

Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 28th 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 28th January 2021, there were 100,748,625 cases and 2,174,835 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 44,765,625 confirmed cases and 1,031,770 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 21st January 2020, there were 73 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy-three percent were from New Providence;
- 43 males and 30 females.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 59,833 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 21st January 2020, there were 243 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Eighty-four percent were from Providenciales.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 681 (49.1%) males, 699 (50.4%) females and 7 (0.5%) unknown gender (data to 27th January 2021);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 27th January 2021) is 0-5 (2.9%), 6-19 (10.9%), 20-29 (19.3%), 30-39 (26.0%), 40-49 (21.2%), 50-59 (13.0%), 60-79 (6.1%), 80 and over (0.5%), unknown (0.1%);
- 869 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 14,083 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5925	137
Grand Bahama	1177	24
Abaco	212	3
Eleuthera	158	1
Exuma	121	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	83	2
Berry Islands	49	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	357	7
TOTAL	8174	176

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	11267	7
North Caicos	35	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	116	1
South Caicos	7	0
TOTAL	1436	8

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

8174 Bahamas
1436 Turks & Caicos

Confirmed

1174 Bahamas
375 Turks & Caicos

Active Cases

6771 Bahamas
1051 Turks & Caicos

Recovered

14 Bahamas
8 Turks & Caicos

Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

176 Bahamas
8 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

38 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

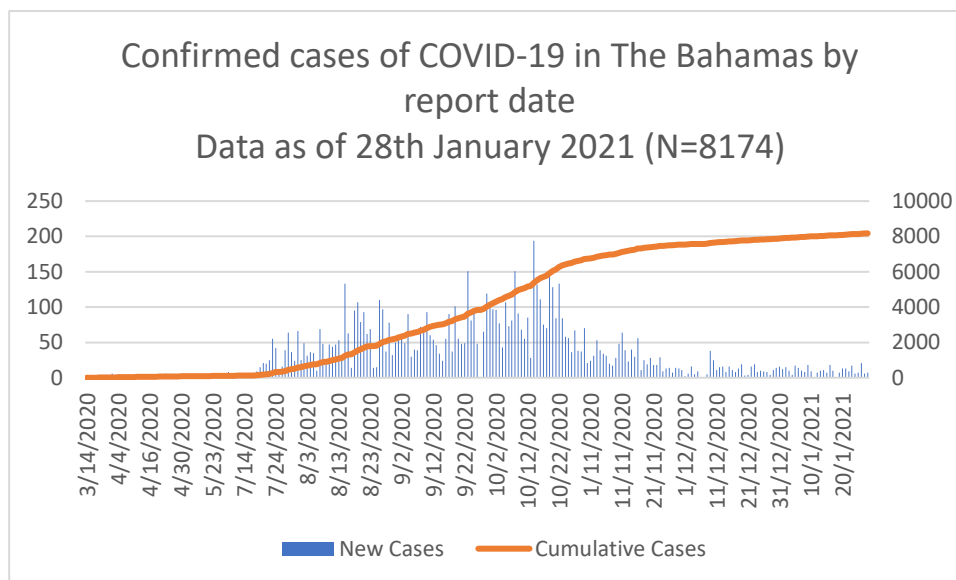
15 Bahamas
Deaths under investigation

PAHO RESPONSE

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

The Bahamas

- Emergency Orders have been extended to 23rd May 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.
- The Ministry of Education advised mid-week that the reopening of public schools (scheduled for 1st February 2021) for face to face classes on Abaco, Eleuthera, Exuma, and New Providence will be delayed.
- The Canadian Government announced suspension of departing flights to The Bahamas from Canada until 30th April 2021.
- Departing passengers from The Bahamas to the United States of America (U.S.A.) will be required to present a negative RT-PCR test or for admission into the U.S.A. Several hotel resorts have commenced COVID-19 testing on site.
- The Centers for Diseases Control revised its Travel Health Notice regarding The Bahamas from Level 4: Very high level of COVID-19 to Level 3: High level of COVID-19.

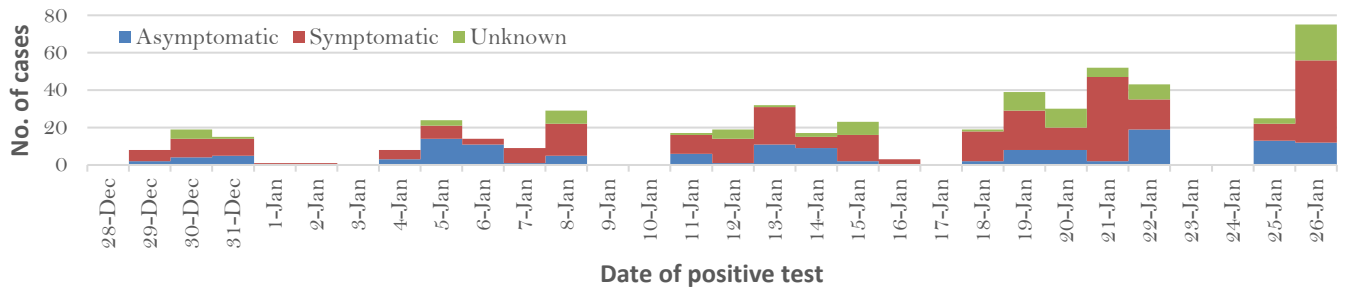


Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- 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 remains in effect and commenced on the other islands 27th January 2021 at 8:00 pm.
- Nightly curfew from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am remains in effect on Grand Turk and commenced for Providenciales on 27th January 2021 to 10th February 2021 from 9:00 pm to 5:00 am nightly.
- Bars, night clubs, and restaurants are restricted to 30% occupancy indoors and signage must be posted to indicate the same.
- No public gatherings including those on the beach are permitted from 27th January 2021 to 10th February 2021.
- Pleasure crafts may operate but are limited to no more than six persons on board at any time.
- Attendance at Church, funerals, religious places of worship, or weddings are limited to 20 persons

from 27th January 2021 to 10th February 2021.

Figure 1: Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test
December 28, 2020 - January 26, 2021



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 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), Princess Margaret Hospital (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.
- The communication campaign for COVID-19 vaccine introduction commenced this past week with educational material shared via Social Media platforms and radio interviews.

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.
- Several government offices were closed this past week to allow for deep sanitization and cleaning due to confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst staff in those offices. Further, some departments reverted to the COVID-19 shift system due to cases in eight departments given the number of persons quarantined from those respective offices.
- COVID-19 vaccine distribution continued this past week to frontline workers, officials, and the general public. Several private facilities have been identified to conduct travel-related COVID-19 testing in Parrot Cay, Providenciales, and South Caicos.
- 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 14,083 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 remain a concern.
- "Roll out" of COVID-19 vaccines is on-going and it will be important to document country experiences and lessons learned.