

Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 21st January 2021.

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 21st January 2021, there were 95,946,986 cases and 2,074,713 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 42,807,169 confirmed cases and 983,878 deaths.

On 15th March 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in The Bahamas. On 23rd March 2020, the first confirmed case was reported in The Turks and Caicos Islands.

HIGHLIGHTS The Bahamas

Since 14th January 2020, there were 69 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy-seven percent were from New Providence;
- 36 males, 33 females.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 57,763 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 14th January 2020, there were 131 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Ninety-four percent were from Providenciales.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 594 (49.8%) males, 596 (50%) females and 2 (0.2%) unknown gender (data to 20th January 2021);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 20th January 2021) is 0-5 (3.0%), 6-19 (11.2%), 20-29 (19.2%), 30-39 (26.2%), 40-49 (21.5%), 50-59 (12.2%), 60-79 (6.1%), 80 and over (0.4%), unknown (0.2%);
- 786 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 12,955 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5872	136
Grand Bahama	1166	24
Abaco	209	3
Eleuthera	158	1
Exuma	121	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	83	2
Berry Islands	47	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	25	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
San Salvador	10	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	356	7
TOTAL	8101	175

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	1064	5
North Caicos	24	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	91	1
South Caicos	3	0
TOTAL	1193	6

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

8101 Bahamas
1193 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

1154 Bahamas
230 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

6720 Bahamas
954 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

12 Bahamas
6 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

175 Bahamas
7 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

38 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

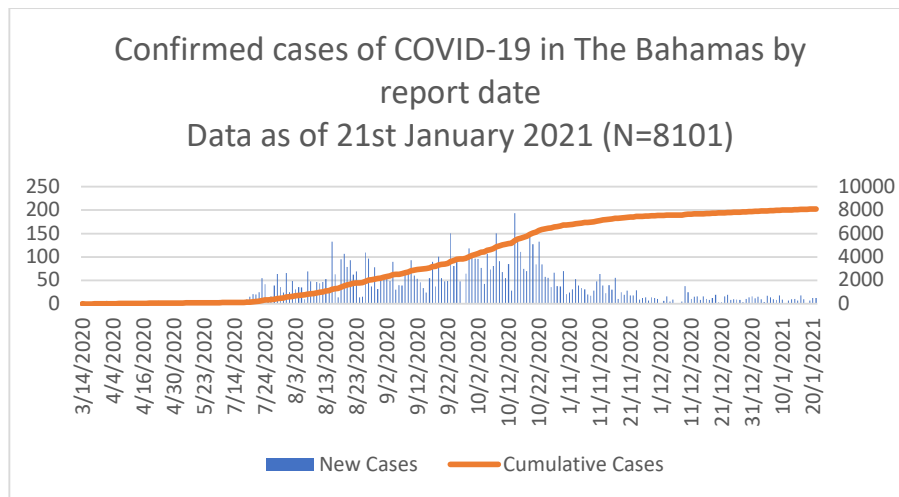
15 Bahamas
Deaths under investigation

PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ Donation of laboratory supplies
- ✓ Risk assessment and situational analysis
- ✓ Technical guidance
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Support to local authorities on surveillance and health systems

The Bahamas

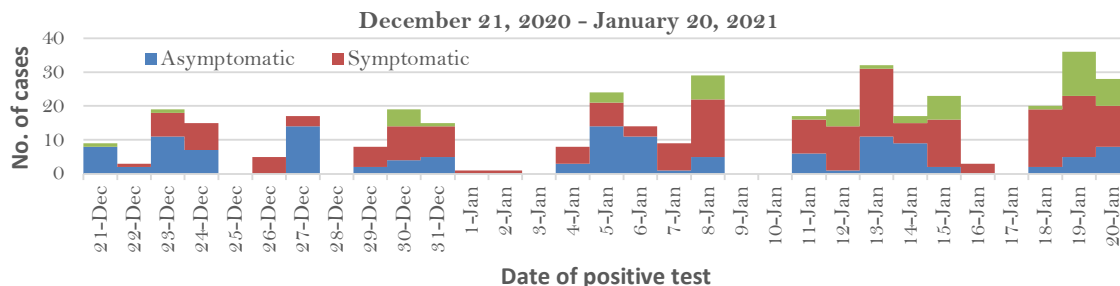
- Emergency Orders have been extended to 31st January 2021.
- Nightly curfews continue for Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, Mondays to Sundays.
- Effective 20th January 2021, funerals (gravesite only) and weddings (indoors) are permitted with a maximum of 20 persons in attendance.
- Effective 24th January 2021, outdoor dining will be permitted at restaurants and opening of gas stations, laundromats, pharmacies will be permitted from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm on Abaco, mainland Eleuthera, mainland Exuma, and New Providence.



Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Protocols related to social distancing, wearing of masks and other related measures including screening for travel have been extended to 31st March 2021.
- Business closures at 7:00 pm on Grand Turk and 10:00 pm on Providenciales remain in effect.
- Nightly curfew from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am remains in effect on Grand Turk.
- Lateral Flow Rapid Tests been approved for use in country. These tests used for screening of COVID-19 will be made available at Primary Health Clinics and for testing of visitors.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government and several personnel from the TCI Medical Association for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines by private medical entities.

Figure 1: Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- While there is a decrease in newly confirmed COVID-19 cases, daily new confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to be reported in The Bahamas. The Sandilands Rehabilitation Center confirmed six new cases of COVID-19 this past week.
- The national authorities continue to require negative real time PCR tests from arriving travelers and rapid antigen testing five and ten days post entry for all in-coming travelers, including citizens and residents.
- COVID-19 laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), PMH, Rand Memorial Hospital and private sector laboratories.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre is still operational, although with a decrease in the number of volunteer contact tracers. An on-line contact tracing course continues to be offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB).
- A SharePoint platform is utilized for multiple user entry of contact tracing data, case investigation and laboratory test results whilst Go.Data is used for epidemiology analysis of a subset of exported data variables.
- Moderate to severe suspected and confirmed cases are treated at PMH, Doctors Hospital West and Rand Memorial Hospital.
- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute PPEs across all public hospitals and clinics.
- MOH continues to provide telemedicine, telepsychology, mental health, and psychosocial support services.
- MOH continues to implement a communication campaign to increase immunization coverage for influenza and other vaccines.
- Preparatory work continues towards developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- Work has started on planning a communication campaign for COVID-19 vaccine introduction.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- There has been an increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19, with notable increase on Grand Turk. New confirmed cases are linked to social gatherings and workplace exposures.
- 1434 COVID-19 vaccines were delivered during this past week of distribution to a myriad of persons including frontline workers, officials, and the general public.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.
- Community drive-through services continue to provide access to COVID-19 tests throughout the islands.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 12,955 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include "frontline" workers and community-based testing.
- The National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan is being implemented – work having been expedited in line with the receipt of Pfizer vaccine. A national committee and a technical task force are supporting vaccine introduction policy development and implementation.

- A communication education campaign has been launched and communication materials on the COVID-19 vaccine are being shared via traditional and social media.
- A Cuban health contingent of 20 persons continues to operate in medical facilities through a bilateral agreement between the two countries.

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

- PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and to technical assistance.
- WHO/PAHO briefing documents have been shared with both countries on COVID-19 vaccination and the emergence of COVID-19 mutant strains in different locations.

The Bahamas

- There has been a decrease in the frequency of EOC meetings. PAHO continues to share global and regional data and technical documents with MOH.
- Three staff members provide data management support to MOH, assisting with coordination of data entry for cases, contacts and laboratory tests and with standardizing of analysis and reporting.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course was completed by 36 physicians and nurses from MOH, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.
- PAHO's regional and country office HSS and EOC groups have advised the MOH on expanding acute care services in three hospitals and adjusting workflow and workplace layout to minimize risks of COVID-19 infection.
- PAHO Country Office personnel continue to participate in MOH's planning committee for developing the country's COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy and plan.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- PAHO continues to provide technical assistance and access to technical guidelines, information and communication products, has advised on contact tracing and data management and made donations of PPE. A weekly virtual meeting is convened between MOH and PAHO for discussion of the technical cooperation programme.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course was completed by 20 personnel from MOH.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases and virus transmission among nationals and residents occurred in both countries after the re-opening of international borders, however, within-country transmission of COVID-19 currently accounts for most of the confirmed cases in both countries.
- There is a new risk to both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands from the emergence of mutant COVID-19 strains in large numbers in the United Kingdom and South Africa with evidence of spread through travel to other countries.
- CARPHA has advised Caribbean countries that it is offering genomic sequencing for COVID-19 strains through collaboration with a researcher at the University of the West Indies. Neither The Bahamas nor Turks and Caicos Islands have in-country sequencing capacity. Furthermore, The Bahamas normally experiences significant challenges to refer biological samples to CARPHA and will be exploring alternative options for accessing support for sequencing of viruses through PAHO.

The Bahamas

- A tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse remains available in New Providence for expanded clinical capacity.
- COVID-19 testing offered in both the public and private sectors, both real time PCR and SARS CoV-2 antigen testing are offered with a requirement to report positive results and workload through the national COVID-19 surveillance system.
- There has been a decline in infections and requirements for isolation/quarantine of frontline health, security service and other sector workers.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- There appears to be a surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases in Grand Turk. Responsive contact tracing and epidemiological investigations are on-going.
- Stigma and discrimination of COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases remains a concern.
- "Roll out" of COVID-19 vaccines is on-going and it will be important to document country experiences and lessons learned.