

Korea

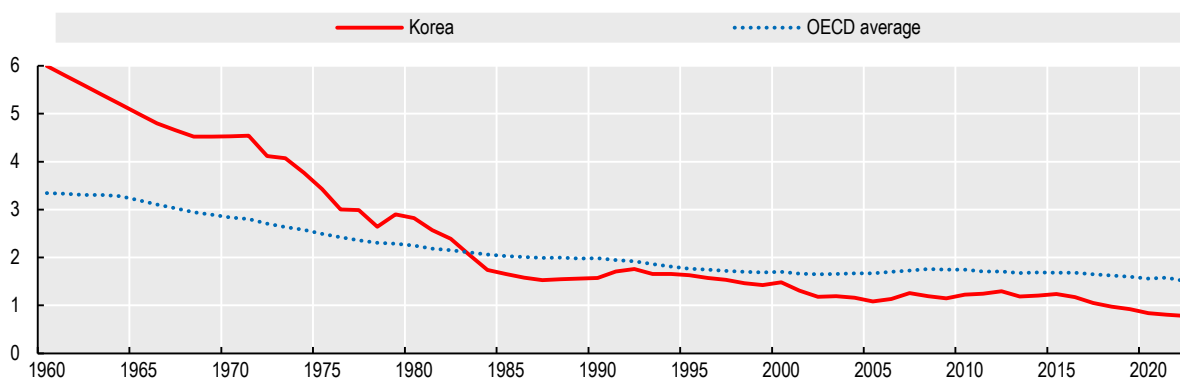
Spotlight on fertility trends

In 2022, 249 186 were born in Korea, corresponding to a total fertility rate (TFR) of 0.78 children per woman, which is nearly 0.75 percentage points below the OECD average of 1.51 and the lowest TFR among OECD countries.

Across the OECD on average, the TFR steadily declined from 1960 until 2002. There was a small fertility rebound in the 2000s until 2008, upon which the TFR dropped to an all-time low of 1.5 in 2022. Across OECD countries the fall in fertility rates has been most significant in Korea. The TFR dropped for 6 children per woman in 1960, was just below 2 children per woman in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, but has fallen since to an estimated low of 0.72 children per woman in 2023.

Figure 1. In Korea declining total fertility rates have been below OECD average over the past four decades

Number of children per woman aged 15 to 49, Korea and OECD average, 1960 to 2022



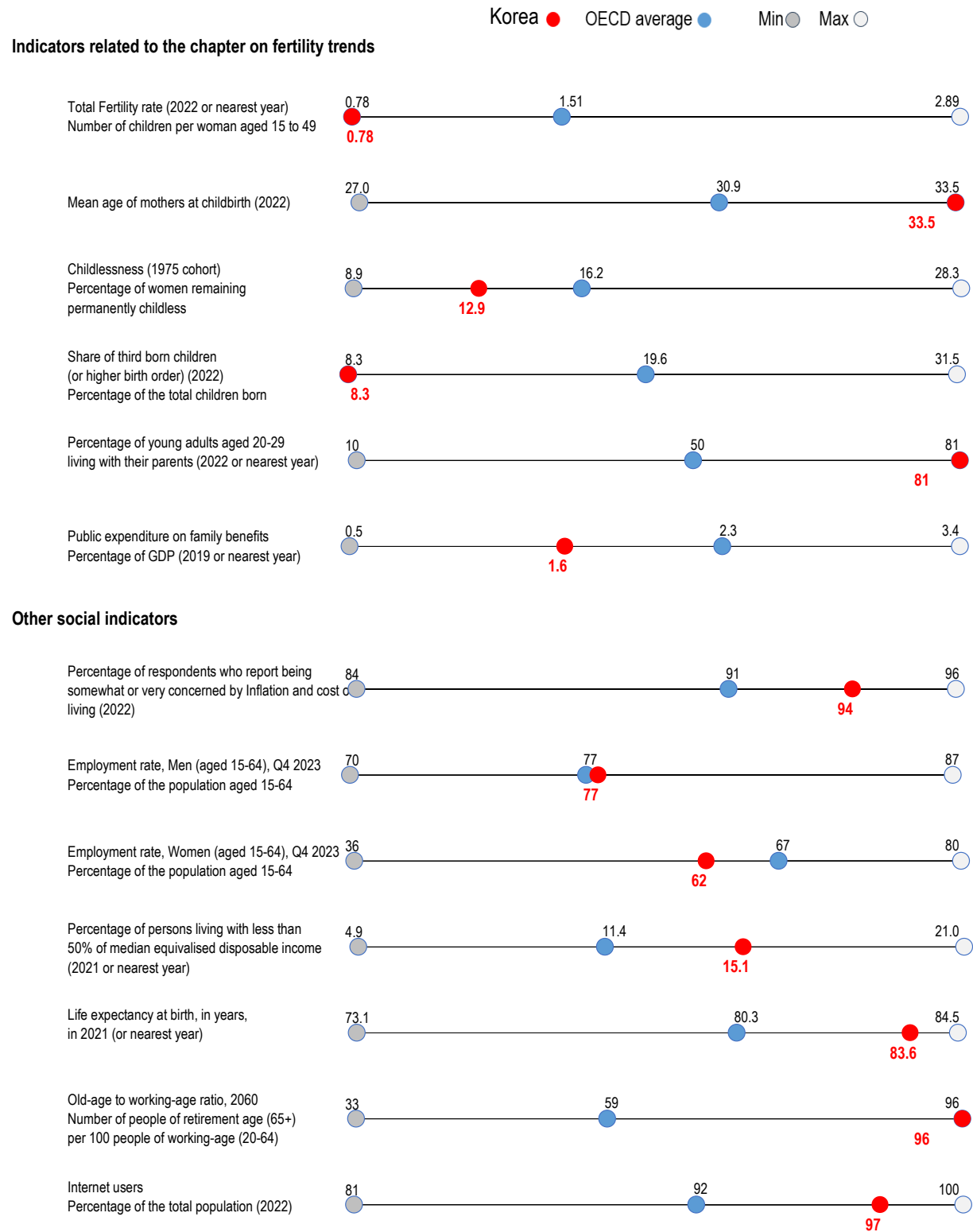
Source: Figure 1.1 in OECD (2024), *Society at a Glance 2024*, <https://stat.link/vxdinc>.

Many factors affect fertility choices, including employment of both men and women, unemployment, financial support for families (e.g. paid parental leave and childcare supports), education and housing costs (Figure 1.7, <https://stat.link/8zu7m3> and Figure 1.14, <https://stat.link/ois3k8>). However other factors such as (financial) uncertainty as well as norms and attitudes also play a role. In many OECD countries, the desire to establish oneself in labour and housing markets have contributed to a delay of childbearing. In Korea, the mean age of mothers at childbirth rose from 29.0 years in 2000 to 33.5 years in 2022, around 2.5 years above the OECD on average (Figure 1.5, <https://stat.link/163n2d>).

The fall in TFRs is related to women having fewer children and/or none at all. Childlessness has been on the rise across the OECD, but there is cross-national variation in timing and extent. In Korea, permanent childlessness increased from 8% for women born in 1955 to around 13% for women born in 1975 (Figure 1.3, <https://stat.link/mykw3b>).

How does Korea compare?

Selection of indicators related to the chapter on fertility trends and other social indicators



Source: OECD (2024), *Society at a Glance 2024*, <https://stat.link/vxdInc>.