

Residential Floor Area and Number of Persons per Household: Disparities and Implications

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Summary

1. Residential floor area per person continues to increase, as does residential floor area per household. This is a result both of an expanded housing supply and a trend toward smaller households. But the availability of residential floor space varies greatly with household size: a typical one-person household has much less floor area than a larger household.

- Average residential floor area for one-person households is 48.6 square meters, but for one-person households occupying rental housing the figure is only 38.3 square meters. Average residential floor area for one-person households consisting of younger members is especially low at only 30.4 square meters.

- Homes in which floor area measures between 60 square meters and 85 square meters account for over 40 percent of newly built homes, with smaller homes accounting for a smaller percentage. Thus the supply of newly built homes fails to accommodate households of varying sizes.

2. Compared with the United Kingdom and the United States, Korea displays greater differences between one-person and two-person households in terms of residential floor area.

- In Korea, the average residential floor area for a two-person household is 73.1 square meters, as compared with 48.6 square meters for a one-person household, a difference of 50.4 percent. In the United Kingdom, average residential floor area for a one-person household is 71.2 square meters and the corresponding figure for

a two-person household is 91.8 square meters, 29.5 percent more. In the United States, average residential floor area is 141.3 square meters for one-person households and 179.7 square meters for two-person households, a difference of 27.2 percent.

- Korea shows greater disparities between one-person and two-person households because two-person households use more space than they need while one-person households, especially those made up of younger people and those renting homes, have to make do with very little.

3. In addition, one-person households in Korea consisting of younger people tend to stay in their homes for a very short time on average.

- In Korea, housing costs per unit of floor area tend to be very high when floor space is more limited. Since younger people are unable to pay high rents, they tend to live in smaller homes to save money. In addition, such households lack stability and the average tenancy period is short.

Implications

- ① As the number of one-person households is increasing, there is a need for an adequate supply of housing of suitable size.
- ② Income levels and housing costs for one-person households need to be considered so that policy makers can provide customized support (financial support for housing, public rental housing, etc.) that varies by age, income level, and whether the person is a tenant or homeowner, so that homes of adequate size can be purchased or rented.

To establish standards and to determine how much space is adequate for households of different sizes, it is necessary to adjust or further subdivide the size of public rental housing and establish the criteria for desired housing conditions.