



Obsolete and Emerging Occupations

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this analysis is to identify obsolete and emerging occupations in the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) taxonomy. This analysis uses job titles that were reported to Illinois and Iowa by employers who were included in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics cooperative Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program samples from 2010 to 2018.

The analysis identifies 11 SOC candidates for consideration as obsolete and 11 candidates for consideration as emerging. In addition to OEWS reported job titles, the analysis uses National Labor Exchange job postings to determine if these candidates are currently in demand by employers. The report proposes SOC codes and definitions for emerging candidates and suggestions for how to code job titles related to obsolete candidates.

Obsolete and Emerging Occupations

Some of the most widely used information provided by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is produced by the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program. OEWS collects information from employers in a semi-annual survey that requests job titles, departments, job descriptions, and wages. This data is used to classify workers into one of over 800 specific occupations found in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), a system that supports efficiency and effectiveness of the US Federal statistical system by ensuring comparability of data across Federal statistical agencies and states.

SOC Revisions

Occasionally, the SOC is reviewed and revised by the SOC Policy Committee to reflect changes in the scope of work performed in the economy. The SOC Policy Committee recommends changes to the Office of Management and Budget who implement these changes. The most recent revision was from 2010 to 2018, and another revision is scheduled to occur in 2028. Below are examples of a few changes that occurred in the 2010-2018 revision:

2010 SOC

11-9199 Managers, All Other

15-1199 Computer Occupations, All Other

2018 SOC

11-9179 Personal Service Managers, All Other
11-9199 Managers, All Other
13-1082 Project Management Specialists

13-1082 Project Management Specialists

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	15-1243 Database Architects
	15-1253 Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers
	15-1255 Web and Digital Interface Designers
	15-1299 Computer Occupations, All Other
29-1069 Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	29-1212 Cardiologists
	29-1213 Dermatologists
	29-1214 Emergency Medicine Physicians
	29-1217 Neurologists
	29-1222 Physicians, Pathologists
	29-1224 Radiologists
	29-1229 Physicians, All Other
	29-1241 Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric

While some of these changes are due to changes in the description of a job or further specialization, many of these changes are the results of an occupation becoming obsolete or emerging due to changes in technology or other conditions. The purpose of this project is to identify candidates for obsolete and emerging occupations for the upcoming SOC revision in 2028 and to develop replicable methodology that can be used for ongoing analysis of new, emerging, and obsolete occupations by other states that wish to conduct the same type of analysis.

Data

Proprietary data were sourced from thousands of employers in Illinois and Iowa who responded to the OEWS survey from November 2019 to May 2025. Employers provide a roster of employee job titles and wage for UI covered employees working during the reference date of that specific panel (either May 12 or November 12 of the panel year). Personal identifying information of these employees is not requested. Wages are requested in the OEWS survey and wage estimates are produced by the OEWS program, but the focus of this study is the occupational titles and employment data that is collected.

Other public data used were the most recent (2024) national and state occupational estimates published on the BLS website here: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, nationwide search results from the U.S. Department of Labor CareerOneStop.org Job Finder search tool here: <https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/job-search.aspx>, and the National Labor Exchange job search here: <https://usnlx.com/>

Methodology: Obsolete Occupations

For this project, we examined the 2024 national employment estimates by occupation, and, using the OEWS Occupation and Wage Data Network (OWDN) Metabase, querying the

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number of times an occupation was reported in Illinois and Iowa for the OEWS surveys conducted from November 2019 to May 2025. Criteria for flagging an occupation for further review were the following:

- The national employment estimate for the occupation was less than 0.002% of the total national employment, roughly 3,000, and
- The total employment reported in the state was less than 0.002% of the employment reported for the occupations reported in that state: roughly 80 for Illinois and 50 for Iowa.

If an employment estimate for an occupation was published in either state during the 2024 round, it was eliminated as a candidate.

Residual SOC codes were not considered as candidates since distinct jobs can be assigned identical residual SOC codes.

Occupations that are not usually in scope of the OEWS survey (examples are agriculture or self-employed) were not considered.

Of the remaining candidates, we examined the number of states where the occupational employment estimate was published in 2024, the number of job openings reported for that job nationally using CareerOneStop.org, and we checked the average national location quotient to determine how concentrated the occupation is. Occupations with high average national location quotients could be eliminated as candidates because they are highly concentrated but might not be in Illinois or Iowa.

Once candidates were determined, the analyst determined if the occupation should be merged or removed. If the occupation definition was similar to a more common occupation, merging SOC codes/definitions was suggested. If the occupation was unique and also uncommon to the point of being considered obsolete, removal from the SOC structure was suggested. In the rare event that this occupation is reported by an employer going forward, the recommendation is to code it to the residual in its major group.

The following table shows the results of this analysis.

Table 1: Obsolete Occupations

SOC Code	SOC Title	Action Suggestion	Notes
19-3032	Industrial-Org Psychologists	Merge	Published in only 2 states. Could merge with other psychologist code

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29-1024	Prosthodontists	Merge	Occupation suppressed in every state/territory. Most instances of this appearing in a search are for Dentist jobs. Suggest merge.
47-2053	Terrazzo Workers & Finishers	Merge	Merge with Tile Setter. While Terrazzo likely requires more training, it is rare and shares many characteristics with tile setters.
51-6092	Fabric & Apparel Patternmakers	Merge	Merge with 51-7032: Patternmakers, Wood or move all patternmakers to residual.
51-7032	Patternmakers, Wood	Merge	Merge with 51-6092 or change to residual.
13-1074	Farm Labor Contractors	Remove	Occupation suppressed in every state/territory. Could be out of scope, but nothing on Career One Stop means good candidate.
39-3021	Motion Picture Projectionists	Remove	Only 2 job openings nationally. Even though published in IA, their employment is low and decreasing. Likely not to have any reports by the next SOC revision.
47-2142	Paperhangers	Remove	Low employment, low concentration. Suggest removal
49-9045	Refractory Materials Repair, Ex Brick	Remove	Specific job description, but very low employment nationally. Remove and assign to residual code.
51-2061	Time Device Assem, Adjust, & Calib	Remove	Occupation suppressed in every state/territory. Strong candidate for removal.
51-7031	Model Makers, Wood	Remove	Very low national employment estimate. Remove

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The spreadsheets showing the initial review, candidates that were rejected as not being obsolete, and other notes will either be in an appendix or a secondary attachment.

Methodology: Emerging Occupations

For each major group in the SOC, there is at least one residual SOC code. These are used to classify occupations that do not fit into the current detailed SOC structure. Residual SOC codes end with the digit “9.” We wrote a query to show all *reported* job title and residual SOC code combinations in the OEWS databases for Illinois and Iowa. The results also showed a unique identifier for an employer and the number of times that exact job title/SOC code combination occurred for that employer. For Illinois, there were 46,580 of these combinations, and there were 16,405 in Iowa, totaling 62,985 across the two states.

Using a VBA macro in Excel, we found the most common 1-, 2-, and 3-word phrases among the employer job titles. Meaningful words/phrases were flagged for review. After these common words were flagged, the list of 62,985 combinations was searched to determine the total employment reported for them. Then, a common job title for each common word was assigned. The reason for this is to combine different words associated with the same residual occupation (compliance manager and regulatory manager were both given the same common title for example).

Finally, once candidates were determined, the common job title and slight variants were entered into the National Labor Exchange search tool across the U.S. to estimate the number of job openings.

Table 2: Emerging Occupations

Common Job Title	Current SOC Code	Reported Emp IL	IL Estab	Reported Emp IA	IA Estab
Anesthesia Technician	29-2099	175	53	5	5
Art/Music Therapist	29-1129	83	45	12	12
Cake Decorator (Excluding Bakers)	51-3099	591	268	135	80
Compliance Manager	11-9199	832	412	352	177
Endoscopy Technician	29-2099	194	50	44	15
Grant Analyst	13-1199	179	87	99	36
Hospitalist	29-1229	571	53	310	24
Online Personal Shopper	41-9099	324	25	267	21
Polysomnographic Technician	29-2099	256	63	76	24
Safety Manager	11-9199	297	206	115	102
Volunteer Coordinator	43-9199	170	110	161	123

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Table 3: Number of Job Openings from National Labor Exchange (Updated 1/13/26)

Common Job Title	Current SOC Code	National Labor Exchange Search
Anesthesia Technician	29-2099	2,041 hits.
Art/Music Therapist	29-1129	2,449 hits for art therapist. 378 for music.
Cake Decorator (Excluding Bakers)	51-3099	543 hits.
Compliance Manager	11-9199	406,327 hits.
Endoscopy Technician	29-2099	886 hits.
Grant Analyst	13-1199	4,911 hits. Some overlap with financial analyst, but still many accurate.
Hospitalist	29-1229	3,676 hits.
Online Personal Shopper	41-9099	5937 hits for online shopper.
Polysomnographic Technician	29-2099	199 hits.
Safety Manager	11-9199	414,506 hits
Volunteer Coordinator	43-9199	36,880 hits.

Spreadsheets showing word counts and review will be in appendix or secondary attachment. Query results should not be made available to the public due to the potential of a unique job title making an employer identifiable.

New SOC Codes and SOC Definitions for Emerging Occupations

The following are definitions of the emerging occupations written in the style of the SOC manual. Suggested SOC code major groups are included, and the first digit of the detailed code is included when appropriate, but full detailed SOC codes will be determined by the SOC team.

31-xxxx – Anesthesia Technicians

Description

Assist anesthesiologists, anesthesiologists, and other healthcare professionals in the delivery of anesthesia care. Prepare and maintain anesthesia equipment and supplies, calibrate machines, and ensure proper functioning prior to procedures. May assist with patient monitoring during anesthesia and perform routine maintenance on anesthesia equipment. Work is typically performed in surgical or procedural settings.

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Illustrative examples

- Certified Anesthesia Technician
- Anesthesia Technologist

Excludes

- “Surgical Technologists” (29-2055)
- “Nurse Anesthetists” (29-1151)

29-xxxx – Art and Music Therapists

Description

Assess, plan, and conduct therapeutic activities using visual arts or music to support patients’ psychological, cognitive, and emotional health. Work with individuals or groups to address mental health, developmental, or rehabilitation needs. Develop treatment goals, document progress, and collaborate with healthcare teams.

Illustrative examples

- Music Therapist
- Art Therapist
- Expressive Arts Therapist

Excludes

- “Recreational Therapists” (29-1125) who may use art or music but not as a primary therapeutic modality.
- “Mental Health Counselors” (21-1014)

51-xxxx – Cake Decorators (Excluding Bakers)

Description

Design and decorate cakes and other baked goods using icing, fondant, and decorative materials. Apply artistic designs based on customer specifications or pre-set themes. May sculpt cake structures or apply airbrushing and specialty finishes. Typically work in retail or commercial bakery environments but are not primarily responsible for baking.

Illustrative examples

- Cake Artist

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- Pastry Decorator

Excludes

- “Bakers” (51-3011), who are primarily responsible for baking products.

11-9xxx: Compliance Managers

Description

Plan, direct, or coordinate activities of an organization to ensure compliance with ethical and regulatory standards. Develop and implement internal policies and procedures to ensure adherence to laws, regulations, and contractual obligations. Monitor operational practices, conduct internal audits, and collaborate with regulatory agencies as needed. May oversee compliance training programs and manage compliance reporting systems.

Illustrative examples

- Environmental Compliance Manager
- Corporate Compliance Officer
- Regulatory Affairs Manager
- Ethics and Compliance Director

Excludes

- “Occupational Health and Safety Specialists” (29-9011)
- “Lawyers” (23-1011)
- “Financial Examiners” (13-2061)
- “Compliance Officers” (13-1041), who primarily enforce rules and monitor for violations rather than manage compliance programs.

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31-xxxx – Endoscopy Technicians

Description

Assist physicians and nurses during endoscopic procedures. Prepare, maintain, and disinfect endoscopic equipment, ensure proper setup in procedure rooms, and support patient positioning and comfort. May manage specimen collection and documentation during procedures.

Illustrative examples

- GI Technician
- Endoscopy Assistant
- Flexible Endoscope Technician

Excludes

- “Surgical Technologists” (29-2055)
- “Medical Equipment Preparers” (31-9093), who focus solely on equipment sterilization.

13-xxxx – Grant Analysts

Description

Review, analyze, and manage grant applications and funding proposals. Monitor compliance with grant requirements, assist in budget preparation, and coordinate reporting. Work with internal departments and external agencies to ensure fiscal and regulatory accountability for awarded funds.

Illustrative examples

- Grant Compliance Analyst
- Grant Budget Specialist
- Research Grants Coordinator

Excludes

- “Financial Analysts” (13-2051)
- “Budget Analysts” (13-2031)
- “Grants Managers,” who oversee broader grant programs.

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29-12xx – Hospitalists

Description

Physicians who specialize in comprehensive medical care of hospitalized patients. Manage and coordinate treatment plans from admission to discharge, including diagnostics, medication, and specialist referrals. Often serve as the primary attending physician during a patient's hospital stay.

Illustrative examples

- Inpatient Care Physician
- Hospital Medicine Specialist

Excludes

- “Internal Medicine Physicians, General” (29-1216) not exclusively practicing in hospital settings.
- “Critical Care Physicians” (29-1214)

41-xxxx – Online Personal Shoppers

Description

Assist customers with selecting and purchasing products online, may offer personalized recommendations based on preferences, trends, and availability. Communicate via digital platforms to respond to inquiries and ensure customer satisfaction. May specialize in fashion, groceries, or luxury goods.

Illustrative examples

- Virtual Personal Shopper
- E-commerce Stylist
- Online Fashion Consultant

Excludes

- “Retail Salespersons” (41-2031), whose work primarily occurs in physical stores.
- “Market Research Analysts” (13-1161)

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29-xxxx – Polysomnographic Technicians

Description:

Monitor and record physiological data during sleep studies under the supervision of a physician or sleep specialist. Apply electrodes and sensors, observe sleep patterns, and record data for diagnosis of sleep disorders such as apnea or narcolepsy. May work in sleep labs, hospitals, or diagnostic centers.

Illustrative examples:

- Sleep Technician
- Registered Polysomnographic Technologist (RPSGT)
- Sleep Study Technician

Excludes:

- “Electroencephalographic (EEG) Technologists” (29-2031.01)
- “Respiratory Therapists” (29-1126)

11-9xxx – Safety Managers

Description:

Develop, implement, and oversee organizational safety programs and compliance with occupational health and safety regulations. Conduct safety audits, risk assessments, and training sessions. Investigate accidents and recommend corrective actions to mitigate hazards in the workplace.

Illustrative examples:

- Occupational Safety Manager
- Health and Safety Director
- Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Manager

Excludes:

- “Occupational Health and Safety Specialists” (29-9011), who primarily inspect and evaluate safety standards rather than manage programs.

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43-xxxx – Volunteer Coordinators

Description:

Recruit, train, and supervise volunteers for nonprofit, healthcare, educational, or community organizations. Coordinate schedules, track hours, maintain records, and ensure alignment of volunteer activities with organizational goals. Serve as the primary liaison between volunteers and staff.

Illustrative examples:

- Community Volunteer Manager
- Volunteer Services Coordinator
- Volunteer Engagement Specialist

Excludes:

- “Human Resources Specialists” (13-1071)
- “Social and Community Service Managers” (11-9151), who oversee broader program operations.

Further Research

The OEWS program recently changed the methodology of its employment estimation. This process uses QCEW industry, geography, ownership, and size, along with the reported OEWS data to model staffing patterns across all UI covered employers in the country. While the BLS does not recommend comparing OEWS estimates over time, this estimation methodology makes these comparisons more meaningful.

With the addition of a panel code to the obsolete occupations query from above, the total employment reported to OEWS by occupation over time can be examined.

Combining both analyses could show occupations increasing and diminishing in employment over time, which could supplement current research on unemployment due to technological shifts, including the proliferation of large language models.

Additional research could also be conducted on location quotients across states and across occupations. For example, a student soon to be entering the job market with an education in Political Scientist would want to know that it is highly likely they would need to relocate to Washington DC. This occupation/area combination has the highest location quotient of 118.81 in the most recent OEWS estimates. The second highest location quotient for this occupation is only 4.18, and it is in Virginia which borders DC. (3rd highest is Maryland). This occupation is only published in 15 states.