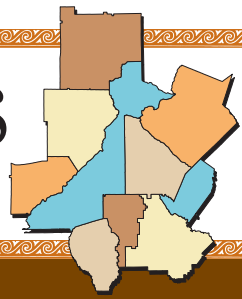


# GLOBAL ATLANTA Snapshots

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



## V I E T N A M E S E

The Global Atlanta Snapshots were created to foster understanding among all people of the Atlanta region. The Snapshots show the rich ethnic and cultural diversity that our region now enjoys. The residents of Atlanta's ethnic communities may have lived in the region for a long time or may have recently arrived. They may come from cultures and have customs significantly different from each other's, and from those of the general population of the Atlanta region. What they have in common with the rest of the region is that they make it their home, and they share in and contribute to its success. The Snapshots introduce and portray selected communities in terms of their backgrounds, their customs and cultures, their roles in the regional economy, and specific local resources available throughout the region.

### Vietnamese in the Atlanta Economy



There are about 12,000 Vietnamese workers contributing their skills and energies to the metropolitan economy. Male workers are found in significant numbers in several occupational groupings, the largest (2,500) in production/ transportation jobs. Other major fields include food preparation, personal care services, sales and office positions, management, business and financial jobs and construction. Professional occupations are largely in computers and mathematics fields and in architecture/ engineering. Vietnamese women are more concentrated in personal care services, many in manicure salons, in textile and apparel production, food preparation and management positions. The overall economic progress of the Vietnamese community is indicated by their median household income of \$49,300, just five percent below the median income (\$51,900) for all metro Atlanta households.

### Vietnamese Life in Metro Atlanta

Two counties in the Atlanta region account for about 60 percent of the local Vietnamese community. According to the 2000 census, 6,100 members of the community live in Gwinnett County and another 6,100 in DeKalb. The Buford Highway corridor, particularly in the Chamblee and Doraville areas of DeKalb County, has become the center for much of the local Vietnamese community. Other clusters can be found in Clayton County (4,000 residents), Fulton County (2,600) and Cobb County (1,600). Members of the professional middle class have moved farther into the suburbs and live in the Lawrenceville/

GA-316 area of Gwinnett County and the Smyrna area of Cobb County. The attached map displays the complete picture of Vietnamese residential concentrations in Greater Atlanta.

The residential patterns of Vietnamese households now largely mirror those of Atlanta's general population. Two-thirds of the households live in owner-occupied housing units, most of them single-family detached. The median value of the homes was \$121,400 in 2000. Some tend to buy new houses in developments for investment purposes. The average Vietnamese household is notably larger than the average household: 4.18 persons/ household vs. 2.68. A common pattern reported is one in which the family, including both parents and 2-3 children or other family members are all working. By living together and pooling their resources for the mortgage payment, some of the homeowners are able to pay off the house in 3 years instead of 15.

*Continued inside*

### Holidays Celebrated

In addition to other Western holidays, the Vietnamese may celebrate the following:

**Tet**  
**Lunar New Year**  
Jan/Feb/Mar

**Thahn Minh**  
**Holiday of the Dead**  
April

**Trung Nguyen**  
**Wandering Souls Day**  
July

**Tet Trung Thu**  
**Children's New Year**  
September

**Buddha's Birth**  
**Enlightenment, Death**  
May

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## A PERSONAL STORY

When he was just 16 years old, Larry left his native Vietnam and resettled in Indianapolis in 1975. He faced the usual problems confronting Vietnamese refugees in that period: language barriers, unfamiliar American customs, and the challenges of securing an education and finding employment. He found that his perseverance and hard work enabled him to overcome those challenges. Larry reports that he relied on those qualities to do many “sensible things”, including learning English, finding good jobs, establishing friendships with decent people, and marrying his wife.

Starting as a department store warehouse helper, he was able to work his way through school and obtain his college degree. By 1982, Larry was working for a leading U. S. pharmaceutical company as a computer programmer. His career with this company

extended to 16 years. When he left the firm he was the company's Information Technology Manager. His career then took a brief detour for a few years when he took a job with a major defense contractor as an Engineering Manager. Because of conflicting goals between his family needs and his job requirements, Larry left his job in the defense industry. The combination of a job offer and the area's appealing climate led him to relocate to Atlanta in 1999. His current position is with a top tier US health care provider, where he is responsible for managing the business data architecture for the company. Larry has now adjusted to his new life in Atlanta, reporting that he just had to get used to “the awful traffic conditions.”

VIETNAMESE CHILDREN ARE FREQUENTLY ATTRACTED TO TECHNICAL FIELDS OF STUDY, SUCH AS COMPUTER SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS. FOR THE MOST PART, VIETNAMESE PARENTS EXPECT THEIR CHILDREN TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL, ATTEND COLLEGE AND OBTAIN BETTER EMPLOYMENT THAN THEY THEMSELVES CURRENTLY HAVE.



## Who are the Vietnamese-Americans?



Vietnam, with a population of 80 million, is the twelfth most populous nation in the world. Yet, unlike other Pacific Rim nations – China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines – which had been the source of immigrant streams to the United States since the late 19th century, there was little Vietnamese presence in this country – until 1975. The end of the Vietnam War and the communist takeover of what had been South Vietnam changed that.

After the war in Vietnam ended, families that had supported American policies during the war, military personnel and employees of the fallen South Vietnamese government fled the country. Some

initially relocated to refugee camps at U.S. military bases elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Thousands of others took refuge as “boat people” by sailing to other Asian ports. Eventually this early wave of refugees was resettled in various areas of the United States. In 1960, there were only handfuls of Vietnamese people in the U.S.; from 1970 to 1980 their numbers across the country grew from 69,150 to 357,400. In the 1990-2000 decade, the Vietnamese population in the U.S. expanded further, from 593,200 to 1.2 million.

Today, the Vietnamese population of metro Atlanta alone stands at about 21,000, almost quadrupling the 1990 population. The early group of Vietnamese families coming to Atlanta was usually sponsored by voluntary organizations, such as church groups under contract to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. Others came under the Family Unification Program, in which those Vietnamese already living here could sponsor relatives still in Vietnam. Additional programs facilitating immigration included the Political Prisoner Program (for ex-political prisoners and their families) and the Amerasian Program (for children of American servicemen and their Vietnamese mothers).

The latest period of growth in the local community is in the form of “secondary migration”, as Vietnamese individuals and families that settled in California, New York and other regions of this country, relocate to Atlanta as a place of economic vitality and opportunity.



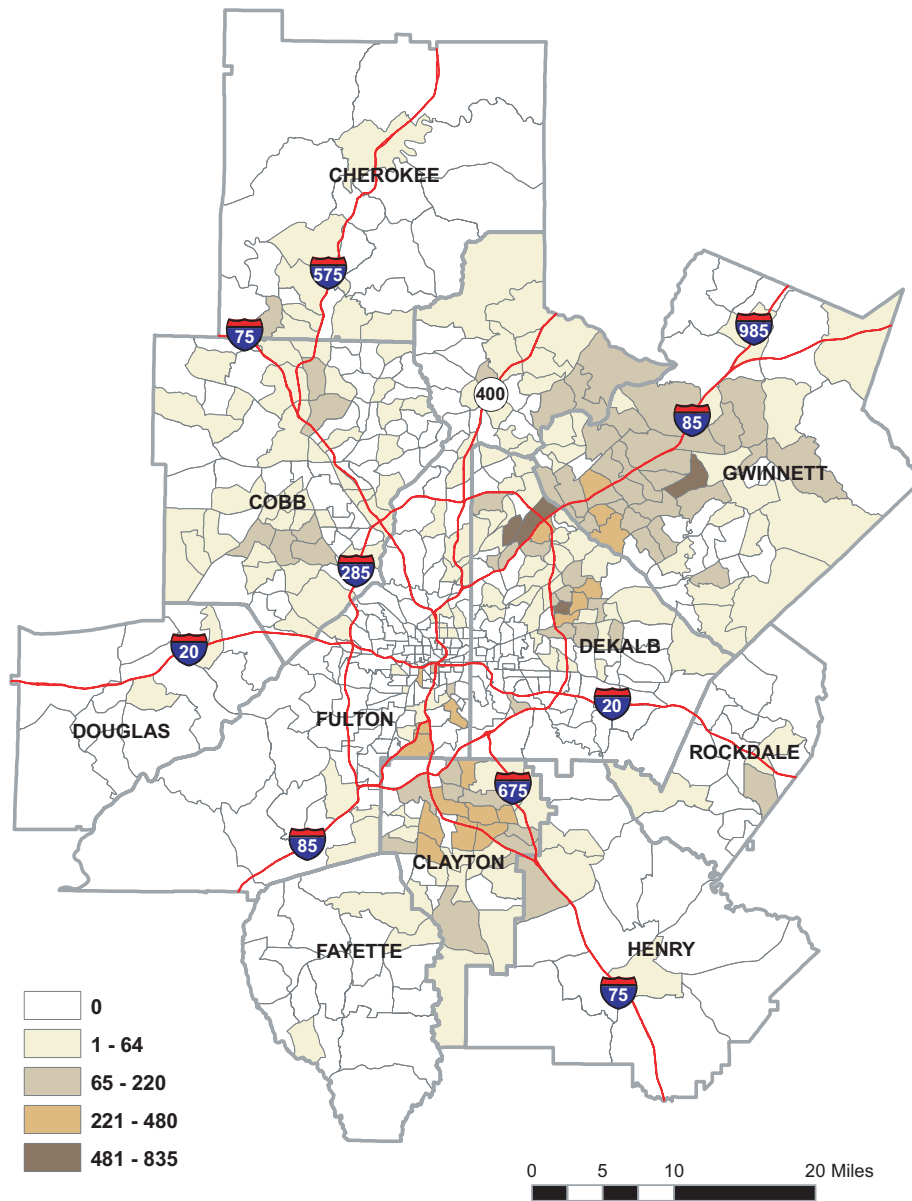
# Vietnamese in the Atlanta Region: By the Numbers

- Cherokee: 187
- Clayton: 4,047
- Cobb: 1,599
- DeKalb: 6,051
- Douglas: 41
- Fayette: 102
- Fulton: 2,608
- Gwinnett: 6,077
- Henry: 172
- Rockdale: 163

**Total 10-county Region: 21,047**

- **Gwinnett and DeKalb** lead the region in Vietnamese-born population with 6,077 and 6,051 respectively.
- Clayton's **population** is the 5th largest in the 10-county Atlanta region, but the county's Vietnamese population ranks 3rd. In fact, **almost 16 percent** of Clayton's foreign-born population is Vietnamese, **by far the highest ratio** of any county in the region. Gwinnett is second with 6.1 percent of its foreign-born population hailing from Vietnam.
- **Gwinnett County** is home to **29 percent** of all Vietnamese in the 10-county region and **24 percent** of all Vietnamese in the state.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent** of Georgia's total population, but it is home to **83 percent** of the state's Vietnamese population.
- Of the region's **110,789** persons born in Asia, 21,047 are from Vietnam, or **19 percent**.

## VIETNAMESE-BORN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area of Birth

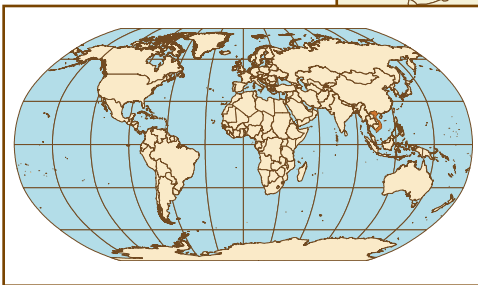


# Vietnamese Life in Metro Atlanta (cont'd)



A variety of Vietnamese-owned businesses have been established to meet the needs of the growing community. Notable among them are real estate offices, income tax and personal loan offices, restaurants, groceries, used car lots and some entertainment venues. For community gatherings

and to celebrate events, various groups rent facilities, usually in the Chamblee and Doraville areas, such as restaurants, schools, ballrooms and, occasionally, hotels. Other important institutions include Good Shepherd Corporation, Our Lady of Vietnam Catholic Church in Riverdale, Vietnamese Martyr Mission (Holy Cross Catholic Church) in Tucker and Buddhist temples, including Quang Minh and Kim Cang. Several Baptist churches in metro Atlanta and Gainesville are also important to the local Vietnamese community.



Map caption

While many in the Vietnamese community have advanced economically, about 10 percent of the members of the community were living below the poverty level in 2000. Good Shepherd Services is one of the few agencies serving the non-English speaking Vietnamese and Chinese communities. An estimated 89 percent of Vietnamese receiving services from Good Shepherd are non-English speaking and 30 percent of the adults are illiterate in Vietnamese as well. Health and social service problems being dealt with include overcoming language barriers and the social isolation they engender and gaining access to health care services. Mental health is a particular concern for elderly members of the community. This stems from the fact that some of the elderly, seeing no prospect of gaining citizenship and having limited means of support, desire to return to Vietnam. Tensions

between the generations are also an issue. In the mid-1990's there were problems with Vietnamese teenage gangs, but area nonprofit organizations targeting services to the teenagers have worked to ameliorate the problems. Older Vietnamese love to meet and discuss political issues with each other, but the younger generation has generally shown less interest in these matters. More recently, this situation has begun to change as a new generation has gained good education and taken more interest in mainstream affairs.

WHILE MANY IN THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY HAVE ADVANCED ECONOMICALLY, ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WERE LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL IN 2000.

## Languages Spoken

Vietnamese is the language spoken in most Vietnamese homes. It is one of the few Asian languages to adopt a modified Roman alphabet. This is called "quoc ngu" or national language. The French language was used by the French-rule Vietnamese government from 1904 until 1954 and was taught later as a foreign language in Vietnamese schools. With the American presence in the late 1960s in Vietnam, the instruction of English increased. For many children, especially those American-born, English has become their primary language. Vietnamese syntax is quite different from the English structure.

**Chao (ban)** "Jawl (baan)"  
Hello

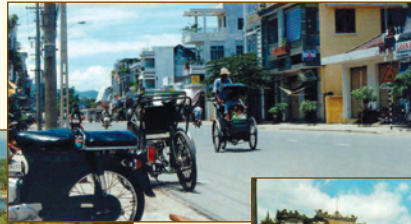
**Ten ba la gi?**  
"Then baah la yee?"  
What is your name? (to a woman)

**Cac ong cac ba manh gioi khong?**  
"Caah om caah baah mahn yoi kong?"  
How are you ladies and gentlemen?

**Ten ong la gi?**  
"Then om la yee?"  
What is your name? (to a man)

**Cam on rat nhieu.**  
"Caam on raht nuw"  
Thank you very much.

# What are Vietnamese Customs and Culture?



The Vietnamese come from a country that stretches from the eastern portion of Indochina in the Pacific/Asia region. The climate and geography vary greatly throughout this small, but diverse land; however, it is mainly a hot tropical area with rainy seasons. It contains rugged mountains, tropical rainforests, marshy lowlands and rich agricultural lands.

Vietnamese food, although similar to Chinese food in that the same raw materials are used, maintains a uniqueness with greatly varied techniques. It has its own special flavors and variations. Rice in its many forms is basic to the cuisine and is supplemented by vegetables and small amounts of egg, meat and fish. Uncooked vegetables and salads are essential to most Vietnamese meals. Fish sauce is another hallmark of Vietnamese cooking. Cha gio (sometimes called “spring rolls”) and pho (a beef and noodle soup) are two popular foods.

The Vietnamese are very formal and respectful to others, including their own family members. It is considered improper to touch or make eye contact with those older than oneself and extremely aggressive for a man to touch a woman to whom he is not related. Traditional Vietnamese courtship behavior is quite reserved compared to contemporary American culture.

The Vietnamese highly value maintaining peace and harmony in communicating with others, tending to be exceedingly polite and delicate in dealing with strangers and highly respected people. Nonverbal communication in the form of many different types of “smiles” is common. Aggressive or assertive behavior is frequently considered impolite. Because of the cultural shyness of qualified individuals to volunteer for positions, voluntary organizations have difficulty changing leadership.

Vietnamese names are written in the following order: Nguyen Van Hai. Nguyen is the family name and denotes family lineage. The middle name, Van, denotes a male and Thi a female; however, other middle names are becoming more common especially as “American” names are given. Frequently the personal name has a meaning; in this case, Hai represents some precious object or a moral virtue. The Vietnamese would be referred to as “Mr. Hai”. His wife would be “Mrs. Hai” rather than her personal name. There are several very common family names including: Nguyen, Pham, Tran, Huynh, Phan and Le.

Vietnamese children are frequently attracted to technical fields of study, such as computer science and mathematics. For the most part, Vietnamese parents expect their children to do well in school, attend college and obtain better employment than they themselves currently have. Teachers are greatly respected, and sacrifice for educational advancement is encouraged. There are now Vietnamese student societies on several local college campuses.

Buddhists, Catholics and Protestants are represented in the Vietnamese population in the Atlanta region. There is no overt divisiveness between these groups, and frequently there has been substantial cooperation to resettle refugees and conduct traditional holiday celebrations. The most important cultural celebration is Tet, or the Lunar New Year. Its date fluctuates between late January and early March. This three-day event has both public and private (limited to homes) aspects. Celebrations consist of singing, dancing, games, a beauty contest, food and other activities to which the general public is invited.

# Vietnamese Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Vietnamese Community. Additional resources are available at [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Asian-American Resource Center**  
6045 Atlantic Blvd.  
Norcross, GA 30071  
[www.aarc-atlanta.org](http://www.aarc-atlanta.org)

**Catholic Social Services, Inc.**  
680 West Peachtree  
Atlanta, GA 30308  
(404) 881-6571  
[www.cssatlanta.com](http://www.cssatlanta.com)

**Center for Pan Asian  
Community Services, Inc.**  
3760 Park Avenue  
Doraville, GA 30340  
(770) 936-0969  
[www.cpacs.org](http://www.cpacs.org)

**Georgia Mutual Assistance  
Association Consortium (GMAAC)**  
Mailing address:  
P.O. Box 250, Clarkston, GA 30021  
Physical address:  
4416 E. Ponce de Leon  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
(404) 296-5400  
[www.gmaac.org](http://www.gmaac.org)

**Lutheran Services of Georgia**  
756 West Peachtree Street NW  
Atlanta, GA 30308  
(404) 875-0201  
(contact main office for other locations)  
[www.lsga.org](http://www.lsga.org)

**International Rescue  
Committee - Atlanta**  
4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 201-C  
Atlanta, GA 30032  
(404) 292-7731  
[www.theirc.org/atlanta](http://www.theirc.org/atlanta)

## Good Shepherd Services

2426 Shallowford Terrace  
Chamblee, GA 30341  
(770) 455-9379  
[www.goodshepherdservices.org](http://www.goodshepherdservices.org)

*An Viet Center in Forest Park*  
4140 Jonesboro Rd. Suite B-3  
Forest Park, Georgia 30297  
(404) 366-8677

*Lac Viet Center in Lilburn*  
656 Indian Trail Rd. Suite 106  
Lilburn, Georgia 30047  
(770) 381-2011

## Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta (PRISA)

4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 205-D  
Decatur, GA 30032  
(404) 622-2235  
[www.rrisa.org](http://www.rrisa.org)

## Refugee Women's Network, Inc.

4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 103-F  
Decatur, GA 30032  
404-299-0180  
[www.riwn.org](http://www.riwn.org)

## World Relief - Atlanta

655 Village Square Dr.  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
(404) 294-4352  
<http://atlanta.wr.org>

*Lawrenceville Resettlement Office*  
311 Scenic Highway, #2  
Lawrenceville, GA 30045  
(770) 338-5968

## ASSOCIATIONS

**Clayton State University Vietnamese  
Student Association**  
<http://studentorg.clayton.edu/vsa/>

**Georgia State University Vietnamese  
Student Association**  
e-mail: [gsvusa@gmail.com](mailto:gsvusa@gmail.com)  
[www.gsvusa.org](http://www.gsvusa.org)

**Georgia Tech Vietnamese  
Student Association**  
[www.cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/vsa](http://www.cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/vsa)

**Vietnamese Professional Society (VPS)**  
[www.vps.org](http://www.vps.org)

## HEALTH

**Georgia Refugee Health Project  
Department of Human Resources**  
2600 Skyland Drive NE  
Atlanta, GA 30319  
(404) 679-4916 or (404) 657-6713

## Child Care Resources & Referrals of Metropolitan Atlanta

550 Executive Park South, Suite 5015  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
(404) 479-4200 or (404) 885-1578  
[www.qualitycareforchildren.org](http://www.qualitycareforchildren.org)

## St. Joseph's Mercy Clinics (main office)

424 Decatur Street, Atlanta, GA 30312  
(404) 880-3550

Northeast Plaza  
3367 Buford Hwy., Atlanta, GA 30329  
(404) 880-3711

## MEDIA

**Atlanta Viet Bao**  
(Monthly newspaper)  
P.O. Box 723176  
Atlanta, GA 31139  
(770) 432-8863  
[www.atlantavietbao.com](http://www.atlantavietbao.com)

## Rang Dong Magazine

P.O. Box 46754  
Philadelphia, PA 19160  
(215) 288-5647  
(770) 454-6346  
[www.rangdongphila.org](http://www.rangdongphila.org)

## TiengNuocToi (TNT)

(Vietnamese Radio Network)  
3304 Shallowford Road  
Chamblee, GA 30341  
(770) 458-6755  
[www.tnradio.net/atlanta.html](http://www.tnradio.net/atlanta.html)

## RELIGIOUS

### Vietnamese Baptist Mission of Riverdale

2195 Highway 138  
Riverdale, GA 30296  
(770) 471-8073

**Contact:**  
E-mail: [globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com](mailto:globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com)

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Charles Krautler, Executive Director      Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the ten-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 63 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of regionwide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • [www.atlcf.org](http://www.atlcf.org)

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