

Statistical analysis of changes in the status of South Korean women

Jae-seon Joo
Research Fellow, Korean Women's Development Institute

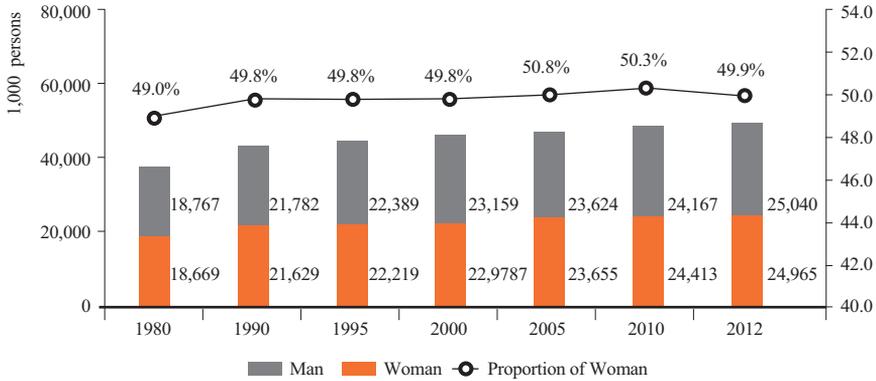
The status of women in South Korea has recently been undergoing changes in a number of areas. This research examines the changes in the lives and status of South Korean women by means of the 2012 Gender Statistics of Korea¹.

1) The Women population in South Korea as of 2012 is 24,965,000 persons or 49.9% of the total population.

The Women population in South Korea as of 2012 is roughly 75,000 persons less than the men population. The number of women has grown from 2,205,000 in 1985 to 23,655,000 in 2005, 24,174,000 in 2010, and 25,040,000 in 2012. Accompanying this increase, the size of the women population has exceeded that of their men counterparts since 2005, with the exception of in 2012.

By age, the number of women children at 14 years of age or younger has been in severe decline, while that of older women aged 65 or older has been rapidly growing. The proportion of elderly women rose by 8.5% points from 4.9% in 1980 to 13.4% in 2010, while that of women children plummeted by 17.3% points from 32.8% in 1980 to 15.5% in 2010. The pattern of change in the men population is similar to that of the men population. The aging index, which represents the level of aging of the population, jumped by 58.3% points over the same period.

¹ This is the new name for what was formerly known as the Annual Statistics on Women, which has been published annually since 1994



Source: Population Census and Future Population Projections by Statistics Korea

Figure 1. Population trend

Table 1. Population structure

(Unit: 1,000 persons; percentage)

Year	Women				Men			
	Total	14 years old or younger	15-64 years old	65 years old or older	Total	14 years old or younger	15-64 years old	65 years old or older
1980	18 658	6 116	11 635	907	18 749	6 540	11 670	539
1985	20 192	5 836	13 258	1 097	20 228	6 259	13 316	652
1990	21 619	5 354	14 914	1 352	21 771	5 780	15 180	811
1995	22 196	4 873	15 657	1 666	22 357	5 362	16 020	975
2000	22 917	4 551	16 281	2 084	23 068	5 088	16 692	1 287
2005	23 576	4 278	16 669	2 629	23 466	4 708	17 021	1 736
2010	24 150	3 746	17 176	3 227	23 841	4 040	17 603	2 198
	Percentage (%)							
1980	100.0	32.8	62.4	4.9	100.0	34.9	62.2	2.9
1985	100.0	28.9	65.7	5.4	100.0	30.9	65.8	3.2
1990	100.0	24.8	69.0	6.3	100.0	26.5	69.7	3.7
1995	100.0	22.0	70.5	7.5	100.0	24.0	71.7	4.4
2000	100.0	19.9	71.0	9.1	100.0	22.1	72.4	5.6
2005	100.0	18.1	70.7	11.2	100.0	20.1	72.5	7.4
2010	100.0	15.5	71.1	13.4	100.0	16.9	73.8	9.2

Note: Non-Korean residents are excluded, but those whose nationality is not established are included.

Source: Population Census by Statistics Korea

2) The total fertility rate has been on the rise since 2010, with approximately 1.30 live births per woman in 2012.

The total fertility rate, which is the average number of live births by a woman over her lifetime, plunged from 2.82 in 1980 to 1.08 in 2005. Despite its rise to 1.30 in 2012, it still remains the lowest rate measured anywhere in the world. The age group with the highest birth rate has shifted from 25-26 years of age in 2006 to 30-34 years of age in 2012 due to a trend toward delayed marriage. The birth rate among women aged 35 or older is rising as well. A preference for baby boys, which was severe in 1990, appears to have all but disappeared as of 2012. The sex ratio of boys to girls at birth in 1990 was 116.5, but had declined to 105.7 by 2012, close to the natural birth ratio. However, the ratio for the third child and after does remain higher at 109.5 than the ratio for first and second children.

Table 2. Birth rate by age and ratio of boys to girls at birth

(Unit: births per 1,000 women in the relevant age group; births per woman of childbearing age; births per 100 baby girls)

Year	Birth rate by age (number of births per 1,000 women in the relevant age group)							Total fertility rate	Ratio of boys to girls at birth
	15-19 years old	20-24 years old	25-29 years old	30-34 years old	35-39 years old	40-44 years old	45-49 years old		
1980	12.4	135.9	242.7	114.0	114.0	15.1	5.6	2.82	105.3
1990	4.2	83.2	169.4	50.5	50.5	1.5	0.2	1.57	116.5
1995	3.7	62.4	175.3	68.6	68.6	2.4	0.2	1.63	113.2
2000	2.5	38.8	149.6	83.5	83.5	2.5	0.2	1.47	110.2
2005	2.1	17.8	91.7	81.5	81.5	2.4	0.2	1.08	107.5
2009	1.7	16.5	80.4	100.8	100.8	3.4	0.2	1.15	106.4
2010	1.8	16.5	79.7	112.4	112.4	4.1	0.2	1.23	106.9
2012	1.7	16.0	77.4	121.9	121.9	4.6	0.2	1.30	105.7

Notes: 1) The total fertility rate is the average number of births per woman in the period between 15 and 49 years of age.

2) Figures for 2012 are provisional.

Source: Vital Statistics by Statistics Korea

3) 6.3 of 100 South Korean men have married a woman of foreign nationality.

While the number of marriages in 2012 declined compared to a decade ago, that of international marriages increased. International marriages in 2012 amounted to 8.7% of total marriages, with the overall number standing at roughly 28,300. The number of marriages between a South Korean

man and a woman from a different country reached 20,600, 2.7 times greater than that between a South Korean woman and a foreign man (7,700). The number of international marriages among South Koreans peaked in 2005 and has declined since. In 2005, the number of marriages between a South Korean man and a woman from abroad was 30,700, while that between a South Korean woman and a foreign man stood at 11,600.

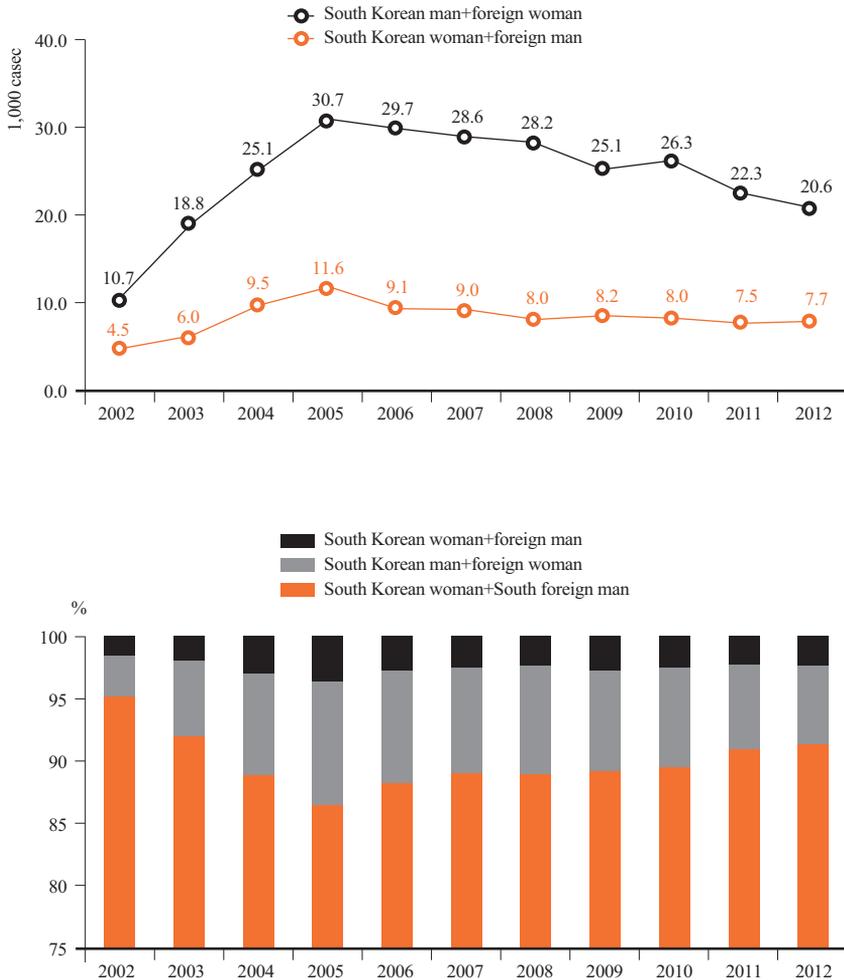


Figure 2. Number and proportion of international marriages

Table 3. Number of marriages

(Unit: 1,000 cases)

Category	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total number of marriages	304.9	302.5	308.6	314.3	330.6	343.6	343.6	309.8	326.1	329.1	327.1
International marriages	15.2	24.8	34.6	42.4	38.8	37.6	37.6	33.3	34.2	29.8	28.3
South Korean man+foreign woman	10.7	18.8	25.1	30.7	29.7	28.6	28.6	25.1	26.3	22.3	20.6
South Korean woman+foreign man	4.5	6.0	9.5	11.6	9.1	9.0	9.0	8.2	8.0	7.5	7.7

Source: Korean Statistical Information Service by Statistics Korea

4) The proportion of women household heads who are financially preparing for retirement is 56.9%, 24.6% points lower than that of their men counterparts.

Although the proportion of women household heads who maintain financial plans for retirement

Table 4. Financial preparation for retirement

(Unit: percentage)

Year/Sex	Those having a plan	Retirement financial plan						Those with no plan	
		Public pension	Private pension	Severance payment	Installment savings & endowment mortgage	Real estate	Stocks & bonds		
2005	Total	63.5	54.0	35.7	10.7	47.8	12.3	2.2	36.5
	Women	44.4	45.7	35.8	5.9	52.5	11.2	1.3	55.6
	Men	68.6	55.5	35.7	11.5	46.9	12.4	2.4	31.4
2009	Total	75.3	58.6	32.5	10.4	45.7	11.6	3.8	24.7
	Women	55.5	49.3	34.0	5.5	52.2	10.1	1.8	44.5
	Men	80.9	60.3	32.2	11.3	44.5	11.9	4.2	19.1
2011	Total	75.8	72.8	27.1	9.0	38.0	9.7	2.4	24.2
	Women	56.9	61.9	28.6	5.2	43.3	10.3	1.7	43.1
	Men	81.5	75.1	26.7	9.8	36.9	9.5	2.6	18.5

Note: 1) Woman refers to woman household heads and man to man household heads.

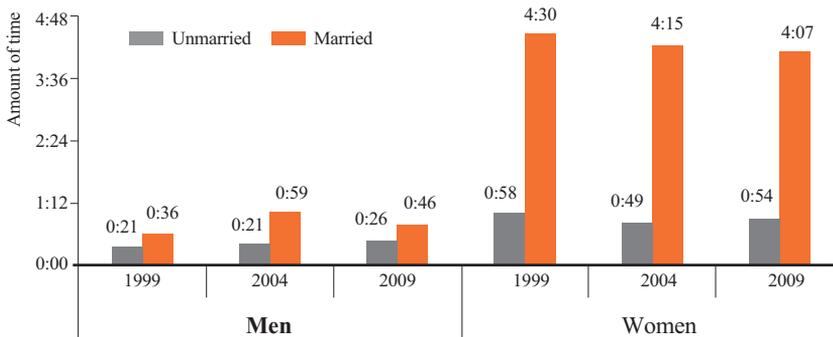
2) Multiple responses

Source: *Social Survey* by Statistics Korea

is rising, the gap between men and women has yet to be reduced. The figures for 2005, 2009, and 2011 were 44.4%, 55.5%, and 56.9%, respectively, marking 24.2% points, 25.4% points, 24.6% points respectively lower compared to men household heads. As to their financial plans for retirement in 2011, public pension was the most frequently noted source of funding with 61.9%, followed by deposits/installment deposits with 43.3%, and private pension with 28.6%. While the plans of men household heads followed a similar pattern, compared to women the proportion relying on the public pension was higher and that of bank deposits was significantly lower. Relative to 2005, the proportion counting on the public pension grew, but those of deposits/installment deposits, private pension, severance payment, and real estate holdings all decreased by a small margin.

5) The average amount of time spent by a married woman on housework in 2009 was 4 hours 7 minutes, while that by a married man was 46 minutes.

According to the 2009 Time Use Survey by Statistics Korea, the amount of time spent engaged in housework by a married woman was five times higher, at 4 hours 7 minutes, than that spent by her husband. While South Korean women in 2009 averaged 23 minutes less on housework than they did when the survey was first conducted in 1999, they still spent 3 hours 21 minutes more than did their husbands. Unmarried women spent 54 minutes in 2009, which is 4 minutes less than they did a decade ago, but still double the amount of time invested by their men counterparts. Compared to five years ago, the length of time engaged in housework rose slightly among both single and married men and fell slightly among both single and married women.

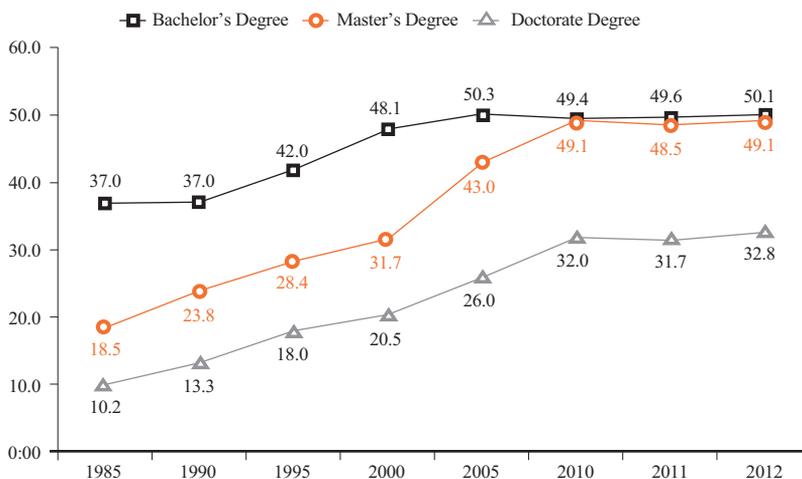


Source: Korean Statistical Information Service by Statistics Korea

Figure 3. Amount of time spent on housework by marital status

6) Women made up half the number of those holding bachelor's and master's degrees in 2012.

Gender equality has made tangible progress in the education sector over the past 27 years. The proportion of women among those holding a bachelor's degree increased from 37.0% in 1985 to 50.1% in 2012. In the case of master's degrees, the figure jumped by a whopping 30.6% points to stand at 49.1% in 2012. While the growth in the number of women with doctorate degrees was slower compared to that among the two lower degrees, it was still relatively high. The proportion of women among those with doctorate degrees rose from 10.2% in 1985 to 32.8% in 2012.



Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Education* by Korean Educational Development Institute

Figure 4. Proportion of women among those with bachelor degrees or higher

7) Women's economic participation rate for 2012 was 49.9%, an increase by 0.2% points year-on-year.

Women's economic participation is on a rising track, although at mild pace. The number of economically active women nearly doubled from 5,412,000 persons in 1980 to 10,609,000 in 2012. Although there have been slight ups and downs, women's economic participation rate also increased by 8.0% points from 41.9% in 1985 to 49.9% in 2012. The number of economically active men also grew, reaching 14,891,000 in 2012, but their economic participation rate fell by 3.1% points over the same period due to a relatively larger increase in the size of the men

population aged 15 years old or older. The difference in the size of the economically active population between men and women is widening, albeit with some fluctuations, while the difference in the economic participation rate is narrowing. As of 2012, the number of economically active men totals 4,282,000 persons more than that of economically active women. The gap in the economic participation measures 23.4% points.

Table 4. Economically active population by sex

(Unit: 1,000 persons; %, % points)

Year	Women		Men		Difference	
	Economically active population	Economic participation rate	Economically active population	Economic participation rate	Economically active population	Economic participation rate
1980	5,412	42.8	9,019	76.4	3,607	33.6
1985	5,975	41.9	9,617	72.3	3,642	30.4
1990	7,509	47.0	11,030	74.0	3,521	27.0
1995	8,410	48.4	12,435	76.4	4,025	28.0
2000	9,101	48.8	13,034	74.4	3,933	25.6
2005	9,860	50.1	13,883	74.6	4,023	24.5
2010	10,256	49.4	14,492	73.0	4,236	23.6
2012	10,609	49.9	14,891	73.3	4,282	23.4

Note: Since 2000, the official job-seeking period of unemployed workers has been adjusted to four weeks.

Source: *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey* by Statistics Korea

8) Among salaried women workers in 2012, 41.5% held irregular positions.

The number of salaried women workers occupied in irregular positions is 3,154,000 persons as of August 2012, representing 41.5% of all salaried women workers. While the number decreased slightly in 2008, influenced by the introduction of the Non-regular Workers Protection Law in July 2007, it rose to 3,073,000 in 2009 and 3,154,000 in 2012. In the case of men workers, however, the figure declined from 2007 (2,907,000 persons) until 2010. It increased to 2,791,000 in 2011 before declining to 2,757,000 in 2012. Due to this trend, the proportion of women among non-regular workers, which was 46.9% in 2002, has remained high since 2009 at 53.4%.

Table 5. Irregular salaried workers

(Unit: 1,000 persons; %)

Year	Salaried workers				Non-regular workers				Proportion of non-regular workers			
	Total	Women	Men	Gap between men and women	Total	Women	Men	Gap between men and women	Total	Women	Men	Gap between men and women
2002	14,030	5,772	8,258	41.1	3,513	1,649	1,864	46.9	25.0	28.6	22.6	-6.0
2005	14,968	6,286	8,682	42.0	5,482	2,747	2,736	50.1	36.6	43.7	31.5	-12.2
2007	15,882	6,647	9,235	41.9	5,703	2,796	2,907	49.0	35.9	42.1	31.5	-10.6
2008	16,104	6,737	9,367	41.8	5,445	2,746	2,699	50.4	33.8	40.8	28.8	-12.0
2009	16,479	6,964	9,515	42.3	5,754	3,073	2,681	53.4	34.9	44.1	28.2	-16.0
2010	17,048	7,265	9,783	42.6	5,685	3,036	2,649	53.4	33.3	41.8	27.1	-14.7
2011	17,510	7,476	10,034	42.7	5,994	3,203	2,791	53.4	34.2	42.8	27.8	-15.0
2012	17,734	7,600	10,134	42.9	5,911	3,154	2,757	53.4	33.3	41.5	27.2	-14.3

Note: All data were collected in August.

Source: *GSIS DB* by Korean Women's Development Institute

9) Women's income approaches 64.0% of that of men.

In addition to career disruptions related to childbirth and childrearing, women face an additional barrier in the labor market: gender discrimination in terms of salary. As of 2011, women workers' average monthly income totaled 2,121,000 won, 64.0% of that of their men counterparts (3,312,000 won). In other words, they earn on average 1,191,000 won less than do men. Fortunately, the gender gap in income has been gradually narrowing, with the ration of women's income to men's rising from 58.0 in 1995 to 62.9 in 2000, 63.9 in 2010, and 64.0 in 2011. In terms of education, women with a 2-year college degree earned the most relative to their peers, with 70.7% of the earnings of their men counterparts, followed by 4-year university graduates with 66.6%, high school graduates with 64.5%, and middle school graduates or below with 58.7%. While the gender gap among university graduates remained low until 2005 compared to those in other education groups, it gradually widened to surpass that among 2-year college graduates in 2011.

Table 6. Monthly average income by educational attainment and gender gap

(Unit: 1,000 won; %)

Category		Total	Middle school graduates or below	High school graduates	College graduates	4-year university graduates
1995	Women	790	647	787	901	1,269
	Men	1,361	1,153	1,246	1,308	1,770
	Ratio of women's income to men's	58.0	56.1	63.2	68.9	71.7
2000	Women	1,167	881	1,091	1,190	1,753
	Men	1,855	1,495	1,637	1,707	2,457
	Ratio of women's income to men's	62.9	58.9	66.6	69.7	71.3
2005	Women	1,673	1,198	1,494	1,634	2,283
	Men	2,630	1,958	2,224	2,308	3,390
	Ratio of women's income to men's	63.6	61.2	67.2	70.8	67.3
2010	Women	2,019	1,386	1,680	1,927	2,590
	Men	3,159	2,280	2,593	2,769	3,944
	Ratio of women's income to men's	63.9	60.8	64.8	69.6	65.7
2011	Women	2,121	1,403	1,778	2,079	2,737
	Men	3,312	2,391	2,759	2,942	4,111
	Ratio of women's income to men's	64.0	58.7	64.5	70.7	66.6

Note: All data were collected in August.

Source: *GSIS DB* by Korean Women's Development Institute

10) The proportion of women public servants at the Grade 5 rank or higher is 9.9% in the central government and 9.2% in local governments.

The proportion of women public servants at the Grade 5 rank or higher has notched up slightly every year since 2001 to reach 9.9% in the central government and 9.2% in local governments in 2011. While the figure has been on a constant incline among both central and local governments, it has been somewhat higher for the central government than for local governments, excepting in 2001 and 2008. Despite such a rising trend, however, the proportion of women public servants reaching that rank remains below 10% at both central and local governments. Given

that the proportion of women employees in the central government stands at 47.0% in 2011, women's rate of climb to higher positions seems considerably slow.

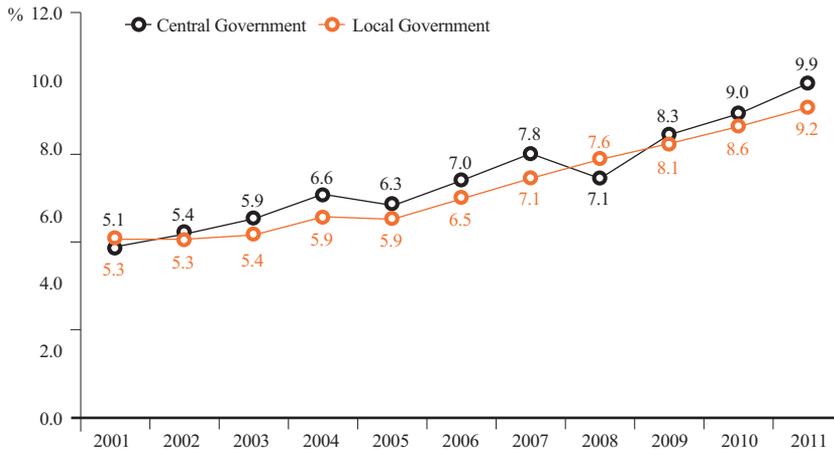


Figure 5. Proportion of women public servants at Grade 5 rank or higher

Source: Statistics on human resource management by governments and statistics on female public servants at local autonomous bodies; both are internal documents published by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration

11) The proportions of women judges and prosecutors stood at 24.4% and 20.5%, respectively, in 2010.

The proportion of women among legal professionals has been rapidly rising since 2000. In the case of 2012, when graduates of law schools established according to the newly introduced law school system were first produced, the proportion of women lawyers surged. As to the number of women among legal professionals in 2012, it was highest among judges with 733 women, or 26.8%, followed by among prosecutors with 440 women (23.6%) and among lawyers with 1,995 women (15.9%). Compared to two years previously, however, the proportion was up by 2.4% points among judges, by 3.1% points among prosecutors, and by 4.2% points among lawyers.

Table 7. Women legal professionals

(Unit: persons; %)

Category	2000		2010		2012	
	Women	Proportion of women	Women	Proportion of women	Women	Proportion of women
Total	280	3.7	2,192	15.0	3,169	18.5
Judges	121	7.4	619	24.4	733	26.8
Prosecutors	29	2.4	365	20.5	440	23.6
Lawyers	130	2.8	1,208	11.7	1,995	15.9

Source: Internal documents published by the Ministry of Justice

12) The proportion of women legislators in 2012 is 15.7%.

The number of women elected to office through general elections is rapidly growing. Regarding regional constituency-based members of the National Assembly, the number increased from none in 1992 to 19 in 2012. With the revision of the Public Officials Election Act in August 2005 requiring over 50% of proportional representation candidates to be women, the share of women among national constituency-based members surged to 28. Spurred by this growth, the proportion of women in the National Assembly jumped to 15.7% in 2012 from 1.0% in 1992. However, the proportion of women candidates for regional-constituency slots remains low at less than 7%, and the number of those elected is as low as approximately 8% of that of their men counterparts.

Table 8. Proportion of women candidates elected through general elections

(Unit: persons; %)

Year	Total			Regional constituency			National constituency (Proportional representation)		
	Total	Women	Proportion of women	Total	Women	Proportion of women	Total	Women	Proportion of women
1992	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
2000	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9	23.9
2008	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0
2012	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9

Source: Data on those elected in the 18th General Election, reports on local elections, and data on winners of nationwide local elections published by the National Election Commission

While the proportion of women members of the legislature has risen, few women succeeded in winning leadership of local autonomous bodies. Since elections for the executive positions of local autonomous bodies were introduced in 1995, no women have been elected at the *Gwangyeok* level (major urban governments). As to the executives of Gicho autonomous bodies (smaller cities and provincial governments), the proportion has been on the rise, but the actual numbers remain negligible with one out of 230 in 1995, two of 232 in 2002, three of 230 in 2006, and six of 228 in 2010.

Table 9. Proportion of women elected as the executive of local governments

(Unit: persons; %)

Year	<i>Gwangyeok</i> level (major urban governments)				Gicho level (smaller city and provincial governments)			
	Total	Women	Men	Proportion of women	Total	Women	Men	Proportion of women
1995	15	0	15	0.0	230	1	229	0.4
1998	16	0	16	0.0	232	0	232	0.0
2002	16	0	16	0.0	232	2	230	0.9
2006	16	0	16	0.0	230	3	227	1.3
2010	16	0	16	0.0	228	6	222	2.6

Source: Data on city and provincial council elections and data on nationwide local elections published by the National Election Commission

13) 69.4% of women feel unsafe from the threat of crime.

The proportion of women who feel unsafe due to the threat of crime reached 69.4% as of 2012. This figure is 10.7% points higher than expressed by their men counterparts. While the level of sense of insecurity due to the threat of crime rose among both men and women compared to 2010, it increased by a larger margin among women. Relative to 2010, the total proportion including both men and women went up by 0.9%, with the share of women rising by 1.6% points and that of men by 0.2% points. Meanwhile, the proportion of those who felt safe despite an increased sense of insecurity grew slightly as well. The proportion of those who felt secure from the threat of crime was 6.8% among women and 11.4% among men in 2012, an increase of 0.4% points and 1.4% points, respectively, compared to 2010.

Table 10. Sense of security from the fear of crime

(Unit: percentage)

Year/Sex		Average	Average	Unsafe
2010	Total	8.2	28.6	63.3
	Women	6.4	25.8	67.8
	Men	10.0	31.6	58.5
2012	Total	9.1	26.8	64.2
	Women	6.8	23.8	69.4
	Men	11.4	29.8	58.7

Source: *Social Survey* by Statistics Korea