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# Family Change and Policy Development

: Based on the Analysis of Gender,  
Generations, and Social Classes

Seung Ah Hong  
Jin Hee Choi  
Mee Jung Chin  
Su Jin Kim





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Korean Women's Development Institute

225 Jinheung-ro Eunpyeong-gu

Seoul 03367

Korea

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## I. Introduction

The family policy initiatives in Korea were triggered by the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 and the enactment of *Framework Act on Healthy Families* in 2005, and diverse family policies and family support services have been carried out ever since. Though family policy has come a long way over time, changes in the family and family structure of contemporary society calls for an improvement and transformation of the current policy. This study intends to identify the new trend of contemporary families based on gender, generations, and social classes, to speculate policy needs in accordance with the transition, and thereby to set appropriate political goals and tasks.

The study consists of five chapters. The first and second ones observe changes in the family and family environments in recent years, and review the necessity of modifications and improvement in family policy. The following chapter examines the transformation of family structures, relations, values, and family-care by gender, generations,

and social classes as well as seeking to identify policy needs in response to the transformation through the secondary statistical data analysis. The fourth chapter looks at major features and the extent of recent family policies in other countries and the way such policies are implemented. Case studies focus on the changes of families in OECD member countries and the types and characteristics of their recent family policies - in particular, the case of France and Australia is studied. The last chapter seeks to propose a new direction of family policy and political measures to draw up in compliance with the changes of families in Korean society.

## II. Research Background

The changes of families require a new approach to social and family policy. Families, readily affected by social and economic circumstances - especially; employment opportunities, income, taxation systems, and income transfers are substantially influential to family life (OECD, 2012: 17-18).

First, family structure is deeply connected to poverty. The risk of poverty is higher among cohabiting couples than among married couples. In particular, divorce and separation tends to drive women into poverty. Single-parent households seem to be more vulnerable to poverty risks than their counterparts, and the children from single-parent households face a substantially elevated risk of poverty (recited from Harkness, 2011, OECD, 2012: 17). This is evidenced by the tendency of which poverty risks have been far more prevalent in families with children for the last 20 years in OECD member

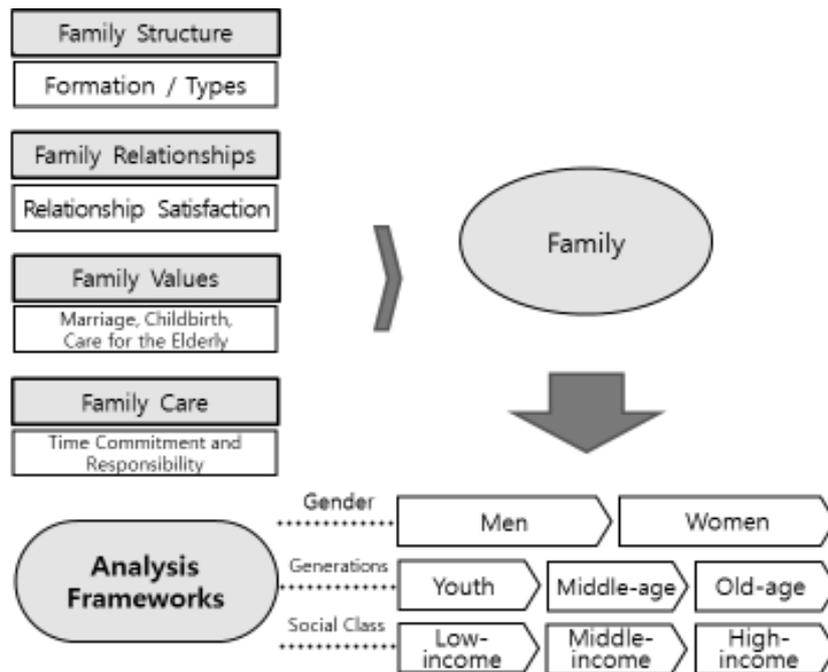
countries (recited from OECD, 2011, OECD, 2012: 17). Second, changes in family structure and family relationships have had a significant influence on the informal supporting network for the elderly. It has become more challenging to maintain enduring relationships with children for divorced couples, separated couples, and remarried couples, making it unlikely for them to be taken care of by their own family members (OECD, 2012: 17). Third, family characteristics also affect out-of-school education. For example, children from underprivileged families or single-parent households have less access to receive out-of-school education such as academic guidance, music, or art (OECD, 2012: 17). Lastly, family structure plays a key role in deciding residential patterns and resources. Housing policies, for example, conferred priority on families with children in the past, but recently, the emphasis has been moved onto single-person households as this type of family continues to increase (recited from OECD, 2011, OECD, 2012: 17).

Moreover, the recent policy reforms universally observed in many of the European countries is to support and encourage men's engagement in a family. Changes commonly found in Nordic countries as well as France and Australia evidently suggest that the goals and targets of the governmental policies have been transformed and expanded to support men's child care and this makes a clear contrast to the past where the policies primarily focused on encouraging and assisting women's participation in the labor market. The essence of such new policies is the implementation of "Daddy-Quotas" as part of parental leave, enabling more men to be actively involved in their family issues (Ellingsæter et al., 2013: 171-172).



### III. Changes in Families and Policy Demands by Gender, Generations, and Social Classes

This part of the research sheds light on the recent changes made in families through the reanalysis of a Social Survey and Korean Time Use Survey conducted by Statistics Korea, Korean General Social Survey (KGSS), Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women & Family by Korean Women's Development Institute, and The Survey of the Nationwide State of Marriage and Birth Rate by Korean Institute for Health and Social Affairs.

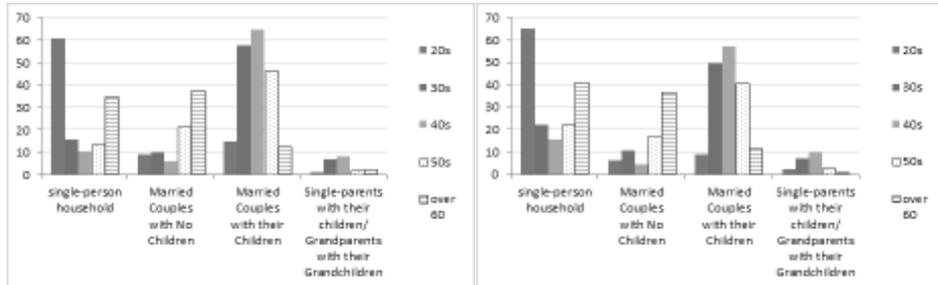


[Figure 1] Analysis Frameworks for Family Changes

## 1. Changes in Families

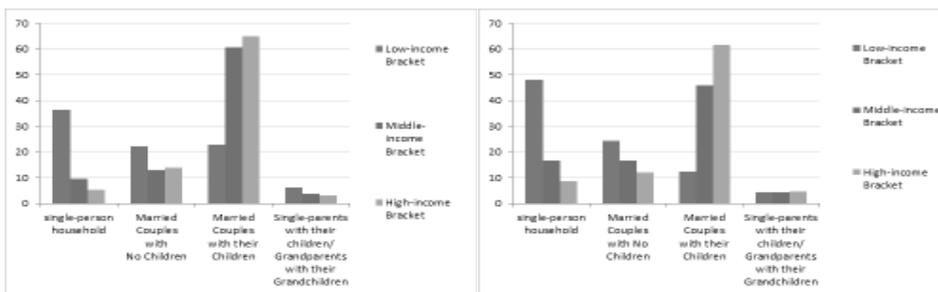
### A. Family Structure

Changes in families in terms of family structure, family relationships, family values, and family-care reveal differential patterns by gender, generations, and income levels. In the framework of family structure, a considerable change is manifested in marital status, family types, the number of family members, and the number of children. The percentage of unmarried people has risen in both men and women; especially, it shows a drastic increase in the 30s and 40s age groups. It is noteworthy in the generational analysis that single-person households have been augmented in all age groups with a sizable increase in the male population in their 40s. The research on families in different income-brackets shows that single-person households take up the largest segment in the low-income bracket and that the average number of family members in this bracket is, in fact, the smallest, while the high-income bracket has the highest number of average family members. The most notable changes in marital relationships and family types were made in the male population at the age of 30s and 40s in the low-income bracket. The high-income bracket did not show tangible changes, which implies that the high-income bracket maintains a stable family structure whereas the low-income bracket has more uncertainties.



Source: Statistics Korea (2008, 2014). *Social Survey*

[Figure 2] Family Types by Generations (2008)(left), (2014)(right)



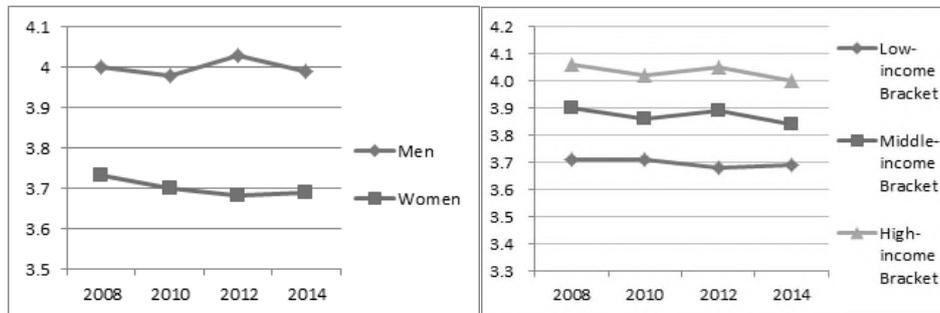
Source: Statistics Korea (2008, 2014), *Social Survey*

[Figure 3] Family Types by Income-bracket (2008)(left), (2014)(right)

## B. Family relationship satisfaction

Family relationship satisfaction index shows consistencies in six different types of family relationships - with partners, with children, with parents, with parents-in-laws, with siblings, and with overall family members. The generational analysis indicates that people in their 20s and 30s have a high level of satisfaction in all of the six types, but those in their 50s and 60s show a low level of satisfaction in all types of family relationships. In the gender analysis, men have higher satisfaction than women in all family relationships except the

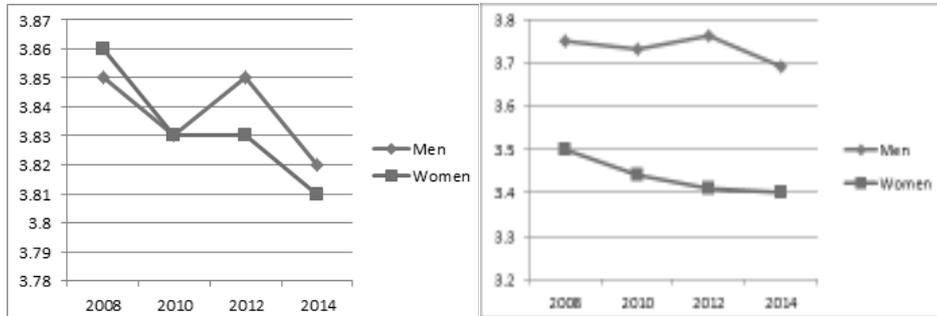
relationships with their siblings. Specifically, women show significantly low satisfaction with the relationship with their parents-in-laws. The discrepancies among different social classes are also noticeable: the high-income bracket has the highest level of satisfaction in all types of family relationships followed by the middle-income and the low-income brackets in order. Big discrepancies with little change are observed in different generations and income-levels, suggesting that the differences between generations and classes remain the same.



Note: Five-point Scale, the closer to five on the scale, the higher satisfaction in relationships with parents

Source: Statistics Korea, *Social Survey* 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014

[Figure 4] Relationship Satisfaction with Partners by Gender(left) and Income(right)(2008, 2010, 2012, 2014)



Note: Five-point Scale, the closer to five on the scale, the higher satisfaction in relationships with parents

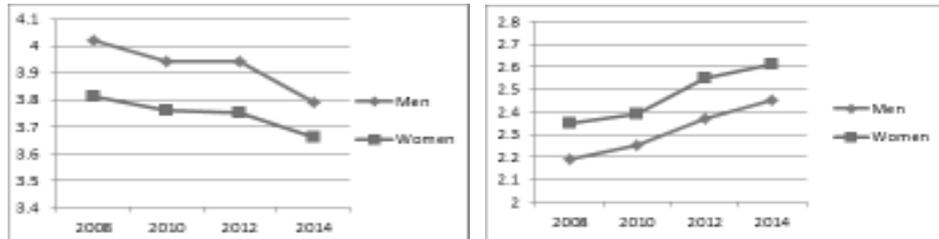
Source: Statistics Korea, *Social Survey* 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014

[Figure 5] Relationship Satisfaction with Parents(left) and Parents-in-laws(right) by Gender (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014)

### C. Family values

As to changes in family values, the number of people who agree upon the necessity of marriage has dwindled in all age groups, while more people disagree on the traditional roles of married couples in both male and female populations. Negative attitudes towards divorce and remarriage are on the wane whereas embracement on divorce, cohabitation, and births outside marriage waxes in all age groups with a noticeable increase in the age bracket of 20s and 30s. All age groups appear to be more embracing of various types of marital status - they have more accepting attitudes towards remarried couples, and international couples than people in other brackets. In contrast, the low-income bracket tends to be more embracing to divorce, cohabitation, and births in de facto relationships. More people in the low-income bracket than in other brackets confer priority to family as a group over individual family members in marital life. This bracket also has the highest percentage of people who agree

that children should take on the financial support for their aged parents.



Note: Five-point Scale, the closer it is to five on the scale, the stronger the necessity of the marriage is  
 Note: Four-point Scale, the closer it is to four on the scale, the more acceptability towards divorce

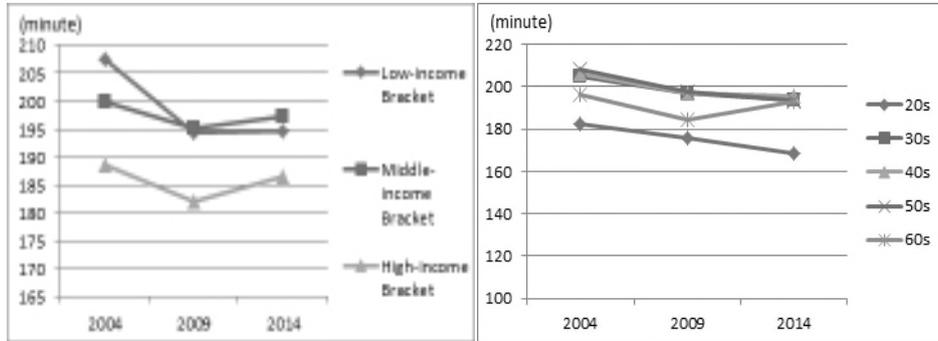
Source: Statistics Korea, *Social Survey* 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014

[Figure 6] Agreement on Necessity of Marriage by Genders (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014) [Figure 7] Changes in Attitudes on Divorce by Genders (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014)

#### D. Family-care

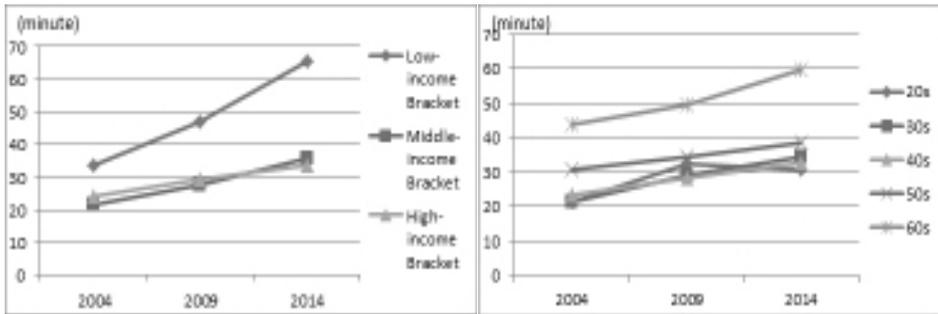
Lastly, the aspect of family-care demonstrates significant gender differences in the amount of time and participation, and this discrepancy has not closed its gap over time. Women spend daily average of 192.97 hours on household chores, which is 4.5 times longer than men’s average of 42.79 hours. Women also spend 181.99 hours on childcare which is 3.4 times more than men’s 53.21 hours<sup>1)</sup>. Nevertheless, change has been noticed between 2009 and 2012. Men’s time commitment on household chores has slightly increased in all age groups except men in their 20s with the biggest increase in the 60s bracket. Particularly, men’s time commitment on household chores and child care has been remarkably augmented in the low-income bracket.

1) In the high-income bracket, women’s time commitment on household chores and child care have remained low from 2004 to 2014.



Source: Statistics Korea, *Korean Time Use Survey 2004, 2009, 2014*

[Figure 8] Married Women's Average Daily Hours on Household Chores by Incomes(left) and Generations(right) (2004, 2009, 2014)



Source: Statistics Korea, *Korean Time Use Survey 2004, 2009, 2014*

[Figure 9] Married Men's Average Daily Hours on Household Chores by Incomes(left) and Generations(right) (2004, 2009, 2014)

## 2. Implications of the Analysis on Changes in Families

The study on changes in families confirms the shift of the center for family from parents and their children to married couple. Additionally, it is observed that people are increasingly changing their perception on the formation and maintenance of families and on the diversity of family structure although the traditional gender roles are still

prevailing. A big change is noticed among a relatively young population, in their 20s and 30s, people in their 50s and 60s have a moderate change in their attitudes though many of them agree on the necessity of change.

In the context of housework, although an increasing number of men acknowledge the need of fair distribution of housework between spouses, the burden of housework is disproportionately distributed from one gender to the other, making an unequivocal discrepancy between their acknowledgement and reality. The discrepancy appears to have been widened over time. In particular, a growing number of men in their 40s, as well as 30s, raise young children due to the recent trend of late marriage and late childbirth, increasing the need to design and implement a family policy aiming at men in their 30s and 40s to keep up with the changes in families.

In addition, men in their 50s and 60s along with people in the low-income bracket are expected to experience a harder time adapting to drastic changes in families than others. The stability of the family structure is critical for members of a family in that it serves as the foundation of predictable family relationships and life. Thus, it is recommended to draw up ways to help the aforementioned groups of people to adjust to modifications in families and have a more harmonious family life.

The income bracket reflects the transformation of families; especially, it shows the biggest impact in the low-income bracket. This bracket also presumably goes through the broadest range of alterations in its family structure. More people in this bracket than in any other turn in favor of various family-altering factors such as divorce, cohabitation, and childbirth of an unmarried couple. As for time for family-care,

women in the low-income bracket have the biggest decrease, while men in the same bracket show the biggest increase. Possible causes for this phenomenon vary: men might have more time to take care of their family as they lost their jobs and their wives entered the labor market instead of them; or the division of roles between men and women is occurring faster in families with low-incomes rather than in other families. This can be supported by Yeo's research on the analysis of female economic activities between 1998 and 2012 which confirmed that the majority of the low-income bracket is comprised of dual-earner couples seeking to complement the household income and close the income gaps with other brackets (Yeo, 2013: 15-17). In contrast, the high-income bracket hardly gains momentum for change because this bracket has stable family structure and it already has relatively positive attitudes towards traditional family values. Changes of families in the middle-income class fall between the high and low-income classes.

These results in combination imply that transformations of families itself does not entail a negative connotation, but it is noteworthy that the change occurred during a short period of time. In addition, modifications of families seem to have a distinctive nature in different generations, genders, and income classes as Korean society is aging and worsening in income inequality. The analysis suggests the polarization of families can be intensified as society is aging and its income inequality is getting deepened and this discrepancy in the speed of change among generations, income-class, and genders can impede the social convergence.

Therefore, it is inevitable to design and carry out tiered family policies based on the differences between generations, income-gaps,

and genders.

### 3. Policy Demands in responding to Family Changes

Firstly, the rate of an unmarried population in both male and female is rising and single households are skyrocketing. Changes of family structure in social stratum are also observed. Therefore, family policies should identify multifaceted policy demands and seek to systematize multidirectional family support services.

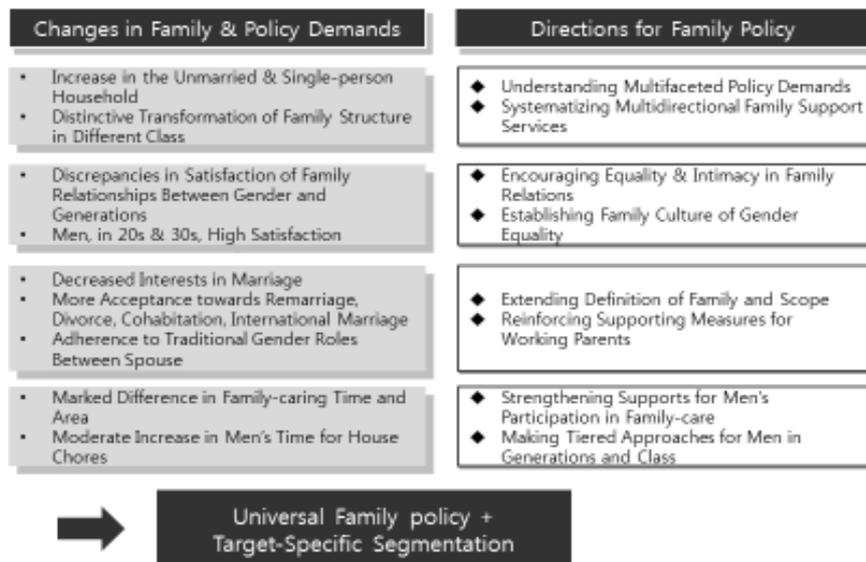
Secondly, satisfaction with family relationships varies by genders and generations. The noticeable discrepancies between males and females are indicative to diverse dynamics in families in terms of communications, roles, and division of responsibilities, which calls for the effort to promote equality and intimacy between genders and generations as well as to establish and develop a family culture of gender equality.

Moreover, among the four analyzed areas, are family structure, family relations, and family values portraying a marked transformation, while family-care still sees a moderate change. It is required to pay attention to the fact that men and women still have a wide gap in terms of time and participation, suggesting that fundamental countermeasures for improvement be drawn up. However, at the same time, it is noteworthy that men's participation in childcare and house chores has continuously increased for the past ten years. To this end, it is inevitable to ensure that men can vigorously partake in childcare and family life by adopting various measures and implementing pragmatic political actions in support of work-family balance.

Furthermore, family life in the middle-aged class should be politically supported. As changes in the family illustrated above, the middle-aged

class, usually in favor of conservatism and stability, has double-sides: people in this class are considered to be the most conservative, while many of them also agree on drastic changes of families. Middle-aged men are easily marginalized in the process of forming a family and maintaining a family life. The marginalization can cause instability of their elderly life if continuing; thus, political approaches should be devised for them (Choi, et al, 2014).

Lastly, family structure should remain stable regardless of the type of a family; in order to do so, the current income support policy should be extended. Compared to other members of OECD, Korea has significantly low support for income transfer. Financial support for families with children should be reinforced and multilateral policies are required to support in a broader range of people from the low-income bracket to the middle-income one.



[Figure 10] Directions for Family Policy

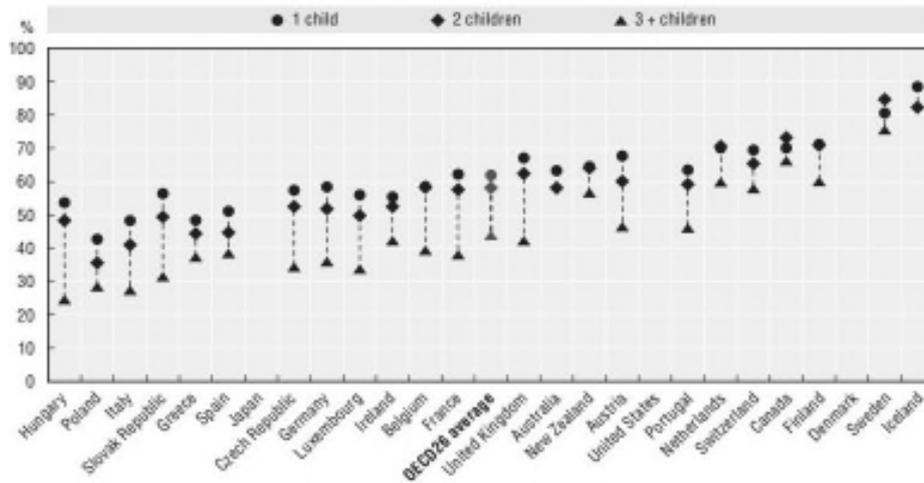
## IV. Family Changes and Current Trend of Family Policy in OECD countries

OECD member countries share in common the decline of a birth rate, the augmentation of families without children, the decrease of marriage rate, the rise of divorce rate, and the increase of unconventional partnerships including cohabitation, single-parent families, and reconstituted families (OECD, 2011: 23-29). While the growing trend of late marriage and childbirth generally leads to a low birth rate, such tendency is not observed in France and Australia. The major reason for this peculiarity is supposedly derived from the fact that the two countries open and extend their family structure with the embracement of childbirth in de facto relationships.

An intriguing point is that Korea is categorized as a limited family supportive country based on the typology of family policies although Korea offers long maternity leave as Japan does. The reason for this classification lies in the fact that hardly any men-specific political methods have been implemented<sup>2)</sup> such as “Daddy-Quota” of parental leave, only regular employees can benefit from paternity leave, and it also has a minuscule amount of cash transfer (Thévenon, 2011: 70-71). Therefore, it is incumbent to strengthen systems for men’s participation in childcare and family life and to ensure that more men can benefit from the system.

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2) Korea implemented its paternity leave in the name of Spouse Leave in 2008. However, it is believed the study does not reflect the system since the research data had collected before the implementation of the law.



Source: OECD (2011)

[Figure 11] Maternal employment rates of women aged 15–64 by number of children under 15

France has carried out innovational family policies beyond the traditional type of families to keep up with the transformation of families. In the occasion of the enactment of Pact of Citizen Solidarity (Pacte civil de la solidarité, PACS), there have been vigorous discussions on the formation and deformation of a family since 2000 and the governmental policies have expanded the scope of policy targets to reflect changes of families and have also been altered to meet the policy needs. It is worthy of attention that France has recently begun *Préparée*, paternity-leave quota, in order to facilitate men’s participation in childcare. The scheme was launched in 2014 with the full support of Ministry of Women’s Affairs under the goal of the reduction of part time labors, the reinforcement of supervision on corporations, and the expansion of paternity leave. Particularly, Act for Real Equality Between Women and Men (*La loi pour l’égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes*), enacted in 2014, laid groundwork for such change and implementation.

As of 2013, according to OECD Family Database, Australia's total birth rate is 1.88 babies per woman, which makes the country relatively concern-free from a low birth rate. Family types in Australia have lost the stability of a married couple, broadening the definition of a family as a group of more than two people based on blood-related, marriage-bound - including legal marriage and de facto relationships, adoption, reconstitution, and fosterage, as well as single-person households (Weston & Qu, 2014: 10). Family policies in Australia mainly concentrate on economic supports; thereby, their biggest focus lies on family tax benefit and the child care subsidy. As for the latter one, the criteria include parents' work, training, study tests as well as household incomes in order to thoroughly investigate service needs. Subsidies are provided in tiers accordingly - from parents who work 24 hours a week to those who work up to 50 hours a week. Australia has also embarked on policies to encourage men's participation in childcare as it launched paid parental leave in 2011 and Dad and Partner Pay in 2013 (Pocock, et al., 2013: 600, Broomhill and Sharp, 2012: 9).

## V. Policy Tasks

The diversity and characteristics of changes in the family clearly calls for the new direction of family policies and the paradigm shift. Indeed, the changes of families occurred as drastically and densely as the process of industrialization, modernization, informatization, and globalization did over the past four decades. The modifications of family types and internal changes in the family have brought “the

holistic change in the geography of families” (Choi, 2011:2), making it inevitable to alter the direction of family policies, scope, and approaches. In response to such changes in the family, a few suggestions for new goals and directions of family policies are made as follows.

First, support for childcare of families should be emphasized. Despite the diversification of family forms, the core of family policies is still the support for childcare. Childcare of individual family is interpreted in the broad spectrum as the nurture of the future generations to serve the function of social reproduction, highlighting its social values and meanings. Hence, the support for families with children forms the most integral part of family policies.

Second, family policies should shed light on work-family balance. As modern society sees two-earner families become more prevalent, the primary goal of family policy should be providing support parents for childcare to enhance work-family balance. Most developed countries are sharing the issue of aging populations and convergence into the global economy, making their family policies indirectly heading for the same direction. Family policies offer diverse policies on the role of nations, families, labor markets respectively (Thévenon, 2011: 57). The counties that successfully implemented work-family balance policies during the past 15 years are enjoying the same result of the high birth rate, the lowest poverty rate, and the high female participation rate in the workforce. Such countries commonly carry out pro-family policies in favor of the women employment and childbirth. To this end, work-family balance policies are the top of the agenda (Thévenon, 2011: 57).

Third, family policy for gender equality is required. As Act on

Gender Equality passed in July 2015, there is a growing need to establish the paradigm of family policies for gender equality in the family. The paradigm should ensure the rights of labor and the rights of parenting for both men and women and it should seek to strengthen paternity along with maternity. As it is confirmed from the case of France and Australia, the focal point of the recent change is transferring the goal and target of the governmental policy from the support for women's work to the support for men's participation in childcare. The recent policy developments consistently made by European countries seek to support men's family life and encourage their participation. Such policies are characterized by the establishment of Daddy-Quota as part of parental leave in order to increase users of the system (Ellingsæter et al., 2013: 171-172).

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