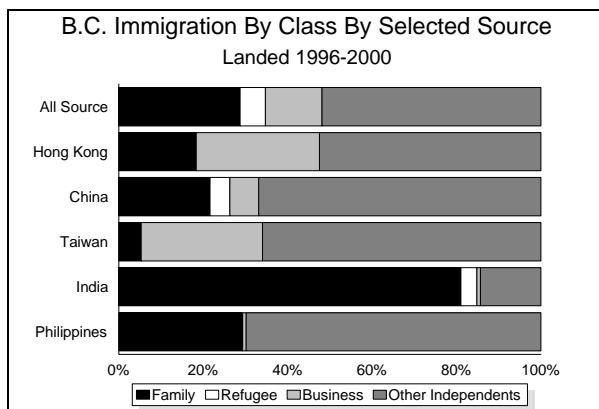


## Special Feature: Immigrants from India

**India has always been an important source of immigrants to Canada. It has been the top source country among others including Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. However, immigrants from India have some characteristics that are distinct from immigrants from other major sources...**

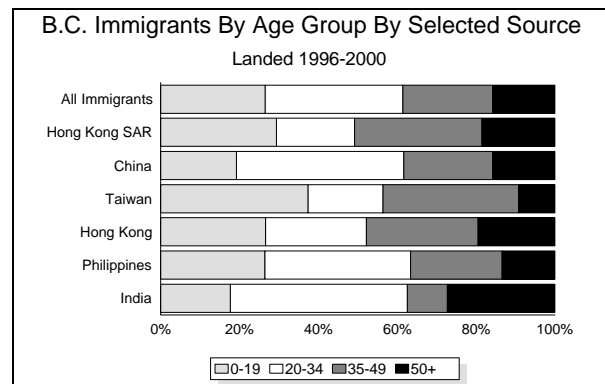
Over the past two decades, India has been ranked within the top three source countries of immigrants to Canada and British Columbia. It was even the top source for B.C. for many years during the early 1980s. During the period 1980-2000, there were more than 77,000 Indian immigrants who landed in B.C., representing 12 per cent of all immigrant landings in the province. Although the majority of recent immigrants to the province were from Asia, immigrants from India collectively exhibited some unique social-demographic characteristics when compared to those who came from other Asian countries.

Most Indian immigrants to B.C. were admitted under the Family Class. Recent immigration statistics show that during the last five years between 1996 and 2000, family immigration accounted for 81 per cent of all landings from India. This proportion was significantly higher than the overall average of 29 per cent family immigrants from all sources. For immigrants from other major Asian countries, family classes generally accounted for no more than 30 per cent of total landings.



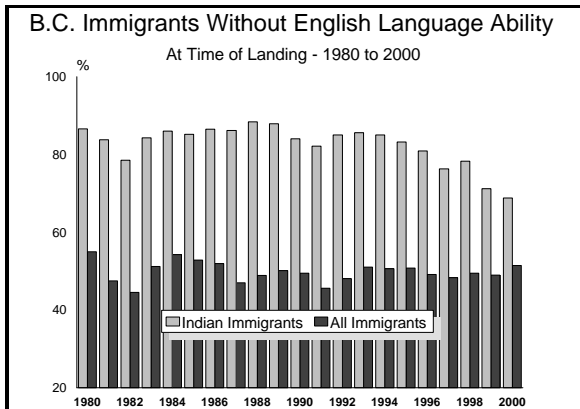
As a result of the high percentage of family related landings, a high proportion of Indian immigrants were sponsored parents, grandparents or spouse/fiancés. The overall landings to B.C. showed a more balanced proportion between spouses/fiancés, children, individuals, and parents/grandparents. Also, since fewer Indian immigrants came under the business and independent skilled worker classes, a relatively smaller proportion of Indian immigrants were in the 35-49 age group. Furthermore, a smaller proportion of children under the age of 19 years was observed due to the low inflow of mid-aged families in the independent classes that tended to have accompanying children.

During 1996-2000, the age distribution of Indian immigrants was 18 per cent aged 0-19, 45 per cent aged 20-34, 10 per cent aged 35-49, and 27 percent aged 50 or older. This is quite different from that of the overall landings of 27%, 35%, 23% and 16%, respectively.

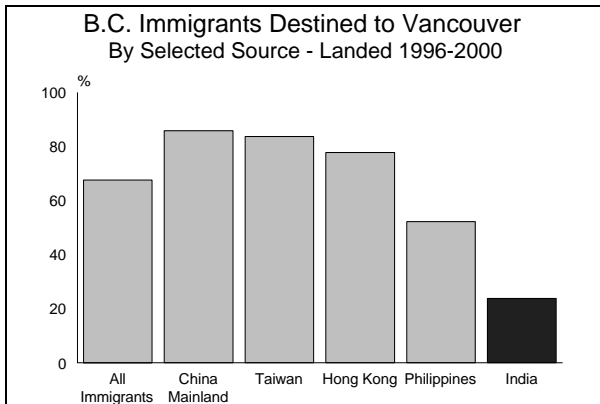


Most Indian immigrants speak a mother tongue of Punjabi or Hindi. At time of landing, a majority of them did not possess any Canadian official language ability. During 1996-2000, about three of every four immigrants from India did not speak, write or understand English. This proportion was considerably higher when compared to only about half of the overall landings which had no English language ability. However, recent Indian immigrants tended to have better English proficiency than those who came earlier. The proportion that has no English language ability

has decreased noticeably over the last few years.



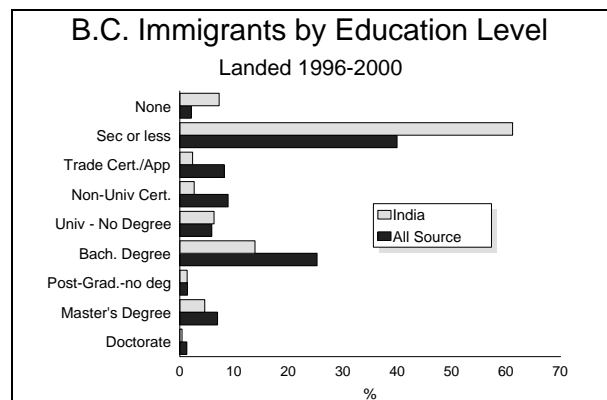
Unlike many other Asian immigrants who tended to settle near the cities of Vancouver or Richmond, immigrants from India were relatively more likely to choose to live outside those areas. During 1996 to 2000, only 24 per cent of Indian immigrants reported Vancouver as their intended destination compared to 68 per cent of the overall landings. The favorite destinations in B.C. for Indian immigrants were Surrey and Abbotsford. During that period, about one-third of Indian immigrants chose to settle in Surrey, and 11 per cent were destined for Abbotsford. Indian Immigrants were also more likely to report an intended destination outside the lower mainland areas.



The choice of settlement areas could also be related to the fact that a relatively higher proportion of Indian immigrants was engaged in the agricultural and manufacturing industries. Statistics from the 1996 Census show that a comparatively higher percentage of the B.C. immigrant population with a South Asian eth-

nic background worked in a farming, manufacturing or processing related occupation. Recent immigration figures also indicated that immigrants from India were relatively more likely to report an intended occupation of farm laborer.

More than 30 per cent of Indian immigrants who landed during the last five years possessed post secondary education at time of landing. Approximately 60 per cent have secondary or lower education. Generally speaking, the education level of immigrants from India tended to be lower than the average level of all immigrants to the province. This could have been due to the fact that Canada has not been able to attract many immigrants from India in the skilled worker or business classes, and that a high proportion of Indian immigrants was in the Family Class where educational qualification was not part of the selection/admitting criteria.



Given that enabling family reunification has always been the main theme in Canadian immigration policy, it is likely that India will continue to be one of the most important sources of immigrants to Canada and British Columbia. According to the trend observed in the past two decades, B.C. will continue to receive a steady proportion of Indian immigrants who come to Canada.