

“What Can I do With a Major in...Sociology?”



An undergraduate degree in sociology proves students with the background and skills necessary for employment in many fields which require a thorough understanding of research design and data analysis, group processes, organizational dynamics and social trends.

Skills Possessed by Sociology Majors

- Research designing skills
- Statistics, data management, analysis, and interpretation skills
- Written and oral communication skills
- Problem solving skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Knowledge of organizational and group dynamics
- Appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity

From the University of Manitoba's Student Counseling and Career Center website.

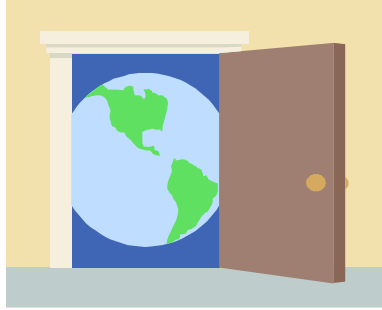
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Possible Job Titles for Sociology Majors



Opportunities With a BA in Sociology

Human Resources, Training, and Labor Relations Managers and Specialists

Every organization wants to attract the most qualified employees and match them to jobs for which they are best suited. However, many enterprises are too large to permit close contact between top management and employees. Human resources, training, and labor relations managers and specialists provide this connection. In the past, these workers performed the administrative function of an organization, such as handling employee benefits questions or recruiting, interviewing, and hiring new staff in accordance with policies established by top management. Today's human resources workers manage these tasks, but, increasingly, they also consult with top executives regarding strategic planning. They have moved from behind-the-scenes staff work to leading the company in suggesting and changing policies.

Mental Health Therapy Aide

As a Mental Health Therapy Aide, you would provide personal care, treatment and rehabilitation to individuals diagnosed with mental illness. Under supervision, you would groom, feed, and wash individuals who are unable to take care of themselves. You would help individuals to participate in games and recreational programs; coach and encourage individuals to develop daily living skills; and provide a clean, safe and comfortable environment. You would work with other staff to develop, carry out and record care plans and, in accordance with special instructions, you may administer medication. These positions may be physically demanding. You would need to be prepared to act to insure the health and safety of patients in emergency situations.

Corrections Officers

Correctional officers, also known as *detention officers*, are responsible for overseeing individuals who have been arrested and are awaiting trial or who have been convicted of a crime and sentenced to serve time in a jail, reformatory, or penitentiary.

The jail population changes constantly as some are released, some are convicted and transferred to prison, and new offenders are arrested and enter the system. Correctional officers in local jails admit and process about 12 million people a year, with about 700,000 offenders in jail at any

given time. Correctional officers in State and Federal prisons watch over the approximately 1.5 million offenders who are incarcerated there at any given time.

Childcare Workers

Child care workers nurture and care for children who have not yet entered formal schooling. They also supervise older children before and after school. These workers play an important role in children's development by caring for them when parents are at work or away for other reasons. In addition to attending to children's basic needs, child care workers organize activities and implement curricula that stimulate children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth. They help children explore individual interests, develop talents and independence, build self-esteem, and learn how to get along with others.

Child care workers generally are classified into three different groups based on where they work: private household workers, who care for children at the children's home; family child care providers, who care for children in the provider's own home; and child care workers who work at separate child care centers.

Admissions Representatives

Admissions representatives work for universities with the goal of increasing student enrollment and providing services to existing students. Responsibilities in this position range from carrying out daily sales activities: recruitment, admissions and enrollment, as well as; interviewing, appointment setting, and closing and following up events.

Non-Profit/Social Work

Fund-raising for social service organizations, nonprofits, child-care or community development agencies, or environmental groups.

Youth Counselor

Youth Counselors provide programs for low-income youth and counseling for individuals to identify and solve complex personal and family problems. Participants are either directed to a Youth Center or referred from school or social service agencies. A Youth Counselor maintains a caseload of clients and coordinates service efforts by various agencies and institutions. When individuals are referred to community resources, the Counselor ensures that appropriate services are provided. The Youth Counselor keeps caseload records and provides direct activities at a Youth Center. Performance is evaluated by a Recreation Coordinator through conferences, observations, reports and evaluation of results.

Substance Abuse Counselor

Substance abuse counselors provide counseling and support services to individuals with alcohol and drug addictions. Requirements to obtain your Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling differ from state to state, but having a BA in a related field can reduce the amount of time need to obtain the certification.

Child Welfare Worker

Child welfare workers provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the well-being of families and the academic functioning of children.

Government Opportunities

The Federal Cooperative Education Program allows students of many disciplines, including sociology, to alternate full-time college study with full-time employment in a Federal agency. Many agencies that attract sociologists participate in this program. Contact the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C., the agency personnel office, or your college placement office.

The Presidential Management Internship Program (PMI) offers Federal employment to students upon completion of their graduate program. Sociology majors are eligible under this program. It offers rewarding entry-level positions that provide exposure to a wide range of public management issues. This program also provides substantial opportunities for career development, on-the-job training, and job rotation to expand skills and knowledge. For more information, contact the Office of Personnel Management or your career placement office.

Careers Open to MAs and PhDs

Teaching: Despite the broad applicability of sociology at the BA level, a substantial majority of graduate-level sociologists teach, whether in high schools, two-year colleges, four-year colleges, or universities. Sociology is a rewarding field to convey to others. It combines the importance of social relevance with the rigor of a scientific discipline.

Teaching sociology differs across settings. A general introduction for high school students requires different skills than does a course for college seniors. These differ from leading an advanced research seminar for doctoral students. For many, teaching represents a desirable occupation with considerable job security and the satisfaction of facilitating learning for students who are struggling with the most intriguing issues that sociology addresses. What is most important is that you include preparation for teaching as part of your graduate work – avail yourself of any seminars, workshops, or discussions on the campus – in the department or at the institution's teaching center – to develop expertise and practice in teaching, including the preparation of a teaching portfolio.

Research: Sociology graduates can conduct research in a variety of employment settings, whether in a university; a public agency at the federal, state, or local level; a business or industrial firm; a research institute; or a non-profit or advocacy sector organization. Some self-employed sociologist researchers direct their own research and consulting firms.

Research follows teaching as the most common career option within sociology. Note, however, that one does not necessarily have to make a choice between teaching and research. Many teaching positions, particularly in universities and four-year colleges, require and support research activities. Institutions vary according to whether they place greater emphasis on research or on teaching as the primary route to advancement. Some institutions place more emphasis on teaching, and many are attempting to achieve an optimum balance between research and teaching. When you investigate an institution, be sure to examine its mission statement and

faculty handbook. Furthermore, as you will see in the section on "Sociological Practice," many sociologists conduct research outside of academic settings.

Sociological Practice: Given the usefulness of their methods and perspectives, sociologists have developed many career paths that take research into the realm of intervention or "sociological practice." This broad category refers to positions that involve "applied" or "clinical" sociology--using sociology to affect positive change among individuals, families, organizations, communities, and societies.

Sociological practice is the application of sociological knowledge-- concepts, methods, theories, predictions, evidence, and insights --to understanding immediate problems and their solutions. This work is "client-driven" meaning that the work is designed to solve a specific situation posed by the employer, rather than "discipline-driven" to add to the knowledge base of the field of sociology, although applied work can and does make those contributions.

Some sociological practitioners ("clinical sociologists") have expertise in counseling individuals and families. Others ("applied sociologists") use sociological knowledge and research methods to effect larger-scale change, for example by conducting social and environmental impact assessments, evaluating programs, facilitating organizational development, mediating and resolving conflicts, or revamping social policies. All these approaches have one thing in common: They help individuals, groups, organizations, or governments to identify problems and their deeper causes, and to suggest strategies for solution.

The application of sociological knowledge is key to careers in the fields of policy making and administration, government, business, social services, and industry.

Policy-Making and Administration: Opportunities exist for sociologists who can use their basic sociological training to help others make more informed policy decisions and administer programs more effectively and imaginatively. This career option has broadened in recent years. Sociologists in this area may not teach in an academic setting, but often find themselves explaining the critical elements of research design, methods, and data analysis to non-social scientists. A solid research and theory background leads to this kind of position.

Although a skilled policy administrator might not conduct his or her own research, he or she would be expected to read the research literature, design useful research projects that others will conduct, cooperate with full-time staff researchers or outside consultants, and apply the developing knowledge of sociology and the social sciences to problems that involve housing, transportation, education, control of the AIDS epidemic, corporate downsizing, health, welfare, law enforcement, or other major issues.

Sociologists have the opportunity to incorporate sociological knowledge into planning and policy-making in areas dominated by other professions. For example, in the mental and physical health fields, sociologists serve with planning boards and health services agencies; they play similar roles in education, law enforcement, and government. Sociologists have contributed their knowledge effectively in many other areas as well.

Other Opportunities in Government: In government settings, many sociologists conduct research and evaluation projects, others manage programs, and some are engaged in policy analysis or problem solving for their agency. Although specific areas of expertise vary, sociologists command an arsenal of skills, knowledge, and experience that can be put to good use at all levels of a complex government. They are employed in such Federal agencies as the

Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Aging, National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute of Drug Abuse, Bureau of the Census, the Department of Agriculture, the General Accounting Office, the National Science Foundation, Housing and Urban Development, the Peace Corps, or the Centers for Disease Control--among many others. Some work at non-governmental organizations such as The World Bank, the National Academy of Sciences, the Social Science Research Council, Children's Defense Fund, Common Cause, and a wide range of professional and public interest associations. At the state level, many are engaged in urban planning, health planning, criminal justice, education, and social service administration.

Because government sociologists face complex problems that require complex solutions, they must be able to produce good data and place it into a broader context. Skills in survey and evaluation research and special knowledge in such areas as health sociology, aging, criminal justice, demography, and the family enable the sociologist to understand (and sometimes shape) current or proposed government programs that affect vast numbers of people. Some special programs afford students an opportunity to gain government experience:

Opportunities in Business: Many sociologists with BA degrees enter the private sector, working primarily in sales, human resources, and management. Corporations employ full-time (or hire as consultants) those with advanced degrees, especially in the fields of marketing, advertising, telecommunications, and insurance. Businesses especially benefit from sociologists who specialize in demography--the study of population--and market research--the study of the needs, preferences, and life-styles of potential clients or customers. Many sociologists work in public opinion or market research, producing findings of interest to leaders in politics, communications, and advertising. Industrial or corporate sociologists--experts on productivity, work relations, minorities and women in the work force, linking technology to the organization, corporate cultures and organizational development--constitute another specialized group.

Sociologists in the corporate world command an arsenal of skills and knowledge that help solve a wide range of business problems, increase job satisfaction, serve consumers better, and make companies more profitable. These include: using demography and forecasting to plan for the future; using training techniques to deal with organizational change; finding out what consumers want through market analysis and focus groups; increasing productivity and efficiency through team-building and work reorganization.

*The content was adopted from the following websites:

http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/careers_and_jobs/sociological_careers_open_to_mas_and_phds_teaching_research_and_practice, <http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/sqa/credentialing/CASACreq.cfm>, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos060.htm>

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Career Resources for Sociology Majors



Specific Resources

American Sociological Association: <http://asanet.org>

Careers in Sociology: <http://www.abacon.com/socsite/careers.html>

General Resources

***CareerSearch:** <http://www.careersearch.net/Hofstra>
(username-hofstra, password-career)

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

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

***Spotlight On Careers:** <http://www.spotlightoncareers.org>
(username-lacn, password-holland)

***Vault:** http://www.vault.com/cb/careerlib/careerlib_main.jsp?parrefer=6123
(You will be prompted for your Novell username and password)

*These websites require you sign in using a username and password.

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Famous Sociology Majors

Reverend Martin Luther King
Civil Rights Leader

Ronald Reagan
Former President, Majored in Sociology and Economics

Emily Balch
1946 Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Regis Philbin
TV Host

Dan Aykroyd
Actor

Robin Williams
Actor/Comedian

Paul Shaffer
Bandleader on the David Letterman Show

Ruth Westheimer (aka Dr. Ruth)
Sex Therapist

Alonzo Mourning, Bryant Stith
Basketball Players

Brian Jordan
Baseball Player

Joe Theisman, Eric Bjornson, Bobby Taylor
Football Players

Ahmad Rashad
Sportscaster

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