

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION**

### **GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT**

#### **GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT**

##### **Security Bureau**

#### **GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT**

##### **Immigration Department**

<b>Registration of births, deaths and marriages</b>
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# REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES

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# REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES

## Summary and key findings

A. **Introduction.** Since July 1979, the Immigration Department (Imm D) has been responsible for the registration of births, deaths and marriages in Hong Kong. To provide these registration services, the Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Sub-division (BDM Sub-division) of the Imm D operates 8 births registries, 4 deaths registries and 12 marriage registries located in different areas of the territory. As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division had an establishment of 233 staff. Of the BDM Sub-division's estimated total expenditure of \$93.6 million for 2001-02, \$84.1 million (or 90%) was for personal emolument (paras. 1.1 to 1.3).

B. **Audit review.** Audit has conducted a review to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the operation of the BDM Sub-division. Audit has found that there is room for improvement in the use of the BDM Sub-division's manpower resources (paras. 1.8 and 1.9). The major audit findings are summarised in paragraphs C to G below.

C. **Utilisation of births registries.** Since 1981, Hong Kong has recorded a significant decrease in the number of registered births. During the period 1981 to 2000, the number of registered births had decreased by 38%. Audit has found that during the period 1996 to 2000, four births registries had been substantially underutilised. Audit has also found that it is feasible to close two underutilised births registries, namely the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry. As an alternative registry cannot be identified to absorb the displaced workload, it may not be feasible to close the other two underutilised births registries, namely the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry. Audit has estimated that the closure of the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry would result in a total annual saving of \$3.2 million in staff cost and accommodation cost. Audit considers that the Imm D should: (a) critically examine the feasibility of closing the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry and (b) review the handling capacity of the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry against their workload so that their resources are more economically and effectively utilised (paras. 2.1, 2.4, 2.17 and 2.18).

D. **Utilisation of deaths registries.** Since 1981, Hong Kong has recorded a significant increase in the number of registered deaths. During the period 1981 to 2000, the number of registered deaths had increased by 36%. Audit has found that during the period 1996 to 2000, the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry had been substantially underutilised. Audit has also found that, as the other three deaths registries, namely the General Register Office, the Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry and the Kowloon Deaths Registry, were each operated beyond their handling capacity, it may not be feasible to close the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry. Notwithstanding this, Audit considers that it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised (paras. 2.1, 2.21 and 2.23).

E. **Utilisation of marriage registries.** Since 1981, Hong Kong has recorded a significant decrease in the number of registered marriages. During the period 1981 to 2000, the number of registered marriages had decreased by 40%. Audit has found that during the period 1996 to 2000, five marriage registries had been underutilised. Audit has also found that it is feasible to close three underutilised marriage registries, namely the Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry. As an alternative registry cannot be identified to absorb the displaced workload, it may not be feasible to close the other two underutilised marriage registries, namely the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry. Audit has estimated that the closure of the Eastern Marriage Registry would result in an annual saving of \$1.8 million in staff cost and accommodation cost. Audit considers that the Imm D should: (a) critically examine the feasibility of closing the Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry and (b) review the handling capacity of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry against their workload so that their resources are more economically and effectively utilised (paras. 2.1, 2.27, 2.39 and 2.41).

F. **Manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division.** Audit has found that, despite the significant decrease in workload of the BDM Sub-division since 1996, other than a review in 1999 brought about by the Enhanced Productivity Programme, no establishment review had been conducted by the Imm D during the period 1997 to 1999. Audit considers that the Imm D needs to review regularly the staff establishment of the BDM Sub-division to take account of the changes in demand for its services. Audit has also found that in total, six posts of the Clerical Officer grade of the BDM Sub-division can be deleted. Audit has estimated that the deletion of these six posts would result in an annual saving of \$2.1 million in staff cost. Audit considers that the Imm D should take prompt action to delete these posts which are surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement (paras. 3.9 to 3.13).

G. **Records management of the BDM Sub-division.** Audit has found that the 10 million index cards provide the only means of searching for master records of births, deaths and marriages registered before 1995. As these index cards have no backup copies, they are vulnerable to fire, flooding and other hazards. In addition, the manual search of index cards for master records is time-consuming and prone to errors, particularly if these index cards have been misfiled or lost. In view of the advancement in technology of database management and electronic imaging, Audit considers that the Imm D should examine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of converting the index cards into computer records for more efficient storage and retrieval (paras. 4.2, 4.3 and 4.8).

H. **Audit recommendations.** To ensure that resources are used economically and effectively, Audit has made the following main recommendations that the Director of Immigration should:

*Utilisation of births registries*

- (a) critically examine the feasibility of closing the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry (para. 2.19(a));

- (b) review the handling capacity of the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry against their workload (para. 2.19(c));

*Utilisation of deaths registries*

- (c) review the handling capacity of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry against its workload (para. 2.24);

*Utilisation of marriage registries*

- (d) critically examine the feasibility of closing the Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry (para. 2.42(a));
- (e) review the handling capacity of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry against their workload (para. 2.42(b));

*Manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division*

- (f) regularly conduct establishment reviews to take account of the changes in workload as a result of the changes in demand for services for registration of births, deaths and marriages (para. 3.14(a));
- (g) expedite the deletion of the six posts of the Clerical Officer grade which are surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement (para. 3.14(b));

*Records management of the BDM Sub-division*

- (h) draw up an implementation plan for converting the 10 million index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages into electronic images for efficient storage and retrieval (para. 4.12(a)); and
- (i) formulate a long-term strategy for records management of the BDM Sub-division (para. 4.12(e)).

I. **Response from the Administration.** The Administration has accepted all of Audit's recommendations.





## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

1.1 In July 1979, the Immigration Department (Imm D) took over from the then Registrar General's Department all duties relating to civil registration. Since then, the Imm D has been responsible for the registration of births, deaths and marriages in Hong Kong. According to the Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance (BDO — Cap. 174), the Director of Immigration is appointed as the Registrar of Births and Deaths. According to the Marriage Ordinance (MO — Cap. 181), the Director of Immigration is appointed as the Registrar of Marriages.

### **The Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Sub-division**

1.2 The Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Sub-division (hereinafter referred to as the BDM Sub-division) of the Imm D is responsible for providing services for registration of births, deaths and marriages to the public. The BDM Sub-division comprises the following two sections:

- (a) ***Operations Section.*** It is responsible for the management and operation of:
  - (i) a total of eight births registries including the General Register Office (GRO — Note 1) in Queensway, the Mobile Registry (see paras. 2.13 to 2.16 below) and six other registries located in different areas of the territory;
  - (ii) a total of four deaths registries including the GRO and three other registries located in different areas of the territory; and
  - (iii) a total of 12 marriage registries including the GRO, the Mobile Registry (see paras. 2.37 and 2.38 below) and 10 other registries located in different areas of the territory; and
- (b) ***Administration and Records Section.*** It is responsible for conducting procedural and legislative reviews, overseeing records management, compiling civil registration statistics and providing administrative support in respect of registration of births, deaths and marriages.

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**Note 1:** *The GRO is a major registry which provides services for registration of births, deaths and marriages.*

1.3 An organisation chart of the BDM Sub-division is at Appendix A. As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division had an establishment of 233 staff. Of the BDM Sub-division's estimated total expenditure of \$93.6 million for 2001-02, \$84.1 million (or 90%) was for personal emolument.

## **Births registration**

1.4 Births registration in the territory is governed by the BDO. According to the First Schedule of the Ordinance, the birth of a child should be registered at a births registry of the district in which it occurred (Note 2). The service for registration of births within 42 days is provided free of charge. However, a post registration fee is charged if the birth is registered after 42 days. A birth that has not been registered within one year can be registered only with the consent of the Registrar of Births and Deaths and upon payment of an additional registration fee.

## **Deaths registration**

1.5 According to the First Schedule of the BDO, a death resulting from a natural cause must be registered within 24 hours at a deaths registry of the district in which it occurred (Note 3). Deaths in rural areas may be registered at 15 designated police stations in the New Territories and the outlying islands prescribed under the First Schedule of the Ordinance. If a death results from an unnatural cause (e.g. poison or violence), the case is reported to a coroner who may conduct an inquest to determine the cause of death and then inform the Registrar of Births and Deaths of the cause of death. Presently, the service for registration of deaths is provided free of charge.

## **Marriage registration**

1.6 Marriage registration in the territory is governed by the MO and the Marriage Reform Ordinance (Cap. 178). The service for registration of marriages includes acceptance of marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages. According to the MO, either party to a proposed marriage has to file a marriage notice and pay a registration fee at any one of the marriage registries. The marriage notice will then be exhibited at that marriage registry and the GRO for at least 15 clear days. If no objection is received and upon payment of an additional registration fee, solemnisation of marriage may take place at any one of the marriage registries. Solemnisation of marriage may also take place at any of the places of public worship licensed for celebration of marriages (Note 4).

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**Note 2:** *The GRO can provide registration service for births which occurred in all districts.*

**Note 3:** *The GRO can provide registration service for deaths which occurred in all districts.*

**Note 4:** *As at 31 July 2001, there were 232 places of public worship licensed for celebration of marriages. These places include, among others, churches, the Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple and the Hindu Temple.*

## **Performance pledges**

1.7 Since 1993, to enhance openness and accountability and to develop a client-based culture in the public sector, the Imm D has published its performance pledges every year. The performance pledges in respect of the registration of births, deaths and marriages set out the standard time for processing registration of births, deaths and marriages. During the period 1996 to 2000, the BDM Sub-division had been generally able to achieve the performance standards for processing registration of births, deaths and marriages.

## **Audit review**

1.8 An audit was conducted to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the operation of the BDM Sub-division. The audit aimed to ascertain whether the manpower resources provided for individual births registries, deaths registries and marriage registries are used economically, efficiently and effectively.

1.9 Audit has found that there is room for improvement in the use of the BDM Sub-division's manpower resources and has made a number of recommendations to address the related issues.

## **PART 2: UTILISATION OF BIRTHS REGISTRIES, DEATHS REGISTRIES AND MARRIAGE REGISTRIES**

### **Changes in number of registered births, deaths and marriages**

2.1 Since 1981, Hong Kong has recorded:

- (a) a significant decrease in the number of registered births and registered marriages; and
- (b) a significant increase in the number of registered deaths.

As indicated in Appendix B, during the period 1981 to 2000, the number of registered births had decreased by 38% and the number of registered marriages had decreased by 40% (Note 5). During the same period, the number of registered deaths had increased by 36%.

### **Handling capacity of registries**

2.2 Since 1993, in addition to the standard time for processing registration of births, deaths and marriages (see para. 1.7 above), the Imm D has published information on the number of cases which can be processed each day (hereinafter referred to as handling capacity) by its various births registries, deaths registries and marriage registries. For each births registry or deaths registry, the handling capacity was set with reference to its available manpower resources and office space. For each marriage registry, in addition to its available manpower resources and office space, the handling capacity was set with reference to the number of wedding halls. Since 1996, no changes had been made to the published handling capacity (Note 6). For the purpose of monitoring the utilisation of various registries, the Imm D has compared the handling capacity of individual registries with their actual workload.

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**Note 5:** *According to the Census and Statistics Department, the decrease in the number of registered births was mainly due to marriage postponement of women and the significant increase in the proportion of never married women among all age groups. The decrease in the number of registered marriages was mainly due to a reduced propensity to marry.*

**Note 6:** *Since October 1998, the Imm D had ceased publishing information on the handling capacity of the deaths registries.*

## **Audit's analysis of utilisation of registries**

2.3 To ascertain the utilisation of births registries, deaths registries and marriage registries, Audit compared the utilised capacity of these registries with their handling capacity during the period 1996 to 2000. The results of Audit's analysis (see Table 1 below) revealed that during this period:

- (a) deaths registries had been operated beyond their handling capacity on both weekdays and Saturdays. Therefore, staff of the deaths registries had to work overtime and, where necessary, additional staff had to be redeployed from other registries to cope with the demand for deaths registration service; and
- (b) births registries and marriage registries had been generally underutilised. This is substantiated by the following utilisation figures:
  - (i) for births registries, while the average utilisation rate on Saturdays during the period 1996 to 2000 was 78%, the utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 67% in 1996 to 56% in 2000; and
  - (ii) for marriage registries, the utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 45% in 1996 to 34% in 2000. During the period 1996 to 2000, while the average utilisation rate on Saturdays was 79%, the average utilisation rate on Sundays was only 49%.

**Table 1**

**Utilisation rates of births registries, deaths registries  
and marriage registries during the period 1996 to 2000**

	Utilisation rate (Note 1)					
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average
Births registries						
Weekdays	67 %	64 %	56 %	53 %	56 %	59 %
Saturdays	84 %	78 %	75 %	74 %	81 %	78 %
Sundays and public holidays (Note 2)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Deaths registries						
Weekdays	122 %	125 %	125 %	129 %	131 %	126 %
Saturdays	144 %	140 %	144 %	146 %	144 %	144 %
Sundays and public holidays (Note 3)	88 %	56 %	62 %	56 %	54 %	63 %
Marriage registries						
Weekdays	45 %	43 %	37 %	36 %	34 %	39 %
Saturdays	77 %	81 %	78 %	79 %	79 %	79 %
Sundays	50 %	58 %	41 %	48 %	50 %	49 %

*Source: Imm D's records*

*Note 1:  $Utilisation\ rate = \frac{Utilised\ capacity}{Handling\ capacity} \times 100\%$*

*Note 2: Births registries were closed on Sundays and public holidays.*

*Note 3: Only the GRO was open on Sundays and public holidays.*

*Remarks: 1. During the period 1996 to 2000, both births registries and marriage registries were generally underutilised.*

*2. During the period 1996 to 2000, deaths registries were operated beyond their handling capacity on both weekdays and Saturdays.*

## **Utilisation of births registries**

2.4 As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division operated a total of eight births registries. The First Schedule of the BDO stipulates that the birth of a child should be registered at a births registry of the district in which it occurred (see para. 1.4 above). To ascertain the extent of utilisation of individual births registries, Audit compared the utilised capacity of each births registry with its handling capacity. The result of Audit's analysis of the utilisation rates of individual births registries (see Appendix C) revealed that during the period 1996 to 2000, the following four births registries were substantially underutilised:

- (a) Fanling District Births Registry (see paras. 2.6 and 2.7 below);
- (b) Yuen Long District Births Registry (see paras. 2.8 to 2.10 below);
- (c) Tsuen Wan District Births Registry (see paras. 2.11 and 2.12 below); and
- (d) Mobile Registry (see paras. 2.13 to 2.16 below).

## **Precedent of closing underutilised births registry**

2.5 Audit noted that in 1992, the Imm D closed a births registry due to its low utilisation rate. In assessing the feasibility of closing the underutilised births registry, the Imm D had taken the following factors into account:

- (a) service demand for births registration;
- (b) the availability of an alternative births registry to absorb the displaced workload of the underutilised births registry; and
- (c) potential saving in staff cost and accommodation cost achieved from the closure of the underutilised births registry.

Based on these assessment criteria, Audit examined the feasibility of closing the four substantially underutilised births registries mentioned in paragraph 2.4 above.



## Feasibility of closing the Fanling District Births Registry

2.6 According to the First Schedule of the BDO, births in the hospitals/clinics in Sheung Shui and Fanling should be registered at the Fanling District Births Registry. **It shares the same office with the Fanling Marriage Registry.** In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has a wedding hall for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the births registry is summarised below:

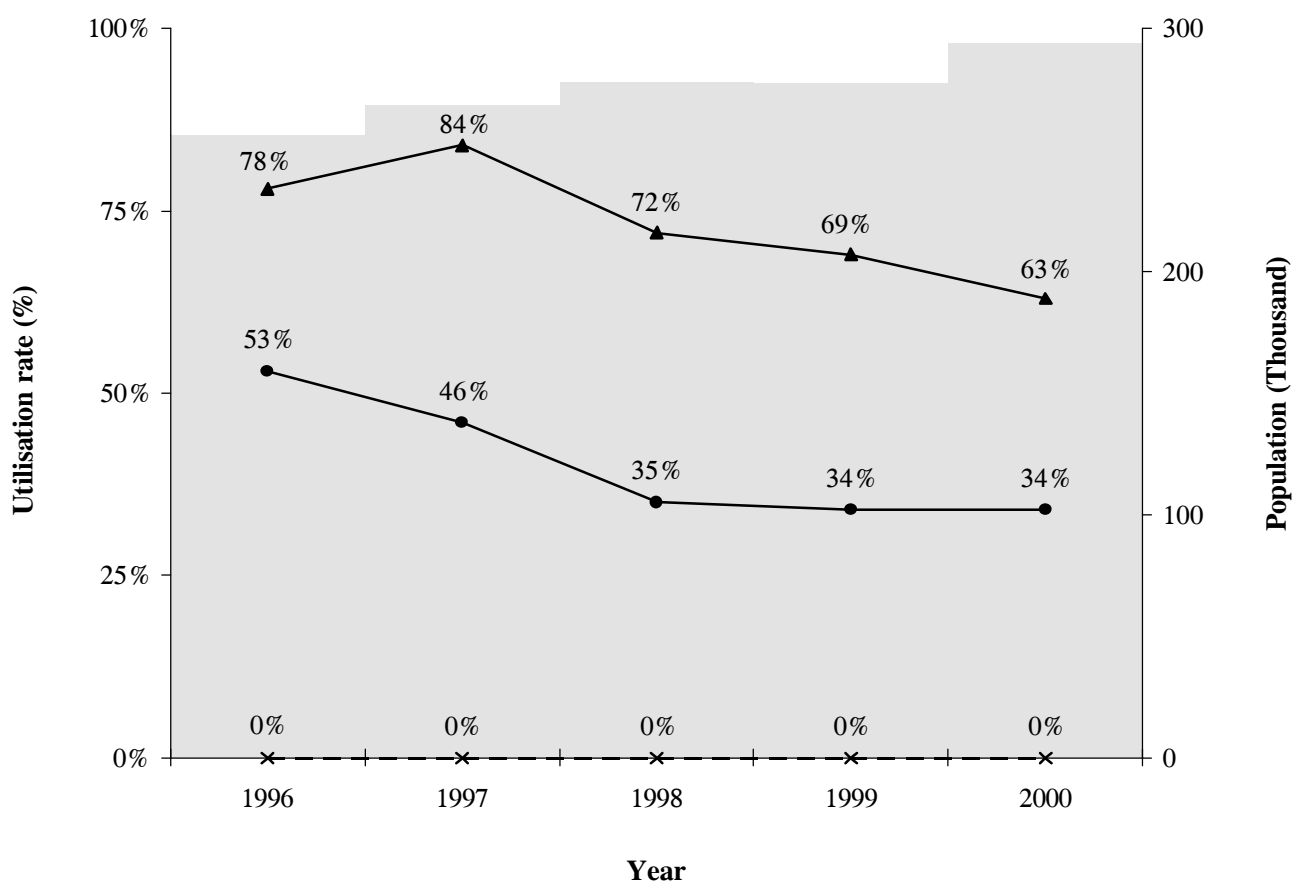
- (a) ***Service demand.*** As indicated in Figure 1 below, during the period 1996 to 2000, no births were registered at the Fanling District Births Registry. Audit noted that:
  - (i) from 1996 to 1999, no births had occurred in the Sha Tau Kok Clinic which was closed in mid-1999; and
  - (ii) no obstetric service had been provided by the only hospital in the district, the North District Hospital, since its opening in 1998.

Furthermore, there would not be any foreseeable workload at the Fanling District Births Registry because the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority have advised the Imm D that in the next five years, the North District Hospital would not provide any obstetric service and no hospitals with obstetric service would be established in the district;

- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** Audit has noted that the Sha Tin District Births Registry has spare capacity to serve the residents in Sheung Shui and Fanling because its utilisation rates during the period 1996 to 2000 were, on average, 60% on weekdays and 92% on Saturdays (see Appendix C); and
- (c) ***Potential saving.*** The Fanling District Births Registry shares the same office with the Fanling Marriage Registry. Audit has also found that it is feasible to close the Fanling Marriage Registry (see Figure 1 and paras. 2.35 and 2.36 below). Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$1.9 million in staff cost and accommodation cost would result from the closure of both the Fanling District Births Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry.

**Figure 1**

**Utilisation rates of the Fanling District Births Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Total population in Sheung Shui and Fanling
  - ▲ Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays
  - Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on weekdays
  - × Utilisation rate for births registration

Source: Imm D's records

- Remarks:
1. The increase in population did not have any impact on the service demand.
  2. During the period 1996 to 2000, no births were registered.
  3. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate for marriage registration on weekdays had decreased significantly from 53% to only 34% while the utilisation rate for marriage registration on Saturdays had decreased from 78% to 63%.

2.7 In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.6 above, it is feasible to close the Fanling District Births Registry.

### **Feasibility of closing the Yuen Long District Births Registry**

2.8 According to the First Schedule of the BDO, births in the hospitals/clinics in Yuen Long should be registered at the Yuen Long District Births Registry. **It shares the same office with the Yuen Long Marriage Registry.** In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has a wedding hall for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the births registry is summarised below:

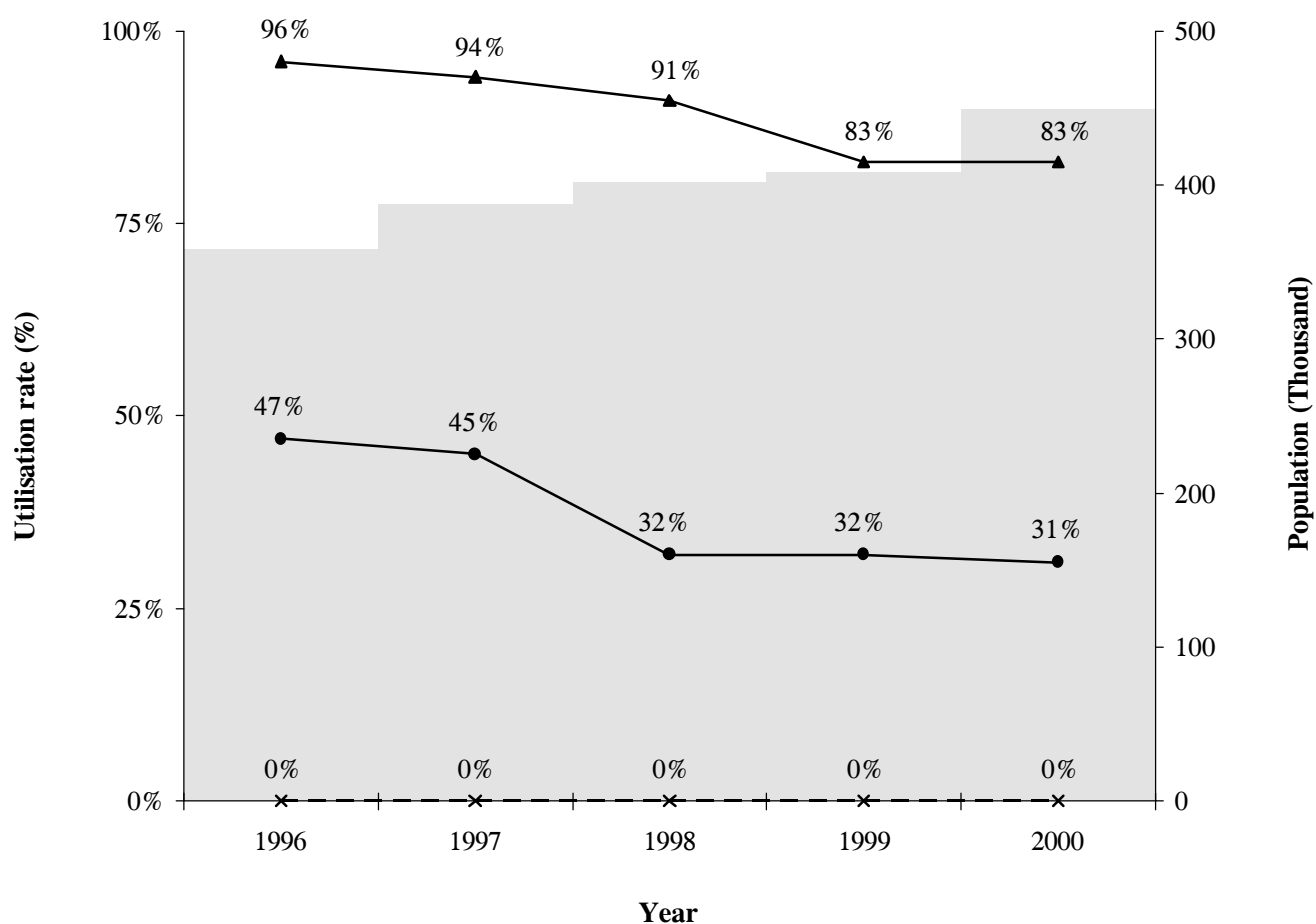
- (a) ***Service demand.*** As indicated in Figure 2 below, since February 1996, no births had been registered at the Yuen Long District Births Registry. Audit noted that since 1995, the maternity unit of the only hospital in the district, the Pok Oi Hospital, had been closed. During the period 1996 to 2000, there had been no demand for births registration service in the district. Furthermore, there would not be any foreseeable workload at the Yuen Long District Births Registry because the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority have advised the Imm D that in the next five years:
  - (i) the maternity unit of the Pok Oi Hospital would not be reopened; and
  - (ii) no hospitals with obstetric service would be established in the district;
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** Audit has noted that the Tuen Mun District Births Registry has spare capacity to serve the residents in Yuen Long because its utilisation rates during the period 1996 to 2000 were, on average, 62% on weekdays and 82% on Saturdays (see Appendix C); and
- (c) ***Potential saving.*** Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$0.3 million in staff cost would result from the closure of the Yuen Long District Births Registry (Note 7).

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**Note 7:** *As the Yuen Long District Births Registry shares the same office with the Yuen Long Marriage Registry, the closure of the Yuen Long District Births Registry alone would not result in any saving in accommodation cost.*

**Figure 2**

**Utilisation rates of the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Yuen Long Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Population in Yuen Long
  - ▲ Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays
  - Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on weekdays
  - × Utilisation rate for births registration

Source: Imm D's records

- Remarks:
1. The increase in population did not have any impact on the service demand.
  2. Since February 1996, no births had been registered.
  3. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilization rate for marriage registration on Saturdays was high.

2.9 In response to Audit's enquiry about the feasibility of closing the Yuen Long District Births Registry, the Imm D has said that it has reservations about closing the registry because:

- (a) in addition to providing births registration service, the Yuen Long District Births Registry provides services for search of birth and death records and for issue of copies of birth and death certificates. Presently, there is no births registry nearby to absorb the displaced workload of these services;
- (b) the applicants for the services provided by the registry are mostly indigenous people who are used to obtaining the services in person rather than through the Electronic Service Delivery Scheme (see para. 2.18 below); and
- (c) upon the completion of a recent study on the manpower requirement of the registry, one Clerical Assistant post has been identified for deletion.

In the light of the Imm D's reservations, it may not be feasible to close the Yuen Long District Births Registry. Notwithstanding this, it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the Yuen Long District Births Registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised.

2.10 As the Yuen Long District Births Registry shares the same office with the Yuen Long Marriage Registry (see para. 2.8 above), Audit has also examined the feasibility of closing the Yuen Long Marriage Registry. As indicated in Figure 2 of paragraph 2.8 above, during the period 1996 to 2000, the Yuen Long Marriage Registry had a high utilisation rate on Saturdays. Besides, there is no marriage registry nearby to absorb its displaced workload. Therefore, it may not be feasible to close the Yuen Long Marriage Registry.

### **Feasibility of closing the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry**

2.11 According to the First Schedule of the BDO, births in the hospitals/clinics in Tsuen Wan should be registered at the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry. **It shares the same office with the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry.** In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has a wedding hall for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the registry is summarised below:

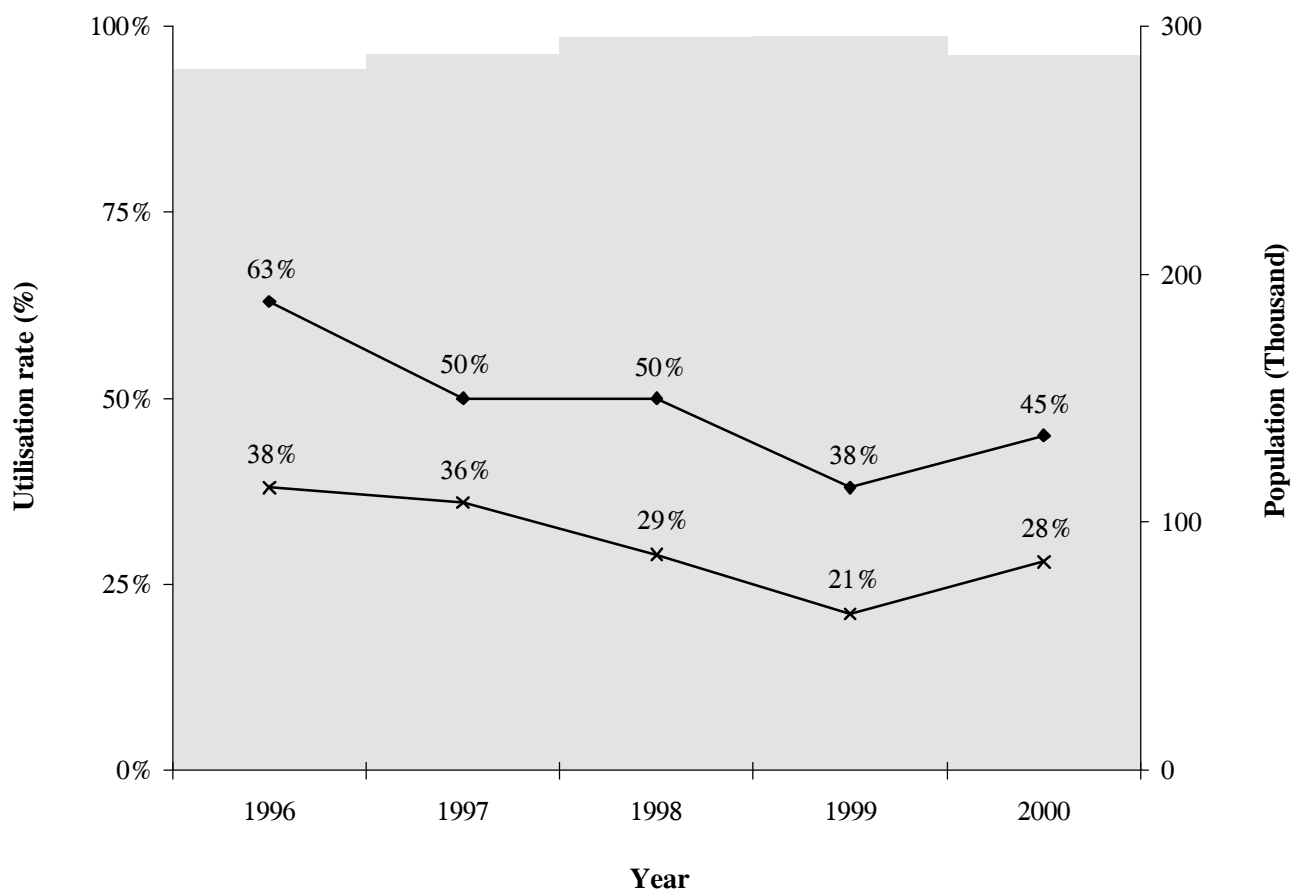
- (a) ***Service demand.*** As indicated in Figure 3 below, during the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry had been low on both weekdays and Saturdays. Audit noted that during this period, there was only one hospital, the Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital, in the district, which provided obstetric service;
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** The Kowloon Births Registry in Yau Ma Tei is the nearest births registry to absorb the displaced workload of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry. Audit has noted that the Kowloon Births Registry has spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload because its utilisation rates during the period 1996 to 2000 were, on average, 65% on weekdays and 76% on Saturdays (see Appendix C); and
- (c) ***Potential saving.*** Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$874,000 in staff cost would result from the closure of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry (Note 8).

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**Note 8:** *As the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry shares the same office with the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry, the closure of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry alone would not result in any saving in accommodation cost.*

**Figure 3**

**Utilisation rate of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Population in Tsuen Wan
  - ◆ Utilisation rate for births registration on Saturdays
  - × Utilisation rate for births registration on weekdays

*Source: Imm D's records*

- Remarks:*
1. The small change in population had limited impact on the service demand.
  2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate was low on both weekdays and Saturdays.

2.12 As the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry shares the same office with the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry, Audit has also examined the feasibility of closing the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry. Audit's findings are as follows:

- (a) it may not be feasible to close the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry because of the lack of a deaths registry with spare capacity to absorb its displaced workload (see paras. 2.22 and 2.23 below); and
- (b) during the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate of the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry was high on Saturdays (see Appendix D). There is no marriage registry nearby with spare capacity to absorb its displaced workload. Therefore, it may not be feasible to close the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry.

In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.11 and in insets (a) and (b) above, it may not be feasible to close the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry alone. Notwithstanding this, it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised.

#### **Feasibility of closing the Mobile Registry for births registration**

2.13 According to the First Schedule of the BDO, the GRO is responsible for providing births registration service to the residents in the rural districts (including Sai Kung and Islands). The BDM Sub-division operates a Mobile Registry to provide services for the registration of births and marriages to the residents in the rural districts of Sai Kung, Tai O and Cheung Chau. The Mobile Registry shares the same office in Central with the Immigration Mobile Office which is mainly responsible for processing applications for passports of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

2.14 Staff of the Mobile Registry travel to the offices of the Rural Committees in Sai Kung, Tai O and Cheung Chau on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday respectively to provide the services to the local residents. For the remaining time, the staff are redeployed to the Immigration Mobile Office to provide immigration service. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of ceasing the registry's births registration service is summarised below:

- (a) **Service demand.** No births were registered at the Mobile Registry in 1999 and 2000 (see Figure 4 below) as women residing in the rural districts preferred to give birth in urban



hospitals. Audit noted that during the period 1996 to 1998, the births registered at the registry had only occurred in the clinic in Sai Kung, which was closed in 1999 (Note 9). Furthermore, there would not be any foreseeable workload of births registration of the Mobile Registry because:

- (i) the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority have advised the Imm D that in the next five years, no clinics/hospitals would be established in the rural districts; and
  - (ii) no births had occurred in the Tai O Jockey Club Clinic in the past five years;
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** Audit has noted that in addition to the GRO, the Kowloon Births Registry has spare capacity to serve the residents in the rural districts; and
- (c) ***Potential saving.*** As it is feasible to close the Mobile Registry for marriage registration (see paras. 2.37 and 2.38 below), Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$1.3 million in staff cost would result from the closure of the Mobile Registry for both births registration and marriage registration (Note 10).

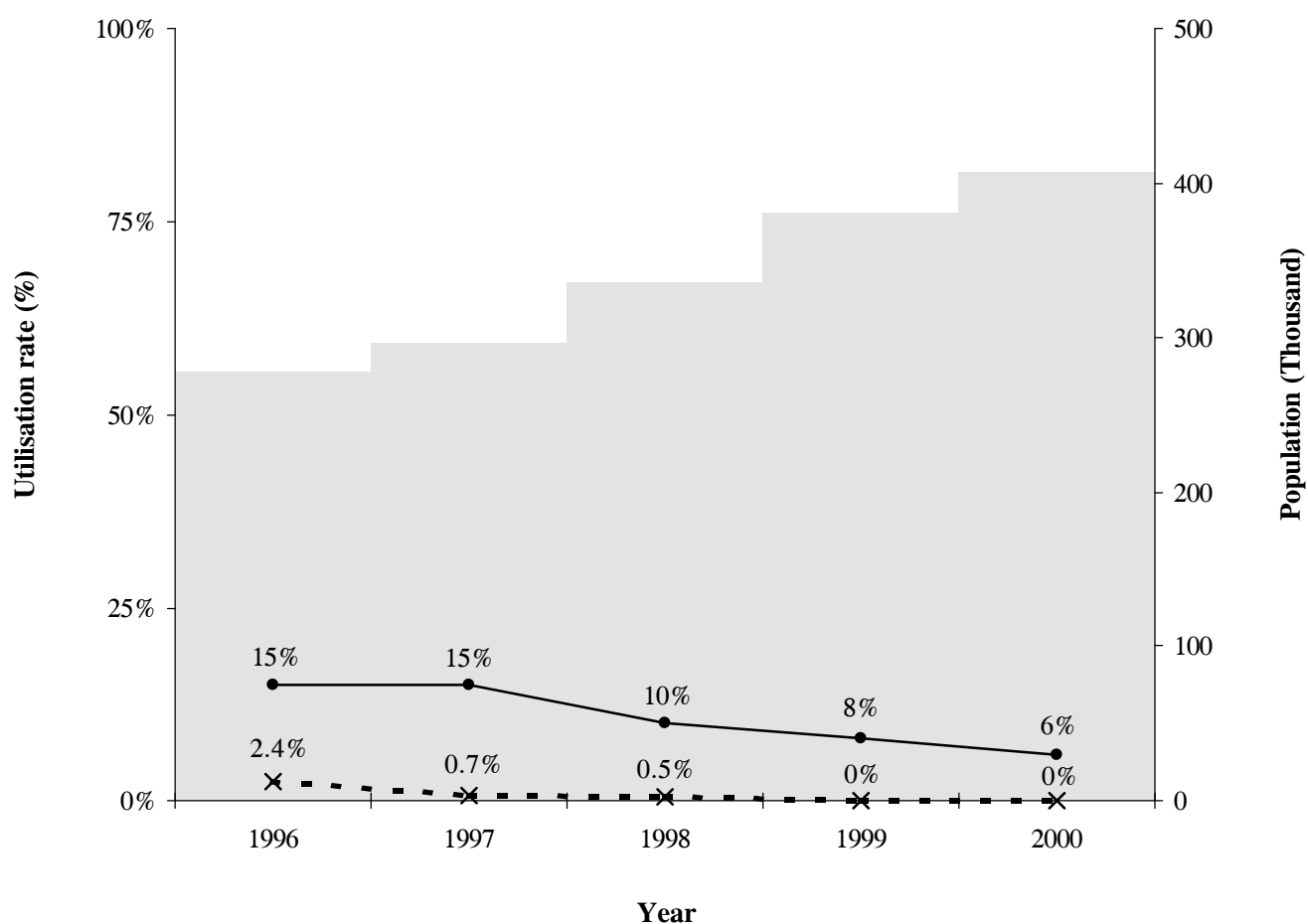
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**Note 9:** *Before 1991, there was one clinic in Sai Kung, one clinic in Tai O and one hospital on Cheung Chau. The hospital on Cheung Chau was closed in 1993 and the clinic in Sai Kung was closed in 1999.*

**Note 10:** *As the Mobile Registry shares the same office with the Immigration Mobile Office, the closure of the Mobile Registry for births registration and marriage registration would not bring about any saving in accommodation cost.*

**Figure 4**

**Utilisation rate of the Mobile Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Total population in Sai Kung and the Islands District
  - Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages
  - Utilisation rate for births registration

Source: Imm D's records

- Remarks:
1. The increase in population did not have any impact on the service demand.
  2. In 1999 and 2000, no births were registered.
  3. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate for marriage registration had decreased from 15% to only 6%.

2.15 Audit noted that only half of the working hours of the Mobile Registry were used to provide services for births registration and marriage registration to the residents in the rural districts. The remaining working hours were spent on travelling and setting up site equipment. In view of the low demand for the services for both births registration (see paras. 2.13 and 2.14 above) and marriage registration (see paras. 2.37 and 2.38 below), it is feasible to close the Mobile Registry.

2.16 Notwithstanding the findings in paragraph 2.15 above, Audit recognises that the Mobile Registry's service may have a symbolic value due to its long-established tradition of serving the residents in the rural districts (Note 11). It is therefore necessary for the Imm D to examine the option of implementing an appointment booking system so that staff of the Mobile Registry will travel to the offices of the Rural Committees only when there is a demand for the registration of births or marriages.

### **Audit observations on utilisation of births registries**

2.17 As a result of the significant decrease in the number of registered births in the territory since 1981 (see para. 2.1 above), four births registries, namely the Fanling District Births Registry, the Yuen Long District Births Registry, the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry, have become substantially underutilised (see para. 2.4 above). Audit has assessed the feasibility of closing these four substantially underutilised registries (using the same assessment criteria adopted by the Imm D in respect of the closure of the births registry in 1992 — see para. 2.5 above). **Audit has found that:**

- (a) **it is feasible to close the Fanling District Births Registry (see para. 2.7 above) and the Mobile Registry (see para. 2.15 above). Audit has estimated that the closure of these two registries would result in a total annual saving of \$3.2 million (Note 12) in staff cost and accommodation cost;**
- (b) **without an alternative births registry and an alternative marriage registry to absorb the displaced workload of the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Yuen Long Marriage Registry, it may not be feasible to close the underutilised Yuen Long District Births Registry alone (see paras. 2.9 and 2.10 above); and**

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**Note 11:** *Before the Imm D took over the civil registration duties from the Registrar General's Department in 1979, the Mobile Registry had been providing services for registration of births and marriages to the residents in the rural districts.*

**Note 12:** *The total annual saving = \$1.9 million (see para. 2.6(c) above) + \$1.3 million (see para. 2.14(c) above) = \$3.2 million*

- (c) **without an alternative deaths registry and an alternative marriage registry to absorb the displaced workload of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry, it may not be feasible to close the underutilised Tsuen Wan District Births Registry alone (see para. 2.12 above).**

2.18 Audit also noted that during the period 1996 to 2000, the workload of other services (such as processing applications for search of birth records and for issue of copies of birth certificates) provided by the four substantially underutilised births registries had, on average, decreased by 68%. In addition, since the introduction of the Electronic Service Delivery Scheme in 2000, online services for processing applications for search of birth records and for issue of copies of birth certificates have been made available to the public. **Audit considers that there is a need for the Imm D:**

- (a) **to critically examine the feasibility of closing the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry;**
- (b) **to review the handling capacity of the Yuen Long District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry against their workload so that their resources are more economically and effectively utilised; and**
- (c) **to closely monitor the utilisation of the remaining births registries so as to ensure that these registries are not substantially underutilised.**

#### **Audit recommendations on utilisation of births registries**

2.19 To ensure that resources are used economically and effectively, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Immigration should:

##### ***The Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry***

- (a) **in consultation with the Secretary for Security and the District Councils concerned (through the Secretary for Home Affairs), critically examine the feasibility of closing these two underutilised births registries, having regard to the significant underutilisation of the births registration service;**

(b) consider the need to amend the First Schedule of the BDO so that:

- (i) the Fanling District Births Registry's responsibility for serving the residents in Sheung Shui and Fanling is taken up by another births registry; and
- (ii) the Kowloon Births Registry takes over the Mobile Registry's responsibility for serving the residents in the rural districts;

*The Yuen Long District Births Registry  
and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry*

- (c) review the handling capacity of these two underutilised births registries against their workload, having regard to the significant decrease in demand for the births registration service; and

*The Kowloon Births Registry, the GRO,  
the Sha Tin District Births Registry and the Tuen Mun District Births Registry*

- (d) continue to closely monitor the utilisation of these four births registries so as to ensure that they are not substantially underutilised.

## **Response from the Administration**

2.20 The **Director of Immigration** has said that:

*The Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry*

- (a) he will, in consultation with the parties concerned, critically examine the feasibility of closing the Fanling District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry. He will further explore the feasibility of implementing an appointment booking system so that staff of the Mobile Registry will travel to the offices of the Rural Committees only when there is a demand for the births registration service;

- (b) he will initiate the necessary legislative amendments if a review confirms that it is feasible to close the two underutilised births registries;

***The Yuen Long District Births Registry  
and the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry***

- (c) he will review the handling capacity of the Yuen Long District Births Registry to take into account the actual service demand, having regard to the significant decrease in demand for the births registration service;
- (d) a recent study on the manpower requirement of both the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry has identified one Assistant Clerical Officer post for deletion. As a result of this study, he will examine the handling capacity of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry under the new establishment level and publish the revised pledged capacity as soon as possible. Furthermore, he will continue to monitor the seasonal fluctuation of workload to ensure flexible and gainful deployment of his staff;
- (e) the birth rate in Hong Kong is on a decreasing trend. Presently, there is one hospital with maternity ward in Tsuen Wan. The Department of Health and the Hospital Authority have also advised the Imm D that no hospitals with obstetric service would be established in the district in the next five years. He will continue to closely monitor the workload situation of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry to ensure gainful deployment of his staff; and

***The Kowloon Births Registry, the GRO,  
the Sha Tin District Births Registry and the Tuen Mun District Births Registry***

- (f) he does, and will continue to, closely monitor the utilisation of these four births registries so as to ensure the optimal deployment of resources.

**Utilisation of deaths registries**

2.21 As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division operated a total of four deaths registries to provide deaths registration service to the public. Similar to births registration, the First Schedule of the BDO stipulates that the death of a person should be registered at a deaths registry of the district in which it occurred (see para. 1.5 above). The result of Audit's analysis of the utilisation rates of individual deaths registries (see Appendix E) revealed that during the period 1996 to 2000:

- (a) the GRO, the Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry and the Kowloon Deaths Registry had been operated beyond their handling capacity; and
- (b) the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry had been substantially underutilised.

### **Feasibility of closing the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry**

2.22 Audit noted that in the past 15 years, no deaths registry had been closed. According to the First Schedule of the BDO, the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry is responsible for serving the residents in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung. To assess the feasibility of closing the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry, Audit used the same assessment criteria adopted by the Imm D in respect of the closure of the births registry in 1992 (see para. 2.5 above). Audit's assessment is summarised below:

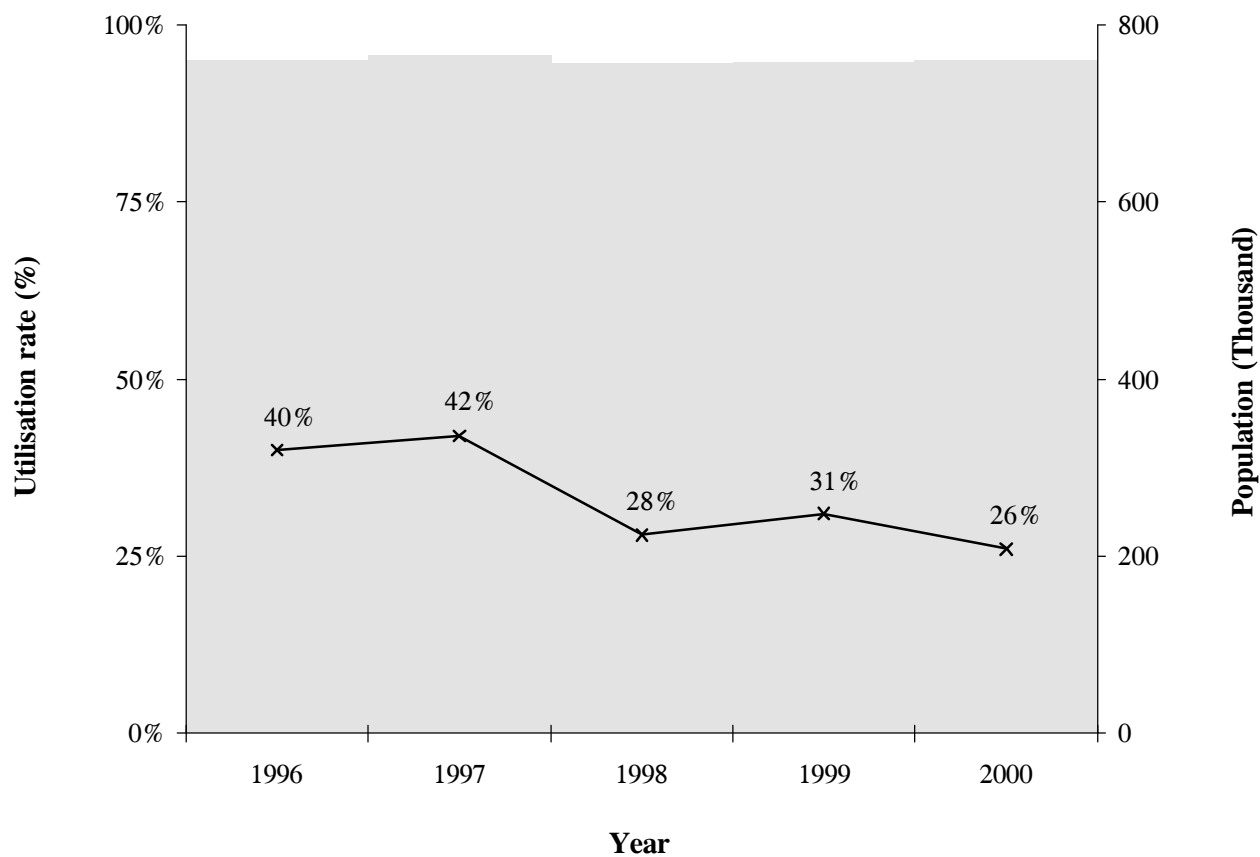
- (a) ***Service demand.*** As indicated in Figure 5 below, the utilisation rate of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry on weekdays had decreased from 40% in 1996 to only 26% in 2000. During the period 1996 to 2000, on average, only eight deaths were registered at the registry on Saturdays;
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** During the period 1996 to 2000, the GRO, the Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry and the Kowloon Deaths Registry had been operated beyond their handling capacity (see Appendix E). Therefore, there is no alternative deaths registry with spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry; and
- (c) ***Potential saving.*** Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$874,000 in staff cost would result from the closure of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry (Note 13).

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**Note 13:** *As the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry shares the same office with the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry (see para. 2.11 above), the closure of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry alone would not result in any saving in accommodation cost.*

**Figure 5**

**Utilisation rate of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



Legend:  Total population in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung

Utilisation rate for deaths registration on weekdays

Source: Imm D's records

- Remarks:
1. The small change in population had limited impact on the service demand.
  2. The utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 40% in 1996 to only 26% in 2000.
  3. During the period 1996 to 2000, on average, only eight deaths were registered on Saturdays.



## **Audit observations on utilisation of deaths registries**

2.23 In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.22 above, Audit considers that it may not be feasible to close the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry. Notwithstanding this, in Audit's view, it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised.

## **Audit recommendation on utilisation of deaths registries**

2.24 To ensure that resources are used economically and effectively, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Immigration should review the handling capacity of the underutilised Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry against its workload, having regard to the significant underutilisation of its deaths registration service.

## **Response from the Administration**

2.25 The **Director of Immigration** has said that:

- (a) despite the low utilisation of the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry, he shares Audit's view that closing the registry is not desirable as there is no alternative deaths registry with spare capacity to absorb its displaced workload; and
- (b) upon completion of a recent study on the manpower requirement of both the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry and the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry, one Assistant Clerical Officer post will be deleted. Hence, the manpower resources of these two registries will be used economically and effectively.

## **Utilisation of marriage registries**

2.26 As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division operated a total of 12 marriage registries. The service for registration of marriages includes acceptance of marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages. Unlike births registration and deaths registration, there is no district restriction on marriage registration. The public can request marriage registration service at any one of the 12 marriage registries (Note 14).

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**Note 14:** *The GRO only accepts marriage notices. The City Hall Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry only provide service for solemnisation of marriages.*

2.27 Appendix D shows the utilisation rates of individual marriage registries on weekdays and Saturdays during the period 1996 to 2000. Appendix F shows the utilisation rates of individual marriage registries on Sundays during the same period. The result of Audit's analysis revealed that during this period, the following five marriage registries had been underutilised:

- (a) San Po Kong Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.29 and 2.30 below);
- (b) Eastern Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.31 and 2.32 below);
- (c) City Hall Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.33 and 2.34 below);
- (d) Fanling Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.35 and 2.36 below); and
- (e) Mobile Registry (see paras. 2.37 and 2.38 below).

#### **Precedent of closing underutilised marriage registries**

2.28 Audit noted that in 1992, the Imm D closed three marriage registries due to their low utilisation rates. In assessing the feasibility of closing the three marriage registries, the Imm D adopted the same assessment criteria in respect of the closure of the births registry in 1992 (see para. 2.5 above). Using these assessment criteria, Audit examined the feasibility of closing the five underutilised marriage registries.

#### **Feasibility of closing the San Po Kong Marriage Registry**

2.29 The San Po Kong Marriage Registry was set up to serve mainly the residents in Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong and Sai Kung. The registry is located at the centre of the San Po Kong District. In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has a wedding hall for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the San Po Kong Marriage Registry is summarised below:

- (a) **Service demand.** As indicated in Figure 6 below:
  - (i) the utilisation rate of the registry on weekdays had decreased from 48% in 1996 to 41% in 2000; and

- (ii) the utilisation rate of the registry on Saturdays had increased from 54% in 1996 to 57% in 2000.

Audit noted that during the period July 2000 to December 2000, over 50% of the marrying couples in the districts served by the San Po Kong Marriage Registry had chosen the City Hall Marriage Registry, the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry or the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry for marriage solemnisation;

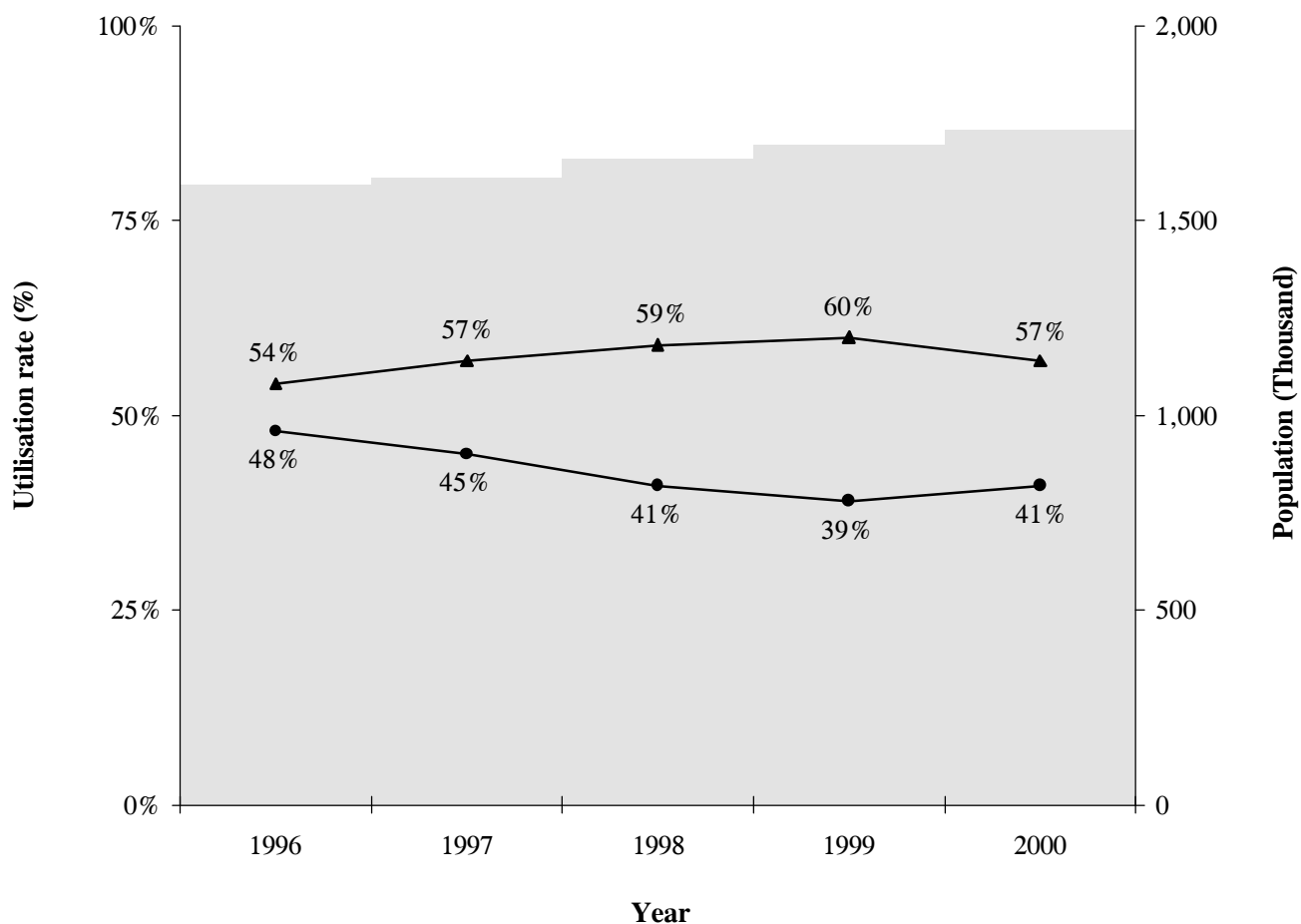
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** The Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry may be regarded as an alternative marriage registry. Audit noted that during the period 1996 to 2000:

- (i) on weekdays, the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry; and
- (ii) on Saturdays, as the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry had been operated beyond its handling capacity in the past three years (see Appendix D), it would not have any spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry; and

- (c) ***Potential saving.*** Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$4.2 million in staff cost and accommodation cost would result from the closure of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry.

**Figure 6**

**Utilisation rate of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Total population in Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong and Sai Kung
  - ▲ Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays
  - Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on weekdays

*Source: Imm D's records*

- Remarks:*
1. The increase in population did not have any impact on the service demand.
  2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 48% to 41% while the utilisation rate on Saturdays had increased from 54% to 57%.

2.30 In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.29 above, it may not be feasible to close the San Po Kong Marriage Registry. However, as the San Po Kong Marriage Registry is the fourth largest marriage registry in terms of handling capacity (see Appendix D), it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised.

### **Feasibility of closing the Eastern Marriage Registry**

2.31 The Eastern Marriage Registry was set up to serve mainly the residents in Wan Chai, North Point, Shau Kei Wan and Chai Wan. The registry is located in Sai Wan Ho. In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has a wedding hall for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the registry is summarised below:

- (a) ***Service demand.*** Since 1996, the service demand of the Eastern Marriage Registry had been decreasing. As indicated in Figure 7 below:
  - (i) the utilisation rate of the registry on weekdays had decreased from 34% in 1996 to only 16% in 2000; and
  - (ii) the utilisation rate of the registry on Saturdays had decreased from 70% in 1996 to 57% in 2000.

Audit noted that during the period July 2000 to December 2000, over 50% of the marrying couples in the districts served by the Eastern Marriage Registry had chosen the City Hall Marriage Registry or the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry for marriage solemnisation;

- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** For accepting marriage notices, during the period 1996 to 2000, the GRO had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the Eastern Marriage Registry. As indicated in Appendix G:
  - (i) during this period, on weekdays, the GRO had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the Eastern Marriage Registry; and

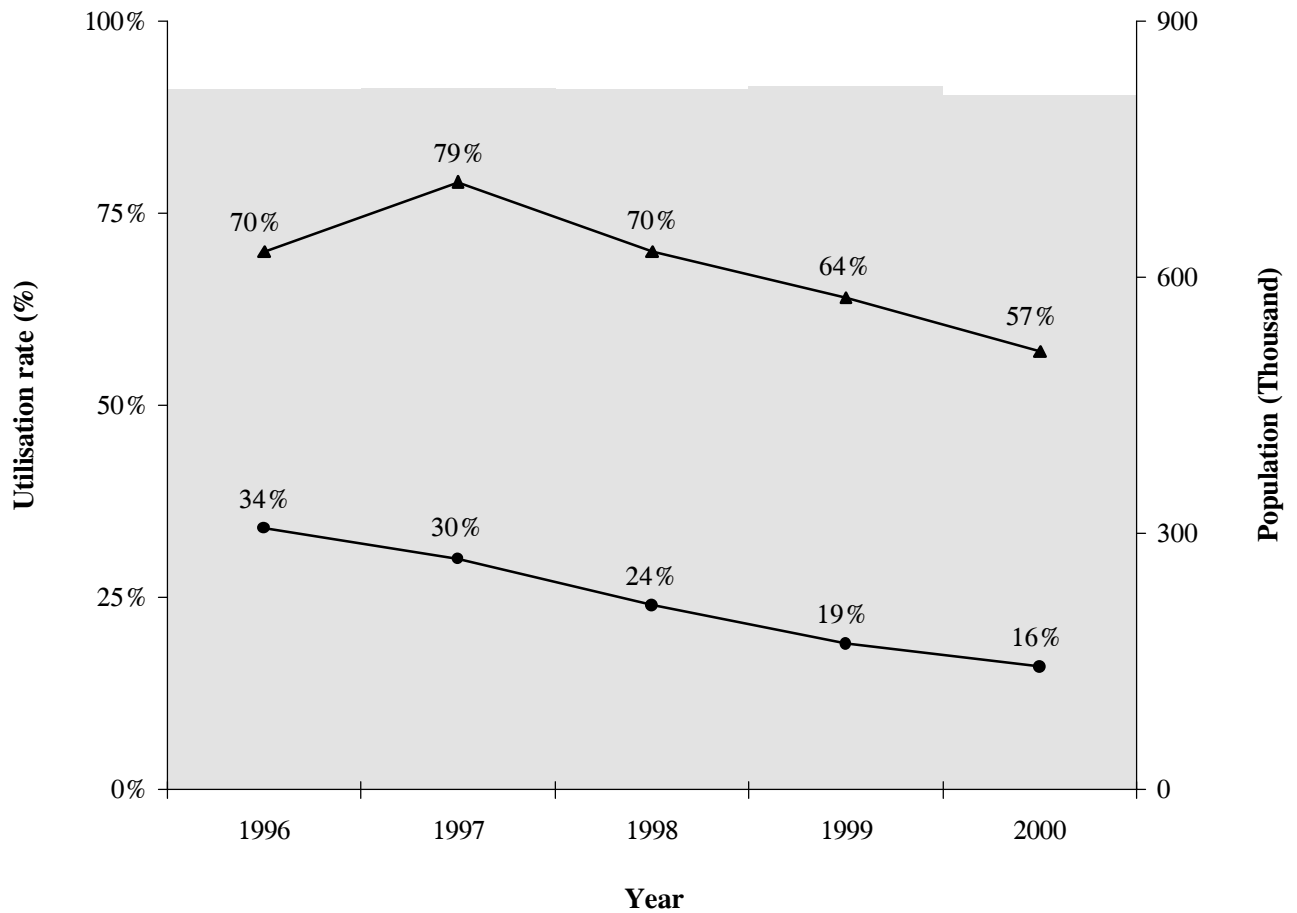
- (ii) on Saturdays, in 2000, the combined actual workload of the GRO and the Eastern Marriage Registry slightly exceeded the annual handling capacity of the GRO. In response to Audit's enquiry, the Imm D has said that one Immigration Officer and one Assistant Clerical Officer are required to increase the handling capacity of the GRO to cope with the extra workload.

For marriage solemnisation, during the period 1996 to 2000, the City Hall Marriage Registry together with the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the Eastern Marriage Registry on both weekdays and Saturdays (see Appendix H); and

- (c) **Potential saving.** Audit has estimated that, taking into account the cost of the two additional posts required to handle the displaced workload of the Eastern Marriage Registry mentioned in inset (b)(ii) above, an annual saving of \$1.8 million in staff cost and accommodation cost would result from the closure of the Eastern Marriage Registry.

**Figure 7**

**Utilisation rate of the Eastern Marriage Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:
- Total population in Wan Chai, North Point, Shau Kei Wan and Chai Wan
  - ▲ Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays
  - Utilisation rate for accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on weekdays

*Source: Imm D's records*

- Remarks:*
1. The small change in population had limited impact on the service demand.
  2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 34% to only 16% while the utilisation rate on Saturdays had decreased from 70% to 57%.

2.32 In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.31 above, it is feasible to close the Eastern Marriage Registry.

### **Feasibility of closing the City Hall Marriage Registry**

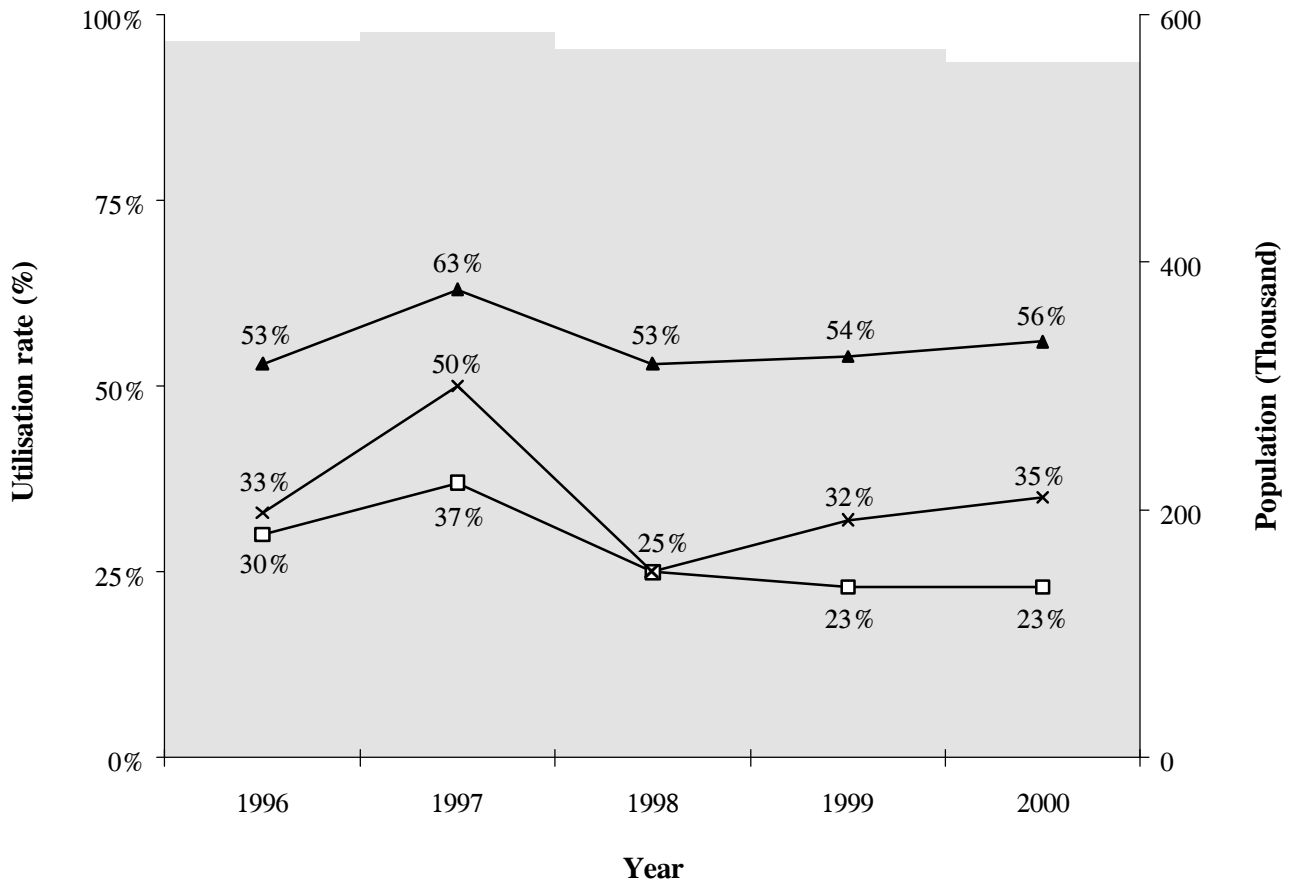
2.33 The City Hall Marriage Registry was set up mainly to serve the residents in Central, Southern and Western Districts. The registry is situated at Edinburgh Place in Central. Since March 1986, the City Hall Marriage Registry had transferred the responsibility for accepting marriage notices to the GRO. In addition to a public waiting hall, the office has two wedding halls for solemnisation of marriages. Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the registry is summarised below:

- (a) *Service demand.* As indicated in Figure 8 below, comparing 1996 and 2000, the utilisation rates of the City Hall Marriage Registry on Saturdays and Sundays did not show any significant changes. However, its utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 30% in 1996 to only 23% in 2000;
- (b) *Availability of alternative registry.* During the period 1996 to 2000, the nearby Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry did not have sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of marriage solemnisation of the City Hall Marriage Registry; and
- (c) *Potential saving.* Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$6.1 million in staff cost and accommodation cost would result from the closure of the City Hall Marriage Registry.



**Figure 8**

**Utilisation rate of the City Hall Marriage Registry  
during the period 1996 to 2000**



- Legend:**
- Total population in the Central, Southern and Western Districts
  - Utilisation rate for solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays
  - Utilisation rate for solemnisation of marriages on Sundays
  - Utilisation rate for solemnisation of marriages on weekdays

**Source:** Imm D's records

- Remarks:**
1. The small change in population had limited impact on the service demand.
  2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate on weekdays had decreased from 30% to only 23%.

2.34 Audit recognises that the City Hall Marriage Registry has been a popular and prestigious marriage registry. Many marrying couples from other districts had chosen the City Hall Marriage Registry for marriage solemnisation (see paras. 2.29(a) and 2.31(a) above). In addition, a major renovation of the registry at a cost of \$3.9 million was completed in 1994. In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.33 above and the above consideration, it may not be feasible to close the City Hall Marriage Registry. Notwithstanding this, it is imperative for the Imm D to review the handling capacity of the City Hall Marriage Registry against its workload so that its resources are more economically and effectively utilised.

### **Feasibility of closing the Fanling Marriage Registry**

2.35 The Fanling Marriage Registry was set up to serve mainly the residents in Sheung Shui and Fanling. The registry shares the same office with the Fanling District Births Registry (see para. 2.6 above). Audit's assessment of the feasibility of closing the registry is summarised below:

- (a) ***Service demand.*** Since 1996, the service demand of the Fanling Marriage Registry had been decreasing. As indicated in Figure 1 of paragraph 2.6 above, the utilisation rate of the Fanling Marriage Registry on weekdays had decreased significantly from 53% in 1996 to only 34% in 2000 while its utilisation rate on Saturdays had decreased from 78% in 1996 to 63% in 2000. During the period July 2000 to December 2000, over 50% of the marrying couples in the districts served by the Fanling Marriage Registry had chosen the Sha Tin Marriage Registry or the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry for marriage registration;
- (b) ***Availability of alternative registry.*** If the Fanling Marriage Registry is closed, the residents of Sheung Shui and Fanling can use the Sha Tin Marriage Registry for marriage registration. This is substantiated by the utilisation figures for the period 1996 to 2000:
  - (i) for both accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on weekdays, the Sha Tin Marriage Registry had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of the Fanling Marriage Registry (see Appendix I);
  - (ii) for accepting marriage notices on Saturdays, on average, the combined workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry exceeded the handling capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry by 24% (see Appendix J); and
  - (iii) for solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays, on average, the combined workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry exceeded the handling capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry by 65% (see Appendix J).

However, Audit noted that one of the two wedding halls of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry had not been used for more than 70% of the time on Saturdays and for more than 60% of the time on Sundays.

In response to Audit's enquiry about the findings mentioned in sub-insets (ii) and (iii) above, the Imm D has said that the BDM Sub-division can deploy one Immigration Officer and one Assistant Clerical Officer to the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and open both wedding halls of the registry to cope with the extra workload of both accepting marriage notices and solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays and Sundays; and

- (c) **Potential saving.** Audit has estimated that, taking into account the cost of the two additional posts required to handle the displaced workload of the Fanling Marriage Registry mentioned in inset (b) above, an annual saving of \$1.9 million in staff cost and accommodation cost would result from the closure of both the Fanling District Births Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry (see para. 2.6(c) above).

2.36 In the light of the assessment mentioned in paragraph 2.35 above, it is feasible to close the Fanling Marriage Registry.

#### **Feasibility of closing the Mobile Registry for marriage registration**

2.37 Audit has also assessed the feasibility of ceasing the marriage registration service of the Mobile Registry. Audit's assessment is summarised below:

- (a) **Service demand.** As indicated in Figure 4 of paragraph 2.14 above, the utilisation rate for marriage registration of the Mobile Registry had decreased significantly from 15% in 1996 to only 6% in 2000. On average, for every five days, only one marriage was registered at the Mobile Registry;
- (b) **Availability of alternative registry.** If the Mobile Registry is closed for marriage registration, the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry (see Appendix D) have the spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of marriage registration of the Mobile Registry; and
- (c) **Potential saving.** Audit has estimated that an annual saving of \$1.3 million in staff cost would result from the closure of the Mobile Registry for both births registration and marriage registration (see para. 2.14(c) above).

2.38 In view of the low demand for marriage registration of the Mobile Registry and the availability of alternative registries to take up its displaced workload (see para. 2.37 above), it is feasible to close the Mobile Registry for marriage registration.

### **Audit observations on utilisation of marriage registries**

2.39 As a result of the significant decrease in the number of registered marriages in the territory since 1981 (see para. 2.1 above), five marriage registries, namely, the San Po Kong Marriage Registry, the Eastern Marriage Registry, the City Hall Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry, have become underutilised. Audit has assessed the feasibility of closing these five underutilised registries (using the same assessment criteria adopted by the Imm D in respect of the closure of three marriage registries in 1992 — see para. 2.28 above). **Audit has found that:**

- (a) **it is feasible to close the Eastern Marriage Registry (see para. 2.32 above), the Fanling Marriage Registry (see para. 2.36 above) and the Mobile Registry (see para. 2.38 above). Audit has estimated that the closure of the Eastern Marriage Registry would result in an annual saving of \$1.8 million (Note 15) in staff cost and accommodation cost (see para. 2.31(c) above); and**
- (b) **without an alternative marriage registry to absorb the displaced workload of marriage registration, it may not be feasible to close the San Po Kong Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.29(b) and 2.30 above) and the City Hall Marriage Registry (see paras. 2.33(b) and 2.34 above).**

2.40 **Audit has also found that during the period 1996 to 2000, the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry, the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry had been operated generally beyond their handling capacity on Saturdays (see Appendix D).**

2.41 Audit also noted that during the period 1996 to 2000, the workload of other services (such as processing applications for search of marriage records and for issue of copies of marriage certificates) provided by the five underutilised marriage registries (i.e. the San Po Kong Marriage Registry, the Eastern Marriage Registry, the City Hall Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry) had, on average, decreased by 27%. In addition, since the

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**Note 15:** *The annual saving resulting from the impending closure of the Fanling Marriage Registry has already been included in the annual saving resulting from the impending closure of the Fanling District Births Registry (see para. 2.6(c) above). The annual saving resulting from the impending closure of the Mobile Registry has already been included in the annual saving resulting from the cessation of its births registration service (see para. 2.14(c) above).*

introduction of the Electronic Service Delivery Scheme in 2000, online services for processing applications for search of marriage records and for issue of copies of marriage certificates have been made available to the public. **Audit considers that:**

- (a) **the Imm D needs to critically examine the feasibility of closing the Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry;**
- (b) **the Imm D needs to review the handling capacity of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry against their workload so that their resources are more economically and effectively utilised;**
- (c) **for those marriage registries which were operated beyond their handling capacity on Saturdays (see para. 2.40 above), the Imm D needs to consider whether their service hours can be extended to include Saturday afternoons so as to meet the service demand; and**
- (d) **there is a need for the Imm D to continue monitoring closely the utilisation of all marriage registries so as to ensure that they are not substantially underutilised.**

#### **Audit recommendations on utilisation of marriage registries**

2.42 To ensure that resources are used economically and effectively, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Immigration should:

##### ***The Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry***

- (a) **in consultation with the Secretary for Security and the District Councils concerned (through the Secretary for Home Affairs), critically examine the feasibility of closing these three underutilised marriage registries, having regard to the significant underutilisation of the marriage registration service;**

##### ***The San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry***

- (b) **review the handling capacity of these two underutilised marriage registries against their workload, having regard to the significant decrease in demand for the marriage registration service;**

*The Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry,  
the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry*

- (c) critically consider the need to extend the service hours of these three marriage registries to include Saturday afternoons to meet the service demand; and

*The GRO, the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry,  
the Yuen Long Marriage Registry and the Tuen Mun Marriage Registry*

- (d) continue to closely monitor the utilisation of these four marriage registries to ensure that they are not substantially underutilised.

## **Response from the Administration**

2.43 The **Director of Immigration** has said that:

*The Eastern Marriage Registry,  
the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry*

- (a) he will, in consultation with the parties concerned, critically examine the feasibility of closing the Eastern Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry. He will also explore the feasibility of implementing an appointment booking system so that staff of the Mobile Registry will travel to the offices of the Rural Committees only when there is a demand for marriage registration service;

*The San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry*

- (b) while a recent study on the manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division has reflected no surplus staff in the San Po Kong Marriage Registry, to cope with the actual service demand, he will review the existing pledged capacity of the registry after its relocation to Wong Tai Sin in October 2001. He will then publish the revised pledged capacity of the registry as soon as possible and will continue to monitor its workload situation to ensure gainful deployment of his staff;
- (c) he will, on the basis of maintaining two wedding halls, review the existing handling capacity of the City Hall Marriage Registry against its workload. He will further explore the feasibility of shifting the provision of marriage solemnisation service on Saturday

afternoons from the City Hall Marriage Registry to the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry;

- (d) the decreasing trend of marriages, the location and accessibility of the marriage registries, the design of the wedding halls of the marriage registries and the environment within the vicinity of the marriage registries are factors contributing to the low utilisation of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry and the City Hall Marriage Registry. While he will review shortly the service level of the City Hall Marriage Registry, the review of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry will commence after its relocation to Wong Tai Sin in October 2001;

***The Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry,  
the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry***

- (e) presently, the service hours of the Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry, the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry include Saturday afternoons on auspicious days. He will critically examine the need to extend the service hours of these marriage registries to include all Saturday afternoons, taking into account factors such as resources implications and the demand for service from the public; and

***The GRO, the Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry,  
the Yuen Long Marriage Registry and the Tuen Mun Marriage Registry***

- (f) he will continue to closely monitor the utilisation of these four marriage registries to ensure the optimal utilisation of resources.

## **PART 3: MANPOWER REQUIREMENT OF THE BDM SUB-DIVISION**

### **Establishment reviews of the BDM Sub-division**

3.1 In view of the significant decrease in workload of the BDM Sub-division since 1981, the Imm D conducted three establishment reviews each in 1983, 1991 and 1996. In these establishment reviews, the Imm D projected the future demand for services in respect of registration of births, deaths and marriages based on the past workload.

3.2 During the period 1996 to 2000, while the number of registered deaths had increased by 6%, both the number of registered births and the number of registered marriages had decreased significantly by 17% (see Appendix B). The significant decrease in the number of registered births and registered marriages indicated that the workload of the BDM Sub-division had also decreased. However, other than a review conducted in 1999 brought about by the Enhanced Productivity Programme (EPP — see paras. 3.3 and 3.4 below), no establishment review had been conducted by the Imm D during the period 1997 to 1999.

### **Enhanced Productivity Programme**

3.3 In 1998, the Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address the launch of the EPP. The objective of the EPP was to improve productivity and efficiency in public service with a view to releasing resources from the baseline to fund new initiatives. Under this programme, by 2002-03, government departments were required to reduce their baseline operating expenditure by a total of 5%.

3.4 In September 1999, in order to formulate an implementation plan to tie in with the Imm D's EPP plan, the BDM Sub-division conducted an EPP review to identify posts for deletion. The EPP review identified a total of five Assistant Clerical Officer posts and eight Clerical Assistant posts for deletion.

### **Imm D's study on manpower requirement**

3.5 In December 2000, the Imm D also commenced a study to assess the manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division. The manpower requirement study was based on time studies conducted during the period January to April 2001 on all the activities of the BDM Sub-division. In this study, the Imm D had taken the following factors into account:

- (a) revised processing time for each service resulting from the revised procedures of the BDM Sub-division since 1996; and



- (b) revised mix of cases resulting from an increase in the number of complex cases which require longer processing time.

3.6 In addition to the posts identified for deletion in the EPP review (see para. 3.4 above), the result of the Imm D's study on manpower requirement further identified five Assistant Clerical Officer posts as surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement.

### **Long-term redeployment of staff**

3.7 The Statistics Unit (SU) of the BDM Sub-division's Administration and Records Section compiles statistics (Note 16), including educational standards, length of residence in the territory and causes of deaths, based on data collected through the registration of births, deaths and marriages. In the SU, there were five Assistant Clerical Officers reporting to a Clerical Officer. Audit noted that three of the five Assistant Clerical Officers of the SU had been "temporarily redeployed" to another unit of the BDM Sub-division's Administration and Records Section for a period of more than four consecutive years.

3.8 The redeployment of the three Assistant Clerical Officers of the SU to another unit for more than four consecutive years mentioned in paragraph 3.7 above is not in compliance with the provisions of Financial Circular No. 4/94. According to this Circular:

- (a) Controlling Officers are delegated with the authority to temporarily redeploy non-directorate posts for a period not exceeding 12 months on each occasion; and
- (b) for redeployments that exceed 12 months, the formal procedures for creation/deletion of posts must be followed and the necessary adjustment to establishment and strength of the department must be made.

### **Audit observations on manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division**

3.9 Audit noted that, despite the significant decrease in workload of the BDM Sub-division since 1996, other than the 1999 EPP review, no establishment review had been conducted by the Imm D during the period 1997 to 1999 (see para. 3.2 above). **Audit considers that there is a need for the BDM Sub-division to regularly review its staff establishment to take account of the changes in demand for its services for registration of births, deaths and marriages.**

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**Note 16:** *The statistics compiled by the SU are provided to other government departments, such as the Census and Statistics Department and the Department of Health, for planning and research.*

3.10 Audit also noted that, in addition to the posts identified for deletion in the EPP review, in early 2001, the Imm D's study on manpower requirement further identified five Assistant Clerical Officer posts as surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement (see paras. 3.5 and 3.6 above). **Audit considers that the Imm D should take prompt action to delete these posts once it is confirmed that they are surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement.**

3.11 Audit noted that the redeployment of three Assistant Clerical Officers from the SU to another unit of the BDM Sub-division's Administration and Records Section for more than four consecutive years did not comply with the provisions of Financial Circular No. 4/94 (see para. 3.8 above). **In Audit's view, the procedures for permanent redeployment of staff should be strictly adhered to so that the Imm D has up-to-date information of its establishment and strength.**

3.12 **In addition, Audit considers that:**

- (a) **the work of the Clerical Officer in the SU (see para. 3.7 above) had been considerably reduced; and**
- (b) **the Clerical Officer post in the SU can be deleted.**

3.13 **Audit has estimated that the deletion of the five surplus Assistant Clerical Officer posts identified by the Imm D's study together with the Clerical Officer post in the SU would result in an annual saving of \$2.1 million in staff cost.**

#### **Audit recommendations on manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division**

3.14 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Immigration should:**

- (a) **regularly conduct establishment reviews to take account of the changes in workload as a result of the changes in demand for services for registration of births, deaths and marriages;**
- (b) **expedite the deletion of the six posts of the Clerical Officer grade which are surplus to the BDM Sub-division's operational requirement; and**

- (c) ensure that the procedures for permanent redeployment of staff as specified in Financial Circular No. 4/94 are strictly adhered to.

### **Response from the Administration**

3.15 The **Director of Immigration** has said that:

- (a) he does, and will continue to, conduct establishment reviews to take account of the changes in workload as a result of the changes in demand for services for registration of births, deaths and marriages. Regarding Audit's observation on the absence of an establishment review between 1997 and 1999 mentioned in paragraph 3.9 above, shortly after the reunification in 1997, the Imm D had faced considerable litigation in respect of the right of abode issues. Such challenges to the relevant laws led to uncertainty about the Imm D's workload situation. As a result, the scheduled establishment review was shelved. After the challenges had gradually subsided, the establishment review was resumed in December 2000;
- (b) the study on the manpower requirement of the BDM Sub-division was completed in May 2001. The six surplus posts identified will be deleted by phases; and
- (c) since the implementation of the Imm D's Processing Automation System, coding of the statistical information on births, deaths and marriages for the Census and Statistics Department has been computerised. A total of three Assistant Clerical Officers in the SU have since been redeployed to the Search and Verification Unit within the Administration and Records Section to reflect the reduction in workload of the SU and to cope with the increasing demand for search and verification of records. He will take action to regularise the staffing structure of the section through the Departmental Establishment Committee mechanism.

## **PART 4: RECORDS MANAGEMENT OF THE BDM SUB-DIVISION**

### **Background**

4.1 According to the BDO, the Director of Immigration (in the capacity as the Registrar of Births and Deaths) is required to record the particulars of all births and deaths in the respective Register Books of Births and Deaths (RBDs). According to the MO, the Director of Immigration (in the capacity as the Registrar of Marriages) may file Certificates of Marriages in the way, which he thinks, best suited for easy reference. The public can also request search of records of births, deaths and marriages, including the RBDs and the Certificates of Marriages, at the registries of the BDM Sub-division.

### **Index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages**

4.2 Before 1995, to facilitate the search of master records of births, deaths and marriages, index cards with particulars of registered births, deaths and marriages were created. In 1995, a new online computer system, the Processing Automation System, was implemented to process applications for registration of births, deaths and marriages (Note 17). Since then, all the relevant information obtained during the registration of births, deaths and marriages has been captured at source and stored on a computerised database to facilitate subsequent search of records. However, for births, deaths and marriages registered before 1995, index cards for master records continue to be the only means of searching for such records.

4.3 As at 31 March 2001, about 10 million index cards for master records were kept by the BDM Sub-division. Audit noted that as the index cards for master records have no backup copies, they are vulnerable to fire, flooding and other hazards. In addition, manual search of index cards for master records is time-consuming and prone to errors, particularly if these index cards have been misfiled or lost.

### **Index cards for record changes**

4.4 Since the computerisation of the processes for registration of births, deaths and marriages in 1995, indices for changes of records (including applications for correction of errors and re-registration of births) have been created in the computer system to enable retrieval of microfilm images of the files. However, prior to 1995, record changes were indexed on cards to keep track of the movement of the files.

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**Note 17:** *The Processing Automation System also processes applications for identity cards, visas and permits.*

4.5 As at 31 March 2001, the BDM Sub-division kept about 310,000 index cards for record changes. The BDM Sub-division is in the process of converting the data on these index cards into computer data. Based on the existing rate of conversion, it was estimated that the whole conversion process would take more than ten years to complete. However, Audit noted that the retrieval rate of index cards was very low due to the unique nature of individual cases.

### **Retention of RBDs**

4.6 According to the MO, the Registrar of Marriages may dispose of any document which has been recorded on microfilm. However, according to the BDO:

- (a) *for births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995*, the Registrar of Births and Deaths may dispose of the RBDs if the particulars of the RBDs have been captured by computer and the RBDs have been recorded on microfilm; and
- (b) *for births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995*, although the Registrar can record the RBDs on microfilm, the Ordinance does not mention whether the RBDs can be disposed of.

4.7 In relation to the retention of RBDs, Audit noted that:

- (a) *for births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995*, the particulars of the RBDs had been captured by computer and the RBDs had been recorded on microfilm. However, the Imm D retained these RBDs for a period of five years to cater for correction of errors; and
- (b) *for births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995*, the Imm D continued to retain the RBDs which had been recorded on microfilm.

### **Audit observations on records management of the BDM Sub-division**

#### **Improvement in records management**

4.8 *Index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages.* In view of the advancement in technology of database management and electronic imaging, Audit considers that it is necessary for the Imm D to examine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of converting the index cards for master records into computer records for more efficient storage and retrieval.

4.9 *Index cards for record changes.* In view of the nature and limited use of these index cards, Audit considers that the Imm D should examine the need to retain the index cards for record changes and the cost-effectiveness of converting these index cards into computer records.

4.10 *Retention of RBDs.* Audit has reservations about the need for keeping all the RBDs after they had been recorded on microfilm. In Audit's view:

- (a) *for the RBDs recording births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995*, in view of the small number of cases which require the correction of entries of births and deaths, a retention period of five years appears excessive. The Imm D should dispose of the RBDs after they have been recorded on microfilm; and
- (b) *for the RBDs recording births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995*, the Imm D should consider the need to amend the BDO so that the RBDs can be disposed of after they have been recorded on microfilm.

#### **Management Services Agency's review on records management**

4.11 In October 2000, the Imm D commissioned the Management Services Agency to review the records management system of the BDM Sub-division (Note 18). In April 2001, the Management Services Agency presented its report to the Imm D. In addition to recommendations on other aspects of records management of the BDM Sub-division, the Management Services Agency made the following recommendations in relation to the audit observations mentioned in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.10 above:

- (a) the 10 million index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages should be converted into electronic images;
- (b) the conversion process of index cards for record changes into computer data should be speeded up by employing contract staff;
- (c) all RBDs recording births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995 should be disposed of immediately after they have been recorded on microfilm; and

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**Note 18:** *The objective of the review was to find ways of improving the management of paper and microfilm records kept by the BDM Sub-division in meeting its business requirements, achieving its operational efficiency and enhancing its quality of service.*

- (d) the BDO should be amended so that the Director of Immigration (in the capacity as the Registrar of Births and Deaths) can dispose of all RBDs recording births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995 after they have been recorded on microfilm.

#### **Audit recommendations on records management of the BDM Sub-division**

##### **4.12      Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Immigration should:**

- (a) in consultation with the Secretary for Security, draw up an implementation plan for converting the 10 million index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages into electronic images for efficient storage and retrieval;
- (b) critically examine the need for retaining the index cards for record changes and the need for employing contract staff to speed up the process of converting these index cards into computer records;
- (c) establish working procedures for implementing the Management Services Agency's recommendation of disposing of all RBDs recording births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995 immediately after they have been recorded on microfilm;
- (d) critically consider the need for keeping the RBDs recording all births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995 after they have been recorded on microfilm, and the need for amending the BDO to permit the disposal of these RBDs; and
- (e) formulate a long-term strategy, in line with the other recommendations put forward by the Management Services Agency, for records management of the BDM Sub-division.

#### **Response from the Administration**

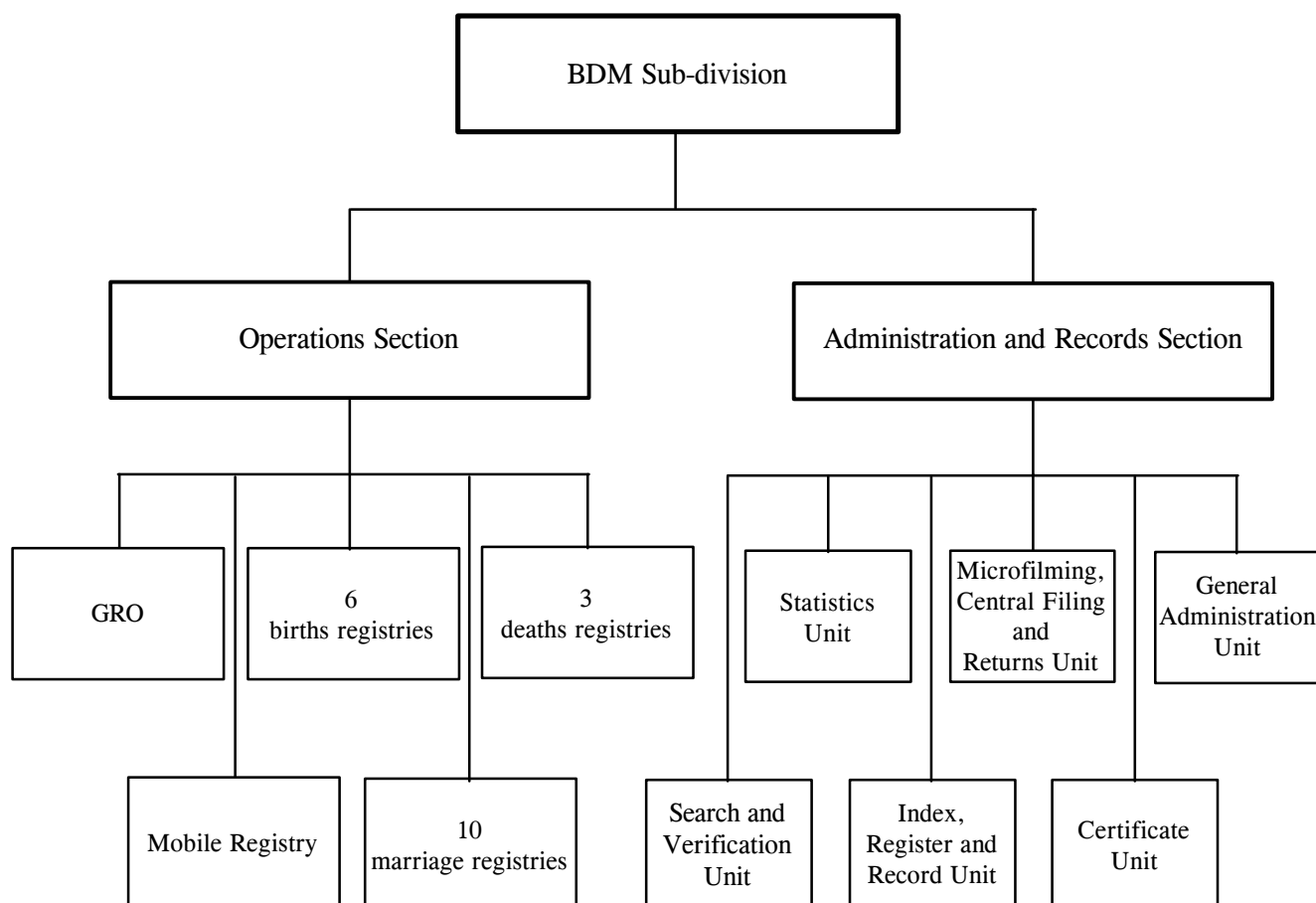
##### **4.13      The Director of Immigration has said that:**

- (a) the Secretary for Security's policy support to convert the 10 million index cards for master records of births, deaths and marriages into electronic images has been obtained. Application for funding has also been submitted to the Administrative Computer Projects Committee. He will draw up an implementation plan for the conversion of the index cards as soon as funding approval is obtained;

- (b) the need for retaining the index cards for record changes is being reviewed. Upon completion of the review, he will then consider whether there is a need for employing contract staff to speed up the process of converting these index cards into computer records;
- (c) for implementing the Management Services Agency's recommendation of disposing of all RBDs recording births and deaths on or after 6 November 1995 immediately after they have been recorded on microfilm, a study on the related procedural changes after the disposal of the RBDs is being conducted;
- (d) the need for retaining the RBDs recording all births and deaths prior to 6 November 1995 after they have been recorded on microfilm is being reviewed. Subject to the result of the review, he will consider the need for amending the BDO to permit the disposal of these RBDs; and
- (e) he agrees that a long-term strategy, in line with the other recommendations put forward by the Management Services Agency, for records management of the BDM Sub-division is required.

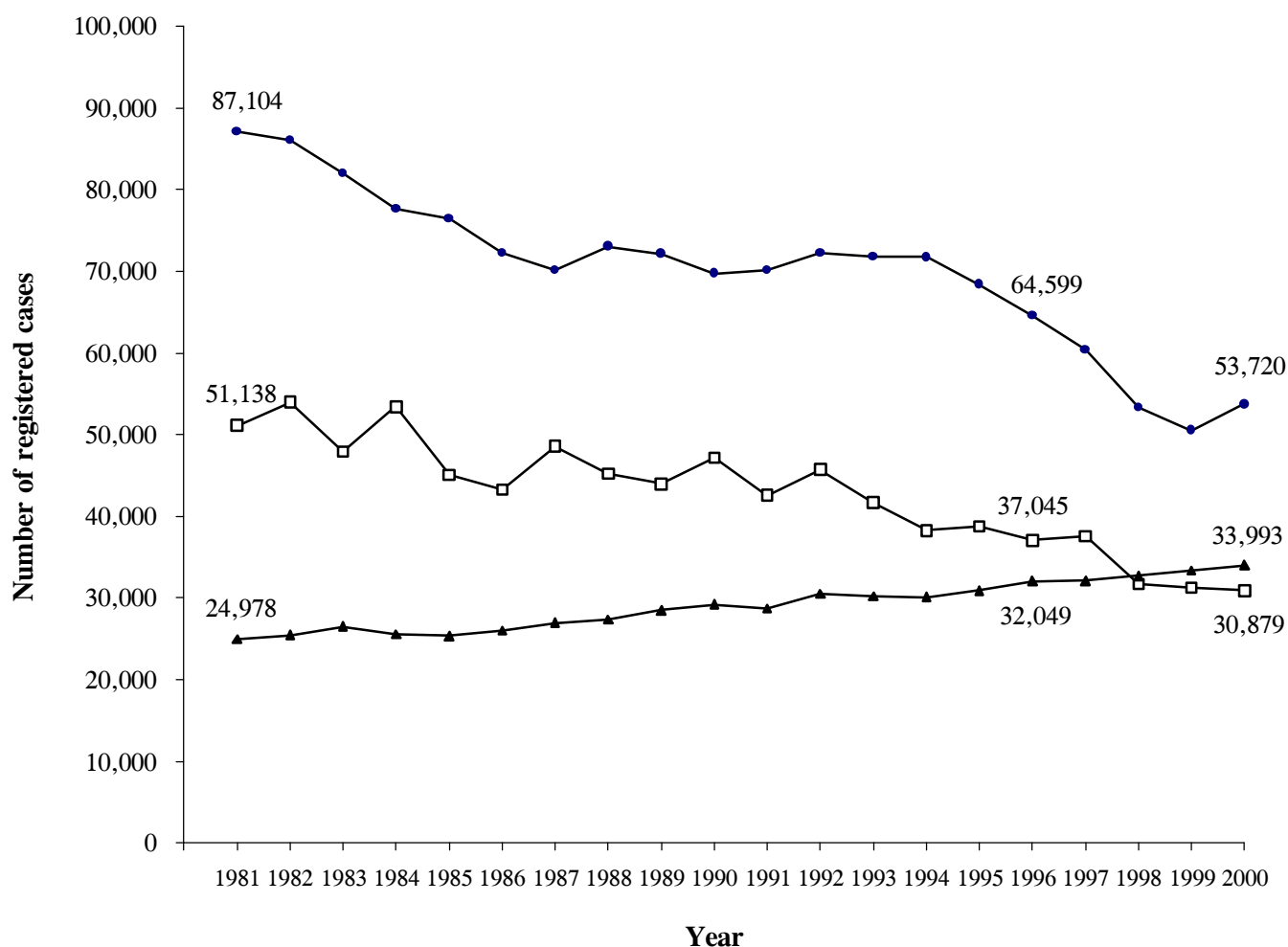


**Organisation chart of the BDM Sub-division  
as at 31 March 2001**



*Source: Imm D's records*

**Number of registered births, deaths and marriages  
during the period 1981 to 2000**



Legend:      —●—      Number of registered births  
                  —□—      Number of registered marriages  
                  —▲—      Number of registered deaths

Source:      *Imm D's records*

- Remarks:      1. During the period 1981 to 2000, while the number of registered deaths had increased by 36%, the number of registered births had decreased by 38% and the number of registered marriages had decreased by 40%.
2. During the period 1996 to 2000, while the number of registered deaths had increased by 6%, both the number of registered births and the number of registered marriages had decreased by 17%.

**Utilisation rates of births registries  
during the period 1996 to 2000**

**ON WEEKDAYS AND SATURDAYS**

Registry		Handling capacity  (Number)	Utilisation rate (Note 1)					Average
			1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	
Kowloon Births Registry	Weekdays	160	73%	71%	61%	58%	61%	65%
	Saturdays	60	80%	75%	70%	73%	82%	76%
GRO	Weekdays	80	84%	79%	67%	60%	62%	70%
	Saturdays	20	123%	113%	111%	102%	110%	112%
Sha Tin District Births Registry	Weekdays	45	66%	64%	56%	56%	60%	60%
	Saturdays	12	94%	91%	92%	90%	95%	92%
Tuen Mun District Births Registry	Weekdays	35	65%	62%	58%	60%	65%	62%
	Saturdays	10	90%	86%	82%	78%	76%	82%
Fanling District Births Registry	Weekdays	12	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Saturdays	4	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Yuen Long District Births Registry	Weekdays	12	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Saturdays	4	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tsuen Wan District Births Registry	Weekdays	12	38%	36%	29%	21%	28%	30%
	Saturdays	4	63%	50%	50%	38%	45%	49%
Mobile Registry	Weekdays	4	2.4%	0.7%	0.5%	0%	0%	0.7%
	Saturdays	(Note 2)	–	–	–	–	–	–

*Source: Imm D's records*

*Note 1: Utilisation rate =  $\frac{\text{Utilised capacity}}{\text{Handling capacity}} \times 100\%$*

*Note 2: The Mobile Registry does not provide births registration service on Saturdays.*

*Remark: During the period 1996 to 2000, the Fanling District Births Registry, the Yuen Long District Births Registry, the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry and the Mobile Registry were substantially underutilised.*

**Utilisation rates of marriage registries  
during the period 1996 to 2000**

**ON WEEKDAYS AND SATURDAYS**

Registry		Handling capacity (Note 1)	Utilisation rate (Note 2)					Average
			1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
		(Number)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
GRO	Weekdays	97	42%	39%	37%	36%	36%	38%
	Saturdays	36	80%	78%	77%	83%	90%	82%
Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry	Weekdays	96	45%	44%	42%	39%	37%	41%
	Saturdays	28	90%	98%	105%	107%	109%	102%
Sha Tin Marriage Registry	Weekdays	77	58%	54%	45%	46%	41%	49%
	Saturdays	24	104%	105%	101%	111%	110%	106%
San Po Kong Marriage Registry	Weekdays	54	48%	45%	41%	39%	41%	43%
	Saturdays	26	54%	57%	59%	60%	57%	57%
Tsuen Wan Marriage Registry	Weekdays	54	40%	37%	31%	26%	25%	32%
	Saturdays	15	83%	82%	80%	83%	74%	80%
Eastern Marriage Registry	Weekdays	48	34%	30%	24%	19%	16%	25%
	Saturdays	17	70%	79%	70%	64%	57%	68%
City Hall Marriage Registry	Weekdays	46	30%	37%	25%	23%	23%	28%
	Saturdays	46	53%	63%	53%	54%	56%	56%
Fanling Marriage Registry	Weekdays	24	53%	46%	35%	34%	34%	40%
	Saturdays	11	78%	84%	72%	69%	63%	73%
Yuen Long Marriage Registry	Weekdays	24	47%	45%	32%	32%	31%	37%
	Saturdays	8	96%	94%	91%	83%	83%	89%
Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry	Weekdays	23	50%	47%	47%	48%	49%	48%
	Saturdays	10	96%	102%	103%	100%	96%	99%
Tuen Mun Marriage Registry	Weekdays	16	84%	79%	65%	70%	70%	74%
	Saturdays	8	100%	95%	89%	93%	96%	95%
Mobile Registry	Weekdays	8	15%	15%	10%	8%	6%	11%
	Saturdays	(Note 3)	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Imm D's records

Note 1: The handling capacity refers to the total number of cases of accepting marriage notices and marriage solemnisation which can be processed by individual registries.

Note 2: 
$$\text{Utilisation rate} = \frac{\text{Utilised capacity}}{\text{Handling capacity}} \times 100\%$$

Note 3: The Mobile Registry does not provide marriage registration service on Saturdays.

Remark: During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilization rates of the San Po Kong Marriage Registry, the Eastern Marriage Registry, the City Hall Marriage Registry, the Fanling Marriage Registry and the Mobile Registry were low.

**Utilisation rates of deaths registries  
during the period 1996 to 2000**

**ON WEEKDAYS AND SATURDAYS**

Registry		Handling capacity	Utilisation rate (Note 1)					Average
			1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
		(Number)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Kowloon Deaths Registry	Weekdays	45	130 %	130 %	136 %	143 %	142 %	136 %
	Saturdays	18	171 %	168 %	184 %	196 %	181 %	180 %
GRO (Note 2)	Weekdays	30	96 %	103 %	101 %	108 %	107 %	103 %
	Saturdays	8	19 %	19 %	5 %	1 %	13 %	11 %
Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry	Weekdays	20	151 %	156 %	147 %	139 %	155 %	150 %
	Saturdays	8	210 %	200 %	193 %	179 %	190 %	194 %
Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry	Weekdays	2	40 %	42 %	28 %	31 %	26 %	33 %
	Saturdays	(Note 3)	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Imm D's records

Note 1: 
$$\text{Utilisation rate} = \frac{\text{Utilised capacity}}{\text{Handling capacity}} \times 100\%$$

Note 2: The GRO was open on Sundays and public holidays with a handling capacity of registering five cases of deaths. In 2000, the average number of cases of deaths registered on Sundays and public holidays was 2.7.

Note 3: No handling capacity was set for Saturdays because staff of the Tsuen Wan District Births Registry would also assist in processing deaths registration, where necessary.

Remarks: 1. During the period 1996 to 2000, the GRO, the Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry and the Kowloon Deaths Registry were each operated beyond their handling capacity.

2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the Tsuen Wan District Deaths Registry was substantially underutilised.

**Utilisation rates of marriage registries  
during the period 1996 to 2000**

**ON SUNDAYS**

Registry	Handling capacity (Note 1)	Utilisation rate (Note 2)					
		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average
	(Number)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
City Hall Marriage Registry	46	33 %	50 %	25 %	32 %	35 %	35 %
Tsim Sha Tsui Marriage Registry	46	48 %	62 %	44 %	54 %	54 %	52 %
Sha Tin Marriage Registry	46	53 %	60 %	40 %	43 %	46 %	48 %
Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry	23	85 %	59 %	67 %	77 %	77 %	73 %

*Source: Imm D's records*

*Note 1: The handling capacity refers to the total number of cases of marriage solemnisation which can be processed by individual registries.*

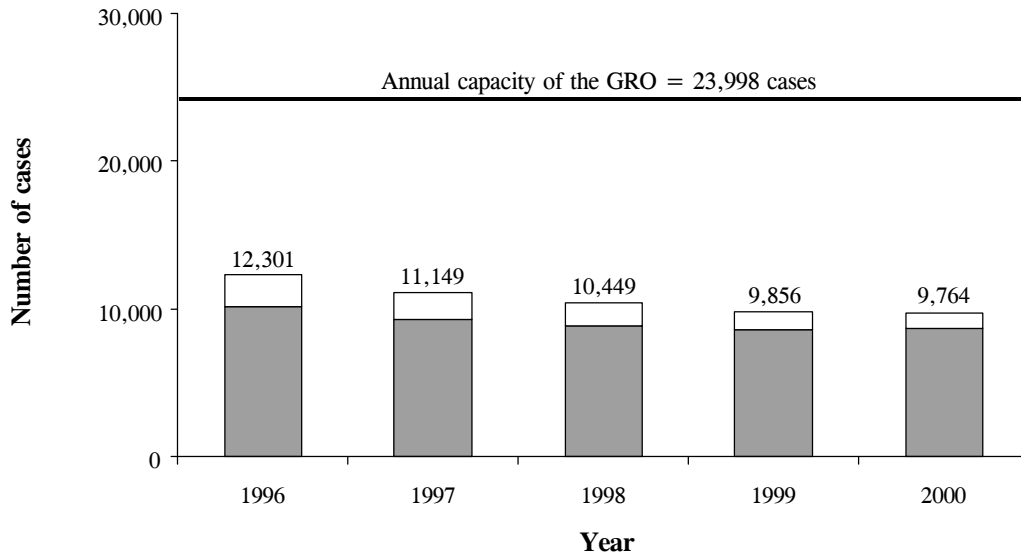
*Note 2: Utilisation rate =  $\frac{\text{Utilised capacity}}{\text{Handling capacity}} \times 100\%$*

*Remarks: 1. On Sundays, only four marriage registries were open to provide service for solemnisation of marriages.*

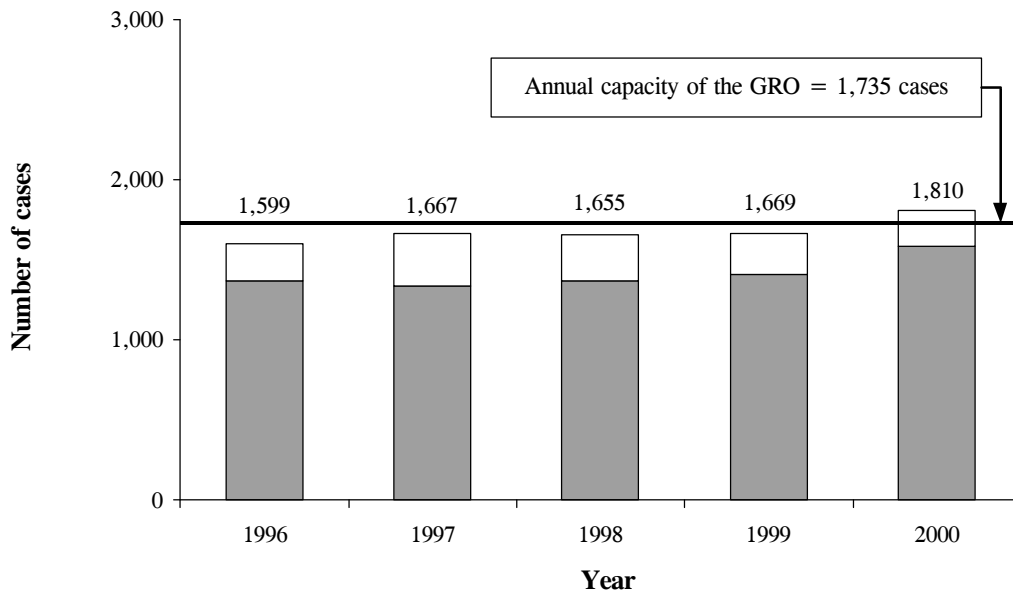
*2. During the period 1996 to 2000, the utilisation rate of the City Hall Marriage Registry was the lowest among the four marriage registries.*

**Capacity of the GRO for absorbing the displaced workload of accepting marriage notices of the Eastern Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**

**(a) On weekdays**



**(b) On Saturdays**



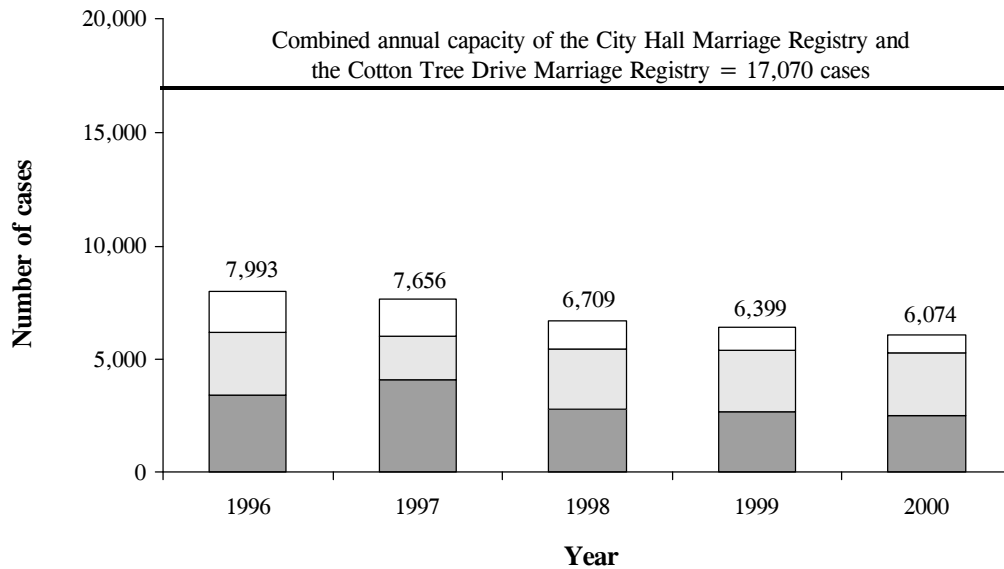
Legend:  Workload of accepting marriage notices of the Eastern Marriage Registry  
 Workload of accepting marriage notices of the GRO

*Source: Imm D's records and Audit's computation*

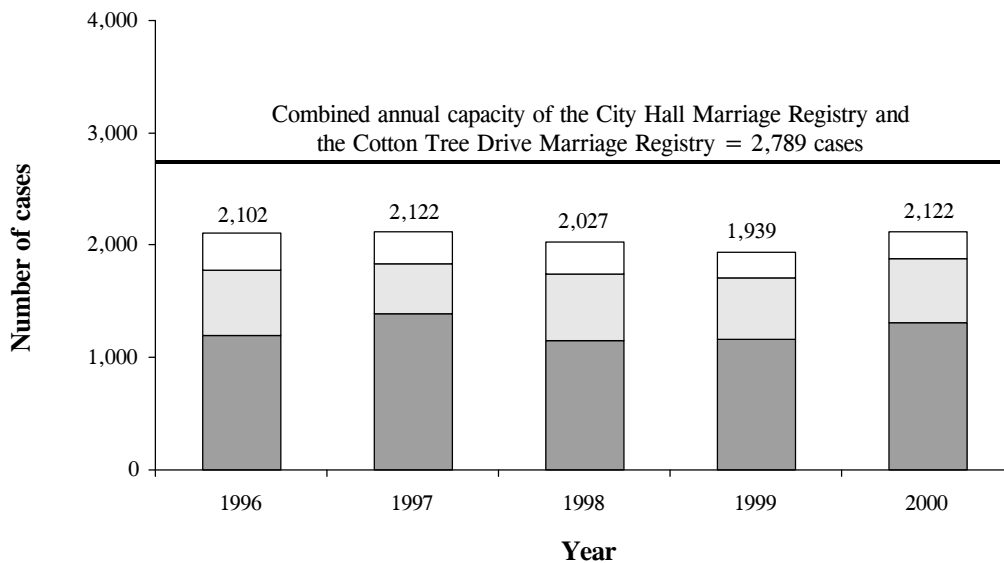
*Remark: In general, the GRO had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of accepting marriage notices of the Eastern Marriage Registry on both weekdays and Saturdays.*

**Capacity of the City Hall Marriage Registry and the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry for absorbing the displaced workload of marriage solemnisation of the Eastern Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**

**(a) On weekdays**



**(b) On Saturdays**



- Legend:**
- Actual number of marriages solemnised at the Eastern Marriage Registry
  - Actual number of marriages solemnised at the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry
  - Actual number of marriages solemnised at the City Hall Marriage Registry

*Source: Imm D's records and Audit's computation*

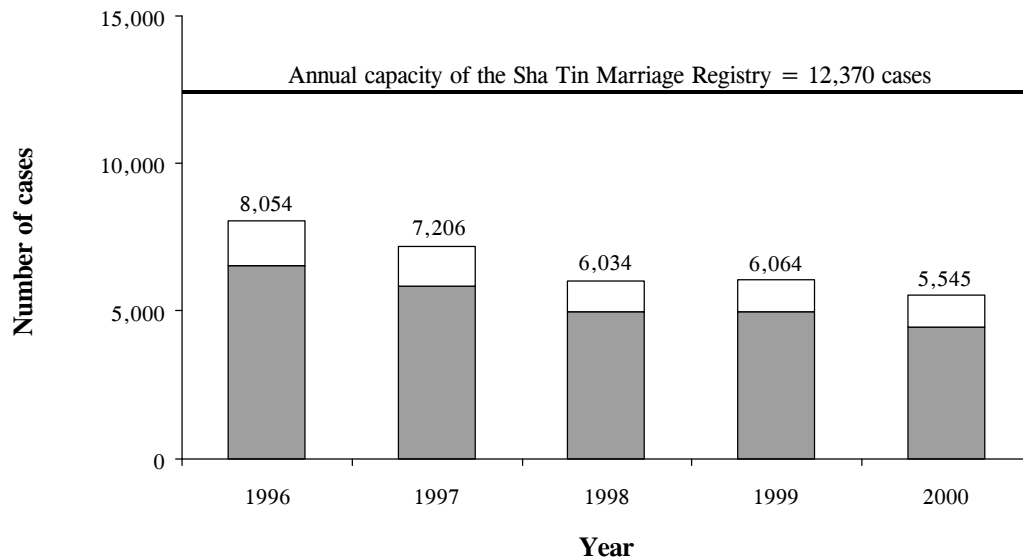
*Remark: The City Hall Marriage Registry together with the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of marriage solemnisation of the Eastern Marriage Registry on both weekdays and Saturdays.*



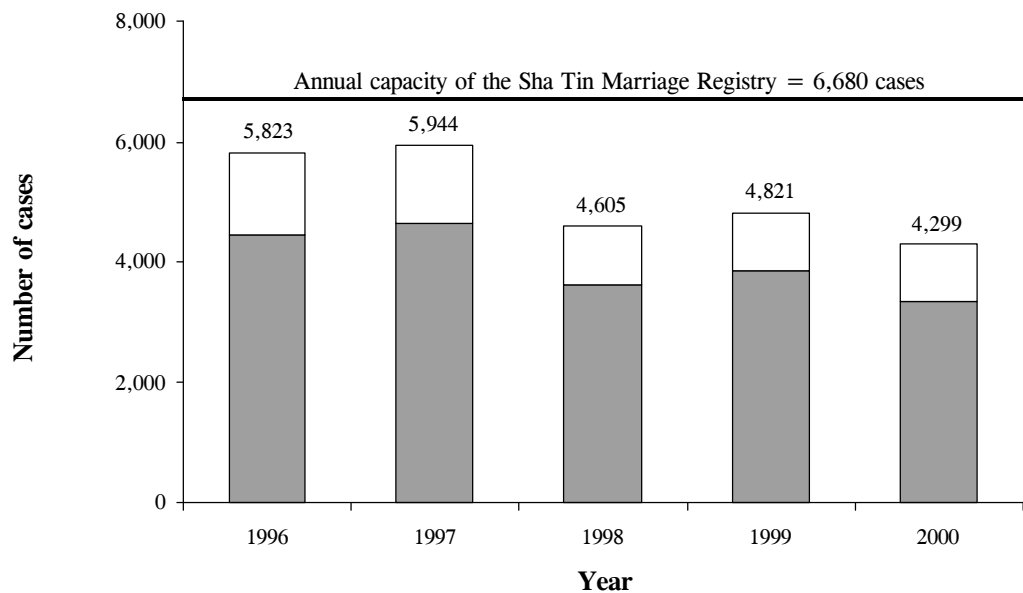
**Capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry for absorbing the displaced workload  
of the Fanling Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**



**ON WEEKDAYS**

**(a) Accepting marriage notices**



**(b) Solemnisation of marriages**



Legend:  Actual workload of the Fanling Marriage Registry  
 Actual workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry

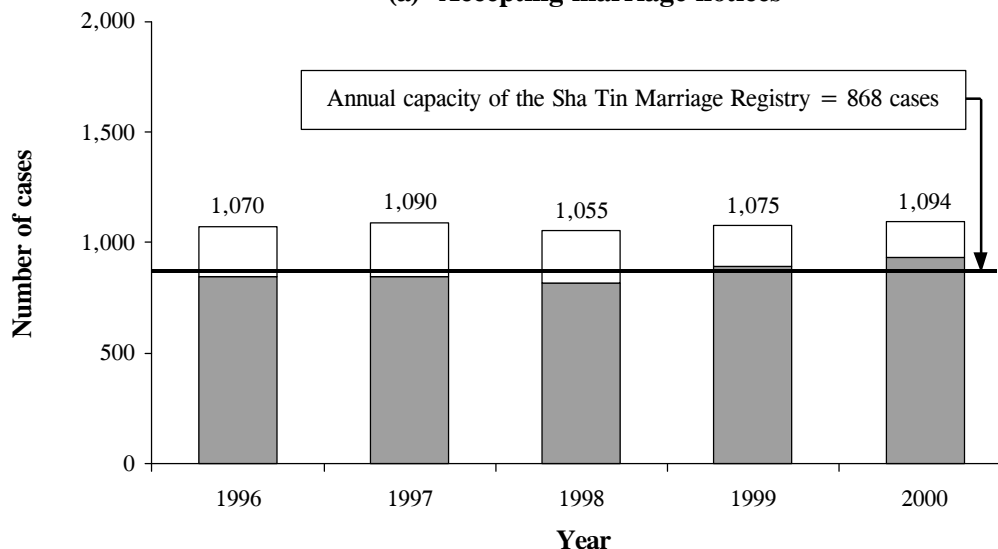
Source: Imm D's records and Audit's computation

Remark: The Sha Tin Marriage Registry had sufficient spare capacity to absorb the displaced workload of both accepting marriage notices and marriage solemnisation of the Fanling Marriage Registry on weekdays.

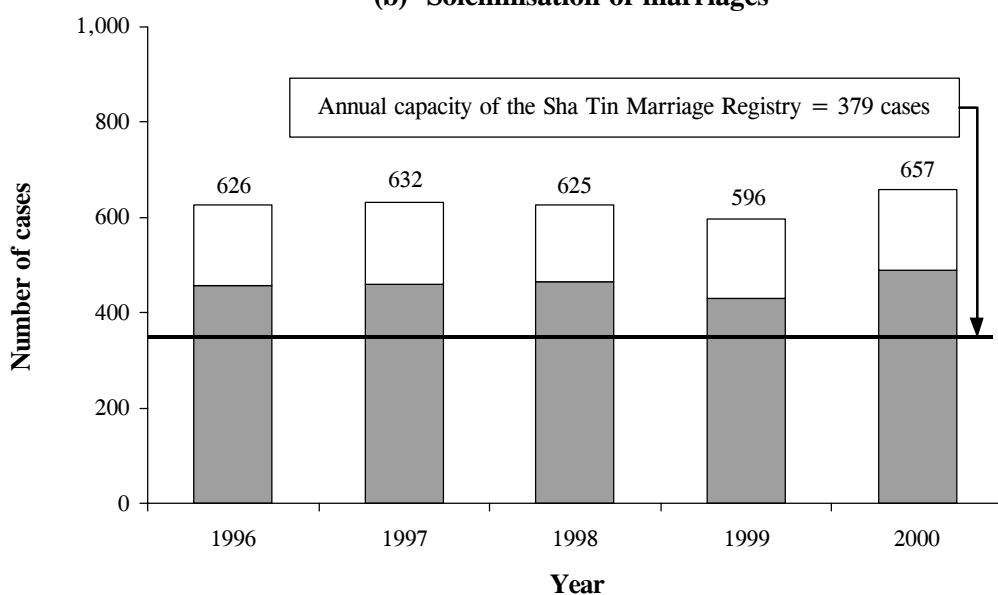
**Capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry for absorbing the displaced workload  
of the Fanling Marriage Registry during the period 1996 to 2000**

**ON SATURDAYS**

**(a) Accepting marriage notices**



**(b) Solemnisation of marriages**



Legend:  Actual workload of the Fanling Marriage Registry  
 Actual workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry

Source: Imm D's records and Audit's computation

- Remarks:
1. For accepting marriage notices on Saturdays, on average, the combined workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry exceeded the handling capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry by 24%.
  2. For solemnisation of marriages on Saturdays, on average, the combined workload of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry and the Fanling Marriage Registry exceeded the handling capacity of the Sha Tin Marriage Registry by 65%.

## **Appendix K**

### **Acronyms and abbreviations**

BDM Sub-division	Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Sub-division
BDO	Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance
EPP	Enhanced Productivity Programme
GRO	General Register Office
Imm D	Immigration Department
MO	Marriage Ordinance
RBDs	Register Books of Births and Deaths
SU	Statistics Unit