

# REPORT ON LABOR FORCE SURVEY (APRIL 2021)

## HIGHLIGHTS

1. The results of the April 2021 round of the Labor Force Survey (LFS) show the tight link between labor market outcomes and the level of quarantine restrictions. Due to the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in the National Capital Region (NCR) Plus, consisting of NCR and the adjacent provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal, from March 29 to April 11, and modified ECQ (MECQ) from April 12 to May 15, there has been a temporary reversal of employment gains from the previous months. The April 2021 LFS shows a decline in the labor force (-1.4 million individuals) and employment levels (-2.1 million individuals) compared to March 2021.
2. Likewise, the unemployment rate in the country moderately increased from 7.1 percent in March 2021 to 8.7 percent in April 2021, which represents an additional 697,000 unemployed individuals. The impact of the ECQ and MECQ is less severe compared to the record high unemployment of 17.6 percent in April 2020 given a more risk-based approach to the recent quarantine restrictions imposed. For instance, instead of shutting down three-fourths of the economy, we allowed public transportation and more sectors to operate, but still subject to the minimum health standards. During the height of the quarantines in April 2020, the labor force dropped by -3.9 million, while employment declined by -8.7 million. Compared to the previous year, the labor force level is up by 6.3 million and employment levels by around 9.4 million.
3. The number of underemployed workers increased by 118,000 compared to the previous month. This means that the underemployment rate increased from 16.2 percent in March 2021 to 17.2 percent in April 2021, indicating a reduction in income during the ECQ and MECQ period.

4. The recent imposition of the ECQ and MECQ was not wasted given the significant decline in COVID-19 cases in the NCR Plus area, where hospital bed capacity was sharply increased and the prevent, detect, isolate, treat, and recover (PDITR) strategy was further enforced. Given this progress, the government is ready to take well-calibrated steps to achieve better health and job outcomes for the people, by continuing to implement the three-pillar strategy to ensure the country's recovery. First is the gradual and safe re-opening of the economy enabled by the strict adherence to the PDITR strategy. Second is the timely implementation of the recovery package. Last is the accelerated implementation of the vaccination program to increase and sustain public confidence while reducing virus transmission.

The labor market situation recorded a decline in April 2021 as employment levels dropped by almost 2.1 million month-on-month (m-o-m). This is largely attributed to the implementation of the ECQ and MECQ to control COVID-19 infections that spiked in March 2021. However, compared to last year's ECQ, the overall labor market outcomes are substantially better as the government took a more risk-based approach in imposing restrictions by allowing public transportation and more sectors to operate, but still subject to the minimum health standards.

**Table 1. Summary of labor and employment indicators, January-April 2020 and January-April 2021 (in thousands)**

Indicators	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>		2021 <sup>p,a</sup>			
	Jan	Apr	Jan <sup>b</sup>	Feb <sup>c</sup>	Mar <sup>c</sup>	Apr <sup>b</sup>
Population 15 years and over	72,841	73,722	74,733	74,603	75,029	74,971
Labor Force Level	44,934	41,058	45,201	47,341	48,772	47,407
Employment Level	42,543	33,830	41,248	43,153	45,332	43,269
Unemployment Level	2,391	7,228	3,953	4,187	3,441	4,138
Underemployment Level	6,299	6,398	6,589	7,850	7,335	7,453
Visible Underemployment	3,799	5,489	4,531	5,385	4,928	5,331
Employment Generation (QOQ)	6	(8,823)	1,411	1,905 <sup>d</sup>	2,178 <sup>d</sup>	(2,062) <sup>d</sup>
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	61.7	55.7	60.5	63.5	65.0	63.2
Employment Rate (%)	94.7	82.4	91.3	91.2	92.9	91.3
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.3	17.6	8.7	8.8	7.1	8.7
Underemployment Rate (%)	14.8	18.9	16.0	18.2	16.2	17.2
Visible Underemployment Rate (%)	8.9	16.2	11.0	12.5	10.9	12.3
Mean Hours of Work	41.3	35.0	39.3	38.9	39.7	38.0

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a</sup> Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; <sup>b</sup> Estimates for the quarterly round of the LFS; <sup>c</sup> Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly/regular LFS to generate national level labor and employment statistics from the survey; <sup>d</sup> Increment from previous month; qoq – quarter on quarter difference

Source: LFS, PSA

1. The April 2021 round of the LFS recorded a decline in total employment of 2.1 million compared to the previous month. Despite the imposition of ECQ and MECQ in the NCR Plus bubble,<sup>1,2</sup> the total employment level in April 2021 is significantly better than the record-high unemployment rate of 17.6 percent in April 2020 at the height of last year's ECQ. It is also the second-highest employment rate recorded since the onset of the pandemic.

**Table 2. Employment: January 2020 – April 2021**

Indicators	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>				2021 <sup>p,a</sup>			
	Jan	Apr	Jul <sup>p</sup>	Oct <sup>p</sup>	Jan <sup>b</sup>	Feb <sup>c</sup>	Mar <sup>c</sup>	Apr <sup>b</sup>
Employment rate (%)	94.7	82.4	90.0	91.3	91.3	91.2	92.9	91.3
Employment level (growth rate, QoQ)	0.01	(20.5)	22.1	(3.6)	3.5	4.6 <sup>d</sup>	5.0 <sup>d</sup>	(4.5) <sup>d</sup>
<i>Employment levels by sector (in thousands)</i>								
Agriculture	9,625	8,761	10,870	9,762	10,044	10,303	11,130	10,560
Industry	7,989	5,754	7,785	7,299	7,601	7,647	8,802	7,885
Manufacturing	3,634	2,699	3,373	3,028	3,140	3,276	3,560	3,420
Services	24,929	19,315	22,651	22,776	23,602	25,203	25,400	24,825

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a/</sup>Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; <sup>b/</sup> Estimates for the quarterly round of the LFS; <sup>c/</sup> Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly/regular LFS to generate national level labor and employment statistics from the survey; <sup>d/</sup> Increment from previous month; qoq – quarter on quarter difference

Source: LFS, PSA

2. Given the higher unemployment rate and lower Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR), 2.1 million jobs were lost between March and April 2021. The bulk of employment losses relative to March 2021 came from the industry sector (-917,000), mainly from construction (-805,000) and manufacturing (-141,000) subsectors. Based on the guidelines issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases and the Department of Public Works and Highways, only essential public and

<sup>1</sup> 'NCR +' under ECQ March 29 to April 4 | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>2</sup> 'NCR Plus' stays under ECQ for another week | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

private infrastructure projects were allowed to operate in ECQ and MECQ<sup>3</sup> areas, prohibiting the operations of private and personal-use small-scale construction projects.<sup>4</sup> The employment turnout in construction is also broadly in line with the less optimistic business sentiments for the subsector in the second quarter of 2021.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the employment decline in manufacturing is also likely due to the reduced operational capacity of firms in the subsector. This is also mirrored by the drop in the country's manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) from 52.2 in March to 49.0 in April 2021, signaling worsening operating conditions for the subsector. After three consecutive months of growth, it was the first time this year that the country's manufacturing PMI fell below the 50.0 neutral value.<sup>6,7</sup>

In contrast, the mining and quarrying (full capacity allowed if for export), and electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply (housing services activities allowed full capacity in MECQ) subsectors experienced moderate net employment gains of 23,000 and 18,000, respectively. These slightly tempered the employment losses in the industry sector.

3. The services sector registered a 575,000 decline in employment level, with most subsectors weakening. The bulk of the employment losses came from the wholesale and retail trade (-457,000), followed by finance (-82,000), and information and communication (-73,000) subsectors. Employment in the trade subsector fell largely due to the limited operations of malls and shopping centers.<sup>8</sup> Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) administrative data also recorded 439 firms in wholesale and retail trade reporting permanent and temporary closures along with a reduced workforce. Likewise, employment losses in the other subsectors are likely

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<sup>3</sup> ECQ was implemented in the NCR+ bubble from 29 March to 11 April; while, MECQ was implemented in the same area from 12 April to 14 May.

<sup>4</sup> OMNIBUS Guidelines with Amendments as of March 28, 2021 ([officialgazette.gov.ph](http://officialgazette.gov.ph)); DPWH Issues Revised Construction Safety Guidelines; Prohibits Small-Scale Projects to Operate in ECQ, MECQ areas | Department of Public Works and Highways

<sup>5</sup> Q1 2021 Business Expectations Survey ([bsp.gov.ph](http://bsp.gov.ph))

<sup>6</sup> IHS MarkIt Philippines Manufacturing PMI ([markiteconomics.com](http://markiteconomics.com))

<sup>7</sup> Philippines Manufacturing PMI | 2016-2021 Data | 2022-2023 Forecast | Calendar ([tradingeconomics.com](http://tradingeconomics.com))

<sup>8</sup> OMNIBUS Guidelines with Amendments as of March 28, 2021 ([officialgazette.gov.ph](http://officialgazette.gov.ph))

due to reduced operating capacity. In particular, some financial services and telecommunications companies are classified as Category III industries with an on-site capacity of a maximum of 50 percent.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, employment in the education subsector increased by 187,000 relative to the previous month. This may be due to the Department of Education's (DepEd) conduct of early registration for the next school year.<sup>10</sup> Accommodation and food service activities also posted an increase in employment (+62,000), which may be attributed to the repurposing of hotels into isolation and quarantine facilities as COVID-19 cases increased in the NCR Plus bubble.<sup>11</sup> The continued rise of home-based food businesses may have also contributed to the employment uptick in the subsector.<sup>12</sup> For instance, employment generated in accommodation and food service activities are mainly classified as self-employed, employer in own family-operated farm or business, and unpaid family workers. At the same time, real estate employment also grew (+58,000).<sup>13</sup>

4. Relative to March 2021, employment in the agriculture sector fell by 570,000. Of this, 493,000 came from agriculture and forestry as the subsector continues to deal with African Swine Fever, rice tungro virus, and the damage brought by Typhoon Bising.<sup>14, 15</sup> Poor weather conditions brought by the typhoon may have also contributed to employment decline in the fishing and aquaculture subsector (-77,000).<sup>16, 17</sup>
5. In terms of major occupations, the majority of employment losses were recorded in elementary occupations (-1.1 million),<sup>18</sup> followed by service and

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<sup>9</sup> OMNIBUS Guidelines with Amendments as of March 28, 2021 ([officialgazette.gov.ph](http://officialgazette.gov.ph))

<sup>10</sup> DepEd sets early registration for next school year | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>11</sup> Department of Tourism (DOT) lauds repurposed hotels for coronavirus fight | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>12</sup> Binalot launches home kitchen-based franchise | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>13</sup> Colliers | Colliers Quarterly | Property Market Report | Q1 2021 | Philippines

<sup>14</sup> DA races to save Albay ricefields from 'tungro' virus | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>15</sup> 'Bising' agri damage reaches P168-M: DA | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>16</sup> Farmers, fisherfolk in 'Bising' path warned to guard livelihood | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>17</sup> Fish supply up again after week of decline due to typhoon | Philippine News Agency ([pna.gov.ph](http://pna.gov.ph))

<sup>18</sup> Elementary occupations involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort.

sales workers (-414,000), plant and machine operators and assemblers (-334,000), craft and related trade workers (-268,000), and skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers (-216,000).

On the other hand, the high-skilled occupation groups posted net employment gains, namely, professionals (+246,000), managers (+41,000), and technicians and associate professionals (+22,000). In addition, employment also increased among clerical support workers (+16,000). The jobs generated in these occupation groups moderated the employment losses for the period.

6. The bulk of losses were recorded in permanent employment (-1.5 million), mostly from construction (-746,000), wholesale and retail trade (-227,000), and manufacturing (-206,000). This was slightly tempered by some 275,000 permanent jobs created in education (+193,000), real estate activities (+40,000), electricity, gas, steam, and air-conditioning supply (+25,000), professional, scientific, and technical activities (+14,000), and activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies (+2,000).

Meanwhile, short-term employment declined by 484,000, moderated by improvements in some sectors. Nonetheless, the bulk of losses came from agriculture and forestry (-427,000), wholesale and retail trade (-243,000), and fishing and aquaculture (-75,000).

7. In comparison with January 2021 which contains the latest LFS results with regional data, employment levels in all regions increased except for Central Luzon (-86,000), Cagayan Valley (-67,000), National Capital Region (-56,000), and Western Visayas (-7,000). The impact of the ECQ and MECQ on unemployment is more pronounced in regions with stricter quarantine measures, further highlighting the sensitivity of the labor market to the quarantine level. NCR and Region IV-A (CALABARZON), where the strictest quarantines were imposed, posted the highest regional unemployment rate in April 2021 of 14.4 percent and 13.4 percent, respectively.

8. Compared to the previous month, employment across all classes of workers declined except for those in the following categories: employers in their own family-operated farm or business (+337,000), government workers (+128,000), and workers in their own family-operated farm or business (+1,000). Remunerative and stable work (or wage and salary workers<sup>19</sup>) was the biggest contributor accounting for 81.8 percent of the total decline, or around -1.7 million individuals. Self-employed individuals (-487,000) and unpaid family workers (-225,000) also recorded declines.

When compared to a year ago, the latest results show significant improvements across all classes of workers. This can be attributed to the more risk-managed approach to recent quarantine restrictions imposed. For instance, instead of shutting down three-fourths of the economy, the government allowed public transportation and more sectors to operate, but still subject to the minimum health standards.

Meanwhile, vulnerable employment decreased from 16.4 million in March 2021 to 15.7 million in April 2021, but still high relative to last year (+32.8% or +3.9 million individuals).

**The national underemployment rate in April 2021 increased to 17.2 percent, a percentage point (ppt) higher compared to March 2021, indicating the reduction in income during the ECQ and MECQ period. Nevertheless, this is still 1.7 ppts lower compared to the same period last year.**

9. Full-time employment<sup>20</sup> declined substantially by -14.3 percent or -4.0 million individuals compared to the previous month. Of the 4.0 million, about 1.4 million worked part-time only,<sup>21</sup> while 615,000 did not work or report to work at all. Hence, the mean hours of work declined from 39.7 in

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<sup>19</sup> This includes those who worked in private households, private establishments, government or government corporation, and with pay in own family-operated farm or business.

<sup>20</sup> worked 40 hours or more

<sup>21</sup> worked less than 40 hours



March 2021 to 38.0 in April 2021. The latter, however, is still better compared to 35.0 hours recorded a year ago.

At the same time, underemployed workers increased by 118,000 from March to April 2021,<sup>22</sup> bringing up the underemployment rate to 17.2 percent from 16.2 percent from the previous month. Compared to a year ago, underemployment in April 2021 was up by over 1 million workers.

10. Most of the additional underemployed workers in April 2021 came from the services sector, with the wholesale and retail trade (+176,000), transportation and storage (+164,000), and accommodation and food service activities (+96,000) subsectors seeing the highest increase. The industry sector saw a 70,000 increase in underemployment, mostly from manufacturing (+46,000). On the other hand, underemployment in agriculture dropped by 465,000, as the sector saw the production and farmgate prices of rice increasing in the dry season.<sup>23</sup>
11. In particular, those who were visibly underemployed<sup>24</sup> rose by 403,000 month-on-month. In contrast, the number of invisibly underemployed<sup>25</sup> decreased by 285,000 with workers wanting more earnings declining by 571,000. Compared to a year ago, those invisibly unemployed increased significantly (+1.2 million), while visible unemployment recorded slight declines (-158,000).
12. By class of worker, underemployment increased among wage and salary workers (+314,000) and employers in their own family-operated farm or business (+32,000). On the other hand, underemployment among the self-employed and unpaid family workers declined by -185,000 and -43,000 from the previous month, respectively.

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<sup>22</sup> those who have jobs but lack income

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.da.gov.ph/rtl-on-track-palay-harvest-and-prices-up-rice-affordable-capped-with-another-record-harvest-in-2021/>

<sup>24</sup> Visible underemployment are persons who are working less than 40 hours per week and want more hours of work

<sup>25</sup> Invisible underemployment are persons working at least 40 hours and still want additional hours of work

13. For areas outside of NCR (AONCR), the underemployment rate also increased marginally quarter-on-quarter from 17.1 percent in January 2021 to 17.5 percent in April. Similarly, the underemployment rate for AONCR in April 2021 is still lower than the 20.3 percent posted in the same period last year. In contrast, NCR’s underemployment rate nearly doubled to 15.5 percent from 8.2 percent in January 2021, and is significantly higher compared to a year ago at 10.2 percent. This is likely due to more jobs that shifted to part-time arrangements given capacity restrictions.

**Table 3. Underemployment rates, January 2020 – April 2021 (in percent)**

Area	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>				2021 <sup>p,a</sup>			
	Jan	Apr	Jul <sup>p</sup>	Oct <sup>p</sup>	Jan <sup>b</sup>	Feb <sup>c</sup>	Mar <sup>c</sup>	Apr <sup>b</sup>
<b>National</b>	14.8	18.9	17.3	14.4	16.0	18.2	16.2	17.2
<b>AONCR</b>	16.7	20.3	14.8	14.2	17.1	N/A	N/A	17.5

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a</sup> Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections;

<sup>b</sup> Estimates for quarterly round of the LFS; <sup>c</sup> Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly/regular LFS to generate national level labor and employment statistics from the survey

Source: LFS, PSA

14. Geographically, underemployment increased in most regions compared to January 2021. The increase came mostly from NCR (+375,000), and Regions VII (+294,000), IV-A (+277,000), and XIII (+147,000) – areas either covered by stricter quarantines or affected by Typhoon Bising.<sup>26</sup> Aside from this, six regions recorded a decline in underemployment, namely Regions IX (-158,000), VIII (-81,000), V (-61,000), X (-59,000), II (-42,000), and XI (-23,000).

**The unemployment rate in April 2021 picked up to 8.7 percent from 7.1 percent in March 2021 as the number of**

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1137310>

**unemployed increased. Still, this is significantly better than the 17.6 percent recorded a year ago.**

15. Relative to the previous month, an additional 697,000 unemployed Filipinos were recorded in April 2021, pulling up the total unemployment level to about 4.1 million. However, the latter is still a significant improvement compared to the unemployment figures a year ago of 7.2 million. Among the additional unemployed, none looked for work, mainly due to COVID-19-related reasons such as the community quarantines.

**Table 4. Unemployment Rates: January 2020 – April 2021 (in percent)**

Indicator	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>				2021 <sup>p,a</sup>			
	Jan	Apr	Jul <sup>p</sup>	Oct <sup>p</sup>	Jan <sup>b</sup>	Feb <sup>c</sup>	Mar <sup>c</sup>	Apr <sup>b</sup>
Overall	5.3	17.6	10.0	8.7	8.7	8.8	7.1	8.7
15-24	13.6	31.5	22.4	19.4	19.8	18.5	15.4	15.8
25-54	4.0	16.0	8.1	7.3	7.4	7.5	6.0	8.1
55 & over	2.0	10.5	4.3	4.3	3.7	4.8	2.9	4.2

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a</sup> Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; <sup>b</sup> Estimates for quarterly round of the LFS; <sup>c</sup> Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly/regular LFS to generate national level labor and employment statistics from the survey

Source: LFS, PSA

By age group, the prime-age workers (25 to 54 years old) recorded the largest increase in unemployment rate compared to March 2021 (+2.1 percentage points). Disaggregating by sex, unemployment grew across all age groups except for young females (-42,000). Given the decline in the youth labor force, youth unemployment registered a minimal increase of +0.4 ppts to 15.8 percent, which is in line with the target of 14.5 to 16.5 percent for 2021 under the Updated Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022.

16. In terms of educational attainment, the April 2021 round is a reversal of trends in previous months when unemployment rates increased except

among those with senior high school (SHS) education (18.0% from 23.8%) and post-secondary undergraduates (10.3% from 11.4%).

17. The impact of the ECQ and MECQ on unemployment is more pronounced in regions with stricter quarantine measures, further highlighting the sensitivity of the labor market to the quarantine level. Relative to January 2021, 5 out of 17 regions posted an increase in unemployment rates: NCR (14.4% from 8.8%), Cagayan Valley (8.8% from 6.0%), Central Visayas (8.2% from 7.1%), CALABARZON (13.4% from 13.1%), and Central Luzon (8.8% from 8.5%). These areas are either covered by stricter quarantines or affected by Typhoon Bising.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/weather/typhoon-bising-pagasa-forecast-april-19-2021-11am>

**Table 5. Comparison of the latest unemployment rates<sup>28</sup> across selected Asian economies**

Indicator	Latest Period		Previous Period	
	Unemployment Rate	Month released	Unemployment Rate	Month released
China <sup>a</sup>	3.9	Mar 2021	4.2	Dec 2020
India <sup>b</sup>	9.9	Apr-May 2021	6.6	Jan-Mar 2021
Indonesia <sup>c</sup>	6.3	Feb 2021	7.1	Aug 2020
Malaysia <sup>b</sup>	4.7	Mar 2021	4.8	Feb 2021
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>Apr 2021</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>Mar 2021</b>
Thailand <sup>b</sup>	1.9	Oct-Dec 2020	1.9	Jul-Sep 2020
Vietnam <sup>a</sup>	2.4	Mar 2021	2.4	Dec 2020

Notes: a/ Unemployment in these countries is reported quarterly (March, June, September, December); b/ Unemployment in these countries is reported monthly; Figures above refer to quarterly average; c/ Indonesia unemployment is reported semi-annually (February and August); Figures in February do not take into account COVID-19 impact

18. Compared to the latest unemployment rates of selected Asian economies, the country's unemployment rate remains high with the exception of India which experienced a massive surge of COVID-19 cases.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/china/unemployment-rate>; <https://unemploymentinindia.cmie.com/>; <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/11/05/unemployment-surges-to-decade-high-as-covid-19-causes-millions-to-lose-jobs.html>; <https://www.economy.com/malaysia/unemployment-rate>; <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/thailand/unemployment-rate>; <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/vietnam/unemployment-rate>

**Compared to the previous month, the LFPR declined to 63.2 percent in April 2021 from 65.0 percent in March 2021, although still exceeding the pre-pandemic rate at 61.7 percent.**

**Table 6. LFPR, January 2020 – March 2021 (in percent)**

Indicator	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>				2021 <sup>p,a</sup>			
	Jan	Apr	Jul <sup>p</sup>	Oct <sup>p</sup>	Jan <sup>b</sup>	Feb <sup>c</sup>	Mar <sup>c</sup>	Apr <sup>b</sup>
<b>LFPR (total)</b>	61.7	55.7	61.9	58.7	60.5	63.5	65.0	63.2
Youth	37.4	32.4	38.9	33.9	34.7	37.7	40.1	38.2
Male	74.8	69.8	75.3	72.3	73.9	75.9	76.8	75.0
Female	48.4	41.5	48.5	45.0	46.9	50.9	53.1	51.4

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a</sup>Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; <sup>b</sup> Estimates for quarterly round of the LFS; <sup>c</sup> Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly/regular LFS to generate national-level labor and employment statistics from the survey

Source: LFS, PSA

19. The total labor force slightly contracted by 2.8 percent or about 1.4 million individuals between March and April 2021. The reduction in the labor force can be observed across all age groups but especially among those aged 25 to 34 (-439,000), 15 to 24 (-367,000), and 55 and over (-202,000). Aside from this, the decline is slightly more pronounced among males (-735,000) than females (-630,000).
20. Nevertheless, between January and April 2021, there was a 2.2 million increase in the labor force. In fact, 14 out of 17 regions recorded improvements in their labor force participation rate. The decline in the total labor force for Cagayan Valley (62.8% from 64.1%) and Central Luzon (57.0% from 58.4%) may still be attributed to the typhoon that hit these regions in April.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the stricter quarantine restrictions observed

<sup>29</sup> [https://ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/4150/SitRep\\_No\\_4\\_TC\\_BISING\\_2021\\_Update.pdf](https://ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/4150/SitRep_No_4_TC_BISING_2021_Update.pdf)

in Western Visayas (61.7% from 62.6%) beginning in April<sup>30</sup> may have contributed to the reduction of those who looked for work during the survey period.

21. Likewise, an overall decline (-2.0 million) was observed among persons not in the labor force (NILF). There was a notable decrease in individuals citing household family duties as a reason for staying out of the labor force (-2.4 million), majority of whom are women (-2.1 million). As community quarantine restrictions were imposed during the survey period, the number of those who cited COVID-19 related reasons also slightly went up (+297,000).

**The share of economically inactive youth declined further to 16.3 percent in April from 19.4 percent in January and 25.2 percent a year ago.**

**Table 7. Share of youth NEE and NEET to total youth population: January 2020 - April 2021 (in percent)**

Indicator	2020 <sup>a,b</sup>				2021 <sup>p,a,b</sup>	
	Jan	Apr	Jul <sup>p</sup>	Oct <sup>p</sup>	Jan	Apr
Share of youth NEE (%)	17.1	25.3	11.5	20.6	19.6	16.4
Share of youth NEET (%)	16.9	25.2	11.4	20.4	19.4	16.3

<sup>p</sup> Estimates are preliminary and may change; <sup>a</sup> Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections;

<sup>b</sup> Estimates for quarterly round of the LFS, no estimates for monthly round

Source: LFS, PSA

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/465716/philippines-western-visayas-authorities-extend-suspension-of-entry-from-metro-manila-and-several-other-localities-through-april-19-update-1>

22. The proportion and number of youth not in education, employment, nor training (NEET) declined to 16.3 percent (equivalent to 3.3 million) compared to 19.4 percent (equivalent to 3.9 million) in January. This is also significantly lower than the proportion of youth NEET of 25.2 percent or an equivalent of 5 million at the height of the ECQ last year. This was mainly due to a reduction in youth NEET not in the labor force (-455,000) on a quarter-on-quarter basis, primarily from those previously citing household family duties (-441,000).

**The government continues to implement its three-pillar strategy to ensure our recovery to achieve better health and job outcomes for the people.**

23. *The first pillar is the further re-opening of the economy towards modified GCQ or better, at the appropriate time.* This may be complemented with expanding the age group allowed to go out and gradually resuming face-to-face learning in the low-risk areas, all with the appropriate safeguards.

*Shift towards targeted quarantine restrictions.* The localized or granular community quarantine serves as an opportunity for the government to balance the act of improving the health system capacity to save lives from COVID-19 and of facilitating the gradual reopening of the economy to ensure the economic survival of households. As daily cases have subsided in the past week, the government continues to intensify the implementation of the PDITR strategy with the provision of more isolation and quarantine beds and digital contact tracing systems.

24. *The second pillar is to fully implement the recovery package.* The recovery package consists of fiscal, monetary, and financial interventions that amount to over 2.7 trillion pesos or 15.4 percent of GDP since last year. Several programs have been embedded in the 2021 budget to help Filipinos cope with the impact of the pandemic. The



implementation of these programs, along with the remaining amounts under the extended FY 2020 budget and *Bayanihan II*, need to be accelerated. Aside from this, the recovery measures also need to be accompanied by appropriate and sufficient information campaigns to ensure that the intended beneficiaries are aware of available assistance.<sup>31</sup>

*Swiftly implement recently-enacted legislation to aid the country's economic recovery*, including the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act, which is expected to attract more foreign direct investments (FDI) through a performance-based, targeted, time-bound, and transparent grant of tax incentives that will result in more job opportunities. There is also a need to swiftly pass the economic liberalization bills, such as the amendments to the Public Service Act, Foreign Investment Act, and Retail Trade Liberalization Act, that will further ease restrictions on foreign investments and complement the benefits of CREATE.

*Fast-track the implementation of the recently launched National Employment Recovery Strategy (NERS) 2021-2022*. The upskilling and retooling programs listed in the NERS action plan will enhance and match the workers' capabilities for in-demand jobs under the 'new normal.' The government is also providing support for informal workers and other vulnerable sectors through the different livelihood programs under DOLE, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Department of Trade and Industry.

25. **The third pillar is the accelerated implementation of the vaccine deployment program.** Accelerating vaccine rollout in the succeeding months is necessary to achieve herd immunity and allow for the gradual re-opening of the economy. The effective rollout of these vaccine doses, complemented by the safe and gradual reopening of low-risk areas, will

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1134903>

build confidence and allow the economy to further restore jobs and income while reducing virus transmission.

With the expected increase in the supply of vaccines beginning June 2021, the government has already opened the vaccination to those classified under the A4 priority group with corresponding guidelines.<sup>32</sup> The A4 priority group for the COVID-19 vaccination rollout has been expanded to include all those who work outside their homes and government employees. Furthermore, the government is expected to intensify its information campaign to reduce vaccine hesitancy among the public. Transportation and logistical preparations and pre-registration of vaccine recipients will also be prioritized and efficiently carried out by the local health units.

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<sup>32</sup> IATF Resolution no. 117