

Latest arrangements for Rating and Valuation Department counter services

The Rating and Valuation Department announced today (April 3) that starting from April 6, the opening hours of its enquiry counters will be adjusted as follows to provide basic and limited counter services to members of the public until further notice:

Opening hours of enquiry counters
Monday to Friday (8.30am to 3pm)

To achieve social distancing, members of the public are encouraged to use the department's 24-hour electronic services (www.rvd.gov.hk) to submit forms or obtain information as far as possible. Public enquiries may also be made to the department by email (enquiries@rvd.gov.hk), by fax (2152 0138) or by phone at 2152 0111/2152 2152, and the waiting/response time may be longer.

Employment and vacancies statistics for December 2019

According to the figures released today (April 3) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), total employment in the private sector surveyed decreased by 2.1% or 59 300 persons in December 2019 compared with a year earlier. The total number of vacancies was 54 430, representing a decrease of 30% or 23 760 over the preceding year.

Employment statistics

In December 2019, the selected industries as a whole employed 2 820 000 persons. The import and export trade engaged 439 100 persons, followed by professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) engaging 306 600 persons, retail trade 261 100 persons, financing and insurance 238 500 persons, and food and beverage services 234 500 persons.

Employment decreased in half of the surveyed industries compared with a year earlier. Decreases in employment were mainly recorded in the industries of import and export trade (-7.5% or -35 700 persons), food and beverage services (-7.0% or -17 500 persons), wholesale (-5.6% or -3 400 persons), manufacturing (-5.2% or -4 700 persons), and retail trade (-4.8% or -13 000 persons). On the other hand, employment increased mainly in the industries of human health services (5.3% or 7 000 persons), residential care and social work services (4.1% or 2 600 persons), and financing and insurance (2.2% or

5 000 persons). Employment figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 1.

Vacancies statistics

Among the 54 430 private sector vacancies, 6 110 were from the industry of professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services), 6 030 from financing and insurance, 4 870 from retail trade, 4 420 from residential care and social work services, 4 170 from education, and 4 030 from import and export trade.

Vacancies decreased in majority of the selected industries in December 2019 over a year earlier. Decreases were mainly observed in the industries of food and beverage services (-7 850 or -67%); retail trade (-3 900 or -45%); arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (-2 370 or -42%); import and export trade (-1 800 or -31%); and professional and business services (excluding cleaning and similar services) (-1 740 or -22%). On the other hand, vacancies increased mainly in the industries of human health services (260 or 9%), and residential care and social work services (70 or 2%). Job vacancies figures for selected major industries are shown in Table 2.

Analysed by major occupation category, private sector vacancies were observed mainly in the categories of associate professionals (12 850 vacancies), service and sales workers (12 250 vacancies), and elementary occupations (10 930 vacancies). Job vacancies figures by major occupation category are shown in Table 3.

Seasonally adjusted statistics

For discerning the latest trend in employment and vacancies in the private sector, it is useful to look at changes over a three-month period in the respective seasonally adjusted figures. Compared with September 2019, the seasonally adjusted total employment and total vacancies in the surveyed industries decreased by 0.6% and 13.2% respectively in December 2019. The changes over three-month periods in the seasonally adjusted series of employment and vacancies are shown in Table 4.

Other information

The above employment and vacancies statistics were obtained from the Quarterly Survey of Employment and Vacancies and the Quarterly Employment Survey of Construction Sites conducted by the C&SD. In the former survey, some economic activities (e.g. those dominated by self-employment, including taxi operators and hawkers) are not covered. Therefore, the respective employment and vacancies figures relate only to those selected industries included in the survey. In the latter survey on construction sites, employment and vacancies figures relate to manual workers only.

A detailed breakdown of the above statistics is published in the following reports:

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics, December 2019"

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp452.jsp?productCode=B1050003)

"Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies at Construction Sites, December 2019"

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp452.jsp?productCode=B1050004)

Users can download these publications free of charge at the website of the C&SD.

Enquiries on more detailed employment and vacancies statistics can be directed to the Employment Statistics and Central Register of Establishments Section, C&SD (Tel: 2582 5076; fax: 2827 2296; email: employment@censtatd.gov.hk).

Tentative issuance schedule for HKSAR Government Bonds under Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), published today (April 3) a tentative issuance schedule for Government Bonds (GBs) offered under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme for the next six-month period from April to September 2020 (annex). The schedule contains information on, among others, the tentative tenors, tender dates, issue sizes, issue dates and method of issuance of individual GB issues. Further details on the methods of issuance are set out in the Information Memorandum available on the Government Bond Programme's website (www.hkgb.gov.hk).

The issuance schedule is normally published on a half-yearly basis. It should be noted that the tenors, tender dates, issue sizes, issue dates and methods of issuance in the issuance schedule are tentative. The HKMA may make adjustments in the light of prevailing market conditions. A revised issuance schedule may be issued where appropriate. Other details of individual issues are to be confirmed and announced at least four business days prior to the scheduled tender dates.

Latest arrangements for public services of Legal Aid Department

In view of the latest developments of COVID-19 and in response to the Government's announcement on special work arrangements, the Legal Aid Department announced today (April 3) that the department will continue to provide basic necessary and limited civil and criminal legal aid application and litigation services until resumption of normal services.

The Information and Application Services Unit of the Kowloon Branch Office will continue to be closed until further notice. The opening hours of other offices are as follows:

Offices	Opening hours (from Monday to Friday, except public holidays)
Information and Application Services Unit, Headquarters	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Crime Section	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Civil Litigation Section 1	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Civil Litigation Section 2	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Costing Unit and Enforcement Unit	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm
Shroff Office	9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 4.30pm

For enquiries, please contact the following offices during the above office hours:

- Information and Application Services Unit, Headquarters: 2537 7717 (for civil legal aid services)
- Information and Application Services Unit, Kowloon Branch Office: 2380 0117
- Crime Section: 2867 3139
- Civil Litigation Section 1: 2867 3123
- Civil Litigation Section 2: 2594 7884
- Costing Unit and Enforcement Unit: 2867 3152

Members of the public may also contact the LAD for other enquiries through its 24-hour hotline (2537 7677), via email (ladinfo@lad.gov.hk) or by fax (2537 5948).

The department will review the prevailing public health situation and make further announcements as necessary.

Government urges public again to avoid grave sweeping on day of Ching Ming Festival

In view of the current severe epidemic situation, a Government spokesman today (April 3) strongly appealed to members of the public again to refrain from going out unnecessarily and to defer their plans to go grave sweeping on the day of the Ching Ming Festival tomorrow as far as possible to avoid the crowded peak period of the festival. Doing so can lessen crowd conditions and reduce close contact, thereby reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus through social contact.

The Government reminded grave sweepers to avoid group gatherings when grave sweeping, maintain an appropriate social distance with others at all times, and avoid meal gatherings with relatives and friends at worship sites.

The spokesman said, "The Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) came into effect on March 29. The Regulation prohibits group gatherings with more than four people in public places, and grave sweeping is not exempted. Therefore, members of the public have to abide by the group gathering regulation by having not more than four people together during grave sweeping, unless they are living in the same household. In addition, a distance of at least 1.5 metres should be maintained between grave sweeper groups."

For members of the public visiting cemeteries and columbaria to pay respects to ancestors during the Ching Ming Festival, the spokesman reminded that they should seek medical advice promptly and refrain from going grave sweeping if they have fever or respiratory symptoms. Grave sweepers should maintain good personal hygiene, wear surgical masks and always keep their hands clean. They are also reminded to keep flammable items (e.g. alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based hand sanitisers) away from ignition sources, incense and candles, and furnaces for the sake of safety.

The spokesman particularly reminded members of the public wishing to go to the Mainland to pay respects to their ancestors to consider postponing their trips in light of the latest epidemic prevention, control and quarantine measures (including compulsory quarantine) implemented by various provinces and cities in the Mainland for arriving travellers.

The spokesman stressed, "At this critical moment when the epidemic situation remains severe, members of the public should co-operate and work together to fight the virus. They should seriously consider postponing grave sweeping activities to avoid the crowded times during the Ching Ming Festival so as to prevent and protect themselves and their family members from infection, thereby preventing the spread of the virus in the community."