



Covid in Barbados The Winter Season Surge

Covid in Barbados: The Winter Season Surge

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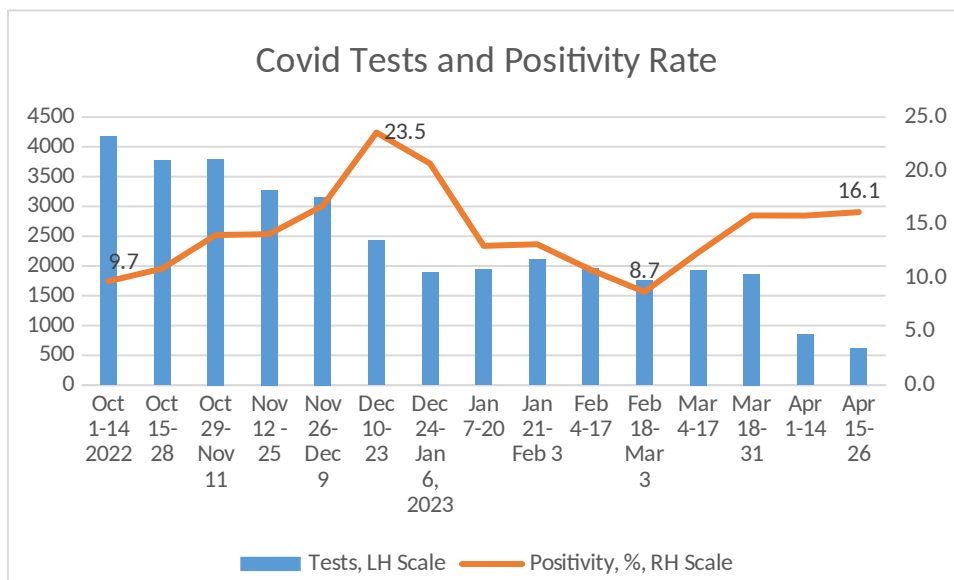
The advent of the winter tourist season in Barbados brought with it the sixth surge in Covid infections. When the Ministry of Health switched from daily to fortnightly bulletins at the beginning of October last year, the fifth wave of infections had abated from a peak of 47 percent on August 2, the highest ever recorded in the island, to ten percent. Immediately, the rate began to rise again as tourism recovered from the slump of the two previous years, rising to a peak of 24 percent positives, of persons tested, in the fortnight December 10-23. The proportion of infections declined in the New Year, to a low of nine percent in the fortnight from February 18 and March 3. However, since then the percent of tests returning positive has risen to 16 percent, a rate which has been unchanged for the six weeks to the end of April.

With the relaxation of Covid restrictions and the closing of several testing stations, many fewer people are being tested. In the first fortnight of October there were 4,000 tests for Covid; for the last fortnight in April only 620 people were tested. It is evident that many more people are infected with Covid than the 100 who are known to be positive. The positivity rate, if applied to the population at large, indicates that one person of every six has Covid, if we include asymptomatic cases.

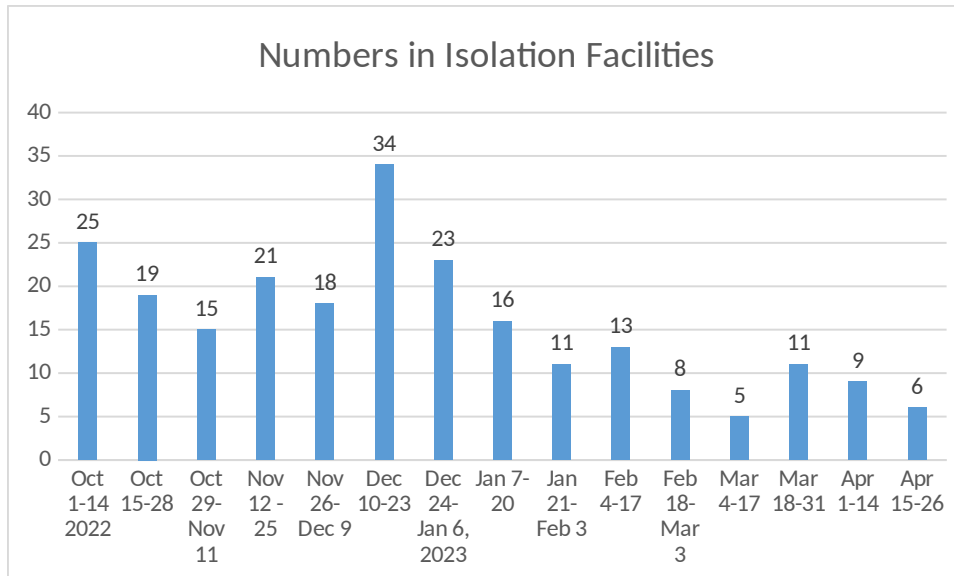
The December peak in infections led to an increase in numbers hospitalised in the isolation facilities for seriously ill Covid patients, to as many as 34 patients in the December 10 - 26 fortnight. That number declined to 11 by the end of January, and it has fluctuated in that vicinity ever since.

Unfortunately, too often the reduction in hospitalizations in isolation facilities was because patients had died. There have been 29 recorded deaths from Covid between the beginning of October and the end of April. The Ministry of Health spokespersons have confirmed that the majority of deaths were among the elderly and those with comorbidities, but no information on the ages of the deceased has been released.

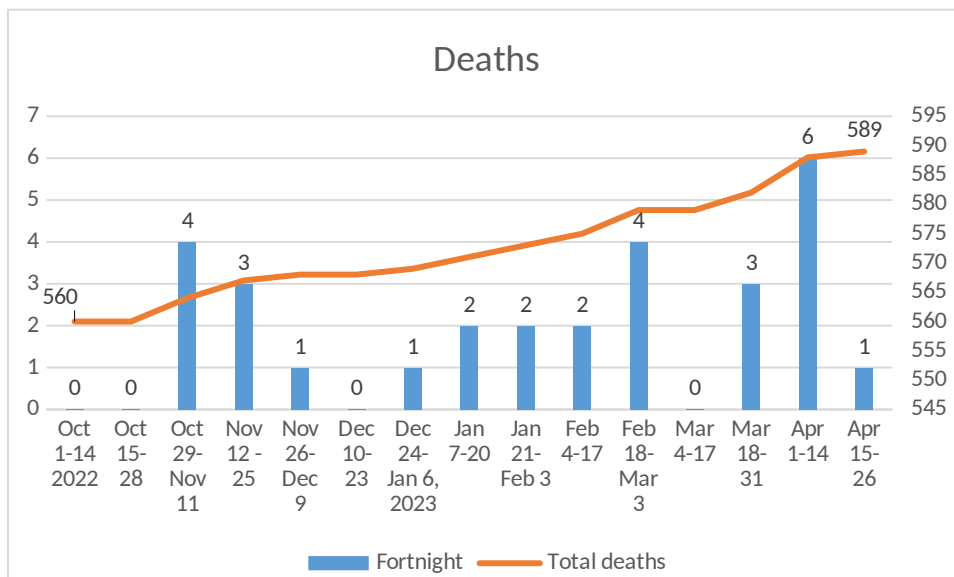
Compared to the earlier phases of the pandemic, the sixth wave peaked at a positivity rate similar to the maximum of the second wave, which occurred in November 2021. The percentage of positives in this wave was lower than for most of 2022. However, the 16 percent positivity rate at which infections have now levelled off is significantly higher than for the early months of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the milder symptoms associated with the strains of Covid now prevalent means that there are fewer deaths, and the great burden of seriously ill persons that over-stretched the island's medical facilities has now been alleviated.



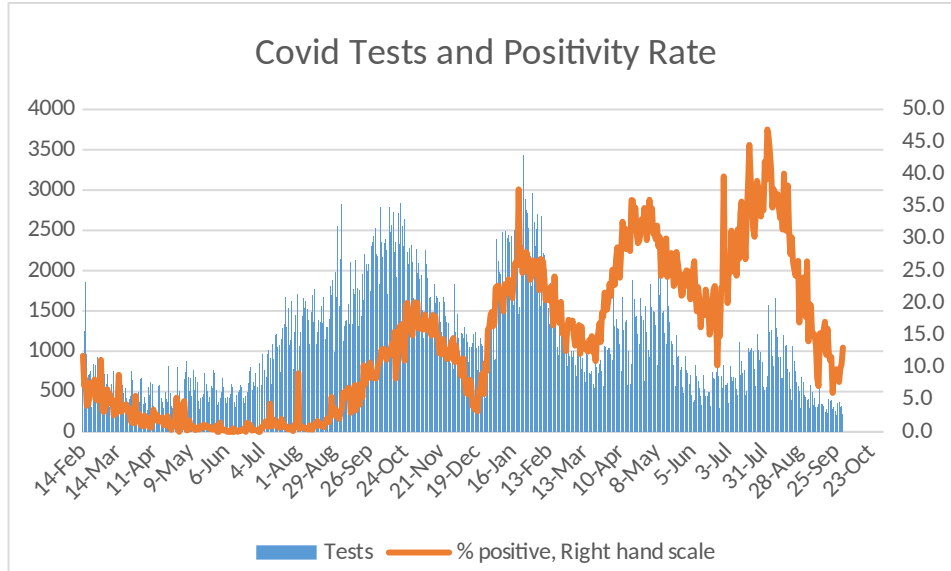
The number of tests is declining, but one in six of those tested is positive.



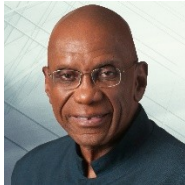
There are only a handful of persons in isolation facilities.



People continue to die from Covid.



The pandemic was more virulent in 2022.



DeLisle Worrell is a member of the Bermuda Financial Policy Council and author of [Development and Stabilization in Small Open Economies](#). He was Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados from 2009 to 2017.