



# Korea, South

## Republic of Korea

Asia

### Geography

**Area** 99,067 sq km. Southern half of Korean peninsula. Forested mountain ranges; 22% arable.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	48,500,717	0.39%
2020	49,474,990	0.13%
2030	49,146,236	-0.14%

**Capital** Seoul 9,773,000. **Other major cities** Pusan 3.4 million; Incheon 2.6mill; Taegu 2.5m; Taejon 1.5m; Kwangju 1.5m; Changwon-Masan 1.3m; Suwon 1.1m; Ulsan 1.1m. **Urbanites** 81.9%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 17%. **Life expectancy** 79.2 yrs.

### Peoples

One of the world's most ethnically homogeneous nations.

**Korean** 97.8%. An ancient and cultured nation.

**Other** 2.2%. A mix of Western, Chinese, Japanese and many South and Southeast Asians. Of the approximately 1 million foreigners, nearly one-half reside for work purposes and one-fourth are illegal immigrants.

**Literacy** 100%. **Official language** Korean. **All languages** 4. **Indigenous languages** 2. **Languages with Scripture** 2Bi 1por.

### Economy

Transformed from a poor, devastated nation in 1953 into the eleventh-largest economy in the world by rapid industrialization and modernization. A wide range of sophisticated, export-oriented industries, driven by the powerful *chaebol* conglomerates. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-99 exposed several weaknesses in the Korean system, but liberalization helped the economy push on. Few natural resources and high dependence on exports make Korea financially vulnerable, but a highly educated workforce and technological

innovation mitigate this.

**HDI Rank** 26<sup>th</sup>/182. **Public debt** 24.4% of GDP. **Income/person** \$19,136 (40% of USA).

### Politics

A millennia-old history of frequent invasions and interference from surrounding nations. The Japanese occupation (1910-1945), the foreign-engineered division of Korea (1945-48) and the devastating Korean War (1950-53) have moulded the attitudes and politics of Koreans. Strong military-civilian governments held power from 1950 until 1987, when public unrest led to constitutional change and a more open, multiparty democracy. The first civilian president in 32 years was elected in 1992. The disastrous state of North Korea seems to make either conflict or unification inevitable.

### Religion

Complete religious freedom. Published numbers range widely due to uncertain boundaries between religious heritage and actual belief and practice.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Non-religious*	30.98	15,025,522	0.9%
Christian	30.95	15,010,972	0.4%
Buddhist	23.70	11,494,670	0.5%
Ethnoreligionist	7.00	3,395,050	-1.0%
Other	4.30	2,085,531	0.9%
Chinese	2.70	1,309,519	-2.4%
Muslim	0.29	140,652	3.4%
Baha'i	0.08	38,801	3.1%

\*Many Koreans have no formal religious ties but do have a connection to Confucian values and teachings.

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	180	34.48	16,723,000	0.3%
Independent	19	0.86	416,000	1.6%
Anglican	1	0.10	50,000	0.2%
Catholic	1	9.18	4,450,000	0.3%
Marginal	69	2.98	1,446,000	1.2%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		<i>-16.65-8,075,000</i>		<i>0.0%</i>

The huge number of doubly affiliated can be attributed to countless denominational schisms, inconsistent enumeration mechanisms in churches and widespread failure to account for dual and transferred memberships, especially within Protestant bodies. The actual number of Protestants may be near half of what is claimed in official denominational reports.

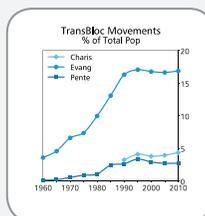
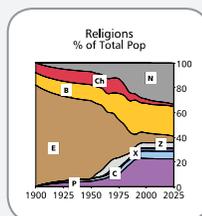
Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	1,243	2,486,034	4,450,000
Presby-HapDong	P	11,112	1,164,990	2,912,476
Presby-Tong Hap	P	7,671	1,343,406	2,686,812
Korean Methodist Ch	P	5,443	762,019	1,585,000
Korea Assembly of God	P	2,800	948,000	1,185,000
Korea Baptist Conv	P	2,785	801,437	931,000
Presby-HapDong Jeong	P	3,004	262,606	866,599
Korea Holiness Evang	P	1,011	374,000	748,000
Jesus Korean Holiness	P	2,758	112,852	564,260
Presby-Ko Shin	P	1,689	197,520	474,047

Presby-Ki Jang	P	1,291	148,458	337,000
Presby-HapDong BoSu	P	877	140,000	242,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	695	206,000	238,960
Presby-Gae Hyuk	P	3,163	129,928	220,877
Presby-Ye Jang Hap Bo	P	179	114,706	195,000
Jesus Assembly of God	I	1,008	69,620	174,051
Presby-HapDong Jung	P	1,012	53,333	160,000
Other denominations[242]		19,449	2,497,582	5,113,947
Doubly affiliated Pentecostals				-350,000
Doubly affiliated				-7,725,369
<b>Total Christians[270]</b>		<b>67,190</b>	<b>11,812,491</b>	<b>15,010,660</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	16.8	8,164,977	0.7%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	4.3	2,103,888	2.5%
Pentecostals	2.7	1,311,424	0.6%

### Missionaries from South Korea

**P, I, A** 21,500 Korean missionaries in about 175 countries with about 200 mission agencies: 97% international, 95% cross-cultural, 95% long-term. Many Korean missionaries are sent by indigenous denominational groups but serve with international agencies, resulting in some duplication.



## Answers to Prayer

- 1 Praise God for the unique Korean Church.** It was founded on sound indigenous principles, blessed with a succession of revivals, refined by persecution and is now one of the foremost Churches in the world for missions vision. It has one of the highest proportions of evangelicals in Asia. Korea's Church presence is highly visible; Korean society has been impacted on many levels by it, and a number of high-profile leaders of politics and industry are Christian. From the first Protestant church planted in 1884, South Korea now has possibly 50,000 Protestant congregations.
- 2 Commitment to sustained, sacrificial and passionate prayer,** both corporately and individually, characterizes much of the Korean Protestant Church. With early morning and evening prayer meetings every day and all night, prayer concerts on weekends and prayer mountains (retreat centres), the commitment of Korean Christians to prayer is remarkable; the fruit of these prayers will never be fully known this side of heaven.
- 3 Korean Christianity is one of superlatives.** Six of the ten largest churches in the world are in Korea as are some of the world's largest theological colleges, baptismal services and evangelistic and Christian gatherings in history. Praise God, not for the size of these events, but for the growth and strength that they reflect.
- 4 Korea's missionary-sending movement** has expanded to make it the second-largest foreign-mission-sending nation on earth. Over 20,000 workers have been sent out from South Korea. Even greater numbers are targeted for the longer term.

## Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Society and culture in Korea** saw great change in the last generation. Pray for the following issues:
  - a) Economic growth has been remarkable** in the last 50 years. But the global success of some Korean brands has exposed corruption in politics and industry. The economy is highly dependent on exports, and inequity between rich and poor is accelerating. Pray for wisdom for leaders and justice for those most vulnerable.
  - b) Moral foundations appear to be eroding.** This traditionally conservative society must face increasing materialism, a growing generation gap, greatly increased suicide rates, Internet addiction and, as with most developed nations, a rapidly rising sex industry, a vanity-driven cosmetic surgery industry and decreased sensitivity to violence in the media.
  - c) Traditional religious faiths** increasingly co-exist with Christianity and modern-day agnosticism.

Korea, South | August 5-6

A spectrum of Buddhism, Confucianism, Korean shamanism and New Religions (usually a blend of Christianity, Buddhism and Eastern mysticism) accounts for most of the population, although the majority do not faithfully practice. In recent years, however, there has been an awakening of religious sentiment among non-Protestant faiths, which has happened to coincide with a relative decline in Protestant growth.

**2 The looming spectre of North Korea** must not be ignored. With Seoul only 30 miles from the demilitarized zone, any conflict would immediately affect millions. More likely than an invasion is the collapse of North Korea's state structure, bringing with it massive humanitarian needs and a huge challenge to the South. Pray that political and Christian leaders may be ready for such an occasion and make wise decisions for the healing of all Korea. Mission to the North is almost impossible, but many in the South prepare and pray for reunification and for the opportunity to share the gospel. **OMS/KEHC** is pursuing ministry among North Korean refugees as a first step. Other initiatives include the Open Doors prayer campaign, CCK's Save North Korea campaign and initiatives by **OMF**, the Methodists and others.

**3 The Korean Church has major spiritual challenges** to face if its credibility before the world and effectiveness in ministry are to be at their maximum:

- a) **Stagnation and saturation.** Numerical growth in the Church has all but stopped despite continued evangelism and prayer. Exaggerated membership claims and double counting are common enough that up to 45% of all "claimed" Christians might be counted by two or more groups. This is especially true of the younger generation, which some claim is drifting away from genuine Christian faith and practice.
- b) **Spiritual pride,** including the belief in some circles that success and prosperity are indicators of God's favour. There is often a pride in statistical growth and impressive organizations and buildings, along with exaggerated claims made. It is a constant temptation for Christian leaders to seek success, wealth and academic degrees more than to lift up the Cross, and to attribute God's blessings to their own hard work or brilliance.
- c) **Divisions and schisms sadly typify** the Korean Protestant scene. At the end of the Japanese occupation, there was only one Presbyterian denomination; now there are over 100 and growing. While some splits were actually healthy, domineering leadership patterns and personality clashes have been at the root of much division; Jesus' prayer for the unity of His disciples needs more attention. Yet some work has been done to address this: 2009 was A Year of Prayer for Unity, adopted by Catholics and Protestants alike. Pray for humility, reconciliation and a new spirit of cooperation to be evident in every part of the Church.
- d) **Patterns of leadership.** Leadership is sometimes too authoritarian. The elevated status of pastors hinders biblical servant-leadership, promotes division and personality cults and stunts discipleship, since too many depend more on pastoral guidance than on celebrating the priesthood of all believers.
- e) **Church structures are not always conducive** to practical holiness or effective discipleship. Christians have at times condoned low ethical standards, bribery and corrupt practices, and they have not addressed the wrongs in wider society. Megachurches can gravitate against effective discipleship and integration of new believers into the body of Christ, which in turn causes "church hopping". With many new Christians from Buddhist/Confucian backgrounds, solid teaching and discipleship are essential.
- f) **Lack of transformational impact on society.** The large, influential and affluent Church has not yet fulfilled its capacity to have a transforming effect on the social problems affecting Korea today. Poverty, corruption, moral drift and unreached segments of society in particular could be more directly addressed. Christians would have remarkable potential to shape society were the churches mobilized to act in concert.

**4 Theological training in Korea** is unique; the nation enjoys an amazingly high number and ratio of workers with pastoral training and theological education. There may be 300 theological institutions in Korea. In addition to the 15,000 or more students in the top Presbyterian seminaries, there are, throughout the English-speaking world, thousands more Koreans studying for Christian ministry. For many who graduate, there are few openings in city congregations – yet the poorer rural congregations and mission agencies have many opportunities to serve. Pray that a new generation of trained Christian workers would seize these humble opportunities with joy and fervour.

**5** **Young people** are at a critical juncture in Korea. Increased affluence and a low birth rate have created a coddled generation that feels greater pressure than ever to meet extremely high expectations.

- a) **There is a notable cooling of spiritual fervour** in the younger generation. The Church will have to work hard to retain any of the hard-fought gains of the last several years as the siren call of the world becomes ever stronger. Some state that Christianity is actually declining among young people. Pray for a new awakening that will particularly impact young people.
- b) **Student ministry** remains crucial to disciple young Christians and to share the gospel with non-believers. Pray for more workers among university students. Korea has the world's highest proportion of adults with post-secondary education (83%). There are 3.6 million students in 408 universities. Several agencies have large numbers of workers involved: UBF, **CCCI**, **Navs**, **IFES/IVCF**, **SFC**, **Joy Mission**, **YWAM** and others.

**6** **The missions vision of the Korean Church** continues, remarkably, to grow and mature. Over 170 agencies are sending Korean missionaries cross-culturally. The larger Korean agencies are: Global Mission Society, University Bible Fellowship, **PC(T-hap)**, **KMCBM**, Korean **AoG**, **KBC**, InterCP, Paul Mission, Tyrannus International Mission, Korean Evangelical Holiness Church, GMF, GP.

- a) **Mobilization of young people** for missions keeps gaining momentum. God has used Korean young people to spearhead the missions movement in other Asian nations. Mission Korea is a coalition of 24 mission agencies and 11 campus ministries working together for the common goal of mobilizing young Korean adults and college students for world mission; they hold a nationwide conference every two years, attracting over 5,000 young people. Pray that these young people may be at the forefront of missions – by going, praying or giving.
- b) **A number of new and effective missionary training** and orientation programmes have been developed. Some of the many training institutions are: The Center for World Mission (Presbyterian TongHap), Global Missionary Training Center (interdenominational), Kosin MTI, the Missionary Training Institute (Presbyterian HapDong), the Missionary Training Center (Korean Evangelical Holiness Church) and the Global Professionals' Training Institute (for tentmakers). Pray for effective preparation of Korean missionary trainees, most of whom already have a theology degree or pastoral training.
- c) **Korean missionaries serving overseas need prayer.** The rapid increase in their numbers generates several great needs, most notably member care and collaboration with other missionaries and agencies. The latter issue requires humility and cultural flexibility for Koreans coming from a very homogenous cultural framework.
- d) **Field strategy must be re-evaluated.** What works in Korea does not necessarily work elsewhere, and cultural sensitivity is essential for missions to be effective abroad; Koreans, like other nationalities, can be insensitive to the local context. The kidnapping episodes in Iraq (2004) and Afghanistan (2007) prompted a lot of criticism from the secular media, resulting in much-needed soul searching, reflection and re-evaluation about how Koreans minister abroad.

**7** **The less-evangelized** groups that need special approaches in ministry:

- a) **Shamanism is resurgent**, though few openly claim to be followers of this ancient Korean religion. It is estimated that there are more than 300,000 shamans and 300 shamanistic temples within one hour of Seoul. Many Koreans still consult shamans and fortune tellers.
- b) **Korean Muslims.** These are growing in number as a result of Islamic missionary efforts among Koreans working in the Middle East. There are about 35,000 to 40,000 Korean Muslims as well as over 100,000 illegal migrant workers; the significant majority are in Seoul. There are eight mosques in Korea. There is only a small amount of outreach to them and a lack of sufficient experience and knowledge on how to reach them.
- c) **The 250,000-plus illegal migrants**, often working in appalling conditions and for long hours. Bangladesh claims the largest share, but China, Vietnam, Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines and Mongolia also weigh in. A number of local churches provide a much-needed and welcome haven of love and assistance to these, in contrast to the coldness they face from Korean society in general.
- d) **New religionists.** There are as many as 300 new religions in South Korea, drawing upon traditional beliefs, Christianity and Buddhism. Chondokyo, with over one million adherents, is a mix of

Buddhist, Confucian, shamanistic, Taoist and Catholic practice and belief. New religions are often a reaction to “Western Christianity” in Korean society.

**8 Pray for the Korean diaspora.** Waves of emigration and extensive business ventures have multiplied Korean communities around the world to an excess of 6 million, many in the USA. Around 70% of diaspora Koreans were reported to be Christian – many become believers shortly after arriving in their newly adopted land. Their own role in supporting and sending missionaries is formidable. Recently, KODIMNET (Korean Diaspora Missions Network) and the World Korean Diaspora Forum (including Korean Research Institute for Diaspora) were established to support the Korean diaspora’s contribution to cross-cultural missions.

**9 Missions to Korea** has a valuable servant role in giving fresh perspectives to biblical teaching, personal holiness and student work. Specialist agencies such as **FEBC** (150 expat workers, broadcasting 24/7 via radio and Internet to China, Russia, Japan and the Koreas) and **CCCI** (827) serve in reaching out as well as in mobilizing for mission. A number of mission agencies have made a major impact in church planting, including several Presbyterian agencies, Baptists, SdA and **OMS**.

**10 Christian literature** has been a key ingredient to growth. The Bible in Korean has gone through several translations and has become a treasured part of the culture. The Korean Bible Society prints over 2 million Korean Bibles/NTs annually in Korean and even greater numbers for other countries and languages. Additionally, there are six other major Bible production companies. Christian publishers are likewise producing increasingly diverse and helpful books; more than 150 different publishers are part of the Korea Christian Publication Association. Pray that these ministries might have a powerful impact in getting the Word of God into non-Christian hands and helpful in shaping a biblical worldview among Christians.

**11 Digital media and the gospel.** South Korea is at the leading edge of the digital revolution, with higher levels of technology consumption and connectivity than anywhere else. A number of churches and ministries work to provide top-quality content in the form of media-rich Internet sites, downloadable materials and live TV. The Christian Global Network is a satellite TV station targeting diaspora Korean Christians. Evangelism by mobile phone is already happening in Korea.