

## BOSNIAN COMMUNITY OF NORTH TEXAS

### QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Bosnia
Population	2,500
Population (Census 2000)	2,462
Main reasons for migration	Refugees from war
Years in this region	1-5 years
Primary areas of residence	Dallas, Garland
General level of education	High school
Employment	Manufacturing, industrial work, restaurant, health care, housekeeping
Principal religions	Primarily Islam, plus Orthodox and Catholicism
Languages	Serbo Croatian
Media (newspaper or radio)	None
Community newsletter	None
Cultural organizations	None

The first Bosnians to arrive in Dallas were four families that were resettled in Oak Lawn in 1993. The first group of Bosnians referred to themselves as “Bosnians from the former Yugoslavia”. They included a traumatized woman believed to be a survivor from a rape camp and several young concentration camp internees who were in extremely poor physical condition. Their severe physical and emotional states, plus the lack of family support or local ethnic community to receive them, made their resettlement more difficult than would have been expected. A British study of Bosnian refugees in 2002 reported that Bosnians who remained in their country throughout the genocide and devastation suffered less emotional trauma than those who were evacuated to England.

Many Bosnians began their new lives working at Dallas Semiconductor or similar industrial and manufacturing plants. More highly educated Bosnians, such as college professors and physicians, found resettlement more rapid. Many of the new arrivals over forty years of age still have only limited English skills, a fact which is of considerable concern for them. Their children, on the other hand, achieved extraordinary and rapid success in school in spite of being placed in run-down inner city schools.

Only two years after arrival, even the language these immigrants used to describe themselves has changed. “Bosnians” were divided into Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats (Catholics) and Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox). Many mixed marriage families found themselves ostracized here in Dallas. Because of the division within the community, an early attempt to form a Bosnian Refugee Relief Association was sabotaged by local interests, and no cultural or arts organization has endured. Moreover, there has been little support from the third-generation Yugoslav immigrants already established in the area, although two well-established members of the former Pan-Slavic Association did become involved intensively on a personal level in assisting these new arrivals.

Like many other refugees from socialist countries, some Bosnian refugees were reluctant to accept entry-level position jobs. Moreover, they were demanding of volunteers who stepped forward to help them, and the initial help offered were mistrusted and sometimes abused. Eventually, the survival methods developed under the totalitarian Yugoslav political system gave way to a more honest approach, and economic and personal progress became more rapid. Bosnians’ relatively high level of education and European culture ultimately promoted a rapid assimilation into their new culture. As parents and siblings joined the first arrivals, extended families of Bosnians began buying homes. Many of the first high school graduates, being outstanding scholars, have won full scholarships to America’s best universities.

### OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Age Distribution	Primarily middle-aged
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Percentage of men and women	50% men, 50% woman
Ties to country of origin	Close relatives remain, send money back regularly
Frequency of travel to country or origin	Every 2-5 years
Estimate of undocumented	Less than 5%

Material Source: DFW International  
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## **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

Unless you know a Bosnian who can help you, outreach will be best on a one by one basis. Meeting needs and building authentic relationships will have the best long-term results.  
ESL for newly arrived immigrants

## **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 the various religions backgrounds and their significance