PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Response to 2022 Monthly Population Survey Data Integration Project

June 2023

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

Project Background

This project aims to integrate data from the Monthly Population Survey (MPS) into the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) and other datasets as an approved research project under the MADIP framework.

The MPS collects information about the Australian population and workforce monthly[1] and is conducted under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* (Cth) (C&S Act). Data from the MPS is used to produce Australia's employment and unemployment figures and a range of other labour[2] related publications.

The MADIP is a secure, person-based, research data asset that combines broad sets of information about Australian citizens on health, education, government payments, income and taxation, employment, and population demographics (including the Census) over time. The MADIP was first established in 2015 to enhance the use and re-use of public data for research purposes. All MADIP projects must be assessed as being in the public interest and secure data access is provided to approved researchers only.

MADIP is enabled though a partnership of seven Commonwealth agencies, being: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Taxation Office, Department of Health and Aged Care, Department of Education, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Social Services, and Services Australia. Representatives from each of these agencies are members of the MADIP Board who oversee the governance and accountability framework and help identify and mange privacy impacts. MADIP data is kept safe and secure and is combined and accessed in ways to protect the privacy of individuals.

The ABS engaged independent privacy consultant Maddocks to conduct a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for the MPS on behalf of the MPS Program Board. The PIA considered the privacy implication of integrating longitudinal MPS information with MADIP (including other datasets approved under the MADIP framework). It was conducted by Maddocks in mid-2022 and included targeted stakeholder consultation. The PIA also builds upon privacy impact assessments previously undertaken in relation to MADIP, specifically the 2019 and 2022 MADIP PIA Updates.

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[1] Participants are required to respond to the MPS for 8 months.

[2] Each quarter at the end of the MPS, additional questions are asked participants about a range of related labour topics – these are known as Labour Force Supplementary Surveys. These surveys cover topics such as characteristics of employment, education and work, job search experience, underemployed workers, and participation, job search and mobility. The supplementary survey data is part of the MPS and is in scope of this PIA.

In month 8 (their last month) participants are asked additional questions on social topics not related to labour statistics – these surveys are known as the Labour Multipurpose Household Survey (MPHS) topics. The MPHS covers topics including crime victimisation, participation in sport and physical activity, environmental views and behaviours, patient experiences in Australia and household use of information technology. The linking of MPHS data with MADIP will be considered at a later date and is beyond the scope of this PIA.

PART 2 – RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Review and update privacy information about MPS on ABS website

Recommendation 1.1

We **recommend** that ABS consider updating the 'Survey Participant Information' available on its website in respect of the MPS, to reflect that the ABS intends to arrange for data collected as part of the MPS to be integrated with other datasets in the ABS' secure MADIP environment, so that it can be included in de-identified data used for research projects to help better understand the Australian population and its needs.

The 'Survey Participant Information' page could also provide links to the comprehensive information about MADIP already found on the ABS website.

Response

Agreed.

The ABS understands the importance of providing accessible information to respondents around the use of their data, including information about data integration and secure researcher access to de-identified linked data. The ABS recently published a new 'Survey Participant Information' page for the MPS that provides clear and immediate information around frequently asked questions (FAQ's) related to the MPS. The ABS enhanced this page to include information and links for MPS participants on data integration, the MADIP, and the ABS Privacy Policy.

Timing – March 2023

Recommendation 1.2

We **recommend** that the ABS consider the ease with which Participants will be able to locate the information on its website about the ABS' handling of personal information for surveys, and whether there are additional ways that would assist Participants to more easily navigate to the ABS' 'Survey Participant Information' page. For example, the ABS could consider whether it would assist Participants if they could be informed via the 'Privacy at the ABS' webpage that the ABS has made available its privacy arrangements in relation to each survey on the ABS website.

Response

Agreed.

The ABS seeks to improve the ways in which it communicates privacy, confidentiality and security – including with new data integration opportunities between the MPS and MADIP. The new 'MPS survey landing page' will provide an improved navigable way of presenting this information to survey participants – with the majority of survey participants participating via the online portal. Written approach materials will also be updated to include information on data integration and the MPS.

Timing – June 2023

Links to Privacy statements and collection notices are facilitated from the 'Privacy at the ABS' webpage. The ABS will create a Collection notice for the MPS which will be added to the Collection notice page. Importantly, the 'Privacy at the ABS' webpage links to the MADIP privacy statement.

Timing – December 2023

Recommendation 2: ABS exercise of MADIP data custodian role

Current MADIP processes require data custodians to approve proposed research projects involving the use of MADIP data. When considering whether to grant such approval in relation to MPS Data, we recommend that the ABS, in its role as data custodian of the MPS Data, carefully consider and record:

- the purpose(s) of the proposed research project, and whether these purpose(s) are consistent with the purposes for which the MPS Data was collected from the relevant individuals; and
- the outcomes of the proposed research project, and whether these might have any unintended impacts for the individuals about which the MPS Data relates.

Response

Agreed.

The ABS will assess and record applications for access to MPS data in MADIP in line with the broader intentions of the MPS as well as project outcomes.

The MPS collects important information about Australia's workforce. Participants are informed that the MPS survey helps to produce statistics about matters that affect the whole community including work, unemployment, training, education, retirement, looking after the family and home. They are also informed that their data may be integrated with other information for research purposes.

The current data governance processes and arrangements for MADIP will remain in place for projects accessing the MPS data. All MADIP projects go through a rigorous assessment and approval process, managed by the ABS. All projects are assessed under the Five Safes

Framework – safe people, safe projects, safe settings, safe data, safe outputs[3]. The project must be assessed as being in the public interest and be in accordance with the legislation of the relevant agencies. Privacy assessments are conducted to consider any privacy impacts of the research and, where necessary, projects may be required to seek ethics approval for the research.

Timing – Ongoing