

Coronavirus Decimates Jobs

By Gwak Rae-geon

April 29, 2020 10:00

The coronavirus epidemic has dealt a huge blow to employment in Korea, the latest statistics show.

The total number of employees shrank by 225,000 on-year to 18.28 million in March, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labor on Tuesday, the first on-year record. The ministry attributed the decline to the lockdown, closure of schools and reduced economic activity amid the epidemic.

Some 171,000 more people lost their jobs in March than found employment. The number of people who lost jobs involuntarily including layoffs increased by 14.5 percent to 587,000, while those who left jobs temporarily or permanently on unpaid leave or for retirement and other reasons surged 78.1 percent to 116,000.



A man looks at a job bulletin board in an employment office in Seoul on April 22.

Jobs that involve direct contact with customers were hit hardest. The hospitality industry's workers dwindled by 153,000 people or 12 percent, education services by 6.7 percent, and arts and sports by 39,000 or 11.9 percent.

By region, the hardest hit was coronavirus hotspot Daegu, where employment was down 4.2 percent, followed by Busan (down 2.3 percent), North Gyeongsang Province (down 1.9 percent) and Gangwon Province (down 1.9 percent).

Kwon Ki-sup, the head of employment policy at the ministry, said, "The employment shock caused by the coronavirus epidemic is starting to become clearly apparent. The government believes the most important task is to ease it and survive from April to June."