

Occupational Requirements Survey

We Need Your Help



September 2015

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What is the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS)?

The ORS is a Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) survey that is conducted in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The ORS gathers information from employers regarding current job characteristics to aid the SSA in their disability determination. This includes information on job duties as well as mental and cognitive demands of jobs.

How do I provide data?

A BLS economist will contact you to discuss the preferred method for providing data and review the specific items included in the survey. He or she will ask for information related to the following items for selected occupations:

- Job duties, such as the general physical, mental, and cognitive tasks that employees perform
- Environmental conditions that workers may experience, such as work outdoors
- Training and educational requirements needed to perform the selected job

Will my information remain confidential?

Yes! Your organization's participation and information will be held in confidence to the fullest extent of the law. The BLS uses the information you provide for statistical purposes only in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?

In addition to the BLS economist who will contact you, please feel free to call or email the NCS information office at 202.691.6199 or NCSinfo@bls.gov.

Why does the Social Security Administration need the Occupational Requirements Survey?

The SSA disability program policy requires five steps of sequential evaluation to determine whether adult claimants qualify for disability benefits. Steps one through three involve making eligibility decisions essentially based on information about the severity of claimants' medical impairments. Steps four and five require information about work that exists nationally. At step four, claimants' functional abilities are compared with the demands of their past work as they describe it and as workers generally perform it in the national economy. Step five involves determining whether there are other types of work in the national economy a claimant can perform.

Currently, decisions made in steps four and five are based on the occupational information found in the Department of Labor's (DOL) Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) and its companion volume, the Selected Characteristics of Occupations (SCO). However, updates to the DOT were discontinued in 1991. In 1998, the DOT was replaced with the Occupational Information Network (O*NET). However, the O*NET was designed for training and career exploration, therefore, some occupational measures do not conform to requirements in the SSA's regulations; so O*NET cannot be used exclusively in the disability adjudication process.

Occupational Requirements Survey History

In 2012, the SSA signed an interagency agreement with the BLS to determine the BLS's ability to collect new occupational data—with the goal of providing better information for the SSA disability claims process. Survey testing concluded in August 2015, and the ORS program launched the following month. The occupational data collected by the BLS through the ORS will supply vital information regarding work-related requirements, including: job duties, mental and cognitive demands, specific vocational preparations, and environmental factors based on the SSA's policy definitions.

For more information, visit the BLS Occupational Requirements Survey website at www.bls.gov/ors.