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## QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

### Introduction

This paper discusses the major underlying concepts and the questions used in the Labour Force Survey and changes made to the questionnaire. A copy of the current questionnaire is attached.

2. The ABS has been conducting labour force surveys since 1960 to collect labour force and other characteristics of the population. The surveys were undertaken on a quarterly basis before February 1978 and have been monthly since then.

3. The labour force survey questionnaire is a document used by interviewers, who are required to ask questions exactly as they appear on the questionnaire in order to ensure consistency of approach in all interviews. Interviewers are trained in the manner of their approaches to households, the significance of the questions in relation to the objectives of the survey, and to assist respondents to appreciate the relevance of the questions to their particular circumstances in order to obtain accurate responses. While the questionnaire may appear formidable if simply read through from beginning to end, in practice a trained interviewer, by following the sequencing of the questionnaire, puts questions appropriate to each person's labour force experience in a manner easily understood by respondents. In addition to initial training, all interviewers are regularly supervised and retrained.

### Development of the labour force survey questionnaire

4. Since 1960, the questionnaire used in the survey for the collection of labour force data has undergone the following development:

- (a) the inclusion in August 1966 of some additional questions on the steps taken to find a job by persons looking for work;
- (b) the introduction in November 1972 of questions seeking information on country of birth and year of arrival in Australia;
- (c) in February 1975 persons who were not employed were asked whether they were looking for work during the previous four weeks instead of during the previous week only. Those who were looking for work during this period were asked whether they would have been able to take a job in the

reference week had one become available;

- (d) a substantial redesign in November 1977 to provide more accurate information on the labour force, to improve the structure of the questions asked and to make them easier to understand and less likely to be misinterpreted;
- (e) in November 1981 a number of minor amendments were made, in particular to the questions which seek to determine whether or not persons reporting that they were looking for work had taken active steps to find a job during the previous four weeks;
- (f) in October 1982 additional questions were asked to enable the identification of usual residence and family relationship. An additional response category was included to identify persons whose standard working arrangements were less than 35 hours in the reference week. There was also some minor rewording and re-ordering of questions;
- (g) in April 1985, the questionnaire was amended following the extension of the definition of employed persons to include persons who worked without pay between 1 and 14 hours per week in a family business or on a farm (i.e. unpaid family helpers). This revised definition aligns the Australian labour force concepts with a set of changed international definitions adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 1982. The number of questions was also increased to accommodate additional topics e.g. persons aged 15-24 attending an educational institution full time;
- (h) in November 1989, Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) was adopted to process survey responses. The introduction of OMR necessitated a complete redesign of the questionnaire to accommodate OMR requirements although there were no changes to questions; and
- (i) in April 1991, the questionnaire was changed slightly to reflect the adoption of a new classification (the *Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics*) for coding country of birth. There were no changes to questions.

### INQUIRIES

- for further information about the contents of this publication or the availability of labour force data products and services, contact Ivan Neville on Canberra (06) 252 6565 or any ABS State office.
- for information about other ABS statistics and services please refer to the back page of this publication.

5. Further details of these changes made to the questionnaires and the reasons for the changes were published in previous issues of this publication in March 1978, December 1981, August 1984, June 1986 and June 1991.

#### Amendments to the questionnaire, February 1993

6. In February 1993, the following amendments were introduced:

- (a) questions about the kind of work undertaken by the respondents in their job (or jobs) were changed to ensure that specific details of the job title and the main tasks or duties are recorded; and
- (b) the question on whether the respondent is studying full time at a tertiary educational institution was changed to remove reference to technical colleges and colleges of advanced education. Some minor rewording changes were also made.

#### Scope

7. The survey includes all persons aged 15 years and over except:

- (a) members of the permanent defence forces;
- (b) certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from census and resident populations;
- (c) overseas residents in Australia; and
- (d) members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.

#### Definitions

8. The labour force category to which a person is assigned depends on the *actual activity* undertaken during the reference week (i.e. whether working, looking for work, etc.). The following definitions, which conform closely to the international standard definitions specified by the International Labour Organisation, relate only to those persons within the scope of the survey.

9. The *labour force* comprises all persons who, during the reference week, were *employed* or *unemployed* as defined below.

10. *Employed persons* comprise all those aged 15 years and over who, during the reference week:

- (a) worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind in a job or business, or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and self-employed persons); or
- (b) worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. unpaid family helpers); or
- (c) were employees who had a job but were not at work and were: on paid leave; on leave without

pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; stood down without pay because of bad weather or plant breakdown at their place of employment for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; on strike or locked out; on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; or receiving wages or salary while undertaking full-time study; or

- (d) were employers, self-employed persons or unpaid family helpers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work

11. *Unemployed persons* are those aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- (a) had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and:

- (i) were available for work in the reference week, or would have been available except for temporary illness (i.e. lasting for less than four weeks to the end of the reference week); or
- (ii) were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and would have started in the reference week if the job had been available then; or

- (b) were waiting to be called back to a full-time or part-time job from which they had been stood down without pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week (including the whole of the reference week) for reasons other than bad weather or plant breakdown.

12. *Persons not in the labour force* are those who, during the reference week, were not in the categories *employed* or *unemployed*, as defined in paragraphs 10 and 11. They include persons who were keeping house (unpaid), retired, voluntarily inactive, permanently unable to work, persons in institutions (hospitals, gaols, sanatoriums, etc.), trainee teachers, members of contemplative religious orders, and persons whose only activity during the reference week was jury service or unpaid voluntary work for a charitable organisation.

#### Guidelines for following the questionnaire

##### General

13. The questionnaire attached relates to the February, May, August and November surveys. For the remaining months of the year a slightly modified questionnaire (not attached) which does not ask for occupation, employer and industry details of those who are employed is used.

14. The questionnaires are structured so that details are collected as follows:

Pages 1-2 Demographic and survey control information

- Pages 3-4 Persons who actually worked during the reference week
- Pages 5-6 Persons who had a job but were not at work during the reference week
- Pages 7-8 Persons looking for work and final determination of persons not in the labour force.

*Identifying Unemployed Persons from the Questionnaire*  
15. In order for a person to be classified to the *looking for work* sub-category of the unemployed, the following three conditions must be fulfilled in the following order:

- (a) persons have to answer 'Yes' to a question which asks whether they have looked for work at any time during the last four weeks, that is;

Answer 'Yes' to question 68 or question 69.

- (b) persons must have taken an active step during the last four weeks to find work, that is;

Answer one of categories 01 to 07 in Question 70.

- (c) persons must fulfil the availability for work conditions specified in the definition given above (see paragraph 11 (a)). Availability is determined by:

Questions 71 to 75.

16. In order to be classified to the *stood down* sub-category of the unemployed (normally very few in number), persons must fulfil the conditions as specified in the definition given above (see paragraph 11 (b)). The questions that determine if these conditions are fulfilled are:

Question 55 and questions 58 to 63.

#### *Questionnaire Conventions*

17. The reasons for different type faces on the questionnaire are:

#### **CAPITALS:**

This is used for all the questions that need to be read out fully by the interviewer. For some questions (e.g. questions 30 and 40) the interviewer must also read out the categories down the page until a positive response is given.

#### **Lower case:**

This is reserved for the coding of answers given by respondents. These words are not read out by the interviewer.

#### *Italics:*

This is used for all instructions to interviewers.

18. The labour force survey is conducted on the basis that any responsible adult member of the household should usually be able to answer the questions pertaining to all residents. In the design of the questionnaire, use has been made of ". . ." when someone's name or a pronoun is to be inserted in the sentence, e.g. sometimes 'you' will be inserted and sometimes 'your husband', 'your wife' etc.

#### **Related publications**

19. Users may wish to refer to the following publications which relate to the labour force and are available on request:

*The Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary* (6202.0)—issued monthly

*The Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0)—issued monthly

*Information Paper: Labour Force Survey Sample Design* (6269.0)

*Information Paper: Revised Labour Force Survey Estimates: January 1984 to January 1989* (6276.0)

*Information Paper: Measuring Employment and Unemployment* (6279.0)

20. Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products, Australia* (1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Publications Advice* (1105.0) which lists publications to be released in the next few days. The Catalogue and Publications Advice are available from any ABS office.

#### **Unpublished statistics**

21. In some cases, the ABS can also make available information which is not published. This information is available on a number of media such as floppy disk, microfiche and customised reports. In general, a charge is made for providing unpublished information. Inquiries regarding the availability of unpublished labour force data should be made to Heather Crawford on Canberra (06) 252 6525 or any ABS State office.

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Acting Australian Statistician









<p>42. DID .... HAVE A JOB, BUSINESS OR FARM THAT .... WAS AWAY FROM BECAUSE OF HOLIDAYS, SICKNESS OR ANY OTHER REASON?</p> <p>Yes ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No ..... → Q.68 <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>48. I WOULD NOW LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THAT JOB.</p>
<p>43. DID .... HAVE MORE THAN ONE JOB?</p> <p>Yes ..... → Q.46 <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<p>49. WHO DOES .... WORK FOR? (Name/Full address)</p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>44. WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES .... DO?</p> <p>(Title)..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Main tasks/duties)..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>50. WHAT KIND OF INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, OR SERVICE IS CARRIED OUT AT THAT ADDRESS?</p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>45. → Q.49</p>	<p>51. DOES .... WORK -</p> <p>FOR AN EMPLOYER FOR WAGES OR SALARY? ..... → Q.55 <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>IN .... OWN BUSINESS WITH EMPLOYEES? ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>WITH NO EMPLOYEES? ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>WITHOUT PAY IN A FAMILY BUSINESS? ..... → Q.53 <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>WHAT ARE .... WORKING ARRANGEMENTS?</p> <p>Payment in kind → Q.55 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Unpaid voluntary work → Q.68 <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
<p>46. WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES .... DO IN EACH OF .... JOBS?</p> <p>Job 1 (Title)..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Main tasks/duties) ..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Job 2 (Title) ..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Main tasks/duties)..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>..... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>52. IS .... BUSINESS A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY?</p> <p>Yes ..... → Q.55 <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>No ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>
<p>47. IN WHICH JOB DOES .... USUALLY WORK THE MOST HOURS?</p> <p>Job 1 in Q.46 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Job 2 in Q.46 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>53. WHY WAS .... AWAY FROM WORK LAST WEEK?</p> <p>Own illness or injury ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 1</p> <p>Holiday/personal reasons ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 2</p> <p>No work available ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p>Bad weather/breakdown ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p>On strike/locked out ..... <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Other..... <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
	<p>54. → Q.63</p>

## 55. WHY WAS .... AWAY FROM WORK LAST WEEK?

- Own illness or injury ..... 1
- Leave, holiday or flexitime/  
personal reasons → Q.61 ..... 2
- Bad weather/breakdown  
→ Q.61 ..... 3
- Stood down .. → Q.58 ..... 4
- No work/insufficient work  
→ Q.59 ..... 5
- On strike/locked out  
→ Q.63 ..... 6
- Usually works less than one hour  
a week/began job/lost job → Q.68 ..... 7
- Other .....  
..... → Q.61 ..... 8

## 56. WAS .... ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAST WEEK?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... → Q.61 ..... 2

## 57. WILL .... BE RETURNING TO WORK FOR .... EMPLOYER?

- Yes ..... → Q.63 ..... 1
- No ..... → Q.68 ..... 2
- Don't know .. → Q.68 ..... 3

## 58. WHY WAS .... STOOD DOWN?

- Bad weather/breakdown  
→ Q.61 ..... 1
- Other ..... 2

## 59. WAS .... PAID OR WILL .... BE PAID FOR ANY OF LAST WEEK?

- Yes ..... → Q.63 ..... 1
- No ..... 2

## 60. HOW LONG HAS .... BEEN AWAY FROM WORK WITHOUT PAY?

- One week ... → Q.63 ..... 1
- Two weeks ... → Q.63 ..... 2
- Three weeks .. → Q.63 ..... 3
- Four weeks or more  
→ Q.68 ..... 4

## 61. UP UNTIL THE END OF LAST WEEK, HOW LONG HAD .... BEEN AWAY FROM WORK?

- Less than 4 weeks → Q.63 ..... 1
- 4 weeks or more ..... 2

## 62. WAS .... PAID OR WILL .... BE PAID FOR ANY PART OF THE LAST FOUR WEEKS?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... → Q.68 ..... 2

## 63. HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DOES .... USUALLY WORK IN (ALL) .... JOB(S)?

- 35 hours or more  
(No more questions) ..... 1
- 1-34 hours ..... 2
- No hours  
(No more questions) .. 3

## 64. WOULD .... PREFER A JOB IN WHICH .... WORKED MORE HOURS A WEEK?

- Yes ..... 1
- No (No more questions) .. 2
- Don't know  
(No more questions) ..... 3

## 65. AT ANY TIME DURING THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS .... BEEN LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK?

- Yes ..... 1
- No (No more questions) .. 2

## 66. AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS ....

WRITTEN, PHONED OR APPLIED IN PERSON TO AN EMPLOYER FOR WORK? ..... 01

ANSWERED A NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT FOR A JOB? ..... 02

LOOKED IN NEWSPAPERS? ..... 03

- Yes ..... 01
- No ..... 02

CHECKED FACTORY OR COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE NOTICE BOARDS? ..... 03

AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST 4 WEEKS HAS ....

BEEN REGISTERED WITH THE COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE? ..... 04

CHECKED OR REGISTERED WITH ANY OTHER EMPLOYMENT AGENCY? ..... 05

DONE ANYTHING ELSE TO FIND A JOB? ..... 06

Advertised or tendered for work ..... 06

Contacted friends/relatives .. .. 07

Other..... ..... 07

..... ..... 08

Only looked in newspapers.. .. 09

None of these..... ..... 10

67. No more questions ◀







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