



MINISTRY OF ECONOMY  
DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS MALAYSIA

KEY STATISTICS OF LABOUR FORCE IN MALAYSIA, MARCH 2020



DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS MALAYSIA



StatsMalaysia

www.dsm.gov.my

LABOUR FORCE MALAYSIA MARCH 2020

Labour force participation rate **68.6%**  
Unemployment rate **3.9%**

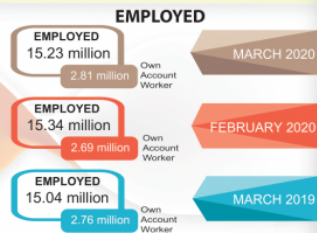


LABOUR FORCE

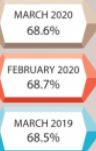


Number of labour force in March 2020 **decreased 0.2 per cent to 15.84 million persons** as compared to February 2020.

The working population in March 2020 was 15.23 million persons, out of them, 2.81 million persons were own account workers such as traders/ small traders (farmer markets/ night markets/ caterings/ freelancers) and etc. These group of workers were exposed to the risk of unemployments and work losses that affect their income during the Movement Control Order (MCO), partly due unable to work.

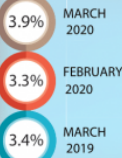


LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (LFPR)



LFPR **declined 0.1 percentage points** from 68.7 per cent in February 2020 to 68.6 per cent in March 2020 after recorded the highest LFPR in January 2020 (68.9%).

The unemployment rate in March 2020 **increased to 3.9 per cent**. The high unemployment rate in March 2020 reflects the negative impact of MCO on the labour market.



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

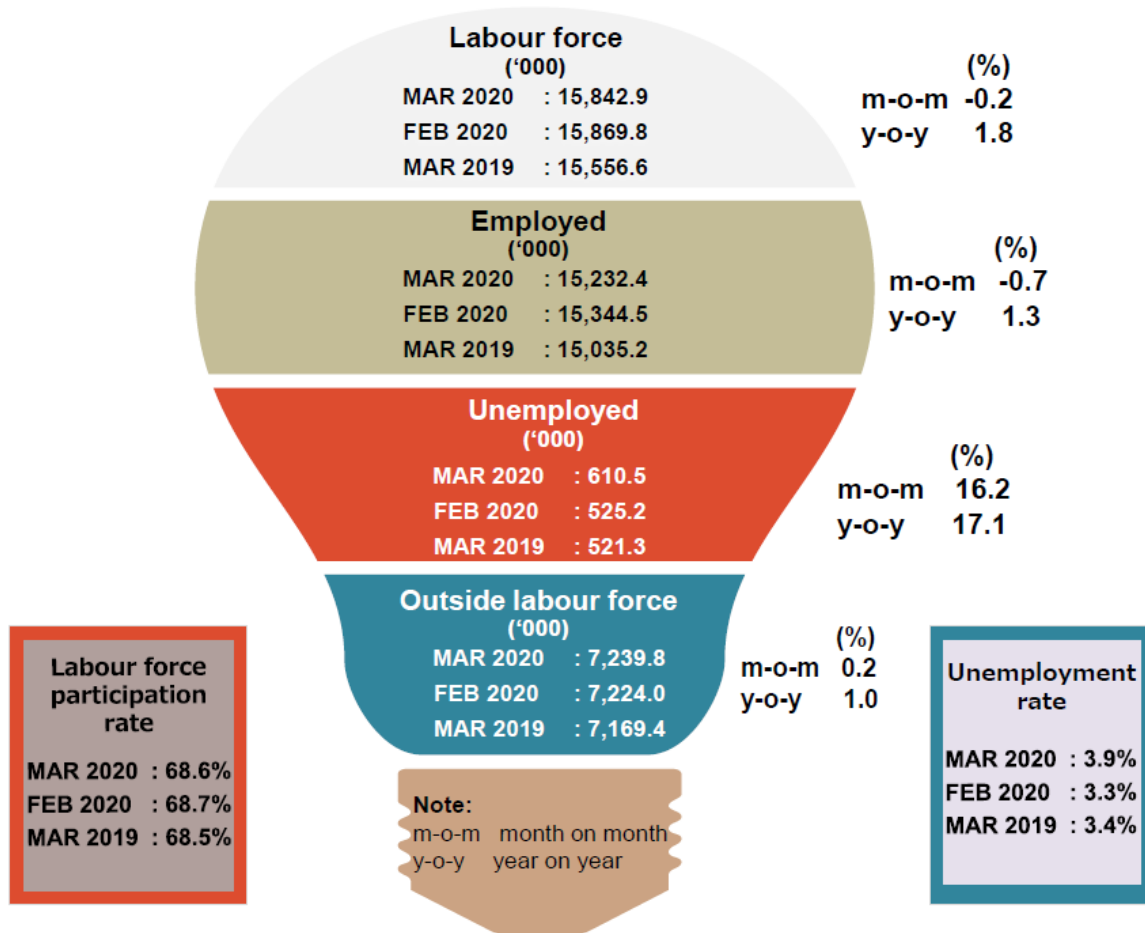


OUTSIDE LABOUR FORCE



A total of **31.4 per cent** of working age population (15-64 years) were outside the labour force which comprised of housewives, students, retirees and those not interested to work.

## WORKING AGE POPULATION (15-64 YEARS)

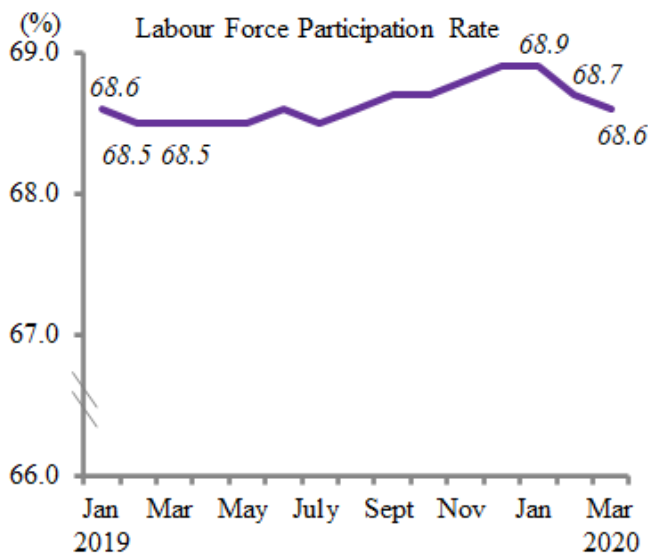


### Labour force participation rate decreased to 68.6%

The labour force participation rate (LFPR) declined 0.1 percentage points from 68.7 per cent in February 2020 to 68.6 per cent in March 2020 after recorded the highest LFPR in January 2020 (68.9%).

The number of labour force in this month decreased 0.2 per cent to 15.84 million persons as compared to February 2020. During the same period, employed persons also decreased 0.7 per cent to 15.23 million persons.

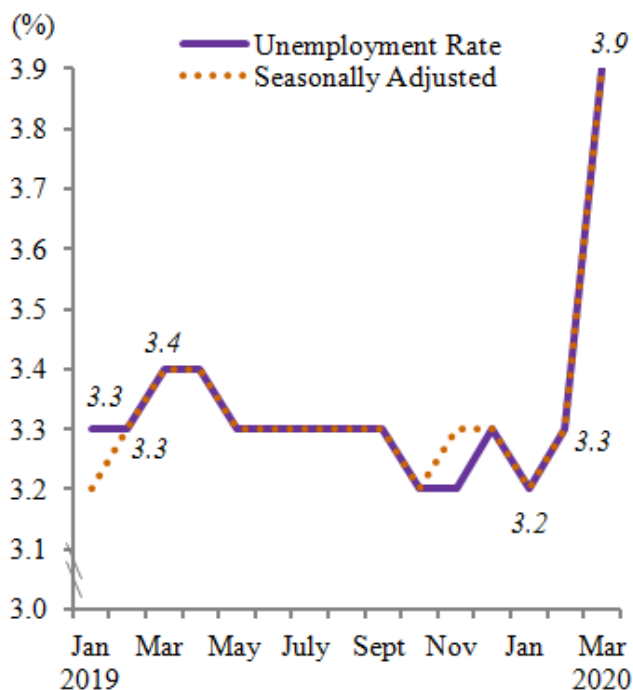
The working population in March 2020 was 15.23 million persons, out of them, 2.81 million persons were own account workers such as traders/ small traders (farmer markets/ night markets/ caterings/ freelancers) and etc. These group of workers were exposed to the risk of unemployments and work losses that affect their income during the MCO, partly due unable to work.



### Unemployment rate increased to 3.9%

Unemployed persons increased by 17.1 per cent to 610.5 thousands as compared to 521.3 thousands in the same month in 2019. The unemployment rate in March 2020 increased to 3.9 per cent. The high unemployment rate in March 2020 reflects the negative impact of MCO on the labour market.

Unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) in March 2020 also increased to 3.9 per cent as compared to 3.3 per cent in the previous month.



### TECHNICAL NOTES

This information is derived from the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** which was conducted to collect information on the structure and distribution of labour force, employment and unemployment.

Concepts and definitions used in LFS are based on the standard guidelines of International Labour Organizations (ILO) through “Manual on Concepts and Methods: Surveys of Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment” which is also used by other country.

LFS covers both urban and rural areas of all states in Malaysia through personal interview method. The survey population cover persons who live in private living quarters and excludes persons residing in institutions such as hotels, hostels, hospitals, prisons, boarding houses and workers residing in construction work site.

The survey comprises of the economically active and inactive population. To measure the economically active population, the LFS uses the age limit of 15 to 64 years. The economically active population comprises of those employed and unemployed whereas those who are inactive is classified as outside the labour force.

LFS uses the actual status approach, where a person is classified on the basis of his labour force activity during the reference week.

- **Labour force** refers to those who, during the reference week are in the 15 to 64 years (in completed years at last birthday) and who are either employed or unemployed.
- **Employed** refers to all persons who, at any time during the reference week worked at least one hour for pay, profit or family gain (as an employer, employee, own-account worker or unpaid family worker). Also considered as employed are persons who did not work during the reference week because of illness, injury, bad weather, leave, labour dispute and social or religious reasons but had a job, farm, enterprise or other family enterprise to return to. Also included are those on temporary lay-off with pay who would definitely be called back to work.

- **Unemployed**

Unemployed refers to those who do not have a job but are interested to work. There are two groups of unemployed that is the actively unemployed and inactively unemployed.

- **Outside Labour Force**

All persons not classified as employed or unemployed as stated above are classified as outside labour force. Includes housewives, students (including those going for further studies), retired, disabled persons and those not interested in looking for a job.

- **Labour Force Participation Rate**

The economic activity of a population depends on the demographic characteristics of that population. The proportion of economically active population, therefore, differs between sub-groups of that population. These variations are measured by specific activity rates termed as labour force participation rate. **Labour force participation rate** is defined as the ratio of the labour force to the working age population (15 to 64 years), expressed as percentage.

- **Unemployment rate** is the proportion of unemployed population to the total population in labour force. This rate measures the percentage of unemployed population in the labour force.

## Seasonally adjusted

Malaysian economic time series data are affected by major religious festivals such as the Eid-ul Fitr, the Chinese New Year and the Deepavali. The major festivals in this country are usually related to the religious activities and such as, the dates are determined by the respective religious calendar. The dates of these holidays are not in line with the Gregorian calendar. Hence, they tend to move along the Gregorian calendar and has strong seasonal influence on many economic time series data.

Since these non-fixed holidays have large impact on the time series data, they need to be taken into account when performing seasonal adjustment process so as to avoid confusion in seasonally adjusted data and trend estimates. Furthermore, the presence of the non-fixed holidays effects may complicate the interpretation of the data.

Seasonal adjustment is a process of removing the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation from the original series so that the effects of other influences on the series may be more clearly recognized.

Seasonal adjustment can be derived by various methods and the results may vary according to the procedure adopted. The approach used for seasonal adjustment in Malaysia is the **Seasonal Adjustment for Malaysia (SEAM)**.

SEAM is a procedure to remove moving holiday effect on the selected Malaysian economic time series data by introducing steps that can be used to overcome the limitations of the existing seasonal adjustment procedure. To apply the SEAM procedure, the X-ARIMA program in Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) is used.

This seasonal adjusted rate will be revised when a complete 12 months time series for the particular year are obtained.

## Population Benchmarks

Population by characteristics of age group, ethnicity and state were used as benchmarks to produce labour statistics.

Starting with the monthly release of the Principal Statistics of Labour Force, Malaysia, January 2016, the principal statistics of labour is estimated based on the current population estimates as compared to the previous series which used population projections based on the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2010. This rebase is to obtain statistics that is more consistent with current population structure.

Release in [PDF](#).

### Released By:

**DATO' SRI DR. MOHD UZIR MAHIDIN**  
**CHIEF STATISTICIAN MALAYSIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS, MALAYSIA**

 [DrUzir\\_Mahidin](#)   [Dr\\_Uzir](#)

**#myHariBulan# #myBulan# #myTahun#**

**Contact person:**

Mohd Yusrizal bin Ab. Razak  
Public Relation Officer  
Strategic Communication and International Division  
Department of Statistics, Malaysia

**Tel** : +603-8885 7942

**Fax** : +603-8888 9248

**Email** : yusrizal.razak[at]dosm.gov.my

**Contact person:**

Baharudin Mohamad  
Public Relation Officer  
Strategic Communication and International Division  
Department of Statistics Malaysia

Tel : +603-8885 7942

Fax : +603-8888 9248

Email : baharudin[at]dosm.gov.my

**Copyright ©2025 Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal. All Rights Reserved.**