



## International education comparison between the USA and Australia

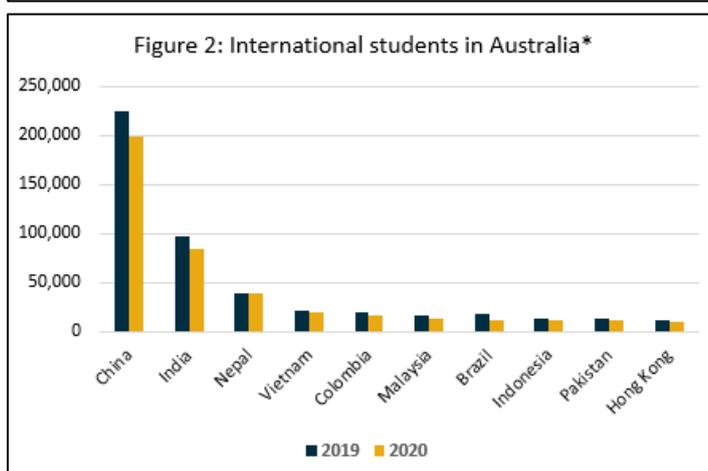
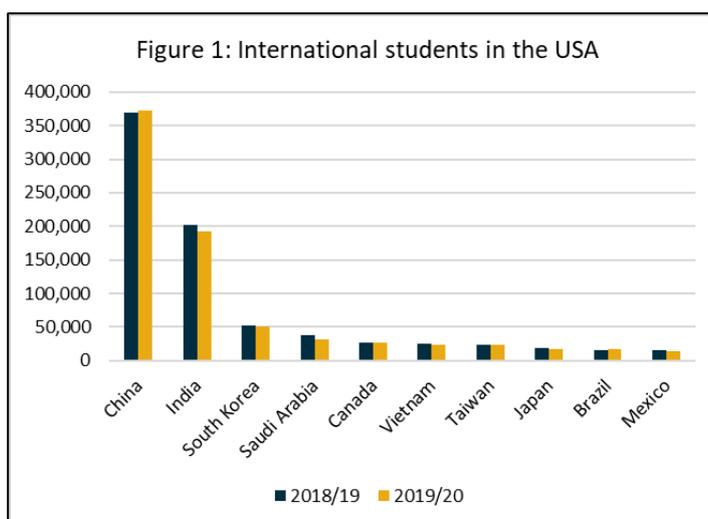
This snapshot looks at the available data on international student enrolments in Australia<sup>1</sup> and the USA. The data used in this snapshot represents each countries' latest academic year (2020 for Australia<sup>2</sup> and 2019/20 for the USA<sup>3</sup>). According to UNESCO, the USA was the most popular study destination for international students, while Australia was the third most popular (after the UK) in 2018. 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 were the largest source countries for both the USA and Australia. Taken together they represented 53 per cent of the USA's and 51 per cent of Australia's international student population respectively. Both the USA and Australia had experienced steady growth in Chinese and Indian student numbers in recent years (prior to 2020).

In 2020, Australia's international student enrolments declined by 14 per cent and the USA's international student enrolments declined by nearly 2 per cent in 2019/20 over the previous year. Australia is somewhat disadvantaged in this comparison as COVID-19 occurred at the start of its academic year, but half-way through the USA's academic year. For the period January-June 2020, Australia still retained 2 per cent growth on the same period in 2019. Also, a more recent report from the USA shows international student declines of 16 per cent as of September 2020.<sup>4</sup>

In 2019/20, growth from the USA's largest source country China was relatively low in 2019/20 (1%) and there was a decline of 4 per cent from India. Australia experienced declines from both China (12%) and India (14%) in 2020.

Top ten source countries contributed nearly three quarters of all international students both in the USA (71%) in 2019/20 and in Australia (75%) in 2020. Excluding China and India the other top eight countries showed a cumulative decline for both the USA (down 5%) and for Australia (down 12%). In 2019/20, the largest declines in students by volume were from India (-8,890) and Saudi Arabia (-6,123), while Australia saw its largest declines from China (-25,891) and India (-14,058).



<sup>1</sup> The Australian data has been adapted to achieve a best comparable fit with the USA's data, by just using higher education, ELICOS and non-award sector enrolments (the USA does not count VET or school equivalent students in its Open Doors report).

<sup>2</sup> The annual 2020 international student data of the Australian Government [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).

<sup>3</sup> For details, see the USA's Institute of International Education's (IIE) the [Open Doors 2020](#) report and the data.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.iie.org/-/media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Special-Reports/Fall-2020-Snapshot-Report---Full-Report.ashx?la=en&hash=D337E4E9C8C9FACC9E3D53609A7A19B96783C5DB>