

# Women and gender ideology in aging Korea

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## Abstract

In 2040, every one out of three persons that we will live in Republic of Korea will be aged 65 or older and, with other factors remaining same (such as ageing indicators or labor market policies), less than every two 'working aged' (currently often set at 15-64) persons will be responsible for supporting and taking care of one 'elderly' (65+) person. For the entire society, this means four times more 'burden' than today. Meanwhile, it is known that women tend to live longer and their likelihood of living in poverty in old age is also known to be higher than men's, mostly because of their shorter working and earning periods due to the society's prevalent gender ideology, i.e. men earning and women caring. The simple fact that the absolute number of women aged 65 or older will reach about 10 million persons by 2040 to account for about 20 percent of the total population is itself eye-catching. As a group, they thus deserve a closer look. In this chapter, I firstly describe current women's stake in Korean society, focusing on their higher risk of low income, and accordingly higher dependency, in later life. Secondly, the social expectations that women face, i.e. women as yet mainly family care-taker, regardless their involvement in paid work, are discussed as the root cause of women's accumulated disadvantages over lifespan. Thirdly, marriage migrant women's issues are addressed as increasingly important wives and mothers in increasingly multi-cultural Korea, who however risk being a new cohort of poor older women in the future. The concluding part of the chapter includes some suggestions for future policy directions.