

# Pacific Statistical/Economic Briefing

## COVID-19 Economic Impacts

### First Quarter 2020

The coronavirus pandemic is adversely affecting almost all activities in the economic and social spheres of our Pacific region. Economic Activity in the Pacific Islands has slowed at an unprecedented rate and scale, triggering major crises in the tourism, trade, financial, private and government sectors. Job losses, restrictions on small businesses and declining remittance flows are having a major impact on the levels of hardship and poverty being experienced by households and families across the region. The extent of the initial economic impacts is now being seen in the available quarterly GDP data and budget forecasts. For example, in the first quarter of 2020 GDP in Samoa was 4.2% below the level of the first quarter of 2019. In Fiji, the recent budget is projecting a 21.7% contraction in GDP in 2020 leading to a forecast budget deficit of 20.2% of GDP in fiscal 2020/21<sup>1</sup>.

Full GDP data often takes several months to be compiled; in the meantime however administrative data collected by the Ministry of Finance, Revenue and Customs Authorities, National Provident Funds, Power Authorities etc. can provide some leading indicators and a good understanding of the pandemic's impact. Information gaps can be reduced if such data is shared with the National Statistics Offices (NSO).

Early in June SDD provided a recommended list of leading economic and social indicators that could be readily compiled from administrative and related data available to governments, see the list here: <https://sdd.spc.int/disasters-data>.

SDD has now extracted the latest available data for these leading indicators from the NSOs, Central Banks, Ministries of Finance and other national websites; the following summarises the findings. If made available other data could provide details such as the number of workers laid off and the magnitude of impact on families that depend on income from tourism-related activities. Data will be updated as and when it becomes available.

Enquiries to Epeli Waqavonovono [epeliwa@spc.int](mailto:epeliwa@spc.int), Director SDD or David Abbott [davidab@spc.int](mailto:davidab@spc.int), Manager Data Analysis and Dissemination, or check our webpage at <https://sdd.spc.int/> and join our LiveChat.

Statistics for Development Division  
Pacific Community  
August 2020

---

<sup>1</sup> For further economic performance data refer to <https://sdd.spc.int/disasters-data/covid-19>

## Contents

<b>Tourism</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>International Merchandise Trade</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Imports</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Financial Sector</b>	<b>9</b>
Gross Foreign Exchange Reserves	9
Broad Money Supply	11
<b>Government Finance</b>	<b>13</b>
Revenues and Expenditures	13
Government Debt	13
<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Remittances</b>	<b>17</b>

## Tourism

Quarter 1, 2020 data show a double-digit decline in tourist numbers for Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu when compared to a year earlier. Looking at the Tourist numbers in our region's dominant destination, Fiji, gives a real sense of the decline being experienced i.e. 413 visitors in June 2020 compared to 85,652 in the same quarter a year earlier, while the month-on-previous month percentage decreases for January, February, March and April were; 11.3%, 29.1%, 39.6% and 97.6% respectively. The most recent arrival figure for June shows a 99.5% decrease over the same period last year.

Quarter 1 2020 Tourism Arrivals represented;

- Declines of 36.6%, 51.2%, 49.7% and 44.2% for Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Declines of 18.7%, 36.2%, 48.6% and 17.3% for Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu respectively when compared to a year ago.

April 2020 Tourism Arrivals represented;

- Declines of 97.6% and 100% for Fiji and Samoa respectively when compared to the preceding month.
- Declines of 99.1% and 100% for Fiji and Samoa respectively when compared to a year ago.

Quarter 1 2020 Tourism Earnings represented;

- Decreases of 42.5%, 31.9%, 3.7% and 18.5% for Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively compared to the preceding quarter.
- Decreases of 41.8%, 56.0% and 66.4% for Fiji, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands respectively compared to a year ago.

**Table 1: Visitor Arrivals and Gross Tourism Earnings**

Countries	Visitor Arrivals														Gross Tourism Earnings		
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month						% change same month last year						% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	
	2020	2020	2020						2020						2020	2020	
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	Q1	Q1	
Fiji	-36.6	-18.7	-11.3	-29.1	-39.6	-97.6	4.6	-41.7	2.5	-4.9	-52.8	-99.1	-	99.0	-99.5	-41.8	-42.5
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	-51.2	-36.2	-41.7	-32.5	-41.0	-100	0	...	-24.0	-22.0	-62.7	-100.0	0	...	...	-56.0	-31.9
Solomon Islands	-49.7	-48.6	-39.2	-20.8	-48.9	...	...	...	6.1	-22.2	-68.7	...	...	...	...	-66.4	-3.7
Tonga	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Vanuatu	-44.2	-17.3	-4.4	-44.7	-47.9	-	100.0	...	25.0	13.0	-51.1	-100	...	...	...	...	...

Source: NSOs and Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

... data not available

## International Merchandise Trade

Shrinking international demand hit the region's trade in Quarter 1, 2020.

### *Exports*

Quarter 1 2020 exports from;

- Fiji and Samoa declined 16.7% and 14.4% respectively when compared to the previous quarter.
- Solomon Islands increased by 20.1% over the previous quarter.
- Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands declined by 19.4%, 9.9% and 12.5% respectively compared to a year ago.

March 2020 exports from;

- Fiji, Samoa and Tonga showed declines of 14.4%, 36.5% and 5.5% respectively compared to a year ago.
- Solomon Islands rose slightly by 1.5% compared to a year ago, see Table 2.

Countries	Table 2: Exports											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	-16.7	-19.4	0.2	-1.0	0.0	-23.5		-30.4	-10.1	-14.4	-34.0	
PNG	...	...	...	...	...		...	...	...			
Samoa	-14.4	-9.9	33.9	-44.5	-0.7	36.0	-19.9	9.9	-0.8	-36.5	29.5	-20.9
Solomon Islands	20.1	-12.5	9.4	25.8	2.2	-65.3	164.0	-34.2	-0.6	1.5	-44.1	-23.6
Tonga	...	...	...	...	...			-5.0	-5.1	-5.5	-8.6	-10.3
Vanuatu	...	...	...	...	...			...	...	...		

Source: Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

Note: Tonga annualised year-on-year change

... data not available

## Imports

Quarter 1 2020 imports for;

- Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands recorded decreases of 45.9%, 30.5% and 30.3% respectively compared to the previous quarter.
- Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands dipped 19.3%, 9.0% and 37% respectively compared to a year ago.

April 2020 Imports for;

- Fiji and Samoa decreased by 13.2% and 18.2% respectively compared to the previous month.
- Solomon Islands showed an increase of 11.2% compared to the previous month.
- Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga recorded contractions of 34.2%, 13.6%, 18.8% and 5.1% respectively compared to a year ago.

**Table 3: Imports (Tonga previous month and quarterly comparison missing)**

	Table 3: Imports											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020 Q1	2020 Q1	2020					2020				
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	-45.9	-19.3	-46.9	-10.3	-10.6	-13.2		-33.0	0.3	-16.2	-34.2	
PNG	...	...	...	...	...			...	...	...		
Samoa	-30.5	-9.0	-45.4	36.9	2.4	-18.2	-15.0	-26.8	21.3	-15.0	-13.6	-45.2
Solomon Islands	-30.3	-37.0	-26.0	-9.4	-11.6	11.2	116.8	-4.0	-58.6	-24.9	-18.8	34.0
Tonga	...	...	...	...	...			-0.7	-3.4	-4.5	-5.1	-6.3
Vanuatu	...	...	...	...	...			...	...	...		

Source: Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

Note: Tonga annualised year-on-year change

... data not available



## Financial Sector

### *Gross Foreign Exchange Reserves*

Gross Foreign Exchange Reserves (GFER) levels at the end of Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 1%, 2.6%, 6.1% and 5.3% for Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu respectively when compared to the previous quarter.
- An increase of 7.7% for Samoa compared to the previous quarter.
- Increases of 14.4%, 12.3% and 12.2% for Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu respectively when compared to a year ago.
- Decreases of 7.3% and 1.6% for the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively when compared to a year ago.

The GFER levels at the end of May 2020 represented;

- Increases of 1.4%, 3.0% and 1.8% for Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively compared to the previous month.
- A decline of 1.3% for Samoa when compared to the previous month.
- Increases of 16.3%, 21.1% and 4.5% for Fiji, Samoa and Tonga respectively when compared to a year ago
- A decline of 6.0% for the Solomon Islands when compared to a year ago.

**Table 4: Foreign Exchange Reserves**

Countries	Gross Foreign Reserves											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	-1.0	14.4	1.5	0.5	-3.0	0.9	1.4	11.0	16.5	14.4	14.0	16.3
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	7.7	12.3	4.9	-2.3	5.1	10.8	-1.3	5.9	2.0	12.3	24.4	21.1
Solomon Islands	-2.6	-7.3	-2.1	10.6	-10.0	1.1	3.0	-9.2	-0.1	-7.3	-6.8	-6.0
Tonga	-6.1	-1.6	-0.9	-0.6	-4.6	-2.6	1.8	0.8	1.3	-1.6	2.3	4.5
Vanuatu	-5.3	12.2	0.9	-1.4	-4.8	2.1		18.8	18.6	12.2	15.3	

Source: Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

... data not available

### ***Broad Money Supply***

The Broad Money Supply at the end of Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 1.8%, 1.7% and 0.9% for the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Tonga when compared to the previous quarter.
- Increases of 0.1% and 0.7% for Fiji and Vanuatu respectively when compared to the previous quarter.
- Decreases of 1.9% and 50.9% for Samoa and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to a year ago.
- Increases of 4.4% and 2.3% for Fiji and Tonga respectively when compared to a year ago.

The Broad Money Supply at the end of May 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 2.8% and 4.4% for Samoa and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to a year ago.
- Increase of 4.5% and 1.3% for Fiji and Tonga respectively when compared to a year ago (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Broad Money Supply by PICs (in % change), March 2020**

countries	Broad Money											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	0.1	4.4	1.1	-0.6	-0.4	0.1	-0.4	3.0	4.4	4.4	4.8	4.5
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	-1.7	-1.9	-1.0	-0.8	0.1	-0.1	-0.2	2.0	-1.9	-1.9	-3.0	-2.8
Solomon Islands	-1.8	-50.9	-2.8	1.2	-0.2	0.5	-0.3	-3.5	-3.7	-2.8	-1.5	-4.4
Tonga	-0.9	2.3	-1.6	-0.4	1.2	-2.6	1.8	-1.0	0.2	2.3	-0.7	1.3
Vanuatu	0.7	4.5	0.3	1.1	-0.7	-0.4		4.4	5.5	4.5	-0.9	

Source: Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

... data not available

## Government Finance

### *Revenues and Expenditures*

Government Revenues and Expenditures recorded both increases and decreases in Quarter 1, 2020. With trends in government revenue and expenditure tending to lag behind performance in the real economy there should be more clarity on the pandemic's impact on government finances come Quarter 2, 2020.

Government Revenues in Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 10.0% and 5.1% for Fiji and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Increases of 4.2% and 1.3% for Samoa and Vanuatu respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- A decrease of 7.8% for Fiji when compared to a year ago.
- Increases of 8.4%, 4.8% and 7.4% respectively for Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu when compared to a year ago.

Government Expenditure in Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 8.8%, 31.0% and 6.9% for Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- An increase of 6.4% for Samoa when compared to the preceding quarter.
- A decrease of 10.9% for Fiji when compared to the same quarter a year ago.
- Increases of 8.0%, 8.6% and 9.6% for Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu respectively compared to a year ago.

### **Government Debt**

Falling revenues often lead to an increase in government debt. Government Debt in Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Increases of 3.0% and 0.3% for Fiji and Samoa respectively compare to the preceding quarter.
- A decrease of 0.2% for the Solomon Islands compared to the preceding quarter.
- Increases of 11.1%, 6.4% and 3.6% for Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands respectively compare to a year ago.

Government Debt in May 2020 represented;

- Increases of 4.5% and 5.1% for Fiji and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to the preceding month.
- Increases of 16.9% and 11.5% for Fiji and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to a year ago.

**Table 6: Government Finance**

Countries	Government Revenues		Government Expenditure	
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year
	2020	2020	2020	2020
	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1
Fiji	-10.0	-7.8	-8.8	-10.9
PNG	...	...	...	...
Samoa	4.2	8.4	6.4	8.0
Solomon Islands	-5.1	4.8	-31.0	8.6
Tonga	...	...	...	...
Vanuatu	1.3	7.4	-6.9	9.6

Source: NSOs, Ministries of Finance and Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

... data not available

**Table 7: Government Debt**

Countries	Government Debt											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	3.0	11.1	0.7	0.9	1.4	4.1	4.5	11.6	11.1	11.1	13.9	16.9
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	0.3	6.4	0.9	-1.4	0.9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Solomon Islands	-0.2	3.6	-0.7	0.4	0.2	1.9	6.1	4.0	3.8	3.6	5.9	11.5
Tonga	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Vanuatu	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: NSOs, Ministries of Finance and Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands

... data not available

## Private Sector

Private Sector Credit is a good indicator of business activity in a country. Increases in credit to the private sector could signify a slowing of business activity prompting businesses to access credit lines rather than financing from cash flow. Private Sector Credit levels in Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- Increases of 0.4% and 0.3% in Fiji and Samoa respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Decreases of 0.6% and 0.5% for the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Increases of 2.4%, 6.4%, 1.7% and 5.9% for Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively compared to a year ago.
- A decrease of 1.5% for Vanuatu when compared to a year ago.

Private Sector Credit levels in May 2020 represented;

- Decreases of 0.2% for both Fiji and Samoa when compared to the preceding month.
- Increases of 0.7% and 0.2% for the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively when compared to the preceding month.
- Increases of 1.3%, 6.2%, 0.7% and 1.7% for Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively when compared to a year ago.

**Table 8: Private Sector Credit by Pacific Island Countries (in % change), March 2020**

Countries	Private Sector Credit											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Fiji	0.4	2.4	0.2	0.4	-0.1	-0.4	-0.2	4.1	2.9	2.4	1.8	1.3
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	0.3	6.4	0.9	-1.4	0.9	-0.2	-0.2	8.9	5.4	6.4	6.0	6.2
Solomon Islands	-0.6	1.7	-0.1	-0.7	0.2	-1.0	0.7	5.2	3.2	1.7	0.6	0.7
Tonga	-0.5	5.9	0.3	-0.9	0.1	-1.1	0.2	7.8	6.7	5.9	2.1	1.7
Vanuatu	0.0	-1.5	-0.7	0.5	0.3	-0.4		-1.6	-1.0	-1.5	-2.9	

Source: Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

... data not available



## Remittances

Remittance levels in Quarter 1, 2020 represented;

- An increase of 1.4% for Fiji when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Decreases of 4.4% and 49.7% for Samoa and the Solomon Islands respectively when compared to the preceding quarter.
- Increases of 6.1% and 0.2% for Fiji and Samoa when compared to a year ago.
- A decrease of 32.7% for the Solomon Islands when compared to a year ago.

Remittance levels in May, 2020 represented;

- Increases of 95.5% and 58.9% for Fiji and Samoa respectively when compared to the preceding month.
- A decrease of 1.2% for Fiji when compared to a year ago.
- An increase of 43.6% for Samoa when compared to year ago.

**Table 9. Remittances**

Countries	Remittances											
	% change over previous quarter	% change over same quarter last year	% change over previous month					% change over same month last year				
	2020	2020	2020					2020				
	Q1	Q1	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May
Fiji	1.4	6.1	15.1	-10.8	-18.3	-29.3	95.5	38.8	14.8	-25.1	-31.7	-1.2
PNG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	-4.4	0.2	-18.1	-10.5	11.7	-21.6	58.9	18.2	4.6	-15.7	-8.7	43.6
Solomon Islands	-49.7	-32.7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tonga	0.0	0.0	-16.4	-8.5	...	...	...	9.3	2.1	-0.1	-1.6	...
Vanuatu	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: NSOs, Ministries of Finance and Central/Reserve Banks of Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu  
 ... data not available



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique