

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for February – April 2021

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for February – April 2021) released today (May 20) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 6.8% in January – March 2021 to 6.4% in February – April 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased from 3.8% in January – March 2021 to 3.3% in February – April 2021.

Comparing February – April 2021 with January – March 2021, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) decreased across almost all the major economic sectors, with more distinct decreases observed in the construction sector; and retail, accommodation and food services sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the construction sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; transportation sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Total employment increased by around 7 900 from 3 614 100 in January – March 2021 to 3 622 000 in February – April 2021. Over the same period, the labour force decreased by around 4 400 from 3 873 900 to 3 869 500.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 12 300 from 259 800 in January – March 2021 to 247 500 in February – April 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 21 800 from 148 400 to 126 600.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market saw some improvement lately as the local epidemic receded. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell by 0.4 percentage point from January – March 2021 to 6.4% in February – April 2021, and the underemployment rate decreased by 0.5 percentage point to 3.3%. Meanwhile, total employment rose by 7 900 over the preceding three-month period to 3 622 000, and the number of unemployed persons went down by 12 300 to 247 500."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rates of most economic sectors fell in February – April 2021 as compared with the preceding three-month period. In particular, the combined unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) fell by 0.8 percentage point to 9.9%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate of food and beverage service activities declined from 13.3% to 12.1%. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate of the construction sector declined by 0.6 percentage point to 10.9%.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "Considering that the business receipts of

many labour-intensive sectors are still far below the pre-recession levels, the labour market will take time to attain a more visible recovery. Nonetheless, if the local epidemic remains well-contained, the pressure on the labour market will gradually ease in the period ahead. To create more favourable conditions for the revival of consumer-facing and tourism-related activities, it is essential for the community to work together to keep the epidemic under control and actively participate in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He pointed out that in order to assist secondary school leavers of this year to enter the labour market, the Labour Department (LD) launched a special programme – Career Let's Go, from May to August 2021. Youth Employment Start will organise various training courses, including those that enhance the job-hunting and interviewing skills of graduates, as well as provide school leavers with career assessment and career consultation services etc. Moreover, the LD will canvass job vacancies suitable for secondary school leavers and organise a number of large-scale and district-based job fairs where job-seekers can have job interviews with the recruiting employers on the spot. A dedicated webpage (www.jobs.gov.hk/careerletsgo) has already been set up to provide information on the activities of the special programme as well as other employment market information, including listing out job vacancies suitable for persons with secondary school education.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Creating New Opportunities Job Fair on June 1 and 2, 2021 at the MacPherson Stadium, with a virtual job fair launched in parallel. Over 45 employers will participate, offering a large amount of job vacancies from various industries. Meanwhile, the LD will continue to receive and release information on job vacancies from various industries. In February – April 2021, the LD recorded an average of 72 472 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 17.8% over the average figure in January – March 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 71.1%. 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.

The survey for February – April 2021 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 73 000 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 3-month period of February to April 2021.

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 at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=D5250021&scode=200). 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 October – December 2020 while the next issue covering the quarter January – March 2021 will be available by end May 2021. Users can also 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 Household Statistics Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).