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Asian Indians plant roots in south metro area

Attracted by jobs, many remain for quality of life



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The Littleton Cricket Club takes on a team from Colorado Springs at Comerstone Park in Littleton Sept. 20. Cricket provides physical and social activity for Indians living in the U.S. Photo by Chris Michlewicz



Douglas County, Colorado Asian Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Asian Community Survey 1-Year Estimates			
Year	Asian Indian	Total Population	% Asian Indian
2008	3,368	280,621	1.2%
2009	3,807	288,225	1.3%
2010	3,391	287,003	1.2%
2011	3,245	293,167	1.1%
2012	3,370	297,870	1.1%
2013	3,679	305,853	1.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Posted Tuesday, September 29, 2015 9:37 pm

Chris Michlewicz (<mailto:cmichlewicz@coloradocommunitymedia.com>)

A cricket club in Littleton. Markets that sell ethnic Asian Indian foods in Lone Tree. A new Hindu temple in Centennial.

The growing population of Asian Indians is changing the ethnic makeup of communities in the south metro area.

"I used to kind of be the odd man out in the store," said Murali Anakavur, who moved to Lakewood in 1995 and now lives in Littleton. "Not anymore."

Although not staggering, the statistics don't lie: There were 2,942 people of Indian descent in Arapahoe County in 2008; that number climbed to 6,701 last year, according to the State Demography Office. The population of Asian Indians, as they are categorized in the U.S. Census, more than doubled in Douglas County from 2012 to 2014.

Census data from 2008-14 shows a "statistically significant" population increase in south metro Denver and across the state, said Rob Kemp, estimates demographer for Colorado's demography office. However, year-over-year figures are nominal and Asian Indians in Arapahoe and Douglas counties account for only about 1 to 2 percent of the total population.

But the change has been especially noticeable, at least in part, because of the high percentage of Caucasians in the area.

"In a place so dominated by one racial group, like especially in Douglas County, it might theoretically look like more because there are not a lot of racial groups," Kemp said.

Welcome to America

Another indicator of the burgeoning community of Indian immigrants arrived in the form of a new Hindu temple on Potomac Street in Centennial. The Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of the Rockies, which opened with a lavish, four-day ceremony in June, was built "to meet the needs of growing Indian population," its website says. More than 1,500 families regularly attend services at the temple.

Douglas County, Colorado

American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

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Several Indian grocery markets have opened up shop, with one each in Centennial and Greenwood Village, and two in Lone Tree.

One of the stores in Lone Tree is the popular Mythri Indian Groceries on Forsstrom Drive



2011	3,293	292,167	1.1%
2012	2,832	298,215	0.9%
2013	3,879	305,963	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Business was a little slow in the first two months after the shop opened in January at the end of a strip mall, but picked up considerably once word got around. Now, there are sometimes lines on Thursdays and Sundays, when shipments of fresh produce come in. The store has 30-40 members and caters to Indians and non-Indians alike.



Owned by four partners, including Satya Chigurupati and Suresh Bejawada, the grocery store carries products familiar to Indians. Bejawada, a 25-year-old who moved to the United States in 2009 to pursue a master's degree in electrical engineering, says the decision to open in Lone Tree was based on its proximity to employers and the light rail system.

Denver's community of "desis," a common term for people from South Asia who live abroad, boasts multiple associations and clubs. One of the more popular activities is cricket, and the best team in Colorado happens to be based in Littleton. The Littleton Cricket Club — founded in 1994 — now has three teams due to demand. It plays matches on Saturdays and Sundays during the summer in Cornerstone Park on the Littleton/Englewood border and Challenger Park in Parker.

On a recent sunny afternoon at Cornerstone Park, one of the few available cricket grounds in the Denver area, club president Ramesh Appat watched the final match before playoffs. He points out the Littleton Lions are going for their fourth consecutive state championship.



Cricket, an Indian pastime similar to America's connection with baseball, is a perfect way to unwind while sharing a cultural experience and bonding. Many players have families and 9-to-5 jobs, the latter of which precipitated the transcontinental relocation for the majority, said Appat, who himself came to the United States in 1998 for a job opportunity.

"We have IT folks; we have doctors," the 44-year-old Parker resident said. "It's a mixture, but primarily information technology, which has been the main attraction for immigrants coming from southeast Asia."

Many in the south metro area have found employment with firms based in the Denver Technological Center, Inverness Business Park and Meridian International Business Center. Housing data from Douglas County Demographic Program analyst Nancy Gedeon shows a high percentage of Asian Indians live in the far northern tier of the county, in close proximity to employment centers.

The decision to stay

Lucrative, one- or two-year contracts with tech firms are, in some cases, what draw Asian Indians to Colorado. But the lifestyle and open space are a convincing reason to stay.

Bejawada, who also plays cricket, says the pleasant climate, absence of heavy traffic and decreased competition for jobs are part of what convinced him to move to the States.

Anakavur, the Littleton resident, moved to the U.S. at the age of 30, and although it was an adjustment for his wife, Anakavur fell in love with Colorado almost immediately.

There was an abundance of attractive attributes: a beautiful landscape, near-perfect weather, community safety, a manageable commute, "quietness" and the people. Plenty of job options and outdoor activities, such as tennis and hiking, drew in Anakavur, who also works in the tech industry.

"I've never looked back since and came to love it here," the 52-year-old said. "It's my home."

Keywords

Asian Indians (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=Asian Indians), south metro Denver (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=south metro Denver), Arapahoe County Colorado (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=Arapahoe County Colorado), Douglas County Colorado (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=Douglas County Colorado), Chris Michlewicz (/search_mode/keyword/browse.html?search_filter=Chris Michlewicz)

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Muchconfused

I have met many Indians here in Douglas County and they have all been very nice and respectful people. When I was a kid, the population of the USA was 220 million. It is now 330 million. How many more people should we have in America? Should our population go to 400 million or more? At some point, this has to stop. The USA cannot be responsible for the lack of birth control in the rest of the world. I don't want anyone who is here now to leave, but I really think that the environment (water, air, garbage, new subdivisions every time you look) cannot handle any more people in the USA.

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