

CHAPTER 12

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

In many countries, statistics on labour are based on standard concepts and definitions recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). These definitions are applied by individual countries in different ways according to national circumstances with the result the statistics are often not comparable.

For labour force statistics this problem is further compounded by the use of a variety of collection methodologies used in the different countries. Some countries, including Australia conduct regular household surveys while others obtain their statistics as administrative by-products. The household survey approach is generally preferred as it provides better coverage and a close adherence to the international recommendations.

International comparisons of labour force statistics are compiled by a number of organisations including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and ILO. BLS makes some adjustments to figures supplied by the various international statistical organisations in order that the data are comparable and in conformity with ILO standards.

The following two tables showing unemployment rates and participation rates for nine countries have been derived from the BLS for the period 1972 to 1982. The figures given by the BLS for Australia are the same as those published by the ABS for unemployment but differ slightly for participation rates.

TABLE 12.1. LABOUR FORCE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES(a) FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES
1972-1982
(Per cent)

Year(b)	Australia	U.S.A.	Canada	Japan	France	Germany	Italy	Sweden	U.K.
1972	2.6	5.6	6.2	1.4	2.8	0.7	3.4	2.7	4.2
1973	2.3	4.9	5.5	1.3	2.7	0.7	3.2	2.5	3.2
1974	2.7	5.6	5.3	1.4	2.9	1.6	2.8	2.0	3.1
1975	4.9	8.5	6.9	1.9	4.2	3.4	3.0	1.6	4.6
1976	4.8	7.7	7.1	2.0	4.6	3.4	3.4	1.6	6.0
1977	5.6	7.1	8.1	2.0	4.9	3.5	3.6	1.8	6.3
1978	6.3	6.1	8.4	2.3	5.4	3.4	3.7	2.2	6.2
1979	6.2	5.8	7.5	2.1	6.1	3.0	3.9	2.1	5.6
1980	6.1	7.1	7.5	2.0	6.5	2.9	3.9	2.0	7.0
1981	5.8	7.6	7.6	2.2	7.7	4.1	4.3	2.5	10.6
1982	7.1	9.7	11.0	2.4	8.5	5.9	4.8	3.1	12.3

(a) Excludes defence forces. (b) Annual averages.

Source: *The Labour Force, Australia, 1978, 1981* (6204.0), *The Labour Force, Australia, December 1982*, (6203.0), *Statistical Supplement to International Comparisons of Unemployment, Bulletin 1979*, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 1983 p13.

TABLE 12.2. CIVILIAN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR
SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1972-1982
(Per cent)

Period (a)	Australia	U.S.A.	Canada	Japan	France	Germany	Italy	Sweden	U.K.
1972	61.5	60.4	58.6	63.8	56.3	55.9	47.5	64.2	61.3
1973	61.9	60.8	59.7	64.0	56.2	55.8	47.4	64.1	62.9
1974	62.1	61.2	60.5	63.0	56.3	55.1	47.5	64.9	62.7
1975	62.2	61.2	61.1	62.4	57.0	54.4	47.5	65.9	63.2
1976	61.9	61.6	61.1	62.4	57.0	53.8	47.8	66.0	63.3
1977	61.9	62.3	61.5	62.5	57.3	53.4	48.0	65.9	63.3
1978	61.1	63.2	62.6	62.8	56.7	53.3	47.7	66.1	63.4
1979	60.8	63.7	63.3	62.7	57.2	53.3	47.8	66.6	63.2
1980	61.4	63.8	64.0	62.6	56.0	53.1	48.0	66.9	63.0
1981	61.2	63.9	64.7	62.6	55.8	53.2	48.0	66.9	62.7
1982	60.9	64.0	64.0	62.7	n.a.	n.a.	47.4	67.1	n.a.

(a) Annual averages.

Sources: *The Labour Force, Australia, 1978, 1981*, (6204.0), *The Labour Force, Australia, December 1982*, (6203.0), *Statistical Supplement to International Comparisons of Unemployment, Bulletin 1979*, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 1983, p 27.