

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for May – July 2021

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for May – July 2021) released today (August 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 5.5% in April – June 2021 to 5.0% in May – July 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased from 2.5% in April – June 2021 to 2.4% in May – July 2021.

Comparing May – July 2021 with April – June 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 construction sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, a decrease was mainly seen in the transportation sector.

Total employment increased by around 9 900 from 3 640 100 in April – June 2021 to 3 650 000 in May – July 2021. Over the same period, the labour force decreased by around 4 700 from 3 853 100 to 3 848 400.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 14 700 from 213 100 in April – June 2021 to 198 400 in May – July 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 3 700 from 96 000 to 92 300.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "The labour market improved further as the economy stayed on track for recovery. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell by 0.5 percentage point from April – June 2021 to 5.0% in May – July 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased slightly from 2.5% to 2.4%. Meanwhile, total employment continued to increase, by 9 900 to 3 650 000, and the number of unemployed persons went down further by 14 700 to 198 400."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rates of most economic sectors fell in May – July 2021 as compared with the preceding three-month period. In particular, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined fell by 0.9 percentage point to 7.6%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate of food and beverage service activities fell by 1.4 percentage points to 8.6%. Meanwhile, the unemployment rates of the construction sector, and the arts, entertainment and recreation sector also recorded visible declines.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market should continue to

improve along with the economic recovery. The Consumption Voucher Scheme will also help. However, the economic and labour market outlook is still subject to uncertainty, mainly stemming from the spread of more infectious COVID-19 variants in many places around the world. To strengthen the foundation for continued recovery in the economy and further improvement in the labour market, it is essential for the community to strive together towards more widespread vaccination. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He pointed out that to assist young people to find jobs, the Labour Department (LD) implemented the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) to provide one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below. The LD organised the YETP Summer Recruitment Waves from July 26 – August 26, 2021, with a number of recruitment days being held during the period. Ten organisations also offered young job-seekers with around 250 on-the-job training vacancies from different industries.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD has organised the Opening Up a New Terrain Job Fair on August 17 and 18, 2021, at the MacPherson Stadium. Over 50 employers participated, offering a large amount of job vacancies from various industries. In May – July 2021, the LD recorded a monthly average of 88 211 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 7.1% over the average figure in April – June 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 39.3%. 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 May – July 2021 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 70 000 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 May to July 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 January – March 2021 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2021 will be available by end August 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).