

Guide to Communication for Social Integration Between North and South Koreans



PSCORE

People for Successful COrean REunification
(사)성공적인 통일을 만들어가는 사람들

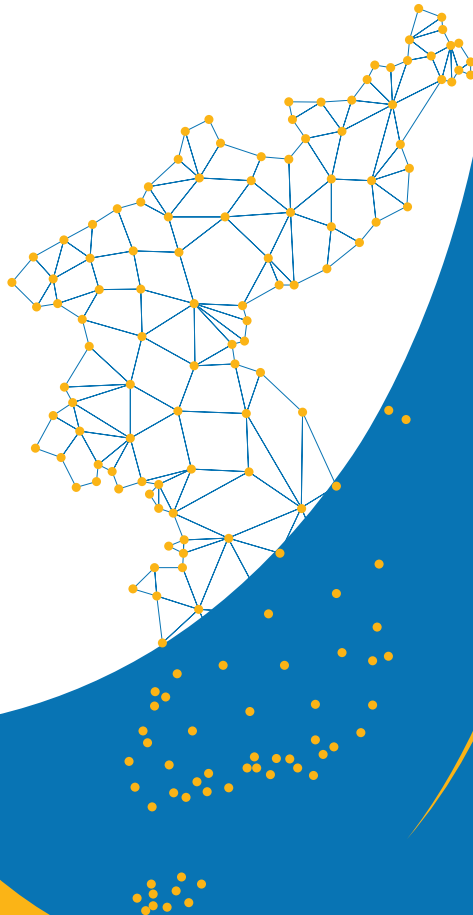


Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Importance of History.....	4
Perceptions and Thoughts on North Korean People	6
To Live as Neighbors	16
(Methods and Recommendations on Achieving Successful Communication to Live as Neighbors)	

Introduction

During the first half of 2019, there were over 33,000 defectors in South Korea. We are currently living in a time when, while the Korean Peninsula is still divided, the chances of meeting a North Korean are high. If that is the case, are we capable of communicating with them with no problems?

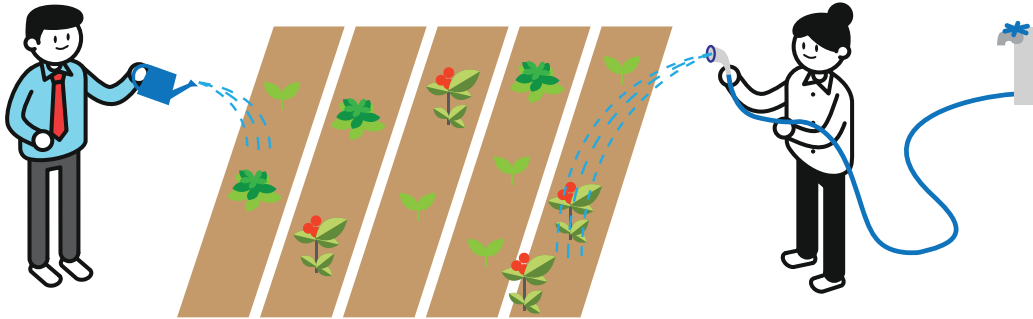
'Am I prepared to meet and live with people who have lived in North Korea right now?'

'Am I prepared to interact with and understand them?'

Misunderstandings and conflict can occur in conversations even between people who were born in the same country and are aware of the same cultural cues. But imagine how much more careful one must be when talking with people who were raised in a different culture and educational system. Therefore, as a human rights organization, this group focuses on the value of human beings and considers the possibility of people meeting when North Korea is more politically open in the future. We have collected tips for a smoother conversation.

"I believe that reunification must begin from the heart."

– A North Korean defector, Chae Seo-Yeon –



Publisher: Kim Tae-Hoon

Editor in chief: Nam Bada

Authors

Kwon Yeong-Tae | Ministry of Unification Lecturer

Park Jin-Seong | Seoul Bulgwang Middle School History Teacher

Song Hyun-Jin | Ewha Women's University Unification Studies Researcher

Kim Young-Ji | Ewha Women's University Unification Studies Researcher

Yujin (Julia) Jung | University of Missouri Ph.D. Student in Political Science

Hyun In-Ae | Director of Korea Hana Foundation, A North Korean defector

Guide summary

PSCORE Interns (Kim Tohi | Morgane Lamothe | Michelle Gray)

This booklet is the property of "People for Successful COrean REunification" and was produced through the sponsorship of the Ministry of the Interior and Security. We deeply thank the Ministry of the Interior and Security for sponsoring the peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula.



행정안전부

Ministry of the Interior and Safety

Importance of History

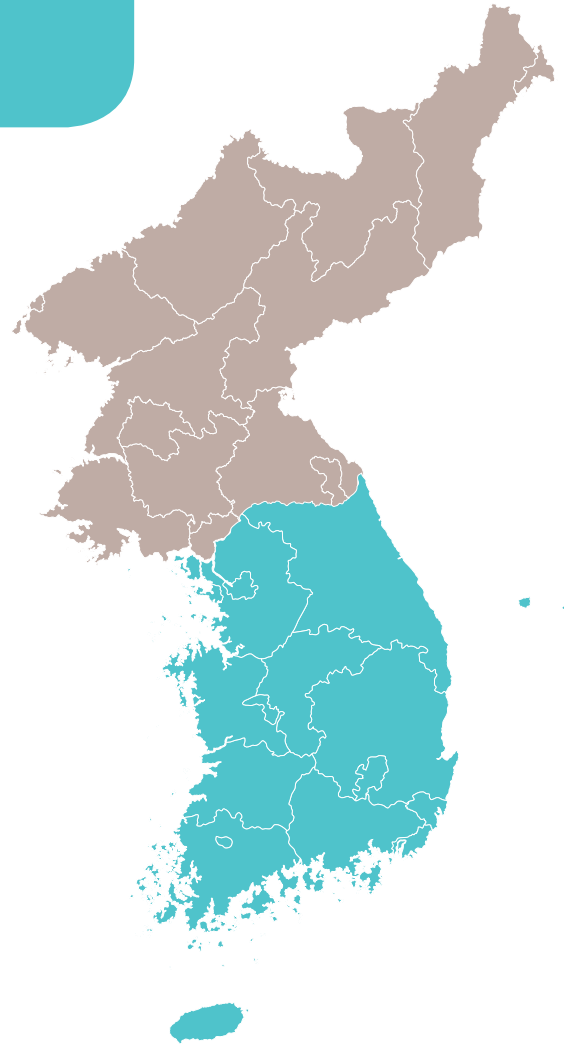
North and South Korea Common Modern History

The Korean Peninsula is where the Korean people have maintained sovereignty for thousands of years. To free itself from foreign rule, our people protested incessantly.

North and South
Korea shared the same
history for 5,000 years,
and they have been
divided for only the
past 70 years.

The Korean peninsula, freed from Japanese rule, was divided into North and South Korea on the 38th parallel by the two great powers: the US and the Soviet Union. In this way, the South established a democracy, and North Korea established a dictatorship.

The directions that the South and North are heading towards are clearly different. What will be the fate of the Korean Peninsula? Our efforts now are important for future generations to record this time of division as only a period of deviation from our long national history.



North Korean History Education

History education is one of the most important ways to pass down memories that bind South and North together. The history of resistance binds us as “the Korean people.”

“I learned the same facts, though the interpretation was different. I didn’t experience a sense of camaraderie when I studied Korean history separately in the South.”

– A North Korean defector –

The representative goal of history education in Korea is to develop an attitude of respect for democratic and peaceful values. On the other hand, history education in North Korea is used as an important tool in legitimizing the regime and plays a role in glorifying the Kim family.

South Korea’s history education curriculum has a dual composition of “Korean History” and “World History.” North Korea’s history education curriculum is divided into “History” and “Revolutionary History,” which examines history in revolutionaries’ activities and their contexts.

Similarities between North and South

North Korea’s history education curriculum is divided into “History” and “Revolutionary History.” And North Korea’s history education curriculum is divided into “History” and “Revolutionary History.” Topics in the “Revolutionary History” can be seen as intended to promote and maintain the legitimacy of the North Korean regime.

However, history education in both South and North Korea fall under the shadow of ‘regime justification’. In other words, the problem that needs to be overcome in history education in North Korea is a task that both Koreas must overcome together. And just as South Korean history education has changed along similar paths, we can assume North Korean history education has also shown a spark of change.



Perceptions and Thoughts on North Korean People

[Perceptions and Thoughts on North Korean People]

Before coming to South Korea

North Korea uses its underlying collectivist culture to teach that South Korean society is selfish and only focuses on individuals.

Perception of South Koreans in North Korea (Repeated answers possible)

Questionnaire Responses	Frequency
The same people, just like us	91
Poor and pathetic	58
A materialist who is only concerned with money	57
A selfish person who is not interested in others	32
A two-faced person with a dual personality	32
A person who lives in a civilized country (ideal, rich, hugely influenced by the United States) did not think about South Koreans in North Korea	1 each

However, despite attempts by the North Korean government to sow stereotypes of South Koreans through education, the responses show that North Koreans view South Koreans as the same people as themselves.



“When I lived in North Korea, I thought that South Koreans were the same people as us, and I knew about the development of South Korea.”

– Kim, Age 51, Male, College graduate, Office worker –

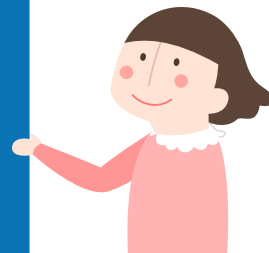


Early Entry

Upon first arrival, North Korean defectors who recognized South Korea as a friendly country expected that South Koreans would welcome and help them. They felt hurt by those South Koreans who were indifferent towards them. They misunderstood each other because they had lived in a different system.

“Good people are professors at universities and church members. I thanked one professor who has continuously provided clothes and snacks for my children. They are like emotional supports to me. Bad people are those who invite me to eat and then do not pay for it”

– Ahn, Age 49, Female, Master, Welfare worker –



As We Live Together

As North Korean defectors and South Koreans lived together and interacted, they came to understand each other's values, cultures, lifestyle, and communication style with empathy.

“Over time, I understood those behaviors. I understood this by acknowledging the difference between systems in North and South Korea. We tend to only understand ourselves first. It needed time.”

– Choi, Age 64, Female, College graduate, Office worker –



Hardships in South Korea

Communication requires major effort because of the vast linguistic difference between North and South Korean people. North Korean defectors complained about the discrimination they experienced at their workplaces in South Korea. This discrimination is a result of the negative social prejudice regarding North Korea.



“South Koreans look down on North Koreans and have a prejudice that North Koreans cannot work.”

– Choi, Age 64, Female, College graduate, Office worker –



Hurtful Things from South Koreans

North Korean defectors are people who left their hometown because living in North Korea was too difficult. Defectors come to South Korea with painful experiences that they do not want to remember. South Koreans who do not know their pain ask about famine, hunger, dictatorship, and family members who are left behind in North Korea without considering how that may affect defectors, exacerbating such painful memories

“Please do not keep asking about family. An individual has heartbreaking stories. Do not keep piercing the heart over and over again. Do not keep asking about pains. That causes us to feel stress again.”

– Kim, Age 51, Male, College Graduate,
Office worker –



Most defectors also mentioned that being shown pity hurts their pride. The fact that their country's economic power is low does not mean that North Koreans do not have any national pride. In fact, North Koreans feel self-respect for liberating their country from Japanese colonial-rule through anti-Japanese movements. Many North Koreans have pride and believe their nation is the best.

When we were hurt by South Koreans (Repeated answers possible)

Questionnaire Responses	Frequency
When they treat us with discrimination	133
When they discipline based on prejudice towards North Korean defectors	90
When they fully ignore and treat us as second-class citizens	77
When they thoughtlessly talk about the scars of defectors	51
When they speak words that hurt our pride	13

In order to form a positive and cohesive identity for the reunified country, it is necessary to work on resolving 'stereotypes' between North and South Koreans. We must recognize that conflicts come from the different societies of North and South Korea. We need to learn to understand and accept those differences.

[South Koreans' Perceptions of North Korean Defectors]

Interview with 5 South Korean residents who frequently meet with North Korean defectors

Some of the interviewees met with defectors by chance and initially thought they were *Joseonjok* (ethnic Koreans from China), and others met them naturally through work or social groups.

Before Meeting

When asked what they thought of North Korean defectors before meeting them, there was a mixture of responses, both negative and positive. The ones with negative perceptions attributed their animosity to the influence of the media.



“Before we met, North Korea itself was a closed country, so I wondered if we could talk to each other peacefully. I had thoughts like “They’re brainwashed.” I couldn’t see the positive side. To be honest, this was the way North Korea was portrayed in the media. I think that the news got me thinking this way.”

– Ha, 37, female, college graduate, career counselor –





After Meeting – the Pros and Cons of Defectors

Positive attributes of North Korean defectors include their honesty, camaraderie and self-determination. There were generally no negatives as interviewees did not have any bad experiences with the North Korean defectors.

“I thought of him as a friend since he was also my friend’s friend. We interacted comfortably.”

– Lee, 33, Male, Ph.D. Candidate, Employee –



“I’ve been listening to a lot of stories of escape, settlement, wanting to see family, dependence on men, and working hard to bring their families over. As I listen, I can understand a lot. If I was living in that situation, I would become like that too. I understood how they could think and act this way.”

– Ji, 37, Female, Master’s Degree, Researcher –

The Difference Between North Korean Defectors and South Koreans

We asked the interviewees whether they had felt any differences between North and South Koreans. Some of them said there was no difference, while others mentioned that North Koreans were “less adept at expressing their feelings”, “more straightforward”, and that “they think about their identities more deeply than South Koreans.”

“They have a different way of communicating. North Koreans are straightforward, direct, and do what they say.”

– Ji, 37, female, master’s degree, researcher –



Still, when asked whether they thought of defectors as South Korean citizens, they mostly gave positive answers.



“Yes. I’ve thought a lot about a unified Korea. I think there was not much of a difference because we could communicate. There was no difficulty there because there was an emotional connection.”

– Ha, Age: 37, Female, College Graduate, Career Counselor –

Thoughts on North Korean Residents

Regarding North Korean citizens rather than defectors, there were more mixed responses. Some of them mentioned viewing them more as compatriots rather than as South Koreans.



Tasks for Reunification and Social Integration

Mutual understanding must precede active engagement and prospective reunification with North Korea.

The result of the interviews provided grounds for the conclusion that North and South Koreans are able to understand each other well and contribute to social integration on the Korean Peninsula.

“I think we need it. There will be huge benefits that will come from reunification.”

– Kim, Age: 55, Male, Master’s Degree, Self-employed –



[Foreigner Perspectives on North and South Korean Social Integration]

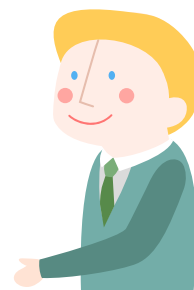
What do the 2.5 million foreign residents living in South Korea think about the social integration of the two Koreas and the tasks involved?

Interview with 6 Foreigners who have Experienced Contact with South Koreans, North Koreans, and North Korean Residents

We interviewed foreigners who have experienced contact with both North and South Koreans. As it is difficult to have access to details of how life really is in North Korea, most foreigners' impressions of the country and its people are prejudiced. The people we have interviewed said that their way of thinking had changed after interacting with North Koreans.

“Meeting North Koreans definitely altered my stereotypes. After meeting North Koreans, I learned that they are very proud of their society and culture, in spite of DPRK’s many problems”

– C, USA, 40s, PhD Candidate/teacher –



Commonalities and Differences Between North and South Korea

“The underlying culture in both countries was very much uniquely Korean and basically the same”.

– A, USA, 50s, Journalist –



As for the most different aspect between North and South Koreans, most foreigners gave “openness” as their answer. Not only in regards to outside culture, but also as a psychological part of their relationship.

Finally, although they were not all in favor of reunification, they did stress the importance of integration and peaceful society.

“I hope South Koreans learn more about North Korea and its people. North Korean society is more attentive to the culture of South Korea than South Korea is to the culture of North Korea. But first, people should start with knowing the truth about the North Korean defectors.”

– C, USA, 40s, Doctoral Student and Teacher –



To Live as Neighbors

1 There is no difference between North and South Korea because they share 5000 years of common history and traditions. They also share one ethnicity and language.

2 It is important as the world moves into the future that ideas of reunification are brought up, and that people learn more about every aspect of life in North Korea.

3 The most important factor for North and South Korea to get to know each other is to increase social accommodation regarding cultural diversity.

4 Our research is only a small step towards North and South Koreans getting to know each other, but it will build the road for reunification. We hope that as more individuals take this initial step, others will follow and the movement will grow.



Through research, PSCORE offers recommendations to expand your knowledge about different aspects of North Korea with a variety of books, movies, documentaries and talks.



People for Successful
Corean REunification
(PSCORE)

Eouishuiyedain Officetel B1, 452
Yangcheon-ro, Gangseo-gu, Seoul,
Republic of Korea

Telephone: +82-2-6497-5035 (5770)

Email: pscore@pscore.org

Find out more at:
www.pscore.org/free-resources