
FACT SHEET

Employment statistics in the construction industry

1. Background

1.1 In 2010, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region earmarked \$100 million to implement various initiatives to attract more people to join the construction industry. Subsequently, the Government sought the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for funding to support Construction Industry Council ("CIC") to enhance training and trade testing for prospective fresh blood and in-service construction personnel, and to enhance promotion and publicity activities of the construction industry. As such, CIC launched the Build Up Training Programme in September 2010 by phases, with the following initiatives:

- (a) Enhanced Construction Manpower Training Scheme;
- (b) Senior Construction Workers Trade Management Course;
- (c) Subsidy for Trade Test;
- (d) Subsidy for Specified Training Course/Skills Enhanced Course; and
- (e) Enhanced Construction Supervisor/Technician Training Programme.

1.2 The measures had delivered results with the construction workforce growing to its present strength of more than 280 000, thus easing the problem of an ageing workforce and succession gap faced by the industry in recent years. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2011-2012 Budget Speech that an additional \$220 million had been further earmarked to support CIC in enhancing manpower training, with an aim to bringing fresh blood into the industry to meet the demand of future infrastructure developments. On the basis of the latest market statistics, this fact sheet provides members of the Panel on Development with an overview of the labour market 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 287 104 valid registered construction workers as at end-2011 (**Table 1**). The number of skilful workers (comprising skilled workers, provisional skilled workers, semi-skilled workers and provisional semi-skilled workers) and general workers¹ accounted for 37.9% and 62.1% of the total number of registered construction workers respectively. Over two-thirds (68.6%) of the registered construction workers were aged 40 or above and 41.2% of them were skilful workers. The corresponding figures for workers aged below 25 were 5.9% and 13.5%.

¹ 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 end-2011)⁽¹⁾

Age	Skilful workers					Registered general workers	Total
	Registered skilled worker	Registered skilled worker (provisional)	Registered semi-skilled worker	Registered semi-skilled worker (provisional)	Sub-total		
Below 20	4	0	127	0	131 (0.05%)	848 (0.3%)	979 (0.3%)
20-24	296	0	1 845	1	2 142 (0.7%)	13 770 (4.8%)	15 912 (5.5%)
25-29	2 231	25	1 999	64	4 319 (1.5%)	14 502 (5.1%)	18 821 (6.6%)
30-34	7 689	229	1 484	28	9 430 (3.3%)	15 675 (5.5%)	25 105 (8.7%)
35-39	10 063	264	1 144	14	11 485 (4.0%)	17 968 (6.3%)	29 453 (10.3%)
40-44	11 041	271	1 268	7	12 587 (4.4%)	20 796 (7.2%)	33 383 (11.6%)
45-49	13 431	366	1 421	19	15 237 (5.3%)	23 321 (8.1%)	38 558 (13.4%)
50-54	20 593	546	2 084	18	23 241 (8.1%)	29 197 (10.2%)	52 438 (18.3%)
55-59	15 633	438	1 858	14	17 943 (6.2%)	24 160 (8.4%)	42 103 (14.7%)
60 or above	10 766	261	1 126	10	12 163 (4.2%)	18 189 (6.3%)	30 352 (10.6%)
Total	91 747 (32.0%)	2 400 (0.8%)	14 356 (5.0%)	175 (0.1%)	108 678 (37.9%)	178 426 (62.1%)	287 104 (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 (2012).

3. Employment situation in the construction sector in Hong Kong

3.1 In recent years, heavy investment in infrastructure projects by the Government has brought about a substantial increase in demand for construction workers, and the ensuing improvement in the employment situation of the construction industry. After reaching a peak of 12.0% in the second quarter of 2009 (**Table 2**), the construction sector's unemployment rate had generally been on the decline and eased to 4.4% in the third quarter of 2011. The number of employed rose from a low of 254 900 in the second quarter of 2009 amidst the global financial crisis to over 286 000 in the third quarter of 2011. Meanwhile, the underemployment rate in the sector has exhibited a similar declining trend. It fell for nine consecutive quarters from a peak of 13.3% in the second quarter of 2009 to 8.5% in the third quarter of 2011, with the number of underemployed down from around 38 500 to 25 500. Nonetheless, 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 On average, people aged over 40 constituted over 70% and 60% of the unemployed and employed population in the construction sector respectively (**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 257 000. While the number of employees aged below 40 fell from 95 900 in the third quarter of 2009 to 91 600 in the third quarter of 2010, the figure has rebounded to 95 300 in the third quarter of 2011. Meanwhile, there was a steady increase in the number of employees aged over 40 from 162 000 in the third quarter of 2009 to 191 000 in the third quarter of 2011.

Table 2 – Employment statistics in the construction sector in Hong Kong against the overall employment situation in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾

	2009				2010				2011		
	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 ('000)	3 694.9	3 688.6	3 692.2	3 653.4	3 657.3	3 651.1	3 665.1	3 700.0	3 701.8	3 747.4	3 769.4
Participation rate	61.3%	61.1%	60.9%	60.1%	60.0%	59.7%	59.7%	60.1%	59.9%	60.5%	60.7%
Unemployed persons ('000)	187.2	202.9	209.2	172.6	160.6	173.3	161.4	136.3	124.5	136.8	127.1
Unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted)	5.2%	5.3%	5.4%	5.1%	4.4%	4.6%	4.2%	4.0%	3.4%	3.5%	3.2%
Job seekers ('000)	178.0	194.6	198.7	164.2	151.9	161.8	151.5	129.4	115.8	129.9	118.4
Employed persons ('000)	3 507.6	3 485.7	3 483.0	3 480.7	3 496.7	3 477.8	3 503.6	3 563.7	3 577.3	3 610.6	3 642.4
Underemployed persons ('000)	79.2	84.0	89.3	83.8	80.0	73.0	71.1	67.0	66.3	66.2	65.8
Underemployment rate	2.1%	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%
Employment in the construction industry of Hong Kong											
Unemployed persons ('000)	33.4	34.7	26.8	21.7	23.9	22.4	18.3	13.9	17.8	16.5	13.3
Unemployment rate	11.2%	12.0%	9.4%	7.4%	8.0%	7.7%	6.6%	4.8%	6.2%	5.6%	4.4%
Job seekers ('000)	26.9	28.7	22.5	17.0	19.1	16.2	14.1	10.4	13.8	12.3	10.5
Employed persons ('000)	265.1	254.9	257.9	272.6	273.4	267.1	257.8	275.0	268.9	277.4	286.2
Underemployed persons ('000)	31.3	38.5	35.0	35.6	32.1	27.7	23.9	25.1	24.6	21.9	25.5
Underemployment rate	10.5%	13.3%	12.3%	12.1%	10.8%	9.6%	8.7%	8.7%	8.6%	7.4%	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 (2009-2011).

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

	2009				2010				2011		
	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep
Unemployed persons ('000)	33.4 (100.0%)	34.7 (100.0%)	26.8 (100.0%)	21.7 (100.0%)	23.9 (100.0%)	22.4 (100.0%)	18.3 (100.0%)	13.9 (100.0%)	17.8 (100.0%)	16.5 (100.0%)	13.3 (100.0%)
15-39	8.1 (24.3%) ⁽²⁾	9.8 (28.2%)	7.1 (26.5%)	5.6 (25.8%)	6.7 (28.0%)	5.9 (26.3%)	5.1 (27.9%)	5.0 (36.0%)	5.1 (28.7%)	4.7 (28.5%)	3.0 (22.6%)
40 or above	25.3 (75.7%)	24.9 (71.8%)	19.8 (73.9%)	16.2 (74.7%)	17.2 (72.0%)	16.4 (73.2%)	13.2 (72.1%)	8.9 (64.0%)	12.7 (71.3%)	11.7 (70.9%)	10.3 (77.4%)
Employed persons ('000)	265.1 (100.0%)	254.9 (100.0%)	257.9 (100.0%)	272.6 (100.0%)	273.4 (100.0%)	267.1 (100.0%)	257.8 (100.0%)	275.0 (100.0%)	268.9 (100.0%)	277.4 (100.0%)	286.2 (100.0%)
15-39	100.0 (37.7%)	93.7 (36.8%)	95.9 (37.2%)	99.8 (36.6%)	95.8 (35.0%)	89.0 (33.3%)	91.6 (35.5%)	97.6 (35.5%)	96.4 (35.8%)	94.1 (33.9%)	95.3 (33.3%)
40 or above	165.1 (62.3%)	161.2 (63.2%)	162.0 (62.8%)	172.9 (63.4%)	177.6 (65.0%)	178.2 (66.7%)	166.2 (64.5%)	177.4 (64.5%)	172.5 (64.2%)	183.3 (66.1%)	191.0 (66.7%)
Underemployed persons ('000)	31.3 (100.0%)	38.5 (100.0%)	35.0 (100.0%)	35.6 (100.0%)	32.1 (100.0%)	27.7 (100.0%)	23.9 (100.0%)	25.1 (100.0%)	24.6 (100.0%)	21.9 (100.0%)	25.5 (100.0%)
15-39	9.6 (30.7%)	9.9 (25.7%)	11.0 (31.4%)	9.7 (27.2%)	8.1 (25.2%)	7.0 (25.3%)	7.5 (31.4%)	5.2 (20.7%)	6.5 (26.4%)	5.5 (25.1%)	5.8 (22.7%)
40 or above	21.7 (69.3%)	28.6 (74.3%)	24.0 (68.6%)	25.9 (72.8%)	24.0 (74.8%)	20.6 (74.4%)	16.4 (68.6%)	19.9 (79.3%)	18.1 (73.6%)	16.4 (74.9%)	19.7 (77.3%)

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

(2) Figures in brackets represent the percentage share of the total.

Sources: Census and Statistics Department (2009-2011).

References

1. Census and Statistics Department. (2009-2011) *Quarterly Report on General Household Survey*. First Quarter 2009 to Third Quarter 2011. Available from: http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/statistical_report/labour/index.jsp [Accessed February 2012].
2. Construction Industry Council. (2011) *CIC Newsletter*. Issue No. 8. Available from: <http://www.hkcic.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=8305&libID=8364> [Accessed February 2012].
3. Construction Workers Registration Authority. (2012) *Total Number of Valid Registered Construction Workers*. Available from: <http://www.cwra.org.hk/information/total.asp> [Accessed February 2012].
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 2012].
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).

Research Division
24 February 2012
Tel: 3919 3632

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.
