

PREFACE

This publication presents a statistical summary of the operations of the Australian labour market. Topics covered include employment, unemployment and underemployment; award rates, earnings and labour costs; hours of work, industrial relations and training. International comparisons of the more important labour statistics also are provided.

The publication has been developed primarily as a reference document, offering an overview of the labour market data produced by the ABS, and providing a base for analysis and research on any aspect of the labour market. It is also of value to those who want an overall picture and to those who require an introduction to the range of ABS labour statistics. Throughout each chapter, some of the more significant elements and trends of the Australian labour market have been highlighted. For many of the specific statistics included in this publication, more recent data is available in other ABS publications dealing with particular topics

Readers should note that the data presented in the publication do not cover the full range of labour statistics produced by the ABS. More detailed information is contained in the specific ABS publications indicated at the bottom of each chart or table and listed in Data Sources on pages 160 and 161. Individual publications also contain details of ABS officers who may be contacted for further information about the statistics.

The statistics shown generally relate to the calendar year 1993. In many cases, a time series of the principal characteristics is provided. Definitions are given in the Glossary, and information on methods of collection and concepts are given in the Technical Notes.

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INTRODUCTION

LABOUR STATISTICS — A BROAD FIELD

User demand on the ABS in the field of labour market statistics has been considerable and consistent over many years and has led to continued improvements in the range, quality and comprehensiveness of the data.

Nevertheless, because pressure comes from users in both the economic and social areas, and because their specific needs for data are many and varied, the demand for an even more comprehensive service continues.

Broadly, users tend to be interested in one or several of the following topics:

- the social, demographic, industrial, occupational, educational and labour force characteristics of the working age population, including employment and unemployment levels;
- earnings and non-wage benefits derived from the efforts of labour, and award rates of pay;
- work patterns, hours of work, job satisfaction and work preferences;
- industrial relations;
- labour costs and labour productivity;
- the relationship of labour market indicators to other social and economic data; and
- education, training and career paths.

SOURCES OF LABOUR STATISTICS

The ABS draws from both household and employer based surveys as well as administrative data to produce the wide range of labour market statistics currently available.

Household Surveys

Household surveys include the monthly Labour Force Survey, supplementary surveys carried out in conjunction with the Labour Force Survey and a set of separate special household surveys employing appropriate methodologies.

The *Labour Force Survey* has been conducted by the ABS from the early 1960s. Collection of monthly labour force data began in February 1978, prior to which it had been conducted at quarterly intervals. (The data are published in *The Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary* (6202.0) and in *The Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0).)

Supplementary surveys attached to the Labour Force Survey have been conducted since the 1960s. They enable the ABS to collect information on new topics or to obtain more detail on topics already covered in the Labour Force Survey. Since the mid-seventies, the range of topics which have been covered by the supplementary survey program has increased markedly, and the conduct of some

surveys on a regular basis has led to the development of time series of various social and labour force indicators.

Special supplementary surveys are generally large scale omnibus surveys covering topics considered too complex or sensitive to be incorporated into a monthly supplementary survey. Some of the more recent topics related to the labour market covered by this collection vehicle include:

- The *1993 Survey of Training and Education* which collected information from the civilian population aged 15 to 64 on socio-demographic characteristics, work history details, training activities, educational profile, recent study for an educational qualification, computer use, access to training, in-house training courses, external training courses, on-the-job training and training requirements. As well, information on the frequency of use of trade skills, trade qualification details and career paths was collected from people with trade qualifications and people who had worked as tradespersons in Australia. A similar survey was conducted in 1989, see the publications *Training and Education Experience, Australia* (6278.0) (formerly *How Workers Get Their Training*) and *Career Paths of Persons with Trade Qualifications, Australia* (6243.0).
- The *1990 Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities* which collected income data from persons aged 15 and over on a weekly and last financial year (1989-90) basis. In addition to income levels it also obtained data on sources of income and a range of labour force and demographic characteristics. Financial year income data for persons with earned income are published in *1990 Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities, Persons With Earned Income* (6546.0). Data on the weekly income of income units are released in *1990 Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities, Income Units* (6523.0). The survey also collected information on housing costs and dwelling characteristics. Such data is contained in *1990 Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities, Housing Occupancy and Costs* (4130.0) and in a range of standard tables from the survey which are available on request.
- The *1988-89 Household Expenditure Survey (HES)* which collected data on 'household expenditure', namely expenditure on goods and services for private consumption. To complement the expenditure data, the survey also collected information about the demographic, labour force and income characteristics of the households and their members. For detailed information about the HES refer to *Information*

Paper: 1988-89 Household Expenditure Survey, Australia (6527.0).

The Household Expenditure Survey was conducted again during 1993-94 and results will be available in 1995.

A list of publications derived from supplementary and special surveys relating to the labour force is shown on page 162.

The *Australian Labour Market, 1993* (6284.0) draws on some of the above sources to provide a wide range of information about Australians and their labour market involvement. Information is presented as a collection of summary articles including some graphs and tables.

For more information on the population survey program, see *Directory of Labour Market and Social Survey Data* (1135.0).

Employer Surveys

For many years, estimates of civilian employees, average weekly earnings, distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours and job vacancies and overtime were based on a statistical framework constructed from lists of employers subject to payroll tax, supplemented by lists of government employers, religious and benevolent institutions and other non-profit organisations. Following a review conducted in 1981, it was concluded that the civilian employees series had substantially underestimated the rate of growth in employment because a significant number of small businesses were exempt from payroll tax. This deficiency in coverage of small businesses also adversely affected the quality of data on average weekly earnings because small businesses were under-represented in estimates based on the payroll tax framework.

In the light of the review, it was decided that the information required would be best obtained directly from employers using sample surveys based on the ABS register of businesses and organisations. Consequently, a new integrated statistical system based on the business register was developed. Since May 1983, the following new or upgraded surveys have been introduced:

- Quarterly Survey of Average Weekly Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Employment and Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Job Vacancies and Overtime;
- Annual Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours;
- Biennial Survey of Major Labour Costs and supplementary Survey of Wage Costs; and
- Survey of Employer Training Expenditure.

To provide a statistical link between the old and new series, the interim surveys have been conducted in parallel with the new Surveys of Employment and Earnings and Average Weekly Earnings for the September and December quarters 1983. The publication *1941-1990 Average Weekly Earnings* (6350.0) contains linked series from 1941 onwards. Further details on the new statistical series outlined above have been published in *Information Paper: New Statistical Series — Employment, Average Weekly Earnings, Job Vacancies and Overtime* (6256.0).

The *Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours* was conducted annually to 1981, again in 1983 and then annually from 1985 onwards. The *Survey of Major Labour Costs* was conducted annually from 1985-86 to 1991-92 and will be conducted biennially from 1993-94. Both the public and private sectors have been covered since 1986-87. The first *Training Expenditure Survey* was conducted in 1989. Subsequent surveys were conducted in 1990 and 1993.

Census of Population and Housing

Censuses of Population and Housing, conducted every five years, obtain information about the labour force, including social and demographic characteristics and occupation and industry profiles. Final results from the 1991 Census have been released.

A Guide to Labour Statistics

The publication *A Guide to Labour Statistics* (6102.0) was released in early 1986. The Guide provides an overview of:

- the development of labour statistics in Australia;
- major International Labour Organisation conventions providing the rationale for such statistics;
- the concepts, methodology and sources of ABS labour market data;
- the comparability between different ABS and non-ABS data sources.

The development of the Guide grew out of a recognition by the ABS that users required more than the ongoing issue of ABS labour market data. The Guide is structured according to subject matter topics similar to chapter headings used in this publication, and is intended as a companion volume to this publication. An updated edition of the guide is planned for release in 1994.

CLASSIFICATIONS

Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)

ASCO is a skill-based classification of occupations developed 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, conducting social research and for vocational guidance.

The First Edition of ASCO was released in September 1986 as the result of an extensive joint project undertaken by the ABS and the then Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR). To maintain the relevance of the national standard for occupation statistics, a review of ASCO will be completed by the ABS and the Department of Employment, Education and Training in time for implementation in the 1996 Census of Population and Housing.

ASCO groups occupations on the basis of type of work, which is defined in terms of two criteria – skill level and skill specialisation.

Skill level is a function of the range and complexity of the set of tasks involved. It is measured in terms of the length and type of education and training, and the experience usually necessary for the satisfactory performance of the set of tasks. Skill specialisation is measured in terms of the field of knowledge required, tools and equipment used, materials worked on and goods and services produced in relation to the tasks performed.

These skill characteristics were used to group jobs into 1,079 occupations, 282 unit groups, 52 minor groups and 8 major groups. At major group level, groups are separated principally according to skill level; at the lower levels the skill specialisation criterion is applied in successively finer degrees of detail.

ASCO was introduced into ABS collections from May 1986, and is now used in all ABS censuses and surveys where occupation data are collected, including the five yearly Census of Population and Housing, the Monthly Population Survey and the Annual Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours. In most collections data are coded at the unit group level. The 1991 Census of Population and Housing, however, has been coded to the occupation level of ASCO.

In 1990, ASCO was introduced into administrative by-product statistics related to registrations of vital statistics. Data on occupation of parents for births, and occupation of persons for whom deaths or divorces are recorded, are coded at minor group level using an automatic coding system operating on occupation title responses only. Data on overseas arrivals and departures are now coded to the unit group level of ASCO.

Data on occupation in ABS labour statistics collected before 1986 were coded to the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO). While the titles of some of the groups in the two classifications are similar, the content of the groups in the two classifications is generally different because occupations are grouped according to different criteria. These differences are likely to have been accentuated by the introduction of a structured method for coding survey data to ASCO. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in attempting to compare data coded to CCLO with that coded to ASCO.

A cross-tabulation of the two classifications at the major group level was presented in Table 41 of the August 1986 issue of *The Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0).

The estimates contained in this table were produced by coding a sub-sample of occupation responses from the May 1986 Labour Force Survey to both ASCO and CCLO. Occupation data from the 1986 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours were coded to both classifications and presented in the May 1986 issue of *The Distribution and Composition of Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia* (6306.0). More detailed information on the relationship between ASCO and CCLO is presented in *Census 86 — ASCO/CCLO Link* (2182.0) and *Census 86 — ASCO/CCLO Link File: Technical Details* (2199.0). (See also *Information Paper: ASCO — Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (1221.0).)

CCLO was originally based on the 1958 version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and thus afforded Australian labour force statistics some international comparability. There were many severe criticisms of CCLO and thus ASCO was developed using a completely different conceptual approach. Since the publication of ASCO in 1986, ISCO (1988) has been revised using a very similar conceptual approach to that adopted for ASCO. A large number of countries have revised, or are currently revising, their national classifications along similar lines.

The following publications about ASCO are available from the ABS:

1. *Information Paper: ASCO — Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (1221.0). This paper provides an introduction to the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), including an overview of the ASCO structure, the ASCO Coding System and a guide to interpreting ASCO statistics. It also provides details of other publications dealing with the relationship between ASCO and CCLO.
2. *ASCO Statistical Classification* (1222.0) outlines the conceptual basis and structure of ASCO, and provides definitions of the major, minor and unit groups in the classification. It is intended principally as an aid in interpreting statistics coded to ASCO.
3. *ASCO Occupation Definitions* (1223.0) comprises the definitions of the ASCO criteria, code conventions, listings of the ASCO structure, definitions of the 1,079 occupations at the most detailed level of the classification, and the Keyword Index of Structure Titles.
4. *ASCO Expert Coding System: Unit Group Level* (1224.0) includes a Coder's Manual, User's Manual and printed copies of the coding indexes in alphabetical and numerical order. The system runs on IBM PC compatible microcomputers.
5. *ASCO Manual Coding System: Unit Group Level* (1225.0) details the procedures and provides the indexes required for the accurate manual coding of survey responses to ASCO. Other indexes con-

tained in the *Statistical Classification* and the *ASCO Dictionary* are not suitable for this purpose.

6. *ASCO Expert Coding System: Occupation Level* (1226.0) is similar to 1224.0 but enables the coding of occupation information to the occupation level of ASCO (1,079 categories).

7. *ASCO Manual Coding System: Occupation Level* (1227.0) specifies the procedures and provides the indexes for the manual coding of occupation data to the 1,079 categories at the most detailed level of ASCO. It is intended for users who wish to assign 6-digit ASCO codes on the basis of relatively detailed information such as that which is available from human resource management systems, job vacancies specifications or responses in special purpose statistical collections.

8. *ASCO Keyword Index of Unit Group Tasks* (1228.0) is primarily designed to assist in resolving problems arising in the course of coding occupation descriptions to the unit group level of ASCO.

9. *ASCO Keyword Index to Occupation Definitions* (1229.0). This publication contains an index of selected words used in Occupation Definitions as published in *ASCO Occupation Definitions* (1223.0)

The keyword index publications (1228.0 and 1229.0) are particularly useful in finding the correct ASCO code for an occupation when no title or an inadequate title is available and the coder needs to use task information. They are not intended to be coding documents in their own right, but rather guides to locating relevant unit group and occupation definitions respectively.

The *ASCO Dictionary* (AGPS Cat. No. 85 1291 0) (now out of print) was produced jointly by ABS and DEIR (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training) and contained descriptions of all groups in the classification down to the occupation level.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Classification of Qualifications (ABSCQ)

The ABSCQ was designed for use in the collection and presentation of data on qualifications held by the

population. For the purposes of the ABSCQ, an "educational qualification" is considered to be an award for attainment, as a result of formal learning, from an accredited post-school institution.

Qualifications can be classified according to the following two elements: *level of attainment* and *field of study*. Level of attainment is a function of the quality and quantity of learning necessary to obtain that qualification. Field of study refers to the subject matter taught in the course of study leading to the award of a particular qualification.

The ABSCQ was first used in the 1991 Census of Population and Housing, and is now being progressively introduced into other ABS collections. Further details about the ABSCQ, including related publications, can be found in *Information Paper: Australian Bureau of Statistics Classification of Qualifications — ABSCQ* (1263.0).

Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC)

The ASIC has been designed primarily as a system for classifying establishments, e.g. individual mines, factories, shops, etc., by industry. An 'industry' i.e. an individual class or group, etc. in ASIC consists of the establishments which have been classified to it.

A new edition of this classification, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) was released in May 1993. It was produced in consultation with Statistics New Zealand and will become the standard industrial classification for both countries. The ANZSIC is to be introduced into ABS collections progressively, with the first statistics on an ANZSIC basis released during 1993.

Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS)

The ASCCSS is a classification of countries based on the concept of geographic proximity. It groups neighbouring countries into progressively broader geographic areas on the basis of their similarity in terms of social, cultural, economic and political characteristics.

The classification is intended for use whenever demographic, labour and social statistics are classified by country.