

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for February – April 2022

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for February – April 2022) released today (May 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 5.0% in January – March 2022 to 5.4% in February – April 2022. The underemployment rate also increased from 3.1% in January – March 2022 to 3.8% in February – April 2022.

Comparing February – April 2022 with January – March 2022, almost all major economic sectors saw an increase in both the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate. For the unemployment rate, more distinct increases were observed in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector; and retail, accommodation and food services sector. As to the underemployment rate, increases were mainly seen in the retail, accommodation and food services sector; transportation sector; education sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Total employment decreased by around 51 300 from 3 610 500 in January – March 2022 to 3 559 200 in February – April 2022. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 33 700 from 3 799 000 to 3 765 300.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 17 600 from 188 500 in January – March 2022 to 206 100 in February – April 2022. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also increased by around 25 000 from 117 000 to 142 000.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market deteriorated further in February – April 2022, but the situation showed some stabilisation in the latter part of the period in tandem with the receding local epidemic and revival of local economic activities. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose by 0.4 percentage point over the preceding three-month period to 5.4% in February – April 2022. The underemployment rate also increased by 0.7 percentage point to 3.8%. Total employment fell by 51 300 to 3 559 200, and the number of unemployed persons increased by 17 600 to 206 100."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined increased by 1.1 percentage points over the preceding three-month period to 10.0% in February – April 2022. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate for food and beverage service activities increased by 1.9 percentage points to 12.9%, and that of the retail sector increased by 0.6 percentage point to 8.3%. The unemployment rates of most other sectors also increased, more notably the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market should see improvement in the coming months. The receding local epidemic situation and progressive relaxation of social distancing measures, together with the new round of Consumption Voucher Scheme, should render support to business and thus employment of the consumption-related sectors. Other relief measures rolled out by the Government, including the 2022 Employment Support Scheme, would also help improve economic sentiment, support enterprises and keep workers in employment. It is essential for the community to work in unison to support the Government to further stabilise the local epidemic situation. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Opening Up a New Terrain Online Job Fair on June 7 and 8, 2022. Over 50 employers will participate, offering a large amount of vacancies from various industries. In February – April 2022, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 60 917 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year decrease of 15.9% while an increase of 2.0% over the average figure in January – March 2022. 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.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc) and unpaid family workers. Generally speaking, the unemployed population refers to persons who have not had a job or performed any work for pay or profit, have been available for work, and have sought work. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for February – April 2022 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 71 000 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 February to April 2022.

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

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 2021 while the next issue covering the quarter

January – March 2022 will be available by end May 2022. 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).