

Hong Kong has an area of 1 106 square kilometres and a population of about 7.34 million in mid-2016. Despite its small size, Hong Kong was ranked the 7th largest trading entity in the world in 2016. The total value of visible trade amounted to \$7,596.6 billion in 2016. During the period of 2006 to 2016, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 2.9 per cent in real terms, to \$2,447.5 billion (in chained (2015) dollars) in 2016. Per capita GDP at current market prices reached \$339,531 (US\$43,743).

The size of the total labour force⁺⁺ in 2016 was 3.92 million, of whom 50.9 per cent were male and 49.1 per cent were female. This represented 61.1 per cent of the total population aged 15 and over⁺⁺.

Labour Legislation and Standards: The Government protects employees' rights and benefits as well as occupational safety and health through an extensive programme of labour legislation.

Hong Kong also applies relevant International Labour Conventions as the local circumstances allow. As at the end of 2016, Hong Kong has applied 41 Conventions. This is comparable with neighbouring places with similar economic development as well as social and cultural background.

Working Conditions: The Employment Ordinance provides the framework for a comprehensive code of employment. It governs the payment of wages, the termination of employment contracts and the operation of employment agencies, etc. The law provides qualified employees with various benefits and protection such as rest days, statutory holidays, paid annual leave, sickness allowance, paternity leave, maternity protection and employment protection. On top of these, the law also provides protection to employees participating in trade union activities, severance payment to employees made redundant and long service payment to workers with long service who are dismissed or resign on grounds of ill health or old age, etc. Employees who are owed wages, wages in lieu of notice, severance payment, pay for untaken annual leave and/or untaken statutory holidays by insolvent employers may apply for ex gratia payment from the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund. The Fund is financed mainly by an annual levy on business registration certificates.

The Employment of Children Regulations prohibit the employment of children aged under 15 in all industrial undertakings. Subject to certain protective restrictions, children aged 13 and 14 who are attending school may take up part-time employment in the non-industrial sectors.

The Employment of Young Persons (Industry) Regulations govern the employment conditions of young persons aged 15 to 17 in industrial undertakings. These young persons are not allowed to work more than eight hours a day and 48 hours a week. Overtime work for them is prohibited.

Labour inspectors of the Labour Department conduct workplace inspections to monitor employers' compliance with various labour laws to safeguard the rights and benefits of local and imported workers.

Trade Unions and Industrial Relations: Hong Kong residents have the right and freedom to form and join trade unions. At the end of 2016, there were 890 trade unions, consisting of 828 employees unions, 15 employers' associations, 36 mixed organisations of employees and employers and 11 trade union federations registered under the Trade Unions Ordinance.

Hong Kong has a sound record of industrial relations. Problems between employers and employees can usually be resolved through mutual agreement or conciliation. In 2016, the Labour Department handled 14 727 labour claims and disputes, most of which were related to disputes on termination and wages. Over 70% of the cases with conciliation service rendered were settled. During the year, the department handled three strikes. The average number of working days lost per 1 000 salaried employees and wage earners was 0.05, which is among the lowest in the world.

Adjudication of Claims: A quick, inexpensive and informal procedure for adjudicating disputes between employees and employers is in place in Hong Kong. The Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board of the Labour Department adjudicates rights claimed under the Employment Ordinance, the Minimum Wage Ordinance and in accordance with individual employment contracts. The board hears claims by not more than 10 claimants for a sum not exceeding \$8,000 per claimant. Claims by more than 10 claimants, or more than \$8,000 for at least one of the claimants, are heard by the Labour Tribunal. The Labour Tribunal comes under the Judiciary and deals with claims arising out of a breach of a contract of employment and the relevant provisions of the Employment Ordinance, the Minimum Wage Ordinance or the Apprenticeship Ordinance.

Occupational Safety and Health: Through inspection and enforcement, education and training, publicity and promotion, as well as collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department seeks to reduce work accidents and prevents occupational and work-related diseases to safeguard employees' safety and health at work.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, 32 sets of regulations have been made to cover various aspects of hazardous activities in factories, building and engineering construction sites, catering establishments, commercial premises and other workplaces.

In 2016, 131 339 inspections and 14 730 accident investigations were conducted. Altogether, 2 944 summonses were heard with fines totalling \$24.4 million.

In 2016, 2 097 seminars, courses and talks for over 68 300 employees were organised to help them better understand occupational safety and health and the relevant laws. Safety and health publications were distributed to members of the public through various outlets and channels. The Labour Department launched a number of large-scale publicity campaigns in 2016, including safety award schemes for the construction and catering industries, aimed at enhancing safety and health awareness in the two industries; and publicity campaigns on work safety for both new works and repair, maintenance, alteration and addition works, electrical work safety and work-at-height safety. The Labour Department also collaborates with the Occupational Safety and Health Council to launch various sponsorship schemes to promote occupational safety and health. In 2016, the portable residual current device sponsorship scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises was launched to enhance electrical work safety. The Labour Department also organised a publicity campaign on the prevention of heat stroke at work and publicity activities for promoting the prevention of occupational and work-related diseases, including organising health talks and seminars, distributing educational publications, broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, publishing feature articles in newspapers, showing educational videos on mobile advertising media, and conducting promotional visits to outdoor workplaces. As for clinic services, the Labour Department's two Occupational Health Clinics provided a total of 10 444 clinical consultations to workers in 2016.

Employees' Compensation: Under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, an employer is liable to pay compensation to an employee who sustains personal injury arising out of and in the course of employment or to eligible family members of an employee who is killed in an accident at work. All employers are required to have valid employees' compensation insurance policies to cover their liabilities under the laws (including the common law).

The Employees' Compensation Ordinance is administered by the Employees' Compensation Division of the Labour Department, which handled 190 fatal accident cases and 51 364 non-fatal cases in 2016. Among these non-fatal cases, 15 134 were minor injury cases with sick leave not exceeding three days. The division also provides administrative support to the Employees' Compensation Assessment Board which assesses the percentage of permanent loss of earning capacity suffered by injured employees. The Pneumoconiosis and Mesothelioma Compensation Office offers assistance to persons who have contracted pneumoconiosis and/or mesothelioma or in case of their death their family members to obtain compensation from the Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund Board which is financed by a levy on the construction and quarrying industries.

Employment Services: The Labour Department provides comprehensive and free employment and recruitment services

to job seekers and employers through a network of 13 Job Centres, three industry-based recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, the Job Vacancy Processing Centre, the Telephone Employment Service Centre, the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website (www.jobs.gov.hk) and its mobile application, as well as vacancy search terminals located in various sites throughout the territory.

Job seekers may use the facilities such as user-friendly vacancy search terminals, telephones, fax machines and computers in the Job Centres to complete the job hunting process. They may also meet employment officers of the Job Centres to obtain personalised employment advisory services. Employment officers will provide job search advice as well as information on employment market and training/retraining courses in accordance with the needs and preferences of job seekers. Employment officers will also support job seekers in conducting career aptitude assessments and match them to suitable jobs.

The Labour Department administers various specialised employment programmes, including the Youth Employment and Training Programme, the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged and the Work Trial Scheme, to cater for the needs of different job seekers. Under the programmes, job seekers are provided with tailor-made employment support services such as the provision of work trials in actual working environment and on-the-job training. Both large-scale and district-based job fairs are organised to facilitate job seekers to apply for jobs and attend interviews with employers on the spot.

By making use of the iES, employers and job seekers may submit vacancy information or register for employment services on the web. Apart from displaying vacancies received by the department, the iES also provides dedicated webpages to disseminate employment information of topical interest to job seekers. Job seekers can also download the iES mobile application and use their smartphones or mobile devices to look for suitable vacancies in the department's job vacancy database anytime and anywhere.

During 2016, the department recorded 1 347 613 vacancies from the private sector and achieved 149 794 placements.

Since October 2011, the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme has been open for application with the aim of helping low-income earners reduce their cost of travelling to and from work and encouraging them to secure or stay in employment. From 2013, applicants may choose to apply on an individual or household basis, and more grassroots workers can benefit from the scheme. As at the end of 2016, the department granted subsidy payment to 109 346 applicants.

Employment Assistance to Persons with Disabilities: The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department provides free specialised employment assistance to persons with disabilities who are fit for open employment, including those with visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, chronic illness, ex-mental illness, autism, intellectual disability, specific learning difficulties and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. During 2016, the division recorded 2 790 registrations and achieved 2 250 placements.

The Labour Department also administers the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme which encourages employers to offer job vacancies to persons with disabilities through the provision of allowance.

Employment Distribution: Total employment in the fourth quarter of 2016 was 3.8 million. The employment distribution among various industry sectors was as follows:

<i>Industry sector</i>	<i>Percentage of employment distribution</i>
Manufacturing	2.4
Construction	8.9
Import/export, wholesale and retail trades; and accommodation [‡] and food services	30.1
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services; and information and communications	11.3
Financing and insurance; real estate; and professional and business services	20.1
Public administration; and social and personal services	26.8
Others	0.5
<i>Total employment</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Wages: As an important Government labour policy initiative to protect the well-being of the grassroots workforce in Hong Kong, the Minimum Wage Ordinance has taken effect from 1 May 2011. In October 2016, on completing its latest round of review, the Minimum Wage Commission reported for the Government's consideration its recommendation to increase the hourly Statutory Minimum Wage rate from \$32.5 to \$34.5.

In May-June 2016, the median monthly wage of employees in Hong Kong (excluding government employees as well as student interns, work experience students and live-in domestic workers as exempted by the Minimum Wage Ordinance) was \$16,200, and increased by 4.1 per cent compared with May-June 2015.

The following notes are used in this fact sheet :

There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table due to rounding.

++ Figures are compiled based on data collected in the General Household Survey from January to December of the year concerned as well as the mid-year population estimates by District Council district compiled jointly by the Census and Statistics Department and an inter-departmental Working Group on Population Distribution Projections. The General Household Survey covers the land-based non-institutional population of Hong Kong.

‡ Accommodation services sector covers hotels, guesthouses, boarding houses and other establishments providing short term accommodation.

