



**STATISTICAL
INSTITUTE OF
BELIZE**



COVID-19 and the Labour Force Survey in Belize

**“Covid-19 impact on labor force surveys and
other household surveys in Caribbean countries” Webinar
June 3, 2020**

Presentation Outline

- Overview – Belize Labour Force Survey
- Impact of COVID-19
- Alternative Data Collection Method for LFS
- Challenges
- Opportunities

Overview – Belize Labour Force Survey

- Belize conducts its Labour Force Survey **twice yearly** – April and September
- Sample size: **2,800 households**
- Duration: **4 weeks**
- Data is collected using **CAPI, via face to face interviews**
- Interviewers work in **teams** of four plus one supervisor
- Quality and progress are monitored in the field and in office, as data is synced to the servers continuously, upon completion of interviews.
- Data cleaning and processing is automated
- Results are **published within two months** of the reference periods (June, November)

Impact of COVID-19

- Prior to COVID-19, Belize was in the final stages of preparations for the 2020 Population and Housing Census
- No April 2020 LFS scheduled – key labour force indicators to be obtained from census
- September 2020 LFS scheduled as usual, as census field work was to be completed by the end of July 2020
- **Early March 2020:** Census 2020 postponed
- **Late March 2020:** First confirmed COVID-19 case detected in Belize

Impact of COVID-19

- **April 2020:** National state of emergency declared
 - Restricted movement between communities and districts
 - Closure of businesses and government offices
 - National curfew imposed
 - Social distancing requirements and limitations to numbers of persons allowed in one place

- **May 2020:** Government offices and some businesses reopened, restrictions to movement between communities lifted, last remaining COVID-19 patient tests negative.

Impact of COVID-19

- **June 2020:** Relaxation of some social distancing requirements
- Despite loosening of restrictions, country remains in a state of emergency
- There is considerable uncertainty about possibility of face to face surveys for the rest of 2020 and possibly 2021.
- With the country emerging from a near economic standstill, government departments and government funded agencies face severe budget cuts

Alternative Data Collection Method for LFS

- September 2020 LFS – data collection by CATI
- Sample size: 3,000 households
- Adjustments required:
 - Sample frame with telephone numbers
 - Shortening of questionnaire
 - Setting up of infrastructure for data collection by telephone
 - Revision of training material with a focus on telephone interviewing
 - Monitoring of quality and progress remotely

Alternative Data Collection Method for LFS

- **Option #1** – Constructing sample frame using administrative data from telephone companies
- Issues encountered:
 - Difficulty in obtaining data required from companies
 - Sample frame would be at the person level rather than household level
 - Issues of bias, coverage
 - Comparability of indicators to existing series

Alternative Data Collection Method for LFS

- **Option #2** – Use computer programming to create a frame consisting of all possible telephone numbers for Belize, then using an automated process try to contact each number and eliminate non-existent numbers.
- Issues encountered:
 - Requires extensive programming, steep learning curve for IT department
 - Sample frame would be at the person level rather than household level
 - Issues of bias and coverage
 - Comparability of indicators to existing series

Alternative Data Collection Method for LFS

- **Option #3** – Develop our own sample frame by conducting a listing exercise, during which telephone and email contact information will be collected
 - Closest approximation to existing LFS sampling methodology
 - Provides most updated sample frame with assurances as to quality of data contained in the frame
 - Using a listing exercise, in which we have experience and expertise, allows for control over timeline of entire process and for better planning
- Listing scheduled to start first week in July.
- Training for LFS in August
- LFS to be conducted as scheduled in September, results published November

Challenges

- Possibility exists that the country could revert to lockdown conditions at any time, if new COVID-19 cases are detected, jeopardizing listing exercise.
Preparations underway to conduct listing as quickly as possible, utilizing present window of opportunity.
- Lack of experience in data collection by CATI.
Technical assistance being obtained from ILO and PRASC, and guidance in training of telephone interviewers being obtained from UNICEF based on their MICS6 pilot.
- Expected higher than usual non-response rate.
Sample size to be increased and a contingency plan for follow ups in the field for no contacts and households with no telephone access.

Challenges

- LFS questionnaire needs to be shortened to facilitate shorter interview times. *Non-essential sections removed, focus on economic activity module and questions required to obtain key indicators. Addition/amending of questions to obtain COVID-19 related indicators.*
- Managing workplace social distancing requirements in a call center setting. *Interviewers will work from home, utilizing GSM-compatible tablets for making calls and capturing data.*
- Controlling for quality in a work-from-home setting. *To be determined.*

Opportunities

- **Building capacity** in a new modality of data collection.
- Possibility of conducting **other short surveys** by telephone, to capture pertinent and relevant indicators on the impact of COVID-19 on the country.
- **Cost savings/efficient use of limited resources** in times of financial constraint.
- In the event that funding constraints prevent the conduct of the census as planned in 2021, possibility of an alternative method of collecting the data required.
- **Continued production of crucial statistics** for monitoring the socio-economic conditions of the Belizean people, even in the face of major resource constraints.

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