

GLOBAL ATLANTA SnapSHOTS

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



J a p a n 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.

Who are the Japanese-Americans?

Consisting of a string of islands forming a great arc off the Pacific coast of Asia, Japan is one of the world's economic superpowers. While its population, estimated at 128 million, places it 10th among the world's nations, Japan's economy ranks second, behind only the U.S. in nominal Gross Domestic Product.

Japan's principal islands, from north to south, are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu and Okinawa, the last being nearly 400 miles southwest of Kyushu. Honshu is regarded as the mainland and has a population of 98 million. The Japanese capital city, Tokyo, is at the center of the world's most populous metropolis with an estimated population of 35 million.

It is believed that human migration from the Asian continent to the Japanese archipelago occurred in the third century B.C. Because the nation was isolated from other people for much of its early history, the Japanese people have unusual ethnic cohesiveness. The population of Japan consists of 99 percent ethnic Japanese, with the remaining one percent being Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Brazilians and others, who may include those from Western countries on extended assignments.

Japan, as is the case with most Asian countries, experienced periods of Chinese cultural influence from which it adapted its own practices. Contact with the West did not begin until the 16th century, when Portuguese traders and missionaries reached Japan on several voyages. In 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy brought about the opening of Japan to the West, with the signing of the Convention of Kanagawa. In ensuing decades, as trade and other contacts developed, the Japanese adopted Western practices, legal and administrative systems.

The earliest Japanese immigration to the U.S. had an intermediate step, as Japanese workers were recruited to work on sugar cane



plantations in Hawaii. The first Japanese workers arrived in Honolulu in 1868. Shortly afterwards, Japanese workers began to migrate to California and other parts of the West Coast, filling jobs in agriculture, fisheries and as cooks, tailors and related work. As their numbers grew at the turn of the 20th century, there were movements to limit Japanese immigration.

As the world moved toward major military conflicts, Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. This was the beginning of a chain of events that culminated in an attack on U.S. military at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941. The bombardment led to U.S. entry into World War II and had a devastating effect on Japanese-Americans then living on the U.S. mainland. More than 120,000 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry were sent to internment camps for the duration of the war.

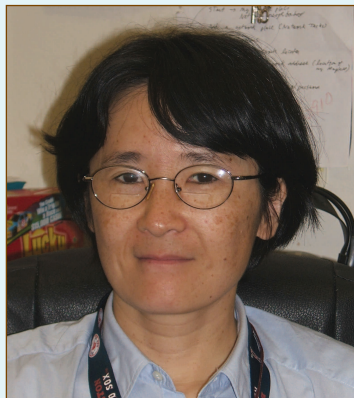
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A PERSONAL STORY



Dr. Yuki Takatori is originally from Saitama prefecture in Japan and pursued her university studies in both Kyoto and Tokyo. She first came to Atlanta in 1983 upon receiving a Rotary Club scholarship to attend Georgia State University for two academic years. Upon returning to Japan and completing her undergraduate degree, Takatori returned

to Georgia in 1986 where she enrolled in a Master of Arts in Linguistics program at the University of Georgia.

In 1986, Takatori married and began the process of formalizing her U.S. citizenship. Following this, she began her doctoral studies in linguistics at Yale University, where she graduated in 1997. Upon completing her doctorate she received a position as Assistant Professor of Japanese language, literature and culture at Georgia State University, where she has remained since.

Takatori said her move and adaptation to American culture has been an easy one with few hardships, adding that she has never been the object of or felt the effects of racial discrimination. She attributes this to her understanding of American culture.

When she first came to America, Takatori said she was shy and felt that Americans generally overlook someone who remains quiet and shy. Thus, she felt it necessary to be more social and began “branching out” to make friends. Takatori said she recalled taking a course in Russian with a small group of students who became “like family.” She began to make friends with this group while a student at Georgia State and remembers being distinctly impressed by what she calls “American hospitality.”

Takatori also recalled her initial impressions of Americans as being far more “liberal” than the Japanese with a limited understanding of international cultures. This was her first realization

that stereotypes were pervasive throughout all cultures and that she, too, had her own about Americans and American culture.

In her opinion the Japanese are notorious for creating neighborhoods of “little Japan” in major cities where a larger Japanese population settles. Takatori initially resented this tendency to congregate together and tried to avoid interacting too closely with the Japanese community in areas of the U.S. where she lived. She wanted to be able to have more interactions with American people, rather than creating what she called a “bubble” of Japan in the U.S.

There are not many Japanese-owned or oriented businesses that Takatori frequents. However, in recent years she has gotten more involved with the Japanese community in Atlanta through her work at Georgia State. She has been developing a Japanese Studies program and exchange student program for students to both go to Japan and Japanese students to come to GSU. In the process, she has begun to interact more with the Atlanta area Japanese community and has done some translating work for local Japanese business owners. She is also involved with the Japanese Consulate office in Atlanta where she helps conduct annual interviews to select JET (Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program) participants.

Takatori also serves as a member of the Japanese-American Society of Georgia (JASG) and as a consultant to several community organizations and businesses. She also judges a Japanese Speech contest and the “Japan Bowl” (a Jeopardy-like game focused on Japan) every February – both events are sponsored and put-on by the Japanese-American Society of Georgia.

She travels to Japan about twice a year. When asked what kind of perceptions she would hope foreigners had of Japan, she noted the Japanese are very hard-working and are customer service-oriented, much more than here in the U.S. she feels.

U.S. culture is very “rule-following.” Alternatively, Americans value equality and justice under the law – a trait she admires. She added that Americans personify a “volunteer spirit” and are always seemingly looking for ways to help their neighbors and community when others are in need.

Japanese Life in Metro Atlanta

Many Japanese who move to the U.S. do so for work or study engagements and for other short-term commitments. According to Dr. Yuki Takatori, a professor at Georgia State University, it may be commonplace for these visiting Japanese to “stick together” and not interact much with the “native” community.

On the other hand, based on 2000 Census data, those born in Japan have not concentrated in any one area of the Atlanta region.

Significant numbers of Japanese residents, ranging in number from 500 to 1,000, are found in Cobb, DeKalb, Fayette, Fulton and Gwinnett counties.

The fact that there are no large concentrations of Japanese-Americans in the area limits the opportunities to shop for Japanese food and consumer items. Some grocery shopping can be accomplished at the local International Farmers market on Buford Highway. Another possibility is a local Japanese grocery store, Tomato, which does little advertising and has signs only in Japanese.



Japanese in the Atlanta Region: By the Numbers

Cherokee: 73	Clayton: 108
Cobb: 948	DeKalb: 845
Douglas: 88	Fayette: 553
Fulton: 840	Gwinnett: 658
Henry: 73	Rockdale: 68

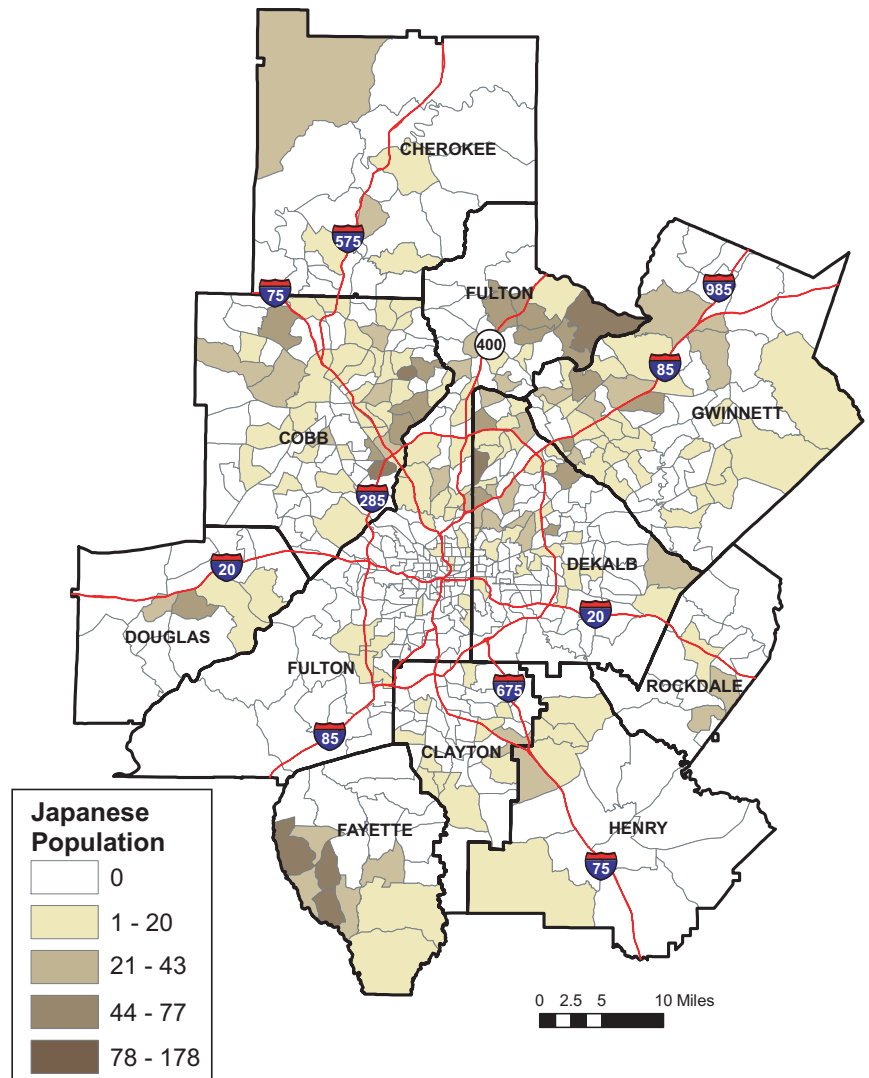
Total 10-county Region: 4,254

According to the 2000 Census:

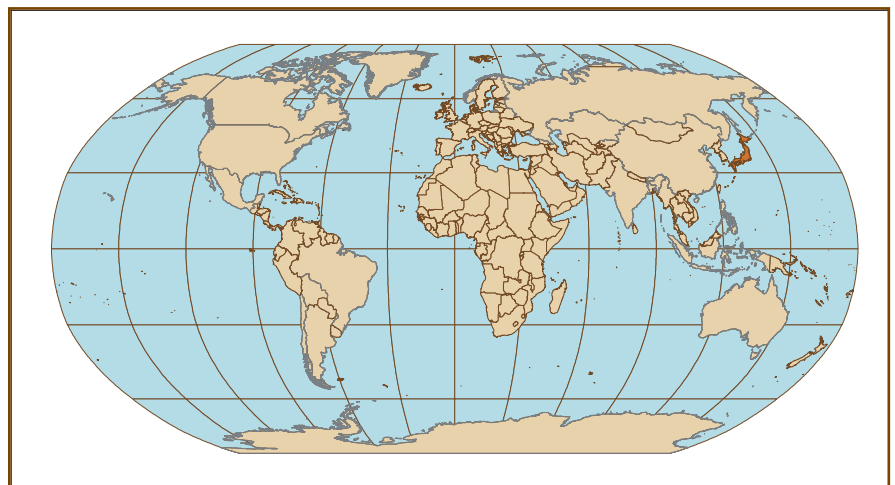
- **Cobb County** is home to the largest population of Japanese, with 948, followed closely by **DeKalb** with 845 and **Fulton** with 840.
- **Cobb, DeKalb and Fulton** are home to **62 percent** of the Japanese in the Atlanta region and **39 percent** of the Japanese living in Georgia.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent of Georgia's total population**, but represents **63 percent of the state's Japanese population**.
- In **Fayette County**, the 553 people born in Japan is the most foreign-born from any country. Fayette is the only county in the region where the Japanese represent the largest of the foreign-born populations.
- The largest concentrations of Japanese are found in north Fulton and southwestern Fayette. Unlike other foreign-born populations, the Japanese are not clustered along an interstate.



JAPANESE POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



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



Who are the Japanese-American... continued

Following the war, Japanese-Americans began returning to their homes, mostly on the West Coast, to rebuild their lives. Some were drawn to the emerging industries in Georgia, where their special skills were in demand.

In 2000, there were 7,000 people in the Atlanta region of Japanese ancestry, which includes those of Japanese ancestry in combination

with one or more other races. Of this total, about 4,250 were born in Japan. Unlike most other immigrant communities, the Japanese community is not growing. Since many are here in connection with temporary corporate assignments or academic appointments, there may be some contraction in the community. The 2005 American Community Survey provides an estimate of 5,600 Japanese in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area.

What are Japanese Customs and Culture?

Japanese culture is influenced by a number of different religious traditions. Shintoism and Buddhism are the two principal religions of the Japanese people. Buddhism first came to Japan in the 6th century and had a major influence on the country's intellectual, artistic, social, and political life. Most Japanese funerals are conducted by Buddhist priests and burial grounds attached to temples are used by members of both religious faiths.

Confucianism arrived with the first great wave of Chinese influence into Japan between the 6th and 9th centuries. While overshadowed by Buddhism, Confucianism still remains an important influence on Japanese thought and values. Japanese culture stresses the importance of order, harmony and individual development – values derived from Confucianism. This emphasis on order and harmony, or *wa*, is expressed in many aspects of Japanese art and daily life, including architecture, interior design, and domestic landscapes.



Christianity was first introduced into Japan in 1549. After initial resistance to this Western religion, Christianity took hold again in the late 19th century. It has a relatively small following (1.4 million adherents).

For Japanese of all traditions, family life is very important. The family is considered the foundation of Japanese society and is



bound together by a strong sense of reputation, obligation and responsibility. Despite outward formality on the part of many Japanese individuals, families are close, warm and mutually supportive. Children are greatly respected and education is highly valued. Because some of Japanese families living in Atlanta are on short-term assignments, in order for children to excel at school, it is important for them to keep up their studies in Japanese while living abroad.

In Japanese-American homes where the cultural traditions are observed, New Year's offerings are set in various places of honor around the home. The New Year holiday, which coincides with the Western New Year, is a special time for the Japanese family, providing time for reflection and renewal. Special holiday foods include fish and lobster dishes. The home is decorated with pine bough, bamboo sprigs, and oranges – items that symbolize prosperity and long life. *Zoni*, a traditional broth, made of rice, herring roe, black beans, dried chestnuts and seaweed, is also enjoyed at this holiday.



Japanese in the Atlanta Economy

According to the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, “Georgia is regarded as the center of Japanese industry in the U.S. Southeast. In fact, Japanese-affiliated companies have invested \$7.2 billion in Georgia, where 352 Japanese-affiliated companies currently operate. These companies together employ 33,653 workers.”

Among the Japanese corporations based in the Atlanta region are YKK AP America, an architectural products manufacturer in Austell; Murata Electronics Systems in Smyrna; Mitsubishi Wireless Communications and Ricoh Corporation, both in Duluth; and Panasonic Automotive Systems in Peachtree City. Japan is the state’s third-largest export market, with the value of products and services in 2005 amounting to \$1.3 billion, according to the Consulate-General of Japan in Atlanta.

Given Japan’s corporate presence in Georgia and the Atlanta region, it should be no surprise that many of the Japanese located here are engaged in managing businesses and providing professional expertise. There were just over 2,500 Japanese workers in metro Atlanta’s labor force in 2000. The male labor force, about 1,400, was heavily concentrated in business management and professional fields. More than 61 percent were in management and professional occupations, with 13.5 percent listed as “top executives” within business management. Japanese men were also heavily

represented in certain professional specialties, including computer and mathematics occupations (7.7 percent of the total), architecture and engineering (5.4 percent) and arts, entertainment and media/ communications (5.6 percent). Of the nearly 4.5 percent in educational occupations, nearly all were in college and university positions. Outside of these fields, another 20 percent of the male labor force was engaged in sales and office occupations.

Japanese women also have a high representation in management and professional jobs, though not to the same degree as the men. Thirty percent are found in professional occupations, with significant representation in education (primary, secondary and post-secondary) and arts and design fields. Another 30.7 percent are in sales and office jobs, while 16.7 percent are in a variety of service occupations. Within the latter category, food preparation jobs are significant. One of every ten Japanese women in the area works in food preparation/serving jobs.

The high concentration in management and professional fields accounts for the relatively high incomes of Japanese households in the area. For all Japanese households (including Japanese alone or in combination with any other race), the median household income in 1999 was \$62,300.

Holidays Celebrated

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

Jan. 1	New Year’s Day
Jan. 8	Coming of Age Day
Feb. 11	National Foundation Day
Feb. 12	‘National Foundation Day’ observed
March 21	Spring Equinox
April 29	Shōwa Day
April 30	‘Shōwa Day’ observed
May 1	Constitution Memorial Day
May 4	Greenery Day
May 5	Children’s Day
July 16	Sea Day
Sept. 17	Respect for the Aged Day
Sept. 23	Autumn Equinox
Sept. 24	‘Autumn Equinox’ observed

Oct. 8	Sports Day
Nov. 3	Culture Day
Nov. 23	Labor Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 23	Emperor’s Birthday
Dec. 24	‘Emperor’s Birthday’ observed

Source: www.timeanddate.com

In addition, the following festivals and cultural events are of interest to the Japanese community:

Macon Cherry Blossom Festival (March)
 Georgia Japanese Speech Contest/Japan Challenge (February or March)
 Conyers Cherry Blossom Festival (March)
 Asian Cultural Experience in Valdosta (March)
 Asian Cultural Experience in Atlanta (July)
 Columbus International Festival (August)
 JapanFest in Atlanta (September)



Japanese Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations serving the Japanese Community.

Additional resources are available at www.atlantaregional.com and www.globalatlantaworks.com

ARTS/CULTURE

JapanFest Atlanta

www.japanfest.org

Note: Annual event in September features Japanese traditions and culture.

ASSOCIATIONS

Georgia Association of Teachers of Japanese

4484 Peachtree Road NE

Atlanta, GA 30319

404-261-1441

Contact: Masako Kanno, President

E-mail: masako.kanno@modlangs.gatech.edu

<http://japanese.gatech.edu/gatj/index.html>

Hanamizuki - Japanese Women's Garden Club

6220 Landover Circle

Morrow, GA 30260

Contact: Roxie Romine Shibata, President

770-961-5466

E-mail: rsnworld@aol.com

Japanese American Citizens League

Contact: Roger Ozaki, President

E-mail: president@jacl-southeast.org

www.jacl-southeast.org

Japan American Society of Georgia

233 Peachtree St., NE

Harris Tower, Suite 2222

Atlanta, GA 30303

Contact: James Foster, Executive Director

404-524-7399

404-524-8447 (fax)

E-mail: jasg@mindspring.com

www.us-japan.org/jasg

EDUCATION

Georgia Nihongo Gakko - Japanese Language School

Pebblebrook Circle

c/o Lindley Middle School

Mableton, GA 30059

Contact: Seiichi Ishiguro

770-941-0533

770-941-9888 (fax)

Seigakuin Atlanta International School

5505 Winters Chapel Road

Atlanta, GA 30360

Contact: Sumiko Tomizawa, Principal

770-730-0045

770-730-0245 (fax)

E-mail: seigakuin@aol.com

<http://www.seig.ac.jp/english/atlanta>

MEDIA

Atlanta Shimpō

2088 Cobb Parkway SE

Smyrna, GA 30080-2700

770-953-4359

E-mail: atl2086@mindspring.com

Note: Japanese community newspaper published twice a month

Axis Atlanta

P.O. Box 500295

Atlanta, GA 31150-0295

404-219-0509

E-mail: axistaka@msn.com

Note: Japanese community newspaper published monthly

Nippon Music Champ on WRAS 88.5

(Georgia State University radio)

P.O. Box 4048

Atlanta, GA 30302

404-651-2240

404-463-9535

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~www885/2001/index.html>

U.S. Japan Weekly

4126 Pleasantdale Road, Suite B-228

Doraville, GA 30340

678-969-0801

BUSINESS

Atlanta Soto Zen Center

1167C/D Zonolite Place

Atlanta, GA 30306

404-523-0040

E-mail: aszcz@mindspring.com

www.aszcz.org

Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta

3500 Lenox Road

One Alliance Center, Suite 1600

Atlanta, GA 30326

Contact: Shoji Ogawa, Consul General

404- 240-4300

404- 240-4311 (fax)

E-mail: ogawa@cgljapanatlanta.org

www.japanatlanta.org

Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia

245 Peachtree Center Ave., Suite 2201

Atlanta, GA 30303

Contact: Pakeshi Saito, Secretary General

404-522-0122

404-522-7524 (fax)

www.jccg.org

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)

245 Peachtree Center Ave. NE, Suite 2208

Marquis One Tower

Atlanta, GA 30303

Contact: Hirokazu Yamaoka, Chief

Executive Director

404-681-0600

404-681-0713 (fax)

<http://www.jetro.go.jp>

RELIGIOUS

Nipponzan Myohoji, Atlanta Dojo

127 Glenwood Ave. SE

Atlanta, GA 30316

404-627-8948

E-mail: atlantadojo@yahoo.com

Soka Gakki International - USA

5831 Riverdale Road

College Park, GA 30349

Contact: Samuel Kudamatsu, Vice

Executive Director Emeritus

770-996-5178

770-996-6978 (fax)

<http://www.sgi-atlanta.org/sgiatlanta.html>

Westminster Japanese Church

11450 Bowen Road

Roswell, GA 30075

Contact: Rev. Tsuneyoshi

770-594-1382

Contact:

E-mail: globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com

Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102 or download free from the ARC website at www.atlantaregional.com

Atlanta Regional Commission • 40 Courtland St., NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.463.3100 • www.atlantaregional.com and www.globalatlantaworks.com
Charles Krautler, Executive Director Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 62 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of region wide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • www.atlcf.org

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