

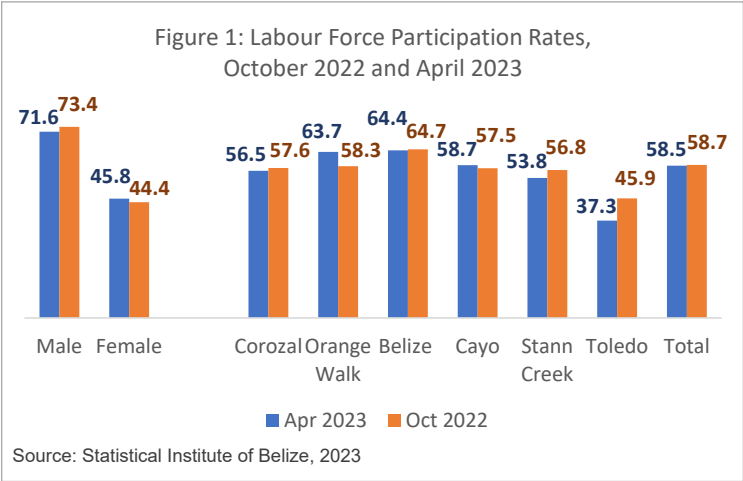


UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT 2.8% IN APRIL 2023; OVER 7,900 MORE PERSONS EMPLOYED

Preliminary results from the Statistical Institute of Belize’s most recent round of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that, in April of 2023, the unemployment rate stood at 2.8 percent, down from 5 percent in October of 2022. This is the lowest level of unemployment recorded in the country to date and was the result of both more persons finding jobs, as well as persons exiting the labour force. Gains in employment were seen primarily in ‘Community, Social & Personal Services; Extra Territorial Organisations & Bodies’, ‘Tourism’ and ‘Manufacturing’.

LABOUR FORCE AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION:

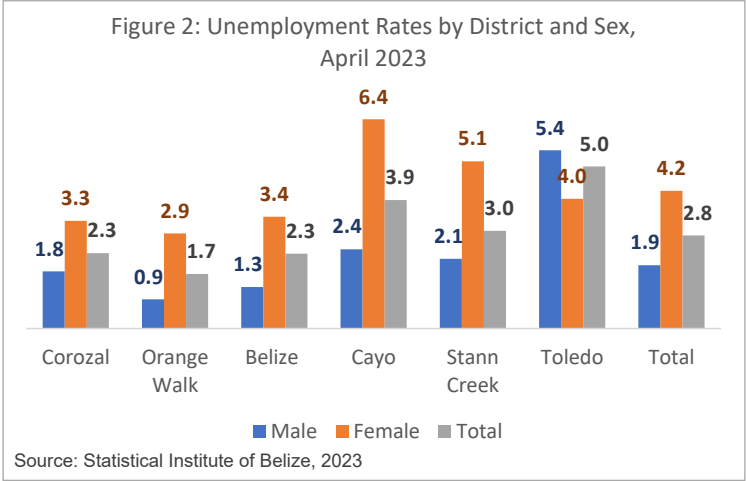
The labour force was estimated to be 195,596 persons, with males representing 60.1 percent of this total. The labour force participation rate was 58.5 percent, a slight decline from 58.7 percent in October 2022, due to some persons exiting the labour force. Females continue to participate in the labour force at a much lower rate (45.8 percent) than males (71.6 percent). Furthermore, participation among married women was even lower at 41.6 percent, compared to 77.1 percent for married men. Among women, the main reason for not participating in the workforce was due to domestic duties or caring for a child or elderly person. Persons with a tertiary level education had the highest participation rate at 76.2 percent, compared to those who did not complete any level of education at 47.7 percent. The Belize district had the highest rate of labour force participation at 64.4 percent, while the Toledo district had the lowest at 37.3 percent (see Figure 1).



UNEMPLOYED:

There were an estimated 5,559 persons who were classified as unemployed in April 2023, representing 2.8 percent of the national labour force. The female unemployment rate was 4.2 percent, more than double that of the males, which stood at 1.9 percent. While the rate of unemployment remained low, persons who were unemployed were found to remain without jobs for an extended period of time, with 40.8 percent of the unemployed population reporting that they had been without work for a year or more.

Across the districts, Toledo registered the highest level of joblessness at 5.0 percent while the Orange Walk district recorded the lowest level of unemployment at 1.7 percent, primarily due to gains in employment in the agriculture sector (see Figure 2). Persons with a tertiary level education experienced the lowest levels of unemployment at 1.1 percent. Those with only a primary or secondary level education registered considerably higher unemployment rates of 3.4 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively. Unemployment among persons aged 14 to 24 declined from 11.8 percent in October 2022 to 6.9 percent in April 2023, as many youths exited the labour force due to school or other training activities.



EMPLOYED:

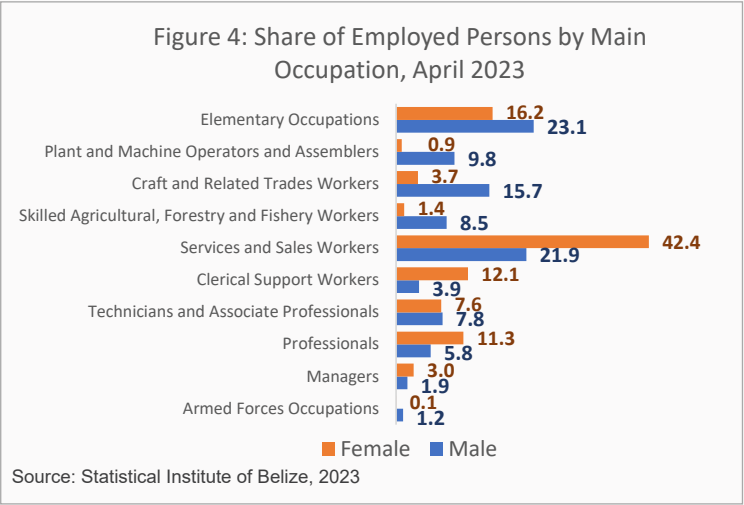
There were an estimated 190,037 employed persons in April 2023, of which more than half, were working in ‘Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repairs’ (16.1 percent), Community, Social & Personal Services; Extra Territorial Organisations & Bodies’ (14.1 percent), ‘Tourism’ (13.3 percent), and ‘Agriculture and Related Activities’ (11.5 percent) (see Figure 3). At the district level, ‘Tourism’ accounted for the largest gains in employment in the Belize district, while ‘Construction’ had the highest gains in the Stann Creek district. Both northern districts showed growth in the number of jobs in ‘Agriculture and Related Activities’.

Almost one-third of all employed persons worked in the ‘Services and Sales Workers’ category. Males accounted for the larger share of employed persons across most occupational categories except for ‘Services and Sales Workers’, ‘Clerical Support’ and ‘Professionals’ (see Figure 4). Approximately 1 out of every 5 employed persons was self-employed without hired help. Persons in informal employment accounted for 37.2 percent or 70,738 of the employed population, up from 35.3 percent in October 2022.



Employed persons worked an average of 41.5 hours per week, slightly down from 43.0 hours in October 2022. Notably, however, the average monthly income in April 2023 was \$1,358, virtually unchanged from October 2022, when average monthly income was estimated at \$1,357. As seen in previous rounds, the highest income earners were ‘Managers’ and ‘Professionals’ who earned an average of \$2,393 and \$2,232 per month, respectively.

Among the employed population, an estimated 6.5 percent or 12,441 persons were classified as underemployed. Underemployment levels were slightly higher for females (7.6 percent) than for males (5.9 percent). The Toledo district registered the highest level of underemployment at 15.0 percent, while the Cayo district recorded the lowest at 1.8 percent. In general, persons engaged in ‘Elementary occupations’ and ‘Services and Sales Workers’ were more likely to be underemployed compared to other occupations. Underemployed persons earned just over half of the national average, at \$752 monthly, and worked an average of 14.3 hours per week.



## PERSONS OUTSIDE THE LABOUR FORCE: POTENTIAL LABOUR FORCE:

An estimated 41.5 percent or 138,955 of working-age persons were classified as neither employed nor unemployed in April 2023. Within this group, 10,158 persons, or 7.3 percent, were classified as being part of the potential labour force, which is comprised of persons who were either (a) looking for a job but not available or were (b) available but not looking for a job. Almost all persons in the potential labour force (98 percent) fell into the latter category. Among those with a job interest who did not actively seeking work, particularly among women, the main barrier preventing them from looking for a job was due to personal or family responsibilities, such as taking care of children or family members or doing home duties. Discouraged jobseekers were another subgroup that were available to work but were not seeking a job. These persons reported that they were not actively seeking employment due to the belief that there was no suitable work available, lack of resources, inability to meet potential employers’ stated requirements, being tired of looking, or being unaware of where to look for employment.