

## **Who Lives Alone in South Korea? Trends Over the Last Four Decades (1980-2020)**

The share of population living alone in South Korea has substantially increased over the last four decades, sparking public concerns about loneliness and its broader effects on individuals and society. The growing prevalence of solo living is particularly significant in Korea, where family has traditionally been a cornerstone of society. However, despite growing academic and public attention to the rise of solo living, little research has explored whether this trend is more significant for some demographic groups than others. To gain deeper insight into the nature of solo living and thus develop more effective policies to address its rise, it is essential to identify specific demographic groups most affected by this trend. In this study, it analyses trends in living alone in Korea over the last four decades from 1980 to 2020 using individual and household-level data from 2 percent micro-samples of the Korean census. The results show a divergence in solo living trends between those with more and less education in both younger and older age groups but in opposite directions. Among young men and women aged 25-34, those with a bachelor's degree or higher are increasingly more likely to live alone than their peers with a high school education or less. In contrast, among old adults aged 65-74, individuals with the lowest level of education are increasingly more likely to live alone than their most-educated counterparts. These contrasting relationships between education and solo living between younger and older age groups suggest that living alone may hold different levels of desirability as a living arrangement for each age group. This discusses the implications of solo living trends for family dynamics and inequality in Korea.