

Unemployment and Underemployment Statistics for October – December 2020

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for October – December 2020) released today (January 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 6.3% in September – November 2020 to 6.6% in October – December 2020. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.4% in the two periods.

Comparing October – December 2020 with September – November 2020, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) increased across almost all the major economic sectors, with a more distinct increase observed in the retail, accommodation and food services sector. As to the underemployment rate, a decrease was mainly seen in the warehousing and support activities for transportation sector while an increase was mainly observed in the retail sector.

Total employment decreased by around 2 400 from 3 650 100 in September – November 2020 to 3 647 700 in October – December 2020. The labour force in October – December 2020 was 3 893 400, about the same as that in September – November 2020 (3 894 400).

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 1 500 from 244 300 in September – November 2020 to 245 800 in October – December 2020. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also increased by around 700 from 133 100 to 133 800.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market deteriorated again due to the fourth wave of local epidemic which started in the latter part of November. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose by 0.3 percentage point from September – November 2020 to 6.6% in October – December 2020, the highest in 16 years, while the underemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.4%. Meanwhile, total employment edged down by 0.1% from the preceding three-month period to 3 647 700, and the number of unemployed persons increased by 0.6% to 245 800."

"Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined rebounded by 0.5 percentage point over September – November 2020 to 10.6% in October – December 2020. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate for food and beverage service activities rose to 13.8%. The unemployment rate in many other sectors also increased."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "As the fourth wave of local epidemic

continues to weigh on local consumption sentiment and disrupt economic activities, the labour market will remain under notable pressure in the near term. The Government has rolled out targeted measures lately to provide further support to the hard-hit sectors, and will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) has launched a pilot scheme in September 2020 to encourage the elderly, young people and persons with disabilities to undergo and complete on-the-job training under its employment programmes through the provision of a retention allowance, thereby stabilising employment. Besides, the Government launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme on January 8, 2021 to encourage young people of Hong Kong to work and pursue their careers in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Young people engaged under this scheme will be deployed to work in GBA Mainland cities during the 18-month subsidy period. The aims are to allow them to have more in-depth contact with the labour market in the Mainland, experience its living culture and leverage the opportunities for career advancement.

Meanwhile, the LD continues to receive and release information on vacancies from various industries for job-seekers with different educational background and working experience. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website for obtaining employment information.

Further Information

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

The survey for October – December 2020 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 73 000 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 3-month period of October to December 2020.

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/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=D5250021). 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 2020 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2020 will be available by end February 2021. Users can

also download this publication 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).