

Wage and payroll statistics for September 2023

Overall wage and payroll statistics

According to the figures released today (December 28) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the average wage rate for all the selected industry sections surveyed, as measured by the wage index, increased by 3.8% in nominal terms in September 2023 over a year earlier.

About 64% of the companies reported increase in average wage rates in September 2023 compared with a year ago. A total of 32% of the companies recorded decrease in average wage rates over the same period. The remaining 4% reported virtually no change in average wage rates.

After discounting the changes in consumer prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index (A), the overall average wage rate for all the selected industry sections surveyed increased by 1.7% in real terms in September 2023 over a year earlier.

As for payroll, the index of payroll per person engaged for all the industry sections surveyed increased by 3.5% in nominal terms in the third quarter of 2023 over a year earlier.

After discounting the changes in consumer prices as measured by the Composite Consumer Price Index, the average payroll per person engaged increased by 1.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 2023 compared with a year earlier.

The wage rate includes basic wages and other regular and guaranteed allowances and bonuses. Payroll includes elements covered by wage rate as well as other irregular payments to workers such as discretionary bonuses and overtime allowances. The payroll statistics therefore tend to show relatively larger quarter-to-quarter changes, affected by the number of hours actually worked and the timing of payment of bonuses and back-pay.

Sectoral changes

For the nominal wage indices, year-on-year increases were recorded in all selected industry sections in September 2023, ranging from 2.8% to 6.0%.

For the real wage indices, year-on-year increases were also recorded in all selected industry sections in September 2023, ranging from 0.7% to 3.8%.

The year-on-year changes in the nominal and real wage indices for the selected industry sections from September 2022 to September 2023 are shown in Table 1.

As for the nominal indices of payroll per person engaged, year-on-year increases were recorded in all selected industry sections in the third quarter of 2023, ranging from 2.8% to 10.7%.

For the real payroll indices, year-on-year increases were also recorded in all selected industry sections in the third quarter of 2023, ranging from 0.9% to 8.6%.

The year-on-year changes in the nominal and real indices of payroll per person engaged for selected industry sections from the third quarter of 2022 to the third quarter of 2023 are shown in Table 2. The quarterly changes in the seasonally adjusted nominal and real indices of payroll per person engaged in the same period are shown in Table 3.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the year-on-year increases in wages and labour earnings accelerated further in the third quarter of 2023 amid the tight labour market.

The average wage rate for all selected industries rose by 3.8% in nominal terms or 1.7% in real terms in September 2023, faster than the increase three months ago.

Payroll per person engaged, which includes basic wage, discretionary bonuses and other irregular payments, increased by 3.5% in nominal terms or 1.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 2023, also faster than the increase in the preceding quarter. All selected industries saw increases in payroll per person engaged, with almost all of them posting faster gains than the preceding quarter.

Looking ahead, the labour market should remain tight in the near term, providing support to wages and labour earnings.

Other information

Both wage indices and payroll indices are compiled quarterly based on the results of the Labour Earnings Survey (LES) conducted by the C&SD. Wage index only covers employees up to the supervisory level (i.e. not including managerial and professional employees), whereas payroll index covers employees at all levels and proprietors actively engaged in the work of the establishment.

Apart from the differences in employee coverage, wage statistics are conceptually different from the payroll statistics. Firstly, wage rate for an employee refers to the sum earned for his normal hours of work. It covers basic wages and other regular and guaranteed allowances and bonuses, but excludes earnings from overtime work and discretionary bonuses, which are however included in payroll per person engaged. Secondly, the payroll index of an industry is an indicator of the simple average payroll received per person engaged in the industry. Its movement is therefore affected by changes

in wage rates, number of hours of work and occupational composition in the industry. In contrast, the wage index of an industry is devised to reflect the pure changes in wage rate, with the occupational composition between two successive statistical periods being kept unchanged. In other words, the wage index reflects the change in the price of labour. Because of these conceptual and enumeration differences between payroll and wage statistics, the movements in payroll indices and in wage indices do not necessarily match closely with each other.

It should also be noted that different consumer price indices are used for compiling the real indices of wage and payroll to take into account the differences in their respective occupation coverage. Specifically, the Composite Consumer Price Index, being an indicator of overall consumer prices, is taken as the price deflator for payroll of workers at all levels of the occupational hierarchy. The Consumer Price Index (A), being an indicator of consumer prices for the relatively low expenditure group, is taken as the price deflator for wages in respect of employees engaged in occupations up to the supervisory level.

Detailed breakdowns of the payroll and wage statistics are published in the "Quarterly Report of Wage and Payroll Statistics, September 2023". Users can browse and download the publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050009&scode=210).

For enquiries on wage and payroll statistics, please contact the Wages and Labour Costs Statistics Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5550 or email: wage@censtatd.gov.hk).

External merchandise trade statistics for November 2023

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (December 28) the external merchandise trade statistics for November 2023. In November 2023, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 7.4% and 7.1% respectively.

In November 2023, the value of total exports of goods increased by 7.4% over a year earlier to \$386.6 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 1.4% in October 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 7.1% over a year earlier to \$414.6 billion in November 2023, after a year-on-year increase of 2.6% in October 2023. A visible trade deficit of \$27.9 billion, equivalent to 6.7% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in November 2023.

For the first 11 months of 2023 as a whole, the value of total exports

of goods decreased by 9.4% over the same period in 2022. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 7.3%. A visible trade deficit of \$407.9 billion, equivalent to 9.7% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first 11 months of 2023.

Comparing the three-month period ending November 2023 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.1%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 5.5%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing November 2023 with November 2022, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 12.2%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (+47.3%), India (+18.7%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+15.5%) and Vietnam (+14.1%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to Malaysia (-29.1%) and Japan (-14.1%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the Netherlands (-21.8%) and Germany (-20.0%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the USA (+2.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+39.7%), Singapore (+27.1%), the Mainland (+8.2%), Japan (+6.8%) and the USA (+5.4%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from the Philippines (-30.1%) and Taiwan (-8.9%).

For the first 11 months of 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Singapore (-22.5%), Japan (-19.6%), Taiwan (-13.0%), the Mainland (-11.3%) and the USA (-9.4%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the United Arab Emirates (+9.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-27.2%), Singapore (-17.9%), Malaysia (-15.9%), the Philippines (-14.7%), Vietnam (-13.7%) and the Mainland (-4.2%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing November 2023 with November 2022, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$20.7 billion or +12.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts

thereof" (by \$11.8 billion or +7.1%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$5.3 billion or +56.6%).

For the first 11 months of 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$243.2 billion or -11.9%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$81.5 billion or -18.0%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$235.1 billion or -11.4%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$93.9 billion or -24.6%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports recorded a year-on-year increase in November 2023 due to a low base of comparison. Exports to the Mainland rose. Those to the United States registered modest growth, while those to the European Union fell visibly. Those to other major Asian markets saw mixed performance.

Looking ahead, the challenging external environment amid heightened geopolitical tensions and tight financial conditions will continue to weigh on Hong Kong's export performance in the near term. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for November 2023. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2020 to November 2023, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for November 2023 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for November 2023.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for November 2023 will be released in mid-January 2024.

The November 2023 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in November 2023 and will be available in early January

2024. Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4691).

Government announces selected organisation to operate premises at No. 2 Lower Albert Road, South Block, Central, for arts and culture use

The Government announced today (December 28) that the proposal from Hong Kong Festival Fringe Limited (HKFFL) has been accepted to operate the premises at No. 2 Lower Albert Road, South Block, Central, for arts and culture use, for a period of three years from April 1, 2024.

According to the plan of the HKFFL, it will continue to operate the Fringe Club and introduce series of new programmes featuring arts tech, cross-genre showcases and Chinese culture at the premises. The HKFFL also plans to maintain the premises as an iconic arts and culture landmark in Central and Hong Kong, so as to showcase our role as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.

The Government announced in April 2023 that it would conduct an Invitation For Proposal (IFP) exercise to identify the most suitable non-profit-making operator for the premises. The IFP exercise was launched in August 2023 to invite non-profit-making operators, including the current operator, to submit proposals. A total of six proposals were received by the deadline of October 20, 2023. An assessment panel was formed to assess and consider the proposals received based on pre-determined assessment criteria.

The premises is currently occupied by the HKFFL and the lease will expire on March 31, 2024.

DH releases Thematic Report on Viral

Hepatitis (Population Health Survey 2020-22)

The Department of Health (DH) today (December 28) released the [Thematic Report on Viral Hepatitis \(Population Health Survey \(PHS\) 2020-22\)](#), which analyses the viral hepatitis status of the Hong Kong population. The Population Health Survey 2020-22 included for the first time survey questions and tests for viral hepatitis markers to provide important epidemiological information of viral hepatitis among the general population, which further realised the core strategy of enhancing surveillance under the [Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020 – 2024](#) (the Action Plan). As derived from the results of the report, about 410 000 people in the Hong Kong population are infected with hepatitis B virus (HBV). Members of the public should take necessary measures to prevent viral hepatitis infection, while those with higher infection risks should get tested and persons with chronic hepatitis should have medical follow-ups as soon as possible.

The PHS 2020-22 is the third territory-wide population health survey, and was conducted between November 2020 and February 2022. The survey interviewed more than 16 000 land-based non-institutional persons aged 15 or above in Hong Kong, and among them over 2 000 respondents aged 15 to 84 further completed the health examination. [Part I](#) (covering household survey results) and [Part II](#) (covering health examination results) of the PHS 2020-22 reports were published in last December and in April respectively. The thematic report on viral hepatitis released today analyses the household survey results related to viral hepatitis (including self-reported history and treatment of viral hepatitis, as well as chronic viral hepatitis and related complications). The thematic report also included results from blood tests against four major types of hepatitis viruses, namely hepatitis A (HAV), B, C (HCV), and E (HEV) virus.

Hepatitis B causes a significant public health burden in Hong Kong among the abovementioned four types of hepatitis viruses. For participants completing the health examination, 6.2 per cent tested positive for hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg), implying chronic HBV infection, and nearly 40 per cent of them did not report themselves as having chronic hepatitis B (CHB) in the household survey and about 70 per cent did not have any medical follow-up for their liver diseases. This revealed a substantial proportion of persons with chronic HBV infection are unaware of their infection status.

As derived from the survey results, about 5.6 per cent of the Hong Kong population, which is about 410 000 people, have hepatitis B. In addition, the survey also revealed the positivity rate of HBsAg peaked at 8.4 per cent among those aged 35 to 54, and was much lower in the younger than 35 age groups (0.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively for the 15 to 24 and 25 to 34 age groups), reflecting that the universal childhood hepatitis B vaccination programme and other preventive measures against mother-to-child transmission of HBV implemented since the 1980s are effective in lowering the prevalence of HBV infection in the younger generation. The routes of HBV

transmission include transmission during delivery from infected mothers to their babies, contact with blood or body fluids of infected persons, and unprotected sexual contact with an infected person. About 15 to 40 per cent of untreated people with CHB may progress to life-threatening liver diseases such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Family members (such as parents, siblings and offspring) and sexual partners of people with CHB have a higher risk of HBV infection, while people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, sex workers, and people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus have a higher risk of both HBV and HCV infection. The DH reminds them to inform healthcare workers of their higher infection risk and carry out tests to ascertain their hepatitis status. People with chronic hepatitis should seek medical consultation and have regular follow-ups and examinations for early detection and management of changes in their liver condition. The DH has been enhancing risk-based viral hepatitis screenings at its relevant services (such as social hygiene clinics, methadone clinics and Elderly Health Centres) for the abovementioned at-risk populations so as to gradually scale up HBV screening.

For hepatitis C, a large portion of untreated patients may develop chronic infection. The survey revealed that 0.26 per cent of the participants tested positive for HCV RNA, signifying infection with HCV. As derived from the results, about 17 000 people have hepatitis C. With integrated analysis of other previous local studies, the figures suggest a consistently low prevalence of HCV infection in the general population in Hong Kong in the past few decades.

Members of the public should take necessary measures to prevent viral hepatitis infection, including receiving the hepatitis B vaccination as applicable. The PHS 2020-22 also assessed the prevalence of antibodies against hepatitis A and E virus. Results revealed that the activity of these two types of hepatitis were generally low in Hong Kong in recent years. HAV and HEV is generally transmitted by contaminated food and water, and usually cause acute hepatitis. Members of the public should maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene.

To achieve the goal outlined by the World Health Organization to eliminate the public health threat posed by viral hepatitis by 2030 in Hong Kong, the Government announced the Action Plan in October 2020, which formulated an overall strategy and specific action plan by the DH, the Hospital Authority and other stakeholders. Early identification and management of people with chronic hepatitis is one of the focus areas in the Action Plan.

For access to the Thematic Report on Viral Hepatitis and more information on viral hepatitis, please visit www.hepatitis.gov.hk/english/index.html.

Labour Department investigates fatal work accident in Chek Lap Kok

The Labour Department (LD) is investigating a fatal work accident that happened in Chek Lap Kok this afternoon (December 28) in which a man died.

The LD immediately deployed staff to the scene upon receiving a report of the accident, and is now conducting an investigation to look into its cause.