

**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 2011 Census, there were 111,785 India-born persons in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013). This is an increase of 111.5% (58,933 persons) since the 2006 census. 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.
- The majority (73.2%) of Indian-born in Victoria arrived in Australia between 2001 and 2011. Only 12.7% of the Indian-born in Victoria arrived in Australia prior to 1991 and 10.9% arrived between 1991 and 2000 (VMC 2013).
- The City of Monash has the fifth largest Indian-born population in Victoria, and the greatest in the eastern region of Melbourne.

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 | 3,528 | 230 | 185 | 84 | 50 | 549 | 15.6% |
| City of Knox | 3,038 | 463 | 227 | 134 | 67 | 891 | 29% |
| City of Manningham | 1,312 | 203 | 172 | 78 | 36 | 489 | 37% |
| City of Maroondah | 1,352 | 90 | 76 | 46 | 19 | 231 | 17% |
| City of Monash | 7,325 | 668 | 355 | 228 | 112 | 1,363 | 18.6% |
| City of Whitehorse | 3,512 | 269 | 208 | 110 | 58 | 645 | 18.4% |
| Shire of Yarra Ranges | 487 | 83 | 72 | 32 | 28 | 215 | 44% |
| Eastern Region | 20,554 | 2,006 | 1,295 | 712 | 370 | 4,383 | 21.3% |

(ABS Census 2011)

- 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 30 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013).
- The largest population in the Eastern Region lives in the City of Monash with 7,323 people at the last Census (ABS Census 2013).

Language:

- 22% of Victoria's Indian-born population (24,585 persons) speak only English at home (VMC 2013).
- Just over three quarters (76.9%) of the Indian-born community in Victoria speak a language other than English at home. The most common of these languages is Hindi, followed by Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu and many more.
- 3% of the Indian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not well' and less than 1% spoke English 'not at all' (VMC 2013).
- 51.2% of the Indian-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 21.9% as 'well' (VMC 2013).
- Out of the 7,322 Indian-born persons in the City of Monash, 21% speaks English only, 59.1% speak English 'very well', 16.2% speak English 'well', 2.3% speak English 'not well' and 0.5% speak English 'not at all'

Religion:

The Indian-born population in Victoria identified with the following religions at the 2011 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013):

- Hinduism - 44.6% (49,828 persons)
- Sikhism - 21.1% (23,590 persons)
- Western Catholic - 18.3% (20,439 persons)
- Islam - 3.1% (3,480 persons)
- Anglican - 2.1% (2,349 persons)
- Other religions - 5.8% (6,524 persons)
- No religion - 2.4% (2,675 persons)

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:

- Death and cancer may be taboo words for some
- Be considerate of individual needs and preferences, as cultural and religious care before and after death may not pertain to all individuals
- Do not be hesitant to address considerations in end of life directly, for example, you may wish to ask *'What is important for us (care staff) to know about your faith or spiritual needs?'* as well as *'How can we support your needs and practices?'*
- 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](http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/documents/pdaproject/Palliative%20care%20resource%20for%20workersAug2009.pdf)

Belief about Organ and Tissue donation:

- For followers of Hinduism among the Indian community, Hindu values are in conformity with organ and tissue donation and no Hindu sacred text explicitly prohibits organ donation. The selfless giving, Daana, taught in Hinduism is supportive of organ and tissue donation (For a full ruling go to http://www.donatelife.gov.au/sites/default/files/Hindu_Council_long_ruling_approved_250113.pdf)
- Other religious and cultural views can be read at www.donatelife.gov.au

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. If unsure, it is advisable to wait for the Indian person to initiate the move
- 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 | <i>26th of January</i> |
| • Independence Day | <i>15th of August</i> |
| • Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday | <i>2nd of October</i> |

* 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: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/government-building-social-cohesion/calendar-of-cultural-and-religious-dates>

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 & Disability Services

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

Ph: 9275 6901

Email: wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au

Website: <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/agedcare.htm>

The Access & Support Program provides short term support to help people access aged care and other services so they can stay living at home independently. The Program provides information, referral, support and monitoring. The aged and disability team generally 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: Blackburn North, 3130

Ph: 0411 604 709

Email: admin@gav.org.au

A non-profit cultural organisation promoting the Gujarat (state in India) cultural heritage. 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 | Monash | Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond St | The monthly programme and activities are updated regularly for each month. Go to https://angloindianassociationvic.wordpress.com/ |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|---|
| Association of Victoria | | Oakleigh, 3166 | for more information. Regular meetings last Sunday of the month, 2:00pm – 10:00pm |
| 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 |
| Indian Senior Citizens Planned Activity Group | Monash | Ashwood Centre, 21a Electra Avenue, Ashwood, 3147 | Every Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm |
| Clayton Indian Seniors Forum | Monash | Clayton Hall, 264 Clayton Road, Clayton, 3169 | 3 rd Saturday of each month |
| Camberwell Indian Seniors Forum | Boroondara | Community Centre of Shirdisai Sansthan, 32 Halley Avenue, Camberwell, 3124 | 4 th Saturday of each month |

Other Support Services

Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria

Address: 3/85 Foster Street, Dandenong, 3175

Ph: 1800 342 800

Email: president@fiav.asn.au

Website: <http://www.fiav.org.au/>

A central hub that brings together various regional, cultural and lingual Indian groups under one umbrella. The organisation provides cultural and social activities for the Indian community in Victoria. The unified community also helps members liaise with government organisations more effectively.

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.

References:

Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2013, *The India-Born Community in Victoria: 2011 Census*, Fact Sheet No. A-2, viewed 4 February 2015, <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/documents/2013/Censusfactsheetscommunityprofiles/02-india.pdf>>.

Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2013, *Victorian Community Profiles: 2011 Census Indian Born*, viewed 10 March 2015, <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/indiafs-24apr08.pdf>>.