

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for October – December 2023

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for October – December 2023) released today (January 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.9% in October – December 2023, same as that in September – November 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing October – December 2023 with September – November 2023, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) decreased slightly across most major economic sectors. Movements in the underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but the magnitudes were generally not large.

Total employment decreased by around 1 900 from 3 708 700 in September – November 2023 to 3 706 800 in October – December 2023. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 8 600 from 3 821 100 to 3 812 500.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 6 700 from 112 400 in September – November 2023 to 105 700 in October – December 2023. The number of underemployed persons in October – December 2023 was 37 000, about the same as that in September – November 2023 (36 600).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at 2.9% in October – December 2023, same as September – November 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0%. Total employment showed a narrowed decline of 1 900 to 3 706 800, whereas the labour force declined further by 8 600 to 3 812 500. The number of unemployed persons decreased further by 6 700 to 105 700."

The unemployment rates of the various sectors stayed low in October – December 2023. Compared with the preceding three-month period, the unemployment rates of most sectors either declined or stayed unchanged.

Looking ahead, Mr Sun said, "The labour market should stay tight in the near term. Though the still unfavourable external environment may have some negative effects, the expected further recovery of inbound tourism and private consumption should continue to support labour demand."

In October – December 2023, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 85 700 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year decrease of 15.4% and a decrease of 6.4% over the average figure in September – November 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 October – December 2023 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 68 000 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 October to December 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 July – September 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2023 will be available by end February 2024. 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).

Composite Interest Rate: End of December 2023

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (January 18) the composite interest rate at the end of December 2023 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 8 basis points to 2.94 per cent at the end of December 2023, from 2.86 per cent at the end of November 2023 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The increase in composite interest rate mainly reflected an increase in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of December 2023 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.

Judicial appointment

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (January 18) announced the appointment of His Honour Judge Hui Ka-ho as a Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court. The appointment will take effect on January 19, 2024.

The appointment is made by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission.

The biographical note of His Honour Judge Hui Ka-ho is as follows:

His Honour Judge Hui was born in Hong Kong in 1963. He obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 1987 and 1988 respectively.

He was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 1988. He was in private practice from 1988 until he joined the Judiciary as Permanent Magistrate in 2000. He was appointed as District Judge in 2012.

EMSD releases lift and escalator contractors' latest performance ratings

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (January 18) announced the performance ratings of the registered lift and escalator contractors for the past 12 months (from January 2023 to December 2023) for public reference.

According to the rating results, 31 registered lift contractors and 20 registered escalator contractors were awarded the Safety Star. Among these contractors, 17 registered lift contractors and 13 registered escalator contractors had not been found non-compliant with the safety and maintenance requirements as reported in the last two consecutive announcements of performance results, and were therefore given the highest rating of five Quality Stars. The EMSD conducted 29 508 inspections of lifts and escalators during the period.

The rating results, conviction records, summaries of the warning letters and equipment failure records are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/emsd/eng/pps/le_pub_mpr.shtml).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, January 18, 2024 is 105 (same as yesterday's index).