

**Speech by Mr. TANG Wai Kong, Leslie,
Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics
at the Press Conference on 31 July 2012
announcing the Hong Kong Population Projections 2012–2041**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. An updated set of population projections is compiled by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) after each round of population census or by-census; and an updating is performed in between the two events. The previous set of population projections was released in July 2010 covering the 30-year period from 2010 to 2039. Following the completion of the 2011 Population Census, a new set of population projections, covering 2012 to 2041, has been compiled.

Projection methodology

2. The “component method”, which is commonly used internationally, is adopted for compiling the population projections. Under this method, the population of a base year is brought forward by age and sex under separate projections of fertility, mortality and movement, year after year until the end of the projection period.

3. The starting point for the updated projections is the population position in mid-2011. Statistical modelling methods applied are based on past trends and the latest socio-economic developments of Hong Kong to generate the fertility, mortality and movement assumptions. Where government policies are involved, it is taken that existing policies will continue to apply. For example, the existing policy of a daily quota of 150 One-way Permit Holders (OWPH) entering Hong Kong from the mainland of China is taken to apply in the entire projection period.

Projection assumptions

4. Generally speaking, Hong Kong’s fertility exhibited a declining trend over the past two decades. Fertility is measured by the total fertility rate, which is the number of children born to 1 000 women during their life time. The total fertility rate decreased from 1 281 live births per 1 000 women in 1991 to the historical low of 901 in 2003. It rebounded in the recent years and reached 1 204 in 2011. In the fertility projections, reference is made to various

factors, including the proportion of now married women, the marital fertility rates and births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women. The total fertility rate is projected to decrease gradually from 1 204 live births per 1 000 women in 2011 to 1 151 in 2041. Such fertility rates are rather low and are below the replacement level of 2 100.

5. While a large increase in the number of births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women was observed in the past few years, the quota of obstetric services for Mainland women whose spouses are not Hong Kong residents would be zero after 2012, hence it has been taken in this updated set of projections that there are no Type II babies (i.e. babies born to Mainland women whose spouses are not Hong Kong Permanent Residents) starting from 2013. As regards babies born to Mainland women whose spouses are Hong Kong Permanent Residents (referred as Type I babies hereafter), the figures are projected to be 7 100 per annum after mid-2012.

6. To obtain the required parameters for projecting the net movement of babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women, six rounds of the “Survey on babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women” (Survey) were conducted at the Birth Registries in early 2007, early 2009, end 2009, early 2010, early 2011 and early 2012 respectively. With reference to the findings of the Survey and some other supplementary data, it is projected that 44% of Type I babies will stay in Hong Kong immediately after birth. The other 56% will leave Hong Kong within the first year of their birth. Among them, 85% will return to Hong Kong before the age of 21. For Type II babies, it is projected that about 2% will stay in Hong Kong immediately after birth. The other 98% will leave Hong Kong within the first year of their birth. Among them, 49% will return to Hong Kong before the age of 21. In other words, overall speaking, it is projected that around 91% of Type I babies and 50% of Type II babies will stay in Hong Kong before the age of 21.

7. It has been taken in this updated set of population projections that there are no Type II babies starting from 2013 because of a series of measures which has been /will be implemented, including (i) public hospitals would not accept bookings for delivery in 2013 from non-local pregnant women; (ii) the Department of Health would stop issuing the “Confirmation Certificate on Delivery Booking” to non-local Mainland women whose husbands are not Hong Kong residents for giving birth in Hong Kong in 2013; and (iii) the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association also indicated that consensus was reached to stop accepting delivery bookings from non-local Mainland women whose husbands are not Hong Kong residents next year.

8. Hong Kong has experienced a continuous decline in mortality during

1991–2011, leading to an increase in life expectancy. In 2011, the expectation of life at birth (provisional) was 80.5 years for males and 86.7 years for females. Compared with other economies, Hong Kong enjoys a very low mortality. The expectations of life at birth for both sexes are close to those low mortality economies. Further medical advancement and socio-economic development would lead to further decline in mortality, though the extent of decline would be smaller. The expectation of life at birth is projected to increase to 84.4 years for males and 90.8 years for females in 2041.

9. According to the existing policy, it is projected that there will be 150 OWPB entering Hong Kong per day. The recent trends of the residency and mobility patterns of the Hong Kong population provide the basis for formulating the assumptions on other net movements.

10. As the trends of fertility, mortality and movement may change over time, the assumptions on fertility, mortality and movement entail a certain degree of uncertainty. These assumptions will hence be revised in a roll-forward manner in each round of population projections conducted at intervals of two to three years, taking into account the latest demographic and socio-economic situations.

Projection results

11. The Hong Kong Resident Population is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 0.6%, from 7.07 million in mid-2011 to 8.47 million in mid-2041. The average annual growth rate over the ten-year period from 2011-2021 is projected to be 0.8%. Yet with significant increase in number of deaths upon aging of the population, the average annual growth rate the over last ten years of the projection period is projected to slacken to 0.4%.

12. Within the Hong Kong Resident Population, the number of Usual Residents is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 0.6% from 6.86 million in mid-2011 to 8.22 million in mid-2041, and the number of Mobile Residents at a similar rate of 0.5% from 212 200 to 245 000.

13. The change in population size involves increase and decrease factors. Increase arises from births and inward movements whereas decrease arises from deaths and outward movements.

14. The number of births which exclude births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women is projected to be about 43 300 to 54 700 per annum.

15. The number of deaths is projected to increase from about 42 700 per year

currently to about 82 400 at the end of the projection period. The increase in the number of deaths is mainly attributable to the growing proportion of older persons in the population despite a longer life expectancy (which implies a lower mortality rate).

16. The population is expected to remain on an ageing trend. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is projected to rise markedly, from 13% in 2011 to 30% in 2041. The pace of population ageing is projected to be accelerating in the coming 20 years (where the proportions in 2021 and 2031 will be 19% and 26% respectively), and slightly slackening in the last ten years of the projection period. Meanwhile, the proportion of the population aged under 15 is projected decrease gradually from 12% in 2011 to 9% in 2041.

17. The ageing trend is also revealed by the increasing median age of the population, it will rise from 41.7 in 2011 to 45.1 in 2021, 47.7 in 2031 and 49.9 in 2041.

18. The phenomenon of ageing of the population can also be further analysed based on the dependency ratio. This is a demographic indicator reflecting the age composition of the population. It is defined as the number of persons aged “under 15” and “65 and over” per 1 000 persons aged 15–64. The ratio is projected to rise continuously from 333 in 2011 to 511 in 2026 and 645 in 2041.

19. The sex ratio (i.e. the number of males per 1 000 females) of the population is projected to fall noticeably, from 876 in 2011 to 788 in 2026 and 712 in 2041. Variations in the sex ratio by age group are expected. In particular, the sex ratio for the age group 25–44 is expected to be much affected by the presence of foreign domestic helpers comprising mostly younger females. Also relevant is the continued entry of One-way Permit Holders in the coming years, most of them being Hong Kong men’s wives coming from the Mainland. Making reference to data which exclude foreign domestic helpers, the sex ratio of the population is higher, though it will still trend down from 948 in 2011 to 867 in 2026 and 786 in 2041.

20. The population pyramid is a commonly used chart for presenting the population structure concisely. For the lower age groups, the number of males slightly exceeds that of females; and this is related to the biological phenomenon that there are more male births than female births. For the middle age groups, there are more females than males owing to the presence of foreign domestic helpers comprising mostly females and the continued trend of One-way Permit Holders which has a consistently high proportion of females. As for the higher age groups, the number of males exceeds that of females, it is because females

usually have a longer life expectancy than males.

21. Population projections form a common basis for Government planning in various programme areas such as education, housing, transport, social services, medical and health services and infrastructural facilities. They are also widely used by the private sector.

22. The publication “Hong Kong Population Projections 2012–2041”, which contains the projection results and a detailed description of the projection methodology and assumptions used, can be downloaded free of charge at the C&SD website.

23. Thank you.