

Trust in ABS and ABS Statistics

A survey of informed users and the general community (2015)

Prepared for:

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1. Survey Overview

1.1. About this report

This report presents the results of the Community Trust in ABS Statistics Survey (CTASS). The purpose of the CTASS was to measure the current levels of trust in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and its products among the general community and informed users of ABS statistics (academics, economists and journalists).

The 2015 CTASS was the second of its kind, having previously been administered in 2010. Though there have been some changes to the design and implementation of the CTASS over these years, this report also presents a comparison of key findings. Readers are advised to view these comparisons as indicative only.

Throughout the report, results have been presented as whole numbers. Where totals are presented, these will not always sum to 100 due to rounding or the allowance for multiple responses.

When reporting on the general community results, weighted data has been used throughout. Where subgroup variations are reported, only those categories that showed statistically significant variations have been included in the discussion.

The Social Research Centre (SRC) was commissioned to conduct the 2015 CTASS and provided an independent report of results. This report presents a summary of those findings.

1.2. About the survey

The CTASS was administered and analysed by the SRC due to the nature of the survey. This eliminates the possibility of bias being introduced by the ABS solely designing and administering a survey related to trust in the ABS and their products. SRC was responsible for questionnaire review (with a view to maintaining consistency with the 2010 instrument where possible), programming, interviewing, data cleaning, analysis and reporting.

In total, 142 informed users of ABS statistics and 2,200 members of the general community participated in the research. Both surveys were administered via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) in June and July 2015.

The general community survey was conducted using a dual-frame (landline and mobile) sample frame. The lists were randomly generated and the landline sample involved random sampling within 15 geographic strata. Weighting was applied to the data to ensure results were representative of Australians aged 15 years or older.

The sample frame for the informed users survey was compiled by the ABS and consisted of 163 academics, 26 economists and 2 journalists. The academics and journalists had received contact from the ABS prior to being contacted for the survey and had consented to participating in the research.

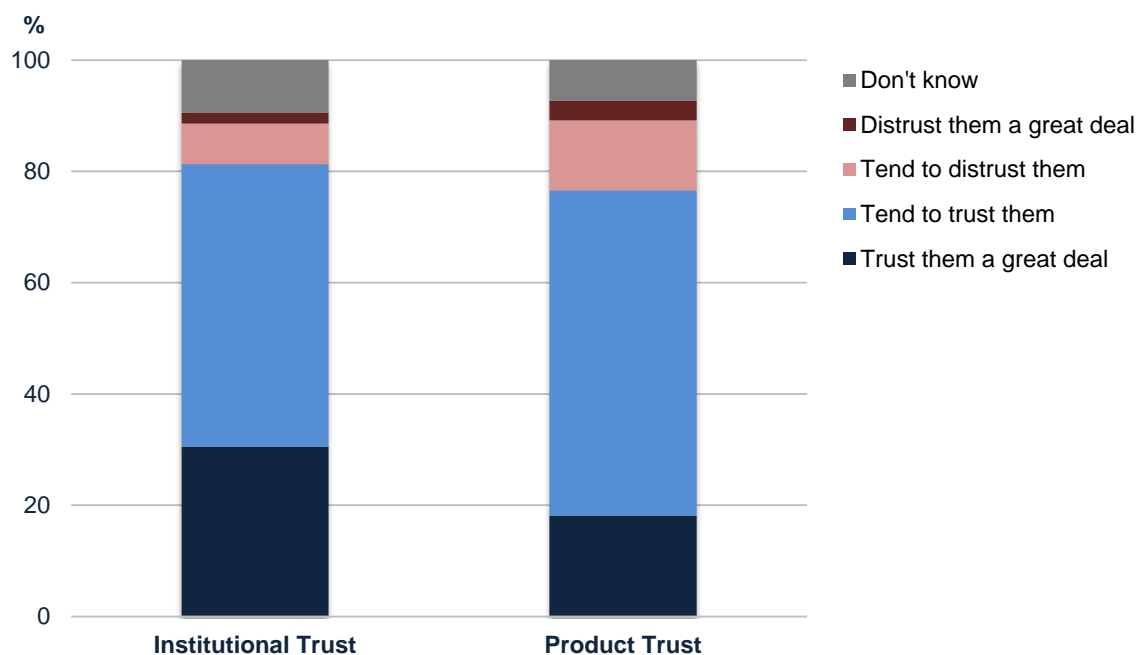
For further details, please refer to the methodology section of this report.

2. Main Findings

Trust in the ABS is high amongst members of the general community

- Survey respondents who indicated that they had heard of the ABS were asked how much trust they held in the ABS as an institution (Institutional Trust) and in ABS' statistical products (Product Trust).
- Institutional trust in the ABS was high amongst general community respondents with 81% indicating that they either tend to trust or greatly trust the ABS.
- Product trust also tended to be high with 76% of respondents indicating that they tend to or greatly trust ABS statistics.
- Amongst the general community, the ABS as an institution engenders greater trust than its statistical products.

Figure 1: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – general community

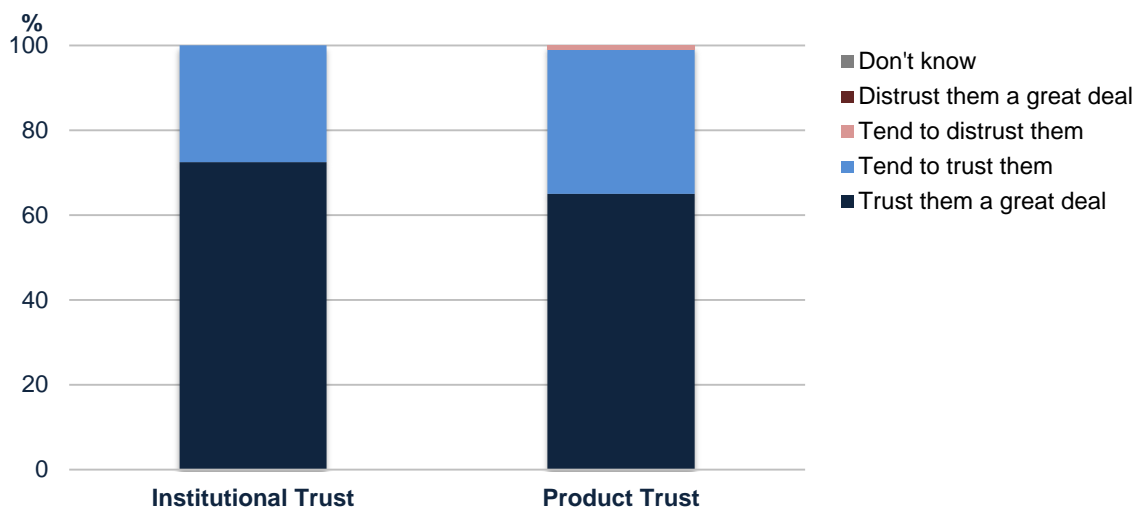


Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)

Informed users of ABS statistics recorded especially high levels of trust

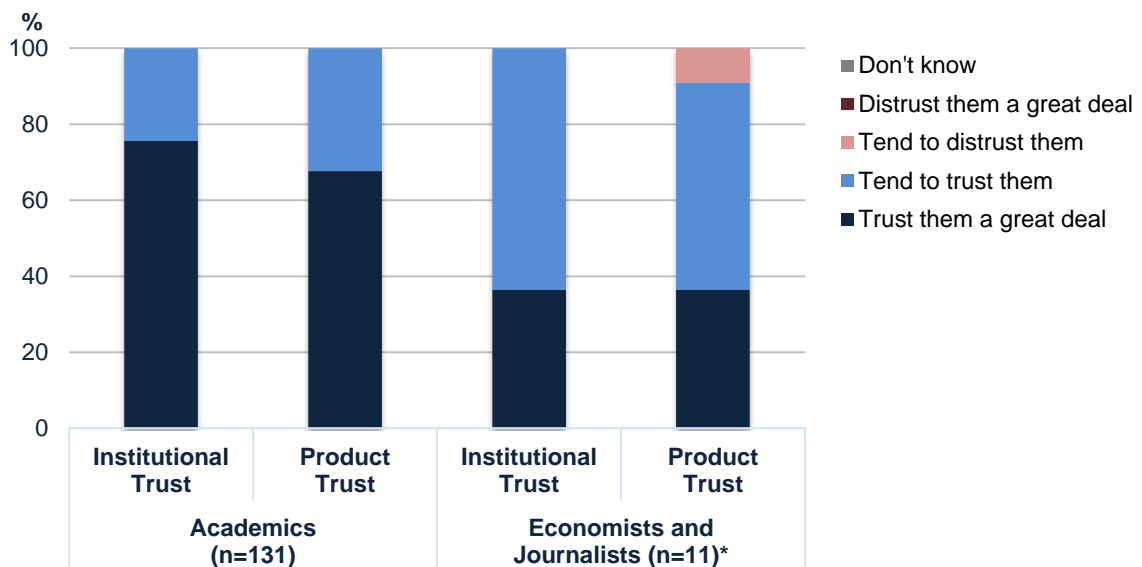
- Institutional trust in the ABS was especially high amongst informed users of ABS statistics with 73% indicating that have a great deal of trust in the ABS as an institution and the remainder (27%) indicating that they tend to trust the ABS.
- Product trust was also high amongst informed users with 65% recording the highest level of trust in ABS statistics (trust them a great deal) and the majority of the remainder (34%) stating that they tend to trust them.
- Though the sample size was small (and results should therefore be treated as indicative only), economists and journalists appeared to record lower levels of trust for both institutional and product trust measures when compared to academics (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users of ABS statistics



Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (n=142)

Figure 3: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users of ABS statistics – by occupation



Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (n=142)

*Caution: Small sample size.

Higher socio-economic status was correlated with higher levels of trust amongst the general community

- For the purposes of this research, socio-economic status (SES) was derived from the self-reported education and occupation of the general community respondents.
- Significant variations in levels of institutional and product trust were observed across SES sub-groups, with respondents in the highest SES group recording higher levels of trust than those with a moderate and, more so, a low SES.
- This is best evidenced by the difference in the proportions reporting the highest levels of institutional trust with 41% of those with a high SES indicating that they trust the ABS a great deal and this proportion decreasing to 25% of those with a low SES.

Figure 4: Institutional trust in the ABS – general community – by socio-economic status

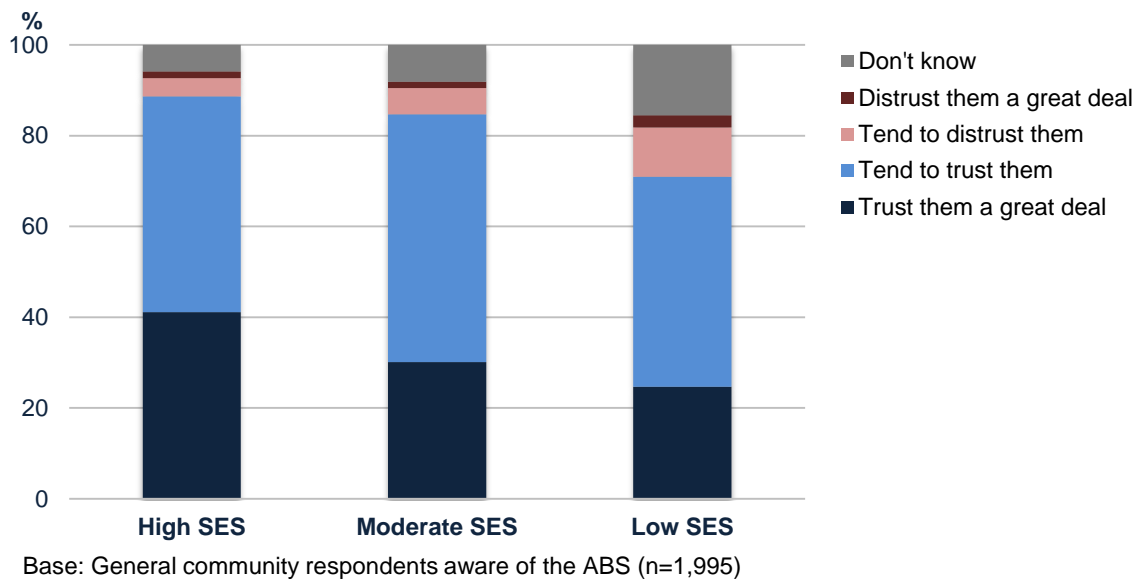
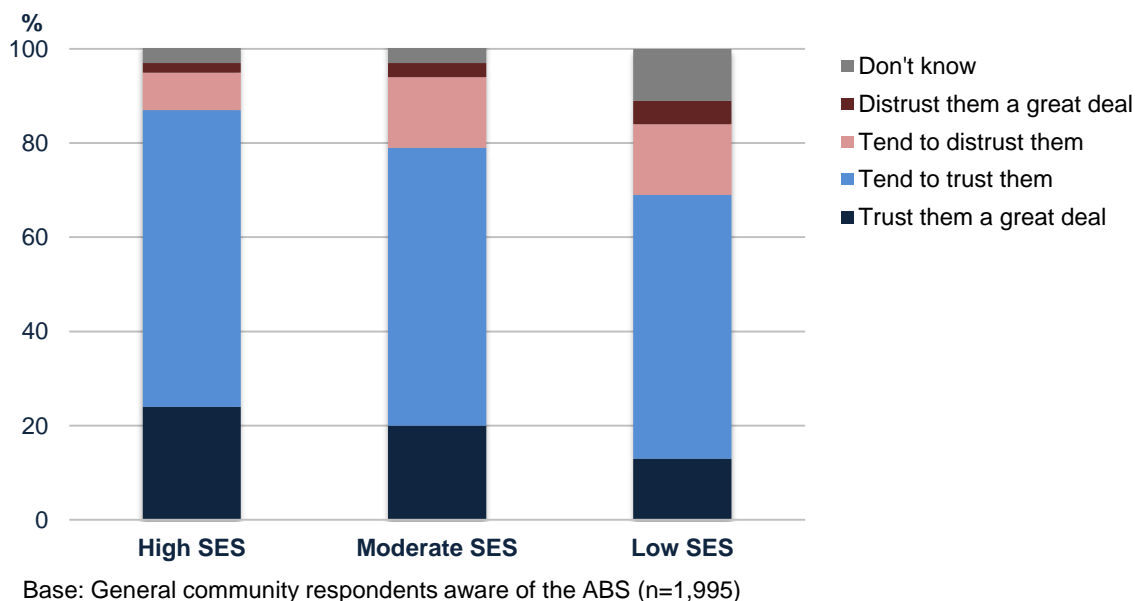


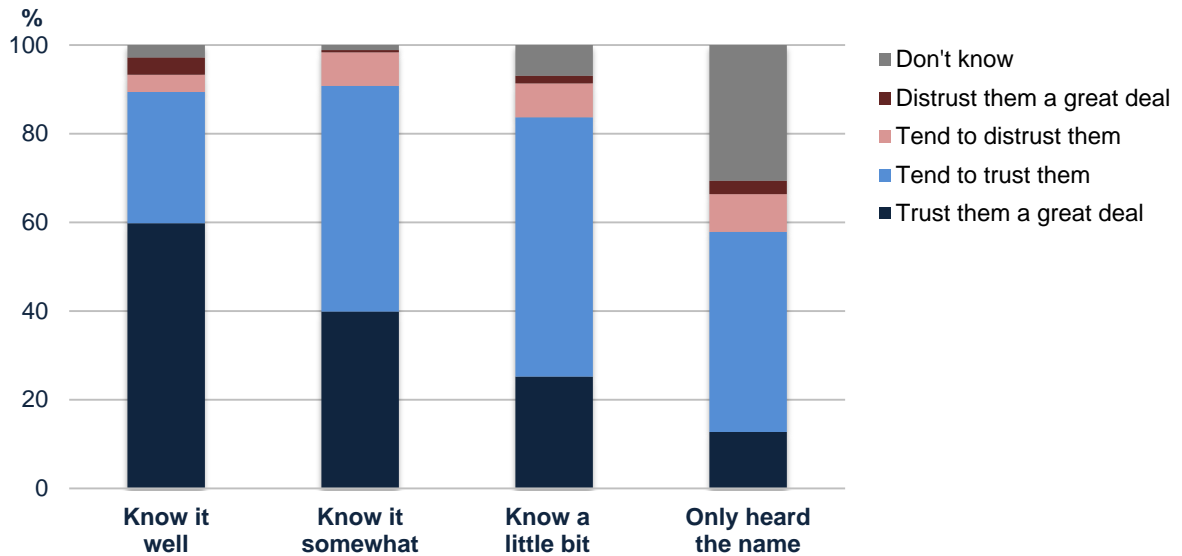
Figure 5: Product trust in the ABS – general community – by socio-economic status



General community trust increased with self-reported knowledge of the ABS

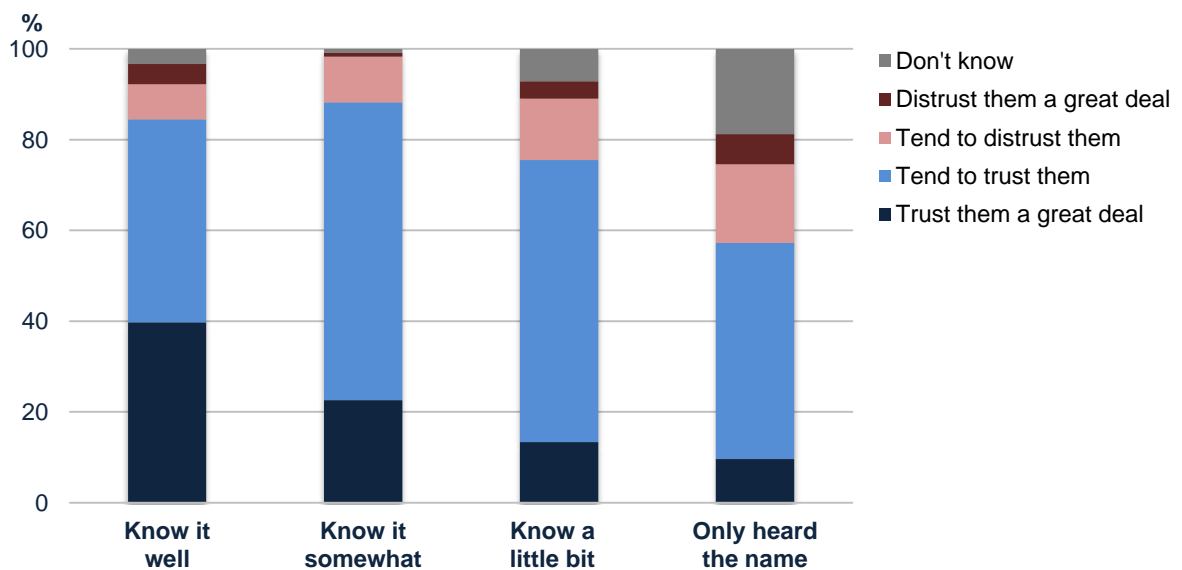
- Those who had heard of the ABS were asked to indicate the extent of their knowledge of the ABS. Upon investigation, a relationship was discovered between self-reported knowledge of the ABS and levels of institutional and product trust.
- For general community respondents, some of the highest levels of institutional trust were recorded by those who reported that they know the ABS well (60% of this group trust the ABS greatly).

Figure 6: Institutional trust in the ABS – general community – by knowledge of the ABS



Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)

Figure 7: Product trust in the ABS – general community – by knowledge of the ABS

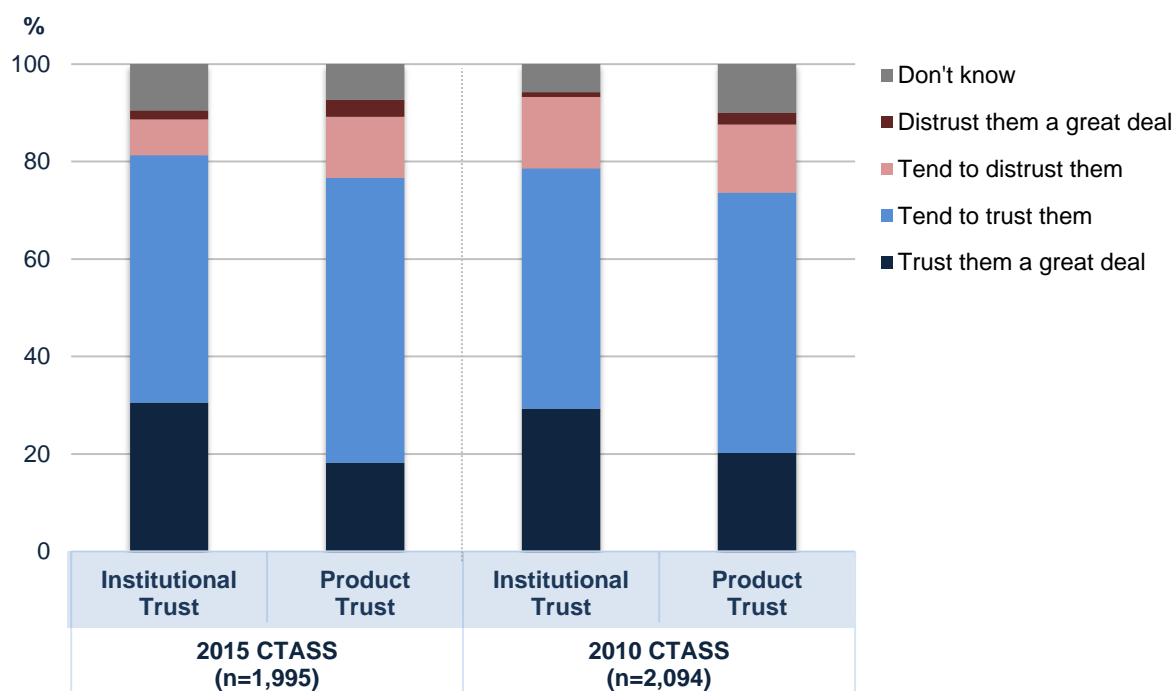


Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)

Five year comparison impacted by population and methodological changes

- Results of the 2015 CTASS are not directly comparable with those collected in the 2010 survey and should therefore be interpreted with caution. This is due to variations to the sample framework for the informed users survey and a range of design considerations for the general community survey. For the latter, the main changes included moving from a landline only sample frame to a dual-frame (landline and mobile phone) methodology (reflecting changes to population accessibility and best practice in administering general community surveys), the use of an updated within-household selection method and changes to the weighting approach (including the introduction of non-response weighting).
- However, attempts have made to make the data as comparable as possible. The ABS adopted a weighting approach to adjust the landline estimates from 2010 in such a way as to yield dual-frame estimates that could be compared with those from 2015. However, this approach does not account for this large increase in the mobile-only population and the likely different characteristics of dual-users in 2015 compared to 2010. We therefore recommend viewing the following point-in-time comparisons as being the best available rather than directly comparable. Refer to Section 4.1 for further details on the methodology used for adjustment.
- Levels of institutional and product trust amongst the general community showed a slight increase when compared to the 2010 CTASS. Correspondingly, there appears to have been a decrease in the proportion of general community members who expressed a tendency to distrust ABS as an institution.

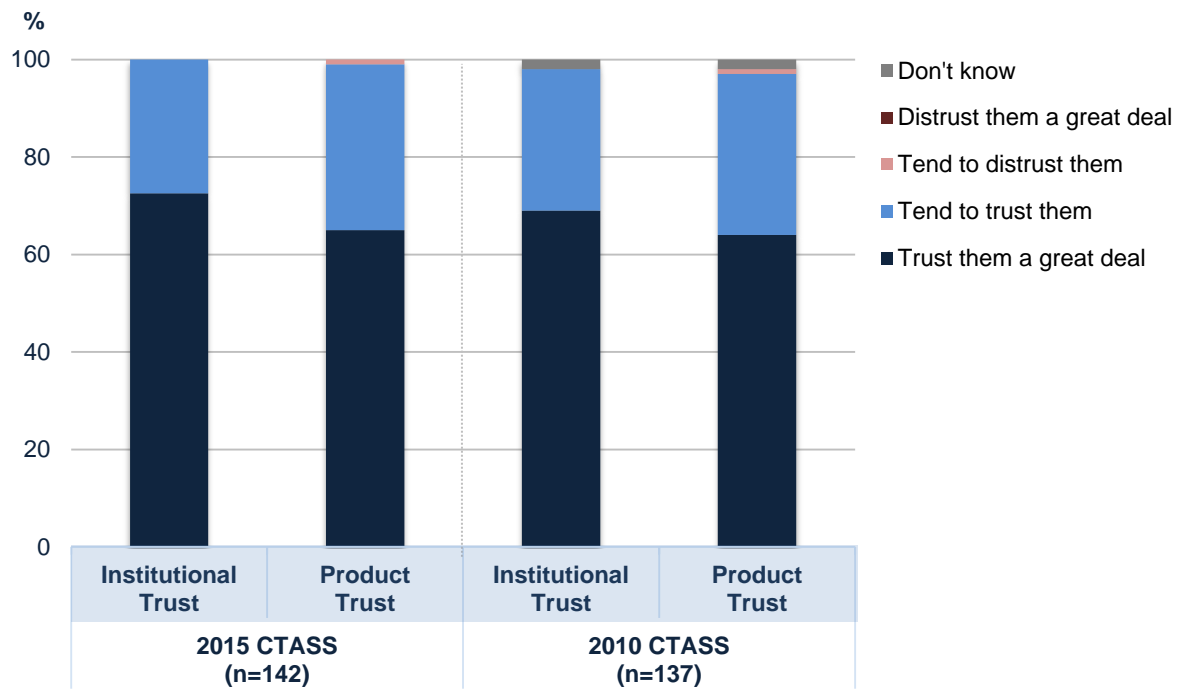
Figure 8: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – general community – by CTASS year



Base: General community respondents who were aware of the ABS

- Amongst informed users of ABS statistics, product and institutional trust were relatively unchanged, remaining at very high levels in both years.

Figure 9: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users – by CTASS year

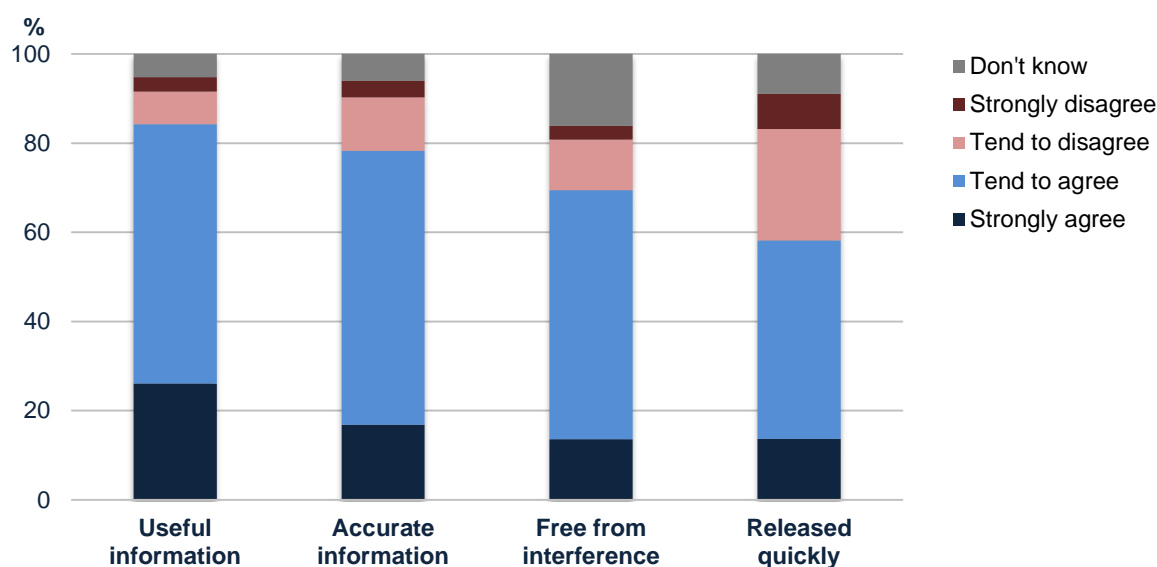


Base: Informed users of ABS statistics

High levels of confidence in usefulness and accuracy of future ABS statistics

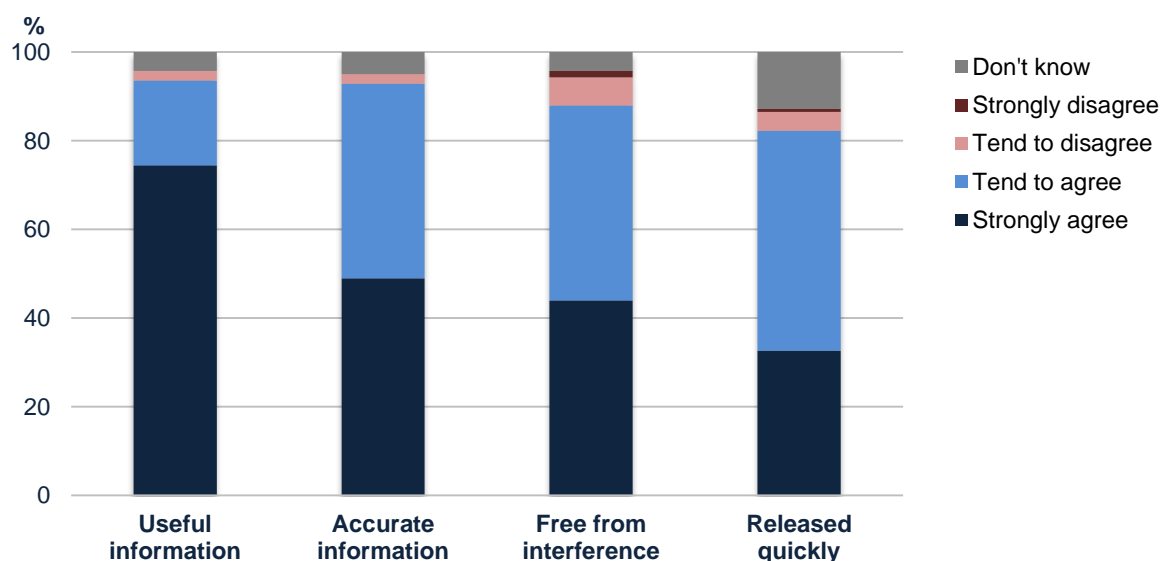
- In an attempt to measure community confidence in future ABS products, respondents were asked their level of agreement with statements related to the usefulness, accuracy, freedom from political interference and speed of release of future ABS statistics.
- Overall, members of the general community were more inclined to agree that future ABS statistics would provide useful and accurate information (84% and 78% agreed respectively) than be free from political interference (69% agreed) or released quickly (58% agreed).
- The same trend was observed amongst informed users of ABS statistics, however, they expressed higher levels of agreement with each statement, reflecting greater confidence in future ABS statistics, when compared to members of the general community.

Figure 10: Agreement with statements related to future ABS statistics – general community



Base: General community respondents familiar with ABS statistics (n=1,532)

Figure 11: Agreement with statements related to future ABS statistics – informed users of ABS statistics



Base: Informed users of ABS statistics in the last 12 months (n=141)

3. Tables of Results

Table 1: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – general community

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	30	51	7	2	10
Product trust in the ABS	18	58	13	3	7

Table 2: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users of ABS statistics

Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (n=142)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	73	27	0	0	0
Product trust in the ABS	65	34	1	0	0

Table 3: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users – Academics

Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (n=131)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	76	24	0	0	0
Product trust in the ABS	68	32	0	0	0

Table 4: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users – Economists and Journalists

Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (n=11)*	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	36	64	0	0	0
Product trust in the ABS	36	55	9	0	0

*Caution: Small sample size.

Table 5: Institutional trust in the ABS – general community – by socio-economic status

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
High SES	41	48	4	1	6
Moderate SES	30	55	6	1	8
Low SES	25	46	11	3	15

Table 6: Product trust in the ABS – general community – by socio-economic status

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
High SES	24	63	8	2	4
Moderate SES	20	59	15	3	5
Low SES	13	56	15	5	11

Table 7: Institutional trust in the ABS – general community – by knowledge of the ABS

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Know it well	60	30	4	4	3
Know it somewhat	40	51	8	1	1
Know a little bit	25	59	8	2	7
Only heard the name	13	45	9	3	31

Table 8: Product trust in the ABS – general community – by knowledge of the ABS

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (n=1,995)	Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Know it well	40	45	8	4	3
Know it somewhat	23	66	10	1	1
Know a little bit	13	62	14	4	7
Only heard the name	10	48	17	7	19

Table 9: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – general community – 2015 CTASS

Base: General community respondents aware of the ABS (2015 n=1,995; 2010 n=2,094)		Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	2015	30	51	7	2	10
	2010	29	49	15	1	6
Product trust in the ABS	2015	18	58	13	3	7
	2010	20	53	14	2	10

Table 10: Institutional and product trust in the ABS – informed users – 2015 CTASS

Base: Informed users of ABS statistics (2015 n=142; 2010 n=137)		Trust a great deal %	Tend to trust %	Tend to distrust %	Distrust a great deal %	Don't know %
Institutional trust in the ABS	2015	73	27	0	0	0
	2010	69	29	0	0	2
Product trust in the ABS	2015	65	34	1	0	0
	2010	64	33	1	0	2

Table 11: Agreement with statements related to future ABS statistics – general community

Base: General community respondents familiar with ABS statistics (n=1,532)	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Don't know %
Useful information	26	58	7	3	5
Accurate information	17	61	12	4	6
Free from interference	14	56	11	3	16
Released quickly	14	44	25	8	9

Table 12: Agreement with statements related to future ABS statistics – informed users of ABS statistics

Base: Informed users of ABS statistics in the last 12 months (n=142)	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Don't know %
Useful information	74	19	2	0	4
Accurate information	49	44	2	0	5
Free from interference	44	44	6	1	4
Released quickly	33	50	4	1	13

4. Methodology

- The 2015 CTASS was administered by the Social Research Centre (SRC) on behalf of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and involved two surveys conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI): a survey of the general community and of informed users of ABS statistics.
- The questionnaires were modified from the 2010 questionnaires by the ABS with consideration given to maintaining comparability with the 2010 surveys. SRC reviewed the questionnaires and provided recommendations based on recent best practice and available concordances and population benchmarks.
- The research was undertaken in accordance with the Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principles contained therein, the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2014, the Australian Market and Social Research Society's Code of Professional Practice, and ISO 20252 standards.

4.1. General community survey

- The 2015 CTASS design entailed the conduct of 2,200 interviews with Australians aged 15 years and over. A dual-frame (using both landline and mobile numbers) sample frame was used. The blend of mobile phone interviews was 50%.
- The randomly generated sample lists were purchased from SamplePages, one of the two main vendors supplying samples to the market and social research industry in Australia.
- For the landline sample, a 'best estimate' of postcode is assigned to each record at the number generation and testing stage, based on information available about the geographic area serviced by each individual telephone exchange. Therefore, to ensure a nationally representative sample, random sampling was conducted within 15 geographic strata (State / Territory, Capital City / Rest of State).
- For the mobile phone sample, phone numbers were generated and tested based on the known mobile phone number prefixes. No geographic information is currently available to researchers for mobile phone numbers generated in this way, therefore, the mobile sample was drawn as one sample strata.
- A summary of the distribution of interviews is presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Distribution of interviews for the General Community CTASS

Strata	Region	Quota	
		n	%
Landline			
1	Sydney	227	10.3
2	Rest of NSW	128	5.8
3	Melbourne	209	9.5
4	Rest of VIC	69	3.1
5	Brisbane	106	4.8
6	Rest of QLD	112	5.1
7	Adelaide	64	2.9
8	Rest of SA	20	0.9
9	Perth	88	4.0
10	Rest of WA	24	1.1
11	Hobart	11	0.5
12	Rest of TAS	13	0.6
13	Darwin	7	0.3
14	Rest of NT	4	0.2
15	ACT	18	0.8
Mobile			
16	Mobile	1100	50.0
Total			
All respondents		2,200	100

- For within-household respondent selection of the landline sample, a next birthday method of selection was used in 50% of cases and a modified Westat selection process in the remainder.
- As detailed in Table 14, a total of 69,108 calls were placed during June and July 2015 to a sample pool of 18,509 sample records to achieve 2,200 survey interviews. The co-operation rate for the survey (total interviews completed of the total number of interviews and refusals) was 61%. Non-response analysis was conducted and weighting applied to correct for variations between respondents and non-respondents.
- The general community survey recorded an average interview length of 13.3 minutes.

Table 14: Key field statistics – general community

Field	Key statistics
Target interviews	2,200
Interviews achieved	2,200
Average interview duration (minutes)	13.3 mins
Co-operation rate (sample yield)	60.6%
Response rate (AAPOR 3)*	18.5%
Total sample records used	18,509
Total calls placed	69,108
Fieldwork start date	2 June 2015
Fieldwork finish date	5 July 2015

*American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 3.

- To ensure estimates made from the general community survey were representative of Australians aged 15 years or older, weights were calculated for each respondent in the dataset. Initial weights were calculated as the inverse of the product of the probability of selection (accounting for the overlapping mobile and landline populations) and of the probability of response (based on a regression model incorporating auxiliary data available for both respondents and non-respondents). The initial weights were then adjusted so that they satisfied population benchmarks for age, gender, state, education, country of birth, and telephone status.
- For comparison with the 2010 CTASS results, it was necessary to obtain a dual-frame estimate for the 2010 survey, given that only a landline estimate was available in 2010 (as the sample frame at that time was the Electronic White Pages and mobile numbers were not included in the sample). The ABS therefore developed a weighting strategy to allow for the calculation of a dual-frame estimate. The efficacy of the adjustments relies heavily on the assumptions of “constant proportionality” between landline and mobile phone responses. As these assumptions cannot be tested, time series results presented in this report should therefore be treated as indicative only.
- Statistical significance testing was conducted using the well-known Kish approximations (IBM, 2011; Kish, 1965; Potthoff et al, 1992)¹. Caution should be used when drawing conclusions about reported significant differences for sub-groups where the effective sample size is not an adequate representation.
- Subgroup categories (for example male and female for gender) were derived from sample details (such as state for the landline sample) or questions asked in the survey. The one exception was socio-economic status (SES) which was derived from the education and occupation questions asked in the survey with concordance to data available from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).²

¹ IBM Corporation (2011). IBM SPSS Data Collection Survey Reporter 6.0.1 User's Guide.

Kish, Leslie (1965). *Survey Sampling*. New York: Wiley. ISBN 978-0471109495.

Potthoff, R. F., Woodbury, M. A. and K. G. Manton (1992) “Equivalent sample size” and “Equivalent degrees of freedom” refinements for inference using survey weights under superpopulation models. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 87, 383-396.

² McMillan, J., Jones, F. L. and Beavis, A. (2009) *A New Scale for Measuring Socioeconomic Status in Educational Research: Development and validation of the Australian Socioeconomic Index 2006 (AUSEI06)*. Paper presented at the 2009 AARE International Education Research Conference, Canberra: National Convention Centre

4.2. Informed users survey

- The informed users survey set out to complete around 140 interviews from a list of 191 users of ABS statistics (see Table 15). The list comprised of three different sample types: academics, economists and journalists. No quotas were set by sample type, however, additional attempts were made to maximise responses from the two smallest sample groups, economists and journalists.
- The final numbers achieved within sample groups were reflective of the sampling approach applied to each. As such, journalists and academics, who had consented to participating in the survey after receiving prior notification from the ABS, recording higher participation rates than economists who were approached cold.

Table 15: Distribution of interviews for the informed users

Selected characteristics	Sample records provided	Interviews achieved	Proportion of sample
Type	No.	No.	%
Academic	163	131	80
Journalist	2	2	100
Economist	26	9	35
Total	191	142	74

- As detailed in Table 16, a total 553 calls were placed to achieve 142 survey interviews. The co-operation rate for the survey was 99%. The informed users survey recorded an average interview length of 13.1 minutes.

Table 16: Key field statistics – Informed users

Field	Key statistics
Target interviews	140
Interviews achieved	142
Average interview duration (minutes)	13.1 mins
Co-operation rate (sample yield)	98.6%
Response rate (APPOR 3)	77.3%
Total sample records used	191
Total calls placed	553
Fieldwork start date	10 June 2015
Fieldwork finish date	24 June 2015

- For reporting purposes, the two smallest user groups (economists, n=9; and journalists, n=2) have been combined to protect the privacy of the smallest group and to ensure their individual responses are not identifiable. Weighting was not applied to the informed users data.