

Statistical Institute of BELIZE

1902 Constitution Drive
Belmopan, Belize C.A.



LFS

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

For the month of:
SEPTEMBER 2019

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE INCREASES TO
10.4%

Date published:
NOVEMBER 27th 2019

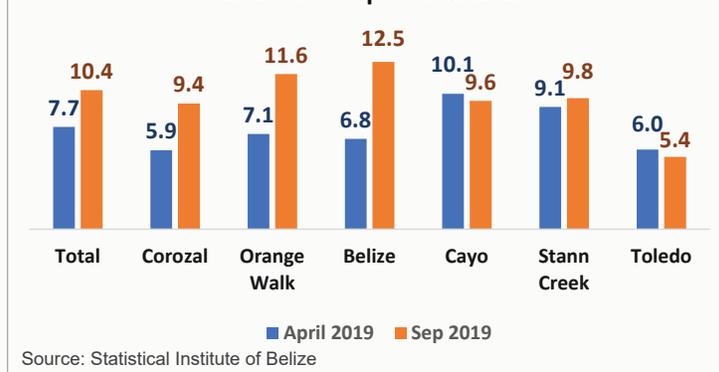
DESPITE 5,600+ NEW JOBS, UNEMPLOYMENT RATE INCREASES TO 10.4% IN SEPTEMBER 2019

Preliminary results from the September 2019 Labour Force Survey (LFS) show that the national unemployment rate grew from 7.7 percent in April 2019¹ to 10.4 percent in September 2019, despite an increase of over 5,600 new jobs over this five-month period (see Figure 1). This suggests that the country's labour force grew at a faster rate than the rate at which jobs were being created during this period.

UNEMPLOYMENT: The level of joblessness in the country increased by 2.7 percentage points to 10.4 percent between the April and September 2019 rounds of the Labour Force Survey. This was primarily due to more persons, especially women, entering the labour force than there were new jobs available. Overall, the number of unemployed persons rose by 6,191 persons, from 13,658 in April to 19,849 in September. Of these, almost three-quarters or 4,554 were females.

Following record low estimated unemployment levels in April 2019, the unemployment rate in the country's urban areas went up from 8.0 percent to 10.5 percent in September 2019, while the level of joblessness in rural areas increased from 7.4 percent to 10.3 percent. Between the sexes, males experienced an increase in unemployment from 5.2 percent in April 2019 to 6.6 percent in September of this year, while unemployment among females increased from 11.2 percent to 15.7 percent.

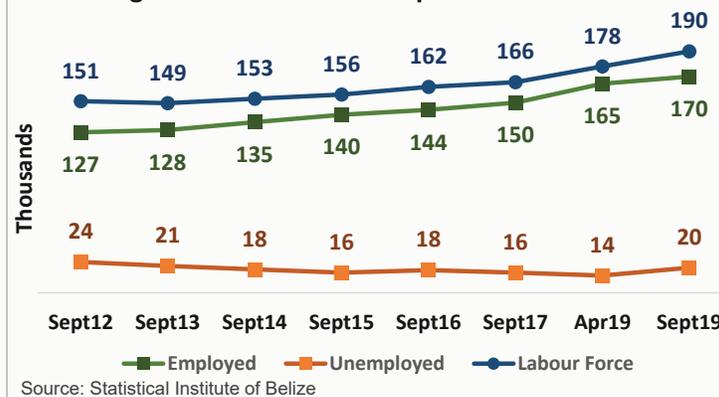
Figure 1: Unemployment Rates by District, April 2019 and September 2019



Across the districts, all except Cayo and Toledo experienced increases in the level of joblessness between the two periods. The Belize district registered the highest unemployment rate for September 2019 as well as the sharpest increase, as joblessness almost doubled from 6.8 percent to 12.5 percent (see Figure 1). In contrast, The Toledo district, where many households continue to rely on subsistence farming for a living, registered the lowest levels of unemployment for the September LFS round, with joblessness decreasing from 6.0 percent in April 2019 to 5.4 percent in September 2019.

LABOUR FORCE: As of September 2019, the national labour force was estimated at 190,307, a net increase of 11,808 persons across the country since April 2019. Most of the new entrants were females, with 8,583 joining the work force over the five-month period. As a result, women comprised about 42 percent of the labour force in September 2019, up from 40 percent in April. The largest number of new entrants, a total of 4,961, came from the Cayo district, followed by 3,490 from the Toledo district. Nonetheless, the Belize district continues to account for the largest share of persons in the labour force at 33.3 percent. In terms of educational attainment, about 44 percent of persons in the labour force had completed no more than a primary level education, while just under one-fourth had attained a secondary level education and about 17 percent had completed tertiary level studies.

Figure 2: Labour Force: September 2012-2019



¹ There was no LFS conducted in September 2018; therefore, comparison is made with the 2019 April round.

About 70 percent of the working age population, persons aged 14 and older, participated in the work force in September 2019. Labour force participation among women saw a marked increase from 53.1 percent in April to 58.9 percent in September of this year. Men continued to have higher levels of participation, as 81.4 percent of working aged males were participants in the labour force. The highest participation rates were observed among persons aged 35 to 44 years at 87.1 percent. Males in this age group were almost fully engaged in the labour force, participating at a rate of 98.9 percent, while this age group also had the highest female participation rate at 75.6 percent.

EMPLOYMENT: Approximately 170,458 persons held jobs in September 2019, which represents a net increase of 5,617 persons being employed since April 2019. Both sexes benefited from jobs created over the period, with 1,588 more men becoming employed and 4,029 more women obtaining jobs. Among the employed population, the largest share (27.6 percent) was comprised of persons who were between the ages of 25 to 34 years, closely followed by persons aged 35 to 44 years, which made up 23.2 percent of all employed persons.

Among the ten major occupation classifications, the largest gains in employment were seen in 'Services and Sales Workers' and 'Elementary Occupations', with these two categories combined accounting for a half of all jobs in the country. Most new jobs were found in the Cayo district, particularly in the 'Wholesale and Retail Trade' and 'Tourism' industries. These two industries also contributed the largest numbers to total employment within the country, with 18.3 percent of all jobs being in 'Wholesale and Retail Trade' and 17.2 percent being provided by the 'Tourism' industry (see Figure 3).

Paid employees accounted for 62 percent of all employed persons in September of 2019, down from 67 percent in April, while the shares comprised of self-employed and unpaid family workers both increased (Table 1). This indicates that a significant number of persons in the labour force have created employment for themselves in areas such as 'Services and Sales', 'Elementary Occupations', and 'Agricultural and Related Activities' by opening their own businesses.

The median monthly income for September 2019 was \$1,134, a decrease of \$110 since April 2019, as there were fewer jobs in the higher paid categories such as 'Managers' and 'Professionals', and more jobs created in the 'Skilled Agriculture Workers' and 'Elementary occupations' categories. The highest paid jobs were observed in the 'Government Services' industry, which provides jobs to 9.4 percent of all employed persons and had a median income of \$1,681 monthly.

UNDEREMPLOYED: The total number of underemployed persons, those usually working less than 35 hours per week, was 38,769 in September 2019, a sharp increase of more than 13,000 persons since April 2019. The most significant increases in underemployment were seen among females with jobs in 'Services and Sales', 'Elementary Occupations', and 'Agriculture Workers'. Females continued to be twice as likely to be working less than full time hours, with 33 percent of working women classified as underemployed, compared to 16 percent among their male counterparts. Across the districts, Toledo showed the highest levels of underemployment at 36.7 percent of the employed population, while Stann Creek district registered the lowest at 13.8 percent. In September 2019, underemployed persons worked an average of 17 hours weekly and had a median monthly income of \$620.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of employed persons by category of worker, April - September 2019

Category of worker	April 2019			September 2019		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Paid employee	66.9%	67.0%	67.0%	64.1%	58.7%	62.0%
Self-employed	30.0%	26.6%	28.7%	30.6%	32.4%	31.3%
Unpaid family worker	3.1%	6.4%	4.4%	5.1%	8.7%	6.6%

Figure 3: Employed by Main Industry: April 2019 - September 2019

