

For information  
9 December 2013

**Legislative Council**  
**Panel on Manpower**  
**and**  
**Panel on Welfare Services**  
  
**Women Employment**

**Purpose**

The Government is committed to helping women who wish to enter the employment market find work. This paper briefs Members on the various support services and measures provided by the Government to facilitate women in joining or re-joining the employment market.

**The Employment Situation of Women**

2. According to the statistics<sup>1</sup> published by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), Hong Kong had a labour force of 3 518 800 in 2012 and 1 549 500 of them were females. In the same year, the labour force participation rate (LFPR) for females was 49.6%, which was lower than the LFPR of 68.7% for males. The male and female LFPRs by age group are provided at Appendix 1.

3. In 2012, Hong Kong had 3 394 400 employed persons and 1 499 900 of them were females. In the same year, there were 49 600 unemployed females and the unemployment rate of females was 3.2%, which was lower than the overall unemployment rate of 3.5%.

4. In 2012, there were 1 571 600 females aged 15 and above who were economically inactive in Hong Kong. Their reasons for being economically inactive are provided at Appendix 2.

**Support Services Provided by the Government**

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics are compiled based on the data collected in the General Household Survey (GHS) of C&SD. The GHS covers the land-based non-institutional population only. Foreign domestic helpers are excluded from the statistics.

## Employment Support Services

5. The Government has been providing various employment support services to help women secure employment. These include the provision of employment market information, employment advisory services and specialised employment programmes etc.

### ***Employment Market Information***

6. The Labour Department (LD) provides comprehensive and free employment services for job seekers including women through a network of 12 job centres, two industry-based recruitment centres, two youth employment resources centres, a telephone employment service hotline, an interactive employment service (iES) website, and numerous vacancy search terminals installed at various locations in the territory. Various facilities, such as telephone, facsimile machine, vacancy search terminals, computers equipped with resume-writing software and internet connection, are made available in job centres to enable the job seekers to complete the whole job hunting process. Job seekers may also obtain job referrals through officers of the job centre or by calling the telephone employment service hotline. Given that some job seekers may wish to find part-time work as they need to take care of their families, LD has set up a dedicated webpage on part-time vacancies at the iES website to facilitate them in finding suitable jobs.

7. LD regularly organises large-scale and district-based job fairs to enhance the dissemination of vacancy information so as to shorten the time needed by job seekers for job search. Moreover, LD has set up two Recruitment Centres, one for the catering and the other for retail industries where the catering and retail employers stage their respective recruitment activities almost every working day. In the first 10 months of 2013, LD organised 12 large-scale job fairs and 411 district-based job fairs while the Recruitment Centres for the catering and retail industries organised a total of 404 job fairs. At these job fairs, vacancies suitable for job seekers of different educational attainments and skill levels are available and job seekers can submit job applications and attend job interviews with employers on the spot to obtain employment.

8. LD requires employers using its recruitment services not to impose any discriminatory requirement on gender in their recruitment terms. If discriminatory requirement on gender is found during vetting of the vacancy information submitted by employers, LD will ask the employers to remove the requirement, unless they can prove that the requirement is a genuine occupational qualification. LD will not provide recruitment services to the employers if they refuse to remove the discriminatory requirement.

9. In 2012, there were 99 812 job seekers registering for LD's

employment services. Among them, 56 031 were females, representing 56.1% of the total number of registrants.

### ***Employment Advisory Services and Specialised Employment Programmes***

10. All LD's job centres provide personalised employment advisory services. Job seekers, including women, can meet the employment officers who will provide the latest information on the labour market and training/retraining courses, give job search advice, and/or conduct career aptitude assessment etc as appropriate.

11. LD also administers various employment programmes to enhance the employability of job seekers who have difficulties in finding jobs. These programmes include the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP) which provides diversified pre-employment and on-the-job training specifically for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainments at sub-degree level or below. There is also the Work Trial Scheme (WTS) which arranges job seekers to undergo work trials in real working environment so as to help them gain hands-on working experience. On-the-job training allowance is provided to employers under YETP and the Employment Programme for the Middle-Aged (EPM) which is also administered by LD to encourage them to hire young people and middle-aged persons aged 40 or above with employment difficulties respectively. Employers who employ eligible employees through these programmes may apply for the on-the-job training allowance. In the Programme Year 2012-13 (from September 2012 to August 2013), 8 087 young people were enrolled in YETP and among them, 3 745 (46.3%) were females. In 2012, 461 job seekers participated in work trials under WTS and 264 (57.3%) of them were females. In the same year, EPM recorded 2 500 placements and 1 602 (64.1%) of them were for females.

### **Training/Re-training Services**

12. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) adopts a “market-driven, employment-oriented” approach in developing its courses. Since its establishment in 1992, ERB has offered an array of training courses to over 810 000 local employees and 70% of them were female.

13. At present, ERB offers over 870 courses straddling 28 industries through its territory-wide network of 410 training centres operated by over 110 training bodies. The courses include full-time placement-tied courses targeting the unemployed or non-engaged people, as well as half-day or evening non-placement-tied courses catering for the needs of serving employees or people planning for a career change. Placement-tied courses are free of charge. Trainees attending placement-tied courses with duration of seven days or more may apply for a retraining allowance. On completion of courses, trainees are

provided with placement follow-up services of three to six months by the training bodies. ERB also provides non-placement-tied courses which cover Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus courses and generic skills training courses (including workplace languages, business numeracy skills and IT applications etc). These courses are fee-charging. Trainees who have no or low income<sup>2</sup> may apply to waive the course fee in full or in part. In recent years, courses that are more popular among female trainees are those related to domestic services, beauty therapy and healthcare services, etc, and about 96% of the course trainees are female. In 2012-13, 83% of female students who had completed ERB courses were employed.

14. ERB provides free referrals in home, care and health services for employers as well as graduate trainees of related courses through the “Smart Living” Scheme. From March 2002 to October 2013, over 200 000 female trainees registered for the service. In June 2013, ERB launched the “Smart Baby Care” Scheme to handle vacancies for post-natal care as well as infant and child care services on a centralised basis, and provide one-stop referral service for employers as well as graduate trainees of related courses. The service can enhance the confidence of employers in recruiting fresh graduates, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities. As at September 2013, over 3 500 trainees registered for the “Smart Baby Care” Scheme and all of them are female.

### Child Care Services

15. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been subsidising non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to run a variety of child care services for children of different ages, including standalone Child Care Centre Service, Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre Service, Occasional Child Care Services, Extended Hour Services, Mutual Help Child Care Centre and After School Child Care Service. To further meet the service needs of families, the Government has actively promoted and developed non-institutional care service in recent years. The Neighborhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) was regularised and extended to all 18 districts in Hong Kong in 2011 to provide more flexible and convenient services to parents. Under NSCCP, service operators have the flexibility to provide additional child care places on top of the minimum requirement set by SWD in order to meet the actual service demand. Since the implementation of NSCCP, there has been a steady increase in the number of beneficiaries.

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<sup>2</sup> Trainees with monthly income of \$9,000 or below may apply for course fee waiver. For those with monthly income between \$9,001 and \$19,500, they may apply for paying only about 30% of the training cost.

16. To ensure that low-income families can afford the relevant services, SWD provides needy families with different forms of fee waiver or subsidy. Overall, there are still quotas available for various child care services and fee subsidy. Operating hours of relevant services cover morning, afternoon and evening on weekdays, weekends and holidays, with residential services provided under special circumstances. SWD will continue monitoring the operation of various services so as to ensure that the services meet community demand.

#### Employment Assistance under Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA)

17. Under the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance, 26 NGOs are commissioned by SWD to operate 41 projects throughout the territory. The NGOs will conduct interviews with the CSSA recipients, including women recipients, regularly and provide advice and counseling services on seeking employment. NGOs will also help such CSSA recipients develop personalised action plans to seek employment and review the plans regularly. In addition, NGOs will assist the recipients to obtain up-to-date information on the labour market and arrange job matching and employment related training such as basic social skills, job seeking skills and skills upgrading training etc. Other support services provided by NGOs include providing information on child care and post-employment support for at least three months to encourage those who have secured jobs to sustain employment. Special employment assistance services are provided to assist and encourage single parents and child carers on CSSA with their youngest child aged 12 to 14 to help them overcome work barriers, enhance employability and secure paid jobs to become self-reliant.

#### Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices

18. The Government is dedicated to encouraging employers to adopt good “employee-oriented” management measures and to implement family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) with a view to helping employees balance their roles and responsibilities in work and family. While the Employment Ordinance already provides for various kinds of leaves so that employees can cater for their personal and family needs, we encourage employers to grant their employees benefits that exceed the statutory requirements and provide them with flexible and varied work arrangements and support, e.g. implementing five-day week, flexitime, home office or remote work and job sharing; granting compassionate leave and special casual leave, and providing child care services and counselling services on stress or emotional management to employees etc.

19. LD has been acting as one of the facilitators in encouraging employers to adopt FFEP and disseminating relevant information to the community through

a wide range of publicity channels and various promotional activities such as publications, large-scale seminars, thematic exhibitions, educational DVDs, newspaper supplements, feature articles as well as regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers. Employers are encouraged to adopt different types of FFEP, having regard to their size, resources and culture, to serve the best interests of their organisations and employees.

20. Besides, the Family Council launched the “Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme” in 2011, giving recognition to over 1 000 employers who put in place family-friendly employment policies and measures. In view of its resounding success, the Family Council has re-launched the Award Scheme this year. The results will be announced in the second quarter of 2014.

21. The Government will continue to promote wider adoption of FFEP with a view to cultivating a family-friendly culture at work which will in turn facilitate women employment.

#### Time-use Survey

22. The Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Women’s Commission are conducting a time-use survey in collaboration with C&SD through the Thematic Household Survey. We hope the survey can help us understand the circumstances surrounding women’s decision to take part in or withdraw from the workforce as well as those factors which would attract them to join or re-join the workforce. The survey is expected to complete by the end of next year.

#### **Public Engagement Exercise on Population Policy**

23. According to the labour force projections for the period 2013 to 2041 prepared by C&SD, Hong Kong’s labour force (excluding foreign domestic helpers) will decline to 3.52 million in 2031 after reaching 3.71 million in 2018 and will stay in the range of 3.51 million to 3.52 million thereafter.

24. Women are important constituents of Hong Kong’s population. In 2012, there were 1 571 600 females aged 15 and over who were economically inactive and 682 800 of them were home-makers. C&SD conducted a Special Topic Enquiry on “Desire of economically inactive persons for taking up jobs if being offered suitable employment” between April and June 2011. The survey findings revealed that around 46 800 females aged 15 and over, who became economically inactive due to engagement in household duties, indicated that they would be willing to work if being offered suitable employment, representing 7.2% of the total number of female home-makers aged 15 or above. For female home-makers aged 30 to 59, around 8% would be willing to work if

being offered suitable employment. If these women enter or re-enter into the employment market, it would provide manpower to drive our economy, and also income to those women. More importantly, it would allow women to realise their potential at work while balancing their needs to take care of their families at the same time.

25. The Steering Committee on Population Policy (SCPP) released its consultation document on 24 October this year, inviting views from the public on issues such as how to unleash the potential of existing population, including, among others, encouraging female home-makers to enter or re-join the employment market. This will help SCPP in its next stage of work, which involves formulating strategies to address the population challenges and mapping out an actionable agenda covering short and long-term measures.

### **Advice Sought**

26. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and give their advice.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Labour Department  
December 2013

**Labour Force Participation Rates by Age Group and Sex**  
**(Excluding Foreign Domestic Helpers)**  
**(Year 2012)**

Age group	Labour force participation rate (%)	
	Male	Female
15 – 19	10.5	9.6
20 – 24	61.1	59.6
25 – 29	94.5	83.9
30 – 34	97.4	75.3
35 – 39	96.3	69.9
40 – 44	96.0	69.8
45 – 49	94.7	67.3
50 – 54	90.5	59.6
55 – 59	78.9	44.7
60 – 64	53.7	21.9
65 and above	11.9	2.8
<b>Overall:</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>49.6</b>



**Number of economically inactive females aged 15 and above**  
**by reason for being economically inactive**  
**(Year 2012)**

Reason for being economically inactive	Economically inactive females aged 15 and above	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Engagement in household duties	682 800	43.4
Retirement/Old age	519 300	33.0
Attending educational institutions	268 400	17.1
Permanent sick/Disablement	38 300	2.4
Other reasons	62 900	4.0
<b>Total<sup>@</sup> :</b>	<b>1 571 600</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note:

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