

Parliamentary reply by DPM Teo Chee Hean on renunciation of citizenship

ORAL ANSWER

TUESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2012

Mrs Lina Chiam:

To ask the Prime Minister (a) what are the criteria for granting Singapore citizenship and permanent residency; (b) whether there is a rigorous system in place to ensure that the right people are given these status; (c) for the past four years, how many foreigners gave up their Singapore citizenship; and (d) whether these foreigners are required to sell their HDB flats and properties when they leave the country or are they allowed to profit from renting them out.

Dr Lim Wee Kiak:

To ask the Prime Minister (a) for each of the past five years, how many Singaporeans who relinquished their citizenship were new citizens; and (b) what were the reasons for doing so.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister):

Every application for Permanent Residence or Singapore Citizenship is evaluated holistically on a range of criteria, including economic contributions, qualifications, age, family profile and length of stay in Singapore.

We assess how well an applicant is able to contribute and integrate into our society and his commitment to sinking roots.

For those with family ties to Singapore Citizens (SCs) or Permanent Residents (PRs), we also consider the local sponsor's ability to support the family.

An average of 1,200 Singaporeans renounced their citizenship each year from 2007 to 2011.

300 of these were naturalized citizens.

The renunciation rates for both naturalised citizens and Singapore-born citizens were low, 0.1% or less.

The reasons for emigration vary.

Some emigrants leave for family reasons – because of marriage, or to reunite with family members overseas, while others do so for a different living environment.

All Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents who own HDB flats will have to sell their properties if they renounce their citizenship or cease to be Permanent Residents. There are no exceptions to this rule.