

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

Indian Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Indian 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:

At the 2006 Census, there were 52,853 India-born persons in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008). They represent a wide range of languages, faiths and cultural groups. Overall the population is highly educated and proficient in English.

Migration:

- There have been three main waves of immigration.
- The first in the late 1960's, the second in the early 1980's and the third is still occurring as people of Indian descent immigrate to Australia from all over the world.

Local Demographics: Indian-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Indian-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Indian-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Indian-born population
City of Boroondara	2627	204	135	27	41	143	5%
City of Knox	2005	323	166	46	35	205	10%
City of Manningham	959	198	119	28	28	129	13%
City of Maroondah	597	74	62	13	13	66	11%
City of Monash	4705	456	268	80	75	370	8%
City of Whitehorse	2100	235	133	43	50	199	9%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	319	69	51	9	14	54	17%
Eastern Region	13312	1559	934	246	256	1166	9%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- These figures do not reflect those of Indian descent born in other countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa and from almost every country in the world.
- The median age of the Italian-born population is 33 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The largest population in the Eastern Region lives in the City of Monash with 4705 people at the last Census (ABS Census 2006).

Language:

- Around 35% of Victoria's Indian-born population (18,942 persons) speak only English at home (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 19.7% (10,409) speak Hindi at home, with the three largest populations residing in Monash, Boroondara and Knox (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Other languages include Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu and many more.
- 2.1% of the Indian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not well' and less than 1% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 46.9% of the Indian-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 13.5% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Religion:

The Indian-born population in Victoria identified with the following religions at the 2006 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008):

- Hinduism - 42.0% (22,222)
- Western Catholic - 28.0% (14,807)
- Sikhism - 11.7% (6,192)
- Anglican - 4.0% (2,140)
- Islam - 3.0% (1,598)
- Other religions - 6.6% (3,463)
- No religion - 2.2% (1,148)

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- Indian-born grandparents play an important role in rearing their grandchildren.
- Respect for the elders in Indian families is very important.
- Indian culture values older people being cared for by their children and grandchildren.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Mental illness is considered to be a taboo subject.
- Some Hindus may see disabilities as a result of past and current life actions, the result in one's Karma.

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:

- Religion is an important source of values, ideals and aspirations. It also provides a location for community life.
- The extended family often provides emotional and financial support.
- Relationships between siblings tend to be close. Often brothers live together for both financial and familial reasons. If parents and their children live apart after marriage, they continue to meet regularly throughout the year for religious ceremonies and other special occasions.
- Value is placed on independence and privacy in Indian culture.
- There is a desire in the Indian culture to 'save face'.
- Family issues are frequently discussed within the immediate family before seeking outside help.
- Modesty is highly valued in the Indian culture.

Communication Styles:

- Male/female handshaking is usually considered inappropriate. A handshake may be appropriate if a woman is educated or in a profession. Handshakes should be gentle, not firm.
- Feet are considered the lowest part of the body and should not come into contact with another person's feet.
- In India, shaking the head means agreement. If an Indian person in Australia shakes their head it may be in agreement or they may be adopting the western action for a negative response.
- Indians see punctuality as a sign of respect.
- Simple courtesies or services may not be greeted with much expressed appreciation, but abundant gratitude may be expressed for favours Indian people see to be important.

Naming Conventions:

- Naming conventions in India vary between ethnic groups, castes and regions.
- Indian people who worked for the British when India was a British colony chose three names. Their first name was their place of origin, the second name was their father's name, and the third name was their given name. Due to the length of Indian names, the British only allowed the Indians who worked for them to write their given name in full, and the rest of their names as initials. For example K. S. Ramamurthy.
- The ruling class Indians under the British, made their names more British by keeping Indian names, but shortening them to a few syllables.
- Indians who were less influenced by the British kept their traditional naming conventions. Their names might be one given name, or various combinations of given name, father's name, mother's name, place of origin or village name, or caste name.
- Many Indian-born Australians have adopted western naming conventions.
- Indian people often prefer to be addressed using their title (Dr., Mr., Mrs. etc.) and family name, although individual preferences may vary in this respect.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Health professionals are seen as minimising discomfort and are therefore welcomed in the family home by the Indian-born population.
- The traditional system of medicine is known as Ayurveda. Traditional systems of medicine practiced in India and ancient Sri Lanka place great emphasis on treatment by the use of herbal medicines, aromatherapy, nutrition, massage and meditation to create a balance between the mind and body.
- Some people rely on herbal remedies as the principal means of preventing and curing illness.
- There is a general acceptance of western medicine practices by the Indian community.

Key Indian Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Republic Day *26th of January*
- Independence Day *15th of August*
- Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday *2nd of October*

* For other significant dates related to religious observances refer to the Hindu and Sikh religious profiles.

* 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 Indian-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.

The Gujarati Association of Victoria

Address: PO Box 1112, Blackburn North, 3130

Ph: 0411 604 709

Provides support and services for older people from a Gujarati background.

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
Fijian / Indian Senior Citizens' Association	Knox	Bayswater Primary School Birch St Bayswater, 3153	2:00pm – 5:00pm 2 nd Sunday of each month
Anglo Indian Australasian Association	Monash	Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond St Oakleigh, 3166	2:00pm – 10:00pm last Sunday of the month
Indian Senior Citizens' Association of Victoria Inc.	Monash	Mt Waverley Youth Centre 45 Miller Cres Mt Waverley, 3149	11:00am – 3:00pm 2 nd Saturday of each month

Other Support Services

Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria

Address: 3/85 Foster Street, Dandenong, 3175

Ph: 1800 342 800

Provides cultural and social activities for the Indian community in Victoria. Also help members liaise with government organisations.

Indian Subcontinent Cultural and Community Welfare Association

Address: PO Box 39, Endeavour Hills, 3802

Ph: 9708 1062

Provides support and services to older people, women and youths from the Indian community in Victoria. Also holds cultural and social events.

Sangam Community Association

Address: 4-8 Ormond Road, Moonee Ponds, 3039

Ph: 9370 1080

Provides support and services for older people from the Indian community.

References:

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Collins, J., Mondello, L., Brehency, J. & Childs, T., 2001, *Cosmopolitan Melbourne: Explore the World in One City*, Big Box Publishing Pty Ltd, Sydney, pp. 209-226.

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services ACT, 2003, *The Cultural Dictionary*, viewed 20 April 2010, <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/5282/Cultural_Dictionary.pdf>, pp. 83-85.

Kemp, C. & Rasbridge, L., 2004, *Refugee and Immigrant Health: A handbook for health professionals*, University Press, Cambridge, pp. 186-194.

Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), 2008, *Seniors from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, Demography on the 50 years plus Victorian population from the 2006 census, Victoria, Australia.

Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008, *The India-Born Community in Victoria*, Fact Sheet No. A-28, viewed 20 April 2010, <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/indiafs-24apr08.pdf>>.

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