

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for August – October 2020

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for August – October 2020) released today (November 17) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 6.4% in August – October 2020, same as that in July – September 2020. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 3.8% in the two periods.

Comparing August – October 2020 with July – September 2020, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied. A relatively notable decrease was observed in the retail, accommodation and food services sector, while an increase was mainly seen in the transportation sector. As to the underemployment rate, a decrease was mainly seen in the education sector, while an increase was mainly observed in the transportation sector.

Total employment increased by around 2 900 from 3 624 800 in July – September 2020 to 3 627 700 in August – October 2020. The labour force in August – October 2020 was 3 885 500, about the same as that in July – September 2020 (3 884 600).

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 2 000 from 259 800 in July – September 2020 to 257 800 in August – October 2020. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 1 100 from 149 100 to 148 000.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "Labour market conditions remained difficult, but showed further signs of stabilisation as the local epidemic situation stayed contained during that period. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained at 6.4% in August – October 2020, unchanged from July – September 2020. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 3.8%. Total employment saw a slightly narrowed decline of 5.6% on a year-on-year comparison, and turned to a marginal increase of 0.1% over the preceding three-month period.

"Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined declined by 0.5 percentage point from July – September 2020 to 11.2% in August – October 2020. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate for food and beverage service activities eased to 14.8%. On the other hand, the unemployment rate of the transportation sector surged by 0.6 percentage point to 6.2%, the highest in close to 17 years. The unemployment rates in other sectors showed diverse movements."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "While the overall economic situation saw some improvement in recent months, hiring sentiments among employers would probably remain cautious, especially when the economic outlook is still clouded by the evolving pandemic situation. The labour market will remain under pressure in the near term. The Government has already rolled out relief measures of unprecedented scale, including a host of measures to create and stabilise employment. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) has all along provided comprehensive and free employment services through its job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and on-line platforms etc, to offer employment support for job-seekers. All job centres provide personalised employment advisory services. Employment officers will provide job-seekers with job search advice and information on the job market and training/retraining courses, conduct career aptitude assessment, etc in accordance with their individual needs and preferences, and match them with suitable jobs.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the New Graduates-New Opportunities Scheme Job Expo on December 9 and 10 at the Southorn Stadium, and around 40 employers will participate. District-based job fairs in the LD's job centres and recruitment activities in industry-based recruitment centres are also being held.

Further information

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

The survey for August – October 2020 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. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of August to October 2020.

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.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=D5250021). 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 publication contains statistics for the quarter April – June 2020 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2020 will be available by end November 2020. Users can also

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).