

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Republic of Korea

**CAPITAL:** Seoul

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Unitary Multiparty Republic

**AREA:** 98,488 Sq Km (38,026 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION** 46,584,500

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** South Korea is located on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula in East Asia. It is bound by North Korea to the north, the Yellow Sea to the west as well as the Korea and Cheju Straits to the south. Around 80% of the Korean Peninsula is covered by mountains while South Korea has a rugged and mountainous terrain. The dominant topographical feature is the Taebaek Range, with its lesser branch, the Sobaek Range. Topographically, the country can be divided into five regions. (1.) The central region, (2.) the Eastern Littoral, (3.) the Nakdong River Basin, (4.) the Southern Littoral and (5.) the southern mountain and valley regions. Only 15% of the land area is covered by plains, which are mostly located along the coast. The four largest rivers in South Korea are the Han, Kum, Nakdong and Somjin with all of these rivers subject to flooding. Major Cities (pop. est.); Seoul 10,612,600, Pusan 3,798,100, Taegu 2,229,000, Incheon 1,817,900, Kwangju 1,139,000 (1990). Land Use; forested 66%, pastures 1%, agricultural-cultivated 21%, other 12% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** South Korea has a continental climate with dry cold winters and hot humid summers. There is a swift transition from winter to summer conditions between April to early May with an equal reversal in late October. Due to the Asian monsoons, the cold winter winds come from Manchuria and Siberia while in summer the warm moist air comes from the Pacific Ocean winds. The wettest months are between June and September with at least one typhoon per year. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,016 mm (40 inches) to 1,524 mm (60 inches) depending on each region. Average temperature ranges in Seoul are from -9 to 0 degrees Celsius (16 to 32 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 22 to 31 degrees Celsius (72 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit) in August.

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**PEOPLE:** The principal ethnic majority are the Koreans who are believed to be descendants of the Tungusic, relatives of the Mongols, with an admixture of Chinese.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 436 persons per sq km (1,129 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 74.4% urban, 25.6% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 50.4% male, 49.6% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 67.4 years male, 75.4 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 27% under 15, 31% 15 to 29, 21% 30 to 44, 13% 45 to 59, 6% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1988). Birth Rate; 15.6 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 5.8 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 9.8 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 15.0 per 1,000 live births (1993).

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**RELIGIONS:** The principal national religions are Confucianism, Shamanism, Christianity, Buddhism and Chondokyo.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official language is Korean or Choson Muntcha which is a member of the Altaic family of languages and spoken by the entire population. English is the principal secondary language and is taught in all secondary schools.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 14.3%, primary 46.2%, incomplete secondary 3.8%, secondary 24.8%, higher 10.9% (1985). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 13,191,432 or 92.7% (1981).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** Following Japan's surrender during World War II, the Soviet troops occupied the Korean Peninsula north of the 38th parallel while the US troops controlled the south. In 1948 the division of Korea was formalized and the North and South Korea's declared, however, both factions claimed sovereignty over the entire peninsula and after the US and Soviet troops were withdrawn, armed clashes escalated. On June 25, 1950 North Korean troops launched a large scale offensive invading South Korea and thus beginning the Korean War. On July 27, 1953 a ceasefire was signed which brought an end to the war. From 1948 to 1960 South Korea was ruled by an authoritarian and corrupt Pres. Syngman Rhee. In Apr. 1960 the government was ousted in a popular revolt and in May 1961 the newly formed second republic's government was overthrown by a military coup led by Gen. Park Chung Lee who established a military Junta. In 1962 the military rule ended and Park became the civilian President of the third republic. Pres. Park was reelected in 1967 and 1971. In Oct. 1972 Pres. Park suspended the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly, following which he established a new and greater authoritarian constitution which broadened his presidential powers. During the 1970's there were protests and growing unrest with demands for greater liberalization. In Dec. 1978 Pres. Park was reelected and on Oct. 26, 1979 was assassinated by the head of the secret police. In Dec. 1979 a military coup seized control of the government and in Aug. 1980 Chun Doo Hwan assumed the presidency while in October the fifth republic's constitution was inaugurated. In Jan. 1981 Pres. Chun was reelected to office and in March his Democratic Justice Party (DJP) won an overall majority in the National Assembly. During the 1980's there were outbreaks of civil unrest which were quickly suppressed. In 1985 the New Korea Democratic Party (NKDP) was formed. In Oct. 1987 a referendum approved the drafting of a new democratic constitution which allowed for a popularly elected President. In Dec. 1987 Roh Tae Woo was elected President and in 1990 Pres. Roh reached an agreement to merge the DJP with two of the three opposition parties, resulting in the formation of the Democrat Liberal Party. In the first few months of 1991 the government was plagued by a series of scandals that resulted in the dismissal of the construction and environment ministers. In

March 1991 it was discovered that the Doosan Electro-Material Co had discharged some 300 tons of toxic waste since late 1990 into the Nakdong River which supplies drinking water to area around Taegu, the latest of which resulted in hundreds of people becoming violently ill. On Apr. 26, 1991 a student demonstrator was beaten to death by plainclothes riot police in Seoul that resulted in massive demonstrations throughout the country as well as 7 people dying after they set themselves on fire in antigovernment protest. On May 22, 1991 Pres. Roh replaced his Prime Minister with Chung Won Shik and declared an amnesty for 350 political prisoners. On Aug. 8, 1991 the two Koreas were accepted into the UN by the Security Council. In Oct. 1991 the US announced it would be removing all nuclear weapons from South Korea in an attempt to get North Korea to open its facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. In the same month the last remaining US troops were pulled out of the demilitarized zone leaving South Korean ground forces to patrol the border and the Premiers of North and South Korea met in Pyongyang, North Korea, agreed to begin drafting a nonaggression and reconciliation treaty. On Dec. 13, 1991 the two governments signed the treaty that officially ended the Korean War some 38 years after hostilities had subsided and on Dec. 31, 1991 signed an agreement to banning nuclear weapons on the peninsula. In Jan. 1992 Chung Ju Yung resigned as chairman of the industrial conglomerate, Hyundai and formed the United People's Party to contest the coming parliamentary and presidential elections. On Aug. 24, 1992 traditional enemies China and South Korea established full diplomatic relations that ended nearly 40 years of hostilities between the two nations. On Sept. 27, 1992 Pres. Roh met with his Chinese counterpart, Pres. Yang Shangkun in Beijing in the hope of getting China to mediate between the North and South, although he was unsuccessful. On Oct. 7, 1992 in response to a scandal over vote buying for the ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP), Pres. Roh appointed Hyun Soong Jong to replace Chung Won Shik as Prime Minister to limit the damage it may cause his party and planned December presidential elections. In Dec. 1992 the new DLP candidate, Kim Young Sam won the presidential elections. On Feb. 25, 1993 Kim Young Sam was inaugurated as President, following which he implemented one of the most comprehensive anti-corruption campaigns the country had seen. On Mar. 8, 1993 Pres. Kim was forced to dismiss three newly appointed ministers after revelations of past misdeeds. In April 1993 Pres. Kim dismissed two three-star generals linked to the 1979 coup that brought Chun Doo Hwan to power while in May 1993 Pres. Kim dismissed the chairman of joint chiefs of staff, Gen. Lee Pil Sup and two other senior generals for their involvement in the 1979 coup. On Aug. 12, 1993 Pres. Kim announced that anonymous or false-name financial transactions would become illegal in an attempt to stifle business conglomerate donations to ruling party coffers and income tax evasion. On Dec. 9, 1993 Pres. Kim agreed to foreign rice imports in line with GATT. By the years end, Pres. Kim's anti-corruption program had resulted in the dismissal of thousands of political bureaucrats, military leaders and business executives as well as the release of thousands of political prisoners.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Won (W) divided into 100 Hwan with each Hwan divided into 10 Chun.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$337,910,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$24,567,000,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$83,800,100,000 (1993). Exports; USD \$82,235,900,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$3,510,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; USD -\$729,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 19,754,000 or 44.8% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 2.8% (1993).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are the USA, Japan, the EU and the Middle East.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Barley, Beans, Coal, Fish, Fruits and Vegetables, Gold, Iron Ore, Lignite, Maize, Millet, Potatoes, Rice, Sorghum, Sugar, Timber, Tobacco, Tungsten, Wheat.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Cement, Chemicals, Engineering, Iron and Steel, Machinery, Textiles.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Chemicals, Food Stuffs, Machinery and Equipment, Metals and Ores, Non-Ferrous Metals, Non-Metallic Minerals, Textile Fabrics.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 6,437 km (4,000 mi) (1989), passenger-km 25,104,000,000 (15,599,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 13,536,000,000 (9,271,000,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 55,778 km (34,659 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 1,558,700 (1989), trucks and buses 1,092,300 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 2,110 (1990), deadweight tonnage 12,461,986 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 18,168,000,000 (11,289,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 2,413,260,000 (1,652,842,000 short ton-mi) (1989).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 63 with a total circulation for 20 of 9,736,000 (1993). Radio; receivers 42,570,000 (1994). Television; receivers 10,430,000 (1994). Telephones; units 16,632,600 (1993).

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**MILITARY:** 633,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 82.1% army, 9.5% navy and 8.4% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.6% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).