

## MIGRANT INFORMATION CENTRE (Eastern Melbourne)

# 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 2016 Census, there were 169,802 India-born persons in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2016). This is change of 51.9% (58,015 persons) since the 2011 census. The Indian community 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.
- Only 10.8% of the India-born in Victoria had arrived in Australia prior to 1996, 51.3% arrived between 1996 and 2010 and 34.9% arrived between 2010 and 2016 (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).
- 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	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 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	4,050	237	204	71	37	312	7.7%
City of Knox	3,934	480	228	122	44	394	10%
City of Manningham	1,754	212	165	77	23	265	15.1%
City of Maroondah	1,925	118	99	42	11	152	7.9%
City of Monash	9,617	683	385	200	87	672	7.0%
City of Whitehorse	4,935	298	213	102	41	356	7.2%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	761	95	75	28	11	114	15%
Eastern Region	26,976	2,123	1,369	642	254	2,265	8.4%

(ABS Census 2016)

- 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 Indian-born population is 33 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).
- The largest population in the Eastern Region lives in the City of Monash with 9,617 people at the last Census (ABS Census 2016).

## Language:

- 16.2% of Victoria's Indian-born population (27,482 persons) speak only English at home (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).
- Over three quarters (83.8%) of the Indian-born community in Victoria speak a language other than English at home. The most common of these languages is Punjabi, followed by Hindi, Malayalam, Gujarati, Telugu and many more.
- 3.4% of the Indian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not well' and less than 1.4% spoke English 'not at all' (ABS Census 2016).
- 56.3% of the Indian-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 22% as 'well' (ABS Census 2016).

## Religion:

The Indian-born population in Victoria identified with the following religions at the 2016 Census:

- Hinduism – 47.1% (79,954 persons)
- Sikhism – 23.4% (39,713 persons)
- Western Catholic – 13.7% (23,275 persons)
- Islam – 3.3% (5,664 persons)
- Other religions – 5.8% (9,893 persons)
- No religion – 3.1% (5,345 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), [https://miceastmelb.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Palliative\\_care\\_resource\\_for\\_workersAug2009.pdf](https://miceastmelb.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Palliative_care_resource_for_workersAug2009.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. Other religious and cultural views can be read at: <https://donatelife.gov.au/resources/multicultural-and-faith-communities>.

## 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 *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.

## 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, Vic 3128 <u>and</u> 18 Bond Street, Ringwood Vic 3134	Ph: 9285 4888 (Box Hill) 9870 1351 (Ringwood)
New Hope Foundation	Grattan Gardens Community Centre, 40 Grattan Street, Prahran Vic 3181	Ph: 9510 5877

### 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](mailto:wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au)

Website: <http://miceastmelb.com.au/our-services/elderly-people-younger-people-disabilities-carers/>

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**

Ph: 0425 616 456

Email: [president@gav.org.au](mailto:president@gav.org.au)

Website: <http://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 6901.

<b>Name of the Club</b>	<b>LGA</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Fijian / Indian Senior Citizens' Association	<b>Knox</b>	Bayswater Primary School Birch St Bayswater Ph: 9849 1023
Anglo Indian Australasian Association of Victoria	<b>Monash</b>	P.O Box 2206, Oakleigh, Vic 3166 (Postal only) Ph: 9551 1598
Indian Senior Citizens' Association of Victoria Inc.	<b>Monash</b>	Mt Waverley Youth Centre 45 Miller Cres Mt Waverley Ph: 9578 3549
Clayton Indian Seniors Forum	<b>Monash</b>	Clayton Hall, 264 Clayton Road, Clayton
Camberwell Indian Seniors Forum	<b>Boroondara</b>	Sai Temple Hall, 32 Eddy Ave, Camberwell Ph: 9543 6615

### **Other Support Services**

#### **Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria**

Address: 3/85 Foster Street, Dandenong, 3175

Ph: 0400 226 793

Email: [president@fiav.asn.au](mailto: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

Email: [msparkar@iinet.net.au](mailto:msparkar@iinet.net.au)

The aims of the association are to provide facilities for learning the languages and culture of the Indian subcontinent, to provide assistance to new migrants and to provide community based services to the elderly, women and youths.

**References:**

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, Census 2016, viewed 6 Jan 2021, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/2016%20Census%20Community%20Profiles>>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, Census of Population and Housing, viewed 1 May 2015, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/census>>.

Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria, 2016, Fact Sheet No. 35, The Indian-Born Community in Victoria, Victoria, Australia.

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>>.