

Chapter 3

Demand of Long-term Care: Older Persons Living Alone

August 2019

This chapter should be cited as

ERIA (2019), 'Demand of Long-term Care: Older Persons Living Alone', in Hayashi, R. (ed.), *Demand and Supply of Long-term Care for Older Persons in Asia*. ERIA Research Project Report FY2018 no.8, Jakarta: ERIA, pp.10–18.

Chapter 3

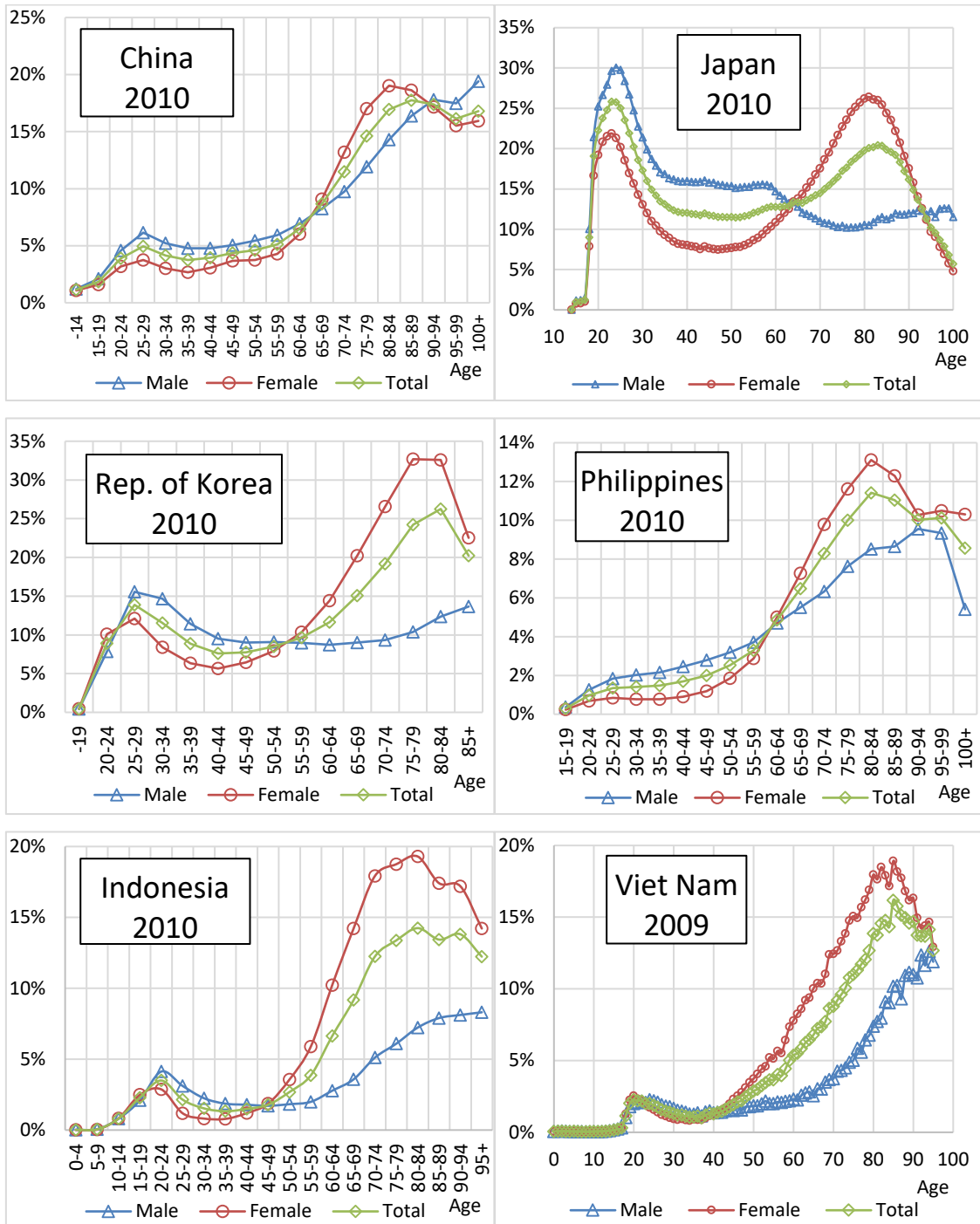
Demand for Long-term Care: Older Persons Living Alone

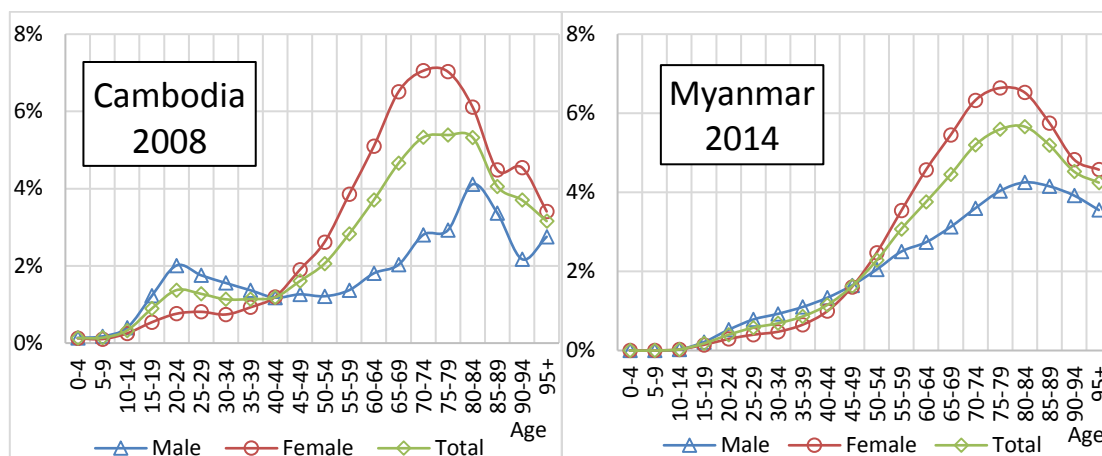
1. Living Arrangements of Older Persons

The role of the family for long-term care is important especially in Asia. Some Asian countries already have a family-first policy for the care of aged parents, explicitly promulgating a law that clearly defines the role of children to take care of their parents (Box 2). Nevertheless, the proportion of older persons living alone are increasing globally, particularly in Asia (UN, 2017b). Although lowering mortality contributes to the smaller number of widows/widowers, the increasing outmigration of children, within or beyond the national borders, leaves older parents in an empty nest after the death of the spouse. Also, nuclearization and changing family values contribute to smaller families, which lead more older persons living alone.

Generally, the proportion of living alone changes with age (Figure 3.1). The proportion increases with age as children depart from the parental home to study or to work to be independent; the proportion decreases after these children marry and form their own families. This change is outstanding in Japan and the Republic of Korea, somewhat observed in China, Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Indonesia, and not at all observed in the Philippines and Myanmar. During this transition, the proportion of men living alone are higher compared to women. From around the age of 40s and 50s, the proportion starts to increase due to the children's departure and the death of the spouse. For older age, the proportion forms an inverted U-shape (Reher and Requena, 2018). When people get very old, they start to need care and live again with family members (most probably with children) or move to a facility. During this phase, the proportion of women living alone are higher than men. For men, the trend differs among countries. The downward trend in very old age is not found in China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, nor Indonesia, whereas the trend exists in the Philippines, Cambodia, and Myanmar. This might be caused by the different old-age care arrangements by country.

Figure 3.1: Proportion of People Living Alone, by Age



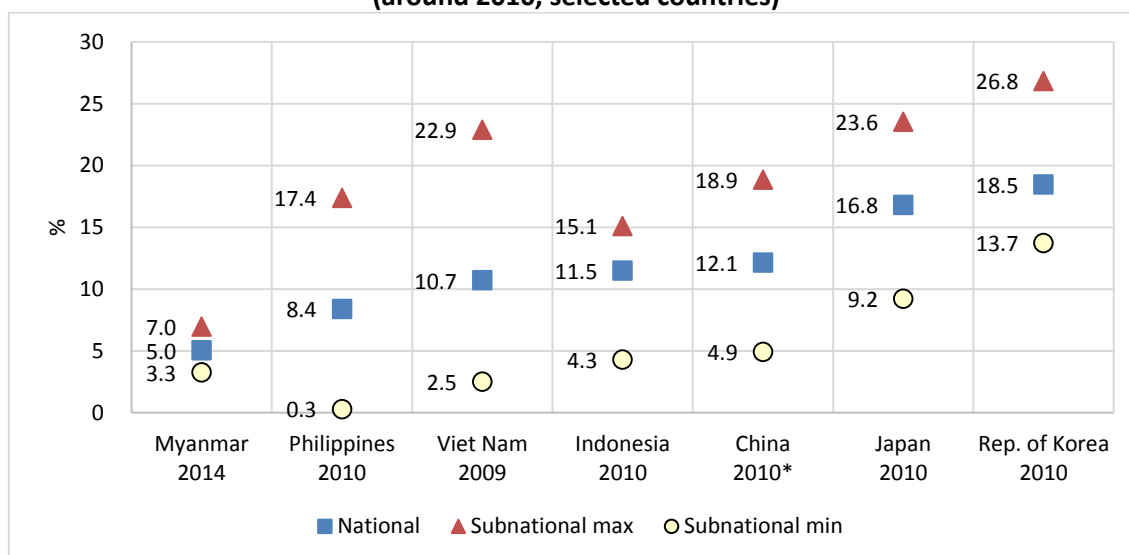


Note: Range of vertical axes varies due to the different levels of proportion.

Sources: Data of the Philippines, Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Cambodia are from the census through IPUMS International; those of China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Myanmar, from each country's Statistics Bureau, compiled by Authors.

Among target countries, the proportion of older persons living alone (Figure 3.2) are the lowest in Myanmar (5.0%) and the highest in the Republic of Korea (18.5%). A general trend is that the higher the proportion of older persons, the higher the proportion of older persons living alone. However, the Republic of Korea's living alone rate of 18.5% is higher than Japan's 16.8% in spite of the relatively lower ageing rate. This might be related to the stronger internal migration in the Republic of Korea (Hayashi, 2015).

Figure 3.2: Proportion of Older Persons Living Alone (around 2010, selected countries)



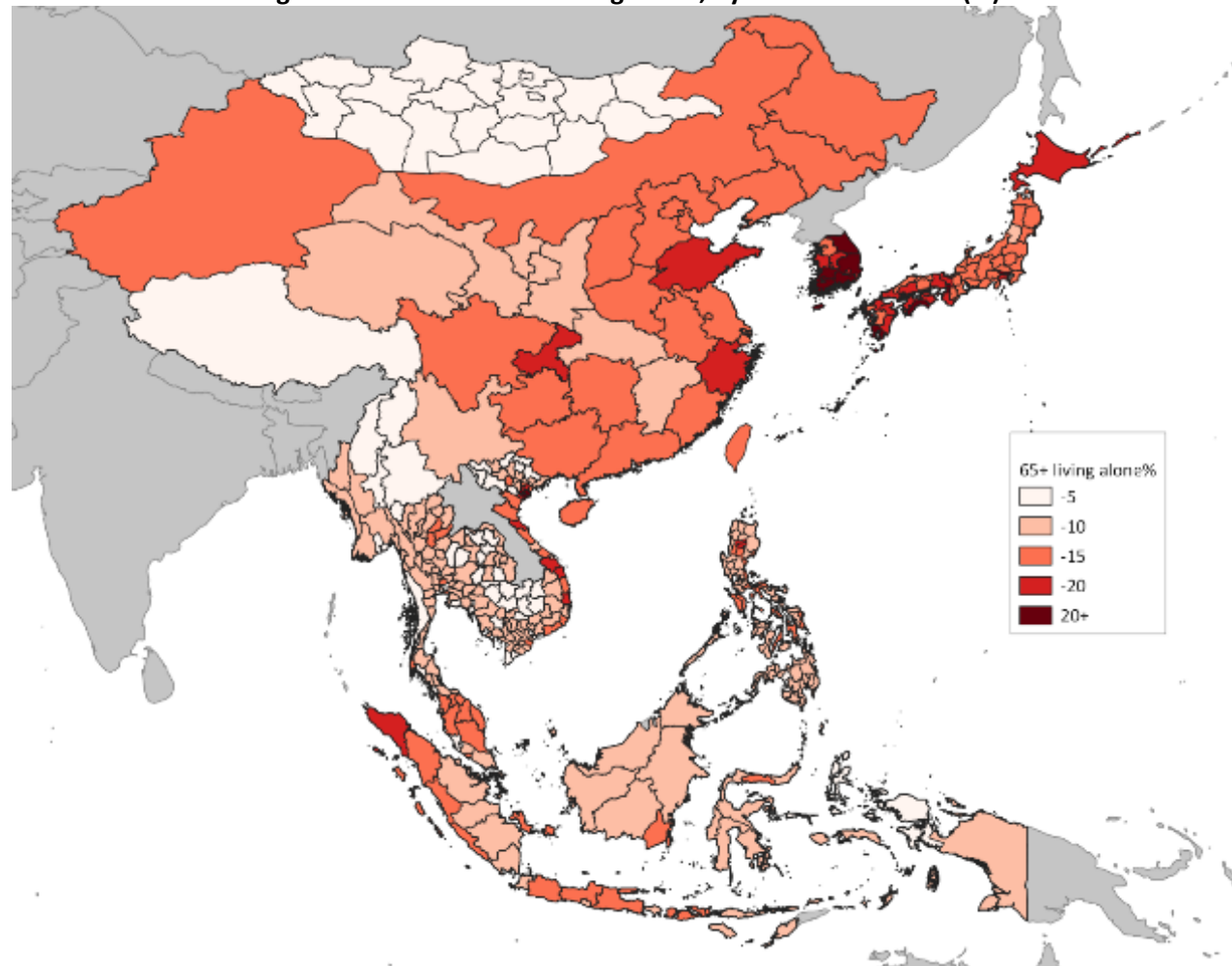
Note: The number of subnational divisions differs by country: Myanmar = 15 states/regions, Philippines = 98 provinces, Viet Nam = 63 provinces, Indonesia = 33 provinces, China = 31 provinces (Census 2010) as well as Hong Kong and Macao (Census 2011) and Taiwan (Census 2010), Japan = 47 prefectures, Republic of Korea = 16 provinces/cities. The first-level administrative division was compared.

Sources: Data of the Philippines, Viet Nam, and Indonesia are from the census through IPUMS International. Those of China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Myanmar are from respective census data. Compiled by Authors.

Disparities among provinces are also large (Figure 3.2). Viet Nam has the largest disparity ranging from 2.5% to 22.9%, followed by the Philippines. This is partly due to the number of provincial divisions. However, this disparity shows how rural areas are affected by the outmigration of children to urban areas. For example, in the provinces of Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, and Thai Binh, just south of Ha Noi, Viet Nam's capital city, the proportion of older persons living alone exceed 20%, more than the national average of Japan or the Republic of Korea (Figure 3.3). In Ifugao and the Mountain Province of the Philippines, the proportion is as high as 17%. This is due to the strong outmigration of the young to Manila or Baguio City who do not return (Commission on Population, 2016). The same high rates are observed in Aceh province (15.1%) in Indonesia, Zhejiang (18.9%), Shandong (15.8%), and Chongqing (15.3%) in China.

In Asia where elderly care is considered to be the role of family and the public care system is not yet fully developed, it is important to know how many older persons are living alone, which is one of the determinants of care demand.

Figure 3.3: Older Persons Living Alone, by Subnational Level (%)



Sources: Census of Cambodia (2008), India (2009), Indonesia (2010), Iran (2011), Malaysia (2000), Philippines (2010), Thailand (2000), Viet Nam (2009) through IPUMS International. That of China (2010), Japan (2010), Myanmar (2014), and the Republic of Korea (2010) were from each country's Statistics Bureau, compiled by the Authors.

Box 2: Projection of Living Arrangements of Older Persons in Japan

Household projections by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS), Japan, show the living arrangements for all household heads. However, living arrangements of other household members are not available. To compensate for this shortage, the IPSS published projections of living arrangements of older persons aged 65 and over in 2012 and 2017. The 2017 revision was produced to supplement the household projections based on the 2010 census of Japan.

Five types of living arrangements were defined as follows:

- (1) Living alone
- (2) Living with a spouse only
- (3) Living with child(ren)
- (4) Living with other person(s)
- (5) Living in an institutional household

If an older person lives with at least one child, his/her living arrangement is classified as (3) regardless of whether his/her spouse co-resides or not. If he/she does not live with a child but with a person other than a spouse or a child, his/her living arrangement is defined as (4) regardless of whether his/her spouse co-resides.

The number of older people living alone was already included in the household projection. Also available in the projection was the number of elderly heads living with a spouse only. The number of elderly spouses living with a head only was projected by applying the distribution of husbands and wives by age taken from contingency tables in the 2010 census, assuming that the distribution does not change in the future.

Since the number of institutionalised people was also available in the household projection, the remaining task was to distinguish types (3) and (4). The ratio $(4) / \{(3) + (4)\}$ in 2010 was calculated from the census. This ratio was assumed to decline as the proportion of households other than nuclear family declined. The future value of this ratio was calculated so that the odds ratio was preserved.

The proportion of older persons living alone (1) are projected to increase from 11.6% in 2010 to 16.3% in 2035 for men, and from 20.8% in 2010 to 23.4% in 2035 for women. This increase is offset by the decrease of proportion of those living with a spouse only (2). The proportion of older persons living with child(ren) do not change for men from 2010 to 2035 and for women from 2020 to 2035 (IPSS, 2017).

Box 3: Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (People's Republic of China)

In China, population ageing has been proceeding rapidly, so the construction of long-term care system is one of the most important policy challenges. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, the basic law of an ageing society, was enacted in 1996. This law defining older persons as those 60 years and over draws the basic ideas of ageing policy and stipulates measures such as support by family members, mutual help in the community, social security, education, cultural life, facility development, life-long education, social participation, and others. In particular, this law emphasises support by family members, such as payment obligation of children for their elderly parents' health care.

This law was amended in 2012 to address further population ageing and the increase of 'empty nest' elderly households. The amended law further emphasises the obligations of sons and daughters to support their elderly parents, including periodical visits if the children live apart from elderly parents. The number of lawsuits related to this law, such as elderly parents suing their children who do not periodically visit them, has increased significantly since the amendment in 2012.

The law also stipulates the role of national and local governments. Article 30 provides for the phased implementation of long-term care policy by the national government. Articles 37 and 38 provide for social services for older persons, such as health care and long-term care by local governments, and Article 46 is on human resource development for elderly social service. In other words, this law defines the government's role based on the role of the family.

Box 4: Migration and Living Arrangements of Older Persons in Malaysia

As in other developed countries, the percentage of older persons living alone are rising in Malaysia. In 2000, about 7% of 1.4 million people 60 years and over live alone (UN, 2017b). With respect to demographic characteristics, lone residence is observed amongst the older groups and females. In geographic terms, older persons living alone are concentrated in rural areas. The data indicates that 9% of those in rural areas and 5% of those in urban areas are living alone (UN, 2017b). The distribution of other living arrangements also differ widely. Most of all, the percentage of those living with children is lower in rural areas (64%) than those in urban areas (72%) (UN, 2017b). This implies that rural–urban migration of young people is one reason for the lower percentage of rural older persons living with their children.

Internal migration played a significant role in the economic development of Malaysian society. The official concern over unbalanced economic and geographical distribution by ethnicity resulted in a policy that aimed at freeing Bumiputera from subsistence agriculture to more modern sectors in the urban areas (Swee-Hock, 2015). The New Economic Policy resulted in urbanisation of all ethnic groups, especially the Malays. The proportion of urban population among Malays increased from 15% in 1970 to roughly 70% in 2010. Consequently, the ethnic composition of urban areas changed drastically. While Chinese made up 58.5% of the urban population in 1970, their share declined to 28.9% in 2010. In contrast, Malay's share increased from 27.6% to 47% during the same period (Tey, 2014).

Migrants tend to be young. A major characteristic of migrants after 2000 is that women migrants outnumbered men among those aged 20–29 years. This may be explained by the strong labour demand of factories in urban areas that employ female workers (Tey, 2014). Another reason may be the pull of colleges and universities that are concentrated in urban areas (Tey, 2014), given that more women than men are enrolled in higher education. At the same time, the educational attainment of Malays grew substantially. This is partly due to the preferential policy that gives advantage to Malays enrolled in higher learning (Swee-Hock, 2015).

Traditionally, Malaysian families provided care for older family members at home, and the use of long-term care facilities was uncommon (Swee-Hock, 2015; Da Vanzo and Chan, 1994). Due to the rapid outmigration of young adults, a growing number of older people are living separately from their children. The study conducted in rural Malaysia (Evans et al., 2018) found that Malays tend to receive support from nearby adult children living in local areas. Chinese older persons, whose children tend to live far, receive support from friends and neighbours (Evans et al., 2018). Assistance from outmigrant children was mostly financial and informational, and practical assistance was either substituted by money or provided solely during periods of ill health.

Box 5: Population Ageing, Intergenerational Caregiving, and Migration in Indonesia

While sustaining a relatively higher level of population growth among East and Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia is expected to undergo rapid population ageing in the next few decades. According to the latest official population projections released by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in August 2018, the proportion of the population aged 65 years and above will increase from the current level of 6% to 14% in 2045, when the total population will reach 310 million (BPS, 2018). Given the inadequacy of social safety and institutionalised care schemes for older people, rapid population ageing raises challenges to meet the growing demand for caregiving in Indonesia.

As in many other Asian countries, the traditional social norm that adult children should support their parents is embedded in the intergenerational relationships in Indonesia. From a demographic perspective, this is sustained by the extended family system, where the family is the potential source of informal care for older people. In the 2010 census, for instance, over 35% of the total older persons lived in a three-generation household (BPS, 2012). The proportion of those living with children and grandchildren are higher for the older population; 40% for those aged 70–79 years and 44% for those 80 years and over. The high proportion of older people living in a multi-generation household imply the importance of family members as primary caregivers.

The sustainability of these caregiving arrangements through intergenerational support has been increasingly challenged particularly in rural areas, where fertility decline and outmigration have accelerated population ageing at a faster pace than in urban areas (UNFPA, 2014). Rapid population ageing and the traditional caregiving regime can impede migration, or residential mobility, of the young-adult population, one of the most salient dimensions of Indonesian demography (Rammohan and Magnani, 2012). The impact of population ageing and the growing demand for aged care on population mobility is expected to be greater in rural areas, where the traditional norm on the extended family system is more persistent and the institutionalised welfare and caregiving services are underdeveloped.

As a result of continuing fertility decline, the shrinking family size and the declining number of siblings reduce the availability of informal care resources for older people in the future, while increasing the physical and physiological burdens on each family member, particularly at a younger age. These demographic and institutional settings will possibly challenge the role of Indonesia as a major supplier of overseas migrant care workers in the Asia-Pacific region.