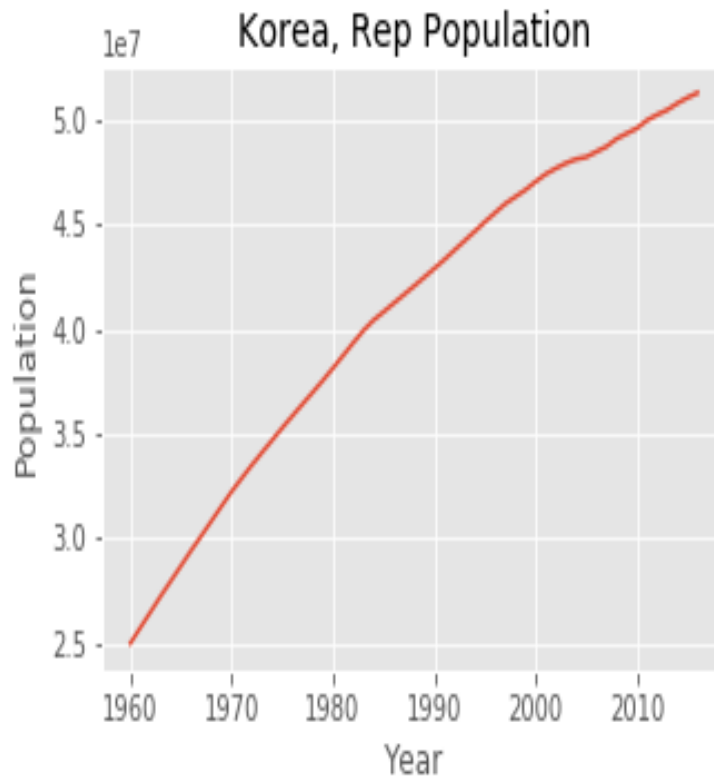


Korea, Rep



South Korea ([listen](#)), officially the Republic of Korea (Korean: 대한민국; Hanja: 大韓民國; Daehan Minguk [listen](#); lit. "The Great Republic of Han"), is a country in East Asia, constituting the southern part of the Korean Peninsula. The name Korea is derived from Goryeo, a dynasty which ruled in the Middle Ages. It shares land borders with North Korea to the north, and overseas borders with China to the west and Japan to the east. South Korea lies in the north temperate zone with a predominantly mountainous terrain. It comprises an estimated 50 million residents distributed over 99,392 km² (38,375 sq mi). The capital and largest city is Seoul, with a population of 10 million. Archaeology indicates that the Korean Peninsula was occupied by the Lower Paleolithic period (2.6 Ma–300 Ka). The history of Korea begins with the founding of Gojoseon in 2333 BC by the legendary Dangun. Following the unification of the Three Kingdoms of Korea under Silla AD 668, Korea was ruled by the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) and Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). It was annexed by the Empire of Japan in 1910. At the end of World War II, Korea was divided into Soviet and U.S. zones of occupation. An election was held in the U.S. zone in 1948 which led to the creation of the Republic of Korea. Although the United Nations passed a resolution declaring the Republic to be the only lawful government in Korea, the Soviets set up a rival government in the North. The Korean War began in 1950 when forces from the North invaded the South. The war lasted three years and involved the U.S., China, the Soviet Union, and several other nations. The border between the two nations remains the most heavily fortified in the world. In the decades that followed, the South Korean economy grew significantly and the country was transformed into a G-20 major economy. Civilian government replaced military rule in 1987. South Korea is a presidential republic consisting of 17 administrative divisions and is a developed country with the second highest standard of living in Asia, having an HDI of 0.909. It is Asia's fourth largest economy and the world's 15th (nominal) or 12th (purchasing power parity) largest economy. The economy is export-driven, with production focusing on electronics, automobiles, ships, machinery, petrochemicals and robotics. South Korea is a member of the United Nations, Uniting for Consensus, G20, WTO, and OECD, and a founding member of APEC and the East Asia Summit. == Etymology == The name Korea

derives from the name Goryeo. The name Goryeo itself was first used by the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo in the 5th century as a shortened form of its name. The 10th-century kingdom of Goryeo succeeded Goguryeo, and thus inherited its name, which was pronounced by visiting Persian merchants as "Korea". The modern spelling of Korea first appeared in the late 17th century in the travel writings of the Dutch East India Company's Hendrick Hamel. Despite the coexistence of the spellings Corea and Korea in 19th century publications, some Koreans believe that Imperial Japan, around the time of the Japanese occupation, intentionally standardised the spelling on Korea, making Japan appear first alphabetically. After Goryeo was replaced by Joseon in 1392, Joseon became the official name for the entire territory, though it was not universally accepted. The new official name has its origin in the ancient country of Gojoseon (Old Joseon). In 1897, the Joseon dynasty changed the official name of the country from Joseon to Daehan Jeguk (Korean Empire). The name Daehan, which means "great Han" literally, derives from Samhan (Three Hans). However, the name Joseon was still widely used by Koreans to refer to their country, though it was no longer the official name. Under Japanese rule, the two names Han and Joseon coexisted. There were several groups who fought for independence, the most notable being the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (대한민국). Following the surrender of Japan, in 1945, the Republic of Korea (대한민국, IPA: [da̞ha̞n̚mɪn̚ɡuk], literally "Great Korean people's country"; listen) was adopted as the legal name for the new country. Since the government only controlled the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, the informal term South Korea was coined, becoming increasingly common in the Western world. While South Koreans use Han (or Hanguk) to refer to the entire country, North Koreans and ethnic Koreans in China and Japan use the term Joseon as the name of the country. == History == == Ancient Korea == The history of Korea begins with the founding of Joseon (also known as "Gojoseon", or Old Joseon, to differentiate it with the 14th century dynasty) in 2333 BC by Dangun, according to Korea's foundation mythology. Gojoseon expanded until it controlled the northern Korean Peninsula and parts of Manchuria. Gija Joseon was purportedly founded in the 12th century BC, but its existence and role have been controversial in the modern era. In 108 BC, the Han dynasty defeated Wiman Joseon and installed four commanderies in the northern Korean peninsula. Three of the commanderies fell or retreated westward within a few decades. As Lelang commandery was destroyed and rebuilt around this time, the place gradually moved toward Liadong. Thus, its force was diminished and it only served as a trade center until it was conquered by Goguryeo in 313. == Three Kingdoms of Korea == During the period known as the Proto-Three Kingdoms of Korea, the states of Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye, and Samhan occupied the Korean peninsula and southern Manchuria. From them, Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla emerged to control the peninsula as the Three Kingdoms of Korea. Goguryeo, the largest and most powerful among them, was a highly militaristic state, and competed with various Chinese dynasties during its 700 years of history. Goguryeo experienced a golden age under Gwanggaeto the Great and his son Jangsu, who both subdued Baekje and Silla during their times, achieving a brief unification of the Three Kingdoms of Korea and becoming the most dominant power on the Korean Peninsula. In addition to contesting for control of the Korean Peninsula, Goguryeo had many military conflicts with various Chinese dynasties, most notably the Goguryeo–Sui War, in which Goguryeo defeated a huge force said to number over a million men. Baekje was a great maritime power; its nautical skill, which made it the Phoenicia of East Asia, was instrumental in the dissemination of Buddhism throughout East Asia and continental culture to Japan. Baekje was once a great military power on the Korean Peninsula, especially during the time of Geunchogo, but was critically defeated by Gwanggaeto the Great and declined. Silla was the smallest and weakest of the three, but it used cunning diplomatic means to make opportunistic pacts and alliances with the more powerful Korean kingdoms, and eventually Tang China, to its great advantage. The unification of the Three Kingdoms by Silla in 676 led to the North South States Period, in which much of the Korean Peninsula was controlled by Later Silla, while Balhae controlled the northern parts of Goguryeo. Balhae was founded by a Goguryeo general and formed as a successor state to Goguryeo. During its height, Balhae controlled most of Manchuria and parts of the Russian Far East, and was called the "Prosperous Country in the East". Later Silla was a golden age of art and culture, as evidenced by the Hwangnyongsa, Seokguram, and Emille Bell. Relationships between Korea and China remained relatively peaceful during this time. Later Silla carried on the maritime prowess of Baekje, which acted like the Phoenicia of medieval East Asia, and during the 8th and 9th centuries dominated the seas of East Asia and the trade between China, Korea and Japan, most notably during the time of Jang Bogo; in addition, Silla people made overseas communities in China on the Shandong Peninsula and the mouth of the Yangtze River. Later Silla was a prosperous and wealthy country, and its metropolitan capital of

Gyeongju was the fourth largest city in the world. Buddhism flourished during this time, and many Korean Buddhists gained great fame among Chinese Buddhists and contributed to Chinese Buddhism, including: Woncheuk, Wonhyo, Uisang, Musang, and Kim Gyo-gak, a Silla prince whose influence made Mount Jiuhua one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Chinese Buddhism. However, Later Silla weakened under internal strife and the revival of Baekje and Goguryeo, which led to the Later Three Kingdoms period in the late 9th century. === Unified Dynasties === In 936, the Later Three Kingdoms were united by Wang Geon, a descendant of Goguryeo nobility, who established Goryeo as the successor state of Goguryeo. Balhae had fallen to the Khitan Empire in 926, and a decade later the last crown prince of Balhae fled south to Goryeo, where he was warmly welcomed and included into the ruling family by Wang Geon, thus unifying the two successor nations of Goguryeo. Like Silla, Goryeo was a highly cultural state, and invented the metal movable type printing press. After defeating the Khitan Empire, which was the most powerful empire of its time, in the Goryeo–Khitan War, Goryeo experienced a golden age that lasted a century, during which the Tripitaka Koreana was completed and there were great developments in printing and publishing, promoting learning and dispersing knowledge on philosophy, literature, religion, and science; by 1100, there were 12 universities that produced famous scholars and scientists. However, the Mongol invasions in the 13th century greatly weakened the kingdom. Goryeo was never conquered by the Mongols, but exhausted after three decades of fighting, the Korean court sent its crown prince to the Yuan capital to swear allegiance to Kublai Khan, who accepted, and married one of his daughters to the Korean crown prince. Henceforth, Goryeo continued to rule Korea, though as a tributary ally to the Mongols for the next 86 years. During this period, the two nations became intertwined as all subsequent Korean kings married Mongol princesses, and the last empress of the Yuan dynasty was a Korean princess. In the mid-14th century, Goryeo drove out the Mongols to regain its northern territories, briefly conquered Liaoyang, and defeated invasions by the Red Turbans. However, in 1392, General Yi Seong-gye, who had been ordered to attack China, turned his army around and staged a coup. Yi Seong-gye declared the new name of Korea as "Joseon" in reference to Gojoseon, and moved the capital to Hanseong (one of the old names of Seoul). The first 200 years of the Joseon dynasty were marked by peace, and saw great advancements in science and education, as well as the creation of Hangul by Sejong the Great to promote literacy among the common people. The prevailing ideology of the time was Neo-Confucianism, which was epitomized by the seonbi class: nobles who passed up positions of wealth and power to lead lives of study and integrity. Between 1592 and 1598, Toyotomi Hideyoshi launched invasions of Korea, but his advance was halted by Korean forces (most notably the Joseon Navy led by Admiral Yi Sun-sin and his renowned "turtle ship") with assistance from Righteous Army militias formed by Korean civilians, and Ming dynasty Chinese troops. Through a series of successful battles of attrition, the Japanese forces were eventually forced to withdraw, and relations between all parties became normalized. However, the Manchus took advantage of Joseon's war-weakened state and invaded in 1627 and 1637, and then went on to conquer the destabilized Ming dynasty. After normalizing relations with the new Qing dynasty, Joseon experienced a nearly 200-year period of peace. Kings Yeongjo and Jeongjo particularly led a new renaissance of the Joseon dynasty during the 18th century. In the 19th century, the royal in-law families gained control of the government, leading to mass corruption and weakening of the state, and severe poverty and peasant rebellions throughout the country. Furthermore, the Joseon government adopted a strict isolationist policy, earning the nickname "the hermit kingdom", but ultimately failed to protect itself against imperialism and was forced to open its borders. After the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was occupied by Japan (1910–45). At the end of World War II, the Japanese surrendered to Soviet and U.S. forces who occupied the northern and southern halves of Korea, respectively. === Modern history === Despite the initial plan of a unified Korea in the 1943 Cairo Declaration, escalating Cold War antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States eventually led to the establishment of separate governments, each with its own ideology, leading to the division of Korea into two political entities in 1948: North Korea and South Korea. In the South, Syngman Rhee, an opponent of communism, who had been backed and appointed by the United States as head of the provisional government, won the first presidential elections of the newly declared Republic of Korea in May. In the North, a former anti-Japanese guerrilla and communist activist, Kim Il-sung was appointed premier of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in September. In October the Soviet Union declared Kim Il-sung's government as sovereign over both parts. The UN declared Rhee's government as "a lawful government having effective control and jurisdiction over that part of Korea where the UN Temporary Commission on Korea was able to observe and consult" and the Government "based on elections

which was observed by the Temporary Commission" in addition to a statement that "this is the only such government in Korea." Both leaders began an authoritarian repression of their political opponents inside their region, seeking for a unification of Korea under their control. While South Korea's request for military support was denied by the United States, North Korea's military was heavily reinforced by the Soviet Union. ===== 1950s ===== On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, sparking the Korean War, the Cold War's first major conflict, which continued until 1953. At the time, the Soviet Union had boycotted the United Nations (UN), thus forfeiting their veto rights. This allowed the UN to intervene in a civil war when it became apparent that the superior North Korean forces would unify the entire country. The Soviet Union and China backed North Korea, with the later participation of millions of Chinese troops. After an ebb and flow that saw both sides almost pushed to the brink of extinction, and massive losses among Korean civilians in both the north and the south, the war eventually reached a stalemate. The 1953 armistice, never signed by South Korea, split the peninsula along the demilitarized zone near the original demarcation line. No peace treaty was ever signed, resulting in the two countries remaining technically at war. Over 1.2 million people died during the Korean War. ===== 1960 to 1990 ===== In 1960, a student uprising (the "April 19 Revolution") led to the resignation of the autocratic President Syngman Rhee. A period of political instability followed, broken by General Park Chung-hee's May 16 coup against the weak and ineffectual government the next year. Park took over as president until his assassination in 1979, overseeing rapid export-led economic growth as well as implementing political repression. Park was heavily criticised as a ruthless military dictator, who in 1972 extended his rule by creating a new constitution, which gave the president sweeping (almost dictatorial) powers and permitted him to run for an unlimited number of six-year terms. However, the Korean economy developed significantly during Park's tenure and the government developed the nationwide expressway system, the Seoul subway system, and laid the foundation for economic development during his 17-year tenure. The years after Park's assassination were marked again by political turmoil, as the previously suppressed opposition leaders all campaigned to run for president in the sudden political void. In 1979 there came the Coup d'état of December Twelfth led by General Chun Doo-hwan. Following the Coup d'état, Chun Doo-hwan planned to rise to power through several measures. On May 17, Chun Doo-hwan forced the Cabinet to expand martial law to the whole nation, which had previously not applied to the island of Jeju. The expanded martial law closed universities, banned political activities and further curtailed the press. Chun's assumption of the presidency in the events of May 17, triggered nationwide protests demanding democracy, in particular in the city of Gwangju, to which Chun sent special forces to violently suppress the Gwangju Democratization Movement. Chun subsequently created the National Defense Emergency Policy Committee and took the presidency according to his political plan. Chun and his government held South Korea under a despotic rule until 1987, when a Seoul National University student, Park Jong-chul, was tortured to death. On June 10, the Catholic Priests Association for Justice revealed the incident, igniting the June Democracy Movement around the country. Eventually, Chun's party, the Democratic Justice Party, and its leader, Roh Tae-woo announced the 6.29 Declaration, which included the direct election of the president. Roh went on to win the election by a narrow margin against the two main opposition leaders, Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-Sam. Seoul hosted the Olympic Games in 1988, widely regarded as successful and a significant boost for South Korea's global image and economy. ===== 1990s ===== South Korea was formally invited to become a member of the United Nations in 1991. The transition of Korean from autocracy to modern democracy was marked in 1997 by the election of Kim Dae-jung, who was sworn in as the eighth president of South Korea, on February 25, 1998. His election was significant given that he had in earlier years been a political prisoner sentenced to death (later commuted to exile). He won against the backdrop of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, where he took IMF advice to restructure the economy and the nation soon recovered its economic growth, albeit at a slower pace. ===== 2000s ===== In June 2000, as part of president Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" of engagement, a North-South summit took place in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. Later that year, Kim received the Nobel Peace Prize "for his work for democracy and human rights in South Korea and in East Asia in general, and for peace and reconciliation with North Korea in particular". However, because of discontent among the population for fruitless approaches to the North under the previous administrations and, amid North Korean provocations, a conservative government was elected in 2007 led by President Lee Myung-bak, former mayor of Seoul. Meanwhile, South Korea and Japan jointly co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup. However, South Korean and Japanese relations later soured because of conflicting claims of sovereignty over the Liancourt Rocks. ===== 2010s ===== 2010 saw an apparent escalation in serious attacks by North Korea. In March 2010 the South Korean warship ROKS

Cheonan was sunk with the loss of 46 South Korean sailors, allegedly by a North Korean submarine. In November 2010 Yeonpyeong island was attacked by a significant North Korean artillery barrage, with 4 people losing their lives. The lack of a strong response to these attacks from both South Korea and the international community (the official UN report declined to explicitly name North Korea as the perpetrator for the Cheonan sinking) caused significant anger with the South Korean public. South Korea saw another milestone in 2012 with the first ever female president Park Geun-hye elected and assuming office. Daughter of another former president, Park Chung-hee, she carried on a conservative brand of politics. President Park Geun-hye's administration was formally accused of corruption, bribery, and influence-peddling for the involvement of close friend Choi Soon-sil in state affairs. There followed a series of massive public demonstrations from November 2016 and she was removed from office. After the fallout of President Park's impeachment and dismissal, new elections were held and Moon Jae-in of the Democratic party won the presidency, assuming office on the 10th May 2017. His tenure so far has seen an improving political relationship with North Korea, some increasing divergence in the military alliance with the United States, and the successful hosting of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

== Geography, climate and environment ==

=== Geography === South Korea occupies the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula, which extends some 1,100 km (680 mi) from the Asian mainland. This mountainous peninsula is flanked by the Yellow Sea to the west, and the Sea of Japan to the east. Its southern tip lies on the Korea Strait and the East China Sea. The country, including all its islands, lies between latitudes 33° and 39°N, and longitudes 124° and 130°E. Its total area is 100,032 square kilometres (38,622.57 sq mi). South Korea can be divided into four general regions: an eastern region of high mountain ranges and narrow coastal plains; a western region of broad coastal plains, river basins, and rolling hills; a southwestern region of mountains and valleys; and a southeastern region dominated by the broad basin of the Nakdong River. South Korea's terrain is mostly mountainous, most of which is not arable. Lowlands, located primarily in the west and southeast, make up only 30% of the total land area. About three thousand islands, mostly small and uninhabited, lie off the western and southern coasts of South Korea. Jeju-do is about 100 kilometres (62 miles) off the southern coast of South Korea. It is the country's largest island, with an area of 1,845 square kilometres (712 square miles). Jeju is also the site of South Korea's highest point: Hallasan, an extinct volcano, reaches 1,950 metres (6,400 feet) above sea level. The easternmost islands of South Korea include Ulleungdo and Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo/Takeshima), while Marado and Socotra Rock are the southernmost islands of South Korea. South Korea has 20 national parks and popular nature places like the Boseong Tea Fields, Suncheon Bay Ecological Park, and the first national park of Jirisan.

=== Climate === South Korea tends to have a humid continental climate and a humid subtropical climate, and is affected by the East Asian monsoon, with precipitation heavier in summer during a short rainy season called jangma (■), which begins end of June through the end of July. Winters can be extremely cold with the minimum temperature dropping below −20 °C (−4 °F) in the inland region of the country: in Seoul, the average January temperature range is −7 to 1 °C (19 to 34 °F), and the average August temperature range is 22 to 30 °C (72 to 86 °F). Winter temperatures are higher along the southern coast and considerably lower in the mountainous interior. Summer can be uncomfortably hot and humid, with temperatures exceeding 30 °C (86 °F) in most parts of the country. South Korea has four distinct seasons; spring, summer, autumn and winter. Spring usually lasts from late March to early May, summer from mid-May to early September, autumn from mid-September to early November, and winter from mid-November to mid-March. Rainfall is concentrated in the summer months of June through September. The southern coast is subject to late summer typhoons that bring strong winds, heavy rains and sometime floods. The average annual precipitation varies from 1,370 millimetres (54 in) in Seoul to 1,470 millimetres (58 in) in Busan.

=== Environment === During the first 20 years of South Korea's growth surge, little effort was made to preserve the environment. Unchecked industrialization and urban development have resulted in deforestation and the ongoing destruction of wetlands such as the Songdo Tidal Flat. However, there have been recent efforts to balance these problems, including a government run \$84 billion five-year green growth project that aims to boost energy efficiency and green technology. The green-based economic strategy is a comprehensive overhaul of South Korea's economy, utilizing nearly two percent of the national GDP. The greening initiative includes such efforts as a nationwide bike network, solar and wind energy, lowering oil dependent vehicles, backing daylight savings and extensive usage of environmentally friendly technologies such as LEDs in electronics and lighting. The country – already the world's most wired – plans to build a nationwide next-generation network that will be 10 times faster than broadband facilities, in order to reduce energy usage. The renewable portfolio standard program with renewable

energy certificates runs from 2012 to 2022. Quota systems favor large, vertically integrated generators and multinational electric utilities, if only because certificates are generally denominated in units of one megawatt-hour. They are also more difficult to design and implement than a Feed-in tariff. Around 350 residential micro combined heat and power units were installed in 2012. Seoul's tap water recently became safe to drink, with city officials branding it "Arisu" in a bid to convince the public. Efforts have also been made with afforestation projects. Another multibillion-dollar project was the restoration of Cheonggyecheon, a stream running through downtown Seoul that had earlier been paved over by a motorway. One major challenge is air quality, with acid rain, sulfur oxides, and annual yellow dust storms being particular problems. It is acknowledged that many of these difficulties are a result of South Korea's proximity to China, which is a major air polluter. South Korea is a member of the Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity Treaty, Kyoto Protocol (forming the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), regarding UNFCCC, with Mexico and Switzerland), Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (not into force), Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, and Whaling. == Government == Under its current constitution the state is sometimes referred to as the Sixth Republic of South Korea. Like many democratic states, South Korea has a government divided into three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. The executive and legislative branches operate primarily at the national level, although various ministries in the executive branch also carry out local functions. Local governments are semi-autonomous, and contain executive and legislative bodies of their own. The judicial branch operates at both the national and local levels. South Korea is a constitutional democracy. The South Korean government's structure is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea. This document has been revised several times since its first promulgation in 1948 at independence. However, it has retained many broad characteristics and with the exception of the short-lived Second Republic of South Korea, the country has always had a presidential system with an independent chief executive. The first direct election was also held in 1948. Although South Korea experienced a series of military dictatorships from the 1960s up until the 1980s, it has since developed into a successful liberal democracy. Today, the CIA World Factbook describes South Korea's democracy as a "fully functioning modern democracy". South Korea is ranked 37th on the Corruption Perceptions Index, with moderate control on corruption. == Administrative divisions == The major administrative divisions in South Korea are eight provinces, one special self-governing province, six metropolitan cities (self-governing cities that are not part of any province), one special city and one metropolitan autonomous city. {{Smaller|a Revised Romanisation; b See Names of Seoul; c May As of 2018. == Demographics == In April 2016, South Korea's population was estimated to be around 50.8 million by National Statistical Office, with continuing decline of working age population and total fertility rate. The country is noted for its population density, which was an estimated 505 per square kilometer in 2015, more than 10 times the global average. Most South Koreans live in urban areas, because of rapid migration from the countryside during the country's quick economic expansion in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The capital city of Seoul is also the country's largest city and chief industrial center. According to the 2005 census, Seoul had a population of 10 million inhabitants. The Seoul National Capital Area has 24.5 million inhabitants (about half of South Korea's entire population) making it the world's second largest metropolitan area. Other major cities include Busan (3.5 million), Incheon (2.5 million), Daegu (2.5 million), Daejeon (1.4 million), Gwangju (1.4 million) and Ulsan (1.1 million). The population has also been shaped by international migration. After World War II and the division of the Korean Peninsula, about four million people from North Korea crossed the border to South Korea. This trend of net entry reversed over the next 40 years because of emigration, especially to the United States and Canada. South Korea's total population in 1955 was 21.5 million, and has more than doubled, to 50 million, by 2010. South Korea is considered one of the most ethnically homogeneous societies in the world with ethnic Koreans representing approximately 96% of total population. Precise numbers are difficult since statistics do not record ethnicity and given many immigrants are ethnically Korean themselves, whilst some Korean citizens are not ethnically Korean. South Korea is nevertheless becoming a more multi-ethnic society over time due to immigration. The percentage of foreign nationals has been growing rapidly. As of 2016, South Korea had 1,413,758 foreign residents, 2.75% of the population; however, many of them are ethnic Koreans with a foreign citizenship. For example, migrants from China (PRC) make up 56.5% of foreign nationals, but approximately 70% of the Chinese citizens in Korea are Joseonjok (조선족), PRC citizens of Korean ethnicity. Regardless of the ethnicity, there are 28,500 US military personnel serving in South Korea, most serving a one-year unaccompanied tour

(though approximately 10% serve longer tours accompanied by family), according to the Korea National Statistical Office. In addition, about 43,000 English teachers from English-speaking countries reside temporarily in Korea. Currently, South Korea has one of the highest rates of growth of foreign born population, with about 30,000 foreign born residents obtaining South Korean citizenship every year since 2010. South Korea's birthrate was the world's lowest in 2009. If this continues, its population is expected to decrease by 13% to 42.3 million in 2050. South Korea's annual birthrate is approximately 9 births per 1000 people. However the birthrate has increased by 5.7% since 2010 and Korea no longer has the world's lowest birthrate. According to a 2011 report from The Chosun Ilbo, South Korea's total fertility rate (1.23 children born per woman) is higher than those of Taiwan (1.15) and Japan (1.21). The average life expectancy in 2008 was 79.10 years, (which was 34th in the world) but by 2015 it had increased to around 81. South Korea has the steepest decline in working age population of the OECD nations. In 2015, National Statistical Office estimated that the population of the country will have reached its peak by 2035. === Education === A centralized administration in South Korea oversees the process for the education of children from kindergarten to the third and final year of high school. The school year is divided into two semesters, the first of which begins at the beginning of March and ends in mid-July, the second of which begins in late August and ends in mid-February. The schedules are not uniformly standardized and vary from school to school. Most South Korean middle schools and high schools have school uniforms, modeled on western-style uniforms. Boys' uniforms usually consist of trousers and white shirts, and girls wear skirts and white shirts (this only applies in middle schools and high schools). The country adopted a new educational program to increase the number of their foreign students through 2010. According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the number of scholarships for foreign students in South Korea would have (under the program) doubled by that time, and the number of foreign students would have reached 100,000. South Korea is one of the top-performing OECD countries in reading literacy, maths and sciences with the average student scoring 542 and has one of the worlds most highly educated labour forces among OECD countries. The country is well known for its highly feverish outlook on education, where its national obsession with education has been called "education fever". This obsession with education has catapulted the resource poor nation consistently atop the global education rankings where in 2014 national rankings of students' math and science scores by the Organization for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD), South Korea ranked second place worldwide, after Singapore. Higher education is a serious issue in South Korea society, where it is viewed as one of the fundamental cornerstones of South Korean life. Education is regarded with a high priority for South Korean families as success in education holds a cultural status as well as a necessity to improve one's socioeconomic position in South Korean society. Academic success is often a source of pride for families and within South Korean society at large. South Koreans view education as the main propeller of social mobility for themselves and their family as a gateway to the South Korean middle class. Graduating from a top university is the ultimate marker of prestige, high socioeconomic status, promising marriage prospects, and a respectable career path. An average South Korean child's life revolves around education as pressure to succeed academically is deeply ingrained in South Korean children from an early age. Not having a university degree carries a major cultural stigma as those who lack a formal university education face social prejudice and are often looked down upon by others. In 2015, the country spent 4.7% of its GDP on all levels of education – roughly equal to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 4.7% also. A strong investment in education, a militant drive for success as well as the passion for excellence has helped the resource poor country rapidly grow its economy over the past 60 years from a war torn wasteland. South Korea's zeal for education and its students' desires to get into a prestigious university is one of the highest in the world, as the entrance into a top tier higher educational institution leads to a prestigious, secure and well-paid white collar job with the government, banks, a major South Korean conglomerate such as Samsung, Hyundai or LG Electronics. With incredible pressure on high school students to secure places at the nation's best universities, its institutional reputation and alumni networks are strong predictors of future career prospects. The top three universities in South Korea, often referred to as "SKY", are Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University. Intense competition for top grades and academic pressure to be the top student is deeply ingrained in the psyche of South Korean students at a young age. Yet with only so many places at universities and even fewer places at top-tier companies, many young people remain disappointed and are often unwilling to lower their sights with the result of many feeling as underachievers. There is a major cultural taboo in South Korean society attached to those who have not achieved formal university education where those who don't hold university

degrees face social prejudice and are often looked down by others as second-class citizens resulting in fewer opportunities for employment, improvement of one's socioeconomic position and prospects for marriage. International opinion regarding the South Korean education system has been divided. It has been praised for various reasons, including its comparatively high test results and its major role in ushering South Korea's economic development creating one of the world's most educated workforces. South Korea's highly enviable academic performance has persuaded British education ministers to actively remodel their own curriculums and exams to try to emulate Korea's militant drive and passion for excellence and high educational achievement. Former U.S. President Barack Obama has also praised the country's rigorous school system, where over 80 percent of South Korean high school graduates go on to university. The nation's high university entrance rate has created a highly skilled workforce making South Korea among the most highly educated countries in the world with one of the highest percentages of its citizens holding a tertiary education degree. Bachelor's degrees are held by 68 percent of South Koreans aged 25–34, the most in the OECD. The system's rigid and hierarchical structure has been criticized for stifling creativity and innovation; described as intensely and "brutally" competitive, the system is often blamed for the high suicide rate in the country, particularly the growing rates among those aged 10–19. Various media outlets attribute the country's high suicide rate to the nationwide anxiety around the country's college entrance exams, which determine the trajectory of students' entire lives and careers. Former South Korean hagwon teacher Se-Woong Koo wrote that the South Korean education system amounts to child abuse and that it should be "reformed and restructured without delay". The system has also been criticized for producing an excess supply of university graduates creating an overeducated and underemployed labor force; in the first quarter of 2013 alone, nearly 3.3 million South Korean university graduates were jobless, leaving many graduates overqualified for jobs requiring less education. Further criticism has been stemmed for causing labor shortages in various skilled blue collar labor and vocational occupations, where many go unfilled as the negative social stigma associated with vocational careers and not having a university degree continues to remain deep-rooted in South Korean society. === Language === Korean is the official language of South Korea, and is classified by most linguists as a language isolate. Korean is not related to Mandarin, although it incorporates a number of words that are Chinese in origin. Additionally Korean spoken in South Korea uses a significant number of loan words from English. Korean uses an indigenous writing system called Hangul, created in 1446 by King Sejong to provide an alternative to the Classical Chinese Hanja characters that were difficult to learn and did not fit the Korean language well. South Korea still uses some Chinese Hanja characters in limited areas, such as print media and legal documentation. The Korean language in South Korea has a standard dialect known as Seoul (after the capital city), with an additional 4 Korean language dialect groups in use around the country. Almost all South Korean students today learn English throughout their education, with some optionally choosing Japanese or Mandarin as well. === Religion === According to the results of the census of 2015 more than half of the South Korean population (56.9%) declared themselves not affiliated with any religious organizations. Korean shamanism (also known as Sindo or Muism) is the native religion of the Koreans, and it may represent a large part of the unaffiliated. Indeed, according to a 2012 survey, only 15% of the population declared themselves not religious in the sense of "atheism". Of the people who are affiliated with a religious organization, most are Christians and Buddhists. According to the 2015 census, 27.6% of the population were Christians (19.7% identified themselves as Protestants, 7.9% as Roman Catholics), and 15.5% were Buddhists. Other religions include Islam (130,000 Muslims, mostly migrant workers from Pakistan and Bangladesh but including some 35,000 Korean Muslims,) the homegrown sect of Wonbuddhism, and a variety of indigenous religions, including Cheondoism (a Confucianizing religion), Jeungsanism, Daejongism, Daesun Jinrihoe and others. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, and there is no state religion. Overall, between the 2005 and 2015 censuses there has been a slight decline of Christianity (down from 29% to 27.6%), a sharp decline of Buddhism (down from 22.8% to 15.5%), and a rise of the unaffiliated population (from 47.2% to 56.9%). Christianity is South Korea's largest organized religion, accounting for more than half of all South Korean adherents of religious organizations. There are approximately 13.5 million Christians in South Korea today; about two thirds of them belonging to Protestant churches, and the rest to the Roman Catholic Church. The number of Protestants has been stagnant throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, but increased to a peak level throughout the 2010s. Roman Catholics increased significantly between the 1980s and the 2000s, but declined throughout the 2010s. Christianity, unlike in other East Asian countries, found fertile ground in Korea in the 18th century, and by the end of the 18th century it persuaded a large part of the population as the declining monarchy supported it and

opened the country to widespread proselytism as part of a project of Westernization. The weakness of Korean *Sindo*, which, unlike Japanese Shinto and China's religious system, never developed into a national religion of high status, combined with the impoverished state of Korean Buddhism (after 500 years of suppression at the hands of the Joseon state, by the 20th century it was virtually extinct) left a free hand to Christian churches. Christianity's similarity to native religious narratives has been studied as another factor that contributed to its success in the peninsula. The Japanese colonization of the first half of the 20th century further strengthened the identification of Christianity with Korean nationalism, as the Japanese coopted native Korean *Sindo* into the Nipponic Imperial Shinto that they tried to establish in the peninsula. Widespread Christianization of the Koreans took place during State Shinto, after its abolition, and then in the independent South Korea as the newly established military government supported Christianity and tried to utterly oust native *Sindo*. Among Christian denominations, Presbyterianism is the largest. About nine million people belong to one of the hundred different Presbyterian churches; the biggest ones are the HapDong Presbyterian Church, TongHap Presbyterian Church, the Koshin Presbyterian Church. South Korea is also the second-largest missionary-sending nation, after the United States. Buddhism was introduced to Korea in the 4th century. It became soon a dominant religion in the southeastern kingdom of Silla, the region that hitherto hosts the strongest concentration of Buddhists in South Korea. In the other states of the Three Kingdoms Period, Goguryeo and Baekje, it was made the state religion respectively in 372 and 528. It remained the state religion in Later Silla (North South States Period) and Goryeo. It was later suppressed throughout much of the subsequent history under the unified kingdom of Joseon (1392–1897), which officially adopted a strict Korean Confucianism. Today, South Korea has about 7 million Buddhists, most of them affiliated to the Jogye Order. Most of the National Treasures of South Korea are Buddhist artifacts. === Health === South Korea has a universal healthcare system. Suicide in South Korea is a serious and widespread problem and the country ranks poorly on world happiness reports for a high-income state. The suicide rate was the highest in the G20 in 2015 (24.1 deaths per 100,000 persons). South Korean hospitals have advanced medical equipment and facilities readily available, ranking 4th for MRI units per capita and 6th for CT scanners per capita in the OECD. It also had the OECD's second largest number of hospital beds per 1000 people at 9.56 beds. Life expectancy has been rising rapidly and South Korea ranked 11th in the world for life expectancy at 82.3 years by the WHO in 2015. == Foreign relations == South Korea maintains diplomatic relations with more than 188 countries. The country has also been a member of the United Nations since 1991, when it became a member state at the same time as North Korea. On January 1, 2007, Former South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon served as UN Secretary-General from 2007 to 2016. It has also developed links with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as both a member of ASEAN Plus three, a body of observers, and the East Asia Summit (EAS). In November 2009 South Korea joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee, marking the first time a former aid recipient country joined the group as a donor member. South Korea hosted the G-20 Summit in Seoul in November 2010, a year that saw South Korea and the European Union conclude a free trade agreement (FTA) to reduce trade barriers. South Korea went on to sign a Free Trade Agreements with Canada and Australia in 2014, and another with New Zealand in 2015. === North Korea === Both North and South Korea claim complete sovereignty over the entire peninsula and outlying islands. Despite mutual animosity, reconciliation efforts have continued since the initial separation between North and South Korea. Political figures such as Kim Koo worked to reconcile the two governments even after the Korean War. With longstanding animosity following the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, North Korea and South Korea signed an agreement to pursue peace. On October 4, 2007, Roh Moo-Hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il signed an eight-point agreement on issues of permanent peace, high-level talks, economic cooperation, renewal of train services, highway and air travel, and a joint Olympic cheering squad. Despite the Sunshine Policy and efforts at reconciliation, the progress was complicated by North Korean missile tests in 1993, 1998, 2006, 2009, and 2013. As of early 2009, relationships between North and South Korea were very tense; North Korea had been reported to have deployed missiles, ended its former agreements with South Korea, and threatened South Korea and the United States not to interfere with a satellite launch it had planned. North and South Korea are still technically at war (having never signed a peace treaty after the Korean War) and share the world's most heavily fortified border. On May 27, 2009, North Korean media declared that the Armistice is no longer valid because of the South Korean government's pledge to "definitely join" the Proliferation Security Initiative. To further complicate and intensify strains between the two nations, the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan in March 2010, is affirmed by the South Korean government to have been caused by

a North Korean torpedo, which the North denies. President Lee Myung-bak declared in May 2010 that Seoul would cut all trade with North Korea as part of measures primarily aimed at striking back at North Korea diplomatically and financially, except for the joint Kaesong Industrial Project, and humanitarian aid. North Korea initially threatened to sever all ties, to completely abrogate the previous pact of non-aggression, and to expel all South Koreans from a joint industrial zone in Kaesong, but backtracked on its threats and decided to continue its ties with South Korea. Despite the continuing ties, Kaesong industrial zone has seen a large decrease in investment and manpower as a result of this military conflict. In February 2016, the Kaesong complex was closed by Seoul in reaction to North Korea's launch of a rocket earlier in the month unanimously condemned by the United Nations security council. The 2017 election of President Moon Jae-in has seen a change in approach towards the North, and both sides used the South Korean held 2018 Winter Olympics as an opportunity for engagement, with a very senior North Korean political delegation sent to the games, along with a reciprocal visit by senior South Korean cabinet members to the North soon afterwards. === China === Historically, Korea had close relations with the dynasties in China, and some Korean kingdoms were members of the Imperial Chinese tributary system. In modern times, before the formation of South Korea, Korean independence fighters worked with Chinese soldiers during the Japanese occupation. However, after World War II, the People's Republic of China embraced Maoism while South Korea sought close relations with the United States. The PRC assisted North Korea with manpower and supplies during the Korean War, and in its aftermath the diplomatic relationship between South Korea and the PRC almost completely ceased. Relations thawed gradually and South Korea and the PRC re-established formal diplomatic relations on August 24, 1992. The two countries sought to improve bilateral relations and lifted the forty-year-old trade embargo, and South Korean–Chinese relations have improved steadily since 1992. The Republic of Korea broke off official relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) upon gaining official relations with the People's Republic of China, which doesn't recognise Taiwan's sovereignty. China has become South Korea's largest trading partner by far, sending 26% of South Korean exports in 2016 worth \$124 billion, as well as an additional \$32 billion worth of exports to Hong Kong. South Korea is also China's 4th largest trading partner, with \$93 billion of Chinese imports in 2016. The 2017 deployment of THAAD defence missiles by the United States military in South Korea in response to North Korean missile tests has been protested strongly by the Chinese government, concerned that the technologically advanced missile defence could be used more broadly against China. Relations between the governments have cooled in response, with South Korean commercial and cultural interests in China having been targeted, and Chinese tourism to South Korea having been curtailed. The situation was largely resolved by South Korea making significant military concessions to China in exchange for THAAD, including not deploying any more anti-ballistic missile systems in South Korea and not participating in an alliance between the United States and Japan. === Japan === Korea and Japan have had difficult relations since ancient times, but also significant cultural exchange, with Korea acting as the gateway between Asia and Japan. Contemporary perceptions of Japan are still largely defined by Japan's 35 year colonization of Korea in the 20th century, which is generally regarded in South Korea as having been very negative. Japan is today South Korea's second largest trading partner, with 12% (\$46 billion) of exports in 2016. There were no formal diplomatic ties between South Korea and Japan directly after independence the end of World War II in 1945. South Korea and Japan eventually signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965 to establish diplomatic ties. There is heavy anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea because of a number of unsettled Japanese-Korean disputes, many of which stem from the period of Japanese occupation after the Japanese annexation of Korea. During World War II, more than 100,000 Koreans served in the Imperial Japanese Army. Korean women were coerced and forced to serve the Imperial Japanese Army as sexual slaves, called comfort women, in both Korea and throughout the Japanese war fronts. Longstanding issues such as Japanese war crimes against Korean civilians, the negationist re-writing of Japanese textbooks relating Japanese atrocities during World War II, the territorial disputes over the Liancourt Rocks, known in South Korea as "Dokdo" and in Japan as "Takeshima", and visits by Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine, honoring Japanese people (civilians and military) killed during the war continue to trouble Korean-Japanese relations. The Liancourt Rocks were the first Korean territories to be forcibly colonized by Japan in 1905. Though it was again returned to Korea along with the rest of its territory in 1951 with the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco, Japan does not recant on its claims that the Liancourt Rocks are Japanese territory. In response to then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, former President Roh Moo-hyun suspended all summit talks between South Korea and Japan in 2009. A summit between the nations' leaders was

eventually held on February 9th, 2018 during the Korean held Winter Olympics. === European Union === The European Union (EU) and South Korea are important trading partners, having negotiated a free trade agreement for many years since South Korea was designated as a priority FTA partner in 2006. The free trade agreement was approved in September 2010, and took effect on July 1, 2011. South Korea is the EU's tenth largest trade partner, and the EU has become South Korea's fourth largest export destination. EU trade with South Korea exceeded €90 billion in 2015 and has enjoyed an annual average growth rate of 9.8% between 2003 and 2013. The EU has been the single largest foreign investor in South Korea since 1962, and accounted for almost 45% of all FDI inflows into Korea in 2006. Nevertheless, EU companies have significant problems accessing and operating in the South Korean market because of stringent standards and testing requirements for products and services often creating barriers to trade. Both in its regular bilateral contacts with South Korea and through its FTA with Korea, the EU is seeking to improve this situation. === United States === The close relationship began directly after World War II, when the United States temporarily administrated Korea for three years (mainly in the South, with the Soviet Union engaged in North Korea) after Japan. Upon the onset of the Korean War in 1950, U.S. forces were sent to defend against an invasion from North Korea of the South, and subsequently fought as the as the largest contributor of UN troops. The United States participation was critical for preventing the near defeat of the Republic of Korea by northern forces, as well as fighting back for the territory gains that define the South Korean nation today. Following the Armistice, South Korea and the U.S. agreed to a "Mutual Defense Treaty", under which an attack on either party in the Pacific area would summon a response from both. In 1967, South Korea obliged the mutual defense treaty, by sending a large combat troop contingent to support the United States in the Vietnam War. The US has over 23,000 troops stationed in South Korea, including the U.S. Eighth Army, Seventh Air Force, and U.S. Naval Forces Korea. The two nations have strong economic, diplomatic, and military ties, although they have at times disagreed with regard to policies towards North Korea, and with regard to some of South Korea's industrial activities that involve usage of rocket or nuclear technology. There had also been strong anti-American sentiment during certain periods, which has largely moderated in the modern day. The two nations also share a close economic relationship, with the U.S being South Korea's second largest trading partner, receiving \$66 billion in exports in 2016. In 2007, a free trade agreement known as the Republic of Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) was signed between South Korea and the United States, but its formal implementation was repeatedly delayed, pending approval by the legislative bodies of the two countries. On October 12, 2011, the U.S. Congress passed the long-stalled trade agreement with South Korea. It went into effect on March 15, 2012. == Military == The unresolved tension with North Korea have prompted South Korea to allocate 2.6% of its GDP and 15% of all government spending to its military (Government share of GDP: 14.967%), while maintaining compulsory conscription for men. Consequently, South Korea has the world's seventh largest number of active troops (630,000 in 2017), the world's highest number of reserve troops (7,500,000 in 2017) and the tenth largest defense budget. The South Korean military consists of the Army (ROKA), the Navy (ROKN), the Air Force (ROKAF), and the Marine Corps (ROKMC), and reserve forces. Many of these forces are concentrated near the Korean Demilitarized Zone. All South Korean males are constitutionally required to serve in the military, typically 21 months. Previous exceptions for South Korean citizens of mixed race no longer apply since 2011. In addition to male conscription in South Korea's sovereign military, 1,800 Korean males are selected every year to serve 21 months in the KATUSA Program to further augment the United States Forces Korea (USFK). In 2010, South Korea was spending █1.68 trillion in a cost-sharing agreement with the US to provide budgetary support to the US forces in Korea, on top of the █29.6 trillion budget for its own military. The South Korean army has 2,500 tanks in operation, including the K1A1 and K2 Black Panther, which form the backbone of the South Korean army's mechanized armor and infantry forces. A sizable arsenal of many artillery systems, including 1,700 self-propelled K55 and K9 Thunder howitzers and 680 helicopters and UAVs of numerous types, are assembled to provide additional fire, reconnaissance, and logistics support. South Korea's smaller but more advanced artillery force and wide range of airborne reconnaissance platforms are pivotal in the counter-battery suppression of North Korea's large artillery force, which operates more than 13,000 artillery systems deployed in various state of fortification and mobility. The South Korean navy has made its first major transformation into a blue-water navy through the formation of the Strategic Mobile Fleet, which includes a battle group of Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin class destroyers, Dokdo class amphibious assault ship, AIP-driven Type 214 submarines, and King Sejong the Great class destroyers, which is equipped with the latest baseline of Aegis fleet-defense system that allows the ships to track and destroy multiple cruise missiles and

ballistic missiles simultaneously, forming an integral part of South Korea's indigenous missile defense umbrella against the North Korean military's missile threat. The South Korean air force operates 840 aircraft, making it world's ninth largest air force, including several types of advanced fighters like F-15K, heavily modified KF-16C/D, and the indigenous F/A-50, supported by well-maintained fleets of older fighters such as F-4E and KF-5E/F that still effectively serve the air force alongside the more modern aircraft. In an attempt to gain strength in terms of not just numbers but also modernity, the commissioning of four Boeing 737 AEW&C; aircraft, under Project Peace Eye for centralized intelligence gathering and analysis on a modern battlefield, will enhance the fighters' and other support aircraft's ability to perform their missions with awareness and precision. In May 2011, Korea Aerospace Industries Ltd., South Korea's largest plane maker, signed a \$400 million deal to sell 16 T-50 Golden Eagle trainer jets to Indonesia, making South Korea the first country in Asia to export supersonic jets. From time to time, South Korea has sent its troops overseas to assist American forces. It has participated in most major conflicts that the United States has been involved in the past 50 years. South Korea dispatched 325,517 troops to fight alongside American, Australian, Filipino, New Zealand and South Vietnamese soldiers in the Vietnam War, with a peak strength of 50,000. In 2004, South Korea sent 3,300 troops of the Zaytun Division to help re-building in northern Iraq, and was the third largest contributor in the coalition forces after only the US and Britain. Beginning in 2001, South Korea had so far deployed 24,000 troops in the Middle East region to support the War on Terrorism. A further 1,800 were deployed since 2007 to reinforce UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. === United States Contingent === The United States has stationed a substantial contingent of troops to defend South Korea. There are approximately 28,500 U.S. Military personnel stationed in Korea, most of them serving one year unaccompanied tours. The American troops, which are primarily ground and air units, are assigned to USFK and mainly assigned to the Eighth United States Army of the US Army and Seventh Air Force of the US Air Force. They are stationed in installations at Osan, Kunsan, Yongsan, Dongducheon, Sungbuk, Camp Humphreys, and Daegu, as well as at Camp Bonifas in the DMZ Joint Security Area. A fully functioning UN Command is at the top of the chain of command of all forces in South Korea, including the US forces and the entire South Korean military – if a sudden escalation of war between North and South Korea were to occur the United States would assume control of the South Korean armed forces in all military and paramilitary moves. There has been long term agreement between the United States and South Korea that South Korea should eventually assume the lead for its own defense. This transition to a South Korean command has been slow and often postponed, although it is currently scheduled to occur in the early 2020s. === Conscientious objection === Male citizens who refuse to undertake military service because of conscientious objection are typically imprisoned, with over 600 people usually imprisoned at any given time; more than the rest of the world put together. The vast majority of these are young men from the Jehovah's Witnesses Christian denomination. See Conscription in South Korea. == Economy == South Korea's mixed economy ranks 11th nominal and 13th purchasing power parity GDP in the world, identifying it as one of the G-20 major economies. It is a developed country with a high-income economy and is the most industrialized member country of the OECD. South Korean brands such as LG Electronics and Samsung are internationally famous. Its massive investment in education has taken the country from mass illiteracy to a major international technological powerhouse. The country's national economy benefits from a highly skilled workforce and is among the most educated countries in the world with one of the highest percentages of its citizens holding a tertiary education degree. South Korea's economy was one of the world's fastest-growing from the early 1960s to the late 1990s, and South Korea is still one of the fastest-growing developed countries in the 2000s, along with Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, the other three Asian Tigers. South Koreans refer to this growth as the Miracle on the Han River. The South Korean economy is heavily dependent on international trade, and in 2014, South Korea was the fifth-largest exporter and seventh-largest importer in the world. Despite the South Korean economy's high growth potential and apparent structural stability, the country suffers damage to its credit rating in the stock market because of the belligerence of North Korea in times of deep military crises, which has an adverse effect on South Korean financial markets. The International Monetary Fund compliments the resilience of the South Korean economy against various economic crises, citing low state debt and high fiscal reserves that can quickly be mobilized to address financial emergencies. Although it was severely harmed by the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, the South Korean economy managed a rapid recovery and subsequently tripled its GDP. Furthermore, South Korea was one of the few developed countries that were able to avoid a recession during the global financial crisis. Its economic growth rate reached 6.2 percent in 2010 (the fastest growth for eight years after significant growth by

7.2 percent in 2002), a sharp recovery from economic growth rates of 2.3% in 2008 and 0.2% in 2009, when the global financial crisis hit. The unemployment rate in South Korea also remained low in 2009, at 3.6%. South Korea became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996. The following list includes the largest South Korean companies by revenue in 2017 who are all listed as part of the Fortune Global 500: === Transportation, energy and infrastructure === South Korea has a technologically advanced transport network consisting of high-speed railways, highways, bus routes, ferry services, and air routes that crisscross the country. Korea Expressway Corporation operates the toll highways and service amenities en route. Korail provides frequent train services to all major South Korean cities. Two rail lines, Gyeongui and Donghae Bukbu Line, to North Korea are now being reconnected. The Korean high-speed rail system, KTX, provides high-speed service along Gyeongbu and Honam Line. Major cities including Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Daegu, Daejeon and Gwangju have urban rapid transit systems. Express bus terminals are available in most cities. South Korea's main gateway and largest airport is Incheon International Airport, serving 58 million passengers in 2016. Other international airports include Gimpo, Busan and Jeju. There are also a large number of airports that were built as part of the infrastructure boom but are barely used. There are a large number of heliports. The national carrier, Korean Air served over 26,800,000 passengers, including almost 19,000,000 international passengers in 2016. A second carrier, Asiana Airlines also serves domestic and international traffic. Combined, South Korean airlines serve 297 international routes. Smaller airlines, such as Jeju Air, provide domestic service with lower fares. South Korea is the world's fifth-largest nuclear power producer and the second-largest in Asia as of 2010. Nuclear power in South Korea supplies 45% of electricity production, and research is very active with investigation into a variety of advanced reactors, including a small modular reactor, a liquid-metal fast/transmutation reactor and a high-temperature hydrogen generation design. Fuel production and waste handling technologies have also been developed locally. It is also a member of the ITER project. South Korea is an emerging exporter of nuclear reactors, having concluded agreements with the UAE to build and maintain four advanced nuclear reactors, with Jordan for a research nuclear reactor, and with Argentina for construction and repair of heavy-water nuclear reactors. As of 2010, South Korea and Turkey are in negotiations regarding construction of two nuclear reactors. South Korea is also preparing to bid on construction of a light-water nuclear reactor for Argentina. South Korea is not allowed to enrich uranium or develop traditional uranium enrichment technology on its own, because of US political pressure, unlike most major nuclear powers such as Japan, Germany, and France, competitors of South Korea in the international nuclear market. This impediment to South Korea's indigenous nuclear industrial undertaking has sparked occasional diplomatic rows between the two allies. While South Korea is successful in exporting its electricity-generating nuclear technology and nuclear reactors, it cannot capitalize on the market for nuclear enrichment facilities and refineries, preventing it from further expanding its export niche. South Korea has sought unique technologies such as pyroprocessing to circumvent these obstacles and seek a more advantageous competition. The US has recently been wary of South Korea's burgeoning nuclear program, which South Korea insists will be for civilian use only. South Korea is the third highest ranked Asian country in the World Economic Forum's Network Readiness Index (NRI) after Singapore and Hong Kong respectively – an indicator for determining the development level of a country's information and communication technologies. South Korea ranked number 10 overall in the 2014 NRI ranking, up from 11 in 2013. === Tourism === In 2016, 17 million foreign tourists visited South Korea. With rising tourist prospects, especially from foreign countries outside of Asia, the South Korean government has set a target of attracting 20 million foreign tourists a year by 2017. South Korean tourism is driven by many factors, including the popularity of South Korean pop music and television dramas, known as Korean Wave (Hallyu), throughout East Asia, traditional culture, cuisine and natural environment. The Hyundai Research Institute reported that the Korean Wave has a direct impact in encouraging direct foreign investment back into the country through demand for products, and the tourism industry. Among Asian countries, China was the most receptive, investing 1.4 billion in South Korea, with much of the investment within its service sector, a sevenfold increase from 2001. According to economist, Han Sang-Wan, shown an analysis that a 1 percent increase of exports of Korean cultural content pushes consumer goods exports up 0.083 percent while a 1 percent increase in Korean pop content exports to a country produces a 0.019 percent bump in tourism. === South Korean National Pension System === The South Korean pension system was created to provide benefits to persons reaching old age, families and persons stricken with death of their primary breadwinner, and for the purposes of stabilizing its nation's welfare state. South Korea's pensions system structure is

primarily based on taxation and is income-related. In 2007 there was a total of 18,367,000 insured individuals with only around 511,000 persons excluded from mandatory contribution. The current pension system is divided into four categories distributing benefits to participants through national, military personnel, governmental, and private school teacher pension schemes. The national pension scheme is the primary welfare system providing allowances to the majority of persons. Eligibility for the national pension scheme is not dependent on income but on age and residence, where those between the ages of 18 to 59 are covered. Any one who is under the age of 18 are dependents of someone who is covered or under a special exclusion where they are allowed to alternate provisions. The national pension scheme is divided into four categories of insured persons – the workplace-based insured, the individually insured, the voluntarily insured, and the voluntarily and continuously insured. Employees between the ages of 18 to 59 are covered under the workplace-based pension scheme and contribute 4.5% of their gross monthly earnings. The national pension covers employees who work in firms that employ five or more employees, fishermen, farmers, and the self-employed in both rural and urban areas. Employers are also covered under the workplace-based pension scheme and help cover their employees obligated 9% contribution by providing the remaining 4.5%. Anyone who is not employed, of the age of 60 or above, and excluded by article 6 of the National Pension Act but of the ages between 18 and 59, is covered under the individually insured pension scheme. Persons covered by the individually insured pension scheme are in charge of paying the entire 9% contribution themselves. Voluntarily insured persons are not subjected to mandatory coverage but can choose to be. This category comprises retirees who voluntarily choose to have additional benefits, individuals under the age of 27 without income, and individuals whose spouses are covered under a public welfare system, whether military, governmental, or private school teacher pensions. Like the Individually insured persons, they too are in charge of covering the full amount of the contribution. Voluntarily and continuously insured persons consists of individuals 60 years of age who want to fulfill the minimum insured period of 20 years to qualify for old age pension benefits. Excluding the workplace-based insured persons, all the other insured persons personally cover their own 9% contribution. South Korea's old-age pension scheme covers individuals age 60 or older for the rest of their life as long as they have satisfied the minimum of 20 years of national pension coverage before hand. Individuals with a minimum of 10 years covered under the national pension scheme and who are 60 years of age are able to be covered by under a 'reduced old-age pension' scheme. There also is an 'active old-age pension' scheme that covers individuals age 60 to 65 engaged in activities yielding earned income. Individuals age of 55 and younger than 60 who are not engaged in activities yielding earned income are eligible to be covered under the 'early old-age pension' scheme. Around 60% of all Korean elders, age 65 and over are entitled to a 5% benefit of their past average income at an average of 90,000 Korean Won (KRW). Basic old-age pension schemes covered individuals 65 years of age who earned below an amount set by presidential order. In 2010, that ceiling was 700,00 KRW for a single individual and 1,120,000 for a couple, equivalent to around \$600.00 and \$960.00.

== Science and technology ==

Scientific and technological development in the South Korea at first did not occur largely because of more pressing matters such as the division of Korea and the Korean War that occurred right after its independence. It wasn't until the 1960s under the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee where South Korea's economy rapidly grew from industrialisation and the Chaebol corporations such as Samsung and LG. Ever since the industrialization of South Korea's economy, South Korea has placed its focus on technology-based corporations, which has been supported by infrastructure developments by the government. South Korean corporations Samsung and LG were ranked first and third largest mobile phone companies in the world in the first quarter of 2012, respectively. An estimated 90% of South Koreans own a mobile phone. Aside from placing/receiving calls and text messaging, mobile phones in the country are widely used for watching Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (DMB) or viewing websites. Over one million DMB phones have been sold and the three major wireless communications providers SK Telecom, KT, and LG U+ provide coverage in all major cities and other areas. South Korea has the fastest Internet download speeds in the world, with an average download speed of 25.3 Mbit/s. South Korea leads the OECD in graduates in science and engineering. The country ranks first among the most innovative countries in the Bloomberg Innovation Index. Additionally, South Korea today is known as a Launchpad of a mature mobile market, where developers can reap benefits of a market where very few technology constraints exist. There is a growing trend of inventions of new types of media or apps, utilizing the 4G and 5G internet infrastructure in South Korea. South Korea has today the infrastructures to meet a density of population and culture that has the capability to create strong local particularity. === Cyber security === Following cyberattacks in the first half of 2013, whereby

government, news-media, television station, and bank websites were compromised, the national government committed to the training of 5,000 new cybersecurity experts by 2017. The South Korean government blamed its northern counterpart for these attacks, as well as incidents that occurred in 2009, 2011 and 2012, but Pyongyang denies the accusations. In late September 2013, a computer-security competition jointly sponsored by the defense ministry and the National Intelligence Service was announced. The winners were announced on September 29, 2013 and shared a total prize pool of 80 million won (US\$74,000).

=== Aerospace engineering === South Korea has sent up 10 satellites from 1992, all using foreign rockets and overseas launch pads, notably Arirang-1 in 1999, and Arirang-2 in 2006 as part of its space partnership with Russia. Arirang-1 was lost in space in 2008, after nine years in service. In April 2008, Yi So-yeon became the first Korean to fly in space, aboard the Russian Soyuz TMA-12. In June 2009, the first spaceport of South Korea, Naro Space Center, was completed at Goheung, Jeollanam-do. The launch of Naro-1 in August 2009 resulted in a failure. The second attempt in June 2010 was also unsuccessful. However, the third launch of the Naro 1 in January 2013 was successful. The government plans to develop Naro-2 by the year 2018. South Korea's efforts to build an indigenous space launch vehicle is marred because of persistent political pressure of the United States, who had for many decades hindered South Korea's indigenous rocket and missile development programs in fear of their possible connection to clandestine military ballistic missile programs, which Korea many times insisted did not violate the research and development guidelines stipulated by US-Korea agreements on restriction of South Korean rocket technology research and development. South Korea has sought the assistance of foreign countries such as Russia through MTCR commitments to supplement its restricted domestic rocket technology. The two failed KSLV-I launch vehicles were based on the Universal Rocket Module, the first stage of the Russian Angara rocket, combined with a solid-fueled second stage built by South Korea.

=== Robotics === Robotics has been included in the list of main national R&D projects in Korea since 2003. In 2009, the government announced plans to build robot-themed parks in Incheon and Masan with a mix of public and private funding. In 2005, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) developed the world's second walking humanoid robot, HUBO. A team in the Korea Institute of Industrial Technology developed the first Korean android, EveR-1 in May 2006. EveR-1 has been succeeded by more complex models with improved movement and vision. Plans of creating English-teaching robot assistants to compensate for the shortage of teachers were announced in February 2010, with the robots being deployed to most preschools and kindergartens by 2013. Robotics are also incorporated in the entertainment sector as well; the Korean Robot Game Festival has been held every year since 2004 to promote science and robot technology.

=== Biotechnology === Since the 1980s, the Korean government has invested in the development of a domestic biotechnology industry, and the sector is projected to grow to \$6.5 billion by 2010. The medical sector accounts for a large part of the production, including production of hepatitis vaccines and antibiotics. Recently, research and development in genetics and cloning has received increasing attention, with the first successful cloning of a dog, Snuppy (in 2005), and the cloning of two females of an endangered species of wolves by the Seoul National University in 2007. The rapid growth of the industry has resulted in significant voids in regulation of ethics, as was highlighted by the scientific misconduct case involving Hwang Woo-Suk.

== Culture == South Korea shares its traditional culture with North Korea, but the two Koreas have developed distinct contemporary forms of culture since the peninsula was divided in 1945. Historically, while the culture of Korea has been heavily influenced by that of neighboring China, it has nevertheless managed to develop a unique cultural identity that is distinct from its larger neighbor. Its rich and vibrant culture left 19 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity, the third largest in the world, along with 12 World Heritage Sites. The South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism actively encourages the traditional arts, as well as modern forms, through funding and education programs. The industrialization and urbanization of South Korea have brought many changes to the way Korean people live. Changing economics and lifestyles have led to a concentration of population in major cities, especially the capital Seoul, with multi-generational households separating into nuclear family living arrangements. A 2014 Euromonitor study found that South Koreans drink the most alcohol on a weekly basis compared to the rest of the world. South Koreans drink 13.7 shots of liquor per week on average and, of the 44 other countries analyzed, Russia, the Philippines, and Thailand follow.

=== Art === Korean art has been highly influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism, which can be seen in the many traditional paintings, sculptures, ceramics and the performing arts. Korean pottery and porcelain, such as Joseon's baekja and buncheong, and Goryeo's celadon are well known throughout the world. The Korean tea ceremony, pansori, talchum and buchaechum are also notable Korean performing arts.

Post-war modern Korean art started to flourish in the 1960s and 1970s, when South Korean artists took interest in geometrical shapes and intangible subjects. Establishing a harmony between man and nature was also a favorite of this time. Because of social instability, social issues appeared as main subjects in the 1980s. Art was influenced by various international events and exhibits in Korea, and with it brought more diversity. The Olympic Sculpture Garden in 1988, the transposition of the 1993 edition of the Whitney Biennial to Seoul, the creation of the Gwangju Biennale and the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1995 were notable events. === Architecture === Because of South Korea's tumultuous history, construction and destruction has been repeated endlessly, resulting in an interesting melange of architectural styles and designs. Korean traditional architecture is characterized by its harmony with nature. Ancient architects adopted the bracket system characterized by thatched roofs and heated floors called ondol. People of the upper classes built bigger houses with elegantly curved tiled roofs with lifting eaves. Traditional architecture can be seen in the palaces and temples, preserved old houses called hanok, and special sites like Hahoe Folk Village, Yangdong Village of Gyeongju and Korean Folk Village. Traditional architecture may also be seen at the nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in South Korea. Western architecture was first introduced to Korea at the end of the 19th century. Churches, offices for foreign legislation, schools and university buildings were built in new styles. With the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 the colonial regime intervened in Korea's architectural heritage, and Japanese-style modern architecture was imposed. The anti-Japanese sentiment, and the Korean War, led to the destruction of most buildings constructed during that time. Korean architecture entered a new phase of development during the post-Korean War reconstruction, incorporating modern architectural trends and styles. Stimulated by the economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, active redevelopment saw new horizons in architectural design. In the aftermath of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South Korea has witnessed a wide variation of styles in its architectural landscape due, in large part, to the opening up of the market to foreign architects. Contemporary architectural efforts have been constantly trying to balance the traditional philosophy of "harmony with nature" and the fast-paced urbanization that the country has been going through in recent years. === Cuisine === Korean cuisine, *hanguk yori* (한국 요리; 한국 요리), or *hansik* (한식; 한식), has evolved through centuries of social and political change. Ingredients and dishes vary by province. There are many significant regional dishes that have proliferated in different variations across the country in the present day. The Korean royal court cuisine once brought all of the unique regional specialties together for the royal family. Meals consumed both by the royal family and ordinary Korean citizens have been regulated by a unique culture of etiquette. Korean cuisine is largely based on rice, noodles, tofu, vegetables, fish and meats. Traditional Korean meals are noted for the number of side dishes, *banchan* (반찬), which accompany steam-cooked short-grain rice. Every meal is accompanied by numerous *banchan*. *Kimchi* (김치), a fermented, usually spicy vegetable dish is commonly served at every meal and is one of the best known Korean dishes. Korean cuisine usually involves heavy seasoning with sesame oil, *doenjang* (된장), a type of fermented soybean paste, soy sauce, salt, garlic, ginger, and *gochujang* (고추장), a hot pepper paste. Other well-known dishes are *Bulgogi* (불고기), grilled marinated beef, *Gimbap* (김밥), and *Tteokbokki* (떡볶이), a spicy snack consisting of rice cake seasoned with *gochujang* or a spicy chili paste. Soups are also a common part of a Korean meal and are served as part of the main course rather than at the beginning or the end of the meal. Soups known as *guk* (국) are often made with meats, shellfish and vegetables. Similar to *guk*, *tang* (탕; 탕) has less water, and is more often served in restaurants. Another type is *jjigae* (찌개), a stew that is typically heavily seasoned with chili pepper and served boiling hot. Popular Korean alcoholic beverages include *Soju*, *Makgeolli* and *Bokbunja ju*. Korea is unique among Asian countries in its use of metal chopsticks. Metal chopsticks have been discovered in Goguryeo archaeological sites. === Entertainment === In addition to domestic consumption, South Korea has a thriving entertainment industry where various facets of South Korean entertainment including television dramas, films, and popular music has generated significant financial revenues for the nation's economy. The cultural phenomenon known as *Hallyu* or the "Korean Wave", has swept many countries across Asia making South Korea a major soft power as an exporter of popular culture and entertainment, rivaling Western nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Until the 1990s, trot and traditional Korean folk based ballads dominated South Korean popular music. The emergence of the South Korean pop group *Seo Taiji and Boys* in 1992 marked a turning point for South Korean popular music, also known as *K-pop*, as the genre modernized itself from incorporating elements of popular musical genres from across the world such as Western popular music, experimental, jazz, gospel, Latin, classical, hip hop, rhythm and blues, electronic dance, reggae, country, folk, and rock on top of its uniquely traditional Korean music roots.

Western-style pop, hip hop, rhythm and blues, rock, folk, electronic dance oriented acts have become dominant in the modern South Korean popular music scene, though trot is still enjoyed among older South Koreans. K-pop stars and groups are well known across Asia and have found international fame making millions of dollars in export revenue. Many K-pop acts have also been able to secure a strong overseas following using online social media platforms such as the video sharing website YouTube. South Korean singer PSY became an international sensation when his song "Gangnam Style" topped global music charts in 2012. Since the success of the film *Shiri* in 1999, the Korean film industry has begun to gain recognition internationally. Domestic film has a dominant share of the market, partly because of the existence of screen quotas requiring cinemas to show Korean films at least 73 days a year. South Korean television shows have become popular outside of Korea. South Korean television dramas, known as K-dramas have begun to find fame internationally. Many dramas tend to have a romantic focus, such as *Princess Hours*, *You're Beautiful*, *Playful Kiss*, *My Name is Kim Sam Soon*, *Boys Over Flowers*, *Winter Sonata*, *Autumn in My Heart*, *Full House*, *City Hunter*, *All About Eve*, *Secret Garden*, *I Can Hear Your Voice*, *Master's Sun*, *My Love from the Star*, *Healer*, *Descendants of the Sun* and *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*. Historical dramas have included *Faith*, *Dae Jang Geum*, *The Legend*, *Dong Yi*, *Moon Embracing the Sun*, and *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*.

=== Holidays === There are many official public holidays in South Korea. Korean New Year's Day, or "Seollal", is celebrated on the first day of the Korean lunar calendar. Korean Independence Day falls on March 1, and commemorates the March 1 Movement of 1919. Memorial Day is celebrated on June 6, and its purpose is to honor the men and women who died in South Korea's independence movement. Constitution Day is on July 17, and it celebrates the promulgation of Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Liberation Day, on August 15, celebrates Korea's liberation from the Empire of Japan in 1945. Every 15th day of the 8th lunar month, Koreans celebrate the Midautumn Festival, in which Koreans visit their ancestral hometowns and eat a variety of traditional Korean foods. On October 1, Armed Forces day is celebrated, honoring the military forces of South Korea. October 3 is National Foundation Day. Hangul Day, on October 9 commemorates the invention of hangul, the native alphabet of the Korean language.

=== Sports === The martial art taekwondo originated in Korea. In the 1950s and 1960s, modern rules were standardized, with taekwondo becoming an official Olympic sport in 2000. Other Korean martial arts include taekkyeon, hapkido, Tang Soo Do, Kuk Sool Won, kumdo and subak. Football and baseball have traditionally been regarded as the most popular sports in Korea. Recent polling indicates that a majority, 41% of South Korean sports fans continue to self-identify as football fans, with baseball ranked 2nd at 25% of respondents. However, the polling did not indicate the extent to which respondents follow both sports. The national football team became the first team in the Asian Football Confederation to reach the FIFA World Cup semi-finals in the 2002 FIFA World Cup, jointly hosted by South Korea and Japan. The Korea Republic national team (as it is known) has qualified for every World Cup since Mexico 1986, and has broken out of the group stage twice: first in 2002, and again in 2010, when it was defeated by eventual semi-finalist Uruguay in the Round of 16. At the 2012 Summer Olympics, South Korea won the Bronze Medal for football. Baseball was first introduced to Korea in 1905 and has since become increasingly popular, with some sources claiming it has surpassed football as the most popular sport in the country. Recent years have been characterized by increasing attendance and ticket prices for professional baseball games. The Korea Professional Baseball league, a 10-team circuit, was established in 1982. The South Korea national team finished third in the 2006 World Baseball Classic and second in the 2009 tournament. The team's 2009 final game against Japan was widely watched in Korea, with a large screen at Gwanghwamun crossing in Seoul broadcasting the game live. In the 2008 Summer Olympics, South Korea won the gold medal in baseball. Also in 1982, at the Baseball Worldcup, Korea won the gold medal. At the 2010 Asian Games, the Korean National Baseball team won the gold medal. Several Korean players have gone on to play in Major League Baseball. Basketball is a popular sport in the country as well. South Korea has traditionally had one of the top basketball teams in Asia and one of the continent's strongest basketball divisions. Seoul hosted the 1967 and 1995 Asian Basketball Championship. The Korea national basketball team has won a record number of 23 medals at the event to date. South Korea hosted the Asian Games in 1986 (Seoul), 2002 (Busan) and 2014 (Incheon). It also hosted the Winter Universiade in 1997, the Asian Winter Games in 1999 and the Summer Universiade in 2003, 2015. In 1988, South Korea hosted the Summer Olympics in Seoul, coming fourth with 12 gold medals, 10 silver medals and 11 bronze medals. South Korea regularly performs well in archery, shooting, table tennis, badminton, short track speed skating, handball, hockey, freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman wrestling, baseball, judo, taekwondo, speed skating, figure Skating, and weightlifting. The Seoul Olympic Museum is a

museum in Seoul, South Korea, dedicated to the 1988 Summer Olympics. On July 6, 2011 Pyeongchang was chosen by the IOC to host the 2018 Winter Olympics. South Korea has won more medals in the Winter Olympics than any other Asian country with a total of 45 medals (23 gold, 14 silver, and 8 bronze). At the 2010 Winter Olympics, South Korea ranked fifth in the overall medal rankings. South Korea is especially strong in short track speed skating. However, speed skating and figure skating are very popular, too, and ice hockey is an emerging sport with Anyang Halla winning their first ever Asia League Ice Hockey title in March 2010. Seoul hosted a professional triathlon race, which is part of the International Triathlon Union (ITU) World Championship Series in May 2010. In 2011, the South Korean city of Daegu hosted the 2011 IAAF World Championships in Athletics. In October 2010, South Korea hosted its first Formula One race at the Korea International Circuit in Yeongam, about 400 kilometres (250 mi) south of Seoul. The Korean Grand Prix was held from 2010 to 2013, but was not placed on the 2014 F1 calendar. Domestic horse racing events are also followed by South Koreans and Seoul Race Park in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do is located closest to Seoul out of the country's three tracks. Competitive video gaming, also called eSports (sometimes written e-Sports), has become more popular South Korea in recent years, particularly among young people. The two most popular games are League of Legends and StarCraft. The gaming scene of South Korea is managed by the Korean e-Sports Association (KeSPA for short) and has become something of a career for many players. They can make a living out of their activity and top players can even make a significant amount of money with some high end Starcraft II players ending up making six figure salaries. Korean e-Sports Association Korea Professional Sports League International Championship Host == See also == Outline of South Korea President of South Korea List of companies of South Korea Index of South Korea-related articles International rankings of South Korea List of South Korean tourist attractions == References == == Further reading == == External links == Official website (Korea.net) Korea Tourism Guide website Korea National Statistical Office Video on South Korea-US Relations from the Dean Peter Krogh Foreign Affairs Digital Archives "South Korea". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. A Country Study: South Korea in the Library of Congress South Korea at Curlie (based on DMOZ) South Korea from UCB Libraries GovPubs Korea OECD South Korea profile from the BBC News South Korea Encyclopædia Britannica entry The War Memorial of Korea Key Development Forecasts for South Korea from International Futures