

BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Bangladesh
Population (community leaders)	10,000
Population (Census 2000)	2,747
Main reasons for migration	Better opportunities, education
Years in this region	25 years
Primary areas of residence	Plano, Richardson, Garland, Irving, Arlington, Fort Worth
General Level of education	Bachelor's degree, some graduate degree
Employment	Professional, retail, education, clerical, restaurant, hotel, health, retail, management, technical
Principal religions	Islam
Languages	Bengali
Media (newspaper or radio)	Weekly radio program
Community newsletter	None
Cultural organizations	2

Bangladeshis began arriving in North Texas in the early 1970's, after independence was declared in 1971. Since then, immigrants have continued to come over, often because of political instability but mostly in search of better opportunities and education. Many have dreams of sending their children to the finest educational institutions in the world. The middle-class sells property to pay for their journeys to America and to get situated here. Most immigrants first come to New York City or to the New England states, and then, once they start a family or relatives begin to arrive, they migrate internally to North Texas.

Many families send their sons to the United States with what little money is available with the hope that they will receive a good education and help the family back home. As is the case in similar Middle Eastern immigrant communities, the result is an excess of young men in the region and a shortage of young women from whom to select a marriage partner. Thus, because relations with the extended family 'back home' are very close and constant; young relatives back home or friends living in the Diasporas frequently bring people together. Arranged marriages, with the bride being selected by the groom's family in Bangladesh, are common. Currently, within the second generation, a new form of arranged marriages has emerged, in which parents introduce their children and let love blossom.

Because it is the son's responsibility to care for his elderly parents, the older generation frequently moves in with the younger members of the extended household. Even when the grand parents spend only part of the year with their son or daughter, they maintain traditions in the home and connect their U.S. born grandchildren with their language, religion and heritage. Even though they may not speak English, they are respected and consulted, and their influence counterbalances the lack of child-centered religious or cultural activities within the Pakistani or BANGLADESHI Community. It is a better financial investment to bring one or more parents for an extended visit to the U.S. than to purchase tickets for the nuclear family residing here to travel back home. Nonetheless, most Bangladeshi children spend the summers or holiday break with their extended families every two to five years.

Most Bangladeshi immigrants are Muslim and feel a strong bond to Muslim community. They are involved in helping resettle refugees arriving from Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan by donating money and offering other services. Despite these ties, cultural and social activities within the Bangladeshi community are limited and that there is little cohesion among its members.

The American-born second generation blends easily with its peers, and is markedly successful in school. Very few Bangladeshis are undocumented as a result of expired tourist and student visas.

OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Age Distribution	Primarily young adults and middle-aged
Percentage of men and women	60% men and 40% women
Ties to country of origin	Phone relatives and members of nuclear family monthly
Frequency of travel to country of origin	2-5 years
Estimate of undocumented	Less than 5%

Material Source: DFW International
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OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Focus on language based materials, using their language for middle-aged or older adults.
To reach the younger, mix with other 2nd generation Muslims having background youth for activities (camp, sports, etc.).
Build one on one relationship.
Involve the community in humanitarian efforts

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
Stay informed on refugee and international issues
Understand Islamic teachings