

CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Cambodia
Population (community leaders)	11,500
Population (Census 2000)	3,227
Main reason for migration	Fleeing war, political oppression and political instability
Years in this region	20-40 years
Primary areas of residence	Arlington, Carrollton, Dallas, Fort Worth, Garland, Mesquite, Richardson
General level of education	Elementary school for women age 40-60 High school for men ages 40-60 College degree for people in their 30s
Employment	Industrial work, professional, housekeeping, restaurant, clerical/office
Principal religions	Buddhism, Evangelical Christianity, Methodist
Languages	Khmer, English, French
Media (newspaper or radio)	
Cultural organizations	

Cambodians have lived in North Texas for over 40 years. Like other Southeast Asian communities, they migrated in high numbers to the United States because of the destabilization to the region caused by the U.S.-Vietnam War (in the late 60s and 70s). The atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime had a devastating effect on the country, and the subsequent Vietnamese invasion of the country at the end of 1978 exacerbated the situation and created a huge wave of refugees.

Most Cambodians in North Texas migrated here directly from their native country, any of them originating in the cities of Battambang and Phnom Penh. This community maintains communications with relatives back home, but is generally not in close contact with other Cambodians in the region, even though a yearly Cambodian New Year Festival held at the community's temple in Duncanville is said to draw thousands of immigrants from Texas and other states.

Immigrants from these communities have problems finding affordable medical care. Like so many other groups, they also have a hard time filling out their income tax forms. The older generations also are concerned about the preservation of their native culture. They hope that the younger generations, most of who were born in the United States, will be able to preserve their heritage. This concern has motivated many Cambodians to study their culture, including classical and folk dances that different groups perform regularly around the Metropolis. Interestingly, the leader in this movement is an Anglo-American computer teacher at an East Dallas school who has studied the culture and dance intensively, has trained two generations of young dancers, and owns the most extensive collection of Cambodian artifacts and costumes in the region.

Cambodian students are viewed as diligent, respectful, and eager to learn. Many of them have become technology specialists with significant experience and/or graduate degrees that provide expertise in this professional field. Four Cambodians who began their new lives in Dallas cleaning classrooms are now head custodians or facilities supervisors in Dallas ISD, while many in the younger generation hold M.A.'s and M.B.A.'s.

OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Age Distribution	Evenly distributed
Percentage of men and women	50% men and 50% women

Ties to country of origin	Many; have close relatives there
Frequency of travel to country of origin	Every 5-10-years
Estimate of undocumented	Less than 5%

Material Source: DFW International
aweiss@airmail.net

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Medical Clinics

Most areas of Texas have Cambodian Ministries, so expert assistance can be obtained from them.
Cambodian New Year festival

HOW DO YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH?

Share your everyday relationship with God...answered prayers, scriptures that comfort
Ask about how needs are met through their faith...loneliness, courage, direction
Offer to pray for their needs
Give books/video that tell a faith story
Discover their interests and find Christians in that field to share their story
Look for Bible stories or principles that teach a value they respect