

# What Can I Do with a BA in Sociology?

Sponsored By: Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society

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## **A Strong Liberal Arts Preparation**

Many students choose to major in sociology because they see it as a broad liberal arts base for professions in: business, government, public administration, education, counseling, social work, law, criminal justice, healthcare, non-profit organizations, human and social services.

Today, sociologists embark upon literally hundreds of career paths. Although teaching and conducting research remains the dominant activity among the thousands of professional sociologists today, other forms of employment are growing both in number and significance.

Many students forget that the purpose of a college degree is not to train you with a narrow set of skills that will be applied to a specific job. Instead you are gaining knowledge and skills that can be applied across various fields.

### **As a sociology major you have the ability to:**

- Think abstractly
- Think critically
- Conceptualize problems
- Apply theories and concepts to real world issues
- Understand issues within a “macro” or social structural perspective
- Design research studies
- Analyze data
- Make oral presentations
- Write well
- Organize material
- Work in groups and collaborate with others
- Bring evidence to bear in support of an argument
- Help others develop insights and make decisions
- Understand and interpret statistics
- Analyze and evaluate policies and programs
- Understand issues of diversity (class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc)

### **Sociology BA graduates have an advantage in understanding human behavior on three levels:**

- how individuals behave in organizations, families, and communities
- the ways in which these social units function as groups
- the wider social, political, and economic contexts in which decisions are made and in which groups function.

**Some of the fields that sociology graduates go into:**

- Social and Human Services
- Social Science Research and Data Analysis
- Non-Profit Sector
- Counseling
- Public Sector Management
- Social Work
- Education
- Labor Relations
- Program Evaluation
- Policy Analysis
- Human Resources
- Market Research
- Community Organizing

**Good Website to look for Sociology related jobs:** [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)

**The American Sociological Association (ASA) provides information on Careers in Sociology on their website at:** <http://www.asanet.org/career-center/careers-sociology>

**Below is some data from an ASA survey done of recent sociology graduates.**

**Sociological Concepts Used Most Often on the Job  
(4 years after graduation)**

<b>Sociological Concepts Used Most on Job</b>	
Working with people from other ethnic groups and cultures	77%
Working with others in teams	73%
Using computers to locate information	72%
Using leadership skills	67%
Writing reports	37%

**Satisfaction with Job Aspects (4 years after graduation)**

	<b>Percent responding that they are “very satisfied”</b>
Helping people	47%
Degree of independence	45%
Contribution to society	40%
Location	39%
Level of responsibility	31%
Benefits	30%
Job Security	29%
Intellectual challenge	28%
Opportunities for advancement	18%
Salary	11%

# Help – I am about to graduate and don't know what to do!

## 1. Informally interview people who already have a career that you are interested in.

If you know what type of career you want, or you are just weighing your options, it is important that you speak to people who are already working in the field. Here are some questions you can ask: What do you like most about your job? What do you like least about your job? How did you get this position? If I were interested in a career in X, what steps do you suggest that I take? Are there any special degrees/credentials/licenses required to work in this profession? What are the salary ranges for this position? How long does it usually take to go from an entry level to managerial/supervisory position? What types of skills are employers looking for? How much flexibility does your job offer? Are you able to bring your ideas to the table and see them implemented? What is the work load like?

## 2. Use the Career Center at CSUN (available to current students and alumni)

Many students do not realize that there are great resources available to them at the CSUN Career Center: <http://www.csun.edu/career/students/>. The center has the following resources and workshops:

<p><b><u>Resumes &amp; Cover Letters</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#"><u>Online Resume Workshop</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Resume Check List</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Cover Letter Guideline</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Sample Cover Letter</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Sample Follow-Up</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Sample Thank You</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Self-Managed Placement Files</u></a></li></ul> <p><b><u>Interviewing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#"><u>Online Interview Workshop</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Typical Interview Questions</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Dress for Success</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Phone Interview (Video)</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Interview (Video)</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Dining Etiquette (Video)</u></a></li></ul>	<p><b><u>Networking</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#"><u>Get the Most Out Of A Career Fair</u></a></li></ul> <p><b><u>Accepting Job Offers</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#"><u>Negotiation Tips</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Salary Negotiations</u></a></li><li>• <a href="#"><u>Graduating Salary Information</u></a></li></ul>
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## 3. A few tips on the Resume

- Use other resumes as templates, attend a resume workshop, ask others to help review/revise your resume.
- Highlight your knowledge, skills, and abilities (for example if you are good at writing, interpersonal communication, have specific computer skills, are good at organizing and planning, have worked in a leadership capacity, have worked with particular populations (children, elderly, immigrants, etc), know how to write grant proposals, conduct interviews, run focus groups, analyze data, etc.

- Leave out what you don't want to highlight. If you graduated with a GPA of 2.5 you should probably leave that information off of your resume. Simply put that you have earned a BA in Sociology.
- **Employment History** - although your past jobs may have nothing to do with the career you would like to pursue, you can still list your job responsibilities/duties, and emphasize any knowledge or skills that would be applicable to other fields.
- **Internships** – many of you have completed an internship prior to graduation. It is important that you highlight your job responsibilities/duties as well as other important experiences gained from this internship.
- **Volunteer Work** - Similar to jobs and internships you may want to briefly summarize what responsibilities/duties you carried out during your volunteer work.
- **Student Organizations/Honor Societies** – list all of these on your resume. If you held a leadership position in any of these organizations it would be important to list this as well and to highlight what you did for the organization.
- **Technical/Computer Skills** – List all computer programs that you are proficient in or have advanced knowledge – ex. Word, Excel, SPSS, Powerpoint, Photoshop, etc. Also if you know how to create and maintain web pages that is a plus.
- **Foreign Languages** – List all languages that you are fluent in, you may want to indicate if your level (intermediate or advanced).
- **Relevant Course Work** – if you are applying for a specific job that may appreciate that you have completed certain courses, this may be worth highlighting, particularly if the course work was part of a licensure process.

#### **4. Create a list of references and contact them ahead of time**

References should include: Past and current employers, Internship supervisors, Professors, Faculty Advisors, Professional Mentors, Co-workers, etc.

It may also help if you provide your references with a summary of your job history (how long you have worked in a position and your job title and responsibilities). You should also let your references know what types of jobs you are applying for and provide them with a list of skills or abilities that you would like them to highlight. Even though you may have been a sales clerk at The GAP, a server at Chili's, or a receptionist at a doctor's office, you probably showed some of the following qualities that your references could highlight: on time, showed initiative, worked well with co-workers, responsible, able to solve problems, ability to work independently, good inter-personal skills, reliable, creative, takes initiative, etc.

#### **5. Internships - Remain attached to the field you want to be in, even if you are currently working in another field.**

After graduation many of you will get jobs that are not in your field. Don't worry, you are not alone. Only 12% of college graduates get a job in their field of choice within five years of graduation. You also may not be able to secure a full-time job, or you may experience "underemployment." One way to stay connected to your field of choice is to get a position as an intern or even as a volunteer in a field that you are passionate about. This will allow you to network with others in the field and build experiences, skills, and knowledge that you can add to your resume.