

LABOUR STATISTICS

AUSTRALIA, 1986

IAN CASTLES

Australian Statistician



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ISSN 0314-2779

PHONE INQUIRIES	• <i>about these statistics</i> —contact Mr Roy Wilson on Canberra (062) 52 6693 or any ABS State office.
	• <i>about other statistics and ABS services</i> —contact Information Services on Canberra (062) 52 6627, 52 5402, 52 6007 or any ABS State office.
MAIL INQUIRIES	• <i>write to</i> Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616 or any ABS State office.
ELECTRONIC SERVICES	• on VIATEL — key *656#.
	• on AUSSTATS — phone (062) 52 6017. • on TELESTATS — phone (062) 52 5404.

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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
- r figures or series revised since previous issue

Other

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

PREFACE

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

The publication has primarily been developed 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 only want an overall picture and to those who require an introduction to the range of ABS labour statistics. To assist readers, a 'Summary of Findings' has been presented to highlight some of the more significant features and trends within the Australian labour market.

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 Appendix I. Individual publications also contain details of ABS officers who may be contacted for further information about the statistics.

The statistics shown are the latest available as at 10 July 1987 and generally relate to the calendar year 1986. Wherever possible, a time series of the principal characteristics is provided. Details of definitions and other technical aspects are given in Appendix II.

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616

IAN CASTLES
Australian Statistician

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 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;
- the relationship of labour market indicators to other social and economic data;
- 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 1960s. Collection of monthly labour force data began in February 1978, prior to which it had been conducted at quarterly intervals.

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 aspects already covered in the Labour Force Survey. 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.

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:

- *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));
- *Alternative Working Arrangements, September-December 1986* (6341.0) which obtained information about certain aspects of the working arrangements of employees and their preferences for changes to those arrangements. It is expected that the data will be published in late 1987.

For more information on the population survey program, see *Information Paper: Population Survey Program* issued by the ABS in January 1986.

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. 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 Overtime;
- Quarterly Survey of Job Vacancies;
- Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours; and
- Survey of Major Labour Costs, Private Sector.

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 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours was conducted annually to 1981, again in 1983 and then annually from 1985 onwards.

The annual Survey of Major Labour Costs, Private Sector, was conducted for the first time in 1986, for the year ended 30 June 1986. The survey was conducted on a sample of approximately 5,000 employers in the private sector selected from the ABS register of businesses in May 1986. The public sector was excluded because it was not possible, in the time available, to carry out the investigation necessary to enable the collection of information on a basis consistent with that for the private sector.

A Guide to Labour Statistics

The publication of *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.

Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)

The First Edition of ASCO was released in September 1986 as the result of a project undertaken by the ABS in partnership with the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR). ASCO is designed as a standard classification to be used in ABS and for other statistical collections.

ASCO is a skill-based classification which groups occupations according to their similarity in terms of the level and specialisation of skill required to perform primary tasks. The classification is hierarchical in structure and is composed of four levels: major group, minor group, unit group and occupation. 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.

Progressively from September 1986, ASCO has been used in the presentation of ABS statistics, starting with the May 1986 Labour Force Survey, the 1986 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours and the 1986 Population Census. Data on occupation in ABS labour statistics released before September 1986 were coded using 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 these groups is different because occupations are not grouped according to the same criteria in CCLO as in ASCO. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in attempting to compare data coded to CCLO with that coded to ASCO.

A matrix 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 matrix were derived from a sub-sample of respondents in the May 1986 Labour Force Survey. The matrix was produced by coding occupation responses to both ASCO and CCLO and cross-classifying ASCO major groups by CCLO major groups. A more detailed analysis of the relationship between ASCO and CCLO will be published with the results of the 1986 Population Census.

The following priced documents about ASCO are available from the ABS:

1. *ASCO Statistical Classification (1222.0)* outlines the conceptual basis and structure of ASCO, and provides definitions of all the occupation groups in the classification. It is intended principally as an aid in interpreting ABS statistics.
2. *ASCO Coding System (unit Group Level)* details the procedures and provides the indexes required for the accurate coding of survey responses to ASCO. Other indexes contained in the *Statistical Classification* and the *ASCO Dictionary*, produced by DEIR (now the responsibility of the Department of Employment, Education and Training), are not suitable for this purpose.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Population

The population of Australia at 30 June 1986 was 16.0 million, an increase of about 200,000 over the previous twelve months. Over the ten years to 30 June 1986, the population grew by 1.9 million, representing an average annual increase of 1.3 per cent.

The population aged 15 to 64 grew by 1.6 million over the ten years to 30 June 1986, an average annual increase of 1.7 per cent.

Labour force

Female participation in the labour force increased over the ten years to August 1986, from 43.0 per cent to 47.6 per cent. Over the same ten year period, the male participation rate declined from 80.0 per cent to 75.2 per cent. The total labour force in Australia at August 1986 comprised 7,481,400 persons.

Employment

Total employment in Australia at August 1986 was 6,885,700, which included 4,179,800 males and 2,705,900 females.

The employment/population ratio was 56.3 per cent for all persons, 69.4 per cent for males and 43.6 per cent for females at August 1986.

The growth rate for full-time employees has been higher for females than for males. While the number of full-time female workers increased by 4.8 per cent over the twelve months to August 1986, the number of males increased by only 1.7 per cent. Female full-time employment increased by 22.6 per cent over the ten years to August 1986, compared with an increase of 6.4 per cent for males.

There has been a shift in the industry composition of employment. The Community Services industry, which comprised 14.5 per cent of total employment in August 1976, has increased to 17.7 per cent of employment in August 1986. Over the same period employment in the Manufacturing industry declined sharply from 21.7 per cent of total in August 1976 to 16.4 per cent in August 1986.

Unemployment

Of the 595,600 persons who were unemployed in August 1986, 348,000 were males and 247,600 were females. The unemployment rates were 7.7 per cent for males and 8.4 per cent for females. Young persons were most affected by unemployment with the unemployment rate for persons aged 15-19 being 18.7 per cent.

The average (mean) duration of unemployment was 48.8 weeks in August 1986 for all persons.

The number of job vacancies in Australia in November 1986 was 51,900, which was virtually identical to the level 12 months earlier.

Persons not in the labour force

In September 1986, 37.6 per cent of the working age population were not in the labour force, of which nearly

70 per cent were females. In September 1986, 749,400 persons were classified as having marginal attachment to the labour force (ie they were not unemployed, but they wanted to and were available for work). Of these 584,000 were females.

Award rates, earnings, income and labour costs

Between December 1985 and 1986, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 9.8 per cent. During the same period weekly award rates of pay increased by 2.3 per cent (full-time adult male wage and salary earners), while average weekly earnings for males increased by 7.8 per cent.

The increase in award rates of pay was smaller in 1986 than in the previous two years. Weekly award rates of pay for male full-time adult wage and salary earners increased by 2.3 per cent between December 1985 and 1986 compared with 6.5 per cent in the previous year and 4.4 per cent in the year before that. Year-to-year movements are affected by the timing of National Wage Case decisions.

Average weekly earnings vary across industries. In May 1986, the average weekly earnings for non-managerial full-time adult males was highest in the mining industry (\$659.50) and lowest in the retail trade industry (\$331.00).

More males than females are in the high earnings groups. For full-time employees, 55.8 per cent of males had weekly earnings over \$360 in August 1986, while only 32.4 per cent of females had weekly earnings over \$360.

Total annual major labour costs per employee in 1985-86, including earnings, were \$19,190.

For each dollar private sector employers paid out for employee earnings, an additional 3.8 cents was paid in payroll tax, 3.2 cents in employer contributions to superannuation schemes, and 3.0 cents in workers' compensation costs. Together, these costs added 10.0 cents to labour costs over and above each dollar of employee earnings, and represented an average annual cost of \$1,740 per employee.

Overall, the average annual costs excluding earnings per employee in the private sector amounted to \$670 for payroll tax, \$510 for workers' compensation and \$560 for superannuation. Only 32 per cent of employees were covered by superannuation, so that the average employer contribution in 1985-86 for each employee actually in a superannuation scheme was \$1,720. Mining had the highest proportion of employees covered by superannuation (78 per cent) while Recreation had the lowest with only 7 per cent in schemes.

Non-wage benefits

Some 39.4 per cent of employees were covered by employer superannuation schemes in August 1986. The coverage for males was much higher than for females with 49.2 per cent of male employees covered by employer superannuation schemes compared with only 25.2 per cent of females. Employees with high earnings are more likely to have superannuation coverage. Only 14.7 per cent of employees with weekly earnings in their main job

less than \$280 were covered by superannuation, while for those whose weekly earnings were greater than \$360, the coverage was 60.9 per cent.

Hours of work, work patterns, work preferences and job satisfaction

Average hours of work have declined over the last ten years due largely to the greater emphasis on part-time work. The average weekly hours worked declined from 36.7 hours in August 1976 to 35.8 hours in August 1986, although over the same period the average hours worked by full-time workers remained virtually unchanged (40.5 hours per week in August 1985). The average weekly hours worked by part-time workers were 15.5 hours in August 1986 and 15.7 hours in August 1976.

Average hours of work were higher for males than females. For full-time female workers, the average weekly hours worked were 37.8 hours in August 1986, compared with 41.6 hours for full-time male workers.

Some 18.7 per cent of employees worked overtime in a particular week in November 1986. For those employees who worked overtime, the average weekly overtime hours paid were 6.9 hours.

Industrial relations

The number of workers involved in industrial disputes during 1986 was 691,700 (down from 2,189,900 during 1976), while the total number of working days lost

during 1986 was 1,390,700 days (compared with 3,799,200 days in 1976).

The level of industrial disputation varied widely across industries with the Coal Mining industry losing 10,773 working days per thousand employees during 1986, and the Construction industry losing 458 working days per thousand employees. Over all industries, 242 working days per thousand employees were lost during 1986.

Membership of trade unions remained virtually unchanged over the past ten years, with 55 per cent of employees being members of trade unions in June 1986. There were substantial differences between male and female membership. The percentage of male employees who were members of trade unions in June 1986 was 63 per cent, while at the same time only 44 per cent of females were union members.

The majority of employees are covered by industrial awards, determinations and collective agreements. In May 1983, only 16.4 per cent of male employees and 10.3 per cent of female employees were not covered by awards.

International comparisons

The average unemployment rate in Australia during 1986 was 8.0 per cent. This compared with rates of 6.9 per cent for USA, 2.8 per cent for Japan, 11.5 per cent for the United Kingdom and 2.7 per cent for Sweden.