

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for October – December 2021

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for October – December 2021) released today (January 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 4.1% in September – November 2021 to 3.9% in October – December 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased from 1.8% in September – November 2021 to 1.7% in October – December 2021.

Comparing October – December 2021 with September – November 2021, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) decreased across almost all the major economic sectors, with more distinct decreases observed in the construction sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; and education sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the transportation sector and education sector.

Total employment increased by around 7 400 from 3 673 300 in September – November 2021 to 3 680 700 in October – December 2021. Over the same period, the labour force decreased by around 7 300 from 3 831 300 to 3 824 000.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 14 700 from 158 000 in September – November 2021 to 143 300 in October – December 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 3 200 from 70 000 to 66 800.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market continued to improve in October – December 2021 amid the sustained economic recovery during the period. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate went down by 0.2 percentage point from September – November 2021 to 3.9% in October – December 2021, and the underemployment rate edged down by 0.1 percentage point to 1.7%. Over the same period, total employment rose by 7 400 to 3 680 700, and the number of unemployed persons decreased by 14 700 to 143 300."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rates of most economic sectors fell in October – December 2021 as compared with the preceding three-month period. Due to the improvement of consumption sentiment in the fourth quarter of last year, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors combined fell by 0.9 percentage point to 5.4%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rates of the food and beverage service activities sector and the retail sector decreased by 1.0 percentage point and 0.9 percentage point to 5.9% and 5.2% respectively. Meanwhile, the unemployment rates of the construction sector and the education sector also declined visibly.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "With the new wave of local epidemic of late and the tightened social distancing measures in response, the employment

situation of the consumption-related sectors could be subject to some pressure in the near term. Nevertheless, the latest round of measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund should provide some relief. The labour market developments in the coming months would hinge on the local epidemic situation and the pace of economic recovery. The community should abide by the anti-epidemic measures and strive towards wider coverage of vaccination, in order to put the local epidemic under control as swiftly as possible. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that in October – December 2021, the Labour Department (LD) recorded a monthly average of 107 334 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 1.4% over the average figure in September – November 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 73.6%. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website for obtaining such vacancy information.

In addition, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) launched the Love Upgrading Special Scheme in October 2019 to provide trainees affected by the economic downturn with training and allowance. The ERB has completed four tranches of the Scheme and provided 60 000 training places. The fifth tranche of the Scheme was launched in January 2022 for six months until the end of June 2022, benefiting an additional 20 000 trainees.

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 October – December 2021 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 October to December 2021.

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).