

TRADE UNION STATISTICS : AUSTRALIA DECEMBER 1978

INQUIRIES

If you want to know more about these statistics ring Mr Joe Christensen on Canberra 526581 or our State office, or write to Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616

For copies of this publication contact Information Services, Canberra 526627 or State offices.

MAIN FEATURES

- At the end of 1978, there were 279 reporting trade unions, with a total membership of 2,774, 800 – a decrease of 19,600 (0.7 per cent) since December 1977. Males decreased by 14,700 (0.8 per cent) and females by 4,900 (0.6 per cent).
- There were nine unions with 80,000 or more members, accounting for nearly 38 per cent of total union membership. The 85 unions which each had less than 500 members accounted for little more than half a per cent of total membership.
- Unions with members in two or more States accounted for nearly 93 per cent of total membership.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The figures contained in this bulletin have been compiled from data obtained from questionnaires sent to individual trade unions in the annual collection of membership of trade unions as at 31 December 1978. For comparison, figures for 1977 are also shown.

2. For the purpose of these statistics a trade union is defined as an organisation, consisting predominantly of employees, the principal activities of which include the negotiation of rates of pay and conditions of employment for its members.
3. Current lists of reporting trade unions are maintained by reference to lists of reporting trade unions used in previous years; by reference to trade unions registered under the provisions of the various Federal and State industrial arbitration Acts, trade union Acts, etc.; from names of unions reported to be engaged in conciliation and arbitration proceedings, etc.; and from reports of trade unions in trade journals, trade union and employer periodicals, newspapers, and other publications. It should be noted that not all reporting trade unions are registered under the relevant Federal or State industrial arbitration legislation or State trade union Acts. (See paragraph 7, page 2.)

4. The published number of reporting trade unions varies from year to year as a result of amalgamations and mergers of unions; unions ceasing to operate; new unions being formed; existing organisations changing their status such that it brings them within the scope of the definition of a trade union (see paragraph 2); and existing unions reporting for the first time. These variations generally have little or no effect on total membership figures. Between 1977 and 1978 the number of reporting trade unions decreased from 281 to 279. There were two amalgamations, the effect of which was that four unions were reduced to two.

5. The total membership of the reporting trade unions represents the aggregate of the membership of individual unions; persons who are members of more than one union are therefore counted more than once in the totals. The extent of this duplication is not known and it may vary over time. Total reported membership figures are affected by differences in the concept of membership adopted by various unions or by the same union at different times. Union rules on membership may follow different concepts and practices and this may be reflected in the level and fluctuations of the figures reported. Some unions confine their reported membership to "financial" members whilst others may also include "unfinancial" members. Individual unions may or may not include in their reported membership unemployed members, members who have retired from the labour force, disabled members, members with dues in arrears (who may be kept on union books for varying lengths of time), etc. Members of unions working overseas (e.g. in Papua New Guinea) are excluded from the reported membership data.

6. Membership of trade unions is shown separately for males and females for each State and Territory. The subdivision of total membership into males and females is not precise because some trade unions are unable to state the exact number of males and females among their members. The subdivision of total membership by States and Territories is also not precise because some unions in the Territories are affiliated with State organisations and their membership is reported under the heading of that State. More accurate reporting of membership by

location over the years is reflected in the annual figures for the Territories and this affects their comparability over time. For this reason the proportion of employees has not been calculated for the Territories.

7. When obtaining statistics from trade unions operating wholly within one State or district, trade union secretaries are asked to report whether or not the union is a branch of an interstate, or a larger State or district organisation. This reporting reduces the possibility of duplication in the figures of the number of unions and of membership. An interstate or federated trade union (i.e. a union with members in more than one State) is treated as a separate union in each State or Territory in which it has members, but is counted only once in the Australian total (see Table 1).

8. *Proportion of total employees.* The approximate percentages of wage and salary earners in employment (i.e. employees) who were members of trade unions is shown in Table 1. The estimates of total employees have been derived by adding figures for employees in agriculture and in private households employing staff to the estimates of employees in all other industries as at the end of each year. The percentages shown should be regarded as giving only a broad indication of the extent of union membership among employees because they are based on estimates of *employed* wage and salary earners that are subject to revision. It is expected that the forthcoming revision of the civilian employees series will result in reductions of roughly 2 or 3 per cent to most of the percentages shown in Table 1; similar revisions of the percentages for previous years will also be necessary. The degree of unemployment of reported union members would affect the percentages for a particular year and comparisons over time.

9. *Organisations registered under the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Act.* Details of employer and employee organisations registered under this Act as at the end of 1978 are set out below with comparable figures for 1977 shown in brackets. There were 80 (79) employer organisations registered at the end of 1978. The number of employee unions registered was 144 (144), with membership of 2,289,600 (2,303,800) representing 82 (82) per cent of total membership of all reporting trade unions in Australia.

10. *Organisations registered under State industrial arbitration legislation, etc.* New South Wales organisations registered under provisions of the Trade Union Act and the Industrial Arbitration Act are listed periodically in the *New South Wales Industrial Gazette*. The annual reports of the President of the Industrial Court in Queensland contain a list of employer and employee unions registered under provisions of the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act*. The *Western Australian Industrial Gazette* contains lists of unions of employers and workers registered under provisions of the *Industrial Arbitration Act*.

11. *Central labour organisations.* The main central labour organisations in Australia are the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA), the Council of Australian Government Employee Organisations (CAGEO), and the Council of Professional Associations (CPA). For information on these organisations reference should be made to the *Official Year Book*.

Related publications

Labour Statistics (6101.0)

Year Book Australia (1301.0)

Trade Union Members, November 1976 (6325.0)

12. All publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications* (1101.0) which is available free of charge from any ABS office.

Symbols and other usages

— Less than half the final digit shown.

Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

A.R. BAGNALL
Acting Australian Statistician

TABLE 1. TRADE UNIONS : NUMBER, MEMBERSHIP AND PROPORTION OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES

<i>End of December –</i>	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>W.A.</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>N.T. (a)</i>	<i>A.C.T. (a)</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
Number of separate unions (b)									
1977	186	162	131	140	149	120	65	88	(c)281
1978	184	162	132	138	147	120	61	84	(c)279
Number of members ('000)									
1977 –									
Males	703.8	509.6	269.0	189.0	162.5	65.0	11.0	34.4	1,944.4
Females	310.1	222.7	118.2	75.9	76.3	25.4	4.7	16.8	850.0
Persons	1,013.9	732.3	387.3	264.9	238.8	90.4	15.7	51.2	2,794.4
1978 –									
Males	701.5	504.8	265.9	189.4	160.1	63.1	11.4	33.4	1,929.7
Females	311.9	219.1	115.8	75.8	74.7	25.3	5.8	16.6	845.1
Persons	1,013.5	723.9	381.7	265.2	234.8	88.5	17.2	50.0	2,774.8
Proportion of total employees (d)									
– Per cent –									
1977 –									
Males	64	61	63	67	61	70	(a)	(a)	63
Females	48	44	52	44	51	50	(a)	(a)	47
Persons	58	55	59	58	57	63	(a)	(a)	57
1978 –									
Males	64	61	62	69	61	69	(a)	(a)	63
Females	48	43	50	44	48	51	(a)	(a)	46
Persons	58	54	58	59	56	62	(a)	(a)	57

(a) See paragraph 6, page 1. (b) See paragraph 4, page 1. (c) Without interstate duplication. See paragraph 7, page 2. (d) See paragraph 8, page 2.

TABLE 2. TRADE UNIONS : CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF MEMBERS, AUSTRALIA

<i>Number of members</i>	<i>Number of separate unions (a)</i>		<i>Proportion of total unions</i>	<i>Number of members</i>		<i>Proportion of total members</i>	<i>Average number of members per union</i>
	<i>Dec. 1977</i>	<i>Dec. 1978</i>	<i>Dec. 1978</i>	<i>Dec. 1977</i>	<i>Dec. 1978</i>	<i>Dec. 1978</i>	<i>Dec. 1978</i>
			%	– ('000) –		%	('000)
Under 100	25	25	8.9	1.1	1.2	–	–
100 and under 250	37	35	12.5	5.9	5.6	0.2	0.2
250 " " 500	27	25	8.9	9.8	9.3	0.3	0.4
500 " " 1,000	43	44	15.7	29.9	29.6	1.1	0.7
1,000 " " 2,000	40	40	14.3	58.0	55.8	2.0	1.4
2,000 " " 5,000	36	39	14.3	115.9	123.2	4.4	3.2
5,000 " " 10,000	21	21	7.5	152.1	161.4	5.8	7.7
10,000 " " 20,000	16	13	4.6	228.9	193.3	7.0	14.9
20,000 " " 30,000	8	9	3.2	205.2	228.0	8.2	25.3
30,000 " " 40,000	7	5	1.8	246.6	175.4	6.3	35.1
40,000 " " 50,000	5	6	2.1	223.8	266.4	9.6	44.4
50,000 " " 80,000	7	8	2.9	425.1	471.7	17.0	59.0
80,000 and over	9	9	3.2	1,091.8	1,053.9	37.9	117.1
Total	281	279	100.0	2,794.4	2,774.8	100.0	9.9

(a) See paragraph 4, page 1.

TABLE 3. TRADE UNIONS : AREA OF OPERATIONS, AUSTRALIA

<i>End of December –</i>	<i>Unions operating in (a) –</i>							<i>Total all unions</i>
	<i>1 State</i>	<i>2 States</i>	<i>3 States</i>	<i>4 States</i>	<i>5 States</i>	<i>6 States</i>	<i>2 to 6 States (b)</i>	
Number of separate unions (c)								
1977	140	8	8	9	24	92	141	281
1978	138	9	7	9	26	90	141	279
Number of members ('000)								
1977	198.5	17.6	66.1	90.1	155.6	2,266.5	2,595.9	2,794.4
1978	200.6	18.4	25.8	100.7	211.0	2,218.3	2,574.2	2,774.8

(a) Certain unions have, in addition to branches in the States, branches in the Northern Territory and in the Australian Capital Territory. See paragraph 7, page 2. (b) Total of previous five columns. Figures refer to interstate or federated unions. (c) See paragraph 4, page 1.