

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for August – October 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for August – October 2019) released today (November 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 2.9% in July – September 2019 to 3.1% in August – October 2019. The underemployment rate also increased from 1.0% in July – September 2019 to 1.2% in August – October 2019.

Comparing August – October 2019 with July – September 2019, increases in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate were mainly seen in the construction sector.

Total employment decreased by around 11 600 from 3 855 400 in July – September 2019 to 3 843 800 in August – October 2019. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 6 400 from 3 975 700 to 3 969 300.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 5 100 from 120 300 in July – September 2019 to 125 400 in August – October 2019. The number of underemployed persons also increased by around 4 400 from 41 500 to 45 900.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market eased further as economic conditions continued to worsen. Both the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate and the underemployment rate went up by 0.2 percentage point in August – October 2019, to 3.1% and 1.2% respectively. The year-on-year decline in total employment enlarged.

"The unemployment rates in most sectors increased compared with the preceding three-month period. The unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related segment (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors as a whole) rose further to 5.0%, the highest since the beginning of 2017. Within this segment, the unemployment rate for those working in food and beverage service activities went up to 6.1%, the highest in more than six years. The unemployment rate of the construction sector, particularly of those involved in decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings, deteriorated visibly."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The unemployment rate will be under increasing upward pressure as local social incidents involving intensifying violence continue to take a heavy toll on the economy. The Government will monitor the developments closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) canvasses vacancies for job-seekers with different educational background and working experience from

employers in various industries; and organises large-scale job fairs in different locations as well as industry-based and district-based job fairs at its recruitment centres and job centres respectively to expedite the dissemination of employment information and help different job-seekers to secure employment.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the North District Recruitment and Training Expo 2020 on January 3, 2020 at Po Wing Road Sports Centre in Sheung Shui. Over 60 employers would participate, offering a large number of job vacancies from various industries. In addition, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at the LD's industry-based recruitment centres and job centres located across the territory.

Further information

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

The survey for August – October 2019 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 74 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong.

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

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization.

Detailed analysis of 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 publication contains statistics for the quarter April – June 2019 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2019 will be available by end November 2019. Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001).

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