

# Appendix A. The Standard Occupational Classification System

In 1999, the OES survey began using the Standard Occupational Classification System (SOC), the new occupational classification system authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The SOC system is the first OMB-required occupational classification system for Federal agencies. The OES survey uses 22 of the 23 major occupational groups from the SOC to categorize workers in 1 of almost 770 detailed occupations. (The major group excluded is military occupations, which are not surveyed in the OES program.) For information about the transition to the SOC in the OES program, see Kristine Heffel and Laurie Salmon, “Implementing the Standard Occupational Classification in the OES Survey,” elsewhere in this publication.

## Description of the SOC structure

The SOC system uses an empirically based economywide occupational classification system. The occupations in the OES system are identified both by titles and by definitions that describe primary job duties. The skill level required for some of the occupations is implicit in the definition.

The SOC system used in this survey was revised in 1998 to better suit the needs of both data users and data producers. The classification system emphasizes occupations of special interest to many data users, such as technology-related occupations and those requiring substantial training. In addition, it was designed to allow the maximum analytical use of labor force data by various agencies of the U.S. Government, State agencies, professional associations, and private research organizations.

The SOC system has four levels of classification: Major group, minor group, broad occupational detail, and detailed occupation. Occupation codes consist of six digits, with a hyphen between the second and third digits for presentation clarity. The first two digits represent the major group; the third, the minor group; the fourth and fifth, the broad occupational detail; and the last digit, along with the preceding five, identifies the detailed occupation. There are residual categories within the various levels of the system for reporting occupations not identified at the detailed level. The following sections discuss the first level of the system (major group), as well as residual occupational categories.

## Major Groups

The major groups and numbers of detailed occupations of the SOC system surveyed by OES are as follows:

Major occupational group	Detailed occupations	
	Number	Percent of total
Total .....	769	100.0
Management .....	30	3.9
Business and financial operations ....	28	3.6
Computer and mathematical .....	16	2.1
Architecture and engineering .....	35	4.6
Life, physical, and social science .....	39	5.1
Community and social services .....	14	1.8
Legal .....	9	1.2
Education, training, and library .....	58	7.5
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media .....	37	4.8
Healthcare practitioner and technical .....	45	5.9
Healthcare support .....	15	2.0
Protective service .....	20	2.6
Food preparation and serving related .....	16	2.1
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance .....	9	1.2
Personal care and service .....	33	4.3
Sales and related .....	21	2.7
Office and administrative support ....	56	7.3
Farming, fishing, and forestry .....	13	1.7
Construction and extraction .....	58	7.5
Installation, maintenance, and repair .....	53	6.9
Production .....	112	14.6
Transportation and material moving .....	52	6.8

First-line managers and supervisors are included in the last 11 major occupational groups. Professional, paraprofessional, and technical supervisors are classified with the workers they supervise due to the extensive subject matter knowledge required. First-line managers and supervisors may be supervised by top and middle managers in the managerial and administrative major groups.

**Residual occupational categories**

The SOC system contains occupations that are numerically significant either in one industry or across all industries. For occupations not meeting one of these standards, residual categories (that is, “All other...”) have been created within most levels of the SOC system. Residual categories provide for a complete accounting of all workers employed within an

establishment and allow the aggregation and analysis of employment data at various levels of detail. Some examples of residual categories are: “All other sales and related workers” at the major group level, and “All other machinery maintenance mechanics” at the detailed level.

For more information about the SOC, please see the BLS Web site at [http://stats.bls.gov/soc/soc\\_home.htm](http://stats.bls.gov/soc/soc_home.htm).