

LCQ17: Young people's demand for public housing

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chow Man-kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

It has been reported that the average waiting time for public rental housing (PRH) in the first quarter of 2024 was 5.7 years, and the waiting time of young people was even longer. Moreover, there is keen competition in the market under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and the White Form Secondary Market Scheme (WSM), and it is often difficult for young people to successfully buy a flat through one-person application. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current number of one-person flats among the PRH flats of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the rental flats of the Hong Kong Housing Society, and set out in Table 1 a breakdown by the three regions, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, as well as District Council district;

Table 1

Region	District Council district	Number of one-person flats
Hong Kong Island		
Kowloon		
The New Territories		

(2) of the number of one-person applicants aged 35 or below among the applicants currently on the PRH Waiting List, and set out in Table 2 a breakdown by their academic attainment (i.e. (i) primary or below, (ii) secondary, (iii) post-secondary and (iv) tertiary or above);

Table 2

	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
Number of applicants				

(3) of the number of one-person applicants aged 35 or below who were allotted one-person PRH flats in each of the past three years and their average waiting time;

(4) of (i) the number of flats reserved for one-person applicants, and (ii) the number of one-person applicants aged 35 or below, and among them, the number of those who successfully bought an HOS flat under the Sale of HOS Flats 2022;

(5) of the following information on one-person applicants aged 35 or below under WSM 2022: (i) the number of applicants, (ii) the number of applicants exceeding the relevant quota and their percentage (if any), and (iii) the number of transactions of HOS flats involved and their percentage in the relevant quota; and

(6) as there are views that, to meet the home-buying needs of young people and tie in with the measure of extending the mortgage default guarantee period of second-hand HOS flats to 50 years, the Government should make good use of the second-hand HOS flats released by the market in response to the measure concerned and motivate more people who can afford home ownership to engage in the property market so as to continuously revive the overall sentiment of the property market, whether the Government will consider increasing the quota for WSM from 4 500 to 20 000 and correspondingly adjusting upward the quota for one-person applicants therein; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In response to the question raised by Dr the Hon Chow Man-kong, our reply is as follows:

(1) As at end-March 2024, the number of public rental housing (PRH) flats for one to two persons under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is as follows:

Region	District Council district	Number of flats
Hong Kong Island	Central and Western	—
	Eastern	4 100
	Wan Chai	—
	Southern	1 800
Kowloon	Kowloon City	5 000
	Kwun Tong	22 200
	Sham Shui Po	12 100
	Wong Tai Sin	9 300
	Yau Tsim Mong	500

New Territories	Islands	2 700
	Kwai Tsing	13 000
	North	4 700
	Sai Kung	5 900
	Sha Tin	8 100
	Tai Po	2 100
	Tsuen Wan	1 500
	Tuen Mun	7 000
	Yuen Long	9 400

Note: The figures include PRH flats in Tenants Purchase Scheme estates, Home Ownership Scheme Courts, Buy or Rent Option Scheme and Mortgage Subsidy Scheme Courts, and Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme Courts. Interim Housing flats are not included.

Meanwhile, as at end-March 2024, the number of rental flats for one/one to two person(s) under the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) is as follows:

Region	District Council district	Number of flats*
Hong Kong Island	Central and Western	330
	Eastern	940#
	Southern	350#
Kowloon	Kowloon City	50
New Territories	North	120
	Sai Kung	580#
	Sha Tin	390
	Tsuen Wan	50

* Rounded to the nearest 10.

There are about 500 one-person flats in Sai Kung District, and about 10 each in Eastern District and Southern District. There is no one-person flat in other districts.

(2) and (3) The Housing Department (HD) conducts the Survey on PRH Applicants biennially to collect updated statistical information on the socio-economic characteristics of applicants. According to the findings of the survey in 2022, there were 38 600 non-elderly one-person applicants under the Quota and Points System (QPS) aged below 30. The number of applicants decreased by 27 900 from 66 500 five years earlier (i.e. 2017). The educational attainment of these applicants is distributed as follows:

Educational attainment	Non-elderly one-person applicants under QPS aged below 30
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Primary or below	0%
Secondary	23%
Post-secondary*	24%
Tertiary or above#	52%
Total	100%

Note: The percentages may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

* "Post-secondary" includes Certificate, Diploma level courses and sub-degree programmes (e.g. Higher Certificate, Higher Diploma, Professional Diploma, Associate Degree, Pre-Associate Degree, Endorsement Certificate, Associateship or equivalent courses and other nondegree level programmes) in local or non-local institutions.

"Tertiary or above includes all undergraduate programmes, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate programmes in local or non-local institutions.

The HD does not keep statistics on the number of applicants categorised as "non-elderly one-person applicants aged 35 or below", and distribution of their educational attainment.

Given the limited PRH resources, it is the policy of the HA to accord priority to general applicants (i.e. family applicants and elderly one-person applicants) over non-elderly one-person applicants in the allocation of PRH flats. Priority of flat allocation of QPS applicants, which is different from that of general applicants, is determined by the total points accumulated by such applicants under the points system instead of the time when they joined the queue. Therefore, the average waiting time of general applicants is not applicable to them. Generally speaking, older applicants will be allocated flats faster under QPS in order not to encourage early registration by young people, and to motivate them to work hard in their youth to move up the social ladder. The average age of non-elderly one-person applicants who were housed to PRH in the past five years is 57, whereas the age of the youngest applicant who was housed to PRH ranges from 47 to 52.

Besides, the HD conducts regular checking on the eligibility of QPS applicants who have waited for five years but not yet due for detailed vetting within the next two years to remove applicants who are no longer eligible for PRH, thus enable the HA to have a more realistic grasp of the situation of the QPS applicants and assess the demand more accurately. On average, the applications of more than half of the target applicants who were subject to regular checking were cancelled each year.

The HD does not keep statistics on the number of applicants categorised as "non-elderly one-person applicants aged 35 or below" who were housed to PRH flats. In the past three years (Note), the number of non-elderly one-person applicants under QPS who were housed to PRH flats is as follows:

Year	Non-elderly one-person applicants under QPS housed to PRH flats
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2020/21	1 518
2021/22	1 944
2022/23	1 992

Note: The figure for 2023/24 will be released in June 2024.

(4) A total of 8 926 flats were put up for sale under the Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2022. Around 10 per cent of the flats were set aside for one-person applicants. The HA received a total of around 250 000 applications (comprising around 200 000 White Forms and around 50 000 Green Forms) under the sale exercise. There were around 110 000 one-person applicants aged 35 or below, accounting for around 43 per cent of all applicants. Around 480 one-person applicants aged 35 or below purchased HOS flats eventually, taking up around 54 per cent of the 900 quotas set aside for one-person applicants.

(5) The HA received around 120 000 applications for the White Form Secondary Market Scheme (WSM) 2022. There were around 60 000 one-person applicants aged 35 or below, accounting for around 51 per cent of all applicants. WSM 2022 provided a quota of 4 500, around 10 per cent of which were set aside for one-person applicants. Around 160 one-person applicants aged 35 or below purchased subsidised sale flats (SSFs) under the HA or HKHS through WSM 2022 eventually, taking up around 36 per cent of the quota for all one-person applicants.

(6) The HA has extended the maximum mortgage default guarantee period and repayment period for the Secondary Market Scheme earlier and we are closely monitoring the situation of the secondary market after the implementation of such arrangements. When we launch WSM in the future, we will take into account different factors, including the demand of White Form applicants towards SSFs, the secondary market and the market environment as a whole in order to review and determine the quotas for WSM.