



COVID-19 IN LAC

BELIZE

2021 LAC HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEYS: Results Phase II, Wave 2



September 2022

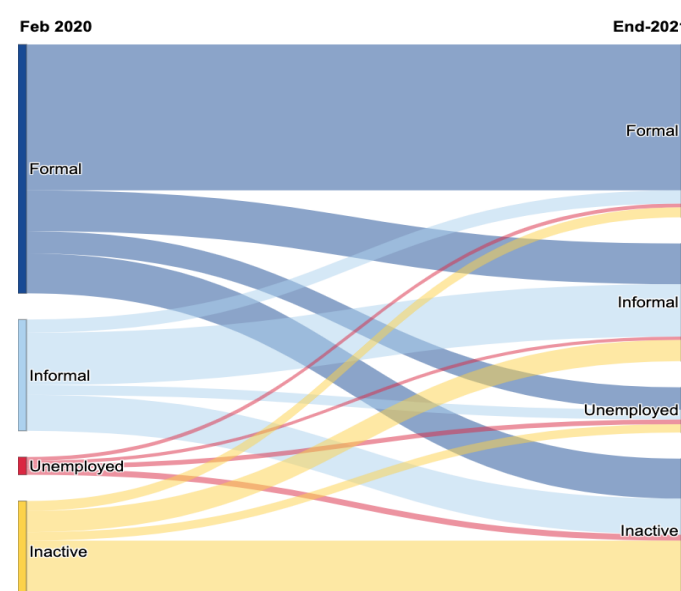
Belize was adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic through a relatively high incidence of Covid-19 cases and a relatively high number of deaths compared to other countries in the Caribbean. The Covid-19 pandemic also led to a strong contraction of the tourism sector, resulting in a GDP reduction of 14 per cent in 2020. The labour market has been slow to recover: 30.0 per cent of those who were employed before the pandemic lost their jobs by the end of 2021, 4.6 percentage points more than reported in the middle of the year. While 8.9 per cent remained in the labour force looking for work, 21.1 per cent dropped out altogether. Some 70.1 per cent of older adults lost the job they held before the pandemic, and women were twice as likely as men to become unemployed (41.9 per cent versus 20.9 per cent). In contrast, 65.8 per cent of men who were not economically active before Covid joined the labour force, while only 30.8 per cent of women did so. Overall, 39.3 per cent of the population who were not economically active beforehand entered the labour market. Some 78.8 per cent of those who did so found a job, although a large share of these were in the informal segment (68.0 per cent). Specifically, 55.5 per cent of those who held formal jobs, were unemployed or were economically inactive pre-Covid moved into informal employment by late 2021. The pandemic also brought changes in how time was distributed within households. In late 2021, 53.4 per cent of respondents reported spending more time helping their children with schoolwork. While this value only grew by 2.6 percentage points from the middle of the year, the increase was 4.2 percentage points for women (reaching 60.4 per cent) and less than 1 percentage point for men (reaching 44.8 per cent). These changes strengthened the trend towards an unequal distribution of the care burden within households.

Key indicators: Individuals (18+ years old)

Distribution among groups	Labour		Childcare	
	% of employed population (pre-pandemic) who lost their pre-pandemic job	% of inactive population (pre-pandemic) who entered the labour market	% of formal, unemployed or inactive (pre-pandemic) who were working and transited into informality	Change in % of population reporting an increase in time spent supporting children's education activities (compared to pre-pandemic) between mid-2021 and end of 2021(pp)
Overall	30.0%	39.3%	55.5%	2.6
Urban	27.8%	40.9%	59.9%	2.4
Rural	31.4%	38.3%	52.7%	3.3
Females	41.9%	30.8%	55.0%	4.2
Males	20.9%	65.8%	55.8%	0.7
18 to 25 years old	29.2%	58.2%	57.1%	3.4
26 to 45 years old	27.7%	34.1%	56.5%	0.9
46 to 64 years old	31.0%	28.0%	49.7%	4.3
65 and older	70.1%	24.3%	83.5%	9.7
Primary or less	33.7%	30.1%	55.5%	3.8
Secondary	26.5%	59.7%	56.7%	2.4
Tertiary and more	22.2%	46.4%	52.2%	-1.5

Source: LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 2

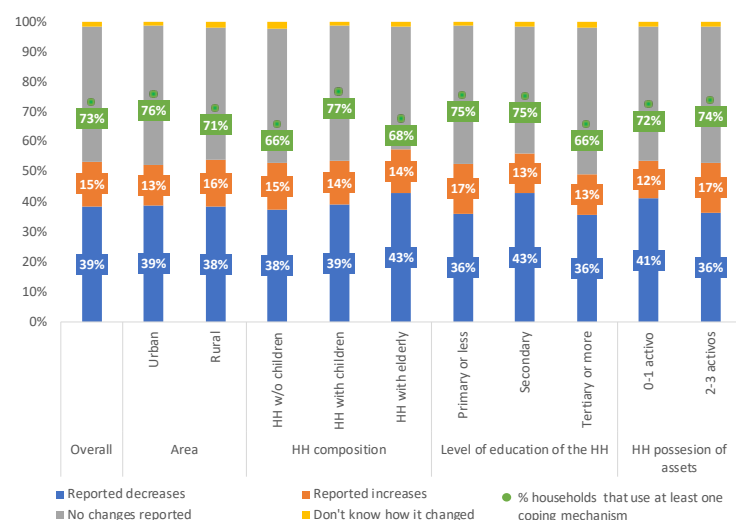
Figure 1: Transitions in the labour market



Despite government responses and private initiatives to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic, the well-being of Belizean households continues to be significantly affected. By late 2021, some 38.6 per cent of households reported that their income levels had dropped compared to the middle of the year. Income loss was more frequent for households with higher dependency ratios (those with children under 18 and/or adults aged 65 or older), those whose heads had secondary education and those with lower asset holdings. To cope with the financial stress triggered by the pandemic and continue covering their basic needs, 73.1 per cent of households had to resort to at least one new coping mechanism. Among the strategies they used are the non-payment of financial obligations, the use of savings and the entry of adults and children who were previously economically inactive into the labour market. Around three out of four urban households (75.9 per cent), with dependent children (76.6 per cent) and whose heads had secondary education or less (75.0 and 75.4 per cent, respectively) resorted to at least one of the aforementioned mechanisms. Specifically, in 12.3 per cent of households with school-age children, a child had to seek employment during the pandemic. This figure was as high as 18.4 per cent for more vulnerable households (those with more limited asset holdings) and 17.1 per cent for those with less educated heads.

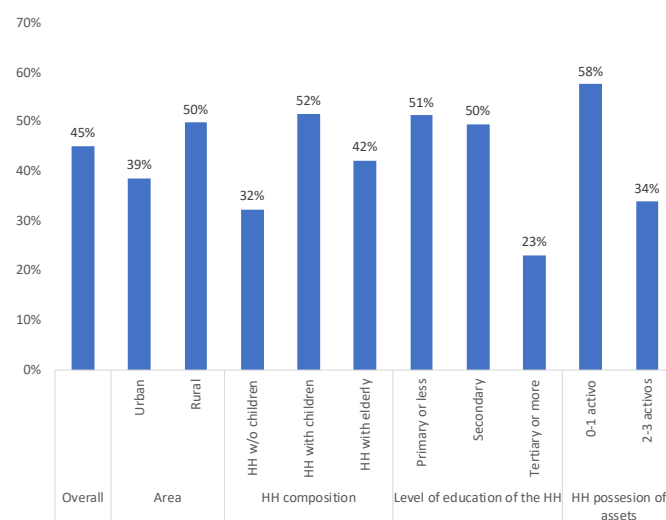
The decrease in household income was associated with higher levels of food insecurity. At the end of 2021, 45.2 per cent of households reported having gone without food during the 30 days leading up to the survey due to a lack of means. Although this figure decreased by 4.0 percentage points compared to mid-2021, it is still 28.7 percentage points above where it stood before the pandemic. At least one out of every two households with dependent children and less educated heads experienced food insecurity. In terms of education, the in-person attendance rate fell 25.0 percentage points, going from 35.9 per cent to 10.9 per cent, the fourth lowest in the region. Face-to-face attendance was even lower among children from households with lower asset availability. The limited levels of in-person teaching that resulted from partial and total school closures have impacted the quality of education in the country. They will most likely have negative implications for the accumulation of human capital and the entry into the labour market of adults with dependent children. The population is aware of these setbacks: 48.9 per cent of respondents said they thought children were learning less than before the pandemic. Those that noted this most markedly were respondents from households with lower asset availability and less educated heads.

Figure 2: Households reporting a change in income (%)
End of 2021 vs. Mid 2021



Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 2

Figure 3: Household that ran out of food (%)
End of 2021



Key indicators: Households and children

Distribution among groups	Income	Coping		Food Insecurity	Education (6-17 yo)	
	% households that report a reduction in total income (End of 2021 vs. Mid 2021)	% of households that resorted to at least one mechanism to manage financial stress in 2021*	% of households reporting school-age children entering in the labour force	% households that ran out of food (last 30 days)	Change in the % of school-age children who attended face-to-face classes (End 2021 vs. Mid 2021) (pp)	% of enrolled children who are learning less than before the pandemic
Overall	38.6%	73.1%	12.3%	45.2%	-25.0	48.9%
Urban	38.9%	75.9%	8.9%	38.6%	-27.4	48.8%
Rural	38.4%	71.1%	14.4%	49.9%	-23.9	49.0%
HH w/o children (0-17)	37.5%	66.0%	-	32.3%	-	-
HH with children (0-17)	39.2%	76.6%	12.3%	51.6%	-25.0	48.9%
HH with elderly (65+)	42.9%	67.6%	12.0%	42.2%	-24.7	57.3%
HH with 0-1 asset	41.2%	72.3%	18.4%	57.6%	-29.9	51.9%
HH with 2-3 assets	36.3%	73.8%	7.4%	33.9%	-22.1	47.1%
HH education - Primary or less	36.1%	75.4%	17.1%	51.3%	-28.1	51.1%
HH education - Secondary	42.9%	75.0%	9.6%	49.5%	-25.9	45.2%
HH education - Tertiary or more	35.7%	65.8%	5.2%	23.1%	-19.1	50.8%

* Coping mechanisms are the strategies used to cope with the financial stress generated by the reduction in income during the pandemic. Particularly, non-payment of financial obligations, use of savings and entry into the labour force.

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 2

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 second wave was collected between November and December 2021, and the data is nationally representative for 22 countries: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, 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 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. For further information see [Chapeau Phase II, wave 2](#).