

VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Vietnam
Population (community leaders)	76,000
Population (Census 2000)	36,522
Main reasons for migration	Refugees from war, political oppression
Years in this region	20-40 years
Primary areas of residence	Arlington, Dallas, Garland, Irving, Mesquite, Plano, Richardson
General level of education	High school
Employment	Professional, health care, industrial worker, clerical restaurant
Principal religions	Buddhism, Christianity
Languages	Vietnamese, English
Media (newspaper or radio)	One full time radio station, three weekly newspapers, two bi-monthly magazines
Community newsletter	None
Cultural organizations	Approximately 10

Vietnamese comprise the largest population of Southeast Asian refugees to have settled in the United States. With their American-born children, they number approximately 995,000. After Mexican-born residents, Vietnamese are the largest immigrant community reported in North Texas by the 2002 Census. Like the Cambodian and Laotians, the Vietnamese arrived as refugees after the U.S. withdrawal from their country in axe. Some were airlifted out at that time, while others were transported for resettlement from refugee camps in subsequent years.

The North Texas region was a major center for Vietnamese refugee resettlement and in the years following the Vietnamese conflict, special offices were set up to receive two distinctive populations. In 1988, the U.S. Department of State reached an agreement with the Vietnamese government to allow “reeducation camps” detainees to leave through the Orderly Departure Program. Many of these were well-educated leaders who have some association with the U.S. presence during the war. Additional families arrived in response to special programs initiated in 1989 that admitted 100,000 Amerasian Vietnamese (children of American servicemen and their parents).

There are slightly more Vietnamese women in the area, probably a result of the loss of young males during the war, which claimed more than one million Vietnamese lives, and from the relative difficulty for them to escape the country after the U.S. withdrawal.

The original refugee populations were resettled in East Dallas, where restaurants, markets and small family businesses soon developed to serve their needs. Secondary immigration from other areas of the country and a desire for better schools spread the population farther northward, to Carrollton and Richardson. Today, Arlington boasts the 15th largest Vietnamese community in the country. Currently, the community is served by a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in Irving and is the proud owner of a large and attractive community center in Garland at the edge of Richardson. The latter area is the center for numerous Vietnamese businesses, including newspapers, law and medical offices.

The Vietnamese family remains very united, with individualism and independence often sacrificed for the ultimate strengthening and growth of the family. Several generations of some extended families work long hours with little cash pay in order to build a firm base in their family restaurant, and the twenty or more Vietnamese restaurants in the region are popular with all ethnic groups. Vietnamese are appreciated for their humble, courteous and personal service, and Vietnamese beauty and nail salons have been very successful. They also excel as medical and clerical assistants.

As women, headed many of the original families with little education, acculturation was challenging for some of these families, some have been unable to progress economically. One resulting problem is the development of Vietnamese gangs, which appeal to young boys who have no strong male role models and who feel adrift in-between two cultures.

Middle-aged Vietnamese are beginning to visit their country, as relations soften between Vietnam and the United States. Many others continue to send money back to help their extended families that are unable or unwilling to leave for the West.

OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Age Distribution	Evenly distributed
Percentage of men and women	60% women, 40% men
Ties to country of origin	Send money back regularly, phone relatives and members of nuclear family weekly
Frequency of travel to country of origin	Some travel often and some do not
Estimate of undocumented	Less than 5%

Material Source: DFW International
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OUTREACH STRATEGIES

If a Vietnamese church is close, work with them on strategies:

Youth/Children's ministries
Build relationships
Share your faith
Offer needed ministries such as ESL, etc.
Include Vietnamese with the youth at your church
Celebrate the New Year
More Bible studies

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.