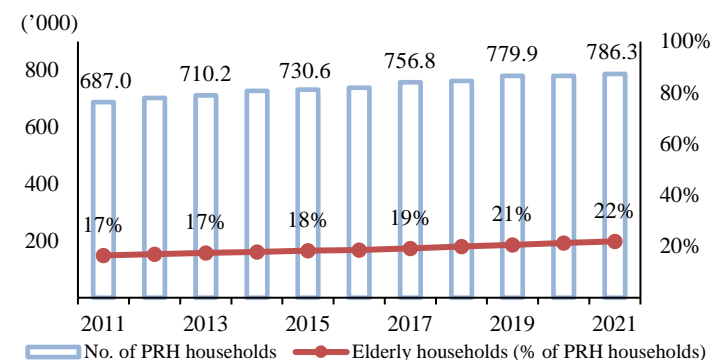


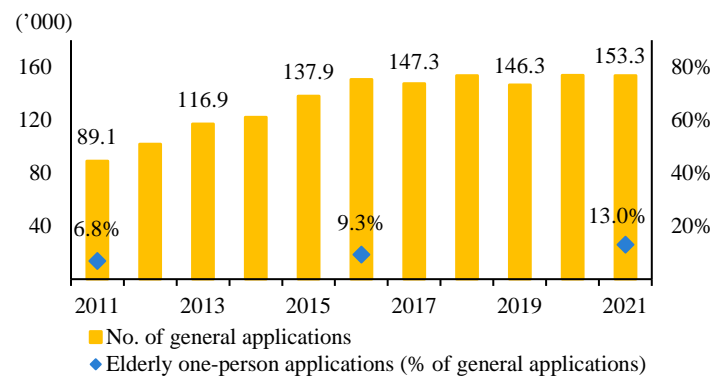
## Elderly households in public rental housing

**Figure 1 – Number of PRH households and share of elderly households, 2011-2021<sup>(1)</sup>**



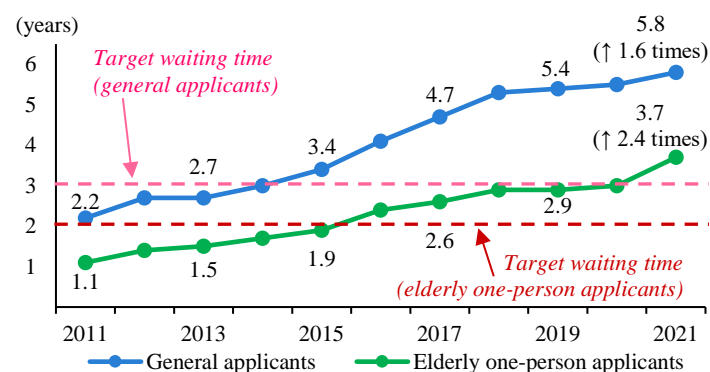
Note: (1) Figures are as at end-March of the year.

**Figure 2 – Number of general applications for PRH, 2011-2021<sup>(1)</sup>**



Notes: (1) Figures are as at end-March of the year.

**Figure 3 – Average waiting time<sup>(1)</sup> for PRH applications, 2011-2021<sup>(2)</sup>**



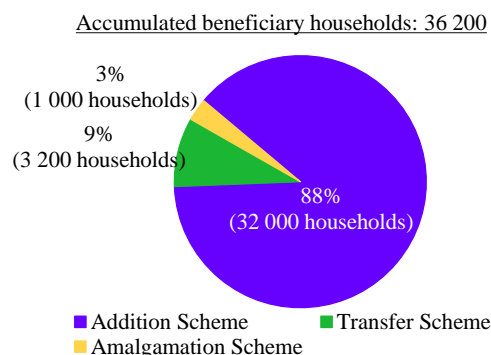
Notes: (1) Average waiting time is calculated as the average of the waiting time of applicants receiving the first PRH flat offer in the past 12 months.  
(2) Figures are as at end-June of the year.

## Highlights

- Public rental housing (“PRH”) in Hong Kong is a long-established safety net for low-income families. The vast majority of such affordable rent flats are provided by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (“HA”). During 2011 to 2021, HA’s PRH consistently housed around 30% of domestic households, with the number of households rising from 687 000 to 786 300. Based on HA’s definition, the share of elderly households (i.e. households with all members aged 60 or above) in PRH households gradually increased from 17% to 22% over the same period (Figure 1), reflecting population ageing in Hong Kong.
- The demand for PRH flats grew considerably in the past decade amidst rising property prices and private flat rentals. Coupled with the tight supply of PRH, the number of PRH general applications (referring to family and elderly one-person applications) surged by 72% between 2011 and 2021, to 153 300. In particular, the proportion of **elderly one-person applications aspiring for PRH allocation** has been persistently rising from 6.8% in 2011 to 9.3% in 2016, and further to 13.0% in 2021 (Figure 2). In other words, at least one in 10 PRH general applications is a one-person elderly household. Besides elderly one-person applications, there might also be other general applications from family households consisting solely of elderly persons. However, such number is not clear as relevant statistics are not readily available from HA.
- In the fourth quarter of 2021, there were about 4 700 flats allocated to general applicants, of which only 310 or 6.6% were to elderly one-person applicants. HA has specifically set a shorter waiting time target of around two years for elderly one-person applicants, as opposed to the target of around three years on average for overall general applicants. Accordingly, the actual average waiting time for PRH of elderly one-person applicants was consistently shorter than that of the overall general applicants. However, the former group’s actual average waiting time had increased by a magnitude of 2.4 times over the past decade, outstripping the 1.6 times increase for overall general applicants over the same period (Figure 3). The latest data indicated that it even reached four years at end-2021 (i.e. double the published target waiting time).

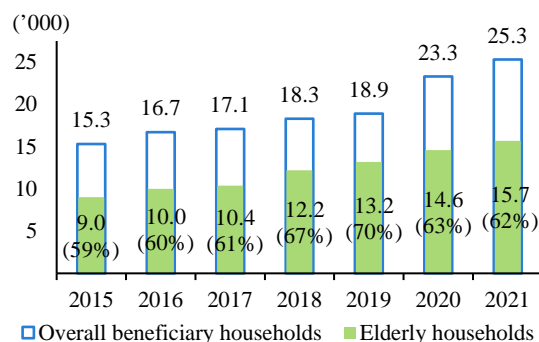
## Elderly households in public rental housing (cont'd)

**Figure 4 – Cumulative number of beneficiary households under HFSs as at 2021<sup>(1)</sup>**

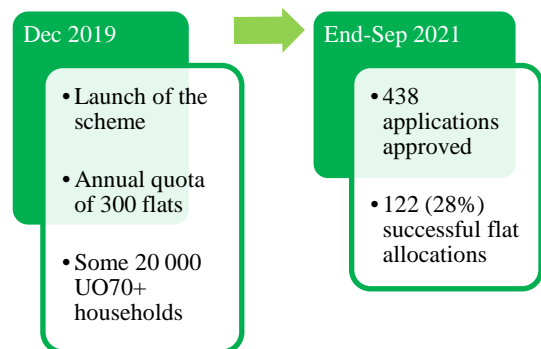


Note: (1) Figures are as at end-March 2021.

**Figure 5 – Beneficiary elderly households under RAS, 2015-2021**



**Figure 6 – Lifetime full rent exemption scheme for UO70+ households in PRH<sup>(1)</sup>**



Note: (1) UO households refer to PRH households enjoying more living space than is allowed under the established standards due to subsequent departure and decease of some family members.

### Highlights

- Meanwhile, for **existing PRH elderly tenants**, HA has launched a series of Harmonious Families Schemes (“HFSs”) to facilitate the establishment of a family-based support network. Under HFSs, elderly tenants may apply for (a) transfer to the same or nearby estates where their offspring live (“Transfer Scheme”); (b) addition of an adult offspring and his/her family members to the tenancy (“Addition Scheme”); or (c) amalgamation of tenancies with their younger family members (“Amalgamation Scheme”) for mutual care. The accumulated number of beneficiary households under HFSs was 36 200 as at 2021, up by 3.7 times from 2011. Among HFSs, the Addition Scheme is the most popular with 88% of accumulated beneficiary households being under this scheme (**Figure 4**).
- Since the 1990s, HA has put in place the Rent Assistance Scheme (“RAS”) with the aim of providing relief in the form of rent reductions at 25% or 50% to PRH tenants facing temporary financial hardship. Households fulfilling certain requirements (e.g. in terms of income, rent-to-income ratio, and not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance with rent allowance) are eligible for RAS. Given that elderly households are more vulnerable to low income issues, the rent reduction is generally provided at 50% for such households and they accounted for over half of the relevant beneficiary households during 2015 to 2021 as well. The share grew to as high as 70% in 2019, but then fell back somewhat in 2020 and 2021 probably because more non-elderly households encountered financial difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic (**Figure 5**).
- Under the existing tenancy agreement, under-occupation (“UO”) households are generally required to move to smaller PRH flats. Considering the difficulties of the elderly in adapting to a new environment, HA provides some relief to UO households with elderlies by (a) placing households with members aged between 60 and 69 at the bottom of the UO list for transfer; and (b) excluding households with members aged 70 or above from the UO list. However, to achieve effective use of PRH resources, HA implemented in December 2019 a scheme, with an annual quota of 300 flats, to allow UO households under (b) above whose members are all aged 70 or above (“UO70+ households”) to enjoy lifetime full rent exemption if they opt to transfer to smaller flats. All UO70+ households (some 20 000 households) were invited to submit applications. Up to end-September 2021, HA had approved 438 applications, yet just 28% of the households accepted the allocations offered by HA (**Figure 6**). According to the Government, the low acceptance rate was partly because some approved applicants found that the housing offers were not of their preference. Due to a small number of successful cases, there are views that the scheme should be enhanced by providing more incentives to transfer in advance of the Government’s review of the scheme scheduled for 2023.

Data sources: Latest figures from Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Housing Authority, Hong Kong Yearbook, and Transport and Housing Bureau.