

American Sociological Association  
*Research Program on the Discipline and Profession*

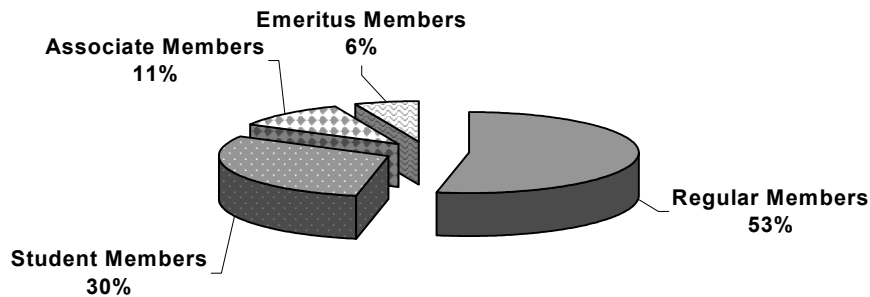
# Data·Brief

## Profile of 2001 ASA Membership

By

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At the end of 2001, ASA had 12,365 members. As shown in Figure 1, their distribution among ASA's four categories (regular, student, associate, and emeritus) revealed the largest category to be regular members who have full voting rights. More than half (53 percent) of all members joined ASA in this category, down somewhat from 58 percent in 1999<sup>1</sup>. The second largest category was student members, which remained stable between 1999 and 2001, comprising 30 percent of all members. Demographic characteristics of these two largest groups are highlighted, below.



**Figure 1: 2001 Membership Distribution**  
Source : American Sociological Association

The data for this Data Brief were compiled from completed ASA 2001 membership forms. Not all members answered all questions, however. For

<sup>1</sup> The reintroduction of the “emeritus” category possibly siphoned off some regular members.

example, about 5 percent did not report their gender, 15 percent of members did not report their race/ethnicity, 18 percent did not provide information on their educational attainments, 21 percent did not report their age, 31 percent did not report their employment status, and 42 percent did not report their employment sector. As a result, all findings should be viewed with some caution.

## ***Regular Members***

### **Demographics**

Changes in ASA membership reflect changing demographics of the profession, as sociologists become less male, less white, and older. These changes are reflected in the proportion of men and women in each of the membership categories. For example, in 2001, men were still the majority (55 percent) of regular members, down slightly from 1999.

About 80 percent of regular members, who reported their race/ethnicity, checked the category non-Hispanic white, down slightly from 1999. In contrast, the proportion of members who reported their race/ethnicity as other than non-Hispanic white increased slightly. About five percent of regular members, who reported their race/ethnicity, listed it as African American, five percent listed it as Asian American, three percent listed it as Hispanic/Latino, and less than one percent listed their race/ethnicity as Native American.

The average age for all regular members in 2001 was 51 years, up an average of two years since 1999. The modal age was 54.

Of the regular members in 2001, who reported information on their highest degree, 85 percent reported that a doctorate, 12 percent reported a master's-level degree, and only 3 percent reported a bachelors degree. Less than one percent hold another degree as their highest degree, such as a JD, MBA, or MSW.

### **Employment of Regular Members**

The vast majority of ASA regular members, who reported their employment status, were employed and employed full-time (82 percent). Of those regular members that reported the employment sector in which they work, 8 out of 10 members were employed in institutions of higher education. Of the remaining 20 percent, 14 percent work in federal, state, or local governments, or not-for-profit organizations. Three percent either own businesses that employ others or are independent consultants.

Of employed members who reported what *type* of employment they held, the overwhelming majority reported an academic or teaching appointment (73 percent). About 13 percent had a research position and about 7 percent had an

administrative position. The remaining seven percent are distributed among post-doctoral fellowships, applied, non-research positions, writing/editorial positions, and other work positions.

## **Gender**

The great majority of regular members were employed full-time with a somewhat higher percentage of men than women in this status (91 percent compared to 86 percent). In contrast, women made up a greater percentage of those members who were employed part-time or unemployed. Although women represented 45 percent of the regular membership, they held about 56 percent of the part-time jobs and are 61 percent of those who reported being unemployed.

A higher percentage of men than women were employed in academic or teaching positions (59 percent compared to 45 percent), while women were more likely to be employed in research or applied positions.

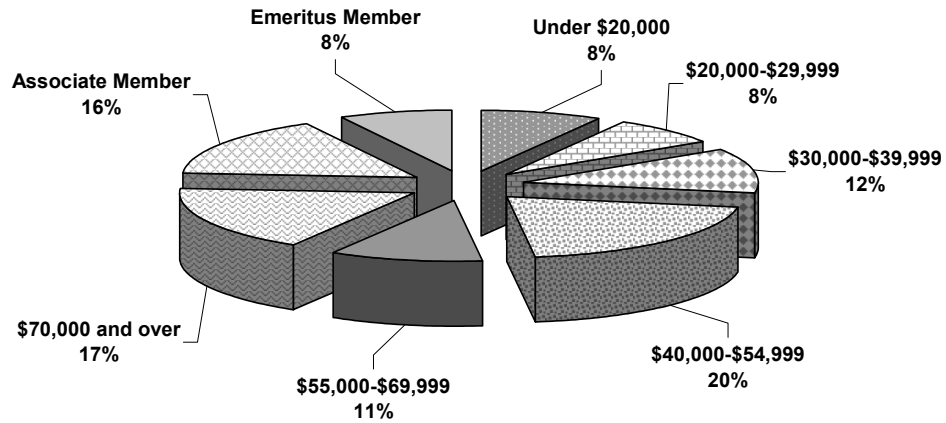
There were relatively small differences in employment sector between men and women with 79 percent of men, compared to 75 percent of women, employed in colleges or universities that grant at least a BA in sociology. These sector differences can be explained by highest degree held. Men were more likely to hold PhDs compared to women. When education level is held constant, gender differences in employment sector disappear. There are no significant differences in employment sector between men and women with PhDs. Similarly, men and women with master's degrees tend to be found in the same sectors.

## **Race/Ethnicity**

There were no differences in employment sector by race/ethnicity. There were also no differences in employment sector by race when educational attainment is controlled. African-Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos are equally likely to be employed as whites in higher education.

## **Income Levels of Regular Members**

ASA breaks down the regular membership into income categories (See Figure 2). The largest group reported earning \$40,000 to \$54,999. Members who joined at the \$55,000 income level and above tended to be older than those members at lower income levels. The average age of those in the membership levels at \$30,000 to \$54,999 was about 45. The average age of those in the \$55,000 to \$69,999 level was about 51, while the average age of those in the \$70,000 and above membership level was about 55. It should be noted that ASA cannot certify the veracity of self-reported income levels.



**Figure 2: 2001 Income Levels of Nonstudent Members**  
 Source: American Sociological Association

## Gender

There were significant differences between men and women in income level. Among men, a higher proportion was in the top income category (3 out of 10) compared to women (2 out of 10). In contrast, about 4 out of 10 women who are regular members (compared to about 1 out of 3 men) earned less than \$40,000. There was greater parity between men and women in the middle-income categories.

These relationships remained when educational attainment was taken into account. Among men and women with PhDs, a significantly higher percentage of women than would be expected based on their proportion of regular membership earned less than \$20,000. In contrast, a higher percentage of men, than would be expected, earned \$55,000 or more. Likewise, men earned significantly more than women in each income category when age was taken into account.

## Race

There was a statistically significant difference in income levels reported among race/ethnic groups (see Figure 3), although the highest percentages of all groups were in the \$40,000 to \$54,999 category. About one-quarter of whites and African-Americans were in the \$70,000-and-over category and fewer than 20 percent were in the bottom income category. Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos and Native Americans were less likely to be in the top income categories and more likely to be in the bottom category. When educational level is taken into account, the differences in the distribution of ethnicities among the membership categories remains significant. Part of this discrepancy might be explained by cohort differences.

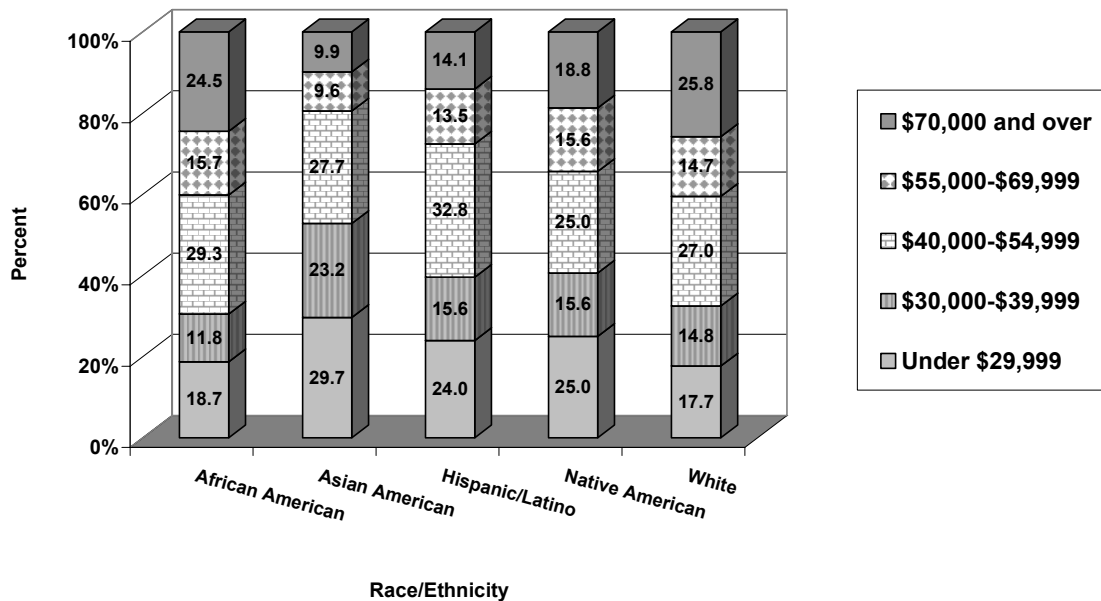


Figure 3: Selected Race/Ethnic Groupings by Regular Membership Level, 2001  
Source: American Sociological Association

## Student Members

Student members represent sociology's future. In 2001, women made up about 65 percent of student members and men were 35 percent, about the same as in 1999.

A relatively large proportion of the non-whites in the total membership were student members. Thirty-four percent of all African-American members, 46

percent of Hispanic/Latino members, 46 percent of Native Americans, and 28 percent of Asian Americans are student members. In contrast, only 25 percent of whites were student members. Since over a third of the non-responses to the race and ethnicity question were student members, this racial breakdown should be viewed with caution.

Not surprisingly, student members were younger than the regular members. The average age of student members is 33 years and the median age is 31, suggesting that many in this category were advanced PhD students rather than BA-level or new graduate students.

### ***Conclusions***

We have seen that a smaller percentage of women and minority groups were found in the regular membership category and a larger percentage were found in the student membership category than white men. These data indicate that, over time, the demographics of the regular membership will likely change. As women and minorities obtain their PhDs, they have the potential to achieve similar employment and income outcomes as white men. The likelihood of parity is not a foregone conclusion, however, as was suggested by the gender and race/ethnicity differences in income when education and age were taken into account. Continuing to monitor membership trends will allow us to see what outcomes occur.