

Unemployment and Underemployment Statistics for July – September 2020

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for July – September 2020) released today (October 20) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 6.1% in June – August 2020 to 6.4% in July – September 2020. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.8% in the two periods.

Comparing July – September 2020 with June – August 2020, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) increased across almost all the major economic sectors, with more distinct increases observed in the retail, accommodation and food services sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the transportation sector and education sector, while increases were mainly observed in the food and beverage service activities sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Total employment decreased by around 15 600 from 3 640 400 in June – August 2020 to 3 624 800 in July – September 2020. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 4 200 from 3 888 800 to 3 884 600.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 11 500 from 248 300 in June – August 2020 to 259 800 in July – September 2020. The number of underemployed persons in July – September 2020 was 149 100, about the same as that in June – August 2020 (149 200).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market deteriorated for the third quarter of 2020 as a whole amid the third wave of the local epidemic, particularly in July and August, but the pressure faced by the labour market showed signs of stabilisation towards the end of the quarter as the local epidemic situation abated in September. Meanwhile, the Employment Support Scheme continued to provide support. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased by 0.3 percentage point from June – August 2020 to 6.4% in July – September 2020, the highest in close to 16 years, while the underemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.8%. The year-on-year decline in total employment widened to 5.8%, while that in labour force remained at 2.1%."

"Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined surged by 0.8 percentage point from June – August 2020 to 11.7% in July – September 2020, the highest since the onslaught of SARS, while the underemployment rate rose by 0.4 percentage point to 6.3%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate and the underemployment rate for food and beverage service activities soared to 15.2% and 9.5% respectively. The

unemployment rate and the underemployment rate of the construction sector stayed elevated at 10.9% and 8.3% respectively. Meanwhile, the unemployment situation in many other sectors deteriorated, particularly in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "As the overall economic situation remains weak and the global pandemic is still evolving, the labour market will remain under pressure in the near term. The Government has rolled out relief measures of unprecedented scale, including a series of measures on job retention and job creation, which help keep workers in employment. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) will organise the Wan Chai Job Fair on October 28 and 29 at the Southorn Stadium, and over 40 employers will participate. With the easing of the epidemic, LD has gradually resumed the organisation of district-based job fairs in LD's job centres and recruitment activities in industry-based recruitment centres since early September.

Meanwhile, the LD continues to receive and release information on vacancies from various industries for job-seekers with different educational background and working experience. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website for obtaining employment information.

Further Information

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

The survey for July – September 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 July to September 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).