INDIA

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

India is rimmed on three sides by water—the Indian Ocean to the south, the Arabian Sea to the west, and the Bay of Bengal to the east—and by the Himalaya Mountains to the northeast. The northeast is also home to the Ganges River, which empties into the Bay of Bengal and holds important cultural and spiritual significance for many Indians.

Two other major rivers are the Indus, in the northwest, and the Brahmaputra, which starts in western China and snakes through India's far eastern provinces located between Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, and Myanmar (see map page 1). These eastern provinces are connected to India by a narrow strip of land referred to as the "chicken's neck."

BASIC FACTS

POPULATION: 1,281,935,911 (percentage under 25 years: 45%)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: 69 years

LITERACY RATE (AGE 15 AND OVER CAN READ & WRITE): 71%

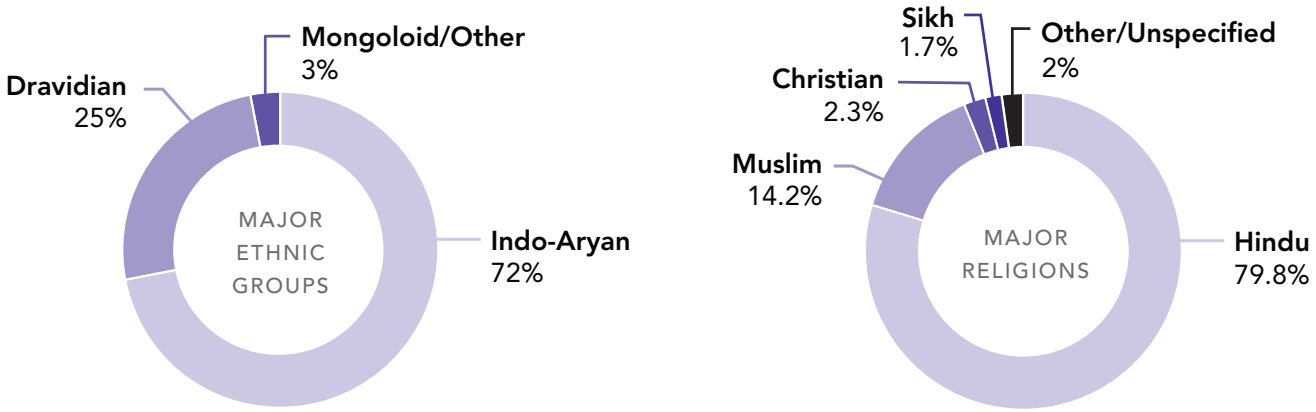
OFFICIAL AND MAJOR LANGUAGE(S): Hindi 41%, Bengali 8%, Telugu 7%, Tamil 6%, Urdu 5%, Gujarati 5%, Kannada 4%, Malayalam 3%, Oriya 3%, Punjabi 3%, Assamese 1%, Maithili 1%, other 6%

TYPE OF GOVERNMENT: Federal parliamentary republic

CURRENT LEADER: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

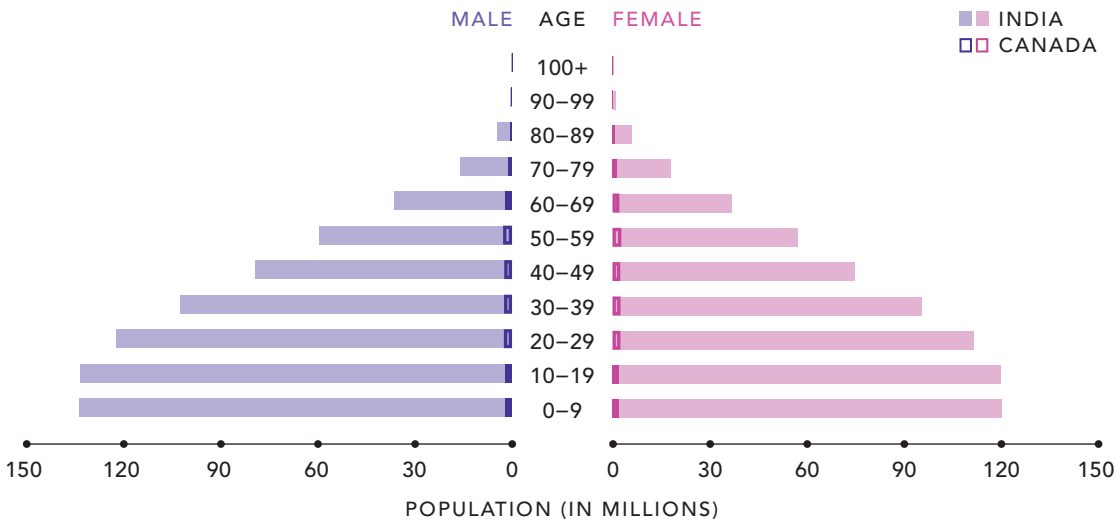
Source: CIA World Fact Book

PEOPLE & CULTURE



Source: CIA World Fact Book

POPULATION PYRAMID



Source: CIA World Fact Book

INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

ACTIVE INTERNET USERS: 34% of population

AVERAGE DAILY INTERNET USE: 7.4 hours

ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USERS: 19% of population

AVERAGE DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA USE: 2.6 hours

Source: We Are Social

ECONOMY

GDP: C$3.0 trillion

GDP PER-CAPITA: C$2,284

CURRENCY: Indian Rupee

MAJOR EXPORTS & IMPORTS:

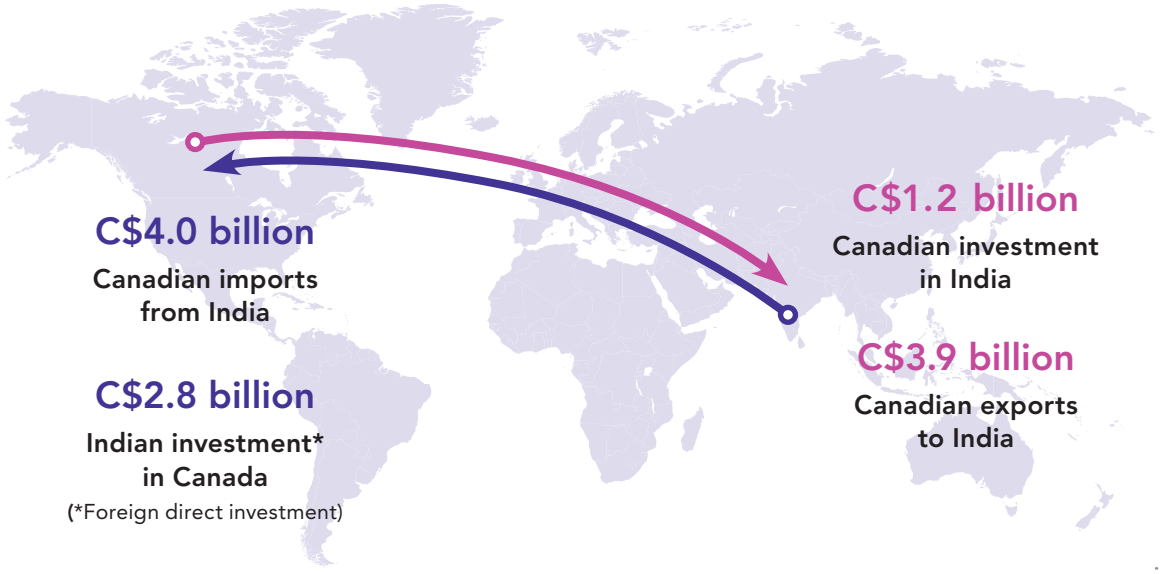
Exports: petroleum products, precious stones, vehicles, machinery, iron and steel, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, cereals, apparel

Imports: crude oil, precious stones, machinery, chemicals, fertilizer, plastics, iron and steel

Source: High Commission of Canada to India & CIA World Fact Book

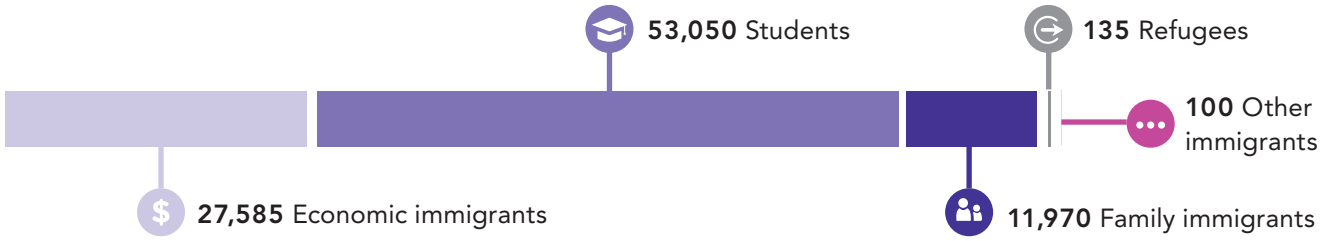
LINKS TO CANADA

TRADE, INVESTMENT IN 2016:



Source: High Commission of Canada to India

IMMIGRANTS FROM INDIA TO CANADA IN 2016*:
(*does not include tourists)



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

NOTABLE DATES

HISTORICAL

Republic Day

January 26, 1950 was the day India's Constitution came into force, completing the country's transition to becoming an independent republic after decades of colonization by the British. The day is now a national holiday, known as Republic Day, and includes many organized events and celebrations such as large military parades in the capital city of New Delhi.

More on Republic Day:
Republic of India born, HISTORY, http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/republic-of-india-born

CULTURAL HOLIDAY

Diwali

Diwali, also referred as Dīvali, Dīpāwali, Deepavali, or Dipabali, is a festival of lights celebrated on the 15th day of the Hindu month of Kartika. Diwali usually falls in October or November and may last for up to five days. The main theme is the triumph of light (good) over darkness (evil). Many people decorate their homes and workplaces with tiny electric lights or small clay oil lamps. Bowls of water with candles and flowers floating on the surface are also popular decorations.

More on Diwali:
Diwali, *National Geographic Kids*, http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/diwali/#diwali_candles.jpg

Diwali: Festival of Lights, *National Geographic*, http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/diwali-lights-festival

CURRENT EVENT

Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

From November 26 to 29, 2008, a group of gunmen conducted multiple, coordinated attacks across Mumbai, India's largest city. Almost 200 people were killed and hundreds more were injured by the attackers. These attacks took place at the city's main tourist and business areas, including hotels, cafes, and also at a hospital. India blamed the attacks on militants from neighbouring Pakistan.

More on the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks:
Mumbai Massacre Background Information, *PBS*, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/mumbai-massacre-background-information/502/

HONOURABLE MENTION

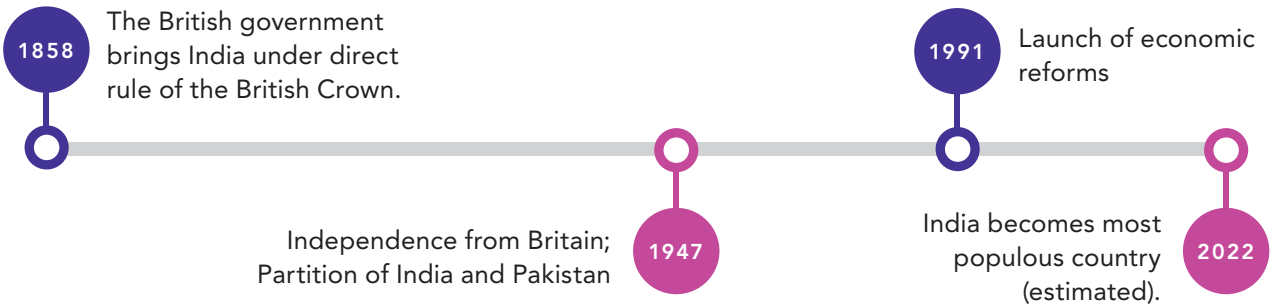
Gandhi's Birthday

October 2 marks the anniversary of the birth in 1869 of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, commonly known as Gandhi. This day is a national holiday to remember his contributions to India's struggle for independence from its British colonizers. Various events are held to commemorate the day, such as prayer services, ceremonies, and tributes, as well as art exhibitions, essay competitions, film showings, and book readings on Gandhi's life and achievements.

More on Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti:
Nation pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on 146th birth anniversary, *The Hindu*, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/mahatma-gandhi-146th-birth-anniversary/article7715444.ece

Biography: Mahatma Gandhi, *HISTORY*, http://www.history.co.uk/topics/biography/mahatma-gandhi

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS



Source: Public Holidays & BBC

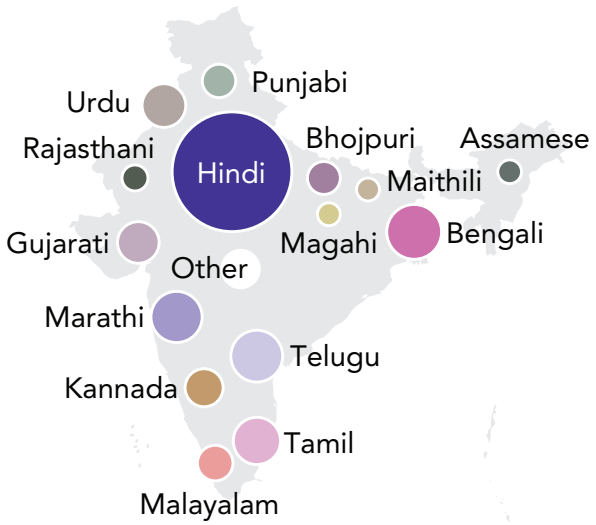
LANGUAGE AND POLITICS

India is sometimes described as more like a continent than a country. One reason is its linguistic diversity, with 22 official languages that are recognized by the Constitution and used in different regions by state governments. There are also more than 100 languages that are not official, but have more than 10,000 speakers. Some of these are classified as "vulnerable" or "endangered" because fewer and fewer people are speaking them.

Only two languages, Hindi and English, are used by the Government of India under the Official Languages Act, 1963. But the status of these two 'national' languages is complicated. Hindi has more speakers than any other Indian language; 422 million people, or 41% of the population, speak it as their first language. In 2014, the national government directed the country's civil servants to prioritize Hindi over English on their websites and social media. Their rationale was that Hindi is an Indian language, whereas English is not.

Some Indians, especially in non-Hindi speaking regions in the south, are wary of the government promoting Hindi. They believe that making Hindi to the sole language used by the national government would give Hindi speakers in the north an advantage, whereas English is as an 'equalizer' because it is no one's first language, and therefore levels the playing field (see "Comment" article below).

Languages of India



Location of language name on map not necessarily accurate depiction of where the language is spoken.

Source: Census India

One thing is certain—India's complicated linguistic landscape creates complicated politics with a complicated history.

Want to learn more?

- Comment: Hindi or English? The Politics of Language in India, http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/10/comment-hindi-or-english-politics-language-india
- Learning with the Times: India Doesn't Have Any 'National Language,' http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Learning-with-the-Times-India-doesnt-have-any-national-language/articleshow/5234047.cms
- Celebrating India's Linguistic Diversity, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/shashi-tharoor/shashi-on-sunday/Celebrating-Indias-linguistic-diversity/articleshow/3346890.cms
- (video: 2:24) India's Demand for English Language Growing, http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35003125
- India's New 'English Only' Generation, https://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/indias-new-english-only-generation/?_r=0

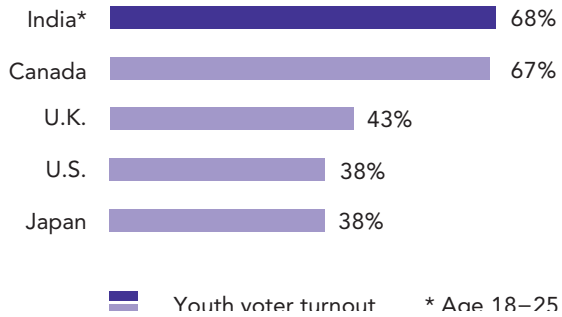
INDIA'S YOUTH VOTERS

India is the world's largest democracy; in its most recent general elections in 2014, 814 million people were eligible to vote. India is also one of the world's youngest countries, with roughly half its population under the age of 30 (see population pyramid, page 2). Unsurprisingly, some of India's political parties have tried to win over the youth vote by fielding younger candidates—India's major political parties are traditionally dominated by older leaders—and by connecting with them through social media.

The general issues that animated many voters in the 2014 election included government inefficiency, corruption, crime, inflation, and economic growth. India's youth voters shared many of these and related concerns, especially government corruption, the safety of women, unemployment, and education.

An interesting new dimension in future elections in India is the participation of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs): Indian citizens who have migrated to other countries temporarily, such as for work or education. There are an estimated 11.4 million NRIs around the world, including 184,000 in Canada. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has been trying to increase awareness among these voters through the "Every Indian Vote Counts" digital campaign.

General Election Youth Voter Turnout (18–24)



Sources: *The Hindu*, Ipsos MORI, United States Census Bureau, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Want to learn more?

- India's Youth in the World's Biggest Election, The Asia Foundation, http://asiafoundation.org/2014/04/09/indias-youth-in-the-worlds-biggest-election/
- India Election Diary 2014, United Nations Development Programme, https://undp-india.exposure.co/india-election-diary-2014-1
- Are You an Overseas Indian Willing to Vote in Indian Elections? Here is Something for You, https://factly.in/overseas-indian-willing-vote-indian-elections-something/
- 90,000 Per Seat: Young India Could Swing Elections 2014, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/90000-per-seat-young-india-could-swing-elections-2014/
- In India, 150 Million People Will Be Voting For The First Time This Year, http://time.com/65071/india-elections-youth/
- Governance in India: Corruption, http://www.cfr.org/corruption-and-bribery/governance-india-corruption/p31823

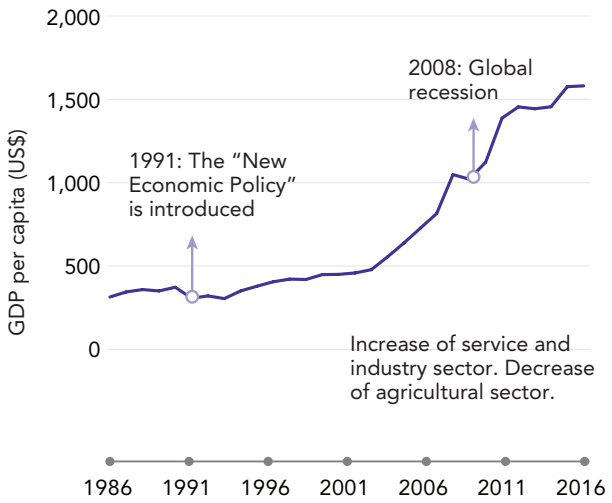
INDIA'S GROWING ECONOMY

India has one of the world's fastest-growing economies. In 1991, its government introduced a set of reforms called the "New Economic Policy." India has been in the top 10% of countries in terms of the rate of its economic growth. In recent years, a major source of this growth is its services sector, which contributed to 57% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013-14. Information technology (IT) and related services are especially significant.

In addition, India has made significant strides in human development. For example, in 1990, India's infant mortality rate (the rate at which children die before they reach the age of one) was 88 deaths per 1,000 live births. As of 2015, that number declined to 40. In 1991, its adult literacy rate was less than half the population, at 48%. Today, that number has climbed to 72%.

Despite the high rates of growth and human development gains, not everyone in India is benefitting equally. Like so many other countries, India is experiencing a widening socio-economic gap, especially between rural and urban areas. Some rural areas still lack basic infrastructure such as indoor plumbing and electricity, and structural problems such as transportation networks make it more difficult for rural areas to develop. Cities, meanwhile, have received most of the benefits of economic development, including benefits from global imports and access to the world distribution channels.

GDP Per Capita 1986–2014



Source: The World Bank

Want to learn more?

- Economic Reforms in India since 1991, http://www.importantindia.com/1859/economic-reforms-in-india-since-1991/
- Growth in India, http://go.worldbank.org/PHG41GT9I0
- India's Economy In Numbers, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/india-economy-in-numbers/
- IMF Warns of Growing Inequality in India and China, http://www.livemint.com/Politics/mTf8d5oOqzMwavzaGy4yMN/IMF-warns-of-growing-inequality-in-India-and-China.html
- China, India Among Nations with Highest Levels of Income Inequality: IMF, http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/hindi/en/article/2016/05/14/china-india-among-nations-highest-levels-income-inequality-imf
- Gap Widening Between Rural and Urban India, *The Hindu*, http://www.thehindu.com/business/gap-widening-betweenrural-and-urban-india/article7785291.ece

SOURCES

Pages 1–4

CIA World Fact Book: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html

High Commission of Canada in India: http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/india-inde/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/fs_india-inde_fd.aspx?lang=eng

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/

BBC: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12641776

Time and Date: http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/india

National Geographic: http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/india-facts/

Embassy of India (Budapest, Hungry): http://www.indianembassy.hu/?page_id=1833

We Are Social: http://wearesocial.com/sg/special-reports/digital-social-mobile-in-apac-in-2015

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Language and Politics

SBS: http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/10/comment-hindi-or-english-politics-language-india

The Times of India: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Learning-with-the-Times-India-doesnt-have-any-national-language/articleshow/5234047.cms

The Times of India: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/shashi-tharoor/shashi-on-sunday/Celebrating-Indias-linguistic-diversity/articleshow/3346890.cms

India's Youth Voters

Indian Express: http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/90000-per-seat-young-india-could-swing-elections-2014/

TIME: http://time.com/65071/india-elections-youth/

Asia Foundation: http://asiafoundation.org/2014/04/09/indias-youth-in-the-worlds-biggest-election/

India's Growing Economy

SBS: http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/hindi/en/article/2016/05/14/china-india-among-nations-highest-levels-income-inequality-imf

Important India: http://www.importantindia.com/1859/economic-reforms-in-india-since-1991/

The Hindu: http://www.thehindu.com/business/gap-widening-betweenrural-and-urban-india/article7785291.ece

Live Mint: http://www.livemint.com/Politics/mTf8d5oOqzMwavzaGy4yMN/IMF-warns-of-growing-inequality-in-India-and-China.html

ABOUT ASIA PROFILES

Asia Profiles introduces you to some basic facts, background, and points of interest of the countries and territories of the Asia Pacific. It is part of the Asia Pacific Curriculum initiative by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.