



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



# Longitudinal Studies

## *Living in Australia: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia*



### Overview

The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey is a nationally representative longitudinal study of Australian households that commenced in 2001. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS), the Survey is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne.

HILDA is a panel survey of Australian households and, as such, HILDA surveys all working age members (15 years and over) of the selected households and then re-interviews the same people in subsequent years.

### Purpose of the study

HILDA provides longitudinal data on the lives of Australian residents. Its primary objective is to support research questions falling within three broad and inter-related areas of income, labour market and family dynamics.

### Key features

The HILDA Survey has the following key features:

- By the nature of its design, the study can be extended to continue indefinitely, following not only the initial sample members for the remainder of their lives, but also the lives of descendants.
- Special questionnaire modules are included as part of each wave, focusing on particular topics in detail. Modules are included in the survey on a rotating basis.
- The HILDA Survey follows the lives of more than 17,000 Australians each year, collecting information on many aspects of life in Australia, including household and family relationships, income and employment, and health and education.

### Data collection

Fieldwork for each wave is conducted from July each year. Each wave of HILDA includes at least one major topic of focus, which is repeated every four years. These topics include: household wealth, family formation and fertility, retirement from the workforce, health and education, skills and abilities.

In addition, there are a number of shorter questions included on a rotating basis, including: job related discrimination (waves 8, 10, 14 and 18); health insurance (waves 4, 9, 13 and 17); diet (waves 7, 9, 13 and 17); and material deprivation (waves 14 and 18).

HILDA does not survey diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, overseas residents in Australia, people living in remote areas, or members of non-Australian defence forces.

### Use of data

According to the bibliography maintained by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, HILDA data have been used in over 1,300 academic journal articles, over 80 books or chapters, and over 400 reports.

Analyses using HILDA data have featured prominently in policy-related reports, inquiries and reviews, including:

- reports produced by the Treasury, the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Productivity Commission
- reviews such as the Retirement Income Review (2020) and the Financial Stability Review (2014)
- inquiries into gambling, welfare, housing, childcare and early childhood learning, and paid parental leave
- reports on domestic violence prevention, inequality by gender, income, age and across generations, the impact of living in social housing, and labour market trends.

**More information** about DSS longitudinal surveys is available at: [www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies](http://www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies)

**Data access** - you can apply via the Australian Data Archive - [dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/hilda](http://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/hilda)  
Releases include a data user guide, a data dictionary and questionnaires with data labels.

**Ad hoc data requests** are available for small requirements. Please email your request to: [LongitudinalStudies@dss.gov.au](mailto:LongitudinalStudies@dss.gov.au)

**Bibliographic research repository** for longitudinal analysis using DSS datasets: see [flosse.dss.gov.au](http://flosse.dss.gov.au)

# Study content overview

## Demographics

- Sex and date of birth
- Time spent living at address
- English language ability
- Family formation
- Number of children
- Disabilities of household members
- Marital status of household members
- Movers – reasons for, and date of, entering or leaving household
- Non-resident children characteristics
- Non co-residential relationships

## Parenting and children

- Parenting stress
- Intent for additional children
- Partner/self currently pregnant
- Time stopped/started work pre/post birth of baby
- Use of birth control
- Grandchildren

## Person and family background

- Country of birth & language
- Year of arrival
- English as first language
- Aboriginality
- Australia citizenship
- Permanent residence
- Visa category [recent arrivals only]
- Parents' education
- Parents ever separated / divorce
- Age at time of separation
- Age left home
- Siblings
- Father's / mother's country of birth

## Education

- Study status
- Type and location of education institutions
- Qualifications studied/completed
- Field of study of highest post-school qualification
- Persons still at school: truancy, suspension and bullying
- Years since left full time education

## Children's education

- Type of school
- Fees paid
- Perceptions of school outcomes and experiences
- Likelihood of attending university

## Household / living situation satisfaction

- Satisfaction with household division of labour
- Responsibility for household tasks

## Assets / liabilities

- Value of various assets
- Value of business debt
- Overdue household bills
- Value of housing debt
- Number of motor vehicles

## Care of children

- Child Care – cost, difficulties
- Receipt of Child Care Benefit
- Receipt of Family Tax Benefit
- Child Health
- Weight of child at birth
- Visits to medical practitioners
- Hospital visits

## Social capital

- Social support
- Contact with siblings
- Membership of clubs etc.
- Internet access
- Social interaction with friends etc.
- Community participation
- Preferences to live in area
- Attitudes about your neighbourhood

## Unemployment

- Job search activity
- Desired hours of work
- Expected probability of finding a job
- Reason for ceasing last job
- Characteristics of a previous job
- Job-related discrimination
- Years out of labour force
- Main activity when not in labour force

## Housing

- Size and type of dwelling
- Ownership status
- Landlord type
- Rent payments
- Boarders
- Notional rent (if live rent free)
- Home loan details
- Whether used a mortgage broker

## Income

- Current wage and salary income
- Government benefits
- Salary sacrifice and non-cash benefits

## Health / disability

- Disability / health condition
- Year of onset
- Impact of disability on work
- Difficulties as a result of disability
- Need for help / supervision
- Home modifications
- Employment difficulties
- Education difficulties
- Serious illness / conditions
- Childhood health
- Medical practitioner visits
- Hospital visits in past 12 months
- Diet / Dieting
- Smoking history
- Sleep quantity
- Psychological distress
- Exercise
- Alcohol consumption
- Food consumption
- Time stress
- Height / weight
- Waist measurement

## Household finances

- Weekly expenditure on food
- Adequacy of household income
- Housing loans repayments / rent
- Self-assessed prosperity
- Stressful financial events
- Response to financial emergency
- Savings habits and reasons
- Savings time horizon
- Risk preference
- Attitudes to borrowing
- Credit card use and payment strategy
- Bank accounts
- Credit card and other debts
- Superannuation

## Employment

- Current / past employment
- Days / Hours of work
- Multiple job holding
- Job tenure
- Working from home
- Trade union membership
- Leave taking
- Family friendly workplace
- Employment contract type
- Expected quit / dismissal probability
- Probability of finding another job
- Work-related training
- Attitudes about work and gender roles
- Job satisfaction
- Reason for ceasing last job

## Retirement

- Intended age of retirement
- Year / age retired

## Parent living elsewhere

- Financial support from other parent
- Amount of contact other parent has with youngest child
- Employment status of other parent

## Caring for others

- Carer in household
- Carer outside household

## Life abilities / satisfaction

- Self-assessed literacy and numeracy
- Languages spoken and read
- Computer use and proficiency
- Whether holds driver's licence
- Education required to carry out job
- Achievement motivation
- Cognitive ability
- Life satisfaction
- Religion
- Sexual identity
- Marital relationship quality
- Satisfaction with family life
- Life events in past 12 months
- Importance of life domains
- Attitudes to life in Australia
- Satisfaction with own weight
- English language speaking