

How's Life?

Korea performs well in some measures of well-being in the Better Life Index. Korea ranks above the average in housing, civic engagement, education and skills, jobs and earnings, personal security, but below average in income and wealth, subjective well-being, environmental quality, health status, social connections, and work-life balance. These rankings are based on available selected data.

Money, while it cannot buy happiness, is an important means to achieving higher living standards. In Korea, **the average household net-adjusted disposable income per capita is USD 21 882 a year**, lower than the OECD average of USD 33 604 a year. There is a considerable gap between the richest and poorest – the top 20% of the population earn more than five times as much as the bottom 20%.

In terms of employment, **67% of people aged 15 to 64 in Korea have a paid job**, slightly below the OECD employment average of 68%. Some 76% of men are in paid work, compared with 57% of women. In Korea, **the percentage of employees working very long hours**, is higher than the OECD average of 11%.

Good education and skills are important requisites for finding a job. In Korea, **88% of adults aged 25-64 have completed upper secondary education**, higher than the OECD average of 78%. This is truer of men than women, as 90% of men have successfully completed high-school compared with 85% of women. Korea is a top-performing country in terms of the quality of its educational system. **The average student scored 519 in reading literacy, maths and science in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**. This score is higher than the OECD average of 486. On average in Korea, **girls outperformed boys by 19 points**, much higher than the OECD average gap of 2 points.

In terms of health, **life expectancy at birth in Korea is 82 years**, two years higher than the OECD average of 80 years. Life expectancy for women is 85 years, compared with 79 for men. **The level of atmospheric PM2.5 – tiny air pollutant particles small enough to enter and cause damage to the lungs – is 27.9 micrograms per cubic meter**, the highest level in the OECD, where the average is 13.9 micrograms per cubic meter. Korea also performs below the OECD average in terms of water quality, as **76% of people say they are satisfied with the quality of their water**, compared with an OECD average of 81%.

Concerning the public sphere, there is a moderate sense of community and high levels of civic participation in Korea, where **78% of people believe that they know someone they could rely on in time of need**, the lowest figure in the OECD, where the average is 89%. **Voter turnout**, a measure of citizens' participation in the political process, **was 77% during recent elections**; higher than the OECD average of 68%. Social and economic status can affect voting rates; voter turnout for the **top 20% of the population is estimated at 92% and for the bottom 20% it is an estimated 60%**, a much larger difference than the OECD average gap of 13 percentage points, and points to shortcomings in the political mobilisation of the worst-off.

In general, Koreans are slightly less satisfied with their lives than the OECD average. When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, **Koreans gave it a 5.9 grade on average, lower than the OECD average of 6.5**.

For more information on estimates and years of reference, see [FAQ section](#) and [BLI database](#).

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In the measures for well-being, which three are the most important for you?

Rank them: 1.

2.

3.

Among these measures, which ones are above/below average for you?

Do you agree that money can't buy happiness?

Does it bother you that the top 20% earns five times as much as the bottom 20%?

Do you think you will get a job easily?

If girls outperform boys by 19 points in the PISA, why do more men complete high school and have a paid job?

Are you worried about the air you breathe and the water you drink?

Who can you rely on in a time of need?

Are you satisfied with your life?

What improvements do you want the government to make to make life in Korea better?