

PRC migration to Australia - statistics and trends



What are the current trends in PRC citizen inflows into Australia – both permanent and temporary? This fact sheet provides a snapshot of key statistics and trends in permanent migration, naturalisation, student visa grants, visitor visa grants, temporary work visa grants and visa cancellations.

Permanent migration

In 2017-18 162,417 permanent migration programme visas were granted. Migrants from the PRC accounted for 15.5 percent.

This compares with:¹

- India: 20.5 percent;
- UK: 8.4 percent;
- Philippines: 6.5 percent;
- Pakistan: 3.8 percent; and
- New Zealand: 3.3 percent.

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PRC citizens have been the second largest source country of permanent migrants to Australia after Indian citizens since 2011-12, accounting for approximately between 14-15 percent of Australia's permanent migration intake each financial year since then.²

Naturalisation

PRC migrants' proportion of total citizenship conferrals reached a 10-year low of 5.2 percent in 2015-16.³ Their proportion continued to decrease in the years following.

In 2016-17, Australian citizenship was conferred on 137,750 people. PRC migrants accounted for 4.8 percent of the total.⁴ Female migrants comprised

1 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Australia's permanent migration outcome—the Migration and Child Program, 2017-18 (Programme year to June 30 2018) <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/permanent-migration-2017-18.pdf>>.

2 2011-12: 13.8 percent; 2012-13: 14.4 percent; 2013-14: 14.1 percent; 2014-15: 14.7 percent; 2015-16: 15.3 percent; 2016-17: 15.4 percent. Data gathered from Australian Government Department of Home Affairs/Department of Immigration and Border Protection migration programme reports 2011-12 to 2017-18 <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/live/migration-program>>.

3 Elena Collinson, 'The PRC diaspora in Australia', Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, February 1 2018 <<https://www.austliachinarelations.org/content/prc-diaspora-australia>>.

4 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Australian

57.7 percent of all migrants from the PRC – the highest proportion of the top six countries of origin, and 6.3 percentage points higher than the average of these.⁵

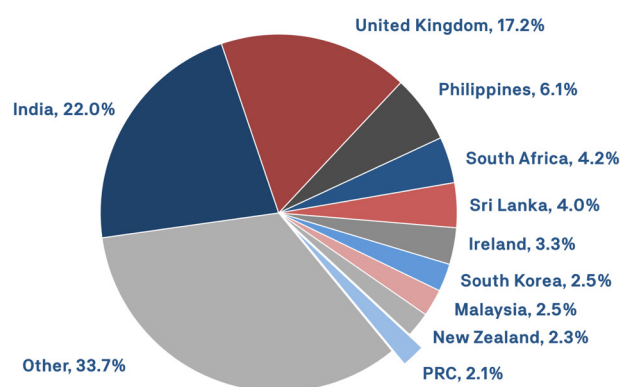
In 2017-18, Australian citizenship was conferred on 80,649 people. PRC migrants accounted for 2.1 percent of the total, rendering it the 10th largest source country that financial year. This compares with:⁶

- India: 22 percent;
- UK: 17.2 percent;
- Philippines: 6.1 percent;
- South Africa: 4.2 percent; and
- Sri Lanka: 4 percent.

Note: These are the top five source countries for migrants who acquired citizenship in Australia in 2017-18.

Department of Home Affairs' citizenship application data reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* last year shows that the drop in citizenship conferrals to PRC migrants is not necessarily reflective of a correlating drop in citizenship applications lodged:⁷

Between 2012 and 2016, residents of Chinese heritage represented six percent of total applications for Australian citizenship...But the Home Affairs figures show that while the number of Chinese applications has remained steady, the number of approvals fell to less than three percent of applicants between July 2017 and February 2018.



Migration Statistics, 2016-17 <<https://data.gov.au/dataset/ds-dga-dba45e7c-81f4-44aa-9d82-1b9a0a121017/details>>.

5 Ibid.

6 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Australian citizenship statistics (last updated November 16 2018) <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/citizenship-statistics>>.

7 Eryk Bagshaw, 'Plunge in number of Chinese residents granted Australian citizenship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 17 2018 <<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/plunge-in-number-of-chinese-residents-granted-australian-citizenship-20180816-p4zxs.html>>.

Temporary entrants

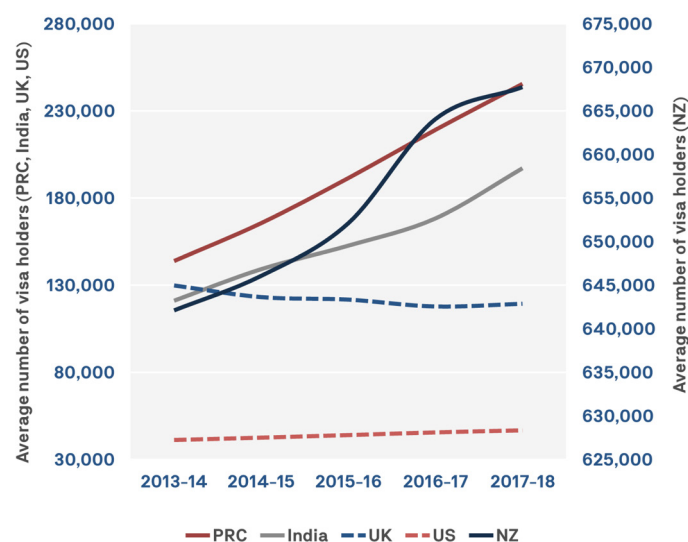
In 2017-18, there were an average of 2.1 million temporary entrants in Australia in each of the four financial quarters.⁸ Temporary entrants include (but are not limited to) visitor visa holders, student visa holders and temporary resident (skilled) visa holders. The Temporary (Work) Skilled visa (subclass 457) was abolished and replaced by the Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) from March 18 2018.⁹

Accounting for 11.5 percent of total temporary entrants, the PRC was the second largest source country in this visa category. This compares with:¹⁰

- New Zealand: 31.2 percent;
- India: 9.2 percent;
- UK: 5.6 percent; and
- US: 2.2 percent.

Note: Including the PRC these are the top five source countries for temporary entrants in Australia in 2017-18.

The average number of temporary visa holders from the PRC has consistently increased over the last five years, from an average of 132,901 in 2013-14 to an average of 245,662 in 2017-18.



8 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Temporary visa holders in Australia (to December 31 2018) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/ab245863-4dea-4661-a334-71ee15937130>>.

9 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Temporary resident (skilled) report 30 June 2018 → summary of key statistics and trends <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/temp-res-skilled-rpt-summary-30062018.pdf>>.

10 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Temporary visa holders in Australia (to December 31 2018) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/ab245863-4dea-4661-a334-71ee15937130>>.

Student visa grants

In 2017-18, a total of 333,014 student visas (excluding secondary visas for dependents, etc.) were granted. With a share of 25.6 percent, the PRC was the largest source country in this visa category. This represents a nine percent increase in absolute terms from 2016-17.

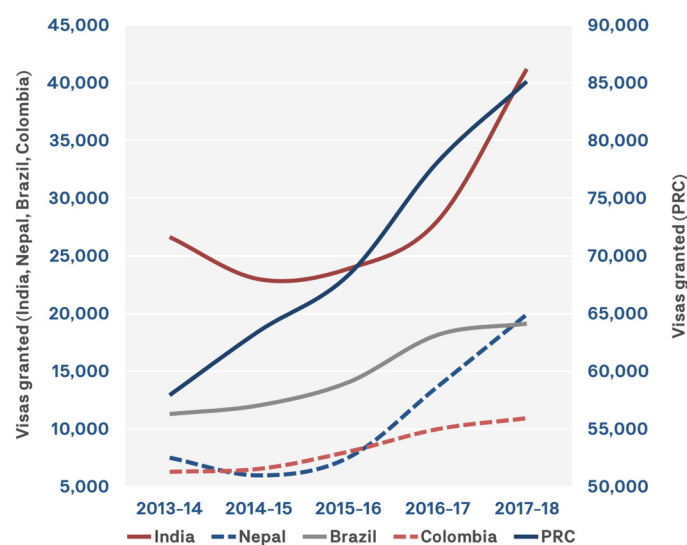
This compares with:¹¹

- India: 12.4 percent;
- Nepal: 6 percent;
- Brazil: 5.7 percent; and
- Colombia: 3.3 percent.

Note: Including the PRC these are the top five source countries for Australian student visa grants in 2017-18.

While the number of visas granted to students from the PRC has continued to grow over the past five years, the rate of growth has slowed since 2015-16. At nine percent growth, the number of PRC student visa grants grew by less than the total number of student visa grants, which increased by 9.8 percent.¹²

Overall growth is now driven primarily by India and Nepal, which grew 47 and 46 percent, respectively, from 2016-17 to 2017-18.



11 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Student visa program (to January 31 2019) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/324aa4f7-46bb-4d56-bc2d-772333a2317e>>.

12 Ibid.

Visitor visa grants

5.6 million visitor visas were granted in 2017-18. Visitor visas include tourism and business subclasses, which accounted for 5.1 million and 0.5 million grants respectively. The PRC was the largest source country for recipients of these visas, comprising 16.9 percent of the total.

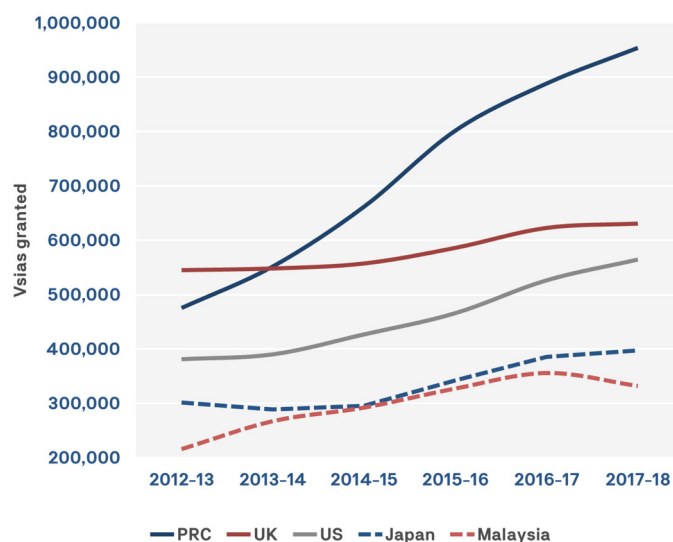
This compares with:¹³

- UK: 11.2 percent;
- US: 10 percent;
- Japan: 7 percent; and
- Malaysia: 5.9 percent.

Note: Including the PRC, these are the top five source countries for visitor visa grants in Australia in 2017-18.

The PRC made up the largest proportion of business visitors with 17.2 percent of all business subclass visas granted, ahead of 12.8 percent for the US. Business visitors from the PRC have outnumbered those from the US every year since 2010-11.¹⁴

In 2013-14, the number of visitor visa grants to PRC citizens overtook visitor visa grants to the UK to make the PRC the largest source country for the first time. This is largely driven by tourist visitors. Between 2009-10 and 2015-16, tourist visitor visa grants grew at double-digit rates every year. However, this rate of growth has slowed since 2016-17.



13 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Visitor visa program (to December 31 2018) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/903e4782-8d6d-438d-9c40-9883cf91606c>>.

14 Ibid.

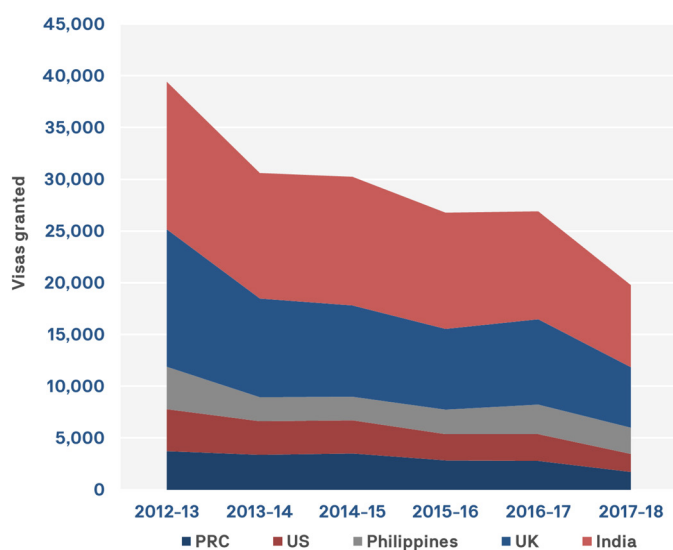
457/482 subclass visa grants

64,470 Temporary (Work) Skilled (457) or Temporary Skill Shortage (482) visas were granted in 2017-18 (excluding secondary visas for dependents, etc.). This was a 25.8 percent decrease from 2016-17.

In 2017-18, grants to PRC workers decreased by 38.7 percent to 1699. Representing 4.9 percent of the total, this made the PRC the fifth largest country of origin for temporary workers, behind:¹⁵

- India: 23 percent;
- UK: 17 percent;
- Philippines: 7.3 percent; and
- US: 5.1 percent.

Total numbers of 457/482 subclass visa grants have largely been declining since 2012-13, with grants to the PRC following this trend. From 2016-17, the proportion of temporary workers from the PRC has decreased from making up six percent of all grants to five percent in 2017-18.



Visa cancellations

Between 2014-15 and 2016-17, the proportion of PRC citizens represented in the visa cancellations category steadily increased:¹⁶

- 2014-15: 6 percent (of 57,860; fifth largest grouping)
- 2015-16: 9.5 percent (of 62,071; third largest grouping)
- 2016-17: 11.1 percent (of 57,161; second largest grouping)

15 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Temporary work (skilled) visa program (to December 31 2018) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/2515b21d-0dba-4810-afd4-ac8dd92e873e>>.

16 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Australian Migration Statistics, 2016-17 (released December 2018) <<https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/australian-migration-statistics>>.