



China-born Community Information Summary

Historical Background

During the nineteenth century an increasing number of Chinese came to Australia fleeing civil disorder, famine and floods and as labour following the cessation of convict transportation. Settlers were also attracted by the discovery of gold in Australia, especially in the state of Victoria. By 1861, the Chinese community was already thriving, according to the Colonial Census, there were 38,258 China-born reported, making up 3.4 per cent of Australia's population and almost up to 7% of the Victorian population. These figures placed the Chinese as the second largest immigrant group after those from the British Isles.

As the gold ran out, many Chinese settled as market gardeners or farm hands. Some set up small grocery stores or fruit and vegetable-hawking businesses in country towns. Others worked in a variety of pursuits, including import-export businesses, laundry operations, cabinet making and in medicine. Many Chinese religious and cultural organisations were established, and Chinese New Year celebrations became a highlight in many towns.

Public animosity towards the Chinese influenced colonial and early federal governments to restrict their immigration. The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, often called the White Australia Policy significantly hindered the entry of non-Europeans, including the Chinese. As a result, the immigration of Chinese declined and by 1947 China-born numbers were only 6,404. However, after relaxation of the immigration restrictions during the 1960s and 1970s, Australia would see an increase in Asian immigration and, China-born numbers had reached 19,971 as recorded in the 1976 Census.

The active marketing of educational services in Asia by the Australian Government in the mid-1980s contributed to a rapid increase in the number of China-born private overseas students coming to Australia. In 1983 there were 38 China-born overseas students and by 1990 this number had increased to 16,642.

The China-born* population is one of the largest birthplace groups in Australia with most living in large cities, such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. It should be noted that a significant proportion of people from some other countries, for example, Singapore and Malaysia, are also of Chinese ancestry.

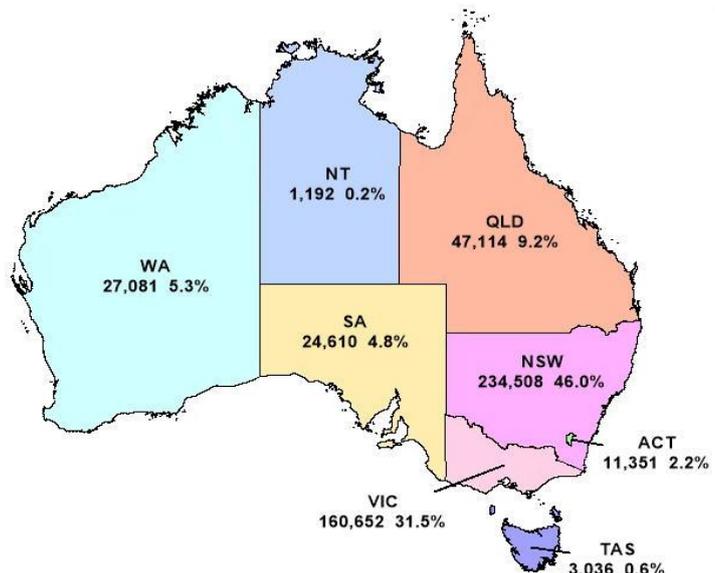
People born in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are not included in this report and have been provided in separate summaries.

*China-born population excludes those from the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) and Taiwan.

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2016 recorded 509,555 China-born people in Australia, an increase of 59.8 per cent from the 2011 Census.

The 2016 distribution by State and Territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 234,508 followed by Victoria (160,652), Queensland (47,114) and Western Australia (27,081).

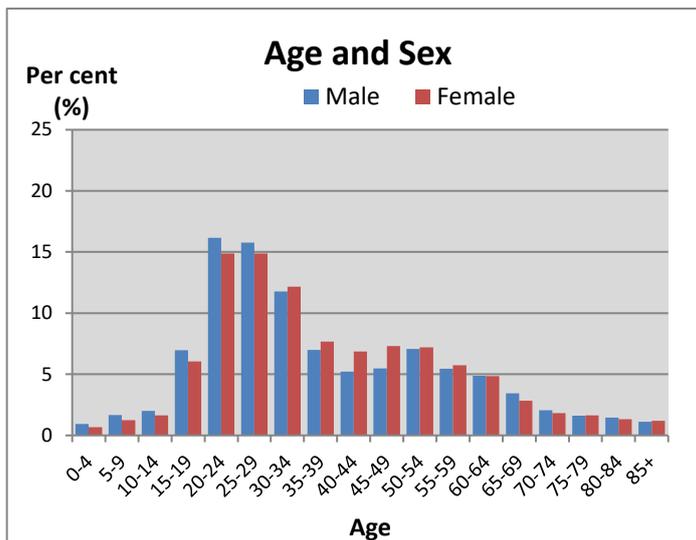


Age and Sex

The median age of the China-born in 2016 was 33 years compared with 44 years for all overseas-born and 38 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 4.0 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 21.9 per cent were 15-24 years, 40.8 per cent were 25-44 years, 24.1 per cent were 45-64 years and 9.2 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the China-born in Australia, there were 224,148 males (44.0 per cent) and 285,409 females (56.0 per cent). The sex ratio was 79 males per 100 females.

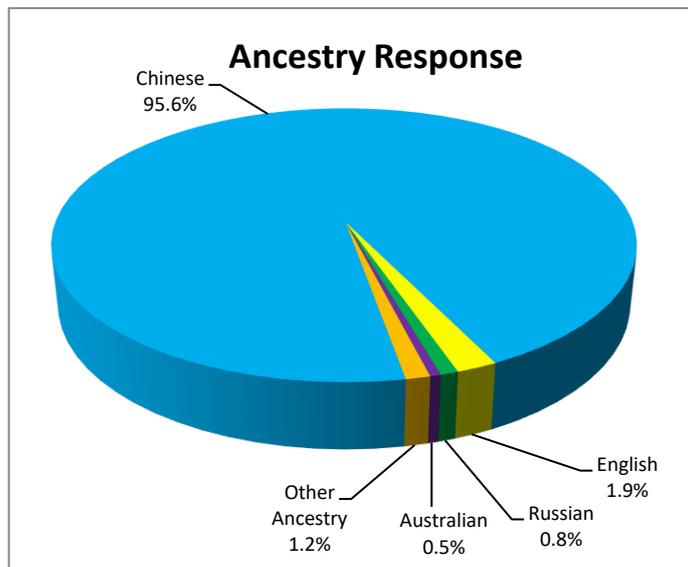


Ancestry

In the 2016 Census, the top ancestry responses* that China-born people reported were Chinese (497,878), English (10,073) and Russian (4,387).

In the 2016 Census, Australians reported over 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses* 1,213,903 responses were towards Chinese ancestry.

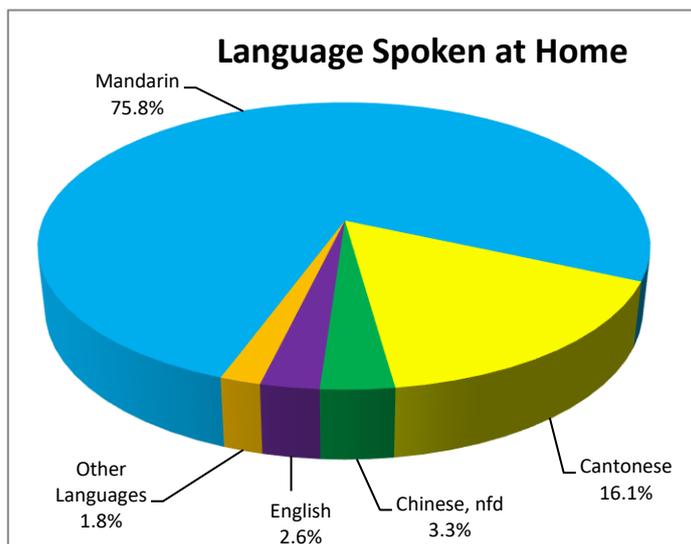
* At the 2016 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question, therefore there can be more responses than total persons.



Language

The main languages spoken at home by China-born people in Australia were Mandarin (386,475), Cantonese (82,064) and Chinese, nfd (16,725).

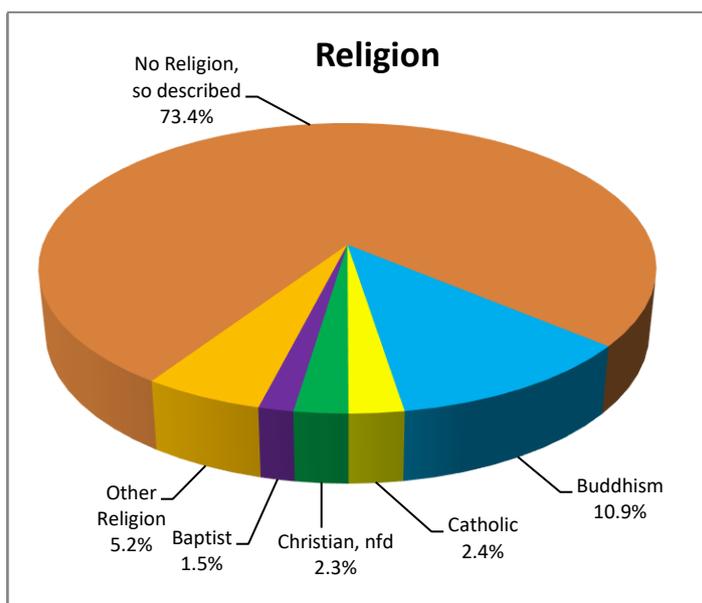
Of the 495,265 China-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 67.7 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 31.9 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.



Religion

At the 2016 Census the major religious affiliations amongst China-born were Buddhism (55,382), Catholic (12,046) and Christian, nfd (11,809).

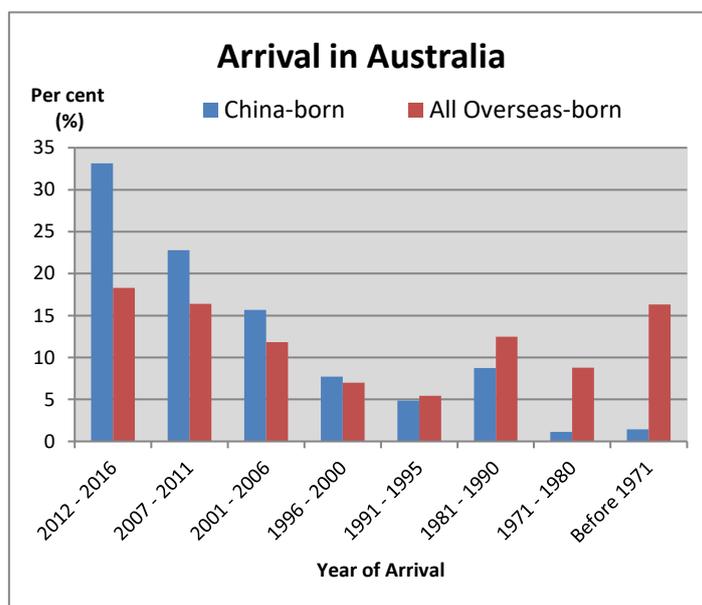
Of the China-born, 73.4 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was higher than that of the total Australian population (29.6 per cent), and 4.1 per cent did not state a religion.



Arrival

Compared to 61.8 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 39.6 per cent of the China-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2007.

Among the total China-born in Australia at the 2016 Census, 22.8 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 and 33.1 per cent arrived between 2012 and 2016.



Median Income

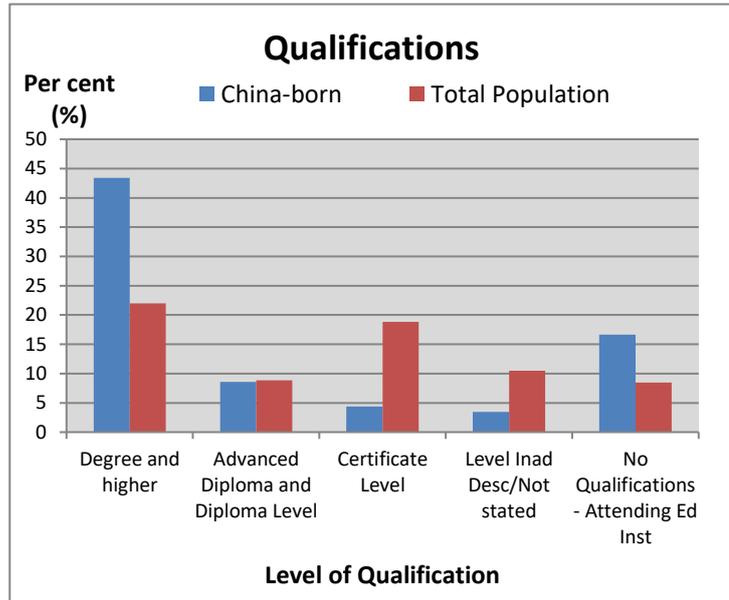
At the time of the 2016 Census, the median Individual Weekly Income for the China-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was \$374, compared with \$615 for all overseas-born and \$688 for all Australian-born.

The total Australian population aged 15 and over had a median Individual Weekly Income of \$662.

Qualifications

At the 2016 Census, 59.8 per cent of the China-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualification compared to 60.1 per cent of the Australian population.

Of the China-born aged 15 years and over, 16.6 per cent had no qualifications and were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.5 per cent.

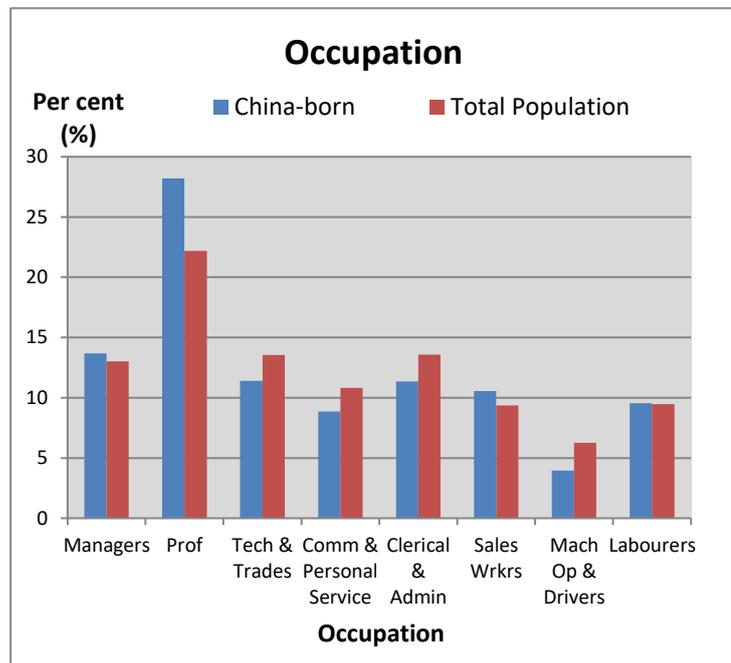


Employment

Among China-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 52.8 per cent and the unemployment rate was 11.8 per cent.

The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent respectively.

Of the 226,485 China-born who were employed, 53.3 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.8 per cent.



Produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the Department of Home Affairs

All data used in this summary is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing.