



AS IT IS

## South Koreans Become Younger after Country Changes Counting Method

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Many South Koreans are now one or two years younger after the nation changed the way it counted ages on Wednesday. A new law will bring South Korea in line with how most countries around the world count a person's age.

In the past, South Korea used a traditional age-counting method that considered a baby one year of age at birth. People then turned a year older every January 1. That means that a child born in December would turn 2 shortly after birth.

One young girl told a local television station: "I turned 6 and then I became 5 again."

Some South Koreans became two years younger. Oh Seung-young went from 63 to 61. "It's always good to be younger," he said with a laugh.

One person, however, reminded people that the new age-counting plan does not change a person's true age.

Choi Eun-young is now 49. She used to be 50.

"The law doesn't make you biologically younger and there are no real **benefits** other than feeling good about being called a year younger than before," she said.

President Yoon Suk Yeol said **updating** all South Korean's ages to the international norm was an important goal for his government. He said he wanted to reduce "social and administrative **confusion**."

But government officials said the new law does not change how South Koreans receive public services and benefits. They were always based on the international **standard**. So were rules about when a child starts school, when a young person is permitted to drive a car, and when an adult can get a **pension**.

Kim Si-eun said she already misses the old method of age-counting. She is 21 years old. She said the old way seemed easier.

“With everybody now going with international age, the changed ages feel **awkward**,” Kim said.

Some observers say the change will be helpful in situations such as giving medicine to children. Instructions on a box of medicine could say the amount for a 12-year-old is different from an 11-year-old. However, if the package was made outside of South Korea, it could be hard for South Korean parents to know how much medicine to give their child.

One office worker noted that South Koreans respect older people. So if someone is now a bit younger, they may no longer be considered as important in an office or an organization.

“You are losing as much as two years!” said 56-year-old office worker Choi Duck-sang. “Still, I think this is a change that should have been made much earlier. It’s a good thing -- the entire nation got younger together,” he said.

I’m Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on a story by The Associated Press.*

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## Words in This Story

**benefit** -n. a good thing

**update** -v. to change something so it is done in a new way

**standard** -n. a common and accepted way of doing things

**confusion** -n. the feeling of not understanding something

**pension** -n. money received by older, retired people after working in a job for a long time; paid either by the company they worked for or the government

**awkward** -adj. a feeling of being uncomfortable

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