

Press release

LCQ16: 2011 Population Census e-Questionnaire

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Following is a question by the Hon Abraham Shek and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 30):

Question:

A member of the public has relayed to me that during the 2011 Population Census, even though a household had immediately completed online the "long form questionnaire" to provide more detailed information on the household's socio-economic characteristics upon receipt of the notification letter about the Census, a census officer suddenly visited the household in late July this year without making any appointment in advance, claiming that no e-Questionnaire had been received from the household. The member of the public also pointed out that during the second visit, the census officer still could not confirm whether the household had submitted the e-Questionnaire, and it was after the visits that an acknowledgement of receipt of the household's e-Questionnaire was made over the phone. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the authorities have received any similar enquiry or complaint, and of the statistics on duplication of enquiry efforts made because of failure to confirm receipt of the e-Questionnaire completed by households;
- (2) whether the authorities will conduct investigation and report the relevant causes for the problem, as well as whether any human error was involved and wastage of resources was resulted; of the corresponding remedial measures adopted; and
- (3) of the number of e-Questionnaire actually used in the 2011 Population Census, and the time required by the computer personnel concerned to notify the frontline staff and acknowledge receipt of the e-Questionnaire filed by households?

Reply:

President,

The face-to-face interview phase of the 2011 Population Census (11C) was conducted between July 16 and August 2, 2011, targeted at those households that had not returned the 11C questionnaire via the self-enumeration mode. Throughout this phase, the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) generated updated reports from its computer system listing out those households that had already returned their questionnaires (including e-questionnaires) for distribution to enumerators on a daily basis. According to the 11C working guide issued by C&SD, enumerators were required to update their records on those households that they were responsible for accordingly in arranging their visit itinerary. In general, enumerators would not visit those households that had already completed and returned their e-questionnaires. In case the enumerators visited a household that indicated that it had already returned its e-questionnaire, then the enumerators should verify the record of households that had returned questionnaires in accordance with the 11C working guide, and if there was subsequent confirmation that the questionnaires returned by the concerned household had been duly received, no interview would be conducted.

My reply to the questions raised by Hon Abraham Shek is as follows:

(1) According to C&SD, in the beginning of the face-to-face interview phase, it had received a few enquiries from households concerning visits by enumerators after they had returned the e-questionnaires. As C&SD had not maintained records of the numerous public enquiries relating to 11C by categories in such detail, it cannot provide figures of such enquiries. According to the 11C working guide, if a household indicated that it had already returned questionnaire, enumerator was not required to proceed with the interview with that particular household. As such, there was no duplication of enquiry efforts.

(2) On the basis of the information provided by the concerned households making enquiries, C&SD has looked into the cases involved and found that individual enumerators had visited households that had returned questionnaires mainly because the relevant records of the households to be visited had not been updated on a timely basis. As there was only a very small number of such cases, it did not have any adverse impact on the progress of the face-to-face interview phase and the resource allocation of 11C. That said, C&SD had reminded enumerators through daily briefings from time to time of the need for timely update of the records of households they should visit so as to avoid causing inconvenience to households.

(3) According to the preliminary enumeration results, over 300,000 households, representing about 14% of the total number of households enumerated, chose to return the 11C e-questionnaires via the self-enumeration mode during the census period. Throughout the face-to-face interview phase, C&SD generated daily computer reports in the morning on those households that had already returned their questionnaires as at the close of the previous day for distribution to enumerators.

Ends