

# KOREAN AMERICANS

## HISTORY

Koreans are one of the largest, fastest growing Asian groups in the United States. The immigration of Koreans in America goes back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. People who suffered the great economic and political turmoil throughout its long history immigrated to America in search of new life. <sup>1</sup> Korean immigration to the United States can be divided into three major waves:

- 1) *January 13, 1903* – Over 7,000 Koreans arrived in Hawaii as sugar plantation workers.
- 2) *Korean war (1950-1953)* – ‘The War Brides Act of 1946,’ the brides of U.S. servicemen arrived in the United States. – ‘The McCarren-Walter Act,’ skilled professionals and students immigrated in small numbers and became U.S. citizens.

### 1) *The Immigration Act of 1965*

Korean Americans had celebrated the 100th anniversary of Korean immigration to the United States in year 2003.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

➤ <sup>2</sup> The 2000 Census counted 1,076,872 Korean Americans, up from 798,849 in 1990. About one-tenth of these are adoptees who are or have been raised mainly by white families.

**Korean Americans make up 0.38% of the whole population**

male	female
480,418	596,454

- The 2000 Census also recorded an additional 151,555 Americans of part-Korean ancestry.
- Median age is 32-year-old.

- The average household size and family size are three people.
- The median household income in 1999 was \$40,037.
- Families below poverty level are numbered 31,830.

## SOME FACTS

- ✓ <sup>3</sup> Coming to the U.S. as adults, (for the most part when they are 20-40 years old) Korean Americans are predominantly first-generation immigrants who are monolingual and maintain their own cultural beliefs and attitudes.
- ✓ <sup>4</sup> For the most part, Koreans are concentrated in just a few states: California, New York, Hawaii, Illinois and Texas.

**<sup>5</sup> One hundred thousand Korean children have been adopted into the United States.**

<sup>6</sup> Though well educated (82% have a high school or higher level of education in Korea), because of poor English speaking skills and English comprehension, many regularly read Korean newspapers (53%) rather than English newspapers (13%) and approximately 3 out of 4 (72%) watch Korean videotapes on a regular basis.

- ✓ <sup>7</sup> The Korean community is still recovering from the burning of Los Angeles in the aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King verdicts.
- ✓ Church has been important community center, particularly for the first generation.

## HEALTH ISSUES

- ❖ <sup>8</sup> While cervical cancer is common in Korean American women, only about 50% of Korean American women age 18 and older have had a Pap test.
- ❖ While colorectal cancer is the second most common type of cancer among Korean American women and third among Korean American men, <sup>7</sup> screening practices such as digital rectal exam (DRE) and fecal occult blood tests (FOBT) are greatly underused.
- ❖ Stomach cancer incidence among Korean Americans is reported to be much higher than other ethnicities in the U.S.
- ❖ <sup>10</sup> Koreans have a high risk of having a Diabetes Mellitus Type II, Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease, Hepatitis B Virus, etc.

**<sup>9</sup> Korean Americans are ranked the lowest in having medical insurance compared to any other ethnic minority group.**

## RESOURCES

If you want more information on Korean American, please check out the following organizations and websites.

- Korean/Korean-American Communities and Organizations on the Web  
<http://www.geocities.com/mokkim/online.html>
- Korean American Coalition, Los Angeles  
(213) 365-5999  
<http://www.kacla.org/index.html>

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>9</sup> *Healthy Korean American Project (2005)*. Retrieved March 9, 2006, from <http://www.son.jhmi.edu/research/Korean%2DAmerican/>
- <sup>10</sup> Shin, K. R., Shin, C., & Blanchette, P. L. *Health and Health Care of Korean American Elders*. Retrieved February, 16, 2006, from <http://www.stanford.edu/group/ethnoger/korean.html>