



Australian Government



National
Skills
Commission

Labour market data: quick reference guide

What is the primary source for labour market data?

The ABS Labour Force Survey is the official source of labour force statistics. The survey covers approximately 26,000 dwellings, resulting in a sample of approximately 50,000 people or 0.32% of the civilian population aged 15 years and over each month. The survey provides consistent definitions and estimates for employment, unemployment, the unemployment rate and labour force participation rate. Data are published in original and seasonally adjusted terms (the trend series the ABS usually publishes has been suspended for the foreseeable future). For more information on these series and other common labour market statistics definitions and calculations, see the glossary on page 3.

Links to the data

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Labour Force Survey

The ABS Labour Force Survey contains key estimates of labour market activity at the national, state/territory and regional level. New data are released monthly on the 3rd and 4th Thursday of the month. The ABS publish release dates months in advance.

- ✚ The [monthly release](#) includes key economic indicators, i.e. data on employed persons, underemployed workers, unemployed persons, the unemployment rate, hours worked and the participation rate.
- ✚ The [detailed monthly and quarterly release](#) contains more detailed data, including duration of unemployment, regional and by age. Industry and occupation data are included in this release but are only collected and updated quarterly (February, May, August and November).

ABS 2016 Census of Population and Housing

The Census is the best source of detailed data and can provide useful benchmarks at the regional level. However, the information is becoming dated and doesn't reflect the impact of COVID-19.

- ✚ [Quick stats](#) provides a broad range of data for a wide range of geographies (down to Local Government Areas and Statistical Area Level 2), including by age, education, culture, language and diversity and employment.
- ✚ [Community profiles](#) provide a more detailed data breakdown of the above (in Microsoft Excel tables).

The next Census is scheduled for 2021 with a first data release expected in 2022.

Weekly Payroll Jobs

The [ABS Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages release](#) provides experimental weekly estimates on the impact of COVID-19 on payroll jobs and wages, sourced from Single Touch Payroll (STP) data. Data are released fortnightly and include estimates of jobs by geography (down to the Statistical Area 3 level), sex, age, industry and business size. Note that these data are subject to revision and only cover businesses who use the STP system, which constitutes approximately 99 per cent of large employers (20 or more employees) and 77 per cent of small employers (less than 20 employees).

Labour Market Information Portal (LMIP)

The [Labour Market Information Portal](#) brings together data from a range of official sources (including the ABS data noted above) to help users better understand their local labour market. To stay up to date with all the latest LMIP data releases, email LMIP@skillscommission.gov.au to subscribe to the fortnightly newsletter.

- ✚ [Employment Regions data](#): provides interactive maps to explore employment data, industry and occupation trends, and Centrelink and Government employment services customer data. Data are also available at the [Statistical Area Level 4 \(SA4\)](#) and updated on a monthly basis where available.
- ✚ [Labour Market Information Portal - Data Visualisations](#): helps users visually explore labour market data, including various industry, occupation and internet vacancy related data at the SA4 and SA2 (unemployment rate and unemployed persons) levels.
- ✚ [Employers' recruitment insights](#): provides insights into recruitment, including what employers are looking for in applicants and how job seekers can better connect with employment opportunities (updated frequently).
- ✚ [Vacancy data and reports](#): the Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) provides detailed data for vacancies advertised online, for around 350 occupations (at all skill levels), as well as for states/territories and 37 regions (updated monthly). The IVI is based on a count of online job advertisements newly lodged on SEEK, CareerOne and Australian JobSearch during the month.
- ✚ [Small Area Labour Market \(SALM\) data](#): quarterly regional estimates of unemployment and the unemployment rate at the Statistical Area Level 2 and Local Government Area level (updated quarterly).

Australian Jobs publication

- ✚ [Australian Jobs](#) provides an overview of trends in the Australian labour market. It is designed to support a range of users, including students, career advisers, job seekers and employment service providers, those considering future training and work and people interested in labour market issues. The 2020 edition was released on 24 November and is available online [here](#).

Job Outlook

- ✚ [Job Outlook](#) combines data from official sources, including the Census, with National Skills Commission research to provide detailed information on employment characteristics for more than 1,000 occupations.

Glossary of common labour market terms and calculations

The definitions provided in the table below are primarily sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website and can be found on the [Labour Force Australia methodology release](#), [Labour Force framework](#) and [labour statistics explained, frequently asked questions](#).

The definitions used by the ABS have remained largely unchanged since the 1960s and align closely with the standards and guidelines set out in Resolutions of International Conferences of Labour Statisticians.

Term	Definition	Summary
Civilian population aged 15 years and over	All usual residents of Australia aged 15 years and over, except members of the permanent defence forces, certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments customarily excluded from census and estimated population counts, overseas residents in Australia, and members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia.	Persons aged 15 and over
Employed	All persons aged 15 years and over who met one of the following criteria during the reference week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (employees and owner managers of incorporated or unincorporated enterprises). • Worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (contributing family workers). • Were employees who had a job but were not at work and were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or ○ away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four-week period to the end of the reference week; or ○ away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement; or ○ on strike or locked out; or ○ on workers' compensation and expected to return to their job. • Were owner managers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work. 	Total employed (includes full-time, part-time, away from work and hours worked not stated)
Employed full-time	Includes employed persons who usually work 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, work 35 hours or more during the reference week.	35 hours or more per week
Employed part-time	Includes employed persons who usually work less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week or were not at work in the reference week.	<35 hours per week
Labour force	For any group, persons who were employed or unemployed, as defined.	Labour Force = Total employed + Total unemployed
Labour force status	A classification of the civilian population aged 15 years and over into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force. These categories are exclusive: a person can only be defined as one of these.	A person can be employed, or unemployed, or not in the labour force

Glossary of common labour market terms and calculations cont'd

Long-term unemployed (LTU)	Persons unemployed for 52 weeks or more. Additionally, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very long-term unemployed: persons unemployed for 2 years or more. • Extremely long-term unemployed: persons unemployed for 5 years or more (this is a commonly used term but data for this group are not available from the LFS). 	52+ weeks unemployed
Not in the labour force	Persons who were not in the categories employed or unemployed, as defined. Includes people who undertook unpaid household duties or other voluntary work only, were retired, voluntarily inactive and those permanently unable to work.	Persons not employed nor unemployed
Participation rate	For any group, the labour force expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 years and over in the same group.	= Labour Force ÷ Civilian Population
Time series adjustments	There are a few different estimations for Labour Force Survey time series data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original series: Raw, unadjusted data, that include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ systematic calendar related events; ○ short-term irregular fluctuations; and ○ long-term cyclical behaviour • Seasonally adjusted series: a time series of estimates with the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation removed (such as spikes in retail activity in December or seasonal crop harvesting). • Trend series: Seasonally adjusted estimates can be smoothed to reduce the impact of irregular or non-seasonal influences. Smoothed seasonally adjusted series are called trend estimates. <p>Since March 2020, given the extent of change in Labour Force time series due to COVID-19, the ABS has temporarily suspended trend series and moved to using forward factors for seasonal adjustment. The timing of the reinstatement of this trend series is unknown at this stage.</p>	
Unemployed	Persons aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 were available for work in the reference week; or • were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then. 	Not working but actively looking for work
Unemployment rate	For any group, the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force in the same group.	= Unemployed ÷ Labour Force
Working age population	Civilian population aged 15 to 64 years.	Persons aged 15 to 64
Youth	Civilian population aged 15 to 24 years.	Persons aged 15 to 24