

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for September – November 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for September – November 2019) released today (December 17) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 3.1% in August – October 2019 to 3.2% in September – November 2019. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 1.2% in the two periods.

Comparing September – November 2019 with August – October 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied. Increase in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) was mainly seen in the retail sector. As to the underemployment rate, increases were mainly seen in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector and food and beverage service activities sector, while a decrease was mainly observed in the repair, laundry, domestic and other personal service activities sector.

Total employment decreased by around 13 200 from 3 843 800 in August – October 2019 to 3 830 600 in September – November 2019. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 13 300 from 3 969 300 to 3 956 000.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) in September – November 2019 was 125 400, the same as that in August – October 2019 (125 400). The number of underemployed persons increased by around 1 000 from 45 900 from August – October to 46 900 in September – November 2019.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market eased further as economic conditions continued to worsen. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose by 0.1 percentage point in September – November 2019 to 3.2%, while the underemployment rate remained unchanged at 1.2%. The year-on-year decline in total employment widened further."

"Hard hit by local social incidents, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related segment (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors as a whole) rose further to a three-year high of 5.2%. In particular, the unemployment rate of the food and beverage service activities sector increased to 6.2%, the highest level in more than eight years. The unemployment rates of many other sectors also recorded increases."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market will be under even more pressure in the near term if the overall economy continues to weaken. The

Government will monitor the developments closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) will assist young people in entering the labour market through enhancing the Youth Employment and Training Programme. These enhancement measures include increasing the quota under "Career Kick-start" and the subsidy payable to participating non-governmental organisations; raising the workplace attachment allowance payable to trainees; and proactively canvassing on-the-job training vacancies and collaborating with employers in organising thematic job fairs.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the North District Recruitment and Training Expo 2020 on January 3, 2020 at Po Wing Road Sports Centre in Sheung Shui. More than 60 employers would participate, offering a large number of job vacancies from various industries. In addition, industry-based or district-based job fairs are regularly organised at the 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 September – November 2019 covered a sample of some 26 000 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 2019 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2019 will be available by end-February 2020. 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).