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# Safety Issues of women living alone and Policy Implications(I): Focusing on Individual and Environmental Risks for Victimization

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Mi-Hye Chang  
Yeunjoo Chung  
Sang-Min Park  
Seeun Hong  
Da-Eun Jung  
Jiyoun Jeoung



Korean Women's Development Institute

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and Environmental Risks for Victimization**



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**Korean Women's Development Institute**

225 Jinheung-ro Eunpyeong-gu

Seoul, 03367, Republic of Korea

[www.kwdi.re.kr](http://www.kwdi.re.kr)

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## I . Introduction

### 1. Purpose

- Not all the members in a society feel the same level of anxiety over safety or are exposed to an unstable environment. Generally, when people are exposed to risk, their mobility is easily limited, and it is difficult to communicate with others. Also, their access to information is restricted. In that aspect, factors such as age (children or elderly), disability, income level or health status are considered in defining a group that is vulnerable in safety.
- In considering the safety vulnerable class, gender is not usually factored in, and women are not classified as safety vulnerable. However, a personal identity is composed of multiple elements, and

in case the elements of safety vulnerability are added, the possibility of such vulnerability increases. Even if not every woman is vulnerable to safety disasters, and when aforementioned elements are combined, it can work as a factor that weakens their safety. It is a basis for need to set up a policy objective in gender equality perspectives.

- As awareness of an issue has been spreading that a certain group among women is vulnerable in terms of safety, considering the fact that there are various groups depending on age or generation, health state, income level, and absence of household members living together, rather than women as a whole, policies have been established on factors of safety vulnerability of single-person household in recent terms.
- Considering these issues, in June 2020, a policy agenda on single-person household have been announced jointly with relevant ministries. However, to improve safety of single-woman households, as opposed to the superset of single-person households, policies based on the understanding of specific current state is necessary. Compared to other types of households, the single-person household is reported to have a higher rate of damages from crime but there have been no separate studies on the woman's experience of crime. As the percentage of single-woman households continues to increase, we need to set up policies to reduce any damage from crime and to increase safety even as this need continues to increase as well. Accordingly, this is the time that we need to have more realistic and effective policy alternatives based on empirical researches on concentrated areas with single-woman households and crime risk.

- Therefore, this study will allow us to understand the current status and features of single-woman households, to analyze social issues that may arise from the increase in single-woman households, specifically safety-related issues, and to review the law and ordinance, and policies that are currently in effect. Based on these, a fundamental data system will be established for tailored policy support and to present policies for prevention of crime risks involving single-woman households.

## 2. Details and methodology

- In this study, we identified the current status of single-woman households in matters of income and asset, age distribution, features of households and stability, and in line with such features, single-woman households were categorized to conduct in-depth analysis.
- Concentrated areas with single-woman households were categorized based on characteristics of demographic and local environmental conditions, and their vulnerability to crime was analyzed through analyses of local characteristics, physical properties of residence, elements on public order, and spatial distribution of housebreaking and sexual assault crime reports.
- First, by identifying the demand for safety-related policy of single-woman households, we reviewed any factors threatening the safety of single-woman households, and limitations of safety policy and its improvement plans. Based on review and analysis of relevant laws and regulations, system, and current policies related to

single-woman households, policy alternatives are presented to enhance the level of safety of single-woman households against crime.

- To categorize the concentrated areas of single-woman households and to analyze vulnerable factors, we used the statistical data of 112 call reporting by the Korean National Police Agency, and statistical data from open data portal of Seoul and Busan. In addition, to identify current damage from crime in concentrated areas of single-woman households and preventative policy, focus group interviews (FGI) were conducted on crime prevention officers (CPO) in the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, Busan Metropolitan Police, and other affiliated police stations.

## II. Current state and features of single-woman households

### 1. Factors affecting vulnerability to safety in single-woman households

- It is highly likely that single-woman households can be exposed to both risk factors posed to woman and to single-person households in complex way. Even amongst women, as there may be different levels of vulnerability to safety by generation, single-woman households were classified into the young adults (aged 20~39), the middle-aged (aged 40~64), and the elderly (aged 65 or older) to differentiate the safety awareness of single-person households by group.

- According to comparison of physical and mental health awareness in single-woman households by life cycle, following features have been identified. First, the group who answered their overall health state is the worst is the elderly group. Second, the group with high level of stress in overall daily life is the middle-aged group. The young adult group also experience the same level of stress with the middle-aged group. Third, the young adult group showed the highest level of suicidal impulse, and 11.4% responded that they actually had thought about how to commit suicide.
- Social relationship and communication level were reviewed in single-woman households by life cycle to see how well it was done. Apart from the party to request any help for housework, the elderly showed the lowest rate of social relationship in all items.
- According to an analysis on vulnerability to crime, in all items, vulnerability was high in the order of the elderly, the middle-aged and young adults. As for fear of crime among single-woman households by life cycle, excluding the items like ‘I’m scared of someone following me or persistently harassing me on phone or like that,’ it was high in the order of young adults, the middle-aged and the elderly.
- Vulnerability in housing was also compared among the single-woman household groups by life cycle. With minor householders excluded, the elderly showed the highest percentage of 25.4% in vulnerability in housing, followed by 20.0% of the middle-aged and 14.8% of young adults. It may be attributable to the situation where the elderly group has the bigger burden of housing expenditure as their income is reduced.

- As for assets, the young adults recorded the lowest, KRW 130.6 million on average, while the middle-aged has the highest amount of KRW 242.71 million on average. As for income by life cycle, the elderly has the lowest average income of KRW 13.89 million.

## **2. Factors in vulnerability to crime in single-woman households**

- According to previous studies confirming vulnerability of one-person households, single-person household residing in concentrated areas with such households show generally higher level of fear of crime than one-person household residing in non-concentrated areas of such households and multi-person households (Park, Jun-Hwi, et al. 2017:261-271). Another statistical result shows that women have a greater fear of crime than men (Statistics Korea and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2020:26). Considering these two outcomes, it would be possible to infer single-woman households have vulnerability to crime with greater fear of crime.
- They are vulnerable to crime and even after they are inflicted with crime, as it is difficult to get help from others, it can aggravate the risk of secondary damage.
- Owner occupation does not just mean stability of housing, and it may also imply an individual's economic stability as well as anti-crime measures and public order in the residential district. Therefore, rather than interpreting the type of residence as a factor affecting fear of crime, it would be more appropriate to understand that economic instability including unstable housing arrangement and characteristics of residence district have an impact on such fear.

- Even among the youth adult group, those in their 20s and 30s are in different economic situation. In addition, one-person household concentrated areas where women in their 20s or 30s usually reside do not show just one attribute, and they can be classified into sub-types with different attributes. Accordingly, as the frequency of exposure to crime risk and the level of fear of crime may be different, age group must be considered in conducting analysis of one-person household concentrated areas.

### III. Public order state in single-woman household concentrated areas

#### 1. Meaning of single-woman household concentrated areas and analytical method

- As this study is to identify a relationship between single-woman household concentrated areas and factors in vulnerability to crime, it is deemed reasonable to select the areas with large female population and with higher possibility of generalizing the analysis outcome. Accordingly, Seoul Metropolitan City, the nation's capital, and the largest provincial city, Busan, were selected for the analytical scope.
- The analysis of single-woman household concentrated areas were conducted in the following order:
  - Step 1: to confirm concentrated areas (hotspots) of single-woman households

- Step 2: to analyze characteristics of these hotspots
- Step 3: to classify the hotspots
- Step 4: to analyze the crimes to which single-woman households are vulnerable

## 2. Analysis of crimes against vulnerable single-woman households

- According to analyses of monthly frequency and rate of crimes against vulnerable single-woman households, there was no clear seasonality identified in dating violence and housebreaking, but stalking and sexual violence increased during the period from March to May and from May to August, respectively. Frequency analysis by timeline showed in both crimes a drastic increase after sunset and decrease from 2~3 in the morning.
- Reported incidents, such as dating violence, sexual violence, stalking, and housebreaking, committed against single-woman households in Seoul were added by districts which collected the data and were analyzed on hotspots for each type. The analysis showed that hotspots were formed in the center of Seoul, and parts of south-eastern area and of south-western area, and in all types of crimes, the hotspot of single-woman households and crime hotspot demonstrated statistically significant relevance. In other words, it was confirmed that the crimes against vulnerable single-woman households were committed mainly in areas where the households are densely populated.
- Even among the groups in hotspots of single-woman households, the crime rate showed seven times or higher difference. According to

an analysis of spatial characteristics of individual groups, the group 7 with the highest crime rate in hotspots showed the lowest average age of women compared to other densely populated areas of single-woman households.

- The analysis of crimes committed against single-woman households in densely populated areas in Busan also showed a correlation between the hotspots of single-woman households and of crimes against the vulnerable group. Depending on the type of crime, there was a difference of min. 2.8 times to max. 10.1 times. Out of the hotspots of single-woman households, 34.3% of the districts reported dating violence, 25.2% sexual violence, 8.5% stalking, and 15.1% housebreaking.

#### IV. Demand for safety policy for single-woman households

##### 1. Current state of damages from committed crimes in concentrated areas and preventative policy

- The most frequently reported crimes in concentrated areas of single-woman households are dating violence and stalking. Dating violence usually occurs when assaulted by boyfriends, or despite the request to leave from the residence, when they reject the request or repeatedly come back to the residence for harassment. Some cases are reported after assault, but in more cases, it is reported when there is any threat of dating violence. Stalking can be committed by acquaintances or strangers.

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- In addition to stalking, crimes are reported such as housebreaking when a guy stalks a woman and follows her to enter the residence building when she opens the main gate. Another case can be that housebreaking occurs through a veranda window, and after entering the house, a woman is tied up for indecent act by force. Or when a woman who is intoxicated falls on the floor, not being able to enter her house, forced indecent act may occur.
  - The crime prevention measures for concentrated areas of single-woman households are mainly focused on the strategy for situational crime prevention including reinforcement of target object and monitoring functions, and not only police agencies and local governments but also relevant organizations in the local community have been making joint efforts. The police agency and stations that are responsible for crime prevention activities need to maintain cooperative relations with local governments for budgeting, revision of relevant law and regulations, and engagement in relevant committees.
  - As various unexpected issues may arise with implementation of crime prevention policies in the field, it is necessary to enhance field applicability, and several improvements are required in areas such as cooperation between Public Safety Division and police officers in districts, between police stations and local governments, cooperation with private security companies, and leveling up of expertise.

## 2. Safety policy for single-woman households

- To identify the demand for policy at the central government and local governing bodies for the safety of single-woman households, a survey was conducted in consultation format to the experts in relevant areas (policymakers in the central and local governments and relevant researchers). Through the survey, opinions were gathered on current status and limitations of policies for single-woman households, and on improvement ideas for the future.
- Experts, who work in research institutes in the areas that include both cities and farming areas, explain that there are differences in single-woman households depending on the region, on whether it is urban or a farming area. While percentage of the young adults is high in urban areas, the middle-aged and the elderly percentage is high in farming areas. Accordingly, such difference in composition by region implies that different safety policies are required for urban and rural areas, and it needs to be considered in the policy-making process.
- There are differences in safety awareness depending on regions. The single-woman households in urban and rural areas are afraid of different aspects, and the demand for safety policy is different. Accordingly, in consideration of different characteristics of single-woman households in urban and rural areas, it would be necessary for the experts to establish and implement more appropriate safety policy.
- As for type of housing among young adults, the percentage of rent is the highest compared to other generations, and monthly rent

payment is very high. Experts pointed out that young adults spend a lot of money for their safety in housing. This means that, even in concentrated areas with single-woman households, it can be differentiated based on various features. Accordingly, it is confirmed that appropriate policies need to be established in line with the characteristics of residents and environment in each area.

- Regarding the limitation of safety policy for single-woman households, several experts pointed out that tailored support considering unique points of each subtype was not sufficient. They mostly mentioned that differences in demand for safety depending on age or income were not factored in.
- As for another limitation, it was mentioned that the government and local organizations consider only the expertise and tasks of each ministry, and policies and projects for single-woman households are scattered across different divisions, reducing the effectiveness. Even for the police, it was pointed out that it was difficult to implement unified policies by the Police Agency, and the City and Provincial governments.

## V. Current law and regulations, and policy of single-woman households

### 1. Law on single-woman households

- There is no specific law or ordinance exclusively for single-woman households and, based on the ordinance related to one-person households that has been enacted by local governments, support has

been provided with policy for single-woman households. Therefore, law and regulations that may include the details related to one-person households, such as the Healthy Family Act, the Framework Act on the Management of Disaster and Safety, the National Basic Livelihood Security Act, the Act on Supporting the Underprivileged Housing Support for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, the Act on the Prevention and Management of Lonely Deaths, law and regulations on architecture, and criminal legislation, were reviewed.

## 2. Ordinance related to single-woman households

- Ordinance on one-person households was first enacted by the Seoul Metropolitan City in 2016, followed by the Busan Metropolitan City in the same year. In line with the increasing trend of one-person households, other local governments continuously followed to enact relevant ordinance. As of September 2022, according to searches with keywords related to one-person households such as ‘one-person households’ and ‘socially isolated household’ in the enhanced local laws and regulations information system (ELIS) of the Korean Law Information Center, 158 ordinances have been enacted and are currently in force.
- As for the ordinance on one-person households in the Seoul Metropolitan City, it has the ordinance for one-person households and the ordinance for prevention of lonely deaths and support for socially isolated households. All 25 districts (Gu’s) have enacted the latter, but the former, the ordinance on one-person households, has been enacted only by 16 districts (Gangdong-gu, Gangbuk-gu,

Gwanak-gu, Gwangjin-gu, Geumcheon-gu, Dongdaemun-gu, Dongjak-gu, Mapo-gu, Seodaemun-gu, Seocho-gu, Seongdong-gu, Seongbuk-gu, Yongsan-gu, Eunpyeong-gu, Jung-gu, and Jungnang-gu).

- The ordinance related to one-person households of the Busan Metropolitan City includes the one on support for one-person households and the ordinance on prevention of lonely deaths and support for the elderly living alone. All 16 primary local authorities have enacted the latter, but the former has been enacted only by four districts (Dong-gu, Busanjin-gu, Seo-gu, and Yeonje-gu).

### 3. Current safety policy for single-woman households

- For single-woman household safety, currently, several ministries including the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Police Agency and local governments have implemented various support policies and projects for housing security and welfare, safety against gender violence and crime, and relief of disease and social isolation for single-woman households.
- As for safety-related policy for individuals, the Seoul Metropolitan City has implemented the following projects; 1) supply of ‘safety home-set’ with dual locks at entrance (supplementary key for entrance door), portable emergency bell, window lock, smart safety sensor, and smart door bell as part of the support for safety equipment; 2) ‘crime prevention efforts for the single woman’ to build a safe environment network; 3) installation of ‘unmanned delivery box (safe delivery service for women)’ to build a safe

human network; and 4) 'safe come-back-home service,' 'safe taxi service for women,' 'village sheriff,' and 'nighttime bus service' that would help going back home late at night to build a safe transportation network. Other local governments have also implemented similar policies and projects.

- The project to build a safe environment has been focusing on the strategy for situational crime prevention by strengthening surveillance functionality. Based on the principle of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), it is to set up and revise a plan to eliminate or minimize any chance of crime being committed when designing a city or architectural space, thereby reducing any occurrence of crime and associated anxiety.

## VI. Policy countermeasures to enhance safety of single-woman households

### 1. To strengthen legislative requirement of safety policy for single-woman households

- Various policies have been implemented to support the safety of single-woman households, but for more organic and active implementation of relevant policies, legislative requirements have to be established. To make this happen, existing law and regulations can be revised, or separate legislation on providing support for the safety of one-person households can be considered as an option.

## 2. Adjustment and consolidation of safety-related tasks by ministries

- Considering the point that factors affecting the vulnerability to safety of single-woman households can be overlapped and multidimensional, adjustment and coordination of individual policies are required. Currently, safety policies have been implemented by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (housing safety), the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (prevention of gender-based violence and sexual crime), the Police Agency (public order), the Ministry of Health and Welfare (disease control), and the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (safety in daily life), and the relevance of projects is low.
- Going forward, consolidated safety policies and support among the ministries are required based on the cooperation at the central ministerial level. For consolidated safety policy and supporting project implementation across the national government for single-woman households, first and foremost, appropriate resources and organization have to be established who can have overall control and dedication over the safety policies on single-woman households. It is also necessary to set up a governance system across all the ministries, including relevant ministries and local governments.

## 3. Implementation of tailored safety policy by region and by subject

- As there are differences in security state and factors affecting vulnerability to crime by region, this study confirmed that crime prevention policy for single-woman households tailored by region is required. To implement tailored policies by region in line with the characteristics of various types of hotspots of single-woman

households and the demand to keep the public peace, following points should be considered;

- First, in areas where re-development is under way or several new buildings are under construction, it is more efficient to design safe structures from the initial stage, instead of supplementing existing building's vulnerability to crime, for proactive prevention.
- Second, as for downtown areas crowded with studio apartments, transport convenience and accessibility to work/universities are attractive points to one-person households, and mainly female office workers and college students reside there. Usually in these areas, there are multiplex housing, which are vulnerable to crime and becoming decrepit. It would be necessary to focus on identifying and improving the crime vulnerability factors in existing buildings.
- Third, as for areas with frequent passage of random people, these may be the crowded areas with single-woman households close to subway station or bus stop. There are commercial buildings, entertainment districts, subway stations, parks, etc. Crime vulnerability in such areas would be, while potential assailants carry out their normal and legitimate activities, that potential victims are highly likely to be exposed to risk. In these areas, to improve natural surveillance, CPTED would have high effectiveness such as the idea to enhance the level of illumination around the entrance to residential areas (for example, streetlights, logojector, signs, design chart mark, wall colors, etc.).
- In addition, we also need to consider the point that even within single-woman households, each household has different

requirements for safety. Accordingly, in the future, considering the fact that single-woman households have various and differentiated psychological features, preventative policies that can reduce anxiety over crime need to be implemented.

#### 4. To enhance effectiveness of safety policy via cooperation

- Projects for safety of single-woman households will be effective only if the local governments and the Police cooperate based on organic relationship. Currently, as for the cooperation between the two parties, the local government mainly carries out planning and operation of the projects and the Police just participate. To enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention activities in concentrated areas of single-woman households, improvements are required in following aspects.
- First, it is necessary to stipulate the local government's support for budget, which is required for installation of crime prevention facilities, in writing. Second, for the budgeting process by the local government, it is necessary for the Police to participate in the crime prevention part. Lastly, the working-level network between the local government and the Police needs to be maintained in a more stable and systematic manner.
- In addition, if the police stations and private security companies sign an agreement for cooperation, it will contribute to more effective execution of capabilities to tackle crimes with limited resources, and it will be necessary to share data-based analysis as a tool for cooperation between the parties.

## 5. Crime prevention based on science and technology

- To accurately identify crime risk factors in concentrated areas of single-woman households and to push forward realistic and feasible preventative policies, it is essential to acquire available data. Though the Police and Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Public Administration and Security tend to disclose more data than in the past, it is still just sharing the data collected by year or by city or province.
- For precise case analysis based on security and crime data, and for effective preventative measures, it is necessary to classify the crime statistics related to woman or single-woman households in the crime statistical system in detail, and to gather accurate data that will help understand the crimes committed against them. At the same time, we need to change toward a direction to expand the access to the original data of crime statistics.

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# KWDI



**KWDI**

225 Jinheung-ro, Eunpyeong-gu (1-363, Bulgwang-dong) Seoul, 03367, Republic of Korea  
TEL 02.3156.7000 FAX 02.3156.7007  
<http://www.kwdi.re.kr>