

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for July – September 2021

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for July – September 2021) released today (October 21) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 4.7% in June – August 2021 to 4.5% in July – September 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased from 2.2% in June – August 2021 to 2.1% in July – September 2021.

Comparing July – September 2021 with June – August 2021, most major economic sectors saw a drop in both the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate. For unemployment rate, more distinct decreases were observed in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector; professional and business services sector (excluding cleaning and similar activities); and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the construction sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Total employment increased by around 6 300 from 3 651 700 in June – August 2021 to 3 658 000 in July – September 2021. The labour force in July – September 2021 was 3 838 600, about the same as that in June – August 2021 (3 839 500).

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 7 100 from 187 700 in June – August 2021 to 180 600 in July – September 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 7 200 from 86 200 to 79 000.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market improved further along with the increasingly entrenched economic recovery. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined by 0.2 percentage point from June – August 2021 to 4.5% in July – September 2021, and the underemployment rate fell by 0.1 percentage point to 2.1%. Meanwhile, total employment went up by 6 300 to 3 658 000, and the number of unemployed persons decreased by 7 100 to 180 600."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rates of most economic sectors fell in July – September 2021 as compared with the preceding three-month period, more noticeably in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector, professional and business services sector (excluding cleaning and similar activities), and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As for the consumption- and tourism-related sectors, the unemployment rate of these sectors combined declined by 0.2 percentage point to 7.2%.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market conditions would depend on the pace of the economic recovery. The Consumption Voucher Scheme should continue to render support to consumption-related activities in the near term. Yet, the global pandemic development remains a key source of uncertainty over the economic and labour market outlook. The community should stay vigilant against the COVID-19 epidemic and strive towards more widespread vaccination. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that in July – September 2021, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 102 742 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 6.5% over the average figure in June – August 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 68.2%. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website for obtaining such vacancy information. The LD has also adopted a series of on-going measures to promote the employment of elderly persons. These include setting up special counters at job centres to provide priority registration and job referral services for elderly job-seekers, organising tailor-made employment briefings for the elderly, setting up a dedicated webpage for elderly job-seekers on the iES website and enhancing the functions of the vacancy search terminals to facilitate their access to employment information and search for suitable vacancies.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment on November 25 and 26, 2021 at the MacPherson Stadium. Around 50 employers will participate, offering a large amount of job vacancies from various industries.

Further Information

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

The survey for July – September 2021 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 69 000 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 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 April – June 2021 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2021 will be available by end November 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).