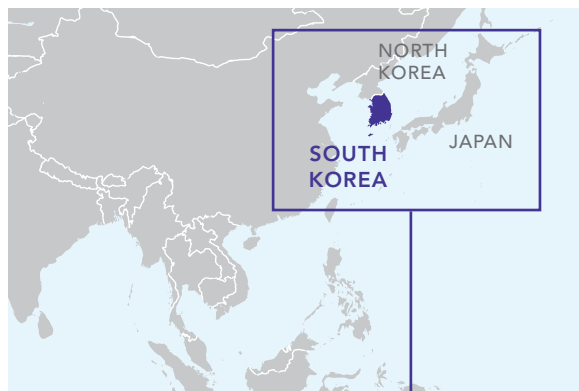




SOUTH KOREA



PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

South Korea shares a 1,200-kilometer-long peninsula with North Korea in the easternmost part of the Asian continent. South Korea is mountainous and has little arable land. Lowlands in the western and southeastern parts of the country make up only about 30 per cent of the total land area.

The climate in South Korea is relatively temperate. Most rain falls during the summer months, and winters can be very cold. In the capital city of Seoul, temperatures in January are often between -7°C and 1°C . In July, temperatures typically range from 22°C to 29°C . Coastal areas in the south are sometimes hit by summer typhoons.

BASIC FACTS

POPULATION: 49,115,196 (percentage under 25 years: 27%)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 80 years

LITERACY RATE (AGE 15 AND OVER CAN READ & WRITE): 99%

OFFICIAL AND MAJOR LANGUAGE(S): Korean

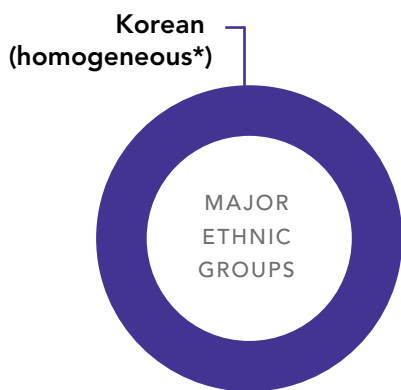
TYPE OF GOVERNMENT: Presidential republic

CURRENT LEADER: Hwang Kyo-Ahn, Acting President until May 9, 2017

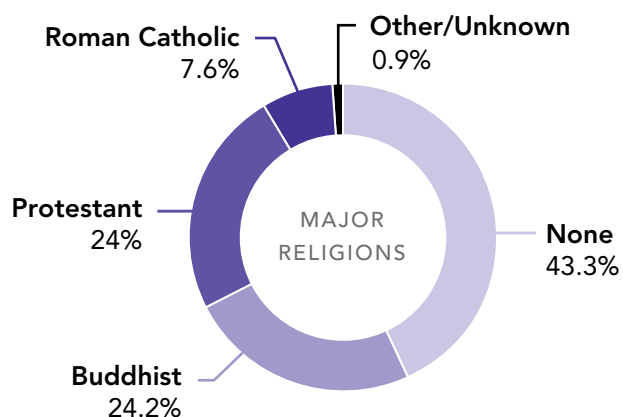
Source: CIA World Fact Book



PEOPLE & CULTURE

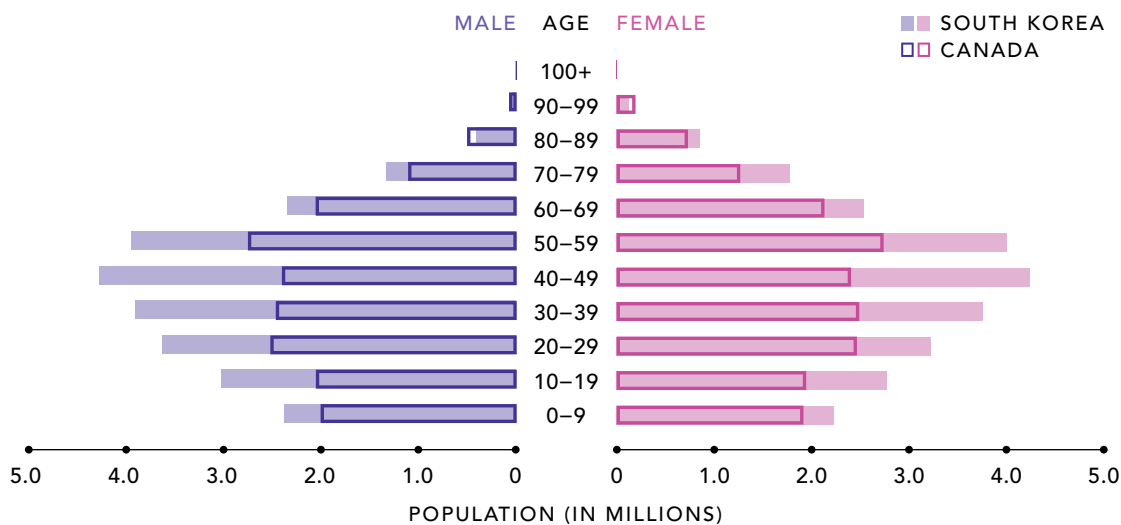


**South Korea's population is almost entirely homogeneous, but has small populations of ethnic Chinese and other Asian minorities.*



Source: CIA World Fact Book

POPULATION PYRAMID



Source: CIA World Fact Book

INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

ACTIVE INTERNET USERS: 88% of population

AVERAGE DAILY INTERNET USE: 3.5 hours

ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USERS: 56% of population

AVERAGE DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA USE: 1.25 hours

Source: We Are Social



ECONOMY

GDP: C\$1,760.62 billion

GDP PER-CAPITA: C\$34,775

CURRENCY: South Korean Won

MAJOR EXPORTS & IMPORTS:

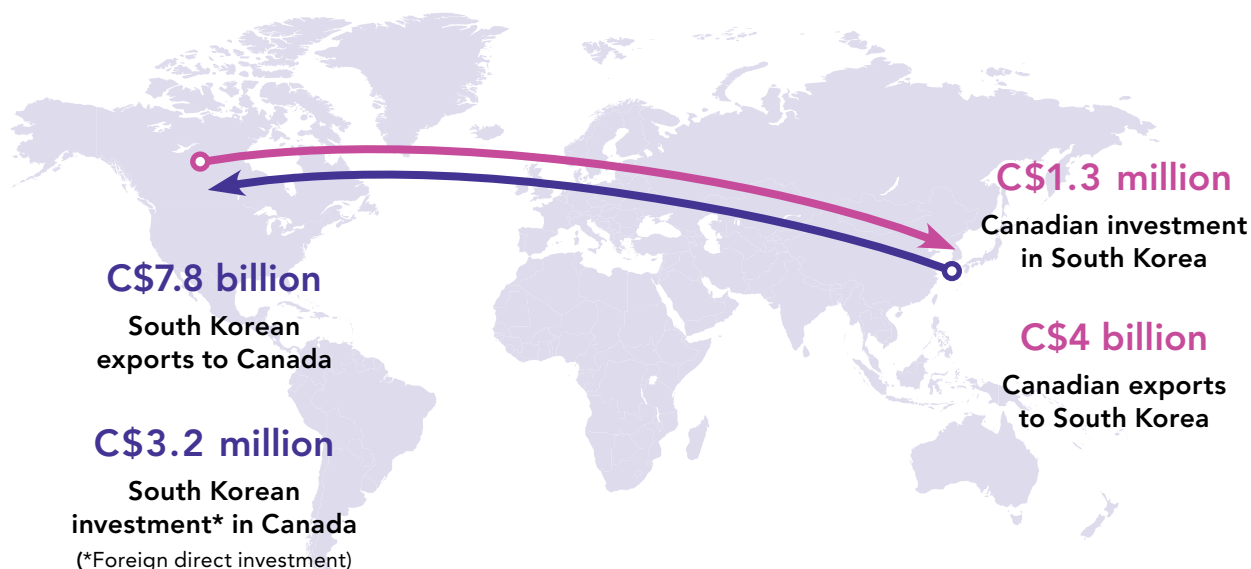
Exports: semiconductors, petrochemicals, automobile/auto parts, ships, wireless communication equipment, flat displays, steel, electronics, plastics, computers

Imports: crude oil/petroleum products, semiconductors, natural gas, coal, steel, computers, wireless communication equipment, automobiles, chemicals, textiles

Source: Embassy of Canada to Korea & CIA World Fact Book

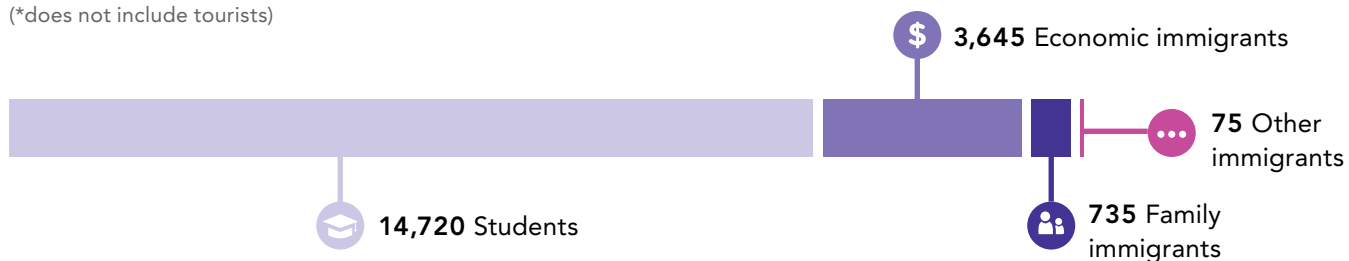
LINKS TO CANADA

TRADE, INVESTMENT IN 2015:



Source: Embassy of Canada to Korea

SOUTH KOREANS COMING TO CANADA IN 2014*:
(*does not include tourists)



Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada



NOTABLE DATES

HISTORICAL

March First Movement

March First Movement, also called the Samil Independence Movement, was a series of demonstrations for Korean national independence from Japan that began on March 1, 1919. The movement was started by 33 Korean cultural and religious leaders who drew up a Korean "Proclamation of Independence" and organized a mass demonstration in Seoul. March 1 is commemorated as a national holiday.

More on the March First Movement:

March First Movement: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/March-First-Movement>

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/korea/march_first_declaration.pdf

CULTURAL HOLIDAY

Chuseok

Chuseok, often referred to as Korean Thanksgiving, is celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month (sometime during the autumn season). It is a celebration of the harvest and a time to give thanks for the bounty of the earth. South Koreans travel all over the country to visit their ancestral homes and celebrate for three days with special food.

More on Chuseok:

Chuseok: Korean Thanksgiving Day, *Asia Society*, <http://asiasociety.org/korea/chuseok-korean-thanksgiving-day>

CURRENT EVENT

Sinking of Sewol Ferry

A South Korean ferry named Sewol sank on April 16, 2014, while traveling from the city of Incheon to the island of Jeju. The tragedy killed 304 people, most of them high school students. It was one of South Korea's worst peacetime disasters and resulted in a sentence of life in prison for the captain, criminal convictions for other crew members, and the resignation of the prime minister.

More on the Sewol Ferry disaster:

Sewol Ferry Disaster, *CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/15/asia/sewol-ferry-korea-anniversary/>

HONOURABLE MENTION

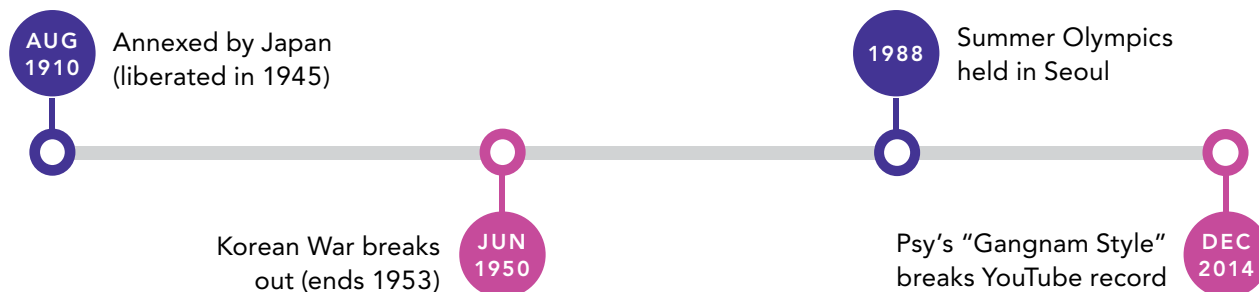
Hangeul Day

Hangeul (pronounced HAHN-gull) is the native Korean alphabet invented by King Sejong in the year 1446. October 9 is a national holiday that celebrates the alphabet's creation. Initially, the Korean alphabet was called "hunminjeongeum," which can be translated as "the proper guiding alphabet of the people."

More on Hangeul Day:

Beautiful Alphabet, Hangeul, *Visit Korea*, http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI_EN_3_6.jsp?cid=631659

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS



Source: Public Holidays & BBC



SOUTH KOREA'S ECONOMIC "MIRACLE ON THE HAN"

South Korea's path to becoming a wealthy country is impressive, and is a source of inspiration for other developing countries in Asia. In 1960, South Korea was mostly agrarian and depended on foreign aid. Its per-capita gross national income (GNI) was only US\$67. After the government introduced industrialization policies and promoted growth through exports in the 1970s, the economy took off. Per-capita GNI is now US\$33,000. This achievement has been referred to as the "Miracle on the Han," a reference to the Han River, which runs through the capital city of Seoul.

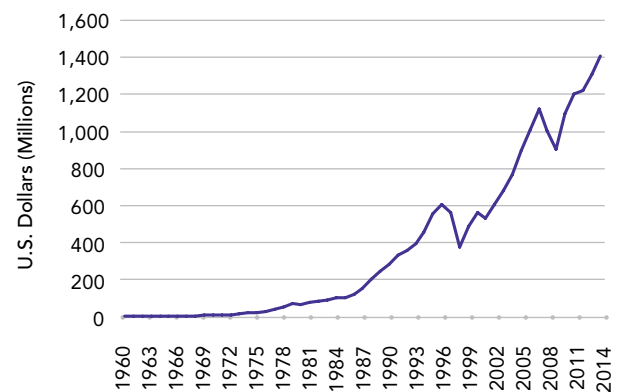
South Korea's economic growth got a boost by having a highly educated population, and by government policies that promoted certain industries. One of the beneficiaries of these policies were *chaebol*, large family-run corporate conglomerates (*chae* means "wealth" and *bol* means "clan"). These companies are often involved in a broad range of businesses, from textiles to grocery store chains to cars and phones. Samsung and Hyundai are two of the most famous *chaebol*.

However, Many South Koreans feel the *chaebol* have widened the income disparity between rich and poor because, they say, the *chaebol* provide temporary jobs, but not the long-term and full-time jobs more Koreans need.

Want to learn more?

- 60 Years of the Republic: Park Chung-hee and the Miracle on the Han River, *Chosun Ilbo*, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2008/07/16/2008071661016.html
- Definition of chaebol, *Financial Times*, <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=chaebol>
- Korea's Path from Poverty to Philanthropy, *Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2010/06/14-korea-philanthropy-oh>
- South Korea's Chaebol Problem, *Globe and Mail*, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-business/asian-pacific-business/south-koreas-chaebol-problem/article24116084/>
- Priority Debate: Labor Reform vs. Chaebol Reform, *Business Korea*, <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/english/news/politics/11927-priority-debate-labor-reform-vs-chaebol-reform>
- The Chaebol Spurn Change, *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/node/6762>

GDP Growth from 1960–2014



Sources: World Bank, East West Center

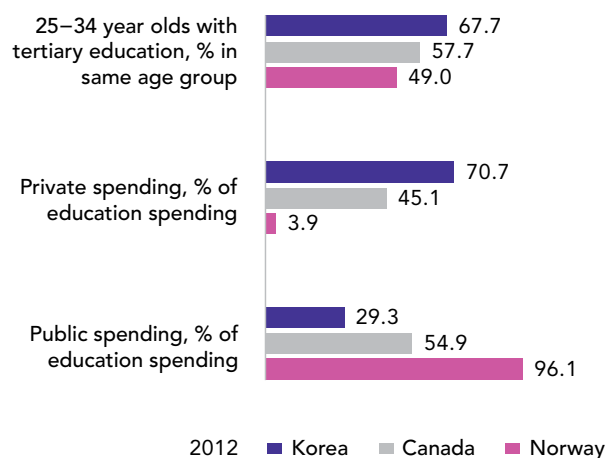


THE GAINS, AND PAINS, OF SOUTH KOREA'S EDUCATION CRAZE

South Koreans are an educated bunch. Two thirds of its people between the ages of 24 and 35 have a university or college degree, which is higher than in Canada. And international tests of high school students' reading and math skills rank South Koreans near the top. This impressive education performance is a source of national pride. It has also been an important factor in South Korea's economic success; because the country does not have many natural resources, it relies on a highly educated population to stay competitive.

But South Korea's education 'obsession' has serious costs in terms of both money and quality of life. Surprisingly, the government in South Korea spends less on education than in many other countries. Instead, many education expenses are often paid for by parents, who sign their children up for extra English, math, music, and art lessons. Korean students often attend cram schools, also known as *Hagwon*, or meet with private tutors for as long as five hours *after* a full day of school. The government has tried to lower the education pressure by requiring *Hagwon* to close no later than 10 p.m. But some parents have protested this decision.

Private vs Public Tertiary Education Spending



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Want to learn more?

- South Korea Pays Heavy Price for Education, *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/8254ec70-2efe-11e3-9e14-00144feab7de>
- South Korean Education Reforms, *Asia Society*, <http://asiasociety.org/global-cities-education-network/south-korean-education-reforms>
- Overeducated, Underemployed, *Korea Times*, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2014/02/164_129722.html
- Education in South Korea: The Crème de la Cram, *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21665029-korean-kids-pushy-parents-use-crammers-get-crammers-cr-me-de-la-cram>
- Teacher, Leave Those Kids Alone, *Time Magazine*, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2094427,00.html>
- At South Korean Cram School, a Singular Focus, *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/25/world/asia/25iht-cram.1.13975596.html?_r=0



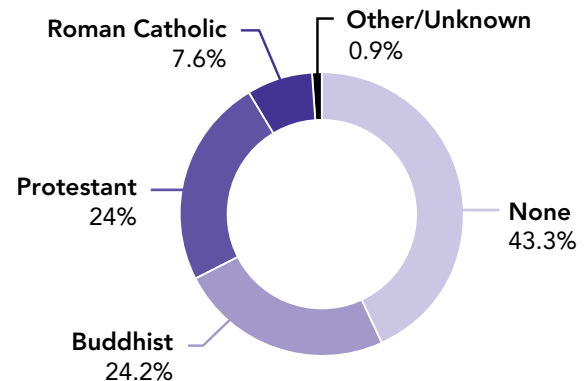
RELIGION IN SOUTH KOREA

South Korea is very ethnically homogeneous, but religiously diverse. In the sixth century, Chinese Buddhist monks introduced both Buddhism and Confucianism to Korea. The earliest signs of Christianity can be traced back to the 16th century, before gaining momentum through Western missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 1985, approximately 20 per cent of the South Korean population identified as Christian, a number that has risen to approximately 30 per cent within the last decade. Some scholars have linked the rise of Christianity to the industrialization of the country and American influence after the Korean War (1950-53). Presidential politics has also played a role: South Korea's first President, Syngman Rhee, was a convert to Methodism. More recently, President Lee Myung-bak was a leader of the Somang Presbyterian Church and was strongly supported by South Korea's Protestant population.

Religion has also played a key role in the Korean diaspora. For example, the heavy representation of Korean Christians in the U.S. can be explained by the fact that most Korean Christians are young adults are from urban and middle class families, which are more likely to immigrate. Korean Christians also tend to migrate more to the U.S. than do Korean Buddhists or Confucians because they see the U.S. as a Christian country.

Religions in South Korea



Source: CIA World Factbook

According to the Korean World Mission Association, there are approximately 14,000 South Korean Protestant missionaries who conduct missionary activities in places such as China, North Korea, and Afghanistan.

Want to learn more?

- Religion in Korea, *Korean Culture and Information Service*, <http://www.korea.net/AboutKorea/Korean-Life/Religion>
- Traditional and Innovative—How Korean Buddhism Stays Relevant, *Center for Religion and Civic Culture*, <https://crcc.usc.edu/traditional-and-innovative-how-korean-buddhism-stays-relevant/>
- 6 facts about South Korea's Growing Christian Population, *Pew Research Center*, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/12/6-facts-about-christianity-in-south-korea/>
- Presidential Election in South Korea Highlights Influence of Christian Community, *Pew Research Center*, <http://www.pewforum.org/2007/12/12/presidential-election-in-south-korea-highlights-influence-of-christian-community/>
- Why South Korea Is So Distinctively Christian, *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/08/economist-explains-6>



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UN Data: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15292674>

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Financial Times, <https://www.ft.com/content/8254ec70-2efe-11e3-9e14-00144feab7de>

The New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/25/world/asia/25iht-cram.1.13975596.html?_r=0

Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/spending-on-tertiary-education.htm>,
<https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm>

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CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>

The Economist, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/08/economist-explains-6>

Korean Culture and Information Service, <http://www.korea.net/AboutKorea/Korean-Life/Religion>

Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewforum.org/2007/12/12/presidential-election-in-south-korea-highlights-influence-of-christian-community/>

ABOUT ASIA PROFILES

Asia Profiles introduces you to some basic facts, background, and points of interest of the countries and territories of the Asia Pacific. It is part of the Asia Pacific Curriculum initiative by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.

