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Working Party on the Information Economy

**ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR SENIORS
THE KOREAN “SILVER-NET” CASE STUDY**

12-13 June 2012

This document is a case study on the Korean Silver-net and is part of the OECD Project on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for a Silver Economy. This case study will serve as a basis for discussion at the OECD Workshop on “Anticipating the Special Needs of the 21st Century Silver Economy: Smart Technologies and Silver Innovation” that will be held in Tokyo on 12-13 September 2012.

The case study was researched and drafted by the Secretariat (E.Ronchi) with the input and contribution of Prof. TM. Chung and Dr. L.Yunhee (Korea Internet and Security Agency).

The working party is invited to comment on all the case studies feeding into the workshop by the end of June so that the comments can be integrated and prepared for the workshop in September.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR SENIORS 3

THE KOREAN “SILVER-NET” CASE STUDY 3

 Introduction 3

 Silver-net: The key features 3

THE KOREAN SILVER SOCIETY’S MAIN NEEDS 5

 Staying active after early retirement in Korea 6

 Gradual erosion of the traditional family structure 7

 A Rising Public Health and Social Emergency: Depression 7

 Long-term care needs 8

THE GROWING ECONOMIC WEIGHT OF THE COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SERVICES SECTOR 10

 Social entrepreneurship for the elderly in Korea 11

 Business run by senior “clubs” 12

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR A SILVER ECONOMY IN KOREA 13

 The Silvers Online: Addressing the Digital Divide is a National Priority 14

THE BENEFITS OF THE ONLINE SILVER SOCIAL NETWORKS 16

 The benefits of the Silver-net news initiative 17

CONCLUSIONS 19

NOTES 20

ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR SENIORS THE KOREAN “SILVER-NET” CASE STUDY

Introduction

1. As the Korean population ages, an increasing number of older people are living alone. Isolation can arise from active choice, but it may also be the result of the loss of close family members and friends, health problems, of disability or handicap, geographical remoteness, or lack of access to services.
2. There is increasing recognition that health in older age has as much to do with physical health as mental, spiritual and social well-being. It may even be argued that the latter is more important to one's quality of life than absence of illness or handicap.
3. The aim of the Silver-net in Korea is to address the risks of growing isolation of the elderly, the associated increasing rates of depression and the need for greater social inclusion.
4. Innovation to address social exclusion has a public good nature, leading to under-investment by the market whilst the social welfare state is increasingly reducing its response, especially in the context of fiscal consolidation. This case study is an example of how social networks and new information and communication technologies (ICTs) can provide innovative solutions with potentially very important social and health gains, for better and more fulfilling lives in an ageing society.

Silver-net: The key features

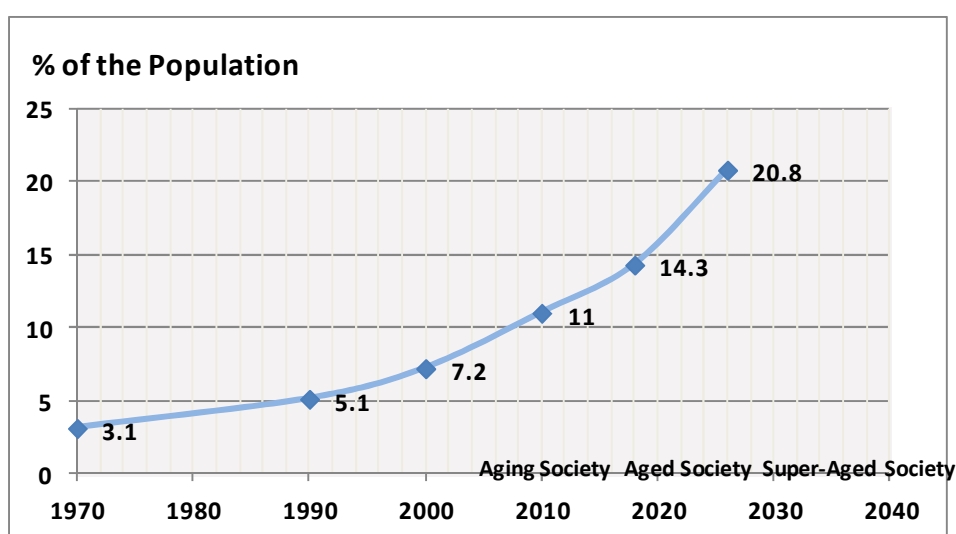
5. The Korean Silver-net grows out early models of social enterprises and is strongly rooted in the country's long tradition of community involvement in the provision of social care.
6. Silver-net is Korea's most respected non-profit organization specializing in computer and Internet education for the elderly. Silver-net's mission is to provide education to older adults for improving their digital literacy and access to computer technologies to enhance their lives and resolve the digital divide between age groups. Since its founding, in September 2000, Silver-net has reached out to over forty thousand seniors, providing encouragement, learning opportunities and new motivation to explore the Internet.
7. The aim of the organisation, financed largely by government, has been to provide the elderly with computer skills, and through computer use, a higher level of social support and connectivity, and more positive attitudes toward ageing.
8. Silver net has worked since its inception with over 50 Non-governmental organisations and in collaboration with universities, private organizations and the business sector.
9. To more effectively promote the use of computers and of the Internet among the elderly, the organisation has established a number of associated programmes, among which the Silver-net news. The goal of the latter initiative is to develop a social network and online community for older adults where members can share experience and opinions, enhance their lives and the lives of others.
10. The Silver-net news was launched in 2002 with the motto, "silvers solve problems by themselves". It is a non-political and not-for-profit network. The social network which went live in 2008 (www.silvernetnews.com), includes today 197 silver journalists working across the nation and is accessed by more than 5000 silvers. It is a representative press that is based on volunteer work.

11. The aim is to encourage the silvers to use the computer and the Internet to post news and comment online on welfare and the environment, civil society, living healthy, the economy and international issues. Silver journalists take pictures which they themselves edit when writing articles, then load on a news story online. The online site includes links to relevant health and social information.

THE KOREAN SILVER SOCIETY'S MAIN NEEDS

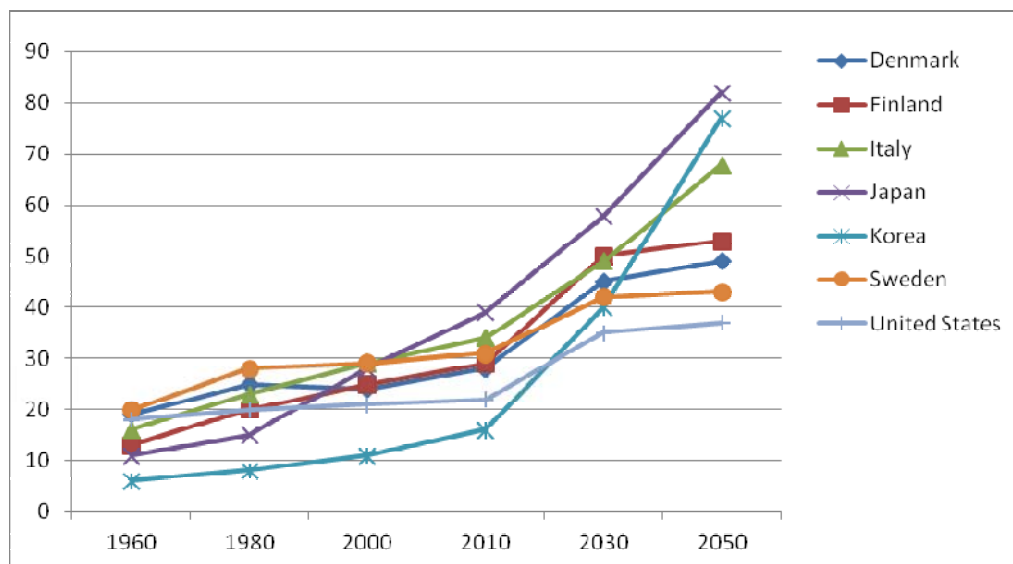
12. In Korea, the proportion of the elderly population almost doubled in the last 20 years, and is expected to double again by 2020. In the next two decades, the elderly population will probably represent one third of the population; that means, there will be fifteen million elders living in Korea by the year 2040, a ten-fold increase in a 60 year span. Korea will enter an aged society by 2018 and will become a super-aged society by 2025 (Figure 1). This speed of population aging in Korea is – just like for Japan- one of the fastest in the developed world and has important implications for the health and social systems of the country.

Figure 1. Elderly 65 + as a % of the Korean Population



Source: Korean National Statistics Office 2011

13. The degree and intensity of this process is best described through the old age dependency ratio- which is the ratio of the number of aged 65+ compared to the number of people 15-64 (the working population). This ratio will grow more than 50% in Korea between now and 2050. In 2050 it is expected to be 77% (Figure 2), second only to Japan, at 82%. This moves Korea from being the third youngest country in 2007 to the second oldest in little over 40 years. By 2050 the population of non-working age will almost be as large as the population of working age.

Figure 2. Observed and Projected Senior (+65) Dependency Ratio (1960-2050)

Source: OECD Factbook 2010

14. These trends will have significant effects on the overall Korean work force and its productivity. As the old-age dependency ratio increases, it will also put severe pressure on public finances for old age income and health security. The balance of evidence suggests that older people as a whole may account for 30-40% of all health care costs, primarily due to the prevalence of chronic diseases in the population 65+ and for the increase in health expenditures incurred near to death- regardless of the age of death. As health care costs already account for about 7% of GDP, even a modest growth in health care costs would imply pressure on the system. The range of needs will likely expand with the steep rise of the 80 year old cohorts.

Staying active after early retirement in Korea

15. In Korea, retirement is still predominantly at age 55. The importance of age and experience in determining wage levels is a major reason for early retirement. Companies for which wages are closely linked to seniority hire fewer older workers (Lee, 2008)¹. In 2005, 85% of firms with more than 300 workers had adopted mandatory retirement below the age of 60.

16. The average employment tenure peaks in the 45-to-49-age group, well below most other OECD countries, where the peak is in the 55-to-64-age group – and then falls sharply.

17. Seniors in Korea would prefer, however, to continue to work until older ages. According to the Korean National Statistics Office, KNSO, (2008) (Table 1), about 57% of people aged 55 and over would want to continue working, with men wanting to continue working more than women (71.8% vs. 44.5%) and the 55–64 more than the 65–79 cohorts (71.5% vs. 41.7%). Even among the 65–79-year-old group, almost 42% would prefer to work, and the major reasons are to continue to earn a living and stay active (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of the Old-aged who want to work and their reasons, 2008

| | Want to work | | | | | Do not wish to work | Total |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | Total | To Stay Active | To earn a Living | For Health Purposes | Other | | |
| All | 57.1 | 19.8 | 31.2 | 1.7 | 6.0 | 42.9 | 100.0 |
| Men | 71.8 | 27.7 | 36.8 | 2.3 | 7.4 | 28.2 | 100.0 |
| Women | 44.5 | 13.0 | 26.6 | 1.2 | 4.9 | 55.5 | 100.0 |
| 55-64 | 71.5 | 24.6 | 40.5 | 1.6 | 6.3 | 28.5 | 100.0 |
| 65-79 | 41.7 | 14.6 | 21.4 | 1.8 | 3.9 | 58.3 | 100.0 |

Source: KNSO (2008), Supplementary survey of the economically active population (age 55 and over).

18. About three-quarters of Koreans, once retired, self-employ. As a result, a third of workers over age 50 are self-employed, compared to 13% of those under that age. The proportion of self-employed workers in 2010, according to the Korean National Assembly Budget Office was 31.3%, and Korea has the highest self-employment rate among OECD countries. As for workers still employed past 50, more than two-thirds in 2007 worked in firms with less than 100 workers and a majority were non-regular workers. Among these, many join voluntary or not-for profit sectors.

Gradual erosion of the traditional family structure

19. In Korea, the family has traditionally played a key role both in caring for the elderly and in providing income support. (Phang, 2006).

20. The supportive role of the traditional extended family is, however, declining rapidly. One reason for this is that younger generations (in general those born after 1970) are less willing or able to provide support for parents within the household, as tradition would have it. Between 1984 and 1998, the proportion of elderly people not living with their children more than doubled to 47 per cent (OECD, 2007).² This feature is related to rapid urbanization in Korea: the proportion of the urban population in the overall population has increased from 17% in 1950 to about 90% in 2005 (KNSO, 2005). The changing patterns of family formation and dissolution contribute to the changing nature of family support mechanisms. People are older when they marry for the first time: the mean age at first marriage for women has increased from 24.9 in 1985 to 27.5 years of age in 2005 (an increase which closely reflects the trend of the OECD-average). Compared to other OECD countries the marriage rate in Korea remains high, but declined sharply over the 1996-2003 period. Over the same period the divorce rate more than doubled, and is well above the OECD average.

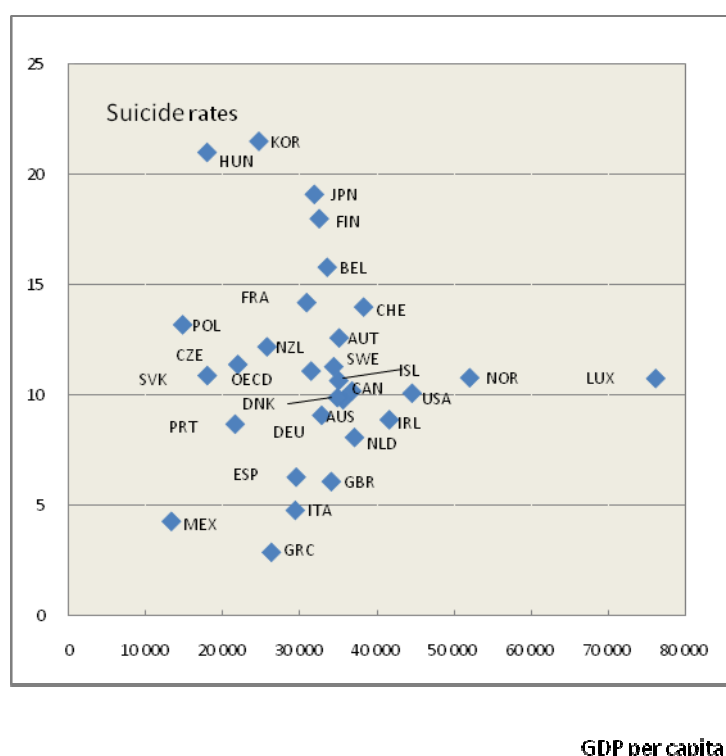
A Rising Public Health and Social Emergency: Depression

21. About 25% of elderly live alone, and the proportion has been steadily increasing. Although not necessarily a consequence of single life, a recent study reports that in 2010, up to a million elders across the nation suffered from significant depressive symptoms³. With the expected tripling of the elderly population in the next 40 years, the number of the elderly population in Korea diagnosed with a major depression could reach beyond a million, and those with depressive symptoms four million.

22. According to the mortality data published by the Korean Statistical Information Services in 2010, the suicide rate of the elderly is increasing sharply. The suicide rate of men over age 65 increased by 5.4 times from 1990 to 2009. According to a Korean National Police Agency, the suicide rate in Korea in 2009 was 29.9 for every 100,000 persons.

23. The figures are higher than those released recently in the OECD Factbook 2010 (Figure 3). The OECD data shows 21.5 suicides out of every 100,000 persons, making the suicide rate in Korea the highest out of 31 OECD countries included in this analysis. Japan and Finland come close at 19.1 and 18 suicides per 100,000 people respectively. Suicide rates show no systematic relation with GDP per capita.

Figure 3. Suicide rates and per capita GDP



OECD Factbook 2010: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics -- © OECD 2010

24. According to the Korean National police report, people older than 61 were the most vulnerable to suicide, at 31.6%, followed by those in the 41-50 age group at 19.0%. Those in the 31-40 age group made up 17.2% of suicides while those in the 51-60 age group made up 16.6%. Preventing depression in old age, therefore, has become a national priority in Korea. It is worth noting that in other rapidly aging societies such as Japan and Finland the rates are similarly very high.

Long-term care needs

25. Both home care and institutional care are provided on a limited basis and public funding under the 'Older Persons Welfare Act' is restricted to relatively poorer elderly people and funded out of general taxation. It is provided free to elderly people who are on social assistance benefits and on a subsidised basis to elderly people on the margins of the social assistance level. Those with higher incomes have to meet the total cost (OECD, 2005).

26. If these arrangements were maintained in future, it is likely that there would be growing unmet need for long-term care. Hence, the development of home-care services for the elderly, dependent people would seem to be particularly desirable in Korea. In most OECD countries there has been a relative shift in long-term care services away from the long-stay institutions which had originally replaced much informal care towards home-care. That is because many elderly people prefer to remain in their own homes when they become dependent. Also, home care can enable informal carers to continue to play a role in care, especially when such carers are themselves supported by formal carers and/or cash benefit. ICTs and increasing digital literacy have a significant role to play in enabling this shift.

THE GROWING ECONOMIC WEIGHT OF THE COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SERVICES SECTOR

27. In Korea the community, social and personal services sector has slowly grown to reach strategic importance for long-term growth as well as for the welfare state. The sector has shown high employment absorbing power, which can contribute to mitigating some of the problems currently facing the Korean economy. Moreover, this sector by itself is showing great potential to address unmet social needs and the challenges of an ageing society.

28. In Korea, the service sector has been steadily growing to take up 56% of the economy's total value added and 65% of its employment in 2005. Due to the changes in the economic structure, demand for services as intermediate inputs, like that for business services (finance, insurance, legal services, accounting services, and so on), has expanded. At the same time, household expenditure on services, such as travel, education and cultural services has rapidly increased.⁴

29. The total share of services and of community, social and personal services have increased quite rapidly in Korea since 1970. The proportion of the service sector in total number of people employed has also increased from 34.3% in 1970 to 68.7 in 2009 (Table 2). Personal and producer services absorbed more than half the increase in total employment for the period 1992~2004, which was about 5 million. New employment of 1.63 million was created in personal services and an additional 1.39 million in producer services.

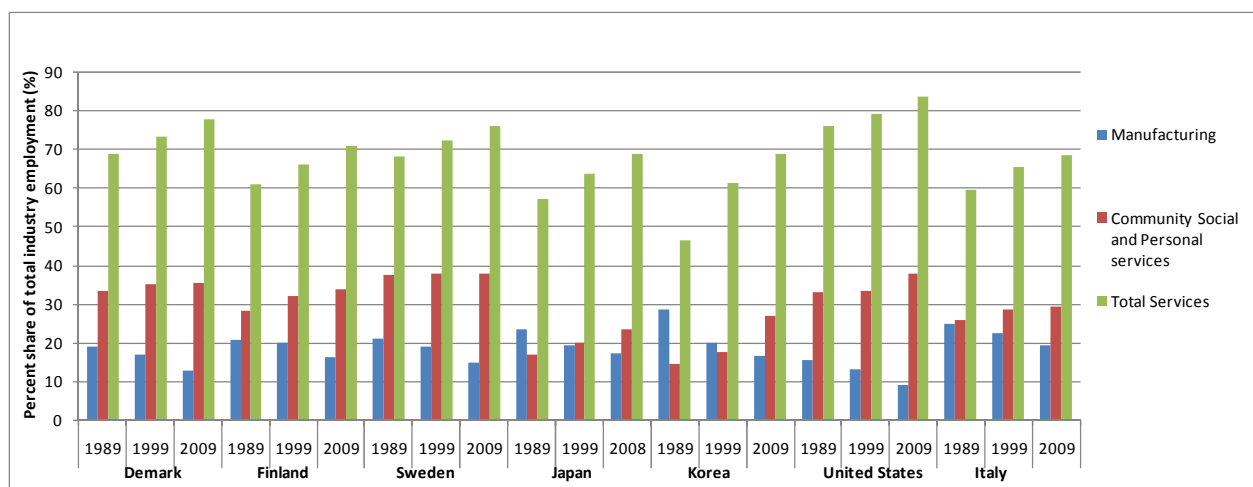
Table 2. Employment share of the services sector in Korea

| | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2009 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total Services | 54.8 | 61.2 | 65.1 | 68.7 |
| Community, Social and Personal Services | 14.9 | 18.1 | 21.3 | 26.9 |
| <i>Public administration and defence compulsory social security</i> | 3.2 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| <i>Education</i> | 5.0 | 5.6 | 6.9 | 7.8 |
| <i>Health and social work</i> | 1.5 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 4.2 |
| <i>Other community social and personal service activities</i> | 5.1 | 6.8 | 8.1 | 10.5 |
| Manufacturing | 23.6 | 20.3 | 18.5 | 16.3 |
| Other Sectors ¹ | 21.6 | 18.5 | 16.4 | 14.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Note: 1) Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, mining and quarrying, utilities (electricity, gas and water supply) and construction. Source OECD STAN database 2010-2011

30. The service sector's share in total employment in Korea has been growing fast enough to match the levels of countries like Italy or Japan (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Share of Employment by selected industry, 1989, 1999 and 2009



Source: OECD STANDATA 2010 Note: Data for Japan for 2009 is not available, 2008 was used instead.

31. Household expenditure on services has also increased rapidly in Korea. The ratio of spending on services in total household consumption expenditure increased from 35% in 1980 to 57% in 2005 in nominal terms, and from 48% to 56% in real terms. Factors such as high penetration of telecommunication devices or the high propensity to spend on education compared with income level appear to contribute to the increase in the share of services in household consumption in the country.

Social entrepreneurship for the elderly in Korea

32. Social entrepreneurship can be an important driver of social innovation and of services that improve the quality of life of older individuals and communities. Social enterprises (co-operatives, including credit unions, associations, non-profit organisations engaged in service provision and/or the creation of jobs and enterprises, and civic movements) have been developing in Korea since the late 1990s. The Social Enterprise Promotion Act (2007) defines social enterprises as hybrid companies that focus both on profits and social aims. These companies include both “social enterprises providing social services” and enterprises aiming at the social and professional integration of disadvantaged workers “work integration social enterprise” (WISE).

33. In 2010, there were 353 certified social enterprises, employing around 11 000 people (0.1% of dependent employment), of which 6 000 were disadvantaged. The principal activities of these social enterprises were social welfare (52 enterprises, 20.7 per cent), environmental activities including recycling (41 enterprises, 16.3 per cent) and care service (33 enterprises, 13.1 per cent). There are also childcare, education, health and culture as principal activities (OECD, 2011).⁵

34. From the Korean government point of view, the ideal model of social enterprise is a sustainable enterprise, operating in the market and employing a majority – or the largest possible number – of disadvantaged people, with temporary and partial support from public authorities. Beyond differences across target groups, this is indeed the kind of ideal model which prevails today and is associated with the social enterprise concept in South Korea.⁶

Business run by senior “clubs”

35. Faced with the rapid ageing of its population, alongside social enterprises, the Korean government launched in 2004 a “Job creation for the elderly” programme. This programme includes different measures, such as the creation of temporary job places, the promotion of volunteering, the provision of information about available job places and the allocation of incentives to enterprises employing the elderly.

36. This programme is carried out by various organisations: local governments, community welfare centres, welfare centres for the elderly, Korean associations of elderly people and senior clubs, which are welfare centres specialised in creating jobs for the elderly.

37. Usually, these organisations are founded with the support of senior clubs, and are mainly run as not-for profits.

38. In general, the income that the elderly can secure through participation in such businesses is not sufficient to cover their living costs; however, the purpose of the Job creation for the elderly programme is primarily to support active ageing’ or the social integration of older people through economic activities.

39. In 2007, 77 enterprise-like organisations, employing a total of 831 seniors in areas such as artisanal manufacturing, social services and small restaurants were run in 40 senior clubs.

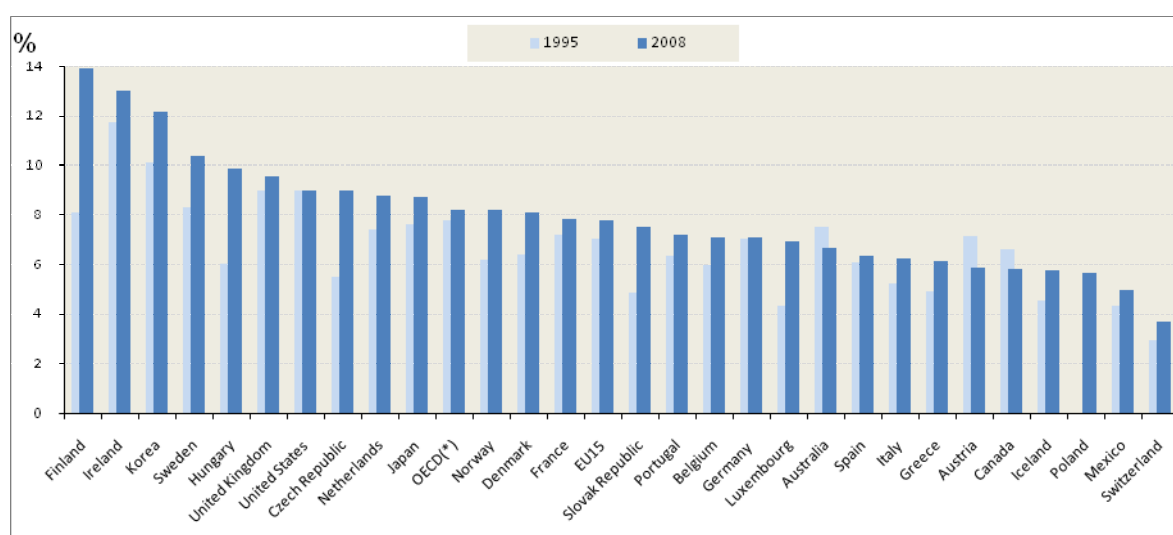
40. The Silver-net news initiative reviewed in this report emerges from this tradition of enterprises managed by seniors to enhance the social integration of seniors.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR A SILVER ECONOMY IN KOREA

41. The ICT industry is an important sector of the Korean economy and has become, in recent years, the country's main engine of growth. The ICT industry has played a very important role in the process of the country's recovery from the economic crisis of the 1990s and in moving forward to a new phase of development. According to the Korean Ministry of Finance and Economy,⁷ the ICT share of GDP rose from 7.7 per cent in 1997 to 15.3 per cent in 2000; and the ICT contribution to GDP growth amounted to 34 per cent in 1999 and 46 per cent in 2000.

42. Value added in the ICT sector increased as a share of business sector value added in Korea over the period 1995-2009, despite the economic downturn of the early 1990s (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Share of ICT value added in business sector value added, 1995 and 2009



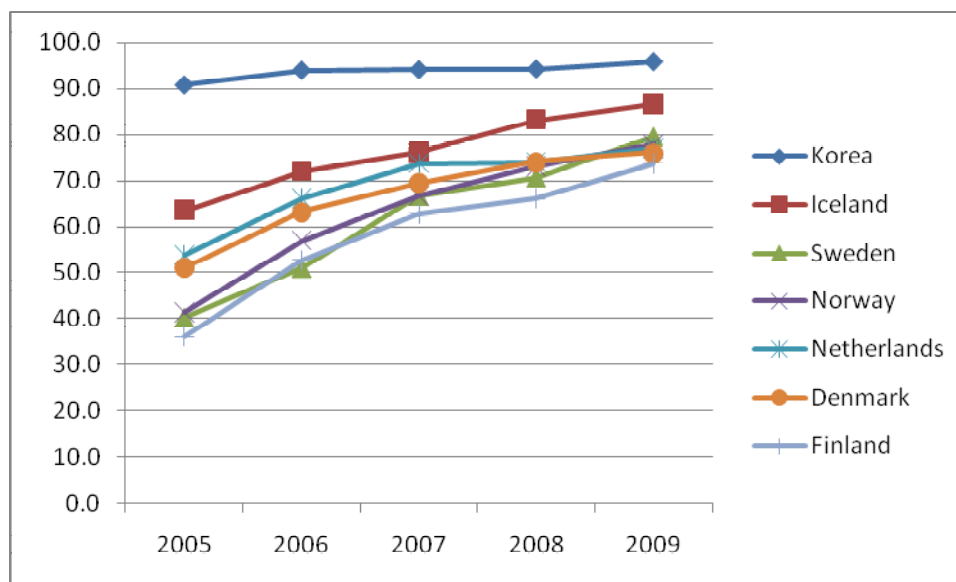
Source: Information Technology Outlook 2011

43. Korea ranks first among the OECD countries in terms of the number of households with broadband access, followed by the Nordic countries. According to the OECD, 95.9% of households have broadband access and 70 % of Koreans are now utilizing the Internet in their everyday lives (Figure 6). The Korean Information Infrastructure (KII) initiative initiated in the mid-1990s has contributed to this high uptake. The government followed KII with a series of 5-year programs that combined government loans with private sector contributions, including Cyber Korea 21 in 1999, e-Korea Vision 2006 in 2002, IT Korea Vision 2007 in 2003 and the Broadband Convergence Network (BcN) and IT 839 initiatives in 2004. Through these programs, South Korea enacted a number of successful efforts to spur broadband demand and digital literacy.

44. From 2000 to 2002, the government offered Internet and computer literacy programs targeting 10 million people, 21 per cent of the population, including women, the elderly, military personnel, disabled citizens and prison inmates. Low-price computers were distributed to allow more people to gain access to the Internet and over 4,000 free-of-charge information facilities were set up across the country. All schools were connected with the Internet for free or at discounted rates. This effort has resulted not only in a

significant demand and domestic market for the ICT industry but also in a high rate of use. In 2010 users spent a weekly average of 14.7 hours online (KISA, 2010 Survey on Internet Usage).

Figure 6. Households with broadband access (1), 2000-09 (percentage of all households)



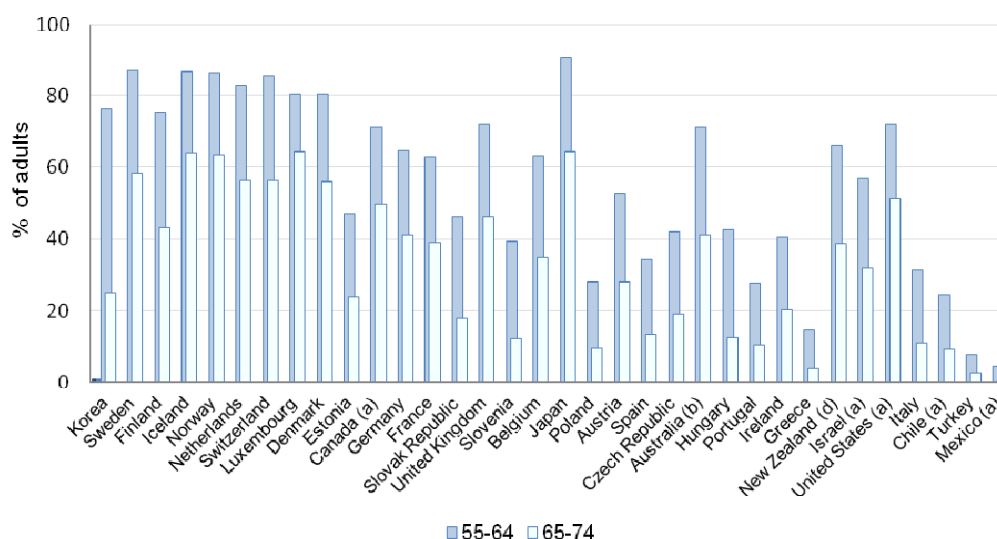
Source: Information Technology Outlook 2011

The Silvers Online: Addressing the Digital Divide is a National Priority

45. A recent survey by the Korean Internet & Security Agency (2011) found that the Internet usage in Korea is constantly increasing and as of 2010, the number of Internet users aged 3 and above was 37.01 million (usage rate 77.8%). Among them, 33.8% of Koreans aged 60 -79 and 8.3% of Korean aged 70+ go online.

46. Bridging the digital divide between the younger and older generations in the country has been a priority for the Korean Government since 1996.

Figure 7. Individuals using internet from any location by age group, 2010 or latest



Source: Information Technology Outlook 2011

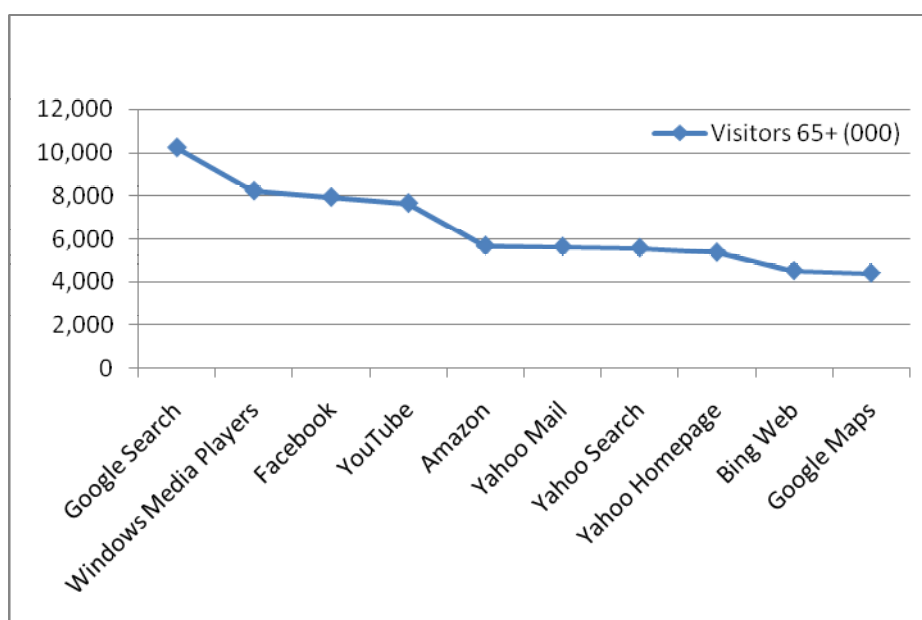
47. In 1996, the government promoted local pilot projects aimed at reducing the divide among different regions in the country. In compliance with commitments taken at the World Summit on the Information Society 2001, the country adopted the Digital Divide Act. The Act stipulated that a five-year master plan should be developed (2001-2005). Under this plan an ‘Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion’ was established to guide an implementation body for the Act. Forty major activities were implemented by this agency in six main priority areas: infrastructure, access to telecommunication, IT learning, contents for marginalized people, e-life, and global digital divide. The total budget for these activities was around USD 1.9 billion.⁸

THE BENEFITS OF THE ONLINE SILVER SOCIAL NETWORKS

48. A significant body of literature shows that increasing the usage of the internet among the 60+ can contribute to an improvement in their quality of life. A study conducted in the fall of 2009 by the Phoenix Center in the United States revealed that Internet use is, for example, an effective, low-cost way to expand social interactions, reduce loneliness, get health information and treatment, and, consequently, reduce depression among older adults.

49. Recent research by Owyang indicates that ‘wired’ seniors in the US are devoted Internet users with 69% of seniors going online on a typical day when compared to 56% of all Internet users (Owyang 2009).⁹ Nielsen reported in 2009¹⁰ that the top four most-visited destinations by Internet users over 65 were Google Search, Windows Media Player, Facebook and YouTube (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Top 10 Online Sites Visited by People 65+ in November 2009 (US Home and Work)



Source: The Nielsen Company, 2009; Inside Facebook <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2009/12/11/facebook-a-top-destination-for-users-over-65/>

50. Recent research in the United States also¹¹ shows that as older adults go online, a majority (53%) of them will use the Internet to locate information, and particularly to look up health information. In Canada, more than one-half of seniors in 2007 used the Internet to find information on travel, health, news and sports, or the weather and driving conditions. The Internet is also a particularly popular source of leisure for online seniors (65+) and even more so for the so-called boomers (45-64) (Veenhof and Timusk, 2009)¹². In 2007 playing games on the Internet was the second-most popular leisure activity among Canadian seniors; while downloading music was the third most common online activity mentioned by both age groups.

51. Park & Hwang (2010)¹³ report similar major reasons for Internet usage among the elderly in Korea: ‘entertainment’, ‘information acquisition’, ‘use for daily life’ and ‘education’. They also indicate that there is a correlation between the use of the Internet by the older people and life-satisfaction.

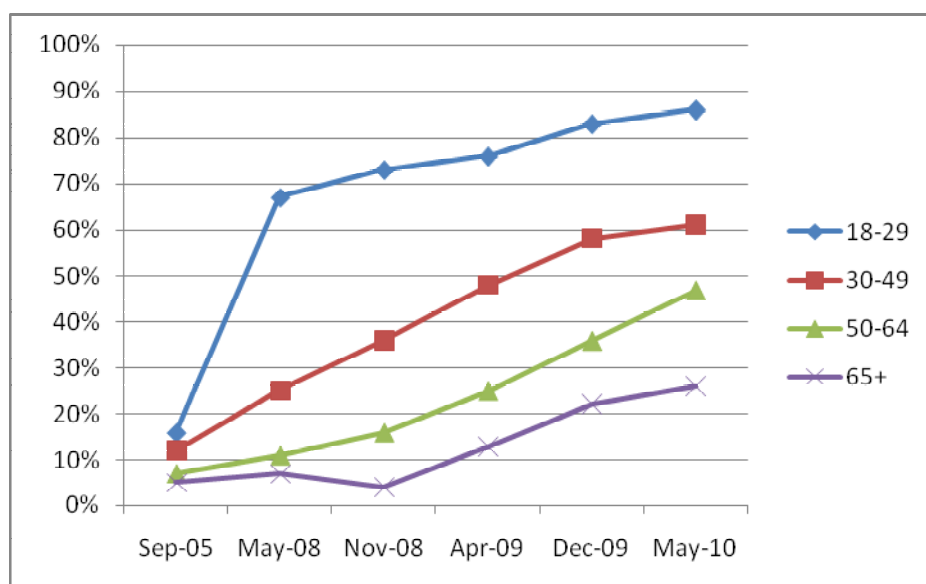
52. For many seniors, checking social networking sites has become part of daily computer usage, and the numbers of these intensive users is rising rapidly (Smith, 2008).¹⁴ Online social networking is described as online spaces that individuals use to present themselves and to establish or maintain connections with others (Ellison et al. 2006).¹⁵

53. Social networks on the Internet offer tremendous benefits for older individuals, providing an opportunity for families and friends to stay connected and to reconnect, increasing exchange and communication.

54. One in five seniors in Canada visits online social networks (Larose 2008)¹⁶ in order to be in contact with their grandchildren. The desire to give and receive information across generations is a key and universal reason for users to participate in social networking sites. (Boyd 2007).¹⁷

55. The Pew Internet & American Life Project¹⁸ reported in 2010 that the number of US seniors embracing social media grew significantly between 2005 and 2009. Social networking of internet users aged 50 and older nearly doubled, from 22% in April 2009 to 42% in May 2010. During the same period, use among people aged 65 and older grew 100%, from 13% to 26% (Figure 8).

Figure 9. Social networks use by Age in the United States (2005-2010)



Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project-Older Adults and Social Media August 27, 2010

56. As businesses begin to use social networks for product targeting and promotion, wired seniors can also use social network tools to investigate different products and services as well as engage in electronic commerce. Online businesses are eager to understand and capitalize on this new growing online customer segment.

The benefits of the Silver-net news initiative

57. In Korea, the Silver net news initiative has leveraged the power of online social networking to lessen the elders' level of anxiety toward the computer. Through the Silver-net initiative over 5000 seniors have developed a greater desire to participate in social life. According to a recent survey, the initiative has successfully:

- ***Helped older people overcome some of the barriers encountered when learning to use a computer:*** The Silver-net emphasizes the social benefits of the learning experience and instead of a passive style, encourages an interactive approach stimulating the elderly to get involved in the learning process.
- ***Motivated the older people to make greater use of e-government services.*** The Internet provides opportunities for online banking, buying, learning, and communicating with family and friends, all of which can be a great convenience for older adults.
- ***Promoted greater inclusion and improved mental well-being:*** Elderly who used ‘Silver-net’ reported that being online has helped them avoid loneliness. The Silver-net campaign is urging the elderly in Korea who have never been online to get connected as a way to help fight loneliness and depression.
- ***Contributed to the sharing of experience and know how:*** The Silver-net project contributes to increasing older people's self-esteem. As the elderly become more and more dependent on others, they begin to feel they are unimportant, and that others also perceive them to be so. The initiative helps the elderly to develop positive thinking and to feel more in control of their everyday lives.
- ***Increased inter-generational communication*** The project has been running online for almost ten years, allowing young people and older people to share their memories and emotional moments, learn new skills, improve communication and build self-esteem. This shows that bringing together different generations in this way can make a positive impact in the Korean community.
- ***Helped generate pride through community involvement:*** The major focus of Silver journalists is local news. They gather information for a news story through interviews, observations and documented searches about their local area. During the process, they can interact with local people, and participate or volunteer in local events or activities.

CONCLUSIONS

58. Since its dramatic industrial development in the 1960s, the Korean society has, like many other OECD countries began to experience significant demographic changes such as the increase of women's participation in economic activities, a rapidly ageing population, and changes in the family and traditional local communities' structures.

59. To deal with these issues, the Korean government introduced in 2006 a very ambitious policy entitled Social Vision 2030 which aimed, among other things, to encourage the formation of a social services market and promote social enterprises as an important means to deliver long term care and other services to the older populations.

60. In the frame of this policy, several new initiatives were also introduced to address the growing digital divide among different age groups, and regions in the country.

61. The Korean Silver-net initiative emerges from this social and policy context. It is a good example of how social innovation supported by public sector and information technologies can provide innovative solutions with potentially important social gains.

62. As older people become increasingly computer literate, they are clearly also becoming more comfortable using the Internet. This has the potential to boost e-commerce, computer sales as well as subscriptions for high-speed Internet access among this population. The promise of social networking, as a tool that can enable people to share news, photos, videos, links, contacts and status updates, has some unique applications for the senior populations. It can be used to lessen the risks of the growing isolation of the elderly, the associated increasing rates of depression and the need for greater social inclusion.

NOTES

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- Distributive Services : Wholesale and retail trade, transport and storage
 - Producer Services : Communication, finance, insurance, real estate, business services, renting of machinery and equipment, advertising and broadcasting
 - Social Services : Public administration and defence, education, health care and social welfare
 - Personal Services : Hotels and restaurants, movie and entertainment, other recreational services, cultural services, repairs, other personal services
 - Knowledge-based services are knowledge-intensive service-providing activities as communication, finance, insurance, real estate, advertising, business services, broadcasting, education, health care and social welfare, movie and entertainment, other recreational services and cultural services (OECD 1999).
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