



## Water seepage in buildings

Figure 1 – Number of water seepage reports received

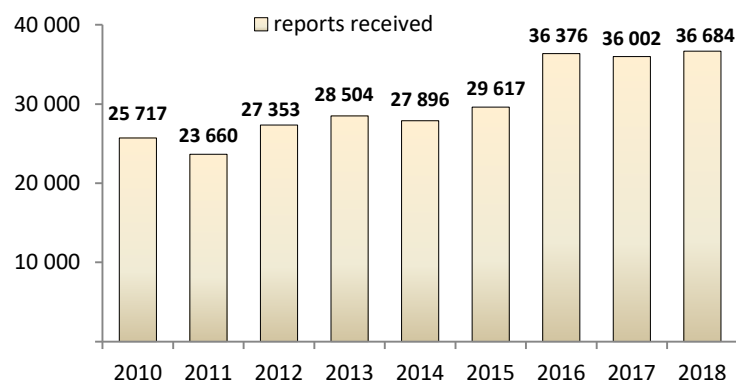
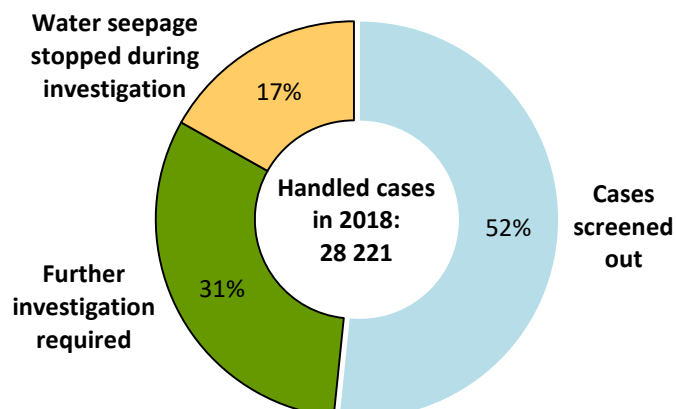


Figure 2 – Distribution of water seepage reports by district

| District      | No. of reports | District            | No. of reports |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
|               | 2018           |                     | 2018           |
| Eastern       | 4 507          | Wong Tai Sin        | 1 601          |
| Kowloon City  | 3 271          | Sai Kung            | 1 426          |
| Yau Tsim Mong | 3 255          | Tai Po              | 1 410          |
| Sha Tin       | 2 997          | Wan Chai            | 1 396          |
| Kwun Tong     | 2 933          | Central and Western | 1 381          |
| Tuen Mun      | 2 828          | Southern            | 1 216          |
| Kwai Tsing    | 2 300          | Yuen Long           | 831            |
| Tsuen Wan     | 2 230          | North               | 745            |
| Sham Shui Po  | 2 100          | Islands             | 201            |

Figure 3 – Handling of water seepage reports

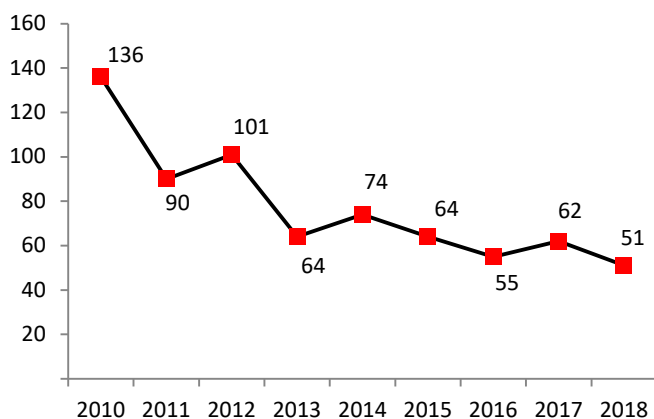


## Highlights

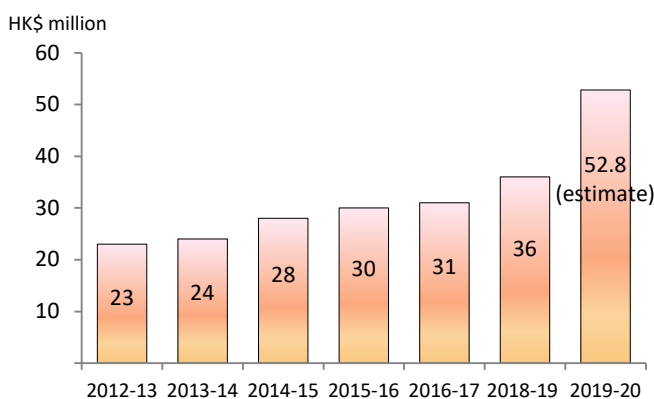
- Water seepage is an enduring urban building plight in Hong Kong which reflects poor building maintenance and substandard works. In the past nine years, the number of water seepage complaints filed to the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints ("the Joint Office") established by the Buildings Department and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has kept increasing. In 2018, the Joint Office received 36 684 complaints, up by 43% from 2010 (Figure 1).
- Most of the reported cases in 2018 occurred in highly urbanized and densely populated districts of Hong Kong. Topping the ranks were Eastern, Kowloon City, Yau Tsim Mong district, with each of them having over 3 000 reports filed to the Joint Office in 2018. There were fewer reports from Yung Long and North districts, possibly due to their low-rise and rural character (Figure 2).
- Most building owners filed a complaint hoping to stop the nuisance caused by water seepage. In practice, about half of the 28 221 complaints handled in 2018 were screened out as they were either unjustified or withdrawn by complainants. A total of 17% of the complaints also did not require further investigation as the water seepage had stopped during investigation. For the remaining 31% of the complaints, further investigation to locate the source of seepage was required (Figure 3).

## Water seepage in buildings (cont'd)

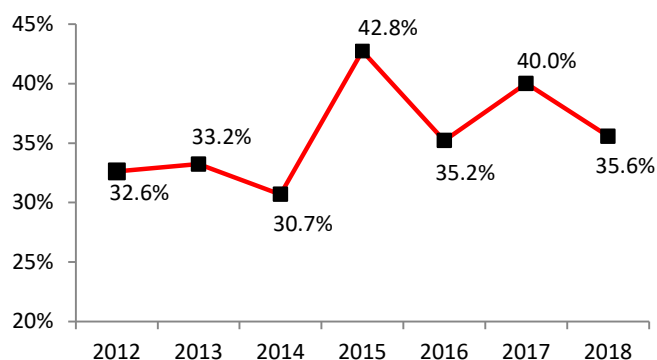
**Figure 4 – Cases requiring court warrant for entry**



**Figure 5 – Expenditure for engaging out-sourced consultants**



**Figure 6 – Failure rates of identifying water seepage source**



## Highlights

- A common obstacle to investigation is denied access to the premise suspected of being the seepage origin to conduct tests to identify the source. To deal with that, the Joint Office may resort to applying for a court warrant for entry. However, the Joint Office's reliance on such warrant has gradually diminished as indicated by the reducing number of warrants issued from 136 in 2010 to 51 in 2018 (**Figure 4**), possibly reflecting enhanced efforts of the Joint Office to reach the property owners or occupants and improved cooperation from them.
- Even if entry is gained, it is not always smooth to identify the source. Since 2013, the Joint Office has resorted to hiring out-sourced consultants to handle complicated cases where conventional methods did not yield any results. In the past three years, these consultants handled an average of about 10 000 cases per year. The expenditure for such services has also grown gradually from HK\$23 million in 2012-2013 to HK\$36 million in 2018-2019 (**Figure 5**). In 2019-2020, the budget estimate for the service has increased markedly, possibly due to more involvement or costly services of consultants in investigations.
- In recent years, failures of identifying the seepage source have exhibited a mild upward trend, accounting for over 35% of the investigated cases annually (**Figure 6**). To improve the chance of identifying the source for complicated cases, the Joint Office has since mid-2018 been testing new technology like infrared thermography and microwave tomography devices in three districts including Central and Western, Wan Chai and Kowloon City. The test will be extended to more districts in 2019.

Data sources: Latest figures from Development Bureau, Buildings Department, and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

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