



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT 9.2% IN SEPTEMBER 2021

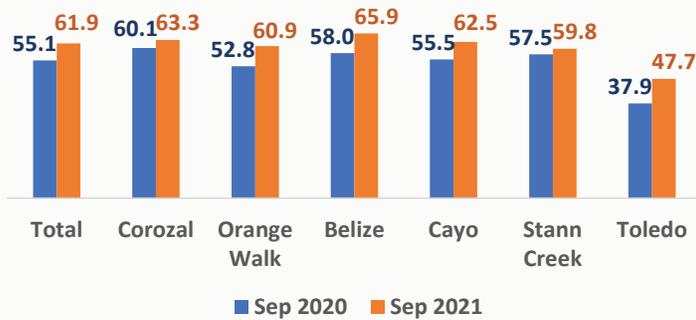
Preliminary results from the Statistical Institute of Belize's September 2021 Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that the national unemployment rate declined from 13.7 percent in September 2020 to 9.2 percent in September 2021, as major industries such as 'Tourism', gradually recover from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were an estimated 28,782 more persons employed in September 2021 when compared to the same month last year, with the most notable gains in employment being seen for jobs in tourism, wholesale and retail trade, and call centers.

LABOUR FORCE:

As of September 2021, the labour force, which consists of employed and unemployed persons, was estimated at 191,881, representing a net increase of 13.8 percent or 23,251 persons since September 2020. Almost two-thirds (62.4 percent) of the new entrants to the labour force were from the Belize and Cayo districts, and the majority (60 percent) were males.

An estimated 62 percent of the working-age population, persons aged 14 years and older, participated in the labour force in September 2021, a significant increase of 6.8 percentage points since September 2020. This change can be largely attributed to persons re-joining the labour force after dropping out last year due to the pandemic. About 48 percent of working-aged women participated in the labour force in September 2021, up from 42.4 percent in September of last year. The participation rate for males also rose from 68.7 percent in September 2020 to 76.1 percent a year later. Across age groups, persons between 25 to 44 years had the highest participation rate of 77.1 percent in September 2021. The Belize district registered the highest labour force participation rate at 65.9 percent in September 2021, while the lowest was recorded in Toledo at 47.7 percent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Labour Force Participation Rates by District, September 2020 and 2021



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2021

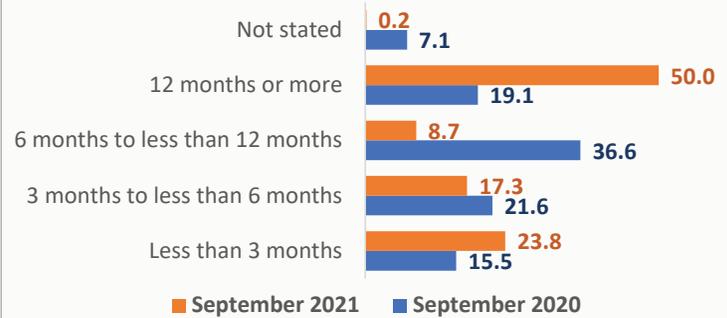
Persons with a tertiary level education had the highest participation rate, with about 4 out of 5 persons within this group being a part of the labour force. Among married men, 79.1 participated in the labour force, compared to 44.4 percent of married women.

UNEMPLOYED:

There was an estimated 17,644 unemployed persons in September 2021, a net decrease of 5,531 persons since September of last year. The unemployment rate stood at 9.2 percent for September 2021, a year-on-year decrease of 4.5 percentage points. This decline was primarily due to persons re-joining the labour force and finding jobs since last September. There was a notable increase in the number of males finding jobs, resulting in a corresponding fall in the unemployment rate among males from 11.6 percent in September 2020 to 6.7 percent in September 2021 (see Figure 3). Although the rate of unemployment also decreased for females, from 17 percent in September 2020 to 13 percent in September 2021, this was still almost double the rate of joblessness than among their male counterparts.

Half of all unemployed persons in September 2021 reported that they had been jobless for at least a year, a significant increase when compared to September 2020, when 19.1 percent of unemployed persons reported that they had been without a job for a year or more (see Figure 2). This suggests that many persons who lost their jobs in 2020 were still looking for work more than a year later. As was the case in September 2020, the most common reason for being unemployed was related to COVID-19. However, the share of unemployed persons who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic decreased drastically, from 61.1 percent in September 2020 to 37.9 percent in September 2021.

Figure 2: Duration of Unemployment (Percentage Share), September 2020 and 2021



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2021

Youths (14 to 24 years) continued to experience the highest rate of unemployment at 18.6 percent, although this was down from the 23.0 percent seen a year ago. Across the districts, Toledo had the highest unemployment rate at 14.6 percent, followed by Cayo at 11.4 percent. Compared to September of last year, unemployment rates decreased in all districts except for Toledo, where a notable increase in unemployment was observed among young females aged 14 to 24. This subgroup alone represented a third of all unemployed persons in this district. In September 2020, the Belize district registered the highest unemployment rate at 15.1 percent; however, in September 2021, the unemployment rate fell by more than a half to 6.5 percent in this district. This was primarily due to gains in employment in 'Tourism', 'Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities' such as call centers, and 'Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repairs'. The Orange Walk district once again experienced the lowest unemployment rate in September 2021 at 6.4 percent. Most of the employment gains for this district were in 'Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repairs' and 'Agriculture and Related Activities'.

Figure 3: Unemployment Rates by Sex and District, September 2020 and 2021

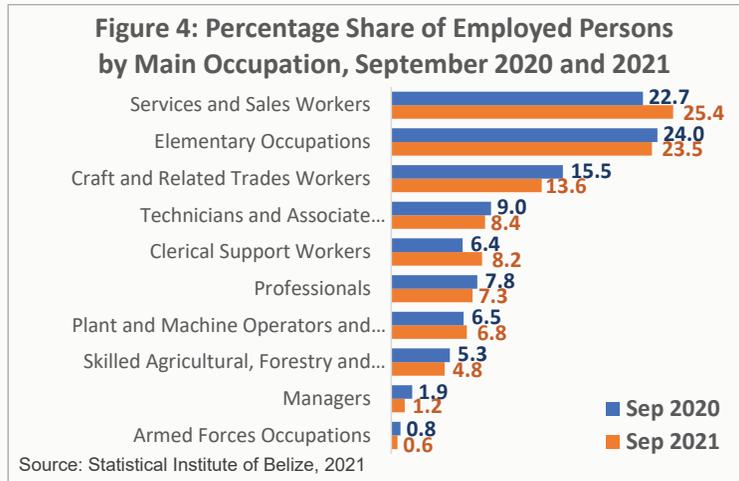


Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2021

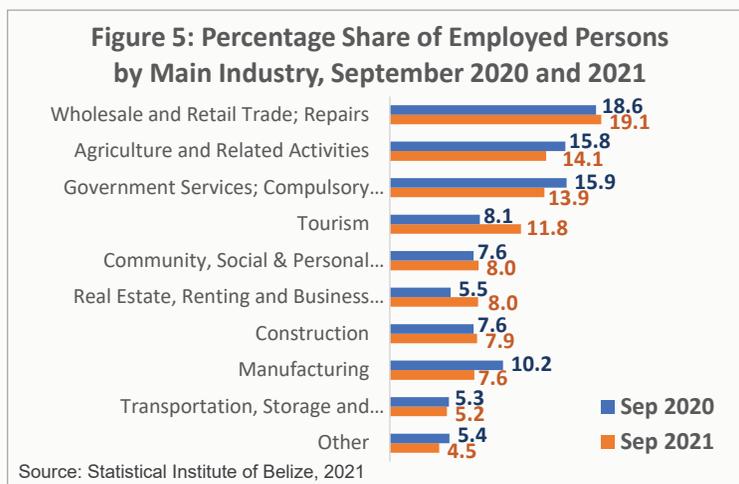
EMPLOYED:

In September 2021, the employed population was estimated at 174,237 persons, a net increase of 17,948 more males and 10,834 more females compared to September 2020. Overall, males continued to dominate the labour market, with about 62 percent of all jobs being held by men. Among the major occupations, about half of all employed persons worked in 'Services and Sales' or 'Elementary Occupations' (see Figure 4). Across the 14 major industries, most employed persons were found in the 'Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repairs' (19.1 percent), 'Agriculture and Related Activities' (14.1 percent), and 'Government Services' (13.9 percent) as shown in Figure 5 below.

All districts experienced increases in employment with the most significant gains observed in the Belize district, where over 13,000 more persons were employed in September 2021 compared to September 2020. Across the country, there were about 8,800 more persons working in the 'Tourism' industry in September of this year compared to September last year.



On average, employed persons worked about 38.8 hours per week, which was 2.6 hours more than the usual hours worked in September 2020. The average monthly income remained unchanged at \$1,168.



The number of persons in informal employment was estimated at 72,433 in September 2021. The share of the informally employed as a percentage of all employed persons remained relatively unchanged at 41.6 percent, despite a net increase of 11,600 persons. Persons in informal employment earned about \$839 per month, \$84 more than in September 2020.

The underemployed population was estimated at 32,945 in September 2021, which was 1,362 persons less than in September 2020. The underemployment rate also went down from 23.6 percent in September 2020 to 18.9 percent in September this year. Across the districts, the rate of underemployment dropped in all districts except for Toledo, where there was a net increase of 1,043 underemployed persons. This district also registered the highest underemployment rate at 29.2 percent. Underemployed persons earned an average of \$774 per month, which was \$394 less than the national average monthly income.

POTENTIAL LABOUR FORCE:

In September 2021, an estimated 118,161 persons or 38.1 percent of the working-age population were classified as being outside the labour force. About 18 percent of this subgroup, or 21,737 persons, formed the potential labour force. These were persons who were either (a) looking for a job but not available or were (b) available but not looking for a job. About 95 percent of persons in the potential labour force reported that they were available to work but were not actively looking for a job. Compared to September 2020, the size of the potential labour force declined, likely as a result of persons transitioning into the labour force. The main reason women did not look for work was due to personal or family responsibilities, while males did not look for work mainly due to being in school or training.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LABOUR FORCE:

An estimated 11,834 persons reported that they had been without a job since March 2020 due to layoffs or businesses closing down as a result of COVID-19. This number was down considerably from the 34,381 persons reported in September 2020. The 'Tourism' industry continues to be the most affected, with a third of those persons who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic stating that they previously worked in this industry. Females, although making up only a third of the total labour force, were disproportionately affected, accounting for 63.3 percent of persons that lost their job due to COVID-19. Just over half (52 percent) of persons that lost their job due to the pandemic were aged 14 to 34, while 54.7 percent of affected persons were from the Belize and Cayo districts.

ANNEX

- **Labour force** - comprised of employed and unemployed persons.
- **Labour force participation rate** - the proportion of the working-age population that are either employed or unemployed.
- **Unemployed** - persons who are not working but available and looking for work.
- **Employed** - persons who worked for pay or profit for at least one hour in the reference week or had a job but were not at work during the reference week.
- **Informal employment** - employed persons who do not contribute to social security or are not registered with the Companies Registry.
- **Underemployed** - persons who work less than 35 hours per week and are wanting and available to work additional hours.
- **Potential labour force** - persons not in the labour force who may be seeking employment but are not available to work, and those who are not actively seeking employment but are available to work or start a business if the opportunity arises.