

# Appointments to Working Group on Implementing the Requirement on Air Change or Air Purifiers in Dine-in Restaurants under Cap. 599F

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (March 16) that a requirement on air change or air purifiers in dine-in restaurants will soon be stipulated in the Secretary for Food and Health's directions in relation to catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) on infection control grounds. The FEHD today made appointments to the Working Group on Implementing the Requirement on Air Change or Air Purifiers in Dine-in Restaurants under Cap. 599F, which will advise the Government on the smooth implementation of the above requirement.

The Working Group will work on specific guidelines for implementing the air change per hour at six in terms of fresh air intake for the seating area of dine-in restaurants, as well as specific guidelines for the alternative of using air purifiers (high-efficiency particulate air filter (HEPA) cum ultraviolet-C (UV-C) devices or HEPA devices or UV-C devices) in terms of meeting the specifications promulgated and application on the ground in a proper manner, for reference by restaurant operators, ventilation contractors and air purifier suppliers.

The composition of the Working Group is as follows:

Chairman

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Professor Yuen Pak-leung

Members

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Mr Antonio Chan

Mr Ho Kui-yip

Mr Kenneth Li

Professor Li Yuguo

Dr David Lung

Mr Simon Siu Yat-ming

Professor Wang Shengwei

Members of the Working Group are appointed on an ad personam basis. They are expert representatives coming from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including public health, engineering (including mechanical engineering and building services engineering), surveying and ventilation (including the ventilation system works and air-conditioning and registration field).

Representatives from the FEHD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department will serve as observers on the Working Group.

"The Working Group will maintain communication with the relevant trades. We believe that the Working Group will make valuable contributions towards the successful implementation of the ventilation requirement in dine-in restaurants under Cap. 599F," the spokesman said.

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## **CSSA caseload for February 2021**

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in February showed a drop of 517 cases, representing a decrease of 0.2 per cent compared with that of January, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (March 16).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of February stood at 224 555 (see attached table), with a total of 318 308 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 0.6 per cent to 2 477 cases. Old age cases were down by 0.4 per cent to 129 725 cases. Single parent cases remained steady at 24 798 cases.

Unemployment cases decreased by 0.1 per cent on a monthly basis to 19 740 cases. The figure represented an increase of about 49.5 per cent in comparison with that of February 2020. On a month-to-month basis, the number of applications of unemployment cases decreased by 26.4 per cent to 683 cases in February 2021, representing a decrease of about 5.7 per cent from 724 cases in February 2020.

Permanent disability cases increased by 0.3 per cent to 17 480 cases. Ill-health cases rose by 0.2 per cent to 26 231 cases.

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## **Man convicted of operating unlicensed employment agency**

The Labour Department (LD) today (March 16) reminded members of the public to obtain a proper licence before operating an employment agency (EA), or else they may face prosecution.

The reminder was made after a man was convicted of operating an EA

without a valid licence and fined \$11,250 at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today.

In November 2019, the Employment Agencies Administration (EAA) of the LD received a complaint against a man from an employer hiring a foreign domestic helper. As the investigation revealed sufficient evidence that the man was operating an unlicensed EA and the complainant was willing to act as prosecution witness, the LD decided to take out prosecution.

All establishments or persons operating a business in Hong Kong for the purpose of obtaining employment for another person or supplying personnel to an employer are governed by Part XII of the Employment Ordinance and the Employment Agency Regulations. Irrespective of the modus operandi or the types of jobs involved, all EAs must obtain a licence issued by the LD before undertaking any EA activities. Except for the EA licence holder or his/her associate, no one shall operate, manage or assist in the management of an EA. Offenders may face prosecution.

The LD reminds EAs to operate in full compliance with the law as well as the Code of Practice for EAs at all times. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution and/or revocation of licence. The Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, which came into force on February 9, 2018, raised the maximum penalty for unlicensed operation of an EA and overcharging of job-seekers' commissions to a fine of \$350,000 and imprisonment for three years.

For enquiries or complaints about unlicensed operation or overcharging of commissions by EAs, please call the EAA of the LD at 2115 3667 or visit its office at Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon.

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## [Hong Kong's Gross National Income and external primary income flows for fourth quarter of 2020 and whole year of 2020](#)

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (March 16) the preliminary statistics on Hong Kong's Gross National Income (GNI) and related figures for the fourth quarter of 2020 and the whole year of 2020.

Hong Kong's GNI, which denotes the total income earned by Hong Kong residents from engaging in various economic activities, decreased by 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2020 from a year earlier to \$740.5 billion at current market prices. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP), estimated at \$713.7 billion

at current market prices in the same quarter, recorded a 4.1% decrease over the same period. The value of GNI was larger than GDP by \$26.8 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020, which was equivalent to 3.8% of GDP in that quarter, mainly attributable to a net inflow of investment income.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, Hong Kong's GNI decreased by 3.6% in real terms in the fourth quarter of 2020 from a year earlier. The corresponding GDP in the same quarter decreased by 3.0% in real terms.

Hong Kong's total inflow of primary income, which mainly comprises investment income, estimated at \$348.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020 and equivalent to 48.8% of GDP in that quarter, recorded a decrease of 8.4% from a year earlier. Meanwhile, total primary income outflow, estimated at \$321.6 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020 and equivalent to 45.1% of GDP in that quarter, decreased by 9.3% from a year earlier.

As for the major components of investment income inflow, direct investment income (DII) decreased by 0.6% from a year earlier, mainly due to the decrease in earnings of some prominent local enterprises from their direct investment abroad. Portfolio investment income (PII) recorded a decrease of 8.1% from a year earlier, mainly attributable to the decrease in interest income received by resident investors from their holdings of non-resident debt securities.

Regarding the major components of investment income outflow, DII decreased by 3.3% from a year earlier, mainly due to the decrease in earnings of some prominent multinational enterprises from their direct investment in Hong Kong. PII decreased by 14.3%, mainly attributable to the decrease in interest payout to non-resident investors from their holdings of resident debt securities.

Analysed by country/territory, the mainland of China continued to be the largest source of Hong Kong's total primary income inflow in the fourth quarter of 2020, accounting for 48.4%. This was followed by the British Virgin Islands (BVI), with a share of 21.3%. Regarding total primary income outflow, the mainland of China and the BVI remained the most important destinations in the fourth quarter of 2020, accounting for 24.9% and 21.6% respectively.

For 2020 as a whole, Hong Kong's GNI decreased by 5.0% from a year earlier to \$2,859.2 billion at current market prices. The difference of \$148.4 billion from GDP for the same year (estimated at \$2,710.7 billion) represented a net primary income inflow of the same amount and was equivalent to 5.5% of GDP in that year. The total primary income inflow was estimated at \$1,538.7 billion, or 56.8% of GDP in 2020 while the corresponding outflow at \$1,390.2 billion, or 51.3% of GDP in 2020. After netting out the effect of price changes, Hong Kong's GNI decreased by 5.8% in real terms in 2020 from 2019.

Further Information

GDP and GNI are closely related indicators for measuring economic performance. GDP is a measure of the total value of production of all resident producing units of an economy. GNI denotes the total income earned by residents of an economy from engaging in various economic activities, irrespective of whether the economic activities are carried out within the economic territory of the economy or outside.

Figures of GNI and primary income flows analysed by income component from the first quarter of 2019 to the fourth quarter of 2020 are presented in Table A, while selected major country/territory breakdowns of primary income inflow and outflow for the same quarters are presented in Tables B(1) and B(2) respectively.

Statistics on GDP and GNI from 2019 onwards and primary income flows for 2020 are subject to revision when more data become available.

Enquiries about GNI and related statistics may be directed to the Balance of Payments Branch (2) of the C&SD at 3903 7054.

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## **Unemployment and underemployment statistics for December 2020 – February 2021**

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for December 2020 – February 2021) released today (March 16) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 7.0% in November 2020 – January 2021 to 7.2% in December 2020 – February 2021. The underemployment rate also increased from 3.8% in November 2020 – January 2021 to 4.0% in December 2020 – February 2021.

Comparing December 2020 – February 2021 with November 2020 – January 2021, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) increased across almost all the major economic sectors, with more distinct increases observed in the import and export trade sector; postal and courier activities sector; education sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, increases were mainly seen in the retail sector; food and beverage service activities sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Total employment decreased by around 20 500 from 3 630 600 in November 2020 – January 2021 to 3 610 100 in December 2020 – February 2021. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 12 300 from 3 884 000 to 3 871 700.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 8 300 from 253 300 in November 2020 – January 2021 to 261 600 in December 2020 – February 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also increased by around 6 400 from 148 200 to 154 600.

## Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "The labour market remained under notable pressure in December 2020 – February 2021. However, the situation tended to stabilise in the latter part of the three-month period alongside the improvement in epidemic situation. The unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) rose by 0.3 percentage point over November 2020 – January 2021 to 6.8% in December 2020 – February 2021, and after seasonal adjustment it rose by 0.2 percentage point to 7.2%. Both are the highest since 2004. The underemployment rate also increased by 0.2 percentage point to a post-SARS high of 4.0%. Meanwhile, total employment fell by 0.6% from the preceding three-month period to 3 610 100, and the number of unemployed persons increased by 3.3% to 261 600.

"Analysed by sector, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined stayed elevated at 11.1% in December 2020 – February 2021, but it was 0.2 percentage point lower than November 2020 – January 2021. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate for food and beverage service activities declined from 14.7% to 14.1%, while that of the retail sector rose from 8.9% to 9.1%. The unemployment situation in most other sectors deteriorated, particularly in import and export trade; postal and courier activities; education; and arts, entertainment and recreation."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market will still face challenges in the near term as the epidemic has yet to be fully contained and inbound tourism remains frozen. With the launch of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, the threat of the epidemic may gradually recede and this will help ease the pressure on the labour market later in the year. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He noted that the Youth Employment and Training Programme of the Labour Department (LD) continues to implement the employment project Career Kick-start which targets at young people with special needs in the 2020/21 programme year. Participating non-governmental organisations will receive subsidy from the Government in offering 12-month on-the-job training to the trainees with a view to enhancing their employability. In order to allow more young people in need to benefit from the project, the eligibility criteria of prolonged unemployment has been relaxed in this new phase. Furthermore, the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme has been launched, providing 2 000 on-the-job training places for university graduates.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme Job Expo on March 23 and 24, 2021 at the MacPherson

Stadium with a virtual job fair launched in parallel. Over 30 employers participating in the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme will participate. Meanwhile, the LD continues to receive and release information on vacancies from various industries. In February 2021, the LD recorded a total of 56 227 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 28.2% over the figure in January 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 57.1%. Job-seekers may make use of the LD's online platforms such as the Interactive Employment Service website for obtaining such vacancy information.

#### Further information

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

The survey for December 2020 – February 2021 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. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of December 2020 to February 2021.

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 at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=D5250021](http://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 October – December 2020 while the next issue covering the quarter January – March 2021 will be available by end May 2021. Users can also download this publication at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001](http://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](mailto:ghs@censtatd.gov.hk)).