

Overseas Koreans: Japan increases; China decreases

OKA releases Status of Overseas Koreans; 7 million reside in 181 countries worldwide
 Decrease in Northeast Asia and North America, increase in South Asia-Pacific and Europe;
 clear trend of ‘large-scale settlement areas shrinking, emerging regions expanding’

The number of overseas Koreans residing in 181 countries worldwide is estimated at approximately 7 million, showing a slight decrease compared with two years ago. Statistics also reveal a structural shift where decreases and increases are concentrated in specific regions. While traditional large-scale residential areas continue to see declines, some emerging regions show a distinct upward trend, indicating a gradual shift in the distribution of overseas Koreans.

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced in its “2025 Status of Overseas Koreans Report,” released Dec. 31, 2025, that the global overseas Korean population was recorded at 7,006,703. This represents a 1.06 percent decrease (74,807 people) compared with the 7,081,510 recorded at the end of 2022. While the decrease is not large, the regional patterns of increase and decrease showed a clear contrast.

These statistics, based on data from Dec. 31, 2024, were calculated by overseas diplomatic missions by synthesizing official statistics from host countries, along with data from civil affairs processing records, overseas citizen registries, overseas voter rolls and overseas Korean community organization records.

If data as of Dec. 31, 2024, cannot be obtained, the most recent

available statistics shall be used, provided that the reference date of the relevant statistical agency is clearly indicated.

First formation of Status of Overseas Koreans Statistics Committee

To enhance statistical reliability, the Overseas Koreans Agency conducted relevant research and established the Overseas Koreans Statistics Committee for the first time, involving overseas Koreans and statistical experts, to undergo a verification process.

By residency status, overseas nationals totaled 2,402,026, while foreign nationals of Korean descent numbered 4,604,677. This represents a decrease of 2.67 percent (65,943 people) and 0.19 percent (8,864 people), respectively, compared with the previous survey. The relatively larger decrease in overseas nationals maintaining Korean citizenship suggests that changes in the structure of overseas stays are intertwined with short-term movements or return flows.

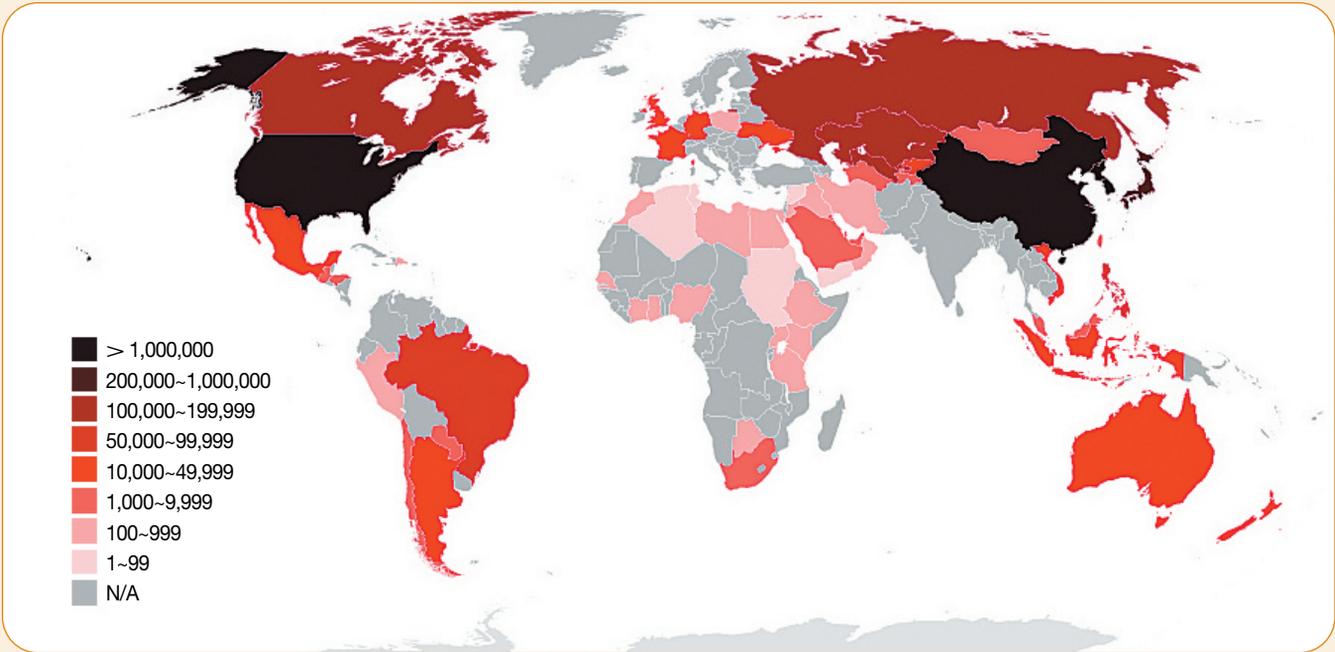
Conversely, the South Asia-Pacific region and Europe showed contrasting trends, increasing by 12.5 percent (64,171 people) and 7.6 percent (15,065 people), respectively. Although their share of the total population is relatively small, these regions are assessed

Status by residency type

Category	Overseas Koreans				Foreign Nationals of Korean Descent (Citizens)
	Permanent Residents	Ordinary Residents	International Students	Total	
Total (people)	1,037,047	1,208,884	156,095	2,402,026	4,604,677
Change (people)	14,036	-84,958	4,979	-65,943	-8,864
Change Rate (percent)	1.37	-6.57	3.29	-2.67	-0.19

Regional Status

Category	Northeast Asia	South Asia/Pacific	North America	Central/South America	Europe	Russia & CIS	Middle East & Africa
Total (people)	2,816,295	577,483	2,820,200	106,348	213,161	444,971	28,245
Change (people)	-102,728	64,171	-42,581	3,597	15,065	-11,182	-1,149
Change Rate (percent)	-3.52	12.50	-1.49	3.50	7.60	-2.45	-3.91



as showing the most dynamic changes in terms of growth rate alone.

The total number of overseas Koreans decreased overall, with declines observed in Northeast Asia, North America, Russia and the CIS region, where 87 percent of all overseas Koreans reside. Northeast Asia decreased by 3.52 percent (102,728 people), North America by 1.49 percent (42,581 people) and Russia/CIS by 2.45 percent (11,182 people). The scale of reduction in these regions led to the overall decrease in the number of overseas Koreans.

Striking contrast between Japan and China

By country, the contrast between Japan and China was particularly striking. Japan saw a 19.8 percent increase (158,852 people) in its overseas compatriots population, as children from international marriages were reflected in the statistics for the first time. Conversely, China experienced a 12.39 percent decrease (261,486 people), the largest decline among individual countries, due to increased repatriation and migration to third countries driven by economic factors.

The number of overseas Koreans in the United States decreased slightly as the non-response rate in the U.S. Census survey was adjusted from 26 percent to 15 percent. The decrease in the Russia/CIS region was analyzed as being influenced by the Russia-Ukraine war. The recovery of the tourism industry and increased corporate expansion were cited as key factors in the South Pacific region, while increased employment and inflow of international students were major factors in Europe.

The country with the largest overseas Korean population is the United States (2,557,047), followed by China (1,848,241), Japan (960,970), Canada (263,153), Vietnam (192,683), Uzbekistan (175,338), Australia (172,155), Kazakhstan (122,554), Russia (113,042) and the Philippines (52,695).

Anticipated utilization for future overseas Korean policy development

The OKA plans to publish the 2025 Status of Overseas Koreans as a booklet and distribute it to major government agencies, universities, research institutions, public libraries and media organizations. Furthermore, it anticipates that these statistics will be widely utilized as foundational data for future overseas Korean policy development, academic research and corporate overseas expansion.

Meanwhile, to ensure transparency in calculation bases, the OKA stipulated that whenever official statistics from the host country government are unavailable and estimates must be used, the calculation basis must be explicitly stated. Furthermore, if any survey subjects are excluded or not reflected in the statistical data, the reasons must be clearly explained.

Additionally, for the use of system data, the number of registered overseas nationals was compiled based on figures registered in the G4K system (Overseas Koreans Civil Services Portal). Additionally, for regions or countries showing a change of 3 percent or more compared with the previous statistics (published in 2023, based on the end of 2022), the specific reasons for the change must be explicitly stated to verify sudden data fluctuations.