

The 2010 Standard Occupational Classification
*Background information for the National Academies
Committee on National Statistics
Panel to Review the Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
March 26, 2009*

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is used by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published the final structure of the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification in January 2009.¹ The SOC Policy Committee (SOCPC) is currently finalizing the SOC Manual for publication later this year.

Classification principles

The SOCPC developed the 2010 SOC using the following Classification Principles.

1. The SOC covers all occupations in which work is performed for pay or profit, including work performed in family-operated enterprises by family members who are not directly compensated. It excludes occupations unique to volunteers. Each occupation is assigned to only one occupational category at the lowest level of the classification.
2. Occupations are classified based on work performed and, in some cases, on the skills, education, and/or training needed to perform the work at a competent level.
3. Workers primarily engaged in planning and directing are classified in management occupations in Major Group 11-0000. Duties of these workers may include supervision.
4. Supervisors of workers in Major Groups 13-0000 through 29-0000 usually have work experience and perform activities similar to those of the workers they supervise, and therefore are classified with the workers they supervise.
5. Workers in Major Group 31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations assist and are usually supervised by workers in Major Group 29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations. Therefore, there are no first-line supervisor occupations in Major Group 31-0000.
6. Workers in Major Groups 33-0000 through 53-0000, whose primary duty is supervising, are classified in the appropriate first-line supervisor category because their work activities are distinct from those of the workers they supervise.
7. Apprentices and trainees are classified with the occupations for which they are being trained, while helpers and aides are classified separately because they are not in training for the occupation they are helping.

¹ See SOC home page at www.bls.gov/soc for links to the document and further information.

8. If an occupation is not included as a distinct detailed occupation in the structure, it is classified in an appropriate “All Other,” or residual, occupation. “All Other” occupations are placed in the structure when it is determined that the detailed occupations comprising a broad occupation group do not account for all of the workers in the group. These occupations appear as the last occupation in the group with a code ending in “9” and are identified in their title by having “All Other” appear at the end.
9. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau are charged with collecting and reporting data on total U.S. employment across the full spectrum of SOC major groups. Thus, for a detailed occupation to be included in the SOC, either the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the Census Bureau must be able to collect and report data on that occupation.

What’s new in the 2010 SOC

The following table indicates how the number of occupational categories changed with the 2010 revision at each of the four levels of the SOC.

<i>Number of occupation categories in the 2000 and 2010 Standard Occupational Classification</i>				
<i>SOC edition</i>	<i>Major groups</i>	<i>Minor groups</i>	<i>Broad occupations</i>	<i>Detailed occupations</i>
2000	23	96	449	821
2010	23	97	461	840
Change	0	1	12	19

Of the 840 detailed occupations in the 2010 SOC, 367 remained the same as in 2000, and over 300 required only editing changes. Therefore, no substantive changes occurred in occupational coverage for about 4 out of 5 detailed occupations in the 2010 SOC. Nine detailed occupations moved from one major group in the 2000 SOC to another in the 2010 SOC. Occupational areas with significant revisions and additions included information technology, healthcare, printing, and human resources.

The 2010 SOC contains 24 new occupations that were broken out of 2000 SOC occupations:

- 13-1131 Fundraisers
- 15-1122 Information Security Analysts
- 15-1134 Web Developers
- 15-1143 Computer Network Architects
- 15-1152 Computer Network Support Specialists
- 21-1094 Community Health Workers
- 25-2051 Special Education Teachers, Preschool
- 25-2059 Special Education Teachers, All Other
- 29-1128 Exercise Physiologists
- 29-1151 Nurse Anesthetists
- 29-1161 Nurse Midwives
- 29-1171 Nurse Practitioners
- 29-2035 Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists
- 29-2057 Ophthalmic Medical Technicians
- 29-2092 Hearing Aid Specialists

29-9092	Genetic Counselors
31-1015	Orderlies
31-9097	Phlebotomists
33-9093	Transportation Security Screeners
39-4031	Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Directors
43-3099	Financial Clerks, All Other
47-2231	Solar Photovoltaic Installers
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians
51-3099	Food Processing Workers, All Other

In two instances, occupations were collapsed from 2 detailed 2000 occupations into 1 new 2010 detailed occupation: 51-9151 Photographic Process Workers and Processing Machine Operators and 11-9013 Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers. The number of detailed occupations in minor group 51-5100 Printing Workers was collapsed from 5 to 3.

Additional tools

Crosswalks: The 2010 SOC manual will contain crosswalk tables for detailed occupations showing the relationships between detailed occupations in the 2000 and 2010 SOC. These tables will also be made available in electronic format.

Direct Match Title File. This file lists associated job titles for many detailed SOC occupations. Each of these titles is a direct match to a single SOC occupation. All workers with a job title listed in the Direct Match Title File are classified in only one detailed SOC occupation code. All Federal agencies that use the SOC have adopted the Direct Match Title File, although some maintain separate program-specific title files.

Plans for the next revision

The SOCP has proposed that the next revision of the SOC will result in a 2018 edition, with the next major review and revision of the SOC expected to begin in 2013.

The intent of this revision schedule is to minimize disruption to data providers, producers, and users by promoting simultaneous adoption of revised occupational and industry classification systems for those data series that use both. Given the multiple interdependent programs that rely on the SOC, this is best accomplished by timing revisions of the SOC for the years following North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) revisions, which occur for years ending in 2 and 7. The next such year is 2018, which has the additional benefit of coinciding with the beginning year of the American Community Survey five-year set of surveys that bracket the 2020 Decennial Census. Thus, OMB intends to consider revisions of the SOC for 2018 and every 10 years thereafter.