

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for March – May 2023

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for March – May 2023) released today (June 19) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.0% in March – May 2023, same as that in February – April 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.2% in the two periods.

Comparing March – May 2023 with February – April 2023, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but the magnitudes were generally not large.

Total employment increased by around 17 900 from 3 655 900 in February – April 2023 to 3 673 800 in March – May 2023. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 16 700 from 3 770 300 to 3 787 000.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 1 300 from 114 400 in February – April 2023 to 113 100 in March – May 2023. The number of underemployed persons in March – May 2023 was 44 400, about the same as that in February – April 2023 (44 500).

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "The labour market continued to improve along with the economic recovery. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at a low level of 3.0% in March – May 2023, same as that in February – April 2023. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.2%. Both the labour force and total employment recorded accelerated increases of 16 700 and 17 900 to 3 787 000 and 3 673 800 respectively. The number of unemployed persons decreased further by 1 300 to 113 100. The labour market should improve further in the coming months as the economy continues to recover."

Comparing with the preceding three-month period, the unemployment rates of various sectors showed diverse movements in March – May 2023. The combined unemployment rate of the consumption- and tourism-related sectors (viz. retail, accommodation and food services sectors) remained unchanged at 4.2%. Among these sectors, the unemployment rates of the retail sector and the food and beverage service activities sector held steady at 3.8% and 4.8% respectively, while that of the accommodation services sector declined by 0.4 percentage point to 3.5%. The unemployment rates of some sectors also declined, notably for the construction sector, the wholesale sector, the human health activities sector and the social work activities sector. The unemployment rates of the remaining sectors either showed little change or increased, but stayed low in general.

On large-scale job fairs, the Labour Department (LD) will organise the Job Fair for Catering, Retail and Hotel Industry & Middle-aged and Elderly Employment at the MacPherson Stadium in Mong Kok on July 20 and 21, 2023. Over 60 employers will participate, offering a large number of vacancies. In March – May 2023, LD recorded a monthly average of 106 022 vacancies from the private sector, representing a year-on-year increase of 40.1% and a decrease of 0.5% over the average figure in February – April 2023. 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.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for March – May 2023 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 69 000 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 March to May 2023.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html). 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 report contains statistics for the quarter January – March 2023 while the next issue covering the quarter April – June 2023 will be available by end August 2023. Users can also browse and 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 General Household Survey Section (3) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).