
South Korea trails global AI startup boom amid weak entrepreneurship



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SEOUL, Aug. 10 — South Korea is falling behind the global artificial intelligence startup boom as science, technology, engineering and mathematics students show limited interest in launching businesses, according to a survey reported by the Chosun Ilbo.

The survey of 1,229 STEM students in South Korea, China, the United States and Japan found that only 12 percent of South Korean respondents wanted to start their own businesses.

The figure was about one-fifth the level in the United States and ranked South Korea near the

bottom alongside Japan, where 11 percent expressed similar ambitions. Nearly one-third of Chinese STEM students wanted to launch ventures.

South Korea's domestic business operators, including self-employed businesses, fell to 1.14 million in 2025, the lowest level in a decade. Startups among people under 30 also declined 6.6 percent year-on-year.

A separate survey found that 50.8 percent of unemployed young South Koreans viewed the startup environment negatively, while half cited failure risks as their main concern.

The survey found that 66.6 percent said greater financial and manpower support would increase their willingness to start businesses