Standard Occupational Classification 2010

Implementation in the Office for National Statistics

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Summary

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is currently formalising its plans to implement the latest update to the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (SOC 2010) which was published in June 2010. This article summarises the major differences between the current classification, SOC 2000 and SOC 2010 and sets out ONS's plans for implementation across a range of household and business surveys.

Background

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is a common classification of occupational information for the United Kingdom. Within the context of the classification jobs are classified in terms of their skill level and skill content. It is used for career information to labour market entrants, job matching by employment agencies and the development of government labour market policies. SOC 2010 is the latest update and aims to improve alignment with the new International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 08).

Important changes introduced in SOC 2010

Redefining managers

The title 'manager', qualified in some way, is frequently used in the UK to denote what would be regarded as supervisory or administrative positions in many other countries. Furthermore, the title is often used in the UK to denote the management of a set of activities that constitute a specific job, rather than the broader and more strategic managerial functions that define managerial roles in other countries. For this reason, UK occupational statistical information is not comparable with similar information from many other countries.

While an attempt was made within SOC 2000 to address this issue, the changes proposed in that revision had little impact upon the proportion of the UK workforce defined as managers. There was general agreement about the need to tackle this issue as a priority in the definition of SOC 2010.

The SOC review team approached this issue first by examining more closely the definition of corporate managers as described in SOC 2000 and in the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 08). ISCO 08 is the latest version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm). **Box 1** reproduces these definitions.

Box 1 Definitions of managers

SOC 2000 definition:

'Job holders in this sub-major group formulate government policy: direct the operations of major organisations, government departments and special interest organisations; organise and direct production, processing, maintenance and construction operations in industry; formulate, implement and advise on specialist functional activities within organisations; direct the operations of branches and offices of financial institutions; organise and co-ordinate the transportation of passengers, the storage and distribution of freight, and the sale of goods; manage the operations of the emergency services, customs and excise, the prison service and the armed forces; and co-ordinate the provision of health and social care services and establishments.'

ISCO 08 definition:

'Corporate managers determine and formulate policies and plan, direct and coordinate the activities of enterprises and organisations, or their internal departments or sections.'

Tasks performed by workers in this sub-major group usually include: determining and formulating policies; planning, directing and coordinating the activities of the business enterprise or other organisation as a whole, or of their internal departments or sections. Supervision of other workers may be included.'

To effect a definition of the managerial role which accords more closely with the broader, more strategic definition as used in ISCO 08, the definition of managers within SOC 2000 Major Group 1:

'This major group covers occupations whose main tasks consist of the direction and coordination of the functioning of organisations and businesses, including internal departments and sections, often with the help of subordinate managers and supervisors.'

was changed to the definition used in SOC 2010:

'This major group covers occupations whose tasks consist of planning, directing and coordinating resources to achieve the efficient functioning of organisations and businesses.'

This revised definition focuses upon the managerial occupation as one which is associated specifically with control over resources ('planning, directing and coordinating') at the enterprise or organisational level and makes more explicit the strategic elements of the job rather than the day-to-day tasks. Where the job title 'manager' is used yet the job description does not indicate significant responsibilities for strategic control over resources (financial, material or human), consideration was given to the reallocation of such job titles and their associated task descriptions to alternative major groups. This required a careful examination of the mechanisms (index rules, guidance notes, coding procedures and so on) by which such job titles and descriptions could be identified and excluded from Major Group 1. To retain a degree of comparability with managerial groups as defined in SOC 2000, certain managerial unit groups (the lowest level of the classification) have been retained in their entirety but repositioned in other major groups of the classification.

Information technology and telecommunications occupations

Continuing technological change together with changes in the way IT occupations are organised and integrated across many functional areas necessitated thorough reconsideration and consequent revision, mainly within Major Group 2 (Professional occupations).

Conservation/environmental occupations

Recognition of occupations relating specifically to conservation and the environment was made for the first time in SOC2000. The increasing significance of this area has resulted in the creation of categories in Major Group 2 (Professional occupations) in SOC2010 and the re-classifying of some occupations previously located within Major Group 3 (Associate Professional occupations).

Supervisors

Supervisory minor and unit groups have been introduced into a small number of areas where the role of supervisor is distinct and is generally regarded as separate from the type of work that is being supervised. This also improves the alignment between SOC 2010 and ISCO 08.

Progress towards implementation

Within ONS, Household surveys are the first to move to the new SOC 2010 classification, with the first results on the new SOC 2010 basis, being the Labour Force Survey (LFS) microdata, released in May 2011. For Business surveys, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) will implement the new classification in April 2011 with results available early 2012.

Table 1 outlines the progress towards the implementation of SOC 2010 in ONS.

Table 1 Timetable for the implementation of SOC 2010 in ONS

Implementation date	Survey	Results available
January 2011	Labour Force Survey (LFS)	LFS Quarter 1 2011 microdata release May 18th- available at the Data archive www.data-archive.ac.uk . May 18 th Labour Force Survey Historical Quarterly Supplement JM11 results published on new SOC basis.
January 2011	Annual Population Survey (APS)	APS Microdata will be available in September 2011. APS data on SOC 2010 basis will be available on the Nomis website in Dec 2011.
January 2011	General Lifestyle Survey (GLF)	November 2012
January 2011	International Passenger Survey (IPS)	November 2012 (data published by Migration Statistics Unit)
January 2011	Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF)	November 2012
January 2011	Integrated Household Survey (IHS)	September 2011
March 2011	Household Assets Survey (HAS)	Late 2013
April 2011	English Housing Survey (EHS)	Autumn 2013 (published by DCLG)
April 2011	Opinions Survey	April 2012
April 2011	Family Resources Survey (FRS)	July/August 2013
April 2011	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)	Early 2012
January 2012	Life Events	Late 2013
Mid 2012	Claimant Count & Vacancies Data	Late 2012

As with the introduction of SIC 2007, on Household surveys, conversion–mapping syntax will be available to users who require mapping from SOC 2000 to the new SOC 2010 classification and from SOC 2010 to SOC 2000.

Further information

Further details of the Revision of the Standard Occupational Classification 2000 can be found at www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/soc2010/index.html

An article on outlining the major areas of change and the impact on national employment by occupation is available at: www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/article.asp?ID=2468

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