

South Korean Man Guilty of Gaining Weight to Avoid Military Service

韓国で、兵役を避ける目的で意図的に体重を増やした男性が有罪となりました。韓国では徴兵制が採用されており、兵役は多くの若い男性にとって身近な問題です。一方、兵役によって学業や仕事を一時中断しなければならないことなどから、制度をめぐる議論も続いています。若者に兵役を義務づけることは公平だと思いますか。また、それを意図的に避けた人にはどのような対応が必要でしょうか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

A South Korean court has found a man guilty of purposefully gaining weight to avoid completing required service in the country's military.

Seoul's Eastern District Court sentenced the 26-year-old man to one year in prison for violating the country's military service act. The Associated Press reports that the court suspended the [sentence](#) for two years. The court said the man did not [appeal](#) the November 13 ruling against him.

The court said the man had gained more than 20 kilograms in an effort to get released from a government requirement to serve in the military.

South Korea requires all able-bodied men to serve in the military for 18-21 months. However, some individuals with health issues can instead perform service in non-military positions. Such service can be carried out at welfare centers or at other approved places within communities.

People with serious health problems are not required to serve in the military at all.

A health examination in 2017 found the man was physically able to become an active-duty soldier while weighing 83 kilograms. But the court said the man received advice that he could get permission to serve a non-military, social service position if he was overweight. This led him to start gaining weight.

The court said that in three physical exams carried out in 2022 and 2023, the man weighed 102-105 kilograms, a weight that made him fit for social service.

The AP reported it was not clear how the crime was discovered nor if the man began his military duty before he was tried. The court said only that he had promised to meet his military service requirement.

South Korea operates a [compulsory](#) military service system to deal with possible military threats from North Korea. But the policy is widely debated in the country. Some critics of the system point to the fact that requiring military service forces young men to [suspend](#) their studies or professional careers.

South Korea's Military Manpower Administration is responsible for operating the country's compulsory military service system. It says that each year, about 50-60 cases of [dodging](#) military duties have been reported.

The organization notes the most common ways to avoid military duties are to gain or lose large amounts of weight or to not complete necessary medical treatments before physical exams.

Source: South Korean Man Guilty of Gaining Weight to Avoid Military Service

VOA

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. sentence (n.) A punishment given by a court

The judge gave the car thief a six-month sentence.

2. appeal (v.) To ask a higher court to change a decision

The technology company plans to appeal the court's decision on paying taxes.

3. compulsory (adj.) Required by law or a rule

In some countries, such as Australia, Belgium, and Singapore, voting is compulsory.

4. suspend (v.) To stop something for a period of time

The school decided to suspend the rule against using smartphones for one month.

5. dodge (v.) To avoid something you should do

Chris tried to dodge his responsibilities at work.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

- 1. How much weight had the man gained to avoid military service? As a result, what did the Seoul Eastern District Court sentence the man to?**
- 2. How long are able-bodied South Korean men normally required to serve in the military?**
- 3. What kind of service can some people with health issues perform instead of military service?**
- 4. Do you think compulsory military service is fair to young men? Why or why not?**
- 5. Should people who deliberately try to avoid military service be punished? Why?**