

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for July – September 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for July – September 2019) released today (October 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.9% in July – September 2019, same as that in June – August 2019. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing July – September 2019 with June – August 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied. A relatively notable decrease was observed in the information and communications sector, while an increase was mainly seen in the food and beverage service activities sector. Movements in the underemployment rates in different industry sectors also varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment decreased by around 8 200 from 3 863 600 in June – August 2019 to 3 855 400 in July – September 2019. Over the same period, the labour force also decreased by around 8 500 from 3 984 200 to 3 975 700.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) in July – September 2019 was 120 300, about the same as that in June – August 2019 (120 600). The number of underemployed persons in July – September 2019 was 41 500, also about the same as that in June – August 2019 (41 000).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong said, "The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at 2.9% in July – September 2019, while the underemployment rate likewise held steady at 1.0%. Yet, total employment declined slightly from the year-ago level."

"Weak local consumption and plunging visitor arrivals caused by local social incidents continued to weigh on the labour market. The unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related segment (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors as a whole) increased further to 4.9%, the highest in more than two years. In particular, the unemployment rate of the food and beverage service activities sector rose sharply to a six-year high of 6.0%."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "Worsened economic conditions will put increasing pressure on the local labour market in the near term. The Government will monitor the developments closely."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) will launch a pilot scheme to encourage the elderly, young people and persons with disabilities to undergo and complete on-the-job training under its respective employment programmes

through the provision of a retention allowance, thereby stabilising employment.

On large-scale job fairs, the LD will organise the New Opportunities-New Terrain Job Expo on October 29 and 30 at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. About 40 employers will participate, offering many vacancies suitable for young people with post-secondary education. The LD will also organise the Job Fair for Middle-aged and Elderly Employment from November 13 to 15 at the Sheung Wan Civic Centre. 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 July – September 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 April – June 2019 while the next issue covering the quarter July – September 2019 will be available by end-November 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).