

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates

2017 - 2018

**Division/Agency:** Australian Bureau of Statistics

**Question No:** 303

**Topic:** Census - Margin of Error

**Reference:** Hansard page 84 (31 May 2017)

**Senator:** Carr, Kim

**Question:**

Senator KIM CARR: There has been some other commentary about the reliability of the statistics and around the survey itself. There has been commentary about the adequacy of the survey. Are you familiar with criticisms of the adequacy of the survey?

Mr Kalisch: Your colleague Senator Ketter covered off that aspect earlier.

Senator KIM CARR: What was your response?

Mr Kalisch: The response I gave to Senator Ketter is the same response that I will give to you, Senator Carr. The analysis that we have undertaken on the labour force survey suggests that there is less month-to-month volatility in the labour force survey now than there was in the 1980s and 1990s. The other part of the response was also that the ABS has been publishing trend estimates of the labour force estimates since 1987, really to deal with some of these aspects about the month-to-month volatility in the series. We would recommend that people use that as the broad indicator of the labour force.

Senator KIM CARR: But you are satisfied that the survey is valid. What is the margin of error?

Mr Kalisch: The standard errors are comparable internationally. In fact, in Australia, I would suggest that we have one of the highest-quality labour force estimate surveys in the world.

Senator KIM CARR: So what is that margin of error?

Mr Kalisch: It depends on the nature of the estimate itself. We publish it; it is in our labour force estimates bulletin. It depends on whether it is a national estimate, whether it is a state and territory estimate, whether it is on employment, unemployment or labour force participation. If you like, I can take something on notice and provide that to you.

Senator KIM CARR: Thank you.

**Answer:**

Standard errors for the estimates are published in two tables within *Labour Force, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6202.0). Standard errors for the most recent estimates, for May 2017, can be found on pages 39 and 40.

Standard errors are also published for all other releases, as part of the release material.