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Living Arrangements and Support among the Elderly in South-East Asia: An Introduction

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Population ageing seems poised to replace population growth as the major demographic issue of public, political and scientific concern

Five years have passed since publication of the September 1992 theme issue of Asia-Pacific Population Journal that focused on social and economic support systems for the elderly in Asia. Since that time, interest in population ageing and its consequences for coming generations has increased considerably. Indeed population ageing seems poised to replace population growth as the major demographic issue of public, political and scientific concern in the twenty-first century (Lutz, Sanderson and Scherbov, 1997). In the developing world, this is likely to be the case earlier rather than later throughout much of East and South-East Asia where declining fertility rates are rapidly approaching or have already reached the replacement level.

The future ageing of the population and the challenges it poses for governments and society are already receiving serious attention in many ESCAP countries. Although in most, the process of ageing is still at an early stage, the inexorable trends are now widely known. For example, in South-East Asia, the region where the countries covered in the following articles are all located, the current 1997 population aged 60 years and older is projected to grow by two and a half times by the end of the first quarter of the next century and by more than five times by mid-century. The result will be an increase in the elderly population's share of the total population from 7 per cent currently to 12.5 per cent in 2025 and 21 per cent by 2050.1 One reflection of this emerging concern has been a substantial expansion of relevant research and analysis designed to guide informed and sound policy formulation. Indeed ESCAP has played an active role in promoting research related to ageing in the region (see appendix on page 16 for a full list of the resulting reports). Moreover, recent annotated bibliographies issued by ESCAP provide convenient guides to much of the expanding research and analysis effort (United Nations, 1996a and 1996b).

As our introductory article in the 1992 theme issue stressed, analyses of issues related to population ageing and the implications drawn for policies directed at coping with this phenomenon need to be based on solid empirical evidence rather than casual impressions and preconceptions (Knodel and Debavalya, 1992). This view has been echoed in a recent overview of the ageing situation in Asia issued by the International Labour Office (ILO, 1997). As Hermalin stresses in his article in the present issue (see pages 71-84), carefully conducted representative surveys of older persons, focusing on the full range of determinants of their socio-economic well-being and health, play an especially important role in this respect. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) Population Programme both recognized this as early as the first half of the 1980s and sponsored multi-country surveys (Andrews and others, 1986; Andrews, undated; Chen and Jones, 1989).

Starting in 1989, the Population Studies Center of the University of Michigan initiated efforts to coordinate collaborative quantitative and qualitative research in a number of the countries in the ESCAP region. This endeavour involved promoting further analysis of existing data sets including some of the ASEAN and WHO surveys as well as assisting new data-collection efforts building upon the earlier experiences. The four country studies presented in this theme issue of the Asia-Pacific Population Journal are all part of this effort 2 .Each article presents findings from detailed surveys conducted between 1995 and 1997 that were specifically designed to examine the socio-economic well-being and health of older persons and to document their familial and extra-familial support arrangements. In the cases of the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, they cover nationally representative samples; the Viet Nam article draws on two regional surveys, one from the northern and the other from the southern part of the country, that together represent by far the most thorough efforts to date in that country to collect such data. Although the articles for each of the four countries have their own emphases, their common connection to the Population Studies Center has permitted some degree of coordination in the analyses, thereby facilitating greater comparability in the results they present than was possible in the 1992 theme issue of this Journal on ageing.

As the World Bank (1994:4-5) stated in its recent comprehensive review of global old-age security arrangements, the challenge for most governments of developing countries facing population ageing is "to move toward formal systems of income maintenance without accelerating the decline in informal systems and without shifting more responsibility to government than it can handle". The article in this issue by Chan on Singapore's experience in instituting a government programme (see pages 35-50 provides an important example of how, in practice, recipients may utilize the assistance in ways that differ from the original intentions behind it. Thus, the social and economic reality in Singapore is such that the elderly continue to rely on family support rather than use their provident funds for their daily living expenses. As the 1997 ILO review stresses, documenting and understanding the existing informal systems of support based within the family and how these systems are themselves changing is a prerequisite for developing appropriate and effective social and economic policies addressing the elderly.

The present theme issue is intended to meet this need. Its focus is on living arrangements and sources of social and economic support of the elderly. The attention given to living arrangements reflects the central role coresidence between elderly family members and younger generation adults, especially their own adult children, has traditionally played in the familial support systems in the region. Moreover, as extensive qualitative research conducted as part of the University of Michigan project has shown, the actors themselves often view living arrangements that permit access between the two generations crucial to their own well-being (see Knodel, 1995).

In this theme issue, Hermalin in his article on policy lessons from research, correctly cautions that it is essential to distinguish between the forms and functions of particular arrangements and to recognize that our ultimate concern is with the well-being of the older members of society and not simply with the maintenance of any particular form. Thus, to judge if changes in the structure of the support system merit sounding alarms requires evidence about the extent to which the newly emerging forms are more or less able to serve the functions of the forms that they are replacing. This is particularly true with living arrangements, since some alternative arrangements to literal coresidence may well serve similar functions with respect to meeting the needs of both generations while also enhancing their privacy. Thus, understanding the meaning of observed changes in living arrangements of the elderly requires more than just the mere documentation that such changes are occurring. Likewise, unchanging living arrangements could mask changing content of the relationships among household members. Indeed, all the surveys that serve as the basis for the country-specific articles that follow are rich in data that will permit addressing these questions in future analyses.

With that said, monitoring trends in the living arrangements and other forms of familial support is an important starting point. And given the centrality of coresidence with adult children in contexts where alternative non-familial arrangements are largely lacking, this feature merits particular attention. Fortunately the new surveys on which the following articles are based provide more complete evidence than has ever been available for these particular countries or, for that matter, almost any other country in the region.

Table 1: Levels and trends in living arrangements among the population aged 60 and older

Country and year	Nature of sample	Percentage living with any child (with or without others)	Percentage living alone	Percentage living only with spouse
Philippines				
1986	Subnational	74	3	5
1988	National	68	4	10
1996	National	69	6	8
Singapore				
1988	National	88	2	3
1995	National	85	3	6
Thailand				
1986	National	77	4	7
1995	National	71	4	12
Viet Nam				
1996	Red River Delta	74	7	13
1997	Ho Chi Minh City and nearby provinces	82	5	5

Sources: The most recent figures for each country and the two regions in Viet Nam are from the country-specific articles in the present issue of this Journal; Philippines 1986 and Singapore 1988 are from Casterline and others, 1992; Philippines 1988 and Thailand 1986 are from Knodel and Debavalya, 1992.

Table 1 presents some basic indicators of living arrangements based on the following articles. In the case of the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, it is also possible to make comparisons with earlier surveys and thus to have some indication of trends (for Viet Nam there are no earlier equivalent surveys for comparison). In all four countries, levels of coresidence with children are high, ranging from 69 per cent in the Philippines to 85 per cent in Singapore according to the most recent surveys. Likewise, the percentage of elderly who live alone is very low in all the countries surveyed. Even the percentage of elderly who live only with a spouse is quite modest. Thus, the very substantial social and economic changes that have engulfed South-East Asia over the last several decades have not yet resulted in major changes in coresidence with children as the predominant form of living arrangement for older persons in each of these countries.

There is some suggestion that coresidence might be declining, although the trends indicated by the surveys shown in table 1 are only modest. In the case of the Philippines, there is some uncertainty as to the trend, since the only prior

survey specifically directed at the older population was based on a sub-national sample in 1986 (as part of the ASEAN Population Programme). If the results of this earlier survey are compared with the 1996 survey, also directed specifically towards the older population, there appears to be a modest decline in the percentage of elderly persons living with one of their children. However, analysis of a national survey in 1988 that formed the basis of the article on the Philippines in the 1992 theme issue of this Journal indicated a slightly lower level of coresidence than found in the new 1996 survey. In the case of Singapore, an earlier survey taken in 1988 indicated that 88 per cent of the Singaporean elderly lived with one of their children compared with 85 per cent doing so in 1995. With the level remaining so extremely high, however, this is hardly evidence of a major change. Thailand shows a modest decline in the percentage of elderly coresiding with a child, i.e. from 77 to 71 per cent over a nine-year interval, but again the level even in 1995 is still quite high. In the case of Viet Nam, although the surveys are regional and there are no earlier data to serve as a comparison, the levels of coresidence are high enough to suggest no major decline is likely to have occurred.

Although the results suggest remarkable persistence in coresidence in these countries, it is possible that more rapid change could characterize the coming decades. The article by Natividad and Cruz on the Philippines (see pages 17-34) presents rather surprising findings on the attitudes of the elderly as to what they view as the preferred living arrangements for older persons in different marital statuses. The results suggest less support for coresidence than would be implied from actual living arrangements. Moreover, recent evidence indicates more pronounced declines in coresidence in at least two other ESCAP member countries not covered in the following articles. In Japan, the percentage of elderly living with any child fell from 77 per cent in 1970 to 60 per cent by 1989 (Hermalin, 1995). Even more dramatic is the apparent decline of coresidence in the Republic of Korea, where the percentage living with any child fell from 78 per cent in 1984 to 49 per cent just 10 years later 3 Thus, the modest changes evident in table 1 for the three countries for which trend data are shown could possibly presage more dramatic future declines.

The new round of surveys on which articles in the present issue are based provide more detail on living arrangements than has been the case in earlier surveys. In recognition that living adjacent to a child or nearby can serve many of the same functions as coresidence, each of the recent surveys except for Singapore provides information about the location of the nearest non-coresident child. Thus some elderly persons who are not literally coresident in the sense of living in the same dwelling unit with any of their children live next door to a child and in most cases such a situation is likely to involve close ties between the two households. When this is taken into account, an even higher level of interdependent living arrangements prevail than is indicated by literal coresidence alone.

In the Philippines, the percentage who live with any child or adjacent to a child is 77 per cent compared with 69 per cent who live in the same household with a child. In Thailand, among the elderly with a least one living child, 74 per cent coreside in the same household with a child compared with 84 per cent who either coreside with or live next door to a child (see Family Support and Living Arrangements of Thai Elderly by John Knodel and Napaporn Chayovan). If we also consider seeing a child daily as an indicator of nearby living, fully 90 per cent of Thai elderly parents either coreside with a child or have daily contact with one. The two regional surveys in Viet Nam also indicate that non-negligible proportions of the elderly who do not coreside with a child nevertheless live next door to the child (see Living Arrangements, Patrilineality and Sources of Support among Elderly Vietnamese by Truong Si Anh, Bui The Cuong, Deniel Goodkind and John Knodel). Thus, in the Red River Delta, 84 per cent of elderly parents live with or next to a child and in Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces, 91 per cent either coreside with them or live next door.

The articles on all the countries but Singapore attempt to delve more deeply into the issue of how large a proportion of the elderly appear to be deserted or at least outside the conventional familial support system. In each case, the answer appears to be a very small proportion. Of course, to the extent that any elderly persons are deserted is a matter worthy of concern. But it is at least somewhat reassuring that many elderly persons who live alone or only with a spouse are still receiving support or assistance from their children or other family members. At the same time, this does not necessarily mean that there are only a few elderly in these countries who are vulnerable in terms of their economic situation or their health. As the ILO report points out, it is often the poverty of the extended family as a whole that poses the major threat to elderly members (ILO, 1997). Thus, to adequately assess who the most vulnerable elderly are, additional analyses are required. They are likely to show that vulnerability needs to be thought of more broadly than in the narrow sense of desertion. Those who have serious economic or health needs are likely to be found across the whole spectrum of living arrangements. In all three countries, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, there are substantial numbers of very impoverished families. Under such conditions, coresidence cannot eliminate many of the circumstances that undermine the well-being of elderly family members.

Each of the new surveys also provides detailed information about the children who coreside with parents. It is thus possible, for example, to compare the extent to which the elderly live with sons or daughters. As Karen Mason (1992) stressed in her review article about family change and support of the elderly in Asia, which was included in the previous theme issue on ageing of this Journal, there are two major types of family systems in Asia: the patrilineal systems found in East Asia and the northern tier of South Asia, and the bilateral systems found in South-East Asia and the southern tier of South Asia. In this context, the countries covered in the current issue of this

Journal, and the ethnic groups in Singapore, reveal very striking differences in terms of the gender of the children with whom the elderly coreside.

Table2: Behavioural indicators of gender preference for coresident children

	Ratio of elderly who live with a son to elderly who live with a daughter Considering:		
	All coresident children	**Single coresident**	**Ever married coresident children**
Philippines (1996)	-	1.32	.84
Singapore (1995)	1.59	-	-
Chinese only	1.72	-	-
Malay only	1.06	-	-
Indian only	1.35	-	-
Thailand (1995)	.73	1.03	.58
Viet Nam			
Red River Delta (1996)	2.53	.90	8.15
Ho Chi Minh City area (1997)	1.35	1.07	1.74

Source: Calculated from results presented in the country-specific articles in the present issue of this Journal.
Note: - means that the data are not available from information in the articles.

Table 2 shows the ratio of elderly persons who live with a son to the ratio of those who live with a daughter for each of the four countries. Ratios over one indicate that living with a son is more common than living with a daughter, while ratios below one indicate the opposite. Table 2 distinguishes coresidence with single children from that with ever married children. The ratio of elderly persons who live with ever married sons to the ratio who live with ever married daughters most clearly reveals differences in the patrilineal compared with the bilateral family systems to which Mason referred.

The results indicate that, of the areas included in table 2, the most strikingly patrilineal pattern by far is found in the Red River Delta of northern Viet Nam. In the Ho Chi Minh City area of southern Viet Nam, there is clearly a higher likelihood of residing with an ever married son than an ever married daughter, but the pattern is far less pronounced than in the Red River Delta. In contrast, in the Philippines and even more so in Thailand there is a greater tendency to live with married daughters than married sons. In the case of Singapore, interesting ethnic differences are evident. Although we cannot distinguish single and ever married children, the Chinese are very distinctly more likely to live with a son than with a daughter, while the Malay are almost equally likely to live with a child of either sex. Ethnic Indians in Singapore are in between the two extremes. In the three other countries where information on single coresident children is available, differences in the percentage of the elderly who live with single sons compared with single daughters are at most only modest. This reflects the fact that the gender considerations regarding the appropriateness of coresidence of particular children emerge strongly only following their marriage. Throughout the region, it is normatively appropriate for single children of either sex to live in their parental home.

The extent and strength of preferences for coresidence with children of one sex over the other have important implications for the future of familial support systems in the region. In each of the four countries covered in this issue, fertility has either fallen to or below the replacement level (Singapore and Thailand) or is in the midst of an on-going decline (the Philippines and Viet Nam). The impact of the sharply reduced family size on the availability of children eligible for coresidence for the future generation of the elderly will depend on how flexible they are with regard to the sex of the coresident child. For example, current family size preferences among reproductive aged adults in both Thailand and Viet Nam suggest that a substantial majority of the future elderly may have only two children (Knodel and others, 1996; Phai and others, 1995). As research reported in the previous theme issue on ageing of this Journal indicated, Thais more commonly prefer to live with a daughter than a son but can be quite flexible in this respect (Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992a). This combined with the fact that few Thais expect to have fewer than two children, means that lower fertility levels in and of themselves are unlikely to have a major depressing effect on the level of coresidence (Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992b). If in contrast the future elderly of Viet Nam maintain a strong patrilineal preference and insist that coresidence must be with a married son, limiting families to two children will have a substantially greater impact in reducing the availability of children who are eligible to coreside with parents.

Although this introduction has focused on living arrangements, we note that each article includes considerable information on support exchanges between the generations. Measures of these exchanges as presented in the following articles, however, are more difficult to compare than those of living arrangements. At least some measures in each of the countries suggest high levels of support provided by children to parents. They also indicate that

substantially smaller but still non-negligible proportions of elderly parents still provide some forms of support to their children. In each country, over 80 per cent of parents received some form of material support other than money from their children. Receiving visits at least on an annual basis is almost universal. Results are more mixed with respect to the provision of monetary support and some puzzling differences appear. For example, in both the Philippines and Thailand, over 80 per cent of elderly parents receive some money, but far more in Thailand report receiving substantial amounts that in the Philippines, even though the amount of money defined in the surveys as substantial was fairly similar. Likewise, Vietnamese elderly persons in the Red River Delta are far less likely to report aid from children in terms of money or major purchases than in Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces. It is difficult to judge to what extent such differences are genuine or instead reflect differences in the survey instruments and their implementation.

Overall, the following country-specific articles illustrate how much more we now know about the elderly population in Asia than just a decade ago. Given that the surveys on which the articles are based are all very recent and cover a wide variety of topics besides those treated in the present theme issue of this Journal, future analyses are certain to continue to expand our understanding of the circumstances in which population ageing is taking place. Thus, governments of countries in the ESCAP region are having increased access to solid and comprehensive research that can serve as a guide for them as they turn to the formulation of appropriately informed policies and programmes.

Endnotes

These figures are based on the 1996 assessment by the Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis.
The papers on the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were written in connection with the project, "Rapid Demographic Change and the Welfare of the Elderly", and the paper on Viet Nam was written as part of the project "The Vietnamese Elderly in a Time of Change". Both are projects of the Population Studies Center and are funded by the U.S. National Institute on Aging (grants R37AG07637 and R03AG14886, respectively).
The figures for the Republic of Korea are based on the 1984 Korean Elderly Survey and the 1994 Survey of the Living Status of Korean Elderly (Kim and Choe, 1992; personal communication from Cheong Kim). Both surveys were conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA).

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Patterns in Living Arrangements and Familial Support for the Elderly in the Philippines

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Living arrangements for the elderly of the future will not necessarily continue to be predominently with a child as coresident

Foremost among the traditional roles that the family is presumed to play in Asian societies is that of provider of support for its members at all stages of the life-cycle. The significance of this role is particularly evident in the old-age stage, when the family performs a social security function that in more developed countries has been taken over by non-familial institutions. In recent years, social changes in the Asian region, including those brought about by fertility decline, rural-to-urban and overseas migration, urbanization and rising female labour force participation, have raised questions about the enduring role of the family as a source of support for its elderly members in views of the rapid pace with which these changes are occurring.

The elderly are a vulnerable group in the face of rapid social and economic changes, because the net effect of such changes may be, theoretically at least, a diminution in the pool of available sources of familial support. Fertility decline, for one, can lead to fewer adult children upon whom the elderly could depend. Urbanization and migration, for another, may lead to the abandonment of the elderly in rural areas as their children move to and settle in cities or in other countries. In general though, the results of studies on living arrangements and sources of familial support for the elderly in the Asian context show as yet no evident threat to the age-old arrangement of families living with older kin (Knodel and Debavalya, 1992). Comparative data on regional differences in the percentage of the elderly (65 years and older) who live alone indicates that Asian countries have the lowest percentages whereas European countries have the highest. That cultural rather than purely economic factors are at play is suggested by the equally high percentages of elderly living alone in the Caribbean and in some Latin American countries where economic conditions are presumably different from those of European countries (Kinsella, 1993).

In the Philippines, studies on living arrangements of the elderly and their sources of support generally reveal a predominant pattern of coresidence with other kin, mainly their spouse and/or their children. Only a small proportion live alone (estimated from the 1988 National Demographic Survey (NDS) to be 4 per cent). No significant differences between the sexes and between rural and urban residents were observed (Domingo and Casterline, 1992). Moreover, data from the 1984 ASEAN Survey on the Elderly showed a picture of continued social contact between the elderly and their other non-coresident children (Domingo and Feranil and Associates, 1990). Both coresident and non-coresident children provide economic support to ageing parents, while the latter also extend various forms of economic and social assistance.

Focus group data contribute further insights into the social interactions behind the data culled from survey results. Filipino elderly participants in focus group discussions conducted in Metro Manila and in two rural villages in 1990 and 1991 reveal that many of the elderly would prefer to live independently of their children but are constrained to do otherwise as much by their own needs as those of their offspring. In many cases, the children are not able to establish themselves on their own and have to live with a parent in the latter's house. A pattern of co-dependence is thus established (Domingo and Asis, 1993).

This article examines patterns in living arrangements and sources of social support for the Filipino elderly (aged 60 years and older) using data from the 1996 Philippine Survey on the Near Elderly and Elderly (1996 PSNEE) which cover the population 50 years and older. The sample consisted of 2,285 respondents aged 50 years and older, of whom 1,131 were aged 60 years and older. This survey is the first to have been conducted in the country specifically on these age groups using a nationally representative sample1 The article aims to examine the latest trends in living arrangements and sources of social support across gender, marital status and rural-urban residence. The PSNEE is part of a comparative study on the elderly and near elderly in four Asian societies (Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China and Thailand) aimed at investigating how rapid demographic change in these societies has affected the elderly. A complete description of the PSNEE is contained in a forthcoming country report on the Philippines.

Table 1: Blackground characteristics of the Filipino elderly aged 60+ (weighted and unweighted values)

	Unweighted percentage distribution (percent)	**Weighted percentage distribution**
Age		
60-69	56.0	56.5

70+	44.0	43.5
Total	100.0	100.0
(N)	(1,311)	(1,264)
Sex		
Male	39.7	41.8
Female	60.3	58.2
Marital status		
Currently married	50.4	54.1
Widowed	44.0	41.0
Others	5.6	5.0
Type of residence		
Urban	46.0	43.4
Rural	54.0	56.6

Results

The basic characteristics of the sample population are presented in Table1which also shows both weighted and unweighted sample sizes.

Table2: Measures of living arrangements for the Filipino elderly aged 60+

Current living arrangement	Total	Age (percent)		Sex (pencent)		Marital status (percent)			Type of resident (percent)	
		60-69	70+	Male	Female	Currently married	Widowed	Others	Urban	Rural
Percentage living:										
Alone	5.5	2.8	9.1	4.4	6.4	0.6	10.0	22.2	4.6	6.3
With spouse (60+)	7.9	8.4	7.3	8.9	7.2	14.5	0	0	5.3	9.9
With any child	69.2	74.2	62.7	71.9	67.4	72.2	70.5	25.8	71.7	67.3
With any child or adjacent to any child	76.8	81.5	70.7	79.5	74.9	81.1	76.8	30.2	79.4	74.8
With a single son	28.6	36.1	18.7	34.6	24.2	36.5	21.2	3.2	28.2	28.8
With a single daughter	21.7	26.3	15.6	22.1	21.5	26.9	17.6	0	23.0	20.8
With an ever married son	20.3	19.9	20.9	17.4	22.4	17.6	25.9	3.2	25.0	16.6
With an ever married daughter	24.0	23.9	24.0	22.2	25.3	20.9	28.4	20.6	24.8	23.4
With a three-generation household	45.5	45.5	46.6	42.2	47.8	40.8	54.1	23.8	48.6	42.9

Patterns in living arrangements of the elderly

Table 2 is a summary table of various types of living arrangements of the elderly broken down by age, gender, marital status and residence. Some of the categories are mutually exclusive, others overlap. In general, the table captures the prevalent types of living arrangement ranging from living alone and living with a spouse to living with children of different characteristics (single vs. married, daughters vs. sons). Table 3 provides additional summary information about living arrangements in a set of mutually exclusive categories.

Table 3: Current living arrangements for Filipino population aged 60+

Current living arrangement	Total	Age		Sex		Marital status			Type of resident	
		60-69	70+	Male	Female	Currently married	Widowed	Others	Urban	Rural
Living alone	5.5	2.8	9.1	4.4	6.4	0.6	10.0	22.2	4.5	6.3
Living with spouse only	7.9	8.4	7.3	8.9	7.2	14.5	0.2	0	5.3	9.9
Living with others only excluding spouse or children	9.8	6.6	14.0	4.4	13.7	0.9	17.4	44.4	10.9	8.9
Living with single but no ever										

married children (regardless of whether spouse or others are present)	28.4	34.5	20.5	35.2	23.5	36.8	20.5	3.2	26.0	30.3
Living with one or more ever married children only (regardless of whether spouse or others are present)	28.5	25.1	33.0	23.5	32.2	20.9	39.2	23.8	31.3	26.5
Living with never and ever married children (regardless of whether spouse or others are present)	13.4	16.0	10.0	13.8	12.9	15.2	12.5	0	15.6	11.6
Other types of arrangement[a]	6.5	6.7	6.2	9.8	3.9	11.1	0.2	6.3	6.4	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a Includes the following: living with children with unknown marital status, and living with spouse and other persons.

Living alone

From the survey's household screening form, the elderly who lived alone were identified to be those who did not report any other member of the household apart from themselves. From the main questionnaire, data on non-coresident children weeded out those who reported living alone on the household form but had at least one non-coresident child living in the same housing unit. Since the questionnaire contained no comparable information on the proximity of kin other than children, the final estimate of elderly who live alone may be biased towards over-representation of the unmarried and the childless, who nevertheless may be living close to other relatives under the same arrangement as non-coresident children. Being childless and being unmarried are two uncommon states among elderly persons in the Philippines. To make up for the perceived deficiency in available support for these groups, focus group data point to a social support network provided by siblings, nephews and nieces (Domingo and Asis, 1993), which the data presented here do not quite capture.

In Philippine society, where the norm is for the elderly to be taken care of by kin -- chiefly spouse and/or children among the ever married and other relatives such as siblings, nephews and nieces for the never married or widowed without children -- living alone in the twilight of one's life is almost unthinkable as it means that the family has somehow reneged on its implied duty to care for its own. This normative standard is mirrored in the overall low proportion of elderly respondents who were living alone, reported at 5.5 per cent (as contrasted with 4 per cent from the 1988 NDS and 3 per cent from the 1984 ASEAN Survey).

The overall proportion living alone increases with age. Also, there are more rural residents who live alone compared with urban residents. With regard to marital status, the category "others", which includes the separated and the unmarried, has the highest proportion living alone. Of these two subgroups, more people separated from their spouse lived alone than those who never married.

Because divorce has not been legalized in the Philippines, there is a mark of social unacceptability for those who are separated. This is especially true among those in the age groups under study who were socialized into a more strict code with regard to staying married. The comparatively high prevalence of the separated among those who are living alone may reflect this unacceptability. In contrast, the never married who also represent an uncommon, albeit not an unacceptable, status do not have such a high prevalence of living alone. The latter are likely to live with siblings or nephews and nieces.

To probe further for the characteristics of the elderly living alone, these cases were singled out for additional analysis. Table 4 shows a profile of their characteristics. The age categories for the elderly were collapsed into one (60 years and older) because of the small sample size involved. Females predominate in this group, a reflection of their higher survivorship. It is interesting to note that those who lived alone were more likely to come from the rural areas where common-sense knowledge in the Philippine context presumes living alone is more uncommon because of more traditional values. Nevertheless, data on place of residence of the nearest child show that few of the elderly truly live in isolation as their nearest child was more likely to live nearby in the same barangay (village), same city/province, or next door.

Table 4: Profile of Filipino elderly who live alone (aged 60+)

Marital status (percent)	
Never married	8.1
Married	6.5
Widowed	14.5

Divorced/separated	71.0
Total (%)	100.0
(N)	(62)
Sex	
Male	34.9
Female	65.1
Place of residence	
Urban	33.9
Rural	66.1
Place of residence of nearest child	
No children	16.2
Next door	10.8
Same *barangay*	61.9
Same city/province	20.6
Outside province	5.3
Abroad	1.3

Living with spouse only

Couples living by themselves after the children have grown are considered to be in the "empty nest" stage of the family life- cycle. This type of living arrangement is prevalent in western cultures where grown children are expected to leave the parental home upon reaching adulthood. In the Philippines, as in other Asian countries, the empty-nest situation appears almost as rarely as living alone (7.9 per cent living with spouse only compared with 5.5 per cent living alone). The proportion living with spouse only does not vary much with age or gender but there are variations by residence, with more rural than urban residents living with spouse only.

While few of the elderly live with spouse only, other data from the survey suggest that many may actually find this living arrangement to be a desirable one. As seen in Table 5, when asked what they thought the best living arrangement would be for elderly couples, the most common choice was for couples to live by themselves, followed by live by themselves but near one or more children. Living with a child came in a poor third and so did rotating residence among children. Females are just as likely to choose living alone with a spouse as are males, while rural residents are slightly more likely to prefer this arrangement than urban residents.

Table 5: Preferred living arrangements for older couples, widows and widowers (aged 60+)

Preferred living arrangement	Total	Age		Sex		Marital status			Type of resident	
		60-69	70+	Male	Female	Currently married	Widowed	Others	Urban	Rural
Older couples										
Live alone	41.8	43.6	39.3	41.5	42.0	42.5	41.4	37.7	38.2	44.6
Live alone but near one or more children	22.4	23.1	21.6	23.1	21.9	24.9	19.2	21.3	24.1	21.1
Rotate residence among children	8.8	7.2	10.9	7.5	9.8	7.7	10.5	8.2	11.3	6.8
Live with a child	22.9	23.4	22.3	23.3	22.6	21.3	25.1	23.0	20.3	24.9
Depends	2.2	1.7	2.9	1.8	2.5	2.0	2.2	3.3	3.2	1.4
No information	1.9	1.0	3.1	2.8	1.3	1.7	1.6	6.6	2.8	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Widow										
Live alone	27.7	29.2	25.6	24.3	30.0	24.9	31.8	25.0	25.2	29.6
Live alone but near one or more children	21.4	21.8	20.8	21.7	21.2	23.4	19.2	16.7	24.2	19.3
Rotate residence among children	12.6	11.9	13.6	14.2	11.3	12.4	12.1	16.7	12.2	12.6
Live with a child	34.8	34.7	35.0	35.8	34.2	36.0	33.8	31.7	33.3	36.1
Depends	1.5	1.3	1.7	2.0	1.0	1.8	0.6	3.3	1.7	1.3
No information	2.0	1.1	3.3	2.0	2.2	1.5	2.4	6.7	3.2	1.2

Widower										
Live alone	27.1	32.3	19.3	28.4	26.1	29.7	24.7	15.4	28.4	26.3
Live alone but near one or more children	20.9	17.7	25.7	24.1	17.8	20.0	22.6	15.4	23.3	18.6
Rotate residence among children	11.0	9.1	13.8	6.9	14.0	8.5	16.1	0	12.1	10.3
Live with a child	36.6	36.0	37.6	38.8	35.7	38.2	33.3	46.2	32.8	39.7
Depends	4.0	4.3	3.7	1.7	5.7	3.6	2.2	23.1	3.4	4.5
No information	0.4	0.6	0	0	0.6	0	1.1	0	0	0.6

The concept of ideal living arrangement changes when the elderly person in question is widowed. Yet, while living with a child is the most common choice under this condition, the change in the distribution of responses suggests that there is no dramatic shift towards choosing this living arrangement. About one out of four believes that the best living arrangement is for a widow to live alone, while one out of three believes that she should live with a child.

Among married respondents, about four out of ten said that the best living arrangement for older couples is to live by themselves even though a much lower proportion of them are actually in this living arrangement. Again, focus group data from Domingo and Asis (1993) provide insight into what goes on behind such seeming inconsistency. They showed that elderly respondents desire to live independently of their children because of the strains that dependence causes on both sides, especially the child on whom the parents depend. The strains are more acute when the coresident child is married. Their respondents also expressed the desire to maintain a certain autonomy that may be threatened by coresidence with an adult child, especially a married one. Yet the elderly focus group discussion participants are constrained to coreside by the exigencies of the situation, either by their own inability to care for themselves and provide for their needs, or their children's continued need for the support they can provide -- among these, a house to stay in or both.

Table 6: Ownership of respondent's current residence among Filipino elderly (aged 60+)

Current living arrangement	**Total**	**Age**		**Sex**		**Marital status**			**Type of resident**	
		60-69	**70+**	**Male**	**Female**	**Currently married**	**Widowed**	**Others**	**Urban**	**Rural**
Respondent and spouse	74.4	80.2	66.8	81.4	69.2	83.9	65.6	41.3	69.4	78.0
Respondent,respondent's spouse and children	3.0	2.4	3.8	2.1	3.7	2.3	4.1	1.6	3.8	2.4
Children	13.5	8.6	20.0	9.7	16.3	7.0	22.6	11.1	11.5	15.2
Others	9.1	8.8	9.4	6.8	10.9	6.7	7.7	46.0	15.3	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

One concrete way to express one's autonomy is by ownership of one's residence.Table 6 shows that the ownership of the house where the elderly respondent currently resides most commonly remains with the elderly couple (or with the surviving spouse). In the Philippines, it is not normal practice to turn over ownership of property to the children while a parent is still alive. In urban areas, it is also a fact that it is very difficult to acquire a house because of high costs. Therefore, in the majority of cases where an elderly person coresides with an adult child, it is the latter who lives with the elderly person rather than the other way around. Because he/she owns the house, the elderly person retains a titular claim to authority in the household even when he/she no longer provides for its needs.

Coresidence with children

Data on coresidence were derived from the survey's household screening form and referred to the elderly as the unit of analysis. A child is someone whom the respondent identified as his/her child, whether a natural or adopted child, or a step-child. In view of the Philippine cultural environment, coresidence with a child refers overwhelmingly to the respondent's natural children. Owing to the near absence of divorce, step-parenting is not a common occurrence and almost always refers to parenting the children of a widowed spouse. Adoption is not commonly legalized either, although de facto adoptions occur often among close kin such as nephews and nieces.

As in other Asian countries, coresidence with a child, with or without the presence of spouse and other kin, is the most common living arrangement, with 69.2 per cent coresiding with a child, a proportion comparable to the 68 per cent reported by Domingo and Casterline (1992) from the 1988 NDS. The percentage increases to 76.8 when children who live adjacent or next door to the respondent are included. Living adjacent to a child means that the child resides within the same housing unit or compound as the parent. This arrangement ensures a degree of independent living for both the child and the elderly person while retaining the close proximity that is a basic feature

of coresidence.

Overall coresidence with a child is not affected by the number of living children (Table 7). The most noticeable aspect of the observed pattern is that elderly persons with two children are the least likely to coreside. Interestingly, elderly persons with one child are more likely to coreside than those with two children. The only possible effect of having fewer children is on limiting the parent's range of choice as to which child to coreside with. However, coresidence with any child is related to other factors. Generally, coresidence increases with age and is slightly more common among males, married, urban residents compared with females, never married/widowed/separated and rural residents, respectively. The magnitude of difference tends to vary with the child's gender and marital status.

Table 7: Percentage with coresident children by number of coresident children among Filipino elderly (aged 60+)

Number of living children	Percentage with coresident children	
	Per cent	(N)[a]
1	66.0	(55)
2	60.9	(72)
3	70.3	(106)
4	73.8	(136)
5	67.1	(166)
6+	74.5	(716)

a Ns are unweighted.

Table 2 shows that the total percentage living with a single son is higher (28.6 per cent) than the percentage living with a single daughter (21.7 per cent). This difference persists with age, gender, marital status and rural-urban residence. Apparently, single sons tend to live with parents more than single daughters, suggesting that single females leave home at a higher rate than single males by migration or earlier marriage or both. Reflecting the increasing marriage rate of children as parents age, the percentages living with either a single son or a single daughter decreases with age.

Turning to coresidence with an ever-married child, the reverse picture is observed. As parents age, there is an increasing percentage residing with a married child, with a slightly higher percentage coresiding with a married daughter than a married son. Since it is unlikely for the elderly person to live with both a married son and a married daughter in the same household, the two categories are less likely to contain elements of both, such that the difference may indicate a preference, though not a marked one, for living with a married daughter rather than with a married son.

Comparing coresidence with married and single children, Table 3, which shows a mutually exclusive and exhaustive breakdown of living arrangements, indicates that coresidence with a married child is more common among the older old (70 years and older) when expectedly the pool of available single children has been diminished by marriage or migration from the household. But it is interesting to note that the percentage who live with a single child (but with no married child present) remains relatively high (about one out of five) even at these ages. Given that the number of single children associated with older parents is rarer as marriage is almost universal in the Philippines, this high percentage may be an indication that the elderly prefer to live with a single child than a married one if given the choice.

Living in a three-generation household refers to a household where there is a grandparent, a child and a grandchild. The elderly who live in a three-generation household constitute 45.5 per cent of the total. More females and more widowed/separated persons are in this type of living arrangement than others, a reflection of the higher survivorship of females and higher proportion of females among the widowed. Because it is generally more difficult to establish an independent household in urban areas owing to housing shortages, more urban residents are in three-generation households than rural residents.

Intergenerational support to and from the elderly

The 1996 PSNEE collected information on the flows of exchanges in material and social support among the elderly and various types of kin, exchanges which are typical of the Filipino kinship network. This analysis focuses on the quite detailed information referring to the exchanges between parent and each child, both coresident and non-coresident, and covering the financial, material and non-material aspects such as mutual visits within the year preceding the survey. Overall, 96.1 per cent of the respondents had at least one living child.

By the mere act of living together, parent and coresident children are assumed to be in a relationship of mutual economic, social and emotional support. But the actual magnitude of flows of economic support are not easy to keep

track of as household expenses are likely to be pooled. Among Filipinos it is generally considered selfish and "nit-picky" in an offensive way to openly discuss the sharing of household expenses with other household members. Normally the principle for sharing is that whoever has more will provide more. This can mean either the parents or child at different times. When the elderly person is not able to contribute much to household expenses, his/her ownership of the house they all live in can be considered his/her rightful share of the household expenses. Nevertheless, it is not expected that an older parent pay his share of the expenses if he has no means to do so (no income from pension, no farm or other income-producing assets).

Table 8: Support exchanges between Filipino elderly persons (aged 60+) and non-coresident children

Within the past year	Total	Age		Sex		Marital status			Type of resident	
		60-69	70+	Male	Female	Currently married	Widowed	Others	Urban	Rural
Percentage who received money from any non-coresident child	80.5	78.6	82.0	78.6	82.0	80.6	81.2	67.9	78.6	81.9
Percentage who received significant amount from any non-coresident child	21.0	20.2	22.1	20.8	21.0	22.1	19.6	18.5	27.1	16.6
Percentage who received any non-monetary support from any non-coresident child	82.5	82.5	82.4	77.2	86.3	81.7	84.8	59.3	80.7	83.7
Percentage who gave money to any non-coresident child	28.8	34.9	20.6	30.3	27.6	31.1	26.1	22.2	30.7	27.4
Percentage who gave significant amount to any non-coresident child	6.9	8.7	4.5	5.3	8.1	8.1	5.4	3.7	8.3	5.8
Percentage who provided any non-monetary support to any non-coresident child	38.5	45.3	29.4	38.4	38.5	41.2	34.9	33.3	37.1	39.5

Support from non-coresident children on the other hand indicates the degree to which other children who have left home keep their "obligations" to provide for their parents in their old age while support from parents to non-coresident children attests to continuing ties of dependence that grown children maintain with parents despite their having left the parental home. In Table 8 it can be seen that there is a high percentage of parents who received some amount of money from at least one non-coresident child within the past year. This percentage increases with the age of the parent.

The same table shows that there is a reciprocal flow of money from the parent to at least one non-coresident child in the past year. Though the proportion of parents who gave money to a child is much lower than the proportion receiving money, the numbers are not insignificant. Giving and receiving a significant amount (defined as 1,000 pesos, or about US$33) was less common. Fewer rural residents received a significant amount compared with urban residents.

Other types of support (provision of food, clothing and personal belongings) are also being exchanged with the elderly who hold their own by not being so far behind in the proportion who gave non-monetary support. In general, the picture that emerges is one of active exchange.

Apart from support to their children, both coresident and non-coresident, grandchildren are also recipients of support. A significant support role that the near elderly and elderly perform is that of parental surrogate for their grandchildren. In the survey, the respondents were asked if they were taking care of any grandchild, i.e. a child of any of their children (natural, adopted and step-children). "Taking care" was defined as being responsible for the care of the young child on a regular basis. The proportion of elderly who regularly care for a grandchild is quite sizable (92.5 per cent of all respondents who had a grandchild). It appears more common among females, the widowed and urban residents. The data further indicate that some elderly persons perform other support functions for grandchildren similar to what they provide their own children both in monetary and non-monetary terms.

Anticipating future living arrangements: attitudes towards living in a home for the elderly

While coresidence with children generally remains the most common living arrangement for the elderly and the near elderly in the Philippines, there are a number of indications that this is not necessarily a preferred choice. There are glimpses of a desire for autonomous living that are overridden by the more practical concerns that favour coresidence.

Living in a "home for the aged" is a choice that few families would make for their elderly members. The most famous home called Golden Acres, which is run by the Government, caters only to the abandoned elderly. In fact, to qualify for admission, the elderly must show proof that no close kin is available with whom he or she could coreside. Yet, future social and demographic change may call for the establishment of more such homes for the elderly. In fact, if the 1988 NDS estimates of living alone can be considered just as representative of the elderly population as the PSNEE, a conclusion of increasing proportions of elderly living alone can be made (4.5 per cent from the 1988 NDS vs. 5.5 per cent from the 1996 PSNEE).

To find out prevailing attitudes towards "homes for the aged", two questions were posed to the respondents: "Do you think it is a good idea to have `homes for the aged' in the Philippines?" and "If there were `homes for the aged' in your province, would you want to live there if you were older?"

Table 9: Attitude towards home for the aged among Filipino elderly (aged 60+)

	Percentage who think it is a good idea to have a "home for the aged"	**Percentage who want to live in a "home for the aged"**
Total	**73.7**	**29.6**
Age		
60-69	76.1	31.7
70+	70.6	26.9
Sex		
Male	76.7	35.2
Female	71.7	25.5
Marital status		
Currently married	75.9	30.2
Widowed	71.0	28.4
Others	72.6	33.3
Residence		
Urban	73.1	29.1
Rural	74.0	29.9

The results shown in Table 9 were somewhat unexpected in that there is more openness to the idea of putting up more "homes for the aged" in the country than had been anticipated, given the strong tendency towards coresidence (76.2 per cent answered "yes" to the first question). It was also surprising to find that a sizable percentage indicated willingness to live in such a home at some future time, i.e. when they were older (Table9). It is unfortunate, however, that the qualifier "if you were older" was added because this makes the answer somewhat ambiguous (for example, would an 80-year-old's affirmative answer mean the same as that of a 50-year-old's?). On the whole, more males than females said they would want to live in a "home" when they were older. The other characteristics (age, marital status and rural-urban residence) showed no discernible pattern.

Summary and conclusions

The 1996 PSNEE provides a rich set of data, the first of its kind on a nationally representative sample of the elderly population and their successors in the Philippines. This first look at living arrangements and support exchanges across age, gender, marital status and urban-rural residence provides a picture of the state of living arrangements and social support flows involving the elderly at this juncture of rapid social change. It also highlights future directions for more focused analysis on specific aspects of living arrangements and social support between the elderly and their children.

In general, the results echo findings from the 1988 NDS as reported by Domingo and Casterline (1992) which showed coresidence with a child as the most common living arrangement for the elderly, a higher likelihood of coresidence with an unmarried child than a married child and a higher percentage of living alone among the unmarried and the formerly married (separated/widowed).

The results also corroborate findings from other studies which challenge the myth of the rural household as predominantly of the extended family household type (Morada and others, 1986; Castillo, 1979). The survey shows that in fact the predominant pattern of living in an extended family household composed of the elderly person(s), his/her spouse, married children or married and unmarried children is more pronounced among urban (48.6 per cent) than rural-based elderly persons (42.9 per cent).

The matter of implied preferences in living arrangements also challenges common notions that the elderly will

coreside with married children as a matter of course. In fact, the data imply that coresidence with a single child if one is available may be more preferred. This is related to indications of a desire to retain some control over running a household, manifested in the retention of ownership of the house, in preferring a single to a married child as coresident, in expressing the belief that the best living arrangement for older couples is not to coreside with a child.

According to Castillo (1979), the Filipino family is "residentially nuclear but functionally extended", meaning that living arrangements may favour nuclear households but the functional household actually includes other relatives. If in fact this is true, the strains of coresidence may be relieved if living arrangements allow for non-coresidence in the same household while maintaining the traditional support networks. This is realized more readily in rural areas where establishing a separate dwelling for married children is not difficult. In urban areas the strains of coresidence may be more pronounced because establishing a separate household for the children is costly. As the Philippines rapidly urbanizes, more and more elderly persons will find themselves in the latter situation.

There are more questions to be asked after this first look at the 1996 PSNEE data on living arrangements, one of which lies along the track of investigating further the seeming points of tension between actual coresidence and what the elderly truly want.

Finally, the data on support exchanges validate what most Filipinos already know and what other studies in the Asian context have also shown, that the elderly are not passive recipients of support from children. Rather they are active participants in a web of exchanges that puts them in the significant role of being providers of support, not just to their children but also their grandchildren. Support exchanges involving grandchildren is also an important topic for further analysis, especially during these times in the changing social and demographic picture of the Philippines where many children of the elderly seek employment outside the country, which leave many grandparents with the task of caring for grandchildren.

In closing, the seeming acceptability of homes for the aged in the Philippines is a finding that is worth noting, especially as earlier studies found the idea of institutionalization of the elderly "almost taboo" (Abaya, 1991). Coupled with data which point towards a perception of living alone with a spouse as a better ideal arrangement compared with living with a child, there may be reason to suspect that living arrangements for the elderly of the future will not necessarily continue to be predominantly with a child as coresident.

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Endnote

The 1984 ASEAN Survey, which covered 1,321 persons aged 60 and older, was not a nationally representative sample but referred to specific regions only.

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An Overview of the Living Arrangements and Social Support Exchanges of Older Singaporeans

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The elderly are active participants in household activities

By the next century, slightly over one quarter of Singapores population will be over the age of 60 (Chen and Cheung, 1988). As a country, Singapore will have the second highest proportion of its population elderly in Asia, being exceeded only by that of Japan. The Singaporean Government and policy makers have long been preparing for the advent of this ageing of the population. Currently, Singapore boasts a national provident fund scheme that covers 86 per cent of its population (Asher, 1996) and a family value system that fosters caring for the elderly. Approximately 90 per cent of individuals above the age of 60 in Singapore live with at least one of their children. Given these high levels of coresidence and the presence of a well-instituted, efficient provident fund, Singaporean elderly persons seem well poised to be able to enjoy their golden years. However, there are several cautionary notes worth making. First, and of primary concern, is the extent to which the Central Provident Fund will actually provide income to the elderly during their old age. As this article will show, many elderly persons in Singapore do not actually use their retirement income for daily living expenses. This is in sharp contrast to the way in which social security systems work in other countries, for example, the United States of America, and in certain European countries. Second, large numbers of today's Singaporean elderly persons do not have any retirement savings accounts or have minimal amounts in such accounts owing to their lower earning power during their youth. Third, although the general picture of well-being among the elderly appears to be bright, there may be certain groups of elderly persons who are not benefiting from these formal and informal arrangements.

This article provides an overview of the living arrangements and social support exchanges of elderly Singaporeans by select characteristics of the elderly and their children, such as age, gender, marital status and ethnicity. The data used in the analysis come from the 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens; they were collected by Singapore's Department of Statistics, the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Health. A nationally representative sample, it consists of 4,750 individuals 55 years of age and older. For this analysis, we use a subset of individuals aged 60 and older (N=4,001). Information was collected on the socio-economic profile, support systems, and physical, mental and functional status of the elderly.

The work presented here is part of a larger project sponsored by the United States National Institute of Aging, as described elsewhere. The goal of the project is to measure the social, economic and health characteristics of the elderly, and predict changes over the next decades, and suggest implications for public policy in four South-East Asian societies: Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China and Thailand.

The next section provides a summary of the Singaporean context, followed by a description of the formal and informal mechanisms that theoretically exist for supporting the elderly in Singapore. An examination of the data is then carried out to determine the types of support that are actually made use of by the country's elderly.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Singaporean elderly (60+)

Indicators (N=4,001)	Percentage
Gender	
Male	42
Female	58
Age	
60-69	37
70+	63
Marital status	
Currently married	42
Widowed	54
Divorced/separated	1
Never married	3
Ethnicity	
Chinese	83
Malay	11

Indian	4
Other	2
Have at least one child	96
Have at least one coresident child	85
Have at least one non-coresident child	46

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.
Notes: Percentages have been weighted to account for the oversampling of seniors aged 75+.

The Singaporean context

Since independence, Singapore has achieved the status of a newly industrialized economy (NIE) and is well on its way to becoming a developed country. Life expectancy increased from 50 years in 1947 to 74 years in the late 1980s (Cheung, 1989). Fertility fell to below the replacement level in 1986, leading to a reversal in the official population policy which had previously provided incentives for limiting fertility (Cheung, 1989).1 The effect of this increase in life expectancy and lowering of fertility has been a rapid increase in the proportion elderly in the total population. As a result, the dependency ratio (defined as the ratio of the number of individuals over age 60 to the number of working individuals aged 15-59) has increased from 11 elderly persons per 100 working adults to 46 elderly persons per 100 working adults (Chen and Cheung, 1988). Table 1 presents the percentage distribution for selected characteristics of Singaporeans over the age of 60 in 1995.

The Government has reacted to the "greying" of the population in a variety of ways. Some of these include (a) raising the retirement age from 55 to 60 in 1993, (b) the implementation of laws governing the support of the elderly, and (c) on-going campaigns to promote familial care of the elderly. The government aims to ensure that familial care of the elderly continues.

There are several reasons why the government is concerned that familial care of the elderly might decrease. Owing to the current smaller family size among Singaporean couples and increased life expectancy, children can expect to have elderly parents, and in the case of married children, two sets of elderly parents, to care for. This will place a great strain on adult children, particularly if they have children of their own to care for. Increasingly, as individuals reach middle age they will find themselves "sandwiched" between caring for their young children and their elderly parents.

Another major reason reasons why the government is concerned that familial care of the elderly might decrease is the increase in womens labour force participation. Womens labour force participation rate increased from 29.7 per cent in 1970 to 51.3 per cent in 1992 (Teo, 1994). Since women are the primary care-givers for the elderly and children, particularly in patriarchal societies such as Singapore, an increase in womens labour force participation places even more competitive demands on womens time.

In anticipation of a possible reduction in familial care of the elderly, the government is providing the younger generation with numerous incentives, such as tax deductions or priority housing, if they care for, or live with, an elderly parent. In addition, Singapore is unique in its formal implementation of laws addressing filial piety. In 1989, the National Advisory Council on Family and the Aged was set up to monitor childrens support of parents. This was followed by the institution of the Maintenance of Parents Act in 1994. In 1996, a tribunal was set up which enables parents to sue their children for neglect. The exact definition of neglect is not clear, however, so within the first six months 100 cases were filed contesting this law. In several cases, children reported having been previously abused by parents and thus refused to support parents in their old age. The debate continues within the Singaporean judicial system as to whether children should be forced to support parents under these circumstances.

Although Singapore promotes familial care of the elderly, provisions have long been made for formal support of the elderly through a provident fund system set up to provide the elderly with income during their retirement. This system is described below.

Formal support

Central Provident Fund

Currently, Singapore's Central Provident Fund (CPF) has the highest coverage of any retirement plan in Asia. The CPF was established in 1955 prior to independence. Modelled on the social security systems in other then existing British colonies, the CPF began essentially as a retirement plan (Choon and Low, 1996). Since its creation, however, it has evolved into an umbrella scheme for various savings plans for education, medical insurance, investment, housing and retirement. As it exists today, the scheme is extremely complex with a heavy emphasis on investment. Each member contributes 20 per cent of his or her earnings to a CPF account and the employer matches this contribution. This is the highest contribution rate in the world (Asher, 1995). There are basically three separate sub-

accounts: (a) Ordinary (75 per cent of the total contributions go into this account and may be used for housing, education, investments or topping up parents' retirement accounts), (b) Medisave (15 per cent of the contributions go into this account and can be used for medical expenses), and (c) Special (10 per cent of contributions go into this account for withdrawal upon retirement). Membership is mandatory for all employees except the self-employed. As of 1 July 1997, individuals must maintain a minimum of S$50,000 (at that time US$1=S$1.50) in their CPF account beginning at age 55. This amount is to be used for retirement. At least S$12,000 of this amount, which is called the "Minimum Sum" has to be in the form of cash; the balance, S$38,000, can be in the form of property or other investments with the CPF board. Individuals who have left their Minimum Sum with the board receive S$345 per month after reaching the age of 60.

The CPF scheme has been extremely successful as a savings and investment mechanism. Singapore has the highest savings rate in the world, with the CPF contributing between 16.3 and 30.4 per cent to the gross national saving rate (Asher, 1995). This situation has led some observers to wonder whether the CPF encourages over-saving and under-consumption (Choon and Low, 1996). It is also questionable whether there will be sufficient funds for the elderly's old age. As Asher (1996) notes, government estimates show that by 2003 the net balance of members' accounts, after withdrawal for housing, investments and other schemes, will not reach the minimum balance.

In this article, we focus on the extent to which CPF funds are used for daily living expenses by the elderly. We also examine the extent to which the Singaporean elderly plan for financial security in their old age. In view of the Confucian culture of Singapore which promotes filial piety above individual needs or wishes, the concept of "preparing for old age" may not be the same as in western countries. In the West, the notion of self-reliance in old age prevails, i.e. relying on one own savings, and living alone. To what extent do the Singaporean elderly plan for an old age "alone", or do they intend to rely on their children? How has the implementation of a formal social security mechanism affected the way in which elderly Singaporeans plan for their old age?

Table 2: Percentage of seniors with CPF accounts, by gender

Variable	Total sample (N=4,001)	Males	Females
Have CPF account	33.3	52.4	16.8
Of those with CPF accounts (N=1,053)			
Adequate for old age	12.7	21.1	5.4
Inadequate for old age	20.6	31.3	11.4
No CPF account	66.8	47.3	83.2
Of those with accounts, percentage using CPF funds for monthly living expenses:			
None	65	-	-
Less than 25 per cent	7.5	-	-
25-50 per cent	7.5	-	-
Have made financial plans for old age	10.6	14.5	7.1
Have not made plans	89.4	85.5	92.9
Reason for not making plans:			
Already have CPF savings	4	2	1
Have pension plan	1	1	0.5
Children will provide support	81	74	87
Other	14	17	11.5

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Table 2 shows the percentage of the elderly (60 years or older) with CPF accounts. Approximately one-third of the elderly have CPF accounts, but there are significant gender differences in that percentage. Half of the males have CPF savings compared with only 16.8 per cent of the females. However, a larger percentage of future cohorts of the elderly will have CPF accounts since they began working when the programme was already in place. Table 2 also shows the percentage of elderly with CPF accounts that think that their CPF savings will be adequate for financial support during old age. Only 12.7 per cent think that their CPF savings will be sufficient to cover their financial needs during their old age.

In view of this relatively low percentage, we determine how many of the elderly actually use their savings during retirement. Table 2 shows that the large majority of CPF account holders, 65 per cent, do not use their savings for monthly living expenses; the majority of funds are invested (results not shown). Singaporean elderly persons with CPF accounts therefore do not appear to be relying on these savings for monthly living expenses.

Table 2 also shows the percentage of the elderly who have made financial plans for their old age: only 15 per cent of males and 7 per cent of females. Instead, the elderly intend to rely on their children for old-age support. This is particularly true of the female elderly; 87 per cent say that they will rely on children for this purpose.

Given that the majority of the elderly rely on their children, how are the elderly faring? The next section examines the informal support received by the Singaporean elderly. It reviews the living arrangements of the elderly and the intergenerational transfers between the elderly and their children.

Informal support

Living arrangements

One of the ways in which the younger generation can care for the elderly is by living with them. In some Asian societies, such as the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China, the focus has been on declining coresidence as a source of concern for the well-being of the elderly (Martin and Kinsella, 1994). However,there has been no decline in the proportion of elderly coresiding with at least one child in Singapore. Over 85 per cent of the Singaporean elderly live with at least one of their children (Table 3)

Table 3: Living arrangements of Singaporean elderly, 60+, by age and gender

Type of living arrangement	All elderly 60+ (N=4,001)	Elderly 60+ with at least one child (N=3,847)				
		Total sample (N=3,847)	60-69 (N=1,411)	70+ (N=2,436)	Males (N=1,604)	Females (N=2,243)
Living alone	3.3	2.2	1.7	2.9	1.6	2.7
Living with a spouse only	5.9	5.4	5.4	5.5	7.7	3.53
Living with at least one child	85.0	87.2	90.0	87.2	86.5	90.6
Living with one or more unmarried children	55.5	58.0	67.6	45.2	63.4	53.5
Living with one or more ever married children	40.8	42.7	36.8	50.5	34.8	49.3
Living with at least one son	66.8	69.8	71.7	67.3	69.4	70.2
Living with at least one daughter	42.1	44.0	48.7	37.7	46.3	42.1
Living in a three-generation household	36.4	38.0	32.3	45.7	30.6	44.2

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Coresidence often involves "costs" and "benefits" to the persons involved (DaVanzo and Chan, 1994; Knodel and others, 1992). As Hermalin (1997) notes on page 98 of the present isssue, one needs to distinguish between "form" and "function" when studying living arrangements. Coresidence may involve flows of support both ways between elderly parents and children. Elderly parents may provide transfers to children such as child-care or help with housework rather than simply being passive recipients of transfers from children.

Among the Singaporean elderly (60 years and older) with at least one child, the majority, 87 per cent, live with a child (see (Table 3). There appears to be son preference among the Singaporean elderly, 70 per cent of whom live with at least one son, compared with only 43 per cent who live with at least one daughter. These children tend to be unmarried, which may indicate that both generations may benefit from coresidence. Owing to high property costs in Singapore, unmarried children may benefit by living with parents in their home; unfortunately however, with these data it is not possible to distinguish who is living with whom. Over one-third (38 per cent) of the elderly live in three-generation households. The following tables show that the elderly are often involved in family decision-making and child-care.

(Table 3) takes the sample of the elderly with at least one child and examines living arrangements by the elderly person's age and gender. We see a life-cycle effect with regard to the results for age. Seniors over 70 are more likely to be living with married children and in three-generation households. They are also twice as likely to be living alone compared with seniors aged 60-69. This is not surprising in view of the fact that many of the seniors over 70 today were migrants who came to work in Singapore before it gained independence. Many of these migrants did not have a family.

Male elderly persons are more likely to be living with a spouse only compared with females. This is because males

tend to remarry and marry younger wives. We see little difference between the sexes in the proportion living with a child. Males are slightly more likely to live with a daughter compared with females. The female elderly are more likely to live in three-generation households. This may be because women live longer and also that women may provide child-care.

Table 4: Living arrangements of all Singaporean elderly, 60+ with at least one child, by marital status and ethnicity

Type of living arrangement	Currently married (N=1,663)	Widowed (N=2,136)	Divorced/separated (N=41)	Chinese (N=3,208)	Malay (N=445)	Indian(N=160)
Living alone	0.4	3.9	14.3	2.3	1.1	1.9
Living with a spouse only	10.4	-	-	5.2	4.7	6.6
Living with a child	85.8	92.5	75.3	89.5	91.6	80.2
Living with one or more unmarried children	66.7	48.3	58.7	58.9	57.4	51.8
Living with one or more ever married children	32.6	54.3	28.6	41.9	51.3	39.8
Living with at least one son	69.8	70.3	60.9	72.2	62.3	58.6
Living with at least one daughter	46.2	41.5	40.6	42.1	58.7	43.3
Living in a three-generation household	29.2	48.2	24.5	37.2	48.2	33.2

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Table 4 provides a breakdown of living arrangements by the elderly person's marital status. Of interest here is the relatively high proportion of seniors, 14 per cent, who are divorced or separated and living alone. Although the actual number of seniors who are divorced or separated is relatively small (41 cases), future generations of elderly persons may contain higher proportions of divorced or separated individuals. Widowed seniors, 93 per cent, are most likely to live with children compared with currently married or divorced or separated seniors. They are also most likely to live in three-generation households. Marital status appears to be signficantly associated with types of living arrangements. Whereas currently married seniors are more likely to live with unmarried children, widowed seniors are most likely to live with married children. Once again, this is probably a life-cycle effect. Widowed seniors are older and hence more likely to have married children. Future multivariate analyses will control for these factors when examining types of living arrangements.

Any analysis of Singaporean society needs to take into account ethnicity. Table 4 also presents types of living arrangements for the elderly with at least one child, by ethnicity. Strong ethnic differences emerge. The Chinese show greater son preference compared with Malays and Indians: 72 per cent of the Chinese elderly live with a son compared with 62 per cent of Malays and 59 per cent of Indians. Malays are more likely to live with daughters, 59 per cent, compared with Chinese, 42 per cent, and Indians, 43 per cent. Malays are also more likely to live in three-generation households compared with the two other ethnic groups. Malays are the most likely to live with a child, 92 per cent; however, the difference between Malays and Chinese is not statistically significant. Indians are significantly less likely to live with a child compared with Chinese and Malays. This differs from results found for Malaysia where Indians are the most likely to coreside with an adult child (Chan and DaVanzo, 1996).

The next section reviews the types of integenerational transfers that occur between the elderly and their coresident and non-coresident children. As the data show, there is a lot of intergenerational activity taking place; Singapore's elderly population is intimately and actively connected with both coresident and non-coresident children.

Intergenerational transfers

Table 5: Transfers between elderly 60+ and their coresident children for elderly with at least one coresident child, by age and gender

Type of transfer	Total sample (N=3,401)	60-69 (N=1,279)	70+ (N=2,122)	Males (N=1,384)	Females (N=2,017)
Transfers with coresident children					
Have meals together					
Often	79.0	80.5	77.0	78.1	79.7

At times	19.3	17.7	21.5	20.3	18.5
Not at all	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.8
Participate in family outings					
Often	31.2	34.8	26.2	32.2	30.3
At times	49.1	49.4	48.6	48.7	49.4
Not at all	19.8	15.8	25.3	19.1	20.3
Discuss family events					
Often	58.4	63.5	51.4	59.6	57.5
At times	36.6	32.5	42.2	35.3	37.5
Not at all	5.0	4.1	6.4	5.1	5.0
Conduct casual conversation					
Often	69.1	74.3	61.8	68.1	69.9
At times	29.5	24.7	36.0	30.9	28.3
Not at all	1.5	1.0	2.1	1.0	1.8
Look after grandchildren					
Often	17.5	17.7	17.1	12.7	21.3
At times	11.9	9.1	15.8	10.8	12.8
Not at all	12.8	7.8	19.7	10.2	14.9
No grandchildren	57.8	65.4	47.4	66.3	51.0
Assist in housework					
Yes	33.4	84.4	69.2	69.8	84.6
No	66.6	15.6	30.8	30.2	15.4
Provide financial assistance to children					
Yes	78.0	39.8	24.7	43.8	25.1
No	22.0	60.2	75.3	56.2	74.9
Advise on important family matters and participate in decision-making					
Yes	80.3	86.7	71.4	84.5	76.9
No	19.7	13.3	28.6	15.5	23.1

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Table 5 shows the percentage of seniors giving and receiving transfers from coresident children. The sample comprises those seniors with at least one coresident child. The elderly appear to be active participants in the household; 79 per cent of them often have meals together with coresident children. A large majority, 58 per cent, discuss family events, 80 per cent participate in family outings, advise on important family matters and participate in decision-making. Transfers do not just flow from coresident children to parents; the elderly also provide financial assistance to their children, 33 per cent, and assist with housework, 78 per cent.

There are differences in participation rates by the senior person's age and gender. Younger elderly persons tend to be more active. Female elderly persons are more likely to look after grandchildren and assist with housework compared with the male elderly, who are more likely to provide financial assistance to children and consult on family matters.

Table 6: Transfers between Singaporean elderly 60+ and their coresident children, for elderly with at least one coresident child, by marital status and ethnicity

Type of transfer	**Currently married (N=1,680)**	**Widowed (N=2,161)**	**Divorced/separated**	**Chinese (N=3,321)**	**Indian (N=160)**	**Malay (N=440)**
Transfers with coresident children						
Have meals together						
Often	79.8	78.8	55.9	79.2	81.0	73.4
At times	18.8	19.2	44.1	19.2	17.7	24.1
Not at all	1.4	2.0	0	1.6	1.3	2.4
Participate in family						

outings						
Often	32.8	29.4	29.9	31.5	29.9	30.6
At times	49.6	48.3	61.3	49.0	53.9	42.8
Not at all	17.6	22.2	8.8	19.6	16.3	26.6
Discuss family events						
Often	60.1	56.8	52.6	57.1	63.1	65.7
At times	35.1	37.8	40.3	37.7	34.3	27.1
Not at all	4.7	5.4	7.1	5.2	2.6	7.2
Conduct casual conversation						
Often	71.5	66.9	58.0	68.9	69.3	71.0
At times	27.4	31.2	42.0	29.6	29.4	28.7
Not at all	1.1	1.9	0	1.6	1.3	0.3
Look after grandchildren						
Often	15.5	19.6	13.4	17.2	21.5	13.2
At times	8.7	15.5	3.1	11.3	14.3	16.4
Not at all	8.8	17.1	12.2	12.6	16.5	10.0
No grandchildren	67.0	47.9	71.4	58.9	47.7	60.4
Assist children withhousework						
Yes	77.0	78.7	89.9	78.2	78.7	74.7
No	23.0	21.3	10.1	21.8	21.3	25.3
Provide financial assistance to children						
Yes	38.6	27.8	50.9	32.5	36.6	38.8
No	61.4	72.2	49.1	67.5	63.4	61.2
Consult						
Yes	84.2	75.9	94.2	79.1	86.7	84.3
No	15.8	24.1	5.8	20.9	13.3	15.7

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

An examination of intergenerational transfers with coresident children shows divorced or separated seniors to be more likely to assist children with housework, provide financial assistance to children, and consult on family matters, compared with currently married or widowed elderly (Table 6). One reason for this difference may be that divorced or separated elderly may be younger and hence have younger children who might need their help. This situation will be explored in future analyses. There are no significant differences between currently married and widowed elderly persons in terms of most intergenerational transfers within the household. Widowed elderly are, however, the least likely to provide financial support to children compared with currently married and divorced or separated elderly persons.

As Table 6 shows, there are no significant differences between ethnic groups in terms of intergenerational transfers with coresident children. Ethnic differences exist in terms of whether the elderly coreside with a child; however, interactions within the household are quite similar across all ethnic groups.

The results so far show that the elderly who coreside with at least one child are very much involved with household activities. As shown in the following tables, a large majority of the elderly are also involved in intergenerational transfers with non-coresident children.

Table 7: Transfers between elderly 60+ and their non-coresident children, for elderly with at least one non-coresident child, by age and gender

Type of transfer	Total sample (N=1,821)	60-69 (N=674)	70+ (N=1,147)	Males (N=760)	Females (N=1,061)
Contact with at least one non-coresident child					
Daily	8.8	11.9	4.6	9.1	8.5

Once a week	54.7	55.8	53.3	55.5	54.1
Once a month	27.1	25.1	29.8	25.5	28.5
Less than once a month	4.6	3.5	5.9	4.7	4.4
Less than once a year	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.8
No contact over last five years	0.1	-	0.2	0	0.1
No contact	2.9	1.8	4.3	3.2	2.6
Transfers from non-coresident children					
(Percentage who received money from at least one child over the previous six months):					
Regularly					
Yes	15.4	83.8	85.7	77.3	90.9
No	84.6	16.2	14.3	22.7	9.1
Occasionally					
Yes	42.2	56.8	59.3	58.9	56.9
No	57.8	43.2	40.7	41.1	43.1
(Percentage who received food from non-coresident children in the previous six months):					
None	15.5	17.9	12.2	21.8	10.0
At least one non-coresident child	84.5	82.1	87.8	78.2	90.0

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Almost 64 per cent of the elderly see a non-coresident child weekly (table 7). Most of the elderly also receive money from non-coresident children, 84.6 per cent, and food, 85 per cent. Females are more likely to receive money and food from non-coresident children compared with males (table 7). There are also differences according to marital status: widowed seniors are more likely to receive money and food compared with currently married and divorced or separated seniors (table 8). Finally, as shown in table 8, among the three ethnic groups, the Chinese elderly are the most likely to receive money from non-coresident children. Indians are most likely to receive food compared with the Chinese and Malays. In future analyses, we shall examine the extent to which transfers from non-coresident children may be a substitute for coresidence. Previous studies have found this to be the case in Malaysia (Chan, 1996; Lillard and Willis, 1996).

Table 8: Transfers between elderly 60+ and their non-coresident children, for elderly with at least one non-coresident child, by marital status and ethnicity

Type of transfer	Currently married (N=792)	Widowed (N=1,008)	Divorced/separated (N=20)	Chinese (N=1,526)	Malay (N=198)	Indian (N=77)
Contact with at least one non-coresident child						
Daily	10.4	6.9	12.2	7.7	11.6	11.1
Once a week	58.2	51.3	36.3	57.5	52.4	34.9
Once a month	23.2	31.4	36.2	27.2	23.7	29.9
Less than once a month	3.9	5.4	-	4.3	5.5	6.5
Less than once year	1.8	1.9	-	0.9	2.3	10.4
No contact over last five years	-	0.1	-	0.1	-	-
No contact	2.4	3.0	15.2	2.2	4.5	7.3
Transfers from non-coresident children						
(Percentage who received money from at least one child over the previous six months):						
Regularly						
Yes	80.1	89.7	86.8	87.5	84.1	57.0

No	19.9	10.3	13.2	12.5	15.9	43.0
Occasionally						
Yes	54.2	61.8	64.8	59.0	58.5	46.1
No	45.8	38.2	35.2	41.0	41.5	53.9
(Percentage who received food from non-coresident children in the previous six months):						
None	22.1	8.1	6.7	14.0	10.2	34.1
At least one non-coresident child	77.9	91.9	93.3	86.0	89.8	65.9

Source: 1995 National Survey of Senior Citizens.

Conclusion

This article examined the living arrangements and social support exchanges of elderly Singaporeans by selected characteristics of the elderly and their children. Formal and informal support mechanisms available to Singaporean elderly persons were discussed, and this was followed by an overview of the extent to which the elderly utilize these support mechanisms. The use of formal sources of support, i.e. CPF account funds, by the elderly for living expenses is not widespread, primarily because not all the elderly were covered by the CPF during their working years. This is especially true for the female elderly, but this situation will change for the better as future cohorts retire. It remains to be seen, however, the extent to which today's Singaporeans plan for tomorrow's old-age financial security, or whether the belief that children will provide support will continue to dominate.

Overall, Singapore's elderly seem to be intimately connected with their families, either by living together with them or via intergenerational transfers with non-coresident children. An examination of the types of transfers that occur within households reveals that the elderly are active participants in household activities. The elderly also provide transfers to children within the household, in the form of help with housework, child care, financial assistance, or consulting on family decisions and providing advice.

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Endnote

The New Population Policy, instituted in 1987, is an attempt to raise fertility to the replacement level.

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Family Support and Living Arrangements of Thai Elderly

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Despite rapid social and demographic change, a widespread and functioning familial system of support and care has been maintained

In contrast to the situation only a decade ago, recognition of the importance of population ageing and the need for policies and programmes to address the rapidly growing population in older age groups is now widespread among scholars and government planners in Thailand. The most recent Five-Year National Social and Economic Development Plan (1997-2001) specifically addresses the need to promote proper health care and support of the elderly by family members and to provide social welfare benefits for the isolated indigent elderly (NESDB, no date). This increased interest in issues related to ageing in Thailand has been accompanied by a considerable research effort directed towards the topic over the same period. These efforts have included several surveys especially focused on the older population as well as analyses of other more general sources, such as censuses, for this purpose.

The present analysis focuses on family support to the Thai elderly, defined as the population aged 60 and older, especially as manifested through living arrangements and intergenerational exchanges of both a material and non-material nature. Data come primarily from a 1995 nationally representative survey. We start by assessing the extent to which changes in the level of coresidence are evident by comparing results with those from previous sources. We then explore living arrangements and material exchanges and contact between the children of the elderly and the parents themselves. Particular attention is given to those elderly who are not coresident with their children. We conclude with an assessment of the extent to which the family system of support appears to be functioning in the present era of rapid social and demographic change.

Sources of data

The primary source of data analysed in this presentation is the Survey of the Welfare of Elderly in Thailand (SWET) conducted in 1995.1 The survey is based on a national probability sample of persons aged 50 years old and older in private households who were usual residents of the household. A total sample of 7,708 persons were interviewed. Details of the survey methodology and sample are provided elsewhere (Chayovan and Knodel, 1997). For the purpose of this presentation, we limit consideration to the 4,486 respondents who were 60 years of age and older in order to focus on the elderly population and to facilitate comparisons with prior surveys that covered only persons in this age range.

Two previous surveys of the elderly population are also drawn upon for comparison. The first is known as the Socio-economic Consequences of the Aging Population in Thailand (SECAPT) survey conducted in 1986 and based on a nationally representative sample of 3,252 persons aged 60 and older (Chayovan, Wongsith and Saengtienchai, 1988).2 The second, a large national survey of more than 14,000 persons aged 50 and older, of whom almost 8,000 were aged 60 and older, was undertaken in 1994 by the National Statistical Office (see NSO, no date; Knodel, Amornsirisomboon and Khiewyoo, 1997). Data are also available from recent Thai censuses that can be used to determine the extent to which elderly women coresided with their own children. In this report we draw on public use samples from both the 1980 and 1990 censuses to make this calculation.3

All three special surveys on the elderly are limited to those who live in private households. Both the 1980 and 1990 censuses indicate that less than 2 per cent of the population aged 60 and older lived in collective households, primarily in temples, presumably as Buddhist monks or nuns. Thus, those excluded primarily represent cases in which a religious institution serves as an alternative to familial living arrangements. The number of elderly who reside in special homes for the elderly is demographically insignificant (Pichyangkura and Singhajend, 1991). Given that the proportion of elderly living in collective households is quite low, the overall picture of living arrangements that is provided by the survey data based on private households only is unlikely to be seriously distorted by their omission.4

Results

Patterns and trends in living arrangements

In Thailand, as in most Asian countries, a central feature of the family support system for elderly members is coresidence (or a functionally equivalent arrangement) with one or more adult children. A common, if narrow, measure of such coresidence can be determined for all sources referred to above: namely the percentage of elderly who coreside with one or more of their children in the same household.5 Table 1 indicates this measure for all

sources, both for all elderly and for elderly persons who have at least one living child. The surveys included information on adopted children and stepchildren as well as the respondent's own biological children while the censuses relate to biological children only. For this reason, the percentages of elderly persons with no children is lower for the surveys. In all cases, however, the elderly without children constitute a small share of all elderly persons in Thailand.

Table 1: Among persons 60 years and older, the percentage who have no children and the percentage coresiding with a child, according to different sources, Thailand

Source	Percentage coresiding in the same household with a child among:				
	Elderly with no children[a]	All elderly	Elderly with at least one child[a]	Elderly living along	Elderly living with a spouse only
Censuses (women only)					
1980	7.1	76.2	82.0	n.a.	n.a.
1990	6.7	76.8	82.3	n.a.	n.a.
Surveys					
SECAPT 1986	3.5	76.9	79.7	4.3	6.7
NSO 1994	3.5	72.8	75.4	3.6	11.6
SWET 1995	4.4	70.9	74.2	4.3	11.9

Sources: Results other than for the censuses refer to the elderly in private households. NSO results are from Knodel, Amornsirisomboon and Khiewyoo, 1997.
a Refers explicitly to own, adopted and stepchildren in SECAPT, NSO and SWET; although not explicitly stated in the censuses, "children" probably refers to "own children" only.

All sources based on data through 1990 indicate that 76-77 per cent of all elderly persons coreside with one of their children. The 1994 NSO survey and the 1995 SWET show somewhat lower levels of coresidence (73 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively). When consideration is limited to those elderly with at least one living child, there is more variation in the percentage coresident because of the differences in the percentage without children. However, all sources through 1990 indicate close to or above 80 per cent of the elderly with a living child as coresident. In contrast, the 1994 and 1995 surveys indicate only 75 and 74 per cent coresidence, respectively. The lower levels of coresidence found in the more recent data could possibly signify the start of a trend away from coresidence. However, it is also possible that differences in sampling techniques and survey methodology between the sources could account for all or part of the differences. Interestingly, the results from the 1980 and 1990 censuses, which are presumably reasonably comparable to each other, do not reveal any prior sign of declining coresidence with children among elderly women.

Table 1 also indicates that very few Thai elderly live alone and this has not changed over the period covered. In contrast, there are substantially more elderly living with a spouse only according to both the NSO survey and SWET compared with SECAPT. This could reflect an increased tendency for adult children to establish separate, but possibly nearby households, as long as elderly parents have each other to live with. The finding that living alone has not increased, however, suggests that once one of the parents dies, coresidence often resumes.

Table 2: Alternative measures of living arrangements in relation to children among population aged 60 and older who have at least one living child, Thailand, 1986 and 1995

Measure and source	Total	Sex		Age		Residence	
		Male	Female	60-69	70+	Urban	Rural
Percentage coresident with a child in same household:							
SECAPT 1986	79.7	79.3	79.9	82.3	75.6	81.9	79.2
SWET 1995	74.2	75.0	73.4	73.8	74.8	80.0	72.9
Percentage coresident or living next door to a child:							
SWET 1995	84.0	84.8	83.3	82.8	86.0	84.7	83.9
Percentage coresident or seeing a child daily:							
SECAPT 1986	90.7	89.8	91.4	91.2	90.0	87.5	91.4
SWET 1995	89.8	90.5	89.2	89.3	90.6	88.6	90.0

Note: Results refer to elderly in private households. Children include own, adopted and stepchildren.

The extent of coresidence in the same household according to sex, age and type of area of residence of the elderly is compared in table 2 between SECAPT and SWET for the elderly with at least one living child. To the extent that a comparison between these two surveys reflects changes in levels of coresidence of elderly parents with children in the same household, coresidence apparently declined equally for men and women but quite unequally according to age and residence of the elderly, with the reduction limited mainly to younger elderly persons (aged 60-69) compared with those older and to the rural elderly compared with those in urban areas.6

The levels of coresidence cited so far are based on a very narrow definition of the phenomenon. In all of the sources cited, the definition of a household typically relies on the official household registration system and thus corresponds to individual dwelling units. In most cases, therefore, living in the same household refers to situations where the elderly and one or more of their children share the same dwelling. Situations in which elderly parents and children live in separate dwellings (with separate registrations) but belong to a related cluster of houses that are interdependent are thus ignored. In many respects, however, such arrangements can serve many of the same functional purposes for meeting the needs of the elderly as living in the same dwelling. Previous studies have indicated that such situations are not unusual in Thailand, especially in rural settings (Cowgill, 1972; Knodel and Saengtienchai, 1996). Thus, results based strictly on coresidence in the same household understate the extent to which the living arrangements of the elderly and their families are intertwined with exchanges of social and economic supports.

In SWET, information was solicited on the location of each of the respondent's children as well as the support each child provided and received. With respect to location, respondents were specifically asked if any of their children who did not reside in the same household lived in an adjacent dwelling. Among the elderly who had a living child but did not coreside with a child in the same household, almost 40 per cent lived adjacent to a child. When these are added to cases where a child was literally coresident, 84 per cent of the elderly are found to be either coresident or living adjacent to a child. Moreover, as indicated in table 2, there is very little difference in this respect between men and women, younger and older elderly, or those in urban or rural areas.

Even including children living in adjacent households can understate the extent to which considerable daily interaction occurs between the elderly and their children, since children who are not literally next door but live nearby can also assist elderly parents in a variety of ways. A more encompassing estimate of the extent to which living arrangements facilitate daily interaction between elderly parents and their children can be obtained by combining information on coresidence with that on the frequency of contact that the elderly have with non-coresident children. Such information was collected in both SECAPT and SWET. As table 2 also indicates, 91 per cent of elderly parents in SECAPT and 90 per cent in SWET either coreside in the same household or have daily contact with at least one child. This means that over half of elderly parents (54 per cent in SECAPT and 60 per cent in SWET) who do not coreside in the same dwelling with a child nevertheless see a non-coresident child every day. Such situations are likely to afford ample opportunities for exchanges of support and services.

The frequency of such visiting is no doubt made possible by the proximity of residences and in many cases reflects situations in which the dwelling units of the elderly and their children in some sense could be considered to form a broader cluster of interrelated households, especially in cases where the child is in an adjacent dwelling (Knodel and Saengtienchai, 1997). The fact that there is very little difference between the two surveys with respect to this more comprehensive combined measure of coresidence and daily contact suggests that the apparent decline between the two surveys in literal coresidence in the same household does not reflect a trend towards desertion of the elderly but rather a limited modification of living arrangements that most likely retains essential exchanges between parents and children. Possibly the improved economic situation in recent years to the middle of 1997 has facilitated construction of separate dwelling units for married adult children next to or near their elderly parents. Such arrangements may be seen as providing greater privacy for both parties while retaining a close level of interaction consistent with a family system of support and care of the elderly. Focus group discussions have revealed that some elderly persons prefer this type of arrangement, especially if they are in good health (Knodel, Saengtienchai and Sittitrai, 1995).

The fact that the main decline in coresidence is observed for the elderly in rural areas, where obtaining land for a new house is not a major problem, is consistent with this speculation. So is the fact that the apparent decline in coresidence is concentrated among the younger elderly and is only very modest among the older elderly, who are more likely to have needs for physical care and concerns about health that require closer attention by a care-giver.

Table 3: Selected measures of living arrangements of population aged 60, by sex, age and residence, Thailand, 1995

Measure	Total	Sex		Age		Residence	
		Male	Female	60-69	70+	Urban	Rural
Percentage alone	4.3	2.9	5.5	3.7	5.3	3.6	4.5
Percentage with spouse only	11.9	14.5	9.7	13.3	9.6	6.6	13.0
Percentage with spouse (with or without others)	60.4	81.0	43.1	69.0	46.3	51.8	62.3
Percentage in three-generation households	47.0	44.7	49.0	45.0	50.3	48.5	46.7

Percentage living with any:							
Child	70.9	72.7	69.4	70.5	71.7	76.6	69.7
Child aged 18+	69.0	69.4	68.6	68.3	70.1	75.8	67.5
Single child	33.2	41.5	26.2	38.7	24.2	45.0	30.6
Ever married child	50.7	47.0	53.8	46.9	56.9	51.9	50.4
Son	36.3	40.8	32.5	38.7	32.3	49.4	33.4
Daughter	49.3	50.4	48.4	49.4	49.3	55.8	47.9
Single son	20.5	26.7	15.2	25.5	12.3	28.2	18.7
Single daughter	20.0	24.5	16.3	22.7	15.7	33.2	17.1
Ever married son	19.6	19.6	19.6	18.0	22.3	28.8	17.6
Ever married daughter	33.8	31.0	36.2	32.2	36.6	30.6	34.6
Ratio living with:							
Single daughter/single son	0.98	0.92	1.07	0.89	1.28	1.18	0.91
Ever married daughter/ever married son	1.72	1.58	1.85	1.79	1.64	1.06	1.97

Source: SWET, 1995.
Note: Results refer to the elderly in private households. Children include own, adopted and stepchildren. Three-generation households include respondents who live with their children and grandchildren as well as those who live with their parents and children or grandchildren.

A more detailed set of indicators of living arrangements of the Thai elderly population according to with whom they live is provided in table 3 by age, sex and area of residence of the elderly respondent based on SWET. Some of the observed differences between men and women and between older and younger elderly persons are largely reflections of the demographics of ageing. For example, the fact that the proportion of elderly who live with a spouse (regardless of the presence of others) is almost twice as high for men as for women undoubtedly reflects the tendency of women to outlive their husbands, both because of higher male mortality and the age differences between spouses, as well as a greater tendency for older men, compared with older women, to remarry in cases of widowhood. Likewise, the far higher proportion of younger compared with older elderly who live with a spouse (with or without others) reflects the increased chance of a spouse dying as people age. Although the proportion living alone is low for all categories shown, these same demographic processes undoubtedly underlie the noticeably higher levels found among women compared with men and among older compared with younger elderly persons.

Overall, almost half of the Thai elderly live in a three-generation household. There is little difference in this respect between urban and rural elderly. Almost all the elderly who live with a child live with an adult child. Thus, the percentage who live with at least one child aged 18 or older is only slightly lower (69 vs. 71 per cent) than the percentage who live with any child. Elderly persons are considerably more likely to live with an ever married child than a single child, although this is far more so for the older than the younger elderly, reflecting the greater likelihood that the elderly's children are married as the elderly themselves grow older (Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1996).

The elderly who live with single children are about as likely to live with a son as a daughter (about 20 per cent in each case). In contrast, far more Thai elderly persons live with an ever married daughter than an ever married son (34 vs. 20 per cent). This tendency is strong among both men and women and younger and older elderly; however, it is largely a rural phenomenon. Among the urban elderly, there is little difference in the proportion who live with an ever married son or daughter. The rural-urban differences in this respect undoubtedly reflect the far greater influence of Chinese ethnicity (and the associated preference for residing with a married son) among urban Thais compared with their rural counterparts.

Intergenerational exchanges of material support and contact

The familial system of care and support for the elderly in Thailand consists of numerous exchanges of services and material contributions among a variety of kin but especially between parents and children. Detailed information was collected in SWET about some of these exchanges between the elderly and each of their children. For some aspects of exchange, the information solicited was conditional on whether or not the child lived outside the household of the respondent. Overall, 96 per cent of the elderly have at least one living child, 91 per cent have at least one non-coresident child, and 71 per cent have at least one coresident child. On average, 4.6 children of elderly parents with at least one non-coresident child lived outside the household; among the coresident elderly, an average of 1.6 children lived in the same dwelling as their parents.

Table 4: Exchange of food/clothes and money with a parent among children of parents aged 60 and older, by the location of the child relative to the parent, Thailand, 1995

	Location of the child				
	Same house	**Adjacent house**	**Same community**	**Same province**	**Elsewhere**
Percentage giving food/clothes to parent at least:					
Daily	X	27.8	9.1	2.7	.5
Weekly	X	49.4	29.2	12.9	2.0
Monthly	X	61.2	46.7	32.7	12.0
Yearly	X	81.0	76.1	72.6	66.3
Percentage receiving food/clothes from parent at least:					
Daily	X	10.6	4.6	1.5	.1
Weekly	X	20.3	13.2	4.6	.5
Monthly	X	26.2	21.1	11.4	3.3
Yearly	X	33.6	32.1	25.4	22.2
Percentage giving to parent:					
Any money	59.7	60.0	53.6	61.3	65.9
At least 1,000 baht	42.7	23.9	20.1	31.6	45.9
Percentage receiving from parent:					
Any money	27.7	13.2	11.8	11.2	11.4
At least 1,000 baht	21.9	7.8	7.2	7.9	8.9

Source: SWET, 1995.
Note: Results refer to the elderly in private households. Children include own, adopted and stepchildren.

Table 4 examines material exchanges in terms of food or clothes and in terms of money given and received during the past year based on children as the unit of analysis. Results are shown by the child's location relative to the parent.7 The question on exchanges of food or clothes was asked only in relation to non-coresident children, since in the case of coresident children exchanges within the same household are likely to be both routine and difficult for a respondent to sort out. Note that food and clothing were combined as a single item in the question that respondents were asked. Presumably, food is the predominant item involved, especially when considering frequent exchanges.

In general, substantially higher percentages of non-coresident children give rather than receive food or clothes in exchanges with parents, although the extent to which parents also give is not trivial. Moreover, the probability of any such exchange as well as its frequency is directly associated with the proximity of the households involved. In particular, daily or weekly exchanges of food and clothes are limited mainly to children who live within the same community and especially those who live adjacent to their parents. Over one-fourth of children living adjacent to an elderly parent provide food or clothes on a daily basis and almost half on at least a weekly basis, testifying to the close linkages between such households. Among children who live outside the immediate community, exchanges of food or clothes are limited largely to less frequent exchanges. Yearly exchanges are nevertheless fairly frequent, especially with respect to children providing food or clothes to the parent. This likely reflects the Thai tradition of returning to visit parents at least once a year during the Thai New Year celebration (Songkran) in mid-April and the normal practice of bringing some gift (typically food and/or money) when visiting from a distance.

Information on exchanges of money was sought from all children including those coresident. Respondents were asked if any money was given or received during the past year and if so, whether the total amount involved equaled at least 1,000 baht (US$40 at the time of the survey). As table 4 shows, money exchanges flow in both directions although children are considerably more likely to give money to parents than to receive it. Although there is no clear relationship between the location of the child and giving any money to a parent, if consideration is limited to amounts of 1,000 baht or more, coresident children and those who live farthest away (i.e. in a different province) are distinctly more likely to provide such amounts than other children. For distant children, this probably reflects a combination of greater ability to contribute money owing to the higher proportions of such children who have paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector and attempt to substitute money for the more frequent types of exchanges of food and services that can take place when living nearby. In the case of coresident children, the high proportion providing at least 1,000 baht probably reflects the nature of shared finances within the same household and thus represents a rather different type of phenomenon.

Such an interpretation is consistent with the observed pattern of receiving money from parents. By the time parents are elderly, the normative obligation for support flows from children to parents rather than the reverse (Knodel, Saengtienchai and Sittitrai, 1995). Thus, although we would still expect the nature of shared household finances to increase the likelihood that an elderly parent would provide money to a coresident child, we would not expect

parents trying to compensate children who are far away from home by providing money in lieu of other forms of support to the children. This is just the pattern that is evident, i.e. those children who coreside with parents are clearly more likely than all others to receive either any money or amounts of at least 1,000 baht. Among non-coresident children, however, there is little difference according to their location with respect to having received money from parents.

Table 5: Contact with and receipt of support from non-coresident children, by living arrangement, among the population aged 60 and older, Thailand, 1986 and 1995

	Coresides in same household with child	Not living with any child				
		Total	Alone	With spouse only	With others only	With spouse and others
Of all persons 60+						
Percentage with a non-coresident child:						
SECAPT 1986	91.2	84.8	89.1	89.7	70.1	94.0
SWET 1995	93.4	85.0	86.3	93.1	64.0	93.4
Of persons 60+ with at least one non-coresident child						
Percentage with a child in an adjacent house:						
SWET 1995	35.5	38.2	45.5	39.0	29.0	39.1
Percentage with a child in same community [a]:						
SECAPT 1986	70.2	68.6	70.0	71.8	67.0	65.4
SWET 1995	70.2	68.2	66.8	73.3	58.1	67.4
Percentage who see a non-coresident child:						
- Daily:						
SECAPT 1986	53.9	55.3	56.0	61.0	47.4	55.0
SWET 1995	63.3	60.5	61.1	65.2	48.2	60.8
- At least weekly:						
SECAPT 1986	72.1	69.6	69.3	74.1	62.7	71.0
SWET 1995	76.4	73.6	72.0	80.4	58.1	73.9
- At least monthly:						
SECAPT 1986	81.9	82.9	78.6	87.0	77.4	86.3
SWET 1995	88.5	87.8	82.5	94.7	77.2	86.0
Percentage who receive food/clothes from a non-coresident child:						
- Daily:						
SWET 1995	17.3	22.6	28.3	23.1	18.0	21.6
- At least weekly:						
SWET 1995	36.4	43.1	46.1	44.1	34.2	46.5
Percentage who received money in previous year from a non-coresident child:						
- Any money:						
SWET 1995	88.4	87.1	85.2	88.7	88.1	84.5
- At least 1,000 baht:						
SWET 1995	69.9	66.9	63.6	67.8	66.8	67.4

Note: Results refer to the elderly in private households. Children include own, adopted and stepchildren.
a Including children who live adjacent to parents.

Table 5 switches focus back to the elderly as the unit of analysis and examines the association between living arrangements and both contact with non-coresident children and receipt of material support from them. Since information on contact with non-coresident children is available from both SECAPT and SWET, results from both sources are presented on this issue. Because the elderly who have no non-coresident child are obviously unable to have contact with or receive support from such a child, results are presented only for the elderly with at least one non-coresident child. It should be noted, however, as also shown in table 5, that among all elderly, there is some variation in the percentage who have a non-coresident child according to living arrangements, although only in the case of the elderly who live with "others" (i.e. other than a child or spouse) is the proportion under 90 per cent.

Results from SWET indicate that a large share of the elderly (with a non-coresident child) who do not live with a child live in a house adjacent to a child (overall 38 per cent). This is especially so for the elderly who live alone (45 per cent). Moreover, a substantial majority (close to 70 per cent) of both coresident and non-coresident elderly with a non-coresident child have a child in the same community. For most living arrangement categories, there is little difference in this respect between the SECAPT and SWET results. Information on contact with children indicates that a very substantial proportion of elderly in all living arrangement categories see a non-coresident child frequently. For elderly persons (with a non-coresident child) in all categories, except the elderly who live with "others", the majority in both SECAPT and SWET see a non-coresident child daily. Moreover, this is somewhat higher in SWET than in SECAPT. If weekly or monthly contact is considered, considerably higher levels of contact are indicated.

Overall, the results regarding contact with a non-coresident child as well as living next door to or in the same village as a child do not suggest that there is much difference in these respects between the elderly who coreside with a child and those who do not. They do indicate, however, that few elderly, including those who do not coreside with a child, are isolated from all their children.

In addition to having contact with non-coresident children, a substantial minority of the elderly receive food or clothes from at least one child on a fairly frequent basis. Elderly persons who do not live with a child are somewhat more likely to receive food on a daily or weekly basis than are the elderly who do coreside with a child, suggesting some modest compensation on the part of children for not living in the same household with parents. On the other hand, the chance of elderly parents receiving financial contributions from at least one non-coresident child appears to be similar regardless of the living arrangement.

Table 6: Proportion of elderly who have regular contact with specific kin, by coresidence with child, Thailand, 1995

	All elderly		**Elderly with kin outside household**	
	Contact yearly	**Contact monthly**	**Contact yearly**	**Contact monthly**
Coreside with child				
Sibling	68.2	33.4	83.3	40.7
Grandchild	89.0	X	92.5	X
Niece/nephew	75.0	X	81.6	X
Other relative	57.3	X	57.3	X
Not coreside with child				
Sibling	70.5	36.5	82.1	41.4
Grandchild	78.1	X	93.6	X
Niece/nephew	77.7	X	84.7	X
Other relative	56.3	X	36.3	X

Note: X = not available.

Besides interactions with their children, contact with other family members can also form an important part of an elderly person's social support. Table 6 summarizes limited information as collected in SWET about contact between the respondent and other family members living outside the household. Results are shown for all elderly respondents, regardless of whether or not they had non-coresident kin of a particular category as well as for those respondents who had at least one such non-coresident kin. In order to determine if coresidence with children substituted for social contacts with other kin, results are shown separately according to whether or not the respondent coresided with one or more children.

In general, only small differences in the percentage having contact with kin are evident between the elderly who coreside with a child and those who do not. Moreover, among the elderly with specific kin outside the household, the vast majority have at least yearly contact with all but more distant relatives. Indeed, for the elderly with living siblings, approximately two-fifths see a sibling at least monthly. The overall situation suggested from the results in table 6 is one in which most Thai elderly persons maintain at least occasional social contact with a variety of different kin. Thus, although adult children in most cases are at the centre of the family support system, other family members also form part of a broader family network of social support.

Discussion and conclusions

Survey and census data on the living arrangements of the elderly and their linkages with related aspects of material exchanges and contact with their children indicate that a widespread and functioning familial system of support and care for the older population has been maintained in Thailand despite rapid social and demographic change over recent decades. Although difference in samples and data collection methods preclude arriving at firm conclusions,

there is some suggestion in the available data that coresidence of elderly parents with at least one child, literally defined as living in the same dwelling unit, is declining. However, this does not appear to represent an erosion of the support system, judging from the fact that increased daily contact between older parents and non-coresident children almost fully compensates for this decline. Rather, it may reflect a tendency to "buy more privacy" for both generations by establishing nearby households, a possibility made more affordable by rising incomes, while retaining sufficient proximity to permit maintaining essential aspects of traditional intergenerational obligations of care and support.

Table 7: Percentage distribution according to living arrangements among the population aged 60 and older in collective and private households, Thailand, 1995

	Percentage of all elderly[a]	Percentage of major category
In collective households (from 1990 census)		
In temple as monk (men only)	1.5	5.7
In temple but not a monk	0.2	9.3
Other than temple	0.1	4.9
Total	1.8	100
In private households (from SWET, 1995)		
Elderly with a living child		
1. Lives with child aged 18+	67.7	72.1
2. Lives adjacent to a child	9.7	10.3
3. Sees a child daily	6.6	7.0
4. Lives with other relative aged 18+ (excluding spouse)	2.1	2.2
5. Lives with spouse and underage child or relative	2.2	2.3
6. Lives with spouse only	3.5	3.7
7. Lives with underage child or relative only	0.8	0.9
8. Lives alone	1.5	1.6
Total	93.9	100
(Of the elderly in categories 5 through 8 above, 73 per cent received 1,000+ baht from at least one child in previous year.)		
Childless elderly		
1. Lives with other relative age 18+ (excluding spouse)	2.6	60.6
2. Lives with spouse and underage relative	0.1	2.4
3. Lives with spouse only	0.8	18.8
4. Lives with underage relative only	>0.1	0.8
5. Lives alone	0.8	17.5
Total	4.3	100
(Of the elderly in categories 4 and 5 above, 49 per cent see a sibling daily.)		

Notes: Within each of the three major groups, assignment to specific categories is hierarchical. Non-relatives in the household are ignored for the purpose of the above tabulations. Overall, 1.2 per cent of the elderly in SWET lived in households with one or more non-relatives. Children include own, adopted and stepchildren.
a The percentages shown for private households (based on SWET) have been adjusted to reflect the 1.8 per cent of the elderly who are indicated as living in collective households based on the 1990 census.

The pervasiveness of a functioning familial system of care and support for the older generation in Thailand is illustrated in table 7 which combines the detailed information on living arrangements, social contact and monetary contributions from the younger generation available from SWET for 1995 with supplementary information from the 1990 census on collective households. Only 1.8 per cent of the elderly live in institutional households, and the vast majority of these (86 per cent) are monks in temples. Information on how long these elderly men had been monks or their reasons for entering the monkhood is unavailable. However, it seems reasonable to assume that most are there for reasons other than a failure of family support. In view of the fact that our previous analysis indicated little gender difference in coresidence with children (see e.g. table 2), if residence in temples were mainly a symptom of a failing family support system, we would not expect to see such a sex imbalance among those seeking refuge there.8 Thus, even the small numbers of elderly in collective households probably do not in the main represent failures of the familial support system.

Among the elderly in private households, it is useful to separate those who have a living child from those who do not, in view of the fact that the living arrangements and support exchanges available to these two groups necessarily differ. Within each group, a hierarchical set of living arrangement categories has been defined in a manner intended to represent roughly a descending scale in terms of normatively preferred forms of familial support and care. Thus, situations in which adult children are likely to be playing important roles are given precedence in the hierarchy to ones where other relatives are likely to be doing so. Since young children (defined as being under the age of 18 for this purpose) are unlikely to be able to provide full assistance in the household either in terms of taking on important household responsibilities or bringing in significant income, they are considered as dependents rather than as part of the familial support system for the elderly in the construction of the hierarchy. Within each of the two major groupings (those with and those without a living child), each elderly respondent is assigned the first category for which he or she qualifies.

Elderly persons who have children and live in private households are by far the vast majority (94 per cent) of the elderly population and most of them reside with an adult child (aged 18 or older). Among those who do not coreside with an adult child, most either live next door to a child or see a child daily. These three categories already encompass 90 per cent of the elderly with a child. Even among the remaining 10 per cent, some live with other relatives aged 18 or older who may well play a role within the household similar to that of a coresident child, and just over half live with a spouse. Only 2.5 per cent of the elderly with a living child live only with a child or relative under 18, or completely alone. Even the 8 per cent of elderly parents who are not coresident, do not live adjacent to a child, do not see a child daily, and do not live with another relative aged 18 or older are not necessarily cut off from support from their children. This is indicated by the fact that almost three-fourths of them receive significant monetary contributions (i.e. at least 1,000 baht) from at least one child.

The information in SWET also shows that most of the small minority of elderly who are without a living child (representing 4.3 per cent of the total elderly) are integrated into the prevailing familial system of care and support. Just over 60 per cent coreside with some relative aged 18 or older. Most of the remainder live with a spouse. Only about 18 per cent live either with a relative under 18 or entirely alone. Again, however, it would be wrong to think that all in even this group are outside the family support system as indicated by the fact that almost half (49 per cent) report seeing a sibling daily.

The overall picture provided by the composite of data used to construct table 7 is one of a remarkably pervasive system of familial support and care for the Thai elderly. Although forces of demographic and socio-economic change may modify the situation in the future, so far there are few, if any, signs that widespread abandonment of the Thai elderly by their children or kin is likely to come about in the foreseeable future. This does not mean that the Thai elderly do not face serious economic problems or necessarily have access to the extra-familial services, including health services, that are necessary for their welfare (see e.g. Knodel, Amornsirisomboon and Khiewyoo, 1997). It does mean, however, that programmes intended for assisting elderly Thais should in many cases consider aid to needy families with elderly members rather than focus only on the tiny minority who are truly deserted by their children and kin.

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Endnotes

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The 1980 and 1990 Thai censuses included direct questions about the number of a woman's children who lived in the same household as she did, the number who lived elsewhere, and the number who had died. Although this information was collected for the purpose of estimating fertility and mortality, it can be used to examine coresidence with children. Equivalent data for men are lacking (see Knodel, Chayovan and Saengtienchai, 1994).
Any bias introduced is primarily for men given that, according to the 1990 census, men constitute 91 per cent of the elderly in collective households. Thus, the percentage of men aged 60 and older in collective households is considerably higher than for women (3.5 vs. 0.3 per cent). Almost all these men (98 per cent) were residing in temples and 96 per cent of them were monks. Among women in collective households, 64 per cent lived in temples. Although the census does not directly identify if such women are nuns, it seems safe to assume the vast majority are.

In a small proportion of cases, coresiding elderly persons are living with a child who has not yet reached adulthood.

In SWET, for example, 3 per cent of households of respondents aged 60 or older with a coresident child had no child at least 18 years old.

For the purpose of this presentation, urban is defined as officially designated municipalities and Bangkok. Living in the same community was defined as living in the same village for rural respondents and in the same neighbourhood for urban respondents.

Only 9.3 per cent of the elderly in collective households were women.

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Living Arrangements, Patrilineality and Sources of Support among Elderly Vietnamese

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Since Viet Nam's fertility has been falling sharply recently, there will be a future decline in the number of care-givers of the elderly

Knowledge about the elderly in Viet Nam has been enhanced by several projects on social gerontology (Bui, 1993; Dang, 1994) as well as recent census data (General Statistical Office, 1991), which has provided us with some basic demographic facts about the elderly population. More precise information has not yet become available, however, regarding the living arrangements and lives of individual elderly persons and their families. This lack of information is unfortunate, because family structure, including patrilineal patterns of coresidence, provides critical insights into socio-cultural processes. The paucity of such information has precluded our ability to situate Viet Nam properly within the broader cultural patterns of East and South-East Asia.

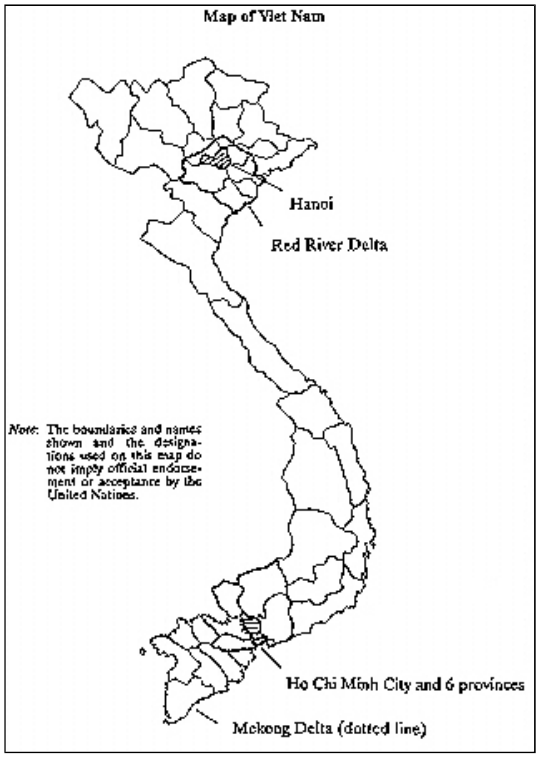
Research into this issue should be a high priority, given the tumultuous social changes Viet Nam has experienced in recent decades. Under the previous centrally planned economy, which was first implemented in the northern region of Viet Nam beginning in the late 1950s and then in the southern region following national reunification in 1975, the family was de-emphasized as the primary institution responsible for the social welfare of Vietnamese people, including the elderly. Since the mid-1980s, however, Viet Nam has undertaken a series of free-market reforms (e.g. Ljunggren, 1993) that have, once again, rendered the family as the primary unit responsible for economic decision-making and individual welfare. A critical issue for shaping future public policy concerns the extent to which such reforms may have affected the social security and living standards of the elderly, both in absolute terms and in relation to non-elderly Vietnamese.

Of course, the aforementioned issues are so broad and potentially complex that extensive study will be required before they can be explored adequately. This report represents an initial step in working towards that goal. It summarizes some basic results of two recent surveys of the elderly, one taken in the provinces of the Red River Delta area in the northern part of the country, and the other taken in Ho Chi Minh City and six adjacent provinces in the southern part. The surveys collected information about basic living arrangements, household structure, location of children and other relatives, sources of income, and a variety of attitudes and life experiences.

Data and questionnaire construction

The first two authors were the directors of the surveys on which this article is based. Bui The Cuong carried out the Red River Delta Survey under the auspices of the Institute of Sociology in Hanoi over the course of 1996. Truong Si Anh undertook the survey in Ho Chi Minh City (hereafter referred to as HCM City) and adjoining provinces under the auspices of the Institute for Economic Research in HCM City in early 1997. The projects were assisted by researchers at the Population Studies Center of the University of Michigan. The questions asked were fairly similar for the two surveys, although there were some differences that will be discussed below. Each survey was preceded by a pre-test in the field.

Geographic coverage



The two surveys taken together by no means represent Viet Nam as a whole. Neither taken singly do they represent the northern (bac bo) or southern (nam bo) portions of the country.1 They do, however, represent two very important clusters of provinces, including the two most prominent urban centres in Viet Nam, and provide considerable rural and urban diversity.

The surveys were intended to include the urban centres within each macro-region (e.g. Hanoi and HCM City), as well as the provinces surrounding them (see map on next page). At the time the Red River Delta Survey began, there were seven provinces fully within the delta and three others with portions within it (some of these 10 provinces were sub-divided after the survey began). Among the latter three provinces, only those areas located in the delta itself were included in the universe from which the sample was selected. In contrast to Hanoi's central location within the Red River Delta, HCM City is located due east of the Mekong Delta. Thus, the bulk of the Mekong Delta lies outside the area covered by the survey. Among HCM City's contiguous provinces, only two, Long An and Tien Giang, are located in the delta -- the rest encompass the megalopolis around HCM City.

Thus, the northern and southern surveys do not offer direct contrasts between the Red River Delta and the Mekong Delta areas, but contrast the two primal cities and their respective provincial environs. Owing to the geographical location of Hanoi and HCM City within each macro-region and the rural/urban distributions within each region, the Red River Delta Survey covered an area more rural than the survey covering HCM City and its environs.2 Furthermore, the areas in and around HCM City are much more developed than their counterparts in and around Hanoi (as well as elsewhere in Viet Nam), due in part to the more intense colonial involvement there under the French, and subsequent interventions and infrastructure investments by the United States prior to reunification of the country in 1975. Sampling procedures were rather different between the two macro-regions but, after weighting, the resulting frequencies are representative of each area.3

Background characteristics of respondents

The demographic and social characteristics of the respondents are depicted in table 1. Results here and in all subsequent tables reflect the weighting procedures just cited. In the Red River Delta, 85.3 per cent of the respondents were rural, 6.3 per cent resided in urban Hanoi and 8.4 per cent in other urban townships. In contrast, only 58.2 per cent of the respondents in the southern survey were rural, 31.8 per cent resided in HCM City, and 10.0 per cent in other urban townships. Again, the greater urban proportions in the southern survey simply reflect the actual population composition as measured by census data. In order to make more meaningful comparisons between the two macro-regions, in most tabulations, we disaggregate results across the primal urban centres, provincial urban townships and rural areas.

Table 1: Distributions of respondents' background characteristics (weighted to reflect actual regional populations), Viet Nam (see text)

	Weighted total	Region			Sex		Age	
		Hanoi	Town	Rural	Male	Female	60-69	70+
Northern area: Red River Delta								
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Residence								
Hanoi	6.3	100.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	5.8	6.3	6.3
Towns	8.4	0.0	100.0	0.0	9.1	8.0	8.7	8.1
Rural	85.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	83.8	86.3	84.9	85.6
Sex								
Male	40.2	45.1	43.5	39.5	100.0	0.0	44.2	35.6
Female	59.8	54.9	56.5	60.5	0.0	100.0	55.8	64.4
Age								
60-69	53.6	53.9	55.5	53.4	58.9	50.0	100.0	0.0
70+	46.4	46.1	44.5	46.6	41.1	50.0	0.0	100.0]
Marital status								
Never married	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.5
Married	61.8	68.6	68.1	60.6	87.6	44.4	73.7	48.0
Divorced/separated	0.7	2.6	1.3	0.5	0.1	1.1	0.5	1.0
Widowed	37.3	28.5	30.5	38.7	12.3	54.1	25.8	50.6
Education								
None, illiterate	42.6	12.0	18.1	47.3	9.9	64.5	26.3	61.4
None, literate	28.8	21.4	31.7	29.0	33.9	25.3	35.5	21.0
Some primary	5.6	7.2	5.5	5.5	9.3	3.1	7.2	3.7
Finished primary	13.2	16.9	16.6	12.6	25.3	5.0	17.0	8.7
Beyond primary	9.9	42.5	28.1	5.7	21.5	2.1	14.0	5.2
Weighted N =	930	59	78	793	374	556	499	431
		HCMC						
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Residence								
HCM City	31.8	100.0	0.0	0.0	30.7	32.6	30.5	33.2
Towns	10.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	9.4	10.5	10.2	9.7
Rural	58.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	59.9	57.0	59.3	57.1
Sex								
Male	41.9	40.4	39.3	43.1	100.0	0.0	43.6	40.0
Female	58.1	59.6	60.7	56.9	0.0	100.0	56.4	60.0
Age								
60-69	54.7	52.6	56.0	55.6	56.8	53.2	100.0	0.0
70+	45.3	47.4	44.0	44.4	43.2	46.8	0.0	100.0
Marital status								
Never married	2.5	3.0	2.4	2.2	0.8	3.9	2.2	3.2
Married	56.6	56.2	53.6	57.3	83.9	36.4	66.0	44.7
Divorced/separated	2.9	3.4	2.4	2.7	0.8	4.3	3.3	2.6
Widowed	38.1	37.4	41.7	37.8	14.4	55.3	8.5	49.5
Education								
None, illiterate	35.5	35.6	29.8	36.5	16.0	49.6	26.3	46.7
None, literate	18.7	15.5	15.5	20.9	22.2	16.0	19.0	18.2
Some primary	23.0	13.6	25.0	27.7	23.9	22.1	27.4	17.7
Finished primary	9.2	11.0	13.1	7.6	13.1	6.6	10.3	7.9
Beyond primary	13.6	24.2	16.7	7.4	24.8	5.7	17.1	9.5
Weighted N =	840	267	84	489	353	487	459	381

In both macro-regions, almost 60 per cent of the respondents were female and over half were under age 70. The vast majority of the elderly were either currently married (56.6 to 61.8 per cent) or widowed (37.3 to 38.1 per cent).

Relatively few were never married, divorced or separated, although respondents in these three categories were more prevalent in the southern than northern areas (5.4 vs. 0.9 per cent). Marital status differed substantially by age and sex owing to the demography of ageing.

Table 1 reveals substantial differentiation in schooling across sectoral location, gender and age. Educational attainment of the elderly tends to be higher among urban residents, men, and the younger elderly (60-69 years old), and such social differentiation is particularly notable in the northern region. Aggregate regional differences, however, can be misleading because they reflect the aforementioned differences in rural/urban proportions. For instance, the overall level of illiteracy was higher in the Red River Delta than in HCM City and environs (42.6 vs. 35.5 per cent). This reflects the greater proportion of rural respondents in the Red River Delta, combined with a truly higher level of illiteracy in the rural Red River Delta compared with the rural south (47.3 vs. 36.5 per cent). In contrast, in the primal cities, illiteracy was far higher in HCM City than Hanoi (35.6 vs. 12.0 per cent).

Table 1 also provides evidence of interregional gender disparities in educational attainment. For instance, compared with their southern counterparts, illiteracy was less prevalent among Red River Delta males (9.9 vs. 16.0 per cent) but more common among Red River Delta females (64.5 vs. 49.6 per cent). This larger gender disparity in the Red River Delta may well be related to regional differences in patrilineality that are examined in this article.

Living arrangements

Table 2 provides a summary of the living arrangements of elderly Vietnamese. Only 6.9 per cent of northern and 4.8 per cent of southern respondents reported living alone. In both macro-regions, living alone was most prevalent in rural areas and among women. But the vast majority of respondents (more than 93 per cent) did not live alone -- about three quarters were living with at least one child (bottom panel), over 50 per cent with their spouse, and over 60 per cent with at least one person other than their spouse or child.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of living arrangements among the elderly vis-a-vis various family members and others in Viet Nam

	Total	Region			Sex		Age	
		Hanoi	Town	Rural	Male	Female	60-69	70+
Northern area: Red River Delta								
Living with whom?								
Alone	6.9	2.1	0.7	7.9	1.6	10.5	5.3	8.8
Spouse only	12.5	12.5	12.2	12.5	16.4	9.8	11.9	13.2
Children only	4.1	4.1	6.1	3.8	0.5	6.5	4.3	3.8
Others only	3.5	3.5	4.5	3.5	0.3	5.6	2.0	5.2
Spouse and children	14.4	14.4	18.3	13.8	18.1	12.0	22.6	5.0
Spouse and others	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.5	5.2	2.3	3.1	3.9
Children and others	26.4	26.4	23.8	26.9	12.9	35.6	17.8	36.4
Spouse, children, and others	28.7	28.7	30.7	28.1	45.1	17.7	33.0	23.7
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (%) living with (non-exclusive categories)								
Child/children	73.7	72.6	78.9	80.8	76.5	71.8	77.7	69.0
Spouse	59.1	57.9	64.8	67.2	84.7	41.8	70.6	45.7
Others	62.1	62.0	62.2	62.5	63.4	61.1	55.9	69.2
Three-generation family	57.4	57.5	58.1	57.1	55.0	59.8	49.5	61.7
		HCMC						
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
Living with whom?								
Alone	4.8	2.2	4.8	6.1	3.4	5.7	3.7	6.3
Spouse only	4.5	0.4	1.2	7.3	2.7	3.9	5.0	3.9
Children only	6.9	6.4	7.2	7.1	3.0	10.2	6.5	7.1
Others only	5.8	6.4	4.8	5.7	2.0	8.6	2.8	9.5
Spouse and children	16.3	14.2	18.9	17.3	26.7	8.8	22.7	8.7
Spouse and others	3.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	5.1	1.6	2.2	3.9
Children and others	28.7	32.2	32.5	26.1	10.2	41.9	23.7	34.5
Spouse, children, and others	30.0	38.2	32.5	25.1	44.9	19.2	33.3	26.1

Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (%) living with (non-exclusive categories)								
Child/children	81.9	91.0	89.1	75.6	83.8	80.1	86.2	76.4
Spouse	53.8	52.8	50.6	54.8	82.4	33.5	63.2	42.6
Others	67.5	76.8	69.8	62.0	62.2	71.3	64.0	74.0
Three-generation family	51.0	61.5	57.4	44.1	45.4	55.0	47.2	55.5

A particularly interesting finding is that over half the elderly in both surveys live in households with at least three generations. At first glance, this finding might seem contradictory to other recent research that stresses the predominance of nuclear family households in Viet Nam (Hirschman and Loi, 1996). The major reason for the apparent contradiction lies in the fact that our focus is on households that have at least one elderly member, whereas studies finding a predominance of nuclear households examine all households, including those without an elderly person. Since most households that are vertically extended by three or more generations are very likely to contain at least one person aged 60 or older, our samples are far more likely to include such households than is a general sample of all households. Thus, there is no real contradiction between findings showing that most households in Viet Nam are nuclear and yet most elderly live in three-generation households. Rather, statistics based on each type of sample have their own distinctive meanings. Indeed, we believe that an assessment of a "cultural pattern" of extended generational living is more meaningfully based on households of the grandparental generation than a general sample of households, since it is, after all, grandparents who are the primary group "at risk" of living in such households.4

A comparison between the northern and southern surveys shows that the prevalence of three-generation families is fairly similar in Hanoi and HCM City and among the elderly in the provincial towns covered by the two surveys. However, there is a considerably higher proportion of rural elderly in the Red River Delta who live in a three-generation family than found among the elderly in the surrounding rural areas of HCM City. In this connection, it is interesting to note that our findings contrast with recent research by others who found a higher prevalence of extended families in a city and nearby rural area in the Mekong Delta than in a city in the Red River Delta (Hai Duong) and nearby rural area (Hirschman and Loi, 1996). It is difficult to assess the importance of this discrepancy, because the other research is based on a sample of all households as discussed above and because those sample areas studied in northern and southern Viet Nam are different from those in our study. At a minimum, however, the differences in results underscore the need for research on broader samples and careful attention to the universe of households being considered before firm conclusions about regional differences in household and family structure can be formed.

Older elderly persons are more likely to live in three-generation families than the younger elderly. This undoubtedly reflects life-course effects: as an elderly person gets older, his or her children are more likely to marry and have children of their own, thus leading to a three-generation household in cases where the married child coresides with the elderly parent.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of living arrangements among the Vietnamese elderly vis-a-vis potential family care-givers, beginning with coresident adult children (hierarchically organized)

	Percentage of all elderly	**Percentage of major category**
Northern area - Red River Delta		
A. Elderly with a living child - Total	97.9	100.0
1. Lives with child age 18+	72.5	74.0
2. Lives adjacent to a child	8.7	8.9
3. Sees child frequently	10.8	11.1
4. Lives with other relative age 18+ (excluding spouse)	1.2	1.3
5. Lives with spouse and underage child or relative	0.6	0.6
6. Lives with spouse only	2.1	2.1
7. Lives with underage child or relative only	0.1	0.1
8. Lives alone	1.9	2.0
B. Childless elderly - Total	2.1	100.0
1. Lives with other relative	1.8	85.8
2. Lives with spouse only	0.0	1.6
3. Lives alone	0.3	12.6
Southern area - HCMC + 6 provinces		
A. Elderly with a living child - Total	94.4	100.0

1. Lives with child age 18+	80.1	84.8
2. Lives adjacent to a child	5.2	5.5
3. Sees child frequently	4.7	5.0
4. Lives with other relative age 18+ (excluding spouse)	0.8	0.9
5. Lives with spouse and underage child or relative	0.8	0.9
6. Lives with spouse only	0.7	0.8
7. Lives with underage child or relative only	0.4	0.5
8. Lives alone	1.6	1.6
B. Childless elderly - Total	5.6	100.0
1. Lives with other relative	2.7	49.2
2. Lives with spouse only	0.5	9.6
3. Lives with non-relative only	0.5	7.6
4. Lives alone	1.9	33.5

Table 3 provides a more detailed portrait of living arrangements of elderly vis-a-vis potential care-givers, beginning with coresident children. Since the potential living arrangements available to the elderly without children necessarily differ from the elderly with children, the two groups are shown separately. Within each group, the categories shown are hierarchical such that inclusion in a prior category takes precedence over subsequent categories. Based on the assumption that familial support, especially from children, is desired by most elderly persons, the hierarchy gives priority to the availability of adult children, followed by other relatives. The results indicate that only a small minority of the elderly are childless and that among those who have a living child, the vast majority live with an adult child, live adjacent to one or see a child frequently (suggesting nearby residence). Among elderly persons with children, those in HCM City and its environs are somewhat more likely to coreside with a child than those in the Red River Delta (80.1 vs. 72.5 per cent), but that difference is diminished and slightly reversed when one adds in adjacent residence or frequent visiting (90.0 vs. 92.0 per cent). Clearly, in both areas, a relatively equal and overwhelming majority of the elderly have easy and frequent access to at least one child.

Based on table 3, it appears that very few of the elderly are left on their own outside the familial support system. Note that the percentages in the category "lives alone" in table 3 exclude those who live near a child or who see a child frequently and thus are lower than the percentages who literally live alone (i.e. in one-person households presented in table 2). Even the small minority of childless elderly persons tend not to live alone.5

Table 4: Nearest child to elderly respondent and percentage with at least one child in each proximate location of Viet Nam

Location of child	Nearest child of elderly parent				Percentage of elderly with at least one child in location			
	Total	Hanoi	Town	Rural	Total	Hanoi	Town	Rural
Northern area: Red River Delta								
In household	75.1	82.5	80.5	74.0	75.1	82.1	81.0	74.0
Next door	8.8	5.3	7.8	9.1	22.6	16.2	17.6	23.5
Nearby	4.7	1.8	2.6	5.1	29.3	14.2	12.2	32.1
Same hamlet/block	4.6	1.8	2.5	5.0	50.8	11.4	24.4	56.3
Same village/ward	2.0	1.8	3.9	1.8	26.3	26.9	44.5	24.5
Same province	3.7	3.5	1.3	4.0	51.9	60.9	34.0	52.9
In other province	1.1	3.5	1.3	0.9	48.0	24.6	60.6	48.5
Abroad	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	18.3	12.7	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	Not applicable			
	HCMC				HCMC			
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
In household	86.1	94.4	92.3	80.4	85.9	94.4	91.9	80.3
Next door	5.1	0.8	1.3	8.0	31.4	14.7	20.3	42.5
Same village	5.4	0.8	3.8	8.3	48.9	19.8	51.3	64.4
Same district	0.9	1.2	0.0	0.9	31.3	29.4	26.6	33.2
Same province	0.7	0.0	1.3	1.1	31.5	40.9	17.5	28.9
In other province	1.4	2.4	0.0	1.1	31.7	23.0	30.4	36.7

Abroad	0.3	0.4	1.3	0.0	14.0	26.2	25.3	5.4
Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		Not applicable		

Table 4 shows the location of the child nearest to the respondent. Note that, owing to differences in the questionnaires, the categorizing of locations is not identical between the two surveys. Coresidence was common in both areas, although Red River Delta elderly persons were less likely to have a child residing in the household than the southern elderly (75.1 vs. 86.1 per cent). Rural elderly persons were less likely to be residing in the same household as a child, yet they were marginally more likely to have at least one child residing in their village/ward or living in closer proximity, a finding that perhaps reflects the cheaper cost of land and housing. Table 4 also shows the proportion of respondents with at least one child in a location relatively close to their household. Despite the close proximate location of elderly parents to their children, many parents also had children living farther away. A substantial proportion of the elderly had children living outside their home province. Even more striking, especially in the southern survey, was the proportion having at least one child residing abroad (over one quarter of all elderly persons in both HCM City and surrounding towns).

Table 5: Percentage of elderly living with at least one child, by sex and marital status of child, Viet Nam

	Total	**Region**			**Sex**		**Age**	
		Hanoi	**Town**	**Rural**	**Male**	**Female**	**60-69**	**70+**
Northern area: Red River Delta								
Percentage living with *any*:								
1. Child	75.1	82.1	81.0	74.0	76.4	74.2	78.9	70.6
2. Son	62.1	68.9	65.8	61.2	67.1	58.7	69.6	53.4
3. Daughter	24.5	29.8	28.9	23.7	27.1	22.8	28.6	19.7
4. Single son	17.4	30.5	28.7	15.3	20.2	15.4	28.5	4.4
5. Single daughter	19.3	18.9	21.5	20.7	22.8	16.8	26.3	11.0
6. Married son	50.5	47.9	44.6	51.3	53.3	48.6	49.3	51.9
7. Married daughter	6.2	11.4	9.9	5.4	4.9	7.1	3.3	9.6
Patrilineal ratio								
Single children (4/5)	0.90	1.61	1.33	0.74	0.89	0.92	1.08	0.40
Married children (6/7)	8.15	4.20	4.51	9.50	10.88	6.80	14.94	5.41
		HCMC						
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
Percentage living with *any*:								
1. Child	85.9	94.5	91.0	80.3	84.8	86.7	89.2	81.7
2. Son	65.1	72.7	60.8	61.7	68.9	62.4	72.4	56.3
3. Daughter	48.3	62.9	53.6	39.4	51.7	45.9	57.3	37.5
4. Single son	34.5	42.4	32.0	30.5	40.0	30.1	46.8	18.9
5. Single daughter	32.3	39.2	31.8	28.5	40.3	26.1	42.4	19.5
6. Married son	46.1	53.7	43.9	42.4	42.9	48.6	43.4	49.6
7. Married daughter	26.4	42.7	33.0	16.4	21.7	30.0	27.3	25.4
Patrilineal ratio								
Single children (4/5)	1.07	1.08	1.00	1.07	0.99	1.15	1.10	0.97
Married children (6/7)	1.75	1.26	1.33	2.56	1.98	1.62	1.59	1.95

Note: Percentages are not mutually exclusive. Married category includes those ever married.

Table 5 shows the kind of child with whom elderly people resided by marital status and sex. In both areas, parents were more likely to reside with a married son than any other type of child. These patrilineal patterns in Viet Nam are usually associated with the "... East Asian model, often described with reference to Confucian cultural heritage" (Hirschman and Loi, 1996:230-231).

Table 5 constructs a "patrilineal ratio", that is the proportion of male children who live with a parent divided by the proportion of female children living with a parent (calculated for married and single children separately). For married children, the patrilineal ratio is consistently greater than one. In addition, comparing across the rows, patrilineal ratios in rural areas and among male elderly respondents exceed those in urban areas and among the female elderly by up to 2:1. However, the most striking social difference in patrilineality is geographical. Among

married children, those ratios are respectively 4.20, 4.51, and 9.50 across Hanoi, urban towns, and rural areas in the Red River Delta, compared with 1.26, 1.33 and 2.56 across HCM City and its urban and rural environs. Thus, patrilineal ratios are at least three times higher in all sectors of the Red River Delta compared with their southern counterparts.

Why should there be such a large macro-regional difference in patrilineality in Viet Nam? Although there may be several explanations, we hypothesize that the main one is related to Viet Nam's geographical location within Asia, which exhibits similar macro-regional differences; much of North and East Asia are characterized by patrilineal systems whereas bi-lateral systems predominate in South-East Asia and southern India (Mason, 1992:16). The Red River Delta is the oldest seat of Vietnamese (Kinh) civilization, which, owing to its proximity to East Asia, is characterized by patrilineal patterns (Keyes, 1977). During the long historical process of migration of ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) from the Red River Delta to southern areas (due in part to population pressures and intermittent invasions by China) Kinh migrants arrived in areas characterized by the bi-lateral kinship system typical of South-East Asia. Contacts (including intermarriage) among Kinh outmigrants with non-Kinh in southern regions likely contributed to a gradual dilution of patrilineal patterns.

Table 6: Percentage of ever married children who reside with elderly respondent among families with at least two married sons and two married daughters, by birth order and sex of married child, Viet Nam

	Living in same household	Living next door
Northern area: Red River Delta		
Oldest married son	14.9	11.7
Younger married son	21.6	11.3
Oldest married daughter	0.6	1.1
Younger married daughter	1.9	1.0
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces		
Oldest married son	12.3	18.0
Younger married son	27.7	11.3
Oldest married daughter	8.9	14.0
Younger married daughter	10.0	12.8

Note: Child's birth order within each sex was determined first; then, only married children were included in the analysis. Married category includes those ever married.

Table 6 provides further information from the perspective of the married children of the respondents. It shows the proportion of married children of different combinations of sex and birth order who live with their elderly parents. Only the children of respondents with at least two married sons and two married daughters are considered, so that for each group of siblings, there is a full permutation of children with whom the parents could reside -- an eldest son or daughter, or a non-eldest son or daughter. The results suggest the distinct patrilineal pattern of residing with a married son rather than a married daughter. Moreover, younger married sons are more likely to reside with elderly parents than the oldest married son. Thus, there is no evidence of primogeniture, where younger sons progressively move out of the household once they marry. Rather, older sons appear more likely to move out of the household, perhaps due to the longer period at risk for leaving, or a societal norm favouring the youngest son as the one to take care of elderly parents. In fact, at least in the southern survey, table 6 suggests that eldest sons were more likely to be living adjacent to elderly parents than youngest sons.

Exchanges between the elderly and their children

Table 7 shows the proportion of non-childless elderly respondents who reported various kinds of exchanges with at least one child. Exchanges in both directions are illustrated -- that is, receipt from and to any child. To simplify our discussion of the results, we distinguish only between those reporting none of these exchanges with those reporting any.

Table 7: Proportion of elderly respondents who received/gave any of the following from/to any child, Viet Nam

	Total	**Region**			**Sex**		**Age**	
		Hanoi	**Town**	**Rural**	**Male**	**Female**	**60-69**	**70+**
Northern area: Red River Delta								
From children:								
Visits	99.7	97.4	100.0	99.8	99.8	99.6	99.8	99.6
Food, clothes, goods	86.4	90.2	76.4	87.1	83.1	88.7	84.4	88.9

Money/major purchases	34.8	54.0	38.1	33.0	30.5	40.7	31.1	41.4
To children:								
Visits	96.1	96.0	98.3	95.9	98.1	94.5	98.3	93.1
Food, clothes, goods	11.9	23.7	21.4	10.1	13.7	10.7	16.5	6.6
Money/major purchases	5.4	9.4	17.1	4.0	8.5	3.3	7.3	3.1
		HCMC						
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
From children:								
Visits	99.1	99.5	98.4	99.1	99.7	98.7	99.2	99.0
Food, clothes, goods	90.0	87.6	93.7	90.6	86.9	92.4	87.7	92.6
Money/major purchases	78.4	81.3	86.2	75.5	82.8	92.8	74.6	83.2
To children:								
Visits	87.1	79.0	79.2	91.5	89.3	85.1	94.2	77.7
Food, clothes, goods	38.3	30.4	32.9	43.6	48.7	30.3	51.4	21.8
Money/major purchases	33.8	22.4	28.7	40.8	44.5	25.3	41.3	24.3

Note: Visits refers only to children who do not reside with their elderly parents.

The question regarding visits refers only to children who did not reside with the respondent. Overall, more than 99 per cent of the respondents reported some level of visitation from at least one non-coresident child. Visits to such children were also fairly common throughout the northern area and the rural southern areas. Visits to children were rarer in the urban south, probably because such a large proportion of non-coresident children there were living abroad or in a different province (table 4).

Exchanges of food, clothes and other goods were fairly common both to and from elderly parents in all regions. However, exchanges of money/major purchases were far less prevalent in the Red River Delta. These differences could be due in part to interregional discrepancies in defining either the items covered by this category or the exact time-period under consideration. Nevertheless, such discrepancies also likely reflect the greater prevalence of non-familial sources of income in the Red River Delta (to be addressed below), which may render the elderly there more self-sufficient.

Sources of household and personal income

Tables 8a and 8b identify main sources of income, although the question was interpreted somewhat differently between the two surveys. One difference was in interpreting whether income from the "family farm" actually belonged to an individual family member (e.g. respondent, spouse, or child). To solve this discrepancy, tables 8a and 8b combine all sources of family support. However, a second problem is less readily solved. The northern survey asked about the most important source of income to the respondents themselves, whereas the southern survey asked about the most important source of income to the household. Thus, results between tables 8a and 8b are not directly comparable. For instance, although pensions and social welfare are far more important sources of income in the urban Red River Delta, it is difficult to determine the extent to which this is due to those respondents measuring their pensions against their personal income, or whether it is due to regional differences in the prevalence or size of pensions.

Table 8a: Main source of Vietnamese elderly respondents' income (among all sources of their personal income)

	Total	**Region**			**Sex**		**Age**	
		Hanoi	**Town**	**Rural/b**	**Male**	**Female**	**60-69**	**70+**
Northern area: Red River Delta								
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family - total	66.4	23.7	22.9	73.7	63.8	68.1	67.1	65.2
Includes respondent, spouse, children, family farm								
Non-family - total	33.6	76.3	77.1	26.3	36.2	31.9	32.9	34.8
Pensions	22.8	68.6	72.0	14.4	28.9	18.4	27.2	17.1
Social welfare (invalid, poor, childless etc.)	10.5	2.9	3.7	11.7	6.7	13.2	5.0	17.3
Investment, interest or rent	0.5	4.7	1.4	0.1	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.4

Table 8b: Main source of income to household of respondent, Viet Nam

	Total	Region			Sex		Age	
		HCMC	Town	Rural	Male	Female	60-69	70+
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family - total	93.4	91.7	92.8	94.5	91.5	94.7	94.6	91.6
Includes respondent, spouse, children, family farm								
Non-family - total	6.6	8.3	7.2	5.5	8.5	5.3	5.4	8.4
Pensions	2.4	3.8	2.4	1.6	5.1	0.6	3.0	1.8
Social welfare (invalid, poor, childless etc.)	2.3	0.4	0.0	3.7	1.1	3.1	0.9	4.2
Investment, interest or rent	1.9	4.1	4.8	0.2	2.3	1.6	1.5	2.4

Note: Family contributions have been aggregated owing to differing macro-regional interpretations of sources of support from within the family. Tables 8a and 8b are separated owing to differing interpretation of main source of income - relative to respondent's or household's income.

Nevertheless, we believe these data are largely reflective of actual differences, because they seem quite comparable to those produced in other surveys. The Vietnam Living Standards Survey (1992-1993), for instance, indicated that the proportion of households receiving a pension within the previous year in the Red River Delta (22.6 per cent) was far greater than among those in the Mekong Delta or south-east region (8.1 and 4.6 per cent, respectively). This macro-regional discrepancy is likely due to the fact that contributions to pension plans in Ho Chi Minh City and environs have only accumulated since national reunification in 1975. At the very least, tables 8a and 8b suggest that in rural areas and throughout southern Viet Nam, economic support from within the family is more important than non-familial support.

Table 9: Main income contributor to household of elderly respondents, Viet Nam

	Total	Region			Sex		Age	
		Hanoi	Town	Rural	Male	Female	60-69	70+
Northern area: Red River Delta								
Respondent	28.9	24.6	32.1	28.9	32.5	26.5	33.8	23.3
Spouse	12.6	15.2	19.3	11.8	16.5	10.1	15.7	9.1
Married son	38.8	38.6	29.5	39.8	37.9	39.5	34.2	44.2
Married daughter	2.9	4.1	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	0.2	6.2
Daughter-in-law	3.0	0.9	3.9	3.0	1.3	4.1	1.6	4.5
Son-in-law	1.1	2.1	2.1	1.0	0.5	1.6	0.2	2.2
Unmarried son	3.7	10.1	6.6	2.9	1.8	4.9	6.2	0.8
Unmarried daughter	6.8	2.9	1.0	7.7	6.0	7.4	7.9	5.6
Others	1.9	1.5	2.3	1.9	0.4	3.0	0.1	4.0
Nobody	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
		HCMC						
Southern area: HCMC + 6 provinces								
Respondent	20.8	10.1	18.1	27.2	27.3	16.2	28.0	12.3
Spouse	9.3	4.1	9.6	12.1	13.1	6.6	10.9	7.3
Married son	30.1	38.1	24.1	26.8	26.7	32.6	24.8	36.5
Married daughter	11.2	16.4	15.7	7.6	7.7	13.5	9.8	12.9
Child-in-law	1.4	1.5	2.4	1.2	0.9	2.0	0.7	2.6
Unmarried son	13.7	14.9	14.5	12.9	15.3	12.5	17.4	9.2
Unmarried daughter	6.3	7.1	9.6	5.3	5.1	7.2	6.3	6.3
Others	7.1	7.8	6.0	7.0	4.0	9.4	2.2	12.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 9 is less ambiguous with regard to cross-regional differences. It identifies which particular person in the household contributed most of the household's income. In rural areas, there was no great difference between the macro-regions in terms of dependence on children. However, there was a difference in urban areas; in Hanoi and provincial towns of the Red River Delta, the income of the respondents or their spouse was distinctly more likely to be the main contribution than was the case in elderly households in Ho Chi Minh City and adjoining urban

townships. Among those dependent on children, the contributions of married sons were everywhere most predominant. They were particularly predominant (as one might surmise based on table 5) in the Red River Delta, where they outweighed the importance from all other child types combined by nearly a 2:1 margin.

Conclusion

In this initial report from two regional surveys on Viet Nam's elderly population, we presented only some very basic results. However, we think that two general findings are noteworthy and have potentially important implications for public policy in Viet Nam.

First, the family remains the most important source of social security for elderly Vietnamese. A large majority of all elderly in our surveys (almost three-fourths of those in the Red River Delta and over four-fifths of those in HCM City and environs) reside with at least one adult child, and most of the rest have adult children living next door or nearby. Other evidence suggests that the small minority who appear to live in isolation from children or adult relatives are indeed particularly vulnerable. Considerably higher proportions of these respondents compared with others reported that their economic situation was worse than that of their peers and that their health was not good (results not shown). However, persons who did not live with or near a child, who did not see a child frequently, and who lived alone or only with a spouse or underage relative constituted only 5-6 per cent of the elderly respondents in the two surveys.

Second, patterns in household structure and sources of economic support reveal a strong patrilineal system. Married sons (non-eldest, in particular) play a particularly crucial role in the welfare and care of elderly parents. This makes sense, given the dominant norm under which daughters move out of their natal households upon marriage (Goodkind and Fricke, 1997). This pattern is particularly pronounced in rural areas and among the male elderly, but the most notable social differential in patrilineality is between the Red River Delta and HCM City and its adjoining provinces. We hypothesize that this difference largely reflects Viet Nam's geographical proximity to two broad regional areas characterized by distinct family systems. The Vietnamese have migrated southward from the Red River Delta, which borders the East Asian region where patrilineality has traditionally predominated, to areas adjacent to South-East Asia where bi-lateral systems are more common.

Two sets of questions with policy relevance emerge from our study. First, since Viet Nam's fertility has been falling sharply recently, there will be a future decline in available care-givers. Findings from other countries in the Asian region suggest that the impact of reduced numbers of children on the welfare of the elderly may be more modest than is typically assumed as long as there is at least one child to take responsibility (Jiang, 1994; Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992; Knodel, Saengtienchai and Obiero, 1995; see also article on the Philippines in this issue, pages 17-34). For example, elderly persons with only two children, and sometimes even only one child, have been observed to be almost as likely to coreside as those with many children. This appears to be true in Viet Nam as well. According to both the northern and southern surveys, almost four out of five elderly persons with just one or two children lived with a child (results not shown). This is somewhat reassuring in light of Viet Nam's official population policy advocating that couples limit their families to only one or two children (NCPFP, 1993). Nevertheless, it is also important to note that, when there are few siblings, children of elderly parents have an added responsibility falling on them compared with children from larger families.

The second set of questions relate to non-familial sources of economic support, such as pensions and social welfare. To the extent that having fewer potential care-givers for children may affect the welfare of elderly parents, such non-familial sources may become increasingly important. Are the most socially isolated (and presumably vulnerable) elderly, as identified in our surveys, most likely to be covered by social welfare? Which elderly persons have been most adversely affected by the recent free-market reforms, and for those that have, was this due to familial or non-familial factors?

In addition, our findings of substantial regional variation in non-familial support raise other questions. For instance, the proportion of elderly in the Red River Delta that receive pensions and social welfare are higher than their southern counterparts. The elderly in the southern part of the country, in addition to this lack of non-familial support, were less likely to name themselves or their spouses as the main persons contributing to family income. Does this pattern imply that the southern elderly are more dependent on their children than those in the Red River Delta? Or, given the lower overall level of household earnings in the Red River Delta compared with those in and around HCM City (not shown), are the former required to work harder in order to make up for macro-regional differences in earnings? And if so, is that greater workload associated with ill health? These and many other questions of importance for guiding social policy as Viet Nam experiences the ageing of its population (as a consequence of the demographic transition) can best be addressed on the basis of careful analysis of systematically collected empirical data. We believe the present analysis of the two surveys of the Vietnamese elderly serves as a useful step in this direction.

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Endnotes

The central area of Viet Nam (trung bo) is not represented at all in our surveys. Ho Chi Minh Cith and Hanoi are provinces that contain both urban and rural sectors. When we refer to Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi in this article, we refer only to the urban sectors of each province. Fuller descriptions of the sampling and survey methodology are described in Truong and others, forthcoming; Bui, forthcoming.

A full discussion of household structure and the extent to which it relates to cultural preferences would need to consider numerous other factors and is beyond the scope of the present analysis. To mention but a few, such factors would include the relative size of older and younger generations, the extent of lateral extension, and the cost and availability of housing.

Moreover, several of the childless men classified as living alone were monks living in monasteries; thus, in reality, they did not actually live alone.

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Drawing Policy Lessons for Asia from Research on Ageing

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The ESCAP region's early attention to population ageing has built a strong foundation for future efforts that can give the region leadership in innovative programme development and the utilization of sound research

Many countries in the ESCAP region, particularly in East and South-East Asia, have been at the forefront among developing and newly industrializing countries in anticipating the consequences of population ageing. They recognize that the significant changes in age structure, current and projected, brought about by their rapid declines in fertility and mortality, coupled with major advances in many dimensions of social and economic development, may put pressure on existing societal arrangements for the welfare of the elderly. They are aware of the high cost and other problems associated with social welfare programmes in the West and are seeking approaches that will provide needed support at a much lower cost, perhaps by melding current family-oriented support systems with limited new public programmes.

An indication of the precocious interest in ageing-related issues in East and South-East Asia is the large volume of conferences, research projects, books and papers on the topic since the early 1980s, although it should be mentioned that only Hong Kong and Japan had more than 10 per cent of their populations aged 60 or older as of 1990. A good overview of this early activity is presented in Phillips (1992), which contains a review of survey and related research throughout the decade by Andrews (1992). It is not possible to enumerate completely all the surveys undertaken in the region, but drawing on Andrews and other sources reveals that almost every country in the region has been subject to at least one survey, and many have had multiple investigations. A number have been part of multi-country projects. Most of these studies, however, have been single cross-sectional efforts; we can identify only four countries where a panel design has been employed. In addition to special surveys, other projects have made use of the fairly strong base of censuses, registration data and general surveys (such as periodic household and labour force surveys) to assess the status of the elderly and address a range of related issues.

Given this large number of endeavours, it is difficult to summarize their content or identify the key research and policy questions. As is common with initial efforts, many of the surveys were quite broad in subject matter. Andrews (1992), in summarizing the contents of the surveys he reviews, mentioned the following topics: basic demographic characteristics; family structure and living arrangements; formal and informal support patterns; social activities; physical and mental health status; health-care utilization; health-related behaviours; nutrition and eating habits; housing and environmental conditions; life satisfaction and level of morale and beliefs, attitudes and aspirations.1 Among these topics, it would appear that the major emphases have been on living arrangements, informal support patterns and certain dimensions of health.

The reasons for this, as suggested above, grow out of the recent demographic and socio-economic changes in the region and the implications of these changes for the welfare of the elderly and the development of appropriate policies and programmes. Throughout the region, it has been traditional for older parents to live with one or more married children in extended or joint households. Hermalin (1995), in a review of selected countries in Asia, found that in the 1980s the proportion of elderly living with children ranged between 60 and 90 per cent. A major concern has been how sensitive these arrangements are to the smaller family sizes resulting from lower fertility and to the rapid social and economic development that, in many places, has greatly increased children's levels of education, transformed the economic base from agriculture to industry and services, and fostered migration from rural areas to cities, especially among the young. A highly influential review of the relationship of development to the welfare of the elderly by Cowgill (1974) concluded that, in nearly all respects, the factors of development have tended to reduce the status of the elderly by trapping them in more traditional and less rewarding jobs, separating them from their families, and depriving them of meaningful roles through earlier retirement and lowering their social status relative to the young. Although Cowgill's theory is literally a statement about the status of the elderly over the course of the development process, analysts have sought to find evidence whether this situation holds true in Asia by studying cross-sectional surveys and contrasting the living and support arrangements of the elderly according to their education (or their children's education), urban-rural location, and other characteristics deemed to predict future trends.

Aside from Cowgill, concerns about the status of the current elderly also grow quite naturally from recognition that, in general, the elderly have had fewer opportunities for education, have spent a good part of their lives in difficult agricultural work, and have benefited less from the growth in income, medical advances and changes in health infrastructure. Given these dynamics, it is understandable that the emphasis is on the vulnerable elderly and their social, economic and health needs, and that these would emerge as priority areas for analysts and policy makers.

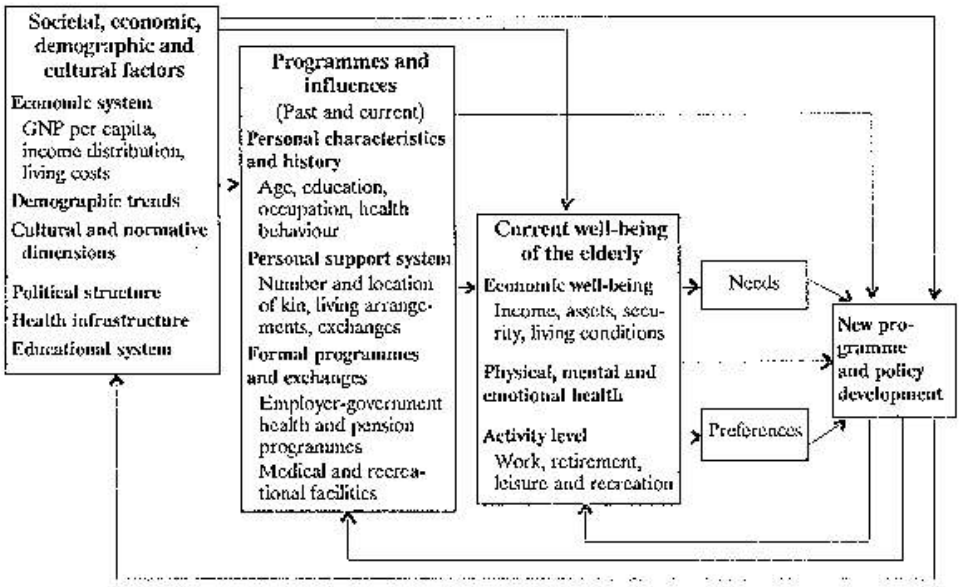
Most of the research to date on the basic aspects of living arrangements and intergenerational support have been

encouraging in the sense of revealing that, to a great extent, a high proportion of the elderly are residing with children, or have children nearby, and that family members are still frequently providing physical, financial and material support in accord with the needs of the elderly. The articles presented in this issue of the Asia-Pacific Population Journal, and elsewhere, demonstrate in a sense that there is no quickly evolving crisis in terms of the elderly, as a result of recent demographic and socio-economic changes, that requires immediate action. As a result, policy makers have an opportunity to develop a more "nuanced approach" to the emerging issues and to fashion research and programmes that will meet the intermediate and longer term needs of their populations. In the following sections we outline some considerations that might assist this development.

Developing a conceptual framework for policy and research

Both policy and research are guided by a conceptualization -- implicit or explicit -- of the nature of the phenomena of interest and how they are interrelated to other elements in society. The advantage of an explicit conceptual framework is that it can help to organize research and policy efforts. From a research standpoint, a framework helps to identify the appropriate questions and the methods and measures needed to address them. It can reveal gaps in knowledge and identify potential explanatory factors that must be incorporated into the research design.

Conceptual framework of factors affecting well-being of the elderly and policy formation



Well-executed research contributes, of course, directly to sound policy by measuring the level and nature of problem areas, and the factors that give rise to them. In addition, the conceptual framework itself serves to identify the range of potential responses to an issue and to alert policy makers to possible unintended consequences of new policies.

The figure on the facing page presents a broad framework of factors affecting the well-being of the elderly and policy formation. It builds on earlier frameworks (e.g. Hermalin, 1995) to emphasize the emerging areas of research and the corresponding policy considerations. The central focus of interest is the well-being of the elderly, which is viewed as consisting of three broad dimensions: their economic well-being; their physical, mental and emotional health; and their activities, incorporating their degree of attachment to the labour force, as well as the nature and level of their leisure and recreation.

To the left of these dimensions of well-being are two sets of determinants, differentiated according to their degree of proximity. At the far left are the more remote, broad societal factors which set the boundaries within which the more proximate policies, programmes and influences operate (shown in the second rectangle). These exogenous social, economic, demographic and cultural factors influence the personal characteristics of the elderly, the number and location of kin, the living arrangements of the elderly and their interpersonal support systems, and the formal arrangements through employers or government programmes which impinge quite directly on the dimensions of well-being.

Before addressing the right-hand side of the figure, it is worth noting that the focus on the three dimensions of well-being -- economic, health and activity -- as key dependent variables represents a break, to a degree, with prior conceptualizations which often focused on living arrangements and exchanges as key outcomes. As noted above, living arrangements were often selected as a prime indicator of well-being and as a possible predictor of future

changes for several reasons. In many of the agricultural societies of Asia, as elsewhere, parents would traditionally coreside with one or more married children and be supported by them. Elderly people living alone were assumed to be under threat of insufficient material and emotional support. Since indicators of living arrangements are often available from censuses and in many surveys, it was tempting to focus on this measure to appraise the well-being of the elderly and anticipate future trends.

This stage of theory and research is being supplemented by a more nuanced perspective which views the well-being of the elderly in the context of social, economic and demographic trends, and takes into account a wide variety of changes occurring at the individual, family and societal levels. One implication of this broader perspective is that living arrangements, along with other aspects of the support system, are more properly viewed as determinants, often highly influential, of the dimensions of well-being rather than primary measures. This formulation makes it possible to give greater attention to emerging changes in social arrangements occurring along with social and economic development. For example, with increases in income, the absence of coresidence may signify a greater preference for privacy and independence on the part of parents and children and the means to achieve this. Or, coresidence may signify support flowing from the elderly parents to their children and grandchildren in the form of child care, shopping and meal preparation rather than assistance to the older generation. One major research and policy implication, discussed further below, is that we must distinguish between the form and function of familial arrangements, and not infer the content from the structure.

In fashioning new programmes and policies related to population ageing, or amending old ones, governments and other relevant organizations will be guided to a large extent by the perceived needs and preferences of the elderly, which are shown separately in the figure. These have been added to draw attention to the logical distinction between measuring the objective status of the elderly and inferring what this means for appropriate policies and programmes. In some cases, of course, the connection between status and policy may be quite direct, as in the case of those with physical limitations and the lack of assistance or aids; in others, there must be further assessment of needs and preferences to adequately inform policy. Do those not working prefer leisure, or would they prefer some degree of gainful employment? How is the adequacy of a certain amount of income or quality of housing to be assessed? In formulating policy, questions of this nature must be addressed implicitly or explicitly. In thinking about the changing needs of the elderly, it is natural to focus first on changes in health or economic security that arise from personal circumstances. But it is important to keep in mind policies and programmes that may have sizable indirect effects. For example, a monetary policy that permitted rapid inflation might be particularly injurious to the elderly on fixed -- and non-indexed -- incomes; or transportation and land-use programmes might place particular burdens on the elderly if they are not well considered.

The figure also makes clear that new policies and programmes will be informed by the broader societal setting which helps to shape goals and values, and sets the broad contours of what is culturally, politically and economically feasible, and, by the current policies and practices in force and their perceived efficacy and acceptability. It is worth noting that policy is shaped not only by the needs of the elderly but by the economic and political power that the elderly can wield in their own behalf and this dimension is coming to the fore in a number of countries.

To point out the dynamic aspect of the interrelationships, the figure also includes feedback, indicated by the arrows, from the new policies and programmes to the well-being of the elderly and the two broad sets of factors which determine well-being. The point, of course, is that policies and programmes must be continually modified in the light of changing conditions and as the effects of previous programmes are altered in interaction with other societal developments. In the following section we utilize this heuristic framework to identify some of the challenges to policy and programme development that are likely to arise as a result of population ageing.

Implications for policy and programme development

Policy makers can view the issues arising from population ageing from many different perspectives. At the most general level, the rapid growth of an older age structure projected for many countries is sometimes viewed as an "ageing problem" in itself. Given the demographic origins of this trend in low fertility, some policy makers may be tempted to seek to redress this trend by fostering somewhat higher levels of fertility. This approach overlooks several key considerations. As stated elsewhere (Hermalin, 1995): "An older aging structure should be viewed as a recent human triumph, reflecting on the one hand a regime of low fertility, due to couples' success in achieving desired small number of children, and on the other low mortality, representing gains toward a universal aspiration for longer and healthier lives". In addition, there is little evidence that a country's fertility can be readily adjusted up or down through exhortation or financial incentives (Uhlenberg, 1992). Moreover, any success in frequently shifting fertility rates can generate social and economic distortions, as societies, for example, cope with the costs of expanding schooling and training capacities after an upturn in fertility, and face the costs of excess capacity after a downturn.

From the standpoint of the figure, a sounder approach may be to consider a range of interventions, commensurate with other societal changes, that can mitigate the potential loss of productivity and higher social welfare costs that can accompany an older age structure. These include adjustments in the age of retirement, training and effective

employment of older workers, increased labour force opportunities for women, better education and training of young people, and, on the demographic front, appropriate policies for immigration and temporary foreign labour.

This array of interventions, which is by no means exhaustive, illustrates several challenges and opportunities that policy makers will face as they attend to the general issue of population ageing and specific ramifications. For most issues there is often a choice of interventions at different levels of specificity. These interventions will also differ in terms of (a) their direct and indirect effects and (b) whether there are short-run as distinct from longer run benefits (e.g. a change in retirement age is a direct intervention with likely short-run effects, whereas an overall improvement in schooling and training is more indirect and longer run perhaps in its impact on productivity).

As a consequence of current and projected trends in population ageing, many countries in the region are giving more attention to their formal pension and social security programmes, and the provision of health coverage for the elderly. In some cases there are quite well-developed programmes which are under review due to emerging needs or cost pressures; in other countries, there are partial programmes that cover selected parts of the population (e.g. government workers and those in large industries); and in still others, there is as yet very little formal development. Consequently the specific issues facing policy makers can vary considerably across the region, but all are concerned about identifying the pressing needs and providing maximum coverage and benefits commensurate with these needs in the most effective and cost-efficient manner. Towards this end policy makers face a wide range of choices as to basic types of programmes to implement and in terms of specific mechanisms.

In making decisions at the broadest level about the nature and structure of potential programmes, policy makers can of course examine the different types of programmes within their own region, which vary considerably, as a potential guide to programme development, and examine more formal analyses of the relative merits of different types of programmes, such as the World Bank treatment of pay-as-you-go vs. provident fund arrangements for social security (World Bank, 1994). Careful comparative analyses should extend beyond the region to an examination of developments in other regions. In Latin America, for example, several countries have initiated provident fund social security programmes which give individual workers considerable choice with regard to how their funds are invested and the relative success of such programmes should be carefully monitored.

Table: Prevalence of work and transfer benefits for men, by age, in the Netherlands and the United States

Age	United States				Netherlands			
		Not working				Not working		
	Working[a]	Disabi-lity transfer[b]	Employer pension[c]	Other[d]	Working[a]	Disabi-lity transfer[b]	Employer pension[c]	Other[d]
51	82.6	4.1	0.9	12.4	83.3	13.7	0.0	3.0
52	84.9	3.0	2.4	9.9	87.5	8.1	1.9	2.5
53	82.8	3.5	0.5	13.2	81.9	14.1	1.7	2.3
54	84.6	2.9	2.7	9.8	74.6	17.2	1.9	6.2
55	78.5	4.5	1.8	15.3	72.2	16.7	3.5	7.5
56	76.9	5.0	6.3	11.8	59.0	23.9	10.2	6.8
57	80.3	4.6	7.0	8.0	58.7	17.4	15.6	8.3
58	71.5	7.5	9.2	12.0	49.0	25.0	19.0	7.0
59	68.9	6.5	9.3	15.3	44.1	23.2	27.5	5.2
60	67.9	6.1	12.6	13.3	20.9	33.3	42.3	3.5
61	65.9	5.6	16.0	12.5	16.8	26.9	50.5	5.8

Source: Data from the Netherlands are weighted values of the 1993 Wave 1 CERRA Household Survey. Data from the United States are weighted values of the 1992 Wave 1 Gamma Release of the Health and Retirement Survey.
a Those who are working at the time of the interview -- 1993 in the Netherlands and 1992 in the United States.
b Those who are not working and are receiving disability transfers at the time of the interview.
c Those who are not working or receiving disability transfers but who are receiving private pension benefits at the time of interview.
d Those who are not working and receiving neither disability transfers nor private pension benefits at the time of interview.

Comparative research can reveal subtle differences in programme structure and operation that can have major cost implications. Often countries or programmes are classified into a few simple categories which mask the wide variation within each category. For example, the variation in the cost and provisions of social security and related programmes across the industrialized countries and in labour force participation often goes unnoticed in the broader focus on the implications of ageing populations on social security costs. A dramatic illustration of this variation is provided by the table on the next page, taken from Burkhauser and others (1997), which contrasts labour force

participation rates in the United States and the Netherlands for men between the ages of 51 and 61, and the sources of income for those not working. The data show that, while employment rates are similar in the two countries at ages 51 through 53, they diverge sharply thereafter: by age 61, less than 17 per cent of men in the Netherlands are still employed contrasted with 66 per cent in the United States at that age. The authors argue that differences in institutional arrangements -- the generous disability system and the mandated employer pensions in the Netherlands -- rather than differences in health status are mainly responsible for the observed differences. This contrast highlights the importance of giving careful attention to the precise structuring of a programme as well as to the mode of enforcement when developing new plans and programmes, since political constraints can often make it difficult to sharply remodel a programme once it is in operation.

In addition to devising and maintaining appropriate social security and health programmes, policy makers need to give attention to many characteristics of the elderly and their implications for programme and policy development. These are summarized in the figure by the three classes of dependent variables -- economic well-being; physical, mental and emotional health; and work, retirement and leisure. The needs and preferences arising from these dimensions have many programmatic implications, including income maintenance, personal care assistance, nursing home and day care centre provision, and number of geriatric health care workers needed. In working out these implications, several research related considerations arise.

First, as noted above, it is important in formulating policy to distinguish form from function in terms of family structure and relationships. With increasing incomes and supply of housing, elderly parents and children may choose to live apart to gain more space and privacy, but this may not imply any diminution in levels of material or emotional support. Programmes that are generated on the basis of these trends on the assumption that they indicate growing isolation or vulnerability of the elderly may be wasteful and overlook more pressing needs on the dimensions of well-being. To be properly informed, policy makers need to utilize and encourage research that ascertains the preferences of the elderly with regard to living arrangements, measures the allocation of duties within households and the two-way flows that take place between elderly parents and children, and be attentive to the location of kin not in the household, since in many places it is customary for children to live nearby even when not coresiding with parents.

This is not to suggest that policy makers should not develop programmes that influence choices in living arrangements and other behaviours which enhance the well-being of the elderly. As Chan notes in her article on pages 35-50 of this issue, Singapore provides tax incentives or housing priorities for children coresiding with or caring for elderly parents. In addition, the retirement programme in Singapore, the Central Provident Fund, contains provisions for use of accumulations for the educational expenses of children, developing expectations for later repayment and support from children. Some health plans in the region allow parents to be included as dependents under a worker's coverage, thus providing one mechanism for financing health care of the elderly in advance of the development of broader health programmes. In these and other ways, policy makers in the region have demonstrated the ability to innovate programmes that take into account emerging needs and trends but sustain desirable elements of traditional family arrangements. Continued development of programmes with these dual features can pay big dividends within the region and provide leadership to other countries facing similar issues.

Possible shifts in levels and patterns of coresidence are one manifestation of the accommodations within existing institutions that are likely to occur with on-going demographic and socio-economic changes. To develop sound policies and programmes, it is important to track the adjustments in behaviour and social relationships that families and individuals make in the face of rapid social changes. Often these give rise to special needs and/or produce groups with special vulnerabilities. Research, both quantitative and qualitative, that traces changing norms and attitudes and emerging needs can be valuable in this respect.

A second perspective important for the development of sound policy is taking account of changes over the life course as well as of changing cohorts. As the figure suggests, the well-being of the elderly is partially a function of their characteristics, and earlier behaviours, as well as their familial and social networks. This means that programmes can seek to affect later well-being through interventions at various stages of the life-cycle. For example, a programme that discourages smoking at younger ages can produce better health and reduce health costs at older ages. A job retraining programme for workers as they age can keep older workers productively involved in the labour force for longer periods.

The time dimension also arises in recognizing that future cohorts of the elderly are likely to be very different in their characteristics compared with current cohorts because of the demographic and socio-economic changes that have taken place throughout the region. On average, they will be better educated, more urban, with smaller families, and probably with better overall health than current cohorts of elderly persons. These differences must be accounted for in fashioning programmes that will extend into the future. Future needs and demands from the elderly for recreation, medical facilities, transportation and housing may look quite different than they do currently.

Policy makers need to encourage research that provides detailed insights for sound decision-making. As the figure suggests, the three dimensions of well-being cover a wide range of characteristics and statuses, from levels of

cognitive impairment to levels of assets, and these are interrelated in many ways. It is obvious that the income of older people can affect their health, and that labour force activity will have an impact on income. But the system is complex and there are subtle problems of cause and effect. Income can affect health; but to what extent does poor health affect income and asset accumulation? Coresidence with children may promote physical and emotional health, but poor health may be a cause of coresidence. To develop sound policy, it is important to understand these and other subtle interrelationships.

These considerations point to two important criteria for effective research on ageing. One is the need for surveys and related data-collection efforts that contain all the factors of interest -- that is, studies of sufficient breadth so that key interrelationships across different domains can be examined. The second critical element is the need for longitudinal data. It is doubtful that we can sort out all the key cause-and-effect relationships without longitudinal information, and given the subtlety of the information needed, this usually points to a panel design with reinterviews rather than reliance on retrospective reporting, although some histories can and should be obtained.

Summary

This review has focused on the interface between policy and research. It has noted some of the ways existing research can inform policy; it has listed several of the challenges facing the formation of sound policy and programmes in the years ahead; and it has identified the kinds of future research needed to provide continuing guidance for policy development.

Research to date on levels of coresidence, availability of kin and levels of support from children are reassuring in demonstrating that there is not a rapid shift away from familial support that requires major programmatic attention. Policy makers thus have time to focus on emerging and longer range needs, and to utilize current and future research in developing appropriate programmes. Several types of research that can contribute to these goals have been illustrated. In addition, policy makers have a responsibility to encourage sound research that will serve both to advance knowledge and inform programme development. In this context, a number of criteria for guiding research have been advanced in this article.

The ESCAP region's early attention to population ageing has built a strong foundation for future efforts that can give the region leadership in innovative programme development and the utilization of sound research.

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Endnote

It is notable that one topic not included in this list is work and retirement. Although many of the surveys contain some current information on labour force participation, Andrews is undoubtedly correct that the topic of work, wealth and retirement, as it has been studied in the West, has been largely absent from most Asian studies to date.

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