POLICY BRIEF
21 – 02

ESTIMATING THE PAID CARE SECTOR IN SOUTH KOREA

Jooyeoun Suh, AARP
CWE-GAM Working Paper Series 20-07

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- Paid care workers in South Korea face poor work conditions, including long hours, low wages, and limited benefits.

- Over 90% of the workers in these jobs are women, but male workers earn more in the vast majority of paid care jobs.

- To meet the rising demand for paid care services and improve the quality of that care, policymakers should increase the visibility of paid care workers in statistics and policy spaces.

- Policies that promote fair working conditions for paid care workers, including will improve the quality of care provided and promote gender equity.

Estimating the Size of the Paid Care Sector in South Korea

This paper produces new estimates of the size, median earnings, and weekly hours of the paid care sector in South Korea. It pulls data from four separate statistical sources to achieve this goal, highlighting the lack of centralized statistics and visibility for paid care workers in South Korea.

Wages, Earnings, And Work Conditions

- **Size**
  Korea’s paid care sector expanded from 800,000 workers in 2019 to over 1 million in 2014

- **Pay**
  93% of paid care workers receive wages that are less than average wage for all workers

- **Hours**
  Paid care workers work 25-45 hours per week on average, many in multiple jobs

- **Gender**
  Men make up less than 10% of paid care workers, but receive higher wages relative to women

Conclusions

Paid care workers face poor conditions, long hours, and low pay. These adversities are more extreme in the case of migrant paid care workers. Female workers are paid less than men, despite forming over 90% of the paid care workforce. Poor job quality for care workers leads to poor quality care work.

- Visibility in statistics and policy
- Fair working conditions for paid care workers
- Better quality of care provided

Demand for paid care in South Korea is growing fast due to an aging population and high labor force participation. Policymakers can improve the quality of care provided by pursuing policies to pursue better working conditions for these workers. The first step is to establish better statistical accounting for the paid care sector to increase visibility of these workers to policymakers.

Brief prepared by: Jooyeoun Suh & Hannah L. Randolph
CWE-GAM Working Paper 20-07: Estimating the paid care sector in South Korea

www.careworkeconomy.org