

# Addressing Structural Injustices and Inequalities Towards Inclusive Societies: A Case of South Korea



Trans-Altai Sustainability Dialogue-

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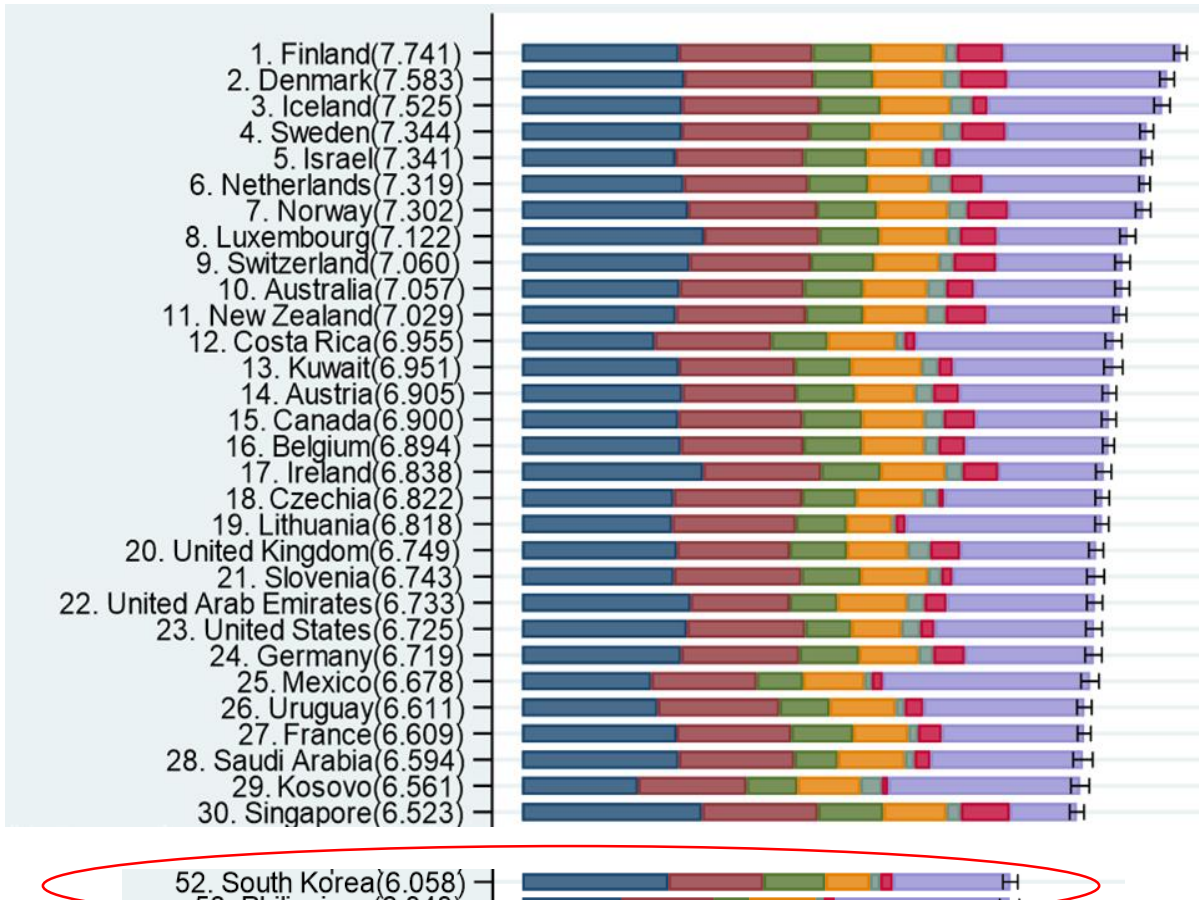
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# **The Case of South Korea**

- 1. The Current Situation in South Korea**
- 2. The Characteristics of Injustices and Inequalities**
- 3. Policy Measures for an Inclusive Society**
- 4. Coping Strategies for Realizing Social Integration**

# 1. The Current Situation in South Korea

## World Happiness Report 2024



## Household Income Inequality and Public Consciousness

**1970s-1990s:** When industrialization was completed, household income inequality was mitigated.

**1990s-2000s:** Income inequality began to increase in the early 1990s and continued until the 2000s due to the Asian Financial Crisis (1998-1999) and Global Financial Crisis (2008)

**Since the 2010s:** Household income inequality has continued to decline: A **relative poverty issue** relevant to populations (low-income classes, the rich and the poor) and **economically vulnerable groups (the elderly, women, and young people)**

**Public consciousness regarding injustice and inequality (Lim 2011):**

- Economic interests as the most fundamental driver (24.7%)
- The government's unilateral planning and implementation of public policy (16.5%)
- The lack of social trust (15.4%)
- Differences in values and ideologies (12.4%)

# 1. The Current Situation in South Korea

## ▪ Degree of Social Anxiety in Korea (n=1,200, %)

Index	Extreme Anxiety	Severe Anxiety	Moderate Anxiety	Mild Anxiety	None Anxiety	Overall
School & Education	6.6	20.8	29.4	30.4	12.8	56.8
Employment	16.8	28.7	28.7	16.4	9.4	74.2
Workplace	13.8	27.6	31.3	20.1	7.3	72.6
Marriage	9.9	21.7	30.2	27.4	10.8	61.8
Economic Status	20.3	31.9	30.6	14.3	2.8	82.8
Aging & Senior Life	23.2	34.4	28.3	11.8	2.3	85.9

(Source: Kim 2019, 126)

### <New Paradigm of Korean Social Integration: Research on Public Consciousness on Social Integration>

- **Survey institution:** Samsung Institute for Social and Mental Health
- **Period:** 2013-14
- **Topics:** 1) Degree of Social Anxiety and Severity of Social Conflict, 2) Causes of Class Conflict
- **Sample size:** 1,288 online surveys and 201 interviews (1,489 in total)
- Excluding 289 inappropriate responses, 1,200 respondents are subject to final analysis
- Samples taken through proportional allocation by gender/age/region among the entire population aged 19-59 years were targeted.

# 1. The Current Situation in South Korea

## ▪ Severity of Social Conflict in Korea (n=1,200, %)

While 64% of all respondents say the severity of social conflict is extreme or severe, only 6.9% say it is mild or none, indicating the current status of cognitive seriousness.

Question: How serious do you think the conflict between the following two groups is?	Extreme	Severe	Moderate	Mild	None	Overall (cognitive seriousness)
The Rich vs. The Poor	40.7	46.1	12.0	1.2	0.1	86.8
Managers vs. Workers	28.7	50.6	19.6	1.1	0.1	79.3
Regular vs. Non-Regular Workers	32.8	45.1	19.7	2.3	0.1	77.9
Highly Educated vs. Low Educated	13.6	40.8	36.6	8.3	0.8	54.4
Homeowners vs, Non-Homeowners	14.8	38.8	37.3	8.4	0.7	53.6
Young Generation vs, Old Generation	17.2	47.2	30.8	4.6	0.3	54.3
Progressives vs. Conservatives (ideological conflict)	46.6	38.8	13.2	1.0	0.5	85.3
Metropolitan vs. Local Residents	11.9	36.3	39.7	10.9	1.3	48.2
Gangnam vs. Gangbuk	12.8	39.7	37.3	9.5	0.8	52.4
Koreans vs. Foreigners	6.7	36.3	45.8	10.1	1.1	43.0

# 1. The Current Situation in South Korea

## ▪ The Dichotomous Cognition of the *Haves* versus the *Have Nots*

- 1) The haves versus the have nots: The root cause of the formation of public perception on injustices
- 2) Three crises in contemporary Korean society (Lee 2022): A reproduction crisis (a significant reduction in marriage and fertility), a motivational crisis (an unwillingness to participate in economic activities), and a crisis of trust in government and public institutions
- 3) Perceptual and structural gaps (Kim 2019):

	Perception Gaps: Social Exclusion	Structural Gaps: Inequality of Opportunity
<b>Distrustful Society</b>	.771	
<b>Collective Selfishness</b>	.727	
<b>Disregarding Others</b>	.723	
<b>Disconnecting Communication in Society</b>	.640	
<b>Rejection of Differences</b>	.574	
<b>Lack of Conflict Mediation Ability</b>	.541	
<b>Income Gap</b>		.762
<b>Unreasonable Distribution Structure</b>		.762
<b>Differences in Opportunity Structure</b>		.732
<b>Unfair Social Competition</b>		.672
Reliability (Cronbach' $\alpha$ )		.811

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## 2. The Characteristics of Injustices and Inequalities

- **The Structural Injustices and Inequalities in South Korea**
  - The study incorporates various factors related to social anxiety and conflict into the three types of crises
- **The Reproductive Crisis Emerging among the Most Vulnerable Social Groups (the youth and women) and Their Awareness of Opportunity Inequalities in the Domestic Economy**
  - An inevitable downturn in the domestic economy exacerbating the general public's considerable anxiety over the relative poverty of the most vulnerable social groups
  - Diminishing marriage and fertility rates in the country (i.e., marriage costs, child nurturing expenses, educational spending, gender inequality in the home, and the availability of childcare services)
- **The Crisis in Motivation among the Youth, Facilitating the Occurrence of the NEET Phenomenon Given the Widening Gap between the *Haves* and *Have Nots***
  - The long-term NEET (not in education, employment, or training) generation: 218,000 young people (aged 15-29 years) have not been employed for more than three years (36.7% of the total youth population)
  - Numerous sociocultural factors: the lack of jobs, the dearth of links between education and employment, and rates of enrollment in tertiary and higher education
- **The Crisis of Trust in Government and Public Institutions, Representing the Country's Distrustful Society and Social Injustices**
  - The reliability of most public institutions diminished; the largest reduction in 2023, and the lowest reliability in the National Assembly (24.7%): Challenges to a strong institution to cope with injustices and inequalities
  - The compressive modernization process and the wider divergence between progressives and conservatives



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### 3. Policy Measures for an Inclusive Society

- **Prerequisites for Inclusive Society:**

- The crisis of trust in government and public institutions: the significant role of governance and effective policymaking in transforming the country into an inclusive society
- The social expenditure of the government (2019-2022): South Korea is one of the least cost-effective countries, placing 33<sup>rd</sup> place among 38 OECD members
- Inferior performance in representative democracy and administrative bureaucracy

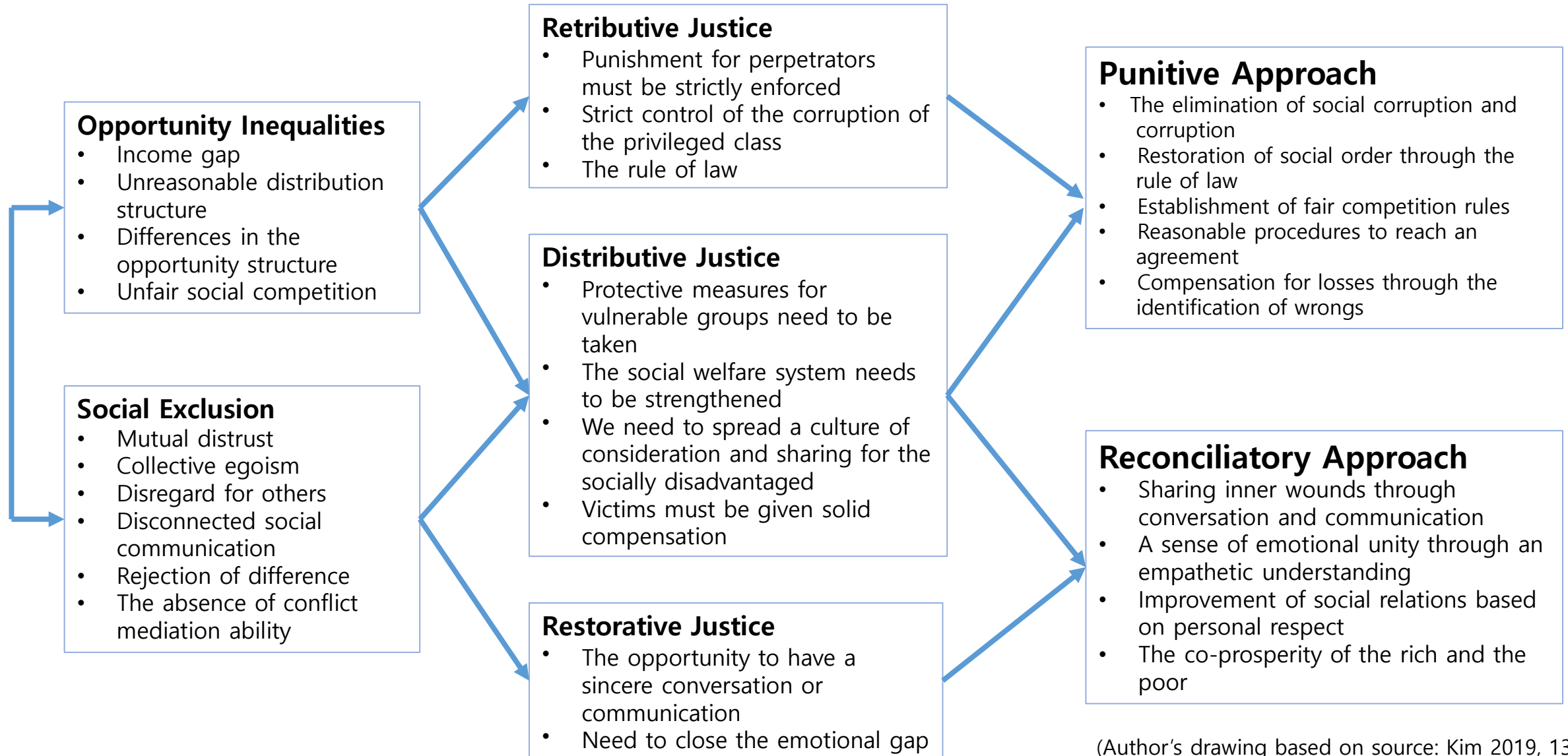
Nation	Freedom Index	Corruption Index
Sweden	100	16.2
Finland	100	8.6
UK	93	16.6
Italy	90	50.0
US	83	29.7
Japan	96	17.0
Taiwan	94	n.a.
<b>South Korea</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>43.4</b>

(Source: Kwon 2022, 25)

- **Public Administration and Public Management:** Passive, inefficient, and slow responses to social changes; the lack of public officials' motivations and ineffective performance
- **New Public Management Reforms:** Accountability since the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998)
- **Government's Initiatives on Public Administration:** A new mechanism for creativity and activities in public administration, the so-called "active administrative system," was in 2009 and reemphasized in 2020.

# 3. Policy Measures for an Inclusive Society

## ▪ Korea's Policy on Building an Inclusive Society



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## 4. Coping Strategies for Realizing Social Integration

- **The Necessity of a Deeper and Wider Understanding of Social Integration**
  - Social problems, social integration with an engaged citizenry, and the pursuit of policy windows and measures
  - Socioeconomic security, social cohesion, social inclusion, and social functionality in endeavors to realize social integration
  - Multidimensionality and multisectionality must be taken into consideration in initiatives to achieve an inclusive society
- **Socioeconomic Security**
  - To enhance the degree of safety in healthcare, disaster prevention, and education
  - To mitigate housing problems, poverty, and crime bring about a dangerous society
- **Social Cohesion**
  - To strengthen trust through cultural tolerance
  - To transform a distrustful society resulting in problems such as emigration or divorce
- **Social Inclusion**
  - To facilitate engagement among the most vulnerable groups—the youth, women, and the elderly
  - To change a discriminative society causing unemployment and inequality
- **Social Functionality**
  - To engender a cooperative society through information sharing, lifelong education, and grievance handling
  - As opposed to union strikes or suicides in a lethargic society

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**Thank you!**

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