Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty Down from 36.5 Percent in September 2021 to 26.4 Percent in September 2023
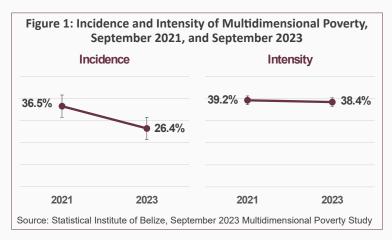
Overview of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI):

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a direct measure of poverty, which captures deprivations across various dimensions of well-being such as health, education, employment and living standards. The MPI provides insights into both the incidence and intensity of poverty within a population. Incidence measures the share of persons or households that are multidimensionally poor in the population, while intensity measures the average level of deprivation experienced among the poor. The MPI is computed by multiplying the incidence by the intensity of poverty and is represented by a number between 0 and 1, where 0 represents no poverty and 1 represents extreme poverty. The MPI complements monetary measures of poverty and serves as a useful tool for the development and monitoring of targeted poverty reduction interventions.
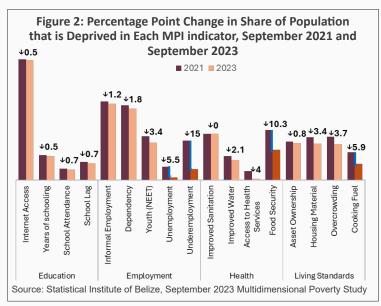
Incidence And Intensity Of Poverty:

In September 2023, 26.4 percent of the population were estimated to be multidimensionally poor compared to 36.5 percent in September 2021 (see Figure 1). This decline was mainly attributed to an estimated 38,595 fewer individuals and 8,902 fewer households experiencing multidimensional poverty between September 2021 and September 2023. Notable reductions were observed in deprivations related to the level of underemployment, food insecurity, use of unsafe cooking fuels and unemployment.
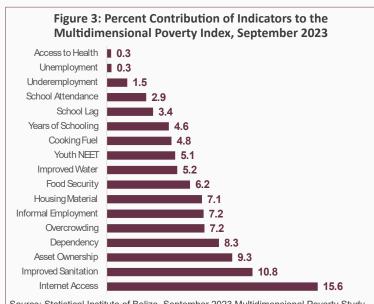
Although the incidence of poverty decreased considerably between September 2021 and September 2023, the intensity of poverty remained almost unchanged, inching down slightly from 39.2 percent in 2021 to 38.4 percent in 2023 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Incidence and Intensity of Multidimensional Poverty, September 2021, and September 2023

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which is calculated as the incidence multiplied by the intensity of poverty, fell from 0.143 to 0.101 between September 2021 and September 2023. A total of 103,944 persons within 24,096 households were estimated to be multidimensionally poor in September 2023. Although there were decreases in deprivation across all indicators, the most notable reductions were observed in underemployment, food insecurity, use of unsafe cooking fuel and unemployment (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage Point Change in Share of Population that is Deprived in Each MPI indicator, September 2021 and September 2023

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Figure 3: Percent Contribution of Indicators to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, September 2023

Indicator	Value
Access to Health	0.3
Unemployment	0.3
Underemployment	1.5
School Attendance	2.9
School Lag	3.4
Years of Schooling	4.6
Cooking Fuel	4.8
Youth NEET	5.1
Improved Water	5.2
Food Security	6.2
Housing Material	7.1
Informal Employment	7.2
Overcrowding	7.2
Dependency	8.3
Asset Ownership	9.3
Improved Sanitation	10.8
Internet Access	15.6

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty By Area:

In September 2023, the incidence of multidimensional poverty was significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas, with 39.9 percent of the rural population experiencing multidimensional poverty, compared to 8.3 percent of the urban population. Additionally, between September 2021 and September 2023, the country's urban areas experienced a greater reduction in the incidence of poverty, from 23.3 percent to 8.3 percent, while poverty in the rural areas declined from 47.5 percent to 39.9 percent. Across both areas, the greatest decrease in deprivation was observed in the levels of 'underemployment' and 'food insecurity'. In addition, rural areas also exhibited a notable decline in the use of unsafe 'cooking fuel'.

Multidimensional Poverty By District:

Among the districts, Toledo recorded the highest percentage of multidimensionally poor persons at 57.5 percent, while the Belize District registered the lowest at 8.6 percent. Cayo, Belize, and Orange Walk saw the largest declines in the incidence of poverty, with reductions of 12.4 percentage points, 12.1 percentage points, and 10 percentage points, respectively.

Figure 4: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by District, September 2021 and 2023

District	2021	2023
Corozal	43.6	35.0
Orange Walk	49.6	39.6
Belize	20.7	8.6
Cayo	35.7	23.3
Stann Creek	37.3	28.0
Toledo	59.8	57.5

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty by Ethnicity:

Consistent with what was observed in September 2021, households headed by persons of Maya ethnicity, experienced the highest level of multidimensional poverty at 60.2 percent. Conversely, households headed by persons of Creole ethnicity recorded the lowest incidence of poverty at 9.1 percent (see Figure 5).
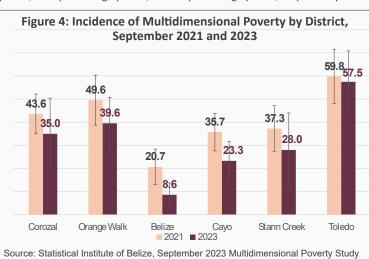
From among the 17 indicators used to measure multidimensional poverty, 'access to internet and communication technology', 'sanitation' and 'asset ownership' contributed the most to the September 2023 MPI, accounting for 15.6 percent, 10.8 percent, and 9.3 percent, respectively. The indicators contributing the least to the overall MPI were 'access to health facilities' and 'unemployment', each of which accounted for 0.3 percent (see Figure 3).
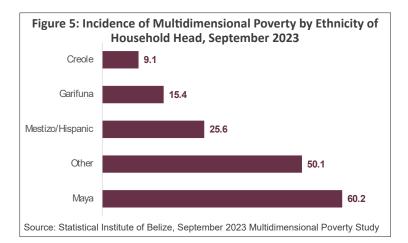
Figure 5: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by Ethnicity of Household Head, September 2023

Ethnicity	Incidence
Creole	9.1
Garifuna	15.4
Mestizo/Hispanic	25.6
Other	50.1
Maya	60.2

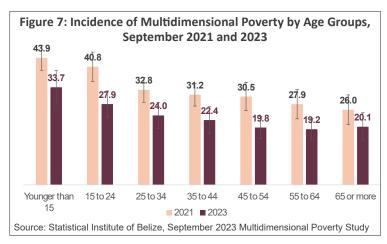Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty by Education of Household Head:

In September 2023, households headed by persons who had not completed any level of education experienced the highest incidence of poverty at 51.5 percent. In contrast, households headed by individuals with a tertiary education saw the lowest incidence of poverty at 3.2 percent. Noteworthy is that households headed by persons with a secondary education had the most significant decrease in the incidence of multidimensional poverty, from 21.1 percent in September 2021 to 9.7 percent in September 2023 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by Educational Attainment of Household Head, September 2021 and September 2023

Educational Attainment	2021	2023
None	61.3	51.5
Primary	43.5	30.5
Secondary	21.1	9.7
Tertiary	5.6	3.2

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study
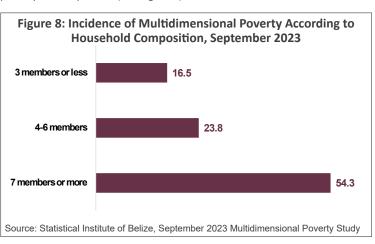
Multidimensional Poverty by Age Groups:

As was observed in September 2021, the results indicated that poverty rates continued to differ across age groups in September 2023. The highest incidence of poverty was experienced among individuals aged 0 to 14, at 33.7 percent. Persons aged 15 to 24 saw the greatest improvement, with the incidence of poverty among this group dropping from 40.8 percent in September 2021 to 27.9 percent in September 2023 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by Age Groups, September 2021 and 2023

Age Group	2021	2023
Younger than 15	43.9	33.7
15 to 24	40.8	27.9
25 to 34	32.8	24.0
35 to 44	31.2	22.4
45 to 54	30.5	19.8
55 to 64	27.9	19.2
65 or more	26.0	20.1

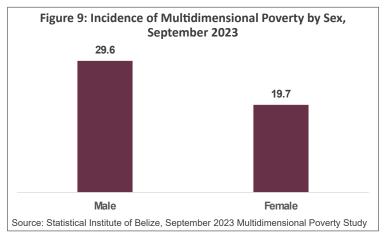Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty by Household Size:

The results showed that in September 2023, households with three members or less had the lowest poverty incidence at 16.5 percent, while larger households faced higher poverty rates. Among households with 4 to 6 members, the incidence of multidimensional poverty was 23.8 percent, while households with seven members or more had the highest incidence of poverty at 54.3 percent (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty According to Household Composition, September 2023

Household Size	Incidence
3 members or less	16.5
4-6 members	23.8
7 members or more	54.3

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study
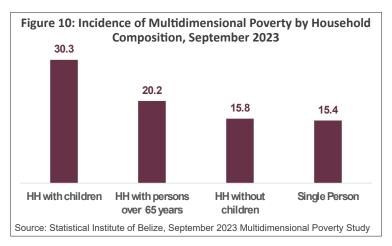
Multidimensional Poverty by Sex:

The incidence of multidimensional poverty also varied considerably, depending on the sex of the household head. In September 2023, the incidence of poverty was higher in male-headed households at 29.6 percent, compared to 19.7 percent in female-headed households (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by Sex, September 2023

Sex	Incidence
Male	29.6
Female	19.7

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty by Household Composition:

The results showed that in September 2023, single-person households experienced the lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty at 15.4 percent, followed by households without children at 15.8 percent. Households with children experienced the highest incidence of poverty at 30.3 percent, and those with persons over 65 years recorded an incidence of 20.2 percent (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty by Household Composition, September 2023

Household Composition	Incidence
HH with children	30.3
HH with persons over 65 years	20.2
HH without children	15.8
Single Person	15.4

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study

Multidimensional Poverty by Employment Status of Household Head:

Employment status, as was seen in September 2021, had a notable impact on multidimensional poverty. In September 2023, households headed by employed persons experienced the lowest incidence of poverty at 22.8 percent. In contrast, households headed by persons that were unemployed had an incidence of poverty as high as 76.2 percent (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty According to Employment Status of Household Head, September 2023

Employment Status	Incidence
Underemployed	51.8%
Persons not in the labour force	30.4%
Unemployed	76.2%
Employed	22.8%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, September 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Study