

# United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

## UN-WOMEN

### *Agenda: Reproductive, Sexual, and Maternal Health*

### *Country: South Korea (Republic of Korea)*

Korea is a country of heritage, culture, music, and art, and this cannot be celebrated without the women of the country that make up almost 50% of the population. This huge population demands a gender-targeted healthcare system that recognizes the individuality of every Korean woman and the communal impact they have on society. Today, in the 21st century, Korea recognizes and promotes the contribution of women in all fields of this working economy and thus uses healthcare facilities to give back to the females of this land.

Today's fundamental approach to healthcare in Korea is to respect the body of a woman and her choice. Women not only in Korea but all over the world highlighted their distress on the control the government and the constitution have on their bodies. Laws criminalizing abortion were introduced in 1953 and since then instilled a fear in the women and the healthcare providers who performed them. But in 2019, Korea saw the world change, and with a different viewpoint once again dived into the debate between pro-choice and pro-life. In April 2019, the government ruled out criminalizing abortion and considered banning the practice unconstitutional. In January 2021, abortion was finally decriminalized, and millions of Korean women felt relieved.

To understand the women of the country better, many types of research, surveys, and polls were conducted across the county by private and non-private organizations, and the data was analyzed to bring some favorable and some non-favorable conclusions. Among the respondents, 76.8 and 25% experienced dysmenorrhea and abnormal uterine bleeding, respectively. Two-thirds of the respondents with dysmenorrhea used analgesics. After analgesics, herbal medicine was the next most used treatment. The mean age of first sexual intercourse was 24.3 years, and 68.8% of the sexually active women used contraception. The most used contraceptive method was the condom (79.7%), and many women (up to 62.2%) showed a distorted understanding of oral contraceptives. Although many women were aware of general gynecological diseases such as cervical cancer (77%), endometriosis (64.4%), and leiomyoma (62.6%), only 22.2% of the respondents had visited a clinic for a gynecological examination, and among those who had visited a clinic, the main reason for the visit was pregnancy (44.1%).

From these analytics, it was concluded that the main reason for such disinterest in a woman's visit to a gynecologist was the lack of awareness in terms of sexual methods, contraceptives, reproductive health, and the understanding of a woman's body during pregnancy and the period after. The solution to this problem was quite simple but its implementation was a challenge. The awareness of these issues could only be increased when such problems can be openly discussed. Sex and sexual practices must now not be considered a topic of taboo in this rapidly urbanizing world. Introduction and healthy exposure to such topics at an early age can slim the chances of misconception in the future. The role of women in Korean society and economy should also be emphasized to see women as more than childbearing and housekeeping tools.

Korea also recognizes the impact its entertainment industry has on the mind and the ideologies of many young girls and women all over the world. The country now aims to use this resource to answer a global call for eradicating stereotypes and misconceptions held in a woman's mind and promoting body positivity.

But in this race to promote a woman's health, Korea does not forget the men, trans, non-binary, and gender-neutral population of the country. The exploration and practicing of one's sexuality are considered a vital part of one's life and thus Korea aims to protect the vulnerable section of society. At this moment, homo-sexual activity is completely legal in Korea and there is no ban on LGBTQA+ representation in the media. Conversion therapy is also legal, and gender identities are allowed to be changed in Korea. The court's decision is also pending on various issues such as same-sex marriages and same-sex adoption along with the service of people recognizing themselves as members of the LGBTQA+ community in the Korean military. Although these changes and promotion of such sensitive topics in the country produced a backlash from some members of the community, Korea stands by these decisions and promotes empowerment and equality of Women and LGBTQA+ members of the country.