

WORKING CONDITIONS, AUSTRALIA FEBRUARY TO MAY 1979 (PRELIMINARY)

NEW ISSUE

INQUIRIES

If you want to know more about these statistics ring Mr Geoff Winter on Canberra (062) 526576 or our State office, or write to Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616

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MAIN FEATURES

79 per cent of the estimated 4.3 million employees who usually worked 20 hours or more a week claimed that they were satisfied overall with their jobs.

The level of overall satisfaction of employees did not vary significantly between industries, occupation groups or different levels of usual weekly earnings.

About 79 per cent of employees claimed that they were satisfied with their security of job tenure.

About 80 per cent were satisfied with the safety precautions at their workplace.

About 45 per cent were at times bothered by dirty conditions at work.

Note. The survey estimates are subject to sampling variability, as explained in paragraph 10.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Introduction

Working conditions was one of a number of topics included in a sample survey conducted throughout Australia during the period February to May 1979. Statistics relating to most of the other topics covered by the survey (sight, hearing, dental health and employment benefits) have already been published. This publication contains preliminary results of the inquiry into employees' attitudes to, or opinions about, selected aspects of their working conditions. More detailed estimates will be published as soon as possible.

2. The survey was based on a multi-stage area sample of private dwellings (about 13,500 houses, flats, etc.) and non-private dwellings (hotels, motels, etc.), and covered about one-third of one per cent of the population of Australia. The information was obtained from the occupants of selected dwellings by carefully chosen and specially trained interviewers.

Scope

3. The survey included all persons aged fifteen years and over except:

- (a) members of the permanent defence forces
- (b) certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from census and estimated populations

(c) overseas visitors holidaying in Australia, and

(d) members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

4. Questions concerning working conditions were asked only of persons who at the time of the survey were employed wage or salary earners (employees) and who usually worked at least 20 hours a week. Respondents were interviewed personally.

Definitions

5. For the purposes of the survey *working conditions* were those aspects of the working situation which directly affected employees and had an influence on their overall satisfaction with their jobs.

6. The attitudes of employees to individual aspects of work were assessed by classifying their responses on the basis of frequency of occurrence or degree of satisfaction. The following aspects of the workplace were assessed on a frequency of occurrence basis:

- Uncomfortably hot or cold atmosphere
- Being bothered by noise
- Being bothered by dirty conditions
- Finding work interesting
- Able to develop job skills and abilities
- Able to use existing skills and abilities
- Feeling of doing worthwhile work
- Thinking about changing jobs to find more interesting work

The following aspects were assessed on a degree of satisfaction basis:

- Safety precautions
- Ventilation
- Ability to choose starting and/or finishing work times
- Availability of regular paid overtime
- Entitlement to paid annual leave
- Entitlement to paid sick leave
- Membership of a superannuation, etc. scheme
- Gross pay
- Security of job tenure
- Availability of promotion opportunities
- Variety of work

7. Information was also obtained about some other

aspects of working conditions, and details will be included in the final publication of results from the survey.

8. The aspects of the working situation included in the survey were not an exhaustive list but a selection of those considered to have a significant influence on the working lives of employees.

9. *Overall level of job satisfaction* was as given by the employee in response to a direct question on overall feelings about the job.

Reliability of the estimates

10. Since the estimates are based on information obtained from occupants of a sample of dwellings they are subject to sampling variability: that is, they may differ by chance from the figures that would have been produced if all dwellings had been included in the survey. One measure of the likely difference is given by the *standard error*. There are about two chances in three that a sample estimate will differ by less than one standard error from the figure that would have been obtained if all dwellings had been included in the survey, and about nineteen chances in twenty that the difference will be less than two standard errors. Another measure of the likely difference is the *relative standard error* which is obtained by expressing the standard error as a percentage of the estimate.

11. A table of standard errors for estimates of numbers of employees is given below. The reliability of an estimated percentage computed by using sample data for both numerator and denominator depends upon both the size of the numerator and the size of the denominator. The relative standard error of an estimated percentage can be approximated by the relative standard error of the numerator, which may be obtained from the table below. The relative standard error for large percentage estimates (greater than 50 per cent) will generally be lower than the relative standard error of the estimate of the numerator.

12. Some very small estimates are subject to such high relative standard errors as to detract seriously from their value for most reasonable uses. Percentage estimates with numerators below 7,000 have not been included in the tables in this publication. Although figures for these small components can in some cases be derived by subtraction, they should not be regarded as reliable. More information about this topic will be found in the final publication for this survey, which will be published as soon as possible.

Related publications

13. Users may also wish to refer to the following publications which are available on request:

The Labour Force, Australia (6203.0)

Employment Benefits, Australia, February to May 1979 (Preliminary) (6332.0)

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

15. Users may also wish to refer to a 1976 publication of the Australian Government Publishing Service, *Living at Work*, by F. E. Emery and C. Phillips (ISBN 0 642 01314 4).

Symbols and other usages

* Subject to sampling variability too high for most practical uses. See paragraphs 10 to 12.

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

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Australian Statistician

STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATES

Size of estimate or numerator	Relative standard error	Size of estimate or numerator	Relative standard error	Size of estimate or numerator	Relative standard error
7,000	27.3	20,000	16.0	200,000	4.1
8,000	25.0	30,000	13.0	500,000	2.2
10,000	22.0	40,000	11.0	1,000,000	1.4
12,000	20.8	50,000	9.2	2,000,000	0.9
15,000	18.0	100,000	6.2		

TABLE 1. ALL EMPLOYEES : USUAL WEEKLY EARNINGS (a) AND OVERALL LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

Usual weekly earnings (a) (\$)	Number of employees represented in the survey ('000)	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			Very satisfied	Total
				Satisfied	-per cent-			
Under 120	562.5	4.2	7.3	10.2	48.8	29.4	100.0	
120-129	134.5	*	7.7	12.0	52.3	24.8	100.0	
130-139	179.7	4.5	6.1	12.5	52.2	24.7	100.0	
140-149	220.2	3.6	5.9	12.3	58.5	19.5	100.0	
150-159	323.8	3.4	7.5	13.3	51.3	24.5	100.0	
160-169	326.1	4.2	7.1	11.8	53.9	23.0	100.0	
170-179	332.3	3.2	5.8	14.6	53.2	23.1	100.0	
180-199	465.5	2.6	7.8	11.4	54.7	23.5	100.0	
200-219	443.7	2.1	5.4	13.5	54.2	24.8	100.0	
220-249	427.7	2.1	6.2	10.3	56.4	24.9	100.0	
250-299	400.5	*	6.1	11.1	54.5	26.8	100.0	
300-349	208.2	*	6.7	10.4	52.3	28.5	100.0	
350 and over	199.9	*	3.7	9.4	53.5	32.5	100.0	
Total (b)	4,320.3	2.9	6.5	11.7	53.3	25.6	100.0	

(a) Usual weekly earnings reported at the time of the survey. Earnings for employees paid other than weekly have been converted to equivalent weekly amounts. (b) Includes employees who did not provide details of their earnings.

TABLE 2. ALL EMPLOYEES : INDUSTRY (a) AND OVERALL LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

Industry (a)	Number of employees represented in the survey	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	78.9	*	*	*	61.7	26.9	100.0
Mining	80.8	*	*	*	59.8	25.0	100.0
Manufacturing	1,065.3	3.6	7.4	13.3	54.4	21.2	100.0
Electricity, gas and water	115.1	*	*	12.8	49.8	28.1	100.0
Construction	248.5	*	5.1	8.9	57.7	25.9	100.0
Wholesale and retail trade	739.5	3.7	7.2	11.9	51.9	25.2	100.0
Transport and storage	264.3	*	5.3	11.8	56.1	24.4	100.0
Communication	131.1	*	6.0	15.1	55.4	21.3	100.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	368.1	2.3	7.5	11.5	51.8	26.8	100.0
Public administration and defence (b)	253.5	3.2	7.0	18.4	49.9	21.4	100.0
Community services	776.1	1.6	5.4	8.8	51.8	32.3	100.0
Entertainment, recreation, restaurants, hotels and personal services	198.9	*	6.7	9.8	51.9	29.3	100.0
Total	4,320.3	2.9	6.5	11.7	53.3	25.6	100.0

(a) Industry of main job at the time of the survey, classified according to the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC) 1969. (b) Excludes defence forces.

TABLE 3. ALL EMPLOYEES : LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH SELECTED ASPECTS OF THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS

Aspects of working conditions	Number of employees represented in the survey	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Total
Safety precautions	4,320.3	3.1	6.5	10.1	53.7	26.6	100.0
Ventilation	(a)4,320.3	6.8	14.3	10.9	44.6	20.1	100.0
Choice of starting/finishing times -	(a)4,320.3	2.1	7.3	15.0	56.0	19.5	100.0
Could choose	(a)1,214.6	1.3	0.8	2.7	46.3	48.8	100.0
Could not choose	(a)3,105.7	2.4	9.8	19.8	59.8	8.0	100.0
Paid overtime -	4,320.3	3.5	9.2	18.6	54.1	14.5	100.0
Worked regularly	1,186.8	2.8	8.7	8.9	65.3	14.2	100.0
Not worked regularly	3,133.4	3.8	9.4	22.3	49.9	14.6	100.0
Annual leave (holidays) entitlement -	4,320.3	1.8	6.0	6.9	64.5	20.8	100.0
Entitled	4,090.3	1.6	5.3	6.2	65.4	21.4	100.0
Not entitled	229.9	5.8	17.1	18.3	48.2	10.5	100.0
Paid sick leave entitlement -	(a)(b)4,320.3	2.1	7.4	7.0	58.7	22.0	100.0
Entitled	(a)4,046.1	1.7	6.8	6.4	60.2	23.2	100.0
Not entitled	(a)222.8	10.1	20.4	18.9	44.7	5.9	100.0
Superannuation, etc. -	(c)4,320.3	3.5	11.5	23.8	44.1	15.9	100.0
Covered	2,013.7	2.3	6.1	9.2	53.3	29.0	100.0
Not covered	2,256.6	4.7	16.5	37.3	36.8	4.6	100.0
Amount of gross pay	4,320.3	4.5	18.2	12.9	53.2	11.2	100.0
Security of employment	4,320.3	3.3	6.9	9.0	48.6	32.2	100.0
Promotion opportunities -	4,320.3	4.9	14.3	23.2	48.0	9.6	100.0
Had opportunities	2,125.3	2.3	10.6	17.4	55.7	13.9	100.0
Did not have opportunities	2,194.9	7.5	17.8	28.7	40.6	5.3	100.0
Amount of variety in work	(a)4,320.3	3.1	10.1	14.1	50.5	22.2	100.0

(a) Includes employees who did not provide an answer to this question. (b) Includes an estimated 1.2 per cent of persons who did not know whether they were entitled to sick leave. (c) Includes an estimated 1.2 per cent of persons who did not know whether they were covered by superannuation, etc. fund membership.

TABLE 4. ALL EMPLOYEES : PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF WORKING CONDITIONS AND OVERALL LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION
(Per cent)

Aspect of working conditions	Perceived frequency of occurrence					Total
	Never or rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Most or all of the time	
OVERALL, VERY DISSATISFIED WITH JOB (123,900 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	16.3	14.5	20.4	23.2	23.7	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	26.4	17.2	14.0	13.7	28.6	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	36.5	14.4	10.8	11.3	26.9	100.0
Found work interesting	47.2	23.5	11.8	9.5	8.0	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	56.7	19.1	12.6	*	7.7	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	56.5	21.6	10.9	*	6.2	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	46.8	18.8	12.3	8.3	13.8	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	11.6	*	*	26.2	55.5	100.0
OVERALL, DISSATISFIED WITH JOB (279,100 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	15.1	21.5	22.4	24.5	16.2	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	28.1	20.0	15.9	18.5	17.4	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	41.8	16.2	12.9	13.6	15.4	100.0
Found work interesting	19.5	26.7	26.3	18.6	8.9	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	30.2	22.5	22.5	13.4	11.3	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	27.1	30.3	22.5	13.2	6.9	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	17.7	24.7	18.2	18.4	21.0	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	7.3	8.0	13.3	43.9	27.4	100.0
OVERALL, NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED WITH JOB (507,800 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	18.2	21.4	23.5	23.5	12.5	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	29.9	22.2	15.7	16.3	15.8	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	45.8	17.5	13.4	10.7	12.5	100.0
Found work interesting	9.9	20.9	34.3	24.6	10.3	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	24.7	22.3	23.2	20.7	9.1	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	15.3	25.2	34.5	17.0	7.8	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	12.6	19.7	23.2	25.4	19.1	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	13.0	17.2	26.7	33.6	9.4	100.0
OVERALL, SATISFIED WITH JOB (2,304,600 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	22.6	24.2	25.0	18.4	8.4	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	38.2	22.3	13.8	13.3	12.4	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	52.9	17.3	11.1	9.1	9.5	100.0
Found work interesting	3.9	7.7	19.4	35.4	33.6	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	15.5	13.9	19.2	29.1	22.1	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	4.7	10.6	24.5	36.3	23.8	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	5.6	8.0	15.2	32.3	39.0	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	38.8	25.4	22.7	10.0	3.1	100.0
OVERALL, VERY SATISFIED WITH JOB (1,104,800 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	32.7	24.2	22.3	12.6	6.5	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	50.6	21.3	9.6	10.4	8.1	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	67.1	12.3	7.8	6.0	6.8	100.0
Found work interesting	0.8	1.7	4.0	21.9	71.7	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	7.3	7.0	13.0	28.3	44.3	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	1.3	2.2	7.8	26.7	62.0	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	1.6	3.1	6.1	22.2	67.1	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	73.2	15.1	7.5	2.7	1.4	100.0
TOTAL (4,320,300 employees)						
Uncomfortably hot or cold	24.0	23.4	23.8	18.1	9.3	(a)100.0
Bothered by noise	39.4	21.7	13.1	13.3	12.5	100.0
Bothered by dirty conditions	54.5	15.9	10.7	8.8	10.1	100.0
Found work interesting	6.1	9.4	17.4	28.8	38.3	100.0
Able to develop skills/abilities	16.6	13.8	18.1	26.2	25.2	100.0
Feeling of doing worthwhile work	8.0	11.8	20.9	29.2	30.1	100.0
Able to use skills/abilities	7.3	9.5	13.9	27.3	41.9	100.0
Thought of changing to more satisfying work	41.7	20.0	18.1	13.5	6.5	100.0

(a) Includes employees who did not answer this question.

NOTE. Since the attitude of respondents to the aspects of working conditions shown in this table was necessarily subjective, the figures may not represent the actual frequency of occurrence of particular conditions, but rather the respondents' perception of them.