

Migration in Belize:

A Snapshot From 2010 Census Data



Introduction

The following summary report aims to analyze and measure migration data from the 2010 population and housing census. This product is part of the Integrated Responses on Migration from Central America (IRM) program, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The development of a complete report by an external consultant in coordination with the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) was supported within the IRM program.

Objectives

To analyze migration data from the 2010 Population and Housing Census in order to provide recommendations for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluations.

Methodology

To assess the pattern of migration in Belize, five dimensions were considered in order to quantify and qualify both the flow and the stock of migrants.

a

Spatial distribution pattern (SDP). Both quantitative and qualitative explanations will be considered for the assessment.

b

Socio-demographic structure from an international level (SDIN). The quantitative, qualitative data and statistical representation will assist to understand the socio demographic patterns of international migrants.

c

Socio-demographic structure from an individual level (SDI). The quantitative, qualitative data and statistical representation will assist to understand the socio demographic patterns of individual migrants.

d

Socio-demographic structure from a household level (SDH). The quantitative, qualitative data and statistical representation will assist to understand the socio demographic migrants' patterns from a household perspective.

e

Economic activity from a household level (EAH). The quantitative, qualitative data and statistical representation will assist to understand the economic activity of migrants from a household perspective.

Foreign Born Population Living in Belize

49,819
foreign-born persons
living in Belize
(2010)



50.2%
25,024 female



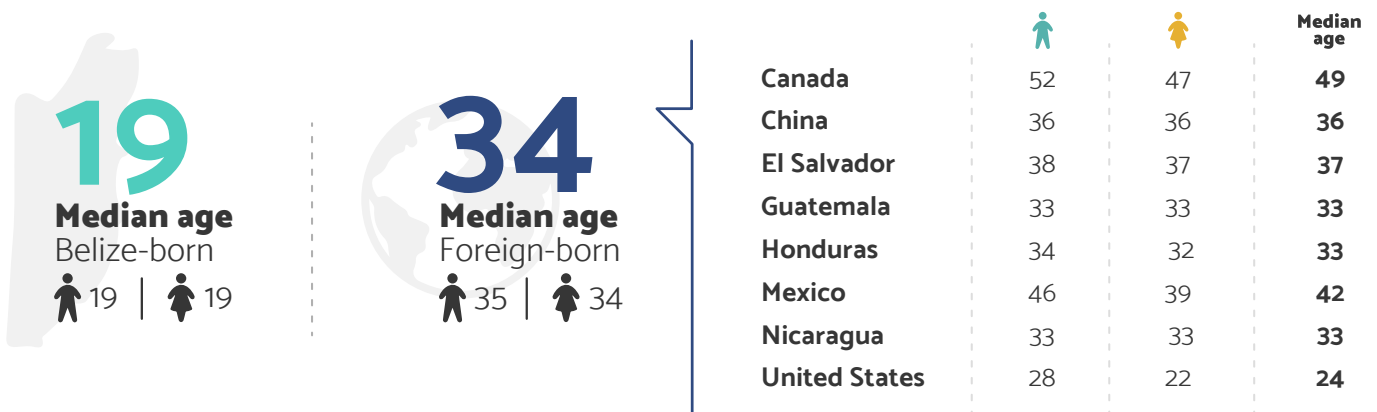
49.8%
24,795 male

Median Age

The median age of persons within the foreign-born population was 34, almost twice that of Belize-born persons, who had a median age of just 19. Moreover, persons born in Canada had a noticeably higher median age of 49, as did those born in Mexico, with a median age of 42. Notably, for persons born in both countries, the median age among males was much higher than among females. In contrast, persons born in the United States tended to be younger, having a median age of 24, although among this group the median age for males was also considerably higher than that for females. Foreign-born persons from other countries had median ages that were much closer to that of the Belize-born population, and also did not have a large age disparity between males and females (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Median age of foreign-born population vs Belize-born population by sex and country of birth, 2010.



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Foreign-Born as a Percentage of Total Population

In 2010, the total population of the country of Belize was 322,424 persons (see Table 1). Of these, 49,819 persons reported that their country of birth was not Belize, which represents 15.5 percent of the total population. This indicator was up slightly from the 2000 Census (14.7 percent), and from the 1991 Census (13.8 percent).

Table 1

Percent share of foreign-born to total population census 1980, 1991, 2000 and 2010.

	1980	1991	2000	2010
Total foreign-born population	12,940	25,745	36,642	49,819
Total population	14,4850	185,969	248,916	322,424
Percent of total population	8.9%	13.8%	14.7%	15.5%
Intercensal Belize-born population growth rate		28.4%	33.8%	29.5%
Intercensal foreign-born population growth rate		99.0%	42.3%	36.0%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 1980, 1991, 2000, 2010.

Geographic Distribution

More than 50 percent of all foreign-born persons were living in Belize or Cayo, at the time of the 2010 Census (see Table 2). The Cayo district accounted for the largest proportion of the foreign-born population, with almost one-third or 31 percent residing in that district. In contrast, among the Belize-born population, the largest proportion, or 30 percent, was living in the Belize district. The Corozal district had the smallest number of foreign-born persons (8 percent), while Toledo was the district with the smallest number of Belize-born persons (9 percent). The geographic distribution of foreign-born persons between urban and rural areas was virtually the same as Belize-born persons, with just over 45 percent living in urban communities and almost 55 percent living in rural areas.

Figure 2

Population distribution across districts.



Table 2
Population by district and place of birth, 2010.

	Belize-born		Foreign-born		Total
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Per district
Corozal	36,885	90.0%	4,090	9.9%	40,975
Orange Walk	40,462	88.1%	5,463	11.9%	45,925
Belize	82,362	86.5%	12,822	13.4%	95,184
Cayo	59,516	79.3%	15,491	20.6%	75,007
Stann Creek	27,691	80.7%	6,597	19.2%	34,288
Toledo	25,413	82.5%	5,357	17.4%	30,770
Total	272,328	84.5%	49,819	15.4%	322,147

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Country of Birth

The vast majority of the 49,819 foreign-born persons living in the country in 2010 were from the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Guatemala accounted for the greatest proportion, with 20,181 or 40.5 percent of the foreign-born population, while El Salvador and Honduras each accounted for a little more than 7,500 persons or just over 15 percent.

Table 3
Total foreign-born by country of birth, 2010.

	Male	Female	Total
Guatemala	9,607	10,574	20,181
El Salvador	3,780	3,802	7,582
Honduras	3,601	3,916	7,517
United States	1,920	1,654	3,574
Mexico	1,523	1,503	3,026
China	989	764	1,753
Canada	349	366	714
Nicaragua	313	341	654
Others	2,712	2,105	4,817
Total	24,795	25,024	49,819

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Cayo and Belize districts rank as first and second most important destinations for Guatemalan and Salvadoran population (see table 4). In the case of Honduras nationals, Belize and Stann Creek districts stand out as first and second most common destinations. Conversely, Mexican born persons tend to settle in the northern Corozal district, followed by neighboring Orange Walk.

Table 4
Foreign-born persons by country of birth and district, 2010.

	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stan Creek	Toledo	Total
Guatemala	1,053	2,148	2,551	8,114	2,731	3,583	20,181
El Salvador	615	1,006	2,036	3,107	501	316	7,582
Honduras	282	466	2,675	1,053	2,123	918	7,517
United States	320	167	1,449	910	514	215	3,574
Mexico	1,106	983	394	466	34	43	3,026
China	182	146	825	306	228	66	1,753
Canada	102	78	168	274	61	31	714
Nicaragua	41	78	397	75	48	15	654
Others	388	390	2,327	1,187	357	169	4,817
Total	4,090	5,463	12,822	15,491	6,597	5,357	49,819

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Reasons for Migrating and Year Last Came to Belize

About half of all persons who had migrated to Belize did so for reasons of either employment (13,063 or 26 percent) or to reunite with family that were already living in the country (12,225 or 24 percent). Just over 15 percent or 7,774 had come to the country as dependents of other persons who were also migrating. A total of 3,005 or 6 percent of foreign-born persons reported that they had migrated for reasons of personal safety or because of high crime rates in their countries of origin.

Figure 3
Total foreign-born population by reason for migrating, 2010.



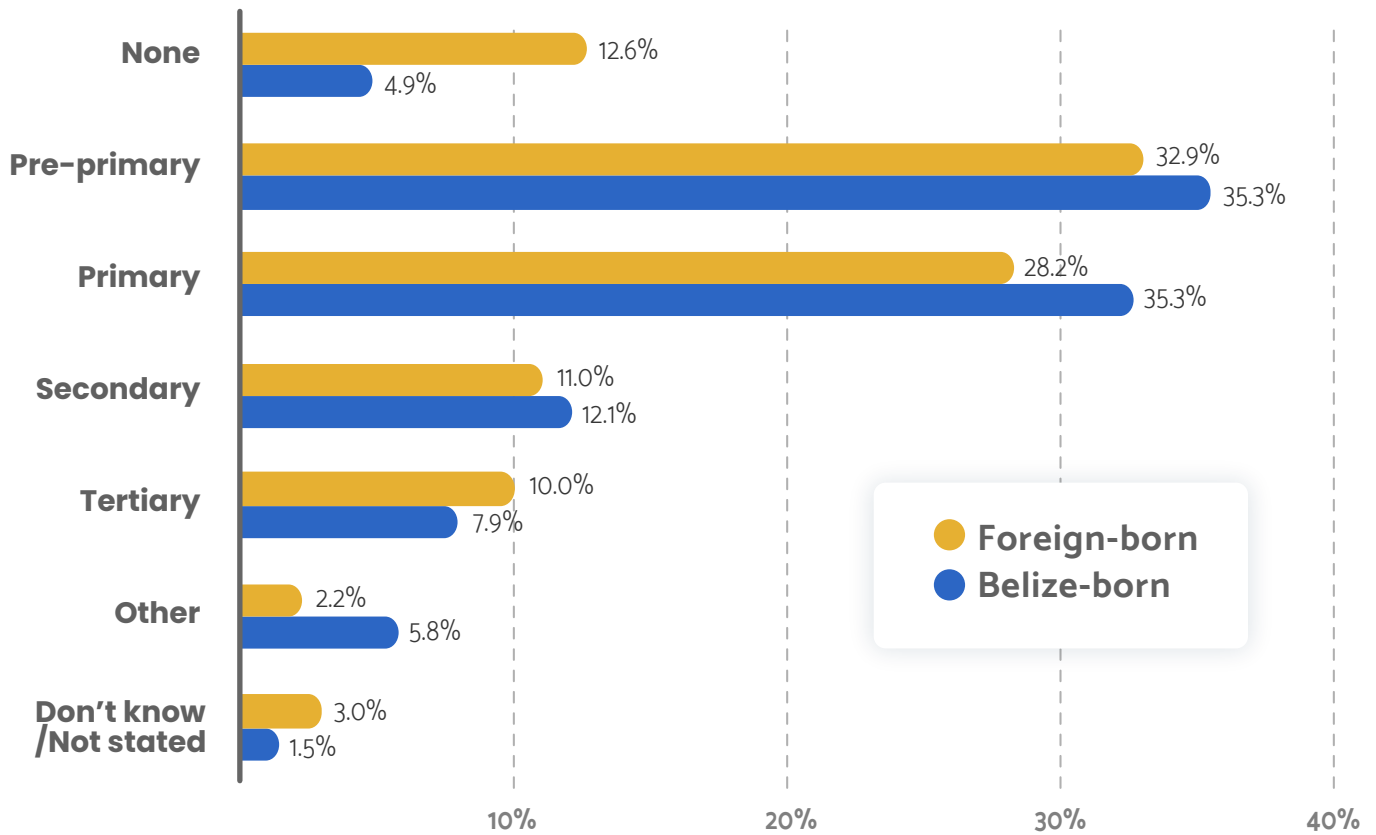
Study (1.6%), Retirement (1.4%), Crime Rate (1.2%), Deported/Involuntary return (0.2%), Medical (0.1%), Other (6.2%), Don't Know/Not stated (6.2%).

Education

Among the foreign-born population a total of 6,247 persons or 12.6 percent reported that they had not completed any level of education. Among the Belize-born population, a significantly lower 4.9 percent or 12,506 persons had not completed any level of education. In general, the foreign-born population reported lower levels of educational attainment than did the Belize-born population, as depicted in figure 4.

Figure 4

Percent of foreign-born and Belize-born population by highest level of education completed, 2010.



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Labour Force Status

Of the 49,819 foreign-born persons living in the country at the time of the 2010 Census, a total of 30,091 were actively participating in the country's labour force. Almost half of foreign-born persons were working, with some 24,773 classified as employed, while 5,318 were unemployed.

Table 5

Total persons by labour force status and place of origin, 2010.

	Number of foreign born persons	Number of Belize born persons
Under 14	5,326 (10.6%)	102,135 (37.5%)
Labour force	30,091 (60.4%)	109,480 (40.2%)
L Employed	L 24,773 (49.7%)	L 82,567 (30.3%)
L Unemployed	L 5,318 (10.6%)	L 26,913 (9.9%)
Persons not in labor force	13,183 (26.4%)	56,605 (20.8%)
Don't know/Not stated	1,218 (2.4%)	4,108 (1.5%)
Total	49,819	272,328

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Category of Worker, Industry, and Occupation

About one-third of the employed foreign-born population reported that they owned their business, whether without hired help (5,603 persons or 22 percent) or with hired help (2,683 or 10 percent). More than a half (14,371 persons or 58 percent) were working in paid employment within the private sector or with a non-government organization. Some 830 persons or 3 percent were employed by the government, while 766 persons or 3 percent were employed by an international organization or embassy.

Table 6

Total employed foreign-born persons by category of worker, 2010.

	Foreign born		Belize born	
Own business/self-employed with paid help	2,683	10.8%	5,753	6.97%
Own business/self-employed without paid help	5,603	22.6%	12,340	14.94%
Paid employee - Government	830	3.4%	11,659	14.12%
Paid employee - Quasi Government	256	1.0%	2,858	3.46%
Paid employee - Private/NGO	14,371	58.0%	4,7132	57.07%
Paid employee - International Organization/Embassy	766	3.1%	2,085	2.52%
Unpaid family worker	150	0.6%	438	0.53%
Don't know/Not stated	114	0.5%	321	0.39%
Total	24,773	100.0%	82,586	100.0%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Median Income

Foreign-born employed persons had a median monthly income of \$780 Belizean dollars, considerably lower than that of employed native-born persons, who had a median monthly income of \$900. It should be noted, however, that across the various education levels, there were little to no differences observed in the incomes of Belize-born and foreign-born employed persons. This would suggest that income differences are caused by distinct educational levels. Among both Belize-born and foreign-born employed persons, the median income for those who had not completed any level of education or who had completed only up to the pre-primary level was \$660 per month. Similarly, regardless of place of birth, employed persons who had completed secondary school had a median monthly income of \$1,020, while those who had completed up to a tertiary level of schooling had a median income of \$1,740.

Table 7
Median income by education and place of birth, 2010 (\$BZ).

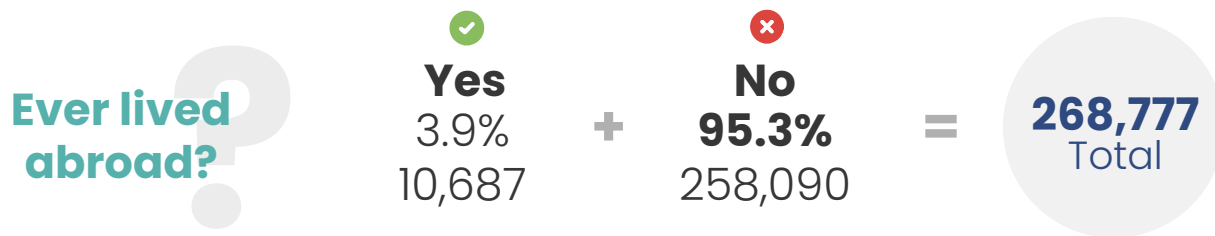
	Belize-born	Foreign-born	Median income
None	\$660	\$660	\$660
Pre-Primary	\$660	\$660	\$660
Primary	\$780	\$780	\$780
Secondary	\$1,020	\$1,020	\$1,020
Tertiary	\$1,740	\$1,740	\$1,740
Other	\$1,380	\$900	\$1,140
Don't Know/Not stated	\$900	\$660	\$780
Median income	\$900	\$780	\$900

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

Belize Born Population: Previous Migration Experience

Migration experience from Belize-born population is less abundant within the census and employs self-reported information of people who already returned to Belize. In terms of international migration, almost 4 percent of Belize-born population have lived abroad. This is a relatively low amount of people, particularly if compared with other Central American countries.

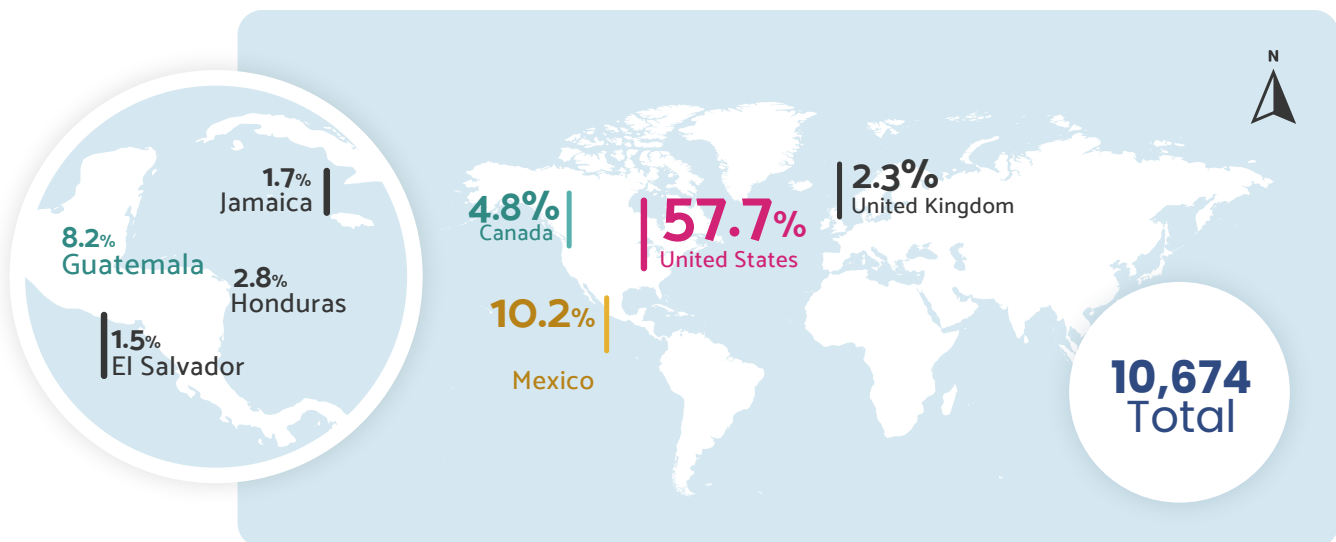
Figure 5
Belize-born population who ever lived abroad.



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.

As per Figure 6, more than half resided in the United States. Moreover, Mexico, Guatemala and Canada were common host countries. Within the Central American region, El Salvador and Honduras were also home of important groups of Belize-born persons. This depicts important outbound and inbound migration flows between Belize and Central American countries.

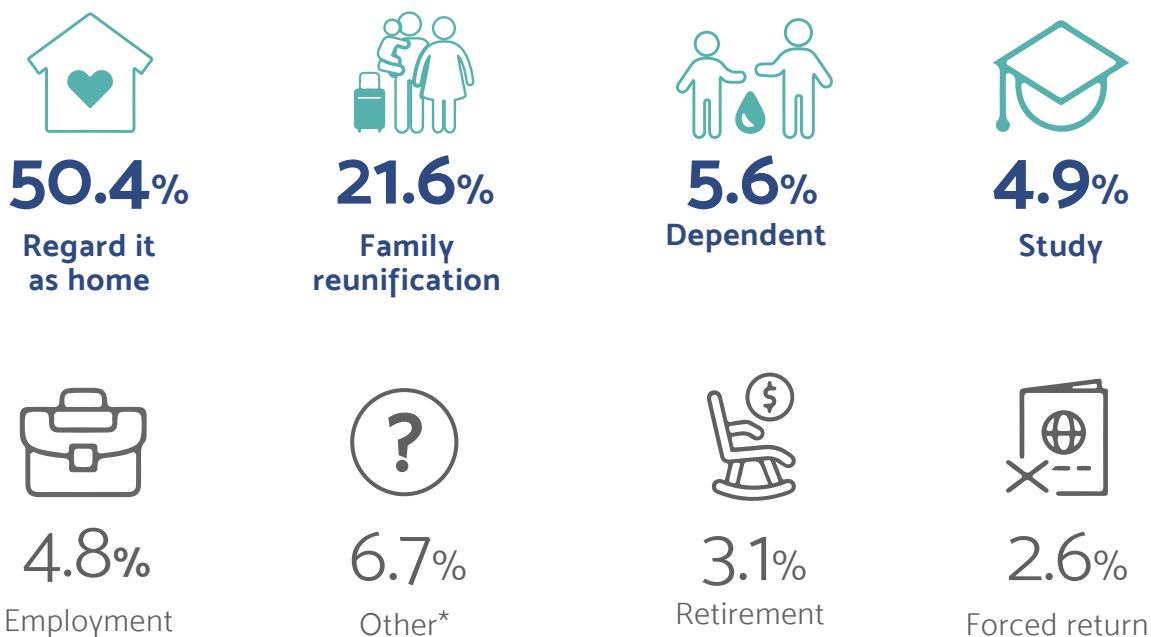
Figure 6
Country where you last lived (Belize-born population). Valid cases only.



Lastly, Belize-born persons returned to this country mainly because it was regarded as home. This may depict rootedness plays a key role in return migration. Closely related, family reunification was cited as the second reason for returning, accounting for 21 percent of the cases. Other motives include employment, studies and retirement. Noticeably, 2.6 percent of the total were forcibly returned to Belize.

Figure 7

Main reason for returning to Belize (Belize born population). Valid cases only.



*Other includes: Business (1.3%), Personal safety (0.9%), Medical (0.8%), Crime rate (0.1%).

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Population and Housing Census 2010.


Final Remarks

Foreign-born persons, totaling 49,819 at the time of the 2010 Population and Housing Census, comprised a significant 15.5 percent of the country's total population. The majority of these persons were originally from one country of Central American neighbors, with Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras accounting for a combined 70.8 percent of all foreign-born persons living in Belize in 2010. Most had come to the country to work or to reunite with family members who were already in Belize, although a fairly large number had also come as dependents of other persons who were migrating.

About a half of all foreign-born persons were employed at the time of the 2010 Census, with employed foreign-born persons being highly concentrated in the agriculture sector, as well as in wholesale and retail trade and community, social and personal services. About one-third of employed foreign-born persons were self-employed, owning their own businesses.

For Belize nationals, migration experience is less common as only around 4 percent of the population has resided abroad. The United States was by far the most frequent destination followed by Mexico. Belize nationals mainly returned as they regard Belize as home, something which relates to rootedness.



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This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the International Organization of Migration and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Suggested Citation. International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020. Migration in Belize: A Snapshot From 2010 Census Data. San Salvador, IOM.