

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for May – July 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for May – July 2019) released today (August 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 2.8% in April – June 2019 to 2.9% in May – July 2019. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing May – July 2019 with April – June 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied, with a relatively notable increase observed in the food and beverage service activities sector. Movements in the underemployment rate in different industry sectors also varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment decreased by around 3 300 from 3 870 700 in April – June 2019 to 3 867 400 in May – July 2019. The labour force in May – July 2019 was 3 985 900, about the same as that in April – June 2019 (3 985 000).

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 4 200 from 114 300 in April – June 2019 to 118 500 in May – July 2019. The number of underemployed persons in May – July 2019 was 40 700, about the same as that in April – June 2019 (41 200).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "After remaining unchanged for over a year, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged up by 0.1 percentage point to a still-low level of 2.9%. Meanwhile, the underemployment rate held steady at 1.0%."

"The manpower situation in most sectors remained largely stable. Yet, as the consumption market stayed soft, the unemployment rate of the retail, accommodation and food services sectors taken together went up from the preceding three-month period. Also, the import and export trade sector has been facing increasing pressure amid shrinking trade flows, with the unemployment rate generally on the rise since early this year."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "As the economy is expected to stay weak in the coming months, the local labour market will unavoidably be subject to greater pressure. The Government will monitor the labour market situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) continues to promote employment at all fronts. Under the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, employers engaging job seekers aged 60 or above who are unemployed or have left the workforce are offered an on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per month per employee for a period of six to 12 months. For employers

engaging unemployed persons aged 40 to 59, the maximum amount of on-the-job training allowance is \$3,000 per month per employee for a period of three to six months.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment on October 3 and 4 at the Lok Fu Place, and the New Opportunities-New Terrain Job Expo on October 29 and 30 at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In addition, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at the LD's industry-based recruitment centres and job centres located across the territory.

Further information

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

The survey for May – July 2019 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.

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.

Detailed analysis of 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 January – March 2019 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2019 will be available by end-August 2019. Users can 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).