



Visitors from the Republic of Korea 1989–2008

Part of the series International Travel and Migration Articles

This article was prepared by the Population Statistics Unit of Statistics New Zealand.

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Introduction

The Republic of Korea (Korea) was New Zealand’s sixth ranked source of overseas visitors in the December 2008 year, contributing 79,100 arrivals (3 percent of total visitor arrivals). While in some years Korea was a major contributor to the gain in total visitor arrivals, in other years there were significant drops. This article examines changes in the number, and characteristics, of visitors from Korea over the past 20 years. All data refers to December years unless otherwise stated.

Visitor numbers

Between 1989 and 1996, visitors from Korea increased dramatically – from 2,800 (less than 1 percent of total visitors) to 127,400 (8 percent of total visitors). See figure 1 for more details. The removal in 1993 of the requirement for Korean citizens to have a visa for a short-term visit, and the opening of a direct air route from Korea to New Zealand in late 1993, facilitated this rapid growth.

Figure 1



However, almost 90 percent of the gain in visitor arrivals from Korea between 1989 and 1996 was lost over the next two years. In 1997 there were 108,300 visitors (a drop of 19,100 from the previous year) but only 17,700 visitors in 1998 (a further drop of 90,600).

During this period, monthly visitor arrivals started dropping, compared with the same month of the previous year, in May 1997. The drops increased significantly from November 1997 as the impact of the Asian financial crisis took effect in Korea. The biggest drops in monthly visitors occurred in December 1997 (down 12,600 or 78 percent), January 1998 (down 14,900 or 92 percent) and March 1998 (down 12,200 or 95 percent).

While visitor arrivals from Korea increased again after 1998, numbers have not reached the 1996 high. After reaching 113,900 in 2004 there were slight drops in 2005 and 2006. Numbers reduced by 11,900 between 2006 and 2007 (less than some of the monthly drops during the Asian financial crisis), and by a further 20,400 between 2007 and 2008. Possible reasons for the drop include increases in tour prices from mid-2007, as Korean tour operators changed the basis on which tour prices were set, and the decline in the world economic situation.

Age

The age structure of visitors from Korea is characterised by a peak around ages 10 and 11, and another in the mid-20s. After a small drop, numbers increase still further until the late-50s and then drop rapidly (see figure 2). For 13 of the past 20 years, the greatest number of visitors has been those aged 59 years. In 2008, the peak in the late-50s was less pronounced than in 1996, due to the decrease over that period in holidaymakers in their 40s and 50s. For all visitors to New Zealand, the peak age group occurs in the late-20s.

Figure 2



While overall visitor numbers from Korea have not regained their 1996 peak, younger visitors have consistently exceeded the 1996 levels. For example, visitors aged from 7 to 14 years have exceeded the 1996 levels, for each age, from 2001 onwards. Almost all of the visitors from Korea each year aged 0–9 years come for a holiday or to visit friends or relatives (VFR). Since 2000, when information on education became available, up to 21 percent of those aged 10–14 years have given this as their purpose. In 2008, children aged 0–14 years comprised 12 percent of visitors from Korea, compared with 5 percent in 1996.

Over the past 20 years, the median age (half are older than this age and half are younger) of visitors from Korea has always been higher than the median for all visitors to New Zealand.

From 1991 to 1996, the median age of visitors from Korea was close to 50 years, around 10 years older than for all visitors. By 2001, the median age had dropped to 40 years, just 1 year older than the median for all visitors. Over the next four years it increased to 45 years, and was 44 years in 2008 (compared with 41 years for all visitors).

Male and female visitors

There have been more female than male visitors from Korea each year since 1993, except in 1998. Over this time, the proportion of female visitors each year has varied between 50 and 54 percent. In 2008, there were 41,300 female visitors (52 percent) and 37,800 males.

Travel purpose

In the early-1980s, business (including work) was the most common purpose for travellers visiting New Zealand from Korea but, from 1987 onwards, a holiday became more common. Business travellers were overtaken by travellers visiting friends or relatives (VFR) in 1993 and by education visitors in 2001 (see table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of Overseas Visitor Arrivals Republic of Korea 1989–2008

Year ended December	Visitor arrivals	Travel purpose				Length of stay	
		Holiday	VFR ⁽¹⁾	Business	Education ⁽²⁾	Average	Median
		(000)				(Days)	
1989	2.8	1.4	0.2	0.5	..	39	5
1990	4.2	1.9	0.2	0.8	..	45	7
1991	6.4	4.4	0.3	0.8	..	20	4
1992	12.8	10.1	0.6	0.9	..	13	4
1993	27.3	23.1	1.3	1.2	..	10	4
1994	61.6	53.2	3.2	2.3	..	8	4
1995	104.4	91.5	5.8	2.5	..	8	4
1996	127.4	110.3	7.6	2.5	..	9	4
1997	108.3	92.3	8.0	2.3	..	10	4
1998	17.7	9.3	5.3	1.3	..	24	7
1999	43.2	29.4	7.8	2.0	..	18	6
2000	66.6	47.0	11.4	2.2	2.1	18	6
2001	87.2	58.5	17.7	2.5	3.6	22	7
2002	109.9	72.6	22.1	3.4	4.5	21	7
2003	112.7	75.4	23.9	3.1	4.1	20	6
2004	113.9	80.1	21.7	2.9	3.1	16	6
2005	112.0	79.3	17.9	3.3	3.8	15	6
2006	111.4	77.5	16.6	3.1	4.1	17	6
2007	99.5	69.0	14.8	2.8	4.5	19	6
2008	79.1	50.2	13.9	2.8	4.2	23	6

(1) Visiting friends and relatives.

(2) Education data available from August 1999.

Symbol:

.. figures not available

Over the past 20 years, the changes in annual visitor numbers from Korea have been driven largely by the changes in the numbers of visitors coming on holiday. For instance, holidaymakers accounted for 87 percent of the increase in visitors between 1989 and 1996, and for 86 percent of the drop in visitors between 2004 and 2008.

Between 1993 and 1997, holidaymakers accounted for over 80 percent of visitors from Korea but, following a drop to 53 percent in 1998, they subsequently accounted for around 70 percent between 1999 and 2007 (and 63 percent in 2008). The share of VFR visitors was less than 10 percent up to 1997, peaked at 30 percent in 1998, and has since varied between 15 and 21 percent.

There are generally more male than female visitors from Korea arriving for business or education purposes but more female holidaymakers and VFR visitors.

Month of visit

January has been the most popular month for visitor arrivals from Korea since 2000. Over this period, the proportion of annual visitors arriving during the month varied between 12 and 16 percent (one month is just over 8 percent of the year). January was also one of the top three months preferred by visitors from Korea between 1989 and 1999 (the exception was 1998). November and/or December were the next most preferred months in almost all years up until 2006. However, the next most preferred months were March and July in 2007 and July and February in 2008.

Length of stay

In 1996, when visitor arrivals from Korea were at their peak, 85 percent of visitors came for a visit of between 1 and 7 days duration, and 5 percent came for 29 days or more. In comparison, just 41 percent of all visitors to New Zealand came for a stay of 1–7 days, and 16 percent came for 29 days or more. By 2008, fewer visitors from Korea were staying for 1–7 days (65 percent) but the percentage staying for 29 days or more was nearly four times as high (19 percent) as in 1996. In contrast, the length of stay distribution in 2008 for all visitors to New Zealand was almost unchanged from 1996.

Stay days

Stay days measure the total number of days spent by visitors in New Zealand. It is calculated by multiplying each intended length of stay (from 1 to 365 days) by the number of visitors intending to stay for that length of time and summing the results. Stay days can be calculated for combinations of visitor characteristics (such as country of residence and reason for travel, etc), which then allows calculation of the average length of stay.

Figure 3

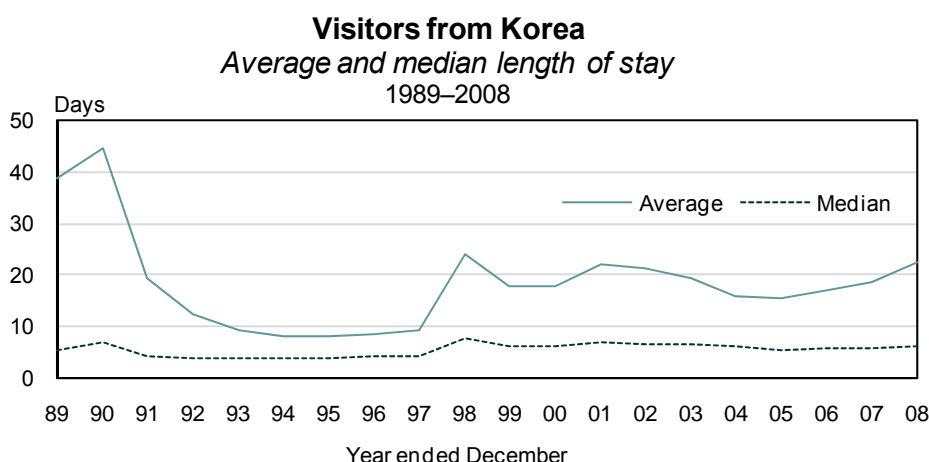


Unlike visitor numbers from Korea, which have not regained their 1996 peak, the number of stay days has exceeded the 1996 level for each year since 2000 (see figure 3), because visitors are staying longer, on average. In 2002, the number of stay days (2.340 million) was double the number in 1996 (1.110 million) despite there being 14 percent fewer visitors. In 2008, there were 1.796 million stay days from the 79,100 visitors. Holidaymakers, who comprised two-thirds of the visitors, contributed one-third of the stay days in 2008, while education visitors, who comprised just 5 percent of visitors in 2008, contributed 26 percent of the stay days.

Average length of stay

The average length of stay of visitors from Korea is generally shorter than the average for all visitors to New Zealand. However, in 1990, the average length of stay of visitors from Korea was 45 days, twice the average of all visitors for that year. The average then dropped to 8 days in 1994 and 1995 (see figure 4) as the number of visitors, mostly holidaymakers, increased much more rapidly than the number of stay days. The rapid decrease in visitors between 1996 and 1998 was not matched by the decrease in the number of stay days with the result that the average length of stay was 24 days in 1998. It has fluctuated around 20 days since that time and was 23 days in 2008 (2 days longer than the average for all visitors).

Figure 4



In 2008, the average length of stay for holidaymakers from Korea was 12 days, more than double the average in 1996. Business travellers stayed 15 days on average, down 4 days on 1996, whereas VFR visitors were up 5 days to 36 days. The average length of stay for education visitors was 112 days in 2008, up from 71 days in 2000 (when information for this group first became available).

Median length of stay

The median length of stay (half stay less than this duration and half stay longer) of visitors from Korea is much shorter than the median for all visitors to New Zealand. From 1991 to 1997 visitors from Korea had a median length of stay of 4 days (see figure 4). The median then varied between 6 and 7 days from 1998 to 2002, and has been 6 days since then. During this period, the median for all visitors to New Zealand was 10 days (apart from 9 days in 1995 and 1996).

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Visitor arrivals

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