

## ARGENTINE COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

### QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Argentina
Population (community leaders)	5,000
Population (Census 2000)	1,083
Main Reason for migration	Political instability, economic hardships
Years in this region	5-20 years
Primary areas of residence	Irving, Plano
General level of education	Some college
Employment	Professionals, housekeeping, sales
Principal religions	Catholic, Jewish, Protestant
Languages	Spanish, English
Media (newspaper or radio)	
Community newsletter	1
Cultural Organizations	5

Argentines take pride in being individualistic rather than in joining organized group activities. Because of this, it is not easy to generalize about their presence in North Texas. While their numbers in the Metroplex are not large—about 3,000 legal residents and an equal number of undocumented immigrants – their cultural impact is significant. Although few Central and South American Cultural or community organizations are visible in 2002; The *Centro Cultural Argentino* supports numerous social activities, a theater group, a tango club and a film association. In addition, an Argentine folkloric dance society and an Argentine tango band contribute to the general cultural level of the Metroplex. Also, several Argentine coaches are involved in local soccer academies and soccer clinics.

Argentines who emigrated in the 70's generally did so to escape the military dictatorship that tortured and killed from 10,000 to 30,000 people. On the other hand, those who arrived in the 80's left their country to seek more favorable economic conditions. Most recently, arrivals within the last 3 years undoubtedly have been fleeing the high unemployment and poverty levels that were produced by a decade of unprecedented corruption.

Argentines tend to reside in the newer and better-developed areas of the DFW Metroplex. However, about 3,000 undocumented new arrivals have settled in the poorer areas of Irving. The latter, principally families from Mendoza, were recruited by a *coyote* (immigrant smuggler) who put them to work selling door to door for commission under near-slavery conditions, as well as doing telemarketing. Many of these undocumented Argentines have college degrees but accept whatever jobs are available, such as in sales, office cleaning, telemarketing, or as nannies. Very little communication exists between these 'poorer country cousins' and the well-established earlier arrivals.

Argentine immigrants are primarily young adults, although many of the earliest arrivals are now in their 50's. The latter are balanced evenly between male and female, and are generally prosperous and well-adjusted to the North Texas cultural environment. They tend to be politically conservative and financially successful. This group includes lawyers, businessmen, physicians and high-tech administrators. The majority is from the Buenos Aires Metroplex, home to 30 percent of the Argentine population. Many of them currently reside in Plano, and most travel regularly to Argentina – often several times a year.

Argentina's population is of European origin, allowing Argentines to blend in relatively easily with the majority Anglo population of Texas, more so than other Latinos of predominantly Indian or African ethnic origin. A high percentage of local Argentines in their 20's and 30's is male, a fact that suggests that more young men than women are driven to leave their country by desperation and lack of opportunities.

Immigrants from Argentina enjoy being up to date with the latest technologies and 33% are college graduates. They are often perceived by other Latinos as being "arrogant" and identifying with European

rather than the South American continent whose culture and language they share. Jokes about Argentine egos are classic among comedians. However, the fact is that after a decade of economic decline, Argentina has in many respects finally integrated into the rest of Latin America, sharing problems such as unemployment, malnutrition and a lack of opportunities (such as in education).

### **OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Age Distribution	Primarily young adults
Percentage of men and women	60% men, 40% women
Ties to country of origin	Nuclear family remains
Frequency of travel to country of origin	Every 2 years
Estimate of undocumented	60-70%

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### **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

Outreach to this group will need to have 2 target populations.

Poorer, newer immigrants

- Locate specific areas of residence
- Offer ESL and other ministries common to new immigrants (job training, CWJC, etc.)
- Establish with the community, cottage industries
- Have a celebration of their holidays inviting the Argentinean community

More established, wealthier immigrants

- Offer to host at your church a cultural event or celebration
- Incorporate Argentinean soccer clubs into your sports activities
- Find an Argentinean soccer coach to coach with your team
- Offer confidential INS counseling
- Have lawyers available as consultants
- Have newer members assisted one on one with various daily needs (i.e. drivers license, shopping, transportation, etc.)

### **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.
- Understand Catholic beliefs and teachings