

Estimates of the number of Mainlanders with Right of Abode in Hong Kong

The Census and Statistics Department is conducting a Special Topic Enquiry (STE) via the General Household Survey (GHS) from March to May 1999 to collect data relating to mainlanders who have the right of abode in Hong Kong. Preliminary figures up to mid-April and a description of some major technical issues are provided in this paper.

Ruling by the Court of Final Appeal

2. Persons in the Mainland who have become eligible for Right of Abode as a result of the ruling include :

- Hong Kong residents' children born in the Mainland. Although their fathers or mothers were not Hong Kong residents at the time they were born, they will become eligible for right of abode once their parents become Hong Kong permanent residents;
- Children "born out of wedlock" of Hong Kong permanent residents.

Preliminary Estimates of the Number of Mainlanders with Right of Abode

3. About half of the survey work has been completed by the Census and Statistics Department. Based on data collected, the following estimates are obtained :

Persons Newly Eligible for Right of Abode

Category	First Generation ⁽¹⁾	Second Generation ⁽¹⁾ (eligible when eligible persons in the first generation fulfil the 7 years' residence requirement)	Total
Children born within registered marriage	172 000 ⁽²⁾	338 000 ⁽³⁾	510 000
Children born out of registered marriage	520 000	645 000	1 165 000
Total	692 000	983 000	1 675 000

Notes : (1) The first generation refers to Mainland children of Hong Kong residents. The second generation refers to the children of those Mainland children, i.e. the grandchildren of Hong Kong residents.

(2) The above table does not include 102 000 persons who already have the right of abode prior to the ruling by the Court of Final Appeal. They are among the first generation. There are thus a total of 274 000 children born within registered marriage, and altogether there are 794 000 persons in the first generation.

(3) Of these 338 000 persons, some are children of the 172 000 persons presented in the table, while the rest are children of the 102 000 persons mentioned in Note (2).

Some Major Technical Issues of the Survey

4. This is not the first time that information is collected on Mainland children of Hong Kong residents. During the period from November 1995 to January 1996, the Census and Statistics Department conducted an STE to collect data on Hong Kong residents' children who were born and still living in the Mainland. The results showed that at that time Hong Kong residents had 320 000 children who were born in the Mainland and still living there. Owing to the privacy nature of the issue, these 320 000 persons largely did not include "children born out of registered marriage". This figure corresponds broadly to the figure of 274 000 just released (i.e. all first generation children born within registered marriage). A considerable number of these 320 000 persons have already come and resided in Hong Kong over the past three years. Meanwhile, newborns are added to this category.

5. Not all "children born out of registered marriage" have been born to "mistresses" or "extra-marital relationship". A considerable number of them were born to the so-called "de facto marriage" in the Mainland. It is known that up to the early 90's, a large number of persons who have children did not go through any formal marriage registration. Therefore, "children born out of registered marriage" include many children born to Hong Kong residents under de facto marriage in the Mainland. The father or mother of these children might have later come and resided in Hong Kong, while the children remained in the Mainland; or one of the parents might have come to Hong Kong for permanent residence and started another family. Certainly, there are also a considerable number of persons who were not born under any form of marriage and whose parents have come and resided in Hong Kong later.

6. Reference period for the current STE is March to May. By mid-April, the Census and Statistics Department has already completed 50% of the survey work, with 9 200 households selected by random sampling having been interviewed.

7. The results published at this stage are compiled from data collected during the period from March to mid-April, and are thus preliminary estimates. Nevertheless, through proper sampling design, the selected households for March and the first half of April form a separate and scientific random sample by itself and can be used to draw inference on the overall situation.

8. Enumerators of the Census and Statistics Department encountered difficulties in using the "direct questioning method" in collecting data on "children born out of registered marriage". During the interviews, the enumerators noticed that respondents felt embarrassed and uneasy or held a perfunctory attitude when being asked questions related to this topic. Thus the number of "children born out of registered marriage" established via the "direct questioning method" cannot be relied on.

9. Apart from using the "direct questioning method" to collect data from half of the sample, the Census and Statistics Department has used the "randomized response technique" (RRT) for the other half of the sample to collect data on "children born out of registered marriage".

10. Under the RRT, a respondent goes through a random process similar to "drawing lots" to determine the question to be answered, i.e. the one related to children born out of registered marriage, or the other question related to an ordinary issue. There is no need for the respondent to tell the enumerator which question is being answered, and the enumerator is unable to relate the answer to the question. By virtue of this, respondents will feel unpressurized in providing true information. This is a method adopted by the statistical profession in tackling issues with a high degree of sensitivity in a survey.

11. Regarding "children born within registered marriage", the survey work has progressed smoothly, and detailed breakdowns of information can also be compiled.

12. As "children born out of registered marriage" involves a high degree of privacy, we could only rely on the RRT method to collect data for estimating first generation "children born out of registered marriage". Within this category, the characteristics of first generation children and the number and characteristics of second generation children can only be estimated based on information pertaining to "children born within registered marriage".

Some major characteristics of Mainland children

13. The following are some major characteristics of the first generation children "born within registered marriage". Comparison with the Hong Kong population is also made :

	% among newly eligible Mainland children born within registered <u>marriage</u> ^(a)	% among all the Mainland children born within registered <u>marriage</u> ^(b)	% among Hong Kong <u>Population</u>
(1) Aged ^(c) 20 or above	80	70	76
(2) Education at secondary level or above	63	50	60
(3) Professional or technical personnel ^(d)	10 (23)	8 (20)	14 (27)

Notes : (a) There are 172 000 newly eligible persons born within registered marriage (first generation).

(b) There are altogether 274 000 eligible persons born within registered marriage (first generation).

(c) A more detailed breakdown by age and sex is given at the Annex.

(d) Figures refer to percentage share of "professional or technical personnel" in the total population of the relevant category of people. Figures in brackets refer to percentage share of "professional or technical personnel" in the working population of the relevant category of people.

Intention of Hong Kong residents for their Mainland Children to come to live in Hong Kong

14. The survey has also collected the views of Hong Kong residents with Mainland children born within registered marriage as to whether they would wish their children to come to live in Hong Kong. Some 80% of the respondents expressed such intention.

Persons not included in the STE and other related issues

15. Two types of persons are not included in the above estimates :

(a) Mainland children of permanent residents of Hong Kong who have deceased;

(b) Mainland children of permanent residents of Hong Kong who have emigrated. This is because the parents of these children could not be included in the survey.

16. In addition, there are quite a number of Hong Kong residents whose spouses still live in the Mainland, and there will continue to be newborns. There will also be Hong Kong residents who will marry and give rise to children in the Mainland. Thus, the estimates refer to the current position only.

Census and Statistics Department

**Percentage Distribution of Newly Eligible Persons Born
Within Registered Marriage (first generation) and
their Children (second generation) Analysed by Age and Sex**

Percentage

Age Group	First generation ⁽¹⁾			Second generation ⁽²⁾		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
0 – 5	1	1	2	11	9	20
6 – 11	2	2	4	12	11	23
12 - 19	5	8	13	13	11	24
20 – 49	30	37	67	18	15	33
50 – 59	5	6	11	*	*	*
60+	1	3	4	*	*	*
Total	44	57	100	54	46	100

Notes: Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total.

* Less than 0.5%

(1) The number of first generation newly eligible persons born within registered marriage is 172 000.

(2) The number of second generation children referred to in this table is 338 000. Of these, some are children of the 172 000 persons mentioned in Note (1), while the rest are children of the 102 000 persons who already have the right of abode prior to the ruling by the Court of Final Appeal.