



LFS

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

STATISTICAL INSTITUTE OF BELIZE

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AT 1.9% IN APRIL 2026

Preliminary results from the Statistical Institute of Belize's most recent Labour Force Survey (LFS) indicate that the unemployment rate in April 2026 was 1.9 percent, down from 2.1 percent in April 2025. The decline was largely attributable to lower labour force participation among working-age persons, particularly women. Compared to April 2025, the labour force decreased by 13,313 persons to 170,056. Employment also declined by 12,611 persons to 166,894 while the number of unemployed persons fell by 702 to 3,162.

Labour Force and Labour Force Participation:

In April 2026, the total labour force was estimated at 170,056 persons, with males accounting for nearly three-fifths of this total. The labour force participation rate¹ stood at 53.6 percent, a decrease of 5.5 percentage points from 59.1 percent in April 2025 (see Figure 1). Gender disparities with respect to participation remained pronounced, with only 39.8 percent of working-age females participating in the labour force, compared to 68.3 percent of working-age males. This gap highlights the continued presence of barriers to female participation, with domestic duties or family care cited as the most common reasons for not being available for work.

Youth (ages 14 to 24) participation in the labour force stood at 37.4 percent in April 2026. Gender differences were also evident within this age group, as just over one-quarter (27.1 percent) of young females participated in the work force compared to 47.5 percent of young males. Among adults (ages 25 and older), participation rates were considerably higher for males, with three-quarters (74.7 percent) participating in the labour force, compared to 43.3 percent of females (see Figure 1).

Labour force participation also varied by educational attainment. Persons who had completed tertiary education experienced the highest participation levels at 68.2 percent, contrasting sharply with those having only a primary education, who recorded participation levels of 45.7 percent.

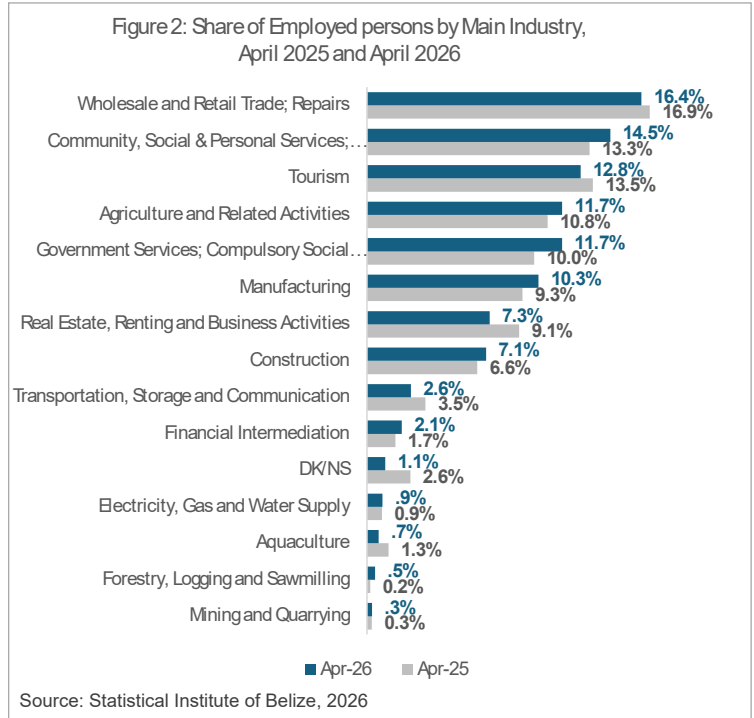
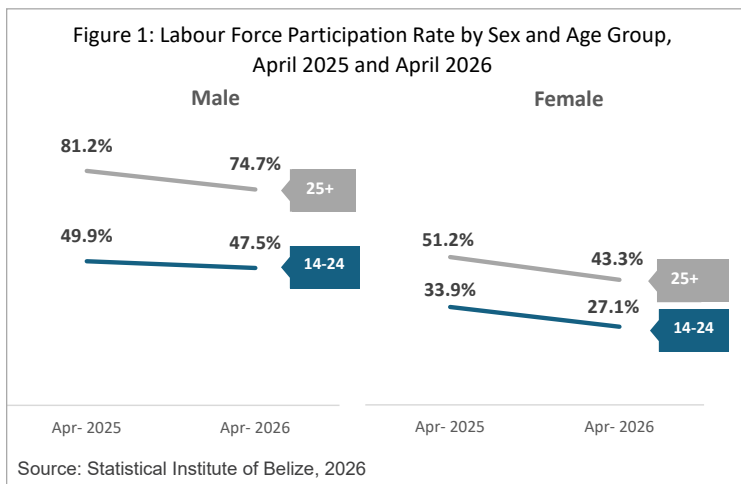
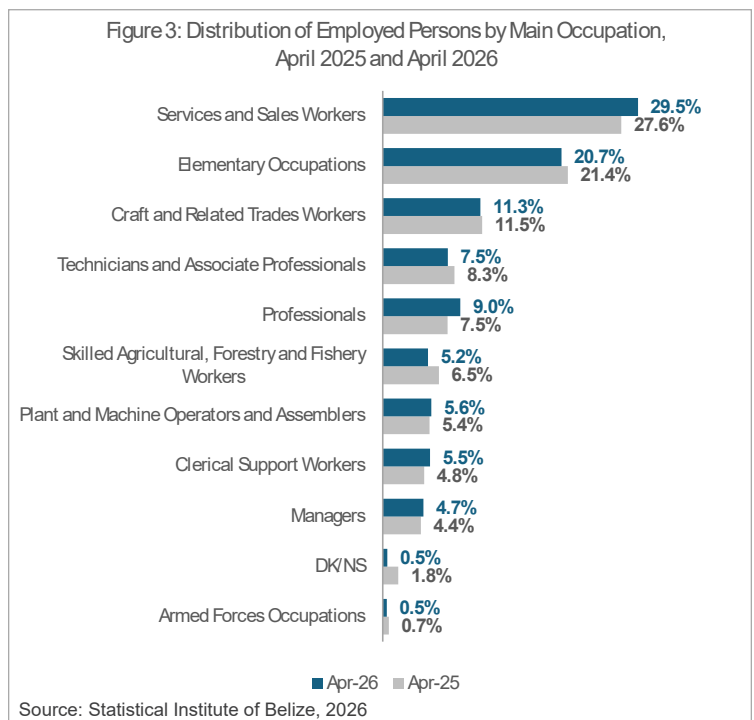


Figure 3 illustrates that, in April 2026, one-half of all employed persons was concentrated in two major occupational groups, namely 'Services and Sales Workers' (29.5 percent) and 'Elementary Occupations' (20.7 percent). Compared to April 2025, the most notable increase in employment share was recorded among 'Service and Sales Workers', which rose by 1.9 percentage points. In contrast, the greatest decline was observed among 'Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers', whose share fell from 6.5 percent to 5.2 percent over the same period.



Employed:

In April 2026, there were 166,894 employed persons, with males representing more than three-fifths of this total. Almost one-half of all employed persons were between the ages of 25 and 44 years. As depicted in Figure 2, the largest share of employed persons worked in the 'Wholesale and Retail Trade' industry (16.4 percent), followed by 'Community, Social & Personal Services' (14.5 percent), and 'Tourism' (12.8 percent). 'Government Services; Compulsory Social Security' and 'Agriculture and related activities' each accounted for 11.7 percent of all employed persons. Compared to April 2025, the 'Government Services; Compulsory Social Security' industry had the largest gains in the share of employed persons, rising by 1.7 percentage points. The share of employed persons working in 'Community, Social & Personal Services' increased by 1.2 percentage points, while the 'Agriculture and Related Activities' rose by 0.9 percentage points. In contrast, the shares accounted for by the 'Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repairs' and 'Tourism' industries declined by 0.5 and 0.7 percentage points, respectively.



More than one-half of all employed persons (55.4 percent) were classified as 'Employees', working for someone else, while 26.1 percent were 'Self-employed'. Another 1.5 percent were classified as 'Contributing family workers.'

¹ The labour force participation rate refers share of the working-age population that participates in the labor market, calculated as the total labor force divided by the working-age population and expressed as a percentage.

The average monthly income for employed persons in April 2026 was \$1,525, an increase of \$27 from April 2025. Among the various occupational groups, the highest average monthly incomes were earned by 'Professionals' (\$2,140), who accounted for 8.9 percent of all employed persons, and 'Managers' (\$2,084), who represented 4.7 percent of the employed workforce. On average, employed persons worked an estimated 42.5 hours per week, up from 41.5 hours per week in April 2025.

Informally Employed²:

A total of 56,966 persons, or 34.1 percent of the employed population, were in informal employment in April 2026. The largest shares of informal employment were found in the 'Wholesale and Retail Trade' industry (20.4 percent) and 'Agriculture and Related activities' (20.1 percent). Among the informally employed, 57.3 percent were 'Self-employed', while 37.5 percent were classified as 'Employees'. On average, persons in informal employment worked 37.5 hours per week and earned a monthly income of \$1,297, representing increases from 35.7 hours and \$1,244, respectively, in April 2025.

Underemployed³:

The underemployed population in April 2026 was estimated at 1,142 persons, representing 0.7 percent of all employed persons. Men accounted for 82.3 percent of underemployed persons and had a higher underemployment rate (0.9 percent) compared to females (0.3 percent). The average monthly income for underemployed persons was \$603, substantially lower than that of the wider employed population. Additionally, underemployed persons worked an average of 13.9 hours per week, down from 17.4 hours per week in April 2025.

Unemployed⁴:

In April 2026, the estimated number of unemployed persons was 3,162, representing 1.9 percent of the total labour force. As shown in Figure 4, the unemployment rate among females was 2.2 percent, compared to 1.7 percent among males. Unemployment was considerably higher among youths aged 14 to 24, whose unemployment rate stood at 5.0 percent in April 2026.

An estimated 39.3 percent of all unemployed persons had been without a job for a year or more, while 23.2 percent had been unemployed for less than three months. Nearly two-thirds (63.8 percent) reported that their primary source of financial support was a parent, spouse or child, while 17.9 percent supported themselves through means such as savings or pensions.

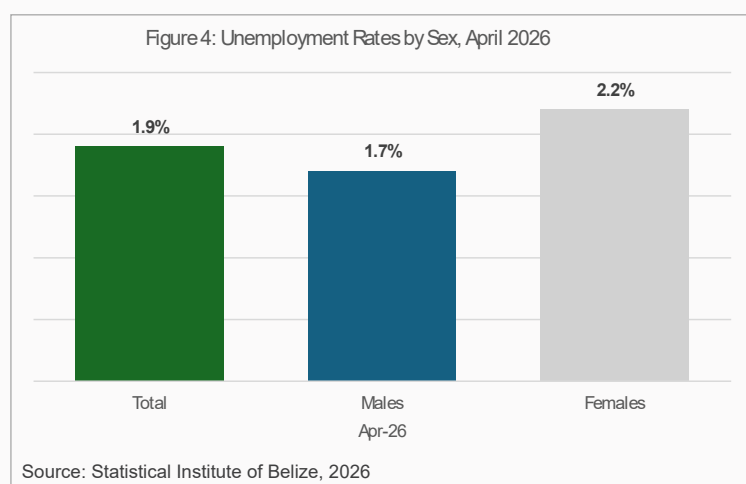
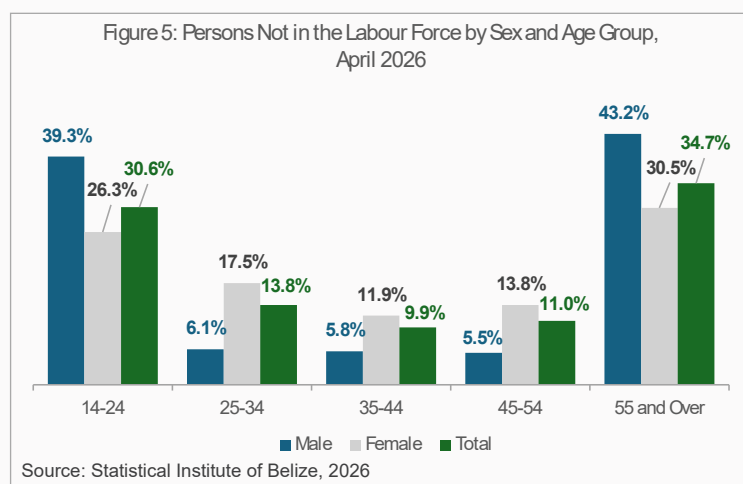
Persons Outside the Labour Force:

Persons who are not employed and are neither actively seeking nor available for work are classified as being outside of the labour force. This group includes persons who are not active in the labour force for reasons such as attending school, performing unpaid household work, being retired, being sick or disabled, or being discouraged from seeking employment.

In April 2026, an estimated 145,965, or 46.0 percent of the working-age population were outside of the labour force, with females accounting for almost two-thirds of this group. Notably, 30.6 percent of persons outside of the labour force were aged 14 to 24, while 34.7 percent were 55 years and older.

Among persons outside the labour force, 33.3 percent cited personal or family responsibilities as their main reason for not participating, with females accounting for 58.1 percent of this group. A further 10.5 percent reported not seeking employment because they were attending school or training, with males and females almost equally represented in this category.

An estimated 58.6 percent of persons outside of the labour force had never worked before, while 74.8 percent relied on a parent, spouse or child as their main source of financial support.



² Informally employed persons are those not registered with the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry or the Belize Social Security Board. This includes persons in paid employment at private entities that do not make Social Security contributions.

³ Underemployed persons are a subset of the employed population who work fewer than 35 hours per week, want to work additional hours, and are available to do so, either in their current job or another, within the next two weeks.

⁴ Unemployed persons are persons aged 14 or over who, since September 2020, meet all three of the following criteria: they are without work, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are available to start work within the next two weeks. Previously, only being without work and being available were required. The added criterion of actively looking for work includes activities such as checking job vacancies, asking relatives or friends, or taking steps to start a business, such as seeking licenses, loans, or land.