

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(1)1040/10-11(01)

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Panel on Public Service Meeting on 17 January 2011

Background brief on overview of the civil service: establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile situation of the civil service. It also summarizes the major concerns expressed by members on related issues in past discussions.

Background

2. The civil service is responsible to the Chief Executive. It supports the Chief Executive and the Government-of-the-day in formulating, explaining and implementing policies; conducting administrative affairs; delivering public services; and undertaking law enforcement and regulatory functions¹. At the meeting of the Panel on Public Service (the Panel) on 22 February 2010, the Administration updated members on the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile situation of the civil service. The relevant information is summarized in paragraphs 3 to 7 below.

Establishment and strength

3. The yearly changes in the establishment (namely the number of

¹ Source: LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)

civil service posts) and strength (namely the number of serving civil servants) positions of the civil service since 1983-1984 are shown in **Appendix I**. As at 1 April 2009, the strength of the civil service stood at 155 128, which was about 2.2% of the population of Hong Kong (estimated at 7.01 million at mid-2009) and about 4.1% of the total work force (estimated at 3.76 million at mid-2009). These percentages have remained stable since 2006-2007.

Retirement and resignation

4. In normal circumstances, civil servants recruited to civilian grades after 1987 and are on pensionable terms or the Civil Service Provident Fund (CSPF) Scheme retire at the age of 60². Their counterparts in the disciplined services grades retire at the age of 55/57. Civil servants recruited before 1987 and are on pensionable term normally retire at 55 (for those who have opted to remain on the Old Pension Scheme). For civil servants who have opted to transfer to the New Pension Scheme, those in the civilian grades may retire at any time from the age of 55 to 60, while those in the disciplined services grades may retire at any time from the age of 55 to 57.

5. A breakdown of the age of civil servants at the time of retirement from 1983-1984 to 2008-2009 is provided in **Appendix II**. A projection of the number of civil servants retiring in the next 25 years is set out in **Appendix III**. The projection is based on the assumption that all civil servants would serve until their normal retirement age. On the basis of the current age profile of the civil service, the Administration expects that the number of civil servants retiring will continue to increase in the next 15 years until 2023-2024, rising from the annual average of around 3 200 in the past five years to around 6 700 in the five-year period of 2019-2024 (which is largely due to the significant growth of the civil service in the 1980s). The number of retirements is estimated to decline thereafter.

6. Retirement is the primary reason for departure of civil servants from the Service. Resignation only accounts for the departure of a small number of civil servants. The annual resignation position of the civil

² Source: LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)

service from 1983-1984 to 2008-2009 is shown in **Appendix IV**.

Age profile

7. The age profile of the civil service from 1983-1984 to 2008-2009 is illustrated at **Appendix V**. In 2006-2007, around two thirds of the serving civil servants were in the age group of 40-59, while the remaining one-third was in the age group of 20-39. Within the latter group, those in the 20-29 age group accounted for 7.1% of the total number of civil servants in 2006-2007. With the gradual general resumption of open recruitment since April 2007, the Administration is recruiting more young people aged 20-29 into the civil service. In 2008-2009, civil servants of this age group accounted for 8.3% of the civil service.

Major concerns expressed by the Panel on Public Service on the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile situation of the civil service

8. The Administration briefed the Panel on 22 February 2010 about the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile situation of the civil service. The major concerns expressed by members are summarized below.

Measures to tackle the succession problem of the civil service

9. Panel members expressed grave concern about the projected significant increase in the number of retiring civil servants from the annual average of around 3 200 in the past five years to around 6 700 in the five-year period of 2019-2024.

10. According to the Administration, the relative aging profile of the civil service was mainly attributed to the expansion of the civil service in the 1980s in response to new policy initiatives such as district administration. With the resumption of open recruitment since April 2007, the Government had been recruiting civil servants to fill vacancies arising from retirement. Bureaux/departments (B/Ds) had also stepped up their training efforts at all levels to prepare staff to take up responsibilities at

the next higher rank. In addition, the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) met with the Head of B/Ds at least once every year to discuss the succession situation at the senior level to ensure that timely actions were taken to address problems in this regard. The Administration considered that the above three-pronged approach should forestall succession problems in the long run.

11. Some members considered that the succession problem could hardly be addressed in a timely manner by training and resumption of recruitment. They asked about the possibility of the Administration taking measures such as recruiting candidates from outside the civil service to fill civil service posts other than those in the entry ranks.

12. The Administration advised that open recruitment would be conducted to recruit people from outside the civil service to fill senior posts should there be genuine succession problems. Some recent examples included the recruitment of the incumbent Director of Broadcasting, the Government Chief Information Officer, and the Law Draftsman. However, the contracts of these post-holders might not be renewed as and when suitable staff in the relevant B/Ds were ready for succession to the top levels. Regarding the overall succession situation, as a result of the rapid and significant expansion of the disciplined services in the 1980s, quite a large number of officers in the junior and middle ranks of the disciplined services would reach the retirement age of 55 in the coming five to 10 years. There was also a succession problem at the directorate ranks in some civilian grades in the works-related departments. To tackle the issue, SCS had been liaising closely with the B/Ds concerned to improve the succession situation.

13. Some Panel members suggested flexibly allowing civil servants to extend their retirement age to, say, 65 in keeping with the global trend, in order to allow more time for the Administration to deal with the succession problem.

14. The Administration advised that extension of the retirement age of civil servants was a highly complex issue and should be carefully considered. The Administration also pointed out that the supply and demand of the labour market and the age profile of the working

population of Hong Kong in the next 20 to 30 years were some of the relevant considerations. In addition, there was a need to consider the financial implications of the proposal and its impact on the promotion prospect of serving staff and hence staff morale. The proposal would also adversely affect the job opportunities of fresh graduates, while the current succession problem might only be put off for a few years rather than genuinely resolved. Nevertheless, the Civil Service Bureau had in fact started to undertake some preliminary research on the subject. The Administration would consult the public if and when it saw a need to adjust civil servants' retirement age.

Enhancing training and career development programmes for staff

15. Some Panel members considered that the succession problem had resulted from the general open recruitment freeze from 1999-2000 to 2000-2001 and from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007. The recruitment of younger civil servants could not immediately address the problem as the new recruits might not be trained up in time for retaining experience at the middle and senior levels when a large number of experienced civil servants would be retiring at the same time.

16. The Administration agreed on the need to ensure that the next generation of civil servants was competent to succeed their seniors and pointed out that apart from training new recruits, in-service training for existing civil servants at all levels and in particular at the middle level, who had the potential to take up responsibilities at higher level, had been stepped up. Such in-service training covered both local and overseas training in leadership, human resources management and change management. Individual B/Ds also provided professional and functional training to their staff. In both types of training, experience sharing by newly retired or senior civil servants constituted a very important part. In addition, tailor-made training would be provided by individual B/Ds for staff identified to have potential for advancement through their performance appraisal. In addition, much emphasis had been put into organizing rigorous training and career development programmes for staff of different grades and ranks. This was also one of the matters to which the Public Service Commission attached a lot of importance.

Council Questions

17. At the Council meeting on 26 May 2010, Dr Hon David LI asked a question on the number of civil servants from 2005-2006 to 2009-2010. Dr Hon Margaret NG asked a question about the attrition rate of Administrative Officer grade at the Council meeting on 1 December 2010. The questions and the Administration's replies are attached at **Appendix VI** for members' reference.

Latest development

18. The Administration has proposed to provide an updated report on the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile situation of the civil service at the next Panel meeting on 17 January 2011.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Panel meeting on 22 February 2010

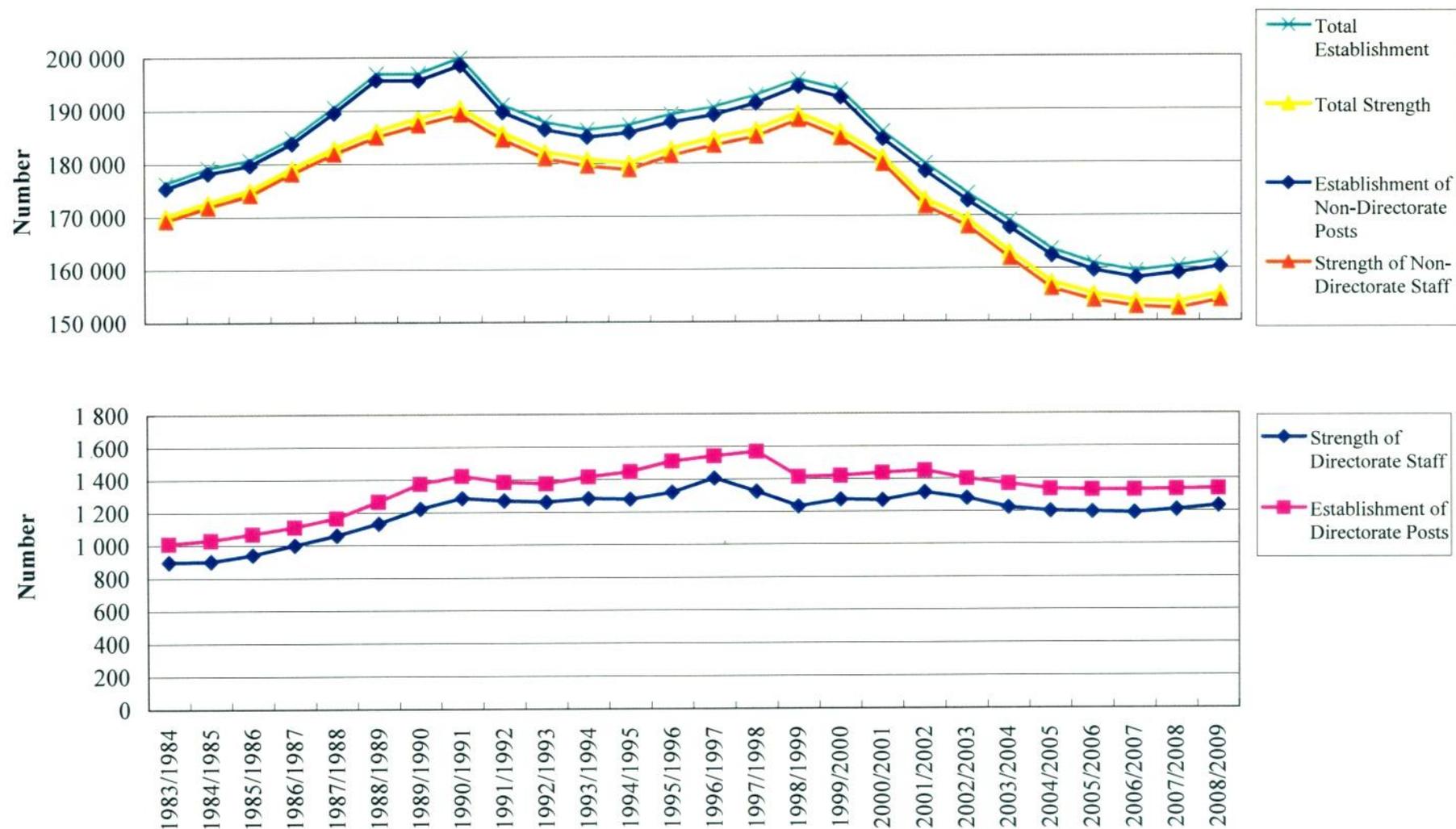
<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ps/papers/ps0222cb1-1134-3-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Panel meeting on 22 February 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps20100222.pdf>

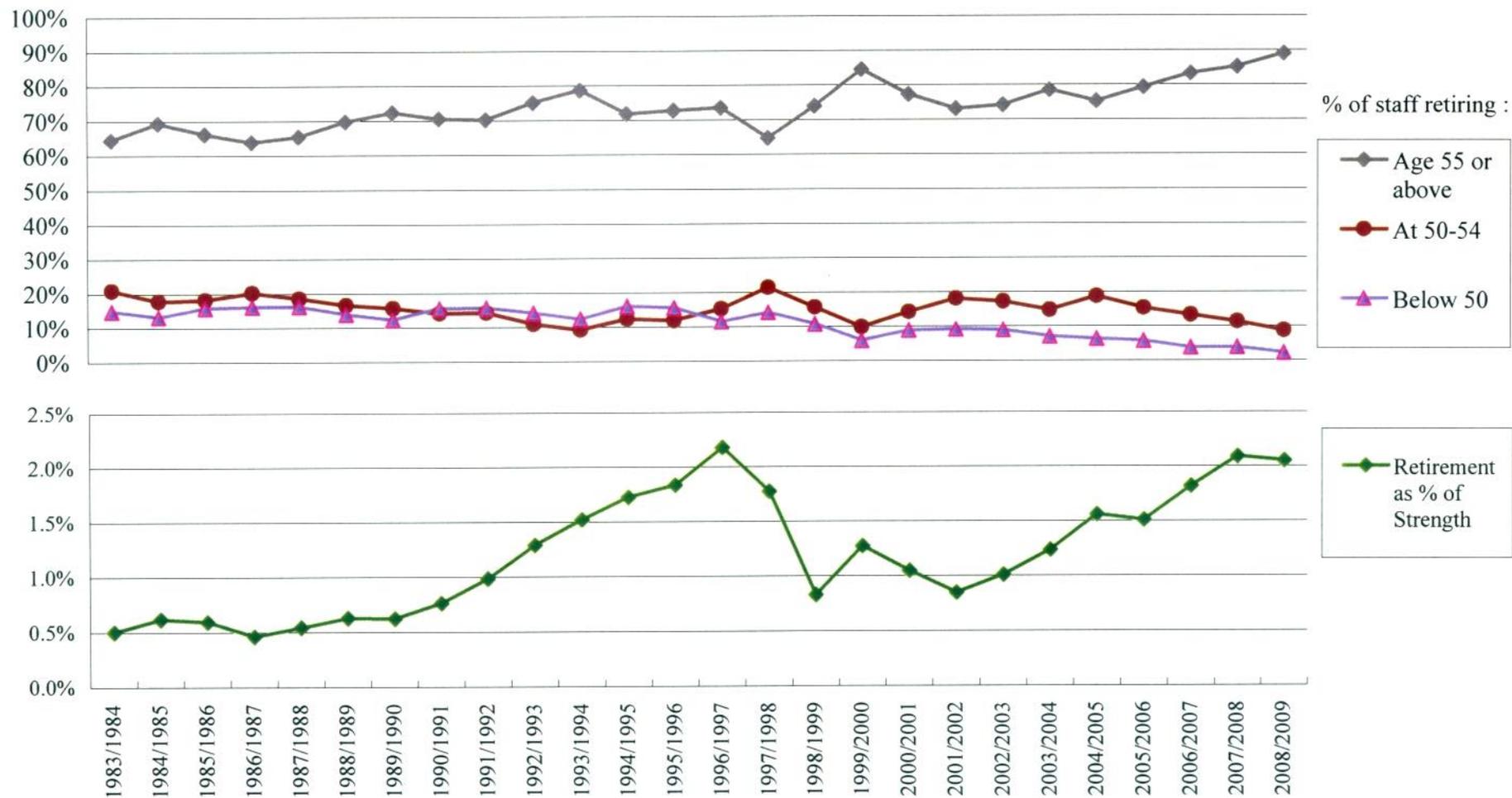
Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
12 January 2011

Establishment and Strength of the Civil Service from 1983-84 to 2008-09



Source: Annex A to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)) provided for the meeting of the Panel on Public Service on 22 February 2010

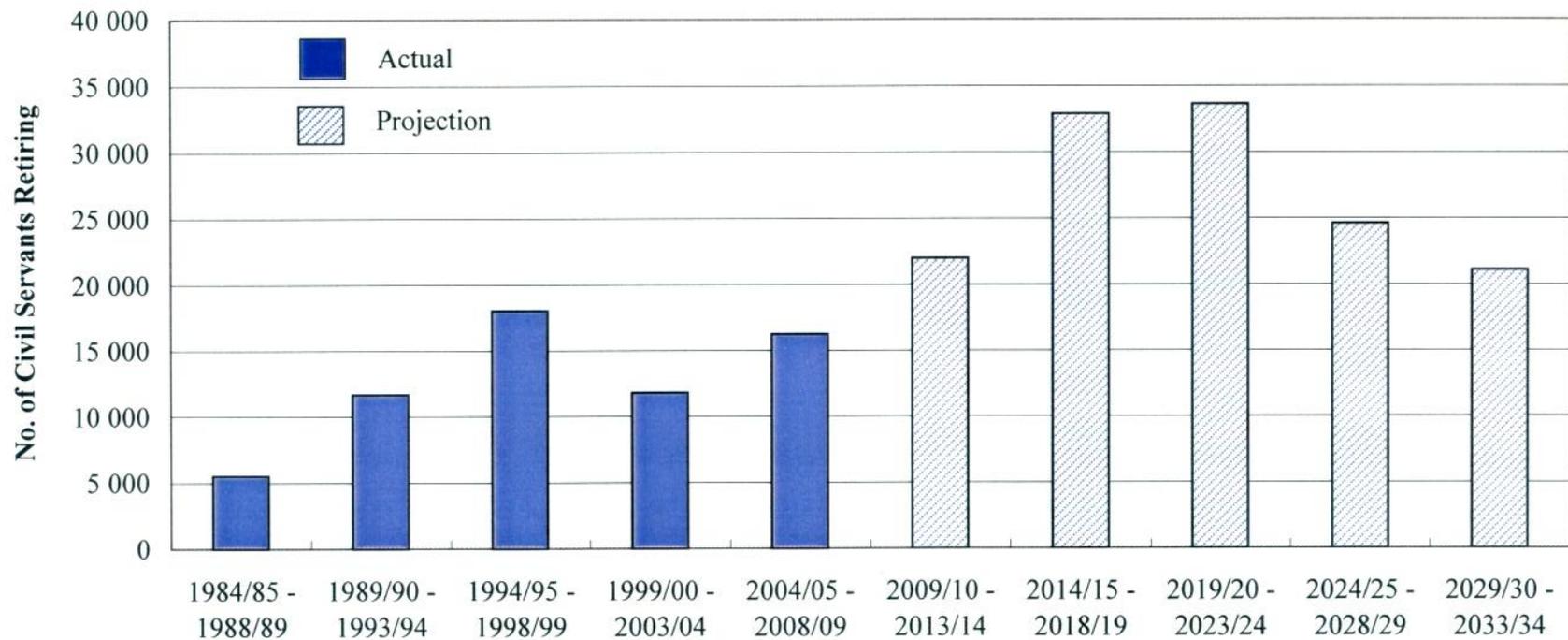
Retirement of Civil Servants from 1983-84 to 2008-09



Note: Retirement in this chart refers to normal and early retirement.

Source: Annex C to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)) provided for the meeting of the Panel on Public Service on 22 February 2010

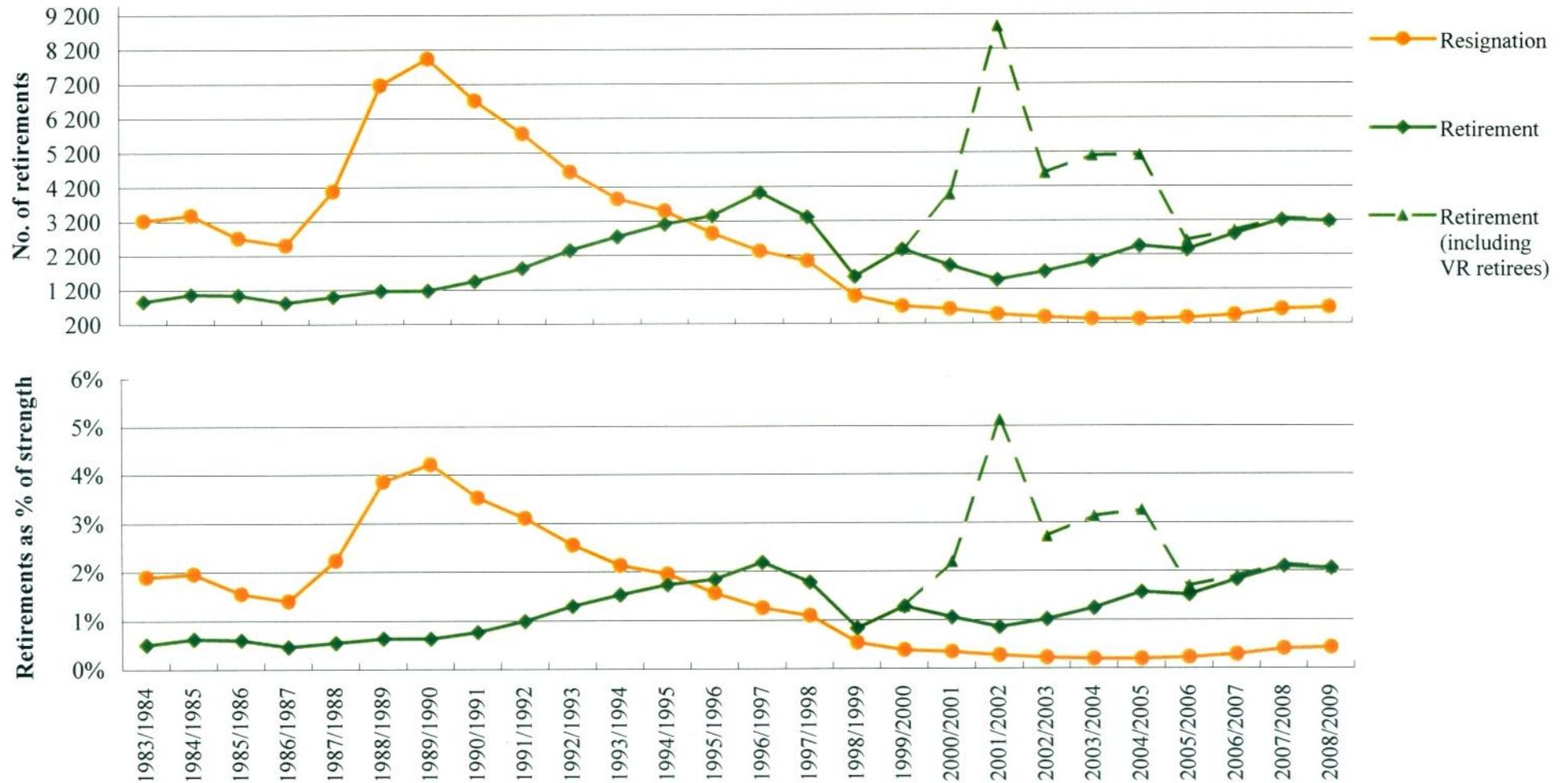
Projected Number of Civil Servants Retiring in the Next 25 Years



Note : Projection made on the basis of age profile of the Civil Service as at 31 March 2009 and staff leaving on normal retirement.

Source: Annex D to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)) provided for the meeting of the Panel on Public Service on 22 February 2010

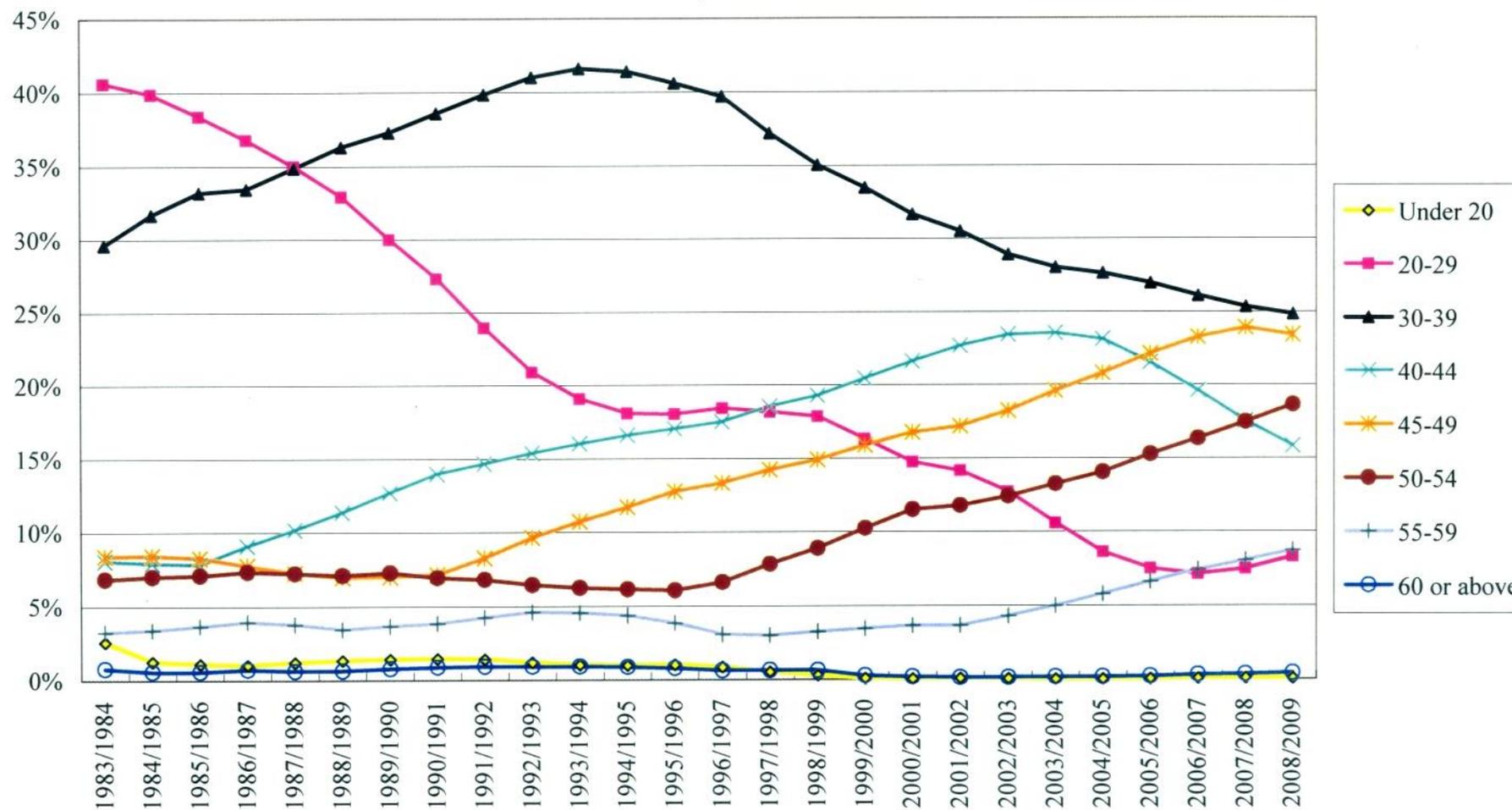
Retirement Position of the Civil Service from 1983-84 to 2008-09



Note: Retirement in this chart refers to normal and early retirement on attaining the required age.

Source: Annex B to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)) provided for the meeting of the Panel on Public Service on 22 February 2010

Civil Servants by Age Groups from 1983-84 to 2008-09



Source: Annex E to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)1134/09-10(03)) provided for the meeting of the Panel on Public Service on 22 February 2010

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Appendix VI**ATTACHMENTS**

LCQ16: Number of civil servants in past five years

- Annex: Civil service statistics from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010

Following is a question by Dr Hon David Li Kwok-po and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Miss Denise Yue, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of the number of serving civil servants by salary group in each of the past five years, and the respective numbers of those who had resigned and retired in that year (set out in the table below)?

Number of civil servants by salary group -----	(year)		
	Serving	Retired	Resigned
-----	-----	-----	-----

Officers at
Directorate
Pay Scale

Officers at
Master Pay Scale
(Points 45-49)

Officers at
Master Pay Scale
(Points 34-44)

Officers at
Master Pay Scale
(Points 26-33)

Officers at
Master Pay Scale
(Points 10-25)

Officers at
Master Pay Scale
(Points 0-9)

Total

Reply:

President,

The number of serving civil servants by salary groups and the respective numbers of those who had resigned and retired in the past five years from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010 are shown in the Annex.

Ends/Wednesday, May 26, 2010
Issued at HKT 15:01

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Civil service statistics from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010

Number of civil servants by Salary Groups ^{1 & 2}	2005/2006			2006/2007			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010		
	Strength as at 31.3.2006	Retired	Resigned	Strength as at 31.3.2007	Retired	Resigned	Strength as at 31.3.2008	Retired	Resigned	Strength as at 31.3.2009	Retired	Resigned	Strength as at 31.3.2010	Retired	Resigned
Directorate Pay Scale or equivalent	1 194	77	5	1 188	81	8	1 205	74	7	1 230	78	5	1 262	79	6
Max. salary between MPS 45-49 or equivalent	3 158	103	14	3 231	107	19	3 270	101	24	3 326	132	18	3 450	129	10
Max. salary between MPS 34-44 or equivalent	13 519	325	51	13 332	349	49	13 393	355	62	14 073	318	83	14 624	340	64
Max. salary between MPS 26-33 or equivalent	20 445	447	79	20 219	357	69	20 998	382	104	21 805	369	134	22 318	393	104
Max. salary between MPS 0-25 or equivalent ³	116 703	2 013	190	115 835	2 443	279	114 611	2 929	404	114 694	2 797	408	114 919	3 052	334
Total	155 019	2 965	339	153 805	3 337	424	153 477	3 841	601	155 128	3 694	648	156 573	3 993	518

Notes:

- Judges and judicial officers, Independent Commission Against Corruption officers and locally engaged staff working in Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices are not included.
- The coverage of Salary Groups is as follows as at 2009/10:

Directorate Pay Scale or equivalent – it covers ranks with maximum salary points in the range of Point 55-59 of the Police Pay Scale (PPS) and ranks on the Directorate Pay Scale, Directorate (Legal) Pay Scale, General Disciplined Services (Commander) Pay Scale.

Max. salary between MPS 45-49 or equivalent – it covers ranks with maximum salary points in the ranges of Point 45-49 of the Master Pay Scale (MPS), Point 33-39 of the General Disciplined Services (Officer) Pay Scale (GDS(O)PS) and PPS 49-54a.

Max. salary between MPS 34-44 or equivalent – it covers ranks with maximum salary points in the ranges of MPS 34-44, GDS(O)PS 22-32 and PPS 32-48.

Max. salary between MPS 26-33 or equivalent – it covers ranks with maximum salary points in the ranges of MPS 26-33 and GDS(O)PS 13-21.

Max. salary between MPS 0-25 or equivalent – it covers ranks with maximum salary points in the ranges of MPS 0-25, GDS(O)PS 1d-12, PPS 1a-31, and ranks on the General Disciplined Services (Rank and File) Pay Scale, Model Scale I Pay Scale and the Training Pay Scale.

Because of the adjustments made to the PPS and GDS(O)PS, their coverage under the above groupings was slightly different before 2009/10.
- Due to the existing salary groupings in our database, we cannot provide further breakdown for this grouping.

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ATTACHMENTS

LCQ4: Attrition rate of Administrative Officer grade

■ Annex

Following is a question by the Hon Margaret Ng and a reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Miss Denise Yue, in the Legislative Council today (December 1):

Question:

It has been reported that more than 10 members of the Administrative Officer (AO) grade had left the civil service this year, which was the largest ever surge in departure. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of members of the AO grade leaving the service in the past five years, and the percentage of that number in the total number of members in the grade;

(b) whether the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has proceeded with any survey and study to find out the reasons of the high turnover rate of the AO grade this year; if it has, of the outcome of the study; if it has not, whether it will launch such survey and study; if it will not, of the reasons for that; and

(c) whether CSB will adopt any improvement measure to address the problem of high turnover rate of the AO grade; if it will, of the specific measures; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

On part (a) of the question, the attrition rate of the AO grade varied from year to year, but generally did not fluctuate much. In the past five financial years, the number of members leaving the Grade ranged between 16 and 24 each year, representing an annual attrition rate of about 3% to 4.5%. The relevant figures are set out at the Annex. The reasons for leaving the AO grade include retirement, resignation, termination of agreement or transfer to other grades.

On part (b) of the question, CSB has been closely monitoring the situation of members leaving the AO grade. Whenever an AO informs us of his/her intention to resign, we endeavour to understand the reasons behind. Generally speaking, some AOs left the service for having found the job not in tune with their characters or abilities; some left for family reasons; some wanted to pursue their own academic goals; some were appointed as political appointees; some took up jobs in other fields outside the Government; and some left just for a change in life. Members of the AO grade left the service for similar reasons in this financial year.

On part (c) of the question, the majority of the AO grade see their service in the grade as fulfilment of their life-long goal and have long-term commitment for serving the community. We hope to provide them with a life-long career in which they can make the best use of their talents and attain job satisfaction. The AO grade Management and I maintain close contact with Grade members. Through regular communication, we can understand their expectation about their career and

problems encountered when performing their duties so that we can offer appropriate and timely assistance to them. We pay close attention to the job content and workload etc., of every AO post. All proposals from bureaux and departments for creating or deleting AO posts or changing the responsibilities of the posts are thoroughly examined by CSB.

We have developed and implemented a training and development framework for AOs at different ranks, which is under constant review for improvement with addition of new training programmes. We also provide AOs with exchange opportunities with the private sector, as well as overseas and Mainland authorities and organisations, so as to broaden their horizons. For new recruits, we provide induction training to help them adapt to the work environment and develop a better understanding of government operation. The induction training comprises classroom learning, visits and tours to government departments and other organisations, and experience sharing sessions with other AOs and civil servants in other grades.

AOs stand a chance of being eventually promoted to the highest rank in the civil service, i.e., as permanent secretaries at Directorate Pay Scale D8. The AO job is also competitive in the labour market. Over the past eight years, we planned to recruit only about 25 to 30 AOs annually, and we received an average of more than 12,000 applications every year.

We will review grade management practices from time to time to ensure that they meet present-day circumstances and are in line with the Government's operational needs and AOs' expectation.

Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, December 1, 2010
Issued at HKT 15:37

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Annex

**Number of Members Leaving the Administrative Officer Grade and
Attrition Rate in the Past Five Financial Years**

Financial Year	Strength of the Grade at the Beginning of the Financial Year	Number of Members Leaving the Grade		Attrition Rate
		Retirement Note (1)	Other Reasons Note (2)	
2005-06	529	10	13	4.3%
2006-07	533	10	7	3.2%
2007-08	552	11	13	4.3%
2008-09	563	9	7	2.8%
2009-10	578	9	8	2.9%

Note (1) AOs leaving the Grade for retirement by ranks

Financial Year	Directorate	Non-directorate	Total
2005/06	10	-	10
2006/07	10	-	10
2007/08	11	-	11
2008/09	8	1	9
2009/10	9	-	9

Note (2) AOs leaving the Grade for non-retirement reasons by ranks

Financial Year	Directorate	Non-directorate	Total
2005/06	1	12	13
2006/07	3	4	7
2007/08	6	7	13
2008/09	3	4	7
2009/10	5	3	8