

Career Brief

Career Development Center
California State University, Bakersfield



Sociology

Sociology Career Facts

The CSUB Sociology Major

See the CSUB General Catalog and/or contact the Sociology Department.

Representative Employer Groups

Government Welfare Agencies
Educational Institutions
Urban/City Planning Commissions
Courts and Correctional Facilities
Social Service Organizations
Hospitals
Market Research Firms
Research Institutes
Business/Industrial Firms
Labor Unions
Public Relations Firms
Colleges and Universities

Further Sources of Information

National Association of Social Workers
California Chapter
1016 23rd Street
Sacramento, CA 95816
www.naswca.org

Pacific Sociological Association
Department of Sociology
CSU, Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6005
www.csus.edu/psa/psa2.html

American Sociological Association
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
www.asanet.org

Sociology is concerned with understanding the sources and consequences of human social action. To this end, it deals with the way action is modified or altered by participation in differing and changing social contexts; the way relationships that constitute human groups are patterned; the way systems of beliefs and values affect behavior; the way these beliefs, values, norms, and expectations are acquired; and the way people seek their own identity, satisfy their basic needs, and find a sense of self and purpose. A related aim of study in sociology is the development of an appreciation for the ways of gaining such understanding of human behavior through disciplined inquiry, observation, and research.

Although few occupations include "Sociologist" in their title, the sociological perspective is excellent preparation for a variety of careers. Sociology majors with a Bachelor's degree can enter the business world and may work in sales, marketing, customer relations, or human resources. Those who enter human services may work with children, adults, the elderly, or with people experiencing problems related to poverty, substance abuse, or the justice system.

Teaching and conducting research remain the dominant activity among sociology majors who have earned a Master's or Ph.D. degree. Sociologists may conduct research in multinational corporations, factories, banks, retail stores, government agencies, hospitals, restaurants, nursing homes, and many other varied settings. Their findings may be used to guide changes in business and organizational practice, and in the development of social policy.

A sociological background is very useful for working in today's multi-ethnic and multinational business environment.

More detailed information is available in the Career Library located in the Career Development Center Office.

Sociology Career Fields

Here is a partial list of careers for which the Sociology major is particularly suited.

***College Teacher:** Provide instruction and engage in social research. May also serve as a consultant to a variety of different organizations concerned with social issues.

Medical Sociologist: Work with public health agencies, study social factors that affect both physical and mental health.

Demographer: Collect and analyze statistics related to population changes, for example, on birth, marriage, and mortality, to name a few areas where demographers are concerned.

Industrial Sociologist: Specialize in the investigation of group relationships of persons employed in business or industry.

Penologist: Investigate crime, punishment, management of penal institutions, and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. May serve as prison warden or director of a rehabilitation facility.

Social Ecologist: Investigate effects of physical environment upon the distribution and activities of individuals or groups. May be employed by planning commissions or other organizations concerned with development in both urban and rural settings.

Urban Sociologist: Investigate origin, growth, structure, composition, and population of cities and the social and economic patterns of living that result from urban development.

Criminologist: Investigate causes of crime and methods of prevention.

Social Worker: Casework, counsel, advise, and guide individuals and families, including work with private and public organizations.

Probation and Parole Officer: Provide supervision, counseling and rehabilitative assistance to adults and juveniles on probation or parole.

Group Counselor: Provide supervision, observation, programming, and general care of juveniles and adults in a variety of settings.

Gerontologist: Work with the elderly as advocates, planners, counselors, social workers, in teaching and in research.

Sales/Marketing: Develop successful market program or sales strategy. Direct sales to individuals or companies.

Human Resources: Perform duties related to employee selection, evaluation, placement, promotion, and union matters.

Customer Relations: Maintain contact between producer and consumer.

Researcher: Conduct research on specific topics in the sociology field for various government agencies, private companies, or large corporations.

***May require additional education.**

Education, Training, & Required Qualifications

Sociology is an exciting discipline with expanding opportunities for a wide range of career paths for a student who obtains a Bachelor's degree. Many of the government positions involving case management or supervision require a candidate with a Bachelor's degree. Bilingual skills are definitely a plus. Positions in the business sector usually require a person with a Bachelor's degree and some knowledge of their field. A sociology major desiring to enter the business world should consider a minor, or perhaps a double major, business or a related area to enhance their qualifications.

For most positions with the title "Sociologist," the minimum requirement for a candidate is usually the Master's degree. A Master's degree is normally required for positions in corporations, think tanks, and agencies that focus on research, statistical analysis, program development, management analysis and evaluation, corporate planning and restructuring. A Ph.D. is needed for careers in teaching/research positions in academic settings and for research/program development positions in business, industry, and organizations.

The sociology major may teach in public schools, K-12, with appropriate state certification.

Employment Outlook

Faster than average growth is projected for the social services field. The number of older people, who are more likely to need services, is growing rapidly. Additionally, the need for social workers will grow with increased concern about services to the mentally ill, mentally handicapped, and individuals and families in crisis. Other growth projections include hospitals in the area of discharge planning; home health care due to early hospital releases and a growing number of people having impairments or disabilities that make it difficult to live at home without some form of assistance; and school social workers due to efforts to respond to adjustment problems of immigrants, children from single parent families and others in difficult situations. The availability of local, state, and federal funding will dictate actual increases in employment in many of these settings.

The outlook in Sociology departments of colleges and universities depends, in part, on enrollment. It is expected that in California, as well as a number of other states, there will be a large number of retirements from Departments of Sociology over the next decade.

The employment outlook in occupations a Sociology major may choose to enter is generally favorable. The field of human resources is expected to experience faster than average growth through 2005. Training will be the fastest-growing specialized area. Personnel consultants will also be in demand. Employment of sales/marketing representatives is expected to increase faster than the average.

Because sociology addresses the most challenging issues of our time, it is a rapidly expanding field whose potential is increasingly tapped by those who craft policies and create programs. Sociology is a valuable preparation for careers in modern organizational settings.

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