



Foreign Residents in South Korea: Twenty Nationality Profiles

SEPTEMBER 2026

Profiles of the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in 2024, with frequently requested statistics on the foreign-resident population as a whole.

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Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. University of Michigan School of Social Work.

Frequently Requested Statistics on Foreign Residents in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

South Korea's foreign-resident population was 2,650,783 at the end of 2024, 2.9 times its 2006 level and equal to 5.2 percent of the resident-registration population of Korean nationals. This page answers the questions most often asked about that population, from its size and origins to visas, education, work and wages, health insurance, naturalization, unauthorized stay and enforcement, asylum, languages and the organizations that serve it.

Most figures come from the Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks of the Ministry of Justice and the Local Government Foreign Resident Status of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, as harmonized in the KIRD dataset for 2006-2024, and 2024 is the reference year for those counts. The questions on unauthorized residents, enforcement and refugees use MOJ figures for 2025. The questions on education, work and wages draw on the Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labour Force of May 2025, and the question on health insurance on National Health Insurance Service data for 2024 and 2025. Where an official figure for Korean nationals or for the population as a whole exists, the answers report it alongside. Companion Spotlights profile the 20 nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners.

Highlights

- ▶ South Korea had 2,650,783 resident foreigners at the end of 2024, 2.9 times the 2006 count and equal to 5.2 percent of its resident-registration population of Korean nationals.
- ▶ The Korean-Chinese (643,277) and other Chinese nationals (315,682) were the two largest groups, and the ten largest nationalities made up 75.5 percent of all resident foreigners.
- ▶ The overseas-Korean F-4 visa was the most common status, with 555,968 holders; 337,279 people had the E-9 work visa of the Employment Permit System.
- ▶ Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi were home to 55.2 percent of registered foreigners in 2024, down from 65.6 percent

in 2008.

- ▶ In May 2025 an estimated 1,109,000 foreign residents aged 15 and over were employed, 44.9 percent of them in mining and manufacturing, against 15.2 percent of all employed people.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals present in Korea on 31 December, including short-term visitors, registered foreigners and overseas Koreans with residence reports (MOJ).

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals resident for more than 90 days who have completed alien registration (MOJ). The only count published for every district with nationality and visa detail.

Residence report (거소신고). The filing that F-4 overseas-Korean status holders make under the Overseas Koreans Act in place of alien registration.

Foreign-origin residents (외국인주민). The MOIS count on 1 November: foreign nationals resident for more than 90 days, naturalized citizens, and children of foreign residents or naturalized citizens.

Survey population (상주인구). In the Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labour Force, foreign nationals aged 15 and over who have lived in Korea for 91 days or more: registered foreigners and overseas Koreans with residence reports, an estimated 1,692,000 in May 2025.

Unauthorized residents (미등록 체류자). Foreign nationals who remain past their permitted period or without a valid status, counted nationally by MOJ; the yearbook term translates as illegal sojourners.

Status of stay (체류자격). The visa category under which a foreign national resides, written as a letter and number, such as E-9 (non-professional employment) or F-6 (marriage migration).

Capital region (수도권). Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi Province.

District (시군구). The municipal level below the province: autonomous districts (gu) of metropolitan cities, cities (si), counties (gun) and the general districts of large cities; 250 units in 2024.

nationality who filed a residence report (거소신고) under the Overseas Koreans Act; and the remaining 608,766 (23.0 percent) were short-term stays.

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) publishes a third count, foreign-origin residents (외국인주민), with a reference date of 1 November 2024. It was 2,583,626 and adds two groups the MOJ counts exclude because they hold Korean nationality: 245,578 people who acquired Korean nationality and 295,304 children of foreign residents or naturalized citizens. The remaining 2,042,744 are residents without Korean nationality, a figure close to the MOJ long-term population of registered foreigners plus residence reports (2,042,017).

Which number to quote depends on the question. The resident-foreigner count (2,650,783) is the one MOJ uses for its headline figure; the registered count (1,488,353) is the only one published for every district with nationality and visa detail; and the MOIS count (2,583,626) is the one local governments use to plan services, because it includes naturalized citizens and children.

Dashboard: National statistics, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-national-en.html

Numbers and Growth

1 Number of foreign residents

How many foreign residents live in South Korea?

Korean government statistics count foreign residents in three different ways, and the totals differ by as much as 1,162,430 people. On 31 December 2024 the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) counted 2,650,783 resident foreigners (체류외국인), the broadest MOJ measure: everyone in the country on a foreign passport that day, including short-term visitors. Of these, 1,488,353 (56.1 percent) were registered foreigners (등록외국인), people resident for more than 90 days who completed alien registration; 553,664 were ethnic Koreans with foreign

TABLE 1
Three official counts of foreign residents in South Korea, 2024

Measure	Publisher and reference date	Persons	What it covers
Resident foreigners (체류외국인)	MOJ, 31 Dec	2,650,783	All foreign nationals present, including short-term stays
Registered foreigners (등록외국인)	MOJ, 31 Dec	1,488,353	Stays over 90 days with alien registration
Overseas Korean residence reports (거소신고)	MOJ, 31 Dec	553,664	F-4 holders who report a residence instead of registering
Short-term stays	MOJ, 31 Dec	608,766	Remainder: visa-free, tourist and other stays of 90 days or less
Foreign-origin residents (외국인주민)	MOIS, 1 Nov	2,583,626	Foreign nationals resident over 90 days, naturalized citizens, and children
Without Korean nationality	MOIS, 1 Nov	2,042,744	Workers, marriage migrants, students, ethnic Koreans, others
Naturalized citizens	MOIS, 1 Nov	245,578	Acquired Korean nationality
Children	MOIS, 1 Nov	295,304	Children of foreign residents and naturalized citizens

Note: Short-term stays are derived as resident foreigners minus registered foreigners minus residence reports. Indented rows are components of the row above them.

Source: KIRD dataset: nationality_national.csv, diaspora_residence_by_sido.csv and national_annual.csv, from MOJ yearbooks and MOIS Local Government Foreign Resident Status.

2 Change since 2006

How has the number of foreign residents changed since 2006?

The resident-foreigner population grew from 910,149 in 2006 to 2,650,783 in 2024, a 2.9-fold increase over 18 years, while the resident-registration population of Korean nationals grew 4.5 percent, from 48,991,779 to 51,217,221. Registered

foreigners rose from 631,219 to 1,488,353 over the same period. Growth was steady through 2019, when resident foreigners numbered 2,524,656.

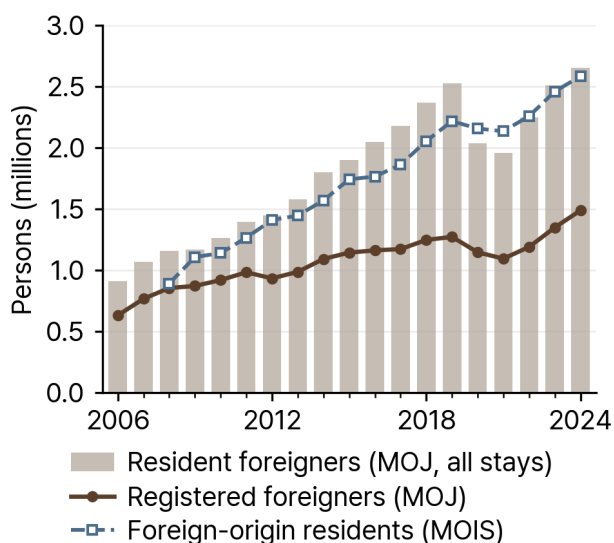
The COVID-19 pandemic reversed that trend. Border restrictions cut short-term entries and delayed the arrival of new workers and students, and the resident-foreigner count fell to 1,956,781 in 2021, 22.5 percent below 2019. Registered foreigners fell by 14.0 percent over the same two years, from 1,271,807 to 1,093,891, and the resident-registration population

of Korean nationals by 0.4 percent. The MOIS foreign-origin count, which includes naturalized citizens and children, changed much less: it was 2,216,612 in 2019 and 2,134,569 in 2021.

Recovery was fast. By 2024 the resident-foreigner population stood 5.0 percent above its 2019 level and the registered population 17.0 percent above it. Between 2023 and 2024 alone, the resident-foreigner count grew by 143,199 and the registered count by 139,727, while the resident-registration population of Korean nationals fell by 108,108.

Dashboard: National statistics, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-national-en.html

FIGURE 1
Foreign residents in South Korea by official measure, 2006-2024



Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks and MOIS Local Government Foreign Resident Status (nationality_national.csv, national_annual.csv). The MOIS series starts in 2008 in the released panel.

3 Population share

What share of Korea's population is foreign?

Resident foreigners equaled 5.2 percent of Korea's resident-registration population of 51,217,221 in 2024, up from 1.9 percent in 2006. The denominator is the register of Korean nationals, which does not include foreigners. Counted instead as a share of everyone present (Korean nationals plus resident foreigners), the figure is 4.9 percent.

On the narrower registered basis the share was 2.91 percent in 2024, and on the MOIS foreign-origin basis it was 5.0 percent of the same denominator.

The registered share varies across the country. It was highest in Chungcheongnam-do (4.5 percent), Jeju-do (4.2 percent) and Chungcheongbuk-do (3.5 percent), and lowest in Sejong (1.6 percent) and Daegu (1.6 percent). Of the 250 districts in the panel, 38 had a registered-foreigner share of 5 percent or more in 2024 and 5 had 10 percent or more.

Dashboard: National map, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-map-en.html; Foreign residents by province and district, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-region-en.html

Origins and Places of Residence

4 Countries of origin

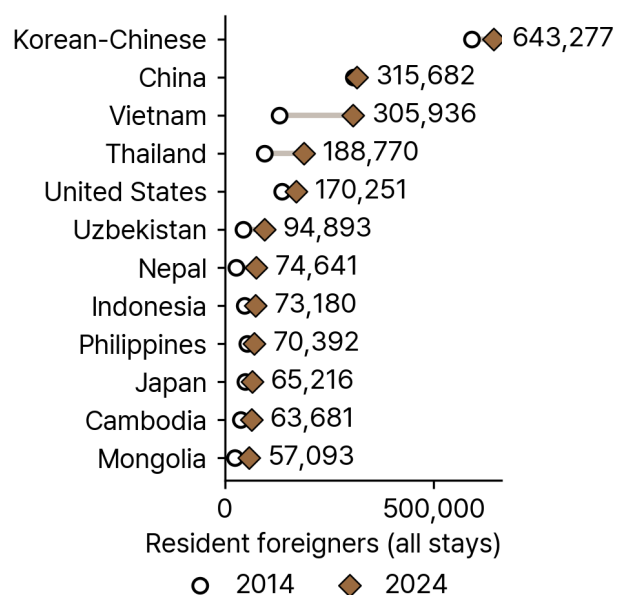
Where do foreign residents come from?

The yearbook lists 200 nationalities among resident foreigners in 2024. The ten largest groups accounted for 75.5 percent of the total. MOJ reports ethnic Koreans with Chinese nationality (한국계중국인, Korean-Chinese) separately from other Chinese nationals: the 643,277 Korean-Chinese residents were the largest single group, and the 315,682 other Chinese nationals ranked second. Together, Chinese nationals of both kinds numbered 958,959, or 36.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

Vietnam (305,936) was third and gained more residents than any other nationality between 2014 and 2024 (+175,963). Thailand (188,770) and the United States (170,251) followed. The Korean-Chinese population was 590,856 in 2014, so it grew by 52,421 while its share of the total fell.

The regional mix has moved from East Asia toward Southeast, South and Central Asia. East Asia (China, the Korean-Chinese, Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia and Hong Kong) accounted for 56.5 percent of resident foreigners in 2014 and 42.7 percent in 2024. Southeast Asia rose from 21.9 to 30.0 percent, South Asia from 5.0 to 6.7 percent, and Central Asia from 3.2 to 7.2 percent.

FIGURE 2
Twelve largest nationalities of resident foreigners, 2014 and 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks (nationality_national.csv, population = stay). Labels give the 2024 count.

Dashboard: Foreign residents by nationality, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-country-en.html

TABLE 2
Ten largest nationalities of resident foreigners, 2014 and 2024

Nationality	2014	2024	Change 2014-2024 (%)	Share of all, 2024 (%)
Korean-Chinese	590,856	643,277	8.9	24.3
China	307,798	315,682	2.6	11.9
Vietnam	129,973	305,936	135.4	11.5
Thailand	94,314	188,770	100.2	7.1
United States	136,663	170,251	24.6	6.4
Uzbekistan	43,852	94,893	116.4	3.6
Nepal	26,790	74,641	178.6	2.8
Indonesia	46,945	73,180	55.9	2.8
Philippines	53,538	70,392	31.5	2.7
Japan	49,152	65,216	32.7	2.5

Note: Resident foreigners include short-term stays. MOJ lists Korean-Chinese (ethnic Koreans with Chinese nationality) separately from other Chinese nationals.

Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks (nationality_national.csv, population = stay).

5 Residential geography

Where in Korea do foreign residents live?

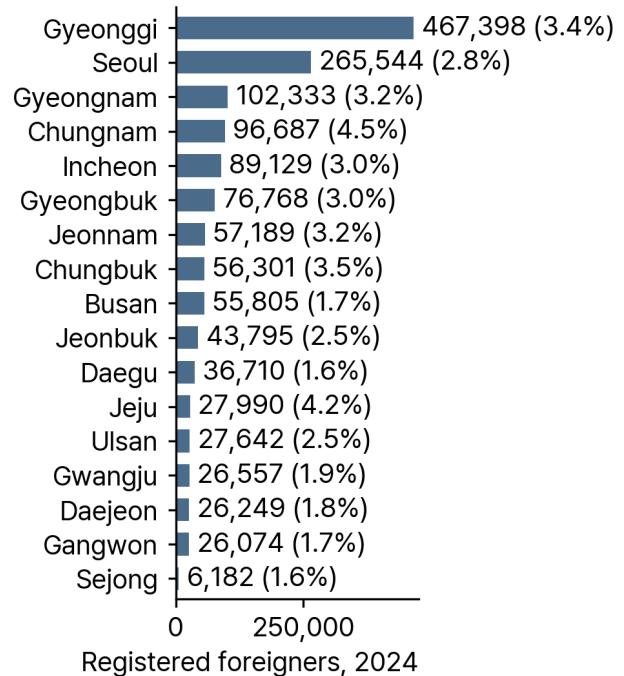
Registered foreigners are the measure MOJ publishes by district, and 1,488,353 of them had a district of residence on record in 2024. Gyeonggi Province, which surrounds Seoul, held 467,398 (31.4 percent) and Seoul 265,544 (17.8 percent). The capital region of Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi together accounted for 55.2 percent of registered foreigners, down from 65.6 percent in 2008 and slightly above the 50.9 percent of Korean nationals who live there.

Outside the capital region, the largest provincial populations were in Gyeongsangnam-do (102,333) and Chungcheongnam-do (96,687). Rural counties (gun) held 10.6 percent of registered foreigners in 2024, compared with 8.2 percent of Korean nationals.

The districts with the most registered foreigners were Hwaseong-si (51,059), Siheung-si (40,493), Ansan-si (38,321), Pyeongtaek-si (32,489), Bucheon-si (29,304). The highest shares were in smaller places. In Yeongam-gun (Jeollanam-do) registered foreigners equaled 18.8 percent of the resident population, and in Eumseong-gun (Chungcheongbuk-do) 15.1 percent. Five of the ten districts with the highest shares were rural counties.

FIGURE 3

Registered foreigners by province, 2024 (percent of resident population in parentheses)



Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks and MOIS resident-registration population (summary_by_sido.csv).

Dashboard: Foreign residents by province and district, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-region-en.html; National map, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-map-en.html

6 Segregation and diversity

How segregated and how diverse are the places foreign residents live?

The KIRD dataset publishes several residential measures computed on registered foreigners by district. Nationality diversity (the Shannon index over the 19 largest nationalities plus a residual) rose nationally from 2.14 in 2009 to 2.60 in

2024, and the concentration index (HHI, the chance that two registered foreigners picked at random share a nationality, counting the nationalities outside the 19 largest as one group) fell from 0.214 to 0.100. The multigroup Theil index, which measures how unevenly Koreans and each nationality are spread across districts (0 means every district has the national mix), barely moved: 0.081 in 2009 and 0.081 in 2024.

TABLE 3

Districts with the highest share of registered foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Registered foreigners	Resident population	Foreign share (%)
Yeongam-gun	Jeollanam-do	9,673	51,391	18.8
Eumseong-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	13,808	91,236	15.1
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	38,321	293,388	13.1
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	16,317	141,463	11.5
Wando-gun	Jeollanam-do	5,110	45,631	11.2
Jincheon-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	8,419	86,537	9.7
Jindo-gun	Jeollanam-do	2,612	28,478	9.2
Seoul Jung-gu	Seoul	10,670	120,544	8.8
Seoul Jongno-gu	Seoul	11,272	138,336	8.2
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	40,493	518,132	7.8

Note: Foreign share is registered foreigners divided by the Korean resident-registration population of the district.

Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks and MOIS resident-registration population (summary_by_sigungu.csv).

The index of dissimilarity (D) gives the share of a group that would have to move for its district distribution to match that of Koreans. Among nationalities with at least 20,000 registered residents in 2024, D was lowest for Japan (0.26) and Vietnam (0.30) and highest for Kazakhstan (0.59), Sri Lanka (0.54) and Bangladesh (0.52). The Korean-Chinese value was 0.52.

The dataset flags an ethnic enclave where one nationality is at least twice as concentrated in a district as in the country (location quotient of 2 or more) and makes up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents. In 2024 there were 54 such district-nationality pairs: 21 Vietnamese, 15 Korean-Chinese and 10 Chinese, among others. The largest was the Korean-Chinese population of Siheung-si (17,727, 43.8 percent of the district's foreign residents).

Dashboard: National map, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-map-en.html; Foreign residents by province and district, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-region-en.html

The yearbook reports 38 statuses of stay in 2024, each with a letter-number code. Grouped by purpose, employment statuses covered 19.2 percent of resident foreigners in 2024, the overseas-Korean statuses F-4 and H-2 covered 24.5 percent, short-term visits 19.7 percent, study and training 10.2 percent, marriage and family statuses 13.6 percent, and permanent residence (F-5) 7.7 percent. Diplomatic, humanitarian, miscellaneous (G-1) and other statuses made up the remaining 5.2 percent.

The largest single status was F-4 (overseas Korean), held by 555,968 people, followed by E-9 non-professional employment (337,279), B-1 visa exemption (206,546), F-5 permanent residence (202,968), D-2 study (178,519), C-3 short-term visit (162,719), B-2 tourist transit (153,101) and F-6 marriage migration (148,376).

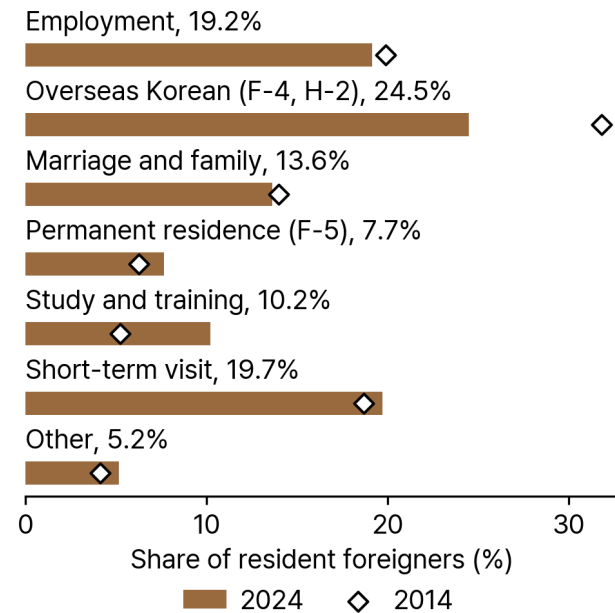
Since 2014 the overseas-Korean share has fallen from 31.8 to 24.5 percent, with H-2 falling from 282,670 to 93,302 while the total grew, and study and training rose from 5.2 to 10.2 percent.

Visas and Reasons for Migration

7 Visa categories

What visas do foreign residents hold?

FIGURE 4

Resident foreigners by visa group, 2014 and 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks (visa_by_nationality.csv, population = stay). Employment: E-1 to E-10, C-4, H-1, D-7 to D-10. Marriage and family: F-1, F-2, F-3, F-6. Study and training: D-1 to D-6. Short-term visit: B-1, B-2, C-1, C-3. Labels give the 2024 share.

Dashboard: Foreign residents by visa status, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-visa-en.html

8 Migrant workers

How many foreign residents come to Korea to work, and from where?

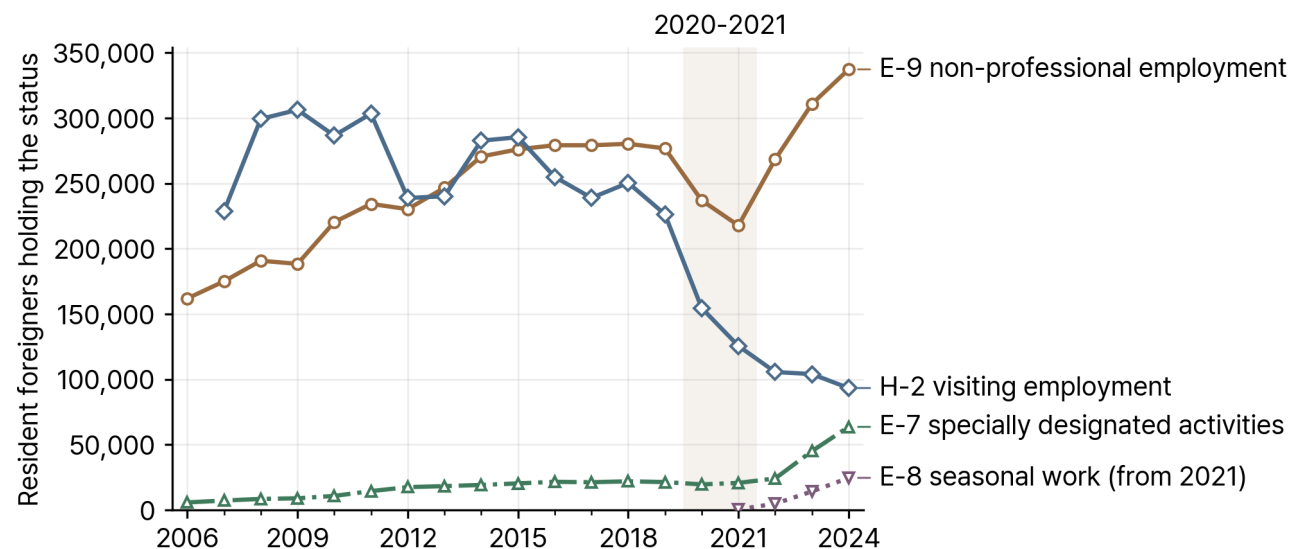
About 508,000 resident foreigners held an employment status in 2024 (507,638 exactly). The largest is E-9 non-professional employment, the status of the Employment Permit System, which admits workers from partner countries for manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, construction and some services. E-9 holders numbered 337,279 in 2024, up from 161,867 in 2006 and 276,755 in 2019. The largest sending countries were Cambodia (48,998), Nepal (47,108), Vietnam (41,547), Indonesia (40,758), Myanmar (32,667).

H-2 (visiting employment) is reserved for ethnic Koreans from China and the former Soviet Union. It peaked at 306,283 in 2009 and has declined since while F-4 grew, falling to 93,302 in 2024; 79,821 of them (85.6 percent) were Korean-Chinese.

E-7 (specially designated activities), the main skilled-worker status, grew 3.0-fold from 21,314 in 2019 to 63,580 in 2024; Vietnam (11,597), China (9,522) and Nepal (7,849) supplied the most. E-8 seasonal workers, hired by rural local governments for farm and fishery peak seasons, grew from 383 in 2021 to 24,530 in 2024, led by Vietnam (13,541), the Philippines (4,454) and Laos (3,183). Other employment statuses include E-10 crew employment (21,922) and E-2 foreign-language instruction (13,443).

Dashboard: Foreign residents by visa status, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-visa-en.html

FIGURE 5

Resident foreigners holding the main work statuses, 2006-2024

Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks (visa_national.csv, population = stay). The H-2 series begins in 2007. The E-8 counts for 2006-2009 record the former training-employment status and are not shown.

9 Marriage migrants and multicultural households

How many marriage migrants and multicultural households are there?

The F-6 marriage-migration status for foreign spouses of Korean citizens, which first appears in the yearbook in 2011, was held by 148,376 resident foreigners in 2024, up from 86,944 in 2012. Vietnam accounted for the most F-6 holders (40,129), followed by China (26,174), the Korean-Chinese (15,916), the Philippines (12,029), Japan (9,553) and Thailand (9,157). In 2024, 21,450 marriages, 9.6 percent of all marriages in Korea, had at least one spouse who was a foreign national or a naturalized citizen.

Many marriage migrants later naturalize and leave the F-6 count. MOIS counts 191,839 marriage migrants without Korean nationality in 2024, up from 125,673 in 2009. It counts naturalized citizens separately (245,578 in 2024) without splitting them by route.

MOIS also counts the members of multicultural households, those formed by a marriage migrant or naturalized citizen with a Korean national or with each other. They numbered 1,239,448 in 2024, up from 963,174 in 2016, the first year in the released panel. By member type, the 2024 count included 418,316 marriage migrants and naturalized citizens, 167,602 Korean spouses, 312,665 children and 340,744 other household members. MOIS omits some small cells, so the member types sum to slightly less than the total.

Dashboard: Multicultural families, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-child-en.html

10 International students

How many international students are in Korea?

Degree students hold the D-2 status and language and other trainees the D-4 status. D-2 holders numbered 178,519 in 2024, up from 61,257 in 2014 and 30,101 in 2006. D-4 general trainees, a status that covers university Korean-language programs, numbered 87,887. Together the two statuses accounted for 266,406 people.

The number of D-2 students fell from 118,254 in 2019 to 101,810 in 2020 and has grown every year since. China sent the most degree students (67,852, 38.0 percent), followed by Vietnam (41,359), Uzbekistan (13,054), Mongolia (10,471) and Nepal (8,867). Vietnam accounted for 55,983 of the D-4 trainees (63.7 percent).

MOIS counted 233,237 international students on 1 November 2024; 72,261 of them (31.0 percent) lived in Seoul. A further 18,226 people held the D-10 job-seeker status, a status open to graduates looking for work.

Dashboard: International students by university, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-student-en.html

11 Overseas Koreans

How many overseas Koreans (ethnic Koreans with foreign nationality) live in Korea?

Ethnic Koreans with foreign nationality (재외동포, overseas Koreans) are the largest group of foreign residents. The F-4 overseas-Korean status, which comes with broad work rights,

was held by 555,968 people in 2024, up from 289,427 in 2014 and 29,574 in 2006, making it the most common status of stay. Most F-4 holders were Korean-Chinese (390,862); others came from the United States (51,177), ethnic Koreans with Russian nationality (33,555), Uzbekistan (28,895), Canada (17,757) and Kazakhstan (14,501).

F-4 holders file a residence report (거소신고) under the Overseas Koreans Act instead of registering as foreigners, so they are missing from the registered count and from every district-level visa table. The 553,664 residence reports on file in 2024 are published by province only; Gyeonggi-do (239,460) and Seoul (147,773) held the most.

Across all statuses, 643,277 Korean-Chinese residents lived in Korea in 2024: 390,862 on F-4, 130,004 on F-5 permanent residence and 79,821 on H-2 visiting employment. Korean-Chinese residents held 64.1 percent of all F-5 permanent-residence statuses. The Korean-Russian population numbered 35,984. MOIS, which uses a survey definition, counted 415,695 ethnic Koreans of foreign nationality.

Dashboard: Overseas Korean residence reports, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-diaspora-en.html

Age, Sex and Children

12 Age and sex

What are the age and sex of foreign residents?

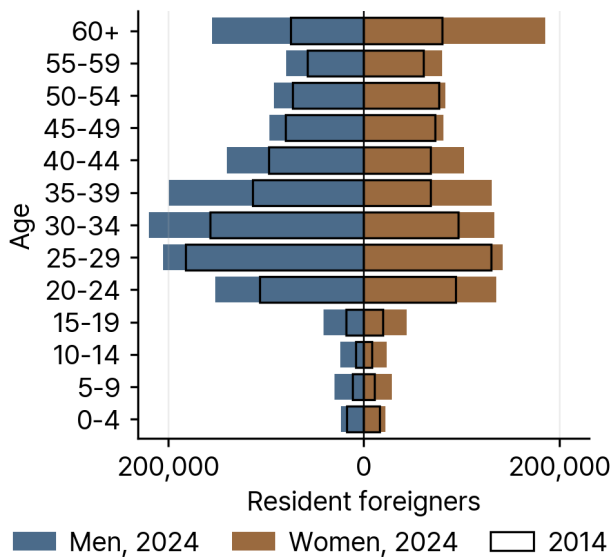
Men outnumber women among foreign residents. Of the 2,650,783 resident foreigners in 2024, 1,195,623 (45.1 percent) were women, about the same as in 2014 (44.7 percent) and below the 50.2 percent of Korean nationals on the resident register. The balance differs by nationality: women were 45.4 percent of Filipino residents and 69.5 percent of Japanese residents, but 18.1 percent of Nepali residents, 63.1 percent of whom held E-9 work status.

The population is young. People aged 20 to 39 made up 49.7 percent of resident foreigners in 2024, twice the 24.6 percent of Korean nationals, and the largest five-year band was 30–34. Children under 15 were 5.7 percent, against 10.7 percent of Korean nationals. Those aged 60 and older numbered 340,904 (12.9 percent, against 8.6 percent in 2014 and 28.2 percent of Korean nationals), and 65.8 percent of them were Korean-Chinese.

These figures count all resident foreigners, a series the yearbook publishes by nationality and age from 2011. The same file also includes registered foreigners alone from 2006; the two are different populations and are not compared here.

Dashboard: National statistics, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-national-en.html

FIGURE 6
Resident foreigners by age and sex, 2014 and 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks (age_sex_national.csv). Both years are on the resident-foreigner basis.

13 Children of migrant background

How many children of migrant background live in Korea?

MOIS counted 315,383 children aged 0 to 18 in foreign-resident and multicultural families in 2024, 54.4 percent more than the 204,204 counted in 2014. By age, 102,372 were 0 to 6 years old, 108,870 were of elementary-school age (7 to 12) and 104,141 were 13 to 18. In 2024, 13,416 babies, 5.6 percent of all births in Korea, had at least one parent who was a foreign national or a naturalized citizen.

Gyeonggi-do held 88,008 of these children (27.9 percent). The children column of the MOIS summary tables (295,304 in 2024) is smaller because it counts children born in Korea only. Among the members of multicultural households, 292,720 children were born in Korea and 19,922 were naturalized or held foreign nationality.

Children who are themselves foreign nationals are counted by MOJ: 236,560 resident foreigners were under 20 in 2024.

Dashboard: [Multicultural families, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-child-en.html](https://immigrantsinkorea.today/h-child-en.html)

Education, Work and Health Insurance

14 Educational attainment

What level of education do foreign residents have?

In May 2025, 522,000 (30.9 percent) of the estimated 1,692,000 foreign residents aged 15 and over had graduated from a junior college or university, 729,000 (43.1 percent) from high school and 299,000 (17.7 percent) from middle school,

and 142,000 (8.4 percent) had elementary schooling or less. In the population as a whole, the same shares were 43.6, 36.2, 10.6 and 9.6 percent.

The employment rate of foreign residents with a junior college or university degree was 65.8 percent, below the 77.0 percent of all degree holders, while that of foreign residents with elementary schooling or less was 55.3 percent, against 36.7 percent. Among high school graduates the two rates were 65.4 and 62.8 percent, and among middle school graduates 70.4 and 36.9 percent.

These figures, and those on work and wages below, come from the Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labour Force, which the Ministry of Data and Statistics (국가데이터처, formerly Statistics Korea) and MOJ have conducted every year since 2017; the MOJ and MOIS counts used elsewhere on this page do not include schooling. The survey covers registered foreigners and overseas Koreans with residence reports who are aged 15 and over and have lived in Korea for 91 days or more, so short-term visitors are outside its scope. It sampled 20,000 of them in 2025 and publishes counts in thousands, from which the shares here are computed. The comparison figures come from the Economically Active Population Survey of the same month, which covers everyone aged 15 and over in its sample households and has included foreign residents since 2009, so they describe the population as a whole.

15 Employment and industries

How many foreign residents work, and in which industries?

In May 2025 an estimated 1,109,000 foreign residents aged 15 and over were employed, up from 1,010,000 a year earlier. Their employment rate was 65.5 percent, against 63.8 percent for the population as a whole in the Economically Active Population Survey of the same month; their labor force participation rate was 70.0 percent (65.6 percent for the whole population) and their unemployment rate 6.4 percent (2.8 percent). Holders of E-9 non-professional employment status were the largest group of workers (321,000), followed by F-4 overseas Koreans (253,000) and F-5 permanent residents (123,000).

Mining and manufacturing employed 498,000 foreign residents (44.9 percent of the employed), followed by wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food (226,000, 20.4 percent); business, personal and public services (148,000, 13.3 percent); construction (107,000, 9.6 percent); and agriculture, forestry and fishing (100,000, 9.0 percent). In the workforce as a whole the shares were 15.2 percent in mining and manufacturing, 19.1 percent in wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food, 6.7 percent in construction and 5.1 percent in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Over the year, employment of foreign residents rose by 37,000 in mining and manufacturing and by 35,000 in wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food.

Wage workers numbered 1,047,000, or 94.4 percent of the employed, against 77.5 percent of the workforce as a whole. Of them, 684,000 (65.3 percent) were regular employees and 363,000 temporary or daily workers; among all wage workers the regular share was 74.1 percent. Establishments with 10 to 29 workers employed the most foreign residents (295,000), followed by those with four or fewer (264,000).

16 Wages

How much do foreign wage workers earn?

In May 2025, 526,000 of the 1,047,000 foreign wage workers (50.2 percent) earned an average of 2 million to under 3 million won a month and 387,000 (36.9 percent) earned 3 million won or more; 95,000 (9.0 percent) earned 1 million to under 2 million won and 40,000 (3.8 percent) less than 1 million won. The immigrant survey publishes no finer wage breakdown. Every band grew in number over the year, and no band's share changed by more than one percentage point.

Compared with all wage workers in the Local Area Labour Force Survey of April 2025, foreign wage workers were more often in the band from 2 million to under 3 million won (50.2 percent against 30.6 percent) and less often at 3 million won or more (36.9 against 49.9 percent) or below 2 million won (12.8 against 19.5 percent).

Among male wage workers, 43.8 percent earned 3 million won or more, against 22.0 percent of women; 25.9 percent of women earned less than 2 million won, against 6.9 percent of men.

By status of stay, 98,000 of the 321,000 E-9 workers (30.5 percent) earned 3 million won or more and 221,000 (68.8 percent) 2 million to under 3 million won. Among professionals

on E-1 to E-7 status, 41,000 of 81,000 (50.6 percent) earned 3 million won or more. International students who worked were concentrated in the lowest bands: 20,000 of 55,000 (36.4 percent) earned less than 1 million won and 28,000 (50.9 percent) 1 million to under 2 million won.

17 National Health Insurance

How many foreign residents have national health insurance, and how do their premiums compare with the benefits paid?

At the end of 2024, 1,578,546 foreign nationals were covered by National Health Insurance, according to the 2024 National Health Insurance Statistical Yearbook of the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS) and the Health Insurance Review and Assessment Service. Of these, 647,924 were workplace subscribers (employees and employers insured through a workplace) and 195,201 their dependents, who pay no premium. The other 735,421 were regional subscribers, the category for everyone not covered through a workplace, in 605,781 households. The yearbook counts registered foreigners and ethnic Koreans with foreign nationality who filed a residence report, and lists Korean nationals living abroad (28,272) separately.

Foreign nationals were 3.1 percent of the 51,439,246 people covered. Compared with Korean nationals, a smaller share were insured through a workplace, as subscribers or dependents (53.4 percent against 70.1 percent), and a smaller share were dependents (12.4 percent against 31.5 percent). The Korean-national shares subtract the foreign counts from the yearbook's national totals.

TABLE 4

Monthly wages of foreign wage workers, May 2024 and May 2025, and of all wage workers, April 2025

Group	Wage workers	Under 1 million won (%)	1 to under 2 million won (%)	2 to under 3 million won (%)	3 million won or more (%)
All, 2024	956,000	3.3	8.4	51.2	37.1
All, 2025	1,047,000	3.8	9.0	50.2	36.9
Men, 2025	720,000	2.1	4.8	49.3	43.8
Women, 2025	327,000	7.6	18.3	52.2	22.0
All wage workers, 2025	22,415,000	9.6	9.9	30.6	49.9

Note: Wage workers are regular, temporary and daily employees; the self-employed and unpaid family workers are excluded. The immigrant survey publishes counts in thousands. The last row covers all wage workers in the Local Area Labour Force Survey of April 2025, whose bands from 3 million won up (3 to 4 million, 4 to 5 million, 5 million or more) are summed here.

Source: Ministry of Data and Statistics and MOJ, 2025 Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labour Force, statistical table 7-71 (monthly wage level); Ministry of Data and Statistics, Local Area Labour Force Survey, first half of 2025.

NHIS also publishes the premiums it levies on foreign nationals and the benefits it pays for them. In 2025 it levied 2.51 trillion won in premiums, 1.83 trillion won from workplace subscribers

and 683.2 billion won from regional subscribers, and paid 1.52 trillion won in benefits, so premiums levied exceeded benefits by 989.1 billion won. The gap was 512.5 billion won in 2021 and

has widened every year since. For every 100 won of premiums levied on foreign nationals in 2025, NHIS paid 60.6 won in benefits. The file reports benefits for Korean nationals through 2023 only; that year NHIS paid 106.5 won in benefits per 100 won of premiums levied on Korean nationals (82.08 trillion won against 77.09 trillion won), and 63.5 won per 100 won for foreign nationals.

The release breaks the figures down for ten nationalities and lists China as one nationality, without the MOJ split between the Korean-Chinese and other Chinese nationals. NHIS levied 947.7 billion won on Chinese nationals in 2025 and paid 997.3 billion won in benefits for them. Premiums exceeded benefits for each of the other nine nationalities, including Vietnam (238.4 billion won against 78.5 billion won) and Nepal (147.2 billion won against 21.0 billion won).

Citizenship, Legal Status and Asylum

18 Naturalization

How many foreign residents become Korean citizens each year?

In 2024, 11,008 foreign nationals naturalized as Korean citizens, and a further 3,607 former Korean nationals had their nationality restored. Annual naturalizations ranged between 9,914 (2019) and 16,090 (2011) from 2011 to 2024, and totaled 158,184 over those 14 years. The stock of naturalized citizens counted by MOIS was 245,578 in 2024.

Simplified naturalization, the route open to spouses of Korean citizens among others, accounted for 5,858 of 2024 naturalizations; general naturalization for 2,095, special naturalization for 1,673 and acquisition by family members for 1,382.

The Korean-Chinese (4,334), Vietnamese (2,951) and other Chinese nationals (1,915) made up 83.6 percent of new citizens in 2024. Over 2015-2024, Vietnam was the leading former nationality (37,959), ahead of the Korean-Chinese (32,118), China (17,347), Cambodia (3,484) and the Philippines (3,342).

Dashboard: Nationality acquisition, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-natz-en.html

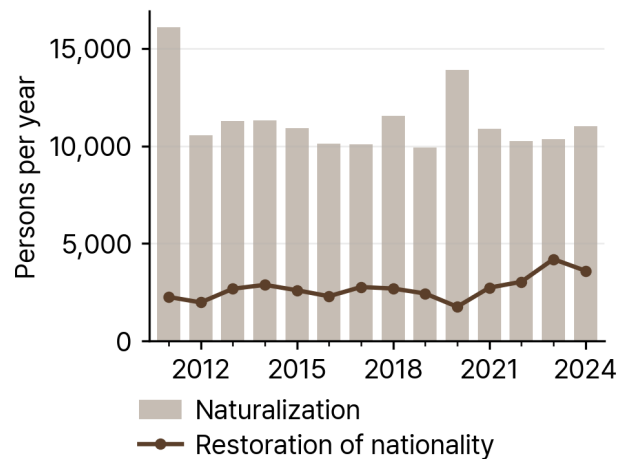
19 Unauthorized residents

How many foreign residents are in Korea without legal status?

MOJ counted 357,598 foreign nationals without a valid status of stay (미등록 체류자, which the yearbook calls 불법체류자) at the end of 2025, down from a peak of 423,675 in 2023. The count was 208,778 in 2014, 208,971 in 2016 and 355,126 in 2018. In 2024 it stood at 397,522, or 15.0 percent of the 2,650,783 resident foreigners that year.

FIGURE 7

Naturalizations and restorations of Korean nationality, 2011-2024



Source: KIRD dataset, built from MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks ([naturalization_annual.csv](#)).

The yearbook records the status on which each person entered or last held. In 2025, 125,925 (35.2 percent) had entered on B-1 visa exemption, 72,910 on C-3 short-term visit visas, and 50,499 had last held E-9 work status. Men were 227,113 (63.5 percent). In all, 188,215 (52.6 percent) had overstayed for more than five years, and 49,962 for more than ten.

The yearbook names only the ten largest nationalities. Thailand led in 2025 with 115,851 (32.4 percent), followed by Vietnam (72,979) and China (56,551). The 137,035 unauthorized Thai nationals in 2024 equaled 72.6 percent of all Thai resident foreigners that year. A separate yearbook table counts only people who had registered and later lost status: 128,813 of 1,604,920 registered foreigners (8.0 percent) in 2025. No district figures exist.

Dashboard: Undocumented residence, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-undocumented-en.html

20 Immigration enforcement

How many foreign nationals are ordered to leave Korea each year?

MOJ processed 142,265 people for violations of the Immigration Control Act in 2025, up from 139,727 in 2024 and 98,350 in 2022. Its yearbook sorts them by the measure taken. Deportation orders (강제퇴거) numbered 33,892 (23.8 percent) and departure orders (출국명령) 43,361 (30.5 percent). Another 1,676 (1.2 percent) received a departure recommendation (출국 권고) and 1,809 (1.3 percent) were referred for prosecution (고발). The remaining 61,527 (43.2 percent) received a fine notice (통고처분) followed by permission to remain or a similar measure.

Deportation orders more than tripled between 2022 (10,196) and 2023 (31,932), and departure orders rose from 28,585 to 40,538. Both fell slightly in 2025. The yearbook counts

persons and does not break these figures down by nationality or type of violation.

TABLE 5
Unauthorized residents by nationality, 2024 and 2025

Rank (2025)	Nationality	2025	2024	2024 as % of that nationality's resident foreigners
1	Thailand	115,851	137,035	72.6
2	Vietnam	72,979	77,730	25.4
3	China	56,551	61,906	19.6
4	Mongolia	14,681	16,554	29.0
5	Philippines	13,594	13,937	19.8
6	Indonesia	13,367	13,001	17.8
7	Cambodia	10,331	10,709	16.8
8	Kazakhstan	9,015	11,306	25.4
9	Uzbekistan	7,375	8,103	8.5
10	Russia	6,531	8,312	25.0

Note: The yearbook prints the ten largest nationalities and a residual row (37,323 in 2025). The last column divides the 2024 unauthorized count by the 2024 resident-foreigner count of the nationality; for China the denominator excludes the Korean-Chinese, whom the resident-foreigner tables list separately.

Source: MOJ Korea Immigration Service Statistical Yearbooks 2024 and 2025, chapter 6, table 6-4, as compiled in the KIRD dashboard (undocumented.json); denominators from the KIRD dataset.

Dashboard: Undocumented residence, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-undocumented-en.html

21 Refugees and asylum

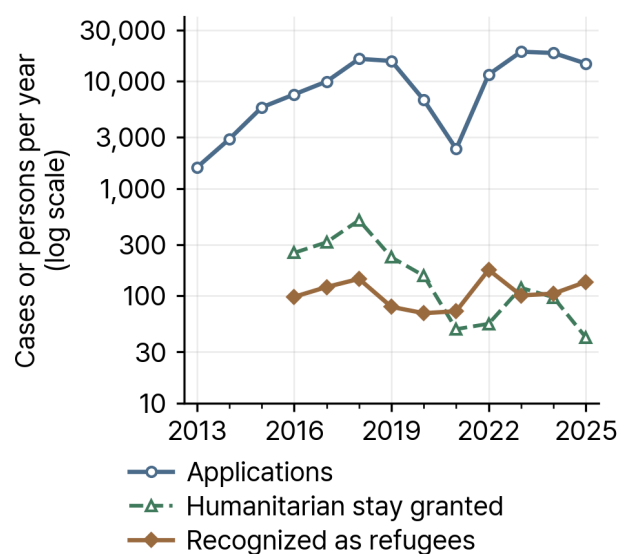
How many people seek asylum in Korea, and how many are recognized?

Korea received 14,626 refugee applications in 2025. Applications rose from 1,574 in 2013 to 16,173 in 2018, fell to 2,341 in 2021 during pandemic border controls, and rose to a high of 18,837 in 2023. Since 1994, when the country began accepting applications, the cumulative total is 136,720.

Few applicants receive protection. Through 2025, 1,679 people had been recognized as refugees and 2,727 granted humanitarian stay, a status that permits residence and work. At first instance in 2025, the ministry recognized 112 of 7,404 decisions (1.5 percent) and granted humanitarian stay in 18. Counting appeals and court rulings, the recognition rate on final decisions was 1.9 percent in 2024 (105 of 5,610) and 2.7 percent over 1994-2024.

Russia (20,283), Kazakhstan (14,295) and China (11,695) accounted for the most applications over 1994-2025, and 74.1 percent of applicants were men. Recognized refugees came most often from Myanmar (550), Egypt (179) and Ethiopia (170); family reunification accounted for 39.4 percent of recognitions. Syrians (1,272) and Yemenis (804) received most humanitarian stay permits.

FIGURE 8
Refugee applications, recognitions and humanitarian stay permits, 2013-2025



Source: MOJ Refugee Policy Division, Consolidated Refugee Statistics 1994-2025, with applications for 2013-2015 from Refugee Application and Review Statistics 1994-2024, as compiled in the KIRD dashboard (h_refugee_moj.json, yearly series). Recognitions and humanitarian permits are counted by year of decision across all review stages.

At the end of 2025, 29,078 applications awaited a first-instance decision and 10,030 appeals awaited review by the Refugee Committee; at the end of August 2026 the counts were 29,091 and 12,323. First-instance decisions made in 2025 came 18 months after the application on average,

against 12 months for decisions made in 2023 and 14 in 2024, and 2,963 of the 7,404 (40.0 percent) came two years or more after it. MOJ puts the average at about 17 months for appeals and about 22 months for court cases against a rejection.

Dashboard: Refugees, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-refugee-en.html

Languages and Services

22 Languages

What languages do foreign residents speak?

No Korean statistic records the languages foreign residents speak. The KIRD dataset estimates first languages by splitting each nationality's count across the first-language (mother-tongue) speaker shares of its country of origin from Ethnologue (24th edition), then summing across nationalities. Korean is excluded, so Korean-Chinese and other ethnic Korean residents whose first language is Korean add nothing. The estimate describes likely interpretation and translation demand; it does not count requests for interpreters.

Applied to the 2024 resident-foreigner population, the method yields 2,006,764 estimated first-language speakers across 1,428 languages. Chinese (Mandarin) led with 349,584,

followed by Vietnamese (262,973), English (189,919), Thai (163,893) and Russian (93,025). Vietnamese demand was 2.3 times its 2014 level.

At the district level, on the registered basis, Vietnamese was the largest estimated non-Korean first language in 146 of 250 districts in 2024, Chinese in 69 and Khmer in 13.

Dashboard: Estimated language demand, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-lang-en.html

23 Organizations serving migrants

How many organizations serve immigrants, and where are they?

There is no official register of organizations serving immigrants, so KIRD compiled one from ministry program rosters, local government lists and organizations' own websites. The census held 1,717 organizations as of 28 September 2026, 1,653 of which serve people directly. The largest types were sites running the MOJ social integration and early adaptation programs (538), civic and faith-based organizations (246), medical support institutions (192), family centers (151), migrant community organizations (116), foreign resident support centers (109) and migrant worker support centers (90).

TABLE 6
Estimated first languages of resident foreigners, 2014 and 2024

Language	2014	2024	Share of estimated speakers, 2024 (%)
Chinese	324,144	349,584	17.4
Vietnamese	112,314	262,973	13.1
English	149,261	189,919	9.5
Thai	81,549	163,893	8.2
Russian	21,733	93,025	4.6
Uzbek	31,923	71,135	3.5
Khmer	38,715	65,488	3.3
Japanese	48,501	64,424	3.2
Tagalog/Filipino	48,352	63,600	3.2
Indonesian	33,420	52,034	2.6

Note: Estimated values. Each nationality's resident foreigners are split by the first-language shares of its country of origin (Ethnologue, 24th edition). Korean is excluded.

Source: KIRD dataset, language_demand.csv, scope = national, built on MOJ resident-foreigner counts by nationality.

By service, 919 organizations offered settlement and social integration support, 847 Korean language classes, 408 employment and labor-rights help, 376 interpretation and translation, 233 legal and immigration-status help, and 43 mental health counseling. The Ministry of Justice funds or designates 453 of the organizations, the gender-equality ministry 267 and the health and welfare ministry 149; 573 are privately funded.

The capital region held 44.3 percent of the organizations and 55.2 percent of registered foreigners. Measured per 10,000 registered foreigners in 2024, coverage was highest in Gwangju (41.0) and lowest in Gyeonggi-do (7.4) and Chungcheongnam-do (7.8); the national figure was 11.5. The census may miss organizations, so low values mark places to check.

Dashboard: Support organization list, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-resource-en.html; Service gaps, immigrantsinkorea.today/h-gap-en.html

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Foreign Residents in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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KIRD dashboard, Immigrants in Korea Today <https://immigrantsinkorea.today/>

Korean-Chinese Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 643,277 Korean-Chinese resided in South Korea. They were the second-largest nationality among registered foreigners, with 246,988 people or 16.6 percent, and the largest among all resident foreigners, at 24.3 percent. The two ranks differ because holders of the F-4 (Overseas Korean) visa report their residence instead of registering. Korean-Chinese had ranked first on both bases in 2006, 2014, and 2019. The Ministry of Justice counts ethnic Koreans of Chinese nationality (known in Korean as Joseonjok) separately from other Chinese nationals.

Highlights

- ▶ About 643,300 Korean-Chinese lived in South Korea at the end of 2024, the second-largest nationality among registered foreigners (16.6 percent) and the largest among all resident foreigners (24.3 percent).
- ▶ The population peaked at 708,082 in 2018, and in 2024 it stood at 91.8 percent of its 2019 size, 16th of the 20 largest nationalities for growth over 2019-24.
- ▶ In 2024, 34.9 percent of Korean-Chinese residents were age 60 or older, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners.

Most Korean-Chinese come on visas reserved for overseas Koreans. The H-2 Working-Visit visa is limited to foreign nationals of Korean ethnicity living in China or the former Soviet Union, a track separate from the general Employment Permit System (E-9) (HRD Korea 2026). The population grew 2.5-fold between 2006 (236,854) and 2014 (590,856), peaked at 708,082 in 2018, fell to 602,907 in 2022, and rose to 643,277 in 2024. Between 2019 and 2024 the number of H-2 holders fell from 194,792 to 79,821, while F-4 (Overseas Korean) holders rose from 346,539 to 390,862. In February 2026 the Ministry of Justice merged H-2 into F-4 (Ministry of Justice 2026).

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Korean-Chinese were older (34.9 percent age 60 or older, against 12.9 percent) and more concentrated in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi (84.3 percent of registered residents, against 55.2 percent). Almost all held overseas-Korean or permanent-residence visas. Only 0.1 percent held an employment visa, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals present in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence.

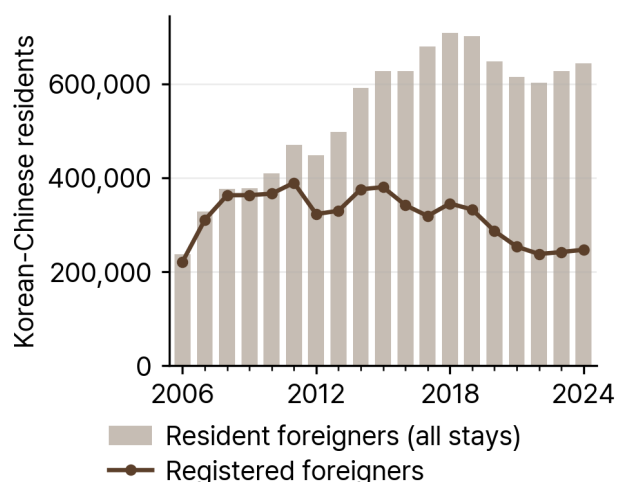
Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals resident for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 (Overseas Korean) visa report their residence instead of registering, so they are counted among resident foreigners but not among registered foreigners.

Korean-Chinese (한국계중국인). Ethnic Koreans who hold Chinese nationality. The Ministry of Justice counts them as a nationality category separate from other Chinese nationals, and this profile follows that classification.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The Korean-Chinese population grew from 236,854 in 2006 to 409,079 in 2010 and 590,856 in 2014, a 2.5-fold increase over eight years. It was 701,098 in 2019, one year after its peak of 708,082 in 2018. The count then fell each year to 602,907 in 2022 before rising to 627,450 in 2023 and 643,277 in 2024.

FIGURE 1

Korean-Chinese Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

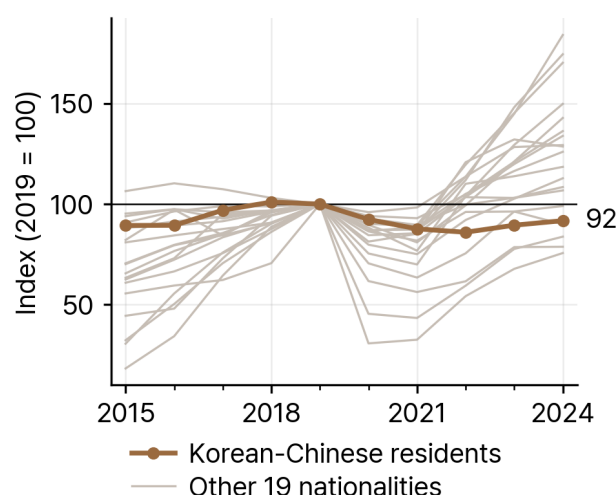
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

With 2019 set at 100, the population index stood at 91.8 in 2024, a decline of 57,821 people (701,098 minus 643,277). That change ranked 16th among the 20 largest nationality groups. Korean-Chinese were the largest nationality among all resident foreigners in 2006, 2014, 2019, and 2024. Their share of all resident foreigners was 26.0 percent in 2006, 32.9 percent in 2014, 27.8 percent in 2019, and 24.3 percent in 2024.

The registered count followed a different path. In 2006, 221,525 Korean-Chinese were registered, 93.5 percent of all Korean-Chinese residents (221,525 of 236,854). In 2024 the

registered count was 246,988, or 38.4 percent. F-4 holders report residence instead of registering and so fall outside the registered count, and the number of Korean-Chinese F-4 holders rose from 208,312 in 2014 to 390,862 in 2024. Among registered foreigners, Korean-Chinese ranked first in 2006, 2014, and 2019 and second in 2024, and their share of all registered foreigners fell from 34.4 percent in 2014 to 16.6 percent in 2024.

FIGURE 2

Growth of the Korean-Chinese Population Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1

Korean-Chinese Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank, resident foreigners	Rank, registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	236,854	221,525	1	1	26.0	35.1
2014	590,856	375,572	1	1	32.9	34.4
2019	701,098	332,525	1	1	27.8	26.1
2024	643,277	246,988	1	2	24.3	16.6

Note: Counts are as of 31 December. Ranks are among all nationalities, with Korean-Chinese counted separately from other Chinese nationals. Resident foreigners include F-4 holders, who report residence instead of registering.

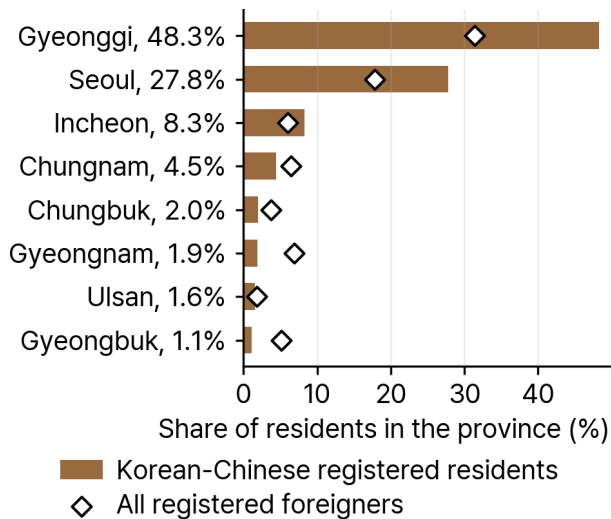
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District data cover registered foreigners only (246,988 Korean-Chinese in 2024). Of these, 56.5 percent (139,635) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi and 27.8 percent (68,560) in Seoul. Together the capital region was home to 84.3 percent of registered Korean-Chinese, compared with 55.2 percent of all

registered foreigners. Chungcheong accounted for 7.1 percent (17,612), Yeongnam 5.9 percent (14,608), Honam 1.6 percent (4,058), and Gangwon and Jeju 1.0 percent (2,515).

FIGURE 3

Registered Korean-Chinese Residents and All Registered Foreigners by Province, 2024

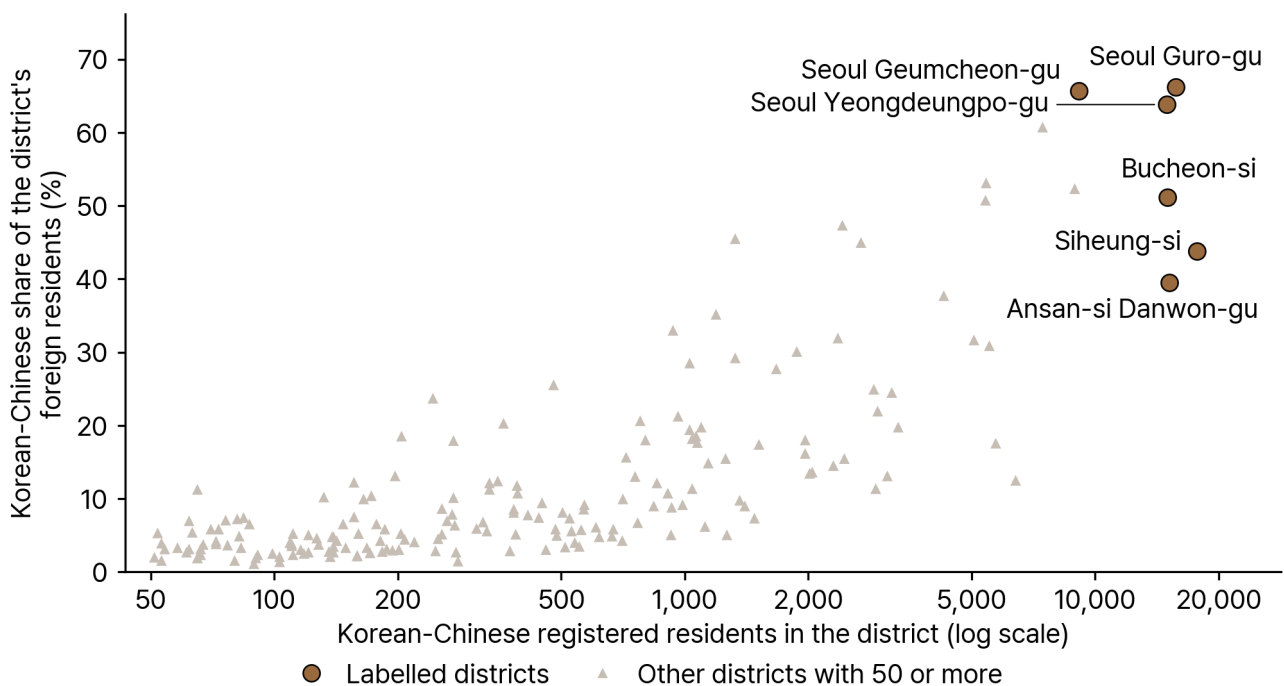
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Only 3.3 percent of registered Korean-Chinese lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners. The group numbered at least 100 in 154 districts in 2024, and the ten largest districts accounted for 47.0 percent of the registered population. Siheung-si in Gyeonggi was the largest (17,727), followed by Seoul Guro-gu (15,726) and Ansan-si Danwon-gu (15,146).

In three Seoul districts Korean-Chinese made up about two-thirds of registered foreigners in 2024: Guro-gu (66.2 percent), Geumcheon-gu (65.7 percent), and Yeongdeungpo-gu (63.8 percent). A 2022 study describes settlement that began in Garibong-dong, expanded to Daerim-dong in Yeongdeungpo-gu and Jayang-dong in Gwangjin-gu, and later extended to Gyeonggi cities such as Bucheon and Ansan (Ahn 2022).

The index of dissimilarity (D) measures the share of a group that would have to move for its district distribution to match that of Koreans. For Korean-Chinese, D rose from 0.493 in 2014 to 0.516 in 2024.

FIGURE 4

Registered Korean-Chinese Residents by District and Their Share of the District's Foreign Residents, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024. Districts with 50 or more Korean-Chinese residents.

KIRD defines an ethnic enclave as a district where the group's location quotient is at least 2 and the group makes up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners. Fifteen districts met both conditions for Korean-Chinese in 2024. The highest location quotients were in Ansan-si Danwon-gu (10.7; 15,146 residents, 39.5 percent of registered foreigners), Seoul

Guro-gu (8.4; 66.2 percent), Seoul Geumcheon-gu (8.4; 65.7 percent), and Seoul Yeongdeungpo-gu (8.3; 63.8 percent). The other eleven were Suwon-si Paldal-gu, Siheung-si, Osan-si, Bucheon-si, Seongnam-si Sujeong-gu, Incheon Bupyeong-gu, Ansan-si Sangnok-gu, Suwon-si Gwonseon-gu, Seoul Gwanak-gu, Gunpo-si, and Anyang-si Manan-gu.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Korean-Chinese Residents, 2024

District	Province	Korean-Chinese residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	17,727	43.8
Guro-gu	Seoul	15,726	66.2
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	15,146	39.5
Bucheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	14,979	51.1
Yeongdeungpo-gu	Seoul	14,933	63.8
Geumcheon-gu	Seoul	9,133	65.7
Bupyeong-gu	Incheon	8,903	52.3
Suwon-si Paldal-gu	Gyeonggi-do	7,431	60.8
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	6,389	12.5
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	5,727	17.6

Note: Registered foreigners only. The ten districts together accounted for 47.0 percent of registered Korean-Chinese residents.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 47.5 percent of Korean-Chinese residents in 2024 (305,294), compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners. The share was 47.6 percent in 2019.

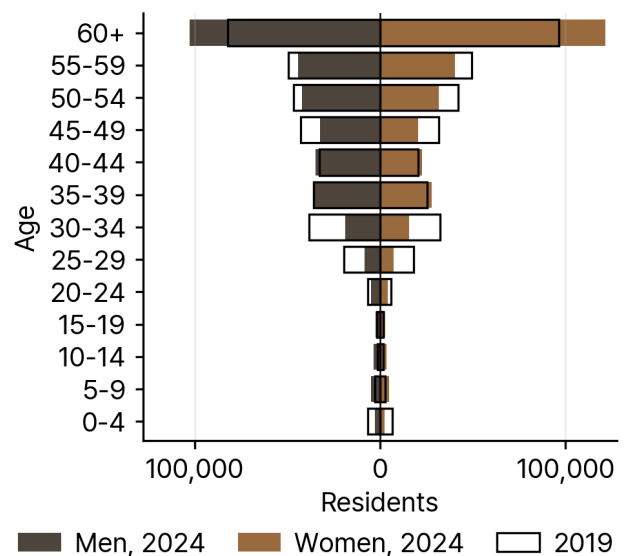
The population is much older than the overall foreign population. In 2024, 34.9 percent of Korean-Chinese residents were age 60 or older, the largest age group, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners, and the median fell in the 50-54 age group. Residents age 50 or older numbered 382,689 in 2024, up from 365,890 in 2019. Those ages 20 to 39 made up 19.2 percent (123,464), against 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and their number fell from 182,001 in 2019.

Children under age 15 made up 3.4 percent of Korean-Chinese residents in 2024 (21,659), compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Children under age 5 fell from 13,125 in 2019 to 5,245 in 2024.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 73.2 percent of Korean-Chinese residents held one of the two overseas-Korean visas (F-4 or H-2), compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners. Another 20.2 percent held permanent residence (F-5), against 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and 5.8 percent held marriage or family visas, against 13.6 percent. Employment visas (0.1 percent), study and training visas (0.1 percent), and short-term visit visas (0.5 percent) were rare among Korean-Chinese, while these categories covered 19.2, 10.2, and 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 5
Korean-Chinese Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2019 and 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The F-4 Overseas Korean visa was the most common status, held by 390,862 Korean-Chinese (60.8 percent) in 2024. Korean-Chinese held 70.3 percent of all F-4 visas in Korea, the most of any nationality. They also held 85.6 percent of all H-2 visas and 64.1 percent of all F-5 permanent residence visas.

The visa mix changed over the decade. In 2014, H-2 holders (267,768) outnumbered F-4 holders (208,312). By 2024 H-2 holders had fallen to 79,821, while F-4 holders had risen to 390,862 and F-5 holders from 64,337 to 130,004. Between

2019 and 2024, F-1 (Visiting Cohabitation) holders fell from 20,490 to 7,463 and C-3 (Short-term Visit) holders from 19,217 to 3,382.

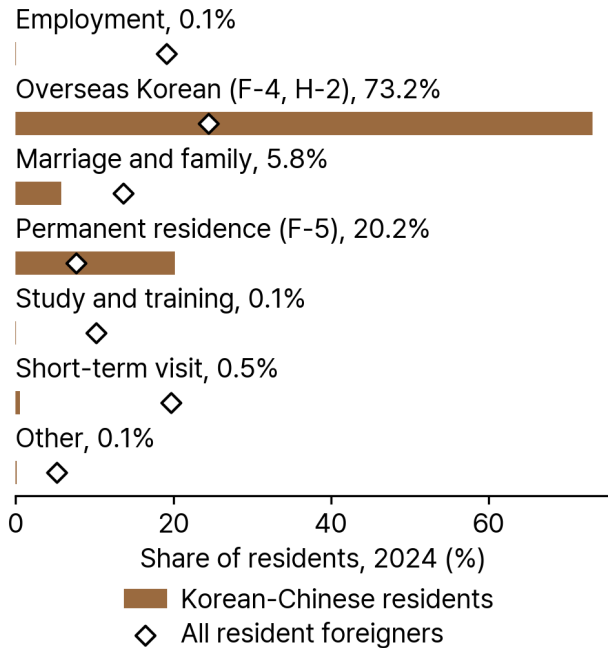
5 Migration Channels and Policy

Korean-Chinese workers come to Korea outside the general Employment Permit System. HRD Korea, which runs the H-2 employment program, lists the target of the H-2 special employment permit as foreign nationals of Korean ethnicity residing in China or the former Soviet Union, and presents it as a track distinct from the general permit system (HRD Korea 2026). China also appears on the list of countries covered by the E-9 electronic visa arrangement for general foreign workers (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026), a route used by Chinese nationals outside the Korean-Chinese category.

On February 12, 2026, the Ministry of Justice merged H-2 status into F-4 regardless of country of origin, describing the change as a response to complaints of unequal treatment by origin country among about 860,000 co-ethnic residents (Ministry of Justice 2026). Under the same reform, 10 of the 47 simple-labor occupations previously closed to F-4 holders were opened, including construction laborer, manual packer, and loading and stocking worker (World Korean News 2026). The KIRD figures in this profile end in December 2024 and predate the merger.

FIGURE 6

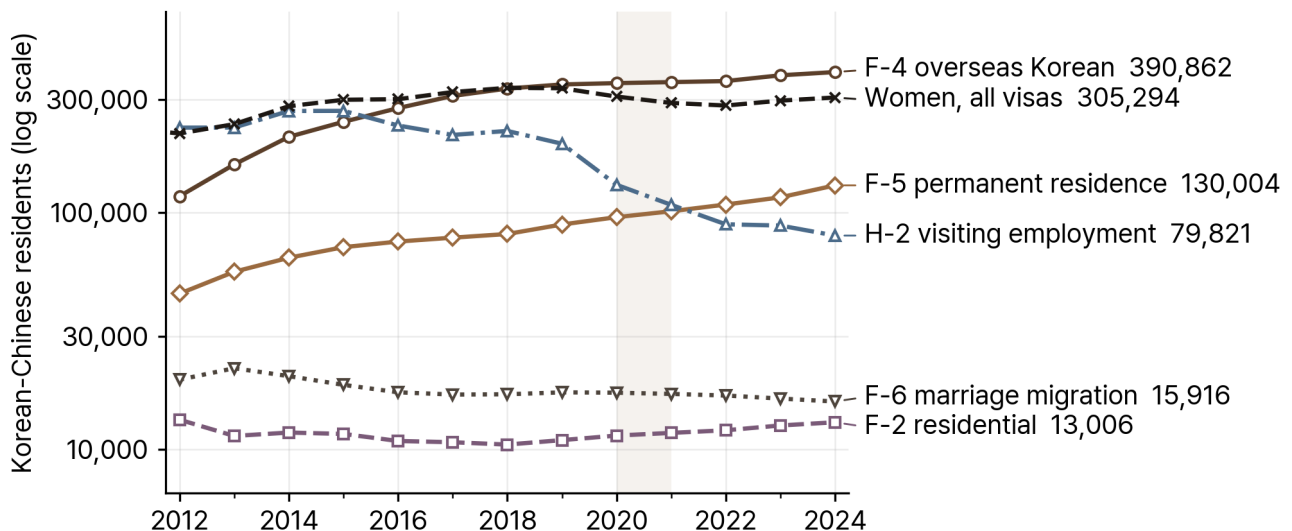
Korean-Chinese Residents and All Resident Foreigners by Visa Group, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 7

Korean-Chinese Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2012-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

6 Naturalization

Ministry of Justice yearbooks report Korean-Chinese naturalizations separately for 2014-17 and 2019-24; no separate count is available for 2009-13 or 2018. Across those

ten years, 36,970 Korean-Chinese acquired Korean nationality by naturalization. Annual counts ranged from 1,521 in 2017 to 6,031 in 2020, and 4,334 were naturalized in 2024.

A second route, restoration of nationality, applies to former Korean nationals. The yearbooks record 2,086 restorations of Korean nationality by Korean-Chinese from 2011 to 2024 (also

excluding 2018), including 53 in 2024.

TABLE 3

Korean-Chinese Residents by Visa Type, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Korean-Chinese residents, 2024 (%)	Korean-Chinese share of all holders of the visa, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	346,539	390,862	60.8	70.3
F-5	Permanent Residence	88,888	130,004	20.2	64.1
H-2	Visiting Employment	194,792	79,821	12.4	85.6
F-6	Marriage Migration	17,398	15,916	2.5	10.7
F-2	Residential	10,938	13,006	2.0	21.2
F-1	Visiting Cohabitation	20,490	7,463	1.2	7.5
C-3	Short-term Visit	19,217	3,382	0.5	2.1

Note: Resident foreigners, 31 December. Shares of Korean-Chinese residents use the 2024 total of 643,277.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Korean-Chinese are not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately, so no count of unauthorized Korean-Chinese residents is published. The yearbook counted 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

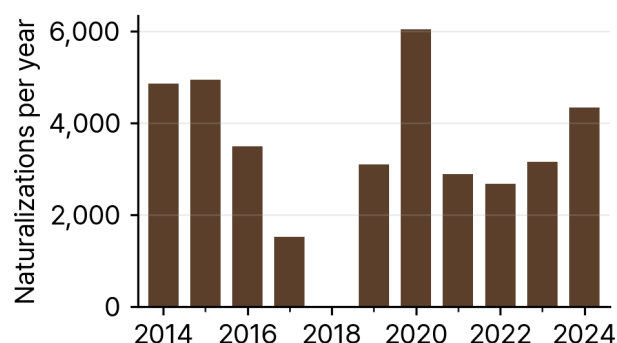
8 Health and Well-being

A pooled analysis of 13,443 Korean-Chinese waged workers from the 2018, 2020, and 2022 Survey on Immigrants' Living Conditions and Labor Force linked perceived ethnic discrimination with poor self-rated health. Among women who had experienced discrimination, asked for fair treatment, and saw the situation improve, the odds of poor self-rated health were 2.63 times those of women who had not experienced discrimination (95% CI 1.29-5.38); the equivalent estimate for men was 0.87 (95% CI 0.30-2.53) (Lee et al. 2024).

A survey of 399 Korean-Chinese adults in and around Seoul measured depression for 292 respondents, whose mean CES-D-K score was 9.3; 20.6 percent scored at or above the clinical cutoff of 16. The association between perceived discrimination and depression was stronger among respondents who identified more as Korean than as Chinese (Hong 2019). An earlier study of 170 full-time Korean-Chinese migrant workers found that roughly 30 percent met criteria for depression, and acculturative stress and work-related psychosocial factors explained 26.3 percent of the variance in depression scores (Lee et al. 2012).

FIGURE 8

Naturalizations of Korean-Chinese Residents in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Of 305 migrant-worker deaths recognized as compensable industrial accidents in 2016-18, 174 were Korean-Chinese, followed by Chinese nationals (37), Nepalis (15), and Vietnamese (11) (Seoul Shinmun 2019).

9 Migration from China's Korean Communities to South Korea

The Ministry of Justice counted 864,245 foreign-national overseas Koreans living in South Korea at the end of 2024, and Chinese nationals of Korean ethnicity made up 77.3 percent of them (EKW 2024). China's census counted 1,923,842 ethnic Koreans in 2000 and 1,702,479 in 2020, a fall of 221,363; the report on the 2020 census names migration to South Korea for work after the 1992 normalization of China-Korea relations as the main cause (Koreancenter 2022). In January 2020, about 708,000 Korean-Chinese lived in South Korea, more than the

roughly 597,000 ethnic Koreans in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (Financial News 2022). To our knowledge, no published source reports South Korea's rank among the destinations of Korean-Chinese emigrants.

Korean-Chinese do not enter through the Employment Permit System or take its EPS-TOPIK test, so no EPS applicant or deployment counts exist for the group. The H-2 Working Visit program began in March 2007, after the Constitutional Court ruled in 2001 that excluding co-ethnics in China and the former Soviet Union from the 1999 Overseas Korean Act was unconstitutional. From 2010 a visa-issuance quota capped the number of H-2 holders at 303,000 (Kang Nam Labor Law Firm 2026). Unlike E-9 workers, H-2 holders may change employers without restriction (HRD Korea 2026).

In 2007, H-2 applicants without relatives in South Korea had to score at least 200 of 400 points on a Korean-language test and then enter a computerized lottery. Places were divided by age: 20 percent for ages 25–34, 35 percent for ages 35–44, 30 percent for ages 45–54, and 15 percent for ages 55 and

older (Hankook Ilbo 2007). We know of no published H-2 applicant counts against available places for any year after 2007.

Personal remittances received by China equaled 0.09 percent of GDP in 2021 and 0.13 percent in 2024, against a world average of about 4.7 percent in the same World Bank series (TheGlobalEconomy.com 2025). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to China at about US\$3.76 billion that year (World Bank 2021). The estimate covers all senders; to our knowledge, no source reports the part sent by Korean-Chinese.

The historic center of China's Korean population is the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province. Ethnic Koreans made up 70.5 percent of Yanbian's population in 1953 and 30.8 percent (about 597,000 people) in 2020, when Han Chinese made up 65.79 percent (Koreancenter 2022). As far as we know, no published source breaks down Korea-bound migrants by province of origin.

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, China's Korean Communities and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Foreign-national overseas Koreans living in South Korea, 2024	864,245	EKW 2024
Share of them who were Chinese nationals of Korean ethnicity, 2024 (%)	77.3	EKW 2024
Ethnic Koreans in China, 2000 census	1,923,842	Koreancenter 2022
Ethnic Koreans in China, 2020 census	1,702,479	Koreancenter 2022
Korean-Chinese living in South Korea, January 2020	about 708,000	Financial News 2022
Ethnic Koreans in Yanbian, 2020	about 597,000	Financial News 2022
Ethnic Korean share of Yanbian population, 1953 and 2020 (%)	70.5 and 30.8	Koreancenter 2022
Cap on H-2 visa holders, from 2010	303,000	Kang Nam Labor Law Firm 2026
Personal remittances received by China, 2024 (% of GDP)	0.13	TheGlobalEconomy.com 2025

Note: No EPS applicant or deployment counts exist for Korean-Chinese, who enter through the overseas-Korean visa track.

China's Nationality Law does not recognize dual nationality (Article 3), and under Article 9 a Chinese citizen residing abroad who voluntarily acquires a foreign nationality loses Chinese nationality automatically (Lawtimes 2004). Korean-Chinese who naturalize in South Korea therefore give up Chinese nationality. We are not aware of any published description of national or Jilin provincial programs that recruit or train workers for South Korea.

Research on this migration covers brokers, debt, work, and health. A 2005 Korean Institute of Criminology study, based on interviews with a Beijing broker and a survey of 456 migrants from China, found that smuggled entry into South Korea cost an average of about 16 million won, that 41 percent of respondents had borrowed to pay it, and that about 30 percent of Korean-Chinese who entered on C-3 short-term

visit visas remained without authorization (Jang 2005). Studies of workers and residents in South Korea link depression to acculturative stress, work-related psychosocial factors, and perceived discrimination, and poor self-rated health to ethnic discrimination (Lee et al. 2012; Hong 2019; Lee et al. 2024); the Health and Well-being section reports their estimates. Studies of Korean-Chinese marriage migration include Freeman's ethnography of marriage and labor migration between China and South Korea (Freeman 2011). Return to China has drawn less research; an interview study of ten Korean-Chinese who went back to Yanbian from Korea, Japan, and Chinese cities and started businesses there discusses the program the Yanbian government began in 2015 to encourage returnees to start businesses (Fang 2018).

10 Community Organizations

A 2022 study describes Korean-Chinese as the largest foreign group in Korea's multicultural population, at about 32 percent of migrants counted in the 2020 local-government foreign resident statistics (Ahn 2022). The Korean-Chinese Students Network in Korea (KCN), founded in 2004, held a 20th-anniversary seminar at Yonsei University on January 13, 2024 (Ethnic Korean World News 2024).

The KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations includes 13 whose name or stated target group refers to this community. They include the Overseas Koreans Agency

(Incheon Yeonsu-gu), Jaehan Dongpo Yeonhap Chonghoe and Jungguk Dongpo Hanmaeum Yeonhap Chonghoe (both Seoul Guro-gu), Jungguk Dongpo Yeonhap Jungang-hoe (Seoul Geumcheon-gu), Jeonguk Dongpo Chongyeonhaphoe (Seoul Yeongdeungpo-gu), Jungguk Dongpo Yeonhaphoe and the Jungguk Dongpo-ui Jip shelter at the House of Foreign Workers (both Ansan-si Danwon-gu), and Suwon Joseonjok Dongpo Hyeophoe (Suwon-si Paldal-gu). Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family and foreign worker support centers, also serve Korean-Chinese residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Korean-Chinese Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Chinese Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

Chinese nationals were the third-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and the second-largest among all resident foreigners. Of the 315,682 Chinese resident foreigners that year (11.9 percent of all resident foreigners), 218,893 (69.3 percent) were registered foreigners, equal to 14.7 percent of all registered foreigners. China ranked second on both bases in 2006, 2014, and 2019.

Highlights

- ▶ In 2024, 315,682 Chinese nationals lived in South Korea. They were the third-largest nationality among registered foreigners (14.7 percent) and the second-largest among all resident foreigners (11.9 percent).
- ▶ The population peaked at 400,684 in 2019, fell to 225,528 in 2021, and in 2024 stood at 78.8 percent of its 2019 size, 19th in growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 29.3 percent of Chinese residents held short-term visit status and 24.0 percent held study or training status, compared with 19.7 and 10.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

The population grew from 145,383 in 2006 to 400,684 in 2019, an increase of about 176 percent. It fell to 247,330 in 2020 and 225,528 in 2021. Visa-free entry to Jeju for Chinese nationals was suspended in February 2020 during COVID-19 (Headline Jeju, 2020). By 2024 it had recovered to 315,682, or 85,002 below the 2019 peak. Among the 20 largest nationalities, only one had a weaker change between 2019 and 2024.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Chinese residents were more often women (57.0 percent versus 45.1 percent), more often in study and training statuses (24.0 percent versus 10.2 percent), and more often in the Seoul capital region (66.0 percent versus 55.2 percent). Only 6.5

percent held employment visas, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. This Spotlight describes the size, location, age, visa status, naturalization, and unauthorized population of Chinese residents, together with migration from China to South Korea and published research on their migration, health, and community institutions.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of each year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are not included.

Chinese residents. In this Spotlight, Chinese nationals whom the Ministry of Justice does not classify as ethnic Korean. Ethnic Koreans of Chinese nationality (Korean-Chinese, 한국계 중국인) are counted separately by the Ministry and are profiled in a separate Spotlight.

Index of dissimilarity (D). A measure from 0 to 1 of how differently a group is spread across districts compared with all other registered foreigners. A value of 0.379 means that 37.9 percent of the group would have to move to match the distribution of other foreigners.

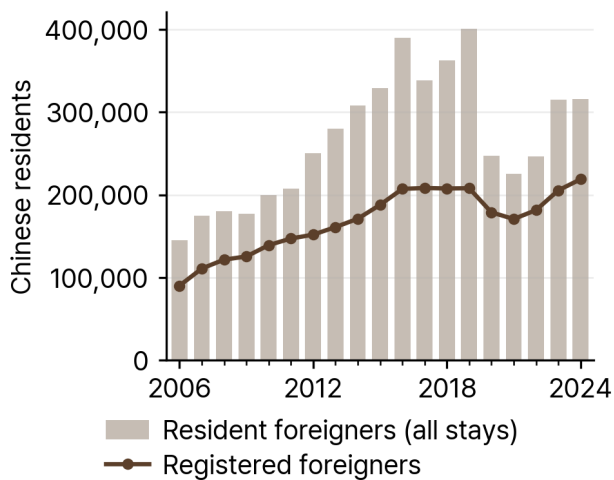
Ethnic enclave. A district where the group's location quotient is at least 2 (its share of the district's registered foreigners is at least twice its national share) and the group makes up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Chinese resident foreigners rose from 145,383 in 2006 to 199,802 in 2010, 307,798 in 2014, and 400,684 in 2019. The count dropped by 153,354 between 2019 and 2020 and was lowest in 2021, at 225,528. It rose to 314,945 in 2023 and 315,682 in 2024.

Registered foreigners followed a steadier path. The registered count grew from 90,298 in 2006 to 208,081 in 2019 and 218,893 in 2024, so it was 10,812 higher in 2024 than in 2019 even though the resident total was 85,002 lower. Most of the decline after 2019 was among short-term visa holders: C-3 short-term visit holders fell from 143,617 to 70,013 and B-2 tourist and transit holders from 43,305 to 22,473 between 2019 and 2024. Among registered foreigners, China ranked second in 2006, 2014, and 2019 and third in 2024, and its share of all registered foreigners fell from 16.4 percent in 2019 to 14.7 percent in 2024. Among all resident foreigners it ranked second in each of those years, and its share fell from 16.0 percent in 2006 to 11.9 percent in 2024.

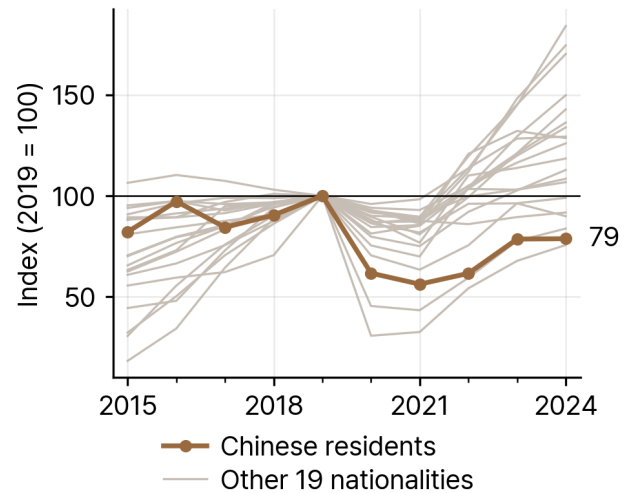
FIGURE 1
Chinese Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Indexed to 2019 (2019 = 100), the Chinese population stood at 78.8 in 2024, which ranked 19th of the 20 largest nationalities.

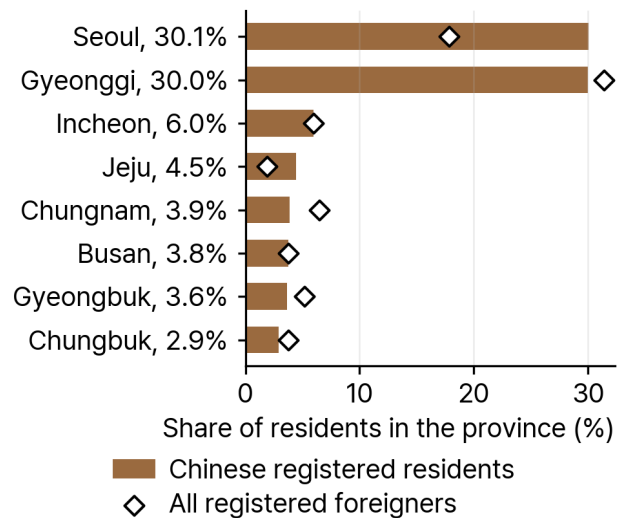
FIGURE 2
Change in the Chinese Population Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

FIGURE 3
Registered Chinese Nationals by Region of South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

District data cover registered foreigners. Of the 218,893 registered Chinese nationals in 2024, 36.0 percent lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi and 30.1 percent in Seoul, so 66.0 percent were in the capital region, compared with 55.2 percent of all resident foreigners. Yeongnam had 13.0 percent, Chungcheong 9.2 percent, and Honam and Gangwon-Jeju 5.9 percent each. Only 3.9 percent lived in rural counties (gun), against 10.6 percent of all resident foreigners.

TABLE 1

Chinese Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	145,383	90,298	2	2	14.3	16.0
2014	307,798	171,174	2	2	15.7	17.1
2019	400,684	208,081	2	2	16.4	15.9
2024	315,682	218,893	3	2	14.7	11.9

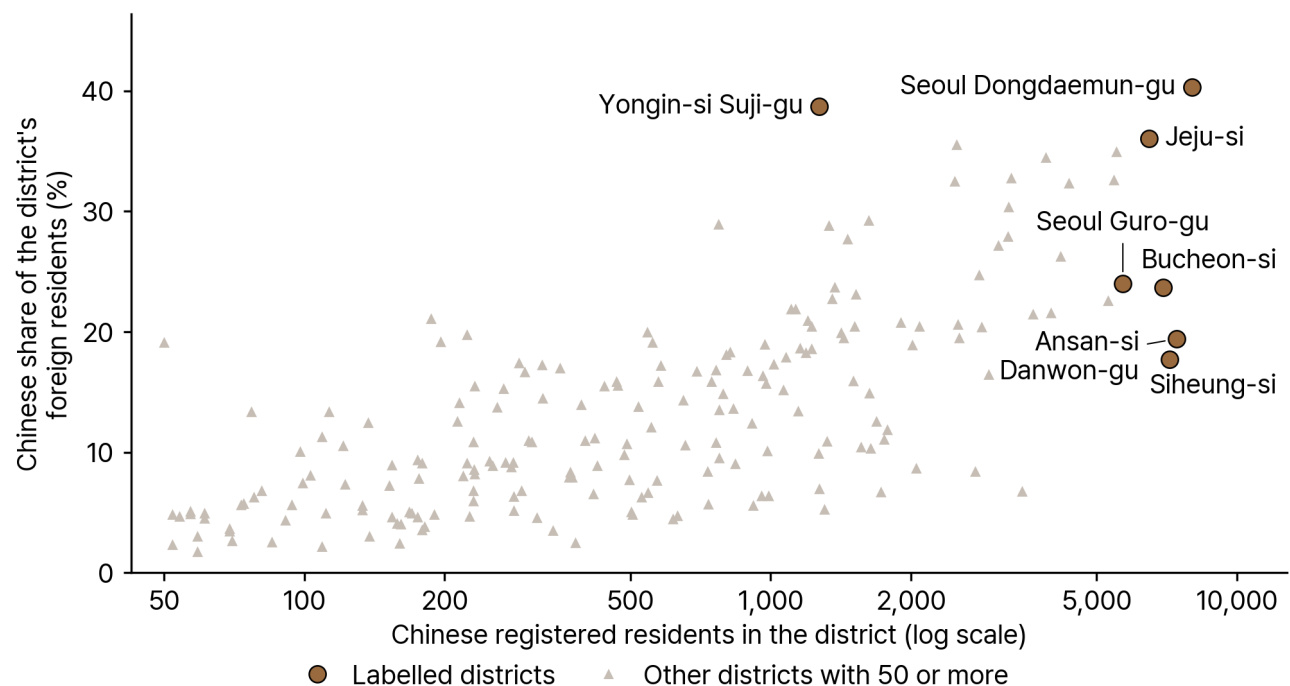
Note: Registered foreigners are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities. All resident foreigners also include short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters. Excludes Korean-Chinese, whom the Ministry of Justice counts separately.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In 2024, 176 districts had at least 100 registered Chinese nationals. The ten largest districts together accounted for 28.5 percent of the group. Dongdaemun-gu in Seoul had the most

(8,007), followed by Danwon-gu in Ansan (7,440), Siheung (7,179), and Bucheon (6,944). Jeju-si (6,479) was the largest district outside the capital region.

FIGURE 4

Districts with the Largest Number of Registered Chinese Nationals in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The index of dissimilarity between Chinese nationals and other registered foreigners rose from 0.294 in 2014 to 0.379 in 2024, so the group's distribution across districts moved further from that of other foreigners over the decade.

Ten districts met the enclave definition in 2024. Seven were in Seoul: Jongno-gu (3,890 people, location quotient 6.6), Jung-gu (3,243, 6.3), Dongdaemun-gu (8,007, 5.5), Seodaemun-gu (5,517, 4.3), Gwangjin-gu (5,447, 3.8), Seongbuk-gu (4,362, 2.4), and Seongdong-gu (2,479, 2.1). The other three were Seogwipo-si (3,285, 4.2) and Jeju-si (6,479, 3.1) on Jeju, and

Cheongwon-gu in Cheongju (2,504, 3.1). In Dongdaemun-gu, Chinese nationals made up 40.3 percent of all registered foreigners.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 57.0 percent of Chinese residents in both 2019 and 2024 (180,022 of 315,682 in 2024), compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners in 2024. The largest five-

year age group in 2024 was 20-24, and the median person fell in the 30-34 group.

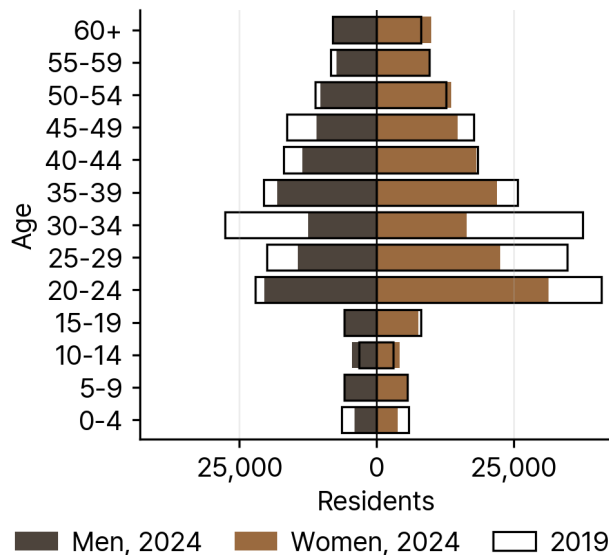
TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Chinese Nationals, 2024

District	Province	Registered Chinese nationals	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Dongdaemun-gu	Seoul	8,007	40.3
Danwon-gu, Ansan-si	Gyeonggi-do	7,440	19.4
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	7,179	17.7
Bucheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	6,944	23.7
Jeju-si	Jeju-do	6,479	36.0
Guro-gu	Seoul	5,697	24.0
Seodaemun-gu	Seoul	5,517	35.0
Gwangjin-gu	Seoul	5,447	32.6
Yeongdeungpo-gu	Seoul	5,295	22.6
Seongbuk-gu	Seoul	4,362	32.4

Note: The ten districts held 28.5 percent of the 218,893 registered Chinese nationals.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

FIGURE 5
Chinese Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

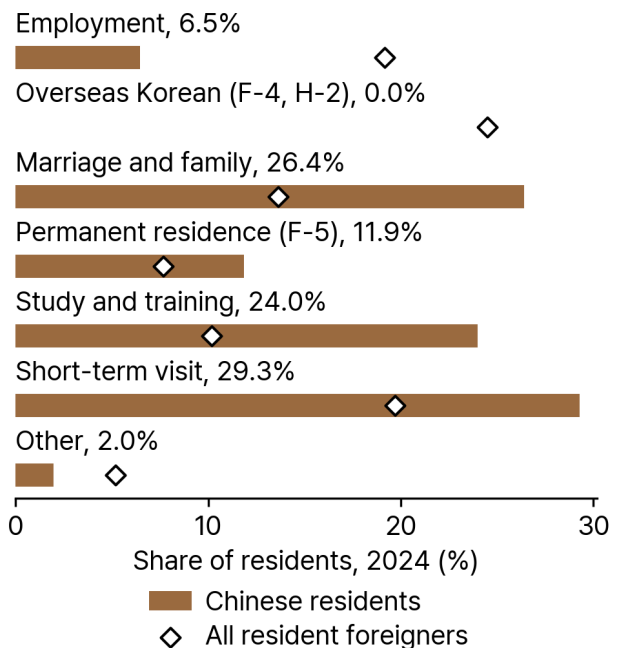


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Half of Chinese residents (50.0 percent) were aged 20 to 39 in 2024, about the same as all resident foreigners (49.7 percent). Children under 15 were a larger share (8.9 percent versus 5.7 percent), and people aged 60 and over a smaller share (5.8 percent versus 12.9 percent). The number of children under 5 fell from 12,173 in 2019 to 7,946 in 2024, while the number aged 50 and over changed little (58,065 and 58,990).

4 Visa Status

FIGURE 6
Visa Groups of Chinese Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



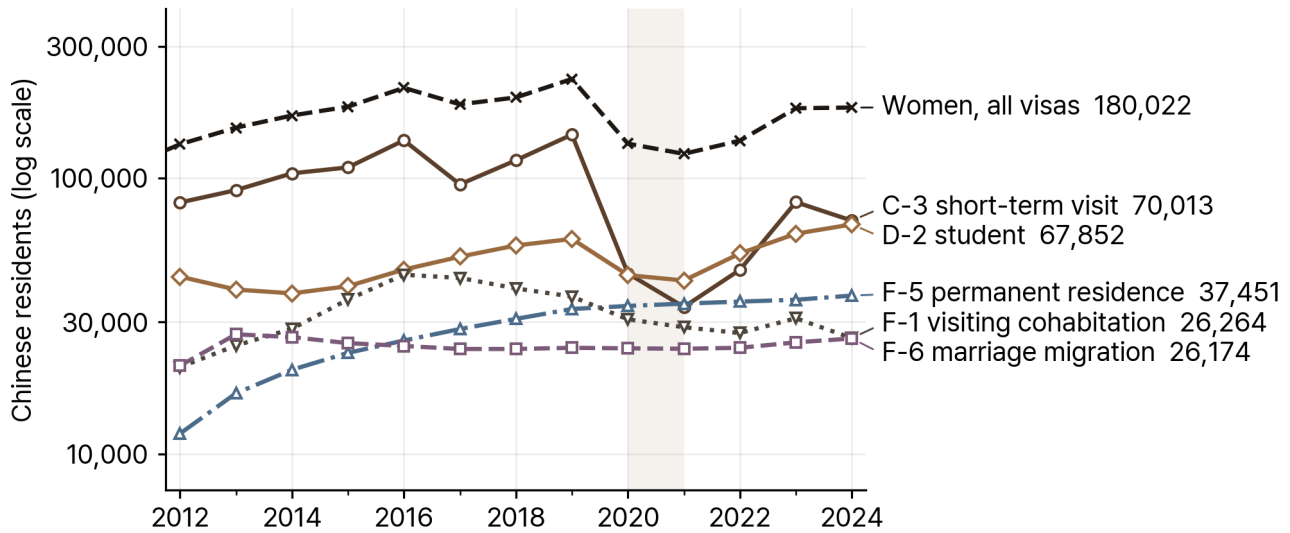
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Chinese residents held a different mix of visas from other foreigners in 2024. Short-term visits accounted for 29.3 percent of the group (19.7 percent of all resident foreigners), study and training for 24.0 percent (10.2 percent), marriage

and family statuses for 26.4 percent (13.6 percent), and permanent residence (F-5) for 11.9 percent (7.7 percent). Employment visas accounted for 6.5 percent, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. The overseas Korean statuses (F-4, H-2), held by 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners, do not apply to this group.

The C-3 short-term visit visa was the most common single status, and Chinese nationals were the largest nationality among its holders, with 43.0 percent of all C-3 holders in Korea in 2024. They also held 38.0 percent of all D-2 student visas and 38.0 percent of all F-2 residential visas. Between 2019 and 2024, D-2 students rose from 60,115 to 67,852, F-5 permanent residents from 33,485 to 37,451, and F-2 holders from 17,764 to 23,304, while C-3 holders fell by 73,604 and F-1 holders by 10,888.

FIGURE 7
Chinese Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Low-skilled Chinese workers come to Korea through the E-9 Employment Permit System, under which they may work for one employer and may change employers only if the employer

breaks the law or the business closes. Korean-Chinese workers on H-2 visas may change employers (Lee and Cho, 2019). That study analyzed 42,089 occupational injury cases among Chinese-national migrant workers from January 2007 to September 2018.

TABLE 3
Most Common Visas Held by Chinese Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Chinese residents, 2024 (%)	Chinese share of all holders of this visa, 2024 (%)
C-3	Short-term visit	143,617	70,013	22.2	43.0
D-2	Student	60,115	67,852	21.5	38.0
F-5	Permanent residence	33,485	37,451	11.9	18.5
F-1	Visiting and joining family	37,152	26,264	8.3	26.5
F-6	Marriage migration	24,215	26,174	8.3	17.6
F-2	Residential	17,764	23,304	7.4	38.0
B-2	Tourist and transit	43,305	22,473	7.1	14.7

Note: Shares of Chinese residents use the 2024 total of 315,682.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Study is a larger channel. In 2020, 67,030 Chinese nationals were studying in Korea, 43.6 percent of all international students and the largest single nationality (Zhang and Kim, 2021). In July 2025 China was the second-largest source, with 71,509 students, behind Vietnam, out of a record 272,573 international students (Nongmin Ilbo, 2025).

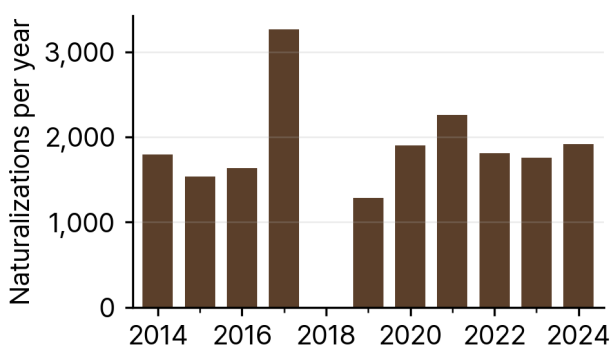
Marriage is a third channel. China was the largest source country of marriage immigrants in 2024, with 33.4 percent of all marriage immigrants, ahead of Vietnam (23.0 percent), Japan (8.9 percent), and the Philippines (7.1 percent) (e-Nara Index, 2024). This national indicator differs in coverage from the F-6 count in the Visa Status section, where Chinese nationals held 17.6 percent of F-6 visas in 2024.

Two recent policy changes applied specifically to Chinese nationals, both concerning short-term visits. Jeju's visa-free entry program, in place since 2002 and used overwhelmingly by Chinese nationals, was suspended at midnight on 4 February 2020 because of COVID-19, the first suspension in its history (Headline Jeju, 2020), and resumed on 1 June 2022 (Headline Jeju, 2022). From 29 September 2025, Korea allowed visa-free entry for Chinese group tourists (parties of three or more booked through designated Korea-China travel agencies) for visits of up to 15 days, as a pilot set to run through 30 June 2026 (KOCIS, 2025). In June 2026 the Ministry of Justice extended it through 31 December 2026, the same period as China's visa-free entry for Korean nationals (Travel Times, 2026).

6 Naturalization

The KIRD dataset records 19,145 naturalizations of Chinese nationals from 2014 to 2024, drawn from the yearbook's by-country tables for 2014-2017 and 2019-2024; the 2018 yearbook reports China and Korean-Chinese together and is excluded. Annual numbers ranged from 1,282 (2019) to 2,257 (2021) in most years, with one higher year: 3,260 in 2017. In 2024, 1,915 Chinese nationals naturalized.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Chinese Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The yearbooks also record 832 restorations of Korean nationality by Chinese nationals from 2011 to 2024 (also excluding 2018), a procedure open to people who previously

held Korean nationality. Only 39 restorations were recorded in 2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

China is among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents. The yearbook counted 70,536 unauthorized Chinese residents in 2019, 63,113 in 2021, 64,199 in 2023, and 61,906 in 2024. The 2024 figure was the third-largest by nationality and equaled 19.6 percent of all Chinese resident foreigners that year.

Chinese nationals made up 15.6 percent of the 397,522 unauthorized residents in Korea in 2024 (61,906 divided by 397,522). As a share of the Chinese resident population, the unauthorized count was 17.6 percent in 2019 (70,536 of 400,684), 28.0 percent in 2021 (63,113 of 225,528), and 20.4 percent in 2023 (64,199 of 314,945). The 2021 share was higher because the resident total fell by more than the unauthorized count.

8 Health and Well-being

In national injury data for 2007-2018, the adjusted fatality rate among injured Chinese-national E-9 workers was 1.80 times that of Korean-Chinese H-2 workers (95% CI 1.31-2.46). The authors attribute part of this difference to the E-9 rule against changing employers (Lee and Cho, 2019).

A cross-sectional study of 128 adult Chinese immigrants in Jung-gu, Seoul, most of them women in their 40s who had lived in Korea for 5 to 10 years, found depression associated with life satisfaction in China ($p = .032$), life satisfaction in Korea ($p = .040$), and perceived everyday stress ($p = .001$) (An, Moon, and Cha, 2019).

In interviews with 20 Chinese international students conducted after the COVID-19 outbreak, participants described online and neighborhood blame, wariness, and discrimination directed at them as Chinese, and coped by concealing their nationality or avoiding certain places and people (Zhang and Kim, 2021).

9 Migration from China to South Korea

To our knowledge, no published source reports what share of China's emigrants live in South Korea or where Korea ranks among their destinations. Korean statistics divide Chinese nationals into ethnic Koreans (Korean-Chinese) and all others; this Spotlight profiles the latter group, who numbered 315,682 in 2024.

The two groups changed at different rates in the national immigrant survey conducted by Statistics Korea and the Ministry of Justice. Between 2023 and 2024, Korean-Chinese residents rose by about 21,000 and other Chinese nationals fell by about 1,000 (Statistics Korea and Ministry of Justice 2024).

In the 2025 survey, Korean-Chinese rose by about 13,000 and other Chinese nationals by about 4,000 over the previous year (Statistics Korea and Ministry of Justice 2025).

In 2026, China was one of the 17 countries whose workers may enter Korea under the general Employment Permit System (E-9), together with Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, Uzbekistan, and others (e-Nara Index 2026). E-9 admissions from China are small: 555 workers in 2024 and 393 in 2025 (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026). In 2024, 3,159 Chinese nationals took the EPS-TOPIK and 2,062 passed (HRD Korea 2025). Outside the EPS, Chinese companies sent 428,000 workers abroad on contract in 2025, and 603,000 were abroad at the end of that year (MOFCOM 2026). Through this channel, 2,274 workers went to Korea in 2024, and 6,223 were in Korea at the end of that year (MOFCOM 2025). Study is a larger channel. In April 2025, Chinese nationals made up 30.2 percent of the 253,400 international students enrolled in Korean universities, the largest share of any nationality (Korea Herald 2025). This count differs in date and coverage from the July 2025 figure in the Migration Channels and Policy section.

Remittances are a small part of China's economy. Personal remittances received equaled 0.13 percent of China's GDP in 2020, according to World Bank data (Trading Economics

2020). The World Bank reports its regional remittance total for East Asia and the Pacific with China excluded; on that basis, remittances to the region grew 4.8 percent to \$85 billion in 2023 (World Bank 2024). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to China at about US\$3.76 billion that year, about half of the US\$7.46 billion estimated for all remittances sent from South Korea (World Bank 2021).

A study of Chinese nationals living in four clusters in Seoul and Suwon, a sample that includes both Korean-Chinese and other Chinese nationals, recorded the places in China they passed through before migration. Most had passed through one place in China before moving to Korea, most often the three northeastern provinces, including Yanji in Yanbian, or Shandong province. In the 2013 fieldwork in Daerim-dong, Shandong appeared at the first, second, and third stages of these routes; in the 2019 fieldwork in Suwon it appeared only at the first stage (Lee and Chung 2022). In the same clusters, Korean-Chinese far outnumbered other Chinese nationals. In Garibong-dong in 2015, 10,120 residents (93.1 percent) were registered as Korean-Chinese and 645 (5.9 percent) as other Chinese nationals.

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, China and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Change in Chinese nationals other than Korean-Chinese, 2023-24 (survey)	About -1,000 (Korean-Chinese: about +21,000)	Statistics Korea and Ministry of Justice 2024
Change in Chinese nationals other than Korean-Chinese, 2024-25 (survey)	About +4,000 (Korean-Chinese: about +13,000)	Statistics Korea and Ministry of Justice 2025
Employment Permit System sending countries, 2026	17, including China	e-Nara Index 2026
E-9 workers admitted from China, 2024 and 2025	555 and 393	Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026
EPS-TOPIK test takers from China, 2024	3,159 (2,062 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
Workers sent abroad by Chinese companies on contract, 2025	428,000 (603,000 abroad at year end)	MOFCOM 2026
Chinese share of international students at Korean universities, April 2025	30.2% of 253,400	Korea Herald 2025
Personal remittances received, share of China's GDP, 2020	0.13%	Trading Economics 2020
Remittances sent from South Korea to China, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	About US\$3.76 billion	World Bank 2021
Korea-China Social Security Agreement in force	16 January 2013	eToday 2012

Note: Survey changes are rounded estimates from the Statistics Korea and Ministry of Justice immigrant survey.

Source: Sources listed in each row.

On the policy side, the Korea-China Social Security Agreement, signed on 29 October 2012, took effect on 16 January 2013 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). A person working in the other country who is enrolled in the home country's national

pension and employment insurance is exempt from the corresponding programs of the country of work, for up to 13 years for posted workers and 5 years for locally hired workers, with no time limit for the self-employed (eToday 2012). On the

Chinese side, companies that send workers abroad on contract fall under the State Council's Regulation on the Administration of Overseas Labor Service Cooperation (Decree No. 620), in force since 1 August 2012. It requires a qualification certificate from provincial commerce authorities, bars companies from taking a deposit or property guarantee from workers under any name, and requires each company to lodge a reserve fund of at least RMB 3 million for unpaid wages and repatriation costs (State Council 2012).

Research on this migration often compares Korean-Chinese with other Chinese nationals. Lee and Chung (2022) find that Korean-Chinese migrants have a more developed kin-based migration network than Han Chinese migrants, and they link this to the larger size and greater spatial differentiation of Korean-Chinese clusters such as Garibong-dong and Daerim-dong (Lee and Chung 2022). Using the National Multicultural Family Survey, Chang and Wallace (2015) find that Han Chinese marriage migrant wives reported good self-rated health more often (54 percent) than Vietnamese (50.5 percent) or Korean-Chinese (47 percent) wives. Han Chinese wives also more often ranked their natal families as wealthy, and 18 percent held a college degree, the highest share of the three groups. Junior high or high school education was associated with worse self-rated health among both Vietnamese and Han Chinese wives, and for Han Chinese wives with a college degree this negative association disappeared (Chang and Wallace 2015). We know of no study of brokers, migration debt, or return migration among Chinese nationals in Korea. Studies of work injuries and mental health appear in the Health and Well-being section.

10 Community Organizations

Korea has an older Chinese community, the overseas Chinese (Hwagyo), with its own institutions. In Incheon, merchant guilds of Guangdong origin (Gwangbang, 1889), of Tianjin, Shandong, and Manchuria origin (Bukbang, 1891), and of Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Fujian origin (Nambang, 1913) merged in December 1913 to form the Incheon Chinese Merchants Hall. Today's Incheon Overseas Chinese Association originated in the Incheon Chunghwa Hall, established in 1905 (Incheon In, 2025). Hwagyo schools teach in Chinese; one is the Overseas Chinese High School in Busan, which opened on 1 September 1951 (International School Information, Government of South Korea).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 56 name Chinese nationals in their name or target group. Most are Ministry of Justice-designated program sites and provincial multicultural education support centers under the Ministry of Education. Examples include the Gunpo Migrants and Multicultural Center (Gunpo-si), the Ansan Foreign Residents Support Headquarters (Danwon-gu, Ansan-si), the Multicultural Education Institute of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul), the Jeju Migrant Center (Jeju-si), and the Jeonnam-Gwangju Foreign Residents Support Center (Gwangsan-gu, Gwangju). Most general-purpose migrant organizations, which do not name a nationality, also serve Chinese residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Chinese Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Vietnamese Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 261,581 Vietnamese nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, residing for more than 90 days. Vietnam was the largest nationality among registered foreigners (17.6 percent of the total, up from third in 2019) and the third-largest among all resident foreigners, a count that also includes short-term visitors (305,936 people and 11.5 percent of the total, up from fourth in 2014). Registered foreigners made up 85.5 percent of Vietnamese resident foreigners in 2024. The resident count was about 5.6 times its 2006 size of 54,698 and grew 36.3 percent between 2019 and 2024, the sixth-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 261,581 Vietnamese nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, making Vietnam the largest nationality among registered foreigners (17.6 percent) and the third-largest among all resident foreigners (305,936 people, 11.5 percent), up from 54,698 resident foreigners in 2006.
- ▶ Study and training visas covered 32.0 percent of Vietnamese residents in 2024, compared with 10.2 percent of all resident foreigners, and Vietnamese nationals held 63.7 percent of all D-4 general trainee visas in the country.
- ▶ The Ministry of Justice counted 77,730 unauthorized Vietnamese residents in 2024, equal to 25.4 percent of Vietnamese resident foreigners and the second-largest group of unauthorized residents by nationality.

Vietnamese migration to Korea grew through three channels. Korea and Vietnam signed an Employment Permit System (EPS) agreement in 2004, and by 2023 Vietnam had sent about 137,000 E-9 workers, more than any of the 16 EPS sending countries (EToday, 2023). Vietnam has also been the

largest source of foreign brides marrying Korean nationals since 2015 (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2023). Since 2019 the fastest growth has come through student and trainee visas: D-2 student visa holders rose from 18,337 in 2019 to 41,359 in 2024, and D-4 general trainees from 39,336 to 55,983.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Vietnamese residents in 2024 were younger (68.5 percent aged 20 to 39, against 49.7 percent), less concentrated in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi (33.6 percent, against 55.2 percent), and more likely to hold study, training, or marriage and family visas. Almost none held the overseas Korean visas (F-4 and H-2) that covered 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of the year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the Ministry of Justice's broadest count and the main measure used in this profile.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). The subset of resident foreigners who remain more than 90 days and register with immigration authorities. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are not included. District figures in this profile use registered foreigners.

Unauthorized residents (불법체류외국인). Foreign nationals who remain in Korea after their permitted period of stay has ended, as counted by the Ministry of Justice.

Dissimilarity index (D). A measure of how differently Vietnamese residents and all other registered foreigners are spread across districts, from 0 (identical distribution) to 1 (complete separation).

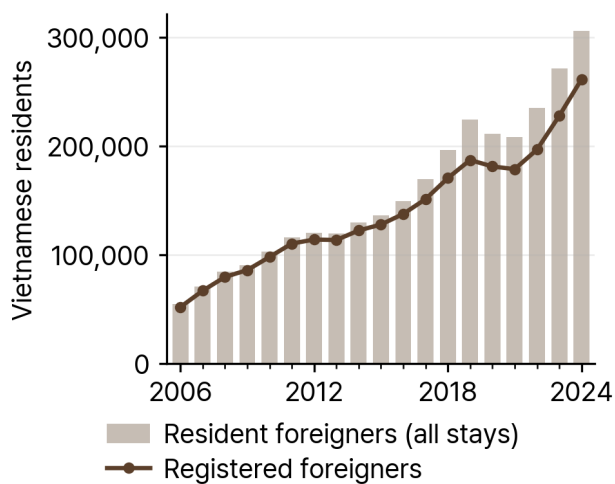
Ethnic enclave. In this profile, a district where the location quotient for the group (its share of the district's foreign residents divided by its share of all foreign residents nationwide) is at least 2 and the group makes up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Vietnamese resident foreigners rose from 54,698 in 2006 to 103,306 in 2010, 129,973 in 2014, and 224,518 in 2019. The count fell to 211,243 in 2020 and 208,740 in 2021, the years of COVID-19 border restrictions, then rose each year to a peak of 305,936 in 2024.

With 2019 set to 100, the Vietnamese population had an index of 136.3 in 2024, the sixth-highest growth among the 20 largest nationalities. The registered share was 85.5 percent in 2024 (261,581 of 305,936), so most Vietnamese residents were long-term stayers.

FIGURE 1
Vietnamese Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

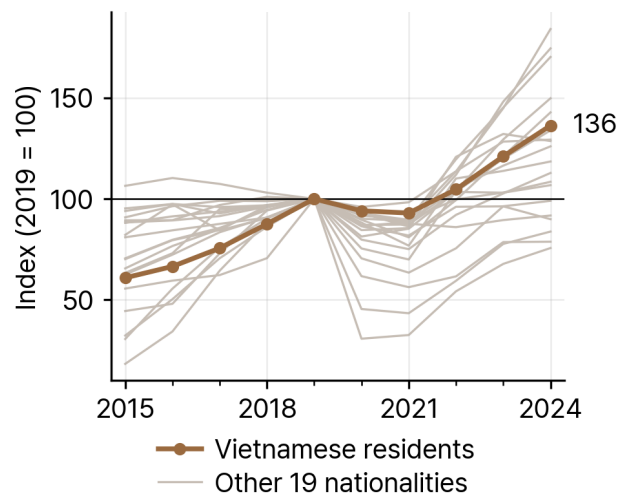
Vietnam ranked third among registered foreigners in 2006, 2014, and 2019 and first in 2024, when Vietnamese nationals made up 17.6 percent of all registered foreigners, up from 8.3 percent in 2006 and 14.7 percent in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, the group ranked fourth in 2006 and 2014 and third in 2019 and 2024, and its share rose from 6.0 percent in 2006 to 11.5 percent in 2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

Vietnamese residents were spread more widely across the country than foreign residents as a whole. In 2024, the Yeongnam region (Busan, Daegu, Ulsan, and the two Gyeongsang provinces) was home to 82,265 registered Vietnamese (31.4 percent), followed by Incheon and Gyeonggi with 60,901 (23.3 percent), Chungcheong with 40,957 (15.7 percent), Honam with 39,252 (15.0 percent), Seoul with 27,032 (10.3 percent), and Gangwon and Jeju with 11,174 (4.3 percent). Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi together accounted for 33.6 percent of Vietnamese residents, compared with 55.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

Rural counties (gun) were home to 13.9 percent of registered Vietnamese residents in 2024, compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents. In Honam the rural share was 32.0 percent. At least 100 Vietnamese residents lived in each of 240 districts, and the ten largest districts accounted for 18.3 percent of the group.

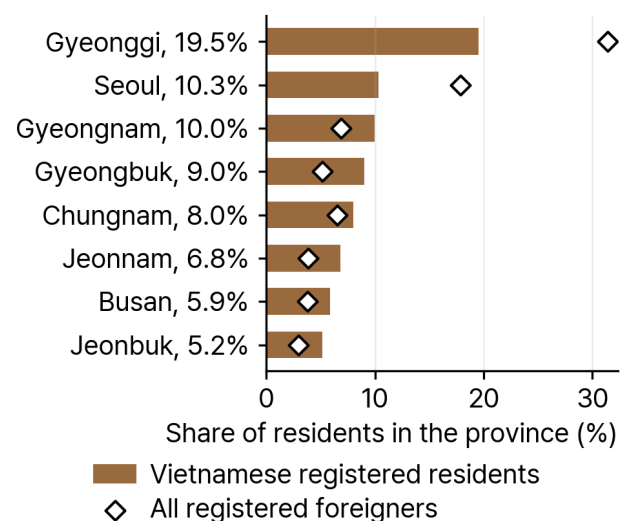
FIGURE 2
Growth of the Vietnamese Population and the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The dissimilarity index between Vietnamese and other registered foreigners fell from 0.324 in 2014 to 0.298 in 2024, so the group's spread across districts moved slightly closer to that of other foreign residents.

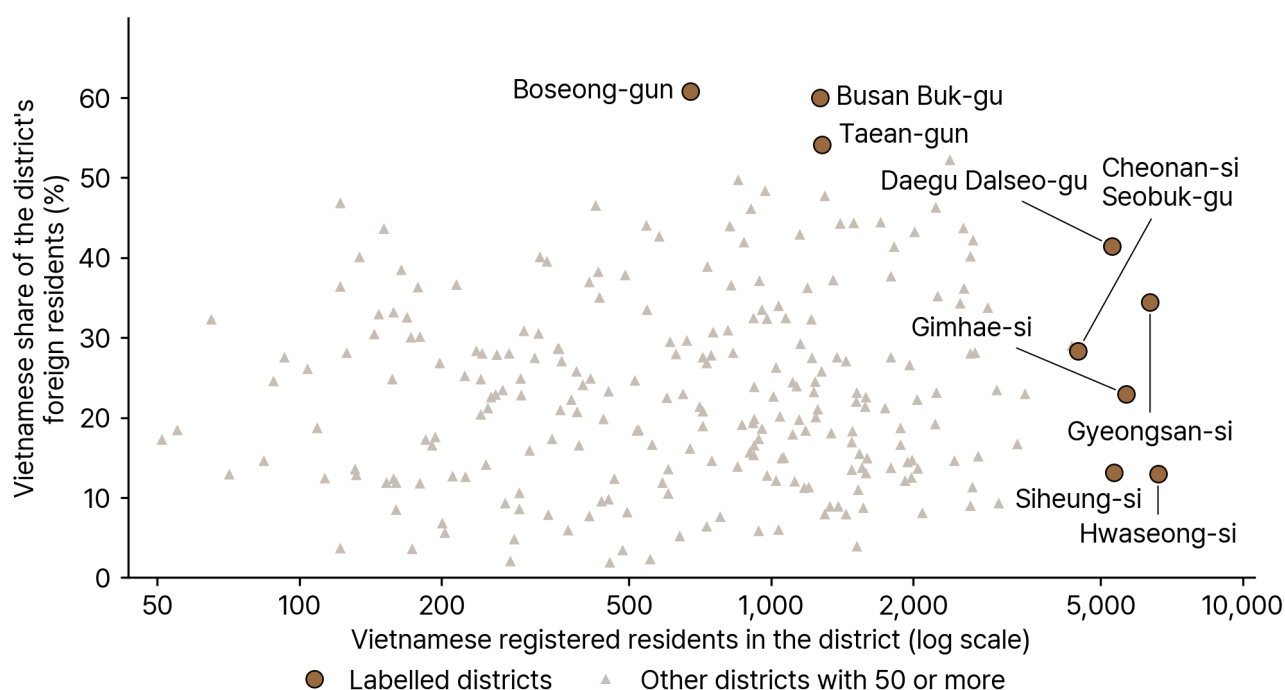
FIGURE 3
Registered Vietnamese Residents by Province, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 4

Registered Vietnamese Residents by District, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

By the definition used here, 21 districts were Vietnamese enclaves in 2024. Most were rural counties or small cities outside the capital region, including Jindo-gun (810 residents, location quotient 5.6), Boryeong-si (2,234; 4.7), Tae'an-gun (1,283; 4.2), and Boseong-gun (675; 3.6). The larger urban

enclaves were Gyeongsan-si (6,362; 4.7), Busan Sasang-gu (2,644; 2.6), Daejeon Dong-gu (2,566; 2.3), and Naju-si (1,791; 3.0). In Boseong-gun and Busan Buk-gu, Vietnamese nationals made up about 60 percent of registered foreigners (60.8 and 60.0 percent).

TABLE 1

Vietnamese Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	54,698	52,157	3	4	8.3	6.0
2014	129,973	122,571	3	4	11.2	7.2
2019	224,518	187,334	3	3	14.7	8.9
2024	305,936	261,581	1	3	17.6	11.5

Note: Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and overseas Koreans with F-4 visas who report their residence. Registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

of all resident foreigners (45.1 percent).

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 46.7 percent of Vietnamese residents in 2024 (142,851 of 305,936), down from 49.3 percent in 2019 (110,707 of 224,518). The 2024 share was slightly above that

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Vietnamese Residents, 2024

District	Province	Vietnamese residents	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	6,615	13.0
Gyeongsan-si	Gyeongsangbuk-do	6,362	34.4
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	5,668	22.9
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	5,332	13.2
Daegu Dalseo-gu	Daegu	5,290	41.5
Cheonan-si Seobuk-gu	Chungcheongnam-do	4,474	28.3
Gwangju Gwangsan-gu	Gwangju	4,341	29.0
Geoje-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	3,450	23.0
Seoul Dongdaemun-gu	Seoul	3,325	16.7
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	3,036	9.3

Note: Counts are registered foreigners in the 2024 district-level data (261,581 Vietnamese in total).

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

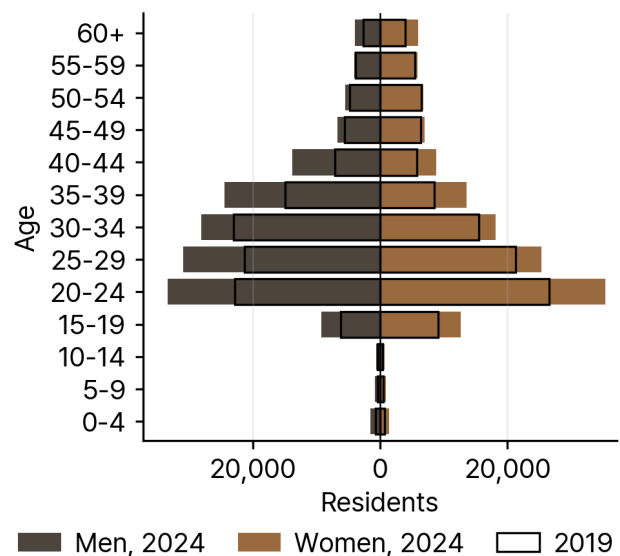
Most Vietnamese residents were young adults. In 2024, 209,452 (68.5 percent) were aged 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group was 20 to 24, and the median fell in the 30 to 34 group. Children under 15 made up 2.0 percent (6,023) and people aged 60 and older 3.3 percent, against 5.7 percent and 12.9 percent among all resident foreigners. The number of children under 15 nearly doubled between 2019 and 2024, from 3,188 to 6,023.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, study and training visas covered 32.0 percent of Vietnamese residents, employment visas 28.1 percent, marriage and family visas 27.3 percent, and short-term visits 10.7 percent. Among all resident foreigners, the corresponding shares were 10.2, 19.2, 13.6, and 19.7 percent. Only 0.8 percent of Vietnamese residents held permanent residence (F-5), compared with 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

The D-4 general trainee visa was the most common visa among Vietnamese residents in 2024 (55,983 holders), up from 2,277 in 2014 and 39,336 in 2019. Vietnamese nationals held 63.7 percent of all D-4 visas in Korea, the largest share of any nationality. They also held 55.2 percent of E-8 seasonal worker visas (13,541), a category with no Vietnamese holders in 2019. E-9 non-professional employment visas rose from 36,621 in 2019 to 41,547 in 2024 but remained below the 2014 level of 49,404.

FIGURE 5
Vietnamese Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

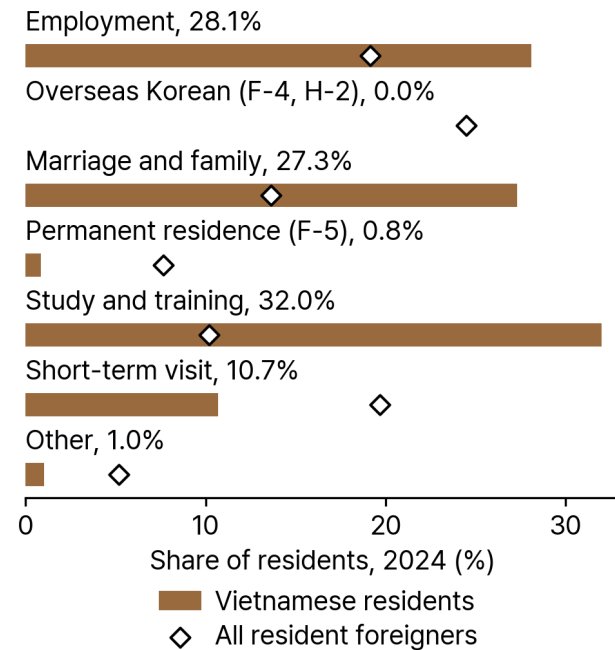


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

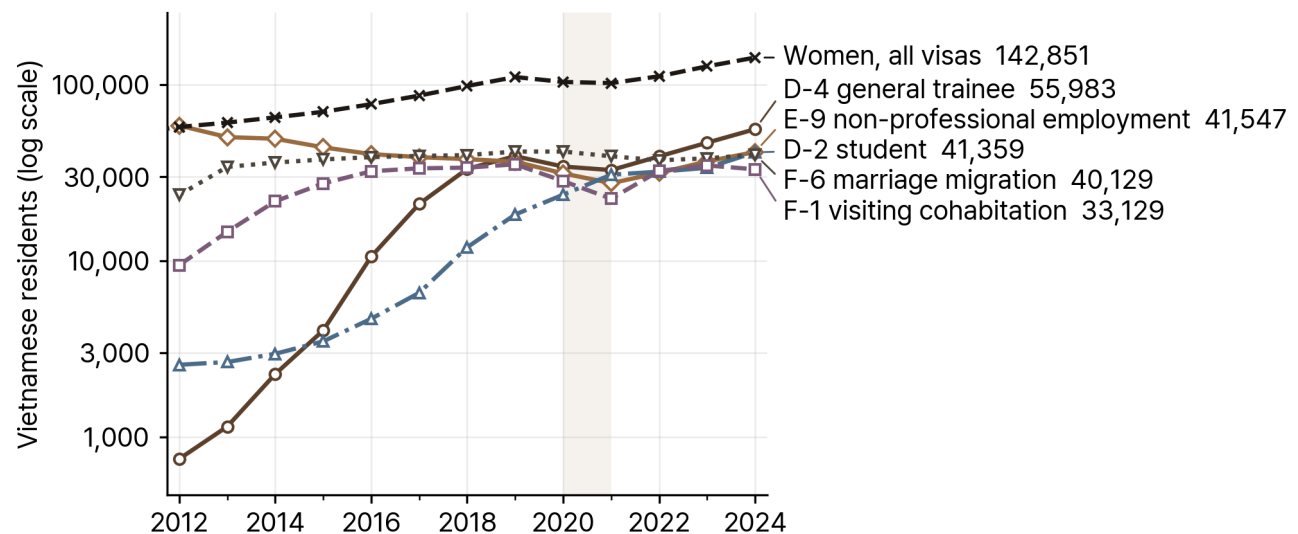
Labor migration from Vietnam takes place mainly through the Employment Permit System. Korea and Vietnam first signed an EPS memorandum in 2004 and renewed it for the ninth time in June 2023, by which point Vietnam had sent about 137,000 E-9 workers in total, the most among the 16 sending countries (EToday, 2023).

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Vietnamese Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 7

Vietnamese Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2006-24


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Marriage migration is a second channel. Vietnam has been the largest source of foreign brides marrying Korean nationals since 2015, and in 2018 it accounted for 38 percent of them (6,338 of 16,608) (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2023). In the KIRD data, 40,129 Vietnamese held the F-6 marriage migrant visa in 2024, 27.0 percent of all F-6 holders.

Education is the most recent channel. In the count of students at Korean universities as of April 2026, Vietnam passed China for the first time as the largest source of international students, with 96,834 students (31.5 percent) (Korea JoongAng Daily, 2026). Ministry of Justice data had already shown Vietnam ahead in August 2025, with 107,807 Vietnamese students against 86,179 Chinese students, out of 305,329 foreign students in total (Korea Times, 2025).

TABLE 3

Main Visa Types Held by Vietnamese Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Vietnamese residents, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
D-4	General trainee	39,336	55,983	18.3	63.7
E-9	Non-professional employment	36,621	41,547	13.6	12.3
D-2	Student	18,337	41,359	13.5	23.2
F-6	Marriage migration	41,772	40,129	13.1	27.0
F-1	Visiting cohabitation	35,364	33,129	10.8	33.4
C-3	Short-term visit	31,531	31,278	10.2	19.2
E-8	Seasonal worker	0	13,541	4.4	55.2

Note: Shares of Vietnamese residents use the 2024 total of 305,936 resident foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Korea has suspended EPS recruitment from parts of Vietnam over visa overstays. After a suspension in 2012, Korea in March 2017 barred recruitment from 11 localities, Hanoi and areas of Bac Ninh, Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Nam Dinh, Phu Tho, Thai Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, and Quang Binh provinces, where more than 30 percent of workers sent had overstayed (VnExpress International, 2017). Suspensions ordered from the Vietnamese side are described in the section on migration from Vietnam to South Korea.

6 Naturalization

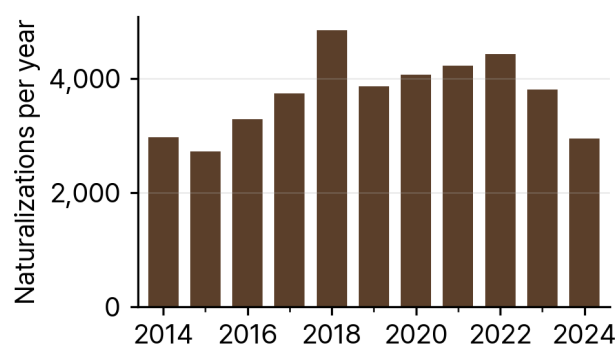
Between 2014 and 2024, 40,936 Vietnamese nationals acquired Korean citizenship through naturalization. Annual numbers rose from 2,977 in 2014 to a high of 4,849 in 2018, ranged from 3,807 to 4,431 from 2019 to 2023, and fell to 2,951 in 2024. The Ministry of Justice also recorded 722 restorations of Korean nationality among Vietnamese nationals over 2011-2024, 20 of them in 2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Vietnam is among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents. The count was 58,686 in 2019, 70,411 in 2021, 79,882 in 2023, and 77,730 in 2024. The 2024 figure equals 25.4 percent of Vietnamese resident foreigners that year (77,730 of 305,936) and 19.6 percent of all 397,522 unauthorized foreign residents (77,730 of 397,522), the second-largest count by nationality.

Overstays have led to suspensions of EPS recruitment from Vietnamese districts with high non-return rates in 2012, 2016, 2017, and 2023. The two migration sections of this profile describe them.

FIGURE 8

Vietnamese Nationals Naturalized as Korean Citizens, 2014-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

8 Health and Well-being

A 2014 study of 216 Vietnamese immigrant women in South Korea found that acculturative stress and depression directly affected the mental health component of their health-related quality of life, while social support acted indirectly through stress and depression (Chae et al., 2014).

Occupational safety has drawn public attention. On March 10, 2026, Nguyen Van Tuan, a 23-year-old Vietnamese worker, died after being trapped beneath an operating conveyor belt at a gravel-processing plant in Icheon, Gyeonggi Province; the company had not followed the two-person team rule for the task (Kyunghyang Shinmun, 2026). On April 17, 2026, the employer agreed to compensate his family using Korean wage levels through age 65, the basis applied to Korean workers. Compensation for migrant workers had usually switched to home-country wages after the end of their visa period (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2026).

9 Migration from Vietnam to South Korea

Vietnam sent more than 158,500 workers abroad for employment in 2024, including more than 52,800 women, and Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were the traditional markets receiving the most Vietnamese workers (Vietnam News, 2024). Of the 158,588 workers counted in 2024, 13,649 (8.6 percent) went to South Korea (Vietnam.vn, 2025a). In 2025, more than 11,600 of over 144,000 Vietnamese workers sent abroad went to South Korea, about 8 percent (Vietnam.vn, 2026). Vietnamese sources counted nearly 130,000 worker placements to Korea over the first 20 years of the EPS (Vietnam.vn, 2023).

In 2023, Vietnam registered 23,412 workers for the EPS, nearly double its target of about 12,000 workers (Vietnam News, 2023). In the round covered by a December 2023 bilateral agreement, about 29,000 Vietnamese workers registered for the Korean-language test, more than half met the conditions, and just over 10,200 received visas (Vietnam.vn, 2023). In 2024, nearly 46,000 Vietnamese candidates applied to take the EPS-TOPIK Korean-language test, the most in ten years (Vietnam.vn, 2025a).

Vietnam received an estimated USD 14 billion in remittances in 2023, among the ten largest amounts received by any country (VietnamPlus, 2023). Personal remittances equaled 3.36 percent of Vietnam's GDP in 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024, citing World Bank data). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Vietnam at about US\$918.9 million that year (World Bank, 2021).

Information on where Korea-bound workers come from is available for Nghe An province and from lists of districts under recruitment suspension. About 16,500 people from Nghe An province were working in South Korea on fixed-term contracts in the mid-2020s, out of an estimated 85,000 Nghe An natives working abroad (Vietnam.vn, 2025b). In 2016, Korea's labor ministry blocked new EPS placements from 44 districts and towns in Nghe An, Thanh Hoa, Ha Tinh, Hanoi, Hai Duong, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Bac Ninh, Quang Binh, and Hung Yen. In 2012, more than 70 percent of workers from Nghe An and more than 90 percent from Quang Binh had remained in Korea after their contracts expired (VietNamNet, 2016).

Vietnam's labor ministry has also suspended recruitment from its own side. In April 2017, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs halted the enrollment of fishery workers from 58 districts in coastal provinces that each had more than 60 workers living unlawfully in Korea, among them Nghi Xuan, Cam Xuyen, Loc Ha, Thach Ha, and Ky Anh in Ha Tinh and Bo Trach, Ba Don, and Dong Hoi in Quang Binh (VietNamNet, 2017). On March 10, 2023, Vietnam's Ministry of Labour suspended recruitment for eight districts, towns, and cities, which were Nghi Xuan and Cam Xuyen in Ha Tinh, Chi Linh in Hai Duong, Cua Lo, Nghi Loc, and Hung Nguyen in Nghe An,

and Dong Son and Hoang Hoa in Thanh Hoa. Each had more than 70 workers residing unlawfully in Korea and a non-return rate above 27 percent (Vietnam News, 2023).

Research on Vietnamese migration to Korea has concentrated on marriage migration and on Korean policy. The growth of the Vietnam-Korea marriage market has been attributed to a marriage squeeze on rural Korean men, a preference for marrying up in both countries, economic motives on the Vietnamese side, commercial marriage brokers, and growing migrant networks (Lee et al., 2016). A Q-methodology study of 26 Vietnamese marriage migrants in rural Korea found four patterns of adaptation, ranging from positive adaptation with strong family support to passive adaptation with regret about the marriage and language barriers, which together explained 55.4 percent of the variance (Jeon et al., 2019). A policy analysis found that Korea's policy toward Vietnamese migrants alternated between coalitions favoring expansion and restriction, with tighter rules in 2012 and wider admissions after 2020, and concluded that expanding temporary recruitment without paths to permanent residence does not address Korea's demographic decline (Kim et al., 2026). A qualitative study of Vietnamese workers in Taiwan and their families found that commercial brokers working within restrictive migration systems raise migration costs and add to families' financial strain (Hoang, 2020). To our knowledge, no comparable study examines debt among Vietnamese EPS workers bound for Korea.

10 Community Organizations

The Association of Vietnamese Community in Korea (AVCK) opened a chapter in Asan, South Chungcheong Province, on July 26, 2026. At the launch, Vietnam's embassy cited more than 370,000 Vietnamese nationals in Korea, including nearly 100,000 women in multicultural families and more than 100,000 students (VietnamPlus, 2026). That embassy figure is for 2026 and differs from the Ministry of Justice count of 305,936 for 2024. In 2010, Vietnamese were the second-largest immigrant group after Chinese in Wongok-dong, Ansan, which had the country's largest foreign resident population and which the government had designated a special zone in 2009 (Korea Times, 2010).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 7 name the Vietnamese community in their name or target group. They include the community group Xin Chào in Jeungpyeong-gun (North Chungcheong), the Vietnamese Community Association of Jeonnam and Gwangju in Gwangju Seo-gu, Wonosa, a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Cheonan Dongnam-gu (South Chungcheong), the Seoul office of the Vietnamese overseas labor center that manages EPS workers, in Seoul Jung-gu, and the Okcheon County Council of Marriage Migrant Women in Okcheon-gun (North Chungcheong). Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family support centers and migrant worker centers, also serve Vietnamese residents.

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Vietnam and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Workers sent abroad, 2024	More than 158,500	Vietnam News, 2024
Workers sent to South Korea, 2024	13,649 (8.6% of 158,588)	Vietnam.vn, 2025a
Workers sent to South Korea, 2025	More than 11,600 of over 144,000	Vietnam.vn, 2026
EPS worker placements to Korea, first 20 years	Nearly 130,000	Vietnam.vn, 2023
EPS registrations against target, 2023	23,412 against about 12,000	Vietnam News, 2023
EPS-TOPIK applicants, 2024	Nearly 46,000	Vietnam.vn, 2025a
Remittances received, 2023	About USD 14 billion	VietnamPlus, 2023
Remittances as share of GDP, 2024	3.36%	Trading Economics, 2024
Remittances sent from South Korea, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	About USD 918.9 million	World Bank, 2021
Nghe An natives working in South Korea, mid-2020s	About 16,500	Vietnam.vn, 2025b

Source: Vietnamese government and press reports, World Bank data via Trading Economics.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Vietnamese Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Thai Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 43,459 Thai nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, 2.9 percent of all registered foreigners and the 10th-largest nationality on that basis; counting short-term visitors, South Korea had 188,770 Thai resident foreigners, 7.1 percent of the total and the fourth-largest nationality. Among registered foreigners Thailand moved from fifth place in 2006 to 10th in 2024, while among all resident foreigners it moved from sixth in 2006 to fourth in 2019 and 2024. The resident count grew from 43,307 in 2006 to a peak of 209,909 in 2019, then fell to 188,770 in 2024.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, Thailand was the 10th-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea (43,459 people, 2.9 percent) and the fourth-largest among all resident foreigners (188,770 people, 7.1 percent).
- ▶ The Thai resident population peaked at 209,909 in 2019 and stood 10.1 percent below that level in 2024, 17th of the 20 largest nationalities by growth over 2019-24.
- ▶ In 2024, 75.6 percent of Thai residents held B-1 visa-exemption status, and Thai nationals made up 69.1 percent of all B-1 holders in Korea.

Organized labor migration from Thailand began with a 2004 memorandum of understanding under Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS), and Thailand and Korea have since signed seven such agreements covering nearly 95,000 Thai workers (Pattaya Mail, 2024). Thai women also arrive through marriage, and Thailand was the third-largest nationality of foreign wives in 2024 (Korea Multicultural Internet Newspaper, 2024). Since 2024 a seasonal-worker scheme (E-8) has added short farm and fishery placements (The Nation, 2026a).

The Thai population differs from resident foreigners overall in its legal status. In 2024, 76.1 percent of Thai residents were on short-term visit statuses, compared with 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and only 23.0 percent were registered foreigners. Thai residents are also younger and more often women: 62.6 percent were aged 20 to 39 and 53.4 percent were women, against 49.7 percent and 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals present in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the Ministry of Justice's broadest count and the main figure used in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals remaining longer than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are not counted here. District-level figures in this Spotlight count registered foreigners only.

Visa exemption (B-1). Entry without a visa under a bilateral visa-waiver agreement. People on this status on December 31 are included among resident foreigners.

1 Size of the Population over Time

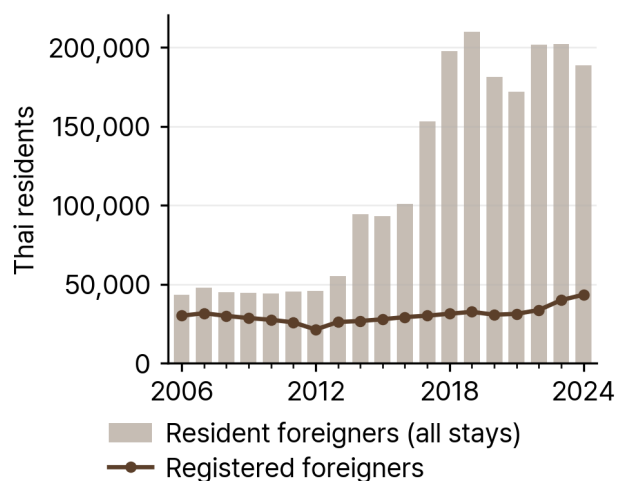
The number of Thai resident foreigners rose from 43,307 in 2006 to 209,909 in 2019, a more than fourfold increase. Growth was uneven. The count edged up to 44,250 in 2010, more than doubled to 94,314 by 2014, and more than doubled again by 2019. Thailand's rank among all resident foreigners rose from sixth in 2006 to fifth in 2014 and fourth in 2019, and its share of resident foreigners went from 4.8 percent in 2006 to 8.3 percent in 2019.

After 2019 the population declined to 181,386 in 2020 and 171,800 in 2021, recovered to 201,681 in 2022 and 202,121 in 2023, and fell to 188,770 in 2024, when Thailand still ranked fourth among resident foreigners with 7.1 percent of the total.

The 2024 figure was 89.9 percent of the 2019 level (index 2019 = 100), which placed Thailand 17th of the 20 largest nationalities by change over 2019-24.

FIGURE 1

Thai Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



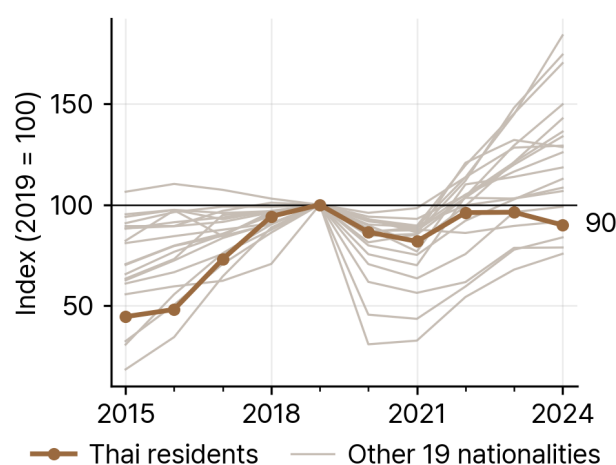
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners are a small share of the Thai total. In 2006, 30,170 of 43,307 Thai residents (69.7 percent) were registered; by 2019 the figure was 32,633 of 209,909 (15.5

percent). In 2024, 43,459 Thai residents were registered, 23.0 percent of the total. Among registered foreigners, Thailand ranked fifth in 2006 (4.8 percent of all registered foreigners), eighth in 2014 (2.5 percent), ninth in 2019 (2.6 percent), and 10th in 2024 (2.9 percent).

FIGURE 2

Change in Thai Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2019-2024.

TABLE 1

Thai Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Registered as % of resident	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	43,307	30,170	69.7	5	6	4.8	4.8
2014	94,314	26,827	28.4	8	5	2.5	5.2
2019	209,909	32,633	15.5	9	4	2.6	8.3
2024	188,770	43,459	23.0	10	4	2.9	7.1

Note: Registered as % of resident is computed as registered foreigners divided by resident foreigners. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters; registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

Of the 43,459 Thai registered foreigners in 2024, 46.2 percent (20,060) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi and 6.5 percent (2,840) in Seoul, so 52.7 percent lived in the capital region, against 55.2 percent of all foreigners. Yeongnam was home to 18.0 percent (7,815), Chungcheong 16.7 percent (7,251), Honam 9.0 percent (3,903), and Gangwon and Jeju 3.7 percent (1,590).

Thai residents live in rural counties (gun) more often than other foreigners: 15.8 percent did in 2024, compared with 10.6 percent of all foreigners. The rural share was highest in Gangwon and Jeju (44.5 percent) and Honam (43.0 percent).

Hwaseong-si in Gyeonggi-do had the largest Thai population, 4,028 in 2024, or 7.9 percent of the district's foreign residents. The ten largest districts together accounted for 31.1 percent of Thai registered foreigners, and 105 districts had 100 or more Thai residents. Thai residents made up the largest shares of the foreign population in small rural counties, led by

Cheorwon-gun (159 people, 17.6 percent of its foreign residents), Buyeo-gun (296, 15.0 percent), and Hongcheon-gun (133, 12.5 percent).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Thai and all other registered foreigners across districts fell from 0.525 in 2014 to 0.418 in 2024, so Thai residents became more evenly

distributed across districts relative to other registered foreigners. No district met the definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 with Thai nationals forming at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Largest Thai Populations, 2024

District	Province	Thai residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	4,028	7.9
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,370	8.4
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,346	5.3
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,320	8.5
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,140	3.5
Seo-gu	Incheon	928	5.9
Icheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	862	8.3
Eumseong-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	856	6.2
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	837	3.6
Anseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	813	5.5

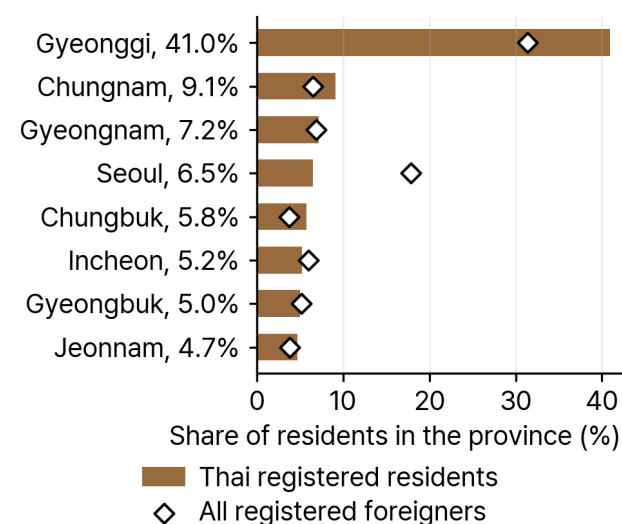
Note: Counts are registered foreigners. The ten districts accounted for 31.1 percent of Thai registered foreigners in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 53.4 percent (100,765) of Thai residents in 2024, up from 52.5 percent in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, 45.1 percent were women.

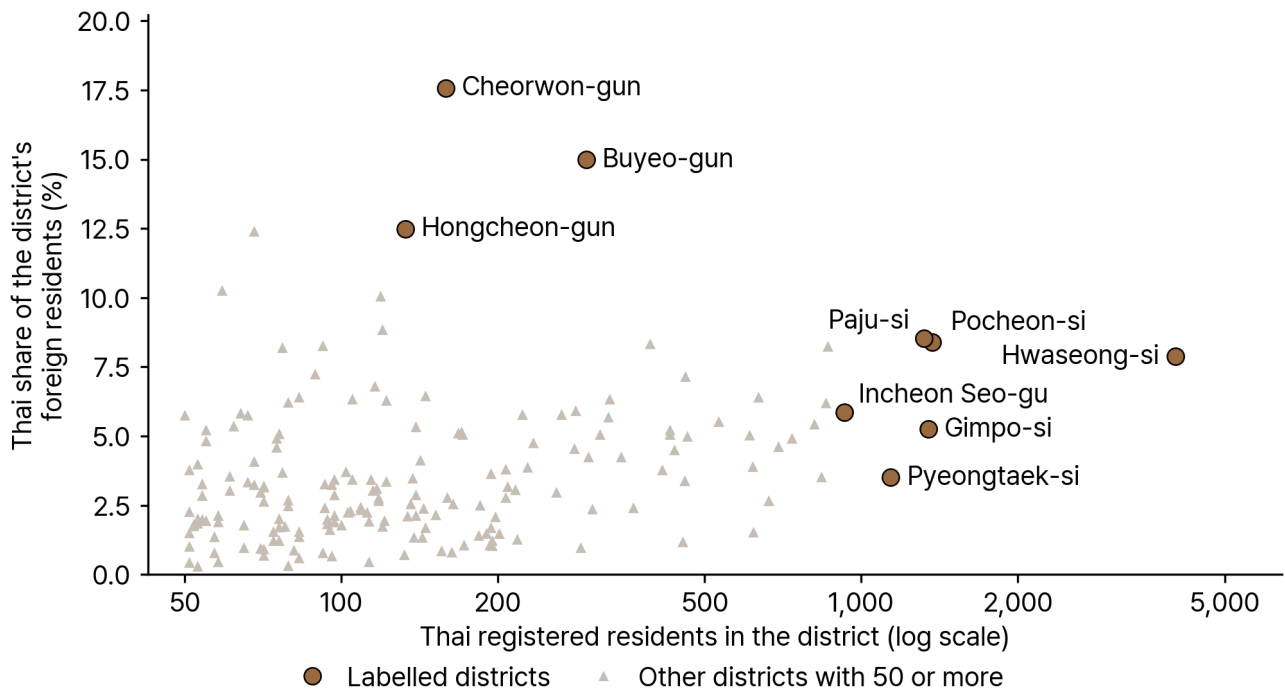
FIGURE 3
Thai Registered Foreigners by Province, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

The Thai population is concentrated in young working ages. In 2024, 62.6 percent (118,237) were aged 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest five-year group was 30 to 34, and the median fell in the 35 to 39 group. Children aged 0 to 14 were 0.9 percent (1,657) of Thai residents, against 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and people aged 60 or older were 1.4 percent, against 12.9 percent.

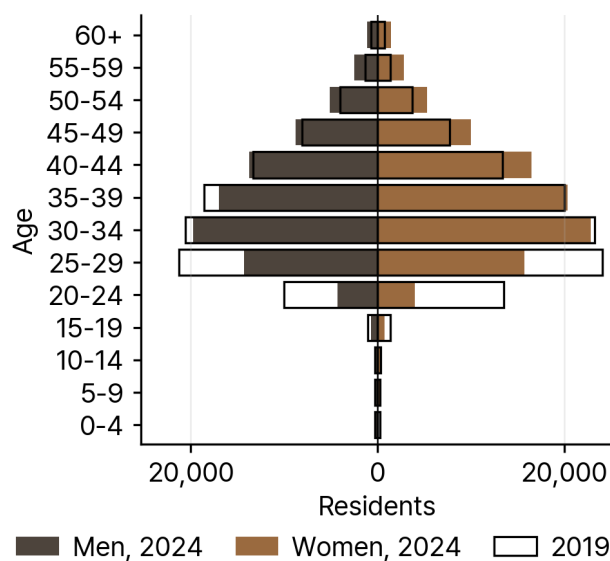
FIGURE 4

Districts with the Largest Thai Populations in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

The number aged 50 or older rose from 11,910 in 2019 to 18,350 in 2024, while the number aged 20 to 39 fell from 151,346 to 118,237.

FIGURE 5

Thai Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

4 Visa Status

Most Thai residents are in Korea on visa exemption (B-1). In 2024, 142,654 Thai nationals held B-1 status, 75.6 percent of the group, and they accounted for 69.1 percent of all B-1

holders in Korea, the largest share of any nationality. Grouped by purpose, short-term visit statuses covered 76.1 percent of Thai residents, against 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

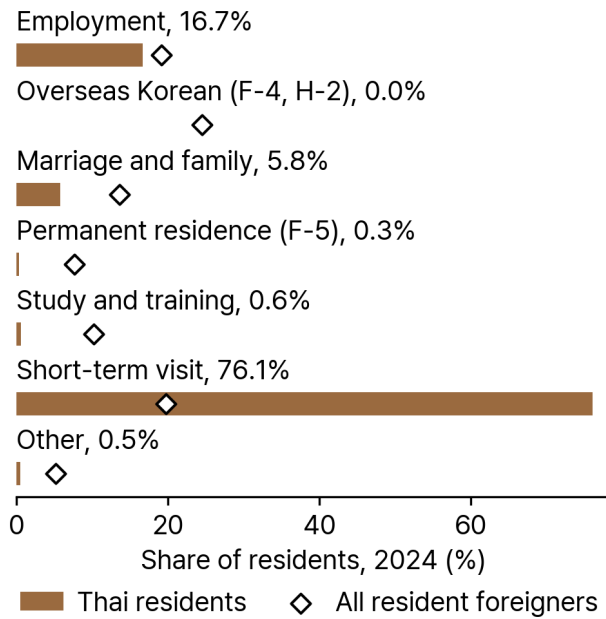
Employment statuses covered 16.7 percent of Thai residents (19.2 percent of all resident foreigners). The largest was non-professional employment (E-9), held by 28,236 Thai nationals in 2024, up from 25,402 in 2019; Thai workers were 8.4 percent of all E-9 holders. Specially designated activities (E-7) grew from 505 to 2,601 over the same period.

Marriage migration (F-6) roughly doubled, from 4,495 in 2019 to 9,157 in 2024. Marriage and family statuses together covered 5.8 percent of Thai residents, compared with 13.6 percent of all resident foreigners. Permanent residents (F-5) numbered 625 in 2024, 0.3 percent of the group, against 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

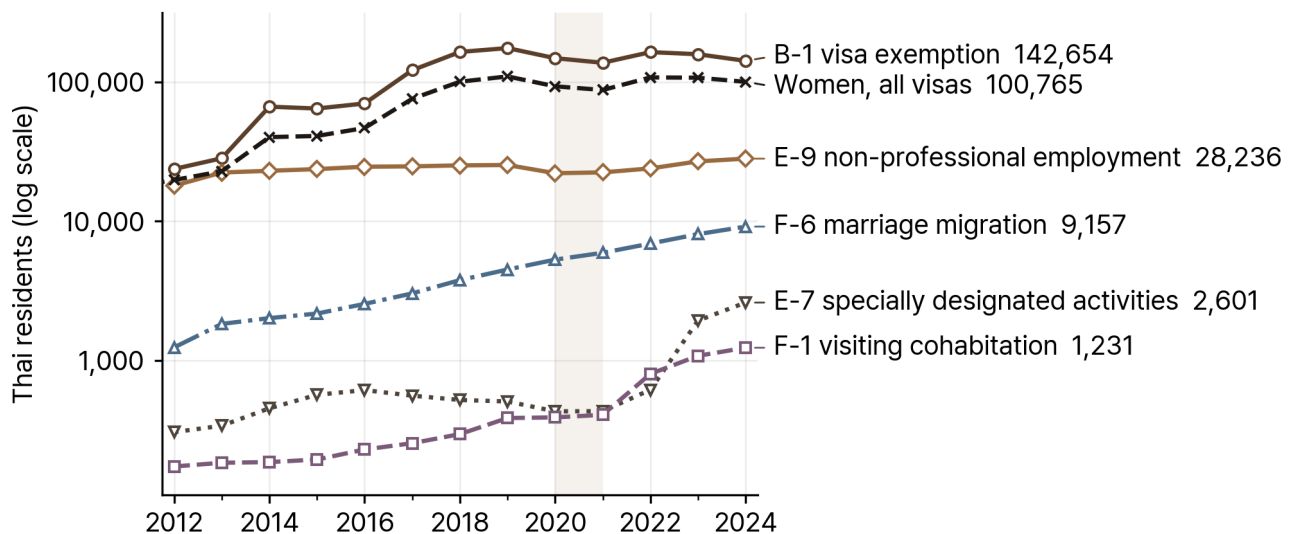
Thailand has sent workers under Korea's Employment Permit System since the first bilateral memorandum of understanding in 2004. The two countries have signed seven such agreements, and nearly 95,000 Thai workers had been employed in Korea under the program by 2024 (Pattaya Mail, 2024). In March 2024 Korea agreed to offer Thai workers 5,500 more EPS jobs that year, a 15 percent increase over the previous year's quota, according to Thailand's Labour Minister (The Nation, 2024).

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Thai Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

FIGURE 7

Thai Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2006-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

A seasonal-worker program (E-8) began in 2024 as a cooperation scheme between Thailand's Department of Employment and Korean local authorities, placing workers from selected Thai provinces in agricultural and fishery jobs (The Nation, 2026a). Korea suspended intake from four of those

provinces (Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum, and Maha Sarakham) from January 1 to December 31, 2026, after some workers sent under the seasonal-labour agreement left their employers (The Nation, 2026b).

TABLE 3
Main Visa Types Held by Thai Residents, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Thai residents, 2024 (%)	Thai share of all holders of the visa, 2024 (%)
B-1	Visa exemption	176,322	142,654	75.6	69.1
E-9	Non-professional employment	25,402	28,236	15.0	8.4
F-6	Marriage migration	4,495	9,157	4.9	6.2
E-7	Specially designated activities	505	2,601	1.4	4.1
F-1	Visiting cohabitation	384	1,231	0.7	1.2
C-3	Short-term visit	23	962	0.5	0.6
F-5	Permanent residence	637	625	0.3	0.3

Note: Shares are of 188,770 Thai resident foreigners in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2019 and 2024.

Marriage is a second channel. Thai women were 10.0 percent of foreign wives in marriages recorded in 2024, the third-largest nationality after Vietnam (26.8 percent) and China (15.9 percent), according to Statistics Korea's 2024 multicultural population statistics as reported by the Korea Multicultural Internet Newspaper, 2024.

Visa-free entry is a third route. Thai nationals' share of Korea's visa-free overstayers rose from 27.9 percent in 2005 to 76.3 percent in 2023, the largest share of any nationality; researchers linked the trend to cheaper flights, Korean Wave tourism, and broker-arranged illegal employment. Researchers recommended adding suspension and withdrawal provisions to visa-exemption agreements such as the one with Thailand, while officials cautioned that such changes could affect diplomatic relations and would require mutual consultation (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026).

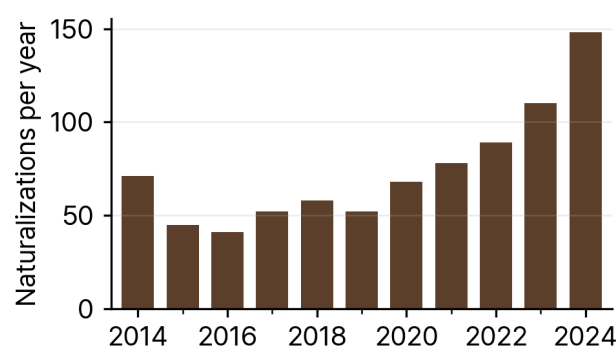
6 Naturalization

Between 2014 and 2024, 812 Thai nationals acquired Korean citizenship through naturalization. Annual numbers ranged from 41 to 58 between 2015 and 2019 and then rose each year, to 68 in 2020, 89 in 2022, 110 in 2023, and 148 in 2024, the highest in the period.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Thailand does not appear among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents, so no official count for Thai nationals is published there; Korea had 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Thai Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

Other reporting points to a large Thai share among visa-free overstayers: Thai nationals accounted for 76.3 percent of them in 2023 (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026).

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no peer-reviewed study reports health outcomes for Thai residents separately. Available figures concern deaths. Of 320 migrant workers who died in industrial accidents in Korea from 2022 through June 2025, 15 were Thai nationals, the fifth-largest group after ethnic Korean Chinese (145), Chinese (36), Vietnamese (25), and Uzbek (20) workers (Kyunghyang Shinmun, 2025).

Thai embassy records obtained by Reuters through a freedom-of-information request showed that at least 522 Thai nationals had died in South Korea since 2015, as reported in December 2020, and that 84 percent of those who died were undocumented. Forty percent of the recorded deaths were

attributed to unknown causes; the other 60 percent were reported as health-related incidents, accidents, and suicides (The Thaiger, 2020).

9 Migration from Thailand to South Korea

Korea is the second most common destination of Thai emigrants. UN DESA estimated that 199,861 Thailand-born people lived in South Korea in mid-2024, about 17 percent of the 1,178,757 Thai emigrants worldwide, behind the United States (307,741) and ahead of every other Asian destination, including Taiwan (80,032), Malaysia (70,718), and Japan (61,263) (UN DESA 2024). The Thailand Migration Report 2024, using the earlier 2020 revision of the same UN DESA series, put Korea second as well, with 159,264 of 1.086 million Thai nationals abroad in mid-2020 (IOM 2024).

Formal deployment of Thai workers to all destinations fell from 149,455 in 2019 to 118,080 in 2023. In December 2023, Korea was the second-largest destination for Thai workers deployed that month, with 1,013 workers against 2,568 for Taiwan. The Thai government arranged about 96 percent of Korea's 638 new placements that month (612 workers) under the EPS, and recruitment agencies arranged 19; for Taiwan, agencies arranged 1,721 of 1,752 new placements (IOM 2024). For fiscal year 2024, Thailand's Ministry of Labour set a target of 7,500 workers for Korea out of 100,000 workers sent abroad, the third-largest country target after Taiwan (20,300) and Israel (7,700) (Mekong Migration Network 2024). In 2024, 31,759 Thais took the EPS-TOPIK and 7,786 passed (HRD Korea 2025), and Korea admitted 6,963 Thai workers on E-9 visas (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026).

Remittances received by Thailand through formal channels rose from USD 8.1 billion in 2019 to USD 8.9 billion in 2022, or from 1.5 percent to 1.8 percent of gross domestic product (IOM 2024). World Bank data put personal remittances at 1.82 percent of GDP in 2024 (Trading Economics 2024). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Thailand at about US\$1.28 billion that year, second only to China (about US\$3.76 billion) and ahead of Vietnam, the Philippines, and Mongolia (World Bank 2021).

Published sources indicate that Korea-bound workers come mainly from the northeastern (Isan) region. Field research on Thai EPS and undocumented migrants to Korea was carried out in Udon Thani province in 2022 (IPSR 2023). When 16 of 80 Thai seasonal workers left their Korean employers in 2024, most came from Udon Thani, Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, and Maha Sarakham (Thai PBS World 2024), the four provinces later covered by Korea's 2026 suspension of E-8 intake.

The Thai state manages most labor migration to Korea. Under a memorandum of understanding signed on June 26, 2023, for seasonal work in Korean agriculture and fisheries, Thailand's

Department of Employment is the sole recruiter (IOM 2024). In 2019 Korea's justice ministry and Thailand's labour ministry signed a memorandum to share data on suspected undocumented Thai workers, after Korean immigration data for July 2019 showed Thai nationals made up 40 percent of 37,889 undocumented foreign residents (Korea Times 2019). A 2023 seminar at Mahidol University reported 147,440 undocumented Thai nationals in Korea as of January 31, 2023 (IPSR 2023). In August 2026 Thai officials described tighter pre-departure safeguards, including certificates of good conduct, briefings on roles and employment conditions, and monitoring systems, along with a state DSD Online Training platform offering more than 300 courses in Korean language, vocational, and digital skills; Korean officials had begun calling this group workers who are registered or using the wrong type of visa, dropping the term illegal foreign workers (ASEAN NOW 2026).

Research on Thai migration to Korea is limited. Chan (2023), drawing on interviews with undocumented Thai workers in Daegu and fieldwork in Bangkok, finds that the Thai government's tolerance of undocumented emigration encourages loosely planned attempts to work in Korea outside the EPS, and that informal brokers, though excluded from the EPS, continue to recruit by presenting undocumented migration as easy. Tadee et al. (2025), using 86 interviews with Thai migrant workers and stakeholders in Thailand and Korea, find that information and communication technology connects Thai workers to co-ethnic networks and labor markets in Korea while maintaining their ties to their places of origin. An earlier master's thesis (Wongprommoon 2011) reports that Thai workers favored the 2009 amendment to Korea's foreign worker act, which allowed five years of continuous employment, because it saved the cost and time of re-entry and visa renewal.

10 Community Organizations

The KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations lists six whose name or target group names the Thai community, all of them religious sites. They include Wat Buddharangsi Seoul temple and Hmong Blessing Church in Hwaseong-si, Buddharama Temple (formerly Dhammacetiaram) in Danwon-gu, Ansan, the Incheon Thai Church support center in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, Beopsinsa (a Thai Dhammakaya meditation center) in Uijeongbu-si, and Love Ground in Yeosu-si. Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family and migrant worker support centers, also serve Thai residents.

The Royal Thai Embassy and the Royal Thai Cultural Center in Korea co-hosted a Songkran (Thai New Year) festival with the Thailand Studies and Thai Interpretation departments of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies on April 3, 2026, which drew about 200 students and staff (Asia Economy, 2026).

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Thailand and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Thailand-born population in South Korea, mid-2024	199,861	UN DESA 2024
South Korea's share of Thai emigrants and rank among destinations, 2024	About 17 percent (199,861 of 1,178,757); second after the United States	UN DESA 2024
Thai workers formally working abroad, all destinations	149,455 (2019); 118,080 (2023)	IOM 2024
Thai workers deployed to South Korea, December 2023	1,013; second after Taiwan (2,568)	IOM 2024
New placements to South Korea arranged by the Thai government, December 2023	612 of 638 (about 96 percent)	IOM 2024
Deployment target for South Korea, fiscal year 2024	7,500 of 100,000; third after Taiwan and Israel	Mekong Migration Network 2024
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Thailand, 2024	31,759 (7,786 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
E-9 workers admitted from Thailand, 2024	6,963	Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026
Remittances received by Thailand, formal channels	USD 8.1 billion (2019); USD 8.9 billion (2022)	IOM 2024
Remittances as share of GDP	1.5 percent (2019); 1.8 percent (2022); 1.82 percent (2024)	IOM 2024; Trading Economics 2024
Remittances sent from South Korea, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	USD 1.28 billion	World Bank 2021
Undocumented Thai nationals in South Korea, January 31, 2023	147,440	IPSR 2023

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Thai Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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American Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

The Ministry of Justice counted 108,097 American resident foreigners in South Korea at the end of 2006 and 170,251 at the end of 2024, an increase of 62,154 people (57.5 percent). In 2024, Americans were the 12th-largest nationality among registered foreigners, the long-term residents who complete alien registration (34,886 people, 2.3 percent of all registered foreigners), and the fifth-largest among all resident foreigners (6.4 percent). In 2014 they ranked 10th among registered foreigners and third among all resident foreigners. Only 20.5 percent of American resident foreigners were registered in 2024: the 51,177 F-4 holders report their residence instead of registering, and the 39,684 B-2 holders are short-term visitors.

Highlights

- ▶ **At the end of 2024, Americans were the 12th-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea (34,886 people, 2.3 percent) and the fifth-largest among all resident foreigners (170,251 people, 6.4 percent), up from 108,097 resident foreigners in 2006.**
- ▶ **In 2024, 51,177 Americans (30.1 percent of the group) held the F-4 Overseas Korean visa, and Americans held 44.9 percent of all E-2 foreign language instructor visas in the country.**
- ▶ **Between 2011 and 2024, 23,351 people whose previous nationality was American restored their Korean nationality, compared with 87 Americans who naturalized between 2014 and 2024.**

Most Americans in Korea hold statuses tied to Korean ancestry, short visits, or teaching. The F-4 Overseas Korean visa, open to former Korean nationals and their descendants, was the most common status in 2024 (51,177 holders), followed by B-2 tourist and transit status (39,684). The

number of B-2 holders more than doubled from 18,428 in 2014, while holders of the E-2 foreign language instructor visa fell from 9,295 in 2014 to 6,032 in 2024.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Americans were more likely to be children under 15 (13.1 percent versus 5.7 percent) or aged 60 and older (18.1 percent versus 12.9 percent), and registered Americans were more concentrated in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi (71.3 percent versus 55.2 percent). Only 5.3 percent held an employment visa, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. This Spotlight describes the number of American residents over time, where they live, their age and sex, visa status, migration channels, naturalization, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of the reference year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who have reported their place of residence. Counts come from the Ministry of Justice immigration statistics yearbooks.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who complete alien registration, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 Overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering, so they are not counted among registered foreigners. District-level figures in this Spotlight cover registered foreigners only.

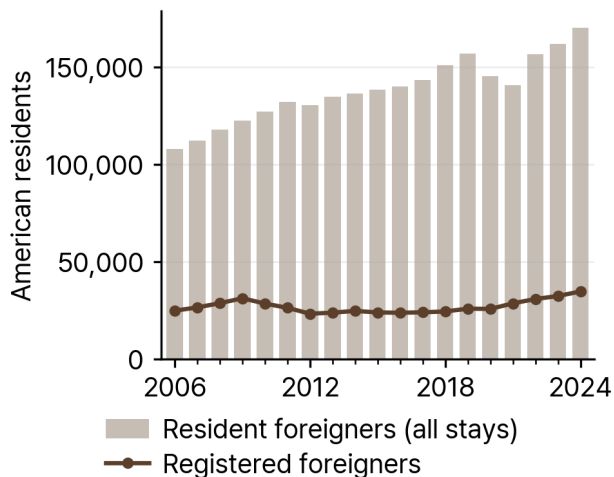
American residents. Foreign nationals whose nationality is recorded as the United States, including Korean Americans who hold US citizenship. People who have restored or acquired Korean nationality are no longer counted as foreigners.

Visa codes. Status of stay codes used by the Ministry of Justice, such as F-4 (Overseas Korean), B-2 (tourist and transit), and E-2 (foreign language instructor).

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of American resident foreigners grew from 108,097 in 2006 to 156,983 in 2019. It fell to 145,580 in 2020 and 140,672 in 2021, then rose to 156,562 in 2022, 161,895 in 2023, and 170,251 in 2024, the highest count in the series. Among all resident foreigners, Americans ranked third in 2006 and 2014 and fifth in 2019 and 2024, and their share of the total fell from 11.9 percent in 2006 to 6.4 percent in 2024 (KIRD dataset).

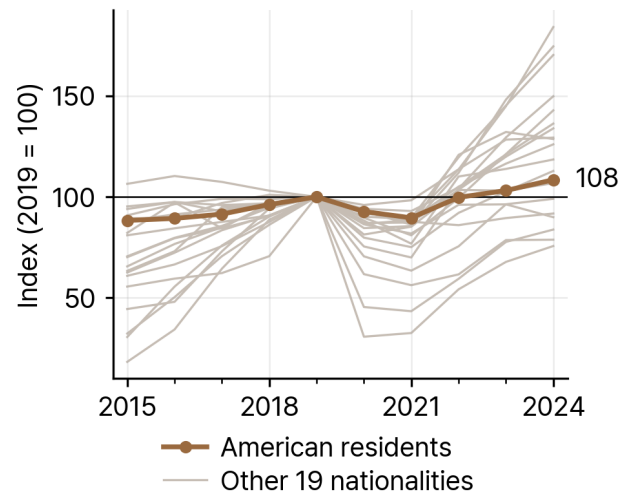
FIGURE 1
American Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners are a much smaller group. In 2024, 34,886 Americans were registered, 20.5 percent of all American resident foreigners, compared with 24,998 registered in 2006 and 26,025 in 2019. Among registered foreigners, Americans ranked sixth in 2006, 10th in 2014, 11th in 2019, and 12th in 2024, and they made up 4.0 percent of all registered foreigners in 2006 and 2.3 percent in 2024.

FIGURE 2
Growth of the American Population and the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Measured against 2019, the American population stood at an index of 108.5 in 2024 (170,251 divided by 156,983). This ranked 13th in growth among the 20 largest nationalities.

TABLE 1
American Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	108,097	24,998	3	6	11.9	4.0
2014	136,663	24,890	3	10	7.6	2.3
2019	156,983	26,025	5	11	6.2	2.0
2024	170,251	34,886	5	12	6.4	2.3

Note: Resident foreigners are counted on 31 December and include short-term visitors and F-4 holders who report their residence. Registered foreigners are those in Korea for more than 90 days who completed alien registration. Ranks are among all nationalities on each basis.

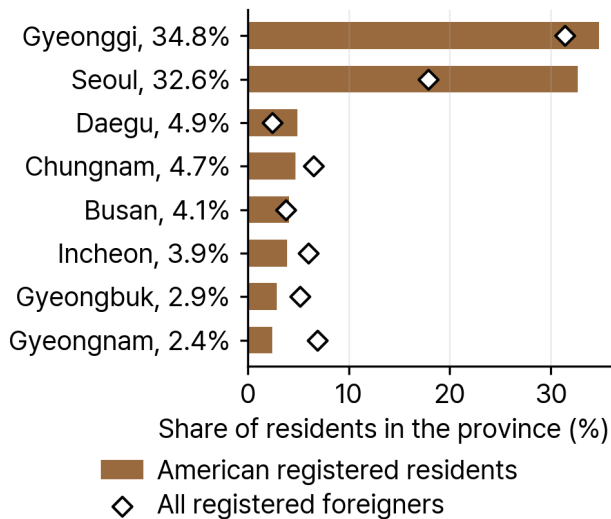
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District data cover the 34,886 Americans who were registered foreigners in 2024. Of these, 38.7 percent (13,498) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi, 32.6 percent (11,387) in Seoul, 14.8 percent (5,169) in the Yeongnam region, 7.7 percent (2,680) in Chungcheong, 3.2 percent (1,102) in Gangwon and Jeju, and

3.0 percent (1,050) in Honam. Together, Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi accounted for 71.3 percent of registered Americans, compared with 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners.

FIGURE 3
Registered American Foreigners by Province in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered American Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Registered Americans	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	6,812	21.0
Seoul Yongsan-gu	Seoul	1,967	14.7
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	1,236	5.2
Seoul Mapo-gu	Seoul	1,193	10.5
Seoul Jongno-gu	Seoul	1,107	9.8
Seoul Gangnam-gu	Seoul	971	16.5
Seoul Seodaemun-gu	Seoul	951	6.0
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	786	4.3
Seoul Seocho-gu	Seoul	772	16.4
Seoul Songpa-gu	Seoul	597	9.6

Note: Registered foreigners only; F-4 holders who report residence are not included.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The index of dissimilarity (D), which measures how differently Americans and all other registered foreigners are spread across districts, rose from 0.352 in 2014 to 0.499 in 2024. A value of 0.499 means that about half of registered Americans would have to move to another district to match the

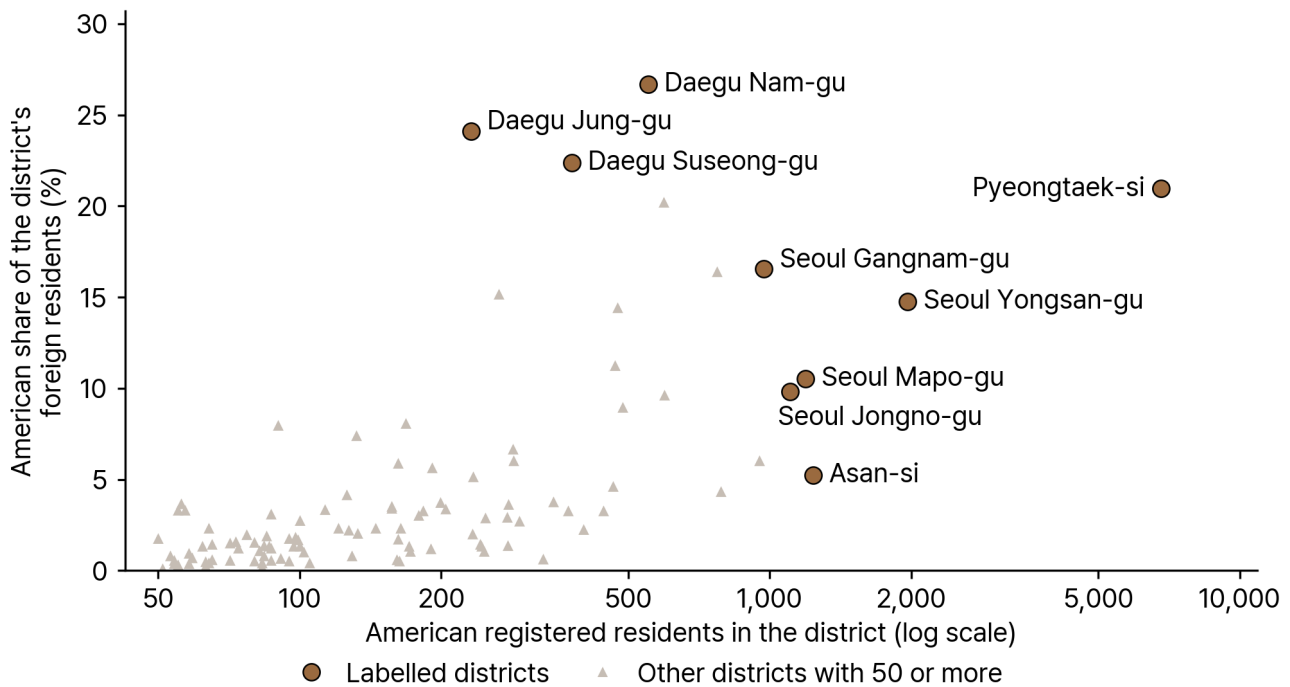
Few Americans live in rural counties (gun). In 2024, 3.3 percent of registered Americans lived in a county, compared with 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners.

Pyeongtaek-si in Gyeonggi-do had the largest number of registered Americans in 2024 (6,812), 21.0 percent of the city's registered foreigners. Seoul's Yongsan-gu followed with 1,967, then Asan-si in Chungcheongnam-do with 1,236. The ten largest districts accounted for 47.0 percent of registered Americans, and 64 districts had at least 100.

Americans made up their largest shares of the foreign population in three Daegu districts: 26.7 percent in Nam-gu (551 people), 24.1 percent in Jung-gu (232), and 22.4 percent in Suseong-gu (379). They also made up 20.2 percent of registered foreigners in Bundang-gu, Seongnam-si (595).

distribution of other foreigners. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and Americans making up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners).

FIGURE 4

Registered American Foreigners by District in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 44.0 percent of American resident foreigners in 2024 (74,946 of 170,251), up from 42.2 percent in 2019 and close to the 45.1 percent among all resident foreigners.

The American population has more children and more older adults than the foreign population overall. In 2024, 13.1 percent were under age 15, against 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and 18.1 percent were aged 60 and older, against 12.9 percent. Adults aged 20 to 39 made up 38.9 percent of Americans and 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest age group among Americans was 60 and older, and the median fell in the 35 to 39 group.

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of Americans aged 50 and older rose from 41,135 to 52,021, and the number aged 20 to 39 fell from 70,099 to 66,162. Children under 5 fell from 9,529 to 6,338.

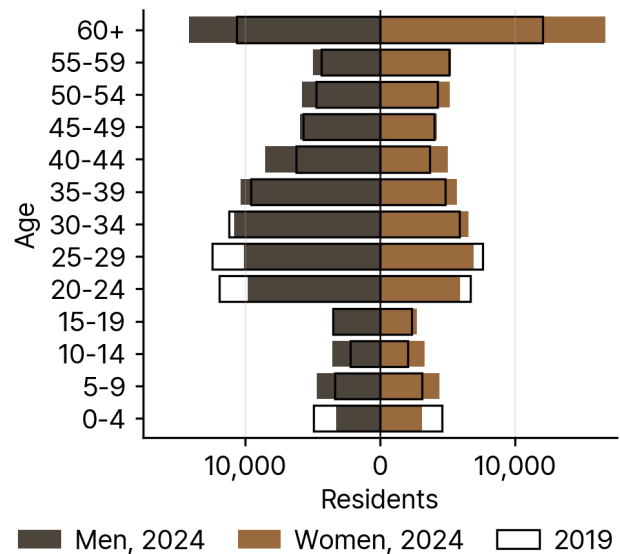
4 Visa Status

In 2024, 30.1 percent of Americans held the F-4 Overseas Korean visa (51,177 people), and Americans were the second-largest nationality among F-4 holders. Another 23.3 percent (39,684) held B-2 tourist and transit status, and Americans accounted for 25.9 percent of all B-2 holders in Korea.

Americans held 6,032 E-2 foreign language instructor visas in 2024, 44.9 percent of all E-2 holders in the country, down from 7,219 in 2019 and 9,295 in 2014. Marriage migrant (F-6)

holders rose from 3,280 in 2019 to 4,743 in 2024, and permanent residents (F-5) from 1,171 to 1,815.

FIGURE 5

American Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

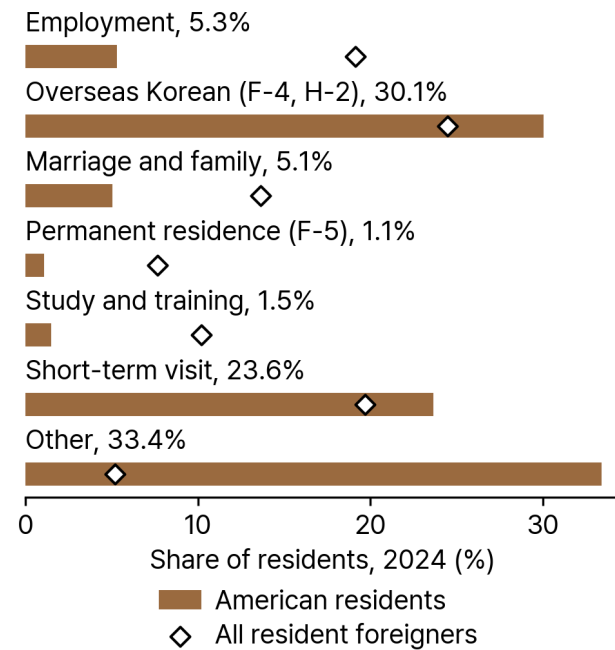
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Grouped by purpose, 5.3 percent of Americans held employment visas in 2024 (19.2 percent of all resident foreigners), 5.1 percent held marriage or family visas (13.6 percent), 1.5 percent held study or training visas (10.2 percent), and 1.1 percent held permanent residence (7.7

percent). Statuses outside these groups made up 33.4 percent of Americans, compared with 5.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of American Resident Foreigners and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

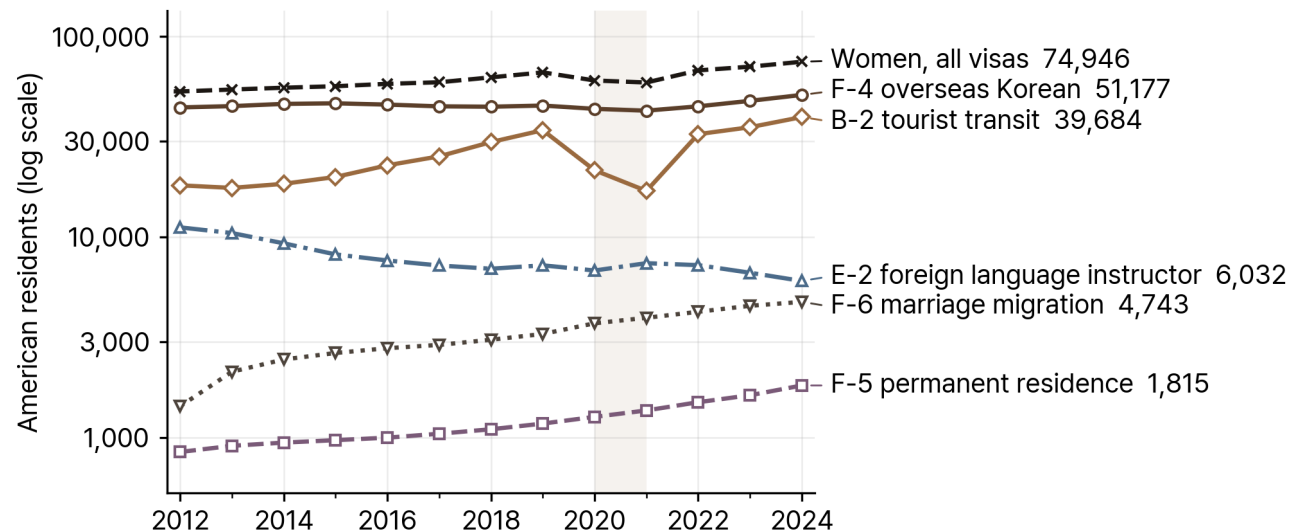
The largest channel is the F-4 Overseas Korean visa. American citizens who previously held Korean nationality, and their descendants, qualify; since July 2, 2019, eligibility has extended to the fourth generation and beyond. The F-4 is a five-year multiple-entry visa under which each entry may last up to two years (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the USA, 2019).

For short visits, US citizens are among the nationals of 22 countries and regions exempted since April 1, 2023, from Korea's K-ETA electronic travel authorization for tourism or business visits of 90 days or less. The government tied the exemption to the recovery of tourism after COVID-19 and has extended it through December 31, 2026 (Fragomen, 2023).

The E-2 foreign language instructor visa is limited to citizens of seven countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland) who hold a bachelor's degree from a university in one of those countries. Applicants also submit an officially verified criminal background check and a health certificate (KOWORK Visa Center, n.d.). The United States is not one of the 17 countries with an Employment Permit System agreement with Korea, so Americans have no access to the E-9 low-skilled work visa (Seoulstart, 2026).

FIGURE 7

American Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Visa Status, 2006-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Rules for E-2 teachers have changed over time. Effective July 3, 2017, Korea dropped the mandatory HIV test that E-2 holders had to pass to renew the visa, retaining mandatory drug and syphilis tests, after criticism that the HIV requirement was discriminatory (Korea Times, 2017). The change followed

a May 2015 opinion of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in a case brought by a New Zealand English teacher in Korea; a Seoul court awarded her \$27,000 for wrongful termination in 2019 (Wagner, 2021).

TABLE 3
Most Common Visas Held by American Resident Foreigners, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Americans, 2024 (%)	Americans' share of all holders of the visa, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	45,291	51,177	30.1	9.2
B-2	Tourist Transit	34,118	39,684	23.3	25.9
E-2	Foreign Language Instructor	7,219	6,032	3.5	44.9
F-6	Marriage Migration	3,280	4,743	2.8	3.2
F-5	Permanent Residence	1,171	1,815	1.1	0.9
D-2	Student	1,243	1,712	1.0	1.0
F-3	Dependent Family	1,666	1,700	1.0	3.2

Note: Shares of Americans use the 2024 total of 170,251 American resident foreigners. The seven visas shown account for 106,863 people (62.8 percent).

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

US military personnel and their families come to and live in Korea under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), a category legally separate from ordinary residence visas. SOFA status covers people in Korea for the US military mission and does not by itself permit off-base employment without a Korean work visa (51st Force Support Squadron, Osan Air Base, n.d.). About 28,500 US service members were stationed in Korea in 2025 (Korea Times, 2025). To our knowledge, no published source states whether SOFA personnel are included in the Ministry of Justice counts used here.

6 Naturalization

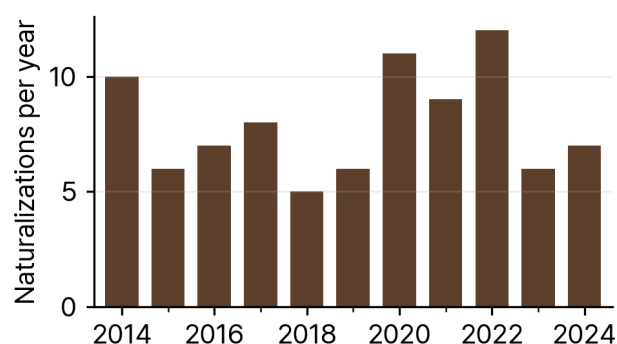
Few Americans naturalize in Korea. Between 2014 and 2024, 87 Americans acquired Korean nationality through naturalization; annual numbers ranged from 5 (2018) to 12 (2022), with 7 in 2024. The Ministry of Justice's by-country table reports this combined naturalization total from 2014; the 2009 and 2010 yearbook editions instead publish cumulative totals since 1991, so this Spotlight does not use them.

Restoration of nationality is far more common. Former Korean nationals who had taken US citizenship can apply to restore Korean nationality, and 23,351 people whose previous nationality was American did so between 2011 and 2024, including 2,298 in 2024. This restoration total is about 268 times the 87 naturalizations recorded between 2014 and 2024 (23,351 divided by 87).

7 Unauthorized Residents

Americans are not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately, so no count of unauthorized American residents is published. The yearbook counted 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Americans, All Routes, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

8 Health and Well-being

As far as we know, neither published studies (in OpenAlex or on the web, in English or Korean) nor government statistics on occupational injury and health care use report the health or well-being of American residents in Korea separately from other nationalities.

9 Migration from the United States to South Korea

In the Ministry of Justice monthly statistics for December 2025, 180,230 US nationals were resident foreigners in South Korea, 6.5 percent of the total and the third-largest nationality after China and Vietnam (Seoulstart 2025). The monthly report groups nationalities differently from the KIRD dataset, which lists Korean-Chinese separately from other Chinese nationals and ranked Americans fifth among resident foreigners in 2024.

No official count of Americans living abroad exists. The State Department's 2016 figure of 9 million is no longer used, and independent estimates range from about 4.4 million (Federal

Voting Assistance Program, 2022) to 5.5 million (Association of Americans Resident Overseas, 2023) (Greenback Tax Services 2026). Measured against those two estimates, the 180,230 Americans in Korea in December 2025 equal about 3.3 to 4.1 percent of Americans abroad. We know of no published source that reports where Korea ranks among the destinations of Americans abroad.

Much of the movement from the United States to Korea draws on the Korean diaspora. The Overseas Koreans Agency counted 2,557,047 overseas Koreans in the United States on 31 December 2024, 36.49 percent of the 7,006,703 overseas Koreans worldwide (Overseas Koreans Agency 2025). This population, which includes former Korean nationals and their descendants, is the pool eligible for the F-4 Overseas Korean visa. No published source appears to break down Korea-bound Americans by US state or region.

Teaching is the main work channel. Korea issued 1,286 E-2 foreign language instructor visas to all eligible nationalities in the first quarter of 2026, 47.5 percent fewer than the 2,448

issued in the first quarter of 2020 and the lowest figure in six years; the newspaper that reported the figures attributed the decline to a shrinking private academy (hagwon) market and the spread of AI language-learning tools (Korea JoongAng Daily 2026). That source does not report American teachers separately. Because the United States is not an Employment Permit System sending country, there are no EPS applicant or quota figures for Americans.

Under the working holiday agreement between Korea and the United States, up to 2,000 Americans aged 18 to 30 may participate each year. The United States is the only partner country whose participants must be post-secondary students or graduates within one year of graduation, with proof of status from their institution (Working Holiday Info Center 2026). On the US side, the House of Representatives passed its version of the FY2026 National Defense Authorization Act on 10 September 2025, which called for maintaining about 28,500 US troops in Korea (Korea Times 2025).

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, United States and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
US nationals resident in South Korea, December 2025	180,230 (6.5% of resident foreigners)	Seoulstart 2025
US citizens living abroad, independent estimates, 2022 and 2023	4.4 million to 5.5 million	Greenback Tax Services 2026
Overseas Koreans living in the United States, 31 December 2024	2,557,047 (36.49% of all overseas Koreans)	Overseas Koreans Agency 2025
E-2 visas issued, all nationalities, first quarter of 2020 and 2026	2,448 and 1,286	Korea JoongAng Daily 2026
Working holiday quota for Americans, per year	2,000	Working Holiday Info Center 2026
EPS applicants and places	Not applicable (not an EPS sending country)	Seoulstart 2026
Personal remittances received, % of GDP, 2025	United States 0.0; South Korea 0.4	Statistics of the World 2025a; 2025b

Note: Figures on E-2 visas cover all eligible nationalities; the source does not report Americans separately.

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

Personal remittances received equaled 0.0 percent of US GDP in 2025, 181st of 185 economies, and 0.4 percent of Korean GDP (Statistics of the World 2025a; Statistics of the World 2025b). Both figures come from a secondary compilation of World Bank World Development Indicators. We are not aware of a published figure for remittances from Americans in Korea to the United States, and the World Bank's bilateral remittance matrix, the usual source for flows between pairs of countries, has not been updated since its 2021 edition.

Research on Americans who move to Korea centers on return and race. In 56 interviews with US-raised Korean Americans who relocated to Korea, Suh (2019) found that their wish to move was tied to their racialization and ethnic identity

formation as racial minorities in the United States, which reinforced existing desires to return. Kim (2012) studied adult Korean adoptees, most raised in Western countries including the United States, who lived and worked in Korea for extended periods around 2000, and found that they were socially marginalized even as the state promoted them as cosmopolitan human capital. On work, Seo and Kubota (2022) analyzed 12 YouTube videos by three African American women teaching in EPIK and found that they described themselves as American teachers, targets of racial prejudice, and cultural ambassadors at the same time. The literature known to us includes no study of brokers, debt, or marriage migration among Americans in Korea.

10 Community Organizations

The American Chamber of Commerce in Korea (AMCHAM Korea), founded in 1953, is the largest foreign chamber of commerce in the country, with about 800 member companies and affiliates (AMCHAM Korea, n.d.). Yongsan International School of Seoul, founded in 1990 in Yongsan-gu, teaches an

American-based K-12 curriculum with Advanced Placement courses and is accredited by WASC and ACSI (Network of International Christian Schools, n.d.).

None of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census names Americans in its name or target group (KIRD dataset). Americans can use the general-purpose organizations in the census, which serve residents of all nationalities.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "American Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Uzbek Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

South Korea had 94,893 resident foreigners of Uzbek nationality on December 31, 2024, according to Ministry of Justice yearbook figures compiled in the KIRD dataset. Of these, 61,733 were registered foreigners, which made Uzbekistan the fifth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (4.1 percent) and the sixth-largest among all resident foreigners (3.6 percent). The population stood at 15,380 in 2006, and 2024 was its highest recorded count.

Highlights

- ▶ There were 94,893 Uzbek nationals in South Korea at the end of 2024, 61,733 of them registered foreigners. Uzbekistan was the fifth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (4.1 percent) and the sixth-largest among all resident foreigners (3.6 percent), up from seventh and ninth in 2014.
- ▶ Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa rose from 11,873 in 2019 to 28,895 in 2024 to become the largest visa group (30.5 percent of Uzbek residents), while H-2 working visit holders fell from 20,281 to 7,666.
- ▶ Children under age 15 made up 10.6 percent of Uzbek residents in 2024, compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and their number grew from 5,505 in 2019 to 10,101 in 2024.

Large-scale labor migration from Uzbekistan followed a memorandum of understanding, signed on March 29, 2006, that made Uzbekistan a sending country under the Employment Permit System (KDI Economic Information and Education Center, 2006). Two other channels have since grown. Ethnic Koreans from Uzbekistan (Koryoin) enter on the H-2 working visit and F-4 overseas Korean visas, and between 2019 and 2024 the F-4 count more than doubled as the H-2 count fell. Student numbers also rose, from 632 D-2 visa holders in 2014 to 13,054 in 2024.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Uzbek residents were more often men (65.8 percent, against 54.9 percent; computed as 100 minus the shares of women, 34.2 and 45.1 percent), more often children, and less often short-term visitors (2.8 percent, against 19.7 percent). They were also less concentrated in the Seoul capital region (Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi), where 39.8 percent of registered Uzbek residents lived, compared with 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of the year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who have reported their residence. This is the main count used in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who have registered with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. F-4 overseas Korean visa holders report their residence instead of registering, so they are counted among resident foreigners but not among registered foreigners. Province and district figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

Koryoin (고려인). Ethnic Koreans of the former Soviet Union and their descendants. Koryoin who hold Uzbek citizenship are counted as Uzbek nationals by the Ministry of Justice. As people of Korean descent they are eligible for the F-4 overseas Korean and H-2 working visit visas.

Nationality. All counts are by citizenship. People from Uzbekistan who have naturalized as Korean citizens are not counted as Uzbek residents.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Uzbek resident foreigners grew from 15,380 in 2006 to 25,895 in 2010, 43,852 in 2014, and 75,320 in 2019. The count fell to 65,205 in 2020 (down 10,115, or 13.4 percent, from 2019) and to 66,677 in 2021, then rose each year to 94,893 in 2024. The 2024 figure is 6.2 times the 2006 figure (94,893 / 15,380).

Among registered foreigners, Uzbekistan ranked eleventh in 2006, seventh in 2014, fourth in 2019, and fifth in 2024, and its share of all registered foreigners rose from 1.8 percent in 2006 to 4.4 percent in 2019 before easing to 4.1 percent in 2024. Among all resident foreigners it ranked eleventh in 2006, ninth in 2014, seventh in 2019, and sixth in 2024, with a share that

rose from 1.7 percent to 3.6 percent. With 2019 set at 100, the population index was 126 in 2024, tenth for growth among the 20 largest nationalities.

Registered foreigners numbered 61,733 in 2024, or 65.1 percent of Uzbek resident foreigners. The difference between the two counts (94,893 minus 61,733, or 33,160 people) includes F-4 visa holders, who report residence instead of registering, and short-term visitors.

TABLE 1
Uzbek Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	15,380	11,617	11	11	1.8	1.7
2014	43,852	34,710	7	9	3.2	2.4
2019	75,320	56,237	4	7	4.4	3.0
2024	94,893	61,733	5	6	4.1	3.6

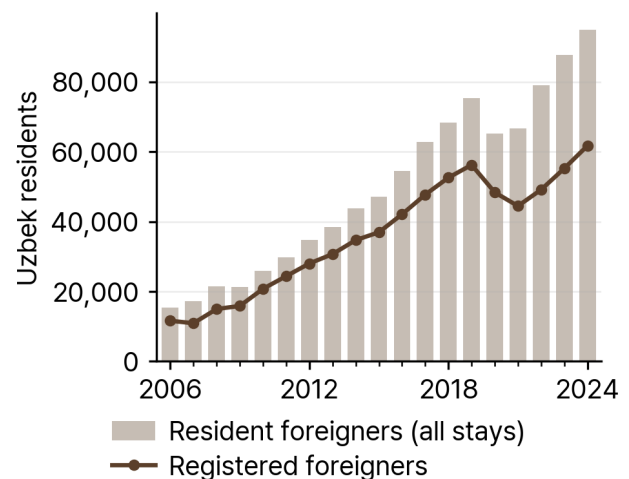
Note: Counts as of December 31. Registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities; resident foreigners also include short-term visitors and F-4 visa holders who report residence instead of registering.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, 33.4 percent of registered Uzbek residents lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi, 28.8 percent in the southeastern Yeongnam region, 18.5 percent in the Chungcheong provinces, 10.7 percent in the southwestern Honam region, 6.4 percent in Seoul, and 2.2 percent in Gangwon and Jeju. By province, 27.1 percent lived in Gyeonggi and 12.4 percent in South Gyeongsang. Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi combined accounted for 39.8 percent of registered Uzbek residents, against 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners.

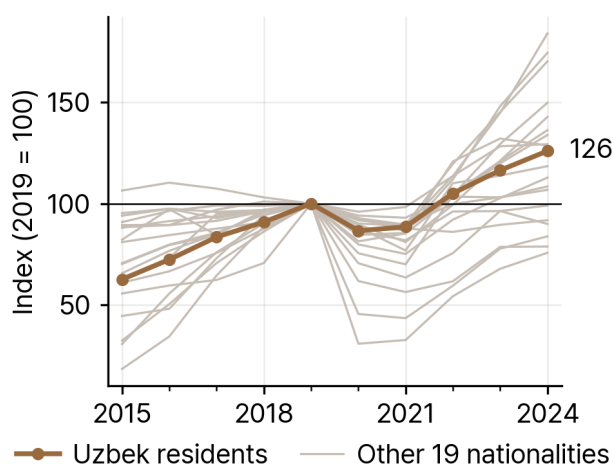
FIGURE 1
Uzbek Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

About 11.9 percent of registered Uzbek residents lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners. The rural share was higher in Honam (31.1 percent of the region's Uzbek residents), Chungcheong (23.2 percent), and Gangwon and Jeju (22.5 percent).

FIGURE 2

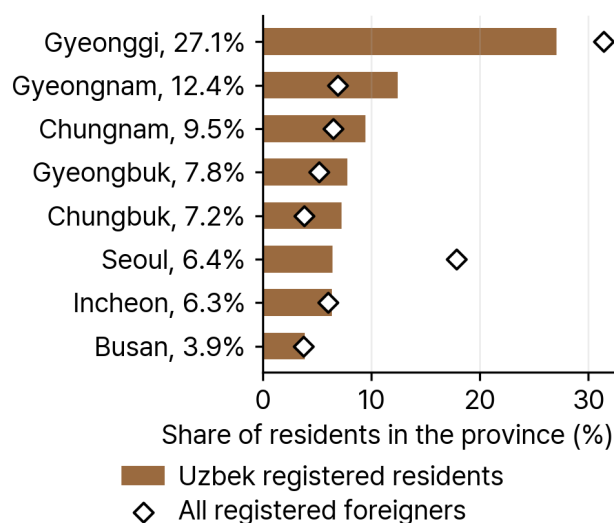
Uzbek Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2015-24 (Index, 2019 = 100)

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The largest district populations in 2024 were in Ansan's Danwon-gu (2,952), Gimhae (2,805), Asan (2,708), Gyeongsan (2,489), and Hwaseong (2,483). The ten largest districts accounted for 33.9 percent of registered Uzbek residents, and 112 districts had at least 100. Uzbek nationals made up the largest share of a district's registered foreigners

in Cheongju's Seowon-gu (18.3 percent, 685 residents), Yeongdong-gun (16.6 percent, 186), Gyeongsan (13.5 percent, 2,489), Wanju-gun (13.3 percent, 593), and Cheongju's Heungdeok-gu (12.9 percent, 904).

FIGURE 3

Registered Uzbek Residents and All Registered Foreigners by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Registered Uzbek Residents, 2024

District	Province	Uzbek residents	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	2,952	7.7
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	2,805	11.3
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	2,708	11.5
Gyeongsan-si	Gyeongsangbuk-do	2,489	13.5
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,483	4.9
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	1,943	10.7
Geoje-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,590	10.6
Gwangju Gwangsan-gu	Gwangju	1,386	9.3
Anseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,331	8.9
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,267	3.9

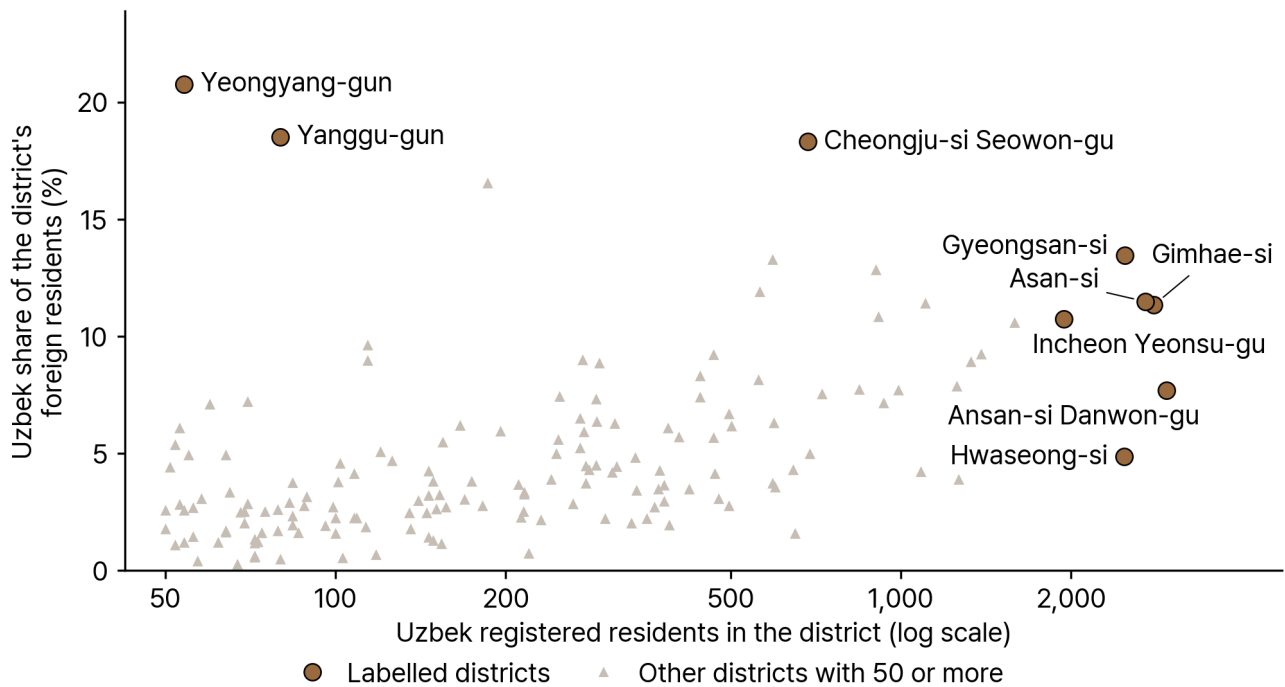
Note: Registered foreigners only; F-4 visa holders who report residence are not included.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The index of dissimilarity (D), which measures how unevenly Uzbek residents are spread across districts compared with all other registered foreigners, fell from 0.546 in 2014 to 0.462 in 2024. The index runs from 0 (identical distribution) to 1 (complete separation); the 2024 value means that 46.2

percent of Uzbek residents would have had to change district to match the distribution of other foreigners. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave (a location quotient of at least 2 with Uzbek nationals making up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners).

FIGURE 4

Registered Uzbek Residents by District, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women were 34.2 percent of Uzbek residents in 2024 (32,464 people), compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners. The share of women was 33.4 percent in 2019.

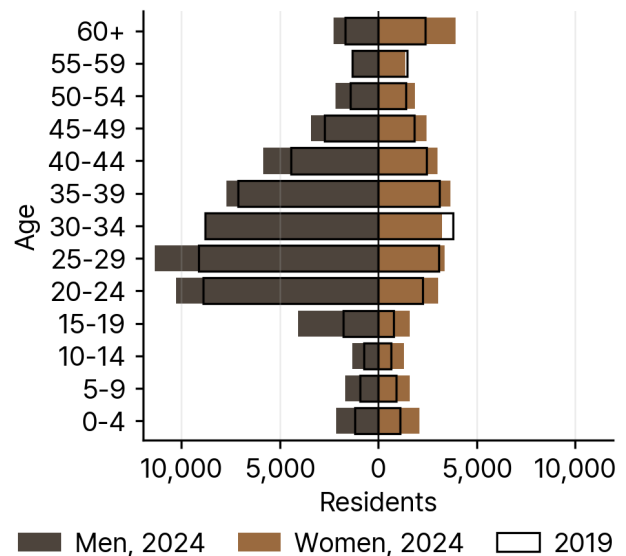
The largest five-year age group in 2024 was 25 to 29, and the median resident fell in the 30 to 34 group. Adults aged 20 to 39 made up 54.3 percent of Uzbek residents, against 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and those aged 60 and older made up 6.6 percent, against 12.9 percent.

Children under age 15 accounted for 10.6 percent of Uzbek residents, nearly twice the share among all resident foreigners (5.7 percent). Their number rose from 5,505 in 2019 to 10,101 in 2024, and the number under age 5 rose from 2,307 to 4,223. Over the same years, holders of the F-3 dependent family visa increased from 826 to 4,874.

4 Visa Status

The F-4 overseas Korean visa was the most common status among Uzbek residents in 2024, held by 28,895 people (30.5 percent). Uzbekistan ranked fourth among nationalities in the number of F-4 holders, and Uzbek nationals were 5.2 percent of all F-4 holders in Korea. The two ethnic Korean visas (F-4 and H-2) together covered 38.5 percent of Uzbek residents, compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 5

Uzbek Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Within that group the balance changed between 2019 and 2024. F-4 holders increased from 11,873 to 28,895, and H-2 working visit holders fell from 20,281 to 7,666. At a 2024 forum on Koryoin settlement, a presenter noted that most Koryoin from Russia hold F-4 visas, while Koryoin from Uzbekistan still hold H-2 status at a high rate (SNU Asia Center, 2024).

E-9 non-professional employment visa holders, the workers admitted under the Employment Permit System, numbered 14,813 in 2024 (15.6 percent), compared with 17,466 in 2014 and 13,909 in 2019. Student (D-2) visa holders rose from 632 in 2014 to 7,026 in 2019 and 13,054 in 2024; Uzbek nationals held 7.3 percent of all D-2 visas in Korea in 2024. Study and training statuses covered 16.3 percent of Uzbek residents, against 10.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

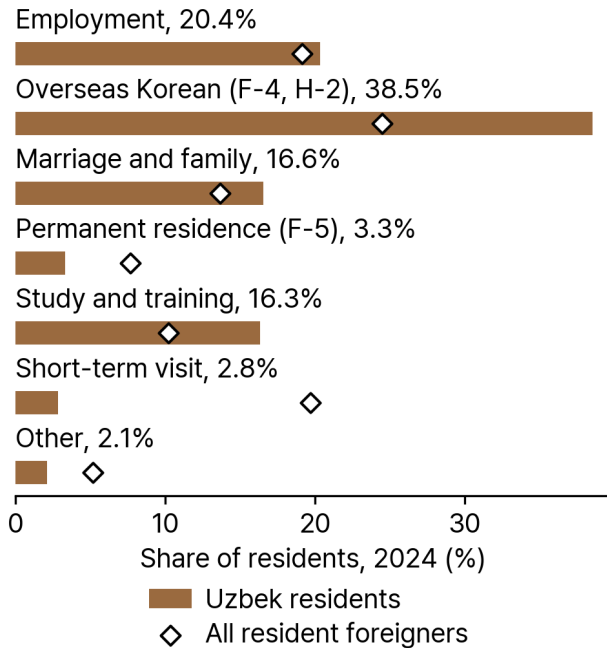
Permanent residents (F-5) numbered 3,139 in 2024, up from 1,282 in 2019. They made up 3.3 percent of Uzbek residents, compared with 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Labor migration under the Employment Permit System dates from a memorandum of understanding signed during the Korea-Uzbekistan summit on March 29, 2006 (KDI Economic Information and Education Center, 2006). By December 2022, about 69,000 Uzbek workers had worked in Korea through the system, the largest number from any Central Asian sending country, and about 8,000 were then employed in manufacturing and service jobs (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022).

FIGURE 6

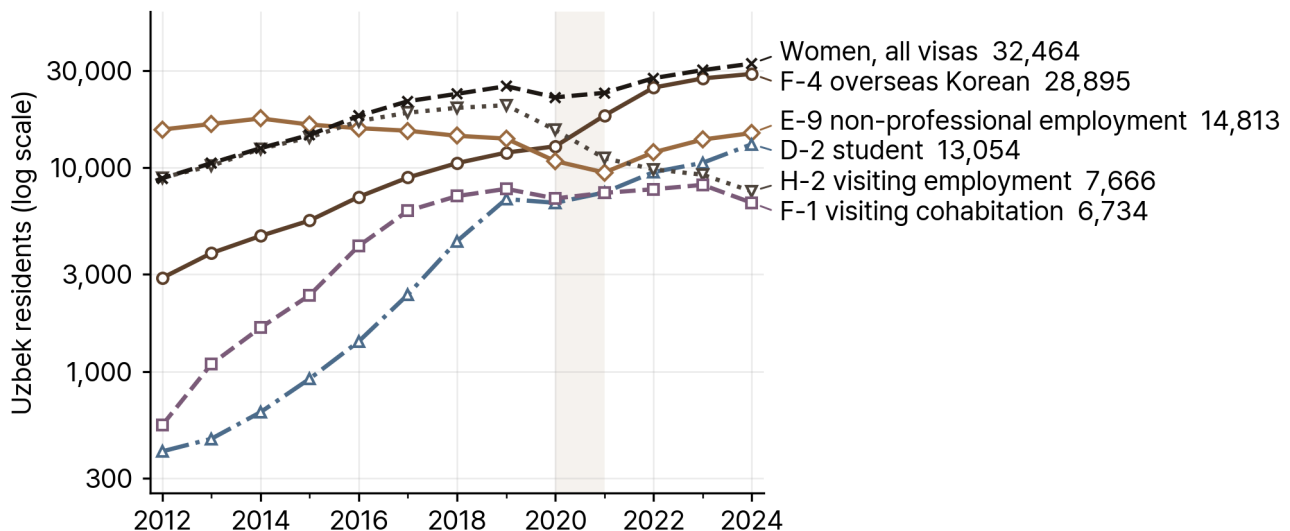
Uzbek Residents and All Resident Foreigners by Visa Group, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 7

Uzbek Residents by Main Visa Type, 2012-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In a meeting reported on December 1, 2022, the two countries' labor ministers renewed the memorandum and discussed the smooth entry of new workers, residency support for Uzbek workers already in Korea, and their safe return within their permitted period of residence (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2022).

Uzbek citizens also participate in the E-8 seasonal worker program. Access was suspended after many earlier participants broke their labor contracts and did not return

home on schedule, and it was restored on May 13, 2024.

Uzbekistan's government reported that up to 100,000 citizens could compete for the 2024 places, with more than 37,000 at the first stage (Gazeta.uz, 2024).

Students form a third channel. About 20,000 international students in Korea held Uzbek nationality in 2025, the third-largest group after Vietnam (116,000) and China (79,000)

(Edaily, 2026). Ethnic Korean migrants from Uzbekistan enter on the H-2 and F-4 visas described in the previous section (SNU Asia Center, 2024).

TABLE 3
Main Visa Types Held by Uzbek Residents, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Uzbek residents, 2024 (%)	Uzbek share of all holders of the visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	11,873	28,895	30.5	5.2
E-9	Non-professional Employment	13,909	14,813	15.6	4.4
D-2	Student	7,026	13,054	13.8	7.3
H-2	Visiting Employment	20,281	7,666	8.1	8.2
F-1	Visiting Cohabitation	7,882	6,734	7.1	6.8
F-3	Dependent Family	826	4,874	5.1	9.3
F-5	Permanent Residence	1,282	3,139	3.3	1.5

Note: Shares of Uzbek residents use the 2024 total of 94,893 resident foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

6 Naturalization

From 2014 to 2024, 995 Uzbek nationals naturalized as Korean citizens. Annual numbers ranged from 48 in 2017 to 138 in 2020, and 107 people naturalized in 2024.

A further 214 Uzbek nationals had their Korean nationality restored from 2011 to 2024, including 8 in 2024. Restoration applies to people who previously held Korean nationality.

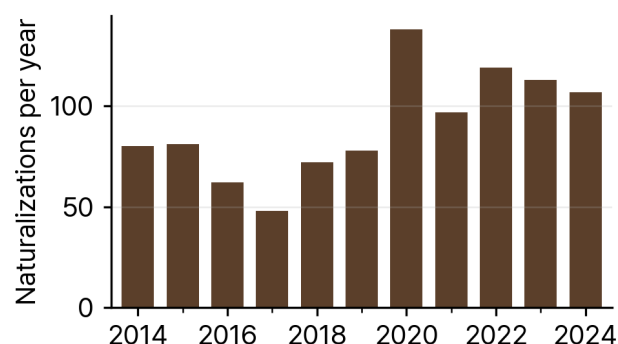
7 Unauthorized Residents

The Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports unauthorized residents separately for the ten largest nationalities only. Uzbekistan appeared in that table in 2019 (7,137 unauthorized residents, 9.5 percent of Uzbek resident foreigners), 2021 (9,167; 13.7 percent), 2023 (8,812; 10.0 percent), and 2024 (8,103; 8.5 percent). In 2024 Uzbekistan ranked tenth, and its 8,103 unauthorized residents were 2.0 percent of the 397,522 unauthorized residents in Korea (8,103 / 397,522). A missing year means Uzbekistan was not among the ten nationalities listed that year; it does not mean the count was zero.

8 Health and Well-being

Among 2,498 Uzbek migrant workers who filed occupational injury claims in Korea between January 2007 and September 2018, 36 injuries were fatal, a fatality rate of 1.4 percent. All 36 deaths were among the 2,259 male claimants (1.6 percent); none of the 239 female claimants died (Lee, Lee, and Cho, 2023).

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Uzbek Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

On July 18, 2026, an Uzbek worker in his twenties died at HD Hyundai Heavy Industries' Ulsan shipyard after being caught between a gondola lift and an upper scaffold inside the cargo hold of an LNG carrier (Ulsan Journal, 2026). To our knowledge, no published study reports mental health measures for Uzbek residents separately.

9 Migration from Uzbekistan to South Korea

About 2.1 million Uzbek nationals lived abroad in 2024, according to a UN DESA estimate cited by the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2025). The 94,893 Uzbek nationals in Korea in December 2024 were about 4.5 percent of that total (94,893 / 2.1 million). Russia remained the main destination, although the number of Uzbek migrants living there fell from 1.2 million at the start of 2024 to 698,000 at the end of the year (IOM 2025).

Uzbekistan's Migration Agency recruited 168,100 citizens for jobs abroad through its official channels in 2024. Of these, 123,681 went to Russia, 10,695 to Kazakhstan, and 10,120 (6.0 percent) to South Korea, which ranked third among named destinations, ahead of the United Kingdom (4,886) (IOM 2025). A narrower count covers E-9 workers under the Employment Permit System: 4,878 Uzbek citizens were employed in Korea on E-9 visas in 2023 and 3,080 in 2024, a fall of 37 percent. Migration Agency officials attributed the

decline to workers leaving their assigned jobs and to some employers going bankrupt (Kun.uz 2025). In 2024, 33,397 people took the EPS Korean-language test (EPS-TOPIK) in Uzbekistan and 13,317 passed (HRD Korea 2025). The head of the EPS Center in Tashkent said that passing does not guarantee a job, because the job-seeker roster lists three times as many workers as employers need, so some wait a long time or are never placed (Yonhap News 2026).

TABLE 4
Unauthorized Uzbek Residents, Selected Years, 2019-24

Year	Unauthorized residents	Uzbek resident foreigners	Unauthorized share (%)
2019	7,137	75,320	9.5
2021	9,167	66,677	13.7
2023	8,812	87,698	10.0
2024	8,103	94,893	8.5

Note: Share computed as unauthorized residents divided by Uzbek resident foreigners in the same year. Years not shown were not reported for Uzbekistan in table 6-4.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks (table 6-4), 2019-2024.

Remittance inflows to Uzbekistan totaled 14.8 billion USD in 2024, about 13 percent of GDP, up roughly 30 percent from 11.4 billion USD in 2023, according to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan. Russia sent 11.5 billion USD (77 percent), followed by Kazakhstan (795 million USD), the United States (577 million USD), and South Korea (534 million USD), about 3.6 percent of the total (IOM 2025).

Ethnic Koreans (Koryoin) make up a large part of the Uzbek population in Korea. In December 2024, 42,543 of the 94,893 Uzbek nationals in Korea (44.8 percent) were ethnic Koreans, according to Korea Immigration Service data cited by IOM (IOM 2025). A 2022 review found that most Uzbek labor migrants in Korea come from rural areas of Uzbekistan (Shin and Kim 2022). The Fergana region hosts a training center set up with the help of Hyundai Heavy Industries and the city of Ulsan, where a further 668 people completed language, cultural, and vocational training in 2025 and 2026 (UzDaily.uz 2026). About 280 workers were to be trained in Uzbekistan for shipbuilding jobs, with the first group expected in Korea in July 2025 (Korea Times 2025).

On October 17, 2024, a presidential decree turned the Agency for External Labour Migration into the Migration Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers. The agency licenses private employment agencies, oversees the organized dispatch of workers abroad, and offers vocational and foreign-language courses matched to foreign employers' requirements (IOM 2025). In May 2026, Uzbek authorities reported a fraud scheme linked to labor migration to Korea with estimated damages of 90 million USD. Brokers, including former employees of the migration agency, charged migrants between 7,000 and 12,000 USD each, and one scheme collected 5.6 million USD from about 1,000 migrants. The

former head of the agency's office in South Korea was dismissed in March 2025 and placed on Interpol's wanted list (AnewZ 2026).

Research on this migration covers work, study, and family life. Interviews with 30 Uzbek workers and students in Korea and 66 migrants in Japan in 2019 and 2020 found that labor and educational migration to Korea and Japan stems from the same lack of jobs at home as migration to Russia (Dadabaev and Soipov 2020). Shin and Kim found that remittances from Korea pay for household consumption, schooling, health care, marriages, and housing in Uzbekistan (Shin and Kim 2022). In interviews with ten Koryoin women from Uzbekistan married to Korean men, Jo found that their skills were devalued in the Korean labor market because they lacked Korean language fluency even though they appear Korean (Jo 2018). A study of Koryoin in Gwangju described transnational families whose members separate and reunite repeatedly between Uzbekistan and Korea (Kim 2015).

10 Community Organizations

The Gwanghui-dong area near Dongdaemun, which Seoul's Jung-gu district designates as Central Asia Street, began forming in the early 1990s after Korea and Russia established diplomatic relations, as people from Russia and Central Asia moved to the neighborhood. About 150 trading firms, restaurants, and grocery stores operate in the area (Seoul Jung-gu District Office, 2026). The Uzbek restaurant Samarkand operated four branches there in 2018 (Asia Economy, 2018).

More than 80 percent of Uzbekistan's population is Muslim, and a 2023 report described a Korean construction site that provided prayer space and a pork-free menu for its Muslim

workers, including Uzbek workers (Industry Journal, 2023).

TABLE 5
Migration indicators, Uzbekistan and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Uzbek nationals living abroad, 2024	About 2.1 million	IOM 2025, citing UN DESA
Uzbek nationals in South Korea, December 2024	94,893 (about 4.5% of those abroad)	IOM 2025, citing Korea Immigration Service
Ethnic Koreans among Uzbek nationals in South Korea, December 2024	42,543 (44.8%)	IOM 2025, citing Korea Immigration Service
Workers recruited abroad through official channels, 2024	168,100; 10,120 to South Korea (6.0%, third)	IOM 2025, citing Migration Agency
Uzbek workers employed in South Korea on E-9 visas	4,878 (2023); 3,080 (2024)	Kun.uz 2025
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Uzbekistan, 2024	33,397 (13,317 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
Remittance inflows, 2024	14.8 billion USD (about 13% of GDP)	IOM 2025, citing Central Bank of Uzbekistan
Remittances from South Korea, 2024	534 million USD (fourth-largest source, 3.6% of inflows)	IOM 2025, citing Central Bank of Uzbekistan

Note: The Migration Agency recruitment count and the E-9 employment count use different definitions and should not be compared directly. Shares of Uzbek nationals abroad and of ethnic Koreans are computed from the figures shown.

Source: IOM 2025; Kun.uz 2025.

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 2 name Uzbek nationals in their name or target group. One is Cheonan Moise, a privately funded NGO in Dongnam-gu, Cheonan (South Chungcheong); the other is the Seoul Central

Mosque in Yongsan-gu, Seoul. Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as foreign worker and multicultural family support centers, also serve Uzbek residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Uzbek Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Nepali Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

South Korea had 74,641 resident foreigners of Nepali nationality on 31 December 2024, of whom 72,151 (96.7 percent) were registered foreigners, the category for foreign nationals in Korea for more than 90 days. Nepal was the fourth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (4.8 percent of the total) and the seventh-largest among all resident foreigners (2.8 percent). The count stood at 5,644 in 2006 and 26,790 in 2014, when Nepal ranked ninth among registered foreigners and twelfth among all resident foreigners.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 74,641 Nepali nationals lived in South Korea. Nepal was the fourth-largest nationality among registered foreigners and the seventh-largest among all resident foreigners, up from ninth and twelfth in 2014.
- ▶ The Nepali population grew 74.5 percent between 2019 and 2024 (from 42,781 to 74,641), the second-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 63.1 percent of Nepali residents held an E-9 non-professional employment visa, and women made up 18.1 percent of the group, compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

Most Nepali nationals came through the Employment Permit System (EPS), which Nepal joined through a ministerial agreement with South Korea signed on 23 July 2007 (EPS Section Nepal, 2007). The population fell from 42,781 in 2019 to 36,903 in 2021 and then rose to 74,641 by 2024. Over the same period, the numbers holding student (D-2) and specially designated activities (E-7) visas grew several times over.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Nepali residents in 2024 were far more likely to hold employment visas (75.3 percent against 19.2 percent), much more likely to be men, and more concentrated in ages 20 to 39. They were also less concentrated in the Seoul capital area and more likely to live in

rural counties. This Spotlight describes the size of the population, where Nepali residents live, their age, sex, and visa status, the channels and policies behind their migration, naturalization, health and well-being, migration from Nepal to South Korea, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the broadest count published by the Ministry of Justice.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans holding F-4 visas report their place of residence instead of registering and are not counted here. District-level figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

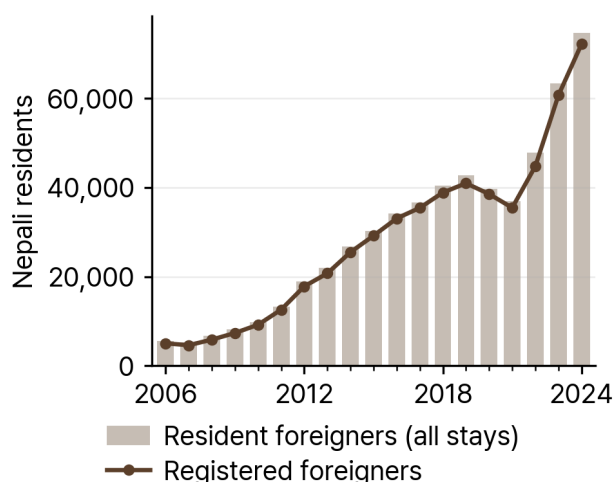
Nepali residents. In this Spotlight, the term refers to foreign nationals holding Nepali citizenship. Naturalized Korean citizens of Nepali origin are not included in the resident foreigner counts.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Nepali resident foreigners rose from 5,644 in 2006 to 26,790 in 2014 and 42,781 in 2019 (see Figure 1). It declined to 39,743 in 2020 and 36,903 in 2021, a drop of 13.7 percent from 2019 (5,878 fewer people), then climbed to 47,865 in 2022, 63,369 in 2023, and 74,641 in 2024, the highest count on record. The 2024 total was about 13 times the 2006 total (74,641 against 5,644).

Registered foreigners made up nearly the whole group in every year: 5,039 of 5,644 in 2006 and 72,151 of 74,641 in 2024 (96.7 percent).

FIGURE 1

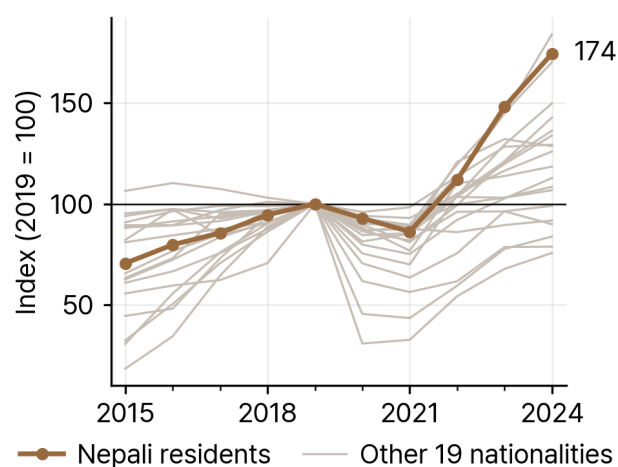
Nepali Residents in South Korea, All Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners, 2006-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Nepal ranked higher among registered foreigners than among all resident foreigners in each year shown in Table 1. Among registered foreigners it ranked 16th in 2006, 9th in 2014, 7th in 2019, and 4th in 2024. Among all resident foreigners it ranked 19th, 12th, 12th, and 7th in the same years. The broader count includes short-term visitors and overseas Koreans with F-4

visas; short-term visas accounted for 1.5 percent of Nepali residents in 2024, against 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 2

Growth of Nepali Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index, 2019 = 100)

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Indexed to 2019 = 100, the Nepali population stood at 174.5 in 2024, a growth of 74.5 percent over five years. That was the second-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities in South Korea (see Figure 2).

TABLE 1

Nepali Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners
2006	5,644	5,039	16	19	0.8%	0.6%
2014	26,790	25,493	9	12	2.3%	1.5%
2019	42,781	40,933	7	12	3.2%	1.7%
2024	74,641	72,151	4	7	4.8%	2.8%

Note: Ranks and shares are computed among all nationalities in each count. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 overseas Koreans who report their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities.

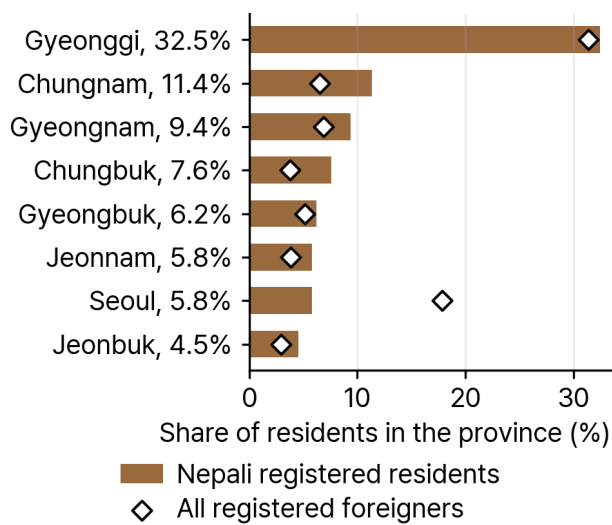
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, 35.1 percent of Nepali registered residents lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi province, 22.1 percent in the Yeongnam region (Busan, Daegu, Ulsan, and the Gyeongsang provinces), 20.0 percent in the Chungcheong region, 11.1 percent in the Honam region, 5.9 percent in Gangwon and Jeju, and 5.8 percent in Seoul (see Figure 3). The Seoul capital area (Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi) was home to 40.9 percent of the group, compared with 55.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

Nepali residents were more likely than other foreigners to live in rural counties (gun): 24.5 percent did in 2024, against 10.6 percent of all resident foreigners. In the Honam region, 53.1 percent of Nepali residents lived in rural counties, and in Chungcheong, 43.8 percent.

FIGURE 3

Nepali Registered Residents by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Nepali Registered Residents, 2024

District	Province	Nepali residents	Share of district's foreign residents
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	4,709	9.2%
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,408	9.4%
Eumseong-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	2,156	15.6%
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,017	12.4%
Yeongam-gun	Jeollanam-do	1,471	15.2%
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	1,385	5.9%
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,375	8.9%
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,374	5.6%
Busan Nam-gu	Busan	1,364	18.5%
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,363	4.2%

Note: Share of district's foreign residents is Nepali registered residents divided by all registered foreigners in the district.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

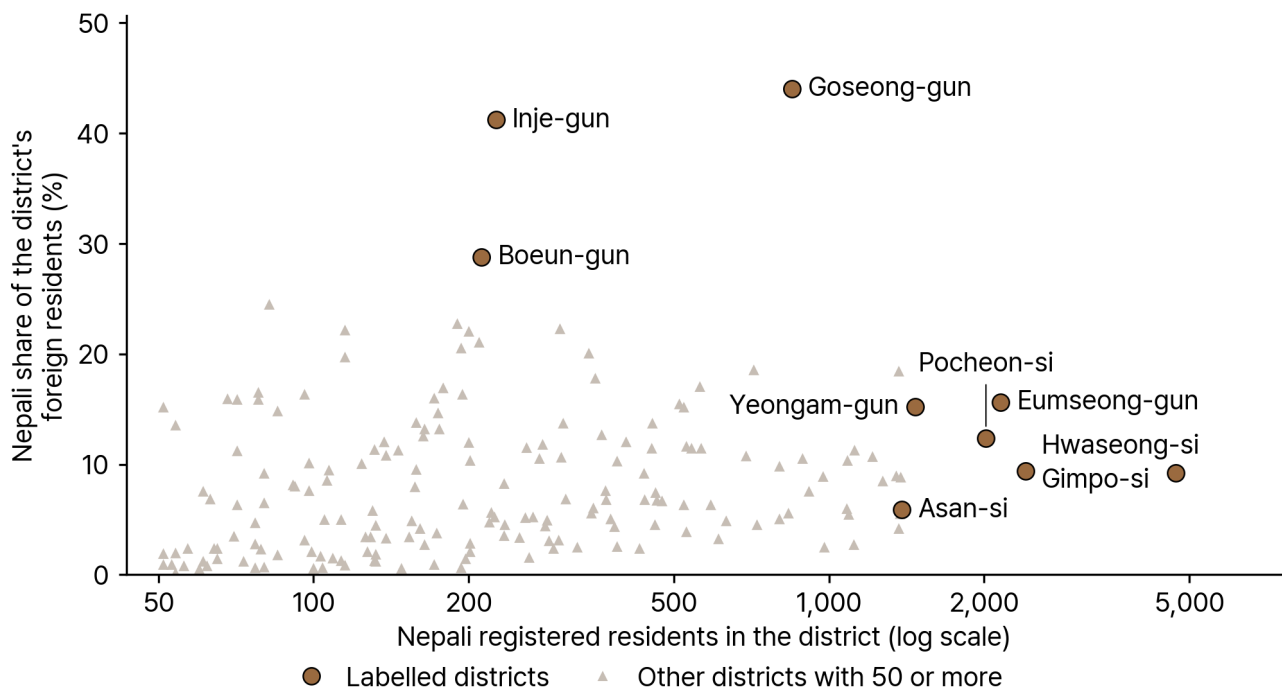
The largest Nepali populations were in Hwaseong-si (4,709), Gimpo-si (2,408), Eumseong-gun (2,156), and Pocheon-si (2,017) (see Figure 4 and Table 2). The ten largest districts together accounted for 27.2 percent of Nepali registered residents, and 140 districts had at least 100. In Seoul, the largest counts were in Jongno-gu (1,213) and Dongdaemun-gu (1,092).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Nepali residents and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.532 in 2014 and 0.509 in 2024. At 0.509, about half of Nepali residents

would have to move to another district for the group to be distributed like other foreigners.

Two districts in Gangwon province met the definition of an ethnic enclave used in this Spotlight (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents) in 2024. In Goseong-gun, 848 Nepali residents made up 44.0 percent of foreign residents, with a location quotient of 22.3. In Inje-gun, 226 Nepali residents made up 41.2 percent, with a location quotient of 5.1.

FIGURE 4

Districts with the Most Nepali Registered Residents, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Nepali residents were concentrated in young working ages. In 2024, 87.8 percent (65,529 people) were ages 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group was 25 to 29, and the median fell in the group ages 30 to 34 (see Figure 5).

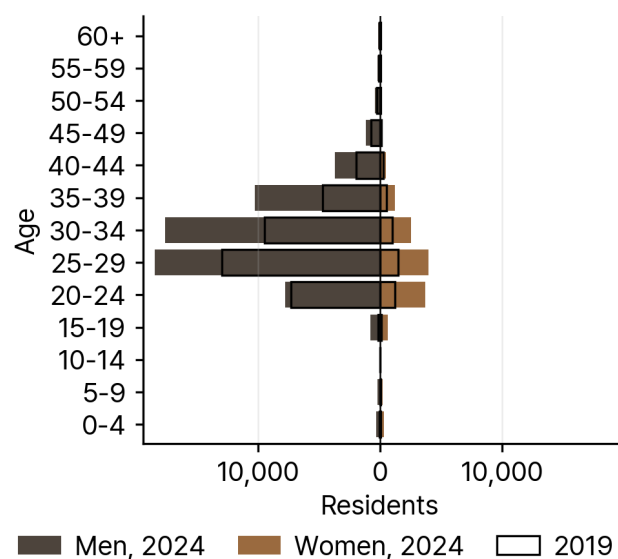
Children and older adults were few. Children under age 15 made up 1.5 percent of the group in 2024 (1,136 children, up from 224 in 2019), compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners. People age 60 and older made up 0.3 percent, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners.

Women made up 18.1 percent of Nepali residents in 2024 (13,494 women), up from 11.5 percent in 2019 (4,914 women). Among all resident foreigners, women made up 45.1 percent.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 75.3 percent of Nepali residents held an employment visa, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 6). Study and training visas accounted for 12.6 percent (10.2 percent for all resident foreigners), marriage and family visas for 8.4 percent (13.6 percent), permanent residence (F-5) for 0.3 percent (7.7 percent), and short-term visits for 1.5 percent (19.7 percent).

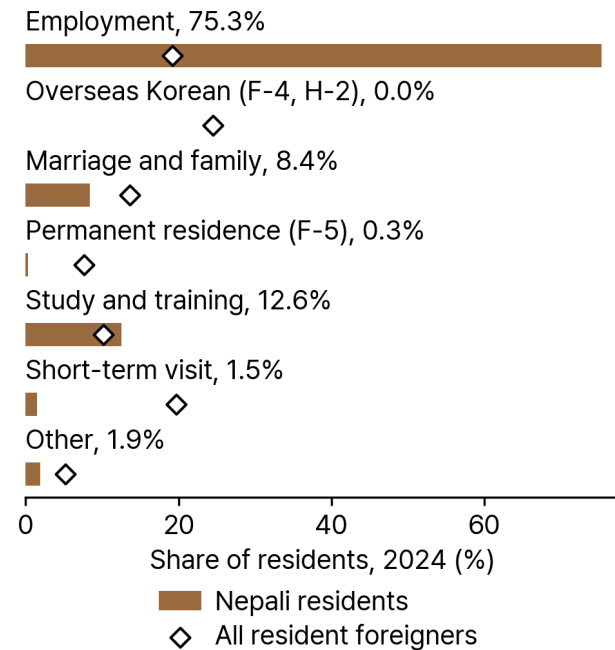
FIGURE 5

Nepali Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2019 and 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa, issued under the Employment Permit System, was held by 47,108 Nepali residents in 2024, up from 22,748 in 2014 and 35,353 in 2019. Nepali nationals made up 14.0 percent of all E-9 holders in South Korea, the second-largest share of any nationality.

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Nepali Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Other visa types grew faster after 2019 (see Figure 7). Student (D-2) visa holders rose from 1,964 to 8,867 between 2019 and 2024, about 4.5 times. Specially designated activities (E-7) visa holders rose from 665 to 7,849, about 11.8 times, and Nepali nationals made up 12.3 percent of all E-7 holders in 2024. Dependent family (F-3) visa holders rose from 543 to 4,113. Marriage migrant (F-6) visa holders changed little, from 749 to 753.

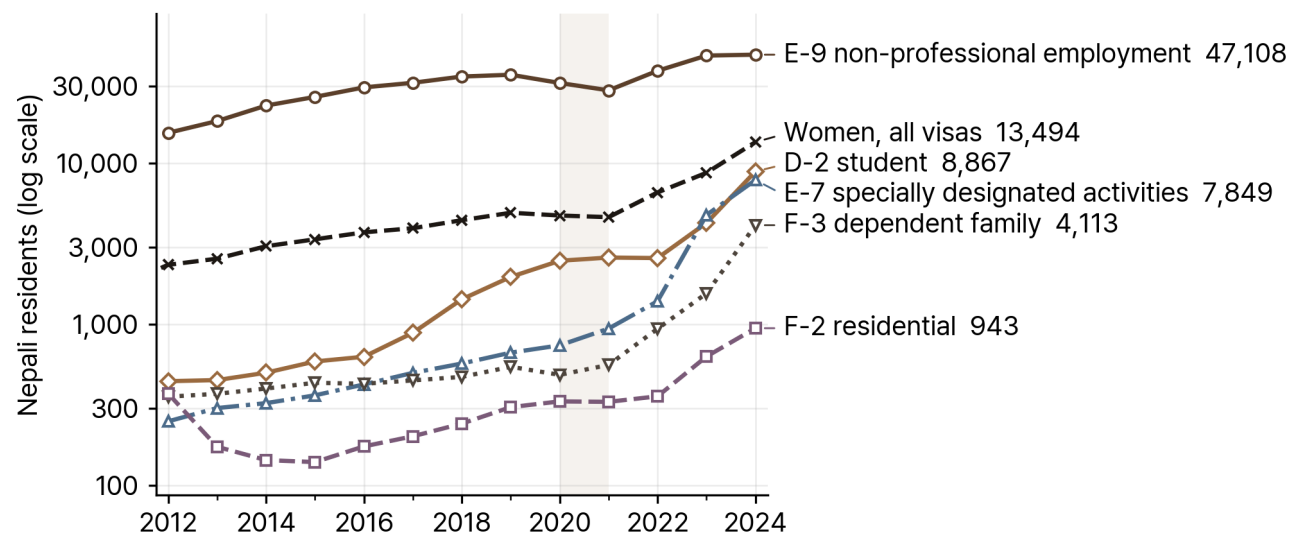
5 Migration Channels and Policy

Nepal and South Korea signed the ministerial-level EPS memorandum of understanding on 23 July 2007, and Nepal set up its EPS Korea Section under the Department of Foreign Employment on 26 July 2007. Two implementing agreements followed on 29 November 2007 and 10 January 2008 (EPS Section Nepal, 2007).

In a 2024 survey of Nepali workers who had returned from South Korea, 81 percent had worked in manufacturing and 18 percent in agriculture and animal husbandry (KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024).

Annual intake depends on quotas set by South Korea. For 2021, HRD Korea set Nepal's EPS quota at 5,400 workers, out of 52,000 for 16 sending countries; no Korean-language test had been held in Nepal in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Investopaper, 2021).

FIGURE 7

Nepali Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2012-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

6 Naturalization

Between 2014 and 2024, 589 Nepali nationals naturalized as South Korean citizens. Annual counts ranged from 57 to 84 between 2014 and 2020, with the high of 84 in 2018, and fell

to 23 in 2021 before rising to 37 in 2024 (see Figure 8). The 37 naturalizations in 2024 equal about 0.05 percent of the 74,641 Nepali residents that year.

TABLE 3

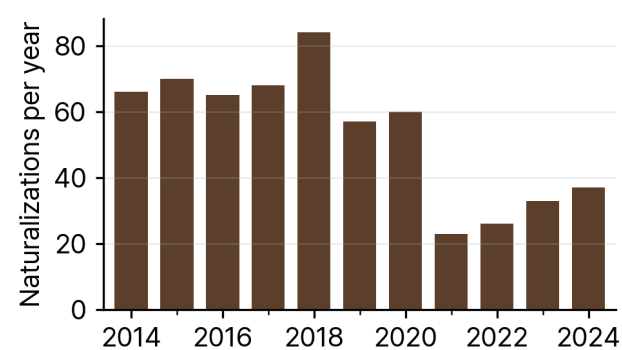
Nepali Residents by Visa Type, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Nepali residents, 2024	Nepali share of all holders of this visa, 2024
E-9	Non-professional Employment	35,353	47,108	63.1%	14.0%
D-2	Student	1,964	8,867	11.9%	5.0%
E-7	Specially Designated Activities	665	7,849	10.5%	12.3%
F-3	Dependent Family	543	4,113	5.5%	7.8%
F-2	Residential	305	943	1.3%	1.5%
C-3	Short-term Visit	1,000	850	1.1%	0.5%
F-6	Marriage Migration	749	753	1.0%	0.5%

Note: Shares of Nepali residents are out of 74,641 resident foreigners of Nepali nationality in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 8

Naturalizations of Nepali Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Nepal is not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents, so no count of unauthorized Nepali residents is published. The yearbook reported 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

8 Health and Well-being

In the 2024 survey of 1,313 Nepali workers who had returned from South Korea, 18.4 percent reported an injury from an industrial accident while working there. About 44 percent of those injured had treatment paid through Workers' Compensation Insurance, and employers paid for another 44 percent (KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024).

A 2021 study reported 170 deaths of Nepali migrant workers in South Korea between 2007 and April 2019: 76 (44.7 percent) from natural causes, 47 (27.6 percent) from suicide, 45 (26.5 percent) from accidents, and 2 (1.2 percent) from homicide. In the same study, 20 Nepali migrant workers ranked family

issues in Nepal, weak camaraderie at work, and hazardous, exhausting work as the main perceived risk factors for suicide (Atteraya et al., 2021).

A 2025 article cited a survey in South Korea in which 23 percent of Nepali migrants reported mental health problems and more than 66 percent reported some form of unfair treatment (Giri et al., 2025).

9 Migration from Nepal to South Korea

In Statistics Korea's 2023 survey of immigrants' living conditions, Nepali nationals made up 14.5 percent of the 291,000 foreign workers holding non-professional employment (EPS) visas in South Korea, the same share as Cambodians and above Vietnamese (11.9 percent) (MoLESS, 2025). To our knowledge, no published source reports South Korea's rank among the destinations of Nepali emigrants.

Nepal's Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) reported that 19,698 Nepali workers who had passed the Korean-language test left for jobs in South Korea in fiscal year 2022/23 and 9,285 in fiscal year 2023/24 (MoLESS, 2025). From 2008 to mid-November 2022, 79,921 Nepali nationals (74,498 men and 5,423 women) went to South Korea for work under the EPS (KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024).

Registrations for the EPS Korean-language test (EPS-TOPIK) in Nepal rose from 31,525 in 2008 to 92,356 in 2019 and 164,322 in 2024 (KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024). For the 2025 recruitment round, about 103,000 Nepalis applied online for the language test against a combined quota of 5,300 places in manufacturing and in agriculture and livestock, about 19 applicants per place (Online Khabar, 2025).

Remittance inflows to Nepal totaled a record NPR 1,445 billion in 2024, equal to 25.3 percent of GDP, up from 10.7 percent of GDP in 2001 (MoLESS, 2025). The report does not break down remittances by sending country. The World Bank's bilateral

remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Nepal at about US\$136.8 million that year (World Bank, 2021).

Koshi Province sends the largest share of Korea-bound workers. Department of Foreign Employment data reported in December 2025 put Koshi's share of Nepalis who had gone to South Korea for work at 33.2 percent (Nepal News, 2025). Of 20,000 workers who returned from South Korea between 2018 and 2022, 5,638 (28.2 percent) came from Koshi, 4,963 from Gandaki, 4,170 from Bagmati, and 3,294 from Lumbini. Sudurpashchim (1,004), Madhesh (474), and Karnali (457) supplied the fewest (KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024).

Nepal sends workers to South Korea under a government-to-government (G2G) arrangement, without private recruitment agencies. According to the Nepal Labour Migration Report 2024, Nepal issued G2G labor approvals for South Korea, Israel, and the United Kingdom; the arrangement with the United Kingdom, for nurses, began in 2022 (MoLESS, 2025).

In September 2023, Nepal's Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security stated that no agreement existed with South Korea on seasonal workers, after a false notice claiming a deal to recruit 12,000 Nepali workers circulated on social media; the ministry said the EPS agreement was the only one being implemented (Kathmandu Post, 2023a).

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Nepal and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Nepali share of EPS (non-professional employment) workers in South Korea, 2023	14.5% of 291,000	MoLESS, 2025
EPS departures to South Korea, fiscal year 2022/23	19,698	MoLESS, 2025
EPS departures to South Korea, fiscal year 2023/24	9,285	MoLESS, 2025
Cumulative EPS departures to South Korea, 2008 to mid-November 2022	79,921	KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024
EPS-TOPIK registrants in Nepal, 2024	164,322	KOICA and HRD Korea, 2024
EPS-TOPIK applicants and quota places, 2025 round	103,000 applicants for 5,300 places	Online Khabar, 2025
Remittance inflows to Nepal, 2024	NPR 1,445 billion	MoLESS, 2025
Remittances as a share of Nepal's GDP, 2024	25.3%	MoLESS, 2025
Remittances from South Korea to Nepal, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	US\$136.8 million	World Bank, 2021
Share of Korea-bound EPS workers from Koshi Province, reported in 2025	33.2%	Nepal News, 2025

Note: Nepal's fiscal year 2022/23 ended in mid-2023 and fiscal year 2023/24 in mid-2024.

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

In December 2023, two protesters died in clashes over a rule that barred applicants on the shipbuilding track from taking the Korean-language test for manufacturing jobs. Nepal's High Court ordered the government to allow those applicants to apply for manufacturing jobs, and Nepal's EPS office issued a notice opening the manufacturing test after South Korea said it could consider the request (Kathmandu Post, 2023b).

Studies of Nepali migrants in South Korea have examined work, family life, and health. Seo (2019) found that EPS workers treated the fixed term of their permits as a "liminal time" or "time-out" from the life course, a view that made precarious work bearable. Nguyen et al. (2024) interviewed 18 Nepali migrant fathers in South Korea and 11 mothers in Nepal; fathers reported guilt over their distance from their children and felt respected by their communities, and mothers reported loneliness and added caregiving stress and felt heavily

scrutinized. Atteraya et al. (2021) identified eight perceived risk factors for suicide among 20 Nepali workers (see Health and Well-being). Baniya et al. (2023) surveyed 402 students at Korean-language institutes in the Kathmandu Valley in 2019. Their spending before migration ranged from NPR 20,000 to more than NPR 200,000, and 39 percent spent NPR 50,000 to 100,000; 80.8 percent relied on family support, 7.0 percent borrowed, and 85 percent of those who borrowed paid interest of 12 to 36 percent a year. The costs include no recruitment-agency fees, because the two governments run the EPS without private agencies.

10 Community Organizations

Changsin-dong in Seoul's Jongno District is the main gathering place of the Nepali community in Korea. A 2026 report estimated about 500 Nepali students in the wider area, about

200 longer-term Nepali residents in Changsin-dong itself, and more than 18 Nepali restaurants (Korea JoongAng Daily, 2026).

The South Korea chapter of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA Korea) has more than 100 members, and in September 2026 about 60 Nepali organizations in Korea were reported to be raising or to have delivered relief funds and supplies for flood-stricken Nepal (Korea Times, 2026).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 9 name Nepali people in their name or target group. They include Nepal House (Jongno-gu, Seoul), the Nepal Cultural Center (5S) and Library (Danwon-gu, Ansan), the Pyeongtaek Foreign Workers Healing Center (Pyeongtaek-si), Cheonan Moise (Dongnam-gu, Cheonan), the Universal Cultural Center (Dong-gu, Gwangju), Hapdeok Foreigners' Church (Dangjin-si), and Sri Radha Shyamasundar Mandir, the ISKCON Seoul temple (Yongsan-gu, Seoul). Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family and foreign worker support centers, also serve Nepali residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Nepali Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Indonesian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

South Korea counted 73,180 Indonesian resident foreigners on December 31, 2024, the largest number on record. Of these, 58,248 (79.6 percent) were registered foreigners remaining longer than 90 days. In 2024 Indonesians were the seventh-largest nationality among registered foreigners (3.9 percent of the total) and the eighth-largest among all resident foreigners (2.8 percent). Among registered foreigners they ranked seventh in 2006, fifth in 2014, and eighth in 2019; among all resident foreigners they ranked ninth in 2006, eighth in 2014, and ninth in 2019. The population stood at 26,378 in 2006 and 48,854 in 2019, fell to 34,188 in 2021, and then rose each year to 2024.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 58,248 Indonesian nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, making Indonesia the seventh-largest nationality among registered foreigners (3.9 percent), and with 73,180 residents in all it was the eighth-largest among all resident foreigners (2.8 percent).
- ▶ The Indonesian population grew by about 50 percent between 2019 and 2024 (from 48,854 to 73,180), the fourth-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ Three in four Indonesian residents (75.0 percent) held an employment visa in 2024, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners, and 17.1 percent were women.

Most Indonesians came to Korea as temporary workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS), for which the two governments signed a memorandum of understanding in 2004 (Recruitment Advisor, 2004). Non-professional employment (E-9) visas accounted for 40,758 Indonesians in 2024, 55.7 percent of the group. Between 2019 and 2024 the number

holding crew employment (E-10) visas rose from 5,787 to 9,967, and the number holding specially designated activity (E-7) visas rose from 224 to 3,564.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Indonesians in 2024 were far more likely to be men (82.9 percent, against 54.9 percent of all resident foreigners), to be aged 20 to 39 (79.6 percent, against 49.7 percent), and to live outside the Seoul capital area (74.1 percent of registered Indonesians, against 44.8 percent of all foreign residents). Almost none held overseas Korean or permanent residence visas (0.4 percent each).

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals present in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the headline count used in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals remaining longer than 90 days who register with an immigration office. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans holding F-4 visas report their residence instead of registering and are not included in this count.

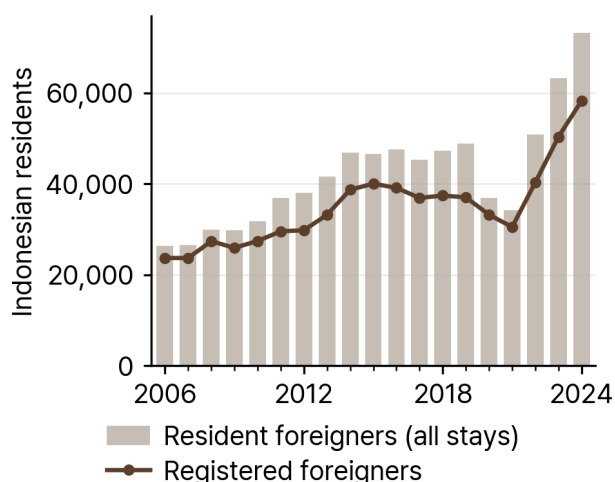
Visa codes. Codes such as E-9 or D-2 are Korean sojourn statuses. E-9 covers non-professional employment under the Employment Permit System, E-10 crew employment on vessels, E-7 specially designated professional and skilled activities, C-3 short-term visits, D-2 degree study, and F-6 marriage migration.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Indonesian resident foreigners nearly tripled between 2006 and 2024, from 26,378 to 73,180 (a ratio of 2.8). Growth was uneven. The population rose to 46,945 in 2014 and 48,854 in 2019, then dropped to 36,858 in 2020 and 34,188 in 2021 before climbing to 50,841 in 2022, 63,226 in 2023, and 73,180 in 2024 (see Figure 1).

Measured against 2019, the Indonesian population had an index value of 149.8 in 2024, an increase of 24,326 people (73,180 minus 48,854). This was the fourth-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities over 2019-24 (see Figure 2). The number of registered Indonesians rose from 37,043 in 2019 to 58,248 in 2024, and registered foreigners made up 79.6 percent of the total in 2024.

FIGURE 1
Indonesian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



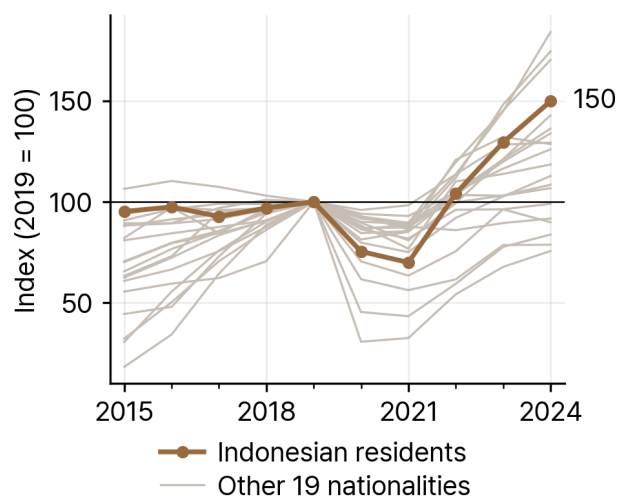
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

Registered Indonesians lived mainly in the southeast. In 2024 the Yeongnam region (Busan, Daegu, Ulsan, and North and South Gyeongsang) was home to 23,976 registered

Indonesians, 41.2 percent of the group. Incheon and Gyeonggi had 12,984 (22.3 percent), Honam 7,526 (12.9 percent), Chungcheong 6,599 (11.3 percent), Gangwon and Jeju 5,054 (8.7 percent), and Seoul 2,109 (3.6 percent). The Seoul capital area therefore accounted for 25.9 percent of registered Indonesians, compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 2
Growth of the Indonesian Population Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index, 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1
Indonesian Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	26,378	23,715	7	9	3.8	2.9
2014	46,945	38,718	5	8	3.5	2.6
2019	48,854	37,043	8	9	2.9	1.9
2024	73,180	58,248	7	8	3.9	2.8

Note: Ranks and shares are computed separately among registered foreigners (long-term residents) and among all resident foreigners (including short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters).

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

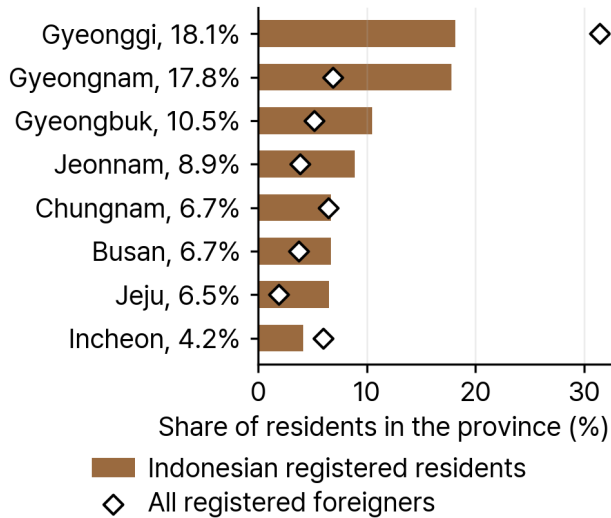
About 21.1 percent of registered Indonesians lived in rural counties (gun) in 2024, about twice the rate for all foreign residents (10.6 percent). The rural share was 43.2 percent in Honam and 39.6 percent in Chungcheong. Indonesians numbered 100 or more in 116 districts, and the ten largest districts accounted for 28.6 percent of the group. Hwaseong-

si in Gyeonggi had the most Indonesian residents (2,434), followed by Jeju-si (2,389) and Tongyeong-si (2,056) (see Figure 4 and Table 2).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between registered Indonesians and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.527 in 2014 and 0.504 in 2024. A value of 0.504 means that about

half of Indonesians would have to move to another district for the group to be distributed like other foreign residents.

FIGURE 3
Registered Indonesian Residents by Region of South Korea, 2024



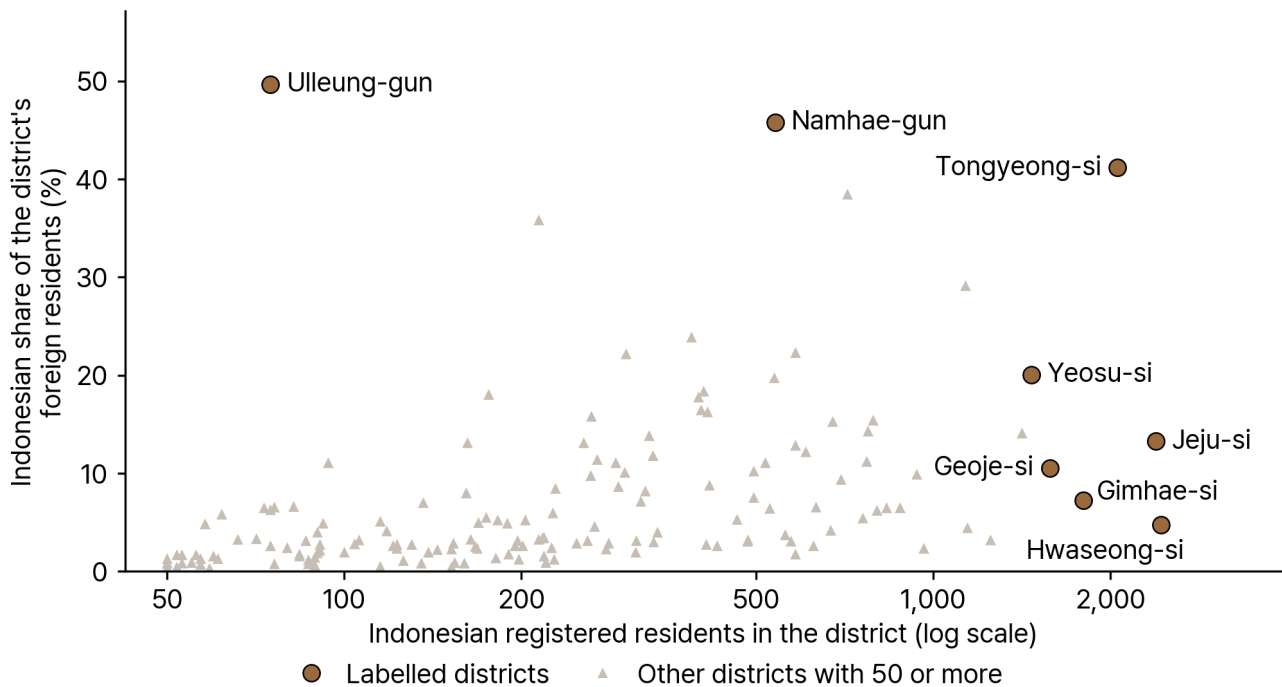
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Four districts met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents). They were Tongyeong-si (2,056 Indonesians, 41.2 percent of the district's foreign residents, location quotient 15.3), Uljin-gun (714, 38.5 percent, 13.6), Namhae-gun (540, 45.8 percent, 11.9), and Ongjin-gun in Incheon (214, 35.8 percent, 9.4). In Sacheon-si, Indonesians made up 29.2 percent of foreign residents, just below the threshold.

3 Age and Sex

Indonesian residents were young and mostly men. In 2024, 12,514 of 73,180 (17.1 percent) were women, down from 18.0 percent in 2019; among all resident foreigners the share of women was 45.1 percent. The largest five-year age group was 25-29, and the median fell in the 30-34 group (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 4
Registered Indonesian Residents by District in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

People aged 20 to 39 made up 79.6 percent of Indonesian residents in 2024 (58,252 people), compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Children under 15 were 3.2 percent of the group (2,347), against 5.7 percent of all resident

foreigners, and 467 were under age 5. Only 1.3 percent were aged 60 or older, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners; 2,870 Indonesians (3.9 percent) were aged 50 or older.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Indonesian Residents, 2024

District	Province	Indonesian residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,434	4.8
Jeju-si	Jeju-do	2,389	13.3
Tongyeong-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	2,056	41.2
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,798	7.3
Geoje-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,579	10.5
Yeosu-si	Jeollanam-do	1,467	20.0
Seogwipo-si	Jeju-do	1,414	14.1
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	1,249	3.3
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,142	4.5
Sacheon-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,134	29.2

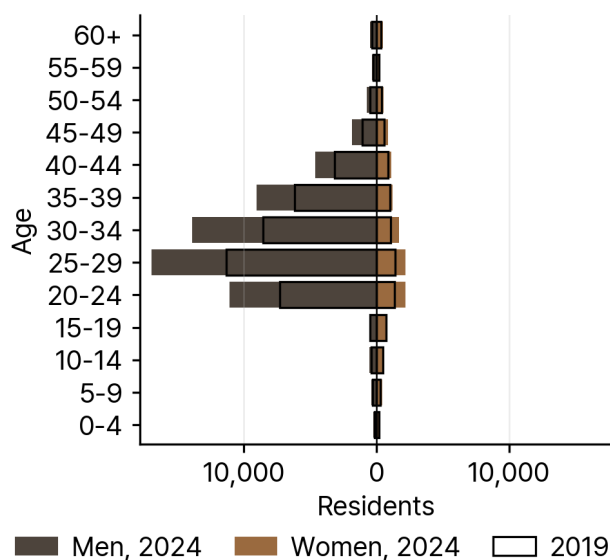
Note: Registered foreigners only. Together these ten districts accounted for 28.6 percent of registered Indonesians.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

4 Visa Status

Employment visas accounted for 75.0 percent of Indonesian residents in 2024, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. Short-term visits made up 15.9 percent (19.7 percent of all resident foreigners), study and training 4.0 percent (10.2 percent), and marriage and family 3.5 percent (13.6 percent). Overseas Korean visas (F-4, H-2) accounted for 0.4 percent of Indonesians and 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners, and permanent residence (F-5) for 0.4 percent and 7.7 percent (see Figure 6).

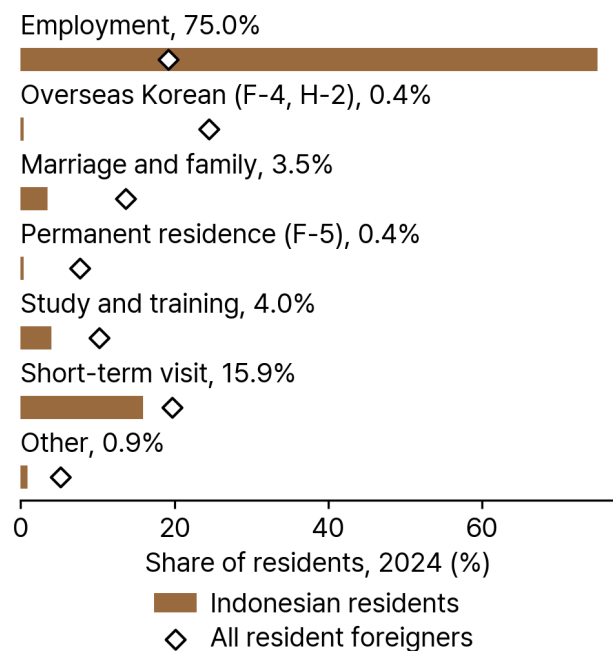
FIGURE 5
Indonesian Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa was the largest single status, held by 40,758 Indonesians in 2024 (55.7 percent of the group), up from 28,463 in 2019. Indonesia ranked fourth among nationalities in E-9 holders. Indonesians held 9,967 E-10 crew employment visas in 2024, 45.5 percent of all E-10 holders in Korea. The E-7 count grew from 224 in 2019 to 3,564 in 2024, and D-2 student visas from 1,269 to 2,304 (see Figure 7 and Table 3).

FIGURE 6
Visa Groups of Indonesian Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 3
Most Common Visa Types among Indonesian Residents, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Indonesian residents, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
E-9	Non-professional employment	28,463	40,758	55.7	12.1
C-3	Short-term visit	9,331	10,606	14.5	6.5
E-10	Crew employment	5,787	9,967	13.6	45.5
E-7	Specially designated activities	224	3,564	4.9	5.6
D-2	Student	1,269	2,304	3.1	1.3
F-6	Marriage migration	730	1,281	1.8	0.9
B-2	Tourist transit	964	1,020	1.4	0.7

Note: Resident foreigners on December 31 of each year.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

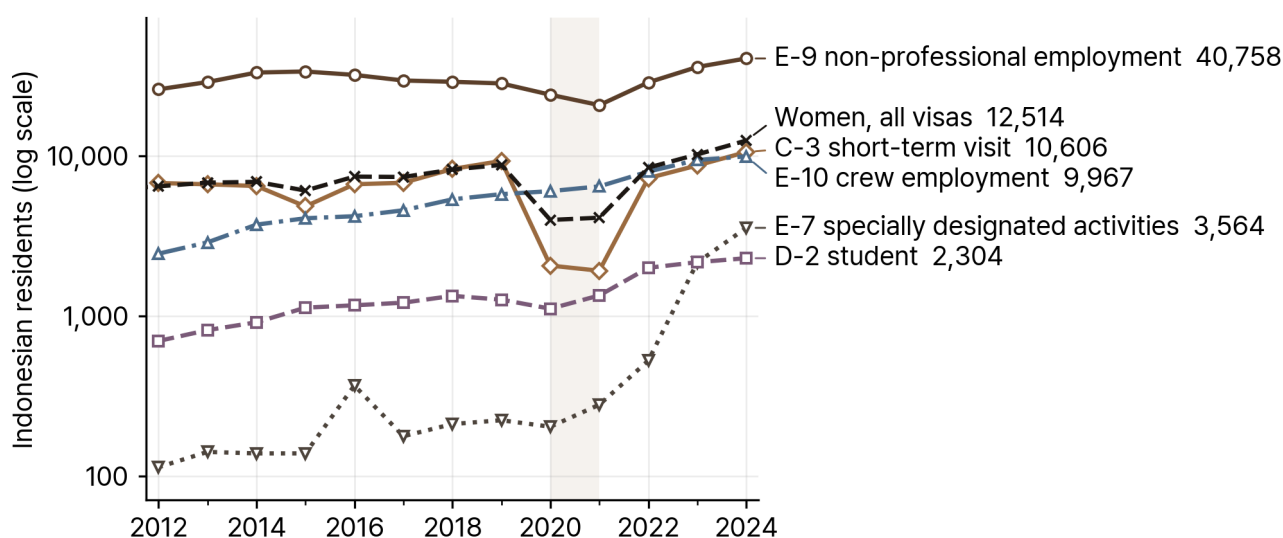
5 Migration Channels and Policy

South Korea and Indonesia signed a memorandum of understanding on sending Indonesian workers under the Employment Permit System in 2004. E-9 workers are recruited through a government-to-government scheme managed

jointly by Indonesia's National Board for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BP2MI) and Korea's Human Resources Development Service (Recruitment Advisor, 2004).

For 2025, Indonesia's EPS placement quota for Korea was 8,200 workers, and 5,410 had been placed by September 23, 2025, including 3,603 in manufacturing and 1,785 in fisheries (Migrant Times, 2026).

FIGURE 7
Indonesian Residents in South Korea by Visa Type, 2006-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

For the 2024 EPS-TOPIK testing cycle, the sectors open to Indonesian applicants were expanded from manufacturing and fisheries to include shipbuilding, waste-processing services ("Service 1"), and hotel and restaurant work ("Service 2") (Antara News, 2024).

Study is a smaller channel. As of February 28, 2023, 2,546 Indonesians were enrolled in Korea on study and language-training visas (2,284 degree students on D-2 visas and 262

Korean-language trainees on D-4-1 visas), making Indonesia the eighth-largest source of international students, according to Ministry of Justice data reported by Haninpost, 2023.

6 Naturalization

Few Indonesians acquire Korean nationality. The immigration yearbooks record 50 naturalizations of Indonesian nationals from 2014 to 2024, with annual counts between 1 and 8 each year and 8 in 2024 (see Figure 8). The 2024 count equals about 0.01 percent of the 73,180 Indonesian residents that year.

The yearbooks also record 111 restorations of nationality (국적 회복, a procedure for people who previously held Korean nationality) from Indonesian nationality from 2011 to 2024, including 12 in 2024.

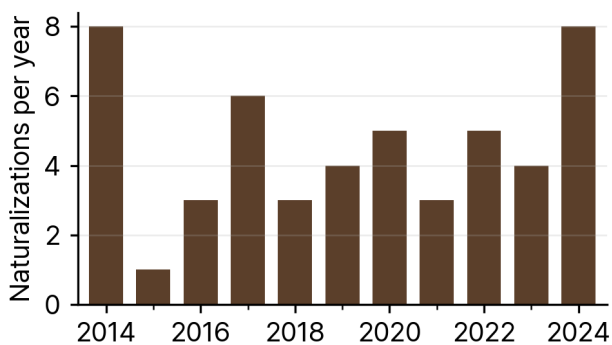
7 Unauthorized Residents

Indonesia is among the ten nationalities for which the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports unauthorized residents separately. The count was 8,460 in 2019, 9,142 in 2021, 11,806 in 2023, and 13,001 in 2024. The 2024 figure equals 17.8 percent of Indonesian resident foreigners and 3.3 percent of the 397,522 unauthorized residents in Korea that year (13,001 / 397,522), placing Indonesia sixth among nationalities. As shares of Indonesian resident foreigners, the counts were 17.3 percent in 2019 (8,460 / 48,854), 26.7 percent in 2021 (9,142 / 34,188), and 18.7 percent in 2023 (11,806 / 63,226).

8 Health and Well-being

A survey of 91 Indonesian migrant workers in Korea conducted in September 2018 found that higher acculturative stress was associated with more depressive symptoms and lower quality of life (Dineva R and Choi, 2019).

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Indonesian Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

A study of 248 Indonesian migrant workers surveyed between November 2018 and January 2019 examined income-based inequality in self-rated oral health. Perceived discrimination

had the largest explanatory power (69.57 percent), and discrimination and health insurance coverage both contributed to the inequality (Novrinda and Han, 2022).

On June 25, 2025, an Indonesian worker from Cilacap, Central Java, died in Cheongwon after his arm was pulled into a conveyor machine he was cleaning. Indonesia's government pressed for a legal investigation, and Rp213 million (about US\$13,000) in compensation was paid to his family through the state insurer BPJS (Antara News, 2025).

9 Migration from Indonesia to South Korea

The UN Population Division estimated that 27,807 people born in Indonesia lived in South Korea in mid-2024, about 0.7 percent of Indonesia's 3,745,148 emigrants worldwide and 1.5 percent of Korea's 1,811,507 foreign-born residents (UN DESA 2024). Ranked by the country estimates in the same table, Korea was the 14th-largest destination of Indonesian emigrants in 2024, after Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Australia, the Netherlands, Qatar, and Bahrain. The UN estimate counts people by country of birth and is lower than the Ministry of Justice count of 73,180 Indonesian nationals at the end of 2024.

Indonesia placed 11,570 workers in South Korea through the government-to-government EPS scheme in 2023, about 4.2 percent of the 274,965 Indonesian migrant workers placed abroad that year (ANTARA 2024a; ANTARA 2024b). Placements to Korea fell to 10,111 in 2024, a decline officials attributed to lower demand from Korean employers (ANTARA 2024b).

Applicants for the Korea scheme outnumber the places. In 2019, 24,952 prospective workers registered online for the manufacturing stream alone, the same year Indonesia's EPS quota rose by 8,800 places (4,900 in manufacturing and 3,900 in fisheries), an increase of 25.71 percent (Merdeka 2019). For the 2023 intake, 35,000 Indonesians registered for Korea against a placement figure of 18,000 (Kompas 2023). In the 2024 testing round, more than 62,000 people registered for the EPS-TOPIK Korean-language test (ANTARA 2024c), while 10,111 workers were placed in Korea that year.

The World Bank and KNOMAD estimated remittances from South Korea to Indonesia at US\$115 million in 2021, 1.2 percent of Indonesia's US\$9,402 million in remittance inflows that year (World Bank and KNOMAD 2022). Bank Indonesia recorded US\$202 million sent from South Korea in the first quarter of 2026, out of US\$4.536 billion sent home by Indonesian migrant workers in that quarter. Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan each sent more than Korea, and Singapore sent less (Migrant Times 2026). Personal remittances from all countries equaled 1.15 percent of Indonesia's GDP in 2024, up from 0.99 percent in 2022 and 1.06 percent in 2023 (World Bank 2024).

Central Java supplies the largest number of Korea-bound applicants. Of the 35,000 Indonesians who registered for the Korea scheme in 2023, about 17,000 (48.6 percent) came from

that province (Espos 2023).

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Indonesia and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Indonesia-born population in South Korea, 2024	27,807	UN DESA 2024
Share of Indonesia's emigrants living in South Korea, 2024	0.7% of 3,745,148	UN DESA 2024
South Korea's rank among destinations of Indonesian emigrants, 2024	14th	UN DESA 2024
Workers placed in South Korea (G2G), 2023	11,570 (4.2% of 274,965 placed abroad)	ANTARA 2024
Workers placed in South Korea (G2G), 2024	10,111	ANTARA 2024
Registrants for the Korea scheme, 2023	35,000 (17,000 from Central Java)	Kompas 2023; Espos 2023
Registrants for EPS-TOPIK, 2024	More than 62,000	ANTARA 2024
Remittances from South Korea, 2021	US\$115 million (1.2% of inflows)	World Bank and KNOMAD 2022
Remittances from South Korea, first quarter of 2026	US\$202 million (of US\$4.536 billion)	Migrant Times 2026
Personal remittances, share of GDP, 2024	1.15%	World Bank 2024

Note: The UN rank is computed from the country rows of the UN DESA bilateral table. Placement figures cover the government-to-government EPS scheme.

Source: Sources as listed in each row; full references under Sources.

Placement under the government-to-government program began in 2004 with 360 workers. Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration managed placements from 2004 to 2006, and the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI, later BP2MI) took over in 2007. Departing workers complete a mandatory 10-day pre-departure course covering medical examinations, passports, visas, and insurance (Pusat Sumber Daya Buruh Migran 2014).

Research on the Indonesia-Korea corridor is limited. Yazid 2017 argues that the number of Indonesians working in Korea is small compared with the numbers in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan because Korea's language and skill requirements are demanding and Indonesian institutions have struggled to prepare candidates to meet them. Comparing Indonesian workers under Korea's EPS and Japan's Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), On and Iskandar 2025 find that government-to-government recruitment under EPS lowers hiring costs, while TITP workers take on recruitment debt to supervising organizations. Bureaucratic barriers and the need for employer consent still limit job changes under EPS, and workers in both systems coped mainly through what the authors call compliant silence. In a survey of 248 Indonesian E-9 workers, Novrinda and Han 2022 found that those with lower incomes had 2.97 times the odds of poor self-rated oral health.

10 Community Organizations

Religious networks are the most documented form of Indonesian community organization in Korea. The Indonesian Muslim Community (KMI) is the umbrella organization for about 57 Indonesian mushalla (prayer rooms) across the country. The same study describes the Korean branch of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muslim women's group Rumah Muslimah Indonesia di Korea Selatan (Rumaisa) (Putri, 2025). The imam of the Ansan Islamic Center Mosque in Gyeonggi is from Indonesia, and the mosque is used as a meeting place for Muslims living nearby (Dompot Dhuafa, 2026).

The KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations includes 6 whose name or target group names the Indonesian community. Four are religious sites and two are community associations: the Korea branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (PCINU Korea, Dong-gu, Daejeon), the Korea branch of Muhammadiyah (PCIM Korea, Seoul), the Indonesian Muslim Community's Sayyidina Bilal mosque headquarters (KMI, Seongsan-gu, Changwon), the Daejeon Islamic Center (Yuseong-gu, Daejeon), Seoul Central Mosque (Yongsan-gu, Seoul), and Shelter Church (Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi). All six are operated by the communities or religious bodies themselves. Most general-purpose migrant support centers also serve Indonesian residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Filipino Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 70,392 nationals of the Philippines lived in South Korea, and 51,991 of them were registered foreigners. Filipinos were the ninth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (3.5 percent) and the ninth-largest among all resident foreigners (2.7 percent). In 2014 they ranked fourth among registered foreigners and sixth among all resident foreigners. Their number fell from 62,398 in 2019 to 46,871 in 2021 and then rose each year to 70,392 in 2024, 12.8 percent above the 2019 level. Of the 20 largest nationalities, Filipinos ranked 12th for growth between 2019 and 2024.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 51,991 Filipinos were registered foreigners in South Korea, the ninth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (3.5 percent), and 70,392 were resident foreigners, also the ninth-largest among all resident foreigners (2.7 percent) and the highest count recorded since 2006.
- ▶ Employment visas covered 48.9 percent of Filipino residents in 2024, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners, and the number holding the E-8 seasonal worker visa rose from none in 2019 to 4,454 in 2024.
- ▶ The Ministry of Justice counted 13,937 Filipino nationals without authorized status at the end of 2024, equal to 19.8 percent of Filipino resident foreigners and the fifth-largest count among nationalities.

Most Filipinos in Korea came as workers or as spouses. In 2024, 36.1 percent held the E-9 non-professional employment visa issued under the Employment Permit System (EPS), and 17.1 percent held the F-6 marriage migrant visa. The E-8 seasonal worker visa, which no Filipino held in 2019, had 4,454 Filipino holders in 2024, and the number on the E-7 visa for

specially designated occupations grew from 437 to 2,229 over the same years. In 2024 a Seoul pilot also brought 100 Filipino household service workers to Korean homes (Ajunews, 2024).

Compared with all resident foreigners, Filipinos are more concentrated in working ages (59.5 percent aged 20 to 39, against 49.7 percent), more likely to hold employment visas, and almost absent from the overseas Korean (F-4, H-2) and permanent residence (F-5) categories. They are less concentrated in Seoul and the surrounding capital region (48.0 percent of registered Filipinos, against 55.2 percent of all foreign residents) and more likely to live in rural counties.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals residing in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of the year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the broadest count and is used here for population size, age, sex, and visa. Ranks are given on this basis and on the registered-foreigner basis.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals residing more than 90 days who register with the immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are not included. Province and district counts in this Spotlight refer to registered foreigners.

Visa codes. E-9 is the non-professional employment visa issued through the Employment Permit System; E-8 is the seasonal worker visa for farming and fishing; E-7 covers specially designated professional and skilled occupations; E-6 covers arts and entertainment; F-6 is the marriage migrant visa; F-1 covers visiting and joining family; C-3 is the short-term visit visa.

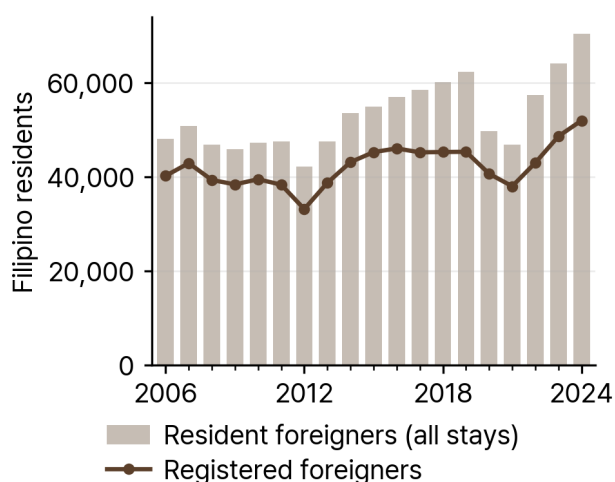
Unauthorized residents (불법체류외국인). Foreign nationals whose permitted period of stay has expired or who remain outside their permitted status, as counted by the Ministry of Justice on December 31.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The Filipino population in Korea changed little between 2006 and 2014, when resident foreigners numbered 48,164 and 53,538. It grew to 62,398 by 2019, fell during the COVID-19 border closures to 49,800 in 2020 and 46,871 in 2021, and then rose to 57,452 in 2022, 64,055 in 2023, and 70,392 in 2024. The 2024 figure is 22,234 (46.2 percent) higher than in 2006.

Registered foreigners made up most of the group. In 2024, 51,991 Filipinos were registered, or 73.9 percent of Filipino resident foreigners. Short-term visitors accounted for much of the remainder: 13,776 Filipinos held the C-3 short-term visit visa in 2024.

FIGURE 1
Filipino Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1
Filipino Residents in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	48,164	40,246	4	5	6.4	5.3
2014	53,538	43,155	4	6	4.0	3.0
2019	62,398	45,354	5	8	3.6	2.5
2024	70,392	51,991	9	9	3.5	2.7

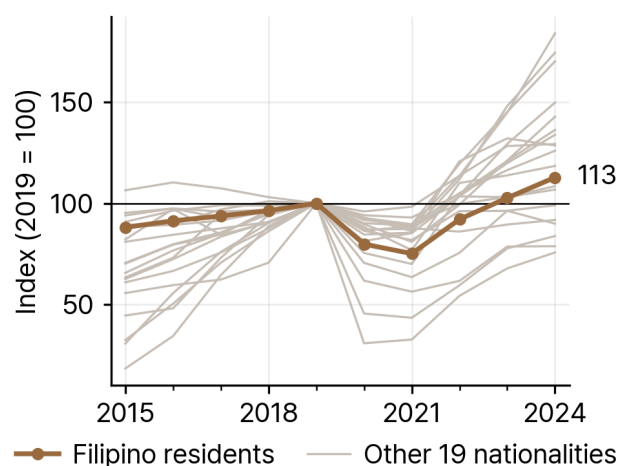
Note: Ranks are among all nationalities. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters; registered foreigners are long-term residents registered with immigration authorities.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Indexed to 2019, the Filipino population stood at 112.8 in 2024. Among the 20 largest nationalities this ranked 12th, so the group grew more slowly than most other large nationalities between 2019 and 2024.

The group's rank fell over the period on both bases. Among registered foreigners, Filipinos ranked fourth in 2006 and 2014, fifth in 2019, and ninth in 2024, and their share of all registered foreigners fell from 6.4 percent in 2006 to 3.5 percent in 2024. Among all resident foreigners they ranked fifth in 2006, sixth in 2014, eighth in 2019, and ninth in 2024, with a share that fell from 5.3 percent to 2.7 percent.

FIGURE 2
Growth of the Filipino Population Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, 41.0 percent of registered Filipinos lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi Province and 7.0 percent in Seoul, for a capital-region share of 48.0 percent, below the 55.2 percent for all

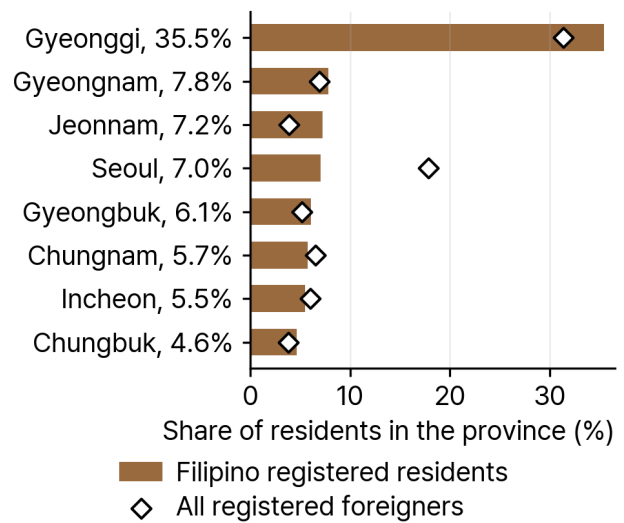
foreign residents. The southeastern Yeongnam region had 24.4 percent, Honam 12.1 percent, Chungcheong 12.0 percent, and Gangwon and Jeju 3.5 percent.

Filipinos are more likely than other foreign residents to live in rural counties (gun): 16.9 percent did so in 2024, compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents. The rural share was highest in Honam (49.5 percent of the region's Filipino residents) and Chungcheong (35.2 percent).

The population is spread across many places. In 2024, 140 cities, counties, and districts had at least 100 registered Filipino residents, and the ten largest accounted for 25.3 percent of the total. Hwaseong-si in Gyeonggi Province had the largest number (2,607). In Seoul, the largest community was in Yongsan-gu (591).

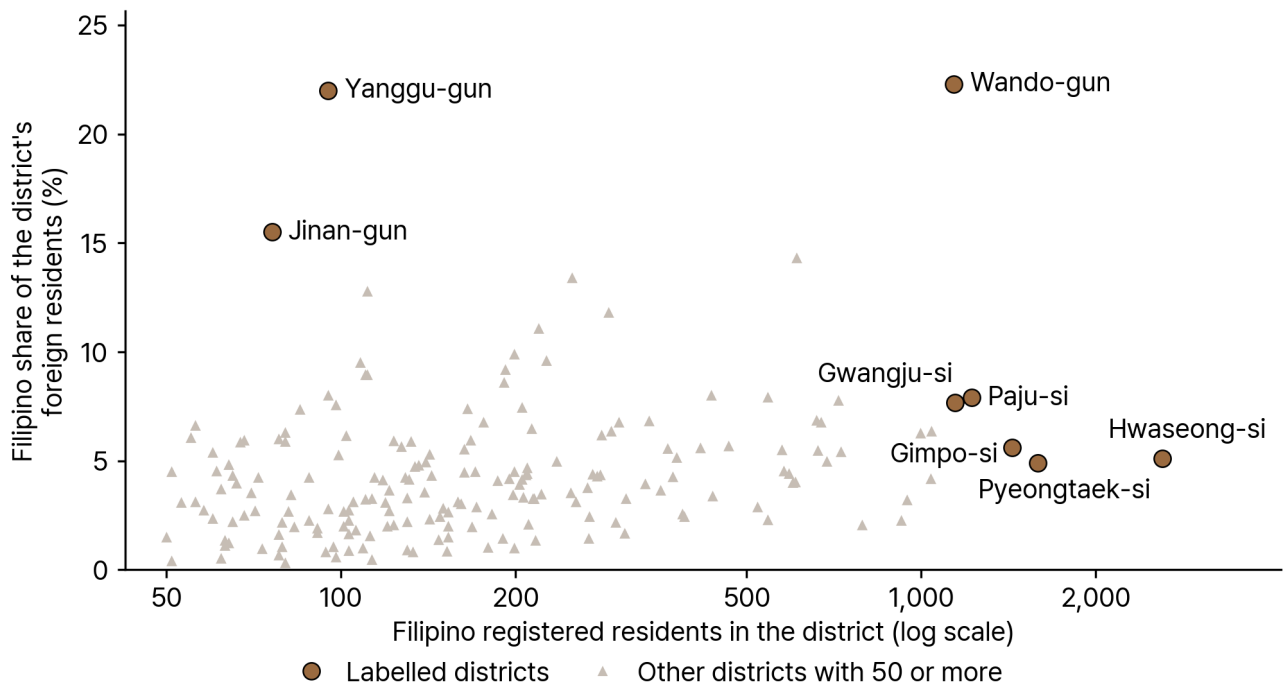
Filipinos made up the largest share of foreign residents in Wando-gun, a county in South Jeolla Province, where 1,139 Filipinos were 22.3 percent of all registered foreigners in 2024. Other districts with high shares were Dongducheon-si (14.3 percent), Busan Dong-gu (13.4 percent), Geochang-gun (12.8 percent), and Busan Yeongdo-gu (11.8 percent).

FIGURE 3

Registered Filipino Residents by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

FIGURE 4

Registered Filipino Residents by City, County, and District, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The index of dissimilarity (D), which measures on a scale from 0 to 1 how differently Filipinos and other foreign residents are spread across districts, was 0.366 in 2014 and 0.365 in 2024. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2, with Filipinos making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 45.4 percent of Filipino resident foreigners in 2024, close to the 45.1 percent among all resident foreigners, and down from 46.3 percent in 2019. The largest five-year age group was 30 to 34, and the median fell in the 35 to 39 group.

TABLE 2
Ten Largest Filipino Communities by City, County, and District, 2024

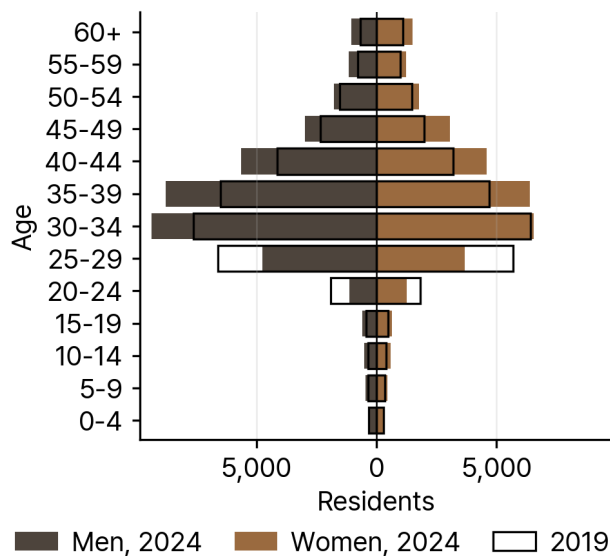
District	Province	Registered Filipino residents	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,607	5.1
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,591	4.9
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,435	5.6
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,222	7.9
Gwangju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,143	7.7
Wando-gun	Jeollanam-do	1,139	22.3
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,042	6.4
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,039	4.2
Seo-gu	Incheon	996	6.3
Bucheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	945	3.2

Note: The ten districts together held 25.3 percent of registered Filipino residents.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The group is concentrated in working ages. In 2024, 59.5 percent were aged 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Children under 15 made up 3.6 percent (5.7 percent among all resident foreigners), and people aged 60 and older 3.6 percent (12.9 percent among all). The number aged 50 and older rose from 6,550 in 2019 to 8,467 in 2024.

FIGURE 5
Filipino Resident Foreigners by Age and Sex, 2024



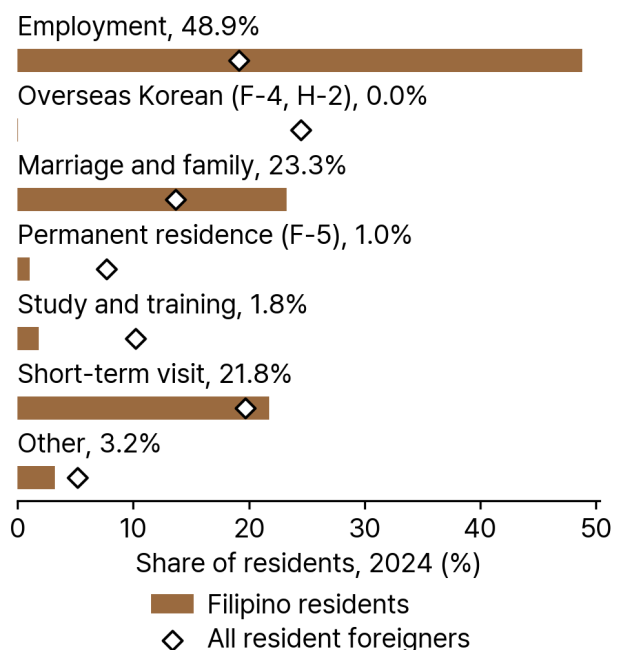
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 48.9 percent of Filipino residents held employment visas, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. Marriage and family visas covered 23.3 percent (13.6 percent among all) and short-term visits 21.8 percent (19.7 percent

among all). Filipinos were almost absent from the overseas Korean category (0.0 percent, against 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners) and rarely held permanent residence (1.0 percent, against 7.7 percent).

FIGURE 6
Filipino and All Resident Foreigners by Visa Group, 2024

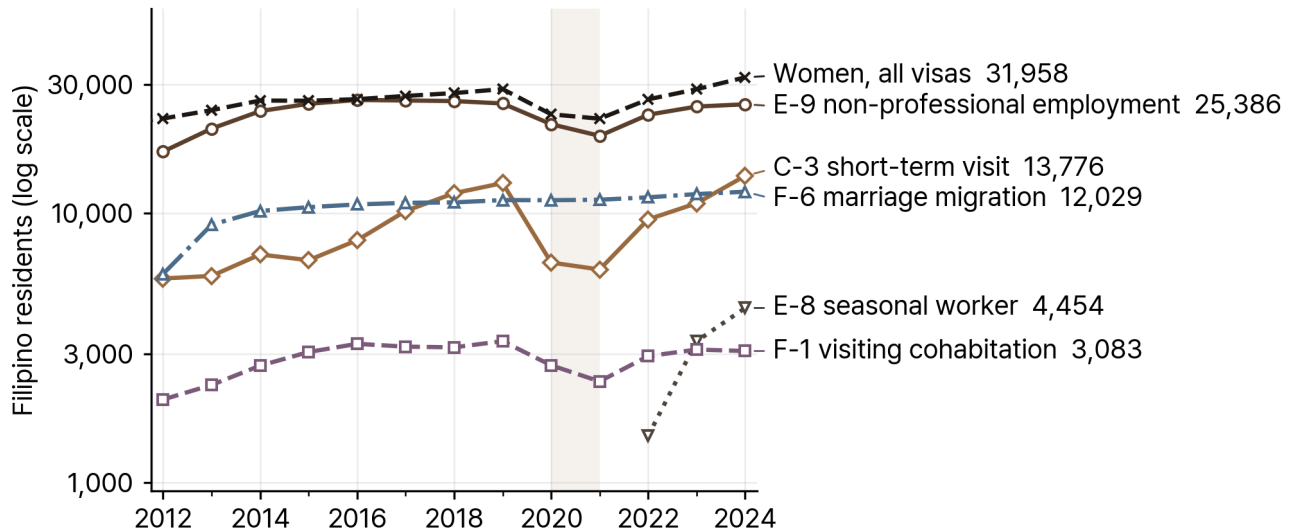


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The E-9 visa was the most common, held by 25,386 Filipinos in 2024, about the same as in 2019 (25,566). Filipinos ranked seventh among nationalities in E-9 holders. The E-8 seasonal worker visa grew from none in 2019 to 4,454 in 2024, when Filipinos held 18.2 percent of all E-8 visas in Korea. E-7 holders

grew about fivefold, from 437 to 2,229. Filipinos also held 42.3 percent of all E-6 arts and entertainment visas in 2024 (1,862 people), although their number on this visa fell from 3,639 in 2014.

FIGURE 7

Filipino Resident Foreigners by Main Visa Type over Time

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 3

Main Visa Types Held by Filipino Resident Foreigners, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Filipino residents, 2024 (%)	Filipino share of all holders of this visa, 2024 (%)
E-9	Non-professional employment	25,566	25,386	36.1	7.5
C-3	Short-term visit	12,948	13,776	19.6	8.5
F-6	Marriage migration	11,198	12,029	17.1	8.1
E-8	Seasonal worker	0	4,454	6.3	18.2
F-1	Visiting and joining family	3,353	3,083	4.4	3.1
E-7	Specially designated activities	437	2,229	3.2	3.5
E-6	Arts and entertainment	1,958	1,862	2.6	42.3

Note: Shares of Filipino residents use the 2024 total of 70,392 resident foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

The Philippines is one of the sending countries in Korea's Employment Permit System, the government program behind the E-9 visa, and the EPS portal maintains a Philippine-language page (EPS, 2026). Entry to the program requires a Korean-language test held in the Philippines. The test scheduled for January 2026 was postponed over implementation issues, and registration for the rescheduled

test reopened in April 2026 in Cebu, Metro Manila, Davao, Pampanga, and Baguio (Embassy of the Philippines in Seoul, 2026).

Seasonal work is the second labor channel. Between 2018 and 2022, the Philippines sent 4,973 seasonal workers to Korea, the most of the 11 sending countries, and Filipinos made up more than 20 percent of all seasonal workers in Korea (Korea Herald, 2024). In the KIRD data, Filipinos held 18.2 percent of all E-8 visas in 2024.

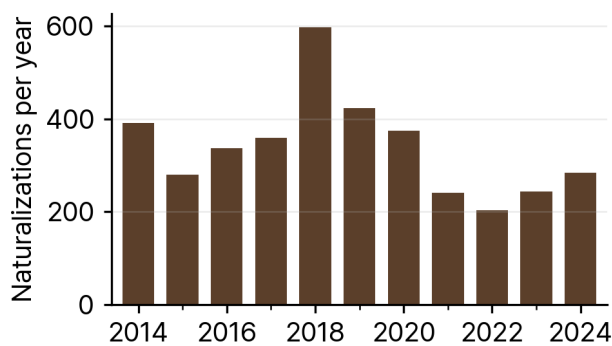
The Seoul Metropolitan Government's plan to bring in 100 Filipina domestic workers was delayed in early 2024, when the Philippine government suspended the deployment of its workers to Korea (Korea Herald, 2024). The pilot went ahead later that year, with 100 Filipino household service workers placed with Seoul households and full service beginning in early September 2024 (Ajunews, 2024).

Marriage is the main family channel. In 2024, 605 Filipino women married Korean men, 3.9 percent of all marriages between Korean men and foreign women that year, placing the Philippines sixth among countries of origin of foreign wives (Dongpo News, 2025, citing Statistics Korea). In the KIRD data, 12,029 Filipinos held the F-6 marriage migrant visa in 2024.

6 Naturalization

From 2014 to 2024, 3,734 Philippine nationals became Korean citizens through naturalization, ranging from 203 in 2022 to 597 in 2018, and 284 naturalized in 2024. The Ministry of Justice yearbook's all-routes naturalization total for the Philippines begins in 2014; the 2009 and 2010 editions of the yearbook print cumulative totals since 1991. People who naturalize leave the resident foreigner count, so the population figures in this Spotlight exclude them.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Philippine Nationals in South Korea by Year



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

The Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports unauthorized residents separately for the ten largest nationalities, and the Philippines is among them. The count was 13,095 in 2019, 13,613 in 2021, 13,951 in 2023, and 13,937 in 2024. In 2024, unauthorized residents equaled 19.8 percent of Filipino resident foreigners, and the Philippines had the fifth-largest count. Of the 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024, Filipinos accounted for 3.5 percent (13,937 divided by 397,522).

8 Health and Well-being

A survey of 116 Filipino migrant workers in Daegu and Gyeongsan, carried out between May 2015 and August 2018, found that 44.83 percent had musculoskeletal disorders, most

often in the arm or elbow, followed by the shoulder and lower back. After adjusting for migration status, undocumented workers were more likely than legally employed workers to report inadequate social support at work (odds ratio 5.37, 95% CI 2.41 to 11.95), and the authors concluded that undocumented workers were more vulnerable to workplace stressors (Amit et al., 2020).

Fatal workplace accidents involving Filipino workers appear in news reports. On August 28, 2026, a fire after an explosion at a paint ingredient factory in Cheonan killed three people, two of them Philippine nationals (Korea Times, 2026).

9 Migration from the Philippines to South Korea

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) counted 6,988,383 people born in the Philippines living abroad in 2024, of whom 37,555 lived in South Korea, or 0.54 percent. Korea ranked 18th among the 93 countries hosting Philippine-born migrants. The count for Korea stood at 49,570 in 2015 and 45,708 in 2020 (UN DESA 2024). The UN figure counts people by country of birth and differs from the Ministry of Justice count of Philippine nationals used elsewhere in this Spotlight.

Korea receives a small share of new Philippine labor deployments. In the first quarter of 2024, the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) recorded 429,056 deployed Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), land-based and seafarers, down from 635,748 in the first quarter of 2023. Of the roughly 319,000 land-based workers, about 6,000 (1.8 percent) went to Korea, the same share as Malaysia. Among Asian destinations, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong (9.0 percent), Qatar, Taiwan (4.9 percent), Kuwait, and Japan (3.2 percent) each received more (DMW 2024). In December 2024, the Philippine News Agency reported that about 36,186 Filipinos were working in Korea, 25,895 of them under the Employment Permit System (EPS) (PNA 2024).

We know of no published EPS quota for the Philippines. For the 10th round of worker selection in the Philippines, the first under a pilot point-based system, the DMW capped online registration at 2,500 registrants. Registration opened on August 25, 2025, the computer-based test was held from September 22 to 30, 2025, and skills-test results were issued in November 2025 (DMW 2025).

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) recorded US\$853.7 million in cash remittances from South Korea through banks in 2024, up from US\$834.7 million in 2023. The 2024 amount was about 2.5 percent of the US\$34.49 billion in cash remittances the Philippines received from all countries that year (BSP 2024). Personal remittances from all sources equaled 8.7 percent of Philippine GDP in 2024, down from 9.7 percent in 2018 (World Bank 2024).

No published source reports the home regions of Filipinos who go to Korea. For land-based OFWs to all destinations in the first quarter of 2024, CALABARZON (Region IV-A) supplied 22.6 percent, Central Luzon 16.8 percent, the National Capital Region 10.2 percent, the Ilocos Region 8.1 percent, and Western Visayas 7.1 percent, and seven in ten came from Luzon (DMW 2024).

The EPS operates through bilateral agreements between Korea and each sending country. In 2017, 15 such agreements were in place, including one with the Philippines, and a policy brief found that Filipino workers paid the lowest total placement fees of the 15 countries to reach Korea (US\$551.80 in 2013), while Pakistani workers paid the highest (Migrant Forum in Asia 2017). In early 2024, the Philippine government suspended the deployment of its workers to Korea, citing a growing number of human rights violations against Filipino workers, including unsafe conditions, underpayment of wages, overwork, and worker deaths (Korea Herald, 2024).

In May 2024, the DMW opened registration for a pilot to recruit 100 caregivers for Korean households under the EPS, open to applicants aged 24 to 38 who held the national caregiving certificate (NC II) from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Philstar 2024). In August 2025, Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor and the DMW

announced a point-based selection system for EPS workers, piloted first in the Philippines. Candidates are screened by Korean-language test score to 1.1 times the recruitment quota and then take a skills test and job capacity assessment, which asks for proof of education equivalent to a junior college diploma, before final selection (DMW 2025).

Research on Filipinos in Korea has concentrated on marriage and community life. Yea (2004) studied Filipina entertainers recruited, in some cases trafficked, to work in clubs near US military bases, some of whom left the clubs to marry or live with American soldiers. Moon (2012) described a Filipina marriage migrant organization in Changwon that worked with the GABRIELA women's network in the Philippines and found that ties between women's organizations in both countries helped marriage migrants act as rights advocates in Korea and at home. Montalvo Granados and Camposano (2024) found that marriage migrants can obtain permanent residence and citizenship through family ties while E-9 workers under the EPS cannot, and described Korean multicultural policy as managed assimilation. In a mixed-methods study of Filipina marriage migrants, Miranda et al. (2026) found that 94.5 percent participated in religious or Filipino community organizations, yet 54.8 percent reported language barriers, and longer residence did not remove these barriers.

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, the Philippines and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Philippine-born people living in South Korea, 2024	37,555	UN DESA 2024
Korea's share of Philippine-born people living abroad, 2024	0.54%	UN DESA 2024
Korea's rank among destination countries of Philippine-born migrants, 2024	18th of 93	UN DESA 2024
Land-based OFWs deployed to Korea, first quarter of 2024	About 6,000 (1.8% of land-based deployments)	DMW 2024
Filipinos working in Korea, December 2024	36,186 (25,895 under the EPS)	PNA 2024
Registration cap, 10th EPS selection round in the Philippines, 2025	2,500 registrants	DMW 2025
Cash remittances from South Korea, 2024	US\$853.7 million (about 2.5% of the total)	BSP 2024
Personal remittances as a share of GDP, 2024	8.7%	World Bank 2024

Note: UN DESA counts people by country of birth. DMW deployment figures cover newly hired and rehired workers.

Source: UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2024; Philippine Department of Migrant Workers; Philippine News Agency; Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas; World Bank World Development Indicators.

10 Community Organizations

Catholic congregations are among the oldest Filipino organizations in Korea. The Hyehwa-dong Filipino Catholic Community in Seoul, the largest group of Catholic Filipino migrant workers in the country, dates from 1989, when Sr. Mary Anne of the Good Shepherd Sisters founded Sampagita, the first Filipino migrant congregation in Korea (Jang, 2017).

In the KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations, four name the Filipino community in their name or target group: the Filipino Community KASAMAKO in Seoul; KASAMMAKO, the Solidarity Council of Filipino Workers' Communities in Korea (location not recorded); Cheonan Moise in Cheonan-si Dongnam-gu, South Chungcheong Province; and an association of Filipino marriage migrants in Seogwipo-si, Jeju. All four are self-run and privately funded. Most general-

purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family support centers and migrant worker centers, also serve Filipino residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Filipino Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Japanese Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 28,005 Japanese nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea and 65,216 were resident foreigners. Japan was the fourteenth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (1.9 percent of the total) and the tenth-largest among all resident foreigners (2.5 percent). Among registered foreigners it ranked tenth in 2006, twelfth in 2014, and thirteenth in 2019; among all resident foreigners it ranked seventh in 2006 and 2014 and sixth in 2019. The resident count doubled from 43,207 in 2006 to a peak of 86,196 in 2019, fell to 26,515 in 2020, and by 2024 had recovered to 75.7 percent of its 2019 level. That index was the lowest among the 20 largest nationalities over 2019-24.

Highlights

- ▶ In 2024, Japan was the fourteenth-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea (28,005 people, 1.9 percent) and the tenth-largest among all resident foreigners (65,216 people, 2.5 percent), down from a peak of 86,196 resident foreigners in 2019.
- ▶ Short-term visitors on B-2 status made up 53.9 percent of Japanese residents in 2024, and Japanese nationals made up 38.0 percent of all Working Holiday (H-1) visa holders in the country.
- ▶ Women accounted for 69.5 percent of Japanese residents in 2024, compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

Japanese nationals come to Korea through several channels. Short visits under B-2 tourist and transit status make up the largest share, followed by marriage migration (F-6), permanent residence (F-5), study, corporate investment, and working holiday visas. Korea's Employment Permit System for lower-skilled workers has never included Japan among its sending countries (Korea Employment Information Service, 2024). Of

the 65,216 resident Japanese in 2024, 28,005 (42.9 percent) were registered foreigners living in Korea for more than 90 days.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Japanese residents were more likely to be women (69.5 percent versus 45.1 percent), to be on short-term visit status (54.0 percent versus 19.7 percent), and to live in Seoul, Incheon, or Gyeonggi (66.1 percent versus 55.2 percent). Few had employment visas (7.7 percent versus 19.2 percent) or overseas Korean status (1.3 percent versus 24.5 percent). This Spotlight describes the size, location, age and sex, visa status, naturalization, and community institutions of Japanese residents in South Korea, and migration from Japan to Korea.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status of stay on December 31 of the reference year. The count includes short-term visitors and overseas Koreans (F-4) who have reported their residence. It is the headline population measure in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for more than 90 days who have registered with the Ministry of Justice. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans on F-4 status report their place of residence instead of registering and are not included. Province and district figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

Short-term visit (B-2). A short-term status of stay for tourism and transit. Visitors on this status who were in the country on December 31 are counted among resident foreigners.

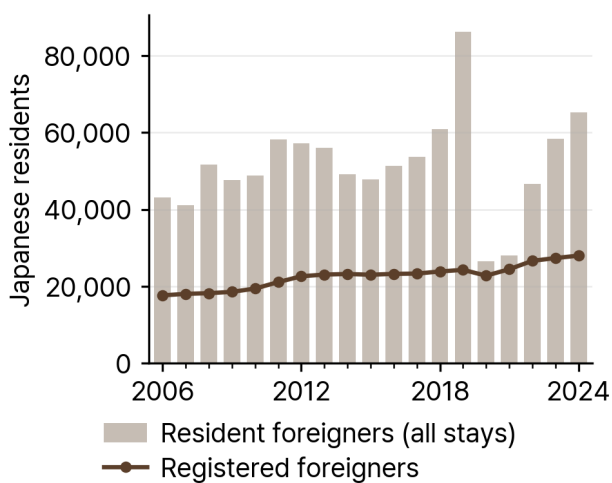
Dissimilarity index (D). A measure of residential segregation across districts that ranges from 0 (the group is spread across districts in the same proportions as all other foreign residents) to 1 (complete separation). It equals the share of the group that would have to move to another district to match the distribution of other foreign residents.

Ethnic enclave. In this series, a district where the group's location quotient (its share of the district's foreign residents divided by its share of all foreign residents nationally) is at least 2 and where the group makes up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Japanese resident foreigners in Korea rose slowly from 43,207 in 2006 to 49,152 in 2014, then climbed to 86,196 in 2019 (see Figure 1). In 2020 the count fell to 26,515, a drop of 59,681 people (69.2 percent) in one year. It rose to 46,741 in 2022, 58,438 in 2023, and 65,216 in 2024.

FIGURE 1
Japanese Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

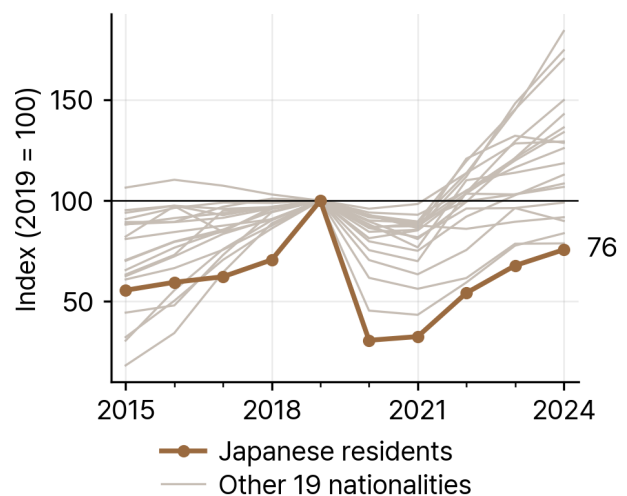


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners changed much less. The registered Japanese population grew from 17,682 in 2006 to 23,237 in 2014, 24,316 in 2019, and 28,005 in 2024. Registered residents made up 28.2 percent of all resident Japanese in 2019 (24,316 of 86,196) and 42.9 percent in 2024. Most of the rise and fall in the total came from short-term visitors.

Indexed to 2019, the Japanese population stood at 75.7 in 2024, the lowest value among the 20 largest nationalities in Korea (see Figure 2). Among all resident foreigners, Japan ranked seventh in 2014, sixth in 2019, and tenth in 2024. Among registered foreigners, a count that excludes short-term visitors, it ranked twelfth in 2014, thirteenth in 2019, and fourteenth in 2024.

FIGURE 2
Japanese Resident Population Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1
Japanese Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Registered as share of resident (%)	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	43,207	17,682	40.9	7	10	4.7	2.8
2014	49,152	23,237	47.3	7	12	2.7	2.1
2019	86,196	24,316	28.2	6	13	3.4	1.9
2024	65,216	28,005	42.9	10	14	2.5	1.9

Note: Registered as share of resident is registered foreigners divided by resident foreigners. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and overseas Koreans (F-4) who reported their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with the Ministry of Justice.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

Location data cover the 28,005 Japanese registered foreigners in 2024. Seoul was home to 10,395 of them (37.1

percent), and Incheon and Gyeonggi to another 8,103 (28.9 percent). Yeongnam accounted for 15.9 percent, Chungcheong for 8.5 percent, Honam for 6.5 percent, and

Gangwon and Jeju for 3.1 percent (see Figure 3). In total, 66.1 percent lived in the Seoul capital area, compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents.

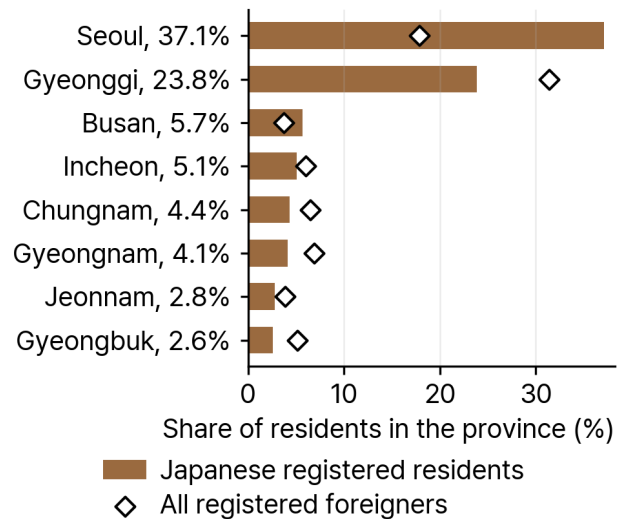
Japanese residents were less likely than other foreign residents to live in rural counties (gun), at 7.6 percent compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents. The rural share was highest in Honam (34.0 percent) and in Gangwon and Jeju (25.4 percent).

In 2024, 87 districts had at least 100 Japanese registered residents. The ten largest accounted for 24.8 percent of the group, and eight of them were in Seoul. Mapo-gu (1,118), Yongsan-gu (937), and Seodaemun-gu (818) had the most (see Figure 4). Outside Seoul, the largest communities were in Hwaseong-si (652) and Asan-si (456).

The group made up its highest share of local foreign residents in Gapyeong-gun in Gyeonggi, where 362 Japanese residents were 28.1 percent of the district's registered foreigners. Seongnam-si Bundang-gu (11.0 percent), Mapo-gu (9.9 percent), Guri-si (9.3 percent), and Gangnam-gu (9.1 percent) followed. No district met the enclave definition used in this series (a location quotient of at least 2 and at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents) in 2024.

FIGURE 3

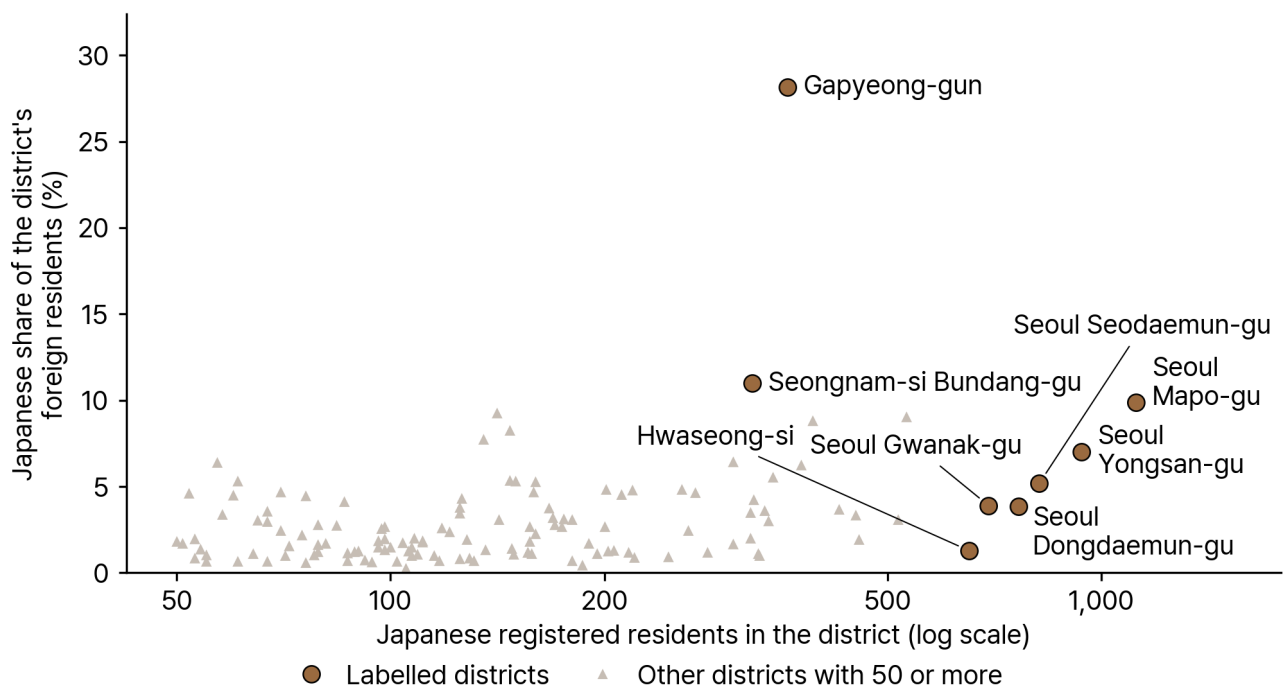
Japanese Registered Foreigners in South Korea by Region, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

FIGURE 4

Japanese Registered Foreigners in South Korea by District, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The dissimilarity index for Japanese residents fell from 0.288 in 2014 to 0.255 in 2024. About a quarter of the group would have had to change districts in 2024 to match the distribution of other foreign residents.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 69.5 percent of Japanese residents in 2024 (45,320 of 65,216), up from 68.6 percent in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, 45.1 percent were women (see Figure 5).

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Japanese Registered Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Japanese residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Mapo-gu	Seoul	1,118	9.9
Yongsan-gu	Seoul	937	7.0
Seodaemun-gu	Seoul	818	5.2
Dongdaemun-gu	Seoul	765	3.9
Gwanak-gu	Seoul	694	3.9
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	652	1.3
Gangnam-gu	Seoul	532	9.1
Gwangjin-gu	Seoul	517	3.1
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	456	1.9
Seongbuk-gu	Seoul	451	3.3

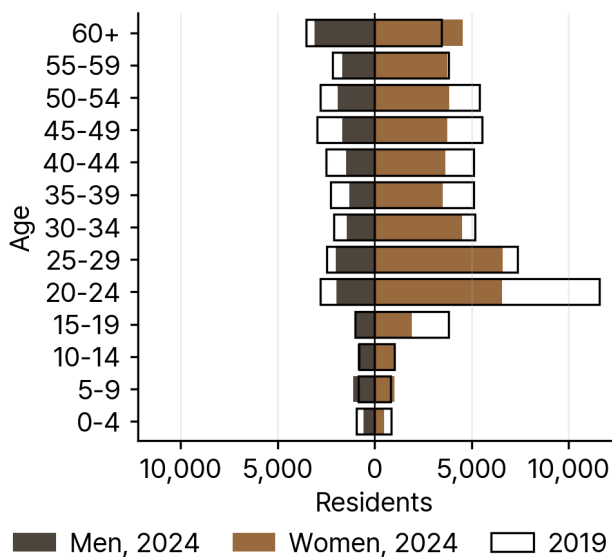
Note: Counts are registered foreigners. The ten districts together accounted for 24.8 percent of Japanese registered foreigners in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The largest five-year age group in 2024 was 25-29, and the median fell in the 35-39 group. Adults aged 20 to 39 made up 42.8 percent of Japanese residents, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Children under 15 were 7.8 percent (5,066 children), above the 5.7 percent share among all resident foreigners. People aged 60 and older were 11.7 percent, compared with 12.9 percent overall.

Between 2019 and 2024 the number of children under age 5 fell from 1,808 to 1,043. The population aged 50 and older fell less, from 21,143 to 18,831, and its share of the group rose from 24.5 percent to 28.9 percent.

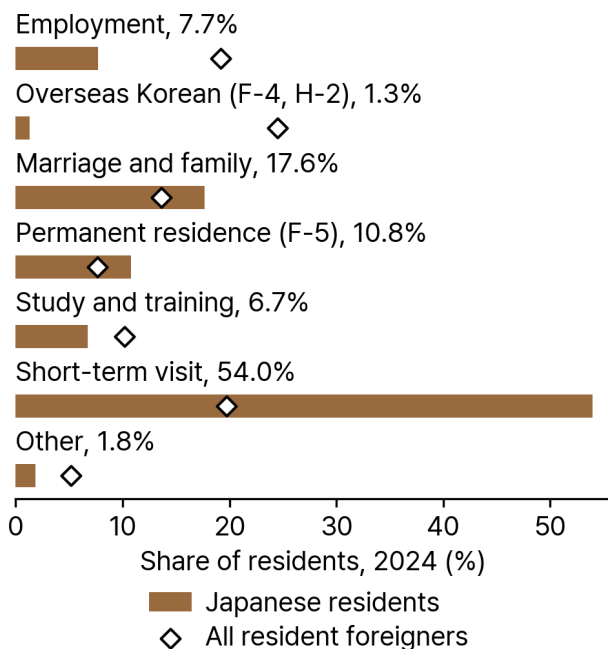
FIGURE 5

Japanese Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

4 Visa Status

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Japanese Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In 2024, 54.0 percent of Japanese residents were on a short-term visit status, nearly three times the share among all resident foreigners (19.7 percent). Marriage and family visas accounted for 17.6 percent (13.6 percent for all resident foreigners) and permanent residence for 10.8 percent (7.7 percent overall). Employment visas (7.7 percent), study and

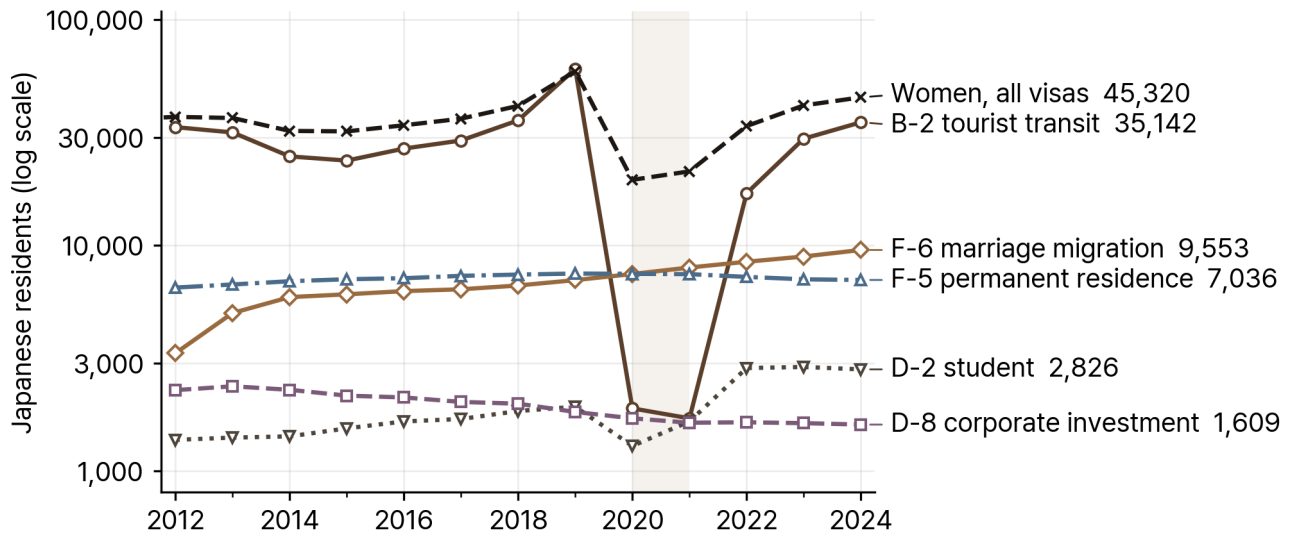
training visas (6.7 percent), and overseas Korean status (1.3 percent) were all less common than among resident foreigners as a whole (see Figure 6).

The number of B-2 visitors fell from 60,640 in 2019 to 35,142 in 2024, a decline of 25,498 that exceeds the group's overall decline of 20,980 (86,196 minus 65,216). Japanese nationals were 23.0 percent of all B-2 holders in Korea in 2024, the second-largest nationality on that status. Over the same

period, holders of marriage migrant visas (F-6) rose from 7,026 to 9,553, students (D-2) from 1,929 to 2,826, and working holiday participants (H-1) from 1,076 to 1,445 (see Figure 7).

Japanese nationals accounted for a large share of two visa types. In 2024 they were 38.0 percent of all Working Holiday (H-1) visa holders and 19.2 percent of all Corporate Investment (D-8) visa holders in Korea.

FIGURE 7
Japanese Residents in South Korea by Visa Type, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Japan is not a sending country under the Employment Permit System (E-9), which recruited lower-skilled workers from 17 countries as of 2024 (Korea Employment Information Service, 2024). Young Japanese adults can work in Korea under the

reciprocal Working Holiday program, which Korea extended to Japan in April 1999 after Australia (1995) and Canada (1996) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea, 2024). Japanese applicants must be 18 to 25 years old, or up to 30 in unavoidable circumstances, and may remain in Korea for one year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea, 2026).

TABLE 3
Main Visa Types Held by Japanese Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Japanese residents, 2024 (%)	Japanese share of all holders in Korea, 2024 (%)
B-2	Tourist and transit	60,640	35,142	53.9	23.0
F-6	Marriage migration	7,026	9,553	14.6	6.4
F-5	Permanent residence	7,512	7,036	10.8	3.5
D-2	Student	1,929	2,826	4.3	1.6
D-8	Corporate investment	1,830	1,609	2.5	19.2
D-4	General trainee	1,118	1,466	2.2	1.7
H-1	Working holiday	1,076	1,445	2.2	38.0

Note: Shares of Japanese residents use the 2024 total of 65,216.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Marriage is the other main long-term channel. A 2014 count cited in a Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs journal placed Japan third among the nationalities of marriage migrants in Korea, at 8.1 percent, after China (41.4 percent) and Vietnam (26.4 percent) (Kim et al., 2015). National marriage statistics for 2025 show 1,483 marriages between Korean men and Japanese women, up 26.1 percent from 1,176 in 2024, and 190 marriages between Korean women and Japanese men, up 29.3 percent from 147 (Korea.net, 2026).

At their August 23, 2025 summit, President Lee Jae-myung and Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba agreed to raise the limit on Working Holiday participation from one time to two times (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea, 2025).

6 Naturalization

Between 2014 and 2024, 287 Japanese nationals naturalized as Korean citizens. Annual counts ranged from 14 in 2019 to 44 in 2015, with 24 in 2024 (see Figure 8).

Restoration of Korean nationality, which applies to people who once had Korean nationality, was more common than naturalization. Over 2011-24, 847 Japanese nationals restored Korean nationality, about 3.0 times the number who naturalized (847 divided by 287). There were 113 restorations in 2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

The Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports unauthorized residents separately only for the ten largest nationalities, and Japan is not among them, so no count for Japanese nationals is published. The yearbook reports 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

8 Health and Well-being

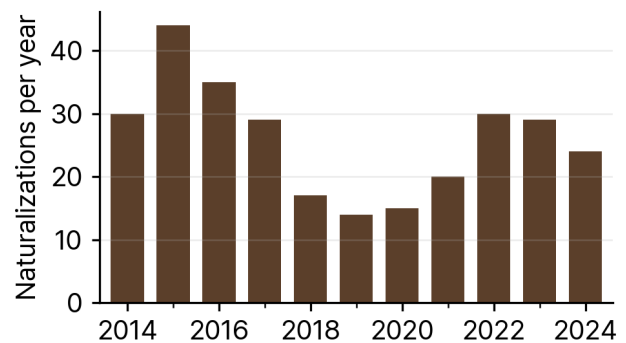
To our knowledge, no published source reports clinical or survey health measures for Japanese nationals in Korea separately. Two qualitative studies focus on Japanese marriage migrant women.

An ethnographic study of 10 Japanese marriage migrant women in rural communities, with fieldwork from August 2017 to June 2018, grouped their adaptation into five cultural domains (practicing the doctrine, accepting the difference, redemption, true home, and confronting reality). The author described the central process as overcoming differences and conflicts between Korea and Japan to achieve a true family (An, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews with 13 Japanese marriage migrant women in South Korea found that their postmigration experiences and emotional responses were tied to media coverage, politics between the two countries, gender roles, parenting ideologies, and family relations (Takeda, 2023).

FIGURE 8

Naturalization of Japanese Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

9 Migration from Japan to South Korea

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs counted 1,293,097 Japanese nationals living abroad as of October 1, 2024. The United States (413,380, or 32.0 percent), Australia (104,141, or 8.1 percent), and China (97,538, or 7.5 percent) were the three largest destinations, and South Korea accounted for 3.3 percent (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024a). The ministry's count for South Korea was 43,064 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024b). This figure comes from Japan's own survey of citizens abroad and uses a different definition from Korea's counts of 65,216 resident foreigners and 28,005 registered foreigners at the end of 2024. Secondary reports of the 2024 survey disagree on South Korea's exact rank among destinations, so this Spotlight reports no rank.

Japan is not a sending country under Korea's Employment Permit System, and migration from Japan to Korea takes place outside Korea's quota-based system for lower-skilled workers (Center for Global Development, 2024). There are therefore no figures on deployments of Japanese workers to Korea or on EPS applicants and places for Japan.

Personal remittances received by Japan equaled 0.11 percent of its GDP in 2024 (World Bank, 2024) and 0.11 percent in 2025 (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2025). The available bilateral estimates describe money sent out of Japan. In the World Bank and KNOMAD estimates for 2021, South Korea was one of the five largest recipients of remittances from Japan, together with China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand (Statista, 2021). KNOMAD has not updated these bilateral estimates since then. The same estimates put remittances sent from South Korea to Japan at about US\$145.7 million in 2021 (World Bank, 2021).

We know of no published breakdown of Korea-bound Japanese migrants by prefecture of origin in Japan. Sociologist Imasato Hajime reported in a 2025 interview that about two-thirds of Japanese residents in Korea live in the Seoul capital region (JBpress, 2025), close to the 66.1 percent of Japanese registered foreigners in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi in the KIRD data for 2024. Imasato also reported that men

outnumbered women among Japanese residents until the 1980s, that the sex ratio reversed in 1993, and that the female share rose after the Korean Wave of the early 2000s to about 80 percent (JBpress, 2025). In the KIRD data, women were 69.5 percent of Japanese resident foreigners in 2024.

One group of women came through marriages arranged by the Unification Church. About 13,000 Japanese women moved to Korea through this channel from the 1990s, of whom about 6,000 later returned to Japan and about 7,000 remained in Korea, mostly in rural areas, as of 2023 (Asahi Shimbun, 2023).

The main bilateral mobility agreement is the Working Holiday program, which the 1998 Japan-South Korea Joint Declaration committed both governments to introduce from April 1999 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1998). On the Japanese side, the government suspended visa-free entry for South Korean nationals and the validity of their existing visas from March 9, 2020, and resumed visa waivers for 68 countries and regions, including South Korea, on October 11, 2022, for visits of up to 90 days (Korea Herald, 2022).

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Japan and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Japanese nationals living abroad, October 2024	1,293,097	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024a
Share of Japanese abroad living in South Korea, October 2024 (%)	3.3	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024a
Japanese nationals in South Korea, Japan's count, October 2024	43,064	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024b
Japanese resident foreigners in South Korea, Korea's count, December 2024	65,216	KIRD dataset
Employment Permit System sending country	No	Center for Global Development, 2024
Personal remittances received by Japan, 2024 (% of GDP)	0.11	World Bank, 2024
South Korea among the top five recipients of remittances from Japan, 2021	Yes	Statista, 2021
Japanese women who moved to Korea through Unification Church marriages since the 1990s	About 13,000	Asahi Shimbun, 2023

Source: Sources listed in the table.

Research on Japanese migrants in Korea has concentrated on marriage migrant women. A study of Japanese wives living permanently in Korea classified their marriage motives as economic necessity, romantic love, and religious affiliation, and found that motives shifted over time toward love-based partner choice (Kim, 2007). A survey of 106 Japanese marriage migrant women identified three common types of everyday microaggression and found that the women's emotional reactions varied with length of residence in Korea, closeness to the speaker, and national identity (Narita & Jang, 2020). Takeda observed that most research on Japanese-Korean marriages has studied Korean wives in Japan, with little on Japanese wives in Korea (Takeda, 2023). A book based on life-story interviews describes Japanese people who moved to Korea as lifestyle migrants, covers their motives, living conditions, and community, and treats this flow as distinct from labor or marriage migration (Imasato, 2025). Korean press coverage attributed the 40.2 percent rise in marriages between Korean men and Japanese women in 2024 to Korean Wave content and to perceptions of the income gap and marriage costs between the two countries (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026).

10 Community Organizations

The Japanese School in Seoul, founded on May 8, 1972, teaches the children of Japanese citizens living in Korea. It moved from Gaepo-dong, Gangnam-gu, to its current site in Sangam-dong, Mapo-gu, around 2010 (Korea International School Information Service; Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Boston, 2008). Mapo-gu and Yongsan-gu were the two districts with the most Japanese registered foreigners in 2024.

Buyonghoe is a mutual aid association first formed by Japanese-born wives who remained in Korea after 1945. It began as Yayoi-kai, was renamed in 1965, and took its current name in 1966. It once had about 550 members in 9 branches; a small number of elderly members survive, some living at a nursing facility for Japanese wives in Gyeongju (Ryu, n.d.).

None of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census names Japanese residents in its name or target group. Most general-purpose organizations, such as multicultural family support centers, also serve Japanese residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Cambodian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

South Korea counted 63,681 Cambodian resident foreigners on December 31, 2024, the largest number on record. In 2024 Cambodians were the sixth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (61,006 people, 4.1 percent of the total) and the 11th-largest among all resident foreigners (2.4 percent). Their rank among registered foreigners was also sixth in 2014 and 2019, while their rank among all resident foreigners moved from 10th in 2014 to 11th in 2019 and 2024. The population grew more than seventeenfold from 3,652 in 2006 ($63,681 / 3,652 = 17.4$), fell from 47,565 in 2019 to 41,405 in 2020, and has risen every year since 2021.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 61,006 Cambodians were registered foreigners in South Korea, the sixth-largest nationality among registered foreigners, and the 63,681 Cambodians among all resident foreigners made them the 11th-largest nationality in that count, 33.9 percent more than the 47,565 recorded in 2019.
- ▶ In 2024, 76.9 percent of Cambodian residents (48,998 people) held the E-9 non-professional employment visa, and Cambodians made up 14.5 percent of all E-9 holders in the country.
- ▶ In 2024, 22.7 percent of registered Cambodians lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents.

Most Cambodians came to Korea as workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS), which Korea opened to Cambodia through a labor-sending agreement signed in 2006 (Korea Times, 2025). A smaller group arrived through marriage to Korean citizens, a channel the Cambodian government suspended in 2008 and again in 2010 over trafficking concerns (ABC News, 2010). Since 2019 two newer routes have grown. Cambodian holders of the E-7 specially designated activities

visa numbered 55 in 2019 and 2,840 in 2024, and holders of the E-8 seasonal worker visa numbered 1,445 in 2024 after none in 2019.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Cambodians are younger, more often men, and far more concentrated in employment visas: 83.8 percent held an employment visa in 2024, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. They are also less concentrated in the Seoul capital area and more likely to live in rural counties. This Spotlight describes the population's size, location, age and sex, visa status, migration channels, naturalization, unauthorized residence, health, community organizations, and migration from Cambodia to South Korea.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the headline count used in this Spotlight unless stated otherwise.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are therefore not in this count. Province and district figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners (61,006 Cambodians in 2024).

Index of dissimilarity (D). A measure from 0 to 1 of how differently Cambodians and all other foreign residents are spread across districts. A value of 0.5 means half of either group would have to move to another district for the two distributions to match.

Ethnic enclave. A district where the location quotient for Cambodians (their share of the district's foreign residents divided by their share of all foreign residents nationwide) is at least 2 and Cambodians make up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Cambodian resident foreigners rose from 3,652 in 2006 to 12,192 in 2010 and 38,395 in 2014. Growth slowed after 2014, and the count was 47,565 in 2019. The count fell by 6,160 (13.0 percent) to 41,405 in 2020, changed little in 2021 (41,525), then climbed to 49,240 in 2022, 57,018 in 2023, and 63,681 in 2024.

Nearly all Cambodians in Korea are registered long-term residents. In 2024, 61,006 Cambodians were registered foreigners, 95.8 percent of the resident count. The registered

count excludes short-term visitors and holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa, groups with few Cambodians, so Cambodians rank higher among registered foreigners. They were 20th among registered foreigners and 22nd among all resident foreigners in 2006, and sixth and 10th in 2014.

Between 2019 and 2024 the Cambodian population grew by 33.9 percent (index 133.9, with 2019 = 100). This was the 7th-fastest growth among the 20 largest foreign nationalities over that period.

TABLE 1
Cambodian Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	3,652	3,331	22	20	0.4	0.5
2014	38,395	37,299	10	6	2.1	3.4
2019	47,565	45,016	11	6	1.9	3.5
2024	63,681	61,006	11	6	2.4	4.1

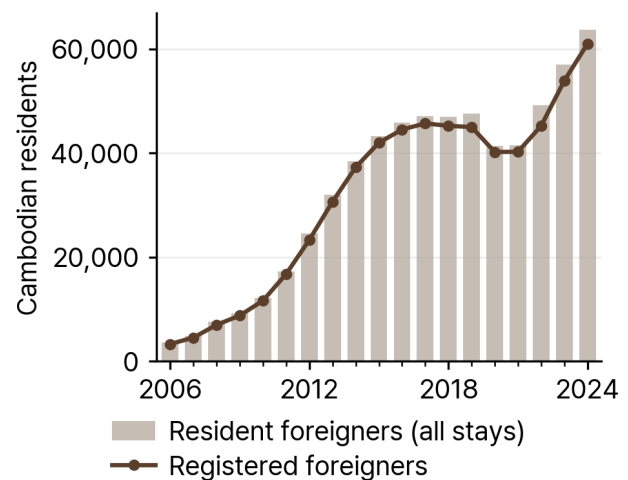
Note: Resident foreigners (체류외국인) include short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters; registered foreigners (등록외국인) are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities. Ranks and shares compare Cambodians with all nationalities in the same count.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, 39.1 percent of registered Cambodians lived in the Seoul capital area (Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi), compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents. Almost all of that share was outside Seoul itself: 22,753 Cambodians (37.3 percent) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi, and 1,109 (1.8 percent) in Seoul. The Yeongnam region held 24.8 percent (15,121), Chungcheong 18.4 percent (11,224), Honam 14.8 percent (9,034), and Gangwon and Jeju 2.9 percent (1,765).

FIGURE 1
Cambodian Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



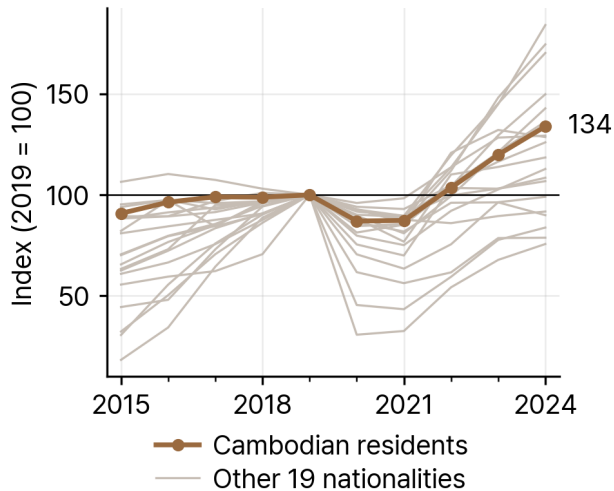
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In 2024, 22.7 percent of registered Cambodians lived in a rural county (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents. The rural county share was 44.5 percent in Honam, 35.3 percent in Chungcheong, and 31.0 percent in Yeongnam.

The population is spread across many places. In 2024, 121 districts had at least 100 registered Cambodians, and the ten largest districts together held 29.4 percent of the total.

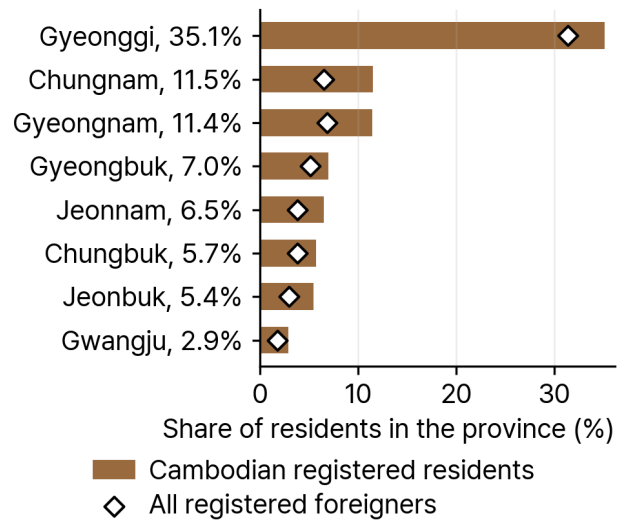
Hwaseong-si in Gyeonggi-do had the most (3,588). In Icheon-si, Nonsan-si, and Miryang-si, Cambodians made up more than one in five foreign residents.

FIGURE 2
Growth of Cambodian Residents Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 3
Registered Cambodians in South Korea by Province, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The index of dissimilarity between Cambodians and all other foreign residents across districts was 0.494 in 2014 and 0.507 in 2024, a change of 0.013 over the decade.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Cambodians, 2024

District	Province	Registered Cambodians	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	3,588	7.0
Icheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,202	21.1
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,813	7.1
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,739	10.7
Gwangju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,670	11.2
Nonsan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	1,522	23.7
Miryang-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,449	29.5
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,432	5.8
Eumseong-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	1,284	9.3
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,255	8.1

Note: Gwangju-si is the city in Gyeonggi-do, distinct from Gwangju Metropolitan City. Together these ten districts held 29.4 percent of registered Cambodians.

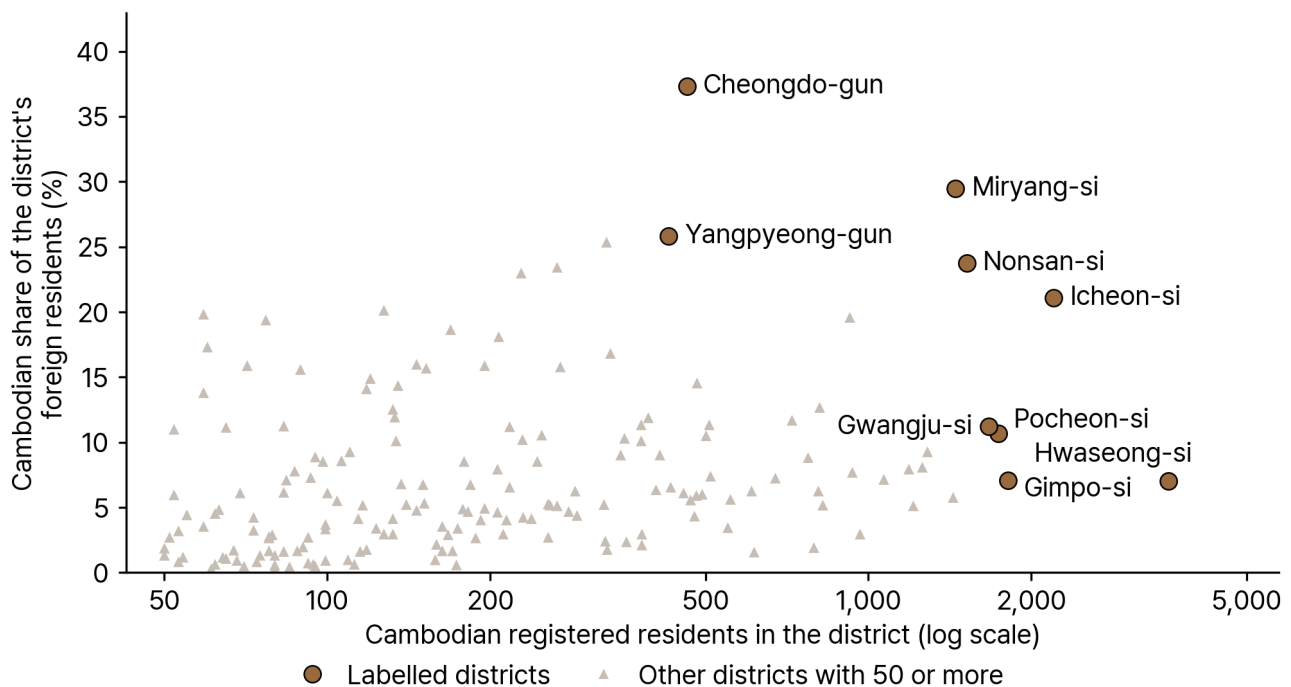
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

One district met the enclave definition in 2024. In Cheongdo-gun (Gyeongsangbuk-do), 462 registered Cambodians made up 37.3 percent of foreign residents, a location quotient of 9.6. Other districts with high Cambodian shares in 2024 were Miryang-si (29.5 percent), Yangpyeong-gun (25.8 percent), Damyang-gun (25.4 percent), and Nonsan-si (23.7 percent).

3 Age and Sex

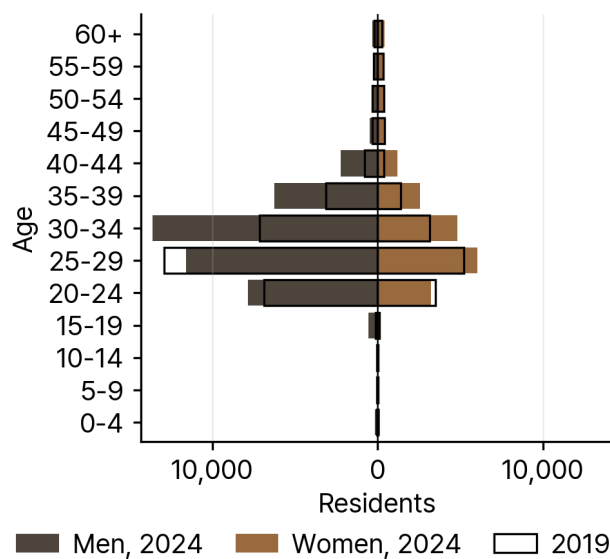
Cambodian residents are concentrated in young working ages. In 2024, 87.8 percent (55,922 people) were ages 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group was 30 to 34, and the median age also fell in that group.

FIGURE 4

Districts with the Largest Numbers of Registered Cambodians, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 5

Cambodian Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Few Cambodian residents are children or older adults. In 2024, 0.9 percent (583) were under age 15, against 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and 1.2 percent were 60 or older, against 12.9 percent. The number of Cambodian children under 15 rose from 245 in 2019 to 583 in 2024, and children under 5 from 83 to 309.

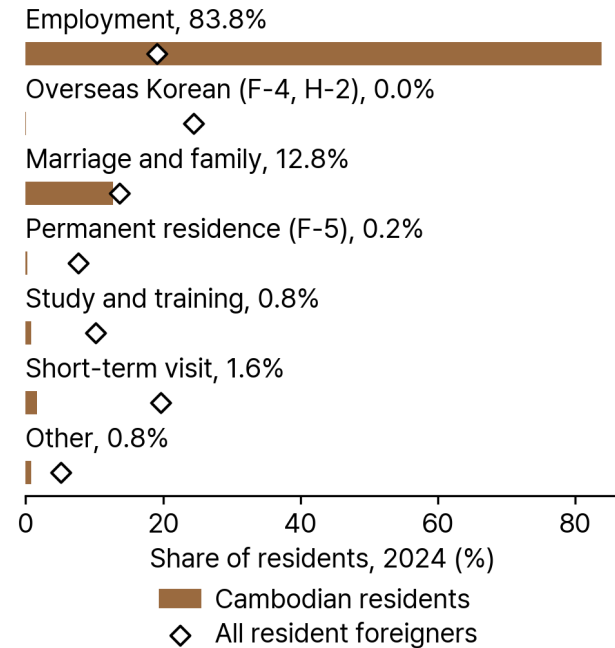
Women made up 31.4 percent of Cambodian residents in 2024 (19,988 people), down from 32.4 percent (15,406) in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, 45.1 percent were women in 2024.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 83.8 percent of Cambodian residents held an employment visa, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. Marriage and family visas accounted for 12.8 percent (13.6 percent among all resident foreigners). Short-term visits (1.6 percent), study and training (0.8 percent), and permanent residence (0.2 percent) were each much smaller than among all resident foreigners (19.7, 10.2, and 7.7 percent). No Cambodians held overseas Korean visas, the category that covers 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa is the main status. Cambodian E-9 holders grew from 31,056 in 2014 to 37,980 in 2019 and 48,998 in 2024. In the KIRD data for 2024, Cambodians were the largest nationality among E-9 holders, at 14.5 percent of the total. The Korea Times described Cambodia in 2025 as the second-largest source of E-9 workers after Nepal (Korea Times, 2025).

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Cambodian Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

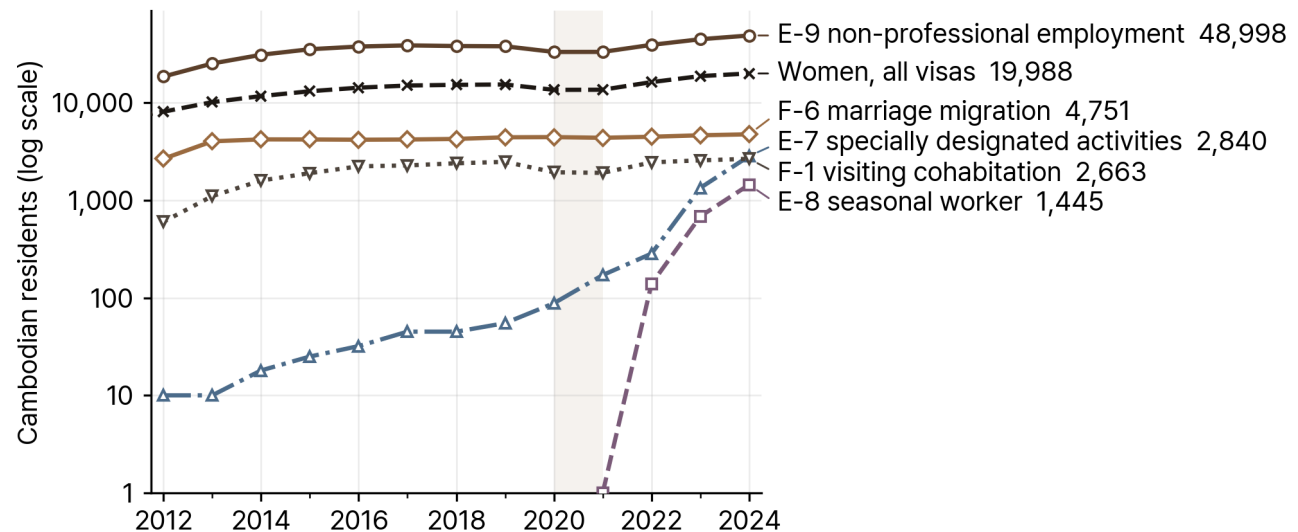
Two smaller statuses grew fast after 2019. E-7 holders increased from 55 in 2019 to 2,840 in 2024, and E-8 seasonal workers from zero to 1,445. Marriage migrants on the F-6 visa numbered 4,751 in 2024, up from 4,428 in 2019, and F-3 dependent family holders rose from 51 to 409.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Labor migration from Cambodia rests on a 2006 labor-sending agreement between the two governments under the Employment Permit System (Korea Times, 2025). The same report described Cambodia in October 2025 as the second-largest source of E-9 workers after Nepal.

Seasonal farm work is a second channel arranged between governments. In August 2026, Hamyang County in South Gyeongsang Province signed an agreement with Cambodia's Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in Phnom Penh to bring in seasonal workers (Newspim, 2026).

FIGURE 7

Cambodian Residents in South Korea by Visa Type, 2012-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In October 2025, after kidnappings and killings of Korean citizens by Cambodia-based crime groups led to public calls to cut Cambodia's E-9 quota, Labor Minister Kim Young-hoon

said the government had no plans to adjust Cambodia's allocation and warned that a cut would unfairly stigmatize Cambodian workers (Korea Times, 2025).

TABLE 3
Main Visa Types Held by Cambodian Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Cambodian residents, 2024 (%)	Cambodians' share of all holders of this visa, 2024 (%)
E-9	Non-professional employment	37,980	48,998	76.9	14.5
F-6	Marriage migration	4,428	4,751	7.5	3.2
E-7	Specially designated activities	55	2,840	4.5	4.5
F-1	Visiting and cohabitation	2,480	2,663	4.2	2.7
E-8	Seasonal worker	0	1,445	2.3	5.9
C-3	Short-term visit	1,130	907	1.4	0.6
F-3	Dependent family	51	409	0.6	0.8

Note: Shares use the 2024 Cambodian resident total of 63,681.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In January 2026, after the Supreme Court ruling on the death of Cambodian worker Nuon Sokkheng (see Health and Well-being), the Ministry of Employment and Labor said it would seek to revise the law so that employers cannot house foreign workers in illegal temporary structures, and would step up inspections of foreign workers' housing (Korea Times, 2026).

6 Naturalization

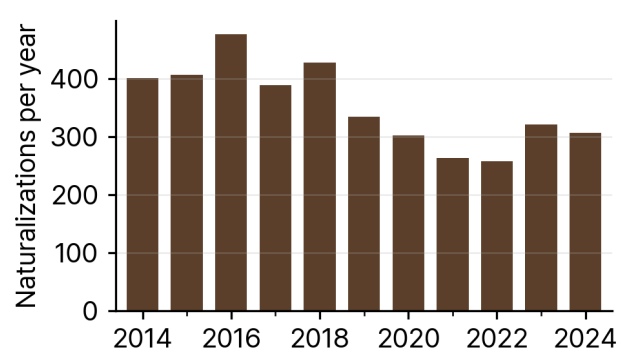
The KIRD dataset records 3,885 naturalizations of Cambodian nationals from 2014 to 2024. The Ministry of Justice yearbook's naturalization table by country of origin is used from the 2011 edition onward, because the 2009 and 2010 editions print cumulative totals dating back to 1991; Cambodia's row covering all naturalization routes in that table begins in 2014. Annual naturalizations peaked at 476 in 2016, fell to 258 in 2022, and stood at 307 in 2024.

A further 83 restorations of Korean nationality were recorded for Cambodian nationals from 2011 to 2024, one of them in 2024. Restoration applies to former Korean nationals and is mainly relevant for ethnic Korean groups.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Cambodia is among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook reports separately in its table of unauthorized residents (table 6-4). The count of Cambodians without valid status was 6,099 in 2019, 8,751 in 2021, 10,920 in 2023, and 10,709 in 2024.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Cambodian Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Relative to the resident count, these figures equal 12.8 percent in 2019 (6,099 of 47,565), 21.1 percent in 2021 (8,751 of 41,525), 19.2 percent in 2023 (10,920 of 57,018), and 16.8 percent in 2024 (10,709 of 63,681). Cambodians ranked 8th among nationalities in 2024 and accounted for 2.7 percent of the 397,522 unauthorized residents counted that year.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no published study reports health outcomes for Cambodian residents of Korea separately. News reports describe deaths at work and in worker housing.

Nuon Sokkheng, a 30-year-old Cambodian farm worker, died on December 20, 2020 in an unheated vinyl greenhouse structure used as her dormitory near a vegetable farm in Pocheon, Gyeonggi Province. On January 29, 2026, the Supreme Court upheld a ruling that the government was liable

for failing to oversee workplace accommodation and ordered it to pay 10 million won to each of her parents (Korea Times, 2026).

On February 28, 2026, a 35-year-old Cambodian worker died of cardiac arrest after a 1-ton ship block fell on him at a shipyard in Samho-eup, Yeongam, South Jeolla Province (Asia Economy, 2026).

9 Migration from Cambodia to South Korea

South Korea receives a small part of Cambodia's labor migration. Of about 183,000 returned migrant workers counted in Cambodia's 2019 Labour Force Survey, 95.3 percent had last worked in Thailand and 1.7 percent in South Korea, the second most common country after Thailand (IOM 2024). In January 2024 a spokesperson for Cambodia's Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training said the ministry had documented more than 1.3 million Cambodians working abroad (Phnom Penh Post 2024).

According to a January 2024 ministry report, 9,778 Cambodians, including 2,719 women, were employed in South Korea in 2023 (The Better Cambodia 2024). In April 2023 Labour Minister Ith Samheng said more than 60,000 Cambodians were working in South Korea, more than 40,000 of them on fixed-term migrant worker contracts, and that the Korean government had promised to raise the number of workers by 10,000 or more (Phnom Penh Post 2023). The KIRD data counted 57,018 Cambodian resident foreigners at the end of 2023. In 2024, 35,341 Cambodians took the EPS Korean-language test (EPS-TOPIK) and 11,498 passed (HRD Korea 2025), and Korea admitted 10,445 Cambodian workers on E-9 visas (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026).

Personal remittances received by Cambodia from all countries totaled about USD 2.83 billion in 2024, or 6.10 percent of GDP, down from 6.57 percent (USD 2.78 billion) in 2023 and 7.43 percent in 2020 (World Bank 2026). For 2021, World Bank bilateral estimates cited by IOM put remittances from South Korea to Cambodia at USD 65 million, the fourth-largest source after Thailand (USD 637 million), the United States (USD 213 million), and France (USD 89 million) (IOM 2024). Cambodian officials report much higher figures. Minister Ith Samheng said in April 2023 that Cambodians in South Korea send home USD 500 million to 600 million a year (Phnom Penh Post 2023).

As far as we know, no published source reports the provinces of origin of Korea-bound workers in aggregate. A 2020 case study of Korea-migrant households was set in Reap and Roka communes of Pea Reang District, Prey Veng Province (Chan & Lak 2020), and workers and families interviewed by the Phnom Penh Post in January 2024 came from Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang provinces (Phnom Penh Post 2024).

Cambodian policy has restricted marriage migration to Korea twice. Cambodia banned foreign marriages in March 2008 to prevent trafficking and lifted the ban about eight months later. In March 2010 it suspended marriages between its citizens and South Koreans, after a matchmaker was sentenced to 10 years in prison for bringing 25 women from the countryside to broker marriages with South Korean men. The number of Cambodian women marrying Korean men had risen from 551 in 2008 to 1,372 in 2009, according to Yonhap as reported by ABC News (ABC News 2010). On the labor side, the total cost of the EPS route for Cambodian applicants, including the language test, health check, passport, visa, orientation, and airfare tax, was USD 991 in 2013, according to Ministry of Labour data submitted to the National Assembly for its 2014 audit (Migrant Forum in Asia 2017).

Research on this corridor centers on remittances and return. Sok and Yang (2021), comparing Cambodian workers in Malaysia and South Korea through interviews, found that most workers in Korea sent their salaries home, while those in Malaysia sent limited amounts, and linked the difference to the government-to-government recruitment used for Korea and the government-agency scheme used for Malaysia. Chan and Lak (2020) found an average annual remittance of USD 7,000 among 69 Prey Veng households with a member in Korea, spent mainly on food, health care, home renovation, education, and property, and described remittances as an insecure income source unless invested in longer-term livelihoods. Lay, Lee, and Kim (2025) interviewed five EPS workers preparing to return, who described building a livelihood at home, restoring relationships strained by years abroad, readjusting to hometown life amid concern about Korean cultural influence, and planning an uncertain future. A 2017 policy brief reported that Cambodian workers had been dispatched unlawfully to farms through labor brokers, despite the government-to-government design of the EPS (Migrant Forum in Asia 2017).

10 Community Organizations

The Cambodian embassy opened a shelter in Sangnok-gu, Ansan, on May 28, 2018, with space for about 20 people, to support Cambodian workers who lacked jobs or housing. The press report at the time put the number of Cambodians in Korea at about 60,000 and in Ansan at more than 600 (Kyeonggi Ilbo, 2018).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 6 name Cambodians in their name or target group. They include the Gwangju-Jeonnam Cambodian Community (Gwangsan-gu, Gwangju), the Gunpo Cambodian Buddhist Center (Gunpo-si, Gyeonggi-do), the Cambodian Cultural Center (Sangnok-gu, Ansan), and Osankam (Miryang-si, Gyeongsangnam-do). Most general-purpose organizations, such as foreign worker support centers and multicultural family centers, also serve Cambodians.

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Cambodia and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Returned migrant workers whose last country of work was South Korea, 2019	1.7% (Thailand 95.3%)	IOM 2024
Cambodians documented working abroad, all destinations, January 2024	more than 1.3 million	Phnom Penh Post 2024
Cambodians employed in South Korea, 2023 (ministry report)	9,778 (2,719 women)	The Better Cambodia 2024
Cambodians working in South Korea, April 2023 (minister's statement)	more than 60,000	Phnom Penh Post 2023
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Cambodia, 2024	35,341 (11,498 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
E-9 workers admitted from Cambodia, 2024	10,445	Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026
Total EPS cost per Cambodian applicant, 2013	USD 991	Migrant Forum in Asia 2017
Remittances from South Korea, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	USD 65 million (fourth-largest source)	IOM 2024
Remittances from South Korea per year, 2023 (minister's statement)	USD 500-600 million	Phnom Penh Post 2023
Personal remittances received, all countries, 2024	USD 2.83 billion (6.10% of GDP)	World Bank 2026
Cambodian women marrying Korean men, 2008 and 2009	551 and 1,372	ABC News 2010

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Mongolian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 37,664 Mongolian nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, making Mongolia the 11th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (2.5 percent) and the 12th-largest among all resident foreigners, a wider count that includes short-term visitors and totaled 57,093 Mongolians (2.2 percent). Registered foreigners made up 66.0 percent of Mongolian resident foreigners. The resident count more than doubled from 24,561 in 2014, when Mongolia ranked 14th on both measures.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, Mongolia was the 11th-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea (37,664 people, 2.5 percent) and the 12th-largest among all resident foreigners (57,093 people, 2.2 percent); in 2014 it ranked 14th on both counts.
- ▶ Students and trainees made up 30.5 percent of Mongolian residents in 2024, three times the 10.2 percent among all resident foreigners, and D-2 student visa holders rose from 5,744 in 2019 to 10,471 in 2024.
- ▶ The Ministry of Justice counted 16,554 unauthorized Mongolian residents in 2024, equal to 29.0 percent of Mongolian resident foreigners and the fourth-largest unauthorized nationality.

Mongolians have come to Korea through labor, marriage, and study. Mongolia sends workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS), and a 2007 Korean Embassy report named Korea as the most common destination for Mongolian women marrying abroad. Since 2019 the mix has moved toward study and training: holders of D-2 (student) and D-4 (general trainee) visas together rose from 8,918 in 2019 to 17,330 in 2024, while E-9 (non-professional employment) holders fell from 5,875 to 4,087.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Mongolian residents were more often women (54.4 percent versus 45.1 percent) and children under 15 (11.5 percent versus 5.7 percent), and less often aged 60 or older (3.1 percent versus 12.9 percent). They were more concentrated in the Seoul capital area (65.3 percent versus 55.2 percent), and almost none held overseas Korean status, which covers 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the headline count in this profile.

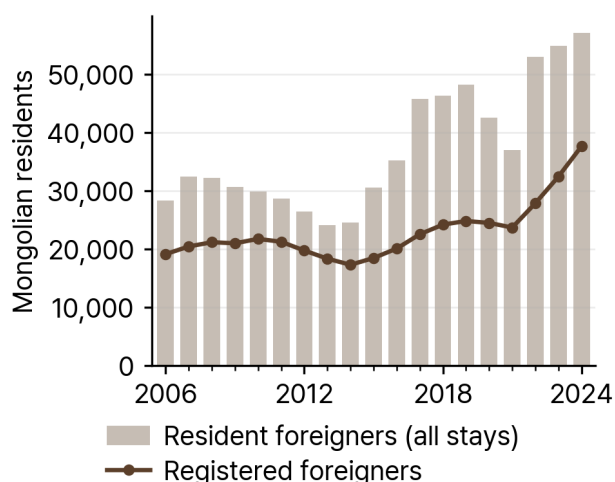
Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Korean (F-4) holders report their residence instead of registering and are not included in this count.

Unauthorized residents (불법체류외국인). Foreign nationals who remain in Korea after their permitted period of stay has ended or who violate the terms of their status, as counted by the Ministry of Justice.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Mongolian resident foreigners fell from 28,392 in 2006 to 24,561 in 2014, then almost doubled to 48,185 by 2019. It dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic years to 37,012 in 2021, recovered to 53,038 in 2022, and rose to 57,093 in 2024, the highest count in the series (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Mongolian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

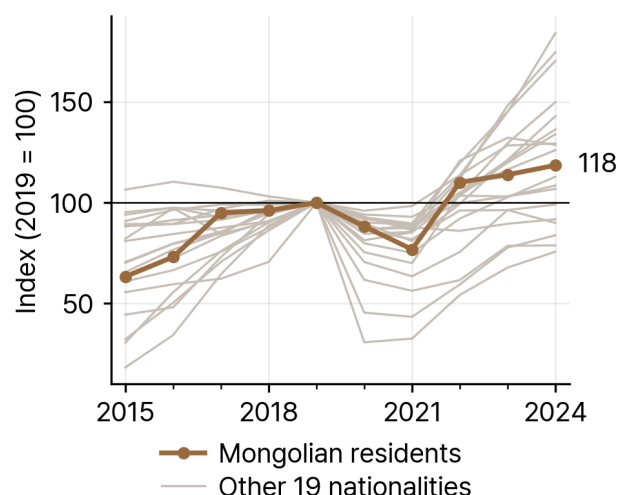
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners grew from 19,160 in 2006 to 37,664 in 2024. In 2024, 66.0 percent of Mongolian resident foreigners were registered; the other 34.0 percent were in Korea for 90 days or less or did not register.

Measured against 2019, the Mongolian population stood at 118.5 in 2024 (2019 = 100). Mongolia ranked 11th in growth over 2019-24 among the 20 largest nationalities (see Figure 2).

Mongolia's rank differs by measure. Among all resident foreigners it ranked 8th in 2006, 14th in 2014, 10th in 2019, and 12th in 2024. Among registered foreigners it ranked 9th in 2006, 14th in 2014, 12th in 2019, and 11th in 2024. Its share of registered foreigners in 2024 (2.5 percent) was higher than its share of all resident foreigners (2.2 percent), since 34.0 percent of Mongolians in Korea were short-term visitors or otherwise unregistered (see Table 1).

FIGURE 2

Growth of Mongolian Resident Foreigners Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District-level counts cover registered foreigners (37,664 Mongolians in 2024). Incheon and Gyeonggi accounted for 36.3 percent of them and Seoul 29.0 percent, so 65.3 percent lived in the Seoul capital area, compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents. Chungcheong followed with 13.6 percent, Yeongnam with 12.2 percent, Honam with 6.6 percent, and Gangwon and Jeju with 2.2 percent (see Figure 3).

Only 4.6 percent of Mongolian residents lived in rural counties (gun) in 2024, compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents. The rural share was highest in Chungcheong, at 18.0 percent of the region's Mongolian residents.

TABLE 1

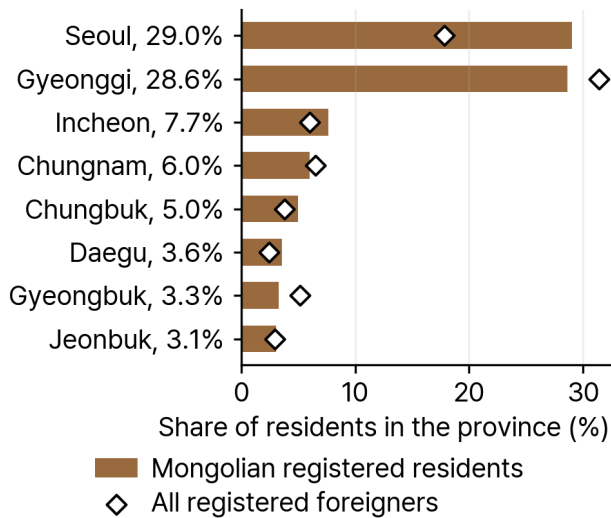
Mongolian Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	28,392	19,160	8	9	3.1	3.0
2014	24,561	17,334	14	14	1.4	1.6
2019	48,185	24,845	10	12	1.9	2.0
2024	57,093	37,664	12	11	2.2	2.5

Note: Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities. Ranks count all nationalities in each series.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 3
Mongolian Registered Foreigners by Region of South Korea, 2024



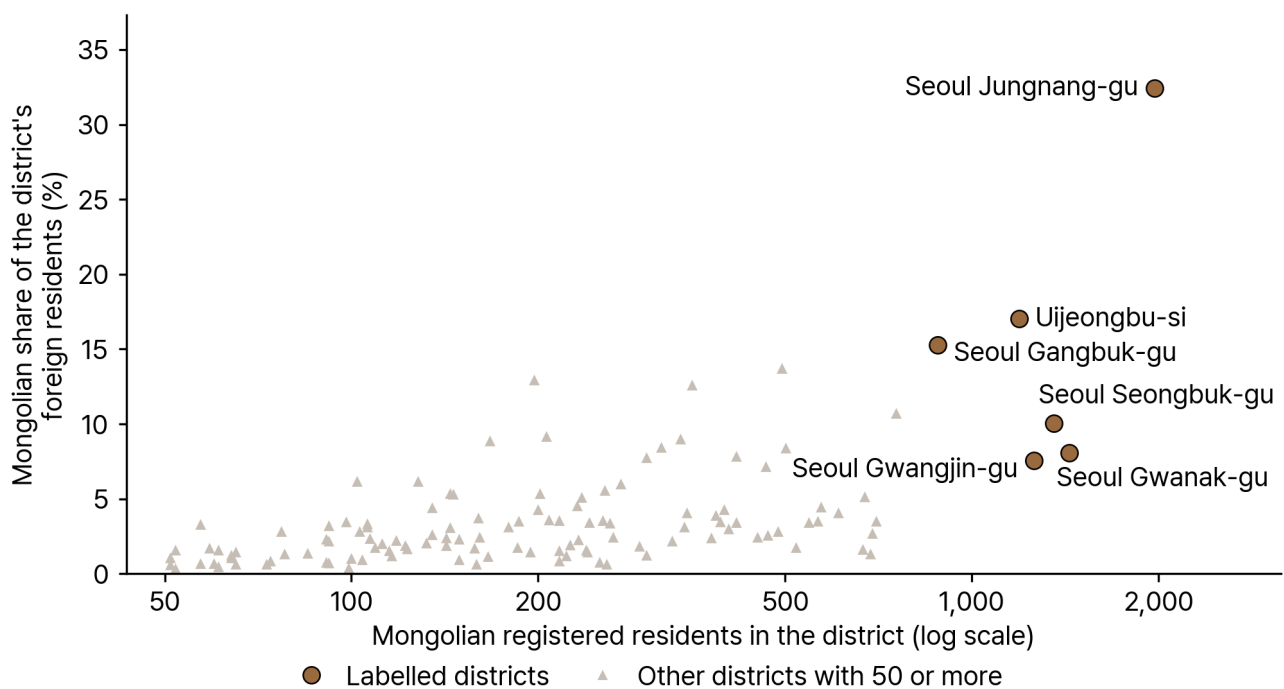
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In 2024, 97 districts had at least 100 Mongolian residents, and the ten largest districts accounted for 29.0 percent of the group. Jungnang-gu in Seoul had the most (1,970), followed by Gwanak-gu (1,437), Seongbuk-gu (1,357), and Gwangjin-gu (1,261), also in Seoul, and Uijeongbu-si (1,193) in Gyeonggi-do (see Figure 4 and Table 2).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Mongolian residents and all other foreign residents across districts was 0.369 in 2014 and 0.378 in 2024. The 2024 value means that about 38 percent of Mongolian residents would have to move to another district for their distribution to match that of other foreigners, a level almost unchanged since 2014.

One district meets the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents). In Jungnang-gu, Seoul, the 1,970 Mongolian residents made up 32.4 percent of all foreign residents in 2024, with a location quotient of 7.1. Mongolians also made up 17.0 percent of foreign residents in Uijeongbu-si and 15.3 percent in Gangbuk-gu.

FIGURE 4
Mongolian Registered Foreigners by District, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

(see Figure 5).

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 54.4 percent of Mongolian resident foreigners in 2024 (31,042 of 57,093), up from 52.0 percent in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, women were 45.1 percent

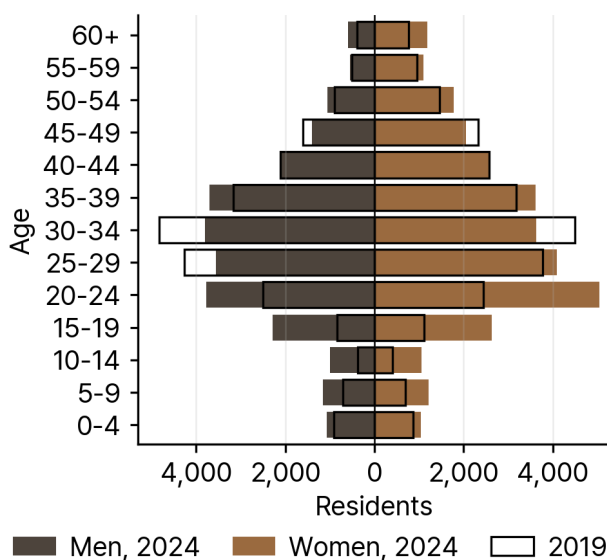
TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Mongolian Residents, 2024

District	Province	Mongolian residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Jungnang-gu	Seoul	1,970	32.4
Gwanak-gu	Seoul	1,437	8.1
Seongbuk-gu	Seoul	1,357	10.1
Gwangjin-gu	Seoul	1,261	7.6
Uijeongbu-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,193	17.0
Gangbuk-gu	Seoul	882	15.3
Cheongju-si Heungdeok-gu	Chungcheongbuk-do	755	10.7
Dongdaemun-gu	Seoul	701	3.5
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	692	2.7
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	686	1.3

Note: Registered foreigners. The ten districts together accounted for 29.0 percent of Mongolian registered foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner counts by district, 2024.

FIGURE 5
Mongolian Resident Foreigners by Age and Sex, 2024



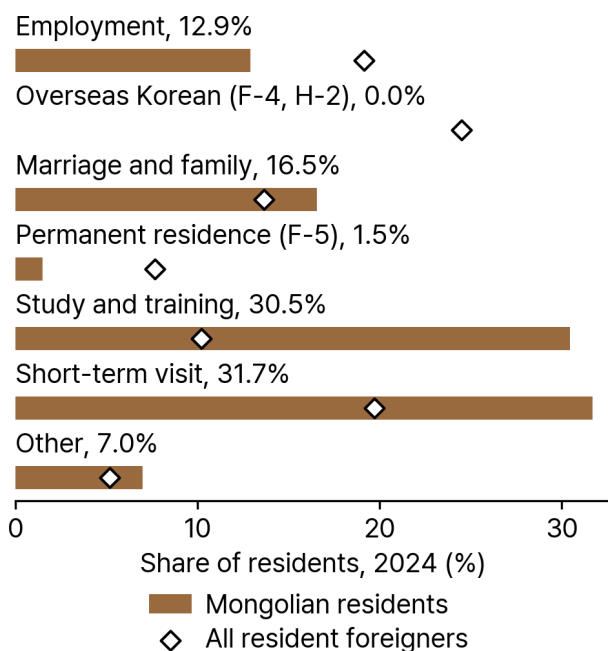
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The largest five-year age group in 2024 was 20-24, and the median resident fell in the 30-34 group. People aged 20-39 accounted for 54.7 percent of Mongolian residents (31,222), compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

Children under 15 numbered 6,542 in 2024, or 11.5 percent of the group, twice the 5.7 percent among all resident foreigners; 2,113 were under age 5. People aged 60 or older made up 3.1 percent of Mongolian residents, against 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners.

4 Visa Status

FIGURE 6
Visa Status Groups of Mongolian Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

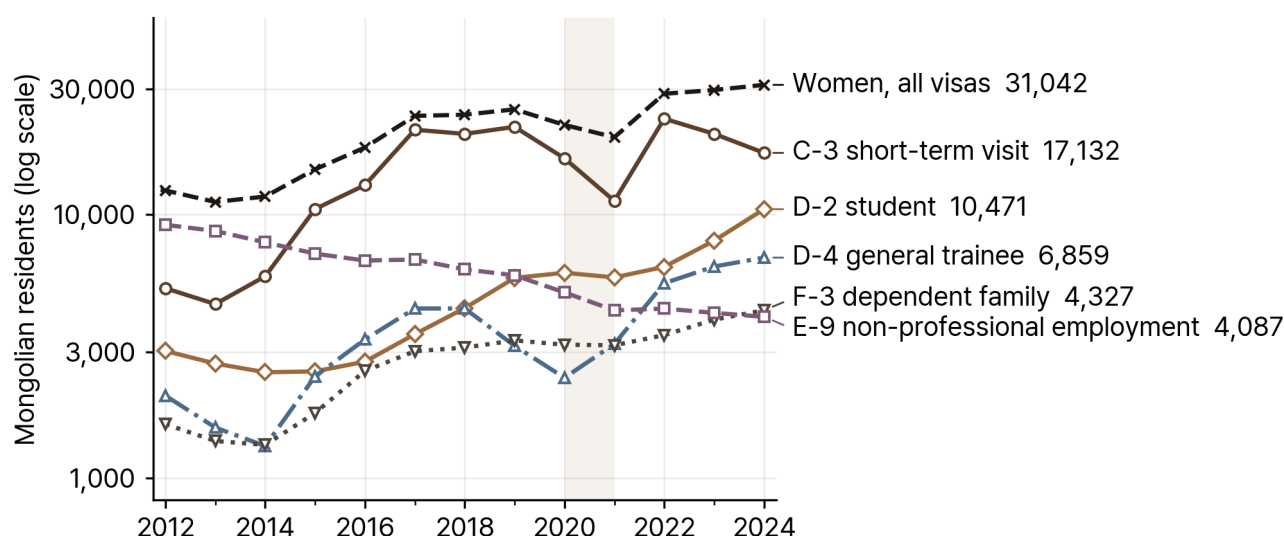
Short-term visits and study were the two largest status groups for Mongolian residents in 2024. Short-term visitors made up 31.7 percent of the group (19.7 percent among all resident foreigners), and study and training visas 30.5 percent (10.2 percent among all). Marriage and family statuses accounted for 16.5 percent (13.6 percent among all), employment for 12.9 percent (19.2 percent among all), and permanent residence (F-

5) for 1.5 percent (7.7 percent among all). Almost no Mongolians held overseas Korean statuses (F-4, H-2), which account for 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure

6).

FIGURE 7

Mongolian Residents by Main Visa Type, 2006-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The C-3 short-term visit visa was the most common single status, held by 17,132 Mongolians in 2024 (30.0 percent of the group), down from 21,504 in 2019. Mongolians were 10.5 percent of all C-3 holders in Korea, the third-largest nationality on that visa.

Student and trainee numbers grew fastest. D-2 (student) holders rose from 2,518 in 2014 and 5,744 in 2019 to 10,471 in 2024, and D-4 (general trainee) holders from 1,321 in 2014 and 3,174 in 2019 to 6,859 in 2024. E-9 (non-professional employment) holders fell from 7,839 in 2014 to 5,875 in 2019 and 4,087 in 2024; Mongolians were 1.2 percent of all E-9 holders in 2024 (see Figure 7 and Table 3).

TABLE 3

Most Common Visa Types among Mongolian Residents, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Mongolian residents, 2024 (%)	Mongolian share of all holders of this visa, 2024 (%)
C-3	Short-term visit	21,504	17,132	30.0	10.5
D-2	Student	5,744	10,471	18.3	5.9
D-4	General trainee	3,174	6,859	12.0	7.8
F-3	Dependent family	3,327	4,327	7.6	8.2
E-9	Non-professional employment	5,875	4,087	7.2	1.2
G-1	Other (miscellaneous)	859	2,922	5.1	5.2
F-6	Marriage migration	1,846	2,140	3.7	1.4

Note: Resident foreigners. Shares of the group use the 2024 total of 57,093.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Mongolia is one of the countries that send workers to Korea

under the EPS, the program behind the E-9 visa. As of 2024, Korea had signed worker-exchange memoranda of understanding with 16 countries, and the Human Resources

Development Service of Korea oversees the admission process on the Korean side (IDE-JETRO, 2024).

Marriage is another channel. A 2007 post by the Korean Embassy in Mongolia, citing Mongolia's Citizen Registration Office, reported that of 2,551 Mongolian women who had married foreign nationals, 1,673 had married Koreans (the post breaks this down as 1,648 women and 25 men). Far fewer had married nationals of Germany (155), China (137), Japan (119), the United States (89), or Russia (65) (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Mongolia, 2007). In the KIRD data, 2,140 Mongolians held the F-6 marriage migrant visa in 2024.

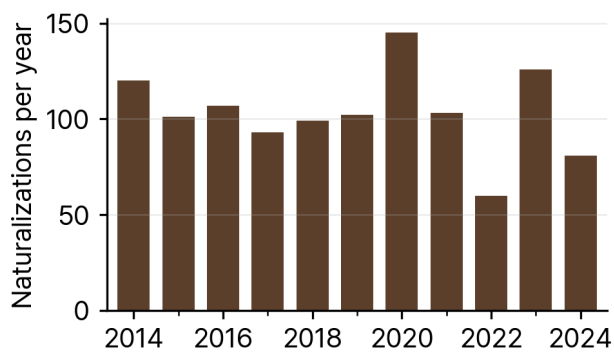
Study has become a large channel. Ministry of Justice records cited by K-Study Times counted 18,254 Mongolian international students at Korean universities as of December 31, 2025 (K-Study Times, 2025). This count uses a different date and definition than the D-2 visa totals in the previous section.

In September 2026, the Korea Labor-Foundation sent a four-day delegation led by Secretary-General Park Jong-pil to Ulaanbaatar to launch a program linking pre-departure safety training for Mongolian workers bound for Korea under the EPS with post-arrival orientation in Korea. The stated aim was to reduce workplace injuries (Korea Times, 2026).

6 Naturalization

From 2014 to 2024, 1,137 Mongolian nationals were naturalized as Korean citizens. Annual counts ranged from 60 (2022) to 145 (2020); 81 Mongolians were naturalized in 2024 (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8
Naturalization of Mongolian Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The Ministry of Justice also recorded 133 restorations of Korean nationality among people of Mongolian nationality between 2011 and 2024, 7 of them in 2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Mongolia is among the ten nationalities for which the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports unauthorized residents separately. The count was 17,510 in

2019, 15,969 in 2021, 18,524 in 2023, and 16,554 in 2024.

Unauthorized residents equaled 36.3 percent of Mongolian resident foreigners in 2019 (17,510 of 48,185), 43.1 percent in 2021 (15,969 of 37,012), 33.8 percent in 2023 (18,524 of 54,846), and 29.0 percent in 2024 (16,554 of 57,093). In 2024 Mongolians were the fourth-largest unauthorized nationality and accounted for 4.2 percent of the 397,522 unauthorized residents in Korea.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, two studies report well-being measures for Mongolians in Korea separately: a 2011 survey of Mongolian migrant workers that measured quality of life and a 2006 study of children of Mongolian migrant workers that measured acculturative stress, self-esteem, and behavior problems (both summarized in the section on migration from Mongolia). The other studies we know of pool Mongolians with other nationalities.

Press reports document workplace deaths of Mongolian workers. On November 8, 2024, a 32-year-old Mongolian worker died at a specialty-vehicle manufacturer in Gimje, North Jeolla Province, after being caught between a parked aerial work platform and roughly 10 tons of newly developed equipment he was moving (Labor Today, 2024). On June 27, 2026, a Mongolian woman in her 40s died at a shipbuilding-component manufacturer in the Daebul industrial area (대불산단) in Yeongam after a pipe being moved by crane struck her in the abdomen (Women's News, 2026).

9 Migration from Mongolia to South Korea

South Korea is the largest destination for Mongolians abroad. Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs counted 211,611 Mongolian nationals living overseas in 2023, about 6.1 percent of the country's population, and South Korea had the largest group of any host country (International Organization for Migration, 2023). Among destinations for Mongolians working abroad, China ranks first and South Korea second, followed by Japan, the Czech Republic, and Hungary; in outbound travel statistics Korea ranks third after China and Russia (IDE-JETRO, 2024).

Korea was already a leading destination in the 2000s. An unofficial 2007 estimate attributed to Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs put about 30,000 of roughly 130,000 Mongolians abroad in Korea, second to Kazakhstan (65,000) and ahead of the United States (about 10,000) (Tsogtsaikhan, 2008).

Workers admitted under the EPS are a small part of the Mongolian population in Korea. For the end of 2023, Fukai estimated about 4,600 Mongolian EPS workers, compared with about 18,500 undocumented workers, 20,200 short-term visitors, 14,300 students and trainees, 2,600 marriage immigrants, and 600 professionals (IDE-JETRO, 2024). Korea

admitted 851 Mongolian workers on E-9 visas in 2023, 724 in 2024, and 676 in 2025 (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2026), and 5,384 Mongolians took the EPS Korean-language test in 2024, of whom 1,814 passed (HRD Korea, 2025). We know of no published source that identifies the aimags (provinces) of Mongolia that Korea-bound migrants come from.

Personal remittances received in Mongolia from all countries equaled about 2.2 percent of GDP in 2024, down from 4.1 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2024); the share was 2.33 percent in 2022 and 2.24 percent in 2023 (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2024). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Mongolia at about US\$171.1 million that year (World Bank, 2021). In a 2004-05 survey of Mongolian labor migrants in three countries, 87.0 percent of those in Korea sent money home, compared with 76.5 percent in the Czech Republic and 62.8 percent in the United States, and 23.4 percent of the Korea group put remittances toward education and training (Tsogtsaikhan, 2008).

Mongolia's 2001 Law on Receiving Foreign Workers and Sending Labor Abroad set up a system of government-to-government agreements and inter-organizational contracts for employment abroad, with the stated aim of organizing labor migration and protecting migrant workers. Tsogtsaikhan reported in 2008 that many migrants still left through irregular channels with the help of a growing number of private intermediaries (Tsogtsaikhan, 2008). For the EPS, the General Agency for Labor Welfare under the Ministry of Labor and

Social Security manages the process in Mongolia, including qualification tests and the deployment of workers. The ministry also operates a Labor and Social Security Service Center in Seoul that assists Mongolian nationals with industrial accident prevention, wage disputes, and access to Korea's pension and social insurance system (IDE-JETRO, 2024).

Research on Mongolians in Korea has focused on marriage, work, and families. A qualitative study of marriage migration found that commercial brokerage, organized around Korean grooms paying the full costs, left Mongolian women exposed to false information and with less say in their own migration (Kim et al., 2008). Interviews with 20 Mongolian marriage migrant women in Gwangju and South Jeolla Province found that they had difficulty turning vocational training at multicultural centers into stable jobs, set work goals around their own economic standing in Korea, and did better when employers recognized credentials earned in Mongolia (Shin, 2024). A 2011 survey of 453 Mongolian migrant workers in 10 Korean cities (333 with legal status and 120 undocumented) found that hope mediated the effect of job satisfaction and social support on quality of life, and that this pathway differed by legal status (Shin & Michiddorj-Otgondulam, 2012). A study of 67 children of Mongolian migrant workers in Seoul and Gyeonggi found moderate acculturative stress, fairly good self-esteem, and few behavior problems (Nho & Hong, 2006). We are not aware of any study of return migration to Mongolia.

Standard Mongolian is the Khalkha (Halh) dialect spoken in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia (Svantesson et al., 2005).

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Mongolia and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Mongolian nationals living abroad, 2023	211,611	International Organization for Migration (2023), citing Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
South Korea's rank among destinations of Mongolian workers abroad	2nd, after China	IDE-JETRO (2024)
Mongolian EPS workers in South Korea, end of 2023	About 4,600	IDE-JETRO (2024)
E-9 workers admitted from Mongolia, 2023, 2024, and 2025	851; 724; 676	Ministry of Employment and Labor (2026)
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Mongolia, 2024	5,384 (1,814 passed)	HRD Korea (2025)
Personal remittances received from all countries, 2024	2.2 percent of GDP	World Bank (2024)
Remittances sent from South Korea, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	US\$171.1 million	World Bank (2021)
Mongolian migrants in Korea who sent money home, 2004-05 survey	87.0 percent	Tsogtsaikhan (2008)

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

10 Community Organizations

Seoul's best-known Mongolian commercial area, Mongol Town, lies near Dongdaemun Market. The area drew Russian immigrants from the late 1980s and began to attract Mongolians in the 2000s; the New Kunho Building is its center (IDE-JETRO, 2024). Mobile phone shops are the most common business there, about 80 percent of them operated by Mongolians and 20 percent by Koreans, alongside beauty and nail salons, shipping agents, job-placement offices, and visa agencies (Harper's Bazaar Korea, 2022).

In the KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations, 4 have a name or stated target group that names the Mongolian community. They are the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Culture Promotion Institute (몽골울란바타르 문화진흥원) in Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, a program site designated by the Ministry of Justice; the Mongolia-Korea Language and Culture Center (몽골-한국언어와 문화센터) in Jungnang-gu, Seoul; the Association of Mongolians in Korea (재한몽골인협회) in Jung-gu, Seoul; and Cheonan MOISE (천안 모이세), a nongovernmental organization in Cheonan-si Dongnam-gu, South Chungcheong Province. Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family support centers and migrant worker centers, also serve Mongolian residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Sources

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Myanmar Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

On 31 December 2024, South Korea counted 52,034 registered Myanmar foreigners, the eighth-largest nationality among registered foreigners (3.5 percent of the total), and 53,914 Myanmar resident foreigners, the 13th-largest nationality among all resident foreigners (2.0 percent). The resident count had been 4,484 in 2006 and 29,294 in 2019, so it grew about twelvefold ($53,914 / 4,484 = 12.0$) between 2006 and 2024.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, South Korea had 52,034 registered Myanmar foreigners, making Myanmar the eighth-largest nationality among registered foreigners and the 13th-largest among all resident foreigners (53,914 people), up from 15th and 16th in 2014.
- ▶ Between 2019 and 2024 the population grew by 84 percent (index 184, with 2019 = 100), the fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 60.6 percent of Myanmar residents held an E-9 non-professional employment visa, and women made up 15.2 percent of the group, compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

Most Myanmar residents came as workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS). Korea and Myanmar signed an EPS memorandum of understanding in November 2007, and Myanmar workers were expected to be able to work legally in Korea from May 2008 (Korea.kr, 2007). After the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the Ministry of Justice introduced a humanitarian measure that allowed Myanmar nationals already in Korea to switch to a temporary status (Edaily, 2021). The number of Myanmar residents fell from 29,294 in 2019 to 26,096 in 2021 and then rose each year to 53,914 in 2024.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Myanmar residents are younger, far more likely to be men, and far more likely to hold an employment visa. In 2024, 90.4 percent were aged 20 to 39 (49.7 percent of all resident foreigners), and 68.4 percent held an employment visa (19.2 percent of all resident foreigners). Almost all (96.5 percent) were registered foreigners, since few hold the short-term or overseas Korean statuses that do not require registration.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of the year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their place of residence. This is the headline count used in this Spotlight.

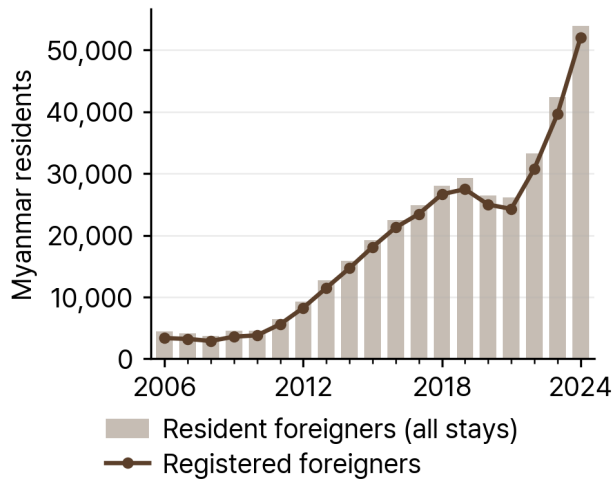
Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans on F-4 visas report their residence instead of registering and are therefore not in this count. District-level figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

Myanmar residents. Resident foreigners whose nationality is recorded as Myanmar by the Ministry of Justice. Naturalized Korean citizens of Myanmar origin are not included.

1 Size of the Population over Time

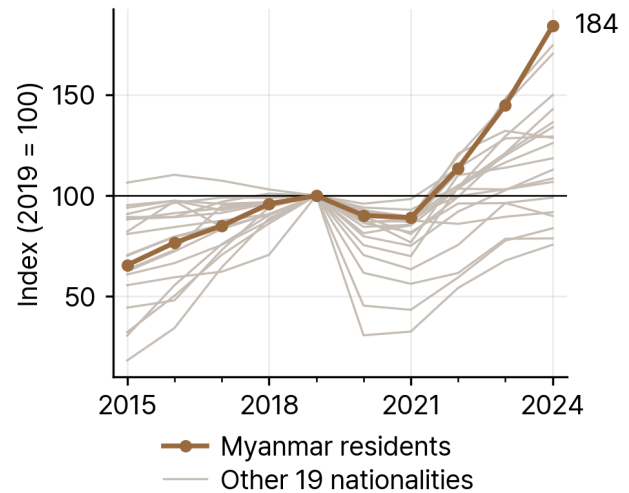
The Myanmar population in Korea was small until the late 2000s. It stood at 4,484 resident foreigners in 2006 and 4,565 in 2010, then rose to 15,921 in 2014 and 29,294 in 2019 (see Figure 1). The count fell to 26,412 in 2020 and 26,096 in 2021, then grew to 33,275 in 2022, 42,438 in 2023, and 53,914 in 2024, the highest level recorded. Registered foreigners followed the same path, from 3,362 in 2006 to 52,034 in 2024.

FIGURE 1

Myanmar Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 2

Growth of the Myanmar Population Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (2019 = 100)

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1

Myanmar Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	4,484	3,362	19	20	0.5	0.5
2014	15,921	14,694	15	16	1.3	0.9
2019	29,294	27,483	10	16	2.2	1.2
2024	53,914	52,034	8	13	3.5	2.0

Note: Registered foreigners are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities. Resident foreigners also include short-term visitors and overseas Koreans (F-4) who report their residence. Ranks and shares are computed separately for each base.

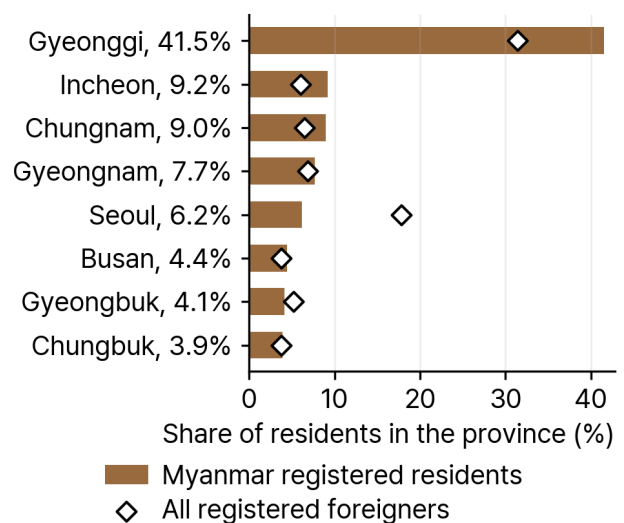
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Among the 20 largest nationalities, the Myanmar population grew fastest between 2019 and 2024 (see Figure 2). With 2019 set to 100, its index was 184 in 2024. Among registered foreigners, Myanmar rose from 19th place in 2006 and 15th in 2014 to 10th in 2019 and 8th in 2024. Among all resident foreigners, it ranked 20th in 2006, 16th in 2014 and 2019, and 13th in 2024 (see Table 1).

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, half of registered Myanmar foreigners (50.8 percent, or 26,419 people) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi-do, and another 6.2 percent (3,230) lived in Seoul (see Figure 3). The Seoul capital area as a whole was home to 57.0 percent of the group, close to the 55.2 percent for all resident foreigners. Yeongnam had 20.0 percent (10,384), Chungcheong 14.1 percent (7,350), Honam 7.2 percent (3,722), and Gangwon and Jeju 1.8 percent (929).

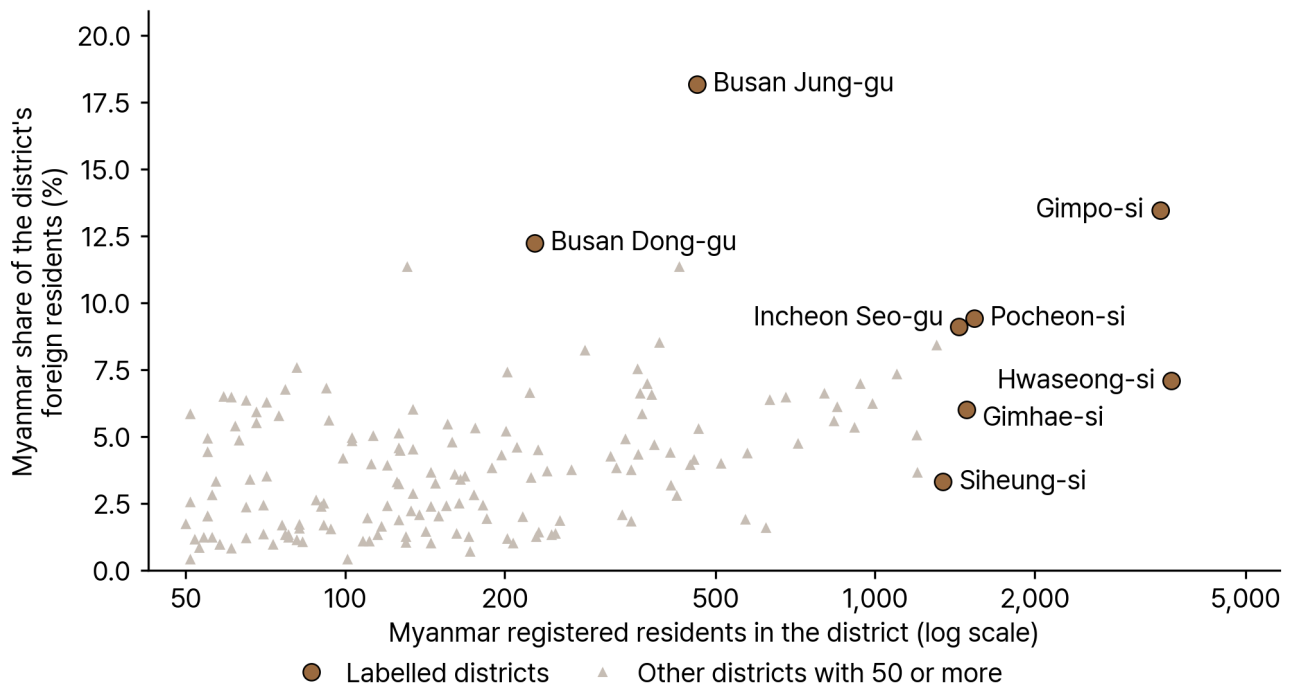
FIGURE 3

Registered Myanmar Foreigners by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 4

Registered Myanmar Foreigners by District, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Registered Myanmar Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Myanmar residents	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	3,623	7.1
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	3,449	13.5
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,537	9.4
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,486	6.0
Incheon Seo-gu	Incheon	1,440	9.1
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,342	3.3
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,305	8.4
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,199	3.7
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	1,196	5.1
Gwangju-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,099	7.4

Note: Counts are registered foreigners (52,034 Myanmar nationals in the 2024 district-level data). The ten districts together accounted for 34.0 percent of the group.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Myanmar residents are spread across many industrial cities. In 2024, 111 districts had at least 100 registered Myanmar foreigners, and the ten largest districts together accounted for 34.0 percent of the group (see Figure 4 and Table 2). Hwaseong-si (3,623) and Gimpo-si (3,449) in Gyeonggi-do were the largest. In Gimpo-si, Myanmar nationals made up 13.5 percent of all registered foreigners. The highest district share was in Busan Jung-gu, where 461 Myanmar residents were

18.2 percent of the district's registered foreigners. Rural counties (gun) accounted for 11.7 percent of the group, compared with 10.6 percent of all resident foreigners.

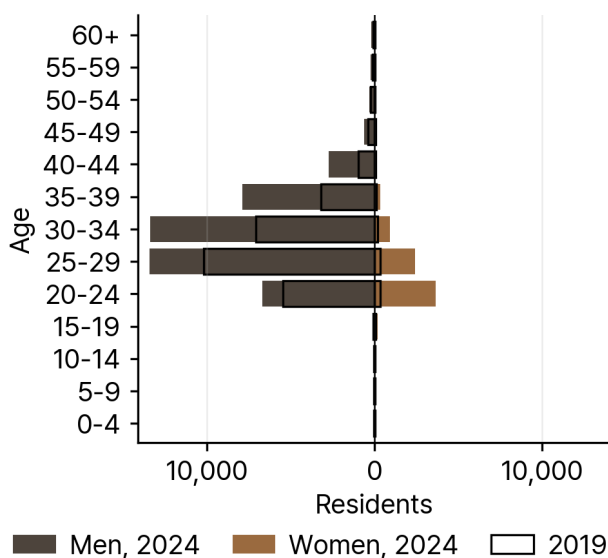
The group became less residentially concentrated over the decade. The index of dissimilarity (D) between Myanmar residents and all other registered foreigners across districts fell from 0.532 in 2014 to 0.436 in 2024. No district met the KIRD

definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2, with the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

3 Age and Sex

Myanmar residents are concentrated in working ages. In 2024, 48,724 of 53,914 (90.4 percent) were aged 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 5). The largest five-year age group was 25 to 29, and the median fell in the 30 to 34 group. Children aged 0 to 14 were 0.8 percent of the group (406 people), and those aged 60 and older were 0.5 percent, compared with 5.7 percent and 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 5
Myanmar Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024



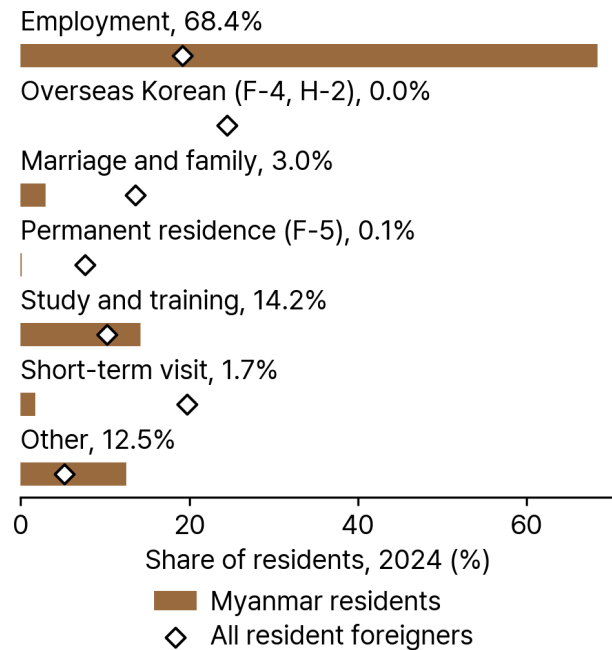
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Women were a small minority. Their number rose from 1,427 in 2019 (4.9 percent) to 8,190 in 2024 (15.2 percent), still far below the 45.1 percent share of women among all resident foreigners. The number of children under 5 rose from 60 in 2019 to 161 in 2024.

4 Visa Status

Employment visas account for most Myanmar residents. In 2024, 68.4 percent held an employment visa, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 6). Study and training visas covered 14.2 percent (10.2 percent of all resident foreigners), and the other category, which includes G-1, covered 12.5 percent (5.2 percent). Marriage and family visas (3.0 percent), permanent residence (0.1 percent), and short-term visits (1.7 percent) were all far less common than among all resident foreigners (13.6, 7.7, and 19.7 percent). No Myanmar residents held overseas Korean visas, which covered 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 6
Visa Groups of Myanmar Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa is the main status. E-9 holders rose from 13,653 in 2014 to 25,311 in 2019 and 32,667 in 2024, when they were 60.6 percent of the group and 9.7 percent of all E-9 holders in Korea; Myanmar ranked fifth among nationalities for E-9 in 2024 (see Figure 7 and Table 3). Other statuses grew faster from a small base between 2019 and 2024. G-1 holders went from 90 to 6,560, D-4 general trainees from 348 to 4,287, D-2 students from 684 to 3,243, and E-7 specially designated workers from 38 to 2,899. The G-1 count includes the humanitarian status (G-1-99) granted to Myanmar workers from March 2021 (OhmyNews, 2023). In 2024, Myanmar nationals were 11.6 percent of all G-1 holders in Korea.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

The EPS is the main entry route. Myanmar was one of five countries (with Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, and Timor-Leste) added in February 2007 to the ten existing EPS sending countries, and it was the fourth of the five to sign a memorandum of understanding, on 28 November 2007 (Korea.kr, 2007). Recruitment continued after the coup. The Korean embassy in Myanmar reported that 1,040 Myanmar workers were sent to Korea through the EPS in January and February 2023 (Korean Embassy in Myanmar, 2023).

On 12 March 2021, the Ministry of Justice announced a humanitarian special measure, effective 15 March 2021, for about 25,000 Myanmar nationals in Korea. It covered EPS workers whose permitted period in Korea had expired, students who had finished their studies or training, and short-

term visitors limited to 90 days, and it suspended forced departure of Myanmar nationals whose status had expired, citing the unstable situation in Myanmar (Edaily, 2021).

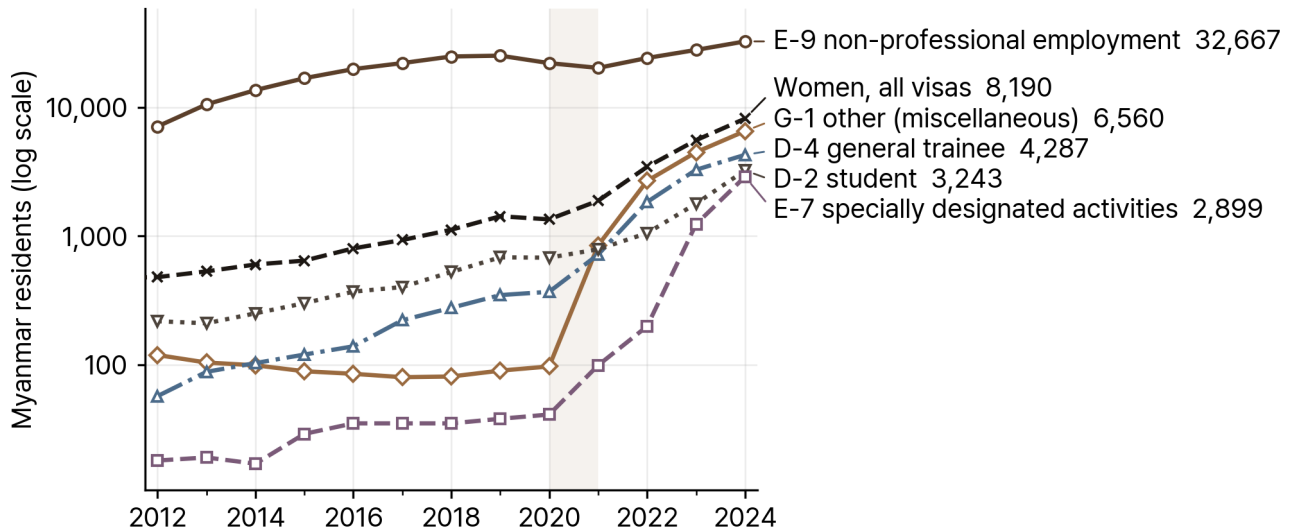
Holders of the resulting G-1-99 status faced a further obstacle. In July 2023, OhmyNews reported that the Myanmar embassy in Seoul was not renewing the expired passports of Myanmar workers with G-1-99 visas, which left many unable to complete required procedures (OhmyNews, 2023).

6 Naturalization

Few Myanmar nationals have become Korean citizens. A total of 84 were naturalized from 2014 to 2024, the period covered by the yearbook's by-country naturalization table (see Figure 8). Annual numbers were in single digits in most years, with the highest counts in 2020 (18) and 2024 (14).

FIGURE 7

Myanmar Residents in South Korea by Main Visa, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 3

Main Visas Held by Myanmar Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Myanmar residents, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
E-9	Non-professional Employment	25,311	32,667	60.6	9.7
G-1	Other (Miscellaneous)	90	6,560	12.2	11.6
D-4	General Trainee	348	4,287	8.0	4.9
D-2	Student	684	3,243	6.0	1.8
E-7	Specially Designated Activities	38	2,899	5.4	4.6
E-10	Crew Employment	769	1,000	1.9	4.6
C-3	Short-term Visit	783	757	1.4	0.5

Note: Shares of Myanmar residents use the 2024 total of 53,914 resident foreigners.

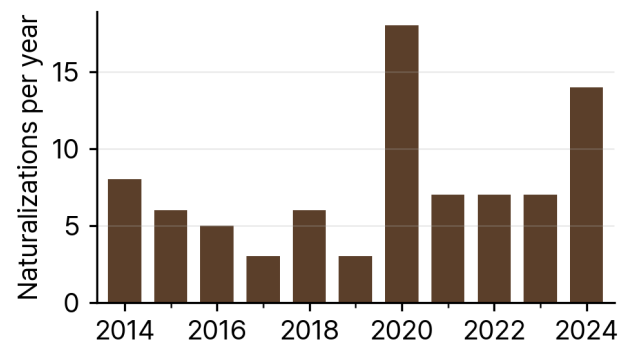
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Myanmar is not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of

Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately, so no count of unauthorized Myanmar residents is published. The yearbook counted 397,522 unauthorized foreign residents of all nationalities in 2024.

FIGURE 8

Naturalizations of Myanmar Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

8 Health and Well-being

Published reports on this group mostly concern workplace injury and death. On 1 July 2026, Aung Min Oo, a 37-year-old subcontracted worker from Myanmar, died after being caught in a conveyor belt at a high-speed rail construction site in Asan, South Chungcheong Province. Women's News reported that the site lacked an emergency shutoff pull cord and a machine guard and did not follow the two-person work rule required for publicly ordered projects (Women's News, 2026).

A 2026 qualitative study of occupational burns among migrant workers in Korea included a Myanmar foundry worker with flame burns over 70 to 75 percent of his body surface. He reported that his treatment visa was extended for only two to three months at a time although he needed about a year of treatment (Lee et al., 2026).

A labor journalism series reported that from May 2024, deaths among Myanmar nationals in Korea rose from one or two a month to one or two a week, with causes including industrial and traffic accidents, cerebral hemorrhage, heart disease, and suicide. The author linked the rise to psychological distress associated with the civil war in Myanmar. The article reports no official death count (Eroun Net, 2024).

9 Migration from Myanmar to South Korea

In 2022, The Korea Times reported that nearly 27,000 Myanmar nationals lived in South Korea and that most had come through the EPS (Korea Times 2022). The KIRD count for the end of 2022 was 33,275 resident foreigners. To our knowledge, no published source reports what share of Myanmar's emigrants live in Korea or where Korea ranks among their destination countries.

Myanmar's government employment agencies sent 10,611 workers to Korea through the EPS in 2023, to jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, livestock, and construction, and Myanmar's recruitment quota for Korea in 2024 was about

11,000 workers (Global New Light of Myanmar 2024a).

Between January and August 2024, 5,850 workers left for Korea, mainly for construction, agriculture, and livestock jobs. The same report stated that 2024 was the first year in which Myanmar would send women to Korea for service-sector work (Global New Light of Myanmar 2024b). We know of no published total of Myanmar's overseas deployments for these years, so Korea's share of all deployments cannot be computed.

Applicants for EPS places far outnumber the places. For the 16th EPS-TOPIK round in 2024, over 100,000 people in Myanmar submitted applications and nearly 90,000 paid the registration fee (Eleven Myanmar 2024a), about nine applications for each of the roughly 11,000 places that year ($100,000 / 11,000 = 9.1$). In the manufacturing-sector test cycle conducted from 3 June to 15 October 2024, 5,540 of 48,000 candidates passed, and the cutoff score was a record 97.5 out of 100 (Eleven Myanmar 2024b). For the second manufacturing batch, scheduled from February to May 2025, 37,957 applicants were expected to take the exam (Eleven Myanmar 2025).

Remittances to Myanmar from all countries fell 13 percent to US\$1.1 billion in 2023, one of the largest declines among East Asia and Pacific recipients that year (World Bank 2024). Personal remittances received were equal to about 1.55 percent of Myanmar's GDP in 2024, according to World Bank data (Trading Economics 2024). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Myanmar at about US\$18.5 million that year (World Bank 2021).

As far as we know, no published source identifies the states, regions, or ethnic groups that send the most workers to Korea. In Korea, Myanmar Street in Bupyeong-gu, Incheon, has separate Buddhist temples for Bamar, Karen, Rakhine, and Mon worshippers, so several ethnic groups are present (Hyunbul News 2025).

On 2 May 2024, Myanmar's military government suspended new overseas work permits for men of conscription age in order to enforce military conscription (Radio Free Asia 2024a).

In March 2024, Radio Free Asia reported that a junta-linked Seasonal Worker Training and Care Center had registered and trained over 10,600 people and aimed to recruit about 60,000 workers in 2024 for seasonal work in Korea. The center charged 380,000 kyat (about US\$180) for training and registration, and one worker was asked for a down payment of 5 million kyat (about US\$2,400) to secure a job. The Korean embassy in Myanmar stated that the Korean government had not announced any guidelines or jobs for seasonal workers, and the director of a Seoul-based civic group warned that a seasonal worker agreement would signal that Korea recognized the junta as a legitimate government (Radio Free Asia 2024b).

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Myanmar and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Myanmar nationals living in South Korea, 2022	About 27,000	Korea Times 2022
EPS workers sent to South Korea, 2023	10,611	Global New Light of Myanmar 2024a
EPS recruitment quota for South Korea, 2024	About 11,000	Global New Light of Myanmar 2024a
EPS workers sent to South Korea, January to August 2024	5,850	Global New Light of Myanmar 2024b
Applications for the 16th EPS-TOPIK round, 2024	Over 100,000	Eleven Myanmar 2024a
Candidates who passed the manufacturing-sector EPS-TOPIK, June to October 2024	5,540 of 48,000	Eleven Myanmar 2024b
Applicants expected for the second manufacturing batch, February to May 2025	37,957	Eleven Myanmar 2025
Remittances received from all countries, 2023	US\$1.1 billion	World Bank 2024
Personal remittances received, share of GDP, 2024	1.55%	Trading Economics 2024

Note: Remittance figures cover all sending countries. No Korea-specific remittance estimate was found.

Source: Sources listed in the table.

We are aware of two studies of Myanmar migrants in Korea, and neither examines migration motives, brokers and debt, marriage, or return. In a phenomenological study of six Myanmar men on the EPS who were active in the Myanmar Association in Korea, Park (2010) found that participation in the association turned them into social and political activists who took on responsibility, maintained a strong political commitment to Myanmar, and gained confidence in Korean society (Park 2010). Kim and Park (2020) found that Myanmar migrant workers arriving from the 1990s built on Vipassana temples that Korean Buddhists had founded after training in Myanmar. The Myanmar Community organization, formed in 1996, was associated with more than 14 Burmese temples in Korea by 2016, and the article reported 18,123 registered Myanmar residents in Korea in 2015 (Kim and Park 2020).

10 Community Organizations

Gwangjang-ro 4-gil in Bupyeong-gu, Incheon, is known as Myanmar Street. Its four Buddhist temples are organized along ethnic lines, with the Myanmar Dharma Propagation Temple

serving the Bamar majority and separate Karen, Rakhine, and Mon temples. A 2025 symposium presentation described these temples as places that connect migration, work, and Buddhist practice, with the minority temples also preserving cultural identity and supporting democracy activities in Myanmar (Hyunbul News, 2025).

Danbi News profiled a Myanmar worker whose first jobs were in bed and sofa factories in Gwangju-si, Gyeonggi-do, where workers lived in container dormitories (Danbi News, 2025). Gwangju-si had 1,099 registered Myanmar foreigners in 2024.

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 2 name this community in their name or target group. They are Myanmar Network (Miyanma Network), a community group organized by Myanmar residents in Siheung-si, Gyeonggi-do, and the Myanmar Buddhist Dharma Propagation Temple (Miyanma Bulgyo Jeonbeop Sawon), a religious site in Bupyeong-gu, Incheon. Most general-purpose organizations, such as migrant worker centers and multicultural family support centers, also serve Myanmar residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Myanmar Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Kazakh Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

In 2024, 44,549 Kazakh nationals were resident in South Korea on 31 December, 1.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Kazakhstan was the 17th-largest nationality among registered foreigners, the long-term residents (20,482 people, 1.4 percent), and the 14th-largest among all resident foreigners, a count that also includes short-term visitors and F-4 holders. The population was small until the mid-2010s: 2,705 in 2006, 1,878 in 2010, and 3,865 in 2014, when Kazakhstan ranked 25th among registered foreigners and 30th among all resident foreigners. By 2019 the count had risen to 34,638, roughly nine times the 2014 figure. After falling to 29,278 in 2020, it rose again to a peak of 45,764 in 2023.

Highlights

- ▶ In 2024, Kazakhstan was the 17th-largest nationality among registered foreigners in South Korea (20,482 people) and the 14th-largest among all resident foreigners (44,549 people), up from 25th and 30th place in 2014.
- ▶ In 2024, 42.9 percent of Kazakh residents held an overseas Korean status (F-4 or H-2), compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners, and F-4 holders rose from 5,215 in 2019 to 14,501 in 2024.
- ▶ The Ministry of Justice counted 11,306 unauthorized Kazakh residents in 2024, equal to 25.4 percent of Kazakh resident foreigners and the seventh-largest count of any nationality.

Many Kazakh nationals in Korea are Koryo-saram, ethnic Koreans whose families were deported from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia in 1937; about 100,000 ethnic Koreans live in Kazakhstan today (Korean Embassy in Kazakhstan, 2026). They have entered Korea mainly through the overseas Korean visas, H-2 (visiting employment) and F-4 (overseas Korean) (Ministry of Government Legislation, 2026). In February 2026

the Ministry of Justice merged these two statuses into F-4 (Ministry of Justice, 2026), and in August 2026 Kazakhstan became the 18th sending country under the Employment Permit System (E-9), with the first workers expected from 2028 (Herald Corp, 2026).

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Kazakh residents were more likely to be children (12.8 percent aged 0–14, against 5.7 percent) and to hold overseas Korean or family statuses. They were much less likely to hold work visas (0.7 percent in the employment group, against 19.2 percent) or permanent residence (1.3 percent, against 7.7 percent). This Spotlight describes the size, location, age and sex, visa status, naturalization, and unauthorized residence of Kazakh nationals in South Korea, drawing on the KIRD dataset (KIRD, 2026) and published sources.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals residing in South Korea with a valid status on 31 December of each year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the headline count in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals residing in South Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 (overseas Korean) visa report their place of residence instead of registering, so they are not in registered counts. District-level figures in this Spotlight are for registered foreigners.

Kazakh residents and Koryo-saram. The Ministry of Justice counts people by nationality. Kazakh residents therefore include ethnic Kazakhs and other citizens of Kazakhstan, among them Koryo-saram (ethnic Koreans of the former Soviet Union) who hold Kazakh citizenship. Holders of the F-4 and H-2 visas are ethnic Koreans by the terms of those visas.

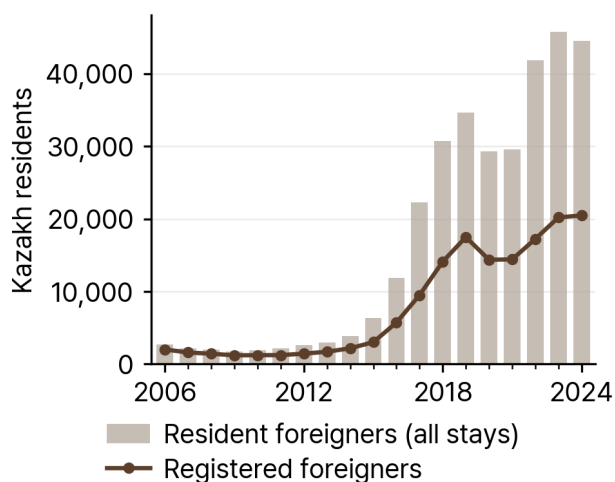
Unauthorized residents. Foreign nationals who remain in South Korea after their permitted period of residence has expired, as reported in table 6-4 of the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Kazakh resident foreigners remained below 4,000 between 2006 and 2014 (2,705 in 2006, 1,878 in 2010, and 3,865 in 2014). It grew to 34,638 by 2019. After a drop to 29,278 in 2020 and 29,616 in 2021, the population rose to 41,840 in 2022 and peaked at 45,764 in 2023, then declined slightly to 44,549 in 2024.

FIGURE 1

Kazakh Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

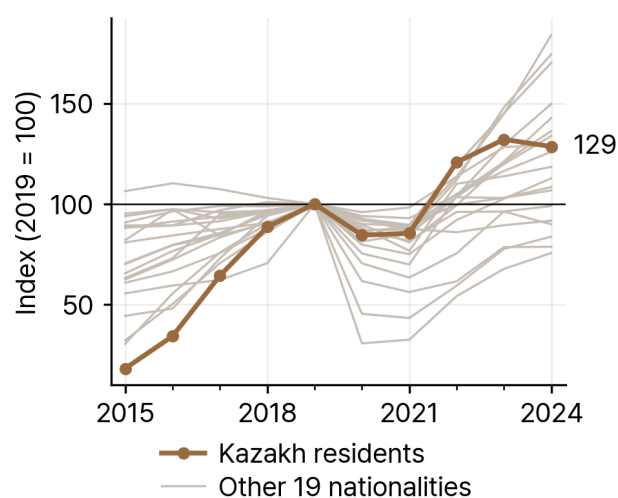


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners made up a falling share of the total. In 2006, 2,015 of 2,705 Kazakh residents (74 percent) were registered; by 2024 the figure was 20,482 of 44,549 (46.0 percent). Those outside the registered count are F-4 holders, who report residence instead of registering, and short-term visitors. Kazakhstan therefore ranked lower among registered foreigners than among all resident foreigners in 2024 (17th against 14th), while in 2014 it ranked higher on the registered basis (25th against 30th).

FIGURE 2

Growth of Kazakh Residents Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (Index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1

Kazakh Resident and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	2,705	2,015	24	22	0.3	0.3
2014	3,865	2,176	30	25	0.2	0.2
2019	34,638	17,499	14	16	1.4	1.4
2024	44,549	20,482	14	17	1.7	1.4

Note: Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 holders who report their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities. Ranks are among all nationalities on each basis.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

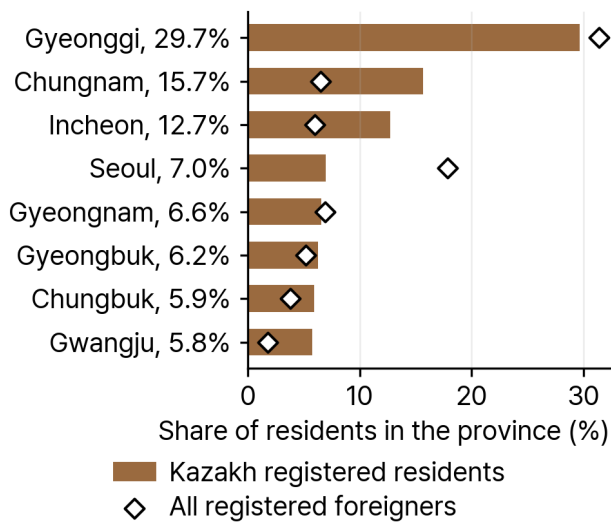
Measured against 2019, the Kazakh population stood at an index of 128.6 in 2024 (a 28.6 percent increase). This placed Kazakhstan ninth in growth among the 20 largest nationalities over 2019-24.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District-level data cover the 20,482 Kazakh registered foreigners in 2024. The Incheon and Gyeonggi area accounted for 42.4 percent of them and Seoul for 7.0 percent, so 49.4

percent lived in the capital region, compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents. The Chungcheong provinces accounted for 23.9 percent, Yeongnam 17.8 percent, Honam 7.9 percent, and Gangwon and Jeju 1.1 percent. Some 7.7 percent lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents.

FIGURE 3
Kazakh Registered Foreigners by Region of South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

The ten largest districts accounted for 53.3 percent of Kazakh registered foreigners in 2024, and 41 districts had at least 100. Incheon Yeonsu-gu had the most (2,126), followed by Asan-si

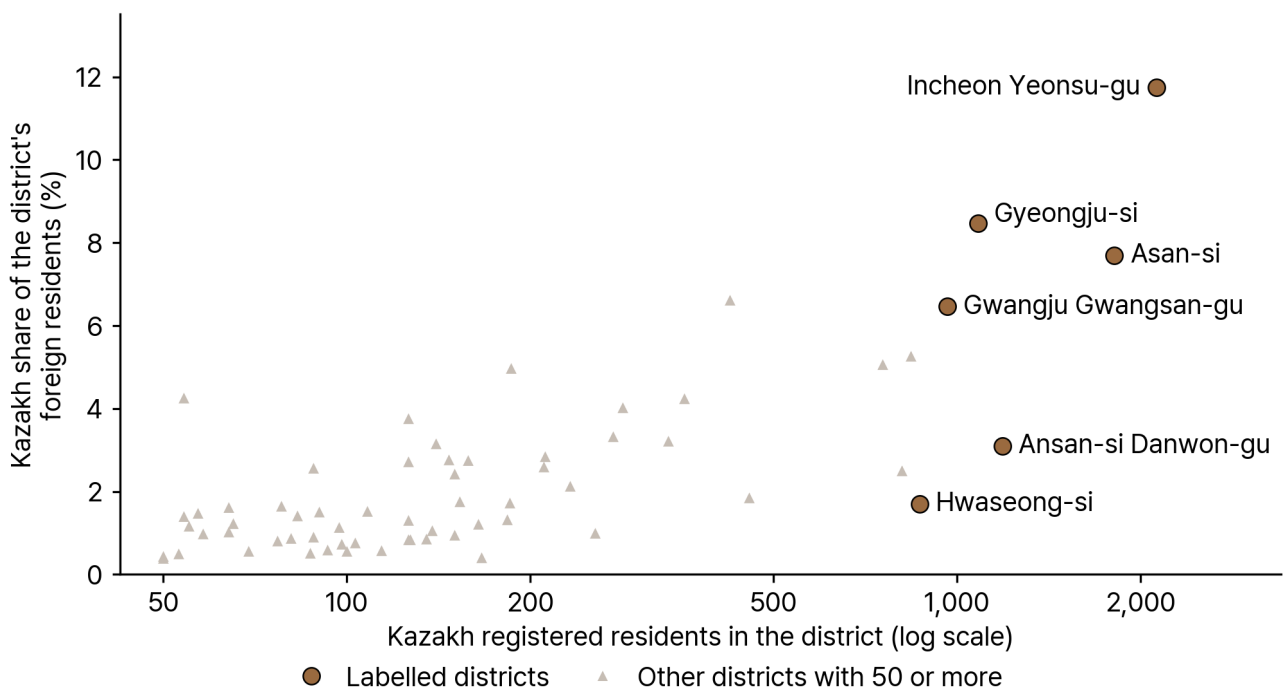
in South Chungcheong (1,813). The two districts of Ansan together had 2,028 (1,188 in Danwon-gu and 840 in Sangnok-gu). Kazakh nationals made up 11.7 percent of all registered foreigners in Yeonsu-gu, 8.5 percent in Gyeongju-si, and 7.7 percent in Asan-si.

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Kazakh registered foreigners and all other registered foreigners across districts rose from 0.507 in 2014 to 0.586 in 2024, so in 2024, 58.6 percent of Kazakh residents would have had to move to match the distribution of other foreigners. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents); the highest share was 11.7 percent, in Yeonsu-gu.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 45.3 percent of Kazakh residents in 2024 (20,185 of 44,549), up from 42.0 percent in 2019 and close to the 45.1 percent among all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group in 2024 was 25-29, and the median fell in the 30-34 group.

FIGURE 4
Districts with the Most Kazakh Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

Children were more common than among foreigners overall. In 2024, 5,703 Kazakh residents (12.8 percent) were aged 0-14, compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners; in 2019 the figure was 2,649 (7.6 percent). Children under 5 numbered

1,775 in 2024, up from 1,081 in 2019. Adults aged 20-39 made up 48.7 percent in 2024 (49.7 percent for all resident foreigners), and people aged 60 and older 4.8 percent (12.9 percent for all resident foreigners).

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Kazakh Registered Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Kazakh residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	2,126	11.7
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	1,813	7.7
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	1,188	3.1
Gyeongju-si	Gyeongsangbuk-do	1,085	8.5
Gwangju Gwangsan-gu	Gwangju	966	6.5
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	869	1.7
Ansan-si Sangnok-gu	Gyeonggi-do	840	5.3
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	813	2.5
Anseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	755	5.1
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	457	1.8

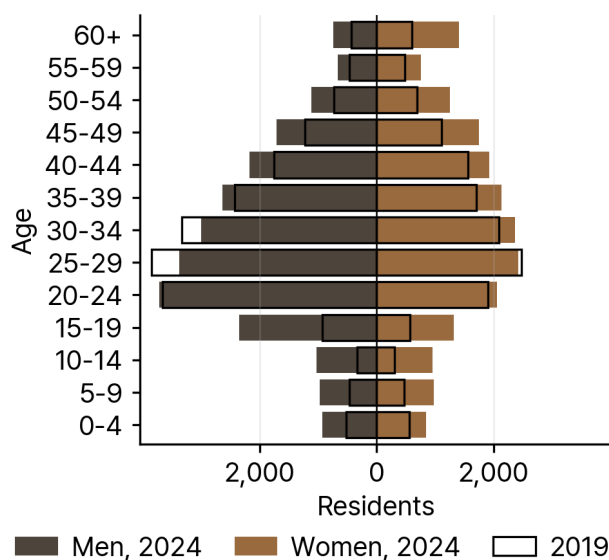
Note: Registered foreigners only; F-4 holders are not included.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

4 Visa Status

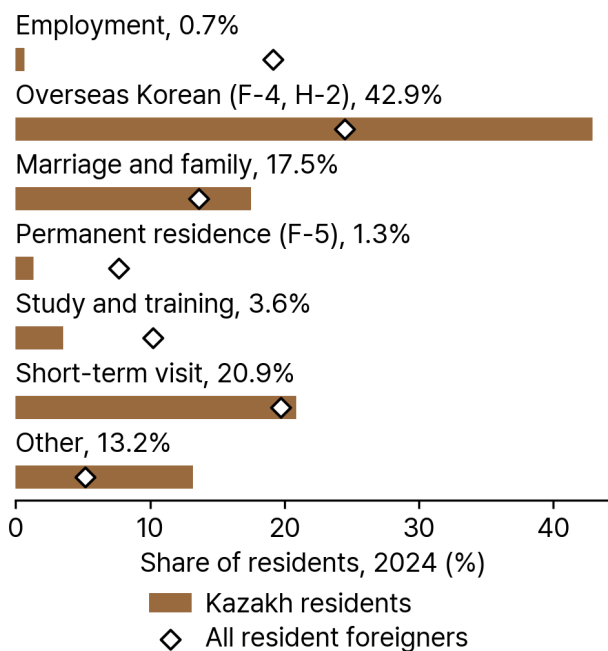
In 2024, 42.9 percent of Kazakh residents held one of the two overseas Korean statuses (F-4 or H-2), compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners. Another 20.9 percent were short-term visitors (19.7 percent overall), 17.5 percent held marriage or family statuses (13.6 percent overall), and 13.2 percent held other statuses (5.2 percent overall). Only 0.7 percent held employment visas, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners, and 1.3 percent held permanent residence (F-5), against 7.7 percent.

FIGURE 5

Kazakh Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 6

Kazakh Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Visa Group, 2024

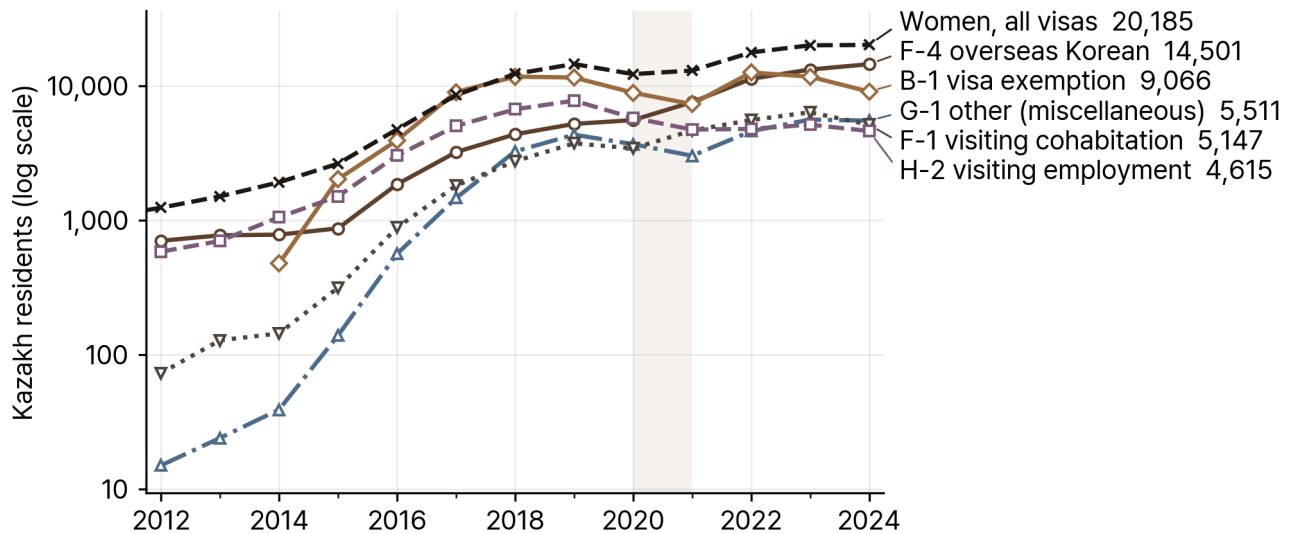
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

F-4 was the most common single status in 2024, held by 14,501 Kazakh nationals (32.6 percent), up from 5,215 in 2019 and 782 in 2014. Kazakhstan had the sixth-largest number of F-4 holders of any nationality in 2024. Between 2019 and 2024, H-2 holders fell from 7,762 to 4,615 and visa-exempt visitors (B-1) from 11,541 to 9,066. Dependent family (F-3) holders grew from 151 to 1,547, and visiting cohabitation (F-1)

holders from 3,739 to 5,147. The 5,511 Kazakh holders of the miscellaneous G-1 status in 2024 made up 9.7 percent of all G-1 holders in Korea.

FIGURE 7

Kazakh Residents in South Korea by Visa Type, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Ethnic Koreans from Kazakhstan have entered and worked in South Korea mainly through the H-2 visiting employment visa, the route for ethnic Koreans aged 18 and older from China and

the former Soviet (CIS) region (Ministry of Government Legislation, 2026). F-4 status is the other overseas Korean route.

TABLE 3

Most Common Visa Types among Kazakh Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Kazakh residents, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	5,215	14,501	32.6	2.6
B-1	Visa exemption	11,541	9,066	20.4	4.4
G-1	Other (miscellaneous)	4,334	5,511	12.4	9.7
F-1	Visiting cohabitation	3,739	5,147	11.6	5.2
H-2	Visiting employment	7,762	4,615	10.4	4.9
F-3	Dependent family	151	1,547	3.5	2.9
D-2	Student	807	1,178	2.6	0.7

Note: Total Kazakh resident foreigners in 2024: 44,549. The H-2 status was merged into F-4 in February 2026.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

On 12 February 2026, the Ministry of Justice merged the H-2 and F-4 statuses into a single F-4 status. New H-2 visas are no longer issued, and existing H-2 holders may change to F-4 before their permitted period ends. The ministry said the change ends disputes over unequal treatment by country of

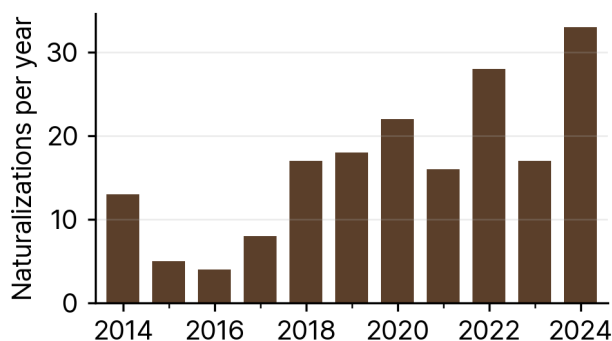
origin and covers about 860,000 overseas Koreans living in Korea (Ministry of Justice, 2026). The KIRD data end in 2024 and so predate this change.

On 14 August 2026, Korea's Foreign Workforce Policy Committee designated Kazakhstan as the 18th sending country under the Employment Permit System (E-9), the fourth in Central Asia after Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (Herald Corp, 2026). Kazakhstan qualified because a government agency deals exclusively with worker dispatch and no problems were found with its training facilities; the first workers are expected from 2028 (Korea Times, 2026). The two governments signed a labor-sending memorandum of understanding on 15 September 2026 (Newsis, 2026). In 2024, 0.7 percent of Kazakh residents held employment visas.

6 Naturalization

Between 2014 and 2024, 181 Kazakh nationals were naturalized as South Korean citizens; the yearbook's by-country naturalization table starts in 2011, but the row covering all naturalization routes for this nationality begins only in 2014. Annual numbers ranged from 4 in 2016 to 33 in 2024, the highest year in the period. Between 2011 and 2024, 12 people from Kazakhstan also had their Korean nationality restored, a route open to those who once held Korean citizenship; none did so in 2024. Against a resident population of 44,549 in 2024, these totals are small, and 1.3 percent of Kazakh residents held permanent residence that year.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Kazakh Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2011-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Kazakhstan is among the ten nationalities listed separately in table 6-4 of the Ministry of Justice yearbook. The yearbook counted 11,092 unauthorized Kazakh residents in 2019, 9,768 in 2021, 13,788 in 2023, and 11,306 in 2024. The 2024 figure equals 25.4 percent of Kazakh resident foreigners (11,306 of 44,549), ranks seventh among nationalities, and makes up 2.8 percent of all 397,522 unauthorized residents that year (11,306 of 397,522). In 2019 the ratio to the resident population was higher, at 32.0 percent (11,092 of 34,638).

Kazakh nationals can enter South Korea without a visa, and 9,066 were visa-exempt (B-1) visitors at the end of 2024. The yearbook does not break down unauthorized residents by the status on which they entered.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no published study reports health outcomes for Kazakh nationals separately. The closest evidence concerns Koryoin (Koryo-saram) in Gwangju, a group that includes people from Kazakhstan and several other former Soviet states. In a 2022-2024 population-based study, 165 Koryoin participants, 89.7 percent of them born in Central Asia or Russia, had higher odds of high predicted cardiovascular disease risk than age- and sex-matched native Koreans: adjusted odds ratios of 1.77 (95% CI 1.13-2.79) on the Framingham Risk Score and 1.89 (95% CI 1.10-3.23) on the Pooled Cohort Equations (Yang et al., 2025).

In Gwangju's Koryoin Village, a volunteer free clinic opened in March 2018 because many residents had difficulty obtaining care due to health insurance eligibility problems (Hankook Ilbo, 2018).

9 Migration from Kazakhstan to South Korea

Labor migrants from Kazakhstan have long gone mainly to Russia because of shared language and culture. A 2024 study reports that migration to the United States, Germany, and South Korea has grown in recent years (Chu 2024). We know of no published source that reports the share of all Kazakh emigrants who live in South Korea or Korea's rank among destinations. Within Korea, Kazakh nationals made up about 31 percent of Central Asian nationals in 2023, second to Uzbek nationals at about 60 percent (Chu 2024).

Kazakhstan has no record of Employment Permit System (EPS) deployments to Korea. In 2023, 5,309 Kazakh nationals in Korea held work visas; 5,146 of them held the H-2 visiting employment visa for ethnic Koreans and 30 held the E-9 EPS visa. The same year, 13,239 held F-4 overseas Korean status, about 17 times the 2013 number (Chu 2024). Kazakh officials cited in 2025 put the number of Kazakh nationals working in Korea at about 15,000, of whom about 11,000 lacked legal status (Times of Central Asia 2026).

No EPS Korean-language test (EPS-TOPIK) had been held in Kazakhstan by August 2026, so there are no figures on applicants or places. Before a first round, the two governments had to sign a memorandum of understanding and set up the test, which Kazakh officials said would take place at the National Testing Center in Almaty (Times of Central Asia 2026).

South Korea is a mid-ranked source of remittances to Kazakhstan. In the first three quarters of 2022, Korea ranked third among sending countries with US\$35.6 million (10.1 percent of the total), behind Russia and the United States. In the same period of 2023 it ranked fourth with US\$27.3 million (11.6 percent), behind Russia, the United States, and Germany, out of total inflows of US\$236.2 million (Chu 2024, using IOM data). Remittances are a small part of Kazakhstan's economy. Personal remittances received equaled 0.083 percent of GDP

in 2024, down from 0.116 percent in 2023 and 0.213 percent in 2022 (World Bank 2024), against a world average of 4.74 percent across 91 countries (TheGlobalEconomy.com 2026).

About 100,000 ethnic Koreans live in Kazakhstan. In August 1937 the Soviet government decided to move Koreans from the Far East to Central Asia, and the first trains of deported Koreans arrived in Kazakhstan that September (Korean Embassy in Kazakhstan 2026). The first Koryo-saram settlement in Kazakhstan was at Ushtobe, in the Almaty region (Korea.net, 2019). As far as we know, no published source reports the regions of Kazakhstan that Korea-bound migrants come from.

A visa waiver agreement signed by South Korea and Kazakhstan in November 2014 opened the way for direct migration, according to the 2024 study. Kazakh nationals filed 2,094 refugee applications in Korea in 2023, 11.1 percent of the 18,837 total and second after Russian nationals, and in May 2023 Korean authorities arrested two Kazakh brokers and one Tajik broker for arranging fraudulent refugee applications (Chu 2024). In 2024 Kazakhstan was the only Central Asian country still in process for an EPS agreement; Uzbekistan had joined in 2006, Kyrgyzstan in 2007, and Tajikistan in 2024, while Turkmenistan restricts overseas movement (Chu 2024). Kazakhstan had sought EPS admission since 2023, and the large number of undocumented Kazakh workers in Korea was the main obstacle. The government in Astana prepared a roadmap to reduce undocumented workers and to prevent workers recruited under a future legal scheme from overstaying (Times of Central Asia 2026).

Research on Kazakh migrants in Korea is limited and mostly treats Koryo-saram from several former Soviet states together. An and Frigerio (2018) find that ethnic Korean migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States, although favored by ethnicity-based visa policy, often take jobs outside the sectors their visas permit because of limited Korean and higher wages in the informal market, and face greater vulnerability at work as a result. Song (2019) describes a hierarchy among co-ethnics in which Korean-Chinese and Koryo-saram return migrants from Uzbekistan experience discrimination and alienation from South Koreans, and Koryo-saram, who lost their Korean language ability, rank at the bottom. Lee (2023), studying Koryo-saram from Uzbekistan, links their migration to Korea with the compatriot visiting employment system opened in 2007 and to ties to an ancestral homeland, within a community divided into subgroups linked by transnational networks. We are not aware of any study that examines brokers, debt, marriage, or return among Kazakh nationals specifically.

10 Community Organizations

None of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census names Kazakhstan or Kazakh nationals in its name or target group. Most general-purpose organizations, such as multicultural family support centers and foreign worker support centers, also serve Kazakh residents.

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Kazakhstan and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Share of Central Asian nationals in Korea, 2023	About 31% (second after Uzbekistan)	Chu (2024)
Kazakh nationals on work visas in Korea, 2023	5,309 (5,146 H-2; 30 E-9)	Chu (2024)
Kazakh F-4 holders in Korea, 2023	13,239	Chu (2024)
Kazakh nationals working in Korea, 2025 (officials' estimate)	About 15,000, of whom about 11,000 without legal status	Times of Central Asia (2026)
EPS-TOPIK applicants	No test held by August 2026	Times of Central Asia (2026)
Remittances from Korea, January–September 2022	US\$35.6 million (10.1%, 3rd)	Chu (2024)
Remittances from Korea, January–September 2023	US\$27.3 million (11.6%, 4th)	Chu (2024)
Personal remittances received, 2024	0.083% of GDP	World Bank (2024)
Refugee applications by Kazakh nationals in Korea, 2023	2,094 (11.1% of total, 2nd)	Chu (2024)

Note: Remittance shares are of all remittances received by Kazakhstan in the period; ranks are among sending countries.

Source: Chu (2024), using Korea Immigration Service yearbooks and IOM data; Times of Central Asia (2026); World Bank World Development Indicators.

Korea has two large Koryo-saram neighborhoods. In September 2022, about 18,000 Koryo-saram lived in Ansan, 6,000 to 7,000 of them in Ttaetgol Village (Namdo Ilbo, 2022).

In 2024, about 100 shops in Gwangju's Koryoin Village provided a living for about 500 Koryo-saram (Namdo Ilbo, 2024). These counts include people from several former Soviet

countries and are not broken down by nationality.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Korean-Russian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 35,984 Korean-Russians (ethnic Koreans of Russian nationality) lived in South Korea as resident foreigners. They were the 34th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (2,383 people, 0.2 percent of the total) and the 15th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.4 percent of the total), up from 39th and 26th in 2014. The two ranks differ because most Korean-Russians hold the F-4 overseas Korean visa and report their residence instead of registering. The population numbered 799 in 2006, 5,452 in 2014, and 27,827 in 2019, and 2024 was its highest recorded year.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, Korean-Russians were the 34th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (2,383 people, 0.2 percent) and the 15th-largest among all resident foreigners (35,984 people, 1.4 percent), up from 39th and 26th in 2014.
- ▶ The group grew from 799 in 2006 to 27,827 in 2019 and 35,984 in 2024, an index of 129.3 (2019 = 100) that ranked eighth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 93.2 percent of Korean-Russian residents (33,555 people) held the F-4 overseas Korean visa, and only 6.6 percent (2,383) were registered foreigners.

Korean-Russians are part of the Koryo-saram, the ethnic Korean population of the former Soviet Union. Russia is not a sending country under Korea's Employment Permit System (E-9), so Korean-Russians do not enter through the general low-skilled labor route (HRD Korea, 2026). They arrive through overseas Korean visas instead: residence in Korea by CIS-origin Koryo-saram increased considerably after the 2007 launch of the H-2 Visit-Employment program (Overseas Koreans Foundation, 2015). In 2019 the Ministry of Justice proposed extending overseas Korean status to the fourth generation of descendants so that young Koryo-saram would not be separated from parents living in Korea (Ministry of

Justice, 2019), and on February 12, 2026 it merged the H-2 and F-4 statuses into a single F-4 status (Ministry of Justice, 2026).

The group differs from resident foreigners overall in legal status and age. In 2024, 93.3 percent held overseas Korean statuses (F-4 or H-2), compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners, and almost none held employment or study visas. Because F-4 holders report residence instead of registering, only 6.6 percent were registered foreigners. Children aged 0 to 14 made up 10.2 percent of Korean-Russian residents in 2024, against 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

This Spotlight reports on the size and geographic distribution of the Korean-Russian population in South Korea, its age, sex, and visa status, and the migration channels, naturalization, health, migration from the origin countries, and community organizations of its members.

BOX 1 Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals residing in South Korea on a valid status on December 31 of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the Ministry of Justice's broadest count and the main figure used in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals residing in Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering and are not counted as registered foreigners. District-level figures in this Spotlight count registered foreigners only, which for Korean-Russians covers 2,383 of 35,984 residents in 2024.

Korean-Russians (한국계 러시아인). Ethnic Koreans who hold Russian nationality. The Ministry of Justice counts them separately from other Russian nationals, in the same way it counts Korean-Chinese separately from other Chinese nationals. Korean-language sources call ethnic Koreans of the former Soviet Union Koryo-saram (고려인); Koryo-saram in Korea also include nationals of other CIS countries, who are not counted in this profile.

Overseas Korean visas (F-4, H-2). F-4 (Overseas Korean) is a residence status for foreign nationals of Korean descent. H-2 (Visit-Employment) was a separate status for overseas Koreans introduced in 2007; the two were merged into F-4 on February 12, 2026.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Korean-Russian resident foreigners rose from 799 in 2006 to 2,973 in 2010 and 5,452 in 2014. Between 2014 and 2019 it grew about fivefold, to 27,827 (27,827 / 5,452 = 5.1).

After a dip to 26,708 in 2020, the population grew each year, to 27,354 in 2021, 31,621 in 2022, 35,709 in 2023, and 35,984 in 2024. The 2024 figure was 8,157 people above the 2019

level, an index of 129.3 (2019 = 100), which placed Korean-Russians eighth of the 20 largest nationalities by change over 2019-24.

Registered foreigners are a small and shrinking share of the total. In 2006, 374 of 799 Korean-Russian residents (46.8 percent) were registered; in 2014 the figure was 745 of 5,452 (13.7 percent), and in 2019 it was 1,360 of 27,827 (4.9 percent). In 2024, 2,383 were registered, 6.6 percent of the total.

The group's rank depends on which count is used. Among all resident foreigners, Korean-Russians ranked 36th in 2006, 26th in 2014, 17th in 2019, and 15th in 2024, and their share of the total rose from 0.1 percent in 2006 to 1.4 percent in 2024. Among registered foreigners they ranked 35th in 2006, 39th in 2014, 36th in 2019, and 34th in 2024, and their share remained between 0.1 and 0.2 percent.

TABLE 1
Korean-Russian Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Registered as % of resident	Rank among resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	799	374	46.8	36	35	0.1	0.1
2014	5,452	745	13.7	26	39	0.3	0.1
2019	27,827	1,360	4.9	17	36	1.1	0.1
2024	35,984	2,383	6.6	15	34	1.4	0.2

Note: Registered as % of resident is computed as registered foreigners divided by resident foreigners. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 holders who report residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents registered with immigration authorities. Ranks are among all nationalities on each count.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

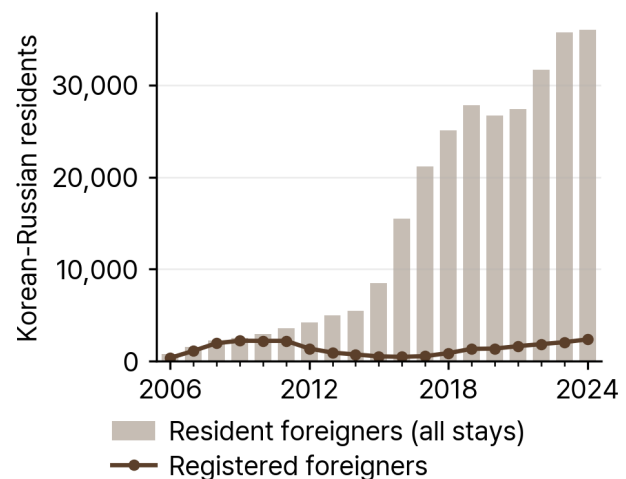
2 Distribution by Province and District

District-level data cover registered foreigners only, so the figures in this section describe 2,383 Korean-Russians in 2024, 6.6 percent of the group. The F-4 holders who make up most of the population are not included.

Of these 2,383 registered residents in 2024, 1,065 (44.7 percent) lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi, 564 (23.7 percent) in the Yeongnam region, and 559 (23.5 percent) in Chungcheong. Only 87 (3.7 percent) lived in Seoul, 87 (3.7 percent) in Honam, and 21 (0.9 percent) in Gangwon and Jeju. Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi together accounted for 48.3 percent of registered Korean-Russians, compared with 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners.

Some 7.9 percent of registered Korean-Russians lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners. The rural share was highest in Gangwon and Jeju (23.8 percent) and Chungcheong (17.5 percent).

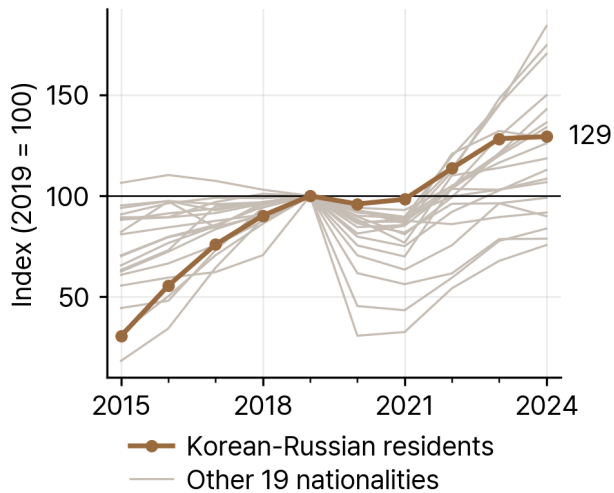
FIGURE 1
Korean-Russian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 2

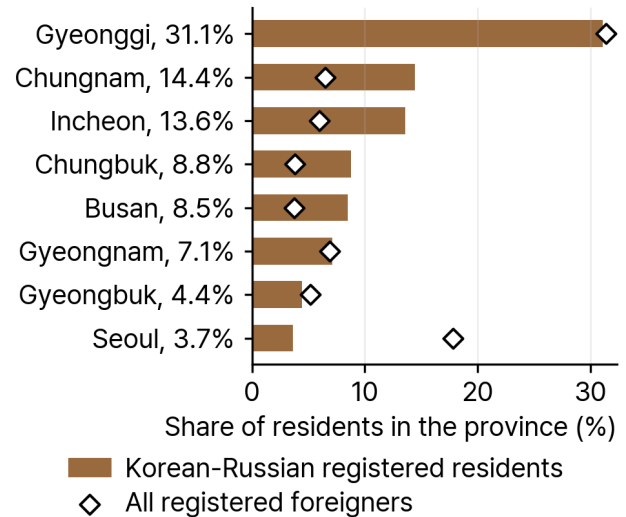
Change in Korean-Russian Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2019-2024.

FIGURE 3

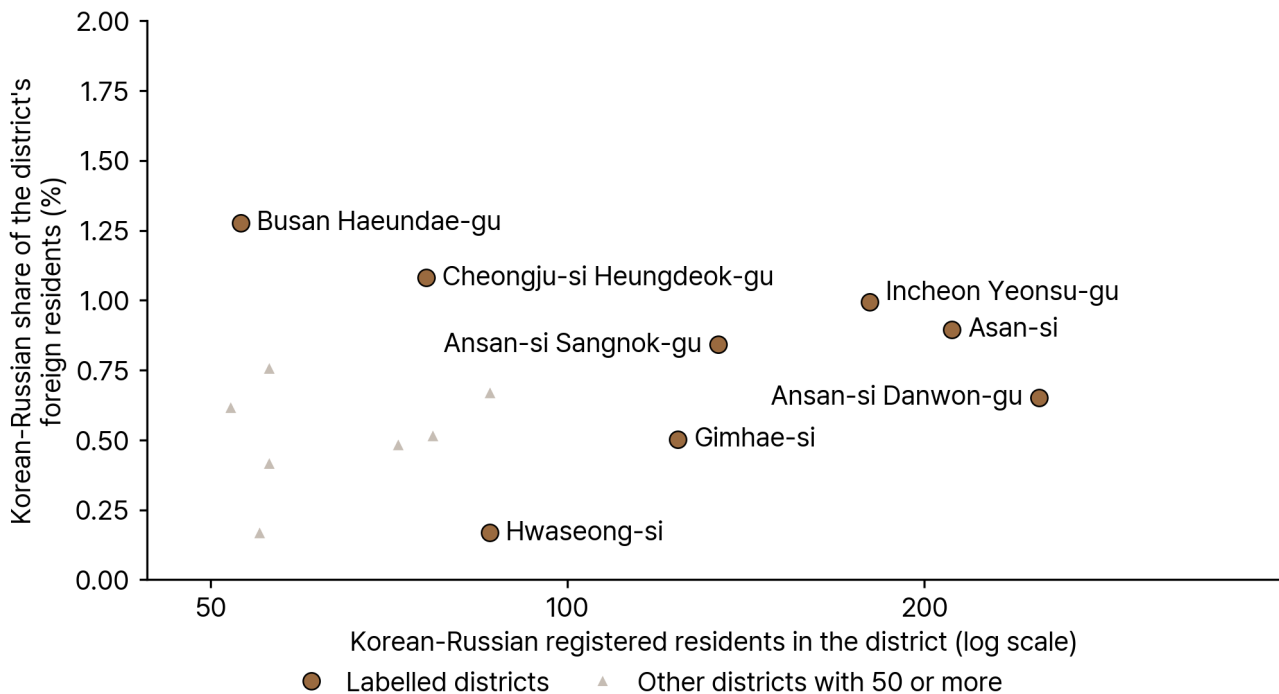
Korean-Russian Registered Residents and All Registered Foreigners by Province, 2024 (%)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

FIGURE 4

Korean-Russian Registered Residents and Their Share of Foreign Residents by District, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024. Districts with 50 or more Korean-Russian registered residents.

In 2024, Ansan-si Danwon-gu (250), Asan-si (211), Incheon Yeonsu-gu (180), Ansan-si Sangnok-gu (134), and Gimhae-si (124) were the five districts with 100 or more registered Korean-Russians. The ten largest districts accounted for 1,296 people, 54.4 percent of the registered total. In none of them did Korean-Russians exceed 1.1 percent of the district's

registered foreigners; the highest shares were in Cheongju-si Heungdeok-gu (1.1 percent) and Incheon Yeonsu-gu (1.0 percent).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between registered Korean-Russians and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.63 in 2014 and 0.66 in 2024, so about two-thirds of the group would have to move to match the distribution of other

foreigners. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Korean-Russian Registered Residents, 2024

District	Province	Registered residents	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	250	0.7
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	211	0.9
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	180	1.0
Ansan-si Sangnok-gu	Gyeonggi-do	134	0.8
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	124	0.5
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	86	0.2
Gyeongju-si	Gyeongsangbuk-do	86	0.7
Gwangju Gwangsan-gu	Gwangju	77	0.5
Cheongju-si Heungdeok-gu	Chungcheongbuk-do	76	1.1
Anseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	72	0.5

Note: Counts are registered foreigners only (2,383 Korean-Russians in 2024). F-4 holders, 93.2 percent of the group, report residence and are not included.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 48.8 percent of Korean-Russian residents in 2024 (17,557 of 35,984), up from 47.1 percent in 2019 (13,109 of 27,827). Among all resident foreigners, 45.1 percent were women.

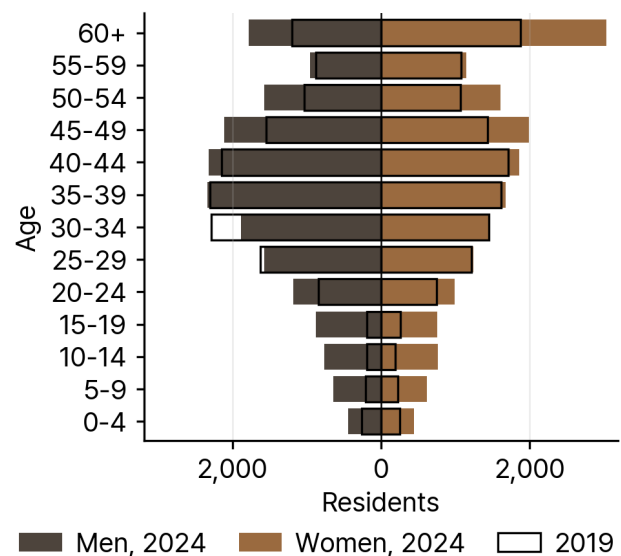
The group has more children and fewer young adults than resident foreigners as a whole. In 2024, 10.2 percent of Korean-Russians were aged 0 to 14, compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners, and the number of children rose from 1,338 in 2019 to 3,674 in 2024. Adults aged 20 to 39 made up 34.2 percent of the group, against 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners (12,068 in 2019 and 12,323 in 2024).

Older residents are also a large part of the population. In 2024, people aged 60 and older formed the largest age group, and 13.4 percent of Korean-Russians were 60 or older, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners. The number aged 50 and older grew from 7,131 in 2019 to 10,087 in 2024. The median person fell in the 40-44 age group.

4 Visa Status

Nearly all Korean-Russians hold the F-4 overseas Korean visa. In 2024, 33,555 of 35,984 (93.2 percent) were F-4 holders, up from 4,650 in 2014 and 26,395 in 2019. Korean-Russians made up 6.0 percent of all F-4 holders in Korea and were the third-largest nationality on that status.

FIGURE 5
Age and Sex Distribution of Korean-Russian Residents in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

Permanent residence (F-5) is the second-largest status and the fastest growing. F-5 holders rose from 243 in 2014 and 335 in 2019 to 1,517 in 2024, about 4.5 times the 2019 figure (1,517 / 335). Visiting cohabitation (F-1) holders fell from 887 in 2019 to 594 in 2024, and dependent family (F-3) holders rose from 2 to 99.

By broad visa group, 93.3 percent of Korean-Russians held overseas Korean statuses in 2024, compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners. The group had almost no holders of employment (0.0 percent against 19.2 percent), study and training (0.0 against 10.2 percent), or short-term visit statuses (0.1 against 19.7 percent).

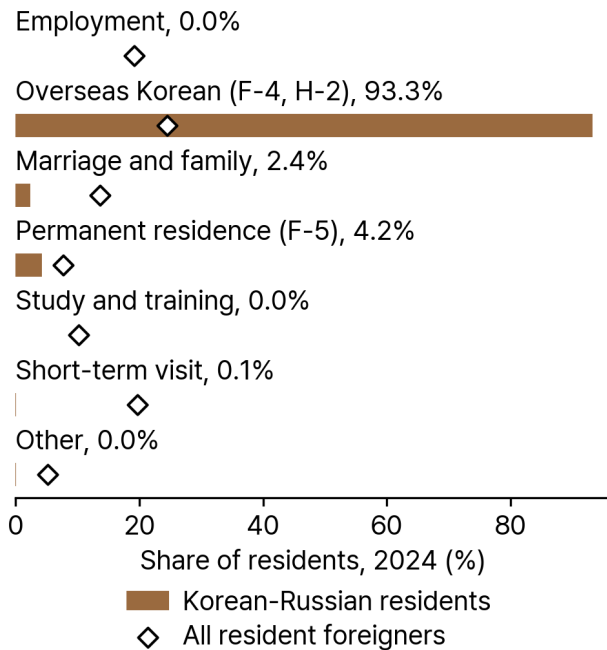
5 Migration Channels and Policy

Korean-Russians come to Korea on overseas Korean visas. Russia is not a sending country under the Employment Permit System (E-9); HRD Korea's 2026 list of sending countries names China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Mongolia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Kyrgyzstan, and Laos (HRD Korea, 2026).

A 2015 study commissioned by the Overseas Koreans Foundation found that residence in Korea by CIS-origin Koryo-saram increased considerably after the H-2 Visit-Employment program began in 2007, and that resident Koryo-saram were unfamiliar with Korean language and culture and faced difficult economic circumstances (Overseas Koreans Foundation, 2015).

FIGURE 6

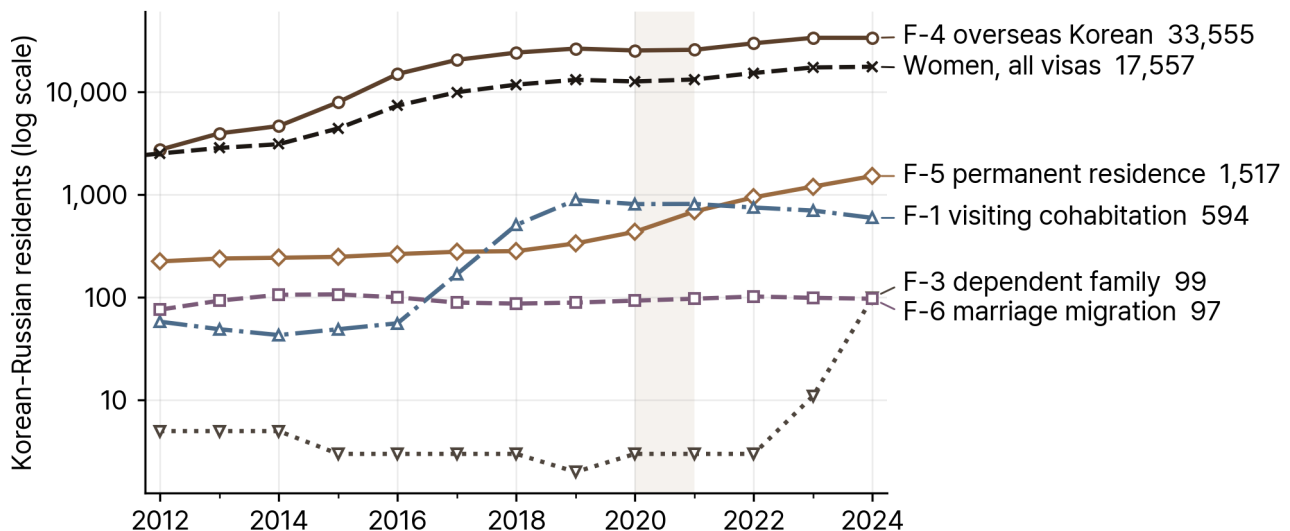
Visa Groups of Korean-Russian Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024 (%)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

FIGURE 7

Korean-Russian Residents in South Korea by Visa Status, 2012-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2012-2024.

On January 25, 2019, the Ministry of Justice issued notice of an amendment to the enforcement decree of the Overseas Koreans Act that would extend overseas Korean status from the third generation to the fourth generation of lineal descendants and beyond. The notice stated that fourth-generation Koryo-saram youth were being separated from parents already living in Korea, and it opened a comment period from January 23 to March 4, 2019 (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

Effective February 12, 2026, the Ministry of Justice merged the H-2 and F-4 statuses into a single F-4 status and ended the issuance of new H-2 visas. Existing H-2 holders may convert to F-4 before their permitted period of residence ends, and any overseas Korean can obtain F-4 without distinction by country of nationality. The same measure added ten occupations to the jobs F-4 holders may take and eased the income requirement for F-5 permanent residence applicants with strong Korean-language ability or volunteer service (Ministry of Justice, 2026).

TABLE 3

Korean-Russian Residents by Visa Status, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of group, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	26,395	33,555	93.2	6.0
F-5	Permanent residence	335	1,517	4.2	0.7
F-1	Visiting cohabitation	887	594	1.7	0.6
F-3	Dependent family	2	99	0.3	0.2
F-6	Marriage migration	89	97	0.3	0.1
F-2	Residential	21	63	0.2	0.1
C-3	Short-term visit	54	36	0.1	0.0

Note: Shares of the group use the 2024 total of 35,984 Korean-Russian resident foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In a February 11, 2025 press release, the Overseas Koreans Agency announced a survey of stateless Koryo-saram, the first since 2007, to document their settlement conditions and prepare ways for them to obtain legal residence status (Overseas Koreans Agency, 2025).

6 Naturalization

From 2014 to 2024, 349 Korean-Russians acquired South Korean nationality through naturalization. Annual counts were 19 in 2014, 38 in 2015, 37 in 2016, 58 in 2017, 45 in 2019, 35 in 2020, 24 in 2021, 16 in 2022, 25 in 2023, and 52 in 2024. No Korean-Russian count is recorded for 2018 in the KIRD series.

Ethnic Koreans can also regain Korean nationality through restoration of nationality. From 2011 to 2024 (excluding 2018), 68 Korean-Russians did so, including 11 in 2024. Adding the two routes, 63 Korean-Russians acquired or regained Korean nationality in 2024 (52 + 11).

7 Unauthorized Residents

Korean-Russians are not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents, so no count is published for this group. The yearbook reported 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

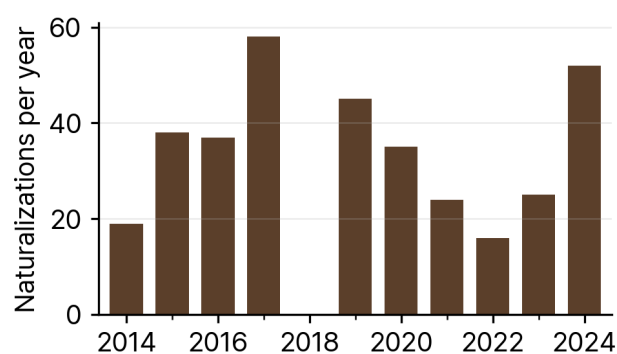
8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no published study reports the health of Russian-nationality Koryo-saram separately. The two studies below cover Koryo-saram in Korea regardless of nationality.

A 2021 art-therapy study of 17 Koryo-saram adolescents aged 14 to 24 at an alternative school in Korea delivered five 90-minute sessions between October and December 2020. After the program, the share of participants scoring in the no-

depression range rose by 41.7 percent and the share with moderate depression fell by 23.5 percent ($Z = -3.145$, $p < .05$) (Lee et al., 2021).

FIGURE 8

Naturalizations of Korean-Russians in South Korea, 2014-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

A face-to-face survey of 400 Koryo-saram residents of Ansan, conducted from August 25 to September 26, 2025, found that 8.0 percent had been assigned dangerous work that Korean coworkers refused to do, and 25.1 percent had endured a rights violation or discrimination without telling anyone (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026).

9 Migration of Koryo-saram to South Korea

Korean-Russians belong to the Koryo-saram, whose presence in Central Asia dates to the 1937 Soviet deportation of about 172,000 ethnic Koreans from the Russian Far East, mainly to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where Tashkent and Kyzylorda became centers of settlement. After the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Russia, South Korea, Europe, and North America became destinations for Koryo-saram emigrants (Novastan 2024). Russia's 2002 census recorded 148,556 ethnic Koreans (Demoscope Weekly, n.d.).

We know of no published source that reports the share of Russia's emigrants who go to Korea or Korea's rank among their destinations. Most published origin-side figures concern Central Asian countries, whose nationals include most Koryo-saram in Korea but are not counted in this profile. In 2023, 87,698 Uzbek nationals lived in South Korea, about 60 percent of the 147,093 Central Asian nationals in the country (Chu 2024). About 15,000 Kazakhstani nationals were working in South Korea as of 2025, roughly 11,000 of them without legal status (Times of Central Asia 2026).

Russia sends no workers under the Employment Permit System, so no Russian deployment figure exists (see Migration Channels and Policy). Among Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan joined the system in 2006, Kyrgyzstan in 2007, and Tajikistan in 2024 (Chu 2024), and Kazakhstan was designated the 18th sending country in August 2026, with worker arrivals expected from 2028 (Korea Times 2026). Uzbek workers deployed to Korea on E-9 visas fell from 4,878 in 2023 to 3,080 in 2024, out of 165,000 foreign workers Korea hired that year (Kun.uz 2025). Kazakhstani nationals on work-eligible visas numbered 5,309 in 2023, down from 7,867 in 2019, and 5,146 of the 2023 total held the H-2 Visit-Employment visa for ethnic Koreans (Chu 2024).

In Uzbekistan, nearly 10,000 people took the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) in Tashkent in July 2026 and more than 12,000 applied for the October round. The head of the Korean Education Center in Tashkent expected more than 50,000 TOPIK applicants in 2026, up from about 45,000 in 2025, and the same report put E-9 departures from Uzbekistan at about 2,500 a year on average (Yonhap News 2026). TOPIK is the general Korean-language test; EPS applicants take a separate test, EPS-TOPIK. HRD Korea reports that 33,397 people took the EPS-TOPIK in Uzbekistan in 2024 and 13,317 passed (HRD Korea 2025).

Personal remittances received by Russia were 0.66 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020, 0.53 percent in 2021, 0.14 percent in 2022, and 0.13 percent in 2023 (World Bank 2023). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Russia at about US\$5.0 million that year (World Bank 2021). For Uzbekistan, remittances from Korea totaled \$534 million in 2024, up 56 percent from 2023, making Korea the fourth-largest source of the country's \$14.8 billion in remittances after Russia (\$11.5 billion, 77 percent of the total), Kazakhstan (\$795 million), and the United States (\$577 million) (Times of Central Asia 2025). Remittances equaled 14.42 percent of Uzbekistan's GDP in 2024 (Trading Economics 2024). Korea sent \$35.6 million to Kazakhstan in the first three quarters of 2022 (10.1 percent of Kazakhstan's remittance inflows, third after Russia and the United States) and \$27.3 million in the same period of 2023 (11.6 percent, fourth after Russia, the United States, and Germany) (Chu 2024).

As far as we know, no published source identifies the provinces or oblasts of Russia, Uzbekistan, or Kazakhstan from which Korea-bound Koryo-saram come. Inside Korea, the Seoul National University Asia Center reported about 10,000 registered Koryo-saram in Ansan's Danwon-gu and about 5,000 in Sangnok-gu in the first half of 2024, with smaller communities in Gwangju, formed between 2002 and 2013, and in Jecheon, where a government recruitment program began in 2023 (SNUAC 2024).

We are not aware of any Russian government policy on emigration to Korea. On the Central Asian side, Korean officials said in 2026 that Kazakhstan qualified as an EPS sending country because it has a government agency dealing exclusively with worker dispatch (Korea JoongAng Daily 2026). On the Korean side, the 1999 Overseas Koreans Act excluded Korean-Chinese and Koryo-saram from the entry-visa and employment benefits given to other overseas Koreans; the law was revised in 2004 after it was found to discriminate unconstitutionally, and the government continued to control this group's entry visas and employment rights (Song 2023).

Research on Koryo-saram migration to Korea centers on return and settlement. Lee (2023) studies the increase in migrants from Uzbekistan since 2007, when Koryo-saram began entering Korea as compatriots, as a case of a diaspora moving to an ancestral homeland most members had never lived in. Kim (2015), studying Uzbek Koryo-saram families in Gwangju, finds varied and changing transnational family arrangements, with some families working toward permanent settlement in Korea and reuniting relatives in stages. Song (2023) argues that despite ethnicity-based entry preferences, Koryo-saram returnees are socially alienated, culturally disregarded, and assigned to lower-wage jobs. The literature known to us includes no study of brokers, migration debt, or marriage migration among Russian-nationality Koryo-saram.

10 Community Organizations

Ansan's Koryo-saram population (all nationalities) grew from 6,307 in 2013 to 22,939 in 2025, a 3.6-fold increase (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026). Gwangju's Koryoin Village in Wolgok-dong, Gwangsan-gu, was approved as a nonprofit corporation by the Minister of Justice in April 2014, after Gwangju enacted an ordinance supporting Koryoin residents in October 2013 (Koryoin Village, n.d.). By 2022 the neighborhood's population, including Koryo-saram and other Asian migrants, was about 7,000, and the nonprofit Koryoin Village ran a resident support center, a kindergarten, a school, a clinic, an elder welfare center, a museum, a publishing house, and a radio station (Epoch Times Korea, 2022).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 28 name Koryo-saram or overseas Koreans from the former Soviet Union in their name or target group. Five are in Gwangju Gwangsan-gu, five in Incheon Yeonsu-gu, and four in Ansan, all districts among the ten with the most registered Korean-Russians. Six are program sites designated and funded by the

Ministry of Justice, including Koryoin Village (Gwangju Gwangsan-gu), the Ansan Koryoin Cultural Center (Ansan-si Danwon-gu), the Gyeongsangbuk-do Koryoin Integrated Support Center (Gyeongju-si), and the Neomeo Incheon Koryoin Cultural Center (Incheon Yeonsu-gu). Others are community groups such as the Korean Koryoin Association

(Incheon Yeonsu-gu), Koryoin Center Mir (Ansan-si Sangnok-gu), the Chungnam Koryoin Support Association (Asan-si), and Friends from the Former Soviet Union (Gimhae-si).

These organizations serve Koryo-saram of all nationalities. Most general-purpose organizations in the census also serve Korean-Russian residents.

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Koryo-saram and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Ethnic Koreans in Russia, 2002 census	148,556	Korean Wikipedia, n.d.
Uzbek nationals in South Korea, 2023	87,698 (about 60% of 147,093 Central Asian nationals)	Chu 2024
Kazakhstanis working in South Korea, 2025	About 15,000 (about 11,000 without legal status)	Times of Central Asia 2026
Uzbek E-9 workers deployed to Korea, 2023 and 2024	4,878 and 3,080 (of 165,000 total hires in 2024)	Kun.uz 2025
Kazakhstani nationals on work-eligible visas, 2023	5,309 (5,146 on H-2)	Chu 2024
TOPIK applicants in Uzbekistan, 2025	About 45,000	Yonhap News 2026
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Uzbekistan, 2024	33,397 (13,317 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
Remittances from Korea to Uzbekistan, 2024	\$534 million (4th-largest source)	Times of Central Asia 2025
Remittances from Korea to Kazakhstan, January-September 2023	\$27.3 million (11.6% of inflows)	Chu 2024
Remittances from Korea to Russia, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	\$5.0 million	World Bank 2021
Remittances, % of GDP, Russia, 2023	0.13	World Bank 2023
Remittances, % of GDP, Uzbekistan, 2024	14.42	Trading Economics 2024

Note: Russia is not an EPS sending country, so there are no EPS deployment or applicant figures for Russia. Central Asian figures cover all nationals of those countries, including those who are not Koryo-saram.

Source: Sources as listed in each row; full references appear under Sources.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Taiwanese Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, the Ministry of Justice counted 17,384 registered Taiwanese foreigners, the 18th-largest nationality among registered foreigners and 1.2 percent of the total, and 35,838 Taiwanese resident foreigners, the 16th-largest nationality among all resident foreigners and 1.4 percent of the total. In 2014 Taiwanese ranked 13th among registered foreigners and 11th among all resident foreigners. The resident count rose from 25,864 at the end of 2006 to a peak of 42,767 in 2019, fell to 18,554 in 2021, and by 2024 had recovered to 83.8 percent of its 2019 level (KIRD dataset).

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 17,384 Taiwanese nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea and 35,838 were resident foreigners, making Taiwan the 18th-largest nationality among registered foreigners and the 16th-largest among all resident foreigners; the resident count was down from a peak of 42,767 in 2019.
- ▶ In 2024, 50.6 percent of Taiwanese residents (18,144 people) held the B-2 tourist and transit status and 29.1 percent (10,428) held F-5 permanent residence, compared with 19.7 percent and 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners.
- ▶ Only 2.8 percent of Taiwanese residents held an employment visa in 2024, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners, and 3,432 Taiwanese nationals naturalized as Korean citizens between 2014 and 2024.

Taiwanese in Korea include a long-resident ethnic Chinese community (hwagyo) that retained Republic of China passports after Korea cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1992; a 2025 news report put this group at about 15,000 people (Incheon In, 2025). Taiwanese visitors have entered Korea without a visa since January 2003, and for up to 90 days per

visit since July 2012 (Maeil Shinmun, 2012). In 2024, 18,144 Taiwanese held B-2 tourist and transit status and 10,428 held F-5 permanent residence, together 79.7 percent of the group.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Taiwanese residents were more often women (58.8 percent versus 45.1 percent) and aged 60 or older (17.1 percent versus 12.9 percent), and registered Taiwanese were more concentrated in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi (71.6 percent versus 55.2 percent). This Spotlight describes the number of Taiwanese residents over time, where they live, their age and sex, visa status, migration channels, naturalization, migration from Taiwan to Korea, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of the reference year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who have reported their place of residence. Counts come from the Ministry of Justice immigration statistics yearbooks.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who complete alien registration, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 Overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering, so they are not counted among registered foreigners. District-level figures in this Spotlight cover registered foreigners only.

Taiwanese residents. Foreign nationals whose nationality is recorded as Taiwan (Republic of China), including ethnic Chinese long resident in Korea who hold Taiwanese passports. Nationals of the People's Republic of China are counted separately. People who have acquired Korean nationality are no longer counted as foreigners.

Visa codes. Status of stay codes used by the Ministry of Justice, such as B-2 (tourist and transit), F-5 (permanent residence), and F-2 (residential).

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Taiwanese resident foreigners rose from 25,864 in 2006 and 24,760 in 2010 to 31,200 in 2014 and 42,767 in 2019, the highest count in the series. It fell to 19,444 in 2020 and 18,554 in 2021, then rose to 25,417 in 2022, 33,225 in 2023, and 35,838 in 2024 (KIRD dataset).

Registered foreigners declined over the same period, from 22,118 in 2006 to 21,014 in 2014, 19,872 in 2019, and 17,384 in 2024. Registered Taiwanese made up 85.5 percent of

Taiwanese resident foreigners in 2006 (22,118 of 25,864) and 48.5 percent in 2024.

Taiwan's rank fell on both bases. Among registered foreigners it was the 8th-largest nationality in 2006, 13th in 2014, 15th in 2019, and 18th in 2024, and its share of all registered foreigners fell from 3.5 percent in 2006 to 1.9 percent in 2014, 1.6 percent in 2019, and 1.2 percent in 2024. Among all resident foreigners it ranked 10th in 2006, 11th in 2014, 13th in 2019, and 16th in 2024, with shares of 2.8, 1.7, 1.7, and 1.4 percent.

TABLE 1

Taiwanese Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners (%)	Share of all registered foreigners (%)
2006	25,864	22,118	10	8	2.8	3.5
2014	31,200	21,014	11	13	1.7	1.9
2019	42,767	19,872	13	15	1.7	1.6
2024	35,838	17,384	16	18	1.4	1.2

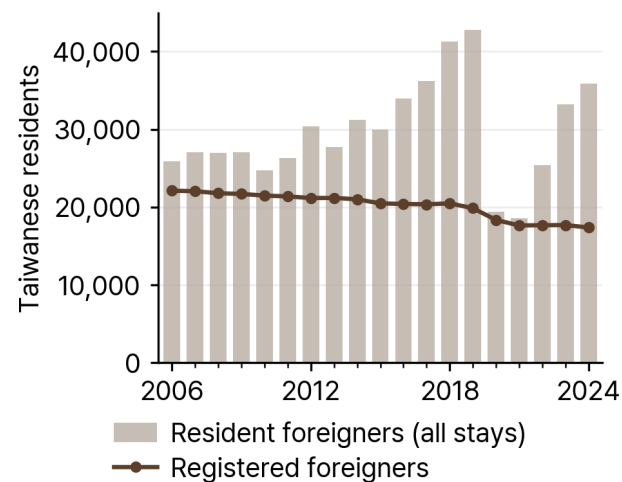
Note: Resident foreigners are counted on 31 December and include short-term visitors and F-4 holders who report their residence. Registered foreigners are those in Korea for more than 90 days who completed alien registration. Ranks are among all nationalities on each basis.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Measured against 2019, the Taiwanese population stood at an index of 83.8 in 2024 (35,838 divided by 42,767). This ranked 18th in growth among the 20 largest nationalities.

FIGURE 1

Taiwanese Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

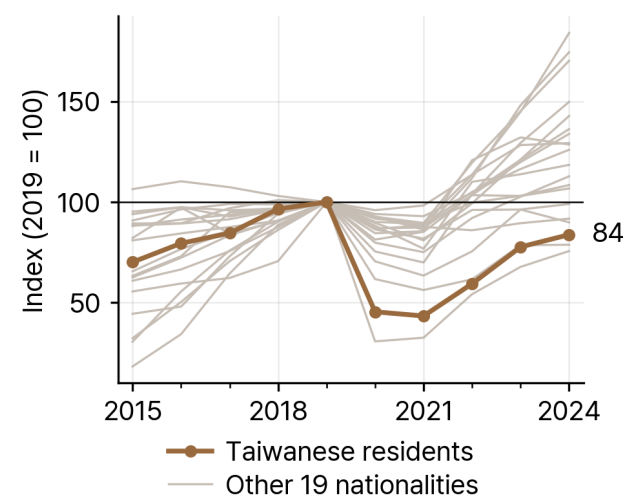
2 Distribution by Province and District

District data cover the 17,384 registered Taiwanese in 2024. Of these, 7,691 lived in Seoul (44.2 percent) and 4,758 in Incheon and Gyeonggi (27.4 percent), so 71.6 percent lived in the

capital region, compared with 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners. A further 2,577 lived in Yeongnam (14.8 percent), Chungcheong 1,077 (6.2 percent), Gangwon and Jeju 656 (3.8 percent), and Honam 625 (3.6 percent). Only 2.3 percent lived in rural counties (gun), against 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners.

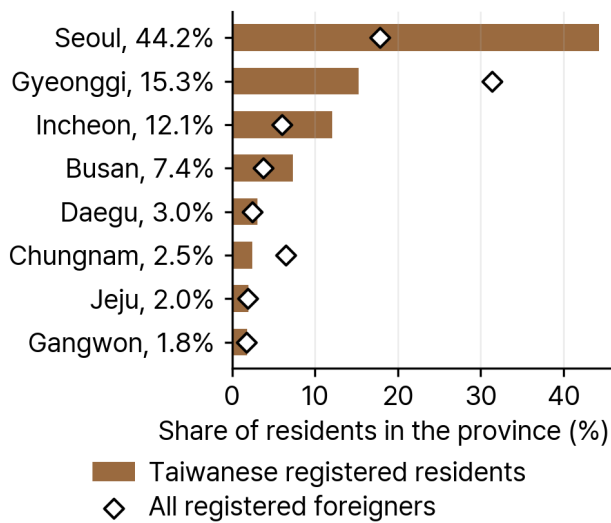
FIGURE 2

Growth of the Taiwanese Population and the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 3
Registered Taiwanese Foreigners by Region, 2024

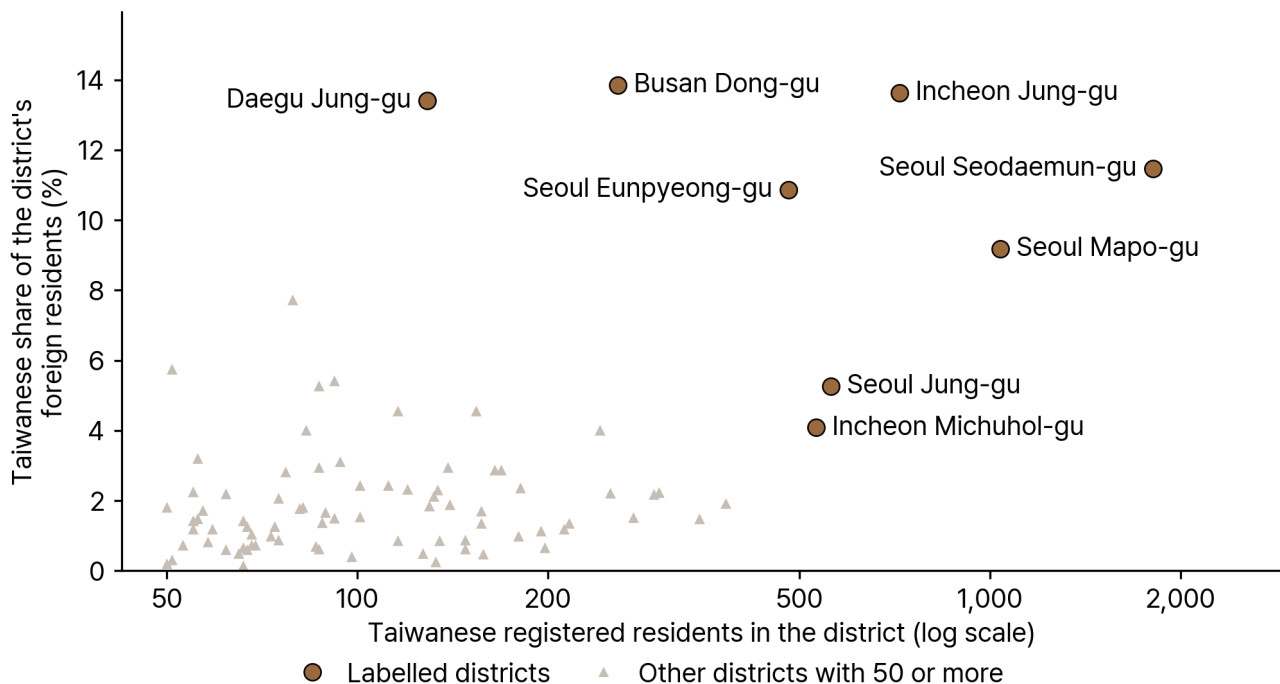


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Seodaemun-gu in Seoul had the largest number (1,809), followed by Mapo-gu (1,039) and Jung-gu in Incheon (720). The ten largest districts were home to 37.2 percent of registered Taiwanese, and 43 districts had 100 or more. Taiwanese made up the largest shares of registered foreigners in Dong-gu in Busan (13.9 percent, 258 people), Jung-gu in Incheon (13.6 percent), and Jung-gu in Daegu (13.4 percent, 129 people).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between registered Taiwanese and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.423 in 2014 and 0.395 in 2024. A D of 0.395 indicates that about 40 percent of Taiwanese would have had to move to match the distribution of other foreigners in 2024. No district met the ethnic enclave definition used in these Spotlights (a location quotient of at least 2 and Taiwanese making up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners).

FIGURE 4
Districts with the Most Registered Taiwanese Foreigners, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 58.8 percent of Taiwanese resident foreigners in 2024 (21,065 of 35,838), down from 60.4 percent in 2019, and well above the 45.1 percent share among all resident foreigners.

The age profile is older than that of all resident foreigners. People aged 60 and older were the largest age group in 2024 and made up 17.1 percent of Taiwanese residents, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners. The median person fell in the 35-39 age group. Adults aged 20-39 made up 48.6 percent (17,412 people), close to the 49.7 percent among all resident foreigners, and children under 15 made up 5.6 percent (2,005), against 5.7 percent overall. A total of 9,962 Taiwanese residents were aged 50 or older in 2024.

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Registered Taiwanese Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Registered Taiwanese	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Seoul Seodaemun-gu	Seoul	1,809	11.5
Seoul Mapo-gu	Seoul	1,039	9.2
Incheon Jung-gu	Incheon	720	13.6
Seoul Jung-gu	Seoul	561	5.3
Incheon Michuhol-gu	Incheon	531	4.1
Seoul Eunpyeong-gu	Seoul	481	10.9
Seoul Dongdaemun-gu	Seoul	382	1.9
Seoul Yeongdeungpo-gu	Seoul	347	1.5
Seoul Yongsan-gu	Seoul	300	2.2
Seoul Seongbuk-gu	Seoul	294	2.2

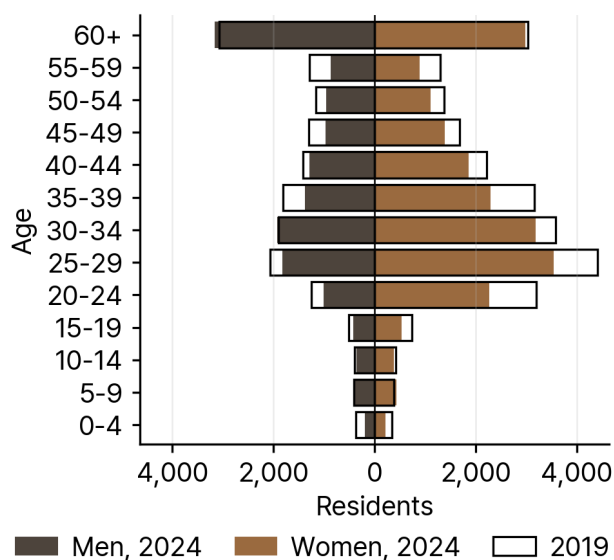
Note: Registered foreigners only; F-4 holders who report residence are not included. The ten districts account for 37.2 percent of registered Taiwanese.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

4 Visa Status

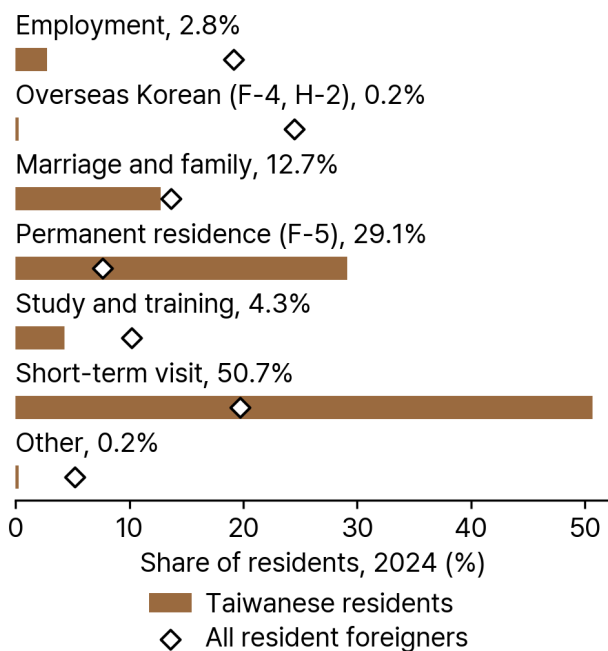
Half of Taiwanese resident foreigners in 2024 were short-term visitors (50.7 percent), compared with 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Permanent residents (F-5) made up 29.1 percent, against 7.7 percent overall. Employment visas accounted for 2.8 percent (19.2 percent overall), study and training for 4.3 percent (10.2 percent overall), and marriage and family statuses for 12.7 percent (13.6 percent overall). Only 0.2 percent held overseas Korean statuses (F-4 or H-2), against 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 5

Taiwanese Resident Foreigners by Age and Sex, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

FIGURE 6

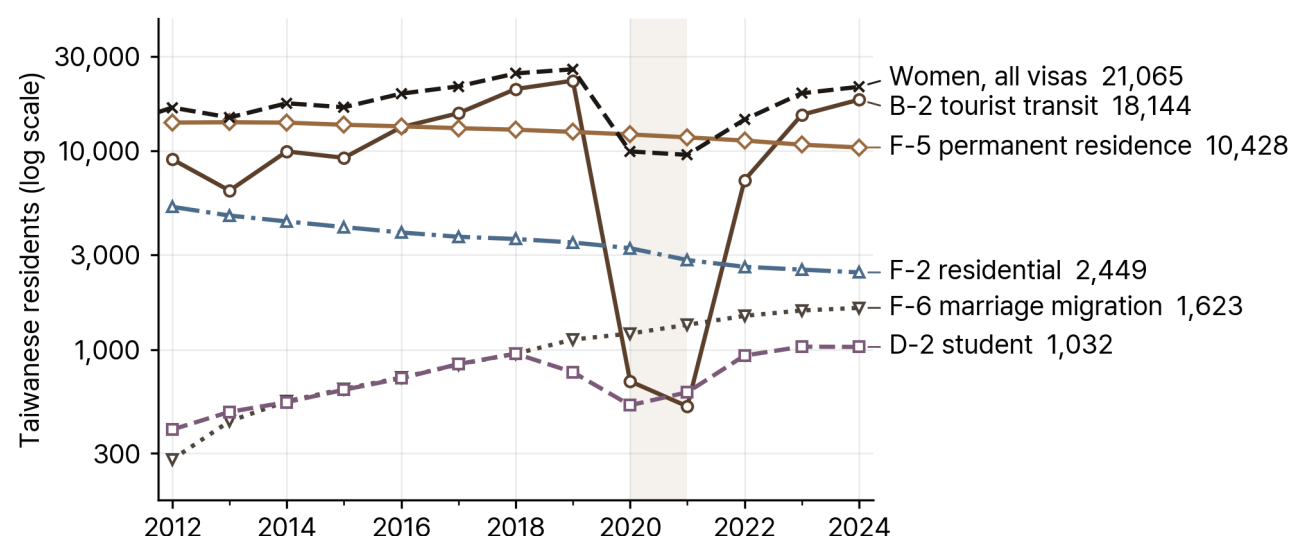
Visa Groups of Taiwanese Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

The B-2 tourist and transit status was the most common, held by 9,958 Taiwanese in 2014, 22,612 in 2019, and 18,144 in 2024. Taiwanese held 11.9 percent of all B-2 statuses in Korea in 2024, the fourth-largest number among nationalities. F-5 permanent residence declined from 13,905 holders in 2014 to 12,488 in 2019 and 10,428 in 2024, and F-2 residential status from 4,422 to 3,465 and 2,449. Holders of F-6 marriage visas rose from 549 in 2014 to 1,623 in 2024, and D-2 students from 544 to 1,032.

FIGURE 7

Taiwanese Resident Foreigners by Visa, 2014-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Taiwan is not among the countries that send workers to Korea through the Employment Permit System (EPS), which operates through agreements between the Korean government and the

governments of sending countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and China. Tajikistan was added as the 17th sending country in 2024 (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2024), and Kazakhstan became the 18th in August 2026 (Korea JoongAng Daily, 2026).

TABLE 3

Most Common Visas Held by Taiwanese Resident Foreigners, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Taiwanese, 2024 (%)	Taiwanese share of all holders of the visa, 2024 (%)
B-2	Tourist Transit	22,612	18,144	50.6	11.9
F-5	Permanent Residence	12,488	10,428	29.1	5.1
F-2	Residential	3,465	2,449	6.8	4.0
F-6	Marriage Migration	1,124	1,623	4.5	1.1
D-2	Student	770	1,032	2.9	0.6
D-4	General Trainee	351	475	1.3	0.5
F-1	Visiting Cohabitation	409	390	1.1	0.4

Note: Shares of Taiwanese use the 2024 total of 35,838 Taiwanese resident foreigners. The seven visas shown account for 34,541 people (96.4 percent).

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2019-2024.

Short visits are the main route of entry. Korea and Taiwan have allowed mutual visa-free entry since January 2003, and the visa-free period was extended from 30 to 90 days on July 1, 2012 (Maeil Shinmun, 2012). The two sides began reciprocal automated immigration clearance for pre-registered travelers on June 27, 2018 (National Immigration Agency (Taiwan), 2018).

Because Korea has had no formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan since 1992, a bilateral working holiday program is administered through the Taipei Mission in Korea and the

Korean Mission in Taipei. It admits up to 800 participants a year on a first-come basis, and an October 2023 revision of the agreement set the eligible age at 18 to 34 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2026).

6 Naturalization

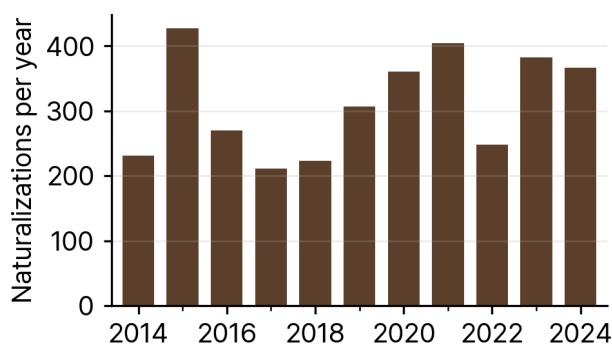
Between 2014 and 2024, 3,432 Taiwanese nationals acquired Korean nationality through naturalization. Annual counts ranged from 211 in 2017 to 427 in 2015, and 367 Taiwanese naturalized in 2024 (KIRD dataset).

The Ministry of Justice also recorded 652 restorations of Korean nationality among Taiwanese nationals between 2011 and 2024, including 32 in 2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Taiwan is not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook reports separately in its table of unauthorized residents (table 6-4), so no count of unauthorized Taiwanese residents is published. The yearbook reported 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Taiwanese Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no work indexed in OpenAlex, KCI, or DBpia, and no news coverage of migrant occupational deaths, reports health, injury, or care-access outcomes for Taiwanese residents of Korea separately.

9 Migration from Taiwan to South Korea

The UN counted 832,507 Taiwan-born people living outside Taiwan in 2024, in 16 named destination countries led by the United States (404,256), China (170,422), Canada (64,617), Japan (62,144), and Australia (61,011). South Korea does not appear as a separate destination for Taiwan-born migrants in that table, so no Korean share or rank among destinations can be computed from it. The same table reports 4,824 Korea-born people living in Taiwan in 2024, up from 1,193 in 1990 (UN DESA 2024).

Taiwan's Overseas Community Affairs Council estimated the Taiwanese compatriot community in Korea at around 16,000 people in 2023 (OCAC 2023).

Because Taiwan is not an EPS sending country, there are no deployment counts or EPS applicant figures for Taiwan (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2024). Taiwan is not a World Bank reporting economy, so World Bank series on

remittances received, including remittances as a share of GDP, have no Taiwan values, and we know of no published figure for remittances from Korea to Taiwan (Taiwan News 2020).

Most Taiwanese nationals in Korea are members of the long-resident ethnic Chinese (hwagyo) community. A 2004 Samsung Economic Research Institute study found that about 90 percent of this community came from Shandong Province in mainland China. The community holds Republic of China nationality because the Republic of China opened an embassy in Korea in 1949 and Korea had no diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China until 1992, which left Taiwanese nationality as the only option. In January 2026, the Ministry of Justice counted just over 10,000 Korea-born Taiwanese nationals holding F-1, F-2, or F-5 status; the Hanseong Overseas Chinese Association put the community at about 15,000 and at most 18,000, and academic estimates ranged from 10,000 to 15,000 (Yonhap News 2026).

On the policy side, Korea and Taiwan resumed direct flights in 2005 (Jeju Ilbo 2012). Taiwan's Bureau of Consular Affairs dates the bilateral working holiday program to January 1, 2011, under a memorandum between the Taipei Mission in Korea and the Korea Mission in Taipei (Bureau of Consular Affairs 2024).

As far as we know, published research on Taiwanese nationals in Korea concerns the hwagyo community. An ethnographic study of hwagyo associations in Seoul found that after 1992 most hwagyo retained Taiwanese nationality and formed an independent migrant identity by maintaining a selective distance from both China and Taiwan (Kim 2016). Interviews with third- and fourth-generation hwagyo found that they described themselves as forgotten people outside Korea's multiculturalism policies and were uncertain about their place in Korean society (Kim et al. 2017). A study of hwagyo who moved from Korea to Taiwan or mainland China, a return migration that began in the 1970s because of discrimination in Korea, found that those in Taiwan came to assert their identity as Korean hwagyo, while among those in mainland China the China-born first generation treated the move as retirement and the Korea-born second generation saw business opportunities, needed long periods of adjustment, and relied on Korean social networks; both groups retained a sense of belonging tied to Korean culture (Lee 2012). We are not aware of any study of recent migrants from Taiwan to Korea, such as students or marriage migrants.

10 Community Organizations

The Seoul (Hanseong) Overseas Chinese Association originated as a Chinese chamber of commerce founded in 1884 and has used its current name since June 1969. It is a semi-official body that handles part of the Taiwanese government's administrative work for the community, including receiving petitions to the Taipei Mission in Korea, delivering visas the mission issues, mediating disputes between overseas Chinese and Koreans, and registering births, deaths, and marriages (Epoch Times Korea, 2024).

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Taiwan and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Taiwan-born people living abroad, 2024	832,507	UN DESA 2024
South Korea listed as a destination of Taiwan-born migrants, 2024	Not listed	UN DESA 2024
Korea-born people living in Taiwan, 2024	4,824	UN DESA 2024
Taiwanese compatriot community in Korea (Taiwanese government estimate), 2023	About 16,000	OCAC 2023
Korea-born Taiwanese nationals with F-1, F-2, or F-5 status, January 2026	Just over 10,000	Yonhap News 2026
Hwagyo originating in Shandong Province (2004 study)	About 90 percent	Yonhap News 2026
EPS sending country	No	Ministry of Employment and Labor 2024
Remittances as a share of GDP (World Bank)	n.a.	Taiwan News 2020

Note: n.a. = not published; Taiwan is not a World Bank reporting economy. The UN table records no separate row for South Korea as a destination of Taiwan-born migrants.

Source: UN DESA; Overseas Community Affairs Council (Taiwan); Ministry of Justice; Yonhap News; Ministry of Employment and Labor.

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, six name this community in their name or target group. All six are self-operated, privately funded overseas Chinese associations: the Hanseong association in Jung-gu, Seoul; the Incheon association in Jung-gu, Incheon; the Busan

association in Dong-gu, Busan; the Daegu association in Jung-gu, Daegu; the Daejeon association in Jung-gu, Daejeon; and the Gwangju association in Seo-gu, Gwangju (KIRD dataset). Most general-purpose migrant organizations in the census also serve Taiwanese residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Taiwanese Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Sri Lankan Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

At the end of 2024, 33,965 Sri Lankan nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, 2.3 percent of all registered foreigners and the 13th-largest nationality on that basis; counting short-term visitors, South Korea had 35,792 Sri Lankan resident foreigners on 31 December 2024, 1.4 percent of the total and the 17th-largest nationality. Among registered foreigners Sri Lanka ranked 12th in 2006, 11th in 2014, and 14th in 2019; among all resident foreigners it ranked 14th, 13th, and 19th in those years. The resident count stood at 12,594 in 2006 and 26,057 in 2014. Almost all Sri Lankan residents (94.9 percent in 2024) were registered foreigners, the category for foreign nationals in Korea for more than 90 days.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 33,965 Sri Lankan nationals were registered foreigners in South Korea, the 13th-largest nationality among registered foreigners and the 17th-largest among all resident foreigners (35,792 people, the highest count on record).
- ▶ The Sri Lankan population grew 42.8 percent between 2019 and 2024 (from 25,064 to 35,792), the fifth-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 80.9 percent of Sri Lankan residents held employment visas and 9.7 percent were women, compared with 19.2 percent and 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

Most Sri Lankan nationals came as workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS), a program operated between the Korean government and the governments of sending countries that began in August 2004. By June 2012, 24,696 Sri Lankan workers were in Korea under the EPS, the fifth-largest group among 15 sending countries (ILO, 2012). The population fell from 25,064 in 2019 to 20,291 in 2021 and

then rose to 35,792 in 2024. Over the same years, holders of specially designated activities (E-7) and dependent family (F-3) visas grew from a few hundred to several thousand.

Compared with all resident foreigners, Sri Lankan residents in 2024 were far more likely to hold employment visas, much more likely to be men, and more concentrated in ages 20 to 39. They lived mostly outside the Seoul capital area, with the largest share in the Yeongnam region of the southeast, and were more than twice as likely to live in rural counties. This Spotlight describes the size of the population, where Sri Lankan residents live, their age, sex, and visa status, the channels and policies behind their migration, naturalization, health and well-being, migration from Sri Lanka to South Korea, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the broadest count published by the Ministry of Justice.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans holding F-4 visas report their place of residence instead of registering and are not counted here. District-level figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

Sri Lankan residents. In this Spotlight, the term refers to foreign nationals holding Sri Lankan citizenship. Naturalized Korean citizens of Sri Lankan origin are not included in the resident foreigner counts.

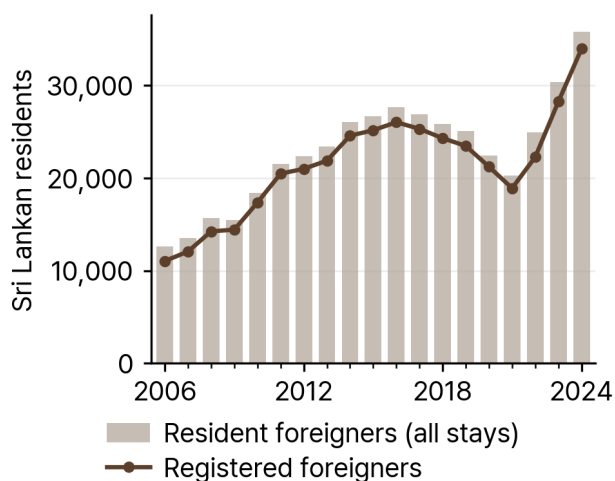
1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Sri Lankan resident foreigners rose from 12,594 in 2006 to 18,377 in 2010 and 26,057 in 2014, then stood at 25,064 in 2019 (see Figure 1). It declined to 22,466 in 2020 and 20,291 in 2021, a drop of 19.0 percent from 2019 (4,773 fewer people). It then climbed to 24,912 in 2022, 30,370 in

2023, and 35,792 in 2024, the highest count on record. The 2024 total was about 2.8 times the 2006 total (35,792 against 12,594).

FIGURE 1

Sri Lankan Residents in South Korea, All Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Registered foreigners made up most of the group in every year shown: 11,051 of 12,594 in 2006 and 33,965 of 35,792 in 2024 (94.9 percent). Sri Lankan nationals were 2.3 percent of all registered foreigners in 2024 and 1.4 percent of all resident foreigners, so the group ranks higher among registered foreigners (13th) than among all resident foreigners (17th) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Sri Lankan Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Registered as % of resident	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	12,594	11,051	87.7	12	14	1.8	1.4
2014	26,057	24,582	94.3	11	13	2.3	1.4
2019	25,064	23,476	93.7	14	19	1.8	1.0
2024	35,792	33,965	94.9	13	17	2.3	1.4

Note: Registered as % of resident is computed as registered foreigners divided by resident foreigners. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 residence reporters; registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities.

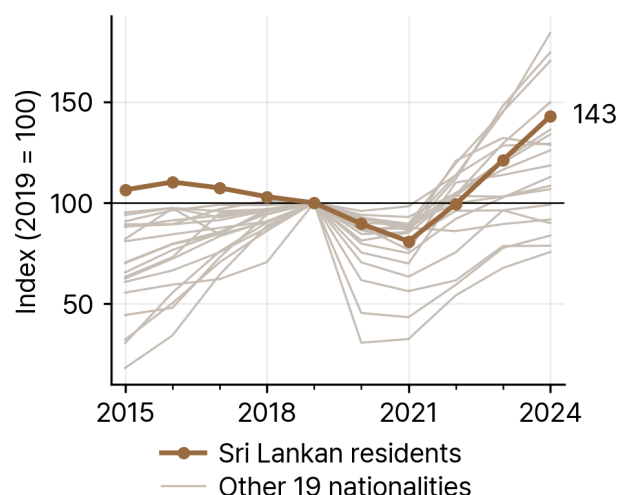
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

In 2024, 37.9 percent of Sri Lankan registered residents lived in the Yeongnam region (Busan, Daegu, Ulsan, and the Gyeongsang provinces), 27.1 percent in Incheon and Gyeonggi province, 16.5 percent in the Honam region, 14.0 percent in the Chungcheong region, 3.5 percent in Gangwon and Jeju, and 1.0 percent (351 people) in Seoul (see Figure 3). The Seoul

FIGURE 2

Growth of Sri Lankan Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index, 2019 = 100)

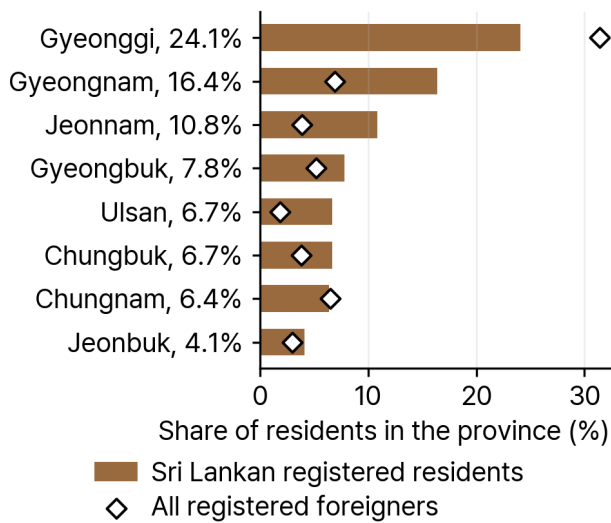


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Indexed to 2019 = 100, the Sri Lankan population stood at 142.8 in 2024, a growth of 42.8 percent over five years. That was the fifth-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities in South Korea (see Figure 2). Because the population had fallen during 2020 and 2021, most of this growth came after 2021: the count rose by 15,501 between 2021 and 2024 (from 20,291 to 35,792).

capital area (Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi) was home to 28.1 percent of the group, compared with 55.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 3

Sri Lankan Registered Residents by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Sri Lankan residents were more likely than other foreigners to live in rural counties (gun): 26.0 percent did in 2024, against 10.6 percent of all resident foreigners. In the Honam region,

61.2 percent of Sri Lankan residents lived in rural counties, and in Chungcheong, 41.9 percent.

The largest Sri Lankan populations were in Hwaseong-si (1,670), Gimhae-si (1,617), Ulsan Dong-gu (1,366), and Geoje-si (1,079) (see Figure 4 and Table 2). The ten largest districts together accounted for 30.3 percent of Sri Lankan registered residents, and 80 districts had at least 100. In Seoul, the largest counts were in Yongsan-gu (60) and Gwanak-gu (47).

In some smaller districts, Sri Lankan nationals made up a large part of the foreign population. They accounted for 24.9 percent of registered foreigners in Daegu Gunwi-gun (145 people), 24.4 percent in Jindo-gun (638), 18.6 percent in Incheon Ongjin-gun (111), 16.3 percent in Wando-gun (832), and 14.2 percent in Ulsan Dong-gu (1,366).

The index of dissimilarity (D), which measures how differently Sri Lankan residents and all other registered foreigners are spread across districts, fell from 0.571 in 2014 to 0.539 in 2024. A value of 0.539 means that about 54 percent of Sri Lankan residents would have to move to another district to match the distribution of other foreigners. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and Sri Lankan nationals making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents); the highest share, in Daegu Gunwi-gun, was 24.9 percent.

TABLE 2

Ten Districts with the Most Sri Lankan Registered Residents, 2024

District	Province	Sri Lankan residents	Share of district's foreign residents
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,670	3.3%
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,617	6.5%
Ulsan Dong-gu	Ulsan	1,366	14.2%
Geoje-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,079	7.2%
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	970	3.8%
Wando-gun	Jeollanam-do	832	16.3%
Eumseong-gun	Chungcheongbuk-do	772	5.6%
Gyeongju-si	Gyeongsangbuk-do	703	5.5%
Jindo-gun	Jeollanam-do	638	24.4%
Daegu Dalseong-gun	Daegu	630	8.5%

Note: Share of district's foreign residents is Sri Lankan registered residents divided by all registered foreigners in the district.

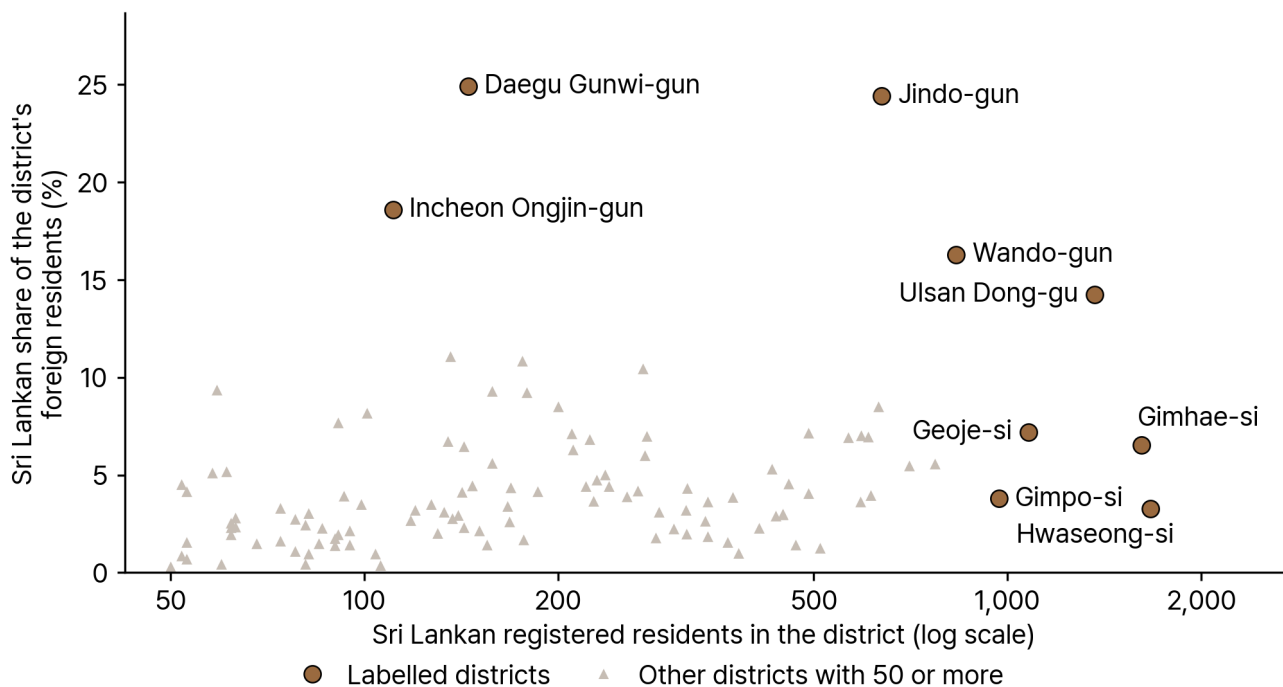
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Sri Lankan residents were concentrated in young working ages. In 2024, 78.9 percent (28,228 people) were ages 20 to 39, compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Both

the largest five-year age group and the median fell in the group ages 30 to 34 (see Figure 5).

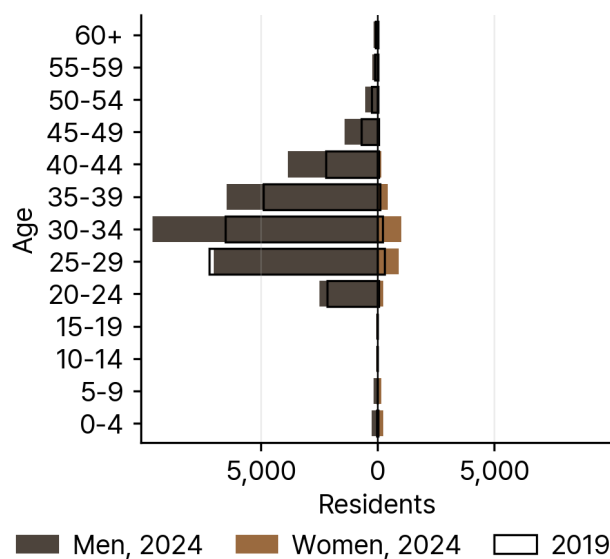
FIGURE 4

Districts with the Most Sri Lankan Registered Residents, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Children and older adults were few, though their numbers grew. Children under age 15 made up 2.6 percent of the group in 2024 (947 children, up from 118 in 2019), compared with 5.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Children under age 5 numbered 508 in 2024, up from 72 in 2019. People age 60 and older made up 0.6 percent, compared with 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 5

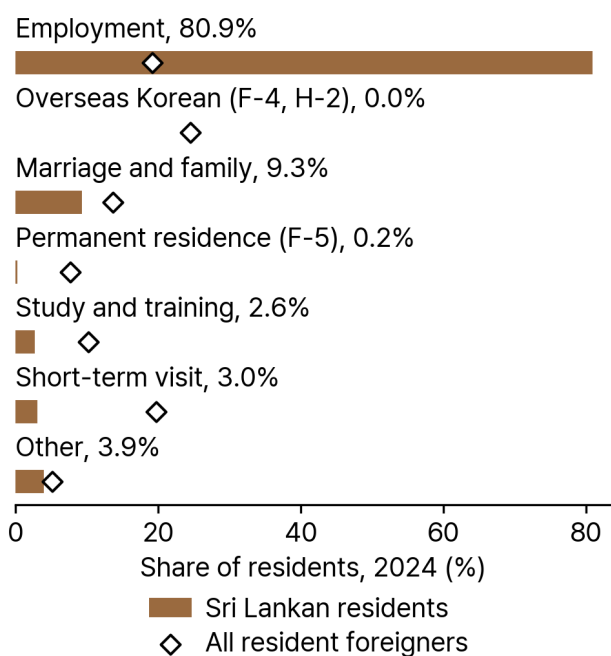
Sri Lankan Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2019 and 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Women made up 9.7 percent of Sri Lankan residents in 2024 (3,487 women), up from 3.6 percent in 2019 (913 women). Among all resident foreigners, women made up 45.1 percent.

4 Visa Status

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Sri Lankan Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

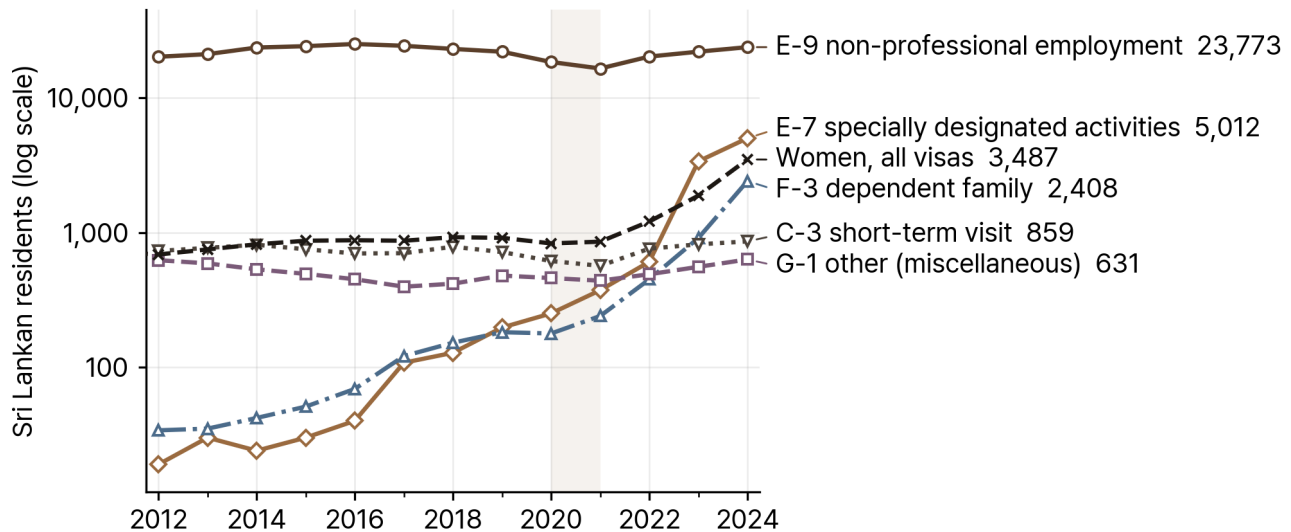
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

In 2024, 80.9 percent of Sri Lankan residents held an employment visa, compared with 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 6). Marriage and family visas accounted for 9.3 percent (13.6 percent for all resident foreigners), short-term visits for 3.0 percent (19.7 percent), study and training

visas for 2.6 percent (10.2 percent), and permanent residence (F-5) for 0.2 percent (7.7 percent). Almost no Sri Lankan residents held overseas Korean visas (F-4 or H-2), which accounted for 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 7

Sri Lankan Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2012-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 3

Sri Lankan Residents by Visa Type, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Sri Lankan residents, 2024	Sri Lankan share of all holders of this visa, 2024
E-9	Non-professional employment	21,992	23,773	66.4%	7.0%
E-7	Specially designated activities	197	5,012	14.0%	7.9%
F-3	Dependent family	182	2,408	6.7%	4.6%
C-3	Short-term visit	716	859	2.4%	0.5%
G-1	Other (miscellaneous)	479	631	1.8%	1.1%
D-2	Student	288	612	1.7%	0.3%
F-6	Marriage migration	308	373	1.0%	0.3%

Note: Shares of Sri Lankan residents are out of 35,792 resident foreigners of Sri Lankan nationality in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa, issued under the Employment Permit System, was held by 23,773 Sri Lankan residents in 2024, compared with 23,618 in 2014 and 21,992 in 2019. Sri Lankan nationals made up 7.0 percent of all E-9 holders in South Korea, the eighth-largest share of any nationality. The E-9 share of the group fell from about 88 percent in 2019 (21,992 of 25,064) to 66.4 percent in 2024.

Other visa types grew much faster after 2019 (see Figure 7). Specially designated activities (E-7) visa holders rose from 197 to 5,012 between 2019 and 2024, about 25 times, and Sri Lankan nationals made up 7.9 percent of all E-7 holders in South Korea in 2024. Dependent family (F-3) visa holders rose from 182 to 2,408, about 13 times. Student (D-2) visa holders rose from 288 to 612. Marriage migrant (F-6) visa holders changed less, from 308 to 373.

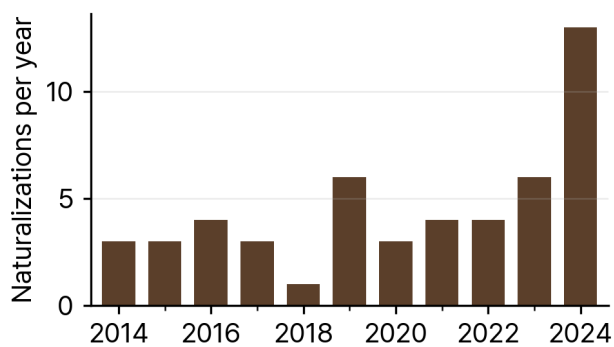
5 Migration Channels and Policy

Sri Lanka sends workers to Korea under the Employment Permit System, which South Korea implemented in August 2004 and operates through agreements with the governments of sending countries. As of June 2012, 24,696 Sri Lankan workers were in Korea under the EPS, the fifth-largest group among the 15 countries with an EPS memorandum of understanding at the time (ILO, 2012).

A 2018 study of Sri Lankan workers who returned from South Korea listed the reasons Korea became one of the top destinations for Sri Lankan labor migrants: low pre-departure costs, no fees to recruitment agencies, no specific educational qualifications or professional tests beyond basic Korean language, relatively high salaries, and a legal work visa granted for five years. Under this route, 7,406 Sri Lankan workers entered Korea in 2011, 5,630 in 2012, and 5,389 in 2013 (Karunaratne and Abeygunawardana 2018).

6 Naturalization

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Sri Lankan Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Between 2014 and 2024, 50 Sri Lankan nationals naturalized as South Korean citizens. Annual counts ranged from 1 to 6 between 2014 and 2023, with the low of 1 in 2018, and rose to 13 in 2024 (see Figure 8). The 13 naturalizations in 2024 equal about 0.04 percent of the 35,792 Sri Lankan residents that year.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Sri Lanka is not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents, so no count of unauthorized Sri Lankan residents is published. The yearbook reported 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

8 Health and Well-being

A study of 67,576 migrant workers with recorded occupational injuries in South Korea between January 2007 and September 2018 included 2,584 Sri Lankan nationals, of whom 22 died

from their injuries (about 0.9 percent) (Lee et al. 2023).

A 2021 survey of Sri Lankan EPS workers in Korean manufacturing found that unfamiliar work practices and a lack of safety and work training were an impediment, and that language was one of the main barriers to living and working in Korea (Don and Hong 2021).

In February 2025, a Korean forklift operator at a brick factory in Naju tied a 31-year-old Sri Lankan worker in plastic wrap and lifted him with a forklift. South Korea's Labor Ministry rejected the factory head's description of the incident as a prank and investigated whether workers had experienced beating, bullying, and overdue wages (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2025). In May 2026, a court sentenced the operator to a suspended prison term and community service and fined the company 5 million won (Yonhap News Agency, 2026).

9 Migration from Sri Lanka to South Korea

South Korea receives a small share of Sri Lankan labor migrants. In 2023, 9,746 of the 297,656 Sri Lankans who registered with the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) registered for jobs in South Korea, about 3.3 percent, making Korea the seventh-largest destination after Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Maldives, and Romania (SLBFE 2023). In 2024 the number fell to 7,114 of 314,786, about 2.3 percent, and Korea dropped to tenth place, behind Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Maldives, Romania, Israel, Japan, and Oman (SLBFE 2025a). UN DESA estimated that 16,851 Sri Lanka-born people lived in South Korea in mid-2024, about 1.1 percent of the 1,492,103 Sri Lankan emigrants worldwide, which placed Korea 15th among destination countries (UN DESA 2024). That estimate is lower than the 35,792 Sri Lankan resident foreigners counted by the Ministry of Justice at the end of 2024.

Sri Lanka's Labour Ministry said it sent 6,500 to 7,000 workers to South Korea in 2023 and planned to send 10,000 in 2024, mainly in production, fishing, and construction (EconomyNext 2024). In the first half of 2025, 3,134 of the 144,379 Sri Lankans who left for foreign employment went to South Korea, about 2.2 percent (SLBFE 2025b). For the EPS-TOPIK round with applications taken from 15 to 17 September 2025, Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor and HRD Korea set a recruitment quota of 2,500 Sri Lankan workers, 2,000 in manufacturing and 500 in fisheries (MOEL and HRD Korea 2025). Over all of 2024, 58,369 Sri Lankans took the EPS-TOPIK and 9,530 passed (HRD Korea 2025); Korea admitted 5,562 Sri Lankan workers on E-9 visas that year and 3,730 in 2025 (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026).

World Bank data put personal remittances received by Sri Lanka at 7.16 percent of GDP in 2023 and 6.75 percent in 2024 (World Bank 2024). In the third quarter of 2025, Sri Lanka

received US\$111.8 million in workers' remittances from South Korea, the eighth-largest amount from a single country, after the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Italy, and the United States (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2025).

We know of no published breakdown of Korea-bound migrants by district, province, or language group. For the population as a whole, Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages.

In February 2025, Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding with South Korean provincial and municipal councils for seasonal work under Korea's E-8 visa. Workers may serve up to three terms within a maximum

of three years, and no private Sri Lankan agency is authorized to send workers under this route. The Cabinet spokesman warned that overstaying visas would lead to reduced quotas for Sri Lankan workers and could cost access to both E-8 and E-9 visas (Daily FT 2025). Under the 2025 point-based selection system for Sri Lankan EPS applicants, candidates must be aged 18 to 39, have no criminal record or history of forced deportation from Korea, pass a color-vision screening, and not have already spent five years or more in Korea on an E-9 or E-10 visa. Applicants who meet these conditions are narrowed to 1.1 times the recruitment quota before a second-round skills test and job-capacity assessment (MOEL and HRD Korea 2025).

TABLE 4
Migration indicators, Sri Lanka and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Sri Lanka-born population in South Korea, mid-2024	16,851	UN DESA 2024
South Korea's share of Sri Lankan emigrants and rank among destinations, 2024	About 1.1 percent (16,851 of 1,492,103); 15th	UN DESA 2024
SLBFE registrations for jobs in South Korea, 2023	9,746 of 297,656 (3.3 percent); seventh	SLBFE 2023
SLBFE registrations for jobs in South Korea, 2024	7,114 of 314,786 (2.3 percent); tenth	SLBFE 2025a
Workers sent to South Korea, 2023 (Labour Ministry)	6,500 to 7,000; 10,000 planned for 2024	EconomyNext 2024
Departures for employment in South Korea, January-June 2025	3,134 of 144,379 (2.2 percent)	SLBFE 2025b
EPS recruitment quota for Sri Lanka, September 2025 round	2,500 (2,000 manufacturing, 500 fisheries)	MOEL and HRD Korea 2025
EPS-TOPIK test takers in Sri Lanka, 2024	58,369 (9,530 passed)	HRD Korea 2025
E-9 workers admitted from Sri Lanka, 2024 and 2025	5,562 and 3,730	Ministry of Employment and Labor 2026
Workers' remittances from South Korea, third quarter of 2025	US\$111.8 million; eighth among source countries	Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2025
Personal remittances as share of GDP	7.16 percent (2023); 6.75 percent (2024)	World Bank 2024

Note: As far as we know, no breakdown of Korea-bound migrants by district or language group has been published.

Research on Sri Lankan migration to Korea is limited. Shaw (2010), using household survey data, finds that Sri Lankan labor migration diversified away from the Middle East from the late 1990s, with Korea among the new destinations in Asia and Europe, and that nearly half of the migrant workforce became male. Karunaratne and Abeygunawardana (2018), studying workers who returned from Korea, report that 60 percent of returnees were engaged in business ventures and 32 percent had put their savings mainly into land or housing. Don and Hong (2021) find that Sri Lankan EPS workers in Korean manufacturing lacked safety and job training and faced language barriers at work. We are not aware of any study of brokers, migration debt, or marriage migration specific to Sri Lankans in Korea.

10 Community Organizations

Buddhist ties connect the two countries. Kandy and Gyeongju established a sister-city partnership in 2018, many Sri Lankan Buddhist monks live in Korea and practice Korean Buddhism, and in August 2021 Gyeongju City provided financial assistance and medical units to the National Hospital of Kandy for COVID-19 patients (Korea Times, 2023). Sri Lankan students have their own association, the Sri Lankan Students Association - Korea (SLSA-Korea), based in Seoul (SLSA-Korea, 2026).

Of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census, 4 name Sri Lankan people or Sri Lanka in their name or target group, and all 4 are religious sites. They are Love Sri Lanka Church (Sangnok-gu, Ansan), the Asan Sri Lanka Maha Vihara

temple (Dhamma Friends, Asan-si), the Mahamevnawa meditation center (Danwon-gu, Ansan), and Sri Radha Shyamasundar Mandir, the ISKCON Seoul temple (Yongsan-gu,

Seoul). Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as multicultural family and foreign worker support centers, also serve Sri Lankan residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Russian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

In 2024, 33,268 Russian nationals were resident in South Korea on 31 December, of whom 22,450 (67.5 percent) were registered foreigners. Russia was the 16th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (1.5 percent of the total) and the 18th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.3 percent). The population numbered 9,735 in 2006, 6,794 in 2010, and 8,973 in 2014, when Russia ranked 21st among registered foreigners and 22nd among all resident foreigners. It rose to 33,600 in 2019, the highest count in the series, fell to 23,702 in 2020 and 21,326 in 2021, and returned to 33,268 by 2024.

Highlights

- ▶ **South Korea had 33,268 Russian nationals in 2024. Russia was the 16th-largest nationality among registered foreigners and the 18th-largest among all resident foreigners, up from 21st and 22nd in 2014, when 8,973 Russians were resident.**
- ▶ **In 2024, 31.3 percent of Russian residents were short-term visitors and 30.4 percent held other statuses, most of them the miscellaneous G-1 status, compared with 19.7 percent and 5.2 percent of all resident foreigners.**
- ▶ **Russian nationals held 9,260 G-1 statuses in 2024, 16.4 percent of all G-1 holders in Korea, up from 3,937 in 2019 and 106 in 2014.**

Russians began arriving in number after Mikhail Gorbachev visited Jeju in 1990 and the two countries normalized relations; about 100,000 Russians, mostly sailors and shuttle traders, visited Busan in 1993 (Sisa Journal, 1994). Russia is not a sending country under the Employment Permit System (Employment Permit System, 2026). Between 2019 and 2024 the number of visa-exempt visitors (B-1) fell by about half, from 19,460 to 9,578, while holders of the miscellaneous G-1 status more than doubled, from 3,937 to 9,260.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Russian residents were more likely to be children (11.5 percent aged 0-14, against 5.7 percent), to be aged 20-39 (57.2 percent, against 49.7 percent), and to hold short-term, family, or other statuses. Few held employment visas (3.4 percent, against 19.2 percent), and none in this category held the overseas Korean statuses F-4 or H-2, because the Ministry of Justice counts ethnic Koreans of Russian nationality separately. This Spotlight describes the size, location, age and sex, visa status, and naturalization of Russian nationals in South Korea, drawing on the KIRD dataset (KIRD, 2026) and published sources.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals present in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of each year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the headline count in this Spotlight.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for more than 90 days who register with immigration authorities, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 (overseas Korean) visa report their place of residence instead of registering, so they are not in registered counts. District-level figures in this Spotlight are for registered foreigners.

Russian residents and Korean-Russians. The Ministry of Justice counts ethnic Koreans of Russian nationality (Korean-Russians, part of the Koryo-saram) in a category separate from other Russian nationals. The Russian residents in this Spotlight exclude that category, so none of them hold the overseas Korean statuses F-4 or H-2.

Unauthorized residents. Foreign nationals who remain in South Korea after their permitted period of residence has expired, as reported in table 6-4 of the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook.

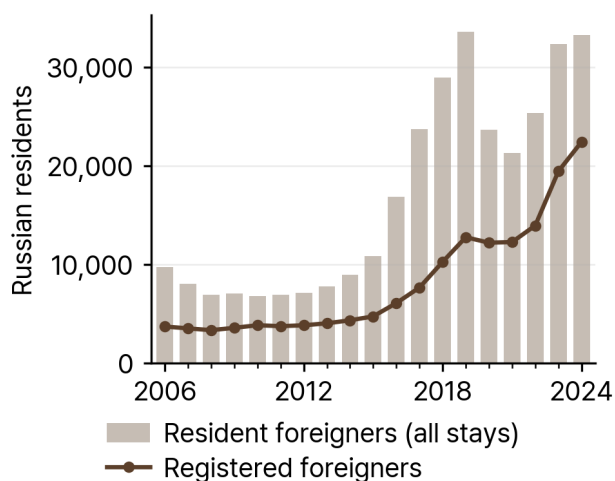
1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Russian resident foreigners remained below 10,000 between 2006 and 2014 (9,735 in 2006, 6,794 in 2010, and 8,973 in 2014). By 2019 it had risen to 33,600, about 3.7

times the 2014 figure. The count fell by 9,898 (29.5 percent) to 23,702 in 2020 and to 21,326 in 2021, then rose to 25,374 in 2022, 32,366 in 2023, and 33,268 in 2024.

FIGURE 1

Russian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

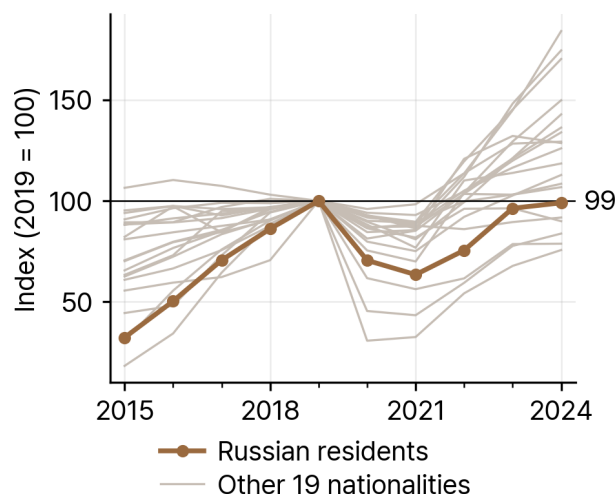
The registered share of the population has risen. In 2006, 3,731 of 9,735 Russian residents (38.3 percent) were registered, and in 2019, 12,786 of 33,600 (38.1 percent). By

2024 the figure was 22,450 of 33,268 (67.5 percent). Those outside the registered count are mainly short-term visitors.

Measured against 2019, the Russian population stood at an index of 99.0 in 2024, about 1 percent below its 2019 level. Russia ranked 15th in growth among the 20 largest nationalities over 2019-24.

FIGURE 2

Growth of Russian Residents Compared with the 19 Other Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (Index 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

TABLE 1

Russian Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners
2006	9,735	3,731	18	16	0.6%	1.1%
2014	8,973	4,365	21	22	0.4%	0.5%
2019	33,600	12,786	18	15	1.0%	1.3%
2024	33,268	22,450	16	18	1.5%	1.3%

Note: Ranks and shares are computed among all nationalities in each count. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 overseas Koreans who report their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who registered with immigration authorities. Korean-Russians are counted separately and are excluded.

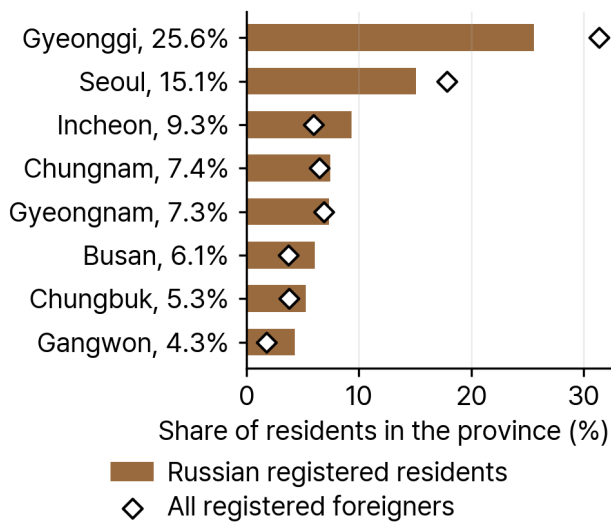
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District-level data cover the 22,450 Russian registered foreigners in 2024. The Incheon and Gyeonggi area accounted for 34.9 percent of them and Seoul for 15.1 percent, so 50.0 percent lived in the capital region, compared with 55.2 percent of all foreign residents. The Yeongnam region accounted for 22.2 percent, the Chungcheong provinces 15.0 percent, Honam 8.2 percent, and Gangwon and Jeju 4.7 percent. Some 7.1 percent lived in rural counties (gun), compared with 10.6 percent of all foreign residents.

The population is spread across many districts. The ten largest districts accounted for 32.7 percent of Russian registered foreigners in 2024, and 62 districts had at least 100. Incheon Yeonsu-gu had the most (1,484), followed by Ansan-si Danwon-gu (948), Hwaseong-si (772), Asan-si (733), and Gimhae-si (700). In Seoul, Jung-gu had 652 and Gwanak-gu 354.

FIGURE 3

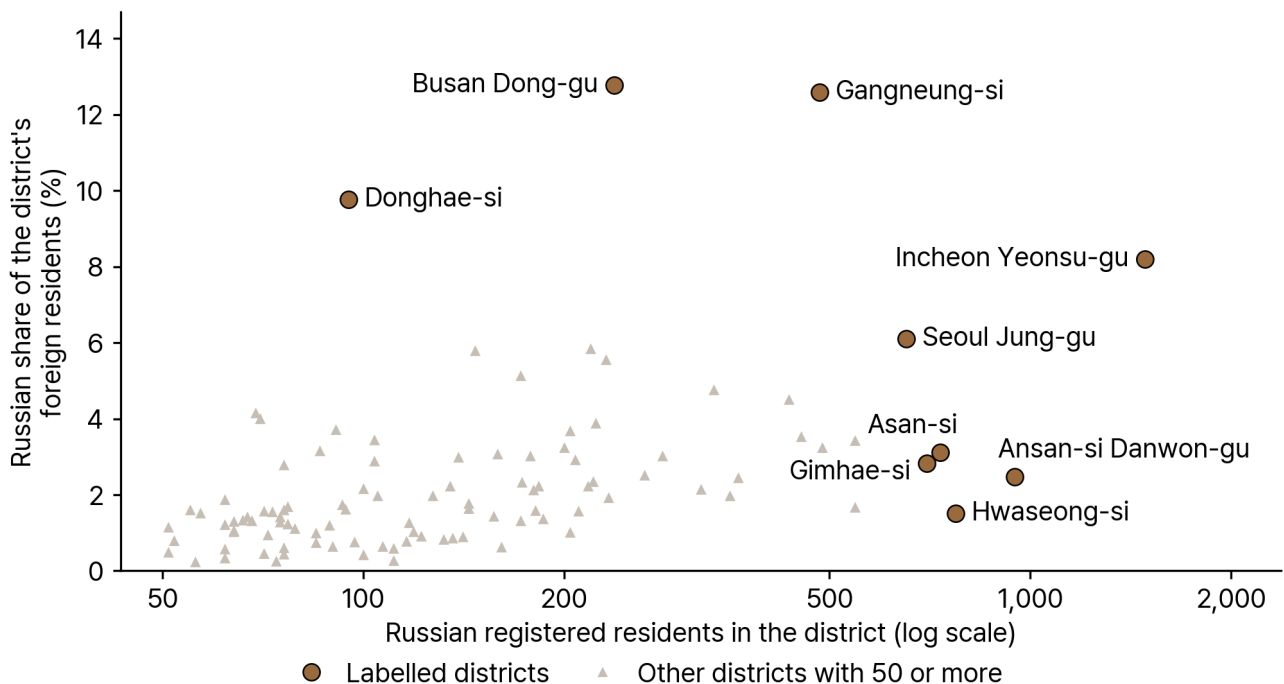
Russian Registered Foreigners by Region of South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

Russian nationals made up the largest shares of registered foreigners in Busan Dong-gu (12.8 percent, 238 people), Gangneung-si (12.6 percent, 483), Incheon Yeonsu-gu (8.2 percent), and Seoul Jung-gu (6.1 percent). Busan Dong-gu contains the Choryang-dong area near Busan Station, which became a Russian-oriented commercial district in the early 1990s (Sisa Journal, 1994).

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Russian registered foreigners and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.419 in 2014 and 0.44 in 2024, a slight increase in residential separation. No district met the definition of an ethnic enclave used in this series (a location quotient of at least 2 and the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

FIGURE 4

Districts with the Most Russian Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 47.0 percent of Russian residents in 2024 (15,625 of 33,268), up from 45.2 percent in 2019 and slightly above the 45.1 percent among all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group in 2024 was 25-29, and the median fell in the 30-34 group.

In 2024, 3,837 Russian residents (11.5 percent) were aged 0-14, twice the 5.7 percent share among all resident foreigners; in 2019 the figure was 3,972. Children under 5 numbered 1,161 in 2024, down from 1,295 in 2019. Adults aged 20-39 made up 57.2 percent of Russian residents (49.7 percent of all resident foreigners), and people aged 60 and older 2.9 percent (12.9 percent of all resident foreigners). Those aged 50 and older numbered 3,260.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 31.3 percent of Russian residents were short-term visitors, compared with 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners. Another 30.4 percent held other statuses (5.2 percent overall) and 25.3 percent held marriage or family statuses (13.6

percent overall). Only 3.4 percent held employment visas, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners; 7.4 percent were in study and training (10.2 percent overall), and 2.2 percent held permanent residence (F-5), against 7.7 percent. None held an overseas Korean status (F-4 or H-2), compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners.

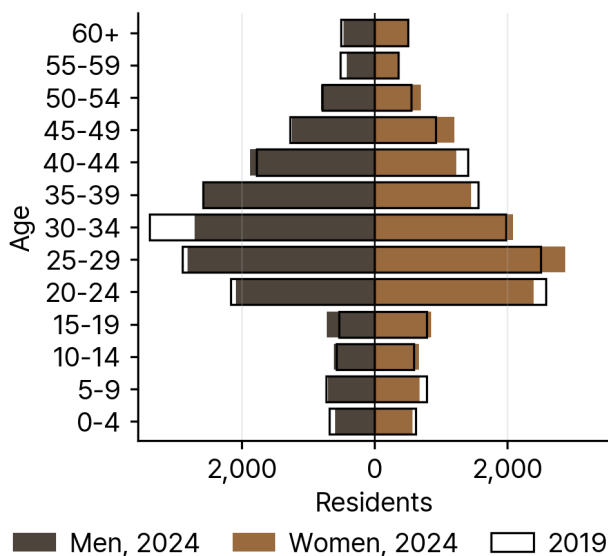
TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Russian Registered Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Russian residents	Share of district's foreign residents (%)
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	1,484	8.2
Ansan-si Danwon-gu	Gyeonggi-do	948	2.5
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	772	1.5
Asan-si	Chungcheongnam-do	733	3.1
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	700	2.8
Seoul Jung-gu	Seoul	652	6.1
Ansan-si Sangnok-gu	Gyeonggi-do	546	3.4
Pyeongtaek-si	Gyeonggi-do	546	1.7
Gwangju Gwangsan-gu	Gwangju	487	3.3
Gangneung-si	Gangwon-do	483	12.6

Note: Registered foreigners only. Share is the Russian count divided by all registered foreigners in the district.

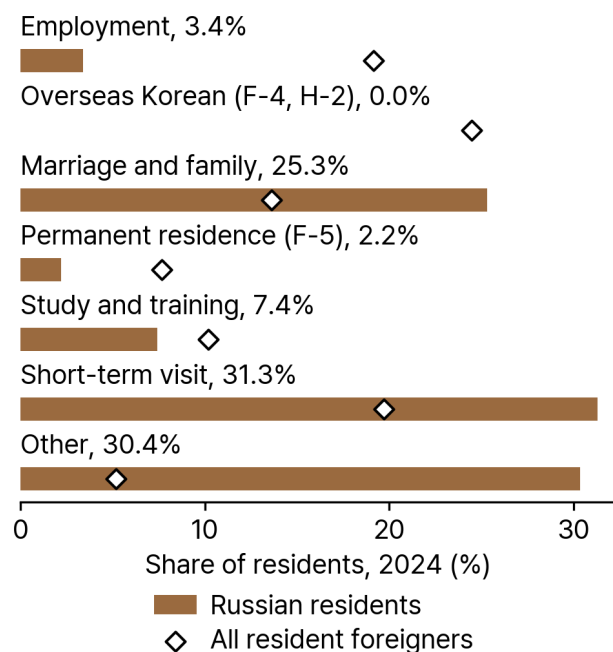
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice district statistics on registered foreigners, 2024.

FIGURE 5
Russian Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 6
Russian Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Visa Group, 2024

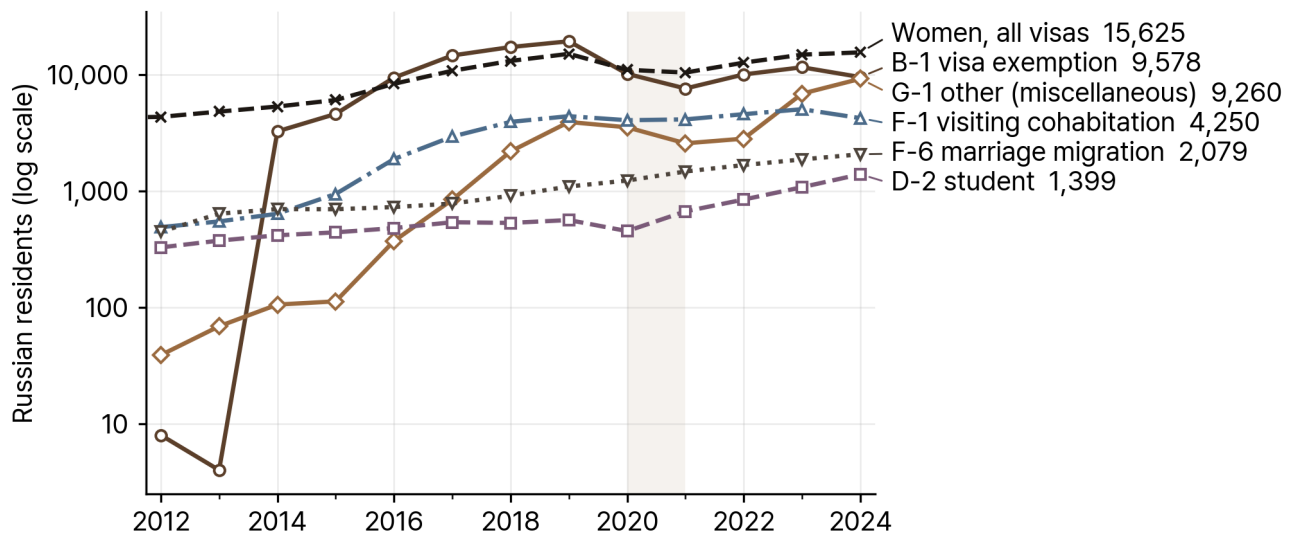


Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Visa exemption (B-1) was the most common single status in 2024, held by 9,578 Russian nationals (28.8 percent). The number was 3,270 in 2014 and 19,460 in 2019. Russia had the third-largest number of B-1 holders of any nationality in 2024.

The miscellaneous G-1 status grew from 106 holders in 2014 to 3,937 in 2019 and 9,260 in 2024; Russians made up 16.4 percent of all G-1 holders in Korea in 2024.

FIGURE 7

Russian Residents in South Korea by Visa Type, 2006-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Visiting cohabitation (F-1) holders numbered 4,250 in 2024, close to the 4,418 of 2019. Between 2019 and 2024, marriage migrants (F-6) rose from 1,098 to 2,079, students (D-2) from 565 to 1,399, dependent family members (F-3) from 485 to 1,291, and general trainees (D-4) from 433 to 1,058.

1993 about 100,000 Russians visited Busan, the second-largest group of visitors after Japanese. Most were sailors and shuttle traders, and the Texas Street area of Choryang-dong near Busan Station became a Russian-oriented commercial district (Sisa Journal, 1994).

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Russian arrivals in South Korea grew after diplomatic normalization in the early 1990s. Russians began coming to Busan right after Mikhail Gorbachev's 1990 visit to Jeju, and in

Russia is not among the sending countries listed in the Employment Permit System program guide, so the E-9 low-skilled work visa is not a route for Russian nationals (Employment Permit System, 2026). Few Russian residents held employment visas in 2024 (3.4 percent).

TABLE 3

Most Common Visa Types among Russian Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Russian residents, 2024 (%)	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024 (%)
B-1	Visa exemption	19,460	9,578	28.8	4.6
G-1	Other (miscellaneous)	3,937	9,260	27.8	16.4
F-1	Visiting cohabitation	4,418	4,250	12.8	4.3
F-6	Marriage migration	1,098	2,079	6.2	1.4
D-2	Student	565	1,399	4.2	0.8
F-3	Dependent family	485	1,291	3.9	2.5
D-4	General trainee	433	1,058	3.2	1.2

Note: Share of Russian residents is out of 33,268 Russian resident foreigners in 2024.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Ethnic Koreans who hold Russian nationality have a separate route. The F-4 overseas Korean status is available to people who held Korean nationality and to their direct descendants who can document the relationship (Ministry of Government Legislation, 2026). The Ministry of Justice counts these Korean-Russians in their own category, so they are not part of the figures in this Spotlight. Korea also operates a permanent return and resettlement program for elderly Sakhalin Koreans, ethnic Koreans who were moved to Sakhalin under Japanese colonial rule. The government selected 270 people in 2023, down from 350 in 2021, and about 3,900 Sakhalin Koreans and family members were estimated to be waiting (Incheon Ilbo, 2026).

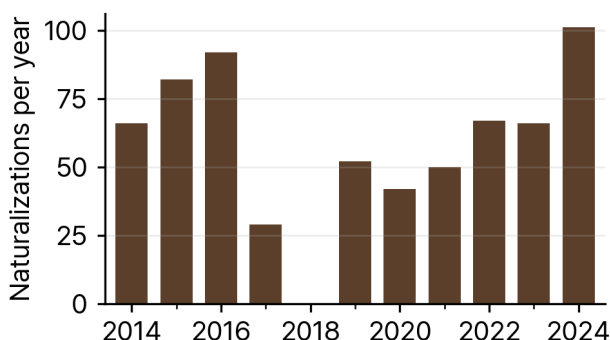
In February 2026, Korea merged the H-2 (visiting employment) status into F-4, ending the practice of giving overseas Koreans different visa routes depending on country or region of origin. Within about six months, more than 54 percent of H-2 holders had converted to F-4 (Dongpo World News, 2026). Because the Russian category in the KIRD data contains no F-4 or H-2 holders, this change mainly concerns Korean-Russians and other overseas Koreans. The KIRD data end in 2024 and so predate it.

6 Naturalization

The KIRD dataset records 647 naturalizations of Russian nationals from 2014 to 2024, drawn from the yearbook's by-country tables for 2014-2017 and 2019-2024; the 2018 yearbook reports China and Korean-Chinese together and is excluded. Annual counts ranged from 29 in 2017 to 101 in 2024, the highest year in the period.

The yearbooks also record 89 restorations of Korean nationality by Russian nationals from 2011 to 2024 (also excluding 2018), a procedure open to people who previously held Korean nationality. Only 26 restorations were recorded in 2024. Against a resident population of 33,268 in 2024, these totals are small, and 2.2 percent of Russian residents held permanent residence that year.

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Russian Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

7 Unauthorized Residents

Russia is not among the ten nationalities listed separately in table 6-4 of the Ministry of Justice yearbook for 2024, so the yearbook gives no count of unauthorized Russian residents for that year. The yearbook counted 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024. Global Voices reported in 2024 that 9,108 Russian nationals were overstaying their visas in 2022, the tenth-largest number of any nationality (Global Voices, 2024). The report does not say whether this count includes Korean-Russians.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no published study reports health outcomes for Russian nationals in South Korea separately.

News reports describe occupational deaths and injuries among Russian sailors on ships docked in Busan, who may not be counted as resident foreigners. On 29 August 2025, a Russian sailor in his 40s died of heat-related cardiac arrest in the engine room of a Russian-flagged refrigerated cargo ship at Gamcheon Port in Saha District (Nocut News, 2025). On 15 September 2026, a Freon gas leak during maintenance of the freezer compartment of a 769-ton Russian fishing vessel in Saha District injured 5 of the 15 Russian sailors aboard, 2 of whom were found in cardiac arrest (Hankook Ilbo, 2026).

9 Migration from Russia to South Korea

We know of no published source that reports what share of Russian emigrants live in South Korea or Korea's rank among their destinations. On the Korean side, Ministry of Justice statistics for March 2025 counted 71,464 residents linked to Russia, comprising 35,952 Koryo-saram (Korean-Russians) and 35,512 other Russian nationals (Ministry of Justice, 2025). The ethnic Korean population of Russia, the group from which Korean-Russian migration draws, fell from 153,156 in the 2010 census (Rosstat, 2011) to 87,819 in the 2021 census (Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, 2022).

Russia has no government labor-sending agreement with South Korea. The e-나라지표 government indicator portal lists 17 Employment Permit System sending countries in 2026, and Russia is not among them (e-나라지표, 2026). No EPS Korean-language test (EPS-TOPIK) is held for Russian nationals, so no count of applicants against quota places exists for this corridor.

Russians have come to Korea by other routes. Through the 1990s and early 2000s, the E-6 entertainer visa brought Russian women to work as dancers in clubs. In February 2003, after more than 20 Russian women on this visa petitioned that they had been made to serve customers in bars and in some cases forced into sexual liaisons, the Ministry of Justice ceased issuing E-6 visas for dancers at cabarets and night spots (Korea Herald via YaleGlobal, 2003). In 2024, Global

Voices reported that many Russians enter on short-term permits and look for jobs in Telegram and KakaoTalk chat groups (Global Voices, 2024).

Russia has been the largest source of asylum applications in South Korea since 2023. Applications from Russian nationals rose from 1,038 in 2022 to 5,750 in 2023 (Korea Herald, 2024), then numbered 4,546 in 2024 and 2,026 in 2025, 13.8 percent of the 14,626 applications that year (Anadolu Agency, 2026). Officials linked the applications to the war in Ukraine and to military conscription, and no Russian applicant was granted refugee status in 2025 (Anadolu Agency, 2026).

Remittances are a very small part of Russia's economy. Personal remittances received equaled 0.083 percent of GDP in 2024, down from 0.128 percent in 2023, 0.142 percent in 2022, 0.527 percent in 2021, and 0.664 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2025). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Russia at about US\$5.0 million that year (World

Bank, 2021). In a case reported in 2026, Korea Customs Service investigators alleged that an underground broker used the Tether (USDT) stablecoin to move about US\$42 million between South Korea and Russia in more than 6,000 transactions between January 2023 and July 2024 (Bitget News, 2026).

Russian migrants to Korea have come mainly from Buryatia, Zabaykalsky Krai (Transbaikalia), Primorsky Krai, Khabarovsk Krai, and Amur Oblast, the eastern regions of Russia closest to Korea. Global Voices reported in 2024 that people now come from all parts of Russia (Global Voices, 2024).

The main policy governing travel between the two countries is a visa waiver agreement signed on 13 November 2013 and in force since 1 January 2014. Holders of ordinary passports of either country may remain up to 60 days without a visa, provided the visit is not for employment, residence, or study (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). The agreement does not permit employment.

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Russia and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Share of Russian emigrants living in South Korea	n.a.	No published source known to us
Russian nationals among resident foreigners in South Korea, March 2025	71,464 total; 35,952 Korean-Russians and 35,512 other Russian nationals	Ministry of Justice, 2025
Employment Permit System sending country, 2026	No	e-나라지표, 2026
Asylum applications by Russian nationals, 2022	1,038	Korea Herald, 2024
Asylum applications by Russian nationals, 2023	5,750	Korea Herald, 2024
Asylum applications by Russian nationals, 2024	4,546	Anadolu Agency, 2026
Asylum applications by Russian nationals, 2025	2,026 (13.8% of 14,626)	Anadolu Agency, 2026
Russian nationals overstaying visas, 2022	9,108 (10th)	Global Voices, 2024
Remittances as a share of Russia's GDP, 2024	0.083%	World Bank, 2025
Remittances from South Korea to Russia, 2021 (World Bank estimate)	US\$5.0 million	World Bank, 2021
Alleged USDT transfers between South Korea and Russia, January 2023 to July 2024	About US\$42 million	Bitget News, 2026

Note: Figures from news and reference sources are as reported there. n.a. = not available.

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

Research on Russian nationals in South Korea, apart from Korean-Russians, is limited and centers on commerce and travel. Kim and Yang (2017) dated the origins of the Central Asia Street in Gwanghui-dong, Seoul, to Russian merchants who came in the 1990s, after the 1990 normalization of relations, to buy Dongdaemun clothing for resale in the former Soviet Union; when most of these traders moved their business to China in the 2000s, Mongolian and Central Asian merchants took over the cargo companies, restaurants, and

Cyrillic signage they left. Park (2014) used bilateral panel data for 1995–2010 to estimate that visa waiver agreements raise inbound visitors from partner countries by about 60 percent and outbound travel by about 14 percent, and applied these estimates to the 2014 Korea–Russia waiver. Fedorova and Nam (2023) photographed more than 800 public signs between 2018 and 2020 in four urban districts, three in Seoul and Wongok-dong in Ansan, and found that new migrant communities, including the Mongolian, Central Asian, and

Russian district near Dongdaemun, create "multilingual islands" in the streetscape. Harmon-Donovan (2015) asked why Russian speakers chose South Korea, Cambodia, and the Netherlands over North America and Western Europe between 1989 and 2015. We are not aware of any study of brokers, debt, work, marriage, or return migration among Russian nationals in Korea.

10 Community Organizations

Two of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census name Russians or Russian speakers in their name or target group. The Svoboda Russian-Speaking Support Center (Seubaboda Reosiaegwon Jiwon Senteo) is a community

organization in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, the district with the most Russian registered foreigners. Cheonan Moise is a nongovernmental organization in Dongnam-gu, Cheonan. Both are self-operated and privately funded. Most general-purpose organizations, such as multicultural family support centers and foreign worker support centers, also serve Russian residents.

In Busan's Choryang-dong, the Choryang TCK House, a nongovernmental organization, supports Russian-speaking migrant families. In 2023, about 100 Russian-speaking students attended Choryang Elementary School, and volunteer teachers at the center provided after-school instruction in Korean and Russian, along with music and other activities (The AsiaN, 2023). The source describes these families as Russian-speaking and does not break them down by nationality.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Bangladeshi Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

South Korea had 31,220 resident foreigners of Bangladeshi nationality on 31 December 2024. Of these, 27,875 (89.3 percent) were registered foreigners, the category for foreign nationals in Korea for more than 90 days. Bangladesh was the 15th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (1.9 percent of the total) and the 19th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.2 percent). The count was 14,649 in 2006, when Bangladesh ranked 14th among registered foreigners and 13th among all resident foreigners, and 14,644 in 2014, when it ranked 16th and 17th.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 31,220 Bangladeshi nationals lived in South Korea, 27,875 of them registered foreigners; Bangladesh was the 15th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (1.9 percent) and the 19th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.2 percent).
- ▶ The Bangladeshi population grew 70.2 percent between 2019 and 2024 (from 18,340 to 31,220), the third-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities.
- ▶ In 2024, 43.7 percent of Bangladeshi residents held an E-9 non-professional employment visa, and women made up 14.4 percent of the group, compared with 45.1 percent of all resident foreigners.

Most Bangladeshi workers came through the Employment Permit System (EPS). Korea designated Bangladesh as an EPS partner country in 2007 and invited more than 1,500 Bangladeshi workers under the program in 2008 (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh, 2007-2008). The population was flat for more than a decade, then rose from 16,426 in 2021 to 31,220 in 2024. Over 2019-2024, the number holding specially designated activities (E-7) visas grew from 321 to 3,749, and the number holding dependent family (F-3) visas grew from 616 to 3,430.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Bangladeshi residents were far more likely to hold employment visas (56.9 percent against 19.2 percent), much more likely to be men, and more concentrated in ages 20 to 39 (70.8 percent against 49.7 percent). A slightly larger share lived in the Seoul capital area (59.4 percent against 55.2 percent). This Spotlight describes the size of the population, where Bangladeshi residents live, their age, sex, and visa status, the channels and policies behind their migration, naturalization, health and well-being, ties to Bangladesh, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of a given year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who report their residence. This is the broadest count published by the Ministry of Justice.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in Korea for longer than 90 days who register with immigration authorities. They are a subset of resident foreigners. Overseas Koreans holding F-4 visas report their place of residence instead of registering and are not counted here. District-level figures in this Spotlight use registered foreigners.

Bangladeshi residents. In this Spotlight, the term refers to foreign nationals holding Bangladeshi citizenship. Naturalized Korean citizens of Bangladeshi origin are not included in the resident foreigner counts.

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Bangladeshi resident foreigners fell from 14,649 in 2006 to 12,605 in 2010, a decline of 14.0 percent (2,044 fewer people). It then rose to 14,644 in 2014 and 18,340 in 2019 (see Figure 1). The count dipped to 16,823 in 2020 and 16,426 in 2021, 10.4 percent below 2019 (1,914 fewer people), then climbed to 21,928 in 2022, 26,636 in 2023, and 31,220 in 2024, the highest count on record. The 2024 total was about 2.1 times the 2006 total (31,220 against 14,649).

The registered share of the group grew over time. Registered foreigners made up 8,596 of 14,649 Bangladeshi residents in 2006 (58.7 percent), 12,065 of 14,644 in 2014 (82.4 percent), and 27,875 of 31,220 in 2024 (89.3 percent). Among registered foreigners, Bangladesh ranked 14th in 2006, 16th in

2014, 17th in 2019, and 15th in 2024. Among all resident foreigners, it ranked 13th, 17th, 21st, and 19th in the same years (see Table 1).

Indexed to 2019 = 100, the Bangladeshi population stood at 170.2 in 2024, a growth of 70.2 percent over five years. That was the third-fastest growth among the 20 largest nationalities in South Korea (see Figure 2).

TABLE 1
Bangladeshi Residents in South Korea, Selected Years, 2006-24

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners	Share of all resident foreigners
2006	14,649	8,596	14	13	1.4%	1.6%
2014	14,644	12,065	16	17	1.1%	0.8%
2019	18,340	14,975	17	21	1.2%	0.7%
2024	31,220	27,875	15	19	1.9%	1.2%

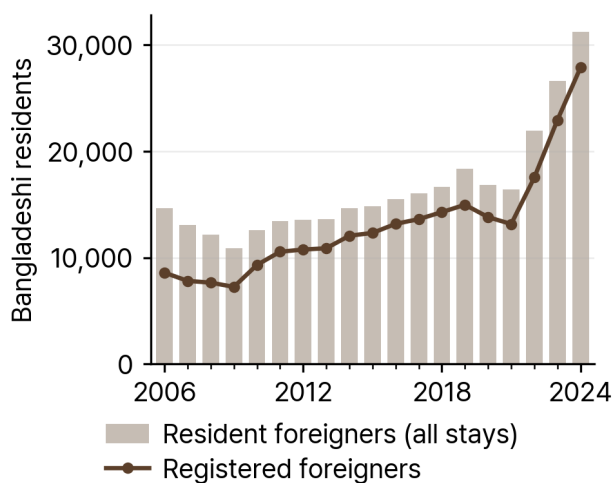
Note: Ranks are among all nationalities. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and overseas Koreans with F-4 visas who report their residence; registered foreigners are long-term residents who register with immigration authorities.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

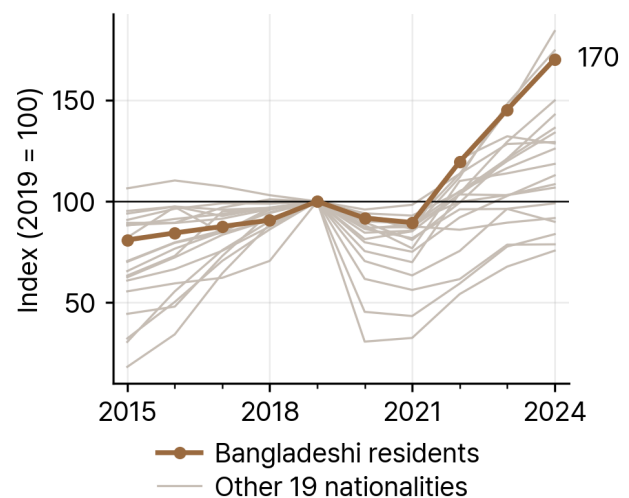
In 2024, 55.5 percent of Bangladeshi registered residents lived in Incheon and Gyeonggi province, 20.2 percent in the Yeongnam region (Busan, Daegu, Ulsan, and the Gyeongsang provinces), 11.6 percent in the Chungcheong region, 6.9 percent in the Honam region, 3.9 percent in Seoul, and 1.9 percent in Gangwon and Jeju (see Figure 3). The Seoul capital area (Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi) was home to 59.4 percent of the group, compared with 55.2 percent of all resident foreigners.

FIGURE 1
Bangladeshi Residents in South Korea, All Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners, 2006-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

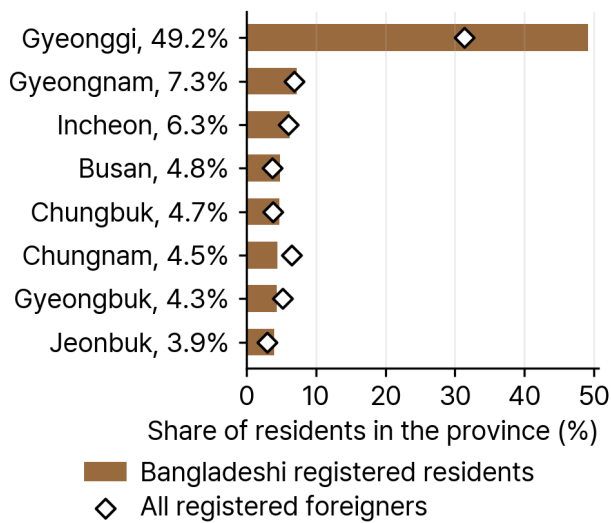
FIGURE 2
Growth of Bangladeshi Residents Compared with the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index, 2019 = 100)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Overall, 11.1 percent of Bangladeshi residents lived in rural counties (gun) in 2024, close to the 10.6 percent of all resident foreigners. The rural share was higher outside the capital area: 50.6 percent in Gangwon and Jeju, 35.1 percent in Honam, and 32.2 percent in Chungcheong.

FIGURE 3

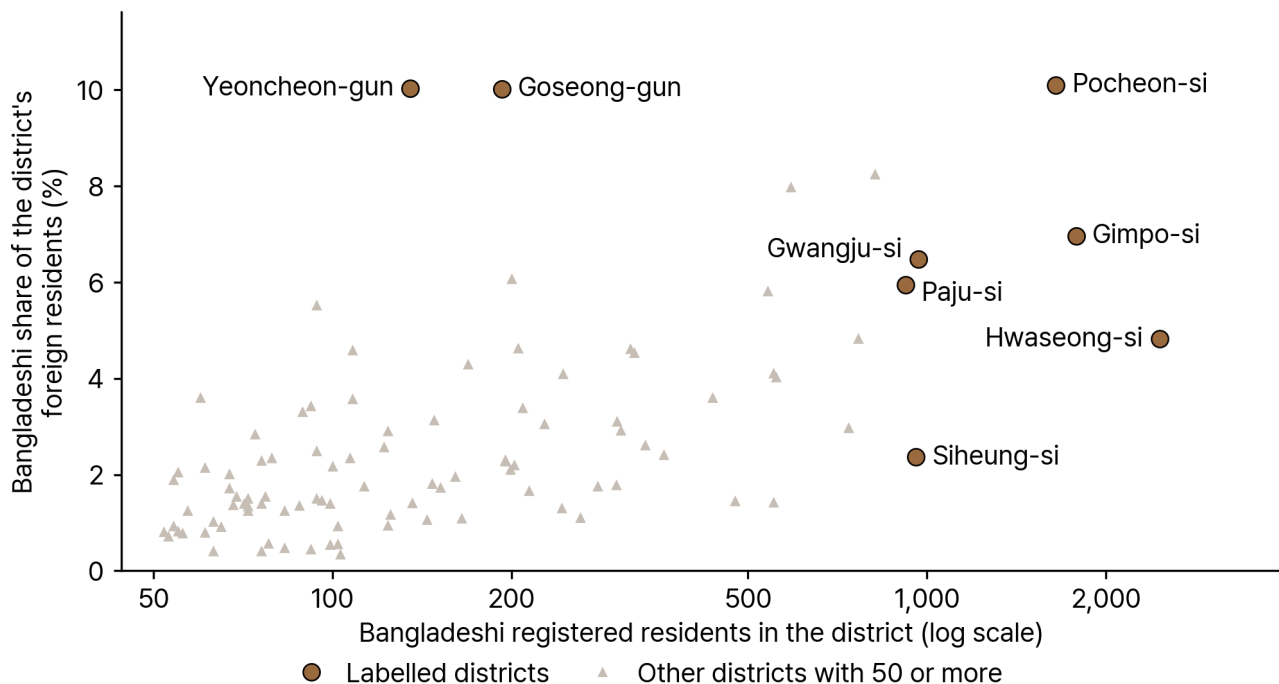
Bangladeshi Registered Residents by Province, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The largest Bangladeshi populations were in Hwaseong-si (2,461), Gimpo-si (1,784), and Pocheon-si (1,648), all in Gyeonggi province (see Figure 4 and Table 2). Seven of the ten largest districts were in Gyeonggi. The ten largest districts together accounted for 41.8 percent of Bangladeshi registered residents, and 58 districts had at least 100. In Seoul, the largest counts were in Gwangjin-gu (300) and Yongsan-gu (144).

Bangladeshi residents made up at most about one in ten foreign residents of any district. The highest shares in 2024 were in Pocheon-si (10.1 percent), Yeoncheon-gun (10.0 percent), and Goseong-gun in Gangwon (10.0 percent). No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave (a location quotient of at least 2 with the group making up at least 30 percent of the district's foreign residents).

FIGURE 4

Districts with the Most Bangladeshi Registered Residents, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

The index of dissimilarity (D) between Bangladeshi residents and all other registered foreigners across districts was 0.545 in 2014 and 0.524 in 2024. At 0.524, about half of Bangladeshi

residents would have to move to another district for the group to be distributed like other foreigners.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Bangladeshi Registered Residents, 2024

District	Province	Bangladeshi residents	Share of district's foreign residents
Hwaseong-si	Gyeonggi-do	2,461	4.8%
Gimpo-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,784	7.0%
Pocheon-si	Gyeonggi-do	1,648	10.1%
Gwangju-si	Gyeonggi-do	967	6.5%
Siheung-si	Gyeonggi-do	957	2.4%
Paju-si	Gyeonggi-do	920	5.9%
Yangju-si	Gyeonggi-do	816	8.3%
Incheon Seo-gu	Incheon	765	4.8%
Gimhae-si	Gyeongsangnam-do	738	3.0%
Busan Nam-gu	Busan	590	8.0%

Note: Share of district's foreign residents is Bangladeshi registered residents divided by all registered foreigners in the district.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

3 Age and Sex

Bangladeshi residents were mostly men. Women numbered 4,481 in 2024, or 14.4 percent of the group, up from 1,301 (7.1 percent) in 2019. Among all resident foreigners, 45.1 percent were women in 2024.

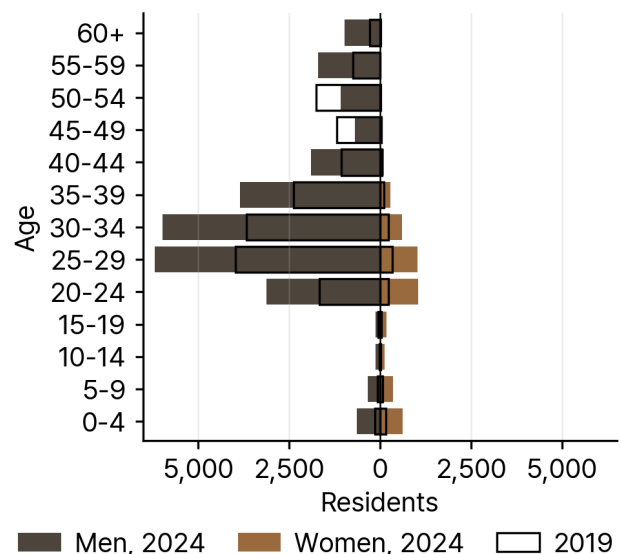
The group was concentrated in young working ages. In 2024, 70.8 percent of Bangladeshi residents were ages 20 to 39 (22,093 people), compared with 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest five-year age group was 25-29, and the median fell in the 30-34 group. Only 3.3 percent were age 60 or older, against 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 5).

The number of children grew quickly. Bangladeshi children ages 0 to 14 rose from 503 in 2019 to 2,202 in 2024, about 4.4 times the 2019 count, and made up 7.1 percent of the group in 2024 (5.7 percent among all resident foreigners). Children under age 5 rose from 305 to 1,245 over the same years.

4 Visa Status

In 2024, 56.9 percent of Bangladeshi residents held an employment visa, about three times the share among all resident foreigners (19.2 percent). Marriage and family visas accounted for 17.0 percent (13.6 percent of all resident foreigners), study and training visas for 10.2 percent (the same share as all resident foreigners), and short-term visits for 9.2 percent (19.7 percent of all). Only 0.8 percent held permanent residence (F-5), against 7.7 percent of all resident foreigners (see Figure 6).

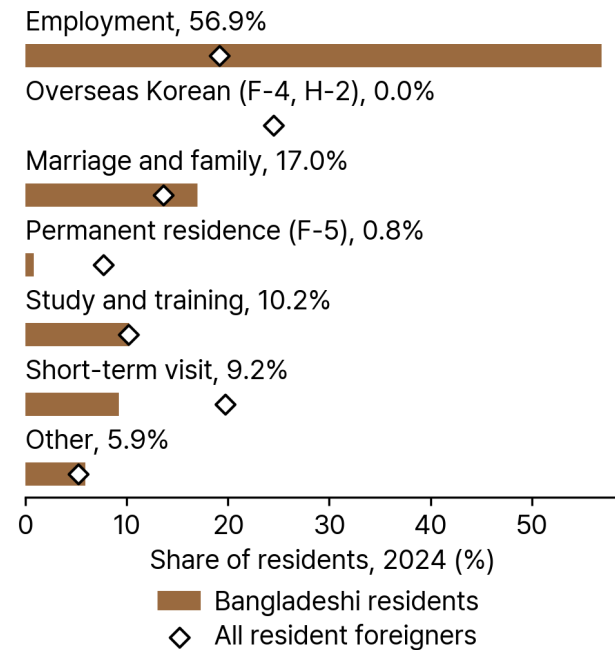
FIGURE 5
Bangladeshi Residents in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

The E-9 non-professional employment visa was the most common single status: 13,630 Bangladeshi residents held it in 2024 (43.7 percent of the group), up from 10,117 in 2014 and 10,260 in 2019. Bangladeshi nationals were 4.0 percent of all E-9 holders in Korea, the tenth-largest group of E-9 holders by nationality.

FIGURE 6

Visa Groups of Bangladeshi Residents and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

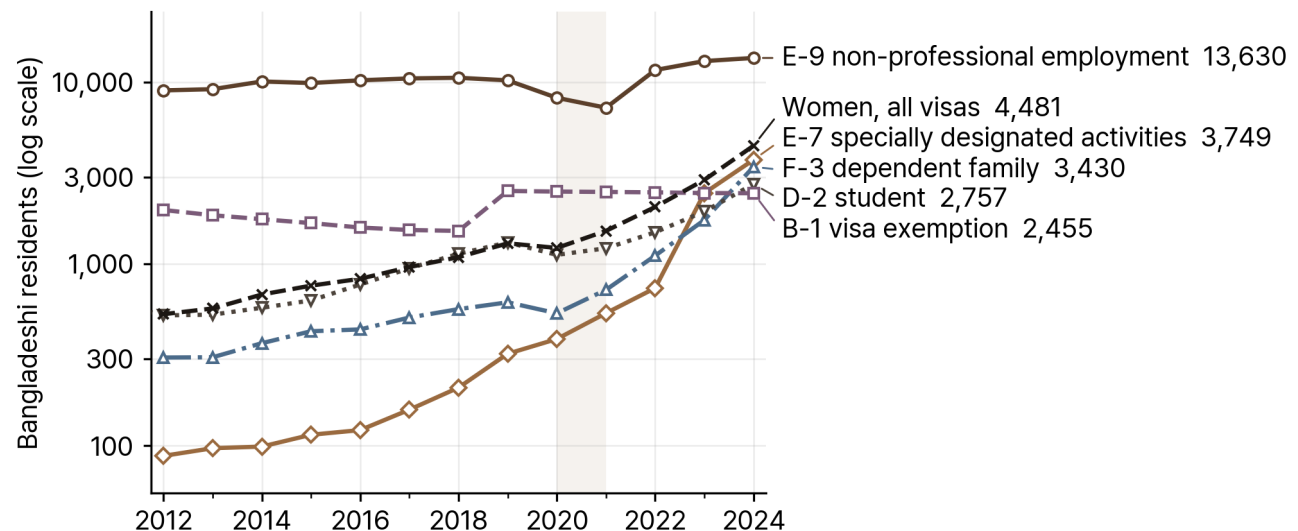
Several other statuses grew faster than E-9 between 2019 and 2024 (see Figure 7 and Table 3). E-7 specially designated activities visas rose from 321 to 3,749, and Bangladeshi nationals held 5.9 percent of all E-7 visas in Korea in 2024. F-3 dependent family visas rose from 616 to 3,430 (6.5 percent of all F-3 holders), and D-2 student visas from 1,316 to 2,757. The number of visa-exempt (B-1) residents changed little, from 2,526 to 2,455.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

Korea designated Bangladesh as a partner country for the Employment Permit System in 2007, and in 2008 it invited more than 1,500 Bangladeshi workers under the program (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Bangladesh, 2007-2008). As of 2025, Bangladesh was one of 17 countries with an agreement with the Korean government to send workers under the EPS (HRD Korea, 2025).

Korea has raised its hiring targets for Bangladeshi workers. In 2022, the Korean government decided to hire 6,000 Bangladeshi workers in 2023, doubling the earlier quota (KIEP, 2022). In February 2024, the Korean ambassador announced that the fisheries and construction sectors would open to Bangladeshi job seekers for the first time, with 2024 targets of 7,500 workers in manufacturing, 1,877 in fisheries, 1,095 in construction, and 304 in shipbuilding (The Business Standard, 2024).

FIGURE 7

Bangladeshi Residents in South Korea by Main Visa Type, 2012-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2012-2024.

6 Naturalization

A total of 256 Bangladeshi nationals acquired Korean citizenship through naturalization from 2014 to 2024. Annual counts ranged from 5 in 2023 to 59 in 2020, and 14 Bangladeshi nationals naturalized in 2024 (see Figure 8).

7 Unauthorized Residents

Bangladesh is not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately for unauthorized residents, so no count of unauthorized Bangladeshi residents is published. The yearbook reported 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

TABLE 3

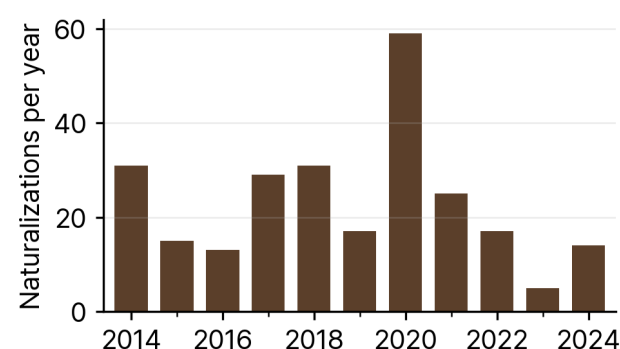
Most Common Visas Held by Bangladeshi Residents in South Korea, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Bangladeshi residents, 2024	Share of all holders of this visa in Korea, 2024
E-9	Non-professional employment	10,260	13,630	43.7%	4.0%
E-7	Specially designated activities	321	3,749	12.0%	5.9%
F-3	Dependent family	616	3,430	11.0%	6.5%
D-2	Student	1,316	2,757	8.8%	1.5%
B-1	Visa exemption	2,526	2,455	7.9%	1.2%
F-2	Residential	596	1,096	3.5%	1.8%
G-1	Other (miscellaneous)	829	846	2.7%	1.5%

Note: Shares of Bangladeshi residents use the 2024 total of 31,220 resident foreigners.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2019 and 2024.

FIGURE 8

Naturalizations of Bangladeshi Nationals in South Korea, 2014-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no source reports population-level health statistics for Bangladeshi residents. Published reporting consists of individual cases of workplace injury and illness among Bangladeshi EPS workers.

In March 2025, Rayhan, a Bangladeshi worker in his twenties, fractured a bone in his hand at a plastics factory in Pocheon, Gyeonggi province. His employer refused to support an industrial-accident claim; he filed it on his own, and his E-9 visa was later not renewed (Newstapa, 2025). Roy Ajit, a 41-year-old Bangladeshi worker, developed interstitial lung disease and lost 40 percent of his lung function after he began polishing metal parts at an agricultural-machinery factory in Gyeonggi in February 2021. The Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service rejected his industrial-accident claim, and as of April 2026 he was pursuing an administrative lawsuit challenging the denial (Kyunghyang Weekly, 2026).

9 Migration from Bangladesh to South Korea

Bangladesh ranked fifth worldwide in the number of its nationals living abroad before the COVID-19 pandemic, with an estimated 7.8 million Bangladeshis working abroad in 2018 (World Bank, 2023). The same World Bank background paper describes the EPS as a channel of modest demand next to the Gulf states, with a total of about 30,000 workers needed from all sending countries combined. We know of no published source that reports South Korea's rank among the destinations of Bangladeshi emigrants.

Bangladesh sent 28,697 workers to South Korea through the EPS from 2008 to 2022, including a record 5,891 in 2022 (The Business Standard, 2022a). The World Bank paper counts 16,721 migrants sent to Korea from 2008 to 2017 (World Bank, 2023).

Departures have fallen short of Korea's allocations. According to data from BOESL, Bangladesh's state recruiting agency, reported by Bonikbarta, Korea allocated 11,700 places to Bangladesh in 2024 and 2,779 workers (24 percent) were sent. Over the five years covered by the report, Korea allocated 39,255 places, BOESL received job orders for 17,247 workers, and 14,829 workers (37 percent of the allocation) were sent. In 2024, more than 7,400 Bangladeshis passed the EPS Korean-language test and were placed on the EPS roster of job seekers. A rostered worker who does not go to Korea within two years must retake the language, skills, and medical tests to apply again (Bonikbarta, 2025).

Bangladesh received US\$96.27 million in recorded remittances from South Korea in fiscal year 2018, 15.61 percent more than in fiscal year 2017, up from US\$64.71 million in fiscal year 2016. At the time, Bangladesh Bank was seeking to raise remittance flows from Japan and South Korea (The Financial Express,

2018). The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, modeled from migrant numbers and incomes and last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Bangladesh at about US\$39.1 million that year, below the recorded figure for fiscal year 2018 (World Bank, 2021). Personal remittances received by Bangladesh from all countries equaled 4.67 percent of GDP in 2022, 5.05 percent in 2023, and 6.11 percent in 2024 (World Bank, 2024), and 7.42 percent in 2025 (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2025).

No published source that we know of reports the home districts or ethnic groups of Korea-bound migrants. For overseas labor migration to all destinations, 10 districts in the Dhaka and Chattogram divisions accounted for about 49 percent of the 9.19 million Bangladeshis who went abroad for work from 2005 to 2020. Cumilla (964,000), Chattogram (726,000), Brahmanbaria (493,000), Tangail (443,000), and Dhaka (404,000) sent the most workers (The Business Standard, 2021).

Bangladesh sends workers to South Korea through the government-run EPS, which the Human Resources Development Service of Korea (HRD Korea) manages on the Korean side. A World Bank background paper found that migrants paid about US\$900 to go to Korea under the EPS, compared with more than US\$4,000 through privately intermediated programs to the same destination. EPS candidates must be ages 18 to 39 and pass a basic Korean-language exam (World Bank, 2023).

Bengali (Bangla) is the sole official language of Bangladesh under Article 3 of its constitution, and the first language of 98 percent of the population (The Business Standard, 2022b).

Studies of Bangladeshi migrants in South Korea have examined migration motives, settlement, business ownership, and discrimination. In an ethnographic study, Kim and Rabbani

(2017) found that Bangladeshi workers were drawn by high employment and wages, good workplace conditions, political and economic stability, and secularism, and that those who sought permanent residence did so by marrying Korean nationals, investing in small businesses, changing their visa status, or applying for refugee status. Fee and Rahman (2014) found that opportunity structures and market conditions explained the move of Bangladeshi workers into business ownership, and that these entrepreneurs served both ethnic and local Korean markets. Kim and Rabbani (2020) reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Bangladeshi workers faced restrictions on their movement at workplaces, limited access to public masks and emergency text alerts, and exclusion from emergency relief grants. We are not aware of any study of recruitment costs, brokers, or debt in this corridor.

10 Community Organizations

The Bangladeshi Students' Association in Korea (BSAK) is a student community organization with members from more than 19 Korean universities. It organizes events for national and religious holidays of Bangladesh and Korea, along with career activities (Bangladesh Circle, n.d.). Ansan's Wongok-dong, a district designated a multicultural village special zone in May 2009, was home to about 21,000 foreign residents from 57 countries in January 2019, and its roughly 200 ethnic restaurants included one Bangladeshi restaurant (Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation, 2019).

A survey of 310 Bangladeshi migrants in Korea, conducted from March to August 2016 and published in 2018, found that they maintained strong bonding networks based on close family ties and weak bridging networks with the wider host society (Hafiz and Shin, 2018).

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Bangladesh and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
Bangladeshis working abroad, 2018	7.8 million (fifth worldwide)	World Bank, 2023
Cumulative EPS departures to South Korea, 2008-2022	28,697	The Business Standard, 2022a
EPS departures to South Korea, 2022	5,891	The Business Standard, 2022a
EPS places allocated and workers sent, 2024	11,700 places; 2,779 sent (24%)	Bonikbarta, 2025
EPS places allocated and workers sent, five years reported in 2025	39,255 places; 14,829 sent (37%)	Bonikbarta, 2025
Candidates who passed the EPS language test and were rostered, 2024	More than 7,400	Bonikbarta, 2025
Migration cost, EPS and private intermediaries	About US\$900; more than US\$4,000	World Bank, 2023
Remittances from South Korea to Bangladesh, fiscal year 2018	US\$96.27 million	The Financial Express, 2018
Remittances as a share of Bangladesh's GDP, 2024	6.11%	World Bank, 2024
Remittances as a share of Bangladesh's GDP, 2025	7.42%	TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2025

Note: Remittance shares of GDP cover inflows from all countries.

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

The KIRD census of 1,717 migrant-serving organizations includes 8 whose name or listed target group names Bangladeshi residents. Most are religious sites, among them the Seoul Central Mosque and the Sri Radha Shyamasundar Mandir (ISKCON Seoul temple), both in Yongsan-gu, Seoul, and the Daejeon Islamic Center in Yuseong-gu, Daejeon. Others are the Jumma People's Network Korea (JPNK) in

Gimpo-si, the Universal Cultural Center in Dong-gu, Gwangju, and the GFC International Student Center at Pusan National University in Geumjeong-gu, Busan. Most general-purpose organizations in the census, such as migrant worker centers and multicultural family support centers, also serve Bangladeshi residents.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Bangladeshi Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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Canadian Immigrants in South Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summary

The Ministry of Justice counted 14,879 Canadian resident foreigners in South Korea at the end of 2006 and 28,604 at the end of 2024, an increase of 13,725 people (92.2 percent). In 2024, Canada was the 27th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (0.3 percent of the total) and the 20th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.1 percent). In 2014 it ranked 19th among registered foreigners and 15th among all resident foreigners.

Highlights

- ▶ At the end of 2024, 28,604 Canadian nationals were resident in South Korea, up from 14,879 in 2006. Canada was the 27th-largest nationality among registered foreigners (0.3 percent) and the 20th-largest among all resident foreigners (1.1 percent), down from 19th and 15th in 2014.
- ▶ In 2024, 62.1 percent of Canadians (17,757 people) held the F-4 Overseas Korean visa, compared with 24.5 percent of all resident foreigners who held an Overseas Korean visa (F-4 or H-2).
- ▶ Between 2011 and 2024, 4,542 people whose previous nationality was Canadian restored their Korean nationality, compared with 28 Canadians who naturalized between 2014 and 2024.

Most Canadians in Korea hold statuses tied to Korean ancestry or to short visits. The F-4 Overseas Korean visa was the most common status in 2024 (17,757 holders), followed by B-2 tourist and transit status (6,235). The number of E-2 foreign language instructor visa holders fell from 2,809 in 2014 to 939 in 2024, while F-4 holders rose from 14,509 to 17,757 over the same years.

Compared with all resident foreigners in 2024, Canadians were more often women (53.3 percent versus 45.1 percent) and more often aged 60 and older (25.7 percent versus 12.9

percent). Registered Canadians were more concentrated in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi (67.3 percent versus 55.2 percent), and 5.6 percent of Canadians held an employment visa, against 19.2 percent of all resident foreigners. This Spotlight describes the number of Canadian residents over time, where they live, their age and sex, visa status, migration channels, naturalization, health and well-being, migration from Canada to South Korea, and community organizations.

BOX 1

Definitions

Resident foreigners (체류외국인). All foreign nationals in South Korea on a valid status on 31 December of the reference year, including short-term visitors and overseas Koreans who have reported their place of residence. Counts come from the Ministry of Justice immigration statistics yearbooks.

Registered foreigners (등록외국인). Foreign nationals in South Korea for longer than 90 days who complete alien registration, a subset of resident foreigners. Holders of the F-4 Overseas Korean visa report their residence instead of registering, so they are not counted among registered foreigners. District-level figures in this Spotlight cover registered foreigners only.

Canadian residents. Foreign nationals whose nationality is recorded as Canada, including Korean Canadians who hold Canadian citizenship. People who have restored or acquired Korean nationality are no longer counted as foreigners.

Visa codes. Status of stay codes used by the Ministry of Justice, such as F-4 (Overseas Korean), B-2 (tourist and transit), and E-2 (foreign language instructor).

1 Size of the Population over Time

The number of Canadian resident foreigners grew from 14,879 in 2006 to 20,435 in 2010, 24,353 in 2014, and 26,789 in 2019. It fell to 21,794 in 2020, a drop of 4,995 people (18.6 percent), then rose to 22,830 in 2021 and 27,705 in 2022, eased to 27,607 in 2023, and rose again to 28,604 in 2024, the highest count in the series (KIRD dataset).

Registered foreigners are a much smaller group, and their number has declined. In 2024, 4,452 Canadians were registered, 15.6 percent of all Canadian resident foreigners,

compared with 6,843 registered in 2006, 5,747 in 2014, and 4,358 in 2019.

TABLE 1

Canadian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, Selected Years

Year	Resident foreigners	Registered foreigners	Rank among registered foreigners	Rank among all resident foreigners	Share of all registered foreigners (%)	Share of all resident foreigners (%)
2006	14,879	6,843	15	12	1.1	1.6
2014	24,353	5,747	19	15	0.5	1.4
2019	26,789	4,358	23	18	0.3	1.1
2024	28,604	4,452	27	20	0.3	1.1

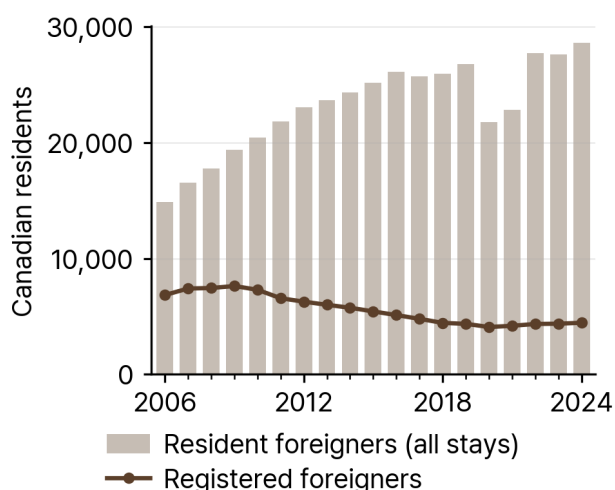
Note: Counts on 31 December. Ranks and shares are computed among all nationalities in each count. Resident foreigners include short-term visitors and F-4 overseas Koreans who report their residence; registered foreigners are those in Korea for more than 90 days who completed alien registration.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Canada ranked lower among registered foreigners than among all resident foreigners in each year shown in Table 1, since F-4 holders (62.1 percent of Canadians in 2024) and short-term visitors (22.0 percent) are not counted among registered foreigners. Among registered foreigners, Canada ranked 15th in 2006, 19th in 2014, 23rd in 2019, and 27th in 2024. Among all resident foreigners, it ranked 12th, 15th, 18th, and 20th in the same years. Canadians' share of registered foreigners fell from 1.1 percent in 2006 to 0.3 percent in 2024, and their share of all resident foreigners fell from 1.6 percent to 1.1 percent.

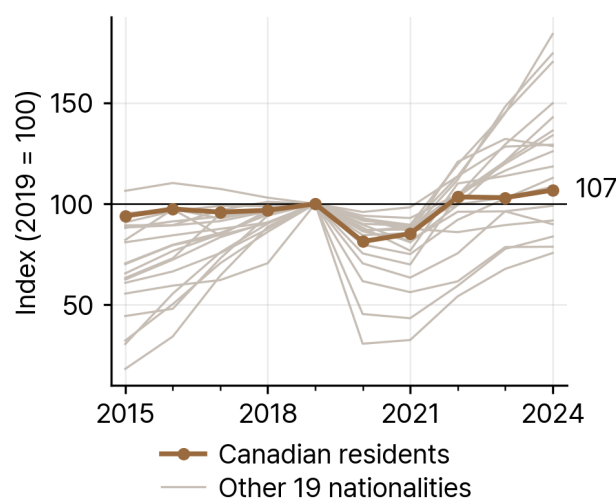
Measured against 2019, the Canadian population stood at an index of 106.8 in 2024 (28,604 divided by 26,789). This ranked 14th in growth among the 20 largest nationalities.

FIGURE 1

Canadian Resident Foreigners and Registered Foreigners in South Korea, 2006-24

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 2

Growth of the Canadian Population and the Other 19 Largest Nationalities in South Korea, 2019-24 (index 2019 = 100)

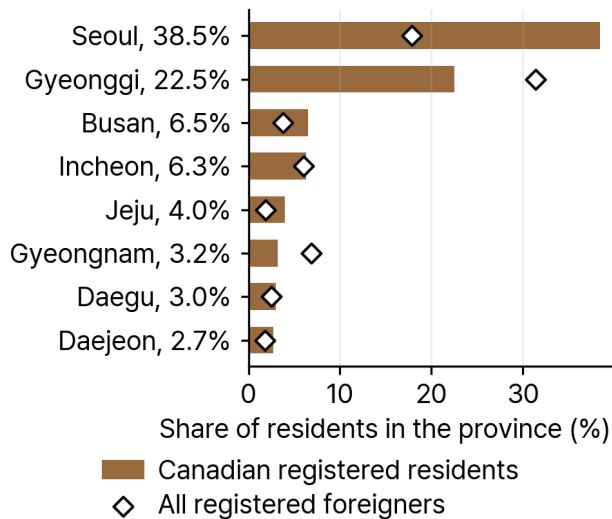
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

2 Distribution by Province and District

District data cover the 4,452 Canadians who were registered foreigners in 2024. Of these, 38.5 percent (1,712) lived in Seoul, 28.8 percent (1,282) in Incheon and Gyeonggi, 16.0 percent (714) in the Yeongnam region, 7.3 percent (324) in Chungcheong, 5.4 percent (242) in Gangwon and Jeju, and 4.0 percent (178) in Honam. Together, Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi accounted for 67.3 percent of registered Canadians, compared with 55.2 percent of all registered foreigners.

Few Canadians live in rural counties (gun). In 2024, 3.1 percent of registered Canadians lived in a county, compared with 10.6 percent of all registered foreigners. Outside the capital area, the largest local populations were in Seogwipo-si (111) and Jeju-si (67) on Jeju, Busan's Haeundae-gu (81), and Daejeon's Yuseong-gu (57).

FIGURE 3
Registered Canadian Foreigners by Province in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Seoul's Yongsan-gu had the largest number of registered Canadians in 2024 (196), followed by Gangnam-gu (187) and Incheon's Yeonsu-gu (131). The ten largest districts accounted for 28.8 percent of registered Canadians, and eight districts had at least 100.

Canadians are a small part of the foreign population in every district where they live in numbers. Among the ten largest districts, their share of registered foreigners was highest in Seoul's Gangnam-gu and Bundang-gu, Seongnam-si (3.2 percent each), followed by Seocho-gu (2.7 percent).

The index of dissimilarity (D), which measures how differently Canadians and all other registered foreigners are spread across districts on a scale from 0 to 1, rose from 0.303 in 2014 to 0.342 in 2024. No district met the KIRD definition of an ethnic enclave for Canadians in 2024 (a location quotient of at least 2 and Canadians making up at least 30 percent of the district's registered foreigners).

3 Age and Sex

Women made up 53.3 percent of Canadian resident foreigners in 2024 (15,259 of 28,604), up from 52.0 percent in 2019 (13,936 of 26,789) and above the 45.1 percent among all resident foreigners.

The Canadian population is older than the foreign population overall. In 2024, 25.7 percent of Canadians were aged 60 and older, against 12.9 percent of all resident foreigners, and 9.4 percent were under age 15, against 5.7 percent. Adults aged 20 to 39 made up 29.9 percent of Canadians and 49.7 percent of all resident foreigners. The largest age group among Canadians was 60 and older, and the median fell in the 45 to 49 age group.

TABLE 2
Ten Districts with the Most Registered Canadian Foreigners, 2024

District	Province	Registered Canadians	Share of district's registered foreigners (%)
Seoul Yongsan-gu	Seoul	196	1.5
Seoul Gangnam-gu	Seoul	187	3.2
Incheon Yeonsu-gu	Incheon	131	0.7
Seoul Seocho-gu	Seoul	127	2.7
Seoul Seodaemun-gu	Seoul	125	0.8
Seogwipo-si	Jeju-do	111	1.1
Seoul Jung-gu	Seoul	110	1.0
Seoul Mapo-gu	Seoul	105	0.9
Seoul Songpa-gu	Seoul	98	1.6
Seongnam-si Bundang-gu	Gyeonggi-do	93	3.2

Note: Registered foreigners only; F-4 holders, who report residence instead of registering, are not included.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of Canadians aged 50 and older rose from 9,811 to 12,430, and the number aged 20 to 39 fell from 9,870 to 8,544. Children under 5 fell from 1,323 to 819, while the number of children under 15 changed little (2,655 in 2019 and 2,686 in 2024).

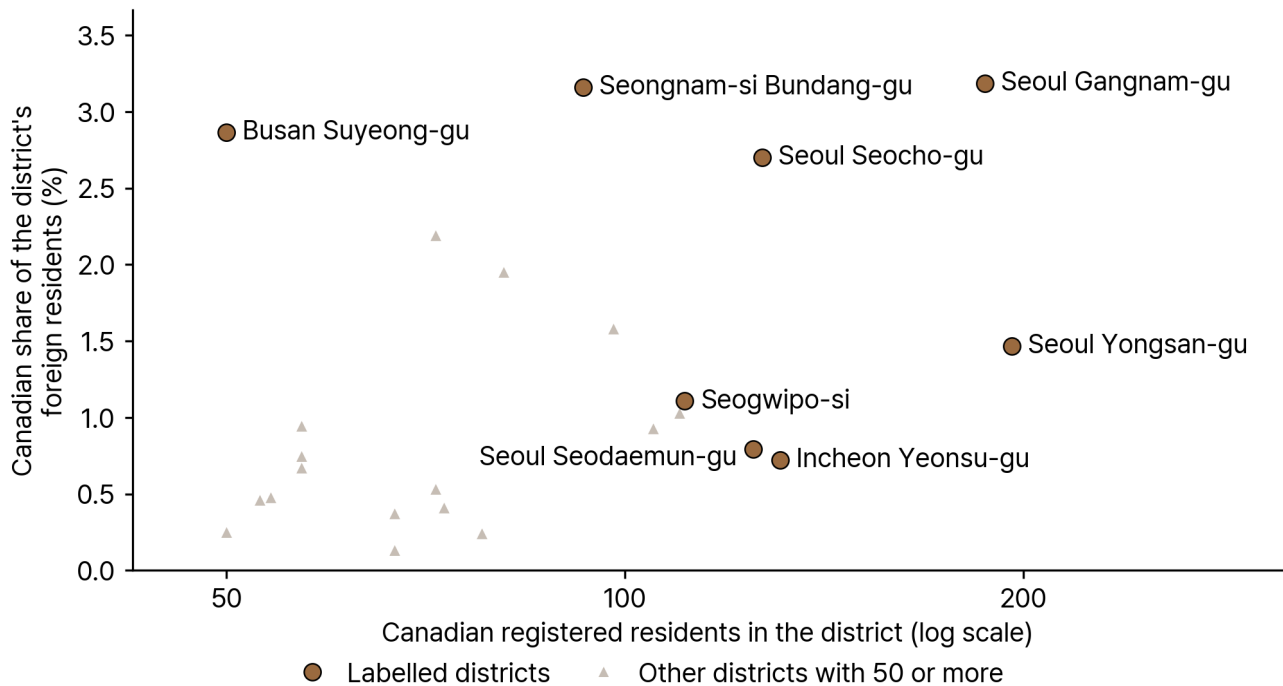
4 Visa Status

In 2024, 62.1 percent of Canadians held the F-4 Overseas Korean visa (17,757 people), and Canadians were the fifth-largest nationality among F-4 holders. Another 21.8 percent

(6,235) held B-2 tourist and transit status, up from 3,913 in 2014.

FIGURE 4

Registered Canadian Foreigners by District in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice registered-foreigner statistics by district, 2024.

Canadians held 939 E-2 foreign language instructor visas in 2024, 7.0 percent of all E-2 holders in the country, down from 1,502 in 2019 and 2,809 in 2014. Marriage migrant (F-6)

holders rose from 977 in 2019 to 1,214 in 2024, and permanent residents (F-5) from 575 to 775.

TABLE 3

Most Common Visas Held by Canadian Resident Foreigners, 2019 and 2024

Visa	Meaning	2019	2024	Share of Canadians, 2024 (%)	Canadians' share of all holders of the visa, 2024 (%)
F-4	Overseas Korean	15,884	17,757	62.1	3.2
B-2	Tourist Transit	6,369	6,235	21.8	4.1
F-6	Marriage Migration	977	1,214	4.2	0.8
E-2	Foreign Language Instructor	1,502	939	3.3	7.0
F-5	Permanent Residence	575	775	2.7	0.4
E-7	Specially Designated Activities	299	289	1.0	0.5
F-3	Dependent Family	176	214	0.7	0.4

Note: Resident foreigners on 31 December. Shares of Canadians use the 2024 total of 28,604.

Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

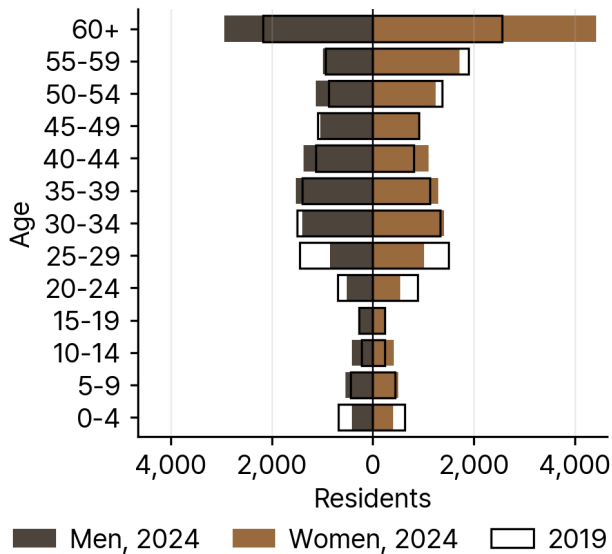
Grouped by purpose, 5.6 percent of Canadians held employment visas in 2024 (19.2 percent of all resident foreigners), 6.0 percent held marriage or family visas (13.6 percent), 2.7 percent held permanent residence (7.7 percent),

and 0.8 percent held study or training visas (10.2 percent). Short-term visit statuses made up 22.0 percent of Canadians and 19.7 percent of all resident foreigners.

5 Migration Channels and Policy

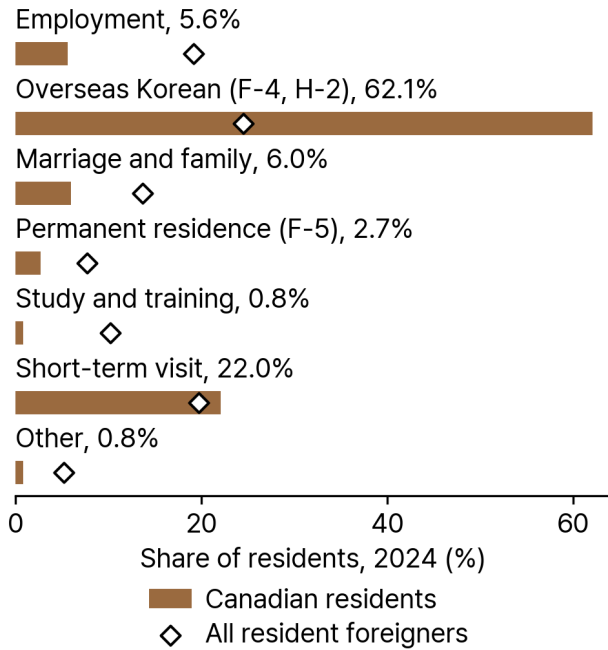
Canada is not among the sending countries of Korea's Employment Permit System, so Canadians do not use the E-9 route for lower-skilled workers (Employment Permit System, 2026).

FIGURE 5
Canadian Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Age and Sex, 2024



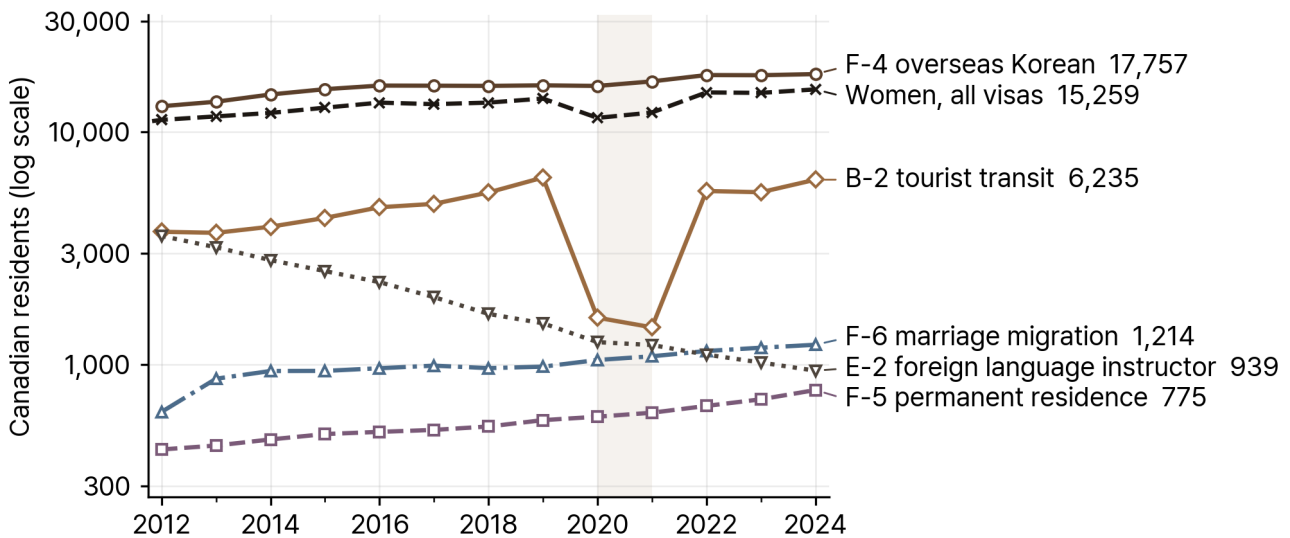
Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

FIGURE 6
Visa Groups of Canadian Resident Foreigners and All Resident Foreigners in South Korea, 2024



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2024.

FIGURE 7
Canadian Resident Foreigners in South Korea by Visa Status, 2006-24 (log scale)



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2006-2024.

Teaching is an older channel. Most of Korea's roughly 16,000 native-speaking foreign language teachers come from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand (Keralis, 2017).

Young Canadians can also come through the Working Holiday (H-1) program. Korea set it up with Canada in January 1996, after its first agreement with Australia in July 1995, and applicants must be 18 to 35 at the time of issuance (Embassy

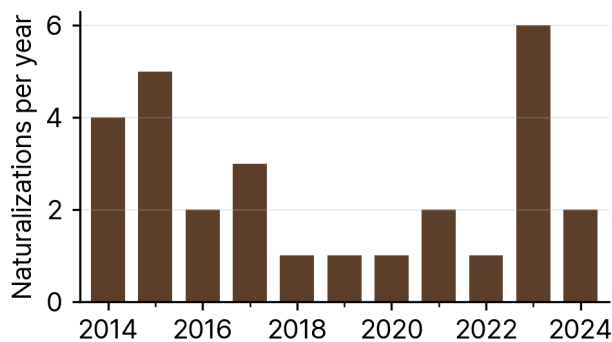
of the Republic of Korea to Canada, 2026). Canada's side of the arrangement is described under Migration from Canada to South Korea.

Rules for E-2 teachers have changed. Effective July 3, 2017, the Ministry of Justice dropped the mandatory HIV test for issuing or renewing E-2 visas, ending a requirement in place since 2007 that citizen groups had pushed for partly over news that Christopher Paul Neil had taught in Korea (Korea Herald, 2017).

Enforcement of E-2 conditions has affected Canadian teachers directly. In May 2017, immigration authorities deported 14 Canadian teachers from Canada British Columbia International School in Seoul over allegations that the school had used E-2 visas, which cover language-academy teaching, for full international-school instruction (Globe and Mail, 2017).

6 Naturalization

FIGURE 8
Naturalizations of Canadians, All Routes, 2014-24



Source: KIRD dataset, from Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks, 2014-2024.

Few Canadians naturalize in Korea. Between 2014 and 2024, 28 Canadians acquired Korean nationality through naturalization; annual numbers ranged from 1 to 6 (2023), with 2 in 2024. The Ministry of Justice's by-country table reports this combined naturalization total from 2014; the 2009 and 2010 yearbook editions instead publish cumulative totals since 1991, so this Spotlight does not use them.

Restoration of nationality is far more common. Former Korean nationals who had taken Canadian citizenship can apply to restore Korean nationality, and 4,542 people whose previous nationality was Canadian did so between 2011 and 2024, including 610 in 2024. This restoration total is about 162 times the 28 naturalizations recorded between 2014 and 2024 (4,542 divided by 28).

7 Unauthorized Residents

Canadians are not among the ten nationalities that the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbook (table 6-4) reports separately, so no count of unauthorized Canadian residents is published.

The yearbook counted 397,522 unauthorized residents of all nationalities in 2024.

8 Health and Well-being

To our knowledge, no published study in OpenAlex, PubMed, or the wider web reports the health or well-being of Canadian residents in Korea separately from other nationalities.

Health policy toward foreign teachers has a Canadian connection. According to a 2017 article, Korea's mandatory HIV testing of E-2 teachers followed public outrage over the Interpol arrest of Christopher Paul Neil, a Canadian national who had taught English in Korea, for sex crimes committed in Thailand; there was no evidence that he had committed crimes in Korea or that he was HIV positive (Keralis, 2017).

Global Affairs Canada confirmed that a Canadian was injured in the crowd crush in Seoul's Itaewon district on October 29, 2022, which killed more than 150 people (Yahoo News, 2022).

9 Migration from Canada to South Korea

The United Nations estimated South Korea's international migrant stock at 1,811,507 people in 2024. Canada is not listed as a separate origin country in that table; Canadian-born migrants fall within the residual "Others" category of 192,536 people (UN DESA, 2024). We know of no published source that reports what share of Canadian emigrants live in South Korea or South Korea's rank among their destinations.

Canada has no labor-deployment arrangement with South Korea. It is not among the sending countries of the Employment Permit System, so no EPS deployment or EPS-TOPIK applicant figures exist for Canada (Employment Permit System, 2025). The E-2 foreign language instructor visa is open to citizens of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, seven countries in all (Korvia Consulting, 2026).

Canada administers youth mobility with South Korea through International Experience Canada (IEC). A May 2023 arrangement replaced the memorandum of understanding signed in 1995, raised the eligible age range from 18 to 30 to 18 to 35, added International Co-op (Internship) and Young Professionals streams to the Working Holiday stream, and allowed participants to participate twice, for up to 24 months each time, with implementation expected in 2024 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023).

For the 2025 season, IEC set quotas for South Korean youth going to Canada of 10,000 Working Holiday places, 1,500 Young Professionals places, and 500 International Co-op places, 12,000 in total. The Working Holiday quota was 1,625 places lower than in 2024, and the other two streams gained the same number (Immigration News Canada, 2025). We are not aware of any published annual count of Canadians who go to South Korea under the arrangement.

TABLE 4
Migration Indicators, Canada and South Korea

Indicator	Value	Source
International migrant stock in South Korea, 2024	1,811,507 (Canada not listed separately)	UN DESA, 2024
EPS deployments and EPS-TOPIK applicants from Canada	n.a. (Canada is not an EPS sending country)	Employment Permit System, 2025
Countries whose citizens are eligible for the E-2 visa	7, including Canada	Korvia Consulting, 2026
IEC places for South Korean youth in Canada, 2025 season	12,000	Immigration News Canada, 2025
Remittances from South Korea to Canada, 2021	US\$11.8 million	World Bank, 2021
Remittances from Canada to South Korea, 2021	US\$458.5 million	World Bank, 2021
Personal remittances received by Canada, 2024	US\$851 million	World Bank, 2024
Remittances as a share of Canada's GDP, 2024	0.04%	World Bank, 2024
Korean ethnic or cultural origin in Canada, 2021 Census	217,650	Statistics Canada, 2022a

Note: Remittance figures are World Bank model estimates in current US dollars. n.a. = not available.

Source: Sources as listed in each row.

The World Bank's bilateral remittance estimates, last produced for 2021, put remittances sent from South Korea to Canada at about US\$11.8 million that year and remittances sent from Canada to South Korea at about US\$458.5 million (World Bank, 2021). Canada received about US\$851 million in personal remittances from all countries in 2024, equal to 0.04 percent of its GDP (World Bank, 2024).

No government source reports the Canadian province of origin of Canadians who move to South Korea. Canadian F-4 holders are Korean Canadians, and the 2021 Census recorded 217,650 people of Korean ethnic or cultural origin in Canada, including 100,025 in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2022a) and 72,025 in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Research on migration from Canada to South Korea is limited. According to Kim (2024), a doctoral dissertation by Sheen (2021) at Inha University was the only empirical study of return migrants from North America to South Korea as of June 2023. Sheen interviewed 11 returnees, 3 of them Korean Canadians, and found that their self-identity changed with the time they had spent in each country and the place where they lived. In a 2017 book on English language teaching in Korea, Jenks (2017) argues that Korean hiring practice, which recognizes a small

group of countries including Canada as English-speaking, treats whiteness as a qualification for good language teaching (Kim, 2018). As far as we know, no study examines recruitment brokers, debt, or marriage migration between Canada and South Korea.

10 Community Organizations

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Korea (CanCham Korea), based in Seoul, has worked for more than three decades to promote trade and investment between Canada and Korea (CanCham Korea, 2026). Branksome Hall Asia, an International Baccalaureate school on Jeju Island, was founded in 2012 as the sister school of Branksome Hall in Toronto (Branksome Hall Asia, 2026).

Canada's consulate in Busan is closed until further notice, and consular services for the region are provided at the Embassy of Canada in Seoul (Global Affairs Canada, 2026).

None of the 1,717 migrant-serving organizations in the KIRD census names Canadians in its name or target group (KIRD dataset). Canadians can use the general-purpose organizations in the census, which serve residents of all nationalities.

About these profiles. The KIRD data profiles describe the twenty nationalities with more than 20,000 resident foreigners in South Korea in 2024 and answer the questions asked most often about foreign residents. Figures come from the Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, built from the Ministry of Justice immigration yearbooks and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety foreign-resident statistics for 2006 to 2024 (<https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>); context comes from the sources listed. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

Suggested citation: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD). 2026. "Canadian Immigrants in South Korea." Foreign Residents in South Korea series, September 2026. Data: Korea Immigration Regional Dashboard (KIRD) dataset, <https://doi.org/10.3886/E249944V1>. Interactive maps and tables: <https://immigrantsinkorea.today>.

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