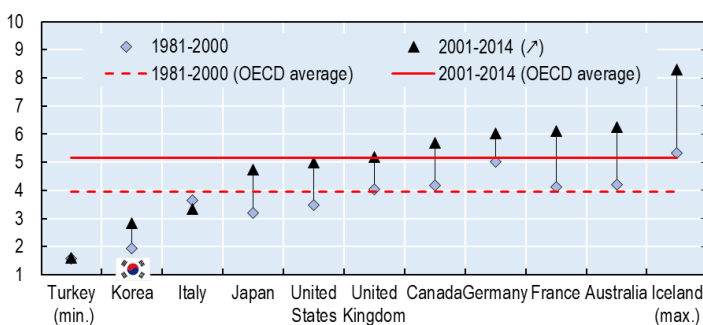




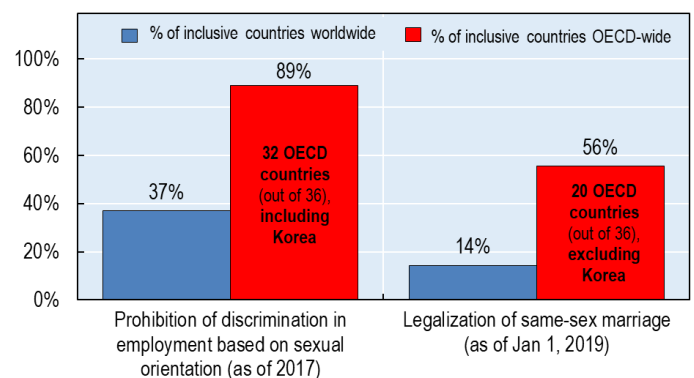
The 2019 edition of *Society at a Glance* examines trends in social well-being across the OECD. It features a special chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people: their numbers, how they fare in terms of their economic situation and well-being, and what policies can improve LGBT inclusivity. It also includes a special chapter based on the 2018 OECD Risks That Matter Survey on people's perceptions of social and economic risks and the extent to which they think governments address those risks. The publication also presents 25 indicators on general context, self-sufficiency, equity, health and social cohesion.

Fig.1. Despite improvements, acceptance of homosexuality remains limited



Note: Acceptance of homosexuality is measured on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that homosexuality is never justifiable and 10 means that it is always justifiable. Source: [Figure 1.6] of OECD Society at a Glance 2019.

Fig.2. There is still a long way before sexual and gender minorities meet full-fledged legal recognition, and Korea is no exception



Source: [Figure 1.18] of OECD Society at a Glance 2019.

### A SPOTLIGHT ON LGBT PEOPLE

Korea does not have any nationally representative survey that includes a survey question on self-identification as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, nor does it collect information on the share of transgender people among the adult population. In the 14 OECD countries where estimates are available, the share of LGB people is significant (2.7% of the adult population), and on the rise [Figure 1.4 of the OECD publication *Society at a Glance 2019*]. Increasing disclosure of an LGB identity is likely to continue in the future since it is driven by younger cohorts.

Attitudes toward LGBT people are improving worldwide and have consistently been more positive in OECD countries than elsewhere. However, there remains substantial room for progress. Korea is lagging behind compared to the OECD average regarding acceptance of homosexuality: Korean citizens score nearly three on a 1-to-10 acceptance scale, two points below the average OECD score [Figure 1 above].

Low acceptance of LGBT people puts them at risk of discrimination. Representative survey data (that do not cover Korea) reveal that LGBT people are penalised with

respect to employment status and labour earnings [Figure 1.12]. Experimental data confirm that this penalty at least partly reflects labour market discrimination: with the same curriculum vitae, homosexual applicants are 1.5 times less likely to be invited to a job interview than heterosexual applicants when their sexual orientation is conveyed through their volunteer engagement or work experience in a gay and lesbian organisation [Figure 1.13].

A range of policies can help improve LGBT inclusivity. Making LGBT individuals and the penalties they face visible in national statistics is a prerequisite for their inclusion, suggesting that Korea could start collecting information on sexual orientation and gender identity on a regular basis.

Legally prohibiting anti-LGBT discrimination and ensuring equal rights for LGBT individuals is also essential to improve their situation. While Korea is among the 32 OECD countries that prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation, same-sex marriage is still not legal in Korea [Figure 2 above]. In the United States, for instance, same-sex marriage policies caused a reduction by nearly 15% of suicide attempts

among adolescents who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Finally, educating people in countering their unconscious bias is a key component of any policy package aiming to better LGBT inclusion. Evidence shows that these interventions can be highly effective, even when they are short.

---

## OVERVIEW OF OTHER SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Low confidence in institutions

**Only 30% of the Korean population report confidence in their national government** [Figures 8.4]. This share is considerably below the OECD average (43%) and eight lowest in the OECD ranking. Confidence rates in the national government are more than double as high in Switzerland (81%), Luxembourg (71%) and Norway (69%). Unlike in many OECD countries, there is no difference in confidence between rich and poor in Korea.

**Trust in the judicial system, military and police is equally low in Korea:** only 26% of the population report confidence in the judicial system (second lowest in the OECD ranking); 47% trust the military (lowest confidence level of all OECD countries); and 64% has confidence in the police (fifth lowest in the OECD ranking). Only for the financial system, Koreans report higher confidence rates (57%) than OECD countries on average (46%) [Figure 8.5].

### Perception of widespread corruption

**Nearly four in five Koreans (79%) believe that corruption is widespread throughout the government** [Figure 8.6]. This share is considerably above the OECD average of 43% and has increased over the past decade. In the Nordic countries and New Zealand, less than one in five report corruption in their government, while in Japan, the share is comparable to the OECD average.

### Decreasing voter turnout

**The participation rate in the 2016 Korean elections (61%) was below the OECD average of 65%** [Figure 8.10]. About one in five Koreans (21%) are not at all interested in politics, slightly more than the OECD average (18%) [Figure 8.11]. As in most OECD countries, there has been a decline in electoral participation over the last two decades and a half in Korea – the voting rate was 75% in 1992.

### Violence against women

**Nearly one in five (18%) women in Korea say that a husband may be justified in hitting or beating his wife,** compared with only one in thirteen women in OECD countries on average [Figure 8.8]. Korea ranks second highest of all OECD countries for this indicator, after Germany. About 17% of Korean women report having experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate

partner in their lifetime [Figure 8.7] and **36% of Korean women do not feel safe walking alone at night** in the city or area where they live [Figure 8.9].

### Many Korean men smoke, but few women

**In 2016, 33% of all Korean men smoked on a daily basis,** placing Korea fifth in the OECD ranking for male smoking rates [Figure 7.13]. In contrast, Korea stands second lowest in the OECD ranking for female smoking rates, with **only 4% of Korean women smoking.** The OECD average rates are 23% and 14% respectively. These Korean gender differences in smoking rates are larger than in any other OECD country. As in most OECD countries, smoking rates in Korea have gone down considerably in the past decade.

### High but declining suicide rate

**Suicide is a significant cause of death in Korea.** In 2016, there were 26 suicides per 100 000 persons, more than twice the OECD average of 12 suicides per 100 000 persons, and the second highest rate in the OECD, after Lithuania [Figure 7.10]. As in other countries, Korean men are more likely to commit suicide than Korean women – nearly three times as likely. After a prolonged increase in suicide rates between 1990 and 2010, the suicide rate is declining again since 2011 [Figure 7.11].

### Delayed family formation

**The average age at which Koreans get married has significantly increased over the past decades.** At the start of the 1990s, the average age at first marriage in Korea was 25 for women and 27 for men. By 2016, the average age increased to 30 for women and to 33 for men. These ages of marriage are similar to the averages for OECD countries [Figure 4.11].

**Despite a significant decline in marriage rates, Koreans still get married frequently.** In 2016, the marriage rate was 5.5 per 1 000 people, compared with 4.8 per 1 000 in the OECD on average [Figure 4.12]. In the 1990s, the marriage rate in Korea was still 9.3 per 1 000 people, the second highest in the OECD at the time.

**As a result of a significant increase in divorce rates, divorces are now more frequent in Korea than in the OECD.** The divorce rate in Korea rose from 1.1 per 1 000 people in 1990 to 2.1 per 1 000 in 2016. This increase was one of the largest among OECD countries, and by 2016, the divorce rate in Korea surpassed the OECD average of 1.9 per 1 000 people [Figure 4.11] [Figure 4.12].

### Contacts:

*OECD Social Policy Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs*

**Marie-Anne Valfort** +33 (0)1 45 24 98 65

[Marie-Anne.Valfort@oecd.org](mailto:Marie-Anne.Valfort@oecd.org)