



# COVID-19 IN LAC

## BOLIVIA

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



September 2022

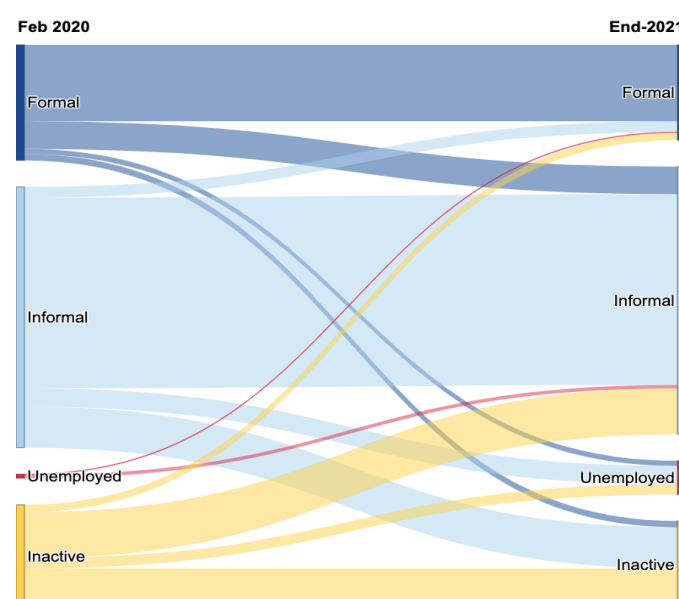
The Covid-19 crisis and falling oil prices led the Bolivian economy to contract by 8.8 per cent in 2020. The country was in lockdown for more than five months, and its Covid death toll was on par with the regional average. Most economic sectors were impacted by these changes, most notably the labour-intensive industry and service sectors. The economy began to recover in 2021, but the labour market has been slower to do so. By late 2021, 18.8 per cent of those who were employed before the pandemic had lost their jobs, and two-thirds of this group dropped out of the workforce altogether. These job losses were greater among rural workers, women, young people (aged 18–25), and those with primary education or less. An unprecedented share of the economically inactive population—61.7 per cent—transitioned into active employment, mostly people in rural areas between the ages of 26 and 45. Those entering the labour market accounted for 14.7 per cent of the total employed and 30.1 per cent of the unemployed at the time of the survey. It is likely that they entered the labour market to escape poverty. The quality of work also deteriorated. Most of those who entered the labour market ended up with informal jobs (86.0 per cent), and 23.9 per cent of those who were formally employed before the pandemic began moved into informal jobs during it. Likewise, 28.8 per cent of those who were formal or inactive employees or unemployed before the pandemic transitioned to informal work. These signs of recovery in the labour market may also be associated with changes in the demand for care within the household: between June and December 2021, there was an 8.32-percentage-point reduction in the share of households reporting an increase in time spent on their children's education.

### 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 transitioned 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	18.8%	61.7%	28.8%	-8.3
Urban	18.0%	59.5%	31.3%	-7.7
Rural	21.4%	70.0%	22.0%	-10.0
Females	27.2%	60.4%	35.7%	-9.7
Males	11.4%	63.8%	22.6%	-6.9
18 to 25 years old	23.7%	57.7%	39.3%	-6.6
26 to 45 years old	18.6%	75.7%	28.4%	-15.0
46 to 64 years old	12.9%	50.0%	21.0%	2.9
65 and older	32.3%	41.4%	23.1%	38.5
Primary or less	29.8%	57.3%	17.5%	0.5
Secondary	18.2%	62.8%	27.2%	-10.7
Tertiary and more	18.2%	59.8%	40.7%	-3.9

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

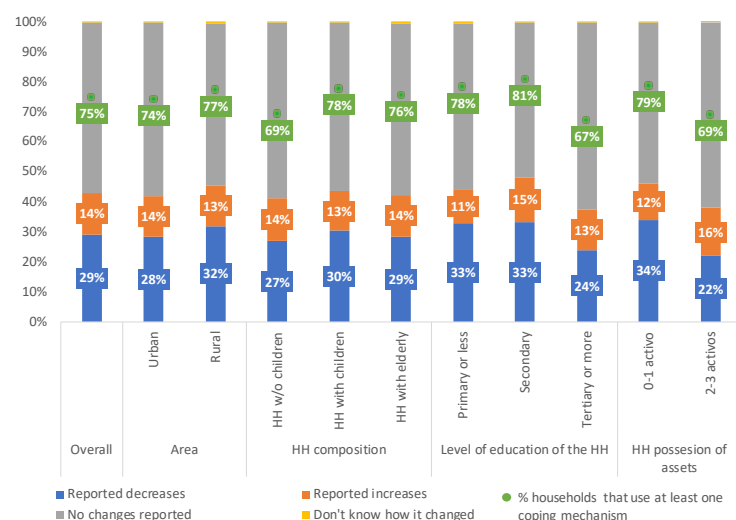
Figure 1: Transitions in the labour market



The emergency transfers implemented since the outbreak of the pandemic had wide coverage. However, by mid-2021, three out of five households reported a decline in total income compared to before the pandemic. Of these, 29.2 per cent reported a decrease in income, and 13.6 per cent reported an increase in income between mid-2021 and the end of the year. Households with one or no assets, in rural areas and whose heads were less educated were more likely to report income losses. Some 74.9 per cent of households used a variety of coping mechanisms in response to this shock caused by the pandemic, particularly rural households, households with minors and those whose heads had lower education levels. Indeed, seeking child employment was used as a coping mechanism by as many as 10.6 per cent of households with minors. This strategy was particularly prevalent for the most vulnerable households (with lower level of education of the head of the household and households in rural areas).

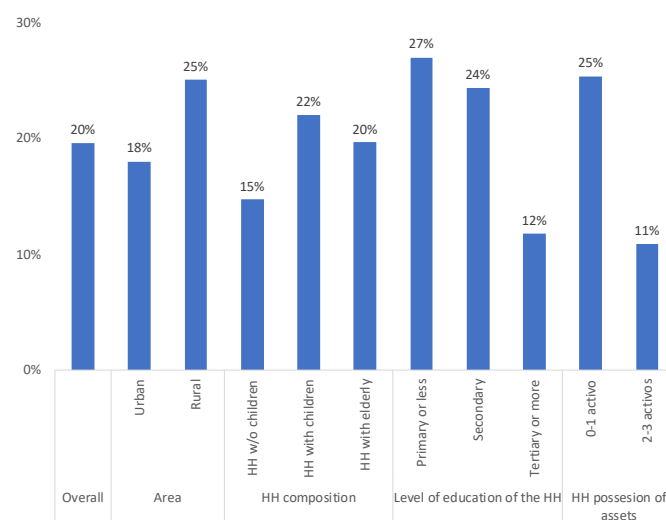
Food insecurity increased: the share of households that reported going without food soared from 17.2 per cent before the pandemic to 43.2 per cent in May 2020 before dropping to 22.7 per cent in mid-2021 and 19.6 per cent by the end of that year. Rural households, households with fewer assets and households with less educated heads experienced greater food insecurity in 2021. By mid-2021, only 25.7 per cent of students reported attending school in person. There were significant improvements in the last six months of 2021, which brought a 17.7-percentage-point increase in face-to-face attendance rates. Despite this, access to in-person learning remains a concern: coverage and perceptions of learning are both low, with 66.0 per cent of respondents believing that children are learning less than they did before the pandemic. Restoring education standards may become one of the most critical public policy issues in the aftermath of the pandemic.

**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	29.2%	74.9%	10.6%	19.6%	17.7	66.1%
Urban	28.4%	74.3%	9.5%	18.0%	15.8	67.6%
Rural	32.0%	77.1%	13.9%	25.0%	25.9	61.0%
HH w/o children (0-17)	26.9%	69.3%	-	14.7%	-	-
HH with children (0-17)	30.4%	77.7%	10.6%	22.1%	17.7	66.1%
HH with elderly (65+)	28.6%	75.6%	8.5%	19.7%	15.7	71.0%
HH with 0-1 asset	34.0%	78.8%	14.9%	25.4%	21.5	68.2%
HH with 2-3 assets	22.0%	69.1%	4.1%	10.9%	14.4	63.5%
HH education - Primary or less	33.0%	78.3%	18.6%	27.0%	17.0	62.9%
HH education - Secondary	33.1%	80.8%	12.8%	24.4%	24.2	67.2%
HH education - Tertiary or more	24.0%	67.1%	4.3%	11.8%	10.7	66.4%

\* 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](#).