

# SURVEYS CHARTER



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From the **Australian Statistician**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collects a wide range of data via household and business surveys. Statistical outputs resulting from household collections include the Census of Population and Housing, the National Health Survey and the Labour Force series; while outputs from business surveys include National Accounts, Retail Trade series and quarterly Business Indicators. All published data are available for free on the ABS website.

This Charter specifies what you can expect when the ABS approaches you for inclusion in any of our household or business surveys. We seek to continually improve our relationship with survey participants, and would appreciate your feedback in relation to any contact you have with the ABS, and on the standards identified in this Charter in particular.

We recognise and greatly appreciate the support of the individuals and organisations who contribute to the ongoing wealth of statistical information about our nation by participating in ABS surveys. It is only with your assistance that the ABS can continue to produce the statistics that contribute to quality informed decision making.

Brian Pink  
Australian Statistician



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# **SURVEYS C H A R T E R**

## **Who we are**

The ABS is Australia's official statistical agency. Our functions and responsibilities are set out in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 and the Census and Statistics Act 1905. Our Annual Report to Parliament provides information on our activities and achievements. The ABS is an agency under the Treasury portfolio.

## **Our mission**

We assist and encourage informed decision-making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

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## What we do

We collect, compile, analyse and disseminate information on a wide range of social, environmental and economic matters. Our statistics are used by governments, business, industry organisations, academics and others seeking to understand Australian society and the economy. We also have an important leadership and coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both in Australia and overseas.

We collect information from individuals, households and businesses, where it is not possible to obtain information from other sources. Our surveys are designed to select only the required number of people, households or businesses needed to produce reliable statistics. Those selected in our surveys represent others in the community with similar characteristics.

ABS surveys may be conducted by interview, either face to face or over the telephone; or may involve the respondent completing their own survey form and returning it to us. Our team of interviewers are authorised under the Census and Statistics Act 1905 to visit or telephone your household, place of work, or contact you using the details you provide, for the purpose of collecting information. Interviewers operate under an agreement which allows for penalties if confidentiality is broken.

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## What you can expect of us

All information provided to us is protected by confidentiality provisions. When we release statistics the law requires us to do so in a manner that protects the identification of any particular person or organisation. Our long standing record for maintaining the privacy of information provided to us is widely acknowledged and respected.

If you are selected as a respondent for our surveys we will:

- be professional and courteous
- inform you when your dwelling or business is selected in a survey
- explain clearly what information we need and how the statistics compiled from this information will be used
- notify you in advance if the survey requires you to refer to extra information
- always identify ourselves with an official identification badge in any personal visit
- confine communication to the collection of survey information
- seek your permission to enter your home or office should the survey require
- work with you to resolve any difficulties caused by our requests for information
- listen and respond quickly and fairly, to any issues you may have
- protect the secrecy of the information you provide, as required by statistics legislation.

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## What we do to help you

We work to minimise reporting burden on the community by:

- only conducting surveys to collect high priority information where needed
- seeking information in a way that reduces the time to respond to our surveys
- accepting approximate responses and careful estimates where precise information is not available
- thoroughly testing our questions before running a survey
- using sampling methods to keep the size of surveys as small as possible.

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## How you can help us

We ask survey participants for their cooperation, and most provide information willingly. Under the provisions of the Census and Statistics Act 1905, if you are directed in writing to provide the information, you are legally obliged to do so. The Act does not provide for payment to respondents for supplying information, and consequently the ABS is not authorised to use public funds for that purpose.

To help us produce high quality statistics, we ask that you:

- provide the answers when requested
- answer the questions as accurately as possible
- provide a suitable table and chair when interviewers visit, as they may be using a laptop.

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## Resolving Complaints

We acknowledge that from time to time we may not meet your expectations. Your complaints, compliments and comments can help us to improve our service.

The ABS collects a wide range of data through different surveys, and if you experience a problem or difficulty with any of them, please contact the 1800 number for that survey. This contact number can be found on your survey form, the letter you received telling you about the survey, or any brochure enclosed with your letter.

Our team of interviewers will help to resolve your issues when you call. If you are not satisfied with our response, you have the right to take the matter further, by writing to:

Survey Participant Liaison Officer  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
PO Box 10  
Belconnen ACT 2616.  
Email: [surveys@abs.gov.au](mailto:surveys@abs.gov.au)

Your complaint will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.

Depending on the complexity of your complaint, we may need more time to investigate your case before it can be resolved. We will write to you advising of the outcome within four weeks of receiving your complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can request a review of the decision by writing to:

Complaints Review Officer  
Policy and Legislation Section  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
PO Box 10  
Belconnen ACT 2616

If the review outcome is unsatisfactory, you may lodge a complaint with the Commonwealth Ombudsman [www.comb.gov.au](http://www.comb.gov.au)



# SURVEYS CHARTER

## Help us to improve our service

We seek to continually improve our relationship with survey participants, and appreciate your feedback in relation to your contact with the ABS. Please provide your compliments or comments by using the website Feedback Form or by emailing: [surveys@abs.gov.au](mailto:surveys@abs.gov.au)

This Charter was developed in accordance with the Australian Charter guidelines and through consultation with survey participants, ABS staff and our stakeholders. We value your opinion and invite you to comment on this Charter or our performance against it.

## How to access ABS data, information and services

Our published data are available free on our website [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

Contact the ABS between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

- Australian callers – call our telephone enquiry service on 1300 135 070
- International callers – call +61 2 9268 4909.

The Service Delivery Charter is also available on our website.

ABS Offices are located in all States and Territories.

To obtain a printed copy  
of this charter, including large  
print and other language  
copies, please contact us on  
1300 135 070