

# Unemployment and underemployment statistics for December 2018 – February 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for December 2018 – February 2019) released today (March 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in December 2018 – February 2019, same as that in November 2018 – January 2019. The underemployment rate decreased from 1.1% in November 2018 – January 2019 to 1.0% in December 2018 – February 2019.

Comparing December 2018 – February 2019 with November 2018 – January 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied, but were generally small in magnitude. Movements in the underemployment rate also varied, with a relatively notable decrease observed in the construction sector.

Total employment decreased by around 5 900 from 3 872 600 in November 2018 – January 2019 to 3 866 700 in December 2018 – February 2019. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 5 200 from 3 974 400 to 3 969 200.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 700 from 101 800 in November 2018 – January 2019 to 102 500 in December 2018 – February 2019. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons decreased by around 1 900 from 42 200 to 40 300.

## Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The labour market remained in full employment in December 2018 – February 2019. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged at 2.8%, while the underemployment rate edged down by 0.1 percentage point to 1.0%."

"When compared to the preceding three-month period, movements in unemployment rates varied across sectors, but were mostly small in magnitude. Meanwhile, a visible decline in the number of underemployed persons was seen in the construction sector. When compared with a year earlier, the unemployment situation in many major service sectors improved, notably in the retail, and accommodation and food services sectors amid the sustained expansion in inbound tourism."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market is expected to stay tight in the near term. Nevertheless, the Government will stay vigilant to the external uncertainties and monitor the potential impact on the local labour market closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) has adopted a series of on-going measures to promote the employment of elderly persons. These include setting up special counters at job centres to provide priority registration and job referral services for elderly job seekers, organising tailor-made employment briefings for them, setting up a dedicated webpage for elderly job seekers on the Interactive Employment Service website and enhancing the functions of the vacancy search terminals to facilitate their access to employment information and search for suitable vacancies.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will co-organise the Hong Kong International Airport Career Expo 2019 with the Airport Authority Hong Kong from May 31 to June 2 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Ample vacancies involving the aviation industry and airport operation will be provided. 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 December 2018 – February 2019 covered a sample of some 25 000 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 October – December 2018 while the next issue covering the quarter January – March 2019 will be available by end-May 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](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)).