

NAVIGATING AGING AND HEALTH WITH LIMITED FAMILY TIES

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POLICY RESPONSES

06-07 FEBRUARY 2025



Navigating Aging and Health with Limited Family Ties: Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Responses

Family ties play a vital role in facilitating various types of intra- and inter-generational transfers, including economic, instrumental, social, emotional, and care support. These ties are consistently linked to the health and well-being of older adults worldwide. However, recent demographic shifts—such as population aging, below-replacement fertility, and increased migration—alongside social, economic, and technological changes, have reshaped family structures and dynamics for current and future cohorts of older persons. Consequently, researchers are increasingly focusing on phenomena such as solo-living older adults, childless aging, “kinlessness”, sole family survivorship, elder orphans, and late-life friendships. As global trends toward smaller families and longer lifespans persist, there is an urgent need for additional empirical studies and theoretical development in this field.

This international workshop brings together empirical research examining the complex dimensions of aging with limited family ties and their implications for care support, health, and well-being of older adults. Contributions cover a wide range of geographic regions, including East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania, North America, Latin America, Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring a truly global perspective. The presentations feature research with diverse methodological approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies, with both single-country and cross-national comparisons. The proceedings from this international workshop will contribute to a special issue of *Social Science & Medicine* on the same theme.

The topics addressed include:

- Trends in limited kin availability (e.g., childlessness, kinlessness, sole family survivorship, one-child families, lifelong singlehood, solo living) and implications for health and well-being
- Long-term care, dementia care, and end-of-life care for older adults with restricted family ties
- Alternative support systems and innovations in care for older adults with minimal kin connections.
- The roles of social integration and social networks in supporting older adults with limited family ties and their implications for later-life health.

WORKSHOP CONVENORS/GUEST EDITORS:

- **Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan** | Department of Sociology and Anthropology & Centre for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore
- **Christine A. Mair** | Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health & Center for Health and Equity, and Aging, University of Maryland Baltimore County

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
6 Feb 2025 (Thursday)	9:00 – 9:30	REGISTRATION
	9:30 – 10:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	10:00 – 11:20	PANEL 1 – KIN AVAILABILITY AND HEALTH OUTCOMES I
	11:20 – 11:35	REFRESHMENT BREAK
	11:35 – 12:30	PANEL 2 – LIMITED FAMILY TIES, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL ISOLATION
	12:30 – 13:45	LUNCH BREAK
	13:45 – 15:05	PANEL 3 – CARE SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG THOSE WITH LIMITED KIN
	15:05 – 15:20	REFRESHMENT BREAK
	15:20 – 16:20	PANEL 4 – CHILDLESSNESS AND END-OF-LIFE CARE AND PREPARATION
	16:20 – 16:30	RECAP & END OF DAY 1
7 Feb 2025 (Friday)	9:30 – 10:00	REGISTRATION
	10:00 – 11:20	PANEL 5 – KIN AVAILABILITY AND HEALTH OUTCOMES II
	11:20 – 11:35	REFRESHMENT BREAK
	11:35 – 12:55	PANEL 6 – LIMITED CLOSE KIN AND LONG-TERM CARE
	13:00 – 14:30	LUNCH BREAK
	14:30 – 16:00	CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION
	16:00 – 16:15	CLOSING REMARKS & END OF DAY 2
18:00 – 20:00	WORKSHOP DINNER	

THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2025

9:30 – 10:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan <i>National University of Singapore</i> Christine A. Mair <i>University of Maryland Baltimore County</i>
10:00 – 11:20	PANEL 1 – KIN AVAILBILTY AND HEALTH OUTCOMES I
<i>Chairperson</i>	Vincent Chua <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>10:00</i>	Sole Family Survivorship, Kinlessness, and the Mental and Physical Health of Older Adults in the United States
<i>Online</i>	Susan L. Brown* <i>Bowling Green State University</i> I-Fen Lin <i>Bowling Green State University</i> Francesca A. Marino <i>Bowling Green State University</i> Kagan A. Mellencamp <i>Indiana University</i>
<i>10:15</i>	Sonlessness and Childlessness in India: Implications of Childlessness and Gender Composition of Children on Psychological Well-Being in Older Adulthood
	Kriti Vikram* <i>National University of Singapore</i> Jinhan Liu <i>National University of Singapore</i> Suhyoon Choi <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<i>10:30</i>	Being and Becoming Spouseless in Later Life: Social Support and Participation as Moderators of Psychological Well-Being across Marital Status and Spousal Transitions
	Wen-Chiung Chang <i>National Institute of Chinese Medicine</i> Shiau-Fang Chao* <i>National Taiwan University</i> Hui-Chuan Hsu <i>Taipei Medical University</i> Ju-Ping Lin <i>National Taiwan Normal University</i>
<i>10:45</i>	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
11:20 – 11:35	REFRESHMENT BREAK
11:35 – 12:30	PANEL 2 – LIMITED FAMILY TIES, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL ISOLATION
<i>Chairperson</i>	Dahye Kim <i>Hong Kong Baptist University</i>
<i>11:35</i>	Family Ties, Loneliness, and Social Isolation Among Older Australians
	Pei-Chun Ko* <i>Monash University</i> Barbara Barbosa Neves <i>University of Sydney</i> Rosanne Freak-Poli <i>Monash University</i>
<i>11:50</i>	Lack of Nuclear Family Ties, Friendship, and Risk of Social Isolation: Diverse Patterns and Inconsistencies Across 27 Countries
	Christine A. Mair <i>University of Maryland Baltimore County</i>
<i>12:05</i>	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:30 – 13:45	LUNCH BREAK

13:45 – 15:05		PANEL 3 – CARE SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG THOSE WITH LIMITED KIN
<i>Chairperson</i>		Mu Zheng <i>National University of Singapore</i>
13:45		Navigating Aging with Limited Kin in China: The Role of Education in Family Support Networks Sha Jiang* <i>Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research</i> Haili Liang <i>South China University of Technology, China</i> Diego Alburez-Gutierrez <i>Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research</i> Emilio Zagheni <i>Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research</i>
14:00		The Evolution of Support Networks for Childless Older Men in a Remote Mountainous Village in Northern China Wenqian Xu* <i>Lund University</i> Chunyan Kong <i>Fudan University</i> Fang Zhao <i>Fudan University</i>
14:15		Sociocultural and Political Activities as Support Mechanisms to Unhealthy Older Adults Whose Adult Children Migrate Abroad in South-East Nigeria Samuel Obinna Ebimngbo <i>University of Nigeria</i>
14:30		QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:05 – 15:20		REFRESHMENT BREAK
15:20 – 16:20		PANEL 4 – CHILDLESSNESS AND END-OF-LIFE CARE AND PREPARATION
<i>Chairperson</i>		Hu Shu <i>Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>
15:20		Estate and Advance Care Planning of Older Adults on Their Own in the United States: Are Unmarried and Childless Persons Less Prepared for the End-Of-Life? Deborah Carr* <i>Boston University</i> Sinae Choi <i>University of Alabama</i>
15:35		Advance Care Planning Among Childless Middle-Aged and Older Adults: Evidence from Singapore Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan* <i>National University of Singapore</i> Dahye Kim <i>Hong Kong Baptist University</i> Pearlyn Neo <i>National University of Singapore</i> Christine Ho <i>Singapore Management University</i>
15:50		QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
16:20 – 16:30		RECAP & END OF DAY 1

**denotes presenter*

FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2025

10:00 – 11:20	PANEL 5 – KIN AVAILBILTY AND HEALTH OUTCOMES II
<i>Chairperson</i>	Shannon Ang <i>Nanyang Technological University</i>
10:00	Family Status and Mortality Among Older Adults in Brazil
<i>Online</i>	Nekehia T. Quashie* <i>University of Rhode Island</i> Flavia C.D. Andrade <i>University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign</i> Joseph L. Saenz <i>Arizona State University</i> Daniella P. Nunes <i>University of Campinas</i>
10:15	Living Alone and Patterns of Health-Seeking Behavior Among Older Adults in Indonesia Timothy Low* <i>National University of Singapore</i> Muh Ulil Absor <i>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga</i> Biyang Yang <i>National University of Singapore</i> Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:30	Shifting Preferences for Aging in Place: The Role of Health and Kin Availability Among Older Adults in South Korea Jung-Hwa Ha* <i>Seoul National University</i> Mancy Pai <i>Kent University</i>
10:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
11:20 – 11:35	REFRESHMENT BREAK
11:35 – 12:55	PANEL 6 – LIMITED CLOSE KIN AND LONG-TERM CARE
<i>Chairperson</i>	Feng Qiushi <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:35	Who Cares? Long-Term Care Needs for Older Adults with Limited Kin Ties in Hong Kong Yuying Tong <i>Chinese University of Hong Kong</i>
11:50	Gender and Long-Term Care in the Context of Limited Close Kin: Evidence from Older Persons in Thailand Wiraporn Pothisiri <i>Chulalongkorn University</i> Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan <i>National University of Singapore</i> Orawan Prasitsiriphon* <i>Chulalongkorn University</i>
12:05	Mining Time to Care for a Partner in Later Life: Differences Between Childless Individuals and Parents in Europe Marco Albertini <i>University of Bologna</i>
12:20	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:55 – 14:30	LUNCH BREAK
14:30 – 16:00	CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION (for speakers and chairpersons)
16:00 – 16:15	CLOSING REMARKS
	Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan <i>National University of Singapore</i> Christine A. Mair <i>University of Maryland Baltimore County</i>
18:00 – 20:00	WORKSHOP DINNER (for invited guests)

**denotes presenter*

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

GUIDELINES FOR WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS (6-7 FEBRUARY)

- **PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR PRESENTATIONS TO christine_mair@umbc.edu BY 5 FEBRUARY.**
- Presenters should plan for a 15-minute presentation.
- Presentations should include all relevant paper sections (background/motivation, research questions/aims, data and methods, results, and discussion/conclusions).
- If you have any updates to your presentation after 5 February, please either email the updated presentation to Christine Mair, or bring the updated copy on a flash drive.

GUIDELINES FOR DRAFT MANUSCRIPTS

- Please prepare manuscripts consistent with [author guidelines of *Social Science & Medicine*](#).
- Drafts should be 5,000-7,000 words including abstract, main text, tables, figures, and references.
- Drafts should include a 250-word abstract that briefly states the purpose of your research, principal results, and major conclusions while avoiding citations or abbreviations.
- Please include a title page that includes title, authors and affiliations, and 1-7 key words.
- The main text of the article should include clearly defined sections and use subheadings.
- SSM does not require a specific citation style, but all citations should list the last name of the author(s) and the year of publication. Publications with 3+ authors should list the 1st author's last name followed by "et al." and the year of publication. When listing multiple citations in the text, please arrange them either alphabetically or chronologically.
- Please review [SSM's policy on the use of generative AI and AI-assisted tools](#).
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**Sole Family Survivorship, Kinlessness, and the Mental and Physical Health
of Older Adults in the United States**

Susan L. Brown*, *Bowling Green State University*

I-Fen Lin, *Bowling Green State University*

Francesca A. Marino, *Bowling Green State University*

Kagan A. Mellencamp, *Indiana University*

Older adults are increasingly kinless, meaning they lack a spouse/partner and children. At the same time, sole family survivorship, which refers to lacking family of origin kin, namely parents and siblings, also rises markedly with age. Roughly 13% of American adults aged 55+ are sole family survivors and 6.6% are kinless. Kinless older adults are disproportionately sole family survivors, underscoring the double burden of kinlessness. Familial ties are linked to health across the life course but play an increasingly salient role with age. Consequently, sole family survivors and kinless older adults may face worse health outcomes than their counterparts with kin. Drawing on 184,494 person-waves of data from the 1998-2018 Health and Retirement Study, we assess how sole family survivorship and kinlessness status are individually and jointly associated with several health outcomes: self-rated health, depressive symptoms, chronic conditions, and (instrumental) activities of daily living (ADL/IADL) limitations. Analyses are conducted separately by gender for adults aged 55 and older. Our bivariate findings indicate that for women, sole family survivorship is negatively associated with self-rated health and positively related to depressive symptoms, chronic conditions, and ADL/IADL limitations. The same pattern obtains for kinlessness and health among women. Among men, sole family survivorship is related to poorer health outcomes on all dimensions except depressive symptoms. Kinlessness among men is related to worse outcomes on all dimensions except chronic conditions. For women and men alike, we find that across some dimensions of health, a double burden emerges for those who are both sole family survivors and kinless compared with those facing only one type of kinlessness. We will conduct multivariable analyses to determine whether these patterns persist net of sociodemographic factors related to kinlessness and health. Our study demonstrates the utility of examining multiple forms of kinlessness which have distinct ramifications for older adult well-being.

Presenter's bio: Susan L. Brown is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Bowling Green State University. She is Director of the Center for Family and Demographic Research and Co-Director of the National Center for Family & Marriage Research. A family demographer, her research addresses union dynamics and their consequences for health and well-being across the life course. Her research has been supported by a career development award from NICHD as well as grants from NIA. She is the author of *Families in America*, published by the University of California Press.

Sonlessness and Childlessness in India: Implications of Childlessness and Gender Composition of Children on Psychological Well-Being in Older Adulthood

Kriti Vikram*, *National University of Singapore*

Jinhan Liu, *National University of Singapore*

Suhyoon Choi, *National University of Singapore*

Objectives: With global fertility decline and increased life expectancy, the effects of childlessness on well-being in later adulthood have garnered significant attention. Emerging research suggests that a consequence of this fertility decline is an increase in families with children of only one gender—either only sons or only daughters. In patrilineal India, the experience of parenthood, particularly the birth of sons, confers considerable emotional, economic, and social benefits. In contrast, daughters may offer limited benefits to parents in the form of economic and instrumental support due to practices such as patrilocal exogamy, the dowry system and low rates of female labour force participation. Lastly, those who remain childless often encounter social challenges and stigmatization. Given this context, the lack of research on how childlessness and the gender composition of children affect psychological well-being in mid- and later life is surprising. This study addresses this research gap by examining the effects of the number and gender composition of children on psychological well-being in India.

Methods: Utilizing data from the first wave of the Longitudinal Aging Study in India (LASI, 2017-2018), which surveyed 63,774 Indian adults aged 45 and older, this study employs ordinary least squares regression models to analyze how the number and gender composition of children influence individuals' levels of depression, loneliness, and life satisfaction.

Results: Compared to having both son(s) and daughter(s), childlessness is associated with higher levels of depression and loneliness as well as lower levels of life satisfaction in mid- and later life for both men and women. Having only daughter(s) exerts similarly adverse effects on psychological well-being, particularly among women. However, no significant differences are observed between having only son(s) and having both son(s) and daughter(s). These observed associations hold regardless of children's coresidence status. The specific number of sons or daughters also does not alter these associations. For women, the absence of sons – whether childless or having one or more daughters - consistently undermines their psychological well-being.

Discussion: This study extends prior research on the significance of family ties in late adulthood by focusing on the number and gender composition of children. The results underscore the importance of considering children's gender when evaluating individuals' well-being, especially in patriarchal societies. Moreover, it emphasizes the construed value of ties, not just their presence.

Presenter's bio: Kriti Vikram is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the deputy director of Center for Family and Population Research, National University of Singapore. Her research lies at the intersection of life course sociology, gender, family demography, and social epidemiology. The core of her work is the study of inequality, how it is generated in the early stages of the life course, and its enduring consequences. She concentrates on two vulnerable groups - women and children. Her current research focuses on the role of gender inequality in shaping women's health in low-and middle-income countries.

Being and Becoming Spouseless in Later Life: Social Support and Participation as Moderators of Psychological Well-Being across Marital Status and Spousal Transitions

Wen-Chiung Chang, *National Institute of Chinese Medicine*

Shiau-Fang Chao*, *National Taiwan University*

Hui-Chuan Hsu, *Taipei Medical University*

Ju-Ping Lin, *National Taiwan Normal University*

Background

Taiwan's population is rapidly aging; the proportion of individuals aged 65 and older reached 7% in 1993, exceeded 14% in 2018, and is projected to surpass 20% by 2025. Single older adults (including those who are widowed, divorced, or never married) account for nearly 40% of this population, comprising about 426,000 single older men and 1.124 million single older women. Given this prevalence, this study seeks to understand how different marital statuses and changes in spousal status affect the psychological well-being (PWB) of older adults. Additionally, it investigates social support (SS) and social participation (SP) as moderators of these relationships to identify modifiable strategies to sustain PWB.

Method

This study analyzed data from the Taiwan Longitudinal Survey on Aging (TLSA), a nationally representative longitudinal study. We examined participants from survey waves conducted in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019, totaling 12,731 participants. Considering the longitudinal nature of the data with repeated measurements, generalized linear mixed models (GLMM) was used to incorporate both fixed and random effects of the data.

Results

Using depressive symptoms and life satisfaction to represent PWB, this study categorized marital status into four groups: married, widowed, divorced, and never married. Additionally, spousal transitions were identified by comparing spousal status between two waves and categorized as remaining spouseless, gaining a spouse, losing a spouse, and remaining with a spouse. Bereaved individuals and those who were separated or divorced exhibited higher depression levels than married individuals. Furthermore, bereaved individuals, along with those separated, divorced, or single, reported lower life satisfaction compared to married counterparts. Individuals remaining spouseless had lower life satisfaction than those remaining with a spouse between waves. Those who lost a spouse between waves reported more depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction. SS, which includes receiving emotional support and feeling helpful to others, was associated with lower depression and higher life satisfaction among individuals remaining spouseless. The moderating effects of SP on PWB varied; work decreased life satisfaction among those who lost a spouse between waves, while volunteering enhanced life satisfaction for this same group. Conversely, providing assistance with activities of daily living reduced depressive symptoms among individuals who remained spouseless.

Discussion and Implications

Being without a spouse or becoming spouseless decreases PWB in later life. This study contributes by identifying SS and SP as coping resources that can enhance the PWB of single older adults, although their benefits vary by marital status and type of spousal transition. Additionally, the different manifestations of SS and SP provide varied benefits for depressive symptoms and life satisfaction among individuals experiencing different spousal transitions between waves, each holding distinct potential for promoting a psychologically positive late life.

Presenter's bio: Shiau-Fang Chao is a professor in the Department of Social Work at National Taiwan University and has long focused on issues related to middle-aged and older adults. Her research focused on middle-aged and older adults across four main themes. The first theme addresses the impact of environmental factors on vulnerable, disabled older adults in institutional or community settings. The second theme explores how participation in meaningful activities can support quality of life and well-being despite age-related declines. A third area applies interdisciplinary methods, such as machine learning, to analyze cognitive changes and record daily activities of retirees. The final theme investigates workplace strategies and factors that promote successful aging, aiming to foster age-friendly work environments. Through varied settings and populations, the research aims to identify mechanisms for enhancing positive aging outcomes.

Family Ties, Loneliness, and Social Isolation Among Older Australians

Pei-Chun Ko*, *Monash University*

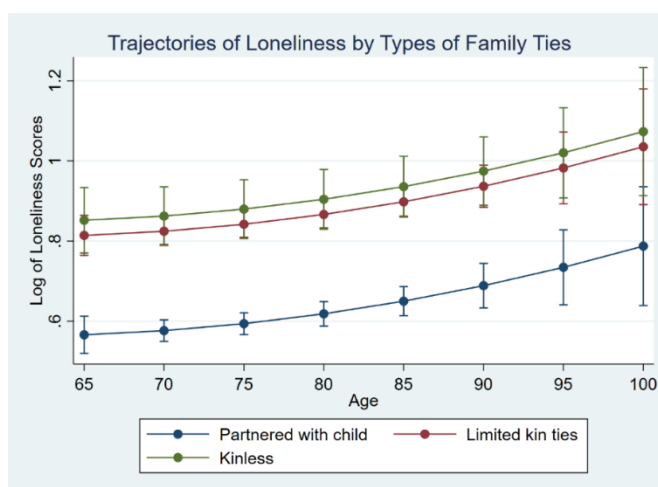
Barbara Barbosa Neves, *University of Sydney*

Rosanne Freak-Poli, *Monash University*

Family ties, especially with spouses and adult children, are central to caregiving in later life. Spouses often provide primary care, while adult children frequently offer social support and intergenerational contact. However, due to changing relationships or loss of family over the life course, a growing trend of kinless older people—i.e., those without a partner and living children—is emerging. Research shows that these individuals face poorer health and worse well-being. Yet, we still lack an understanding of how prolonged absence of family ties relates to loneliness and social isolation, and if institutional assistance can help mitigate such issues.

This article examines whether limited family ties or kinlessness influences loneliness, social isolation, and social support. Drawing on the unmet needs model, which considers family ties as key sources to fulfil older adults' needs, we analysed two samples of older Australians (65+): those living in the community and those receiving institutional long-term care support (in-home or living in a residential care home). The first sample is based on four waves of the HILDA survey (2019-2022); the second on a nationwide survey of older adults receiving long-term care support (2023-2024). We employed growth Curve models and logistic and OLS regressions, categorising family ties into: (1) those with a partner and at least one living child, (2) those with either of them, and (3) those with neither.

Findings indicate that kinless individuals in both samples were more likely to feel lonely (and over time; Figure 1), socially isolated, and less satisfied with their social support. Those in residential care reported lower loneliness and greater satisfaction with social support, but institutional care did not fully offset the negative effects of lacking family ties. This study underscores the disadvantages experienced by kinless older people, particularly regarding harmful social health issues like loneliness and social isolation.



Presenter's bio: Pei-Chun Ko is a Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. As a sociologist, she specializes in ageing and family research, focusing on productive ageing, health and life course, and intergenerational support. Her work has been published in top social science journals. She serves as an associate editor for the *Journal of Family Studies* and the *Journal of Sociology* and is the secretary and treasurer of the Family Research Committee (RC06) of the International Sociological Association. She is also a key investigator in a national evaluation for the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care.

Lack of Nuclear Family Ties, Friendship, and Risk of Social Isolation: Diverse Patterns and Inconsistencies across 27 Countries

Christine A. Mair, *University of Maryland, Baltimore County*

Social isolation is linked to higher levels of mortality and poorer health cross-nationally. Given the growing global population who lack nuclear family ties, concerns about social isolation are increasing. Yet, sociological theories of networks and integration provide conceptual distinctions between having fewer ties and being socially isolated while emphasizing potential buffering roles of close social ties—such as friends—in reducing social isolation risk. Furthermore, processes of social isolation differ by country due to contextual differences in norms about relationships. For example, cultural emphasis on familism versus individualism may dampen or boost associations between social ties and risk of social isolation. Given these complex nuances, it is unknown if and to what extent 1) lacking nuclear family ties is associated with social isolation, 2) risk of social isolation is buffered by friendship, and 3) if and how these processes differ across societies. To address these gaps, I examine social isolation (e.g., lacking companionship, feeling isolated, and feeling left out) among unpartnered and childless adults aged 45+ (N=19,250) and the buffering role of friendship across 27 countries in North America, Europe, and Asia using data from the International Social Survey Programme’s (ISSP) module on “Social Networks and Social Resources” (2017). Multilevel logistic regression results reveal that lacking partners (but not children) is associated with risk of social isolation, especially for men. Contact with friends reduces risk overall but does not substantially buffer the risks associated with being unpartnered. Patterns are not consistent across countries, however, and reveal an array of conflicting results across societies (e.g., lacking family ties is not associated with social isolation in several familistic and individualistic countries). These results are discussed considering changing family demographics, the potential future role of friendship as a source of support, and wide-ranging cross-country heterogeneity in these patterns.

Presenter’s bio: **Christine A. Mair** is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Gerontology and Director of the Center for Health, Equity, and Aging in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Her work focuses on documenting variation in older adults’ social environments (e.g., family structures and social networks) and health cross-nationally to identify options for promoting well-being among aging populations that are particularly vulnerable to social isolation.

Navigating Aging with Limited Kin in China: The Role of Education in Family Support Networks

Sha Jiang*, *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research*

Haili Liang, *South China University of Technology*

Diego Alburez-Gutierrez, *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research*

Emilio Zagheni, *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research*

For China's aging population, improving human capital through higher educational attainment is seen as a key strategy to address related socioeconomic challenges. But can educational improvements help alleviate the pressures of internal family aging and caregiving demands? This study uses demographic methods with both empirical and projection data to explore changes in kinship quantity and quality under different educational scenarios. Preliminary results suggest that higher educational attainment is associated with increased labor force participation and better health outcomes for working-age kin, while for older kin, higher education is linked to improved health but lower labor force participation. In scenarios with rapid educational advancement, the burden on healthy working-age kin supporting less healthy older relatives appears reduced. These findings suggest that educational improvements reveal changes in kin's human capital (quality), which reshape family support dynamics. Future work will employ multi-state models to explore how educational differences in fertility and mortality rates affect kinship structure (quantity).

Presenter's bio: Sha Jiang is a Research Scientist at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research with a Ph.D. in Biology from Stanford University. Her research uses demographic models and statistical analyses to examine the trends and impacts of demographic transitions, with a particular focus on how these transitions reshape kinship networks and create new challenges for public policy.

The Evolution of Support Networks for Childless Older Men in a Remote Mountainous Village in Northern China

Wenqian Xu*, *Lund University*
Chunyan Kong, *Fudan University*
Fang Zhao, *Fudan University*

Support networks are essential for the health and wellbeing of rural older adults. Childless older adults in rural areas exhibit unique support network characteristics due to the absence of children, such as reduced informal care in advanced age and early self-care planning. However, research on the evolution of support networks of childless older men—a growing demographic in rural China—remains limited. Focusing on rural childless older men in a remote mountainous village in northern China, our study explores the types of support network, how networks evolve over time, and what individual and structural factors affect network evolution. Informed by the convoys of care model (Kemp et al., 2013), this study conceptualizes support networks as dynamic and shaped by multilevel factors unique to each individual and family. Through interviews and observations, we thematically analyzed life stories of 13 childless older men, supplemented with insights from village officials. Preliminary findings suggest four types of support networks: (1) sibling-based, (2) extended kin (e.g., nephews), (3) self-care with state support, and (4) self-care alone. Typically, caregiving starts with close relatives, extends to younger kin, and may include friends or other community members, though full expansion is rare. Government-provided formal support has increased offering material and basic health services. However, as formal support strengthens, material assistance from informal networks is reduced across families, while in some cases, emotional and practical support traditionally provided by these networks is also diminished. In other cases, formal support complements family care, particularly in resource exchanges like land and housing transfers. This research also shows how childless older men’s support networks adapt to individual (e.g., life transitions) and structural factors (e.g., family culture, poverty reduction policies, and rural economy). Findings offer implications for policies addressing the care needs of rural childless older adults amid China’s economic downturn.

Presenter’s bio: **Wenqian Xu** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Department of Health Sciences, Lund University. His research interests include age-friendly environments, childless ageing, ageism, and new media technologies. He obtained his Ph.D. in Ageing and Social Change from Linköping University, supported by the EU’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. Currently, he is conducting a three-year research project on “Ageing without Children,” which has received funding from the Swedish Research Council. He served as a policy consultant for two years at World Health Organization Regional Office for Western Pacific.

**Sociocultural and Political Activities as Support Mechanisms to Unhealthy Older Adults
Whose Adult Children Migrate Abroad in South-East Nigeria**

Samuel Obinna Ebimgbo, *University of Nigeria*

Background: Nigeria has been regarded as an “important source of migration” because of the huge involvement of its citizens especially youths in international migration. Although, the accurate numbers of Nigeria’s migrants are not readily available in the official migration records consequent upon the citizens’ involvement in irregular migration and human trafficking. However, the available record shows that in 2020, about 1.7 million Nigerians migrated abroad while approximately 260,000 Nigerians especially youth sought approval to migrate overseas in 2023. Economic factors such as poverty, hunger, youth unemployment, and insecurity are responsible for the increasing migration of this sub-population. With the lack of state-sponsored support systems for Nigerian older adults, the family members especially the young family members become both the social and economic safety nets for their older parents. However, the absence of these young family members due to international migration has affected the perceived family support dynamics; thereby creating diverse challenges for the left-behind family members including poor health conditions and mortality. This study, therefore, sought to ascertain some social, cultural, and political activities as forms of social support system for the left-behind older adults.

Data Source and Methods: The Activity Theory and Social Convoy Model were used to structure the framework for the study while a descriptive phenomenological design was adopted. Older adults who are left behind (N = 25) served as the sample size for the study and were selected through purposive, snowballing, and availability sampling techniques. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used as instruments for data collection. The data set was subjected to inductive thematic analysis.

Results: Findings of the study revealed that some of the prevailing social and cultural activities including visitations, marriages, funerals, and village meetings as well as political activities such as party meetings, campaigns, and voting often serve as support mechanisms to buffer the experience of challenges occasioned by the absence of their young family members.

Conclusion: To achieve the United Nations Goals and African Union Agenda 2063, this study, therefore, suggests the need for the left-behind older family members to actively participate in some of these activities to enable them to achieve maximum life satisfaction. The Nigerian government should also implement the already approved ageing policy to ensure a high standard of living and well-being for these individuals.

Presenter’s bio: Samuel Obinna Ebimgbo holds a Ph.D. in Social Work (Social Gerontology and Migration) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He is a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Social Work, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He has his specialty in social gerontology and has published a couple of studies on the subject in refereed journals. He has attended several workshops on ageing and health as well as scientific writing. He was an Erasmus student at Julius-Maximilians University Wurzburg, Germany. He teaches courses related to the welfare of older adults in the Department and accepts crossovers from relevant policy areas.

**Estate and Advance Care Planning of Older Adults on Their Own in the United States:
Are Unmarried and Childless Persons Less Prepared for the End-Of-Life?**

Deborah Carr*, *Boston University*

Sinae Choi, *University of Alabama*

Planning for one's end-of-life health and financial needs is critical both for dying persons and the loved ones they leave behind. Advance care planning (ACP), which encompasses an advance directive and informal discussions, is an important step toward the receipt of end-of-life medical care that aligns with one's wishes. Estate planning refers to legal preparations individuals make to provide financial security to their survivors, and may include naming an executor and beneficiaries, making charitable gifts, and setting up funeral or memorial arrangements. Both ACP and estate planning are *inherently relational processes* and are associated with better psychological adjustment and family functioning among the decedent's survivors. However, it is unclear how those growing old outside of traditional marriage or who have complex childbearing histories prepare for end-of-life. Drawing on social control and gender as relational frameworks, we use data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) to explore how complex romantic partnership histories and parental statuses affect three dimensions of ACP: having a living will, appointing a DPAHC, and discussing end-of-life preferences; and one dimension of estate planning (whether one has a will). We examine the extent to which these patterns differ by gender, after adjusting for socioeconomic, health, and psychosocial factors that have been found elsewhere to affect ACP and estate planning. We find that never married, divorced, and widowed persons are more likely than their married counterparts to do ACP. The recent loss of a spouse through divorce or death also impels ACP. Childless persons have especially low rates of ACP. Widowed men and women without biological children are especially likely to do estate planning. Our results have important implications for policy and practice and contribute to a rapidly growing literature on the distinctive challenges faced by socially isolated and "kinless" older adults.

Presenter's bio: Deborah Carr is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Innovation in Social Science at Boston University. She has written extensively on inequality in old age, death and dying, bereavement, and family relationships. She has published more than 120 articles and chapters, and several books including *Aging in America* (2023), and *Golden Years? Social Inequality in Later Life* (2019). She was editor-in-chief of *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* (2015-20) and is principal investigator of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). She currently serves as editor-in-chief of *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (2023-26).

Advance Care Planning Among Childless Middle-Aged and Older Adults: Evidence from Singapore

Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan*, *National University of Singapore*

Dahye Kim, *Hong Kong Baptist University*

Pearlyn Neo, *National University of Singapore*

Christine Ho, *Singapore Management University*

Advance care planning (ACP) is essential for ensuring high-quality, cost-effective end-of-life care, typically facilitated by spouses and adult children. However, the growing number of older adults without children has been largely overlooked in ACP research. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine ACP practices and perceptions among 1,500 childless and non-childless adults aged 50+ in Singapore, a family-oriented society with one of the world's highest childlessness rates among older populations. Quantitative data from a nationwide survey is complemented by qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with a subset of respondents (N=30) to explore how childless individuals approach ACP in the absence of close kin. Findings show that fewer than one-fourth of respondents engaged in any form of ACP, despite government efforts to promote it. Childless women were significantly more likely to engage in ACP than childless men, mothers, and fathers. Strong familial ties increased the likelihood of informal ACP, while social connectedness with non-kin was associated with formal ACP. However, factors such as spousal presence and sibship size were not significantly related to ACP adoption. Qualitative data reveal diverse interpretations of ACP among childless individuals, expanding the concept beyond traditional medical directives to include health maintenance, preventive measures, insurance, and financial planning. These findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of ACP among childless Singaporeans and underscore the need for targeted policies and interventions that address the specific needs of this demographic in their end-of-life preparations.

Presenter's bio: Bussarawan "Puk" Teerawichitchainan holds joint appointments as an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and as Co-Director of the Centre for Family and Population Research at the National University of Singapore. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Washington. Her research interests focus on the intersection of family demography, social gerontology, population health, and social stratification. Her current work explores the roles of family, policy, and social structure in explaining the life course and well-being of older adults in Southeast Asia. This includes ongoing research on the long-term impacts of war and trauma exposure on the health and well-being of older Vietnamese war survivors, as well as a study on aging without children in Singapore and Thailand. She serves as a Deputy Editor of *Demography* and is on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* and *Asian Population Studies*.

Family Status and Mortality Among Older Adults in Brazil

Nekehia T. Quashie*, *University of Rhode Island*

Flavia C.D. Andrade, *University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*

Joseph L. Saenz, *Arizona State University*

Daniella P. Nunes, *University of Campinas*

Background: Brazil is rapidly aging against a background of limited social welfare and infrastructure to maximize opportunities for healthy aging. Sociocultural norms of family cohesion prevail with spouses and adult children being the primary sources of support. Traditional gendered norms also position women to have closer ties to their families over their life course, and wider sources of social support, relative to men. Declining fertility and marital transitions may threaten older adults' support systems and health raising a critical question: are there gender differences in older Brazilians' mortality risks by partnership and parenthood status?

Methods: We used the baseline data from the Brazilian Longitudinal Study of Aging (ELSI-Brazil), a nationally representative cohort study of adults 50 and older (2015-2016). We include 8007 participants with complete information on all variables in our analyses and whose deaths could be linked to Brazil's Mortality Information System to ascertain the mortality by follow-up in 2019 to 2021. Cox proportional hazard models examined the survival of men and women across four family statuses: (1) partnered with children, (2) partnered childless, (3) unpartnered with children, and (4) childless and unpartnered while controlling for demographic, physical/mental health, and health behaviors.

Results: Compared to older adults with a partner and children, women who were childless and unpartnered showed higher mortality risks (HR=1.97, 95% CI 1.19-3.26), while men unpartnered with children (HR=2.03, 95% CI 1.51-2.73) or both childless and unpartnered (HR=3.35, 95% CI 2.20-5.50) had higher mortality risks.

Discussion: Among older Brazilians, lacking both traditional family ties presents higher mortality risks for men and women, but men are also at higher mortality risk even if they lack a spouse. We discuss these findings in the context of demographic and social changes in family structure and the potential opportunities to enhance survival among older adults in Brazil.

Presenter's bio: Nekehia T Quashie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health at the University of Rhode Island (USA). Trained as a sociologist, her research is motivated by understanding how social welfare policies and socioeconomic inequality shape families' roles in social support, health, and well-being of older adults cross-nationally. Her current research investigates dimensions of family structure, support, and relationship quality, and their implications for later life health and well-being, within and across global regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America.

Living Alone and Patterns of Health-Seeking Behavior Amongst Older Adults in Indonesia

Timothy Low*, *National University of Singapore*

Muh Ulil Absor, *Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga*

Biyang Yang, *National University of Singapore*

Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan, *National University of Singapore*

Older adults often depend heavily on health services to maintain their well-being. However, low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) typically have weaker health infrastructures and older adults in these regions, due to cultural beliefs or lack of resources, often use traditional medicine or self-treatment to manage their health conditions. Yet, few studies have examined factors that determine the wide range of older adults' health-seeking behaviors in these countries. Furthermore, previous research showed mixed findings on how social relationships relate to healthcare utilization. Some studies show that social relationships encourage older adults to seek health services when they are ill, while others suggest that older adults seek social contact through the use of health services when they face social isolation. Additionally, few studies consider how social relationships influence older adults' health-seeking behavior alongside support provided by formal institutions. This raises questions on how having limited ties (i.e., living alone) would influence health-seeking behaviors for older adults in LMICs. As Indonesia is an LMIC with an aging population and greater healthcare needs, we would examine middle and older adults aged 50+ (n=8062) in Wave 5 of the Indonesia Family Life Survey (2014) to address these questions. To have a contextualized understanding of health-seeking behaviors amongst older Indonesians, we consider various dimensions of health-seeking behaviors (i.e., frequency of outpatient visits, health facilities used, purpose of outpatient visits, engagement in self-treatment) and use latent class analysis to identify different patterns of health-seeking behavior. We then employ multinomial logistic regression to examine how living alone relates to health-seeking behavior profiles, and how social transfers, health insurance and participation in social groups (i.e., rotation saving groups - *arisan*) potentially mediate this relationship. The findings could help policymakers in LMICs understand the vulnerabilities (or resilience) of older adults who live alone, guiding interventions to improve their healthcare utilization.

Presenter's bio: Timothy Low is currently a PhD student (Sociology) at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, National University of Singapore. Previously, he was a research assistant at the NUS Centre for Family and Population Research (CFPR) working on the Vietnam Health and Aging Study (VHAS). His research interest lies in health disparity, aging and social demography. He is currently interested in exploring health disparities amongst older adults within Southeast Asia countries.

**Shifting Preferences for Aging in Place:
The Role of Health and Kin Availability Among Older Adults in Korea**

Jung-Hwa Ha*, *Seoul National University*
Mancy Pai, *Kent University*

Aging in place is a key objective of community-based long-term care for older adults in Korea. However, limited research has examined whether Korean older adults' living arrangement preferences remain stable or change with declining health, or whether these preferences vary based on kin availability. This study investigates (1) if older adults' preferred living arrangements differ depending on health status (i.e., when healthy versus when ill) and (2) the impact of childlessness on these preferences. Analyses draw on 2023 data from the National Survey of Older Koreans (NSOK), a nationally representative cross-sectional study of Koreans aged 65 and older conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs. Results show that while 89.7% of participants preferred to live at home when healthy, only 49.4% maintained this preference if their health were to decline. Childless older adults were less likely to prefer their own home when healthy, but childlessness had no significant effect on preferences when health declined. These findings suggest that while living arrangement preferences are influenced by health status, kin availability does not necessarily determine preferences for aging in place as health deteriorates. This shift highlights the importance of early identification of care needs to support smoother transitions in living arrangements as individuals age. The findings also suggest a potential need for policymakers to adjust long-term care strategies, challenging traditional reliance on family caregiving and calling for more robust community-based alternatives that serve both childless individuals and those with family support.

Presenter's bio: Jung-Hwa Ha is a professor in the Department of Social Welfare at Seoul National University in South Korea. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Work and Sociology from the University of Michigan. Ha's research interests encompass various aspects of older adults' social relationships and support, stress and coping, bereavement, end-of-life care, and dementia care.

Who Cares? Long-Term Care Needs for Older Adults with Limited Kin Ties in Hong Kong

Yuying Tong, *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

Rooted in both traditional Chinese culture and deficient institutional care, “aging in place” has been a longstanding government policy in Hong Kong. However, this policy faces challenges due to sociodemographic trends where older adults increasingly lack kinship ties in Hong Kong. On the one hand, the decline in fertility has resulted in more older adults having fewer or no children. On the other hand, waves of emigration have caused many older adults to have fewer or no children residing in Hong Kong. These trends pose significant challenges for those requiring long-term care (LTC).

Against this backdrop, this study aims to address two research questions. First, what are the actual care deficits and patterns of care sources for older adults without immediate access to adult children within their households? Second, what are the social norms and expectations regarding where to seek caregivers and long-term care plans for those with limited social ties locally?

To address the first question, we will use the most recent population census data from Hong Kong in 2021 to examine caregiver deficits and the primary sources of care for older adult-alone households compared to multiple generational households. We will also analyze how these patterns vary by social class and gender. For the second question, we will conduct a small-scale online Factorial Survey Experiment (FSE) to explore the key factors considered when seeking caregivers and long-term care plans for individuals with limited kinship ties in Hong Kong.

Preliminary findings from the Hong Kong census data show that care deficit tends to be the case in older adult-alone households, especially for female older adults who do not have spouses. In contrast, adult children tend to be the primary caregivers to older adults who are in need of LTC. Domestic helpers play a significant role as the primary givers for LTC in households without adult children. Our study will enhance understanding of the challenges faced by Hong Kong society due to low fertility and high childlessness and emigration rates, providing valuable insights for government policy recommendations.

Presenter’s bio: Yuying Tong is a professor in the Sociology Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She obtained her PhD in Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), where she spent most of her time as a Pre-doc trainee at the Carolina Population Center (CPC). Her research areas include cross-social demography, migration and immigration, family and life course, gender disparity, and population health/well-being. Currently, she is the director of the Centre for Chinese Family Studies (CCFS), Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. She is also the Assistant Dean (Research) for the Faculty of Social Science at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

**Gender and Long-Term Care in the Context of Limited Close Kin:
Evidence from Older Persons in Thailand**

Wiraporn Pothisiri, *Chulalongkorn University*

Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan, *National University of Singapore*

Orawan Prasitsiriphon*, *Chulalongkorn University*

In Thailand, where cultural norms favor family-based model of care, demographic changes—such as declining birth rates, increased singlehood, childlessness, and migration—are leaving more older Thais without care support from immediate family members. This is particularly challenging in the context of low- and middle-income countries like Thailand where formal long-term care (LTC) options remain very limited. Using data from the 2021 Survey of Older Persons in Thailand (SOPT), along with earlier waves of SOPT (2007-2017), this study examines trends and determinants of LTC receipt among older Thais facing diverse configurations of limited kin support. Given significant gender disparities in longevity, health trajectories, and social relationships, we further investigate the gender dynamics of limited close kin availability and LTC receipt.

Our findings suggest that aging with limited close kin has become increasingly common over the past 15 years, primarily driven by geographical dispersion of family members due to children’s outmigration and smaller family sizes. In recent years, actual childlessness and non-marriage have also contributed to this trend, with the percentage of kinless older Thais rising from 4% in 2007 to 6% in 2021. Among those with LTC needs, three quarters receive support, with kin availability playing a critical role in access to care. Having at least one coresident or nearby child significantly increases the likelihood of receiving care, while spousal presence plays a secondary role. Contrary to assumptions, *de facto* childless individuals, particularly partnered ones, are more at risk of not receiving care, as spouses of similar age may also face limitations in caregiving due to their own frailty. However, actual childlessness does not appear to be a disadvantage for care receipt, especially among childless women, who may proactively arrange for support from relatives or non-kin.

Family remains the cornerstone of LTC, with 85% of care recipients relying on close kin, especially daughters and spouses, while sons and children-in-law play a lesser role. Extended kin, such as siblings, are crucial caregivers for *de facto* and actual childless women, with nearly 70% of actual childless women depending on extended family. Non-kin involvement in caregiving remains rare, at just 3%. Notable gender differences emerge, as most men regardless of kin configuration rely on close kin, particularly spouses and daughters. Meanwhile, childless women depend more on extended kin for support. These findings underscore the importance of family in Thailand’s LTC landscape, especially for women without children, who often turn to collateral kin for care.

Our findings highlight the heterogeneity in close kin availability and its varied implications on LTC deficits, underscoring the critical role of gender in these complex dynamics. Recognizing these nuances is essential for developing targeted, effective policies to support Thailand’s aging population, especially as the number of older adults aging without close family support continues to grow.

Presenter’s bio: Dr. Orawan Prasitsiriphon is a lecturer at the College of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University. She holds a Ph.D. in Demography and has been involved in research on healthcare financing, population health, and aging. Dr. Prasitsiriphon has contributed to various national and international research projects and has published work on topics like health systems and demographic trends. She combines her interest in data analysis with a focus on practical applications in population studies.

**Mining Time to Care for a Partner in Later Life:
Differences Between Childless Individuals and Parents in Europe**

Marco Albertini, *University of Bologna*

It has been shown in previous studies that in later life childless people have a slightly different mix of care providers/sources. On the one hand, they are more likely than parents to access paid care services; on the other hand, when needs are relatively less time- and emotionally- demanding, such as help with household chores and paperwork, they receive significant help from friends and non-family networks. However, when the need for demanding support with personal activities of daily living arises, childless people must rely mostly on their own partners and/or experience significant care gaps; eventually, they tend to enter residential care at lower ages and levels of dependency than parents. The present paper focuses on the main informal care providers of childless individuals: their partners. By leveraging the recently collected information on time use within the Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), the analyses explore the differences in time allocation between childless and non-childless partnered Europeans who, in the two years before the interview, have experienced a significant deterioration in their partners' health. The main question revolves around the extent to which childless partnered people must increase their informal support to directly providing care to a partner vs. what is experienced by parents; in addition, it is asked which type of activities childless older individuals sacrifice to devote this additional time to taking care of their partners. Eventually, it is examined if these differences are also associated with different levels of psychological wellbeing as measured by Euro-D and CASP12.

Presenter's bio: Marco Albertini is a professor of Sociology at the University of Bologna. His research interests include intergenerational relations, income and wealth inequality, social stratification, the consequences of childlessness, the impact of caregiving, long-term care policies, and aging. He earned his Ph.D. from the European University Institute. Additionally, he has served as a visiting scholar at the Aging Studies Institute at Syracuse University in New York, USA. Marco has also worked as a short-term consultant for the World Bank on the Regional Aging Report for Europe and Central Asia. Furthermore, he is a founding member of the Alma Aging center at the University of Bologna.