



SCAN & LISTEN!
Do We All Participate in Cancel Culture?
NEWSWEEK PODCASTS



deprivation – ograniczenie, pozabawienie (np. wolności)
fulfill incremental goals – stopniowo realizować cele
rigid statistics – twarde dane statystyczne
wield the buzzword – posługiwac się modnym hasłem
passive resistance – bierny opór
opt out of the rat race – rezygnować/z wyścigu szczurów
reconcile – pogodzić ze sobą (np. dwie kwestie)
fall on deaf ears – trafić w próżnię, rzucić grochem o ścianę

The South Koreans who won't leave their rooms



51.8 percent of Koreans spent their leisure time alone in 2022

status; socio-psychological indicators such as **deprivation**, depression, negative future outlook and low self-esteem, and relationship characteristics including lower social skills, past experiences of violence, and less online activity.

The researchers underscored the importance of facilitating South Korea's youths as they seek to **fulfill incremental goals** at each stage of life: "These results highlight the need for a customized support system at the national level that takes into account the developmental tasks of young adults as a preventive strategy to solve the problem of social isolation of young adults and to devise various strategies to provide them with mental health services."

The Rise of the Individualist

Policy-makers in Seoul may need to dig deeper into the **rigid statistics** in order to determine whether they're seeing hikikomori or a version of "tongpung," the Mandarin phrase for "lying flat," popularized in recent years by burned-out or jobless Chinese youths. In March, nearly 20 percent of those aged 16-24 were out of work, Beijing's quarterly report said, versus 7.2 percent in South Korea over the same period.

China's young adults **wielded the buzzword** as a form of **passive resistance** as they **opted out of the rat race**. The sentiment may be shared in part by their Korean counterparts, for whom suicide remained the leading cause of death in 2019, after traffic accidents and cancer, according to official data.

South Korea's leaders must **reconcile** with dynamic shifts in traditional values that come with a society under transformation, in which some are choosing individualism over collectivism, as well as freedom from interference.

The latest government projections showed one-person households numbered 7.16 million, or 33.4 percent of the total, in 2021, up from 20 percent in 2005. They are likely to reach 39.6 percent by 2050. In America last year, 29 percent of households were classified as single-person, reported the U.S. Census Bureau.

Additional household data by Statistics Korea found 51.8 percent of Koreans spent their leisure time alone in 2022. Among one-person households, 57.7 percent were satisfied with their overall family relationships, and 46.7 percent were satisfied with their overall human relationships, a respective 6.8 and 6.1 percentage points lower than the national average.

The Yoon administration's policy to reverse social isolation is yet to generate much discussion inside South Korea and may, for the casual observer, detract from an otherwise safe and prosperous society, including for the youth, said David Tizzard, an assistant professor at Seoul Women's University and a senior contributor for the nonprofit Asia Society Korea.

"Individualism is on the rise. Some of these ideas, which you can track through neologisms, are seven years old. This has combined with the government, on both sides of the political divide, realizing the need to put tax money toward social welfare, which doesn't have a long-standing history in South Korea," he told Newsweek.

"We as humans are moved by narratives, representation and meaning rather than by statistics and numbers. This policy may **fall on deaf ears** because people want to be heard and seen. But it does show that South Korea is taking it a little bit more seriously now. Even if it only moves the needle 1 percent, that's a good thing," Tizzard said.

Michelle Sihyun Ju, Asia Society Korea's digital content development officer, said Yoon's approach is a step away from a past focus on the gender divide and could lead to positive views of his presidency for following through on a campaign pledge to support younger Koreans.

"Among the statistics likely are Korean youths who feel pessimistic about the future because of a lack of participation in helping to shape it," Ju told Newsweek. "I think society in general does see this more as a problem requiring someone to step in, whereas before the narrative was: 'They're young. They'll get over it.'"

One solution, she said, is more engagement between the government and the next generation of Koreans in high schools and universities. "Young-er students may find it very hard to speak up if they don't even know they're feeling isolated, even though they're part of the statistic." **NL**

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