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## North Koreans in South Korea: 'Outsiders' or 'Insiders'?

Articles in [Asian Ethnicity's](#) special issue provide fresh and sophisticated accounts of North Koreans in South Korea and explores the issues, experiences, identities and crisis that accompanies the reality of the unrealized unification of the two Koreas.

Since the late 1990s, the number of North Koreans entering South Korea has increased dramatically. Until 1993, with only around 10 migrants annually, this figure has jumped rapidly to 2,000 in 2001, 10,000 in 2006 and by the end of 2013, the number had reached a high of 26,000.

North Koreans in South Korea is not only about the 'defectors' whose cross border crossing is motivated by their objection to the communist North Korean regime. It uncovers deeper issues as they find themselves assuming multiple (and often conflicting) identities. Are they 'defectors', 'heroes' or 'refugees'? Are the North Koreans considered as 'them' or 'us'? These articles document the unfolding debates over whether North Koreans should be treated as 'multicultural' subjects like other migrants.

Are there no signs of North Koreans becoming 'average' South Koreans? These studies provide a deeper understanding and demand a re-evaluation of what unification really means.

### NOTE TO JOURNALISTS

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