

Sociology Career Options

There are two major career routes with a BA in sociology: sociology can be your career or you can use the skills and background you've obtained to find employment in other similar areas.

Sociology as a Career

A BA in sociology is an excellent preparation for future graduate work in sociology in order to become a teacher or professor, researcher, or applied sociologist.

Teaching

A substantial majority of sociologists teach in settings such as two-year colleges, four-year colleges, or university graduate departments.

Research

Research is second to teaching as the most common career option within sociology. Note, however, that there is not necessarily a choice between teaching and research. Many teaching positions, particularly in universities but also in four-year colleges, require research activities.

One can also do research in a variety of employment settings: a university; a public agency at the federal, state, or local level; a business or industrial firm; or as a staff member of a research institute in the non-profit or advocacy sector. Some are self-employed, and head their own research or consulting firms.

Sociological Practice

This broad category of career activities refers to positions that involve "applied" or "clinical" sociology. Applied sociology is knowledge directed to understanding immediate problems and their solutions. Clinical sociology, also concerned with the application of sociological knowledge, extends into involvement in the world by intervening in social settings using a wide range of techniques to help guide the process of change. Clinical sociologists may carry out interventions at the individual, group, organizational, community and societal levels. They are experts in counseling, social and environmental impact assessment, evaluation, facilitation, and mediation and techniques of conflict resolution (between couples, ethnic groups, communities, even nation-states). These approaches all have one thing in common: they help citizens, groups, organizations or government to identify problems and their deeper causes and to suggest possible strategies for solutions. There are a number of options for sociological practice. These include policy making and administration, government, and business.

Sociology as a Foundation for Other Jobs

Employment Opportunities

A BA in sociology also serves as a broad liberal arts base for professions such as law, education, medicine, social work, and counseling.

Employment opportunities for sociology majors include:

- Social Services – where skills other than social work are central; in rehabilitation, case management, group work with youth or the elderly, recreation, or administration

- Community Work – community planning and development; in fund-raising for social service organizations, nonprofits, child-care or community development agencies, or environmental groups.
- Corrections – in probation, parole, or other criminal justice work
- Business – where understanding of human relations is critical; in advertising, marketing, and consumer research, insurance, real estate, personnel work, training, or sales; various types of applied research;
- College settings – in admissions, alumni relations, or placement offices
- Health Services – in family planning, substance abuse, rehabilitation counseling, health planning, hospital admissions and insurance companies
- Publishing, Journalism, and Public Relations – in writing, research, and editing
- Government Services – in federal, state, and local government jobs in such areas as transportation, housing, agriculture, and labor
- Teaching – in elementary and secondary schools, in conjunction with appropriate certificate

Linking to Other Majors and Minors

You can increase the power of your sociology major by taking a multidisciplinary approach. Employment analysts predict that the most successful people in the 21st century will be those who have been exposed to a wide variety of disciplines and have taken the time to study in some depth outside their field.

You can begin the process of multiplying your perspectives as an undergraduate major in sociology by planning a double major with justice studies, economics, English, anthropology, a second language, political science, or education. Or, you can take a minor or concentration in computer science, business management, marketing, human services, law and society, social work, or pre-law—just to name a few possibilities.

Job Searches

Corporate interviewers are looking for applicants who display a purpose and commitment to their future occupation. This does not mean that BA graduates will be hired as industrial sociologists, but that applicants may be considered for junior positions in corporate research, human resources, management, sales, or public relations.

Interviewers will seek to determine if applicants can easily adapt to organizational life in the private sector. In particular, this means the ability to work well with others as part of a team. Employers value graduates who have a keen understanding of the impact of cultural, racial, and gender diversity in the workplace, and who comprehend the global nature of business and industry.

During the job search, BA graduates should stress their work and internship experience, analytical skills, oral and written communication skills, computer literacy, and knowledge of statistics and research design.

Those who are determined to succeed will be at an advantage. Ambition, drive, and competition are positive words in the world of business and organizations.

Tips for the job search...

- Acquire a broad educational background
- Gain experience through jobs, internships, and volunteer work
- Obtain skills in public speaking, writing, and computer applications
- Focus on an area that interests you (for example: human resources, industrial relations, management, marketing, public relations, or sales) and learn as much as you can before applying for positions.

(This information is excerpted from the American Sociological Association Website. For more information, visit <http://www.asanet.org>)

Places to Search: Jobs and Career Information

<http://www.idealists.org/career.html> Focus is on the non-profit sector. Features job postings in the U.S. and around the world, as well as volunteer opportunities and internships.

<http://www.academyhealth.org/careers> Health services research is the multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, health technologies, and personal behaviors affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and ultimately our health and well-being.

<http://www.rileyguide.com/social> Riley Guide

<http://www.makingthedifference.org> A student-oriented site for locating jobs and internships in the federal government.

<http://www.USAjobs.gov> The main job bank for federal government jobs.

<http://www.ourpublicservice.org/ops> (Partnership for Public Service) Information on applying for federal government jobs.

<http://www.CollegeGrad.com> An award winning site focusing on entry-level jobs.

<http://www.SocialService.Com> is the place to start looking for a social service or social work job, whether in mental health, substance abuse, children and youth, medical social work, criminal justice, domestic violence, counseling, community organizing and outreach, homelessness or a variety of other human service areas.

<http://www.publichealthdegree.com/resources/social-scientists/> US Department of Labor's informational website on social science occupations includes information helpful to job seekers.

<http://www.sjsu.edu/careercenter/> San Jose State University's Career Center has several resources available to all current students and alumni to help with the job search. Information sessions and job fairs occur on a regular basis so it is recommended that you check the website frequently for current schedules and updated information.

Source: [American Sociological Association](#)

Some Job Titles Found in the Sociology Field (BA level)

Community and Social Services

Fundraising assistant/director
Childcare worker
Caseworker/aide
Environmental organizer
Community organizer
Youth outreach worker
Family planning worker
Substance abuse counselor
Occupational/career counselor
Hospital administrator

Medical records worker
Community aid
Homeless/housing worker
Case manager
Child development technician
Public administration assistant
Recreation worker
Public assistance worker
Resident planning aide
Public health supervisor
Rural health outreach worker

Housing coordinator
Group home worker
Rehabilitation program worker

Education

Teacher
Student personnel worker
Affirmative action assistant
Admissions counselor
Alumni relations worker
College placement worker

Extension service specialist
Public health educator

Government

Affirmative action worker
Employee specialist
Foreign services
Human rights officer
International worker
Personnel coordinator
Program supervisor
Special agent
Urban planner
Information officer
Legislative aide
Peace Corps volunteer

Business and Industry

Sales representative
Sales manager
Advertising staffer
Consumer relations worker

Market analyst
Real estate agent
Issues manager
Public relations staffer
Training assistant
Insurance agent
Banker
Human resources manager
Production manager
Labor relations staffer
Administrative assistant
Planning assistant
Quality control manager
Merchandiser/purchaser
Computer analyst
Data entry manager
Publishing staffer

Justice System

Corrections officer
Corrections staffer
Criminal investigator

Juvenile court worker
Parole officer
Police officer
Police department staffer
Special agent
Correctional counselor
State trooper
Rehabilitation counselor

Research

Social research assistant
Survey research technician
Data analyst
Market researcher
Interviewer
Statistician
Public survey worker
Census research assistant
Demographer assistant
Criminology assistant
Consumer researcher

Source: [American Sociological Association](#)