

The Hidden Price of Adolescent Pregnancy and Early Motherhood

Socio-Economic Impact of Adolescent Pregnancy & Early Motherhood
in Suriname, Belize and Curaçao — A Comparative MILENA Assessment

SR Suriname

SSLC 2016/17/2022 · MILENA

BZ Belize

Census 2022 · MILENA

CW Curaçao

Pending

2022 Census Data soon available

Why AP&EM Demands Economic Attention —Countries in LAC Face the Same Challenge

SR SURINAME

22%

of all live births
from
girls aged 10–19

~1,400

adolescent
births/yr
(2015–2018)

3%

of teen mothers
under 15 yrs old

1.5×

Suriname AP
rate vs
global average

BZ BELIZE

74/1k

births per 1,000
girls
aged 15–19
(2022)

1,089

adolescent births
recorded
(Census 2022)

<14

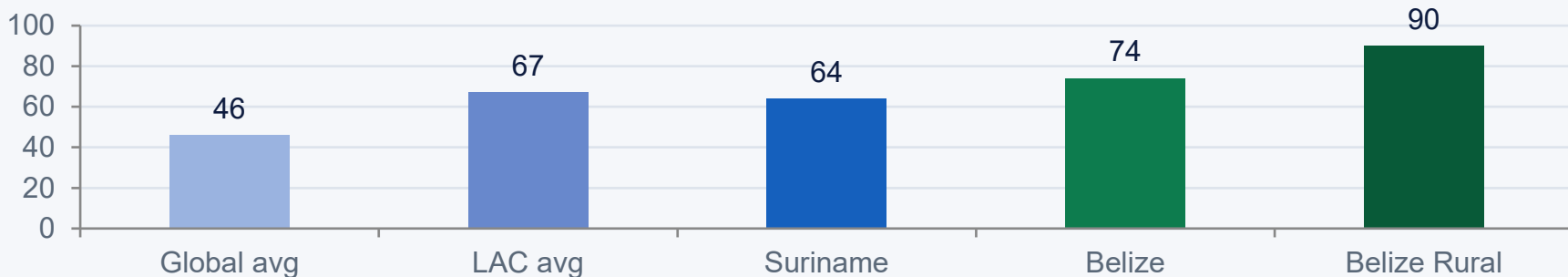
youngest
recorded
mother (Census
2022)

1.1×

Belize AP rate vs
LAC average (67)

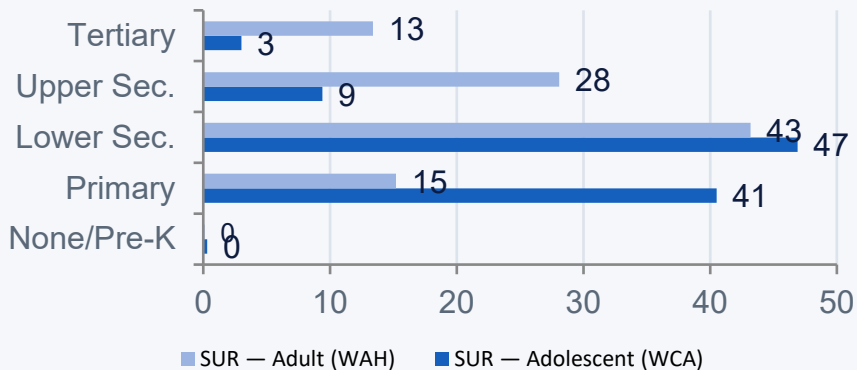
Context: LA&C is the only region globally with an increasing adolescent birth rate (PAHO/UNFPA/UNICEF, 2017). Suriname: 1.5× global avg | Belize: 1.1× LAC average of 67 | Rural Belize reaches 90 per 1,000

Adolescent Birth Rate — International Comparison

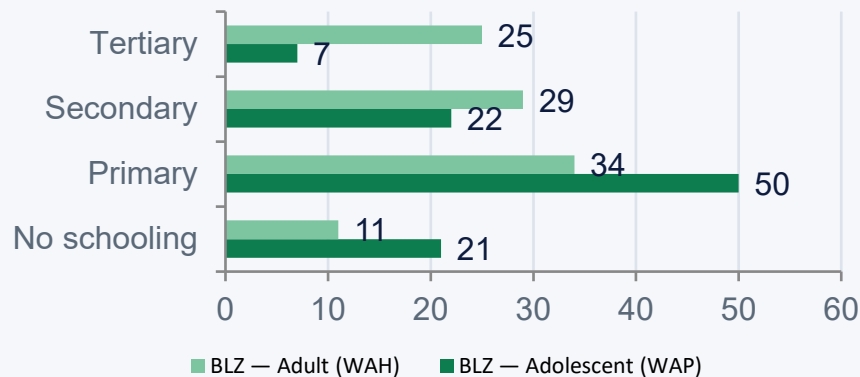


Who Carries the Burden? Comparative Profile of Adolescent Mothers

SR Education Level — Suriname (%)



BZ Education Level — Belize (%)



Economically
inactive (WCA/WAP)

SR	BZ
60%	57%

Max lower/primary
education

SR	BZ
85%	63%*

**15-19 yr group*

Reach
tertiary education

SR 3%	BZ 7%
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Income gap
WCA vs WAH

SR	BZ
34%	2.4%

The MILENA Framework — Opportunity Cost Approach

Opportunity Cost = value of the best alternative foregone due to AP&EM

SR Suriname

Treatment: WCA: Women 20–60 first child age 10–19
Control: WAH: Women 20–60 first child age 20–29
Data: SSLC 2016/17-2022 · N(2017) = 6,913

BZ Belize

Treatment: WAP: Women 15–49 first child age 10–19
Control: WAH: Women 20–49 first child age 20–49
Data: Census 2022 · N = 98,910 women

D1

Labour Market
Participation

D2

Labour
Income

D3

Educational
Attainment

D4

Health
Impact

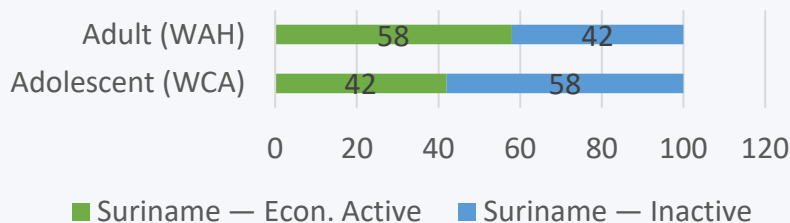
D5

Fiscal /
Tax Impact

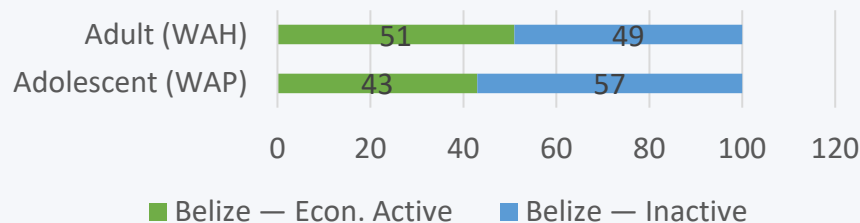
AGGREGATED SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COST
Total OC (D1–D3) + Health (D4) + Fiscal Loss (D5) = GDP Share

D1 & D2: Labour Market Participation & Income: Suriname vs Belize

SR Economic Activity (%)



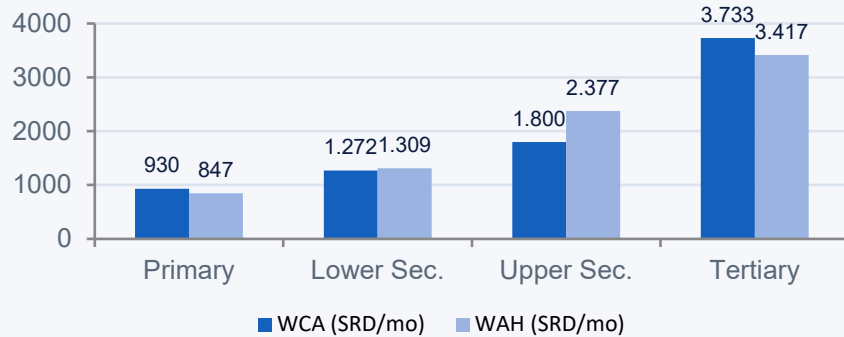
BZ Economic Activity (%)



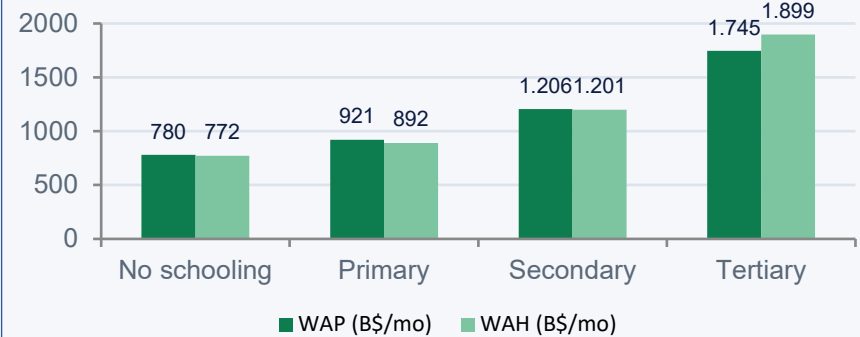
Indicator	SR Suriname	BZ Belize
Inactivity rate (WCA/WAP)	58%	57%
Inactivity gap vs adult mothers	16 pp → WCA 28% more likely	8 pp → WAP 16% more likely
Unemployment rate (WCA/WAP)	19.5%	2.3%
OC — Labour Inactivity (D1)	SRD 119M ≈ USD 16.3M	USD 16.9M
OC — Unemployment (D1)	SRD 26M ≈ USD 3.6M	USD 0.4M
Annual income WCA/WAP	SRD 16,270 ≈ USD 2,229	USD 6,977 (B\$13,068)
Annual income WAH	SRD 24,706 ≈ USD 3,385	USD 7,145 (B\$14,291)
Income gap (%)	34%	2.4%
OC — Labour Income (D2)	SRD 268M ≈ USD 36.7M	USD 4.2M

D3 — Educational Opportunity Cost: Suriname vs Belize

sr Monthly Income by Education (SRD)



bz Monthly Income by Education (B\$)



Schooling gap
(stuck at primary)

SR -25 pp BZ -16 pp

SUR

BLZ

Professionalization gap
(upper sec / secondary)

SR +19 pp BZ +18 pp

SUR

BLZ

Tertiary gap

SR +10 pp BZ +18 pp

SUR

BLZ

OC Education

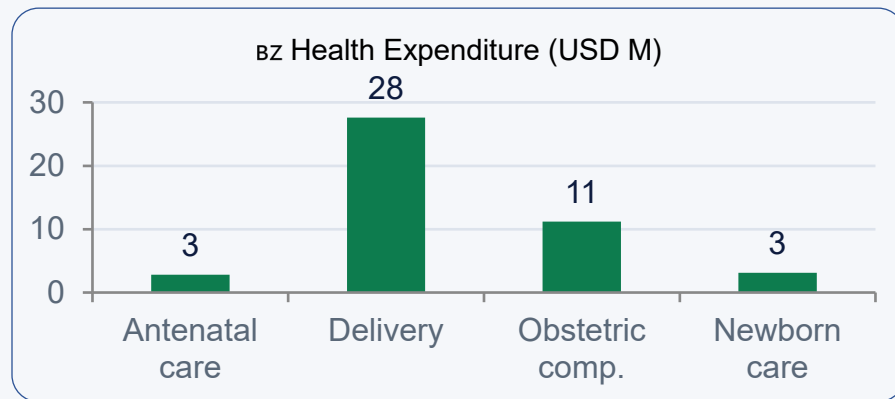
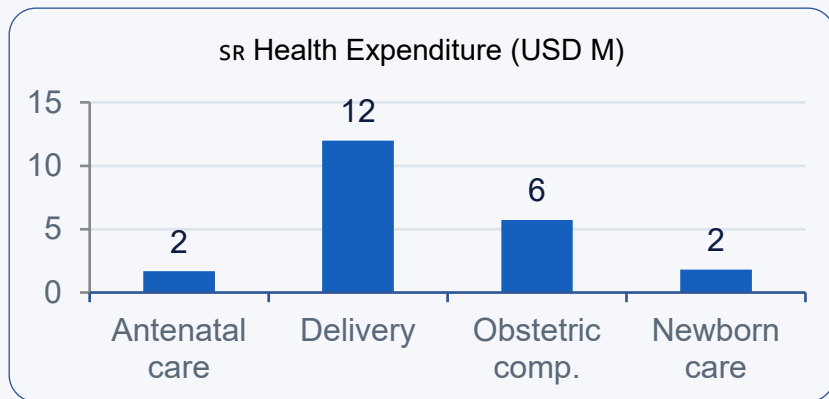
SR SRD 165M
≈ USD 22.6M

BZ USD
25.5M

SUR

BLZ

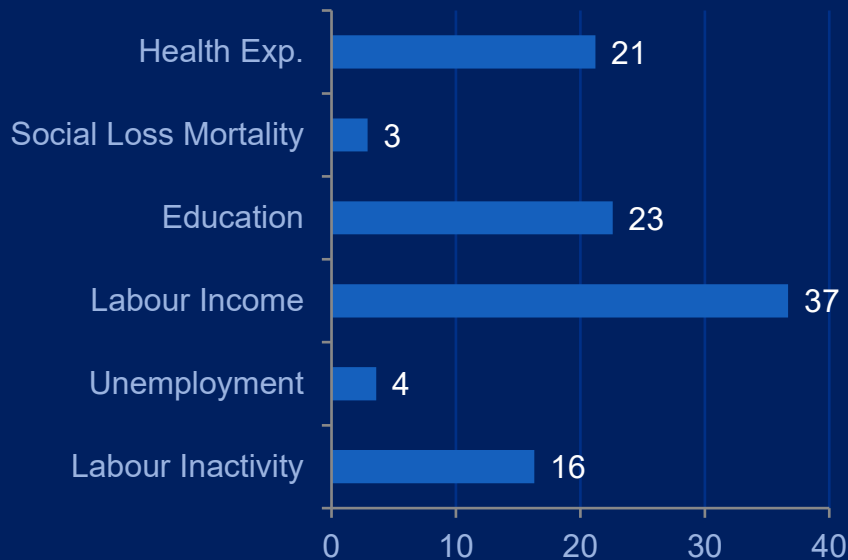
D4 — Health Consequences: Mortality, YPLL & Expenditure



Health Metric	SR Suriname	BZ Belize
Maternal Mortality Rate Adolescents (MMRA)	10 per 100,000	14 per 100,000
Adolescent maternal deaths	30 deaths (2017)	1 death (2022)
Life expectancy	77 years	77 years
Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL)	1,800 years	55 years
Years of Potential Productive Life Lost	1,290 years	48 years
Social loss — maternal mortality	USD 2.9M	USD 0.33M
Total health expenditure (AP-related)	SRD 155M ≈ USD 21.2M	USD 44.7M

D5 & Aggregate — The Full Economic Bill: Suriname vs Belize

SR Suriname — Opportunity Costs (USD M)



BZ Belize — Opportunity Costs (USD M)



SUR — Total Socio-Econ. OC

SRD 413M

≈ USD 56.6M

SUR — Tax Revenues
Forgone

SRD 73.7M

≈ USD 10.1M

SUR — Share of GDP

1.6% GDP

(2017)

BLZ — Total Socio-Econ. OC

USD 21.5M

B\$ 43M

BLZ — Tax Revenues
Forgone

USD 6.6M

ISR + IVA

BLZ — Share of GDP

0.8% GDP

(2022)

Conclusions — Comparative MILENA Scorecard

Dimension	SR Suriname Key Finding	BZ Belize Key Finding	Common Pattern
D1 Labour Participation	WCA 28% more likely inactive OC: SRD 145M (USD 19.9M)	WAP 16% more likely inactive OC: USD 17.3M	Both ~55–58% inactivity for adolescent mothers
D2 Labour Income	34% wage gap SRD 16,270 vs 24,706/yr	2.4% income gap USD 6,977 vs 7,145/yr	Adolescent mothers earn consistently less
D3 Education	85% WCA $\leq$ lower secondary OC: SRD 165M (USD 22.6M)	70% WAP $\leq$ primary; only 7% tertiary OC: USD 25.5M	Large schooling & tertiary gaps in both countries
D4 Health	30 maternal deaths; 1,800 YPLL Health cost: USD 21.2M	1 maternal death; 55 YPLL Health cost: USD 44.7M	Health expenditure dominates Belize; mortality Suriname
D5 Fiscal	Tax forgone: SRD 73.7M	Tax forgone: USD 6.6M	State misses revenue due to lower participation
TOTAL	SRD 413M = 1.6% GDP	USD 21.5M = 0.8% GDP	Both: recurring annual preventable loss

Policy Recommendations & Research Agenda

Education & School Retention

Legislation to keep adolescent mothers in school. Targeted support in inland/rural areas. Both countries: 70–85% reach maximum VMBO level.

Sexual & Reproductive Health

Evidence-based CSE at junior secondary level. Increase access to contraception. Only 23–37% of adolescents use contraception.

Social Protection & Poverty Targeting

Integrating AP data into PMT/BIS systems (Suriname). Expanding Social Safety Nets for Adolescent Mothers in Both Countries.

Legislation & Child Rights

Maintain minimum age of marriage, strengthen GBV protection. 14.5% of DV cases in Belize involve adolescents; Suriname: repeat pregnancies are on the rise.



NWO Onderzoeksagenda:

Update Suriname MILENA with SSLC 2022 · Ethnic-disaggregated causal analysis (Maroon/Indigenous) · Evaluate APP Baseline KAP survey impact · MILENA Curaçao as soon as national survey data are available · Longitudinal Panel Study Recurrence Pregnancies

Investing in adolescent girls is not a cost — it is the highest return investment a small state can make.