International students in Australia up to 2019

This snapshot provides an historical analysis of the total number of international students who have studied in Australia on student visas from 2002 to 2019. The data over the period 2002 to 2019 are presented as two student cohorts: those who had studied before 2019; and those who were commencing or continuing students in 2019.

Nearly three million (2,895,799) international students have undertaken studies in Australia from 2002 to 2019, including 2,137,645 who were no longer studying in 2019. The largest source country over this entire period was China accounting for 20 per cent of all students, followed by India with 11 per cent. Figure 1 shows the top 20 nationalities, which together contributed 81 per cent of all international students who have studied from 2002 to 2019.

Continuing strong growth in student numbers over the period 2002 to 2019 is evidenced by the fact that just over a quarter of all international students studying between 2002 and 2019, were studying in 2019.

Table 1 shows that there were slightly more male students (51%) than females (49%), although gender distribution varied by student nationality. Figure 2 shows that countries in the Asian region have been a major source of international students in Australia. Since 2002, students from this region make up more than two thirds (68%) of the total.

In addition to the students on student visas counted here, it is estimated that almost 860,000 English language students were studying on other visas between 2002 and 2019, including around 47,000 in 2019.

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1 The annual 2019 international student data of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

2 English Australia (annual regional markets surveys counts since 2002, adjusted down by 10% to account for an assumed carry-over of students between years).

For more information, visit the International Education website of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment or contact IEResearch@dese.gov.au.