

UNEMPLOYMENT FALLS TO 9.7% IN SEPTEMBER 2017: ALMOST 5,700 MORE PERSONS EMPLOYED

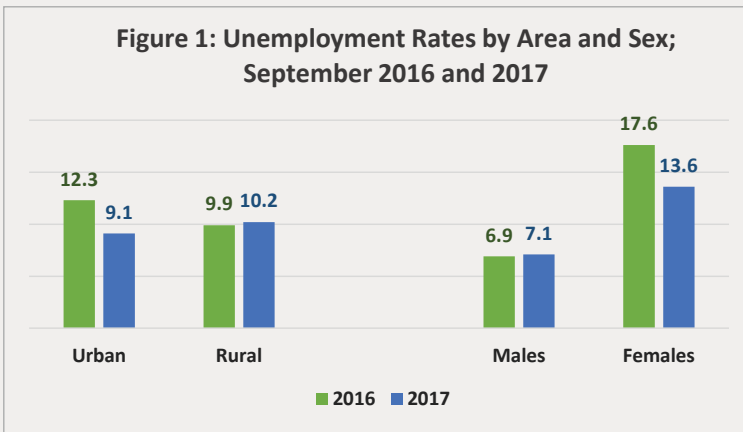
Unemployment Rate: The Statistical Institute of Belize’s preliminary results from its September 2017 Labour Force Survey indicated that the national unemployment rate for that month was 9.7 percent, a decline of 1.4 percentage points from 11.1 percent in September 2016. This fall in the unemployment rate can be attributed for the most part to an increase in the number of employed persons for the period, particularly urban females.

Unemployment in the country’s urban areas fell by 3.2 percentage points, from 12.3 percent in September 2016 to 9.1 in September 2017, while rural areas saw a slight increase in the rate of unemployment from 9.9 percent in September of last year to 10.2 percent for this September. The rate of joblessness among males inched up from 6.9 percent to 7.1 percent, while it fell by a full 4 percentage points among females from 17.6 percent to 13.6 percent (see Figure 1).

be a part of the work force, whether working or looking for work, with more than three fourths of working age males participating in the labour force, compared to just about one half of working aged females.

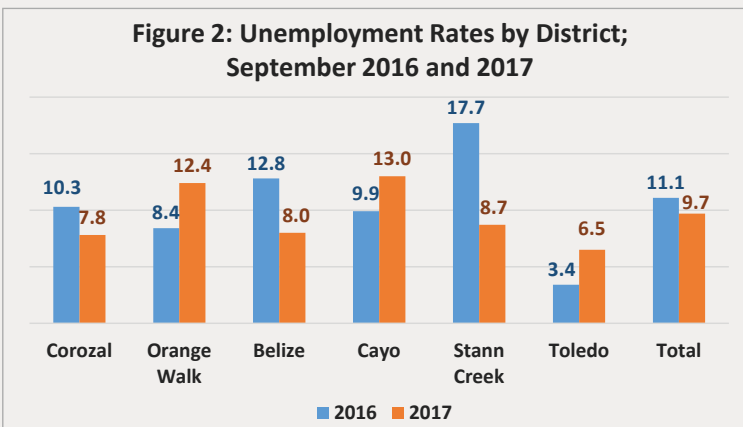
Employed: The total number of employed persons in September 2017 was estimated to be 149,994. This represented a net increase of almost 5,700 persons since September 2016 when the number of persons holding jobs stood at 144,302. Most of these newly employed persons were seen in the ‘Professionals’ and ‘Technician and Associate Professionals’ categories. Females experienced the largest gains in employment, with 4 out of every 5 newly employed persons being women.

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates by Area and Sex; September 2016 and 2017



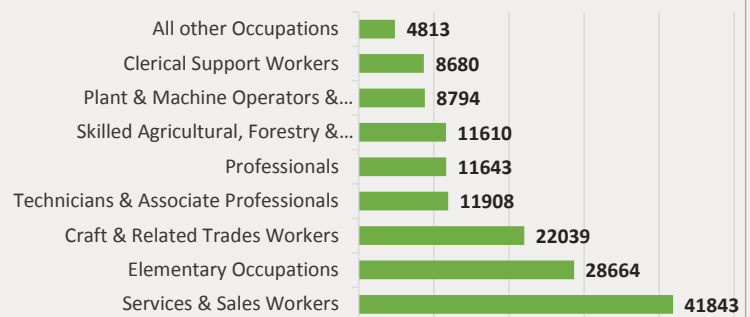
Across the districts, Cayo recorded the highest unemployment rate of 13 percent in September 2017, while Toledo had the lowest at 6.5 percent (see Figure 2). Compared to September 2016, the Orange Walk, Cayo and Toledo districts all recorded a rise in the level of unemployment. Noteworthy is that the unemployment rate in the Toledo district, which has consistently seen the lowest rates of joblessness in the country, has almost doubled since September 2016 due to a net loss of about 700 jobs across several industries. On the other hand, Corozal, Belize and Stann Creek each saw a decrease in the rate of unemployment. The Stann Creek district recorded the largest decline in its unemployment rate, from 17.7 percent in September 2016 to 8.7 percent a year later.

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates by District; September 2016 and 2017



Labour Force: In September 2017, there were approximately 166,049 persons in Belize’s labour force, an increase of 3,795 persons since September 2016, when the total number of persons in the labour force stood at 162,254. New entrants into the labour force for this period were primarily from the country’s urban areas and almost two-thirds of new entrants were females. Nonetheless, males continue to comprise the majority of the country’s labour force, accounting for 60 percent while only 40 percent were females. Men continue to be more likely to

Figure 3: Number of Persons Employed by Occupation; September 2017



All districts recorded an increase in the number of employed persons except Orange Walk, where just over 1,000 jobs were lost compared to last September, and Toledo, which saw a loss of around 700 jobs. The Stann Creek district recorded the highest gains in employment since last September, adding over 2,200 more jobs. Most of the new jobs in this district were seen in the ‘Services and Sales Workers’ and ‘Craft and Related Trade Workers’ categories. The median monthly income for employed persons during the month of September 2017 was approximately \$1,200, with urban workers earning about \$1,330 compared with \$1,084 for persons living in rural areas.

Underemployed: The number of underemployed persons, those who work less than 35 hours per week, declined by about 1,800 overall, from 24,165 in September of 2016 to 22,313 twelve months later. This represented 14.9 percent of all employed persons in September 2017. Females continue to be about twice as likely to be underemployed, with more than 21 percent of working women falling into this category, compared to 11 percent of working males. It should be noted that, notwithstanding the gains in employment among urban females, this group was the only sub-sector of the labour force to have seen an increase in the number of underemployed persons, with almost a half of all new jobs going to urban women being for less than 35 hours per week.

Figure 4: Employed and Underemployed Persons by Sex and Area; September 2017

