

**Office of Foreign Labor Certification Technical Release Notes for the Occupational
Employment and Wage Statistics Update
for July 2022 through June 2023 Wage Year**

Effective July 1, 2022

The Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC) will discontinue its use of the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and begin using the 2018 SOC codes on July 1, 2022. OFLC will begin using 2018 SOC codes because the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) and the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) have completed the transition from 2010 SOC codes to 2018 SOC codes.¹

Below are technical release notes, which explain how OFLC will apply the 2018 SOC structure to OEWS wages for the July 2022 through June 2023 wage year. In certain instances, the 2018 SOC codes may be aggregated, may not have wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations, or may not have Job Zone data due to O*NET data limitations. Examples of such instances are presented below.

Example of a 2018 SOC Detailed Occupation Aggregated into a Single Broad OEWS Occupation

- OEWS has aggregated certain 2018 SOC detailed occupations into a single broad occupation.² For these occupations, OFLC will apply the applicable broad occupation wage estimate to each of the 2018 SOC detailed occupations. OEWS has published a list of OEWS occupations and definitions that include 2018 SOC detailed occupations that have been aggregated. This list can be found at https://www.bls.gov/oes/occupation_definitions_m2021.xlsx.

For example, the broad occupation 13-1020, Buyers and Purchasing Agents, will provide the wage for the following 2018 SOC detailed occupations:

- 13-1021, Buyers and Purchasing Agents, Farm Products
- 13-1022, Wholesale and Retail Buyers, Except Farm Products
- 13-1023, Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail, and Farm Products

¹ For background on classifications of occupations, see Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 2018, at p. 11, 15, available at https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/soc_2018_manual.pdf (providing further information regarding definitions of particular classifications of occupations); see also O*NET-SOC 2019 Taxonomy, available at <https://www.onetcenter.org/taxonomy.html#latest> (providing further information on how the O*NET-SOC 2019 taxonomy structure has been revised based on transition to the 2018 SOC).

² See generally Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 2018, available at https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/soc_2018_manual.pdf (providing further information regarding definitions of particular classifications of occupations); see also O*NET-SOC 2019 Taxonomy, available at <https://www.onetcenter.org/taxonomy.html#latest> (providing further information on how the O*NET-SOC 2019 taxonomy structure has been revised based on transition to the 2018 SOC).

Example of an Occupation that Does Not Have Wage Estimates Due to OEWS Data Limitations

- Certain 2018 occupations do not have wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations.

For example, the occupation 45-3031, Fishing and Hunting Workers, does not have wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations. OFLC will continue to apply the same guidelines from previous years. OFLC will apply the OEWS mean wage for the 2018 SOC major group 45-0000, Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations to all wage levels of 45-3031, Fishing and Hunting Workers. OFLC will apply the OEWS wage estimate at the most geographically specific area available.

- OFLC will first look to OEWS wage estimates published at the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or non-MSA (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrcma.htm>).
 - If no MSA or non-MSA data is available, state-level data will be used (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrcst.htm>).
 - When a location is within a multistate MSA, OFLC will use state-wide data for the first principal city listed in the MSA (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bulletin-20-01.pdf>).
 - Absent a state value, the national wage estimates will be used (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm).
- The occupation 41-9012, Models, only contained OEWS wage estimates for 112 of 533 geographic areas due to OEWS data limitations. OFLC calculated the mean wage values for these 112 areas, leveled these values, and applied them to the remaining 421 areas where no wages were available. Applying mean wages is similar to the methodology used by OEWS, which uses a national average for wages (GeoLevel 4) when there is no releasable estimate for the state level.

Example of an Occupation that Does not Have an ACWIA Higher Education Wage Estimate Due to OEWS Data Limitations

- Certain occupations do not have American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act (ACWIA) Higher Education wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations. For these occupations, OFLC will continue to apply ACWIA Higher Education wage estimates for the most closely aligned occupation, based on 2018 SOC occupational definitions and wage patterns. OFLC will first select the appropriate 2018 SOC code and assess the appropriate wage level. Then, if no ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate is available, OFLC will assign a wage from the most closely aligned occupation with an ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate.

For example, the occupation 29-1023, Orthodontists does not have an ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate available. NPWC will apply the ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate for 29-1021, Dentists, General, which is the most closely aligned occupation based on the 2018 SOC occupational definitions and wage patterns.

Example of an O*NET Occupation that Does not Have Job Zone Data Due to O*NET Data Limitations

- Not all 2018 O*NET detailed occupations have Job Zone data due to O*NET data limitations. For occupations with no available Job Zone data, OFLC will use the methodology announced in its November 15, 2021, *Federal Register* notice.³ A list of the Job Zones to be applied for these occupations will be available on the OFLC website (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor>).

For example, the O*NET detailed occupation 13-2099.00, Financial Specialists, All Other does not have an established Job Zone in O*NET. OFLC therefore assigned Job Zone 5 to 13-2099.00, Financial Specialists, All Other by calculating the mean of the other O*NET detailed occupations in the same O*NET broad occupation, 13-2090: 13-2099.01, Financial Quantitative Analysts, Job Zone 4; and 13-2099.04, Fraud Examiners, Investigators, and Analysts, Job Zone 5).

- OEWS has aggregated certain 2018 SOC detailed occupations into a single OEWS broad occupation. OFLC will apply the applicable Education level of the OEWS broad occupation to each of the 2018 SOC detailed occupations. A list of the Education levels to be applied for these occupations will be available on the OFLC website (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor>).

³ See Update to Appendix A to the Preamble-Education and Training Categories by O*NET-SOC Occupations; Labor Certification for Permanent Employment of Immigrants in the United States and Procedures To Establish Job Zone Values When O*NET Job Zone Data Are Unavailable, 87 FR 63070 (Nov. 15, 2021), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/15/2021-24813/update-to-appendix-a-to-the-preamble-education-and-training-categories-by-onet-soc-occupations-labor>.