

立法會  
*Legislative Council*

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**Subcommittee on Census and Statistics (2016 Population Census) Order**

**Background brief**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the Census and Statistics (2016 Population Census) Order and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Members on matters relating to the 2016 Population By-census ("16BC") in recent years.

**Background**

2. Population censuses have been conducted in Hong Kong at 10-year intervals since 1961 and by-censuses are carried out in the middle of the intercensal period. The aim is to obtain up-to-date benchmark information on the socio-economic characteristics of the population and on its geographical distribution. Such information provides benchmark data for studying the direction and trend of population changes, which are key inputs for making projections concerning population, household, labour force and employment.

3. Population censuses involve a complete headcount of the population, while population by-censuses enquire about the detailed characteristics of the population on the basis of a large sample. Population censuses and by-censuses differ from other general household sample surveys in their sizable scales which makes them feasible to provide statistics of high precision, even for population sub-groups and small geographical areas. Census information is vital to the Government for planning and policy formulation. It is also important to the private sector and academia for business and research purposes.

## **The 2016 Population By-census**

### Data collection period and sampling scheme

4. According to the Administration, the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") plans to conduct 16BC from 30 June to 2 August 2016 (altogether 34 days). In line with the practice of past population by-censuses, C&SD will select a sample of about one-tenth of households for detailed enquiry in 16BC. The design of 16BC basically follows that used in the detailed enquiry of the 2011 Population Census ("11C") so as to produce consistent results with the benchmark data of the last population census.

### Means of data collection

5. C&SD will collect data in two phases. In the first phase, households will be provided with the option to submit e-questionnaires online or via a dedicated mobile app. For those households who do not respond in the first phase, enumerators will then collect the required data by conventional face-to-face interviews in the second phase. The face-to-face interviews will be conducted in a paperless way where enumerators will make use of mobile tablet computers to record the collected data, i.e. a paperless computer-assisted interviewing method. According to the Administration, this new approach is more environmentally friendly, can offer more efficient and seamless support to fieldwork operations and related administrative work, and can enhance the quality of collected data by incorporating on-the-spot data validation checks to enable more timely verification and clarification with the respondents.

### Data topics

6. C&SD conducted a public consultation for 16BC in 2013-2014 to review census data topics to ensure that they remain relevant and meet users' needs. According to the Administration, some 180 Government bureaux/departments, selected organizations and groups, and relevant faculties and departments in academic institutions have been invited to rate the usefulness of topics covered in 11C and make suggestions on new topics.

7. Factors considered by C&SD in deciding the topics for 16BC include (a) usefulness of data; (b) willingness and ability of the respondents to answer; (c) ability of the enumerators to understand; (d) existence of other data source/data collection channel; (e) processing efforts; (f) comparability of data with previous censuses/by-censuses; (g) keeping the interviewing time within reasonable length; and (h) recommendations of the United Nations and international practices.

8. Having taken into account the views and suggestions received during the public consultation, C&SD has drawn up the data topics to be covered by 16BC. Compared to 11C, four new data topics have been added, namely, "ability to read/write languages", "hours of work", "whether sub-divided units" (in respect of premises other than a vessel), and "saleable area of accommodation".

### Computer systems and services

9. In 2013, C&SD commissioned a feasibility study to examine the technical requirements of 16BC and the relevant financial implications, and conducted a business process re-engineering study to identify opportunities for streamlining and improving the workflow of 16BC. In order to meet the changing requirements of 16BC, in particular the adoption of the new paperless computer-assisted interviewing method, the feasibility cum re-engineering study has recommended a combination approach for the 16BC computer system covering a total of 19 sub-systems, including enhancement of 17 sub-systems and an overhaul of a sub-system of 11C, and development of a new sub-system.

### **The Census and Statistics (2016 Population Census) Order**

10. On 23 October 2015, the Administration published in the Gazette the Census and Statistics (2016 Population Census) Order ("Order"). The Order specifies 30 June 2016 to 2 August 2016 as the dates for taking 16BC. It also specifies matters including the persons, premises and vessels in respect of which particulars are to be obtained, persons who are required to give the requisite information, and the deadline for destroying the completed questionnaires<sup>1</sup>. The Schedule to the Order sets out the data topics covered by 16BC.

11. The Order was tabled before the Legislative Council at its meeting of 28 October 2015 and is subject to the negative vetting procedure. It will come into operation on 17 December 2015.

### **Major views and concerns expressed by Members**

12. The Administration consulted the Panel on Financial Affairs on its plan for 16BC at the meeting on 2 December 2013. The Finance Committee deliberated on the funding proposal for acquiring computer equipment and

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<sup>1</sup> The Order directs that the Commissioner for Census and Statistics must destroy all completed schedules collected or received by census officers, and all copies of the schedules, not later than 29 June 2017. Schedule (統計表格) is defined in section 2 of the Census and Statistics Ordinance (Cap. 316) as any form or other document issued by the Commissioner for Census and Statistics for collecting statistical information in any statistical inquiry.

services for 16BC at the meetings on 11 and 12 July 2014. The major views and concerns expressed by Members at the above meetings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Data topics to be covered

#### *Persons with disabilities*

13. There was a suggestion from Members that the Administration should collect information on persons with disabilities ("PwDs") in 16BC to facilitate the formulation of welfare policies/measures for these persons. The Administration considered that, given the sensitivity of the topic and the demand for enumerators' interviewing skills, it would be more appropriate to conduct thematic surveys on PwDs. The Administration informed Members that a report on the findings of a thematic survey on PwDs and chronic diseases was published in December 2008. C&SD conducted another round of survey on the topics in 2013 and the findings were released in 2014.

#### *Children born to Mainland parents*

14. Members enquired whether information on children born in Hong Kong to Mainland parents would be collected in 16BC. Some Members considered that the Administration should keep up-to-date information on whether and when these children would reside or study in Hong Kong, as such information was essential for planning the provision of education services and facilities. Members also suggested that the Administration should maintain regular contact with the Mainland parents to keep track of the movement of their children born in Hong Kong.

15. C&SD advised that since 2007, it had conducted six rounds of survey on babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women through interviewing the parents concerned at the Births Registries to gather information on their plans for the newborns to reside and/or study in Hong Kong. As revealed by the surveys, about half of the children concerned would stay in Hong Kong for living ultimately. If these children resided in Hong Kong, they would be categorized as Hong Kong residents for statistical purposes in the population censuses/by-censuses.

16. As regards ways for collecting information on children born to Mainland parents, some Members suggested that C&SD should conduct face-to-face interviews with a certain sample of these parents, or collect such information through a computer-assisted interviewing method or e-questionnaires via the Internet.

17. C&SD responded that the methods for collecting information from the Mainland parents in question would require further discussion and collaboration between the relevant bureaux/departments and the Mainland authorities, including the National Bureau of Statistics. For instance, the feasibility of enumeration by postal return of questionnaires could be explored if the correspondence addresses of the Mainland parents in question were available from the health/vaccination records of their newborns or other public records.

*Places of residence*

18. As regards Members' suggestion of gathering information on Hong Kong residents residing or working in the Mainland or elderly Hong Kong residents staying in the Mainland, C&SD said that people who usually resided outside Hong Kong would be categorized as non-Hong Kong residents for statistical purposes and hence would not be covered in 16BC. It would be more appropriate to collect such information through thematic surveys.

19. Given that households living in rented premises might move their homes more frequently, some Members considered that collecting information on the respondents' places of residence one to two years before instead of the proposed five years in 16BC, would be more useful for the formulation of housing policies. C&SD responded that the five-year period was commonly adopted by other countries for collecting data on internal migration in their population censuses.

*Sexual orientations and gender identities*

20. Some Members urged the Administration to include a data topic on sexual orientations in 16BC, and estimate from the 16BC results the population size of sexual minorities. Respondents to questionnaires of 16BC should also be provided with a choice of gender other than "male" and "female". These members considered that refinements to the data topic on marital status alone could not reflect sexual orientations at all, because individuals with different sexual orientations might not choose to have a marriage or co-habitation.

21. C&SD explained that since 16BC was large in scale and questionnaires of population censuses/by-censuses normally consisted of relatively simple questions, 16BC would not cover complicated or sensitive topics. As such, C&SD had decided not to include data topics on transgender persons, same-sex marriage and sexual minorities in 16BC. There were in fact concerns about the accuracy of data collected on these topics. An inaccurate estimation on the population of sexual minorities would mislead the public and would not be beneficial to discussions on relevant issues. C&SD considered it more appropriate to collect such information through thematic surveys. A data topic on sexual orientations was also not included in population censuses of other

economies. On gender identity, C&SD pointed out that apart from the choices of "male" and "female", a choice of "others" might be provided in the e-questionnaires for 16BC.

### Procurement and disposal of computer equipment

22. Members sought justification for purchasing over 6 000 mobile tablet computers for 16BC and enquired about the disposal of the equipment upon completion of 16BC. There was a suggestion that the Administration should consider donating the mobile tablet computers to children from low-income families. The Administration responded that the mobile tablet computers would be used by the enumerators to replace paper questionnaires in order to achieve greater accuracy and efficiency in capturing data. The use of mobile devices would provide better data security as the devices would only store personal data at a minimal amount and in encrypted form, which would be uploaded to the centralized computer system simultaneously minimizing the risk of data leakage. Upon completion of 16BC, the 6 000 mobile tablet computers would be handled in accordance with the established procedure, including redeployment within C&SD or to other Government departments, donating to non-governmental organizations, or disposal through auction.

23. On Members' enquiry about the enhancement of the 11C computer system for handling the work of 16BC, the Administration advised that the priority was to reuse the computer systems developed for 11C. 17 sub-systems were reusable after minor modifications, one sub-system would require an overhaul to accommodate the Internet dissemination of census statistics, and a new sub-system would be added to make up a total of 19 sub-systems for 16BC. C&SD would evaluate all sub-systems used in 16BC and reuse them for the 2021 Population Census where appropriate.

### Data quality assurance

24. Regarding Members' enquiry about the measures C&SD would adopt to ensure the authenticity of statistical data collected in 16BC, the Administration assured that it had put in place measures to enhance quality of data collected by C&SD and would implement comprehensive checking and verification measures for 16BC. Under the existing data quality assurance mechanism of C&SD, supervisors would provide guidance to enumerators and perform checking on the work of each enumerator to ensure proper completion of data collection. Independent checkers would also revisit a sample of households with returned questionnaires to verify the key information recorded on the returns and whether enumerators had visited the households. C&SD would further strengthen these measures in 16BC.

### Data privacy protection and data security

25. Members were concerned that individuals might not disclose information on sensitive topics in the presence of other members of the household. In order to ensure that accurate statistical information would be collected, Members suggested that C&SD should discuss with relevant concern groups and academic institutions to develop appropriate data collection methods and interviewing skills for sensitive topics, and implement measures to protect privacy of the data given by respondents.

26. C&SD advised that it would take various measures to protect data privacy throughout the process of 16BC, from data collection to subsequent processing and disposal of the information collected. The data privacy protection measures would include: (a) providing households with the option of self-enumeration by submitting e-questionnaires via the Internet; (b) requiring respondents to only provide information sufficient for follow-up clarifications as necessary instead of providing information that might identify respondents; (c) treating all collected information in strict confidence, including encryption during storage and transmission, and processing by designated officers only; and (d) requiring all enumerators to take an oath of secrecy.

27. Members enquired about the encryption method of secured data transfer and whether Secure Sockets Layer ("SSL") encryption was used for the Administration's web interface. The Administration responded that the secured data transfer in 16BC would conform to the relevant provisions in the Government's Security Regulations, which would be more secure than using paper questionnaires. The Administration confirmed that SSL encryption was used for its web interface.

### **Council questions**

28. During the Council meetings from 2010 to 2015, Members raised five questions on matters relating to population censuses/by-censuses and surveys on particular topics, including measures to protect the privacy of the data collected from households, conducting face-to-face interviews with households, topics to be included in 16BC (such as same-sex co-habitation/marriage, vacancy situation of private domestic units, and sub-divided units). The hyperlinks to the details of the questions and the Administration's responses are provided in the **Appendix**.

### **Latest development**

29. At the House Committee meeting on 30 October 2015, Members agreed that a subcommittee should be formed to examine the Order.

### **Relevant papers**

30. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 November 2015



## List of relevant papers

Date	Event	Paper/minutes of meeting
26 May 2010	Hon Jeffrey LAM raised a question on the 2011 Population Census at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Hansard</a>
30 November 2011	Hon Abraham SHEK raised a question on the 2011 Population Census e-questionnaire at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Hansard</a>
6 June 2012	Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che raised a question on the supportive services for same-sex cohabitants at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Hansard</a>
2 December 2013	The Panel on Financial Affairs was briefed on the Administration's plan for the 2016 Population By-census ("16BC")	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> (LC Paper No. CB(1)390/13-14(07))  <a href="#">Minutes</a> (LC Paper No. CB(1)981/13-14)  <a href="#">Follow-up paper provided by the Administration</a> (LC Paper No. CB(1)624/13-14(02))
11 and 12 July 2014	The Finance Committee discussed the funding proposal for acquiring computer equipment and services for 16BC	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> (FCR(2014-15)11)  <a href="#">Minutes of the meeting on 11 July 2014</a> (LC Paper No. FC45/14-15)  <a href="#">Minutes of the meeting on 12 July 2014</a> (LC Paper No. FC35/14-15)  <a href="#">Follow-up paper provided by the Administration</a> (LC Paper No. FC148/13-14(01))

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Paper/minutes of meeting</b>
10 December 2014	Hon CHAN Chi-chuen raised a question on the provision of same-sex marriage registration services by foreign consulates at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Hansard</a>
27 May 2015	Hon WU Chi-wai raised a question on the statistical information provided by the Census and Statistics Department at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Hansard</a>
28 October 2015	The Census and Statistics (2016 Population Census) Order was tabled at the Council Meeting	<a href="#">Content of the subsidiary legislation</a> (L.N. 208 of 2015)  <a href="#">Legislative Council Brief</a> (File Ref: C&SD/1/11(2014) Pt.2)  <a href="#">Legal Service Division Report</a> (LC Paper No. LS4/15-16)