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Residential segregation of Chinese minority groups in Greater Sydney

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, migration to the major cities of advanced economies has culminated in residential segregation for minority groups. These segregated communities often have differing driving forces and demographic characteristics. Greater Sydney, for instance, has been home to waves of immigrants, particularly from China, making the Chinese the third-largest immigrant group in Australia as of 2021. This resulted in the formation of Chinese enclaves in the city, but the residential segregation of the Chinese minority has not been examined in the literature. Notably, these Chinese enclaves may not align with the traditional understanding of residential segregation. To address this gap, we interviewed 61 Chinese residents living within these designated enclaves and supplemented our findings with secondary data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. We applied content analysis and qualitative methods to identify the prominent enclaves, their determinants, and the consequences of living in these areas. The findings suggest that Chinese enclaves do not match the typical segregated areas known for their socio-economic disadvantages. Chinese migrants tend to settle in certain areas primarily due to favorable pull factors, such as access to quality education, better economic opportunities, and well-developed infrastructure. Although these areas also provide supportive environments with cultural and community benefits that facilitate the settlement and integration of Chinese migrants into Australian society, they still face unique challenges, such as potential cultural segregation and the impact on local house prices. The findings could inform settlement policies by the relevant state authorities and aid the decisions of newly arrived in Australia.

1. Introduction

There is a history of international migration across countries (Lissoni, 2018). According to the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), as of July 2020, there were 281 million international migrants across the globe. This constitutes 3.5% of the world population, compared to 2.8% in 2000 and 2.3% in 1980 (UN, 2023). International migration can be voluntary, arising from the differences in economic opportunities and social amenities between the origin and destination countries. In contrast, involuntary international migration could be triggered by conflicts and life-threatening situations (Kraly et al., 2024). Historically, empirical evidence has shown that migration between countries has resulted in urbanization, especially in advanced economies (Bangura and Lee, 2023a, 2023b). Statistics from the UN show that around 68% of the world population is expected to live in urban areas by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDEC], 2018). These findings indicate that metropolitan cities are the likely final destinations for international migrants.

Greater Sydney, Australia's most populous city, has long been an important final destination for international migrants. Over the years, China, for instance, has maintained a striking history of emigration to Australia. China has been Australia's largest trading partner for more than decades, coupled with higher job prospects, education opportunities, favorable weather, political stability, and the rich multicultural life in Australia have all contributed significantly to this migration flow (Chhetri et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2018). According to Australia's 2016 national census, the ethnic Chinese population has increased from almost 200,000 in the mid-1980s to around 1.2 million (Gao, 2022). As of 2021, the Chinese-born population has become Australia's third largest immigrant group, accounting for 2.3% of the Australian population (Australia Government Department of Home Affairs [AGDHA] 2023a, b). Despite the growing trend of the Chinese population in Australia, this cohort remains a notable minority group, especially in Greater Sydney, where more than half of mainland China-born migrants live (Wang et al., 2018). This has resulted in the Chinese experiencing

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residential segregation in the city, reflecting the self-defined residential neighborhoods discussed by Pinchak et al. (2021).

Residential segregation, the concentration of people with a shared identity living in a given area, varies in its determinants and can emerge or be established due to race, culture, socioeconomic status, financial status, religion, and health reasons (Timberlake, 2014). Such segregation may also have positive and negative connotations. In the United States [US], for instance, tensions between residents can increase in racially diverse cities with heavily segregated neighborhoods, deepening mistrust and stereotyping among these residents (Charles & Heil, 2015). Australia's residential segregation is lower than in the United States, primarily based on income and social factors. The Chinese migrants, for example, tend to choose middle-to-high-income suburbs (Ting, 2018). However, Australia has ethnically diverse areas with "concentration disadvantages," including Chinese enclaves (Colic-Peisker & Peisker, 2023). The concentration of the third-largest immigrant community in Australia may have some adverse effects. However, studies have yet to examine the possible negative consequences of over-concentration in Chinese enclaves, which this study seeks to address. An exception is Dunn (1998), who previously posited new theories on ethnic relations and the ethnic concentration of Indo-Chinese Australians by case-studying Cabramatta, a suburb in the Fairfield local government area in Sydney's outer west.

In filling this space in the literature, we case study the Chinese residential segregation in Greater Sydney, Australia, to identify key characteristics of the most populated residential segregations of Chinese minority groups, the reasons they choose to live in these areas in Greater Sydney, and the consequences of these residential segregations. This demographic delineation offers an ideal case study for the following reasons. First, Australia is part of the Anglosphere, which has robust immigration systems and a high demand for immigrants. In 2022–23, for instance, the top 3 nations providing the most permanent migrants to Australia are India, China, and the Philippines (AGDHA, 2023). While English is the official language in India and the Philippines, this communication medium still needs to be more widespread in China. Most people in China are not fluent in English, and there is a vast difference in lifestyle between the Chinese and Australians. As such, Chinese immigrants in Australia face huge cultural and English language barriers, leading to a higher degree of residential segregation. Second, both Sydney and Melbourne have a large number of Chinese migrants. However, Greater Sydney is more socially and economically polarized. Higher-income households live mainly on the waterfront and inner-city areas, while the most disadvantaged households live in the middle and outer suburbs (Bangura & Lee, 2019). Low-income areas of Greater Sydney, particularly Western Sydney, face serious housing affordability issues and apparent signs of a bubble (Bangura & Lee, 2022; Bangura et al., 2023). Notably, these suburbs coincide with several Chinese enclaves. Importantly, Pawson et al. (2015) suggested that high housing costs lead to residential concentrations often determined by ethnic and income-based factors. These factors offer a unique situation requiring an in-depth investigation, contributing to literature in the following ways.

The first contribution of this study focuses on understanding the formulation of Chinese residential segregation in Greater Sydney. Specifically, this study is the first to investigate whether Chinese migrants in a global city differ from other ethnic groups in their settlement patterns, challenging the conventional view in residential segregation literature. Unlike existing studies (e.g., Colic-Peisker & Peisker, 2023; MacDonald et al., 2018), which primarily examine socioeconomic disadvantages and forced segregation of ethnic minorities (e.g. Muslims of Middle Eastern origin and African Americans in the US), the formulation of Chinese residential segregation in a Western city is somewhat under-researched. This is even though Chinese migrants may have different settlement patterns, influenced by advantageous factors rather than socio-economic constraints. This is potentially linked to China's hukou system, which has accustomed Chinese migrants to relocating to larger, more developed cities in search of better educational resources, economic opportunities, and infrastructure (Bi et al., 2019; Fan et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2022). Existing studies have not considered the unique migration motivations of Chinese communities. As a result, previous findings, which predominantly focus on disadvantaged conditions as drivers of residential segregation, may not apply to Chinese migrants. Our study fills this gap by providing a dedicated investigation into the formation of Chinese enclaves, exploring their settlement patterns and drivers distinct from those of other ethnic groups.

Second, the study contributes to the literature by reevaluating the factors driving residential segregation and validating Lee's (1966) push-pull theory. Contrary to existing literature that often links ethnic minority segregation in major cities to disadvantaged conditions (e.g., Dunn, 1998; Steil & Arcaya, 2023), our findings reveal that advantageous factors like educational resources, public transportation, amenities, and infrastructures, economic and employment opportunities, environment. These factors attract the Chinese into these enclaves. The median house prices and the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantages and Disadvantages (IRSAD) for these suburbs are generally higher than the Greater Sydney average, further highlighting the role of these features in influencing the settlement decisions of the Chinese. These results depart from other groups, such as Greater Sydney Muslims of Middle Eastern origin and African Americans in the US. Extant literature generally reports that the residential segregation of these ethnic minorities, especially in metropolitan cities, is triggered by disadvantaged factors. Our study challenges the traditional view that migrant enclaves form primarily due to socio-economic disadvantages. Instead, we found that positive factors, such as access to high-quality education, public transportation, and employment opportunities, primarily drive Chinese enclaves in Greater Sydney. This aligns with Lee's (1966) "pull factor" theory, which emphasizes that migrants are attracted to favorable features of a destination. These findings have potential implications for urban planners and policymakers in managing settlement patterns and community integration strategies for future Chinese immigrants.

Thirdly, we add to the literature on residential segregation by examining the positive and adverse consequences of living in these communities for the first time. These settlements offer positive effects like the absence of cultural barriers, increased cultural identity, easier adapting to life in Sydney, and a suitable environment for business. The adverse consequences include increasing the housing price, increasing the population density, and making it difficult for residents to integrate into mainstream Australian society. Moreover, there is no link between the residential segregation of Chinese in Greater Sydney and the racial discrimination against Chinese. The Chinese do not also feel discriminated against in the real estate market; they are not forced to move to Chinese concentration areas because of discrimination, and there is no data to prove that residential segregation has increased the level of discrimination against Chinese. The result offers the actual cost of living in residential segregation, which could inform household location decisions.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, Section 3 presents the theoretical framework, and Section 4 covers the data and methodology. Section 5 discusses the results, and Section 6 makes the concluding statements.

2. Literature review

The Chinese immigration community has become deeply rooted in Greater Sydney's society and culture, embracing home ownership as a basic human right (Rogers, Lee, & Yan, 2015). The immediate goal of most Chinese migrants is to own property to secure their rights and benefits, such as infrastructure and educational resources, to make their lives in Sydney more stable.

2.1. Chinese migration patterns and the formation of residential segregations

China has an internal migration passport system, known as the "hukou" system, driven by push and pull factors emanating from the differences in access to economic and social opportunities between urban and rural residents. Urban hukou often provides additional benefits, such as better hospitals, higher superannuation, and employment opportunities (Bi et al., 2019; Chan, Liu, & Yang, 1999; Chen, DeLoach, & Islam, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). As a result, people from rural areas are often attracted to these urban areas to seek jobs and urban hukou. These migrants are called "Nongmingong," or rural migrant workers (Bi et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2014). The international migration pattern of Chinese is an extrapolation of the "hukou" system as people explore other cities across the globe with a wide range of education and employment opportunities and career trajectories for them and their future generations (Johnson, 2017). Over the past decades, the Australian government statistics have reported a consistent flow of immigrants from China to Australia. By the end of June 2022, 597,440 Chinese-born people were living in the country, representing an increase of 47% from June 2012 (AGDHA, 2023).

In the past few decades, migrants from China have been attracted to some communities in Greater Sydney, such as Hurstville, Burwood, and Zetland. The Chinese concentration in these areas can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, these communities offer efficient transportation systems and rich amenities, and secondly, they provide a valuable sense of psychological security, protecting the Chinese from potential mainstream prejudice (Colic-Peisker & Peisker, 2023). For instance, between 2010 and 2020, the relationship between Australia and China was highly strained, causing an outbreak of "Sinophobia" in Australian society. Unfortunately, incidents of discriminatory racial behavior against Chinese have increased, exposing them to unprecedented social pressures and inequalities (Ang & Colic-Peisker, 2022). These Chinese communities provide them with the psychological and physical protection required and promote cohesion.

2.2. Residential segregation in various areas

As Timberlake (2014) stated, residential segregation is the physical separation of two or more groups into different neighbourhoods in a city, a product of race, socioeconomic status, or religion, and a culmination of a homogenized population in a diverse city. In the US, residential segregation is severe, long-lasting, widespread, and particularly disadvantageous to African Americans, a minority group in the country. Widespread discrimination prevents this cohort from integrating into other communities, sometimes making it more difficult to access quality housing, good schools, and other services (Steil & Arcaya, 2023). This stretch of segregation has led to several studies. Martinez (2021), for instance, highlighted the issue of racial inequality in homeownership and housing values, while Demissie (1994) had earlier pointed out race as a major determinant of residential segregation and a catalyst for the development of the "underclass" of African American urban communities. This persistent segregation has led to economic deterioration in some areas and heightened discrimination, worsening the problem of poverty that causes further marginalization in both physical and social space (Massey, 1990). In response, the US government enacted the Fair Housing Act in 1968, which prohibits public and private housing discrimination, including financing and brokerage practices, to help ameliorate residential segregation. As amended in 1988, the Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on colour, disability, family status, race, national origin, religion, or gender (Silver & Danielowski, 2019). Despite these efforts, residential segregation in the US remains a serious concern. Housing discrimination and its ensuing segregation is also prevalent in Europe, although on a lesser scale when compared to the United States. Silver and Danielowski (2019), therefore, call for a mix of social housing policies to address the issue of extreme discrimination in housing that engenders residential segregation in Europe. In the United Kingdom [UK], ethnic segregation is simmering down as some groups are integrating into the broader society, while socioeconomic segregation is growing in 12 capital cities in Europe (Musterd et al., 2015).

Also in Europe, Benassi et al. (2020) reported that northwestern countries of Europe recorded lower levels of residential segregation than their Southern European counterpart. Similarly, Tammaru et al. (2020) found that the proportion of income inequalities is lowest in North Europe but highest in South Europe. They conclude that changes in the levels of residential segregation between socioeconomic classes relate to changes in income inequality. More specifically, the differences in education, income, language skills, and the city of the village or city size potentially account for 29–84% of the residential isolation of the immigrants from Italy, Turkey, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe to Germany (Sager, 2012). In Australia, the gold rush caused a large-scale Chinese migration, mainly from Guangdong, in the 19th century. Later, skilled and business migration from China increased dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, Sydney's Chinese migrants have gradually decentralized from Chinatown to suburban settlements, creating regions where Chinese migrants constitute a high proportion of the population (Robertson et al., 2022).

2.3. Consequences of residential segregation

As Sager (2012) pointed out, residential segregation is a recurring discourse with increasing controversies. It can be viewed as the most visible feature of community divides across various populations in many modern societies. Muslims of Middle Eastern origin, for instance, comprise 3.2% of Greater Sydney's population and are often victims of racist attitudes and prejudices in Australia (MacDonald et al., 2018). The Scanlon Foundation's Social Cohesion Survey has been polling Australians' attitudes to Islam since 2007. They reveal a continuing trend of negative perceptions of Muslims. Social Islamophobia may not only cause Muslims of Middle Eastern origin to be discriminated against in the property market but also result in high levels of residential segregation (Mourad, 2023). In the rental market, minority renters, such as Muslims, are often not prioritised and sometimes discriminated against—the Chinese enclaves of Greater Sydney experience similar situations (MacDonald et al., 2018).

In contrast, the Anglo-Australians are often given preferential treatment to live in higher-status neighborhoods with better social amenities. This difference leads to wider inequalities of opportunity in Greater Sydney, increasing the concentration of ethnically diverse and disadvantaged households in particular suburbs (MacDonald et al., 2018; Mourad, 2023). The cultural and religious preferences also play an essential role in residential choices. Muslims of Middle Eastern origin tend to congregate in places like Auburn, Lakemba, and surrounding areas in the city's southwest region, primarily due to the availability of mosques, social networks, and community support (Arifin, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2018). In the US, residential segregation also limits blacks' access to the self-employment market, exacerbating the gap in self-employment rates between whites and blacks (Massey, Condran, & Denton, 1987). Moreover, this racial residential segregation is not limited to African Americans but also Hispanics and Asian Americans, albeit to varying degrees (Charles, 2003).

In the UK, the electoral threshold does not only depend on the group size of the minority population but also the degree of regional segregation, revealing that residential segregation can also contribute to increased representation of minority populations (Campion, 2023). In Montreal, Canada, visible minorities are more segregated, especially Asians and blacks, because of the concentration of affordable, ageing housing in this city's older urban centers. Moreover, minorities in Montreal face greater economic challenges than those in Toronto and Vancouver, often resulting in a reliance on cheaper apartments (Bauder & Sharp, 2002). Toronto's immigrant communities are trending toward

suburbanization as many immigrants avoid the downtown area and disperse to the inner and outer suburbs (Bauder & Sharp, 2002). Dai et al. (2023) demonstrate an integration trend among minorities in cities such as Chicago. Particularly, the Asian population is less segregated from white families and is more socially mobile, especially the younger generation. This trend is further reflected in the rapid growth of the Asian American population.

In summary, the discourse on residential segregation continues to evolve, capturing the causative factors and the consequences on the groups and the broader societies. This means different settings require different empirical evidence to inform policies and advocacy initiatives. In Australia, there is residential segregation, especially in Greater Sydney. Even though previous studies have examined residential segregation in Australia, there is still little research on the residential segregation of Chinese migrants, a minority group, in Greater Sydney, which is an obvious gap in the existing literature that needs to be addressed.

3. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

This section discusses the theoretical framework behind residential segregation and explores why it occurs, focusing on how Chinese migrants in Sydney may experience it differently. Rather than being solely a product of exclusion or discrimination, Chinese migrants may choose residential clustering driven by a need for social cohesion and the preservation of cultural identity (Ang and Colis-Perisker, 2022).

Residential segregation refers to the physical separation of groups within a particular geographic area, where social and economic inequalities often manifest spatially. It is typically defined as separating two or more groups into different neighbourhoods, shaping urban areas' social and economic landscapes (Massey & Denton, 1993). Traditionally, segregation has been viewed through the lens of inequality, discrimination, and economic disparities. For many migrant groups, limited access to housing and employment opportunities forces them into clustered, marginalized communities. However, segregation can also emerge to foster internal solidarity and preserve cultural integrity, particularly for groups seeking to maintain their heritage while adapting to a new environment (Light, 2019).

One of the driving forces behind Chinese migrants' residential segregation in Greater Sydney is not necessarily exclusion by the host society but rather the pull factors that encourage them to cluster in culturally cohesive neighbourhoods. According to Lee's (1966) push-pull theory, migration decisions are shaped by negative factors pushing individuals to leave their place of origin and positive factors pulling them toward a new destination. For Chinese migrants, Australia's high standard of living, educational opportunities, and quality healthcare are significant pull factors. Due to its unique ' Hukou ' system, these have emerged as a key factor for Chinese internal migration decisions (Bi et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2014). However, beyond economic incentives, the formation of Chinese communities in Sydney may be more deeply rooted in the migrants' desire for cultural preservation and social cohesion. Chinese migrants often settle in specific areas to retain familiar cultural practices, languages, and social structures. This form of self-segregation provides a support network that helps migrants navigate the challenges of settling in a foreign country (Johnson, 2017). In particular, residential clustering enables migrants to access resources specific to their community, such as culturally relevant goods and services, language support, and religious or social institutions that reflect their traditions (Li, 1998). This choice to cluster may reflect a reaction to external pressures and an intentional effort to foster a sense of belonging and mutual support within the Chinese community.

Furthermore, the Chinese diaspora in Greater Sydney has historically developed around tight-knit neighbourhoods, where mutual aid and community ties provide emotional and social security. During heightened anti-Chinese sentiment or economic instability, such as in the 19th and early 20th centuries, these communities acted as a buffer against discrimination, offering a protective social structure (Light, 2019). While contemporary Chinese migrants face less overt discrimination, the cultural, social, and economic advantages of living in a culturally cohesive neighbourhood continue to motivate residential segregation. In this sense, Chinese migrants' residential clustering in Greater Sydney can be viewed not only as a response to socio-economic constraints but also as a deliberate effort to maintain cultural ties and promote social cohesion. These communities help reinforce the cultural identity of Chinese migrants while easing their adaptation to life in a new country (Ting et al., 2018). By living in areas where cultural practices, language, and values are shared, Chinese migrants can better preserve their heritage while integrating into the broader Australian society. Therefore, the residential segregation of Chinese migrants in Greater Sydney is more likely driven by economic benefits and the need for cultural preservation and social cohesion than by exclusion or discrimination. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Main Hypothesis: Chinese migrants in Greater Sydney tend to segregate primarily due to economic benefits and the need for social cohesion and cultural preservation rather than being driven solely by exclusion or discrimination.

4. Data and methodology

4.1. Data and information

We use both primary and secondary data and information. Primary information is generated through interviews with Chinese residents in the identified segregated communities, while secondary data and information were obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] various census reports, including Domain. These sources provide reliable and detailed data and information widely used in research, academic, and policy-making environments, providing a solid basis for analyzing population distributions and house price trends.

4.2. Methodological approach

We use both a content analysis approach and a qualitative method to comprehensively understand the residential segregation of the Chinese minority in Greater Sydney. The content analysis aims to identify Chinese settlements in the city, while the qualitative methods were used to analyze the settlement preferences of Chinese immigrants, examine the reasons Chinese immigrants choose to settle in these areas, and analyze the consequences of residential segregation in Chinese enclaves.

4.2.1. Content analysis approach

Content analysis was employed to systematically identify and describe the patterns of Chinese residential segregation in Greater Sydney. This method was chosen for its ability to synthesise and simplify complex data to uncover meaningful insights about spatial and demographic patterns (Serafini & Reid, 2023; Yan et al., 2024). This method is commonly used in social sciences, urban studies, and housing research to systematically analyze how specific terms, ideas, and narratives emerge (Antrop, 2001; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Weber, 1990; Zheng & Lee, 2025). Following Antrop (2001), in this study, our approach involved analysing secondary data from publicly available sources, such as census data, housing market reports and other demographic reports, to identify key characteristics of Chinese enclaves, including their spatial distribution, socioeconomic attributes, and housing market dynamics.

The goal of the content analysis was twofold: first, to identify the existence of Chinese enclaves in Greater Sydney, and second, to examine the specific socio-economic variables that define these areas. This included median household income, educational attainment, housing affordability, and employment opportunities. By categorising the occurrence of key terms, such as "Chinese enclaves," "segregation," "housing market," and "ethnic concentration," we were able to assess

the geographical location of these communities and their corresponding socio-economic characteristics.

The analysis sought to uncover the broader patterns of residential segregation by exploring whether these enclaves are predominantly located in high or low-income areas or if there are correlations with other factors, such as proximity to cultural hubs, public transportation, or employment centers. As such, this content analysis also aimed to understand the unique dynamics of Chinese migration and settlement, influenced by factors such as the hukou system in China, which may drive Chinese migrants to seek specific urban areas with advantageous features. Specifically, the content analysis followed a systematic process.

Step 1 Data Collection:

Data was extracted using ABS TableBuilder software, focusing on LGAs and suburbs with high concentrations of Chinese residents in New South Wales (NSW) (ABS, 2021). The top 10 LGAs with the highest proportions of Chinese residents were identified, including Parramatta, Canterbury-Bankstown, and Georges River. Within these LGAs, suburbs with over 30% of Chinese population concentration were selected for further analysis.

Only pre-existing secondary data from reputable sources was used to ensure objectivity and minimise bias, avoiding subjective interpretations during data collection (ABS, 2021). The analysis covered all suburbs within Greater Sydney to ensure comprehensive coverage and reduce selection bias (Gronsbell et al., 2022).

Step 2 Coding and Categorization:

Data was coded to identify thematic patterns, as Serafini and Reid (2023) suggested, such as the degree of Chinese concentration, housing affordability, and socio-economic characteristics of the suburbs. Suburbs were classified into two tiers based on Chinese population density: high ($\geq$30%) and low ($\leq$29%).

Step 3 Integration with Qualitative Research:

Findings from the content analysis informed the design of the qualitative phase by identifying key areas for participant selection and thematic exploration. For example, the qualitative interviews in Stage 2 prioritised suburbs such as Eastwood, Burwood, and Hurstville, which exhibited high concentrations of Chinese residents, for further investigation.

4.2.2. Qualitative analysis

The preceding section identified areas of Chinese concentration in Greater Sydney and analysed the socio-economic characteristics of these areas. Building on these findings, this section employs qualitative analysis and semi-structured interviews with Chinese residents in these areas to explore the main motivations and factors influencing their settlement decisions and the processes leading to the formation of Chinese concentration areas or enclaves.

Participants were selected using a stratified sampling approach to ensure a diverse and representative sample of the Chinese community across Greater Sydney. Stratification was based on several demographic factors, such as age, migration status, tenure type, education level, income, and length of time in Australia. This method captured various perspectives on settlement preferences, educational resources, support systems, and cultural identity. By ensuring demographic diversity, the study aimed to improve the representativeness and accuracy of the findings, reflecting the broader socio-economic and cultural landscape of the Chinese community in Sydney. Stratified sampling also helps mitigate sampling bias, ensuring that different subgroups within the community are adequately represented and that the study's findings are generalisable to the population (Gronsbell et al., 2022).

61 participants were interviewed, representing various age groups, occupations, migration histories, and social backgrounds. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, allowing in-depth exploration of participants' views and experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the transcription process ensuring that the data retained its original context and meaning. Before the full-scale interviews, the interview guide was pretested with five participants to refine the questions and ensure clarity and relevance. This pilot testing helped identify any potential misunderstandings or confusion, allowing adjustments to be made before proceeding with the main interview process.

The interviews were designed to explore key themes related to residential segregation, migration experiences, and the factors influencing settlement decisions. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with residential segregation, the factors influencing their decision to settle in specific areas, and the role of cultural identity, educational opportunities, and community support in shaping their settlement patterns. As the interviews progressed, it became clear that no new insights emerged after the 50th participant, suggesting that data saturation had been reached. This is a critical point in qualitative research, as it signals that the data collection process has yielded comprehensive information and that further interviews are unlikely to provide additional valuable insights.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data systematically. A hierarchical coding framework was developed, categorising responses into primary themes and sub-themes. For instance, the primary theme of "residential segregation" was further subdivided into sub-themes such as "the importance of educational resources," "employment opportunities," and "perceptions of safety." Each interview response was coded sentence by sentence, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the participants' views. Within the theme of "Feeling safe in Chinese concentration areas," sub-categories such as "Feeling less discriminated against" and "Discrimination is rare in Sydney" were identified, reflecting participants' experiences of safety and inclusion within their communities.

Nvivo software was employed to facilitate the organisation and analysis of the transcripts, enabling the researchers to manage large volumes of qualitative data efficiently. This software assisted in identifying recurring themes and patterns, allowing for a more systematic and rigorous analysis. To enhance the reliability and consistency of the findings, a second researcher independently reviewed the coding structure and thematic analysis. This peer review process ensured that the interpretation of the data was consistent and that the thematic framework accurately reflected the underlying patterns within the data.

The qualitative data collection and analysis provided a rich, multidimensional understanding of the settlement patterns, preferences, and challenges the Chinese community faces in Greater Sydney. The findings shed light on the factors influencing residential segregation, such as access to educational resources, proximity to employment opportunities, and social and cultural networks. They also reveal the complex relationship between residential segregation and community integration, highlighting both positive and negative outcomes for Chinese migrants. These insights are valuable for informing urban planning, housing policy, and social integration strategies, offering a more nuanced understanding of how migrant communities navigate settlement in a multicultural urban environment.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. The identification of Chinese enclaves

We use the 2021 ABS census data to identify the Chinese concentration in Greater Sydney. Firstly, a table is created in the ABS table builder software to derive the percentage of the Chinese ancestry population in each local government area [LGA] of NSW. Appendix 1 shows the LGA by 2-digit level Chinese Ancestry Multi Response tables, defining the percentage for each LGA as the proportion of Chinese origin

Table 1
Top 25 LGAs in NSW with population of Chinese origin.

No.	Local Government Area (LGA)	Chinese Population
1	Parramatta	9.84%
2	Canterbury-Bankstown	7.33%
3	Georges River	6.79%
4	Sydney	6.14%
5	Ryde	5.79%
6	Cumberland	5.10%
7	Ku-ring-gai	5.03%
8	The Hills	4.83%
9	Fairfield	4.64%
10	Bayside (NSW)	4.45%
11	Hornsby	4.40%
12	Willoughby	3.47%
13	Blacktown	3.04%
14	Inner West	2.66%
15	Canada Bay	2.48%
16	Randwick	2.35%
17	Burwood	2.27%
18	Liverpool	2.17%
19	Strathfield	1.68%
20	Sutherland	1.56%
21	Northern Beaches	1.55%
22	North Sydney	1.29%
23	Campbelltown (NSW)	1.04%
24	Lane Cove	0.96%
25	Central Coast (NSW)	0.88%

Source: Author's compilation from the ABS (2024).

in that LGA to Chinese origin in NSW. Although the ABS does not provide the proportional relationship of the Chinese population in each LGA to the area's total population, we determine this metric from the table of LGAs in Greater Sydney with a high proportion of Chinese population.

As seen in Table 1, the top 10 LGAs in NSW with the highest proportion of Chinese residents are Parramatta, Canterbury-Bankstown, Georges River, Sydney, Ryde, Cumberland, Ku-ring-gai, The Hills, Fairfield, and Bayside. These LGAs are all located within Greater Sydney, indicating that most of the Chinese population resides in the most populous city of Australia. Even though the table shows the proportion of Chinese in all LGAs in NSW, it is still applicable in our study as it shows the concentrations of Chinese in the city.

Even though we have a preliminary understanding of the Chinese residential areas in Greater Sydney, the LGA may be considered too large to determine exactly where the Chinese concentrations are. We investigate suburb-level data to identify Chinese concentrations in the city further. However, the ABS does not directly provide data on the proportion of the Chinese population in each NSW suburb on the table builder website. Therefore, as shown in Fig. 1, we use two sets of data - the number of people of Chinese origin in each NSW suburb and the number of residents in that suburb - to perform a back-of-the-envelope calculation of the proportion of Chinese population in each suburb. This will help determine which areas have major Chinese enclaves. The results show that the settlement pattern of the Chinese in Greater Sydney tends to be more suburban than inner-city. Fig. 1 illustrates the suburbs within the top 10 LGAs with the highest percentage of the Chinese population, giving insight into the settlement patterns of these demographics at a more localized level. It can be seen that most of these areas are in the outer suburbs of Sydney, such as Eastwood, Burwood, Hurstville, and East Killara. At the same time, the top 5 LGAs are concentrated in the city's south-western suburbs, including Berala, Campsie, Riverwood, and Narwee.

Using Domain sales data in December 2023, the median house price in Greater Sydney was $1,595,310 (Domain, 2024). As housing price is a key determinant of location decisions (Bangura & Lee, 2022), our subsequent analysis compares prices in Chinese concentrations with the median price of Greater Sydney. Fig. 2a shows that housing prices in Chinese concentration suburbs are generally higher than in Greater Sydney's median house price. The few exceptions are Berala, Campsie, Narwee, Riverwood, Marsfield, and Beverly Hills. These prices generally indicate that the pattern of Chinese concentrations in Greater Sydney certainly differs from other racial residential segregations, such as African Americans in the US or Middle Eastern Muslims in Greater Sydney, where house price plays a decisive role.

The median unit price in Greater Sydney is $795,994 (Domain, 2024). As shown in Fig. 2b, the observed trend shows that unit prices in Chinese concentrations present a mixed picture when compared to the overall median price of Greater Sydney. While suburbs like Eastwood, Hurstville, Epping, Carlingford, Berala, Wolli Creek, Campsie, Narwee, and Riverwood are below the median price, others like Burwood, Chatswood, Gordon, Chippendale, Zetland, Ultimo, Killara, and Macquarie Park hit above the median price range. This shows the geographic disparity in unit prices across Greater Sydney. Units in Greater Sydney are generally concentrated in three key areas: the city center, suburban centers, and coastal suburbs, where prices are significantly higher, and the Chinese concentrations rarely overlap with these city centers and coastal areas. Real estate market dynamics in Chinese concentration areas differ from the broader Sydney market, largely due to supply and demand factors. Specifically, Chinese concentration areas may experience a surplus of units, which may be due to targeted development efforts or a cultural preference for higher-density living. This oversupply has resulted in lower median prices in these areas.

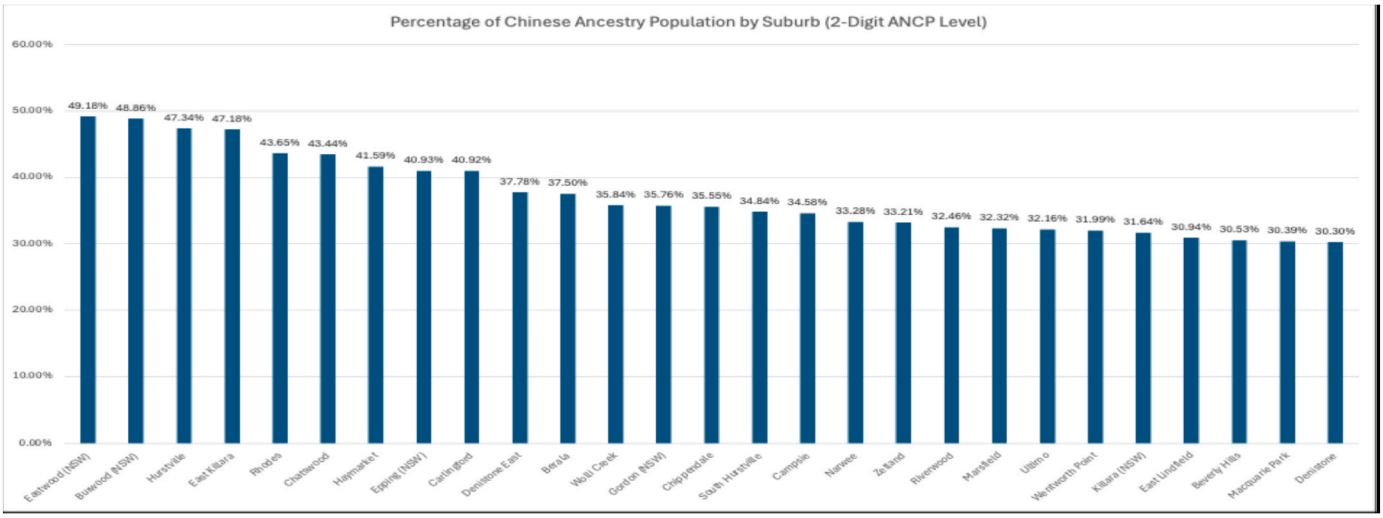

Fig. 1. Residents of Chinese Origin at the Suburb Level in NSW Source: Author's compilation from the ABS Table Builder (2024).

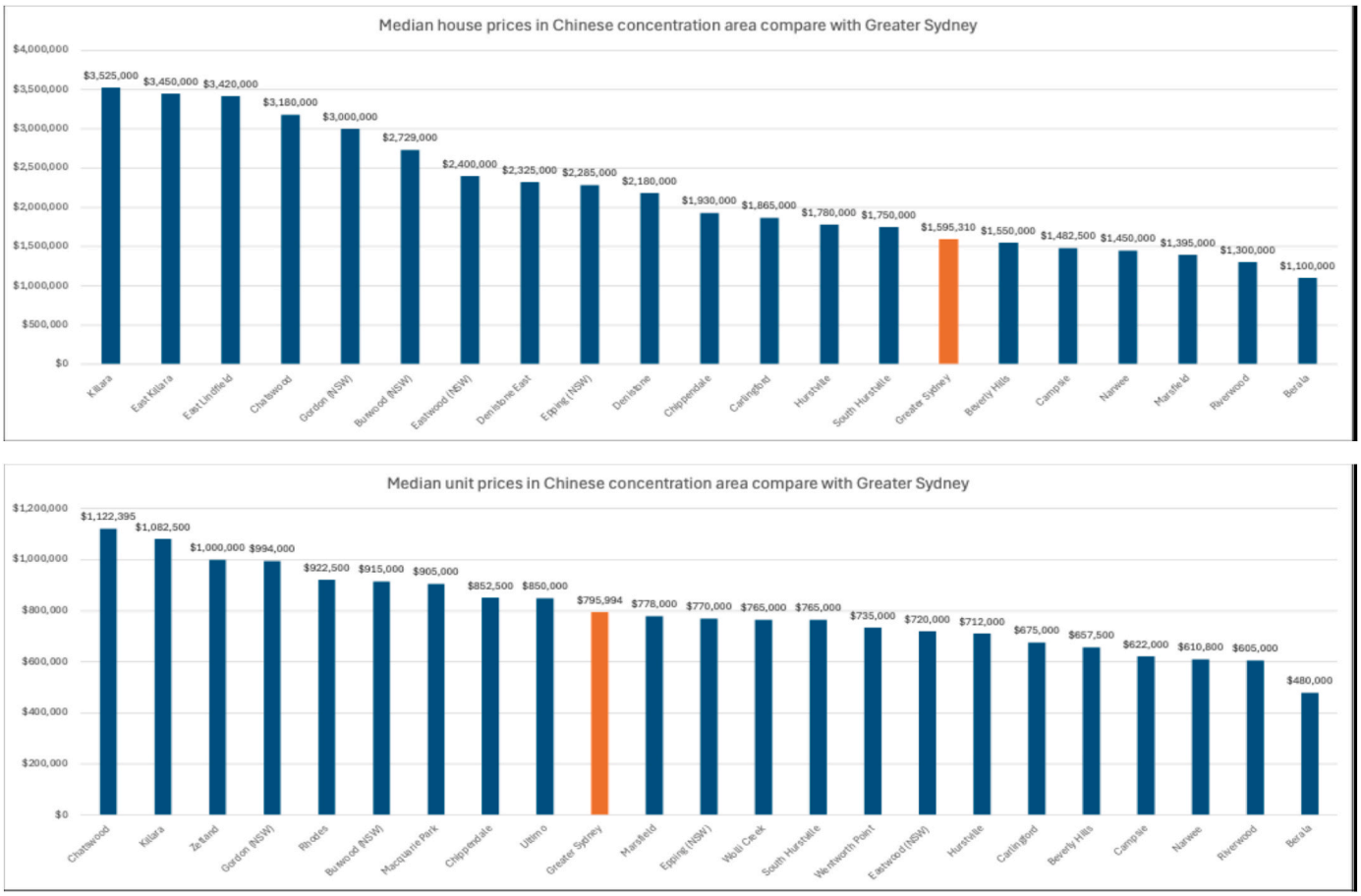

Fig. 2. Median Housing Prices of Chinese Concentrated Areas: Q4,2023. Source: Author's compilation from Domain (2024).

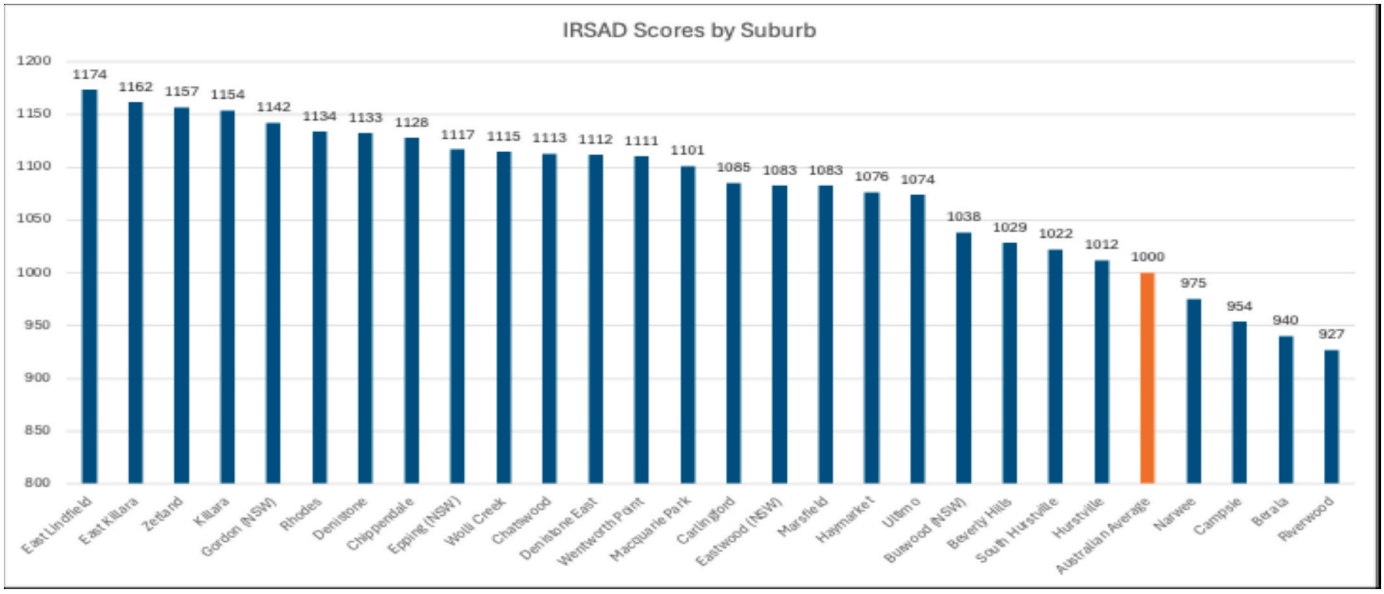

Fig. 3. IRSAD in Chinese Concentrated Areas. Source: Author's compilation from the ABS (2024). Note: IRSAD of 1000 and above suggests a socially advantaged suburb.

Adding to the analysis of housing prices in Chinese concentration areas is the general economic and social well-being of households in these areas. We use the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantages and Disadvantages (IRSAD), a summary measure of people's economic and social conditions. The reference value for the whole of Australia is set at 1000, and a score below this threshold reveals a lower socio-economic status in that area. Many households with low incomes and unskilled occupations and a few with high incomes and skilled

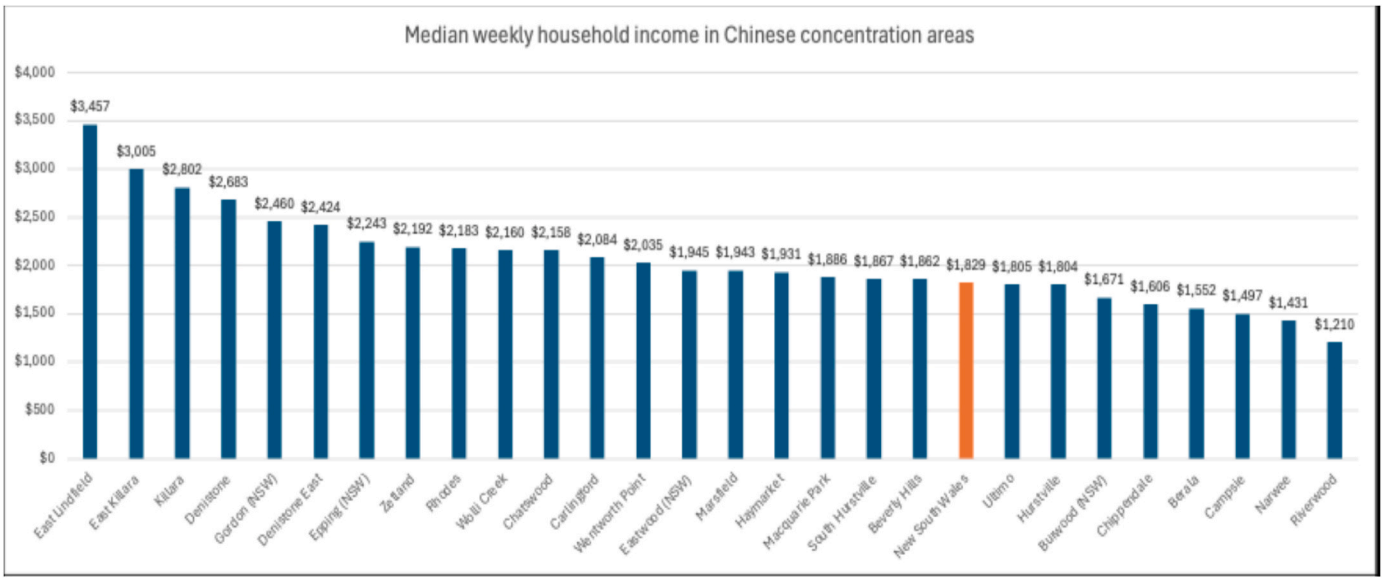

Fig. 4. Median Income of Chinese Concentrated Areas. Source: Author's compilation from the ABS (2024).

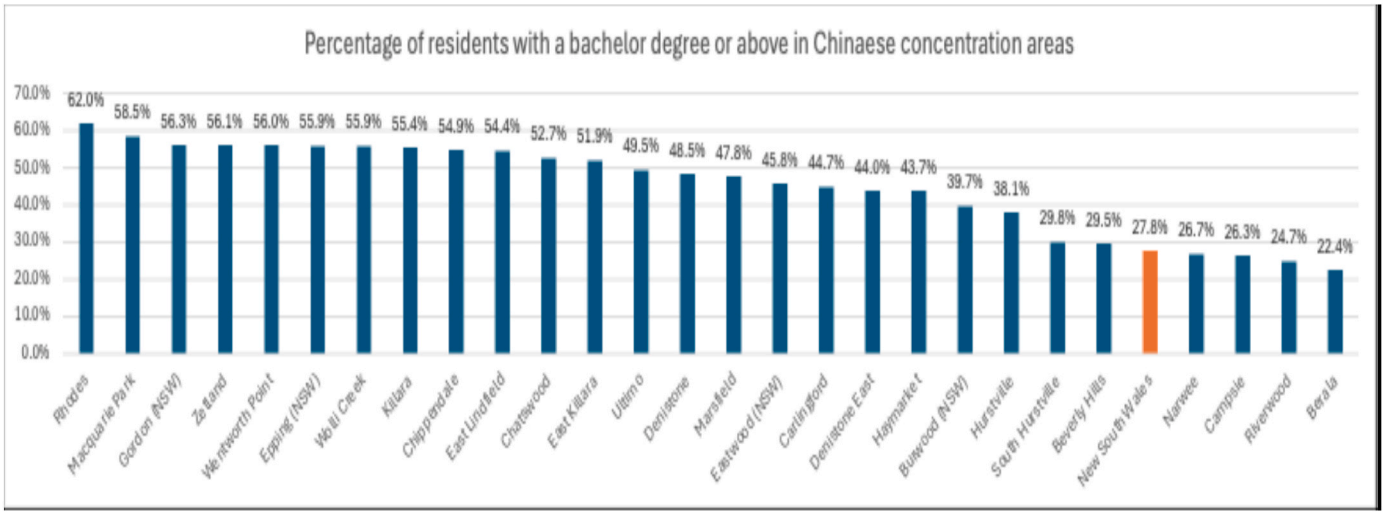

Fig. 5. Educational attainment in Chinese Concentrated Areas. Source: Author's compilation from the ABS (2024).

occupations often characterize this. A score above 1000 indicates a relative absence of disadvantage and a high degree of advantage overall, resulting in many high-income families with skilled occupations and few low-income families in unskilled occupations (ABS, 2024; Healthstats, 2024).

From Fig. 3, the IRSAD index shows the majority of Chinese concentration suburbs are above the Australian average of 1000, indicating that these suburbs are thriving economically and socially. East Lindfield, East Killara, and Killara, for instance, have scores of 1174, 1162, and 1152 respectively, which highlight that some Chinese communities are faring well from the socioeconomic perspective despite their high concentrations. However, suburbs like Berala, Campsie, Narwee, and Riverwood have IRSAD scores below the Australian average, and this can be attributed to the higher proportion of residents under the age of 65 who are dependent on government support and are likely alienated from mainstream society, especially in Berala, poor transportation planning in Narwee, and lots of social housing in Riverwood. This means the low IRSAD scores in these suburbs can be linked to various local factors rather than systemic economic disadvantages. Despite these low scores, these areas do not exhibit typical characteristics of slums, such as outdated housing, limited retail options, high crime rates, and limited employment opportunities (Massey et al., 1987). The results also show that despite the disadvantages, certain qualities of these suburbs remain attractive to Chinese households.

Fig. 4 shows the median weekly household income in Chinese enclaves. About two-thirds of the Chinese enclaves have household incomes above the NSW average. In particular, affluent suburbs such as East Lindfield ($3457) and East Killara ($3005) attract Chinese residents seeking a higher quality of life. The high concentration of Chinese in high-income suburbs indicates that they intentionally choose to live in the suburbs with significant advantages rather than being forced to cluster in some suburbs due to financial constraints.

Fig. 5 shows the educational levels of residents in Chinese enclaves. In most Chinese enclaves, a high proportion of residents have a bachelor's degree or above. Only four Chinese enclaves are below the NSW average. In particular, suburbs such as Rhodes (62.0%), Macquarie Park (58.5%) and Gordon (56.3%) have very high proportions of bachelor's degree holders and above, indicating that the Chinese community highly values education and prioritizes choosing to settle in the suburbs with good educational resources. Although a small number of Chinese

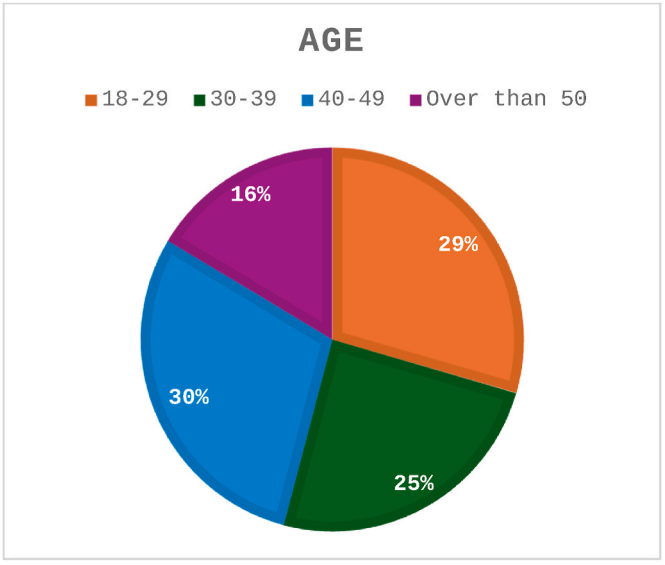

Fig. 6. Age Distribution of the Participants. Source: Authors' compilation from the interviews.

enclaves, such as Riverwood, have lower income and education levels, it does not mean that residents are forced to live there. Instead, these suburbs offer specific benefits, such as more cost-effective housing, stronger community networks and more Chinese cultural facilities. These factors can support new immigrants or families seeking a foothold before moving to more affluent suburbs.

These statistics show that most Chinese concentration areas have higher economic and social levels than the Australian average. The Chinese community does not have an inherent preference for socio-economically disadvantaged areas. This analysis exemplifies how the settlement preferences of the Chinese community in Greater Sydney differ from those of other groups, refuting the common assumption that the ethnic concentration of minorities is associated with lower socio-economic status (Charles, 2003). The question of what factors motivate Chinese groups to settle in Chinese concentration areas will be explored in the next stage of the analysis.

5.2. Reasons the Chinese immigrants choose to settle in those areas

5.2.1. Description of the participants

The interviews covered all Chinese concentration areas with more than 30% of the Chinese population. We categorized all the cases in Nvivo, derived the age distribution of the interviewees, and calculated the median age. Fig. 6 shows the participants' age distribution, highlighting that all age groups are similarly represented. The median age of the interviewees was 38.3 years, slightly lower than 40.1, and the median age of Australia's Chinese-born migrants in 2022, as estimated by the ABS. This is within a reasonable margin of error. Therefore, this interview represents the general opinion of the Chinese community in Sydney.

In terms of the current marital status of the interviewees, 50% are single, 39% are married with children, and 12% are married without children. Regarding housing tenure status, people who rent make up about 47% of the participants; about 33% are homeowners with mortgages, and 20% are outright homeowners, indicating an almost equal proportion of renting households and homeowners. From the perspective of the educational attainment of the interviewees, about half had a master's degree, with the second highest percentage having a bachelor's degree, and 15% and 5% each having a specialist's degree and a PhD. Many interviewees had higher education beyond a bachelor's degree, indicating a high level of education among this cohort. The results of the residency of the respondents show that about half of the interviewees

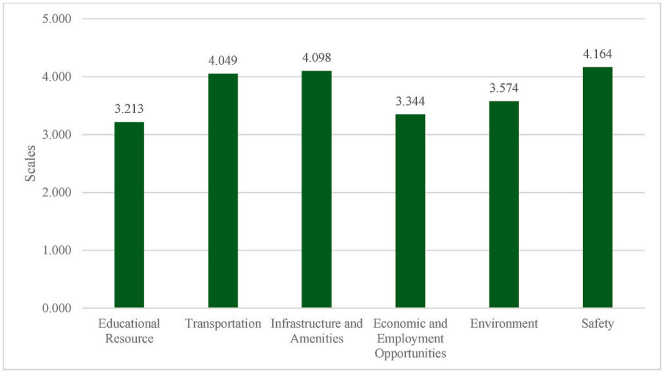

Fig. 7. Chinese Settlement Preferences. Source: Authors' compilation from the interviews.

had temporary visas, while 39% were permanent migrants, and 7% were born in Australia. The income brackets of interviewees range from zero to AU$ 8000 per week, and the occupational categorization includes professionals at 25%, students at 34%, business at 16%, and others including sales workers, laborers, and technicians. About 84% of the participants speak Chinese, and only 14% speak both English and Chinese. Overall, there is a strong linguistic and cultural identity, higher education, and a significant proportion of students within Chinese residential concentration.

5.2.2. Chinese Settlement Preferences

Six key factors that drive their location settlement decisions have been identified regarding Chinese settlement preferences. These include educational resources, public transportation, infrastructure and amenities, economic and employment opportunities, environment, and safety (Martinez, 2021; MacDonald et al., 2018; Farley 1997). Interviewees rated each factor on a scale of 1–5, depicting the importance of the variable, with 5 being very important and 1 not important. We calculated the average scores for each factor illustrated in Fig. 7. It can be seen that each factor has a score of more than 3, meaning the Chinese generally agree on the importance of these six factors.

On average, fundamental factors like transportation, infrastructure and amenities, and safety generate at least a score of 4.1 out of 5 from the respondents, indicating that these three factors are top preferences for Chinese settlement decisions. This reflects the pull factors discussed by Lee (1966), highlighting the importance the Chinese put into the connectedness of the area in terms of movement, its social facilities, infrastructural development, and safety when deciding their settlement locations. Some of the quotes from the respondents about these factors include, "Public transport is important to me because I don't have a car, so I can only travel by public transport, and it would be very inconvenient for me if I lived far away from a transport hub. When I go out, I have to go to a bus stop or a train station before I can go anywhere. In my neighbourhood, I can get around quite easily. There is a bus stop 200 m away from my house"; "I don't like to spend too much time on the road when I want to shop, so convenience and infrastructure are also important factors for me when evaluating properties"; and "no discrimination was encountered, and the security situation was not bad". Other participants expressed similar sentiments about these factors. As one of the interviewees stated, reliable and convenient public transport is essential for those who rely on this means of mobility for their daily commute or those who may not have access to a car. Regarding infrastructure and amenities, some Chinese like that their suburbs are too well equipped with infrastructure and amenities. As one interviewee put it, too much infrastructure will attract too many people from outside to this suburb, which could also lead to overcrowding and queuing. Some Chinese reckon that safety is a major consideration. As one interviewee stated, safety has to be discounted due to the difficulty

of renting an apartment. All in all, transport, infrastructure amenities, and safety scored extremely high, at 4.04, 4.09, and 4.16 respectively, indicating that these factors are the primary preferences of the Chinese in choosing a place to settle.

The scores of educational resources, economic and employment opportunities, and environment range from 3.2 to 3.6. The perceptions of the importance of educational resources among interviewees vary with marital status. On the one hand, married respondents with and without children responded that an excellent school district could bring a good learning atmosphere for their children and may be less likely to attract bad students into the area. They added that supporting educational resources can bring considerable appreciation to their property. As one parent interviewee from the inner-west of Greater Sydney stated "As a parent, a quality education is essential. Burwood's excellent schools give me peace of mind that my children will receive a great education". Married interviewees generally think that school catchment is important because it will benefit their children. On the other hand, single interviewees, the majority in this category, do not think educational resources were important in deciding where to live. They responded that being single, at least for now, means there is no need to think about the educational resources of the next generation. However, some single interviewees believe educational resources will increase the value of their property. The differences in marital status mainly accounted for the average score of 3.2 for educational resources. Even though it is the lowest score, the variable is still important to the Chinese community.

The status of the local economy and employment opportunities also play a critical role in determining the location decisions of the Chinese. Most of the interviewees agreed that suburbs with good economy and job opportunities are important to them. With a vibrant economy in the area, they can seek jobs and live in a vivacious and prosperous suburb. They believe that the economy and employment opportunities determine whether the business district they live in is prosperous or not, which is a determinant of their daily life. One respondent stated, "If the economy is good, more businesses will move in, which adds another layer of convenience for the residents in the area. Also, I work in construction, and if the economy improves, I can have more work opportunities in my suburb". However, students and professionals, including employees, were not necessarily concerned about economic and employment opportunities in their place of residence. They indicated that they have no current need to find a job in the area. They argued that overly economically developed suburbs would disturb the peace in the area.

The occupation of the Chinese determines the importance of economic and employment opportunities. Current employees and students do not think about looking for a job at the moment, so they would prefer to live in a quiet suburb and, as such, there is no demand for economic and employment opportunities. In contrast, some respondents have Chinese-related businesses such as Chinese supermarkets, restaurants, and multinational logistics, and they need employees and customers of Chinese backgrounds. One respondent argued that "a good economy in a suburb is beneficial for developing their shops". Therefore, they attach value to the economic and employment opportunities in deciding where to live, generating an average score of 3.34.

The interviewees' perceptions of the importance of the environment also vary with tenure status. Generally, most interviewees value the environment where they live, generating an average of 3.6. However, interviewees, who are renting, do not consider the environment very important. They prioritised rent affordability and transportation over the environment. Conversely, homeowners believe that a bad environment could affect the health and quality of life of the individual and the whole family in the long term. One homeowner interviewee stated, "It is important for me to have good airspace and to be able to go for walks and dates after work". Also, those residing temporarily tend to prioritise rent and transport, while long-term residents value the living environment.

In addition to the tangible factors mentioned above, the Chinese also value the aura of Chinese culture in the neighbourhood. Whether the Chinese prefer to live closer to other Chinese reveals 89% of the interviewees agreed. The results show that the longer people have lived in Australia, the more important they value the Chinese cultural atmosphere in their place of residence. As one interviewee indicated, "Greater Sydney is an international metropolis that offers enough diversity. People of different races can live here easily. For example, when calling the police, people have the option of requesting the help of an interpreter". Another participant stated, "Chinese people are concerned about cultural identity. So Chinese are still more comfortable living in Chinese concentration areas". This shows a strong sense of the Chinese cultural atmosphere among Chinese and its importance in deciding where to live.

The above discussion shows that when choosing a suburb, the Chinese would consider tangible factors such as educational resources, public transportation, infrastructure, economy, environment, and safety and intangible factors such as cultural identity and Chinese cultural atmosphere. The Chinese would choose to settle in an area because of the advantageous characteristics exhibited in the suburb. Even in the only four Chinese communities with low IRSAD, as discussed earlier, advantageous factors attract Chinese to settle there. The interviewee living in Berala, for instance, noted that even though the suburb has a high proportion of residents under 65 who are dependent on government support and alienated from mainstream society, the suburb is still very secluded and has a natural feel to its planning and landscaping, and there are many Chinese supermarkets and restaurants. The interviewee living in Campsie noted that the safety index was lower than the average for Greater Sydney, probably because of some random incidents that had happened because they had never felt unsafe in this suburb, and this old Chinese community provided strong support for his parents to settle in Australia. The interviewee living in Narwee noted that despite being remote and having poor transport planning, there is still a railway station in this suburb to support traveling, albeit sparsely. The interviewee living in Riverwood noted that even though there is a lot of affordable housing in the area, it is outside the Chinese neighbourhood. According to this interviewee, the residents of these affordable housing units are also very friendly, and Riverwood has a train station.

Most interviewees feel attracted to the factors being discussed rather than circumstances pushing them to live in their current suburb. Combined with the current analyses, it is clear that the Chinese are clustering because they like certain advantageous features of that area. However, a small number of interviewees still feel circumstances are pushing them to live in their current suburb. It was learned During the interviews that most interviewees were overseas students. They had difficulty renting their preferred apartments during peak season and, as such, chose a less desirous suburb to avoid paying extra for an apartment. In addition, some overseas student interviewees stated that most had no income and could only rent for a short period. As a result, many landlords are unwilling to rent to them, considering that the rent may be unstable, leaving limited rental options for them. Despite this particular reason, the overall results show that the Chinese live in the Chinese community because they like the tangible and tangible features of that area, not because of circumstances. Similarly, the high property prices in the Chinese concentration areas are not a barrier to living in these suburbs.

We relate our findings to previous studies on residential segregation. We found that residential segregation among the Chinese community in Sydney is significantly different from the Black community in the US. In

Table 2
Cross-tabulation analysis.

Key Drivers	Infrastructure and Amenities	Economic and Employment Opportunities	Educational Resources	Environment	Safety
Age	9.304	18.926	9.865	12.588	9.862
Martial Status	1.686	2.041	4.114	14.991***	4.065
Income	9.181	12.325	15.710	19.580	10.591
Newly arrived migrants	4.340	3.639	13.018	16.719**	2.887

Note: *** denotes statistically significant at 1%, while ** represents statistically significant at 5%.

the US, black enclaves often emerged out of a need to avoid pervasive racial discrimination and social inequality. These enclaves are sanctuaries where community members can seek mutual support and protection from physical and psychological harm (Farley et al., 1997). In contrast, the Chinese in Greater Sydney choose to live in specific suburbs not out of social vices but because of advantageous factors such as convenient public transportation and access to quality educational resources. Greater Sydney's Chinese and Black Americans differ dramatically in their choice of settlement preferences, leading to a fundamental difference in the reasons for the formation of Chinese settlements versus Black enclaves. Also, in Greater Sydney, the Chinese community has a similarity and a difference when compared to the Muslim Middle Eastern community. The convergence stems from suburban settlement with greater employment opportunities and effective public transportation, highlighting a common priority for economic development. Moreover, both groups value the cultural identity the concentration areas give them. Chinese like to stay close to other Chinese because it gives them a sense of belonging. Muslims of Middle Eastern origin would gather together because of their faith, which also gives them a sense of identity, and the mosques in Muslim concentration areas provide tangible support for their sense of identity. However, a line of divergence between the two communities is the consideration for safety. Unlike the Chinese community, the Muslim Middle Eastern community tend to use their cultural identity to overshadow safety concerns (MacDonald et al., 2018).

Importantly, the results here explicitly support the hypothesis of this study and contribute to a nuanced understanding of residential segregation dynamics. The results reveal that Chinese migrants in Greater Sydney predominantly choose to settle in specific areas driven by positive pull factors, such as access to high-quality educational resources, abundant economic opportunities, and well-developed infrastructure. Additionally, these areas often feature cultural amenities that promote a sense of identity and belonging and social networks that foster cohesion and mutual support within the community. These factors significantly outweigh any influence of exclusion or discrimination in shaping their settlement patterns. The findings further highlight that Chinese enclaves in Greater Sydney have higher socio-economic advantages than the broader urban landscape. For example, these areas tend to have above-average property values, superior public transportation, and proximity to prestigious schools and employment hubs. Such attributes make these suburbs desirable for economic benefits, cultural preservation, and community building. Notably, the finding is not in line with previous studies and challenges traditional narratives of residential segregation being solely a result of socio-economic disadvantages or discriminatory practices. Unlike ethnic groups who may experience segregation due to systemic barriers (Dunn, 1998; Steil & Arcaya, 2023), Chinese migrants demonstrate agency in actively selecting areas that align with their aspirations for high-quality educational resources, and well-enveloped infrastructure and transportation, economic success, social cohesion, and cultural preservation. This highlights the importance of considering the unique motivations and preferences of Chinese migrants when studying settlement patterns.

5.2.3. Cross-tabulation analysis of Chinese Settlement Preferences

To examine the differences in key location preference drivers across various sub-groups, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted. The results are reported in Table 2, which highlights how factors such as infrastructure and amenities, economic and employment opportunities, educational resources, environmental quality, and safety are valued across demographic categories, including age, marital status, income levels, and newly arrived migrants.[1]

The results generally indicate no statistically significant preference differences across most sub-groups. These factors are key variables, suggesting that access to education, safety, economic and employment opportunities, infrastructure and amenities, and quality living environments are consistently valued regardless of income level and age. However, some notable variations are observed. While no significant differences are detected, older participants and higher-income households exhibit a slightly stronger preference for environmental factors than younger and lower-income participants. This reflects their tendency to prioritise quality living environments, such as green spaces and clean surroundings, over other considerations. A statistically significant difference is observed for the environmental factor with a chi-square of 14.991, which is statistically significant at the 1% level, with married individuals placing a higher emphasis on environmental quality. This may reflect family-oriented preferences, such as seeking greener, safer spaces conducive to raising children and family life.

Further, a statistically significant result for environmental factors (16.719, significant at the 5% level) indicates that newly arrived migrants (e.g., those who have resided in Australia for less than five years) prioritise environmental quality less than their established counterparts. This finding reflects that newly arrived migrants focus primarily on economic or employment opportunities. This is a reasonable finding, as newly arrived migrants often prioritise immediate economic opportunities, access to essential services, and social cohesion when deciding on their settlement location. Environmental factors, while necessary, may become a more significant consideration as long-term migrants settle more permanently and transition to different life stages. While no significant differences are observed for most factors across the sub-groups, two key variations stand out. These findings highlight the role of environmental quality as a key driver for specific demographic groups, particularly families and older migrants. At the same time, preferences for other factors remain broadly consistent across the broader population.

In conclusion, when choosing a Chinese concentration area, the Chinese in Greater Sydney focus on advantageous features like educational resources, public transportation, amenities and infrastructures, economic and employment opportunities, environment, law and order, and cultural atmosphere. A suburb with these attractive features will draw more Chinese into the area. Therefore, there is a clear difference in the residential segregation of these three groups: Greater Sydney Chinese, Greater Sydney Muslims of Middle Eastern origin, and African Americans. Existing research generally reports that the settlement patterns of ethnic minorities, especially in metropolitan cities, tend to gravitate toward disadvantaged areas. This study refutes this view

[1] Thank you for your valuable suggestion to include residence or visa conditions, such as student visas, temporary visas, permanent residents, and citizens, in the analysis. We have focused on newly arrived migrants, which include temporary visa holders who have lived in Australia for less than 5 years. This is also in line with the definition of the ABS.

because we found that the residential segregation of the Chinese in Greater Sydney is caused by favoring the advantageous features of the region.

5.2.4. Consequences of Chinese residential segregations

From the preceding discussion, we found that the aggregate of Chinese residential segregation embodies students, immigrants, permanent residents, and those who were born in Australia, a culmination that leads to positive and adverse consequences from living in these areas.

From the negative lens, we found that around half of the interviewees expressed concern that living in a Chinese community for a long period would prevent them from integrating into the wider Australian society. As one interviewee stated. "They felt being restricted on business opportunities and personal identity development, leading to isolation from the mainstream Australian market and social structures. This segregation may lead to missed opportunities to participate in economic and social activities outside their ethnic community". In addition, 9% of the interviewees noted that a high concentration of Chinese tends to push up local house prices. This relates to the benefit highlighted by homeowners in the enclaves. 14% of the interviewees believed that an over-concentration of Chinese would result in high population density, which would reduce the quality of life due to the issue of overcrowding. This is similar to the residential segregation of Blacks in the US in which residential segregated neighborhoods may increase tensions between residents and the outside world, and spark mistrust and stereotyping of residents by the outside world (Charles, 2006). In Greater Sydney, a Chinese who has lived in a Chinese neighbourhood for a long period will likely have difficulty integrating into Australian society. Thus, while the local impacts of residential segregation may vary, the overall consequences usually involve a degree of social isolation that affects the integration and quality of life of segregated groups.

The segregation of Chinese residences has many positive consequences. 44% of the interviewees believe that living in a predominantly Chinese neighbourhood makes adapting to the local environment easier. According to one respondent, "It was easier to obtain Chinese food and complete daily necessities, thus facilitating a smooth transition to life in Greater Sydney." We also found that 32% of respondents felt they did not have to face cultural barriers living in a Chinese neighbourhood, and living in a Chinese community would remove communication barriers. Cultural identity was also raised as 17% of the interviewees believed living in the Chinese community would project a stronger sense of the Chinese identity. They further indicated that living in a Chinese community increases cultural identity, especially for Australian-born Chinese children; living with similar cultural backgrounds strengthens cultural ties and identity. Finally, 7% of the interviewees saw economic benefits. They felt these communities could support local businesses by providing a ready-made customer base and easier access to culture-specific suppliers. Similar characteristics have been observed among Muslim communities in the UK. Residential segregation of Muslim minorities in the UK increases their cultural cohesion and enhances their ethnic representation in the country. This reduces the proportion of the dominant ethnic group elected to public office (Campion, 2023). In Greater Sydney, the Chinese residential segregation not only strengthens community ties but also promotes cultural cohesion in the Chinese community.

We extend our analysis by examining the relationship between residential segregation and racial discrimination. About 70% of the interviewees agreed that living in the Chinese community leads to less discrimination. A respondent from Zetland, for instance, stated that "They believed that they would feel less discriminated against when living in a place with more Chinese people because Chinese people would be more understanding and tolerant towards their people". However, the rest of the interviewees believe that discrimination against Chinese is rare in Sydney, both in Chinese concentration areas and in other suburbs. It can be seen that whichever idea the interviewee holds, they do not think that residential segregation will increase the discrimination against Chinese in the outside world. More specifically, we examine discrimination in the real estate market. We found that about 90% of the interviewees were not discriminated against in renting or buying a residential property. One respondent summed it up as follows: "Because it is impossible for a real estate agent or seller to discriminate against their wallets". The remaining 10% believe that their difficulties in obtaining housing do not come from racial discrimination but their status as overseas students with temporary needs and unreliable income. From a risk perspective, these factors made them a less preferred tenant. Overall, the Chinese do not feel racially discriminated against in the real estate market.

These findings differ from Martinez's (2021) findings on black discrimination in the U.S. housing market. Martinez argues that whites and blacks are treated differently in the housing market, ranging from housing sales and marketing to financing. This has resulted in an unequal playing field for white and black households in accessing affordable quality housing, limiting quality housing options for the black community (Martinez, 2021). However, the Chinese do not face similar barriers in Greater Sydney. There is also no direct evidence that the Chinese are unable to purchase quality housing in Greater Sydney due to racial discrimination. Thus, the experience of Chinese in Greater Sydney's real estate market reveals a different picture than the racial inequality Martinez (2021) describes the African American community as facing.

In addition, the fact that the Chinese settlement did not trigger discrimination may be due to the relatively low level of concentration. In our previous analysis, we observed that even in Eastwood, which has the highest density of Chinese residents, this percentage does not exceed 50%. This figure represents a significantly lower level of minority concentration compared to the global concentration of minorities. Notably, high concentrations such as those of African Americans have led to serious socioeconomic challenges, including rising poverty rates, rising crime rates, deteriorating educational conditions, and rising mortality rates (Massey, 1990). These observations may explain why the clustering of Chinese neighborhoods has not caused similar discriminatory responses.

In conclusion, there are two sides to the consequences of residential segregation of Chinese in Greater Sydney. Positive consequences include no cultural barriers, increased cultural identity, easier to adapt to life in Sydney, and good for business. The adverse consequences include pushing up the housing price, increasing the population density, and making it difficult for residents to integrate into mainstream Australian society. Moreover, there is no link between the residential segregation of Chinese in Greater Sydney and the racial discrimination against Chinese. The Chinese are not discriminated against in the real estate market; they are not forced to move to Chinese concentration areas because of discrimination, and there is no data to prove that residential segregation has increased the level of discrimination against Chinese.

5.2.5. Robustness check: quantitative modelling of key drivers

While the preceding section of qualitative interviews offers valuable insights into the motivations and preferences of Chinese migrants, quantitative methods can strengthen the robustness of the findings by identifying statistical relationships between the proportion of the Chinese population and the six key drivers (e.g., infrastructure and amenities, economic opportunities, educational resources, environment, safety, and transportation).

To address this, we conducted an ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis at the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) framework Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) level, which closely corresponds to suburbs. SA2s are designed by the ABS to represent functional areas or communities. This geographic unit is particularly suitable for statistical analysis as it balances population size and local area representation. By regressing the proportion of the Chinese population on the six key drivers identified from the interviews, this analysis

Table 3
Key determinants of spatial concentration of Chinese settlements.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-Statistic
Crime	−3.557	2.833	−1.255
Education	0.204	0.114	1.818*
Environment	0.043	0.049	0.892
Infrastructure	0.355	0.145	2.449**
Transportation	0.057	0.022	2.572**
Unemployment	−1.194	1.101	−1.083
Constant	0.125	0.109	1.148
Number of observations	147		
Adjusted R-squared	0.501		
F-statistic	2.954**		

Notes: Robust standard errors were employed. * represents statistically significant at 10%, and ** denotes statistically significant at 5%.

aims to validate the qualitative findings quantitatively and uncover statistically significant relationships that influence the spatial distribution of Chinese migrants in Greater Sydney.

We included areas with more than 20% of the Chinese population, based on data from the 2021 ABS Census, resulting in a total of 147 SA2s included in the analysis. Key variables such as education level (bachelor's degree and above), transportation (percentage of people commuting to work by public transport), and the unemployment rate were sourced from the ABS Census database. Crime rate and population data were obtained from the NSW Crime Tool website, while infrastructure and environmental quality data were collected from the Landchecker website. The results are presented in Table 3.

The results are consistent with the qualitative findings, with infrastructure, transportation, and educational resources emerging as significant predictors of the spatial concentration of Chinese migrants. These findings further support the conclusion that settlement patterns are influenced by advantageous features rather than exclusion or discrimination. Specifically, the coefficient for infrastructure is positive and statistically significant at the 5% level. This suggests that areas with better-developed infrastructure attract a higher proportion of Chinese residents. These findings align with the interview results, where well-developed amenities were frequently mentioned as a critical factor in settlement decisions.

Further, transportation accessibility is also statistically significant at the 5% level, reinforcing its importance in influencing settlement patterns. Proximity to public transport emerged as a key theme in the qualitative data, and this quantitative result further validates its importance. This suggests that transportation is a key consideration of Chinese spatial concentration. Another key determinant is educational opportunities. Education opportunities were marginally significant at the 10% level. This finding aligns with qualitative data, where access to high-quality schools was identified as a priority for Chinese families.

The coefficient of crime rate is negative, suggesting that Chinese prefer to live in areas with lower crime rates. Although not statistically significant, this aligns with qualitative findings, where safety was considered an essential consideration in settlement decisions. Environmental quality is positively associated with Chinese settlement areas but is not statistically significant. However, qualitative interviews highlighted a preference for areas with a good green environment, even if it is not a decisive factor. Similarly, the unemployment rate also shows a negative association, suggesting that areas with higher Chinese concentrations tend to have lower unemployment rates. While not statistically significant, this corroborates the qualitative evidence, where economic opportunity was frequently mentioned as a crucial factor influencing settlement choices.

These results further support the conclusion that settlement patterns are influenced by advantageous features rather than exclusion or discrimination. Unlike Farley (1997), MacDonald et al. (2018) and Martinez (2021), Chinese in Greater Sydney differ dramatically in their choice of settlement preferences from Black Americans in the US and Muslim Middle Eastern communities in Sydney, which favouring factors such as access to educational resources, transportation and infrastructure and amenities. As identified in the qualitative interviews, these advantageous features (e.g., infrastructure, transportation, and educational resources) emerge as key factors in shaping Chinese settlement patterns.

The regression results further highlight that Chinese enclaves in Greater Sydney have higher socio-economic advantages than the broader urban landscape identified from the content analysis. Specifically, these areas tend to have above-average property values, superior public transportation, and proximity to prestigious schools and employment hubs. Such attributes make these suburbs desirable for economic benefits, cultural preservation, and community building. The results here explicitly support the hypothesis of this study and contribute to a nuanced understanding of residential segregation dynamics. It offers critical insights for urban planners and policymakers to accommodate the needs of diverse migrant communities better. Further, the adjusted R-squared of the model exhibits a moderate fit, with the predictors accounting for a significant proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. The significant F-statistic further confirms the joint explanatory power of the included variables.

In conclusion, the combination of qualitative and quantitative findings strengthens the argument that Chinese settlement patterns in Greater Sydney are driven by advantageous features rather than exclusion or discrimination. This mixed-methods approach provides a robust understanding of the factors shaping these spatial concentrations.

6. Conclusion and policy implications

The historical international migration across countries has heightened population diversity in many advanced economies, culminating in minority groups usually bonded by a common identity such as race, culture, socioeconomic status, financial status, religion, or health. Moreover, as these ethnic communities expand, generations will emerge, creating unique cultural identities and behavioural traits. This is typical in the housing market, where these cohorts congregate to create residential segregation. These settlement patterns may vary across cultures, creating a line of research on residential segregation across major cities. Studies have examined, for instance, residential segregation among African Americans in the US and Muslims of Middle Eastern origin in Greater Sydney. These studies reveal differences in the characteristics and drivers of these settlements across cultures and countries. In Australia, there is evidence of such concentrations among Chinese, especially in the country's major cities. However, no study has examined Chinese residential segregation despite being the third largest group of immigrants in Australia. To fill this gap in the literature, we adopted ABS Table Builders to identify suburbs in Greater Sydney with a Chinese population of at least 30% and conducted interviews with 61 Chinese residents across the city to highlight their characteristics and discuss the consequences of living in these residential segregations. We applied NVivo to analyze the information generated from the interviews and documented the following findings.

Firstly, there is residential segregation among the Chinese minority in Greater Sydney. The areas with the highest concentrations are Eastwood, Burwood, Hurstville, East Killara, Rhodes, and Chatswood, which have a Chinese population of over 30% of their total population. House prices and the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantages and Disadvantages (IRSAD) for these suburbs are generally higher than the Greater Sydney average. Secondly, Chinese migrants settle in these suburbs because of tangible advantages such as educational resources, public transportation, infrastructure, economy, environment, and safety. At the same time, they also consider intangible factors such as cultural identity and Chinese cultural atmosphere. This validates the pull factor of Lee's (1966) theory and emphasizes that the Chinese are attracted to favorable features of a destination. This also refutes the traditional view that residential segregation forms primarily due to

socio-economic disadvantages. Thirdly, there are positive and adverse consequences of residential segregation in Chinese enclaves. The positive consequences include no cultural barriers, enhanced cultural identity, more straightforward adaptation to life in Greater Sydney, and a good business environment. The negative consequences include increasing housing prices, intensifying population density, and making it difficult for Chinese residents to integrate into mainstream Australian society. In addition, there is no evidence suggesting any link between the Chinese residential segregation in Greater Sydney and racial discrimination against Chinese.

The findings have policy implications. The identification of Chinese enclaves could be used by public policymakers, Chinese ethnic organisations, and advocacy groups to inform the settlement policies of Chinese immigrants. The driving force of the Chinese enclaves is the availability of tangible and intangible features. This result could inform the actions of property developers and the regulators of state and local municipalities in developing community plans. These segregated markets could inform the decisions of newly arrived Chinese immigrants in Greater Sydney and business owners in these communities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Chyi Lin Lee: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Mustapha Bangura:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Jingxin Lin:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix

Appendix 1: LGA by 2-Digit level Chinese Ancestry Multi-Response

Local Government Area (LGA)	% of Chinese Ancestry
Parramatta	9.84%
Canterbury-Bankstown	7.33%
Georges River	6.79%
Sydney	6.14%
Ryde	5.79%
Cumberland	5.10%
Ku-ring-gai	5.03%
The Hills	4.83%
Fairfield	4.64%
Bayside (NSW)	4.45%
Hornsby	4.40%
Willoughby	3.47%
Blacktown	3.04%
Inner West	2.66%
Canada Bay	2.48%
Randwick	2.35%
Burwood	2.27%
Liverpool	2.17%
Strathfield	1.68%
Sutherland	1.56%
Northern Beaches	1.55%
North Sydney	1.29%
Campbelltown (NSW)	1.04%
Lane Cove	0.96%
Central Coast (NSW)	0.88%
Penrith	0.78%
Wollongong	0.74%
Newcastle	0.61%
Woollahra	0.53%
Camden	0.49%
Waverley	0.44%
Lake Macquarie	0.42%
Mosman	0.30%
Hunters Hill	0.23%
Blue Mountains	0.19%
Shoalhaven	0.15%
Coffs Harbour	0.15%
Maitland	0.15%
Queanbeyan-Palerang	0.15%
Tamworth	0.14%
Wagga	0.14%
Hawkesbury	0.14%
Tweed	0.14%
Port Macquarie-Hastings	0.13%
Mid-Coast	0.11%
Shellharbour	0.10%
Wingecarribee	0.10%
Dubbo	0.10%
Port Stephens	0.10%
Orange	0.09%
Albury	0.08%

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(*continued*)

Local Government Area (LGA)	% of Chinese Ancestry
Armidale	0.08%
Wollondilly	0.07%
Griffith	0.07%
Bathurst	0.07%
Ballina	0.07%
Goulburn Mulwaree	0.06%
Lismore	0.06%
Cessnock	0.06%
Clarence Valley	0.06%
Snowy Monaro	0.05%
No usual address (NSW)	0.05%
Byron	0.05%
Bega Valley	0.04%
Eurobodalla	0.04%
Kiama	0.04%
Kempsey	0.03%
Lithgow	0.03%
Leeton	0.03%
Inverell	0.03%
Upper Hunter	0.03%
Hilltops	0.03%
Singleton	0.03%
Mid-Western	0.02%
Junee	0.02%
Yass Valley	0.02%
Muswellbrook	0.02%
Cootamundra-Gundagai	0.02%
Snowy Valleys	0.02%
Parkes	0.02%
Moree Plains	0.02%
Nambucca Valley	0.02%
Murray River	0.02%
Richmond Valley	0.02%
Gunnedah	0.02%
Bellingen	0.01%
Narrabri	0.01%
Cowra	0.01%
Cabonne	0.01%
Edward River	0.01%
Broken Hill	0.01%
Federation	0.01%
Glen Innes Severn	0.01%
Berrigan	0.01%
Liverpool Plains	0.01%
Warrumbungle	0.01%
Forbes	0.01%
Uralla	0.01%
Balranald	0.01%
Cobar	0.01%
Blayney	0.01%
Upper Lachlan	0.01%
Kyogle	0.01%
Oberon	0.01%
Greater Hume	0.01%
Temora	0.01%
Bland	0.01%
Wentworth	0.01%
Narrandera	0.01%
Lachlan	0.00%
Dungog	0.00%
Tenterfield	0.00%
Walgett	0.00%
Gwydir	0.00%
Coonamble	0.00%
Lockhart	0.00%
Bourke	0.00%
Warren	0.00%
Carrathool	0.00%
Coolamon	0.00%
Gilgandra	0.00%
Murrumbidgee	0.00%
Narromine	0.00%
Unincorporated NSW	0.00%
Bogan	0.00%
Hay	0.00%
Central Darling	0.00%

(*continued on next page*)

(*continued*)

Local Government Area (LGA)	% of Chinese Ancestry
Brewarrina	0.00%
Weddin	0.00%
Walcha	0.00%
Migratory - Offshore - Shipping (NSW)	0.00%
Total	100.00%

Source: Author's compilation from the ABS (2024).

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