GLOBAL ATLANTA SNAPSHOTS

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION

k o r e a n s

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.

Koreans in the Atlanta Economy



There are about 10,200 members of the Korean community, almost equally divided between men and women, working in the regional economy. About 3,300 hold jobs in either management or professional fields, while an equal number are found in sales and office occupations. Another 1,650 workers are in service occupations, with about 650 men and women

engaged in food preparation and serving. Other service occupations include building and grounds operations, in which over 300 Korean men are employed; 300 Korean women hold personal care jobs. Women also hold some 700 production jobs, half of which are to be found in textile and apparel manufacturing.

Overall, Korean households in the Atlanta area have a median income of just under \$43,000, according to the 2000 census, about 17 percent below the median for all metropolitan area households.

Korean Life in Metro Atlanta



The Korean community is clustered in four of the region's counties, with the largest concentration by far in Gwinnett County, home to about 7,500 members of this group. The only other counties in which Koreans are living in any significant numbers are Fulton (3,200 population), DeKalb (3,000) and Cobb (2,700). As the Korean community grows,

they are showing a preference to move to locations farther out into Atlanta's outlying suburbs.

Korean businesses are also moving away from the inner city; now they are moving to suburban locations and attracting a clientele of higher socio-economic status than before. The new stores are bigger (i.e. not just corner convenience stores) and the businesses include gas stations, dry cleaners and beauty supply shops. Moving beyond ownership of single stores, entire small shopping strips throughout DeKalb County are Korean-owned. As noted earlier, a number of Koreans, in Atlanta as elsewhere, have entered business as greengrocers. The Buford Farmers Market is Korean-owned, but there is concern within the community that a large grocery chain, with stores in New York and other cities, will be moving to Gwinnett County and creating a new economic challenge.

Koreans have been slow to participate in politics, with the language barrier cited as a significant factor. But that situation is changing, as the second generation of Korean-Americans, comfortable with the English language, takes its place in society. A Korean Young Democrats

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A PERSONAL STORY

Kyung J. "Kay" Kim was born in Korea, the daughter of a college professor. She started her own move towards a professional career by going into nursing. In 1974, she and her husband moved to the United States. Initially settling in Chicago, she continued her nursing education and earned her master's degree. That led to her taking the position of head nurse in the cardiac unit of a Chicago hospital. Sometimes working double shifts there, along with putting in hours at a second hospital, it was a grueling routine to maintain.

It was clear early on that Kay Kim was interested in entrepreneurial pursuits. Kim and her husband worked to save enough money to invest in a garment business. But after saving and scrimping, they placed their life savings in the business only to see it fail after a few years. The only alternative at that point was to return to double shifts of hospital duty in order to support her family. But Kim was saying to herself, "If I worked this hard, I think I can do anything." And, emulating some of her fellow nurses, she obtained a real estate sales associate's license.

In 1987, at the encouragement of a church friend who had moved here earlier, Kim and her husband moved to Atlanta. Again, she quickly found work in nursing, including weekend shifts at Northside Hospital and other stints at what is now Dunwoody Medical Center.

Kim drove the Buford Highway corridor and noticed all the new residential development taking place there. She decided to enter the real estate industry full time. She worked briefly for Century 21 and Northside Realty, then joined Re/Max in 1991, finding a core of clients from the community of her home country.

Soon after she joined Re/Max she received Top Sales Associate Awards for her individual offices, climbed to top rankings for Re/Max of Georgia throughout the 1990s, and in the year 2000 was awarded the highest honor in the Re/Max organization, that of #1 Team in Georgia, the United States and the world in commission and number of home sales. That same year the Atlanta Board of Realtors awarded Kay the prestigious Top Sales Team Award and also awarded her the Phoenix Award, which recognizes 10 years in a row in the Million Dollar Club as a member of the Atlanta Board of Realtors.

As she started in the real estate field, Kay Kim was concerned that her ethnic background and foreign accent would be a detriment to her success as a salesperson. Today, although her clientele does include people from many other ethnic backgrounds, her client base has grown to consist mostly of Americans (speakers of English as a first language).

Who are the Korean-Americans?



The Korean peninsula, jutting east of the Asian continent, has been heavily influenced by its larger neighbors, Japan and China. The Korean people, thought to be the descendants of various Mongol tribes who migrated out of Manchuria, are a very homogeneous society. Few non-Koreans have settled in the country; most Koreans speak the same language and share the same cultural traditions.

Koreans began arriving in the United States early in the 20th century. Leaving the kingdom of Choson ("Morning Calm"), some

8,000 sailed eastward between 1903 and 1920, most arriving in Hawaii. They were generally urban and had a relatively high rate of literacy. Converted to Christianity, many Koreans were encouraged to emigrate by American missionaries. The migration was also spurred by Japanese imperialism (Japan was then controlling Korean affairs), and by poverty.

Following the end of World War II, the Korean peninsula was partitioned at the 38th parallel. At this early stage of the Cold War, the People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) was established, under the influence of the Soviet Union and mainland China; below the 38th parallel, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was under the patronage of the United States. This uneasy arrangement lasted briefly; the Korean War (1950-1953) broke out, ending with a ceasefire and an unresolved political situation that continues a half century later.

Korean-Americans may have roots in the north or south, but under the prevailing political circumstances, recent arrivals to the United States are more likely to be from South Korea. With the end of the Korean conflict in combination with the 1965 Immigration Act, a second wave of Korean immigration to the United States occurred. From just 10,000 in 1960, the population jumped to 500,000 by 1985 and to just over 1 million by the 2000 census.

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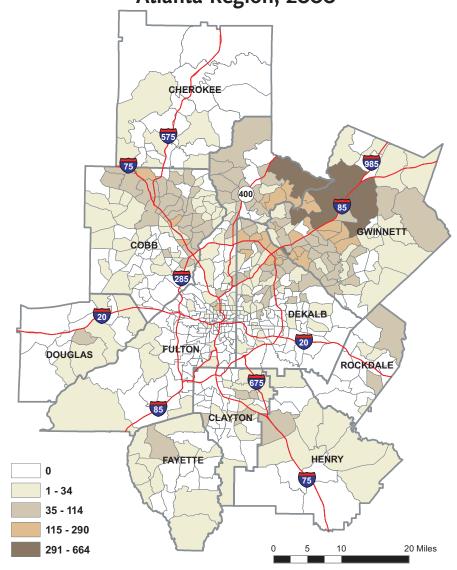
Koreans in the Atlanta Region: By the Numbers

Cherokee: 83 Clayton: 378
Cobb: 2,746 DeKalb: 3,043
Douglas: 100 Fayette: 182
Fulton: 3,225 Gwinnett: 7,499
Henry: 306 Rockdale: 173

Total 10-county Region: 17,465

- Gwinnett County is home to, by far, the largest population of Koreans, 7,499 as of the 2000 Census. Fulton ranks second with 3,225, followed by DeKalb (3,043) and Cobb (2,476).
- Gwinnett is home to 43 percent of the region's Koreans and 32 percent of the Koreans living in Georgia.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately 42 percent of Georgia's total population, but represents 75 percent of the state's Korean population.
- Similar to other populations from Asia (except the Vietnamese, with a large population residing in Clayton County), the vast majority of Koreans live in the northern portions of the region, northwest of I-85 in Gwinnett and northern Fulton.
- A total of 110,789 Asians living in the region, with 16 percent of the Asians living in the region born in Korea. The Koreans are the second-least populous (ahead of Chinese) ethnic community hailing from Asia, with Asian-Indians and Vietnamese each having greater numbers.

KOREAN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



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

Languages Spoken

The national language for all of Korea is Korean. The spoken language is coupled with a writing system called *han-gul*. Korean people take great pride in this writing system and recognize its invention each

year with a designated holiday. *Han-gul* is a phonetic alphabet consisting of 10 vowels and 14 consonants. Created in the mid-15th century, it is one of the most scientific writing systems in the world. Its method, while systematic and comprehensive, is easy to learn and print, and has helped to foster high literacy rates throughout the Korean peninsula.

안녕하십니까

此な台山の

이율이무엇입니까?

Annyong haseyo. **Hello**

Ch'oum poepkessumnida. I'm happy to meet you.

Sunghami ottoke toeshimnika?

May I ask your name?

A Symbol of Survival - Mugunghwa



The Rose of Sharon, or Mugunghwa, is the national flower of Korea. This flower, with which Korean people strongly identify, can endure harsh conditions and difficult times yet remain strong and vibrant. A tall shrub with pink, red, purple or white blossoms, it can be found growing in many older neighborhoods in the Atlanta region.

Who are the Korean-Americans? (cont'd)



These newer Korean arrivals generally were urban and came from the college-educated middle class. Many were trained medical professionals like physicians, nurses, pharmacists and dentists, while others were teachers or had held various administrative posi-

tions. As they resettled in the United States, particularly in major urban centers such as Los Angeles and New York, language barriers and discrimination limited their job opportunities. Formerly whitecollar workers in their home country, Korean immigrants became auto mechanics, radio and television technicians, gas station attendants, gardeners and janitors. Many others became owners of a variety of retail establishments: wig shops, restaurants, liquor stores and, most notably, greengrocers. Some similar patterns have been evident as Korean-Americans have made their new homes in the Atlanta region.

While some in the community believe that the number is much higher, the population of Korean-Americans in the Atlanta region was recorded in the 2000 census at 17,500.



Celebrated Holidays

New Year's

(1st day of first lunar month) January

Parents' Day

May

Folklore Day

January 1

Ch'usok

(15th day of the 8th lunar month)

Arbor Day April

Liberation Day

(national Independence Day)

celebrate the following:

August

Buddha's Birthday

(8th day of the 4th lunar month)

National Foundation Day October

Children's Day May

In addition to other Western holidays, the Koreans may

Han-gu

(Korean Alphabet Day)

October

Dano Festival

(5th day of the 5th lunar month) May



Korean Life in Metro Atlanta (cont'd)

group was formed in recent years and the community takes pride in the fact that one of its own is running for State Court Judge in Gwinnett County. Korean community weekly newspapers provide essential information and the estimated 200 or more Korean churches are seen by some as important, not only as places of worship, but also as sources of vital community information.

While the Korean community is making economic and social progress, newcomers in the community are in need of a range of services. For those needing English language instruction, assistance is provided by the Center for Pan Asians, located on

Buford Highway in Doraville and convenient to the Doraville MARTA station. People's Law School, Bridging the Gap, various churches offering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and the DeKalb Tech branch office on Buford Highway are some of the other agencies and institutions providing essential services to Koreans in need of assistance. Other problems confronting the community are an increase in DUI infractions and cases of domestic violence. In a domestic violence class for both men and women, it is noted that 1 out of 5 participants in the class are women.

What are Korean Customs and Culture?



Education and family are important in the Korean community. Individuals

are expected to be industrious and hard working. Age is respected in this community and elders are treated reverently. In addition to extended families, traditionally the norm, smaller, nuclear families are now common.

Korean names are composed of two parts — the family name and the given name. For example, Kim Hyong Sim has the family name of Kim and the given name Hyong Sim. In all, there are about 300 family names in Korea, but a handful are common. These include: An, Chang, Cho, Ch'oe, Chong, Han, Kang, Kim, Lee, Pak, Park, Yi, Yu and Yun. Many families in the United States will invert the order of their name to adhere to Western ways. In addition, many Korean-Americans will adopt "American" first names.

Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism are the traditional religions of Korea. Missionary activity has been strong for over a century and Christianity has gained a foothold. The majority of Korean immigrants are Christians of various denominations, including Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and Seventh-Day Adventists. There are more than 100 Korean Christian congregations in the Atlanta region and at least three Buddhist temples.

Two of the many traditional festivals celebrated in the Atlanta region are Ch'usok, the harvest festival, and the New Year. Ch'usok, held in August, is celebrated with food, folk dancing, and traditional costumes. In the United States, it has become incorporated by many families into Thanksgiving Day celebrations. The New Year is observed at the end of the 12th month of the lunar year. In Korea, New Year celebrations often continue for three days. As families gather during the New Year festival, young family members show respect for their elders and wish them good fortune. In return, the children are given advice for the coming year and rewarded with gifts of money, cakes or fruit.

Other festivals also highlight the importance of children and the family. On a baby's first birthday, all the gifts are put around the child and the one the child picks first is thought to signal his or her future career. Age is also honored by a celebration on one's 60th birthday called *huan'gap*. Family members may save for years for this special occasion.

Many people consider the "national food" of Korea to be Kimch'i (also spelled kim chee). Kimch'i is a kind of pickle made by combining Chinese cabbage with spices and other strongly flavored foods. It is generally served at every meal — even breakfast. Korean food is also composed of rice dishes mixed with spicy vegetables and meats such as chicken, beef, fish or pork. For special occasions, food such as *kimhap*, a heavily spiced version of sushi, or *pulkugi*, strips of marinated barbecued beef, may be prepared. Other common foods and beverages include dok (pounded rice cake), soups and barley tea. These dishes, many of which are hot and spicy, can be enjoyed at many Korean restaurants in the Atlanta region.

Korean Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Korean Community. Additional resources are available at www.atlantaregional.com

GENERAL INFORMATION

Asian-American Resource Center

6045 Atlantic Blvd. Norcross, GA 30071 e-mail: aarc@aarc-atlanta.org www.aarc-atlanta.org

Center for Pan-Asian Community Services

3760 Park Avenue Doraville, GA 30340 (770) 936-0969 www.cpacs.org e-mail: cpacs@cpacs.org

Consulate General of the Republic of Korea

229 Peachtree Street International Tower, Suite 500 Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 522-1611

Korean-American Coalition (KAC)

4675 Rivergreen Parkway Duluth, GA 30096 (404) 388-6560 www.kacatl.org

Korean Association of Greater Atlanta, Inc.

6930 Buford Highway Doraville, GA 30340 (770) 263-1888

Korean Directory of Atlanta

5312 Buford Highway, Suite B-3 Doraville, GA 30340 (770) 936-8994

ARTS

Asian Cultural Experience – Atlanta (Annual event during July)

www.asianculturalexperience.com

ASSOCIATIONS

Atlanta Korean Lions Club
P.O. Box 1, Atlanta, GA 30060
(404) 696-7697
(770) 315-3333
http://lionsofga18a.org/AtlantaKoreanLionsClub.htm

Korean-American Grocers Association (404) 624-1825

BUSINESS

Korea-Southeast U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs 781 Marietta Street, Atlanta, GA 30318 (404) 894-3199 e-mail: angela.levin@inta.gatech.edu

Korea Trade Center (KOTRA)

5 Concourse Parkway NE, Suite 2181 Atlanta, GA 30328 (770) 508-0808 www.kotraatl.com

Korean-American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia Korean Business Directory

5455 Buford Hwy., Suite B-203 Atlanta, GA 30340 (770) 452-0366 or (770) 452-0466

The National Association of Asian-American Professionals – Atlanta

(NAAAP) P.O. Box 620035 Atlanta, GA 30362 http://www.naaapatlanta.org

MEDIA

Korean Journal

5455 Buford Highway, Suite A-207 Atlanta, GA 30340 (770) 451-6946

Korean Southeast News

P.O. Box 29805 Atlanta, GA 30359 (770) 454-9655

Korean Television Network (KTN)

4675 Rivergreen Pkwy. Duluth, GA 30096 (770) 497-0015 www.ktn38.com

U.S. Korean Daily News

4325 Steve Reynolds Blvd. Norcross, GA 30093 (770) 300-0991 www.uskorea.com

RELIGIOUS

Korean Community Presbyterian Church of Atlanta

2534 Duluth Highway Duluth, GA 30097 (770) 939-4673 www.kcpcatlanta.org

Korean First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta

6175 Lawrenceville Highway Tucker, GA 30084 (770) 934-8282

Korean United Methodist Church

3205 Pleasant Hill Road Duluth, GA 30096 (678) 381-1004

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 Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.463.3100 • www.atlantaregional.com

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

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