

REPORT ON LABOR FORCE SURVEY (JANUARY 2022)

HIGHLIGHTS

1. The unemployment rate improved from 6.6 percent in December 2021 to 6.4 percent in January 2022, the lowest since the start of the pandemic.
2. However, due to the Omicron surge in January, the labor force participation rate fell from 65.1 percent to 60.5 percent. Another reason for lower employment levels is the end of the holiday season which shed off seasonal jobs. Despite this, net employment remains at 0.5 million above the pre-pandemic level.
3. The level of underemployment also slightly increased from 14.7 percent to 14.9 percent.
4. Since March 15, 2022, 70 percent of the economy has already shifted to Alert Level 1. This means that more restrictions were removed on travel and capacity limits on establishments were eased. This translates to an additional PHP10.8 billion per week of economic activity for the country and 195,000 less unemployed over the next quarter, compared to Alert Level 2.
5. We also emphasize the need to reopen all schools in Alert Level 1 for face-to-face learning as this will provide a big boost to the economy, enable children to learn more, and allow more parents to go back to work.
6. The full and urgent resumption of face-to-face classes can maximize the benefits of Alert Level 1. This can also increase economic activity by around PHP12 billion per week due to the return of related services around schools. It will also free up the time of parents, one in four of whom have to skip or reduce work hours in order to assist their children with online classes at home.

7. To cushion the most vulnerable from the impact of inflationary pressures due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, the government will distribute targeted subsidies amounting to PHP6.1 billion. Among the primary beneficiaries are transport and agriculture and fisheries sector workers.
8. At the same time, the government is also planning to provide unconditional cash transfers of PHP2,400 for the bottom 50 percent of households to mitigate the impact of rising prices of basic goods.
9. We also recommended a four-day workweek, with 10 hours each day, as a measure to help conserve energy and reduce transportation costs. The same strategy was employed during the 1990s in the midst of the Gulf War and in 2008 amid high oil prices.

Table 1. Summary of labor and employment indicators (in thousands)

Indicators	2020 ^{f,a,b}		2021 ^a		2022 ^{p,a}
	Jan	Apr	Jan ^{f,b}	Dec ^{p,c}	Jan ^b
Population 15 years and over	72,841	73,722	74,733	76,123	75,895
Labor Force Level	44,934	41,058	45,212	49,546	45,943
Employment Level	42,543	33,830	41,248	46,274	43,018
Unemployment Level	2,391	7,228	3,964	3,272	2,925
Underemployment Level	6,299	6,398	6,589	6,811	6,397
Visible Underemployment	3,799	5,489	4,469	4,556	3,848
Employment Generation (QoQ / MoM)	6	(8,713)	1,411	797 ^d	(3,256) ^d
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	61.7	55.7	60.5	65.1	60.5
Employment Rate (%)	94.7	82.4	91.2	93.4	93.6
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.3	17.6	8.8	6.6	6.4
Underemployment Rate (%)	14.8	18.9	16.0	14.7	14.9
Visible Underemployment Rate (%)	8.9	16.2	10.8	9.8	8.9
Mean Hours of Work	41.3	35.0	39.3	39.7	41.8

^p Estimates are preliminary and may change; ^f Final estimates; ^a Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; ^b Estimates for the quarterly round of the LFS; ^c Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly or regular LFS to generate national-level labor and employment statistics from the survey; ^d Increment from the previous month; QoQ – quarter on quarter difference; MoM – month on month difference

Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) registered at 60.5 percent in January 2022 is down by 4.6 percentage points (ppts) month-on-month, as more individuals opted out of the labor force.

The number of persons not in the labor force (NILF) increased by 3.4 million month-on-month (m-o-m). Given the revert to stricter alert levels in many areas due to the surge in cases in January, a bulk of this increase is observed among individuals citing COVID-19-related concerns (+878,000) for staying out of the labor force. In addition, increases are also recorded among those who cited age limitations (*i.e.*, too young or too old) and permanent disability (+788,000), household duties (+561,000), schooling (+382,000), and temporary illness (+302,000) for not joining the labor force.

As a result, the total labor force at 45.9 million in January 2022 decreased by 7.3 percent (-3.6 million) relative to the previous month. The decline in the labor force can be observed across all age and sex groups, though more pronounced for ages 55-64 years old (-7.0 ppts) and females (-5.9 ppts). Meanwhile, by year-on-year (y-o-y) comparison, LFPR slightly increased (+0.04 ppt) for females (+1.2 ppts) and all age groups except the youth (-2.7 ppts).

Table 2. Labor force participation rates, 2020-2022 (in percent)

Indicator	2020 ^{f,a,b}		2021 ^{p,a}												2022 ^{p,a}
	Jan	Apr	Jan ^{f,b}	Feb ^c	Mar ^c	Apr ^b	May ^c	Jun ^c	Jul ^b	Aug ^c	Sep ^c	Oct ^b	Nov ^c	Dec ^c	Jan ^b
LFPR (total)	61.7	55.7	60.5	63.5	65.0	63.2	64.6	65.0	59.8	63.6	63.3	62.6	64.2	65.1	60.5
Youth	37.4	32.4	34.7	37.7	40.1	38.2	38.4	39.8	33.3	37.8	35.8	35.7	37.5	36.7	32.0
Male	74.8	69.8	73.9	76.0	76.8	75.0	76.1	76.3	72.4	75.8	75.5	74.9	76.1	76.1	72.9
Female	48.4	41.5	46.9	50.9	53.1	51.4	52.9	53.7	47.1	51.4	51.1	50.2	52.3	54.0	48.1

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Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

- Furthermore, all regions recorded a decline in their respective LFPRs relative to October 2021, except for CAR, Western Visayas, and BARMM. Regions that also bore the brunt of weather disturbances¹ like Northern Mindanao (-6.7 ppts), Central Visayas (-6.2 ppts), SOCCSKSARGEN (-5.2 ppts), Cagayan Valley (-3.5 ppts), Caraga (-3.1 ppts), and Bicol (-3.0 ppts) posted higher declines in the LFPRs compared to the overall decline (-2.1 ppts).

¹ 2 weather systems to bring rains over VisMin, Palawan | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph); 2 weather systems to bring rains across PH | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph); Cloudy skies, rains expected in parts of PH due to 'amihan' | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

With the end of the holiday season and a higher alert level in place to curb the spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, total employment dropped to 43.0 million in January 2022.

11. Relative to December 2021, employment fell by almost 3.3 million in the January 2022 round of the LFS. These were mostly from the agriculture and services sectors, which experienced a decline in employment by 2.5 million and 850,000, respectively. These losses were slightly tempered by the industry sector with around 76,000 additional employment generated m-o-m. Nonetheless, domestic employment in January 2022 remains 475,000 higher than pre-pandemic (January 2020). It is also significantly higher compared to the same period last year (January 2021), by nearly 1.8 million.

12. The decline in agricultural employment is largely attributed to the aftereffects of Typhoon Odette, which damaged crops, fishponds, cages, boats, and other fishing gear in December 2021. The fisheries sector alone incurred losses worth PHP4 billion.² Meanwhile, total damage to agriculture was estimated at PHP16.9 billion.³ In addition, the sector continues to battle the African Swine Fever (ASF) and increases in fertilizer and fuel prices.⁴

Employment in the agriculture sector for January 2022 is the second lowest recorded since April 2020 and is relatively lower than the pre-pandemic level by 275,000.

² DA to import 60MT of fish due to 'Odette'-induced shortage | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

³ 'Odette'-affected families top 2.5M: NDRRMC | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

⁴ DA pushes against 2022 global inflation with price management strategies | Department of Agriculture (da.gov.ph)

Table 3. Employment: 2020-2022

Indicators	2020 ^{f,a,b}		2021 ^{p,a}												2022 ^{p,a}
	Jan	Apr	Jan ^{f,b}	Feb ^c	Mar ^c	Apr ^b	May ^c	Jun ^c	Jul ^b	Aug ^c	Sep ^c	Oct ^b	Nov ^c	Dec ^c	Jan ^b
Employment rate (in %)	94.7	82.4	91.3	91.2	92.9	91.3	92.3	92.3	93.1	91.9	91.1	92.6	93.5	93.4	93.6
Employment growth (QoQ in %)	0.01	(20.5)	3.5	4.6 ^d	5.0 ^d	(4.5) ^d	3.3 ^d	0.8 ^d	(7.6) ^d	6.2 ^d	(1.5) ^d	0.5 ^d	3.8 ^d	1.8 ^d	(7.0) ^d
<i>Employment levels by sector (in millions)</i>															
Agriculture	9.63	8.76	10.04	10.30	11.13	10.56	10.63	10.94	9.19	11.10	10.25	10.77	11.16	11.83	9.35
Industry	7.99	5.75	7.60	7.65	8.80	7.89	8.22	8.17	8.34	8.37	8.17	7.82	7.91	8.24	8.31
Manufacturing	3.63	2.70	3.14	3.28	3.56	3.42	3.55	3.50	3.54	3.71	3.37	3.33	3.37	3.69	3.63
Services	24.93	19.32	23.60	25.20	25.40	24.83	25.87	25.97	24.14	24.76	25.18	25.24	26.41	26.21	25.36

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Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

13. Within services, most of the employment decline came from wholesale and retail trade (-965,000), public administration (-222,000), and health and social work (-150,000). Employment losses in wholesale and retail trade are likely due to the imposition of Alert Level 3 across the country in January.⁵ The decline in wholesale and retail trade and human health are consistent with the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) administrative data where more workers were reportedly retrenched or displaced due to permanent closure of firms compared to the previous month. Unlike wholesale and retail trade which posted a decline primarily amongst part-time workers, public administration and health registered a drop in full-time employment.

These were partly offset by gains in transportation (+160,000), administrative and support services (+118,000), and information and communication

⁵ Six more areas escalate to Alert Level 3 by Jan. 28 | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

(+90,000). These are in line with the buoyant employment outlook of firms under these subsectors for Q1 2022.⁶

Despite the drop in employment compared to the previous month, services employment was higher than the pre-pandemic level and January 2021 by 426,000 and 1.8 million, respectively. This was largely due to employment gains recorded in administrative and support services; wholesale and retail trade; and professional activities.

14. In contrast, industry employment increased, mainly from the construction (+104,000), water supply (+20,000), and electricity (+14,000) subsectors. These are also consistent with the upbeat employment outlook of firms under these subsectors for Q1 2022.⁷

Meanwhile, employment in manufacturing fell by 62,000. With demand and output deteriorating in January due to tighter restrictions and higher prices, manufacturing firms reportedly scaled back on headcounts.⁸

All subsectors under industry recorded higher employment levels in January 2022 compared to pre-pandemic and January 2021, except for manufacturing and electricity (still slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels).

15. Employment across all occupation groups declined, except for plant and machine operators (+305,000), craft workers⁹ (+189,000), and technicians (+23,000). Corresponding to the decline in employment by sector, the majority of the losses primarily came from elementary occupations¹⁰ (-1.6 million) and skilled agricultural workers (-1.2 million).

⁶ This refers to the Employment Outlook Index for the next quarter based on responses from establishments under transportation and business activities in the Q4 2021 Business Expectations Survey. Business Expectations Survey Q4 2021 (bsp.gov.ph)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ IHS Markit Philippines Manufacturing PMI January 2022 (markiteconomics.com)

⁹ Craft and related trades workers apply specific knowledge and skills in the fields to construct and maintain buildings, form metal, erect metal structures, set machine tools, or make, fit, maintain and repair machinery, equipment, or tools, carry out printing work, produce or process foodstuffs, textiles, or wooden, metal and other articles, including handicraft goods.

¹⁰ Elementary occupations involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort.

16. The proportion of vulnerable employment (i.e., self-employed and unpaid family workers) improved from 36.4 percent in December 2021 to 31.5 percent in January 2022 (or a decline of 3.3 million individuals). Meanwhile, wage and salary workers in private establishments increased by 396,000 or +1.8 percent. It also grew by 9.8 percent y-o-y and 1.4 percent compared to pre-pandemic levels. These characterize improvements in the labor market despite the decline in total employment.
17. Meanwhile, 10 out of 17 regions experienced a decline in employment compared to October 2021. The regions with the largest employment losses are Central Visayas (-327,000), Caraga (-322,000), Northern Mindanao (-215,000), and SOCCSKSARGEN (-129,000). These regions are among the areas hardest hit by Typhoon Odette.¹¹

The number of underemployed individuals dropped by 414,000 as part-time employment fell by 3.8 million.¹²

18. In terms of hours of work, full-time employment increased by 766,000, pushing up the mean hours of work to 41.8 in January 2022, from 39.7 in December 2021. Part-time employment (-3.8 million) and workers with jobs but not at work (-248,000) dropped significantly.
19. Meanwhile, the actual number of underemployed workers went down by 414,000 to 6.4 million. The reduction in the number of visibly underemployed (-707,000) offset the increase of the invisibly underemployed¹³ (+293,000). Most of the decline came from self-employed (-266,000), unpaid family workers (-158,000), and wage and salary workers in private establishments (-123,000). The underemployment rate is broadly steady m-o-m, having returned to pre-crisis levels as of December 2021.

¹¹ National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (ndrrmc.gov.ph)

¹² Visibly underemployed persons are those who are working less than 40 hours and still want additional hours of work

¹³ Invisibly underemployed persons are those who are working 40 hours or more and still want additional hours of work

Table 4. Underemployment rates, 2020 – 2022 (in percent)

Indicator	2020 ^{f,a,b}		2021 ^{p,a}												2022 ^{p,a}
	Jan	Apr	Jan ^{f,b}	Feb ^c	Mar ^c	Apr ^b	May ^c	Jun ^c	Jul ^b	Aug ^c	Sep ^c	Oct ^b	Nov ^c	Dec ^c	Jan ^b
National	14.8	18.9	16.0	18.2	16.2	17.2	12.3	14.2	20.9	14.7	14.2	16.1	16.7	14.7	14.9
AONCR	16.7	20.3	17.1	N/A	N/A	17.5	N/A	N/A	21.8	N/A	N/A	16.9	N/A	N/A	15.7

^p Estimates are preliminary and may change; ^f Final estimates; ^a Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; ^b Estimates for the quarterly round of the LFS; ^c Starting February 2021, monthly LFS will be conducted in between quarterly or regular LFS to generate national-level labor and employment statistics from the survey.

Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

20. The underemployment rate improved in 10 out of 17 regions relative to the previous quarter (October 2021), of which Caraga exhibited the largest decrease (-9.0 ppts), followed by CALABARZON (-6.0 ppts) and SOCCSKSARGEN (-5.0 ppts). Meanwhile, Northern Mindanao (+7.0 ppts) posted the largest increase in underemployment followed by the Zamboanga Peninsula (+5.1 ppts) and Davao Region (3.4 ppts). NCR continues to have the lowest underemployment rate at 9.0 percent in January 2022 from 10.2 percent in October 2021.

The number of unemployed individuals declined by 10.6 percent to 2.9 million.

21. Unemployed persons decreased by 347,000 while the rate was broadly steady at 6.4 percent. Relative to the previous year, the overall unemployment rate decreased by 2.4 ppts, although still slightly elevated (+1.1 ppts) from the pre-pandemic level.
22. Following the Omicron surge in January 2022,¹⁴ unemployed persons who looked for work declined by 801,000 and unemployed persons citing COVID-19 related reasons for not looking for work increased by 316,000 during the

¹⁴ PH now classified again as 'high risk' for Covid-19 | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

period. Notably, the percentage of discouraged workers rose from 4.9 percent in December 2021 to 8.9 percent in January 2022.

23. Furthermore, unemployment across all educational levels decreased m-o-m, except among senior high school undergraduates (+33,000), junior high school undergraduates (+18,000), elementary graduates (+14,000), and post-secondary undergraduates (+9,000). Unemployment across the board still decreased y-o-y, except for senior high school undergraduates (+2,000).

Table 5. Unemployment rates: 2020 –2022 (in percent)

Indicator	2020 ^{f,a,b}		2021 ^{p,a}												2022 ^{p,a}
	Jan	Apr	Jan ^{f,b}	Feb ^c	Mar ^c	Apr ^b	May ^c	Jun ^c	Jul ^b	Aug ^c	Sep ^c	Oct ^b	Nov ^c	Dec ^c	Jan ^b
Overall	5.3	17.6	8.8	8.8	7.1	8.7	7.7	7.7	6.9	8.1	8.9	7.4	6.5	6.6	6.4
15-24	13.6	31.5	19.8	18.5	15.4	15.8	14.5	14.5	15.4	16.0	17.7	15.1	13.4	12.8	13.8
25-54	4.0	16.0	7.4	7.5	6.0	8.1	6.9	7.1	5.9	7.2	7.9	6.5	5.7	5.9	5.6
55 & over	2.0	10.5	3.7	4.9	2.9	4.2	4.2	3.3	3.3	3.8	4.9	3.8	3.1	3.9	3.3

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Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

24. In 11 out of 17 regions, the unemployment rate eased relative to October 2021, of which MIMAROPA (-3.5 pts) posted the largest decline followed by CALABARZON (-2.8 pts) and Central Luzon (-1.5 pts). In contrast, Central Visayas (+1.1 pts) recorded the largest increase followed by Northern Mindanao and Cagayan Valley (both by 1.0 ppt).
25. The unemployment rate in the Philippines remains to be among the highest among major Asian emerging economies, only slightly outperforming India and Indonesia.¹⁵ This is expected to further improve as growth prospects remain encouraging with the gradual decline of COVID-19 cases, accelerated

¹⁵ Based on FY 2021 unemployment rate figures, India and the Philippines are at par with each other at 7.8 percent.

vaccination, and the implementation of recovery measures amid the external headwinds.

Table 6. Latest unemployment rates across selected Asian economies

Indicator	Unemployment Rate	Month released
China ^a	3.9	December 2021
India ^b	6.6	January 2022
Indonesia ^c	6.5	August 2021
Malaysia ^b	4.3	December 2021
Philippines	6.4	January 2022
Vietnam ^a	3.6	December 2021

Notes: ^{a/} Unemployment in these countries is reported quarterly (March, June, September, December); ^{b/} Unemployment in these countries is reported monthly; ^{c/} Indonesia unemployment is reported semi-annually (February and August)

The share of economically inactive youth went up to 14.5 percent in January 2022 from 13.9 percent in October 2021.

The proportion and number of youth not in education, employment, nor training (NEET) recorded a slight increase to 2.9 million in January 2022 from 2.8 million in October 2021. Majority of the increase came from the youth NEET not in the labor force. Most cited COVID-19 and community restrictions (+309,000) and tired or believe no work available (+144,000) as reasons for not looking for work.

**Table 7. Share of youth NEE and NEET to total youth population:
2020 –2022 (in percent)**

Indicator	2020 ^{f,a,b}				2021 ^{p,a,b}				2022 ^{p,a,b}
	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan ^f	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan
Share of youth NEE (%)	17.1	25.3	11.4	20.6	19.6	16.4	17.8	14.0	14.6
Share of youth NEET (%)	16.9	25.2	11.4	20.4	19.4	16.3	17.5	13.9	14.5

^p Estimates are preliminary and may change; ^f Final estimates; ^{a/} Estimates are based on 2015 CPH population projections; ^{b/} Estimates for quarterly round of the LFS, no estimates for monthly round.

Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), PSA

26. Relative to the previous year, youth NEET substantially dropped by 4.9 ppts or 991,000 fewer inactive youth.

As the country shifts from a pandemic to an endemic paradigm, the implementation of the 10-point policy of the Economic Development Cluster (EDC), will help regain employment opportunities, and further steer the economy towards full recovery in 2022 despite the headwinds. The government will also provide targeted subsidies for affected sectors due to upward inflationary pressures as a result of the Russia-Ukraine tensions.

27. The **EDC's 10-point policy in the following areas remains crucial** in fully reopening the economy and achieving economic recovery. These are recommendations on: 1) metrics; 2) vaccination; 3) healthcare capacity; 4) economy and mobility; 5) schooling; 6) domestic travel; 7) international travel; 8) digital transformation; 9) pandemic flexibility bill; and 10) medium-term preparation for pandemic resilience.
28. To cushion the most vulnerable from the impact of inflationary pressures due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis, the government will distribute targeted subsidies amounting to PHP6.1 billion. Among the primary beneficiaries are transport and agriculture and fisheries sector workers. This can be sourced from the higher value-added tax (VAT) collections due to the higher fuel prices. As of March 18, 2022, the government is also planning to **provide unconditional cash transfer (UCT)** of PHP2,400 for the bottom 50 percent of households to mitigate the impact of rising prices of basic goods.

At the same time, the government also recommends a four-day workweek, with 10 hours each day, as a measure to help conserve energy and reduce

transportation costs. The same strategy was employed during the 1990s in the midst of the Gulf War and in 2008 amid high oil prices.

Furthermore, to help insulate the economy from external pressures, we recommend for the entire country to **revert to Alert Level 1 and fully resume face-to-face learning**. Since March 15, 2022, 70 percent of the economy has already shifted to Alert Level 1. This means that more restrictions were removed on travel and capacity limits on establishments were eased. This translates to an additional PHP10.8 billion per week of economic activity for the country and 195,000 fewer unemployed over the next quarter, compared to Alert Level 2.

The full resumption of face-to-face learning can increase economic activities due to the return of services around schools such as transport, dormitories, food stalls, and school supplies stores, among others. This can increase economic activity by around PHP12 billion per week due to the return of related services around schools. It will also free up the time of parents, one in four of whom have to skip or reduce work hours in order to assist their children with online classes at home.

29. In this regard, the **accelerated roll-out of the vaccination program** will support the gradual reopening of the economy. As of March 9, 2022, almost 64 million Filipinos have been fully vaccinated and 10.7 million have been inoculated with booster shots, nearing the vaccination target of 77.1 million adult population by the end of Q1 2022.¹⁶ In addition, the government will also expand vaccination partnerships with pharmacies, clinics, schools, and other private establishments, especially as the National Task Force and Department of Health formulate the new normal roadmap.¹⁷

¹⁶ National COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard | Department of Health website (doh.gov.ph)

¹⁷ Gov't to develop 'new normal' roadmap vs. Covid-19 pandemic | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph); PH back at low risk for Covid-19; readies shift to 'new normal' | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)

30. Lastly, the **timely implementation of the FY 2022 national budget, faster utilization of the extended 2021 budget, and urgent passage of reforms are crucial to accelerate economic recovery and mitigate the impact of the ongoing global crisis.** Amendments to the Public Service Act, which redefines the coverage of public utilities and proposes to relax foreign ownership restrictions in critical services sectors, including transportation and telecommunications, will generate more employment opportunities, enhance innovation, lower prices, and improve the quality of goods and services for all Filipinos. Moreover, the economic team recommends the passage of legislative measures to increase the buffer stock of gas and diesel from 30 to 45 days and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from 7 to 15 days, ensuring more adequate supply in case of a global shortage.