
FACT SHEET

Employment statistics in the construction industry

(as at 16 February 2011)

1. Background

1.1 With various major infrastructure projects and other major and minor works projects scheduled to come on stream, there has been concern about the supply of manpower in construction-related disciplines to meet the rising demand in the next few years. According to the Construction Industry Council and some industry stakeholders, the local construction industry is facing the problems of an aging workforce and a shortage of young skilled workers in some trades.¹ In this fact sheet, relevant labour statistics are provided to give an overview of the employment situation of the construction sector in Hong Kong.

2. Supply of construction workers in Hong Kong

2.1 According to the Construction Workers Registration Authority, there were a total of 264 685 valid registered construction workers as at 31 December 2010 (refer to **Table 1**). The number of skilful workers (comprising skilled workers, provisional skilled workers, semi-skilled workers and provisional semi-skilled workers) and general workers² accounted for 39.7% and 60.3% respectively. Over two-thirds (68.4%) of the registered construction workers were aged 40 or above and 5.6% were below 25. Among those workers aged 40 or above, up to 42.8% were skilful workers, whereas only 15.5% of those aged below 25 were skilful workers.

¹ See Construction Industry Council (2011) and Toh, H. S. (2010).

² Under the *Construction Workers Registration Ordinance*, registered construction workers are divided into five types, namely skilled workers, provisional skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, provisional semi-skilled workers and general workers.

Table 1 – Number of registered construction workers in Hong Kong (as at 31 December 2010)⁽¹⁾

Age	Skilful workers				Sub-total	Registered general workers	Total
	Registered skilled worker	Registered skilled worker (provisional)	Registered semi-skilled worker	Registered semi-skilled worker (provisional)			
Below 20	1	0	283	0	284 (0.1%)	796 (0.3%)	1 080 (0.4%)
20-24	266	0	1 741	15	2 022 (0.8%)	11 754 (4.4%)	13 776 (5.2%)
25-29	2 777	71	1 833	100	4 781 (1.8%)	12 792 (4.8%)	17 573 (6.6%)
30-34	7 604	344	1 162	70	9 180 (3.5%)	14 149 (5.3%)	23 329 (8.8%)
35-39	9 872	398	1 039	58	11 367 (4.3%)	16 576 (6.3%)	27 943 (10.6%)
40-44	10 373	452	1 152	74	12 051 (4.6%)	18 714 (7.1%)	30 765 (11.6%)
45-49	14 237	696	1 500	88	16 521 (6.2%)	23 049 (8.7%)	39 570 (14.9%)
50-54	19 846	1 084	2 041	126	23 097 (8.7%)	27 131 (10.3%)	50 228 (19.0%)
55-59	13 299	866	1 601	82	15 848 (6.0%)	20 321 (7.7%)	36 169 (13.7%)
60 or above	8 393	561	887	53	9 894 (3.7%)	14 358 (5.4%)	24 252 (9.2%)
Total	86 668 (32.7%)	4 472 (1.7%)	13 239 (5.0%)	666 (0.3%)	105 045 (39.7%)	159 640 (60.3%)	264 685 (100.0%)

Note: (1) Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.

Source: Construction Workers Registration Authority (2011).

3. Employment situation in the construction sector in Hong Kong

3.1 Amidst the global financial crisis, the unemployment rate of the construction sector³ soared to 11.2% in the first quarter of 2009 from 6.1% in the previous quarter, with the unemployed population up 90% to 33 400. After reaching a peak of 12.0% in the second quarter of 2009 (refer to **Table 2**), the sector's unemployment rate subsequently dropped to 6.6% in the third quarter of 2010. In any event, the unemployment rate of the construction sector has remained consistently higher than the overall unemployment rate in Hong Kong over the past 33 months.

3.2 The overall employment population in the construction sector rose from the lowest level of 254 900 since the start of the global financial crisis to over 270 000 between the last quarter of 2009 and the second quarter of 2010 and moderately contracted to 261 700 in the third quarter of 2010. Meanwhile, the underemployment rate in the sector declined for five consecutive quarters from a peak of 13.3% in the second quarter of 2009 to 8.5% in the third quarter of 2010, with the number of underemployed persons down from around 38 500 to 23 900.

3.3 On average, people aged over 40 constituted over 70% and 60% of the unemployed and employed population in the construction sector respectively (refer to **Table 3**). Since the second quarter of 2009, the total employment in the sector has rebounded from the bottom of the global financial crisis to an employment population consistently above 260 000. While the number of employees aged below 40 fell from 95 900 in the third quarter of 2009 to 91 800 in the third quarter of 2010, there was a steady increase in the number of employees aged over 40 from 162 000 to 169 900 during the same period.

³ The construction sector includes building construction, civil engineering, demolition and site preparation, building services installation and maintenance, and decoration and repair.

Table 2 – Employment statistics in the construction sector in Hong Kong, with reference made to the overall employment situation in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾

(Thousands)	2008				2009				2010		
	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep
Employment in Hong Kong											
Labour force	3 653.5	3 638.2	3 657.4	3 661.9	3 694.9	3 688.6	3 692.2	3 669.9	3 657.3	3 664.0	3 682.5
Participation rate	61.1%	60.7%	60.9%	60.9%	61.3%	61.1%	60.9%	60.3%	60.0%	59.9%	59.9%
Unemployed persons	119.0	121.1	133.6	141.2	187.2	202.9	209.2	172.8	160.6	171.8	161.8
Unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted)	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%	4.1%	5.2%	5.3%	5.4%	4.9%	4.4%	4.6%	4.2%
Job seekers	111.7	112.3	123.9	134.9	178.0	194.6	198.7	164.2	151.9	161.8	151.5
Employed persons	3 534.5	3 517.1	3 523.7	3 520.7	3 507.6	3 485.7	3 483.0	3 497.1	3 496.7	3 492.1	3 520.6
Underemployed persons	70.5	67.9	66.3	69.0	79.2	84.0	89.3	84.5	80.0	73.7	71.0
Underemployment rate	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.9%	2.1%	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%
Employment in the construction industry of Hong Kong											
Unemployed persons	21.3	21.3	15.8	17.5	33.4	34.7	26.8	22.1	23.9	22.3	18.4
Unemployment rate	7.5%	7.6%	5.5%	6.1%	11.2%	12.0%	9.4%	7.4%	8.0%	7.6%	6.6%
Job seekers	15.7	16.0	12.2	14.3	26.9	28.7	22.5	17.3	19.1	16.3	14.2
Employed persons	264.1	259.3	271.8	270.6	265.1	254.9	257.9	275.9	273.4	271.1	261.7
Underemployed persons	31.0	29.1	29.8	31.6	31.3	38.5	35.0	36.1	32.1	28.0	23.9
Underemployment rate	10.9%	10.4%	10.4%	11.0%	10.5%	13.3%	12.3%	12.1%	10.8%	9.6%	8.5%

Note: (1) Definitions of the various terms used in the table are given below:

- labour force refers to the land-based non-institutional population aged 15 and over who satisfy the criteria for being classified as employed population or unemployed population;
- unemployed persons refer to those persons aged 15 or over who: (i) have not had a job; (ii) have not performed any work for pay or profit; (iii) have been available for work during the seven days before enumeration; and (iv) have sought work during the 30 days before enumeration;
- unemployment rate refers to the proportion of unemployed persons in the labour force;
- employed persons comprise those persons aged 15 and over who have been at work for pay or profit during the seven days before enumeration or have had formal job attachment;
- job seekers belong to the unemployed category and include first-time job seekers;
- underemployed persons are a group of employed persons who have involuntarily worked less than 35 hours during the seven days before enumeration and have sought additional work during the 30 days before enumeration, or have not sought additional work but have been available for additional work during the seven days before enumeration; and
- underemployment rate refers to the proportion of underemployed persons in the labour force.

Sources: Census and Statistics Department (2008-2010).

Table 3 – Employment statistics in the construction industry of Hong Kong by age⁽¹⁾

(Thousands)	2008				2009				2010		
	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep
Unemployed persons	21.3 (100.0%)	21.3 (100.0%)	15.8 (100.0%)	17.5 (100.0%)	33.4 (100.0%)	34.7 (100.0%)	26.8 (100.0%)	22.1 (100.0%)	23.9 (100.0%)	22.3 (100.0%)	18.4 (100.0%)
15-39	5.0 (23.5%)	5.6 (26.3%)	4.3 (27.2%)	4.9 (28.0%)	8.1 (24.3%)	9.8 (28.2%)	7.1 (26.5%)	5.7 (25.8%)	6.7 (28.0%)	6.0 (26.9%)	5.0 (27.2%)
40 or above	16.3 (76.5%)	15.7 (73.7%)	11.4 (72.2%)	12.6 (72.0%)	25.3 (75.7%)	24.9 (71.8%)	19.8 (73.9%)	16.3 (73.8%)	17.2 (72.0%)	16.3 (73.1%)	13.3 (72.3%)
Employed persons	264.1 (100.0%)	259.3 (100.0%)	271.8 (100.0%)	270.6 (100.0%)	265.1 (100.0%)	254.9 (100.0%)	257.9 (100.0%)	275.9 (100.0%)	273.4 (100.0%)	271.1 (100.0%)	261.7 (100.0%)
15-39	104.2 (39.5%)	101.1 (39.0%)	95.8 (35.2%)	94.2 (34.8%)	100.0 (37.7%)	93.7 (36.8%)	95.9 (37.2%)	100.5 (36.4%)	95.8 (35.0%)	89.3 (32.9%)	91.8 (35.1%)
40 or above	160.0 (60.6%)	158.2 (61.0%)	176.0 (64.8%)	176.3 (65.2%)	165.1 (62.3%)	161.2 (63.2%)	162.0 (62.8%)	175.4 (63.6%)	177.6 (65.0%)	181.8 (67.1%)	169.9 (64.9%)
Underemployed persons	31.0 (100.0%)	29.1 (100.0%)	29.8 (100.0%)	31.6 (100.0%)	31.3 (100.0%)	38.5 (100.0%)	35.0 (100.0%)	36.1 (100.0%)	32.1 (100.0%)	28.0 (100.0%)	23.9 (100.0%)
15-39	8.1 (26.1%)	8.3 (28.5%)	6.9 (23.2%)	8.6 (27.2%)	9.6 (30.7%)	9.9 (25.7%)	11.0 (31.4%)	10.0 (27.7%)	8.1 (25.2%)	7.2 (25.7%)	7.2 (30.1%)
40 or above	22.8 (73.5%)	20.9 (71.8%)	22.9 (76.8%)	23.0 (72.8%)	21.7 (69.3%)	28.6 (74.3%)	24.0 (68.6%)	26.1 (72.3%)	24.0 (74.8%)	20.9 (74.6%)	16.6 (69.5%)

Note: (1) Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.

Sources: Census and Statistics Department (2008-2010).

References

1. Census and Statistics Department. (2008-2010) *Quarterly Report on General Household Survey*. First Quarter 2008 to Third Quarter 2010. Available from: http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/statistical_report/labour/index.jsp [Accessed February 2011].
2. Construction Industry Council. (2011) *CIC Newsletter*. Issue No. 4. Available from: <http://www.hkcic.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=6668&libID=6717> [Accessed February 2011].
3. Construction Workers Registration Authority. (2011) *Total Number of Valid Registered Construction Workers*. Available from: <http://www.cwra.org.hk/information/total.asp> [Accessed February 2011].
4. Development Bureau. (2011) *Supplementary information: Proposed Measures in the 2010-11 Budget for Increasing the Construction Manpower Resources*. Available from: http://gia.info.gov.hk/general/201002/26/P201002260299_0299_62520.doc [Accessed February 2011].
5. Environment, Transport and Works Bureau. (2007) *Construction Workers Registration Ordinance Position of Registration and Proposed Implementation of Phase One Prohibition*. Paper submitted to the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works of the Legislative Council for discussion on 24 April 2007. LC Paper No. CB(1)1410/06-07(03).
6. Toh, H. S. (2010) Labour shortage to delay mega projects. *South China Morning Post*. 2 June.

Research Division
18 November 2010
Updated on 16 February 2011
Tel: 2509 3190

Fact sheets are compiled for Members and Committees of the Legislative Council. They are not legal or other professional advice and shall not be relied on as such. Fact sheets are subject to copyright owned by the Legislative Council Commission (the Commission). The Commission permits accurate reproduction of fact sheets for non-commercial use in a manner not adversely affecting the Legislative Council, provided that acknowledgement is made stating the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat as the source and one copy of the reproduction is sent to the Legislative Council Library.
