Revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08)


Session 7

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What is ISCO-08?

The ILO is the custodian for ISCO

ISCO is a statistical classification used to classify and code information on occupations, with the following objectives:

- A basis for the international reporting, comparison and exchange of statistical and administrative information about occupations
- A model for the development of national and regional International classifications of occupations
- A system that can be used directly in countries that have not developed their own national classifications

ISCO-08 was adopted by a tripartite Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics on updating ISCO, convened by the Governing Body of the ILO in accordance with a resolution of the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)

- The resolution of the Meeting of Experts was endorsed by the Governing Body of the ILO in March 2008.
What is ISCO-08?

- The statistical unit in ISCO-08 is jobs
- ISCO-08 is a four-level hierarchically structured classification
  - 10 Major Groups (most aggregated level)
    - 43 Sub-Major Groups
    - 130 Minor Groups
    - 436 Unit Groups (most detailed level)
  - that allows all jobs in the world to be classified into 436 unit groups
- Occupations are grouped on the basis of their similarity in terms of the skill level and skill specialization required for the jobs
- Given its international characteristics, only 4 skill levels are used in ISCO and they are set at the top level of the classification
  - All subsequent groups follow the same skill levels (few exceptions)

Definitions and concepts used in ISCO-08

- Jobs
  Set of tasks and duties performed or meant to be performed, by one person, including for an employer or in self employment

- Occupations
  Refers to the kind of work performed in a job. The concept of occupations is defined as a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterized by a high degree of similarity

- Definition of Skill
  The ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job

- Operational measure of Skill levels
  A function of the complexity and range of tasks and duties performed in an occupation
  - Measured operationally by considering one or more of:
    - The nature of the work performed in an occupation in relation to the characteristic tasks and duties
    - The level of formal education defined in terms of ISCED-97
    - The amount of informal on-the-job training and/or previous experience in a related occupation
      - required for competent performance of the tasks and duties involved

- Skill specialization
  Considered in terms of four concepts:
  - the field of knowledge required
  - the tools and machinery used
  - the materials worked on or with
  - the kinds of goods and services produced
Why is ISCO-08 revision needed?

• Positive feedback on the use and implementation of ISCO globally
  • Many national and regional occupational classifications are based on/ or directly use ISCO-08,
  • Large number of research papers, analysis, policy making, projects, and other uses of ISCO-08
• But, since the launch of ISCO-08 there have been major changes, knowing that the practice has been to
  revise ISCO in a 20-year cycle (ISCO-58, ISCO-68, ISCO-88 and ISCO-08)
  • Technological transformation and changes affecting the world of work, and at a faster pace,
  • New jobs have emerged (ICT, climate change and the green economy, etc.),
  • Tasks have changed (use of machine, ways work is done, business are run, such as self-check out, etc.),
  • The need for more detail in some jobs (breakdown of some existing groups), less detail in others
    (obsolescence of jobs),
  • Other factors including change in skills, higher knowledge and skill requirements, etc.
  • Other opportunities, including using of available technology and various user needs
• Provide a relevant and modern system to code and classify information on occupations
  • Taking into account what can be achieved with known challenges and available resources including time
    frame: 22nd ICLS (before the next round of housing and population censuses in 2030)
Consultations, feedback and major issues in ISCO-08

Consultations, feedback from countries and experts - presented during 19th and 20th ICLS

ISCO-08 skill model
- Problems with the application of skill level as a classification criterion and its implication on analysis
- Revision of skill level boundaries and their descriptors
- Revision of skill level for a number of occupations

ISCO-08 specific group issues
- Systematic treatment of certain groups or cases
- Need to maintain or not certain groups

Need to update and improve the structure of ISCO-08
- Identify and incorporate emerging occupations
- Identify and treat obsolete occupations
- Restructuring and regrouping the ISCO structure: to provide more detail (breakdown) or less for certain groups

Need to maintain ISCO aligned with relevant standards
- 19th ICLS resolution I concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization

Modernization of ISCO
- Exploring means to modernize various aspects of ISCO

Continued receiving and seeking feedback – log of issues and concerns
- Countries and other users
- Associations of professionals
- Other initiatives or working groups and regional events

Examined a number of country experiences and various sources of information and statistics
- National Occupational Classifications, other sources
- Anticipating skill needs,
- Jobs in demand in the future,
- Etc.

Formed the Technical Working Group for ISCO-08 revision
- Knowledge-sharing platform
The revision process of ISCO

Conducted in a collaborative approach - an extensive international consultative process

- Formed Technical Working Group (TWG) in June 2021: representatives of governments, workers, employers, and observers (international and regional organizations)

Three sub-working groups

- SWG1: Revising and improving the ISCO structure – Chair Mexico
- SWG2: Revising and improving group descriptions - Chair Switzerland
- SWG3: The modernization of ISCO - Chair New Zealand

- Since June 2021, we held 7 online meetings + 1 meeting for each SWG
- Receiving feedbacks and input from other channels in addition to ad-hoc consultations, when needed
  - Regional activities to collect additional feedback on issues or concerns with ISCO-08
The scope of ISCO-08 revision

- Maintain ISCO relevant to mirror the reality of the world of work and address priority policy needs
- Remain globally relevant and inclusive
  - Global relevance of the proposed options and their suitability to various contexts and regions, etc.
- Maintain a balance between relevance, continuity and comparability with past statistics
  - Minimizing break in series, unless unavoidable
  - Maintaining similar conceptual approach, including the basic principles and the main structure of ISCO-08
What is being revising and improved?

Revising and improving the ISCO skill model

- Exploring means to expand the operational measurement of the skill levels (focus on additional skill dimensions, not only on formal education)
- Reviewing existing boundaries between skill levels (in particular between SL 2 and SL 3)
- Revising skill levels of a group of occupations that are believed to be at the wrong skill level, etc.

Revising and improving the ISCO structure and group descriptions

- Examining and incorporating emerging occupations, treating obsolete ones
- Restructuring, regrouping of certain groups, or split of groups
- Updating the list of main of tasks, taking into account the impact of technology and change in skills, etc.

Modernization of ISCO

- Presentation of ISCO in a user-friendly mode, exploring the potential creation of job families, options for a flexible presentation of the ISCO structure
- Exploring feasibility and relevance of targeted update in the future as a mean to maintain ISCO relevant between major revisions, including a ‘flexible’ ISCO model and testing the feasibility of using of big data – job adverts and AI (POC with the MOM in Singapore)
- Research agenda for future ISCO revisions: innovative approaches could be explored
Time plan

21st ICLS in 2023: progress of work and proposals for future actions

- What have been done so far: exploring means to improve the skill model, groups that could be revised, etc
- The modernization of ISCO: including the idea of targeted ISCO updates and the relevance of using big data to maintain ISCO up-to-date and relevant between major revisions

2023

- Finalise a first draft (structure of ISCO) and undertake targeted testing and global consultation
- Finalize updated group descriptions
- Draft methodological notes (treatment of specific groups and cases, changes between ISCO-08 and ISCO-28, etc) and brief implementation companion.
- Finalize the Index of occupational titles
- Crosswalk with ISCO-08

22nd ICLS in 2028: finalized version of ISCO-28

- Ready for use for the next round of housing and population censuses in 2030
Thank you