



Survey modularisation for the Australian Labour Force Survey

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ABS Data Acquisition Modernisation Program

- ▶ ABS was funded a significant amount of money to modernise its data acquisition systems, tools and processes

- ▶ Significant opportunity – how can we redesign the model of our Labour Force Survey to:
 - Ensure the long-term integrity of core labour force data
 - Provide opportunities for new and more dynamic data on supplementary and specialised labour topics
 - Deliver an improved respondent experience, in the questions, sequencing, timing of modules and other elements
 - Address declining response, by smoothing out the peaks and troughs in the program

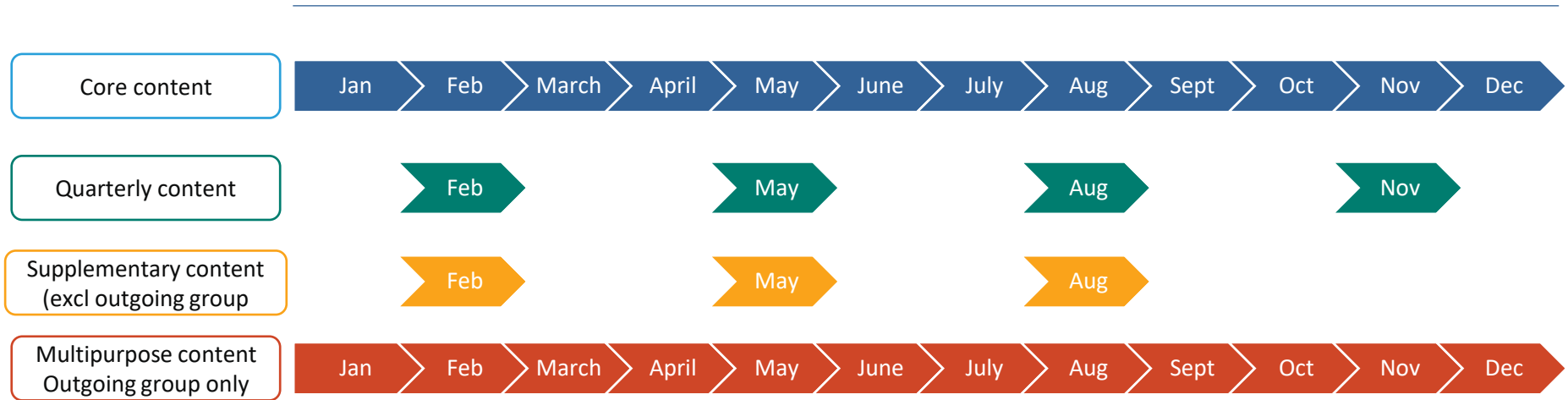
Demand for Supplementary topics

- ▶ Significant demand for thematic labour topics on our survey program
- ▶ For household based surveys, this includes:
 - Core Labour Force Statistics
 - Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation
 - Potential Workers
 - Underemployed and Underutilised Workers
 - Job Mobility
 - Employee Earnings
 - Working Arrangements
 - Trade Union Membership
 - Work Related Injuries
 - Digital Platform Workers
- ▶ Much more focus on other methods (administrative datasets, micro data), but surveys still critically important

Current Labour Force Survey

- ▶ Sample of ~ 26,000 households / 50,000 individuals each month
- ▶ Households selected for 8 months (1/8 rotation each month)
- ▶ Content varies month to month:
 - Core labour force content asked every month
 - Labour Force quarterly (Aug, Nov, Feb and May)
 - Three supplementary surveys:
 - 'Characteristics of Employment' (Aug)
 - 'Participation, Job Search and Mobility' (Feb)
 - 'Education and Work' (May)
 - Multipurpose Household Survey with additional topics on labour, health, education and crime (each month, outgoing rotation group only)

Current model



Changes to the collection vehicle

Current design

- Labour Force monthly (Jul-Jun)
- Labour Force quarterly (Aug, Nov, Feb and May)
- Three supplementary surveys:
 - 'Characteristics of Employment' (Aug)
 - 'Participation, Job Search and Mobility' (Feb)
 - 'Education and Work' (May)
- Multi Purpose Household Survey (Jul-Jun, from the outgoing rotation group)

Future design

- Labour Force (Jul-Jun)
- Month 8 module (Jul-Jun):
 - Outgoing rotation group only
 - Includes content from supplementary surveys
 - Asked **after** Labour Force questions
- Multi-Purpose Household Survey – now Month 9 (Jul-Jun)

New model

Core content
Months 1 - 8

Jan > Feb > March > April > May > June > July > Aug > Sept > Oct > Nov > Dec

Supplementary content
Month 8 only

Jan > Feb > March > April > May > June > July > Aug > Sept > Oct > Nov > Dec

Multipurpose content
Month 9 only

Jan > Feb > March > April > May > June > July > Aug > Sept > Oct > Nov > Dec

- ▶ Long journey of consolidation, which started in 2014
 - New content in monthly LFS – most notably underutilisation
 - Consolidated supplementary surveys – bring together like content which were historically separate collections, across Feb, July, Aug, Sep, and Nov
 - Participation Job Search and Mobility (PJSM) – annually in Feb
 - Characteristics of Employment (COE) – annually in Aug
 - Supps combined and somewhat consolidated, but not integrated or optimised

Supplementary topics in the new model

- ▶ Supplementary survey content no longer collected in set months (Feb, May, Aug)
 - Labour topics to be collected from outgoing rotation group over the whole year in 'Month 8'
- ▶ Labour Force Survey will collect the same content every month
 - no longer 'quarter month' content (in Feb, May, Aug, Nov)
 - quarter month content moved to either monthly LFS or Month 8
- ▶ Multi Purpose Household Survey moves from the outgoing rotation group to 'Month 9' – a follow-up for selected respondents in the month following their last month in the LFS
- ▶ Transition to new model scheduled to start in March 2026
 - More details on transition and timing later in slides

Respondent burden and data quality

- ▶ Need to carefully consider the survey time of the integrated Month 8 survey, to ensure it is not too long
- ▶ Aiming for 'burden neutral'
 - a small increase for people not employed – currently asked the least number of questions
- ▶ Removing the 'quarter month' version of the LFS and re-allocating high priority content into a single version of monthly LFS will result in
 - Monthly LFS slightly longer than the current 'non-quarter month' version, but shorter than the 'quarter month' version
- ▶ But should be improved respondent experience
 - will be easier to answer as modules will be consolidated and simplified
 - also optimised for on-line self-response
- ▶ Additions/changes to monthly LFS are targeted and low-risk

Benefits of the new model

- ▶ Quarantines core Labour Force from supplementary survey content changes
 - Removes supplementary survey effects from core estimates, which are currently controlled through dedicated seasonal adjustment process
 - Supplementary survey content can also then evolve over time without risk to core Labour Force
- ▶ More integrated supplementary content allows for more co-variate analysis across topics, and better integration of content across core Labour Force and supplementary survey
- ▶ Enables important 'supplementary' content on a quarterly basis, in addition to traditional annual content
 - Estimates can be compared before and after major changes, whenever they happen during the year - no need to wait until next Feb or next Aug
- ▶ Simplify and reduce the number of different survey instruments (operational efficiencies)
- ▶ Shortening the survey for respondents in their first 7 months in sample
 - Maximise response and self-enumeration
 - Increase retention of people who start in Feb, May or Aug (not hit with big survey in month 1)
- ▶ Running supplementary survey on 1/8th of the sample each month smooths out interviewer workload