

Korea

Foreign population – 2022	3.5% of the population	Main countries of nationality: China (43%), Viet Nam (10%), United States (4%)
Size: 1.8 million, 45% women	Evolution since 2012: +86%	

In 2021, Korea received 54 000 new immigrants on a long-term or permanent basis (including changes of status), -6.1% compared to 2020. This figure comprises 8.8% labour migrants, 28.9% family members (including accompanying family) and 0.2% humanitarian migrants. Around 39 000 permits were issued to tertiary-level international students and 59 000 to temporary and seasonal labour migrants.

China, Viet Nam and the United States were the top three nationalities of newcomers in 2021. Among the top 15 countries of origin, Uzbekistan registered the strongest increase (+5 100) and Viet Nam the largest decrease (-10 000) in flows to Korea compared to the previous year.

In 2022, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 400%, to reach around 12 000. The majority of applicants came from Kazakhstan (2 500), India (1 300) and Türkiye (1 200). The largest increase since 2021 concerned nationals of Kazakhstan (+2 400). Of the 11 000 decisions taken in 2022, 1% were positive.

Emigration of Korean citizens to OECD countries decreased by -11% in 2021, to 37 000. Approximately 33% of this group migrated to the United States, 22% to Canada and 8% to Germany.

Admission quotas for employment permit (E-9) workers in 2023 have been set about 110 000, with 89 970 allocated for new entries and 20 030 for re-entry. Most of these quotas, more than 75 000, are dedicated to the manufacturing sector. The remainder will be distributed among the construction (3 000), service (1 000), agriculture (14 000), and fishery (7 000) sectors.

In February 2023, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy announced the results of visa screenings for foreign workers in the shipbuilding sector. More than 2000 foreign workers with E-7 (professional) and E-9 status were selected to begin working. To address the labour shortage in the booming shipbuilding industry, several measures were implemented, including an improved expedited examination system, increased special examination support staff for shipbuilding visas, and an exemption from the practical skills test for international students graduating from domestic science and engineering majors related to shipbuilding when issuing E-7-3 visas.

In March 2023, the MoJ decided to waive fees for extending the stay for ethnic Korean nationals residing in Ukraine until the end of the Ukraine war. The ministry also simplified the visa issuance process for these ethnic Korean Ukrainian nationals, including waiving required documents and fees for overseas Koreans, their spouses and underage children when changing their status or applying for permission to work. This measure is expected to benefit approximately 1 200 Ukrainians of Korean descent.

From November 2022 to February 2023, the MoJ implemented the Special Voluntary Departure Program, waiving fines and suspending entry restrictions for undocumented residents who voluntarily departed Korea. Failure to depart voluntarily within the specified period or being caught in a crackdown would subject illegal residents to fines and tougher entry bans.

In January 2023, the MoJ launched a fast-track programme for permanent residence and naturalisation of outstanding foreign scientific and technological talents who have studied in Korea. This programme aims to expedite their process of obtaining permanent residence and nationality to facilitate successful settlement in Korean society after completing their degrees.

The government has been improving and implementing the foreign seasonal worker system to cater to the needs of farms and rural areas, with continuous collaboration and communication with farmers, fishermen, and local governments. In July 2022 and December 2022, a combined total of 35 166 foreign seasonal workers were assigned to local governments nationwide, to address labour shortages in the seasonal agricultural and fishing sectors.

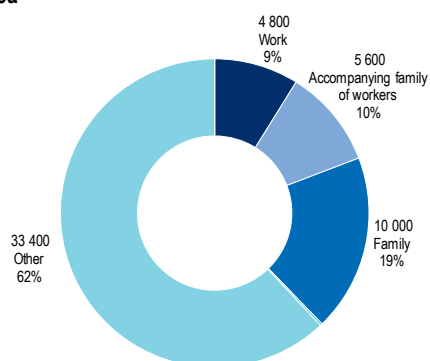
In November 2022, the MoJ established the Immigration Policy Reform Division to update Korea's policies on border security and immigration services. The aim is to address current challenges such as population decline, eradication of illegal residence, and the establishment of stricter immigration regulations. To address concerns over human rights violations in the expansion of the nation's Seasonal Worker Program (SWP), the MoJ implemented several measures with the goal of strengthening human rights protection: the arrangement of communication assistance; intensified assessment of human rights violations using index indicators; abolition of the security deposit system; and customised education to prevent human rights violations.

For further information: www.eps.go.kr | www.immigration.go.kr | www.mrtc.re.kr/eng/main/main.php

Key figures on immigration and emigration – Korea

Long-term immigration flows
2021 (Source: OECD)

Korea



Temporary migration
(Sources: OECD, UNHCR)

Temporary labour migration

	2021	2021/20
Working holidaymakers	320	- 64%
Seasonal workers	550	..
Intra-company transfers	380	- 6%
Other temporary workers	57 500	+ 34%

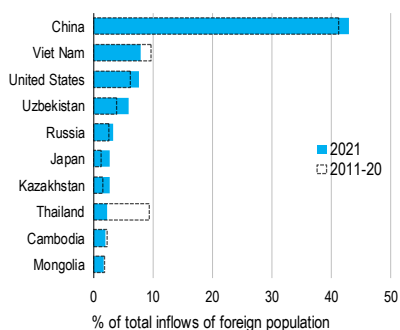
Education

	2021	2021/20
International students	38 610	+ 36%
Trainees	380	+ 29%

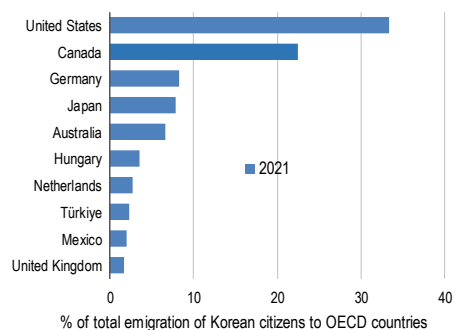
Humanitarian

	2022	2022/21
Asylum seekers	11 540	+ 395%

Inflows of top 10 nationalities
(national definition)



Emigration of Korean citizens to OECD countries
(national definition)



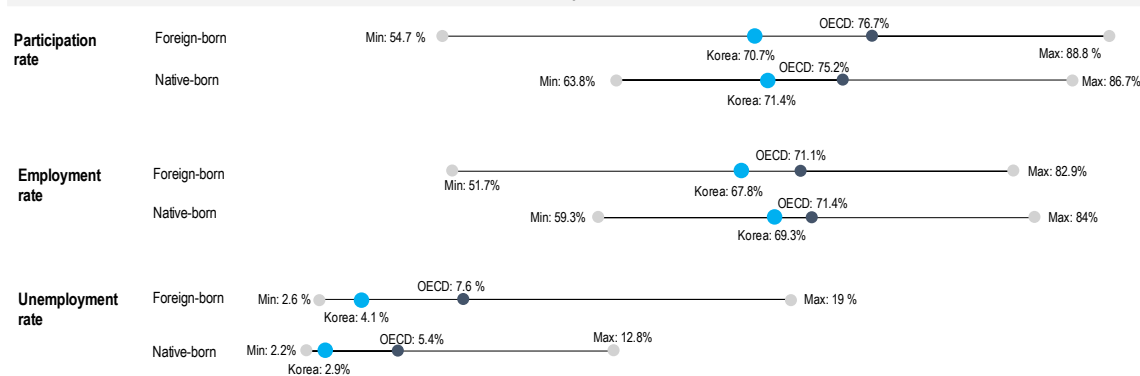
Components of population growth

	2022 Per 1 000 inhabitants	2022/21 difference
Total	-0.9	+0.9
Natural increase	-2.4	-1.3
Net migration plus statistical adjustments	1.5	+2.2

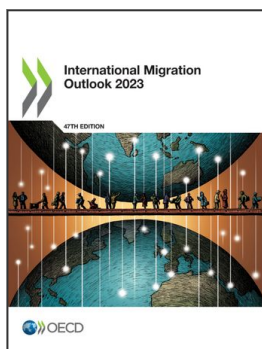
Annual remittances

	Million current USD	Annual change %	Share in GDP %
Inflows (2022)	7 825	+1.1	0.4
Outflows (2022)	8 301	-19.7	0.5

Labour market outcomes
2022



StatLink <https://stat.link/asz8ud>



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