

## Mapping of Care Policies in Asia: South Korea

S. Korea is an ageing society with a rapidly growing elderly population and the world's lowest birth rate<sup>1</sup>. Also this society has relatively low employment rate for women with M curve according to age, which means that women at the age of marriage and child birth tend to step out of labor market and come back later in middle age. Meeting growing care needs and increasing women's employment are of the crucial agendas of the society.

This paper is briefly looking at the care needs of the society, care infrastructure, people in care sector, and the situation of domestic workers.

### 1. Overview of care needs

As of 2021, the number of children aged at 5 or below is 1,989,455, accounting for 3.8% of total population, and the number of children under 15 is 6,087,471 (11.8% of total population)<sup>2</sup>. Besides, elderly people aged 65 or above is 8,706,561 (16.8% of total population)<sup>3</sup>, expected to rise to 40.1% by 2050<sup>4</sup>. It is an aging society, seeing dramatic increase of elderly population in a short period.

There were 2,644,700 people with disabilities in 2021, accounting for 5.1% of total population<sup>5</sup>.

A national survey on family (2020) shows that 4.8% of total families have family members in care need<sup>6</sup>.

### 2. Care infrastructure

Government expenditure on care service including child care and elderly care is 3.0% of total government expenditure in 2021<sup>7</sup>. In 2020, government expenditure on care was only 0.86% of GDP, which is only 1/3 of average one of OECD countries (2.3% of GDP)<sup>8</sup>.

Public social expenditure on family- the sum of expenditures on family allowance, maternity and parental leave, other cash benefits, early childhood education and care, home help/accommodation, and other benefits in kind (in accordance with OECD standard) was 1.2% of GDP in 2018<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Birth rate was 0.78 in 2022.

<sup>2</sup> (National Statistical Office, 2021a)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> (National Statistical Office, 2021b)

<sup>5</sup> (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021a)

<sup>6</sup> (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2020)

<sup>7</sup> (JoSeon-ju, 2022)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> (Social Security Committee, 2020), p.106

As South Korean society is aging and the demand of work and family balance has been rising, care has emerged as growing social agenda. Since early 2000s, its society has strived to enhance public care services on the basis of socialization of care<sup>10</sup>. However, meeting the care needs and providing quality care service is still a long way to move. There is no systematic and integrated management system for the demand for care, which causes a gap in care<sup>11</sup>.

Basic framework for major government care service like long-term care and child care is that government finances for private outsourced institution to provide public care service. Among government care service providers in 2019, 79.4% of child care center and 70~80% of long term care facilities are private facilities established by private for-profit corporations. To enhance care workers' working condition and care service quality, public infrastructure for care service should be increased<sup>12</sup>.

### Public care services for the elderly

Korea has set up a universal long-term care service scheme, which classified into two types in terms of source of funding. The majority is covered by national long-term care insurance and the rest are covered by government's Customized Care Service for the Elderly with taxation funding. The beneficiaries of the "Customized Care Service for the Elderly" are people eligible for public assistance.

Main government elderly care services are provided through Long-term care scheme, which is a national insurance based scheme. Long-term care service is available to elderly aged 65 or above and people under 65 with geriatric disease (like dementia), Parkinsonism, cerebrovascular disease, who are judged to be in need of help in their daily life. Government's screening committee assesses the need and rate of care service upon application. Once identified to be in need, they can receive public care services in accordance with the degree of care need, the status of physical and mental function, and their choices.

Long-term care service is largely classified into three types, in-home care services (including day center care), institutional care services (such as nursing home), and cash benefit for family carers. Institutional care is to provide long-term care for elderly who need caregiver for all day long at residential institutions like nursing home. In-home care is to provide long-term care for elderly, who can manage to make their daily living and need a caregiver to some degree, at their home. In-home care services include home visit care, home visit bath, home visit nursing, day center, and respite care.

---

<sup>10</sup> It means strengthening the government's role in care work and costs. It is a policy basis that emphasizes the need for the government to provide care services by bringing care work, which was previously mainly performed by women in the family, into the public.

<sup>11</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021) , P. 4.

<sup>12</sup> (LeeSe-a, 2021)<https://www.womennews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=213635> , womennews(<http://www.womennews.co.kr>), accessed on 2023.3.3

As of 2021, there are 85,228 elderly welfare facilities<sup>13</sup> and 24,953 long-term care facilities<sup>14</sup>. The number of elderly people receiving public long-term care is 899,113<sup>15</sup>(10.3% of total population aged 65 or above), the number of elderly people aged 85 or above receiving public long-term care is 352,551(40.2% of total population aged 85 or above)

In 2019, the number of beneficiaries of public long-term care (both long-term care and comprehensive elderly care service<sup>16</sup>) is 688,780(641,173 for long-term care, 47,607 for comprehensive elderly care service). The coverage is 8.6% of total population aged 65 or above. It has been increased from 5.7% in 2011<sup>17</sup>. In terms of public elderly care services, the coverage has been increasing steadily.

Compared to the rate of elderly people in receipt of long-term care(both public and private), 8.9% of total population aged 65 or above, the coverage of public long-term care is 8.0% of total population aged 65 or above in 2018<sup>18</sup>, which means that 89.9% of total elderly who receive long term care(both public and private) are covered by public long-term care services.

As of 2020, government's expenditure on long-term care was 1.9 trillion KRW (0.2% of GDP<sup>19</sup>), while long-term care insurance's expenditure was 9.46 trillion KRW, which has increased by 7.3 times from 2009(1.3 trillion KRW)<sup>20</sup>.

Despite of public long-term care scheme in place, family burden is still significant. It remains in high demand for the government to provide adequate and quality service with greater responsibility.

### Community care for the elderly

Community care for the elderly in South Korea is in a pilot stage to establish an integrated delivery system nationally by 2025.<sup>21</sup> There has been a demand for aging in place and the inadequateness of in-home long-term care services. Quite a few local governments are budgeting for community care and implementing various small scale projects, but they are insignificant. So, nationwide community care has been initiated to integrate and improve housing, medical care, nursing, care services for the elderly to spend healthy lives where they lived.

### Personal assistance service for the disabled

---

<sup>13</sup> (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021c)

<sup>14</sup> (Social Security Committee, 2020), p.143 ,

<sup>15</sup> (National Health Insurance Service, 2021)

<sup>16</sup> Government comprehensive elderly care service has been incorporated into government's Customized Care Service for the Elderly since 2020.

<sup>17</sup> (Social Security Committee, 2020), p.141 ,

[http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/jb/sjb030301vw.jsp?PAR\\_MENU\\_ID=03&MENU\\_ID=032901&CONT\\_SEQ=367077](http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/jb/sjb030301vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=03&MENU_ID=032901&CONT_SEQ=367077) , accessed 2023.2.25

<sup>18</sup> (Social Security Committee, 2020), p.141-142

<sup>19</sup> (JoSeon-ju, 2022)

<http://www.betterfuture.go.kr/front/notificationSpace/columnDetail.do?articleId=172> accessed on 2023.2.25

<sup>20</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021), P. 98.

<sup>21</sup> (Community Care, 2021) <https://www.korea.kr/special/policyCurationView.do?newsId=148866645#L4> accessed on 2023.3.2

Personal assistance service for the disabled is to provide public services to assist with performing activities of daily living including physical activities, housework, and social activities for the disabled (physically and mentally). Care workers (assistants) visit homes of beneficiaries to provide services, which is classified into three types, assistance with performing daily living activities, home visit bath, and home visit nursing. This service is available to the disabled aged between 6 and below 65<sup>22</sup>. The eligibility to receive this service is screened. The amount of services that the eligible disabled receive is determined according to the degree of disability. The number of the disabled who received this service in 2019 was 86,730 (82% of the eligible disabled, 105,569)<sup>23</sup>.

However, the service doesn't fully meet the needs. A survey shows that in case of people with severe disabilities who are the most in need of care by others, only 11.7% of them receive the service<sup>24</sup>. Also there is a criticism that the eligibility criteria are too strict and service hours is not to meet the needs<sup>25</sup>. Therefore family burden is significant for people with severe disabilities or people with a developmental disability<sup>26</sup>.

### Public childcare services

Government of South Korea has expanded its childcare public service on the policy basis for free childcare. Government's universal schemes on childcare are largely divided into two categories, one is to subsidize the fees of childcare center (including nursery school) and the other is cash benefit. Government provides financial support for Childcare fee for all children aged 5 or below, according to the standard amount set by the government.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the childcare allowance is provided for children who don't use childcare centers (or nursery school).<sup>28</sup>

Parent benefit is a cash benefit for parents who have children below age of 2. If parents don't use government subsidized child care center, parents receive full amount of the allowance. If parents use government subsidized child care center, they receive differences. Child benefit is another universal cash benefit, eligible for all children under school age.

In 2020, public expenditure on child care was 0.6% of GDP; and public expenditure on pre-primary child care was 0.5% of GDP.<sup>29</sup> With the free childcare policy (in place since 2013), public expenditure increased by 3.4 times (from 1.7 trillion KRW in 2009 to 5.87 trillion KRW in 2020)<sup>30</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup> The disabled aged 65 or above are eligible for the long-term care services.

<sup>23</sup> (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2019)

[https://www.data.go.kr/data/3084474/fileData.do#layer\\_data\\_infomation](https://www.data.go.kr/data/3084474/fileData.do#layer_data_infomation) accessed on 2023.3.9

<sup>24</sup> (Korea's Disabled people's Development Institute, 2021)

<sup>25</sup> (SeoYu-ri, 2023)

<sup>26</sup> According to a government survey, 20.5% the respondents said one parent quit their job to take care of children with a developmental disability, and 78.8% of them were mother (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> However, lots of private childcare centers charge extra fee in the name of extracurricular activities, apart from fixed fee paid by government.

<sup>28</sup> (ParkJyungja, HwangOck-Kyeong, MoonHyuk-Jun, 2013), Vol. 9. No. 5. pp. 513-538

<sup>29</sup> (JoSeon-ju, 2022),

<http://www.betterfuture.go.kr/front/notificationSpace/columnDetail.do?articleId=172> accessed on 2023.2.25

<sup>30</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021), P. 98.

As of 2021, there are 37,371 childcare centers, providing 1,184,716 children with child care<sup>31</sup>. And there are 582,572 children at 8,660 nursery schools in 2021<sup>32</sup>. Considering the population of children aged at 5 or below is 1,989,455 in 2021, 88.8% of children below 6 are receiving public care through childcare facilities. According to the government, in 2020 the coverage of public care for children is 82.0% of children aged at 2 or below, and 97.2% of children aged 3 to 5<sup>33</sup>.

Although it is universal to use care and education facilities for children as public care service, childcare facility service doesn't cover all care need for children. Demand for caregiver to meet care need that is not met by the hours of use of childcare center exists. It is because service hours of childcare center don't address fully the required time for care need. In these cases, many households with children in care needs rely on unpaid care work of parents(include grand parents, close relatives) or paid domestic workers

Despite of free childcare policy, issues has been raised on lack of public facilities, service quality, and adequate service hours.

Also, there has been an increased demand for public care for children in elementary school age, but supportive policy for it has been insufficient. According to a government paper, the coverage of public care for children aged 6~8 and aged 9~11 were only 25.6% and 5.2% respectively<sup>34</sup>.

#### Semi-government supported services for childcare

Childcare support home visit service(아이돌봄 사업) is to meet care gap between facility(like childcare center, nursery school, school) based public care service and needs of individual household, for example, for working parent to meet the gap in care need after childcare center or school. This service is available to children aged at 12 or below. Under this scheme, child caregivers(Idolbomi, 아이돌보미) visit homes to take care of children. This service is provided mainly part-time based with government subsidy up to 85% of service charge, depending on household income.

This child caregivers(Idolbomi, 아이돌보미) are employed by public or non-profit institutions, certified by government. In 2022, under this scheme 78,212 households received the service and there were 227 service providers(institutions), hiring 26,675 child caregivers(Idolbomi, 아이돌보미). The number of households who use government 'Child care home visit service' has increased steadily<sup>35</sup>.

#### Family-friendly workplace policies

The EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE ASSISTANCE ACT and the Labor Standards Act provides protection for maternity and legal ground for family-friendly policies,

---

<sup>31</sup> (Ministry of health and welfare, 2021b)

<sup>32</sup> (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2021)

[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=334&tblId=DT\\_1963003\\_001&conn\\_path=l2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=334&tblId=DT_1963003_001&conn_path=l2) accessed on 2023/3/21

<sup>33</sup> (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family , 2023)

<sup>34</sup> (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family , 2023)

<sup>35</sup> (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family)Website of Childcare support home visit service, [https://www.idolbom.go.kr/front/upc/comm/htmlInfo.do?SEQ=16&L\\_MENU\\_CD=020102&H\\_MENU\\_CD=0201&SITE\\_ID=FRONT&MENU\\_SITE\\_ID=FRONT](https://www.idolbom.go.kr/front/upc/comm/htmlInfo.do?SEQ=16&L_MENU_CD=020102&H_MENU_CD=0201&SITE_ID=FRONT&MENU_SITE_ID=FRONT)  
Accessed on 2023.3.2

including 90-days paid maternity leave, 10-days paid paternity leave, parental leave(1 year, paid 80% of regular wage by Unemployment Insurance), flexible working arrangements including reduced working hours for employees with children aged 8 and below, workplace childcare facilities, etc. Also, these Acts prohibit unfair treatment/discrimination against employees who use these benefits.

Recently, Childbirth allowance(출산급여) policy for the uninsured of national Unemployment Insurance has been implemented. Also, family care leave (up to 10 days per year) and reduced working hours has been introduced in order for workers to use when they have to take care of their families urgently due to family illness, accident, old age, or child caring<sup>36</sup>.

Paid sick leave is not stated in the Labor Standards Act. It depends on workplace regulation or a collective agreement. Protection from employment injury is applicable for all employees, except employees directly hired by individuals or households (including domestic workers) and agricultural workplace with below 5 employees, by INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT COMPENSATION INSURANCE ACT.

The EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE ASSISTANCE ACT and the Labor Standards Act prohibit discrimination on the ground of gender in recruiting or employing employees, wage and in kind, Education, Assignment, and Promotion, Age Limit, Retirement, and Dismissal. The Labor Standards Act prohibits discriminatory treatment on the ground of nationality, religion, or social status in relation to terms and conditions of employment. Also sexual harassment and workplace harassment are prohibited by laws.

Although some legal grounds for family-friendly workplace are provided, the utilization of the system is still limited. Especially workers in small and medium-sized workplaces are not likely to enjoy fully these benefits. Also long working hour<sup>37</sup> interrupts with work-life balance that make possible for workers to fulfill their care responsibility. Many women step out the labor market to take care of family members in care needs.

## **0. People in the care sector**

The number of Care workers, including social welfare-related workers (childcare teachers and others), workers in care and health service (excluding nursing and medical practitioners), and domestic chores and childcare helper by 7th Korean standard classification of occupations<sup>38</sup>, is 1,037,000(mostly women<sup>39</sup>), accounting for 5.21% total paid workers in 2020. It has increased by nearly 1.5 times since 2011. Especially, the number of workers in care and health service has doubled.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> The EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE ASSISTANCE ACT(article 22-2, 22-3)

<sup>37</sup> As of 2021, the average annual actual working hours and working hour per week of OECD member countries were 1,716 hours and 36.8 hours respectively. Whereas those of S. Korea were 1,915hours and 40hours respectively (CHoMin-ju, BaeJeong-yoon, ImHyeon-Cheol, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> It is standardized classification to be used for collection of occupation- related statistics in Korea, and it is adopted on the basis of international standard classification of occupation, but the code of KSCO is not entirely consistent with ISCO's code.

<sup>39</sup> In 2019, women account for 94.8% of total care workers( Ji-yeonJang, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021), P. 99.

Working hours per week for Care worker in the above category is 31.5 hours per week in 2020. It differs by occupation in the category. Working hours of social welfare-related workers is 35.39 hours, a bit longer than other care workers. 'Workers in care and health service' and 'domestic chores and childcare helper' worked for some 29 hours per week, which is considerably short compared to other industries and occupation.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of wage, there are differences among workers in care worker category. Hourly wage is estimated at 13,900KRW for social welfare-related workers, while those for 'workers in care and health service' and 'domestic chores and childcare helper' are estimated at 10,500KRW and 8,700KRW respectively in 2020. These wages are just as low as minimum wage in 2020, which is 8,590KRW/hour, also are far lower than those of other occupation. Given that the average hourly wage in entire occupation is 17,000KRW, these wage for 'workers in care and health service' and 'domestic chores and childcare helper' is only 60.7% and 50.3% of it<sup>42</sup>. Low wage for care worker is a long standing problem since government has initiated public care services on the policy basis of socialization of care. Despite policies for socialization of care, the country relies on women's labor for care which is severely undervalued. Socialization of care may have somehow contributed to an increase in employment but it has hardly changed social recognition and appreciation on care work.

<Number of workers, average wage, working hour by occupation in 2020>

	Care workers				Entire occupation
	Total care worker	social welfare-related workers	workers in care and health service	domestic chores and childcare helper	
Number of workers	1,037,000	391,000	526,000	120,000	-
Monthly wage (10000KRW)	157.00	212.67	129.79	94.58	272.73
Working hour/week (hour)	31.51	35.39	29.34	28.24	37.10
Hourly wage (Est) (10000KRW)	1.16	1.39	1.05	0.87	1.73

Reference: Yoon Ja-Young, Yoon Jeong-hyang, Ham Sun-yoo, Seo Ju-yeon, Im Eun-jae, Jeon Bo-kyeong(2021), *A study on improvement of undervalued care work*, Presidential committee on ageing society and population policy

The age composition of care workers shows a clear trend of aging. Almost half of care workers are over 60. Among the total care workers, the proportion of those aged 60 or older was 43.7% in the second half of 2019, a significant increase from 28.7% in the first half of 2013. On the other hand, all other age groups have decreased<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> (Ji-yeonJang, 2020)

### Local domestic workers

The number of local domestic workers varies, depending on the definition. In a narrow sense, by 7<sup>th</sup> Korean standard classification of occupations, the number of domestic workers including only 'domestic chores and childcare helper' (KSCO code-951<sup>44</sup>), excluding domestic workers in public sector like long-term home care worker, is estimated at 106,959 in 2022. It has been decreasing from 218,979 in 2015<sup>45</sup>. As stated above, the number of workers in care and health service has doubled. It is noted that the scale of care workers including domestic workers showed an increasing trend from some of 560,000 in 2013 to 660,000 in 2019, while domestic workers has decreased. This comparison is likely to indicate that the percentage of care worker in public sector has increased steadily, because public long-term care worker accounts for more than 80% of workers in care and health service<sup>46</sup>. It shows that socialization of care work has made a progress to some degree<sup>47</sup>.

But this figure of domestic workers excludes caregivers for the sick, hired by individuals as the official statistics on informal sector workers is not available. The number of caregivers for the sick was estimated at 90,000 in 2012.<sup>48</sup> Very few hospitals provide care giving services for the sick, so for patients who need someone's care, either among family members (mostly women) take care of them or they have to hire caregivers individually. Therefore, there are lots of caregivers for the sick hired by individuals or households, though the place of work is within hospitals. Care work carried out by these types of domestic workers in hospitals includes assisting patients with personal hygiene, physical mobility, feeding, dressing, and etc.

Average monthly wages of these 'domestic chores and childcare helper' is 1,082,000 KRW in 2022. Average working hour per week is 27.4 hours<sup>49</sup>. Standard working hour by law is 40 hours per week. Mostly, local domestic workers work on part-time base. Average hourly rate become 9,872 KRW. The minimum wage in 2022 was 9,160 KRW.

### Home visit Care workers (domestic workers) under public care scheme

Looking at the scope of domestic workers in a broad sense, some care workers who visit beneficiary's home to deliver care service under government scheme can fall into domestic workers category according to ILO's definition. Among those workers are long-term home care workers (재가요양보호사) under government 'long term care service', child caregivers (Idolbomi, 아이돌보미) under government 'child care support home visit service' (아이돌봄서비스), and domestic chores and health assistants (Gasaganbyeongdoui, 가사간병도우미) under

---

<sup>44</sup> Code number for domestic chores and childcare helper is 951 by 7th Korean standard classification of occupations. (Cf. code number for workers in care and health service is 421.)

<sup>45</sup> (National Statistical Office, 2022)

<sup>46</sup> There were 450,970 long-term care workers in 2020 (National Health Insurance Service, 2020), while the total number of care worker in care and health service were 526,000 in 2020.

<sup>47</sup> (Ji-yeonJang, 2020)

<sup>48</sup> (Economic, Social & Labor Council, 2012)

<sup>49</sup> (National Statistical Office, 2022)



government's 'domestic and health care home visit service'(가사간병방문지원서비스), and 'personal assistant services' assistants for the disabled(장애인활동지원사)<sup>50</sup>.

'Long-term home care workers' and 'domestic chores and health helpers' carry out domestic work like cleaning, cooking, and physical/mental support for the beneficiaries. Child caregivers(아이돌보미) don't carry out house chores, but look after children only. Personal assistant for the disabled carry out works to assist with performing activities of daily living such as eating, removing and putting on clothing, using the restroom, and assistance with getting into or out of a vehicle. Depending on needs of the disabled who are not able to do house chores, the work carried out by personal assistant for the disabled may include domestic work like cooking and cleaning.

The scope of care work that these workers provide is stipulated in each service manual. However, in many cases, these workers provide services beyond the scope as it is not clear nor easy to distinct only care work for beneficiary from other family member-related domestic work.

A study presents that according to a government's paper, the number of these types of worker providing care work on home-visit basis in public sector was estimated at 540,000 in 2020<sup>51</sup>.

### Migrant domestic workers

In terms of the size of migrant domestic workers, there is no available statistics. However some researches provide estimates of migrant domestic workers. The estimated size of migrant domestic workers varies considerably, ranging from 15,000 to 60,000<sup>52</sup>

They are mainly Korean Chinese, who are only eligible for work in service sector among migrants. Given that service sector including domestic work is not open to migrant workers of other nationality than Korean Chinese and there is language barrier, the size of other migrant domestic workers than Korean Chinese is likely to be few.

They are directly hired by individuals, mainly on live-in basis. Korean Chinese women migrant workers are apt to choose live-in domestic work as they need a place to stay in the first stage of migration. Also live-in domestic work is easy for them to access because the demand for domestic work is not filled with local workers.

### Care workers in residential institutions for long-term care and for people with disabilities

---

<sup>50</sup> However, these workers tend to be regarded only as care workers, not domestic workers.

<sup>51</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021)

<sup>52</sup> According to a study, a government report estimated that the number of migrant domestic workers in 2013 was 60,000 (Jeong-wooHan, 2017). Another study showed that the number could be estimated at 15,000 in 2010 (KimYeong-Soon, ChoiSeong, Estevez-AbeMargarita,, 2014).

Long-term care workers (excluding medical practitioners) in long-term care institutions are 79,799 in 2021<sup>53</sup>. In 2019, there are 1,557 residential facilities for people with disabilities and the number of their residents (people with disabilities) was 33,954<sup>54</sup>.

Average monthly wage of long-term care workers in long-term care facilities is 1,825,000KRW, and average working hours per month is 176hours in 2019.<sup>55</sup> Average hourly rate become 10,369KRW.

Long-term care workers in elderly home must be qualified. To be a long-term care worker, one must complete the education and training set by government regulation, and then must obtain the qualification.

### Caregivers (or teachers) in childcare centers

The number of Childcare teachers in child care center is 237,769 in 2021.<sup>56</sup> Childcare teacher must be qualified.

Average monthly wage of Childcare teachers in child care center is 2,635,000KRW.<sup>57</sup> Average working hour per week is 50.5hours/week.<sup>58</sup> In this occupation, resignation is increasing due to the working condition of childcare sector with long working hours, high workload, and high intensity of work.<sup>59</sup>

## **1. The situation of domestic workers**

There is a lack of legal recognition of domestic work. Basically, domestic workers remains excluded from the application of Labor Standard Act, which is the most basic of the labor law. Exclusion from the application of the Labor Standard Act means exclusion from most of legal labor protection. Legal framework for labor protection in South Korea has been constructed on the basis of formal employment relationship. A large part of labor-related national laws excludes the employment within household from their application.

Nevertheless, there are some measures for domestic workers to be protected by labor laws. Labor protection for domestic workers depends on their employment relationship. Those in the employment under public care schemes has been in coverage of labor laws and entitled to social security protection, for example, long-term home care workers (재가요양보호사), child caregivers (Idolbomi, 아이돌보미), and domestic chores and health assistants (Gasaganbyeongdoui, 가사간병도우미), and personal assistants for the disabled (장애인활동지원사). And recently, with the enforcement of the ACT ON THE EMPLOYMENT IMPROVEMENT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

<sup>53</sup> (National Health Insurance Service, 2021) In total, the number of long-term care workers, both in-home care workers and institution care workers, reaches 507,473 in 2021.

<sup>54</sup> (Social Security Committee, 2020) p.157

<sup>55</sup> (Ministry of health and welfare, 2019)Ministry of health and welfare, 2019 Long-term care survey,

<sup>56</sup> (Ministry of health and welfare, 2021b)

<sup>57</sup> (Ministry of health and Welfare, 2021d), p.215

<sup>58</sup> (Ministry of health and Welfare, 2021d), p.258

<sup>59</sup> (Ministry of health and Welfare, 2021d), p.318

(hereinafter the Domestic Workers Act) in 2022, domestic workers in an employment with domestic service provider(institutions) in private sector are able to come under the coverage of some of labor-related laws, including the Labor standards Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act, and the Minimum Wage Act.

Yet, the Domestic Workers Act doesn't apply to domestic workers directly hired by individuals or households, leaving many of domestic workers vulnerable.

#### Working hours: less protection, shorter working hours than one that care workers desire and demand

Basically care workers in formal employment relationship are in coverage of the Labor Standards Act with provision of 40 standard working hours. However, many of care workers, especially care workers(including domestic workers) on the basis of home visit like long-term home care workers, are not likely to fully enjoy this working hour regulation, rest hour, and overtime pay as they works on part-time basis. At least, care workers (including domestic workers) in public sector under government scheme are in application of weekly paid leave and paid annual leave. Live-in domestic workers, many of them are migrants, are excluded from the application of the standard working time provision by the Domestic Workers Act.

The Domestic Workers Act provide separate regulations on rest hour, weekly leave, annual leave for domestic workers who are in the coverage of the law. The Act has a provision on minimum working hour per week for domestic worker not to be excluded from actual application of labor related law.<sup>60</sup> According to the Act, rest hour is subjected to agreement between the parties, but for live-in domestic workers the rest hour should be applied under the Labor standard Act. The Domestic workers Act stipulates that paid leave are applied based on actual working hours.

According to a study above, care workers' average working hours per week is 31 hours. Given that the working hour is shorter than hours that care workers want to work, it is under-employment<sup>61</sup>.

Some studies on actual working condition of home visit care worker under government scheme shows that paid weekly leave and paid annual leave are likely being observed, however additional pay for holiday work is not likely to be observed<sup>62</sup>.

#### Minimum wage/ equal pay for equal work: paid as low as minimum wage

Basically care workers in formal employment relationship are in coverage of minimum wage provision and equal pay for equal work provision by the Minimum Wage Act and the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act respectively. Also, Domestic

---

<sup>60</sup> The provision of paid weekly leave and paid annual leave are applied when the working hour per week is no less than 15 hours per week.

<sup>61</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021), p.139

<sup>62</sup> According to a study on personal assistants for the disabled under government scheme, only 10.5% of these care workers enjoy additional pay in compliance with legal standard for holiday work(YoonJeong-Yang & ChoiHye-young, 2022).

workers in the coverage of the Domestic Workers Act are in the application of minimum wage provision. Otherwise, domestic workers directly hired by individuals are likely to be out of these protection.

As shown above, there are no big differences in terms of wage between care workers (many of them are in public sector with labor law application) and directly hired domestic workers, as both workers' wages are as low as minimum wage. The hourly wage gap is mainly caused by weekly paid leave. Although both work on part-time basis alike, care workers in public sector under government scheme can enjoy weekly paid leave, while directly hired domestic workers can't.

#### No ensured Occupational safety and health

As no paid sick leaves are ensured by laws, care workers are vulnerable when they are sick<sup>63</sup>. Some of them may have unpaid day-off for short period time, however in case the sickness is severe and takes long time to treat, they don't find ways to secure their jobs but step out of the jobs.

Care workers who are in formal employment relationship under government scheme have access to Industrial accident compensation. Many care workers suffer from musculoskeletal disorder due to repetitive work and physical assistance. However it is almost impossible for care worker's musculoskeletal disorder and hazard caused by emotional labor to be recognized under industrial accident compensation insurance<sup>64</sup>.

#### No significant Salary increases for accumulation of skills and experience

Mostly salary increases for accumulation of skills and experience is not common within care work sector. It is because there is no wage structure (wage ladder) for many of care work sector and mostly wage is calculated according to hours of work on part-time basis. Caregivers(teachers) in childcare center have wage structure for salary increase in accordance with accumulation of skills and experience. Also long-term care worker receive long service allowance. Otherwise, no salary increases for accumulation of skills and experience is applied.

#### Restricted Access to the courts and dispute resolution mechanisms

Workers who recognized as workers by labor related laws are eligible for the access to the courts and dispute resolution mechanisms. For care workers including domestic workers in formal employment relationship, the access to the courts and dispute resolution mechanism is ensured. However, domestic workers and care workers without formal employment relationship, like an employment within households, are restrained from the right to access to the labor dispute resolution mechanism.

---

<sup>63</sup> Only 6.3% of personal assistants for the disabled under government scheme enjoy a paid sick leave (YoonJeong-Yang & ChoiHye-young, 2022).

<sup>64</sup> (YoonJa-young, YoonJeong-hyang, HamSun-yoo, SeoJu-yeon, ImEun-jae, JeonBo-kyeong, 2021) (YoonJeong-Yang & ChoiHye-young, 2022)

### Representation & collective bargaining rights of domestic workers

Unlike other labor-related laws and regulations which exclude domestic workers from their application, the TRADE UNION AND LABOR RELATIONS ADJUSTMENT ACT applies to domestic workers. So, domestic workers are entitled to the 3 basic rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and collective action. Domestic workers, care workers on home visit under government care service scheme, for example long-term home care workers has been organized into trade unions.

Domestic workers are not fully represented in policy dialogue. Though, domestic workers organizations which represent domestic workers have been engaged in policy dialogue and law-making through discussion with government and members of National Assembly or through presenting opinion papers, in support of women CSOs.

### Partial and Limited Access to social security, social insurance

Major social security scheme for workers in South Korea is ensured through 4 major social insurances, that are national pension, national health insurance, unemployment insurance, industrial accident insurance. These 4 major social insurances, like a package, are mandatory for workers in formal employment relationship, for 1 or more month, who work no less than 15hours per week<sup>65</sup>. Domestic workers in formal employment relationship have the same right and obligation to these social security packages like other workers. So, domestic workers in public sector under government care scheme<sup>66</sup> have the access to social security. Domestic workers with formal employment relationship in private sector also have access to the social security. Whereas, workers in an employment within household have limited access to social security. For national health insurance, all nationals should be covered and insured by any means. For national pension, it allows voluntarily insured regardless of employment relationship.

### References

Cho, Min-ju, Bae, Jeong-yoon, Im, Hyeon-Cheol. (2022). "Comparison between Korea and major developed countries on the status of working hours regulations". *KIPA ISSUE PAPER*, No. 120, Korea Institute of Public Administration. (in Korean)

"Community Care". (2021년 11월 17일). Republic of Korea Policy Briefing : <https://www.korea.kr/special/policyCurationView.do?newsId=148866645#L4> accessed on 2023. 3. 2

Economic, Social & Labor Council. (2012). *Care service labor market status and further challenges (in Korean)*

---

<sup>65</sup> The industrial accident insurance is paid only by employers.

<sup>66</sup> For example, Long-term home care workers under long-term care service, domestic chores and health assistants under government's domestic and health care home visit service(가사간병방문지원서비스), child caregivers under government's Child care home visit service(아이돌봄서비스) are among those workers.

Han, Jeong-woo. (2017). "Migrant Chinese-Korean Domestic's Relationship with Employers: An Ethnographic Study". *Multi-Culture and Peace*, vol.11, no.3, pp. 1-23. (in Korean)

Jang, Ji-yeon. (2020). "Has the level of wage for care work improved?". *Labor review*, no.188, Korea Labor Institute. (in Korean)

Jo, Seon-ju. (2022). "Expenditure on care 3%, less than half of the OECD average." Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy:  
<http://www.betterfuture.go.kr/front/notificationSpace/columnDetail.do?articleId=172> accessed on 2023.2. (in Korean)

Kim, Yeong-Soon, Choi, EunSeong, & Estevez-Abe, Margarita. (2014). "Size of Korean Domestic Workers and Its Implications : Focusing on the Relationship with Labor Market and Gender Regime". *Social science review*, 2014 Spring, Vol. 45 No.1. (in Korean)

Korea's Disabled people's Development Institute. (2021). *The disabled life panel survey*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=438&tblId=DT\\_438001\\_AE026&vw\\_cd=MT\\_ZTITLE&list\\_id=D3\\_003\\_001\\_005&scrlId=&seqNo=&lang\\_mode=ko&obj\\_var\\_id=&itm\\_id=&conn\\_path=MT\\_ZTITLE&path=%252FstatisticsList%252FstatisticsListIndex.do](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=438&tblId=DT_438001_AE026&vw_cd=MT_ZTITLE&list_id=D3_003_001_005&scrlId=&seqNo=&lang_mode=ko&obj_var_id=&itm_id=&conn_path=MT_ZTITLE&path=%252FstatisticsList%252FstatisticsListIndex.do) accessed on 2023.4.20

Korean Educational Development Institute. (2021). *Educational Statistics*  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=334&tblId=DT\\_1963003\\_001&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=334&tblId=DT_1963003_001&conn_path=I2) accessed on 2023/3/21

Lee, Se-a. (July 7, 2021). "The value of care work, about 3% of GDP..."Resonable compensation required". Womennews:  
<https://www.womennews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=213635> accessed on 2023.3.3 (in Korean)

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. (2020). *National Family Survey*.

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. (2023). *The 3th Gender Equality Policy Master Plan (2023~2027)*. (in Korean)

Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. "Introduction of Childcare support home visit service". Childcare support home visit service:  
[https://www.idolbom.go.kr/front/upc/comm/htmlInfo.do?SEQ=16&L\\_MENU\\_CD=020102&H\\_MENU\\_CD=0201&SITE\\_ID=FRONT&MENU\\_SITE\\_ID=FRONT](https://www.idolbom.go.kr/front/upc/comm/htmlInfo.do?SEQ=16&L_MENU_CD=020102&H_MENU_CD=0201&SITE_ID=FRONT&MENU_SITE_ID=FRONT), accessed on March 2, 2023 (in Korean)

Ministry of health and welfare. (2019). *2019 Long-term care survey*.

Ministry of health and Welfare. (2021d). *2021 National childcare survey*.

Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2021c). *Elderly welfare facility state*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=117&tblId=DT\\_117N\\_B00003&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=117&tblId=DT_117N_B00003&conn_path=I2)

Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2021a). *State of the disabled*.

Ministry of health and welfare. (2021b). *Statistics on childcare facilities and users*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=117&tblId=DT\\_15407\\_NN002&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=117&tblId=DT_15407_NN002&conn_path=I2)

Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2019). *The disabled assistance service statistics*.  
[https://www.data.go.kr/data/3084474/fileData.do#layer\\_data\\_infomation](https://www.data.go.kr/data/3084474/fileData.do#layer_data_infomation) accessed on 2023.3.9

National Health Insurance Service. (2020). *Long-term Care Insurance statistics*.

National Health Insurance Service. (2021). *Long-term Care Insurance statistics*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=350&tblId=DT\\_35006\\_N030&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=350&tblId=DT_35006_N030&conn_path=I2)

National Statistical Office. (2021a). *Census*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT\\_1IN1503&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT_1IN1503&conn_path=I2)

National Statistical Office. (2021b). *Future population projection*.  
[https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT\\_1BPA001&conn\\_path=I2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT_1BPA001&conn_path=I2)

National Statistical Office. (2022). *Regional employment survey 2022(the first half)*.

Park, Jyungja, Hwang, Ock-Kyeung, & Moon, Hyuk-Jun. (2013). "Childcare Policies in Korea", *Journal of Korean Child Care and Education*, 2013, Vol. 9. No. 5. pp. 513-538. (in Korean)

Seo, Yu-ri. (2023.4.19). "The response rate of using Personal assistance services for the disabled is only 5%... Why?" *Busan Ilbo*:  
<https://www.busan.com/view/busan/view.php?code=2023041916210931808> accesson on 2023.4.20

Social Security Committee. (2020). *Social Security Fact book*:  
[http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/jb/sjb030301vw.jsp?PAR\\_MENU\\_ID=03&MENU\\_ID=032901&CONT\\_SEQ=367077](http://www.mohw.go.kr/react/jb/sjb030301vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=03&MENU_ID=032901&CONT_SEQ=367077) , accessed 2023.2.25 (in Korean)

Yoon, Ja-young, Yoon, Jeong-hyang, Ham, Sun-yoo, Seo, Ju-yeon, Im, Eun-jae, & Jeon, Bo-kyeong. (2021). *A study on the improvement of undervalued care work*. Presidential committee on ageing society and population policy. (in Korean)

Yoon, Jeong-Yang, & Choi, Hye-young. (2022). *Survey on Care worker of private-outsourced care service- focusing on personal assistants for the disabled*. Korea Women's Trade Union (in Korean)