

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 2593)

Head: (26) Census and Statistics Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) National Accounts and Balance of Payments Statistics, (4) General Statistical Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Leo YU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

Question:

As mentioned in the Budget, the Department's expenditures on National Accounts and Balance of Payments Statistics, and General Statistical Services have increased as compared with the estimates of the previous year. The provision for National Accounts and Balance of Payments Statistics for 2024-25 is increased by \$4.8 million (4.8%) as compared with the revised estimates for 2023-24, mainly due to the increased salary provision for filling of vacancies and staff changes, and the increased operating expenses. Based on the above,

1. Could you please provide the specifics on the job vacancies and staff changes that led to the increase in cost figures?
2. Some members of the public have expressed concerns about the low readability of data survey reports published by the Census and Statistics Department. There is a certain threshold for the general public to understand the reports and the situation has existed for many years without improvement. Is there a plan for the Bureau to carry out internal reforms in the future to better serve the public?
3. It has been noted that the survey data released by the Department to the public has not always been timely. After the increase in provision, is there a plan for the Department to address these shortcomings of its previous work?
4. Could you please provide information on the statistical tools that are currently used by the Bureau? Is data visualisation included in the departmental assessments of the Bureau?

Asked by: Hon KONG Yuk-foon, Doreen (LegCo internal reference no.: 11)

Reply:

- (1) The provision for National Accounts and Balance of Payments Statistics has increased by \$4.8 million compared to the revised estimate for 2023-24, with about \$2.7 million for filling vacancies of civil service posts and about \$2.6 million for the increased provision for salaries of non-civil service staff and other operating expenses. The

increased provision is partially offset by the decrease in provision of around \$0.5 million in the Capital Account for 2024-25.

- (2) Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) has been gradually rolling out new Web Reports (i.e. reports in the form of webpage) on its departmental website since April 2023 to replace most statistical reports in PDF format. The Web Reports feature a brand new design which provides a clear and concise analysis of the latest social and economic trends, accompanied by key statistical charts and tables. Users can easily access key statistical information on mobile devices and personal computers anytime, anywhere. Additionally, they can download tables and charts in various formats (such as XLSX, CSV, XML, JPG and PNG) or export the whole report for further processing or archiving purposes. The reports also include links to more detailed statistics, enabling interested users to conduct in-depth studies. As at the end of February 2024, a total of 36 Web Reports have been published.
- (3) In the area of data dissemination, C&SD fully complies with the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the International Monetary Fund. The Standard sets out the international guidelines for the coverage, periodicity, timeliness, and quality, etc. of disseminated economic and financial data. Generally, monthly or quarterly statistics are released within one month or one quarter after the reference period respectively. This practice is consistent with that of other economies. For instance, monthly Consumer Price Index is released approximately 20 days after the reference month, while the quarterly Gross Domestic Product is released around one month after the reference quarter in Hong Kong.
- (4) C&SD utilises statistical software packages commonly adopted in the market, including SAS, Python and R, and tailor-made statistical tools developed by statistical authorities of other economies, such as X-12-ARIMA, CANCEIS and BANFF, to undertake statistical work. In addition, C&SD has used data visualisation tools to create interactive dashboards for presenting the 2021 Population Census results (<https://www.census2021.gov.hk/en/snapshot.html>) and statistics on selected topics (https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/page_5504.html). The Department plans to introduce more interactive dashboards on key statistics in the second half of 2025.

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