Australian Bureau of Statistics
INFORMATION PAPER

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CENSUS 81—INCOME

PHONE INQUIRIES	*for more information about these statistics*—contact Mr Fred Dawes on Canberra (062) 52 5848 or any of our State offices.
	other inquiries including copies of publications—contact Information Services on Canberra (062) 52 6627 or in any of our State offices.
MAIL INQUIRIES	*write to* Information Services, ABS, P.O. Box 10, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616 or any of our State offices.

Introduction

A question on income was asked of all persons aged 15 years and over in the 1981 Census of Population and Housing.

Individual income was then used to tabulate family and household income.

Income (whether individual, family or household) can be cross-classified with other items, including a special classification of family type which is an important variable for welfare oriented analysis.

This paper examines the census concept of income, some of its problems and how the classifications of income statistics are derived.

The question

The wording and format of the 1981 Census question on income is shown below.

Non-response and accuracy

It is expected that the non-response rate for the 1981 Census income question will be about the same as in the 1976 Census, which was 7.5 per cent. The Census Content Check conducted immediately after the 1976 Census showed that most non-respondents were low income earners; also that a significant proportion of people reported their net income, instead of gross income as asked for. A similar check was not made after the 1981 Census, but it is likely that these findings apply.

Individual income (INC)

Individual income is obtained directly from question 21 on the census schedule which is a self-coding question. It is the basis for deriving both family and household incomes. The question asked at the 1981 Census differs from that asked in 1976 only in that the ranges of income given as response categories were adjusted to allow for changes in money values.

21. What is the gross income (including pensions and/or allowances) that each person usually receives each week from all sources?

- If unable to estimate income on a weekly basis, tick the appropriate box to show present income on an annual basis.

- Count all income, wages, salary, overtime, family allowance [illegible], [illegible] superannuation, tips and gratuities, business or farm income (less expenses of operation), unemployment benefits, etc..
- Do not deduct tax, superannuation, health insurance, etc..

No income	☐ 1
Less than $19 p.wk. Less than $1000 p.yr.	☐ 2
$19 to $38 p.wk. $1000 to $2000 p.yr.	☐ 3
$39 to $58 p.wk. $2001 to $3000 p.yr.	☐ 4
$59 to $77 p.wk. $3001 to $4000 p.yr.	☐ 5
$78 to $115 p.wk. $4001 to $6000 p.yr.	☐ 6
$116 to $154 p.wk. $6001 to $8000 p.yr.	☐ 7
$155 to $192 p.wk. $8001 to $10000 p.yr.	☐ 8
$193 to $231 p.wk. $10001 to $12000 p.yr.	☐ 9
$232 to $288 p.wk. $12001 to $15000 p.yr.	☐ 10
$289 to $346 p.wk. $15001 to $18000 p.yr.	☐ 11
$347 to $423 p.wk. $18001 to $22000 p.yr.	☐ 12
$424 to $500 p.wk. $22001 to $26000 p.yr.	☐ 13
Over $500 p.wk. Over $26000 p.yr.	☐ 14

The responses to the income question are classified as follows:

Individual income (INC)

Code	*Descriptor*
00	Not applicable
01	None
02	Less than $1,000
03	$1,000-$2,000
04	$2,001-$3,000
05	$3,001-$4,000
06	$4,001-$6,000
07	$6,001-$8,000
08	$8,001-$10,000
09	$10,001-$12,000
10	$12,001-$15,000
11	$15,001-$18,000
12	$18,001-$22,000
13	$22,001-$26,000
14	Over $26,000
15	Not stated

Family income (FIN)

For census purposes family income is defined as the sum of the individual incomes of the head of a family and spouse, where both were present on census night, or the individual income of the head where no spouse was present.

In the census, the head of a family is:

(a) the household head (Person 1 on the census schedule) in a Primary Family Unit (PFU);

(b) the husband in a Secondary Family Unit (SFU);

(c) the single parent in an SFU consisting of a lone parent and child/ren; or

(d) a single person living alone.

Whereas the spouse in a PFU can be a husband or wife (including de facto), in an SFU the spouse is always the wife. (A more detailed description of census families will be found in *Census 81-Dwelling, Household, Family* (2150.0)).

The same income ranges used to classify individual income are used for family income (i.e. ranges from 'less than $1,000' to 'over $26,000'). Family income is calculated by adding together the mid-points of the individual incomes of the head and spouse (or the head only if no spouse is present).

Where the individual income of either the head or the spouse is not stated the following rules apply:

(a) where either one of head or spouse has not stated his/her income, and the other income is reported as 'over $26,000', family income is recorded as 'over $26,000';

(b) where either one of head or spouse has not stated his/her income and the other has either not stated his/her income, or the stated income falls below the range 'over $26,000', family income is recorded as 'not stated';

(c) if the head of household is aged less than 15 years, the family income is recorded as 'none'.

To keep the definition of family income standard regardless of the composition of the census family, the calculation of FIN excludes any income of other members of the family apart from the head and spouse (e.g. income of children aged 15 years or more, or of the parents of the head or spouse is not included).

Family relationships, for census purposes, are only coded for private dwellings. Families are defined on the basis of blood and marriage (including de facto) relationships. Family units are identified by the relationship of individuals to other members of that family or to other families within that household, and are largely based on the principle of a nuclear (immediate) family i.e. mother, father, children.

When considering family income it should be remembered that persons were enumerated where they spent census night and not where they usually lived. Thus, where a family consists normally of a head and spouse but one or the other was absent from their usual residence for any reason on census night, the census will show the family as having a head only. This point must be taken into account in any analysis of income of families without a spouse.

On the census unit record file, family income is held for each person in the family as the variable FIN.

Household income (HIN)

For census purposes, household income is defined as the sum of the individual incomes of all members of a household. A household is defined as a group of people living in an occupied private dwelling and having common eating arrangements. (There is no census concept of a household in non-private dwellings).

The same income ranges used to classify individual or family income are used to classify household income (i.e. from 'less than $1,000' to 'over $26,000').

Household income is calculated by adding the mid-points of the ranges of the individual incomes of the persons in the household. Where the individual income of one or more members of a household is not stated but the sum of the remaining individual incomes exceeds $26,000, household income is shown as 'over $26,000'. Otherwise household income is shown as 'not stated'.

On the census unit record file, household income is held for each person in the household as the variable HIN.

Income unit type (IUT)

This is a derived classification of family type and relates only to persons in occupied private dwellings. Income unit type is classified as follows:

Code	*Descriptor*
0	Not applicable
1	Head and spouse only
2	Head, spouse and dependants
3	Head only and dependants
4	Head only
5	Other adult family member
6	Adult non-family member

where dependants are defined as *all* children counted on census night who are 0-15 years of age and all *issue* children 16-20 years of age who are full-time students. (Please refer to *Census 81—Dwelling, Household, Family* (2150.0) for more information about the IUT classification).

On the census unit record file, income unit type is held for each person in the household as the variable IUT.

For tables which cross-classify income with IUT the following rules apply:

(a) for IUT codes 1-3, family income is used and either families or individuals are counted, depending on the table;

(b) for IUT codes 4-6, individual income is used and persons are counted.

Median income

Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below it. The median income measure, which can be calculated for individual, family and household incomes, as well as particular income unit types, is a useful derived measure for examining income statistics.

This calculation can be done by anyone using the income statistics but no statistics on median income will be published by the ABS.

It should be noted that, as the top income range is open-ended (i.e. 'over $26,000') it is not possible to calculate a mean (or average) income.

Expenditure

The only area in which information on expenditure was obtained in the census was amount of rent paid for rented dwellings or amount of mortgage repayments for dwellings under mortgage. This information is available at the household level only.

Related publications

Statistics on all the topics discussed in this paper are available in statistical publications, on microfiche and in magnetic tape summary files.

A general discussion of the statistics planned from the 1981 Census is contained in *Census 81—Data Release Plans* (2142.0) and its *Addendum*.

Other related publications are;

Catalogue of 1981 Census Tables (2139.0)(a)
Making Sense of Census 81 (2140.0)
Geographic Code List (2141.0)(a)
Census 81—Data Release Plans (2142.0)(a)
Census 81—Data Release Plans, Addendum (2142.0)(a)
Census 81—Magnetic Tape Summary Files (2143.0)
Census 81—Statistical Publications (2144.0)(a)
Census 81—Microfiche (2145.0)
Census 81—Maps (2146.0)(a)
Census 81—Industry (2147.0)
Census 81—Occupation (2148.0)
Census 81—Education Qualifications (2149.0)
Census 81—Dwelling, Household, Family (2150.0)
Census 81—Language (2152.0)
Census 81—Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (2153.0)
Census 81—Journey to Work (2154.0)
Census 81—Usual Residence and Internal Migration (2155.0)
Census 81—Effects of Introduced Random Error (2156.0)(a)

(a) already available.

Further inquiries

If you require any further information about this topic or any other aspect of the census, please contact one of the offices listed in the Appendix.

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APPENDIX

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