

LCQ14: Employment of people with disabilities in civil service

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Tik Chi-yuen and a reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 8):

Question:

Regarding the employment of people with disabilities (PWDs) in the civil service, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of PWD employees in various government departments, including civil servants and non-civil service contract staff, and the respective percentages of such numbers in the numbers of employees in the relevant government departments, with a tabulated breakdown by type of disability (including physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual or mental disability, and other disabilities); whether it has examined which positions are primarily occupied by these PWD employees and whether there are apparent concentrations or limitations in their placement;

(2) whether it will publish data on the numbers and ratios of PWD employees in government departments on an annual basis; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the offices of various government departments currently provide barrier-free facilities and technical aids designed for PWDs, including but not limited to stair lifts, accessible toilets, electronic devices and adaptive devices (e.g. Braille readers, text enlarging software and hearing aids); if not, (i) which government departments' offices lack barrier-free facilities and the relevant technical aids, (ii) of the reasons for the lack of facilities and aids, and (iii) whether it will set a timetable for the full provision of barrier-free facilities and the relevant technical aids in these offices;

(4) given that the Government currently provides assistance and accommodation (including but not limited to extending the duration of written tests or interviews, providing accessible venues, conducting interviews through written communication, and providing enlarged test papers) during the staff recruitment process in the light of the special needs of applicants with disabilities, of the number of applicants with disabilities who requested assistance and accommodation in the past five years, as well as the respective types of such assistance and accommodation provided; and

(5) whether the Government will set performance indicators for employing PWDs, including but not limited to recruitment quotas or targets number of recruits, so as to increase the employment ratios of PWDs in government departments; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

As an equal opportunities employer, the Government has been committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has formulated and implemented appropriate measures to ensure persons who have declared their disabilities in applications for government jobs (applicants with disabilities) would enjoy equal opportunities in the recruitment process.

Regarding the question raised by Dr Hon Tik Chi-yuen, we have consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) and the Government Property Agency (GPA), and our consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) and (4) Persons with disabilities can choose whether to declare their disabilities when applying for government jobs. This applies to serving civil servants and other government employees as well. The Government does not and has no plan to require job applicants, serving civil servants and other government employees to declare their disabilities on a mandatory basis. The CSB collects statistical information on employment of persons with disabilities in the Government through Bureaux/Departments (B/Ds) every year, with the major sources of information including the number of job applicants who declared their disabilities on a voluntary basis, and the cases of application for financial assistance made by serving employees for purchasing technical aids to assist in their performance of duties.

As at March 31, 2024, B/Ds employed at least 2 438 serving civil servants declared with disabilities (excluding persons with colour blindness or defective color perception), representing around 1.4 per cent of the strength of the civil service. The relevant statistics, with breakdown by B/Ds and types of disability, are set out in Appendices 1 and 2. Given that civil servants and government job applicants declare their disabilities on a voluntary basis, the relevant statistics only reflect the situation of those who have declared their disabilities. The actual number of persons with disabilities working in the Government must be larger than the reported number. At present, we do not collect number of civil servants declared with disabilities by job positions and details of assistance or accommodation offered during the recruitment process. We also do not have readily available information on non-civil service contract staff declared with disabilities.

If job applicants with disabilities request for assistance or accommodation in the selection test/interview process to cater for their special needs, recruiting B/Ds will try their best to provide reasonable assistance or accommodation. For example, B/Ds may extend the examination duration for applicants with dyslexia; provide large monitors, electronic magnifiers, enlarged/braille test papers, enlarged answer books and table lamps for applicants with visual impairment; and conduct interviews through written communication for applicants with hearing impairment. Given that the nature, degree and complexity of the assistance or accommodation vary among applicants with disabilities, and each applicant may request for more than

one kind of assistance or accommodation, we do not collect such statistics.

(3) It is the Government's established policy objective to provide a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities such that they can access premises and enjoy the facilities and services therein on an equal basis with others, thereby enabling them to live independently and fully integrate into the community. Currently, the government joint-user general office buildings are all equipped with barrier-free facilities, and the ArchSD will comply with the latest barrier-free access requirements in the design and construction of new government premises. The ArchSD completed the Retrofitting Works for Barrier-Free Facilities at Government Premises Programme in 2014, which covered about 2 500 existing government premises, by following the requirements under the "Design Manual: Barrier-free Access 2008". The ArchSD will continue to improve the barrier-free access and facilities of individual existing government premises where necessary and practicable. Besides, the GPA will ensure that appropriate barrier-free facilities are available when identifying and leasing premises for B/Ds. The CSB will continue to provide financial assistance to B/Ds for purchasing necessary technical aids for employees with disabilities.

(5) The Government does not plan to set any target for employing persons with disabilities as civil servants. Appointments to the civil service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. It may create a negative labelling effect on persons with disabilities, which is not conducive to their integration into the community, if an employment quota system is introduced. As mentioned in the first part of the reply, the Government has no plan to require job applicants, serving civil servants and other government employees to declare their disabilities on a mandatory basis for statistical purpose.

In fact, currently persons with varying types and degrees of disabilities are undertaking jobs of different nature in the Government, including posts with high academic and professional qualifications requirements. This shows that the prevailing assistances provided by the Government are effective in enabling persons with disabilities to unleash their full potential in the civil service based on their abilities and interests (rather than disabilities). As always, the Government will continue with efforts to ensure that applicants with disabilities enjoy equal opportunities in the civil service recruitment process and are accorded priority in employment where appropriate.

(2) The CSB reports to the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service annually regarding updates on the employment of persons with disabilities in the civil service, including the percentage of civil servants with declared disabilities in the overall strength of the civil service, and the percentage of eligible applicants with disabilities employed through the recruitment exercises concluded in the past year. The latest information paper was issued on December 24, 2024.