

## FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF AGING IN KOREA

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*Based on the data of the nation-wide survey "The Living Status of Korean Elderly" in 1994, this study examines the family relationship by analyzing household size, living arrangements, and frequency of contacting family, and shows family care for the elderly by identifying their financial, physical and emotional support system. Out of the total aged respondents (2,058 aged 60 years and over) 41.0 percent (31.2 percent in urban areas and 54.0 percent in rural areas) live apart from their children. The highest proportion (21.7 percent) of the elderly see their separately living children once every three months. However, 44.3% of the elderly receive financial aid from their children as their main source of income. This study shows that the family still plays important and comprehensive roles in caring for the elderly, even though the function of family supports for the elderly has been weakened.*

### INTRODUCTION

Although the elderly population has increased rapidly in conjunction with industrialization and urbanization, the status of the aged people and the family support has continuously weakened. The aged cannot properly prepare for their old age, cannot get enough knowledge and skill to adapt themselves to the drastic changes of the modern society, and furthermore the welfare system for the elderly is underdeveloped in Korea. The lack of social support systems results in aging problems that cannot be solved by individual efforts.

This paper attempts to provide an overview of family relationship by analyzing household size, living arrangement, and frequency of contacting with family and show family care for the elderly by examining their financial, physical and psychological support system in detail. It also intends to describe the social activity participation of the elderly, their attitudes toward family care, their opinion about the most appropriate retirement age, and their perception of being old.

To attain these purposes, the major parts of this study are derived from the data of the nation-wide survey, *The Living Status of Korean Elderly* which was carried out by Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs in 1994. The

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survey employed the same sampling unit as used for *The Population and Housing Census, 1990*. One hundred and six households were selected from 7,250 households of the Census sampling units and 2,058 aged 60 years and over who live for one or more months in these households were visited and interviewed by well-trained interviewers during 32 days from April 4 to May 5, 1994. The data of this survey were computerized and analyzed with statistical methods.  $\chi^2$  test is used to testify significance level because most of the variables of this survey were measured by non-continuous scales (Rhee et al. 1994).

## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF THE ELDERLY

### *Household Size of the Elderly*

#### 1. Distribution of Having or Not-having Family and Relatives

Out of the total aged respondents, 97.6 percent have one or more sons and

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENTAGE OF THE ELDERLY HAVING OR NOT-HAVING FAMILY BY AREA (Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Children who survive			
having	97.6	96.4	99.1
not having	2.4	3.6	0.9
Children living together			
having	52.3	62.8	38.4
not having	47.7	37.2	61.6
Children living separately			
having	94.4	92.1	97.6
not having 5.6	7.9	2.4	
Parents living separately			
having	7.9	7.4	8.5
not having	92.1	92.6	91.5
Brothers/sisters living separately			
having	75.4	75.7	74.8
not having	24.6	24.3	25.2
Grand children living separately			
having	92.9	90.0	96.7
not having	7.1	10.0	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(2,058)	(1,171)	(887)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *Survey on the Living Status of Korean Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

daughters who are in existence, while only 3.4 percent do not have any live children. 52.3 percent of the elderly have one child living with them and 94.4 percent have one or more children who live separately from them. Table 1 also shows that most of the elderly have family and relatives who live apart from them: those with their old parents is 7.9 percent, those with separate-living brothers/sisters is 75.4 percent, and 92.9 percent have grandchildren. Comparing distributions of percentage of living arrangement of the elderly by areas, we find that for the elderly with children who survive, the rate of rural residents is higher (99.1 percent) than that of urban residents (96.4 percent). In contrast, more rural elderly (38.4 percent) live with one of their children than urban elderly (62.8 percent) do.

## 2. Family Size

On average, the elderly have 4.3 children and they live together with 0.6 children and apart from average 3.7 sons or daughters. By areas, the tendency shown from Table 2 exhibits that the elderly in rural areas have more children who survive than those in rural areas, which is 4.0 children in urban areas in contrast to 4.8 in rural areas. However, the number of children living together is more in urban areas than in rural areas, which reflects a higher rate of the elderly living together with their children. The average number of brothers or sisters living apart from them is 0.2, that of separate-living parents is 0.1, and also that of the same kind of children is

TABLE 2. SIZE OF FAMILY BY AREA

(Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Children who survive	4.3	4.0	4.8
(sons)	(2.2)	(2.0)	(2.5)
(daughters)	(2.1)	(2.0)	(2.3)
Children living together	0.6	0.8	0.4
(sons)	(0.5)	(0.6)	(0.4)
(daughters)	(0.1)	(0.2)	(0.0)
Children living separately	3.7	3.2	4.4
(sons)	(1.7)	(1.4)	(2.1)
(daughters)	(2.0)	(1.8)	(2.3)
Brothers/sisters living separately	2.2	2.2	2.2
(male)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
(female)	(1.2)	(1.2)	(1.2)
Parents living separately	0.1	0.1	0.1
Grand children living separately	7.4	6.2	9.0

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

## 7.4.

*Living Arrangement of the Elderly*

## 1. Current Living Arrangement

According to the survey, the elderly who live apart from their children is 41.0 percent including 11.9 percent of the total respondents living alone and 29.1 percent living with their spouses only. Also the proportion of the aged living with their children is 53.8 percent—elderly living with married children is 39.1 percent and those living with the unmarried 14.7 percent—and elderly people with others appears to be 5.2 percent. We can also find from Table 3 that there is a big difference between rural and urban areas. In urban areas, the rate of the aged who live apart from their children is 31.2 percent, while the rate in rural area is 54.2 percent.

The proportion of the elderly living apart from their children has significantly increased from 32.9 percent in 1988 to 54.0 percent in 1994, especially in rural areas.

Table 5 describes the living arrangement of the elderly in detail. 87.4 percent of the total elderly live with one of their family members or relatives including their spouses. The proportion of the elderly living with their children is 53.8 percent which contains 31.4 percent of the aged living with eldest sons (31.4 percent), 16.5 percent with other sons, 5.9 percent with daughters. The two-generation households which consist of the elderly and their old parents are 2.4 percent and the elderly living with only their old

TABLE 3. LIVING ARRANGEMENT BY AREA

(Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Elderly living alone	11.9	9.6	15.0
Elderly living with spouses only	29.1	21.6	39.0
Elderly living with their children	53.8	64.1	40.2
(married children)	(34.8)	(38.4)	(28.9)
(married and unmarried children)	( 4.3)	( 6.0)	( 3.9)
(unmarried children)	(14.7)	(19.7)	( 7.4)
Elderly living with others	5.2	4.7	5.9
(parents)	( 1.3)	( 0.8)	( 2.0)
(relatives)	( 3.2)	( 3.1)	( 3.4)
(unrelated)	( 0.7)	( 0.8)	( 0.5)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(2,056)	(1,170)	(886)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

**TABLE 4. TRENDS IN CHANGES OF THE ELDERLY LIVING APART FROM THEIR CHILDREN**  
(Unit: %)

	1988 <sup>1)</sup>			1994 <sup>2)</sup>		
	Both	Urban	Rural	Both	Urban	Rural
Elderly living apart from their children/total Elderly	24.7	16.8	32.9	41.0	31.2	54.0
Elderly living alone/total Elderly	7.6	6.0	9.4	11.9	9.6	15.0
Elderly living with spouses only/total Elderly	17.1	10.8	23.5	29.1	21.6	39.0

Note: 1) N = 19,560, 2) N = 2,056

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1989. *The Structural Characteristics of the elderly Household*. Seoul: KIHASA.

parents appears 1.3 percent. The results from Table 5 show the significant difference between the rates of the elderly living with eldest son by areas—36.8 percent in urban areas and 20.0 percent in rural areas. Most Koreans have traditionally thought that eldest son is obliged to live with their parents looking after them. In general, this traditional concept has been thought to be more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. However we observe the contrary trend that the rate of the urban elderly who live

**TABLE 5. FAMILY STRUCTURE OF THE ELDERLY BY AREA**  
(Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Elderly living alone	11.9	9.6	15.0
Elderly living with a spouse only	29.1	21.6	39.0
Elderly+parents	1.3	0.8	2.0
Elderly+Eldest sons/daughters-in-law+others	30.7	36.4	18.9
Elderly+parents+eldest sons/daughters-in-law	0.7	0.4	1.1
Elderly+other sons/daughters-in-law+others	16.2	18.9	12.7
Elderly+parents+other sons/daughters-in-law+others	0.3	0.4	1.1
Elderly+daughters/sons-in-law+others	5.8	7.8	3.0
Elderly+parents+daughters/sons-in-law+others	0.1	0.2	—
Elderly+grand children/brothers/sisters+others	3.2	3.1	3.3
Elderly+parents+grand children/brothers/sisters+others	0.0	—	0.1
Elderly+others	0.7	0.8	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(2,056)	(1,170)	(886)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

with their children is higher than that of the rural residents. This trend can be explained by the radical decrease of the younger population in rural areas resulted from their leaving for urban areas. Especially, the higher education level of eldest sons in rural areas can be one of the important reasons for them to have much more of a chance to live in cities than any other children.

## 2. Desired Living Arrangement

The survey asked the elderly about their preferences of living arrangement and therefore found that they like to live apart from their children independently. Table 6 shows the largest percentage, 46.4 percent of the elderly want to live independently. 34.0 percent indicate their preference for living with eldest son. The total percentage of the elderly who want to live with one of their children is 47.2 percent. However this rate is not considered to be so high compared with the existing studies. To date, many other studies suggest that living with the eldest son is the most desired preference among the elderly. For example Gallup survey indicated that 83.5 percent of the elderly in 1984 and 68.2 percent in 1989 wanted to live with one of their children. We observe very important change of the preferences of living arrangement from these results.

Comparing the rates of rural and urban areas, 53.1 percent of rural aged residents and 41.3 percent of the urbans chose living apart from their children as the most desired arrangement. It appears that the rural elderly

TABLE 6. DESIRED LIVING ARRANGEMENT BY AREA AND MARITAL STATUS (Unit: %)

	Both	Area		Marital Status	
		Urban	Rural	With a spouse	Spouseless
Elderly living alone/with a spouse only	46.4	41.3	53.1	58.0	31.0
Elderly living with Eldest sons / daughters-in-law	34.0	35.4	32.2	28.3	41.5
Elderly living one of sons	8.2	8.7	7.6	4.9	12.6
Elderly living with daughters	2.4	3.4	1.2	1.2	4.0
Elderly living with one of children want to most	2.6	3.1	1.9	1.7	3.7
Elderly living with others	1.2	1.4	0.9	0.3	2.3
Don't know	5.2	6.8	3.2	5.5	4.8
Total (person)	100.0 (1,936)	100.0 (1,105)	100.0 (831)	100.0 (1,103)	100.0 (833)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

**TABLE 7. DESIRED LIVING ARRANGEMENT BY ECONOMIC STATUS** (Unit: %)

	Both	Independent	Dependent
Elderly living alone/with a spouse only	46.6	59.7	33.3
Elderly living with Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	33.7	26.3	41.4
Elderly living one of sons	8.3	5.0	11.7
Elderly living with daughters	2.4	1.1	3.7
Elderly living with one of children want to most	2.6	1.4	3.7
Elderly living with others	1.2	0.7	1.7
Don't know	5.1	5.8	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(1,893)	(957)	(936)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

want to be in their hometown, even though they have to live separately from their children. The proportion of the elderly with their spouses only reaches 58.0 percent whereas only 36.2 percent of them answered that they want to live with their children. To the contrary, the spouseless elderly prefer living with their children (61.9 percent) than to living separate from their children (31.0 percent).

Table 7 shows the desired living arrangement of the elderly by their economic status. These are classified into two types by degree of economic dependency. The first type, "the economic independent elderly", means those who are self-sufficient by working on their own, their savings, profits from property, public or private pensions. The second type of the elderly is "the economic dependent elderly". They consist of a group who receive economic supports from their children for their living expenses. Out of the elderly in the first group, 59.7 percent want to live alone or with a spouse only, while 33.3 percent of the second group want to. The result implies that the difference of the economic status has significant influence upon the desired living arrangement of the elderly.

73.4 percent of the elderly chose "Convenient with living alone separately" as the major reason for the preference of living apart from their children. The major reasons for choosing to live with their children are varied with "Convenient with living with children" (23.6 percent), "because it is a traditional custom" (22.1 percent), and "because of loneliness" (21.2 percent).

## FREQUENCIES OF SEEING AND CONTACTING WITH FAMILY

*Frequency of Seeing the Family*

To find out how often the elderly living alone or with a spouse only see their family, we calculate the frequency of meeting with one of their family members including their children and relatives. If an aged person meet a different member of their family everyday, we measure that they see their family once a day.

As shown in Table 8, the highest proportion of the elderly see their separately-living children once, every three months (21.7 percent). The next group once a month (17.3 percent), once a every week (15.6 percent), once every half a year, and once a every two week. This results mean that 39.9 percent of the elderly have chances to meet one of their children once every three or six months, that 4.2 percent of the aged meet their children once or less in a year, 14.4 percent see their family only on a special day such as their birthday and that the elderly who never see even one of their children are 0.5 percent. 31.3 percent of the elderly see their children more than one time a week. In detail, the rates of the elderly who see even one of their family appear higher for the urban residents (40.0 percent) than for the rural elderly (20.2 percent), higher for the elderly who have their own property (32.9 percent) than for those who do not (29.6percent), and more frequently for the elderly without any difficulties in ADL than for those with one or

TABLE 8. FREQUENCY OF SEEING THE FAMILY

. (Unit: %)

	Separately-living children	Their parents	Brothers/ sisters	Grand- children	Relatives
Almost everyday	8.1	8.6	5.5	6.1	10.1
Twice or three times a week	7.6	2.8	3.1	5.5	3.1
Once a week	15.6	3.9	3.6	13.0	2.8
Once every two weeks	10.9	5.7	4.7	8.7	2.0
Once a month	17.8	10.1	10.5	13.5	5.6
Once every three months	21.7	15.4	13.2	19.8	7.8
Once every six months	12.2	19.1	13.9	18.8	8.8
Once or less a year	4.2	22.7	13.8	10.2	8.2
On special day only	1.4	7.0	26.0	2.8	39.7
Never	0.5	4.7	5.7	1.7	11.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(1,830)	(161)	(1,486)	(1,797)	(1,906)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

more limitations in ADL. In conclusion, the needy elderly including rural residents, spouseless elderly, not-havings, and elderly with problems of ADL see their children less frequently than expected.

The highest proportion of the elderly (21.7 percent) answered that they see their parents who live apart from them once or less a year and the next proportions appears once every six months (19.1 percent), once every quarter a year (15.4 percent), and once every month. In the case of brothers or sisters and other relatives, respectively 26.0 percent and 39.7 percent of the elderly meet them on a special day only.

#### *Frequency of Contacting with the Family*

We can see from Table 9 how often the elderly get in touch with their family, friends, or neighbors through phone or letters. To examine the contacting frequency, we measured only the total number of contacts. Generally frequency of contacting is expected higher than that of seeing. 17.5 percent of the elderly are in contact with one of their children once or more in a day. The result is the same as general expectations. However, the frequencies of contacting parents (6.8 percent), brothers/sisters (2.3 percent), grandchildren (6.5 percent) or other relatives (1.9 percent) are lower than those of visiting in person. This means that the elderly get in touch with their children very often even though they have few chances to meet their children because of a long distances or lack of time.

21.1 percent, the highest rate of the elderly contact with their separate-living children once a week, and the next groupings are twice or three times in every week (21.5 percent), once in a day (15.8 percent). In contrary to that

**TABLE 9. FREQUENCY OF CONTACTING WITH THE FAMILY** (Unit: %)

	Separately-living children	Their parents	Brothers/ sisters	Grand- children	Relatives
Twice or more a day	1.7	-	0.4	1.4	0.3
Once a day	15.8	6.8	1.9	5.1	1.6
Twice or three times a week	21.5	5.0	5.3	7.7	3.4
Once a week	25.1	12.4	11.9	13.9	5.4
Once a month	22.9	31.7	26.2	20.9	15.7
Once every three months	9.4	21.7	36.8	20.3	34.8
On special day only	-	-	-	-	5.4
Never	3.6	22.4	17.5	30.6	33.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(person)	(1,828)	(161)	(1,483)	(1,797)	(1,906)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

most aged persons have opportunities to be in contact with their children very frequently, there are also 9.4 percent of the elderly who contact with their family only once every three months and 3.6 percent never have any chance to get in touch with their family.

Out of the total elderly, 64.1 percent contact with once or more a day. In detail we can see higher rate of urban elderly 70.2 percent than that of rural elderly 56.6 percent and higher the aged with spouse (69.7 percent) than spouseless elderly (56.1 percent), the elderly with their own property than non-proprietaries, the elderly without any difficulties in ADL than those with one or more ADL problems. The rural residents, the spouseless elderly, having-nots, and the old aged with one or more ADL limitations are generally expected to need much more helps from their family. But their contacting rates are lower than that of the elderly who are not expected to need assistances.

## RECIPROCAL CARE OF FAMILY AND THE ELDERLY

### *Family Care for the Elderly*

#### 1. Financial Care

##### (1) Main Resources of Income of the Elderly

The survey asked the major resource of the elderly's own or spouses'

TABLE 10. MAIN RESOURCE OF INCOME OF THE ELDERLY (Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Self-support (their own work or job)	37.6	28.0	50.2
Properties/rents/savings	6.9	8.8	4.6
Pension	3.9	5.3	2.0
All children	44.3	50.5	36.2
(Eldest sons/daughters-in-law)	(27.0)	(29.8)	(23.3)
(Other sons/daughters-in-law)	( 7.8)	( 8.7)	( 6.7)
(Daughters/sons-in-law)	( 5.5)	( 7.0)	( 3.4)
(Unmarried children)	( 2.5)	( 3.8)	( 0.8)
(Grand children/spouses)	( 1.1)	( 0.9)	( 1.4)
(All children together)	( 0.4)	( 0.3)	( 0.6)
Public assistance/old age allowances	3.5	2.8	4.5
Others	1.5	2.1	0.6
None	2.3	2.6	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(2,048)	(1,166)	(882)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

income. The results show that for 27.0 percent of the total elderly respondents the financial support to the elderly are provided by their eldest sons/daughters-in-law. 17.3 percent of the elderly are supported by other children including other sons, daughters, all children together, or grandchildren. That is, out of the total elderly 44.3 percent receive financial aid from their children as their main source of income.

By areas, 36.2 percent of the rural residents and 50.5 percent of the urban residents are dependent on their children for their income. As Table 10 shows, the proportion of the elderly receiving financial support as the most important resource of their income is highest in urban areas. This amounts to 50.5 percent in contrast to this result, 50.2 percent of the rural elderly are living on their own work or job as the main income.

#### (2) Provider of Living Expenses for the Elderly

This part is concerned with those who provide living expenses for six items like housing, food, subsistence commodities like clothing, medication and health maintenance, social activities and leisure costs. 56.4 percent of the elderly responded that they are completely or partially dependent on other persons for their own living costs, and that the average number of financial providers is 1.6 persons. This shows that in Korea children give not only "cash" as their allowances but also living expenses for their elderly parents.

Of the main caregivers who financially support the elderly throughout last year, the family is the highest proportion, amounting to 94.9 percent, followed by sons/daughters-in-law (15.6 percent), daughters/sons-in-law (11.9 percent), unmarried children (4.6 percent), all children together (0.8 percent) are also chosen as the main carer. Therefore it can be said that children form the highest rate, 94.2 percent of the main caregivers who are charged with the total or the part of living expenses for the elderly. By areas,

**TABLE 11. THE FINANCIAL CARE PROVIDER FOR LIVING EXPENSES BY AREA** (Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	61.3	59.1	64.7
Other sons/daughters-in-law	15.6	16.4	14.3
Daughters/sons-in-law	11.9	11.6	12.5
Unmarried children	4.6	6.0	2.3
All children together	0.8	0.7	0.8
Others	6.6	6.9	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,061)	(655)	(407)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

the proportion of eldest sons/daughters-in-law or daughters/sons-in-law in rural areas is higher than in urban area, while that of other sons in urban area rate higher than in rural areas.

## 2. Physical Care

548 of the elderly respondents need assistance in normal daily life, which is 26.6 percent of the total aged. This group includes all the elderly who choose "not able to do anything completely", "very difficult", and "a little difficult" when they were asked about six ADL items. Out of these 548 aged, 53.5 percent are receiving care in real daily life and the average number of physical caregivers is estimated 1.5 persons. The survey shows that 88.2 percent of caregivers consists of family members, and spouses play usually the most important role in providing physical care for the elderly. The proportion of spouses is 29.5 percent, followed by sons/daughters-in-law (13.3 percent) and daughters/sons-in-law (11.5 percent). The percentage of grandchildren acting as caregiver, 8.9 percent is higher than that of unmarried children, 1.5 percent. Elderly males are mostly provided physical care by their spouses who represent the highest proportion 69.9 percent, while physical care of female elderly are provided by various members of family including sons/daughters-in-law (15.9 percent), daughters/sons-in-law (15.4 percent) and grandchildren/their spouses (11.5 percent). Examining distribution of physical caregivers by marital status, we can see that the main caregivers for the elderly living with spouses is their spouses

TABLE 12. PHYSICAL CAREGIVERS BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS (Unit: %)

	Both	Sex		Marital Status	
		Male	Female	With-Spouse	Spouseless
Spouse	29.5	69.9	12.8	69.6	-
Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	23.8	9.7	29.6	9.6	34.1
Others sons/daughters-in-law	13.3	7.1	15.9	6.4	18.6
Daughters/sons-in-law	11.2	1.1	15.4	4.0	16.8
Unmarried children	1.5	3.6	0.6	2.4	0.6
Grand children/spouses	8.9	2.6	11.5	0.8	15.0
Others relatives	2.3	-	3.2	0.8	3.6
Friends/neighbors	5.4	3.6	6.2	2.4	8.4
Others/unrelatives	4.0	2.4	4.7	4.0	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(292)	(85)	(207)	(118)	(174)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

(69.6percent), while those for the spouseless elderly are their eldest sons/daughters-in-law (34.1percent). We conclude that the male representing high rate of the elderly with spouse receive mostly physical care by their spouses and that the female with low rate spouseless elderly are dependent on their children for physical care.

### 3. Emotional Care

The percentage distribution of the emotional caregiver were measured by asking whether the elderly have a consultant or not when they suffer from problems or worries. The survey revealed that 75.6 percent of the elderly have a emotional care provider and that the number of provider is 2.3 person on average. 87.9 percent of the elderly are given emotional care by family members, consisting of 48.7 percent by their spouses, 19.9percent by eldest son/daughters-in-law, and 11.4 percent by daughters/sons-in-law. By sex, emotional care is provided for the female elderly by their spouses (29.8 percent), eldest sons (25.7 percent), daughters/sons-in-law (17.0 percent) and friends or neighbors (11.4 percent), but of the male elderly, 75.2 percent the highest rate, receive emotional care from their spouses. Comparing the proportion of elderly living with spouse and those without spouses in regards to emotional support, 75.7 percent for the aged person with spouse is their spouse, which is highest, while eldest sons/daughters-in-law (38.0 percent), daughters/sons-in-law (22.5 percent) and friends or neighbors

TABLE 13. CAREGIVERS BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS

(Unit: %)

	Total	Sex		Marital Status	
		Male	Female	With-Spouse	Spouseless
Spouse	48.7	75.0	29.8	76.2	-
Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	19.9	11.8	25.7	9.6	38.0
Others sons/daughters-in-law	4.8	1.9	6.9	2.2	9.5
Daughters/sons-in-law	11.4	2.5	17.7	5.0	22.5
Unmarried children	1.9	1.2	2.4	0.5	4.3
Grand children/spouses	1.1	-	1.9	0.1	3.0
Parents	0.1	0.4	-	0.2	-
Brothers/sisters	1.6	1.2	1.9	0.8	3.5
Others relatives	1.0	0.2	1.6	0.2	2.4
Friends/neighbors	9.1	5.8	11.4	4.8	16.4
Others/unrelatives	0.4	-	0.8	0.2	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,489)	(622)	(866)	(932)	(542)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

(16.4 percent) provide emotional care for the spouseless.

The survey suggests that spouses are the most important emotional caregiver for the elderly with spouse, and that eldest son/daughters-in-law, daughters/sons-in-law and friends/neighbors are mostly responsible for taking care of the spouseless elderly.

In summary, about half of the elderly are living on financial support from their children as a main source of income resource and are also dependent on their children for additional living expenses. For the elderly with ADL limitations, physical care is mostly given by their family as well. A similar pattern is also found for emotional support. The family role of caring for elderly people is very essential for enabling older persons to attain and maintain economic, physical, and emotional well-being by providing all kinds of cares.

### *Care by the Elderly*

#### 1. Financial Care

##### (1) Care Receiver from the Elderly

The survey also examined whether the elderly currently provide financial or physical supports for others besides for their spouses. 17.7 percent of the elderly give financial or physical support to other people. The average number of care receivers is estimated 1.7 persons.

Table 14 reveals those who mainly receive financial or physical care from the elderly. Those provided for by the elderly include 92.3 percent which consist of eldest sons/daughters-in-law (37.3 percent), grand children/their spouses (25.0 percent), unmarried children (12.2 percent) and other

**TABLE 14. PERSONS PROVIDED FINANCIAL CARE BY THE ELDERLY** (Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	37.3	15.2	54.6
Others sons/daughters-in-law	11.0	11.4	10.6
Daughters/sons-in-law	4.8	5.5	4.3
Unmarried children	12.2	16.9	8.5
Grand children/spouses	25.0	34.1	17.9
All children together	1.9	1.9	1.9
Others	7.7	14.9	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(365)	(160)	(205)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

sons/daughters-in-law (11.0 percent). The rate of the rural elderly who give financial or physical care to their eldest sons/daughters-in-law is much higher (54.6 percent) rather than that in urban communities (15.5 percent). To the contrary in the case of other sons/daughters and grandchildren/spouses, the rate of urban communities is higher than that of rural communities.

### (2) Property Transfer

The elderly are asked whether they hand over their own property to their children or not. The aged who answered positively are 19.1 percent of the total respondents—the elderly who pass over total property is 47.2 percent, those who pass over the part of their property represent 5.5 percent. 47.2 percent of the respondents answered that they have not handed property over to their children yet, and 36.2 percent answered that they do not have any property to hand over.

By areas, the proportion of the urban residents to give their total property is higher 17.5 percent than that of the urban residents, and also 4.4 percent of the rural elderly hand over the part of their property, which is more than 2.6 percent of the urban elderly.

### (3) Financial Contribution for the House Purchasement of Their Children

**TABLE 15. PROPERTY TRANSFER BY AREA**

(Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Transfer of the total property	13.6	10.7	17.5
Transfer of the part of property	5.5	2.6	9.4
Not transfer of the property yet	47.2	43.9	51.4
Nothing to transfer	32.6	41.2	21.3
No children	1.1	1.6	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(2,056)	(1,171)	(885)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

**TABLE 16. FINANCIAL AIDS FOR HOUSE PURCHASES OF CHILDREN**

(Unit: %)

	Both	Urban	Rural
Transfer of buy house for children	35.8	18.3	6.24
A little aid	12.3	14.3	9.1
No Aid	51.9	67.4	28.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(551)	(333)	(218)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

Out of 563 aged respondents who have children with houses, almost half of them (48.1 percent) provide at least some financial help when their children purchase houses. For the elderly in rural areas, most of them (71.5 percent) help their children with financial support when their children buy houses. From the results, we know that most Korean elderly provide financial assistance for their children's purchase.

## 2. Physical Care by the Elderly

The survey shows that 7.4 percent of all elderly give assistance to others with ADL limitations and that the average number of those provided physical care is 1.2 persons. Major care receivers includes family members (88.8 percent) of which 51.8 percent are grand children/spouses (18.6 percent), and old parents (9.9 percent). The male elderly provide mostly for their spouse (65.4 percent), while the female provide for their spouses (40.8 percent) and grand children (23.4 percent). For the elderly with spouses, the rate of spouses (69.9 percent) is higher than that of any others. However, the spouseless elderly provide much more grand children (40.0 percent) with physical care than the others.

## 3. Provision of Emotional Care

Almost more than half of the elderly (59.9 percent) give emotional care to others and the number of care receiver is estimated to be 2.5 persons on

TABLE 17. PHYSICAL CARE RECEIVER OF THE ELDERLY BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS  
(Unit: %)

	Total	Sex		Marital Status	
		Male	Female	With-Spouse	Spouseless
Spouse	51.8	65.4	40.8	69.9	-
Eldest sons/ daughters-in-law	3.1	3.8	2.7	1.0	8.9
Others sons/daughters-in-law	5.1	-	7.9	1.0	15.6
Daughters/sons-in-law	1.0	1.4	0.8	1.5	-
Unmarried children	1.8	-	2.8	-	6.7
Grand children/spouses	18.6	10.3	23.4	8.7	40.0
Parents	9.9	7.6	11.3	9.7	1.1
Others relatives	3.4	1.2	4.7	3.0	4.5
Friends/neighbors	5.3	10.5	2.6	4.9	5.3
Others/unrelatives	2.5	-	3.2	-	6.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(147)	(52)	(96)	(101)	(47)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

**TABLE 18. EMOTIONAL CARE RECEIVER OF THE ELDERLY BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS**  
(Unit: %)

	Total	Sex		Marital Status	
		Male	Female	With-Spouse	Spouseless
Spouseless	48.3	69.3	30.3	69.9	–
Spouse Eldest sons/daughters-in-law	14.1	8.4	19.6	7.8	27.9
Others sons/daughters-in-law	3.8	2.3	5.1	2.2	7.6
Daughters/sons-in-law	8.0	3.2	12.1	4.3	16.2
Unmarried children	2.6	1.6	3.5	1.4	5.1
Grand children/spouses	1.3	0.6	1.9	0.2	3.9
Parents	0.2	0.4	–	0.3	–
Brithers/sisters	2.1	1.6	2.6	0.9	4.9
Others relatives	2.3	1.2	2.9	1.8	3.3
Friends/neighbors	17.2	11.2	22.5	11.2	30.6
Others	0.1	–	0.2	–	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,164)	(629)	(629)	(802)	(362)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

average. 80.4 percent of the elderly provide emotional care for other persons. While emotional care by the female elderly is given to various persons including their spouses (30.3 percent), friends/neighbors (22.5 percent), eldest sons/daughters (19.6 percent), the male elderly care for their spouses (30.6 percent) emotionally. Table 18 shows also a different result by marital status. The elderly living with their spouses provide mainly emotional care for their spouses (69.9 percent) while spouseless elderly provide care for their friends/neighbors (30.6 percent).

We can find from the survey results that family members receive most financial, physical and emotional care from the elderly, which are 17.7 percent, 7.4 percent and 59.9 percent respectively. In other words, most elderly in Korea give assistance to their family.

## PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND OLD AGE

### *Leisure and Group Activities*

#### 1. Leisure Activity

Leisure activity participation is estimated by asking about how often the elderly take part in the twelve leisure activities. According to survey result, the number of activities which the elderly participate in is 3.9 on the average. The female elderly enjoy 3.9 leisure activities on average which are

TABLE 19. LEISURE ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATION OF THE ELDERLY

(Unit: %)

	Once or more a week	Once or three times a month	Rarely	Irregular	Never	Total
V.radio	94.3	0.3	1.0	4.3	4.3	100.0
Reading books/newspapers	26.5	1.2	6.1	66.1	66.1	100.0
Religious activities	26.0	7.5	1.1	49.4	49.4	100.0
Meeting friend/relatives	21.6	19.5	0.5	38.0	38.0	100.0
Gardening	14.1	1.2	1.9	78.5	78.5	100.0
Sport activities/mounteering	13.6	2.4	0.3	78.9	78.9	100.0
Playing cards	13.6	6.4	0.9	70.6	70.6	100.0
Out for dinner/movies/concerts	2.6	5.8	0.1	82.5	82.5	100.0
Knitting	2.6	1.6	0.4	89.5	89.5	100.0
Drawing/music	2.0	0.6	0.2	95.7	95.7	100.0
Collecting stamps/antiques	0.3	0.1	0.5	98.2	98.2	100.0
Watching sport games	0.2	1.1	0.4	94.5	94.5	100.0

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

more than the 3.5 activities of elderly Korean males. By areas, the urban residents take part in more various activities 3.9 as opposed to 2.9 activities of the rural residents. The elderly enjoy watching TV or listening to radio once or more times in a week (95.7 percent). Also 13.5 percent of the elderly answered watching TV or listening to a radio as the only leisure activity. Other activities that the aged participate in once or more times a week include reading newspapers or books (26.5 percent), religious activities (26.0 percent), meeting with friends/family (21.6 percent), gardening (14.1 percent), sports/mountaineering (13.6 percent) and playing cards, etc. (13.6 percent).

## 2. Social Activities

To estimate social activity participation of the elderly, the respondents were asked to take part in various activities such as going to senior center or

TABLE 20. SOCIAL LEISURE ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATION OF THE ELDERLY

(Unit: %)

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Social activities	9.9	13.2	6.4	70.6	100.0
Religious activities	8.1	7.5	6.5	77.9	100.0
Learning activities	1.3	0.8	0.6	97.3	100.0
Political activities	0.4	0.3	0.2	99.1	100.0

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

community meeting, joining political meeting, going to senior school, and religious meeting. They answered that they participate in social, religious, learning and political activities "very frequently" or "sometimes", which are respectively 23.1percent, 15.6percent, 2.1percent and 0.7percent. The participation rates of learning and political activities are very low.

The Korean elderly of these times represent the generation who suffered from poverty and spent most of their times to maintain minimum life levels. Therefore they did not have many chances to enjoy leisure activities. Low leisure activity participation of the elderly indicates not only that they have not learned the way to enjoy their extra time for leisure activities, but also that do not saved money for them.

### *Perception of the Old Age*

#### 1. The Appropriate Age for Being Old

To understand how the elderly perceive their old age, the survey asked what causes themselves to feel old. Most of the respondents tend to perceive as an onset of being old the physical changes such as deterioration of physical abilities (71.6 percent) rather than social changes like retirement, sixtieth birthday or going to senior homes (11.8 percent) and changes of life cycle such as marriage of their children or births of grand children (6.3 percent). The appropriate age for being "old" perceived by the male elderly is 65.3 years old, and later than that of female which is 63.1 years old on average. And the urban residents feel that 64.2 years old is the proper age, which is later than 63.6 years old of the rural elderly.

**TABLE 21. PERCEPTION OF BEING OLD AGE BY SEX AND AREA** (Unit: %)

	Both	Sex		Area	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Deterioration of physical abilities	58.2	57.3	58.8	55.8	61.3
Physical changes	13.4	11.1	14.8	12.4	14.6
Social changes	11.8	14.0	10.4	13.3	10.0
Changes of life cycle	6.3	4.8	7.3	6.9	5.7
Others	2.2	1.9	2.4	3.0	1.1
Never thought	8.1	10.9	6.3	8.6	7.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,937)	(770)	(1,166)	(1,106)	(830)
Average Age	64.0	65.3	63.1	64.2	63.6

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

TABLE 22. PERCEPTION OF THE RETIREMENT AGE BY SEX AND AREA (Unit: %)

	Both	Sex		Area	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Under 60 years	5.0	5.8	4.6	4.3	6.1
60-64	27.3	28.0	26.9	28.1	26.3
65-69	27.9	31.6	25.5	32.6	21.7
Over 70 years	14.9	18.4	12.5	14.4	15.6
No proper Age	24.8	16.3	30.4	20.7	30.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,946)	(775)	(1,171)	(1,113)	(833)
Average Age	64.0	64.3	63.7	64.1	63.9

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

## 2. The Most Appropriate Retirement Age

27.9 percent of the total elderly responded the age of 65-69 as retirement age, while 27.3 percent chose the age of 60-64. Also, the average retirement age is estimated 64.0 years old. The average age for retirement is a little bit higher in the male elderly (64.3 years), compared with the age in the female elderly (63.7 years), Urban residents have inclination to perceive 64.1 years old as the appropriate age which is later than the 63.9 years old of the rurals. We can find a big gap between the reality and perception of the elderly from this results. While the elderly chose the retirement age much older around 65 years than the real average retirement age is actually around 55 years.

We can see that the appropriate retirement age is consistent in the age for being old, 64.0 years, of which the results have many implications. The elderly perceive the point of feeling that they become "old" with the development of senility.

## 3. Perception and Attitudes toward Care by Their Children

### (1) Children's Responsibility for Care for the Elderly

Over half of the total respondents stated that children's support for the elderly is very important. Specifically, 55 percent of the elderly referred to "children have to care for their parents even if they cannot afford to do", and 21.9 percent chose "children have to take care of their parents only if they can afford to do". And only 16.6 percent of the respondents have the opinion that "children do not have to take the responsibility of caring for their parents". The attitudes of the elderly males appear more positive than that of the female, and the rural residents are more positive toward

**TABLE 23 . ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN' CARE FOR THE ELDERLY BY SEX AND AREA**  
(Unit: %)

	Both	Sex		Area	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Must care for the elderly	55.5	56.7	54.8	55.2	55.9
Had better care for the elderly	21.9	21.6	22.1	23.2	20.2
Do not have to care for the elderly	16.6	18.6	15.3	15.9	17.5
Do not know	6.0	3.1	7.8	5.6	6.5
Total (persons)	100.0 (1,937)	100.0 (770)	100.0 (1,166)	100.0 (1,106)	100.0 (830)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

children's support than urban elderly.

#### (2) Preference of Desired Care Provider

The preference for the best provider for the elderly clearly explains their attitudes toward family support. When asked who should take care of the elderly during illness, the elderly desired "family support" most (87.7 percent), breaking down to their spouses (31.1 percent), eldest sons/daughters-in-law (43.4 percent), other sons/daughters-in-law (7.9 percent), and daughters-in-law (5.3 percent). It means that the aged in Korea are mostly dependent on their first sons/daughters-in-law. By sex, while the preference of care provider of the elderly males focuses on their spouses (60.2 percent), eldest sons/daughters-in-law (26.0 percent), that of the female varies—eldest sons/daughters-in-law (11.5 percent), their spouses (9.9 percent) and home-based service or institutional care (13.5 percent). Furthermore, we can see the different preferences between rural and urban residents. The preference of family support is stronger in rural areas (93.4 percent) than in urban areas (83.5 percent). Especially, eldest sons/daughters-in-law are chosen as the best caregiver by many more aged persons in rural areas (52.5 percent) than by those in urban areas (36.5 percent). However the rate of the urban elderly who want daughters/sons-in-law and institutional care to take care of them is twice or more than that of the rural elderly.

The survey suggests that most of the elderly in Korea want to receive physical care from their family. The family have played important and comprehensive roles in caring for the elderly. Social support system in Korea is not sufficient to replace the family support system. Therefore welfare policy for the elderly must be implemented by way of supporting

TABLE 24. PREFERENCE OF CARE PROVIDER BY SEX AND AREA (Unit: %)

	Both	Sex		Area	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
<b>Family</b>					
Spouse	31.1	60.2	9.2	39.2	17.7
Eldest son/daughter-in-law	43.4	26.0	56.1	37.9	53.1
Other sons/daughters-in-law	7.9	2.9	11.5	5.3	11.4
Daughters/sons-in-law	5.3	2.0	7.8	3.7	7.2
<b>Paying Services/institutions</b>					
Community services	2.3	1.1	3.2	2.5	2.1
Institutional Care	5.3	4.2	6.2	6.4	3.0
Hospitals	3.8	3.4	4.1	5.0	3.3
Others	0.8	0.2	1.3	0.1	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(persons)	(1,737)	(732)	(1,005)	(596)	(292)

Source: Ka-Oak Rhee et al. 1994. *The Analysis on the Living Status of the Elderly & Welfare Policy*. Seoul: KIHASA.

the family's function of caring for the elder persons.

## CONCLUSION

Rapid growth of the elderly population, increase of the life expectancy, and the decrease in the birth rate have brought a new situation and needs for the elderly in Korea. These trends are pervasive not only to the elderly but also to all Korean people. Given the weakening of family support, the elderly have no any preparations for their old age and experience loss of income after their retirement at about 55 years old. Current welfare policies focus on only the maintenance of the minimum life level for the elderly under the absolute poverty-line. Korea does not have any formal supports to strengthen the quality of life in old age. The lack of formal support result in bigger and bigger gaps between the reality and needs.

To solve the aging problems, it is necessary to establish comprehensive policies for the elderly. One of the main policy objectives is to set the relations between functions of social support systems and family support system. Government should build up practical policies which cover tax reduction or exemption, development of housing style for the elderly households, and expansion of community care services to support and develop the family support for their aged parents.

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