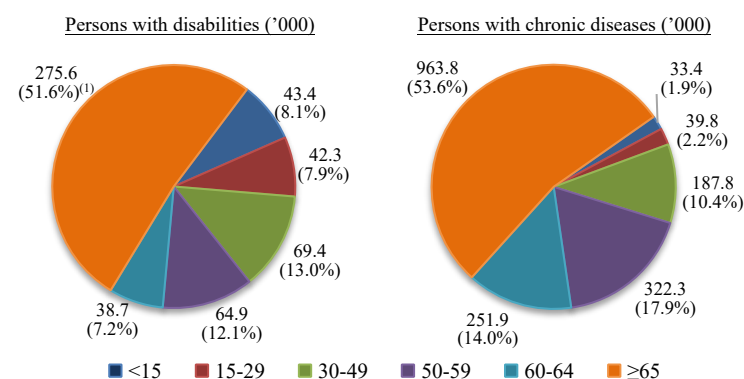




Support for carers of persons with disabilities and chronic diseases

Figure 1 – Persons with disabilities/chronic diseases by age, 2020



Note: (1) Figures in the parenthesis represent the percentage of the total.

Figure 2 – Elderly persons and PWDs waitlisted for subsidized care services, 2022-2023

Service type	No. of persons waitlisted	Average waiting time (months)
Elderly persons		
Residential care services (16 836 persons waiting)		
Care and attention place	14 040	14.0
Nursing home place	2 796	18.0
Day care services		
Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly	1 581	4.0
PWDs		
Residential rehabilitation services (10 035 persons waiting ⁽¹⁾)		
Long stay care home	2 450	72.3
Hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons ⁽²⁾	2 417	171.1
Hostel for moderately mentally handicapped persons	2 798	154.1
Supported hostel	2 370	78.8
Day rehabilitation services (3 457 persons waiting)		
Day activity centre	1 195	55.6
Sheltered workshop	2 239	14.0
Supported employment	23	2.5

Notes: (1) Only those residential rehabilitation services in high demand are covered in this Figure. The number of PWDs being waitlisted for residential rehabilitation services would have increased from 10 035 to 11 458 at end-March 2023 if the relatively less sought-after services are included.
(2) Among residential rehabilitation services for PWDs, the average waiting time was the longest for hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons (171.1 months) and the shortest for halfway house (4.2 months).

Figure 3 – Age distribution of specific carers, 2020

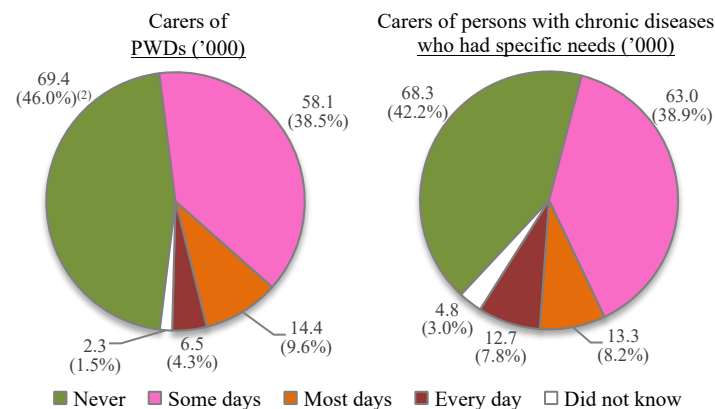
Age group of the specific carer	PWDs		Persons with chronic diseases who had specific needs	
	No. of persons ('000)	%	No. of persons ('000)	%
< 40	23.7	13.3	22.6	10.6
40 - 49	36.5	20.5	32.0	15.1
50 - 59	50.1	28.2	51.5	24.3
60 - 64	20.7	11.7	27.7	13.1
65 - 69	15.0	8.5	21.3	10.0
≥ 70	26.1	14.7	46.7	22.0
Did not know / not applicable	5.5	3.1	10.4	4.9
Total	177.5	100.0	212.1	100.0
Median age (years)	55		58	

Highlights

- Hong Kong's population is ageing fast, and elderly persons aged 65 and above are expected to make up 30% of the total population by 2031. Disability and chronic diseases are highly prevalent in older population. According to the survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") between August 2019 and December 2020, 51.6% of 534 200 persons with disabilities ("PWDs") were aged 65 and above (**Figure 1**). The corresponding share for the 1.8 million persons with chronic diseases was 53.6%.
- Support and care for elderly persons and PWDs constitute an important component of the social welfare system in Hong Kong. While the Government currently provides day care/rehabilitation and residential care services ("RCS") for the elderly and PWDs, the supply falls short of demand and the shortage is well reflected in the long waiting list for some types of subsidized care services (**Figure 2**). At end-March 2023, some 16 800 elderly persons were waitlisting for subsidized RCS places. Regarding RCS places for PWDs, there were a total of some 11 500 PWDs being waitlisted for various types of services and the average waiting time ranged from 4.2 months to a high of 171.1 months.
- The long waiting list of elderly persons and PWDs for subsidized care services inevitably points to a heavy burden on their families to care for them. This is particularly the case for "specific carers" who are relatives/friends acting as the primary or sole carers to provide support to day-to-day living of another person who resides at home and has specific needs. Among the 177 500 PWDs who had a specific carer in 2020, some 34.9% of their specific carers were aged 60 and above. The corresponding share for the 212 100 persons with chronic diseases was 45.1%. The above figures suggest that the situation of "seniors caring for seniors" (以老護老) and "seniors caring for PWDs" (以老護殘) has become more common in recent years, raising concerns over the additional burden borne by older carers in Hong Kong.

Support for carers of persons with disabilities and chronic diseases (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Frequency of the specific carers feeling stressed due to caring responsibilities⁽¹⁾



Notes: (1) The C&SD survey excluded those specific carers who could not be contacted or refused to answer the follow-up questions on the frequency of their stress of caring services.
(2) Figures in the parenthesis represent the percentages of the total.

Figure 5 – No. of respite places for elderly persons and PWDs

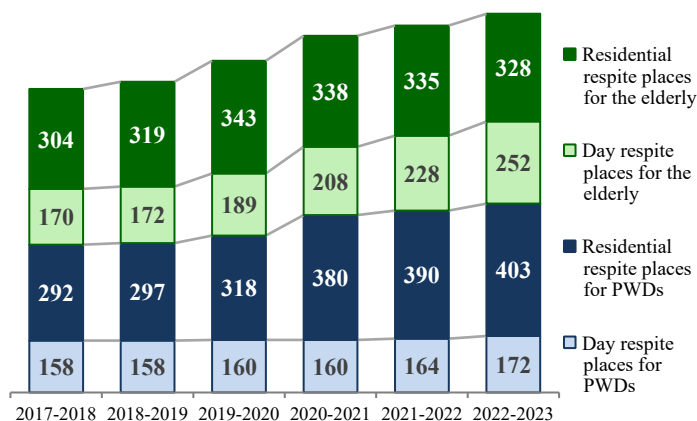


Figure 6 – Living allowance for low-income carers

	Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families ⁽¹⁾				
	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	Total
	Jun 2014 – Sep 2016	Oct 2016 – Sep 2018	Oct 2018 – Mar 2021	Apr 2021 – Sep 2023	/
No. of invitation letters issued	20 383	29 213	31 209	23 886	104 691
No. of approved cases ⁽²⁾	2 001	1 968	1 760	1 823	7 552
	Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of PWDs ⁽¹⁾				
	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Total	
	Oct 2016 – Sep 2018	Oct 2018 – Mar 2021	Apr 2021 – Sep 2023	/	
No. of invitation letters issued	14 740	13 070	13 580	41 390	
No. of approved cases ⁽²⁾	1 528	798	1 213	3 539	

Notes: (1) Figures are as at end-December 2022.
(2) These figures refer to new applications that have been assessed as eligible and granted the allowance.

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Highlights

- Another noteworthy phenomenon for specific carers is the considerable physical, mental and financial burdens encountered by them when discharging their day-to-day caring responsibilities. Among the 150 800 PWDs who had a specific carer, 52.4% of their specific carers felt stress during the one month before the C&SD survey (**Figure 4**). The corresponding percentage for those 162 000 persons with chronic diseases who had specific needs was 54.9%.
- At present, the Government provides day and residential respite services to afford short-term care to elderly persons and PWDs. The services aim to provide temporary relief to their carers, relieving their stress and allowing them to take a short break when required. To enhance respite service for the elderly, the Government started to purchase additional residential and day respite places from private residential care homes for the elderly from February 2018 and December 2023 respectively. While this has helped boost the number of respite places in recent years (**Figure 5**), such increase pales in comparison with the number of elderly persons who are on the waiting list for subsidized long-term care services.
- In a further effort to ease the burden of carers, the Government also launched (a) the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families in 2014; and (b) the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. In October 2023, the Government regularized both schemes and raised the monthly allowance from HK\$2,400 to HK\$3,000.
- The eligibility criteria for carer allowance schemes have been considered by some stakeholders as too strict. In particular, the carer must not be a recipient of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or the Old Age Living Allowance, which has resulted in rejection of many needy families already benefitting from some kinds of cash assistance scheme. Reflecting the above, the Social Welfare Department had issued a total of 104 691 and 41 390 invitation letters to elderly persons and PWDs respectively as at end-December 2022 (**Figure 6**), inviting their carers to apply for the carer allowance. Yet, less than 10% of invited carers had applied for and received the allowance.

Data source: Figures from the Census and Statistics Department, Labour and Welfare Bureau, and Social Welfare Department.

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