

Sustainable Trade Index **2025**

# South Korea

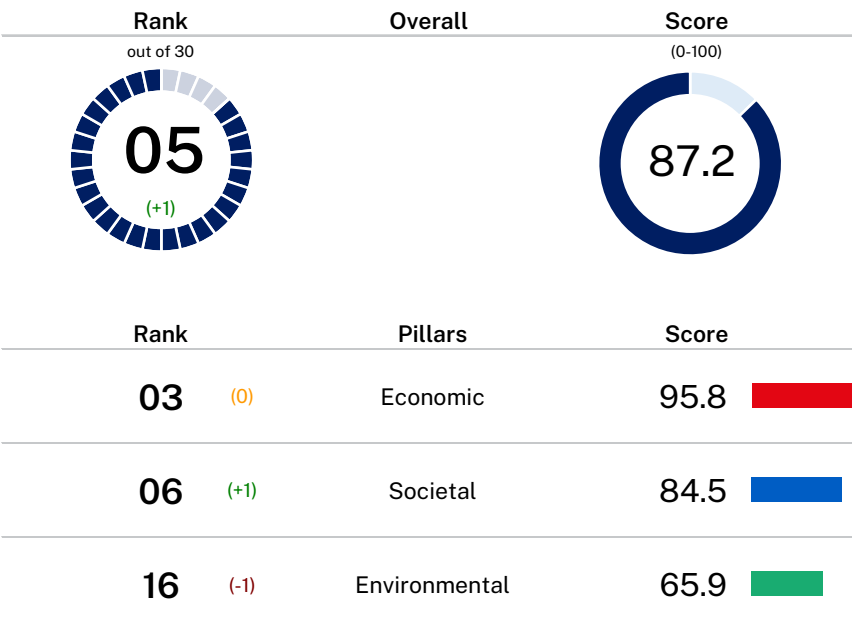


# Sustainable Trade Index

The Hinrich-IMD Sustainable Trade Index measures 30 economies’ readiness and capacity to participate in the global trading system in a manner that supports the long-term goals of economic growth, environmental protection, and societal development.

## Overall and pillars

### South Korea



The values in (parentheses) indicate the one year ranking change

## Background information

Population, millions (2024)	51.75	Large
Income level, GDP per Capita US\$ (2024)	36,129	High
Membership	APEC, RCEP	

# Economic pillar

The Economic pillar measures an economy's ability to ensure and promote economic growth through international trade. In this category, economies receive scores for indicators that demonstrate a link between the trading system and economic growth.

Some indicators capture the quality of trade infrastructure, while others measure the ease of conducting international trade. We measure export diversification by evaluating an economy's bilateral trade destinations and how heavily its exports are concentrated by sector. Furthermore, we consider the technological infrastructure and innovation capabilities of an economy by assessing its emphasis on research and development investments and digital technologies.

## Indicators

1 Economic Pillar		Rank	Rank +/-	Value	Year	Score (and 30-country average <sup>o</sup> )
1.01	Consumer price inflation	12	(0)	2.32	2024	83.85
1.02	Real GDP Growth per capita, % GDP	19	(+3)	1.95	2025	53.06
1.03	Growth in labor force, %	25	(-3)	0.20	2024	31.81
1.04	Foreign direct investment, net inflows, % GDP	19	(-1)	1.11	2023	7.38
1.05	Gross fixed capital formation, % GDP	02	(0)	32.16	2023	71.63
1.06	Tariff & non-tariff barriers	21	(-3)	-	-	75.03
1.06.01	Tariff barriers	23	(-9)	-	-	72.01
1.06.01.a	Tariff barriers in force	19	(0)	356	2024	93.87
1.06.01.b	New tariff barriers 2024	24	(-23)	36	2024	71.35
1.06.01.c	Net percentage of imports affected by new tariff barriers (2023)	13	(0)	-0.05	2023	45.27
1.06.02	Non-tariff barriers	21	(-3)	-	-	68.93
1.06.02.a	Non-tariff barriers in force	21	(0)	4,855	2024	85.31
1.06.02.b	New non-tariff barriers 2024	26	(-5)	1,041	2024	72.17
1.06.02.c	Net percentage of imports affected by new non-tariff barriers (2023)	05	(0)	-0.11	2023	59.80
1.07	Trade liberalization	04	(+3)	-	-	76.14
1.07.01	Regional Trade Agreements, number in force	04	(0)	23	2025	54.29
1.07.02	Capital account liberalization, index	01	(0)	2.29	2022	100.00
1.07.03	Investment Freedom, index	09	(+3)	60	2025	57.14
1.08	Exchange rate stability, parity change from national currency to SDR, 2024/2022	15	(+6)	0.05	2024	80.56
1.09	Domestic credit to private sector, % of GDP	05	(+1)	176.12	2023	75.04
1.10	Foreign trade and payments risk	06	(0)	-	-	74.98
1.10.01	Country credit rating	07	(0)	53.0	2024	88.23
1.10.02	Gross debt, % GDP	13	(+3)	52.49	2024	78.58
1.11	Trade costs	10	(0)	-	-	76.98
1.11.01	Logistics performance, index	06	(0)	3.80	2023	73.68
1.11.02	Corruption perceptions, index	10	(+1)	64	2024	70.59
1.11.03	Rule of law, index	10	(0)	85.85	2023	86.67
1.12	Monetary policy intervention	21	(0)	-	-	53.35
1.12.01	Current account balance, % GDP	23	(-1)	5.30	2024	51.95
1.12.02	Change (1-year) in total reserves (includes gold), % GDP	09	(+1)	-0.52	2024	50.11
1.13	Export concentration	10	(+14)	-	-	64.46
1.13.01	Export market concentration, Top 5 as % total	13	(+14)	56.89	2024	61.73
1.13.02	Export product concentration, Top 5 as % total	09	(+5)	55.72	2024	71.17
1.14	Exports of goods and services	07	(+1)	-	-	21.49
1.14.01	Merchandise exports, US\$ millions	04	(0)	683,609	2024	19.17
1.14.02	Commercial services exports, US\$ millions	08	(0)	138,167	2024	14.95
1.15	Technological innovation	01	(0)	-	-	100.00
1.15.01	R&D expenditure, % GDP	01	(0)	5.21	2022	100.00
1.15.02	Researchers in R&D, per 1,000 inhabitants	02	-	9.43	2022	72.94
1.15.03	Patent applications, per million inhabitants	01	(0)	5,614.96	2023	100.00
1.15.04	High-technology exports, % of manufactured exports	07	(+6)	29.98	2023	40.62
1.15.05	Scientific articles, per million people	07	(0)	1,488.90	2022	60.26
1.16	Technological infrastructure	02	(+1)	-	-	94.54
1.16.01	Fixed internet speed, Mbps	02	(+6)	252.97	2025	86.01
1.16.02	Internet users, % population	03	(0)	97.40	2023	97.86
1.16.03	Fixed broadband subscriptions (per 100 people)	01	(0)	46.57	2023	100.00
1.16.04	Mobile subscriptions (per 100 people)	06	(0)	162.11	2023	44.28

# Societal pillar

Social factors matter in an economy's capacity to trade internationally over the long term. Economies are measured on the environment that encourages and supports the development of human capital, such as the extent of education and labor standards.

This pillar also captures factors that influence public support for trade expansion. These include income inequality, political stability, goods produced by forced and child labor, and the government response to human trafficking.

## Indicators








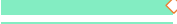










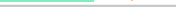
2 Societal Pillar		Rank	Rank +/-	Value	Year	Score (and 30-country average)	
2.01	Inequality (Gini coefficient)	04	(-1)	32.90	2021	61.26	
2.02	Educational attainment	04	(0)	-	-	74.67	
2.02.01	Mean years of schooling	06	(+1)	12.72	2023	87.59	
2.02.02	University education index	08	(+1)	23.89	2024	20.95	
2.02.03	Tertiary enrollment, % age group	02	(0)	103.28	2023	96.88	
2.03	Labor standards	08	(0)	-	-	80.60	
2.03.01	Gender non-discrimination in hiring, index	01	(0)	100	2024	100.00	
2.03.02	Freedom of association and assembly, index	10	(0)	0.61	2024	61.19	
2.04	Political stability and absence of violence	10	(0)	68.25	2023	68.72	
2.05	Goods produced by forced labor or child labor	12	(0)	-	-	95.35	
2.05.01	Goods produced by forced labor	12	(0)	-	-	90.71	
2.05.01.a	Goods produced by forced labor, number of goods categories	01	(0)	0	2024	100.00	
2.05.01.b	% population in forced labor	11	(0)	0.35	2023	80.02	
2.05.02	Goods produced by child labor, number of goods categories	01	(0)	0	2024	100.00	
2.06	Government response to human trafficking	21	(+4)	-	-	59.42	
2.06.01	Government response to human trafficking, Criminalization	22	(+4)	5	2024	40.00	
2.06.02	Government response to human trafficking, Strategy	25	(0)	38.46	2023	32.35	
2.06.03	Government response to human trafficking, Action	01	(+8)	1	2024	100.00	
2.07	Trade in goods at risk of modern slavery	21	(+2)	-	-	80.10	
2.07.01	Imports of goods at risk of modern slavery, US\$ millions	26	(0)	14,065	2023	77.01	
2.07.02	Exports of goods at risk of modern slavery, US\$ millions	01	(0)	0	2023	100.00	
2.08	Social mobility, index	07	(0)	71.4	2020	88.07	
2.09	Life expectancy at birth	03	(+1)	84.33	2023	93.90	
2.10	Uneven economic development	04	(0)	3.1	2024	88.89	
2.11	Universal Health Coverage Index	02	(0)	89.00	2021	96.72	

# Environmental pillar

The Environmental pillar measures the extent to which an economy's trade supports sustainable resources. The factors include measurements of non-renewable natural resources in trade and the management of externalities that arise from economic growth and participation in the global trading system.

While an economy's capacity to participate in the global trading system is dependent on economic development, achieving sustainable trade requires prudent stewardship of natural resources and limiting externalities in an economy's economic calculus to promote its overall environmental capital. The indicators chosen in this section measure an economy's environmental capital and include indicators for air and water pollution. In terms of future impact, we measure national environmental standards, carbon emissions, and share of natural resources in exports.

## Indicators

3 Environmental Pillar		Rank	Rank +/-	Value	Year	Score (and 30-country average <sup>o</sup> )
3.01	Air pollution, PM2.5 micrograms per cubic metre	23	(0)	26.00	2020	52.15 
3.02	Deforestation, index	17	(0)	0.00	2022	15.36 
3.03	% of wastewater treated	02	(0)	99.43	2024	99.39 
3.04	Energy intensity, energy consumed for each 1,000 US\$ of GDP in MTOE	16	(-1)	0.108	2022	68.78 
3.05	Ecological footprint	22	(+1)	5.47	2024	49.05 
3.06	Renewable energy, %	25	(0)	2.6	2023	3.30 
3.07	Environmental standards in trade, count	21	(0)	-	-	62.50 
3.07.01	Convention: Hazardous Wastes	01	(0)	2	2024	100.00 
3.07.02	Convention: Prevention of Marine Pollution	01	(0)	2	2024	100.00 
3.07.03	Convention: Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna)	01	(0)	2	2024	100.00 
3.07.04	Convention on Climate Change (Kyoto)	01	(0)	2	2024	100.00 
3.07.05	The International Timber Agreement	21	(0)	0	2024	50.00 
3.07.06	Convention: International Trade in Endangered Species	28	(0)	0	2024	0.00 
3.07.07	Convention: Prior Informed Consent - Hazardous Chemicals (Rotterdam)	01	(0)	2	2024	100.00 
3.08	Transfer emissions, million tonnes carbon	05	(0)	-19.94	2021	52.55 
3.09	Share of natural resources in trade, %	14	(+1)	14.38	2024	82.82 
3.10	Carbon	09	(+3)	-	-	73.50 
3.10.1	Carbon pricing	01	(0)	2	2025	100.00 
3.10.2	CO2 emissions per capita, tonnes per person	24	(+1)	11.04	2023	49.10 



# About us

Global trade has helped lift hundreds of millions of people around the world out of poverty. It is a powerful driver of economic growth and a key source of job opportunities. However, downsides may include labor disruptions, negative environmental impacts, and income inequalities. Therefore, sound public policy and responsible business leadership are essential for properly harnessing the full benefits of global trade.

The Hinrich Foundation and the IMD World Competitiveness Center have combined their expertise to build the Hinrich-IMD Sustainable Trade Index, a framework for policy makers, business executives, and civil society leaders to understand and advance sustainable global trade.

**hinrich foundation**  
**advancing sustainable global trade**

The Hinrich Foundation is an Asia-based philanthropic organization dedicated to advancing mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade.

We believe that global trade – when mutually beneficial and sustainable – is a powerful force for shared prosperity, technological progress, sustainability and peaceful international cooperation. Our work is grounded in independent, fact-based research and the development of innovative trade education programs.

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Center

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The IMD World Competitiveness Center is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge on world competitiveness and offers benchmarking services for countries and companies using the latest data. The Center has pioneered research on how nations and enterprises compete to lay the foundations for future prosperity.

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