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NEW ABS DEVELOPMENTS IN MEASURING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Submitted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹

¹ Prepared by Elisabeth Davis and Horst Posselt.

New ABS developments in measuring social capital

Elisabeth Davis
and
Horst Posselt

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Abstract

Following the publication of a framework and suggested set of indicators for social capital in 2004, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has been developing modules of questions to address many of the framework elements. These modules, as well as a voluntary work survey, are part of the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS) currently being conducted. The GSS collects items covering many other topic areas and so promises to support the analysis of social capital and wellbeing outcomes in various areas of concern. Other ABS surveys in the field this year also have potential to contribute to our understanding of social capital and its relationship to the lives of individuals.

While not comprehensive, there is already a stock of data relating to framework elements among ABS collections, including the 2002 GSS. The ABS has recently prepared an analytical report, 'Aspects of Social Capital, Australia, 2006' (cat. no. 4911.0) which draws this information together. This publication was released on 17 July 2006 and is available free of charge from the ABS website. As well as presenting various indicators, it provides a reference to available ABS data sources, many ongoing, and is expected to provide useful background information to the new data to be released in 2007.

This paper presents some of the information to be found in 'Aspects of Social Capital, Australia, 2006', showing how it relates to the social capital framework. It provides an overview of the social capital content of the GSS and other 2006 collections, and outlines proposed approaches to analysing and disseminating the results of these surveys.

1. Introduction

1. It has been in relatively recent times that 'social capital' has emerged as being a social resource of considerable public policy interest in Australia. This has been supported by arguments that social capital is important to shaping individual and community wellbeing. Many researchers have suggested the positive benefits of aspects of social capital for individual outcomes in areas such as health, education, employment and family wellbeing and also in fostering community strength and resilience. It has been in response to these interests that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has committed resources to improving the evidence base for measuring and monitoring aspects of social capital in Australia. This paper describes the work undertaken to date and informs of the wider sets of data that will soon be available to support further research and analysis in this area of concern.

2. The progression of ABS social capital work can be described as having four main components. These include:

- the production and release (in 2004) of *Measuring Social Capital, an Australian Framework and Indicators* (cat. no. 1378.0) to provide a widely agreed framework for further analytical work and data development activities.
- compilation of existing ABS data relevant to the framework elements as presented in the publication *Aspects of Social Capital, Australia, 2006* (cat. no. 4119.0); with the publication being released on 17 July, 2006.
- to add to the limited data already available, the development of a new set of social capital data items for collection in the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS), and the collection of a number of related data items in other 2006 collections, including the 2006 Census of Population and Housing and the 2006 Time Use Survey. These data are all due for release throughout 2007.
- the development of some plans for analysis of the data items available from these surveys.

3. It is these four components that are discussed further in this paper.

2. ABS Social Capital Framework and Indicators

4. Social Capital relates to the resources available within communities in networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. A number of definitions of social capital have been devised, and the ABS has chosen to use the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition to guide work on the development of measures of social capital: "networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups" (OECD 2001).

2.1 The ABS Social Capital Framework

5. In November 2000, the ABS released a consultation paper *Measuring Social Capital: Current Collections and Future Directions* (ABS, 2000). A large number of stakeholders including Commonwealth and state government departments, representatives of local governments, researchers, and non-government organisations provided comments on that work, and supported the ABS involvement in this field. In July 2001, the ABS set up a small unit to undertake further work.
6. Well-attended consultations were conducted in all States during the first half of 2002. A variety of views were expressed by attendees. Some were sceptical or cynical; some felt social capital represented old approaches under a new name; many, working with communities, felt that the ground-up involvement of communities of various types in the setting of objectives and the way they might be achieved was having promising results in resolving intractable problems, such as the conditions in public housing estates or the survival of regional towns. A common view among people attending was that, while the economic bottom line was important, there were important social relationships and values that needed to be taken into account when considering wellbeing. Overall there was strong support for continuing the ABS work on a statistical framework and indicators.
7. Our objective during the consultations in 2002 was to find out what characteristics were needed to be understood and measured. Much of this was covered in the draft proposal, but other ideas came up repeatedly, such as the cognate ideas of power relationships, sense of efficacy and locus of control. It also became clear over time that people from different policy interests had somewhat different emphases in the information they required. For some, the quality of close personal relationships was primary; for others, active participation in civic activities, or setting up structures of cooperation that would enable the negotiation of differences, were the important aspects.
8. The ABS framework was developed to accommodate the different emphases and data needs, and so has a wider scope for measurement than would be included in some important theoretical constructs of social capital. The Australian Institute of Family Studies, for instance, restricts the concepts to networks characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity, and excludes voluntary work as an effect (Winter 2000). Michael Woolcock from the World Bank has argued that trust is an effect (Woolcock 2001), and therefore not in the base concept, although it is very important for the strength of communities. The ABS framework also potentially accommodates the concept of social capital within and among businesses and in the relationships between organisations from different sectors, although indicators for these have not yet been systematically developed.
9. Social capital resources are presented as interacting with other resources, natural, produced economic and human capital, in a cultural, political, legal and institutional context which itself is the product of previous such interactions over time, both within Australia and the wider international context. Social capital is shown as attributes of networks (see figures 1 and 2 in Appendix 1). Social capital is organised into four broad dimensions of networks: qualities; structure; transactions; and broad types (bonding, bridging and linking). Potential network participants (such as individuals, families, friends, organisations/groups) are indicated by network composition.

10. Figure 1 lists the four dimensions and their main elements. Definitions for each of the elements are provided in the Information Paper: *Measuring Social Capital, an Australian Framework and Indicators* (cat. no. 1378.0),

11. Potential positive and negative effects of social capital are shown as flowing from and feeding back into the operation of social capital. Examples of the positive effects include: identity and a sense of belonging; lowering of transaction costs; and an increased capacity to achieve community goals. The potential negative effects of social capital include: social exclusion or intolerance of difference; reduced family functioning; corruption; and community breakdown.

Figure 1: ABS uses of the social capital framework

<i>Framework elements</i>	<i>Addressed in Aspects of Social Capital(a)</i>	<i>Supported in 2006 GSS</i>
1. NETWORK QUALITIES		
1.1 Norms		
Trust and trustworthiness	Topic 5	Yes
Reciprocity	Topics 6 and 7	Yes
Sense of efficacy		Yes
Cooperation	Topic 8	
Acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness		Yes*
1.2 Common Purpose		
Social participation	Topics 9 and 10	Yes
Civic participation		Yes
Community support	Topic 11	Yes
Friendship		Yes
Economic participation	Topic 12	Yes
2. NETWORK STRUCTURE		
Network size		Yes
Network frequency, intensity and communication mode	Topic 13	Yes
Density and openness		
Transience/mobility	Topic 4	Yes
Power relationships		Yes*
3. NETWORK TRANSACTIONS		
Sharing support	Topic 7	Yes
Sharing knowledge, information and introductions		
Negotiation		
Applying sanctions		
4. NETWORK TYPES		
Bonding		Yes
Bridging		Yes*
Linking		Yes*
Isolation	Topic 13	Yes

(a) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Information Paper: *Measuring Social Capital, an Australian Framework and Indicators* (cat. No. 1378.0).

* Not addressed comprehensively.

2.2 Social Capital Indicators

12. Each element of the ABS Social Capital Framework is associated with a small set of possible indicators and data items. Indicators are designed to provide useful summary measures of particular aspects of social capital for reporting and analysis. The framework and indicators paper contains a selection of data items that might support the different indicators as examples, although they were not endorsed pending further ABS work on a collection instrument. The suggested indicators are still

experimental. The many, but not all, framework elements for which indicators were selected for the 2006 GSS are shown in Figure 1. Analysis and the level of effective use made of these social capital data will assist in their evaluation.

3 The Publication ‘Aspects of Social Capital’

3.1 Purpose

13. Many existing ABS surveys provide data that relate to certain elements of the social capital framework. Information on informal caring (ABS 2004b), voluntary work (ABS 2001b), and business giving, business-community projects and sponsorship (ABS 2002c) can be found in existing surveys. The Time Use Survey is a source of information on the time people spend alone and with others, and on participation in a range of activities including helping others in the community in an informal way (ABS 1998). Labour market surveys show changes in the labour force participation rate, particularly for women, changes in work arrangements and use of personal networks in job search activities (ABS 2004c). Environment-related collections provide information about cooperative attitudes and behaviours in this area of concern (ABS 2004d). The census (ABS 2002e) provides information about the geographic distribution of the population in cities, towns and sparsely settled areas, the social relationships implied in living arrangements, the distribution of diverse groups, the relative mobility or stability of the population over time, labour force participation and religious identification. These are all useful indicators, but they only address the elements of social capital (as listed in Figure 1) in a limited way.

14. Drawing together this existing material into a compendium publication, however, makes it possible to consider some of this material from a new perspective. It creates a background reference tool for researchers interested in social capital and a base of information for the new data from several ABS 2006 collections, and for the social capital information from the major longitudinal surveys [Women’s Health, Australia (ALSWH, or WHA); Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY); Household Income and Labour Dynamics, Australia (HILDA); and Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC)/Growing up in Australia (GUIA)].

3.2 Content and Findings

15. The data and descriptive analysis in this publication is structured into a set of 13 topics. The first three topics, on the geographical distribution of people, their living arrangements in terms of household and family composition and cultural diversity illustrated by country of birth, languages spoken and religious affiliation, provide some aspects of the social environment as a context for the more specific social capital indicators in the later topics.

16. These include residential mobility; feelings of safety at home alone as an indicator of local community trust; reciprocity, first in terms of ability to ask for and the provision of support, and then as giving; co-operation, as shown by power and water conservation practices and ways of managing waste; social participation illustrated by participation in a range of activities in the previous three months, including religious activities, and attending cultural venues and events in the previous 12 months; then by participation in various roles in sport and physical recreation and attendance at sports events in the

previous 12 months; community support as shown by volunteering and caring; economic participation, particularly the continuing increase in women's participation in employment and some of the associated changes in broader social relationships; and finally frequency of contact and time spent with family, friends and others.

17. Generally, the indicators are disaggregated to show differences between population groups, by age, sex, and area of residence (state/territory and remoteness areas). Other variables frequently used to describe populations are labour force status, family type, whether born in Australia, equivalised household income and the relative socio-economic status of person's area of residence with this last measure being derived using the ABS's 2001 census-based 'Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage'. For some indicators, time series are available.

3.3 Highlighting some trends over time

18. While the social capital related measures available on a time series basis were limited in number and scope they nevertheless provide some useful insights into changing social conditions within Australia. Some of these are discussed below.

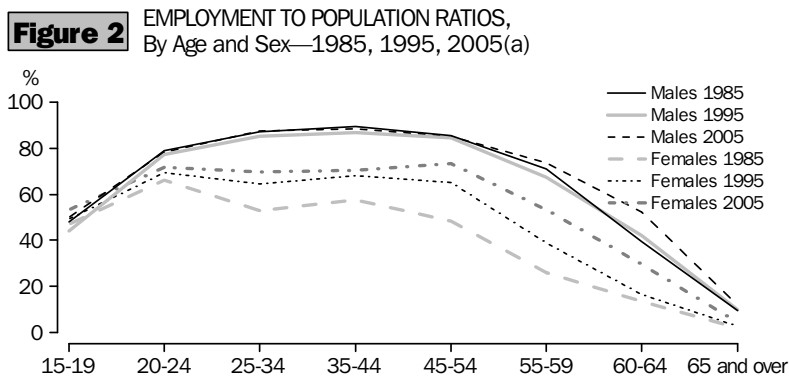
19. The first relates to people's living arrangements which, among other indicators, are partly revealed by a general decrease in household size (down from 2.6 persons to 2.5 persons between 1994 and 2004). This fall by itself suggests greater levels of individualism but the trend is highlighted by the increasing propensity of people to live alone. Among adults aged 15-64 years the proportion living alone increased from 7% in 1994 to 9% in 2004: 29% of those aged 65 years and over lived alone in 2004. Time use data also supports a view of decreased contact with close family and friends. Between 1992 and 1997, the proportion of waking time people spent alone increased from 17% to 20%. While partly due to a higher proportion of people living alone, there was an increase in solitary time across three broad age groups, and regardless of whether the person lived alone or not. Those living alone, however, experienced the greatest increase in waking time spent alone: for 15-34 year-olds, from 39% to 50%; for 35-64 year-olds from 56% to 60%; and for the older people, from 75% to 79% of their waking time. The greatest impact was on time spent with relatives who were not co-resident, which decreased from 12% to 7% of waking time. Time spent with friends lessened from 12% to 10% of waking time. There was less effect on time spent with co-located people, such as colleagues in workplaces, 16% of waking time in 1992 and 15% in 1997. These proportions of time relate to time spent physically alone – it is possible that contact was being made in other ways.

20. People changing homes affect community connections and Australians have relatively high mobility rates. In 2001, 19% of the population had moved from their address one year earlier and 45% had done so from their address five years earlier. However, the pattern has remained fairly steady over time. Over the 20 years to 2001, the five-year mobility rate reported at each census (conducted every five years) had remained steady, at around 44% of the population aged five years and over.

21. Droughts over recent years have made water use at home an issue of greater awareness and regulation. In the years 1993-94, 1996-97 and 2000-01 water usage per capita has been variable, varying also across

states and territories. There has been little change in the proportion of households using water conservation practices over recent years, 47% in both 1998 and 2004. The overall stability, however, masks considerable variation in the states and territories, with declining participation in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory countered by a considerable increase in Victoria. In contrast, the proportion of households using water conservation devices, particularly dual flush toilets and reduced-flow shower heads, has with the support of new building regulations and incentive schemes increased markedly in the same period, up from 66% to 82% Australia-wide, with an upward trend evident in all the States and Territories.

22. Although the nature of jobs may have changed over the last 20 years, the employment to population ratios for men in each age group have remained very stable in 1985, 1995 and 2005, the only notable change being an increase in the proportion of men aged 60-64 years in 2005. For women, though, the changes have been striking. The employment to population ratio increased from 42% in 1985 to 54% in 2005. In 1985, there were markedly lower levels of employment among women in the 25-34 years age range. In 1995 and 2005, progressively higher proportions of women of this age were employed. The effect of the child bearing and raising years could still be seen, but spread and mitigated by extending over the 35-44 year age group as well, and possibly by smaller amounts of time away from work.



(a) As at June each year.

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Apr 2006, (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

23. Women in older age groups have also been extending their working years. Overall, this has been part of a substantial change in relations between the market and the household, involving changes in workplaces, homes and potentially neighbourhoods.

24. Religious participation in the previous three months was reported by 23% of the population in 2002. Data on participation in religious activities by age group on an average day remained very similar in 1992 and 1997, from around 3% of 15-34 year-olds rising to 8% for those aged 55-64 years and 65 years and over. The next time use survey, currently in the field, will show whether any change has taken place over the last nine years.

27. A commonly held perception is that the big cities of Australia are less friendly and potentially dangerous places, where people are less connected to others and take less care for each other. To only a small extent is this supported by the available data: most people in the major cities (93%) felt they could ask for small favours from others, but this was slightly higher in other areas, at 95%; big city dwellers were a little more likely to feel unsafe or very unsafe alone at home after dark (9%, compared with 7% in inner regional and other areas); a higher proportion of those who lived in the remote and very remote areas took part in organised sport (43% compared to proportions ranging from between 30% and 38% in the other areas) and attended sports events (56% in remote and very remote areas, compared to proportions ranging from between 47% and 50% in the other areas).

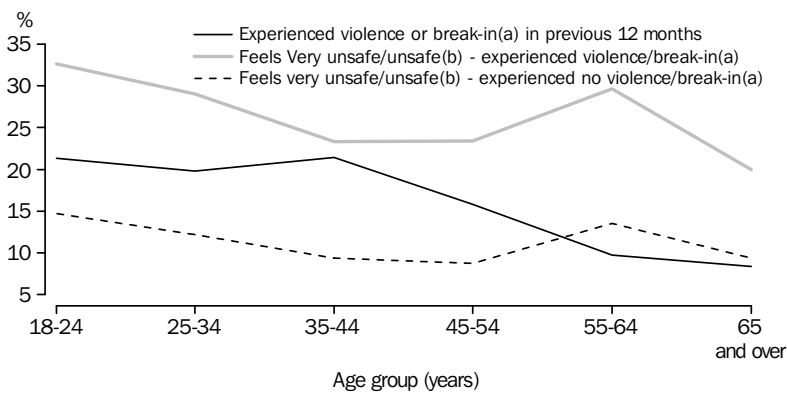
28. The likelihood was greater that people outside major cities were volunteers (31% in the major cities compared with 41% in Inner Regional Australia and 43% across the remaining areas) and they were slightly more likely to be carers (13% in major cities compared with 15% in Inner Regional Australia and 14% in other areas). Looked at more closely, though, the higher proportion of carers in regional Australia was a response to a higher disability rate in those areas.

29. There was barely any difference between areas in contact with family and friends in the previous week (just slightly more common in major cities) or in the ability to seek support in time of crisis; and, perhaps surprisingly, those who lived in major cities had more commonly participated in religious activities in the previous 3 months (25%) than those in Inner Regional Australia (19%) or the other areas (21%). There are no data yet from an ABS general population social survey on the level of participation in community groups, other than for voluntary work, but that will become available from the 2006 GSS early in 2007.

3.5 Focus on feelings of safety

30. Some interesting data are available for an indicator of people's perception of neighbourhood safety, namely, feelings of safety alone at home at night. By age and sex groups, feeling very unsafe or unsafe alone at home at night was rare for men, ranging from 3% of young men up to about 5% for men aged 65 and over. Feeling unsafe was much more common for young women (18%) and declined progressively among older women, except for a second peak among those aged 55-64 years. It was possible to examine this directly in the 2002 GSS against the person's experience of actual or threatened violence, and actual and attempted break-in within the previous 12 months. For women there were strikingly similar patterns by age group of feeling unsafe/very unsafe, regardless of whether they had experienced violence or break-in although the actual proportions for those who had experienced violence or break-in were much higher.

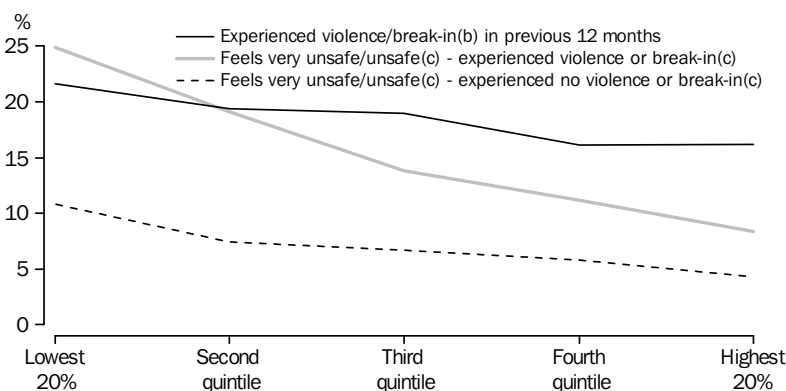
Figure 4 CRIME VICTIMISATION RATES AND FEELINGS OF SAFETY AMONG WOMEN—2002



(a) Actual or threatened violence, actual or attempted break-in. (b) Feels very unsafe/unsafe alone at home after dark.
 Source: General Social Survey, 2002

31. It was also revealing to look at the proportions of people feeling unsafe or very unsafe alone at home at night by the socio-economic status of the local areas in which they lived. When all areas are organised into quintiles of disadvantage those people who lived in the most disadvantaged areas were more likely to have experienced an assault or a break-in or an attempted assault or break-in in the previous 12 months (22%) than those in less disadvantaged areas. In fact, the proportions of people who were crime victims fell progressively as the level of disadvantage decreased down to 16% for those living in the least disadvantaged quintile. Correspondingly, in the most disadvantaged areas, 25% of those who had experienced violence or break-in, and 11% of those who had not, felt very unsafe or unsafe alone at home at night. For both groups, the proportion feeling unsafe was lower as the level of disadvantage decreased, but perhaps surprisingly declined more sharply for those who had been victims.

Figure 5 CRIME VICTIMISATION RATES AND FEELINGS OF SAFETY, Socio-economic status of area(a)—2002



(a) Person's area of residence ranked according to the 2001 Census based Index of Socio-economic Disadvantage. Greater disadvantage is at the lower end of the scale.
 (b) Actual or threatened violence, actual or attempted break-in.
 (c) Feels very unsafe/unsafe alone at home after dark.
 Source: General Social Survey, 2002.

3.6 Some population sub-group differences

32. Some of the measures of social support and social interaction from the 2002 GSS presented in the Aspects of Social Capital publication had very high proportions of people being recognised as being 'well-off' in a social capital sense. For instance, the proportions of Australians who felt they could ask others for small favours or for support in a time of crisis were 93% and 94% respectively. These high proportions suggest that the measures are not particularly useful as they tend to be poor discriminators between groups of people who might otherwise have high and low levels of social support. However, population sub-groups often associated with disadvantaged life circumstances still generally appeared to be worse-off according to these indicators if only by a small extent. Examples of sub-groups in these situations included those with poor self-assessed health (87% and 89% for the two measures noted above, respectively), those with more severe levels of disability (89% for both measures), and those in the lowest quintile of equivalised household income (90% for both measures).

Figure 6. Social Participation, Support and Feelings of Safety, selected population sub-groups(a), Australia—2002

	Lowest quintile equivalised household income	One parent family with dependent children	Un-employed	Poor self-assessed health status	Disability with core activity limitation Aged <65 years	Severe/ profound disability Aged under 65 years	Aged 75 years and over	All persons aged 18 years and over in Australia
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Feels unsafe alone at home after dark	13	17	11	17	14	15	8	8
Could ask someone for help with small favours	90	92	88	87	89	..	91	93
Could ask someone for support in time of crisis	90	95	91	89	89	..	93	94
Provided support to relatives outside the household	20	24	18	22	32	..	17	27
Social activities	82	92	91	73	..	78	80	92
Attended cultural venues and events	74	91	90	61	..	67	71	88
Religious participation	..	..	..	..	..	..	26	23
Participation in org. sport or physical activity (any role)	19	..	..	..	19	..	18	34
Attended sports events	..	45	43	..	..	..	..	48
Volunteer	26	32	28	20	36	..	24	34
Contact with family & friends in previous week	93	96	92	90	91	..	94	95

(a) The percentages are given independently for each sub-group without controlling for other factors.

Source: Aspects of Social Capital (4911.0). Various tables and charts.

33. Those whose self-assessed health status was poor were more than twice as likely as Australians in general to feel unsafe alone at home at night, which might arise from security concerns or from fears about consequences of their health conditions, among other reasons; and they may be less well-connected in their neighbourhoods. They had considerably lower rates of participation in a range of social activities than most other people, not surprisingly. A higher proportion of people with poor health were not able to ask others for small favours or for support in time of crisis. There may have been physical barriers preventing their asking in a time of need; they may also have been conscious of a possible lack of ability to return the favours or support. They were less likely than others to be volunteers or to provide material support to relatives not living with them, although one in five did contribute in these ways. Finally, while 90% had had contact with family and friends in the previous month, this was a lower proportion than for other groups.

34. People aged less than 65 years with relatively severe disability and older people shared a number of these characteristics. However, the younger people with a disability were almost as likely to volunteer, and as likely to provide support to relatives not living with them, as the national average. People aged 75 years and over were no more likely than Australians in general to feel unsafe alone at home alone. They were equally likely to be able to ask someone for help with small favours, although less likely to be able to ask someone for help in a time of crisis. While smaller proportions took part in social activities of various kinds, they were more likely than people in general to participate in religious activities.

35. Members of one-parent families with dependent children were more than twice as likely to feel unsafe at home alone at night than most others. Their volunteer rate was slightly below the average. However, on other indicators of community connection, such as having had recent contact with family and friends, the feeling of being able to get support in a time of crisis, and to ask for small favours, the proportions were similar to the average.

36. Those living in households in the lowest quintile of equivalised household income tended to have lower levels of community engagement according to most indicators. Lack of financial resources, compounded by age, poor health and disability may be among the factors accounting for this difference. Notwithstanding these differences, this group was similar to the norm in having had recent contact with family and friends.

4. Data from the ABS General Social Survey

37. The General Social Survey (GSS), first conducted in 2002, is in 2006 the main vehicle being used to extend the range of social capital related data available from the ABS.

4.1 General Social Survey 2002

38. The 2002 GSS asked a series of questions designed to capture key dimensions of social and economic outcomes for households and individuals. Demographic characteristics included age, sex and marital status. Other characteristics include health status, educational participation and attainment, labour force

status and associated work related variables, feelings of safety at home alone, experience of life stressors, social participation and the availability of family and community support. Indicators of economic circumstances in addition to labour force status included income, wealth and experiences of financial stress.

39. Unlike many other ABS surveys, which concentrate on one or two specific 'areas of social concern', the GSS was designed to describe peoples lives across a range of life dimensions and so provide indicators describing many aspects of wellbeing. The 2002 GSS (ABS 2003) also collected some information relevant to aspects of social capital that extended the possibilities for analysis. It included information on:

- contact with family and friends;
- support given to children and other relatives living in different households;
- ability to ask for small favours, and sources of support in time of crisis;
- participation in social activities, including religious participation;
- feelings of safety alone at home during the day and after dark;
- participation in voluntary work.
- attendance at cultural venues and events
- participation in sport and physical activity (organised and non-organised)
- attendance at sports events

40. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) was also conducted in 2002 (ABS 2004e). It covered similar topics to those included in the 2002 GSS. In addition to items such as contact with family and friends and participation in social activities the NATSISS also collected material relating more directly to Indigenous culture and life circumstances. Much of the additional material relates well to elements or effects of social capital such as a sense of belonging, participation in community events and feelings of safety. Items include:

- identification with clan, language or tribal group,
- identification with homeland,
- whether lives on, or is allowed to visit, homeland,
- whether removed from family,
- whether relative removed from family, by relationship
- whether speaks an Indigenous language,
- attendance at community events
- presence and type of neighbourhood problems

4.2 General Social Survey 2006

41. The field collection phase of the 2006 GSS is in its final stages, with over 80% of households enumerated and good response rates being recorded. Feedback from the field suggests that interviewers have found it an enjoyable and easy to administer survey. In terms of content, some additional core topic items were added to those included in 2002. These relate to residential mobility; dwelling size; access to,

and communication with, service providers; barriers to education; and visa status. The topic area chosen for the flexible component of the GSS in 2006 has been social capital and the GSS also includes a repeat of the full Voluntary Work Survey last conducted in 2000.

42. The GSS was considered to be a particularly good vehicle for the collection of social capital data because of its potential to assess relationships between aspects of social capital and the many other dimensions of wellbeing covered by the core component of the survey. Two proposals were presented to the Social Capital and Voluntary Work Advisory Group regarding the content of the social capital component. One was for a broad approach covering a range of the elements described in the ABS social capital framework, while the other was to focus on a limited set of elements but to do so in greater depth. The advisory group supported the broad approach.

4.3 Social Capital topic design and development

43. The data item proposal developed for question design and testing was based on the elements in the ABS Social Capital Framework shown in Appendix 2. The limited time available for interviewing in the GSS required a sub-set of these elements to be selected. However, the aim was to collect a sufficiently wide range to meet varying data needs. From consultations and observation, it appears that different agencies and groups have been using different combinations of the various social capital elements according to their areas of interest. For instance, some have chosen particular indicators to help measure progress towards selected targets specified in social development plans, other indicators have been used to investigate the social determinants of wellbeing (especially evident in studies of health status and life longevity), yet another grouping of measures have been used to assess the strength of local communities, and a different configuration to shed light on matters of governance and citizenship. The information will not be combined into a single index, but work will be done to see whether there are groups of items that might usefully be combined.

44. The survey includes items addressing the frequency, quality and diversity of personal relationships; trust, reciprocity, sense of efficacy, active group participation of various kinds, participation and proactivity in community events and civic activities, and knowing people in formal systems. In response to a growing interest, questions are also included on informal helping and caring to complement some of the basic data on voluntary work. As this whole set of questions was a new element to the ABS household survey program, they were taken through two to three rounds of cognitive testing, and through two field tests, with modifications being made along the way where necessary.

45. Two sets of three items were proposed to help examine the issue of social diversity within people's networks. Measuring such diversity provides a practical means of measuring social inclusiveness. For both personal friendships and involvement in formal groups, it was proposed that the survey questions ask the extent to which members of the respective groups were 'similar' in age, ethnic background and educational achievement. After settling on what might reasonably qualify as 'being similar', and whether 'friends' should refer to those contacted within a specific period, or to friends in general, it was established that the questions relating to personal friendships could be understood and that respondents could accordingly give

sensible answers. However, when the same questions were asked about fellow members of organisations it was found that they were too awkward to answer. Respondents felt they did not know enough about other members of organisations, and were reluctant to venture a judgment. Consequently, the three items relating to diversity in formal groups were dropped.

46. Trust is usually seen as a constitutive aspect of social capital. It is prominent in a number of definitions. Three kinds of trust are commonly identified – generalised trust, informal trust (i.e. trust in family, friends and neighbours) and institutional trust. Generalised trust is sometimes seen as a proxy measure for social capital, and has often been measured using the double pole question from the World Values Survey (WVS), (i.e. ‘Generally, do you think that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful dealing with people?’). The advisory group agreed that informal trust was of lower priority than the other types; therefore this item was not specified for cognitive testing or for collection.

47. There has been much debate about the form and meaning of the generalised trust question, and what might be understood from the results. Knack and Keefer (1997) have famously argued a reasonably consistent level of correlation across countries between the WVS generalised trust question and the experiment on the return of ‘lost’ wallets, but many others have argued about the lack of consistency of understanding. The ABS Social Capital Advisory Group wanted a generalised trust question included in the GSS, but agreed it would be better to have a question that could be consistently understood rather than opt for comparability with the WVS question.

48. Initially testing was for the question ‘Do you trust people you come in contact with on a day to day basis?’ in order to limit the large range of people potentially referenced in responses (e.g. those in the local area? in Australia? in the world?). However, testing revealed that respondents were often thinking about the people they knew rather than people in general, and that they were confused about how to respond when they trusted some in some circumstances but not others. These responses appeared to be more about informal trust, which is based on knowledge and experience of people.

49. The question included in the final survey was ‘How strongly do you agree or disagree that most people can be trusted?’ with a scaled response (designed to avoid being a leading question). It was still not clear that there was a common understanding of the concept. It may be that this question does not provide a strong measure of trust in others but rather reflect a personal orientation to living be it confidently or defensively. It may relate to a combination of a person’s optimism or pessimism and sense of personal efficacy, along with an implicit judgment about how predictable and law-abiding other people in the person's community tend to be. It remains to be seen whether this question will produce useful information. To assist in its evaluation, the same question has been included in the 2006 Time Use Survey. Its inclusion there will support assessments of its relationship with the daily activity patterns of individuals, which may in itself prove useful in assessing its robustness as a measure of social capital.

50. Institutional trust was seen as important. This information has been collected in a number of surveys, in respect of whole systems – the political system (or ‘the government’), the health system, the justice system, the education system and others. However, each of these system concepts is highly complex.

People will have had different experiences with different parts of whole systems and may be aware of the extent of some systems but vague about others. In a survey interview, it is not clear that there could be a consistent understanding of the questions, and from the output, it would not be clear which aspects of the systems needed to be addressed if there were a low level of trust reported. The 2006 GSS questions have been limited to two systems, health and justice, and operationalised at a much more specific level. For the health system the questions were: *'How far do you agree or disagree that you can trust: i) your doctor? and ii) hospitals, to do the right thing by you?'* For the justice system, on the other hand, the same question was asked to assess trust in i) police in local area, and ii) police outside the local area.

51. Active involvement in groups of various kinds is another area of interest included in the survey. There are however many types of organisations and groups in which people may have involvements. In order to make effective use of prompt cards to guide responses, the range of groups were divided into three broad categories, namely those related to social activities, those associated with civic participation and those associated with community support. Experience from cognitive and then field testing led to fine tuning of the examples for some types of groups. "Other, please specify" questions were retained, and it has been possible to usefully code the responses in the small number of cases where they have been used. These questions provide an expansion of the data on participation in different types of groups and organisations that can be gained from the Voluntary Work Survey. The information collected should prove a useful benchmark for analysis of group involvement at lower geographic levels.

52. For many of the data items, question development was straightforward. The detailed list of framework elements provided in Appendix 2 shows all the sub-elements being addressed by the 2006 GSS questions. A list of the data items and associated response categories can be made available in due course.

5. After enumeration

53. The 2006 GSS enumeration will be virtually complete by the end of July 2006. Work is well underway on preparation for processing and dissemination. Among products to be released in the first quarter of 2007 will be: a publication presenting the survey results through a variety of tables and a summary of main findings; a survey user reference guide; and, two types of Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) (i.e. a basic CURF available for independent use and an expanded CURF which will be accessible from the ABS's Remote Access Data Laboratory facility). The data dissemination program will allow researchers to take advantage of the variety of data available from the 2006 survey. The summary publication is being modelled on the 2002 publication, and provides a presentation of the social capital data for a range of population groups.

54. In addition to the data from the GSS, over the course of 2007 data will be released from the 2006 Census, which has questions establishing participation rates for voluntary work and caring at a small area level, and from the 2006 Time Use Survey, which also has data relevant to social capital (as shown in Appendix 2). Relevant data items in the Time Use Survey include the main data on time spent doing various activities, along with data on the location of the activity and 'with whom' and 'for whom' the activities were done. It also includes a time stress module, a self-assessed health question, the previously

referred to question on generalised trust, and questions relating to satisfaction with the level of social interaction on the specified days. The survey makes possible the analysis of paid and unpaid work, the balance between work away from home and family interaction, and the way in which people balance family and broader community responsibilities with personal maintenance activities and recreation.

55. As well as the basic output from the surveys, there will be an analytic program. Several projects are currently envisaged as detailed below.

56. One of the foreshadowed projects will be to examine the associations between the social capital items themselves. Among the objectives will be to establish whether some items are more useful than others in helping to explain particular life outcomes and to help establish those which might be the best candidates for future data collection activity should a reduced content social capital module ever be required or should there be a desire to make way for some new measures.

57. A further project being considered relates to the possibility of producing some composite items which could themselves be used to identify sub-populations of interest for further analysis. While the separate items may all meet particular data needs—and the ABS is already seeing demand for many of them—the use of some more complex derived items might provide a better tool for analysing the relationship between elements of social capital and the various aspects of individual wellbeing measured by the GSS. One example would be to draw together bonding, bridging and linking elements, available from various questions into a single measure. However, other options based on multi-variate techniques such as factor analysis might also be considered as a means of producing composite variables. If any such composite items prove useful for analysis, it is expected that the results would be published as articles in ABS social reports or as topic specific research papers. It is also possible that such new derived items could be added to the expanded CURF, which may be accessed from the remote access facilities, for wider use.

58. There is also a possibility of a social capital-specific publication. Feedback about the type of analysis that would be most useful in such an ABS publication would be very welcome. An objective would be to present work which is complementary to, but not competing with, that which might be undertaken by other researchers.

59. Yet another possibility being considered is the inclusion, on the expanded CURF, of some census based indicators that describe the areas in which respondents live. It is envisaged that these would be a supplement to the various census based 'socio-economic indexes for areas' (SEIFA) produced by the ABS. But, these area-of-residence based indicators would be used to provide more particular information about the person's social environment than would otherwise be available. Examples include indicators concerned with the age and birthplace composition of the population (whether it had a high/medium or low proportion of elderly people and people born overseas) or perhaps whether the area had a high/medium or low proportions of people involved in voluntary work. Many other population attributes might also be considered as being important to investigations of why people appear to have lower or higher levels of social capital. However, at the moment there are many caveats around this proposal. These include

considerations of the value of such information for analysis, whether indicators could be designed that would not compromise confidentiality, and, perhaps most difficult, identifying a suitable base area.

60. A further evaluation project will be to compare results relating to specific data items being collected in a number of collections. Participation in voluntary work has been ear-marked as a topic of particular interest. This data will be collected using similar concepts, but different methodology, in the 2006 GSS (here in great detail), in the 2006 Census, and in the 2006 Time Use Survey. In the Time Use Survey participation will be measured as part of people's daily activity patterns but also, as in the other collections, in terms of involvement within the previous 12 months. Data confrontation is likely to add to the understanding of the results from each source.

61. The ABS sees its contribution to the widespread collaborative project on social capital in Australia as providing a national set of data, and question modules which can be used partially or wholly by other agencies and communities so that the results are relatable and benchmarked. This is already happening – there has already been a demand to use the new sets of questions developed by the ABS by a number of agencies and increasing reference is being made to the framework as a guide to data development and analysis activities. .

62. However, while considerable work has been done to develop a social capital module in the GSS, having evidence that the data has been usefully used to support policy development and evaluation activities, and to support widely referenced research which enhances understandings of the importance of social capital in affecting individual and community wellbeing, remains the touchstone by which it should be judged. Until it meets this test it remains a work in progress.

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Appendix 1: Framework for Measuring Social Capital

Figure 1: Resources and Outcomes

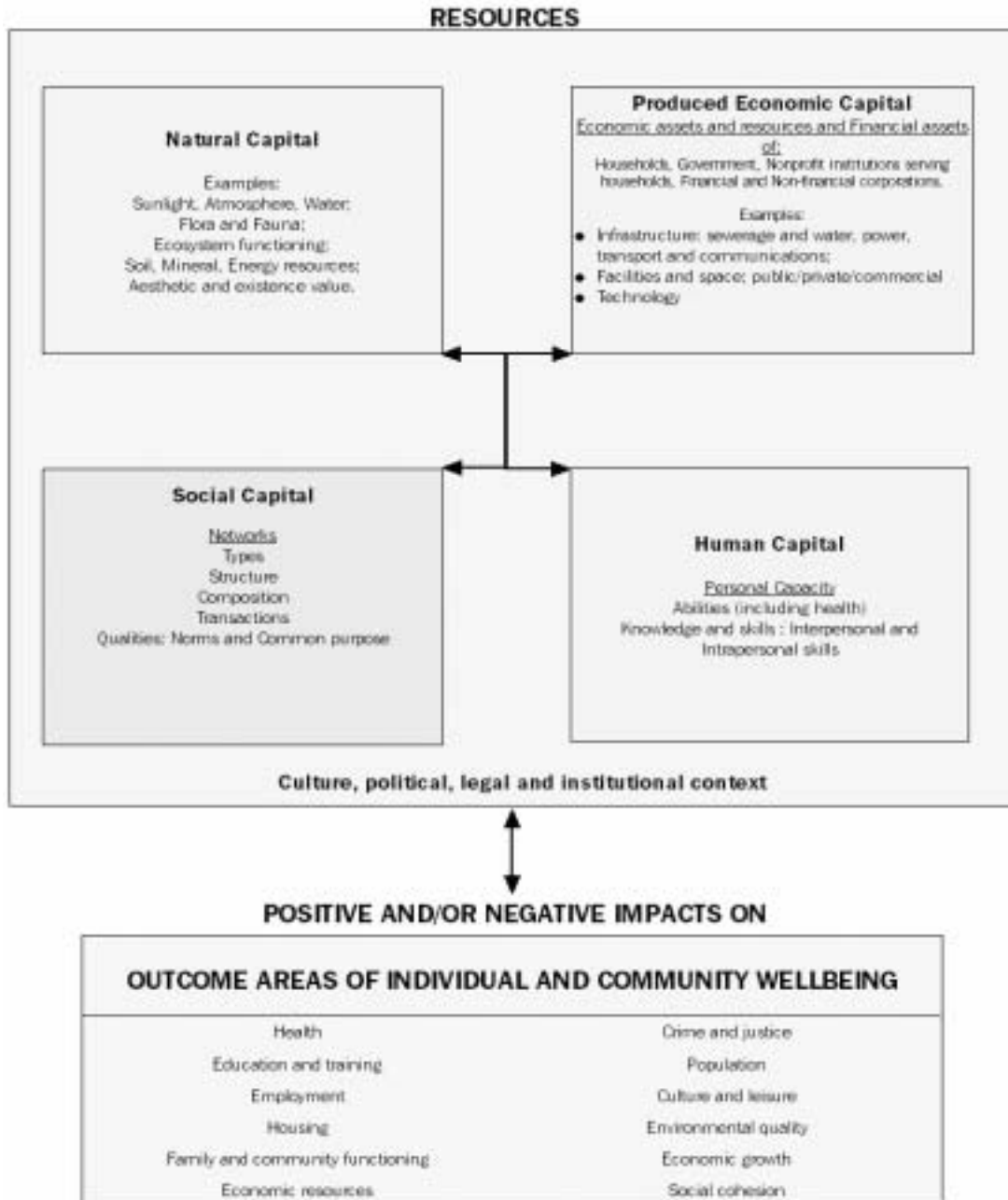
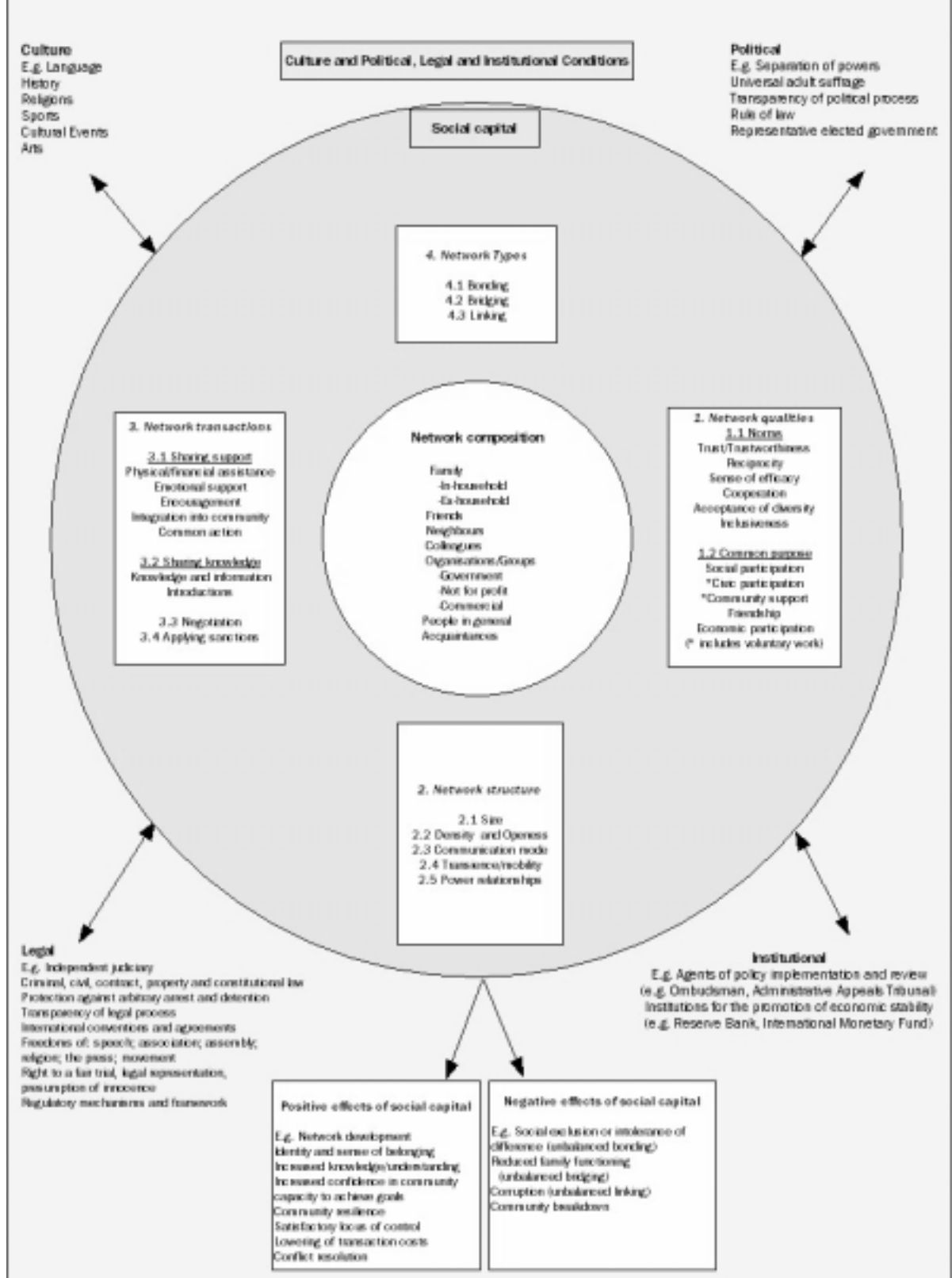


Figure 2: Social Capital, Culture and Political, Legal and Institutional Conditions in Australia



Appendix 2: Framework elements: elements covered in the ‘Aspects of Social Capital’ (cat. no. 4911.0) publication and data sources from which new data will be in available in 2007.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: AN AUSTRALIAN FRAMEWORK(a)				
Framework elements and indicators	Addressed in 4911.0 publication(b) in Topic:	Data to be available from:		
		GSS 2006	TUS 2006	Census 2006
1. Network Qualities				
1.1 Norms				
1.1.1 Trust and trustworthiness				
1.1.1.1 Generalised trust		Y	Y	
1.1.1.2 Informal trust				
1.1.1.3 Institutional trust		Y Partial		
1.1.1.4 Generalised trustworthiness				
1.1.1.5 Feelings of safety using public transport				
1.1.1.6. Feelings of safety walking in the street alone after dark		Y		
1.1.1.7 Feelings of safety alone at home after dark	5. Trust: Feelings of safety	Y		
1.1.2 Reciprocity				
1.1.2.1 Perception of reciprocity in the community	6. Reciprocity: Access to and provision of support	Y		
1.1.2.2 Donating time or money	7. Reciprocity: Giving	Y		
1.1.2.3 Attitude towards contributing to the community				
1.1.3 Sense of efficacy				
1.1.3.1 Perceptions of community efficacy				
1.1.3.2 Sense of personal efficacy in the community				
1.1.3.3 Personal/ community efficacy		Y		
1.1.3.4 Efficacy in local decision making				
1.1.3.5 Perception of Efficacy				
1.1.4 Cooperation				
1.1.4.1 Co-operation in conservation of water resources and electricity	8. Cooperation: Conservation practices			
1.1.4.2 Support for community events		Y		
1.1.4.3 Attitude toward community decision-making capacity		Y		
1.1.4.4 Attitude to social and civic co-operation				
1.1.5 Acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness				
1.1.5.1 Acceptance of different lifestyles				
1.1.5.2 Support for cultural diversity				
1.1.5.3 Group diversity	3. Cultural diversity	Y		
1.1.5.4 Expressions of negative behaviours toward cultural diversity				
1.1.5.5 Perception of change in negative attitudes toward cultural diversity				
1.1.5.6 Attitude toward the practice of linguistic diversity				
1.2 Common purpose				
1.2.1 Social participation				
1.2.1.1 Participation in social activities	9. Social Participation: Social activities and attendance at cultural venues	Y	Y	
1.2.1.2 Barriers to social participation	9. Social Participation: Social activities and attendance at cultural venues			
1.2.1.3 Membership of clubs, organisations or associations for social participation				
1.2.1.4 Active involvement in clubs, organisations or associations	9. Social Participation: Social activities and attendance at cultural venues	Y		
1.2.1.5 Number of clubs, organisations or associations active in		Y No. of types		
1.2.1.6 Religious affiliation	3. Cultural Diversity			
1.2.1.7 Religious attendance	9. Social Participation: Social activities and attendance at cultural venues	Y Partial	Y	
1.2.1.8 Duration of religious attendance				
1.2.2 Civic participation				
1.2.2.1 Level of civic participation		Y Partial		
1.2.2.2 Time spent on community participation activities			Y	
1.2.2.3 Membership in clubs, organisations or associations for civic participation				
1.2.2.4 Active involvement in clubs, organisations or associations	11. Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y		
1.2.2.5 Number of groups active in		Y No. of types		
1.2.2.6 Involvement in a committee	10. Social participation: Sport and Physical Recreation	Y		
1.2.2.7 Barriers to civic participation				
1.2.2.8 Level of involvement with groups, clubs and organisations				
1.2.2.9 Knowledge of current affairs and news.				
1.2.2.10 Trade union membership	12. Economic participation			
1.2.2.11 Voting				
1.2.2.12 Representativeness of government				
1.2.2.13 Membership of political parties				
1.2.2.14 Naturalisation of citizens		Y Visa status		

Appendix 2 (continued)

SOCIAL CAPITAL: AN AUSTRALIAN FRAMEWORK(a)				
Framework elements and indicators	Addressed in 4911.0 publication(b) in Topic:	Data to be available from:		
		GSS 2006	TUS 2006	Census 2006
1.2.3 Community support				
1.2.3.1 Providing help outside the household	11.Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y	Y	Y
1.2.3.2 Providing help in the household	11.Community support: Voluntary work and caring		Y	
1.2.3.3 Participation in voluntary work	11.Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y	Y	Y
1.2.3.4 Frequency of voluntary work	11.Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y		
1.2.3.5 Annual hours spent on voluntary work	11.Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y	Y	
1.2.3.6 Personal donations to any organisation or charity	7. Reciprocity: Giving	Y		
1.2.3.7 Business donations to any organisation or charity	7. Reciprocity: Giving			
1.2.3.8 Membership in clubs, organisations or associations				
1.2.4 Friendship				
1.2.4.1 Number of close relatives (i.e. relatives as close friends)		Y		
1.2.4.2 Number of close friends		Y		
1.2.4.3 Number of other friendships				
1.2.4.4 Satisfaction with friendships			Y	
1.2.4.5 Work-initiated friendships				
1.2.5 Economic participation				
1.2.5.1 Labour force participation rate	12. Common purpose: Economic participation	Y	Y	
1.2.5.2 Previous work colleagues in current social networks				
1.2.5.3 Trust in work colleagues				
1.2.5.4 Friends and relatives as sources of finance and business information	12. Common purpose: Economic participation	Y		
1.2.5.5 Use of local shops and other local businesses				
1.2.5.6 Membership and participation in unions, professional or technical association	12. Common purpose: Economic participation			
1.2.5.7 Membership of co-operatives				
1.2.5.8 Membership of bartering organisations				
2 Network structure				
2.1 Network size				
2.1.1 Source of support in a crisis	6. Reciprocity: Access to and provision of support	Y		
2.1.2 Close relatives or friends who live nearby				
2.1.3 Acquaintance with neighbours				
2.1.4 Links to institutions		Y		
2.2 Network frequency, intensity and communication mode				
2.2.1 Frequency of face-to-face contact with relatives	13. Network structure: Frequency, intensity and mode of contact		Time spent with family, friends	
2.2.2 Frequency of face-to-face contact with friends	13. Network structure: Frequency, intensity and mode of contact	Y combined F*R		
2.2.3 Frequency of telephone contact with relatives		Y combined F*R		
2.2.4 Frequency of telephone contact with friends		Y combined F*R		
2.2.5 Frequency of email/Internet contact with relatives		Y combined F*R		
2.2.6 Frequency of email/Internet contact with friends		Y combined F*R		
2.2.7 Frequency of other forms of communication with relatives	13. Network structure: Frequency, intensity and mode of contact	Y combined F*R		
2.2.8 Frequency of other forms of communication with friends	13. Network structure: Frequency, intensity and mode of contact	Y combined F*R		
2.2.9 Communication through Internet chat rooms				
2.3 Density and Openess				
2.3.1 Nature of informal networks - family and friends				
2.3.2 Nature of informal networks - friends				
2.3.3 Density of formal networks				
2.4 Transience/mobility				
2.4.1 Length of residence in current locality	4. Residential Mobility	Y		
2.4.2 Geographic mobility	4. Residential Mobility	Y		
2.4.3 Changes in intensity of involvement with organisations				
2.4.4 Change in intensity of involvement with organisation in which most active				
2.4.5 Duration of involvement with organisation in which most active		Y		
2.4.6 Experiences in social, civic, community support activities as a child/youth		Y		
2.4.7 Child/youth background - parent's voluntary work				
2.4.8 Child/youth background - type of area of residence				
2.4.9 Geographic mobility as a child/youth				

Appendix 2 (continued)

SOCIAL CAPITAL: AN AUSTRALIAN FRAMEWORK(a)				
Framework elements and indicators	Addressed in 4911.0 publication(b) in Topic:	Data to be available from:		
		GSS 2006	TUS 2006	Census 2006
2.5 Power relationships				
2.5.1 Contact with organisations		Y		
2.5.2 Perception of access to public services and facilities		Y		
2.5.3 Personal sense of efficacy		Y		
2.5.4 Mentoring				
3. Network transactions				
3.1 Sharing support				
3.1.1 Physical/financial assistance, Emotional support and Encouragement				
3.1.1.1 Provision of support	11. Community support: Voluntary work and caring	Y	Y	Y
3.1.1.2 Receipt of support		Y		
3.1.1.3 Provision of help to work colleague				
3.1.1.4 Expectation of help from a work colleague				
3.1.1.5 Capacity to seek support (also Reciprocity)	6. Reciprocity: Access to and provision of support	Y		
3.1.2 Integration into the community				
3.1.2.1 Provision and use of community facilities				
3.1.2.2 Attendance at community events	10. Social participation: Sport and Physical Recreation	Y	Y	
3.1.2.3 Sense of belonging to an ethnic or cultural group, State or Territory and Australia				
3.1.2.4 Perception of friendliness of community				
3.1.2.5 Extent of acquaintance and friendship networks in local area				
3.1.3 Common action				
3.1.3.1 Taking action with others to solve local problems				
3.1.3.2 Participation in the development of a new service in local area		Y		
3.1.3.3 Group participation for social or political reform				
3.2 Sharing knowledge, information and introductions				
3.2.1 Use of Internet to contact government				
3.2.2 Friends and relatives as sources of job search information	12. Economic participation			
3.2.3 Job search methods	12. Economic participation			
3.2.4 Source of information to make life decision				
3.3 Negotiation				
3.3.1 Resolving conflict through discussion				
3.3.2 Confidence in mechanisms for dealing with conflict				
3.3.3 Willingness to seek mediation				
3.3.4 Dealing with local problems				
3.4 Applying sanctions				
3.4.1 Perception of willingness to intervene in antisocial behaviour				
3.4.2 Willingness to allow behaviour against norms				
4. Network types				
4.1 Bonding				
4.1.1 Group homogeneity				
4.1.2 Density of formal networks				
4.2 Bridging				
4.2.1 Group diversity				
4.2.2 Density of formal networks				
4.2.3 Openness of local community				
4.2.4 Low bridging				
4.3 Linking				
4.3.1 Links to institutions		Y		
4.4 Isolation		Y	Y	
4.4.1 Lack of activity in groups		Y		
4.4.2 Feelings of social isolation	13: Network structure: Frequency, intensity and mode of contact			

a) ABS (2004) Information Paper. Measuring Social Capital: An Australian Framework and Indicators (cat. no. 1378.0). ABS, Canberra

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