ABS SUBMISSION

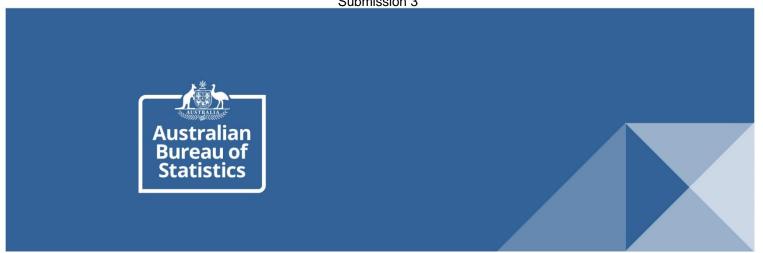## Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care

September 2022

ABS SUBMISSION
Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care
September 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) welcomes the opportunity to support the work of the Select Committee through this submission.

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency. The ABS' purpose is to inform Australia's important decisions by delivering relevant, trusted and objective data, statistics, and insights.

This submission describes ABS information relating to work and care which may be relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care. The submission covers the:

- Labour Force Survey and its supplementary topics
- Census of Population and Housing
- Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
- National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Multi-Agency Data Integration Project.

For inquiries about this submission,

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Labour Force Survey

The monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides the most authoritative and up to date estimates of labour market activity of Australia's resident civilian population aged 15 years and over. The LFS provides key statistics on employment, unemployment, and underemployment for the whole of Australia and each state and territory, as well as more detailed labour market-specific data, including hours of work and other working arrangements.

To provide further information and insights, the ABS collects periodic supplementary topics with the LFS. One such topic is 'Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation', which has traditionally been collected every second year, with 2020-21 data to be released in November 2022.

Data from this topic includes reasons people were unavailable to start a job or work more hours (such as caring for children or caring for people with disability) and the importance of incentives for people to join or increase their participation in the labour force (such as access to childcare or financial assistance with childcare costs).

Participation, Job Search and Mobility is another topic that collects information on the extent to which caring activities influence the availability for work and job search activity. The ABS collects this every February.

More information is available here:

- Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation
- Participation, Job Search and Mobility

ABS SUBMISSION
Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care
September 2022

Census of Population and Housing

The Census of Population and Housing (Census) is the most comprehensive snapshot of the country. The Census is conducted every five years, most recently in August 2021.

The Census collects information about a wide range of characteristics of people, including caring responsibilities and labour force status.

A question on caring responsibilities has been included in the Census since 2006. All respondents aged 15 years and over are asked:

- 'In the last two weeks did the person spend time providing unpaid care, help or assistance to family members or others because of a disability, a long-term health condition, or problems related to old age?'

Examples of unpaid care, help or assistance include common daily activities such as bathing and dressing, helping someone be understood by others, cleaning, cooking, and providing emotional support and helping maintain social activities. In 2021 there were around 2.5 million people aged 15 years and over who provided unpaid assistance to others with a disability, long-term health condition or due to old age.

The Census also asks about unpaid child care; that is, whether a person spent time caring for a child or children aged under 15 years without pay in the last two weeks.

The Census includes a range of questions on income and work, including personal, family and household income, hours worked, occupation and industry of employment, and labour force status. Labour force status provides information on whether a person was employed, unemployed or not in the labour force in the week prior to the Census.

Questions relating to labour force status were first asked in the 1911 Census, with response categories revised in 2006 to align more closely with ABS labour force concepts. The ABS will release data for 2021 on employment variables including labour force status on 12 October 2022.

The Census therefore provides a range of information on work and care, and, as it includes everybody in the population, can provide a wealth of further information on relationships between work and care and other socio-demographic topics for small population groups (for example, people born in other countries) and areas (for example, remoteness areas).

Care should be taken when comparing Census data on caring with information from other ABS surveys, as definitions and methodology can differ between different statistical collections and may not match Census definitions.

More information is available here:
- [Unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition, or due to old age](#)
- [Unpaid child care](#)
- [Income and work](#)
- [Labour force status](#)

ABS SUBMISSION
Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care
September 2022

Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) collects information from three target populations:
- people with disability
- older people (those aged 65 years and over)
- carers of people with disability or a long-term health condition or older people.

SDAC is the primary source of information about disability in Australia and provides a socio-demographic profile of people with disability, older people and carers compared with the general population. It includes information on labour force participation and employment restrictions.

The SDAC was most recently conducted in 2018, following similar surveys conducted every three years since 2009 and around every six years back to 1981. ABS is currently conducting the 2022-23 cycle of the survey and expects to publish results in the first half of 2024.

According to the SDAC, in 2018 there were 2.65 million carers in Australia, down from 2.70 million in 2015. Carers aged 15-64 years living in households were less likely to be employed (66.6 per cent) than non-carers (77.4 per cent).

More information is available here:

- Carers

National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing

The National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (NSMHW) provides information on the number of Australians with mental disorders such as anxiety, depression and substance use. It includes a range of questions on socio-demographic characteristics of people including whether a person provides unpaid care, help or assistance to someone with a long-term health condition, disability or a problem related to old age, and the number of hours they spend each week on providing this care.

The ABS conducted a first cohort of the Study in 2020-21. A second and larger cohort is being conducted in 2022. The ABS will combine the data from the two cohorts to provide information on the prevalence of mental disorders among people with caring responsibilities. The ABS plans to publish data from the combined cohorts in the second half of 2023.

More information is available here:

- National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Multi-Agency Data Integration Project

The Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) is a secure data asset combining information on health, education, government payments, income and taxation, employment, and population demographics (including the Census) over time. It also includes National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) data as well as ABS survey datasets such as SDAC.

ABS SUBMISSION
Australian Senate Select Committee on Work and Care
September 2022

MADIP is enabled through a partnership of agencies, including the: ABS, Australian Taxation Office, Department of Education, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Department of Health and Aged Care, Department of Social Services and Services Australia.

In conjunction with variables on caring and work, MADIP can inform on a wide range of associated topics such as education, income (including allowances and payments for people with caring responsibilities) and use of services, as well as characteristics of people receiving care. These allow whole-of-life insights about carers and interactions between their characteristics and outcomes.

As the accredited integrating authority for MADIP, ABS collects and combines data from the various source datasets and provides access to authorised researchers. The broad range of data included in MADIP allows complex questions to be analysed, with new insights that may not be available from a single data source. The datasets are also longitudinal in nature, meaning they allow changes and patterns in the Australian population, economy and environment to be better understood and analysed over time.

More information is available here:

- Multi-Agency Data Integration Project