

**USE OF THE INTERNET  
BY HOUSEHOLDERS**

AUSTRALIA

EMBARGO: 11:30AM (CANBERRA TIME) THURS 28 MAY 1998

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- For further information about these and related statistics, contact Joseph Di Gregorio on Canberra 02 6252 5609 or David McGeachie on Canberra 02 6252 5614.

## NOTES

### ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication focuses on the use of the Internet by persons 18 years and over. It presents a selection of results from a survey conducted in February 1998 of 3,266 persons randomly selected from private households.

### ABOUT THE SURVEY

The range of information sought in this survey has been expanded to address Internet usage in more detail than did the previous survey conducted in 1996. For February 1998, questions on the use of the Internet were expanded to cover both its use at home and outside of the home. Information was also sought on teleworking arrangements and the use of electronic information booths and kiosks.

### Electronic information booths and kiosks

An electronic information booth is a computer that has been set up to provide information to the public without assistance. These generally comprise a touch screen which has prompts telling the user what to touch if they require information about a specific subject. An information kiosk is a more complicated device whereby people can use a combination of touch screens and buttons to find out information and pay bills. Automatic Teller Machines are excluded.

Other data from this survey, including the use of computers, peripherals and communication technologies in the home will be included in, *Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, February 1998* (Cat. no. 8128.0) to be issued shortly.

### SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

ABS Australian Bureau Of Statistics

PSM Population Survey Monitor

TAFE Technical And Further Education

\* estimates have a relative standard error of greater than 25%

— nil or rounded to zero

W. McLennan  
Australian Statistician

## MAIN FEATURES

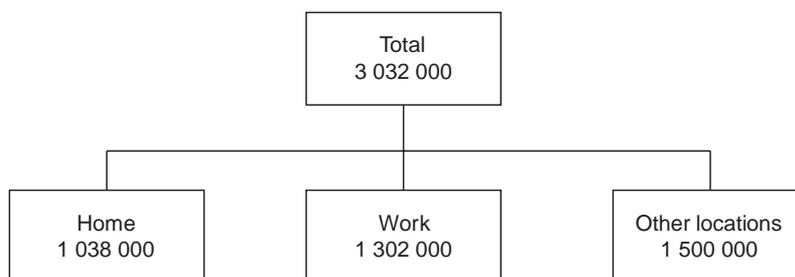
### PERSONS ACCESSING THE INTERNET

Just over three million Australians aged 18 years and over accessed the Internet in the 12 months to February 1998. This represented 23% of Australia's total population aged 18 years and over.

### PLACE OF ACCESS

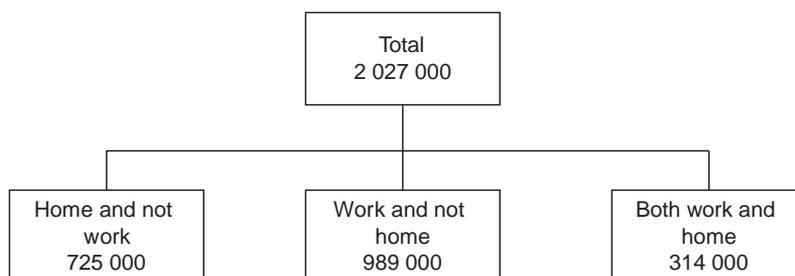
The most frequently reported places to access the Internet were work and home. Of the 1.5 million persons accessing the Internet from other locations just over 800,000 persons reported accessing the Internet from a neighbour or friend's house, the third most frequently reported place of access.

#### INTERNET ACCESS — 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998



More than two million persons accessed the Internet from home or work, but the vast majority only had access from one of these sites. The distribution of these users is shown in the following diagram.

#### INTERNET ACCESS, AT HOME OR WORK — 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998



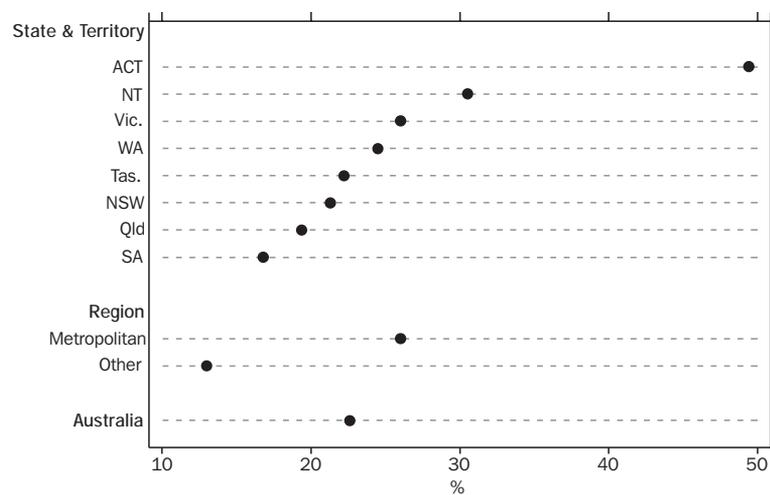
## GROWTH IN INTERNET USE

The February 1998 survey showed that there were approximately one million Internet users in the home. This is about four times the number reported in the February 1996 survey.

The 1996 survey only measured the use of the Internet in the home. Thus this is the only site for which an historical comparison can be made.

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF INTERNET USERS

The Australian Capital Territory, with nearly 50%, had the highest proportion of persons 18 years and over who accessed the Internet in the 12 months to February 1998, a larger percentage than for the other States and Territories. People in metropolitan areas had much greater access to the Internet than people living elsewhere (26% compared to 13%).



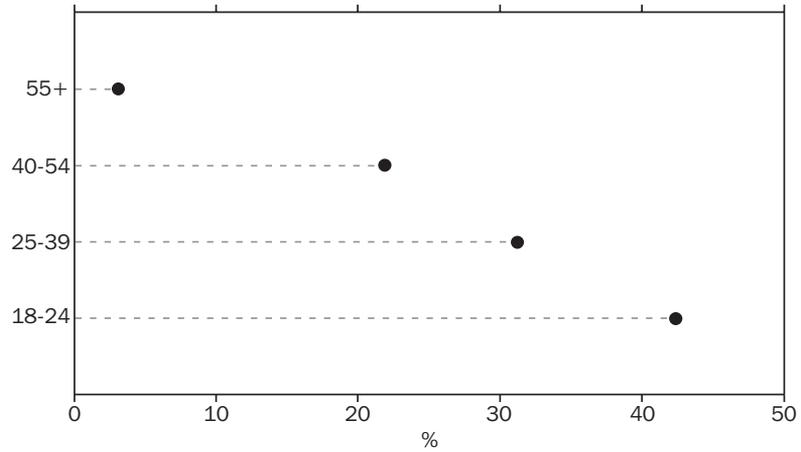
## CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNET USERS

### By sex

Approximately 26% of males, (1.7 million persons), 18 years and over accessed the Internet in the 12 months to February 1998. The corresponding statistic for females was 19% (1.3 million persons).

By age

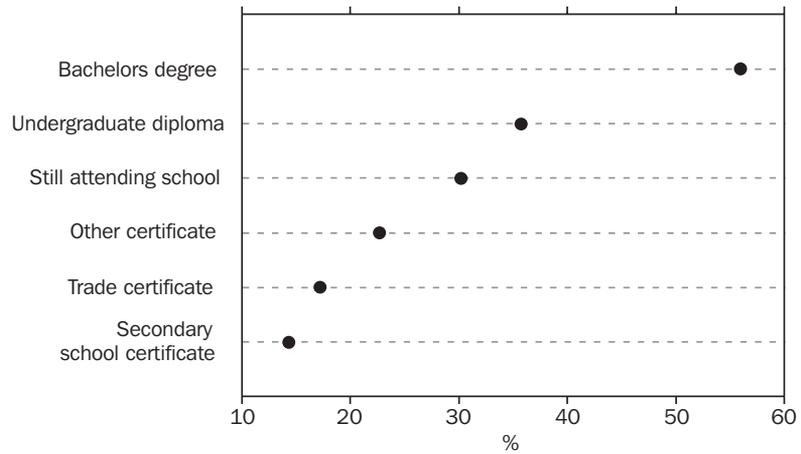
Younger age groups had the greatest proportion of Internet users. More than 42% (770,000) of 18–24 year olds used the Internet. For persons aged 25–39 years the estimate was 31% (1.3 million persons).



By highest educational qualification

Persons with tertiary qualifications had the highest proportion of Internet users:

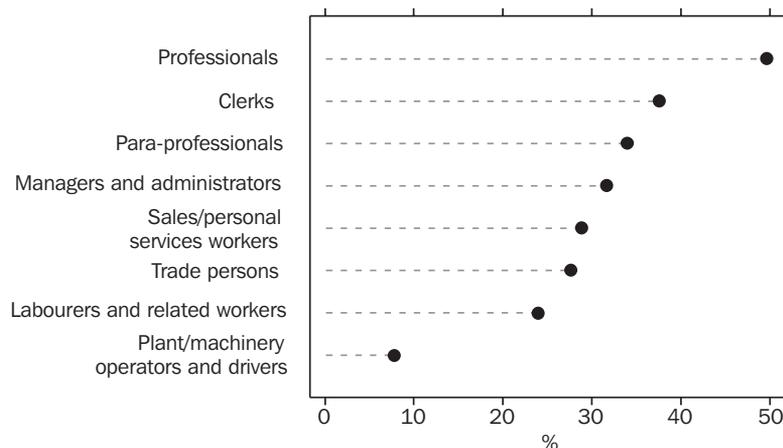
- 56% of persons with a Bachelors degree accessed the Internet; and
- 36% of persons with an Associate undergraduate diploma as their highest degree accessed the Internet.



By occupation

Nearly 50% of Professionals accessed the Internet. Other occupations where there was a significant level of Internet usage included:

- Clerks — 38%;
- Para-professionals — 34%; and
- Managers and administrators — 32%.



## INTERNET ACTIVITIES

Total

Of the three million persons who accessed the Internet:

- 2 million used it for general browsing;
- 1.5 million reported activities relating to their work;
- 1.1 million reported activities about goods or services; and
- 1 million reported using the Internet for activities relating to studies.

The activities referred to above include searching for specific pieces of information, corresponding via email about the information and any subsequent actions, such as purchasing goods or services.

Purchasing/ordering goods or services

A much smaller number of people, 210,000, used the Internet to purchase/order goods or services for their own private use. However, a high proportion of these persons, 82%, reported they had paid for the goods/services via the Internet.

Nearly 175,000 persons, 85% of persons ordering/purchasing goods or services via the Internet, reported they had purchased or ordered goods or services from overseas compared with 50,000 from Australia.

Paying bills

Only 44,000 persons are estimated to have used the Internet to pay other bills, or transfer funds, in the last three months. This is less than the 69,000 persons who reported paying bills via an electronic kiosk during the same period.

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION  
BOOTHES OR KIOSK

Nearly 1.8 million persons (13% of persons 18 years and over) accessed an electronic information booth or kiosk in the 12 months to February 1998.

The most common sites accessed were:

- shopping mall — 6.5%;
- a government agency or shopfront — 4.2%;
- museum, an exhibition or at a tourist attraction — 3.8%; and
- a public library — 3.6%.

Electronic information booths are generally not Internet based.

# 1

## INTERNET ACCESS IN THE 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998, BY AGE

<i>Place of internet access(a)</i>	18-24		25-39		40-54		55+	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Work	188	24.4	601	45.2	491	59.7	*23	*20.6
Home	149	19.3	479	36.1	341	41.5	70	62.9
Neighbour or friend's house	280	36.4	400	30.1	106	12.9	*19	*17.5
TAFE/tertiary institution	308	40.0	135	10.1	75	9.2	*1	*0.6
Public library	39	5.0	116	8.8	62	7.5	*2	*2.1
School	125	16.2	*32	*2.4	*24	*2.9	—	—
Other	45	5.9	95	7.2	36	4.4	*7	*6.0
Internet accessed from any site(b)	770	42.4	1 329	31.2	822	21.9	111	3.1

(a) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet.

(b) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

# 2

## INTERNET ACCESS IN THE 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998, BY SEX

<i>Place of internet access(a)</i>	Males		Females		Persons	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Work	713	41.5	590	44.8	1 302	42.9
Home	711	41.5	327	24.8	1 038	34.2
Neighbour or friend's house	525	30.6	281	21.3	806	26.6
TAFE/tertiary institution	273	15.9	245	18.6	519	17.1
Public library	121	7.0	98	7.5	219	7.2
School	56	3.3	125	9.5	181	6.0
Other	70	4.1	114	8.6	184	6.1
Internet accessed from any site(b)	1 715	26.0	1 317	19.3	3 032	22.6

(a) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet.

(b) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

### 3

#### GROWTH IN THE USE OF THE INTERNET FROM HOME(a)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Persons</i>	
	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>
February 1996	160	2.5	95	1.4	255	2.0
November 1996	315	4.9	131	2.0	446	3.4
February 1998	711	10.8	327	4.8	1 038	7.7

(a) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

### 4

#### INTERNET ACCESS, BY STATE, TERRITORY AND REGION(a)(b)

<i>Regional distribution</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>
State and Territory		
New South Wales	971	21.3
Victoria	878	26.0
Queensland	475	19.4
South Australia	183	16.8
Western Australia	313	24.5
Tasmania	75	22.2
Northern Territory	*28	*30.5
Australian Capital Territory	109	49.4
<i>Australia</i>	3 032	22.6
Region		
Metropolitan(c)	2 516	26.4
Other	516	13.3

(a) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

(b) Period refers to the 12 months to February 1998.

(c) Includes all capital cities and the major urban centres of 100 000 or more.

## 5

## INTERNET ACCESS IN THE 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998(a)

<i>Selected characteristics</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Persons</i>	
	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Age group (years)</i>						
18-24	390	42.5	380	42.2	770	42.4
25-39	717	33.9	612	28.5	1 329	31.2
40-54	521	27.9	301	16.0	822	21.9
55+	87	5.1	*24	*1.3	111	3.1
<i>Total</i>	1 715	26.0	1 317	19.3	3 032	22.6
<i>Highest educational qualification</i>						
Still attending school	*4	*8.1	*22	*63.7	*26	*30.2
Secondary school certificate	475	16.4	511	12.7	986	14.3
Trade certificate/apprenticeship	299	18.4	*20	*9.1	319	17.2
Other certificate	234	28.8	234	18.8	468	22.7
Associate undergraduate diploma	132	40.1	172	32.9	304	35.7
Bachelors degree	567	64.2	354	46.4	921	55.9
Other	*4	*100	*3	*94.7	*7	*97.7
<i>Place of birth</i>						
Born in Australia	1 140	23.8	974	19.3	2 114	21.5
Born outside Australia	575	31.6	343	19.6	918	25.7
<i>Persons not in the labour force</i>						
Currently studying	75	41.4	65	71.2	140	51.4
Other	109	7.1	97	3.6	206	4.9
<i>Total</i>	184	10.8	162	5.8	346	7.7
<i>Unemployed persons</i>	98	23.8	92	33.5	190	27.7
<i>Occupation</i>						
Managers and administrators	153	30.4	67	35.0	220	31.7
Professionals	432	62.3	263	37.2	695	49.6
Para-professionals	192	33.5	122	34.7	314	34.0
Trade persons	345	29.2	*19	*14.0	364	27.6
Clerks	*4	*10.1	140	40.5	144	37.6
Sales/personal service workers	140	30.2	365	28.3	505	28.8
Plant/machinery operators and drivers	45	8.4	*7	*5.5	52	7.8
Labourers and related workers	58	37.1	50	17.0	108	24.0
Not stated	64	19.1	30	10.7	94	15.3
<i>Total</i>	1 433	32.0	1 063	28.6	2 496	30.4

(a) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

## 6

### ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED VIA THE INTERNET IN THE 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Persons</i>	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
<b>Any site of access(a)</b>						
Activities in relation to studies	478	27.9	515	39.1	994	32.8
Activities relating to work	902	52.6	587	44.5	1 488	49.1
General browsing/surfing the web/net	1 150	67.0	805	61.2	1 955	64.5
Activities about goods or services	745	43.5	397	30.1	1 142	37.7
Other	164	9.5	157	11.9	320	10.6
<b>At work(b)</b>						
Activities in relation to studies	127	17.9	100	16.9	227	17.5
Activities relating to work	629	88.3	436	74.0	1 065	81.8
General browsing/surfing the web/net	354	49.7	372	63.0	726	55.8
Activities about goods or services	317	44.6	204	34.5	521	40.0
Other	65	9.2	68	11.5	133	10.2
<b>Away from work(c)</b>						
Activities in relation to studies	396	29.5	432	49.0	828	37.2
Activities relating to work	459	34.2	210	23.8	669	30.1
General browsing/surfing the web/net	961	71.5	516	58.5	1 478	66.3
Activities about goods or services	565	42.1	242	27.4	807	36.2
Other	120	9.0	107	12.1	228	10.2

(a) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet.

(b) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet at work.

(c) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet away from work.

## 7

### USE OF INTERNET TO MAKE PURCHASES FOR OWN PRIVATE USE(a)(b)

	'000	%
Purchased or ordered goods/services	207	6.8
<b>Location of purchase</b>		
Australia	*32	*1.1
Overseas	157	5.2
Both	*18	*0.6
<b>Location from which order made</b>		
Home	159	5.3
At work	*13	*0.4
Other	*35	*1.2
Goods purchased and paid for online	170	5.6

(a) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who accessed the internet.

(b) Period covers the 12 months to February 1998

## 8

### USE OF THE INTERNET TO PAY BILLS OR TRANSFER FUNDS(a)

	'000	%
Paid bills or transferred funds via the Internet (b)	44	0.3
Paid bills via an electronic kiosk(b)	69	0.5

(a) Period covers the three months to February 1998.

(b) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over.

## 9

### ELECTRONIC INFORMATION BOOTH ACCESS IN THE 12 MONTHS TO FEBRUARY 1998(a)

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Persons</i>	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Place of access						
Public library	227	3.4	249	3.7	476	3.6
Government agency/department/shopfront	367	5.6	193	2.8	560	4.2
Shopping mall	451	6.8	416	6.1	866	6.5
Museums/exhibitions/tourist attractions	307	4.6	204	3.0	511	3.8
Other	94	1.4	84	1.2	178	1.3
Electronic information booth or kiosk accessed from any site	1 020	15.5	736	10.8	1 756	13.1

(a) Percentages are of all persons 18 years and over.

## 10

### TELEWORKING ARRANGEMENTS(a)

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Persons</i>	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Were able to access an employer's computer from home through a modem	104	12.0	54	7.9	158	10.2
Had a teleworking agreement	91	10.6	46	6.8	137	8.9

(a) Percentages are of persons 18 years and over who used a computer to work from home.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### POPULATION SURVEY MONITOR

**1** During February 1998 the Population Survey Monitor (PSM) collected data on the use of information technology, including the Internet.

**2** From this survey, data was compiled for households and for persons. The statistics presented in this publication relate to persons 18 years and over.

#### Scope and coverage

**3** The survey covers rural and urban areas across all States and Territories of Australia, except sparsely settled areas. All persons living in non-private dwellings are excluded. All usual residents in private households are included in the PSM.

### DATA COLLECTED

**4** Data were collected on a number of topics relating to persons accessing the Internet. These included:

- place where Internet accessed;
- activities undertaken via Internet;
- satisfaction with Internet access outside the home;
- personal characteristics of Internet users including age, sex, marital status, birthplace, highest educational qualification, income, labour force status, occupation and major activity of those people not in the labour force;
- bill payment via the Internet/electronic kiosks;
- use of electronic information booths; and
- place where electronic information booth accessed.

**5** An electronic information booth is a computer that has been set up to provide information to the public without assistance. These generally comprise a touch screen which has prompts telling the user what to touch if they require information about a specific subject. For example, information booths can often be found in large shopping malls or department stores. An information kiosk is a more complicated device (along the lines of an Automatic Teller Machine) whereby people can use a combination of touch screens and buttons to find out information and pay bills. These are beginning to appear in some government shop fronts (e.g. Australian Capital Territory), shopping centres, etc. and allow people to pay for things such as water, rates and fines, and to get basic information on services and to identify agency responsibilities.

**6** In addition to gathering data on persons accessing the Internet, the survey collected the information on household use of the Internet. These statistics will be published in *Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, February 1998* (Cat. no. 8128.0).

## ACCURACY OF DATA

**7** As the estimates in this publication are based on information obtained from a sample drawn from households in the surveyed population, the estimates are subject to sampling variability, that is, they may differ from the figures that would have been produced if all households in Australia had been included in the survey.

**8** One measure of the likely differences is given by the standard error, which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of households was included. 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 households had been included in the survey, and about 19 chances in 20 that the difference will be less than two standard errors.

**9** The standard errors for some statistics are relatively high and users are advised to exercise caution in interpreting these statistics. Estimates with standard errors of 25% or more have been marked with an asterisk (\*). The following table of standard errors is for data on the number of households using selected information technology.

<i>Size of estimate</i> '000	<i>Standard error</i> '000
100	10
200	13
500	20
800	23
1 000	26
2 000	33

Example using the  
standard error table

**10** Consider the estimate of the number of persons who accessed the Internet from home. An estimate of 1,038,000 has a standard error of 26,000. This means there are about two chances in three that the true value (i.e. the value that would have been obtained from a complete census) is within the range 1,012,000 to 1,064,000. There are about 19 chances in 20 that the true value is in the range 986,000 to 1,090,000.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

**11** Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publications draw extensively on information provided freely by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations. Their continued cooperation is very much appreciated: without it, the wide range of statistics published by the ABS would not be available. Information received by the ABS is treated in strict confidence as required by the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

**12** Other ABS publications on the production and use of information technology and telecommunication goods and services in Australia are:

*Business Use of Information Technology, 1993-94* (Cat. no. 8129.0)

*Government Information Technology, Australia, 1993-94*  
(Cat. no. 8119.0)

*Household Use of Information Technology, Australia,  
February 1998* (Cat. no. 8128.0)

*Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 1996*  
(Cat. no. 8146.0)

*Information Technology, Australia, 1995-96* (Cat. no. 8126.0)

*Information Technology, Australia, Preliminary, 1995-96*  
(Cat. no. 8143.0)

*Telecommunications Services, Australia, 1996-97* (Cat. no. 8145.0)

AVAILABILITY OF  
UNPUBLISHED STATISTICS

**13** As well as statistics included in this publication, the ABS has a range of data on the use of selected information technologies in households. Inquiries about these statistics should be made by telephoning Joseph Di Gregorio on Canberra 02 6252 5609 or David McGeachie on Canberra 02 6252 5614.

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*PHONE* Call 1900 986 400 for the latest statistics on CPI, Labour Force, Earnings, National Accounts, Balance of Payments and other topics. (Call cost is 75c per minute)

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