

# CHINA



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

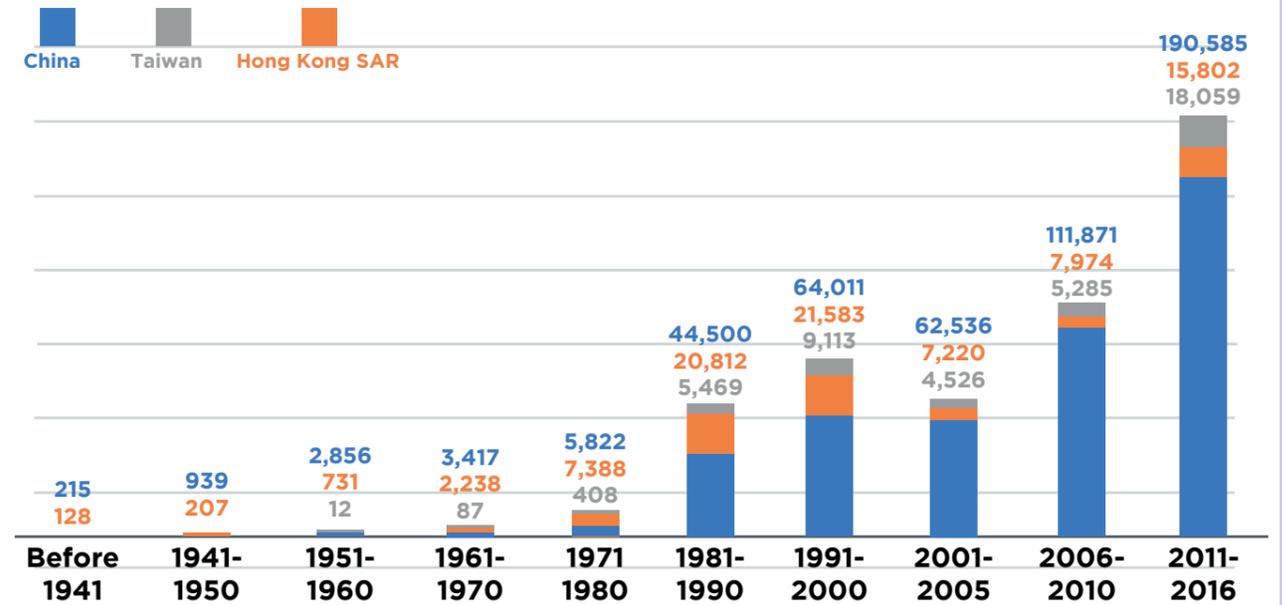
The Chinese community living in Australia is the largest ethnic community living in Australia with 1.2 million people of Chinese ancestry according to the last census. The Chinese community is incredibly diverse with people who are born in Australia, to those who have migrated from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries.

The Chinese diaspora community is a diverse community and the history of Chinese diaspora in Australia dates back to the 1800s and has been part of the fabric of Australia for more than 200 years. The first group of Chinese arrived in Australia to meet labour shortages in the 1820s and since then the numbers of Chinese migrants increased significantly during the gold rush era from 1850 and reached over 38,000 in 1881. However, when the Federation of Australia was formed in 1901, the first law enacted was the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (commonly known as the White Australia Policy), people that are of non-European ethnic origins especially Asians (primarily Chinese) and Pacific Islanders were forbid from immigrating to *Australia*. This policy impacted on the numbers of Chinese people in Australia dramatically with the Australian Bureau of Statistics data showed that from 1881 to 1921, the number of Chinese residents in Australia fell by more than half from over 38,000 in 1881 to just over 17,000 in 1921 (ABS 2012). These immigration restrictions were gradually lifted in the 1960s and fully abolished in 1973 by the Whitlam Labor government and established a policy of multiculturalism in Australia.

Since the introduction of the policy of multiculturalism and the numbers of Chinese migration increased. In 1975, Australia saw the next wave of ethnic Chinese immigrants who were primarily Indo-Chinese refugees fleeing from the war. Between the 1960s and 1980s Chinese-Australian communities grew through immigration from different parts of the world including Cambodia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. In wake of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, Australia granted permanent residency to a large cohort of Chinese students in Australia. From that time there has been a steady flow of immigrants from mainland China.

In the last 10 years, there has been a large increase in the number of immigrants from mainland China. In 2006, the number of Australian people born in mainland China was 206,240, this number more than doubled reaching 509,563 by 2016. In 2016, people who reported to have Chinese ancestry was 1.21 million according to the Australian census.

## Migration to Australia



**China**  
Hong Kong SAR  
Taiwan

White Australia policy in force

**China**  
Hong Kong SAR

Taiwan

White Australia policy renounced in 1973 by the Whitlam government.

**China**

Tiannanmen square incident in 1989 leading to people from China and students from China migrating or staying if they are already studying in Australia.

**Hong Kong SAR**

Hong Kong SAR handed back to China after the 99 year lease to Britain in 1997.

**China**

Since the 2000s, with the rapid development of the economy in China and led to a large increase of immigrants from China

**Hong Kong SAR**

Tiannanmen square incident in 1989 leading to people from Hong Kong SAR to migrate overseas.

## ANCESTRIES<sup>(a)</sup> OF PEOPLE WITH SELECTED BIRTHPLACES - 2001<sup>1</sup>

Birthplace	'000 <sup>(b)</sup>	Leading ancestries <sup>(c)</sup>
Vietnam	154.8	Vietnamese (72%), Chinese (28%)
Philippines	103.9	Filipino (93%), Spanish (7%), Chinese (4%), Australian (2%)
Malaysia	78.9	Chinese (72%), Malay (11%), English (6%), Australian (5%), Irish (2%)
Indonesia	47.2	Chinese (50%), Indonesian (42%), Dutch (10%), Australian (2%), English (2%)
Singapore	33.5	Chinese (65%), English (12%), Indian (9%), Australian (6%), Malay (4%), Irish (3%)
East Timor	9.4	Chinese (61%), Timorese (40%), Portuguese (10%)

(a) Accounting for at least 2% of the birthplace group.  
 (b) Includes people whose ancestries were not stated, not codable or inadequately described.  
 (c) People whose ancestries were not stated, not codable or inadequately described were excluded prior to the calculation of percentages.

<sup>1</sup> ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/af5129cb50e07099ca2570eb0082e4621?OpenDocument>

# DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

The demographic and socio-economic data used to develop the Chinese community profile in Australia was drawn predominately from the Census data.

There are two key sets of data used in this section. The birthplace data, which excludes second and future generations and ancestry data which includes second and future generations. The reason why both sets of data is used is due to the lack of comprehensive ancestry data that also break down further into gender, age, education, religion.

In order to capture a comprehensive picture of the numbers Chinese people born in Australia, the ancestry data is used in this section. In the 2016 Census, 1.2 million people were reported to be of Chinese ancestry.

## Geographical Distribution

The 2016 Census showed that New South Wales is the state with the largest number of Chinese people, followed by Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory.

## Language

The official language in China is mandarin, however there are many dialects in the Chinese language. The main language after mandarin is Cantonese and are predominately spoken by people from Hong Kong SAR and those from the Guangdong province in China. The main language for those from Taiwan is mandarin.

There are two main written scripts in Chinese, the traditional and the simplified. The traditional writing is primarily used by people born in Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR and the simplified writing is primarily used by people born in China.

## Religion

The majority of Chinese people living in Australia have no religion (born in **Hong Kong SAR 52.3%**, **China 73.4%**, **Taiwan 56.0%**).

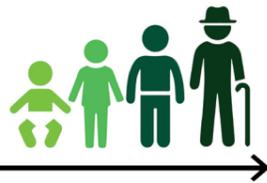
Other religions practiced by the Chinese community include:

- Buddhism
- Christian
- Catholic
- Baptist
- Uniting Church

## Structure by age

### CHINA

0-14 years	20,475
15-24 years	111,578
25-34 years	138,943
35-44 years	68,822
45-54 years	69,551
55-64 years	53,344
65+ years	46,844



### HONG KONG SAR

0-14 years	4,106
15-24 years	13,274
25-34 years	18,597
35-44 years	13,236
45-54 years	11,902
55-64 years	16,407
65+ years	9,363

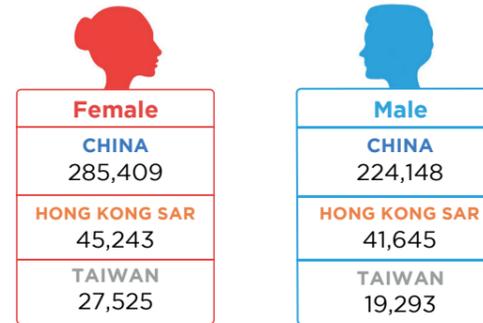
### TAIWAN

0-14 years	1,887
15-24 years	5,969
25-34 years	22,574
35-44 years	8,497
45-54 years	3,603
55-64 years	3,904
65+ years	2,379

Year	Number of Chinese <sup>2</sup>	Source of information	Situations
1881	38,533	The Chinese in Australia, ABS <sup>3</sup>	Gold rush
1901	29,627		Australia's federation, White Australia Policy
1921	17,157		
2001	556,338	Profile ID - by ancestry <sup>4</sup> . Note that the question on ancestry was not asked in 1991 and 1996 and prior to that, the accuracy was not high from the 1986 Census.	
2006	669,306		
2011	866,001		
2016	1,214,438		

## Gender<sup>6</sup> structure

The birthplace data is used in this section.



## Legal Status<sup>7</sup>

	Australian Citizen	Non Australian Citizen
China	36.3%	62.8%
Hong Kong SAR	75.3%	23.3%
Taiwan	46.9%	51.9%

## Education Level

	China	Hong Kong SAR	Taiwan
Year 12	27.3%	21.2%	28.2%
Certificate III or IV	3.2%	4.7%	3.4%
Advance diploma and Diploma	8.6%	9.4%	8%
Bachelor degree and above	43.4%	45.8%	46.7%

## Professional Activities



**China**  
**Work full-time** 55%  
**Work part-time** 28.9%  
**Unemployed** 11.8%  
**Not in the labour force** 47%

**Hong Kong SAR**  
**Work full-time** 60.7%  
**Work part-time** 28.4%  
**Unemployed** 7.4%  
**Not in the labour force** 34.9%

**Taiwan**  
**Work full-time** 50.9%  
**Work part-time** 37.1%  
**Unemployed** 8%  
**Not in the labour force** 31.6%

Data on number of business owners of Chinese background. The types of occupation for Chinese people include:

- Labourers
- Professionals
- Community and Personal Service workers
- Managers
- Clerical and Administrative Workers
- Technicians and Trade workers
- Sales Workers

It is estimated that in 2011, the number small business owned or operated (with employees) by people born in China was **18,980** or **63.7%** of all business owned by those born in China.

Sole trader account for **32%** and medium and big business account for **2%** (Liu, X. 2016).

# DEGREE AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

Given the diversity of Chinese people in Australia, there are also a diversity of organisations from senior citizen groups (activity based and may be funded by local councils or auspiced by other community organisations), interest groups (women, youth, art, culture), professional and business groups, location-based groups and more.

Whilst there are some understanding of the types of Chinese community organisations, there is no serious attempts at scientifically categorise the types of community organisations that exist within the Chinese community.

# CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

As the tension between Australia and China continue to rise, it also places undue pressure on the Chinese community living in Australia. The Chinese Australian community are informed and sensitive to the current Australia-China relationship with people supporting all sides of the arguments and this is due to the large diversity of people of Chinese background living in Australia. However, it should be noted that the large majority of Chinese-Australians have no interest in the geo-political debate, however, the discussions is impacting on the community and sparked racism and discrimination towards the Chinese community. In some anecdotal reports, members of the Chinese community have barriers when seeking security clearance when working in the public service. Whilst it is understandable given the heighten tension and therefore it requires an increase in diligence when dealing with requests, however the irony is that this is also the time Australia need the cultural knowledge from Chinese Australians to help Australia find the best path to both protect Australia's national interest and maintain good working relationship with a rising power in the world.

WeChat is a social media platform that is used by many Chinese people for social connection, business, and source of information. Whilst there are discussions about people using the platform to influence Chinese living in Australia and therefore it is important for the Australian government to find ways to remove fake news or uninformed information on platforms such as WeChat, however it is imperative for the Australian government to understand the role of WeChat plays in social connection amongst the Chinese Australian community and small businesses using WeChat as the main platform for their retail (similar to Facebook).

In the past, there is a lack of understanding by the Australian Government on the Chinese community. There is an opportunity for the government to genuinely understand the community and better provide resources to ensure the community are provided with official and credible sources of information.

<sup>2</sup>Ancestry data, which includes second and future generations

<sup>3</sup>ABS data <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article1925?open=document&tabname=Summary&prodno=1301.0&issue=1925&num=8view>

<sup>4</sup><https://profile.id.com.au/australia/ancestry?webID=10>

<sup>5,6,7</sup>ABS [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6105\\_036](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6105_036)