

Health and Social Policies for Ageing Population in Korea

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Due to the improvement in nutrition, sanitation, and medical care, life expectancy increased around the world in recent times and Korea is no exception; the Korean ageing index is expected to record 100.7 in 2016, when the elderly population will exceed the young population (aged less than 15). Senior citizens are expected to make up 38.2% of the population in 2050, among the highest percentage in the world. Most Koreans recognize the super-low fertility trend and aging population as a serious challenge with far reaching implications on their lives.

Korean government started to respond to low fertility and aging population with a nationwide system. Quinquennial Basic Plans were established in 2005 to ensure the sustainable growth of Korea by providing the foundation for the government to proactively respond to low fertility and aging population, with related governmental agencies creating annual action plans to meet the plan's goals. The government showed a strong will to faithfully conduct national agendas for overcoming the low birth rates and aging issues, and creating a customized and working welfare.

Korean government established policy foundation for improving the quality of life for senior citizens; focusing on a response system to the aging of baby boomers, ensuring stable and energetic post-retirement years, and creating an elderly-friendly environment.

The government steadily expanded fiscal spending in order to adapt to aging society, and the policy framework for income security and medical care for the elderly were established by introducing Basic Old Age Pension (2007), Long-term Care Insurance for Senior Citizens (2008), and Promotion of Senior-Friendly Industries Act (2008).

These policies aimed to building multi-pillar income security system by improving individual income-security measures to ensure financially stable post-retirement life. The health policies for the aging population also aimed at promoting preventive healthcare activities for the elderly to ensure healthy post-retirement life and reduce medical costs for elderly care, and enhance support system for medical treatment and care.

This study aims to examine and monitor some of the recent policy trends and issues in health and social systems for ageing population in Korea. Aiming to provide national overviews and understanding of the health and social policies in Korea, the study outlines demographic trends, and changes and challenges in social structure and social needs.

The study also reviews the health and social care system and structure in Korea in terms of delivery, financing, and regulations to understand the context behind the said system for the elderly population, and their recent development in Korea. This study presents some of the detailed aspects of the health and social policies that the ministry has reported to be of core tasks for the elderly population in Korea.