

[\[Country Listing\]](#) [\[Factbook Home Page\]](#)

## Korea, South



Geography
People
Government
Economy
Communications
Transportation
Military
Transnational Issues



## Korea, South

### Geography

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Location:** Eastern Asia, southern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea

**Geographic coordinates:** 37 00 N, 127 30 E

**Map references:** Asia

**Area:**

*total:* 98,480 sq km

*land:* 98,190 sq km

*water:* 290 sq km

**Area—comparative:** slightly larger than Indiana

**Land boundaries:**

*total:* 238 km

*border countries:* North Korea 238 km

**Coastline:** 2,413 km

**Maritime claims:**

*contiguous zone:* 24 nm  
*continental shelf:* not specified  
*exclusive economic zone:* 200 nm  
*territorial sea:* 12 nm; 3 nm in the Korea Strait

**Climate:** temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter

**Terrain:** mostly hills and mountains; wide coastal plains in west and south

**Elevation extremes:**

*lowest point:* Sea of Japan 0 m  
*highest point:* Halla-san 1,950 m

**Natural resources:** coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower

**Land use:**

*arable land:* 19%  
*permanent crops:* 2%  
*permanent pastures:* 1%  
*forests and woodland:* 65%  
*other:* 13% (1993 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 13,350 sq km (1993 est.)

**Natural hazards:** occasional typhoons bring high winds and floods; low-level seismic activity common in southwest

**Environment—current issues:** air pollution in large cities; water pollution from the discharge of sewage and industrial effluents; drift net fishing

**Environment—international agreements:**

*party to:* Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94  
*signed, but not ratified:* Desertification

## People

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Population:** 46,416,796 (July 1998 est.)

**Age structure:**

*0-14 years:* 22% (male 5,505,564; female 4,894,780)  
*15-64 years:* 71% (male 16,772,319; female 16,272,145)  
*65 years and over:* 7% (male 1,126,963; female 1,845,025) (July 1998 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 1.01% (1998 est.)

**Birth rate:** 16.08 births/1,000 population (1998 est.)

**Death rate:** 5.67 deaths/1,000 population (1998 est.)

**Net migration rate:** -0.31 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1998 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

*at birth:* 1.14 male(s)/female

Korea, South

*under 15 years:* 1.12 male(s)/female  
*15-64 years:* 1.03 male(s)/female  
*65 years and over:* 0.61 male(s)/female (1998 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 7.79 deaths/1,000 live births (1998 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

*total population:* 73.95 years  
*male:* 70.37 years  
*female:* 78 years (1998 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 1.79 children born/woman (1998 est.)

**Nationality:**

*noun:* Korean(s)  
*adjective:* Korean

**Ethnic groups:** homogeneous (except for about 20,000 Chinese)

**Religions:** Christianity 49%, Buddhism 47%, Confucianism 3%, pervasive folk religion (shamanism), Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), and other 1%

**Languages:** Korean, English widely taught in junior high and high school

**Literacy:**

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write  
*total population:* 98%  
*male:* 99.3%  
*female:* 96.7% (1995 est.)

## Government

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Country name:**

*conventional long form:* Republic of Korea

*conventional short form:* South Korea

*local long form:* Taehan-min'guk

*local short form:* none

*note:* the South Koreans generally use the term "Hanguk" to refer to their country

*abbreviation:* ROK

**Data code:** KS

**Government type:** republic

**National capital:** Seoul

**Administrative divisions:** 9 provinces (do, singular and plural) and 6 special cities\* (gwangyoksi, singular and plural); Cheju-do, Cholla-bukto, Cholla-namdo, Ch'ungch'ong-bukto, Ch'ungch'ong-namdo, Inch'on-gwangyoksi\*, Kangwon-do, Kwangju-gwangyoksi\*, Kyonggi-do, Kyongsang-bukto, Kyongsang-namdo, Pusan-gwangyoksi\*, Soul-t'ukpyolsi\*, Taegu-gwangyoksi\*, Taejon-gwangyoksi\*

**Independence:** 15 August 1945; note—date of liberation from Japanese colonial rule

**National holiday:** Liberation Day, 15 August (1945)

**Constitution:** 25 February 1988

**Legal system:** combines elements of continental European civil law systems, Anglo-American law, and Chinese classical thought

**Suffrage:** 20 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

*chief of state:* President KIM Tae-chung (since 25 February 1998)

*head of government:* Acting Prime Minister KIM Chong-p'il (since 3 March 1998)

*cabinet:* State Council appointed by the president on the prime minister's recommendation

*elections:* president elected by popular vote for a single five-year term; election last held 18 December 1997 (next to be held 18 December 2002); prime minister appointed by the president; deputy prime ministers appointed by the president on the prime minister's recommendation

*election results:* KIM Tae-chung elected president; percent of vote—KIM Tae-chung (NCNP) 40.3%, YI Hoe-chang (GNP) 38.7%, YI In-che (NPP) 19.2%

**Legislative branch:** unicameral National Assembly or Kukhoe (299 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

*elections:* last held 11 April 1996 (next to be held NA 2000)

*election results:* percent of vote by party—NA; seats by party—NKP 139, NCNP 79, ULD 50, DP 15, independents 16; note—the distribution of seats as of February 1998 was GNP 165, NCNP 78, ULD 43, NPP 8, independents 4, vacant 1

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Court, justices are appointed by the president subject to the consent of the National Assembly

**Political parties and leaders:** Grand National Party (GNP), CHO Sun, president; National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), KIM Tae-chung, president; United Liberal Democrats (ULD), PAK Tae-chun, president; New People's Party (NPP), YI In-che, president

*note:* subsequent to the legislative election of April 1996 the following parties disbanded—New Korea Party (NKP) and Democratic Party (DP)

**Political pressure groups and leaders:** Korean National Council of Churches; National Democratic Alliance of Korea; National Federation of Student Associations; National Federation of Farmers' Associations; National Council of Labor Unions; Federation of Korean Trade Unions; Korean Veterans' Association; Federation of Korean Industries; Korean Traders Association; Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

**International organization participation:** AfDB, APEC, AsDB, BIS (pending member), CCC, CP, EBRD, ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Inmarsat, Intelsat, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, MINURSO, NSG, OAS (observer), OECD, OSCE (partner), UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNMOGIP, UNOMIG, UNU, UPU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTrO

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

*chief of mission:* Ambassador YI Hong-ku

*chancery:* 2450 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

*telephone:* [1] (202) 939-5600

*consulate(s) general:* Agana (Guam), Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

*chief of mission:* Ambassador Stephen W. BOSWORTH

*embassy:* 82 Sejong-Ro, Chongro-ku, Seoul

*mailing address:* American Embassy, Unit 15550, APO AP 96205-0001

*telephone:* [82] (2) 397-4114

*FAX:* [82] (2) 738-8845  
*consulate(s):* Pusan

**Flag description:** white with a red (top) and blue yin-yang symbol in the center; there is a different black trigram from the ancient I Ching (Book of Changes) in each corner of the white field

### Economy

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Economy—overview:** As one of the Four Dragons of East Asia, South Korea has achieved an incredible record of growth. Three decades ago its GDP per capita was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. Today its GDP per capita is eight times India's, 15 times North Korea's, and already up with the lesser economies of the European Union. This success through the late 1980s was achieved by a system of close government business ties, including directed credit, import restrictions, sponsorship of specific industries, and a strong labor effort. The government promoted the import of raw materials and technology at the expense of consumer goods and encouraged savings and investment over consumption. The Asian financial crisis of 1997/98 exposed certain longstanding weaknesses in South Korea's development model, including high debt/equity ratios, massive foreign borrowing, and an undisciplined financial sector. Also, a number of private sector conglomerates are near bankruptcy. At yearend 1997, an international effort, spearheaded by the IMF, was underway to shore up reserves and stabilize the economy. Growth in 1998 will be sharply cut. Long-term growth will depend on how successfully South Korea implements planned economic reforms that would bolster the financial sector, improve corporate management, and open the economy further to foreign participation.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity—\$631.2 billion (1997 est.)

**GDP—real growth rate:** 6% (1997 est.)

**GDP—per capita:** purchasing power parity—\$13,700 (1997 est.)

**GDP—composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 8%

*industry:* 45%

*services:* 47% (1991 est.)

**Inflation rate—consumer price index:** 5% (1996)

**Labor force:**

*total:* 20 million

*by occupation:* services and other 52%, mining and manufacturing 27%, agriculture, fishing, forestry 21% (1991)

**Unemployment rate:** 2% (1996)

**Budget:**

*revenues:* \$101 billion

*expenditures:* \$101 billion, including capital expenditures of \$20 billion (1996 est.)

**Industries:** electronics, automobile production, chemicals, shipbuilding, steel, textiles, clothing, footwear, food processing

**Industrial production growth rate:** 8.2% (1996)

**Electricity—capacity:** 31.665 million kW (1995)

**Electricity—production:** 174.52 billion kWh (1995)

**Electricity—consumption per capita:** 3,831 kWh (1995)

**Agriculture—products:** rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit; cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs; fish catch of 2.9 million metric tons, seventh largest in world

**Exports:**

*total value:* \$129.8 billion (f.o.b., 1996)

*commodities:* electronic and electrical equipment, machinery, steel, automobiles, ships; textiles, clothing, footwear; fish

*partners:* US 17%, EU 13%, Japan 12% (1995)

**Imports:**

*total value:* \$150.2 billion (c.i.f., 1996)

*commodities:* machinery, electronics and electronic equipment, oil, steel, transport equipment, textiles, organic chemicals, grains

*partners:* US 22%, Japan 21%, EU 13% (1995)

**Debt—external:** \$154 billion (1998 est.)

**Economic aid:** \$NA

**Currency:** 1 South Korean won (W) = 100 chun (theoretical)

**Exchange rates:** South Korean won (W) per US\$1—1,706.80 (January 1998), 951.29 (1997), 804.45 (1996), 771.27 (1995), 803.45 (1994), 802.67 (1993)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

## Communications

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Telephones:** 16.6 million (1993)

**Telephone system:** excellent domestic and international services

*domestic:* NA

*international:* fiber-optic submarine cable to China; satellite earth stations—3 Intelsat (2 Pacific Ocean and 1 Indian Ocean) and 1 Inmarsat (Pacific Ocean region)

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 79, FM 46, shortwave 0

**Radios:** 42 million (1993 est.)

**Television broadcast stations:** 256 (57 of which are 1 kW or greater) (1987 est.)

**Televisions:** 9.3 million (1992 est.)

## Transportation

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Railways:**

*total:* 3,081 km

*standard gauge:* 3,081 km 1.435-m gauge (560 km electrified) (1996 est.)

**Highways:**

*total:* 83,400 km  
*paved:* 63,467 km (including 1,920 km of expressways)  
*unpaved:* 19,933 km (1996 est.)

**Waterways:** 1,609 km; use restricted to small native craft

**Pipelines:** petroleum products 455 km; note—additionally, there is a parallel petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) pipeline being completed

**Ports and harbors:** Chinhae, Inch'on, Kunsan, Masan, Mokp'o, P'ohang, Pusan, Tonghae-hang, Ulsan, Yosu

**Merchant marine:**

*total:* 474 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 6,749,052 GRT/10,447,597 DWT  
*ships by type:* bulk 118, cargo 131, chemical tanker 28, combination bulk 3, combination ore/oil 1, container 70, liquefied gas tanker 12, multifunction large-load carrier 1, oil tanker 72, refrigerated cargo 22, roll-on/roll-off cargo 1, short-sea passenger 2, vehicle carrier 13  
*note:* South Korea owns an additional 273 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 11,985,267 DWT operating under the registries of Cambodia, Cyprus, Liberia, Malta, Panama, and Singapore (1997 est.)

**Airports:** 103 (1997 est.)

**Airports—with paved runways:**

*total:* 67  
*over 3,047 m:* 1  
*2,438 to 3,047 m:* 18  
*1,524 to 2,437 m:* 15  
*914 to 1,523 m:* 14  
*under 914 m:* 19 (1997 est.)

**Airports—with unpaved runways:**

*total:* 36  
*914 to 1,523 m:* 4  
*under 914 m:* 32 (1997 est.)

**Heliports:** 202 (1997 est.)

## Military

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Military branches:** Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, National Maritime Police (Coast Guard)

**Military manpower—military age:** 18 years of age

**Military manpower—availability:**  
*males age 15-49:* 13,849,615 (1998 est.)

**Military manpower—fit for military service:**  
*males:* 8,837,541 (1998 est.)

**Military manpower—reaching military age annually:**  
*males:* 399,034 (1998 est.)

**Military expenditures—dollar figure:** \$17.4 billion (1996)

**Military expenditures—percent of GDP:** 3.3% (1996)

## Transnational Issues

[\[Top of Page\]](#)

**Disputes—international:** Demarcation Line with North Korea; Liancourt Rocks (Takeshima/Tokdo) claimed by Japan

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[\[Country Listing\]](#) [\[Factbook Home Page\]](#)