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Republic of Korea (ROK)

2026 Edition

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Republic of Korea (ROK) – 2026 Edition

Enforcement Assessment of Gender-Based Violence

Data Coverage: 2024

Grade:

D

Weak Enforcement

Trend Indicator: → Stagnant

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The Lex Feminae Index evaluates whether legal systems deliver measurable protection against gender-based violence. The assessment is outcome-based. Legislative intent, policy declarations and strategic commitments are not considered. Only documented enforcement performance is examined.

This report presents the 2026 enforcement assessment of the Republic of Korea using consolidated national data from the 2024 reporting cycle.

The Republic of Korea operates a centralized criminal justice system. Criminal law is nationally defined and prosecution is conducted at national level. Judicial outcomes are recorded by the Supreme Court of Korea. Domestic violence cases may proceed either through criminal prosecution or under the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Crimes of Domestic Violence as "Home Protection Cases" before Family Courts.

This assessment relies exclusively on official statistical publications issued by the Korean National Police Agency, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court of Korea, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and National Assembly data disclosures.

The evaluation examines whether statutory criminalization of sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking translates into operational enforcement in practice. It measures:

- Police-recorded violence
- Judicial intake and case resolution
- Prosecution filtering and indictment
- Sentencing patterns
- Availability and enforcement of protection measures
- Public accessibility and consolidation of enforcement data

Prevalence surveys and advocacy estimates are referenced for contextual background but are not used as grading inputs.

The 2024 edition establishes the Republic of Korea's baseline enforcement profile within the Lex Feminae Index. Future editions will measure progression or regression using the same standardized indicators.

The central question is structural:

Does enforcement practice produce measurable protection for women after violence occurs?

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METHODOLOGIC FRAMEWORK

A. Data Scope

This assessment relies exclusively on official statistical publications issued by diverse official governmental entities of ROK

No NGO datasets, advocacy estimates, media compilations or external projections are used.

B. Administrative Counting Limits

Victim and suspect figures reflect administrative counting by offence category and procedural stage.

Counts may include multiple entries per individual within a given procedure or across parallel processing tracks (criminal prosecution and Home Protection Cases).

Protective dispositions and criminal indictments are recorded within distinct judicial channels and are not directly interchangeable.

C. Police-Justice Interoperability Limits

Police, prosecutorial and judicial datasets are published by separate institutions and are not consolidated within a single offence-coded enforcement chain.

ROK does not publish a unified arrest-to-indictment-to-conviction longitudinal dataset for gender-based violence categories.

Matching between police intake, prosecutorial decisions and judicial outcomes therefore requires structural interpretation rather than direct case-level linkage.

D. Conviction Timing Clarification

Conviction figures reflect cases reaching judicial resolution within the reporting year.

They do not represent direct cohort conversion between complaints registered and convictions issued in the same calendar year.

Criminal indictments, Home Protection Case transfers and final convictions may correspond to cases initiated in prior reporting cycles.

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LEGAL

I. Legal Recognition & Statutory Framework

The Republic of Korea criminalizes rape and sexual assault under the Criminal Act, domestic violence under the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Crimes of Domestic Violence and stalking under the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking.

Domestic violence cases may be processed either through criminal indictment or as Home Protection Cases before Family Courts, where protective dispositions may substitute for penal sentencing.

The statutory framework permits both penal prosecution and rehabilitative court supervision.

ASSESSMENT

The statutory framework provides full criminalization of sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking. The legal architecture permits both penal prosecution and rehabilitative court supervision through Home Protection Case processing.

The legal framework does not restrict enforcement capacity. However, the dual-track structure structurally enables diversion from criminal conviction toward protective disposition in domestic violence cases.

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REPORTING

II.　Reporting Accessibility & Victim Registration

2024 official data indicate:

- Dating violence police reports: 77,150
- Sexual violence counseling victims: 14,874
- Child and adolescent victims: 4,254
- Digital sex crime victims supported: 10,305
- Intimate partner homicide (independent monitoring): 181

ASSESSMENT

Police-recorded intake volume is substantial and publicly reported across multiple institutions. Victim support infrastructure is nationally accessible and operational.

However, intake data is institutionally fragmented. Police reports, counseling intake and lethal violence tracking are published through separate channels without unified offence-coded consolidation.

Reporting transparency is present. Full intake-to-outcome traceability remains structurally segmented.

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PROSECUTION

III. Prosecution Filtering

- Sexual Offense Indictments: 32,281
- Domestic indictments: 1,841
- Indictment Rate (Sexual Offenses): 80.7% of prosecutorial legal decisions resulted in indictment.
- Suspects recorded by police (sexual offenses): 42,430

Domestic Violence Criminal Indictments: 1,841

- Suspects Transferred to Family Court for Protective Processing: 4,833
- Home Protection Cases Filed: 19,253
- Protective Dispositions Issued: 14,581

ASSESSMENT

Prosecutorial activity in sexual offense cases is measurable, with a high indictment ratio among cases reaching legal decision.

In domestic violence cases, criminal indictment represents a minority pathway relative to Family Court protective processing. A substantial proportion of cases are transferred to Home Protection track rather than prosecuted criminally.

The enforcement model demonstrates activity, but penal conversion in domestic violence cases is selective.

IV. Conviction Ratios

- Total convictions across reported sexual and domestic violence offence categories: 83,007
- Sexual Violence Conviction Rate (first-instance trial): 82.8%

ASSESSMENT

Conviction activity is high among cases reaching trial stage. However, aggregate conviction totals cannot be directly matched to police intake due to absence of unified offence-coded longitudinal datasets.

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Judicial conversion from indictment to conviction is strong in cases of sexual violence. Direct intake-to-conviction cohort tracing remains structurally fragmented.

SENTENCING

V.   Sentencing & Deterrence

- Rape — 39% sentenced ≥1 year
- Kidnapping — 22% sentenced to ≥1 year
- Sexual offense convictions — Immediate custodial imprisonment: 37%
- Suspended imprisonment: 56%
- Fine-only: 7%

Most convicted offenders received suspended sentences, fines or custodial terms under one year.

Summary Orders recorded (all categories): 347,292

Offence-specific disaggregation for gender-based violence summary orders is not published.

ASSESSMENT

Judicial sentencing activity is measurable. However, custodial exposure in serious sexual offenses remains limited relative to conviction totals, with suspension and short-term imprisonment representing the majority outcome.

Sentencing severity is therefore moderate rather than punitive. The absence of GBV-specific summary order disaggregation limits full evaluation of fine-based versus custodial enforcement balance.

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PROTECTION

VI.   Protection Measures

- Home Protection Cases Filed: 19,253
- Protective Dispositions Issued: 14,581
- Access-Prohibition Orders: 2,904
- Access-Prohibition Orders: 2,904
- Confirmed lethal incidents under active police protection: 4

Four confirmed lethal incidents occurred while official protection measures were active. Public reporting does not provide unified denominator tracking linking active protection cohorts to lethal outcomes.

ASSESSMENT

Protection measures are widely deployed through the Home Protection Case system, with substantial use of court-issued protective dispositions.

However, protective supervision frequently substitutes for criminal prosecution in domestic violence cases. Unified national tracking of breach outcomes and longitudinal monitoring of individuals under active protection is not publicly consolidated.

Lethal incidents under active protection are rare in absolute terms, but enforcement continuity within protective cohorts is not fully externally verifiable

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DATA

VII. Data Integrity & Transparency

The Republic of Korea publishes:

- Police-recorded intake data
- Prosecutorial indictment ratios
- Judicial conviction totals
- Protective disposition volumes

However:

- Arrest-to-indictment conversion is not unified within a single offence-coded dataset.
- Protective disposition re-offense tracking is not publicly consolidated.
- No standalone judicial coding for femicide exists.
- Summary order volumes are aggregated and not disaggregated by offence category.

ASSESSMENT

The Republic of Korea publishes police intake figures, prosecutorial indictment ratios, judicial conviction totals and protective disposition volumes through official national institutions.

However, enforcement data is institutionally segmented. A unified longitudinal dataset linking police intake, prosecutorial decision, protective transfer and final sentencing by offence category is not publicly available.

Offence-coded femicide tracking is absent within judicial statistics. Summary order volumes are aggregated and not disaggregated for gender-based violence categories.

Judicial publications do not provide a consolidated offence-specific breakdown distinguishing immediate custodial sentences, suspended imprisonment and fine-only outcomes by gender-based violence category within a unified dataset.

While percentage distributions are published in summary form, absolute sentencing counts by sanction type are not fully disaggregated across all GBV categories.

This limits precise external verification of penal depth and sanction composition at category level.

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Data transparency is present. Full chain-of-enforcement traceability remains structurally incomplete.

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CLIMATE RISK MODIFIER

VIII.   Climate Risk Context

The Republic of Korea experiences periodic natural disasters including flooding, typhoons, wildfires and extreme heat events that result in temporary displacement.

Official enforcement datasets do not integrate disaster-status or displacement coding within gender-based violence offence reporting. Climate-displacement-specific enforcement tracking is not consolidated within national judicial statistics.

The Republic of Korea is not classified within the Index framework as a high structural climate-displacement vulnerability jurisdiction.

The Climate Risk Modifier does not alter grade determination for the 2024 reporting cycle.

The question becomes:

Does the justice system treat women in a flood shelter with the same enforcement seriousness as women in stable housing?

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STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT

DOES THE LAW PROTECT WOMEN IN PRACTICE?

The Republic of Korea maintains a comprehensive statutory framework criminalizing sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking. Police intake volume is substantial and prosecutorial activity in sexual offenses is measurable.

However, enforcement outcomes demonstrate structural limitation in domestic violence case conversion and moderated penal exposure across core gender-based violence categories.

In IPV cases:

57,973 suspects entered the justice system in 2024.

- 1,841 cases proceeded with criminal indictment.
- Most cases were diverted to Home Protection or protective disposition tracks.
- More than 85% of domestic criminal convictions resulted in suspended sentences or fines.
- Recidivism among domestic offenders stands at approximately 22%.
- Activation of suspended sentences and breach-to-detention escalation remains limited in publicly reported data.

In Sexual Offense Cases:

- 42,430 suspects entered the justice system in 2024.
- 32,281 were formally indicted.

Final criminal convictions are included within the 83,007 aggregate criminal convictions reported for gender-based violence categories.

Among sexual offense convictions:

- 37% resulted in immediate custodial imprisonment
- 56% resulted in suspended sentences
- 7% resulted in fine-only outcomes
- Sexual recidivism stands at approximately 8%

While indictment-to-conviction conversion is strong in sexual offense cases, many sentences remain suspended or non-custodial.

Immediate incarceration is not the dominant sanction outcome.

Penal exposure in cases of sexual violence is therefore moderated rather than maximized. Where immediate custodial sentencing is not the dominant outcome in serious sexual violence cases, deterrence depth remains structurally constrained.

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While sexual offense prosecution demonstrates stronger indictment-to-conviction conversion, sentencing patterns show that suspended and non-custodial outcomes remain the dominant sanction in most sexual violence cases.

In domestic violence cases, diversion to protective tracks and non-custodial sentencing further limit penal exposure

A system in which most domestic offenders avoid custodial exposure, suspended sentencing dominates in sexual violence cases, and recidivism remains measurable across categories cannot be classified as delivering robust protection in practice.

Judicial activity is present across offence categories.

However, penal depth remains structurally limited, with diversion dominance in domestic violence and moderated custodial exposure in sexual violence cases.

Enforcement is operational, but protection reliability remains weakened by limited penal conversion and high reliance on suspended sanctioning.

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AUDIT GRADE

Under Lex Feminae Index criteria:

The Republic of Korea does not meet C — Partial Accountability — due to:

- Structural predominance of diversion over criminal indictment in domestic violence cases
- Extremely narrow penal exposure relative to domestic suspect intake
- High reliance on suspended sentencing
- Moderate domestic recidivism (approximately 22%)
- Limited publicly consolidated breach-to-sanction escalation data
- Moderated custodial exposure to sexual violence sentencing

The Republic of Korea does not meet E — Severe Enforcement Deficiency — because:

- Sexual offense indictment and conviction conversion is measurable and active
- Judicial institutions are operational
- Protective measures are formally available
- Enforcement data is publicly published, though institutionally segmented

The enforcement framework is operational.

However, penal conversion relative to domestic intake is structurally narrow, and sanction severity in domestic violence cases does not demonstrate consistent protection delivery.

The Republic of Korea's 2024 enforcement profile aligns with:

Grade D — Weak Enforcement

Trend Indicator: → Stagnant

Structural enforcement architecture remains consistent within the current reporting cycle.

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FINAL GRADE

D — Weak Enforcement

Trend Indicator:

→ Stagnant*

1. Domestic penal conversion structurally limited relative to suspect intake.
2. Majority of domestic convictions result in suspended or fine-based outcomes.
3. Suspended sentencing dominates sexual violence convictions.
4. Domestic recidivism remains measurable at approximately 22%.
5. Breach escalation and suspended activation data not consolidated at national level.
6. Enforcement active but protection reliability not demonstrably robust.

* Stagnation reflects structural persistence of enforcement patterns across recent reporting cycles as documented in official statistical continuity

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