



Classification differences between ISCO-08 and ISCO-88

Although the conceptual model used to guide the development of ISCO-08 was not fundamentally changed from that used in ISCO-88, there are significant differences in the treatment of some occupational groups between. These reflect the need to address concerns about specific difficulties experienced in the use of ISCO-88, as well the need to reflect occupational change in the 20 year period following development of ISCO-88.

The overall system of major groups, sub-major groups, minor groups and unit groups used in ISCO-88 has been retained in ISCO-08. The 10 major groups at the top level of the ISCO-08 structure are the same as those used in ISCO-88. The names of some of the major groups have been changed slightly, so as to more clearly indicate their contents, and some occupational groups have been moved from one major group to another. A number of the sub-major groups, minor groups and unit groups, however, are different from those in ISCO-88.

The most important of the changes address concerns that ISCO-88 was seriously out of date in some areas, most notably as a result of the impact of developments in technology on professional, technical and clerical work associated with the use of computers and telecommunications. Some categories in ISCO-88 have therefore been merged, split or moved to reflect occupational and technological change in the labour market. New categories have been created to allow for the identification of new or emerging occupational groups. To assist time series analysis, ISCO-88 unit groups have not been split and joined to parts of other ISCO-88 unit groups, except where this was unavoidable.

In addition there are some changes in the way the ISCO conceptual model is applied to the design of the classification. Most notably, the nature of the work performed has been given more emphasis than formal education and training requirements in determining the skill level of an occupation.

Other changes in the classification structure have been made to reflect concerns that ISCO-88 was excessively detailed in some areas and inadequately detailed in others, and that there was a wide variation in the size of some sub-major and minor groups. Wherever possible, efforts have been made to ensure that the level of detail provided is appropriate and useful considering the main purposes of ISCO. It is hoped that these changes will make it easier to produce estimates from sample surveys for ISCO-08 sub-major and minor groups than was the case with ISCO-88. Given the nature of the occupational distribution of the labour market at the international level, and in view of the variety of uses of ISCO, concerns about the size of groups and about differing levels of detail in different parts of the classification, were important, but not overriding, considerations.

In some cases there were concerns that it was not feasible to make distinctions between certain categories in ISCO-88 on a consistent basis internationally, especially considering the kind of data that it is possible to collect in a census or in surveys. In such cases, for example, as the treatment of managerial occupations in agriculture, adjustments were made to ISCO-88 to improve both consistency of reporting and international comparability.

Some of the more significant changes are summarised below.

- The sections of the classification dealing with managerial occupations were reorganized so as to overcome problems experienced by users of ISCO-88.

- Some additional unit groups and one new minor group were created for selected supervisory occupations, but only in areas where supervisors commonly perform significantly different tasks from the workers they supervise.
- There was a major updating and expansion of occupations associated with information and communications technology, allowing for the identification of professional and associate professional occupations in this field as sub-major groups.
- The parallel groups in appearing in different ISCO-88 major groups to cater for cases where the education and training requirements for a particular occupational group differ between countries do not appear in ISCO-08 when the tasks performed are essentially the same.
- Occupations concerned with the provision of health services were expanded, in order to provide sufficient detail to allow ISCO-08 to be used as the basis for the international reporting of data on the health work force. These occupations were grouped together where possible to provide two sub-major groups and a separate minor group devoted to occupations in health services.
- The section of the classification dealing with office clerks was reorganized to reflect the increasing impact of information and communications technology and to provide more meaningful detail for occupations in which large numbers of women are employed.
- The aggregate groups for sales and service workers were reorganized, including the provision of new sub-major groups for personal service workers, personal care workers and protective services workers
- There are more detailed categories for and greater clarity in the treatment of some occupational groups involved in agriculture.
- More detailed categories are provided for occupations involved in the provision of information and services to clients, including those related to tourism.
- The groups for plant and machine operators were restructured and reorganized in response to concerns that this part of ISCO-88 was excessively detailed and out-of-date in some areas.
- The coverage and visibility of occupations that are significant in the informal employment was improved, leading to an associated increase in the number of sub-major groups in ISCO-08 Major Group 9, Elementary occupations.

The result of these changes was a modest increase in detail at each level of the classification except the top level, which has not changed. These changes are not distributed evenly across the classification structure however. The number of unit groups in Major group 2, Professionals and Major group 5, Service and sales workers has increased significantly, whereas the number of unit groups in Major group 8, Plant and machine operators, and assemblers has significantly decreased.