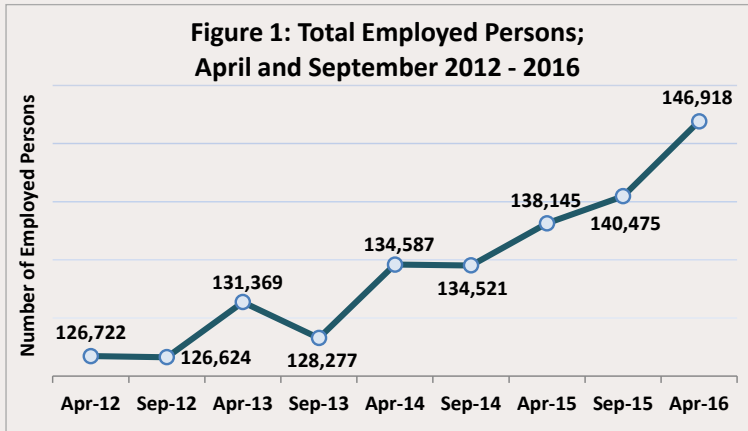


UNEMPLOYMENT DROPS TO 8% IN APRIL 2016, OVER 8,700 NEW JOBS ADDED

Preliminary results of the Statistical Institute of Belize’s most recent Labour Force Survey show that, in April 2016 there were a total of 146,918 employed persons in the country of Belize. This represented a considerable increase of 8,773 persons over April of 2015, when a total of 138,145 employed persons was recorded. The national unemployment rate stood at 8 percent, down 2 percentage points from April 2015, and was the first single digit unemployment rate recorded in almost a decade. The median monthly salary for employed persons was \$1,131, almost unchanged from one year ago.

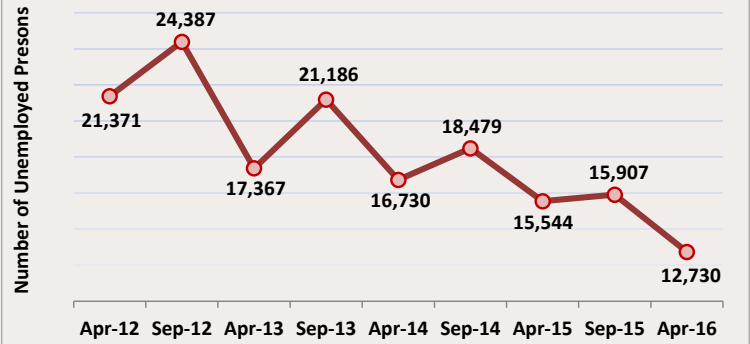


Both males and females saw gains in employment during the period, with men accounting for about 5,700 of all new jobs and women accounting for 3,000. The rate of joblessness among men declined by more than 2 percentage points to 4.3 percent, while that of women decreased by 1.5 percentage points to 13.6 percent. Females continue to be about three times as likely to be unemployed than males. Women also participate in the labour force to a lesser degree than do their male counterparts, with only a half of working aged women being a part of the labour force, compared to three quarters of working aged males.

All districts saw an increase in the number of employed persons, except for Orange Walk which experienced a net loss of about 190 jobs. The Cayo district recorded the largest gains in employment, with over 2,700 additional jobs, primarily in construction, wholesale and retail trade, and other services. The vast majority of new jobs were created in the country’s urban areas.

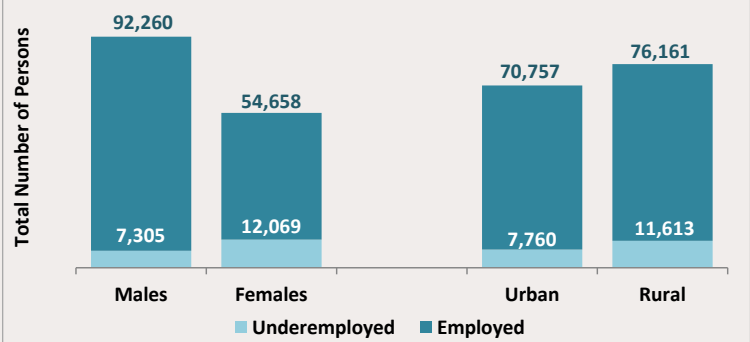
As shown in Figure 2, a general downward trend in the total number of unemployed persons has been observed over the past four years. Between April 2015 and the same month in 2016, this figure declined by more than 2,800, from 15,544 to 12,730. This indicates that sufficient new jobs were created over the period to absorb new entrants into the labour force as well as provide employment to a portion of the persons who were previously unemployed.

Figure 2: Total Unemployed Persons; April and September 2012 - 2016



It should be noted that, along with the overall increase in the number of persons with jobs, there has also been a significant rise in the number of persons who are underemployed, working less than 35 hours per week. This is solely attributable to an increase of 3,000 in the number of women who are underemployed. Additionally, the average hourly work week of underemployed persons was shortened from 22 hours in April of last year to 18 hours in April 2016. About 13 percent of all employed persons are classified as underemployed.

Figure 3: Employed and Underemployed Persons by Sex and Urban/Rural; April 2016



The highest rate of joblessness was found in the Stann Creek district, with an unemployment rate of 10.6 percent, followed by the Belize District with 9.6 percent. At 3.9 percent, the Toledo district had the lowest unemployment rate for the period.

Figure 4: Unemployment Rates by District; April 2016

