

# **The National Policy Indicator System (*of the*)**

## **Republic of Korea**

### **Introduction**

All governments need good statistics. Good statistics provides a basis for good policy making and help governments to identify the best courses of action in dealing with complex situations. These are the reasons that good statistics are needed. The Korea National Statistical office takes the responsibility of providing good statistics to users such as policy makers, policy evaluators and scholars, not to mention the responsibility of making good statistics. In the past, we tended to focus on making good statistics, but what good are they unless statistical users use them? It is more important for users to be able to have access to the statistics when desired and/or needed. Now it is time to turn our eyes to the policies that will boost the use of statistics.

The Republic of Korea has a decentralized statistical system. There are about 150 statistical organizations including the Korea National Statistical Office. One of the disadvantages of this decentralized statistical system is that users have difficulty in searching for desired information because statistical data is spread among all of the various statistical organizations. To relieve the burden of users, KNSO has been conducting a project to incorporate all statistical databases. In fact, we attempted to incorporate all statistical databases in the past, but we were unable to achieve our goal because of a lack of cooperation among the other statistical organizations. Once again, we are making an effort to improve our statistical system. A Statistics law is under revision that would strengthen the coordinating role of KNSO. Under the newly revised Statistics law, we expect this national statistics incorporation project to have a successful outcome.

As an additional effort to meet statistical users' needs, we built the national policy indicator system. It provides a one-stop service for users who want to look for statistics related to national policies or information that shows the current status of our nation. Below, we will introduce this National Policy Indicator System in detail.

### **Why did the National Policy Indicator System come into being?**

As mentioned earlier, we can not over-emphasize the importance of statistics. Such importance of statistics should be understood by policy makers. In this case, we can easily gain political support in implementing a national statistics improvement plan. Luckily, the sitting President of our nation understands the importance of statistics. Compared with the previous Presidents, he puts much more emphasis on statistics. Now, there is a good opportunity for KNSO to improve the national statistics system.

In fact, the National Policy Indicator System was started from an idea proposed by the current President. His initiative was based on the idea that national infrastructure was required which could provide a direction for our nation to move in. That direction should be based on objective information, that is, statistics. He also wanted to evaluate the effectiveness of national policies based on statistics. Last, he wanted to open a way for citizens to have access to information related to national policies and to ultimately participate in the process of policy-making.

### **Who participated in this project?**

Following the President's observation of the necessity of national infrastructure based on statistics, the Blue House, the counterpart of the White House in the United States, summoned all related government agencies. In that meeting, we realized his intentions and reached a full agreement to create the National Policy Indicator System. We launched the project to build this system in October, 2005. In this project, KNSO played a role as a project leader because of its abundant expertise and know-how concerning statistics and statistical databases. Forty government agencies, including policy making ministries, were involved in this project. Each agency created or excavated indicators related to their policies. The Blue House helped each agency actively participate in this project.

## What does this system contain?

The National Policy Indicator System provides 818 national indicators. These indicators include official statistics and policy-related data which are used internally or were published in foreign agencies.

We classified the indicators in three different ways. First, we classified them by their areas. It has a three-level hierarchical structure. At the first level, they were classified into one of five categories of aggregate indicators including economy, society, culture, law & justice and related areas. At the second level, they were classified into one of the sub-areas under the first-level category. This is true of the third level. The total number of second-level categories and third-level categories is 41 and 168, respectively. The following table shows the examples of classification by areas.

< Table 1. Classification by Areas >

	# of categories at second level	# of categories at third level	# of indicators	Examples
Aggregate indicators	3	13	55	Seoul Metropolitan Area Population
Economy	18	77	383	GDP Growth Rate, CSI, BSI
Society	11	50	244	Minimum cost of living Gini coefficient
Culture	4	10	42	Registered museums and art centers
Law & justice and related areas	5	18	94	Exemption

Second, we classified indicators by agencies in order for general citizens to have access to them according to agencies. Table 2 below shows the number of indicators managed in each government agency.

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**Topic 3. Statistical systems/Administration and management of statistical organizations**

< Table 2. Classification by Agency >

	Government Agency	number of indicators
1	Civil Service Commission	6
2	Ombudsman of Korea	5
3	Korea Independent Commission against Corruption	3
4	Ministry of Planning and Budget	23
5	Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs	21
6	Fair Trade Commission	9
7	Financial Supervisory Commission	24
8	Commission on Youth Protection	6
9	Ministry of Finance and Economy	33
10	Ministry of Education	43
11	Ministry of Science and Technology	15
12	Ministry of Unification	6
13	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	16
14	Ministry of Law and Justice	19
15	Ministry of National Defense	22
16	Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs	27
17	Ministry of Culture and Tourism	32
18	Ministry of Agriculture	28
19	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy	39
20	Ministry of Information and Communication	25
21	Ministry of Health and Well-being	53
22	Ministry of Environment	31
23	Ministry of Labor	36
24	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family	24
25	Ministry of Construction and Traffic	67
26	Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	31
27	National Tax Service	24
28	Korea Customs Service	9
29	Public Procurement Service	10
30	Supreme Public Prosecutor's office	21
31	Military Manpower Administration	7

32	National Police Agency	13
33	National Emergency Management Agency	8
34	Korea Meteorological Administration	10
35	Cultural Properties Administration	10
36	Defense Acquisition Program Administration	3
37	Forest Government Information Agency	12
38	Small and Medium Business Administration	22
39	Korean Intellectual Property Office	12
40	Korea Coast Guard	7
41	National Statistical Office	11

Also, we classified indicators by their usage, that is, how they were used. According to their usage, they were classified into at least one of three categories, a basis for policy-making, a basis for evaluation of effectiveness of policies and a basis for checking the current status.

### **How are indicators represented?**

Each indicator consists of tables of statistics, its graph, explanations, and related files/links. Among them, related files/links are optional. Figure 1 shows how each indicator is represented. What makes this system more distinguishable from other statistical information system is that it provides explanations such as trends, the main factors influencing numbers, and the future expectation. It is the view of the agency which makes policies based on the statistics. These explanations could be subjective, so we allow other people to upload their opinions freely below each indicator contents. We are willing to accept the different views in order to make a constructive future together.

< Figure 1. How each indicator is represented >

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The screenshot displays the '나라지표' (National Indicators) website interface. It features a search bar at the top and a navigation menu on the left. The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Table of Statistics:** A table showing data from 1997 to 2005 for '임대주택건설현황' (Leasehold Housing Construction Status). The table includes columns for '합계' (Total), '지방자치단체' (Local Government), '주택공사' (Housing Corporation), and '민간' (Private). The data shows a general upward trend in construction volume over the period.
- Graph:** A bar chart titled '임대주택건설현황' (Leasehold Housing Construction Status) showing the same data as the table. The Y-axis represents the number of units in thousands, ranging from 0 to 100,000. The X-axis shows the years from 1997 to 2005. The chart uses different colors to represent '주택공사' (blue), '민간' (red), and '지방자치단체' (green).
- Explanation:** A text block providing context for the data. It states that the construction of leasehold housing has increased significantly since the early 2000s, driven by the government's policy to increase the supply of rental housing. It also notes that the construction volume has increased significantly since the early 2000s, and that the government has been actively promoting the construction of leasehold housing.

**How do we manage this system.**

As mentioned earlier, 41 government agencies including KNSO participated in this project. The principle of management is as follows.

< Principle of management >

1. KNSO takes responsibility of overall operation. For this, KNSO has 3 system managers.
2. Each agency takes responsibility of creating/managing the indicators related to its policies. Each agency places 1 main operator and indicator-managers.
3. An indicator-manager should update his/her indicator regularly, and manage all kinds of users' questions and opinions.
4. A main operator in each agency should be responsible for all indicators and indicator-managers related to his/her agency.
5. By contact with main operators of other agencies, system managers of KNSO coordinate and manage this system.

### **How many people use this system?**

We began web service to the general public on September 1, 2006. Actually, we had three months of pre-operation time within the government networks prior to the launching of the public service. During the time, we tested the reliability of system and checked the accuracy and consistency of data.

We now have 2,780 members and about 1,000 people have access to this system every day.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Good statistics have vital power only when they are used. One of the roles of the National Statistical Office is to bestow vital power on statistics by boosting their usage. We sincerely hope that more people will use this system in the future. In this aspect, the KNSO must nurture the National Policy Indicator System which has the potential to provide a valuable resource to its citizens. In order to accomplish this, we will make every effort continually to improve our national statistics system.