발 간 등 록 번 호
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2025 Census 100th anniversary

100 Years of the Korean Census

The Housing of Korea

Statistics Korea

Foreword

The Village Registers of the Silla Dynasty and the household surveys of the Joseon Dynasty demonstrate that efforts to record population, households, and housing have been a longstanding tradition in Korea for over a thousand years. This year is particularly significant, as it marks the 100th anniversary of Korea's first modern Census, conducted in 1925 under the name National Census.

As the nation's first basic statistics, the census has periodically enumerated the entire population, households, and housing across the nation, documenting structural changes in Korean society over time. Data are produced not only at the levels of *si* and *do* (cities and provinces), *si*, *gun*, and *gu* (cities and districts), and *eup*, *myeon*, and *dong* (submunicipal units), but also for smaller units such as enumeration districts and grid cells. These data are widely used in planning, policymaking, research, and education across the public and private sectors. They also serve as the foundation for producing derived statistics—such as population and household projections, and the housing supply ratio—and for providing sampling frames and population parameters necessary for designing sample surveys and generating survey estimates.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the census, we are publishing *100 Years of the Korean Census: The Population of Korea* and *100 Years of the Korean Census: The Housing of Korea* in both Korean and English. These volumes document the evolution of

Korea's Population and Housing Census and provide a comprehensive analysis of the social changes that have taken place over the past century.

100 Years of the Korean Census: The Population of Korea explores in depth key demographic topics, including births and deaths, migration, foreign residents, family composition, economic activity, education, and religion. In particular, it provides statistical insights into urgent social challenges such as population decline, aging, low fertility, and multicultural dynamics, highlighting their broader social and policy implications.

100 Years of the Korean Census: The Housing of Korea covers changes in occupancy patterns, housing types, housing conditions, and issues related to housing poverty and housing welfare. It offers a broad perspective on the evolving housing landscape, covering housing supply, vacant housing, changes in household composition, and regional disparities in living conditions.

These volumes go beyond presenting statistics; they serve as guidebooks for reflecting on the past and preparing for the future through the lens of population and housing. We hope these publications will serve as valuable resources for citizens, stakeholders in both the public and private sectors, and academic researchers, helping to deepen their understanding and to foster meaningful dialogue on Korea's sustainable societal development.

The future of population and housing in Korea will differ greatly from the past 100 years. As we prepare to face future challenges, Statistics Korea remains committed to providing accurate and timely statistics to support informed decision-making and proactive responses.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the researchers, contributors, and staff who were involved in the planning, writing, and editing of these publications.

August 2025

안 형준

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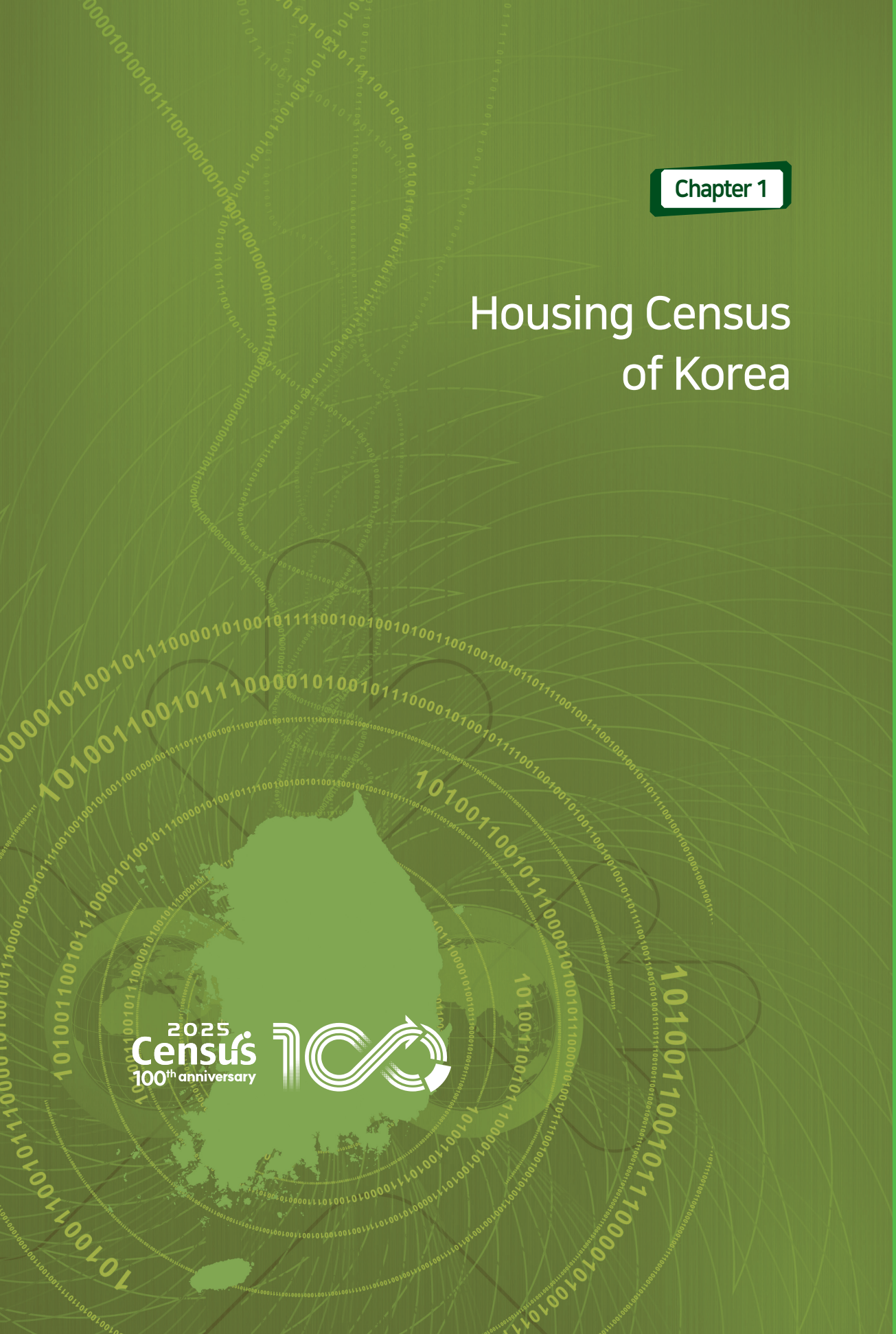
Chapter 1

Housing Census of Korea



1. Background and Purpose of the Study

A housing census is the total process of planning, collecting, processing, analyzing, disseminating, and evaluating statistical data relating to the number and condition of housing units and facilities as available to the households pertaining, at a specified time, to all living quarters and occupants thereof in a country (UN DESA, 2017).[1)]

The Housing Census, conducted as part of the Population and Housing Census, in the Republic of Korea was first conducted in 1960, which has a shorter history compared to the Population Census that began in 1925. Since the second survey in 1970, the Housing Census has been conducted regularly every five years. Since 2015, a register-based census using administrative data has been introduced alongside the Population Census, with complete enumeration items collected every year through the register-based census and sample items gathered every five years through face-to-face interviews and internet surveys.

The microdata from this comprehensive and large-scale survey is highly useful. The Population and Housing Census not only accumulates long-term time series data but also provides information on housing conditions in small areas that are difficult to capture in other sample surveys. The results of the Housing Census serve as fundamental data for

1) Living quarters are structurally separated and independent living spaces. It is a place that has been built, modified, or transformed for human habitation and is used for residential purposes, even if its designated purpose is not housing according to the *Building Act,* as long as it is used for residential purposes on the reference date.

decision-making and policy formulation related to housing issues and are also used as a framework for other sample surveys.

Since the start of the Housing Census in 1960, there have been significant changes in housing supply and living conditions over the past 60 years. In the 1960s, rapid urbanization due to industrialization led to a sharp increase in urban populations and households, but the housing supply could not keep up, resulting in serious shortages of housing as a major urban issue. Particularly in Seoul, the shortage of housing was exacerbated by the influx of people moving in search of jobs. The population of Seoul, which had not exceeded a million until 1940, grew rapidly after liberation, coinciding with the expansion of the city's administrative boundaries.

Solving the problem of housing shortage has long been a top priority in housing policy. There was an urgent housing need for people flocking to the cities, which led to social demand for housing supply. The *2.5 Million Housing Units Construction 10-year Plan (1972)*, the *Five Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1980)*, and the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1989)* were all established against this backdrop.

Large-scale housing supply has driven improvements in standards of living. In the 1960s and 1970s, the public sector laid the groundwork for housing supply through land readjustment and housing site development,[2] gradually promoting private housing supply. In the 1980s and 1990s, both public and private sectors redeveloped poor districts known as hillside villages and shantytowns. Since the 1990s, the creation of *New Towns* with large-scale apartment complexes in the Seoul metropolitan area and major cities has become an important policy tool for expanding housing supply. As housing was supplied primarily through relatively high-quality apartments, living conditions overall improved and the

2) The Korea National Housing Corporation (now Korea Land and Housing Corporation, LH), established in 1962, was primarily responsible for housing supply.

proportion of households living in inadequate housing[3] has steadily decreased. A major policy shift around 1990 was the supply of public rental housing for low-income households that struggled to cope with rapidly rising housing costs.

Korea, one of the world's poorest countries right after the Korean War, grew into one of the top 10 economies in the world. With economic growth, the prevailing types of housing changed, and housing facilities were improved to modern lifestyles. The items included in the Housing Census have reflected the changing times. Shantytowns, makeshift houses, and tents enumerated in the 1960 Housing Census have almost disappeared. While shared toilets and coal heating lasted longer, they are now nearly gone.

Despite quantifiable achievements such as the national Housing Supply Ratio—the ratio of total housing units to the number of households—exceeding 100% and a decrease in households below minimum housing standards, deprivation issues in qualitative aspects, which are not immediately visible, still remain. This is why housing welfare policies such as public rental housing and housing benefits are being expanded. As interest in housing welfare has increased, a legal basis for establishing minimum housing standards was included in the *Housing Act* in 2003, and in 2015, the *Framework Act on Residence* was enacted, marking the first time housing rights were specified in law.

Housing served as a means for households to accumulate assets and played a significant role in capital accumulation in the construction industry, contributing to rapid economic growth. However, the rapidly rising housing prices alongside economic growth have deepened asset inequality. Despite the large-scale housing supply, the homeownership rate has stagnated since the 2000s, with a decrease in the jeonse—the lease with a lump-sum deposit—ratio and an increase in the relatively burdensome monthly rent. Since 2022, large-

3) Inadequate housing refers to living quarters that do not meet the criteria for adequate housing, such as the minimum standards for habitability and legal security of tenure defined in the *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Typical examples of inadequate housing include subdivided units, cubicle dwellings (*gosiwon*), (semi-)basement housing, and rooftop rooms.

scale cases of jeonse *scam* have occurred nationwide, highlighting the precarious status of tenants.

Unaffordable housing costs relative to income, inadequate housing and the increase in decaying and vacant houses are illustrative issues faced by Korean society, which has focused solely on the quantitative expansion of housing stock. Young people living in illegally subdivided houses, basement housing, cubicle dwellings, and rooftops find it difficult to plan for marriage and childbirth. Large-scale land development and apartment supply on the outskirts of cities have contributed to rapidly increasing quality housing stock, but have also led to the spread of vacant housing issues in old downtown areas.

Recent rapid demographic changes, such as absolute population decline due to low fertility rates and aging, the increase in one-person households, and the influx of immigrants (foreigners) and multicultural households, present challenging issues that are not easily solvable. After the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, Korea's population structure began to collapse fast.[4] Due to an unprecedentedly rapid pace of low fertility rates and aging, the natural population decline began in 2020, with the number of deaths exceeding the number of births. This would have a significant impact on housing demand, supply, and prices.

The accelerated climate crisis of the 21st century and the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 have highlighted the importance of housing as a shelter that protects people from external hazards such as extreme heat and cold, disasters, and diseases. Ensuring a safe and comfortable living space for everyone has become an essential task of the government in the era of climate change and infectious diseases.

As the Population and Housing Census, first conducted in 1925, approaches its 100th anniversary, it is necessary to reassess the historical mission and role of the census in the housing sector over the past 60 years and to analyze various emerging topics in response

4) The total fertility rate in Korea decreased from 4.53 in 1970 to 1.52 in 1997 and to 0.72 in 2023.

to new changes. The Housing Census, which has been part of Korea's modern history, serves as an important foundation for reflecting on the past, diagnosing the present, and preparing for the future. Based on the results of past censuses, we aim to compile the history of housing changes in Korea and highlight the significance and value of the census. Furthermore, by analyzing topics of high interest, we aim to contribute to raising awareness and perceptions of the Housing Census.

2. Research Methods and Scope

This study primarily utilizes data published on the *Korean Statistical Information Service* (KOSIS) and analyzes 10% and 20% of sample data of the Population and Housing Census from 2000 to 2020 provided by the *Microdata Integrated Service* (MDIS) of Statistics Korea.[5] Additionally, 2% of sample data from 1975 to 1995 was analyzed.[6] Throughout the analysis, other statistical data such as the *Korea Housing Survey*, *Household Projections*, and *Statistics of House Ownership* were employed as necessary.

The temporal scope of the research spans 60 years, from 1960 to 2020. However, for stable and effective time series comparisons, the analysis may begin from 1970/1975 or extend to 2023. The spatial scope covers the entire country, with analyses conducted by provinces (si·do) and cities·districts (si·gun·gu). For consistent time series analysis,

5) The sample survey of the Population and Housing Census was conducted on 10% of the population from 1990 to 2010 and on 20% from 2015 onwards. The sample survey included more items than the complete enumeration.

6) The 2% sample data from 1975 to 1995 was sourced from publicly available download services, while the 10% and 20% sample data from 2000 to 2020 was accessed through the Remote Access Service (RAS).

historical data were adjusted to current administrative boundaries through the reconstruction of administrative regions using the GIS. In order to ensure comparability, key items were reclassified based on the response categories of the newest census.

The primary subjects of analysis in this study are the living quarters and household items included in the Population and Housing Census. Items related to living quarters were answered by household members who are well aware of the household situation, and since the introduction of the register-based census in 2015, most data have been collected based on administrative records. Items such as living quarters type, housing tenure, number of rooms, and year of construction have been included in the survey since the Housing Census began in 1960. Information on the residential floor, ownership of other housing, and parking facilities was included as survey items from 2005, and fire safety equipment was added starting in 2020.

3. Key Concepts

This section defines and compares the key concepts used in this study, such as living quarters, housing, and household, over time and in relation to international standards. This aims to clarify the meanings and contexts of the core terms.

1) Living Quarters and Housing

The term *living quarters*, which refers to the space where a household resides, is a broader concept than *housing*. The UN distinguishes living quarters into housing units (or dwellings) and collective living quarters, while in Korea, a distinction is made between

housing and *living quarters other than house* (see Figure 1-1). In the Population and Housing Census, living quarters refer to any place where people reside and are defined as structurally separated and independent living units (Table 1-1).

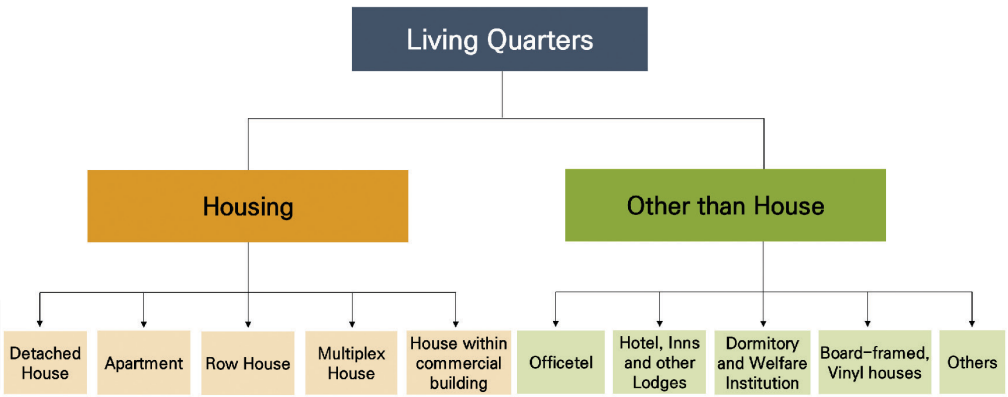


Figure 1-1. Classification of Living Quarters in Korea

Table 1-1. Definitions of Living Quarters, Housing, and Other than House in the Population and Housing Census

Category	Definition
Living Quarters	Living quarters refer to all spaces where people reside, defined as a structurally separated and independent living unit, distinguished into housing and living quarters other than house.
Housing	A house built for a household to live independently, which must meet the following requirements: ① Permanent or semi-permanent building ② with a kitchen and one or more rooms ③ with an independent entrance ④ a unit that is customarily owned or sold.
Living Quarters Other than House	Living spaces that do not meet the housing requirements, including officetels, hotel rooms, dormitories, shanties, greenhouses, and others (such as sleeping rooms in workplaces and temporary structures for residence).

Source: Statistics Korea (2020).

In the Population and Housing Census, *housing* is defined as a house built for a household to live independently, and it must meet four criteria as explained in Table 1-1. Living spaces that do not meet these criteria are classified as *living quarters other than house*.

The types of living quarters in the Population and Housing Census have evolved. In 1970, housing types were categorized into independent houses, collective housing, row houses, and housing in non-residential buildings, which were later classified into detached houses, apartments, row houses, and multiplex houses to reflect the emergence of new housing types and institutional changes.

According to the UN census guidelines, *conventional dwellings* are a subcategory of housing units. *Housing units* refer to separate, independent living spaces for one household or living quarters occupied by one household at the reference period, even if not solely intended for residential purposes. Conventional dwellings must meet the following criteria: ① be a room or suite of rooms and its accessories (such as lobbies) in a permanent building or structurally separated part of a building, ② be used for residential purposes, ③ be constructed, renovated, or modified for the purpose of one household living, and ④ have an independent entrance linked to a road or common space.

The definition of a *house* used by Statistics Korea is similar to that of *conventional dwellings* in the UN census guidelines, but the requirement of 'being a unit customarily owned or sold' is not included in the UN guidelines. There have been concerns that this criterion is inappropriate for calculating the housing supply ratio because it is more useful for policy purposes to understand how many living quarters or independent spaces exist rather than defining housing as a unit of ownership or sale. Particularly, with the increase in multi-family houses where multiple households live independently within a single ownership/sale unit, the gap between the number of houses counted as ownership/sale units

and living quarters has widened.[7)]

To address this issue, the survey items were adjusted in the 1995 Population and Housing Census to identify the number of housing units based on the definition of living quarters while maintaining a time series comparison of the number of houses based on the traditional concept of ownership/sale units.

For example, if there is a multi-family house with rooms 101, 102, 201, and 202, and if rooms 201 and 202 are occupied by multiple renter households each with a different livelihood, this multi-family house will be tallied as one house ownership or sale, four housing units, and six households in the current Population and Housing Census (see Figure 1-2). The changes in the survey items that allow for the identification of housing units have formed the basis for improving the housing supply ratio statistics.

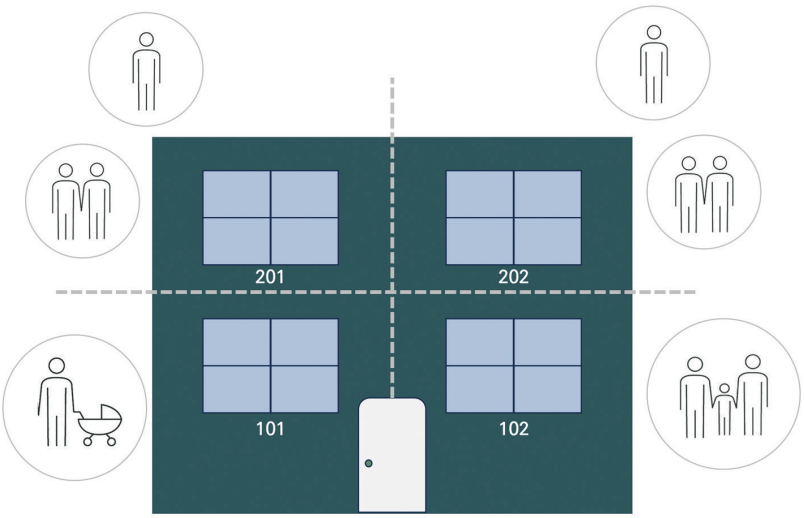


Figure 1-2. Enumeration of Housing Units and Households

7) A multi-family house is classified as a detached house but consists of separate living units. Unlike apartments or row houses, it's ownership is not registered by unit (dwelling) but as a single entity for the entire building. As this housing type could be divided into up to 19 of living quarters, it is primarily used for rental purposes.

2) Households

According to the UN census guidelines, households are categorized into one-person households and multi-person households (UN DESA, 2017). The definition and calculation methods differ slightly by country, generally divided into the housekeeping unit concept and the household-dwelling concept. In most countries, co-residence is the most important criterion when identifying households. Some countries adopt the household-dwelling concept, where living together in a single living quarter is sufficient to be considered one household, while others use the housekeeping unit concept, where households are defined based on shared expenses, meals, or household responsibilities (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Warner, 2008). In Korea, which adopts the housekeeping unit concept, a household is defined as a unit of individuals who reside together in a living quarter and share a livelihood, so even if ones live in the same living quarter but have different livelihoods, they are enumerated as separate households.

In the Population and Housing Census, the definition of a household is a unit where one or more individuals reside together and gather to share cooking, sleeping, and other livelihoods. *General households* include those composed of families, households where five or fewer non-family (non-kin) individuals live with a family, households of five or fewer non-family individuals, and one-person households. *Group households* include institutional households (households living collectively in institutions such as dormitories and nursing facilities) and households consisting of six or more non-family individuals. *Foreign households* consist solely of foreigners.

4. Main Research Contents

This book consists of 11 chapters, including Chapter 1, the introduction. Chapter 1 provides basic information about the topics covered in this book by examining the research objectives, methods, changes in survey items, and key concepts. Chapter 2 outlines the transformations in Korea's economy, society, and housing, while Chapter 3 analyzes the structural changes of households, the basic units of housing demand.

From Chapter 4 onwards, the focus shifts to the quantitative and qualitative changes in housing. Chapter 4 analyzes the trends in housing supply ratio and vacant houses. Chapter 5 sheds light on how the distribution of housing types has changed.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss households; Chapter 6 examines how housing tenures have changed and discusses the affordability of households. Chapter 7 examines factors related to housing quality, such as living space, number of rooms, facilities, and building age.

Chapters 8 and 9 analyze housing conditions by household characteristics and region. Chapter 8 analyzes changes in housing outcomes by household characteristics. Chapter 9 compares changes in housing conditions in the Seoul metropolitan area and other regions.

Chapter 10 defines housing deprivation, analyzes trends, and examines changes in housing welfare policies such as public rental housing and housing benefits. Chapter 11 provides a comprehensive summary of housing issues and discusses policy implications.

Chapter 2

Socioeconomic Changes and Housing in Korea

Korea was once one of the poorest countries in the world, having endured exploitation during the Japanese colonial period and the devastation of the Korean War. However, since the 1960s, it has achieved rapid economic growth driven by industrialization, export-oriented economic policies, and the diligence of its people. In 1996, Korea became the 29th member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Today, as one of the world's top ten economies, it has transitioned from being an aid recipient to an aid donor.

Through sustained economic growth, Korea overcame absolute poverty and achieved economic prosperity. However, it also faced numerous challenges and side effects arising from rapid industrialization and urbanization. As traditional, community-based living patterns dissolved and urbanization progressed, cities faced a range of challenges, including housing shortages, transportation congestion, public health concerns, safety issues, and urban poverty.

Housing, along with food and clothing, is one of the most fundamental necessities for a dignified life. The government has strived to address housing issues and has achieved considerable progress. However, housing remains a significant social challenge. Korean society faces various social changes affecting housing demand, such as rapid aging, a surge in one-person households, and ultra-low fertility rates. Vulnerable populations unable to afford housing costs, along with households residing in substandard conditions in which housing rights are violated, continue to persist.

This chapter provides an overview of changes in family structure, urbanization, and housing, accompanied by economic development. Based on an analysis of these transformations and their trajectories, this chapter concludes by discussing key policy implications.

1. Economic Growth, Urbanization, and Nuclear Family Formation

1) Urbanization and Housing

Urbanization refers to the increase in the urban population, accompanied by the expansion of urban lifestyles and a decrease in the share of the primary sector. The rising proportion of the urban population has shifted the dominant family structure from extended families to nuclear families. As many young people separated from their agricultural or fishing villages' extended families and formed independent households in cities, the number of urban households increased significantly. In contrast, the number of household members in rural areas decreased sharply. The average household size nationwide declined significantly, from 5.2 persons in 1970 to 3.8 in 1990, and further to 2.3 in 2020.

While urbanization has been a driving force behind economic growth, it has also given rise to numerous challenges in housing, transportation, sanitation, and other areas. One of the most serious problems was the housing shortage. During the period when large numbers of people migrated rapidly to cities within a short time, the housing supply could not meet the demand adequately. As a result, large informal settlements, makeshift hillside

settlements called *daldongne*, formed on the outskirts of large cities.

2) Nuclear Family Formation and Income Growth

The nuclear family emerged as the prevailing household type during the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society. Before the 1960s, Korea's economy was centered on the primary sector. The government-led industrialization policies of the 1960s created many jobs in urban areas, as a pull factor attracting labor from rural fishing and farming communities. The share of households living in urban areas (*dong* and *eup*) was 51.7% in 1970 but surged to 86.6% by 2000. Conversely, the share of households in rural areas (*myeon*) sharply declined from 48.3% to 13.4% over the same period. By 2020, the share of rural households further decreased to 9.6%, while urban households increased to 90.4%.

As economic development progressed, surplus labor in rural areas moved to cities where jobs were created, contributing to productive activities that significantly increased the gross national product. The rural-to-urban migration phenomenon contributed to high economic growth without diminishing agricultural output, as Lewis (1954) emphasized in his seminal work.

Over the past 50 years, changes in Korea's national income show that, compared to 1970, nominal GDP in 2020 increased by 694.0 times, nominal GDP per capita increased by 419.7 times, and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 21.5 times (Table 2-1). Measured in constant prices, real GDP in 2020 was 25.5 times greater and GDP per capita was 13.8 times greater compared to 1970.

Table 2-1. Changes in Economic Level (1970–2020)

(Unit: trillion KRW, ten thousand KRW, multiple)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nominal	GDP	3	11	40	88	201	437	652	957	1,323	1,658	1,941
		1.0	3.8	14.2	31.5	71.7	156.3	233.0	342.4	472.9	592.9	694.0
	Per Capita Income	9	30	103	211	467	966	1,377	1,973	2,673	3,260	3,777
		1.0	3.3	11.4	23.4	51.9	107.3	153.0	219.2	297.0	362.2	419.7
Real	GDP	72	116	175	275	454	684	904	1,155	1,427	1,658	1,840
		1.0	1.6	2.4	3.8	6.3	9.5	12.5	16.0	19.8	23.0	25.5
	Per Capita Income	256	345	486	708	1,192	1,702	1,972	2,383	2,808	3,260	3,530
		1.0	1.3	1.9	2.8	4.7	6.6	7.7	9.3	11.0	12.7	13.8
GDP Deflator		3.9	9.1	22.7	32.1	44.2	63.9	72.1	82.9	92.7	100.0	105.5
Consumer Price Index		4.7	9.5	21.0	29.6	38.5	52.0	63.2	74.4	86.4	94.9	100.0
		1.0	2.0	4.5	6.4	8.3	11.2	13.6	16.0	18.6	20.4	21.5

Source: Bank of Korea, Economic Statistics System; Statistics Korea, Consumer Price Survey.

Note: 1) Real GDP and real per capita income are calculated using nominal GDP/per capita income and the GDP deflator.

2) Ratios relative to 1970 are also presented for nominal and real GDP, per capita income, and consumer price index.

3) The figures presented below for nominal and real GDP, per capita income, and the Consumer Price Index indicate the multiples relative to their 1970 levels.

2. Expansion of Housing Stock

The total housing stock in Korea, which does not fully account for all the separate housing units, was only 4.4 million in 1970 but increased dramatically to 18.5 million by 2020, a 4.2-fold increase over half a century. This remarkable expansion of the housing stock stemmed from the complex interaction between global and domestic socioeconomic factors and government policies.

During the period when economic growth was the top national priority, investments were concentrated on social overhead capital such as roads, ports, and dams, which were prerequisites for growth, rather than on housing. However, as the underinvestment in housing accumulated, shortages worsened in the 1980s, leading to a sharp rise in housing prices and growing public concern. In response, the government implemented a range of policies to expand the housing supply, most notably the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1988–1992)*. As part of this plan, the first phase of *New Towns* was implemented, supplying 0.3 million houses across five cities in the Seoul metropolitan area and 1.7 million in other regions. As a result of the plan's success, the housing supply ratio rose from 71.7% in 1985 to 86.0% in 1995.

However, the Asian Financial Crisis in November 1997 severely impacted Korea's economy, and the housing market was no exception. Amid an extreme decrease in housing demand, construction projects were suspended as a result of labor market restructuring and elevated interest rates, resulting in a significant accumulation of unsold new housing. Following Korea's recovery from the crisis, the housing market regained stability.

The first phase of the five *New Towns* in the Seoul metropolitan area helped disperse Seoul's population to Gyeonggi-Do. Despite policies like the *Seoul Metropolitan Area Readjustment*

Plans, which aimed to curb population concentration in the capital area, the population of the area increased rapidly through the 1990s and early 2000s. Consequently, housing shortages intensified in the Seoul metropolitan area, and housing prices rose sharply again.

In response, the government launched the second phase of *New Towns* in 2007. Of the 12 *New Towns* nationwide, 10 were located in the Seoul metropolitan area and 2 in the Chungcheong region (Figure 2-1). Following the successful implementation of the plan, the housing stock increased significantly again.

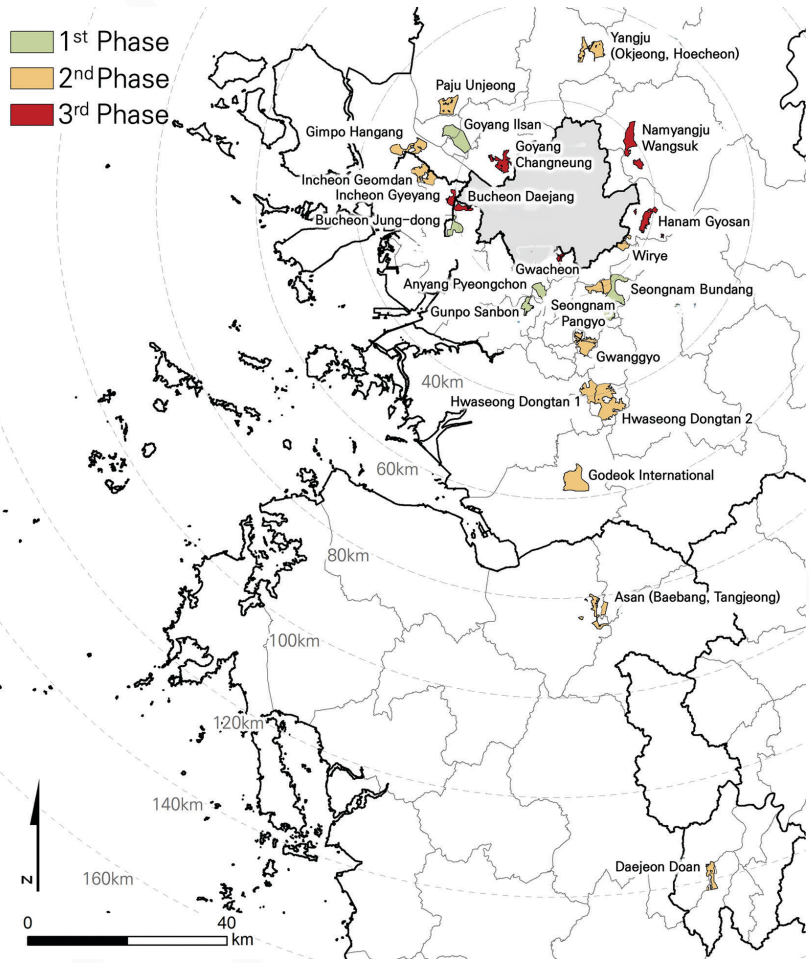


Figure 2-1. Locations of Major New Towns in Phases 1–3

However, in 2008, the Global Financial Crisis that originated in the United States once again shook Korea's economy, causing a decline in housing prices. Amid a significant decline in housing demand caused by the economic crisis, the number of unsold new housing has increased nationwide.

As the effects of the crisis gradually receded, housing prices began to rise again. To stabilize the housing market, the government announced a large-scale housing supply plan through the third phase of *New Towns* in 2018. Similar to the first phase, the locations of the third phase were designated in Gyeonggi-Do and Incheon, adjacent to Seoul.

3. Changes Caused by the Increase in Housing Stock

1) Characteristics of the Increased Housing Stock

The housing stock in Korea increased dramatically due to improved supply capacity, rising income-driven demand, and a preference for apartments. The increase in housing stock shows the following characteristics:

First, there has been a shift in predominant housing types from detached houses to apartments. As shown in Table 2-2, apartments numbered only 33,000 in 1970 but surged to 11.7 million by 2020. Consequently, the share of apartments in the total housing stock increased from 0.7% to 62.9% during the same period. In contrast, the number of detached houses decreased from 4.2 million to 3.9 million, and their proportion of total housing dropped significantly from 93.7% to 21.0%.

Second, new housing types emerged and spread. Through the 1980s, multiplex

houses were institutionalized separately from row houses and began to be surveyed in the Population and Housing Census from 1990 onward.[1] The stock of row houses and multiplex houses has steadily increased since the 1980s. Their share of total housing was only 3.3% (146,000 units) in 1970 but rose to 14.9% (2.8 million units) in 2020. In addition, since 1990, *officetels*—classified as living quarters other than house—have also increased significantly.

Third, despite the large-scale apartment supply, the increase in owner-occupied households was relatively small compared to the rise in housing stock. Between 1970 and 2020, the total housing stock increased by 14.1 million units, while owner-occupied households increased by only 8.0 million, from 4.0 million to 12.0 million households.

Fourth, the increase in vacant houses is notable. While new houses have been steadily supplied and the overall housing stock has grown, the number of old houses abandoned and vacant has also increased. Vacant houses numbered only 74,000 in 1970 but reached 1.5 million in 2020.[2]

1) Both row houses and multiplex houses in Korea are apartment-style residences but low-rise of four stories or less, lower than apartments. The difference between row houses and multiplex houses is the floor area. Row houses have larger floor areas than multiplex houses.

2) The Population and Housing Census enumerates housing units as vacant if they are empty on the census reference date (November 1). Therefore, the figure includes temporary vacancies, such as units for rent/sale or secondary residences.

Table 2-2. Changes in Number of Houses by Type (1970–2020)

(Unit: thousand units, %)

Category	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Detached Houses	4,155	4,382	4,652	4,719	4,727	4,490	4,269	4,264	4,089	3,974	3,898
	93.7	91.0	85.6	75.3	64.3	46.9	37.2	32.2	27.9	24.3	21.0
Apartments	33	89	374	822	1,628	3,610	5,480	6,963	8,576	9,806	11,662
	0.7	1.8	6.9	13.1	22.1	37.7	47.8	52.7	58.4	59.9	62.9
Row Houses and Multiplex Houses	146	165	162	350	603	1,122	1,322	1,788	1,851	2,383	2,752
	3.3	3.4	3.0	5.6	8.2	11.7	11.5	13.5	12.6	14.6	14.9
Houses within Commercial Buildings	25	98	131	213	202	348	401	209	161	204	214
	0.6	2.0	2.4	3.4	2.7	3.6	3.5	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.2
Total Housing Stock (Growth Rate)	4,434	4,816	5,434	6,271	7,357	9,570	11,472	13,223	14,677	16,367	18,526
	-	8.6	12.8	15.4	17.3	30.1	19.9	15.3	11.0	11.5	13.2
Vacant Houses (As a Percentage of Total Housing)	74	82	115	167	197	365	513	728	794	1,069	1,511
	1.7	1.7	2.1	2.7	2.7	3.8	4.5	5.5	5.4	6.5	8.2

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS; Vacant housing stock before 1995 cited from Statistics Korea (2002).

Note: As the number of houses from 1970 to 1990 excludes vacant houses, the sum of percentages accounts below 100%..

2) Stagnation of Homeownership Rate

The homeownership rate refers to the proportion of households living in their own homes. As owner-occupiers are generally considered more stable than renters, a higher homeownership rate indicates a higher proportion of households with stable living

conditions.

Despite the rapid increase in housing stock, the nationwide homeownership rate fell below 60% in 1980 and declined further to 49.9% by 1990. After 1990, it rose above 50% but has not yet reached 60%. Particularly in Seoul, where housing demand is especially intense, the homeownership rate has remained between 38.0% and 45.2% from 1975 to 2020. Other metropolitan cities also have relatively low homeownership rates.

4. Significant Improvement in Housing Consumption

1) Increase in Number of Housing Units per a Thousand People

Korea uses the housing supply ratio as an indicator reflecting the supply and demand of housing; however, this measure is rarely used in international comparisons. Instead, the housing stock is mainly measured by the number of houses per person. In Korea, the number of houses per a thousand people was only 145 in 1980 but increased significantly to 249 in 2000 and 418 in 2020 (Table 2-3).

Table 2-3. Improvements in Housing Consumption (1980–2020)

(Unit: unit, m^2, count)

Category	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Number of Housing Units per a Thousand People[1)]	145	155	169	215	249	330	357	383	418
Floor Space per Household	45.8	46.4	51.0	58.6	62.4	66.3	67.4	68.4	70.1
Floor Space per Capita	10.1	11.3	13.8	17.2	19.8	23.1	25.0	26.9	29.7
Number of Rooms Used per Household[2)]	2.1	2.2	2.5	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.7
Number of Rooms Used per Capita	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6

Source: Figures for the five indicators from 1980 to 1990 and 1995 (except number of houses per thousand people) cited from Statistics Korea (2002); number of housing units per thousand people since 1995 from MOLIT, Housing Supply Rate; floor space per household, floor space per capita, number of rooms used per household, and number of rooms used per capita since 2000 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: 1) The number of houses per a thousand people from 1980 to 1990 cited from Statistics Korea (2002) does not count separate housing units of multi-family houses.

2) The number of rooms used per household from 1980 to 1995 cited from Statistics Korea (2002) is based on the total number of rooms per household.

2) Improvement in Overcrowding Rates

Internationally, the level of housing overcrowding is measured by indicators such as the number of rooms used per person, the number of persons per room, and floor space per household or capita. The trends of key indicators are as follows:

① Number of Rooms Used per Person: This indicator can be calculated by dividing the total number of rooms used by the total number of household members. In other words, it

represents how many rooms, on average, one person uses. International standards generally consider a value below 1.0 to indicate overcrowding. In Korea, the number of rooms used per person was only 0.5 in 1980. It rose to 1.1 by 2000, surpassing the overcrowding threshold. This indicator has steadily improved since then, reaching 1.6 in 2020.

② Living Space: This can be measured by floor space per household or per capita. Floor space per capita is calculated by dividing the total floor space of houses and officetels occupied by general households by the total number of household members. It has steadily increased from 1980 to the present. Specifically, it increased from only 10.1m^2 in 1980 to 19.8m^2 in 2000 and 29.7m^2 in 2020. Overall, Koreans now live in larger homes than before.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Korea's rapid economic growth and surge in national income have driven both a substantial increase in housing stock and marked enhancements in housing quality. However, statistical indicators alone cannot fully explain the structural transformations in housing conditions. Socioeconomic conditions, lifestyle changes beyond the statistics, and the unique characteristics of the housing market present a range of policy implications including the need for sustained housing supply, support for vulnerable populations, and help climbing the housing ladder.

First, a robust housing supply is essential. However, as was the case during times of acute housing scarcity, the straightforward approach of simply building more homes is no longer an effective solution. Household formation and rising income levels require not only a stable

housing supply but also improvements in housing quality. In particular, consideration should be given to the timing of reconstruction for housing built during periods of mass supply.

Second, policies aimed at supporting vulnerable groups should be further developed and strengthened. Despite steady housing supplies, the homeownership rate remains below 60%. A considerable share of homeowners possess properties not for their own use, but primarily for investment purposes, suggesting that greater policy attention should be directed toward the distribution of housing.

The fundamental goal of housing policy is consistent across the globe: to ensure adequate housing that upholds the dignity and basic living standards of economically vulnerable populations. Although income levels have risen substantially, a significant proportion of the population continues to face threats to accessing adequate housing. Policies should aim to reduce the number of households living below minimum housing standards and enhance housing stability for them. In addition to expanding the supply of public rental housing, greater attention must be given to policies that address housing needs across different life stages—particularly by supporting the rapidly growing number of elderly households and providing housing assistance for the young.

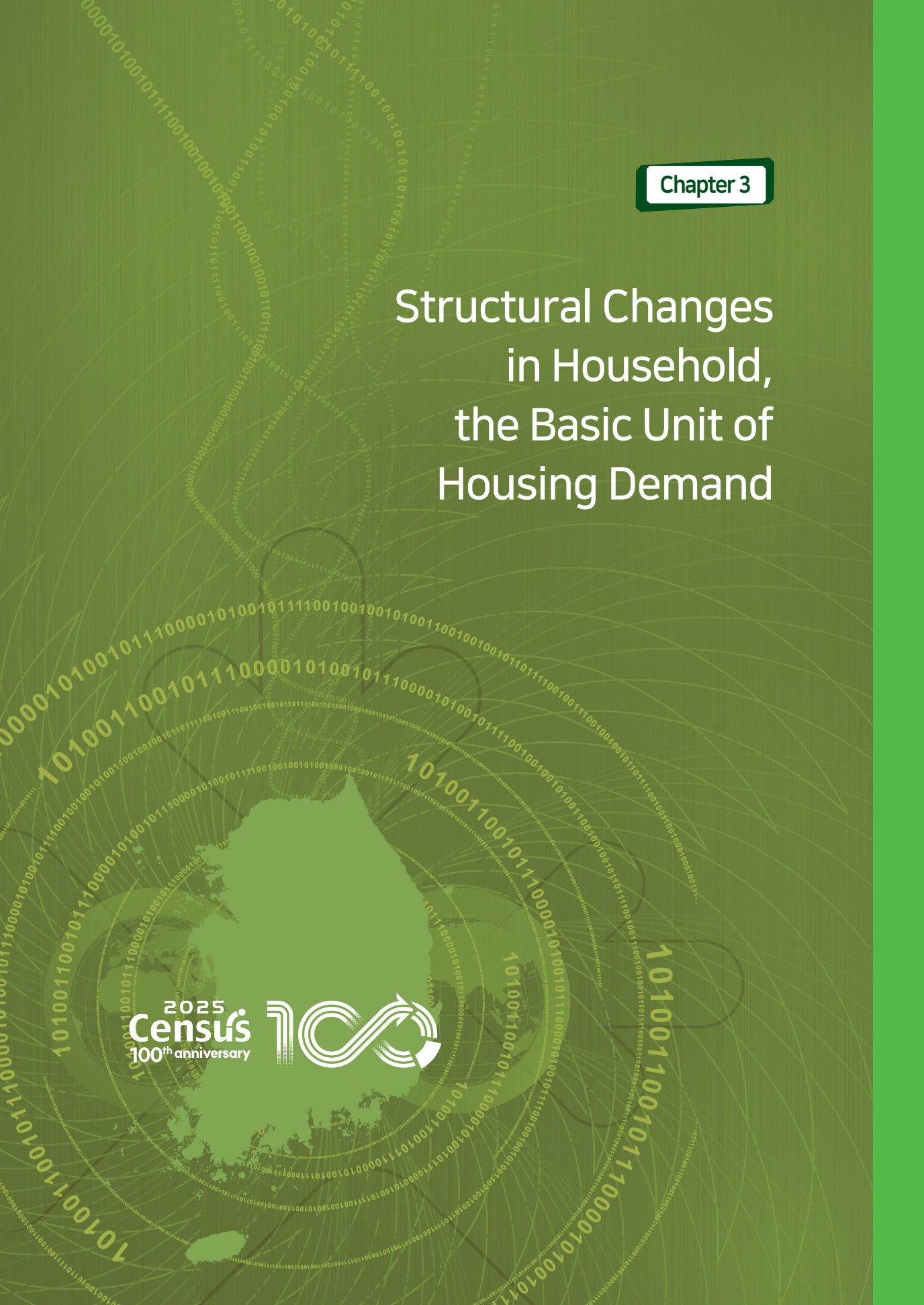
Third, the need for urban regeneration has become increasingly urgent, as population shifts from old city centers to suburbs have led to the depopulation and decline of many inner-city areas. Comprehensive projects considering the increased vacancies of houses as well as surrounding housing, commercial buildings and traditional markets should be undertaken.

Fourth, housing policy should shift to decentralization. Significant regional differences exist in indicators such as housing prices relative to income, vacant houses, and the housing supply ratio. This indicates diverse housing issues across regions. However, most housing policies are led by the central government in Korea. Although 30 years have passed since the implementation of local autonomy, local governments in Korea still lack the capacities

to play a leading role in housing policy. Local governments should take a more proactive role in housing policies, with a deeper understanding of regional characteristics and their provision of social services closely tied to residents' daily lives.

Chapter 3

Structural Changes in Household, the Basic Unit of Housing Demand



Changes in household structure directly impact the housing market because the unit of housing consumption is the household, not the population. This chapter explores the changes in Korea's household structure, which have a significant influence on housing demand, and draws implications.

1. Household, the Unit of Housing Consumption

Looking at the changes in household size, the proportion of one-person households, which was 4.8% in 1980, significantly increased to 31.7% in 2020 (Figure 3-1). Until 1995, one-person households accounted for the lowest proportion, but since 2015, they have become the largest. The proportion of two-person households also significantly increased from 10.5% in 1980 to 28.0% in 2020. Conversely, four-person households peaked at 31.7% in 1995 and decreased to 15.6% by 2020, and five-person households showed a steady downward trend from 20.0% in 1980 to 3.6% in 2020.

Housing, as a specific good, generally has the unique characteristic that each household occupies a separate residential space. Although some housing types accommodate multiple households within a single unit, each household still requires independent space,

and it is difficult to share a whole residential space like a family. Therefore, the number of households is essential for estimating the required number of housing units, and the household size becomes the key variable for estimating housing demand.

A key example illustrating that housing demand is based on household units is the housing supply ratio. This indicator, calculated as the number of housing units divided by the number of households and expressed as a percentage, theoretically signifies equilibrium at 100%. However, considering that vacant houses or houses that are too old and unsafe, cannot satisfy demand, reaching the ratio of 100% does not necessarily mean that the housing supply is sufficient.

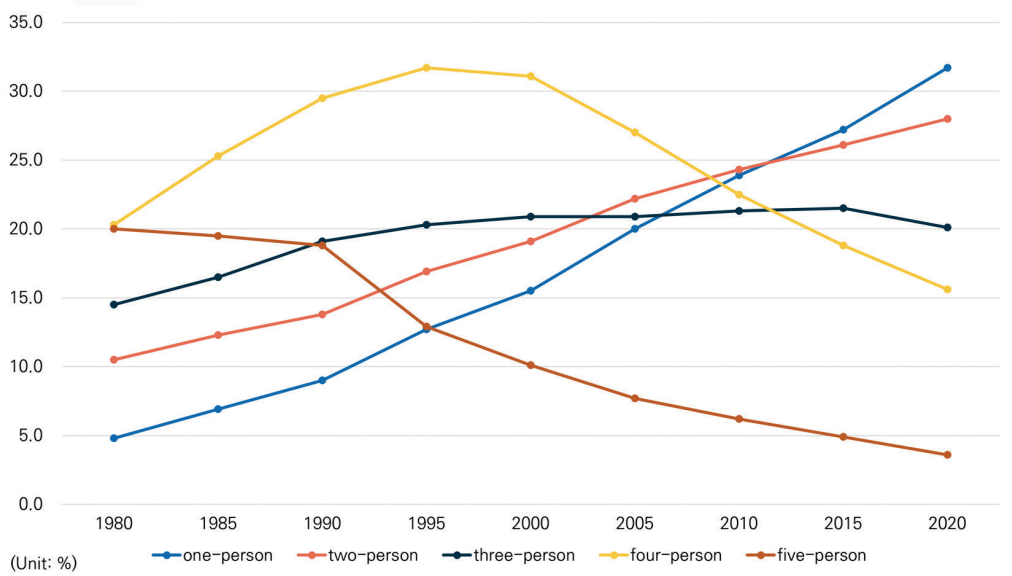


Figure 3-1. Changes in Household Size (1980-2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

2. Quantitative Changes in Households and Housing Demand

1) Quantitative Changes in Households

Over the approximately 70 years from 1955 to 2022, the total population of Korea increased 2.4 times, from 21.5 million to 51.7 million. During the same period, the number of general households[1] grew 5.7 times, from 3.8 million to 21.8 million households. With an average annual population growth rate of 1.2% and a household growth rate of 2.5%, the number of households grew at a faster pace than the population.

The faster rate of household increase compared to the population was due to the rapid nuclearization of families and new household formation. In 1955, the average number of household members was 5.5, which was halved to 2.2 in 2022. As a result of the birth control policy implemented from the 1960s and sustained for over three decades, the number of large families declined rapidly, and households with one or two children became the dominant family structure. The total fertility rate was 1.57 in 1990, reduced to one-third of the 4.53 recorded in 1970. Consequently, population policy has shifted back to *pro-natalist policies*, but the trend of declining fertility rates has become difficult to reverse. As a result, population growth began to slow down, eventually leading to the first natural decline in 2020, when deaths outnumbered births. Apart from population trends, the number of households continued to grow at a high rate, both during the implementation of birth control

1) The number of households in 1955 is based on ordinary households consisting only of family relations and does not include one-person households or non-family households, whereas the number of households in 2022 is based on general households.

policies and after the shift to pro-natalist policies.

2) Changes in Households and Housing Demand

There is no doubt that changes in the number of households have a direct impact on housing demand. However, this does not necessarily mean that an increase in the number of households automatically leads to a proportional increase in housing demand.

The housing supply ratio reflects the perspective that the number of houses needed is proportional to the increase in households.[2] Though the number of houses increased by 6.05 million units in 2020 compared to 2005, the housing supply ratio increased by only 5.3 percentage points over 15 years, from 98.3% in 2005 to 103.6% in 2020. This is because the number of households also increased by 5.04 million during the same period.

The fact that the number of houses nationwide has exceeded the number of households, does not mean the housing shortage has been resolved. First, there is the issue of vacant houses. According to the Population and Housing Census, the number of vacant houses in 2020 was about 1.5 million, which is about 8.2% of the total housing stock. While some houses are vacant for sale/rent, moving, or repairs, there are also abandoned vacant houses. Regardless of why a house is vacant, the point is that it is not being used. Although a direct comparison between the two statistics is limited—given that the housing supply ratio is based on separate housing units, while the census data on vacant houses is not—excluding vacant homes results in a nationwide housing supply ratio of 96.3% in 2020.

Another important factor is foreign households. Although foreign households are excluded when calculating the housing supply ratio, they nonetheless generate a tangible demand for housing. As of 2020, about 1.7 million foreigners live in Korea, constituting

2) For more details on this, see Chapter 4.

540,000 foreign households. In certain areas of various cities—such as Garibong-dong and Daerim-dong in Seoul, and Wongok-dong in Ansan, Gyeonggi—foreigners tend to live in concentrated communities, significantly influencing local housing demand.

As mentioned earlier, the most notable change in household structure over the past 100 years has been the rise of smaller households, specifically, a rapid increase in one- and two-person households, accompanied by a decline in traditional households consisting of three or more members. In particular, the increase in one-person households is faster than in the United States (Figure 3-2). The proportion of one-person households in the US increased moderately from 22.7% in 1980 to 28.2% in 2020, whereas during the same period, the proportion in Korea sharply increased from 4.8% to 31.7%, surpassing the US from 2020. While Korea's one-person household share is lower than the average of the 27 European Union (EU) countries, which reached 37.7% in 2020, the growth rate since 2010 has been faster than the EU.

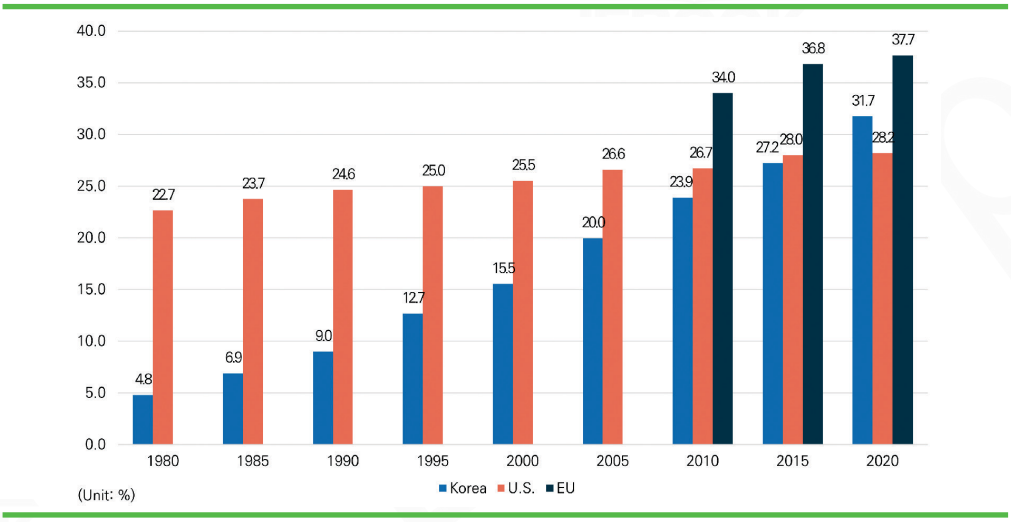


Figure 3-2. International Comparison of Changes in One-Person Household (1980-2020)

Source: Figures of Korea from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS; US from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements; EU, the average of 27 EU countries from Eurostat, Households by Type (data code: lfst_hhnhtych).

Housing is a durable good that is difficult to demolish or modify once built. Therefore, promptly adjusting the existing housing stock by unit size in response to changes in household composition is a challenging task.

While the proportion of one-person households was 31.7% in 2020, the proportion of small housing units of 40m^2 or less, suitable for one-person households, is low at 12.8%. According to the 2020 census, the proportion of one-person households living in housing units—including *officetels*[3]—of 40m^2 or less is 33.2%, and the proportion living in over 40m^2 and up to 85m^2 is 51.3% (Table 3-1). Of course, not all one-person households demand small housing units. However, considering the age and income of one-person households, housing units of appropriate size must be supplied to make housing costs affordable, which suggests the need to expand the stock of small housing units.

Although there is an increasing trend of small housing stock in urban areas (*dong*), the slow pace is problematic. The proportion of housing units of 40m^2 or less only increased by 0.6 percentage points from 12.9% in 2015 to 13.5% in 2022. The shortage of small housing stock sometimes leads to situations where one-person households have to pay high housing costs relative to their income to live in larger houses, or are forced to live in inadequate living quarters to save on housing costs.

3) An officetel is a type of building that combines the functions of an office and a hotel, allowing individuals to both work and reside in the same space.

Table 3-1. Floor Area by Household Size (2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	40m² or less	Over 40m² and up to 85m²	Over 85m² and up to 130m²	Over 130m²
Total	12.8	65.2	12.7	9.3
One-person	33.2	51.3	7.8	7.7
Two-person	9.8	65.7	14.0	10.5
Three-person	4.4	73.5	13.2	8.9
Four-person	2.3	74.6	14.6	8.6
Five-person	2.1	65.7	19.3	12.9
Six or more person	2.3	53.8	24.0	19.9

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, 20% Sample microdata.
Note: Households with unknown floor area are excluded from the calculation.

Looking at the changes in household structure over the past 100 years from a quantitative view, the number of households increased much faster than the population, which led to a rapid expansion of housing demand. Korea's current situation is that the pace of household change is too fast, and there persist institutional limitations that make it difficult for the housing system to address the shifting demand. At the same time, Korea's floor area per capita was 29.7m² in 2020, still lower than advanced countries like Japan (40.2m², 2018) and the UK (43.2m², 2020).[4] The necessity to expand medium-to-large sized housing units is also simultaneously emerging.

4) Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2019, Housing and Land Survey; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023, English Housing Survey Headline Report; Statistics Korea, e-Nara Indicators.

3. The Effect of Change in Household Characteristics on Housing Demand

1) Changes in Household Characteristics

Changes in household characteristics relevant to housing demand can be summarized as income polarization, the increase in elderly households, the rise in female-headed households, and the increase in multicultural households. These changes have led to the diversification of housing demand.

The polarization of household income is the most important factor. The PIR (Price-to-Income Ratio), measured by median house price relative to median income, based on the result of *Korea Housing Survey* rose from 4.3 in 2010 to 6.7 in 2021. As the number of households unable to secure adequate housing increased, it has become difficult to avoid the polarization of housing demand and needs.

Due to low fertility rates, aging, and nuclearization of families, the increase in elderly households, consisting of elderly individuals living alone or elderly couples, is accelerating. The proportion of elderly households whose head is 65 years or older increased significantly from 12.1% in 2000 to 22.6% in 2020, a rise of 3 million households from 1.7 million to 4.7 million. This signifies a rapid increase in demand for housing suitable for the elderly. While some elderly individuals—so-called active seniors—remain active and self-reliant, elderly households generally have weaker economic and physical capacities than middle-aged households, leading to different housing demands.

The rise in female-headed households also has important implications for housing demand. The proportion of female-headed households rapidly increased from 14.7% in

1980 to 18.5% in 2000 and 32.7% in 2020. In the past, the marital status of female heads of household was mainly widowed, but recently, due to changes in women's status and gender roles within family or society, there has been a sharp increase in female household heads who are unmarried or divorced.

The increase in multicultural households due to the increase in foreign-born and naturalized populations is also a notable change in household structure in recent years. Multicultural households increased from 299,000 in 2015 to 399,000 in 2022. Notably, multicultural households are increasing mainly in urban areas, with the proportion of them reaching 77.4% in 2022.

2) Changes in Household Characteristics and Housing Demand

The changes in household characteristics discussed above provide important implications for housing demand. First, the increase in household income and income polarization are among the most crucial factors influencing housing demand. Even if the number of households does not change, housing demand increases if household income rises. The household income growth rate has been gradually slowing and housing demand appears to have been affected.

Even though average income increases, if income polarization leads to a growth in low-income or vulnerable households, the need for housing assistance grows. Globally, the polarization of household income is intensifying, and Korea is no exception. As a result, the need for housing welfare policies, such as public rental housing or housing benefits, is continuously rising.

The increase in elderly households leads to rising demands for specific housing types, such as senior welfare housing. Typically, such housing is designed with barrier-free features to allow better mobility for those with physical disabilities. Furthermore, these houses often

include separate facilities for healthcare, physical therapy, or leisure activities.

The phenomenon of increasing female-headed households also influences housing demand. As of 2020, women accounted for 32.7% of all household heads nationwide, but their share among households living in apartments was at 29.5%. It seems that female-headed households have relatively lower income than male-headed households.

FFurthermore, female-headed households are often one-person households or raising children alone, making them more vulnerable in terms of housing safety. As of 2022, the proportion of single-parent families raising children alone is higher for female-headed households (17.9%) than for male-headed households (3.3%), and the proportion of one-person households is also significantly higher for female-headed households (50.5%) than for male-headed households (26.1%).

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Driven by unprecedented economic growth, Korea has experienced rapid shifts in household structure, with projections indicating that these changes are occurring at a significantly faster rate than in other nations. The growth rate of one-person households is among the highest in the world, while the fertility rate has dropped to one of the lowest. Although average household income has significantly increased, income polarization is exacerbating the issue of housing polarization. Regionally, a contrasting situation is unfolding: in the Seoul metropolitan area and large cities, 1-2 person households are increasing, particularly among younger generations, due to household formation and influx from other regions; whereas in small and rural areas, elderly one-person households

and vacant houses are increasing. These changes in household structure offer numerous implications for the housing market.

Quantitatively, the change in households can be summarized as housing units are still *not sufficient*. Considering foreign households excluded from the housing supply ratio and vacant houses included in the number of houses, housing stock is insufficient. Housing shortages are evident where demand is intense.

Projections of future housing demand, taking into account changes in both the number and composition of households, clearly indicate potential housing shortages. Despite a declining population, the number of households is projected to increase until 2041, suggesting that housing demand will remain elevated for at least another decade. As the number of households grows, centered on 1-2 person households, the housing demand will increase, along with the demand for new types of housing (such as shared houses, co-living, and co-housing). Furthermore, if telecommuting becomes more widespread, people will make more efficient use of space in high-cost downtown areas, and the demand for mixed-use housing combining work, residence, and leisure is also likely to expand. The steady increase in demand for commercial-residential complexes can be understood in this context.

Supplying specific housing for elderly households and female-headed households is also a challenge. The increase in elderly households will lead to increased demand for co-housing that enables mutual care among the elderly or customized housing for seniors. Additionally, the increase in never-married and childless households is likely to drive changes in infrastructure across residential areas. The recent decrease in kindergartens and elementary schools and the increase in facilities for the elderly are likely to continue. This would lead not just to changes in housing demand but also in residential areas. In addition to incorporating elderly-friendly features within individual homes—such as ramps, alarm systems, and safety handles—it will be necessary to develop housing policies tailored to seniors.

Meanwhile, in response to the increase in female-headed households, which have a relatively higher proportion living in non-apartment housing, also being one-person or single-parent households, there is a need to supply safe and secure housing units.

The increase in foreign households will lead to transformations in the housing market. If the increase in foreign households is not properly reflected in housing policy, it could aggravate social segregation due to the inability to achieve social integration. It is now necessary to consider foreign households as a target of housing policy. They are generating housing demand, and in a few regions, not only for rental housing but for homeownership. Therefore, it is important to continuously monitor the characteristics and evolving patterns of foreign households to ensure their needs are reflected in housing policy.

In summary, Korea's household structure is likely to undergo more rapid changes in the next 100 years than in the past century, and changes in housing demand are expected to accelerate. Although the number of households is still increasing despite the population decline, it is expected to start decreasing in the near future, and factors such as low fertility rates, aging, and non-marriage will cause changes in housing demand.

Chapter 4

Changes in Housing Supply Ratio and Vacant Housing

The *Housing Supply Ratio* is a quantitative indicator that shows whether the housing stock is sufficient compared to the number of households at a given time. The housing supply ratio published by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT) serves as a fundamental data source for establishing housing policies. This chapter will examine the trends in the housing supply ratio and the changes in vacant housing. Additionally, we aim to estimate the housing supply ratio that reflects the changing concepts of housing and households, considering vacant housing, *officetels*, and foreign households. Finally, we will discuss the significance and limitations of the housing supply ratio as an indicator of housing stock and propose directions for improving housing stock-related policies.

1. Changes in the Housing Supply Ratio

The housing supply ratio is a key indicator of the achievements of housing supply policies. However, it has limitations in that it does not reflect the physical quality and performance of housing, ownership distribution (homeownership rate), or living conditions. Prior to 2007, the housing supply ratio was based on the number of houses which was smaller than the number of housing units and the number of households was calculated

excluding one-person and non-family households of five people or fewer.

With the expansion of multi-family house supply since 1990, there arose a need to revise the measure of calculating the housing supply ratio in the 2000s. Additionally, as household compositions diversified, there was a demand for an expanded definition to include one-person households and non-family households of five people or fewer. The revised housing supply ratio in 2007 included the housing units of multi-family houses. In addition, the definition of households expanded to general households of the census—including one-person households and non-family households of five people or fewer. Although the housing supply ratio is published by the MOLIT, the number of households and housing units used in its calculation is based on the results of the Population and Housing Census by Statistics Korea.

Before the revision, the nationwide housing supply ratio was 79.5% in 1970 and remained below 80% until 1990. However, it recorded 86.0% in 1995 and 96.2% in 2000. The rapid increase in the housing supply ratio in the 1990s was largely driven by the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1988–1992)* and *New Towns* developments. From this period, policy approaches to stabilize housing prices began shifting from measures focused on curbing speculation and regulating prices to strategies emphasizing the expansion of housing supply. Under the new housing supply ratio, it began to exceed 100% from 2010 onwards (Table 4-1).[1)] The housing supply ratio slightly increased from 100.5% in 2010 to 104.8% in 2019, but fell to 102.5% in 2023 due to a significant increase in the number of households compared to housing units between 2019 and 2023.

The housing supply ratio in Seoul remained near 50% from 1970 to 1990. However, it rose significantly to 68.0% in 1995 and 77.4% in 2000. As Seoul has numerous housing units in multi-family houses, the housing supply ratio increased sharply to 93.7% in 2005

1) In 2007, when the housing supply ratio was reformed, the previously published figures was also recalculated and published using the new standards from 2005.

with the revised calculation. The ratio in Seoul rose gradually from 94.4% in 2010 to 96.3% in 2016, but stagnated after, then falling to 93.6% in 2023.

As of 2023, the housing supply ratio in the non-capital area was 107.7%, while the Seoul metropolitan area was only 97.2%, falling below 100%. In major urban areas, including Seoul, where the housing supply ratio is low, there persists a possibility of periodic price increases due to the mismatch between supply and demand.

Table 4-1. Changes in Housing Supply Ratio in the Nationwide and Seoul (2005-2023)

(Unit: household, unit, %)

Category	Nationwide			Seoul		
	Number of Households	Number of Housing Units	Housing Supply Ratio	Number of Households	Number of Housing Units	Housing Supply Ratio
2005	15,887,128	15,622,600	98.3	3,309,890	3,102,200	93.7
2010	17,655,700	17,738,000	100.5	3,646,500	3,442,100	94.4
2011	17,928,100	18,082,100	100.9	3,673,400	3,477,800	94.7
2012	18,209,200	18,414,400	101.1	3,700,600	3,509,800	94.8
2013	18,499,600	18,742,100	101.3	3,728,200	3,546,400	95.1
2014	18,800,000	19,161,200	101.9	3,756,200	3,607,600	96.0
2015	19,111,030	19,559,100	102.3	3,784,490	3,633,000	96.0
2016	19,367,700	19,877,100	102.6	3,784,700	3,644,100	96.3
2017	19,673,900	20,313,400	103.3	3,813,300	3,671,500	96.3
2018	19,979,200	20,818,000	104.2	3,839,800	3,682,400	95.9
2019	20,343,200	21,310,100	104.8	3,896,400	3,738,600	96.0
2020	20,926,700	21,673,500	103.6	3,982,300	3,778,400	94.9
2021	21,448,500	21,917,200	102.2	4,046,800	3,811,900	94.2
2022	21,773,500	22,236,900	102.1	4,098,800	3,839,800	93.7
2023	22,073,200	22,623,900	102.5	4,141,700	3,878,500	93.6

Source: MOLIT, Housing Supply Ratio.

2. Changes in Vacant Housing

In the Population and Housing Census, the definition of vacant housing follows the guidelines set forth in the *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for the Censuses*. Vacant housing refers to all houses that are not occupied as of the census reference date, November 1. Therefore, not only long-term vacant housing but also temporary vacancies due to moving for sales, rentals, development projects, and unsold new housing are included in the count.

When the statistics on vacant housing began in 1995, the number of vacant housing nationwide was 0.4 million (3.8%), which increased significantly to 1.1 million (6.5%) in 2015 and 1.5 million (8.2%) in 2020 (Table 4-2). Even in Seoul, which has the lowest proportion of vacant housing nationwide, the number increased from 40,000 (2.3%) in 2015 to 97,000 (3.2%) in 2020.

Looking at vacant housing by housing type nationwide, in 1995, the distribution was as follows: apartments (42.5%), detached houses (41.9%), row houses (9.4%), and multiplex houses (4.7%). By 2020, this changed to apartments (54.9%), detached houses (22.5%), multiplex houses (16.1%), and row houses (4.9%). In Seoul, the distribution in 1995 was apartments (53.9%), row houses (18.0%), detached houses (14.2%), and multiplex houses (12.5%). In 2020, it shifted to apartments (52.7%), multiplex houses (36.7%), row houses (5.5%), and detached houses (3.6%).

The upward trend in vacant housing in the non-capital area is even steeper. In 2015, the proportion of vacant housing exceeded 10% in five provinces (*si* and *do*), and by 2020,

increased to nine.[2] The non-capital area is experiencing continuous population outflow, with areas of population decline overlapping with regions that have high vacancy rates.

Table 4-2. Changes in Vacant Housing by Housing Type in Nationwide and Seoul (1995-2020)

(Unit: unit, %)

Category	Housing Type	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nationwide	Total	365,466 (3.8)	513,059 (4.5)	727,814 (5.5)	793,848 (5.4)	1,068,919 (6.5)	1,511,306 (8.2)
	Detached House	152,997	199,717	278,587	292,379	261,542	339,406
	Apartment	155,356	248,509	335,732	390,950	571,333	829,784
	Row House	34,435	36,815	38,201	32,440	54,485	74,371
	Multiplex House	17,005	19,119	64,957	67,966	165,969	242,870
	House within Commercial Building	5,673	8,899	10,337	10,113	15,590	24,875
Seoul	Total	39,806 (2.3)	56,642 (2.9)	79,800 (3.4)	78,702 (3.1)	79,049 (2.8)	96,629 (3.2)
	Detached House	5,636	8,684	12,051	8,472	2,662	3,508
	Apartment	21,438	36,248	41,350	44,100	43,302	50,900
	Row House	7,174	5,547	6,861	5,463	4,901	5,338
	Multiplex House	4,992	5,313	18,315	19,639	27,617	35,485
	House within Commercial Building	566	850	1,223	1,028	567	1,398

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: The figures in parentheses indicate the proportion of vacant housing relative to the total number of houses (living quarters within multi-family houses not included).

2) There are 17 provinces in South Korea.

3. Directions for Improving the Calculation of Housing Supply Ratio

1) Estimation of Housing Supply Ratio Reflecting Vacant Housing, Officetels, and Foreign Households

The housing supply rate requires improvement in order to increase its effectiveness as a basis for policymaking. In the Korean census, housing is conventionally defined as a unit of ownership or sale. In contrast, most developed countries account for residential spaces that can accommodate independent households as housing units. A separate entrance is a prerequisite, and in some countries, having a separate kitchen (cooking facilities), bathroom, and toilet is required for a housing unit.

After the revision of the housing supply ratio, Korea has come closer to international standards by including housing units in multi-family houses. In order to enhance the accuracy of the housing supply ratio, changes are inevitable. First, the definition of what constitutes 'housing' should be revised. It remains problematic that the total number of houses reported in the Housing Census is still based on the conventional ownership or sale. It would be more rational to collect and analyze housing-related data based on the number of housing units.

Secondly, it is necessary to include *officetels* in the number of housing units. In Korea, an *officetel* is a compound word of "office" and "hotel", meaning a building that blends office and residential functions. Since institutionalization in the 1980s and 1990s, *officetels* have been supplied mainly in urban areas, often functioning similarly to urban studios. In the current Population and Housing Census, *officetels* are classified under living quarters other

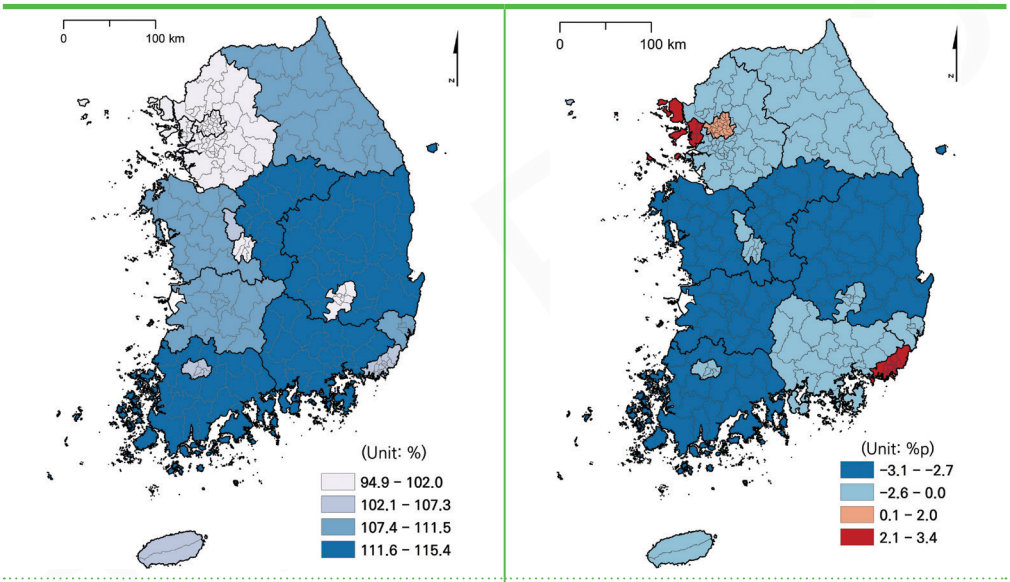
than house and are not included in the calculation of the housing supply ratio. However, in taxation, administration, and policy support, *officetels* are often regarded as housing.

When residential *officetels* are counted, the nationwide housing supply ratio for 2020 would be 106.7%, which is 3.1 percentage points higher than the official housing supply ratio (103.6%). Particularly, in Seoul and Incheon, this would increase by over 5 percentage points compared to the current housing supply ratio.

Thirdly, the current housing supply ratio in Korea is calculated excluding foreign households, but it is necessary to calculate it by including them. Foreign households numbered 542,000 in 2020, and their influence on the housing markets is likely to be significant.

Fourthly, it is necessary to exclude damaged vacant housing when calculating the housing supply ratio. As of 2020, there were 119,000 damaged vacant housing (7.9% of the vacant housing). In some provinces like Jeonnam, Gyeongbuk, Gyeongnam, Jeonbuk, and Gyeonggi, there are more than 10,000 damaged vacant housing. Excluding damaged houses would lower the housing supply ratio, particularly in non-capital or rural areas, which have a high proportion of old houses. These areas are also experiencing population decline and also classified as regions with a high housing supply ratio.

Damaged vacant housing and foreign households in the calculation would lower the housing supply ratio, while including residential *officetels* leads to an increase in the ratio. When all of these factors are taken into account, the adjusted nationwide housing supply ratio for 2020 is 103.4%. This is 0.2 percentage points lower than the official housing supply ratio. Incheon, Busan, and Seoul saw increases of over 1.0 percentage points (Figure 4-1), primarily influenced by the number of residential *officetels*. In non-capital areas, most provinces experienced a decrease of over 1.0 percentage points, significantly affected by damaged vacant housing and foreign households.



Current Housing Supply Ratio

Changes in Housing Supply Ratio with Improved Calculating Method

Figure 4-1. Changes in Housing Supply Ratio with Improved Calculating Method by Province (2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

2) Housing units per 1,000 People as a Supplementary Indicator

Most developed countries primarily use *the number of housing units per 1,000 people* as an indicator to measure housing stock. While some countries use a concept similar to Korea's housing supply ratio, it is not universal.

In Korea, the number of housing units per 1,000 people is adopted as a supplementary indicator for the housing supply ratio. According to the *Housing Act*, the MOLIT and the governors of metropolitan and provincial governments are required to establish *Comprehensive Housing Plans* every ten years. In this plan, the governments can continue to use the housing supply ratio as a quantitative indicator to maintain

statistical consistency, while utilizing the number of housing units per 1,000 people as a supplementary indicator for international comparison. Currently, the MOLIT uses both the number of housing units per 1,000 people and the housing supply ratio as quantitative indicators to assess the level of housing stock. The number of housing units per 1,000 people is calculated by dividing the number of houses, including dwelling units in multi-family houses, by the total population—including both Korean citizens and foreigners—and then multiplying by 1,000. The housing supply ratio uses the number of general households as the denominator, excluding foreign households. In contrast, the denominator for the number of housing units per 1,000 people includes both Korean citizens and foreigners.

As of 2020, Korea's number of housing units per 1,000 people is 418.2, with the Seoul metropolitan area at 385.0 and the non-capital area at 451.7, showing a significant difference. Gyeonggi has the lowest at 378.5, with both Incheon and Seoul also below 400. Korea's number of housing units per 1,000 people is slightly lower than that of the UK (433.7), Canada (426.8), and the US (425.2), but slightly higher than Australia (410.7).[3] When making cross-country comparisons, it is important to take into account each country's definition and scope of housing, the use of housing for short-term rentals or tourist accommodations such as Airbnb, and the prevalence of second homes.

3) OECD, Affordable Housing Database.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Historically, the housing supply ratio has aimed to address the absolute shortage of housing and served as evidence for promoting housing supply expansion. Nonetheless, the limitations of the housing supply ratio are clear. It has limitations in showing the supply-demand mismatch in the housing market and does neither provide insights into the quality and performance of existing housing nor policies for marginalized groups. It is difficult to assert that the housing stock is sufficient in Korea. Up until the early 2000s, there was a perspective that if the housing supply ratio exceeded 100%, the absolute shortage of housing stock would be resolved, leading to a demand-driven housing market. However, despite the housing supply ratio being over 100%, housing price hikes driven by supply shortages continue to emerge in specific areas and at particular times.

The appropriate level of the housing supply ratio may vary by region. Considering temporary vacancies due to moving, relocation, and unsold properties, a 100% housing supply ratio does not necessarily indicate sufficient supply. In regions with a low housing supply ratio or supply stagnation, it is unlikely to expect an increase in homeownership opportunities for low-income households. The ownership and use of limited housing stock are determined by competition in the housing market, which may exacerbate the hardships of low-income households.

Generally, increases in housing prices occur when supply is insufficient relative to demand. However, they can also happen when there is a shortage of quality housing stock. Housing is characterized by irreversibility, making it difficult to change its structure, facilities, and equipment, leading to a continuous decline in the quality over time. It is essential to not only increase supply but also to improve quality and performance of

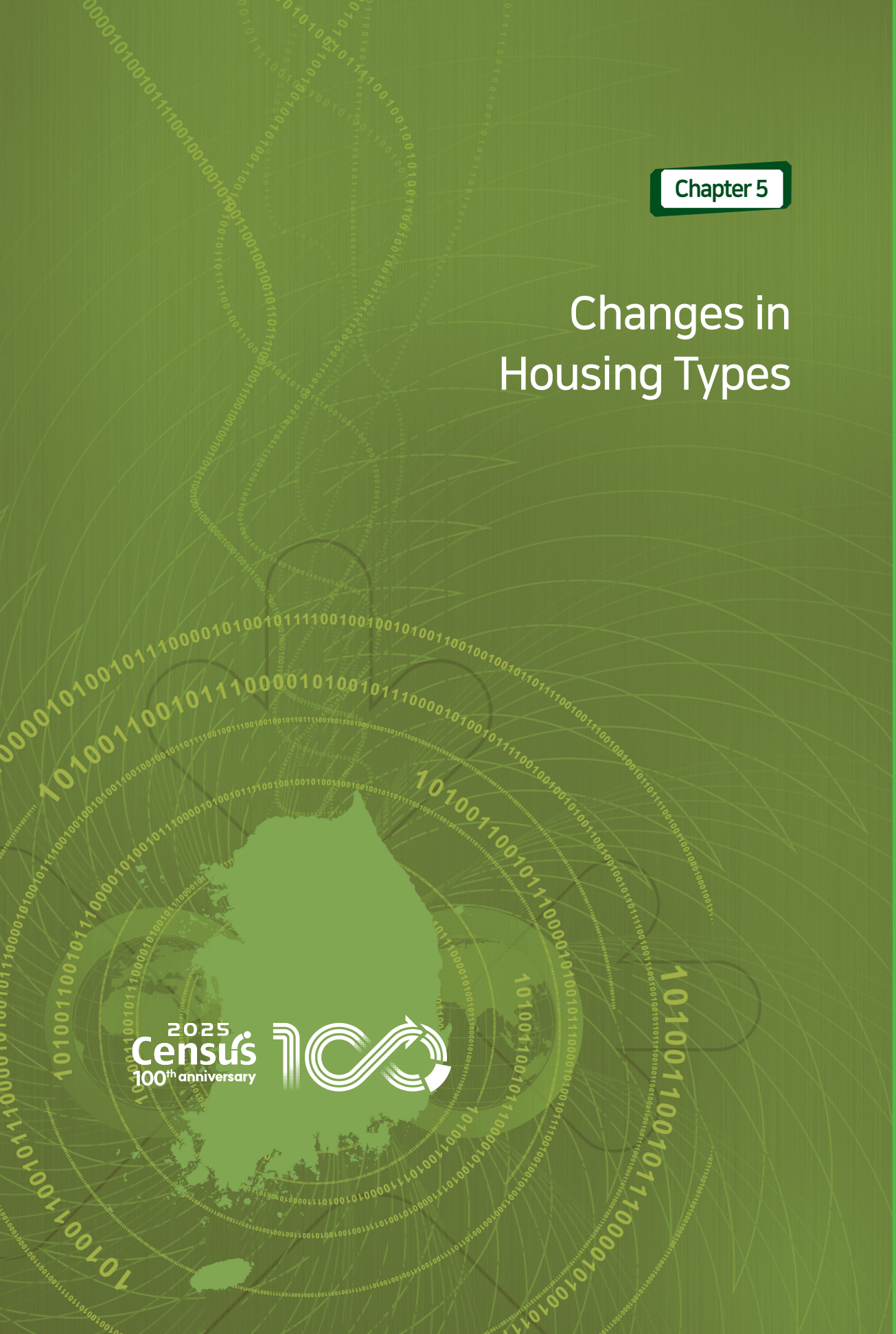
housing.

Policies that promote housing improvement and renovation are needed to enhance effective utilization and increase the volume of transactions. Neglecting maintenance during the economic lifespan of housing and pursuing large-scale redevelopment projects is inappropriate, especially in the era of climate change. It is important to recognize that housing renovation and retrofit are among the policy tools for supplying quality housing.

The challenges related to housing policy have shifted from focusing on quantity to quality. The government needs to pay attention to the importance of managing the quality of housing stock rather than just its quantity. Although minimum housing standards were introduced in the early 2000s, these standards have limitations such as ambiguity in structural, performance, and environmental criteria. In the future, the government should establish evaluation criteria that can objectively assess not only structural safety and habitability centered on the quality and performance of housing, but also the safety and health standards.

Chapter 5

Changes in Housing Types



Information on housing type is fundamental to effective housing policy. Since the first Housing Census was conducted in 1960, the item regarding the type of housing (living quarters) has always been included.[1] Housing types have changed over time, notably with the increase in specific types such as apartments. Due to substantial differences in the classification of housing types, the 1960 census poses challenges for time-series comparison. Therefore, this chapter will examine how housing types have changed from 1970 to 2020 through the Population and Housing Census and suggest policy implications.

1. Changes in Definition of Housing Types

With economic growth and changes in demand across the housing market, as well as new attempts in urban architecture, the categories for housing types in the census have undergone significant changes. The criteria for housing types in the 2020 Population and Housing Census are summarized in Table 5-1.

1) The census conducted in 1966, which focused on population, is an exception.

Table 5-1. Criteria for Housing Types in the Population and Housing Census

Category	Criteria
Detached House	Ordinary Detached House: A detached house built for a single household to live in. Multi-family House: A detached house designed for multiple households to live in. A combination of dwelling and business: A building that includes both residential and commercial spaces, where the residential area is equal to or greater than the commercial area (residential area ≥ commercial area).
Row House	A collective housing unit of four stories or less, which was permitted as a row house at the time of construction, with a total floor area exceeding 660m^2.
Multiplex House	A collective housing unit of four stories or less, which was permitted as a multiplex house at the time of construction, with a total floor area of 660m^2 or less.
Housing within Commercial Building	Housing within a commercial(non-residential) building, where the living area has rooms, a kitchen, and an independent entrance (residential area < commercial area).
Officetel	An office space that can also serve as living quarters.

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census Survey Guidelines.

In the 1970 census, housing types were classified as detached houses, row houses, collective houses, and houses within commercial buildings. Among these, *detached houses* were defined as a separate building constructed or remodeled for only one household to live in. *Multi-family houses* were included under detached houses from the 1995 census onward, which were supplied to address the housing shortages. Since then, the definition has distinguished *ordinary detached houses* built for a single household and *multi-family (detached) houses* designed for multiple households.

A notable aspect regarding housing types in the early Population and Housing Census is that *row houses*, a type of collective housing, were enumerated as a separate item.

Specifically, based on physical form, particularly the number of stories and entrance pathways, single-story buildings were classified as row houses, while those with two or more stories were classified as *collective housing*. If the entrance was connected directly to the outdoors, it was classified as a row house; if it was through a shared hallway or staircase, as collective housing. In the 1975 census, collective housing was renamed *apartments*. While the classification of housing types by the number of stories continued, the definition of apartments in the 1980 census included the term permanent buildings of *four* stories or more, which changed to *five* stories or more starting from the 1995 census.

This shift occurred due to the increase in high-rise apartments resulting from *New Towns* developments and the emergence of a new building type called a multiplex house. *A multiplex house*, as included from the 1990 census onward, is a type of collective housing built to allow multiple households to live independently within a single building. While it shares characteristics with apartments and row houses, it is defined differently in terms of the number of stories and the floor area. Since then, the distinctions and definitions regarding housing types have largely remained unchanged up to the 2020 census.

Meanwhile, housing units in buildings that contain both residential and commercial spaces were classified as *housing within commercial (non-residential) buildings* until 2000. Housing within commercial buildings refers to dwellings located within buildings constructed for commercial purposes, such as stores and factories, where the living space meets the housing requirements. From 2005 onward, a method comparing floor spaces was introduced, so if the residential space is greater than or equal to the commercial, it began to be classified as *a combination of dwelling and business* in detached houses rather than *housing within commercial buildings*.

Below, the time series trends in the number of living quarters and the number of households by housing type from 1970 to 2020 are analyzed. The analysis of the number of living quarters included vacant housing in general, but for the years 1970 to 1990, the analysis was conducted

excluding vacant housing due to data limitations. The total number of living quarters was reported, without disaggregating the number of separate units of multi-family houses.[2)]

2. Change in Housing Types from Detached Houses to Collective Housing

1) Changes in Stock by Housing Type

From 1970 to 2020, the total number of living quarters nationwide increased from 4.4 million to 19.5 million, and the housing stock grew from 4.4 million to 18.5 million, more than quadrupling. In particular, the growth rate has accelerated sharply since the 1990s; approximately 2.9 million units increased over the first 20 years after 1970, while about 4.1 million units were added in the subsequent 10 years starting from 1990. The mass supply of apartments played a significant role in this increase.

As seen in Table 5-2, as of 2020, apartments accounted for 11.7 million units, 59.7% of the total stock. In 1970, the proportion of apartments (collective housing) was only 0.8%, with a mere 33,000 units. In the 1975 census, the apartment stock was less than 100,000 units, but it surged to 374,000 units in the 1980 census, more than quadrupling, and continued to build up more than double with each census until 1995. By 2000, the stock of apartments exceeded that of detached houses, and from then until 2020, it increased by more than 1 million units with each census.

2) Multi-family housing contains multiple housing units, but in the past, there were no measures to identify these separate housing units.

Detached houses accounted for 94.1% of the total stock in the 1970 census, with 4.2 million units, making it the predominant housing type. However, the ratio decreased to 46.7% in 1995 and further to 20.0% in 2020, reflecting a trend opposite to that of apartments. The stock also began to decline from its peak of 4.7 million units in 1990, decreasing to 3.9 million units by 2020. This decline occurred because the loss of detached houses due to urban redevelopment exceeded the construction of new detached houses. Following government policies encouraging the supply of multi-family houses since 1990, the stock and proportion of ordinary detached houses have decreased even more significantly.[3)]

Table 5-2. Changes in the Number of Living Quarters by Type (1970-2020)

(Unit: thousand units, %)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Houses	Detached Houses	4,155	4,382	4,652	4,719	4,727	4,490	4,269	4,264	4,089	3,974	3,898
		94.1	91.9	86.9	76.9	65.6	46.7	36.9	31.7	27.3	23.4	20.0
	Apartments	33	89	374	822	1,628	3,610	5,480	6,963	8,576	9,806	11,662
		0.8	1.9	7.0	13.4	22.6	37.5	47.4	51.8	57.2	57.8	59.7
	Row and Multiplex Houses	146	165	162	350	603	1,122	1,322	1,788	1,851	2,383	2,752
		3.3	3.5	3.0	5.7	8.4	11.7	11.4	13.3	12.4	14.0	14.1
	Housing in Commercial Buildings	25	98	131	213	202	348	401	209	161	204	214
		0.6	2.1	2.5	3.5	2.8	3.6	3.5	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.1
Living Quarters other than Houses	Officetels	-	-	-	-	5	6	21	157	233	327	647
		-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.2	1.6	1.9	3.3
	Others	55	35	34	33	38	42	71	50	70	280	354
		1.2	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5	1.7	1.8
Total Housing Stock		4,415	4,769	5,353	6,137	7,203	9,619	11,564	13,429	14,981	16,974	19,527
		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.
Note: The number of vacant houses is not included for 1970-1990.

3) According to the Population and Housing Census, the proportion of ordinary detached houses among all detached houses decreased from 77.7% (3.2 million units) in 2000 to 67.8% (2.6 million units) in 2020.

The increase in apartments was not uniform across regions, showing different patterns in urban and rural areas. Generally, the areas classified as urban are *dong*, while *myeon* is classified as rural, and *eup* is classified as an urban-rural complex. The changes in the proportion of living quarters in *dong*, *eup*, and *myeon* are illustrated in Figure 5-1. Until 1975, the proportion of living quarters located in *myeon* (50.3%) exceeded 50%, being higher than that in *dong* (38.6%) and *eup* (11.1%). However, as the housing supply concentrated in *dong*, the proportion of living quarters in *dong* increased sharply. The proportion of living quarters in *dong* exceeded 50% for the first time in 1985, reaching 55.0%, and increased to 79.3% by 2020. In contrast, the proportion of living quarters in *myeon* steadily decreased from 40.7% in 1980 to 10.5% in 2020. The proportion of living quarters in *eup* showed little change, remaining around 10%.

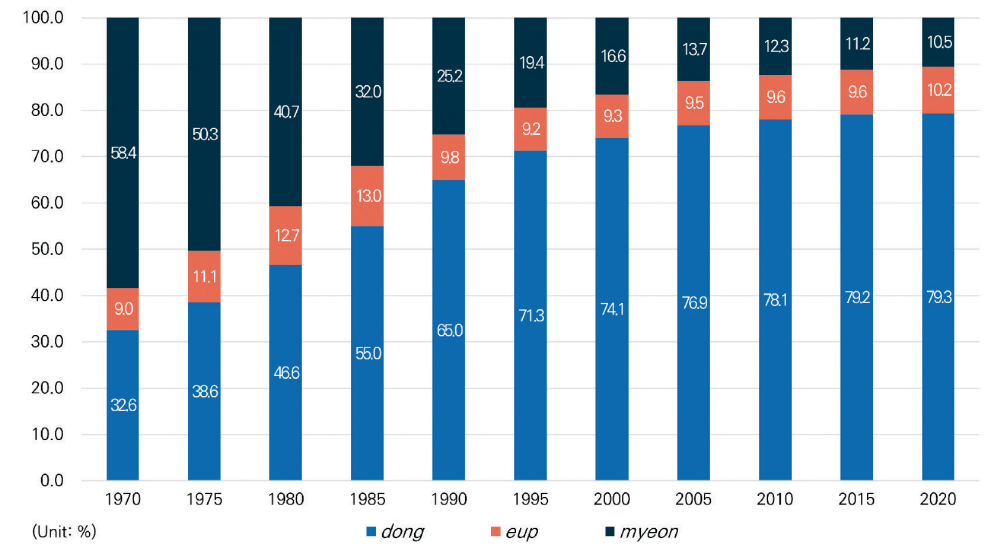


Figure 5-1. Changes in the Proportion of Living Quarters by Region (1970-2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: The number of living quarters does not include living quarters within multi-family houses.

Looking at the changes in the types of living quarters in *dong*, the proportion of detached houses was 87.1% in 1970, but it significantly decreased to 11.7% by 2020 (Table 5-3). The stock of detached houses peaked at 2.4 million units in 1990 and decreased to 1.8 million units by 2020. In contrast, the proportion of apartments, which was only 2.2% of the living quarters in *dong* in 1970, surged to 66.2% by 2020. Nationwide, the stock of apartments increased by more than 11 million units over 50 years, with approximately 10 million units supplied in *dong*.

Over the past 50 years, the stock of row and multiplex houses in *dong* also increased significantly. The stock of row and multiplex houses rose steadily from 93,000 units in 1970 to 2.4 million units in 2020, and its proportion of the total living quarters increased from 6.5% in 1970 to 15.8% in 2020.

Table 5-3. Changes in the Number of Living Quarters by Type in Dong (1970-2020)

(Unit: thousand units, %)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Houses	Detached Houses	1,254	1,546	1,882	2,137	2,411	2,242	2,129	2,124	2,007	1,905	1,778
		87.1	84.1	75.4	63.3	51.5	32.9	25.2	20.9	17.4	14.4	11.7
	Apartments	31	84	356	765	1,542	3,294	4,845	6,123	7,488	8,607	10,092
		2.2	4.6	14.2	22.7	33.0	48.4	57.3	60.1	64.9	65.0	66.2
	Row and Multiplex Houses	93	108	135	293	533	982	1,151	1,600	1,652	2,111	2,407
		6.5	5.9	5.4	8.7	11.4	14.4	13.6	15.7	14.3	15.9	15.8
	Housing in Commercial Buildings	19	71	96	154	161	250	269	151	116	147	151
		1.3	3.8	3.8	4.6	3.4	3.7	3.2	1.5	1.0	1.1	1.0
Living Quarters other than Houses	Officetels	-	-	-	-	4	6	20	154	230	319	627
		-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.5	2.0	2.4	4.1
	Others	43	29	27	26	29	31	47	30	40	161	195
		3.0	1.6	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.3	1.2	1.3
Total Housing Stock		1,441	1,839	2,496	3,375	4,679	6,805	8,461	10,182	11,533	13,250	15,250
		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: The number of vacant houses is not included for 1970-1990.

2) Changes in the Number of Households by Housing Type

The changes in the number of households by type of living quarter generally follow the trend of stock changes, but there are differences among housing types. From 1970 to 1990, while the stock of detached houses increased by 570,000 units, the number of households living in detached houses rose from 5.5 million to 8.5 million, an increase of 3 million households (Table 5-4). Since 1995, the number of households has also steadily decreased along with the decline in the stock of detached houses, falling to 6.4 million households by 2020. The proportion of households living in detached houses dropped from 94.0% in 1970 to 74.9% in 1990, 39.6% in 2010, and 30.4% in 2020.

The number of households living in apartments increased from 42,000 in 1970 to 1.7 million in 1990, and soared to 10.8 million by 2020. The proportion of households living in apartments increased from 0.7% in 1970 to 51.5% in 2020. The point at which the proportion of apartments exceeded 50% in terms of the number of living quarters was in 2005, but in terms of the number of households, it was in 2020. Additionally, the stock of apartments exceeded that of detached houses in 2000, while the number of households living in apartments exceeded that of detached houses in 2010 (Figure 5-2). This difference is mainly due to the inclusion of multi-family houses in the detached house category.

Among living quarters other than houses, the number of households living in *officetels* increased from 7,000 in 1990 to 637,000 in 2020, while the number of households in living quarters other than houses excluding *officetel* rose from 46,000 to 448,000 during the same period.

Table 5-4. Changes in the Number of Households by Type of Living Quarters (1970-2020)

(Unit: thousand households, %)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Houses	Detached Houses	5,506	6,165	7,118	7,838	8,506	7,716	7,103	7,064	6,860	6,739	6,352
		94.0	91.3	89.1	81.9	74.9	59.5	49.6	44.5	39.6	35.3	30.4
	Apartments	42	96	391	863	1,678	3,478	5,238	6,629	8,169	9,196	10,782
		0.7	1.4	4.9	9.0	14.8	26.8	36.6	41.7	47.1	48.1	51.5
	Row and Multiplex Houses	211	295	205	442	729	1,139	1,294	1,695	1,744	2,137	2,387
		3.6	4.4	2.6	4.6	6.4	8.8	9.0	10.7	10.1	11.1	11.4
	Housing in Commercial Buildings	34	146	229	393	388	576	593	282	212	327	320
		0.6	2.2	2.9	4.1	3.4	4.4	4.1	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.5
Living Quarters other than Houses	Officetels	-	-	-	-	7	6	21	160	225	320	637
		-	-	-	-	0.1	0.0	0.1	1.0	1.3	1.7	3.0
	Others	64	52	50	36	46	43	63	57	129	392	448
		1.1	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.7	2.1	2.1
Total Living Quarters		5,857	6,754	7,993	9,571	11,355	12,958	14,312	15,887	17,339	19,112	20,927
		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: The number of living quarters does not include living quarters within multi-family houses.

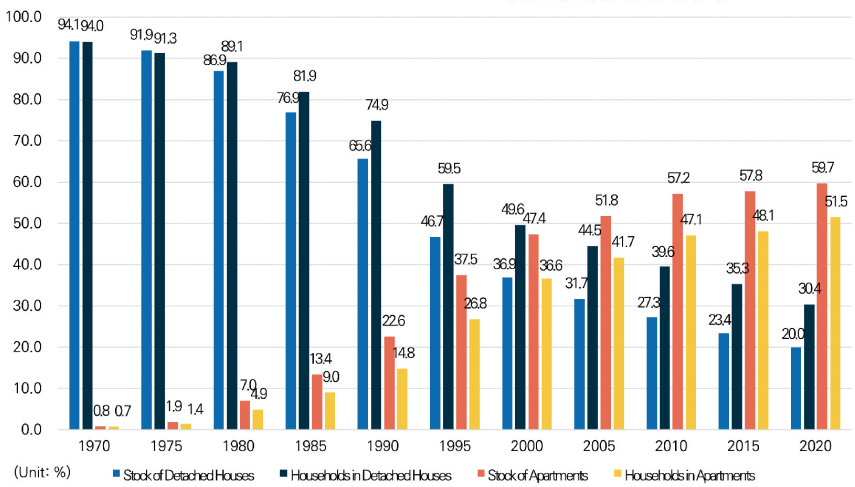


Figure 5-2. Changes in the Proportion of Stock and Households of Detached Houses and Apartments (1970-2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

The number of households residing in *dong* areas exceeded 50% in 1975 (Figure 5-3). In *dong*, the number of households living in detached houses increased from 2.3 million in 1970 to 5.8 million in 1990, before decreasing to 4.2 million in 2020 (Table 5-5). The proportion of households living in detached houses steadily decreased from 89.6% in 1970 to 24.7% in 2020, although it remains relatively high compared to the proportion of detached house stock. From 1970 to 2020, the number of households living in apartments increased dramatically from 40,000 to 9.4 million, with the proportion of households living in apartments rising from 1.6% to 55.8%. As of 2020, the proportion of apartment stock was 66.2%, accounting for about two-thirds, but the proportion of households living in apartments is comparatively lower. The number of households living in row and multiplex houses increased from 147,000 in 1970 to 2.1 million in 2020. The proportion of households living in row and multiplex houses in 2020 was 12.6%, which is not significantly different from the stock proportion of row and multiplex houses (15.8%).

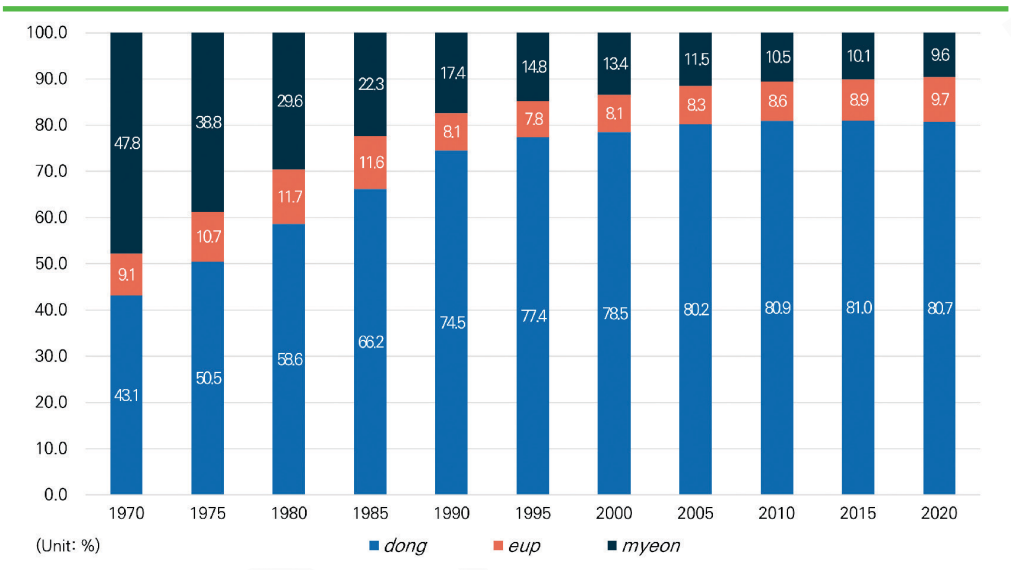


Figure 5-3. Changes in the Proportion of Households by Region (1970-2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Table 5-5. Changes in the Number of Households by Type of Living Quarters in Dong (1970-2020)

(Unit: thousand households, %)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Houses	Detached Houses	2,261	2,947	3,920	4,817	5,845	5,347	4,914	4,929	4,789	4,591	4,178
		89.6	86.4	83.6	75.8	69.0	53.2	43.8	38.7	34.1	29.6	24.7
	Apartments	40	91	373	805	1,591	3,189	4,677	5,872	7,180	8,148	9,436
		1.6	2.7	8.0	12.7	18.8	31.7	41.6	46.1	51.2	52.6	55.8
	Row and Multiplex Houses	147	218	174	381	655	1,009	1,138	1,529	1,568	1,915	2,125
		5.8	6.4	3,7	6.0	7.7	10.0	10.1	12.0	11.2	12.4	12.6
	Housing in Commercial Buildings	27	111	180	312	332	454	437	219	169	264	248
		1.1	3.3	3.8	4.9	3.9	4.5	3.9	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.5
Living Quarters other than Houses	Officetels	-	-	-	-	6	6	20	157	222	312	608
		-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.2	1.6	2.0	3.6
	Others	50	44	41	37	44	39	43	39	102	257	302
		2.0	1.3	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.7	1.7	1.8
Total Households		2,525	3,413	4,688	6,352	8,474	10,043	11,229	12,745	14,031	15,488	16,897
		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

3. Conclusion and Implications

In Korea, the prevalent housing type has shifted from detached houses to apartments in a relatively short period. The way apartments have spread in Korea, the reasons behind their expansion, and their impact on society are different from those of Western countries where apartments were introduced earlier. The supply-side efficiency, convenience of living, economic benefits, and social symbols provided by apartments have changed the behaviours of both suppliers and consumers, resulting in apartments becoming the typical form of housing. It is rare to find a country where apartments are perceived as sophisticated

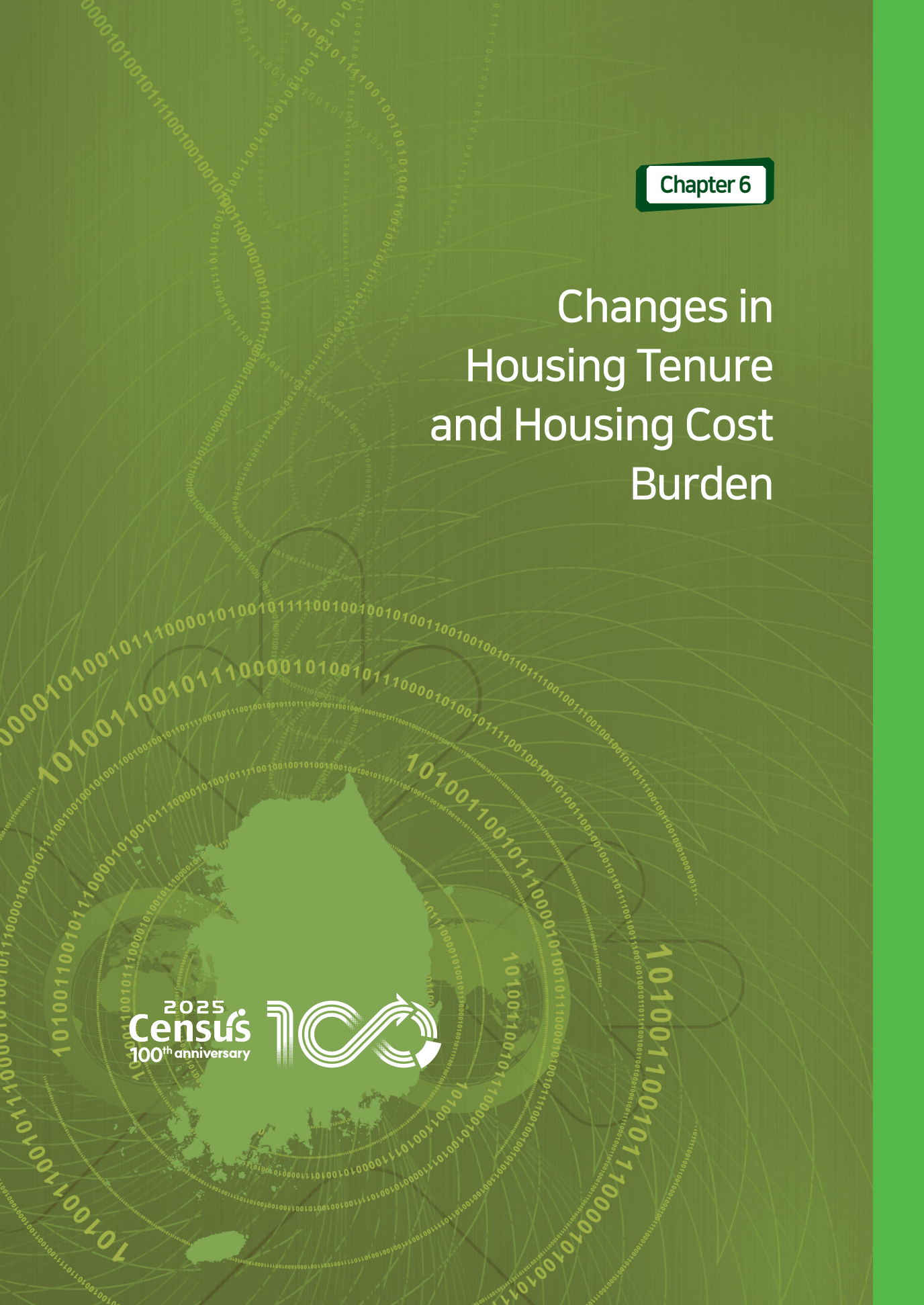
and desirable housing, associated with capital gains, and symbolic of relatively high social status—as is the case in Korea.

During the industrialization period, Korea faced the need to supply a large quantity of housing in a short time. This led to the industrialization of the housing sector through the standardization of materials and processes, prioritizing economic efficiency in urban planning. Since the construction of the first complex-type apartments in 1962, and with the establishment of the housing supply system in the 1970s, apartment supply has become the dominant approach in most development projects, including New Towns (Pong, 2003).

The supply centered around apartments will likely continue for the time being. Economic growth and the ongoing accumulation of capital may further encourage this trend. However, it is uncertain whether the priority of apartments will be maintained when demographic and household structures change significantly. In contrast to the past, demand for a broader range of housing types and more diverse residential spaces has emerged. It is time to seriously consider whether to continue maintaining an apartment-centered system and housing supply policy.

Chapter 6

Changes in Housing Tenure and Housing Cost Burden



Housing tenure is a key indicator of housing stability. Since the first Housing Census in 1960, housing tenure has been recorded in each census, along with the types of living quarters. The classification of housing tenure has evolved alongside housing culture and rental practices. The unique Korean rental system known as *jeonse*[1] has been surveyed separately from monthly rents[2] since 1975. Since the 1985 census, deposits and monthly rents for renter households have been surveyed, but the housing prices for owner-occupied households have not been investigated.

Housing tenure is influenced by various factors, including household circumstances, economic conditions, the construction industry, and housing demands. This chapter aims to examine time-series changes in the homeownership rate, focusing on the results of the Population and Housing Census. In addition, changes in households' housing cost burden are examined using the MOLIT's *Korea Housing Survey.*

1) *Jeonse* is a unique rental practice in Korea where the tenant pays a lump-sum deposit to the landlord and resides without monthly rent. The entire deposit is to be returned at the end of the contract.

2) In this chapter, *sageulse*, the rental form of a lump-sum payment of rent in advance, is incorporated in the monthly rent category.

1. Changes in Housing Tenure

1) Changes in the Housing Market

Nationally, the homeownership rate[3] of general households rapidly decreased from 63.1% in 1975 to 49.9% in 1990, followed by a gradual increase starting in 1995, reaching 57.3% in 2020 (Table 6-2). Since 1975, the number of households has increased sharply due to the rise of the nuclear family and the increase in household formation, leading to serious concerns about the shortage of housing along with population growth. In response, housing supply policies were supplemented during the period of rapid economic growth.

Between 1972 and 1981, during the third and fourth *Five-Year Economic Development Plan*, a total of 1.9 million houses were constructed. Additionally, the *Five Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1980)*[4] and the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan (1988–1992)* were announced, resulting in a mass housing supply. However, the rate of increase in housing prices outpaced the growth in household income, causing the increase in owner-occupied households to lag behind the increase in housing stock. The number of owner-occupied households steadily grew from 4.3 million in 1975 to 12.0 million in 2020, an increase of approximately 8 million households, while the housing stock increased by 14.1 million during the same period.

3) In this chapter, the homeownership rate is estimated by household.

4) Although the Chun Doo-hwan administration announced a plan to construct 5 million housing units in 1980, no detailed scheme was formulated. In contrast, the plan announced in the late 1980s was accompanied by a much more concrete strategy and achieved its policy goal ahead of schedule.

Table 6-1. Changes in Housing Tenure (1970–2020)

(Unit: thousands household, %)

Category		1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Number of Households	Owner-Occupied	3,996	4,260	4,672	5,127	5,667	6,910	7,753	8,828	9,390	10,850	11,989
	Jeonse	1,457	1,171	1,904	2,202	3,157	3,845	4,040	3,557	3,766	2,961	3,252
	Monthly Rent		1,049	1,231	1,893	2,173	1,875	2,113	3,012	3,720	4,529	4,905
	Free	123	215	162	350	358	328	406	490	464	773	781
	Total	5,576	6,754	7,969	9,571	11,355	12,958	14,312	15,887	17,339	19,112	20,927
Proportion	Owner-Occupied	71.7	63.1	58.6	53.6	49.9	53.3	54.2	55.6	54.2	56.8	57.3
	Jeonse	26.1	17.3	23.9	23.0	27.8	29.7	28.2	22.4	21.7	15.5	15.5
	Monthly Rent		15.5	15.5	19.8	19.1	14.5	14.8	19.0	21.5	23.7	23.4
	Free	2.2	3.2	2.0	3.7	3.1	2.5	2.8	3.1	2.7	4.0	3.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Figures for 1970 cited from Statistics Korea (2002); Since 1975 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: 1) In 1970, the survey target for housing tenure differed from that of censuses conducted from 1975 onward.
2) In 1975, housing tenures of households living in living quarters other than houses were not counted.

The rental types represented by *jeonse* and monthly rent are influenced by various conditions. The *jeonse* system has long been maintained as a form of private financing autonomously formed by the mutual interests of landlords and tenants in the market. Landlords use the *jeonse* deposit for investments, while tenants take advantage of it as seed money for future homeownership, making it a reciprocal system for a considerable time.

However, since the interest rate hikes in 2005, the proportion of *jeonse* has decreased, leading to the emergence of a new type of monthly rent with a much larger deposit than before. The *jeonse* ratio gradually declined from a peak of 29.7% in 1995, and by 2015, it

fell below the monthly rent ratio. Nevertheless, in 2020, the *jeonse* ratio remained at 15.5%, the same level as in 2015, and the number of households living in *jeonse* increased by approximately 300,000 to 3.3 million households.

There's a considerable difference between the number of homeowners and owner-occupiers. In Korea, both homeownership rates—the proportion of owner-occupiers and the proportion of homeowners regardless of current tenure types—are widely used.[5] As the Population and Housing Census has included a question on homeownership other than currently residing dwellings, it is possible to calculate not only occupancy-based but also ownership-based homeownership rates.

Based on this homeownership criterion, the proportion of homeowners—including owner-occupiers—increased modestly from 60.3% in 2005 to 62.1% in 2020. Meanwhile, the proportion of multi-property-owning households—those who are owner-occupiers and own at least one more dwelling—rose from 6.6% to 10.5% over the same period.

2) Regional Differences

In the 1970s, rapid economic growth was accompanied by rapid urbanization. Through the 1970s and 1980s, industrialization has led to population growth and concentration of the population in urban areas, exacerbating housing shortages in cities.

In urban areas, the homeownership (owner-occupancy) rate declined until 1990 but then shifted to an upward trend, reaching 55.2% in 2020.[6] This also reveals that the proportion of tenant households increased until 1990 and then began to decrease. However, there are differences in the changes in housing tenures among tenant households. The proportion of *jeonse* decreased from 33.7% in 1995 to 16.7% in 2020. Meanwhile, the proportion of

5) All other sections of this chapter report the homeownership rate based on occupancy.

6) In this chapter, urban areas refer to both *dong* and *eup*, while non-urban areas refer to *myeon*.

monthly rent has gradually increased since 2000, reaching 24.8% in 2020. In non-urban areas, the homeownership rate continued to decline slightly, and the proportion of monthly rent has risen since 1995, reaching 10.8% in 2020.

When examining changes in housing tenure since 1975, distinguishing between the Seoul metropolitan area and non-capital areas, the results are as follows. In the Seoul metropolitan area, the homeownership rate decreased from 50.8% in 1975 to 42.2% in 1990, then increased to 50.2% in 2005, maintaining around 50%, and reaching 51.3% in 2020. The proportion of *jeonse* in the Seoul metropolitan area peaked at 38.0% in 1995 and has since declined to 20.9% in 2020. The proportion of monthly rent in the Seoul metropolitan area steadily increased from 14.3% in 1995 to 25.4% in 2015, then slightly decreased to 24.8% in 2020.

In non-capital areas, the homeownership rate decreased from 69.1% in 1975 to 55.8% in 1990, then increased to 64.1% in 2015 before slightly decreasing to 63.0% in 2020. The proportion of *jeonse* in non-capital areas rose from 11.3% in 1975 to 23.0% in 1995, then fell to 9.5% in 2015 before slightly rising to 10.4% in 2020. The proportion of monthly rent in non-capital areas fluctuated slightly, recording 22.1% in 2020, up from 15.5% in 1975.

3) Changes by Type of Living Quarters

Examining the changes in homeownership rates by type of living quarters, the rate for apartments is higher than for other types, but there has been little change since 1980, remaining around 60%, and recorded 66.2% in 2020 (Table 6-2). The homeownership rate for detached houses significantly decreased from 59.4% in 1980 to 47.3% in 1990, falling below 50% since then. The homeownership rate for row houses and multiplex houses increased from 55.8% in 1980 to 66.4% in 1995, but has since declined, recording 56.9% in 2020. The homeownership rate for *officetels*, which have a relatively high share of

young households, has steadily increased from 10.1% in 1995 to 21.3% in 2020, although it remains lower than the other types.

The point at which the proportion of monthly rent surpassed that of *jeonse* among overall housing was in 2015. In the case of detached houses, the shift from *jeonse* to monthly rent occurred more rapidly than for other types, with the proportion of monthly rent exceeding that of *jeonse* (26.7% vs. 23.5%) starting in 2005. The proportion of *jeonse* in detached houses continued to decrease, reaching 13.9% in 2020, while the proportion of monthly rent increased to 33.5% in 2015 and held steady in 2020.

Table 6-2. Changes in Homeownership Rates by Type of Living Quarters (1980–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category		1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Houses	Detached House	59.4	53.5	47.3	48.3	48.1	46.5	44.6	46.7	48.1
	Apartment	65.5	65.5	64.1	64.1	61.8	64.8	63.4	66.6	66.2
	Row-Multiplex House	55.8	57.0	63.0	66.4	65.6	64.9	57.9	57.9	56.9
	House within Commercial Building	28.8	27.1	24.2	31.9	39.0	38.8	38.7	46.6	44.1
Living Quarters other than House	Officetel	-	-	22.2	10.1	10.2	12.8	15.1	18.9	21.3
	Others	37.0	30.4	25.6	37.6	25.8	29.8	22.6	32.7	36.4
Total		58.6	53.6	49.9	53.3	54.2	55.6	54.2	56.8	57.3

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census; KOSIS, 10%·20% sample microdata (only for living quarters other than house since 2000).

The homeownership rate for apartments has shown little change over the past 40 years since 1980, with a decrease in the proportion of *jeonse* and an increase in monthly rent. From 1980 to 2020, the proportion of monthly rent rose from 4.3% to 16.0%, exceeding *jeonse* since 2015. In row-multiplex houses, the proportion of *jeonse* has generally decreased while the proportion of monthly rent has increased since 1980, but unlike other living quarter types, the proportion of monthly rent remains lower than that of *jeonse* even up to 2020.

4) Changes by Household Characteristics

This section examines changes in housing tenures by household size, head's age, and sex. Looking at the changes in homeownership rates by household size, in 2000, there was a significant difference between households with four or fewer persons and those with five or more persons. However, as the homeownership rates for two-, three-, and four-person households increased, by 2020, they became similar to that of five-person households (Table 6-3).

Between 2000 and 2020, the homeownership rate for two-person households increased from 54.9% to 66.0%, for three-person households from 53.2% to 68.0%, and for four-person households from 58.1% to 70.7%. During the same period, the homeownership rate for one-person households increased slightly from 32.1% to 34.3%, and that for five-person households also increased slightly from 68.0% to 70.2%.

Despite the significant increase in the number of one-person households, there has been little change in their homeownership rate since 2000; however, the proportion of *jeonse* has decreased while the proportion of monthly rent has increased. The proportion of *jeonse* for one-person households decreased from 30.0% in 2000 to 17.5% in 2020, while monthly rent increased from 33.2% to 42.3% during the same period. For two to five-person households,

the homeownership rates have increased, the proportion of *jeonse* has decreased, and the proportion of monthly rent has increased slightly. As of 2020, the difference in the proportion of *jeonse* based on household size is not significant, but the proportion of monthly rent is significantly higher for one-person households (42.3%) compared to households with two or more.

Changes in income and assets according to the life cycle also influence changes in housing tenure, so it is meaningful to examine the time-series changes in housing tenure by the age of the household head. Below, we classify the age of the household head into 20–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, and 65 and over to examine changes in housing tenure since 1995.

Table 6-3. Changes in Homeownership Rates by Household Size (2000–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
1-person	32.1	31.1	31.9	34.0	34.3
2-person	54.9	57.9	59.1	63.4	66.0
3-person	53.2	59.2	59.4	64.0	68.0
4-person	58.1	63.2	62.6	67.6	70.7
5-person	68.0	69.1	65.7	69.1	70.2
6 or more Person	79.9	78.8	72.9	75.6	73.1
Total	54.2	55.6	54.2	56.8	57.3

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

The phenomenon of higher homeownership rates with increasing age of the household head continues, but the rates for all age groups decreased from 1995 to 2020 (Table 6-4). From 1995 to 2020, the homeownership rate for the 45–54 decreased from 66.6% to 59.8%, and for the 55–64 from 76.3% to 67.2%, showing a larger decline compared to other age groups. During the same period, the homeownership rate for the 20–34 slightly decreased from 24.0% to 20.1%, with a relatively small change. For the 35–44, the rate decreased from 50.9% in 1995 to 46.2% in 2010, but then increased to 48.8% in 2015 and 50.7% in 2020, recovering to the 1995 level. The homeownership rate for those aged 65 and older decreased slightly from 78.0% in 1995 to 74.9% in 2020, but it remains higher than that of other age groups.

Despite the fact that homeownership rates decrease across all age groups, the overall rate increased because the proportion of households headed by 45 or older with high homeownership rates increased.

Table 6-4. Changes in Homeownership Rates by Age of Household Head (1995–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
20-34	24.0	23.9	23.7	21.2	21.8	20.1
35-44	50.9	49.8	49.7	46.2	48.8	50.7
45-54	66.6	64.6	62.7	57.8	57.8	59.8
55-64	76.3	75.2	74.0	70.0	67.6	67.2
65 and over	78.0	76.0	75.7	74.8	75.6	74.9
Total	53.3	54.2	55.6	54.2	56.8	57.3

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, full field enumeration microdata (1995), KOSIS (2000–2020).

Since 1995, the proportion of *jeonse* has decreased and monthly rent has increased across all age groups, with the change being relatively large for the 20–34. The proportion of *jeonse* for the 20–34 fell from 50.2% in 1995 to 28.9% in 2020, while the proportion of monthly rent rose from 22.4% to 45.9%. For the 35–44, the proportion of *jeonse* decreased from 31.9% in 1995 to 22.0% in 2020, but it remains higher than the overall average (15.5%) as of 2020. The proportion of monthly rent for those aged 65 and older increased from 7.6% in 1995 to 13.7% in 2020, but it is lower than the overall average (23.4%) in 2020.

One of the most significant changes related to household characteristics is not only the increase in one-person households but also the rise in female-headed households. The proportion of female-headed households increased significantly from 12.8% (0.9 million) in 1975 to 32.7% (6.8 million) in 2020.

Since 2000, examining the changes in housing tenure by the sex of the household head, male-headed households consistently had higher homeownership rates compared to those headed by women (Table 6-5). The homeownership rate for male-headed households increased from 56.7% in 2000 to 61.0% in 2020. During the same period, the homeownership rate for female-headed households rose from 43.4% to 49.6%, but it remained lower than that of males.

Meanwhile, the proportion of monthly rent for female-headed households increased from 25.6% in 2000 to 31.8% in 2015, then slightly decreased to 29.4% in 2020. In contrast, during the same period the proportion of monthly rent for male-headed households increased from 13.0% to 20.5%, but the rent proportion for females remained higher than that for males.

Table 6-5. Changes in Homeownership Rates by Sex of Household Head (2000-2020)

(Unit: %)

Category		2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
M	Owner-Occupied	56.7	59.5	57.8	60.6	61.0
	Jeonse	27.1	20.5	21.3	15.1	14.8
	Monthly Rent	13.0	16.3	18.2	20.3	20.5
	Free	3.2	3.6	2.7	4.0	3.7
F	Owner-Occupied	43.4	43.5	43.6	47.7	49.6
	Jeonse	27.2	22.5	22.8	16.5	17.1
	Monthly Rent	25.6	29.6	30.8	31.8	29.4
	Free	3.8	4.4	2.8	4.1	3.8

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, 10% and 20% sample microdata.

2. Changes in Housing Cost Burden

This section first examines the changes in the *Price to Income Ratio* (PIR), which reflects the ratio of housing prices to annual income of households, based on the MOLIT's *Korea Housing Survey*. Currently, the Ministry publishes the time-series changes in PIR by region, income level, and household characteristics for owner-occupied households.

The median PIR for owner-occupied households nationwide increased from 4.2 times in 2006 to 6.7 times in 2021, while the average PIR rose from 6.0 times to 8.9 times (Figure 6-1). During the same period, the median PIR in Seoul increased from 7.5 times to 14.1 times, and the average PIR rose from 10.1 times to 15.4 times. This suggests that housing prices have risen significantly compared to the increase in household income in Seoul.

The *Rent to Income Ratio* (RIR), which indicates the housing cost burden for renting households, is widely used internationally. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs are classified as having a high housing cost burden, and reducing the burden on these households is a key objective of housing policy.

The national RIR based on the median increased from 18.7% in 2006 to 20.3% in 2014, then gradually decreased to 15.7% by 2021 (Figure 6-2). The average RIR was higher, increasing from 22.9% in 2006 to 24.2% in 2014, before dropping to 21.5% in 2021. The RIR in Seoul is higher than the national average, with a median of 21.6% and an average of 29.7% in 2021, showing little change since 2006. The median RIR varies by region, with the Seoul metropolitan area at 17.8% and the non-capital areas at 12.6% in 2021.

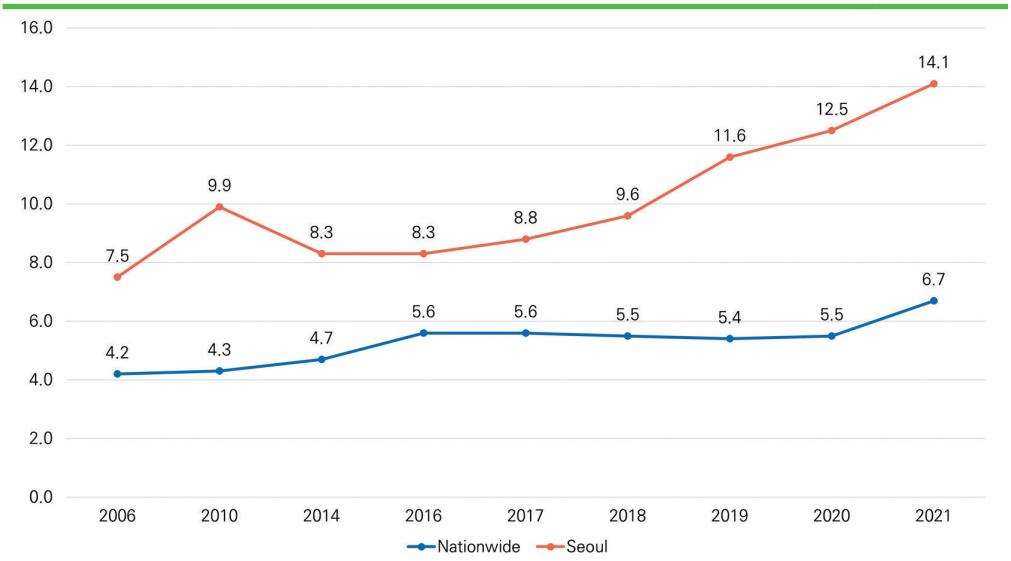


Figure 6-1. Changes in Median PIR for Nationwide and Seoul (2006-2021)

Source: MOLIT, Korea Housing Survey.

Note: PIR was calculated based on the respondent's estimate of the expected price of the house. Since 2020, the reference date has been the Monday of the third week of June of the survey year.

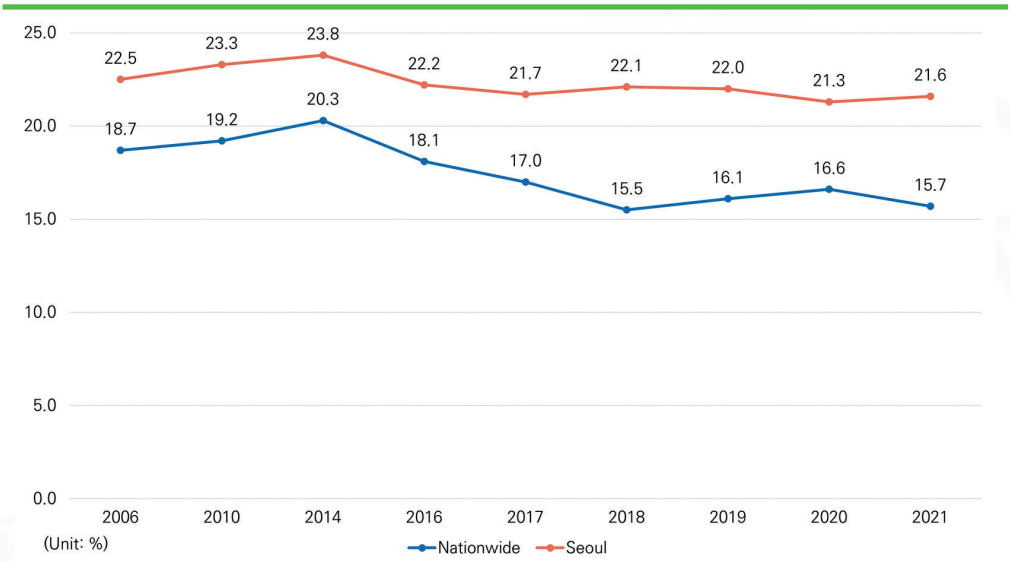


Figure 6-2. Changes in Median RIR for Nationwide and Seoul (2006-2021)

Source: MOLIT, Korea Housing Survey.

3. Conclusion and Implications

The housing tenures from the Population and Housing Census have been used as indicators to understand housing stability, which is a fundamental goal of housing policy. These figures are used as a benchmark for various sample surveys, including the *Korea Housing Survey*. In particular, the significance of homeownership rates and renter-household ratios in housing policy has led to increased interest in housing tenure across various fields.

Recent discussions regarding housing tenure statistics can be summarized into several key issues. First, there is a demand for improvements to shorten the production cycle of housing tenure statistics from the Population and Housing Census, which has been set at five years. In Korea, before the 2020 revision of the *Housing Lease Protection Act*, which granted tenants a one-time right to renew a contract, the typical duration of rental contracts was two years, resulting in high residential mobility. Therefore, there is a need to improve the timeliness of the statistics to capture these dynamics.

Second, there has been an extensive discussion on how to measure the housing cost burden for households. Measures for the housing cost burden vary depending on the scope of expenses and the tenure type. For example, the housing cost burden for owner-occupied households could be measured by the repayment amount of mortgages relative to income, rather than housing prices relative to income. Additionally, the housing cost burden for renter households could include not only rent but also maintenance fees. Furthermore, given the unique *jeonse* system in Korea, it is inappropriate to group *jeonse* and monthly rent under the same category based on the traditional RIR measure used in other countries. Thus, there is a need to improve the system to produce accurate and timely indicators by

thoroughly discussing and reviewing the methods used to measure and understand housing cost burdens.

Third, as the demand for statistics has expanded and more organizations have begun producing data, issues related to similar statistics, such as PIR and RIR, have repeatedly arisen. Some argue that producing a variety of statistics could provide comprehensive information, as long as their definitions, survey objectives, and calculation methods are specified. However, there are also concerns that producing similar indicators can lead to confusion. Coordinating among organizations that produce similar statistics and improving these indicators remains an ongoing challenge.

Finally, there are areas for improvement in processing and disseminating data in accordance with international standards. For instance, the OECD classifies housing tenure into own outright, owner with mortgages, private rent, subsidized rent, and others. It is necessary to consider the possibility of restructuring the housing tenure category in the Population and Housing Census to align with international standards. There is also a need to explore methods for linking and providing accurate data for international comparisons.

Chapter 7

Changes in the Quality of Housing

At this point, where the nationwide housing supply ratio exceeds 100%, it is increasingly important to assess the quality of housing. A key indicator in this regard is the minimum residential standards. Article 17 of the *Framework Act on Residence* defines minimum residential standards as 'an indicator of the minimum level of housing necessary for the people to maintain a pleasant and fulfilling life',[1] and the OECD also publishes similar indicators. Considering this, the quality of housing can be largely understood by dividing it into three categories.

First, the residential density of individual households, with quantifiable indicators such as floor area or the number of rooms per capita; second, the degree of modernization of housing facilities essential for a decent living environment; third, understanding the condition of elements included in the minimum housing standards, such as securing durability, soundproofing, ventilation, lighting, and disaster prevention.

Among the three aspects above, the items that can be analyzed through the Population and Housing Census are about density and housing facilities. Regarding the third aspect, the criteria are not clear, making it difficult to assess through general statistical surveys.

1) Minimum housing standards were introduced in 2004, and with the enactment of the *Framework Act on Residence* in 2015, the legal basis was changed from the *Housing Act* to the *Framework Act on Residence*.

1. Changes in Housing Size and Density

1) Changes in Housing Stock by Size

Although the Population and Housing Census began enumerating the total floor area of houses in 1970, analysis was conducted on data from 1980 onwards due to difficulty in using the earlier data; the 1990 data was also excluded due to difficulty in use.

The changes in the size distribution of the total housing stock are shown in Table 7-1. In all years, the proportion of housing units over 40m^2 and up to 85m^2 is the highest, while the ranking of other size categories varies by period. Until 1985, the order was 40m^2 or less, over 85m^2 and up to 130m^2, and over 130m^2. From 2000 to 2010, the order changed to over 85m^2 and up to 130m^2, over 130m^2, and 40m^2 or less. Since 2015, it has changed to 40m^2 or less, over 85m^2 and up to 130m^2, and over 130m^2.

Table 7-1. Changes in the Number of Housing Stock by Size (1980–2020)

(Unit: thousand units, %)

Category	1980	1985	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
40m² or less	1,451	1,272	1,013	1,046	832	1,267	2,117	2,423
	27.2	20.7	11.1	9.5	6.6	9.1	12.9	13.1
40m²~85m²	2,991	3,559	5,333	6,205	7,040	8,962	10,546	12,173
	56.1	58.0	58.5	56.4	55.7	64.5	64.4	65.7
85m²~130m²	554	813	1,762	2,527	3,440	2,222	2,094	2,255
	10.4	13.2	19.3	23.0	27.2	16.0	12.8	12.2
Over 130m²	337	495	1,007	1,224	1,327	1,432	1,610	1,675
	6.4	8.1	11.0	11.2	10.5	10.4	9.9	9.0
Total	5,333	6,139	9,116	11,001	12,639	13,884	16,367	18,526
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census 2% sample microdata (1980–2000), Full field enumeration microdata (2005), KOSIS (2010–2020).

Note: 1) Analysis for 1990 was not possible due to data limitations.

2) Totals and percentages exclude cases with unknown total floor area.

2) Changes in Overcrowding Rates based on Number of Rooms

Overcrowding rates can be analyzed using items on the number of rooms and floor area in the census. From 1960 to 2010, questions on the total number of rooms in a house and the number of rooms used by a household were both conducted as a full field enumeration. However, with the introduction of the register-based census in 2015, the total number of rooms in a house and the number of rooms used by a household were collected in a

sample survey (20%). Since 2020, only the number of rooms used by a household has been enumerated through a sample survey (20%), and the total number of rooms in a house through administrative registers.

This section examines time-series changes in the number of rooms per household member, an indicator also used by the OECD to assess housing overcrowding. A lower number of rooms per person indicates higher overcrowding rates. According to the OECD methodology, this can be calculated by dividing the total number of rooms by the total population. For the number of rooms per person up to 2000, data published by Statistics Korea were used, and since 2005, the results are based on the analysis of microdata.

The nationwide number of rooms per person steadily increased from 0.43 in 1970 to 0.93 in 1995, exceeding 1.0 in 2000, and continued to rise thereafter, reaching 1.61 in 2020 (Table 7-2). The number of rooms per person was highest in *myeon* areas, followed by *eup* and then *dong* areas. The number of rooms per person in *myeon* areas steadily increased from 0.47 in 1970 to 1.65 in 2010, decreased to 1.59 in 2015, and increased again to 1.70 in 2020. The number of rooms per person in *eup* areas steadily increased from 0.42 in 1970 to 1.62 in 2020. During the same period, the number of rooms per person in *dong* areas increased from 0.38 to 1.60. The highest number of rooms per person in myeon areas is due to the relatively high share of larger detached houses with more rooms compared to household size, as well as a smaller population.

Table 7-2. Changes in the Number of Rooms per Person by Region (1970–2020)

Category	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nationwide	0.43	0.44	0.48	0.53	0.68	0.93	1.09	1.27	1.37	1.45	1.61
Eup	0.42	0.44	0.47	0.53	0.66	0.93	1.11	1.31	1.40	1.46	1.62
Myeon	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.59	0.68	0.96	1.20	1.59	1.65	1.59	1.70
Dong	0.38	0.40	0.46	0.52	0.68	0.92	1.06	1.22	1.34	1.43	1.60

Source: Figures before 2005 cited from Statistics Korea (2002); Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, full field enumeration microdata (2005-2010), 20% sample microdata (2015-2020).

3) Changes in Overcrowding Rates Based on Floor Area

Besides the number of rooms per person, the floor area per person (household member) is also an important indicator for analyzing overcrowding rates. However, the Population and Housing Census enumerates the total floor area of the housing, not the floor area occupied by households. While it is relatively easy for respondents to answer questions about the number of rooms, providing exact figures for floor area is more difficult. It is also important to note, when interpreting the results, that the measurement units and methods have changed, and a register-based census was introduced in 2015.

The floor area per person living in housing units up to 1995 was based on data published by Statistics Korea. However, floor area per person for eup and myeon areas was combined, thus limiting time-series analysis. From 2000 onwards, floor area per person living in housing units as well as *officetels* was enumerated.

The nationwide floor area per person increased from 8.2m^2 in 1975 to 23.1m^2 in 2005, and reached 29.7m^2 in 2020, more than a threefold increase (Table 7-3). Since 2000, floor

area per person by region has been the largest in *myeon* areas, followed by *eup* and then *dong* areas. Floor area per person in *myeon* and *eup* areas is larger than the nationwide average, while it is smaller in *dong* areas. The figure in *dong* areas increased from 7.4m^2 in 1975 to 28.9m^2 in 2020. Between 1975 and 1995, floor area per person in *eup* and *myeon* areas combined increased from 9.0m^2 to 20.5m^2. Subsequently, floor area per person expanded to 30.7m^2 in *eup* areas and 36.6m^2 in *myeon* areas by 2020.

Table 7-3. Changes in Floor Area per Person by Region (1975–2020)

(Unit: m^2)

Category	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nationwide	8.2	10.1	11.3	13.8	17.2	19.8	23.1	25.0	26.9	29.7
Eup	9.0	11.1	12.0	15.9	20.5	21.1	24.1	26.3	27.8	30.7
Myeon						24.4	28.7	31.4	32.5	36.6
Dong	7.4	9.3	11.0	13.0	16.4	19.1	22.1	24.1	26.2	28.9

Source: Figures before 2000 cited from Statistics Korea (2002); Since 2000 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: Figures before 2000 are calculated by combining eup and myeon.

2. Changes in Housing Facilities

This section examines the time-series changes in housing facilities such as modern kitchens, flush toilets and heating facilities. Data up to 2000 are from published data by Statistics Korea, and data from 2005 onwards are based on the analysis of 10% and 20% household sample microdata.

1) Kitchen

In the case of kitchen-related items, the 1960 census recorded only whether a kitchen was present. In 1970, it was classified by cooking fuel type, categorized into briquettes, wood/straw/vegetation, oil, gas, electricity, and others. In 1975, the primary fuel was surveyed and categorized similarly. From 1980, whether the kitchen was modern (western) was surveyed, and from 1990, whether the kitchen was for exclusive use began to be surveyed. From 2005, as the modernization of kitchen facilities progressed, the cooking fuel item was excluded.

The proportion of households with a modern kitchen rapidly increased from 18.2% in 1980 to 94.3% in 2000 (Table 7-4). In 2005, it was already 97.5%, and in 2020, it reached 99.0%, confirming that most households have modern kitchen facilities.

Table 7-4. Changes in Households with Modern Kitchens by Region (1980–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nationwide	18.2	34.6	52.4	84.1	94.3	97.5	97.9	98.4	99.0
Eup	7.6	19.3	41.1	79.8	92.3	96.7	98.0	98.4	99.1
Myeon	2.5	5.8	22.1	70.9	87.5	93.8	96.0	96.8	97.8
Dong	34.8	55.0	60.7	87.1	95.2	98.1	98.2	98.7	99.1

Source: Before 2005 cited from Statistics Korea (2002); Since 2005 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census 10%·20% sample microdata.

Note: Before 2005, the proportion of households with a modern was analyzed; since 2005, the proportion of households with an exclusive modern kitchen has been analyzed.

Before 1995, the proportion of households with a modern kitchen was relatively low in *eup* and *myeon* areas. Between 1980 and 1990, it increased from 7.6% to 41.1% in *eup* areas, and from 2.5% to 22.1% in *myeon* areas. However, as housing facilities modernized, the proportion of households with a modern kitchen has also exceeded 90% in both *eup* and *myeon* areas since 2005.

Meanwhile, in *dong* areas, the proportion of households with a modern kitchen was higher than in *eup* and *myeon* areas, but even by 1990, about 40% of households in *dong* areas did not have a modern kitchen. However, with the rapid increase in apartment supply in *dong* areas, the proportion of households with a modern kitchen significantly increased to 87.1% in 1995 and 99.1% in 2020.

Since the 1970s, the so-called LDK[2)]-type interior space has rapidly spread along with large-scale apartment supply. In rural areas, the government-led *Saemaul Undong* (New

2) Living room, Dining room, and Kitcken.

Village Movement) expanded to include individual house improvement projects promoting the modernization of kitchens. However, the modern kitchens in rural areas did not expand as quickly as the government intended, and the proportion of modern kitchens rapidly increased in the 1990s.

2) Toilets

In 1960, when flush toilets were few, toilets were categorized into flush, soil pit (*Tohyeol*),[3] cement type, and other types in the census. From 1970, the presence of toilets and their types, such as traditional and flush, were surveyed. From 1990, whether the toilet was for exclusive use was surveyed.

The proportion of households with flush toilets was only 18.4% in 1980 but increased sharply to 87.0% in 2000 (Table 7-5). The proportion of households with exclusive flush toilets exceeded 90% in 2005 at 92.4% and reached 98.4% in 2020.

In *eup* and *myeon* areas, the proportion of households with flush toilets was relatively low. The figure was less than 50% until 1990 in *eup* areas and until 1995 in *myeon* areas. On the other hand, in *dong* areas, more than half of the households have had flush toilets since 1985. The proportion of households with private flush toilets exceeded 95% in *dong* areas from 2005, but in *eup* areas, the proportion exceeded 90% in 2010, and in *myeon* areas, it exceeded 90% in 2015.

The modernization of toilets is also related to the construction of sewage facilities as basic infrastructure. In the 1970s, to address the problem of toilet waste discharged into rivers without sewage treatment, the government encouraged the conversion of inadequate toilets to septic tank toilets and even mandated the installation of flush toilets.

3) *Tohyeol* refers to a traditional toilet dug into the ground.

Table 7-5. Changes in Households with Flush Toilets by Region (1980-2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Nationwide	18.4	33.1	51.3	75.1	87.0	92.4	96.0	97.5	98.4
Eup	5.5	15.2	26.9	57.1	76.3	87.2	94.4	96.8	97.9
Myeon	1.3	3.9	8.0	36.8	58.2	73.2	86.3	92.7	94.3
Dong	37.0	54.4	64.0	84.2	93.0	95.7	97.4	98.2	98.9

Source: Before 2005 cited from Statistics Korea (2002); Since 2005 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census 10%·20% sample microdata.

Note: Before 2005, the proportion of households with flush toilets was analyzed; since 2005, the proportion of households with exclusive flush toilets has been analyzed.

3) Heating Facilities

The survey on heating facilities began with the 1980 census. However, the 1985 and 1995 censuses only collected information on heating facilities at the dwelling level, not the household level, therefore excluded from the analysis.

The results of examining the changes in household heating facilities since 1980 are as follows (Table 7-6). The proportion of central heating increased from 2.0% in 1980 to 8.3% in 2000, but decreased to 3.0% in 2020. The proportion of district heating increased from 6.4% in 2000 to 15.2% in 2020, and the proportion of individual heating decreased from 98.0% in 1980 to 81.8% in 2020.

Table 7-6. Changes in Household Heating Methods by Region (1980–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category		Central	District	Individual	Boiler						Furnace		Others
					City Gas	Oil	LPG	Electric	Briquette	Firewood	Briquette	Traditional	
1980	Nationwide	2.0	-	98.0	-	2.0	-	0.1	69.9	-	-	23.0	3.0
	Eup	0.2	-	99.8	-	0.8	-	0.1	73.2	-	-	22.7	3.1
	Myeon	0.1	-	99.9	-	0.3	-	-	25.5	-	-	65.5	8.6
	Dong	3.3	-	96.7	-	3.1	-	0.2	91.7	-	-	1.5	0.2
1990	Nationwide	5.9	-	94.1	-	20.0	5.2	0.3	48.6	-	13.7	5.8	0.5
	Eup	0.5	-	99.5	-	18.9	0.9	0.4	59.3	-	11.4	8.1	0.4
	Myeon	0.2	-	99.8	-	10.2	0.4	0.3	50.9	-	13.4	24.4	0.2
	Dong	7.8	-	92.2	-	22.4	6.8	0.3	46.9	-	14.1	1.2	0.5
2000	Nationwide	8.3	6.4	85.2	37.0	40.3	3.4	1.6	1.5	-	0.3	0.8	0.4
	Eup	2.9	2.2	94.9	12.0	63.3	11.5	2.7	3.2	-	0.5	1.3	0.5
	Myeon	0.6	0.1	99.3	4.5	76.4	4.1	4.7	3.7	-	0.8	4.4	0.6
	Dong	10.2	7.9	81.8	45.2	31.7	2.4	0.9	1.0	-	0.2	0.1	0.3
2005	Nationwide	5.9	8.7	85.5	50.6	25.7	3.6	3.3	1.1	-	0.2	0.4	0.5
	Eup	2.0	1.8	96.3	27.9	44.8	13.0	5.9	2.8	-	0.4	0.7	0.7
	Myeon	0.5	1.3	98.2	5.6	66.4	5.3	11.8	4.2	-	0.7	2.7	1.7
	Dong	7.1	10.4	82.5	59.4	17.9	2.4	1.8	0.5	-	0.1	0.0	0.3
2010	Nationwide	4.7	10.6	84.7	59.5	15.8	3.2	4.1	1.1	-	0.1	0.2	0.6
	Eup	0.9	4.1	95.0	41.3	30.4	11.4	7.8	2.6	-	0.2	0.3	1.1
	Myeon	0.3	2.0	97.7	10.2	54.8	6.0	16.3	4.8	-	0.4	1.7	3.5
	Dong	5.7	12.4	81.9	67.8	9.3	1.9	2.1	0.5	-	-	-	0.2
2015	Nationwide	2.7	12.7	84.6	64.4	12.1	2.6	3.5	0.8	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.2
	Eup	0.7	4.4	94.9	51.6	24.6	7.8	7.0	2.0	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.4
	Myeon	0.1	0.3	99.6	15.2	51.2	5.8	16.3	3.8	5.4	0.4	0.8	0.8
	Dong	3.3	15.1	81.6	71.9	5.9	1.7	1.5	0.3	-	-	-	0.1
2020	Nationwide	3.0	15.2	81.8	66.6	8.8	2.4	2.7	0.4	0.5	-	-	0.4
	Eup	0.7	5.7	93.6	62.1	17.7	6.5	5.0	0.8	0.8	-	-	0.6
	Myeon	0.5	0.7	98.8	21.1	48.1	7.9	13.8	1.8	4.3	-	-	1.7
	Dong	3.6	18.0	78.4	72.5	3.1	1.3	1.1	0.2	-	-	-	0.2

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census 2% sample microdata (1980–2000), 10%·20% sample microdata (2005–2020).

Note: In 1985 and 1995, household's heating facilities were not included in the survey items.

Breaking down of individual heating types is as follows. The proportion of briquette boilers decreased from 69.9% in 1980 to 48.6% in 1990, then significantly dropped to 1.5% in 2000, and fell below 1% from 2015. The proportion of traditional furnaces decreased from 23.0% in 1980 to 5.8% in 1990 and has become less than 1% since 2000. The proportion of oil boilers increased sharply from 2.0% in 1980 to 40.3% in 2000. But it has decreased since 2005, recording 8.8% in 2020. Meanwhile, the proportion of city gas boilers has steadily increased from 37.0% in 2000 to 66.6% in 2020.

There is a large difference in household heating facilities between *dong* and *myeon* areas. In *dong* areas, the proportion of district heating has steadily increased from 7.9% in 2000 to 18.0% in 2020, while in *myeon* areas, the proportion of individual heating has consistently been over 90%, accounting for the majority since 1980. The proportion of city gas boilers increased from 45.2% in 2000 to 72.5% in *dong* areas, but only increased from 4.5% to 21.1% in *myeon* areas during the same period. The proportion of oil boilers in *myeon* areas increased sharply from 0.3% in 1980 to 76.4% in 2000, and although it decreased afterward, it was still significantly higher than in other regions at 48.1% in 2020.

Changes in heating facilities are influenced by building regulations, energy policies, and other factors. Many apartments built in Seoul during the 1970s were designed to use briquette boilers. Subsequently, regulations prohibiting the use of briquettes in newly constructed apartments and row houses, or mandating the use of city gas boilers, influenced the decrease in the proportion of briquette boilers.

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

As housing policy has shifted from a focus on supply to an emphasis on housing welfare, the quality of housing has become an important criterion for policy evaluation. The improvement in overcrowding-related indicators, such as floor area per person and number of rooms per person, is partly due to changes in population and household structure, and also a result of housing supply policies. Although the Population and Housing Census has indeed played a crucial role in capturing societal changes, several improvements are needed to support evidence-based housing policy formulation.

First, it is necessary to more accurately assess the qualitative level of housing by improving measures for some items, such as the criteria for counting rooms. A review is needed to determine if the currently applied minimum space criterion of 4m^2 for a room is appropriate.

Second, it is necessary to assess the qualitative level of housing appropriate for diverse housing and household types. For instance, the qualitative assessment of housing types like shared houses, where living rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and toilets are shared, has limitations with existing methods. The lifestyles of increasing one-person households may also require different housing quality compared to households formed by two or more members. Furthermore, housing needs of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and disabled, would differ from other groups,[4] so it is necessary to assess how well universal design and barrier-free design are being applied.

4) Singapore supplies HDB Studio Apartments with elderly-friendly Universal Design (35m2 and 45m2) to vulnerable elderly individuals aged 55 and over, which are larger than the housing area for general households (23-33m2). In Korea, when supplying public rental housing, there are plans to allocate a certain proportion of housing for vulnerable residents and supply larger units than for general households.

Third, although the overall housing quality has improved, some households still reside in substandard living conditions, which call for targeted measures for these groups. In international comparisons by the OECD, assessing the distribution of overcrowded households among low-income groups is considered more important than the overall overcrowding rate. Even though housing facilities for the majority of households have been modernized since the 2000s, the distribution and conditions of households in housing deprivation need to be monitored more precisely. The proportion of households residing in substandard living conditions and those in living quarters other than houses has decreased in the total number of households, but it is still at an unignorable level (see Chapter 10). Continued attention and sustained efforts are essential to improving the living conditions of those experiencing housing deprivation.

Chapter 8

Housing Outcomes by Household Characteristics

Despite overall improvements in housing conditions, rapid shifts in household composition have led to widening disparities in housing outcomes across different demographic groups. Among the most significant structural changes are the sharp increase in single-person households and the growing proportion of elderly households. One-person households have now become the most prevalent household type, while the accelerating aging population has pushed the country toward super-aged society status earlier than anticipated. These demographic transformations, alongside evolving patterns across the life course, have reshaped housing demand and access. This chapter analyzes how these changes in household characteristics have influenced housing outcomes and explores their implications for housing policy and planning.

1. One-Person Households

1) Changes and Characteristics of One-Person Households

The proportion of one-person households increased dramatically from 4.2% (approximately 280,000 households) in 1975 to 31.7% (6.64 million households) in 2020

(Table 8-1). Over this period, the share of single-person households grew nearly eightfold, while the absolute number expanded more than twenty-three times. This demographic shift has been accompanied by a marked decline in traditional family structures. Specifically, the proportion of households composed of couples with unmarried children fell from 53.2% in 1975 to 29.1% in 2020. In contrast, the share of couples without children rose from 4.8% to 16.8%, reflecting broader changes in family formation and living arrangements.

One-person households have grown rapidly in urban areas, with most of the increase concentrated in *dong* (urban administrative units), while their presence in *eup* and *myeon* (rural areas) remains comparatively limited. This trend reflects the urban concentration of socio-economic opportunities, particularly those related to education and employment. A closer analysis of the sex and age distribution of one-person households reveals a pronounced bimodal pattern, with peaks in the late 20s and early 60s—each showing notable differences by gender. Men outnumber women in the one-person household category between their late 20s and late 50s, whereas women predominate in the 60-and-over age group. While the overall gender distribution is nearly equal (49.7% male, 50.3% female), age-specific variations reflect underlying differences in marital patterns and life expectancy.

Table 8-1. Changes in Household Composition (1975–2020)

(Unit: %)

Category	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Couple-only	4.8	6.0	7.1	8.3	10.8	12.3	14.2	15.4	15.6	16.8
Couple + Children	53.2	53.0	52.8	51.9	50.4	48.2	42.2	37.0	32.2	29.1
One-Person	4.2	4.8	6.9	9.0	12.7	15.5	20.0	23.9	27.2	31.7
Others	37.8	36.2	33.1	30.8	26.2	24.0	23.6	23.7	25.0	22.4

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Marital status also reveals distinct characteristics of one-person households nationwide. The majority are unmarried (50.3%), followed by widowed (20.5%), divorced (16.1%), and married individuals living alone (13.2%). These patterns diverge by location: in urban areas, one-person households are predominantly composed of individuals who have never married, while in rural areas, they are more likely to be widowed.

2) Housing Conditions of One-Person Households

One-person households are particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity due to their relatively low rates of homeownership. In 1980, tenure distribution among one-person households was 39.8% owner-occupied, 33.1% monthly rented, and 22.3% *jeonse*—with homeownership slightly exceeding monthly rental. By 2000, ownership and monthly rent rates converged at 32.6%, while the share of *jeonse* increased to 29.0%. However, by 2020, the share of monthly rent surged to 42.4%, overtaking both owner-occupancy (34.3%) and *jeonse* (17.5%). This shift reflects a marked decline in housing stability for one-person households, particularly among younger populations.

Tenure type also varies significantly by age. Younger individuals are predominantly concentrated in monthly rental contracts, while *jeonse* arrangements are more common among those aged 25 to 44. In contrast, among individuals aged 65 and older, more than half live in owner-occupied housing, underscoring a generational divide in housing security.

Historically, one-person households have predominantly resided in detached houses, but there has been a notable shift toward apartment living over time. In 1980, 85.9% of one-person households lived in detached houses; however, by 2020, this proportion had decreased to 43.9%, while the share living in apartments increased from 5.1% to 32.0%. The percentage of one-person households residing in living quarters other than houses (excluding *officetels*) remained relatively stable at around 1% between 1985 and 2005, but by 2020, it

had risen to 4.3%. The proportion of one-person households living in *officetels*—a hybrid residential-commercial space—also increased significantly, from 0.2% in 1990 to 6.5% in 2020, reflecting a growing trend among younger one-person households.

When examining living quarters by age group, *officetels* are most commonly occupied by individuals in their 20s and 30s, while apartments are more prevalent among those in their 40s and 50s. For those under 30 and over 50, detached houses make up more than 40% of their living arrangements.[1)]

By sex, both men and women predominantly live in detached houses, although more men tend to occupy them than women. Conversely, women are more likely to live in apartments than men. Additionally, males are more likely to reside in living quarters other than houses compared to females.

One-person households tend to have relatively short tenures in their current residences, with a significant proportion having lived in their current housing for less than two years. This is particularly true for individuals in their 20s, suggesting that they may have recently moved out to live independently or frequently change residences. A notable portion of individuals in their 30s and 40s also report living in their current housing for less than two years. In contrast, the proportion of one-person households that have resided in their current dwelling for over 20 years is significantly higher among individuals aged 60 and older, reflecting greater housing stability in later life.

1) In Korea, *detached houses* also include multi-family houses, where multiple households reside in separate units within a single building. Therefore, although the proportion of residents in detached houses is high, it does not necessarily indicate that these individuals live in standalone homes. In urban areas, many youths reside in multi-family houses categorized under *detached houses* that resemble studio apartments.

2. Elderly Households

1) Progress of Aging

Korea is projected to become a *super-aged society*, with the proportion of individuals aged 65 and over expected to exceed 20% by 2025. Having reached the threshold of an *aged society* in 2020—defined as a population where those aged 65 and older comprise more than 14%—Korea will transition to a super-aged society in just five years. This rapid demographic shift contrasts sharply with the pace observed in other countries, such as the UK (50 years), France (39 years), and the USA (15 years). As of 2020, the old-age dependency ratio stood at 22.2 per 100 working-age individuals. Population projections indicate that this ratio is anticipated to increase dramatically, reaching 104.2 by 2072.

According to household projections from Statistics Korea, elderly households—defined as those with heads aged 65 or older—are expected to increase steadily as the population continues to age. These households will predominantly consist of couples or one-person households. In 2000, couples (33.1%) and one-person households (31.4%) accounted for a combined 64.5% of elderly households (Figure 8-1). By 2052, it is projected that the share of elderly households living alone or as couples will rise to 76.4%, with one-person households (42.1%) surpassing couples (34.4%).

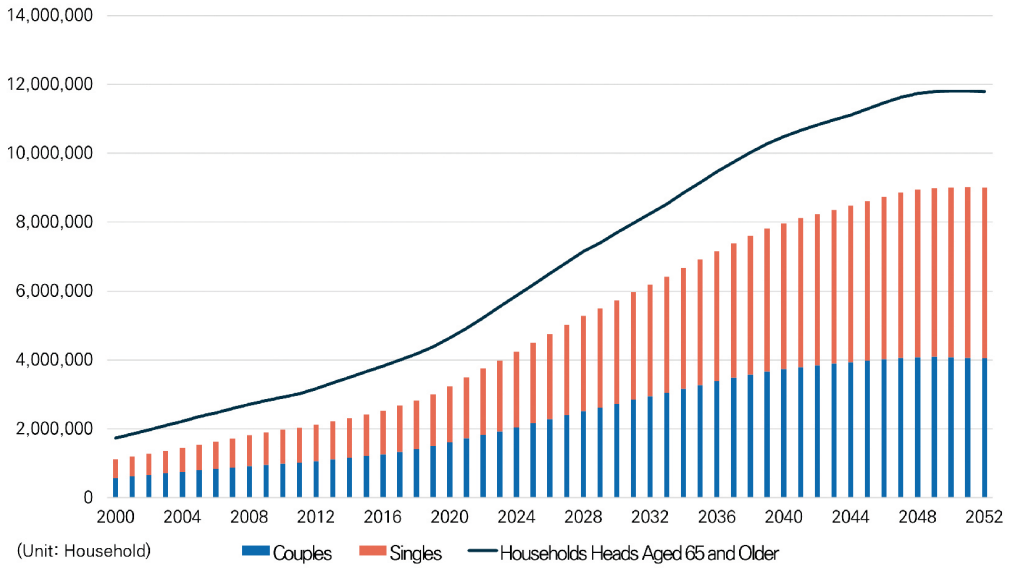


Figure 8-1. Elderly Household Projections (2000–2052)

Source: Statistics Korea, Household Projections (2022).

Nationwide, the proportion of elderly households increased from 12.1% in 2000 to 22.6% in 2020. This trend is more pronounced in rural areas, where the percentage of elderly households has grown significantly. Since 2000, districts with elderly household proportions exceeding 30% have been concentrated in non-capital areas, highlighting the geographic shift in the elderly population.

2) Housing Conditions of Elderly Households

Elderly households generally have a high homeownership rate; however, between 1985 and 2020, there was a noticeable decline in homeownership, while the proportion of elderly households living in monthly rental accommodations increased. The homeownership rate, which had approached 80%, decreased to 74.5%, while the proportion of households in

monthly rent rose from 7.6% to 13.6%. This shift reflects a diversification in tenure types among elderly households. Additionally, the type of living quarters occupied by elderly households has gradually shifted from detached houses to apartments. In 1975, 94.6% of elderly households lived in detached houses, but by 2020, the proportion of those living in apartments increased to 42.8%, surpassing those in detached houses (42.1%). However, when examining urban and rural areas separately, rural areas continue to see a higher proportion of elderly households living in detached houses compared to apartments.

The living conditions of elderly households have significantly improved, particularly in terms of amenities such as modern kitchens, flush toilets, and hot water bathing facilities. In 1980, only 6.2% of elderly households had modern kitchens, but by 2020, this figure had risen to 99.1%. Similarly, the proportion of households with flush toilets increased from 6.2% to 97.6% during the same period. The percentage of households with hot water bathing facilities, which was just 3.2% in 1980, reached 98.2% by 2020. The majority of elderly households now have access to modern living facilities, reflecting a substantial improvement in their living standards.

According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare's *Survey on the Actual Conditions of Older Persons* in Korea, there has been a marked shift in attitudes toward intergenerational cohabitation among the elderly. The proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement that "at least one of the children should live with their elderly parents" declined significantly from 27.6% in 2011 to 12.8% in 2020. Similarly, the percentage of parents expressing a preference to live with their eldest son decreased from 57.6% to 32.1% over the same period. In contrast, the proportion favoring cohabitation with a financially independent child increased from 14.1% to 29.9%. These findings reflect a substantial transformation in traditional perceptions of familial cohabitation and caregiving norms among Korea's aging population.

Moreover, elderly individuals exhibit varying preferences regarding their place of

residence depending on their health status. While most older adults prefer to remain in their current homes when in good health, the proportion expressing a desire to relocate to service-providing facilities increases as health conditions deteriorate. This shift highlights the growing difficulty elderly individuals face in managing care, meal preparation, and daily living tasks without external assistance.

In response, the number of elderly care facilities in Korea has expanded significantly. These facilities encompass a range of services, including residential care, medical treatment, leisure activities, and home-care support. Recently, there has been an increased focus on specialized facilities that provide protective services, employment support, and shelters for abuse victims, reflecting the diverse needs of the aging population. According to the *Status Report of the Inmates and Staff in Welfare Facilities*, the number of nursing facilities increased substantially from 1,832 in 2008 to 6,069 in 2022. The number of residents rose from 81,262 to 232,235, indicating a growing demand for institutional care among the elderly.

In parallel, the number of facilities offering home-care services—such as bathing assistance and nursing care delivered to older adults in their homes—has also grown substantially. Between 2008 and 2022, the number of home-care facilities increased from 2,298 to 13,272, reflecting a significant expansion in service availability. During the same period, the number of service users rose markedly from 13,460 to 106,857, underscoring the increasing reliance on community-based care options that enable elderly individuals to remain in their homes while receiving essential support.

3. Housing Outcomes by Life Cycle

1) Characteristics of Life Cycle

Changes in the characteristics of household heads by age group are closely linked to shifts in marital status and housing needs. For analytical purposes, household heads are categorized into four age groups: young adults (aged 34 and under), middle-aged adults (35–49), older adults (50–64), and seniors (65 and over). This section examines how housing characteristics vary across these life cycle stages. The proportion of young adult household heads peaked at 31.6% in 1985, following an increase from 29.1% in 1975, but subsequently declined to 14.8% in 2020, making it the smallest share among all age groups. Similarly, the share of middle-aged household heads declined from 42.0% in 1975 to 28.9% in 2020. In contrast, the proportion of older adult household heads rose significantly from 17.8% to 33.6% over the same period. The proportion of senior household heads more than doubled, reaching 22.6% in 2020, reflecting the broader demographic trend of population aging.

There is a notable disparity in the marital status distribution of household heads across age groups. The most significant change is observed among young adult household heads, where the proportion of married individuals has dramatically declined from 79.3% in 1975 to 24.4% in 2020. Similarly, the married share among middle-aged household heads decreased from 90.9% to 68.6% over the same period. In contrast, the overall divorce rate among household heads increased substantially, rising from 0.8% in 1975 to 9.6% in 2020. This trend is particularly pronounced among older adults, with the divorce rate rising from 0.6% to 15.6%, reflecting a sharper increase than in other age groups. Another notable

shift is the rise in unmarried households. In 2020, 74.1% of young household heads were unmarried, marking a dramatic reversal from 1975, when 79.3% were married.

Residential mobility patterns vary across the life cycle, with younger household heads exhibiting higher rates of migration, which tend to decline with age. An analysis of residential mobility since 1985, based on household heads' residence one year prior, reveals that the proportion of households remaining in the same dwelling has increased across all age groups from 1985 to 2020, indicating an overall decline in residential movement. Notably, older household heads have consistently shown the highest rates of residential stability. However, between 2015 and 2020, there was a slight increase in inter-municipal (*si-gun-gu*) moves, accompanied by a significant decrease in intra-municipal relocations.

An analysis of the proportion of households that moved within the past five years reveals a consistent decline across all age groups. Since peaking in 1995, overall residential mobility has demonstrated a downward trend. Young adult household heads have remained the most mobile, with their mobility rate increasing from 80.9% in 1985 to 90.6% in 1995, and reaching 86.8% in 2015. Although this rate declined to 73.0% in 2020, it remained the highest among all age groups, indicating that young adults continue to exhibit a relatively high degree of residential mobility. For middle-aged household heads, the mobility rate peaked at 66.7% in 1995 but declined to 48.0% by 2020. The high mobility rate in 1995 is largely attributed to the significant housing supply, which prompted residential relocation.

2) Housing Conditions by Life Cycle

The trend of increasing homeownership rates with age has remained consistent since 1985. As of 2020, homeownership rates were 19.8% for young adults, 53.6% for middle-aged adults, 65.2% for older adults, and 74.9% for seniors (Figure 8-2). An analysis of changes in housing tenure by age group reveals a significant shift, particularly among young

adults: the proportion of *jeonse* contracts declined from 36.3% in 1985 to 28.4% in 2020, while the share of monthly rent with deposits rose sharply from 16.6% to 42.6%, making it the most prevalent tenure type. Among middle-aged household heads, homeownership remained relatively stable at approximately 50%. Prior to 2010, *jeonse* was the second most common tenure type after ownership, but from 2015 onward, monthly rent with deposits surpassed *jeonse* in prevalence. For older adult heads, the homeownership rate declined from 75.0% in 1985 to 65.2% in 2020, with monthly rent with deposit overtaking *jeonse* since 2015. Senior household heads continue to predominantly live in owner-occupied housing, with approximately 75% doing so. Across all age groups, there is a clear trend toward increasing reliance on monthly rent with deposits, which has surpassed *jeonse* in recent years.

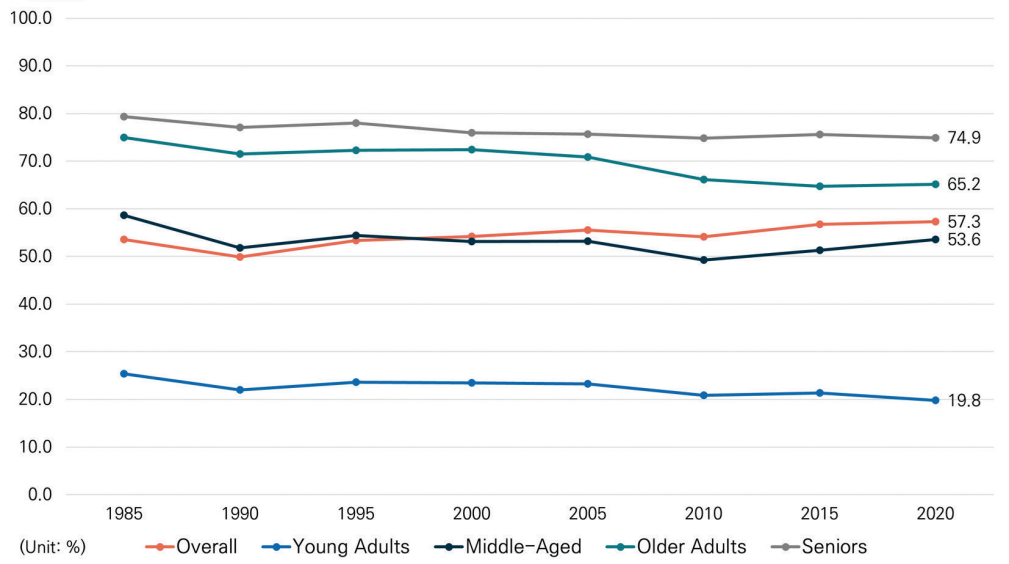


Figure 8-2. Changes in Homeownership Rates by Household Head Age (1985–2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: Age group classifications are as follows: young adults (34 and younger), middle-aged (35–49), older adults (50–64), and seniors (65 and older).

Changes in the types of living quarters reflect a significant shift toward apartment living. In 1975, more than 90% of all households resided in detached houses. However, due to rapid urbanization and the large-scale development of apartment complexes, the proportion of households living in apartments has increased dramatically. The share of households occupying detached houses declined from 91.3% in 1975 to 30.4% in 2020, while the share residing in apartments rose markedly from 1.4% to 51.5% over the same period.

Overall, a consistent decline in detached house occupancy and a corresponding increase in apartment occupancy are observed across all age groups of household heads. Nonetheless, as of 2020, the predominant type of housing varies by age group. The proportion of detached house dwellers remains relatively high among senior and young adult household heads, whereas middle-aged and older adult heads—typically in the child-rearing phase—are more likely to live in apartments.

An analysis of the availability of modern housing facilities by household head age group reveals that prior to 2000, housing modernization substantially progressed, with middle-aged household heads exhibiting higher levels of access to modern amenities than other age cohorts. In particular, individuals aged 35 to 49—typically in the stage of marriage and child-rearing—have consistently demonstrated the highest rates of residence in modernized dwellings from the 1980s onward.

The most notable period of growth in the availability of modern housing facilities, including modern kitchens, flush toilets, and hot water bathing amenities, occurred between 1990 and 1995, a trend observed uniformly across all age groups. This pattern suggests that government-led mass housing supply initiatives not only increased the quantity of available housing but also significantly improved the quality of housing through modernization.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Projections regarding shifts in household composition raise important considerations for future housing policy. Traditional household structures—such as nuclear families consisting of parents and children or multigenerational households in which elderly family members are supported within the family unit—are becoming increasingly uncommon. One of the most notable transformations is the sharp rise in the number of one-person households, a trend that is expected to persist. This phenomenon now spans all age groups.

Several structural and societal factors underpin this shift, including urbanization, industrialization, increased educational attainment, longer life expectancy, and evolving social values. As a result, the housing needs of one-person households are highly diverse, varying by region, gender, and socioeconomic status. These households typically exhibit lower homeownership rates, are more likely to live in non-apartment dwellings, and often experience shorter residential tenures, thereby necessitating targeted policy interventions. It is therefore essential to continue developing housing policies that ensure a minimum standard of living for one-person households.

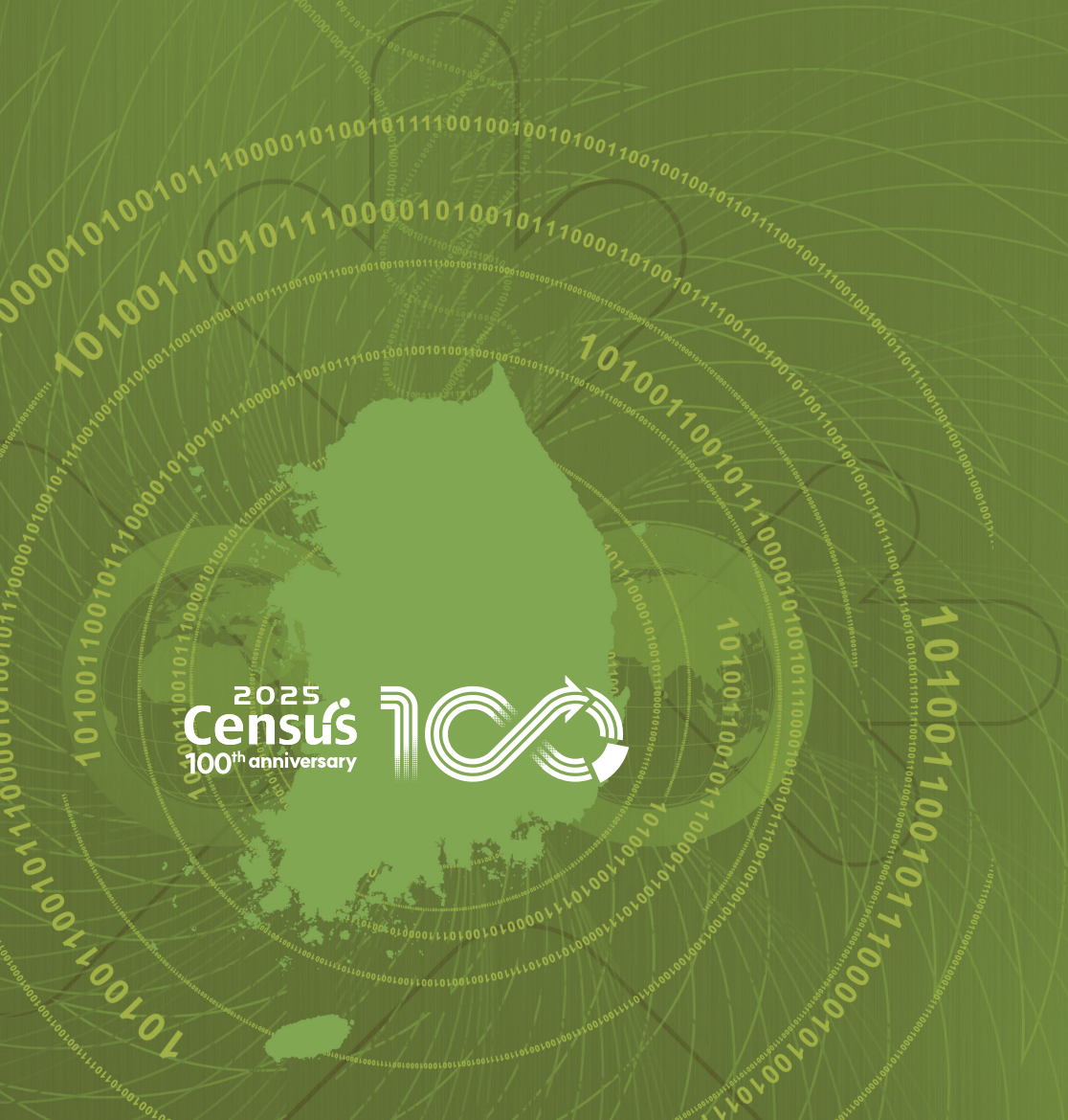
Korea is on track to become a super-aged society at an unprecedented rate in global history. Once a young nation with a median age under 20 in the 1960s, it is projected to have a median age exceeding 60 by 2056. The traditional norm of elderly individuals living with their children is gradually fading, leading to a rise in elderly households living alone or only with a spouse. While elderly households once enjoyed high homeownership rates, there is a noticeable shift toward more unstable tenure types, with significant regional disparities in housing and tenure options. In earlier decades, elderly households predominantly resided in detached houses located in rural areas. However, a growing number now live in apartment

units in urban settings. Despite age-related declines in health and daily functioning, many elderly individuals prefer to age in place and remain in their current homes for as long as possible. Nevertheless, policy responses have not kept pace with the rapid demographic transformation. There is an urgent need for comprehensive and proactive policy measures, including the expansion of community-based care services, housing quality enhancements, and strengthened housing support systems, to enable the elderly population to continue living safely and independently within their communities.

One of the most significant shifts in the life cycle in Korea is the growing proportion of unmarried young adults and the increasing trend toward delayed marriage. The proportion of married individuals in their early 30s has declined markedly, while divorce rates have risen across various age groups. These changes have contributed to delayed family formation and an increase in household dissolution. At the same time, younger generations are experiencing a decline in homeownership and a marked increase in rental housing. The growing number of unmarried young individuals, coupled with persistently low fertility rates and increasing divorce rates, reflects broader structural and societal changes beyond personal preferences or values. In light of these transformations, long-term housing policy must evolve to reflect the changing realities of family life. It is imperative to reconsider the concept of family, moving beyond traditional normative frameworks to ensure that housing policies are inclusive and responsive to diverse household compositions.

Chapter 9

Changes in Housing Conditions by Province



This chapter focuses on specifically exploring long-term changes in regional housing conditions and inter-regional differences by analyzing the accumulated data of the Population and Housing Census. This will provide an opportunity to reinterpret the outcomes of housing policies and housing development over the past decades from the perspective of regional disparities. Furthermore, it can be used as a reference for formulating policies aimed at the qualitative improvement of housing standards, moving away from an approach that emphasizes the quantity of housing supply. Here, regional housing conditions are examined by housing stock status and household occupancy status. Housing stock status includes the number of houses, the housing supply ratio, and the age of the houses, while household occupancy status covers the type of living quarters, tenure, and floor area.

1. Housing Stock Status

1) Number of Houses

The total number of houses increased from 4.4 million in 1970 to 7.2 million in 1990 and 18.5 million in 2020. From 1990 to 2020, the number of houses in the Seoul metropolitan area increased 3.1 times from 2.7 million to 8.5 million in 2020, while the number of houses

in the non-capital area increased 2.3 times from 4.4 million to 10.0 million. Within the Seoul metropolitan area, the number of houses in Seoul increased 2.1 times from 1.4 million units in 1990 to 3.0 million in 2020, whereas the number of houses in Gyeonggi became 4.6 times, increasing from 0.97 million to 4.5 million units, showing a higher increase rate in Gyeonggi than in Seoul. Until 1995, the number of houses in Seoul was greater than in Gyeonggi. However, since 2000, Gyeonggi has surpassed Seoul, and in 2020, it had over 1 million more units.

The proportion of houses in the Seoul metropolitan area relative to the nationwide total housing stock nearly doubled from 24.2% in 1970 to 46.1% in 2020. Housing supply accelerated, particularly in the Seoul metropolitan area, over the past 50 years, resulting in a decrease in the proportion of housing in the non-capital area from 75.8% in 1970 to 53.9% in 2020. The proportion of houses in Seoul increased by 2.9 percentage points, from 13.4% in 1970 to 16.3% in 2020. Incheon and Gyeonggi saw a much larger increase of 19.0 percentage points, rising from 10.9% in 1970 to 29.8% in 2020. Although the number of houses in non-capital areas has also increased for the same period, their share of the national total has declined.

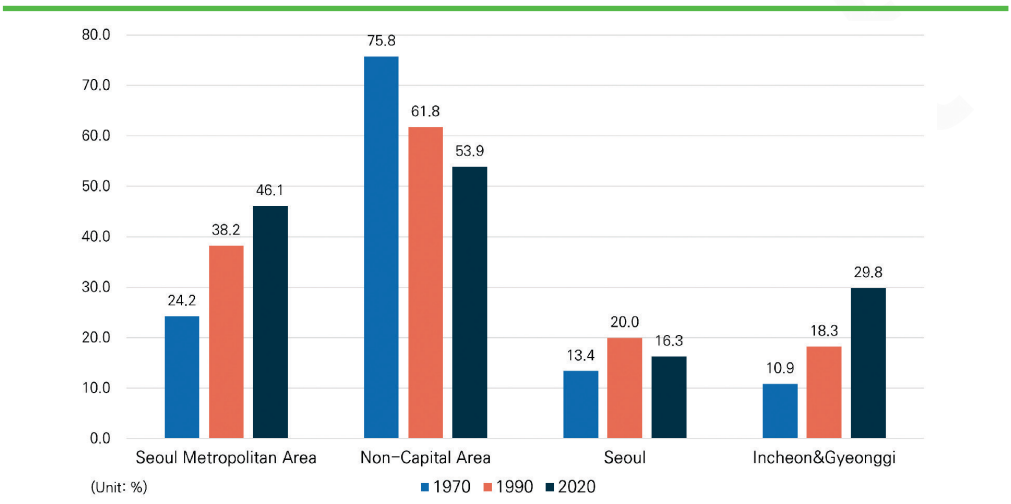


Figure 9-1. Changes in the Proportion of Housing Stock by Region (1970–2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

2) Housing Supply Ratio

The housing supply ratio of the Seoul metropolitan area never exceeded 100% based on the previous housing supply ratio calculation method,[1] while the non-capital area exceeded 100% starting in 2000.

After the revision in the housing supply ratio measure, the nationwide ratio increased from 100.5% in 2010 to 103.6% in 2020, but decreased to 102.5% in 2023 (Table 9-1). Meanwhile, the ratio in the Seoul metropolitan area increased from 96.4% in 2010 to 97.2% in 2023. In the non-capital area, it rose from 104.3% to 107.7% over the same period. Within the Seoul metropolitan area, the ratio in Gyeonggi Province increased steadily from 97.3% in 2010 to 99.3% in 2023. The ratio in Seoul rose from 94.4% in 2010 to 96.0% in 2015 but declined again to 93.6% in 2023. In Incheon, the ratio also increased from 99.8% in 2010 to 101.0% in 2015, but declined to 99.1% in 2023.

Despite the continuous increase in the number of houses, the housing supply ratio in the Seoul metropolitan area remained below 100% in 2023. Particularly in Seoul, the housing supply ratio has consistently been the lowest among the 17 provinces. The decrease in the housing supply ratio is associated with an unusual surge in the number of households.

In 2023, among the non-capital area, Gyeongbuk (113.1%) had the highest housing supply ratio, followed by Jeonnam (112.6%) and Chungnam (111.7%). Daejeon (96.4%) was the only province in the non-capital area with a housing supply ratio below 100% in 2023. Busan and Jeju, which had housing supply ratios below 100% in 2010, exceeded 100% from 2015.

1) About the measure of housing supply ratio, see chapter 4.

Table 9-1. Changes in Housing Supply Ratio and Age of Housing by Province

(Unit: %)

Category		Housing Supply Ratio		Age of Housing			
				up to 20 years		over 30 years	
		1995	2023	1980	2020	1980	2020
Seoul Metropolitan Area		76.7	97.2	87.7	59.0	12.3	13.1
	Seoul	68.0	93.6	91.8	55.1	8.2	18.3
	Incheon	89.9	99.1	-	51.5	-	15.8
	Gyeonggi	84.3	99.3	81.7	63.3	18.3	8.9
Non-Capital Area		93.6	107.7	67.7	47.5	32.3	22.0
	Busan	71.0	102.9	89.0	47.7	11.0	23.0
	Daegu	71.2	103.3	-	48.2	-	17.7
	Gwangju	81.0	105.5	-	49.9	-	16.3
	Daejeon	90.7	96.4	-	44.0	-	17.0
	Ulsan	-	108.6	-	50.7	-	12.9
	Sejong	-	106.1	-	86.4	-	6.2
	Gangwon	107.6	109.2	81.7	46.3	18.3	23.1
	Chungbuk	103.4	111.2	66.5	48.2	33.5	20.5
	Chungnam	108.8	111.7	65.2	52.0	34.8	19.6
	Jeonbuk	105.3	109.2	56.4	40.7	43.6	25.8
	Jeonnam	115.2	112.6	61.9	38.7	38.1	33.5
	Gyeongbuk	106.3	113.1	67.9	42.6	32.1	26.8
	Gyeongnam	92.9	109.1	61.5	50.3	38.5	20.9
	Jeju	94.5	105.3	78.0	58.4	22.0	20.4
Nationwide		86.0	102.5	73.9	52.8	26.1	17.9

Source: MOLIT, Housing Supply Ratio; Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: 1) In 1995, the housing supply ratio was not enumerated by housing units, whereas in 2023, it was.

2) Figures of age of housing mean the ratio of certain age group to the total stock.

3) Distribution by Age of Housing

Based on the age classification of housing—20 years or less, over 20 to 30 years, and over 30 years—the nationwide proportion of houses older than 20 years has shown a continuous increase since 2000 (see Table 9-1). The proportion over 20 years to 30 years decreased from 15.8% in 1980 to 10.0% in 2000, but increased to 29.4% in 2020. The proportion over 30 years decreased from 26.1% in 1980 to 8.7% in 2000, but increased again to 17.9% in 2020. The proportion 20 years or less increased from 73.9% in 1980 to 81.3% in 2000, but decreased to 52.8% in 2020.

The Seoul metropolitan area has a higher proportion of houses up to 20 years than the nationwide average, which decreased from 87.7% in 1980 to 59.0% in 2020. Particularly, Seoul showed a larger decrease in this proportion than the Seoul metropolitan area average (28.7%p), dropping from 91.8% in 1980 to 55.1% in 2020—a decline of 36.7%p.

The proportion of houses over 30 years in the Seoul metropolitan area decreased from 12.3% in 1980 to 4.2% in 2000 but increased again to 13.1% in 2020, becoming higher than in 1980. The non-capital area had a lower proportion of houses up to 20 years than the Seoul metropolitan area, decreasing from 67.7% in 1980 to 47.5% in 2020. On the other hand, the proportion of houses over 30 years in the non-capital area decreased from 32.3% in 1980 to 11.9% in 2000, but increased again to 22.0% in 2020. It has been consistently higher than in the Seoul metropolitan area.

2. Household Occupancy Status

1) Type of Living Quarters

Looking at the changes in the proportion of living quarter types for households, categorized into non-apartment, apartment, and *officetel*, from 1970 to 2020, the proportion of households residing in apartments significantly increased over 50 years. While only 0.7% of households nationwide lived in apartments in 1970, this figure rose dramatically to 51.5% by 2020, indicating that more than half of households resided in apartments. As of 2020, 3.0% of households lived in *officetels*, a non-significant increase from just 0.1% in 1990. The proportion of households living in apartments across the Seoul metropolitan area increased from 1.9% in 1970 to 52.0% in 2020. A similar trend was observed across the non-capital area. The proportion of households living in apartments across the non-capital area increased from 0.2% to 51.1% between 1970 and 2020.

In 2020, the proportion of households living in apartments was highest across Sejong (75.0%), followed by Gwangju (66.9%), and Ulsan (60.6%). In summary, the proportion of households living in non-apartment housing was higher than that of apartments in Seoul, Gangwon, Chungnam, Jeonbuk, Jeonnam, Gyeongbuk, and Jeju. In contrast, in the other 10 provinces, a higher proportion of households resided in apartments (Figure 9-2). Meanwhile, the proportion of households residing in *officetels* was higher in the Seoul metropolitan area (4.5%) than in the non-capital area (1.5%) in 2020.

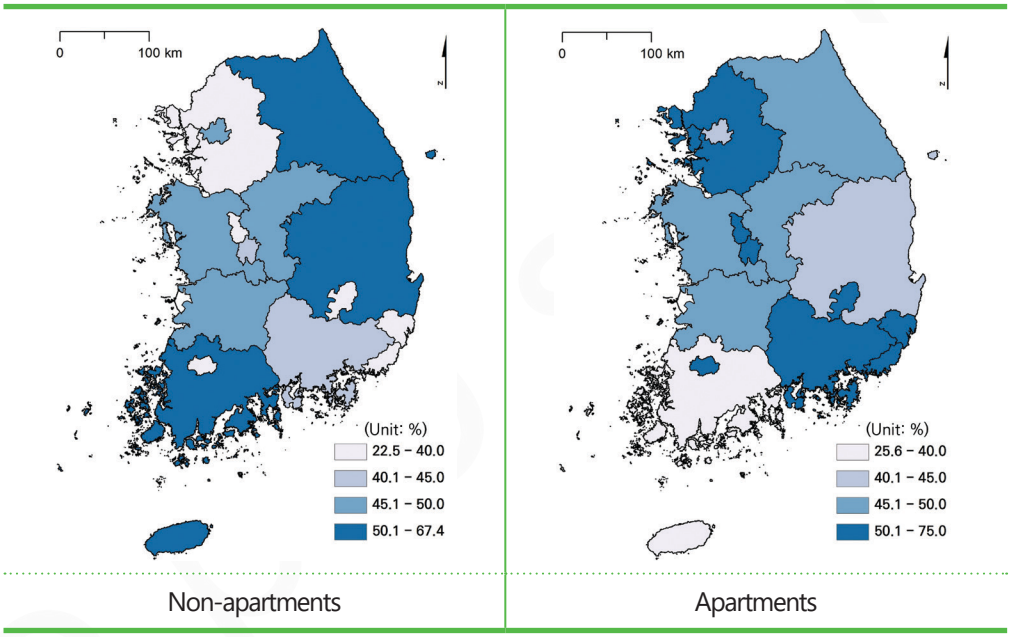


Figure 9-2. Proportion of Non-Apartments/Apartments by Province (2020)

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

2) Housing Tenure

Nationwide, the homeownership rate decreased from 58.6% in 1980 to 54.2% in 2000, but increased to 57.3% in 2020 (Table 9-2). The *jeonse* rate increased from 23.9% in 1980 to 28.2% in 2000, then decreased to 15.5% in 2015, and remained at 15.5% in 2020. The monthly rent rate increased from 15.5% in 1980 to 23.7% in 2015 and slightly decreased to 23.4% in 2020. Overall, the homeownership rate rose after 1995, while the monthly rent showed an increasing trend, and the *jeonse* had a decreasing trend.

The homeownership rate in the Seoul metropolitan area decreased from 48.3% in 1980 to 47.6% in 2000, but increased to 51.3% in 2020. The homeownership rate in the non-capital area decreased from 64.6% in 1980 to 59.6% in 2000, but increased to 63.0% in 2020. The rate in the Seoul metropolitan area has consistently been lower than in the non-

capital area. As of 2020, the homeownership rate was highest in Jeonnam (71.1%), followed by Gyeongbuk (69.0%) and Jeonbuk (67.7%). It was lowest in Seoul (43.5%), followed by Daejeon (51.7%) and Sejong (51.9%).

The *jeonse* rate in the Seoul metropolitan area increased from 32.9% in 1980 to 35.9% in 2000, but decreased to 20.9% in 2020. In the non-capital area, the *jeonse* rate increased from 18.7% in 1980 to 21.8% in 2000. It then decreased to 9.5% in 2015, and rallied to 10.4% in 2020. The *jeonse* rate in the Seoul metropolitan area has consistently been higher than in the non-capital area.

In the Seoul metropolitan area, the monthly rent rate decreased from 17.3% in 1980 to 14.4% in 2000. It then increased to 25.4% in 2015 and dropped again to 24.8% in 2020. In the non-capital area, the monthly rent rate steadily increased from 14.4% in 1980 to 22.1% in 2015, and remained at 22.1% in 2020. In both areas, the monthly rent rate was higher than the *jeonse* rate from 2015 onwards.

3) Floor Area

Nationwide, the floor area per household increased by 7.7m^2 from 62.4m^2 in 2000 to 70.1m^2 in 2020. The floor area per household increased in all provinces during the same period (see Table 9-2). However, the floor area per household in the Seoul metropolitan area has consistently been smaller than in the non-capital area since 2000. As of 2020, the floor area per household is the largest in Ulsan (77.4m^2), followed by Jeju (74.9m^2) and Chungnam (74.7m^2). It was the smallest in Seoul (61.5m^2), followed by Incheon (67.6m^2) and Daejeon (68.6m^2).

The nationwide average floor area per capita increased by 9.9m^2, from 19.8m^2 in 2000 to 29.7m^2 in 2020. This upward trend was observed across all provinces. However, the floor area per capita in the Seoul metropolitan area has consistently been smaller than in the non-capital area, and the gap between the two has been widening.

Table 9-2. Changes in Housing Tenures and Floor Area per Household by Province (1980-2020)

(Unit: %, m^2)

Category		Homeownership		*Jeonse*		Monthly Rent		Floor Area per Household	
		1980	2020	1980	2020	1980	2020	2000	2020
Seoul Metropolitan Area		48.3	51.3	32.9	20.9	17.3	24.8	61.1	67.4
	Seoul	44.5	43.5	37.8	25.7	16.5	28.4	58.7	61.5
	Incheon	-	60.9	-	15.4	-	20.6	61.4	67.6
	Gyeonggi	54.7	55.3	24.6	18.5	18.6	23.0	63.7	72.0
Non-Capital Area		64.6	63.0	18.7	10.4	14.4	22.1	63.5	72.7
	Busan	39.7	59.7	38.3	12.7	21.0	24.5	60.4	68.7
	Daegu	-	58.4	-	12.1	-	26.1	62.7	73.3
	Gwangju	-	61.1	-	10.6	-	25.1	63.7	72.4
	Daejeon	-	51.7	-	17.1	-	28.1	65.7	68.6
	Ulsan	-	63.9	-	10.1	-	22.3	62.7	77.4
	Sejong	-	51.9	-	19.5	-	25.5	-	73.8
	Gangwon	69.1	61.8	9.1	9.1	17.4	22.2	64.0	73.2
	Chungbuk	72.9	62.2	12.8	10.8	11.7	22.1	65.0	73.1
	Chungnam	72.9	63.8	15.2	10.1	9.8	20.4	69.3	74.7
	Jeonbuk	74.8	67.7	16.0	8.3	7.4	19.5	65.7	73.0
	Jeonnam	73.4	71.1	15.7	8.0	9.0	15.0	63.0	71.1
	Gyeongbuk	60.7	69.0	19.1	7.0	17.7	18.9	63.4	73.5
	Gyeongnam	66.3	66.4	15.1	9.3	16.1	20.1	61.7	74.5
	Jeju	63.7	56.6	15.4	6.9	17.5	29.2	63.4	74.9
Nationwide		58.6	57.3	23.9	15.5	15.5	23.4	62.4	70.1

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: Floor area per household was enumerated excluding living quarters other than houses.

As of 2020, the floor area per capita in the Seoul metropolitan area was 27.8m^2, which is smaller than non-capital areas, where it averaged 31.6m^2. The floor area per capita in 2020 was the largest in Gyeongbuk (33.3m^2), followed by Gangwon (33.1m^2) and Chungnam (32.8m^2). It was the smallest in Seoul (26.6m^2), followed by Incheon (27.5m^2) and Gyeonggi (28.7m^2).

Thus, as of 2020, Seoul has the smallest floor area per household or per capita among the 17 provinces. Although the floor area per capita in Seoul steadily increased since 2005, the floor area per household has steadily decreased.

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The comparative review of regional housing conditions yields several key policy implications. First, housing conditions differ across regions. Through various indicators constituting housing conditions, distinct characteristics were observed between the Seoul metropolitan area and the non-capital area. Over the past 50 years, the proportion of non-apartment housing has decreased, while the proportion of apartments has increased in both the Seoul metropolitan area and the non-capital area. The non-capital area has a higher proportion of aged houses compared to the Seoul metropolitan area. Furthermore, similar to the disparities in housing conditions within the Seoul metropolitan area, significant variations were also evident across the 14 provinces in the non-capital area.

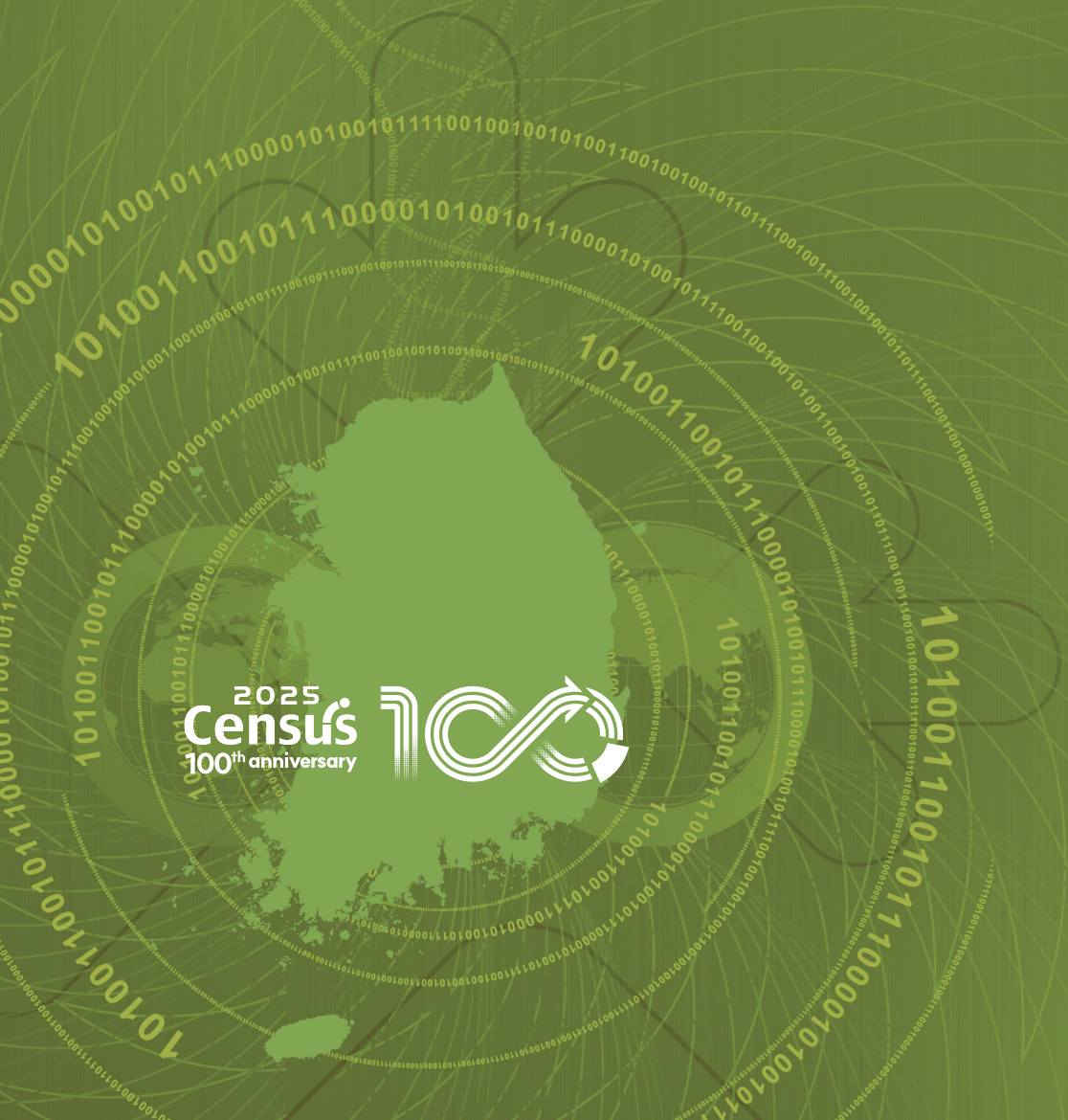
Given these regional disparities, policy responses also should be diversified across regions. For example, in the capital region, it is necessary to pursue key policies such as expanding the housing supply and public rental housing, managing and maintaining

aging houses, ensuring housing security for tenants and access to homeownership, and providing housing assistance to households living in inadequate housing. In the non-capital area, attention should be directed toward addressing aging housing stock, managing vacant houses, and alleviating the housing cost burden for households living in monthly rent units.

Furthermore, to effectively address such regional needs, it is essential to shift from the centralized housing policy to a decentralized, locally driven approach. This shift is referred to as the localization of housing policy, based on the premise that local governments are better equipped than the central government to address local housing issues. To realize the localization of housing policy, future priorities should include revising the urban planning system, reforming the allocation of public finances, and strengthening the policy capacity of local governments.

Chapter 10

Housing Deprivation and Housing Welfare Policy



The COVID-19 pandemic and the escalating climate crisis have underscored the vital role of housing as a front-line defense in protecting people from external threats. Improving housing conditions can save human lives, reduce disease, enhance quality of life, reduce poverty, and mitigate climate change (WHO, 2018). The right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and the UN explicitly states the obligation of central and local governments to guarantee the housing right in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR).

In Korea, beginning with the provision of *permanent rental housing*[1] for low-income households in 1989, the institutional foundations for guaranteeing housing rights have steadily expanded. The legislation of minimum housing standards in 2004, followed by the enactment of the *Framework Act on Residence* in 2015—which explicitly recognizes housing rights—marked significant milestones in the advancement of housing rights in Korea.

In this chapter, based on the Population and Housing Census, we analyze the current status of households in housing deprivation, whose housing rights are under threat, and examine trends in housing deprivation by household characteristics. Furthermore, housing welfare policies, with a particular focus on public rental housing and housing benefits, are also examined.

1) Permanent rental housing in Korea is public rental housing supplied by the state or local governments for low-income households. Rents are substantially lower than the market, and eligible tenants can stay as long as they meet income and asset criteria.

1. Introduction of Minimum Housing Standards and Housing Deprivation Status

In response to public demand for improving the poor housing conditions of low-income households, minimum housing standards and the *Framework Act on Residence* were enacted. The minimum housing standards were introduced by the *Ministry of Construction and Transportation* in 2000, and legislated in 2004 with the revision of the *Housing Act*. The legal foundation for housing policy shifted with the enactment of the *Framework Act on Residence* in 2015.

The current minimum housing standards present criteria for minimum floor area, number of rooms, essential facilities, and structure/performance/environment standards. Essential facilities include an exclusive modern kitchen fully equipped with water supply and drainage facilities, an exclusive flush toilet, and bathing facilities. The minimum floor area and number of rooms by household composition are as shown in Table 10-1.

In this section, households in housing deprivation are defined not only as households living in substandard housing by law, but also as those residing in living quarters other than houses[2] or in inadequate housing, such as (half) basements and rooftops. Inadequate housing negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, so it is important to draw an accurate picture for establishing policies to improve their housing conditions and to support relocation. The composition of households in housing deprivation as defined in this study is diagrammed in Figure 10-1.[3] Hereafter, we examine the characteristics

2) In this chapter, living quarters other than houses are defined as unsuitable units for residence, excluding *officetels*.

3) When calculating the number of households in housing deprivation, households below minimum housing standards and those living in basements/rooftops may overlap, so the sum of each category is not equal to the total sum.

of households in housing deprivation identifiable through the Population and Housing Census.

Table 10-1. Minimum Floor Area and Number of Rooms by Household Composition Based on Minimum Housing Standards

Number of Household Members (Persons)	Standard Household Composition[1)]	Room Composition[2)]	Floor Area(m^2)
1	One-person household	1 K	14
2	Couple	1 DK	26
3	Couple + 1 child	2 DK	36
4	Couple + 2 children	3 DK	43
5	Couple + 3 children	3 DK	46
6	Elderly parent(s) + Couple + 2 children	4 DK	55

Source: MOLIT, Minimum Housing Standards.

Notes: 1) KK means kitchen, DK means dining kitchen, and the number indicates the number of bedrooms (including those also used as living rooms) or rooms that can be used as bedrooms.

2) The principles for separating bedrooms to determine the number of rooms follow the criteria below:

1. A couple uses the same bedroom.
2. Children aged 6 or older are separated from parents.
3. Children of different sexes aged 8 or older are separated from each other.
4. Elderly parents use a separate bedroom.

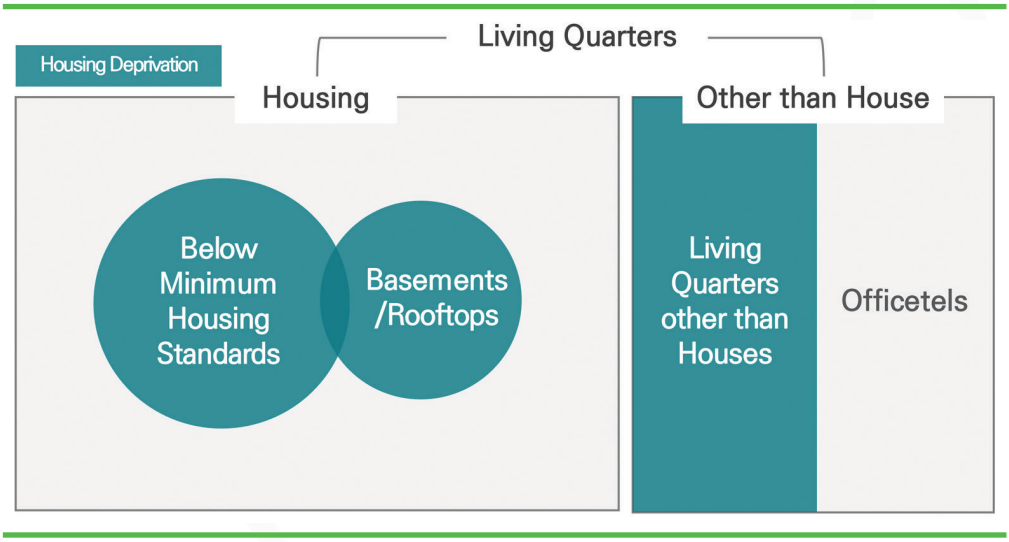


Figure 10-1. Composition of Households in Housing Deprivation

The number of households residing in living quarters other than houses has been enumerated since 1970, but the number of households residing in basements/rooftops has only been available since the 2005 census. The inadequate housing conditions of basements, concentrated in the Seoul metropolitan area, had long been a social issue. While basement housing was believed to be widespread, its exact scale had been difficult to determine before the item on basement was included in the census.[4)]

4) The Korea Center for City and Environment Research conducted the first survey on basement-dwelling households in 2002, and the Korea National Housing Corporation (currently LH) conducted a larger-scale survey in 2004 (Jang, 2013).

2. Changes in Households Below Minimum Housing Standards and Housing Deprivation

Table 10-2 presents the trends in households below minimum housing standards or in housing deprivation nationwide according to the standards revised in 2011. The number of households below minimum housing standards has continuously decreased from 5.9 million (46.3%) in 1995 to 1.0 million (4.6%) in 2020.

Disaggregated by components of the standards, the proportion of households lacking facilities was highest at 34.8% in 1995. This is because the proportion of households using traditional kitchens and toilets or sharing them with other households was high until the 1990s. Subsequently, the proportion of households lacking facilities decreased rapidly from 19.2% in 2000 to 2.0% in 2020. The proportion of households below minimum area standards also dropped rapidly from 24.5% in 1995 to 2.8% in 2020, becoming higher than that of households lacking facilities since 2005. Since 2010, the proportion of households lacking sufficient rooms has fallen to below 1%.

The proportion of households living in basements/rooftops decreased from 4.0% in 2005 to 1.9% in 2020. On the other hand, households in living quarters other than houses have continuously increased from 57,000 (0.4%) in 2005 to 448,000 (2.1%) in 2020.

Time-series comparison of the size of households in housing deprivation is possible from 2005, when the census item on the residing floor began. Households in housing deprivation have decreased from 3.1 million (19.3%) in 2005 to 2.6 million (14.8%) in 2010, 2.3 million (12.0%) in 2015, and 1.8 million (8.4%) in 2020.

Table 10-2. Changes in Households in Housing Deprivation (1995-2020)

(Unit: household, %, person)

Category			1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Below Standards	Facilities (a)		4,429,614	2,717,089	1,359,552	894,510	635,977	413,082
			34.8	19.2	8.6	5.2	3.3	2.0
	Floor Area (b)		3,122,776	2,109,895	1,413,550	1,265,792	1,011,752	588,446
			24.5	14.9	8.9	7.3	5.3	2.8
	Rooms (c)		1,357,155	477,368	167,289	126,890	100,639	56,923
			10.7	3.4	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.3
	Total	Household (=aUbUc)	5,891,563	4,071,328	2,536,259	2,028,699	1,560,752	970,033
			46.3	28.7	16.1	11.8	8.2	4.6
		Population	18,009,979	11,399,503	6,645,671	4,997,917	3,826,837	2,208,726
			43.2	26.1	14.8	10.8	8.0	4.5
Basement/Rooftop			-	-	637,770	566,677	417,728	392,923
			-	-	4.0	3.3	2.2	1.9
Living Quarters other than Houses			42,419	62,875	56,731	128,675	391,245	447,675
			0.3	0.4	0.4	0.7	2.1	2.1
Households in Housing Deprivation			5,933,982	4,134,203	3,046,332	2,555,810	2,276,562	1,757,856
			46.6	29.2	19.3	14.8	12.0	8.4

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, Full field enumeration microdata (1995-2010), 20% sample microdata (2015-2020).

Notes: 1) Total number of rooms is the sum of bedrooms plus living rooms and dining rooms that can be used as rooms.

2) Aggregated for general households of 6 persons or less.

Inadequate housing conditions have particularly severe negative impacts on households with children (aged 19 or younger). Housing deprivation can negatively affect physical, emotional, and cognitive development, potentially impacting children throughout their entire lives. While the *Weimar Constitution* had explicitly stated the guarantee of housing rights for households with children in 1919, in Korea, the scheme named *ensuring children's housing rights and implementing measures to enhance housing support* was announced in 2019, 100 years later.

Table 10-3. Changes in Households with Children in Housing Deprivation (2015-2020)

(Unit: person, household, %)

Category		Number of Children		Number of Households	
		2015	2020	2015	2020
Housing	Below Standards	789,121	346,805	468,351	209,558
		8.1	4.1	7.7	3.9
	Basement	98,582	53,227	64,562	35,775
		1.0	0.6	1.1	0.7
	Rooftop	11,824	11,063	7,768	7,440
		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Living Quarters other than Houses		86,605	50,947	55,664	32,682
		0.9	0.6	0.9	0.6
Households in Housing Deprivation		944,104	446,892	571,173	276,162
		9.7	5.2	9.4	5.1
Total		9,777,864	8,525,278	6,083,089	5,403,046

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, 20% sample microdata.

Between 2015 and 2020, the number of households with children in housing deprivation decreased from 571,000 (9.4%) to 276,000 (5.1%) (Table 10-3). The number of children in housing deprivation decreased from 944,000 (9.7%) in 2015 to 447,000 (5.2%) in 2020. Both the number of children and households with children in housing deprivation were reduced by approximately half between 2015 and 2020.

Between 2015 and 2020, as overall housing conditions for the population improved, the number of young households—whose heads aged 20-34—in housing deprivation has also declined (Table 10-4). Nationwide, the proportion of young households in housing deprivation fell from 17.6% in 2015 to 11.4% in 2020. However, as of 2020, more than 10% of young households remained in housing deprivation. In further detail, the highest proportion was among those living below the minimum housing standards (11.3%), followed by households

residing in living quarters other than houses (4.0%), which was also notably high.

In general, housing deprivation among young people is more pronounced in Seoul, where housing costs are unaffordable and living space per capita is small. High population density in Seoul, the growth of precarious employment, and rising housing costs have significantly increased the vulnerability of young people.

With Korea's rapid demographic shift toward a super-aged society, it is crucial to understand the current state of housing deprivation among elderly households—whose heads aged 65 or over. Between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of elderly households experiencing housing deprivation declined from 12.5% to 9.5%. Compared to the sharp decreases observed among households with children and young households during the same period, the reduction for elderly households was relatively modest.

Table 10-4. Changes in Young Households in Housing Deprivation (2015-2020)

(Unit: household, %)

Category		2015	2020
Housing	Below Standards	289,512	204,428
		11.3	6.7
	Basement	61,212	55,355
		2.4	1.8
	Rooftop	13,315	17,060
		0.5	0.6
Living Quarters other than Houses		101,837	78,653
		4.0	2.6
Households in Housing Deprivation		450,565	345,634
		17.6	11.4
Total		2,564,568	3,029,105

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, 20% sample microdata.

A closer look at housing deprivation reveals that, while the proportion of households living below minimum housing standards declined significantly, the share living in basements or rooftops did not decrease. Furthermore, the proportion of elderly households residing in living quarters other than houses has increased rapidly.

Table 10-5. Changes in Elderly Households in Housing Deprivation (2015-2020)

(Unit: household, %)

Category		2015	2020
Housing	Below Standards	386,809	264,247
		9.4	5.6
	Basement	68,902	79,324
		1.7	1.7
	Rooftop	6,679	8,484
		0.2	0.2
Living Quarters other than Houses		65,218	104,207
		1.6	2.2
Households in Housing Deprivation		514,457	449,718
		12.5	9.5
Total		4,101,045	4,724,160

Source: Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, 20% sample microdata.

3. Emergence and Expansion of Housing Welfare Policies

This section analyzes the changes in housing welfare policies, specifically public rental housing and housing benefits. Changes in public rental housing stock are analyzed using the *Rental Housing Statistics* published by the MOLIT since 2007, and the change in the ratio of public rental housing to the total number of housing units based on the MOLIT's housing supply ratio is also examined. Changes in the number of housing benefits recipient households are analyzed using the *Welfare Statistics* published by the *Social Security Information Service* since 2015, and the ratio compared to general households from the census is also presented.

The public rental housing policy was introduced with the supply of *permanent rental housing* in 1989. The turning point in public rental policy was shaped by two forces: growing resistance from displaced people affected by development projects and the broader democracy movement of the time.

Current public rental housing consists of publicly constructed rental housing—built and supplied directly by public developers—and *buy-to-rent public housing*, which is leased after being acquired through purchase or other means. It is categorized into several types under the *Special Act on Public Housing*, each with different mandatory rental periods, rent levels, and eligibility criteria for occupancy. There are also differences in ownership: while most units are publicly owned and rented out at below-market rates, some involve the subleasing of private homes, and others are designed for sale to residents after a rental period of 5 to 10 years. The public rental housing stock, summing up all these types, increased from 0.8 million units in 2007 to 1.9 million units in 2022 (Table 10-6). The year-on-year increase in public rental housing stock was highest in 2018, with 108,000 units

added, followed by 107,000 units in 2017.

The total number of housing units, reflecting the number of multi-family houses, increased from 16.3 million in 2007 to 22.2 million in 2022. The ratio of public rental housing stock to the total number of housing units steadily rose from 5.1% in 2007 to 8.3% in 2022. Since its introduction in 1989, Korea's public rental housing stock ratio has grown to surpass the OECD average of 7.1% by 2022.[5)]

Table 10-6. Changes in Public Rental Housing Stock (2007-2022)

(Unit: thousand units, %)

Category	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Public Rental Stocks (A)	826	878	950	995	1,014	1,095	1,147	1,235	1,331	1,439	1,549	1,645	1,726	1,771	1,856
Stock Increase	-	52	71	45	19	82	51	89	96	107	108	97	81	45	85
Total Housing Units (B)	16,295	17,071	17,672	18,131	18,551	18,969	19,429	19,559	19,877	20,313	20,818	21,310	21,674	21,917	22,237
Public Rental Ratio (A/B)	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.4	7.7	8.0	8.1	8.3

Source: MOLIT, Rental Housing Statistics; MOLIT, Housing Supply Ratio.
Note: Figures for 2008 are excluded from the analysis due to an error in the Seoul data.

5) OECD, *Affordable Housing Database*, PH4.2 *Social Rental Dwellings Stock* (as of June 18, 2024). Accurate comparison is difficult as the definition and categories of public rental housing (social housing) differ by country. Excluding types subletting private rental housing and conversion for sale, and only counting types with a mandatory rental period of 20 years or longer, Korea's public rental housing ratio is 6.0%, which is lower than the OECD average (7.1%).

Table 10-7. Changes in the Number of Housing Benefits Recipient Households (2015-2021)

(Unit: thousand households, %)

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Recipient Households	746	805	822	957	1,054	1,211	1,334
Renters	668	728	749	874	967	1,115	1,226
Home owners	78	77	73	83	88	96	108
General Households	19,111	19,368	19,674	19,979	20,343	20,927	21,448
Recipient Ratio	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.8	5.2	5.8	6.2

Source: Social Security Information Service, Welfare Statistics; Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS.

Note: Excluded households entitled but not receiving benefits, households residing in group homes, etc.

The housing benefits system was revised alongside the change in the *National Basic Livelihood Security System* in 2015, subsidizing rent benefits to renter households and covering repair and maintenance costs for owner households. The number of housing benefits recipient households increased from 0.7 million in 2015 to 1.3 million in 2021 (Table 10-7). The ratio of recipient households increased from 3.9% in 2015 to 6.2% in 2021. The number of renter households receiving housing benefits increased by 83.5%, from 0.7 million in 2015 to 1.2 million in 2021. During the same period, the number of recipient owner households increased by 38.5%, from 78,000 to 108,000, while renter households experienced a higher growth rate.

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

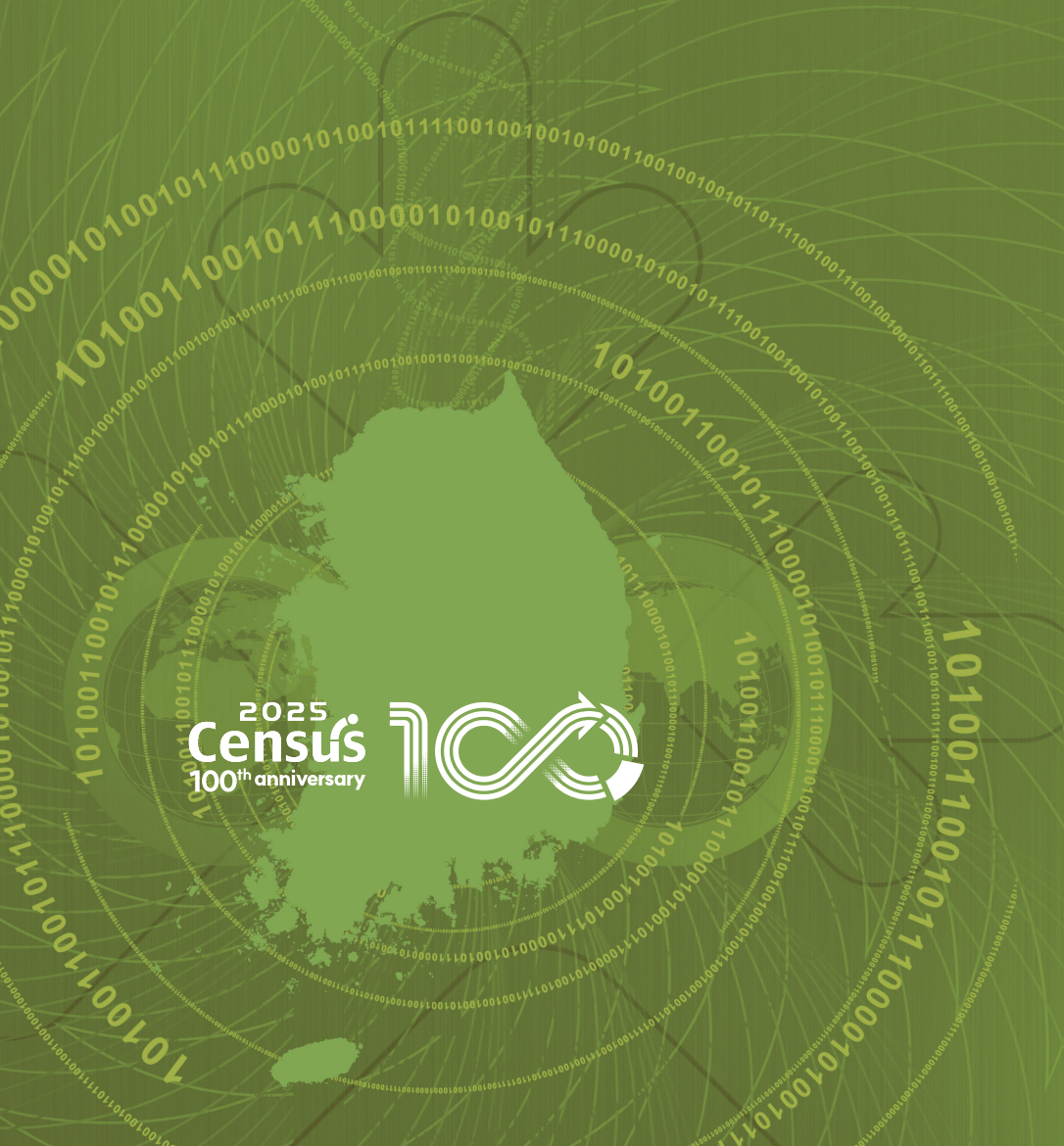
This chapter examined the status of households in housing deprivation, focusing on the results of the Population and Housing Census. The government has endeavored to address housing deprivation through housing welfare policies; consequently, the proportion of households in housing deprivation has continuously decreased. Establishing minimum housing standards, supplying public rental housing, and providing housing benefits are key policies for alleviating housing deprivation.

The number of households residing in small, inadequate spaces or in basements and rooftops has decreased significantly over the past 25 years, but remains substantial. Elderly households primarily reside in *myeon* areas without city gas supply, raising significant concern that climate change will exacerbate housing dilapidation and insulation problems. The housing deprivation issue among the younger generation also remains unresolved.

Minimum housing standards are a core tool for measuring inadequate housing, however, the current criteria are limited because they do not classify basements, rooftop dwellings, or living quarters other than houses as substandard housing. Administrative and judicial intervention regarding housing below minimum standards also remains limited. The UK has regulated inadequate housing that negatively affects residents' health since 2006, assessing the safety of living quarters through the *Housing Health and Safety Rating System* (HHSRS) and the *English Housing Survey*. In Korea, the minimum housing standards should also be revised to regulate and improve inadequate housing. These revisions should be closely aligned with changes to the Population and Housing Census to enable precise tracking of inadequate housing under the updated standards.

Chapter 11

Housing Issues and Policy Responses



Housing demand increased sharply due to rapid urbanization and rising income from economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, but the response in housing supply was insufficient to meet the increase in demand. One of the reasons for inadequate supply was that the housing sector was given low priority in resource allocation during the early stages of economic development. The *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan,* implemented over the period 1988-1992 was a milestone in housing policy, that brought the scale of new housing supply to an unprecedented level. Since then, the large volume of housing supply was sustained from the 1990s onward, and Korea's housing standards have improved significantly both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Although the nationwide housing shortage problem has been resolved, Korea is faced with other challenging issues, including housing shortages in Seoul and in the Seoul metropolitan area, worsening housing affordability due to rising housing prices, and housing insecurity among vulnerable groups. An important task of housing policy is to respond to changes in both demand conditions (such as low and declining fertility rate, population aging, shifting consumer preferences and lifestyles) and supply conditions (such as housing obsolescence, advancements in construction technology, and the mandate of carbon neutrality) so as to raise the overall housing standards of the nation and to enhance housing stability for segments of the population.

This chapter, taking the trends in Korea’s housing standards into consideration, presents the challenges and responses of housing policy, measures to improve the quality and utilization of housing-related data, and measures to strengthen data-based policy evaluation.

1. Trends in Housing Standards and Housing Issues

1) Trends in Housing Standards

Until the 1980s, Korea's biggest housing problem was an absolute shortage of houses caused by inadequate supply compared to the increase in demand resulting from the growth of income and urban population. Triggered by rapid house price increases between 1986 and 1988, and the vocal demand for government action to address the housing problems following political democratization, the government decided to expand housing supply on a massive scale through the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan* from 1988 to 1992.

The initiative marked a turning point in housing policy in Korea. The average annual volume of new supply on a permit basis almost tripled from 220,000 units during the period 1980-1987 to 600,000 between 1989 and 1991, exceeding the supply target set by the plan ahead of schedule. As a result, the housing stock increased from 6.1 million units in 1985 to 9.2 million units in 1995, a 50% increase over a 10-year period. This increase in new housing supply was possible because the supply of developable land and housing finance increased on an unprecedented scale. An average of 400,000 to 600,000 new housing units were supplied every year ever since, except during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. By the early 2000s, the problem of absolute shortage of housing was resolved for the country as a whole, and housing standards of the nation improved remarkably.

Table 11-1 summarizes the trends in the quantitative and qualitative improvement of

housing standards over the period 1980-2020 using key indicators. During this period, real per capita income increased more than 7 times from 4.86 million KRW to 35.30 million KRW per year, and the average household size decreased by half from 4.5 persons to 2.3 persons. The number of housing units per thousand population, a key quantitative indicator of housing standards, increased significantly from 145 in 1980 to 418 in 2020. The number of rooms used per capita and floor space per capita increased by 3.2 times and 2.9 times, respectively. The proportion of houses equipped with housing facilities such as piped water, flush toilets, hot water bathing facilities, and modern kitchens increased rapidly, and approached nearly 100% in 2020. This is a result of the continuous expansion of the supply of apartments and other types of houses fully equipped with those facilities.

Table 11-1. Changes in the Key Indicators of Housing Standards (1980-2020)

Category	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Real Per Capita Income (10,000 KRW in, 2020 prices)	486	1,192	1,972	2,808	3,530
Average Household Size (persons)	4.5	3.7	3.1	2.7	2.3
Number of Housing Units Per Thousand Population	145	169	249	364	418
Average Number of Rooms Used Per Household (units)	2.1	2.5	3.4	3.7	3.7
Number of Rooms Used Per Capita (units)	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.4	1.6
Number of Residents Per Room (persons)	2.0	1.5	0.9	0.7	0.6
Floor Area Per Household (m^2)	45.8	51.0	62.4	67.4	70.1
Floor Area Per Capita (m^2)	10.1	13.8	19.8	25.0	29.7
Proportion of Households Residing in Houses with Piped Water (%)	51.2	76.7	87.5	93.7	96.8
Proportion of Households Residing in Houses with Flush Toilets (%)	18.4	51.3	87.1	97.0	98.8
Proportion of Households Residing in Houses with Bathrooms (%)	22.1	44.1	89.2	97.7	99.2
Proportion of Households Residing in Houses with Hot Water Bathing Facilities (%)	10.0	34.2	87.5	97.7	99.5

Source: Figures for average household size from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS; figures for number of houses per thousand population for 1980-1990 from Statistics Korea (2002), for number of housing units for 2000-2020 from MOLIT, Housing Supply Ratio; figures for proportion of households residing in houses with piped water, flush toilets, bathrooms, hot water bathing facilities for 1980 from Statistics Korea (2002), for 1990-2020 from Statistics Korea, Population and Housing Census, KOSIS; remaining items from Chapters 2-10.

Note: The number of houses per thousand population for 1980 and 1990 are based on the practice of counting a multi-family house as one unit.

Despite the quantitative and qualitative improvement in housing standards, important challenges remain to be addressed going forward. The list includes making housing more affordable, enhancing the stability of the rental market, improving the housing conditions of those residing in basements, rooftop rooms, *gosiwon* (cubicle dwelling), and other poor-quality residences, and reducing disparities in housing standards and homeownership across regions and income groups.

2) Housing Costs and Housing Affordability

Table 11-2 shows the changes in asset price of housing and *jeonse* price indices, the consumer price index, and real gross disposable income per capita since 1986, the year housing price index began to be released, to 2022, presented as multiples of change over the relevant time periods. Looking at the entire period 1986-2022, disposable income increased much faster than both the asset price of housing and *jeonse* price indices. However, the data disaggregated by sub-period show that the rate of increase in apartment jeonse prices and Seoul apartment prices outpaced that of disposable income after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. This trend was further strengthened between 2000 and 2022.

Table 11-2. Changes In Housing Prices, Consumer Prices, and Disposable Income (1986-2022)

Category		1996/ 1986	2007/ 1996	2022/ 2007	2022/ 1986	2022/ 1996	2022/ 2000
Housing Price Index, All Housing Types	Nationwide	1.56	1.47	1.63	3.63	2.33	2.51
	Seoul	1.46	1.87	1.69	4.39	3.00	3.11
Housing Price Index, Apartments	Nationwide	1.99	1.88	1.73	6.34	3.18	3.20
	Seoul	1.90	2.51	1.75	8.07	4.24	4.03
Jeonse Price Index, All Housing Types	Nationwide	2.40	1.44	1.80	6.08	2.53	2.37
	Seoul	2.37	1.45	2.03	6.77	2.85	2.68
Jeonse Price Index, Apartments	Nationwide	2.95	1.74	1.96	9.90	3.35	2.90
	Seoul	3.08	1.74	2.15	11.30	3.67	3.23
Consumer Price ndex	All urban areas	1.80	1.43	1.38	3.55	1.97	1.71
Real Gross disposable Income Per Capita (10,000 KRW)	Nationwide	4.20	1.80	1.88	14.17	3.38	2.85

Source: KB Kookmin Bank, Housing Price Trend Survey; Bank of Korea, Economic Statistics System.

3) Structural Vulnerability of the Rental Market

As of 2020, about 40% of all households resided as renters, rendering the stability of the rental market very important. Only a small number of renter households lived in public rental housing, while most others reside in rented houses owned by individuals. The Korean rental market has been dominated by the unique contract type called *jeonse* (also spelled as *chonsei*), but the proportion of monthly rent with a deposit is gradually increasing.

Jeonse is a rental lease that gained popularity in the past amid an absolute housing shortage, expectations of rising house prices, high interest rates, and the underdeveloped

housing finance system, effectively functioning as a non-institutional private finance mechanism. *Jeonse* was considered beneficial to both the tenant and the landlord. The tenant pays a deposit which is normally lower than the asset price of the house and resides in it during the contract period, and can use the returned deposit as seed money for home purchases in the future. The landlord can secure a significant fraction of the funds needed to purchase a house to be rented out, and avoids the risk of not receiving monthly rent from the renter. However, the *jeonse* tenant is exposed to an inherent risk. Oftentimes, the landlord returns the deposit of the existing tenant using the deposit from the new tenant. Thus, the *jeonse* system is sustainable only when deposits continue to rise, and the tenants might not get their deposits back if the *jeonse* falls due to the changes in market conditions.

Long after the factors that led to *jeonse* establishing itself as the main type of rental lease have largely disappeared or been alleviated, *jeonse* still comprises a large share of rental contracts. The provision of public sector loans and guarantees to tenants is a main reason. Recently, as the level of *jeonse* has grown faster than income of the tenants, more tenants need to borrow money to make a deposit. The government provided low-interest loans to qualifying *jeonse* tenants using the *Housing and Urban Fund*. Commercial banks expanded *jeonse loans* using the guarantee provided by the public sector institutions as *de facto* collateral. The guarantee safeguards the lender against the event of the tenant failing to repay the *jeonse* loan. In addition, the government mandated the landlords receiving tax benefits to subscribe to guarantees to protect the tenants from the risk of not getting their deposit back at the end of the lease term. Nevertheless, *jeonse scams* and other incidences whereby landlords failed to return the deposits have surged since 2022, and the volume of subrogation[1] by the *Housing and Urban Guarantee Corporation* (HUG), a public sector guarantee provider, has increased sharply. The National Assembly legislated a special law

1) Refers to the transfer of a creditor's claim to another person (a third party or co-debtor, etc.) who pays off the debt on behalf of the debtor and acquires the right of indemnity.

to provide relief to victims of *jeonse scams* and the government established a task force to implement various relief measures. Efforts are also being made to prevent similar incidents, though this remains a difficult task.

Alleviating housing deprivation is another important policy issue. The number of households experiencing housing deprivation—including those living in dwellings that fall below the minimum housing standards and those residing in basement or rooftop units—has steadily declined. However, as of 2020, it still amounts to 1.76 million households, representing 8.4% of all households (refer to Chapter 10 for details).

4) Disparity in Homeownership

Houses not only provide living space but also constitute the most important asset for households. Rising house prices are widening the asset gap between the middle-aged and elderly groups with a high homeownership rate and the youth group with a low homeownership rate. According to the *Survey of Household Finances and Living Conditions* in 2010 and 2020, during this period, the housing assets of owner-occupied households with a household head aged 29 or younger decreased from an average of 21.67 million KRW to 19.05 million KRW, while those of all other age groups increased. In particular, for elderly households aged 60 or older, it increased from 133.56 million KRW to 192.61 million KRW. As intergenerational disparities in housing assets may be exacerbated through gifts and inheritance, a more detailed analysis of the size and distribution of housing assets by age group is needed.

2. Policy Challenges and Response Measures

1) Policy Goals and Instruments

Government intervention in the housing market can be justified to improve efficiency in resource allocation and equity in distribution. The goals of housing policy are to support the overall improvement of housing standards and enhance the welfare of the housing vulnerable. To achieve the first goal, the market needs to function properly so that houses desired by consumers can be supplied and traded without friction. To achieve the second goal, policies are needed to provide stable housing alternatives and alleviate housing cost burden for those who have difficulty solving their housing problems on their own.

Housing price stability can be an intermediate goal for achieving these two goals. Stable house prices allow people to purchase or rent better houses to enjoy a better residential life, and also ease the housing cost burden on the housing vulnerable. However, there are limitations to the government's ability to influence housing prices determined by markets, especially the prices in specific regions or submarkets. Furthermore, if strengthening taxation for the purpose of stabilizing housing prices leads to excessively high holding and transaction costs, it may distort household housing choices and mobility decisions and make it difficult for them to improve their housing standards.

While governments intervene in housing markets in various forms in many countries, Korea is special in terms of its policy goals and instruments (Kim, 2023). Successive governments have prioritized housing price stability and employed various policy instruments on both the demand and supply sides to achieve this goal. Demand-side

policy instruments include taxes imposed at the purchase, holding, and transfer stages; regulations on housing loans and transactions; and caps on rent increasesis. Supply-side policy instruments include the system of providing developable land by the public sector, the housing pre-sale system comprising rules governing the allocation of houses to the homebuyers and the ceiling on pre-sale prices, and the construction, provision, and management of public rental housing.

Enhancing the welfare of people in housing deprivation is a core task of housing policy. Since the construction of 190,000 units of permanent rental housing using state funds through the *Two Million Housing Units Construction Plan*, successive governments have increased the stock of public rental housing and expanded the housing benefit system throughout the 2000s. Going forward, closer attention should be given to such questions as how many additional units of public rental housing should be constructed, how the management of existing public rental housing can be improved, and how the synergy between the housing benefit and public rental housing policies can be strengthened. Alleviating the housing cost burden, which is considered a major cause of young people's reluctance to marry and have children, and providing effective support to the increasing number of elderly in poor housing conditions are also important tasks.

2) Major Policy Challenges

(1) Overall Improvement of Housing Standards

To achieve the important goal of overall improvement in housing standards, a stable supply of decent houses of various types and sizes that meet demand is necessary. Expanding the housing supply will also contribute to price stability. To expand the housing supply that meets demand, reconstruction of aging housing stock, redevelopment of lower-

density residential neighborhoods in urban areas, and the supply of developable land in areas with good access to the city center are needed.

In addition to the stable supply of housing, the operation of housing finance and taxation needs to be rationalized. On the housing finance side, long-term fixed-rate mortgages need to be expanded adhering to the principle of lending based on the borrower's repayment capacity. The system of taxes on holdings, transactions, and transfers should be better aligned with the principles of efficient and equitable taxation.

Upgrading the aging housing stock and expanding high-quality residential space is also important. As of 2020, 17.9% of houses nationwide and 15.5% of houses in urban areas are over 30 years old, and this proportion is expected to continue increasing. The reconstruction, remodeling, and retrofitting of old houses and commercial buildings are important tasks not only for improving housing standards but also for responding to climate change.

(2) Enhancing the Welfare of the Vulnerable

The housing problems of the vulnerable groups vary by income, age, and region of residence. As of 2020, the proportion of all youth households in housing deprivation nationwide is 11.4%, and that of one-person youth households is 13.6%, which is higher than the proportion of all households in housing deprivation (8.4%). The proportion of elderly households in housing deprivation nationwide is 9.5%, which is slightly higher than that of all households but lower than that of youth households. In the case of Seoul, the proportion of youth households (21.3%) in housing deprivation is higher than that of all households (14.5%), while that of elderly households (12.4%) is lower than the overall average.

The two pillars of housing policies designed to enhance the welfare of the vulnerable groups are public rental housing and housing benefit. In the case of public rental housing,

as of 2022, the stock of long-term public rental housing comprised nearly 8% of the total housing stock. A careful reassessment is needed regarding the appropriate stock of public rental housing, measures to improve the quality of aging rental housing, and enhancements to the financing of new construction and property management.

The housing benefit system has seen its target population and payment amounts expanded since its conversion from a component in a consolidated benefit system combined with other public assistance in 2015 to an individual stand-alone benefit system. To resolve the problem of housing deprivation, it is necessary to expand the target population to cover blind spots and strengthen the level of protection. Furthermore, the housing benefit and public rental housing programs should be better coordinated.

3. Improving the Quality of Housing-Related Statistics

High-quality data is a crucial ingredient for market analysis, policy formulation, and policy evaluation. This section assesses the status of key housing-related statistics and proposes ways to improve their quality.

1) The Number of Houses and Housing Supply Ratio

There are two answers to the question, “How many houses are there in Korea?”: the number of houses as units of ownership and transaction, and the number of houses as separate housing units providing residential space. The discrepancy between the two figures occurs in detached houses inhabited by multiple families. As of 2020, the number of houses

in Korea is 18.53 million based on the former definition, and 21.67 million based on the latter. The figures based on the two definitions produce a sizable difference of about 3.15 million whereby the former underestimates the effective housing unit (refer to Chapters 2 and 4).

In fact, the Population and Housing Census publishes the number of houses according to the two definitions since 1995. Detailed statistics provided on the number of houses by housing type, the number of vacant houses, the age distribution of houses, and the number of houses equipped with various housing facilities all follow the practice of counting houses as units of ownership and transaction. Another gap in the counts of housing stock relates to the legal definition of *housing*. It is necessary to build and utilize systematic statistics on 'quasi-housing' units stipulated in the *Enforcement Decree of the Housing Act*, such as *officetels*, senior housing, and dormitories.

The housing supply ratio is the figure obtained by dividing the number of houses by the number of general households. It is the most widely used quantitative indicator of housing in Korea, but it is rarely used overseas. For example, in the United States, a household is defined as people living in one house, so that the number of households and the number of housing units are the same. This means the housing supply ratio is always 100%, rendering the measure meaningless. Furthermore, since the housing supply ratio does not reflect the heterogeneity based on the quality of houses, it cannot be assumed that there are sufficient satisfactory living quarters even if the supply ratio exceeds 100%.

While refining the definition of the housing supply ratio is worthwhile to do, it is desirable to use the indicator together with other indicators widely used for international comparison, such as the number of housing units per thousand people.

2) Housing Prices

Housing prices are an important variable that determines the quantity and quality of housing standards, as well as the rate of return on housing assets. In Korea, where housing price stability is given a high priority, the housing price index is also the most frequently used indicator for housing policy evaluation.

There are various types of housing price indices depending on the purpose of use, calculation method, and the data. The *Sales Price Index* from the *National Housing Price Trend Survey* and the *Transaction-based Price Index* for Apartments published by the *Korea Real Estate Board* are the official statistics.[2] In the private sector, *KB Kookmin Bank*, the largest commercial bank publishes housing price indices. In light of the controversies regarding the reliability of house price statistics, it is necessary for academia, experts, statistics-producing institutions, and relevant government ministries to discuss ways to enhance the credibility and usefulness of overall housing-related statistics, including the house price index.

3) Housing Affordability and Housing Cost Burden

Housing affordability reflects complex aspects indicating the possibility of purchasing a house or bearing housing costs. It is also subject to controversy in interpretation (Quigley and Rafael, 2004). Therefore, it is difficult to measure a household's capacity to purchase a home or housing cost burden with a single indicator.

The *Price to Income Ratio* (PIR) and the *Rent to Income Ratio* (RIR) are widely used

2) Korea operates an official statistics approval system to enhance the quality and reliability of statistics produced by state institutions or major statistics produced by private institutions.

indicators of housing cost burden. However, there are conceptual and technical issues regarding their meaning, calculation methods, and usefulness. For example, the PIR calculated based on the house prices and income of people who already own houses may not be useful for people currently thinking about buying a house. Although PIR gives a sense of how expensive housing is compared with household income, it is not a practical measure of home purchase affordability. Since purchasing a home requires financing, a *Housing Affordability Index* (HAI) that considers factors such as accessibility to mortgage loans, loan amount, loan maturity, interest rate, and principal and interest repayment method could be more useful. The *Korea Housing Finance Corporation* and *KB Kookmin Bank*, among others, publish this index.

Computing RIR in Korea is a complicated exercise. Since most housing rental transactions are in *jeonse* or monthly rent with a sizable deposit, the accuracy of RIR depends on the interest rate used by market participants to convert the deposit to monthly rent.

The biggest constraint in calculating Korea's housing affordability and housing cost burden indices is the lack of income data by region. The Population and Housing Census does not include an entry for income. The provision of more detailed income statistics is necessary for a more accurate analysis of housing affordability and the effectiveness of affordable housing policy.

4. Promoting Data-Driven Housing Policy

1) Importance of and Prerequisite for Data-Driven Policy

Korea's housing policy has alternated between strengthening and relaxing regulations and taxation to counter the fluctuations in the housing market and to stabilize housing prices as its top priority. Political economy plays a crucial role in housing policy because it affects the lives of people. In an environment where sharply conflicting views coexist regarding the necessity of government intervention in the housing market and the scope and method of appropriate intervention, data-driven scientific policy evaluation and social consensus based on such evaluation are even more important.

The starting point of data-driven policy evaluation is securing accurate and up-to-date data necessary for analysis. The quality of basic data such as housing prices, transaction volume, and the volume and the usage of mortgage loans is essential for a more sophisticated analysis of the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at stabilizing the housing markets. In the case of policies on public rental housing and the housing benefit scheme, the two pillars of housing policy to enhance the welfare of the socially disadvantaged, a solid database regarding the physical condition of houses, resident satisfaction, characteristics of residents and benefit recipients, and residential mobility is required. More detailed data should be made available to researchers so that they conduct research on policy effectiveness and draw recommendations for policy improvement.

2) Enhancing the Usefulness of International Comparisons

Housing-related indicators produced in Korea are provided to international organizations such as the OECD and UN Habitat. The results of international comparative analysis using such data by the staff members of international organizations are published and reported in the domestic media or quoted by policymakers. For a meaningful international comparison on housing markets and housing policies, it is necessary to confirm whether data is produced based on unified definitions and methodologies and to interpret the results taking into account the specific context of institutions, history, and socio-economic characteristics of the countries.

For example, when calculating the size of social housing stock as a percentage of total housing stock in the OECD's Affordable Housing Database, a judgment is required regarding which type of Korea's public rental housing falls under social housing. In the case of housing price indices, Korea provides indices based on the *National Housing Price Trend Survey* by the *Korea Real Estate Board*, but most member countries submit actual transaction-based price indices.

As Korea's economic status rises, foreign interest in statistics regarding Korea may increase further. Therefore, government-level efforts are needed to ensure the accuracy and comparability of the data including the credibility and accountability of the institutions that produce the data.

5. Conclusion

Since the turn of the 21st century, Korean society has experienced aging along with a much faster decline in the fertility rate than expected, resulting in a decrease in population for the first time in 2021. Economic growth rates continue to decline and disparities in income and assets between classes and generations are widening. In addition, Korea is faced with new challenges of adapting to changes brought about by the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* and digital transformation. As the demographic structure, economic conditions, and technological environment change, preferences for the type, size, location, and amenities of housing are also changing.

Going forward, to upgrade housing policy in response to the various changes, the entire policy process—diagnosis of reality, policy formulation, and evaluation of policy effectiveness—should be data-driven. To this end, it is necessary to continuously improve the quality of the Housing Census, the most important source of basic data, and to expand the scope of publicly available data, enabling more researchers to utilize it for policy analysis. In addition, additional data is needed on the aspects of housing not covered by the Housing Census for further analysis of housing policies and for international comparison. Improving housing policy governance is also necessary to promote cooperation among central ministries involved in housing policy and to enhance policy synergy between central and local governments' housing programs.

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