

Speech by
Mr. FUNG Hing-wang
Commissioner for Census and Statistics
at the 2011 Population Census Press Conference on Thursday, 23 June 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an established practice in Hong Kong since 1961 to conduct a population census every ten years and a by-census in the middle of the intercensal period. In line with this practice, the Census and Statistics Department is going to conduct the 2011 Population Census from 30 June to 2 August this year.

2. The purpose of population censuses is to obtain up-to-date benchmark information on the size and socio-economic characteristics of the population and on its geographical distribution. Statistics compiled from the information collected are vital to government planning and policy formulation, particularly in such fields as education, housing, transport, medical and social services. The data are also important to the private sector for formulating business strategies and the academics for research purposes.

3. The 2011 Population Census is conducted under the Census and Statistics (2011 Population Census) Order (“the Order”) which was enacted under Section 9 of the Census and Statistics Ordinance. Under this ordinance, persons specified in the Order are obliged to provide the required information.

4. The entire population of Hong Kong, including the land population and the marine population, will be covered in the 2011 Population Census. Persons living in some special types of quarters, such as infirmaries, will also be covered.

5. The 2011 Population Census requires participation of all households in Hong Kong. About one-tenth of the households have been selected through a random sampling procedure for a detailed enquiry using a long form questionnaire, while the remaining nine-tenths will be subject to a simple enumeration to provide some basic demographic information using a short form questionnaire.

6. The data topics for the 2011 Population Census are drawn up after wide consultations and taking consideration of such factors as the operational concerns and international practices. The final list of data topics is broadly the same as that for the 2001 Population Census and the 2006 Population By-census.

7. Apart from five questions on occupancy and number of household members in the quarters concerned, each member in a household selected for a simple enumeration (i.e. short form households) will be required to answer a total of 13 questions such as sex, year and month of birth, place of birth and residency pattern in Hong Kong (including a dummy question with pre-filled person serial number). As for households selected for a detailed enquiry (i.e. long form households), individual members will be required to provide information on various aspects, including demographic and social characteristics, educational characteristics, internal migration characteristics and economic characteristics. In addition, there are some 10 questions on housing and household characteristics (e.g. number of rooms) for the long form households.

8. To tie in with the current lifestyle of Hong Kong people, a multi-modal data collection approach is adopted for the first time in the 2011 Population Census. The 34-day data collection period is divided into two phases. The first phase is the self-enumeration period (from 30 June to 15 July 2011). Long form households may register for the use of e-Questionnaire and submit the questionnaire online. In addition to e-Questionnaire, short form households may return the completed questionnaire by post. The second phase is the face-to-face interview period (from 16 July to 2 August 2011) where the Census and Statistics Department will arrange census officers to visit all households which have not provided information in the first phase. Enquiry about the 2011 Population Census can be made by calling the Telephone Enquiry Centre at 2153 2011. The Telephone Enquiry Centre has been in operation and provides enquiry services 7 days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. till the end of the census period. Let me now explain the data collection arrangements in detail.

9. The Census and Statistics Department has started today to issue notification letters about the 2011 Population Census to households living in quarters with clearly identifiable postal address in batches. I expect that most of the households in Hong Kong will receive the notification letter by end June. A guidance note is enclosed in the notification letter detailing the method of providing the required information for the 2011 Population Census. A copy of questionnaire as well as a pre-paid return envelope is also enclosed for short form households. The notification letter is intended for delivery to the occupant. In other words, households should complete postal questionnaire or e-Questionnaire in accordance with the instructions laid down in the notification letter sent to their residential address no matter they are owner-occupiers or tenants of the quarters concerned. For those households living in quarters without clearly identifiable postal address (including those living in rural areas using communal letter boxes), those dwelling on board a vessel and those living in non-residential buildings, together with those households not choosing

self-enumeration in the first phase, the Census and Statistics Department will arrange for census officers to visit them in the second phase to collect the required information direct by face-to-face interview.

10. Regarding postal questionnaire, short form households should complete and return them using the pre-paid return envelope by 7 July 2011 if they wish to choose this self-enumeration mode. Households should mark a cross in the appropriate box for each of the multiple-choice questions and write down the correct answers in the boxes for all other questions with blue or black ball pen.

11. Both short form households and long form households can choose to use e-Questionnaire. Short form households may activate their e-Questionnaire account online during 30 June (starting from 9 a.m.) to 7 July 2011 through the 2011 Population Census website (Web address: www.census2011.gov.hk) by entering the “household reference number”, “household account number” and “activation key” printed on the questionnaire. For long form households, the information required for account activation can be found on the notification letter. During the account activation process, households are required to input their own password which will be used for subsequent login if needed. After completing the registration procedures, households can immediately fill in and submit their own questionnaire online. Generally speaking, short form households may take less than 10 minutes to complete the whole registration, form-filling and submission process in one go. As for long form households, it will take on average about 30-40 minutes to do so while the actual time varies depending on the number of household members and their characteristics. If necessary, partially completed data can be saved for completion later. Registered users are requested to submit the completed e-Questionnaire no later than 15 July 2011 by logging in the system again using the “household reference number”, “household account number” and their own password.

12. e-Questionnaire of the 2011 Population Census is operated on a secure platform and the data entered will be encrypted before transmission over the Internet. Taking this opportunity, I wish to remind households using e-Questionnaire to take care of information security. They should always access e-Questionnaire through the 2011 Population Census website at the web address www.census2011.gov.hk and avoid the use of public computers in accessing e-Questionnaire.

13. During the second phase of data collection (from 16 July to 2 August 2011), household visits will normally be carried out from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. each day. Appointment booking service is available for the face-to-face interview. Households may make appointment online via the 2011 Population Census website (www.census2011.gov.hk) or by calling the Telephone Enquiry Centre (2153 2011).

Appointment booking service will start on 8 July 2011.

14. During the visit, census officers will wear a green Census uniform (with purple collar and with the words "Population Census" imprinted at the back) and a Census Badge, carry a red satchel with the Census Logo and identify themselves with a Census Officer Certificate of Identity issued by the Census and Statistics Department. I wish to stress that impersonation of a census officer is an offence. In case of doubt about the identity of census officers, households should call the Telephone Enquiry Centre (2153 2011) immediately for verification.

15. It should be noted that census officers will pay household visits only in the second phase (from 16 July to 2 August 2011) to conduct face-to-face interview. However, census officers may contact individual households which have ever provided information for the 2011 Population Census by phone for follow-ups in the two phases of the census period. The phone number of the Telephone Enquiry Centre (2153 2011) will be displayed for all calls made by census officers for this purpose and they will also recall some of the information provided by households before follow-ups.

16. All along, the Census and Statistics Department has been implementing strict measures to ensure the confidentiality of data pertaining to individual households and persons. Under the Census and Statistics Ordinance, it is an offence for census officers to disclose such data to unauthorized persons. Also, the Census and Statistics Department will use such information for statistical purposes only and will not release it to any government departments or organisations. Moreover, all completed questionnaires will be destroyed within 12 months after commencement of the Census. Therefore, members of the public need not worry at all that their personal information will be divulged.

17. The 2011 Population Census is a very large-scale project. With about 18 300 temporary field workers employed by the Census and Statistics Department to carry out the operation, the 2011 Population Census will involve a complete enumeration of all people in Hong Kong including residents and visitors. This project is estimated to cost some 520 million dollars.

18. Ladies and gentlemen, the statistics obtained from the Census will help build a better future for Hong Kong. General community support is vital for the success of the Census. Taking this opportunity, I call upon all Hong Kong households to cooperate and provide accurate information. I would also like to call upon others to render any help which may facilitate the work of our census officers.

19. Lastly, I would like to share with you the Census slogan “SUPPORT THE CENSUS BUILD A BETTER FUTURE”. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the households for their co-operation and in particular their contributions in building a better future for Hong Kong.

20. My colleagues and I would be glad to take questions from you. Thank you.