

Speech by
Mr. FUNG Hing-wang
Commissioner for Census and Statistics
at the 2006 Population By-census Press Conference on Thursday, 6 July 2006

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 will conduct the 2006 Population By-census beginning next Saturday, i.e. 15 July. During the 18-day period from 15 July to 1 August 2006, census officers will visit sampled households in Hong Kong to collect the required information.

2. The 2006 Population By-census is a very large scale project which has taken a long time for its preparation. The By-census will need 5 000 temporary field workers to carry out the operation. This project is estimated to cost some 150 million dollars.

3. Similar to censuses, the purpose of population by-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.

4. A by-census differs from a census in that the former does not have a complete head count of the population, but collects detailed information on the population from a sample, based on which the size and the characteristics of the entire population are estimated. It differs from other sample surveys in that it has a much larger sample size, so that it can provide reliable population data on small geographical areas for local planning, and data on population sub-groups for the planning of government services for such groups.

5. The 2006 Population By-census is conducted under section 9 of the Census and Statistics Ordinance. Under this ordinance, specified persons are obliged to provide the required information.

6. The entire population of Hong Kong, including the land population and the marine population, will be covered in the 2006 Population By-census. Persons living in some special types of quarters, such as infirmaries, will also be covered.

7. About one-tenth of all quarters in Hong Kong have been selected according to a probability sampling scheme. During the By-census operation period, census officers will visit the sampled households and members therein will be asked about their particulars, such as year and month of birth, marital status, educational attainment and employment details.

8. The Census and Statistics Department will issue letters to sampled households tomorrow (7 July) to inform them of the 2006 Population By-census and the name of the visiting census officer.

9. Household visits will usually be carried out from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays to Saturdays and from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sundays during 18-day operation period. Households can make appointment for the visits using the Appointment Request Service on the Internet (<http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/ars>) or calling the 2006 Population By-census enquiry centre at 3582 3800 after receiving the householder letters.

10. During the visit, census officers will wear a light green colour T-shirt, carry a red satchel with the By-census Logo and identify themselves with a Census Officer's Certificate of Identity issued by the Census and Statistics Department. If households wish to verify the census officer's identity, they can telephone the 2006 Population By-census enquiry centre at 3582 3800.

11. The 2006 Population By-census will also provide electronic questionnaires for those households/persons opting for electronic reporting. Sampled households/persons can call the enquiry centre at 3582 3800 to register for using the electronic questionnaires on or before 14 July. Some basic information will be collected during the registration for preparing the tailor made and password protected electronic questionnaires. Census officers will deliver the password letters to the registered households/persons so that they can download their own electronic questionnaires from the designated website for completion and return to the department. These procedures are specially designed to ensure the confidentiality of data provided on the electronic questionnaires.

12. The provision of electronic questionnaires provides an additional option for the sampled households/persons to provide the required information. The 2006 Population By-census is a detailed enquiry using a long and rather complicated questionnaire. Completing the electronic questionnaire is not a simple task. At this stage, it is estimated that not many households/persons will opt for electronic reporting.

13. The Census and Statistics Department will implement 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 one year after the By-census. Therefore, members of the public need not worry at all that their personal information will be divulged.

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

15. Lastly, I would like to share with you the By-census slogan "SUPPORT THE 2006 BY-CENSUS HONG KONG'S BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW". I would also like to express my gratitude to the sampled households for their cooperation and in particular their contributions in building a better future for Hong Kong.

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