

LCQ13: Subdivided unit households who have not applied for public rental housing

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (October 18):

Question:

According to the 2021 Population Census, over 100 000 households lived in subdivided units (SDUs) in Hong Kong, and the Report of the Task Force for the Study on Tenancy Control of SDUs published by the Transport and Housing Bureau in March 2021 revealed that nearly 50 per cent of SDU households had not applied for public rental housing (PRH). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number and percentage of sandwich class households with household income exceeding the income limit for PRH among the SDU households who have not applied for PRH;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number and percentage of households having household members who are non-Hong Kong residents (including Mainland residents holding Exit-entry Permits for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao as well as non-refoulement claimants) among the SDU households who have not applied for PRH;

(3) whether it has compiled statistics on (i) the number of sandwich class households with household income exceeding the income limit for PRH, and (ii) the number of households having household members who were non-Hong Kong residents mentioned in (2), among the households living in SDUs between 2016 and 2021, as well as their respective percentages in the SDU households who had not applied for PRH; and

(4) whether it has studied if, apart from the aforesaid reasons, there are other reasons why SDU households have not applied for PRH, together with the numbers and percentages of such households by reason?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has all along been paying attention to the housing needs of those who are inadequately housed. We are taking forward a series of measures, including the provision of about 20 000 transitional housing units and construction of about 30 000 Light Public Housing units, so as to provide more housing options for people who are currently inadequately housed, including those

living in subdivided units (SDUs), to improve their living environment.

Having consulted the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the reply to various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong is as follows:

(1) to (3) According to thematic reports on persons living in SDUs in C&SD's 2021 Population Census and 2016 Population Bi-census, there were about 108 000 and 93 000 SDUs in Hong Kong in 2021 and 2016 respectively, accommodating about 216 000 and 210 000 persons. The relevant information reflecting the situation in 2021 is as follows:

(i) The median monthly household income of households living in SDUs was \$15,310, which was 13.4 per cent higher than \$13,500 in 2016. Among households living in SDUs, the monthly household income of 22.0 per cent (about 24 000 households) was below \$10,000, similar to that in 2016 (23.7 per cent; about 22 000 households); that of 24.5 per cent (about 26 000 households) was \$10,000 – \$14,999, significantly fewer than that in 2016 (35.6 per cent; about 33 000 households); that of 19.4 per cent (about 21 000 households) was \$15,000 – \$19,999, also fewer than that in 2016 (26.1 per cent; about 24 000 households); and that of 34.2 per cent (about 37 000 households) was \$20,000 and above, significantly more than that in 2016 (14.6 per cent; about 13 000 households);

(ii) Among persons living in SDUs, the majority was Chinese (87.6 per cent; about 188 000 persons), followed by South Asians (6.3 per cent; about 13 000 persons) and Filipinos (2.0 per cent; about 4 200 persons), largely similar to the situation in 2016; and

(iii) About one-fifth (21.2 per cent; about 23 000 households) of households living in SDUs had at least one household member from the Mainland having resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years, fewer than that in 2016 (25.6 per cent; about 24 000 households).

It is the objective of the Hong Kong Housing Authority to provide housing to low-income families who cannot afford to rent private accommodation. Households with income and assets below the prescribed limits are deemed to be low-income families who are unable to afford renting private accommodation, and hence are eligible to apply for public rental housing (PRH). The limits are assessed annually to keep them in line with the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. The income and asset limits for PRH application vary in accordance with the family size. The relevant details are at Annex. As the Government does not keep income information of SDU households by household size, the number of SDU households with household income exceeding the income limit of PRH application is not available. Furthermore, the Government does not keep information on the income of SDU households which have not applied for PRH and whether the relevant persons are Hong Kong residents.

(4) Persons living in SDUs may decide not to apply, or have not applied, for PRH with their own considerations or due to different reasons (including

transportation and geographical location). Besides, PRH applicants must not own or co-own any domestic property in Hong Kong; while persons who are not granted the right to land in Hong Kong (e.g. Mainland residents holding Exit-entry Permits for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao as well as non-refoulement claimants) cannot be included in PRH applications either. Hence, when handling the SDU issue, the HKSAR Government has to carefully consider the impacts brought by relevant measures and formulate follow-up arrangement, so as to avoid displacing some SDU households who are not eligible for PRH to accommodation with higher rents, or even rendering them homeless.