



Cristina Salvador/Press-Telegram

Cambodian residents of two apartment complexes prepare dinner together on small barbeques. The tenants gather in the courtyard several times a week to share food, often fish, and

cook outside. Although about 43 percent of Cambodians surveyed in Long Beach share apartment space with another family, another 43 percent live in single-family homes.

CAMBODIANS
IN LONG BEACH

BEYOND
THE
KILLING
FIELDS

សេដ្ឋានស្រុក លាភពិបាក

Fourth of six parts



Cristina Salvador/Press-Telegram

Nay Nourn stands in front of her home and rose garden in Long Beach, where she has lived since 1975. Her 10 college-educated children purchased the house for her.

Many Cambodians break the bonds of poverty, stereotypes to own their home

By Dorothy Korber

Staff writer

The common notion of a typical Cambodian home is colorful, if cramped: Three or four refugee families jammed into a small apartment, with travel posters of Angkor Wat taped to the walls and children everywhere.

But that image is belied by statistics culled from a recent Press-Telegram sur-

vey of 206 Cambodian adults in Long Beach, which found:

- The overwhelming majority of Cambodian households contain only one family.
- More than half the households have two or fewer children.
- As many Cambodian families live in single-family residences as live in apartment houses.

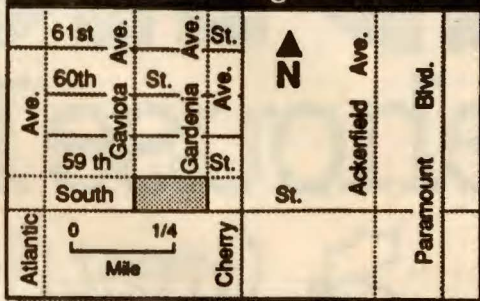
These results don't surprise Syed Rushdy, manager of housing and neigh-

borhoods for the city of Long Beach. Although some refugees still live in overcrowded apartments, he says many have moved on to more spacious quarters. He explains that the progression is natural and based on economics.

"It's a transition time for the Cambodian community," he says. "When they first came, many did live with three or four families together. But now their eco-

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**North Long Beach
Cambodian neighborhood**



Erwin de Groot / Press-Telegram

“In the market right now, usually I see two families going together to buy a house. They co-sign. They go where there is affordable housing ... but most like to stay in Long Beach.”

—Steve Sothear Vong,
real estate agent



Cristina Salvador/Press-Telegram

Two Cambodian girls, one playing dress-up in women's shoes, enjoy a snack of Doritos on the stoop of a crowded apartment complex off Martin Luther King Avenue in Long Beach.

Cambodians make the move to homeowners

FROM/A 1

conomic situation has improved, and they've spread out.

"They're hard-working people. They're becoming acculturated. This is a fluid thing, a phenomenon that applies to Central Americans and other immigrants as well."

The survey results also correspond to observations by Don Cillay, a city environmental health officer.

"We field complaints about overcrowding, and I'm not aware of any particular concern regarding Cambodians," Cillay says. "I don't think there is a special problem in the Cambodian community. I'd be aware of it if there was."

The survey, a random sample of 92 households, was scientifically designed to represent adult Cambodian refugees in Long Beach. Questions ranged from family size to personal anxiety level.

In the questionnaire designed for heads of households, 82 percent said that only one family lived in the home. Eleven percent answered that two families shared the same household, while just 7 percent said that three families lived together.

For the survey, "one family" included households with one grandparent present. Using this standard, the overall average was 1.2 families per household.

Apartment-dwellers account for 43 percent of the Cambodian households, equally matched by the 43 percent who reside in single-family dwellings. Another 13 percent live in duplexes.

Asked how many adults lived in the household, 19 percent answered "one." On the other end of the spectrum, 27 percent answered that four or more adults resided in the house. The average was 2.5 adults.

Nearly one in five said that there were no children younger than 18 in the house, while 14 percent said their household included five or more children. The average number of children per house was 2.4.

The size of the average Cambodian household — 4.9 people — is more than twice the citywide average for Long Beach, which is 2.3 people per home.

Nine out of 10 Cambodians are

renters, but the number who own their own homes is gradually increasing. Real estate agent Steve Sothear Vong, who is Cambodian, says that his business is good.

"In the market right now, usually I see two families going together to buy a house. They co-sign," Vong said. "They go where there is affordable housing. I see more families moving to North Long Beach, for example. Some might buy in Paramount, but most like to stay in Long Beach, to be near each other and the Asian businesses."

Many Cambodian refugees want to buy a home, according to Chantara Nop, a social adjustment counselor at United Cambodian Community Inc., a social service agency.

"They never have the renting experience in Cambodia," he says. "People own their home. Even if it is a small cottage, they are going to live peacefully by themselves."

Nop, who bought a house in central Long Beach, shares the belief of many Americans that owning a home makes more sense financially than renting.

"After 30 years, you think this is mine," he said. "If you rent for 30 years, you waste 30 years of money. You buy, it's yours."

Nop observes that refugees who came from the countryside in Cambodia are likely to band together in Long Beach, while those from cities tend to value their privacy and live alone. "People from the provinces flock together," he said. "They feel much safer."

The Press-Telegram survey also identified Cambodian neighborhoods by correlating addresses with Cambodian names from the telephone directory. The highest concentration was in an area roughly bounded by Seventh Street on the south, Pacific Coast Highway on the north, Obispo Avenue on the east and Long Beach Boulevard on the west.

Anaheim Street, site of bustling Little Phnom Penh, runs arrow-straight through the heart of Long Beach's Cambodian quarter.

Another pocket of Cambodians has settled in North Long Beach near

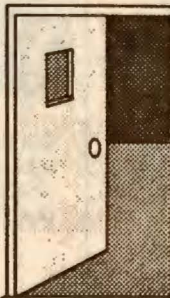
The roofs over their heads

A statistical profile of Cambodian households in Long Beach

Number of families in household:	Number of adults in household:	Number of children in household
One family* 82%	One 19%	None 19%
Two families 11%	Two 35%	One 16%
Three families 7%	Three 19%	Two 22%
Average: 1.2	Four or more 27%	Three 15%
* "One family" includes those with one grandparent present.	Average: 2.5	Four 14%
		Five or more 14%
		Average: 2.4
		Type of dwelling
		Single-family 43%
		Duplex 13%
		Apartment (less than 6 units) 28%
		Apartment (more than 6 units) 15%

Do you rent or own your home?
Own 11%
Rent 89%

The percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding off of the figures.



The statistics in these charts represent the adult population of Cambodian refugees in Long Beach. They are based on a random sample of 206 individuals who were interviewed by the Press-Telegram in 92 households.

Press-Telegram

South Street and Cherry Avenue. Others have moved to the westside, according to planner Rushdy.

As time passes, Rushdy says, refugees who excel financially will move into increasingly upscale neighborhoods.

"Economics is a big, big factor in choosing where you live," he concludes. "For immigrants, you try to protect your culture, but at the same time, you try to assimilate. For our Cambodian community, this is a foundation time, a time to build on."