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INQUIRIES

- *for further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics* contact Information Services on Canberra (06) 252 6007, 252 6627, 252 5402 or any ABS State office, or the Labour Statistics Section in any ABS State office.
 - *for information about other ABS statistics and services* please refer to the back page of this publication.
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Symbols

The following *symbols*, where shown in columns of figures or elsewhere in tables, mean:

- n.a. not available
- . . not applicable
- nil or rounded to zero
- break in continuity of series
- * subject to sampling variability too high for most practical uses
- r figures or series revised since previous issue

Other

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

PREFACE

This publication presents a statistical summary of the operations of the Australian labour market. Topics covered include employment, underemployment and unemployment; award rates, earnings, income and labour costs; hours of work, industrial relations and training. International comparisons of the more important labour statistics series are also provided.

The publication has been developed primarily as a reference document, offering an overview of the labour market data produced by the ABS, and providing a base for analysis and research on any aspect of the labour market. It is also of value to those who want only an overall picture and to those who require an introduction to the range of ABS labour statistics. Throughout each chapter, some of the more significant elements and trends of the Australian labour market have been highlighted.

Readers should note that the data presented in the publication do not cover the full range of labour statistics produced by the ABS. More detailed information is contained in the specific ABS publications indicated at the bottom of each chart or table and listed in Data Sources on page 142. Individual publications also contain details of ABS officers who may be contacted for further information about the statistics.

The statistics shown are the latest available as at April 1990 and generally relate to the calendar year 1989. Wherever possible, a time series of the principal characteristics is provided. Definitions are given in the Glossary on page 154, and information on methods of collection and concepts are given in the Technical Notes on page 145.

**Australian Bureau of Statistics
Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616**

**IAN CASTLES
Australian Statistician**

INTRODUCTION

LABOUR STATISTICS - A BROAD FIELD

User demand on the ABS in the field of labour market statistics has been considerable and consistent over many years and has led to continued improvements in both the quality and comprehensiveness of the data.

Nevertheless, because pressure comes from users in both the economic and social areas, and because their specific needs for data are many and varied, the demand for an even more comprehensive service continues unabated.

Broadly, and at some risk of oversimplification, users tend to be interested in the following topics:

- the social, demographic, industrial, occupational, educational and labour force characteristics of the working age population, including employment and unemployment levels;
- income and non-wage benefits derived from the efforts of labour, and award rates of pay and their relationship to overall income;
- work patterns, hours of work, job satisfaction and work preferences;
- industrial relations;
- labour costs and labour productivity;
- the relationship of labour market indicators to other social and economic data; and
- training and career paths.

SOURCES OF LABOUR STATISTICS

The ABS draws from a mix of household and employer based surveys and administrative data to produce the wide range of labour market statistics currently available.

Household Surveys

Household Surveys include the monthly Labour Force Survey, supplementary surveys carried out in conjunction with the Labour Force Survey and a set of separate special household surveys employing appropriate methodologies.

The *Labour Force Survey* has been conducted by the ABS from the early 1960s. Collection of monthly labour force data began in February 1978, prior to which it had been conducted at quarterly intervals.

Supplementary Surveys attached to the Labour Force Survey have been conducted since the 1960s. They enable the ABS to collect information on new topics or to obtain more detail on topics already covered in the Labour Force Survey. Since the mid-seventies, the range of topics which have been covered by the supplementary survey program has increased markedly, and the conduct of some

surveys on a regular basis has led to the development of time series of various social and labour force indicators.

Special Supplementary Surveys are generally large scale omnibus surveys covering topics considered too complex or sensitive to be incorporated into a monthly supplementary survey. Some of the more recent topics related to the labour market covered by this collection vehicle include

- *Career Paths of Persons with Trade Qualifications, 1989* (6243.0) which sought information from persons with trade qualifications classified by - how and when qualified, whether ever worked in trade, frequency of use of trade skills, whether ever left the trade and if so, when and why. Other information collected includes demographic and labour force characteristics.
- *Career Paths of Qualified Nurses, 1989* (6277.0) which sought information from persons who had ever qualified as either registered or enrolled nurses classified by - how and when qualified, whether ever worked in nursing, nursing position held, whether ever left nursing and if so, when and why. Other information collected includes demographic and labour force characteristics.
- *How Workers Get Their Training, 1989* (6278.0) which collected information from persons who were wage and salary earners in the last twelve months classified by - educational attainment, work history, qualifications needed to obtain job, training courses and on-the-job training undertaken in the last twelve months, demographic and labour force characteristics.
- *Income Distribution Survey, 1986* (6546.0) which collected data on persons with earned income, their levels of income and demographic and social characteristics.
- *1988-89 Household Expenditure Survey (HES)*, a twelve month field enumeration which began in July 1988 — the main objective was to obtain data on 'household expenditure', namely expenditure on goods and services for private consumption. For more information on the HES refer to *Information Paper: 1988-89 Household Expenditure Survey, Australia* (6527.0).
- *Alternative Working Arrangements, September-November 1986* (6341.0) which obtained information about certain aspects of the working arrangements of employees and their preferences for changes to those arrangements.
- *Child Care Arrangements, June 1987* (4401.0) which obtained information on child care

arrangements made by persons responsible for children under 12 years of age.

A list of publications derived from supplementary and special surveys relating to the labour force is shown on page 144.

For more information on the population survey program, see *Population Survey Program, Australia, 1990-91*.

Employer Based Surveys

For many years, estimates of civilian employees, average weekly earnings, distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours and job vacancies and overtime were based on a statistical framework constructed from lists of employers subject to payroll tax, supplemented by lists of government employers, religious and benevolent institutions and other non-profit organisations. Following a review conducted in 1981, it was concluded that the civilian employees series had substantially underestimated the rate of growth in employment because a significant number of small businesses were exempt from payroll tax. This deficiency in coverage of small businesses also adversely affected the quality of data on average weekly earnings because small businesses were under-represented in estimates based on the payroll tax framework.

In the light of the review, it was decided that the information required would be best obtained directly from employers using sample surveys based on the ABS register of businesses and organisations. Consequently, a new integrated statistical system based on the business register was developed. Since May 1983, the following new or upgraded surveys have been introduced:

- Quarterly Survey of Average Weekly Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Employment and Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Overtime;
- Quarterly Survey of Job Vacancies;
- Annual Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours;
- Surveys of Labour Costs and Wage Costs; and
- Survey of Employer Training Expenditure.

To provide a statistical link between the old and new series, the interim surveys have been conducted in parallel with the new Surveys of Employment and Earnings and Average Weekly Earnings for the September and December quarters 1983. Further details on the new statistical series outlined above have been published in *Information Paper : New Statistical Series — Employment, Average Weekly Earnings, Job Vacancies and Overtime (6256.0)*.

The *Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours* was conducted annually to 1981, again in 1983 and then annually from 1985 onwards. The survey of Labour Costs

has been conducted annually since 1985-86, covering both the public and private sectors since 1986-87. The first *Training Expenditure Survey* was conducted in 1989.

Census of Population and Housing

Censuses of Population and Housing, conducted every five years, obtain information about the labour force, including social and demographic characteristics and occupation and industry profiles.

A Guide to Labour Statistics

The publication of *A Guide to Labour Statistics (6102.0)* was released in early 1986. The Guide provides an overview of:

- the development of labour statistics in Australia;
- major International Labour Organisation conventions providing the rationale for such statistics;
- the concepts, methodology and sources of ABS labour market data;
- the comparability between different ABS and non-ABS data sources.

The development of the Guide grew out of a recognition by the ABS that users required more than the ongoing issue of ABS labour market data. The Guide is structured according to subject matter topics similar to chapter headings used in this publication, and is intended as a companion volume to this publication. (Some updating of the Guide is being undertaken with a view to release of a new edition later in 1991.)

CLASSIFICATIONS

Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)

ASCO is a skill-based classification of occupations developed as a national standard for the production and analysis of labour force statistics, human resources management, education planning, the listing of job applicants and vacancies, the provision of occupational information, conducting social and epidemiological research and for vocational guidance. The First Edition of ASCO was released in September 1986 as the result of an extensive joint project undertaken by the ABS and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training).

The classification groups occupations on the basis of type of work performed. This criterion has been interpreted in terms of two variables: skill level and skill specialisation. The skill level of an occupation (not of an individual) is defined in terms of the length and type of training normally required for the satisfactory performance of the primary tasks involved. The skill specialisation of an occupation is defined in terms of the field of knowledge required, tools and equipment used, materials worked on, and goods and services produced.

These variables were used to group jobs into 1,079 occupations, 282 unit groups, 52 minor groups and 8 major groups. At major group level, groups are separated principally according to skill level; at the lower levels the skill specialisation criterion is applied in successively finer degrees of detail.

ASCO was introduced into ABS collections from May 1986, and is now used in all ABS censuses and surveys where occupation data are collected, including the five yearly Census of Population and Housing, the Monthly Population Survey and the Annual Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours. In these collections data are coded at the unit group level but it is planned that occupation responses obtained in the 1991 Census of Population and Housing will be coded at the occupation level of ASCO.

In 1990, ASCO was introduced into administrative by-product statistics such as births, deaths and divorces. The data are coded at minor group level using an automatic coding system operating on occupation title responses only. Data on overseas arrivals and departures are now coded to the unit group level of ASCO.

Data on occupation in ABS labour statistics collected before 1986 were coded to the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO). While the titles of some of the groups in the two classifications are similar, the content of these groups is different because occupations are grouped according to different criteria. These differences are likely to be accentuated by the introduction of a structured method for coding survey data to ASCO. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in attempting to compare data coded to CCLO with that coded to ASCO.

A cross-tabulation of the two classifications at the major group level was presented in Table 41 of the August 1986 issue of *The Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0). The estimates contained in this table were produced by coding a sub-sample of occupation responses from the May 1986 Labour Force Survey to both ASCO and CCLO. Occupation data from the 1986 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours were coded to both classifications and presented in the May 1986 issue of *The Distribution and Composition of Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia* (6306.0). More detailed information on the relationship between ASCO and CCLO is presented in *Census 86 - ASCO/CCLO Link* (2182.0) and *Census 86 - ASCO/CCLO Link File : Technical Details* (2199.0). (See also *Information Paper: ASCO - Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (1221.0).)

CCLO was originally based on the 1958 version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and thus afforded Australian labour force statistics some international comparability. There were many severe criticisms of CCLO and thus ASCO was developed using a completely different conceptual approach. Since the publication of ASCO in 1986, ISCO (1988) has been revised using a very similar conceptual approach to that adopted for ASCO. Other countries such as the United

Kingdom and Canada are currently revising their national classifications along similar lines.

The following publications about ASCO are available from the ABS:

1. *Information Paper : ASCO- Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (1221.0). This paper provides an introduction to the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), including an overview of the ASCO structure, the ASCO Coding System and a guide to interpreting ASCO statistics. It also provides details of other publications dealing with the relationship between ASCO and CCLO.

2. *ASCO Statistical Classification* (1222.0) outlines the conceptual basis and structure of ASCO, and provides definitions of the major, minor and unit groups in the classification. It is intended principally as an aid in interpreting statistics coded to ASCO.

3. *ASCO Occupation definitions* (1223.0) comprises the definitions of the 1,079 occupations at the most detailed level of the classification, and the Keyword Index of Structure Titles.

4. *ASCO Expert Coding System: Unit Level* (1224.0) includes a Coder's Guide, User's Guide and printed copies of the coding indexes in alphabetical and numerical order. The system runs on IBM XT, AT or PS/2 compatible microcomputers.

5. *ASCO Manual Coding System: Unit Group Level* (1987) (1225.0) details the procedures and provides the indexes required for the accurate manual coding of survey responses to ASCO. Other indexes contained in the *Statistical Classification* and the *ASCO Dictionary* are not suitable for this purpose.

6. *ASCO Keyword Index of Unit Group Tasks* (1228.0) is primarily designed to assist in resolving problems arising in the course of coding occupation descriptions to the unit group level of ASCO. It is particularly useful in finding the correct ASCO code for an occupation when no title or an inadequate title is available and the coder needs to use task information. It is not intended to be a coding document in its own right, but rather a guide to locating relevant unit group definitions.

7. *ASCO Expert Coding System: Occupation Level* (1226.0) is similar to 1224.0 but enables the coding of occupation information to the occupation level of ASCO (1,079 categories).

The *ASCO Dictionary* (AGPS cat. No. 85 1291 0) was produced jointly by ABS and DEIR (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training) and contains descriptions of all groups in the classification

down to the occupation level. It is published by the Australian Government Publishing Service and is available from AGPS bookshops.

Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC)

ASIC has been designed primarily as a system for classifying establishments, e.g. individual mines, factories,

shops, etc., by industry. An "industry" i.e. an individual class or group, etc. in ASIC consists of the establishments which have been classified to it. ASIC may also be used for classifying other statistical units such as enterprises.