Social distancing measures to reduce the spread of the virus in Antigua and Barbuda have had overwhelming economic and social impacts in specific sectors such as tourism and hospitality, where women are disproportionally represented. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a GDP reduction of 20.2 percent, one of the worst in the region. Recovery has been slow, with an estimated increase in GDP of just 1.0 percent during 2021.
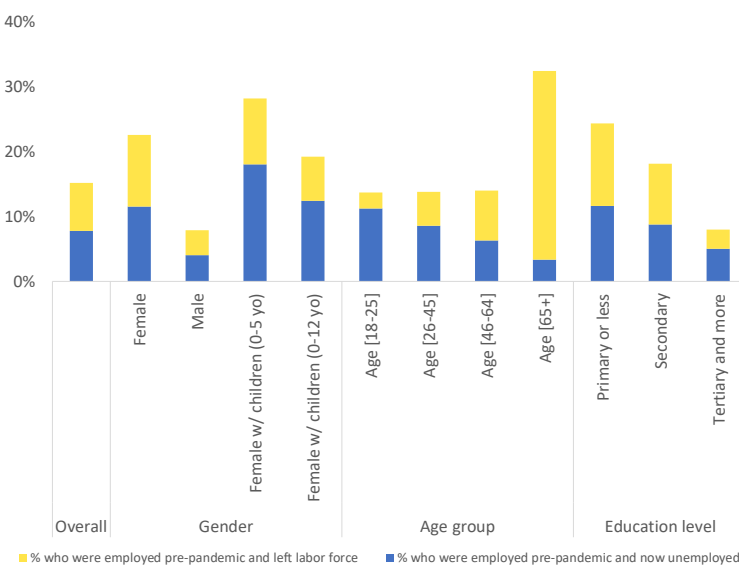
At the time of the survey, 15.2 percent of the previously employed workers had lost their pre-pandemic job, and about half of them had left the labor force altogether. Job loss was highest among individuals with primary education or less (24.3 percent). Among the new inactive, 74.0 percent are women across all age ranges and education levels, two-thirds of whom do not have children under 18. Most salient, however, is the share of previously inactive people who entered the labor force during the pandemic (36.1 percent). The newly active population represents 4.2 percent of the currently employed workers and 22.6 percent of the unemployed. The pandemic also pushed formal workers into informality—nearly 7 percent of workers in formal employment before the crisis became informal. At the time of the survey, workers 65 and older and workers with primary education or less were more prone to transiting into informality than younger cohorts and those with higher education levels.

Income reductions and food insecurity in Antigua and Barbuda have been severe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 1 in every 2 households (47.2 percent) reported a reduction in total income compared to its pre-pandemic level. Families with fewer assets – a proxy of vulnerability – and less educated heads were the most affected by income reductions, at 57.8 and 50.9 percent, respectively. Food insecurity tripled during the pandemic, affecting a large share of the population. Almost a third of households (30.4 percent) said they had run out of food at least once in the 30 days before the survey. Again, households with fewer assets and less educated heads were more prone to report this.
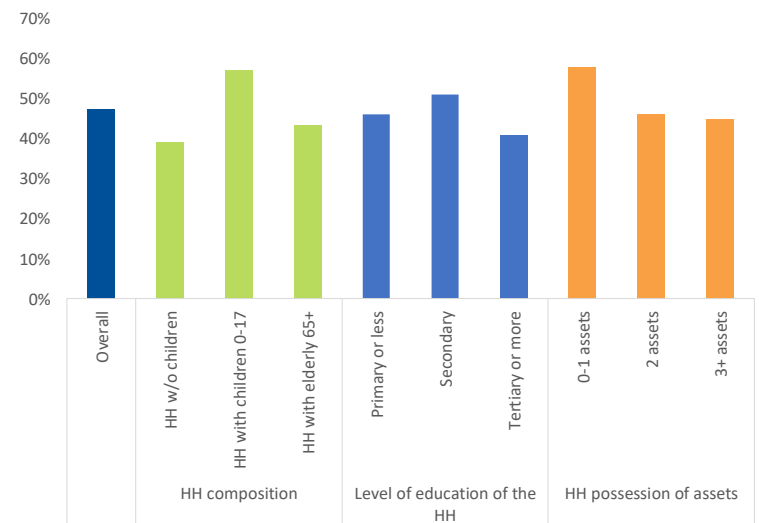
At the time of the survey, 95.2 percent of school-age children were attending school, either in person or virtually, and 93.9 percent had been engaged in learning activities involving direct interaction with a teacher. The widespread in-person school attendance explains this high share (97.2 percent of children enrolled were attending classes in person in mid-2021). School closures were limited in Antigua and Barbuda at the time of the survey.

More than a fifth of the population (22.8 percent) was unwilling or unsure about getting vaccinated, with some variation across age groups. Younger people, those of ages 18-25 in particular, were more likely to report vaccine hesitancy (28.7 percent) compared to their older counterparts 65+ (19.0 percent). This result may be related to the vaccination roll-out across cohorts.

JOB LOSS (% OF PRE-PANDEMIC WORKERS)

Legend: ■ % who were employed pre-pandemic and left labor force   ■ % who were employed pre-pandemic and now unemployed

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	15.2%	36.1%	6.5%	58.7%	22.8%	-
Females	22.4%	29.4%	7.4%	65.9%	22.1%	-
Males	7.9%	52.6%	5.5%	45.9%	23.7%	-
18 to 25 years old	13.7%	54.7%	9.6%	43.8%	28.7%	-
26 to 45 years old	13.7%	59.9%	4.7%	76.5%	27.5%	-
46 to 64 years old	13.9%	30.5%	6.0%	35.8%	14.9%	-
65 and older	32.3%	13.7%	24.8%	28.0%	19.0%	-
Primary or less	24.3%	44.0%	13.5%	39.2%	24.4%	-
Secondary	18.0%	38.1%	6.9%	54.9%	25.7%	-
Tertiary and more	7.9%	28.8%	4.0%	70.9%	18.1%	-

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	47.2%	24.8%	30.4%	95.2%	93.9%	65.9%
HH w/o children (0-17)	39.2%	19.6%	23.3%	-	-	61.5%
HH with children (0-17)	57.0%	31.1%	39.0%	95.2%	93.9%	70.2%
HH with elderly (65+)	43.4%	23.3%	22.8%	96.7%	94.1%	69.4%
0-1 assets	57.8%	27.5%	51.0%	100.0%	100.0%	62.8%
2 assets	46.2%	29.4%	37.9%	91.9%	91.9%	57.3%
3+ assets	44.7%	21.8%	20.7%	95.6%	93.8%	68.6%
HH education - Primary or less	46.0%	31.2%	43.1%	90.6%	90.6%	65.2%
HH education - Secondary	50.9%	25.0%	36.8%	96.3%	95.3%	63.3%
HH education - Tertiary or more	40.9%	19.0%	13.4%	95.0%	93.5%	68.7%

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. 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).