

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for November 2021 – January 2022

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for November 2021 – January 2022) released today (February 21) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.9% in November 2021 – January 2022, same as that in October – December 2021. The underemployment rate increased from 1.7% in October – December 2021 to 1.8% in November 2021 – January 2022.

Comparing November 2021 – January 2022 with October – December 2021, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied. Increases in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) were mainly seen in the food and beverage service activities sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector, while decreases were mainly observed in the manufacturing sector; and transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications sector. As to the underemployment rate, an increase was mainly seen in the food and beverage service activities sector.

Total employment decreased by around 4 200 from 3 680 700 in October – December 2021 to 3 676 500 in November 2021 – January 2022. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 12 300 from 3 824 000 to 3 811 700.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 8 100 from 143 300 in October – December 2021 to 135 200 in November 2021 – January 2022. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons increased by around 3 000 from 66 800 to 69 800.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The fifth wave of local epidemic began to weigh on the labour market. Although the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in November 2021 – January 2022 remained at 3.9%, same as that in October – December 2021, the underemployment rate turned to increase by 0.1 percentage point to 1.8% over the period. Total employment turned to decline by 4 200 to 3 676 500, while the labour force declined further by 12 300 to 3 811 700."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the food and beverage service activities sector went up by 0.3 percentage point over the preceding three-month period to 6.2% in November 2021 – January 2022, and that of the arts, entertainment and recreation sector went up by 1.3 percentage points to 5.3%. This is because the worsened local epidemic situation in January 2022

hindered activities in these sectors. On the other hand, the unemployment rates of many other sectors continued to decline, notably those of the manufacturing sector and the transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications sector.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The deterioration in the local epidemic situation of late will pose further pressure on the labour market. The sixth round of measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund, which are estimated to benefit 67 000 businesses, operators of 40 000 transport tools and 750 000 individuals, should render some support. However, the outlook of the labour market would hinge on the development of the local epidemic. It is thus essential for the community to work in unison to help and support the Government to put the local epidemic under control as swiftly as possible. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

In November 2021 – January 2022, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 97 011 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year increase of 81.2% while a drop of 9.6% over the average figure in October – December 2021. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website for obtaining such vacancy information.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise a large-scale virtual job fair on March 30 and 31, 2022. 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.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for November 2021 – January 2022 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 November 2021 to January 2022.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

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 July – September 2021 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2021 will be available by end February 2022. 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).