

## IRAQI COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

### QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Iraq
Population (community leaders)	800
Population (Census 2000)	1,552
Main reasons for migration	Refugees from war, former soldiers captured by US troops, came to study and stayed
Years in this region	5-10 years
Primary areas of residence	Scattered
General level of education	Varies, many have college degrees
Employment	Varies
Principal religion	Islam
Languages	Arabic
Media (newspaper or radio)	None
Community newsletter	None
Cultural organizations	None

Several hundred Iraqis, primarily Shia soldiers who had participated in a US promoted uprising in southern Iraq, were brought with great secrecy to Dallas. The first Iraqis arrived approximately 5 years after the Gulf War, having spent the intervening years in a refugee camp just across the border in Saudi Arabia. Only a limited number of families, particularly those with some special need, were selected for resettlement. Many of the single men required treatment for post-traumatic stress and for mental conflicts resulting from torture and assassination of their family members at the hands of Saddam Hussein.

Very few people were aware that Iraqis were living in this area. It was presumed that the resettling agencies were attempting to avoid negative publicity that had resulted in other areas of the country when single Iraqi men were interviewed by the media.

There are no Iraqi cultural associations, even though among the individuals resettled in this area were a published poet, a newspaper editor and a talented folk dancer. This may be due to the fact that New Americans who were former Iraqi soldiers are less educated than the average Muslim or Middle Eastern immigrant. In addition, it is usually females who begin the first dance or cultural/educational society to maintain their traditions for their children and the number of Iraqi females in the Metropolis is severely limited.

Iraqi immigrants in this area have not attained the economic success seen by other Muslim and Arab immigrant groups. In general, the adaptation of refugees from pastoral or less developed countries is slower than the average for all immigrants. Nevertheless, nearly all manage to send money home to support their families whose economic situation is truly tragic.

Iraqis tend to hide their nationality and to merge with other Muslim or Arab communities as a camouflage that insulates them from hateful acts. Because of the U.S. sanctions against their country, they feel that they belong to 'an outcast nation that does not even belong to the human family'.

### OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Age distribution	25-45- years of age
Percentage of men and women	80% men, 20% women
Ties to country of origin	Nuclear family and relatives remain, send money back regularly
Frequency of travel to country of origin	Infrequent
Estimate of undocumented	5-10%

Material Source: DFW International  
[aweiss@airmail.net](mailto:aweiss@airmail.net)

### **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

Jobs, language and other transitional immigrant needs  
Use language materials, Bibles, to connect with culture  
Build relationships, one on one

### **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/videos 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.  
Be sensitive and accepting in relationship building