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Unemployment reaches 150,000

In seasonally adjusted terms, the number of unemployed rose by 12,000 to reach 150,000 people, and the unemployment rate increased to 6.5 percent during the September 2009 quarter, Statistics New Zealand said today. The number of people unemployed is at its highest level since the March 1994 quarter.

A rise in the number of unemployed males drove the increase in unemployment during the latest quarter, however, the number of unemployed females also rose. The number of people unemployed has increased steadily since the December 2007 quarter.

The number of people employed fell by 17,000 during the latest quarter, driven entirely by males. Male full-time employment decreased by 14,000, while male part-time employment decreased by 6,000.

“During the past year there have been notable decreases in employment in the manufacturing, retail trade and accommodation, and construction industries, while employment in the health care and social assistance, and public administration and safety industries has increased”, said Peter Gardiner, Manager of Work, Knowledge and Skills at Statistics New Zealand.

Actual hours worked fell by 0.7 percent during the September 2009 quarter, reflecting the 0.8 percent fall in employment. Actual hours worked have fallen by 3.1 percent since the September 2008 quarter.

The labour force participation rate fell by 0.4 percentage points to 68.0 percent during the latest quarter, partly due to a decline in the number of people in the labour force. Participation is at its lowest rate since the March 2008 quarter.

Geoff Bascand
Government Statistician

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