

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY, NEW SOUTH WALES, OCTOBER 1994

MAIN FEATURES

The Community Fire Safety Survey, which covered households in private dwellings, was conducted throughout New South Wales in October 1994.

Major findings from the survey were:

Fire Safety Equipment

- Of the 2,164,900 households in NSW just over half (53%) had at least one of the following items of fire safety equipment: smoke detector, fire extinguisher, fire blanket, fire sprinkler system, electrical safety switch.
- An electrical safety switch was the most common item and was installed in just over 1 in 3 (35%) households.
- Smoke detectors were installed in 21% of households and 17% had a fire extinguisher.
- Between November 1992 and October 1994, there was an increase in the proportion of households in Sydney Statistical Division with smoke detectors from 10% to 19%, and an increase in the proportion with an electrical safety switch from 21% to 35%.
- 59% of households with battery powered smoke detectors had tested them in the previous month.
- 27% of households with fire extinguishers had checked them in the previous 6 months, 13% had never checked them and 17% last checked them more than two years ago.

External fire safety precautions

- An emergency water source was available to 25% of households living in houses. This varied from 18% of urban households not living near bushland to 79% of non-urban households living near bushland.
- In 53% of urban households living in houses located near bushland the gutters were cleaned at least once every 6 months compared with 37% of those households not near bushland.

Fire risk factors

- Combustible home and car maintenance products were stored by about 4 out of 5 households (79%) in NSW. Nearly 9 out of 10 (89%) households living in separate houses stored these products, with more than half of these households using the garage for storage.
- During the winter of 1994 nearly 2 out of every 3 households (65%) used an open fireplace or a portable heater.
- Only 8% of households with children aged under 10 years stored matches or lighters in a cupboard with a lock or child-resistant latch. 68% of households stored these items in a cupboard or shelf which was at least 1.5 metres high.

Household insurance

- 69% of all households in NSW had the dwelling's contents insured against fire.
- 95% of households purchasing or owning their homes had building insurance against fire.

INQUIRIES:

- for further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Jill Tomlinson on Sydney (02) 268 4493.
- for information about other ABS statistics and services please refer to the back of this publication.

NOTES

This publication contains results relating to the Community Fire Safety Survey conducted throughout New South Wales in October 1994. The survey collected information on fire safety precautions taken by householders and the presence of fire risk factors in private households.

Explanatory and Technical Notes are located on pages 9–11.

GREG BRAY
Deputy Commonwealth Statistician

TABLE 1. HOUSEHOLDS: FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire safety equipment	Number			Proportion		
	Has	Does not have (a)	Total	Has	Does not have (a)	Total
	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%
Smoke detector	453.9	1,711.0	2,164.9	21.0	79.0	100.0
Fire extinguisher	373.2	1,791.7	2,164.9	17.2	82.8	100.0
Fire blanket	123.6	2,041.3	2,164.9	5.7	94.3	100.0
Fire sprinkler system	9.2	2,155.6	2,164.9	0.4	99.6	100.0
Electrical safety switch	747.1	1,417.7	2,164.9	34.5	65.5	100.0

(a) Includes not known if fire safety equipment present in household.

TABLE 2. HOUSEHOLDS WITH BATTERY POWERED SMOKE DETECTORS: WHEN SMOKE DETECTOR LAST TESTED, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Battery powered smoke detector last tested	Number	Proportion
	'000	%
Within the last month	247.3	58.9
2 to 6 months ago	110.6	26.3
7 months to 1 year ago	15.4	3.7
More than 1 year ago	*2.9	*0.7
Never tested	7.0	1.7
Recently installed/not yet tested	22.5	5.4
Not known how often tested	14.3	3.4
Total	420.1	100.0

TABLE 3. HOUSEHOLDS WITH FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: WHEN FIRE EXTINGUISHER LAST CHECKED, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire extinguisher last checked	Number	Proportion
	'000	%
Within the last 6 months	100.6	27.0
7 months to 1 year ago	63.2	16.9
Between 1 and 2 years ago	26.7	7.1
More than 2 years ago	65.0	17.4
Never checked	49.5	13.3
Recently installed/not yet checked	23.2	6.2
Not known how often checked	45.0	12.1
Total	373.2	100.0

TABLE 4. HOUSEHOLDS: SMOKE DETECTORS AND SAFETY SWITCHES, SYDNEY STATISTICAL DIVISION

Fire safety equipment	November 1992 (a)		October 1994	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
	'000	%	'000	%
Smoke detector	133.1	10.2	255.0	18.9
No smoke detector (b)	1,168.6	89.8	1,090.7	81.1
Electrical safety switch	275.5	21.2	473.0	35.1
No electrical safety switch (b)	1,026.1	78.8	872.7	64.9
Total	1,301.6	100.0	1,345.7	100.0

(a) From the Household Safety Survey conducted in Sydney in November 1992. (b) Includes not known if fire safety equipment present in household.

TABLE 5. HOUSEHOLDS: FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY TYPE OF DWELLING, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire safety equipment	Dwelling type					Other (a)	Total
	Separate house	Semi-detached/ row/ terrace/ townhouse	Flat				
			1 or 2 storey block	3 or more storey block			
NUMBER ('000)							
Smoke detector	405.2	22.3	10.9	13.4	*2.0	453.9	
Battery	382.6	20.9	7.1	7.5	*2.0	420.1	
Other	22.6	*1.4	*3.8	*5.9	*—	33.8	
No smoke detector (b)	1,239.7	125.0	142.0	177.9	26.4	1,711.0	
Fire extinguisher	327.1	15.7	12.0	14.5	*3.8	373.2	
No fire extinguisher (b)	1,317.8	131.6	140.9	176.7	24.7	1,791.7	
Fire blanket	102.7	7.7	*4.2	*6.4	*2.6	123.6	
No fire blanket (b)	1,542.2	139.7	148.7	184.9	25.8	2,041.3	
Fire sprinkler system	*3.4	n.p.	n.p.	*3.9	n.p.	9.2	
No fire sprinkler system (b)	1,641.5	n.p.	n.p.	187.3	n.p.	2,155.6	
Electrical safety switch	634.2	54.1	27.3	26.0	*5.5	747.1	
Switchboard	565.3	47.9	21.7	18.7	*3.9	657.4	
Other (c)	69.0	*6.1	*5.5	7.4	*1.7	89.7	
No electrical safety switch (b)	1,010.6	93.3	125.6	165.2	22.9	1,417.7	
One or more of the above	960.5	72.4	43.1	53.1	9.3	1,138.2	
None of the above	684.4	75.0	109.9	138.2	19.2	1,026.6	
Total households	1,644.9	147.3	152.9	191.2	28.5	2,164.9	
PROPORTION (per cent)							
Smoke detector	24.6	15.2	7.1	7.0	*7.2	21.0	
Battery	23.3	14.2	4.6	3.9	*7.2	19.4	
Other	1.4	*1.0	*2.5	*3.1	*—	1.6	
No smoke detector (b)	75.4	84.8	92.9	93.0	92.8	79.0	
Fire extinguisher	19.9	10.7	7.9	7.6	*13.2	17.2	
No fire extinguisher (b)	80.1	89.3	92.1	92.4	86.8	82.8	
Fire blanket	6.2	5.2	*2.8	*3.3	*9.3	5.7	
No fire blanket (b)	93.8	94.8	97.2	96.7	90.7	94.3	
Fire sprinkler system	*0.2	n.p.	n.p.	*2.0	n.p.	0.4	
No fire sprinkler system (b)	99.8	n.p.	n.p.	98.0	n.p.	99.6	
Electrical safety switch	38.6	36.7	17.8	13.6	*19.4	34.5	
Switchboard	34.4	32.5	14.2	9.8	*13.5	30.4	
Other (c)	4.2	*4.1	*3.6	3.9	*5.9	4.1	
No electrical safety switch (b)	61.4	63.3	82.2	86.4	80.6	65.5	
One or more of the above	58.4	49.2	28.2	27.8	32.5	52.6	
None of the above	41.6	50.9	71.9	72.3	67.5	47.4	
Total households	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

(a) Flat or house attached to shop etc. (b) Includes not known if fire safety equipment present in household. (c) Includes safety switches installed at power points and portable safety switches.

TABLE 6. HOUSEHOLDS: FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY AGE OF DWELLING, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire safety equipment	Number					Proportion				
	Built before 1945	Built between 1945 and 1974	Built in 1975 or later	Not known when built	Total	Built before 1945	Built between 1945 and 1974	Built in 1975 or later	Not known when built	Total
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%	%	%
Smoke detector	81.6	180.0	179.7	12.6	453.9	18.2	22.4	24.0	7.7	21.0
Battery	76.5	168.4	164.0	11.1	420.1	17.1	20.9	21.9	6.7	19.4
Other	*5.1	11.6	15.6	*1.5	33.8	*1.1	1.4	2.1	*0.9	1.6
No smoke detector (a)	366.4	625.1	567.9	151.7	1,711.0	81.8	77.6	76.0	92.3	79.0
Fire extinguisher	72.5	149.6	139.6	11.5	373.2	16.2	18.6	18.7	7.0	17.2
No fire extinguisher (a)	375.5	655.4	608.0	152.8	1,791.7	83.8	81.4	81.3	93.0	82.8
Fire blanket	22.8	48.5	47.3	*5.0	123.6	5.1	6.0	6.3	*3.0	5.7
No fire blanket (a)	425.2	756.6	700.3	159.3	2,041.3	94.9	94.0	93.7	97.0	94.3
Fire sprinkler system	n.p.	*3.5	*4.1	n.p.	9.2	n.p.	*0.4	*0.6	n.p.	0.4
No fire sprinkler system (a)	n.p.	801.6	743.4	n.p.	2,155.6	n.p.	99.6	99.4	n.p.	99.6
Electrical safety switch	133.3	248.7	335.9	29.3	747.1	29.8	30.9	44.9	17.8	34.5
Switchboard	116.2	213.6	305.1	22.5	657.4	26.0	26.5	40.8	13.7	30.4
Other (b)	17.0	35.1	30.8	6.8	89.7	3.8	4.4	4.1	4.1	4.1
No electrical safety switch (a)	314.7	556.4	411.7	135.0	1,417.7	70.3	69.1	55.1	82.2	65.5
One or more of the above	217.2	411.6	462.2	47.2	1,138.2	48.5	51.1	61.8	28.7	52.6
None of the above	230.8	393.4	285.4	117.1	1,026.6	51.5	48.9	38.2	71.3	47.4
Total households	448.0	805.1	747.6	164.3	2,164.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Includes not known if fire safety equipment present in household. (b) Includes safety switches installed at power points and portable safety switches.

TABLE 7. HOUSEHOLDS: FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT BY NATURE OF HOUSING OCCUPANCY, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire safety equipment	Number				Proportion			
	Owned/purchasing	Rented	Other	Total	Owned/purchasing	Rented	Other	Total
	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%	%
Smoke detector	389.6	54.4	9.8	453.9	25.7	8.9	29.2	21.0
Battery	364.5	47.6	7.9	420.1	24.0	7.8	23.5	19.4
Other	25.0	6.8	*1.9	33.8	1.6	1.1	*5.7	1.6
No smoke detector (a)	1,128.6	558.7	23.8	1,711.0	74.3	91.1	70.8	79.0
Fire extinguisher	310.1	54.6	8.5	373.2	20.4	8.9	25.3	17.2
No fire extinguisher (a)	1,208.1	558.5	25.1	1,791.7	79.6	91.1	74.7	82.8
Fire blanket	97.3	23.1	*3.2	123.6	6.4	3.8	*9.5	5.7
No fire blanket (a)	1,420.9	590.0	30.4	2,041.3	93.6	96.2	90.5	94.3
Fire sprinkler system	*6.1	*3.1	*—	9.2	*0.4	*0.5	*—	0.4
No fire sprinkler system (a)	1,512.1	610.0	33.6	2,155.6	99.6	99.5	100.0	99.6
Electrical safety switch	605.3	132.3	9.6	747.1	39.9	21.6	28.6	34.5
No electrical safety switch (a)	912.9	480.8	24.0	1,417.7	60.1	78.4	71.4	65.5
One or more of the above	915.6	203.7	18.9	1,138.2	60.3	33.2	56.3	52.6
None of the above	602.5	409.4	14.7	1,026.6	39.7	66.8	43.7	47.4
Total households	1,518.2	613.1	33.6	2,164.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Includes not known if fire safety equipment present in household.

TABLE 8. HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN HOUSES (a): PROXIMITY TO BUSHLAND BY EXTERNAL FIRE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

External fire safety precautions	Urban		Non-urban		Total (b)
	Near bushland	Not near bushland	Near bushland	Not near bushland	
NUMBER ('000)					
<i>Emergency water supply source</i>	63.8	231.2	89.7	46.9	432.5
With pump	25.4	84.0	68.7	34.6	212.6
No pump (c)	38.4	147.2	21.1	12.4	219.8
No emergency water supply source	186.5	1,072.2	24.5	15.3	1,300.3
<i>Garden hose</i>	247.1	1,275.3	111.1	60.4	1,696.6
Kept connected to a tap	235.3	1,165.4	104.0	58.1	1,565.4
Not kept connected to a tap	11.8	109.9	7.1	*2.4	131.2
No garden hose	*3.2	28.1	*3.1	*1.8	36.2
<i>Cleans gutters—</i>					
At least once a month	39.0	102.0	19.3	6.9	167.3
Once every 2 to 6 months	93.3	375.0	39.8	14.5	523.3
Once a year	60.1	359.5	31.3	18.1	470.4
Less than once a year	16.9	102.3	7.4	*6.1	132.8
Never cleans gutters	29.6	268.8	12.6	13.4	324.7
Doesn't know or has no gutters	11.4	95.8	*3.8	*3.1	114.2
<i>Knapsack pump (d)</i>	17.5	..	38.5	16.9	72.8
Checked within the last 6 months	9.6	..	27.9	13.0	50.5
Checked more than 6 months ago	7.9	..	10.6	*3.9	22.4
No knapsack pump (d) (e)	232.8	..	75.7	45.3	356.5
Total households	250.3	1,303.5	114.2	62.2	1,732.8
PROPORTION (per cent)					
<i>Emergency water supply source</i>	25.5	17.7	78.6	75.4	25.0
With pump	10.1	6.4	60.1	55.5	12.3
No pump (c)	15.4	11.3	18.4	19.9	12.7
No emergency water supply source	74.5	82.3	21.4	24.5	75.0
<i>Garden hose</i>	98.7	97.8	97.3	97.1	97.9
Kept connected to a tap	94.0	89.4	91.1	93.4	90.3
Not kept connected to a tap	4.7	8.4	6.2	*3.8	7.6
No garden hose	*1.3	2.2	*2.7	*2.9	2.1
<i>Cleans gutters—</i>					
At least once a month	15.6	7.8	16.9	11.2	9.7
Once every 2 to 6 months	37.3	28.8	34.9	23.3	30.2
Once a year	24.0	27.6	27.4	29.1	27.1
Less than once a year	6.8	7.9	6.4	*9.9	7.7
Never cleans gutters	11.8	20.6	11.0	21.6	18.7
Doesn't know or has no gutters	4.6	7.4	*3.4	*5.0	6.6
<i>Knapsack pump (d)</i>	7.0	..	33.7	27.2	17.0
Checked within the last 6 months	3.8	..	24.4	21.0	11.8
Checked more than 6 months ago	3.2	..	9.3	*6.2	5.2
No knapsack pump (d) (e)	93.0	..	66.3	72.8	83.0
Total households	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Separate houses, semi-detached, row or terrace houses. (b) Includes dwellings that were not able to be coded to one of these categories. (c) Includes a small number of households with an emergency water supply and pump, but where the pump did not work. (d) Not asked of households in urban dwellings that were not near bushland. (e) Includes not known.

TABLE 9. HOUSEHOLDS: SELECTED FIRE RISK FACTORS BY TYPE OF DWELLING, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Fire risk factor	Dwelling type					Total
	Separate house	Semi-detached/ row/terrace/ townhouse	Flat		Other (a)	
			1 or 2 storey block	3 or more storey block		
NUMBER ('000)						
Used open fireplace or portable heater last winter	1,036.5	113.4	104.2	139.2	20.0	1,413.4
Did not use open fireplace or portable heater last winter	560.8	20.3	31.5	36.6	*6.4	655.5
Not applicable (b)	47.6	13.7	17.2	15.5	*2.0	95.9
<i>Stores combustible home and car maintenance products (c)</i>	<i>1,455.6</i>	<i>100.6</i>	<i>60.9</i>	<i>88.0</i>	<i>14.2</i>	<i>1,719.3</i>
In house/flat etc	324.0	45.8	40.2	67.1	9.5	486.5
In garage	778.3	36.5	15.2	25.1	*4.8	859.9
In shed	580.9	19.3	6.7	n.p.	n.p.	609.7
Other	106.0	10.4	8.0	n.p.	n.p.	130.9
Does not store these products	189.2	46.7	92.1	103.3	14.2	445.5
Has material stored in the roofspace (d)	118.7	n.p.	..	..	n.p.	127.6
Does not have material stored in the roofspace or no useable roofspace (d)	1,526.2	n.p.	..	..	n.p.	1,693.1
Total households	1,644.9	147.3	152.9	191.2	28.5	2,164.9
PROPORTION (per cent)						
Used open fireplace or portable heater last winter	63.0	77.0	68.1	72.8	70.4	65.3
Did not use open fireplace or portable heater last winter	34.1	13.8	20.6	19.1	*22.6	30.3
Not applicable (b)	2.9	9.3	11.3	8.1	*7.0	4.4
<i>Stores combustible home and car maintenance products (c)</i>	<i>88.5</i>	<i>68.3</i>	<i>39.8</i>	<i>46.0</i>	<i>50.0</i>	<i>79.4</i>
In house/flat etc	19.7	31.1	26.3	35.1	33.4	22.5
In garage	47.3	24.8	9.9	13.1	*17.0	39.7
In shed	35.3	13.1	4.4	n.p.	n.p.	28.2
Other	6.4	7.0	5.2	n.p.	n.p.	6.0
Does not store these products	11.5	31.7	60.2	54.0	50.0	20.6
Has material stored in the roofspace (d)	7.2	n.p.	..	..	n.p.	7.0
Does not have material stored in the roofspace or no useable roofspace (d)	92.8	n.p.	..	..	n.p.	93.0
Total households	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Flat or house attached to shop etc. (b) Did not live in this dwelling last winter. (c) Categories do not add to total as households could choose more than one category. (d) Excludes flats.

TABLE 10. HOUSEHOLDS: USE OF OPEN FIREPLACE OR PORTABLE HEATER BY PRESENCE OF CHILDREN AGED UNDER 10 YEARS, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

	Number			Proportion		
	With children aged 0-9	Without children aged 0-9	Total	With children aged 0-9	Without children aged 0-9	Total
	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%
Used open fireplace or portable heater last winter	353.0	1,060.4	1413.4	63.0	66.1	65.3
Did not use open fireplace or portable heater last winter	183.9	471.7	655.5	32.8	29.4	30.3
Not applicable (a)	23.2	72.7	95.9	4.1	4.5	4.4
Total households	560.1	1,604.8	2,164.9	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Did not live in this dwelling last winter.

TABLE 11. HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN AGED UNDER 10 YEARS (a): STORAGE LOCATION OF MATCHES/LIGHTERS, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Storage location of matches/lighters	Number	Proportion
	'000	%
Cupboard with lock or child-resistant latch	37.9	7.7
Other cupboard/shelf 1.5 metres or higher	334.4	67.7
Other cupboard/shelf/drawer below 1.5 metres	70.9	14.4
Handbag/briefcase	56.2	11.4
Fireplace	10.4	2.1
Stove	15.5	3.1
Other	34.2	6.9
Total (b)	493.8	100.0

(a) Households with matches/lighters. (b) Categories do not add to the total as households may store matches/lighters in more than one location.

TABLE 12. HOUSEHOLDS: WHETHER DWELLING CONTENTS INSURED AGAINST FIRE, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

	Number				Proportion			
	Insured	Not insured	Not known	Total	Insured	Not insured	Not known	Total
	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%	%
Type of dwelling—								
Separate house	1,266.1	343.7	35.1	1,644.9	77.0	20.9	2.1	100.0
Semi-detached/row/terrace/townhouse	88.6	53.1	*5.7	147.3	60.1	36.0	*3.9	100.0
Flat/other	130.7	231.6	10.3	372.4	35.0	62.2	2.8	100.0
Nature of housing occupancy—								
Owned/purchasing	1,283.1	206.4	28.7	1,518.2	84.5	13.6	1.9	100.0
Rented	181.6	411.5	20.1	613.1	29.6	67.1	3.3	100.0
Other	20.8	10.5	*2.3	33.6	61.9	31.3	*6.8	100.0
Total households	1,485.4	628.4	51.0	2,164.9	68.6	29.0	2.4	100.0

TABLE 13. HOUSEHOLDS IN DWELLINGS WHICH ARE OWNED OR BEING PURCHASED: WHETHER BUILDING INSURED AGAINST FIRE, NSW, OCTOBER 1994

Type of dwelling	Number				Proportion			
	Insured	Not insured	Not known	Total	Insured	Not insured	Not known	Total
	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%	%
Separate house	1,280.8	49.5	15.5	1,345.8	95.2	3.7	1.2	100.0
Semi-detached/row/terrace/townhouse/flat/other	162.0	*2.2	8.1	172.4	94.0	*1.3	4.7	100.0
Total	1,442.8	51.8	23.6	1,518.2	95.0	3.4	1.6	100.0

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Introduction

This publication contains results from a survey of community fire safety which was conducted throughout New South Wales in October 1994 as a supplement to the ABS Australia-wide Monthly Population Survey. This supplementary survey was conducted at the request of the New South Wales Fire Brigades.

2. The aim of the survey was to collect data on fire safety precautions taken by householders and the presence of fire risk factors in private households.

Survey methodology

3. The survey was conducted using private dwellings (houses, flats, etc.) included in the Monthly Population Survey (MPS) for New South Wales. The MPS was conducted during the two weeks commencing Monday, 10 October 1994.

4. Information was sought from approximately 6,400 households of whom approximately 5,800 (91%) responded.

5. Interviews were conducted by specially trained ABS personnel. In each selected dwelling the particulars for the household were sought from any responsible adult member of the household.

Scope

6. All households in private dwellings were in scope for this supplementary survey, with the exception of those occupying caravans, houseboats or non-permanent structures.

7. Non-private dwellings such as hospitals, motels and jails (included in the Monthly Population Survey) were excluded from this survey.

Definitions

8. *Household* refers to a group of people who live together in a single dwelling as a single unit in the sense that they have common housekeeping arrangements, such as common provision for food and other essentials of living.

9. *Bushland* includes bushland reserves located within a predominantly suburban area as well as large expanses of bush, such as national parks, State forests, etc.

10. *Urban, near bushland* refers to dwellings in urban areas (towns/suburbs etc.) where the dwelling is within approximately 200 metres of bushland.

11. *Urban, not near bushland* refers to dwellings in urban areas where the dwelling is located more than approximately 200 metres from bushland.

12. *Non-urban, near bushland* refers to dwellings on farms, and other rural areas (e.g. small clusters of dwellings, small villages), where the dwelling is within approximately 200 metres of bushland.

13. *Non-urban, not near bushland* refers to dwellings on farms, and other rural areas (e.g. small clusters of dwellings, small villages), where the dwelling is located more than approximately 200 metres from bushland.

14. *Electrical safety switch* is a switch specifically designed to cut off power to an electrical appliance in a fraction of a second. Normal fuses or circuit breakers are not included, nor are surge protectors.

15. *Emergency water supply source* refers to a reasonably large source of water that can be used in case of fire, for example, a swimming pool, water storage tanks or a dam.

16. *Knapsack pump* is generally in the form of a water canister which can be carried on a person's back, with a hose that can be directed straight onto the fire.

17. *Combustible home and car maintenance products* includes paints, varnishes, adhesives, petrols/mower fuel, mineral turpentine, methylated spirits, motor oils, kerosene, pool chemicals, diesoline.

Reliability of estimates

18. The household estimates in this publication have been formed from the survey data using a complex weighting procedure. This procedure involved weighting the survey estimates so that they conform to an independently estimated distribution of the population.

19. Estimates in this publication are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. For information on these sources of error and the reliability of the estimates, refer to the Technical Note on Data Reliability.

Related publications

20. The ABS produces a wide range of publications on social and demographic statistics. Other ABS publications which relate to this survey topic include:

Household Safety, Sydney, November 1992 (4387.1)

Safety in the Home, Melbourne, November 1992 (4387.2)

Additional data

21. The ABS can make available additional information from this survey which is not published. This includes data relating to:

- Main material of outside walls of dwelling
- Material of frame
- Type of roof
- Main material of roof
- Material of garage
- Supply of gas
- Location of smoke detectors

22. In general, a charge is made for providing unpublished information. For further information please phone Jill Tomlinson on (02) 268 4493 or contact the ABS as shown on the back of this publication.

Symbols and other usages

- n.p. not available for publication but included in totals where applicable
- * estimate is subject to a relative standard error of 25 per cent or more. (See the Technical Note on Data Reliability.)
- . . not applicable
- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

23. Figures have been rounded, and discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals shown.

24. In some tables, a household may fall into more than one of the listed categories. The sum of the numbers in all categories may therefore exceed the total number of households shown in the table.

TECHNICAL NOTE ON DATA RELIABILITY

Sources of error

There are a number of possible sources of error in sample surveys and these can be classified into two types: sampling error and non-sampling error.

Non-sampling errors

2. Non-sampling errors may arise as a result of errors in the reporting, recording or processing of the data and can occur even if there is a complete enumeration of the population. Non-sampling errors can be introduced through: inadequacies in the questionnaire; non-response; inaccurate reporting by respondents; errors in the application of survey procedures; incorrect recording of answers; and, errors in data entry and processing.

3. It is difficult to measure size of the non-sampling errors and the extent of these errors could vary considerably in significance from survey to survey and from question to question. However, every effort is made in the design of the survey and development of survey procedures to minimise the effect of these errors.

Sampling errors

4. Sampling error is the error which occurs by chance because the data were only obtained from a sample, not the entire population.

Standard errors

5. One measure of the variability of estimates which occurs as a result of surveying only a sample of the population is the standard error (SE). There are about 2 chances in 3 that a survey estimate is within one standard error of the figure that would have been obtained if all persons had been included, and about 19 chances in 20 that it is within two standard errors. That is, if all persons had been included, there are 19 chances in 20 that the figure obtained would have been in the range —

$$x - 2SE(x) \text{ to } x + 2SE(x)$$

(where x is the estimate)

The standard error of an estimate can be obtained from the table below. Linear interpolation should be used to calculate the standard error of estimates falling between the sizes of estimates listed in the table.

Relative standard errors

6. The standard error can also be expressed as a percentage of the estimate and this is known as the relative standard error (RSE). The RSE is determined by dividing the standard error of an estimate $SE(x)$ by the estimate x and expressing it as a percentage. That is —

$$RSE(x) = \frac{100SE(x)}{x}$$

(where x is the estimate)

7. Proportions and percentages formed from the ratio of two estimates are also subject to sampling error. The size of the error depends on the accuracy of both the numerator and the denominator. The formula for the RSE of a proportion or percentage is —

$$RSE(x/y) = \sqrt{[RSE(x)]^2 + [RSE(y)]^2}$$

8. For all tables in this publication, only estimates with relative standard errors of 25 per cent or less, and percentages based on such estimates, are considered sufficiently reliable for most purposes. However, estimates and percentages with larger relative standard errors have been included and are preceded by an * to indicate that they are subject to high standard errors and should be used with caution.

The table below provides a guide for the calculation of standard errors and relative standard errors for the estimates in this publication.

**STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATES OF HOUSEHOLDS,
NEW SOUTH WALES, OCTOBER 1994**

Size of estimate (households)	Standard error of estimate (number)	Relative standard error (per cent)
1,000	660	66.0
3,000	1,150	38.3
5,000	1,450	29.0
6,000	1,550	25.8
8,000	1,800	22.5
10,000	2,000	20.0
20,000	2,700	13.5
30,000	3,200	10.7
40,000	3,650	9.1
50,000	4,000	8.0
100,000	5,300	5.3
200,000	6,900	3.5
300,000	8,100	2.7
400,000	9,000	2.3
500,000	9,800	2.0
1,000,000	12,600	1.3
2,000,000	16,000	0.8
5,000,000	21,600	0.4



For more information ...

The ABS publishes a wide range of statistics and other information on Australia's economic and social conditions. Details of what is available in various publications and other products can be found in the *ABS Catalogue of Publications and Products* available at all ABS Offices (see below for contact details).

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Information tailored to special needs of clients can be obtained from the Information Consultancy Service available at ABS Offices (see Information Inquiries below for contact details).

National Dial-a-Statistic Line

0055 86 400

(Steadycorn P/L: premium rate 25c/21.4 secs.)

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ABS Email Addresses

Keylink	STAT.INFO/ABS
X.400	(C:AU,A:TELMEMO,O:ABS,SN:INFO,FN:STAT)
Internet	STAT.INFO@ABS.TELEMEMO.AU



Information Services, ABS, GPO Box 796, Sydney NSW 2001
or any ABS office

