

Policy Report 2019-01

# 2018 National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare



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2018 National Survey on Fertility,  
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I

Introduction



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# I

## Introduction <<

The demographic structures of all countries are continually changing due to the interaction of three major factors: births, deaths, and migration. States have been seeking to curtail the adverse effects of demographic change by adopting various population policies. If we define population policy as consisting of “deliberate efforts undertaken by a government to achieve and maintain an appropriate population size by exerting influences on the population-related behavior of individuals” (Gu, 1996), we may understand South Korea’s population policy as having evolved through three main phases thus far: the growth inhibition phase (1961 to 1995), quality improvement phase (1996 to 2003), and phase of responses to the low birth rate and population aging (2004 to the present) (Lee et al., 2013). The growth inhibition phase coincides with the abrupt and explosive growth of the Korean population, while the current phase, centered on mitigating the potential harms of the low birth rate and population aging, is supported by the growing concern over the possible future consequences of Korea’s population decline. Over the past decades, Korea’s dramatically declining natality and mortality rates have been transforming the country’s demographic structure, exerting profound effects on almost all areas of policymaking. The shrink-

ing working-age population, anticipated labor supply shortage, mounting fiscal burden due to the increasing cost of care, and stagnation of economic growth all pose grave threats to the future viability of Korean society. If not addressed, these problems could destabilize the very foundation of the Korean nation. The accelerated aging of the Korean population due to the declining natality and mortality rates presents us with a serious social problem that may well evolve into a crisis.

If the natality and mortality rates remain persistently low, the Korean population will continue aging, likely at an accelerated pace. It is therefore critical for Korean policymakers to first identify the causes of this demographic change in order to find appropriate measures for adapting to and managing the phenomenon. Demographic transformation is a long-term process, and it is important to understand how the factors involved change over time. We therefore need basic data that enable us to monitor demographic changes and find and implement policy measures capable of managing the adverse effects in an effective manner.

The National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare (NSFFHW) was first organized in 1960 to support the development and assessment of Korea's population policy in light of the government's first Five-Year Economic Development Plan. The survey has a long history in Korea, having been regularly conducted since 1964. Since 2000, Korean policymakers have

been using the findings of the survey to establish and evaluate policy measures concerning the low birth rate. As part of its efforts to establish and evaluate the first, second, and third Plan for Aging Society and Population (policies on Low Fertility and Aging Society), the Korean government also conducted the National Marriage and Childbirth Trend Survey in 2005, 2009, 2012, and 2015. As per Statistics Korea's advice to integrate similar nationwide surveys, the Marriage and Childbirth Trend Survey was combined with the NSFFHW in 2012. Ever since, the Korea Institutes for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) has been surveying the marital status, pregnancy and childbirth histories, and childcare behaviors of Korean women of child-bearing age (15 to 49) and the marriage- and childbirth-related behaviors and attitudes of unmarried men and women aged 20 to 44 across Korea. This report analyzes the findings of the NSFFHW with the objective of providing important basic analysis for the development, monitoring, and assessment of effective population policy measures. The NSFFHW, which was conducted for the 24th time in 2018 (having been conducted every three years since 1979), is also identified as Official (Government-Designated) Statistics Survey No. 331001. The findings of the survey are analyzed herein to support the establishment of Korean measures comparable with those of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), and other such international

organizations as well as support the systematic evaluation of past population policy measures, improvement of future policy measures, and related academic research.

# II

## Theoretical Background



# II

## Theoretical Background <<

Let us start by comparing the NSFFHW to other similar surveys. Similar official panel surveys conducted in Korea include the Child Panel Survey, Youth Panel Survey, Young Adults Panel Survey, Korean Labor and Income Panel Survey, Korean Welfare Survey, and Women and Families Panel Survey. However, panel surveys fundamentally differ from fact-finding surveys such as the NSFFHW in terms of purpose. Panel surveys are longitudinal studies that conduct dynamic analyses of the same population defined in relation to the given theme or subject, while fact-finding surveys are cross-sectional studies that represent the status of the entire given population (or number of households) at a given point in time. The NSFFHW, however, overlaps with the Women and Families Panel Survey (WFPS) in terms of some content and interests.

The WFPS was first conducted in 2007, targeting women aged 19 to 64 living in 9,068 households across Korea. Its objective is to ascertain changes in the patterns of Korean women's lives, family structures, and employment behavior (Ju et al., 2017). Specifically, the WFPS identifies the correlation between the increasing economic participation of Korean women and their work-family balance and empirically ascertains the living experiences of women and how those experiences correlate to

the present and future of Korean families. It also traces changing patterns in the birth rate, population aging, childcare, work-family balance, and family-friendliness of the overall social settings in Korea with a view to procuring basic data necessary for effective policymaking on women- and family-related issues (Ju et al., 2017). To these ends, the WFPS surveys the sample population in terms of household size (number of household members), home ownership status, household income and consumption, assets and liabilities, educational background of women, marital status and experiences, involvement in housework, spouses' employment status, experiences with pregnancy and childbirth, family plans, children's education, relationships with grown-up children (whether unmarried or married), relationships with parents (women's and their spouses' parents), relationships with siblings (women's and their spouses' siblings), family-related values, health, perceptions of safety in local communities (addendum), economic status, experiences with job hunting, job satisfaction, educational and training background, participation in social insurances, experiences at work and in the family, experiences with discrimination, and assessment of maternity policy measures (Ju et al., 2017).

However, whereas the WFPS focuses on the changing lives, family structures, and economic status of Korean women aged 19 to 64, the NSFFHW focuses on surveying married women of

childbearing age (15 to 49, whether co-habiting or legally married) and adult men and women aged 20 to 44 with respect to their behavior and perceptions regarding marriage and childbirth with the goal of ascertaining their ties to the demographic changes in Korea. The two surveys, in other words, differ in terms of methodology (panel vs. fact-finding), target population, and main objective. The NSFFHW draws its significance from the fact that marriage and childbirth—subjects it shares with the WFPS—are major events that individuals experience only rarely in their lives and therefore cannot be fully understood through panel studies only.

Similar fact-finding surveys include the Family Fact-Finding Survey (FS), National Marriage and Childbirth Trend Survey (NMCTS), and Social Survey. The NMCTS, with which the NSFFHW shares much in common, was combined with the NSFFHW in 2012, based on the advice of Statistics Korea. The FS continues to be conducted every five years, involving all household members aged 12 or older in 5,000 households across Korea. Its main objective is to identify changing patterns in the division of labor and distribution of resources among household members along gender, generational, and class lines so as to ascertain changing trends concerning Korean families and procure basic data necessary to update Korea's family policy (Jang et al., 2014; Jang et al., 2015, p. 5). The most recent FS surveyed household members in terms of general character-

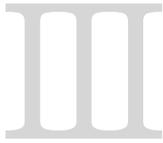
istics, financial situation, family values, family behavior (formation of new families and changes in existing ones), work and care (family participation in household, childcare, and care for the elderly and other members in need), quality of family relationships (between spouses, between parents and teen children, and between parents and their grown-up children), lifestyle (life designs, diets, leisure activities, involvement in local communities, etc.), preparations for old age, family conflicts, and perceptions and needs regarding family policy (support for work-family balance, small weddings, active participation in local communities) (Jang et al., 2015). The NSFFHW and FS thus diverge in terms of their target populations, frequency, surveyed content, and policy purposes (family policy vs. population policy).



# Survey Methodology

1. The Sample
2. Sample Overview





### 1. The Sample

The 2018 NSFFHW sought to identify changes and trends in Koreans' behavior and perceptions regarding marriage and childbirth by surveying both married women aged 15-49 and unmarried adults of both sexes aged 20~44. To ensure the representativeness of the sample population, it was essential to devise a sampling framework capable of representing the entire nation. Such a sampling framework was developed based on the results of Population and Housing Census 2016, the latest of the survey series, provided by Statistics Korea.

The stratified sample was selected by first dividing Korea into 17 metropolitan cities and provinces, and then again into municipal administrative units (dong, eup, and myeon), according to a two-stage cluster sampling strategy. To sample enumeration districts in the first stage, the population was arranged by stratum-intrinsic stratification variables, i.e., the characteristics of enumeration districts, number of women, and number of households. Enumeration districts were then sampled using the probability proportional systematic sampling method. In the second stage, households were sampled systematically based on the number of households present in each enumera-

tion district. The target sample size was to include 700 enumeration districts and 10,000 households, averaging about 14 to 15 households per district. With the aim of achieving a survey success rate of 83 percent, the actual sample size was set at 20-percent higher than the target, i.e., 12,000 households across Korea and the married women aged 15 to 49 and unmarried men and women aged 20 to 44 inhabiting those households.

This method of sampling was then submitted to Statistics Korea (No. 331001) and the Institutional Review Board (No. 2018-30) for approval before the survey could be commenced.

## 2. Sample Overview

A total of 11,207 married women between the ages of 15 and 49 participated in the survey. Of these women, 42.9 percent were residents of metropolitan cities (i.e., the seven Special and Metropolitan Cities in Korea, excluding Sejong City) and small- to medium-sized cities in nine provinces (including the eastern part of Sejong City), while 14.3 percent were residents of rural areas in the nine provinces and the rural administrative units of Sejong City. Only four (0.0 percent) of these women were aged 19 or under, while 0.7 percent were aged 20 to 24; 4.4 percent, aged 25 to 29; 13.7 percent, aged 30 to 34; 23.6 percent, aged 35 to 39; 25.5 percent, aged 40 to 44; and 32.0

percent, aged 45 to 49.

(Table 3-1) Married Women Aged 15 to 49: General Characteristics

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Type	Metropolitan cities	Small- to medium-sized cities	Rural areas	Total
All married women	42.9	42.9	14.3	100.0
N	(4,802)	(4,802)	(1,602)	(11,207)
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age				
15 to 19	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
20 to 24	0.4	0.7	1.6	0.7
25 to 29	4.0	4.3	5.6	4.4
30 to 34	14.3	13.1	13.9	13.7
35 to 39	24.6	22.3	24.3	23.6
40 to 44	24.7	26.9	24.1	25.5
45 to 49	31.9	32.7	30.4	32.0
Educational attainment				
Middle school or below	1.2	1.9	5.0	2.0
High school	28.4	38.2	47.4	35.3
College/university	64.1	55.8	45.5	57.9
Postgraduate	6.3	4.1	2.1	4.8
Marital status				
Married	95.1	94.4	95.4	94.9
Widowed	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Divorced/separated/single mother	3.9	4.6	3.6	4.2
Household income				
Less than 60% of median	8.9	9.8	14.2	10.0
60% to less than 80%	14.7	16.6	20.4	16.4
80% to less than 100%	16.7	19.2	21.9	18.5
100% to less than 120%	17.0	16.7	16.2	16.7
120% to less than 140%	13.5	13.1	12.0	13.1
140% to less than 160%	9.3	9.3	6.2	8.9
160% or greater	19.9	15.3	9.2	16.4
Employment status				
Employed	57.6	58.3	61.9	58.5
Unemployed	42.4	41.7	38.1	41.5

Note: 1) Non-responses were omitted from the analysis. The percentages may not add up to 100 due to the weights applied.

As for household income, 10.0 percent of the women had an average monthly household income, as of the second quarter of 2018, of less than 60 percent of the median monthly household income (KRW 4.53051 million, according to Statistics Korea, 2018); 16.4 percent, of 60 to less than 80 percent; 18.5 percent, of 80 to less than 100 percent; 16.7 percent, of 100 to less than 120 percent; 13.1 percent, of 120 to less than 140 percent; 8.9 percent, of 140 to less than 160 percent; and 16.4 percent, of 160 percent or more. In addition, 58.5 percent of the women were working, while the other 41.5 percent were either temporarily unemployed or economically inactive.

Unmarried men and women aged 20 to 44 also participated in the survey. The general characteristics of these participants are summarized in Table 3-2.

(Table 3-2) Unmarried Men and Women Aged 20 to 44: Characteristics

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Type	2018			
	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	N
Overall	100.0 (1,140)	100.0 (1,324)	100.0	(2,464)
Region				
Metropolitan cities	47.3	50.9	49.2	(1,213)
Small- to medium-sized cities	38.2	37.6	37.9	( 933)
Rural areas	14.6	11.4	12.9	( 318)
Age				
20 to 24	30.8	36.0	33.6	( 827)
25 to 29	28.6	30.1	29.4	( 724)
30 to 34	17.0	15.5	16.2	( 398)
35 to 39	13.4	11.2	12.2	( 302)
40 to 44	10.3	7.2	8.6	( 213)
Educational attainment				
Less than high school	53.3	32.8	42.3	(1,042)
College or above	46.7	67.2	57.7	(1,422)
Education status				
Graduated	66.7	76.2	71.8	(1,769)
Currently enrolled	20.0	18.8	19.4	( 478)
Dropped out/withdrawn/on leave	13.3	5.0	8.8	( 217)
Employment status				
Employed	61.5	67.8	64.9	(1,598)
Unemployed	38.5	32.2	35.1	( 866)

Note: 1) Non-responses were omitted from the analysis. The percentages may not add up to 100 due to the weights applied.



# IV

## Findings

1. Marriage
2. Pregnancy and Childbirth
3. Childcare and Work–Family Balance
4. Policy Needs



## 1. Marriage

### (1) Attitudes toward Marriage

Of married women aged 15 to 49 participating in the survey, only 39.4 percent regarded marriage in general as something one should do (including 9.0 percent who answered “absolutely necessary” and 30.4 percent who answered “better married than not”). The majority, or 60.1 percent, held either a reserved or negative attitude toward marriage. Note, however, that the majority of women, or 53.3 percent, held a reserved or ambivalent attitude toward marriage as something one may or may not experience. Only 6.8 percent of women answered “better unmarried than married.”

Among unmarried men and women aged 20 to 44, 14.1 percent of men regarded marriage as “absolutely necessary”; 36.4 percent, “better married than not”; 39.2 percent, ambivalent; and 6.6 percent, “better unmarried than married.” Among unmarried women, 6.0 percent regarded marriage as “absolutely necessary”; 22.8 percent, “better married than not”; 54.9 percent, ambivalent; and 14.3 percent, “better unmarried than married.” Whereas 50.5 percent of unmarried men held a pos-

itive view of marriage, only 28.8 percent of unmarried women did. Nevertheless, those ambivalent toward marriage made up the largest group among both men and women, and a significant minority of men believed that it is better to be unmarried than married. Women may be more negatively predisposed to marriage than men. The difference, however, seems to be more reflective of the pervasive ambivalence toward, or dismissal of, marriage among young people rather than the gender divide.

<Table 4-1> Attitudes of Unmarried Men and Women Toward Marriage

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Group	Absolutely necessary	Better married than not	Ambivalent (neither necessary nor bad)	Better unmarried than married	Undecided	Total	N
Unmarried men	14.1	36.4	39.2	6.6	3.7	100.0	(1,140)
Unmarried women	6.0	22.8	54.9	14.3	2.0	100.0	(1,324)

**(2) Attitudes toward the Division of Roles between Spouses**

When asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with statements on the respective roles of spouses, 73.9 percent of married women disagreed with the statement “Husbands are to earn money, and wives are to look after their families.” The statement that garnered the next largest percentage of disagreement (54.2 percent) was “It is more important for married

women to help their husbands build better careers than to focus on their own.” On the other hand, the statement “Mothers are better able to care for children than fathers” gained an agreement rate of 56.3 percent, while the statement “It is better for women to be full-time mothers for children under the age of two” garnered an overwhelming agreement rate of 92.1 percent. Comparison with the results of the same survey conducted in 2015 reveals that insistence on traditional gender roles within the family has declined. The fact that the percentage of women agreeing with the statement about raising one’s own children full time until they reach the age of two increased compared to 2015 appears to have more to do with the changed wording of the statement than any actual change in women’s opinions.

The 2018 survey nonetheless confirms the ongoing and pervasive belief that women bear greater responsibility for childcare than men, particularly with respect to young children under the age of two. Contrary to the rigidity of perceived gender roles in childcare, the old prejudice disparaging of women working after marriage appears to be waning.

〈Table 4-2〉 Married Women's Perceptions of Gender Roles in the Family

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Statement		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	N
(1) It is more important for married women to help their husbands build better careers than to focus on their own.	2015	8.7	45.0	40.1	6.2	100.0	(10,322)
	2018	8.0	37.8	44.4	9.8	100.0	(10,630)
(2) Husbands are to earn money, and wives are to look after their families.	2015	5.1	30.8	53.0	11.1	100.0	(10,322)
	2018	3.7	22.4	54.8	19.1	100.0	(10,630)
(3) Mothers are better able to care for children than fathers.	2015	14.2	51.3	31.8	2.7	100.0	(10,322)
	2018	10.1	46.2	36.4	7.3	100.0	(10,630)
(4) It is better for women to be full-time mothers for children under the age of two.	2015 <sup>1)</sup>	49.2	39.2	9.6	2.0	100.0	(11,009)
	2018	51.4	40.7	6.4	1.4	100.0	(10,630)

Notes: 1) The statement in the 2015 survey was: "It is better to raise children under the age of two at home than to send them to daycare."

2) Non-responses were omitted from the analysis. The percentages may not add up to 100 due to the weights applied.

Source (2015 survey): Lee, S. et al. (2015). *2015 National Survey on Fertility, Family Health and Welfare*. Sejong: KIHASA.

The majorities of both unmarried men and women tended to disagree with the statements expressing traditional gender roles, such as "It is more important for married women to help their husbands build better careers than to focus on their own" and "Husbands are to earn money, and wives are to look after their families." Yet a sizable minority still agreed with these statements, while the percentages of those disagreeing with these statements not so strongly far outnumbered the percentages of those disagreeing with them strongly. Conservative views of spouses' respective roles within the family continue to linger, although they are in decline. Traditional gender roles and biases still remain strong, as also indicated by the major-

ities of unmarried men and women agreeing with statements concerning childcare such as “Mothers are better able to care for children than fathers” and “It is better for women to be full-time mothers for children under the age of two.”

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that unmarried men and women’s attitudes toward the respective roles of spouses increasingly favor greater gender equality. Unmarried women, however, tend to oppose such traditional perceptions more strongly than unmarried men.

(Table 4-3) Unmarried Men and Women’s Perceptions of Gender Roles in the Family

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Statement	Sex	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	N
(1) It is more important for married women to help their husbands build better careers than to focus on their own.	Men	3.7	19.8	55.8	20.7	100.0	(1,140)
	Women	2.6	13.6	46.7	37.1	100.0	(1,324)
(2) Husbands are to earn money, and wives are to look after their families.	Men	2.0	13.1	55.5	29.4	100.0	(1,140)
	Women	1.4	8.0	42.3	48.2	100.0	(1,324)
(3) Mothers are better able to care for children than fathers.	Men	19.5	35.9	33.6	11.0	100.0	(1,140)
	Women	6.7	40.0	42.7	10.7	100.0	(1,287)
(4) It is better for women to be full-time mothers for children under the age of two.	Men	22.3	46.8	22.4	8.4	100.0	(1,140)
	Women	24.3	46.1	16.5	13.1	100.0	(1,324)

Note: Non-responses were omitted from the analysis. The percentages may not add up to 100 due to the weights applied.

## 2. Pregnancy and Childbirth

### (1) Attitudes toward Having Children

Married women were surveyed regarding their attitude toward having children, particularly their views on the necessity of having children and their reasons for having or not having children. Among married women, 49.9 percent answered that it was necessary to have children; 32.8 percent, better to have them than not; and 16.9 percent, neither necessary nor better to have children.

Next, the women who thought it necessary or better to have children were asked to give their reasons for doing so. Of the eligible women, 81.1 percent answered that they favored having children for “the happiness and harmony of family life.” Another 15.6 percent answered “self-satisfaction”; 1.2 percent, “to continue the family lineage”; 0.7 percent, “others close to (them) having children”; 0.5 percent, for “support in old age”; 0.5 percent, “to please parents”; and 0.4 percent, for a variety of other reasons (performance of ancestral veneration rituals, financial assistance, and others). The vast majority of women who favored having children chose to have children for emotional reasons rather than financial or instrumental ones.

Unmarried women were then asked what they considered to be the ideal number of children to have. The vast majority, or

63.6 percent, answered two; 17.0 percent, three; 9.9 percent, one; and 4.1 percent, four or more. The average ideal number of children to have was 2.16. In 2015, 65.9 percent of unmarried women answered two; 19.9 percent, three; 7.0 percent, one; and 5.7 percent, four or more; with the average number reaching 2.25. In 2018, the percentages of unmarried women who regarding having zero or no more than one child as ideal increased, while the percentages of those selecting two or more children as ideal decreased.

Married women who did not favor having children were then asked to give reasons for not having children. Of these, 25.3 percent answered “slim chances of children finding happiness in our society”; 24.1 percent, “greater financial freedom”; 16.2 percent, “greater personal freedom”; 15.6 percent, “greater freedom for the married couple”; and 11.3 percent, “financial difficulty.” Whereas women favored having children for emotional rather than financial reasons, women not in favor of having children did so for financial rather than emotional reasons. It is also noteworthy that the largest percentage of these women were not in favor of having children because of their pessimism about the overall state of society today.

〈Table 4-4〉 Reasons among Married Women for Having or Not Having Children

(Units: percentage, number of people)

Reasons for having children										
To continue family lineage	To please parents	Support in old age	Self-satisfaction	Others close having children of their own	Happiness and harmony in family life	Other	Total	N		
1.2	0.5	0.5	15.6	0.7	81.1	0.4	100.0	(9,265)		
Reasons for not having children										
Greater financial freedom	Desire to continue career	Greater freedom for the couple	Greater personal freedom	Financial difficulty	Struggle with conceiving (infertility)	Slim chances of children finding happiness in our society	Other	Total	N	
24.1	2.5	15.6	16.2	11.3	2.4	25.3	2.7	100.0	(1,896)	

## (2) Prenatal and Postnatal Care and Pregnancy Outcomes

Prenatal and postnatal care is an important indicator of reproductive health. All married women in Korea undergo prenatal screenings and examinations when they become pregnant. It is also important for the prenatal care process to begin as early as possible in the pregnancy. On average, married women in Korea undergo the initial prenatal examination at Week 5.4 of gestation. In the poorest group, however, the initial examination occurs at Week 5.8 on average, by far the latest among married women.

Postnatal care is particularly important to women's health as well as their future reproductive prospects. The percentage of married women receiving postnatal care was 94.7 percent in

the 2018 survey, which is less than the percentage of married women receiving prenatal care.

Married women participating in the survey had 2.2 pregnancies each on average. Of these, 1.7 pregnancies ended in normal childbirth; 0.3, in spontaneous miscarriage; and 0.2, in abortion. In other words, failure of childbirth made up 0.5 out of 2.2 pregnancies, or 14.3 percent of all pregnancies that had ended by the time of the survey.

⟨Table 4-5⟩ Pregnancy Outcomes of Married Women

(Units: number of pregnancies, percentage, number of people)

Type	Number of pregnancies delivered	Failure of delivery				Currently pregnant	Total number of pregnancies (average)	Average pregnancy retention rate (%)	N
		Stillbirth	Immediate death after birth	Spontaneous miscarriage	Abortion				
Overall	1.72	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.16	0.03	2.18	85.7	(11,207)

### (3) Family Plans

Married women were asked about the number of children they had initially planned to have. Two children was the most common answer among these women, given by 49.5 percent of them, with 21.3 percent answering that they had made no such plans; 15.6 percent, having one child; 10.3 percent, having three children; 2.8 percent, having four or more children; and 0.5 percent, having no children at all. In other words, 62.6 percent of married women had planned to have at least two chil-

dren early in their marriage.

On the other hand, 53.3 percent of married women had had two children by the time of the survey; 26.4 percent, one child; 12.1 percent, three children; 6.9 percent, no children; and 1.3 percent, four or more children. The average number of children actually born was 1.75. This pattern has remained more or less the same since 2015, when the percentages of women having different numbers of children diverged by less than 1.0 percentage point, except for those having either a single child or two children. In 2015, 55.9 percent of married women had two children; 24.4 percent, one child; 11.6 percent, three children; 7.1 percent, no children; and 1.0 percent, four or more children, with the number of children born averaging 1.75.

When asked whether they were planning to have more children in the future, 84.8 percent of married women reported having no plans to do so; 10.4 percent, having such plans; and 4.8 percent, being undecided. Over 80 percent of women aged 35 or older said they were no longer planning to have more children. In other words, the vast majority of pregnancies and childbirths occur before women reach the age of 35. Considering the fact that the average age at which Korean women get married for the first time is rising continuously, the actual window of opportunity for married women to have children continues to narrow, resulting in the decline in the number of children born.

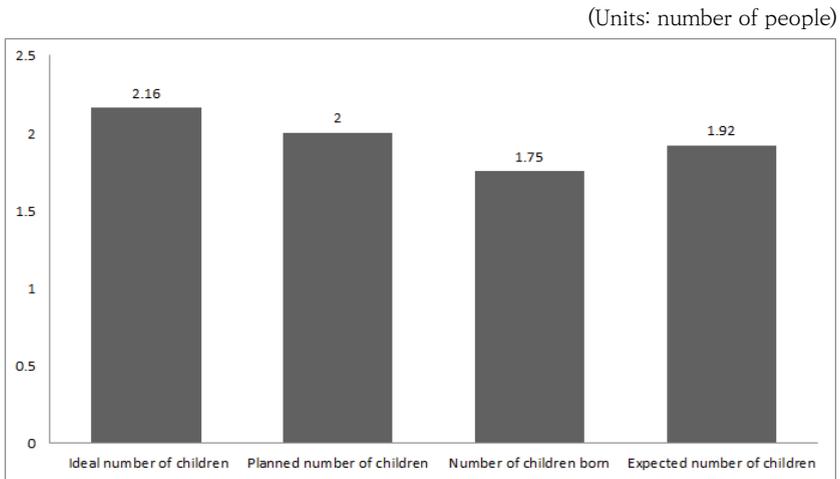
Married women who claimed to have no further plans to have children were asked for their reasons. The percentage of women who said that they already had enough children (whether according to their own plans, in comparison with others, or simply having more than enough children) was 20.1 percent, which is the same as the percentage of women who were not planning to have any more children due to their advanced age. Plans to have more children once again emerged here as significantly correlated to women's age. Other reasons included the financial burden of educating children (16.8 percent), financial burden of raising children (14.2 percent), income/employment insecurity (7.9 percent), and difficulty maintaining work-family balance (6.9 percent).

The expected number of children is the sum of the number of children actually born and the number of children one plans to have in the future. It can serve as a proxy for the completed fertility rate among married women. Of the married women, 60.9 percent expected to have two children; 21.2 percent, one child; 14.2 percent, three children; 2.1 percent, no children; and 1.6 percent, four or more children.

We compared the average ideal number of children, average planned number of children, average number of children actually born, and average expected number of children among all married women. Overall, 1.75 children were actually born; 1.92 children were expected; and 2.16 children was considered

ideal. In other words, women fall short of the ideal number of children by 0.41 children on average. Even if they were to give birth to the expected number of children, they would still be short by 0.24 children.

[Figure 4-1] Average Ideal, Planned, Born, and Expected Numbers of Children among Married Women



### 3. Childcare and Work–Family Balance

#### (1) Division of Labor for Childcare and Housework

Married women were surveyed in terms of their perceptions of and experiences with sharing housework with their spouses. When asked whether they thought the division of labor with their husbands was fair, 52.0 percent of the women answered

that it was generally unfair. As for the actual number of hours women spent on housework, excluding childcare, there was a sizable gap between the hours for women and those for their husbands. In general, married women spent three hours per day on housework, on average, whether during the week or on weekends. Men, on the other hand, spent 40 minutes or so a day during the week and 70 minutes a day on weekends.

Among married women with young children under the age of 13, the percentage of women who thought the division of labor for childcare was generally fair was 61.1 percent. In other words, married Korean men appear to be more actively involved in raising children than doing housework. Although married men still lag behind women in terms of the actual number of hours they spend on childcare (looking after, educating, and playing with children), the gap is not as wide as the one observed in the division of housework. Overall, married women spend more time caring for children than doing housework. While men spend considerably less time caring for children than women during the week (less than one hour per day as opposed to four to five hours), they spend much more time on childcare during weekends (three to four hours compared to women's six hours).

## (2) Childcare

As for the match between the types of daycare facilities favored by married women and the types actually attended by their children, the percentages of married women whose children actually attended national or public daycare facilities (the favored choice) were 16.7 percent and 36.5 percent, respectively, for children two years old or younger and children between the ages of three and school age. As for private daycare facilities, the percentages spiked to 82.7 percent and 95.3 percent, respectively. This indicates a significant need to increase national and public daycare facilities to meet the demands of mothers.

The percentages for after-school daycare for schoolchildren were 75.6 percent and 66.2 percent, respectively, for children in the first three grades and children in the fourth through sixth grades. While these percentages are higher than those for daycare for preschool children, they also indicate that not all demands for after-school daycare are being met. Although only five to eight percent of married women expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of daycare across all types, dissatisfaction tended to be higher among mothers of toddlers than mothers of preschool children, among mothers of higher-grade schoolchildren than mothers of lower-grade ones, and among working mothers than non-working ones. One possible cause

for this may be mothers' desire to see daycare programs cater to the educational and academic needs of children, going above and beyond simply looking after them. An important reason for dissatisfaction with daycare among mothers of toddlers was that mothers were still required to spend significant amounts of time caring for their children, while mothers of preschool children were also dissatisfied with the relatively short hours of operation of daycare facilities. It is important to consider extending the hours of operation of daycare facilities in order to cater to these mothers' needs. As for mothers of schoolchildren, the costs and quality of services were the main factors of their dissatisfaction. The financial burden of after-school daycare rose even higher for children in the fourth through sixth grades.

Of the surveyed married women, 59.2 percent thought it proper to support their children until they graduated from college or university. The ideal duration of support for children also increased in proportion to women's education, employment, and income.

### **(3) Career Discontinuity and Use of Maternity and Parental Leaves**

Of the married women who had worked up until their first pregnancy, 34.2 percent continued to work until they became

pregnant with their second child (or until the time of the survey among those who had only a single child). On the other hand, 50.3 percent had quit working and remained out of the workforce until they became pregnant with their second child. Another 15.5 percent left their original careers and worked in other jobs. In other words, 65.8 percent of married women with experiences of pregnancy left their original careers or switched to other jobs.

Of the married women who worked up until their first pregnancy (excluding those who held unpaid jobs), only 40.0 percent made use of maternity leaves for their first child, and a still smaller 21.4 percent used parental leaves. The ability to use maternity leaves made a significant difference as to whether women could continue working in their original jobs after giving birth to their first child. Of married women who continued working in their original careers until they became pregnant with their second child, 88.2 percent had used maternity leaves, which is far greater than the only 17.0 percent of women who left their original careers. It is, of course, possible that the latter group of women did not use maternity leaves because they willingly quit their careers rather than due to the culture at their workplaces making taking such leaves difficult. Nevertheless, there was also a considerable difference between women who used parental leaves and maintained their careers until having their second child and women who quit their ca-

reers before they became pregnant with their second child. Whereas 48.5 percent of the former group had used parental leaves, only 8.5 percent of the latter did the same.

Of married women who continued to work until they became pregnant with their second child (except those working in unpaid jobs), 64.4 percent used maternity leaves and 35.7 percent used parental leaves for their second child. The percentages of women using both types of leaves were greater with respect to the second than the first child. This is likely because women who had difficulty using such leaves quit their careers after giving birth to their first child, with women working in environments more conducive to work-family balance continuing to work.

As for whether they found it difficult to maintain work-family balance, 13.7 percent and 41.4 percent of married working women answered that it was “very” and “generally” difficult to maintain that balance, respectively, as opposed to 40.1 percent and 4.8 percent who found it to be “generally” unchallenging or “not at all” challenging, respectively.

## 4. Policy Needs

Both married women and unmarried adults of both sexes assigned great importance to systematic support for marriage and childrearing from both the government and workplaces. As for marriage support policy measures, financial support designed to help newlyweds find family homes rated the greatest need. There were also significant needs for policy support for fostering safe environments in which one could raise one's children, increasing the available resources for quality daycare and childcare support, and reducing the financial burden of raising children.

In general, the survey respondents were highly aware of, were receiving significant help from, and rated as very important policy support measures for marriage, pregnancy and childbirth, preschool care and education, after-school daycare for schoolchildren, and work-family balance. Over 80 percent of the survey respondents were aware of all these programs, giving them scores of at least 4.0 out of 5.0 in terms of usefulness and scores of at least 4.5 out of 5.0 in terms of importance.

Of the housing support available for newlyweds, the home acquisition loan, public rental housing, and Happy Housing programs received relatively high awareness rates, ranging from 83 to 85 percent. These programs also scored highly in terms of usefulness (4.4 to 4.5) and importance (4.6 to 4.7).

As for policy measures supporting pregnancy and childbirth, 99.9 percent of married women were aware of such programs, and rated them as very important (4.8 out of 5.0). When it came to health support for mothers and newborns, the awareness rates and importance ratings declined slightly. Both types of measures, however, scored 4.2 to 4.3 in terms of usefulness. With respect to policy programs supporting childcare, all programs except for support for after-school care received high awareness rates in the 90-percent range, with childcare financial support garnering the highest awareness rate of 97.0 percent. Quality daycare services operated by national or public parties were rated as the most important, while the monthly child benefit payments were, relatively speaking, rated as the least important. All work-family balance support programs showed high awareness rates of over 95 percent, and also scored highly in terms of usefulness and importance. Parental leaves for mothers, in particular, received the highest scores.

Among the various government measures supporting marriage, childbirth, and childcare, unmarried men and women were most commonly aware of parental and maternity leaves for both spouses. Less than 65 percent, however, were aware of housing support for newlyweds. The policy support for the financial expenses of pregnancy and childbirth (National Happiness Card) was the program with the lowest awareness among unmarried men and women, especially among un-

married men. Unmarried men and women who were aware of these various policy programs generally rated all such measures as important. Unsurprisingly, they rated maternity and parental leaves—the measures with the highest awareness rates—as the most important. As for parental and maternity leaves for husbands, however, unmarried men rated them as relatively less important than other policy support measures. This may reflect the fact that working men find it difficult, or even impossible, to use these leaves even when such leaves are guaranteed by law. Although the unmarried men and women surveyed had not actually used these policy programs, it is important to maintain and advertise the programs, as many unmarried men and women will eventually come to use them.

V

Conclusion





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## Conclusion <<

The rapid transformation of Korean society has brought about profound changes in Korean's attitudes toward marriage and raising children and reshaped their behavior accordingly. Compared to the 2015 survey, the 2018 survey revealed that unmarried Korean men and women's reluctance to marry, whether early or at all, has increased even further. As marriage and childbirth are major events in people's lives, it is important for policymakers to identify the causes of the pervasive reluctance to engage in these events and introduce effective policies to address such causes.

As the vast majority of children born in Korea are born in legally sanctioned wedlock, the growing reluctance to marry early or at all is the main factor behind the plummeting birth rate in the country. The survey results demonstrate that married women increasingly perceive having and raising children as burdensome. Specifically, the financial burdens of raising and educating children and the challenges of maintaining work-life balance are the major factors significantly inhibiting childbirth. Although the ideal number of children to have among married women decreased slightly from 2.25 in 2015 to 2.16 in 2018, it is important to note that married women still want to have at least two children. Yet, as the survey results reveal, married

women are 0.41 child short of the ideal number, with even their expected or planned number of children falling short of the ideal number by 0.24. These results imply that women are facing significant obstacles in terms of having and raising children, and that it is crucial to remove such obstacles through policy means in order to raise the birth rate.

Policymakers should concentrate their efforts on mitigating or eliminating factors that stand in the way of individuals getting married and having children. Policy support is especially needed to improve the physical and mental health, employment, and housing of young adult men and women. Most importantly, greater efforts should be made to establish a culture in which it is safe to have and raise children, individuals' choices are respected, gender roles are more equal, and families are respected and protected.

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