



Annual Report 2023

Melbourne Institute:
Applied Economic
& Social Research



Acknowledgements

The Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research (Melbourne Institute) is Australia's pre-eminent research institution. It undertakes high-quality, independent and impartial applied research, and contributes to the development of public policy in Australia.

The Melbourne Institute acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which our offices within the University of Melbourne are located: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples. The Melbourne Institute pays respect to Elders past, present and future. We recognise the importance of Indigenous knowledge contributing towards our mission of undertaking high-quality, independent and impartial applied research that contributes to the development of public policy in Australia.

The 2023 Melbourne Institute Annual Report was written by the Communications and Publications Manager and edited by Professor A. Abigail Payne, Director and Ronald Henderson Professor. We would also like to thank Melbourne Institute staff for their contributions to the content and editing of the report.

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Message from the Director



Professor A. Abigail Payne

Director and Ronald Henderson Professor
Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic
& Social Research

I am immensely proud of the achievements of the Melbourne Institute Team. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and working from home, we have persevered, embracing change and continuous improvement.

2023 marked my seventh year as serving as the Director of the Melbourne Institute.

We sit within a top-ranked university known for research, innovation, and teaching. As a department focused on applied research and engagement, our aspirations include contributing to the ever-important building of internationally recognised peer-reviewed research and making an impact on policy development and implementation. These two intersecting aspirations are what distinguishes us from non-academic based policy institutes, centres, government departments, and related organisations.

When I joined the Melbourne Institute, one of its defining features was the number of long-standing researchers who had been with the institute for more than a decade. These scholars have played an important role in shaping the Melbourne Institute. During my tenure, we have also attracted leading senior scholars who have brought fresh perspectives and taken on new challenges, expanding our research and impact. This has included challenging our ideas of what is meant by economic and social policy research that concerns Australia. Are we simply considering what happens within Australia or should we include how Australia impacts its neighbouring countries?

For instance, Professor Lisa Cameron's expertise in development economics has permitted us to take on projects in Indonesia and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Professor Yuting Zhang has expanded our work in health economics and is leading initiatives to challenge how we think about Medicare. Professors Ragan Petrie and Marco Castillo, though part-time appointments, have challenged our approaches to policy research through their expertise for running field experiments and promoting opportunities for taking on the testing of big ideas. We also have hired data scientists to expand our expertise and to showcase the importance of data science through the lens of economics.

We are a department that has embraced prioritising the collective impact of our work: it is our sum that makes the Melbourne Institute. Over the past seven years, we have pursued a transition from isolated teams to a collaborative environment that embraces the diversity of our expertise and contributions across core themes of work.

We have also aligned with the University of Melbourne's mission to train and deliver a skilled workforce through our Foundation Fellows program. This program provides recent graduates with the necessary skills to transform and analyse data, information and shaping economic and social policy. By providing a program that is utilised by all projects, our fellows get an opportunity to work on a range of topics and to work with scholars who are diverse in their approach to research and analysis.

The impact of the Melbourne Institute extends beyond the accomplishments of our researchers. This is evident in our partnerships, collaborations and funding arrangements.

Some notable examples include:

- Our longstanding contract with the Department of Social Services to develop the HILDA Survey exemplifies the importance of working together for a common good that benefits the whole of Australia – from policy and research perspectives.
- Our partnership with Westpac to provide a consistent assessment of expectations and macroeconomic indicators that helps us to better understand the world of inflation, interest rates, and employment.
- Our collaboration with *The Australian* to provide the regular delivery of the Economic and Social Outlook Conference, enabling a venue for convening analysts, academics, and political leaders to discuss the critical challenges and opportunities facing Australia.
- Roy Morgan Research has been instrumental not only for the delivery of the HILDA Survey but also in the development of the Melbourne Institute – Roy Morgan Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey, an initiative undertaken during the early days of the pandemic to capture the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and that is now evolving into an overall pulse of the microeconomic and social issues facing Australia.
- Our researchers who are a part of the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Centre of Excellence known as the Life Course Centre demonstrate the importance of cross-disciplinary/cross-university initiatives to understand children and families over the life course.

- The establishment of the Melbourne Institute Data Lab has facilitated various initiatives that includes: applying to become the first university-based Accredited Data Service Provider, promoting a collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to address the challenges of providing increased access to sensitive data for research and policy engagement, and funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to develop shared data environments to support analyses that seek to understand and address disadvantage in Australia.
- Our engagement with other university departments (e.g. University of Melbourne Faculty of Education, Melbourne Social Equity Institute), research and community organisations (e.g. Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Greater Shepparton Foundation, Parkville Institute) to reinforce our commitment to collaboration and social and economic impact.

I am immensely proud of the achievements of the Melbourne Institute Team. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and working from home, we have persevered, embracing change and continuous improvement. The support by the team for embracing change and continuous improvement has led to a vision for strategic growth for both academic research and the pursuit of policy impact.

With over 60 years as an institute, I am confident that the next decade will build upon our accomplishments and further strengthen our role for informing and shaping economic and social policy. This Annual Report serves as a testament to our work and showcases how we have tackled a diverse range of issues and opportunities to support Australia's development.



Professor A. Abigail Payne
23 March 2023

About us

The Melbourne Institute is home to over 50 accomplished researchers with international reputations, working on economic and social policy issues to support better policy and practice in Australia.

We tackle the challenges and opportunities facing individuals, households, organisations, communities, and government. Our work involves providing rigorous statistical analysis that includes the development and curation of data, the translation of analyses and core statistics, and the provision of policy-driven insights. Our research is published in leading academic journals and we provide the editorial oversight for the *Australian Economic Review*.

Our core themes



Employment Skills & Education

From early child development to impacts of schooling and lifelong learning, we study human capital development. We also track and better understand employment, earnings, and work patterns. We pay particular attention to groups of individuals such as those at risk of or living in economic disadvantage, women, and single parents.



Health, Wellbeing & Disadvantage

We concentrate on documenting and exploring the conditions that can lead to positive or negative health and wellbeing of Australians. Our work seeks to understand how family dynamics can impact outcomes, what explains income or wealth inequality, the importance of financial wellbeing, and how our systems impact health, poverty, and overall wellbeing. Our studies include exploring the key determinants of individual and community poverty, ageing and retirement, crime, and the impacts of policy for promoting equitable outcomes.



Taxes, Spending & Public Service

We study the tax and transfer system, the importance of Medicare and the provision of a public health system especially as it relates to hospitals and the provision of fair and advanced healthcare, the role played by not-for-profits, the importance of government subsidies for promoting education and training opportunities, the importance of not-for-profit service provision, and the overall efficiency of government services.



Macroeconomics, Modelling & Forecasting

Our longstanding relationship with the government and the banking industry has enabled the Melbourne Institute to provide current and critical macroeconomic indicators and forecasts for policy analysis.



Data & Analytics

Building new data sets to inform Australia has been a long-standing hallmark of the Melbourne Institute. These data include over 20 years of running the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, the Consumer Attitudes, Sentiments and Expectations in Australia Survey (CASIe), and, more recently, the

undertaking of the Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan *Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey*. In addition to creating data, we have a rich history of curating data from non-traditional sources, utilising research tools for data visualisations, and offering data training to recent graduates. Our data and analytics underpin all work undertaken by the Melbourne Institute researchers, providing support for others to engage in much-needed, evidence-based analyses, to address issues and opportunities in Australia.

2023 year in review

59 Peer-reviewed publications

41 Articles published in A or A* journals (Scopus Equivalency)

19 Working papers

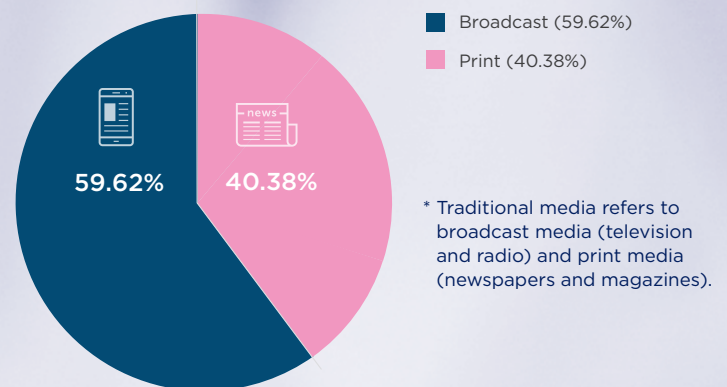
136 Presentations given at conferences

48 Visitors to the Melbourne Institute

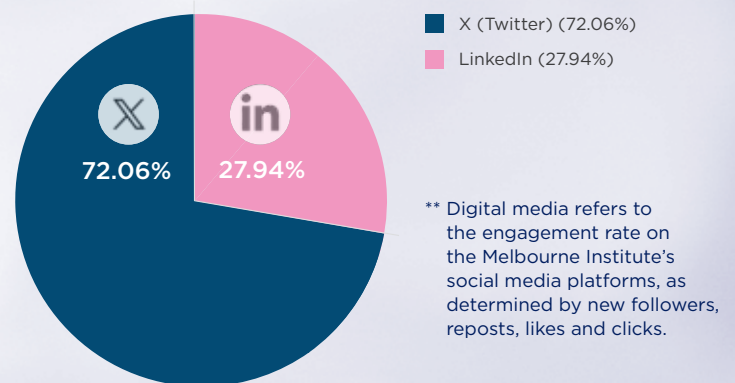
68,863 Media mentions

6,204 Global downloads of *The Australian Economic Review*

Traditional media*



Digital media**





Highlights of 2023



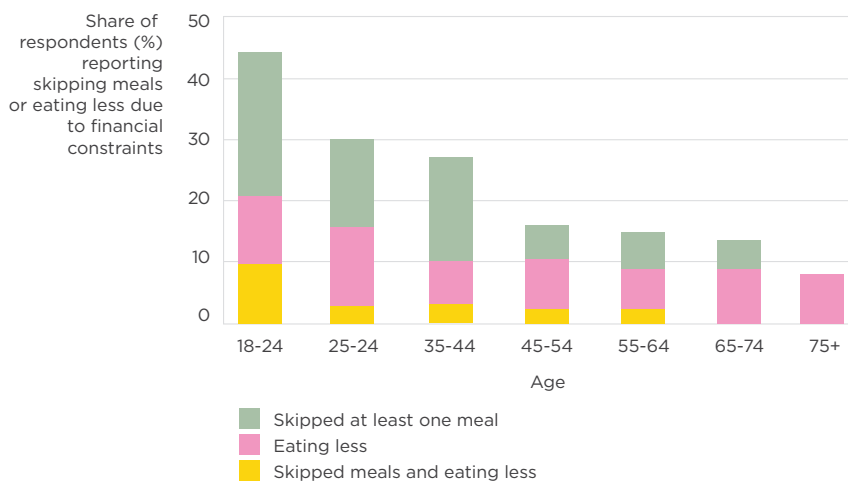
Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

The rising cost-of-living challenges underpinned much work by the Melbourne Institute in 2023. Endemic to our DNA through the legacy of the Institute's founding Director, Professor Ronald Henderson, we passionately worked to understand and identify persistent and emerging issues of poverty, noting that Australia faced five interest rate increases by the Reserve Bank of Australia, rising costs on basic necessities such as food, utilities, and housing.

The Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan *Taking the Pulse of the Nation (MI-RM TTPN) Survey* is a joint partnership and in 2023 we extended its tracking of financial matters faced by Australians. This incorporated a financial resiliency measure and tracking of Australians' perceptions regarding financial challenges related to food, housing, energy bills and medical needs. Analyses focused on the variation for putting food on the table by different socio-demographic characteristics (age, employment, mental distress, location), the role of financial pressures as a barrier to obtaining a university education, the willingness to seek support when there is a need, and the impacts of rising energy prices.

Using MI-RM TTPN data, Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel's work was featured in Pursuit (The University of Melbourne's online news publication) and provided insights into why - [More than half of Australians are only just making ends meet](#). Her article highlighted the impact of the incremental rate rises and growth in inflation, which have contributed to a longer-term problem of ongoing mental distress caused by the cost-of-living crisis and increased experiences of financial hardship.

Skipping meals and eating less due to financial constraints



[Twelve months later: Most Australians facing high levels of challenges covering housing and/or food costs \(TTPN Report December 2023\).](#)

In 1972 under the McMahon Government, Professor Ronald Frank Henderson chaired the Australian Government's Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. The results led to the Melbourne Institute's creation of the 'Henderson Poverty Line,' a tool that captures the adequacy of income relative to basic needs for Australian households. Fast-forward 51 years, and the Melbourne Institute once again made submissions and presented to the Parliament of Australia's Senate Committee on the extent and nature of poverty in Australia.

Professor A. Abigail Payne, Director and Ronald Henderson Professor, emphasised the collaborative effort required to combat poverty, stating:

“Overcoming income poverty involves having a sufficient level of resources to cover necessities... tackling poverty is not a one-person or one-organisation job; we need a village.”

To further an evidence-based approach to tackling poverty, the Breaking Down Barriers (BDB) project (funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation) released its Community Profiles report and a set of interactive visualisations enabling communities to easily access current and past information on measures such as poverty, employment, education and how these measures relate to other communities and have changed over time. The curated data behind the interactive visualisation for the BDB Community Profiles highlights the importance of geography and looking at poverty beyond a national rate – a key driver in the design of future place-based programs.

Breaking Down Barriers Community Profiles



As part of our serving as a node of the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Children and Families Over the Life Course (Life Course Centre), we worked with The University of Queensland to run a Breaking Down Barriers/Life Course Centre Brisbane Roundtable to discuss poverty and disadvantage through data-informed decision-making. This Roundtable enabled meaningful discussions on how we use data, what data are needed, and how governments, organisations, and universities can better collaborate to understand and create policies and services to reduce poverty and disadvantage.



Professor A. Abigail Payne, Breaking Down Barriers/Life Course Centre Roundtable in Brisbane.

Our engagement with a broader community continued in our co-hosting a Public Economics Forum with the Life Course Centre in Canberra to present work and discuss female poverty in Australia. The forum was moderated by Ms Victoria Anderson, Deputy Secretary Small Business, Housing, Corporate and Law Group, the Treasury and brought together 68 representatives from government, policy, and academia. Following the forum, a Roundtable was held at the Treasury, further discussing the topic of early parenthood.

“ The cross-nodal and interdisciplinary collaborations that have resulted from our Centre of Excellence are evidence of the well-known saying “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”, which has proven to be particularly true for the outputs that have resulted from joining forces across disciplines and across (and beyond) Australia.”

Professor Guyonne Kalb, Melbourne Institute (and Life Course Centre Melbourne Node Director)



ARC Industry Fellow Cameron Parsell, Breaking Down Barriers/Life Course Centre Roundtable in Brisbane.

Across Anti-Poverty Week our work was cited by the media 142 times, including:



During Anti-Poverty Week, Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel served as a panellist in a webinar: 'Combatting child poverty in Australia: what are the challenges and how can we overcome them?' She presented insights from her work that explore an increased risk of falling into poverty at the time of childbirth.

Also during Anti-Poverty Week, Professor A. Abigail Payne presented on key issues affecting poverty at the Parliamentary Friendship Group to End Poverty, hosted by Alicia Payne MP and Bridget Archer MP. The discussion included presentations by the Australian Council of Social Services and Foodbank Australia.



Professor A. Abigail Payne
and Mr Julian Hill MP,
Parliament House.

Through these collaborations, research initiatives, and events, the Melbourne Institute continues to follow in the footsteps of Professor Ronald Henderson, with an enduring mission to combat poverty and create a more equal society.



Public Economics Forum
in Canberra (L - R: Deputy
Secretary, Victoria Anderson,
Dr Barbara Broadway, Dr Alice
Campbell and Dr Angela Jackson).

Evolution and impact of HILDA

Since its inception in 2001, the Melbourne Institute has conducted the HILDA Survey under a contract with the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The contract was further extended in 2023, to permit data collection in 2024 and 2025.

The Melbourne Institute and DSS co-hosted the HILDA Survey Research Conference, which solicited papers using HILDA Survey data from around the world. The papers presented at the conference focused on examining the changes in the lives of Australians during the 21st century and the driving factors behind these changes. Presenters focused on the consequences of these changes, including the impact of the factors on health, subjective wellbeing, employment, family life, income, and wealth. Papers examined the effects of childcare costs on female labour supply, changes in income and wealth inequality, the inter-relationships between mental health and employment, the importance of home ownership, what we know about substance use and working from home, and how children affect a couple's housing relocation decisions.

The papers presented at the conference focused on examining the changes in the lives of Australians during the 21st century and the driving factors behind these changes.



Professor Mark Wooden, the HILDA Survey Project Director, announced his retirement having served for 23 years as the HILDA Survey Project Director. He has been instrumental in making HILDA a data source with an outstanding international reputation. This reputation reflects the efforts he has put in to build an exceptional team, to ensure high standards for data collection and cleaning, and to support the development of what is now referred to as an important national data asset for Australia.



Professor Mark Wooden addressing guests at the HILDA Survey Research Conference dinner.

We worked with DSS to create a transition of leadership from Mark to two co-directors: Professor Roger Wilkins and Associate Professor Nicole Watson.

“ I am honoured by the opportunity to lead the HILDA Survey project alongside Professor Roger Wilkins. I have worked closely with Professor Mark Wooden over the last 23 years and appreciate his commitment, enthusiasm, and perseverance in leading the HILDA Survey Project as it has grown and matured. I look forward to working with Roger and the team to continue to build on this strong foundation.”

Associate Professor Nicole Watson

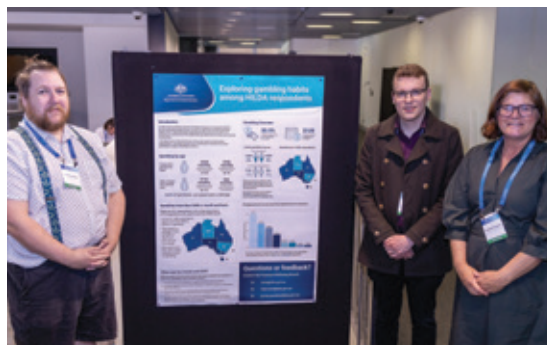
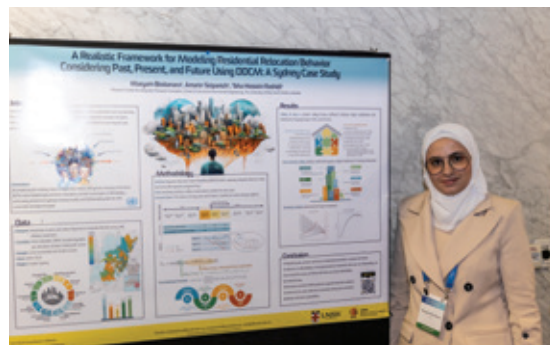
“ It is a privilege to take over co-leadership of the HILDA Survey Project with Associate Professor Nicole Watson, and I hope that together we can further cement its national and international reputation as a leading household panel study.”

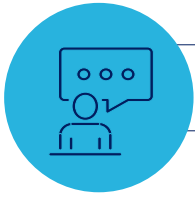
Professor Roger Wilkins



Highlights of the 2023 HILDA Survey Research Conference

We would like to thank all our partners and guests who contributed to the success of this event.





HILDA media highlights

The Project, Channel 10

New report reveals less
Aussies are choosing
to get married.



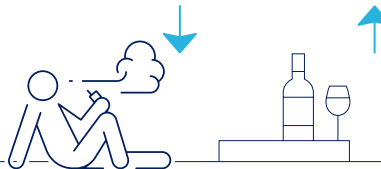
ABC News Breakfast

Interview with Michael
Rowland and Lisa Millar.



The Conversation

7 charts reveal we're
smoking less, taking more
drugs and still binge drinking.



Australian Financial Review

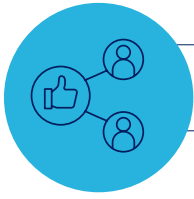
Gender pay gap shrinks
at fastest rate in 20 years.



The Guardian

Number of young Australians
in psychological distress
continues sharp rise.





HILDA social media highlights

We created 52 HILDA social media posts across the University of Melbourne during our February media campaign. As a result, we observed a noticeable increase in traffic to our social media platforms:

52 HILDA posts
were created

341K
impressions 80%
↑

89K 68%
views ↑

3K 23%
link clicks ↑

Economic and Social Outlook Conference: Bold Ideas for a Defining Decade

The 21st Economic and Social Outlook Conference was presented with our longstanding partner *The Australian*. Following the transition to a newly appointed Australian Labor Party government in 2022, we focused on where to go with new leadership: **“Bold Ideas for a Defining Decade.”** Prime Minister of Australia, The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP and Treasurer, The Honourable Dr Jim Chalmers MP delivered keynote addresses. Both discussed the importance of addressing the big issues facing Australia including inflation, housing and renewable energy.

A hallmark of the Conference is the presentation of ideas from several perspectives, including experts from Academia. The University of Melbourne and the Melbourne Institute were well represented through presentations by Professor Michael Wesley, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Global Culture and Engagement, Associate Professor Leslie Martin from the Department of Economics, Professor Lisa Cameron, Professor Yuting Zhang, Professor Roger Wilkins, Professor Guay Lim, and Professor A. Abigail Payne. University of Melbourne Chancellor Jane Hansen AO and the Faculty of Business and Economics Dean, Professor Paul Kofman provided introductory and closing remarks.





Cost of living

"Our government understands the cost of living is the number one pressure on Australian families, which is why help with the cost of living is our number one priority... It means backing our people, by helping with the cost of living and investing in the skills, knowledge, and technology that our workers and businesses need to compete and succeed... It means strengthening our resilience and self-reliance, so we are better protected from future shocks and better positioned for future opportunities."

The Hon. Anthony Albanese
MP Prime Minister of Australia



Energy transitions for becoming a renewable energy superpower

"We want to put the energy transformation front and centre in our economic reform efforts. We see it as crucial to the future and that means it should be absolutely central to the work of the Productivity Commission too."

The Hon. Dr. Jim Chalmers
MP Treasurer of Australia



Full employment and low inflation: Can we pull it off?

"We need to do better on unemployment—and under-utilisation more broadly—than we have done over the past century... It's a national effort that will require support of government, business, workers, and educators. No one sector can do it alone."

Innes Willox, Chief Executive,
Australian Industry Group



Easing the housing supply squeeze and making homes affordable for all Australians

"Negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts increase housing prices, cost the budget billions and increase the need for social housing."

Professor Lisa Cameron



An inclusive society: Employment, ageing and health

"Our research shows that private health insurance is not an effective way to reduce hospital waiting times. Other ways to reduce waiting times and improve access are: providing more resources to the public system and target rebates to those who need it most."

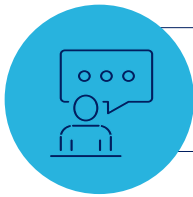
Professor Yuting Zhang



Education and skills for the future

"In a recent analysis by my colleague Nicolás Salamanca, Australians highlighted that a critical reason for not pursuing higher education was tied to the financing of this education... this points to the challenges we continue to face in encouraging students from less advantaged communities to pursue higher education."

Professor A. Abigail Payne



Media highlights from the 2023 Economic and Social Outlook Conference

370+
mentions*

Economic and Social
Outlook Conference

13.5 million
people

audience
reach

* TV, radio, online,
print newspaper



Data development, evaluation, and training

The Melbourne Institute has a strong legacy of survey development and survey methods: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, Consumer Attitudes, Sentiments and Expectations in Australia (CASI), Journeys Home, Medicine in Australia: Balancing Employment and Life (MABEL), and the Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan *Taking the Pulse of the Nation* (MI-RM TTPN) Survey. Moreover, Melbourne Institute researchers have also actively engaged in data curation and analysis of data not traditionally used for policy analysis.

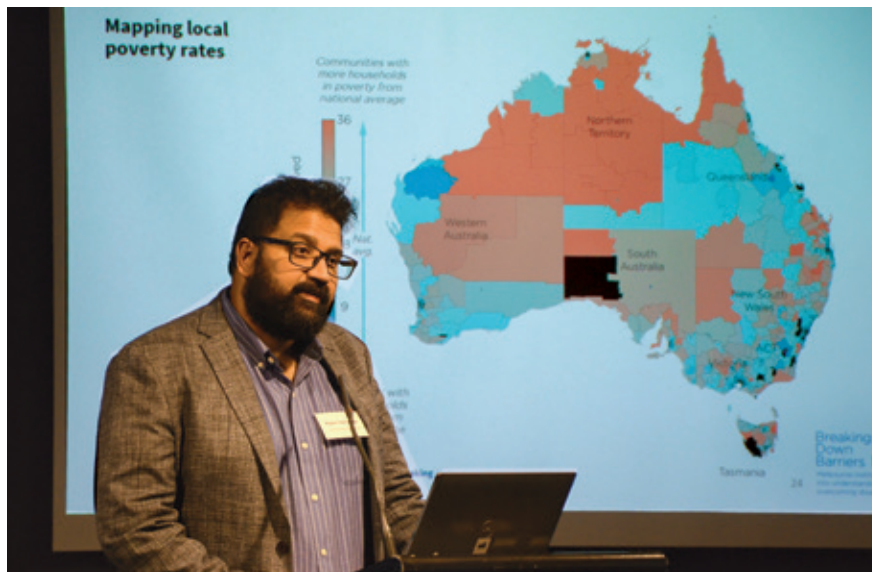
It is only fitting as a large department known for its quantitative analysis, that the Melbourne Institute is known as a facilitator of a range of data, analytical, and visualisation services that includes providing secure access to curated and linked data sets, engaging in expert research and policy analyses, creating user-friendly ways to interact with statistics and data.

The Melbourne Institute's holistic approach to data for informing and shaping economic and social policy is tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders and maximise the efficiency of policy development. The Melbourne Institute expanded the role it is playing in the provision of secure data environments through the Melbourne Institute Data Lab (MIDL) by engaging with senior executives at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to pioneer methods for stronger collaboration between academic-based data labs and the Australian Government through sharing sensitive data between secure data environments, enabling increased use of critical data assets for research and policy engagement.

The Melbourne Institute submitted an application to become the first university-based Accredited Data Service Provider (ADSP) under the recent Data Availability and Transparency (DAT) Scheme regulated by the Office of the National Data Commissioner. The work undertaken enabled working through critical issues for the University of Melbourne such as developing protocols for data governance, privacy, and output vetting, and creating mechanisms to reduce the risk of cybersecurity attacks.

Examples of work undertaken in 2023 that showcase the breadth and depth of the Melbourne Institute's Data, Evaluation, and Analytical expertise include:

- The Breaking Down Barriers (BDB) Community Profiles were launched, providing an interactive data visualisation tool for community-level data, intended to inform and support place-based economic and social policy to address poverty and disadvantage in Australia. This data visualisation project showcased the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) to speed up the roll-out of the community reports for each profile. The Melbourne Institute's Data and Analytics team developed a workaround for inputting sensitive data into a large language model (LLM) to create draft community-level profiles based on data trends. This workaround also involved training our Foundation Fellows on LLM methods and enabled close supervision and editing by the project leads.
- Dr Maxim Ananyev facilitated several workshops and evaluations to support the use of synthetic control trials for assessing interventions and policy assessment in a systematically controlled manner. Synthetic control trials provide credible ex-post evaluation plans for services that did not start with a design of providing a control group upon which to benchmark the impacts of the services being provided. The first implementation of a synthetic control trial evaluated The Hive project, a place-based early childhood development impact initiative that was rolled out in three communities in New South Wales. This work has resulted in ongoing work funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation.



“By developing an ethical approach to using a large language model, we were able to create 300+ community profile reports over 23 days versus 9-12 months if we followed a more traditional approach.” Dr Rajeev Samarage

- The Melbourne Institute and the Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous Business Leadership, through Associate Professor Cain Polidano, have been instrumental in the development of a new ABS BLADE data module that highlights Indigenous-owned businesses. The project involves the curation and incorporation of data from Indigenous business registries, including data from the National Indigenous Australia Agency, Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations Database, the Industry Capability Network Gateway, Waalitj Foundation, the Victorian Department of Industry, Skills and Regions and the Melbourne Business School. Other developments include the incorporation of Australian Government procurement data from AusTender and National Indigenous Australia Agency and the Government grant data from GrantConnect. The data is used to produce annual Indigenous business snapshot reports and will be used to evaluate the impacts of Indigenous Preferential Procurement Policies and the impacts of services delivered through Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- The Melbourne Institute has a team of researchers that are collaborating with members of the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Education and the Front Project, a national enterprise to ensure all children have equal access to early learning, to evaluate Victoria's three-year-old kindergarten program. The work being undertaken by Professor Guyonne Kalb, Associate Professor Yi-Ping Tseng and Dr Sarah Dahmann involves using linked administrative and survey data to estimate the policy impacts on workforce participation and child outcomes.
- The accomplishments of Associate Professor Yi-Ping Tseng and other University of Melbourne collaborators in their demonstration of strong positive impacts of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program through the use of a gold standard program evaluation method and careful analyses have resulted in the creation of new centres for early years development that will continue to be evaluated by Associate Professor Tseng and her team. The new funding also supports the development and trial of an intensive Early Childhood Education and Care program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing significant family distress and hardship.

Data and analytics at the Melbourne Institute have grown exponentially in recent years building on a decades-long foundation of quality data development and analysis. 2023 represents the beginning of a new decade for the Melbourne Institute as it builds on past successes of informing and shaping economic and social policy whilst recognising the importance of taking a trans-disciplinary approach to data development, evaluation, analysis, and visualisation.



Employment,
skills &
education

Employment, skills & education

The Melbourne Institute undertakes extensive research in human capital development, to improve an individual's scope for prosperity in Australia. Through our research in early childhood development, gender equality in the workforce, the tertiary sector, youth employment services and more, we are working to increase the earning potential for Australians over their lifetime. Understanding human capital development and how best to invest in it is essential for a prosperous society.

Early Childhood Education and Care Research Projects

Melbourne Institute Associate Professor Yi-Ping Tseng and Department of Economics Professor Jeff Borland have been leading a randomised controlled trial (RCT) that evaluates an innovative centre-based program, Early Years Education Program (EYEP), designed specifically for children experiencing extreme adversity. EYEP was initiated by Kids First, previously the Children's Protection Society (CPS), an independent not-for-profit child and family services organisation. The program was designed and implemented by CPS in collaboration with Associate Professor Brigid Jordan and Dr Anne Kennedy.

Large impacts of EYEP are found for children's IQ, language, and social-emotional development for both the 24-month and 36-month follow-up outcome after commencement in the program. Evaluation of the longer-term impacts and in-depth analyses of children's outcomes using the rich data collected in RCT are in progress.

In the next four years, Associate Professor Yi-Ping Tseng and Nichola Coombs will lead the outcome evaluation for two new initiatives and will be working closely with researchers from the Parkville Institute, a not-for-profit organisation established by Associate Professor Brigid Jordan AM and Dr Anne Kennedy. Other collaborators include SNAICC-National Voice for our Children, Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, and Social Ventures Australia, who have co-developed the Aboriginal program with the Parkville Institute.

The Melbourne Institute has engaged with various inquiries currently underway around developing policies to encourage early childhood education care (ECEC) and workforce participation. After participating in a submission to the Treasury in relation to the Employment White Paper consultation in late 2022, Professor Guyonne Kalb was an invited panellist in the session "The role of ECEC: Childhood development and women's participation" at the inaugural Treasury Policy Research Conference in April 2023. This conference was organised around the Employment White Paper and by invitation only. In June 2023, Professor Kalb provided advice on labour supply and childcare modelling to Productivity Commission staff involved in the Inquiry into the ECEC sector and has continued to engage with the Productivity Commission on this Inquiry.

The Melbourne Institute has engaged with various inquiries currently underway around developing policies to encourage early childhood education care (ECEC).

FBE Gender Lab: Researching gender issues in Australia and abroad

Melbourne Institute researchers Professor Lisa Cameron and Dr Diana Contreras Suárez will be joining the lead investigator from the Department of Economics and researchers in the Department of Finance to establish the Gender Lab in the Faculty of Business and Economics. The Lab will foster a community of researchers working on gender within the Faculty. It will also encourage multi-disciplinary work via a seminar series with invited speakers working on gender-related issues from across the university campus. The lab will initiate gender workshops, sponsor sessions focused on gender research at leading international conferences to showcase the work being undertaken by the Faculty of Business and Economics. Projects will be domestically and internationally focused, including a project Professor Cameron and Dr Contreras Suárez are involved in on mothers' and fathers' contributions to children's cognitive development in Timor-Leste.

Youth disadvantage and employment

Using seed funding from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and funding under the Paul Ramsay Foundation's Breaking Down Barriers Grant, Dr Steeve Marchand, Professor A. Abigail Payne, and Dr Ujjwal KC have been working on a series of tools and reports to better understand youth poverty rates, youth engagement in education and employment, and employment opportunities at a regional level. Professor Payne presented the initial visualisations to members of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Board and Dr Steeve Marchand presented the work at the Breaking Down Barriers/Life Course Centre Brisbane Roundtable.

Core to the project is to provide information to key stakeholders such as schools, communities, governments and industry – so they understand the connections between youth disadvantage, education, and employment opportunities.

Dr Steeve Marchand joined the Early School Leavers Working Group of the Data Catalyst Network. The Data Catalyst Network program has been developed by Infoxchange, an organisation focused on providing the right tools for use by not-for-profits to deliver greater social and economic impact. This partnership has led to a small grant to undertake a project that analyses employment service provider data to explore job placements for early school leavers and how these placements can lead to longer-term employment and stable wages.

Implications of university debt

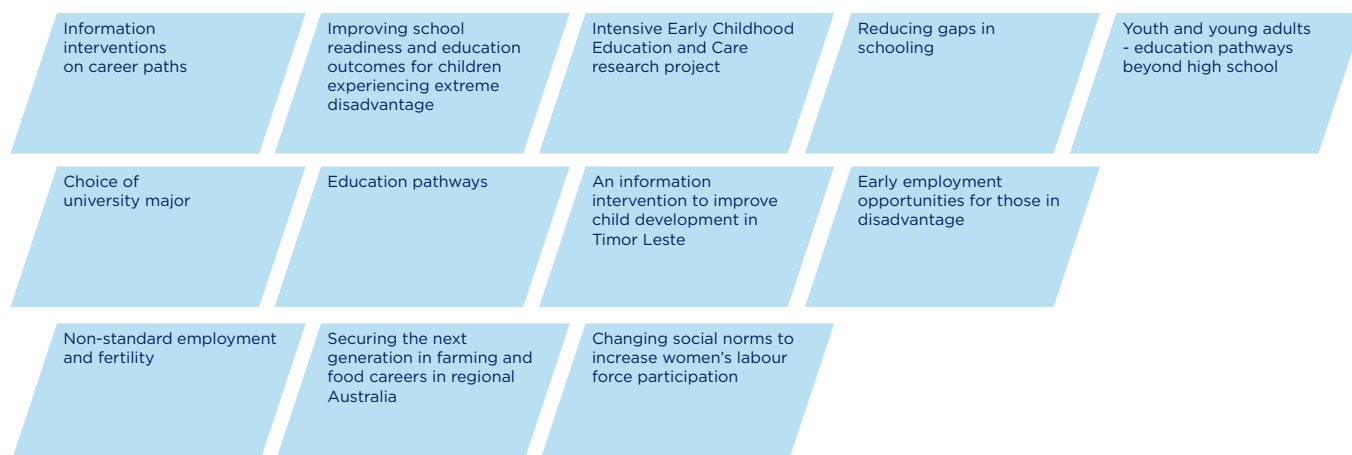
Professor A. Abigail Payne, Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel, and Dr Steeve Marchand initiated a series of projects that explore the effect of university debt on later-in-life outcomes (earnings, occupational choice, getting married, and having children). They are working with a longitudinal data set that captures information on loan debt, earnings, and family status from 1990 onwards. Professor Payne presented early versions of this work at the 79th Annual Congress of the International Institute of Public Finance (USA) and the CESifo Area Conference on Economics of Education (Munich).

Dr Sarah Dahmann's Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan *Taking the Pulse of the Nation* (MI-RM TTPN) Survey report "Higher education in Australia – a desired but costly investment" was quoted in an *Australian Financial Review* article. "HECS debt shaping graduate's love lives". Her research showed that student debt has affected major life decisions for borrowers, such as housing choices, career paths and family planning. In her interview, Dr Dahmann said

"I'm surprised by the scope of the decisions – that it influences family decisions, and the choice of romantic partners. That 11 percent, I think, is quite large".



Employment, skills & education projects



Honorary Associate Professor Chris Ryan’s co-authored journal article “Socioeconomic disadvantage, ability to pay and university attendance in Australia” was published in *Education Economics*. His work explores global evidence of how a younger person’s low socioeconomic status can lead to low university participation. Findings suggest that improving high school achievement is an important channel through which disadvantaged students’ participation in university can improve.

Dr Jan Kabátek co-authored “1.5% of students swapped fields due to the ‘Job-ready Graduates’ fee changes” in an article for *The Conversation*. The report analyses the impact of the former Morrison Government’s Job-ready Graduates scheme. As the current Albanese Government undertakes a broad review of Australia’s higher education system, Dr Kabátek has highlighted that increasing HECS-HELP debts for some, while reducing others, is not prompting students into careers the government considers a ‘priority’. His co-authored working paper: University fees, subsidies and field of study was cited in the Australian Government, Australian Universities Accord Final Report 2023.

VET and Vocational Education

In partnership with Skills Australia, Associate Professor Cain Polidano and Dr Jan Kabátek have undertaken three data-driven deep dives, to better understand key concepts of Australian vocational education (micro-credential courses, foundation and pathway courses and incomplete courses). The work identifies key issues and opportunities within Australia’s current vocational system by reporting on the outcomes of vocational students who fall into these respective categories. The project will not only shed new light on the long-term returns to apprenticeship/traineeships in Australia, but it will inform policy decisions on the role of employer subsidies in shaping these long-term outcomes.

Professor Guyonne Kalb, Associate Professor Cain Polidano, and Dr Jan Kabátek began work on a project using ABS Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) data to understand the impacts of apprenticeship incentive payments on opportunities for youth in training and subsequent labour market benefits. Results from this work will feed directly into the upcoming (2024) Department of Employment and Workplace Relations review of apprenticeship incentives. The findings will be particularly informative in understanding the trade-offs between universal incentive payments and payments targeted at jobs in skill-shortage areas.

Associate Professor Polidano has an ongoing research agenda on understanding the outcomes of vocational education and training in Australia, that recently included a publication on the outcomes from workplace learning in school-based vocational education and training programs (published in *Education Finance and Policy*). Associate Professor Polidano and Ms Yashu Kalera published an article in *The Conversation* discussing the impacts of MySchool on school choice, this was subsequently covered in the Herald Sun and Seven News and presented in the Australian Research Council (ARC) Life Course Centre of Excellence Seminar Series.

Work and Wellbeing for Contemporary Australia

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia convened a policy Roundtable to bring together a diverse range of government officials and leading social scientists for an in-depth discussion on the developments of work and wellbeing in contemporary Australia. Professor Roger Wilkins led a discussion on the non-financial benefits of work, which explored the effects of unemployment on subjective wellbeing and mental health. Participants in the group discussed the term ‘decent work’, which considers the benefits of work beyond a fair income.



Employment, skills & education projects

Using social media to influence men’s gender norms relating to women’s labour market participation

Outcomes of work-based training in promoting wellbeing of Australians

School-based VET programs what is their availability and does it matter?

Non-cognitive (behavioural) factors in high school that affect educational, social and employment outcomes beyond high school

Positive school engagement during mid-childhood

Non-cognitive skills of persistence and grit and schooling outcomes

Assessing the impact of the 12-year-old rule for wearing masks in Victorian schools

The scholastic impact of COVID-19 and digital learning over primary and secondary school on schooling performance and mental health

Investigating the impact of school resources and parental investment on child development



Health, wellbeing
& disadvantage

Health, wellbeing & disadvantage

The Melbourne Institute strives to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians, to reduce and deter disadvantage, ensuring a more equitable society for all. Through collaboration with policymakers, government agencies, and community organisations, our research is used to develop evidence-based solutions. By identifying barriers and inequalities, and prioritising the health and wellbeing of everyone, we take meaningful action to address some of the greatest challenges Australia faces today and may face in the future.

Historical Frontier Violence: Drivers, legacy and the role of truth-telling

Established in 2021, the Historical Frontier Violence project is funded by the Australian Research Council's Discovery grant scheme. Melbourne Institute contributors to this project are Associate Professor Cain Polidano, Dr Rajeev Samarage, Dr Bill Pascoe, and Associate Professor Julie Moschion (now with The University of Queensland). Their work combines quantitative and qualitative analyses involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A critical goal of the project is to create an inclusive data set which can be used for creating a cohesive understanding of Australia's economic history, giving a voice to different visions, contributing towards closing the gap and a vital step towards better relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

2023 highlights for this project include:

- A short article on the relationships between community historical frontier violence and the referendum "no" vote, released during reconciliation week.
- Development of a national database of the first historical censuses in Australia at the ABS Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2).
- Compiled contemporary outcome data at the SA2 level.
- A draft literature review on the intergenerational impacts of traumatic events.

Revolutionising healthcare in Australia

2023 was a big year for health economics, with Professor Yuting Zhang establishing a research hub (Health Analytics, Leadership, and Economics, "HALE") designed to revolutionise healthcare in Australia. HALE highlights the importance of evaluating current healthcare funding options and conducting rigorous causal analyses of key policy reforms. In a landscape where healthcare funding often hinges on service volume rather than health outcomes, HALE's mission is to provide evidence that drives effective policy development and empowers patients to make the right healthcare choices. This evidence will be driven through an interdisciplinary team of affiliations, including economics, psychology, marketing, management, accounting, and computer science.

Public Economics Forum

Professor Zhang co-organised a Public Economics Forum (PEF) in Canberra on the 19th of September 2023 with Dr Phillip Gould, First Assistant Secretary, Health Economics and Research Division at the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHA). During the forum, we discussed recent developments in data linkage led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and DoHA. Professor Zhang shared recent findings on the topic of Medicare and private health insurance policies.

Professor Zhang also organised a separate Roundtable discussion with the entire DoHA team who are responsible for the private health insurance reforms. Melbourne Institute researchers Associate Professor Jongsay Yong, Dr Susan Méndez, Dr Karinna Saxby, and Professor A. Abigail Payne contributed to the Roundtable event, ensuring policymakers were aware of our research findings.

“ My vision for HALE is to ensure that policymakers have the best evidence to guide policy interventions and that Australians can have affordable and equal access to healthcare. The Melbourne Institute is passionate about ensuring an efficient and equitable healthcare system. We have undertaken a broad array of research to improve the healthcare system, ranging from evaluating the government incentives on private health insurance (e.g., rebates, and tax penalties), bulk-billing incentives to make primary care more affordable, to the closing-the-gap program to reduce disparity for Indigenous populations. Our research has made and will continue to make a real impact in guiding health policy in Australia.”

Professor Yuting Zhang



Ensuring an efficient and equitable healthcare system

Advancing Melbourne's 2030 commitment to place through evidence-based analysis

The University of Melbourne's 'Advancing Melbourne' strategy, includes a commitment to place and a recognition of the importance of the University's relationship to the Traditional Owners of the land on which its campuses stand which includes a campus in the Goulburn Valley. Shepparton is at the centre of the Goulburn Valley and the Melbourne Institute has embarked on a partnership with local organisations to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by Shepparton. Led by Professor A. Abigail Payne, the initial phase of the project is to develop a snapshot report that captures information on Shepparton and compares the statistics for Shepparton to other regional communities in Victoria to inform the Shepparton Philanthropy Summit in 2024.



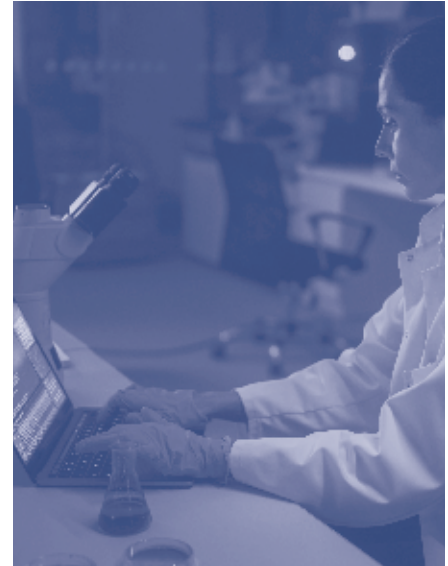
Commitment to place

Cash transfer program

Dr Diana Contreras Suárez is the Chief Investigator in a partnership between the Melbourne Institute and the Asia Foundation to evaluate the living standards of families with young children in Timor-Leste. Professor Lisa Cameron and Ms Harshita Bhatia are supporting Dr Contreras Suárez on this project funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The project will collect baseline data to evaluate the impacts of a program that is providing significant investments to support families. The research will determine if participation in cash transfer programs can effectively increase consumption of food, reduce food insecurity, reduce poverty, and increase the nutritional status of children in Timor-Leste.



Reduce poverty and increase the nutritional status of children in Timor-Leste



Health, wellbeing & disadvantage projects

Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey

The economic and social impact of COVID-19 mitigation policies: A cross-country analysis of macro events

Building resilience: communities, schools, and parental investment in human capital

Incarceration and intergenerational disadvantage

Immigration

Life Course Centre analysis of financial autonomy

Financial wellbeing evaluation and optimisation

Illicit drug use in developing countries

Gestational diabetes and mothers and newborn outcomes in Australia

Wellbeing of Indigenous youth in the Northern Territory

Indigenous Economic Power Project

Historical Frontier Violence

The dynamics of poverty in Australia: Evidence from HILDA 2001-2019

From partnered to single

The role of social housing and service provision on changes in community poverty rates

Non-profit and local service delivery

Parental investment and socioeconomic inequality in Australia

Intergenerational disadvantage: causes, pathways and consequences

Early years "boost" for families

Analysing the impacts of student debt in Australia

Youth disadvantage and employment: building place-based data driven tools to inform communities and guide policy practice

Sharing data to support research into deep and entrenched poverty and disadvantage in Australia



Taxes, spending
& public services

Taxes, spending & public services

The Melbourne Institute is committed to promoting fairness and equality through our research that focuses on prioritising effective government spending. Our investment in data technologies and platforms for sharing information with the public is designed to increase transparency and accountability for spending decisions made in Australia. Improving taxation and government spending requires public consultation and collaboration. Through these processes, we seek to ensure that the diverse needs and perspectives of our society are represented.

Evaluations for the NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Starting in 2019, Professors Guyonne Kalb and Lisa Cameron have been leading a large-scale evaluation of social housing reform in NSW, for the Department of Communities and Justice. The successful outcome of the evaluation component of this project has centred on the availability of a broad range of linked administrative data, made available to the researchers through a secure remote access arrangement. Although it is still too early in the evaluation to observe all the impacts (e.g. on health or employment), a framework of data linkage and methodology was established, for future use in “replications” of the analyses. Due to the sheer size of the data and the number of data sources, many Melbourne Institute staff (as well as two external researchers) have been involved in the data analyses for this project. This includes Dr Ferdi Botha, Dr Barbara Broadway, Dr Diana Contreras Suárez, Dr Miguel Ruiz, Associate Professor Yi-Ping Tseng, and former colleagues: Associate Professor Nicolas Herault, Dr Jordy Meekes, and Associate Professor Julie Moschion. One protocol paper has been published: [Future Directions: Study Protocol for an Effectiveness-Implementation Hybrid Evaluation of a State-based Social Housing Strategy and Three Social Housing Programs.](#)

Similarly, an economic evaluation for the NSW Department of Communities and Justice on child protection services reform was undertaken by Professor Kalb and former colleague Dr Jordy Meekes. Their report which discusses the results is publicly available: [Evaluation of the Permanency Support Program.](#)

Breaking Down Barriers

The Breaking Down Barriers project commenced in 2020 and is funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, which is well known for its commitment to partnering with organisations who are working to overcome disadvantage and create a more equal society for Australia. In 2023, the Breaking Down Barriers project released two research reports written by Dr Maxim Ananyev, Professor A. Abigail Payne, Professor Roger Wilkins, and Dr Federico Zilio:

- [Prevalence of, and Recovery from, Negative Earnings Shocks: Evidence from Three Decades of Longitudinal Tax Data.](#)
- [Individual Earnings Changes and the Business Cycle: An Analysis of Australian Longitudinal Tax Data.](#)

Indigenous preferential policies

Early findings of work from Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage and Discovery Grants on the impacts of Indigenous Preferential Policies (IPP) and the intergenerational impacts of historical frontier violence were presented in the University of Sydney’s Reconciliation Workshop in February and at the University of Victoria (Canada) Seminar Series in October. The research team of Associate Professor Cain Polidano, Dr Sarah Dahmann, Dr Miguel Ruiz and Ms Yashu Kalera completed the latest round of data integration for the annual Indigenous business snapshot study. Work that was completed including mapping (for the first time) of historical county boundaries to historical census data. These data will be matched to SA2 identifiers and will become part of a national historical data asset that will enable new research on contemporary outcomes from historical events in Australia.

Child support payments

Professor Guyonne Kalb, Dr Barbara Broadway and Ms Harshita Bhatia (and Dr Anna Zhu from RMIT University) have collaborated with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to learn more about the child support system from the DSS experts in this area. This has enabled Melbourne Institute researchers to use HILDA data to investigate reported child support payments, versus the child support amount to be paid, according to the child support formula. The aim is to investigate whether anecdotal evidence of underpayment can be observed (and quantified) through survey data, confirming (or not) this anecdotal evidence through quantitative large-scale data and, if present, measuring the extent of underpayment. Melbourne Institute researchers will report their findings to DSS.

Closing the Gap and mental health reforms

Dr Karinna Saxby has delivered numerous presentations to academic and non-academic audiences on how healthcare reform and financing influence healthcare utilisation and health outcomes among priority populations, including First Nations peoples and people with mental health disorders.

Dr Saxby's research on the impact of Closing the Gap reforms on mortality among Indigenous peoples was presented in Australia at:

- Australian Health Economics Society Conference in Adelaide.
- Accessibility and Affordability of Healthcare conference in Melbourne.

This research on Closing the Gap reforms has been used by National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) – Australia's peak body for Indigenous health, in government reporting and advocacy as a part of the Community Pharmacy Agreement.

Dr Saxby's research on regional variation in mental healthcare utilisation and suicides was presented internationally at:

- International Health Economics Association conference - Cape Town, South Africa.
- 9th IRDES Workshop on Applied Health Economics and Policy Evaluation - Paris, France.
- Wennberg International Collaborative Meeting - Pisa, Italy.

This research is currently under review at the Journal of Health Economics therefore translation and impact is ongoing.

Australia's system of taxing alcohol defined as 'incoherent'

Dr Ou Yang, in collaboration with RMIT Senior Lecturer Dr Preety Pratima Srivastava and Monash University Associate Professor of Econometrics Xueyan Zhao's 2022 journal article published by Wiley: "Equal Tax for Equal Alcohol? Beverage Types and Antisocial and Unlawful Behaviours", was popularised in 2023 in the media. This included an article in The Conversation, Yahoo News, and the SBS Mandarin podcast channel. The research provides empirical evidence linking ten alcoholic beverages to drink driving, hazardous, or antisocial behaviours when intoxicated. Dr Yang and his colleagues recommended that if alcohol is to be taxed according to the damage it does, the tax system should be more complex than a single rate for every unit of alcohol.



Taxes, spending & public services projects

Social protection in developing countries

Evaluating a universal Cash Transfer Program in Timor-Leste

Cash transfers and children's development

Mobilise matched: impact evaluation feasibility

Health insurance design: choices, consumer behaviours and policy challenges

Health system, incentives, choice, and markets in healthcare

Effects of aged quality ratings on the performance of aged care homes

The Indigenous practice incentives program's impact on healthcare access and health outcomes among Indigenous peoples

Price transparency in healthcare

Price transparency and price variations in healthcare

Physician preferences for medical innovation

Internet access and provision of health care

Transparency payment laws in pharmacy

Future Directions evaluation

Retirement income system

School resources, natural disasters, and academic achievement

Same-sex role model effects in education



Macroeconomic modelling: forecasting & policy analysis

Macroeconomic modelling: forecasting & policy analysis

The Melbourne Institute uses a range of macroeconomic models to understand complex interactions within the economy, to make evidence-based predictions about future performance and to conduct simulation analysis of alternative policy scenarios. The approaches incorporate historical data as well as current economic indicators and we adopt best-practice methodologies in the analyses. We have a sound reputation for providing expert analysis on GDP growth, inflation, interest rates, and unemployment levels and our reports helps policy makers and businesses make informed decisions.

The challenge for macro policy

2023 was a year marked by high inflation and sluggish growth and the policy challenge was to engineer a fall in the inflation rate (by raising the cash rate), at a pace that would not cause sharp rises in the unemployment rate.

The Misery Index is a simple economic indicator to ascertain how the average citizen is doing economically. It is the sum of the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, the annual inflation rate, and the cash rate, adjusted by the growth in GDP per capita..

Pursuit Article: *"What we can expect from the 2023 Economic Misery Index"* (Professor Guay Lim and Associate Professor Sam Tsiaplias), March 2023.

Monthly Inflation, Cost of Living, Price and Wage Expectations

The Melbourne Institute Monthly Inflation and Cost of Living Gauge has provided a timely and accurate monthly measure of inflation in Australia since 2002. In the past year, the Gauge has been augmented to include monthly Cost of Living indexes for key household types such as age pensioners, government transfer recipients, and self-funded retirees.

The Melbourne Institute Survey of Consumer Inflationary and Wage Expectations provides information about price and wage expectations over the coming 12 months.

Collectively, these reports track the pace at which inflation is declining and the uncertainty about the timing of inflation returning to the target band.

ARC Discovery Project: Nowcasting and Interpreting the Australian Economy

Associate Professor Tim Robinson together with co-chief investigators in the Department of Economics and other universities were successful in obtaining ARC funding for their project *'Nowcasting and Interpreting the Australian Economy'*. The project will investigate how the current state of the economy, and the factors driving the economy can be determined in a timely way by harnessing new data sources and innovative methods. The outcomes should speed up our ability to address macroeconomic policy challenges faced in Australia by speeding up the ability to inform the formulation of appropriate policy responses.

This project will add to the range of timely indicators of the state of the Australian economy produced by the Melbourne Institute. The research will inform and expand on current reports about (i) Leading Indicators of Economic Activity for Australia and the States and (ii) Nowcasting monthly GDP and Phases of the Australian Business Cycle.

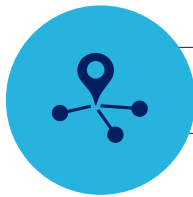
Macroeconomic Reports and the State of the Economy in 2023

Consumer Attitudes, Sentiment and Expectations (CASiE)

The Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index continued to provide timely insights about economic activity in the consumer sector. Throughout 2023, consumers were deeply pessimistic and 2023 marks the second worst calendar year for sentiment on record (dating back to 1974).

Despite rising costs of living putting enormous pressure on household family finances, consumers were less concerned about future job prospects with the *Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Unemployment Expectations Index* hovering around its long-run average in 2023, consistent with a softening rather than a sharp deterioration in labour market conditions.

Furthermore, the issue of housing affordability continued to be in the public domain and our reports were informative about consumers' expectations of *House Prices* and *Mortgage Rates* in the next 12 months as well as about whether *it is a good or bad time to buy a dwelling*.



Macroeconomic modelling: forecasting & policy analysis projects

The formation of
inflationary expectations

Monetary policy
announcement, consumer
expectations, and
marginal propensity
to consumer

Nowcasting GDP

Fiscal policy, growth,
and the labour share

Macroeconomic modelling: forecasting & policy analysis workshops

Continuing Education in Macroeconometrics

The Continuing Education in Macroeconometrics workshop was hosted by the Melbourne Institute (organised by Associate Professor Tim Robinson). This workshop was a combination of masterclasses on cutting-edge methods in macroeconomics and macroeconometrics, together with presentations by PhD students and early career researchers.

The theme of the masterclasses was heterogeneous agent models, with presentations by Dr James Graham (University of Sydney) and Associate Professor Laura Liu (University of Pittsburgh). A panel discussion on “Macro modelling for policy analysis after the pandemic” included speakers from the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Treasury. The event was attended by around 60 participants.



This workshop was a combination of masterclasses on cutting-edge methods in macroeconomics and macroeconometrics.

New Cross-Sectionally Dependent Panel Data Methods for the Analysis of Networks

Professor Yongcheol Shin (University of York), an eminent visiting scholar to the Melbourne Institute (hosted by Associate Professor Viet Nguyen), presented a series of lectures about some recent developments in panel-data econometrics for the analysis of networks. Professor Shin's lectures covered the foundations underpinning econometric estimation methods for cross-sectionally dependent panel data sets. The lectures were illustrated with several empirical applications, relevant to the Australian context. These included the estimation of national and regional house price cycles, and the estimation of the regional productivity network to investigate the diffusion impacts of capital intensity on labour productivity.



A series of lectures about some recent developments in panel-data econometrics for the analysis of networks.



Data
& analytics



Data & analytics

The Melbourne Institute is at the forefront of advancing data analytics through our combined expertise in survey methodology, data development, data analytics and visualisation, and the governance and systems to support analyses of large sensitive datasets. Today, the Melbourne Institute is widely regarded by government departments, policymakers and industry to not only provide research analysis but to demonstrate rigorous data collection and evaluation methods, which are required for enhanced decision-making processes. With over 60 years of expertise in data (curation, evaluation, analytics, and training) our capabilities in this space demonstrate the distinct and incomparable service we provide.

The growth of the Melbourne Institute Data Lab and Data Development

Researchers have been utilising the Melbourne Institute Data Lab (MIDL) to develop key data assets that support economic research. These include the ongoing development of the HILDA Survey and the development of the Frontier Wars Dataset that brings together historical Census data, geographical, economic, and social metrics to understand the impact of historical frontier violence on communities today.

Dr Rajeev Samarage and Dr Ujjwal KC worked on several projects funded by the Australian Research Data Commons to showcase the importance of MIDL and sensitive data environments for supporting integrated research infrastructure within the social sciences. The importance of this work is highlighted in the application by the University of Melbourne to make MIDL an accredited data service provider for Commonwealth-held data.

2023 MIDL operations

115

virtual
desktops



14

projects
in use



80k+ hrs

of computing
resources used
by MIDL's
data curators,
users, and
output vetting
specialists



Indigenous Economic Power Project

This project is an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant with the Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous Business Leadership, in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The project has two aims, first to produce annual snapshot reports on the nature of the Indigenous business sector, its economic contribution, strengths, and challenges. The second, is to analyse the impacts of the Commonwealth's Indigenous Preferential Procurement (IPP) program, an affirmative action policy that gives Indigenous firms priority access to government contracts. Impacts examined include business development, sustainability and Indigenous community outcomes such as employment, job retention, income, and participation in education and training. This work involves the integration of identifiers of Indigenous-owned businesses and corporations, procurement, and grant data into the ABS Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) and working in synchrony with qualitative researchers.

2023 highlights for this project include:

- Completion of the third national Indigenous business and corporation snapshot study.
- Integration of GrantConnect, AusTender, and Indigenous Preferential Procurement Reporting System data into BLADE.



Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey

Informing Australian economic and social policy, the Melbourne Institute - Roy Morgan *Taking the Pulse of the Nation Survey* project has had another successful year, delivering seven reports:

- *To address rising energy costs, Australians want long-term solutions from the government rather than temporary reliefs* - February.
- *Women continue to do more unpaid domestic work than men. Better provision of external support services and greater flexibility to work from home needed to reduce burden* - April.
- *Australians continue to face budgetary constraints in housing, food, energy and healthcare* - May.
- *Higher education in Australia - a desired but costly investment* - June.
- *Ongoing work-from-home negotiation converges (somewhat)* - July.
- *Financial pressures are seen widely as the key barrier to getting a university education* - October.

- *Twelve months later: Most Australians facing high levels of challenges covering housing and/or food costs* - November.

The Melbourne Institute continues to successfully deliver this project in partnership with Roy Morgan Research and several TTPN reports have been commissioned by external organisations wishing to benefit from bespoke survey questions and our research expertise, for tackling various challenges such as food insecurity, energy poverty, and more. This demonstrates the TTPN survey's successful transition away from the focus effects of COVID-19 to a valuable data asset that Australian society can leverage for its success.



Working with Person Level Integrated Data Assets (PLIDA)

Dr Karinna Saxby is one of Australia's most active PLIDA researchers, with five peer-reviewed publications and six working papers referencing this data asset. She has provided feedback to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on PLIDA on multiple occasions and in 2023 she demonstrated her PLIDA expertise at the following conferences:

- Keynote Speaker - IDAHOBIT, Monash University's School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.
- Presenter - PLIDA Analytical Working Group.
- Presenter - Linked Data for Better Health: Policy and Practice Forum.

Advancing data analysis

The Melbourne Institute is establishing a statistical library that will generate synthetic data that mimics the large population registers maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. While currently a scoping exercise, Dr Jan Kabátek presented at the *Statistics Netherlands Synthetic Data Workshop* in 2023.

Dr Kabátek has extensive experience reducing carbon footprints for large quantities of data. His graphing software package has been designed to reduce the computing power required for housing large datasets, which translates into high levels of energy consumption. In 2023 he presented his software at the Stata UK Conference and Stata Oceania Conference.

For best practice tips and tricks for using administrative data sets, Dr Kabátek is also one of the Melbourne Institute's most experienced researchers, who has spent over ten years working with CBS Data (Statistics Netherlands). In 2023 Dr Kabátek presented his expertise at the ODISSEI Summer School, Rotterdam, Netherlands.



The Melbourne Institute is establishing a statistical library that will generate synthetic data that mimics the large population registers.





Events



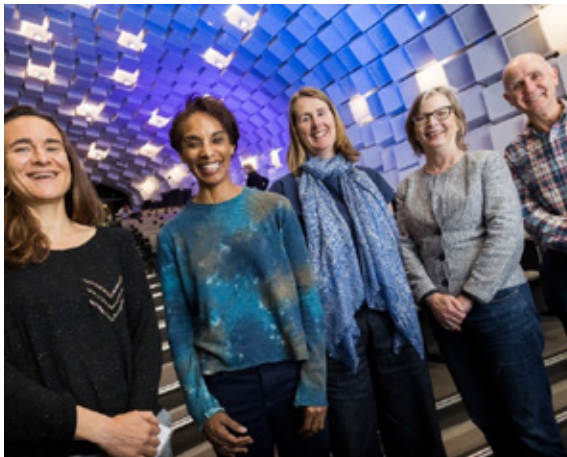
Events

Western Economic Association International Conference

12-15 April 2023

The Melbourne Institute, Department of Economics and Melbourne Business School were the local organisers of the 17th annual WEAI Conference. The conference involved keynote addresses by Nobel laureate Professor David Card, US Council of Economic Advisers Chair Professor Cecilia Rouse and Professor Pauline Grosjean (UNSW Sydney). Professor A. Abigail Payne presented a keynote address

“A call to arms...solving important policy issues” at the conference dinner while Professors Lisa Cameron and Jeff Borland participated in a panel discussion with the keynote speakers on “How can our work in labour and public economics inform policy in a post-pandemic high inflation economy”. The conference was attended by approximately 300 economists worldwide, with 200 papers presented over 100 sessions.



The conference was attended by approximately 300 economists worldwide, with 200 papers presented over 100 sessions.

Economic & Social Outlook Conference

2 November 2023

This was the 21st conference presented by the Melbourne Institute and The Australian.



Insurance in a changing climate: Finding solutions

10 May 2023

Organised by Dr Antonia Settle, 2019 McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow, this event was co-presented by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and Financial Counselling Victoria. The event focussed on cross-sector collaboration to find ways of making insurance more sustainable, inclusive, and supportive of communities. This was the second event to follow the success of 2022's Insurance in a Changing Climate Environment, which discussed the unfolding climate crisis and the need for the insurance industry to evolve. The event was held at the Woodward Conference Centre and 82 people attended.

Melbourne Economic Forum

This Forum brings together economic policy thinkers from across Melbourne and is co-organised by the Melbourne Institute and Victoria University's Centre for Policy Studies. These events aim to discuss, debate, and encourage sound government policy-making. Three forums were held in 2023, with a total of 99 attendees.

Productivity

17 April 2023

This forum explored the recent history of Australia's productivity performance across a range of economic activities, sectors and policy domains.

An RBA fit for the future?

29 May 2023

Prompted by the release of the Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), this forum was reported on in various print and radio media.

Trade Liberalisation within the APEC region

9 November 2023

This forum examined alternative prospects for trade liberalisation through plurilateral agreements and the implementation of trade facilitation with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region.



Public Economics Forum in Canberra

HILDA Survey Research Conference

27- 28 September 2023

This conference was supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. The event was held over two days with an optional dinner that was well attended.

Breaking Down Barriers Roundtable

7 November 2023

This event was an introduction to the Breaking Down Barriers Shared Data Environment.

Public Economics Forums

Held in Canberra, 2023 marked the first year since the start of the pandemic for resuming these forums. Our new format includes bringing on a co-host and organising a roundtable for selected invitees.

19 September 2023

Organised by Professor Yuting Zhang and co-hosted with the Federal Department of Health and Aging, on the topic of Medicare and private health insurance policies.

30 October 2023

Organised by Professor Guyonne Kalb and co-hosted with the Life Course Centre, on the topic of female poverty.

Workshops: Making the best use of HILDA

As part of our ongoing work to encourage the use of the HILDA Survey Data, we engaged in the following activities.

Introduction to Panel Data Analysis

20 February 2023

The workshop introduced various statistical and econometric (panel) techniques to a broader group of business and policy researchers.

Getting Started: Analysing HILDA with Stata

15 February 2023

A three-day hands-on introductory HILDA Survey training course held in Canberra, Melbourne, and online throughout 2023. The workshop is designed for people who are not yet familiar with the HILDA Survey data but are interested in using it in their research. Participants were given an overview of the HILDA Survey, the datasets, and documentation.

Brown bag and seminar highlights

The Melbourne Institute has a longstanding Brown Bag and Seminar series, which offers a variety of research topics and opportunities for discussion throughout the year.

13 June 2023

Seminar: Evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program for the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs presented by Associate Professor Francis Mitrou and Dr Ha Nguyen (Victoria University).

1 August 2023

Brown Bag: Cultural Integration in the Classroom: The Role of Parents and Teachers presented by Dr Nicolás Salamanca Acosta.

3 August 2023

Seminar: A Family of Norms: Related Beliefs about Female Labor Force Participation presented by Dr Elif Incekara Hafalir (University of Technology Sydney).

22 August 2023

Brown Bag: The Individual Laffer Curve: Evidence from the Spanish Income Tax presented by Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel.

7 September 2023

Seminar: Uneven Growth, Redistribution and Inequality: The Australian Case presented by Postdoctoral Fellow Nabeeh Zakariyya (Australian National University).

5 October 2023

Seminar: The labour market impacts of lower-skilled temporary migration: evidence from the PALM scheme presented by Dr Ryan Edwards, Deputy Director and Fellow of the Crawford School of Public Policy (Australian National University).

12 October 2023

Seminar: Inequality in Property Tax Appeals: Evidence from Field Experiments with Homeowners and Assessors presented by Post Doctoral Scholar Andrew Simon (University of Chicago).

19 October 2023

Seminar: The Longer-Term Impacts of Liquor Licence Trading Restrictions on Alcohol-Related Violence presented by Professor Don Weatherburn (University of New South Wales).

9 November 2023

Seminar: Mental accounts and consumption behaviour across the distribution of liquid assets presented by Dr James Graham (The University of Sydney).

14 November 2023

Brown Bag: The impact of school disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic on parental labour supply in Australia presented by Professor Mark Wooden.

16 November 2023

Seminar: The Effects of Increasing the Full Retirement Age on Retirement Savings: Evidence from U.S. Tax Data presented by Dr Ellen Stuart (The University of Sydney).

21 November 2023

Brown Bag: The Melbourne Institute Foundation Fellow Program: Where we have been, and where to from here? Presented by Dr Rajeev Samarage.



8

Awards, milestones
& promotions

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Awards, milestones & promotions

Awards

2023 Economic Society of Australia Distinguished Fellow Award

Congratulations to Professor Lisa Cameron who received the 2023 Economic Society of Australia (ESA) Distinguished Fellow Award. Established in 1985, the prestigious award recognises esteemed Australian economists for their contribution to the development of economics. Professor Cameron's research focuses on policy evaluation, with a particular interest in the welfare of disadvantaged and marginalised groups and the socio-economic determinants of health. Much of her research to date has focused on developing countries, particularly Indonesia and China, and she has extensive experience collaborating with agencies such as the World Bank and AusAID (DFAT).



Best Paper 2023 – Labour Econometrics Workshop

Dr Nicolás Salamanca Acosta won Best Paper for Cultural Integration in the Classroom: The Role of Students, Parents and Teachers. The award was presented at the 25th Labour Econometrics Workshop, hosted by the University of Technology Sydney. Dr Salamanca Acosta co-authored this paper with Alexandra de Gendre, Assistant Professor Krzysztof (Chris) Karbownik and Professor Yves Zenou.



Dean's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards

Dr Karinna Saxby received the 2023 Dean's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award, in the category of 'Thought Leadership and Intellectual Contribution'. This award is gifted on behalf of the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Business and Economics, in partnership with the Melbourne Business School (MBS). Dr Saxby's research project *Keeping Medicare fair: Using administrative data to understand drivers of healthcare inequality in Australia*, met the award criteria for research that explores effective approaches to meet the challenges in diversity and inclusion practices. This project focussed on the evaluation of policies and programs, including Medicare policies such as Closing the Gap, Safety Net reforms, and incentives and payments.



L to R: Professor Ian Harper, Co-Dean of Faculty of Business and Economics, Dr Karinna Saxby, and Professor Paul Kofman, Co-Dean of Faculty of Business and Economics

Milestones



Associate Professor Cain Polidano celebrates 15 Years

Cain joined the Melbourne Institute as a Research Fellow in 2008, having undertaken his PhD at Monash University, prior to which he had stints at the Productivity Commission and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. For much of his career at the Melbourne Institute, his research has been in the area of education economics, with a particular emphasis on vocational education and training. In more recent years his research focus has shifted to retirement policy and to issues affecting Indigenous people. Cain is an affiliate with the Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous Business Leadership and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course. He has a strong record of engagement with policy makers, producing numerous reports for various government departments and agencies, and is regularly invited to present his work to the government. Cain was promoted to Senior Research Fellow in 2018 and to Principal Research Fellow in 2022.



Michelle Summerfield celebrates 15 Years

Michelle started at the Melbourne Institute in 2008 and has become a key member of the HILDA Survey team. She became the HILDA Deputy Director of Survey Management in 2010. As such, she manages the day-to-day interactions with our fieldwork provider (Roy Morgan), monitors fieldwork, undertakes data investigations and reviews along with our data support staff and much more. We thank her for 15 years of service with the Melbourne Institute.

Promotions



Dr Tim Robinson – Promoted to Principal Research Fellow

Tim joined the Melbourne Institute in 2014 as a Research Fellow, after having worked at the Reserve Bank of Australia for 14 years, during which time he undertook a PhD at the University of New South Wales. His research focuses on how empirical macroeconomic models can be used to inform the conduct of macroeconomic policy. His current research is on nowcasting the Australian economy, supported by an ARC Discovery grant. He has worked on issues such as evaluating macroprudential policies, the impacts of forward guidance of monetary policy, and estimating output gaps. He produces the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Leading Index, has frequent interactions with Australian macroeconomic policy institutions, teaches Modelling the Australian Macroeconomy to honours and graduate students, and co-coordinates the PhD in Economics program. Tim was promoted to Senior Research Fellow in 2018, and to Principal Research Fellow in 2024.



Australian Economic Review

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Ross Williams AM for his dedicated service as Managing Editor of the Australian Economic Review over the past 19 years. As the Melbourne Institute's esteemed, peer-reviewed, applied economics journal, our researchers have been privileged to oversee and contribute to its editorial process.

Professor John de New is assuming the role of Managing Editor in 2024. We look forward to the journal growing and thriving under his leadership.

Contributing Editors from the Melbourne Institute include Associate Professor Viet Hoang Nguyen, Dr Susan Méndez, Dr Barbara Broadway, and Associate Professor Sam Tsiaplias.

The Australian Economy in 2022-23: Inflation and Higher Interest Rates in a Post-COVID-19 World was our most popular article, with an impressive 14,780 views. This is a notable increase from our top-performing article in 2022 which had 1,228 views. The article, co-authored by Associate Professor Sam Tsiaplias and Dr Jiao Wang, showcases the calibre of research published in our journal.



Foundation
Fellow & PhD
programs

Foundation Fellow & PhD programs

The Foundation Fellow program employs recent graduates for two years to enable opportunities for training in data and analysis of economic and social policy issues. Each fellow works on several projects with a goal that these fellows will progress to policy-relevant analysis positions in government or the private sector and/or continue their academic pursuits for seeking a graduate degree in economics or public policy.

Our program objectives are:

- To provide a well-rounded training program that instils core principles and best practices in data development, exploration, and management.
- To enable Foundation Fellows to be platform agnostic in their computer skills (Stata, R, Python, etc).
- To encourage innovative thinking and approaches to research and analysis.
- To provide opportunities for translating analyses and statistics into written pieces and/or through the development of interactive data visualisations.
- To encourage effective work practices and developing strong approaches for teamwork and collaboration.

Our Foundation Fellow program was established in 2019 and the program has evolved and grown into one that attracts strong candidates. In 2023, we created two Senior Foundation Fellow positions with the goal of developing a career path for Foundation Fellows, enabling further growth in policy analysis and evaluation and to better support the training and oversight of the Foundation Fellows.

2023 Existing Foundation Fellows:

- Taylor Ey
- Daniel Fischer, promoted to Senior Foundation Fellow
- Tanya Gupta, promoted to Senior Foundation Fellow
- Yashu Kalera
- Chenhao (Ryan) Liang
- Nicholas Marinucci
- Shirin Tejani
- Shrey Varshney

Foundation Fellows appointed in 2023:



Harshita Bhatia

Harshita joined the Melbourne Institute in July 2023 after completing her Master of Applied Economics from the Australian National University. Before her Master's, Harshita gained extensive experience in data analysis and measurement through her time working in market research. Harshita's current projects include *Understanding Underpayments of Child Support*, *Analysing the Socio-Economic and Wellbeing Status in Timor-Leste* and *Investing in the role of Community Health Services*.



Yuchen Zhong

Yuchen has completed a first-class honours degree in Economics at Monash University, where she successfully published a working paper. Yuchen's current projects include *Intergenerational Disadvantage: causes, pathways and consequences*, *Data on Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC)*, *Post-secondary education data (student debt)*, and *Mobilise Matched - impact evaluation*.



PhD Economics Program

The PhD in Economics program is jointly run by the Melbourne Institute and the Department of Economics. It is the leading economics PhD program in Australia, comprising a 5-6 year program, 2 years of coursework and 3-4 years of dissertation writing.

In 2023, students gave numerous seminar and conference presentations, won several awards, and visited leading international institutions, such as Harvard University and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The Department of Economics hosted the 37th PhD Conference in Economics and Business, which brought together students from around Australasia. Several staff from the Melbourne Institute participated in the conference, including Associate Professor Viet Nguyen, Senior Research Fellow Dr Diana Contreras Suárez, Professor Lisa Cameron, and Associate Professor Sam Tsiaplias.



Professional
staff

Professional staff

Welcome to our new professional staff:



Mr Scott Soper

Mr Soper joined the Melbourne Institute in October 2023 as Department Services Manager, bringing with him extensive tertiary education sector experience from his nearly 10-year tenure at RMIT University and 15 years at Victoria University. Despite his short time with the team, his supportive leadership has already had a positive impact on the staff and their work.



Dr Billy Chang

Dr Chang joined the Melbourne Institute in May 2023 as the Proposal Development Manager. Dr Chang holds a PhD in Engineering and has extensive project management and research management experience. Before joining us, Dr Chang worked at Monash University as a HUB Project Manager. His contributions have already added unique perspectives and expertise for successful grant applications.



PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Dr Billy Chang, *Proposal Development Manager*

Kate Gilkison, *Life Course Centre Senior Project Officer*

Logan Jacobs, *Services Coordinator*

Michelle Leeson, *Administrative Support Officer*

Kristin Marriner, *Breaking Down Barriers Project Manager*

Mary Podporin, *Executive Officer (Projects)*

Scott Soper, *Department Services Manager*

Jo Steinle, *Administrative Support Officer*

Sasha Sweatman, *Engagement Support Officer*

Myron Yovannidis, *Events Manager*

Farewell

We would like to acknowledge the work of several colleagues who have left Melbourne Institute in 2023: Kayte Jenkins, Eileen Kenny, Claire Denby and notably Rachel Derham who served the Melbourne Institute for 25 years.



11

Researchers,
publications
& engagement

Researchers, publications & engagement

The following captures the publications from 2023, the top 3 external service commitments, and key highlights of our staff's core areas of policy and research interests.

Note: Service excludes the extensive internal work undertaken by our staff for the Melbourne Institute, Faculty of Business and Economics, and the University Melbourne; and only references the top three external activities undertaken.





Director and Ronald Henderson Professor
A. Abigail Payne



Professorial Fellow
Lisa Cameron

Academic Publications

- *The effect of tax price on donations: Evidence from Canada* (National Tax Journal)

Policy Publications

- Breaking Down Barriers Community Profiles (MI Research Insight)
- Individual Earnings Changes and the Business Cycle (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Prevalence of and Recovery from Negative Earnings Shocks (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Not Able to Save for a Rainy Day (MI Research Insight)
- Most Australians, not just the poor, are facing constraints in covering basic needs (MI Research Insight)
- Twelve months later: Most Australians facing high levels of challenges covering housing and/or food costs (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Australians continue to face budgetary constraints in housing, food, energy and healthcare (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Avoiding the Cliff and the Freefall into Poverty (Pursuit)
- YouthView 1.0 Visualisation

Service (top 3)

- Australian Statistics Advisory Council Member
- ifo Institute Scientific Advisory Council Chairwoman
- Economic Inquiry Co-editor

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Lead for University of Melbourne's submission to the Senate Inquiry into Poverty
- Work with community agencies to understand opportunities and challenges in Shepparton
- Youth employment, disadvantage, and challenges for success as young adults
- Understanding the implications of student debt
- Analyses of food insecurity for OzHarvest
- Cost-of-living challenges and financial insecurities
- Oversight of Taking the Pulse of the Nation
- Creating community-level measures for economic and social policy analysis
- Curation of not-for-profit service provider data

Academic Publications

- *Child marriage: using the Indonesian family life survey to examine the lives of women and men who married at an early age* (Review of Economics of the Household)
- *Indonesia in Comparative Perspective Gender Equality* (Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies)
- *Development: Indonesia in a Global Context* (Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies)

Policy Publications

- Changing gender norms around women's work: Evidence from an online intervention in Indonesia (MI Research Insight)

Service (top 3)

- Australasian Development Economics Association (President)
- Econometric Society (Regional Secretary)
- Indonesia Project Advisory Board

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Incarceration and the intergenerational cycle of economic disadvantage
- Gender equality and social inclusion advisor for Australia-Indonesia Knowledge Partnership
- NSW Family and Community Services Evaluation of Future Directions for Social Housing



Professorial Fellow
John de New

Policy Publications

- Using Item Response Theory for the Development of Financial Wellbeing Scales (ANZ report)
- A Conceptual Overview of the Components of Financial Wellbeing (ANZ report)
- Frameworks for Causal Analyses for Financial Wellbeing Research (ANZ report)

Service (top 3)

- Managing Editor of Australian Economic Review (Incoming)
- Chaired Higher Degree Research PhD Program Review of School of Education
- Australian Economic Review Data Review Editor

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Career aspirations for disadvantaged children
- Mental health and socioeconomic advantage
- School accountability
- Financial wellbeing measurement and analysis



Professorial Fellow
Guyonne Kalb

Academic Publications

- *Educational and developmental gains in early childhood (EDGE) study protocol: investigating the impact of funded three-year-old kindergarten* (International Journal of Research & Method in Education)
- *Essential work and emergency childcare: Identifying gender differences in COVID-19 effects on labour demand and supply* (Oxford Economic Papers)

Policy Publications

- Household Expenditure Measure (MI report)
- Evaluation of the Permanency Support Program: Final Report for NSW Government

Service (top 3)

- Economic Record Co-editor
- Australian Journal of Labour Economics Editorial Board Member
- ARC CoE Life Course Centre Node Director

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Permanency support evaluation for the NSW government
- NSW Family and Community Services Evaluation of Future Directions for Social Housing
- ECEC and female labour supply
- Improving tax and transfer simulators and other microsimulation models
- The Educational and Developmental Gains in Early Childhood (EDGE) study
- Evaluation of Try Test and Learn projects



Professorial Fellow
Guay Lim

Academic Publications

- *Retail investor trading intentions: New evidence from Australia* (Economic Record)

Policy Publications

- Westpac-Melbourne Institute Reports (Leading Index of Economic Activity, Survey of Consumer Sentiment, Survey of Unemployment Expectations, Survey of House Price Expectations)
- Melbourne Institute Reports (Monthly Inflation Gauge and Cost of Living, State Leading Indices of Economic Activity, Nowcast of Australian GDP)
- What we can expect from the 2023 economic 'misery index' (Pursuit)
- Australian Cohesion Index 2023, Economic and Material Wellbeing: Comments, Scanlon Institute Report

Service (top 3)

- Voting member of the CAMA RBA Shadow Board
- Economic Papers Editor
- RBA Academic Panel 2023

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Modelling the Australian macro-economy
- Forecasting macro variables (GDP, consumption, unemployment, inflation, and interest rates)
- Analysing macro policy scenarios



Professorial Fellow
Roger Wilkins

Academic Publications

- *Rising top-income persistence in Australia: Evidence from income tax data* (Review of Income and Wealth)

Policy Publications

- Individual Earnings Changes and the Business Cycle (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Prevalence of and Recovery from Negative Earnings Shocks (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Poverty Lines Quarterly Newsletter (MI Report)
- HILDA Statistical Report 2023 (published 2024)
- Unequal? Our analysis suggests Australia is a more equal society than has been thought (The Conversation)

Service (top 3)

- ABS Labour Statistics Advisory Group
- Australian Council of Social Service
- Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Income/wealth inequality and poverty
- Employment
- Development and production of HILDA Survey data set (DSS)



Professorial Fellow
Mark Wooden

Academic Publications

- *Quantifying the human impact of Melbourne's 111-day hard lockdown experiment on the adult population* (Nature Human Behaviour)
- *Does temporary employment increase length of commuting? Longitudinal evidence from Australia and Germany* (Transportation)
- *The Differential Impacts of Contingent Employment on Fertility: Evidence from Australia* (Social Forces)

Service

- Fair Work Commission

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Development and production of HILDA Survey data set (DSS)



Professorial Fellow
Yuting Zhang

Academic Publications

- *Age penalties and take-up of private health insurance* (Health Economics)
- *Elderly Responses to Private Health Insurance Incentives: Evidence from Australia* (Health Economics)
- *Effects of Medicare Part D Coverage Gap Closure on Utilization of Branded and Generic Drugs* (Health Economics)

Policy Publications

- Who really benefits from private health insurance rebates? Not people who need cover the most. (The Conversation)
- Does private health insurance cut public hospital waiting lists? We found it barely makes a dent. (The Conversation)
- Private health insurance is set for a shake-up. But asking people to pay more for policies they don't want isn't the answer (The Conversation)
- Submission to the Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority
- Submission to the Department of Health and Aged Care; Re: Consultation Paper – Private Health Insurance (PHI) Incentives and Hospital Default Benefits Studies

Service (top 3)

- Co-Chair, the Arrow Award Committee, highest award in health economics, which awards an annual prize in honour of Nobel Laureate Kenneth Arrow for the best paper in the field of health economics
- Advisory board, the Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific
- Appointed statistical/methods reviewer, JAMA Network Open

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Taiwan's National Health Insurance Administration (NHIA)
- Private health insurance roundtable and Public Economics Forum, Department of Health and Aged Care
- Women's health roundtable to advise industry on current issues and gaps in research
- The Treasury's new Australian Centre for Evaluation on methods, issues on policy evaluation



Professorial Fellow
Marco Castillo
Fractional Appointment



Professorial Fellow
Ragan Petrie
Fractional Appointment

Policy Publications

- Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, Government of South Australia
- Ongoing work-from-home negotiation converges (somewhat) (TTPN Summary Report)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Presented on the use of behavioural insights and experimental methods for policy-making at the Australian National University Research School of Economics, *Educating a Better World* seminar

Policy Publications

- Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, Government of South Australia
- Ongoing work-from-home negotiation converges (somewhat) (TTPN Summary Report)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Presented on the use of behavioural insights and experimental methods for policy-making at the Australian National University Research School of Economics, *Educating a Better World* seminar



Principal Research Fellow
Viet Nguyen

Academic Publications

- *Biased expectations* (European Economic Review)
- *What is mine is yours: Sovereign risk transmission during the European debt crisis* (Journal of Financial Stability)

Policy Publications

- Westpac-Melbourne Institute Reports (Leading Index of Economic Activity, Survey of Consumer Sentiment, Survey of Unemployment Expectations, Survey of House Price Expectations)
- Melbourne Institute Reports (Monthly Inflation Gauge and Cost of Living, State Leading Indices of Economic Activity, Nowcast of Australian GDP)

Service

- Australian Economic Review, Associate Editor



Principal Research Fellow
Cain Polidano

Policy Publications

- Who takes advantage of My School data? (MI Research Insight)

Service

- PLIDA Education Technical Advisory Group, Australian Bureau of Statistics
- BLADE Technical Advisory Group, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Vocational education and skills in Australia
- Frontier violence historical data set development
- Indigenous business snapshot study



Principal Research Fellow
Tim Robinson



Principal Research Fellow
Yi-Ping Tseng

Policy Publications

- Westpac-Melbourne Institute Reports (Leading Index of Economic Activity, Survey of Consumer Sentiment, Survey of Unemployment Expectations, Survey of House Price Expectations)
- Melbourne Institute Reports (Monthly Inflation Gauge and Cost of Living, State Leading Indices of Economic Activity, Nowcast of Australian GDP)

Service

- Continuing Education in Macroeconometrics Workshop, Organiser

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Modelling the Australian macroeconomy

Academic Publications

- *JUE Insight: Making it home? Evidence on the long-run impact of an intensive support program for the chronically homeless on housing, employment and health* (Journal of Urban Economics)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- NSW Family and Community Services Evaluation of Future Directions for Social Housing
- Early Years Education Program (EYEP) Randomised Control Trial
- Intensive Early Childhood Education and Care Project
- The Educational and Developmental Gains in Early Childhood (EDGE) study
- Evaluation of Try Test and Learn projects



Principal Research Fellow
Sam Tsiaplias

Academic Publications

- *Retail investor trading intentions: New evidence from Australia* (Economic Record)
- *The Australian Economy in 2023-24: Navigating a Narrow Path* (Australian Economic Review)

Policy Publications

- What we can expect from the 2023 economic 'misery index' (Pursuit)
- Westpac-Melbourne Institute Reports (Leading Index of Economic Activity, Survey of Consumer Sentiment, Survey of Unemployment Expectations, Survey of House Price Expectations)
- Melbourne Institute Reports (Monthly Inflation Gauge and Cost of Living, State Leading Indices of Economic Activity, Nowcast of Australian GDP)

Service

- Australian Economic Review, Policy Forum Co-editor

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Modelling the Australian macroeconomy



Principal Research Fellow
Nicole Watson

Academic Publications

- *Simulating the Consequences of Adaptive Survey Design in Two Household Panel Studies* (Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology)

Service

- HILDA Technical Reference Group

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- HILDA Survey weighting and imputation
- Workshops on using HILDA and panel data analysis
- University student wellbeing
- Development and production of HILDA Survey data set (DSS)



Principal Research Fellow
Jongsay Yong

Academic Publications

- *Socioeconomic status and access to care in a universal health care system: The case of acute myocardial infarction in Australia* (Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization)
- *Determinants and outcomes of invasive coronary angiography in unselected patients presenting with chest pain to emergency departments in Western Australian teaching hospitals* (Heart Lung and Circulation)
- *It's not a one operation fits all* (Social Science & Medicine)

Service

- Interim Aged Care Working Group (IACWG) of the Independent Health and Hospital Pricing Authority Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Submission to the Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority on the Pricing Framework
- Australian residential aged care services



Senior Research Fellow
Ferdinand Botha

Academic Publications

- *Locus of control, self-control, and health outcomes* (SSM-Population Health)
- *Comparing estimates of psychological distress using 7-day and 30-day recall periods: Does it make a difference?* (PLOS ONE)
- *Generational differences in mental health trends in the twenty-first century* (The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS))
- *Vulnerability and recovery: Long-term mental and physical health trajectories following climate-related disasters* (Social Science & Medicine)

Policy Publications

- Not Able to Save for a Rainy Day (MI Research Insight)
- Most Australians, not just the poor, are facing constraints in covering basic needs (MI Research Insight)
- HILDA Statistical Report 2023 (published 2024)
- Twelve months later: Most Australians facing high levels of challenges covering housing and/or food costs (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Australians continue to face budgetary constraints in housing, food, energy and healthcare (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Using Item Response Theory for the Development of Financial Wellbeing Scales (ANZ report)
- A Conceptual Overview of the Components of Financial Wellbeing (ANZ report)
- Frameworks for Causal Analyses for Financial Wellbeing Research (ANZ report)

Service (top 3)

- Social Indicators Research, Co-editor
- Journal of Happiness Studies, Editorial Board Member
- Journal of Community Wellbeing, Editorial Board Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Energy Charter work on cost-of-living pressures
- Financial wellbeing
- Analyses of food insecurity for OzHarvest
- Oversight of Taking the Pulse of the Nation



Senior Research Fellow
Barbara Broadway

Policy Publications

- Household Expenditure Measure (MI report)
- HILDA Statistical Report Chapter

Service

- Australian Economic Review, Policy Forum Co-editor
- Australian Journal of Labour Economics, Editorial Board Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- NSW Family and Community Services Evaluation of Future Directions for Social Housing
- Financial security of single parents
- Spatial heterogeneity in welfare reform success
- Early parenthood and government policy



Senior Research Fellow
Diana Contreras Suárez

Academic Publications

- *Associations between ongoing COVID-19 lockdown and the financial and mental health experiences of Australian families* (Australian Journal of Social Issues)
- *Child marriage: using the Indonesian family life survey to examine the lives of women and men who married at an early age* (Review of Economics of the Household)
- *Feasibility of linking universal child and family healthcare and financial counselling: findings from the Australian Healthier Wealthier Families (HWF) mixed-methods study* (BMJ Open)

Policy Publication

- Changing gender norms around women's work: Evidence from an online intervention in Indonesia (MI Research Insight)

Service

- Australian Development Economics Workshop, Chair

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Design of the evaluation of a universal cash transfer program in Timor-Leste (DFAT)
- Feasibility of an impact evaluation of a cash transfer program for people at risk of homelessness for We Are Mobilized
- Impact Evaluation for the Bolsa da Mãe Program



Senior Research Fellow
Jan Kabátek

Academic Publications

- *Are shorter cumulative temporary contracts worse stepping stones? Evidence from a quasi-natural experiment* (Labour Economics)

Policy Publication

- Changing the cost of some uni degrees didn't change students' minds (Pursuit)
- Only 1.5% of students swapped fields due to the 'Job-ready Graduates' fee changes (The Conversation)

Service (top 3)

- ABS Labour Statistics Advisory Group
- Czech Ministry of Education Advisory Council
- ABS Education Working Group

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Vocational education and skills in Australia
- Family economics and sexual minorities
- Commuting time and life satisfaction
- College financing



Senior Research Fellow
Susan Méndez

Academic Publications

- *It's not a one operation fits all* (Social Science & Medicine)
- *Therapeutic substitution in response to patent expiry? Statins in Australia* (Economic Papers)

Policy Publications

- Submission to the Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority in response to the Consultation Paper on the Pricing Framework for Australian Residential Aged Care Services 2024-25

Service (top 3)

- Australian Economic Review, Co-editor
- University of Melbourne Health Economics Group, Coordinator
- Healthcare Workforce Workshop, Scientific Committee Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Provided advice to NACCHO on the upcoming Community Pharmacy Agreements in a report to be provided to the Department of Health
- Telemedicine and primary care service delivery
- Transparency in payment laws in pharmaceutical markets
- Effects of COVID-19 restrictions on parental mental health and substance abuse



Senior Research Fellow
Nicolás Salamanca Acosta

Policy Publications

- Financial pressures are seen widely as the key barrier to getting a university education (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Financial wellbeing
- Role models in education
- Parental investment in children's education
- Intergenerational welfare dynamics
- Oversight of Taking the Pulse of the Nation



Senior Research Fellow
Rajeev Samarage

Policy Publications

- Breaking Down Barriers Community Profiles (MI report)

Service

- Australian Academy of Social Sciences Decadal Plan for Social Science Research Infrastructure Expert Working Group
- University of Melbourne Working Group for Data Labs and Analysis, Organiser
- Data Catalyst Network Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Develop and showcase integration between the CADRE platform and the Melbourne Institute Data Lab
- Develop and showcase the sensitive data demonstrator for the IRIS Project using the Melbourne Institute Data Lab
- Work with Community Agencies for Understanding Opportunities and Challenges in Shepparton
- Creating Shared Data Environments for analysing sensitive data
- Creating community level measures for economic and social policy analysis
- Using generative AI for policy analysis
- Frontier violence historical data set development



Senior Research Fellow
Esperanza Vera-Toscano



Senior Research Fellow
Ou Yang

Academic Publications

- *Quantifying the human impact of Melbourne's 111-day hard lockdown experiment on the adult population* (Nature Human Behaviour)
- *The impact of lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic on fertility intentions* (Economics and Human Biology)
- *Zero-COVID Policies: Melbourne's 112-Day Hard Lockdown Experiment Harmed Mostly Mothers* (Nature Human Behaviour)

Policy Publications

- HILDA Living in Australia Report
- HILDA Statistical Report 2023 (published 2024)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Effects of COVID-19 Policy in Australia
- Improving mental health in Australia
- University student wellbeing
- Career progression and school to work transitions in farming and food industries

Academic Publications

- Socioeconomic status and access to care in a universal health care system: The case of acute myocardial infarction in Australia (Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization)

Policy Publications

- The Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority Consultation Paper on the Pricing Framework for Australian Residential Aged Care Services submission
- Australia's system of taxing alcohol is 'incoherent', but our research suggests a single tax rate isn't the answer (The Conversation)

Service

- International Health Economics Association, Early Career Research Special Interest Group, Convenor

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Waiting times for health care
- Ageing and nursing home quality



Research Fellow
Maxim Ananyev

Academic Publications

- *Identity and conflict: Evidence from Tuareg rebellion in Mali* (World Development)

Policy Publications

- Breaking Down Barriers Community Profiles (MI)
- Individual Earnings Changes and the Business Cycle (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Prevalence of and Recovery from Negative Earnings Shocks (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Household insurance and financial stress: Securing the family home in a changing climate (MI Research Insight)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Work with Community Agencies for Understanding Opportunities and Challenges in Shepparton
- Creating community level measures for economic and social policy analysis
- Using synthetic control methods for evaluation
- Using generative AI for policy analysis



Research Fellow
Sarah Dahmann

Academic Publications

- *Self-Control and Unhealthy Body Weight: The Role of Impulsivity and Restraint* (Economics & Human Biology)

Policy Publications

- Higher education in Australia—a desired but costly investment (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Women continue to do more unpaid domestic work than men, better provision of external support services and greater flexibility to work from home needed to reduce burden (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)

Service

- 17th International Western Economics Association International (WEAI) Conference local organising committee member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- The Educational and Developmental Gains in Early Childhood (EDGE) study
- Working from home and unpaid domestic work
- Noncognitive skill development, self control, and schooling
- Returns to education
- Intergenerational welfare dynamics



Research Fellow
Ana Gamarra Rondinel

Policy Publications

- Not Able to Save for a Rainy Day (MI Research Insight)
- Most Australians, not just the poor, are facing constraints in covering basic needs (MI Research Insight)
- More than half of Australians are only just making ends meet (Pursuit)
- Twelve months later: Most Australians facing high levels of challenges covering housing and/or food costs (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- Australians continue to face budgetary constraints in housing, food, energy and healthcare (MI Taking the Pulse of the Nation)
- More than half of Australians are only just making ends meet (Pursuit)

Service

- Data Catalyst Network Member (Early Childhood)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Analyses of food insecurity for OzHarvest
- Elasticity of income for low-income earners
- Understanding Laffer curves for individuals
- Risk of entering poverty after childbirth
- Understanding the implications of student debt
- Supporting early childhood development
- Creating community level measures for economic and social policy analysis
- Curation of not-for-profit service provider data



Research Fellow
Ujjwal KC

Academic Publications

- *A systematic review of the evolution of food system resilience assessment* (Global Food Security)
- *Loss functions for spatial wildfire applications* (Environmental Modelling & Software)

Policy Publications

- Breaking Down Barriers Community Profiles (MI)
- YouthView 1.0 Visualisation

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Develop and showcase integration between the CADRE platform and the Melbourne Institute Data Lab
- Youth employment, disadvantage, and challenges for success as young adults
- Applying and developing visualisation techniques to support economic and social policy development



Research Fellow
Steeve Marchand



Research Fellow
Miguel Ruiz

Academic Publications

- *Physical Disability and Labor Market Discrimination: Evidence from a Video Resume Field Experiment* (American Economic Journal)

Policy Publications

- YouthView 1.0 Visualisation

Service

- Data Catalyst Network Member

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Youth employment, disadvantage, and challenges for success as young adults (Youth View reports and visualisations)
- Understanding the implications of student debt
- Disadvantaged affecting youth after high school
- Creating community level measures for economic and social policy analysis
- Employment opportunities for young adults (Infoxchange)
- Crime prevention and rehabilitation of offenders

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Indigenous business snapshot study
- Early childhood education and development and accreditation (Indonesia)
- War and internal displacement
- Effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous business ecosystem



Research Fellow
Karinna Saxby



Research Fellow
Federico Zilio

Academic Publications

- *Household Composition and Smoking Behavior in a Prospective Longitudinal Australian Cohort* (Nicotine and Tobacco Research)
- *Does affirmative action reduce disparities in healthcare use by Indigenous peoples? Evidence from Australia's Indigenous Practice Incentives Program* (Health Economics)
- *The impact of employment on mental healthcare use among people with disability: distinguishing between part- and full-time employment* (Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health)
- *'Quitlink': Outcomes of a randomised controlled trial of peer researcher facilitated referral to a tailored quitline tobacco treatment for people receiving mental health services* (Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry)

Service

- MADIP/PLIDA Education Technical Advisory Group

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Community Pharmacy Agreement advice for the Department of Health and ABS
- Health and healthcare equity, especially among priority populations, and those with disabilities

Policy Publications

- Individual Earnings Changes and the Business Cycle (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Prevalence of and Recovery from Negative Earnings Shocks (Breaking Down Barriers Report, MI)
- Is inflation starting to bite financially precarious Australians? (MI Research Insight)

Areas for Policy Analysis and Engagement Activities

- Effects of COVID-19
- Health shocks and allocations of time & spending
- Impacts of natural disasters

Research and research support staff



Research Fellow

Nichola Coombs

RESEARCH COORDINATOR
INTENSIVE ECEC RESEARCH
PROJECT



Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

Darcy Coulter



Research Fellow

Sarah Fraser

CLINICAL RESEARCH
COORDINATOR INTENSIVE
ECEC RESEARCH PROJECT



Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

Bill Pascoe



Melbourne Post-Doctoral
Research Fellow

Kushneel Prakash



ADJUNCT & HONORARY STAFF

Professor Matthew Butlin AM

Professor Allan Fels AO

Professor Ross Garnaut AC

Associate Professor Bruce Headey

Associate Professor Nicolas Hérault

Professor Irma Mooi-Reci

Professor David Ribar

Associate Professor Chris Ryan

Professor Michael Shields

Professor Matthew Sutton

Professor Ross Williams AM

RESEARCH SUPPORT STAFF

Ms Brooke Garrard, *HILDA Database Support Officer*

Ms Roopa Kamath, *HILDA Database Support Officer*

Ms Ninette Macalalad, *HILDA Survey Research Database Engineer and Analyst*

Dr Mossamet Nesa, *Survey Statistician/ Methodologist*

Ms Michelle Summerfield, *HILDA Deputy Director (Survey Management)*

Farewell

We would like to acknowledge the work of several academics who have left Melbourne Institute in 2023: Professor Anthony Scott, Dr Antonia Settle, and Ms Shirin Tejani.

Notes

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