

CAREERS IN SOCIOLOGY

°How to Get a Job

°How Sociology Helps



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Why Employers Want College Graduates

Increasingly, employers hire only college graduates. For example, now it is almost impossible to get hired in community service or criminal justice fields without a college degree. So, here you are, going to college. Hopefully, you soon will get that required piece of paper called a college degree.

But do you know why so many employers want college graduates? The answer is simple: Employers want college graduates because they want people who have a college education. And this is because society is changing:

°**In the age of diversity awareness**, college graduates are expected to be culturally competent, and highly sensitive to diversity issues.

°**In the age of the information super highway**, college graduates are expected to be knowledgeable on a wide range of topics.

°**In the age of communication**, college graduates are expected to be able to communicate articulately, as well as to be trained in how to listen to others.

°**In the age of technology**, college graduates are expected to be conversant in a wide range of computer-based skills, the more the better.

°**In the age of accountability**, college graduates are expected to be able to gather and analyze data and write a clear and accurate report of the results.

°**In the age of complex problems**, college graduates are expected to be able think critically—to problem solve by considering different explanations and viewpoints in an ever more divided world.

Your college training is much more than something you must endure until you get that piece of paper. Your training is what will give you a career. The skills and knowledge you have received will prepare you for the challenges you will face out in the world. Employers will want to know about this training, and you should feature it on your resume and during job interviews.

Even courses that seem irrelevant expose you to different areas of knowledge and different ways of thinking. And this may come in handy in unexpected ways. If you watch TV crime dramas, you will notice that the detectives are knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects. This enables them to talk to different kinds of suspects and witnesses, as well as to solve crimes.

How Sociology Trains You

Sometimes students think, “I’m only interested in being a police officer [or working at a service agency], so why do I need all this training in research methods and theory?” In truth, police departments and service agencies —like most fields in today’s world—want well-rounded employees sensitive to diversity issues, capable of critical thinking and understanding group dynamics—and yes, who can gather and clearly report data.

One thing you do not see on TV shows is how much time many employees spend writing reports. It may be a short report about a single incident or individual. But an office commonly will be mandated to do a long-term study or assessment. If you know how to interview people in-depth, do a field study, and/or can generate a survey and analyze the statistics, you may well go farther in your career. In real life, promotions often happen when you have proven yourself able and willing to do a tasks that other people cannot do.

Similarly, theory teaches you about group patterns, enables you to make reasonable predictions about group behavior, offers explanations for why people are the way they are, and helps make you think more about the diversity of human experience. Theory also helps you become a critical thinker, because it exposes you to many different ways of seeing the social world. With so much political and ethnic strife in today’s world (at home and abroad), having an informed sense as to why this is happening will help you to deal with many different kinds of people.

Departments and agencies will train you in the specifics of their field. What they need to know from you now is that you will be a good investment for that training—that you have the skills and knowledge needed in today’s world. Many employers would rather know you are an intelligent individual capable of creative problem solving than that you necessarily took a lot of courses in one sub-area. Virtually every day, there is something in the news about police misjudging a situation, or how social services failed to intervene before a family tragedy. Such employers do not want to hire people likely to make these same mistakes. They are looking for more. And when you take your sociology training seriously, you will be the kind of person who has what they are looking for.

Another thing to keep in mind is that there are more people who want to work in these fields than the system has jobs to offer. Only about one-third of the people who want to work in areas such as criminal justice or social services will get hired. So what do have to say for yourself that sets you apart from the crowd?

The skills you learn in sociology are marketable. On the next page, there is a sample resume that provides examples of the skills a sociology that major can offer society.

Sample Sociology Resume

Let's say you have done nothing but study sociology—that you have not taken other kinds of courses, and have never worked at all. Just on the basis of your sociology training, here is an example of what you can say about yourself:

Jane Doe
111 1st Street
New Haven, CT 06515
(203) 555-1212

Objective

A position in a public or private agency dedicated to positive social change and community development.

Skills

- Develop and interpret quantitative and qualitative data
- Write professional reports comprehensible to the average reader
- Think critically and approach problem solving from multiple perspectives
- Apply sociological theory and concepts to social issues
- Understand group and organizational dynamics
- Sensitive to diversity of race, class, gender and other ascribed statuses
- SPSS; Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint

Work Experience

Internship at 1st Street Women's Shelter: Client intake, service referrals, police reports, assistance in counseling.

Education

Southern Connecticut State University Sociology, B. S. (Cum Laude)

Memberships

Alpha Kappa Delta (International Sociology Honor Society)
American Sociological Association
Southern Connecticut State University Sociology Club (Treasurer)

References

Available upon request

Tips for Success

- 1. Get good grades:** Yes, employers look at academic transcripts. It is more impressive when a student does well in all areas, not just the major. Try to keep “W” grades to a minimum. Employers want to hire someone who does not let pressure or emergency situations compromise his or her professionalism. A lot of “W” grades may create the impression of instability or unreliability.
- 2. Do especially well in key courses:** For example, if you want to be a juvenile probation officer, strive especially hard to get an “A” in Juvenile Delinquency. If you get less than a “B,” you may want to re-take the course.
- 3. Participate in campus extracurricular activities:** Employers want to hire people who are personable, involved, and potential leaders. For example, run for office in the Sociology Club.
- 4. Do some volunteer work:** If you care about the community, demonstrate that this is so by volunteering for a community organization.
- 5. Letters of recommendation:** Before graduating, ask several of your professors to write letters of recommendation for you. Depending on the job you are trying to get, letters from outside sociology may also be helpful.
- 6. Develop a good professional relationship with your professor(s):** Drop by a professor’s office hours just to talk about the course material, particularly before an exam. The more you stand out to your professors, the more good things they will say about you to potential employers.
- 7. Make a portfolio:** Put together a portfolio of your best work as student. Also keep e-versions of these materials, in case you can bring a laptop to your job interview(s). Maybe even create a PowerPoint presentation about your training and professional experiences to date.
- 8. Offer proof that you are a versatile communicator:** Provide examples of your good writing, demonstrate your oral communication skills, and list any public speaking you have done on your resume.
- 9. Join professional organizations:** Joining organizations such as the American Sociological Association shows that you are trying to professionalize yourself, and network with others.
- 10. Know your community:** Demonstrate your sincerity—and your research skills—by familiarizing yourself with the problems and resources of the community you would be serving in your new job.
- 11. Develop a uniquely marketable self:** Many other people are competing for the job you want. What will make your resume and interview presence stand out from the pack? It is not enough to say you really want a job—who doesn’t? Why do you want to work in this particular area, and what about you is exceptionally well qualified to do so? Have you had any interesting life experiences that add to your understanding of society? Do you have an interesting hobby?
- 12. Go to Graduate school:** As the job market becomes increasingly competitive, getting a Master’s degree can give a decisive edge. It also can enable you to make more money, and get more promotions. If you want to be a professor or high-level researcher, you can get a Ph.D.

Careers in Sociology

Admissions Counselor	Government Worker	Public Relations Specialist
Adoption Agent	Group Therapist	Public Service Worker
Advertising Manager	Health Care Worker	Recreation Therapist
Banking/Branch Management	Human Resources Administrator	Rehabilitation Counselor
Budget Analyst	Human Services Worker	Reporter
Career Services Counselor	Independent Living Trainer	Research Analyst
Case Aid Worker	Industrial Sociologist	Research Assistant
Child Welfare Officer	Insurance Agent/Broker	Research Director
City Planner	Job Analyst	Sales Campaign Planning
Civil Engineer	Labor Force and Manpower	Sales Representative
Clergy	Labor Relations Representative	School Counselor
Community Relations Director	Life Quality Research	Secret Service Agent
Compensation/Benefits Worker	Manufacturing Representative	Social Movements Organizer
Congressional Aid	Market Researcher	Social Science Analyst
Consultant	Marketing Research Analyst	Social Scientist
Consumer Advocate	Marriage and Family Therapist	Social Survey Director
Consumer Survey Advisor	Mass Communications Analyst	Social Welfare Examiner
Convention Organizer	Medical Social Worker	Social Worker
Cooperative Extension Agent	Mental Health Agent	Statistical Analyst
Correctional Case Worker	Motivational Speaker	Statistician
Corrections Officer	News Correspondent	Survey Research Technician
Cottage Parent	Nutritionist	Survey Specialist
Criminologist	Parole Officer	Systems and Programming Specialist
Customer Relations	Peace Corps/VISTA Worker	Teacher
Data Analyst	Penologist	Technical Writer
Data Processing	Personnel Interviewer	Therapy Aid
Day Care Worker	Personnel Specialist	Urban Planner
Delinquency Counselor	Personnel Training/Development	Veterans Affairs Specialist
Demographic Analyst	Policy Analyst	Welfare Counselor
Dietitian	Political Systems Researcher	Writer/Author
Editor	Population Specialist	
Family Guidance Clinic Worker	Probation Officer	
Family Preservation Case Work	Professor	
Family Services Specialist	Program Director	
Financial Aid Director	Public Administrator	
Foster Care Worker	Public Health Educator	
Fund-raiser/Development Officer	Public Health Statistician	
Gerontologist	Public Opinion Surveyor	