

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

2017 - 2018

Division/Agency: Australian Bureau of Statistics
Question No: 29
Topic: Census Data - Unemployed Status
Reference: Hansard page 83-85 (31 May 2017)
Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

Senator XENOPHON: Given the ABS's mission statement, which I know you take very seriously, to provide useful statistical information for the purpose of good decisions being made, the fact that you are not deemed to be unemployed if you work for only one hour a week or more—do you have any concerns that that might be inherently misleading? If someone does two or three hours of work a week, and they are looking for full-time work, they are effectively pretty much unemployed. You are not going to be able to pay a mortgage or buy a car or pay your rent with that sort of income.

[...]

Senator XENOPHON: Thank you very much for offering that. I just want to confirm that on notice you can give us a breakdown of the people who are underemployed, if you like—those who want to work more, those who are deemed to be employed but who work from one to three hours, three to six hours.

Mr Kalisch: We would have to look at it.

Senator XENOPHON: Can you break it down so it is a bit more specific?

Mr Kalisch: We will try to be as helpful as we can, Senator.

[...]

Senator XENOPHON: If you can give greater particularity, I would very much appreciate it, and I am sure the minister is very interested in these figures as well.

Answer:

The ABS does not consider that the 1 hour threshold for employment is misleading, as it is important for ensuring statistics in *Labour Force, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6202.0) are consistent with international standards and with other macroeconomic statistics, such as the National Accounts.

A broad range of information on underemployment and underutilisation is published by the ABS in Excel spreadsheets, including:

From ABS cat. no. 6202.0:

- Table 22. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original
- Table 23. Underutilised persons by State, Territory and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original
- Table 24. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex, Monthly
- Table 25. Underutilised persons by State, Territory and Sex, Monthly

From ABS cat. no. 6291.0.55.003:

- Table 19. Underemployed persons by Industry division (ANZSIC), Occupation major group (ANZSCO) of main job and Sex
- Table 23a. Volume measures of underutilisation by State, Territory and Sex
- Table 23b. Volume measures of underutilisation by Age and Sex

From ABS cat. no. 6226.0:

- Table 4. Participation potential: Underemployed part-time workers, Duration of current period of insufficient work—By selected characteristics
- Table 5. Participation potential: Underemployed part-time workers, Preferred number of extra weekly hours—By selected characteristics
- Table 6. Participation potential: Underemployed part-time workers; Main difficulty in finding work

The table below shows the estimates of those working 1-3 and 4-6 hours, as annual averages for the 2015 and 2016 calendar years.

	Employed persons	
	1-3 hours per week	4-6 hours per week
Annual average 2015	110,000	286,000
Annual average 2016	111,000	273,000

The table below shows the estimates of those working 1-3 and 4-6 hours, as annual averages for the 2015 and 2016 calendar years, as a percentage of the total employed population.

	% of total employed population		
	1-3 hours per week	4-6 hours per week	Total (1-6 hours per week)
Annual average 2015	0.9%	2.4%	3.4%
Annual average 2016	0.9%	2.3%	3.2%