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## **Family Policies Implications in the Context of an Increase in One-person Households**

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This study aims to derive policy implications from analyzing the trend of increasing one-person households from a family change perspective. Main findings and the results of the study are as follow:

First, from a family change perspective, an increase in one-person households is not just a demographic response. It should be understood as a process of institutional and behavioral adaptations of families. This study addressed the issue of an increase in one-person households through various ongoing discussions such as family change and individualization, de-standardization of the life course, gender equality and marriage, issues in childbirth, and so forth. Although it differs from country to country, the main issues here are the

progress in individualization of family and de-standardization. As a part of this change, there has been a delay in family formation, for example, late marriage and late childbearing or low fertility rate and various ways of forming a couple are increasing. Particularly in relation to family formation, many countries display lower mean age at first birth than mean age at first marriage. This means that institutional features of marriage have already weakened and also the relationship between marriage and childbirth is being weakened.

Secondly, characteristics of one-person households were examined through a reanalysis of national statistical data. First of all, through Household Survey (2006, 2016), earnings differences by gender and consumption of one-person households were analysed. Through Time Use Survey (2004, 2014), time-use patterns of one-person households by gender were analysed. one-person households have relatively lower level of income and consumption than two-or-more-person households. Especially, it was found that one-person households are very vulnerable in terms of poverty and inequality, as more than 20% of one-person households were in lower deciles. From the analysis of Time Use Survey, following gender issue was found. Women from one-person households spent average 2 hours or more on work or study than women from two-or-more-person households, while spending less than 90 minutes on chores or childcare. On the other hand, in case of men, there was no significant difference between one-person households and two-or-more-person households. Thirdly, the results of the survey on life-styles, marriage and family-related values of one-person households (25-44 years old) were as follows: 1) Most of the respondents recognized their economic status as below average. Their actual average living expense were KRW 980,000 which is mainly composed of followings; food(33.5%), housinge(23.1%), dining out(22.4%), transport and communication(5.9%). The most challenging socioeconomic issues faced by one-person households today are housing cost burden and issues of stable residence; 2) One-person households have more flexible attitudes towards

marriage and sex-related values compare to others. In terms of marriage, male one-person households chose not to marry for economic reasons, while high proportion of female one-person households chose to be *bihon* (choose to not to wed). Also, they had a positive perception regarding premarital sex and positive attitudes toward cohabitation and remaining single.

Fourthly, focus group interviews were conducted with following 7 categorized groups of one-person households: university student; male and female preparing for employment; working male and female; and divorced single-households. The one-person households who participated in the research displayed twofold characteristics, independence and dependency. The participants desired for their “own lives”, and they start the way of independence from the independence of space. No matter how small and inadequate, they value “their own space” and enjoy living alone in independent space. However, at the same time, opposed to their willingness for independence, issues of economic independence have not been fully resolved. Also, self-fulfillment of the individual is becoming more important than forming, caring, and taking responsibility for the family. Timing of family formation is being gradually delayed and the desire for family formation is also decreasing. Respondents had a strong sense of resistance to systems that had to work long hours to rake money in; and instead, they wanted to live life with a job as a source of income, that may have low salary but secure and allow more personal time. They would refuse to work hard or exhaust themselves at work but rather choose to live life in “earn a little and spend less” way. There is a drastic change in their views on marriage and family. In case of men, desire to avoid responsibility as a breadwinner for family with insufficient income is strong. On the other hand, in case of women, desire to avoid burdens of career interruption and work and life balance, in which they have to carry out with birth, childcare, and a job at the same time. As a result, both men and women perceive marriage not as a course in the life course, but something rather to postpone and avoid as long as they can. In the

economic situation where the youth unemployment is serious and finding quality job is difficult, living as a one-person households with no dependent or caregiving family members contributes in feeling relief and satisfaction.

Lastly, based on the findings of the study, following family policy supports regarding increase in one-person households were identified:

1. Guaranteeing social citizenship: improve living conditions of one-person households, employment support for economic stability, ensure the right to be safe, establishment of community-based Daily Life Support Center
2. Promoting new family cultures: establish gender-equal family culture, improve awareness of different family composition and prohibit discrimination, social protection for births, seek alternative family structures.