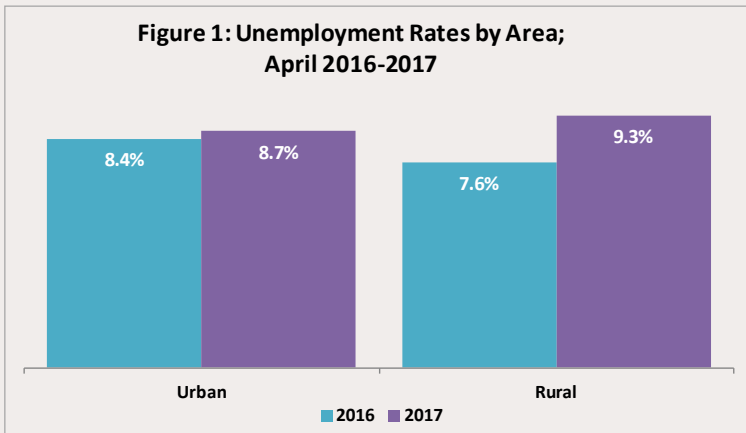


UNEMPLOYMENT RISES marginally TO 9% IN APRIL 2017 DESPITE 3,000 NEW JOBS

Unemployment Rate: Results from the Statistical Institute of Belize’s most recent Labour Force Survey showed that the national unemployment rate in April 2017 stood at 9 percent, a marginal increase from 8 percent in April 2016, when the country recorded its lowest unemployment rate in almost a decade. This rise in the rate of unemployment recorded was notwithstanding the net addition of more than 3,000 new jobs, as persons joined the labour force at a faster rate than that at which new jobs were created.

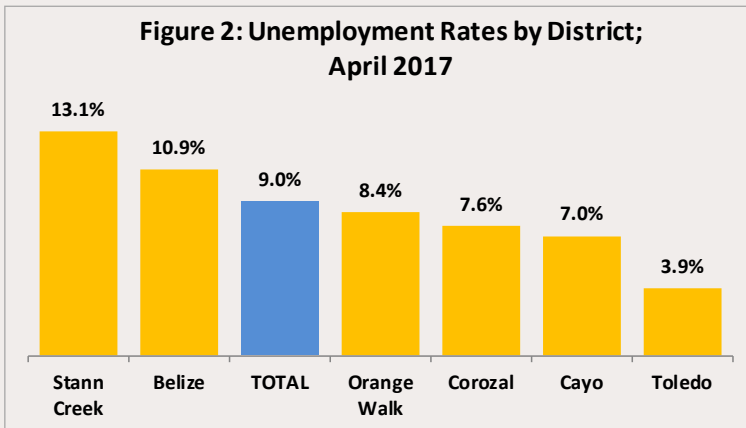
Unemployment in the country’s rural areas rose by 1.7 percentage points, from 7.6 percent in April 2016 to 9.3 percent in April 2017, while the rate in the urban areas increased only slightly (see Figure 1). The unemployment rate was higher in all districts than in the same month of 2016 except for Cayo, where unemployment fell from 8 percent in April 2016 to 7 percent in April 2017. The Stann Creek district recorded the highest unemployment rate of 13.1 percent, while Toledo, where a relatively large proportion of the labour force is engaged in subsistence farming, retained the lowest rate of unemployment at 3.9 percent.

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates by Area; April 2016-2017



Labour Force: As at April 2017, the number of persons in the labour force was estimated to be 164,935, representing an increase of 5,286 persons since April 2016. The overwhelming majority of new entrants into the labour force since April of last year, more than 4,500 persons, were males. The female workforce saw a net increase of only 762 persons, in stark contrast to April 2016, when the female labour force expanded by about 2,400. A large proportion, about 43 percent, of Belize’s labour force has only a primary level education, while 21 percent has completed up to the secondary school level. Only 18 percent of the country’s total labour force has a tertiary level education and 16.5 percent has not completed even a primary school education.

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates by District; April 2017

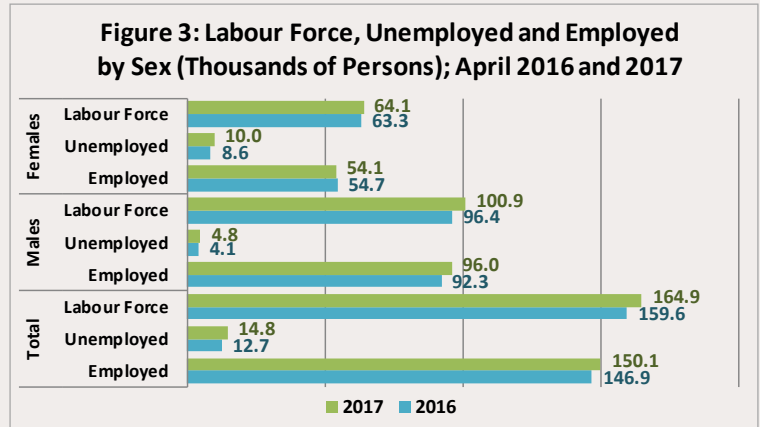


Employed: The total number of employed persons in April 2017 was estimated to be 150,112, representing a net increase of 3,194 new jobs compared to April 2016. This net gain in employment was solely due to more men being employed over this period. Women, in contrast, experienced a net loss of over 500 jobs, primarily in the rural areas of the country. Among employed persons, 18 percent worked in the

‘Wholesale and Retail Trade’ sector, 17 percent in the ‘Agriculture’ sector and 13 percent in the ‘Tourism’ industry. Males accounted for 90 percent of the country’s agricultural workers, about 60 percent of jobs in the ‘Wholesale and Retail Trade’ sector, and just over 50 percent in the ‘Tourism’ sector. All districts saw increases in the number of employed persons except for Cayo and Stann Creek, which experienced net losses of over 600 and 1,000 jobs, respectively. The Belize district had the largest gains in employment, with over 3,500 additional jobs, mostly in ‘Manufacturing’, ‘Tourism’ and ‘Agriculture’. The median monthly income for employed persons in April 2017 was \$1,113, down slightly from \$1,131 in April 2016.

Unemployed: Despite the overall gains in total jobs in April 2017, the unemployed population grew by over 2,000 persons from 12,730 in April of last year to 14,823, indicating that there were more persons entering the workforce than there were available jobs. Women entering the labour force were twice as likely to be unable to find a job, and among the newly unemployed population 1,346 were females while only 747 were males. This is particularly noteworthy, as men outnumber women in the labour force by two to one. The largest increases in jobless persons were seen in the Belize district, where the unemployed population grew by more than 1,200, and the Corozal district, which saw its unemployed population rise by over 600 persons. Cayo was the only district that experienced a decline in the number of unemployed persons. The majority of the unemployed reported that they were interested in jobs in services and sales.

Figure 3: Labour Force, Unemployed and Employed by Sex (Thousands of Persons); April 2016 and 2017



Underemployment: The total number of underemployed persons, those working less than 35 hours per week, was 25,302 in April 2017, an increase of more than 5,600 persons compared to the same period last year. This increase resulted in an underemployment rate of 16.7 percent, the highest recorded since April 2012. The underemployed were disproportionately women, with a total of 13,890 employed women falling within this category, while 11,142 men were underemployed. Youths (persons aged 14-24 years) accounted for almost one-third of the total underemployed population.

Figure 4: Employment by Industry; April 2017

