

**MIGRANT INFORMATION CENTRE (Eastern Melbourne)  
Multicultural Equity and Access Program**

## Korean Cultural Profile

**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Koreans who live in the Eastern Region of Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients.

### Introduction:

- Korea is a country with unique cultural and artistic history where traditional oriental culture combines with economic and technological developments of the Western world.
- Korea is divided into Northern (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) and Southern (Republic of South Korea) regions.
- The South Korean community is increasing in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne.

### Migration:

- Koreans started migrating to Australia after the Korean War (1950-1953). In the following decades Koreans migrated primarily under the family and skilled migration streams. In Victoria over the past 20 years 6404 people have settled from Korea, with 73% settling under the skilled migration program. In the Eastern Region over the same time period 3034 people settled (47% of Victorian settlement) from Korea with 81% settling under the skilled migration program.
- In the past four years 984 people have settled in the Eastern Region from Korea, again primarily under the skilled migration program.

### Local Demographics: South Korean-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total South Korean-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of South Korean-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the South Korean-born population
City of Boroondara	505	22	3	6	3	12	2%
City of Knox	133	13	3	0	3	6	5%
City of Manningham	475	50	17	10	0	19	4%
City of Maroondah	74	0	5	0	0	0	0%
City of Monash	1015	66	34	3	0	18	2%
City of Whitehorse	617	32	13	9	6	15	2%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	42	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Eastern Region	2861	183	75	28	12	70	2%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- At the 2006 Census, there were 6,316 South Korean-born people in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The median age of the South Korean-born population is 27 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

- 26.9% of the South Korean-born population hold Australian Citizenship (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

## Language: Korean speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Korean at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Korean speaking people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Korean speaking population
City of Boroondara	461	20	6	6	0	12	3%
City of Knox	140	16	3	0	3	6	4%
City of Manningham	493	52	16	12	0	21	4%
City of Maroondah	59	0	0	0	0	0	0%
City of Monash	1091	69	30	3	0	15	1%
City of Whitehorse	626	30	14	6	6	15	2%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	22	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Eastern Region	2892	187	69	27	9	69	2%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- Korean is the official language of both North and South Korea.
- Koreans speak different dialects however they are similar enough that speakers/listeners do not have much trouble understanding each other.
- Korean language is written in a phonetic alphabet called Hangul which was originated in the mid-15th century. Hangul is comprised of ten vowels and fourteen consonants that are combined to form syllabic groupings.
- 26.2% of the South Korean-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not well' and 2.5% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 20.6% of the South Korean-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 35.5% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

## Religion:

- The values and beliefs reflected in Korean culture can be regarded as a blend of Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Christianity and other religions.
- Christianity was introduced in Korea by Catholic and Protestant missionaries. South Korea has a higher percentage of Christians than any country in East Asia.
- Many people outside of Christianity have been deeply influenced by the traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism. The branch of Buddhism most commonly practiced by Koreans is 'Mahayana Buddhism'.
- There are approximately forty Korean churches in Victoria and the majority of Koreans have a strong relationship with these churches.

- The South Korean-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions in the 2006 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008):
  - Western Catholic - 21.6% (1,360)
  - Uniting Church - 20.2% (1,276)
  - Presbyterian - 10.4% (657)
  - Buddhism - 8.0% (504)
  - Other religions – 8.5% (536)
  - No religion - 22.6% (1,423)

### **Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:**

- Growing old is viewed in a positive way in Korean culture and the society gives respect, reverence and honour for the wisdom that older people have acquired from lifelong experiences.
- In Korean culture there is more emphasis on “independence” and older adults with or without disabilities reside at home with their families. In many cases the eldest son has special duties and responsibilities to look after his parents. Caregivers are usually spouses, daughters-in-law, daughters and sons.

### **Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:**

- In general, views and attitudes towards people with disabilities and mental illness are negative. Some Koreans believe lifelong disability is a payback for something they did wrong in the past, the fault of an ancestor or the result of misfortune or bad luck.
- A child with an illness or disability is often cared for by parents who usually expect them to outgrow their illness/disability.
- People generally accept illness and disability due to ageing as a fact of life.

### **Attitudes to Death and Palliative Care:**

- Koreans honour their dead parents and grandparents on the anniversaries of their death, New Year’s Day and other holidays through worshiping their ancestors and offering food.
- Palliative care is a relatively new concept in Korean society and as a result there is lack of understanding and government support for palliative carers. The majority of palliative carers are volunteers and attract little attention by members of Korean society.

### **Customs / Values:**

- Koreans regard family as the basic social unit and consider harmony at home as the first step toward harmony in the community. The eldest son inherits the family leadership and wealth and has the responsibility of caring for his parents.
- The family relationship has been strongly influenced by Confucianism which emphasises independence and order within a system of prescribed roles for family members.
- Korean parents emphasise the value of education. They invest enormous amounts of money in preparation for entrance exams for secondary schools and universities. They would prefer to see their children employed in an office environment.
- Gift giving or food sharing is a common cultural practice in the Korean community and is considered to be a symbol of appreciation or friendship. Gifts are given and received with both hands and the gesture of giving is more important than the price of a gift.

## Communication Styles:

- Greetings and introductions tend to be formal with older people being greeted first. Touching between strangers or casual acquaintances, especially between people of the opposite sex is considered inappropriate.
- Based on Confucianism, Koreans are comfortable with prolonged silence and meaningful conversation is highly regarded. Direct expression of feelings is discouraged and assertiveness of children and individualism is not regarded as a virtue.
- Open criticism or public disagreements are not appropriate in Korean society. It is sometimes considered to damage a speaker's own reputation. Koreans will choose to be indirect while expressing their negative impressions or opinions.

## Naming Conventions:

- Koreans take pride of family heritage and Korean names are traditionally written with the surname first, followed by the given name.
- Use titles such as "Dr.", "Mr." and "Mrs." in order to demonstrate appropriate respect.
- A woman's surname remains after marriage in Korea. Marriage between people with the same surname and place of origin has been customarily forbidden.

## Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Traditional Koreans believe that illness can be attributed to the imbalance between the natural forces 'yin' and 'yang'. Such imbalance can lead to an individual becoming ill.
- Traditional medical/health-related practices include the use of herbs, acupuncture, cupping and moxibustion which is the burning of a soft material at specified spots on the skin.
- Diagnostic methods used are observing the patients, obtaining the histories of illnesses, taking their pulse, and then utilizing the metaphysical and cosmological means of treatment.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Hangul	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	안녕하세요	AN-YONG-HA-SE-YO
How are you?	어때십니까?	O-TTO-SHIM-NI-KKA?
Good Bye	안녕히 가세요	AN-NYONG-HI-GA-SE-YO
Yes	네	NE
No	아니요	A-NI-YO
Thankyou	감사합니다	KAM-SA-HAM-NI-DA

## Key Korean Festivals / Significant Dates:

Koreans officially follow the Gregorian calendar however some of the holidays observed are based on lunar calendar. There are several festivals/events which are held by the Korean Society of Victoria throughout Victoria.

- New Year's Day (Seol-nal) *1<sup>st</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> Lunar Month*
- Buddha's Birthday *8<sup>th</sup> day of 4<sup>th</sup> Lunar Month*
- Harvest Full Moon Festival (Chu seok) *15<sup>th</sup> day of 8<sup>th</sup> Lunar Month*
- Independence Movement Day *1st March*

\* To search for exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/calendar-australia/>

## Local services useful for Korean-born residents in the Eastern Region

### Settlement Services

Provide information, referral and casework for refugees and family migrants who arrived in the last five years.

Name	Address	Contact
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)	Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128	Ph: 9285 4888
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street Oakleigh, 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

### Aged Care & Disability Support Services

#### **Migrant Information Centre Aged Care & Disability Services**

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128

Ph: 9275 6905

The aged and disability team aims to increase access to aged care and disability services for CALD communities in the EMR through working with CALD communities to promote those services, provide information and referral and supporting organisations to provide culturally appropriate care. The team also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

### Senior Citizens Groups

For more information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6905.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Monash Korean Senior Citizens Club	<b>Monash</b>	Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond Street Oakleigh, 3166	10:00am – 3:00pm Wednesdays
Companion Club	<b>Whitehorse</b>	17-23 Nelson Road Box Hill, 3128	10:30am – 2:30pm Wednesdays

## **Other Support Services**

### **The Korean Society of Victoria Australia**

Address: 424 Kooyong Road, Caulfield South, 3150  
Ph: 9560 0512

The Korean Society of Victoria Australia aims to promote welfare of and friendship among Korean community members in Victoria and aims to promote mutual understanding between Korea and Australia. It also promotes ethnic identity among Korean society members through education in traditional culture.

### **Korean Welfare Association Victoria**

Address: 16 Oxford Street, Newport, 3015  
Ph: 9391 0195 Mobile: 0422 174 995

The KWAV aims to enhance Koreans' social inclusion at all levels of the Australian community and to identify gaps and barriers in services available to the Korean community. The KWAV also advocates on welfare issues for the Korean community and strengthens the Korean community's capacity to participate in the multicultural society of Victoria.

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