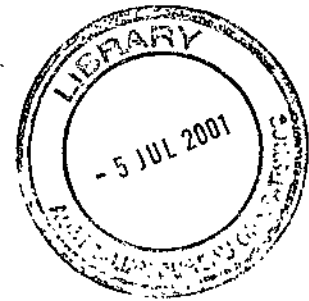


# **LABOUR STATISTICS**

**AUSTRALIA, 1985**

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**Australian Statistician**



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- MAIL INQUIRIES** • *write to Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616* or any ABS State office.
- ON VIATEL** • key \*656# for selected economic, social and demographic statistics on VIATEL.

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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
- n.e.c. not elsewhere classified
- \* subject to sampling variability too high for most practical uses
- p preliminary figure subject to revision
- r figures or series revised since previous issue

### Other

In tables, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the items because of rounding.

## **PREFACE**

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

The publication has primarily been developed 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 only want an overall picture and to those who require an introduction to the range of ABS labour statistics. To assist readers, a 'Summary of Findings' has been presented to highlight some of the more significant features and trends within the Australian labour market.

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 Appendix I. 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 1 July 1986 and generally relate to the calendar year 1985. Wherever possible, a time series of the principal characteristics is given, back to 1975. Details of definitions and other technical aspects are given in Appendix II.

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

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 the 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;
- 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;
- conditions of the workplace including occupational health and safety and industrial accidents.

The ABS relies on 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 somewhat different methodologies.

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

The most recent major development to the Labour Force Survey has been the development of procedures and systems to allow the regular release of regional estimates from April 1985.

*Supplementary Surveys* attached to the Labour Force Survey have been conducted since the 1960's. They enable the collection of information on aspects covered in the Labour Force Survey in more detail or on new topics. Since the mid-seventies, topics which have been covered by the supplementary survey program have 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.

New topics conducted in 1985 were:

- *Underemployed workers, Australia (6265.0)* which collected information about persons currently working part-time who would prefer to work more hours per week and persons who usually work full-time but did not do so in the previous week. Details collected included industry, occupation, family status and preferred number of extra hours.
- *Persons who had re-entered the labour force, Australia (6264.0)* which collected information on persons who re-entered the labour force at some time in the previous 12 months. Data collected included details of previous job, reason for leaving previous job, main activity while out of the labour force and main reason for re-entering.
- *Persons who have left the labour force, Australia (6267.0)* which collected information on persons currently out of the labour force who left the labour force in the previous 12 months. Data collected included whether permanent or temporary exit, expected time until re-enters the labour force and details of previous job. It is expected that the data will be published in late 1986.

*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 concerning the labour market covered by this collection vehicle include:

- *Alternative Working Arrangements, March-May 1982 (6341.0)* which obtained information about certain aspects of the working arrangements of employees and their preferences for changes to those arrangements;
- *Career Paths of Persons with Trade Qualifications, September-November 1982 (6243.0)* which sought information enabling the identification of persons with trade qualifications, and whether those qualifications are being or have been used;
- *Superannuation, September-November 1982 (6319.0)* which collected data on the extent of coverage of superannuation or retirement schemes and life assurance policies in conjunction with the 1982 Income and Housing Survey. This was the first ABS survey to include information on superannuation coverage and costs, on the extent of coverage of life assurance policies, and on payments (including lump sum payments) received from superannuation schemes, life assurance policies, and worker's compensation as well as current and annual income;
- *Income and Housing Survey, September-November 1982 (6502.0)* which collected current and annual income, along with data on housing occupancy and costs;

- 1984 Household Expenditure Survey (HES), a twelve month field enumeration which began in January 1984 — the survey's main objective was to obtain data on 'household expenditure', namely expenditure on those goods and services for private consumption (for more information on the HES refer to *Information Paper : 1984 Household Expenditure Survey* (6527.0)).

For more information on the population survey program, see *Information Paper : Population Survey Program* issued by the ABS in January 1985.

### Employer-Based Surveys

For many years, estimates of civilian employees, average weekly earnings, distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours, 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 (which required an upgrade in the coverage of small businesses) 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;
- Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours.

To provide a link between the old and new statistical series, parallel surveys on the old and new systems were conducted for the Employment and Earnings and Average Weekly Earnings surveys 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 May Biennial Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours was conducted annually to 1981 and next in 1983 and 1985 after which it will again be conducted annually. The inclusion in the survey of questions about the award coverage of employees enables the compilation and publication of data on the incidence of awards cross-classified by other data items collected in the survey.

### 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.

### Australian Standard Classification Occupations (ASCO)

The ASCO project began in 1978, and was undertaken in partnership with the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR).

ASCO is designed as a standard classification, to be used in all ABS and other statistical collections incorporating occupational information (as well as for a number of non-statistical uses such as vocational guidance and matching job-seekers with vacancies in the CES). In the past a number of different classifications have been used, each of which had problems such as statistical imbalance, lack of descriptive information or excessive reliance on extraneous variables such as Industry and Qualifications. The ABS has generally used the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO) to code occupational data from its statistical collections.

Progressively, from the release of the First Edition (September 1986), ASCO will be used in the presentation of ABS statistics, starting with the Labour Force Survey, Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours and the 1986 Population Census.

The two main ASCO publications to be released in 1986, are as follows:

#### 1. ASCO Statistical Classification

This will consist of the First Edition Structure, and Group Descriptions, Keyword Index of Structure Titles, and an introduction describing the background and conceptual basis of the project.

#### 2. ASCO Dictionary of Occupations

This will consist of the First Edition structure, a complete set of occupation descriptions containing Alternative and Specialisation as well as Principal Titles, and an index containing all of these titles in alphabetic order.

The ABS plans to provide a link between ASCO and CCLO by coding occupational data from a number of collections to both classifications.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Population

The population of Australia at 30 June 1985 was 15.8 million, an increase of 195,700 over the previous twelve months. Over the ten years to 30 June 1985, the population grew by 1.9 million, representing an average annual increase of 1.3 per cent.

The population aged 15 to 64 grew by 1.6 million over the ten years to 30 June 1985, an average annual increase of 1.6 per cent.

### Labour force

Female participation in the labour force grew over the ten years to August 1985, increasing from 43.0 per cent to 45.7 per cent during this time. There has been a gradual convergence of participation rates for married and not married females — at August 1985 the participation rate for married females was 44.3 per cent, compared with 47.8 per cent for not married females. Over the same ten year period, the male participation rate declined sharply from 80.5 per cent to 75.2 per cent. The total labour force in Australia at August 1985 comprised 7,217,200 persons.

### Employment

Total employment in Australia at August 1985 was 6,646,100, an increase of 183,800 or 2.8 per cent over the previous twelve months. The increase over the previous ten years was 804,800, representing an average annual increase of 1.3 per cent. Female employment increased by 26.5 per cent over this ten year period, compared with an increase of only 7.0 per cent for males.

The employment/population ratio was 55.5 per cent at August 1985 compared with 58.8 per cent ten years earlier.

Part-time work has grown in importance over the last ten years. Part-time workers represented 13.6 per cent of employment in August 1975 and this had grown to 18.2 per cent by August 1985.

Professional and technical occupations have become more significant, comprising 15.8 per cent of employment in August 1985, compared with 12.0 per cent ten years earlier. Employment in the trades, production-process and mining occupations has declined from 33.6 to 28.5 per cent over the ten year period.

The shift in occupations is also reflected in the changes in the industry composition of employment. Employment in the Community Service industry, which comprised 13.6 per cent of employment in August 1975, has increased to 17.4 per cent of employment in August 1985. Over the same period the Manufacturing industry declined sharply from 21.6 per cent of employment in 1975 to 16.7 per cent in 1985.

Private sector employment increased by 5 per cent between June 1975 and June 1985. Over the same period, Commonwealth Government employment increased by 9 per cent, State Government by 25 per cent and Local Government by 10 per cent.

### Unemployment

Unemployment declined over the twelve months to August 1985. The unemployment rate at August 1985 was 7.9 per cent compared with a rate of 8.6 per cent twelve months earlier. These rates are much higher than those prevailing 10 years previously (the unemployment rate was 4.6 per cent in August 1975). Young persons were most affected by unemployment with the unemployment rate for persons aged 15-19 being 18.2 per cent in August 1985.

The increase in unemployment has been accompanied by an increase in the duration of unemployment. The average (mean) duration of unemployment increased from 12.7 weeks in August 1975 to 49.5 weeks in August 1985. At August 1985, there were 176,500 persons who had been unemployed for more than a year.

The number of job vacancies in Australia at November 1985 was 51,800, an increase from 39,800 over the previous twelve months.

### Persons not in the labour force

In September 1985, 38.6 per cent of the working age population were not in the labour force, of which nearly 70 per cent were females. A large number could be described as having some attachment to the labour force. All told there were some 739,700 persons classified as having marginal attachment to the labour force (ie they were not unemployed, but they wanted to and were available for work). Of these 573,000 were females.

### Award rates, earnings and income

Between December 1984 and 1985, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 8.3 per cent. During the same period weekly award rates of pay increased by 6.4 per cent (full-time adult male wage and salary earners), while average weekly earnings for males increased by 6.3 per cent.

The increase in award rates of pay was larger in 1985 than in the previous two years. Weekly award rates of pay for male full-time adult wage and salary earners increased by 6.4 per cent between December 1984 and 1985 compared with 4.4 per cent in the previous year and 5.1 per cent in the year before that.

Average weekly earnings vary across occupations. In May 1985, the average weekly earnings for professional and technical occupations was \$501.60 (male full-time non-managerial adult employees), while for tradespersons it was \$395.90.

More males than females are in the high earnings groups. For full-time employees, 62.8 per cent of males had weekly earnings over \$320 in August 1985, while only 35.5 per cent of females had weekly earnings above the same level.

### **Non-wage benefits**

Some 39.5 per cent of employees were covered by employer superannuation schemes in August 1985. The coverage for males was much higher than for females with 50.0 per cent of male employees covered by employer superannuation schemes compared with only 24.0 per cent of females. Those with high earnings are more likely to have superannuation coverage. Only 6.9 per cent of employees with weekly earnings in their main job less than \$200 were covered by superannuation, while for those whose weekly earnings was greater than \$320, the coverage was 59.6 per cent.

### **Hours of work, work patterns, work preferences and job satisfaction**

Average hours of work have declined over the last ten years due largely to the greater emphasis on part-time work. The average weekly hours worked declined from 36.9 hours in August 1975 to 35.8 hours in August 1985, although over the same period the average hours worked by full-time workers remained virtually unchanged (40.3 hours per week in August 1985). The average weekly hours worked by part-time workers in August 1985 was 15.9 hours.

Average hours of work were higher for males than females. For full-time female workers, the average weekly hours worked was 37.7 hours in August 1985, compared with 41.3 hours for full-time male workers.

Some 18.7 per cent of employees worked overtime in a particular week in November 1985. For those employees who worked overtime, the average weekly overtime hours paid was 7.0 hours.

### **Industrial relations**

Industrial disputation declined over the last ten years with the number of industrial disputes during 1985 being 1,844 compared with 2,432 during 1975. The number of workers involved in industrial disputes during 1985 was 569,400 (down from 1,398,000 during 1975), while the total number of working days lost during 1985 was 1,256,200 days (compared with 3,509,900 days during 1975).

The level of industrial disputation varied widely across industries with the Coal Mining industry losing 6,732 working days per thousand employees during 1985, and the Construction industry losing 580 working days per thousand employees. Over all industries, 230 working days per thousand employees were lost during 1985.

Membership of trade unions remained virtually unchanged over the past ten years, with 57 per cent of employees being members of trade unions at June 1985. There were substantial differences between male and female membership. The percentage of male employees who were members of trade unions at June 1985 was 63 per cent, while at the same time the percentage of female employees was 47 per cent.

The majority of employees are covered by industrial awards, determinations and collective agreements. In May 1983, only 16.4 per cent of male employees and 10.3 per cent of female employees were not covered by awards.

### **International comparisons**

The average unemployment rate in Australia during 1985 was 8.2 per cent. This compared with rates of 7.1 per cent for USA, 2.6 per cent for Japan, 8.6 per cent for the Federal Republic of Germany and 13.2 per cent for the United Kingdom.