are noticeable characteristics of Korean society. In addition, a high level of enthusiasm for education and a high level of educational achievement are significant factors in Korean society. Elementary and secondary education is provided by public educational institutions established by the state, along with a variety of private educational institutions. Various schools have been established for special purposes in accordance with the characteristics of students. At the high school level, more choices such as college prep, vocational, and technical high schools are available. Higher education is based on four-year institutions and two-year community colleges. There are also technical colleges covering various professions. Recently, online and extension colleges and degree programs have been developed. Many graduate schools offer master’s and doctoral degrees, and many students pursue graduate study abroad.

The middle school entrance rate is nearly 100%, and has been since the late 1980s, and the high school entrance rate has been close to 100% since the mid-1990s. The number of students has been continuously increasing. The number of elementary and middle schools has been consistent since the late 1980s. Kindergarten enrollment has significantly decreased since the 1990s, as kindergarten education has become more widely available. The total number of students differs by age group, with the number of elementary students decreasing slightly due to declining fertility rates. A declining fertility rate has also resulted in decreases in the middle and high school populations since the late 1980s. As a benefit, an increase in teacher hirings has reduced the number of students per teacher. Changes in the school-age population vary greatly by region. Gyeonggi-do has experienced an increase in its school-age population, while other regions show large decreases from 2000 to 2020.
Kindergartens are operated by national and public institutions: National and public kindergartens primarily operate as elementary school-affiliated institutions. Various types of private kindergartens with unique educational goals operate in areas with a large kindergarten population. National and public kindergartens are important for preschool education in areas with few kindergarten-age children.

Most elementary schools are national and public. Private elementary schools are concentrated in suburban areas due to population loss to the suburbs. Meanwhile, in the new residential areas, the location of elementary schools is generally determined by the planning process. Families with school-age children prefer the newly developed areas because the commuting distance to an elementary school is very short. On the other hand, many rural elementary schools have been closed because of declines in the number of school-age children. As indicated on the map, Min-8-dong, Chongjeong-dong, and similar areas, as a typical rural area, has experienced an exodus of young people, resulting in the closure of many elementary schools. Looking at the 5-year period, many schools were established during the 1960–70s when many Korean babies were born. Consequently, the number of school-age children has been steadily decreasing, and some of the closed schools have been sold or used as an educational, recreational, cultural, public sports, and income-increasing facilities.

A result, the number of elementary school children from marriages between Korean and non-Korean and foreign families has increased. Students of foreign families are concentrated in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, while many students from marriages between Koreans and non-Koreans live in areas where the proportion of international marriages is high. In addition, elementary students study abroad due to immigration, their parents working overseas, and a choice to study abroad at an early age. The location of elementary schools is closely related to residential zones in urban areas and to settlement conditions in rural areas. Elementary schools in old residential areas were often established in the early stages of urban development and rapid urbanization. These tend to be fewer students and classes in those areas due to population loss to the suburbs. Meanwhile, in the new residential areas, the location of elementary schools is generally determined by the planning process. Families with school-age children prefer the newly developed areas because the commuting distance to an elementary school is very short.

On the other hand, many rural elementary schools have been closed because of declines in the number of school-age children. As indicated on the map, Min-8-dong, Chongjeong-dong, and similar areas, as a typical rural area, has experienced an exodus of young people, resulting in the closure of many elementary schools. Looking at the 5-year period, many schools were established during the 1960–70s when many Korean babies were born. Consequently, the number of school-age children has been steadily decreasing, and some of the closed schools have been sold or used as an educational, recreational, cultural, public sports, and income-increasing facilities.

### Preschool and Elementary Education

#### Distribution of Kindergartens (2020)

Kindergartens are operated by national and public institutions: National and public kindergartens primarily operate as elementary school-affiliated institutions. Various types of private kindergartens with unique educational goals operate in areas with a large kindergarten population. National and public kindergartens are important for preschool education in areas with few kindergarten-age children.

#### Distribution of Kindergartens by Type of Educational Institutions (2020)

Most elementary schools are national and public. Private elementary schools are concentrated in suburban areas due to population loss to the suburbs. Meanwhile, in the new residential areas, the location of elementary schools is generally determined by the planning process. Families with school-age children prefer the newly developed areas because the commuting distance to an elementary school is very short. On the other hand, many rural elementary schools have been closed because of declines in the number of school-age children. As indicated on the map, Min-8-dong, Chongjeong-dong, and similar areas, as a typical rural area, has experienced an exodus of young people, resulting in the closure of many elementary schools. Looking at the 5-year period, many schools were established during the 1960–70s when many Korean babies were born. Consequently, the number of school-age children has been steadily decreasing, and some of the closed schools have been sold or used as an educational, recreational, cultural, public sports, and income-increasing facilities.

#### Multicultural Family Students in Elementary School (2020)

Location and Population Pyramid of Old Town and New Town Elementary School (2020): Location of an Elementary School in an Old Town (Changsin-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul)

On the other hand, many rural elementary schools have been closed because of declines in the number of school-age children. As indicated on the map, Min-8-dong, Chongjeong-dong, and similar areas, as a typical rural area, has experienced an exodus of young people, resulting in the closure of many elementary schools. Looking at the 5-year period, many schools were established during the 1960–70s when many Korean babies were born. Consequently, the number of school-age children has been steadily decreasing, and some of the closed schools have been sold or used as an educational, recreational, cultural, public sports, and income-increasing facilities.
Middle schools are classified as national and public schools and private schools, with as much as 80% of middle schools being national and public. The number of middle school classes and students of international marriage families have increased rapidly in middle schools as a whole. Students of foreign families are mainly concentrated in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, while students of international marriage families are distributed across the whole country, including rural areas. In addition, the number of middle school students leaving Korea to study abroad is larger than that of students returning after studying abroad.

Multicultural diversity has rapidly increased in middle schools as well. Students of foreign families are mainly concentrated in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, while students of international marriage families are distributed across the whole country, including rural areas. Teachers in both rural and urban areas tend to be older because former non-teachers are recruited due to the decreasing number of students.

Examples of Foundations and Closings of Elementary Schools (Miwon-myeon, Cheongju-e, Chungcheongbuk-do)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Closures</th>
<th>Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-1940</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2010</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Closures: Schools that closed in the specified period.
- Openings: Schools that opened in the specified period.
Special education schools are responsible for educating students with disabilities. These special education schools have been established in metropolitan cities and in some small and medium-sized cities. However, many rural areas do not have such schools; thus, students with disabilities study with other students in the general schools through a type of integrated education. Korea’s high schools are classified as regular high schools for students planning to attend colleges and universities and as specialized high schools for students planning to seek special industrial employment after receiving specialized techniques and skills. In addition, specialized high schools have been established for education in foreign languages and the sciences. Many autonomous private schools, which have autonomy in education and financial operations, have also been established. Specialized high schools offer a unique education that conforms to the characteristics of the Social Sciences, including agriculture, industry, commerce, and marine industries. Many middle and high schools have been renamed in the form of a single-sex school where boys’ and girls’ schools are separated. This phenomenon continued until the 1990s, but from the end of the 1990s, boys’ and girls’ schools gradually converted to co-ed schools following the government policy. In addition, a number of co-ed schools have been established in the new residential areas. These trends have led to a significant increase in co-ed schools in the total number of schools since the 2000s.

Universities are classified as national and private universities. A few national universities were established in the central city of each province. Private universities have been established as the basis of their unique educational goals. Since the 1990s, as the number of private universities has significantly increased, the percentage of students entering universities has also grown dramatically. As a result, the current percentage of students entering university in Korea is the highest among the OECD countries. The positive aspect of this phenomenon is the achievement of a highly educated workforce, but this also results in a significant economic burden for the students. Online and extension colleges, established for meeting lifelong education through ICT, have fewer spatial and temporal constraints than general universities because most lectures and evaluations are conducted online. However, in contrast with other types of colleges, these colleges are largely located in the Special Metropolitan Areas and other metropolitan cities.

The appropriate level of college tuition, the state’s scholarship support, and the maintenance of fiscal sustainability of both public and private universities have become important agendas. Majors in universities are mostly classified under humanities, social sciences, education, natural sciences, engineering, medicine, arts, music, and physical sciences.
A decrease in the school-age population leads to a decrease in the number of college students. As a result, the consolidation of colleges began in the mid-2000s. Colleges continually have reduced the number of new students in the quota to maintain the enrollment ratio. However, the enrollment rate of new students in all higher education institutions is steadily decreasing. This trend is noticeable in the case of two-year colleges versus four-year universities. Most consolidations occur between junior college and university or between two or more universities. Recently, the consolidation is also taking place between national universities in provinces.

The percentage of full-time faculty and the number of students per full-time faculty are major indicators of the college’s learning environment and conditions. Accordingly, colleges made great efforts to secure full-time faculties, and the rate of full-time faculties increased to 86% in 2020.

The number of doctorate holders who got their degrees has been increasing every year. The proportions of engineering, natural science, social science, and medicine obtained at domestic universities. The number of doctorate holders who got their degrees has been relatively high by field. More than 70% of all doctorate holders are densely distributed in the Seoul Metropolitan Area and the Chungbuk region.

University professors mostly have doctoral degrees, and a large proportion of these degrees are obtained at domestic universities. The number of doctorate holders who got their degree has been increasing every year. The proportions of engineering, natural science, social science, and medicine are relatively high by field. More than 70% of all doctorate holders are densely distributed in the Seoul Metropolitan Area and the Chungbuk region.

The number of international students in undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral courses in all higher education institutions has been steadily increasing. Although the number of international students for bachelor’s degree courses temporarily decreased from 2013 to 2014, it increased sharply again after 2015, reaching 75,000 in 2020. Chinese and Vietnamese students are the most among all international students. However, the proportion of international students from other countries, such as Uzbekistan and Nepal, is relatively high in some areas. In addition, the proportion of international students’ countries of origin also varies by their major, especially in the medical field. Canada, the United States, and Taiwan are relatively high.
Private Education and Other Schools

The enthusiasm for education has been praised for promoting and developing excellent human resources in Korea. Meanwhile, excessive private education is a large part of the problem for Korean education in terms of parental financial burden and the disparity of available private education opportunities between regions and social strata. Recent statistics reveal that a very high proportion of middle and high private education in elementary school.

The average household spending on education is about 280,000 won, which is about 13% of total household expenditures. The proportion of household expenditure on education declined to 13.3% from its peak in 2009. Government policies, such as reforming the college entrance exam system, housing part-time learning, and improving educational broadcasting, have been implemented to lessen private education costs.

In addition, it is reported that the choice for private education is closely related to the social-economic condition of the parents. A survey shows that the higher the household income level and academic degree of the parents, the more likely they spend more on private education for their children. Therefore, differences in children’s academic achievement may occur depending on participation rates in private education.

Regional private institute are concentrated in the Seoul Metropolitan Area and other metropolitan cities. In addition, differences in expenditure on private education between metropolitan regions and other cities, which has prompted a concern that educational gaps between social classes and between regions will be widened. Private institutes are classified as supplementary educational institutes and lifelong educational institutes by the subject and purpose of education. In general, private institutes are supplementary educational institutes that provide school curricula targeting for preschool students and elementary and high school students. Lifelong educational institutes are significantly fewer than supplementary ones. However, the number of lifelong educational institutes, instructors, and registered students has increased an interest in lifelong education and professional qualifications has increased, however, there are no lifelong educational institutes in some rural areas, so the regional gap between urban and rural areas becomes problematic.

School qualification examination is a system to evaluate whether students who have completed the school curricula have the same academic abilities as those who completed the school curricula at regular school education. This qualification examination is conducted only for elementary, middle, and high school curricula. The number of applicants varies by region and type of qualification. From 2015 to 2019, the number of applicants for the elementary school graduation qualification exam was generally increasing, while those for the middle and high school graduation qualification exams were decreasing.

As the number of foreign students in Korea has increased, so have the foreign educational institutes and foreign schools. Foreign educational institutes are established by a corporation or body operating foreign educational institutions in Korea. Foreign schools are established to provide students home education for children of foreigners living in Korea. These foreign schools provide education tailored to each country’s curriculum and admit foreign students, who have lived in the relevant foreign countries. In addition, some international schools, which specialize in international education in Jeju Global Education City, were established by the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province. The educational institutes of foreign countries directly operate foreign educational institutes in designated areas. Alternative schools and specialized schools provide unique education that cannot be adequately addressed in a traditional school environment. Those schools often specialized education in accordance with their educational goals, such as instruction in religion, music, global education, and environmental studies.

Income (KRW)