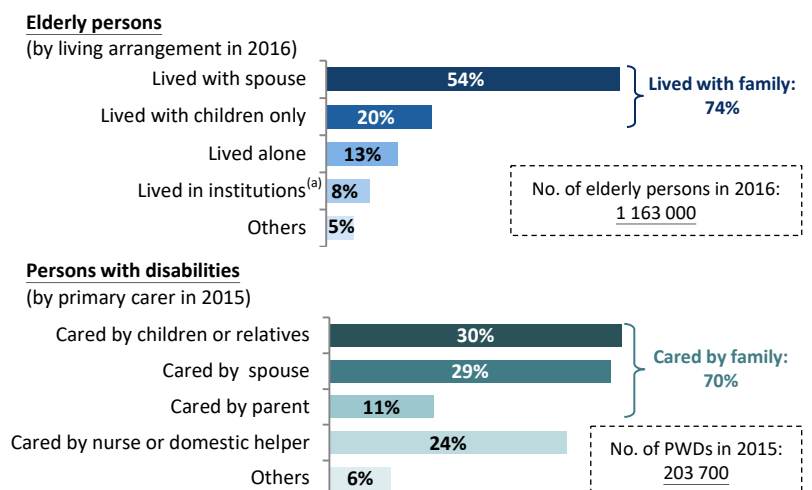


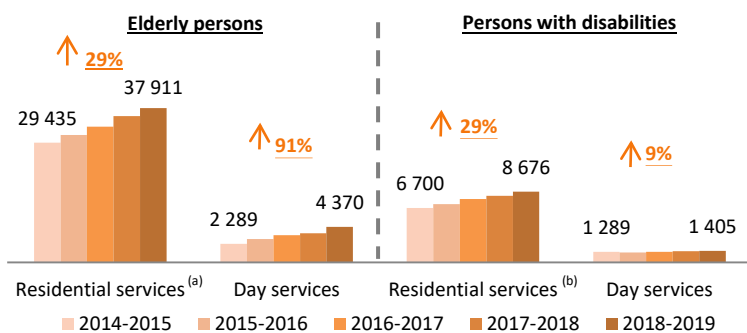
## Support for carers

**Figure 1 – Elderly persons and persons with disabilities ("PWDs") who require care**



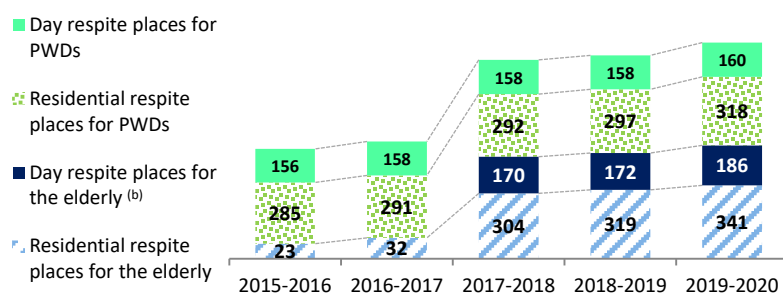
Note: (a) The figure includes elderly persons living in homes for the aged and hospitals.

**Figure 2 – Elderly persons and PWDs waiting for subsidized care services**



Notes: (a) The figures include elderly persons waiting for care and attention home and nursing home services.  
 (b) The figures include PWDs waiting for care and attention home and hostel services.

**Figure 3 – Number of respite places for elderly persons and PWDs<sup>(a)</sup>**



Notes: (a) The figures are accurate up to end-December 2019.  
 (b) The Social Welfare Department does not have information on day respite places for elderly persons in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

## Highlights

- In Hong Kong, there has been a growing number of elderly and persons with disabilities ("PWDs") who may require care by family members. According to the latest by-census conducted in 2016, Hong Kong's elderly population increased from 853 000 in 2006 to 1 163 000 in 2016. A majority of them lived with their spouse or children, at 74%, in 2016 (**Figure 1**).
- Meanwhile, the proportion of PWDs who were primarily cared by their families also increased from just 51% in 2001 to 70% in 2015 (**Figure 1**), according to the latest data available. Over the same period, the number of PWDs residing in domestic households also increased by 128 200 persons.
- The growing care need is also reflected in the demand for subsidized care services among elderly persons and PWDs. From 2014-2015 to 2018-2019, there was a 29% increase in the number of elderly and PWDs queuing for subsidized residential care (**Figure 2**). Some elderly and PWDs have to wait for a number of years before receiving the required service, which inevitably places a heavier burden on their families to care for them.
- At present, the Government provides respite services to afford short-term care to elderly persons and PWDs in need, as well as relieve the stress of their carers. Since 2018, the Government has begun purchasing elderly respite places from private residential care homes. The number of elderly residential respite places rose visibly from 32 in 2016-2017 to 341 in 2019-2020 (**Figure 3**). In September 2020, a similar plan to purchase 40 residential respite places for PWDs was announced. Nevertheless, the number of respite places provided by the Government pales in comparison with the long waiting list for subsidized care.

## Support for carers (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Living allowance for low-income carers

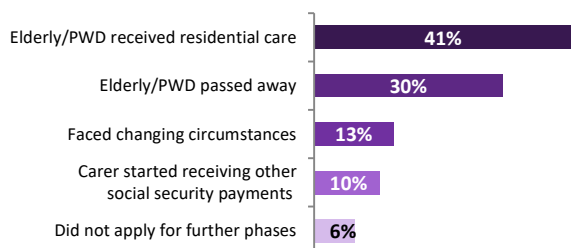
	Living allowance for low-income carers of elderly persons <sup>(a)</sup>			
	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Total
Period	Jun 2014 – Sep 2016	Oct 2016 – Sep 2018	Oct 2018 – Sep 2020 <sup>(b)</sup>	/
No. of invitation letters issued	20 383	29 213	31 209	80 805
No. of applications	2 928	2 917	2 330	8 175
No. of approved cases <sup>(c)</sup>	2 001	1 968	1 740	5 709
No. of withdrawn cases	1 594	1 266	399	3 259
	No. of current recipients			<b>2 450</b>

	Living Allowance for low-income carers of PWDs <sup>(a)</sup>		
	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Period	Oct 2016 – Sep 2018	Oct 2018 – Sep 2020 <sup>(b)</sup>	/
No. of invitation letters issued	14 740	13 070	27 810
No. of applications	1 934	1 069	3 003
No. of approved cases <sup>(c)</sup>	1 528	783	2 311
No. of withdrawn cases	366	80	446
	No. of current recipients		<b>1 865</b>

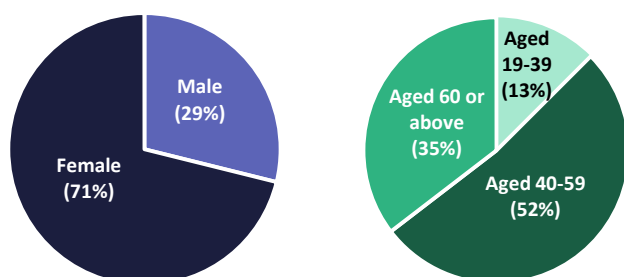
Notes: (a) The figures are accurate up to end-December 2019.  
 (b) The Government recently announced that the respective schemes will be extended for six months from October 2020 to end-March 2021.  
 (c) The figures only account for the newly approved cases in the specified phases of the pilot schemes.

Figure 5 – Reasons for withdrawing from the carer allowance schemes<sup>(a)</sup>



Note: (a) The figures are accurate up to end-December 2019.

Figure 6 – Profile of recipients of the carer allowance<sup>(a)</sup>



Note: (a) The figures are accurate up to end-December 2019.

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## Highlights

- Since June 2014, the Government has begun providing allowances on a pilot basis to ease the financial burden of low-income carers. In general, a carer may qualify for the monthly allowance set at HK\$2,400 if he or she (a) provides at least 80 hours of care per month; (b) comes from a family with monthly income at or below 75% of the median household income; and (c) tends to an elderly or PWD who is waiting for subsidized care services.
- The Social Welfare Department has thus far issued 80 805 and 27 810 letters to selected elderly persons and PWDs respectively, inviting their carers to apply for the allowance (Figure 4). Yet, the schemes have received a lukewarm response, with less than 8% of invited carers applying for and receiving the allowance. As at end-December 2019, there were 2 450 elderly carers and 1 865 PWD carers receiving the allowance, which is below the prescribed quota of 6 000 and 2 500 respectively. According to the Government, this is because the allowance is only intended for needy carers not covered by the existing social safety net.
- Furthermore, as at end-December 2019, there were 3 259 elderly carers and 446 PWD carers who withdrew from the schemes. While it is plausible for carers to withdraw after their dependents began receiving residential care or passed away, there were still 29% who withdrew because they faced changing circumstances, received other social security payments, or chose not to re-apply (Figure 5). The above, coupled with the low participation for the allowance, has engendered discussions as to how the schemes might be streamlined and/or regularized in the long run.
- According to the recipients' profile, the carers who have received the allowance mainly comprised able-bodied carers aged 40 to 59 (52%) (Figure 6). Yet, there were also 35% of low-income carers aged 60 or above. This suggests that the situation of "seniors caring for seniors" (「以老護老」) and "seniors caring for PWDs" (「以老護殘」) is not uncommon, raising concerns over the additional burden borne by older carers in Hong Kong.

Data sources: Latest figures from Census and Statistics Department, Labour and Welfare Bureau and Social Welfare Department.

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