

Skill levels criteria for the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Theme: Labour Market

1 Introduction

The Standard Occupational Classification 2020 (SOC2020) classifies jobs into groups according to the concepts of 'skill level' and 'skill specialisation'. As in SOC2010 and its predecessors (SOC2000 and SOC90), skill level is defined with respect to the duration of training and/or work experience recognised in the field of employment concerned as being normally required in order to perform the activities related to a job in a competent and efficient manner.

Skill specialisation is defined as the field of knowledge required for competent, thorough and efficient conduct of the tasks that comprise a job. In some areas of the classification, it refers also to the type of work performed (e.g. materials worked with, tools used, etc.).

Skill levels are approximated by the length of time deemed necessary for a person to become fully competent in the performance of the tasks associated with a job. This, in turn, is a function of the time taken to gain necessary formal qualifications or the required amount of work-based training. Apart from formal training and qualifications, some tasks require varying types of experience, possibly in other tasks, for competence to be acquired. Within the broad structure of the classification (major groups and sub-major groups) reference can be made to four skill levels.

2 Skill levels

The **first** skill level equates with the competence associated with a general education, usually acquired by the time a person completes his/her compulsory education and signalled via a satisfactory set of school-leaving examination grades. Competent performance of jobs classified at this level will also involve knowledge of appropriate health and safety regulations and may require short periods of work-related training. Examples of occupations defined at this skill level within the SOC2020 include postal workers, hotel porters, cleaners and catering assistants.

The **second** skill level covers a large group of occupations, all of which require the knowledge provided via a good general education as for occupations at the first skill level, but which typically have a longer period of work-related training or work experience. Occupations classified at this level include machine operation, driving, caring occupations, retailing, and clerical and secretarial occupations.

The **third** skill level applies to occupations that normally require a body of knowledge associated with a period of post-compulsory education but not normally to degree level. Several technical occupations fall into this category, as do a variety of trades occupations and proprietors of small businesses. In the latter case, educational qualifications at sub-degree level or a lengthy period of vocational training may not be a prerequisite for competent performance of tasks, but a significant period of work experience is typical.

The **fourth** skill level relates to what are termed 'professional' occupations and high-level managerial positions in corporate enterprises, or in national or local government. Occupations at this level normally require a degree or equivalent period of relevant work experience.

The table below lists the sub-major groups of SOC2020 and compares these with SOC2010. As can be seen from the names of these sub-major groups, the skill specialisation criterion has been used to distinguish groups of occupations within each skill level. For example, health professionals are distinguished from science, research, engineering and technology professionals; and skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades from skilled construction and building trades.

Table 1: Skill levels and the sub-major group structure of SOC2010 and SOC2020

| Skill Level | Sub-major groups of: | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| | SOC2010 | | SOC2020 | |
| Level 4 | 11 | Corporate managers and directors | 11 | Corporate managers and directors |
| | 21 | Science, research, engineering and technology professionals | 21 | Science, research, engineering and technology professionals |
| | 22 | Health professionals | 22 | Health professionals |
| | 23 | Teaching and educational professionals | 23 | Teaching and other educational professionals |
| | 24 | Business, media and public service professionals | 24 | Business, media and public service professionals |
| Level 3 | 12 | Other managers and proprietors | 12 | Other managers and proprietors |
| | 31 | Science, engineering and technology associate professionals | 31 | Science, engineering and technology associate professionals |
| | 32 | Health and social care associate professionals | 32 | Health and social care associate professionals |
| | 33 | Protective service occupations | 33 | Protective service occupations |
| | 34 | Culture, media and sports occupations | 34 | Culture, media and sports occupations |
| | 35 | Business and public service associate professionals | 35 | Business and public service associate professionals |
| | 51 | Skilled agricultural and related trades | 51 | Skilled agricultural and related trades |
| | 52 | Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades | 52 | Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades |
| | 53 | Skilled construction and building trades | 53 | Skilled construction and building trades |
| 54 | Textiles, printing and other skilled trades | 54 | Textiles, printing and other skilled trades | |
| Level 2 | 41 | Administrative occupations | 41 | Administrative occupations |
| | 42 | Secretarial and related occupations | 42 | Secretarial and related occupations |
| | 61 | Caring personal service occupations | 61 | Caring personal service occupations |
| | 62 | Leisure, travel and related personal service occupations | 62 | Leisure, travel and related personal service occupations |
| | 71 | Sales occupations | 63 | Community and civil enforcement occupations ¹ |
| | 72 | Customer service occupations | 71 | Sales occupations |
| | 81 | Process, plant and machine operatives | 72 | Customer service occupations |
| | 82 | Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives | 81 | Process, plant and machine operatives |
| | | | 82 | Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives |
| | | | | |
| Level 1 | 91 | Elementary trades and related occupations | 91 | Elementary trades and related occupations |
| | 92 | Elementary administration and service occupations | 92 | Elementary administration and service occupations |

Notes

1. New to SOC2020.