



COVID-19 IN LAC

BELIZE

2021 LAC HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEYS: Results Phase II, Wave 1



Belize was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through a relatively high incidence of COVID-19 cases and a relatively high number of deaths compared to other countries in the Caribbean. The COVID-19 pandemic also led to a strong contraction of the tourism sector, resulting in a GDP reduction of 14 percent in 2020.

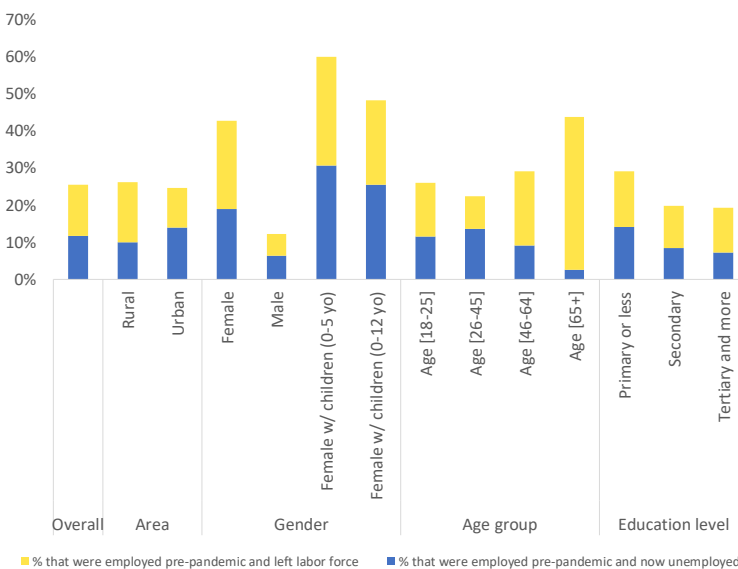
A deterioration of labor market conditions is evident. By mid-2021, a quarter of those who worked before the pandemic was no longer employed, and more than half of them had left the labor force altogether. 14.1 percent of those formally employed before the pandemic transitioned into informality, while 7.9 percent of workers previously employed informally entered formal employment. In addition, 41.9 percent of previously inactive people entered the labor force, with males comprising more than half of the entrants. The newly active represent 10.5 percent of the employed and 17.9 percent of the unemployed in mid-2021. The impacts of the pandemic on labor market outcomes continued to be felt most acutely by women and were even more pronounced for females with children.

In line with worsened labor market outcomes, the pandemic led to a decrease in the average household's income in Belize. About two of every three households reported a reduction in their total income since the start of the pandemic. The share of affected households was higher in rural areas, among those with fewer assets and among households with children. Decreased income levels translated into higher food insecurity. Nearly half of households in Belize reported that they had run out of food in the 30 days preceding the survey, compared to 16.5 percent before the pandemic (based on recall data). The Belizean government responded to the crisis by providing social relief packages, like other countries in the region. However, the survey indicates that even though 40.5 percent of households received emergency transfers during the pandemic, total income reductions were still very widespread.

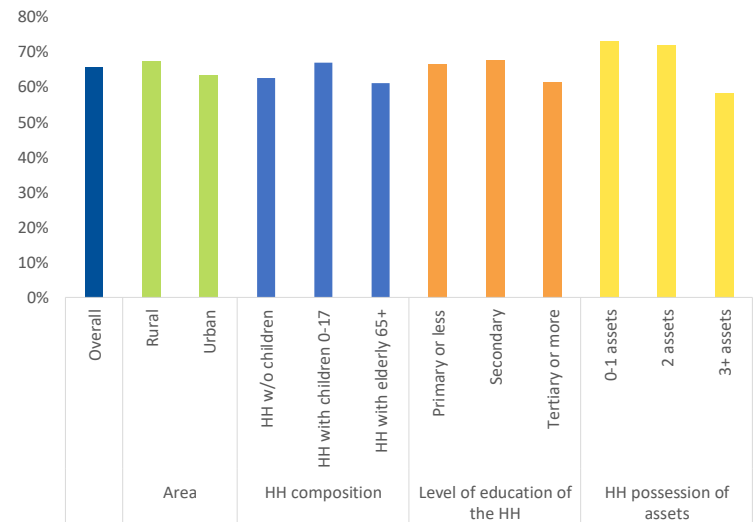
The pandemic has also had consequences on school attendance due to mobility restrictions implemented to mitigate the effect of the pandemic. The share of children of school age who attended classes either in person or virtually at the time of the survey was one of the lowest in the region at 65.4 percent. And only half of them engaged in learning activities involving direct interaction with a teacher (online or in-person). School closures may have a long-term effect on human capital accumulation and future welfare. School closures also increased the burden of household responsibilities on adult household members. Unequal intra-household arrangements resulted in 27.4 percent more women than men reporting an increase in the time spent supporting children's education during the pandemic. However, 44.1 percent of men reporting an increased burden is remarkable.

Limited connectivity may have hampered the response to the pandemic and recovery efforts. Half of the Belizean households that have an internet connection at home (66.7 percent of all households) had problems with internet services due to poor access, quality, or speed, which prevents the widespread use of virtual platforms for healthcare delivery, teaching, and work in the hope of adapting to the crisis.

JOB LOSS (% OF PRE-PANDEMIC WORKERS)



HOUSEHOLDS (%) WITH REDUCED INCOME



Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

KEY INDICATORS: INDIVIDUALS (18+ years old)

Distribution among groups	Labor		Childcare responsibilities	Health	Finance	
	% of employed population (pre-pandemic) who lost their pre-pandemic job	% of inactive population (pre-pandemic) who became active (employed or unemployed)	% of formal workers (pre-pandemic) who became informal	% of population who spent more time accompanying children's education	% of population who is not planning to get vaccinated or unsure (vaccination hesitancy)	% of population using mobile wallets
Overall	25.4%	41.9%	14.1%	50.8%	30.5%	-
Rural	26.0%	40.9%	15.7%	48.9%	32.3%	-
Urban	24.6%	43.3%	12.1%	53.3%	28.2%	-
Females	42.7%	35.9%	12.2%	56.2%	35.9%	-
Males	12.1%	60.0%	15.2%	44.1%	25.1%	-
18 to 25 years old	25.9%	55.3%	15.2%	37.6%	42.8%	-
26 to 45 years old	22.3%	35.8%	11.7%	58.1%	28.2%	-
46 to 64 years old	29.0%	35.6%	20.4%	46.8%	27.3%	-
65 and older	43.7%	27.8%	0.0%	41.6%	7.3%	-
Primary or less	29.1%	39.6%	14.2%	44.8%	32.8%	-
Secondary	19.8%	48.1%	23.7%	53.9%	30.6%	-
Tertiary and more	19.2%	41.2%	5.7%	71.8%	23.0%	-

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

KEY INDICATORS: HOUSEHOLDS AND CHILDREN

Distribution among groups	Income	Food Insecurity	Education (6-17 yo)	Connectivity		
	% HH that report a reduction in total income (current v. pre-pandemic)	% HH that received Emergency Government Transfers during the pandemic	% HHs that ran out of food (last 30 days)	% of children in school age who attended school (in person or virtually)	% of children in school age who interacted with teacher (in-person or online classes)	% HHs that had problems with internet service due to poor access quality/speed
Overall	65.5%	40.5%	49.2%	65.4%	49.1%	50.2%
Rural	67.4%	44.4%	53.8%	62.8%	46.5%	51.1%
Urban	63.2%	35.8%	43.7%	69.2%	52.8%	49.3%
HH w/o children (0-17)	62.6%	32.0%	31.8%	-	-	53.1%
HH with children (0-17)	66.9%	44.6%	57.5%	65.4%	49.1%	48.8%
HH with elderly (65+)	60.9%	33.2%	42.8%	66.7%	50.2%	41.9%
0-1 assets	72.9%	41.9%	75.7%	51.9%	38.2%	52.9%
2 assets	71.9%	51.6%	54.3%	60.6%	42.9%	46.0%
3+ assets	58.3%	33.2%	34.3%	73.8%	57.1%	51.5%
HH education - Primary or less	66.4%	46.6%	56.8%	63.2%	48.8%	50.6%
HH education - Secondary	67.6%	43.5%	53.5%	65.9%	48.4%	47.8%
HH education - Tertiary or more	61.4%	21.5%	24.9%	79.1%	61.7%	51.5%

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEY

The World Bank and UNDP conducted a multi-wave High-Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) in 2021 to assess the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the welfare of Latin American and Caribbean households. The first wave was collected between May and July 2021, and the data is nationally representative for 24 countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. In Belize, Dominica and Saint Lucia, the HFPS was co-financed by the European Union, in the frame of the Caribbean Regional Resilience Building Facility, managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). The data for Brazil was collected between July 26 and October 1. The HFPS provides information on the welfare impacts that households experienced with respect to food insecurity, changes in employment, income changes, access to health and education services, and coping mechanisms. Key indicators on socioeconomic effects are available at the [COVID-19 monitoring global dashboard](#), which provides 96 harmonized indicators across 50 countries in Latin America and the world. For further information, see [World Bank and UNDP \(2021\)](#). The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the author(s).