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## QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

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### Introduction

This paper discusses the major underlying concepts and the questions used in the Labour Force Survey and changes made to the questionnaire. A copy of the revised questionnaire is attached.

2. ABS has been conducting labour force surveys since 1960. The surveys were undertaken on a quarterly basis prior to February 1978 and monthly since then. Details of estimates derived from the surveys and descriptions of the methodology of the surveys and the sample of dwellings are published monthly in *The Labour Force, Australia (Preliminary)* (6202.0) and *The Labour Force, Australia* (6203).

3. The labour force survey questionnaire is a document used by interviewers, who are required to ask questions exactly as they appear on the questionnaire in order to ensure consistency of approach in all interviews. Interviewers are trained in the manner of their approaches to households, the significance of the questions in relation to the objectives of the survey, and to assist respondents to appreciate the relevance of the questions to their particular circumstances in order to obtain accurate responses. While the questionnaire may appear formidable if simply read through from beginning to end, in practice a trained interviewer, by following the sequencing of the questionnaire, puts questions appropriate to each person's labour force experience in a manner easily understood by respondents. In addition to initial training, all interviewers are regularly supervised and retrained.

### Development of the labour force survey questionnaire

4. Since 1960, the questionnaire used in the survey for the collection of labour force data has undergone the following development:

- (a) the inclusion in August 1966 of some additional questions on the steps taken to find a job by persons looking for work;
- (b) the introduction in November 1972 of questions seeking information on country of birth and period of arrival in Australia;

- (c) in February 1975 persons who were not employed were asked whether they were looking for work during the previous four weeks instead of during the previous week only. Those who were looking during this period were asked whether they would have been able to take a job in the survey week had one become available;

- (d) a substantial redesign in November 1977 to provide more accurate information on the labour force, to improve the structure of the questions asked and to make them easier to understand and less likely to be misinterpreted;

- (e) in November 1981 a number of minor amendments were made, in particular to the questions which seek to determine whether or not persons reporting that they are looking for work have taken active steps to find a job during the previous four weeks. This change was made mainly to take account of revised administrative arrangements within the Commonwealth Employment Service.

5. Further details of these changes made to the questionnaire and the reasons for the changes were published in previous issues of this publication in March 1978 and December 1981.

### Amendments to the questionnaire, October 1982

6. *Identification of usual residence.* Questions 9 and 10 have been included to enable the identification of each respondent's place of usual residence. In association with the introduction of population benchmarks which are compiled according to place of usual residence, labour force survey estimates are thus compiled wholly according to place of usual residence. The February 1984 issue of *The Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0) contains details of the change to a usual residence basis along with revised labour force survey estimate.

7. *Identification of family relationships.* Questions 12 to 16 enable the identification of family relationships within related households and the subsequent estimation of the labour force characteristics of families.

## 8. Other amendments included:

- (a) the inclusion of an additional response category in *Question 36* to identify persons whose standard working arrangements meant that they worked less than 35 hours in the survey week;
- (b) The re-wording of *Question 66* to reduce respondent misinterpretation; and
- (c) the re-ordering of *Questions 67 to 70* to provide smoother sequencing throughout the questionnaire.

**Definitions**

9. To understand the objectives of the labour force questionnaire it is necessary to relate the questions asked to the various labour force categories used in the survey. The labour force classification used in the survey conforms closely to the international standard definitions specified by the International Labour Organisation (I.L.O.). The labour force category to which a person is assigned depends on his actual activity (i.e. whether working, looking for work, etc.) during a specified week, known as survey week, which is the week immediately preceding that in which the interview takes place. The principal categories of the labour force recorded by the labour force questionnaire are defined in the following paragraphs.

10. The survey includes all persons aged 15 years and over except:

- (a) members of the permanent defence forces;
- (b) certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from census and estimated populations;
- (c) overseas residents in Australia; and
- (d) members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

11. The following definitions relate only to those persons within the scope of the survey.

12. The *labour force* comprises all persons who, during the survey week, were *employed* or *unemployed* as defined below.

13. *Employed persons* comprise all those aged 15 years and over who, during the survey week:

- (a) worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind in a job or business, or on a farm (including employees, employers and self-employed persons); or

- (b) worked for 15 hours or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. unpaid family helpers); or

- (c) were employees who had a job but were not at work and were: on paid leave; on leave without pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the survey week; stood down without pay because of bad weather or plant breakdown at their place of employment for less than four weeks up to the end of the survey week; on strike or locked out; on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; or receiving wages or salary while undertaking full-time study; or

- (d) were employers or self-employed persons who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

14. *Unemployed persons* are those aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the survey week, and:

- (a) had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the survey week and:

- (i) were available for work in the survey week, or would have been available except for temporary illness (i.e. lasting for less than four weeks to the end of the survey week); or

- (ii) were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the survey week and would have started in the survey week if the job had been available then; or

- (b) were waiting to be called back to a full-time or part-time job from which they had been stood down without pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the survey week (including the whole of the survey week) for reasons other than bad weather or plant breakdown.

15. *Persons not in the labour force* are those who, during the survey week, were not in the categories *employed* or *unemployed*, as defined in paragraphs 13 and 14. They include persons who were keeping house (unpaid), attending an educational institution (school, university, etc.), retired, voluntarily inactive, permanently unable to work, inmates of institutions (hospitals, gaols, sanatoria, etc.), trainee teachers, members of contemplative religious orders, and persons whose only activity during the survey week was jury service or unpaid voluntary work for a charitable organisation. Specific surveys of persons not in the labour force indicate that a number want to work but are not classified as unemployed because they were not actively looking for work and/or were not available to begin work in the survey week. Included in this group are the discouraged jobseekers and other persons marginally attached to the labour force.

## Guidelines for following the questionnaires

### General

16. The questionnaires attached relate to the February, May, August and November surveys. For the remaining months of the year a slightly modified questionnaire (not attached) which does not ask for occupation, employer and industry details of those who are employed is generally used.

17. The questionnaires are structured so that details are collected as follows:

- Page 1 Demographic and survey control information
- Page 2 Persons who actually worked during the survey week
- Page 3 Persons who had a job but were not at work during the survey week
- Page 4 Persons looking for work and final determination of persons not in the labour force.

### Identifying Unemployed Persons from the Questionnaire

18. In order for a person to be classified to the *looking for work* sub-category of the unemployed, the following three conditions must be fulfilled in the following order;

- (a) persons have to answer 'Yes' to a question which asks whether they have looked for work at any time during the last four weeks, that is;

Answer 'Yes' to question 62 or question 63.

- (b) persons must have taken an active step during the last four weeks to find work, that is;

Answer one of categories 01 to 07 in Question 64.

- (c) persons must fulfil the availability for work conditions specified in the definition given above (see paragraph 14(a)). Availability is determined by;

Questions 66 to 70.

19. In order to be classified to the *stood down* sub-category of the unemployed (normally very few in number), persons must fulfil the conditions as specified in the definition given above (see paragraph 14(b)). The questions that determine if these conditions are fulfilled are:

Question 51 and questions 54 to 59.

### Questionnaire Conventions

20. The reasons for different type faces on the questionnaire are:

#### CAPITALS:

This is used for all the questions that need to be fully read out by the interviewer. For some questions (e.g. questions 28 and 64) the interviewer must also read out the categories down the page until a positive response is given.

#### Lower case:

This is reserved for the coding of answers given by respondents. These words are not read out by the interviewer.

#### Italics:

This is used for all instructions to interviewers.

21. The labour force survey is conducted on the basis that any responsible adult member of the dwelling should usually be able to answer the questions pertaining to all the residents. In the design of the questionnaire, use has been made of ". . . ." when someone's name or a pronoun is to be inserted in the sentence, e.g. sometimes 'you' will be inserted and sometimes 'your husband' etc.

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<p>38. DID . . . . HAVE A JOB, BUSINESS, OR FARM THAT . . . . WAS AWAY FROM BECAUSE OF HOLIDAYS, SICKNESS OR ANY OTHER REASON?</p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>47. DOES . . . . WORK – FOR AN EMPLOYER FOR WAGES OR SALARY? (Go to Q.51) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>IN . . . . OWN BUSINESS WITH EMPLOYEES? . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>WITH NO EMPLOYEES? . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>WITHOUT PAY IN A FAMILY BUSINESS (Go to Q.62) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>WHAT ARE . . . . WORKING ARRANGEMENTS?</p> <p>Payment in kind (Go to Q.51) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Unpaid voluntary work (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>	<p>53. WILL . . . . BE RETURNING TO WORK FOR . . . . EMPLOYER?</p> <p>Yes (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Don't know (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>
<p>39. DID . . . . HAVE MORE THAN ONE JOB?</p> <p>Yes (Go to Q.42) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>48. IS . . . . BUSINESS A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY?</p> <p>Yes (Go to Q.51) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>54. WHY WAS . . . . STOOD DOWN?</p> <p>Bad weather/breakdown (Go to Q.57) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Other . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>40. WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES . . . . DO?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>49. WHY WAS . . . . AWAY FROM WORK LAST WEEK?</p> <p>Own illness or injury . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Holiday/personal reasons . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>No work available . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>Bad weather/breakdown . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>On strike/locked out . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Other . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>	<p>55. WAS . . . . PAID OR WILL . . . . BE PAID FOR ANY OF LAST WEEK?</p> <p>Yes (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>41. Go to Q.45</p>	<p>50. Go to Q.59</p>	<p>56. HOW LONG HAS . . . . BEEN AWAY FROM WORK WITHOUT PAY?</p> <p>One week (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Two weeks (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Three weeks (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>Four weeks or more (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>
<p>42. WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES . . . . DO IN EACH OF . . . . JOBS?</p> <p>Job 1: .....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Job 2: .....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>51. WHY WAS . . . . AWAY FROM WORK LAST WEEK?</p> <p>Own illness or injury . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Leave, holiday or flexitime/personal reasons (Go to Q.57) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Bad weather/breakdown (Go to Q.57) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>Stood down (Go to Q.54) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>No work/insufficient work (Go to Q.55) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>On strike/locked out (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p> <p>Usually works less than 1 hr a week/began job/lost job (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 7</p> <p>Other (Go to Q.57) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 8</p>	<p>57. UP UNTIL THE END OF LAST WEEK, HOW LONG HAD . . . . BEEN AWAY FROM WORK?</p> <p>Less than 4 weeks (Go to Q.59) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>4 weeks or more . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>43. IN WHICH JOB DOES . . . . USUALLY WORK THE MOST HOURS?</p> <p>Job 1 in Q.42 <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Job 2 in Q.42 <input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>52. WAS . . . . ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAST WEEK?</p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (Go to Q.57) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>58. WAS . . . . PAID OR WILL . . . . BE PAID FOR ANY PART OF THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?</p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>44. I WOULD NOW LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THAT JOB.</p>	<p>59. HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DOES . . . . USUALLY WORK IN (ALL) . . . . JOB(S)?</p> <p>35 hours or more (No more questions) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>1-34 hours . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>No hours (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<p>59. HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DOES . . . . USUALLY WORK IN (ALL) . . . . JOB(S)?</p> <p>35 hours or more (No more questions) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>1-34 hours . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>No hours (Go to Q.62) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>
<p>45. WHO DOES . . . . WORK FOR? (Name/Full address)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>60. WOULD . . . . PREFER A JOB IN WHICH . . . . WORKED MORE HOURS A WEEK?</p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (No more questions) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Don't know (No more questions) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<p>61. AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS . . . . BEEN LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK?</p> <p>Yes (Go to Q.64) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (No more questions) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>46. WHAT KIND OF INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, OR SERVICE IS CARRIED OUT AT THAT ADDRESS?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

<p><b>62. AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS . . . . BEEN LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK?</b></p> <p>Yes (<i>Go to Q.64</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>66. IF . . . . HAD FOUND A (PART-TIME) JOB COULD . . . . HAVE STARTED WORK LAST WEEK?</b></p> <p>Yes (<i>Go to Q.71</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Don't know (<i>Go to Q.71</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<p><b>73. WHAT KIND OF WORK DID . . . . DO?</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[ ][ ]</p>
<p><b>63. HAS . . . . BEEN LOOKING FOR PART-TIME WORK AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS?</b></p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>67. WHAT WERE THE REASONS . . . . COULD NOT HAVE STARTED WORK LAST WEEK?</b></p> <p>Own illness or injury . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Going to school (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>Going to a tertiary institution (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>Personal reasons, family responsibilities (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>Waiting to start job (<i>Go to Q.69</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Other (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>	<p><b>74. WHO DID . . . . WORK FOR? (Name/Full address)</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>64. AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS . . . . WRITTEN, PHONED OR APPLIED IN PERSON TO AN EMPLOYER FOR WORK? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 01</p> <p><b>ANSWERED A NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT FOR A JOB? . . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 02</p> <p><b>LOOKED IN NEWSPAPERS?</b></p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/></p> <p>No <input type="radio"/></p> <p><b>CHECKED FACTORY OR COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE NOTICE BOARDS? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 03</p> <p><b>AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS . . . . BEEN REGISTERED WITH THE COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 04</p> <p><b>CHECKED OR REGISTERED WITH ANY OTHER EMPLOYMENT AGENCY? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 05</p> <p><b>DONE ANYTHING ELSE TO FIND A JOB?</b></p> <p>Advertised or tendered for work . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 06</p> <p>Contacted friends/relatives <input type="checkbox"/> 07</p> <p>Other (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 08</p> <p>Only looked in newspapers (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 09</p> <p>None of these (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 10</p>	<p><b>68. UP UNTIL THE END OF LAST WEEK HOW LONG HAD . . . . BEEN ILL?</b></p> <p>Less than 4 weeks (<i>Go to Q.71</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>4 weeks or more (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>75. WHAT KIND OF INDUSTRY, BUSINESS OR SERVICE WAS CARRIED OUT AT THAT ADDRESS?</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[ ][ ]</p>
<p><b>65. <u>Sequence Guide</u></b></p> <p>. <i>If works and looking for full-time work (i.e. '1' in Q.61) no more questions</i> . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>. <i>Otherwise, go to Q.66</i> . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>69. WHEN WILL . . . . BE STARTING WORK IN THAT JOB?</b></p> <p>Less than 4 weeks . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>4 weeks or more (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>76. DID . . . . WORK -</b></p> <p><b>FOR AN EMPLOYER FOR WAGES OR SALARY? (<i>No more questions</i>)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p><b>IN OWN BUSINESS - WITH EMPLOYEES? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p><b>WITH NO EMPLOYEES? . . . .</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p><b>WITHOUT PAY IN A FAMILY BUSINESS? (<i>No more questions</i>)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p><b>WHAT WERE . . . . WORKING ARRANGEMENTS?</b></p> <p>Payment in kind (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Unpaid voluntary work (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
<p><b>71. WHEN DID . . . . BEGIN LOOKING FOR WORK?</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>Less than 2 weeks . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 001</p> <p>No. of weeks . . . . [ ][ ]</p>	<p><b>70. IF THE JOB HAD BEEN AVAILABLE LAST WEEK, WOULD . . . . HAVE STARTED THEN?</b></p> <p>Yes . . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p><b>77. WAS . . . . BUSINESS A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY?</b></p> <p>Yes (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p><b>72. HOW LONG AGO IS IT SINCE . . . . LAST WORKED FULL-TIME FOR TWO WEEKS OR MORE?</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>Under 2 years (no. of weeks) [ ][ ]</p> <p>2 years or more (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 104</p> <p>Never worked (<i>No more questions</i>) . . . . <input type="checkbox"/> 999</p>	<p>.....</p>	