

The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons in the Post-COVID-19 Era: Focused on Korean Older Persons

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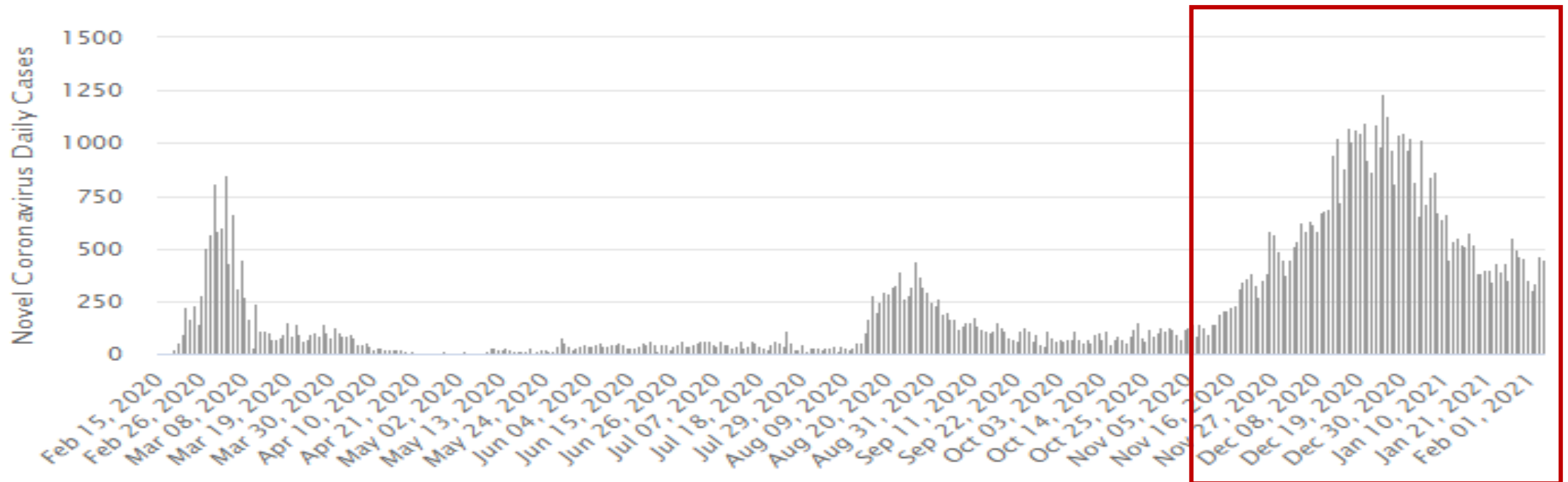


COVID-19 in Korea and Beyond

The above picture capture from the Korean-English Glossary for Korea's Response to COVID-19 (July 2020), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

COVID-19 Pandemic is Ongoing

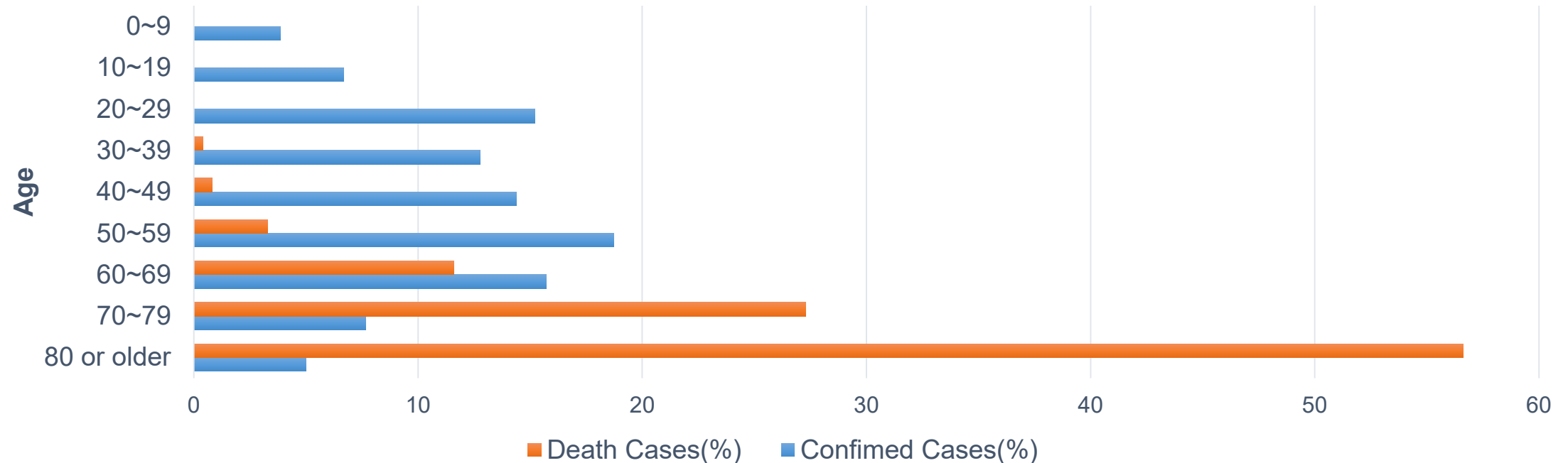
- As of February 5, 2021, the number of cases rose to 105,436,036 persons, and 2,294,862 persons lost their lives globally due to COVID-19 infection
 - In Korea, 80,131 persons infected (86th highest), 1,459 persons lost their lives



Source: "Daily New Cases in Korea" from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/south-korea>

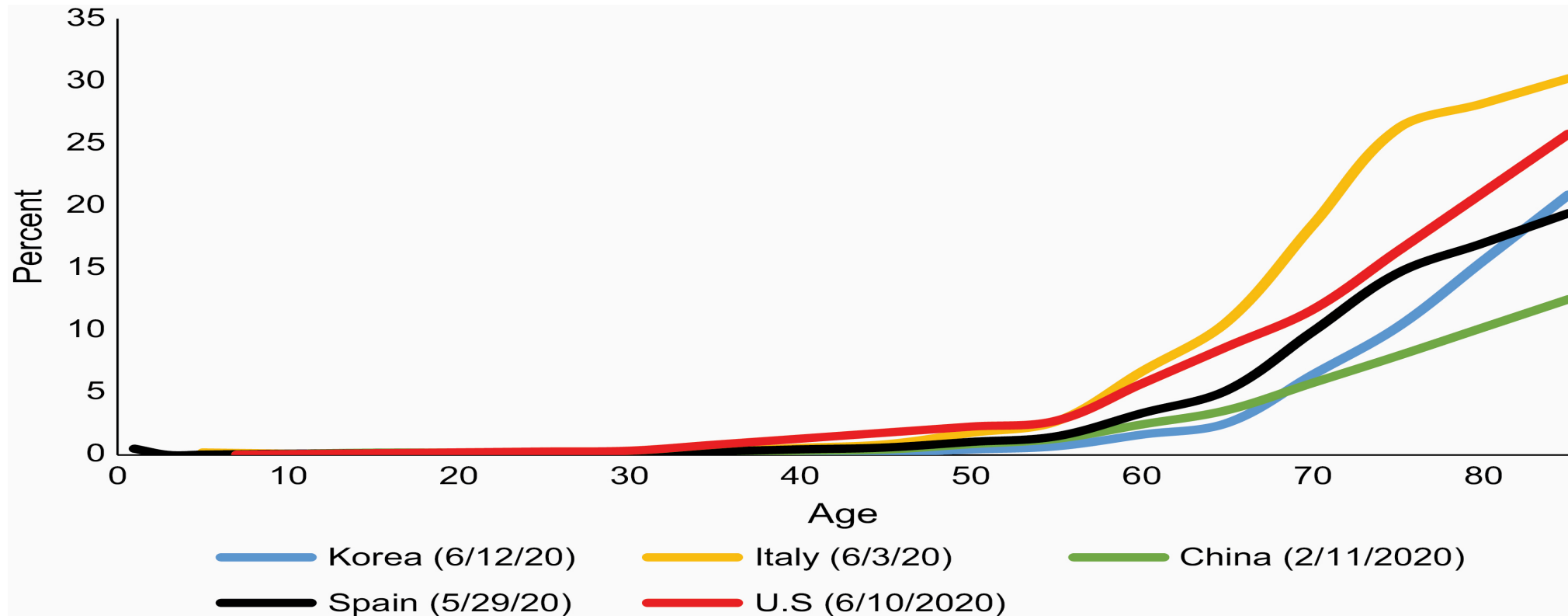
COVID-19 and Older Adults

- % of infected cases and deaths are heavily concentrated to very old age
 - Deceased cases of persons age 80+ account for 57% of total deceased cases
 - About **3 deceased cases out of 10 confirmed cases** in age 80+ group in Korea



Source: Coronavirus Disease-19, Republic of Korea Latest Updates (as of Feb. 5th, 2021) from http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/bdBoardList_Real.do?brdId=1&brdGubun=11&ncvContSeq=&contSeq=&board_id=&gubun=

Deaths (% dying) among confirmed COVID-19 cases by age in Six Different Countries



Source: Crimmins E.M. (2020). Age-related Vulnerability to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Biological, Contextual, and Policy-Related Factors. *Public Policy Aging Rep* 30(4), Pages 142–146, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppar/praa023>

Higher Risks to Older Persons Not Only on their Health but on their Rights and Well-being

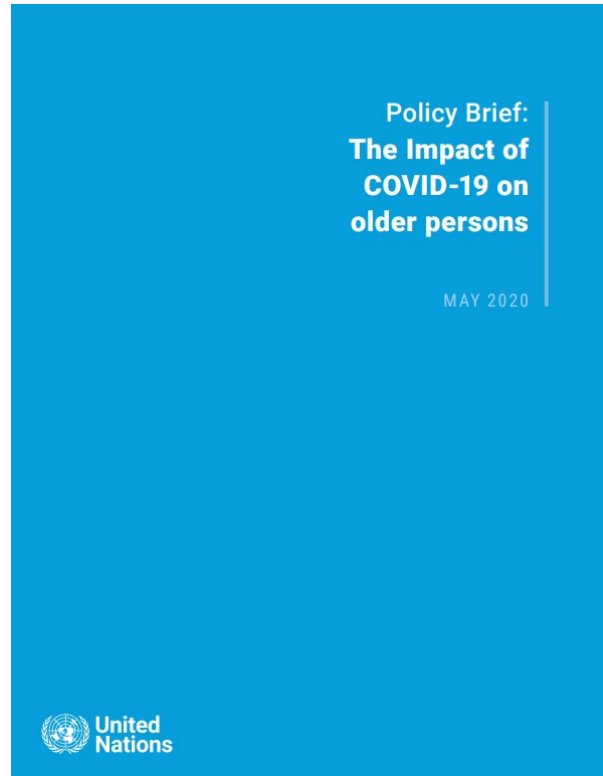


“ The world marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons as we reckon with the disproportionate and severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on older persons around the world – not only on their health, but on their rights and well-being.

— UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Treats to the Rights of Older Persons in the Pandemic Era

COVID-19 Related Risks in Older Persons



Source:
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-older-persons-may-2020>

Life and Death

- Higher risk of mortality and severe disease following infection
- Age discrimination in health care and beyond

Vulnerability and Neglect

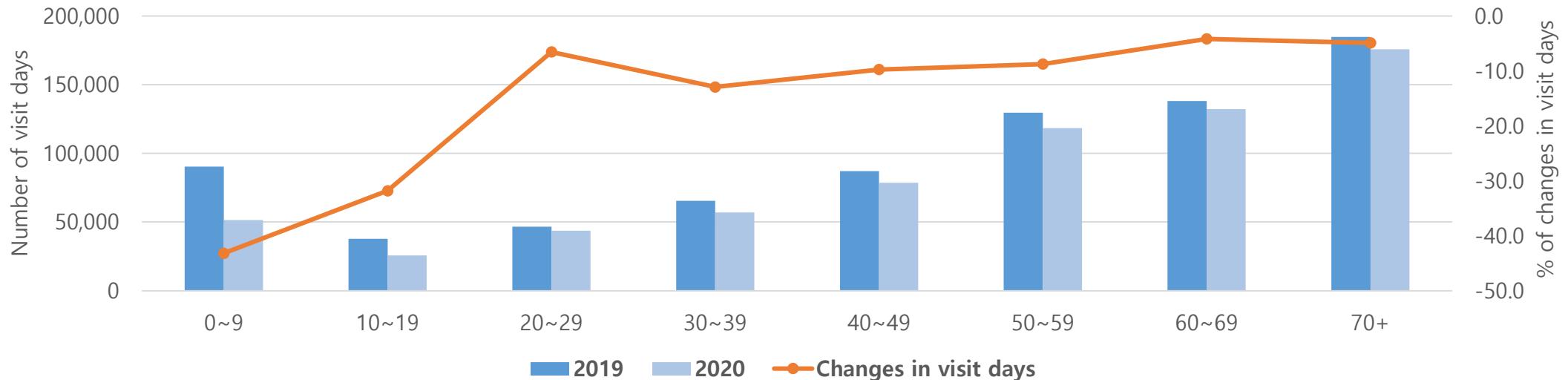
- Need a particular attention to vulnerable groups of older persons (e.g., long-term care residents, older caregivers)

Social and Economic Well-being

- Loneliness, social/emotional isolation
- Decreases in income and increases in unemployment rates

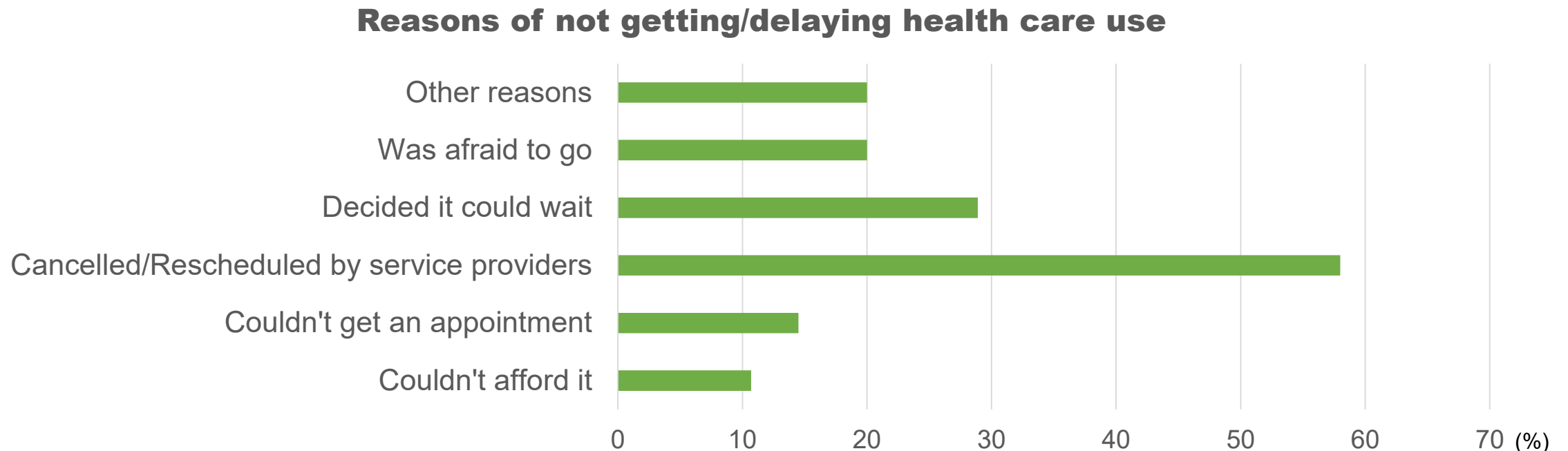
Health and Health Care during the Pandemic

- Older persons may be more susceptible to the infection due to pre-existing health conditions
 - 73% of older Koreans aged 65+ reported having 2+ chronic conditions (2017 National Survey of Older Adults, KIHASA)
- 70% of older Koreans reported that they are reluctant or hesitant to visit hospitals/clinics due to the fear of COVID-19 (Goyang Research Institute, 2020 July)
 - However, they have greater needs of using healthcare services



Rising Unmet Healthcare Needs in the Pandemic Era

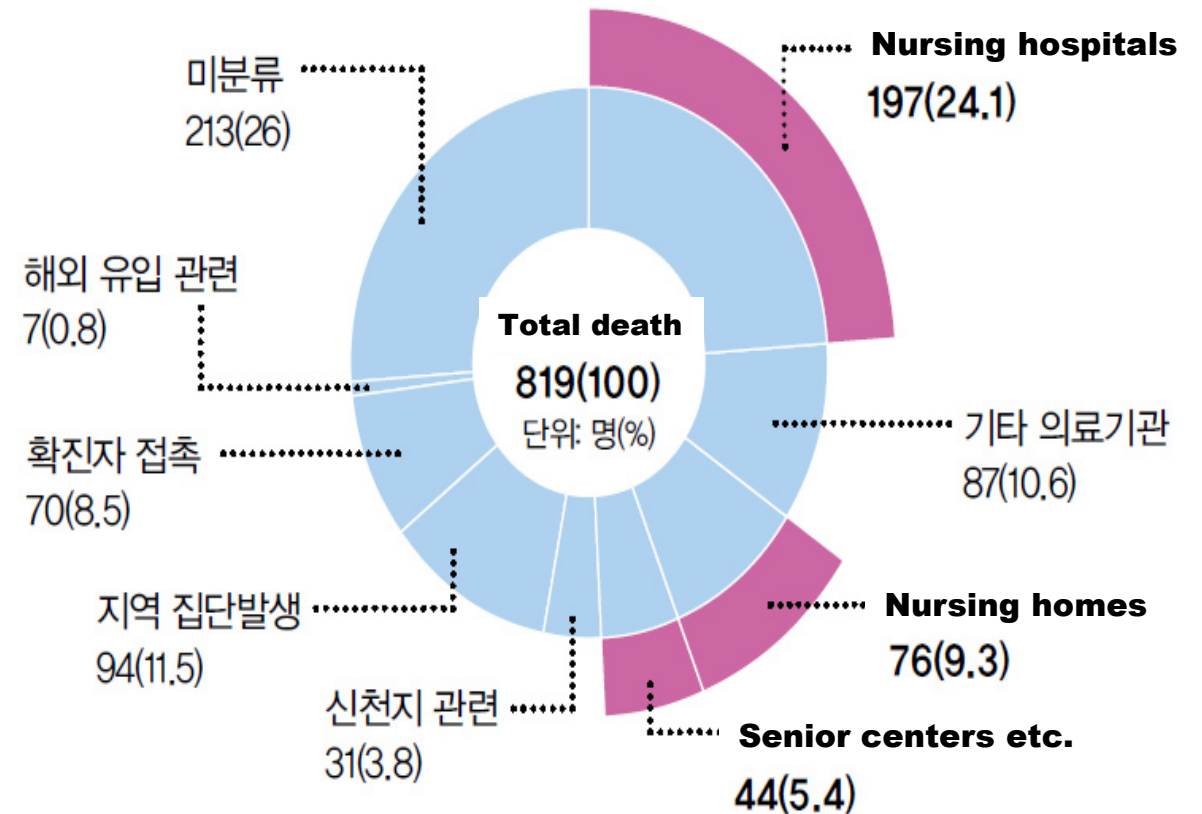
- In older Americans aged 50+, 30% reported delaying or not getting the needed medical/dental care since March 2020



Source: Health and Retirement Survey 2020 Covid-19 Module. Based on the author's analysis.

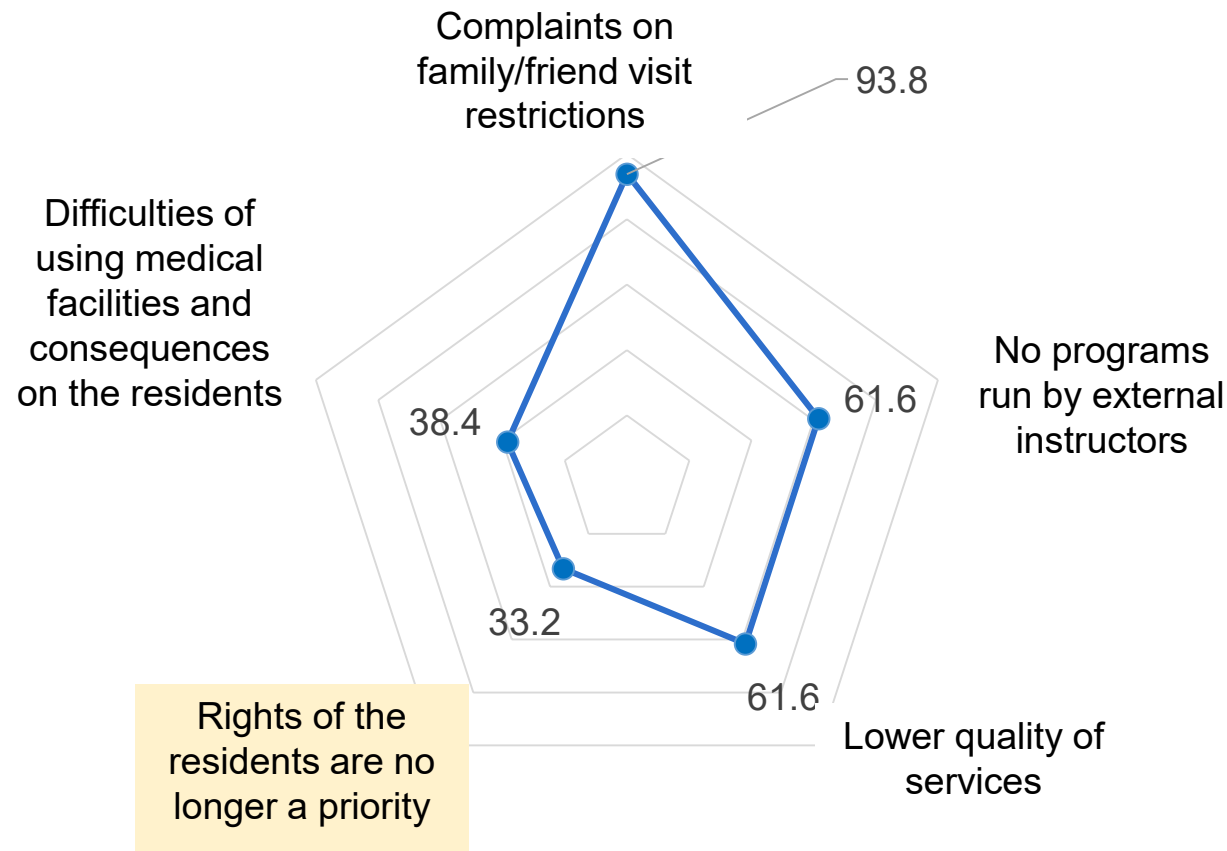
Long-Term Care Residents and COVID-19

- Long-term care residents have multiple risk factors of the infection(-related death)
 - Cognitive/physical disabilities and multiple underlying diseases, close contact with staff and other residents, and living in confined spaces ¹
- Clusters of infection occasionally occurred in the facilities
 - About 35% of deceased cases are related to elder care facilities (as of Dec. 28, 2020)



Source: http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/976995.html

Challenges on the Services and the Rights of the Residents during the Pandemic Era

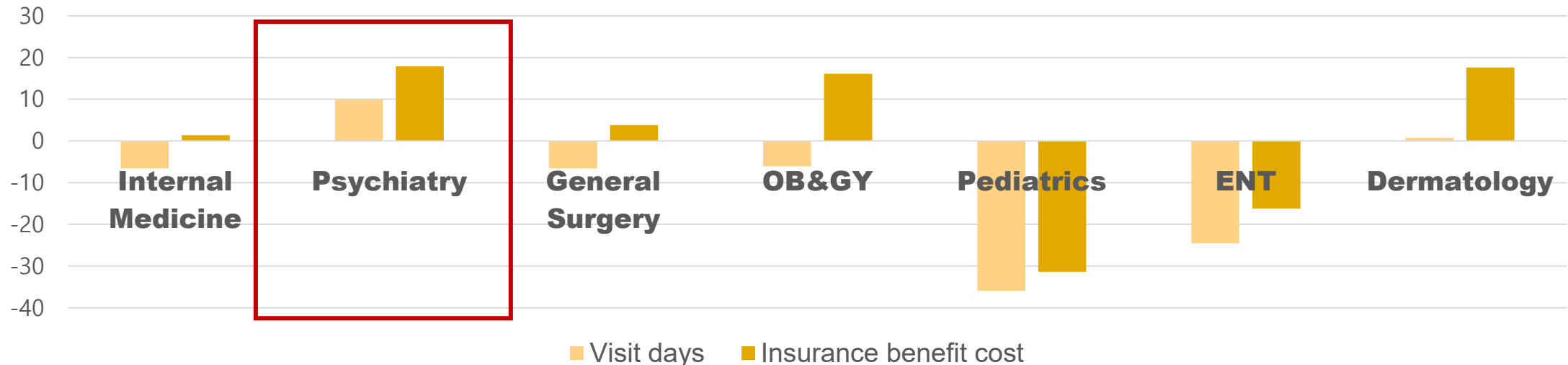


- The main challenges of the nursing homes include the violation of the rights of the residents by providing inadequate, lower quality services and restricting family visits

Mental Health During the Pandemic

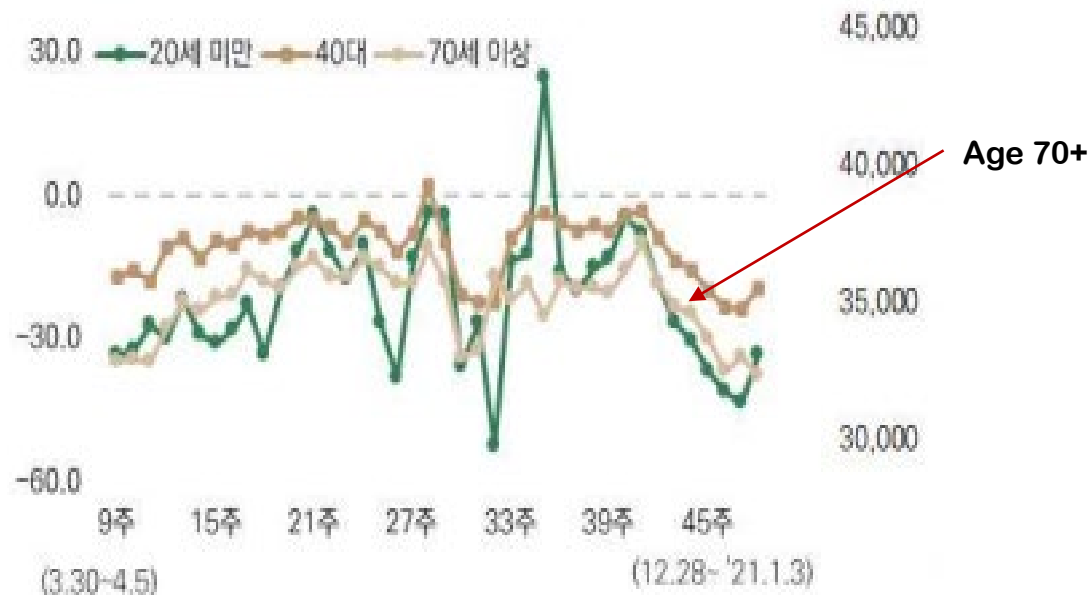
- Increased mental health problems for all age groups
 - Social/emotional isolation, stress, hypochondriasis(worries about one's health), depressive symptoms, anxiety, insomnia
 - Increased use of mental health-related medical services during the pandemic

Changes in Healthcare Use by Department (Jan.-Jun. 2019 to 2020)



Older Koreans May be More Vulnerable..

- Decreased out-of-home activities and isolation are most evident among older adults
- Older Koreans showed relatively poor mental health even before the pandemic



Source: Health Insurance Review & Assessment Services (Jan 7, 2021) <https://www.hira.or.kr/bbsDummy.do?pgmid=HIRAA020045030000&brdScnBltno=4&brdBltno=2409&pageIndex=1>

The highest suicide rate among OECD countries for 30's and 70's+



[출처: WHO의 2019 Mortality data base('19.5.1. 추출)를 활용하여 중앙자살예방센터 산출]

Greater Challenges for Older Persons Living Alone

- About 25% of older Koreans age 65+ live alone¹
 - 33% of older women
- Older persons who are living alone are likely to receive less emotional support from families, have limited social network, and show more depressive symptoms¹
 - 30% of older adults living alone reported severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic (June 2020)²

1. 2017 National Survey of Older Adults, KIHASA

2. Gwangmyung Senior Welfare Center (June, 2020). Survey of older adults living alone.
<http://www.incheonilbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1064730>

Economic Hardship During the Pandemic

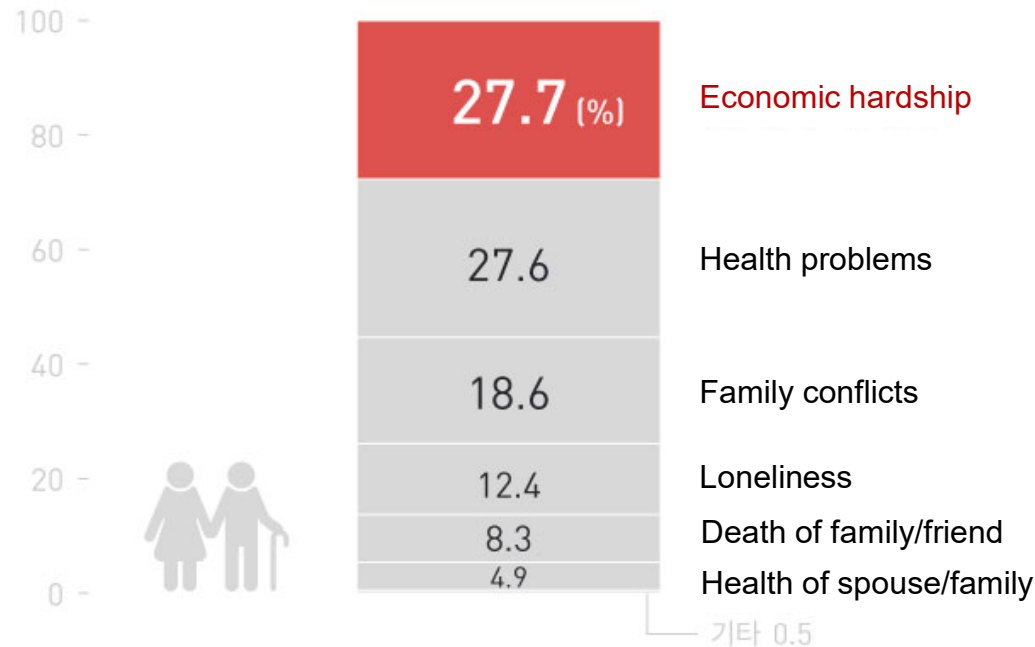
- Increased unemployment rates and decreased employment rates among adults aged 55-79 (May, 2020)



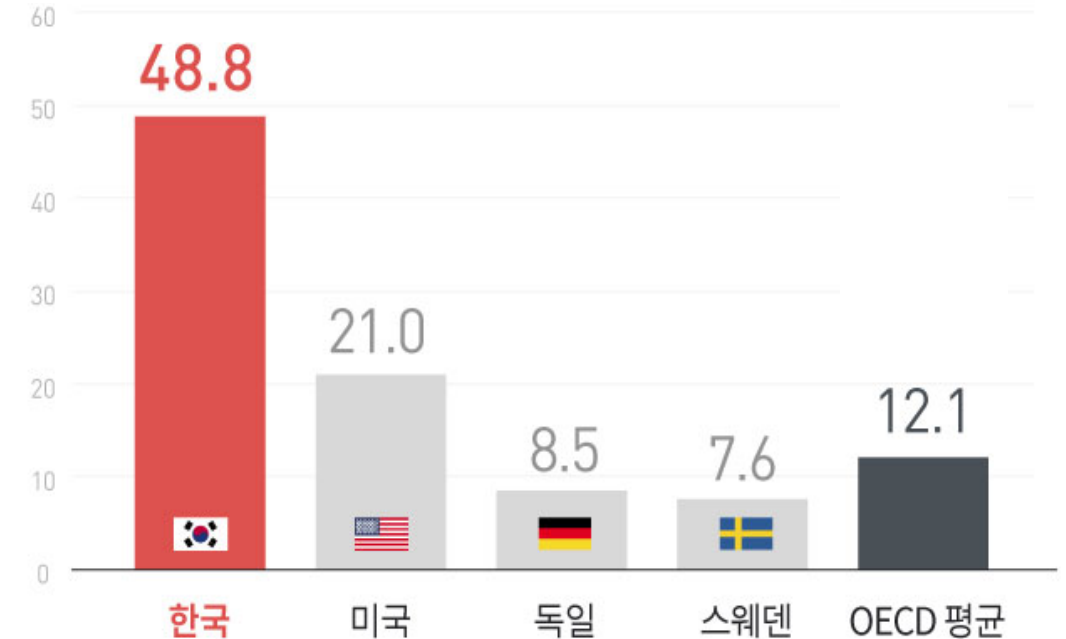
Source: <http://www.bokjitime.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=23570> (based on the survey by Statistics Korea)

Greater Economic Hardship of Older Koreans before the Pandemic

Main Reasons of Suicidal Ideas of Older Adults age 65+



% of Older Persons who Lives under the 50% of the Median income



자료 한국 보건사회 연구원 대상 자살을 생각해 본 노인 673명 인포그래픽 권세라

KBS

자료 OECD Society at a Glance 2016 인포그래픽 강준희

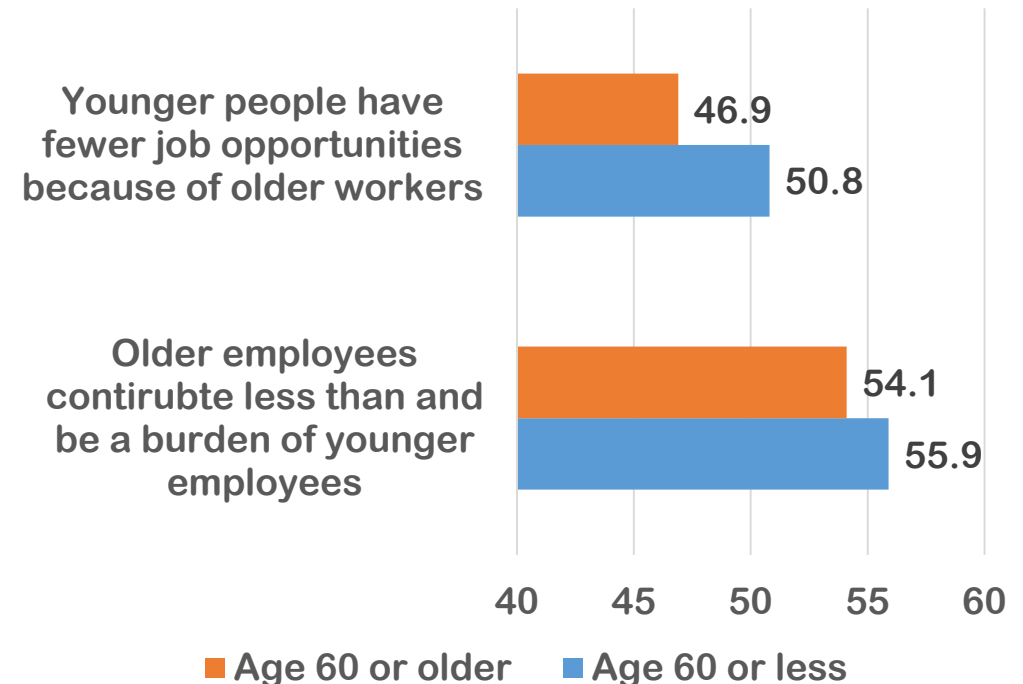
KBS

Source: <https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4292513> based on the survey by KIHASA (left) and OECD Society at a Glance 2016 (right)

Ageism and Age Discrimination during the Pandemic

- Age discrimination in decisions on medical care, triage, and public health policies
 - Indefinite isolation for older adults, esp. long-term care residents, is widely accepted
- Rising intergenerational division and devaluation of older persons
 - #boomerRemover, #grandmakiller
 - Name-calling, blame, and “so-be-it” reactions toward age vulnerability are common in public media ¹

- Age discrimination in workplace



Source: 2020 Low-Fertility and Population Ageing National Survey. KIHASA

1. Lichtenstein, B. (2020). From “Coffin Dodger” to “Boomer Remover”: Outbreaks of Ageism in Three Countries With Divergent Approaches to Coronavirus Control, The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, gbaa102, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa102>



Strategies Promoting the Rights of Older Persons in the Post-Pandemic Era

Tackle Ageism in Healthcare System & Beyond

- Acknowledge that older population is not homogeneous and chronological age is not the only criterion for healthcare decision making process
- Develop public health protocols to protect the public AND the dignity and rights of older adults (long-term care residents) in cases of future emergency situations
- Promote intergenerational solidarity with public education and policies

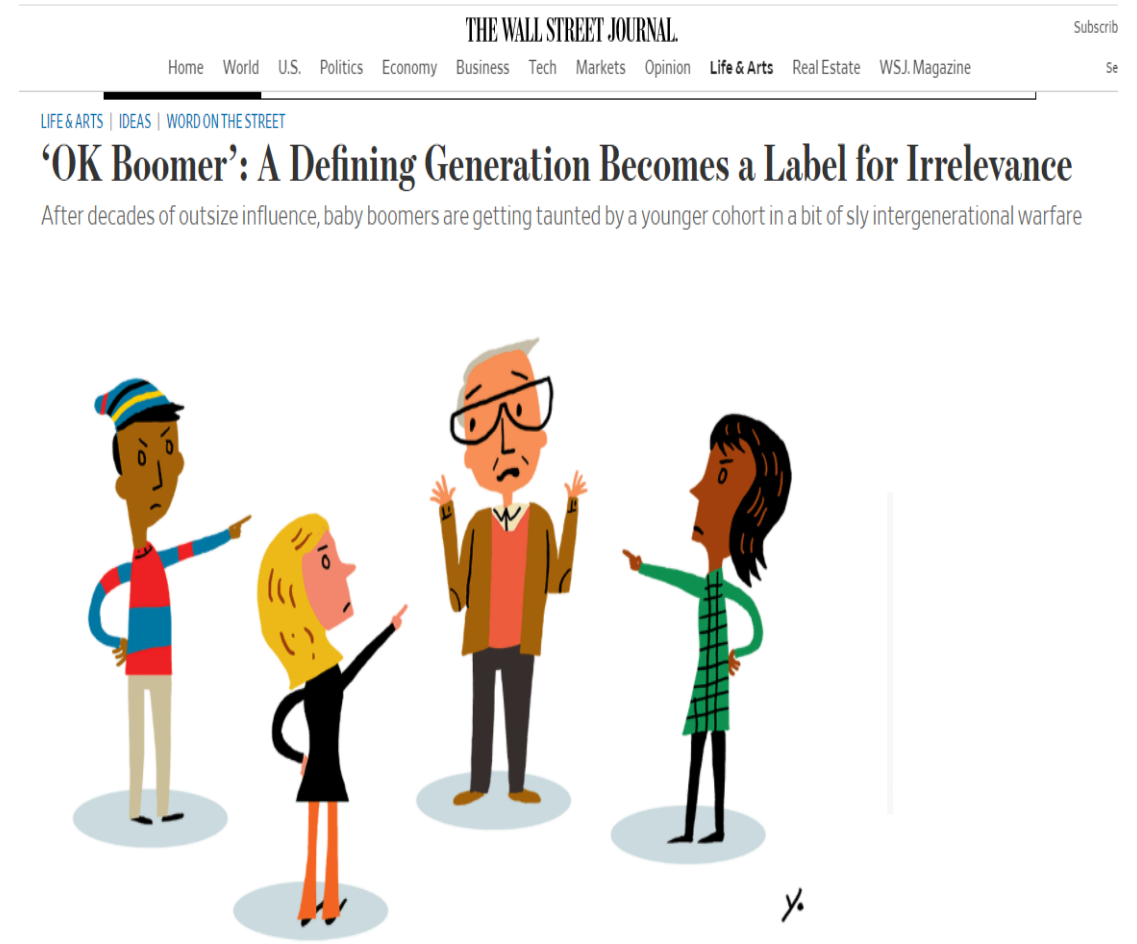


ILLUSTRATION: JAMES YANG

Improve Long-term Care Services and Policies to Better Serve the Residents and Caregivers

- Develop monitoring system for long-term care residents and services
 - Health and well-being of the residents (e.g., mental illnesses, abuse, violence)
 - Staffing, operation, medical/social resource
- Address the pre-existing systematic problems in the long-term care
 - Inadequate staff
 - Inadequate monitoring and surveillance efforts at the national, regional levels

Pay Attention to At-Risk Older Persons

- Ensure the well-being and health of older persons living alone or in isolation
 - Provide regular visits, check-ups, meal delivery services, etc.
 - Use technologies (e.g. AI, smart home, robot)
- Need support for family caregivers
 - Develop policies to protect their employment rights and physical/emotional well-being



INVITATION

ICT 돌봄 2020 심포지엄

ICT Care Symposium 2020 Webinar

포스트 코로나 시대, 노인돌봄 공백 해소 방안 마련을 위한
디지털 전환과 사회적 가치 창출

Digital Transformation and Social Value Creation for
Closing the Care Gap for Older People in the Post-Corona Era

가상박람회 2020. 10. 30.(금) open

온라인 세미나 실시간 중계 2020. 11. 04.(수) 13:30~17:00

| 주최·주관 |  독거노인종합지원센터
(중앙노인복지지원기관)

| 후원 |  SK hynix  사랑의열매  국제저분체크노모자학회 한국지부

Support Social Inclusion and Mental Health of Older Persons

- Increase older persons' access to digital technologies
 - In the mean time, governments/service providers should communicate via various outlets beyond digital media
- Provide emotional support for older persons who are isolated, at-risk of mental health problems
- Promote the inclusion of older persons in the community



Ensure the Economic Well-being in Later Life

- Tackle age discrimination in workplace
- Ensure the lifelong education/work opportunities; increase civic engagement
- Strengthen the Social Security system and other policies to ensure the various sources of income after retirement

Thank you for your attention