The Korean people have developed and maintained their unique national culture for a long time. The national culture of Korea emerged as an adaptation to the natural environment and, at the same time, as an outcome of the human impacts on the natural environment. The arrangement of mountains and plains, at the same time, as an outcome of the human impacts on the environment. Traditional Korean culture is in part an outcome of life fit the conditions of modern life, the contemporary culture is not confined to a way of life formed through adaptation to the natural environment and, and harmony between nature and residential space in overcoming ingredients and processing of certain food and cooking methods, the dyeing process, including the usage of pigments and hand dying, was developed. Clothing and accessories sometimes represented the status and ranking of individuals. For instance, in the Joseon Dynasty, kites used for accessories, such as Norigae, or hats represented individuals’ status and social classes. Clothing in the traditional era was generally handmade, and laundering and care of garments accounted for a large share of the households. By contrast, modern clothing is mostly made in factories and therefore is in a large proportion of household expenditure. Also, the care of clothing has become more diversified. For example, it is increasingly common for laundry and ironing to be done by commercial laundry services. Particularly, an increase in off-face-to-face services has caused a rise in self-service laundromats. There is an increase in electronic times to maintain clothing at home, including washing machines, dryers, and ironing clothes care systems.

Since the modern era, the introduction of various synthetic fibers and the development of new weaving techniques have significantly changed Korean clothing culture. Since the 1980s, the textile industry has played an important role in Korean economic growth. Several small clothing manufacturers emerged in the process of rapid urbanization in metropolitan areas, where small factories employed many laborers who moved into cities. In addition, the development of the chemical industry has expanded the spinning and weaving industry in the national economy. Because of this development, as well as an abundance of labor, textile-related industrial complexes and cities have emerged in various places where small clothing companies were operated in the early industrialization period, and the textile industry succeeded for a large proportion of exports. Recently, the textile, garment, and apparel industries have become concentrated in low-wage countries. Due to globalization, many domestic manufacturers have moved to China and Southeast Asia, resulting in a decline in the domestic clothing industry and increased clothing imports as the Korean economic structure has become more technical and capital-oriented. As a result, most imported clothing is from China and other parts of Southeast Asia, and branded clothing mostly comes from Europe and other developed countries. The Korean clothing and apparel industry has the challenging task of transforming itself into a design-oriented, high-value-added industry. Meanwhile, as there is an increasing notion regarding the short cycle of launching new clothing products, unexpected issues from synthetic clothes, and an increase in clothing waste, there is an increased number of clothing manufacturers that use environment-friendly materials or manufacturing techniques, and also running businesses that use environmentally-friendly detergents or pressing environmental cleaning techniques.

The clothing culture of the Korean people began with the history of nature. Prehistoric equipment for apparel design and manufacturing is found across the country and shows a very long history of Korean clothing. Ancient Korean clothing can be seen on the ancient tomb murals of Goguryeo and on some documents such as Biographies of the Dangjeon (from Book of Yi of the Reign of the Three Kingdoms). The prototype for traditional Korean dresses, such as the Jeogori and pants, can be found in the murals of the ancient tombs of Goguryeo. As time passed, various fabrics were used, and clothing styles diversified. Following silk and cotton fabrics, the introduction and cultivation of cotton led to the use of new fabrics and significant changes in clothing styles. Koreans were known for the white-colored clothing, though they also liked various colored clothing for special events and rituals. The dying process, including the usage of pigments and hand dying, was developed. Clothing and accessories sometimes represented the status and ranking of individuals. For instance, in the Joseon Dynasty, kites used for accessories, such as Norigae, or hats represented individuals’ status and social classes. Clothing in the traditional era was generally handmade, and laundering and care of garments accounted for a large share of the households. By contrast, modern clothing is mostly made in factories and therefore is in a large proportion of household expenditure. Also, the care of clothing has become more diversified. For example, it is increasingly common for laundry and ironing to be done by commercial laundry services. Particularly, an increase in off-face-to-face services has caused a rise in self-service laundromats. There is an increase in electronic times to maintain clothing at home, including washing machines, dryers, and ironing clothes care systems.

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Changes in clothing culture have greatly influenced where clothing sales have branched out to include department stores, specialty stores, outlets, superstores, traditional markets, and online shopping malls. Fashion retailers are mainly distributed in metropolitan cities with large numbers of department stores, specialty stores, outlets, superstores, traditional markets, and online shopping malls. More than 40% of clothing e-commerce, which has been expedited by the outbreak of COVID-19, is sold through internet shopping malls, home shopping networks, and social commerce sites. Additionally, with increased usage of cosmetic products and visits to hair salons among various genders and age groups, including men, adolescents, and infants, salons have specialized for specific gender and age groups, such as exclusively for men and children. The COVID-19 pandemic has become the main reason for the changing pattern of the consumption of cosmetic products and the visits to hair salons. Specifically, there has been an increase in the consumption of color cosmetic items and, in contrast, an increase in the consumption of cosmetic items for sanitation and basic skincare products. COVID-19 also has triggered an increase in consumers who do hair care and skin care at home, similar to shopping trends; there is an increase in sales of cosmetic products online. Also, more consumers are interested in ethically consuming cosmetic items that do not include harmful chemicals. With the growth of the cosmetics industry and an increase in consumers’ enthusiasm who are exposed to the Korean culture and its products, Korean cosmetics are gaining popularity around the world. For the last 10 years, the number of businesses that have produced cosmetic products in Korea has increased by nearly 21 times. The production output has increased by about 2.5 times. As a result, the exports of cosmetic items have been growing rapidly, while the imports have gradually diminished.

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Food and Culture

The Korean people have developed a diverse and unique food culture dating back to ancient times. The origins of their agriculture can be understood by studying carbohydrate grains and skill manuals, and fishing tactics found along the shores which evidence that they collected seaweed. The most important grain in the Korean diet has been rice. Like many Asian countries in which rice has been a main source of carbohydrates, Korea has worked hard on land reclamation and securing a water supply to cultivate rice. Various resources from ancient times show the long tradition of rice cultivation. However, due to the campaign to consume mixed grains in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rapid increase in the consumption of bread and noodles. As a result, rice and wheat have become the two major grains that Koreans consume.

In particular, the consumption of wheat has increased gradually, while Korea imports a large amount of wheat. Recently, the consumption has decreased due to rapid changes in diet and increased interest in health. In contrast, the consumption of various other grains has increased. The contemporary Korean diet is largely characterized by a reduction in rice consumption and an increase in consumption of vegetables, grains, rice, noodle, and diary products.

One feature of Korean food culture is the development of fermented food. Kimchi is the quintessential example of this. With four distinct seasons, fermenting allows people to eat enough various foods to rapid changes in diet and increased interest in health. In contrast, the consumption of various other grains has increased. The contemporary Korean diet is largely characterized by a reduction in rice consumption and an increase in consumption of vegetables, grains, rice, noodle, and diary products.

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Distribution of Cafes (2019)

Types and Distribution of Muslim-Friendly Restaurants (2021)

E-commerce has grown rapidly in recent years, and food distribution, particularly agricultural, livestock, and fish products, has seen rapid expansion. The most notable change is the rise of e-commerce in rural areas and the growth of online sales of agricultural, livestock, and fish products. The overall degree of food self-sufficiency is very low, except for rice. Therefore, Korea imports a large amount of agricultural, livestock, and fish products every year. Korea’s imports of foreign agricultural, livestock, and fish products have been rapidly growing because of the international trade agreements in recent years. The pattern of Korean food consumption is also related to the country of origin of imported products. For example, with an increase of Muslim residents and visitors to Korea, the Korea Tourism Organization has implemented a Muslim-friendly restaurant classification system to designates and promotes halal food restaurants.

The usage of workers clashing a take-out coffee cup during lunchtime in the central business district of a city is representative of daily life in urban business districts. Coffee and tea-related culture has undergone rapid changes. The most remarkable phenomenon is the trend of enjoying different types of coffee and tea, which coexists with the older culture of consuming instant coffee and tea bags. For example, the number of coffee shops and milk tea shops has been rapidly growing, especially in metropolitan cities, and coffee shop signs are a common feature of the urban landscape. The number of coffee shops is rapidly increasing in residential areas and suburbs as well as in the central areas of metropolitan cities. For example, a cafe is a place where you can drink coffee and tea.

A cafe functions as a gathering place for people for work-related purposes as well as for socializing, drinking coffee and tea at home by using different tools and methods. A cafe functions as a relaxing place for people for work-related purposes as well as for socializing, and it also functions as a leisure and living space for spending time reading a book or studying. The home coffee culture has also emerged with a prevalence of work from home and an increase of time staying at home since the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, an increasing number of people enjoy drinking coffee and tea at home by using different tools and methods.

Imagery of workers clutching a take-out coffee cup during lunchtime in the central business district of a city is representative of daily life in urban business districts. Coffee and tea-related culture has undergone rapid changes. The most remarkable phenomenon is the trend of enjoying different types of coffee and tea, which coexists with the older culture of consuming instant coffee and tea bags. For example, the number of coffee shops and milk tea shops has been rapidly growing, especially in metropolitan cities, and coffee shop signs are a common feature of the urban landscape. The number of coffee shops is rapidly increasing in residential areas and suburbs as well as in the central areas of metropolitan cities. For example, a cafe is a place where you can drink coffee and tea.

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With an increase in the cultural trend of eating out, various kinds of restaurants are becoming more popular, in addition to the general Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and Western restaurants. Fast restaurants, which are classified as "silla," mainly include bakeries, pizza/hamburger-sandwich shops, chicken restaurants, as well as smoks and Gulpyay restaurants. Overall, these "silla"-type of restaurants have steadily increased, and many of them are franchises. Since the mid-2000s, franchises have been expanded dramatically. Furthermore, on the branding and marketing strategies of large enterprises, such as the success of chicken, coffee, fast food, confectioneries, and baked goods, have become part of the urban landscape in contemporary Korea.

The percentage of people eating out is increasing. Except for toddlers and infants, the percentage of having dinner with other family members is below 30%. Younger generations are more likely to eat breakfast, especially those in their 20s. More than half of them do not have dinner with family. Two aspects of contemporary cultural liberty, convenience and lack of time, have made the culture of eating out more prevalent. In a recent survey asking the reason for eating out, whether visiting a restaurant is a set, fixed delivery, or take-out, the most common answer was "for everyday meals," and the proportion of the respondents who answered "to enjoy eating out with the family" was also high. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, eating out together on work-related occasions, especially take-out, increased significantly, and eating restaurants to celebrate special days such as anniversaries and graduations were quite common as well.

Currently, the trend of purchasing and consuming foods has rapidly changed. The increase of the culture of eating out, and a faster-paced lifestyle have been dominant reasons for the increase of the online selling of such traditional liquor has led to the actual consumption of alcoholic beverages. Traditionally, beer and diluted soju accounted for the majority of alcoholic beverages consumed by Koreans. However, in recent years, the introduction of foreign alcoholic beverages has led to an interest in traditional domestic alcoholic beverages such as Makgeolli among Koreans. Also, the promotion of the online selling of such traditional liquor has led to the actual increase in such products' sales. In 2021, "Makgeolli making" was designated as a national intangible heritage by the Cultural Heritage Administration. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced people to seek foods and consume alcoholic beverages at home. Most products which enable people to make Makgeolli at home and town of domastic brews have been introduced. Korean alcoholic beverages have become a way for people to experience the Korean culture holistically. "Act on Promotion of Korean Traditional Liqueur Industries" and "Act on The Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage" have been enacted to support such changes. The leaders of the intangible heritage in specialty alcoholic liquor and alcoholic beverages are designated and protected under these acts. In addition to this, consumers can purchase these alcoholic beverages such as wine, spirits, and Makgeolli from various types of shops such as supermarkets, department stores, liquor stores, convenience stores, and supermarkets.
The Hanok (traditional Korean-style house) is unique to Korean inhabitants by extended families. The Confucian tradition became traditional characteristics are designated as important folk cultural found across the country. Especially, the villages that continue in choosing a residence. Traditional Korean villages can still be having a mountain behind the village offered timber for firewood and a wide expanse of other uses and served as a windbreak for the freezing northeast winter wind. The streams and rivers in front of villagers supplied agricultural water and were important factors in choosing a residence. Traditional Korean villages can still be found across the country. Especially, the villages that continue the traditional characteristics are designated as important folk cultural heritage and kept preserved. Traditional Korean villages are often inhabited by extended families. The Confucian tradition became a basic principle for maintaining community inside the village. The Hanok (traditional Korean-style house) is unique to Korean villages. Both older and more recent Hanoks have been preserved as part of Korea’s precious cultural heritage. Hanok villages can be found in various places, including metropolitan cities.

A Hanok is a Korean building built with unique technology and architectural style using readily available materials that are in harmony with nature and whose unique aesthetic reflects the cultural heritage and sense of place that create a distinct Korean architectural landscapes. In addition, a Hanok incorporates a unique heating technology and ventilation systems. Most Hanoks are made entirely wood and can be found across the country, including rural areas. Also, some contemporary architectural buildings borrow from the architectural styles of the Hanok.

Confucian historical customs of the past sometimes meant that the house represented social status or economic position, wherein the traditional village was composed of small houses called Gongsajip for the Yangban (noble or ruling) class, and thatched houses called Chogajip for ordinary people. While there are a variety of house styles in accordance with status and economic capability, all these houses reflect a deep interaction between people and climate. A housing structure that protects inhabitants from the elements by maintaining the need to go outdoors was developed in the mountainous provinces, which are distinguished by long, cold winters. One that maximizes air circulation through Dachwoong (a mid-apex floor) was developed in the southern provinces, which are characterized by hot, humid summers. Traditional Korean houses also include Ondol (a floor heating system) for living with the cold winters.

An apartment is a typical Korean housing unit. Apartment construction began in the 1970s and accelerated through the 1990s and 2000s. Apartments accounted for 30% of total housing in 1990 and surpassed 60% by 2020. Apartments typically house about 65 m² and 85 m² based on the area for exclusive use, which reflects the government’s housing policy. Using government funds designated to provide affordable housing for people in the 1970s, the standard for national housing was set by the Housing Construction Promotion Act to be within 85 m², the so-called upper limit for the “national housing standard,” which became the standard for tax benefits and financial sector loans. An apartment of 65 m² is generally a three-bedroom and two-bathroom suite, typical for a family of parents and children. In the past, an apartment of 65 m² typically had two bedrooms and one bathroom. However, today, the most common configuration of 65 m² is the three-bedroom and two-bathroom suite.

While the square footage for the area for exclusive use has changed little over time, the use of that space has gradually diversified, with larger bathrooms and living rooms due to increased use of shared spaces such as expanded balconies. Apartment living remains most popular for Korean urbanites because of the advantages of convenient parking, installation of elevators, and co-management and security in regimented developments. However, many apartments have deteriorated and become less safe after more than 20 years, and parking has become a challenge with the growth of private car ownership. Thus, many older apartment buildings have been either remodeled or reconstituted to improve the residential environment.

As a typical Korean housing unit, apartments are generally divided into two main categories: private apartments (apartments owned by individuals or companies) and cooperative apartments (apartments owned by the cooperative). Cooperative apartments are generally larger and more luxurious than private apartments. However, private apartments are more common and are generally smaller and less luxurious than cooperative apartments. In addition, cooperative apartments are generally more expensive than private apartments. Private apartments are generally divided into two main categories: apartments for sale and apartments for rent. Apartments for sale are generally more expensive than apartments for rent. However, apartments for rent are generally more common than apartments for sale.

The structure of a typical Korean apartment consists of several main areas: the entrance, the living room, the bedroom, the kitchen, and the bathroom. The entrance is generally located at the front of the apartment and is often used for storing shoes and other items. The living room is generally located in the center of the apartment and is used for socializing and entertaining guests. The bedroom is generally located in the back of the apartment and is used for sleeping. The kitchen is generally located in the middle of the apartment and is used for preparing meals. The bathroom is generally located in the back of the apartment and is used for bathing and other personal care.
One of the most remarkable aspects of the residential style of Koreans in contemporary society is that the high percentage of people live in individual dwellings. Housing in Korea is officially classified as detached housing, apartments, row housing, and multiplex housing. Detached housing is further classified as general single-family and multi-family (semi-detached) housing. General single-family houses are further classified as freestones, country houses, and others. A multi-family building is one that is divided into various units rented by several households. An apartment, as a house, and a multiplex (elevators) are examples of housing in which various households own units compartmentalized inside a larger building. Apartment refers to residential buildings where individual households independently own each multi-story unit. Condominiums would be a more common term for describing this type of housing. However, the apartment is widely used to describe this type of housing in Korea. Also, apartments are high-rises with more than 5 stories. In Korea, a multiplex building (flat/bedroom) is commonly called a “Villa.” Typically, a multiplex housing unit is in a row to facilitate building in which individual households separately own each unit. Multiplex housing is similar to the concept of condominiums.

Many detached houses are located in rural areas or urban areas where construction or redevelopment has not been done. Recently, the number of rural housing districts has increased as people desire to enjoy a rural life far away from the bustling urban life. According to policies for improving residential environments, many detached houses have been replaced with apartment complexes or multiplex housing, such as part of the urban integration. Apartments have been built to efficiently utilize the limited urban space in densely populated cities. Apartments have become popular because affordable and educational and commercial facilities are easily located in the apartment complex. In addition, high-rise apartments occupy more residential areas in many newly constructed commercial housing zones, such as in new cities in metropolitan areas. As a result, apartments have been steadily increasing relative to other housing types, accounting for about 60% of all the housing—exceeding 18 million and 300 thousand households as of 2020. In addition, including row housing and multiplex housing, about 70% of Koreans live in small-unit dwellings. Recently, a large number of multi-unit dwellings have been constructed even in suburban or rural villages. In addition, high-rise commercial complexes, in which a low-rise is used for commercial facilities and a higher one for residential areas, have been invested in some parts of the metropolitan cities. Recently, single-person and 2 to 3-person households have been increased. The increase in multi-persons and various types of rental housing reflects the government policy for young adults and low-income families. For example, urban folk houses have increased in number, and the average size of these houses has been reduced to the size of 35 to 45 square meters of space per household. For the areas between 30 square and 50 square meters, a house can consist of up to two rooms. Also, an efficiency apartment called Collective Housing is originally used as an office during the day and then as a residential house at night. However, many Offices are mainly used for residential purposes. The living space of an Office is about 40 square meters of an apartment. Nevertheless, the number of people living per household is about half of each household for an apartment. Thus, the living area per person is smaller than that of an apartment.

Social housing, which is a type of rental housing, has recently increased. It is rental housing supplied by the social economic agents, including social enterprises and non-profit corporations. It guarantees low rent and a smaller rental period. The Subway Station Area Housing Project for Young Adults, initiated by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in 2016, is rental housing located in the subway station areas for young adults and one-year adults, provided by private and public sectors. Youth housing, which is another kind, has started to be implemented in 2019 to rent a remodeled house in the city center as a Subway Station Area Housing for Young Adults.

Multiplex houses have recently developed into so-called “Villa.” Simple, small housing units such as one-bedroom units were divided into small rooms. Department store houses are also residential apartments. Some workers often prefer multiplex houses near the city center or close to various neighborhood facilities.

Having one’s own house is an important and difficult task for Koreans to the extent that the expression ‘the dream of getting your own house’ has become common. The fact that the Housing Affordability Index—an indicator for the loan repayment pressure in the use of a median income household to purchase a multi-personal house with a standard loan—has been recently increasing shows that it is becoming more difficult to purchase a house. Especially in the major metropolitan cities such as Seoul, housing prices, fees, and monthly rental prices have increased overall. This housing crisis has been a large burden, especially for those who do not own a house. The proportion of one-year-olds and young adults who own their houses is lower than that of other groups. Therefore, the government has introduced implemented housing welfare policies, including the supply of houses, subsidy of rent, houses for housing purchase for a house, and rent control. Real estate speculation has emerged as a social problem with the rapid increase in prices, including houses. Furthermore, with widened gaps in the real estate price depending on different regions, the imbalance of tax revenue in different regions has also aggravated. Accordingly, the government has enacted and implemented the Comprehensive Real Estate Tax Act that lessens this additional tax for those who earn real estate excessively. This act stabilizes the level of real estate prices by suppressing real estate speculation and enhancing tax equity.

Another problem to be resolved regarding the Korean housing system is the increase in empty houses. In particular, the proportion of empty houses in South Korea is high. In metropolitan areas, the proportion of empty houses over 50% exceeds the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. The proportion of empty houses over 50% exceeds the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. The proportion of empty houses over 50% exceeds the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. According to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the proportion of empty houses in South Korea is higher than the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. The proportion of empty houses over 50% exceeds the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. The proportion of empty houses over 50% exceeds the average rate of empty houses of 30% in metropolitan areas. teenager housing, and are indirectly high. If the government efficiently manages and uses empty houses by assigning the Spatial Plan on the Maintenance of Empty Houses and Small Houses.