

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for September – November 2020

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for September – November 2020) released today (December 17) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased slightly from 6.4% in August – October 2020 to 6.3% in September – November 2020. The underemployment rate also decreased from 3.8% in August – October 2020 to 3.4% in September – November 2020.

Comparing September – November 2020 with August – October 2020, among the various major economic sectors, more distinct decreases in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) were observed in the retail, accommodation and food services sector; education sector; and art, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the construction sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; and transportation sector.

Total employment increased by around 22 400 from 3 627 700 in August – October 2020 to 3 650 100 in September – November 2020. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 8 900 from 3 885 500 to 3 894 400.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 13 500 from 257 800 in August – October 2020 to 244 300 in September – November 2020. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 14 900 from 148 000 to 133 100.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "Labour market conditions remained weak in September – November 2020, though showing some marginal improvement amid the stabilisation of the third wave of local epidemic during the period. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged down by 0.1 percentage point from August – October 2020 to 6.3% in September – November 2020, and the underemployment rate decreased by 0.4 percentage point to 3.4%. Meanwhile, total employment increased by 0.6% over the preceding three-month period, and the number of unemployed persons decreased by 5.2% to 244 300."

"Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined declined somewhat by 1.1 percentage points from August – October 2020 to 10.1% in September – November 2020. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate for food and beverage service activities fell from 14.8% to 13.1%. The unemployment situation in many other sectors also improved, particularly in the education sector and the arts, entertainment and

recreation sector."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "Given the fourth wave of local epidemic of late, the pressure on the labour market is likely to increase again in the near term. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely, and roll out targeted measures to support the hard-hit sectors as and when necessary."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) continually canvasses and releases information on job vacancies from various industries for job-seekers with different educational background and working experience. In November 2020, the LD recorded a total of 73 597 vacancies from the private sector, an increase of 7% over the figure in October 2020. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website and its mobile application for obtaining vacancy and employment information.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the "Creating New Opportunities Online Job Fair" on January 7 and 8, 2021. Over 40 employers will participate, offering lots of job vacancies from various industries for online applications.

Further information

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

The survey for September – November 2020 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 72 000 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 September to November 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 free of charge 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 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).