Quality of Life Indicators in KOREA: Challenges and Opportunities

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CONTENTS

I. Background
II. Progress
III. Key Results
IV. Utilization of QoL
V. Discussion for Next Step
I

Background
I  Background

- Domestic Circumstances

Despite its successful economic growth and democracy, Korean society was faced with emerging social issues:

- Lowering Life Satisfaction
  - Fell from 61.5% to 47.3% between 1990 and 2002, according to the OECD

- Weakening Social Vitality
  - Low fertility rate (0.78 in 2022)
  - Rapid population aging
  - High suicide rate

- Social Coherence Issues
  - Social conflicts
  - Low trust

Policy interventions required
I Background

International Circumstances: Gaining Momentum of Measuring Well-being

Growing Awareness

- The focus shifting from the economic growth into the QoL and environment since 90’s
  - Growing recognition of the importance of QoL and sustainability
  - Need for overcoming the limitations of the GDP and its economic focus

International and National Efforts

- Country Cases
  - Canada – QoL (Quality of Life Framework)
  - U. K. – MNWB (Measuring National Well-being)
  - Japan – COWD (Cabinet Office Well-being Dashboard)
  - Spain – QoL (Quality of Life Indicators)
  - Bhutan – GNH (Gross National Happiness)
  - Italy – BES (Benessere Equo e Sostenibile)
  - Norway – QoL (Quality of Life in Norway)
  - New Zealand – LSD (Living Standards Dashboard)
I Background

More than 70% of OECD countries have developed national frameworks, development plans or surveys with a well-being focus.

LEGEND
Regular = Measurement frameworks
Italicized = Policy frameworks
Initiatives in grey font are known to have since been discontinued

Note: The year refers to the first published instance of the work.
https://doi.org/10.1787/1e1ecb53-en.
I Background

Social Circumstances in Korea

- Post-industrialization/Democratization social issues
  → Demands for shifting policy interests from economic growth into the quality of life

International Consensus in Measuring QoL

- Global agendas evolved from economic development toward the QoL and sustainability
- Much effort made at international and national levels

Need for measuring well-being and social development

Build understanding on Korean QoL and societal development
Provide basic data for creating policies aimed at improving QoL
Progress
Progress

What We’ve Achieved So Far

2011
Developed QoL framework

- Joint R&D activities with researchers
- 9 areas, 84 indicators

2012
Developed new indicators

- Civic engagement, subjective well-being
- Korea Social Integration Survey (KSIS)

2013
Incorporated experts’ opinions

- Gathering opinions from internal and external experts
- 12 areas, 83 indicators

2014
Indicator services
Indicator review committee

- Sharing QoL indicators on the website
- 12 areas, 81 indicators

2015
Held the 1st QoL forum

- Promoting the sharing of QoL indicators
- Theme of the forum: progress in measuring QoL and future tasks

2016
Held an international conference
Incorporated public opinions

- Conference theme: GDP plus Beyond
- Gathered opinions through 'Naver Knowledge iN' and 'www.idea.epeople.go.kr'

2017
Reorganized the indicator framework

- Reflecting the results of public opinion reviews
- Ensuring the consistency with other indicators
- 11 areas, 71 indicators

2018
Selected key indicators

• Joint R&D activities with researchers
• 9 areas, 84 indicators

2019
Disaggregated QoL indicators

- Subdividing indicators by age (youth/seniors)
- Developing 21 common regional items

2020
Conducted regional social surveys
Selected key indicators

2022
Publishing reports “Child & Youth Well-being 2022”

- Promoting the sharing of QoL indicators
- Theme of the forum: progress in measuring QoL and future tasks

- Reflecting the results of public opinion reviews
- Ensuring the consistency with other indicators
- 11 areas, 71 indicators

- Conference theme: GDP plus Beyond
- Gathered opinions through 'Naver Knowledge iN' and 'www.idea.epeople.go.kr'

- Subdividing indicators by age (youth/seniors)
- Developing 21 common regional items

- Joint R&D activities with researchers
- 9 areas, 84 indicators

- Publishing reports “Child & Youth Well-being 2022”
Progress

QoL Measurement Mandala: 3 dimensions, 11 domains

**Target**

**Environmental Conditions**
- Safe and sustainable environment
  - Environment, Safety

**Social Relationship**
- Mutually supportive and active community
  - Civic Engagement, Leisure, Family/Community

**Individuals**
- Capable individuals
  - Income/Consumption/Wealth, Health, Education, Housing, Employment/Wage

**Specifications**

The environment will be:
- Free from dangers; and
- Protected for a sustainable living

Communities will:
- Cultivate social coherence;
- Foster civic engagement; and
- Provide leisure activities and cultural experience

Each individual will:
- Have education to acquire knowledge and work ability;
- Benefit from economic comforts and social assurance; and
- Enjoy a healthy life.
Progress

Criteria for Selecting Indicators

Data Quality
- Official Statistics
- Coverage
- Time-series

Relevance
- Face Validity
- Output orientation
- Understandability
- Policy responsiveness
- Relevant to National context

Impartiality
- Not influenced by political orientation
## Summary of Korean QoL Indicators: 11 domains, 71 indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Objective indicator (42)</th>
<th>Subjective indicator (29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family · Community (3, 2)</td>
<td>Live-alone Elderly Rate, Social Isolation, Social Group Participation Rate</td>
<td>Family Relationship Satisfaction, Sense of Belonging to a Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (5, 2)</td>
<td>Life Expectancy, Healthy Life expectancy, Physical Activity Rate, Obesity Rate, Suicide Rate</td>
<td>Self-reported Health, Stress Self-recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (3, 3)</td>
<td>Preschool Enrollment Rate, Population with Tertiary Education, Employment Rate of College Graduates</td>
<td>Perception toward Effects of School Education, School Life Satisfaction, Degree of Education Cost Burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Wage (5, 1)</td>
<td>Employment Rate, Unemployment Rate, Average Monthly Wage, Working Hours, Proportion of Low-paid Workers</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Consumption Wealth (5, 2)</td>
<td>Gross National Income per Capita, Equivalised Median Income, Household Net Wealth, Household Debt Ratio, Relative Poverty Rate</td>
<td>Income Satisfaction, Consumption Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure (4, 2)</td>
<td>Leisure Time, Travel Days per Person, Ratio of Expenditure on Leisure, Participation in Culture, Art and Sport Event</td>
<td>Leisure Satisfaction, Sufficiency of Leisure Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing (5, 1)</td>
<td>Residential Area per Capita, Commuting Time to Office, Dwelling without Basic Facilities, Rent to Income Ratio, Home-ownership Rate</td>
<td>Housing Environment Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (3, 6)</td>
<td>Fine Dust Concentration Level(PM2.5), Urban Park Area per Capita, Waterworks Supply Rate in Rural Area</td>
<td>Climate Change Recognition, Air quality Satisfaction, Water Quality Satisfaction, Soil Quality Satisfaction, Noise Level Satisfaction, Green Environment Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety (7, 2)</td>
<td>Homicide Rate, Child Abuse Rate, Crime Victimization Rate, Child Mortality Rate from Safety Accidents, Industrial Accident Mortality Rate, Number of Fire Fatalities, Road Traffic Accident Fatality Rate</td>
<td>Feeling Safe Walking Alone at Night, Perception toward Societal Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement (2, 5)</td>
<td>Voter Turnout Rate, Voluntary Work Participation Rate</td>
<td>Perception of Political Empowerment, Citizenship, Corruption Perceptions Index, Interpersonal Trust, Institutional Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Wellbeing (0, 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Life Satisfaction, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Frequency: Annual 45, Biennial 23, Quinquennial 3
## Progress

### Showing recent trends: A Traffic Light Dashboard

- **Improved**
  
  The recent measure indicates an improved QoL compared to the previous one.
  
  \[ X_t - X_{t-1} > 0 \]

- **No change**
  
  The recent QoL measure is the same as the previous measure.
  
  \[ X_t - X_{t-1} = 0 \]

- **Deteriorated**
  
  The recent measure indicates a worse QoL compared to the previous one.
  
  \[ X_t - X_{t-1} < 0 \]

### Key Indicators: 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family and Community</td>
<td>social isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>life expectancy, suicide rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>school life satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and Wage</td>
<td>employment rate, unemployment rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income, Consumption, Wealth</td>
<td>GNI per capita(real), relative poverty rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>leisure time, leisure satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>dwelling without basic facilities, rent to income ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>fine dust concentration level(PM2.5), water quality satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>feeling safe walking alone at night, industrial accident mortality rate, road traffic accident fatality rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>corruption perceptions index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Wellbeing</td>
<td>life satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Results
### Key Results

#### Dashboard (March, 2024)

- **Improved**: 49 (69.0%)
- **Deteriorated**: 20 (28.2%)
- **No change**: 2 (2.8%)

**Total**: 71

1. The parts marked with * are based on the 2023 measurements.
2. The blue colored parts are updated in March, 2024.

Note 1) Improved
Note 2) Deteriorated
Note 3) No change
Key Results

Covid-19 and QoL

Leisure activities

Travel Days per Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit: day/year</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation in Culture, Art, Sports Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit: day/year</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trust

Interpersonal Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit: %</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit: %</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Results

Covid-19 and QoL

Social Activities and Network

Social Group Participation Rate

- All
- 19-29
- 50-59

Social Isolation

Obesity rate

Unit: %
### Key Results

#### Covid-19 and QoL

#### Environment

**Fine Dust (PM2.5)**

- **Unit:** %
- **2015:** 26.1
- **2016:** 26.0
- **2017:** 25.0
- **2018:** 23.2
- **2019:** 23.6
- **2020:** 19.4
- **2021:** 18.7
- **2022:** 17.9

#### Air quality satisfaction

- **Unit:** μg/m³
- **2010:** 36.0
- **2012:** 40.1
- **2013:** 36.0
- **2014:** 31.7
- **2015:** 28.6
- **2018:** 38.2
- **2020:** 42.3

#### Employment

**Employment rate**

- **Unit:** %
- **All:** 70.8
- **Male:** 69.8
- **Female:** 71.5

**Employment rate of college graduates**

- **Unit:** %
- **2011:** 50.1
- **2012:** 50.3
- **2013:** 50.9
- **2014:** 51.6
- **2015:** 52.9
- **2016:** 54.1
- **2017:** 54.8
- **2018:** 55.6
- **2019:** 56.4
- **2020:** 57.3
- **2021:** 58.2
- **2022:** 59.6
Key Results

The Trend of the Last Decade – Constant Improvement

Population with Tertiary Education

Dwelling without Basic Facilities

Equivalised Median Income

Child Mortality Rate from Safety Accidents
The Trend of the Last Decade – Constant Improvement, But Still Higher than OECD Average

Source: OECD, Stat (OECD Income Distribution Database, retrieved in Jan 2024)

Note: ① These are based on disposable income.
② The 2017 data for Iceland; the 2018 data for Ireland, Italy, Japan, Poland; the 2019 data for Austria, Belgium, Czech, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain; the 2020 data for Australia, Chile, Germany, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Turkey and the 2021 data for the United States were used.
### Key Results

#### The Trend of the Last Decade – Constant Improvement, But Still Higher than OECD Average

**Suicide Rate in OECD (2020)**

Unit: deaths per 100 000 population (standardized rates)

Source: OECD, OECD Health Statistics (retrieved in Aug, 2023)

Note:

① These are aged-standardized suicide rates.

② New Zealand and Norway used data of the year 2016; France and Italy data of the year 2017; and Belgium, Sweden, Ireland data of the year 2018; Türkiye, Slovak Republic, Portugal, Canada, Hungary data of the year 2019
III Key Results

The Trend of the Last Decade – Constant Improvement, But Still Lower than OECD Average

Life satisfaction of OECD (Average of 2020 ~ 2022)

Unit: Scores (on a scale of 10)

Source: SDSN 「World Happiness Report 2023」
Note: ① This is based on the average values from 2020 to 2022.
② This is an evaluation item for life based on average scores on a scale of 0 to 10.
III Key Results

The Trend of the Last Decade – Constant Deterioration

**Live-alone Elderly Rate**
- Unit: persons 2000,000
- Data points from 2000 to 2023
- Graph showing a steady increase in the rate.

**Child Abuse Rate**
- Unit: cases/100,000 population
- Data points from 2001 to 2022
- Graph showing a consistent increase in abuse cases.

**Household debt ratio**
- Unit: %
- Data points from 2008 to 2022
- Graph showing an upward trend in household debt.

**Obesity rate**
- Unit: %
- Data points from 2001 to 2022
- Graph showing an increase in obesity rate over the years.
### Key Results

#### Recent Key Change Indicators

**Life Expectancy**

- **Unit:** Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Household Net Wealth**

- **Unit:** KRW 10,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>26,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>27,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>29,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>31,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>34,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>35,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>36,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>39,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>40,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>42,334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV

Utilization of QoL
Share QoL measures

- Quarterly update QoL indicators on the website (www.index.go.kr/life)

- Publish annual analysis reports (~2019)
IV Utilization of QoL

Korean Quality of Life Measurement Forum Held Annually

'15 The Outcomes and Challenges of QoL Measurement in Korea
'16 The Domestic Implementation of Beyond GDP Agenda
'17 Relating QoL Indicators to the System of Indicators/Disaggregation of Measurement by region and life course
'18 The Use of the QoL measurement for Policies
'19 The direction of Social Indicators reorganization/Disaggregation of Measurement by region and life course
'20 Quality of Life in Korea and Youth QoL
'21 QoL changes caused by COVID-19 and elderly QoL
'22 Measurement of Happiness and QoL and the Utilization in Policymaking
'23 Societal Changes and QoL During Digital Transformation
'24 QoL Measurement, 10 years behind us and 10 years ahead
IV Utilization of QoL

Measurement Enhancement

Disaggregation by life stage: measuring the QoL of specific target groups in policymaking

- **Aged 0-17**
  - Children & Youths Well-being
  - Research in 2018
  - Co-Research in 2019~21
  - Publish in 2022

- **Aged 18-34**
  - Young Adult Well-being
  - Research in 2022

- **Aged 35-64**
  - The elderly Well-being
  - Research in 2019~2020

- **Aged 65 and over**
IV Utilization of QoL

Children & Youth Well-being Framework

- Subjective Well-being
  - Relationship
  - Health
- Learning & Competence
- Safety & behavior
- Material situation, housing & environment
- Leisure, activity & participation

Demographic & Social Backgrounds

- Population
- Social Environment

Publish annual report

Children & Youth Well-being in Korea

Summary 2022
IV Utilization of QoL

Measurement Enhancement

Sub-national Disaggregation: Standardizing disaggregated regional indicators by means of promoting common indicators related to QoL

Expected to encourage policy makers to use regional social indicators and provide consistent support for the advancement of indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Common Indicators (21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Well-being</td>
<td>Life Satisfaction, Positive emotions, Negative emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income · Consumption · Wealth</td>
<td>Average income of Household, Income Satisfaction, Degree of Difficulty in a Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Transportation</td>
<td>Housing Environment Satisfaction, Transportation Satisfaction, Period of Residence and Permanent Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Sufficiency of Job, Job Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Educational Environment Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Leisure Satisfaction, Satisfaction with Time Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Medical Service Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td>Interpersonal Trust, Institutional Trust(Optional Item), Social Support, Sense of Belonging to a Community, Satisfaction with Social Welfare Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Fear of Crime Victimization, Evaluation of Safety Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Environmental Awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion for Next Step

Is it necessary to make a composite index

- The pros and cons of composite indicator and dashboard should be reviewed.
- When making a composite index, we should consider the weight of each indicator and area, the rate of change of indicators, etc.
- We also need to examine the best case of a country making a composite index.

What efforts are required for utilization in policy-making?

- Since policy-making is processed separately by each government agency, it is difficult to promote well-being policies as a whole. When the ruling party switches, it has a possibility of suspending well-being policies.
- For the consistent promotion of well-being policies, the collaboration of NSO with the office of the Prime Minister or ministry of budget is necessary.

International comparability vs. national specialty?

- For enhancement of international comparability, standardization of indicators and development of guidelines are needed.
- Consider OECD BLI indicators and OECD KEP on well-being
Thank YOU!