

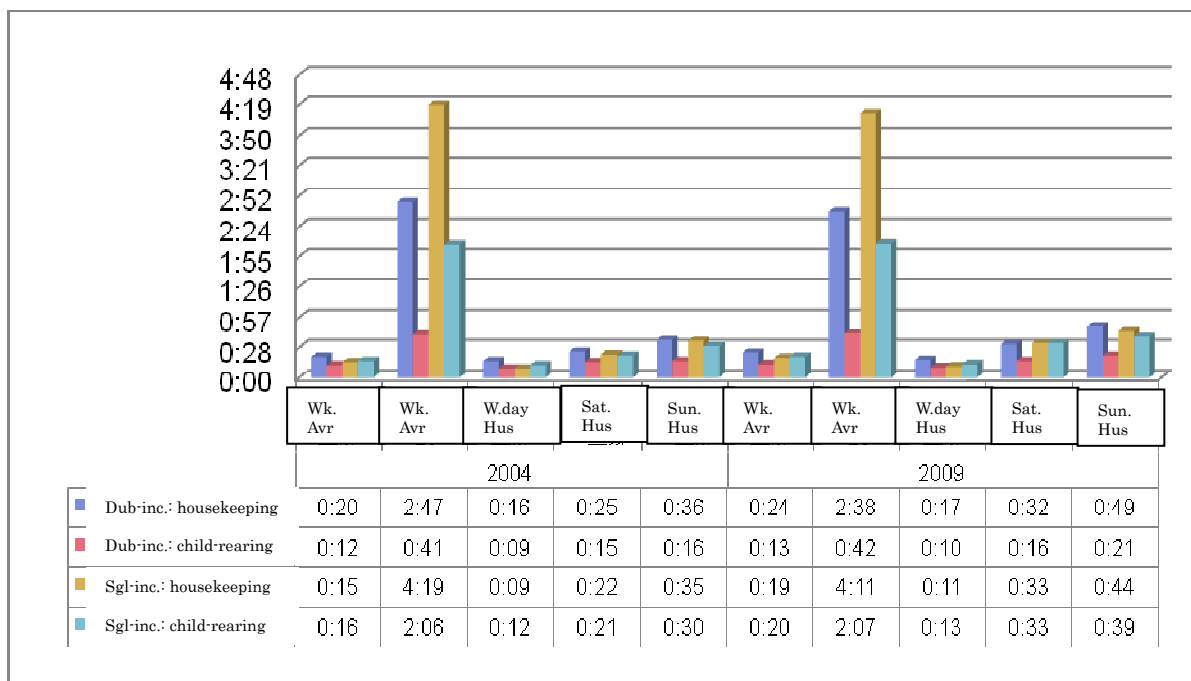
Sharing of Gender Roles at Home Chang Ik Lee (South Korea)

Recently, the Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) released the results of their “Survey on Actual Living Conditions in 2009.” The results for gender-shared roles in double-income families and single-income families were compared to results from the same survey in 2004. (Refer to Figure 1.)

In double-income families, the housekeeping contribution of the husband increased by 4 minutes to 24 minutes, while the wife’s housekeeping time decreased by 9 minutes to 2 hours and 38 minutes. In double-income families, the child-rearing time of the husband increased by 1 minute to 13 minutes, while wife’s child-rearing time increased by 1 minute as well to 42 minutes. Alternatively, in single-income families, the housekeeping contribution of the husband increased by 4 minutes to 19 minutes, while the wife’s time decreased by 8 minutes to 4 hours and 11 minutes. In single-income families, the child-rearing time of the husband increased by 4 minutes to 20 minutes, while the wife’s time increased by 1 minute to 2 hours and 7 minutes.

Figure 1. Average housekeeping/caring time in double/single income family home (2004 and 2009)

Unit: Hour : Minute



Source: Statistics Korea. “Survey on Actual Living Conditions” 2004 and 2009.

Notes: Abbreviations in Figure 1 are as follows.

Wk. Avr.: Average of the week. / Hus.: Husband. / W. Day: Weekdays / Sat.: Saturday / Sun.: Sunday / Dub-inc.: Double-income family. / Sgl-inc.: Single-income family.

The survey results show that the housekeeping time of husbands in both double and single income families increased, while that of the wife decreased, largely because husbands increasingly share many tasks such as house cleaning. In particular, the husbands of double-income families do more household work than those of single-income families.

In addition, the household caring time of both the husband and wife increased in double and single-income family homes. The number of nuclear families has increased in Korea as well. The family-oriented way of thinking has spread gradually, which we could not see in the past. Although family life was male-centered in the past, it has now making progress toward a society that reflects gender equality.

Husbands of single-income families pay more attention to housework. Many single-income families are male-oriented families. Therefore, husbands tend to spend more time on family matters during holidays. As for my family, I always enjoy a good dinner with my wife and son on holidays, or at least once in a week.

However, despite the increasing number of double-income families, the gap between the wife's and husband's housekeeping contributions in double-income families is still an average of more than two hours. We still have a long way to go before we reach a gender-equal society.

What should we do to solve this problem? To balance the sharing of traditional gender roles at home, we need to express how important our family is by taking action rather than just thinking. As a society, we should provide a universal education starting from early childhood so that we can shift the mindset of people toward gender equality.