

Response to the ONS consultation on the revision of the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (SOC2010)

05 July 2016

Background

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for maintaining and updating the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). SOC was introduced in 1990, with a major revision in 2000 and a minor revision in 2010.

Due to the continual evolution of occupations, ONS needs to ensure that SOC is reflective of significant changes which occur in technological developments, innovation and new products, the use of new materials, improved methods of production or delivery of services etc. We consulted stakeholders and users to gauge their views on whether SOC2010 needed updating.

ONS was also interested to know about the use of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC), which is derived using SOC and other labour market information. Respondents were asked to answer 4 questions in relation to NS-SEC as part of this consultation.

The consultation ran from 25 January 2016 until 17 April 2016. The consultation document is available to download from the [ONS website](#).

For more information on SOC2010 and NS-SEC please visit the [ONS website](#).

Summary of responses

In total, 79 responses to the consultation were received. The majority of responses were from government departments, academics and researchers. Responses were also received from the charitable & voluntary sector, local authorities, health authorities and from private businesses. A list of responding organisations can be found in Annex A.

Thank you to all respondents for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

Standard Occupational Classification

The majority (78%) of respondents stated that SOC2010 needed updating.

Key areas highlighted by respondents were:

- the range of the existing groups and occupations are no longer reflective of many roles in the IT/Tech, digital and creative sectors
- the current SOC does not reflect some occupations where a degree is now a compulsory requirement or where a university qualification is now a common requirement
- a further disaggregation of some SOC groups is needed
- continuity between classifications for time series analysis is needed

The following section analyses the responses received to the questions asked about SOC2010.

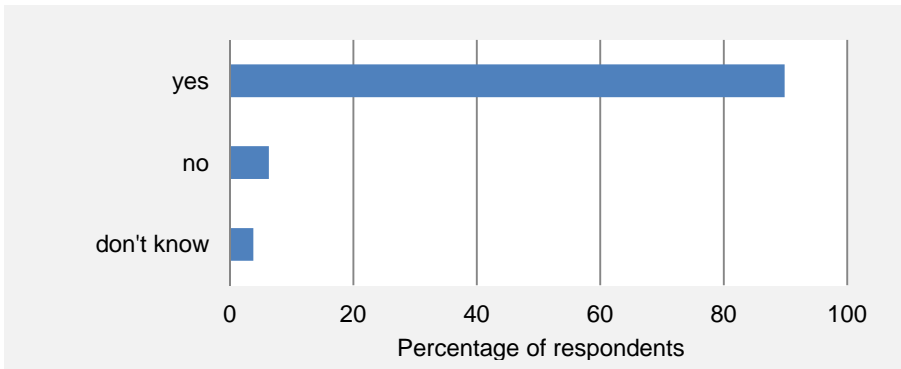
For the purpose of this consultation any pertinent information for question 5:

Question 5 - Please provide any other comments on SOC2010.

has been included in the feedback for question 4.

Question 1 - Do you or your organisation currently use SOC2010?

90% of respondents said that they use SOC2010, 6% said no and 4% said they didn't know.

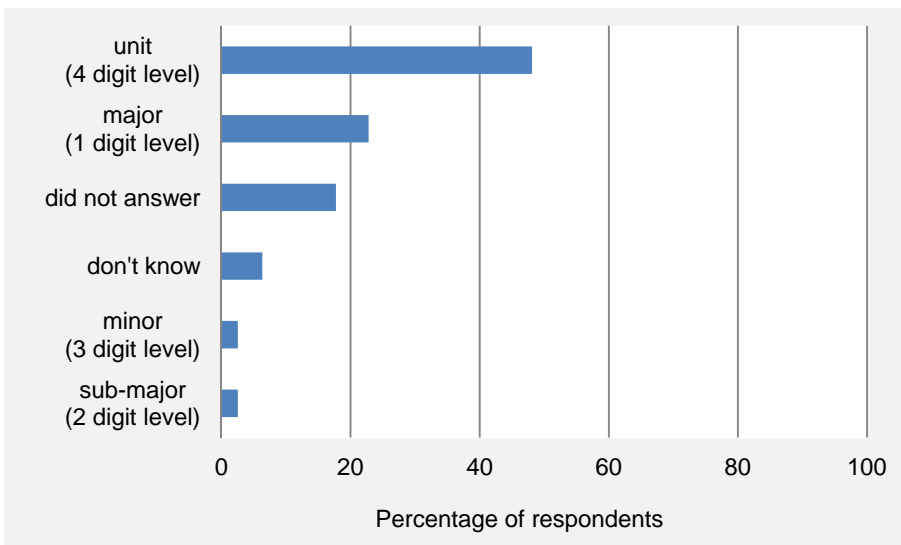


Please note that percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Question 2 - At what group level do you or your organisation use SOC2010?

48% of respondents said that they used SOC2010 at unit group level, 23% at major group level and 3% at both sub-major and minor group level. 18% did not answer the question and 6% didn't know.

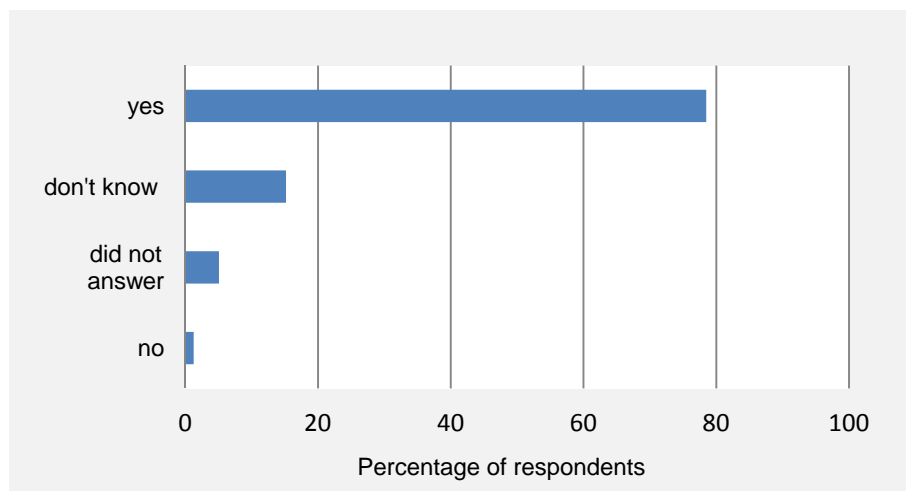
Please note that 40% of respondents responded that they used multiple levels. This information is not included in the chart below or in the calculation of the percentages above.



Please note that percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Question 3 - In your view does SOC2010 need to be updated?

78% of respondents said that SOC needed updating, 15% said they didn't know, 1% said no and 5% did not answer the question.



Please note that percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Question 4 - What areas of SOC 2010 do you think could be improved?

Many respondents reported that SOC2010 excludes a large number of modern occupations in the IT/Tech, digital and creative sectors, and that because of technological changes and innovations the existing range of SOC groups is no longer reflective of many roles in these sectors:

“The current definition does not allow a robust measurement for Digital and Creative occupations as these industries are fast changing and not fully reflected in the SOC2010 update (often because they were not significant at the time).”

“Ukie, the trade body for the games and interactive entertainment industry, has expressed concern that there are no codes in the SOC system pertaining specifically to those who design and produce computer games, i.e. gaming programmer/engineer, and game designers. Relatedly, there are no SOC codes pertaining to those who develop apps for mobile or other devices.”

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

“We feel that the SOC system needs to be updated so allow better classification/segmentation of ‘digital’ roles more widely (as opposed to IT/Telecoms specialists) and in particular positions such as digital marketing, digital administrators, digital service managers, etc.”

The Tech Partnership

“Make sure the marketing codes keep pace with new types of marketing, such as social media and further fragmentation of roles in the sector.”

Careers and Employability Centre, University of Chester

Respondents also highlighted that SOC2010 does not reflect that teaching assistants and veterinary nurses now need a degree as a compulsory requirement. Some respondents also felt that SOC needed updating to reflect the changes in the labour market for occupations where a degree may now be needed, such as administrators and personal assistants:

“My major concern is that the classification does not adequately reflect the jobs where a degree is now an actual or virtually compulsory requirement. Given that Major Groups 1 - 3 are routinely regarded by commentators as the indicators of graduate jobs, we need to be sure that jobs that are graduate entry are

acknowledged as such. Key degree subject areas such as clothing technology, food technology and hotel and leisure management are not always reflected as such. Similarly with certain jobs - higher level teaching and health assistants and veterinary nurses.”

“Need for greater differentiation of 'administrator' job titles that currently fall in major group 4. Roles that clearly require a degree (often a specific or closely related subject) and higher level skills and attributes are all too often defined on a par with clerical roles yet they clearly contain considerable emphasis on resource organisation, strategic and operational planning, resource management etc. than simple clerical processing. “

Manchester Metropolitan University

Some respondents said that that the SOC needed a higher level of granularity. Areas of particular note are: IT/Tech, digital, creative, engineering, data related occupations, technicians and for areas of specialism in sales and teaching. It was suggested that this could be achieved by either disaggregating unit groups to a 5-digit level, or bringing the system in line with the US database of occupational information (O*NET) by increasing the number of SOC codes at 4-digit level.

“We believe the current breadth of occupations in SOC2010 is often far too wide (in terms of similarity of occupations) and it is often not clear how certain occupations have been grouped together. An example of the latter is 2426 Business and Related Research Professionals – which encompasses Crime analyst (police force), Fellow (researcher), Games Research (broadcasting) and Inventor. The four do not naturally fit together, and would benefit from being broken down further or broken up into smaller clusters. Examples like this have created challenges for our policy development.”

Department for Education

Respondents expressed that continuity between classifications for the analysis of trends is needed.

“My comments don't relate specifically to SOC2010 but rather to the process of changing/updating the coding systems in general. Given that part of our remit is to look at trends in incidence over time, any significant change to the coding systems we use can introduce methodological problems/bias. For our purpose (and I'm sure other users will have the same issues) the ideal is to therefore keep changes to a minimum and only implement if deemed really necessary. If significant changes do occur it is also vital to ensure the availability of tools to map between versions.”

Centre of Occupational and Environmental Health, the University of Manchester

Respondents also highlighted that:

- more details about key qualifications and skills/knowledge information is needed
- that SOC could be informed by, or mapped to O*NET for occupational skills and knowledge profiles

The responses covered a wide variety of areas where respondents felt that SOC could be improved. These are too numerous to list in this report but will be considered as part of our research.

National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)

The NS-SEC has been constructed to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations. These are central to show the structure of socio-economic positions in modern society and help explain variations of social behaviour and other social phenomena. The following section analyses the responses received to the questions asked about NS-SEC.

For the purpose of this consultation any pertinent information for question 9:

Question 9 - Please provide any other comments on NS-SEC.

has been included in the feedback for question 8.

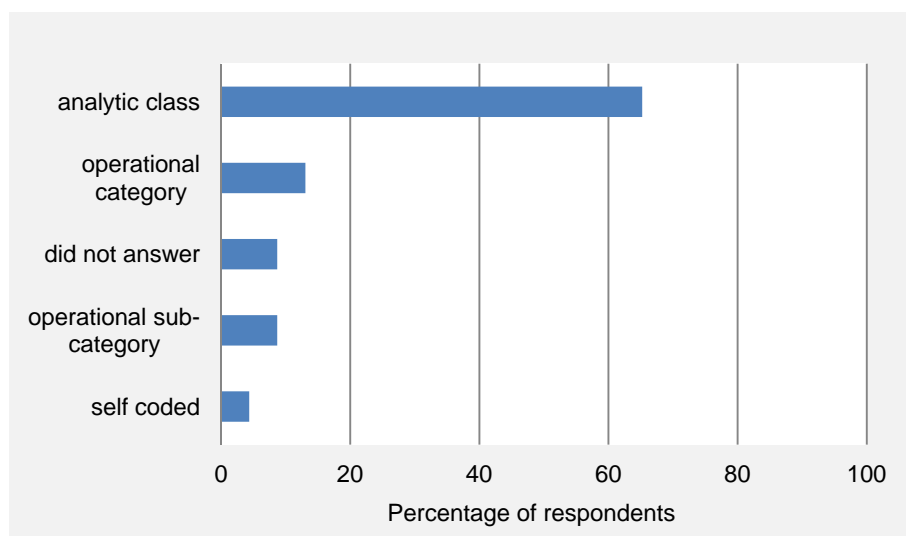
Question 6 - Do you or your organisation currently use NS-SEC?

29% of respondents said that they use NS-SEC.

Question 7 - At what level do you or your organisation currently use NS-SEC?

65% of respondents said that they used the analytic class, 13% the operational category, 9% the operational sub-category, 4% the self-coded and 9% did not answer the question.

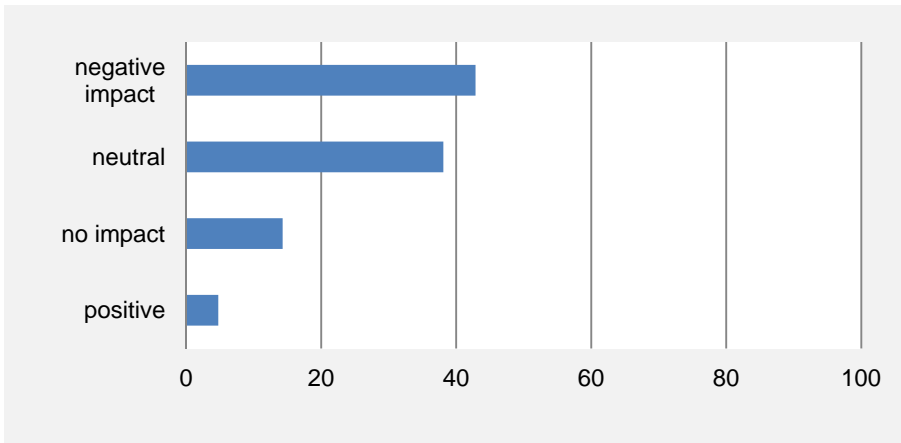
Please note that 22% of respondents used multiple categories. This information is not included in the chart below or in the calculation of the percentages above.



Please note that percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Question 8 -The 2011 Census coded NS-SEC using the reduced derivation method. Please describe in the box below what the impact would be to you or your organisation's work if ONS coded NS-SEC using the simplified derivation method?

21 respondents supplied comments to this question. Of those, 43% stated that there would be a negative impact if ONS coded NS-SEC using the simplified method. 38% were neutral, 14% said no impact and 5% were positive.



Please note that percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Comments from respondents included:

“Basically there would be a loss of analytical comparability between stratification-related research using the Census and other sources. In addition, employment status is too important an aspect of the generation of an analytically valid socio-economic classification for a measure using the simplified derivation method to be satisfactory for social science research.”

University of Warwick

“We don’t envisage any problems with the move to the simplified derivation method. However we would be interested to know more about the rationale and risks of such a move?”

Health and Safety Executive

Next steps

A SOC Revision Steering Group (SRSG) has been established and a meeting of the SRSG will be held on 11 July 2016 to agree whether an update to SOC2010 is needed. A report outlining their decision will be published within 4 weeks of the meeting.

Getting in Touch

If you have any queries or comments about the survey process, please email Simeon Bowen at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk or call 0845 601 3034.

You can also write to us at the following address:

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Room 1.101
Office for National Statistics
Government Buildings
Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8XG

For further information on ONS surveys, please visit <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/index.html>

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Accessibility

All material relating to this consultation can be provided in braille, large print or audio formats on request. British Sign Language interpreters can also be requested for any supporting events.

Annex A: Organisations which responded

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
Cabinet Office	Nuffield College, Oxford
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	Office of Manpower Economics
Cheshire East Council	Ofqual
Chubb	Office for National Statistics
City University London	Norwich University of the Arts
Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)	Pilates Alliance Australasia
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	Pilates Teacher Association
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Private Allied Health Practice in Australia
Department for Education	Rezatec Ltd
Department for Transport	Scottish Government
Department for Work and Pensions	Sheffield Hallam University
Design Council	STUDIO RCT
Durham University	Tees Valley Combined Authority
Cabinet Office, Isle of Man Government	Teeto
Gatsby Foundation	The Engineering Council (on behalf of The Engineering Council, EngineeringUK, Royal Academy of Engineering and E4E)
Graduate Prospects/HECSU	The Open University
Greater London Authority	The Tech Partnership
Harper Adams University	UK Music
Health and Safety Executive	University College London
Higher Education Careers Services Unit	University of Bristol Careers Service
Higher Education Funding Council for England	University of Chester Careers and Employability Centre
Higher Education Statistics Agency	University of Hull
Imperial College London	University of Leicester
Landscape Institute	University of Manchester Careers Service
Lantra	University of Sheffield
Live and Breathe Pilates	University of Warwick
Loughborough University	University of Worcester
Manchester Metropolitan University	
National Council for the Training of Journalists	
National Records of Scotland	