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# Gateway Policy Explorer: Retirement Series

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## Republic of Korea

### Spousal Old-Age Benefit Plan Details

**1992-2022**

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## Preface

This document is intended for researchers who want to understand the evolution of policy or the policy in place at a particular point in time. This document is not intended for financial advice or to aid in decision-making. The authors have made significant effort to identify and collect historical information pertaining to these policies, to accurately represent these policies, and to communicate how policies may interact to determine legal requirements, eligibility for benefits, and/or benefits levels. The policies presented in this document focus on rules applicable to most individuals aged 50 and older from 1992. Many systems include special policies or alternative eligibility rules for specific groups. We encourage all users to complete their own review of literature in this area depending on the research questions they have in mind.

If you have feedback or questions or identify an error, please contact [policy@g2aging.org](mailto:policy@g2aging.org).

## Background — Gateway Policy Explorer: Retirement Series

The *Gateway Policy Explorer* (<http://g2aging.org/policy-explorer>) is part of the Gateway to Global Aging Data (<http://g2aging.org>) project. The *Retirement Series* captures historical policy that affects the birth cohorts of respondents in the surveys covered by the Gateway. It was motivated by the rapid evolution of policies affecting older people across the world. As the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) began in 1992 and many of the international network of studies (HRS-INS) cover more than a decade, understanding the policies in place at the time of the survey has become more demanding for researchers.

*Why are we tracking past policy?* Individuals make choices based on current policies and the outcomes we see today may reflect responses to past policies. When interpreting the survey responses of individuals, an understanding of the policy environment under which those individuals operate is critical. The collection of contextual information in the *Gateway Policy Explorer* aims to support researchers who want to understand or use policy changes in their research and provide context for longitudinal or cross-country differences. Over the period 2023–2026 the *Gateway Policy Explorer* will be expanded to include information on retirement, long-term care, education, and other policies affecting the life cycle.

The key dimensions to the *Gateway Policy Explorer: Retirement Series* are country and time. We prioritize data collection for each country based on its first interview wave and are continuing to expand our data collection back in time to 1992, the earliest survey date in the HRS-INS.

A separate document, like this one, is developed for each country and each broad category of policies covered in the *Gateway Policy Explorer: Retirement Series*.

## Author and Contributor Disclaimers

† The opinions expressed here are those of authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OECD or of its member countries.

# Republic of Korea

Spousal Old-Age Benefits  
Plan details 1992-2022 \* †

The National Pension Scheme (NPS) provides limited benefits for dependent spouses. It pays a fixed supplement for eligible dependents, including a spouse, children younger than age 19 (18 before July 29, 2015) or with a disability, and parents (including the spouse's parents). This supplement has existed since the introduction of the NPS in 1988.

## Key Dates

First law: 1986

Major changes since 1992: 1999

In 1999, a split pension was created for divorced spouses if the marriage lasted for at least 5 years, the claimant was age-eligible for old-age pension benefits, and the divorced spouse was an old-age pension beneficiary.

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\* If you have questions or suggestions, please contact [policy@g2aging.org](mailto:policy@g2aging.org).

† Detailed information and definitions are provided in tables, formulas and a glossary at the end of this document. To facilitate switching back and forth, this document is designed with hyperlinks. Most PDF readers have shortcuts that permit a reader to return to the previous location after selecting a hyperlink. In Adobe Acrobat on a PC: "Alt" + "←"; In Adobe Acrobat on a MAC: "command" + "←"; In Preview on a MAC: "command" + "[".

## Chapter 1: Policy enacted 1992-1998

### Overview

The National Pension Scheme (NPS) provides limited benefits for dependent spouses that do not qualify for their own old-age benefits. It pays a fixed supplement to old-age pension beneficiaries for eligible dependents, including a spouse, children younger than age 18 or with a disability, and parents (including the spouse's parents). This supplement has existed since the introduction of the NPS in 1988.

### Eligibility

**Are divorced spouses entitled to benefits based on their ex-spouses contribution or earnings history?** Answer: No

#### Age requirements to start benefits without penalty

- **Full eligibility age (FEA)**  
Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)  
No age requirement for dependent spouse
- **Does FEA vary by sex?** Answer: No
- **Does FEA vary by birth year?** Answer: No

#### Requirements to be eligible to receive benefit

- **Currently married spouses**  
Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)
  - The insured must have at least 10 years of coverage and claimed the old age pension
  - The dependent must remain married to the insured
  - Spouses who receive their own old age pension or special occupational pensions (civil servants, private-school employees, military personnel) are not qualified for dependent supplement

#### Alternative eligibility requirements that permit starting benefits early, but with a penalty

- **Can an individual start benefits before FEA?** Answer: No

### Benefits

- **To receive a benefit, does an individual have to claim it?** Answer: Yes
- **To continue to receive a benefit, does an individual have to remain qualified?** Answer: Yes

#### Payment type

- **Payment options (i.e., Annuity, cash balance, or lump sum):** Annuitable

#### Factors effecting computation of benefit entitlement

- **Does the formula for computing benefit entitlement differ by birth year?** Answer: No
- **Is the formula for computing benefit entitlement progressive?** Answer: Yes (fixed rate)
- **Does the benefit entitlement depend on the surviving spouse's own contribution/work history?** Answer: Yes
- **Does the benefit entitlement depend on the contribution/work history of the deceased spouse?** Answer: No
- **Are future benefit entitlements adjusted for cost of living?** Answer: Yes
- **If so, what measure is used for adjustment?**  
CPI

#### Benefit formula for claiming at FEA

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

Fixed rate adjusted annually for changes in consumer prices. See [Table 1](#) for annual spouse supplement.

#### Adjustments for starting benefits before FEA (Early claiming or retirement)

- **Are benefits reduced for starting benefits before FEA?** Answer: No

**Adjustments for starting benefits after FEA (Delayed claiming or retirement)**

- **Are benefits increased for starting benefits after FEA?** Answer: No

**Adjustments for starting benefits and continuing to work (Earnings Test)**

- **Are benefits reduced or eliminated while working?** Answer: No

## Chapter 2: Policy enacted 1999-2022

### Policy change in 1999

In late 1998, a reform introduced a split pension for divorced spouses ([Act No. 5623, December 31, 1998](#)). The reform permits individuals in a divorced couple where the marriages lasted at least five years or longer to equally divided their own old-age pension benefits based on the proportion of their marriage they were contributing to the NPS.

In late 2015, a reform permitted a split pension to be split non-equally between spouses by a divorce court and claimed in advance at the time of divorce ([Act No. 13642, December 29, 2015](#)). However, benefits are only paid once both parties reach old-age pension eligibility age.

### Overview

The National Pension Scheme (NPS) provides limited benefits for dependent spouses that do not qualify for their own old-age benefits. It pays a fixed supplement to old-age pension beneficiaries for eligible dependents, including a spouse, children younger than age 19 (18 before July 29, 2015) or with a disability, and parents (including the spouse's parents). This supplement has existed since the introduction of the NPS in 1988.

Divorced spouses are eligible for a split pension (sometimes referred to as a divided pension or a partial pension or an installment pension) if their marriage lasted for at least five years, the claimant was age-eligible for old-age pension benefits, and the divorced spouse was an old-age pension beneficiary.

### Eligibility

**Are divorced spouses entitled to benefits based on their ex-spouses contribution or earnings history?** Answer: Yes (only in split pension)

#### Age requirements to start benefits without penalty

- **Full eligibility age (FEA)**

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

No age requirement for dependent spouse

Split pension

Depends on the [SRA](#) for old-age pension benefit, which varies based on birth year

- **Does FEA vary by sex?** Answer: No
- **Does FEA vary by birth year?** Answer: Yes (split pension only)
- **Details by birth year:**
  - Split pension
  - See [Table 2](#) for SRA by birth year

#### Requirements to be eligible to receive benefit

- **Currently married spouses**

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

- The insured must have at least 10 years of coverage and claimed the old age pension
- The dependent must remain married to the insured
- Spouses who receive their own old age pension or special occupational pensions (civil servants, private-school employees, military personnel) are not qualified for dependent supplement

- **Divorced spouses**

Split pension

Both the insured and the divorced spouse must have reached their respective [SRA](#). The divorced spouse must have been married to the insured for at least five years during his or her period of coverage.

**Alternative eligibility requirements that permit starting benefits early, but with a penalty**

- **Can an individual start benefits before FEA?** Answer:

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

No

Split pension

No (split pension cannot be claimed before SRA)

**Benefits**

- **To receive a benefit, does an individual have to claim it?** Answer: Yes
- **To continue to receive a benefit, does an individual have to remain qualified?** Answer: Yes

**Payment type**

- **Payment options (i.e., Annuity, cash balance, or lump sum):** Annuitable

**Factors effecting computation of benefit entitlement**

- **Does the formula for computing benefit entitlement differ by birth year?** Answer: No
- **Is the formula for computing benefit entitlement progressive?** Answer: Yes (spouse benefit is a fixed rate)
- **Does the benefit entitlement depend on the surviving spouse's own contribution/work history?** Answer: Yes
- **Does the benefit entitlement depend on the contribution/work history of the deceased spouse?** Answer: No
- **Are future benefit entitlements adjusted for cost of living?** Answer: Yes
- **If so, what measure is used for adjustment?**

CPI

**Benefit formula for claiming at FEA**

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

Fixed rate adjusted annually for changes in consumer prices. See [Table 1](#) for annual spouse supplement.

Split Pension

Up to 50% of the insured ex-spouse's old-age pension benefit is paid (negotiable in court since 2016). The amount varies according to the length of marriage. See [Formula 1](#) for how the split is computed and *Korea, Public Own Old-Age Benefit Plan Details* for how to compute own old-age pension benefits.

*Note:* The divorced spouse must claim the split pension within five years of the insured's benefit claiming to receive benefits.

**Adjustments for starting benefits before FEA (Early claiming or retirement)**

- **Are benefits reduced for starting benefits before FEA?** Answer:

Spouse benefit (dependent supplement)

No

Split pension

No (split pension cannot be claimed before SRA)

**Adjustments for starting benefits after FEA (Delayed claiming or retirement)**

- **Are benefits increased for starting benefits after FEA?** Answer: No

**Adjustments for starting benefits and continuing to work (Earnings Test)**

- **Are benefits reduced or eliminated while working?** Answer: No

## Tables and Formulas

**Table 1: Monthly Spouse Supplement by Year**

Year	Amount
1992	80,890 ₩
1993	80,890
1994	90,030
1995	90,030
1996	99,930
1997	99,930
1998	99,930
1999	161,250
2000	162,540
2001	166,270
2002	173,080
2003	177,750
2004	184,140
2005	190,760
2006	195,910
2007	200,220
2008	205,220
2009	214,860
2010	220,870
2011	227,270
2012	236,360
2013	241,550
2014	244,690
2015	247,870
2016	249,600
2017	252,090
2018	256,870
2019	260,720
2020	261,760
2021	263,060
2022	269,630

**Source:** Article 52 of the National Pension Act, Act No. 8541, July 2007 ([Ministry of Legislation, 2021](#)) defined the spouse supplement. Values are collected for 1988-2020 from Table 3, Average Monthly Income, Dependents' Pension Amount & Revaluation Rate ([National Pension Service, 2021](#)); Since 2021, authors' collection of annual



**Table 2: Statutory Retirement Ages by Birth Year**

Birth year	Statutory Retirement Age
1952 or earlier	60
1953 - 1956	61
1957 - 1960	62
1961 - 1964	63
1965 - 1968	64
After 1968	65

**Source:** Article 8 of Addendum to the National Pension Act, Act No. 8541, July 2007 ([Ministry of Legislation, 2021](#))

**Formula 1: Split Pension**

$$B_{OA(split),i,t,t_c} = c_i \times (P_{ij}/Q_{ij}) \times B_{OA,i,t,t_c}$$

- $B_{OA(split),i,t,t_c}$  = Individual  $i$ 's split old-age pension benefit at time  $t$ .
- $c_i$  = Fraction of split pension paid to  $i$ . Typically 50% before December 30, 2016, but negotiable in court since December 30, 2016.
- $B_{OA,i,t,t_c}$  = Ex-spouse  $j$ 's old-age pension benefit at time  $t$  if benefit had been claimed at time  $t_c$ . See computation in *Republic of Korea: Public Own Old-Age Benefit Plan Details*.
- $P_{ij}$  = Ex-spouse  $j$ 's years of contribution during marriage to  $i$ .
- $Q_{ij}$  = Length of marriage between  $i$  and  $j$  in years

**Source:** Article 57-2 of the National Pension Act before 2007 and Article 64 of the National Pension Act after 2007 ([Ministry of Legislation, 1998, 2007, 2015](#))

**Table 3: Earliest Eligibility Ages by Birth Year (with at least 10 years of coverage)**

Birth year	Earliest Eligibility Age
1952 or earlier	55
1953-56	56
1957-60	57
1961-64	58
1965-68	59
After 1968	60

**Source:** Article 8 of Addendum to the National Pension Act, Act No. 8541, July 2007 ([Ministry of Legislation, 2021](#))

## Sources

This section records key sources consulted when we collected the institutional details reported in this document. Archived versions of these sources are available at the Gateway Policy Explorer website (<http://g2aging.org/policy-explorer>).

Ministry of Legislation (1998). National Pension Act, Act No. 5623, Dec. 31, 1998. Only available in Korean. Current version as of April 19, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)

Ministry of Legislation (2007). National Pension Act, Act No. 8541, July 23, 2007. Only available in Korean. Current version as of April 19, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)

Ministry of Legislation (2015). National Pension Act, Act No. 13642, December 29, 2015. Only available in Korean. Current version as of April 19, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)

Ministry of Legislation (2021). National Pension Act, Act No. 18608, December 21, 2021. Only available in Korean. Current version as of March 25, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)

National Pension Service (2021). 국민연금 통계연보(2020년) [National Pension Statistical Yearbook 2020]. Available in Korean only. As of April 18, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)

## Glossary of terms

This section summarizes key definitions from the main text. To facilitate switching back and forth, this document is designed with hyperlinks. Most PDF readers have shortcuts that permit a reader to return to the previous location after selecting a hyperlink. In Adobe Acrobat on a PC: “Alt” + “←”; In Adobe Acrobat on a MAC: “command” + “←”; In Preview on a MAC: “command” + “[”.

**Annuitable System:** A pension system that provides a periodic payment for life after the benefit begins.

**Cash Balance System:** A pension system that provides each individual an account that is drawn down over time.

**Claimable Benefit:** A pension where the beneficiary must actively file a claim for benefits with the government’s pension authority.

**Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA):** Adjustments after an individual begins receiving benefits that increase benefit payments, typically in line with consumer prices or average earnings.

**Earliest eligibility:** Earliest age and/or years of contributions required to be eligible to start receipt of a particular type of benefit. Earliest eligibility is the same as statutory eligibility in countries where there is no benefit penalty for claiming before the statutory retirement age.

**Full Eligibility Age:** The age at which individuals are eligible to receive their full benefit. For dependent benefits or social assistance, the full eligibility age may differ from the statutory retirement age for own old-age pension benefits.

**Latest claiming age:** Latest age where a benefit may be claimed such that benefit payments are increased as an incentive for delaying the start of benefits past the statutory retirement age. Latest claiming age is the same as statutory retirement age in countries where there is no benefit to delayed claiming. Not applicable for non-claimable benefits.

**Lump Sum Benefit:** A pension system that provides an individual with a one-time or limited number of payments. Lump sum benefits are distinct from annuitable or cash balance benefits because they do not continue past a specified time frame. Lump sum benefits use varies by country, but they are sometimes used as death benefits, incentives to delay claiming, or payments to individuals with an insufficient contribution history to be eligible for annuitable benefits.

**National Income Measure:** In some pension systems, the benefit is dependent on a national income measure, such as average wages. We indicate a pension system depends on the national income measure if the benefit paid is determined by a national income measure (as opposed to an individual’s earnings history). For example, the benefit level for the United Kingdom Basic State Pension depends on a level set by the government and does not depend on an individual’s earnings. This distinction does not include systems that adjust annual benefits based on a national income measure or index past earnings using a national income measure.

**National Pension Scheme (NPS):** The public old-age benefit system of South Korea

**Progressive Benefit:** A benefit is progressive if people with lower earnings have a greater replacement rate for their contributions.

**Qualified Benefit:** A benefit is qualified if an individual must continue to meet certain standards, such as a means test, to continue receipt of benefits.

**Statutory Retirement Age (SRA):** The age at which individuals are eligible to receive their full benefit. In the United States, this is known as the normal retirement age. In the United Kingdom, this is known as the state pension age.

## Version information

*Current Version: 1.1 (August 2023)*

### Version History

- 1.0 (May 2022): First version
- 1.1 (August 2023): Updated formatting

## Additional resources

The following resources provide additional details for the interested reader:

National Pension Service [국민연금] (2022) *Old Age Pension* [노령연금]. Available only in Korean.

Available at: [https://www.nps.or.kr/jsppage/info/easy/easy\\_04\\_01.jsp](https://www.nps.or.kr/jsppage/info/easy/easy_04_01.jsp)

Features: This website provides several easy-to-use website pages that walk a user through the calculation of benefits and the eligibility rules for old-age benefits. While only available in Korean, the website can be read using the translate feature in Google Chrome.

Ministry of Legislation [법제처] (2022) *National Pension Act* [국민연금법]. Available only in Korean.

Available at: [https://www.law.go.kr/법령/국민연금법/\(18608,20211221\)](https://www.law.go.kr/법령/국민연금법/(18608,20211221))

Features: The Ministry of Legislation provides the current version of the National Pension Act, but also allows users to see previous versions and provides a comparison tool that allows users to review changes to particular articles of legislation over time. The National Pension Act was wholly revised in 2007. Spousal benefits are specified in Article 48 before the 2007 reform and Articles 52, 64, 64-2, 64-3, 64-4 and 65 since 2007 reform. While only available in Korean, the website can be read using the translate feature in Google Chrome.