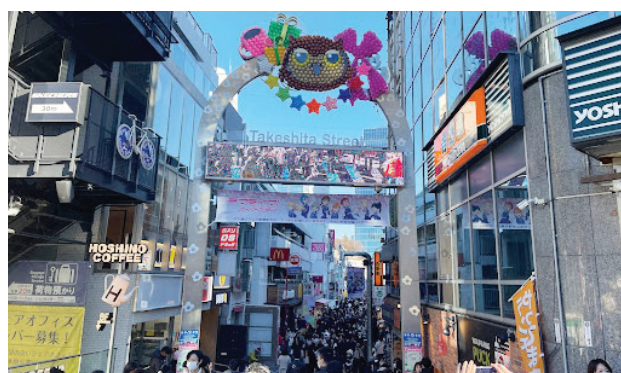


Student Reporter

Now is the Time to Visit Japan!



Hanul Ju
Grade 10
Geffen Academy at UCLA



Takeshita Street is a great place to visit in Japan, especially for tourists visiting the area.
[Source: Author, Hanul Ju]

After nearly three long, dreary years, Japan has finally reopened its doors to visa-free US citizens. This country, known for its deep culture, scenic views, and prominent face in eastern Asian media, was finally back for tourism. I visited three cities over my winter break during Japan's reopening in December: Hakone, Yokohama, and Tokyo.

Hakone, mostly well-known for its hot springs, expansive views of Mount Fuji, and its iconic Hakone Shrine, offers great natural beauty to various kinds of people and is one of the most popular areas for

both domestic and international tourists. Hakoneyama, formed by two overlapping calderas, has many thermally active areas and sits as the tourist center of the town. The unique geography of the area provides not only a beautiful view but also an enjoyable tourism experience. A cable car service is offered, where visitors can view volcanic gas spewing out the side of the mountains. Although most of the volcano is closed off, a kuro tamago, meaning black egg, is sold at an outlook. It is a charcoal-black color due to it being boiled in the sulfuric springs, and these special eggs are said to add seven years

to one's lifespan. Many tourists choose to eat while looking at the majestic expanse of Mount Fuji. All in all, Hakone town is a popular spot to relax and appreciate the beauty of Japan.

Yokohama, having deep roots in Japanese port trading history, still functions as a business powerhouse today. Being one of the top choices not only for sightseeing but also shopping, it has much to offer. Because the value of the Japanese Yen has depreciated by over 20% of its value against the US dollar in the past year, it is the perfect time to go all-out and spend on snacks and souvenirs. Any shopaholic's heart will be content with the masses of clustered shops all around the area. Contrary to the US, masks are still the norm in every large Japanese city, just like in most of Asia. Despite this, COVID does not seem to have impacted the country too much, as there are no noticeable restrictions bound upon tourists, be it on the metro or any densely crowded area.

Tokyo, the capital and face of Japan, boasts both pristine, modern, and extravagant traditionally styled architecture. Be it visiting a shrine or touring the Tokyo tower, the mix of past and present provides plenty of unique experiences for anyone willing to go out and explore the city. Akihabara, famous for its manga, anime, and tech retailers, is the core shopping center of Tokyo, and it is mostly marketed toward electronics lovers and collectors. However, that is not all there is to the city - the Tokyo Skytree and Tokyo Tower offer picturesque views of the city skyline. My experience looking across the soft glow of the city during the night was definitely one of the best sights.

If you have never visited Japan before, or would like to return, now would be the chance. The country has much to provide for visitors, and the pandemic does not seem to have had a large impact on the large communities. Japan is finally open again.

Student Reporter

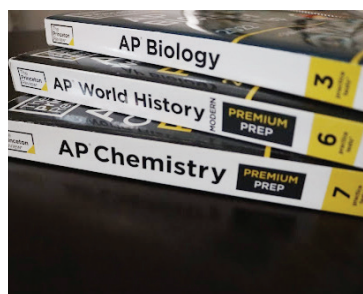
Rice Paddies & Math Tests



Caleb Lee
Grade 11
St. Francis High School

College application season is nearing an end, and many have been eagerly awaiting their results. High school students continue to strive for excellence in their academics, to be admitted into their dream colleges. As a result of this competition, admission offices are increasing expectations. Out of all applicants, however, it seems like the Asian community has been hit the hardest.

The stereotype of Asian academics is prevalent across the world. After many interviews with high school students, I have found that contrary to this belief, fewer students in Asian households have been experiencing extreme pressure from their parental figures. Although more prevalent among Asians than other nationalities, students have been, as one junior says, "less miserable" when it comes to school work. Despite this fact, academic competitiveness



As competitiveness increases, AP (Advanced Placement) course attendance has dramatically increased in high schools.
[Source: Author, Caleb Lee]

does bring stress and anxiety to many Asian students in particular. In Malcolm Gladwell's "Outliers," he describes in his 8th chapter, Rice Paddies & Math Tests, that Asian students tend to receive higher standardized testing scores due to a cultural aspect in their family environment. He goes on to say that parental figures tend to have more authority in Asian culture; thus, students are induced to, in his terms, "perfectionism."

Students' concerns about "being a failure" have brought up a recent issue in schooling and politics. Many students report stress-induced headaches; one student describes, "my head feels like it's spinning." Furthermore, colleges have been increasing their student diversity, thus causing many Asian students to be deferred, even though their transcripts and activities may be more well-suited than that of other students with a different nationality. In the winter of 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments challenging race-conscious admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill on the grounds that they were discriminating against Asian applicants. Since Asian students have higher standardized test scores than their peers (according to the CollegeBoard, 60% of the highest SAT scores are Asian),

race-blind colleges tend to have a higher Asian student population. Colleges use affirmative action to consider a student's background characteristics, such as race, for admissions. Cornell Law school describes affirmative action as: "a set of procedures designed to; eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination in the future." When asked about this topic, many interviewees agreed that colleges should either not consider race or reduce the importance of nationality. But, colleges and universities still need a way to give less-represented backgrounds an equal chance. Though ethnicity is important in admissions, there are still many other factors in play that should be considered. How will the education system resolve this escalating issue?

Student Reporter

Over the Border: A Mission Trip to Mexico



Junny Jung
Grade 11
Grover Cleveland Charter High School

Every summer and winter break, I have the privilege of going on a mission trip with my church to a small monastery in Ensenada, Mexico. The trip takes just over five hours each way by car. On the morning of the trip, 13 members of the church pack into two large vans that will carry supplies for the people waiting eagerly two hundred miles away.

The church's mission trips help citizens living on campos, sites embedded throughout Mexico. Here, adults work 16-hour days in the fields while children stay in their residential areas, an already-cramped space shared among several other families. In Ensenada, parents' salaries are no less tormenting than the back-breaking labor that rewards merely 30 pesos (roughly \$1.60) after each workday.

The living conditions of these

campos are inhumane and cruel. The living areas themselves are very dark, dirty, and without electricity. Until just five years ago, these sites had no running water, which meant that individuals needed to take long treks to access a simple necessity. Fortunately, a water source has since been created, but even still, the water is often contaminated and unfit for human consumption. Living amongst animals, the citizens use the livestock not only for food but also for entertainment and trade due to the advantageous value protein resources hold

Citizens of these campos attend the missionary that our church organizes, and every trip is made for the sake of these individuals, especially the children. During each expedition, volunteers bring toys, blankets, clothes, and snacks, which we then organize to deter-

mine the distribution of brought resources among families. After the long trip, the church members get right to work, organizing all of the materials that we brought, to see which families will get certain supplies. To facilitate this process, youth members, divided by gender, are in charge of the toys that will be given to the children of Ensenada. Their faces of joy, gratefulness, and deep affection when they receive the toys are invaluable.

My first experience with these mission trips and engaging in an entirely different world of the campos was very eye-opening and culturally shocking. As I walked through the lodgings, their homes, I felt gratitude and guilt from my newly gained perspective. I have gained a newfound appreciation for my life in America, but I also feel a greater



An inside look into the Campos kitchen area, which doesn't seem like much compared to those in America.
[Source: Author, Junny Jung]

desire to help those less fortunate than I am. Now, I greatly value and anticipate the days of my Mexico trips because very few events in my life have held as much meaning as seeing the familiar faces waiting for me.

Student Reporter

Life 4 Cuts Expanding Worldwide



Sungeun Yoon
Grade 9
Saigon South International School



Life Four Cuts Studio, located in Vivo City mall in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam [Source: Author, Sungeun Yoon]

“Life Four Cuts” is Korea’s first and biggest self-taking picture studio, and is currently very popular in Korea. Because it is so well-liked, people don’t mind having to wait outside the store to take four consecutive photos since it is so well-liked. 430 stores have

opened around the country since the company’s 2018 start. Over 100 million images were printed over the course of five years, with 2.3 million visitors every month. The four cuts of life were developed by Lee Ho-ik (45), CEO of LK Ventures, who claimed that this was possible because “sticker photos have moved away from being considered as recording memories and have become a form of entertainment in the 20s and 30s.”

The frames of the printed photos were originally the only extra additions to choose from, but as the popularity increased, the company started to have new filters and frames full of variety and character. They also have different categories of accessories to wear for the photos, such as hair bands and plushies. A QR code shows on the screen when

you print one of the four cuts of life images. With the help of a smartphone and this code, people can download the image and post it to social media. Before launching the service, CEO Lee introduced the idea of combining four images like a film and embraced the recommendations of younger staff to attract young people.

Representative Lee examined customer reactions on the streets of Seoul’s Hongdae and Rodeo Station in 2018 which led to tremendous success; instant photography became extremely popular nationwide. Life 4 Cuts has all of a sudden come to represent sticker photographs, and LK Ventures’ sales last year totaled 30 billion won (around 24 million dollars).

As many people from all over the world have gotten to know

K-pop and Korean culture, Life 4 Cuts were also starting to show popularity outside the nation. BTS, who is one of the people who represent the nation, has also taken pictures in Life 4 Cuts during “FESTA,” which is when they celebrate their debut anniversary with their fans, and was a part of the goods in the “BUTTER” album, which tremendously impacted “Life 4 Cuts.” Soon after, the store started to launch worldwide in 8 overseas countries, such as the United States (19 stores), Japan (16 stores), and Canada (3 stores). In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, there are currently four stores near each other which are crowded with people. Having many stores of Life 4 Cuts in Korea can now be considered common to the nation, but rapidly launching more stores in Ho Chi Minh City shows the company expanding worldwide with lots of love.

Student Reporter

There’re Robots on the Sidewalks?



Kenneth Lee
Grade 9
The Science Academy STEM Magnet

Technology is everywhere on Earth today and will be here probably forever. We use technology every day; hard tasks, like analyzing data, and simple tasks, like operating our phone, we use every day. Also, technology brings us humans together; for example, by using social media. Social media is extremely popular because it’s a platform you can show your lifestyle in. But most importantly, technology made AI.

In today’s world, it’s really difficult to live without technology, since it transports us and it amuses us. Do you remember when the first iPhone was launched by Steve Jobs? It was on January 9, 2007. People were amused and shocked to find technology so intriguing. But, there’s also something called



The delivery robot is about to cross the street to deliver the person’s item. [Source: Author, Kenneth Lee]

AI. AI is artificial intelligence, basically your Alexa, Bixby, or Siri. But not only these things but robots as well. AI is known to be expensive, but companies will still spend their time and effort

on this. For example, Google’s CEO Sundar Pichai claimed that artificial intelligence would be more transformative to humanity as a species than electricity and fire. This means that it might change our human viewpoints and will teach us things we don’t know. There are many different ways people use artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is everywhere. For example, we have robots that deliver packages to our homes, our smartphones, online shopping advertisements, refrigerators, smart air conditioners, fire detectors, and many others. All of these are very important to us, and without them, we might not be able to do simple things like shop online or keep our home at the right tempera-

ture when we’re away. And today, I saw a new type of AI, a delivery robot that looks like a cart, but it delivers the item to the person who bought it. I thought this was interesting because of how much artificial intelligence can be used and how its potential is endless. If it can deliver items, artificial intelligence can do more harsh things like underwater and outer space exploration.

Artificial intelligence is extremely important for all of us. If we can keep using this, there’s nothing that we can’t do. AI’s potential for this world is endless. So, when you’re using your phone, remember that’s a piece of artificial intelligence you carry with you every day, everywhere.

Student Reporter

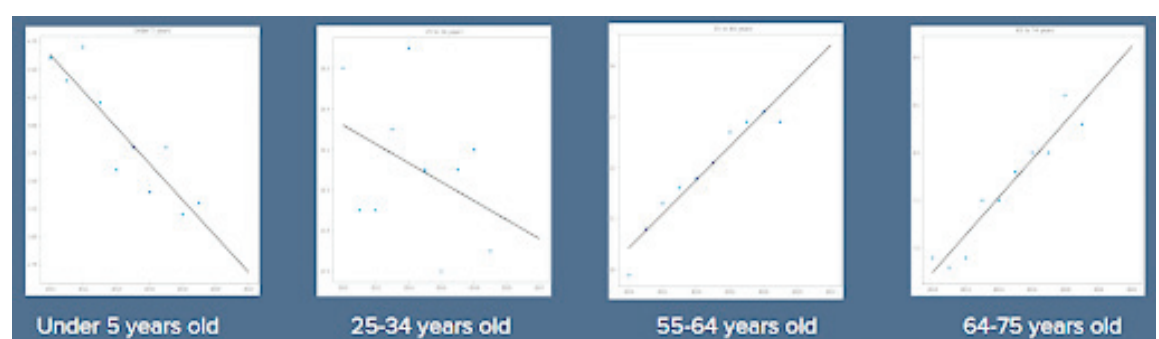
Is Korea’s Population Dwindling?



James Kim
Grade 10
Santa Teresa High School

With actively growing companies like Amazon and Meta running the online world, it is important to understand that the tech industry is growing daily. According to Moore’s law, “The number of transistors and resistors on a chip doubles every 24 months.” To put it into perspective, only 50 years ago, Intel released its very first processor with just around 2300 transistors. Now? AMD is reaching upwards of 50 billion. This goes to show how fast computers are evolving in both speed and processing power. The reality of it is, Moore’s law was based on historical trends and predictions, which leads to my topic, the Korean daily python with a data science project.

This summer, I participated in the KD Python with DS Project, where I completed six weeks of nonstop research and coding. The goal of the program was for groups of students to utilize data analysis and create a project to display our findings. My group



There is a clear generation growth distinction that must be watched carefully. [Source: Author, James Kim]

decided to take a look at the Korean American population within the United States, with the end goal of predicting population growth as well as the decline in the coming years, along with the age distributions within it.

We collected the necessary information from the United States Census Bureau and decided to use linear and polynomial regressions to graph accurate predictions. An issue that arose was that the data varied too much as an overall population in the time from 2010-2019. However, to tackle this, we separated each age

group into different categories and analyzed them separately.

What we found was surprising, to say the least, the younger age groups were decreasing in proportion rapidly, while the categories for ages 45 and over were increasing. What is important to note through these predictions is that decreasing proportions of younger people indicates lower birth rates and potential future population decline. The higher proportion of older people is also crucial to observe, as they will need a greater amount of medical resources specifically allocated to

them soon.

Through these tests and graphs, we found that when looking at the Korean population through the lens of age demographic, there is an increasing amount of elderly with a decreasing amount of younger children. This can be correlated to the increase in today’s health-care services that allow the elderly to prosper. The truth must be confessed, and based on the data, if we as a population do not continue to reproduce, we are destined to diminish slowly as a whole.