

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for November 2018 – January 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for November 2018 – January 2019) released today (February 21) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in November 2018 – January 2019, same as that in October – December 2018. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1% in the two periods.

Comparing November 2018 – January 2019 with October – December 2018, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment in November 2018 – January 2019 was 3 872 600, the same as that in October – December 2018 (3 872 600). The labour force decreased by around 3 600 from 3 978 000 in October – December 2018 to 3 974 400 in November 2018 – January 2019.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 3 600 from 105 400 in October – December 2018 to 101 800 in November 2018 – January 2019. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 2 300 from 44 500 to 42 200.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market stayed tight in November 2018 – January 2019, with the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate holding steady at 2.8%. The underemployment rate was likewise unchanged at 1.1%."

"When compared to the preceding three-month period, movements in unemployment rates varied across sectors, but were generally small in magnitude. Yet on a year-on-year basis, the unemployment situation in many major service sectors continued to improve. In particular, the unemployment rates in the retail, and accommodation and food services sectors recorded notable declines on the back of visible expansion in inbound tourism."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "While the labour market will likely remain tight in the near term, the employment outlook for the rest of 2019 will hinge on how the various external uncertainties evolve. The Government will stay vigilant and monitor the developments closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) assists young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below to

find jobs through the comprehensive training and employment support provided under the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP). Through the YETP, LD also organises various recruitment activities and collaborates with training bodies and employers to launch different special employment projects, with a view to enhancing the employability of young people.

On large-scale job fairs, LD will organise the Leap into a New Page Job Expo on March 5 and 6, 2019 at the Hong Kong Productivity Council Building in Kowloon Tong. More than 50 employers and organisations will participate, offering a large number of vacancies suitable for young people with post-secondary education. LD will also stage the "Mong Kok Job Expo – Building a Multi-culture Workplace" on March 18 and 19 at the MacPherson Stadium. Over 90 employers, nine training bodies and the Race Relations Unit of the Home Affairs Department will participate. In addition, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at 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 November 2018 – January 2019 covered a sample of some 25 000 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 July – September 2018 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2018 will be available by end February 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).