



MEASURES OF UNPAID WORK

INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Census was the first time questions on unpaid work have been included in an Australian census. Unpaid work covers a variety of activities such as voluntary work, domestic work, and caring for others.

Unpaid work in the household and voluntary work in the community make a substantial contribution to the national economy and to Australian society. The most recent estimate of the value of unpaid work in Australia was \$261 billion in 1997 - approximately half of the total gross domestic product (GDP), (*Unpaid Work and the Australian Economy, 1997*, cat. no. 5240.0). However, data on unpaid work does not usually appear in more traditional social and economic statistics.

Unpaid work fulfils many important functions that directly affect the well-being and quality of people's lives. The data will help in understanding the way Australian men and women and their families balance their paid work with other important aspects of their lives such as family and community commitments. Balancing paid and unpaid work responsibilities, particularly those related to caring for family members and others, is an important issue which features strongly in negotiations on workplace conditions.

Small area census data on the characteristics of people who carry out various kinds of unpaid work will assist with the profiling of different types of communities and the targeting of suitable support services. However, time spent on unpaid work was only collected for unpaid domestic work and not for other types of unpaid work. Information on time spent on household work, caring, helping and volunteering is available from other sources.

In response to community representations, the Government asked the Australian Bureau of

Statistics to consider including unpaid work questions in the 2006 Census. A Consultative Committee on Unpaid Work was established in June 2003 to determine whether there was a need for a question on unpaid work in the 2006 Census, as distinct from other ABS collections. This Committee comprised ABS and key external organisations. A need for data on unpaid work at the small area level was identified by the committee. The ABS had previously not included such questions in the Census as the most reliable and comprehensive data on unpaid work is obtained through surveys, such as the Time Use Survey. Other ABS surveys which cover various aspects of unpaid work include the Child Care Survey, the Voluntary Work Survey, the Disability, Ageing and Carers Survey and the Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation. However, these do not provide information for small areas and small population groups.

Four questions were added to the 2006 Census to cover different forms of unpaid work undertaken by persons aged 15 years or older. Each question related to a different timeframe to best suit respondent recall, and this can affect comparability between the questions. The questions and their timeframes were:

- Unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group, in the last twelve months.
- Time spent on unpaid domestic duties for their household, in the last week.
- Unpaid care of their own or other people's children, in the last two weeks.
- Unpaid care of people with a disability, a long-term illness or problems related to old age, in the last two weeks.

In selecting the timeframes, consideration was given to issues such as respondent recall, and

comparability of data between states and territories and with other sources of data.

VOLUNTARY WORK FOR AN ORGANISATION OR GROUP (VOLWP)

Figure 1.

<p>51 In the <i>last twelve months</i> did the person spend any time doing voluntary work through an organisation or group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclude anything you do as part of your paid employment or to qualify for a Government benefit. • Exclude working in a family business. 	<p><input type="radio"/> No, did not do voluntary work</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, did voluntary work</p>
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This question refers to voluntary work undertaken in the twelve months prior to the Census to include those people who may do voluntary work on an irregular basis as well as those who do it more regularly. However, no information on the *amount of time* spent on this type of unpaid work was collected (see Figure 1).

Further to the instructions in the question (Figure 1), the Census Guide directed people to include help willingly given in the form of time, service or skills to a club, organisation or association. Unpaid voluntary work can include assisting at organised events and with sports organisations; helping with organised school events and activities; assisting in churches, hospitals, nursing homes and charities; and other kinds of volunteer work (e.g. emergency services, serving on a committee for a club, etc.).

Volunteers make a significant contribution to the Australian economy. The most recent

estimates of the economic value of volunteer services to non-profit institutions was \$8.9 billion (*Australian National Accounts: Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account, 1999-2000*, cat. no. 5256.0). Volunteers also make an invaluable contribution to the Australian community in building and sustaining both social and welfare networks. Participation in voluntary work in particular areas provides an indication of the strength of community life in those areas.

National and state governments and local councils and non-government organisations require the information to plan for support services and programs, and to fund and provide services to assist volunteers. The information from this question together with information from the ABS Voluntary Work Survey will help to make sure that resources and services are allocated to people in the areas with the greatest need.

UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK: NUMBER OF HOURS (DOMP)

Figure 2.

<p>48 In the <i>last week</i> did the person spend time doing unpaid domestic work for their household?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all housework, food/drink preparation and cleanup, laundry, gardening, home maintenance and repairs, and household shopping and finance management. • See page 14 of the Census Guide for more information. 	<p><input type="radio"/> No, did not do any unpaid domestic work in the last week</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, less than 5 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, 5 to 14 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, 15 to 29 hours</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, 30 hours or more</p>
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This question on unpaid domestic work was the only census question on unpaid work that asked for the number of hours spent. It was collected in ranges (see Figure 2) and referred

to the week prior to the Census to assist recall of the amount of time spent on these activities.

Further to the instructions in the question (see Figure 2), the Census Guide directed people to

include *all* domestic work that the person did without pay, in their own home and in other places, for themselves and their household. However, they were told not to include any domestic work that was done as part of any paid employment.

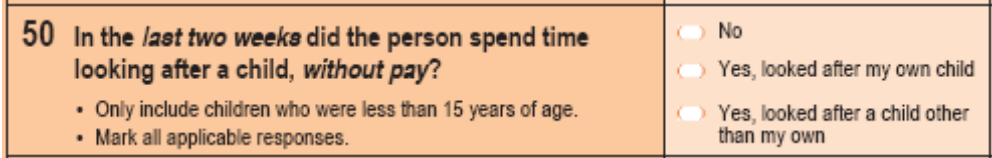
A factor which could affect the quality of the data was the difficulty people may have estimating the exact amount of time spent on unpaid domestic work. For this reason, broad ranges of hours were included. The ranges were used mainly to distinguish between those persons whose main activity was housework and those persons who did relatively little or no housework. Another factor which could affect the quality of the data is respondent's

perceptions of whether the activities they are undertaking are domestic work or another activity.

There has been an increased interest over the last few decades in identifying, acknowledging and valuing the unpaid work that supports home and community life. The amount of time spent on unpaid housework by people in different types of households and particularly the distribution of this work within the household is associated with issues of equality between men and women. Census data should contribute useful information at a small area level unavailable from other sources.

UNPAID CHILD CARE (CHCAREP)

Figure 3.



This question refers to care provided for children aged less than 15 years of age in the two weeks prior to the Census. This period of time (rather than a longer period), was chosen to avoid school holidays which occur at different times in different states and territories. This was a multi-response question, allowing for care to both a respondent's own children and other children to be reported. The amount of time spent on caring for children is collected in other ABS surveys, including the Time Use and Child Care Surveys.

The question was designed to capture all types of unpaid child care, including care for grandchildren, and children of relatives, friends and neighbours. However, child care given through an organisation or club was not included and would be reported as voluntary work.

An issue which could affect the data quality is respondent interpretation of 'own child'. Primary carers such as grandparents, uncles or aunts may feel that a grandchild, niece or nephew (or other relative) is their 'own child' rather than an 'other' child. Another factor which may impact on the quality of the data is the respondent's perception of whether or not

they are providing care when undertaking various activities (e.g. undertaking domestic activities while keeping an eye on children, preparing a meal for the entire family including children, etc).

There is a need for small area data about unpaid carers of children outside the family as well as within the family. The data will assist in understanding the contribution of unpaid child care to Australian society and the characteristics of carers. Together with census data describing participation in other common activities such as employment, education, domestic work and voluntary work, the data on child care helps build a picture of how local communities operate and adds to the information local area service delivery planners may use when considering the provision of child care facilities.

Care should be taken when comparing data from this question with data from the Child Care Survey as the age of the children who are reported on is different. The Child Care Survey only includes children aged less than 13 years. Also, the dates of data collection vary.

UNPAID ASSISTANCE TO A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY (UNCAREP)

Figure 4.

<p>49 In the <i>last two weeks</i> did the person spend time providing unpaid care, help or assistance to family members or others because of a disability, a long term illness or problems related to old age?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recipients of Carer Allowance or Carer Payment should state that they provided unpaid care.• Ad hoc help or assistance, such as shopping, should only be included if the person needs this sort of assistance because of his/her condition.• Do not include work done through a voluntary organisation or group.	<p><input type="radio"/> No, did not provide unpaid care, help or assistance</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, provided unpaid care, help or assistance</p>
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This question asked about care or assistance provided in the two weeks prior to the Census. No information on the *amount of time* spent providing such unpaid care was collected (see Figure 4). Some information on the amount of time spent caring is available from other ABS surveys, such as the Time Use Survey and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

Further to instructions in the question (see Figure 4), the Census Guide directed that unpaid care includes, but is not limited to, bathing, dressing, toileting and feeding; helping someone to move around; helping someone be understood by others; providing emotional support and helping maintain friendships and social activities; helping with or supervising medication; dressing wounds; cleaning, laundry, cooking, managing diets and meal preparation; housework, light household repairs or maintenance, and household finances; driving or accompanying someone to appointments or activities.

There is a need for data about unpaid carers of the elderly and people with a disability at the small area level. It is difficult to provide reliable estimates of the number of carers in regional and remote areas using surveys and the Census provides a unique opportunity to look at their characteristics across every part of Australia. The data will be useful for organisations supporting carers, to find out where carers are, for determining the proportion of the population who provide care in particular areas, and as an indicator of social capital within communities.