

# Korean American Elders

## through the decades of the 1900s

Based on information in COHORT ANALYSIS AS A TOOL IN ETHNOGERIATRICS,  
 Yeo, et.al (1999) , a publication of the Stanford Geriatric Education Center  
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**Printer Friendly Version**

(Requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

Each Cohort webpage contains the following information:

<b>General Information</b>	<b>Decade of Interest</b>					<b>Related to the Age of Your Patient</b>			
						If the age of your patient is:			
	1900-20	1920-40	1940-60	1960-80	1980-present	55-65 yrs	65-75 yrs	75-85 yrs	85+ yrs

"After the immigration of a small number of ginseng salesmen and students who had graduated from missionary schools in Korea in the late 19th century, the first large group of Koreans to arrive in the U.S. were recruited to Hawaii to work in the sugar plantations between 1903 and 1905. Ninety percent ...were male; most were young and uneducated. About 40% were Christian, having been encouraged by missionaries to come to Hawaii because it was thought to be an easier place for Christians. These early immigrants established the foundation for the church as a primary institution in Korean American communities.

- "Korea became a protectorate of Japan in 1905, and in 1910 Japan annexed Korea; as a result Japan took over Korea's foreign affairs, and almost all of the immigration to the U.S. was stopped. Exceptions were picture brides and political asylum seekers. ....
- Over 500 political activists critical of Japan's annexation of Korea were allowed to immigrate to the U.S. as student refugees between 1910 and 1924. .... From that time until after World War II, the small Korean communities in Hawaii and the West Coast remained relatively stable in size except for the natural increase from the families that had been established. A major focus of these communities was independence of Korea from Japanese occupation. ....
- "After Japan was defeated in World War II, Korea was occupied again, this time by Russia in the North and United States in the South. It was not until the 1950s that immigration from Korea began increasing again. Two major groups were included.... Korean wives of U.S. servicemen stationed in Korea ... and ... war orphans. Because both groups were dependents of U.S. citizens, their situations were significantly different from previous, and many times, later immigrants, but both had their own unique adjustment and identity issues. The wives of servicemen are known to have had low levels of education and occupational skills; they also experienced high levels of family conflict and divorce. They tended to be isolated from both the U.S. dominant society as well as the Korean American communities due to the stigma of their status that implied a certain lifestyle prior to immigration. As a result they were cut off from significant sources of support. The Korean war orphans were adopted primarily by EuroAmerican families all over the country at relatively young ages, so they also were not connected to Korean American communities.
- "The remaining 2,500 who immigrated during this period were professionals, skilled workers, and students who settled in communities all over the U.S. and tended to be integrated into the mainstream. Hence they tended not [to] be major participants in the Korean American

communities that had been established by Korean immigrants in the earlier part of the century.

- "It was after the change in the immigration law in 1965, however, that the U.S. experienced the largest wave of immigration from the Korean peninsula, and those who came since then make up over 90% of the current population of Korean Americans. These newcomers were different from prior waves in that they came of their own volition, were not dependents of U.S. citizens, and intended to settle in the U.S. permanently. .... A major portion of immigrants since the mid 1970s have been "followers of children", older Koreans who come to the U.S. to be with their adult children. Over 8,000 over aged 60 immigrated from 1989-1992 alone.
- "One of the consequences of these different phases, motivations, and characteristics of immigration from Korea during the 20th century has been vast heterogeneity within the population of older Korean Americans.... The newcomers are less likely to speak English or be familiar with the American culture; 80% of Korean American elders said in 1990 they did not speak English well, and 53% were judged to be linguistically isolated. Aging women who came as wives of servicemen in the 1950s and 60s may have had very different experiences and faced different challenges than those who have lived in close-knit families in Korean American communities.

"While well developed communities exist in Los Angeles, the San Francisco/San Jose area, New York, Honolulu, and the Chicago area, older Korean Americans also live in small towns and cities throughout the country where there are few others from similar backgrounds. While they are more likely to live in multi-generational households with their adult children and grandchildren than the larger population of older Americans, some choose to live in senior housing instead. Most are Christian, and many are in families who earn their living from self-employment, but there are those from Buddhist backgrounds and many with a great variety of occupations" (Yeo, et al, 1999, pg. 41-42).

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Years	<b>Historical Events: Korean American Elders</b>	age 55-65	age 65-75	age 75-85	age 85+
1980 - present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased fractionalization among Koreans.</li> <li>Post-Rodney King decision focuses on Korean Americans.</li> <li>Number of women continues to outnumber men.</li> <li>Continued population influx:</li> <li>1980 pop. 354,600; 1990 pop. exceeded 800,000.</li> </ul>	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old	Young Old & Old	Old
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influx of Koreans after the 1965 Immigration Act.</li> <li>Women continue to outnumber men, 10:7.</li> <li>Educated, middle class immigrants.</li> <li>Stereotypes: liquor store operators and green grocers.</li> <li>Koreatowns emerge in urban areas.</li> </ul>	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old	Young Old & Old
1940 - 1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow move out of Chinatowns.</li> <li>Awareness of war brides and orphans as fallout from Korean War.</li> <li>Population change, more women to men - 10:7</li> <li>1950-53 Korean War; war brides and war orphans.</li> </ul>	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged	Middle Aged & Young Old
1920 - 1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lived in rural areas and Chinatowns.</li> <li>Lumped with Asian groups as "Oriental".</li> <li>Some families, and small communities in Hawaii and California.</li> <li>Population was 4 men for each woman.</li> <li>1924 - Immigration Act stops picture brides.</li> </ul>	Children	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults	Young Adults & Middle Aged
1900 - 1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laborers moved to West Coast of U.S.</li> <li>1906 - beginning of picture brides.</li> <li>Immigrants were 10 men for each woman.</li> <li>1902 - immigration to Hawaii</li> </ul>		Children	Children & Adolescents	Adolescents & Young Adults
Pre-1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited information about immigration to the U.S. is available; numbers of immigrants few or none.</li> </ul>			Children	Children & Adolescents

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