

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

Vietnamese Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Vietnamese people 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. This is an update of the profile in the Home and Personal Care Kit developed by the MIC in 2004.

Introduction:

There are over 150,000 Vietnamese-born people living in Australia including people of Chinese (usually Cantonese) ancestry and ethnic Vietnamese as well as a number of smaller minority groups including the Khmer and Hmong. As a result there are many different cultural influences on people who were born in Vietnam.

Migration:

- There have been three main waves of migration to Australia. The first wave began in 1975 and comprised mainly of an educated and privileged sector. The next commenced in 1978 with the large-scale exodus of 'boat people' from Vietnam, initially arriving directly in Australia, but later via refugee camps in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Hong Kong.
- From 1992 onwards, family reunions resulted in a third wave of arrivals.

Local Demographics: Vietnamese-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Vietnamese -born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Vietnamese -born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Vietnamese -born population
City of Boroondara	1083	198	49	31	15	67	6%
City of Knox	1060	186	57	31	14	65	6%
City of Manningham	877	185	61	24	9	57	6%
City of Maroondah	356	77	31	10	3	24	7%
City of Monash	2004	365	95	48	27	112	6%
City of Whitehorse	2005	418	152	83	22	169	8%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	48	10	0	0	3	3	6%
Eastern Region	7433	1439	445	227	93	497	7%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- There were 58,878 Vietnamese-born persons in Victoria at the last census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The median age of the Vietnamese-born population is 40 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Language: Vietnamese-speaking people in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Vietnamese at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Vietnamese speaking people aged 65 and over	Vietnamese speaking people aged 65+ as a % of the Vietnamese speaking population
City of Boroondara	1112	145	35	22	6	41	4%
City of Knox	935	76	29	12	5	29	3%
City of Manningham	596	85	25	7	17	35	6%
City of Maroondah	348	47	16	6	3	15	4%
City of Monash	2150	241	63	41	26	90	4%
City of Whitehorse	1602	243	87	45	17	99	6%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	41	9	3	0	3	3	7%
Eastern Region	6784	846	258	133	77	312	5%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- The national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese.
- At the 2006 Census, 78.4% of the Vietnamese population in Victoria spoke Vietnamese at home, 16.4% spoke Cantonese, 0.7% spoke Mandarin and 2.3% spoke only English (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Depending on their ethnic background, Vietnamese-born people may speak Chinese (usually Cantonese), English, French and Khmer.
- 34.1% of the Vietnamese-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 8.1% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 21.7% of the Vietnamese-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 32.5% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Religion:

- A large proportion of Vietnamese-born people are Buddhists (58.8%) (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 21.6% of Vietnamese-born people in Victoria identify as being Catholic (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Vietnamese also practice Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao.
- Vietnamese Buddhists may fast on specific days in the lunar calendar months. Catholic Vietnamese may fast on Good Friday and on Ash Wednesday.

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- Traditionally elderly parents are taken care of by the family.
- In Vietnam, elders were the leaders in families and had a strong influence in decision-making. In Australia the elders no longer have power, money or land, and become financially dependent on their children, creating a role reversal.
- Older Vietnamese people can become socially and culturally isolated from the younger generation.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Some Buddhist Vietnamese people may believe that they reap what they sow, or that disability is the result of misdeeds done in past lives.
- Traditionally, mental illness is a shameful thing within the Vietnamese culture. Mental illness is often feared or denied, and those who are ill are hidden away by their families until the family can no longer care for them.

Attitudes to Death and Palliative Care:

- For further information please see resource:

Palliative Care for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities: Cultural profiles to assist in providing culturally sensitive Palliative Care, 2009, Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/documents/pdaproject/Palliative_care_resource_for_workersAug2009.pdf

Customs / Values:

- Respect for elders is an important cultural value. Insults to elders or ancestors are very serious and can often lead to severed social ties.
- In general, the Vietnamese culture values respect for authority and avoidance of conflict.
- The traditional Vietnamese family is patriarchal; the mother is considered the home minister (noi tuong) and is responsible for family harmony, the family budget and family schedules.
- In the Vietnamese community the benefit of the family and community comes before the individual.
- Vietnamese people tend to be polite, guarded and non-confrontational. Disagreement may be expressed in the form of non-compliance, or not answering a question.
- Modesty and privacy are important cultural values.

Communication Styles:

- To show respect, Vietnamese people bow their heads and don't look a superior or elder in the eye.
- Generally Vietnamese women do not shake hands with each other or with men. Many may greet by bowing slightly to each other.
- It is disrespectful to touch another person's head. Only an elder can touch the head of a child.
- Vietnamese people may say 'yes' to indicate that they are listening, this may not indicate that they agree. If a Vietnamese person does not understand something they may also smile or laugh to hide this and mask their embarrassment.
- Speaking in a loud tone with excessive gestures is generally considered rude.

Naming Conventions:

- Vietnamese names are traditionally written with the surname first, followed by their middle name, with their given name last. Most names can be used for either gender.
- Vietnamese people prefer to be addressed, using their title. For example, Dr. Mr. and Mrs.
- Many Vietnamese people have also adopted western names.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Self-medication in the Vietnamese community is common.
- Many use traditional remedies in conjunction to western health care. Chinese medicines such as herbal remedies, tonics and massage are used. Acupuncture, pinching, pulling on the skin, rubbing oiled skin with the edge of a coin or spoon (cao gio), or cupping may also be used. These practices may result in bruises or marks.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Vietnamese	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	CHA `O Ô / Ã	CHJOW ONG / BAA
Yes	DA	ZAA
No	KNÔNG	KHYONG
Thankyou	CÁM ON	KOME -EARN

Key Vietnamese Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Vietnamese follow the lunar calendar.
- Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Easter from Thursday to Saturday, concluding with a family gathering on Saturday night. Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Christmas with a family gathering after midnight Mass.
- Chinese (Lunar) New Year *1st day of the 1st Lunar Month (Jan/Feb)*
- Ancestor's Day (Full moon Festival) *April*
- Commemoration of the fall of Saigon *30th of April*
- Doan Ngo *June*
- Wandering Souls Day *August*

* 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 Vietnamese-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
Boroondara Vietnamese Senior Citizens Group Inc.	Boroondara	533 High Street Kew, 3101	3 rd Saturday

Other Social Support Groups for Vietnamese Seniors

Name of Organisation & Contact Details	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Lac Viet Group Ashburton Support Services 296 High Street, Ashburton, VIC, 3147 Ph: 9885 3815	Boroondara	296 High Street, Ashburton, 3147	Tuesdays
Indo-Chinese Planned Activity Group City of Whitehorse Locked Bag 2 Nunawading Delivery Centre, 3131 Ph: 9877 6311	Whitehorse	Mountain View Cottage 25 Mountain View Rd, Nunawading	Mondays
Indo-Chinese Elderly Association in the Eastern Suburbs Inc.	Whitehorse	2 Holland Road, Blackburn South, 3130	Mon, Wed, Thurs & Sat

Other Key Contacts

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association

Address: 30-32 Lennox Street, Richmond North 3121

Ph: 9428 9078

Provide information about Vietnamese community. Specific services include Planned Activity Groups for older people from Vietnamese background in central area.

Indochinese Elderly Refugees Association Victoria

Address: Ground Floor, Suite B, 108 Elizabeth Street, Richmond 3121

Ph: 9429 1307

Have Community Partners Program funding. Cross Cultural resource "Caring for Vietnamese Elderly" available at www.icera.org.au.

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