FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020

South Korea

FREE

83 /100

Political Rights	33 /40
Civil Liberties	50 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS
83 /100 Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.

Overview

South Korea's democratic system features regular rotations of power and robust political pluralism, with the largest parties representing conservative and liberal views. Personal freedoms are generally respected, though the country struggles with minority rights and social integration. Legal bans on pro–North Korean activity affects legitimate political expression. Members of the press can also come under undue scrutiny by the government as they report on,

On South Korea

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

or commentate on, inter-Korean relations. South Korea is also affected by severe corruption, which has ensnared successive governments and executives from the country's largest companies in recent years.

Key Developments in 2019

- Investigations into the corruption of high-ranking government officials, judges, and business executives continued through the year. President Moon Jae-in's justice minister, Cho Kuk, was indicted on charges including bribery, embezzlement, and document fraud in December, after he was forced from his post in October. Former president Park Genu-hye and Samsung vice-chairman Lee Jae-yong faced renewed trials over acts of corruption and collusion, after they were respectively convicted in 2018 and 2017. In May, former chief justice Yang Sung-tae was put on trial for manipulating high-profile cases to curry favor with the former president.
- The government renewed its campaign against "fake news," using the country's media regulator, police, and prosecutors to pressure journalists and commentators who criticize its policies. The country's internet censor also gained new powers to more closely track South Koreans who visit secure web pages in February.
- South Korea returned two North Korean fishermen who requested resettlement after they were accused of killing 16 of their fellow crew before traveling south, despite fears that they would be tortured upon their return. They were the first defectors to be returned to North Korea since the Korean War ended in 1953.

See More

Country Facts

Global Freedom Score
83/100
Free

Internet Freedom Score
66/100
Partly Free

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Other Years

2019

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	**4**/4

The 1988 constitution vests executive power in a directly elected president, who is limited to a single five-year term. Executive elections in South Korea are largely free and fair. Moon Jae-in of the liberal Minjoo Party won a May 2017 snap presidential election following the impeachment of former president Park Geun-hye. President Moon took 41 percent of the vote, followed by Hong Jun-pyo of the conservative Liberty Korea Party (LKP) with 24 percent and Ahn Cheol-soo of the centrist People's Party with 21 percent. About 77 percent of registered voters turned out for the election.

While voters were not unduly pressured by electoral authorities, a provincial governor did attempt to influence their choices through a social media manipulation campaign. Kim Kyuong-soo, the governor of South Kyŏngsang Province, collaborated with blogger Kim Dong-won to manipulate the dissemination of 80,000 news articles, so that social media platforms would effectively portray then-candidate Moon more positively. Governor Kim was convicted and handed a two-year sentence, which he vowed to appeal, in January 2019. His coconspirator was given a three-year sentence that August.

In the June 2018 local elections, the Minjoo Party won 14 of 17 metropolitan mayoral and gubernatorial offices, with two

of the others going to the LKP and one to an independent. Turnout for the local elections was 60.2 percent, marking the first time the voting rate had surpassed 60 percent for local elections since 1995.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	**4**/4

The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 300 members serving four-year terms, with 253 elected in single-member constituencies and 47 through national party lists. The contests are typically free of major irregularities. In the 2016 elections, the Minjoo Party won 123 seats, while the Saenuri Party (which later became the LKP) won 122. The People's Party took 38 seats, and minor parties and independents secured the remaining 17 seats.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	**3**/4

Elections are managed by the National Election Commission, an independent nine-member body appointed for six-year terms. Three members are chosen by the president, three by the National Assembly, and three by the Supreme Court. While elections are generally considered free and fair, National Assembly constituencies have historically been affected by malapportionment, giving outsized voting power to thinly populated rural areas. A revised map adopted for the 2016 elections mitigated the problem, in keeping with a 2014 Constitutional Court ruling.

In December 2019, the National Assembly took another step in addressing this issue by passing an election reform bill to change how the 47 seats filled through national party lists are distributed, allowing the legislature to better reflect the national vote and giving smaller parties a better chance of winning seats. The legislation, which will take effect in time for legislative elections due in April 2020, also lowered the minimum voting age from 19 to 18.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?	**3**/4

Political pluralism is robust, with multiple parties competing for power, though party structures and coalitions are very fluid. In addition to the two main parties—the liberal Minjoo Party and conservative LKP—several smaller groups are represented in the National Assembly, as are a handful of unaffiliated members. Only once has the Constitutional Court legally dissolved a political party—the United Progressive Party in 2014—for violations of the National Security Law, which bans pro–North Korean activities.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	**4**/4

There have been multiple transfers of power between rival conservative and liberal parties since the early 1990s, and the orderly election and inauguration of President Moon in 2017 reinforced this democratic pattern.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	**3**/4

Family-controlled business empires known as *chaebol* dominate the country's economy and have amassed significant political influence, which has historically enabled them to protect their interests despite calls for reform. Corruption scandals involving bribery by the chaebol have affected almost all of South Korea's former presidents. President Moon came to power promising to reform these large firms, but the government's efforts have stalled. Instead, Moon has come to rely on the chaebol to bolster the country's domestic supply chains, as it grapples with the economic consequences of a trade war with Japan.

The National Intelligence Service (NIS) has been implicated in a series of scandals in recent years, including allegations that it sought to influence the 2012 presidential election and later conducted illegal surveillance targeting Park's opponents.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	**3**/4

Although the country's few ethnic minority citizens enjoy full political rights under the law, they rarely win political representation. Residents who are not ethnic Koreans face extreme difficulties obtaining citizenship, which is based on parentage. North Korean defectors are eligible for citizenship.

Women enjoy legal equality but remain underrepresented in politics, holding 17 percent of the seats in the National Assembly and six seats in President Moon's cabinet. A group of women legislators attempted to address the political gender gap in with a reform bill introduced in February 2019 that would reserve half of its seats for women and would require political parties to include women in half of their electoral slate in future races.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	**4**/4

Elected officials generally determine and implement state policy without undue interference from unelected entities and interests.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	**3**/4

Despite government anticorruption efforts, bribery,

influence peddling, and extortion persist in politics, business, and everyday life. The Kim Young-ran Act, or Improper Solicitation and Graft Act, establishes stiff punishments for those convicted of accepting bribes. The law, which took effect in 2016, applies to government officials as well as their spouses, journalists, and educators.

Former president Park was impeached in late 2016 after officials were caught coercing businesses into providing donations to Choi Soon-sil, the leader of a religious organization and a close friend of the president. Park was impeached and removed from office in 2017; in 2018, she was given two prison sentences for charges including bribery, revealing state secrets, abuse of power, violation of election laws, and illegal receipt of funds from a state agency. Samsung vice-chairman Lee Jae-yong was handed a five-year prison sentence in 2017 after he directed donations to Choi's group. Lee was released in 2018 after the Seoul High Court cut his sentence in half and suspended the remainder.

In August 2019, the Supreme Court set part of Park's conviction aside, ruling that the district court's interpretation of what constituted a bribe was too narrow and ordering a retrial. The ruling revolved around the gifting of three horses worth $2.8 million from Samsung to Choi's daughter, which was not originally considered a bribe when Park was tried. The Supreme Court also ordered Lee to stand trial for his involvement; this trial was not in session by year's end.

Samsung was ensnared in another scandal in December 2019, when three executives were convicted of accounting fraud by inflating the value of one of the company's subsidiaries. The executives admitted their act, but denied accusations that the fraud was designed to benefit Lee Jae-

yong in his quest to strengthen his grip on the chaebol.

Former president Lee Myung-bak, who once served as a head of a Hyundai subsidiary, was convicted of bribery and embezzlement in 2018. Lee was given a 15-year sentence, but was placed under house arrest in March 2019 due to chronic illness.

In response to pervasive government corruption, the National Assembly created the High-Ranking Officials' Corruption Investigation Agency through legislation passed in December 2019. The agency will focus on corruption allegations against public officials, legislators, prosecutors, judges, and the president; it will also have the power to unilaterally indict police officers, prosecutors, and judges. The Supreme Prosecutors' Office voiced its opposition days before its passage, saying the new agency would weaken its own abilities. The agency will begin its work in July 2020, though the government is expected to legislate to address prosecutors' concerns before then.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	**2** / 4

Investigations into former president Park and coconspirator Choi Soon-sil revealed a network of collusion between the two, which involved major businesses as well as the national pension fund. Despite President Moon's pledge to fight corruption and improve transparency in his administration, his government has been affected by scandal in 2019.

The daughter of Cho Kuk, President Moon's nominee for justice minister in August 2019, allegedly benefited from her position to gain an unearned academic citation and receive a scholarship to attend a medical school when she did not

qualify. Cho's wife, Chung Kyung-shim, found herself under investigation after she was accused of embezzlement and fabricating material to secure their daughter's medical school admission. While Cho was confirmed as justice minister in September, he was forced to step down in October, and his wife was arrested for her activities that same month. In late December, Cho was indicted on charges including bribery, embezzlement, and document fraud.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	**3**/4

The news media are generally free and competitive, reporting aggressively on government policies and allegations of official and corporate wrongdoing. However, a defamation law authorizes sentences of up to seven years in prison, encouraging a certain degree of self-censorship, and journalists at major news outlets have faced political interference from managers and the government.

News coverage or commentary that is deemed to favor North Korea can be censored and lead to prosecution under the National Security Law, and access to North Korean media is banned. The government also exerts pressure on journalists covering inter-Korean relations outside of these strict laws. In March 2019, a spokesperson for the ruling Minjoo Party accused a Bloomberg journalist of authoring

"traitorous content," after she wrote an article portraying President Moon as a "spokesperson" for North Korean leader Kim Jong-il the year before. That same month, the spokesperson used similar language to criticize *New York Times* writer Choe Sang-hun, after she authored similar content. The party retracted those statements after receiving fierce criticism from the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club.

The government has continued its fight against what it calls "fake news" in 2019. Prime Minister Lee Nak-yon originally ordered police forces, prosecutors, and the Korea Communications Commission (KCC), a government media regulator, to investigate and punish those who spread it in mid-2018, saying practitioners were risking the country's national security. In practice, the government has reacted most strongly to public criticism of its policies; the prime minister's instructions came after he was derided by conservative commentators for attending the funeral of Vietnamese president Tran Dai Quang. The National Police Agency subsequently investigated 16 false stories that appeared on social media platforms, some of which originated from right wing outlets or users.

President Moon reiterated his commitment to this policy in August 2019, after receiving online criticism over the country's ongoing trade dispute with Japan and his policy towards North Korea. The KCC reiterated the same stance that month, saying that the need to halt fake news outweighed the risk of violating freedom of expression.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	**4**/4

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected in practice. However, the military conscription system made no allowances for conscientious objection, and hundreds of men—nearly all of them Jehovah's Witnesses—were imprisoned each year for refusing military service. In 2018, the Constitutional Court ruled that the government must provide alternative forms of service. Later that year, the Supreme Court acquitted a man who refused military service due to his religious beliefs.

After those rulings, the justice ministry began offering parole to conscientious objectors; the 70th and final objector was paroled in March 2019. In December 2019, the National Assembly passed legislation allowing conscientious objectors to perform alternative service at correctional facilities for 36 months.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	**3**/4

Academic freedom is mostly unrestricted, though the National Security Law limits statements supporting the North Korean regime. The 2016 anticorruption law subjects teachers and administrators to the same tight restrictions as public officials. Certain portrayals of sensitive historical issues—such as imperial Japan's wartime sexual enslavement of Korean women—can be subject to government censorship or prosecution under the country's defamation laws.

In September 2019, Yonsei University professor Ryu Seok-chun portrayed comfort women as voluntary sex workers in a lecture, and was suspended after his remarks were reported by the press. Ryu also resigned his membership

from the LKP after its ethics committee prepared to discipline him. In October, the sociology professor became the target of a police probe over his remarks.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	**4**/4

Private discussion is typically free and open, and the government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. However, the government also maintains a robust surveillance apparatus.

A 2016 antiterrorism law granted the NIS expanded authority to monitor private communications, and the measure's vague definition of "terrorism" raised concerns that it would enable the agency to track government critics, particularly online. The NIS, police, prosecutors, and investigative agencies can also access metadata without a warrant; this includes internet users' national ID numbers, postal addresses, and telephone numbers.

The government also uses invasive information-gathering techniques when considering the requests of conscientious objectors; in early 2019, prosecutors announced they were examining the phone records of conscientious objectors to see if they had played "online shooting games," which would have undermined their claims. It remains unclear how prosecutors gained access to those records.

The Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC), the government body that monitors online content, is another part of this apparatus; it evaluates online content found by its staff, along with material referred to it by other government agencies, and censors such content according

to vaguely defined standards. The KCSC's abilities were bolstered in February 2019, when it began employing Server Name Indication (SNI) filtering to closely monitor user access of secure web pages.

The National Security Law restricts speech that is considered pro–North Korean. However, the law was not strictly enforced amid the inter-Korean diplomatic process during 2018; concerns about potential constraints on free expression shifted to those who opposed or could complicate rapprochement with the North, including North Korean defectors and human rights activists.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	**4**/4

The government generally respects freedom of assembly, which is protected under the constitution. However, several legal provisions conflict with this guarantee, sometimes creating tension between the police and protesters over the application of the law.

The year's largest demonstrations were held after the government nominated Cho Kuk, who had been suspected of corruption and embezzlement, as justice minister in August 2019. Massive rallies in favor of and against his appointment were regularly held; the LPK claimed that its largest rally against Cho had 3 million participants.

LGBT+ pride events are treated inconsistently by the

government; while the Seoul pride parade was held without major disruption in June 2019, efforts to hold similar events in other cities were met with resistance. Activists in the city of Busan cancelled their Queer Culture Festival in 2019 after a local district office denied a necessary permit. One of its organizers accused the authorities of harassment, which they denied.

The northwestern city of Incheon held its second LGBT+ parade in August 2019, a year after the first event was disrupted by over 1,000 counterprotesters. The organizing group, Rainbow Mama Papa, reported that counterprotesters physically blocked participants from leaving the 2018 event, and damaged flags and banners carried by marchers. Police arrested eight counterprotesters, but did not charge them. In 2019, participants faced heckling and required a heavy police escort during the procession.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?	**3**/4

Human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active and generally operate freely, though they face political pressure when criticizing the government or other powerful interests. Many South Korean NGOs rely on government grants, despite their independent agendas.

NGOs focusing on human rights in North Korea and on support for defectors have come under the most intense pressure under the Moon administration, as it embarked on an effort to improve relations with North Korea. In late 2018,

the government slashed funding for the North Korea Human Rights Foundation (NKHRF), which was established by a human rights law enacted in 2016. Government funding of the NKHRF fell by 93 percent in President Moon's draft budget that year. The government also withdrew support for the North Korean Defector Comradery, which supports defectors with workforce training and education, that same year. The NKHRF remained largely inactive in 2019.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	**4**/4

Workers have the right to form independent unions and engage in strikes and collective bargaining. The country's independent labor unions advocate for workers' interests in practice, organizing high-profile strikes and demonstrations that sometimes lead to arrests. However, labor unions have diminished in strength, as more South Koreans work on a temporary or part-time basis.

While South Korea joined the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1991, it is not in full compliance with its eight conventions on workers' rights. The government enacted legislation allowing unemployed and dismissed workers, retired public officials, teachers, firefighters, and college educators to join trade unions in September 2019, in an effort to align to these conventions. The legislation also lengthened the validity of collective bargaining agreements from two years to three. Workplaces with fewer than 30 employees are not obligated to establish or operate collective agreements.

Major employers are nevertheless known to engage in antiunion activity; this behavior came to the forefront when

over 24 current and former employees at Samsung Electronics were convicted for sabotaging unions in December 2019, including board chair Lee Sang-hoon and vice president Kang Kyung-hoon. The company threatened to cut the wages of employees active in unions, and diverted business away from subcontractors considered friendly to unions.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	**3**/4

The chief justice and justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president with the consent of the National Assembly. The appointments are made based on recommendations from the chief justice, who is assisted by an expert advisory committee. The chief justice is also responsible for appointments to the lower courts, with the consent of the other Supreme Court justices. The president, the National Assembly, and the chief justice each nominate three members of the Constitutional Court. The judiciary is generally considered to be independent, but senior judges have also been ensnared in corruption scandals in recent years.

In June 2018, investigations began into the Supreme Court's National Court Administration (NCA), which manages the judicial branch's daily operations and administrative tasks. The NCA and Yang Sung-tae, who served as chief justice from 2011 to 2017, were accused of influencing trials and suits in favor of the Park administration, paying off judges through a slush fund that drew resources from lower courts, and other related crimes. Yang was arrested in January 2019,

and was charged with 47 instances of manipulating high-profile cases to curry favor from the administration and major businesses. Yang was also accused of derailing cases brought by survivors of forced labor during World War II to protect President Park from diplomatic difficulty. His first hearing took place in May 2019, and he was placed under house arrest in July.

In March 2019, 10 former and current judges were indicted on charges of abuse of power, including included Lee Min-geol, a former chief of planning at the NCA, Lee Kyu-jin, a former member of the Supreme Court's sentencing committee, and Yoo Hae-yong, a former chief judicial researcher at the Supreme Court. That same month, prosecutors informed the Supreme Court that it was investigating possible misconduct by 66 judges. The court referred 10 of them to a disciplinary committee in May, though five of them had already been indicted in March.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	**3**/4

Judges render verdicts in all cases. While there is no trial by jury, an advisory jury system has been in place since 2008, and judges largely respect juries' decisions. Ordinary legal proceedings are generally considered fair, but the courts have sometimes been accused of denying due process and impartiality to defendants in National Security Law cases.

In November 2019, the South Korean government returned two North Korean fishermen who were suspected of murdering 16 fellow crewmen, claiming they did not receive protection under South Korean law because of their alleged acts. The government claimed the two fishermen had

confessed, and no criminal trial was conducted.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the action, warning that South Korea's decision to surrender the fishermen violated international law because they would likely be tortured in North Korea. Defectors living in South Korea subsequently claimed that the fishermen received death sentences that December.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	**3**/4

Reports of abuse by guards in South Korea's prisons are infrequent, and prison conditions generally meet international standards. Violent crime is relatively rare, but the country is still technically at war with North Korea, resulting in a heavy military presence in some areas and the constant threat of renewed combat. Minor incidents of violence near the de facto border are not uncommon.

In late 2018, the two Koreas signed a military confidence-building agreement calling for measures to reduce the military buildup along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Cooperation between the two Koreas faltered in 2019 after talks between North Korea and the United States failed to produce an accord that would halt the North's nuclear weapons program. Tensions on the peninsula remained high as North Korea maintained its schedule of ballistic missile tests.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	**3**/4

South Korea lacks a comprehensive antidiscrimination law. Members of the country's small population of ethnic minorities encounter legal and societal discrimination. Children of foreign-born residents suffer from systemic exclusion from the education and medical systems.

There are approximately 32,000 North Korean defectors living in South Korea. While the government aims to integrate this group into South Korean society, defectors can face months of detention and questioning upon their arrival. Some defectors have also reported abuse in custody and societal discrimination.

North Korean defectors are almost always granted citizenship, and do not need to apply for asylum using the same process as other applicants. By comparison, asylum seekers from other countries see their claims rejected on a regular basis. HRW reported that only 144 people were given refugee status out of the 16,173 who requested it in 2018; most applicants were rejected outright.

Women generally enjoy legal equality but face significant social and employment discrimination. South Korea has the highest gender pay gap among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries; men earned a median salary 34.1 percent larger than women as recently as 2018. In July 2019, the Fair Hiring Practice Act was amended to prohibit invasive hiring practices against female applicants, including inquiries regarding physical appearance, hometowns, and marital status.

Sexual harassment of women in the workplace is common,

and the #MeToo movement against such abuses has continued to gain momentum in 2019. Former justice ministry official Ahn Tae-geun was convicted of abuse of power in January and sentenced to two years in prison, after he was originally accused of sexually harassing public prosecutor Seo Ji-hyeon in 2018. Former presidential candidate Ahn Hee-jung, who was acquitted of sexually assaulting a female aide in 2018, had his verdict overturned by the Seoul High Court in February 2019. The court sentenced him to three and a half years in prison.

Same-sex relations are not restricted amongst civilians, and existing human rights legislation bars discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, this legislation does not offer specific penalties for such discrimination, and transgender people are not explicitly protected. Conservative Christian groups have used their political influence to prevent legislators from adopting stronger laws. Soldiers who engage in same-sex activity are subject to a "disgraceful conduct" provision of the Military Criminal Act and face two-year prison terms, though the Constitutional Court was considering whether the law should stand at year's end.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	**4**/4

Travel both within South Korea and abroad is unrestricted, except for travel to North Korea, which requires

government approval. School is free for children between the ages of 6 and 15. Senior high schools have charged modest tuition fees, but legislation passed in October 2019 will abolish these fees for all students by 2021. Under this legislation, national and local governments will subsidize tuition fees, and some private schools will be exempt from these changes. Many families spend heavily on private academies to supplement public education. Individuals can change jobs freely, though the leading business conglomerates tend to focus their recruitment on graduates of specific universities.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	**3**/4

South Korea fully recognizes property rights and has a well-developed body of laws governing the establishment of commercial enterprises. However, the economy remains dominated by chaebols that have colluded with political figures to pursue their own interests.

The inter-Korean rapprochement process has led to pressure from President Moon on some of South Korea's chaebol, especially Samsung, to create investment plans for North Korea that can be offered as part of formal negotiations.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	**3**/4

Women generally have equal rights in divorce and custody matters. Abortion was considered a crime punishable with imprisonment except in cases of rape, incest, threats to the mother's health, or designated disorders or diseases. However, the abortion ban was overturned by the Constitutional Court in April 2019, and the government must legislate to comply with the ruling by the end of 2020.

Domestic violence is common, despite laws in place to prevent such crimes. In October 2019, the justice ministry announced new legislation that would ban men who possess criminal records of domestic violence or sexual crimes against children from inviting foreign women to immigrate for the purposes of marriage. This legislation is scheduled to take effect in October 2020.

Same-sex marriage is not legal in South Korea, and same-sex couples do not receive the same government benefits, incentives, and legal rights as married opposite-sex partners. Gagoonet, a network of LGBT+ advocacy groups, filed a complaint at the National Human Rights Commission in November 2019 in an effort to secure these rights for LGBT+ partners.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	**3**/4

Protections against exploitative working conditions are enforced by the authorities. Nevertheless, foreign migrant workers remain vulnerable to illegal debt bondage and forced labor, including forced prostitution. In August 2019, a coalition of migrant workers' groups and unions voiced opposition against a proposal by the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises, a government agency that

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