

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for April – June 2021

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for April – June 2021) released today (July 20) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 6.0% in March – May 2021 to 5.5% in April – June 2021. The underemployment rate also decreased from 2.8% in March – May 2021 to 2.5% in April – June 2021.

Comparing April – June 2021 with March – May 2021, the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) decreased across almost all the major economic sectors, with more distinct decreases observed in the construction sector; import/export trade and wholesale sector; retail, accommodation and food services sector; and arts, entertainment and recreation sector. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were mainly seen in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector; and retail, accommodation and food services sector.

Total employment increased by around 9 700 from 3 630 400 in March – May 2021 to 3 640 100 in April – June 2021. Over the same period, the labour force decreased by around 10 600 from 3 863 700 to 3 853 100.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 20 200 from 233 300 in March – May 2021 to 213 100 in April – June 2021. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 11 400 from 107 400 to 96 000.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market showed further improvement as the economy continued to recover alongside the stabilisation of local epidemic situation and the improved external environment. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell by 0.5 percentage point from March – May 2021 to 5.5% in April – June 2021, the fourth consecutive moving three-month period that registered a decline. The underemployment rate also decreased further by 0.3 percentage point to 2.5%. Meanwhile, total employment rose for the fourth consecutive moving three-month period, increasing by 9 700 to 3 640 100. The number of unemployed persons went down further by 20 200 to 213 100."

Analysed by sector, the unemployment rates of most economic sectors fell in April – June 2021 as compared with the preceding three-month period. In particular, the unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) combined fell by 0.9 percentage point to 8.5%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rate of food and beverage service activities fell by 1.3 percentage points to

10.0%. Meanwhile, the unemployment rates of the construction sector, the import/export trade and wholesale sector, and the arts, entertainment and recreation sector also declined notably.

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market should improve further with the continued economic recovery. The Consumption Voucher Scheme will also help. To create a solid foundation for a full-fledged revival of economic activities and hence a continued recovery of the labour market, it is essential for the community to actively participate in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely."

He pointed out that the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) launched the Love Upgrading Special Scheme in October 2019 to provide trainees affected by the economic downturn with training and allowance. The ERB has completed three tranches of the Scheme and provided 40 000 training places. The fourth tranche of the Scheme was launched in July 2021 for six months until the end of this year, benefiting an additional 20 000 trainees.

On large-scale job fairs, the Labour Department (LD) and the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions Occupational Retraining Centre have co-organised the Embracing New Opportunities Job Fair on July 20 and 21, 2021 at MacPherson Stadium. About 40 employers have participated, offering a large amount of job vacancies from various industries. Meanwhile, the LD will continue to receive and release information on job vacancies from various industries. In April – June 2021, the LD recorded a monthly average of 82 377 vacancies from the private sector, representing an increase of 0.6% over the average figure in March – May 2021 and a year-on-year increase of 50.6%. 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 April – June 2021 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 April to June 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/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=D5250021&scode=200). 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 January – March 2021 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2021 will be available by end August 2021. Users can also download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200).

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).