

How many women can have baby in your city? SKorea shuts site

December 30 2016, by Youkyung Lee



A journalist watches a screen showing a press release from the South Korean Ministry of the Interior about the birth map showing the number of women in childbearing age at his office in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Dec. 30, 2016. South Korea's government closed its website that drew fury for showing the number of women in childbearing age by each city district and region. The letters at left top read "Birth Map." (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

South Korea's government closed its website that drew fury for showing the number of women in childbearing age by each city district and region.

The Ministry of the Interior's [website](#) featuring the pink birth map remained closed on Friday, a day after its launch, showing instead a notice that the site is undergoing corrections to reflect [public opinion](#).

The website had gone offline after just a few hours following criticism the government is trying to shame [women](#) for not having babies. Some said the government treated the [birth rate](#) issue as concerning only women, pointing out that no picture of men was used on the website.

Using pink as the main color, the site contained information on birth rates, benefits from local governments on child rearing, average marriage age and other data. On top of the website, it showed a picture of a woman kissing a little girl.

In the birth map, the regions with a higher number of female residents aged 15-49 were colored in dark pink while the regions with a lower number of such women were shown in light pink. The site also featured a ranking of regions by the number of women aged 15-49.

Users could look up how many women who can have a baby resided in their neighborhood for the past 10 years.

Many users reacted with wonder and anger, saying they do not understand what the number of women who can get pregnant has to do with encouraging people to have more babies.

"I felt so angered that it blatantly showed how the government saw women's body as the country's reproductive tools, not that belonging to the woman," said Lee Min-kyung, a 24-year-old feminism writer. "I felt

like nothing has changed and the hatred of women that I have experienced appeared again."

The government had touted it as a tool to increase the public's understanding of the country's low birth rate and compare the benefits from local governments for having a baby or raising a child.

"It was established to encourage [local governments](#) to learn and compare other governments' benefits and to promote free competition," the ministry said in the press release distributed at the time of its launch. Calls seeking comments were not answered Friday.

South Korea is struggling to boost its rock bottom birth rate, one of the lowest among rich countries. This year, the country also saw growth of vocal feminist movements protesting misogynist views reflected in government policies and pop culture.

More information: Online (in Korean): birth.korea.go.kr

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