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Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Australia

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Executive summary

01 Geopolitical impacts and Confidence levels

- Geopolitical tensions between Australia and China have created trading delays, higher costs and general uncertainties. However 47% of the surveyed entrepreneurs report no significant impacts on Australian businesses.
- Chinese entrepreneurs feel increased levels of support from the Australian businesses, government and media sectors in 2025 (up from 2023).
- Respondents reported increased levels of confidence in the Chinese market and much higher confidence in their specific industries in Australia. Confidence in the Australian market fell slightly from 2023, however Australia is still seen as a safe and stable environment.

02 Connecting Australia's opportunities with China

- In the survey, 92% of Chinese entrepreneurs maintain business, cultural or social ties with China, 58% report innovation links, 42% import from China and 38% export to China.
- Entrepreneurs bridge capital and markets between Australia and China.

03 Drive and resilience

- 83% of the respondents studied at Australian universities, while 62% first arrived as international students.
- Many interviewed entrepreneurs self-studied and practically learned through experience on how to navigate new business systems, regulations and practices in Australia and China.
- They attributed their resilience to early competitive learning environment in China and "ground up" career experiences.

04 Innovation across borders

- In the past three years, 77% have deployed new technologies, 83% have entered new customer segments, 65% have adjusted business models and 28% operate multiple diverse businesses.
- Much of the innovation comes from new technologies developed overseas and deployed in Australia.

Background

This is the third report in a collaborative series on Chinese migrant entrepreneurs¹ in Australia by KPMG and The University of Sydney Business School.

This report draws on survey and interview data from 100 first-generation Chinese migrant entrepreneurs collected between September and October 2025.

Each participant completed a questionnaire and semi-structured interview, providing both quantitative indicators and detailed personal responses. Interview participants were identified through research, networks and referrals.

On average, each interview lasted 60 minutes, allowing respondents sufficient time to engage with both the interviewers and survey components in depth.

The findings capture the experiences and strategies reported by our respondents. They are not intended to be representative of all Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Australia.

¹ In this study, we define Chinese migrant entrepreneurs as individuals born in China who have migrated to Australia and subsequently founded or co-founded a business operating within Australia.

Demographics

This study is based on responses from 100 first-generation Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Australia. The result reaffirms several consistent patterns observed in our earlier reports². The entrepreneurs are predominantly young to middle-aged, with most born in the 1970s and 1980s. Nearly 83% first arrived in Australia between 1990 and 2019, including 48% arriving in the 2000s.

Nearly half of the businesses in our sample are registered in New South Wales, followed by Victoria and Western Australia, and representatives from Queensland.

Nineteen percent had annual revenues above AU\$100 million, while 21% generated revenue between AU\$20–50 million (see Figure 1). Eight companies are listed on the ASX and 23 have overseas subsidiaries or offices.

The industry sectors range across food and beverage, property, trading, health, industrial and others (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Distribution of respondent businesses by annual revenue

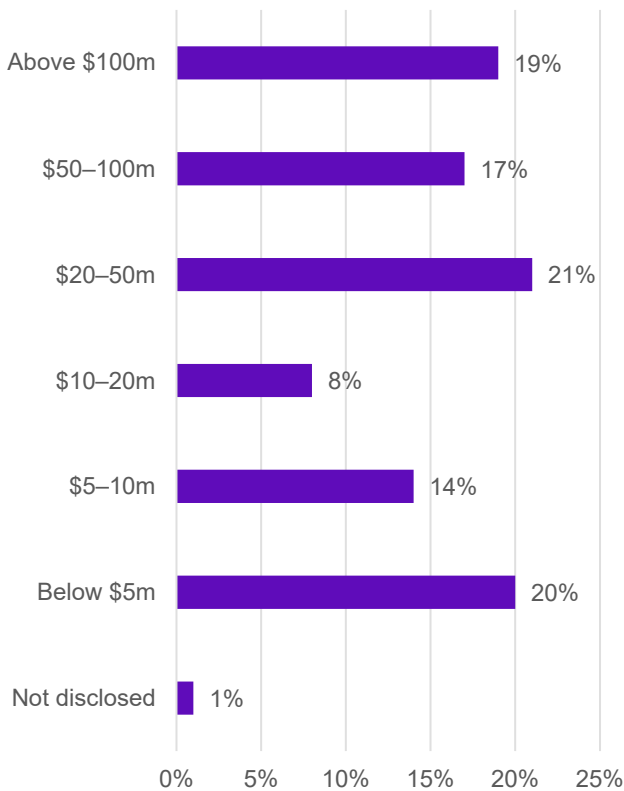
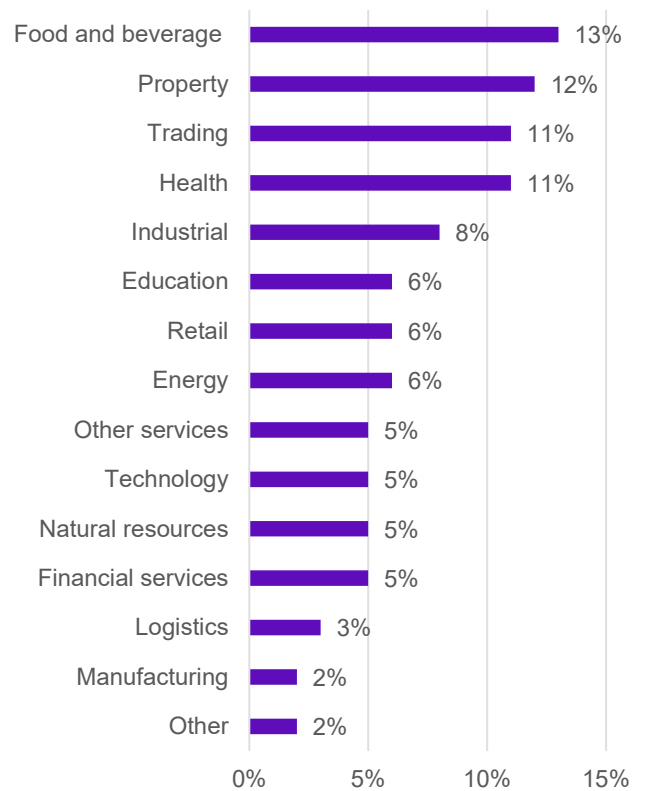


Figure 2: Distribution of respondent businesses by business sector



2025 respondents = 100

² The New Chinese Australian Entrepreneurs, 2020
Australia-China Entrepreneurs and Cross-Border Business Ecosystems, 2023



Part 1.

**Geopolitical
impacts and
confidence levels**

Geopolitical impacts and confidence levels

- Forty-seven percent of businesses reported no major geopolitical impact, while 41% experienced multiple, overlapping impacts from geopolitical tensions.
- Entrepreneurs navigate geopolitical dynamics through diversification, localisation and improved compliance processes to keep their businesses resilient.
- Perceived support from media, government and industry has grown.
- Market confidence remained stable to positive, with industry confidence showing significant improvements.

Geopolitical shifts are multidimensional

Fifty-three percent of respondents reported tangible disruptions linked to geopolitical shifts (Figure 3). The three most common impacts are supply chain disruptions and delays, rising costs, and global restructuring or business reorganisation. Notably, 41% of respondents experienced multiple, overlapping impacts from geopolitical tensions.

Respondents illustrate how these effects can compound. For example, one importer describes how the Russia–Ukraine conflict and Middle East tensions pushed up global prices of agricultural commodities, fertilisers and freight, and exposure to foreign exchange risks “all at once”. Other respondents noted increased geopolitical considerations linked to certain technologies, such as AI. Mining industry entrepreneurs described diverting investment activities to other countries largely due to tighter regulatory scrutiny.

Geopolitical impacts vary significantly across sectors. Industries such as retail and property have been relatively less exposed. Some small importers feel geopolitics matters “very little” to their business because they import materials that Australia cannot produce and are not politically sensitive.

Figure 3: Impacts of geopolitical tensions (multiple choices)

2025 respondents = 100

Navigating geopolitics

Entrepreneurs adopted practical approaches to navigate geopolitics. Many navigated by adjusting procurement, manufacturing locations, capital sources, and rebalancing market and product mixes.

In resource-related businesses, some respondents incorporated geopolitical constraints into capital-raising strategies early, aligning projects towards investment geographies they viewed as more feasible.

Respondents also linked resilience to improved compliance, cash-flow management and the formalisation of operations. While not always framed as “geopolitical risk management”, these practices were described as enabling businesses to absorb sudden shocks in prices, demand or changes in regulatory settings.

WW Cables: turning challenges into value

WW Cables supplies premium electrical cables to the mining, infrastructure and renewable energy sectors. Much of its production is in China, with customers across Australia and Asia-Pacific.

The founder, William Wang, is aware that even when demand is stable, export approvals and trade remedies can shift for reasons beyond the company's control.

During the pandemic, anticipating supply disruptions, WW Cables stockpiled heavily. When the market experienced shortages, this strategy paid off. Its large stock enabled faster order fulfilment.

Geopolitics exerted influences on WW Cables through trade protection measures and regulatory scrutiny. As the company gained market share in the high-performance product segment, it faced many challenges.

For one major project, the customer selected the most stringent global standards for Wang to meet. He responded with improved product quality and better regulatory compliance. WW Cables embraced the challenges, turning them into valuable source of competitive advantage.



William Wang

Managing Director & CEO, WW Cables

A more supportive operating environment in Australia

Compared with 2023, respondents reported a more supportive external operating environment in Australia. Survey results indicate that perceived government support increased substantially, while perceived support from Australian media increased modestly (see Figure 4). The largest improvement was in perceived support from industry and business.

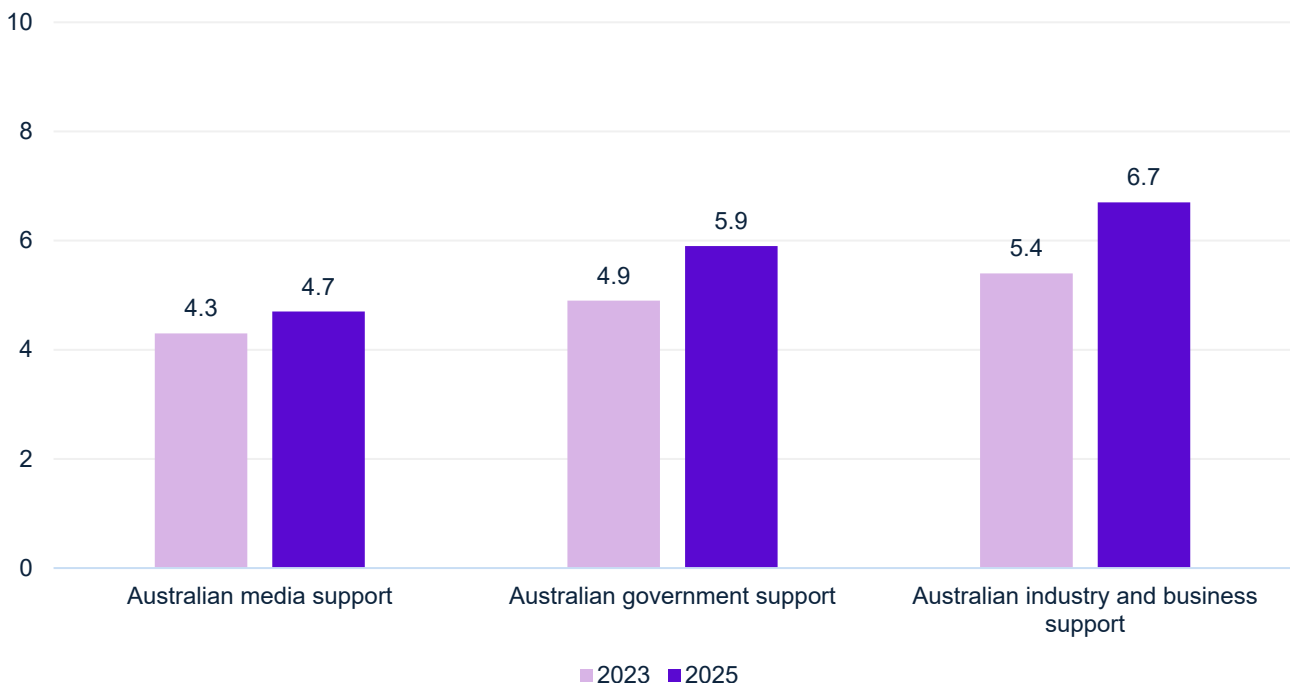
However, entrepreneurs highlighted a gap in cross-community engagement: interactions remain largely within personal networks and Chinese business chambers, with limited participation in mainstream industry associations and wider business platforms. Entrepreneurs tend to respond to negative media coverage with a relatively calm, measured attitude, focusing on the growing supportive environment around them.

Encouragingly, some Chinese entrepreneurs are beginning to push beyond a traditionally “low-profile” stance, using industry roles and public platforms to help shape a more balanced narrative for this community.

One Queensland entrepreneur had previously stood for parliament and remains active in an industry association where Chinese representation is still very limited. In New South Wales, a group of younger Chinese-Australian property developers, builders, contractors, suppliers and related professionals have come together to establish an industry association.

By forming a collective voice and working closely with government and mainstream industry bodies, they aim to enhance the visibility, influence and representation of the Chinese-Australian entrepreneurs within the local community.

Figure 4: Improved perceptions of stakeholder support (2023 vs 2025) (0 = no support, 10 = full support)



2023 respondents = 135
2025 respondents = 100

Melbar: advocating for the needs of CALD communities

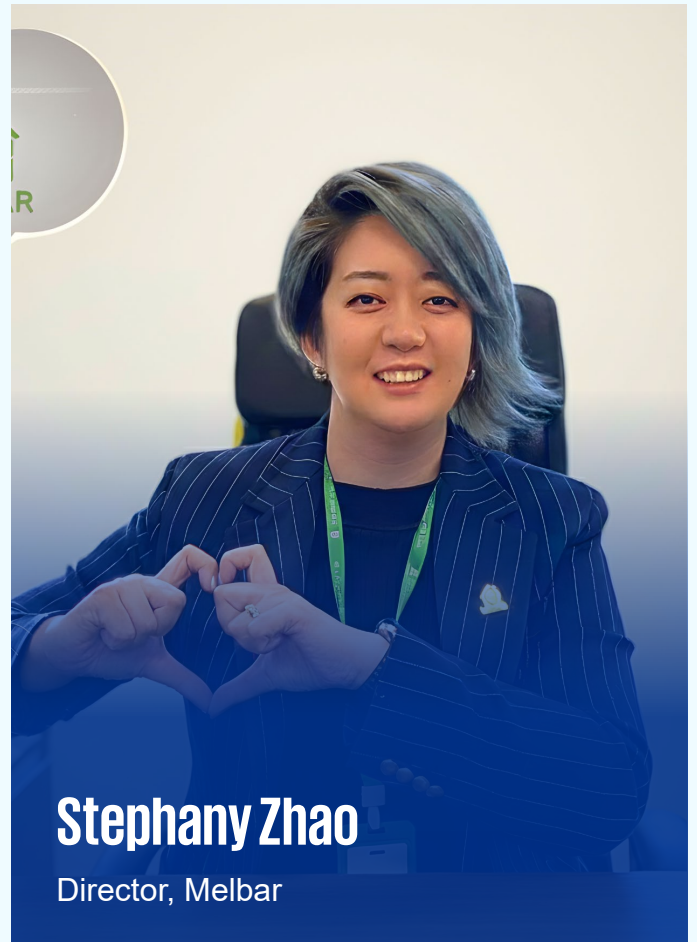
Stephany Zhao arrived in Australia with her mother in 2004 with limited English and few local contacts. Over time she built language capability and work experience, which later enabled her move into entrepreneurship.

In 2016, Zhao established Melbar after identifying unmet demand for culturally appropriate home-care services for elderly Chinese people. As Melbar grew, Zhao increasingly emphasised compliance and service quality in a highly regulated industry. Melbar was recognised in KPMG's 2023 Aged Care Market Analysis for its rapid growth.

Zhao highlighted a broader challenge in Australia: aged care systems and representation do not always reflect the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. She has used industry participation to advocate for better recognition of Chinese cultural needs and for stronger pathways into leadership for Chinese professionals.

Melbar is part of a five-year research collaboration with Flinders University focused on dementia care in CALD communities. Zhao frames this work as a way to ensure that the perspectives of elderly Chinese people and care providers are better reflected in future care models. She also monitors aged care innovations in Asia and explores cross-market learning, including how governance and service models can be adapted in Australia.

Zhao's goal is clear: to ensure that the voices of elderly Chinese people and their care providers shape future care models. "If Chinese voices aren't at the table, they're barely heard," she says. "I want more people to speak up, to be seen and understood."



Stephany Zhao

Director, Melbar

Confidence in two markets

Respondents reported confidence within both the Australian and Chinese markets as well as within their own industries. Many stressed that Australia and Asia, especially China, are complementary to each other. Several also noted that policy settings that support stable trade and investment with Asia would help sustain opportunities for cross-border business activity.

Industry confidence increased in 2025 (see Figure 5). The highest reported confidence was in manufacturing, natural resources, energy, logistics and retail, which are sectors respondents commonly described as dynamic, globally connected or technology-enabled.

Confidence in the Chinese market also strengthened in 2025. This reflected more positive assessments of Chinese consumer demand, digital innovation and outbound opportunities. Respondents commonly pointed to China’s strength in supply-chain ecosystems, the availability of competitively priced products, the scale of the market, and a deep pool of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) talent. Many characterised the current slowdown as an adjustment phase rather than a structural decline.

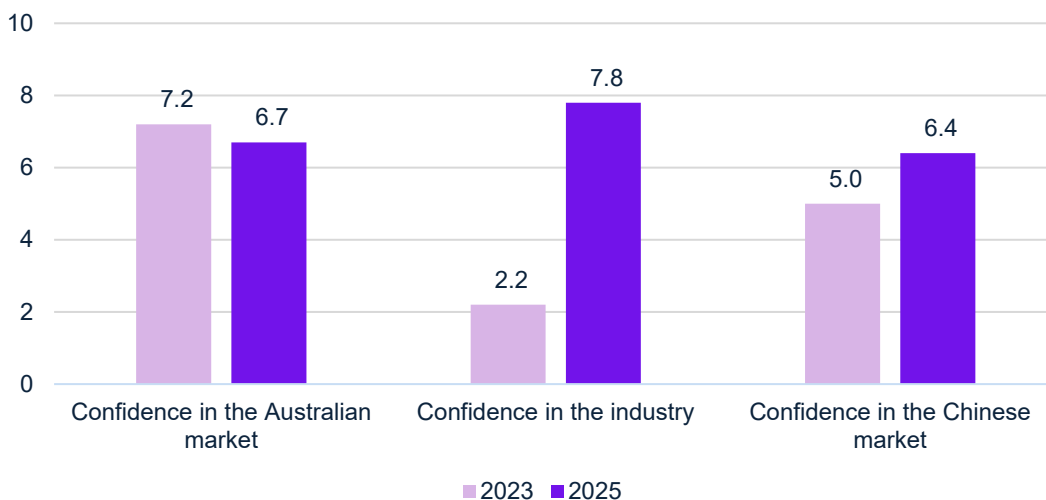
Respondents continued to describe Australia as a safe and stable base for long-term operations, although their confidence in the Australian market slightly declined compared with our last survey in 2023.

Australia’s political stability, rules-based and fair business environment, and established regulatory institutions are cited by respondents as major strengths. At the same time, many pointed to high compliance and labour costs, and the relatively small size of the domestic market as pressures on business growth.

“Chinese entrepreneurs continue to evolve across generations — from the first generation focused largely on labor-intensive work, to the second generation driving trade and commerce, and now to a new generation entering capital-intensive sectors such as real estate, as well as technology-driven industries including renewable energy and AI.”

– Fong Wei, SmartChannel

Figure 5: Confidence in Australian market, industry and the Chinese market (0 = no confidence, 10 = full confidence)



2023 respondents = 135
 2025 respondents = 100



Part 2.

**Connecting
Australia's
opportunities
with China**

Connecting Australia's opportunities with China

- Chinese entrepreneurs bridge Australia's opportunities with the Chinese market through trade, capital, innovation and technology.
- The survey data show 92% of respondents maintain social and business ties with China.
- Compared with earlier reports, more respondents are bringing Chinese industrial and consumer products into Australia.
- Respondents demonstrate practical understanding of Australian and Chinese rules and markets.

Active links with China

Respondents maintain personal and business ties through frequent visits, regular communication with Chinese partners, monitoring Chinese news and information sources, and use of Chinese digital and social media platforms.

As Figure 6 shows, 92% of respondents maintained social, cultural or business links with China. Fifty-eight percent reported innovation exchange ties. Forty-two percent of the entrepreneurs imported products and services from China, and 38% exported products and services to China. Twenty-six percent raised capital from China and 25% served Chinese/Asian clients in Australia.

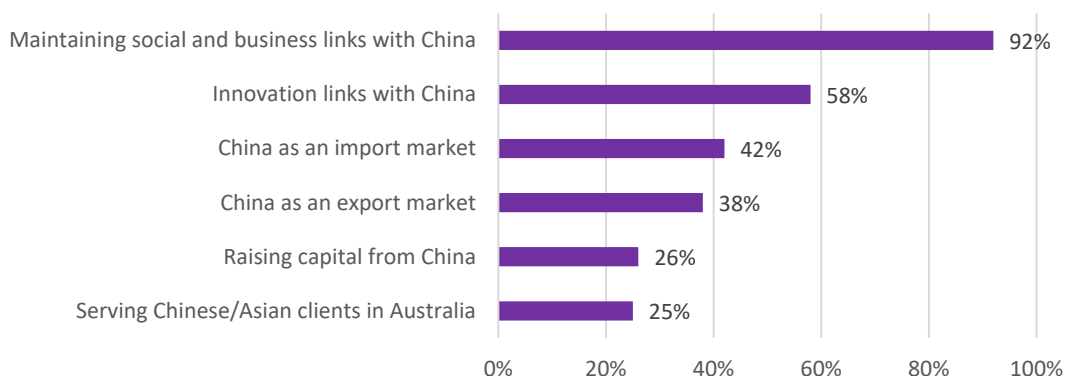
Shift in trade directions

Previous reports in our series showed more focus on export activities of premium Australian products to China by Chinese entrepreneurs. Respondents in this study indicated more focus on imports of Chinese industrial and consumer products into Australia, including renewable energy hardware, specialised electrical and mechanical components, electronic vehicles, construction materials and a range of consumer products.

China is a source of innovation inputs

Over half of respondents (58%) reported innovation links with China. Many leveraged China's manufacturing ecosystems, digital platforms and STEM talent in product development, sourcing and market learning.

Figure 6: Types of links with China/Asia



2025 respondents = 100

Bridging market and capital between Australia and China

Many respondents regarded themselves as the bridge of markets and capital between Australia and China.

One mining entrepreneur, for example, described their model as being built upon local networks of Australian resource owners, and Chinese demand and capital. Others in technology and healthcare described collaboration with Chinese partners (including in generative AI and health tech) and viewed China as a potential source of capital and capability.

Across sectors, respondents gave examples of 'matchmaking' work, such as aligning Chinese capital with Australian projects, using China-based manufacturing for Australian-designed products, adapting and certifying China-made components to Australian standards, and connecting China-linked clients to Australian-regulated services

Cross-system knowledge as a practical capability

Beyond language and culture, many respondents described accumulated, practical insight into how two different systems work in practice. This includes understanding of laws, regulations, and market dynamics, as well as connecting industry and innovation ecosystems. Several contrasted Australia's rules-based, highly regulated environment with systems they experienced in China and parts of Asia that they perceived as less codified.

Interviews suggest this locally anchored, cross-system knowledge helps respondents identify opportunities, manage risk, and coordinate partners across borders.

Respondents provided many examples of applying this capability. One founder described relying on China-based talent (including engineers with experience in major Chinese tech firms) to strengthen product and delivery capability, while building commercialisation and client-facing operations in Australia.

A respondent described that meat export to China involved complex approvals, requirements, and high regulatory standards. These complexities extend across credentials, capital, distribution channels, and policy changes, which can be difficult for local exporters to navigate.

EZZ Life Science: China market know-how

EZZ Life Science is an Australian-listed health and beauty company founded by Qizhou Qin. He worked in marketing and established his own agency in China before immigrating to Australia.

After moving to Australia, Qin developed a premium skincare and wellness brand called Eaoron, and has been growing its market presence. China is a key market for EZZ's supplements and beauty products. Qin's knowledge of Chinese consumers and go-to-market channels supports EZZ's efforts to align Australian-made products with evolving consumer requirements in China.

Success in China depends on staying ahead of fast-moving trends in social media, livestream e-commerce and digital wellness communities. EZZ has built strong online momentum on "Douyin" (抖音) and other content-commerce platforms, using them not just for sales but as real-time laboratories for product insights and brand testing.

These connections have helped bring Chinese/Asian product and brand marketing innovations into Australia. EZZ brought beauty formats and aesthetics that were already popular across East Asia to Australia. This two-way flow positions the company as a bridge, translating Asian consumer and platform trends into trusted, compliant, Australian-made products for both local and international markets.



Qizhou Qin

CEO & Executive Director,
EZZ Life Science



Part 3.

**Drive
and resilience**

Drive and resilience

- Eighty-three percent of the respondents studied at Australian universities. Around 62% first arrived as international students.
- Many entrepreneurs link their learning drive to China's rigorous education environment and competitive careers. Several described combining STEM training in China with business education in Australia.
- Respondents often described migration as "starting from zero", including taking entry-level roles or joining small businesses.
- Entrepreneurs' upbringing in China's reform-era has also provided great resilience to navigate challenges.

From competitive schooling to business persistence

Nearly all respondents in our study hold university degrees. Overall, 38% had completed tertiary education in China and 83% had studied at Australian universities.

Entrepreneurs attributed their persistence, endurance and strong learning orientation to their early education in China, which they described as intensely competitive and effort-driven. The academic environment, marked by high pressure examinations, long study hours and constant peer comparison, cultivated discipline, perseverance and a strong sense of self-belief. One founder recalled repeating Year 12 twice to get into a top-tier university. That experience taught him that "if you work hard enough, you can change your situation."

"Tongli's success is rooted in the education I received in China. Studying engineering at Shanghai Jiao Tong University gave me rigorous STEM training that strengthened my analytical thinking and systematic approach to problem-solving."

– Thomas Jin, Tongli

Rebuilding from zero

While this rigorous academic foundation shaped their mindset, migration presented a different challenge: stripping away prior social and professional status, and networks. It demanded a new phase of “learning by doing”. In interviews, respondents often described arriving in Australia as “starting from zero”. They faced steep learning curves in language, regulation and business practices. Entrepreneurs linked this experience to a stronger reliance on “learning by doing” and a greater tolerance for hardship.

Over 34% of respondents reported prior work experience before establishing their first business. Around one-third reported taking entry-level roles such as delivery, sales or running market stalls to gain grassroots commercial experience. Many entered unfamiliar industries and “learned as they went”.

Many respondents are in sectors where standards, regulation and technology are demanding. They taught themselves complex topics such as Australian taxation, labour law, IT and ERP systems while running their businesses.

“I left a great job in Shenzhen’s municipal government, where I worked in foreign investment promotion. I came to Melbourne and started from scratch. Life here was very different from what I had in Shenzhen, but I was willing to humble myself and step out of my comfort zone — first running a small market stall, then taking on various sales jobs. Eventually, by selling Kodak products, I earned my first pot of gold.”

– Monika Tu, Black Diamondz

Umall: learning by doing



Umall was established in 2020 by social media entrepreneurs Stan Chen and Roc Zhang, and e-commerce and logistics specialists Jimmy Zhu and Max Xu. Drawing on complementary knowledge, they developed the idea of a fresh-food e-commerce platform tailored to Chinese consumers in Australia.

During Sydney's pandemic lockdown, Umall enjoyed strong demand, but faced early operational challenges due to limited fresh-food supply chain experience. This caused delays and stock availability issues. They learned a key lesson that success in e-commerce depends as much on delivery reliability as on sales volume.

After the pandemic, they were challenged by a sharp drop in demand, which placed the business under financial pressure and prompted a major operational reset. They invested significant capital in warehousing and cold-chain logistics upgrades, including automated sorting and systems to improve inventory visibility and replenishment. They rebuilt supply chains by expanding import channels, developing local sourcing, shifting toward more direct procurement, and using more detailed cost models. Umall has now moved toward a more stable and efficient operation with fast growing revenue.

Operations now span Sydney, Melbourne, Wollongong and Canberra, supported by multiple apps.

Their story illustrates "learning by doing" in practice: entering an unfamiliar sector, building operational capability through trials, investments and iterations, and adapting as market conditions shift.

Resilience shaped by China’s reform-era

A recurring pattern in our study is that severe shocks, such as cash-flow crises, business model failures, pandemics and geopolitical shifts, did not end these Chinese entrepreneur’s business journeys. Instead, they drove deep reflection, financial sacrifice and strategic change. This resilience is clear in how Chinese migrant entrepreneurs are willing to start from scratch and endure hardship.

The same attitude pattern shows up in how they handle crises. During COVID-19 and other periods of severe financial stress, some entrepreneurs in sectors such as education services, wine and fertiliser distribution invested large amounts of personal savings to keep their businesses alive. Rather than closing down, they absorbed personal financial losses, cut costs, reorganised their operations and kept trading.

“The pandemic cut off our student demand while our lease commitments to multiple landlords remained unchanged, creating significant financial pressure from late 2019 through 2022. Many advised me to walk away, but I chose to honour every obligation. We broadened our services to generate commission income, and I sold some of my own properties to keep the business afloat. I’m proud that we stayed the course and came through stronger.”

– Lance Li, Inndeavor

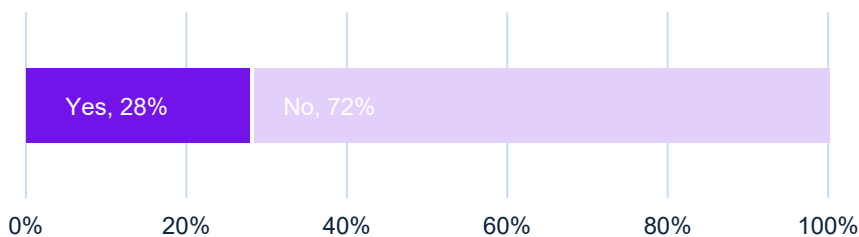
Our respondents spoke about bringing an “involution” work ethic, formed in exam pressure and intense workplaces, into Australia’s more relaxed market. As one interviewee commented:

“If you bring China’s highly competitive ‘involution’ business mindset to Australia, the chances of entrepreneurial success are higher”.

– William Tang, Ferngrove

Rather than relying on a single income stream, many run more than one venture at the same time to diversify risks across sectors and markets. Survey results show that 28% of the entrepreneurs interviewed operate multiple businesses concurrently (see Figure 7), using diversification as a way to buffer shocks and create new growth options, even after their primary venture is already well established.

Figure 7: Are you running multiple businesses concurrently?



2025 respondents = 100



Part 4.

**Innovation
across borders**

Innovation across borders

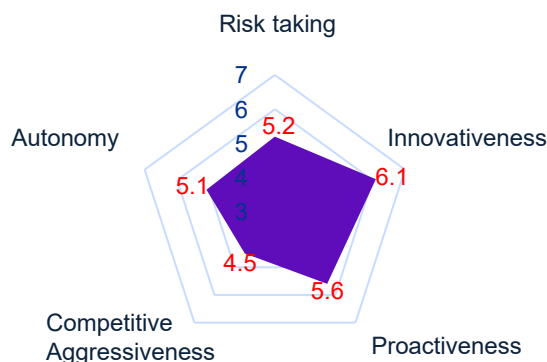
- Over 80% of the respondents undertook some form of innovation activity in the past three years.
- Innovation is often cross-border, driven by sourcing new and high-quality overseas products and services, as well as adopting new technologies.

Strong innovation orientation

Using the Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) framework³, respondents demonstrated high scores on innovativeness and proactiveness (see Figure 8). This pattern is consistent with our survey findings: 82% of the respondents indicated that their products or services are distinct to some extent, with an average rating of 5.67 out of 7 for uniqueness. Together, these results indicate a clear emphasis on innovation and differentiation from competitors.

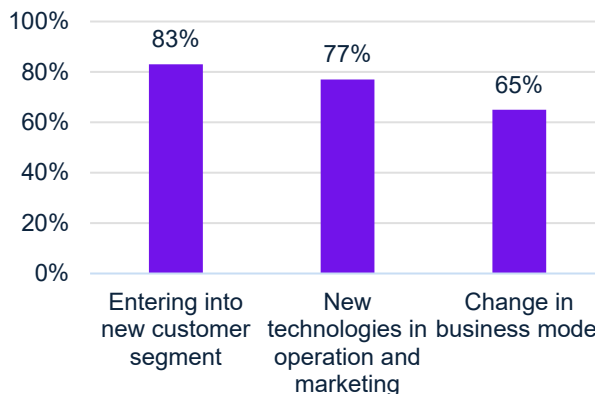
Over the past three years, more than 80% of the respondents undertook some forms of innovation activity. Figure 9 summarises the types of innovation adopted by Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Australia over the past three years. The pattern points to a strong market and customer focus, with 83% of respondents entering new market segments and 77% adopting new technologies in operations and marketing. Meanwhile, 65% implemented changes to their business models, reflecting strategic adaptation to evolving consumer needs and competitive dynamics.

Figure 8: Entrepreneurial orientation



2025 respondents = 100

Figure 9: Percentage of key innovation adoptions (past 3 years)



2025 respondents = 100

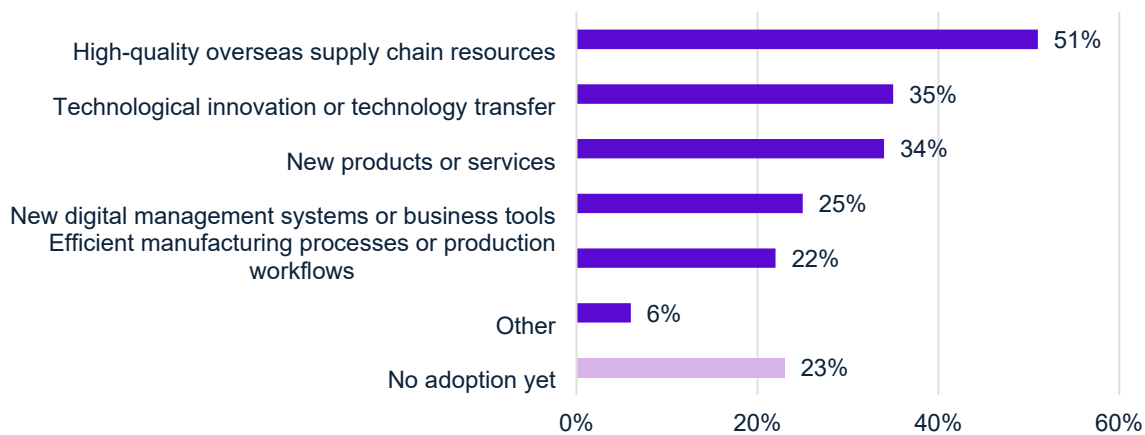
³ Lumpkin, G. T., & Dess, G. G. (1996). Clarifying the entrepreneurial orientation construct and linking it to performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(1), 135-172.

Bringing overseas capabilities into Australia

Survey findings indicate that many Chinese migrant entrepreneurs draw on overseas resources and practices to increase their competitiveness in Australia (see Figure 10). Rather than being limited to domestic Australian innovation, respondents leveraged imported products, technologies and business practices from overseas markets into their local operations.

Over half of respondents reported leveraging high-quality overseas supply-chain inputs such as equipment and materials. Around 35% have adopted technological innovations or technology transfers (including automation and digital tools) and 34% have introduced new products or services from overseas markets. In addition, 25% have brought in new digital management systems or business tools, and 22% have implemented more efficient manufacturing or production workflows.

Figure 10: Types of capabilities introduced from China



2025 respondents = 100

One Stop Warehouse: tech-driven innovation



OSW (One Stop Warehouse) is one of Australia's leading solar distributors. The business applies AI-driven tools and innovative business models to enhance efficiency and resolve operational challenges across the downstream solar value chain.

The co-founder and CEO Anson Zhang's early technology initiatives included implementing an ERP system to create a more structured and efficient distribution operation. In 2015, he launched GreenDeal, a software platform designed to streamline installers' and retailers' applications for government incentives and to simplify complex processes.

In 2016, he founded Discover Energy and began developing a Virtual Power Plant model, exploring ways to coordinate distributed energy resources through digital platforms. More recently, he launched a new Green Sketch venture. It is an intelligent design tool that automates solar and storage system planning while standardising design workflows. In parallel, he has outlined plans for a fintech solution to address financing and payment challenges in the sector.

OSW's journey illustrates how a business leverages technology-driven innovation to build capability and enhance coordination in a fragmented industry ecosystem.

Final word

This research has shown that Chinese migrant entrepreneurs are an important source of China capability for Australia. Respondents maintain ongoing business, capital and knowledge ties to China, actively navigating geopolitical shifts while introducing overseas innovations and business practices to Australia. Many also described learning, adapting and rebuilding following setbacks.

In a more uncertain environment, these combined capabilities, including cross-border coordination, self-efficacy, learning and adaptive resilience, represent an important source of economic capability within Australia's business community.

Australia does not need to build China capability from scratch. It can leverage and strengthen what already exists in partnership within these Chinese migrant entrepreneurs.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all entrepreneurs who participated in the interviews for generously contributing their time, experiences and insights.

Their openness in sharing personal journeys, challenges and reflections has been invaluable to this research. The depth and authenticity of their contributions not only strengthened the findings of this study but also helped illuminate the diverse capabilities, resilience and cross-border expertise that Chinese migrant entrepreneurs bring to Australia.

This report would not have been possible without their trust and collaboration.



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