

**The Barratt Simplified Measure of Social Status (BSMSS)**  
**Measuring SES**  
**Will Barratt, Ph.D.**

Circle the appropriate number for your Mother's, your Father's, your Spouse / Partner's, and your level of school completed and occupation. If you grew up in a single parent home, circle only the score from your one parent. If you are neither married nor partnered circle only your score. If you are a full time student circle only the scores for your parents.

<u>Level of School Completed</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>You</u>
Less than 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	3	3	3	3
Junior high / Middle school (9 <sup>th</sup> grade)	6	6	6	6
Partial high school (10 <sup>th</sup> or 11 <sup>th</sup> grade)	9	9	9	9
High school graduate	12	12	12	12
Partial college (at least one year)	15	15	15	15
College education	18	18	18	18
Graduate degree	21	21	21	21

Circle the appropriate number for your Mother's, your Father's, your Spouse / Partner's, and your occupation. If you grew up in a single parent home, use only the score from your parent. If you are not married or partnered circle only your score. If you are still a full-time student only circle the scores for your parents. If you are retired use your most recent occupation.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>You</u>
Day laborer, janitor, house cleaner, farm worker, food counter sales, food preparation worker, busboy.	5	5	5	5
Garbage collector, short-order cook, cab driver, shoe sales, assembly line workers, masons, baggage porter.	10	10	10	10
Painter, skilled construction trade, sales clerk, truck driver, cook, sales counter or general office clerk.	15	15	15	15
Automobile mechanic, typist, locksmith, farmer, carpenter, receptionist, construction laborer, hairdresser.	20	20	20	20
Machinist, musician, bookkeeper, secretary, insurance sales, cabinet maker, personnel specialist, welder.	25	25	25	25
Supervisor, librarian, aircraft mechanic, artist and artisan, electrician, administrator, military enlisted personnel, buyer.	30	30	30	30
Nurse, skilled technician, medical technician, counselor, manager, police and fire personnel, financial manager, physical, occupational, speech therapist.	35	35	35	35
Mechanical, nuclear, and electrical engineer, educational administrator, veterinarian, military officer, elementary, high school and special education teacher,	40	40	40	40
Physician, attorney, professor, chemical and aerospace engineer, judge, CEO, senior manager, public official, psychologist, pharmacist, accountant.	45	45	45	45

Level of School Completed Scoring

1	If you grew up with both parents add <u>Mother</u> + <u>Father</u> and divide by 2. If you grew up with one parent enter that score to the right.	
2	If you are married or partnered add <u>Spouse</u> + <u>You</u> and divide by 2. If you live alone enter <u>Your</u> score to the right. If you are a full-time student leave this blank.	
3	Double your score from line 2. If you are a full-time student leave this blank.	
4	If you are a full-time student enter only your parents' score. Add line 1 and line 3 then divide by 3 (three) for a <b>TOTAL EDUCATION</b> Score should be between 3 and 21	

Occupation Scoring

1	If you grew up with both parents add <u>Mother</u> + <u>Father</u> and divide by 2. If you grew up with one parent enter that score to the right.	
2	If you are married or partnered add <u>Spouse</u> + <u>You</u> and divide by 2. If you live alone enter <u>Your</u> score to the right. If you are a full-time student leave this blank.	
3	Double your score from line 2. If you are a full-time student leave this blank.	
4	If you are a full-time student enter only your parents' score. Add line 1 and line 3 then divide by 3 (three) for <b>TOTAL OCCUPATION</b> Score should be between 5 and 45	

TOTAL Score:

Add <b>TOTAL EDUCATION</b> + <b>TOTAL OCCUPATION</b> : Score should be between 8 and 66	
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About the Barratt Simplified Measure of Social Status (BSMSS)  
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This measure is built on the work of Hollingshead (1957, 1975) who devised a simple measure of Social Status based on marital status, retired/employed status (retired individuals used their last occupation) educational attainment, and occupational prestige. This is a measure of social status, which is a proxy for socio-economic status. This is not a measure of social class, which is best seen as a cultural identity. An individual's or their parents' educational attainment and occupational prestige can change over their life. Social class, especially social class of origin identity, stays with each person throughout their life similar to gender identity and ethnic identity.

Two important changes have been made to the Hollingshead Four Factor measure of social status as it was transformed into the BSMSS. First, the list of occupations has been updated based on the work of Davis, Smith, Hodge, Hakao, and Treas (1991) who calculated occupational prestige ratings from the 1989 general social survey. Hollingshead originally had 9 occupational groups, so the 1989 data was divided into 9 groups. To develop the dividing lines between the 9 groups the distribution of the "Prestige Score" was examined closely. Scores ranged from 86 for Physician to 17 for Miscellaneous Food Preparation Occupations, however, below Physician there was a gap of eleven points until the next occupation of Lawyer, and 30 occupations ranked as a 74. Clearly the "Prestige Score" would not lend itself to a readily apparent set of 9 divisions.

It was decided to use a 6 or 7 point spread for each of the 9 divisions, using judgments for the dividing line based on the fall-off, or scree, of the plotted scores. Once the 9 divisions had been made raters were asked to identify typical, or common, occupations from within each group to use as the descriptors in the instrument.

The second change was to recognize the generational shift in social status. The BSMSS accounts for an individual's parent's educational attainment and occupational prestige and combines that with the individual's own family's educational attainment and occupational prestige. An arbitrary weighting was given of 2:1 for Individual's family scores to parent's family scores. Social class mobility, in the US, is a fact of life. As with all identities growth is an aggregating process, so we all carry identities from our family of origin into our attained identity of the moment. The choice of a 2:1 weighting recognized that the individual's current identity is the most important.

Hollingshead's original conceptualization of educational attainment has been maintained faithfully, as has his weighting of educational attainment to occupational prestige of 3:5.

The BSMSS does not produce a measure of SES in any absolute sense. A discussion of the larger issues of SES is not the point here; suffice it to say that no classic definition of SES exists. The score that results from this measure is ordinal only. It is sufficient for regression analysis or for creating SES groups based on the data collected. The BSMSS is not designed to identify any individual or group as belonging to any particular social class, or socio-economic status, or social status.

Note please that assumptions about a mother's or father's contribution to an individual's social class are Hollingshead's. Stay-at-home mothers are not included in this calculation even though we know that mothers are an important influence on children.

## References

Davis, J., Smith, T., Hodge, R., Nakao, K., & Treas, J. (1991). Occupational prestige ratings from the 1989 general social survey. Ann Arbor MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Hollingshead, August B. (1957). *Two factor index of social position*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Sociology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

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