North Korea lies north of the demarcation line set by the Korean Armistice Agreement in July 1953. Its total area is 23,114 km², accounting for approximately 58% of the entire Korean Peninsula, which is 35,356 km². As of 2017, the population of North Korea was about 25,014,000, and its population density was 203.1 persons per km². This is close to 80% of that of North Korea, whose population density is 52.6 persons per km².

North Korea faces the sea to the east and the Yellow Sea to the west and shares a border with the northeastern part of China along the Amnokgang River (Yalu River) and the Donggang River (Tumen River), and with Russia’s Siberia along the Dumangang River. The boundary with China is 1,352 km long and features bridges such as the Amnokgang Bridge, which enables road and railway traffic to flow between Sinuiju in North Korea and Dandong in China. North Korea shares a border with Russia that is 162 km long and is connected by a railroad bridge between North Korea’s Dandong Station in Nansin (Rason) and the Korean Station just across the border in Russia. To the north, North Korea’s border with South Korea consists of the Demilitarized Zone Line, fond along Gumsong (Kongam) and Songjin (Changjin) gup in Hwanghaebuk-do, Chongjin gup, Pyongsong gup, Kaesong gup, Changjin gup, Geumgang (Kumgang) gup, and Goseong gup in Gangwondo and South Korea’s Gyeonggi-do and Gangwon-do.

In 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japan, the administrative system of the Democratic region of the northern part of the country was comprised of six provinces, nine cities, 89 gun, and 530 eup and myeon. However, administrative and district systems were carried out in December 1952, changing from a four-stage administrative system (1. province and direct-controlled city; 2. gu, gun; 3. upo, and 4. dong) to a three-stage administrative system (1. province and direct-controlled city; 2. gu; and 3. dong/gun/local districts). Subsequently, there were several minor administrative district reforms. What is available is the map of the Special Cities of Nansin (Rason) and Nampo (Nampho) for economic purposes. As of 2017, North Korea consisted of one direct-controlled city of Pyongyang (Pyongyang), two special cities (Nansin, Nampho), and nine provinces.

One of North Korea’s prominent geographical features is the Kangwonnamwon Mountain Range, which is part of the Bukhodong (traditional way of representing southern mountain ranges of the Korean Peninsula), and which runs from north to south. The following ranges are also part of Bukhodong: the Gangwonnamwon Mountain Range, Kangwongnamwon Mountain Range, and Myohyangsan Mountain Range located to the west, and the Maenguyangsan Mountain Range and Buppo-yangsan Mountain Range located to the east in Kangwondo-do and Hamgyeong-do. The northern and southern parts of North Korea are markedly dominated by mountains and uplands, whereas the northern and western parts generally consist of plains and lowlands.

Due to this topography, the rivers that run toward the Yellow Sea, including the Amnokgang River, Donggang River, Chongsonggang River, and Yeonggang River, tend to wind through the mountains before meandering on gentle slopes. In contrast, rivers that move toward the East Sea, such as the Dumangang River and Namhaechon River, are straighter and much shorter in length than those of west-bound rivers. Consequently, North Korea’s major plains, which include the Pyongyang Plain, Kangwondo Plain, and Yeonggang Plain, are located on alluvial deposits supplied by the larger rivers that run toward the Yellow Sea.

Malls of the modern state in North Korea were formed during the period between the pro-Cultural and Economic Eras, providing the country with a wide range of mineral resources. North Korea is one of the top ten countries in the world owning the largest reserves of magnesite, tungsten, molybdenum, graphite, barite, gold, mica, and Baekri. There are about 40 kinds of natural mineral resources that have economic value.

North Korea has its own temperate climate region and has a continental climate. Its winters are quite cold, and summers are hot. The country has hot and humid climate due to the southwesterly monsoon wind that brings rain air from the Pacific Ocean. The average annual rainfall is between 800–1,000 mm, and 53–62% of all precipitation occurs from June to September. The overall rainfall is in less than half of South Korea and varies widely depending on the region.

In the past, North Korea had an abundance of natural resources with ecological value. However, its forests have been consistently damaged due to deforestation such as “Narodnaya Forstizhenie,” one of the five major reforestation campaigns that began in the 1960s, “Terrestrial Field Forsting,” one of the five major reforestation campaigns that began in the 1970s, and the project of “New Field Forsting,” which began in the 1980s. Particularly in the 1990s, forests were devastated on financial difficulties forced people to find food and fuel in the mountains. In 2007, North Korea and North Korea agreed to “continuing cooperative projects in various areas such as agriculture, health, and medical services and on environmental protection” in the October 9 Summit Declaration and discussed “providing [the construction and utilization of] a tree sapling nursery, reforestation and prevention of moth and harmful pests starting in 2008.” However in 2008, the South Korean government’s enforcement of the May 24 motions in 2001 disapproved not just inter-governmental forestry cooperation but also reforestation support. Since civil groups in South Korea, both North Korea held the inter-Korean summit on April 27, 2018, the South Korean government selected forestry cooperation as a top priority task to implement “The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula.” As a result, the South and the North held inter-Korean forestry cooperation talks on July 6, 2018, to carry out the Panmunjom Declaration, and inter-Korean forestry cooperation is now being promoted.

Administrative Regions of North Korea

Administrative Divisions of North Korea

Overview of North Korea

North Korea

Area 25,014,000 km²
Population 25,014,000 Persons
Population Density 203.1 Persons/km²
Urbanization Rate 52.4%
GDP 10.7 Trillion Won
GDP per Capita 194,510 Won
RGDP 0.5% (2018)
In 1944, a year after Korea’s liberation from Japan, the total population of North Korea numbered 8.5 million. However, during the Korean War, the North’s population dropped to its lowest level at 6.9 million. By 1955, the population had grown continuously to surpass the ten million mark for the first time in history, and it reached 20 million by the late 1980s. According to North Korea’s central statistics office, the country’s population recorded a net loss in 1991 for the first time since 1945. Since 1993, North Korea has shown an average annual population growth of 1%, and its population loss in 1992 for the first time. Since 1993, North Korea has shown to surpass the ten million mark for the first time in history, and it

The Direct-Administered City of Pyeongyang, in particular, boasts the highest share and number of incoming population, which is 40% migrated to Pyeongyang. Pyeongyang’s in-migration to other regions is generally evenly distributed. One of the interesting features of Pyeongyang’s population movement is that a significantly small number of people move to Yanggang-do (10.1%) or Hwanghaebuk-do (8.0%) compared to all other provinces. Similarly, those moving from Yanggang-do and Hwanghaebuk-do to Pyeongyang represents 0.03% and 0.04%, respectively. This trend may be a result of the fact that the two provinces have smaller populations than other provinces. However, given that the similar-sized Gangwon-do accounts for as much as 8.5% of Pyeongyang’s incoming population and 18.6% of its outgoing population, the low migration trend for Yanggang-do and Hwanghaebuk-do appears to be related to their socioeconomic conditions as two of the country’s most underdeveloped provinces.

As of 2006, 64.0% of North Korea’s total population lived in urban regions. Pyeongyang is the most urbanized area, with 86.7% of its population residing in its urbanized area. Hwanghaebuk-do, which has major cities such as the Najin-Seonbong (Raizan-Shimboku) Special Economic Zone and the city of Chongjin, is the second most urbanized area, with an urbanization rate of 75.7%, followed by Yanggang-do (68.4%) where the special city of Nampo is located. All of the other provinces, however, have a below-average urbanization rate. Regional inequality in terms of urbanization is a serious problem.

Historically, North Korea once experienced rapid urbanization as it initially pursued industrialization following Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. In a result, their urbanization rate jumped from 31% in 1955 to 56.7% in 1975; the pace has significantly slowed since then. However, according to the UN World Urbanization Prospects, the urbanization rate of North Korea has increased again since 2010 and is expected to exceed 70% in 2040 and reach 74.2% in 2050.

As of 2006, the population of Pyeongyang, the largest city in the North, stood at 2,313,000. Followed by Hamhung-si in Hwanghaebuk-do (748,000) and Chongjin-si in Hamgyeongbuk-do (687,000). Pyeongyang is the only city whose population is more than one million, only two other cities have more than 500,000 people, and only 18 other cities surpass the 100,000 mark.

North Korea’s ranking by population of its cities in 1940 was as follows: Pyeongyang, Chongjin-si, Wonsan-si, and Hamhung-si. In 1942, Chongjin-si became North Korea’s second-largest city, and the ranking changed once again to the following: Pyeongyang, Chongjin-si, Hamhung-si, and Wonsan-si. During the 1990s, Hamhung-si repositioned its second-place rank, and Nampo-siMigrated to Pyeongyang

Inflow in Pyeongyang

Outflow in Pyeongyang

Migration

Population and Cities of North Korea

As shown on the map above, most North Koreans live in the southern and western parts of the country in the plains and lowlands. Pyeongyang and its neighboring Pyonganbuk-do share the highest population density. The population density is generally low in the northeastern mountains and eastern parts (Hamgyeongbuk-do, Yanggang-do, Hwanghaebuk-do, and Gangwon-do), with the exception of scattered cities, such as

As of 2008, the total population of North Korea numbered 21.5 million. However, during the Korean War, the North’s population dropped to its lowest level at 18.9 million. By 1960, the population had grown continuously to surpass the ten million mark for the first time in history, and it reached 20 million by the late 1980s. According to North Korea’s central statistics office, the country’s population recorded a net loss in 1991 for the first time since 1945. Since 1993, North Korea has shown an average annual population growth of 1%, and its population loss in 1992 for the first time. Since 1993, North Korea has shown to surpass the ten million mark for the first time in history, and it
North Korea's economy is a centrally planned and unified system in which the State Planning Commission of the central government determines economic development plans and strictly controls all economic units, such as regional governments, factories, and cooperatives. Along with a centrally planned system, another important feature of North Korea's economy is that the country included plans to assign top priority to developing heavy industry with pointed developments in agriculture and light industry. Due to the lack of capital and resources, however, heavy industry was favored over light industry and agriculture. With the collapse of communist governments around the world during the 1990s, the problem of fostering heavy industry and expanding agriculture and light industry became urgent, and both the financial difficulties and shortages in the mid-1990s. The North's economy began to recover as a result, North Korea imported a minimum amount of indispensable food production versus demand rose from 80% to 90%, it is estimated, this imperative led it to underestimate the importance of economic cooperation with foreign countries. As a result, North Korea started the Economic Development Zones policy has been more aggressively promoted under the Kim Jong-un regime, and it is now expanding across the country. With the enactment of the “Economic Development Zones Act,” North Korea announced 13 economic development districts to attract foreign investments, with 11 of them being designated as new special economic zones. In July 2014, North Korea designated six more economic development zones including Uiju, a cutting-edge technological development zone. Subsequently in April 2017, it added which was set up in 1991, the largest economic zones are divided into central government-level economic zones and local-level economic zones and are specialized in industrial, agricultural, tourism, export processing, and high-technology works. However, North Korea's economic policies have not been smooth to international sanctions as a consequence of nuclear and missile tests.

On July 1, 2002, North Korea partially introduced some elements of a market economy into the existing centrally planned economy through the adoption of the Economic Management Improvement Measures. While it introduced measures such as a crackdown on commercial activities and closure of general markets in order to prevent excessive marketization, the North Korean government has adopted some policies since February 2002 to relax the market activities. The activities helped North Korea's marketization expand into official economic sectors and increase in number of markets. As of 2016, there were 646 general markets across the country, in addition, a newly opened mass-class called 'donju' is emerging with the accumulation of commercial capital. This group of people is expanding their economic influence. As the circulation of a variety of goods through official trades, to barter deals or smuggling, in the construction industry, such as building and trading apartments.
The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, 2000

- The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, 2000

- The June 15 Joint Declaration (2000)

- Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

- Influenced by the Cold War structure around the Korean Peninsula, the inter-Korean relationship was hostile and confrontational through the division and the subsequent Korean War. The Cold War ended for most of the world with the collapse of the socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. In February 1997, the South Korean government under Kim Dae-jung inaugurated a forward-looking policy on North Korea called the “Sunshine Policy” to end the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula. As a result, the first inter-Korean summit after the division of the Korean Peninsula was held between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and North Korea leader Kim Jong-il on June 13-15, 1998, and both announced the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration. Both Korea agreed to resolve the question of militarization independently, promptly resolve humanitarian issues such as exchange visits by separated family members and victims, and consolidate military confidence. From October 2 to October 4, 2007, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and North Korea’s Chairman Kim Jong-il held the second summit and announced “The Declaration of October 4 Joint Declaration (2007)” for the division of the Korean Peninsula, and co-prosperity and reunification of both Koreas. Since 2008, inter-Korean relations have been strained, but the possibility of an exchange of goods through their respective markets decreased. As inter-Korean relations cooled in 2008, the separated families’ chances of communicating with their family members significantly decreased.

- Inter-Korean Social and Cultural Exchange

- The progress in inter-Korean economic cooperation has had a positive impact on families separated by the division between North Korea and South Korea. Between 2003 and 2007 when inter-Korean economic exchanges were at their peak, families were able to search for their family members separated from them by the Demarcation Line, communicate with them through letters, and include various reforms on the military, economy, and separated families in the “September 19th Panmunjom Declaration.” Since the inter-Korean relationship began to improve in 2018, inter-Korean exchange and cooperation has been actively undertaken in various realms such as arts, culture, sports, academic research and cultural heritage. In February 2018, inter-Korean exchange performances held at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. A joint archaeological excavation of Sunhodong, farming area occurred from October to December 2018. At the 2019 Asian Games, North Korea and South Korea teams marched together under a unified Korean flag and formed combined teams to compete with other national teams.
On September 19, 2000, at the Pyongyong Summit, both Koreas adopted the “Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain” as an annex to the Pyongyong Declaration. It includes existing military agreements between the two Koreas such as existing military hostilities in zones of confrontation, turning the area around the Northern Limit Line in the Yellow Sea into an maritime peace zone, declaring firearms and military posts from the Joint Security Area, cutting the numbers of personnel stationed there, and conducting a joint inspection of military facilities for the first time since the Armistice Agreement of 1953. Representatives from the South and North Korean armies visited each other’s guard posts (GPs) to verify the demolition of guard posts (GPs) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From November 5 to December 26, 2018, the South and North Korea also began dismantling guard posts (GPs) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From November 5 to December 26, 2018, the South and North Korea also began dismantling guard posts (GPs) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From November 5 to December 26, 2018, the South and North Korea also began dismantling guard posts (GPs) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From November 5 to December 26, 2018, the South and North Korea also began dismantling guard posts (GPs) in the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

On December 12, 2018, both Koreas began to remove about 80,000 landmines buried at the border areas called “Army Head Island” for joint excavation of remains from the Korean War. In addition, the two Koreas and the UN Command took measures to withdraw firearms and military posts from the Joint Security Area, cutting the numbers of personnel stationed there, and conducting a joint inspection of military facilities for the first time since the Armistice Agreement of 1953. Representatives from the South and North Korean armies visited each other’s guard posts (GPs) to verify the demolition of GPs in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). From November 5 to December 26, 2018, both Koreas conducted a hydrographic survey to guarantee freedom of navigation by civilian vessels in the Hwangang River estuary. These changes show that improvement in the inter-Korean relationship leads to the relaxation of tension in the border region.