A Guide To Major ABS Classifications

Introduction

Classification is one of the cornerstones of statistics. Without the accurate and systematic arrangement of data according to common properties, statistical output can be neither reliable nor comparable.

Over the years, the ABS has expanded greatly the scope and sophistication of its classification systems and methods. Comprehensive classifications now exist in many fields. Regular reviews are conducted to ensure that economic and social changes are reflected in the classifications, and where relevant and possible, Australian statistical classifications are integrated with international standards.

Each year the ABS produces nearly two thousand separate statistical bulletins with the data contained therein classified according to a variety of national and international standards.

This article provides an introduction to the major classifications developed and utilised by the ABS. It outlines the structure and purpose of each of these major classifications and the statistical units to which the classification is applied. Statistical units in general are the units of observation in a statistical series, ie the basic entities about which data are recorded and which are then classified and aggregated to provide the official statistics. Examples of statistical units include businesses, farms, motor vehicles, building sites, persons, households and families.

Apart from the major classifications described in the following pages, many other classifications are used by the ABS. Some have been developed jointly with other agencies and others taken directly from international use (eg the International Classification of Diseases produced by the World Health Organisation and the Standard International Trade Classification produced by the United Nations). A listing of some other classifications used is contained in the Appendix.

It is hoped this article will encourage wider use of national classification systems by other producers of statistics. Unfortunately, through lack of use of national classifications and standards, many public and private sector organisations generate statistics that cannot be used in conjunction with the statistical output of the ABS and other bodies.

While recognising that this lack of integration is sometimes necessary owing to specialist requirements, often it arises through lack of knowledge about national statistical standards. Greater use of a common statistical framework throughout Australia not only increases efficiency, but also enriches the data that can be drawn upon by the community in decision-making.

ASGC

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

The Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) is the principal Australia-wide geographical classification which the ABS uses in the collection, compilation and provision of geographically classified statistics. It incorporates a number of hierarchic structures of geographic areas (also referred to as spatial units) and defines the individual structures and the area types of which each structure is composed. Each geographic area in the classification is identified by a unique numeric code.

Purpose of the classification

The ASGC is a classification of spatial units. Its main purpose is to enable statistics to be produced on a useful and comparable basis. In this context 'useful' means representing geographical areas for which statistical information is required by users of statistics.

Nature of the ASGC

Common types of statistical units classified are households in population censuses and surveys, and establishment locations (eg individual farms, mines, factories and shops) in economic censuses and surveys.

Once these units have been classified (ie assigned ASGC codes), statistics can be compiled and published (subject to normal confidentiality restraints) for the geographical areas in which the units are located.

Further information

Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) (1216.0) 1991 Edition.

ASCCSS

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES FOR SOCIAL STATISTICS

Introduction

The Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS) is a classification of countries based on the concept of geographic proximity. It groups countries into progressively broader geographic areas on the basis of similarity in terms of their social, cultural, economic and political characteristics. The ABS intends to use ASCCSS in its own statistical work and urges its use by other government agencies and private organisations classifying demographic, labour and social statistics by country.

Purpose of the classification

The classification is intended for use whenever demographic, labour and social statistics are classified by country. For example, the classification should be used when collecting, aggregating and disseminating data relating to personal characteristics such as country of birth, country of last residence, country of citizenship, etc. The classification is not intended for use in classifying economic statistics by country, nor is it intended for classifying related concepts such as the ethnicity of individuals or the language spoken by individuals.

Units of ASCCSS

The base units in the classification are 'countries'. The four types of 'countries' identified in the classification are:

- independent countries (excluding their dependencies, external territories, etc.)
- overseas dependencies, external territories, bailiwicks, etc., of independent countries
- units which are recognised geographic areas, the ownership or control of which is in dispute, and
- administrative subdivisions of Australia and the United Kingdom.

All independent countries are identified in the classification. Other 'country' units are identified if they are considered to be significant in terms of the major purposes for which the classification has been developed.

Further information

Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS) (1269.0)

ANZSIC

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

The ANZSIC has been produced by the ABS and the New Zealand Department of Statistics for use in the collection and publication of statistics in the two countries. It replaces the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC) and the New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (NZSIC).

Purpose of the classification

The ANZSIC is the standard to be applied in both countries for the production and analysis of official industry statistics. Users in both countries have been widely consulted in the development of the ANZSIC to ensure that it adequately reflects the structure of Australian and New Zealand industry, and services user requirements for industry statistics.

Notion of industry

The general notion of an industry is that of a goup of businesses which do similar things. Industries represented in the ANZSIC are somewhat more qualified in order to address a range of statistical and cost considerations.

In the ANZSIC, industry classes are designed to represent recogniseable segments of Australian and New Zealand industry, meet user requirements for statistics, be homogeneous in terms of industrial activities, be economically significant, and to align as closely as practicable with the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC).

Structure of the classification

The 1993 ANZSIC employs a 4-level hierarchic structure consisting of divisions (at the broadest level), subdivisions, groups and classes (at the finest level). The following industry divisions are represented at the broadest level of the classification:

A Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing
B Mining
C Manufacturing
D Electricity, Gas and Water Supply
E Construction
F Wholesale Trade
G Retail Trade
H Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants
I Transport and Storage
J Communication Services
K Finance and Insurance
L Property and Business Services
M Government Administration and Defence
N Education
O Health and Community Services
P Cultural and Recreational Services
Q Personal and Other Services

Further information

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) (1292.0)

Associated products

Associated products are currently under development.

ASCC

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD COMMODITY CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

The Australian Standard Commodity Classification is used to classify commodities (ie. goods and services) produced by industries.

The ASCC as developed to date covers transportable goods only and presents the range of such commodities used in the collection and publication of ABS statistics for the agriculture, mining and manufacturing industries.

Nature and purpose

The ASCC is aimed at improving:

- comparability between production, import, and export statistics
- links between commodities and industries, and
- comparability between Australian and international commodity classifications.

The ultimate purpose of the ASCC is to facilitate the use of commodity statistics by governments and private organisations, for example in the analysis of market shares; the relationship between employment, industry structure and tariff provisions; studies of import competition and replacement; and the conduct of trade and tariff negotiations.

By formally presenting production commodity items in a complete classification, and by showing the links to the underlying international standard classifications and to the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC), the 1989-90 ASCC provides users and suppliers of ABS commodity data with a reference to the definitional basis of the commodities concerned.

The next edition of the ASCC, due for release in 1994, will cover all goods and services.

Further information

Australian Standard Commodity Classification (Revised) Transportable Goods 1989-90 (1254.0)

ATFCC

AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT FREIGHT COMMODITY CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

The Australian Transport Freight Commodity Classification (ATFCC) and the Australian Pack Classification (APC) (described below) are related classifications and are often used in conjunction with each other.

Both classifications were jointly developed by the Department of Transport and the Australian Bureau of Statistics in association with other interested bodies.

Nature and purpose

The Australian Transport Freight Commodity Classification is a commodity classification which provides a systematic arrangement of goods which are judged to be important in terms of their impact on Australia's transport network which includes transportation by sea, rail, road, air and pipeline. It has been devised to facilitate standardised classification of goods carried by these modes of transport to and from Australia and within Australia.

Because of the importance of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) (see page 7), in relation to the recording of the movement of goods via sea and air (both by overseas and coastal traffic) both the ASCC and the ATFCC are based fundamentally on that classification. Whereas the ASCC is broadly structured according to the 3-digit level of the SITC (Rev 3), the ATFCC is broadly structured according to the 2-digit level of the same version of SITC. At this broad level of aggregation, it would be possible to compare commodities produced, imported and exported, with the movement of these goods by various transport modes.

The ATFCC is designed to be used by the organisations responsible for recording information on cargo or freight movements relevant to Australia's transportation services.

This classification may be used in conjunction with other classifications (such as origin, destination and routes of consignment, pack type of cargo defined for example by the Australian Pack Classification, freight handling methods, freight and wharfage charges) and has been designed with these uses in mind.

The classification is designed to facilitate the use of commodity data by organisations involved in transportation planning and in the design, control and monitoring of the operations of transport facilities.

AUSTRALIAN PACK CLASSIFICATION (APC)

The Australian Pack Classification (APC) is used for classifying units of freight transported by any transport mode, or moved through any port, depot or freight terminal.

The APC categorises freight in terms of its most immediately discernible units (eg freight in bulk, containers, etc), insofar as they have implications for handling, transportation, and administration.

This classification is therefore aimed towards the operations side of the transport industry, where the provision of transport and handling equipment and the levying of freight charges is not related to individual commodities, but on a unit load basis.

Further information

Australian Transport Freight Commodity Classification (ATFCC) & Australian Pack Classification (APC) (1210.0)

Australian Transport Freight Commodity Classification (ATFCC) on Floppy Disk (1256.0)

HS

HARMONISED COMMODITY DESCRIPTION AND CODING SYSTEM

Introduction

On 1 January 1988 Australia adopted a new international classification system, the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HCDCS) for describing goods involved in international trade. The HCDCS, or Harmonised System (HS) for short, forms the basis for administering Australia's imports and exports and for the collection and presentation of foreign trade statistics.

All import and export transactions are reported to the Australian Customs Service (ACS) according to the following two classifications, which are extensions of the HS:

- import statistics are collected according to the Combined Australian Customs Tariff and Statistical Nomenclature which replaced the old Customs Tariff and the Australian Import Commodity Classification (AICC)
- export statistics are collected according to the Australian Harmonised Export Commodity Classification (AHECC), which replaced the Australian Export Commodity Classification (AECC).

The HS is also used in defining categories of domestically produced goods as detailed in the Australian Standard Commodity Classification (ASCC) (see page 4).

Purpose

The HS has been developed to:

- provide international uniformity in classifying and coding goods
- update the previously used Customs Cooperation Council Nomenclature (CCCN) to reflect technological developments and changes in the pattern of internationally traded goods, and
- simplify the collection, analysis and comparison of foreign trade statistics.

As a signatory to the Harmonised System Convention, Australia is obligated to collect and publish trade statistics according to all the codes of the HS with the exception of confidential data. There is provision to extend the HS to meet the specific needs of local data users where they require finer level data.

Combined Australian Customs Tariff and Statistical Nomenclature

The Harmonised Tariff has been developed both for administering the duty provisions of the Customs Tariff Act 1987 and for the collection and compilation of import statistics by the ABS.

Australian Harmonised Export Commodity Classification

The AHECC has been developed for the identification of exports by the ACS and for the collection and compilation of export commodity statistics by the ABS.

Relationship of HS to Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 3)

The Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) was developed by the United Nations Statistical Office, primarily for economic analysis purposes. As such, it groups commodities to provide aggregates for classes of goods such as foods, raw materials, chemicals, machinery, etc. The hierarchy of the HS is oriented more towards the requirements of customs administration activity.

The third revision of the SITC, known as SITC (Rev 3), was developed to keep the SITC in step with the HS and was introduced with the HS on 1 January 1988. SITC (Rev 3) is used by the ABS for dissemination of broad level import and export statistics. Categories in the SITC (Rev 3) are composed of one or more whole HS items thereby permitting the direct reaggregation of data collected according to the HS.

Further information

Australian Harmonised Export Commodity Classification (1233.0)

Australian Harmonised Export Commodity Classification Microfiche (1235.0)

SISCA

STANDARD INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR CLASSIFICATION OF AUSTRALIA

Introduction

The Standard Institutional Sector Classification of Australia (SISCA) is a system for classifying institutional units, i.e. enterprises and households, by broad economic sectors in national accounts and related statistics.

Purpose of the classification

The main purpose of the classification in national accounts statistics is to classify transactors of the national income and outlay account and the national capital account into sectors according to differences in their financial role and behaviour. This is done to facilitate the provision and analysis of sectoral statistics on the sources and uses of disposable incomes and capital funds.

The classification is also used in other statistical series for such purposes as:

- classifying enterprises to the public and private sectors of the economy
- determining the scope of Australian Government Finance Statistics (GFS)
- classifying public sector enterprises in Government Finance Statistics (GFS) to relevant sectors and subsectors; and
- determining the sector boundaries of the capital expenditure collections.

Units of the 1987 edition of SISCA

The appropriate statistical units for classification according to the SISCA are institutional units ie enterprises and households. Enterprises and households are economic transactor type units which, for statistical purposes, are broadly defined as follows:

- an enterprise consists of one or more Australian resident legal entities which collectively own one or more management units. The legal entities on management units of an enterprise represent the smallest possible common grouping of such units (within an enterprise group). Examples include companies, partnerships, trusts, government departments and statutory authorities. This definition applies to both the private and public sectors,

- a household in the context of national accounts is essentially an entity (other than a non-profit organisation) which, as a unit, receives income and uses all of it for private final consumption expenditure and saving (ie after payment of taxes and other transfers).

Structure

The classification is primarily based on the institutional sectors recommended by the UN in a "A System of National Accounts".

The Sectors and Subsectors of the SISCA are:

- Corporate Trading Enterprises
  - Private Corporate Trading Enterprises
  - Public Trading Enterprises
    - Commodity Marketing Authorities
    - Other Public Trading Enterprises
- Financial Enterprises
  - Private Financial Enterprises
  - Public Financial Enterprises
    - Reserve Bank
    - Other Public Financial Enterprises
- General Government Enterprises
- Households and Other Private Enterprises
  - Households
  - Private Unincorporated Trading Enterprises
  - Private Non-profit Institutions Serving Households
- Non-Resident Enterprises in Australia

Current review

The SISCA is currently being reviewed in the light of changes made to the economic units model used by the ABS, proposed changes to the SNA, and user requirements.

Further information

Standard Institutional Sector Classification of Australia 1987 (SISCA) (1218.0)

Classifications Manual for Government Finance Statistics Australia (1217.0)

CMGFS

CLASSIFICATIONS MANUAL FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCE STATISTICS, AUSTRALIA

Introduction

The classifications contained in the Classifications Manual for Government Finance Statistics, Australia (CMGFS) are applied to enterprise units of the non-financial public sector and their transactions. The non-financial public sector comprises general government enterprises such as Commonwealth and State government departments as well as public trading enterprises such as TELECOM and electricity operations of State and local governments.

The statistical unit used in government finance statistics is the enterprise. Each government department, statutory authority and local government authority is generally treated as a separate enterprise. In some cases, however, notably local government authorities, these units have been 'split' to form more than one unit where the original unit engages in a mixture of trading and general government activities.

The CMGFS contains two types of classifications - 'enterprise or unit' level classifications and 'transaction' level classifications.

The main classifications applied to enterprise units are:

- institutional sector (ie general government, public trading enterprise)
- level of government (ie Commonwealth, State, Local), and
- administrative sector (ie budget, non-budget).

The principal classifications applied to transactions data are the Economic Transactions Framework (ETF), the Taxes, Fees and Fines Classification (TFFC) and the Government Purpose Classification (GPC). This brief overview will only outline these three major classifications.

ECONOMIC TRANSACTIONS FRAMEWORK (ETF)

The ETF is modelled along standards promulgated by the International Monetary Fund. It is designed to group transactions of the non-financial public sector in a manner which facilitates the study of the macro-economic impact of government transactions in the economy. It also provides the basic building blocks to derive the aggregates to be incorporated into the Australian National Accounts.

TAXES, FEES AND FINES CLASSIFICATION (TFFC)

The TFFC is used to classify in detail all transactions which have been classified by the ETF as either taxes, fees or fines received. It therefore provides a supplementary dissection of these transactions according to the type of tax, fee or fine collected by governments.

GOVERNMENT PURPOSE CLASSIFICATION (GPC)

The GPC, which closely follows the United Nations 'Classification of the Functions of Government' (COFOG), classifies selected government transactions in terms of the purposes for which they are made. In conjunction with the ETF, the GPC provides information on the socio-economic effects of government transactions. It is especially useful in establishing the trends in government outlays on particular purposes over time.

The main transactions which are classified by the GPC are current and capital outlays of both general government and public trading enterprises, including grants and advances received by them.

Further information

Classifications Manual for Government Finance Statistics, Australia 1989 (1217.0)

ASCO

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

Introduction

The Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) is a skill based classification of occupations developed in Australia as a national standard for the production and analysis of labour force statistics, human resources management, education planning, the listing of job applicants and vacancies, the provision of occupational information and for vocational guidance.

Purpose of the classification

The purpose of ASCO is:

- to identify a set of occupations covering all jobs in the Australian economy
- to define those occupations in terms of a number of selected attributes, and
- to group those occupations on the basis of their similarity into successively broader categories for purposes of statistical description and analysis.

Units of ASCO

The individual unit of classification is typically a job, which is defined as the set of tasks, performed by a given worker in a given establishment.

An occupation is then defined as a set of jobs with identical sets of tasks.

In the real world, every job is a little different. In practice an occupation is a collection of jobs sufficiently similar in their main tasks to be grouped together for classification purposes.

Structure

The structure of the ASCO is based on kind of work and defined in terms of two broad criteria - skill level and skill specialisation.

Further information

A detailed explanation of all ASCO products is provided in the *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Information Paper* (1221.0).

ICD

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES

Introduction

The World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is used by the ABS for the collection, compilation and publication of disease and injury statistics.

The ICD is revised approximately every 10 years. The Ninth Revision is currently in use, and was adopted from 1979. The Tenth Revision was to have been introduced from 1 January 1993, but it is not now expected to be available before 1 January 1995.

Purpose of the Classification

The ICD enables classification of diseases and injury at fine levels of detail. The ICD is principally used by the ABS in classifying causes of death. It is also applied to occupational health and safety data for occupational diseases and occupational injuries. Other past ABS uses include disease/injury coding for hospital morbidity collections and health surveys.

Concept of the Classification

For mortality coding, the concept of the underlying cause of death is used, which the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined as the disease or injury which initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death. Accidental and violent deaths are classified according to the external cause, that is, to the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury rather than to the nature of the injury.

Further information

International Classification of Diseases
1975 Revision Volume 1
World Health Organization

International Classification of Diseases
1975 Revision Volume 2 Alphabetical Index
World Health Organization

The classifications can be obtained from the Australian Government Publishing Service.

ANCO

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF OFFENCES

Introduction

The Australian National Classification of Offences (ANCO) has been developed by the ABS for use in the preparation of statistics by crime and justice agencies in all States and Territories.

Purpose of the classification

The purpose of the ANCO is to provide a framework for classifying offences for statistical purposes, which is able to be applied at various levels of detail by police, courts, legal aid, correction and other agencies involved in crime and justice.

Units of ANCO

The ABS has developed the ANCO from a draft classification (DANCO).

Offences are defined in legislation and in documents of the relevant agency and therefore no attempt is made in the classification to define the elements or circumstance which constitute an offence.

In all cases the offence as described in source documents is the offence to be classified.

The main factors taken into consideration in developing the classification were:

- the need to provide a classification usable in different areas of crime and justice
- differing legislation in individual States and Territories and Federal legislation
- the homogeneity of groupings in terms of the nature of constituent offences
- the need to separately identify offences of particular interest
- the incidence of particular offences.

Further information *Australian National Classification of Offences* (1234.0)

ASRC

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

The ASRC is due for release during 1993. It consists of three classifications which aim to facilitate the comparison of Research and Development (R&D) data between all sectors of the Australian economy. The three classifications involved are the Type of Activity Classification (TOA), the Field of Research Classification (FOR) and the Socio-economic Objective Classification (SEO).

Purpose of the classification

The ASRC has been designed for use in the measurement and analysis of R&D undertaken in both the public and private sectors in Australia.

To support international comparisons the definition, scope and classification of R&D activities have been largely devised in accordance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys of Research and Experimental Development, "FRASCATI MANUAL", fifth revision 1992.

Further Information *Australian Standard Research Classification* (1292.0)

APPENDIX : OTHER PRINCIPAL CLASSIFICATIONS USED BY THE ABS

Classification Group	*Classification Title*
Institutional Units	Type of Legal Organisation (TOLO) Level of Government Administrative Sector Source Destination Classification
Commodities	Classification of Commodities by Broad Economic Categories (BEC) Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Input-Output Commodity Classification (IOCC) Materials Used Classification Retail Trade Commodity Classification Agricultural Commodity Classification Household Expenditure Survey Commodity Code List (HESCCL)
Buildings	New Functional Classification of Buildings
Financial Assets and Liabilities	Type of Assets and Liabilities Type of Deposits and Advances
Travel	Type of Visitor (Domestic, International) Type of Consumers (Tourist, Excursionist) Purpose of Visit (Holiday, Business, Other and Not Known)
Road Traffic Accidents	Nature of Accidents (Fatal accidents, Injury accidents, Persons killed, Persons injured) Type of Road User Involved (Drivers, Passengers, Pedal cyclists, Pedestrians)
Labour Force Attributes	Labour Force Status Status in Employment Hours Worked Per Week Mode of Travel to Work Wages and Earnings Labour Costs Full-time/Part-time Status Duration of Unemployment
Industrial Accidents	Type of Accident (e.g. burn, fall) Nature of Injury (e.g. fracture, dislocation) Bodily Location (e.g. hand, mouth) Agency of Accident (e.g. mechanical equipment)
Industrial Disputes	Cause of Dispute Duration of Dispute Method of Settlement
Education	ABS Classification of Qualifications Type of Student Type of Institution
Welfare	Australian Standard Welfare Activities Classification (ASWAC)
Families, Households and Other Social Groups Other Attributes	Household Type Family Type Dwelling Structure Type Relationship in Household Marital Status Religion State of Usual Residence