

# S o c i o l o g y

## Defining Class Groups

### Quantum 03

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# Defining Class Groups

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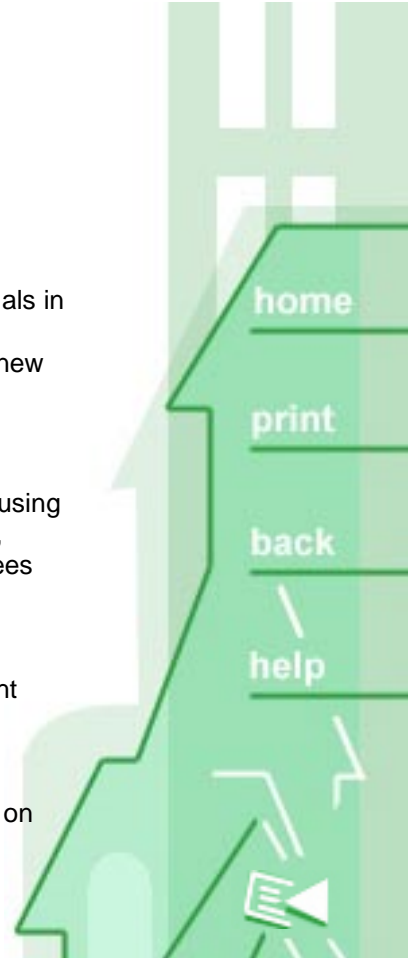
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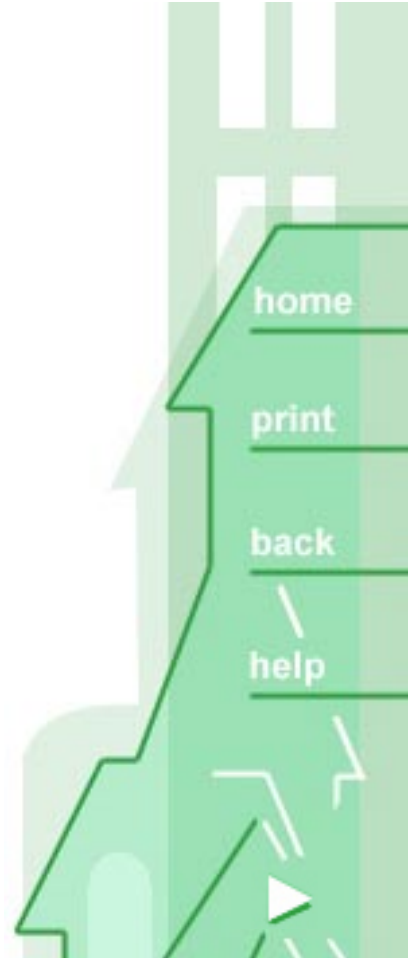
## *Objectives*

By the end of this quantum you will be able to define the basic terms used in the study of social class, recognise three different ways of looking at class and explain some of the differences between them.

## **PRE-REQUISITES**

This quantum should be linked to appropriate sections in your textbook, which will be indicated.

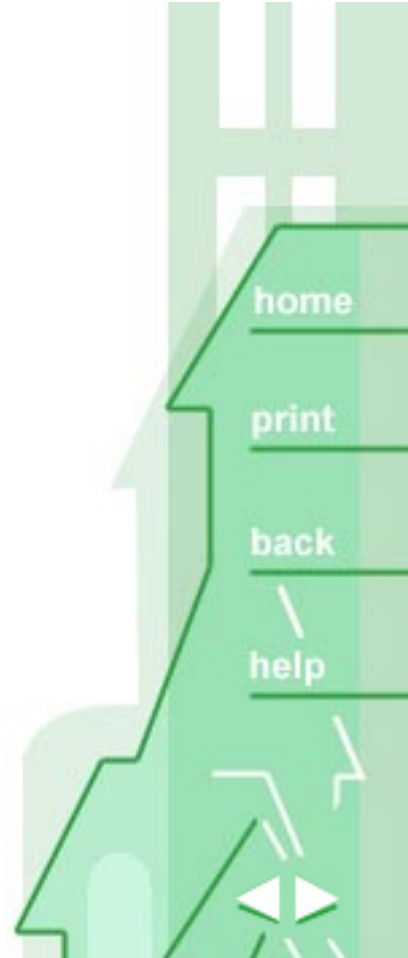
The discussion points are for discussion with fellow students, tutors or members of your family.



# Defining Class Groups

## WELCOME

The aims of this quantum are to introduce you to the concept of social class and to help you to understand the continuing importance of social class in the way our lives are shaped and to compare different ways of looking at social class.



# Defining Class Groups

## CLASS

Class is a feature of an industrial society. With industrial production, the number of kinds of jobs increase dramatically, and the specialisation involved requires different training from that which can be provided within the family.

A formal education system is needed, and people end up in occupations very different from their parents.

Unlike an agricultural society, where each group can be fairly self-sufficient, an industrial society is highly complex and interdependent. Each person specialises in some kind of trade or occupation and receives money for the work they do.



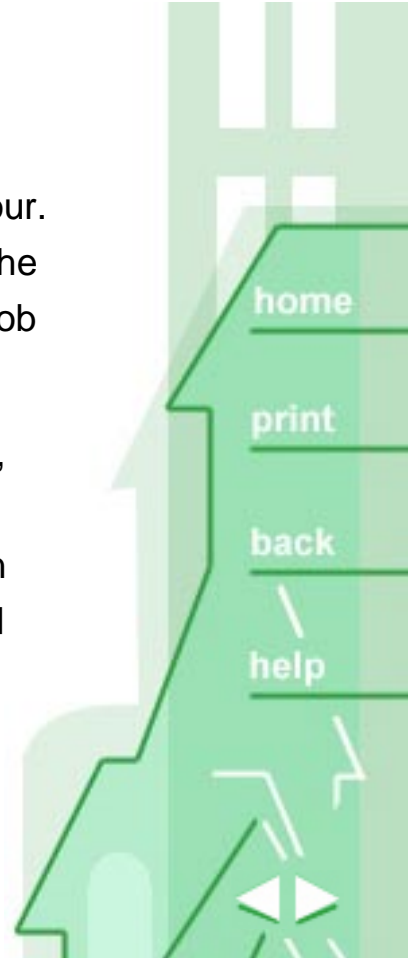
# Defining Class Groups

The money allows them to buy the products of someone else's labour. This is called **division and specialisation of labour**. The greater the degree of industrialisation, the more highly specialised everyone's job becomes.

People in different class positions have different amounts of wealth, status and power. In an industrial society, these are very closely related to the job you do. You get a job largely because of your own efforts, and therefore occupational class is an example of **achieved status**.

## Activity 1

List the different kinds of jobs you can think of in society today, the more specialised the better. Try to group them as you go along.



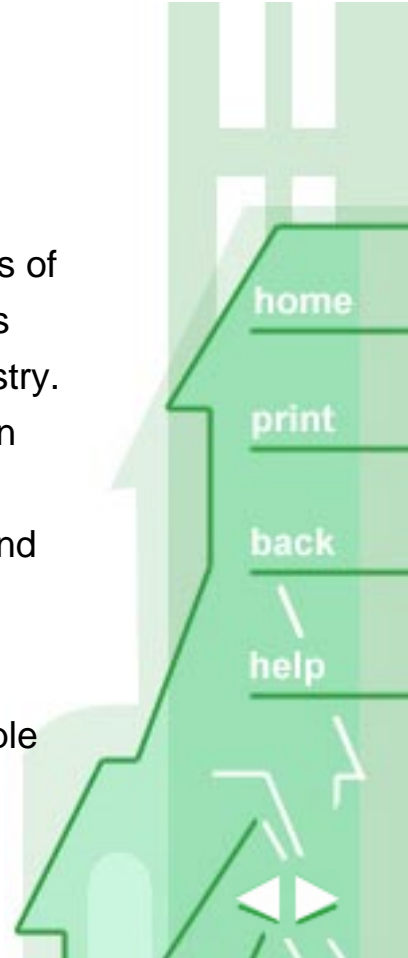
# Defining Class Groups

## PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SECTORS

Social scientists usually distinguish between jobs in different sectors of the economy: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary sector is concerned with the production of raw materials – food, fishing, forestry. The secondary sector is concerned with manufacturing, construction and transport. The tertiary sector is also called the **service sector**, which includes all jobs concerned with providing a service of one kind or another, including the professions.

In agricultural societies, most of the work force is engaged in the primary sector. Some specialist crafts are supported, but most people get their income from the land, helped out by part-time activities.

In countries which are moving towards industrialisation, farming techniques become more productive.



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Different crops are grown, and the land is managed better; machinery takes the place of the hoe. As a result, fewer people are needed to work the land and more people are available to be employed by the manufacturing sector.

In a country which is fully industrialised, machines and computers take over the work of people: fewer people are employed in manufacturing, and more people are employed in personal service occupations, such as hairdressing, and hotel and catering. Many more people are employed to provide communications (newspapers, etc) and entertainment and leisure.

If your list reflects this, the list of service occupations should be longer than the others. This is the situation in Britain today, and some people suggest that we live in a **post industrial society**.



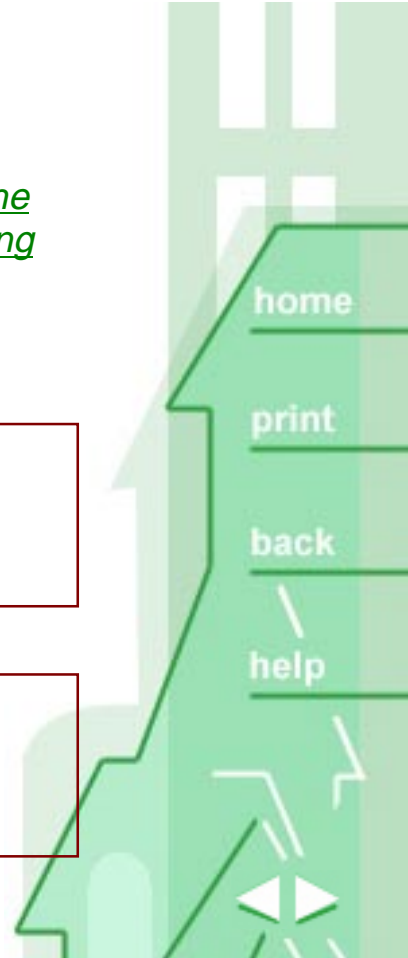


# Defining Class Groups

[Click here to access and print out diagrams illustrating some of the areas in which jobs have been lost, and those which are expanding and then answer the following questions.](#)

## Self Assessment 1

- 1 Look at Diagram 1. Approximately what percentage of the working population was employed in producing basic food stuffs and timber in 1841?
- 2 Look at the percentage employed in the service sector in 1841, and again in 1994. By approximately how much has the figure increased? (Be careful)



# Defining Class Groups

- 3 Look at Diagram 2. By how much has the manufacturing sector declined between 1976 and 1996? Can you suggest some consequences of the decline of manufacturing in Britain?



- 4 The female workforce has increased. Suggest two reasons for this.



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- 5 Look at the list of occupations you wrote down earlier. Can you decide which sectors they belong to. Note at the side of each one whether you think it is part of the primary, secondary or tertiary sectors.

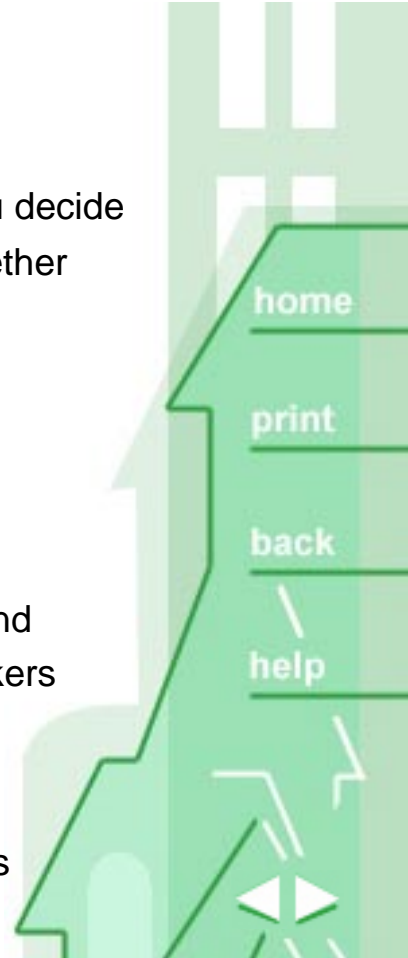
[Click here to check your answers](#)

## STATE OWNED OR PRIVATE?

Another way of categorising jobs is whether they are in the **private sector** or the **public sector**. Public sector jobs are those which are paid by **the state**: all jobs in education, the Health Service, Local and Central Government, the Police Service, the Prisons, and also workers in the nationalised industries.

## Activity 2

Look back at your list of occupations. Note against each, which jobs are in the public sector and which in the private?



# Defining Class Groups

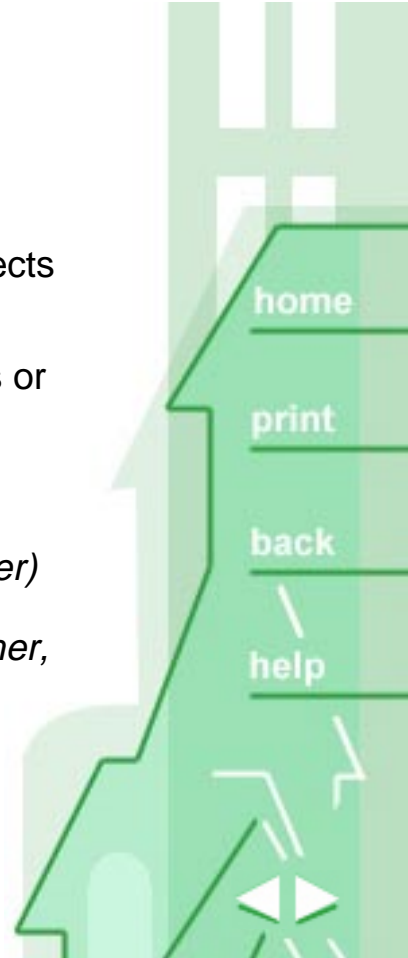
## THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S SCALE

This is another way of grouping occupations. The Government collects huge numbers of statistics each year on every conceivable subject, and many of these are categorised in various scales of occupations or social classes. The most well known of these is the **Registrar General's Scale**, which is a ladder arrangement of social classes:

Class I:        *Professional (eg accountant, dentist, university lecturer)*

Class II:       *Intermediate Occupations (eg manager, teacher, farmer, engineer)*

Class IIIN:    *Skilled Occupations (Non-Manual) (eg clerk, shop assistant, sales representative, policeman)*



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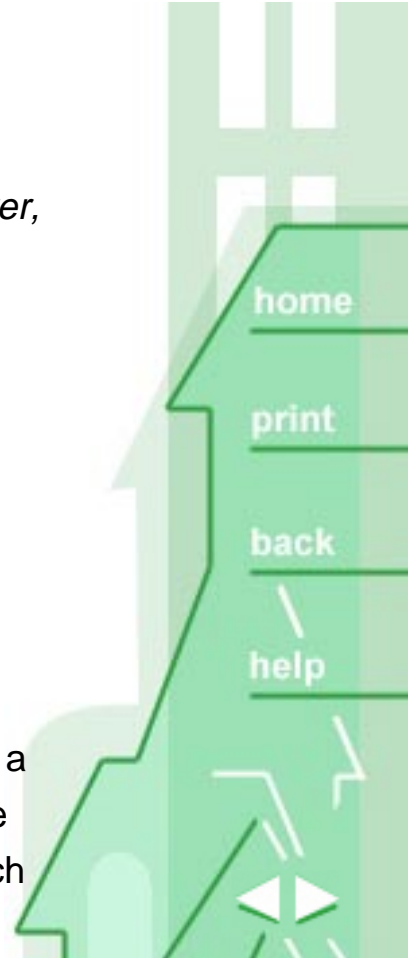
Class IIIM: *Skilled Occupations (Manual) (eg electrician, bus driver, plumber)*

Class IV: *Semi-Skilled Occupations (eg agricultural worker, postman, fisherman, barman)*

Class V: *Unskilled Occupations (eg railway porter, window cleaner, office cleaner, labourer)*

A range of occupations are fitted into each grouping according to several criteria, including income, education and general 'social standing' within the community.

The Registrar General's Scale was developed in 1911, and reflects a time when education was confined to people with money, and office work and shop-work which needed literacy and numeracy, had much higher status than it does today.



# Defining Class Groups

The scale has had to change over the years, as social conditions have changed:

In 1931, clerical workers moved down from II to IIIN.

In 1961, postal workers moved down from IIIM to IV.

In 1961, university lecturers moved up from II to I, and aircraft pilots and engineers from III to II.

In 1981, undertakers and waiters moved down from IIIN to IIIM.

Market researchers use yet another scale which links jobs more closely to earnings.



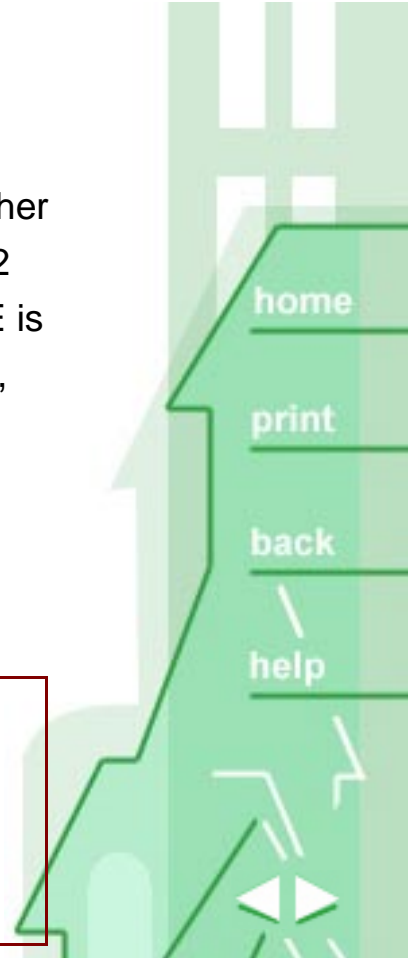
# Defining Class Groups

Categories A/B are professional and managerial jobs; C1 covers other 'white-collar' jobs, including primary school teachers and nurses; C2 refers to skilled manual jobs; D is for semi and unskilled jobs, and E is for the unemployed and retired, students, disabled – in other words, those whose income comes from the state.

## Activity 3

Where do you come on the scales?

Where do your parents/family/friends come?



# Defining Class Groups

## A BRAND NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

From the year 2001, when the ten-yearly census of the population will be held, the Government statistical office, now known as the Office for National Statistics (ONS), will use a new scale, devised by a team from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This uses an eight point scale, including a category for the long-term unemployed.

The new scheme does not use income as the most important criterion – what matters more is how secure the jobs are; whether they are salaried; if there are promotion opportunities; and how much workers are allowed freedom to decide their own work-patterns.





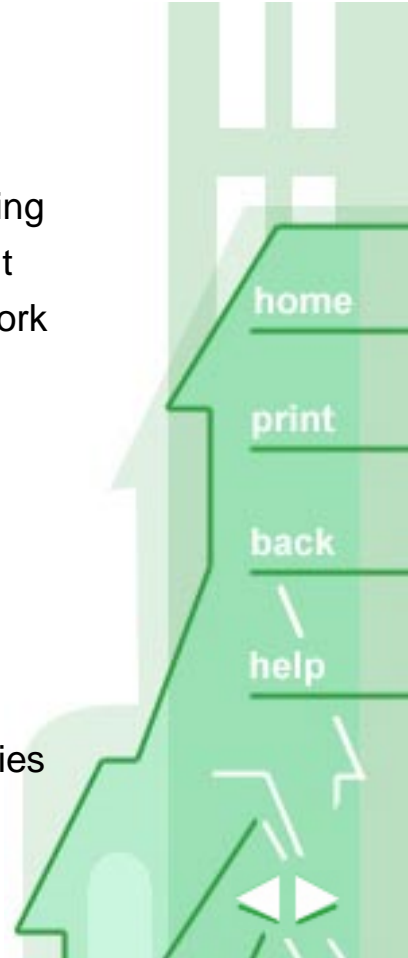
# Defining Class Groups

The new scales are intended to break away from the idea of a ranking system, where one group is seen as higher or better than another. It also tries to move away from a divide between manual (physical) work and non-manual (mental) work, and to avoid reference to skills.

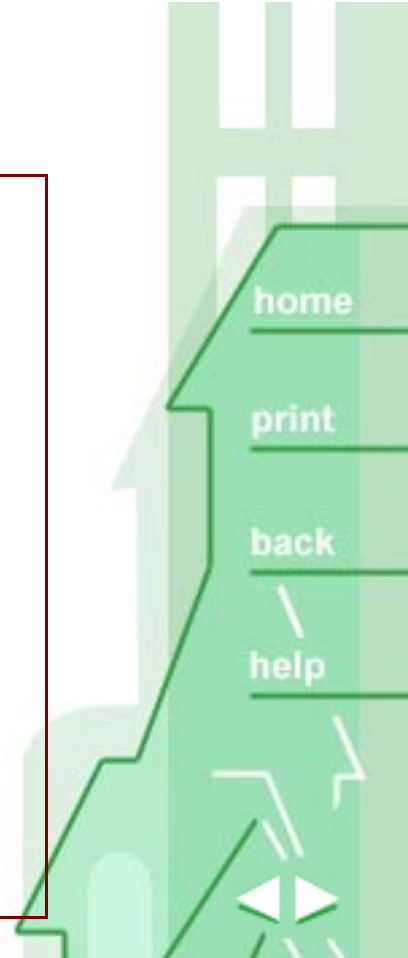
[Click here to access a diagram on 'Where You Rate in the New Social Order'](#)

## Activity 4

- 1 Teachers and social workers have been included in the same group (class) as barristers and solicitors. What are the similarities between these groups of occupations? What are the differences?

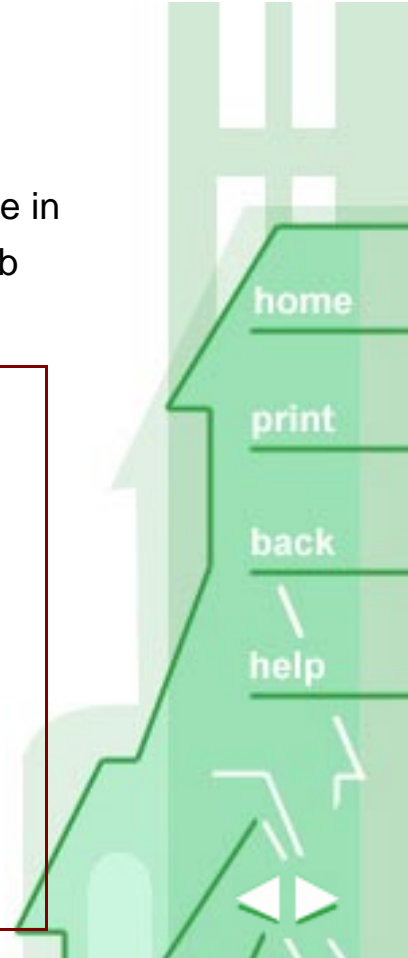


# Defining Class Groups



# Defining Class Groups

- 2 Waiters have steadily gone down the scales. In 1911, they were in class IIINM. Now they are in class 7. Find out how a waiter's job has changed over 90 years to explain this drop.



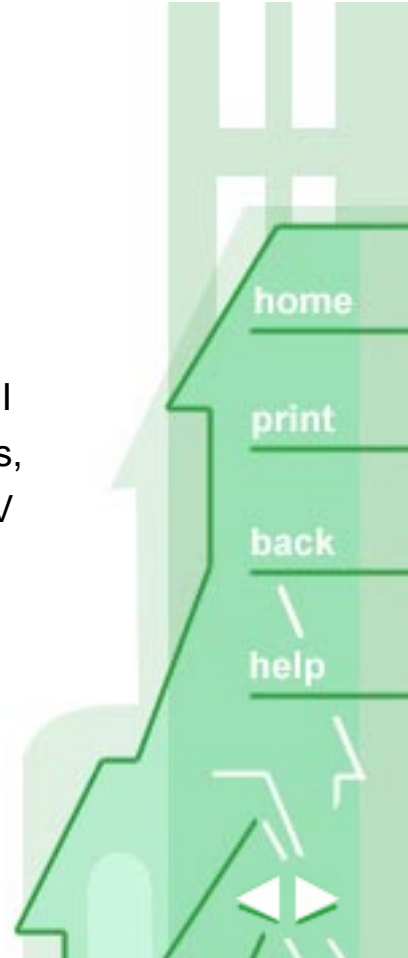
# Defining Class Groups

When statistics about education, health and death rates are collected by the Government, the information they provide shows that there are very real differences in life chances.

This means that children born to professional parents in Classes I and II live longer, and have more opportunities for education, jobs, holidays than children born to working class parents in Classes IV and V.

## Self Assessment 2

[Click here to access a chart and then answer the following questions.](#)

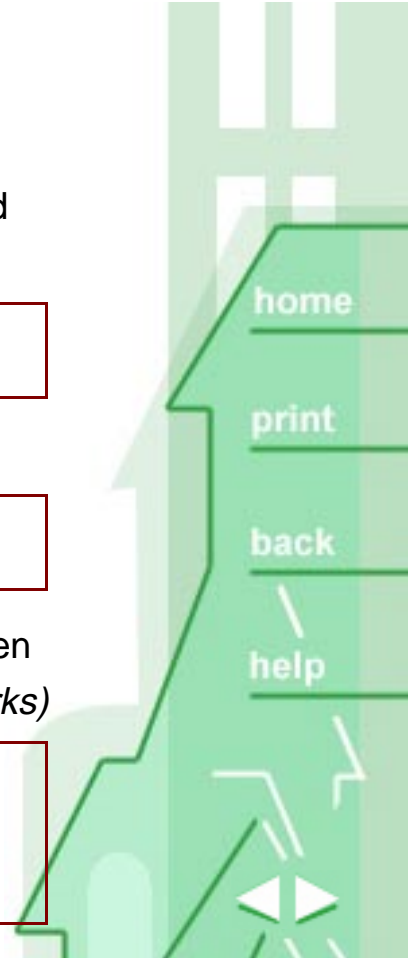


# Defining Class Groups

1 Which group has the highest rate of infant deaths per thousand live births? What is the rate? (2 marks)

2 Which group has the lowest rate? What is the rate? (2 marks)

3 From the evidence of this chart, what is the relationship between social class and deaths before the age of one year old? (3 marks)

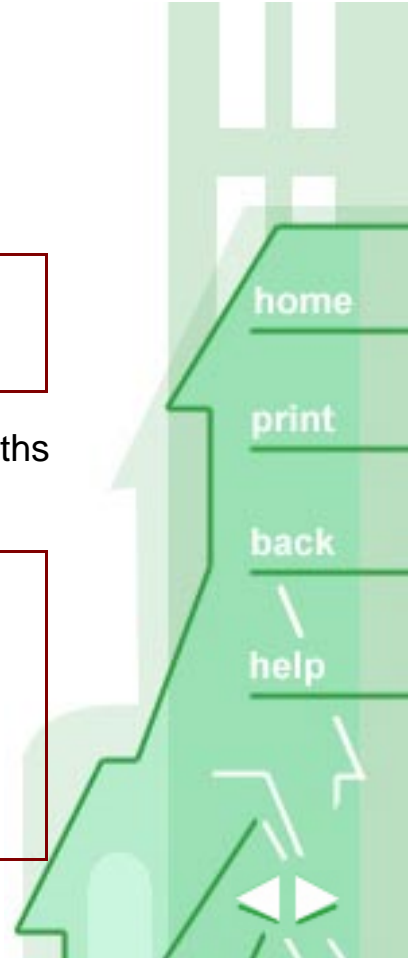


# Defining Class Groups

4 Where do these statistics come from? (1 mark)

5 Suggest three reasons for the differences in rates of infant deaths between social classes. (6 marks)

[Click here to check your answers](#)

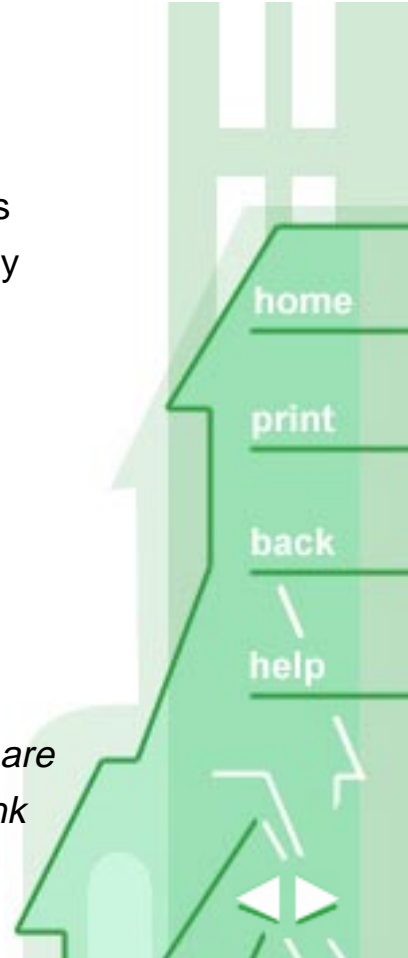


# Defining Class Groups

The RG scale classified those who are **economically active**, that is those who are working: people who are not working are classified by other factors, for example pensioners and the unemployed are classified by their previous job. In the new scale, people who have worked are classified by their previous job, but there will be a new category for those who have never worked, or who are long term unemployed.

## Discussion Point

*What are the differences between people who have had a job, and are now unemployed, and people who are long-term unemployed? Think about job opportunities, family situations, housing, health.*

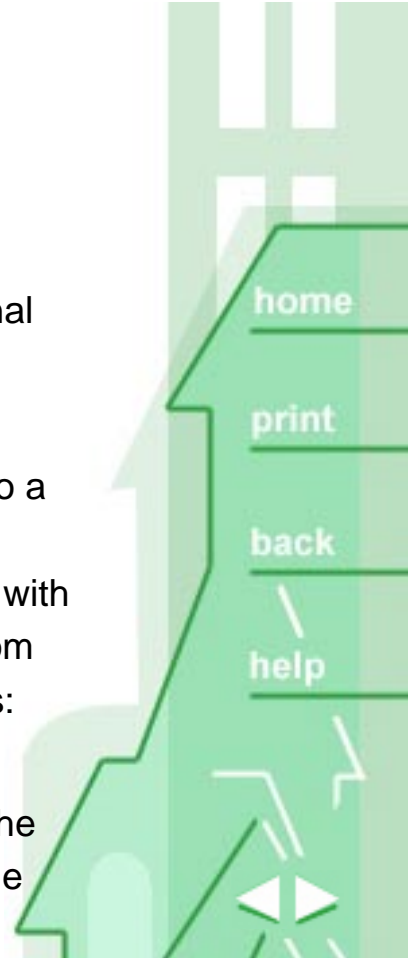


# Defining Class Groups

In most scales, it is the **household** which forms the basis of classification, and the occupation of **Head of the Household or highest wage-earner** is used for this purpose. This fits the traditional picture of man working, wife at home. Housewives are usually classified by their husband's occupation.

Many wives work, part-time or full-time, and have jobs which fall into a different class from their husbands. In effect, many women do not appear in the scales. And what about people with disabilities, living with their families; or students, whose lifestyle might be very different from their parents? Such people become invisible for statistical purposes: they literally aren't counted!

Above all, those who live off **unearned income**: the very wealthy, the aristocracy, the owners of **capital**: these do not appear on any of the scales at all.





# Defining Class Groups

Some Marxists suggest that the way statistics are collected persuades us that a real class system does not exist. We lose sight of people with real power because they are not shown to us in any factual way.

## Self Assessment 3

To check whether you have understood the work so far, answer the following questions:

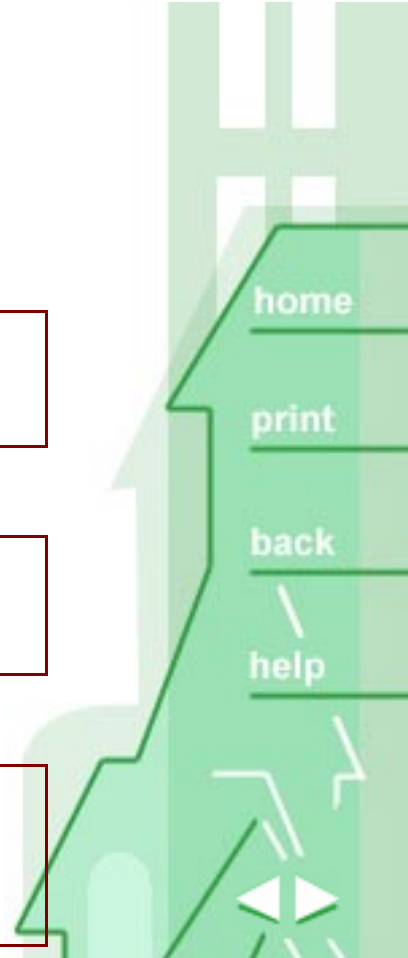
- 1 What is the Registrar General's Scale? (3 marks)

# Defining Class Groups

- 2 How are different jobs placed on:
- a the Registrar General's scale (2 marks)

- b the new scales? (2 marks)

- 3 How are housewives placed on the scales? (1 mark)



# Defining Class Groups

- 4 In which scale would you place the following occupations:
- a the Registrar General's scale?
  - b the new scales

<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>RG SCALE</b>	<b>NEW SCALE</b>
Teachers	class .....	class .....
Solicitors	class .....	class .....
Shop assistants	class .....	class .....
Plumbers	class .....	class .....
Cleaners	class .....	class .....

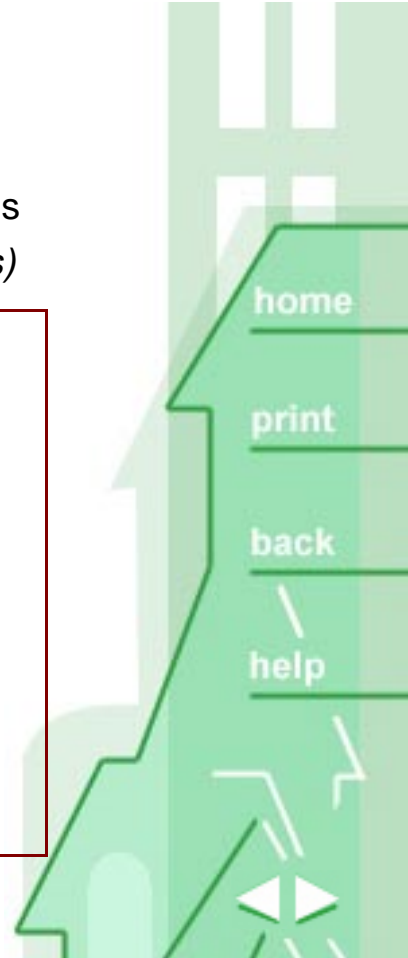
( 5 marks)

# Defining Class Groups

- 5 Someone who is very rich, who lives off the income from shares and other investments: how would you classify them? (2 marks)



[Click here to check your answers](#)



# Defining Class Groups

## EXPLANATIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS

[Click here to access a list of different occupations and their earnings](#)

There are many debates within Sociology about why certain jobs carry more wealth, status and power than others, and also, why jobs shift their positions in the scale over time.

Do some jobs attract higher wages because they have higher status in society or because they have greater access to power? Or is there another, hidden reason for differences between jobs?

The most usual explanation is that, because some jobs are very skilled or carry a lot of responsibility, the people chosen for them must be better fitted for responsibility than everybody else: more talented, with higher qualifications; more open to opportunities.



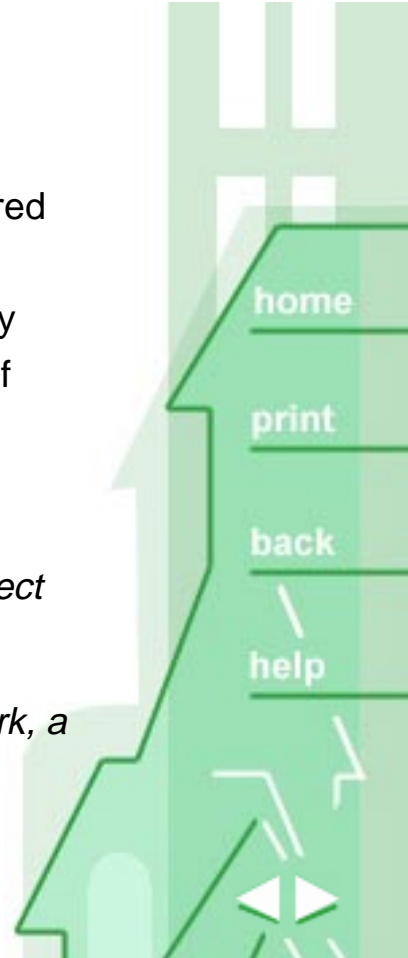
# Defining Class Groups

So, high pay and status come as a reward for those who are prepared to study for higher qualification, and to take on the extra work and greater responsibility. From an employer's point of view, to get really talented people to work for them, and to take on the responsibility of the work, the need to pay a really high salary.

## ***Discussion Point***

*Do you agree with this argument? Do high levels of pay always reflect high levels of talent, or of responsibility?*

*Do you know of any jobs which need a lot of study, a lot of hard work, a lot of responsibility, but which are paid badly?*



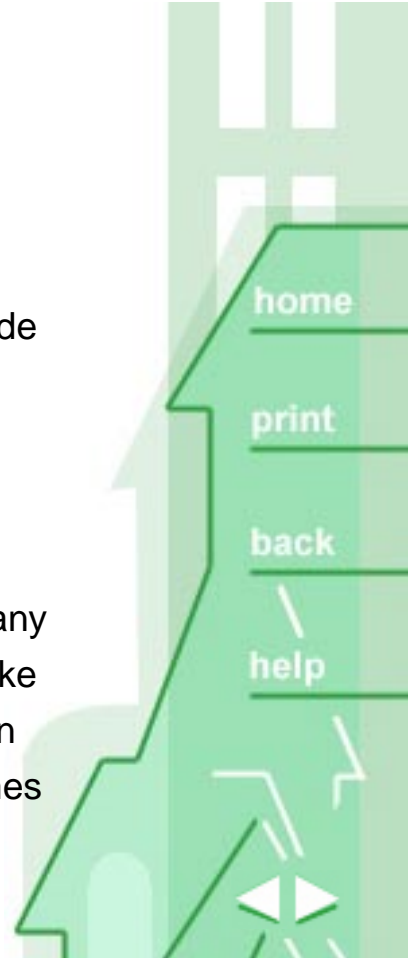
# Defining Class Groups

## Activity 5

If you are studying sociology in a large group, you could arrange a debate to argue whether pay reflects the importance of jobs: one side arguing that it does; the other that it doesn't.

Some points to consider are:

- Which jobs do you think 'deserve' the most pay?
- How can you say which job is most important? Is a Company Director more important than the workers who actually make the product? Could they change places? If they receive ten times as much income, does that mean the work is ten times more important?



# Defining Class Groups

- Does everyone have an equal chance to show how talented they are?
- Why do some people choose to continue their studies? Do they only think about higher pay, or are there other reasons?
- Do you always have to study for high qualifications to get the best jobs?
- Do you think that 'background' matters in getting a well-paid job, for example the wealth of your family, the school you go to, the contacts you have?

If you have access to a video recorder, you could 'televise' your debate. Don't forget to have a vote at the beginning and at the end to see which argument is the most convincing.

**Click the Home Button to move on**



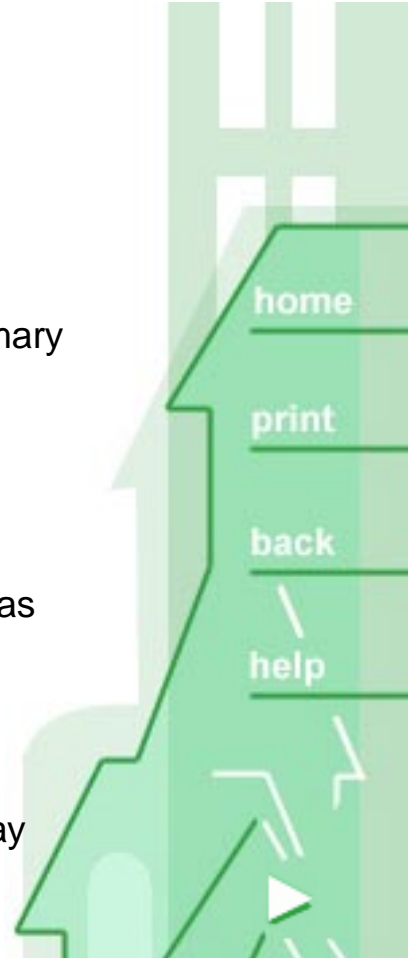
# Defining Class Groups

## SELF ASSESSMENT 1 – ANSWERS

### Sectors of Employment

- 1 Approximately 25% of the workforce were employed in the primary sector.
- 2 The percentage of the workforce in the service sector has increased over two and a half times. (Approx 28% to 73%)
- 3 The number of people employed in the manufacturing sector has decreased by 3.3 million.

The decline in manufacturing means that there are fewer 'traditionally male' jobs around. Union membership may suffer. Jobs in service industries are more available to women, but may be part-time or have irregular working patterns.



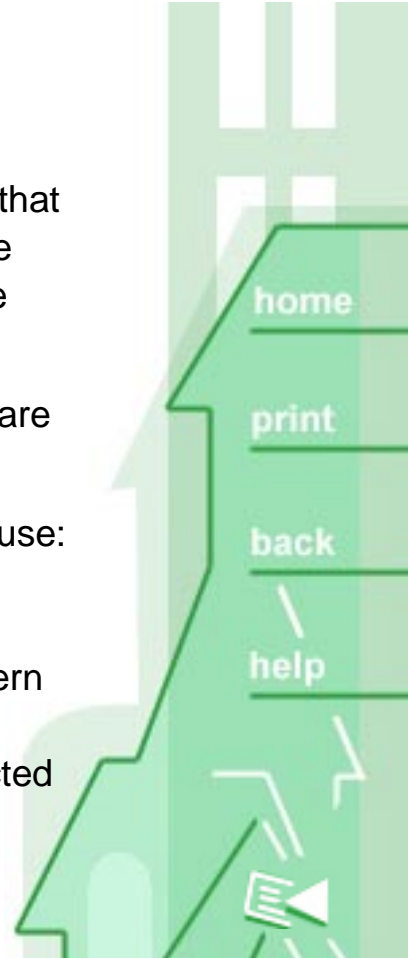
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Communities which grew up around manufacturing industries, that is in the North East, the North West, or Glasgow are likely to be hard hit, unless new industries are persuaded to move to those areas.

- 4 There are more jobs available which fit in with women's child-care commitments.

Increasing numbers of women may feel the need to work because:

- i their partners are not working
  - ii they are divorced
  - iii the family income is too low to meet the expenses of modern living
  - iv social attitudes have changed, and women are now expected to work, even if they have children
- 5 Ask your tutor to look over your list to see if you are correct.

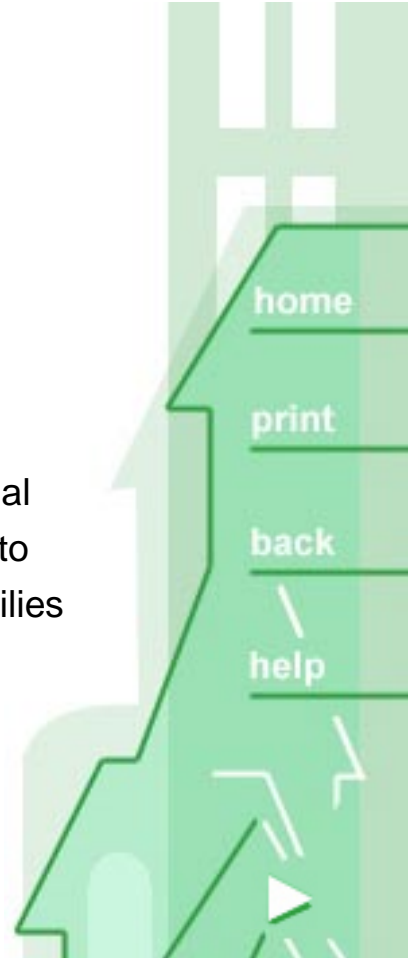


# Defining Class Groups

## SELF ASSESSMENT 2 – ANSWERS

### Life Chances

- 1 Unskilled 10%
- 2 Intermediate under 5%
- 3 The rate of deaths below the age of one, relates closely to social class: infants under the age of one are less likely to die if born to families higher up the class scale, and more likely to die in families lower down the class scale.
- 4 Social trends 1993



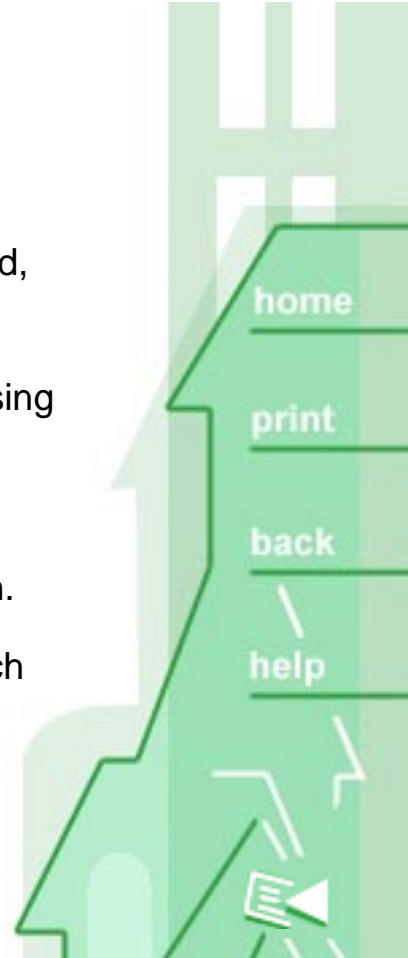
# Defining Class Groups

- 5 Families at the lower end of the scale receive lower incomes. Lower incomes probably mean poorer housing, and poorer food, each of which affects the health of infants.

In addition, more accidents happen in poor housing. Poor housing may be built in areas with an unhealthy atmosphere.

Mothers from classes IV and V are more likely to smoke, less likely to attend clinics, their own health may be poor, and so on.

Parents from those classes are more likely to work in jobs which carry greater health risks, which may affect the health of their children. You may have thought of other reasons as well.

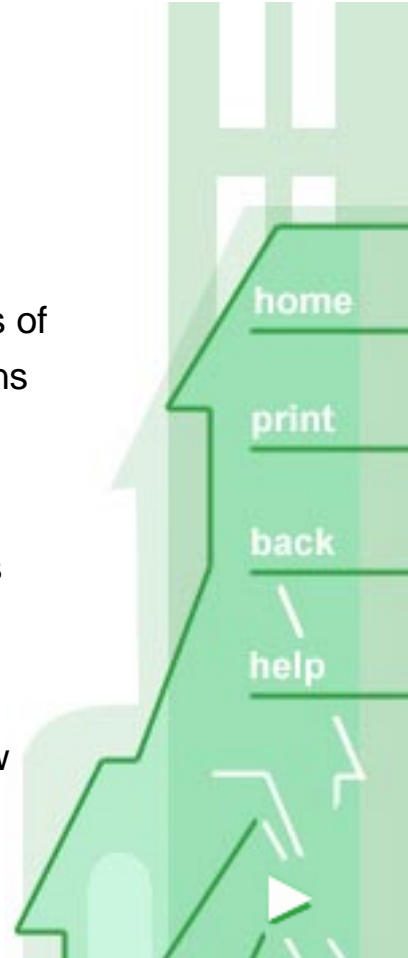


# Defining Class Groups

## SELF ASSESSMENT 3 – ANSWERS

- 1 A way of categorising occupations used by the government statistical service for collecting statistics on a variety of aspects of social life. The scale corresponds to clear differences in patterns of health, welfare and consumption.
- 2 Positions on the RG scale are decided in terms of 'general standing within the community': in other words, status, which is linked to levels of reward and education.

On the new scales, occupations are grouped according to how secure the job is, whether there is promotion available and how much freedom they have to organise their own work.



# Defining Class Groups

3 They are placed according to the status of the 'head of the household' – usually, but not always, their husband.

4	<b>RG Scale</b>	<b>New Scale</b>
Teachers:	class II;	new class 1.2
Solicitors:	class I;	new class 1.2
Shop assistants:	class IIIN;	new class 6
Plumbers:	class IIIM;	new class 5
Cleaners	class V;	new class 7

5 In Class I if a Company Director or equivalent. In Class 4 if classified as small employer. Might not appear at all.

