

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for April – June 2023

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for April – June 2023) released today (July 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 3.0% in March – May 2023 to 2.9% in April – June 2023. The underemployment rate also decreased from 1.2% in March – May 2023 to 1.1% in April – June 2023.

Comparing April – June 2023 with March – May 2023, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied, with relatively notable decreases observed in the retail sector and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the foundation and superstructure sector and retail sector.

Total employment increased by around 15 000 from 3 673 800 in March – May 2023 to 3 688 800 in April – June 2023. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 15 400 from 3 787 000 to 3 802 400.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) in April – June 2023 was 113 600, about the same as that in March – May 2023 (113 100). The number of underemployed persons decreased by around 2 900 from 44 400 in March – May 2023 to 41 500 in April – June 2023.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Acting Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Ho Kai-ming, said, "The labour market continued to improve alongside the local economic recovery. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged down by 0.1 percentage point from March – May 2023 to 2.9% in April – June 2023. The underemployment rate likewise declined slightly by 0.1 percentage point to 1.1%. Both the labour force and total employment increased further, by 15 400 and 15 000 to 3 802 400 and 3 688 800 respectively. The number of unemployed persons stayed low at 113 600."

Analysed by sector, the combined unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) declined by 0.2 percentage point from March – May 2023 to 4.0% in April – June 2023. Among these sectors, the unemployment rates of the retail sector and the accommodation services sector declined by 0.3 and 0.5 percentage point to 3.5% and 3.0% respectively, while that of the food and beverage service activities sector held steady at 4.8%. Some sectors also saw declines in unemployment rates, notably the arts, entertainment and recreation sector. The unemployment rates of the remaining sectors either held steady or increased, but stayed low in general.

Looking ahead, Mr Ho said, "The labour market should improve further in the coming months as the economic recovery gathers further strength."

On large-scale job fairs, the Labour Department (LD) will organise the Job Fair for Catering, Retail and Hotel Industry & Middle-aged and Elderly Employment at the MacPherson Stadium in Mong Kok on July 20 and 21, 2023. Over 60 employers will participate, offering a large number of vacancies. In April – June 2023, LD recorded a monthly average of 101 364 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year increase of 11.9% and a decrease of 4.4% over the average figure in March – May 2023. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms, such as the Interactive Employment Service website, for obtaining such vacancy information.

Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for April – June 2023 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 69 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of April to June 2023.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html). More detailed analysis of the labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the report contains statistics for the quarter January – March 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2023 will be available by end August 2023. Users can also browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the General Household Survey Section (3) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).

Public consultation on assignment arrangements of spectrum in 6/7 GHz band launched

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) and the Communications Authority (CA) today (July 18) jointly launched a public consultation on arrangements for assignment of 400 MHz of spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band (6570-6770 MHz and 6925-7125 MHz) for the provision of public mobile services, and the methods for setting the related spectrum utilisation fee (SUF).

"Being the mid-band frequency blocks with the largest amount of spectrum available for mobile services, the 6/7 GHz band would enable the deployment of fifth generation (5G) mobile networks and services with speeds and capacity vital to the future sustainable development of digital economy and mobile broadband connectivity in Hong Kong," a spokesman for the CA said.

To enable the use of the 6/7 GHz band for the provision of public mobile services, the CA also proposes to amend the Hong Kong Table of Frequency Allocations to allocate the 6425-7075 MHz band to mobile service on a co-primary basis in addition to the existing allocations to fixed service and fixed satellite service (Earth-to-space).

As there are likely to be competing demands for the spectrum, the CA proposes to assign it by way of auction. Similar to the other spectrum assigned for public mobile services by way of auction, the SCED proposes that the SUF should reflect the full market value, and will set the auction reserve prices nearer the time.

"The auctioning of spectrum will ensure that such a scarce public resource be put into the hands of those who value it the most and will consequently put it to the most efficient use, thereby benefiting the general public at large," a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) said.

Meanwhile, the CA has updated the Spectrum Release Plan (SRP) for 2023-2025 to inform the industry of the potential supply of spectrum in the 6570-6770 MHz and 6910-7125 MHz band for the provision of public mobile services. The updated SRP for 2023-2025 is available on the CA's website (www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_613/updated_spectrum_plan2023_en.pdf).

Views and comments from the industry and other interested parties are welcome on or before August 15, 2023. After taking into account the views and comments received in response to the public consultation, the SCED and the CA target to make their respective decisions around the first half of 2024.

The consultation paper can be downloaded from the websites of the [CEDB](#) and the [CA](#).

Illegal discharge of muddy water exposed by EPD's smart surveillance system again

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has detected a case of repeated illegal discharge of muddy water from a construction site in the Southern District of Hong Kong Island through its smart surveillance system again. The contractor involved, Lermond Engineering Limited, was convicted of three charges in total for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) by discharging improperly treated wastewater and violating the requirements of the wastewater discharge licence, and was fined \$45,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (July 18).

Through the smart surveillance system installed, EPD officers noted last year a construction site of a private housing development on Ap Lei Chau Praya Road that was found to be discharging muddy water in waters at Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter via the nearby communal drains frequently, causing pollution. The enforcement officers then made use of the data collected with the system and carried out a number of blitz operations at the construction site between August and October last year. During the inspections, it was found that improperly treated wastewater was being discharged from the construction site into communal drains. A test result of wastewater samples confirmed that the concentration of suspended solids exceeded the upper limit as stated in the wastewater discharge licence, among which the highest concentration of suspended solids in the wastewater samples was 79,000 milligrams/litre, exceeding the upper limit as stated in the wastewater discharge licence by some 2,600 times. After an investigation and evidence gathering, the EPD then initiated prosecution in accordance with the WPCO against the contractor of the construction site for the three cases. The EPD reminded the contractor concerned about the relevant legal liabilities of illegally discharging muddy water, and directed them to always maintain the proper operation of the wastewater treatment system and to strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence.

The EPD spokesman reminded all construction contractors that they should provide proper wastewater treatment facilities to properly collect and treat wastewater to comply with the requirements of the licence as well as prevent substandard wastewater from flowing into communal drains.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater into communal drains not in compliance with the standard of the

discharge licence commits an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$400,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: July 18, 2023
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q2329
Issue date	: July 19, 2023
Maturity date	: October 18, 2023
Amount applied	: HK\$149,510 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$61,672 MN
Average yield accepted	: 4.38 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 4.47 PCT
Pro rata ratio*	: About 6 PCT
Average tender yield	: 4.90 PCT

Tender date	: July 18, 2023
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H2358
Issue date	: July 19, 2023
Maturity date	: January 17, 2024
Amount applied	: HK\$55,210 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$19,800 MN
Average yield accepted	: 4.30 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 4.37 PCT
Pro rata ratio*	: About 64 PCT
Average tender yield	: 4.67 PCT

*"Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning

July 24, 2023:

Tender date : July 25, 2023
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2330
Issue date : July 26, 2023
Maturity date : October 25, 2023
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$51,572 MN

Tender date : July 25, 2023
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2359
Issue date : July 26, 2023
Maturity date : January 24, 2024
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$12,600 MN

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, July 18, 2023 is 103.4 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, July 15, 2023 was 103.4 (up 0.3 against last Friday's index).