

Hong Kong has an area of 1 104 square kilometres and a population of about 7.31 million in mid-2015. Despite its small size, Hong Kong was ranked the 8th largest trading entity in the world in 2015. The total value of visible trade amounted to \$7,651.7 billion in 2015. During the period of 2005 to 2015, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 3.4 per cent in real terms, to \$2,246.4 billion (in chained (2013) dollars) in 2015. Per capita GDP at current market prices reached \$328,854 (US\$42,422).

The size of the total labour force⁺⁺ in 2015 was 3.91 million, of whom 51 per cent were male and 49 per cent were female. This represented 61.2 per cent of the total population aged 15 and over⁺⁺.

Labour Legislation and Standards: The Government keeps up the momentum in enhancing 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 2015, 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 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 2015, there were 885 trade unions, consisting of 821 employees unions, 16 employers' associations, 37 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 2015, the Labour Department handled 14 441 labour claims and disputes, down 8.8 per cent on 2014. Most of the claims were related to termination and wages. During the year, the department handled two strikes. The average number of working days lost per 1 000 salaried employees and wage earners was 0.03, which is among the lowest in the world.

Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board: To speed up the settlement of minor employment claims, the Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board was set up in the Labour Department in 1994 for the adjudication of rights claimed under the Employment 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. Hearings are conducted in public and procedures are simple and informal. Claims by more than 10 claimants, or more than \$8,000 for at least one of the claimants, are heard by the Labour Tribunal.

Labour Tribunal: The tribunal comes under the Judiciary and provides a quick, inexpensive and informal forum for settling labour disputes. It deals with claims arising out of a breach of a contract of employment and the relevant provisions of the Employment Ordinance, 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 2015, 130 173 inspections and 15 046 accident investigations were conducted. Altogether, 2 603 summonses were heard with fines totalling \$21.81 million.

In 2015, 2 106 seminars, courses and talks for over 71 400 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 Occupational Safety Charter sets out the rights of employees to enjoy a safe working environment and the employers' obligations to reduce the risk of accidents. As at the end of 2015, 1 223 organisations including employer and employee bodies have subscribed voluntarily to the charter. The Labour Department launched a number of large-scale publicity campaigns in 2015, 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, and work-at-height 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. As for clinic services, the Labour Department's two Occupational Health Clinics provided a total of 9 054 clinical consultations to workers in 2015.

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 both under the ordinance and at common law.

The Employees' Compensation Ordinance is administered by the Employees' Compensation Division of the Labour Department, which handled 191 fatal accident cases and 51 726 non-fatal cases in 2015. Among these non-fatal cases, 14 994 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 free recruitment assistance to employers and employment services to job seekers 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 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 with internet connection and resume-building software provided in the Job Centres to complete the job hunting process. All Job Centres also provide employment advisory services for job seekers so that they can meet employment officers to discuss their employment needs, to obtain information on labour market and training/retraining courses, and/or to undergo career aptitude assessments as appropriate.

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 etc. Both large-scale and district-based job fairs are organized 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 processed by the department, the iES also provides dedicated webpages to disseminate employment information of topical interest to job seekers. The Labour Department has also launched the iES smartphone application, job seekers can look for suitable vacancies in the department's job vacancy database anytime and anywhere with the use of their smartphones or mobile devices.

During 2015, the department recorded 1 343 035 vacancies from the private sector and achieved 148 347 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 the claim months of 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 2015, the department granted subsidy payment to 98 463 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, intellectual disability, ex-mental illness, autism, specific learning difficulties and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. During 2015, the division recorded 2 720 registrations and achieved 2 401 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 2015 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 | 2.5 |
| Construction | 8.8 |
| Import/export, wholesale and retail trades; and accommodation [‡] and food services | 30.2 |
| Transportation, storage, postal and courier services; and information and communications | 11.3 |
| Financing and insurance; real estate; and professional and business services | 19.9 |
| 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. The Statutory Minimum Wage rate has been increased by 8.3 per cent to \$32.5 per hour since 1 May 2015.

In May-June 2015, the median monthly wage of employees in Hong Kong (excluding employees in the Government as well as student interns, work experience students and live-in domestic workers as exempted by the Minimum Wage Ordinance) was \$15,500, and increased by 4.9 per cent compared with May-June 2014.

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..

