

Food Assistance Programme in Food Paradise – Urban Poverty and Food Insecurity in Hong Kong



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Background

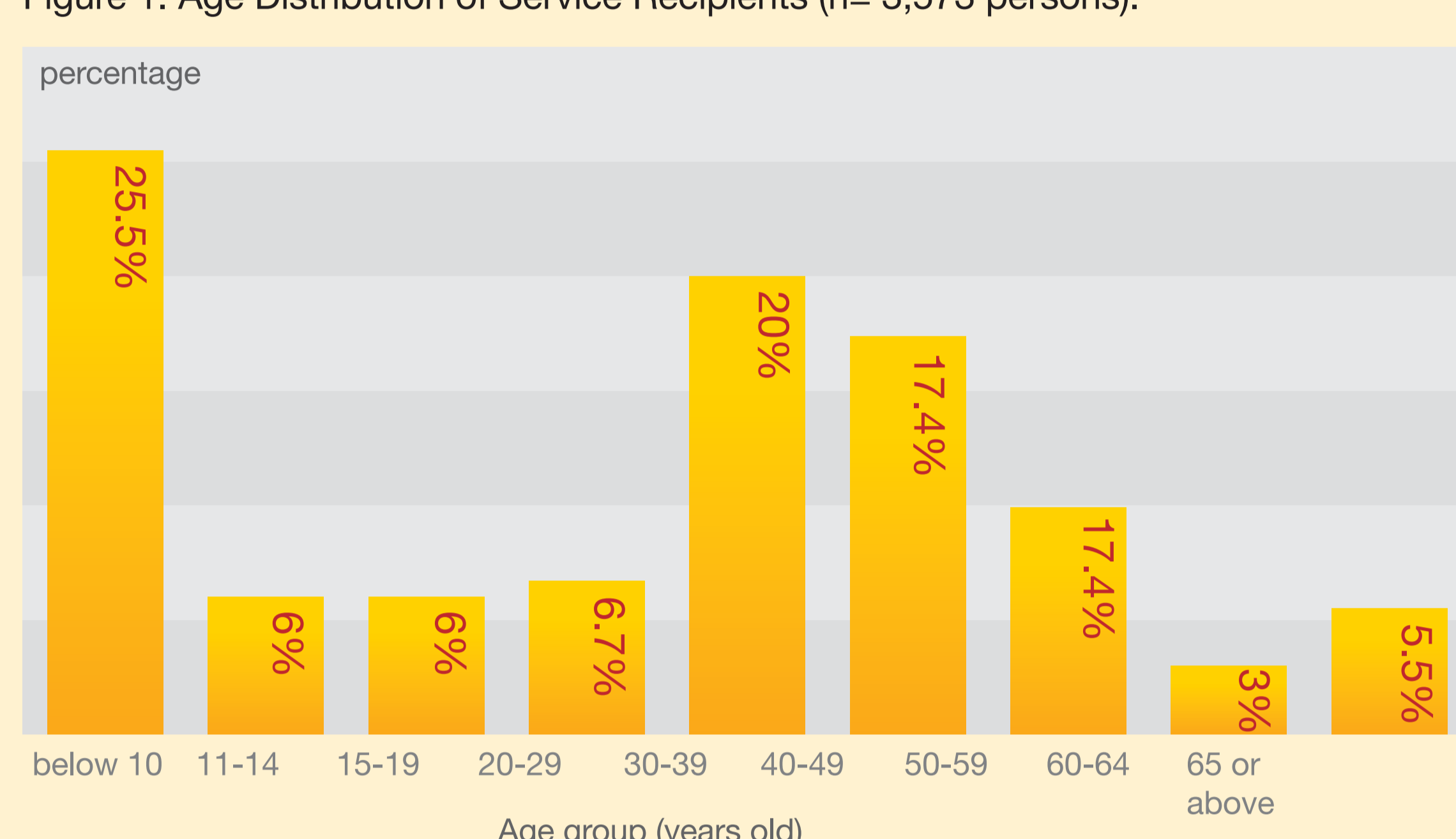
In Hong Kong, a renowned financial center also known as the Food Paradise, there are still a group of marginalized poor residents in need of food assistance for subsistence.

Since the economic tsunami struck in 2008, unemployment rate has increased sharply. With the devastating economy accompanied by rising commodity prices, Food-for-all food assistance service was thus established under the subsidy of the government, with the aim to assist people in financial crisis and those struggling on the poverty line.

Characteristics of Food Assistance Service

It provides low income families and people in financial crisis with immediate food assistance, including dry food (rice, noodles, biscuits etc.), meal coupons, meat/ vegetable coupons and special dry food for ethnic minority. There are 57 food delivery points for recipients to collect food.

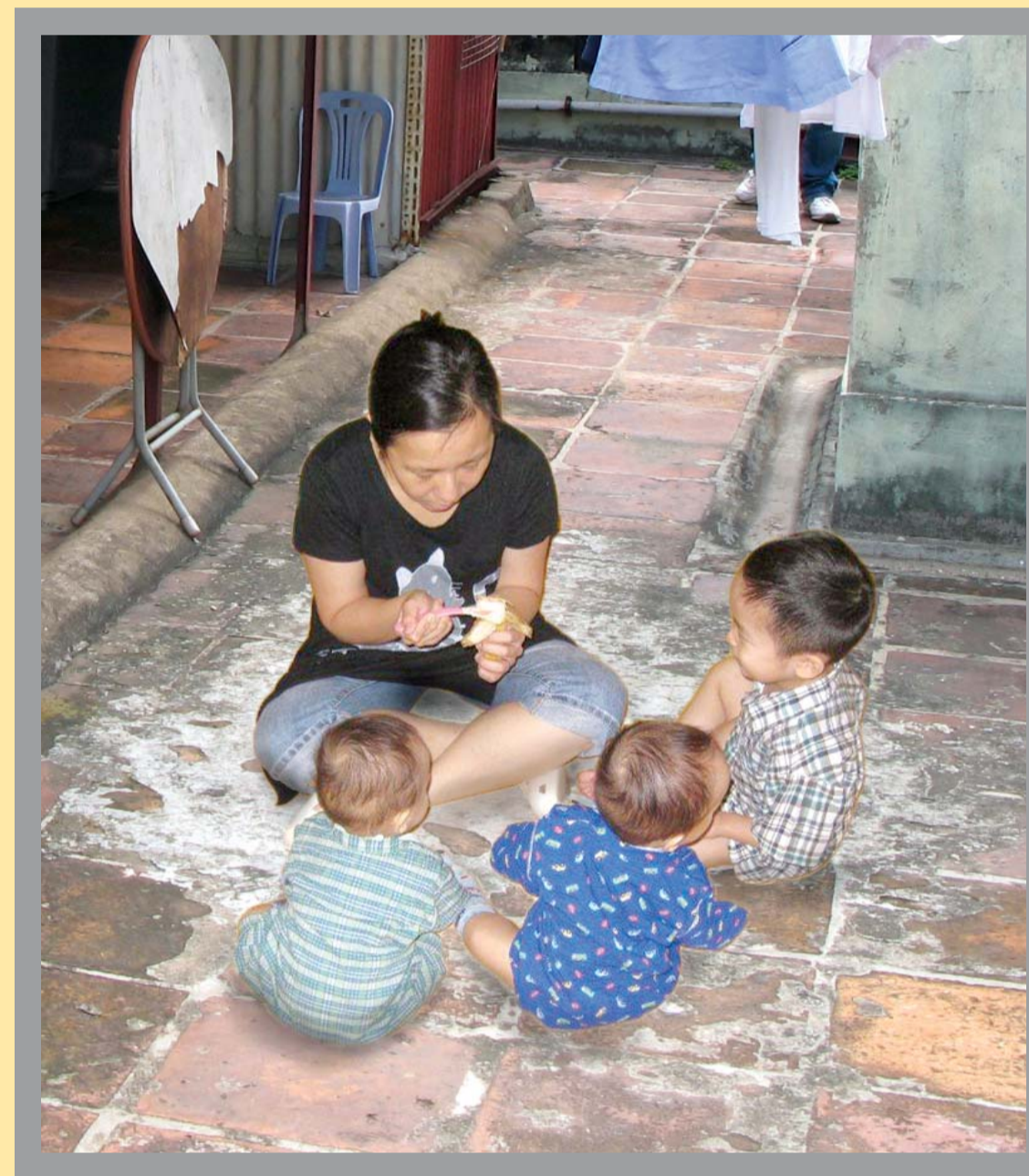
Figure 1. Age Distribution of Service Recipients (n= 3,573 persons).



Children below 15 years old (31.5%) and the middle aged (30-49 years old) (37.5%) are the two major groups of food assistance recipients.

Low income families with young children living on the roof

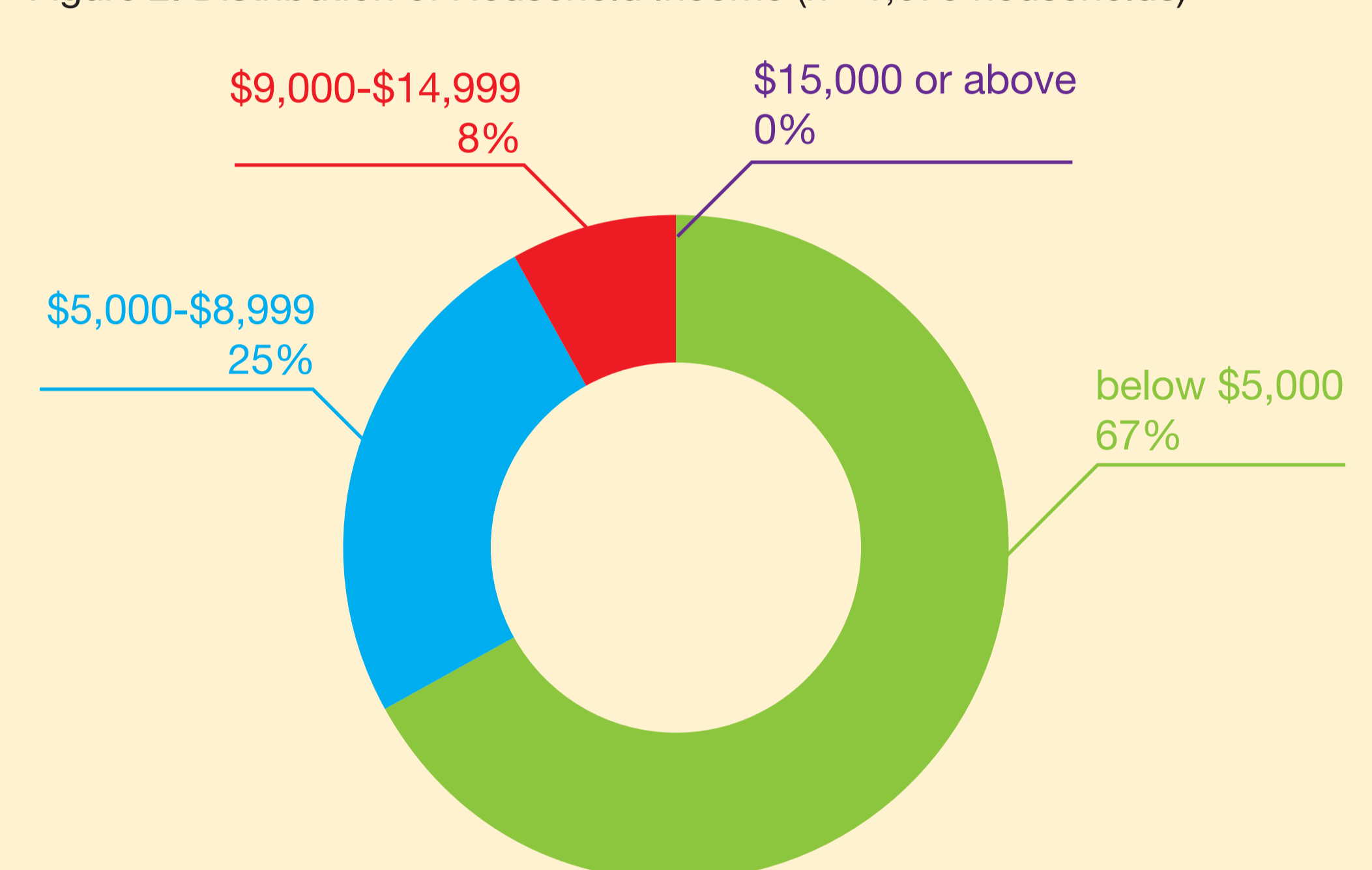
"It really hurts when I see my children have only one piece of bread for meal...and when our rice bowl is nearly empty, we can only have congee for meal...Luckily we receive food assistance, at least now we don't have to worry about food."



Unemployed middle aged man

"I have been unemployed since Lunar New Year. Even before Lunar New Year, I only worked less than 2 weeks a month... I just need a few weeks' assistance to help me getting through these days. I will have work next month; then I can support myself."

Figure 2. Distribution of Household Income (n= 1,675 households)



98.8% of recipients are from low income households*
The median household income of Hong Kong in 2009 was \$ 18, 000 (Census and Statistic department, 2009)

*Low income households: Please refer to the Household Survey of 2009 first quarter by Census and Statistics Department.

Service Statistics

For the past year, TWGHs Food-for-all food assistance service has served 3,530 households (6,927 person-times) of Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po, and Yau Tsim Mong districts in Hong Kong.

3,573 persons out of the 2,127 households interviewed (4,206 persons) provided adequate information for further analysis.

Analysis and Reflection

1. Low income families with dependants have a relatively long term need for food assistance.

- Majority (62.2%) of food assistance recipients were dependants; 38.1% of them were children.
- Families with young children have difficulties in improving their financial situation in the short term, since parents looking after the children are unlikely to go out to work.

2. High rental fee increases the financial burden of family

- High rental fee and income ratio is specific to old urban areas like Yau Tsim Mong district, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po.
- 78.7% of households interviewed were tenants who paid more than one third of their income for rental.
- 8.2% (174 households) of food assistance recipients were street sleepers, who cannot afford a place for living because of high rental fee.

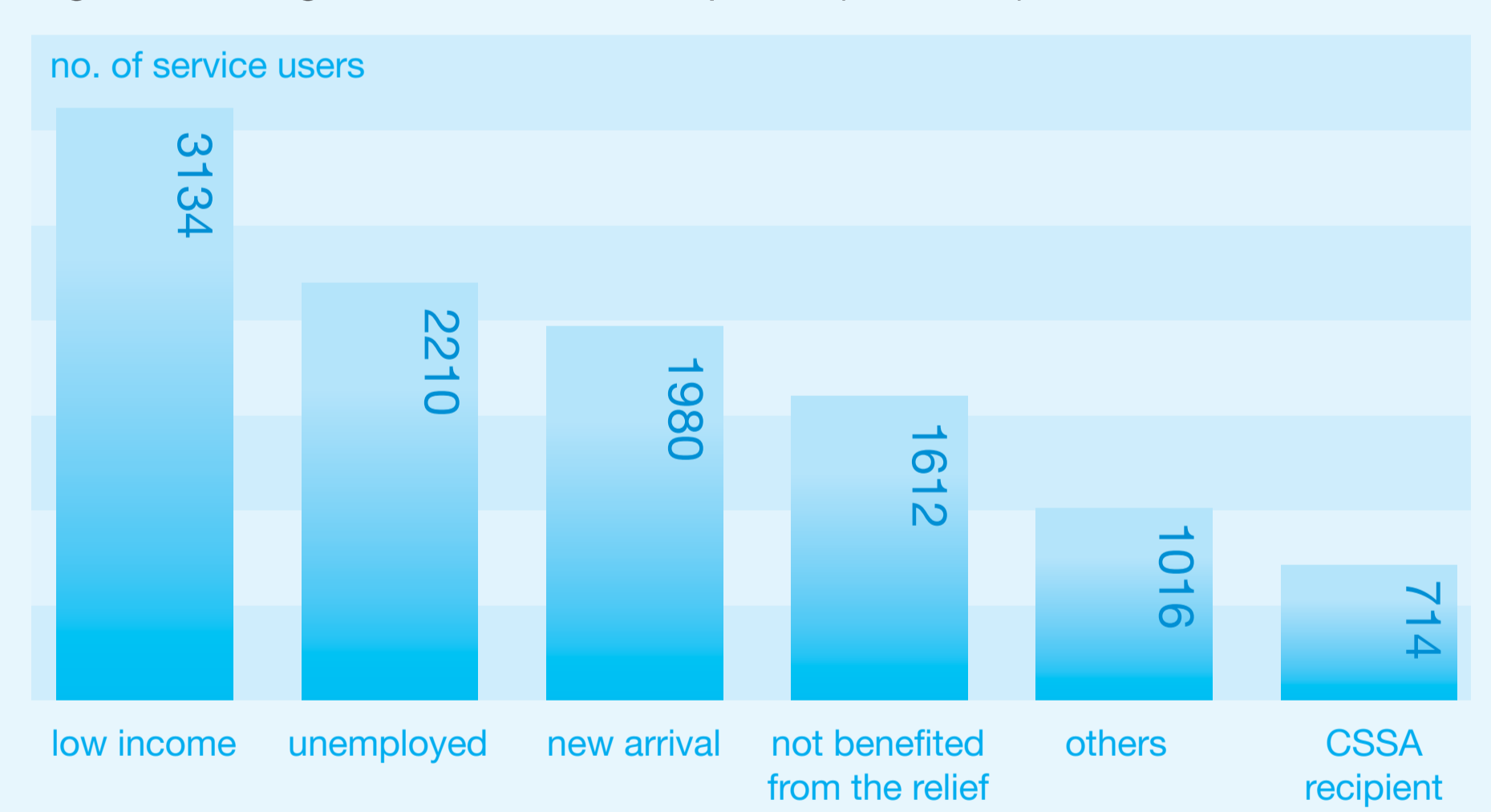
3. Unemployed group needs professional intervention to achieve self reliance

- Middle aged unemployed group with low education level encounters difficulties in job hunting.

Reflection:

Extension of food assistance service and service period is suggested in meeting the long term need of low income families. Professional intervention to enhance the ability of service users in achieving self reliance is recommended.

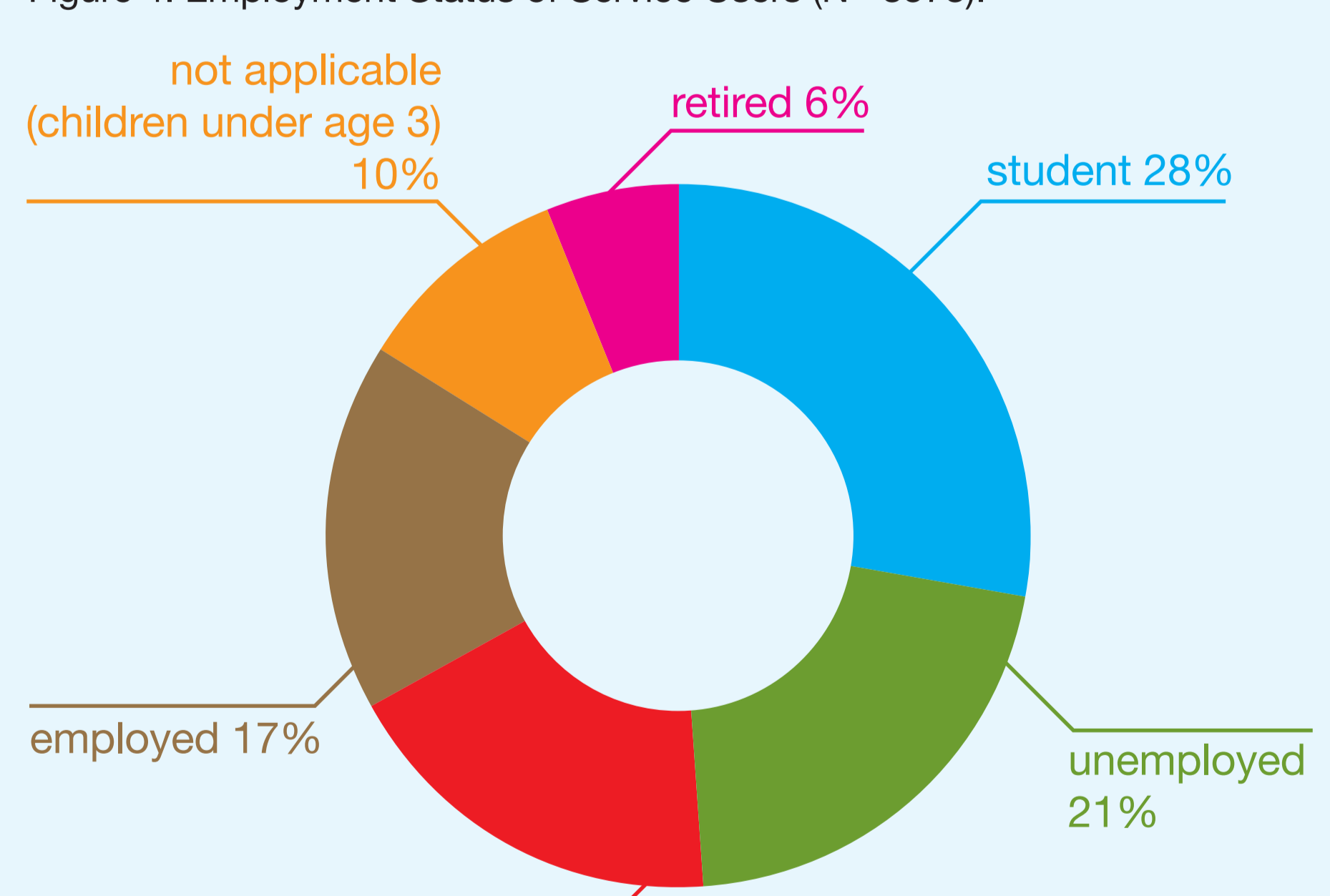
Figure 3. Categories of Service Recipients (N= 6,927).



CSSA recipients were granted food assistance only for emergency reasons. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Unemployed is the second largest group of recipients.

Figure 4. Employment Status of Service Users (N= 3573).



62% of recipients are dependants (i.e. students, young children, home carers, retired) (Figure 4).

