

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates

4 – 6 June 2013

**Question: BET 23**

**Topic: Unpaid Work Data**

**Hansard Page: Tuesday 4 June 2013, Page 104**

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Senator RHIANNON:** Is it true that only diary based data accurately identifies unpaid work—that is, women's work—compared to surveys based on recall?

**Mr Sutton:** We do use diary based methodologies and they do help facilitate recall. It is a sound methodology for capturing that type of information compared with other types of methodologies.

**Senator RHIANNON:** So will recall surveys substitute for the information missed by cancelling the 2013 WoLF Survey?

**Mr Sutton:** Well, surveys that rely on recall will not necessarily provide as accurate answers to those types of questions, say, compared with a diary approach, everything else being equal, but they will still give you some valuable information that you can rely on for certain types of decisions that you might want to—

**Senator RHIANNON:** What information gaps would occur by going over to the recall system?

**Mr Sutton:** I could take that on notice and give you, I think, a more comprehensive answer to that, given that I hear murmurings about the time. But, where we can, we use the diary methodology as the gold-plated standard for collecting that type of information. We do use recall techniques or approaches for certain types of information, when we think we can still gain some reliable information. It really does very much depend on what you are asking, as to whether one methodology gives you a strikingly different answer to the other.

**Senator RHIANNON:** If you could take that on notice it would be appreciated. So the question is: because you are substituting, what will you lose—what do we lose?

**Answer:**

Stylised recall questions about time use do not provide a satisfactory alternative to diary based collections for many social policy information needs. Stylised recall questions do not capture the detail obtained over a 24 hour period as respondents record activities in a diary as they are undertaken, including important contextual information (e.g. with whom/for whom an activity was undertaken, simultaneous secondary activities etc.).

Studying time use by using stylised questions introduces a number of known measurement issues. For example, it has been observed that measures of time use based on stylised recall questions tend to overestimate the time used for gainful, domestic and voluntary work. Additionally, although the stylised recall question includes a reference period in which to recall activities, such as one week, two weeks etc., collection through a point-in-time survey does not generally ensure adequate representation across seasons and weekends versus weekdays, to the same extent as a representative diary based collection conducted over a longer enumeration period.

Well known examples of stylised recall questions on time use are the four unpaid work questions in the 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing - questions on time spent doing unpaid domestic work, unpaid childcare, unpaid care for someone and time spent volunteering. These

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questions provide opportunity to examine broad measures of unpaid work for small populations of interest and in small areas of interest by the wide range of personal and household characteristics collected in the Census. This information has proven valuable for use by the Australian Government in considering disability, carer, childcare and volunteering strategies and the gender division of unpaid work. In contrast, time use data collected by sample survey will not generally enable consideration of unpaid work activities at small area levels or for small populations of interest.

In summary, stylised recall questions will not substitute the extent of detail and accuracy achieved through conducting the diary based collection planned for WoLFS. The next WoLFS is scheduled for 2019, however, the ABS is considering options for bringing forward aspects (such as time use) of this important collection subject to funding sources.