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Socio-Economic Aspects of Indian Immigrants in United States and Canada: Implications and Future Directions

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In the recent past, there has been a substantial flow of immigrants from India to the U.S and Canada. About 20 per cent of immigrants to U.S held a bachelor's degree or higher and high levels of education have to become a productive segment of the population. Out of the 72 per cent work force, 44 per cent are employed in managerial and professional jobs including computing, scientific research and medicine. The Canadian government remains committed to investing in economic and social development through immigration. This was in tune with the government's long-term objective of moving gradually to immigration levels of approximately 1 per cent of Canada's population, keeping in mind Canada's absorptive capacity. Canada faces serious demographic

INTRODUCTION

Immigrants are persons lawfully admitted for permanent residence in a country. They either arrive with immigrant visas issued abroad, or adjust their status from temporary to permanent residence. During the past two decades, there has been a substantial flow of immigrants from India to the United States (U.S) and Canada. In 1996, the total legal immigrants admitted were 915,900 and in 2001, 70,000 Indians immigrated to the U.S. (Arora, 2002). U.S. census data indicate, in fact, that the number of immigrants from India doubled from 1990-2000, growing from 815,447 or 0.3 per cent of the total U.S. population in 1990 to 1.6 million or 0.6 per cent in 2000. These immigrants tend to be well educated; census data show that in 1990 about 20 per cent held a bachelor's degree or higher. High levels of education have enabled them to become a productive segment of the population, with around 72 per cent participating in the work force. Of these labour force participants, 44 per cent are employed in managerial and professional specialties including computing, scientific research and medicine (Embassy of India in Washington, D.C., 2002). Of the total change in immigration in recent past, the attributed

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challenges in the years ahead. By 2011 immigration will likely account for all net labour force growth and by 2031 it will account for all population growth.

categories were the immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, family-sponsored preference immigrants, employment-based immigrants, refugees and asylees, diversity immigrants, and other categories of immigrants.

Canada is a nation of immigrants. Since mid-1800's, the country has seen successive waves of new immigrants. While certain periods saw greater numbers of immigrants than others, there have always been new arrivals to enrich the country. In the era following World War II, Canada had emerged as a major industrial power and as such, began to require an increasing amount of labour resources. This new reality prompted the government to re-evaluate its outdated immigration laws, which heavily restricted immigration from countries other than those that belonged to the "old" Commonwealth, the United States and Europe. By the early 1960's, many of the previous restrictions based on race, colour, or national origin had been lifted, and in 1967, the Government adopted a points-based immigration system. Under the new system, points were assigned up to a fixed maximum in each of several categories, such as education, employment opportunities in Canada, age, the individual's personal characteristics, and degree of fluency in English or French. 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. During the period 1980-2000, there were more than 77,000 Indian immigrants who landed in British Columbia (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 socio-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 between 1996 and 2000, family immigration accounted for 81 per cent of all landings from India.

FEATURES OF RECENT LEGAL IMMIGRATION IN U.S

The primary features of recent legal immigration includes the following:

1. Increase in Admissions of Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens

Immigration of immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, which is not subject to numerical limit, increased rapidly. Immediate relatives accounted for approximately the same.

2. Increase in Family-sponsored Preference Admissions

The number of aliens admitted under the family-sponsored preference categories has increased. Since demand for family sponsored preference visas exceeds the supply, year-to-year fluctuations in admissions in this category result primarily from changes in the annual limits, not fluctuations in applications. Family-sponsored preferences accounted for about one-third of all admissions in recent past.

3. Increase in Employment-based Admissions

Employment-based admissions remained below the annual limit but increased considerably. The largest increases in employment-based immigration occurred among priority workers (first preference) and skilled workers and professionals (third preference excluding unskilled workers).

4. Continuation of Geographic Residential Concentration

Recent Immigrants intended to settle in relatively few states and urban areas. The top six states of intended residence for immigrants admitted since 1971 were California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois. The five leading metropolitan areas of intended residence included New York City, Los Angeles-Long Beach, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, DC.

5. U.S. Immigration Programme

U.S. law gives preferential immigration status to persons with a close family relationship with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, persons with needed job skills, or persons who qualify as refugees. Immigrants in other categories usually account for relatively few admissions.

6. Annual Cap on Immigration

The Immigration Act of 1990 created a flexible annual cap with a worldwide limit of 675,000 immigrants (excluding refugee and asylee adjustments and certain other categories). The cap includes 480,000 family-sponsored immigrants, 140,000 employment-based immigrants, and 55,000 Diversity immigrants.

IMMIGRATION IN U.S. SUBJECT TO THE NUMERICAL CAP

The following categories of immigrants are subjected to numerical cap:

1. Preference Immigrants

The Immigration Act of 1990 maintained a preference system for legal immigrants rooted in family relationships and job skills. The Department of State is responsible for determining the annual limits and visa allocation. The Department of State calculates the number of visas for the preference categories each year based on usage during the preceding year, and within a minimum of 3,66,000 visas. The per-country limit is also calculated annually and is limited to 7 per cent of the annual total; the limit for dependent areas is 2 per cent of the annual total. In addition to increasing the level of employment-based immigration, the Immigration Act of 1990 allotted a higher proportion of visas to highly skilled immigrants. Prior to the 1990 Act, 27,000 visas were issued to highly skilled immigrants and their family members and 27,000 were issued to certain skilled workers, unskilled workers, and their family members. Recently, the number of visas available to skilled immigrants and unskilled workers has increased considerably.

2. Family-sponsored Immigrants

The demand for family sponsored preference visas in recent past exceeded the annual limit for all preferences. The distribution of admissions by preference was thus similar to the distribution of the annual limits. The majority of family-sponsored preference immigrants were spouses and children of alien residents (the second preference). This category accounted for 54 per cent of all family-sponsored preference immigrants in 1994 and 62 per cent in 1996 due to an increase in the annual limit. The next largest category in 1996 was brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens and their families (fourth preference), which represented 22 per cent of all family-sponsored preference immigrants. Married sons and daughters of U.S. citizens (third preference) and unmarried sons and daughters of U.S. citizens (first preference) represented 9 per cent and 7 per cent of family-sponsored preference immigrants in 1996, respectively.

3. Employment-based Immigrants

The demand for employment-based visas increased, but admissions were lower than the annual limit set by law. Employment-based visas were immediately available to all skilled workers in 1996 except for nationals of India and the Philippines, who were affected by per-country limitations. There continued to be a backlog for unskilled worker visas for all countries since the demand for visas exceeded the annual limit of 10,000. The majority of employment-based immigrants admitted in recent past entered under the third preference that includes skilled workers, professionals, needed unskilled workers, their families, and aliens. Most third preference immigrants were skilled workers and professionals.

The next largest category, representing 23 per cent of all employment-based admissions was the first preference or priority workers, including multinational executives or managers and aliens with extraordinary ability and outstanding professors or researchers. Second preference immigrants, consisting of professionals with advanced degrees or aliens of exceptional ability and their family members, accounted for significant proportion of employment based preference immigrants, followed by special immigrants entering under the employment fourth preference, and the fifth preference, the employment creation or "Investor" category, whose share was marginal.

4. Diversity Immigrants

The number of immigrants admitted under the Diversity programmes was quite significant. Nearly all were admitted under the permanent programme, which replaced the transitional program recently. Diversity immigrant admissions were above the annual limit of 55,000.

5. Other Admissions

In addition to immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, there was large proportion of admissions under other categories not subject to the worldwide limit. The largest category was refugee and asylee adjustments. For example, a total of 118,528 refugees adjusted to permanent resident status in 1996. Refugees are eligible to become immigrants 1 year after they enter the United States; therefore, there is a lag between their arrival and adjustment to permanent residency. Asylees must also wait 1 year after they are granted asylum to apply for permanent resident status. Until 1992, there was a limit of 5,000 adjustments per year. The Immigration Act of 1990 increased the limit to 10,000 and exempted asylees who had applied for adjustment before June 1, 1990 from any numerical restrictions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN U. S

1. U.S. Residence and Country of Origin

The largest share of immigrants in 1996 was from North America (37%), followed by Asia (34%), and Europe (16%). Asia had been the leading source region since 1978 and African immigrants comprised only 6 per cent of the total in 1996. However, African immigration nearly doubled, primarily due to the Diversity programme. Mexico was the leading source country with 163,572 or 18% of all immigrants in 1996. Other leading sending countries included the Philippines (55,876), India (44,859), Vietnam (42,067), the People's Republic of China (41,728), and the Dominican Republic (39,604). These six countries combined accounted for 42 per cent of all admissions in 1996.

2. Age and Gender

Immigrants in recent past were similar to those admitted earlier in age and gender. The median age of immigrants was 29 years (28 years in 1995 and 1994) and the majority (54 per cent) were females. In 1996, 54 per cent of aliens admitted were under age 30. The persons ages 65 and over represented about 5 per cent of all immigrants in 1996, but nearly double that proportion among immigrants admitted as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and refugees/asylees.

3. Occupation

A significant proportion of the immigrants admitted between 16 and 64 years of age were having an occupation at the time of entry or adjustment. Immigrants qualifying for immigrant status based on their job skills under the employment-based preferences entered the U.S. workforce in their reported occupations. The remaining immigrants have either the occupation in their last job before immigration or the occupation in which they were trained. About half of the employment-based workers were employed in a professional or technical occupation. The leading occupational groups following professionals included: executive, administrative, and managerial; service; precision production, craft, and repair; and operator, fabricator, or labourer.

IMMIGRATION TO MINNESOTA, U.S

During the 1990s alone, Minnesota's foreign-born population more than doubled, from 110,000 to 240,000. For many immigrants, Minnesota provides the first glimpse of life in the U.S. Others settle briefly elsewhere in America, but relocate to Minnesota because of family ties, economic and educational opportunities, or for other reasons. Minnesota is attractive to immigrants because of a strong economy, good quality of life, educational opportunities, and a thriving civic and cultural life. Minnesota also has a history of active volunteerism regarding immigration and refugee resettlement, led primarily by faith-based organizations.

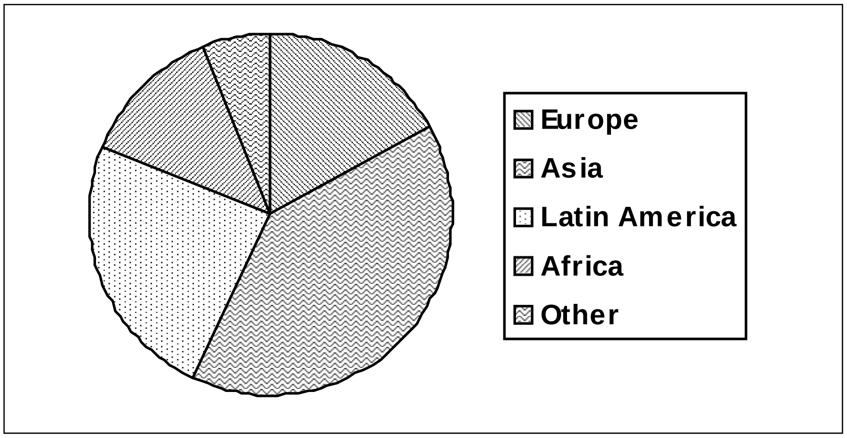
Over the past several decades, tens of thousands of immigrants have arrived in Minnesota. They have come from all over the world, and settled throughout the state. They have come for the same reason that attracted immigrants in the past: opportunity. They experience the same difficulties of adjusting to life in a new country—language barriers, culture shock, a sense of loss, and isolation.

The established Minnesotans, for the most part, are eager to welcome and learn more about these new members of the community. Certainly there are challenges inherent in incorporating new languages and customs into the fabric of Minnesota life. However, the economic and cultural benefits enrich the schools, neighbourhoods, businesses, and communities and make Minnesota a more interesting place to live.

1. Regions of Origin

The following chart I clearly highlight the proportion of immigrants in Minnesota in 2000, which stood at 17% from Europe, 40% Asia, 24% Latin America, 13% Africa and rest from elsewhere.

Chart I: Immigrants by Regions in Minnesota, U.S, 2000



2. Contributions by Immigrants

Tensions may arise as new immigrants establish themselves socially and financially. Some established Minnesotans might feel resentment or competition towards relative newcomers who appear to be surpassing them economically. Others may fear that already scarce resources will be spread even more thinly as services such as job training and English language instruction are provided to new immigrants. And some people are simply intolerant of cultural differences.

Yet, the contributions of immigrants benefit us all in many ways:

(a) Work—filling jobs and providing services. Some industries, such as food processing and meatpacking, are almost entirely dependent on immigrant labor.

(b) Economic development—revitalizing neighbourhoods and communities that had previously been abandoned, depressed, and unsafe.

(c) Intellectual capital—benefiting from the ideas and innovations of immigrant scholars. Arts, culture, and cuisine—sharing new ideas and customs with Minnesotans to enrich the lives.

3. Economic Impact

Immigrants contribute to the economy in multiple ways: by paying taxes, filling job vacancies, engaging in entrepreneurial activities and neighbourhood revitalization, and also through the consumption of goods and services. Since the majority of immigrants arrive at a young working age, they contribute to the economy for decades, often while remaining ineligible to receive some social service benefits. For example, more than 16,000 Asian-Indians living in Minnesota have a consumer base of nearly $500 million; pay $5.2 million in real estate taxes and $2.3 million in rent, and own 400 companies, employing more than 6,000 people. 97% of Minnesota's Asian-Indians have received no public assistance.

It's true there are significant short-term costs associated with immigration. With the resettlement of refugees in particular, education, job training, health care, and other support systems must adapt to meet new and complex needs. The long-term economic benefits, however, more than offset those costs. Studies continue to emerge that document the net financial gains that immigration produces. Economics, however, are just one aspect of immigration; civic and humanitarian, intellectual and artistic, and other important contributions are difficult to quantify.

4. Family Life

Due to economic pressures, many immigrants must adjust to changing family dynamics. Families may be expected to take care of their aging parents at home but need to find alternative care instead, or some grandparents may be enlisted as child-care providers as parents work full-time outside of the home.

5. Education

Minnesota's public school students now speak more than 70 different languages at home. Some students were born in the U.S. and speak English fluently, although their parents speak their native language at home. Others are classified as "English Language Learners" (ELL). Because they have a limited ability to speak, read, and write English, ELL students often struggle academically. But even the children who speak English fluently confront challenges. Many immigrant parents find it hard to communicate with teachers and school administrators about homework and other important matters.

For these students, getting help with homework at home with its current emphasis on word problems—is often difficult if not impossible. This language barrier has implications for parent-child relationships beyond the daily completion of school assignments. As children gain fluency more quickly than their parents, they become major conduits for a range of information parents need.

Throughout American history, education has been essential to helping immigrants gain a foothold in the U.S. economy and fully participate in civic life. Access to higher education will continue to be critical to helping the children of today's immigrants become productive workers, citizens, and leaders. Immigrant adults, too, pursue education—including English language classes and job training—often in conjunction with fulltime work and family life.

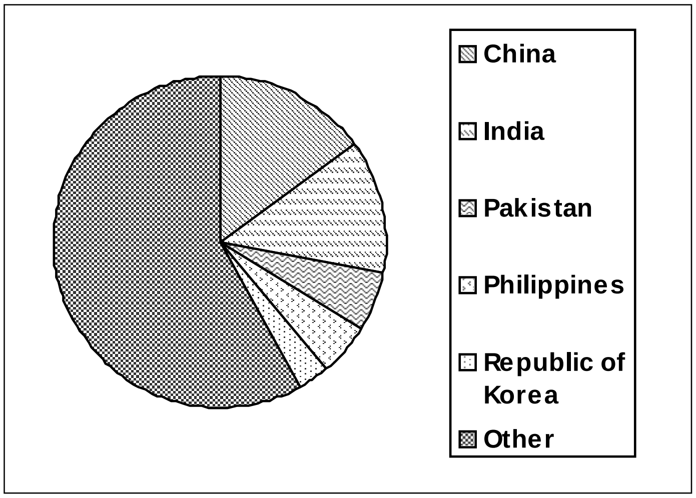
Immigration to Canada

For the past four years, China has been the largest source of immigrants to Canada. While in 1998, close to 20 000 Chinese citizens came to Canada, representing 11.3% of all immigrants, that number had jumped to almost 33 000 in 2002, representing over 15% of the total immigration figures. In the year 2002, the four next largest source countries of immigrants were India (13%), Pakistan (6%), the Philippines (5%), and the Republic of Korea (3%). Together, the top five countries accounted for approximately 40% of all immigrants to Canada. The government remains committed to investing in Canada's economic and social development through immigration. A planning range of 210,000 to 235,000 is confirmed for 2002, which is in line with the government's long-term objective of moving gradually to immigration levels of approximately 1% of Canada's population, while bearing in mind Canada's absorptive capacity.

Between 2001 and 2002 there was a decrease of more than 8% in the annual numbers of immigrants to Canada. In Quebec, however, levels remained stable-at about 37,000 and thus the decline outside that province-in the rest of Canada-rose to 14% over the year. In the year 2002, Montreal supplanted Vancouver as the country's second largest immigrant receiving metropolitan area. Vancouver and Ottawa had significant decreases in numbers of immigrants they took in between 2001 and 2002 with respective declines of approximately 13% and 15% over that period. Halifax incurred a near 20% drop in annual immigration and despite the increase in Quebec's overall numbers in its capital of Quebec City there was a 25% drop in real numbers over that period.

Between 2001 and 2002 there were decreases in several 'classes' of immigrants in Canada, though most notable in skilled workers (10%) and business immigrants (25%), the latter of which fell below 2000 levels. Quebec's increase in immigrants during the 2001-2002

Chart II: Immigrants by Country in Canada, 2002



period was largely an outcome of increased numbers of skilled immigrants and over the past two years the province benefited from a 67% increase in such immigration while the rest of Canada a decrease of approximately 15% between 2001 and 2002. On the other hand business class or investor immigrants dropped by nearly 25% in the province of Quebec where such immigration was nearly cut in half between 2001 and 2002. Conversely despite little change in its real numbers, the province of British Columbia (B.C.) saw its share of such immigrants rise from about one quarter to one-third in one year.

Montreal established a single year record for the percentage of bilingual immigrants with nearly one quarter falling into this category in the year 2002. Whereas in 2001 some 55% of all of Canada's bilingual immigrants ended up in Montreal the percentage rose to 60% in the year 2002. The year 2002 likely saw the realization of the breaking of the 50% mark for French speaking immigrants that the Quebec government set out to attain several years ago. In Montreal in 2002 some 49% of new arrivals were able to speak French although given the high percentage of bilinguals some 41% were also able to speak English. The biggest increase in source counties for Canada was in Iranian immigrants between 2001 and 2002. Immigration from India remained stable while entrants from China dropped. In Montreal it is immigration from Morocco and Romania that has been the object of increasing numbers and in the case of the latter country there has been a 60% rise in one year. Immigration from China to Montreal has dropped by more than 20% between 2001 and 2002 returning to the level that approximated the figure for the year 2000.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada projected that refugees would account for more than 10 per cent of newcomers to Canada in 2002. Skilled workers, business people and provincial or territorial nominees, together with their families, will again make up about 60 percent of the movement for that year. As observed below, there were decreases in several 'classes' of immigrants, though most notable in skilled workers and business immigrants, the latter of which fell below 2000 levels.

These shifts in immigrant class admission were spread unevenly throughout the country. Indeed Quebec's increase in immigrants during the 2001-2002 period was largely an outcome of increased numbers of skilled immigrants and over the past two years the province benefited from a 67% increase in such immigration while the rest of Canada a decrease of approximately 15% between 2001 and 2002 and therefore dropped below the number for the year 2000.

There were very significant reductions in business class or investor immigrants in Canada between 2000 and 2002 with a drop of nearly one-quarter the biggest decline being in the province of Quebec where such immigration was nearly cut in half between 2001 and 2002. Conversely despite little change in real numbers the province of British Columbia saw its share of such immigrants rise from about one quarter to one-third in one year.

Another objective of the federal government was an increase in the number of the country's French-speaking immigrants and a desire to encourage a higher number to settle outside of Quebec in support of minority francophone populations in need of demographic stimulus. Despite overall decreases in immigration to Canada between 2001 and 2002 the numbers of French speakers stayed approximately the same largely due to the rise in bilingual entrants. More than one in ten new immigrants were able to speak French and there was a sharp decline in persons that spoke English only.

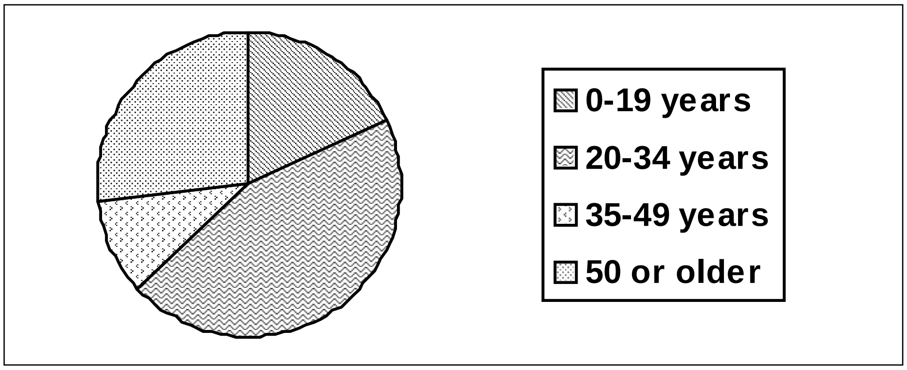
However upon closer examination it is Montreal and likely the rest of the province that absorbed nearly the entire increase in French-speakers. Indeed Montreal established a single year record for the percentage of bilingual immigrants with nearly one quarter falling into this category in the year 2002. Whereas in 2001 more than half of all of Canada's bilingual immigrants ended up in Montreal the percentage rose to about two-third in the year 2002. The year 2002 likely saw the realization of the breaking of the 50% mark for French-speaking immigrants that the Quebec government set out to attain several years ago. In Montreal in 2002 some 49% of new arrivals were able to speak French although given the high percentage of bilinguals some 41% were also able to speak English.

IMMIGRATION TO BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

As a result of the high percentage of family related landings, a high proportion of Indian immigrants were sponsored parents, grandparents or spouse/fiances. The overall landings to British Columbia showed a more balanced proportion between spouses/ fiances, 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 35-49 years age group. Furthermore, a smaller proportion of children under the age of 19 years were 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 (see Chart III).

Chart III: Indian Immigrants by Age (years) in B.C., 1996-2000

Indian Immigrants to Canada, 1996-2000



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. 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 were engaged in the agricultural and manufacturing industries. 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 were 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.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1976

In 1976, the Government unveiled the Immigration Act. The Immigration Act formed the cornerstone of Canada's immigration policy until June 2001, when the new Immigration and Refuge Protection Act replaced it. The 1976 Act broke new ground by spelling out the fundamental principles and objectives of Canada's immigration policy. Included among these are the promotion of Canada's demographic, economic, cultural, and social goals; family reunification; the fulfillment of Canada's international obligations in relation to the United Nations Convention (1951) and its 1967 Protocol relating to refugees, non-discrimination in immigration policy.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT, 2001

By the late-1990's, the government decided that the 1976 Immigration Act, which had been amended over 30 times, needed to be replaced by a new act designed to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the new century. In November 2001, the government passed Bill C-11, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The new Act and its regulations, building upon the foundation of the 1976 Act, carry a dual mandate: closing the back door to criminals and others who would abuse Canada’s openness and generosity while opening the front door to genuine refugees and to the immigrants the country needs.

The new legislation will give Canada the tools to say “no” more quickly, in order to remove serious criminals, and to say “yes” more often to the immigrants and refugees it needs to continue to grow. The Act re-groups provisions into four main parts: immigration to Canada; refugee protection; enforcement; and the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).

The new legislation recognizes that to continue to grow and prosper in the new global economy, modernized immigration policies are a cornerstone of success. Canada needs modern tools to be able to attract the best and the brightest. The new legislation modernizes the selection system for skilled workers, shifting the emphasis from the present occupation based model to focus more on choosing skilled workers with the flexible and transferable skill sets required to succeed in a fast changing, knowledge-based economy. The legislation will recognize that the Canadian economy values skilled technical workers and tradespersons with good human capital attributes as well as university educated professionals.

There are millions of refugees in the world today, and as such, the need for protection of people fleeing war or persecution continues to grow. The new legislation provides the policy and legislative tools required to maintain and enhance Canada’s strong humanitarian tradition by ensuring rapid responses to alleviate human suffering. At the same time, the bill contains tough provisions against those who would abuse the system. With the rise in human trafficking, and the increase in fraudulent cases, Canada needs to protect itself, and the new Act addresses this problem. Since the end of World War II, Canada has accepted 600,000 refugees from around the world, and this new legislation will allow us to accept more refugees in a more efficient manner.

WAGE DISCRIMINATION: NATIVE VS. IMMIGRANTS

In most countries immigrants have lower wage rates compared to natives. This phenomenon may have several causes. It can be caused by differences in ‘standard’ human capital, also denoted qualifications. It can be due to differences in host country specific human capital–a hopefully transitory component, whose gradual disappearance is called ‘assimilation’. The differences in wages between immigrants and natives may be a result of discrimination, that is, differences in returns to the variables determining wages. The wages of immigrant men have most often been analyzed using the wage assimilation framework. There are initial wage differences, but that these tend to decline over time, as immigrants spend time in the host country (Borjas, 1987). Previous research on wages of immigrant women in North America finds no unfavorable wage gap due to foreign country of origin. Based on cross-section data, Long (1980), Beach and Worswick (1993), Shamsuddin (1998) find that the wages of immigrant women are 12-14% higher than those of native women, conditional on their characteristics.

When analyzing the wage gap between immigrants and natives, the general finding is that there is a wage gap (though often it is not as large as the gender wage gap), some of which is explained by differences in qualifications and some is caused by discrimination or behavioral differences (Altonji and Blank, 1999). In the 'perfectly assimilated state', an immigrant wage gap would remain for some groups. For males, the gap remains due to low formal qualifications in terms of education, work experience and occupational status, whereas for women it remains due to low remuneration of formal qualifications, that is, discrimination. The policy implications are fairly clear. Efforts towards reducing the income inequalities between certain immigrant groups and natives should not be directed at legislation against wage discrimination, but rather at improving the formal qualifications of immigrants, particularly in terms of education and work experience. One way to do that is to formally evaluate the value of the educational levels immigrants bring from their home countries, and in satisfactory cases recognize these educations as applicable on the local labour market.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT AMONG IMMIGRANTS

Most of the immigrants to the U.S. and Canada are high-skilled workers. There is an increase in the number of temporary visas given to high-skilled workers, particularly in the information technology sector. The immigrants are more likely to be working in one of the high-skilled occupations than natives, but that the gap between the two groups decreased in the 1980s and 1990s. It also shows that high-skilled natives are more likely to be self-employed than immigrants. Self-employment rates for high-skilled immigrants appear to vary less between national origin groups than they do among immigrants overall. Higher proportions of co-nationals or co-ethnics in an area, so called enclaves, seem to increase the probability a highly skilled individual selects self-employment. The high-skilled occupations can be grouped into 8 groups. The high-skilled occupational groups are Management and Finance, Architecture, Engineering, Computer Sciences, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Health and Medicine, Social Sciences and Law.

The proportion and the distribution of workers in high-skilled occupations among natives and immigrants have changed in the recent past. The proportion of male natives in high-skilled occupations increased over time. Although the proportion of workers in high-skilled occupations is higher for immigrants than natives, there appears to be a downward trend among immigrants. A large proportion of the high-skilled individuals are working in Management and Finance and in Law. The most dramatic increase was, not surprisingly, in the Computer Sciences where the proportion of high-skilled immigrants more than doubled in 1990s than in 1980s. The proportion of high-skilled natives in this occupation category also increased, but not as dramatically as for immigrants.

Self-employment rates among high-skilled natives and immigrants are substantially higher than overall self-employment rates. Approximately one fifth of all individuals in high-skilled occupations are self-employed. Not surprisingly, self-employment rates vary considerably across occupational groups. Nevertheless, it appears that self-employment rates do not differ very much between immigrants and natives within occupational groups. Also, the overall self-employment rates are quite similar for immigrants and natives. However, high-skilled natives are more likely to be self-employed than high-skilled immigrants. The observed increase in overall self-employment rates for both immigrants and natives is due to an increase in the self-employment rates of the relatively less-skilled individuals.

Previous studies of immigrant labour market performance have found that skill levels vary across immigrants from different country of origin, as do self-employment rates (see for example Borjas, 1994 and Fairlie and Meyer, 1996). The skill levels vary substantially across national origin groups. For example, only about 1 percent of Mexican immigrants reported in 1990 as working in one of the high-skilled occupations while in the same year nearly one-third of immigrants from India and Pakistan were high skilled. Although there is large variation in the proportions of high-skilled workers between countries of origin, there is substantially less variation in self-employment rates of the high skilled across national origin groups. Immigrants in the U.S. have been found to be less successful in the labour market than natives in the 1980's (Borjas, 1995 and Betts and Lofstrom, 2000). Notably, the self-employed are excluded from these studies. Lofstrom (1999) however includes the self-employed in his study and finds that self-employed immigrants do better in the labour market than wage/salary immigrants and are also likely to reach earnings parity with self-employed natives.

The relative success of self-employed immigrants, compared to natives and wage/salary immigrants, also appears to hold for the high-skilled self-employed immigrants. Wage/salary of natives in high-skill occupations have an income disadvantage relative to wage/salary immigrants. Light (1984) argues that differences in traditions of commerce among immigrants from different countries help explain differences in self-employment rates among immigrants in the U.S. This may be one of the reasons for variations in self-employment rates over countries of origin that is not captured by the observable traits in the model. Several earlier studies have shown, using population representative samples that both self-employment rates and earnings vary across national origin groups (Camarota, 2000, Fairlie and Meyer, 1996, Lofstrom, 1999 and Yuengert, 1995). It is however very interesting to note that there is very little variation across high-skilled immigrant and ethnic groups. Immigrants' earnings in the wage/ salary sector have been found to not converge with natives' earnings (Borjas, 1985 and 1995) over the work life. Earnings of immigrants start out at a lower point and rise more rapidly over time than natives' earnings. However, parity is not reached. The labour market performances of self-employed immigrants, who are excluded from Borjas' studies, have been found to be significantly different from wage/salary immigrants. Lofstrom (1999) finds that earnings of self-employed immigrants are predicted to converge with native wage/salary earnings at around age 30 and native self-employed earnings at around age 40. Immigrants in high-skilled occupations have higher annual earnings than natives. Self-employed natives in high-skill occupations have lower earnings than self-employed immigrants.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG IMMIGRANTS FROM INDIA

Little research has been reported on domestic violence among Indian immigrant families. Most research suggests that wife abuse is found equally in all social groups and classes and that where large discrepancies exist, they are more likely to reflect underreporting than a genuine difference in rates (Bachman and Saltzman, 1995; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). The traditional Asian values emphasizing close family ties and harmony may discourage women from disclosing violent victimization. One might add that many women who migrate with their husbands are ill equipped to get any help from authorities. They have been socialized to be subservient to their husbands and to accept mistreatment as their destiny. Their knowledge of English is often limited, they fear authority, know little about the police, and they may be worried about their immigration status. Finally, the isolation of many migrant wives means they are less likely to receive encouragement from family and friends to report domestic violence than might be the case in their own countries.

Adams (2000) found a lifetime prevalence rate for domestic violence of 77 percent among Indian and Pakistani immigrants and Raj and Silverman (2002) found that 41 percent of the 160 South Asian women immigrants (83% were Indians) they interviewed in Boston had experienced physical or sexual injury due to interpersonal partner violence. The most common forms of physical abuse reported by these women were being pushed or shoved, being slammed against a wall, or having their hair pulled and arms twisted.

Taken together, the facts reviewed above suggest that despite the economic success and relatively crime-free record of Indian immigrants, there could be a substantial domestic violence problem within Indian immigrant communities (Abraham, 2000). This problem will only be uncovered by research that recognizes the special circumstances pertaining in Indian immigrant communities, which both raise the chances of domestic violence occurring and of its being underreported. Without such research, little policy guidance can be formulated for the police and other agencies that should respond to the problem.

The following discussion further highlight the phenomenon of domestic violence among the immigrants in U.S and Canada:

Immigration Process

Negotiating the immigration process involves many difficulties. Because of the bureaucracy involved, applicants for visas and work permits face many delays and frustrations. The process can be so complex and full of pitfalls that it is often necessary for an applicant to employ a lawyer to move the case forward. This can involve what may seem like huge sums of money to immigrants from India.Some immigrant families are better able to deal with these difficulties than others. Perhaps the most favorable circumstances are when both husband and wife are emigrating together, when they are young with recently acquired computing or scientific qualifications, when their parents are wealthy, and when they have a supportive network of relatives and friends already in the U.S.

In contrast, the least favorable conditions may involve either marriages contracted to secure funds for the husband to emigrate, or ones in which a man who is already established in the U.S with a green card returns to India to marry a woman with a dowry commensurate with his position. In the former case, the man might be tempted to enter into an unsuitable marriage simply as the price of emigrating. In the latter, immigration rules require that the wife remain on her own in India for a period of up to two years before she can enter the United States. This long period of separation puts many strains on a new marriage. When the wife is finally able to move, she may find that her husband has entered into a relationship with another woman who may even have moved into his house. In such cases, husbands may threaten their wives with deportation or may confiscate their passports so they cannot leave (Abraham, 2000). These circumstances are conducive to physical and emotional abuse of the wife and, as a result of the publicity given to such cases, many Indian parents have become much more cautious about entering into marriage arrangements with a man already living in the United States.

American Culture

The process of becoming ''acculturated'' to the host society can take considerable time and depends partly on prior familiarity with the host culture and the degree of attachment to Indian society. The statistics show that many Indian immigrant families adapt quickly to American society and lead successful and productive lives. These figures also indicate, however, that a variety of negative conditions can produce stress in one or other of the marriage partners, including racial prejudice, discrimination at work, discounting of Indian qualifications, intolerance of language difficulties, and so forth. This stress may be reflected in the dissatisfaction of one or both partners, which puts pressure on the marriage. Further, some of the prized attributes of American society including individualism and competitiveness and the value placed on sexual equality and fulfilling careers for women are not always perceived as such by Indian immigrants, especially the women. This ''culture shock'' (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001) stems from Indian women having been taught from an early age that there is virtue in self-denial and in serving husband and family. Discarding these values or adapting them to American culture can be very difficult and can sometimes lead to a loss of identity or to the ''immigrant syndrome'' discussed below. According to Dasgupta (1999), women's experience of immigration in general is different from that of men, with the clash in gender roles and expectations between traditional and Western culture being particularly disturbing for women.

Immigrant Syndrome

Most immigrants go through a period of turmoil at home and work as they settle in the U.S. This period of turmoil may be so prolonged or extreme that the individual is regarded as suffering from the ''immigrant syndrome.'' For many husbands, long hours of work in a competitive environment, compounded by language problems, prejudice and discrimination may result in deep dissatisfaction with work. Some men take to alcohol, drugs and gambling for escape. In other cases, men unused to the greater sexual freedom in the U.S may engage in affairs with women they meet at work. Either circumstance increases the probability of quarrels between the husband and wife and the probability that the husband will abuse his wife. For wives, especially those without jobs, it may be difficult to meet expectations in terms of language skills, dress, cooking habits, finding groceries that suit family needs, dealing with children's problems at school, learning to drive or how to use domestic appliances, and coping with the many demands of an advanced technological society (Erez 2000; Espin 1999). They might also have to cope with the many difficulties of childbirth and rearing children with little help or support from family members. On top of these difficulties, they may have to confront restless and unhappy husbands, who may subject them to constant criticism for their inability to cope with the demands of life in the U.S. In the language of victimology, these perceived failings transform the wife into a ''culturally legitimate victim,'' one who ''deserves'' to be punished by her husband. Under these circumstances, many young wives become depressed and lose energy, and therefore may be unable to respond to their husband's sexual demands. This could contribute to increased impatience on the husband's part and to mental or physical abuse. In turn, this could deepen depression among wives so that the immigrant syndrome is transformed into battered woman syndrome, a variety of post-traumatic stress disorder (Walker, 1984 and 1993), which is a psychological condition resulting from exposure to prolong and severe trauma.

Living Situation

Many Indian immigrants live in nuclear rather than extended families. This has some advantages for the wives, but it does mean that they are often isolated (Nielsen, Endo and Ellington, 1992). Their own parents may still be in India and they may have been forbidden by their husbands to telephone them. If their husbands preceded them to America, they may not have made friends outside the husband's circle. Unless they live in a ''little India,'' they may not know their neighbours well enough to ask for help. If their husbands begin to abuse them, there is no one to whom they can turn for help. They may not be inclined to ask for help from the police, perhaps because of worries about immigration status, because police in India are widely distrusted, or because they feel awkward interacting with a male officer. While in the language of victimology, the isolation of many Indian immigrant wives increases their ''vulnerability to victimization,'' in the language of routine activity theory they become ''suitable targets'' left without ''capable guardians'' to give them protection from a ''likely offender'' (in this case the husband). According to routine activity theory, the basic conditions for abuse to occur have been met under these conditions (Tedeschi and Felson, 1995).

The private organizations run by South Asian women immigrants have provided the most help to abused wives in the Indian immigrant community (Abraham, 2000). For the past two decades, these women have formed help centers that provide: an advocacy culture, supportive counseling, legal clinics, transitional homes, women's support groups Interpreting and transportation services (court and hospital accompaniment), English conversation classes and outreach through education. While this voluntary support is very valuable, it is presently confined to rather few areas of the country and it needs significant private and public funding if it is to be expanded to serve more victims. Meanwhile, some of the gaps in services could be filled by other nonprofit agencies providing victim services, family services, health services and domestic violence shelters, especially where these services cater to the special needs of immigrant groups. Even with extended help for abused women, more needs to be done to alleviate the problem. Perhaps the most practical of these measures are those that strengthen the ''guardianship'' of abused wives and that encourage them to seek help from the authorities. This need is served to some extent already through the voluntary help centers established by Asian women. However, voluntary services are no substitute for legal protection and there is an urgent need for law enforcement to reach out to immigrant women. Many immigrants choose to congregate in particular neighbourhoods, which should make it easier to implement community policing initiatives that would reach substantial proportions of the immigrant population.

CONCLUSION

During the decade beginning in 1905, immigration to the U.S was at its highest level. The average annual number of immigrants admitted during the recent past was 4.0 immigrants per thousand U.S. residents. Immigration to the U.S reached its lowest point during the Great Depression. In some years during the 1930s more persons left the U. S than entered. Immigration has generally increased since the end of World War II, and during 1991 it reached the highest total ever recorded as a result of the legalization programmes. The number of persons granted permanent resident status in 1992 and 1993 decreased to 974,000 and 904,000, respectively, principally due to decreases in the number of adjustments under the legalization provisions. The total number of immigrants in a fiscal year includes those who arrived from overseas with immigrant visas and those who completed adjustment to immigrant status during the year. New arrivals do not correspond exactly to visas issued overseas by the Department of State. In the recent past, there has been a substantial flow of immigrants from India to the U.S and Canada. For example, the total legal immigrants admitted in U.S were 915,900 in 1996 and 70,000 in 2001. About 20 percent of immigrants held a bachelor's degree or higher and high levels of education have enabled them to become a productive segment of the population. Out of the 72 percent work force, 44 per cent are employed in managerial and professional jobs including computing, scientific research and medicine.

In 2002, share of Indian immigrants to Canada was 13%. The Canadian government remains committed to investing in economic and social development through immigration. A planning range of 210,000 to 235,000 was confirmed for 2002. This was in tune with the government's long-term objective of moving gradually to immigration levels of approximately 1% of Canada's population, keeping in mind Canada's absorptive capacity. It is widely acknowledged that Canada faces serious demographic challenges in the years ahead. The federal government has repeatedly declared that birth rates are at a historic low, and Canada's largest age cohort - the baby boomers - is ageing. Though immigration cannot significantly change the resulting age structure of the population, the federal authorities recognize it as an important tool to mitigate its effects. By 2011 immigration will likely account for all net labour force growth and by 2031 it will account for all population growth. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada seeks to ensure that immigrants and refugees have the skills to succeed in the Canadian labour market. They add however that available data point to gaps in labour market performance between immigrants, refugees and the Canadian-born. Clearly this condition is having a bearing on the numbers of immigrants admitted into the country and points to the need for a clearer debate over the reconciliation of demographic and economic needs in this country as well as a discourse that more properly reflects such discussion. If Canada incurs further reductions in immigration and Quebec moves higher the percentage decline in the rest of Canada will continue to rise. Currently the discourse that expresses a need for greater immigration and moves higher in that regard is Quebec where expectation and reality as it pertains to levels of immigration are somewhat more in line.

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