



Comparison between the USA's and Australia's international education sectors

This snapshot looks at the available data on international student enrolments from Australia and the USA. The data used in the snapshot represent each countries' latest academic year (2017 for Australia¹ and 2016-17 for the USA²). According to UNESCO, the USA is the most popular study destination for international students, while Australia is the third most popular (after the UK). Thus, a comparison between international student populations of the two countries can provide some insight into Australia's relative success in the global education market.

China and India are the largest source countries of both the USA and Australia. Taken together they represent nearly 50 per cent of both the USA's and Australia's international student population, with China alone representing over 30 per cent. Both the USA and Australia have experienced steady growth in China and India student numbers in recent years, suggesting the prominence of China and India in the global education market is likely to persist in the near future.

The top 10 source countries for the USA (Figure 1) and Australia (Figure 2) represented about 70 per cent of each country's total international student population. However, excluding China and India, students from the USA's remaining top 10 source countries (i.e. countries ranked 3-10) declined by 7 per cent, while the equivalent measure for Australia increased by 8 per cent.

Figure 1: International students in the USA

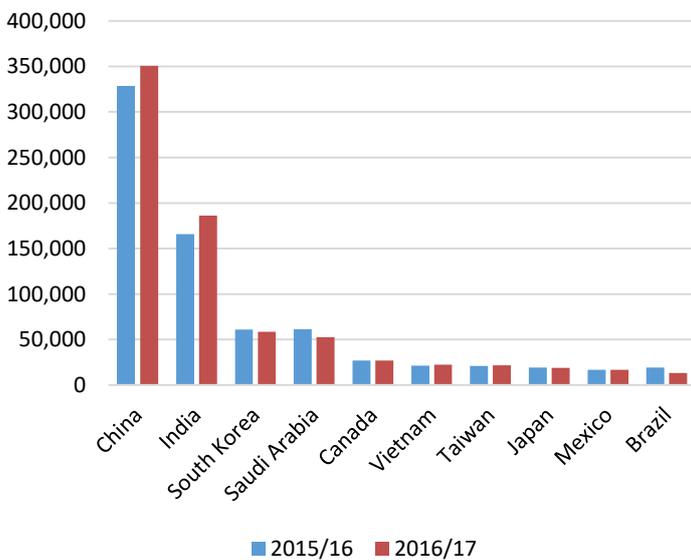
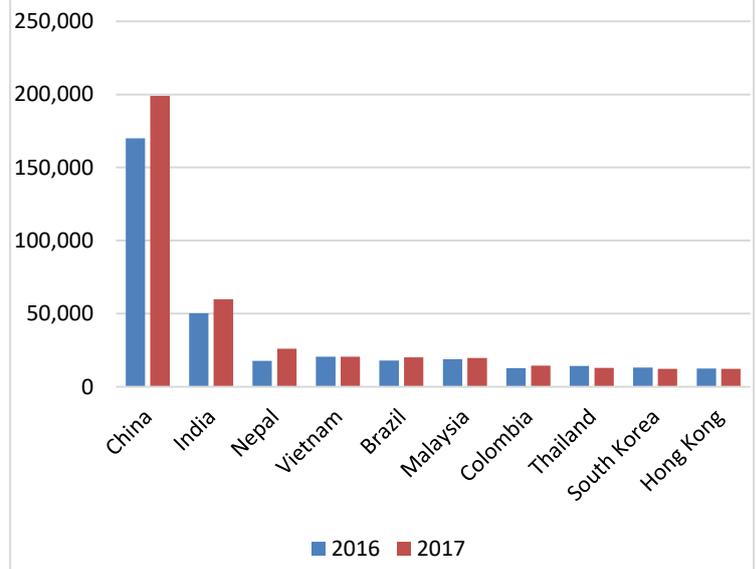


Figure 2: International students in Australia*



*The Australian data has been adapted to achieve a best comparable fit with the USA's published data, by just using our higher education, ELICOS and non-award sector enrolments (the USA does not count VET or school equivalent students in its Open Doors report).

The USA has seen recent declines in students from Saudi Arabia (14%) and Brazil (32%). Australia had a similar decline in Saudi Arabian students in 2017 (18%) suggesting there may be a local issue affecting outgoing Saudi Arabian student numbers. However, Australia saw strong growth in Brazilian students in 2017 (12%) suggesting that Australia is able to provide a more attractive education experience for these students.

Both the USA and Australia also saw losses from South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong and the UK suggesting local issues are affecting outgoing student numbers from these countries. However, Australia saw losses from Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines and Italy, while the USA saw gains. This suggests it would be worthwhile for Australia to investigate ways to enhance its strategic engagement with these countries.

¹ Using data from our higher education, ELICOS and non-award sector enrolments to achieve a best fit with the USA's published data.

² The USA's Open Doors 2017 report data is summarised here: <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Places-of-Origin>

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