

LABOUR STATISTICS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Symbols

The following *symbols*, where shown in columns of figures or elsewhere in tables mean:

- n.a. not available
- . . not applicable
- nil or rounded to zero
- n.e.c. not elsewhere classified
- * subject to sampling variability too high for most practical uses
- p preliminary figure subject to revision

Other

In tables, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the items because of rounding.

PREFACE

This publication is the eighth in the series summarising the range of labour statistics produced by the ABS. The format of the publication presents the statistics by subject matter rather than source of collection.

The statistics shown are the latest available data and generally relate to the calendar year 1984 and wherever possible a time series of the principal characteristics is also given back to 1974. International comparisons of the more important labour statistics series are provided in Chapter 10. Some new topics (retirement intentions, characteristics of migrants, incidence of industrial awards) are also included in this issue.

Because of limitations of space only a summary of the principal statistics is shown in the relevant tables. Users requiring more detailed information should refer to the specific ABS publications indicated at the bottom of each table or chart.

A full list of data sources corresponding to each chapter is given in Appendix I. Details of definitions used, accuracy of results and other technical aspects are given in Appendix II.

Comments on the usefulness of the changes made to the publication and suggestions for further improvements would be welcomed. Correspondence should be addressed to:

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October 1985

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INTRODUCTION

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 both the 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 unabated.

Broadly, and at the risk of oversimplification, users tend to be interested in the following topics:

- the relationship of labour market indicators to macro and other economic data;
- the social, demographic, industrial, occupational, educational and labour force characteristics of the working age population;
- income and non-wage benefits derived from the efforts of labour and award rates of pay and their relationship to overall income;
- work patterns, hours of work, job satisfaction and work preferences;
- industrial relations;
- labour costs and labour productivity;
- conditions of the workplace including occupational health and safety and industrial accidents.

The ABS relies on a mix of household and employer-based surveys and 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 somewhat different methodologies.

The *Labour Force Survey* has been in existence from the early 1960's. Collection of monthly labour force data began in February 1978, prior to which it had been conducted at quarterly intervals.

The most recent major developments to the Labour Force Survey have been:

- the development of procedures and systems to allow the regular release of regional estimates from April 1985;
- the preparation, for release in the second half of 1985, of a comparative historical data series from 1966 (this is to be released in *The Labour Force, Australia* (6204.0)).

Supplementary Surveys attached to the Labour Force Survey have been conducted since the 1960's. They enable the collection of information on aspects covered in the Labour Force Survey in more detail or on new topics. Since the mid-seventies, topics which have been covered by the supplementary survey program have 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.

New topics conducted in 1984 were:

- *Characteristics of Migrants Aged 18 Years and Over at Time of Arrival and Who Arrived after 1960, Australia* (6250.0) which sought information about migrants aged 18 and over at the time they arrived in Australia and who arrived after 1960 — details collected included migrant category, country of last residence, State in which first settled, family details, and labour force characteristics;
- *Persons Who Intend to Retire from Full-time Work, Australia* (6258.0) which collected information on persons aged 45 years and over who intended to retire from full-time work — data collected included intended age of retirement, life insurance coverage, intended main source of income, current and intended housing arrangements, and standard demographic and labour force characteristics.

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 concerning the labour market covered by this collection vehicle include:

- *Alternative Working Arrangements, March-May 1982* (6341.0) which obtained information about certain aspects of the working arrangements of employees and their preferences for changes to those arrangements;
- *Career Paths of Persons with Trade Qualifications, September-November 1982* (6243.0) which sought information enabling the identification of persons with trade qualifications, and whether those qualifications are being or have been used;
- *Superannuation, September-November 1982* (6319.0) which collected data on the extent of coverage of superannuation or retirement schemes and life assurance policies in conjunction with the 1982 Income and Housing Survey — this was the first ABS survey to include information on superannuation coverage and costs, on the extent of coverage of life assurance policies, and on payments (including lump sum payments) received from superannuation schemes, life assurance policies, and worker's compensation as well as current and annual income;

- *Income and Housing Survey, September-November 1982* (6502.0) which collected current and annual income, along with data on housing occupancy and costs;
- *1984 Household Expenditure Survey (HES)*, a twelve month field enumeration which began in January 1984 — the survey's main objective was to obtain data on 'household expenditure', namely expenditure on those goods and services for private consumption (for more information on the HES refer to *Information Paper : 1984 Household Expenditure Survey* (6527.0)).

For more information on the population survey program, see *Information Paper : Population Survey Program* issued by the ABS in January 1985.

Employer-Based Surveys

For many years, estimates of civilian employees, average weekly earnings, distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours, 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 (which required an upgrade in the coverage of small businesses) was developed. From 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 Overtime;
- Quarterly Survey of Job Vacancies;
- Biennial Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours.

To provide a link between the old and new statistical series, parallel surveys on the old and new systems were conducted for the Employment and Earnings and Average Weekly Earnings surveys for the September and December quarters 1983. 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 May Biennial Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours is also used as a collection vehicle for data about the incidence of awards. The inclusion in the survey of questions about the award coverage of employees enables the compilation and publication of data on the incidence of awards cross-classified by other data items collected in the survey.

A Guide to Labour Statistics (GLS)

The publication of *A Guide to Labour Statistics* (6102.0) is scheduled for the second half of 1985. When published, the GLS will provide an overview of:

- the development of labour statistics in Australia;
- major International Labour Organisation conventions providing the rationale for such statistics;
- the conceptual frameworks underlying, and data items contained in, ABS labour statistics;
- the comparability between different ABS and non-ABS data sources.

The development of the GLS grew out of a recognition by the ABS that users required more than the ongoing issue of ABS labour market data. Hence, it was decided that a document containing an overview of labour market data, a description of principal data sources, and a commentary on the comparability of related data from different sources should be produced.

Australian Standard Classification Occupations (ASCO)

The ASCO project began in 1979, and is being undertaken in partnership with the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR). Two prototype structures were developed for testing:

- *Structure A* — the 'main dictionary' structure based on a 'kind of work' criterion with an emphasis on materials worked on and products/services produced; and
- *Structure B* — the 'alternative approach' structure based on a 'kind of work' criterion with an emphasis on skill level (length and type of training) and skill specialisation (e.g. subject matter knowledge).

Following the conduct of a user requirements survey and an extensive program of statistical feasibility testing, an evaluation of both structures was undertaken. It was decided that there were distinct advantages in the development of one structure only for use as a recognised national standard classification of occupations. *Structure B* has been chosen as the basis of the final structure for the ASCO First Edition on the grounds that it will best meet the long term needs of most significant users and producers of occupational information and statistics. Further details about the development of ASCO are published in an information paper issued jointly by ABS and DEIR in December 1984.

The ASCO First Edition will be published about the middle of 1986, and the ABS is committed to its simultaneous introduction for the 1986 Census of Population and Housing and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Until the introduction of ASCO, the ABS will continue to use the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO) to code occupational data from its statistical collections. The ABS also plans to provide a link between ASCO and CCLO by coding some Census and LFS occupational data to both classifications.