According to the latest labour force statistics (provisional figures for June - August 2013) released today (September 17) by the Census and Statistics Department, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.3% in June - August 2013, same as that in May - July 2013. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.5% in the two periods.

Comparing June - August 2013 with May - July 2013, increases in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) were mainly observed in the education, and warehousing and support activities for transportation sectors, while decreases were mainly seen in the construction and retail sectors. As to the underemployment rate, an increase was mainly observed in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector, while a decrease was mainly seen in the import and export trade sector.

Total employment increased by around 1 700 from 3 749 500 in May - July 2013 to 3 751 200 in June - August 2013. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 3 600 from 3 883 500 to 3 887 100.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 1 800 from 134 000 in May - July 2013 to 135 800 in June - August 2013. The number of underemployed persons in June - August 2013 was 58 400, about the same as 58 800 in May - July 2013.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, said, "Thanks to the resilient domestic demand, the labour market performed well in June - August 2013 and was able to absorb nearly half of the increase in labour supply. As a result, total employment grew further to another record high. After discounting for seasonal factors, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed low at 3.3%."

On the short-term outlook, Mr Cheung said, "The Hong Kong economy will likely see further moderate growth. With the students on summer jobs gradually returning to school as well as the largely positive hiring sentiment in the corporate sector, the labour market is expected to remain stable in the near term. However, external uncertainties, in particular the pace of the US monetary policy adjustment down the road and its ensuing impact on global fund flows direction and regional economies, remain a cause of concern. We will stay alert to these developments and closely monitor their potential impacts on the local economy and labour market. The Labour Department will keep up its efforts in providing comprehensive employment service to job-seekers and enhance its employment service in relatively remote districts."

"In August 2013, the number of private sector vacancies recorded by the Labour Department increased by 4.4% from 108 633 in the previous month to 113 371, and up by 3.8% over 109 273 in the same period last year," he added.

Since January this year, the Labour Department has organised 10 large-scale job fairs with 300 participating organisations offering over 22 300 vacancies from different industries. Training bodies also took part in these fairs to introduce job-training opportunities and receive applications on the spot. The Department will stage another two large-scale job fairs in Tsuen Wan on September 26 and 27 for application by job-seekers on the spot.

Further Information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for June - August 2013 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 Organisation.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The current issue of the publication covering the quarter April - June 2013 is now available and the next issue covering the quarter July - September 2013 will be available by end November 2013. Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the Census and Statistics Department (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001).

Enquiries for labour force statistics for June - August 2013 can be directed to the General Household Survey Section (3), Census and Statistics Department (Tel: 2887 5508; Fax: 2508 1501; e-mail: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).