

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1)937/01-02  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

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**Legislative Council**  
**Panel on Financial Affairs**

**Minutes of special meeting held on**  
**Thursday, 8 November 2001 at 4:30 pm**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP  
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP  
Hon James TO Kun-sun  
Hon Bernard CHAN  
Hon CHAN Kam-lam  
Hon SIN Chung-kai  
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon MA Fung-kwok

**Non-Panel members** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
**attending** Hon Margaret NG  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

**Members absent** : Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP

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- Public officers attending** : For item I
- Mr Frederick HO Wing-huen, JP  
Commissioner for Census and Statistics
- Mr FUNG Hing-wang, JP  
Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics
- Mr Alvin LI Wing-kong  
Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Social)
- Mr CHEUNG Hok-ying  
Principal Economist, Financial Services Bureau
- Clerk in attendance** : Ms Anita SIT  
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)6
- Staff in attendance** : Ms Pauline NG  
Assistant Secretary General 1
- Mr WONG Tin-yau, Anthony  
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)8
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**I Briefing on the Summary Results of the 2001 Population Census**  
Report entitled "2001 Population Census — Summary Results"  
published by Census and Statistics Department (C&SD)

LC Paper No. CB(1)267/01-02(01) - Table listing the relevant text, tables and charts in the Summary Results of the 2001 Population Census in respect of different policy areas prepared by the LegCo Secretariat

LC Paper No. CB(1)267/01-02(02) - Information note provided by C&SD

At the Chairman's invitation, the Commissioner for Census and statistics (C for C&S) made an opening remark that the Summary Results of the 2001 Population Census (Summary Results) published on 26 October provided an overview of the salient features of the population and the broad demographic changes in Hong Kong. More detailed data and analyses on the 2001 Population Census (the Census) would be published in electronic and paper formats in the ensuing months. With the Census databank in place, C&SD

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could generate additional statistical information on the Census for topical studies of Government bureaux/departments and various other institutions. He hoped that in the ensuing discussion with Members, some preliminary insights into certain issues would be gained and topics of interest to Members would be identified. C&SD would take these into account in compiling the reports on the results of the Census to be published in the early part of 2002.

2. C for C&S gave a powerpoint presentation on the Summary Results. The key findings highlighted in his presentation are set out in the information note tabled (CB(1)267/01-02(02)).

## Discussion with members

3. Miss Margaret NG thanked C for C&S for the presentation and requested the Administration to notify LegCo Members at the earliest opportunity in future of the issuance of similar reports, as these reports contained important information about the community.

4. In reply to Miss HO Sau-lan's enquiry, C for C&S advised that the questionnaire used for the Census and other information on the methodology of the Census would be included in the Main Report on the Census.

5. Noting that the information collected in the Census would be used for government planning and policy formulation, Miss CHOY So-yuk asked whether the Census had been planned with particular regard to the requirements of certain policy bureaux. In response, C for C&S advised that the primary purpose of the Census was to collect information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population. In the planning process, C&SD had consulted those government bureaux and departments which would likely make use of the Census information for planning as well as representatives from different sectors of the community. C&SD had also researched into the relevant statistical standards adopted by recognized international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund etc. and drawn reference to the experience of overseas countries in conducting their censuses.

## *New arrivals from the Mainland*

6. In view of the wide public concern with the integration of Mainland new arrivals in Hong Kong, Miss Margaret NG enquired if information on the characteristics of these new arrivals, such as their places of origin, age, and economic conditions had been collected in the Census. She was concerned that due to the lack of information on Mainland new arrivals, Government policies and action programmes formulated to assist them to adapt to the local community might have been made on a broad-brush basis, and thus might not provide them with the assistance they actually needed. C for C&S said that information on the places of origin of new arrivals from the Mainland had not been collected in the 2001 Population Census, but this information was available from other

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sources and surveys of the Administration. He further said that to study the profile of Mainland new arrivals, it would be more appropriate to gather relevant information from different sources, rather than relying on a single source of information such as the Census, which could only provide a snapshot of the situation at a particular point in time. For example, on arrival in Hong Kong with a one-way permit, Mainland new arrivals had to complete a form with questions on their places of origin and other personal details, and statistics were compiled therefrom. He also pointed out that C&SD had conducted a study in 1999 (Special Reports no. 25) on the characteristics of Mainland new arrivals who had taken up residence in Hong Kong for less than seven years. In the study, there was information on the economic, employment and family conditions of the new arrivals from the Mainland. C for C&S also advised that a coordinating group set up under the Home Affairs Department met regularly to monitor and assess the provision of services for new arrivals from the Mainland. To this end, C&SD had been providing relevant statistical information and analyses to facilitate the work of the coordinating group.

*Mobile Residents*

7. In reply to Miss Cyd HO's enquiry, C for C&S advised that "Mobile Residents" in the Census referred to Hong Kong Permanent Residents who had stayed in Hong Kong for at least one month but less than three months during the six months before or for at least one month but less than three months during the six months after the census moment, regardless of whether they were in Hong Kong or not at the census moment. He observed that some persons employed with regional responsibilities who had to travel frequently out of Hong Kong and some retired and semi-retired persons fell into this category. Due to their mobile nature, it was difficult to collect complete census data on this group of residents during the 2001 Population Census. However, information on their characteristics such as age and sex was available from the Immigration Department and statistics had been compiled based on such information.

8. Miss Cyd HO pointed out that there was an increasing number of Hong Kong Permanent Residents who took residence in Shenzhen and travelled daily to Hong Kong to work or for schooling. She was concerned that this group of people was not covered in the Census. Without the necessary census data on this group of people, it would be difficult to plan public services to cater for their needs, such as the number of school places to be provided for them. C for C&S replied that according to the information of the Immigration Department and the Education Department, there were approximately over 3 000 children and another several thousand adults who were Hong Kong Permanent Residents but lived in Shenzhen and travelled to Hong Kong regularly. In fact, C&SD was working with the Planning Department to plan a study on Hong Kong Residents living in the Pearl River Delta Region. The purpose of the study was to obtain information on the socio-economic characteristics of these residents, and their views on living in the Mainland.

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*Elderly persons and ageing population*

9. Dr Philip WONG Yu-hong enquired how the life expectancy of the local population was compared with that of other cities. C for C&S said that the average life span of the Hong Kong population was getting longer due to a lower death rate. The current average life span for males was 77 years and for females was 82 years. In comparison with other metropolitan cities, the average life span of the Hong Kong population was the second longest, only next to the Japanese population.

10. Mr MAK Kwok-fung sought clarification as to why the definition of 'elderly persons' in Table 4 (Dependency Ratios) of the Report on the Summary Results was age 65 and above, whereas in describing the category of "Mobile Residents", 'elderly persons' referred to persons aged 60 and above. C for C&S replied that C&SD did not have a particular stance in regard to the definition of 'elderly persons'; it was up to the relevant policy bureaux to decide how the age segmentation was to be made in planning for community, welfare and medical services etc. for the population. The classification of persons aged 60 and above as "elderly persons" for Mobile Residents was considered appropriate since the retirement age for civil servants, teachers, and many employees in the commercial sector was 60, and these retired persons were a significant component group of "Mobile Residents".

11. As regards the availability of census data on "returnees", C for C&S advised that while this term commonly referred to Hong Kong residents having returned to Hong Kong upon emigration to other countries for a period of time, there was no standard definition of "returnees" adopted in Hong Kong. A related question that had been asked was whether the respondent was in Hong Kong or abroad five years ago. Information was thus not available in the Census for ascertaining whether a person was a "returnee" or not.

12. Mr MAK Kwok-fung asked if the 2001 Population Census covered certain health characteristics of the population, such as physical disabilities, chronic illnesses etc. He considered this kind of information important for planning medical and welfare services. C for C&S advised in the planning process, C&SD had initially considered incorporating questions on these aspects into the Census questionnaire. The idea was however not pursued as it was considered that in a survey with such a magnitude as the Census, useful and objective data on these aspects would be difficult to obtain. Instead, these aspects had been covered in a more focused study with quarterly surveys carried out in year 2000. The relevant report, i.e. the Social Data Collected through the General Household Survey: Special Topics Report no. 28, was published in August 2001.

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*Population by nationality and ethnicity*

13. Referring to Table 9 (Population by Nationality) of the Report, Miss CHOY So-yuk enquired about the reasons for the large fluctuations in the numbers of British, American and Canadian between the years 1991, 1996 and 2001. C for C&S explained that the fluctuation in the number of persons with the British nationality was mainly attributed to the adoption of a different classification of nationality in the 2001 Census from that adopted in the 1991 Census and 1996 By-Census. The new classification was based on the Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China (the Nationality Law), which came into effect in Hong Kong after the Handover. Under the Nationality Law, Hong Kong residents and former residents who were of Chinese descent and born in the Mainland or Hong Kong were of Chinese nationality. Hence, some persons classified as of British nationality or another nationality in the 1991 Census and 1996 By-Census were regarded as of Chinese nationality in the 2001 Census. The main reason for the substantial rise in the number of persons of British nationality in the 1996 By-Census compared with the 1991 Census was the implementation of the British Nationality Selection Scheme in the early 1990s.

14. Miss Margaret NG said that the reasons suggested by C for C&S might not have fully explained the fluctuation in population numbers by nationality. C for C&S responded that while there were some other factors contributing to the fluctuation in the population numbers by nationality, the operation of the Nationality Law in Hong Kong after the Handover and the implementation of the British Nationality Selection Scheme were the main factors contributing to the fluctuation. C for C&S further said that in the Census, respondents were asked a number of questions relating to nationality to ensure accuracy of the data collected.

15. Referring to Table 10 (Population by Ethnicity), Miss Margaret NG asked why relevant figures for 1991 and 1996 were not shown on the table. C for C&S explained that data on ethnicity had not been collected in the 1991 Census and 1996 By-census and hence relevant figures were only available for 2001. He also advised that included in the figure of 61 345 under "Others" in the table were some 9 000 American and Canadian white persons, some 6 800 Australian and New Zealand white persons, and around 10 000 European white persons other than British white persons. The category of "British" in the table referred to British white persons. While C for C&S advised that the classification of ethnicity adopted in the Census was in line with the relevant international standard, Miss Margaret NG expressed reservation on the propriety of the classification especially the category of "British". Miss NG said that "British" was commonly understood as a person of "British" nationality and the person might be a white person or a person of any skin colour. Miss NG further said that she was mainly concerned with how well people coming from diverse cultural backgrounds integrated into the society. She hoped that C&SD would conduct some surveys in this area in future.

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16. Miss Magaret NG and Ms Cyd HO expressed concern whether there was an increasing number of persons not of Chinese descent leaving Hong Kong in recent years, since such a trend might affect Hong Kong's image as a cosmopolitan city. They asked whether information on the socio-demographic characteristics of these persons was available. C for C&S advised that there were no directly relevant data collected in the Census in this regard. The Immigration Department might possess some relevant information but the department might not keep information on persons who made short stays or who frequently traveled in and out of Hong Kong.

*Income disparity*

17. Miss Emily LAU referred to Table 28 on "Percentage Distribution of Monthly Household Income by Decile Groups of Domestic Households in 1991, 1996 and 2001" in the Report and noted that the Gini coefficient increased from 0.476 in 1991 to 0.525 in 2001 while the income of the families of the 10<sup>th</sup> decile group (the highest income group) accounted for 41.2% of the total income of the entire population in 2001 as compared to 37.3% in 1991. She sought elaboration on the trends revealed by the data.

18. C for C&S explained the concept and application of the Gini Coefficient. He said that notwithstanding that the Gini Coefficient was a useful numerical indicator, it should not be taken at face value, since income distribution was a complex subject and the factors affecting the Gini Coefficient should be taken into account in analysing the Gini Coefficient. It should also be noted that characteristics of the household structure were normally not accounted for in the compilation of the Gini Coefficient. On the phenomenon of increasing income disparity, C for C&S observed that there was a similar trend in other developed economies. This might be attributed to the changes towards a knowledge-based economic structure. He informed members that C&SD would carry out more comprehensive and in-depth analyses of the data on household income in future. The data would be systematically categorised and made available for use by government bureaux/departments and other institutions.

19. The Principal Economist, Financial Services Bureau supplemented that Hong Kong had transformed from a economy characterised by labour-intensive industries to a knowledge- and technology-based economy over the past one to two decades. The increased demand for well-educated and technology talents had driven up the salary levels of this sector of population. This was recognized as one of the main factors contributing to the increase in the value of the Gini Coefficient. He noted that countries with a similar economic development process also experienced the trend of increasing income disparity.

20. At Miss Emily LAU's request, C for C&SD agreed to provide more information about the income distribution of the population to facilitate Members' preparation for the motion debate on "alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor" at the Council meeting on 21 November 2001.

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*(Post meeting note: Further information on the income distribution of the population provided by C&SD was sent to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)346/01-02 dated 16 November 2001.)*

*Maximum sustainable population size*

21. Miss Emily LAU asked if the Administration would conduct a comprehensive analysis to estimate the maximum sustainable population size for Hong Kong making use of the data bank of C&SD or other information sources of the Administration, and whether the results of such an analysis could be presented to LegCo. C for C&S responded that the issue raised by Miss LAU was very complex in view of the many variable factors involved and the complex relationships among these factors. While there were different schools of thought on the subject of 'optimal population size' within the academic sector, he was not aware of any plan within the Administration to work out an optimal population size or a maximum sustainable population size for Hong Kong.

22. Mr SIN Chung-Kai and Miss Emily LAU requested C&SD to examine if more in-depth statistical information on various policy areas could be generated from the data collected in the Census to facilitate the work of LegCo Panels. C for C&S responded that the table prepared by the LegCo Secretariat listing the relevant text, tables and charts in the Summary Results in respect of different policy areas might be useful for this purpose. The Assistant Secretary General (1) suggested that the Secretariat would follow up with C&SD after the meeting to explore how the relevant data collected from the Census could be used by Panels for reference and deliberation.

*(Post meeting note: Having discussed with C&SD on the matter after the meeting, ASG1 issued a circular (CB(1)457/01-02 on 30 November 2001) to inform Members of the policy areas for which C&SD could provide more statistical information and the arrangements for briefings by C&SD for relevant LegCo Panels.)*

23. The Chairman thanked C for C&SD for his briefing.

**II Any other business**

24. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.

Legislative Council Secretariat

31 January 2002