

Employment and vacancies statistics for September 2023

According to the figures released today (December 21) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), total employment in the private sector surveyed increased by 2.1% or 56 300 persons in September 2023 compared with a year earlier. The total number of vacancies was 80 650, representing an increase of 8% or 5 810 over the preceding year.

Employment statistics

In September 2023, the selected industries as a whole employed 2 743 200 persons. The import and export trade engaged 374 800 persons, followed by professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) engaging 311 700 persons, retail trade 252 100 persons, financing and insurance 235 800 persons, and food and beverage services 224 200 persons.

Movements in the employment in different surveyed industries varied when compared with a year earlier. Increases in employment were mainly recorded in the industries of arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (8.6% or 9 900 persons), residential care and social work services (5.5% or 3 700 persons), accommodation services (5.2% or 1 700 persons), and professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) (4.8% or 14 100 persons). On the other hand, employment decreased mainly in the industries of wholesale (-4.0% or -2 100 persons), and import and export trade (-1.4% or -5 100 persons). Employment figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 1.

Vacancies statistics

Among the 80 650 private sector vacancies in September 2023, 9 110 were from the industry of education; 8 470 from human health services; 6 850 from transportation, storage, postal and courier services; 6 570 from professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services); and 6 220 from food and beverage services.

Vacancies increased in many selected industries in September 2023 over a year earlier. Increases were mainly observed in the industries of construction sites (manual workers only) (1 920 or 299%), arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (1 490 or 39%), education (1 200 or 15%), and retail trade (900 or 18%). On the other hand, vacancies decreased mainly in the industries of human health services (-910 or -10%), and financing and insurance (-860 or -13%). Job vacancies figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 2.

Analysed by major occupation category, private sector vacancies were observed mainly in the categories of service and sales workers (28 170 vacancies), professionals (13 450 vacancies), and associate professionals (13

400 vacancies). Job vacancies figures by major occupation category are shown in Table 3.

Seasonally adjusted statistics

For discerning the latest trend in employment and vacancies in the private sector, it is useful to look at changes over a three-month period in the respective seasonally adjusted figures. Compared with June 2023, the seasonally adjusted total employment and total vacancies in the surveyed industries increased by less than 0.05% and decreased by 6.4% respectively in September 2023. The changes over three-month periods in the seasonally adjusted series of employment and vacancies are shown in Table 4.

Other information

The above employment and vacancies statistics were obtained from the Quarterly Survey of Employment and Vacancies and the Quarterly Employment Survey of Construction Sites conducted by the C&SD. In the former survey, some economic activities (e.g. those dominated by self-employment, including taxi operators and hawkers) are not covered. Therefore, the respective employment and vacancies figures relate only to those selected industries included in the survey. In the latter survey on construction sites, employment and vacancies figures relate to manual workers only.

A detailed breakdown of the above statistics is published in the following reports:

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics, September 2023" (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050003&scode=452)

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies at Construction Sites, September 2023" (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050004&scode=452)

Users can browse and download these publications at the website of the C&SD.

Enquiries on more detailed employment and vacancies statistics can be directed to the Employment Statistics and Central Register of Establishments Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 5076 or email: employment@censtatd.gov.hk).

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of

Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt, and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on December 20 to noon today (December 21), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 134 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 52 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 21 315 samples of food imported from Japan (including 14 165 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 5 916 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, December 21, 2023 is 104.2 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Interbank Account Data Sharing pilot programme

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (December 21) the upcoming launch of the pilot programme of the Interbank Account Data Sharing (IADS) initiative, which aims to allow customers to securely and efficiently share their bank account data with other banks subject to customer consent.

In collaboration with the Hong Kong Association of Banks and the banking industry, the HKMA's Fintech Facilitation Office has completed a preliminary study of the IADS initiative. The study findings suggest that sharing customer bank account data between banks could help digitalise banking operations, strengthen risk management of banks, and enhance customer experience. Through the study, the rules and standards facilitating interbank customer-consented data sharing have been established for the IADS pilot programme, covering retail, corporate and small and medium-sized enterprise customer segments.

The IADS pilot programme, covering deposit account information (Note), will commence on January 1, 2024, with the participation of 28 banks (see Annex). It is expected that the banks will gradually develop new and innovative banking services, such as streamlined loan applications, consolidated account views and tailored data-driven services. Throughout the pilot programme, the HKMA will monitor the implementation progress and market developments, and further formulate a possible implementation approach of the IADS initiative in the future.

Mr Howard Lee, Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, said, "The IADS pilot programme marks a significant milestone in fostering a customer-centric banking landscape. We expect this programme will empower customer to further unlock the potential of their account data at banks. By enabling consent-based and secure interbank account data sharing, both banks and customers will benefit from improved efficiency, lowered cost and innovative digital services and solutions, fuelling the growth of the digital economy in Hong Kong."

Note: Deposit account information refers to account availability, status, balance, and transaction details.

CFS follows up on aquatic products imported from Japan suspected of breaching Food Safety Order

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 21) that aquatic products processed and manufactured in a regulated Japanese prefecture were suspected to be in breach of the relevant Food Safety Order when the CFS inspected two consignments of food imported from Japan. The products concerned have been marked and sealed by the CFS and have not entered the market. The CFS is following up on the cases.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "During inspections of the food labels of the concerned consignments of food imported from Japan, the CFS found two boxes of chilled scallops and two packs of chilled crab meat suspected to have been processed and manufactured respectively in Miyagi Prefecture after the Order was issued. The importers concerned are thus suspected of breaching the relevant Order."

According to the Order, all aquatic products originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, are prohibited from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong if they are harvested, manufactured, processed or packed on or after August 24, 2023, including all live, chilled, frozen, dried or otherwise preserved aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed.

â€‹The CFS will continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action, including informing the Japanese authorities concerned of the incidents. Prosecution will be instituted against the importers concerned should there be sufficient evidence. The investigation is ongoing.