

Using the Singapore Standard Occupational Classification (SSOC)

How to Determine an Appropriate Code?

SSOC is the acronym for the Singapore Standard Occupational Classification which is the national statistical standard for classifying occupations.

The SSOC adopts the basic framework and principles of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) developed by the International Labour Office (ILO), and is regularly updated to reflect developments in the labour market.

The use of SSOC in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data facilitates data sharing and ensures data coherence (where data are consistent internally with as well as comparable with other data sources and over time). This is one of the six data quality dimensions specified in the [Statistical Best Practices 2020 handbook](#).



How to Determine an Appropriate SSOC Code?

SSOC applies a five-digit coding system to reflect the five levels of classification – major group, sub-major group, minor group, unit group and occupation. At the most detailed level, an occupation is defined as a 'set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity'.

- For instance, a sales assistant working in a fashion store and a salesperson working in a furniture shop are two different jobs but are grouped under the same occupation code SSOC 52202 Shop Sales Assistant as the main tasks and duties of selling goods and explaining the functions and qualities of goods and services to customers are similar.

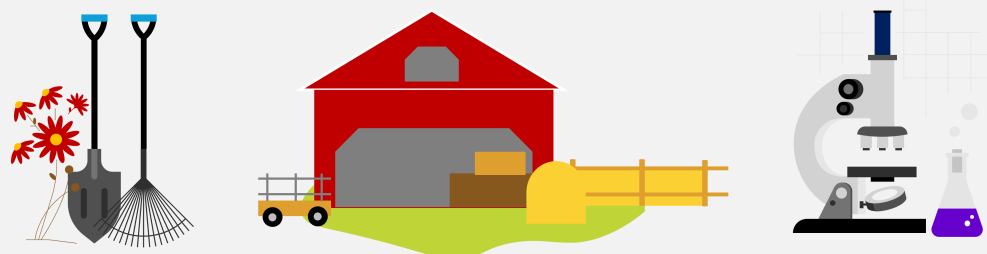
As exemplified, the basic classification principle of the SSOC is to classify the occupations based on the **principal tasks and duties**. Persons who perform the same principal tasks and duties are considered to be doing the same type of work and are classified under the same occupation code regardless of their work experience, employment status, or qualifications.

There are certain occupations which may involve a variety and range of tasks and duties that could fall under the scope of various occupations. There may also be instances where the principal tasks are not possible to be ascertained. In such cases, the following rules shall apply, in the order of precedence given below:

▼ **In cases where the tasks and duties performed spans across different broad job levels, the job should be classified according to those tasks and duties related to the highest job level**

Rule of Highest Broad Job Level: Broad job level is a function of the complexity and range of the tasks and duties to be performed in an occupation. It takes into account the formal education required to perform the tasks competently, the amount of informal on-the-job training and/ or experience in a related occupation, and the type and complexity of tasks and duties involved. There are four broad job levels with Broad Job Level 4 (comprising occupations with the most complex tasks) being the highest level. See the [SSOC 2024 report](#) to read more regarding the different broad job levels.

To illustrate, a farm technician reports that he provides technical support to conduct experiments to improve the yield and quality of crops (key task of SSOC 31421 Horticultural Technician) and also cultivates crops in the farm (key task of SSOC 61133 Gardener/ Horticultural Worker). Following this principle, he should be coded to SSOC 31421 instead of SSOC 61133 as the former is associated with a higher broad job level.



▼ **In cases where the tasks and duties are associated with different stages of the process of producing and distributing goods and services, the tasks and duties related to the production stage should take priority over those related to the sales, marketing and transportation of the same goods**

Rule of Production Taking Precedence: To illustrate, consider a leather craftsman who makes bags and wallets and sells his products at a small pop-up store in a shopping mall. Following this principle, he should be coded as SSOC 75362 Leather Goods Maker/ Assembler rather than SSOC 52202 Shop Sales Assistant as the main task related to the production stage (i.e., making leather products) takes priority.



In cases where the tasks and duties are of the same broad job level and production stage, the appropriate code will be the tasks/ duties which take up the most amount of time

With digitalisation advancements, more occupations increasingly require technology skills to perform the tasks. Nevertheless, the occupation should still be classified based on the main tasks performed rather than the specific competencies involved. For instance, an equity analyst who performs complex financial modelling to facilitate investment recommendations should be coded as SSOC 24131 Financial Analyst instead of SSOC 21222 Data Scientist, despite the use of advance data modelling techniques.

With these classification principles in mind, there are two ways to determine an appropriate SSOC code using the available SSOC resources:

1

Refer to the [SSOC Alphabetical Index](#) or use the [SSOC Search](#)

to look for the job title by which the occupation is known, followed by selecting the most appropriate code by referring to the detailed definition.

2

Refer to the [SSOC classification structure](#)

to broadly classify the job before narrowing down to the most appropriate five-digit code at the occupational level. Confirm the choice of code by referring to the detailed definition.

Important Points to Note when Determining an SSOC Code

The primary objective of the SSOC...

...is to classify occupations of the civilian working population, but with provisions for the collective classification of those in the armed services (under X3000) and foreign diplomatic personnel (under X4000).

SSOC is not applicable to...

...persons outside the labour force such as housewives, full-time students, retired persons, and voluntary/ non-salaried social workers.

Classification Principle:

Persons who perform the same principal tasks and duties are to be classified under the same occupation, regardless of work experience, employment status, or qualifications.

Apprentices and Trainees...

...are classified according to the occupation they are training for, provided they are employed in the capacity of an apprentice or trainee.

SSOC 2024 Publication



To maintain the relevance of the SSOC, the classification is regularly revised and updated to reflect recent developments in the labour market and to align with changes in international standards. The Singapore Department of Statistics led a multi-agency working group for the revision of the SSOC 2020 and consulted various public agencies on the updates to the classification. These efforts culminated in the development and publication of the latest SSOC 2024. The deliberations and consultations ensure that the SSOC continues to meet the classification needs of users and producers of occupational data.

The latest SSOC 2024 publication and related materials are available on the [SingStat Website](#). Some of the key changes in the SSOC 2024 include the creation of codes for emerging occupations in various sectors such as the Infocomm Technology and Green Economy. Some occupations across major groups and unit groups have been reclassified due to developments in their main tasks and duties over time. Detailed definitions for certain codes have also been enhanced to provide greater clarity in the descriptions of the main tasks and duties of these occupations.

Conclusion

The SSOC is used in the compilation, presentation and analysis of a wide range of statistics, including demographic, social and labour statistics. Ensuring that appropriate SSOC codes are chosen improves the quality and comparability of statistics which is essential for meaningful analyses and policy implementation.