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The Measurement of Socioeconomic Status and Social Class in the LSAY Project

Technical Paper No. 14

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Abstract

There is little doubt that socioeconomic background is an important concept among social researchers and policy developers. First and foremost, the relationships between socioeconomic status with educational and labour market outcomes is an important indicator of the degree of social equity and the success of policies aimed at reducing social inequality. Although there is almost universal agreement on the importance of socioeconomic status there is little agreement on its conceptualisation and measurement. There are a variety of issues relating to socioeconomic status which have produced considerable debate. These include the explicit or implicit theoretical approach, whether continuous or categorical measures are used, the assignment of occupations and occupational groups to measures of socioeconomic status, and the relative importance of father's and mother's occupation in the construction of socioeconomic status measures. In this brief discussion paper we address these issues and provide rationales for the decisions taken for analyses of data in the LSAY project.

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