Policy Report 2019-06

Social Cohesion: Current Issues and Countermeasures

– Part V Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion

Haesik Jung · Migon Kim · Eugene Yeo · Seonggeun Kim
Yeongyu Lyu · Sunhee Woo and Geunhye Kim

KIHASA
Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs

【Principal Researcher】

Haesik Jung Research Fellow, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs

【Publications】

A Study of Social Problem and Social Cohesion in Korea with Policy Recommendations, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA), 2017(co-author)

A Study of Development and Application of Social Cohesion Index, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA), 2016(co-author)

【Co-Researchers】

Migon Kim	Associate Research Fellow, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs
Eugene Yeo	Research Fellow, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs
Seonggeun Kim	Research Fellow, Korea institute of Public Administration
Yeongyu Lyu	Professor, Department of Social Welfare, Seoul Theological University
Sunhee Woo	Senior Researcher, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs
Geunhye Kim	Researcher, Korea institute for Health and Social Affairs

Social Cohesion: Current Issues and Countermeasures
– Part V Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion

Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs
Building D, 370 Sicheong-daero, Sejong city 30147 KOREA
http://www.kihasa.re.kr
ISBN: 978-89-6827-593-7 93330

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

I

Research Background and Purpose

I Research Background and Purpose

This report is an outcome of the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)'s Social Cohesion Policy Assessment Program (SCPAP). With the objective of identifying policy implications relevant to promoting social cohesion in South Korea, the program organizes annual society-wide surveys on various issues relating to social cohesion and reports the findings. Its past projects include the Survey on the Perceptions of Social Cohesion and Happiness (2014), Survey on Social Mobility and Social Cohesion (2015), Survey on Social Cohesion and Public Perceptions (2016), and Survey on Social Problems and Social Cohesion (2017).

The annual research that was conducted in 2018 focused on the relationship between social conflicts and social cohesion. The previous year's research had found that, in order to promote social cohesion in South Korea, it is important to convince the public of the proper and normal workings of social institutions in addition to reducing inequality and the instability of material conditions for living. The 2017 research also concluded that it was necessary to identify the patterns and causes of various social conflicts experienced by Koreans (Jung et al., 2017, p. 182). With the rapid changes in economic and social settings now contributing to the widening disparities in

perception among groups and generating conflicts on multiple points in line with the changing structure of distribution, Korean citizens are becoming even more keenly aware of the need for fairness in resource allocation. We have thus set ourselves to research and explore, in 2018, the different types and patterns of conflicts, how Koreans experience and process conflicts at the individual level, and how such experiences affect the state of social cohesion in Korea.

To this end, we interviewed 3,873 adult men and women across Korea using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire highlighted aspects of conflicts concerning the distribution of economic and political resources. To support in-depth analysis, it also raised questions that were intended to identify differences in public perceptions of class, generational, gender, and public conflicts, in addition to questions on the household and idiosyncratic differences of respondents. In an effort to ensure the comparability of the annual survey results across the years, the core common questions that had been included in the previous years' surveys were also retained.

This report elucidates the detailed design of the 2018 survey and provides an analysis of the results of that survey. Herein, the reader can find in-depth analyses of class, gender, generational, and public conflicts, as experienced and perceived by Koreans, as well as a summary of the survey findings, policy recommendations, and advice for future research.

II

Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion: Overview

Ⅱ Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion: Overview

The SCPAP survey of 2018 focuses mainly on conflicts that are widely regarded as obstacles to social cohesion in South Korea. Note that conflict is not necessarily the opposite of cohesion. In fact, the appropriate management and resolution of conflicts can serve to enhance social cohesion. Depending on the timing of the emergence of certain conflicts, however, such conflicts can be seen as obstructing social cohesion. Below, we summarize the types of social conflicts that can be said to be setting back or challenging social cohesion in Korea. The underlying assumption is that conflicts over distributive justice manifest most acutely along class lines; conflicts over changing values, along generational lines; and conflicts over gender equality and discrimination, along gender lines.

〈Table 1〉 Main Subjects of Questions in the Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion (2018)

Category	Subjects
Class conflicts	Degrees of class conflicts, degrees of class conflicts as experienced by different groups, degrees of inequality, perceived factors of success, perceived factors determining wages, perceived appropriate wages for different occupations, perceptions of the social elite, perceived legitimacy/illegitimacy of government intervention, perceptions of tax increases, preferences regarding government spending programs, perceptions of supporting elderly parents, experiences with and responses to violence at work, etc.
Generational conflicts	Preferences regarding freedom and equality, preferences regarding changing values, perceptions of generational conflicts, preferences

Category	Subjects
	regarding government's roles in economic growth and welfare, perceptions of Korean unification, etc.
Gender conflicts	Degrees of gender equality in different areas of society, experiences with and perceived causes of gender discrimination, degrees of perceived lookism and concerns about safety while out at night, perceptions of caring for young children, perceptions of the intent and effects of the Me Too movement, etc.
Public conflicts	Perceptions of the frequency of public conflicts, perceived causes of public conflicts, perceptions of the degrees of how public conflicts are managed and who should be responsible for managing them, perceived means of conflict management, perceptions of governmental and public sector cooperation, perceived effects of public conflicts on social cohesion, etc.

The 2018 survey forms part of the continuum of annual surveys that have been organized, since 2014, under the KIHASA's Social Cohesion Policy Assessment Program (SCPAP). The questionnaire for the 2018 survey, therefore, includes not only questions specific to the given year's goal, but also questions that have been repeated since the 2014 survey that are designed to support the tracing and monitoring of Koreans' changing perception of social cohesion and its factors. These common questions, which have been repeated over the past five years, include those concerning the general household and personal factors of respondents, financial situations of respondents' households, respondents' subjective happiness and life satisfaction, social capital, and respondents' subjective class identification and ideological orientations. See Table 2 for details.

〈Table 2〉 Common Subjects of Questions of the SCPAP Surveys, 2014 to 2018

Category		Subjects
General household and personal factors	Household structure and type	Number of members, number of elderly members, number of members with disabilities, number of members with chronic diseases, number of children, and household type
	Respondent type	Sex, age, education, marital status, employment status, occupation, employment security, and employment type
	Home ownership status	Residence type and home ownership status
	Social security	Whether participating in public insurances, i.e., National Pension, National Health Insurance, Employment Insurance, and Workers' Compensation Insurance
Household finance	Cost of living	Total cost of living, education expenses, medical expenses, and rent
	Income	Total household income, respondent's earned income, and National Basic Livelihood Security Program (NBLSP) benefits
	Assets and liabilities	Price of home, financial assets, other real estate and other assets, and total liabilities
Happiness and satisfaction		Overall life satisfaction, happiness, and depression
Social capital		Degree of trust in other people and society in general
		Participation in charity activities (volunteering and donations)
		Participation in elections
		Perceived conflicts between social groups
		Perceived roles of government
Self-identified class and ideological orientations		Subjective income class identification, ideological orientations, and national pride

The 2018 survey involved the participation of adults, aged 19 to 75, in 17 metropolitan cities and provinces, including Jeju, across Korea. The survey was conducted via in-person interviews from June to September of 2018.

Sampling for the 2018 survey was conducted using the

Census Output Areas (COAs). Statistics Korea introduced the COAs as census-based units for processing geographical and locational services. On average, there are approximately 200 households included in a COA. For the 2018 survey, we subjected 500 COAs to probability proportional-to-size systematic sampling, and then again systematically sampled eight households per COA to arrive at a final sample of 4,000 households in total. To ensure the random nature of the actual respondents participating in the survey, household members with the earliest birthdays in their respective households were selected as the final respondents. Respondents were permitted to seek help from the heads of their respective households or their spouses when the respondents themselves did not have sufficient information to answer questions about their household situations, such as finance-related questions. The final surveyed sample consisted of 3,873 respondents.

〈Table 3〉 Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion: Overview

Type	Description
Target population	Male and female adults across South Korea aged 19 to 75. Specifically, men and women whose dates of birth coincide with, or fall between, May 31, 1942, and May 31, 1999. *Foreign nationals not included. (Immigrants were included in the survey insofar as they have been naturalized and hold South Korean nationality.)
Sample unit	One member (member with the earliest birthday) of each household
Sample size	4,000 respondents (3,873 finally completed) of households across 500 COAs nationwide
Sampling method	COA-based survey: Eight households systematically sampled from each of the 500 COAs.
Survey method	Face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire
Survey period	June 22 to September 4, 2016
Survey subjects	Household structure and financial status, general information on the respondents, perceptions of society and social cohesion, experiences with and perceptions of conflicts of different types (i.e., class, generational, gender, public).
Polling agent	Korea Research Inc.

III

Major Findings

1. Perceptions of Class Conflict and Attitudes toward (Re) Distribution
2. Gender Conflict and Social Cohesion
3. Generational Conflict and Social Cohesion
4. Public Conflicts and Social Cohesion

III Major Findings

1. Perceptions of Class Conflict and Attitudes toward (Re) Distribution

Class conflict lies at the core of all conflicts in any given society. It has also been a major impetus behind societal transformation and innovation throughout history. Class conflict in South Korea, however, tends to manifest itself in personal, rather than organized, forms. In Korea, the heavy-handed, state-led model of economic development has suppressed attempts at unionization and solidarity for decades. Accordingly, Koreans have been experiencing, and expressing, class conflict in personal and individual ways, instead of via organizations. However, the acceleration of socioeconomic polarization and collapse of the dictatorial emphasis on economic development in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis have given rise to new patterns of class conflict, particularly between labor and management, the haves and the have-nots, and the gap and the eul. The so-called "candlelight revolution" of 2017 occasioned a new momentum, bringing individual citizens together in a new movement of "loose, yet sprawling" solidarity against the remaining vestiges of developmental dictatorship. In other words, even as class conflict has continued to fragment and in-

dividualize Korean society, new axes of class conflict have been emerging and growing at the same time.

There are three main questions we seek to address in the present analysis. First, between objective class identifications and subjective ones, which better explain the difference in perceptions of class conflict? Second, are there significant class differences in perceptions of the current level of social conflict, state of distribution, and societal fairness in Korea? Third, are there significant class differences in attitudes toward taxation and social welfare?

To answer these questions, we divided respondents into social classes according to a number of variables upon which the groups' perceptions differed the most. These were: subjective class identification, objective class identification, experience with absolute deprivation, employment status, and occupation. The differences in the groups' perceptions were analyzed for statistical significance, and the results were applied as independent variables.

The analysis revealed a number of pertinent findings. First, class conflict in Korea is more acute in terms of subjective class identification than between objectively defined classes. In other words, Koreans' perceptions of class conflict are more correlated to their subjectively identified socioeconomic status than their actual income levels. Therefore, class conflict in Korea can be better explained using a more complex and mul-

tifaceted concept of classes than that defined according to a single status variable, such as income, employment status, or occupation. This finding implies the need for more in-depth research on the less visible factors that divide Koreans into different socioeconomic classes. It also highlights the importance of reducing inequality and discrimination along multiple dimensions, rather than just in terms of income, in order to mitigate class conflict in Korea.

〈Table 4〉 Regression Analysis Using Total Scores on Perceived Economic Conflicts as Dependent Variables

Variable	Category	Subjective class model (b/se)		Objective class model (b/se)	
Gender	Male	0.728	(0.496)	0.811	(0.498)
Age	25 to 34	3.397**	(1.034)	3.643***	(1.041)
	35 to 44	3.634***	(1.014)	4.041***	(1.021)
	45 to 54	1.639	(0.949)	1.842	(0.956)
	55 to 64	3.016**	(1.016)	3.441***	(1.021)
	65+	1.640	(1.234)	1.887	(1.250)
Education	High school	2.199*	(0.893)	1.832*	(0.910)
	College+	1.702	(0.985)	0.921	(0.995)
Equivalized income		0.006**	(0.002)		
Total household assets		0.000***	(0.000)	0.000**	(0.000)
Subjective class identification	Lower-middle	-1.751*	(0.755)		
	Middle	-4.327***	(0.777)		
	Upper-middle (upper)	-7.156***	(1.341)		
Median income	50 to 150%			0.175	(0.944)
	Over 150%			0.958	(1.153)
Constant		56.128***	(1.312)	54.885***	(1.354)
N		3,464		3,464	
r2		0.027		0.013	

Source: KIHASA (2018), Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Second, there is growing concern over the state of fairness in Korean society. The prevailing perception is that income inequality is quite significant (3.22 out of 4), and that corruption is an essential part of attaining success (2.59 out of 4). The lower-income class was especially more convinced of the general inequality and unfairness of Korean society than the upper-middle class. Respondents also rated law enforcement as the area in which inequality was most visible, next to wealth. This result indicates a lack of trust in judicial procedures and administration. Perceptions of societal inequality and unfairness, when they exceed a certain level, can be a major destabilizing factor capable of inducing social anomie. The more unequal a society is, the lower the level of societal trust and the higher the rates of activities indicative of social pathology, such as hate crime, the collapse of families, and suicide. South Korea already has the highest suicide rate and lowest birth rate among member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It is thus high time for the Korean government to introduce specific measures to ensure the systematic management of inequality and unfairness.

〈Table 5〉 Subjective Class Identifications and Perceptions of Unfairness

(Unit: points)

Perceptions of fairness	Overall	Subjective class identification				F	Prob>F
		Lower-income	Lower-middle	Middle	High and upper-middle		
Income inequality in Korea is too high.	3.22	3.38	3.29	3.11	3.16	25.06	0.0000
Corruption is an essential part of attaining success in Korea.	2.59	2.76	2.57	2.56	2.39	9.73	0.0000
Being born into a higher-class family is important to attain success.	3.04	3.09	3.08	3.00	2.98	3.53	0.0143
One's own hard work is important to attain success.	0.88	0.84	0.90	0.88	0.83	1.09	0.3517
Total perceived unfairness score	9.74	10.07	9.85	9.56	9.36	14.30	0.0000

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

〈Table 6〉 Subjective Class Identifications and Perceptions of Inequality

(Unit: points)

Perceptions of inequality	Overall	Subjective class identification				F	Prob>F
		Lower-income	Lower-middle	Middle	High and upper-middle		
Opportunity for education	1.72	1.79	1.70	1.72	1.53	4.61	0.0032
Opportunity for landing jobs	2.34	2.50	2.35	2.30	2.04	17.01	0.0000
Opportunity for promotion	2.45	2.59	2.46	2.44	2.15	14.89	0.0000
Law enforcement	2.58	2.68	2.61	2.55	2.46	4.76	0.0026
Treatment of women	2.17	2.17	2.17	2.19	2.04	1.92	0.1249
Treatment of the disabled	2.40	2.49	2.38	2.39	2.31	3.34	0.0186
Treatment of foreign laborers, etc.	2.46	2.55	2.42	2.46	2.34	4.71	0.0028
Income distribution	2.55	2.73	2.55	2.51	2.32	18.00	0.0000
Wealth distribution	2.61	2.77	2.59	2.58	2.41	13.73	0.0000
Regional development	2.49	2.51	2.47	2.51	2.42	1.37	0.2496
Total perceived inequality score	23.77	24.78	23.71	23.63	22.01	14.03	0.0000

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

As for perceptions of social mobility, either within or across generations, the upper and upper-middle income classes were significantly more optimistic than the lower-income classes that lifelong hard work could raise one's socioeconomic status and that the socioeconomic status of one's children would be higher than one's own. This statistically significant difference persisted whether subjective or objective class identifications were used. The lower-income classes, in other words, are considerably more skeptical than the higher-income ones that social mobility existed, especially within each generation.

Social mobility across and within generations holds the last key to the openness and willingness of a given society to ensure fairness. Social mobility signifies that the equality and fairness of opportunity is ensured, both formally and substantially. It also motivates individuals to work hard and dedicate themselves to their work by leading them to believe that their future will be better than the present. Since the Asian Financial Crisis, however, numerous and diverse signs have been emerging to indicate the gradual erosion of social mobility, both across and within generations, in Korea. It is critical for Korean policymakers to find and implement measures in a timely manner in order to reduce general inequality in education, job opportunities, and household income and re-secure the channels for upward mobility.

〈Table 7〉 Objective Class Identifications and Perceptions of Social Mobility

(Unit: points)

Social mobility	Overall	Equivalized median income			F	Prob>F
		Under 50%	50% to 150%	Over 150%		
Change in standard of living over the past decade	2.04	1.61	2.04	2.30	116.71	0.0000
Belief in the possibility of raising one's socioeconomic status through lifelong hard work	1.24	1.14	1.23	1.37	14.45	0.0000
Expectation of better socioeconomic status for one's children	1.42	1.38	1.41	1.49	4.57	0.0105

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

〈Table 8〉 Subjective Class Identifications and Perceptions of Social Mobility

(Unit: points)

Social mobility	Overall	Subjective class identification				F	Prob>F
		Lower-income	Lower-middle	Middle	High and upper-middle		
Change in standard of living over the past decade	2.04	1.55	1.99	2.21	2.50	151.40	0.0000
Belief in the possibility of raising one's socioeconomic status through lifelong hard work	1.24	0.99	1.18	1.35	1.60	51.94	0.0000
Expectation of better socioeconomic status for one's children	1.42	1.25	1.42	1.47	1.63	18.96	0.0000

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Finally, the middle class emerged as taking an increasingly self-interested or conservative approach to state intervention and welfare. Respondents who identified themselves as members of the lower-income classes tended, more than those who identified themselves as middle- and higher-income (upper and upper-middle) classes, to view it as the state's responsibility to reduce income inequality, ensure quality of life for the un-

employed, and distribute benefits to the poor. By contrast, respondents who identified themselves as being in the upper-middle classes favored the subsidization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) more.

Interestingly, the self-identified middle class was more opposed than the self-identified upper class to regulatory restrictions on large corporations' entry into areas of business traditionally occupied by small businesses and the poor as well as to the regulatory requirement of additional employment security measures for the elderly and people with disabilities. This suggests that the middle class is increasingly aware that the expansion of government welfare programs would increase its tax burdens, while those programs would favor the poor more than the middle class as beneficiaries. This finding suggests the need for Korean policymakers to look for policy measures to increase support for welfare programs among the middle class.

〈Table 9〉 Subjective Class Identifications and Preferences for Government Intervention

(Unit: points)

Preference for government intervention		Overall	Subjective class identification				F	Prob>F
			Lower-income	Lower-middle	Middle	High and upper-middle		
It is the government's responsibility to reduce income inequality between high earners and low earners.		2.55	2.72	2.59	2.47	2.41	13.30	0.0000
The government should ensure quality of life for the unemployed.		2.49	2.66	2.48	2.44	2.37	10.43	0.0000
The government should reduce policy benefits for the poor.		2.24	2.49	2.22	2.16	2.20	16.52	0.0000
Legitimacy of intervention	Restrictions on large corporations' entry into areas of business traditionally occupied by small businesses or the poor	1.84	1.95	1.84	1.80	1.87	4.21	0.0055
	Restrictions on large corporations' entry into areas of commerce traditionally occupied by small businesses or the poor	1.88	2.00	1.87	1.83	1.98	5.62	0.0008
	Subsidization of SMEs	1.77	1.78	1.77	1.75	1.91	2.59	0.0512
	Provision of underpaid workers with earned income tax credits (EITCs)	1.90	1.94	1.93	1.87	1.86	2.64	0.0480
	Provision of wage subsidies and/or public work for the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.	2.03	2.07	2.05	1.99	2.11	3.97	0.0078
	Raising taxes to provide greater welfare benefits	1.51	1.55	1.51	1.48	1.56	1.15	0.3289
Total government intervention preference score		18.25	19.31	18.32	17.79	18.31	18.28	0.0000

Notes: 1) The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with three statements—"It is the government's responsibility to reduce income inequality," "The government should ensure quality of life for the unemployed," and "The government should reduce policy benefits for the poor"—along a five-point scale ranging from zero to four. As for the rest of the statements, the respondents were asked to rate their agreement along a four-point scale ranging from zero to three.

2) The responses to the statement, "The government should reduce policy benefits for the poor," were reverse-coded.

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

2. Gender Conflict and Social Cohesion

As with other types of conflicts, gender conflict takes on various forms in modern society. Its manifestations include physical and sexual violence resulting in injuries, sexual harassment, conflicts or contradictions of gender roles, and online conflicts on social media. The extent of fear for one's safety against sexual predators and the terror that one experiences on a daily basis can also be seen as manifestations of gender conflict. Gender conflict, in other words, consists not only of gender-related differences in perceptions of certain social issues, but also of differences in experiences with and perceptions of gender discrimination and sexual violence.

We should therefore determine the current and potential nature of gender conflict as experienced at the social and individual levels. We should also analyze how individuals' demographic, socioeconomic, and psychological factors influence their experiences with and perceptions of gender discrimination and sexual violation.

Our analysis reveals that perceptions of gender conflict are more acute among unmarried and young people, rather than being correlated to respondents' sex. Education, income, unemployment, and/or having temporary employment status are also variables that are proportionally correlated to the acuity of gender conflict perceived by individuals. Politically conservative respondents also tend to view gender conflict as a se-

rious social issue, suggesting that the heightened public profile of gender conflict through the Me Too movement and the like has increased the sense of threat felt by conservatives.

〈Table 10〉 Differences in Perceptions of Gender Conflict

Category	Group	Gender conflict	F	Conflicts in general	F
Overall		2.59	n/a	2.87	n/a
Sex	Female	2.60	0.801	2.88	0.134
	Male	2.58		2.88	
Marital status	Married	2.55	10.291***	2.88	0.996
	Separated	2.57		2.93	
	Widowed	2.40		2.89	
	Divorced	2.58		2.94	
	Never married	2.71		2.87	
Generation	Young	2.72	25.011***	2.85	2.991
	Middle-aged	2.55		2.90	
	Elderly	2.44		2.86	
Region	Metropolitan cities	2.65	12.231***	2.88	4.327*
	Small to medium cities	2.52		2.89	
	Rural regions	2.59		2.81	
Education	Middle school or below	2.47	7.553**	2.86	1.227
	High school	2.59		2.87	
	College or above	2.62		2.89	
Income	1st quartile	2.58	3.218*	2.88	3.184*
	2nd quartile	2.55		2.87	
	3rd quartile	2.57		2.85	
	4th quartile	2.66		2.92	
Employment status	Full-time workers	2.59	3.184**	2.84	3.102**
	Temporary/day workers	2.62		2.90	
	Self-employed/employers	2.53		2.93	
	Unpaid family business workers	2.46		2.91	
	Unemployed	2.77		2.86	
	Economically inactive	2.60		2.88	
Employment security	Regular workers	2.59	0.742	2.84	4.737*
	Irregular workers	2.62		2.90	

Category	Group	Gender conflict	F	Conflicts in general	F
Ideological orientation	Conservative	2.65	7.191**	2.94	9.351***
	Centrist	2.54		2.88	
	Progressive	2.61		2.84	
Experience with sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	2.55	84.09***	2.87	23.799***
	Yes	2.99		3.02	
Fear of sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	2.48	57.227***	2.86	4.585*
	Yes	2.68		2.90	

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, and *** p < .001.
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Only 1.9 percent of respondents thought women were treated "very equally" with men, while 18.2 percent thought women were treated "generally equally." The majority thought women were treated "slightly unequally" (44.3 percent), "generally unequally" (32.1 percent), and "very unequally" (3.4 percent). However, when asked to rate the state of gender inequality in Korea on a scale ranging from zero ("very equal") to five ("very unequal"), respondents gave an average score of 3.17, which is lower than the scores for other types of inequality (opportunities for employment and promotion, law enforcement, treatment of the disabled, treatment of immigrants, income distribution, wealth distribution, and regional development). Specifically, inequality in family received an average score of 2.68; roles within workplaces, 3.01; opportunities for employment and promotion, 3.30; wages, 3.35; and overall social participation, 3.09. In other words, gender conflict was more keenly experienced with respect to wages and employ-

ment and promotion opportunities.

Respondents' sociodemographic idiosyncrasies bore little statistical significance to their perceptions of gender inequality. However, it is important to point out that direct experience with, or fear of, sexual violence and/or gender discrimination raises the perceived acuity of gender conflict. In other words, the serious or pervasive nature of sexual violence and gender discrimination experienced or perceived on the individual level can feed and amplify gender conflict on the societal level.

〈Table 11〉 Perceptions of Gender Inequality

Category	Group	General gender inequality	F	Roles within family	F	Employment and promotion	F	Wages	F
Overall		3.17	-	2.68	-	3.30		3.35	
Sex	Female	3.25	39.808***	2.78	50.835***	3.41	59.359***	3.45	53.866***
	Male	3.09		2.58		3.19		3.25	
Marital status	Married	3.16	1.891	2.63	5.286***	3.28	3.417**	3.35	4.722**
	Separated	3.29		2.72		3.29		3.23	
	Widowed	3.03		2.81		3.41		3.48	
	Divorced	3.20		2.86		3.50		3.53	
	Never married	3.20		2.73		3.29		3.28	
Generation	Young	3.21	13.938***	2.69	1.152	3.31	0.951	3.30	4.795**
	Middle-aged	3.19		2.68		3.30		3.35	
	Elderly	2.98		2.62		3.31		3.44	
Region	Metropolitan cities	3.16	4.438*	2.75	10.191***	3.28	1.320	3.33	1.539
	Small to medium cities	3.20		2.63		3.33		3.35	
	Rural regions	3.07		2.59		3.27		3.41	
Education	Middle school or below	3.05	7.212**	2.72	3.913*	3.29	2.446	3.44	31.691***
	High school	3.20		2.71		3.34		3.38	
	College or above	3.19		2.63		3.28		3.29	
Income	1st quartile	3.16	4.736**	2.78	13.664***	3.37	3.706*	3.46	12.380***
	2nd quartile	3.13		2.73		3.30		3.40	
	3rd quartile	3.12		2.66		3.24		3.27	
	4th quartile	3.17		2.54		3.28		3.26	
Employment status	Full-time workers	3.15	4.563***	2.65	9.074***	3.22	7.795***	3.25	9.004***

Category	Group	General gender inequality	F	Roles within family	F	Employment and promotion	F	Wages	F
	Temporary/day workers	3.23		2.81		3.38		3.48	
	Self-employed/employers	3.07		2.54		3.22		3.31	
	Unpaid family business workers	3.18		2.76		3.44		3.55	
	Unemployed	3.26		2.88		3.33		3.33	
	Economically inactive	3.23		2.74		3.41		3.43	
Employment security	Regular workers	3.15	3.4	2.62	22.71***	3.22	10.564**	3.23	32.341***
	Irregular workers	3.22		2.83		3.37		3.48	
Ideological orientation	Conservative	3.13	5.682**	2.73	4.761**	3.28	3.511*	3.31	1.687
	Centrist	3.14		2.69		3.27		3.34	
	Progressive	3.24		2.62		3.36		3.38	
Experience with sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	3.13	84.101***	2.63	121.673***	3.26	108.283***	3.31	65.562***
	Yes	3.58		3.20		3.80		3.73	
Fear of sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	3.04	79.641	2.52	112.667	3.14	109.735***	3.23	62.413***
	Yes	3.28		2.82		3.44		3.45	

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, and *** p < .001.

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

The overwhelming majority of respondents had no direct experience with sexual violence or gender discrimination at the individual level. Analysis of experiences with and fear of specific forms of gender-related harassment and violence, such as lookism (including criticism and insults), gender-discriminatory portrayals in popular media, verbal abuse/neglect/demeaning comments while driving or taking public transportation, safety at night, unwanted physical contact in public spaces, burden of chores and care for family members, and outright sexual violence and gender discrimination, revealed that being women, being divorced or unmarried, being young, living in a metropolitan city, having higher education, having higher income, working either full-time or as a day laborer, and having personal experiences with sexual violence and discrimination were factors proportionally correlated to experiences with and perceptions of sexual violence and gender discrimination. Gender conflict encountered at the individual level is not merely personal. This study confirms the need to implement diverse preventive and remedial measures against the specific forms of gender violence and conflict that Koreans experience on a routine basis.

〈Table 12〉 Experiences with and Fear of Sexual Violence and Gender Discrimination

Category	Group	Score	F
Overall			
Sex	Female	9.65	226.992***
	Male	9.31	
Marital status	Married	8.23	8.515***
	Separated	8.03	
	Widowed	8.42	
	Divorced	8.92	
	Never married	8.94	
Generation	Young	9.11	40.623***
	Middle-aged	8.38	
	Elderly	7.42	
Region	Metropolitan cities	9.05	44.295***
	Small to medium cities	8.08	
	Rural regions	7.70	
Education	Middle school or below	7.40	37.715***
	High school	8.40	
	College or above	8.88	
Income	1st quartile	8.27	3.543*
	2nd quartile	8.30	
	3rd quartile	8.63	
	4th quartile	8.67	
Employment status	Full-time workers	8.72	7.696***
	Temporary/day workers	8.92	
	Self-employed/employers	7.99	
	Unpaid family business workers	7.51	
	Unemployed	8.52	
	Economically inactive	8.41	
Employment security	Regular workers	8.73	0.533
	Irregular workers	8.87	
Experience with sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	7.98	1134.094***
	Yes	14.20	

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, and *** p < .001.
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

As for the effects of the Me Too movement, Koreans generally perceived the movement as having some effect on reducing sexual violence and mitigating gender violence, but being unlikely to alleviate gender conflict. The Me Too movement has greatly increased the frequency and profile of reports of accusations and condemnations of gender violence across Korean society, and, in the process, has amplified gender conflict. The recent manifestations of gender conflict over matters of sexuality, including the Me Too movement, can catalyze gender conflict further while also denouncing and preventing sexual violence and gender discrimination. It is therefore important to manage such manifestations in a timely and appropriate manner by adopting proper conflict management measures.

〈Table 13〉 Perceptions of the Me Too Movement and Its Effects

Category	Group	Reduces sexual violence	F	Mitigates gender discrimination	F	Resolves gender conflict	F
Overall		2.28		2.28		2.41	
Sex	Female	2.12	26.203***	2.19	47.320***	2.32	52.084***
	Male	2.24		2.35		2.49	
Marital status	Married	2.15	4.063**	2.25	2.753*	2.36	3.843***
	Separated	2.10		2.36		2.38	
	Widowed	2.26		2.26		2.38	
	Divorced	2.27		2.34		2.44	
	Never married	2.24		2.33		2.50	
Generation	Young	2.20	10.584***	2.31	5.821**	2.48	6.570**
	Middle-aged	2.15		2.24		2.37	
	Elderly	2.31		2.35		2.41	
Region	Metropolitan cities	2.14	6.454**	2.26	1.400	2.41	1.565
	Small to medium cities	2.23		2.29		2.42	
	Rural regions	2.16		2.24		2.33	
Education	Middle school or below	2.29	8.686***	2.35	3.391*	2.43	1.034
	High school	2.20		2.27		2.39	
	College or above	2.14		2.26		2.42	
Income	1st quartile	2.27	7.289***	2.33	6.424***	2.43	6.189***
	2nd quartile	2.18		2.26		2.37	
	3rd quartile	2.12		2.20		2.35	
	4th quartile	2.17		2.32		2.41	
Ideological orientation	Conservative	2.24	8.767***	2.34	6.941**	2.44	1.182
	Centrist	2.20		2.28		2.40	
	Progressive	2.11		2.22		2.39	
Experience with sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	2.21	56.416***	2.30	43.013***	2.42	9.865**
	Yes	1.89		2.01		2.27	
Fear of sexual violence/gender discrimination	None	2.27	44.124***	2.30	5.070*	2.40	0.190
	Yes	2.11		2.25		2.41	

Note: *p 〈 .05, **p 〈 .01, and *** p 〈 .001.
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

3. Generational Conflict and Social Cohesion

To understand generational conflict in Korea, we must explore not only the different values held dear by each generation but also the size of each generation and the distribution of economic resources across generations. Since 2010, generational conflict in Korea has mostly involved competition between the generations over limited resources. Critics have pointed out that the frame of the intergenerational competition for resources has been adopted for political reasons (Cho and Kim, 2016), and the debate about intergenerational rivalry, such as the "generation game," has been used to fuel conflict between generations (Jeon, 2018).

In this section, we shall explore generational conflict from the perspective of values. Our survey sought to determine how generations differ from one another in terms of the values they hold dear.

Table 14 shows the difference between the median income of respondents who identified themselves as middle-class or higher and the median income of all respondents. The difference in median income between self-identified middle-class respondents and the rest is relatively limited among respondents born in 1974 and later. Among respondents born from 1954 to 1973, however, the tendency to identify themselves as "middle-class" only after having secured considerably high lev-

els of income is stronger. Given the fact that subjective class identification is a far more significant variable in explaining class conflict than objective class identification, it is likely that the younger generation, given the limited disparity between their income and subjective class identification, is more likely to match their class interests with generational ones. Resolution of conflict with the younger generation therefore requires a more realistic approach that is oriented toward catering to their actual demands and desires.

〈Table 14〉 Median Equivalized Household Income and Personal Income by Generation

(Unit: KRW 10,000)

Birth year	Overall income group		Income group reported as middle class and higher	
	Equivalized household income	Personal income	Equivalized household income	Personal income
1990 and afterward	270.5	191.0	296.0	197.2
1974 to 1989	270.6	292.7	304.1	320.0
1964 to 1973	262.5	305.6	310.4	360.6
1954 to 1963	252.8	286.0	322.3	391.8
1942 to 1953	146.0	147.1	176.5	163.4
Overall	250.0	267.8	296.6	312.9

Note: Personal income was counted only when the given respondent's personal income was more than zero.

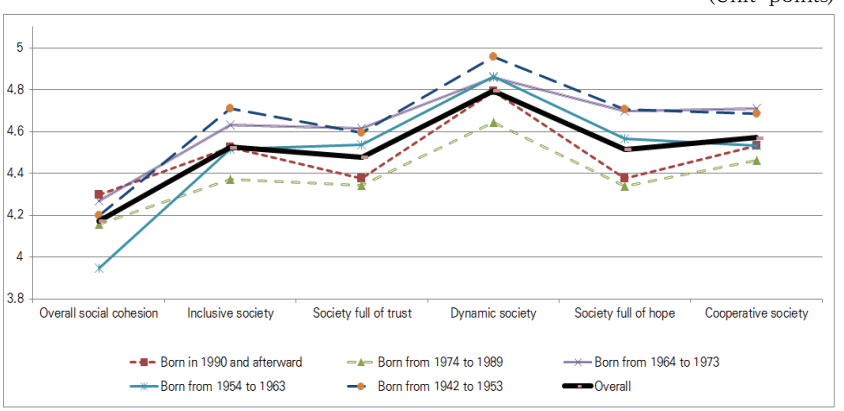
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Negative and pessimistic perceptions of various aspects of Korean society were more prevalent among the younger generations than older ones. In particular, Koreans of the "democratization generation," who were born in the years from 1974 to 1989, were especially critical of Korean society. They

were more likely than any other generations to disagree with the statement that Korea is an inclusive and dynamic society. Koreans born in 1990 and afterward were also critical of Korean society, especially disagreeing that Korea is a society with high levels of trust and hope.

[Figure 1] Social Cohesion Scores by Generation

(Unit: points)



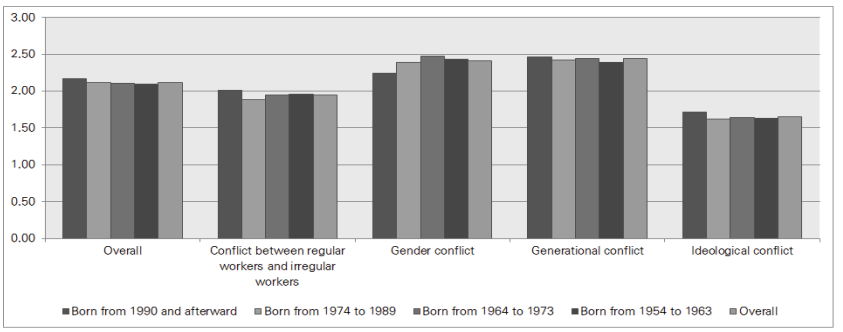
Note: Views of Korean society as inclusive were rated along a 10-point scale, with zero indicating extreme discrimination and alienation and 10 indicating a society of respect and inclusion; as full of trust, along a 10-point scale, with zero indicating pervasive mutual mistrust and suspicion and 10 indicating a society full of mutual trust; as dynamic, along a 10-point scale, with zero indicating a society sapped of all vitality and energy and 10 indicating a society full of vital energy and hope; as full of hope, along a 10-point scale, with zero indicating a society filled with worry over financial stability and the future and 10 indicating a society holding high hopes for better financial prospects and a brighter future; and as cooperative, along a 10-point scale, with zero indicating a society rife with selfishness, lack of respect, and conflicts and 10 indicating a society where people always make the effort to listen to and understand one another.

Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

All generations have the tendency to perceive the state of conflicts in Korea as being serious (2.12 points on average). While the post-1990 generation tends to be more acutely aware of social conflicts than other generations, the difference was less than significant. As for the different types of conflicts, all generations tend to view gender conflict (which has been a high-profile issue since 2018) and generational conflict as less serious than other types of conflicts. However, the young generation, born in 1990 and afterward, is most keenly aware of gender conflict, suggesting the influence that the Me Too movement has had on them. Failure to resolve the rising gender conflict in a positive and productive way could well make gender one of the greatest sources of conflict in Korea.

[Figure 2] Conflict Scores by Generation

(Unit: points)

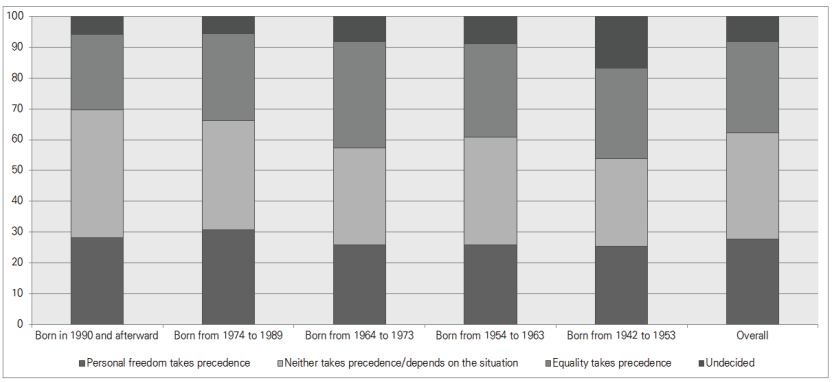


Note: The lower the score, the more seriously the given type of conflict is taken. The neutral score is three (3.0).
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

The post-democratization generations also placed greater emphasis on personal freedoms than the older generations. Those born in 1974 and afterward tend to emphasize personal freedom slightly more than equality. Yet the difference in the tendency to favor freedom over equality between generations is less than significant. A more noteworthy pattern, however, is that the post-1974 generations are less likely than the older generations to agree with the statement that equality may take precedence over freedom. Of the post-1990 generation, in particular, only 24.6 percent agreed with the precedence of equality over freedom. The generation born in the years from 1964 to 1973 expressed the greatest support for equality. Baby boomers and even the industrialization generation place greater emphasis on equality than the post-democratization generations.

[Figure 3] Support for Freedom and Equality by Generation

(Unit: percentage)

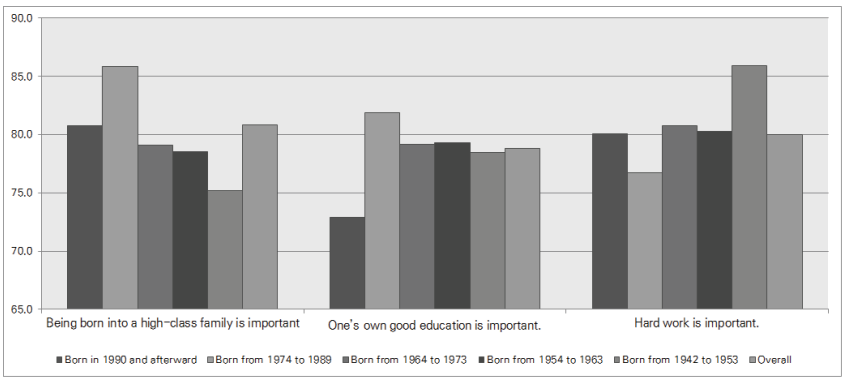


Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Generational divide is most apparent when it comes to what constitutes factors of success and how they are distributed. The decline in upward social mobility in Korea is evident in the growing perception that being born into an upper-class family is important—even decisive—for the attainment of success. However, whereas the generation born in the years from 1974 to 1989 assigns greater importance to being born into an upper-class family, the industrialization generation (1942 to 1953) emphasizes hard work more. Interestingly, the post-1990 generation also emphasizes hard work over background, which may reflect the growing tendency toward individualism among the young generation.

[Figure 4] Factors of Success by Generation

(Unit: percentage)



Note: "Unknown" and "undecided" responses were excluded.
Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

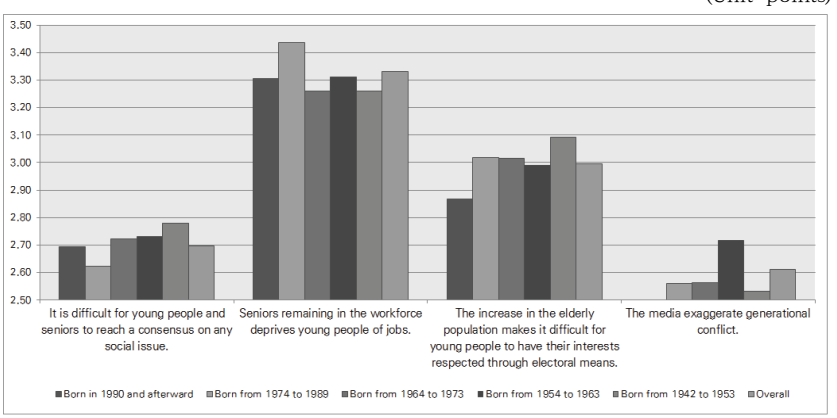
Four questions were asked to assess different generations' perceptions of intergenerational relations. Regarding the question of how feasible intergenerational cohesion is, young people and the elderly gave an average score of 2.70, which lies somewhere between "agree" and "neither agree nor disagree." The generation born from 1974 to 1989 most strongly agreed that intergenerational cohesion is feasible.

As for the claim that seniors' remaining in the workforce is what deprived the young generation of jobs, the overall response was somewhere between "neither agree nor disagree" and "disagree." Of the post-democratization generations, the one born from 1974 to 1989 most strongly disagreed with this claim. The claim that the increase in the elderly population makes it difficult for young people to have their interests re-

spected through electoral means garnered a neutral score on average. The post-1990 generation agreed with this claim slightly more than the older generations. As for the claim that the media exaggerate generational conflict, all generations gave scores ranging between "agree" and "neither agree nor disagree." However, the post-1990 generation and baby boomers were more opposed to the claim (i.e., believed that media portrayals of generational conflict carry some truth) than other generations.

[Figure 5] Perceptions of Generational Conflict by Generation

(Unit: points)



Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

The younger generations, with their emphasis on individual and personal freedoms, stress the importance of enhancing the conditions for people to exercise their freedoms. They view appropriate housing and employment as essential conditions

that enable them to exercise and realize their freedoms. Young people's opposition to government policies was most acute when policymakers failed to satisfy of young people's housing needs by emulating conventional policy decisions and failed to create decent jobs for young people. The positive change needed to resolve the generational divide can only come from the established generation's understanding and acceptance of young people's demands as natural and their willingness to help the younger generation achieve their goals. Only on the basis of such understanding and hard work can the generational conflict be reduced, giving rise to intergenerational integration.

4. Public Conflicts and Social Cohesion

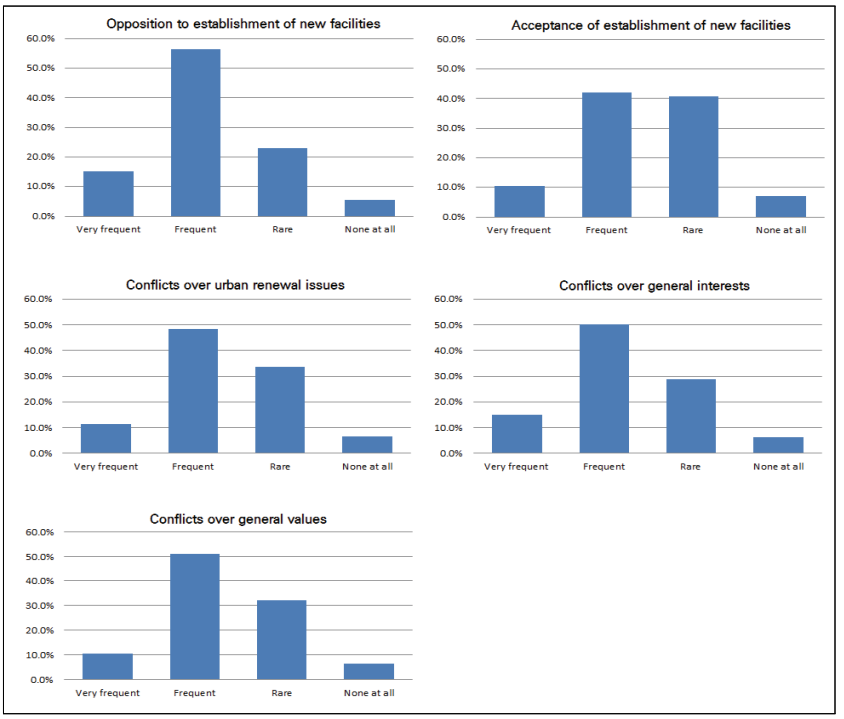
Public conflicts can both promote and suppress social cohesion. Unlike conflicts taking place in the private realm, which tend to eclipse and hide the complex involvement of different interests, public conflicts can raise the public profile of the opposing interests and forces clashing over the given issues, and may therefore facilitate efforts to strengthen social cohesion. Nevertheless, public conflicts that arise from deep-rooted causes, such as values, can be detrimental to social cohesion. The Korean government has failed to manage and resolve public conflicts in a constructive manner, con-

tributing to the popular public perception that public conflicts always hinder social cohesion.

In this section, we shall explore the Korean public's perception of the frequency of public conflicts, their roots, favored mechanisms for managing them, and the parties responsible for resolving them. We are not yet capable of establishing and testing a theoretical correlation between public conflicts and social cohesion, and the development and verification of such a model is not within the purview of this study. Nevertheless, our analysis in this section elucidates a few important policy implications for how to manage public conflicts.

As for the perceived frequency of public conflicts in Korea, Koreans generally think such conflicts occur frequently. Such perception, however, is more likely rooted in general impressions than empirical facts. One effective way to narrow the disparity between the perceived and actual frequencies of public conflicts is for governmental (whether national or local) actors, which are always major parties to such conflicts, to raise the public's awareness of the differences in positions and interests involved in the undertaking of certain policy programs before such differences expand into full-blown conflicts. As many people still believe that public conflicts can and do play a role in strengthening social cohesion, proactively tackling and managing public conflicts can generate more beneficial outcomes than simply ignoring them.

[Figure 6] Perceived Frequency of Public Conflicts

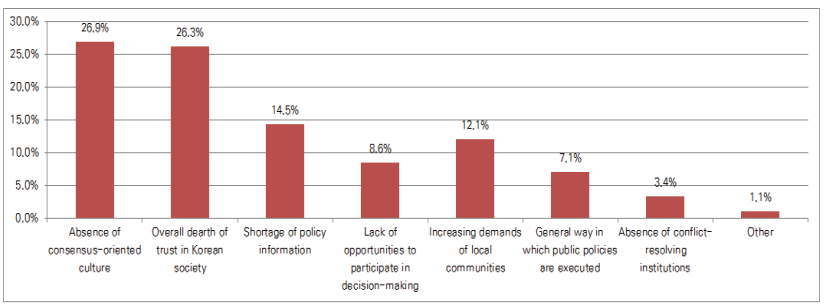


Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Second, as for the roots of public conflicts, Koreans generally pick the absence of consensus-oriented culture and the overall dearth of trust in Korean society. The shortage of policy information, increase in local communities' demands, and general lack of opportunities to participate in public decision-making have also been identified as major sources of public conflicts. The most effective approach to managing these conflicts is therefore to provide the public with more information during the policymaking and policy implementation

processes and more opportunities to participate in democratic decision-making. That Koreans identify the restoration of trust in the government and establishment of consensus-oriented culture as the two most important steps that the Korean government should take toward managing conflicts suggests as much.

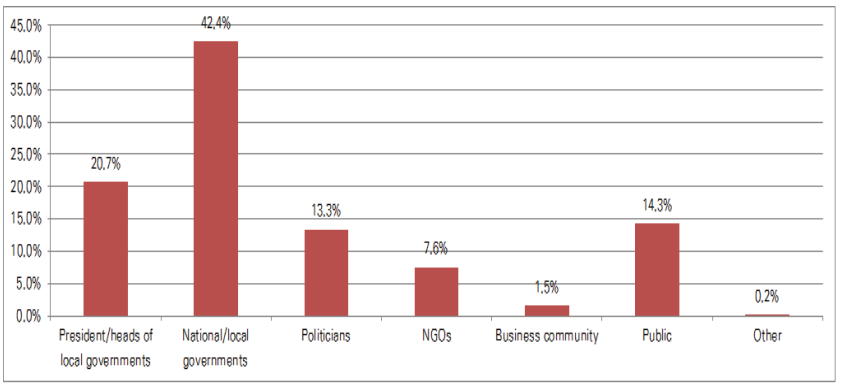
[Figure 7] Perceived Roots of Public Conflicts



Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Third, as for the resolution of public conflicts, Koreans generally assign the responsibility to national and local governmental actors. The primary role of these actors, Koreans believe, is to introduce proper legislative and institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution. In Korean law, there is currently only one Presidential Decree on resolving and preventing public conflicts. Despite the Korean government's diverse attempts at managing these conflicts better, the absence of a legislative ground has added to the difficulty of resolving public conflicts.

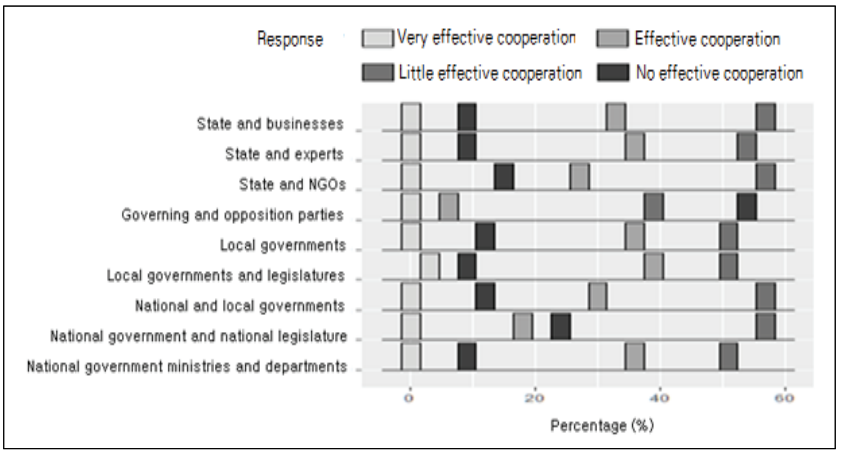
[Figure 8] Main Actors Responsible for Resolving Public Conflicts



Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Fourth, concerning cooperation between stakeholders responsible for resolving public conflicts, Koreans generally think that no such effective cooperation exists. In fact, significant disparities were observed regarding the perceived state of relations between the state and nongovernmental organizations and also between the central government and local governments, which are the two areas that are increasingly emerging as epicenters of public conflicts. As these are more perceptions than accurate portrayals of reality, it is important for policymakers to work harder to overturn these negative public perceptions as part of their efforts to garner greater public support for the resolution of public conflicts.

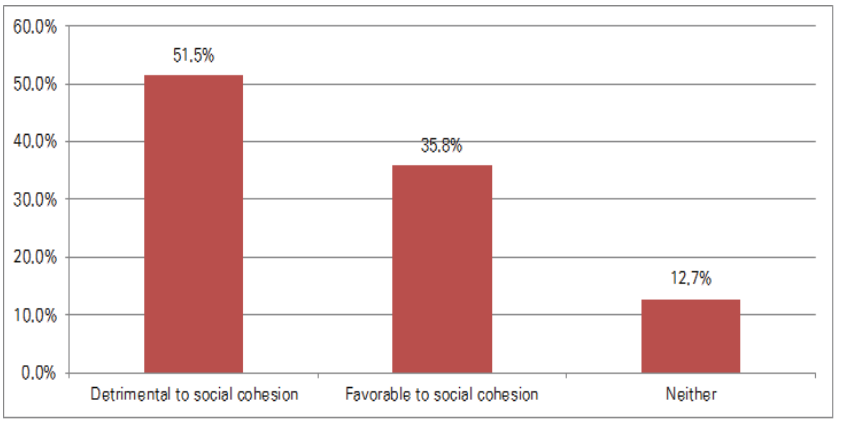
[Figure 9] Perceptions of Cooperation between Stakeholders



Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

Finally, it is crucial to note that Koreans do not automatically equate public conflicts as inevitable setbacks to social cohesion. Desiring more public support for policy projects, policymakers are incentivized to act as if there were no conflicts or controversies concerning their actions. Our survey, however, revealed that Koreans do not always think public conflicts are necessarily detrimental to social cohesion. Koreans also favor the enforcement of law and coercion of those who insist on taking irrational and selfish positions regarding the execution of public policies. The proper way to manage public conflicts, in other words, lies not in making indiscriminate efforts to minimize or eliminate such conflicts, but in the government guaranteeing its commitment to the legitimate and fair execution of policies established for the greater good.

[Figure 10] Perceived Relationship between Public Conflicts and Social Cohesion



Source: KIHASA (2018). Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion.

IV Conclusion

Ⅳ Conclusion

In this report, we survey the factors that may explain the differences in Koreans' perceptions of the fairness of distribution, welfare policy orientation, social values, gender roles and equality, and public conflicts. The objective of our analysis is to understand the changing patterns of social conflicts in Korea in light of the distribution of economic and political resources and also via the class, gender, and generational lenses. A cohesive society, as entailed by this understanding, is one equipped with the capabilities necessary to manage and resolve conflicts among its members over limited resources and their distribution. Challenging Korean society's current inability to resolve these conflicts may make some who are accustomed to the existing system of distribution and values uncomfortable. It is, however, critical for all Koreans to reach a consensus on the importance of developing new and more effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts in order to ensure the long-term sustainability and cohesion of Korean society.

Our analysis confirms that the recent conflicts characterizing Korean society are rooted in the widening divide along class, gender, and generational lines. The first step toward effectively managing conflicts is to distinguish between conflict and competition. Competition begets conflict, but not all forms of

conflict originate from competition. Competition is a question of who among the competitors gets to possess more of the given limited resources. However, conflicts may arise when the competing parties do not have opposing goals (Deutsch, 1973, p. 10). As conflicts can arise in both competitive and cooperative processes, it is crucial to carefully examine and determine the actual roots of conflicts before attempting to resolve them. Thoroughly examining conflicts often provides hope that the causes of such conflicts can be reduced. It is important to maintain a consensus orientation in resolving conflicts, by encouraging the conflicting parties to communicate and make compromises rather than continuing to compete against and antagonize one another.

The aspects of the class, gender, and generational conflicts in Korean society highlighted by the Survey on Social Conflicts and Social Cohesion reveal that conflicts in Korea today arise from complex origins rooted in both values and interests. One undeniable tendency that emerged was that the lower-income classes were more inclined than the middle and upper classes to view Korean society as unequal and unfair. This suggests the need for the Korean government to institute specific measures to reduce unfairness. Another important pattern to note is the growing self-interested attitude of the Korean middle class toward the expansion of government welfare. This attitude suggests the need for universal welfare programs that can increase the overlap between taxpayers and welfare beneficiaries.

Gender conflict is more acutely perceived among unmarried and young people, especially those facing unstable employment prospects. Gender inequality, in particular, is perceived as limiting opportunities for employment and promotion. Although it is rapidly becoming impossible for Korean families to rely on single, male income earners, efforts to reduce gender inequality in financial and economic activities are only slowly being made. It is, in other words, incumbent upon the Korean government and labor market to reduce gender inequality in economic rewards. The fact that class understanding and generational understanding tend to coincide more closely in the younger generations also suggests the need for more realistic and demand-oriented policy approaches toward them. Such policy approach is needed to narrow the generational divide and pave the way for greater intergenerational solidarity. This is all the more true as the "new" generation of the past, which took the leading role in resolving generational conflict, has now become the "established" generation, leaving little room for today's young people to move up. It is most important to respond to differences in class, gender, and generational interests in a timely manner and manage them before they evolve into full-blown social conflicts. This requires efforts to reduce the existing sources of conflicts and the provision of the Korean public with more policy information and opportunities to participate directly in public decision-making.

References

Seo, M. (2004). "A Study on the Structure of Social Conflicts in South Korea." *Journal of Korean Sociology*, 38(6). 195-218.

Jeon, S. (2018). *Intergenerational Game: Beyond the Generation Frame*. Munhakgwajiseongsa.

Jung, H., Kim, M., Yeo, U., Jeon, J., Kim, M., Woo, S., and Choi, J. (2017). *Social Cohesion: Current Issues and Countermeasures – Part IV: Social Problems and Social Cohesion*. KIHASA.

Cho, H. and Kim, J. (2016). "The Park Geun-hye Administration's 'Pluralistic Two-Peoples Strategy' and Intergenerational Conflict." *Economy and Society*, 110. 270-299.

Deutsch, M. (1973). *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes*. Yale University Press.