Executive Government

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, the Executive Government consists of the President and the executive branch. The president of the Republic of Korea is elected to a five-year term. On May 10, 2017, the 19th President, Moon Jae-in, took office. Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea defines the position of the President as follows:

1. The President shall be the Head of State and represent the State in its widest sense.
2. The President shall have the duty to pursue sincerely the continuity of the State and the Constitution.
3. The President shall provide annual suggestions for the budget of the State, the direction of the State’s activities, and other matters which may be necessary for the effective implementation of the Constitution.
4. The President shall be appointed by the President with the consent of the National Assembly.
5. The President shall be appointed by the President in accordance with the Government Organization Act (Enforcement Law) and the Constitution.

Executive power shall be vested in the Executive Branch.

The Transformation of Government Organization

The Republic of Korea has adopted a five-year, single-term presidential system since its constitutional amendment in 1997. Citizens over the age of 18 elect the president by direct vote. The 19th presidential election was held on May 9, 2017, following the Constitutional Court's decision of the 18th President's impeachment. The voter turnout rate for the election was 77.2%, 1.4% higher than the previous presidential election. Early voting was held in the presidential election for the first time, with 26.1% of the voters participating in the election. Approximately 220,000 overseas Koreans participated in the presidential election as a result of the president's efforts to improve voter turnout.

The Democratic Party of Korea's Moon Jae-in secured 41.1% of the vote. Other candidates included the following percentages of the vote: Liberty Korea Party's Hong Joon-hyung (28%), People's Party's Ahn Chil-soo (23%), Bareun Party's Yoo Seung-min (6%), and Justice Party's Kim Sang-joong (6.5%). The other eight candidates received only a few votes. According to the number of votes cast in the 17 metropolitan cities, provinces, and special autonomous cities, Moon Jae-in won the popular vote in 14 districts, and Hong Joon-hyung received the most votes in three provinces: Jeonbuk, Gyeonggi-do, and Gyeongsangbuk-do. According to the number of votes cast in the 250 districts, Moon Jae-in received the most votes in 175 districts, and Hong Joon-hyung received the most votes in 75 districts.
As of 2018, the total number of public officials in Korea was approximately 1.30 million. Public officials serve in one of five main groups: the legislative branch, the judicial branch, the executive branch, public officials of the executive branch, and local public officials. Public officials of the executive branch fall into one of two categories: state public officials or local public officials. Local public officials are divided into local government officials and local public educational officials. Public officials in the legislative branch and the judicial branch, however, are considered as judicial officials.

In 2016, the highest number of public officials by occupation was state public educational officials, followed by local public officials, local public educational officials, and local firefighter officials. The number of local public officials is almost proportional to the population; therefore, the larger the population of an administrative district, the larger the number of local public officials in that administrative district. However, the number of local public officials per thousand population is higher in administrative districts with a smaller population density than in urban or metropolitan cities where the population density is high.

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Among the newly-developed innovation cities, including Wonju, Jincheon/Eumseong, Jeonju/Wanju, Naju, Gwangyang, and Yeosu, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Science and ICT were approximately 260,000 employees or 70% of the total employees of all public institutions.

Public institutions are institutions that are established and operated by government investment or government financial support. Public institutions are categorized by type: state-owned public corporation (state-owned public corporations and quasi-market-based public corporations), quasi-governmental institution (hand-management-based quasi-governmental institutions and service-based quasi-governmental institutions), and non-classified public institutions. As of 2018, there were 102 state-owned public institutions, including 27 affiliated institutions, and approximately 400,000 employees. Each year, the Ministry of Strategy and Finance may designate new public institutions or reclassify designated public institutions. Public institutions are supervised by the appropriate department of the central government. The number of employees in the public institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Science and ICT was approximately 260,000 employees or 70% of the total employees of all public institutions.

In August 2018, 955,896 (69.6%) of the 1,390,227 state and local public officials (excluding those on leave of the executive branches) participated in the Civil Service Census. This census divided public officials of the executive branches into four categories: state public officials of the executive branch, public officials of the executive branch (excluding general services, public officials, local public educational officials, and local firefighter officials); local government officials and local public educational officials; public officials in the legislative branch; and public officials in the judicial branch. The number of local public officials is almost proportional to the population; therefore, the larger the population of an administrative district, the larger the number of local public officials in that administrative district. However, the number of local public officials per thousand population is higher in administrative districts with a smaller population density than in urban or metropolitan cities where the population density is high.