

**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in  
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-25**

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 3031)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

To ease the cash flow burden of student loan repayers amidst the epidemic, the Government has provided interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement since April 2020 for 4 years, and announced in last year's Policy Address its extension for another year until 31 March 2025. Will the Government inform this Committee of:

- (1) the numbers of applications received and approved since the implementation of the interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement, as well as the average length of deferral granted;
- (2) the proportion of students applying for the arrangement concerned to the total number of student loan repayers;
- (3) the total amount of outstanding loans with recovery actions still underway and the number of students involved.

Asked by: Hon LAM Kin-fung, Jeffrey (LegCo internal reference no.: 39)

Reply:

(1) and (2)

To ease the financial burden of student loan repayers (except defaulters against whom legal recovery actions have been taken) amidst the epidemic, the Government has been providing interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement (deferral arrangement) for 5 years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025 (suspension period). New loan repayers with loan repayments activated upon graduation or completion of study during the suspension period are also eligible for the deferral arrangement. Without having to apply, all eligible student loan repayers do not need to repay the principal and instalment interest payable during the suspension period, i.e. the repayment period will also be correspondingly extended for up to

5 years. However, student loan repayers may choose to opt out of the deferral arrangement and continue to repay according to their original repayment schedules. Since the implementation of the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 and up till 31 January 2024, about 16 000 student loan repayers have opted out of the deferral arrangement, accounting for about 8% of the total number of repayers.

(3)

The numbers of default cases<sup>^</sup> and amounts in default<sup>@</sup> under various student financial assistance schemes as at 31 January 2024 are as follows:

<b>A. Tertiary Student Finance Scheme - Publicly-funded Programmes</b>	
Number of default cases	508
Amount in default (\$ million)	12.23
<b>B. Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>	
Number of default cases	603
Amount in default (\$ million)	9.34
<b>C. Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students</b>	
Number of default cases	379
Amount in default (\$ million)	8.00
<b>D. Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>	
Number of default cases	1 072
Amount in default (\$ million)	27.71
<b>E. Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme</b>	
Number of default cases	2 948
Amount in default (\$ million)	45.82
<b>Total</b>	
<b>Number of default cases</b>	<b>5 510</b>
<b>Amount in default (\$ million)</b>	<b>103.10</b>

<sup>^</sup> Cases with 2 or more consecutive overdue quarterly instalments/6 or more consecutive overdue monthly instalments are regarded as default cases.

<sup>@</sup> The amount in default is the total amount of arrears in the defaulted student loan accounts, including the arrears from the previous academic years.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EDB193**

**(Question Serial No. 1660)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (101) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(102) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(103) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students  
(201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

As mentioned in the Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2024-25 under Head 173 - Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency, the Government will continue the concerted efforts to recover student loans in arrears. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

- In respect of schemes providing means-tested and non-means-tested loans for post-secondary students, what are the total numbers of applications, the median and total loan amounts, the numbers of write-off cases and the amounts borne accordingly in the past 3 years?
- Given the possibility of an increase in tuition fees for undergraduate programmes, will the Government consider lowering the interest rate of the non-means-tested loan schemes to be on par with that of the means-tested loans so as to ease the burden of applicants? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LEE Wai-wang, Robert (LegCo internal reference no.: 30)

Reply:

## **Information on loans provided to post-secondary students and write-off cases**

The information on loans disbursed to students by the Student Finance Office (SFO) and write-off cases under the means-tested financial assistance schemes (i.e. Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes (TSFS) and Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP)) and non-means-tested loan schemes (NLS) (i.e. Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students (NLSFT), Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students (NLSPS) and Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS)) for local post-secondary students in the 2021/22 to 2023/24 academic years is tabulated below:

Scheme	Academic Year		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>Means-tested Financial Assistance Schemes</b>			
<b>(i) TSFS</b>			
Number of loans disbursed	2 921	2 797	1 985
Median loan amount (\$)	53,890	55,560	57,340
Total amount of loans disbursed (\$ million)	132.22	131.50	97.16
Number of write-off cases #	46	16	5
Write-off amount (\$ million)	2.88	0.94	0.04
<b>(ii) FASP</b>			
Number of loans disbursed	2 616	2 329	1 572
Median loan amount (\$)	53,890	55,560	57,340
Total amount of loans disbursed (\$ million)	121.07	111.40	78.77
Number of write-off cases #	9	3	1
Write-off amount (\$ million)	0.40	0.06	0.04
<b>NLS</b>			
<b>(i) NLSFT</b>			
Number of loans disbursed	11 366	11 199	10 201
Median loan amount (\$)	42,100	42,100	42,100
Total amount of loans disbursed (\$ million)	451.25	446.51	411.36
Number of write-off cases #	10	5	2
Write-off amount (\$ million)	0.64	0.24	0.02

Scheme	Academic Year		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>(ii) NLSPS</b>			
Number of loans disbursed	10 346	10 063	9 256
Median loan amount (\$)	58,700	59,000	59,000
Total amount of loans disbursed (\$ million)	609.44	608.10	528.46
Number of write-off cases #	22	5	1
Write-off amount (\$ million)	2.78	0.54	0.10
<b>(iii) ENLS</b>			
Number of loans disbursed	6 086	5 919	3 972
Median loan amount (\$)	61,880	63,000	65,000
Total amount of loans disbursed (\$ million)	455.27	457.53	269.78
Number of write-off cases #	79	33	27
Write-off amount (\$ million)	2.72	1.31	0.95

\* As at 31 January 2024

# A write-off case may involve the loan repayment accounts of one or more financial assistance schemes administered by SFO. As student loans are funded by public money, SFO endeavours to make every effort to recover outstanding loans from defaulters and their indemnifiers, and will only consider writing off outstanding loans when they are irrecoverable.

### **Interest rates of post-secondary student financial assistance/ loan schemes**

The Government's policy on student finance is to ensure that no local student is denied access to education due to lack of means. Post-secondary students who have financial needs and have passed both the income and assets tests are provided with grants not requiring repayment to pay for their tuition fees and academic expenses, and low-interest loans to cover their living expenses. The interest rate of the loans concerned is currently set at 1% per annum. As for the NLS, they provide loans for students who do not intend to undergo or fail to pass the income and assets tests to settle their tuition fees. The annual interest rate of the non-means-tested loans is determined on a "no-gain-no-loss" basis as approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, and will be adjusted regularly or in response to changes in the market interest rates in accordance with the established mechanism. In other words, the Government will not seek to make a profit from these loans, nor will it suffer any loss or provide any subsidy. The current interest rate of the loans concerned is 2.42% per annum. If the interest rate of the NLS is set at the same level as that of the means-tested loans, it will mean that taxpayers have to subsidise such schemes, which goes against the "no-gain-no-loss" principle. Moreover, if applicants can obtain low-interest loans from the Government without having to go through the income and assets tests, it will easily result in abuse of the schemes, thus encouraging unnecessary borrowing and increasing the future repayment burden of students.

The Government has implemented a number of measures to ease the repayment burden of student loan borrowers. As regards the interest to be paid, the interest rate of means-tested loans has been lowered from 2.5% to the prevailing 1% per annum as mentioned above. In addition, the risk-adjusted-factor rate for determining the interest rate of the NLS previously has been reduced from 1.5% to 0% per annum, and hence the current interest rate is 2.42% per annum. In respect of the repayment arrangements, the standard repayment period has been extended to 15 years, with quarterly instalments changed to monthly instalments. To ease the financial burden of student loan borrowers right upon their graduation and allow them more time to secure a stable job, they are given the option of commencing loan repayment one year after graduation. Student loan borrowers with proven repayment difficulties (e.g. financial hardship, further full-time study or serious illness) may apply to defer repayment of their loans without interest for up to a maximum of 2 years, meaning that the repayment period of the borrowers concerned can be up to 17 years. Furthermore, the Government has been providing interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement for 5 years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025 (suspension period). Without having to apply, eligible student loan repayers do not need to repay the principal and instalment interest payable during the suspension period. Taking into account the 5-year suspension period, the entire repayment period will be correspondingly extended to up to 22 years. These measures can appropriately ease the repayment burden of student loan borrowers.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 2940)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

Regarding the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) -

1. Please set out the total amount of student loans repaid and administrative fees collected each year since the implementation of interest-free deferral of loan repayment in 2020 up till now, as well as the administrative expenses incurred by the implementation of the deferral of loan repayment each year;
2. It is mentioned under the Programme that the WFSFAA will “continue the concerted efforts to recover student loans in arrears”. Please provide an update on the number of defaulters, amount in default and their reasons for failure to repay loan instalments; and
3. It is mentioned under the Programme that the WFSFAA will be “developing a centralised e-service portal to facilitate single sign-on for different e-services of the Agency”. Noting that online applications for “Financial Assistance Schemes at Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Levels” and “Financial Assistance Schemes at Post-secondary and Tertiary Levels” are already available on “SFO (Student Finance Office) E-link”, will the centralised e-service portal replace the existing “SFO E-link”? Will the portal be linked to the “iAM Smart” platform? What are the relevant progress and estimated expenditure of developing the portal?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Yuk-wai, Kenneth (LegCo internal reference no.: 14)

Reply:



1. To ease the financial burden of student loan repayers (except defaulters against whom legal recovery actions have been taken) amidst the epidemic, the Government has been providing interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement (deferral arrangement) for 5 years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025 (suspension period). The total amounts of loans repaid under the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes (TSFS), Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP), Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students (NLSFT), Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students (NLSPS) and Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS) in the 2020-21 to 2023-24 financial years are tabulated as follows –

Total Amount of Loans Repaid #	Financial Year			
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
	(\$ million)			
TSFS	32.17	29.76	22.13	21.47
FASP	31.47	29.01	22.95	19.35
NLSFT	70.56	75.30	76.15	76.69
NLSPS	151.93	137.80	133.28	116.25
ENLS	110.39	93.16	89.80	81.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>396.52</b>	<b>365.03</b>	<b>344.31</b>	<b>315.47</b>

# Including the principal and all interest paid by student loan repayers who opted to repay according to their original repayment schedules, made early lump sum repayment of loans, made early partial repayment of loans and defaulted on repayment.

\* As at 31 January 2024

Under the deferral arrangement, the annual administrative fee of \$180 chargeable on loan repayment accounts under the NLSFT, NLSPS and ENLS is waived during the suspension period, but new applicants under the relevant schemes would still be subject to an administrative fee for their applications during the suspension period. The administrative fees collected from applicants of non-means-tested loans in the 2020-21 to 2023-24 financial years are tabulated as follows –

Administrative Fee	Financial Year			
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
<b>Total (\$ million)</b>	7.10	6.42	6.26	6.30

\* As at 31 January 2024

No additional expenditure was incurred for the implementation of the deferral arrangement.

2. The total number of default cases<sup>^</sup> and the total amount in default<sup>@</sup> under various student assistance schemes as at 31 January 2024 are tabulated as follows –

<b>Total number of default cases<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>5 510</b>
<b>Total amount in default (\$ million)<sup>@</sup></b>	<b>103.10</b>

<sup>^</sup> Cases with 2 or more consecutive overdue quarterly instalments/6 or more consecutive overdue monthly instalments are regarded as default cases.

<sup>@</sup> The amount in default is the total amount of arrears in the defaulted student loan accounts, including the arrears from the previous academic years.

The Student Finance Office (SFO) has always appealed to student loan borrowers to actively contact SFO for assistance if they have difficulties in repaying their loans due to financial hardship. For those student loan borrowers who have contacted SFO to apply for deferment of loan repayment, the main reasons for deferment are financial hardship, serious illness and further full-time study.

3. The Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) commenced in 2022 the project of the centralised e-service portal, which is expected to be launched in 2025. The centralised e-service portal allows users to log in to all financial assistance/loan schemes administered by WFSFAA through a single sign-on process. The portal will interface with our existing e-service portals (including the SFO E-link) and the Government’s “iAM Smart” platform in order to provide a one-stop e-service platform for creating better user experiences.

The expenditure on the development of the centralised e-service portal is tabulated below:

<b>2022-23 (\$ million)</b>	<b>2023-24 (as at 29 February 2024) (\$ million)</b>	<b>2024-25 (Estimated) (\$ million)</b>
1.331	3.840	5.571

-End-

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 0729)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

It is mentioned under the Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2024-25 that the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) will continue the concerted efforts to recover student loans in arrears. There will also be a decrease of 10 posts. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) the details and reasons for the decrease of 10 posts;
- (2) with the amount of student loans in arrears having exceeded \$100 million in 2023-24, what loan recovery actions will be taken by the Government or the WFSFAA? What are the manpower and the expenditure involved?
- (3) has the WFSFAA looked into the reasons why the students default on loan repayments? Will any resources be set aside to instill financial planning concepts among students?

Asked by: Hon LIAO Cheung-kong, Martin (LegCo internal reference no.: 7)

Reply:

- (1) In order to maintain the sustainability of our public finances, the Government has strictly controlled the civil service establishment since 2021-22. The Government will continue to implement this initiative, and maintain the target of zero-growth in the civil service establishment in 2024-25, with the aim of containing the establishment at a level not exceeding that as at end-March 2021. For the purpose of meeting such target, the Student Finance Office (SFO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) has enhanced effectiveness and efficiency through re-prioritisation,

internal redeployment and streamlining of work processes, so that various enhancements and administrative arrangements can be taken forward. Having reviewed its manpower requirements, SFO will delete 10 civil service posts with effect from 1 April 2024. The deletion of these 10 posts will not affect the service and efficiency of WFSFAA.

- (2) Cases with two or more consecutive overdue quarterly instalments/six or more consecutive overdue monthly instalments are regarded as default cases. SFO administers different loan recovery procedures as appropriate at different stages on a case-by-case basis having regard to the circumstances of each case. Generally speaking, SFO will issue reminder letters, send SMS messages or make phone calls to the loan borrowers concerned and their indemnifiers requesting them to settle the arrears. Apart from urging them to settle the arrears, SFO will also attempt to find out their reasons for defaulting on the loan repayment and see if they need any assistance. If no repayment or response is received from the loan borrowers and their indemnifiers, SFO will proceed to take legal recovery action against them by referring the cases to the Department of Justice (DoJ) or filing claims directly with the Small Claims Tribunal, depending on the circumstances of the case. For those defaulted loan borrowers who have genuine difficulties in repaying their loans, SFO will provide assistance on a case-by-case basis.

In the 2023/24 academic year (as at 31 January 2024), about 100 staff (including those of SFO and DoJ) are tasked to handle work relating to student loan recovery with an overall operating expenditure of around \$13.9 million.

- (3) SFO has always appealed to student loan borrowers to actively contact SFO for assistance if they have difficulties in repaying their loans due to financial hardship. SFO has established a mechanism to process their applications for loan restructuring or deferment of loan repayment. For those student loan borrowers who have contacted SFO to apply for deferment of loan repayment, the main reasons for deferment are financial hardship, serious illness and further full-time study.

Regarding education on financial management, SFO has all along been promoting education on financial prudence to student loan applicants and their parents to enhance their awareness on proper financial management. This includes providing, through the departmental website, advice to applicants of the various student financial assistance schemes for post-secondary students alongside scheme details.

SFO has also been collaborating with various post-secondary institutions. Apart from holding sharing sessions for the staff of their student affairs offices from time to time to provide them with the latest information on loan application and messages about financial management for students, SFO also distributes relevant promotional materials to these institutions for use in their student activities, with a view to instilling a prudent attitude towards financial management in their students while reminding them of the points to note in making applications under the financial assistance schemes for post-secondary students.

In addition, in collaboration with the Investor and Financial Education Council (IFEC), SFO promotes through its departmental website IFEC's financial education platform "The Chin Family" and its annual financial education campaign "Hong Kong Money

Month”, so as to provide financial management information to student loan applicants and their parents, educate them about the importance of early financial planning and equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills for planning and managing their finances.

To promote the concept of financial prudence among student loan applicants more extensively, SFO has commenced the following work recently:

- Conducts regular visits to student affairs offices of post-secondary institutions with the aim of strengthening communication and connection with regard to education on financial management;
- Updates the “Tips on Financial Management” and related leaflets on its website to promote the messages of financial prudence, credit management and responsible borrowing, as well as to raise awareness on the possible consequences of default in loan repayment for the purpose of strengthening publicity and deterrent effects; and
- Enhances the collaboration with the IFEC and through various activities organised by the IFEC, provides information on financial management to student loan applicants and their parents.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EDB196**

**(Question Serial No. 3291)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

How many young people in Hong Kong have to repay student loans? What is the average amount of student loans owed by them?

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 70)

Reply:

As at 31 January 2024, about 184 000 loan borrowers under various student financial assistance schemes (excluding those who are still studying and therefore not yet required to commence loan repayment) had outstanding loans, and the average amount of outstanding loan was \$90,065 per person.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EDB308**

**(Question Serial No. 3672)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): (228) Student financial assistance

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

How many eligible students are receiving financial assistance under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme?

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 416)

Reply:

Applicants for the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme are subject to income test. The numbers of students in receipt of relevant financial assistance in the past 5 school years are tabulated below:

<b>School year</b>	<b>Number of beneficiaries*</b>
2019/20	25 640
2020/21	26 151
2021/22	24 918
2022/23	23 148
2023/24 (as at 31 January 2024)	20 133

\* The number of beneficiaries does not include students who did not need to pay school fees under the kindergarten education scheme.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EDB309**

**(Question Serial No. 3736)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(254) Loans to Students

Subhead (No. & title): (101) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(102) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(103) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students  
(201) Means-tested loan for tertiary students pursuing publicly-funded programmes  
(202) Non-means-tested loan scheme  
(203) Means-tested loan for post-secondary students

Programme: (1) Student Assistance Scheme

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

Please provide comprehensive and detailed breakdowns and information on the following in respect of student loans:

- (1) Basic data on student loan application, approval, repayment and default in each of the past 5 years and the latest year
  - Number of applicants
  - Number of successful applicants
  - Total amount approved
  - Number of borrowers who have commenced loan repayment
  - Number and percentage of borrowers who have fully repaid the loans
  - Number and percentage of borrowers unable to fully repaid the loans
  - Average amount in default
  - Total amount in default
  - Actual amount of repayment
  - Breakdowns of the above data by:
    - a) Type of programme attended  
(bachelor degree/master degree/doctoral degree/self-financing post-secondary education/others)



- b) Type of institution (publicly-funded/Direct Subsidy Scheme/private)
- c) Level of annual household income (low/lower-middle/middle/high income)
- d) Year of graduation
- e) Year of repayment
- f) Range of amount in default  
(below \$10,000/\$10,000-\$50,000/\$50,000-\$100,000/over \$100,000)

(2) Cumulative amount in default

- Cumulative total amount in default in the past 5 years and the latest year
- Breakdowns on the amount in default by categories (a) to (f) above
- Number and percentage of cases with the amount in default over \$50,000

(3) Defaulting for a prolonged period

- Number of cases defaulting for over 5 years and the amount involved in the latest year
- Relevant figures by categories (a) to (f) above
- Follow-up measures taken by the Government and their effectiveness

(4) Recovery of defaults

- Number and types of recovery actions taken in the past 5 years and in the latest year
- Actual amount recovered and its percentage in the total amount in default in the year concerned
- Fees collected for recovery actions and its share

(5) Bankruptcy cases

- Number of bankruptcy cases due to insolvency in the past 5 years and the latest year
- Amount involved
- Relevant figures by categories (a) to (c)

(6) Waiver applications

- Number of and reasons for waiver applications in the past 5 years and the latest year
- Number, amount and percentage of waivers approved
- Relevant processing time

(7) Low-income loan repayers

- Number of loan repayers with monthly income below \$20,000 and the repayment amount involved in the latest year
- Relevant figures by categories (a) to (f)
- Relevant trend in the past 5 years

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 482)

## Reply:

(1) The Student Finance Office (SFO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency administers 5 student financial assistance schemes which provide loans to local post-secondary students. They include:

### **2 means-tested financial assistance schemes**

- (a) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes - provides means-tested financial assistance in the form of grant and low-interest living expenses loan to full-time students taking up an exclusively publicly-funded student place of a recognised programme at tertiary level; and
- (b) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students - provides means-tested financial assistance in the form of grant and low-interest living expenses loan to full-time students pursuing locally-accredited, self-financing post-secondary education programmes at sub-degree or bachelor's degree level.

### **3 non-means-tested loan schemes**

- (c) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students - provides loans to full-time students taking up an exclusively publicly-funded student place of a recognised programme at tertiary level to settle tuition fees;
- (d) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students - provides loans to full-time students pursuing locally-accredited, self-financing post-secondary education programmes at sub-degree or bachelor's degree level to settle tuition fees; and
- (e) Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS) - provides loans to students pursuing specific post-secondary/continuing and professional education courses to settle tuition fees.

## **Number of applications, number of loan borrowers and total amount of loans**

The numbers of applications, numbers of loan borrowers and total amounts of loans of the above student financial assistance schemes by level of study/category of courses in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are set out at the Annex (Table 1). Applicants of non-means-tested loan schemes are not required to submit any information on family income to SFO. As for the 2 means-tested financial assistance schemes, the numbers of applications, numbers of loan borrowers and total amounts of loans by family income level are set out at the Annex (Table 2).

## **Number of new loan repayment accounts**

Normally, a loan repayment account will be activated for commencement of repayment upon graduation of the student loan borrower concerned. However, to alleviate the financial burden of student loan repayers amidst the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government is providing interest-free deferral of loan repayment arrangement (deferral arrangement) from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025 (suspension period).

The numbers of new loan repayment accounts under the financial assistance schemes in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are set out at the Annex (Table 3). Since the ENLS covers a wide range of post-secondary/continuing and professional education courses, SFO

only keeps the overall numbers of new loan repayment accounts under the ENLS, while the numbers of new loan repayment accounts under the rest of the financial assistance schemes are provided by level of study. All the numbers of new loan repayment accounts include those newly-activated accounts which are eligible for the deferral arrangement and hence requiring no repayment during the suspension period.

### **Loan repayment**

The numbers of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled under the financial assistance schemes and their proportions to all loan repayment accounts in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are set out at the Annex (Table 4). The total amounts of loans repaid under the financial assistance schemes are detailed in the Annex (Table 5).

(2) to (4)

Cases with 2 or more consecutive overdue quarterly instalments/6 or more consecutive overdue monthly instalments are regarded as default cases. The numbers of defaulters, their percentages out of the total numbers of defaulters of the respective academic years, the amounts in default, the average amounts in default and the default rates in terms of the total numbers of loan repayment accounts with breakdowns by level of study and range of amount in default in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are set out at the Annex (Table 6).

SFO has always attached great importance to the problem of defaulted student loans. Regarding the work in recovering defaulted student loans and following up on cases of inability to repay loans, SFO administers loan recovery procedures as appropriate at different stages on a case-by-case basis having regard to the circumstances of each case. Generally speaking, SFO will issue reminders, send SMS messages or make phone calls to the loan borrowers concerned and their indemnifiers to request them to settle the arrears. Apart from urging them to settle the arrears, SFO will also attempt to find out their reasons for defaulting the loan repayment and see if they need assistance. If no repayment or response is received from the loan borrowers and their indemnifiers, SFO will proceed to take legal recovery action against them by referring the cases to the Department of Justice or filing claims directly with the Small Claims Tribunal, depending on the circumstances of the case. For those defaulted loan borrowers who have genuine difficulties in repaying their loans, SFO will provide assistance on a case-by-case basis.

Overall, the number of default cases as a percentage of the total number of loan repayment accounts and the amount in default have decreased significantly as compared with previous years, from 12.45% and \$285 million in the 2009/10 academic year (up to 31 July 2010) to 2.65% and \$103 million in the 2023/24 academic year (up to 31 January 2024). SFO will continue to closely monitor the situation of student loan repayment and take appropriate measures to address the problem of defaulted student loans.

Failure to repay loan instalments by the due dates will result in surcharge (for means-tested loans) or overdue interest (for non-means-tested loans). If no repayment or response is received from the defaulters and their indemnifiers, SFO may initiate legal proceedings against them for the recovery of the full amount of the outstanding loan together with the overdue interest/surcharge, administrative fee (if applicable) and any recovery expenses (including legal costs and related expenses incurred). Apart from the above prescribed fees, SFO does not charge defaulters and their indemnifiers any additional fees for the loan recovery actions. The numbers of default cases with successful recovery, the amounts

recovered, the total amounts in default in the years concerned and their percentages in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are tabulated as follows:

Number and type of recovery actions	Academic Year				
	2019/20	2020/21 <sup>^</sup>	2021/22 <sup>^</sup>	2022/23 <sup>^</sup>	2023/24 <sup>^*</sup>
<b>Number of default cases with successful recovery<sup>+</sup></b>					
(i) Number of default cases in which SFO initiated recovery actions against the defaulters and their indemnifiers	5 470	2 089	919	1 888	985
(ii) Number of default cases in which legal recovery actions were initiated	215	702	343	136	181
Amount recovered (\$m) <sup>+@</sup>	20.53	25.26	14.52	18.70	11.42
Total amount in default in the year concerned (\$m) <sup>@#</sup>	147.05	127.39	114.60	106.35	103.10
Percentage of amount recovered in the total amount in default in the year concerned <sup>+</sup>	13.96%	19.83%	12.67%	17.58%	11.08%

<sup>^</sup> The Government is providing the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, but repayers with defaulted loans before the suspension period still need to settle the arrears. With the deferral arrangement in force, the number of defaulters and the relevant figures have decreased as compared with previous years.

<sup>+</sup> In and before the 2019/20 academic year, SFO only kept the relevant statistics of the 2 means-tested financial assistance schemes.

<sup>\*</sup> As at 31 January 2024

<sup>@</sup> There is no direct correlation between the amount recovered and the total amount in default in the same academic year. The former shows the amount recovered by SFO in the academic year concerned through the recovery actions taken, while the latter reflects the position of default as at the end of the same academic year.

<sup>#</sup> Including the total amount in default under all of the financial assistance schemes.

(5) The numbers of bankruptcy cases concerning recipients of student financial assistance and the amounts involved (the reasons for bankruptcy application may not necessarily be related to student loans), grouped by level of study, from the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are tabulated below:

Level of study <sup>@</sup>	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Bachelor degree or above</b>					
Number of student loan borrowers going bankrupt	40	72	52	78	24
Amount involved (\$m)	4.30	6.91	5.19	8.86	2.01
<b>Sub-degree<sup>^</sup></b>					
Number of student loan borrowers going bankrupt	50	68	34	92	37
Amount involved (\$m)	4.90	4.04	2.13	7.76	3.24
<b>Diploma programmes or Diploma Yi Jin Programme</b>					
Number of student loan borrowers going bankrupt	48	81	46	74	19
Amount involved (\$m)	1.80	3.94	1.80	2.92	0.57

Level of study <sup>@</sup>	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>Others<sup>+</sup></b>					
Number of student loan borrowers going bankrupt	13	12	15	21	5
Amount involved (\$m)	0.62	0.29	0.68	1.23	0.20

@ Based on the highest level of academic qualification attained by a student loan borrower under all of the financial assistance schemes.

\* As at 31 January 2024

^ Including associate degree/higher diploma programmes.

+ Other courses include:

- (a) courses accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications or courses offered by institutions by virtue of their self-accreditation status or Programme Area Accreditation status;
- (b) courses covered by the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses;
- (c) training or development courses provided or funded by local statutory bodies; and
- (d) registered courses and exempted courses under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Chapter 493).

(6) As student loans are funded by public money, SFO endeavours to make every effort to recover the outstanding loans from the defaulters and their indemnifiers and will only consider writing off the loans when they are irrecoverable (for example, where the loan borrower has deceased and his/her indemnifier is unable to repay the loan, or where both the loan borrower and his/her indemnifier are bankrupt). Indemnifiers who have genuine difficulties in repaying their loans may apply to SFO for write-off on compassionate grounds. The numbers of applications for write-off on compassionate grounds as well as the numbers, amounts and percentages of write-off approved from the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are tabulated below:

	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
Number of applications for write-off on compassionate grounds	8	5	11	8	13 <sup>#</sup>
Number of write-off approved on compassionate grounds	4	5	8	3	1
Amount of write-off approved on compassionate grounds (\$'000)	196.5	238.9	840.2	234.1	162.1
Percentage of write-off approved on compassionate grounds <sup>^</sup>	50.00%	100.00%	72.73%	37.50%	33.33%

\* As at 31 January 2024

# 10 of these applications for write-off on compassionate grounds are in process.

^ Regarding the rejected cases, the main reason for rejection is that SFO is not satisfied that the applicants concerned have genuine difficulties in repaying the loans.

SFO will take into account the financial status of the applicant and the specific circumstances of the case when considering each application for write-off on compassionate grounds. Normally, if complete information is provided by the applicant, SFO will finish vetting the application within 1 month and notify him/her of the result.

(7) SFO does not have information on the incomes of student loan repayers.

(Table 1): Number of applications, number of loan borrowers and total amount of loans by level of study/category of courses

Level of study	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>(a) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes</b>					
<b>Bachelor's degree or above</b>					
Number of applications	16 109	15 891	15 150	14 953	14 578
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	3 236	2 734	2 461	2 364	1 718
Total amount of loans (\$m)	130.65	116.99	110.33	109.76	82.88
<b>Sub-degree <sup>^</sup></b>					
Number of applications	6 210	6 054	5 390	4 654	4 289
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	591	533	460	433	267
Total amount of loans (\$m)	26.79	24.74	21.89	21.74	14.28
<b>(b) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
<b>Bachelor's degree/Top-up degree</b>					
Number of applications	8 402	8 354	7 777	7 097	6 473
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	1 617	1 458	1 325	1 224	855
Total amount of loans (\$m)	68.25	65.81	60.86	58.23	42.98
<b>Sub-degree <sup>^</sup></b>					
Number of applications	10 888	10 543	9 628	9 140	8 959
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	1 472	1 417	1 291	1 105	717
Total amount of loans (\$m)	61.84	63.60	60.21	53.17	35.79
<b>(c) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students</b>					
<b>Bachelor's degree or above</b>					
Number of applications	13 746	13 759	11 966	12 033	12 742
Number of loan borrowers	10 846	10 747	10 060	10 098	9 390
Total amount of loans (\$m)	441.97	437.88	411.19	412.69	386.67
<b>Sub-degree <sup>^</sup></b>					
Number of applications	2 578	2 378	1 918	1 646	1 597
Number of loan borrowers	1 487	1 407	1 306	1 101	811
Total amount of loans (\$m)	44.87	43.14	40.06	33.83	24.69
<b>(d) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
<b>Bachelor's degree/Top-up degree</b>					
Number of applications	7 895	8 015	6 896	6 576	6 590
Number of loan borrowers	6 330	6 366	5 872	5 612	5 105
Total amount of loans (\$m)	373.08	383.17	355.75	344.61	278.58
<b>Sub-degree <sup>^</sup></b>					
Number of applications	7 745	7 208	5 635	5 560	5 965
Number of loan borrowers	5 599	5 062	4 474	4 451	4 151
Total amount of loans (\$m)	300.22	279.68	253.69	263.49	249.87

Categories of eligible courses	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>(e) Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme</b>					
<b>Category 1: Courses accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications or courses offered by institutions by virtue of their self-accreditation status or Programme Area Accreditation status</b>					
Number of applications	3 570	4 344	4 004	4 141	3 227
Number of loan borrowers	3 336	4 105	3 742	3 843	2 699
Total amount of loans (\$m)	259.47	338.28	318.50	331.30	207.62
<b>Category 2: Courses under Diploma of Applied Education (DAE) / Diploma Yi Jin (DYJ)</b>					
Number of applications	834	626	591	495	435
Number of loan borrowers	779	582	542	438	359
Total amount of loans (\$m)	27.34	19.76	18.70	14.81	12.93
<b>Category 3: Courses covered by the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses</b>					
Number of applications	0	0	1	0	1
Number of loan borrowers	0	0	1	0	1
Total amount of loans (\$m)	0	0	0.01	0	0.02
<b>Category 4: Training or development courses provided or funded by local statutory bodies</b>					
Number of applications	0	0	0	0	0
Number of loan borrowers	0	0	0	0	0
Total amount of loans (\$m)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Category 5: Registered courses and exempted courses under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Chapter 493)</b>					
Number of applications	2 237	2 235	1 917	1 761	1 097
Number of loan borrowers	2 034	2 060	1 806	1 643	914
Total amount of loans (\$m)	127.82	134.08	118.05	111.42	49.21

\* As at 31 January 2024

# The number of applicants who have passed the means test and accepted offer of low-interest living expenses loan, excluding those who have passed the means test but only accepted the offer of grant.

^ Including associate degree/higher diploma programmes.

**(Table 2): Number of applications, number of loan borrowers and total amount of loans by family income level**

Family income level	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
<b>(a) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme - Publicly-funded Programmes</b>					
<b>Level 1: Granted 100% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	12 691	12 943	12 513	11 979	9 829
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	2 666	2 368	2 240	2 152	1 560
Total amount of loans (\$m)	132.33	121.08	116.47	115.13	86.00
<b>Level 2: Granted 75% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	1 248	1 128	940	908	671
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	237	200	142	164	102
Total amount of loans (\$m)	8.72	7.57	5.43	6.62	4.26
<b>Level 3: Granted 50% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	1 900	1 701	1 449	1 355	1 079
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	445	361	288	267	190
Total amount of loans (\$m)	10.94	9.26	7.42	7.15	5.29
<b>Level 4: Granted 25% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	1 252	1 123	931	810	610
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	315	219	165	147	85
Total amount of loans (\$m)	4.11	2.87	2.20	2.04	1.20
<b>Level 5: Granted 15% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	903	684	532	483	356
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	164	119	86	67	48
Total amount of loans (\$m)	1.34	0.95	0.70	0.55	0.41
<b>(b) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
<b>Level 1: Granted 100% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	10 796	10 914	10 450	9 709	7 454
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	2 241	2 207	2 047	1 850	1 271
Total amount of loans (\$m)	110.69	113.82	106.63	99.61	70.57
<b>Level 2: Granted 75% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	1 009	837	802	706	536
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	211	155	154	115	76
Total amount of loans (\$m)	7.79	5.83	6.04	4.62	3.18
<b>Level 3: Granted 50% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	1 508	1 392	1 164	1 045	758
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	322	264	236	190	142
Total amount of loans (\$m)	8.16	6.92	6.25	5.11	3.98
<b>Level 4: Granted 25% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	936	966	741	585	419
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	189	169	121	102	60
Total amount of loans (\$m)	2.47	2.22	1.68	1.45	0.85
<b>Level 5: Granted 15% of the maximum level of assistance</b>					
Number of applications	688	585	480	431	212
Number of loan borrowers <sup>#</sup>	126	80	58	72	23
Total amount of loans (\$m)	0.97	0.62	0.46	0.60	0.19



\* As at 31 January 2024

# The number of applicants who have passed the means test and accepted offer of low-interest living expenses loan, excluding those who have passed the means test but only accepted the offer of grant.

**(Table 3): Number of new loan repayment accounts**

Level of study	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 <sup>#</sup>
	Number of new loan repayment accounts <sup>@</sup>				
<b>(a) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes</b>					
Bachelor's degree or above	2 476	1 614	1 705	1 261	Not available
Sub-degree <sup>^</sup>	681	461	447	349	Not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 157</b>	<b>2 075</b>	<b>2 152</b>	<b>1 610</b>	Not available
<b>(b) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
Bachelor's degree/Top-up degree	1 648	739	1 151	640	Not available
Sub-degree <sup>^</sup>	1 820	1 201	1 325	906	Not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 468</b>	<b>1 940</b>	<b>2 476</b>	<b>1 546</b>	Not available
<b>(c) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students</b>					
Bachelor's degree or above	5 067	3 396	4 407	3 109	Not available
Sub-degree <sup>^</sup>	1 313	957	947	736	Not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 380</b>	<b>4 353</b>	<b>5 354</b>	<b>3 845</b>	Not available
<b>(d) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
Bachelor's degree/Top-up degree	5 009	2 858	3 140	2 877	Not available
Sub-degree <sup>^</sup>	4 154	4 259	3 650	3 065	Not available
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 163</b>	<b>7 117</b>	<b>6 790</b>	<b>5 942</b>	Not available
<b>(e) Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme</b>					
<b>Number of new loan repayment accounts<sup>@</sup></b>	6 188	3 829	4 514	4 279	Not available

# As most student loan borrowers have yet to complete their study and graduate in the academic year, the relevant figures for 2023/24 academic year are not yet available.

@ A loan repayer may have more than one loan account.

^ Including associate degree/higher diploma programmes.

**(Table 4): Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled and their proportions to the total number of loan repayment accounts**

	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21*	2021/22*	2022/23*	2023/24*
<b>(a) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme - Publicly-funded Programmes</b>					
Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled	1 418	619	697	449	415
Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @	5%	2%	2%	2%	1%
<b>(b) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled	1 932	659	712	469	393
Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @	7%	2%	2%	1%	1%
<b>(c) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students</b>					
Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled	2 522	1 148	1 392	1 143	919
Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @	7%	3%	3%	3%	2%
<b>(d) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students</b>					
Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled	2 971	1 507	1 896	1 629	1 053
Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @	5%	2%	3%	2%	1%
<b>(e) Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme</b>					
Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled	5 076	2 209	2 150	2 146	1 304
Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @	9%	4%	3%	3%	2%
<b>Total</b>					
<b>Number of loan repayment accounts which have been fully settled</b>	<b>13 919</b>	<b>6 142</b>	<b>6 847</b>	<b>5 836</b>	<b>4 084</b>
<b>Proportion to the total number of loan repayment accounts @</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>

\* As the Government is providing the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, the numbers of fully settled loan repayment accounts in the 2020/21 to 2023/24 academic years (as at 31 January 2024) decreased significantly as compared with previous years.

@ The total numbers of loan repayment accounts in the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years reflect the positions as at 31 July 2020, 31 July 2021, 31 July 2022, 31 July 2023 and 31 January 2024 respectively, and include those newly-activated loan repayment accounts which are eligible for the deferral arrangement.

**(Table 5): Total amount of loans repaid**

Total amount of loans repaid <sup>#</sup>	Financial year				
	2019-20	2020-21 <sup>*</sup>	2021-22 <sup>*</sup>	2022-23 <sup>*</sup>	2023-24 <sup>*</sup>
	(\$m)				
Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes	162.56	32.17	29.76	22.13	21.47
Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students	148.67	31.47	29.01	22.95	19.35
Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students	287.86	70.56	75.30	76.15	76.69
Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students	552.96	151.93	137.80	133.28	116.25
Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme	353.24	110.39	93.16	89.80	81.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,505.29</b>	<b>396.52</b>	<b>365.03</b>	<b>344.31</b>	<b>315.47</b>

# As the Government is providing the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, all eligible student loan repayers do not need to repay their loans during the suspension period. However, student loan repayers may choose to opt out of the deferral arrangement and continue repaying their loans according to their original repayment schedules. They may also make early lump sum or partial repayment of their loans during the suspension period. Defaulters are still required to settle the arrears during the suspension period. The total amounts of loans repaid include the principal and all interests repaid under the above scenarios.

\* With the implementation of the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, the total amounts of loans repaid in the 2020-21 to 2023-24 financial years (as at 31 January 2024) decreased significantly as compared with previous years.

**(Table 6): Number of defaulters, amount in default, average amount of arrears and the default rates in terms of the total number of loan repayment accounts**

**(i) By level of study**

Level of study <sup>@</sup>	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21 <sup>^</sup>	2021/22 <sup>^</sup>	2022/23 <sup>^</sup>	2023/24 <sup>^*</sup>
<b>Bachelor's degree or above</b>					
Number of defaulters <sup>@</sup> (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	2 511 (29.19%)	1 567 (24.07%)	1 323 (23.56%)	1 146 (22.74%)	1 092 (22.66%)
Total amount in default (\$m) <sup>#</sup>	46.08	37.58	32.60	29.47	28.46
Average amount of arrears (\$)	18,400	24,000	24,600	25,700	26,100
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	1.20%	0.71%	0.57%	0.53%	0.53%
<b>Sub-degree &amp;</b>					
Number of defaulters <sup>@</sup> (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	2 622 (30.49%)	2 014 (30.93%)	1 569 (27.95%)	1 393 (27.66%)	1 334 (27.69%)
Total amount in default (\$m) <sup>#</sup>	56.49	48.37	43.37	40.44	39.35
Average amount of arrears (\$)	21,500	24,000	27,600	29,000	29,500
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	1.25%	0.91%	0.67%	0.65%	0.64%
<b>Diploma or Diploma Yi Jin courses</b>					
Number of defaulters <sup>@</sup> (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	1 860 (21.63%)	1 416 (21.74%)	1 328 (23.66%)	1 177 (23.37%)	1 122 (23.29%)
Total amount in default (\$m) <sup>#</sup>	21.13	19.23	17.83	16.59	16.10
Average amount of arrears (\$)	11,400	13,600	13,400	14,100	14,300
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	0.89%	0.64%	0.57%	0.55%	0.54%
<b>Others <sup>+</sup></b>					
Number of defaulters <sup>@</sup> (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	1 607 (18.69%)	1 515 (23.26%)	1 394 (24.83%)	1 321 (26.23%)	1 270 (26.36%)
Total amount in default (\$m) <sup>#</sup>	23.35	22.21	20.80	19.85	19.19

Level of study <sup>@</sup>	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21 <sup>^</sup>	2021/22 <sup>^</sup>	2022/23 <sup>^</sup>	2023/24 <sup>^*</sup>
Average amount of arrears (\$)	14,500	14,700	14,900	15,000	15,100
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	0.77%	0.69%	0.60%	0.61%	0.61%

@ Based on the highest academic qualification attained by the student loan borrowers under all of the financial assistance schemes

<sup>^</sup> The Government is providing the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, but repayers with defaulted loans before the suspension period still need to settle the arrears. With the deferral arrangement in force, the number of defaulters and the relevant figures have decreased as compared with previous years.

\* As at 31 January 2024

# The amount in default is the total amount of arrears in the defaulted student loan accounts, including the arrears from previous academic years.

& Including associate degree/higher diploma programmes.

+ Other programmes include:

- (a) courses accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications or courses offered by institutions by virtue of their self-accreditation status or Programme Area Accreditation status;
- (b) courses covered by the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses;
- (c) training or development courses provided or funded by local statutory bodies; and
- (d) registered courses and exempted courses under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Chapter 493).

## (ii) By range of amount in default

Range of amount in default <sup>#</sup>	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21 <sup>^</sup>	2021/22 <sup>^</sup>	2022/23 <sup>^</sup>	2023/24 <sup>^*</sup>
<b>Below \$10,000</b>					
Number of defaulters (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	5 342 (62.12%)	3 630 (55.74%)	2 991 (53.28%)	2 596 (51.54%)	2 432 (50.48%)
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	2.55%	1.65%	1.28%	1.21%	1.17%
<b>\$10,000-\$50,000</b>					
Number of defaulters (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	2 905 (33.78%)	2 542 (39.04%)	2 332 (41.54%)	2 169 (43.06%)	2 121 (44.02%)
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	1.39%	1.15%	1.00%	1.01%	1.02%
<b>\$50,000-\$100,000</b>					
Number of defaulters (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	301 (3.50%)	286 (4.39%)	248 (4.42%)	232 (4.61%)	225 (4.67%)
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	0.14%	0.13%	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%
<b>Over \$100,000</b>					

Range of amount in default #	Academic year				
	2019/20	2020/21 <sup>^</sup>	2021/22 <sup>^</sup>	2022/23 <sup>^</sup>	2023/24 <sup>^*</sup>
Number of defaulters (percentage out of the total number of defaulters in the academic year)	52 (0.60%)	54 (0.83%)	43 (0.76%)	40 (0.79%)	40 (0.83%)
Default rate in terms of total number of loan repayment accounts	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%

# The amount in default is the total amount of arrears in the defaulted student loan accounts, including the arrears from previous academic years.

<sup>^</sup> The Government is providing the deferral arrangement from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025, but repayers with defaulted loans before the suspension period still need to settle the arrears. With the deferral arrangement in force, the numbers of defaulters and the relevant figures have decreased as compared with previous years.

\* As at 31 January 2024

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)228**

**(Question Serial No. 0879)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme, please inform this Committee of the following in the past 3 years:

- (1) the manpower and expenditure involved each year in administering the WFA Scheme; the percentage of the related expenditure in the overall expenditure of the Agency; the average number of cases handled by each staff member;
- (2) the number of applications for the WFA Scheme in each year with a breakdown by the 18 districts in Hong Kong;
- (3) the number of applications in receipt of full-rate allowance and the amount of the allowance granted in each year, with a breakdown by gender, age, family size, industry, occupation, employment earnings and working hours of the applicants;
- (4) the number of applications in receipt of half-rate allowance and the amount of the allowance granted in each year, with a breakdown by gender, age, family size, industry, occupation, employment earnings and working hours of the applicants;
- (5) the number of applications from single-parent families in receipt of full-rate allowance and half-rate allowance in each year, with a breakdown by gender, age, family size, industry, occupation, employment earnings and working hours of the applicants;
- (6) the number of applications requiring self-declared statement or statutory declaration for working hours/income from work in each year;
- (7) a breakdown of the number of applications by race;
- (8) the number of cases withdrawn from the WFA Scheme in each year; and
- (9) the manpower and estimated expenditure involved in the WFA Scheme in 2024-25.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kapui, Judy (LegCo internal reference no.: 6)

Reply:

- (1) The number of staff in the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (the Agency) was about 760 in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The staff costs of the WFAO in 2021-22



and 2022-23 were about \$267.7 million and \$279.7 million respectively, while the revised estimate of staff cost for 2023-24 is about \$301.2 million. The staff cost accounted for about 4% of the overall expenditure of the Agency (including the operational expenses of the Agency as well as the recurrent and general non-recurrent expenditures on administering the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme and various student financial assistance schemes) in these 3 years. As at end of February 2024, the WFAO has received a total of about 369 000 WFA applications in the past 3 years, representing an application-to-staff ratio of about 160:1 per year.

- (2) The number of approved WFA applications by district from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Table 1 of the Annex.
- (3) & (4) A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Tables 2 to 13 of the Annex.
- (5) A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Tables 14 to 19 of the Annex.
- (6) The number of approved applications with applicants submitting self-declared statements as proof of their working hours or income from work from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Table 20 of the Annex.
- (7) The number of applications received from non-Chinese households from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Table 21 of the Annex. The WFAO does not maintain further statistics on ethnicity.
- (8) The number of applications withdrawn from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is set out in Table 22 of the Annex.
- (9) The number of staff in the WFAO is estimated to be around 710 in 2024-25, involving estimated staff costs of about \$316.2 million.

Table 1

A breakdown of the number of approved WFA applications by year and by district is as follows:

District	Number of approved WFA applications		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Kwun Tong	18 374	16 915	12 644
Sham Shui Po	13 955	13 207	9 893
Yuen Long	11 975	10 679	7 831
Kwai Tsing	10 902	9 966	7 670
Sha Tin	10 810	10 152	7 726
Tuen Mun	9 728	9 434	8 067
Wong Tai Sin	7 484	7 219	5 598
North	6 546	7 309	6 030
Kowloon City	6 319	5 765	4 311
Yau Tsim Mong	4 936	4 377	3 121
Eastern	4 761	4 475	3 463
Tsuen Wan	4 323	4 025	3 059
Islands	3 984	3 627	2 604
Sai Kung	3 701	3 326	2 456
Tai Po	3 629	3 283	2 444
Southern	2 293	2 146	1 654
Central & Western	1 197	1 078	788
Wan Chai	655	614	440
<b>Total</b>	<b>125 572</b>	<b>117 597</b>	<b>89 799</b>

Table 2

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by gender of the applicant is as follows:

Gender of applicant	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Male	47 210	8 808	41 290	9 564	30 876	7 812
Female	37 527	6 521	33 610	7 171	25 039	5 485
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Table 3

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by year and by gender of the applicant is as follows:

(i)

Gender of applicant	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Male	\$958,791,750	\$829,075,750	\$633,513,000
Female	\$618,930,150	\$549,079,850	\$428,087,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

Gender of applicant	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Male	\$92,035,400	\$99,828,550	\$81,537,350
Female	\$56,569,900	\$61,569,500	\$48,439,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>

Table 4

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by age of the applicant is as follows:

Age of applicant	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
15 to below 20	13	2	13	5	3	3
20 to below 30	3 207	748	2 314	674	1 464	463
30 to below 40	24 120	4 597	20 624	4 837	14 920	3 844
40 to below 50	32 004	5 866	28 885	6 483	21 941	5 392
50 to below 60	16 738	3 038	14 739	3 466	10 976	2 624
60 or above	8 655	1 078	8 325	1 270	6 611	971
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Table 5

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by year and by age of the applicant is as follows:

(i)

Age of applicant	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
15 to below 20	\$103,550	\$109,400	\$15,050
20 to below 30	\$54,587,500	\$39,800,250	\$26,166,800
30 to below 40	\$527,578,850	\$442,158,700	\$330,268,250
40 to below 50	\$647,476,600	\$584,972,150	\$459,132,050
50 to below 60	\$254,163,700	\$222,946,600	\$174,295,350
60 or above	\$93,811,700	\$88,168,500	\$71,723,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

Age of applicant	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
15 to below 20	\$9,800	\$16,850	\$10,950
20 to below 30	\$5,910,350	\$5,772,750	\$3,826,150
30 to below 40	\$51,190,000	\$53,415,300	\$42,576,100
40 to below 50	\$62,483,500	\$68,573,900	\$57,589,450
50 to below 60	\$22,891,900	\$26,290,850	\$20,588,250
60 or above	\$6,119,750	\$7,328,400	\$5,386,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>

Table 6

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by household size is as follows:

Household size	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
1 person	4 774	1 871	4 225	2 013	3 062	1 305
2 persons	15 802	2 551	13 556	2 796	9 701	2 251
3 persons	21 422	4 263	18 458	4 480	13 651	3 417
4 persons	30 974	4 727	27 870	5 442	21 334	4 573
5 persons	9 150	1 445	8 399	1 526	6 335	1 374
6 persons or above	2 615	472	2 392	478	1 832	377
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Table 7

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by year and by household size is as follows:

(i)

Household size	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
1 person	\$33,420,000	\$28,020,050	\$21,390,950
2 persons	\$177,095,000	\$145,968,850	\$107,438,000
3 persons	\$342,013,650	\$290,128,100	\$222,272,200
4 persons	\$691,076,850	\$612,234,800	\$476,052,350
5 persons	\$253,086,150	\$228,387,400	\$176,883,400
6 persons or above	\$81,030,250	\$73,416,400	\$57,564,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

Household size	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
1 person	\$7,821,100	\$8,141,750	\$5,219,950
2 persons	\$16,749,000	\$18,191,650	\$14,748,750
3 persons	\$36,741,050	\$38,575,650	\$29,102,150
4 persons	\$58,762,500	\$66,463,650	\$55,047,800
5 persons	\$21,122,800	\$22,493,400	\$19,831,150
6 persons or above	\$7,408,850	\$7,531,950	\$6,027,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>

Table 8

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by industry of the applicant is as follows:

Industry of applicant	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business services	25 364	4 692	22 503	5 270	16 583	4 022
Construction	13 936	3 111	12 584	3 339	9 447	2 552
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications	13 161	1 759	11 744	1 924	9 043	1 714
Accommodation and food services	11 758	2 121	9 984	2 227	7 302	1 975
Import/export, wholesale and retail trades	10 087	1 360	8 767	1 438	6 480	1 140
Public administration, social and personal services	5 154	1 371	4 614	1 547	3 625	1 163
Manufacturing	1 430	196	1 313	242	960	170
Others	3 847	719	3 391	748	2 475	561
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Table 9

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by industry of the applicant and by year is as follows:

(i)

Industry of applicant	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business services	\$405,796,400	\$358,837,700	\$271,217,750
Construction	\$302,509,200	\$268,601,600	\$208,866,950
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications	\$268,811,800	\$237,905,150	\$185,524,450
Accommodation and food services	\$225,860,650	\$187,862,400	\$143,396,300
Import/export, wholesale and retail trades	\$183,465,850	\$158,380,800	\$121,353,800
Public administration, social and personal services	\$92,204,200	\$80,277,550	\$66,779,750
Manufacturing	\$24,919,450	\$22,709,150	\$17,045,200
Others	\$74,154,350	\$63,581,250	\$47,416,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

Industry of applicant	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business services	\$38,460,700	\$43,532,700	\$33,867,750
Construction	\$35,991,350	\$38,423,850	\$29,248,050
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications	\$18,641,200	\$20,355,900	\$17,698,550
Accommodation and food services	\$21,357,100	\$22,522,950	\$20,240,200
Import/export, wholesale and retail trades	\$12,746,350	\$13,062,200	\$10,698,250
Public administration, social and personal services	\$12,228,100	\$13,541,700	\$10,722,600
Manufacturing	\$1,946,950	\$2,372,050	\$1,730,600
Others	\$7,233,550	\$7,586,700	\$5,770,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>



Table 10

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by occupation of the applicant is as follows:

Occupation of applicant	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Elementary occupations	33 610	4 947	30 265	5 452	22 493	4 169
Service and sales workers	22 290	3 609	19 276	3 825	14 440	3 201
Craft and related workers	8 185	1 747	7 123	1 870	5 312	1 471
Associate professionals	6 847	2 202	6 015	2 603	4 602	2 193
Clerical support workers	7 734	1 287	6 914	1 437	5 163	1 051
Professionals	1 318	424	1 104	392	819	334
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	476	198	433	190	301	146
Others	4 277	915	3 770	966	2 785	732
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Table 11

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by year and by occupation of the applicant is as follows:

(i)

Occupation of applicant	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Elementary occupations	\$599,561,900	\$535,562,400	\$410,806,500
Service and sales workers	\$415,031,400	\$351,478,350	\$274,221,700
Craft and related workers	\$176,100,900	\$150,628,350	\$114,349,500
Associate professionals	\$138,757,050	\$122,167,900	\$96,733,050
Clerical support workers	\$131,684,450	\$118,291,550	\$89,990,750
Professionals	\$25,288,450	\$21,086,900	\$16,305,950
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	\$9,549,150	\$8,819,150	\$6,214,900
Others	\$81,748,600	\$70,121,000	\$52,978,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

Occupation of applicant	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Elementary occupations	\$45,921,750	\$50,384,900	\$38,898,900
Service and sales workers	\$34,005,800	\$36,103,600	\$31,102,400
Craft and related workers	\$19,699,100	\$21,166,750	\$16,541,200
Associate professionals	\$22,699,200	\$26,566,900	\$22,174,550
Clerical support workers	\$10,795,100	\$11,524,450	\$8,780,300
Professionals	\$4,159,400	\$3,762,500	\$3,406,500
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	\$2,102,250	\$2,112,100	\$1,595,500
Others	\$9,222,700	\$9,776,850	\$7,477,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>

Table 12

A breakdown of the number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year, by household income level and by working hours is as follows:

	Number of approved applications granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>
Basic Allowance <sup>3</sup>	3 521	71	4 744	158	2 794	169
Medium Allowance <sup>3</sup>	9 403	893	8 113	1 090	4 894	739
Higher Allowance <sup>3</sup>	71 813	14 365	62 043	15 487	48 227	12 389
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 737</b>	<b>15 329</b>	<b>74 900</b>	<b>16 735</b>	<b>55 915</b>	<b>13 297</b>

Note 1: The income limits for a full-rate allowance is set at a level not exceeding 50% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income of economically active households (MMDHIEA).

Note 2: The income limits for a half-rate allowance is set at a level exceeding 60% but not higher than 70% of MMDHIEA.

Note 3: Under the WFA Scheme, non-single-parent households that work at least 144 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 36 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Basic Allowance; non-single-parent households that work at least 168 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 54 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Medium Allowance; non-single-parent households that work at least 192 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 72 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Higher Allowance. Owing to the epidemic, the Government implemented a time-limited special arrangement for the claim months from June 2021 to May 2022 to reduce the working hour requirements for non-single-parent households under the WFA Scheme, including lowering the working hour requirements to 72 hours for a Basic Allowance and to 132 hours for a Medium Allowance; while the lenient working hour requirements of single-parent households remain unchanged.

Table 13

A breakdown of the amount of full-rate and half-rate allowances granted by year and by working hours is as follows:

(i)

	Amount of full-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Basic Allowance	\$41,986,250	\$55,625,900	\$34,792,450
Medium Allowance	\$145,596,500	\$126,012,000	\$75,741,950
Higher Allowance	\$1,390,139,150	\$1,196,517,700	\$951,066,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,577,721,900</b>	<b>\$1,378,155,600</b>	<b>\$1,061,600,900</b>

(ii)

	Amount of half-rate allowance granted		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Basic Allowance	\$391,400	\$1,073,700	\$1,095,150
Medium Allowance	\$7,477,500	\$9,215,650	\$5,963,150
Higher Allowance	\$140,736,400	\$151,108,700	\$122,918,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$148,605,300</b>	<b>\$161,398,050</b>	<b>\$129,976,900</b>

Table 14

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by gender of the applicant is as follows:

Gender of applicant	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Male	1 773	393	1 494	380	1 097	265
Female	8 390	922	7 501	1 161	6 024	1 020
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Table 15

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by age of the applicant is as follows:

Age of applicant	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
15 to below 20	0	0	0	0	1	0
20 to below 30	460	64	325	82	179	65
30 to below 40	4 015	575	3 471	644	2 706	525
40 to below 50	4 694	566	4 221	661	3 484	557
50 to below 60	878	103	866	144	669	126
60 or above	116	7	112	10	82	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Table 16

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by household size is as follows:

Household size	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
2 persons	4 191	703	3 572	843	2 748	686
3 persons	4 398	479	3 894	536	3 141	469
4 persons	1 287	99	1 255	136	1 028	105
5 persons	253	27	241	20	174	22
6 persons or above	34	7	33	6	30	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Table 17

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by industry of the applicant is as follows:

Industry of applicant	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business services	3 451	424	3 045	541	2 313	480
Construction	789	145	661	147	518	103
Transportation, storage, postal and courier services, information and communications	587	93	551	99	450	77
Accommodation and food services	1 631	193	1 430	215	1 217	186
Import/export, wholesale and retail trades	1 905	183	1 695	203	1 336	173
Public administration, social and personal services	1 168	212	1 065	256	843	206
Manufacturing	191	16	148	16	123	10
Others	441	49	400	64	321	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Table 18

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year and by occupation of the applicant is as follows:

Occupation of applicant	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate	Full-rate	Half-rate
Elementary occupations	2 372	226	2 069	251	1 602	198
Service and sales workers	3 950	462	3 507	536	2 838	453
Craft and related workers	449	80	358	72	274	41
Associate professionals	838	254	727	313	598	298
Clerical support workers	1 815	170	1 649	221	1 289	185
Professionals	244	56	225	60	166	45
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	28	7	31	8	20	6
Others	467	60	429	80	334	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Table 19

A breakdown of the number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances by year, by household income level and by working hours is as follows:

	Number of approved applications from single-parent households granted the full-rate and half-rate allowances					
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	
	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>	Full-rate <sup>1</sup>	Half-rate <sup>2</sup>
Basic Allowance <sup>3</sup>	209	4	228	1	164	4
Medium Allowance <sup>3</sup>	251	4	287	3	203	2
Higher Allowance <sup>3</sup>	9 703	1 307	8 480	1 537	6 754	1 279
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 163</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>8 995</b>	<b>1 541</b>	<b>7 121</b>	<b>1 285</b>

Note 1: The income limits for a full-rate allowance is set at a level not exceeding 50% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income of economically active households (MMDHIEA).

Note 2: The income limits for a half-rate allowance is set at a level exceeding 60% but not higher than 70% of MMDHIEA.

Note 3: Under the WFA Scheme, single-parent households that work at least 36 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Basic Allowance; that work at least 54 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Medium Allowance; and that work at least 72 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Higher Allowance.



Table 20

The annual number of approved applications with applicants submitting self-declared statements as a proof of their working hours or income from work by year is as follows:

Number of approved applications with applicants submitting a self-declared statement as proof of their working hours or income from work		
2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
25 973	24 257	18 327

Table 21

The annual number of applications from non-Chinese households by year is as follows:

Number of applications from non-Chinese households		
2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
3 269	3 100	2 654

Table 22

The annual number of applications withdrawn by year is as follows:

Number of applications withdrawn		
2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
2 759	3 416	3 043

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)229**

**(Question Serial No. 0197)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
Subhead (No. & title): ()  
Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance  
Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

It is mentioned in the Programme that the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) administers efficiently and cost-effectively the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme, which seeks to encourage self-reliance and ease inter-generational poverty. In this connection, will the Government advise this Committee of:

- a. the expenditure on the development and continuous maintenance of the chatbot launched by the WFSFAA to enhance enquiry services on the WFA Scheme;
- b. further to the above question, whether the WFSFAA has assessed the effectiveness of the chatbot in reducing the manual workload; if so, the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- c. whether the chatbot can achieve cost-saving; if so, the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- d. the expenditure involved in implementing and developing the centralised e-service portal; and
- e. further to the above question, the estimated expenditure on publicising and promoting the service portal.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ling-lai, Lillian (LegCo internal reference no.: 24)

Reply:

- (a) The Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) has launched a chatbot in phases since May 2022. The costs for the development and continuous maintenance of the chatbot in the past 2 years are tabulated below:

<b>2022-23 (\$ million)</b>	<b>2023-24 (as at 29 February 2024) (\$ million)</b>
0.912 <b>(costs for development)</b>	0.160 <b>(costs for continuous maintenance)</b>

- (b) and (c) The WFSFAA has launched the chatbot as an additional channel to provide round-the-clock online public enquiry services. The main aims are to bring greater convenience to the public and enhance service quality and efficiency. Any manpower saved has been redeployed to other tasks for service improvement and is difficult to quantify.
- (d) and (e) The WFSFAA commenced the project of centralised e-service portal in 2022. The costs for developing the centralised e-service portal in the past 2 years are tabulated below:

<b>2022-23 (\$ million)</b>	<b>2023-24 (as at 29 February 2024) (\$ million)</b>
1.331	3.840

The centralised e-service portal is expected to be launched in 2025. Since the publicity and promotion work is still under planning, the estimated expenditure in the connection is not yet available.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)230**

**(Question Serial No. 2941)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme, please advise on the following:

1. What are the respective numbers of single-parent and non-single-parent households in the past 3 years?
2. What are the total numbers of WFA Scheme recipients and the numbers of children eligible for the Child Allowance in the past 3 years?
3. The WFA Scheme aims to encourage self-reliance and ease inter-generational poverty. Has the Government assessed the effectiveness of the Scheme since its launch, and what are the results achieved in the two areas mentioned above (i.e. encouraging self-reliance and easing inter-generational poverty)?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Yuk-wai, Kenneth (LegCo internal reference no.: 15)

Reply:

1. and 2. From 2021-22 to 2023-24, the breakdown of the numbers of single-parent and non-single-parent households granted the Working Family Allowance (WFA) are set out in Table 1 in Annex, whereas the breakdowns of the numbers of beneficiaries granted the WFA and children granted Child Allowance are set out in Tables 2 and 3 respectively in Annex.
3. The WFA Scheme aims to support lower-income working households with longer working hours which are not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, and to encourage continuous full-time employment. Since the launch in 2018 and up to end-February this year, the WFA Scheme had received around 707 000 applications. Of these, around 646 000 (i.e. more than 90%) have been approved, and some are still being processed. The total amount of allowance disbursed is approximately \$9.78 billion. As at end-February 2024, the WFA Scheme had more than 51 000 “active households” (i.e. households which have been approved with WFA and submitted the latest application in the past 6

months), which involved around 173 000 persons, including around 71 000 children. The WFA Scheme encourages self-reliance and adopts the principle of rewarding hard work by providing different rates of allowance based on working hours. At present, almost 90% of WFA-receiving households are granted Higher Allowance (i.e. meeting the highest working hour requirement under the Scheme). Besides, every eligible child can apply for Child Allowance. The Government will continue to encourage eligible households to apply for WFA with a view to providing appropriate support for more grassroots working families in need.

Table 1

A breakdown of the number of single-parent and non-single-parent households granted the WFA by year is as follows:

Households	Number of households of granted the WFA		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Single-parent households	7 522	7 145	6 549
Non-single-parent households	63 884	59 326	50 594

Table 2

A breakdown of the number of beneficiaries granted the WFA by year is as follows:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Number of beneficiaries granted the WFA	234 133	219 805	191 684

Table 3

A breakdown of the number of children granted Child Allowance by year is as follows:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Number of children granted Child Allowance <sup>Note</sup>	90 765	86 369	77 460

Note: As the Child Allowance of the WFA Scheme is disbursed together with the household allowance every 6 months, each child in the above table may be granted allowance once or twice in the same year.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)231**

**(Question Serial No. 2628)**

Head: (173) Working Family And Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the Low-income Working Family Allowance, please advise the following since the launch of the scheme: (provide the yearly breakdowns in table form)

1. the number of applications in each year, with breakdown by (1) household size and (2) working hours of applicants;
2. please list (i) the occupation categories of the applicants; and (ii) the respective proportions of applicants who were (a) full-time employees, (b) part-time employees, (c) casual workers and (d) self-employed persons in the past 3 years;
3. the respective numbers of applications with self-declaration statement in lieu of proof on income/working hours in the past 3 years;
4. the number of beneficiaries from single-parent households and non-single-parent households in each year, with breakdown by type of allowance granted (full-rate/ 3/4-rate/ half-rate);
5. the amount of allowance involved in the scheme in each year and the administrative expenditure incurred; and
6. the number of children benefitted in each year since the launch of the scheme, with breakdown by type of allowance granted.

Asked by: Hon LI Sai-wing, Stanley (LegCo internal reference no.: 9)

Reply:

1. The numbers of applications received under the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme from 2019-20 to 2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024), broken down by household size and monthly working hours, are set out in Table 1 and Table 2 of the Annex.
2. Regarding applicants who were granted the WFA from 2021-22 to 2023-24, their occupations, and the numbers and proportions of self-employed persons, are set out in Table 3 and Table 4 of the Annex. The Working Family Allowance Office

under the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency does not maintain information on whether the applicants are full-time employees, part-time employees or casual workers.

3. The numbers of approved WFA applications with applicants submitting self-declared statements as proof of their working hours or income from work from 2021-22 to 2023-24 are set out in Table 5 of the Annex.
- 4 to 6. The numbers of beneficiaries granted the WFA which were from single-parent households and non-single-parent households, the amounts of allowance granted, the administrative expenditure, the numbers of children granted the Child Allowance and the amounts of Child Allowance are set out in Tables 6 to 9 of the Annex.



Table 1

A breakdown of the number of WFA applications from 2019-20 to 2023-24 by household size is as follows:

Year		Number of applications						
		Household size						
		1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5 persons	6 persons or more	Total
WFA Scheme	2019-20	6 488	20 186	29 320	38 660	10 968	3 386	<b>109 008</b>
	2020-21	9 170	25 246	36 563	46 824	13 398	4 028	<b>135 229</b>
	2021-22	10 759	25 177	35 427	46 110	13 415	4 054	<b>134 942</b>
	2022-23	10 141	23 247	33 007	44 538	13 180	4 014	<b>128 127</b>
	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	7 732	18 756	26 939	38 082	11 374	3 531	<b>106 414</b>

Table 2

A breakdown of the number of WFA applications from 2019-20 to 2023-24 by monthly working hours is as follows:

Monthly working hours Note		Number of applications						Total
		Single-parent household	Less than 36 hours	36 hours - less than 54 hours	54 hours - less than 72 hours	72 hours or more	Information not provided by applicant	
		Non-single-parent household	Less than 144 hours	144 hours - less than 168 hours	168 hours - less than 192 hours	192 hours or more		
WFA Scheme	2019-20	1 730	2 412	7 818	96 761	287	<b>109 008</b>	
	2020-21	2 714	3 718	11 937	116 396	464	<b>135 229</b>	
	2021-22	3 586	3 854	11 092	116 124	286	<b>134 942</b>	
	2022-23	4 472	4 408	11 318	107 737	192	<b>128 127</b>	
	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	2 567	3 152	8 994	90 339	1 362	<b>106 414</b>	

Note: Under the WFA Scheme, non-single-parent households that work at least 144 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 36 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Basic Allowance; non-single-parent households that work at least 168 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 54 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Medium Allowance; non-single-parent households that work at least 192 hours per month and single-parent households that work at least 72 hours per month can meet the working hour requirements for a Higher Allowance. Owing to the epidemic, the Government implemented a time-limited special arrangement for the claim months from June 2021 to May 2022 to reduce the working hour requirements for non-single-parent households under the WFA Scheme, including lowering the working hour requirements to 72 hours for a Basic Allowance and to 132 hours for a Medium Allowance; while the lenient working hour requirements of single-parent households remain unchanged.

Applicants who fail to provide the information on working hours will not be granted the WFA.

Table 3

A breakdown of the number of approved WFA applications from 2021-22 to 2023-24 by year and by occupation of the applicant is as follows:

Occupation category of applicant	Number of approved WFA applications		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Elementary occupations	47 153	44 672	33 701
Service and sales workers	32 386	29 649	22 852
Craft and related workers	12 726	11 767	8 960
Associate professionals	12 486	11 922	9 611
Clerical support workers	11 084	10 531	7 977
Professionals	2 284	2 065	1 561
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	892	862	617
Others	6 561	6 129	4 520
<b>Total</b>	<b>125 572</b>	<b>117 597</b>	<b>89 799</b>

Table 4

The numbers and proportions of approved WFA applications from self-employed applicants from 2021-22 to 2023-24 are as follows:

Employment nature of applicant	Number of approved WFA applications (percentage of the total number of cases granted the allowance)		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
Self-employment	7 635 (about 6.1%)	7 235 (about 6.2%)	5 719 (about 6.4%)

Table 5

The numbers of approved WFA applications with applicants submitting self-declared statements as proof of their working hours or income from work from 2021-22 to 2023-24 are as follows:

Number of approved WFA applications with applicants submitting a self-declared statement as proof of their working hours or income from work		
2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)
25 973	24 257	18 327

Table 6

A breakdown of the number of beneficiaries granted the WFA which were non-single-parent households and single-parent households from 2019-20 to 2023-24 by type of allowance is as follows:

Year	Number of household members granted the allowance						Total
	Single-parent household			Non-single-parent household			
	Full-rate allowance	3/4-rate allowance	Half-rate allowance	Full-rate allowance	3/4-rate allowance	Half-rate allowance	
2019-20	15 194	2 784	1 314	125 990	34 315	18 119	<b>197 716</b>
2020-21	17 307	3 220	1 637	151 978	38 477	22 464	<b>235 083</b>
2021-22	15 030	3 361	2 074	141 812	42 754	29 102	<b>234 133</b>
2022-23	13 356	3 757	2 480	122 976	45 026	32 210	<b>219 805</b>
2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	12 468	3 339	2 266	105 700	39 683	28 228	<b>191 684</b>

Table 7

The amounts of the WFA granted from 2019-20 to 2023-24 are as follows:

Year		Amount of allowance granted
WFA Scheme	2019-20	\$1,351,989,250
	2020-21	\$1,797,458,250
	2021-22	\$2,075,241,150
	2022-23	\$1,891,968,450
	2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	\$1,475,840,500

Table 8

The administrative expenditure incurred in implementing the WFA Scheme from 2019-20 to 2023-24 are as follows:

Year	Administrative expenditure
Actual expenditure for 2019-20 (WFA and I-WITS) <sup>Note</sup>	About \$304.0 million
Actual expenditure for 2020-21 (WFA and I-WITS) <sup>Note</sup>	About \$329.2 million
Actual expenditure for 2021-22 (WFA and I-WITS) <sup>Note</sup>	About \$355.5 million
Actual expenditure for 2022-23 (WFA)	About \$374.6 million
Revised estimate for 2023-24 (WFA)	About \$401.9 million

Note: The Working Family Allowance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency also processed the applications for Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (I-WITS) (which was abolished starting from June 2021) in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. Therefore, the administrative expenditure for these 3 years covered WFA Scheme and I-WITS Scheme.

Table 9

The numbers of children granted the Child Allowance and amounts of the Child Allowance from 2019-20 to 2023-24 are as follows:

	Number of children granted the Child Allowance <sup>Note</sup>	Amount of the Child Allowance
WFA Scheme		
2019-20	79 654	\$734,637,750
2020-21	91 946	\$1,005,757,300
2021-22	90 765	\$1,200,386,250
2022-23	86 369	\$1,102,685,850
2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	77 460	\$869,184,750

Note: As the Child Allowance of the WFA Scheme is disbursed together with the household allowance every 6 months, each child in the above table may be granted allowance once or twice in the same year.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)232**

**(Question Serial No. 3214)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

At present, there are 24 government staff in the Labour and Welfare Bureau responsible for the work relating to Programme (3) Manpower Development. In this connection, please advise this Committee on:

- a) the number of government staff responsible for vetting applications under the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme in the past 3 years;
- b) the government staff expenditure for the WFA Scheme in the past 3 years; and
- c) the manpower-related expenditure incurred for the WFA Scheme in the past 3 years?

Asked by: Hon NGAN Man-yu (LegCo internal reference no.: 42)

Reply:

- (a) In 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency had about 550 vetting staff, including about 320 civil servants, who were responsible for processing and vetting applications under the WFA Scheme (Note: The Work Incentive Transport Subsidy was abolished since June 2021, thus the vetting staff of the WFAO had to process applications received under that scheme at the same time in 2021-22).
- (b)&(c) The annual total staff costs of the WFAO and the annual total manpower-related expenditure incurred from 2021-22 to 2023-24 are set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the Annex.

Table 1

A breakdown of the total staff costs of the WFAO by year is as follows:

Year	Staff Cost
2021-22	About \$267.7 million
2022-23	About \$279.7 million
2023-24 (Revised Estimates)	About \$301.2 million

Table 2

A breakdown of the total manpower-related expenditure<sup>#</sup> of the WFAO by year is as follows:

Year	Manpower-related Expenditure
2021-22	About \$48.9 million
2022-23	About \$55.0 million
2023-24 (Revised Estimates)	About \$54.4 million

<sup>#</sup> Manpower-related expenditure includes electricity charges, computer equipment for staff and office rent and management fees, etc.

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)233**

**(Question Serial No. 1094)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Please provide the number of children receiving Child Allowance under the Working Family Allowance Scheme in the past 10 years.

Number of Children Receiving Child Allowance

Full-rate Child Allowance    3/4-rate Child Allowance    Half-rate Child Allowance

2023-2024

2022-2023

2021-2022

2020-2021

2019-2020

2018-2019

2017-2018

2016-2017

2015-2016

2014-2015

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 22)

Reply:

From 2019-20 to 2023-24, the number of children granted Child Allowance under the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme is as follows:

	Number of Children Granted Child Allowance <sup>Note</sup>		
	Full-rate Allowance	3/4-rate Allowance	Half-rate Allowance
2019-20	57 854	14 331	7 469
2020-21	67 715	15 474	8 757
2021-22	62 116	17 163	11 486
2022-23	54 578	18 667	13 124
2023-24 (up to 29 February 2024)	48 490	16 878	12 092

Note : As the Child Allowance of the WFA Scheme is disbursed together with the household allowance every 6 months, each child in the above table may be granted allowance once or twice in the same year.

- End -



**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**LWB(W)234**

**(Question Serial No. 1099)**

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency  
(Mr Andrew TSANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the Working Family Allowance (WFA), please provide breakdowns by District Council district on:

- 1) the numbers of applications and approved applications in the past 3 years;

	1-person family	2-person family	3-person family	4-person family	5-person family	6-person or more family
Central and Western						
Wan Chai						
Eastern						
Southern						
Sham Shui Po						
Yau Tsim Mong						
Kowloon City						
Wong Tai Sin						
Kwun Tong						
Kwai Tsing						
Tsuen Wan						

Tuen Mun						
Yuen Long						
North						
Tai Po						
Sha Tin						
Sai Kung						
Islands						

- 2) among the approved applications in the past 3 years, how many of them were granted with Child Allowance at the same time?

	1-person family	2-person family	3-person family	4-person family	5-person family	6-person or more family
Central and Western						
Wan Chai						
Eastern						
Southern						
Sham Shui Po						
Yau Tsim Mong						
Kowloon City						
Wong Tai Sin						
Kwun Tong						
Kwai Tsing						
Tsuen Wan						
Tuen Mun						
Yuen Long						
North						
Tai Po						
Sha Tin						
Sai Kung						
Islands						

- 3) apart from the WFA, what measures are currently in place to support grassroots families in childcare?

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 27)

Reply:

1. and 2. In 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 (up to the end of February 2024), a total of 369 483 applications were received under the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme, of which 332 968 applications were approved, while some applications are still being processed. Among the approved applications, 260 719 applications were granted Child Allowance. The numbers of applications approved and granted Child Allowance as mentioned above, broken down by district and household size, is set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the Annex.
3. The Government has implemented various measures to support grassroots families to take care of their children, such as child care centres which provide day care services for children aged below 3. To alleviate parents' financial burden in meeting the service fees of child care centres, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has implemented the "Child Care Centre Parent Subsidy" in February 2020 to provide parents with direct subsidies to pay the service fees of full-day aided child care centres to ease their economic burden. The monthly ceiling of the subsidy per child will be increased from \$600 to \$1,000 starting from April 2024. Financially needy households with children receiving whole-day care services in the child care centres (i.e. day crèches, day nurseries or kindergarten-cum-child care centres) registered with the SWD can make application under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS).

Meanwhile, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme provides a safety net of last resort for families who cannot support themselves financially to help them meet their basic needs. Households with children are entitled to higher standard rates and a wide range of special grants to meet their special needs, including educational expenses. Non-CSSA families with financial needs can also make application under various student financial assistance schemes, such as the KCFRS and the Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students for pre-primary students; and the School Textbook Assistance Scheme, the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme and the Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges for primary and secondary students.

Table 1

A breakdown of the number of approved WFA applications by district and household size from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is as follows:

District	Number of approved WFA applications (Household size)					
	1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5 persons	6 persons or more
Kwun Tong	3 354	8 913	11 622	16 715	5 642	1 687
Sham Shui Po	3 491	6 936	9 519	12 604	3 585	920
Yuen Long	2 284	5 113	8 049	10 921	2 999	1 119
Sha Tin	1 411	4 984	7 613	10 940	3 038	702
Kwai Tsing	2 185	4 699	6 257	10 642	3 420	1 335
Tuen Mun	2 402	5 754	7 435	8 885	2 280	473
Wong Tai Sin	1 537	3 364	4 825	7 173	2 530	872
North	1 282	3 688	5 668	7 144	1 692	411
Kowloon City	1 397	3 401	4 378	5 432	1 383	404
Eastern	879	2 256	3 015	4 699	1 367	483
Yau Tsim Mong	1 925	2 660	3 330	3 499	830	190
Tsuen Wan	708	1 980	2 857	4 416	1 167	279
Islands	415	1 179	2 578	4 238	1 361	444
Sai Kung	591	1 554	2 441	3 465	1 055	377
Tai Po	516	1 729	2 548	3 428	969	166
Southern	302	1 036	1 577	2 238	790	150
Central and Western	252	464	732	1 156	343	116
Wan Chai	205	367	487	531	82	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 136</b>	<b>60 077</b>	<b>84 931</b>	<b>118 126</b>	<b>34 533</b>	<b>10 165</b>

Table 2

A breakdown of the number of applications granted Child Allowance by district and household size from 2021-22 to 2023-24 is as follows:

District	Number of applications granted Child Allowance (Household size)					
	1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5 persons	6 persons or more
Kwun Tong	1	3 640	9 677	16 249	5 592	1 677
Sham Shui Po	0	3 231	8 198	12 327	3 543	916
Yuen Long	0	2 574	6 918	10 576	2 975	1 115
Sha Tin	0	2 384	6 664	10 756	3 026	701
Kwai Tsing	0	1 993	5 164	10 290	3 376	1 333
Tuen Mun	0	2 682	6 397	8 700	2 272	469
North	0	1 859	5 065	6 988	1 678	410
Wong Tai Sin	0	1 342	3 993	6 926	2 510	868
Kowloon City	0	1 677	3 882	5 308	1 375	402
Eastern	0	1 039	2 645	4 560	1 364	483
Tsuen Wan	0	1 104	2 512	4 341	1 165	279
Yau Tsim Mong	0	1 489	2 986	3 453	828	190
Islands	0	679	2 221	4 136	1 349	444
Tai Po	0	848	2 266	3 363	966	166
Sai Kung	0	725	2 045	3 349	1 048	377
Southern	0	455	1 333	2 187	776	150
Central and Western	0	217	643	1 110	337	116
Wan Chai	0	206	437	514	82	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28 144</b>	<b>73 046</b>	<b>115 133</b>	<b>34 262</b>	<b>10 133</b>

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