

2021 Budget Debate

Duane E. Sands MD

Elizabeth

9/6/2021

Mr. Speaker,

The world is a different place now! Wondrous and strange things are happening.

In 2020 during the pandemic ... I became a father again.

While eternally grateful for twin blessings ...my career in that line of business (which spans some 30 years... 1991 to 2020) is now completed...

Adrienne, Brandon, Nicholas, Mila, Amadeus, Laurin and Elijah...

My focus has been... and will continue to be... the support and nurturing of my children and family... and working to

help all the nation's youngsters and not-so-young to lead healthy productive lives – and to provide an example of citizenship.

I start my contribution that way because the differing realities of my eldest children and my youngest reflect their life journey - successes and challenges of their family... but also speaks to the times in which they were born. What was true when Adrienne was born in 1991 is no longer the case when the two littlest ones entered the world amid a Covid-19 pandemic. In the early 90's I was starting the last phase of my training as a surgeon and anxious to take my place in the redevelopment of the Bahamas. In 2021, I am one of the senior surgeons in the country assessing the landscape and realizing there is much work left to be done.

None of my kids got to choose the date of entrance onto the stage of life or the circumstances into which they were born... good or bad.

Today, I shall spend extraordinarily little time on partisan politics ...who did what and when...

I sincerely believe that in the current form practiced, it adds little to the growth and development of our nation and oftentimes prevents us from addressing the critical issues facing our beloved country.

In its purest form..." politics is the art of the possible (Otto Von Bismarck) ... combat for compromise.

A better understanding would be Mao Tse Tung's "politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed."

Partisan tribalism or positions taken simply for the sport of politics has caused us to lose much... there are many issues on which we would agree or compromise but dare not ... for fear of ceding captured ground which is itself as fleeting as sandcastles built between the high and low water mark on a stormy day.

We have collectively created this complex mess sometimes by acts of what we have done (commission) or just hadn't gotten around to doing it (omission.)

And yet... my journey as complex as it has been...as politically eventful as my path since the by-election in 2010 (can you recall two days of recounts and weeks of election court.) has crystallized for me that in this Bahamas... there is but one political organization to which I should be aligned...

For better or worse... through good times and bad... I have been, am and for the foreseeable future...will remain... an FNM.

The Free National Movement – as imperfect as it is...remains in my view - the party best equipped to steer this nation through the stormy seas ahead.

So today, I hope to speak directly about my view of a nation that I love dearly and to examine critically whether "We"

have been effective stewards of this nation of islands. I will offer recommendations informed by my personal observations and research and the kind guidance offered by a number of patriotic Bahamians.

Elizabeth...

12 years ago, I started a relationship with the people of Elizabeth.

4 years ago, they entrusted me to represent them... To be their voice.

In this place and out, I have attempted to ensure that Elizabeth is heard...

It is only because of the support and confidence of the men and women of Elizabeth that I have had the privilege of serving in this way.

I am grateful – and try everyday to do the best for them that I can.

I enjoy the support of an incredible team. Let me single out my executive, headed by Mrs. Pamela Hart.

We are Elizabeth strong.

Accomplishments of the last four years.

1. PROVIDED OVER 7,000 MEALS, CLOTHING, AND HYGIENE CARE PACKAGES FOR HURRICANE DORIAN VICTIMS
2. SOUP KITCHEN
3. BJC AND BGCSE AFTERSCHOOL CLASSES 2018-2020
4. MORE THAN 19,000 BAGS OF GROCERIES AND 2490 (fifty-dollar) FOOD VOUCHERS GIVEN OUT. Bags include rice, sardines, tuna, grits, cream, soup, noodles, spaghetti, flour, sugar, water and occasionally fruits. (Parable of five loaves and two fish)
5. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS TO ALL COMMUNITY PARKS IN THE ELIZABETH CONSTITUENCY
6. 20FT DUMPSTER CONTAINERS PROVIDED TWICE ANNUALLY IN MAJOR AREAS WITHIN ELIZABETH ESTATES

7. MOSQUITO FOGGING WITHIN THE CONSTITUENCY
FROM 2017-PRESENT

8. RAT AND RODENT TREATMENT THROUGHOUT THE
ELIZABETH CONSTITUENCY FROM 2017-PRESENT

9. REMOVAL OF HUNDREDS OF DERELICT VEHICLES FROM
2017-PRESENT

10. PRE-HURRICANE TREE TRIMMING FROM 2017-PRESENT

11. MEDICAL/PHARMACY ASSISTANCE FOR THE ELDERLEY
IN THE CONSTITUENCY

12. COMPUTER TABLET GIVEAWAY FOR STUDENTS IN
ELIZABETH CONSTITUENCY

13. SCHOOL UNIFORM ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS

14. ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL GIVEAWAY

15. MOTHER'S DAY LUNCHEON

16. 3 WEEK SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM FROM 2017-2019

17. SAFETY HAZARD PROPERTY CLEARING THROUGHOUT
ELIZABETH CONSTITUENCY

18. COMPLETE ROOF REPAIR ASSISTANCE FOR THREE
CONSTITUENCY RESIDENTS AND PARTIAL REPAIRS FOR
OTHERS

19. ASSIST HOME FIRE VICTIMS WITHIN THE
CONSTITUENCY

20. ANNUAL CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS GIFT GIVEAWAY

21. COMPUTER DONATIONS TO THELMA GIBSON PRIMARY
SCHOOL

22. COMPUTER DONATIONS TO ELIZABETH
CONSTITUENCY CHILDREN'S HOME

23. ELIZABETH CONSTITUENCY CHILDREN'S HOME REPAIR
AND MAINTENANCE ASSISTANCE

24. FURNITURE DONATIONS TO RESIDENTS

25. WHEELCHAIR DONATION

26. HURRICANE AND FLOOD ASSISTANCE TO ELIZABETH
CONSTITUENCY RESIDENTS

27. EASTER EGG HUNT

28. STREET LIGHT REPAIRS (160)

29. FATHER'S DAY BASKETS FROM 2017-2019

30. ASSISTED RESIDENTS WITH JOBS

31. ASSISTED RESIDENTS WITH RENT AND UTILITY BILLS

32. DONATED COMPUTERS TO CHURCH

33. DONATED TABLETS TO CHURCH

34. PARTNERED WITH VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL
GROUPS TO ASSIST FAMILIES ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY
MAJOR HURRICANES, ESPECIALLY MATTHEW, DORIAN,
AND THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

35. PARTNERED WITH THE MISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO INTRODUCE BACK YARD FARMING TO RESIDENTS

36. PROVIDED MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WHERE POSSIBLE

Mr. Speaker... We are here to debate a compendium of bills which collectively make up the annual budget for the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Elizabeth looks at this 2021-2022 budget as truly a “critical point” in national finance.

This budget... more than any other ...must signal that we have reached a point ... not a cross- road but a T junction. For those of you who are familiar with the scene in the Matrix... take the red pill or the blue pill.

In the movie (1999) The Matrix, Neo is given the choice to learn the truth or remain in ignorance.

We must now turn left... or turn right.

At this point we must now pivot and recognize that government cannot be the engine for sustained growth.

It can... and must supply the lubrication. But it is ill equipped to drive.

We must embrace the private sector and the industry and creativity of our people.

This budget... this time... must be the last time... this is a “never again” scenario. We must use this year as the springboard to the future.

We must facilitate the re-tooling and rebuilding (capacity building) to allow the Bahamas to survive.

We must accept that we have outlived the utility of certain models.

Let me build the case.

Mr. Speaker

General thoughts on expenditure last 30 years.

A review of the balance sheet of the commonwealth of the Bahamas tells a sad story.

I have benefitted from a validated, verified thorough review of annual Bahamas government expenditure, revenue, deficits and GDP data sent to me by (Rick Lowe.) He painstakingly fact-checked our fiscal performance over the last 50 years using Central Bank data and a review by Alvin

Rabushka” The Monetary History of the Bahamas.” It has been shared on social media widely.

The numbers tell a story of a proud but financially challenged nation with disappointments, setbacks and the impacts of external forces and...because budgets are about choices... the fiscal impact of our choices...year in.... and year out!

Let us start with a newly independent Bahamas... 1974.

The revenue was 115M and expenditure was 155M.

The national debt in 1974 was 108.2M It has now grown to 9665M. This is not a sustainable scenario.

We have now reached perilously close to the fiscal cliff. That is not a political statement.

Jamaica and Barbados have already fallen.

Every year since 1974, successive governments have spent more than they collected.

Every Single Year.

Let us dissect the past ... because unless we know (and claim) the past, we are doomed to repeat it.

The national debt doubled in

1. 1977 218M
2. 1982 443.6M
3. 1990 924M
4. 1999 1,905M

- 5. 2009 3928M
- 6. 2017 7884M

From 1974 to 2017...

Total addition to debt FNM \$3,120.98M (3.1 billion.)

Total addition to debt PLP \$4,655.17M (4.7 billion)

Raw numbers are difficult to compare from year to year or decade to decade.

The buying power of a dollar in 1974 would require \$5.64 in 2021 (Dollartimes.com)

Instead let us look at percentages.

Parable of the Talents[\[edit\]](#)

The "Parable of the Talents", in [Matthew 25:14–30](#) tells of a master who was leaving his house to travel, and, before leaving, entrusted his property to his servants. According to the abilities of each man, one servant received five talents, the second had received two, and the third received only one. The property entrusted to the three servants was worth 8 talents, where a [talent](#) was a significant amount of money. Upon returning home, after a long absence, the master asks his three servants for an account of the talents he entrusted to them. The first and the second servants explain that they each put their talents to work, and have doubled the value of the property with which they were entrusted; each servant was rewarded:

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

— *Matthew 25:23*

The third servant, however, had merely hidden his talent, burying it in the ground, and was punished by his master:

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

— *Matthew 25:24–30*

Average % deficit (deficit \$M/ Expenditure \$M)

Low 0.8% 2000 (7.8M) Expenditure was 958.5M
High 44.3% 2020 (1,324.1) Expenditure of 2985M (3
billion)

From 1974 to 1981 Deficits ranged from 25.5% to 3.1%
(Average of **13.8%**)

1982-1991 Deficits ranged from 24.3% (1982) to 2.9% (1986)
with an average of **11.9%**

1992-1996 Deficits ranged from 14.1% (1992) to 3.7% (1994)
with an average of **8.9%**

1997-2001 Deficits ranged from 9.5% (1998) to 0.8% (2000)
with an average of **5.9%**

2002-2006 deficits ranged from 18.8% (2003) to 6.9% ((2006)
with an average of **13.7%**

Global meltdown 2008-2009

2007-2011 deficits ranged from 23.2% (2009) to 11.5% (2008)
WITH AN AVERAGE OF **17.8%**

2012-2016 DEFICITS RANGED FROM 28.5% (2012) to 11.5% (2015) with an average of 22.5%

Hurricane Joaquin September 2015 (200M) Hurricane Matthew October 2016 580M

2017-2020 deficits ranged from 44.3% (2020) to 8.7% (2019) with an average of 22.7% or 15.5% if 2020 is excluded.

Dorian September 2019 \$3.4B

Covid 19... March 2020 -present... incalculable.... Still being determined. At least (I am advised by financial experts) \$3.0B (World- wide world economy shrank by 4.3% ...great depression, WWI, WWII)

Overall loss... \$10 Trillion...(10,000,000,000,000.00) ten million million.

The Economist: Finance & Economics , Jan 7th 2021)

We have suffered (Dorian & Covid-19) 6.4Billion dollars of unexpected losses.

It is therefore no surprise that the damage to our main economic engine (tourism) and every other business due to Covid...on top of the blow of Dorian has left us in...

A very tight spot.

State Owned Enterprises (SOE)... Cost taxpayers upwards of 400M dollars per year. 16+% of recurrent expenditure

Interest...Cost of money in 2021... we shall spend some 512M dollars on interest.

Add the more than 900M of principle repayments due in the upcoming fiscal year and yes... Our total debt servicing obligation... principal and interest payments due and we are at about 50%.

Mr. Speaker ... we did not get here overnight... We got here step by step...year after year... every year without exception.

Sobering!

WE HAVE A SOVEREIGN DEBT CRISIS.

Elijah and Laurin entered this world owing \$25,000 each...

Most people are familiar with the debt service ratio (TDS). If you apply for a loan or mortgage, the lender will ask for your total income - salary, investment interest, rent payments etc. and then look at your expenses...

In general, if TDS is more than 40% or 45%... it is unlikely that you will be considered favorably because the expectation is that debt default is more likely.

For the Bahamas... we may still be able to get loans... but the cost of those loans will have a premium for the lender.

Eventually, it does not make sense to borrow...

Remember the fate of Greece, Italy and Spain

While the comparison between the Bahamas national budget and a personal budget is methodologically imperfect – The bottom line is... our previous decisions have consumed half of our daily output and leveraged the options for our children and grandchildren.

The world is a different place. This rapid deterioration (2019-2021) in fiscal position was not predictable or avoidable but it highlights the structural weaknesses.

Never again...

If we survive this.... And we must!

If we survive this.... And we will... we must make the adjustments needed.

We cannot simply kick this reform down the road...

Mr. Speaker... This is the time... Now... not tomorrow...today... to start on the road to resiliency and recovery!

It is time to lock in fundamental reforms moving forward.

1. Let us acknowledge and book total debt ... let us “as the old people say” claim it! Find where the bodies are buried at BMC, BOB, BDB, BA, BPL, unbooked pension liabilities and accrued vacation and leave.

2. Let us speak openly about the state of the NIB fund and the challenged ability to provide benefits beyond 2028-2033 as the recent actuarial reviews confirm. As painful politically as a national, holistic “come to Jesus’ moment” may be... sugar coating our current situation is not an ideal approach.

3. Move aggressively to refinance debt for longer terms. The headroom achieved by refinancing...if possible ...if possible... must not be used for more spending!

4. After 2021-2022... Implement belt-tightening...yes, I said it... starting with State owned enterprises and eliminating the “bottomless pit” approach to finance. If I were to criticize this year’s budget, I would say that it does not ...in plain language... in incontrovertible ways... acknowledge that we are in trouble.

5. There is no “free lunch.”

6. We must now accept that things are different... we may have afforded champagne previously... but if we drink cider or beer, we will emerge stronger and leaner.
7. Accept that mortgage default rates of 40-50 % helps no-one.
8. Carve out sustainable investments in the future... Put a cost on the road to digital transformation and fund it.
9. Continue the road to autonomy of healthcare – accept that the current model is broken. Promising free care to all results in substandard or no care for many.
10. Capital investment in healthcare without maintenance contracts and continuous capital equipment repairs and upgrades is...nonsensical.
11. Reassess the tax structure of the Bahamas to meet the annual funding needs of the government. If it requires income tax..., do it voluntarily. Clearly, our tax system is inefficient and predicated on ‘best case scenarios.’ Clearly, we are underperforming relative to best practices (15-18%) of GDP as opposed to 22-25%.

12. Right size the contingency for climate change and other catastrophic events. Matthews Erma's and Dorians are expected to become the norm. our budgets must consider these probable events.
13. Let us shift expenditure from recurrent to capital...
14. Exploit PPP's.
15. Restructure the Civil service...
16. Finance the policies that impact ill health and the massive expenditures on diseases that lead to PYLL.
17. What about breadbasket reform to make healthy foods more affordable?
18. Invest even more heavily in Education.

Healthcare...

In 1977 I left the Bahamas to train to become a surgeon. Connecticut, Boston Massachusetts, Baltimore Maryland and then Detroit Michigan.

17 years later, I returned as a cardiac, vascular and trauma specialist.

I have served in many capacities ...Consultant, chief of surgery, President of the MAB, Chairman of the BMC.

Finally, as Minister...

I thank the people of Elizabeth for the privilege to serve and the forbearance shown as I executed my duties.

I resigned as minister in 2020. There is still much work to do...

In 2020 I returned fulltime to the frontlines...

This is what I found:

Violence

NCD's

Heart disease...

Challenges with access to care.

I have spent the last year as a practicing surgeon...

Heart disease, kidney disease, trauma... and Covid 19.

Adrian Coakley...

37-year-old defense force officer.

SOB due to covid-19.

Admitted to ICU.

440 pounds

Hypertension.

He developed respiratory failure... required intubation and ventilation.

Then developed kidney failure.

Ultimately required ECMO and dialysis.

While seriously ill and barely able to breathe, he called his commanding officer and saluted.

Buoyed by his mother...and daughter...

Teamwork...nurses, respiratory technicians, PCT's OR staff, X ray staff...

Doctors in ID, Medicine, critical care ...Anesthesia.

Nephrology.

His story is the story of Bahamians...at high risk...

His is also the story of success and the amazing commitment of our Bahamian healthcare workers.

But he survived... was discharged.

Has lost 130 pounds...

We have not yet had the celebratory beer....

Covid.... The Bahamas is amid the third wave of covid-19.
11796 cases.

April and May had more than twice the number of cases as
March (613)

And more than December, January and February combined.
May also saw more deaths than Jan to April combined.

How are we doing as a country.

As of June 6, the Bahamas recorded 12,024 cases.

International averages **22,391**/ Million

481.9 deaths /Million

Bahamas.... 30,595 cases/Million

590 – 648 deaths/Million

Island	Cases/million	cases/ population
NP	38, 850	8858/228K
Andros and BI	37,500	167 +88 /6800
CI	46,649	71/1522
GB	35,009	1810/51.7K
Bimini	68,913	137/1988
Exuma	14,181	156/11K
Abaco*	21,647	368/17K
Eleuthera	21,545	237/11K
Long island	8,080	25/3094

(Attribution Alexander Hanna)

If we accept the premise that the economy of the Bahamas must be revved up and humming.

If we believe that we are all in it together...

If we believe that in the short- term tourism remains our best bet.

We have spoken about diversification since I was a little boy.

Diversify we must... but it will not happen overnight.

If we accept that there is tremendous pent-up demand for vacations.

If we acknowledge that people have choices.

If we value the role of every Bahamian... airline, airport staff, taxi-drivers, hair braiders, straw vendors, restaurateurs, hoteliers, doctors, lawyers, engineers....

This is going to be hard work that requires that we work harder than we want...for less than we feel we deserve...for longer than we think reasonable.

There is no pot of gold to harvest.

By the sweat of your brow... you shall eat bread... until you return to the ground.

The Bahamas must position itself as a Covid-safe destination... If we wish to retain our role as a leading tourism destination. For all of our businesses to thrive... they must be Covid safe...

Even as we watch countries around the world debate the pros and cons of vaccination...

Understand that a low covid environment is critical to our survival.

Elucidate.

Our World in Data
Articles by topic Search... Latest About Donate

Coronavirus > By country **Data explorer** Deaths Cases Tests Hospitalizations Vaccinations Mortality risk Excess mortality Policy responses Exemplars All charts

COVID-19 Data Explorer

Download the complete Our World in Data COVID-19 dataset.

Type to add a country...

Sort by **Total vaccinations ...**

- Ecuador 15
- Bahamas 14
- Peru 13.19
- Venezuela 11.61
- Trinidad and Tobago 8.96
- Jamaica 6.01
- Paraguay 5.72
- Honduras 4.25
- Guatemala 3.33
- Nicaragua 2.53
- Gibraltar 230.68
- Seychelles 138.83

Clear selection

METRIC
INTERVAL

Vaccine doses
Cumulative

Relative to Population
 Align outbreaks

COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people, Jun 7, 2021

Total number of vaccination doses administered per 100 people in the total population. This is counted as a single dose, and may not equal the total number of people vaccinated, depending on the specific dose regime (e.g. people receive multiple doses).

LINEAR
LOG

Country	Doses per 100 people	Date
Chile	101.84	Jun 6, 2021
United States	80.55	
Uruguay	87.9	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	71.8	Jun 5, 2021
Canada	70.22	
Antigua and Barbuda	56.73	Jun 6, 2021
Dominica	51.37	Jun 2, 2021
Barbados	49.93	Jun 4, 2021
Dominican Republic	47.91	Jun 6, 2021
Guyana	36.27	Jun 5, 2021
Brazil	32.70	Jun 6, 2021
El Salvador	33.1	
Costa Rica	32.56	Jun 1, 2021
Argentina	31.72	
Mexico	26.84	
Saint Lucia	26.28	
Panama	25.51	Jun 3, 2021
Cuba	25.12	Jun 5, 2021
Grenada	22.7	May 28, 2021
Colombia	22.57	Jun 5, 2021
Belize	20.15	Jun 4, 2021
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	19.31	Jun 3, 2021
Suriname	18.42	
Bolivia	16.09	
Ecuador	15	Jun 5, 2021
Bahamas	14	May 29, 2021
Peru	13.19	Jun 6, 2021
Venezuela	11.61	Jun 5, 2021
Trinidad and Tobago	8.96	
Jamaica	6.01	May 28, 2021
Paraguay	5.72	Jun 1, 2021
Honduras	4.25	Jun 6, 2021
Guatemala	3.33	Jun 6, 2021
Nicaragua	2.53	May 21, 2021

Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data
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Dec 14, 2020
Jun 7, 2021

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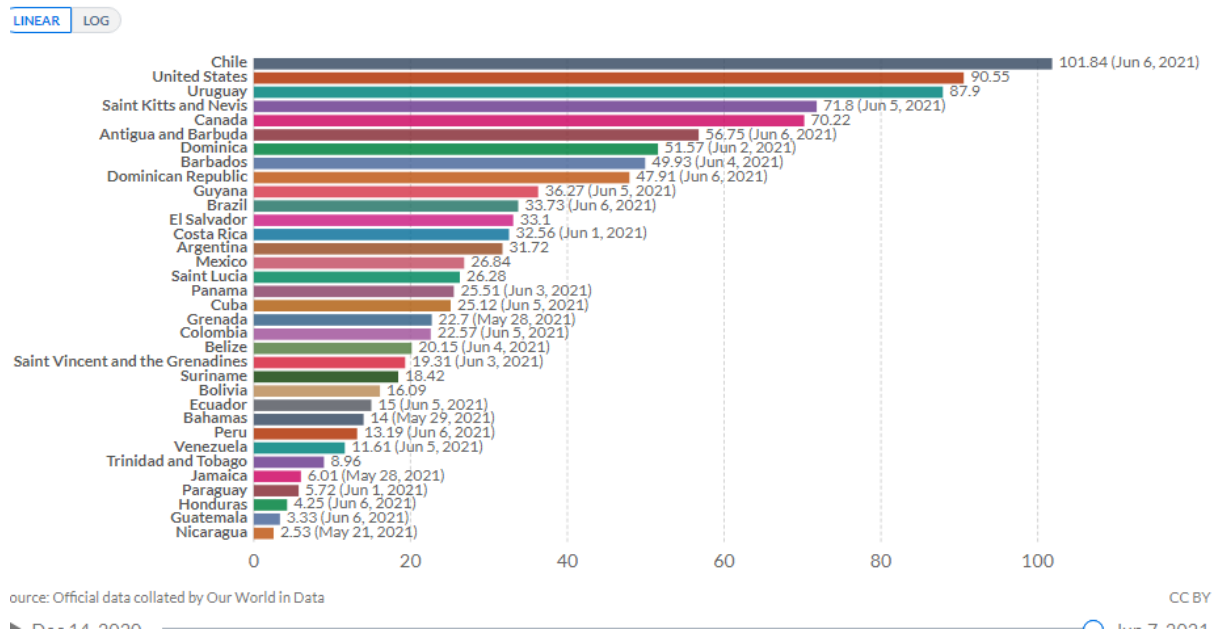
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1. Testing (1000/day) until positivity rate consistently below 5 percent.
2. Treatment
3. Public health measures are still highly effective.
4. Some variants are breaking through vaccination (delta variant)
5. Vaccination...62 thousand (total)
6. 48,434 (1st shot)
7. 13,734/292,972(second shot) 4.7% of adults.
8. There have been 2.18 billion doses of Covid 19 vaccines administered world-wide.
9. The leader in number of doses is Gibraltar @ 230 doses/100 people.
Israel (63%) Canada (61%) and the UK leads in percentage of population immunized.
10. In the Americas... Chile has injected 101.8 doses per 100 people.

11. The Bahamas (member of PAHO) 14 doses per 100 people. Rank 26/34.
12. Barbados (49) Jamaica (6) Nicaragua 2.53
13. Vaccination is not a standalone as countries like Uruguay, Bahrain and Maldives are battling surges and high death rates (Forbes)
14. I am not yet convinced that the value proposition for vaccination of children... now being considered... has been shown.

Employers and Covid Vaccines - What's Legal and What's Not?

ANN C. HODGES Professor of Law Emerita and Program Chair for Paralegal Studies at the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, University of Richmond

As the vaccines roll out and hopes rise about a return to pre-pandemic life, the reluctance of some to get the vaccine has led to questions about what employers can do to either mandate or encourage vaccination. While it is far too early for any judicial decisions on the issue, **Guidance** from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) provides some assistance in making the determination.

In general, the guidance indicates that mandating vaccines is lawful, but requires accommodation of individuals whose disabilities or religious beliefs would prevent vaccination.

Employers that require vaccination must reasonably accommodate employees who have disabilities that prevent vaccination, unless the employer can establish that accommodation would cause undue hardship. Undue hardship under the ADA is defined as “**significant difficulty or expense.**” Under the ADA, the determination of the reasonableness of any accommodation and of whether undue hardship exists is always case specific. Nevertheless, one can imagine accommodations that might be reasonable such as telecommuting, wearing personal protective equipment, or changing the structure of the workplace or job to minimize contact with other people. Some employers may be able to establish that having an unvaccinated employee in a job that requires close contact with other people poses a significant risk of viral transmission that cannot be ameliorated by other means, i.e., that the employee poses a direct threat to health and safety. For other employers, the accommodations will be sufficient to reduce or eliminate that risk. The availability of accommodations should always be discussed with the requesting employee, as the law requires the parties to engage in an interactive process to ascertain the possibility of accommodation. Further, the employer is permitted to request medical documentation of the need for an alternative to vaccination as an accommodation.

Like employees with disabilities, employees with sincere religious beliefs that preclude vaccinations must be accommodated, unless the employer can show that there is no accommodation that does not cause undue hardship. Undue hardship for religious accommodations is easier for an employer to demonstrate, as it is anything more than de minimis cost or burden. If personal protective equipment and social distancing would reduce or eliminate the risk and is consistent with job responsibilities, an employee who brought and wore his or her own mask could probably be accommodated without undue hardship.

These determinations regarding accommodation will almost certainly be influenced by evolving medical knowledge about the pandemic. At present, it is not clear that vaccination eliminates the risk of transmission so if that is the concern, personal protective equipment may well be deemed equally protective. If scientific knowledge were to change, however, the accommodation requirement will change with it.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW, REGULATION AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE, WORKERS' RIGHTS

Vaccine hesitancy

[COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy: 12 Things You Need to Know](#)



[Sherita Hill Golden, M.D., M.H.S.](#)

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a personal choice. To support you as you make your decision, here are 12 facts and insights, shared by [Sherita Golden, M.D., M.H.S.](#), chief diversity officer at Johns Hopkins Medicine, who specializes in diabetes, heart conditions and patterns of disease in diverse communities.

1. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine can protect you from getting sick.

The COVID-19 vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the coronavirus if you are exposed to it. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, getting the vaccine is a powerful step in taking charge of your health. When given as directed, the FDA-authorized vaccines can prevent severe COVID-19 and death.

2. People of color are especially vulnerable to severe COVID-19.

Generations of health inequities have caused Black and Hispanic/Latin Americans and other [communities of color to be overrepresented in severe COVID-19 cases and deaths](#). People of color are vulnerable to COVID-19 risk factors, and are more likely to be working front-line, essential

jobs that cannot be performed from home, increasing their chances of being infected. [Getting vaccinated can provide protection.](#)

3. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 helps others in your community.

Older people and those living with [chronic medical conditions](#) such as heart disease and diabetes are more likely to experience severe — even fatal — cases of COVID-19 if they catch it. The more people who receive the coronavirus vaccines, the sooner vulnerable people can feel safe among others.

4. More vaccinations for COVID-19 mean a chance to return to normal.

After over a year of coronavirus pandemic closures, cancellations and postponements, everyone is eager to think about returning to work, school, sports, family celebrations and social activities. Though no one is sure when the pandemic will be over, every person who gets protection from the coronavirus by getting a vaccination helps us move closer to normal life.

5. Though the COVID-19 vaccine development was fast, it did not skip steps.

The development of the COVID-19 vaccines did not cut corners on testing for [safety](#) and efficacy. The vaccines were made using processes that have been developed and tested over many years, and which are designed to make — and thoroughly test — vaccines quickly in case of an infectious disease pandemic like we are seeing with COVID-19.

6. Diversity in COVID-19 vaccine testing helped assess safety and effectiveness.

COVID-19 affects everyone, so scientists made sure clinical trial participants for the vaccines were diverse. The clinical trials for the first two COVID-19 vaccines included Black (about 10% of participants) and Hispanic (about 20% of participants) people, older age groups (about 25%), and people with conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and heart and respiratory conditions. The U.S. study participants for the one-shot COVID-19 vaccine were 15% Hispanic/Latinx; 13% Black/African American; 6% Asian and 1% Native American.

New and future clinical trials will also include pregnant women and children under 12.

7. Side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are temporary and do not mean you're sick.

The vaccines do not contain live coronavirus, and you cannot and will not get COVID-19 from getting

vaccinated. After the shots, you might experience a sore arm, a mild fever or body aches, but this doesn't mean you have COVID-19. These symptoms, if they happen at all, are temporary, usually lasting only a day or two. They signal a natural response as your body's immune system learns to recognize and fight the coronavirus.

8. Do you have allergies? You can probably still get the COVID-19 vaccine.

The CDC says people with allergies to certain foods, insects, latex and other common allergens can get a COVID-19 vaccine. If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine, be sure to discuss that with your doctor, who can evaluate you and assess your risk. However, if you are severely allergic to any of the coronavirus vaccines' ingredients, you should not be vaccinated.

9. Here's what we know about pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility concerns with the COVID-19 vaccines.

Pregnant women should discuss a COVID-19 vaccine with their doctors. Although the vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant women, getting COVID-19 while pregnant can be dangerous, so your doctor can help you decide if the vaccines are appropriate for you. The vaccines are safe for breastfeeding mothers, and do not harm a woman's ability to become pregnant.

10. If you've already had COVID-19, getting the vaccine will add extra protection.

Even if you have already had COVID-19, you can still get a vaccine. Current guidelines suggest that anyone previously infected with COVID-19 should be vaccinated. Some people who have been vaccinated after having COVID-19 have observed a strong immune reaction after the first of the two shots with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

11. COVID-19 Vaccines: Time is of the essence.

Some people are deciding not to get the coronavirus vaccines until more people have had them. Vaccine hesitancy can affect people of all different backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. But waiting too long to be vaccinated allows the coronavirus to continue spreading in the community, with [new variants emerging](#). Severe COVID-19 can be very dangerous: The sooner you get vaccinated, the sooner you are protected.

12. Vaccines can't save lives unless people get vaccinated.

By themselves, the COVID-19 vaccines cannot shorten the pandemic. They can only work when communities agree to receive them. And, even if you are vaccinated, you should continue to wear a

mask, wash your hands and practice physically distancing until the pandemic is over.

How can you decide if you should get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Do your research. Take the time to ask questions and learn all you can about the [COVID-19 vaccine](#) from reliable sources so you can make the most informed decision about getting vaccinated.

VAERs

Deaths

Safety...

Children and vaccines: slippery slope.

Nursing...

Mr. Speaker... We are losing our nurses in droves. They are leaving... resigning (some retiring or dying.)

This is possibly one of the single greatest threats to our national security and safety.

Nurses form the backbone of healthcare delivery in all countries including the Bahamas.

Nursing has evolved from a field of generalists to specialists.

In addition to midwives, there are critical care, perioperative, dialysis, Emergency Department, nursing practitioners in multiple specialties, nurse anesthetists, enterostomal and wound care specialists – to name a few.

Contact with a registered nurse is a critical component of good patient outcomes.

We have lost up to 50% of our critical care nurses. (Private sector.) At PMH... we cannot open the ICU to full capacity, Few Dialysis/ OT and ER nurses.

This is critical.

You can have all the whistles and bells... new construction...

We do not have nurses.

Covid has interfered with the practical training of doctors and nurses.

Graduate nurses...delayed clinical training... despite the paucity of nurses.

Over the years, we have not provided the appropriate level of attribution and compensation (cash or kind)

Average nursing salary US \$80,100. (Median 75,330.00)

California \$120,560.00

April 1, 2021, Incrediblehealth.com

Some health systems in Georgia are paying 10K to 30K to recruit nurses.

We have not completed the revision of the nursing act.

We are paying the price for it to this day.

Unless we single out nursing and improve their relative value ... we shall not be able to provide the level of healthcare support demanded by our people.

Nurses continue to leave for greener pastures.

Resignations and retirements have resulted in no net gain in nursing complement since 2019.

We continue to have a deficit of some 300 RN's and 102 TCN's (public sector)

Nutrition

Fruit

Vegetables

Corned beef

Sugar sweetened beverages

marijuana

NCD's continue to be a scourge of our existence.

Hypertension, diabetes heart (cardiovascular disease) and obesity continue to surge.

Future options.

We must now embrace ideas that will substantively transform the Bahamas.

1. Dust off the national development plan.
2. Make LPIA the hub for south and central America and the Caribbean... and the convention center for the hemisphere.
3. Position the Bahamas as the trading center of the world...given its proximity to international shipping.
4. Acknowledge that we are at a defining moment and prepared to make the right decisions....
5. We have made them before.

6. Elizabeth supports the compendium of bills that comprise the 2021-2022 budget of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.