

Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Regulator Performance Framework  
Assessment Report, 2020-21

---

## Background

### *Changes to Government regulator performance reporting requirements*

The Regulator Performance Framework (RPF) 2014, which came into effect on 1 July 2015, was replaced by the Government's new [Regulator Performance Guide \(RPG\)](#), effective 1 July 2021. Under the new RPG, future reporting by regulators is to be incorporated into entity Annual Reports. This report will therefore be the final report provided by the ABS under the RPF.

### *RPF*

The RPF was developed to support the Australian Government's Deregulation Agenda and helped Commonwealth regulators to evaluate and report their regulatory performance. The RPF required regulators to minimise their impact on those they regulate while still delivering the vital role they have been asked to perform.

The RPF has six outcome-based key performance indicators (KPIs) reflecting the Government's expectations of regulator performance. Specifically:

1. Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities.
2. Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted, and effective.
3. Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed.
4. Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated.
5. Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities.
6. Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks.


In accordance with the RPF, all regulators were required to undertake an annual self-assessment of their regulatory performance against each KPI. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), under the Treasury portfolio, was required to undertake this annual self-assessment.

## Introduction

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency, providing relevant, trusted, and objective data, statistics, and insights on a wide range of economic, social, population, and environmental matters of importance to Australia. These products support research and inform decisions being made by government, businesses, non-government organisations, and the wider Australian community.

The ABS relies on the cooperation of individuals, households, businesses, and governments to produce these statistics and data, and seeks to limit the burden placed on these providers.

The ABS developed performance metrics in consultation with key stakeholders (including the Treasury and the Minister responsible for the ABS), to demonstrate compliance with the Government's RPF.

This report covers the 2020-21 financial year. The ABS achieved an overall rating of **GOOD**  across the six KPIs.

## Providing information to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020-21, the ABS continued to release statistics and information to guide Australia's policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included provisional and preliminary releases, statistics based on new 'big data' sources, and rapid household and business surveys. These provided timely insights into the unfolding social and economic impacts of the pandemic during the year.

The ABS consulted with users to adjust the design of surveys to capture information relevant to changing priorities, to understand how the information was being used, discuss evolving measurement priorities, and identify requirements for additional topics or questions.

Key achievements included:

- Publishing a series of articles on how the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was adjusted to take into account actions by governments, businesses, and individuals in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Re-weighting the CPI using a range of timely data sources (e.g. supermarket scanner data) to ensure that the weighting patterns for the CPI continued to reflect Australian household spending.
- Supporting research using person and business level integrated microdata, including the Treasury's real-time analysis of the economy and labour market as the economy recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic-induced recession.
- Supporting the greater use of labour statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted education, analysis, and products.

## ABS Forward Work Program

The ABS undertakes consultation on its Forward Work Program (FWP) annually, to ensure the work program is relevant and of value to a broad range of users. New data collection methods and existing data sources are considered before collections are incorporated into the work program.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated further changes (beyond the changes to the FWP in 2019-20) to ensure the ABS could continue to support the Government's response by providing a wide range of relevant and timely information. In addition to publishing new statistics, the ABS made several changes to how it delivered the statistical work program due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Reducing reporting required by businesses, while meeting critical information needs about business activity, changes in the economy, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reviewing and updating methods, in consultation with the statistical community, to maintain the quality and reliability of statistics, including treatment of policies related to the pandemic at source, seasonal adjustment, and trend estimates.

- Exploring alternative data sources to supplement existing data, such as de-identified transactions data from major banks and using scanner data from major supermarket outlets, to inform official estimates.

## 2021 Census for Population and Housing

During 2020-21, the ABS was focused on finalising systems, testing, and assurance for the 2021 Census. Census reference night took place on 10 August 2021. The three key objectives for the 2021 Census were:

- Smooth running: *The Census experience is easy, simple, and secure.*
- Strong support: *Governments, businesses and the community have confidence in the Census and there is a high level of community participation.*
- High-quality data: *Census data is high-quality and widely used to inform on areas of importance to Australia.*

Key achievements for the year included: running the large-scale voluntary Operational Readiness Exercise (also known as the Census test) in October 2020; developing and receiving Government approval for the 2021 Census communications campaign; partnering with service providers to develop the 2021 Census Digital Service; and preparing to use integrated administrative data for the first time to support Census data collection, improve the quality of Census counts, and provide back-up for data gaps.




The Australian National Audit Office tabled its performance audit – [Planning for the 2021 Census](#) – in November 2020, which examined ABS preparations for the 2021 Census. The audit found that planning and governance arrangements for the 2021 Census were largely effective, and that the ABS cyber-security strategy was sound. The audit concluded that ABS planning for the Census was ‘partially effective’ and made seven recommendations relating to program oversight and assurance, data quality, privacy, and security. The ABS accepted all recommendations and implemented them in full.

The ABS took a user-centred design approach for the 2021 Census, ensuring the community had crucial input into how the Census was conducted. This included partnering with external experts to deliver key Census services that met contemporary community expectations and enabled all Australians to complete their Census easily and safely.

## High level summary and conclusion for 2020-21


This section provides a high-level summary and rating of performance against the six KPIs, as well as an overall rating for the 2020-21 reporting period.

The following traffic light system has been used:


	Good
	Satisfactory, but with some aspects for improvement identified
	Unsatisfactory, with significant areas for improvement identified

An overall KPI rating of 'Good' has been applied where the majority or all sub-KPIs have been rated as 'Good'.


#### **KPI 1 – Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities.**

**Rating: Good**  The ABS maintains active engagement with stakeholder and provider communities to ensure relevance, minimise costs, and reduce negative impacts for providers.


#### **KPI 2 – Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted, and effective.**

**Rating: Good**  The ABS provides up to date and accessible guidance material and information, and regularly consults with affected stakeholders and providers to ensure communication remains effective and relevant, and to maintain stakeholder understanding of ABS decisions and advice.


#### **KPI 3 – Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed.**

**Rating: Good**  The ABS maintains a risk-based approach to compliance and enforcement and remains vigilant in ensuring that this approach reflects the changing environment.


#### **KPI 4 – Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated.**


**Rating: Good**  The ABS makes the minimum possible requests to the Australian public and businesses to deliver on its statistical work program. It supports other regulators by making materials available to assist survey development and advisory services.

#### **KPI 5 – Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities.**

**Rating: Good**  The ABS is responsive to the requests and questions of providers. The ABS continues to publish entity performance measurement results to ensure transparency to the Australian public.

#### **KPI 6 – Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks.**

**Rating: Good**  The ABS has cooperative and collaborative relationships with stakeholders and regularly shares intelligence with other agencies to contribute to the ongoing relevance of the regulatory framework.

The ABS' overall self-assessment rating for 2020-21 is **GOOD** .

The next section of this report will provide a detailed analysis of each KPI for the 2020-21 RPF self-assessment. Where relevant, a KPI may conclude with a subsection that details specific areas for improvement.

## DETAILED SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR 2020-21

### KPI 1 – Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities

1.1 The ABS demonstrates an understanding of the operating environment of the business, or the circumstances of individuals, selected for surveys and the current and emerging issues that affect them.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 1.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 1.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
<p>Resources allocated to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in each state and territory to improve data quality and increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in the ABS' statistical processes.</p>	<p>1. Functions undertaken by the <a href="#">Centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics</a> (CoATSIS).</p> <p>2. ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Managers and Officers <a href="#">listed</a> on the ABS website.</p> <p>3. The <a href="#">ABS Round Table on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics</a> meets at least annually.</p> <p>4. Ongoing engagement is aligned with the ABS</p>	<p>1. CoATSIS, including the Engagement Managers Unit, has consistently engaged across the states and territories, with a focus on early and ongoing conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to support the delivery of the ABS statistical program in a culturally safe manner.</p> <p>2. The ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Managers and Officers list consists of 13 staff and was updated on the ABS website in 2021.</p> <p>3. The ability of the ABS Round Table on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Statistics to meet face to face was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Two virtual meetings were held (July and October 2020) with one face to face meeting held in March 2021.</p> <p>During the height of COVID-19 restrictions in the first and second quarter of 2020-21, the ABS Round Table also held sub-working group meetings to advise on elements of the 2021 Census.</p> <p>4. Considerable consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</p>

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy that facilitates and governs ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait engagement resources.	peoples continued in the first and second quarter of 2020-21 on the 2021-23 Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study (IHMHS). Consultation included a combination of workshops, webinars, an information paper, and online survey. This consultation fed directly into the content development and cultural considerations for the IHMHS.  Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also extended to developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific strategies for the 2021 Census.
<b>Evidence 1.1.2</b>	<b>Evidence source</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Accessible and transparent process available for survey respondents to seek exemption from a survey due to specific circumstances.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Survey Participant Information</a> published on the ABS website is: up to date, meets Government accessibility standards, and exemption information is easy to locate.</li> <li>2. Formal training on the exemption process was provided to ABS telephone interviewers and support staff to ensure clear communication to providers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The ABS has maintained accessible and transparent processes for survey respondents to seek an exemption. Refer to the <a href="#">Resolving Complaints</a> chapter of the <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a>.</li> <li>2. ABS telephone interviewers and support staff are formally trained in the exemption process, both in employee induction sessions and as a refresher at least once annually.</li> </ol>
<b>Evidence 1.1.3</b>	<b>Evidence source</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Environmental scanning is undertaken regularly and at a minimum, on an annual basis.	<p>Meetings of the following consultative and advisory fora were held during 2020-21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC)</li> <li>• Census Executive Board</li> <li>• Census Delivery Committee.</li> </ul>	<p>Environmental scanning was undertaken at the following external advisory groups which met in 2020-21:</p> <p>ASAC meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 November 2020</li> <li>• 21 April 2021</li> </ul> <p>The Census Executive Board and Census Delivery Committee include external members. These bodies met regularly over the reference period (on average once every 6 weeks).</p>

		NB: The State Statistical Forum, Economic Statistics Advisory Group, and Population and Social Statistics Advisory Group mentioned in previous reports were disbanded in August 2020, replaced with more direct engagement with specific members and their networks.
--	--	--

**1.2 The ABS takes action to minimise the potential for unintended negative impacts of surveys on respondents.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 1.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 1.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Avoidance of duplication in business collections conducted by official bodies for statistics purposes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Methods, Standards and Classifications.</a></li> <li><a href="#">Contact the ABS.</a></li> <li><a href="#">Deregulation at the ABS.</a></li> </ol>	<p>The ABS provides support to minimise survey burden on businesses by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>making <a href="#">materials</a> available to assist survey development</li> <li>offering an optional user pays advisory service.</li> </ul> <p>The ABS received funding in the 2020-21 Federal Budget to examine opportunities to reduce duplication of data collection across government, starting with a Proof of Concept collaboration with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. The project identified some opportunities to reduce data collection, particularly when the second phase of work using Single Touch Payroll data is implemented.</p>
Evidence 1.2.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Complaint resolution performance meets <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a> standards.	Registers for all complaints, queries, and exemption requests is housed within the ABS' National Data Acquisition Division (NDAD).	<p>This measure has shown improvement compared to 2019-20.</p> <p>The target (as outlined in the <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a>) has been substantially met: 99% of written queries and complaints from businesses and households were responded to with written advice of the outcome within 28 days.</p>



		See comment below table for further detail.
<b>Evidence 1.2.3</b>	<b>Evidence source</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Minimisation of provider load on businesses and households selected in ABS surveys	<p>1. <a href="#">Synchronised Sampling</a> for business surveys.</p> <p>2. Conditional Selection method for household surveys (unpublished June 2018 Methodology Advisory Committee paper).</p> <p>3. <a href="#">Deregulation at the ABS.</a></p>	<p>1. In 2020-21, the ABS continued to use the Synchronised Sampling method to limit the time each individual business is in sample for repeated business surveys, and to minimise the number of different ABS surveys for which the same business is selected.</p> <p>2. In 2020-21, the ABS continued use of an improved household survey methodology - the Conditional Selection method - to minimise the chance that households are selected in more than one ABS survey.</p> <p>3. The ABS received funding in the 2020-21 Federal Budget to undertake Proofs of Concept for the ability of small and medium enterprise (SME) businesses to submit data through accounting software; and to simplify large business reporting. These projects aim to identify opportunities to reduce business burden by 50,000 hours per year.</p>

### Evidence 1.2.2 comment

Results for this measure showed improvement in 2020-21. On average, the ABS responded to written queries and complaints within 9.5 days of receipt of correspondence. In 2020-21, 99% of both businesses and households were sent written advice of the outcome of their correspondence within 28<sup>1</sup> days (compared to 98% and 99% respectively in 2019-20).

During 2020-21, the ABS responded to 1,959 written queries or complaints from survey providers (an increase from 1,299 in 2019-20). There were 1,749 requests seeking an exemption from an ABS survey (106 from businesses and 1,643 from households), 77 complaints (10 from businesses and 67 from households), and 101 'return data to source' requests from business providers.

In 2020-21, the ABS experienced an overall increase in the number of exemption requests, in part due to the impact of COVID-19, particularly in households with older and more vulnerable respondents. Requests for

<sup>1</sup> The ABS Surveys Charter states the ABS will advise the outcome of complaints within 28 days.

exemption by businesses dropped compared to last year (down from 154 to 106) but requests from households increased (up from 1,006 to 1,643). At times, the ABS provides general exemptions from surveys to small businesses and compassionate exemptions can be granted to both business and household providers.

The number and source of complaints were relatively steady – business complaints rose from six to ten, whilst household complaints decreased from 73 to 67. The number of ‘return of source’ data requests from business providers increased, up from 60 to 101.

### 1.3 ABS implements continuous improvement strategies to reduce the costs of compliance for survey respondents.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 1.3 is  ‘Good’.

Evidence 1.3.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Products, services, and tools are available and improved to assist providers to meet their obligations.	<a href="#">Survey Participant Information</a> on the ABS website provides details of products, services, and tools for respondents.	Improved portal for respondents providing visibility across all obligations.  Increased range of options for response to ensure COVID-safe practices can be followed; digital channels introduced across all surveys (wherever possible) to complement existing methods.

#### Evidence 1.3.1 comment

Household and business surveys, as well as administrative data collections, have continued to work towards using new data collection methods.

As part of the ABS COVID-safe strategy, household surveys that have traditionally been conducted face to face are now offered an online or telephone interview option for respondents to complete their survey where possible.

Business surveys can be completed through electronic channels via the ABS website. In 2020-21, business take up of these channels increased slightly to 89.5% (up from 87% in 2019-20). Some businesses are unable to utilise e-forms, in particular the farming/agricultural sector, and a small number of surveys are not available through an electronic channel. The ABS continues to engage with providers to further improve data collection methods.

Automated secure file transfer processes have improved the experience of data provision for large dataset providers. The automated connection between the provider and the ABS has enabled files to be delivered with minimal manual intervention required. Feedback from providers has been positive.

KPI 1 overall rating is  'Good'.

**Specific areas for improvement for KPI 1**

KPI 1.3 (evidence 1.3.1)

In 2020-21, the ABS adapted a number of household surveys impacted by COVID-19 for completion online or by phone, providing a safe alternative to face-to-face data collection for providers in impacted jurisdictions. The ABS website has been updated to reflect its commitment to conducting surveys in a COVID-safe way and to confirm alternatives to face-to-face contact.

**KPI 2 – Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted, and effective**

**2.1 The ABS provides guidance and information that is up to date, clear, accessible, and concise through media appropriate to the target audience.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 2.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 2.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Information is accessible and concise on the ABS website for survey participants on their frequently asked questions.	Covered by 1.1.2.	Refer to 1.1.2.
Evidence 2.1.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Accessible and transparent process available for respondents to seek exemption from a survey due to specific circumstances.	Covered by 1.1.2.	Additional information was added in relation to the impacts of COVID-19. Refer to 1.1.2.
Evidence 2.1.3	Evidence source	Outcome
The ABS provides information to respondents on the importance of data being collected, why it is collected, and how it is used.	Survey specific information is provided to respondents, both through direct correspondence and <a href="#">topic pages</a> on the ABS website.	Detailed information about the purpose, objectives and main users of specific ABS surveys is available via the ABS topic pages, in the form of guidance material produced for each survey, or by contacting the

		<p>help number listed on the survey questionnaire.</p> <p>Additional information was added to materials in relation to importance of data during COVID-19.</p> <p>Example: <a href="#">Survey Participant Information – Agricultural Surveys.</a></p> <p>Example: <a href="#">Price Indexes and Inflation topic page.</a></p>
--	--	---

**2.2 ABS considers the impact on providers and engages with industry groups and representatives of the affected stakeholders before changing policies, practices or service standards.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 2.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 2.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Resources allocated to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in each state and territory to improve data quality and increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in the ABS' statistical processes.	Covered by 1.1.1.	Refer to 1.1.1.
Evidence 2.2.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Proposed initiatives likely to lead to significant changes in regulator burden due to changes in policies, practices or service standards are circulated to relevant stakeholder consultation groups (including but not limited to such groups as Careers Australia, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Small Business Ministerial Advisory Council, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Business	Covered by 1.1.3.	Refer to 1.1.3.

Economists, Australian Bankers Association, Minerals Council of Australia) for feedback prior to implementation.		
--	--	--

**2.3 ABS decisions and advice are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 2.3 is  'Good'.

Evidence 2.3.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Complaint resolution performance meets <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a> standards.	Covered by 1.2.2.	Refer to 1.2.2.

KPI 2 overall rating is  'Good'.

**KPI 3 – Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed**

**3.1 ABS applies a risk-based, proportionate approach to compliance obligations, engagement, and regulatory enforcement actions.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 3.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 3.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS methods of respondent engagement, and information available regarding obligation to respond and value of response, leads to requests for exemptions from surveys at or below 0.5% of households and businesses selected for ABS surveys.	Calculated from exemptions and response rate figures obtained from the ABS' National Data Acquisition Division (NDAD).	In 2020-21, there were 1,749 requests for exemptions received, which is less than the target of 0.5% of households and businesses selected for ABS surveys.

3.2 ABS preferred approach to regulatory risk is regularly assessed. Strategies, activities, and enforcement actions are amended to reflect changing priorities that result from new and evolving regulatory threats, without diminishing regulatory certainty or impact.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 3.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 3.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
<p>ABS surveys adopt target response rates, proportionate to regulatory risk and commensurate with fit for purpose statistics.</p>	<p>The ABS determines what response is needed for each survey (both household and business) to meet statistical requirements by working with stakeholders, assessing the population to be sampled, survey methods and mode of survey delivery (e.g. face to face, web, phone). It does this through the work of survey management teams, survey program governance, and consultation with expert groups and stakeholders (including representatives of potential respondents). An assessment is made of existing administrative data that can be used to substitute for information collected through surveys.</p>	<p>ABS surveys provide a balanced approach to collecting high-priority information, minimising respondent burden and minimising the sample size required to meet the information needs.</p> <p>Exemptions from the survey approach are managed in accordance with the <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a>.</p>
Evidence 3.2.2	Evidence source	Outcome
<p>Accessible and transparent process available for respondents to seek exemption from a survey due to specific circumstances.</p>	<p>Covered by 1.1.2.</p>	<p>Refer to 1.1.2.</p>

KPI 3 overall rating is  'Good'.

## KPI 4 – Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated

4.1 ABS information requests are tailored and only made when necessary to secure regulatory objectives, and only then in a way that minimises impact.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 4.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 4.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS ensures surveys are appropriate and necessary by tabling proposals for the collection of information before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with Section 6 of the <a href="#">Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975</a> .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Parliament of Australia website</a>.</li> <li><a href="#">Documents Tabled in Parliament by the ABS</a>.</li> </ol>	Refer to <a href="#">Parliament of Australia website</a> .
Evidence 4.1.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Eliminating duplication in business collections conducted by official bodies for statistics purposes.	Covered by 1.2.1.	Refer to 1.2.1.
Evidence 4.1.3	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS surveys adopt target response rates that reduce regulatory risk by removing the need to continually follow up difficult to contact respondents.	Covered by 3.2.1.	Refer to 3.2.1.

4.2 ABS frequency of information collection is minimised and coordinated with similar processes including those of other regulators so that, as far as possible, information is only requested once.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 4.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 4.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Avoidance of duplication in collections conducted by official bodies for statistical purposes.	Covered by 1.2.1.	Refer to 1.2.1.

### 4.3 ABS utilises existing information to limit the reliance on requests from providers and share the information among other regulators, where possible.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 4.3 is  'Good'.

Evidence 4.3.1	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS advances data integration initiatives, thereby reducing the need for additional burden.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Documented approvals for ABS data integration proposals (internal Data Integration Proposal Register).</li> <li>2. <a href="#">Data Integration Project Register</a>.</li> <li>3. <a href="#">ABS Annual Report 2020—21, Chapter 4 Annual Performance Statement</a>, performance measure 3.2.</li> <li>4. ABS internal Data Services Operational Project Register.</li> </ol>	<p>The ABS continues to develop and expand its key integrated data assets (Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) and Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE)), infrastructure and services.</p> <p>The ABS is well positioned to provide a range of data access and custom integration services.</p> <p>The need to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian population and economy has driven a number of high priority data integration projects in 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>New data integration projects or amendments to existing projects have increased from 32 in 2018-19 to 79 in 2019-20 and 100 in 2020-21.</p> <p>There was an average of 12 new MADIP/BLADE project initiations/project updates per month from January to June 2021.</p> <p>Access and use of MADIP and BLADE data integration assets has continued to increase, with 600 researchers (491 in 2019-20) across 69 (56 in 2019-20) organisations accessing data from these assets.</p>



Evidence 4.3.2	Evidence source	Outcome
<p>ABS utilises administrative data sources to reduce burden.</p>	<p>1. Building Approvals administrative data collection.</p> <p>2. Water utilities data collections.</p> <p>3. Jobs in Australia data collection.</p> <p>4. <a href="#">Planning the 2021 Census Australia</a>.</p>	<p>1. Building Approvals is a monthly administrative data collection of approximately 400 permit authorities across Australia. The administrative data provided is used to produce the monthly <a href="#">Building Approvals, Australia</a>, as well as being used as the frame for the quarterly <a href="#">Building Activity, Australia</a> and <a href="#">Construction Work Done, Australia</a> publications (which are key inputs into the <a href="#">Australian National Accounts</a>).</p> <p>2. The ABS and the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) are working together to minimise the reporting burden on water utilities. Data for the <a href="#">Water Supply and Sewerage Services</a> collection is collected from the BoM's online Water Reporting Database for most providers. This approach minimises the number of touch-points between utilities and government, and streamlines government data collection from water utilities.</p> <p>3. <a href="#">Jobs in Australia</a> provides annual data on filled jobs for more than 2,200 different regions across Australia, including employment income, age, gender and detailed industry information. Previously this level of detail was only available using data from the Census of Population and Housing. It brings together Personal Income Tax (PIT) data, Pay As You Go (PAYG) Payment Summaries, Individual Tax Returns (ITRs), and the ABS Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE).</p> <p>4. The 2021 Census used a 'signs of life' indicator using a range of administrative sources to improve decisions on whether dwellings were occupied or not.</p>

	<p>5. Merchandise exports/BLADE.</p> <p>6. <a href="#">Sugarcane experimental regional estimates</a> using new data sources and methods.</p> <p>7. Supermarket transactions (scanner) data.</p> <p>8. National Health Survey/MADIP.</p>	<p>5. Adoption and reuse of alternative administrative exports data supplied to ABS following the Australian Taxation Office ceasing collection of export sales activity from small businesses.</p> <p>6. The ABS produced estimates for sugarcane production using a combination of existing data sources from the Sugar Cane Levy Payers Register, the Australian Sugar Milling Council and satellite crop mapping of sugarcane. No survey data was collected to produce these statistics and this work is the first practical step towards making greater use of alternative data sources to produce agriculture statistics. The positive response to this work will allow questions on sugarcane production to be removed from future agriculture surveys, reducing burden on farmers. The extra detail provided by the administrative sources allows the statistics to be produced with greater regional detail and sooner than is possible using survey data.</p> <p>7. Transactions (scanner) data refers to point-of-sale purchases from retailers. Data is provided on a weekly basis and contains millions of transactions. The data is used to produce the <a href="#">Consumer Price Index, Australia</a>; <a href="#">Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product</a>; <a href="#">Apparent Consumption of Selected Foodstuffs, Australia</a>; and <a href="#">Retail Trade, Australia</a>.</p> <p>In response to COVID-19, the ABS also used scanner data to produce <a href="#">Retail Trade, Australia, Preliminary</a>.</p> <p>8. Linking the <a href="#">National Health Survey (NHS)</a> with the <a href="#">Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP)</a> means Australians selected in the NHS no longer need to answer questions on medication. Instead, existing information from the administration</p>
--	---	---

	9. Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia.	of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is used, as outlined in <a href="#">National Health Survey: Persons accessing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidised prescriptions, 2014-15.</a>  9. Experimental weekly estimates on the impact of COVID-19 on payroll, jobs and wages, sourced from Single Touch Payroll data, published on the ABS website in <a href="#">Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia.</a>
--	--	---

**4.4 ABS takes into account, where possible, the circumstance and operational needs of the provider.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 4.4 is  'Good'.

Evidence 4.4.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Accessible and transparent process available for respondents to seek exemption from a survey due to specific circumstances.	Covered by 1.1.2.	Refer to 1.1.2.

KPI 4 overall rating is  'Good'.

**KPI 5 – Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities**

**5.1 Regulators are open and responsive to requests from providers regarding the operation of the regulatory framework, and approaches implemented by the ABS.**

Overall rating for sub-KPI 5.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 5.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Complaint resolution performance meets <a href="#">ABS Surveys Charter</a> standards.	Covered by 1.2.2.	Refer to 1.2.2.
Evidence 5.1.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Information is accessible and concise on the ABS website for survey participants on their frequently asked questions.	Covered by 1.1.2.	Refer to 1.1.2.

## 5.2 ABS performance measurement results are published in a timely manner to ensure accountability to the public.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 5.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 5.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Response rates for (key) surveys published.	Details for individual survey response rates are outlined in the 'Methodology' section for most ABS surveys. This information is available on the ABS website, provided as part of the release of the published statistical product.	Target met. For example: <a href="#">Labour Force, Australia, June 2021 (Methodology)</a> .
Evidence 5.2.2	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS regulator performance framework metrics and annual result publicly available by 31 December each year.	Annual <a href="#">ABS Regulator Performance Framework report</a> (including performance framework metrics) published on ABS website.	Target met.
Evidence 5.2.3	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS performance and activity is published annually.	<a href="#">ABS Annual Report</a> .	Target met.

KPI 5 overall rating is  'Good'.

## KPI 6 – Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks

6.1 ABS has cooperative and collaborative relationships with stakeholders to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 6.1 is  'Good'.

Evidence 6.1.1	Evidence source	Outcome
Resources allocated to engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in each state and territory to ensure cooperative and collaborative relationships with data providers and promote trust and efficiency.	Covered by 1.1.1.	Refer to 1.1.1.
Evidence 6.1.2	Evidence source	Outcome
Products, services, and tools are available and improved to assist providers to meet their obligations.	Covered by 1.3.1.	Refer to 1.3.1.

6.2 ABS regularly shares feedback from stakeholders and performance information with policy departments to improve the operation of the regulatory framework and administrative processes.

Overall rating for sub-KPI 6.2 is  'Good'.

Evidence 6.2.1	Evidence source	Outcome
ABS regulator performance framework metrics and annual result publicly available by 31 December each financial year.	Covered by 5.2.2.	Refer to 5.2.2.

KPI 6 overall rating is  'Good'.

## Attachment

### The validation mechanism

The ABS' regulator performance self-assessment was validated by a group of external stakeholders. The stakeholders were jointly selected by the ABS, The Treasury, and the then Minister in 2015 to ensure the validation was unbiased and representative. The stakeholder group was refined ahead of the 2015-16 self-assessment process in consultation with The Treasury. The ABS 2020-21 RPF draft self-assessment was disseminated to the agreed list of stakeholders in early November 2021 and responses were received between mid and late November 2021.

### RPF consultation summary

Comments on the ABS 2020—21 self-assessment were received from three (3) external stakeholders.

The responding stakeholders indicated the self-assessment was an accurate and reasonable reflection of the ABS' performance against the six KPIs, and that the overall assessment rating of 'Good' was appropriate.

Positive feedback was received in relation to the:

- openness of the ABS to suggestions for improvement through both formal and informal mechanisms.
- meaningful insights produced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling users to better understand the impacts on the Australian population and economy.
- broader range of tools and data made available to support business.
- efforts to align collection with business as usual operations.
- efforts to reduce burden by re-using data already collected by other agencies.
- understanding of the ABS of the burden imposed on businesses by data collection.
- welcomed exploration of alternative data sources from both government and private sectors to reduce burden and improve the richness of statistical information.

Suggestions for improvement were made in relation to:

- using of formal fora where a broader range of stakeholders' interests are represented.
- improving consultation with external specialist organisations when developing burden reduction initiatives.
- improving communication to let more businesses, industry associations and opinion leaders know about the burden reduction improvements being made by the ABS.