

Immigrants in the
Twin Cities:
A Snapshot
2nd Edition

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Introduction

In recent years, there has seemed to be a dramatic increase in the immigrant population of the Twin Cities. There is an enormous demand for information about these new arrivals, including how many are here, why they chose to live in the Twin Cities, and what economic, social, and cultural characteristics they possess. *Immigrants in the Twin Cities: A Snapshot* attempts to consolidate this information on five of the most visible immigrant populations in the Twin Cities: Hispanics, Hmong, Somalis, Russians, and Tibetans.

Disclaimers

Exact information regarding these populations will not be available until the complete results of the 2000 Census are released, creating gaps in our knowledge until at least 2002. Until then, the information that is available will be either dated or based on estimates. Currently, the information that we have available is broken down by race and Hispanic origin. What we do not have is information regarding citizenship status.

It should be recognized that not all of the Hispanic, Hmong, Russian Jew, Tibetan, or Somali populations are immigrants. Many members of these populations were born in the United States. The characteristics of native-born members of these populations may differ in significant ways from those of recent immigrants (e.g., their need for English as a Second Language programs). Most, but not all, of the findings in this report are applicable to immigrants and nonimmigrants from these groups.

Information on the cultural characteristics of any subpopulation must always be recognized as generalizations. No statement regarding a racial, ethnic, or cultural group will be universally applicable. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to learn some of the contrasts in beliefs, values, and practices that one might find when dealing with people of differing national origin. Similarly, because different information is available for each immigrant group, not all of the questions and topics are the same throughout the report. The second edition of this report includes sections on Tibetans and Soviet Jews in addition to some minor changes to the first edition text.

Background

Contrary to the common perception, the Twin Cities is not experiencing a flood of immigration, either in comparison with previous historical experience or with other metropolitan areas. In 1990, 6 percent of the Minneapolis population was foreign-born; in 1890, 37 percent was foreign-born. For the entire Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan statistical area in 1990, only 3.5 percent of the population was foreign-born, compared with an average of 9.5 percent for metropolitan areas in the United States (US Bureau of the Census, 1999).

The perception of massive immigration is fueled by the increase that has occurred since 1990 and the unique characteristics of many of the Twin Cities' immigrants. In 1990, there were 113,039 foreign-born residents in Minnesota; from 1990-1996, Minnesota Planning has estimated that the state added 52,563 immigrants. The Twin Cities have among the largest Hmong and Tibetan populations in the United States, and are estimated to have over half of the arrivals from Somalia (Minnesota Planning, 1998; US Bureau of the Census, 1999).

The new immigrant populations tend to settle in metropolitan areas, especially Minneapolis and St. Paul. In the 2000-2001 school year, over one in five (22%) Minneapolis public school students,

and over one in three (37%) St. Paul public school students, reported speaking a language other than English at home (Urban Coalition).

National data on the general immigrant population can provide some hints regarding the situation facing Twin Cities immigrants. In March, 1997, about 35 percent of the foreign-born were naturalized citizens, and about 65 percent were not citizens. Approximately 35 percent of the foreign-born population over the age of 25 had not completed high school, compared with 16 percent of the comparable native-born population. About 1 in 12 (8.4%) of noncitizen, foreign-born persons in the labor force were unemployed, compared with 4.3 percent of naturalized, foreign-born citizens, and 5.4 percent of the native-born. The poverty rate for the native-born was 13 percent in March, 1997, compared to 10 percent for naturalized citizens and 27 percent for foreign-born noncitizens (Schmidley & Alvarado, 1998).

For a more detailed background on immigration legislation and history as well as a glossary of terms please see appendices A and B.

The Hispanic Population in the Twin Cities: An Overview

◆ What attracted Hispanics to the Twin Cities?

Focus group respondents in a study conducted by Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) reported a variety of motivations, including the attraction of work opportunities, to join other family members, to take advantage of the quality of life in Minnesota, and to enjoy a growing Latino community (HACER, 1998).

◆ How many Hispanics are in the Twin Cities?

The newest data released by the United States Census 2000 indicates that there are 143,382 persons of Hispanic or Latino origin living in Minnesota (citizenship status unspecified). Sixty-eight percent live in the 10 - country metro area (defined as Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Washington, and Wright Counties). Fifty-one percent of the state's Hispanic and Latino population lives in Hennepin (32%) and Ramsey (19%) Counties. Since 1990 the Hispanic population in Hennepin County quadrupled and in Ramsey County it doubled.

◆ What are the educational characteristics of this population?

A 1995 study by the Wilder Foundation indicated that 1 percent of the metro-area adult Hispanics surveyed had never attended school; 24 percent had less than a high school diploma; 25 percent were high school graduates or had obtained a GED; 23 percent had some college or vocational/technical school; 15 percent had completed their college degree; and 12 percent had more than a four-year degree (Chase, Zerger, & Zaragoza, 1995).

◆ Employment information

According to a 1995 Wilder Foundation study, over 9 in 10 metro-area Hispanic households with at least one adult with a high school diploma or GED had one or more adults who were employed. Approximately 8 in 10 metro-area Hispanic households which did not have an adult member with a high-school diploma or GED reported having one or more working adults (Chase, Zerger, & Zaragoza, 1995). Along with other immigrant groups, their reputation for being hard workers in the community can perhaps be seen most visibly in their entrepreneurial activities around areas such as District Sol in St. Paul, and the Lake Street/Chicago Avenue area of Minneapolis.

◆ Poverty and income issues

Within Minneapolis, approximately 80 percent of Hispanic public school students were eligible for free or reduced price school lunches during the 1998-99 school year, compared to 28 percent of white students. In St. Paul, 72 percent of Hispanic students were eligible, compared to 32 percent of white students (Urban Coalition).

In a 1995 Wilder Foundation study of the Hispanic population, one-third of the respondents reported an annual income of less than \$20,000; 39 percent reported an annual income between \$20,000 and \$50,000; and 21 percent reported a household income of \$50,000 or more (8% didn't know or refused to answer) (Chase, Zerger, & Zaragoza, 1995).

◆ **English skills of this population**

According to a 2000 Wilder Foundation report, 2 in 5 respondents specified that they can speak English well, and 1 in 10 were currently taking English classes (Wilder, 2000). Focus group respondents in a 1998 study conducted by HACER reported that education was their most crucial need, particularly in English. The lack of English skills on the part of parents and of Spanish on the part of teachers and administrators was noted as a hindrance to children’s school achievement and development (Chase, Zerger, & Zaragoza, 1995; HACER, 1998).

◆ **Contrasting beliefs, values, and practices**

Maria Zuniga (1998) from the San Diego State University School of Social Work has highlighted the following differences between Latinos and the mainstream culture:

Latino	White Mainstream Culture
Collective orientation	Individual orientation
Interdependence	Independence
Collective, group identity	Individual identity
Cooperation	Competition
Saving face	Being direct
Relaxed with time	Time sensitive
Emphasis on interpersonal relations	Emphasis on task orientation
Spiritual/magical belief orientation	Rational/empirical belief orientation
More recent agrarian influence	More urbanized/industrialized mode
Tendency toward more patriarchal family structure	Tendency toward more democratic family structure
More relaxed expectations for child development	Strong expectations for child development
More overt respect for the elderly	Less value/respect toward the elderly
Extended family system more pronounced	Nuclear family system more pronounced
Death more ritualized	Death less ritualized

◆ **Cultural Courtesies and Customs**

According to Zuniga (1998), it is generally inappropriate for people working with Latino families to:

- Speak to the wife before speaking to the husband when both are present
- Not ask whether the father is in agreement with the recommendations or plans, even if he is not at the session or meeting
- Decline a beverage or food offering
- Begin on work or tasks immediately, before any informal and relaxed exchange with the client has taken place
- Use a tone of voice that is harsh and authoritarian
- Show impatience or present themselves in a very hurried manner
- Sit in a slouched or extremely relaxed (disrespectful) manner
- Use teasing to break the ice
- Laugh at a cultural artifact or ritual or dismiss its importance to the family

The Hmong Population in the Twin Cities: An Overview

◆ What attracted the Hmong to the Twin Cities?

The Laotian Hmong assisted the CIA for two decades in the fight against Communism in Southeast Asia. Following the end of the Vietnam War, the Hmong were forced to flee to Thailand to save their lives, and were resettled in refugee camps. The Hmong then began moving from those camps into resettlement centers in the various countries willing to accept them. The Catholic Church and Lutheran Social Service sponsored the Hmong to emigrate to St. Paul as well as to Fresno, California, and these first immigrants were followed by their family members. The past few years have seen a significant increase in secondary migration, as Hmong who initially resettled in California and elsewhere migrated to Minnesota to join extended family members and take advantage of favorable economic conditions (Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc., 1999; Meyer, 1998).

◆ How many Hmong are in the Twin Cities?

Hmong leaders reported that there were approximately 60,000 Hmong in the Twin Cities as of 1998, with about 10,000 to 15,000 moving in during the preceding year. Analysts estimate that two-thirds of this population resides in St. Paul. Minnesota Planning has estimated that there are 60,000 Hmong living in the entire state, but notes that most of Minnesota's immigrants are concentrated either in the Twin Cities metropolitan area or in Olmsted County (Rochester). Hmong are the second largest ethnic group in Minnesota (after Hispanics). Over 9 in 10 (93%) of the state's public school students who report speaking Hmong at home are in either Ramsey or Hennepin County (Taylor, 1998; Minnesota Planning, 1999). The Twin Cities is home to 85-90 percent of the Hmong in Minnesota; 60-75 percent of those individuals live in St. Paul.

School language data indicate that the Hmong population is continuing to grow. From 1990 to 1995, there was an increase of over 80 percent in the number of Minnesota public school students speaking Hmong at home (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning). During the 2000-01 school year, almost 11 percent of Minneapolis public school students and 27 percent of St. Paul public school students reported speaking Hmong at home. The number of Minneapolis public school students speaking Hmong at home increased from 3,412 in 1995-96 to 5,209 in 2000-01. In Minneapolis, most of these students reside in the Camden or Near North neighborhoods; in St. Paul, most reside in the Greater East Side, Dayton's Bluff, Payne-Phalen, North End, and Thomas-Dale planning districts (Urban Coalition).

◆ What are the educational characteristics of this population?

As of 1990, fewer than 4 in 10 (38.5%) of the Hmong adult population had at least a high school education. Over 4 in 10 (43.1%) had no formal education. However, nearly one-third (31.3%) reported that they were currently enrolled in school (Hmong American Partnership, 1993). A recent Wilder Foundation (2000) report found that 34 percent of the Hmong respondents had at least a high school education, and 6 percent had a four-year college degree or higher.

◆ Employment information

According to the 1990 Census, over 65 percent of Hmong adults are not in the labor force, and 30 percent report that they are employed. Approximately one-third (31%) of those not in the labor force reported being in school. The highest labor force participation was among those who arrived in the U.S. between 1975 and 1979, and the lowest participation was among those who arrived in the U.S. between 1987 and 1990 (Hmong American Partnership, 1993). The Hmong community has been crucial to revitalizing many neighborhoods in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Their entrepreneurial activities have played a key part in the Frogtown area of St. Paul.

◆ Poverty and income issues

Poverty rates are extremely high among the Hmong. According to the 1990 Census, just under two-thirds (64.5%) of the Hmong lived at or below the poverty line. Nearly three-fourths (72.2%) of Hmong children ages 18 and under were living below the poverty line (Hmong American Partnership, 1993). According to the Hmong American Partnership, factors influencing this include language barriers, high cost of health insurance, lack of affordable childcare, low wages, lack of education, and the shortage of affordable housing.

During the 1998-99 school year, 89 percent of school-aged Hmong children in the St. Paul public schools, and 94 percent of Hmong children in Minneapolis public schools, were eligible for free or reduced price school lunches. In contrast, 32 percent of white children in St. Paul and 28 percent of white children in Minneapolis were eligible (Urban Coalition).

◆ English skills of this population

A recent study by the Wilder Foundation (2000) found that 24 percent of the Hmong respondents felt that they either speak and understand English very well or with little trouble. Forty percent reported that they cannot speak English, 37 percent reported that they could speak English a little bit, and 17 percent of those that were not fully confident were currently taking classes. It has been reported that parents who do not know English may become dependent on their children to accomplish many important tasks, undermining their role in the family and increasing their vulnerability (Hmong American Partnership, 1993).

◆ **Contrasting beliefs, values, and practices**

The following table lists some of the distinct historical contrasts between traditional Asian and white mainstream cultural orientations documented by Sam Chan of the California School of Professional Psychology (1998):

Asian	White Mainstream Culture
Contemplative, holistic thinking	Analytic, linear thinking
Fatalistic	Personal control over environment and one's fate
Stoicism, patience	Optimism, eagerness to take action
Tradition, living with the past	Change, future orientation
Self-denial, self-discipline	Self-assertiveness, self-gratification
Spiritualism, detachment	Materialism
Group welfare, public consciousness	Self-actualization, privacy
Hierarchy, role rigidity, status defined by ascription (birthright, inheritance, family name, age, sex)	Equality, role flexibility, status defined by achievement
Conformity	Challenge or question authority
Cooperation, nonconfrontation, and reconciliation	Competition, aggressiveness
Family solidarity, responsibility, and harmony	Individual pursuit of happiness, fulfillment, and self-expression
Children are extensions of parents	Children are individuals
Indirect Expression Indirect, nonverbal Formal Goal oriented Emotionally controlled Self-effacing, modest	Direct Expression Explicit, verbal Informal Spontaneous Emotionally expressive Self-promoting, egocentric

◆ Cultural Courtesies and Customs

These are some of the behaviors and expectations that Chan advocates when interacting with selected Asian American populations:

- Greet family members in order of age, beginning with the oldest and typically the male members first.
- Use Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss, or other appropriate title with the family name (surname) for Chinese and Koreans and with the individual's first (given) name for Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese.
- Women typically do not shake hands with men, and younger people do not shake hands with an elder or significantly older persons.
- In general, direct physical contact (particularly between men and women) should be avoided.
- Avoid prolonged gazing or expecting direct/sustained eye contact in formal interactions and with individuals who are relative strangers.
- Touching the head (including a child's) is often considered threatening or offensive by Cambodians, Lao, and selected Buddhists because of the spiritual belief that it is the most sacred part of the body.
- Waving arms to elicit attention and pointing or beckoning with an index finger are considered to be signs of contempt.
- Winking or batting one's eyes at another is impolite.
- Avoid talking or laughing loudly or otherwise engaging in demonstrative behavior.
- In an initial encounter or first meeting, refrain from asking personal questions of the other party too quickly, but be prepared for people to ask personal questions of you.
- Avoid talking about what people think of the government and current foreign policy issues or internal political events/affairs pertaining to their native country.
- Removing one's shoes before entering a house is considered appropriate for many Asian groups.
- Expect to be offered food or drinks, and partake of the hospitality.

The Somali Population in the Twin Cities: An Overview

◆ What attracted Somalis to the Twin Cities?

Somalis emigrated to the United States to escape clan warfare that erupted after the collapse of President Siad Barre's totalitarian regime in 1991. The initial wave was attracted to Minnesota by the presence of food-processing jobs. Others were sent directly from refugee camps or were attracted from other states by job opportunities and the growing Somali community (Tomlinson, 1997; Tillotson, 1998).

◆ How many Somalis are in the Twin Cities?

It is difficult to determine the number of Somalis living in the Twin Cities. Minnesota's Department of Human Services has estimated that there are 15,000 Somalis living in Minnesota, but Minnesota Planning has noted that this number is the rough equivalent of all Somalis who have come to the United States since 1986. Minnesota Planning estimates that there are approximately 6,000 Somalis in the state, with the population increasing by about 1,000 per year (Ronningen, 1999).

According to the Somali Community of Minnesota, four of every five Somalis in the state live in Minneapolis, with 80 percent of this Minneapolis contingent in South Minneapolis. Somali Community estimates that 70 percent of Minnesota's adult Somalis are single and between 20 and 40 years of age. Since many men were killed during the war, many Somalis in Minnesota are single women with five or more children (Somali Community of Minnesota [b]).

In 2000-01, approximately 2,123 (or 4.3% of total) children in Minneapolis public schools were identified as speaking Somali at home. Most of those students were in the Central, University, Powderhorn, and Phillips neighborhoods. This is a 77 percent increase since 1998-99. There were 415 (or 1% of total) public school students in St. Paul who spoke Somali at home in 2000-01, with almost half of them living in the St. Anthony Park planning district. This is a 235 percent increase since 1998-99 (Urban Coalition).

Most (91%) of the African refugees settling in Minnesota between 1972 and 1997 arrived during the 1993-1997 period. The nearly 10,000 African refugees settling in Minnesota between 1993 and 1997 constitute over half of the total number of refugees settling during that period (these estimates include U.S.-born children, and include refugees resettled originally in other states that have subsequently moved to Minnesota) (Wilder Foundation, 1998).

The number of immigrants to Minnesota from Africa more than tripled between 1990 and 1996, from 518 in 1990 to 1,735 in 1996 (this is initial immigration only – where new arrivals to the U.S. indicate their ultimate destination – and does not include secondary immigration). In 1996, more immigrants to Minnesota came from Africa than any other continent, except Asia, and most of these African immigrants were from Somalia. Over 95% of Somali people in Minnesota are refugees (Minnesota Planning, 1998).

◆ Concerns facing this population

Somali immigrants have several concerns that need to be recognized by service providers. Training opportunities need to be located in the community, near public transportation sites.

There is a dearth of opportunities for education about the U.S. legal system, including rights and responsibilities under federal, state, and local laws. An audio-visual format in Somali language is needed for a significant portion of the population, who are functionally illiterate. Resources for interpretation and translation in dealings with police and courts are currently inadequate (Somali Community of Minnesota [a]).

Data regarding the percentage of Somali children eligible for free or reduced price school lunches indicate that poverty may be a major concern for these immigrants. In the 1998-99 school year, 93 percent of Somali public school students in Minneapolis were eligible for free or reduced price school lunches, and nearly all of these were eligible for free lunches. By contrast, only 28 percent of white students in Minneapolis were eligible for free or reduced price school lunches (Urban Coalition).

◆ Information on beliefs, values, and practices

According to Mohamed Essa, director of the Somali Community of Minnesota, the role of women as authority figures in U.S. society is different from Somalia, where few women work outside the home and men are not accustomed to taking instruction from women. Touching between members of the opposite sex (such as shaking hands) is considered rude (Tomlinson, 1997; Somali Community of Minnesota [c]).

Somalis practice corporal punishment, and many complain that child protection workers are too quick to take away their children (Tomlinson, 1997).

Somali tradition requires female circumcision of infants or young children, believing that it ensures a woman's virginity, enhances men's sexual pleasure, and promotes marital fidelity. The practice is outlawed in the United States, and parents as well as practitioners can be prosecuted in Minnesota. The practice leaves women with lifelong pain, and causes bladder and kidney infections, pain during menstruation and sexual intercourse, and intensification of the pain of childbirth. The State Department estimates that 98 percent of Somali women have undergone its most extreme form in their home country. No cases have been reported in Minnesota, but the subject is not addressed publicly due to its illegality (Miller, 1998; Tomlinson, 1997).

Virtually all (99.9%) of Somalis are Muslim. During the day, many are required to pray several times. Muslims do not eat pork or pork by-products. Along with learning a new language and a new cultural system, they are dealing with physical and emotional scars from their experiences in Somalia and the refugee camps (Somali Confederation of Minnesota).

The Russian Jewish Population in the Twin Cities: An Overview

◆ Sociodemographic characteristics

Three of the most prominent characteristics of the Russian Jewish population are age, family structure, and patterns of support. Russian Jews are the oldest refugee group entering the United States, and the significant number of older persons among their population yields distinct patterns of adjustment. While on one hand, older persons have had trouble learning English and finding employment, on the other hand, they are able to help with providing childcare as well as fostering a strong sense of community. One characteristic of American culture that has been problematic for Russian Jewish families is the independence of children. In the former Soviet Union parents were highly involved in their children's lives. However, after coming to the US they have found it difficult given youth independence in the American culture (Gold, 1996).

◆ How many Russian Jews are in Minnesota?

Minnesota Planning (1999) estimated in 1999 that there were 5,000-7,000 Russians living in Minnesota, most of which are Russian Jews. Jewish Family Service of Saint Paul (2000) stated in their 1999 annual report that resettlement continued at the same rate as in 1998 with 33 new Russian Jews arriving per year. A majority of the Russian immigrants in the Twin Cities come from Belarus and St. Petersburg (A. Fridland, personal communication, November 3, 2000).

◆ Why did Russian Jews leave Russia?

Since the mid 19th-century, Jews living in the former Soviet Union have faced severe restrictions and anti-Jewish sentiments. Their outsider status was institutionalized by having their nationality recorded as "Jewish" on passports regardless of where they were born. They have been restricted to particular geographic regions and excluded from certain occupational opportunities. Their ability to emigrate or even travel abroad was restricted until the late 1980s. In addition, they have been subjected to violent attacks and life-long conscription; furthermore, beginning in the 1960s, the Soviet government banned all (not just Jewish) forms of religious activities and training (Gold, 1997).

The major political changes in the past two decades have fostered a new openness in Russian politics and society. For the first time in 70 years, Russian Jews are able to freely engage in religious activities. However, the current climate is also ripe with economic distress, social disorder, and ultranationalism. These characteristics have led to a setting that is primed for anti-Semitic outbreaks, which are becoming increasingly frequent (Gold, 1997).

When making the decision to leave the former Soviet Union, Russian Jews were faced with two options, Israel or the United States. Initially, most went to Israel. However, over time more have chosen to come to the United States. Reasons cited for the US preference include: greater economic opportunity, a higher level of national security, and no compulsory military service. Many also felt more comfortable in the secular and pluralistic society of the United States (Israel was considered by many to be too orthodox) (Gold, 1996).

◆ What language do Russian Jews speak?

While all are Russian speaking, most also speak the language of the republics where they used to live (i.e., Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Uzbek). Native languages of Yiddish and Ladino are also sometimes spoken at home, although typically only the oldest generation of Russian Jews can still understand and speak these older languages (Cross Cultural Health Care Program, 1996).

◆ What are the educational characteristics of Soviet Jews?

Russian Jews have been noted for their high levels of education; it is one of their most important values. Their average education level is about 13.5 years (which is the highest among all immigrant groups entering the United States). School-age children tend to excel in United States schools: Both reading and math scores for Russian Jews in New York schools were much higher than the average for all students in New York schools, including American-born students (Gold, 1997).

◆ Employment characteristics

Russian Jews are particularly experienced and highly educated in professional and technical fields; many are involved in engineering, real estate, small businesses, and self-employment (Gold, 1997). They also have an unusually high proportion of women employed in professional and technical fields. A recent survey showed that 67 percent of Russian Jewish women in the United States were engineers, technicians, or other kinds of professionals prior to immigration. In contrast, only 16.5 percent of American women work in these fields. Data from the 1990 census shows that Soviet Jews also have the highest level of self-employment of all ethnic groups in the United States. After an initial adjustment period most Russian Jews are able to find good-paying jobs. However, as with other highly educated immigrants, they frequently are not able to reach their previous level of occupational prestige (Cross Cultural Health Care Program, 1996; Gold, 1997).

◆ English language

Russian Jews have made excellent progress with the English language, although, as with other immigrant groups, the older people have had the most difficult time. While only about 50 percent spoke no English when they arrived in the United States, within a few years more than two-thirds rated themselves as having a “good” or “better” command of the English language. Russian Jews also have very high enrollment (50-70%) in English language classes (Gold, 1997).

◆ Contrasting beliefs, values, and practices

Once the Russian Jews arrived in the United States and the adaptation process began, several friction points emerged between the émigrés and the American-born Jewish community. Russian Jews have expressed apprehension towards formal organizations because of their past experiences in the Soviet Union (Gold, 1997). Therefore, when they arrived in the United States

they were uncomfortable engaging in the activities designed for them by formal Jewish organizations, and some saw the organizations as extensions of the United States government. American-born Jews were also surprised, and sometimes upset, when the émigrés did not exhibit a strong impulse to connect with Judaism and/or seek affiliation with the Jewish institutions. An additional cultural difference is that Russian Jews tend to be politically conservative and when naturalized tend to join the Republican party, which is in contrast to American Jews who tend to generally be politically liberal (Handelman, 1998).

One of the most complex issues of the Russian Jews is in regards to their Jewish identity. Russian Jews formerly practiced Orthodox Judaism. However, until recently the government prohibited all religious practices. As a result, most frequently it is only older generations that now maintain contact with their religion. Those that are 30-50 years old are almost totally atheistic, and many have little knowledge about Jewish religion or history (Cross Cultural Health Care Program, 1996).

While many have had very little formal Jewish education, a deep feeling of connectedness and strong ethnic identification as Jews is common. Perhaps as a result of years of anti-Semitic sentiments in the Soviet Union, most have a very private and personal approach to Judaism that does not lead them to participate in organized Jewish activities. In a national survey of Russian Jews, 60 percent felt that the meaning of "Jewish" was cultural and 30 percent felt it was religious (Gold, 1997).

Russian Jews have been noted for their high rates of naturalization. They have naturalized more rapidly than other refugee groups, such as Cubans and Southeast Asians, who have entered the United States since 1975. This has provided them with opportunities for political participation, eligibility for schools, scholarships, and higher priority ranking when assisting relatives to gain entry into the United States.

The Tibetan Population in the Twin Cities: An Overview

◆ Why did Tibetans come to the United States?

In 1949, the newly formed communist government in China sent troops to invade Tibet. A treaty was imposed in May of that year acknowledging Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. "As the Chinese consolidated their control, they repeatedly violated the treaty and open resistance to their rule grew, leading to the National Uprising in 1959 and the flight into India of Tibet's head of state and spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama" (The Office of Tibet, 1996). Along with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 100,000 Tibetans also fled. Large numbers of Tibetans are now residing in India and Nepal (Tibet Online, 1996-2000).

During the 20 years following the uprising there was severe destruction of Tibet's culture and oppression of its people. A document produced by the Tibetan Government in Exile claims that 1.2 million Tibetans, one-fifth of the country's population, died as a result of China's policies. Many more have suffered in prisons and labor camps. Exile sources have estimated that up to 260,000 people died in prisons and labor camps between 1950 and 1984 (Tibet Online, 1996-2000).

The current situation in Tibet has become increasingly tense. The influx of Chinese continues to increase and peaceful demonstrations in Lhasa and elsewhere continue to take place despite the strong and often violent reaction of Chinese security forces. Unarmed demonstrators were shot without warning by Chinese police on five occasions between 1987 and 1989. Chinese has replaced Tibetan as the official language of the country and religious practice was forbidden until 1979 (Tibet Online, 1996-2000). More than 6,000 monasteries, temples, and other cultural and historical buildings were destroyed and their contents pillaged (The Office of Tibet, 1996).

On October 27, 1990 the United States Congress passed the United States Immigration Bill, granting a special, one-time allocation of immigrant visas to 1,000 Tibetan nationals living as refugees in India and Nepal. This allowed them to come to the United States under the status of "immigrants," and they were referred to as "displaced Tibetans" rather than "refugees." The 1,000 people that came to the United States were men and women between the ages of 18 and 45. The selection process used by the Tibetan Government in Exile was set up so that a broad spectrum of Tibetan society was represented. These Tibetans settled in 21 cities across the United States, and each was supported by private groups under the direction of the Tibetan Resettlement Project (Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota, 2000).

◆ What attracted Tibetans to the Twin Cities?

According to the Tibetan American Foundation, "Tibetans moved to Minneapolis and St. Paul because of job opportunities, good living conditions, as well as the openness and warmth of the people of Minnesota."

◆ How many Tibetans are in Minnesota?

In the Twin Cities, the supporting agency was the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM) which became registered as a nonprofit agency in 1992. Between April 1992 and June 1993, 160 Tibetans settled in the Twin Cities, making it the largest Tibetan settlement in the

United States. Seventy-five percent of the Tibetans were previously living in India and 25 percent in Nepal. In 1996, the first spouses and children began arriving under the family reunification program of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Today most of the families have been reunited.

Official and unofficial estimates of the current number of Tibetans in Minnesota vary greatly. Minnesota Planning estimates that there are between 400 and 600 Tibetans living in Minnesota (1999). TAFM estimates that population numbers are approximately 900. The Tibetan community of Minnesota is the second largest in North America (next to New York City), and almost all have arrived since 1992. With very few exceptions they live in the areas of Whittier, Northeast Minneapolis, South Minneapolis, Southeast Minneapolis, Richfield, St. Louis Park, and St. Paul neighborhoods. About 35 percent of the population moved to Minnesota from other parts of the country (TAFM, 2000).

◆ **What are the educational characteristics of this population?**

The Tibetan community considers education a particularly high priority and this is the primary reason that many came to the United States. In June 2000, 23 local Tibetan students graduated from high school. Nineteen of them received academic awards or scholarships toward continuing education. In addition, many adults are currently attending school part-time to improve language skills and job prospects (TAFM, 2000).

◆ **Employment information**

Because of the Tibetans' immigrant status, they had to show that they could be totally self-sufficient prior to ever setting foot in the United States. Three months before arriving they needed to show proof of a sponsor and a full-time, permanent job. The Tibetan community established itself virtually without government assistance, and they have a reputation throughout the community as being hard workers. Most Tibetans worked two or even three jobs preparing for the arrival of their families (TAFM, 2000).

◆ **Information on beliefs, values, and practices**

Tibetans are closely bound to their families and national culture. They are known for their strong work ethic, sense of humor, and deep devotion to religion and education. They practice a form of Buddhism that was inherited from India more than 2,500 years ago. "It interweaves ritual, devotion, meditation, and philosophy in pursuit of the Buddhist ideal of compassionate enlightenment" (TAFM, 2000). Since the seventeenth century, most Tibetans have recognized the Dalai Lama as their most important spiritual and temporal leader. He is believed to be the incarnation of Chenrezig, the Buddha of compassion and the patron deity of Tibet.

The Tibetan language is both spoken and written. Of all of the Asian literatures, Tibetan is one of the most extensive. "Tibetan literature includes poetry, essays, histories, biographies, religious commentaries, novels, and treatises on every branch of traditional knowledge, from painting, to architecture, to law, to politics, to medicine" (TAFM, 2000). In 1997, the leaders of the Tibetan community in Minnesota began a Saturday school to teach young Tibetans about their cultural heritage and history (TAFM, 2000).

◆ Concerns facing this population

The major concerns identified by the Tibetan Community of Minnesota include service barriers such as language, cultural norms, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, and lack of information. Health insurance is also a problem. Most adults have insurance at least for themselves; however, many of the lower level jobs don't cover other family members. As Tibetans are becoming United States citizens they are bringing their parents to the U.S., and generally they are not able to cover them by employer-sponsored health plans (A. Ayrault, personal communication, October 10, 2000).

Appendix A

Immigration Policy

For a complete understanding of immigration policy there are three important areas to become familiar with: legal immigration, humanitarian admissions, and illegal immigration. The primary goals of these policies are:

- ◆ social – family reunification
- ◆ economic – increasing productivity and the standard of living in the United States
- ◆ cultural – encouraging diversity
- ◆ moral – human rights
- ◆ national and economic security – controlling illegal immigration

Humanitarian admissions are guided by the moral of promoting human rights by offering protection to those fleeing persecution. Current legislation regarding humanitarian admissions was primarily set out in the 1980 Refugee Act. Its three main objectives are to: base humanitarian admissions on criteria developed by the United Nations that are internationally recognized; create a predictable and manageable flow of refugees; and include a resettlement program.

The 1980 Refugee Act included two types of humanitarian admissions – refugees and asylees. The principal difference between the two is that refugees apply for admission before entering the United States and applications are processed overseas, while asylees petition to remain in the United States after having entered the country (often illegally). The 1990 Immigration Act created the Temporary Protected Status (TPS). This classification was created with the recognition that under certain circumstances (war or natural disaster) certain nationality groups should be allowed temporary residence in the United States.

Legal immigration is based predominantly on precepts of family unification as well as meeting the labor market's needs. The admissions policies of the United States are to a great extent the product of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. They are meant to promote nondiscriminatory principles and eliminate ethnic biases that controlled immigration before 1965. In general, legal immigration is aimed at addressing the social, economic, and cultural goals noted above.

Illegal immigration is addressed in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Prior to this policy, dealing with illegal immigration control primarily consisted of intercepting people at the border or arresting them at their jobs. The ICRA made the hiring of illegal immigrants a crime. It also extended legal status to immigrants who have been in the United States continuously since 1982 or have worked in agriculture. This led to the legalization of almost three million residents (more than 1% of the United States population). However, sanctions on employers have proven difficult to enforce as a result of the prevalence of fraudulent documents.

History of Legislation

The first modern federal control of immigration was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. During the 1840s Chinese immigrants were imported to fill labor shortages; however, by the 1870s there was a recession and Chinese immigrants were increasingly berated. The Chinese Exclusion Act barred Chinese naturalization, suspended Chinese immigration to the United States for 10 years, and called for deportation of Chinese illegally in the country. This law was not repealed until 1943.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1924 created the first quantitative restrictions on immigrants. The National Origins Act created a ceiling of 150,000 per year on European immigration. Japanese immigrants were completely barred and other quotas were based on data from the 1890 census. There was an explicit effort to ensure that future immigrants were largely from Northern and Western Europe. This system remained in place until 1965.

The election of President John F. Kennedy (who denounced the national origins quota system) as well as the civil rights movement, began a more open and inclusionary era of immigration. The 1965 Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act overturned the national origins quotas, set up a seven-category preference system, and set limits on immigration from the Western Hemisphere (most notably Mexico). This marked the beginning of a shift away from primarily European immigration.

Three significant pieces of legislation were passed between 1980 and 1990. The first was the Refugee Act of 1980, which communicated to the rest of the world that the United States was committed to receiving a substantial number of refugees in a systematic fashion. The act also expanded the definition of refugees as well as gave them entitlement to certain federal social and medical services.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 addressed the issue of illegal immigration. Penalties were created for employers who knowingly hire immigrants that are illegally in the country. Programs were created that facilitated granting legal status, and border reinforcement was increased. Finally, the Immigration Act of 1990, which revised legal immigration policies, increased legal immigration by forty percent, most of this addition was allocated to highly skilled immigrants.

Major Legislative Milestones in U.S. Immigration History

Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)

- ◆ Suspends immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years.
- ◆ Bars Chinese naturalization.
- ◆ Provides for deportation of Chinese illegally in United States.

Immigration Act of 1891

- ◆ First comprehensive law for national control of immigration.
- ◆ Establishes Bureau of Immigration under Treasury.
- ◆ Directs deportation of immigrants unlawfully in country.

Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1924

- ◆ Imposes first permanent numerical limit on immigration.
- ◆ Establishes the national origins quota system, which resulted in biased admissions favoring northern and western Europeans.

Immigration and Naturalization Act of June 27, 1952

- ◆ Continues national origins quotas.
- ◆ Quota for skilled immigrants whose services are urgently needed.

Immigration and Naturalization Act Amendments of October 3, 1965

- ◆ Repeals national origins quotas.
- ◆ Establishes seven-category preference system based on family unification and skills.
- ◆ Sets 20,000 per country limit for Eastern Hemisphere.
- ◆ Imposes ceiling on immigration from Western Hemisphere for first time.

Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1976

- ◆ Extends 20,000 per country limits to Western Hemisphere.

Refugee Act of 1980

- ◆ Sets up first permanent and systematic procedure for admitting refugees.
- ◆ Removes refugees as a category from preference system.
- ◆ Defines refugee according to international, versus ideological standards.
- ◆ Establishes process of domestic resettlement.
- ◆ Codifies asylum status.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

- ◆ Institutes employer sanctions for knowingly hiring illegal immigrants.
- ◆ Creates legalization programs.
- ◆ Increases border enforcement.

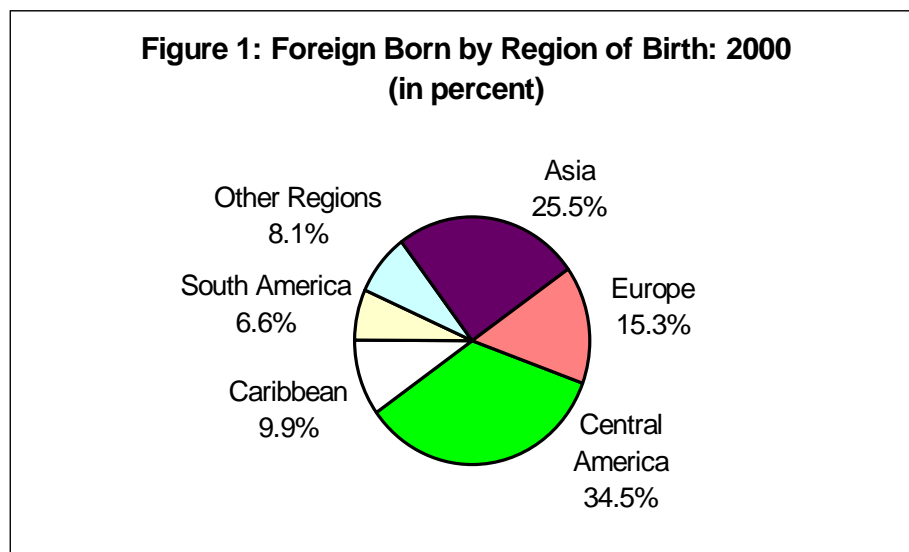
Immigration Act of 1990

- ◆ Increases legal immigration ceilings by 40 percent.
- ◆ Triples employment-based immigration, emphasizing skills.
- ◆ Creates diversity admissions category.
- ◆ Establishes temporary protected status for those in the U.S. jeopardized by armed conflict or natural disasters in their native countries.

Source: Fix, M. & Passel, J.S., *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight*, The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C. May 1994.

The Foreign Born Population in Minnesota and in the United States

In 2000, 28.4 million foreign born persons were living in the United States (10.4% of the United States population). Figure 1 shows this population by region of birth. Over half came from Latin America, over a quarter from Asia, 15.3 percent came from Europe, and 8.1 percent from other regions of the world (Lollock, 2001).



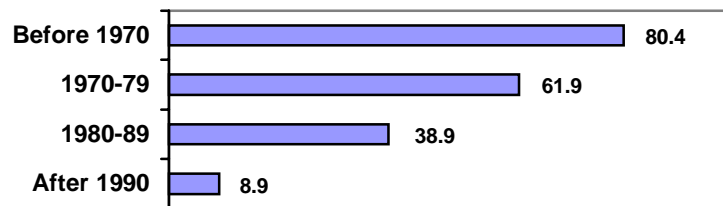
Source: Lollock, Lisa (2001). *The Foreign Born Population in the United States: March 2000*. Current Population Reports, p. 20-524, U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.

Mexico generally sends the most immigrants to the United States every year. Large numbers also come from India, China, southeast Asia, and the Philippines followed by Europe, Canada, and some countries in South America. The composition of the foreign born population in Minnesota is very different than that of the nation. Mexico has been one of the top source countries of immigrants to Minnesota only since 1995. The former Soviet republics sent the most immigrants to Minnesota in 1998, followed by Somalia (which sent the most in 1997). This is a very different profile than for the United States as a whole (Ronningen, 2000).

In general, the foreign born population is geographically more concentrated than the rest of the population. The foreign born from Latin America are most likely to live in the south and the west, and nearly half of the foreign born from Asia live in the west. The foreign born are also much more likely to live in a central city of a metropolitan area (45.1%) compared to the native population (27.5%) (Lollock, 2001).

In the United States more than one of every three foreign born persons are naturalized citizens. Figure 2 shows the United States citizenship status of the foreign born population by the year of entry as of 2000. Of those foreign born persons that arrived in the United States before 1970, 80.4 percent have obtained citizenship by 2000. This proportion decreases as recency increases (Lollock, 2001).

Figure 2: U.S. Citizenship of the Foreign-Born Population by Year of Entry
(In percent)



Source: Lollock, Lisa (2001). *The Foreign Born Population in the United States: March 2000*. Current Population Reports, pp. 20-524, U.S. Census Bureau: Washington D.C.

Minnesota is home to a high proportion of immigrants that come as refugees. According to INS data, the proportion of refugees among Minnesota immigrants has ranged from 24.3 percent in 1998 to 46.2 percent in 1987. While Minnesota's proportion of immigrants who are refugees is large – Minnesota's share of total refugees is small, with only 2.7 percent of the national total for 1987-1998. Minnesota is ranked 16th among states for total immigration (Ronningen, 2000).

Immigration data at the state level is particularly limited at this time. The 2000 Census data, to be released within the next year, will be the best source of information on Minnesota's immigrant population. One of the best sources of current information comes from the Department of Children, Families and Learning, which collects data about the number of school children who speak a language other than English at home. According to their information this number in the 1999-2000 year was 56,000, which is a 22 percent increase since the 1997-1998 school year (Ronningen, 2000).

Asian is the largest language group spoken by students. Just under 32,000 children in the 1999-2000 school year spoke an Asian language at home. Most of these children live in Ramsey, Hennepin, Anoka, and Dakota counties. Approximately two-thirds of the Asian language speakers are Hmong. Many of these children were born in the United States and are American citizens and children (or grandchildren) of immigrants (Ronningen, 2000).

According to the Children, Families and Learning data, Spanish speakers are the most dispersed geographically of any language group in Minnesota schools. It is a common misperception that a majority are children of migrant workers. Over the past 10 to 20 years the use of technology in agriculture has reduced the demand for migrant workers and therefore their numbers have declined. Many of Minnesota's largest concentrations of Spanish-speaking people are employees of food processing plants in greater Minnesota (Ronningen, 2000).

Since 1990 African immigrants have become an important part of Minnesota's population. Somalis were the largest group of immigrants to Minnesota in 1997. Most Somali speakers are concentrated in Minneapolis. However in the 1999-2000 school year other districts with larger numbers included Rochester, Owatonna, St. Paul, Eden Prairie, and Mankato (Ronningen, 2000).

Appendix B

Glossary

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC): A federal program that provided cash payments to poor families with children.

Alien: A person who is not a citizen of the United States.

Legal Alien: A person who lives in a foreign country with the approval of that country.

Illegal or Undocumented Alien: A person who lives in a foreign country without that country's approval.

Asylee: A person in the United States or at a port of entry who is found to be unable or unwilling to return to his or her country or nation, or to seek the protection from that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on the alien's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Asylum: Legal permission to live in the United States, given by the government to people fleeing danger or persecution in their original homeland.

Domestic Resident: A United States citizen.

Deportation: The forced removal of someone from the country.

Ethnic Minority: A term often used to refer to members of immigrant groups of color.

Family Reunification: Americans can sponsor their close relatives to live with them in the United States.

Foreign Born: Someone who was not a United States citizen at birth.

General Assistance (GA): A state program that provides financial assistance to poor people who are ineligible for programs such as MFIP or SSI and who meet the eligibility criteria, usually single adults or childless couples. Sometimes referred to as Adult Assistance.

Green Card: A term often used to describe the permit that indicates that a non-U.S. Citizen can legally reside in the United States. They may live in the U.S. without fear of deportation unless they commit a serious criminal offense or live outside of the country for more than two years.

Immigrant: A person who comes to a country where they intend to settle permanently and obtain citizenship.

Legal Immigrant: A person who comes to settle in a country with the legal permission of its government.

Illegal Immigrant: A person living in a country without the permission of its government.

Migrant Worker (or Economic Migrant): A person that must travel from place to place, sometimes across country borders, to find work.

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP): A Minnesota pilot program that began in 1994 with the intent of moving long-term welfare recipients into work.

Native: A resident citizen that was born in the United States, or born abroad of at least one parent who was a United States citizen.

Naturalization: The process an immigrant goes through to receive citizenship. Naturalized citizens of the United States have all the rights and privileges as native-born citizens – except election to certain public office such as the Presidency.

Refugee: Any person who is outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Resettlement: Permanent relocation of refugees in a place outside of their country of origin. Resettlement occurs when a refugee has no hope of returning home safely. It is accomplished with the direct assistance of private voluntary agencies working with the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI): A program providing cash benefits to low-income elderly people and low-income people with disabilities.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): The federal replacement for AFDC with time limits on assistance and more authority vested in states regarding program implementation.

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, Greater Twin Cities United Way Research and Planning Department.

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About this Report

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