

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for May – July 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for May – July 2019) released today (August 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 2.8% in April – June 2019 to 2.9% in May – July 2019. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing May – July 2019 with April – June 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied, with a relatively notable increase observed in the food and beverage service activities sector. Movements in the underemployment rate in different industry sectors also varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment decreased by around 3 300 from 3 870 700 in April – June 2019 to 3 867 400 in May – July 2019. The labour force in May – July 2019 was 3 985 900, about the same as that in April – June 2019 (3 985 000).

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 4 200 from 114 300 in April – June 2019 to 118 500 in May – July 2019. The number of underemployed persons in May – July 2019 was 40 700, about the same as that in April – June 2019 (41 200).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "After remaining unchanged for over a year, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged up by 0.1 percentage point to a still-low level of 2.9%. Meanwhile, the underemployment rate held steady at 1.0%."

"The manpower situation in most sectors remained largely stable. Yet, as the consumption market stayed soft, the unemployment rate of the retail, accommodation and food services sectors taken together went up from the preceding three-month period. Also, the import and export trade sector has been facing increasing pressure amid shrinking trade flows, with the unemployment rate generally on the rise since early this year."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "As the economy is expected to stay weak in the coming months, the local labour market will unavoidably be subject to greater pressure. The Government will monitor the labour market situation closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) continues to promote employment at all fronts. Under the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, employers engaging job seekers aged 60 or above who are unemployed or have left the workforce are offered an on-the-job training allowance up to \$4,000 per month per employee for a period of six to 12 months. For employers

engaging unemployed persons aged 40 to 59, the maximum amount of on-the-job training allowance is \$3,000 per month per employee for a period of three to six months.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment on October 3 and 4 at the Lok Fu Place, and the New Opportunities-New Terrain Job Expo on October 29 and 30 at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. 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 May – July 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 January – March 2019 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2019 will be available by end-August 2019. 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).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, August 19, 2019 is 106.5 (up 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, August 17, 2019 was 106.4 (down 0.1 against last Friday's index).

Preliminary report on Hong Kong Airlines cabin crew injury during turbulence encounter released

The Air Accident Investigation Authority (AAIA) today (August 19) released Accident Investigation Preliminary Report 5/2019 on an accident in which a cabin crew member sustained an injury on board an A330-243 aircraft (registration mark B-LHA) operated by Hong Kong Airlines Limited during a turbulence encounter enroute from Beijing to Hong Kong on June 18, 2019.

A spokesperson for the AAIA said that the preliminary report contains information relating to the accident collected up to the time of issue, and must be regarded as tentative.

"The AAIA will continue to collect and study all relevant information in order to determine the circumstances and causes of the accident. Further in-depth investigation and analysis have to be conducted before any conclusion can be drawn," the spokesperson said.

The full Accident Investigation Preliminary Report 5/2019 is available for download from the AAIA webpage (www.thb.gov.hk/aaia/eng/investigation_reports/index.htm).

Lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach resume

Attention TV/Radio Announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has announced that the lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach in Tuen Mun District resumed today (August 19). The lifesaving services at the beach were suspended earlier due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty.

Second phase of "Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware" saves over 1 million sets of disposable tableware

To encourage the public to go "plastic-and-disposable-free" when ordering takeaways, the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) collaborated with the food and beverage (F&B) industry to organise the "Plastic-Free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware" publicity and education campaign. Phase 2 of the campaign concluded successfully on August 9.

The Phase 2 promotion programme was launched in mid-June 2019 by the ECC and the EPD together with some 700 eateries across the territory (including over 630 eateries under more than 30 catering businesses and over 50 canteens and restaurants in government venues), to encourage the public to bring their own reusable tableware and avoid the use of disposable tableware so as to reduce single-use plastic waste. During the two-month programme, around 1.2 million sets of disposable tableware were saved by the public. Members of the public also saved around 1.2 million sets of disposable tableware during the first phase of the campaign, a two-month pilot programme at the extensive networks of three major fast food chains across the territory, held from November 2018 to January this year. The two phases of the campaign have saved a total of about 2.4 million sets of disposable tableware.

The EPD spokesman said, "Participation from the entire community is crucial to achieving 'less waste, plastic-free'. The campaign has received wide support from the F&B industry. The Phase 2 promotion programme included a diverse range of eateries, from fast food chains and Hong Kong-style tea restaurants to Chinese restaurants, Western cafés and restaurants, light refreshment restaurants, kiosks and stores, as well as online takeaway platforms. Together they have provided environmentally friendly customers with various complimentary offers and gifts. The ECC and the EPD also actively released information about the programme and promoted the message of 'say no to disposables, bring your own tableware' through various channels including public transport, radio and newspapers, social media and webpages to help instill a 'plastic-free for all' culture in society."

Under the promotion programme, customers may receive a sticker for each takeaway order made at participating restaurants/catering businesses without obtaining disposable tableware, so as to encourage the public to cultivate green lifestyle habits and avoid using disposable plastic tableware in everyday life. After collecting six stickers, they can redeem a reusable stainless steel cutlery set sponsored by the ECC for free, or a complimentary

offer/gift (e.g. discount coupon, dessert, snack and drink) provided by individual restaurants/catering businesses. During the programme, participating restaurants distributed around 1.2 million stickers to take-away customers, while about 38 000 sets of stainless steel cutlery and some 30 000 complimentary offers/gifts were redeemed. Stainless steel cutlery sets have also been stored at Community Green Stations across the territory and at designated offices of the ECC and the EPD, which members of the public with unused and sufficient stickers may visit for redemption by September 10, 2019. Please refer to the ECC's Facebook page for detailed addresses (www.facebook.com/ECC1990/posts/2338582506179095).

The EPD is reviewing the implementation of the promotion programme and its operational experience, and will maintain close liaison with different stakeholders in the F&B sector to consider further collaboration in promoting reduced use of disposable plastic tableware. Meanwhile, the EPD is also holding the 2019 "Plastic-free Beach, Tableware First" campaign at all public beaches during this year's swimming season. More environmentally friendly tableware including paper straws, wooden forks, paper containers and reusable utensils will be used in place of disposable plastic tableware, with a view to promoting a "plastic-free" culture and protecting the oceans.

In the long run, the EPD is conducting a study on the control of disposable plastic tableware, which includes making reference to developments in other countries or places regarding the control of disposable plastic items as well as exploring the necessity and feasibility of such control, in order to draw up proposals suitable for implementation in Hong Kong. The experience gained from promoting reduced use of disposable plastic tableware in the food and beverage sector will also be taken into account in the study, which is scheduled for completion in 2020.