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***Social Inclusion on Aging, Gender and  
Social Innovation in East Asia: Status,  
Challenges and Way Forward***

# Background

- East Asia (EA): the most dramatic demographic transition and outstanding economic progress in recent years
- Dev. + gov. commitment to promoting a more inclusive society for all  
→ improved the living standards of all groups in society
- But the intersecting & coexisting of new & old demographic profiles
  - Present enduring challenges to such efforts
  - Aging and cultural practices in gender relationship → render the elderly and women excluded in many dimensions of social life

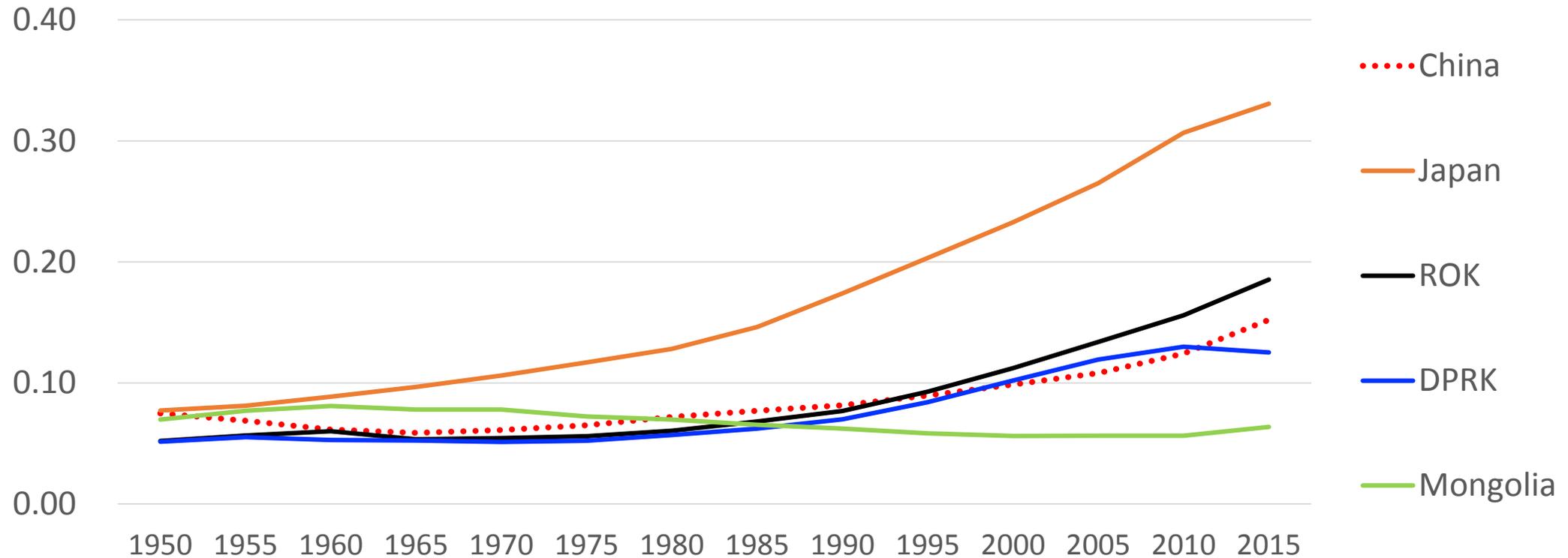
# Purpose

- Provide an overview of the current state of research on social inclusion in East Asia (EA)
  - Five countries: China, DPRK, Japan, Mongolia, and Republic of Korea (ROK)
  - Three focusing themes: **aging**, **gender** and **social innovation**
- Assess and identify the challenges of policy uptake
- Suggest ways to address these issues in the region

# Population aging

- The overlap of low TFR and enhanced longevity contributes to an unprecedented pace of aging in all countries
- EA is one of the regions with the **most rapid pace** of aging, and **largest size and share** of elder population in the world
- Substantial local variations in 2015:
  - Already OLD: Japan > 33%; ROK = 18.54% (those over 60)
  - Risk of “getting old before getting rich:” China = 16.1%; DPRK = 13%
  - Stable: Mongolia = 6.4%

# Trend and current status of aging in EA



**Figure 1. Share of People Aged 60+ in East Asian Countries: 1950-2015**

Source: World Population Prospects, the 2015 Revision (UNDP 2016)

# Multifaceted and multi-leveled consequences

## Multifaceted

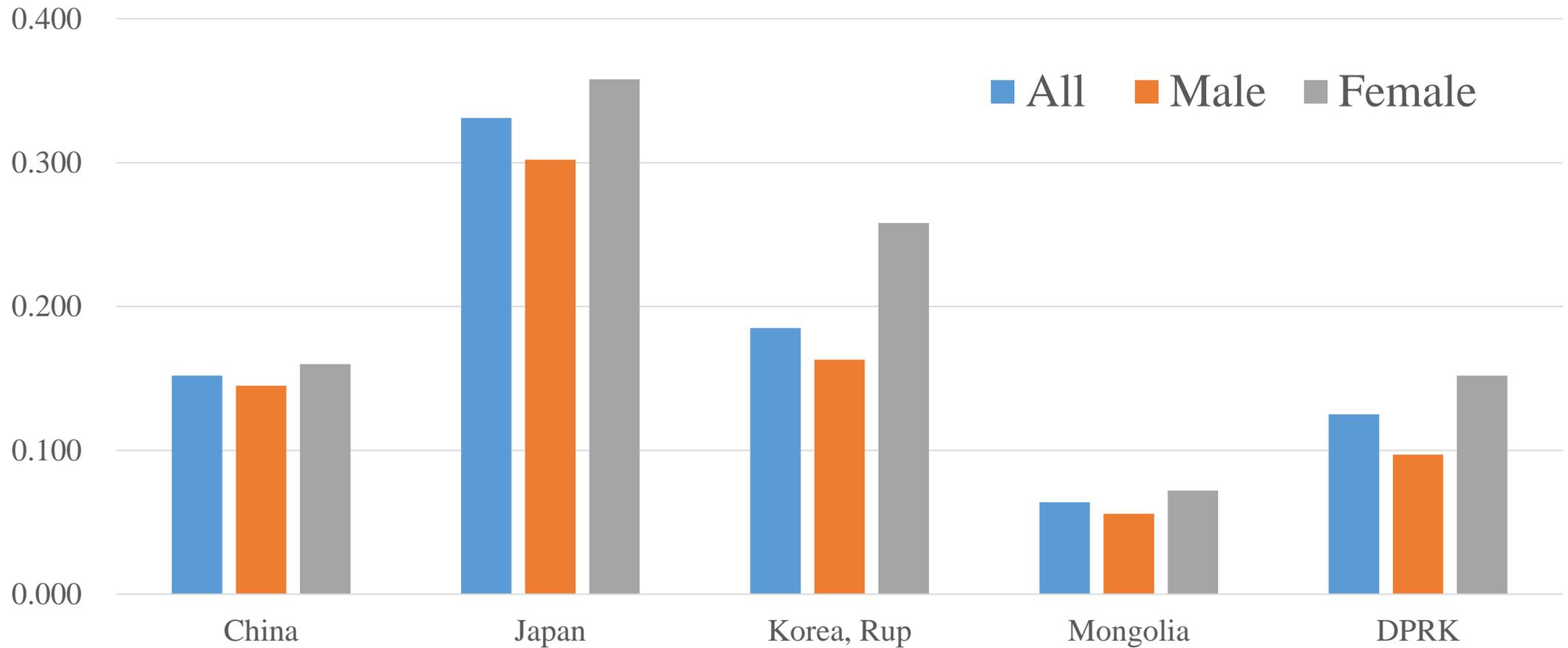
- Pension
- Health expenditure
- Long-term care system
- Daily living support
- Psychological comfort
- Multiple & diversified needs

## Multi-levels

- Individual
- Household
- Community
- Government

# More vulnerable elderly population

- **Female, the oldest old, & rural elderly: more vulnerable** to poverty, face greater health problems & need more daily care & comfort
- Poverty increases with age and higher in the countryside
  - Japan, ROK and Mongolia, 2-3% % in Mongolia (WB 2016)
  - China: 22.9% in 2013; 28.9% and 9.5% in rural & urban (NDRC at PKU 2013)
- Women live longer, maternal leave + retire earlier → (-) working years  
→ less pension & income savings to live on → more economic and financial strains



**Figure 2. Aging Population by Gender in East Asian Countries in 2015**

Source: World Population Prospects, the 2016 Revision.

- As people get older, they are more likely to suffer from physical and psych. health problems. Functional limitations (+) with age, especially among the oldest old, women & the poor
- In Japan and ROK, difficulties with physical functions are more pronounced among men than women (WB 2016)
- In China, old women have a much higher prevalence of difficulty (Gerontology Research Center 2016). The disabled elderly will reach 42m, and those aged 80 or over will be 29m by 2020 (NAC 2016)
- Rates of depression (+) with age & poverty, especially among women in China & ROK, leading some rural elderly to commit suicide

# Gender issues

- The gender gap in later life: linked to inequality in the early life stages
- EA: well known for unequal gender relationship (GR); today, gov. have made formal commitments to promote gender equality
- Changing structure forces → reshaped GR → “SDT” (Lesthaeghe and van de Kaa 1986)
- Nevertheless, women still encounter significant cultural and economic barriers inside and outside the home, and spend much time on unpaid work to take care of children and the elderly

# Measurements of gender (in)equality

Many single and composite indicators are drawn to measure GE

- Gender Development Index
- Gender Empowerment Measure
- Gender Inequality Index
- Global Gender Gap (GGG) →

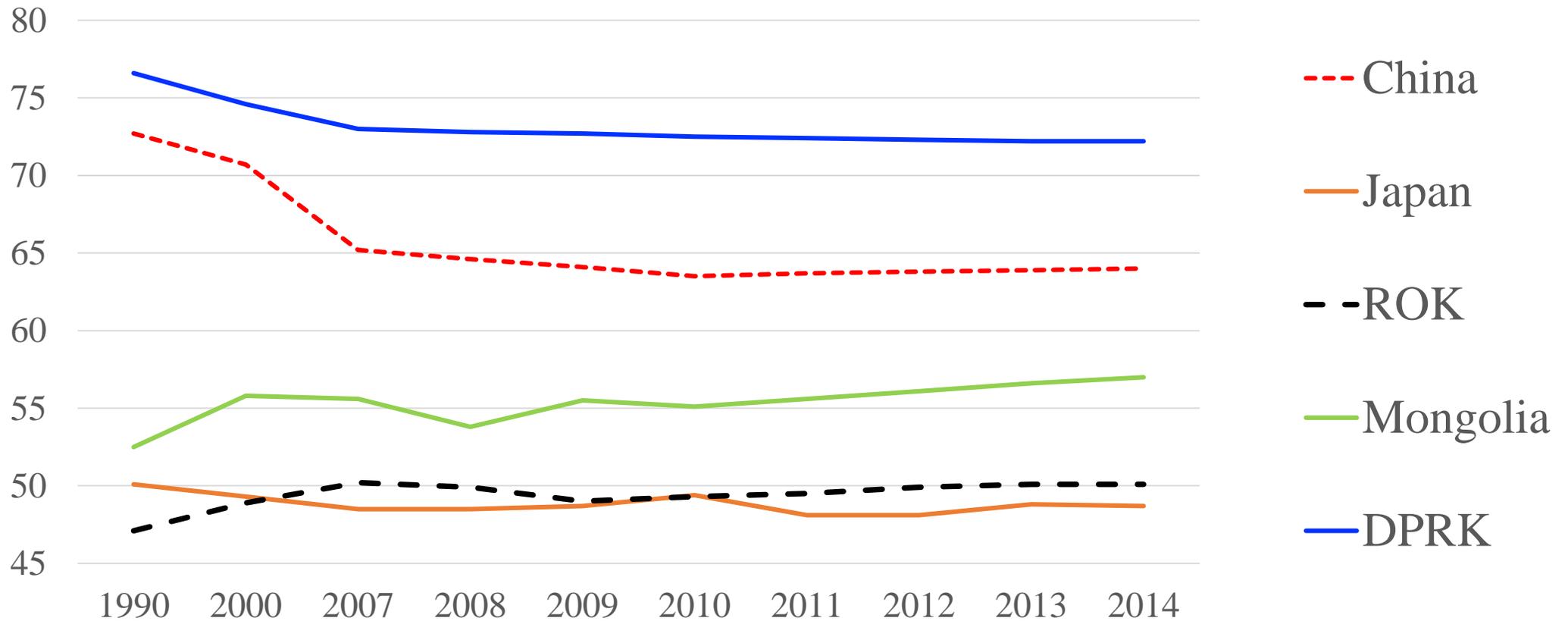
World Economic Forum

Comprehensive, 4 dimensions

- Econ. participation & opportunities
- Educational attainment
- Health & survival
- Political empowerment

# Gender gap worsened in the labor market & income

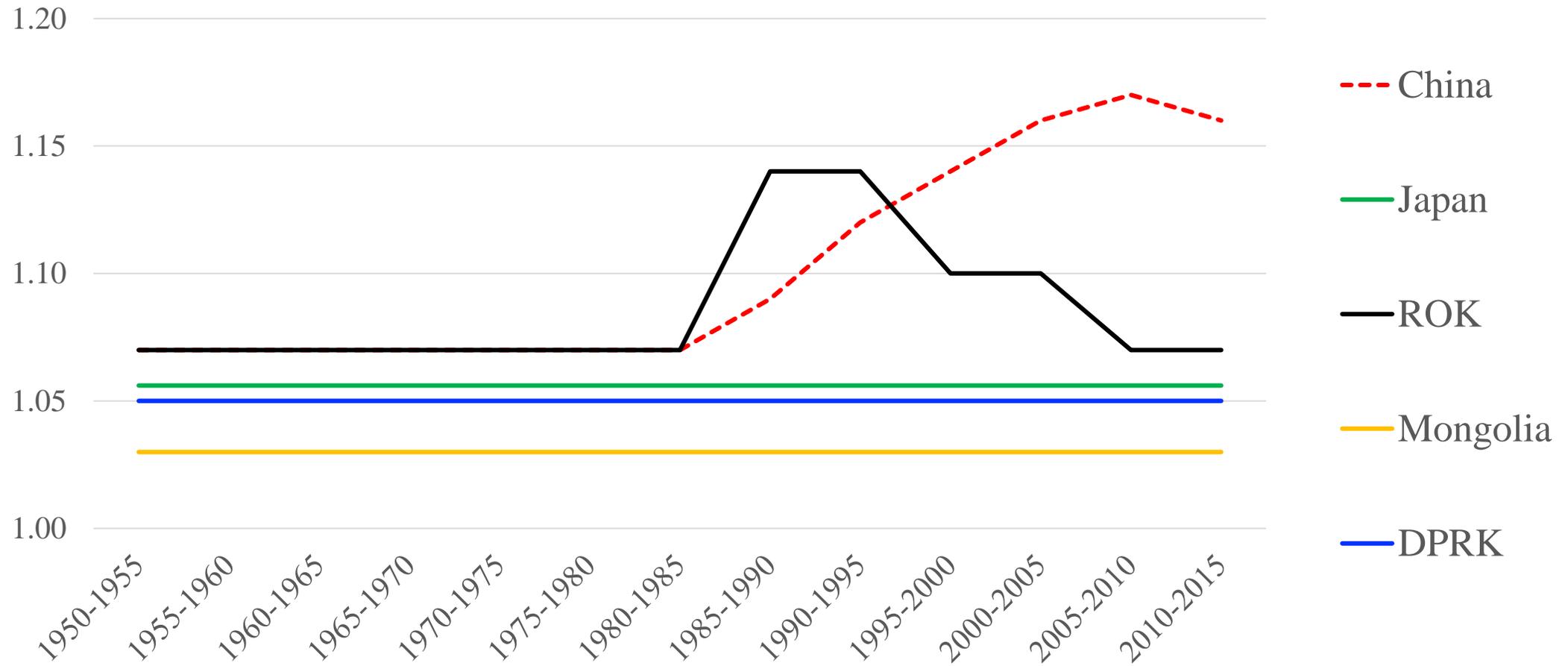
- The gender gap has been largely reduced in formal education and health, but it has been worsened in the labor market. 2016 report
  - FLFP rate=54% (global), but male's =81%
  - Half of male's income; 2014 report: women can catch up with men in 2095, but 2016 report: women have to wait until 2186 to reach this goal
- Women are less active politically, socially and economically
- China used to have high FLFP, 79.1% in 1990, but dropped to 70.4% in 2014 (World Bank 2015); the gender wage gap in income has also been enlarged (Beijing Normal University Labor Market Research Center 2016)



**Figure 3. FLFP in East Asia: 1990-2014**

Source: World Bank. Available at <http://data.worldbank.org.cn/>

- China ranks 99 of 144 countries
- What pulls China down most is its very low ranking in health and survival – it remains the world’s lowest-ranked country due to SRB
- Both ROK and China have suffered from a severely skewed SRB, but ROK has successfully brought its number into normal range after 2005
- In China, it has also reduced due to gov. efforts to promote gender equality practices & the crackdown of the “two-illegalities.”
- High SRB: the most important indicator among all types of gender inequality – many girls lose their opportunity to be born



**Figure 3. Sex Ratio at Birth in East Asian Countries over Time**

Source: World Population Prospects, the 2016 Revision

	Rank	Reasons
Japan	116	Low scores in labor force & underrepresentation in political participation
ROK	111	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low ranking in the labor market</li> <li>• But large improvement on in professional and technical workers, and in political empowerment</li> </ul>
Mongolia	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. 1 in health &amp; survival, &amp; 23<sup>rd</sup> in the econ. dimension</li> <li>• Women's political participation = 119<sup>th</sup>, gap in legislators, senior officials, and management level</li> </ul>
DPRK	n/a	27 <sup>th</sup> in the GDI. SRB =1.05 in 2014 (OECD 2014). Low incidence of missing women; FLFP rate is far ahead of other countries

# **Social innovation**

- It has been increasingly acknowledged that aging has or will become the new normal in this region, and that gender equality helps maintain peace, democracy and stability in society, and facilitate the progress of inclusive development
- Delayed retirement age and long-term care system have been established or is establishing to cope with aging. Holistic approach, including Anti-Domestic Violence Law (in China), and family-supportive policies has been adopted to promote gender equality, and facilitate women's work and family balance

# **Social innovation**

- Building inclusive societies for all is not simply a matter of business as usual or a better implementation of existing policy frameworks
- Such an agenda calls for social innovation in knowledge and policies, among others
- Understanding long-term trends and policy effects of aging has been facilitated by scientific studies

## **Social innovation: What knowledge we have gained**

- Our society is shifting away from young to old age structure, and aging has or will become the new normal in this region
- Increasing knowledge has been acquired on the consequences of aging at all levels in the context of ultralow fertility, rapid pace of urbanization and economic growth, and changing family
- Gender equality is not simply a private issue but also a public issue
- Gender equality may maintain peace, democracy and stability in society, and facilitate the progress of inclusive social development
- Improved women's status in the early life stages will better empower their latter years.

## **Social innovation: What policies have been adopted and implemented**

- Long-term care system has been established or is establishing to cope with aging, especially in Japan
- Holistic approach has brought high SRB back to normal in ROK
- Anti-Domestic Violence Law has been implemented in China in 2016
- Family-friendly policy has been adopted in various countries to facilitate women's work and family balance

While most EA countries have made noticeable progress in promoting GE & policy framework dealing with aging, challenges remain salient

# Cross-cutting Challenges

**The roles of public policy in promoting healthy and productive aging and gender equality are uncertain**

- Pop. = top-heavy. Need proactive policies to deal with it, but they will not be the correct response to every challenge in every country
  - Delayed retirement ages → (-) family support for elderly & kids
  - Policies encouraging FLFP **in the context of insufficient public childcare support** may exacerbate work-family conflicts of women
- Longer lifespan & fewer births → aging
  - Work-family balance; “ideal employee” vs. “ideal motherhood” → “double losses” → either give up childbearing or being active in the labor market
  - How to achieve a work-family life “win-win” situation and cost-effective solution to aging remains unclear

# **Changing family structure (-) family support for daily care & generated (+) demand of the elderly for public support**

- Japan, ROK and China: structural forces → fundamentally reshaped fertility norms → lowest TFR → family size and living arrangements
- Parent-child co-residence: effective means for the elderly to be taken care of in twilight years, but this practice has declined
  - China: for those aged 65 to 70, co-residence fell from nearly 66% in the early 1980s to roughly 43% in 2011
  - ROK: ages 65+, (-) from over 80% in 1980 to well under 30% by 2010 (Lee 2009)
  - Living apart → inconvenient for elderlies' daily care and family support → big challenge for living a decent life in later years when no public support

# Each country has unique challenges in response to aging and gender equality: China

- **Urbanization due to R-U migration complicates aging issues.** Selectivity in migrants → leave elderly residing in less developed areas, demanding for public and private supports in monetary terms and in daily care
- **The universal TCP may exacerbate gender discrimination in the labor market, and put heavier burden on the grandmothers when pro-family policies are lacking.** Employers prefer to hire men to avoid the expenses of maternity leave and childcare; the arrival of the second child place greater burden for grandmothers in childcare due to the lack of public support
- **Many men in low socioeconomic status will have no chance to find a wife due to the high SRB and sky-high cost of marriage**

# Policy Implications

- Demographic transition & SDT have reshaped & will further reshape EA societies and economies, presenting tremendous challenges for policy makers, communities, and citizens
- However, “demography is a powerful force in development, but it is not destiny” (World Bank 2016)
- Policy makers in EA have the potential to promote a society for all
- This will require more integrated methods of approaching public policy and service delivery systems

# **Holistic approaches is necessitated in order to be prepared for an aging society**

- The proportion of the elderly is expected to increase further
- Being prepared for an aging society would require holistic approaches
  - Increasing pensions and welfare
  - Ensuring social care funding
  - Building sustainable home- and community-based long-term care system
  - Providing collaborative working to improve services for elders
  - Promoting the role of tele-care in services for older people, etc.

# **Prioritize the most vulnerable population, rural, female and the oldest old**

- The rural, female and the oldest old are more likely to suffer from poverty- economically, medically and socially
- Thus, they should be the first targets of pension policy, medical services and insurance, increasing the investment and coverage of social security
- In China, the share of reimbursement of medical service and nursing home care for the elderly should also be increased, as well as the provision of long-term care services and extra stipend to the elderly in rural areas

# **Adopt the life course approach to empower younger people and women in early life stages**

- Vulnerability of the elderly and elder women may be reduced if women are able to lead better lives in their early days
- It is not just the elderly who should be the only focus
- We should start empowering women from early childhood, childbearing age, working age, right through to older ages
- Encouraging more women to join the workforce, reforming existing pension schemes, and shifting healthcare focus from hospital care to primary care are demands which need to be heard and be acted upon

# **Conduct cross-national research for evidence-informed policymaking and policy responses**

- EA nations should recognize the essential importance of cross-national research in policy making
- They should develop multidisciplinary and longitudinal research, and collaborate in collecting data that are comparative, harmonized and standardized, and readily accessible for communities of scientists
- Such data can best reflect the long-term interrelationships among changing family structures, work, health and economic status, and enhance the ability of policymakers to evaluate institutional and programmatic features of aging policy, and maximize policy choices

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