



American Sociological Association
Department of Research and Development

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HAVE FACULTY SALARIES PEAKED? SOCIOLOGY WAGE GROWTH FLAT IN CONSTANT DOLLARS

A recent headline in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* exclaimed that the increase in average faculty salaries in Academic Year (AY) 2003/2004 was the lowest in 30 years. This increase was actually close to zero when viewed in constant dollars (a measure of the dollar's inflation-eroded value over a specified period and as determined by the CPI (Consumer Price Index)).¹ This headline is disturbing to all faculty who received raises hovering around zero percent in constant dollars but who paid the above-inflation prices for products and services--e.g., college tuition, childcare, gasoline, and protein including meat, poultry, fish, and eggs.

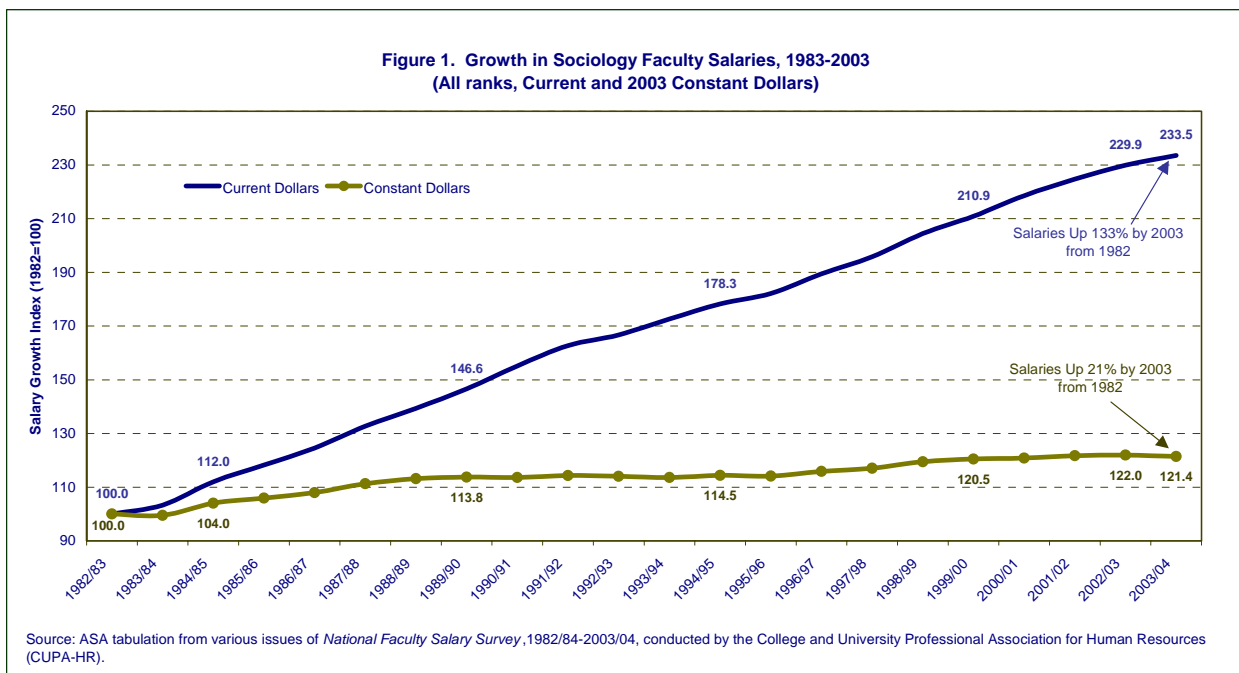
This finding is from an annual salary survey conducted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Information from this survey is available by faculty rank, type of institution, and specific institution but not discipline. How do AAUP's findings of low-salary growth compare to findings for faculty in specific disciplines including sociology and other social and behavioral sciences? To answer this, we turn to the National Faculty Salary Survey, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA). As with the AAUP data, the CUPA data show that the AY 2003/2004 raises for all faculty (regardless of rank, type of university, or discipline) were the lowest in the twenty-one years for which we have data. In fact, when the rate of inflation was taken into account, there was no raise. In fact, salaries declined by an average of 0.45 percent from AY 2002/2003.

This ASA Information Brief uses data from CUPA to examine changes in average sociology faculty salaries over a 21-year period—from AY 2002/2003 through AY 2003/2004—and how these average changes vary by faculty rank and by type of institution. Finally, changes in sociology faculty salaries will be compared to those in other social sciences including anthropology, political science, psychology, and economics.

¹ Wilson, Robin. 2004. "Faculty Salaries Rise 2.1%, the Lowest Increase in 30 Years." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50 (33). Retrieved April 24, 2004 (<http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v50/i33/33qo1201.htm>).

SOCIOLOGY FACULTY SALARIES

Over the course of 21 years, the average sociology faculty salary more than doubled in current dollars--not controlling for inflation. Salaries increased by 133 percent, reaching an index figure of 233 by AY 2003/2004 (with the base year, 1982, index level set at 100). The average increase was about six percent per year in current dollars. In contrast, between AY 2002/2003 and AY 2003/2004, the average increase in current dollars was about 1.6 percent. When we control for inflation, however, using the 1982 anchor point, the increases are substantially lower, averaging about one percent per year over the 21 years, reaching an index of 121 points. Although there were periods of growth that vary by decade, with the mid- to late-1980s and 1990s reflecting higher raises, Figure 1 shows a trend line in constant dollars with an increase of about 1 percent per year. In other words, there has been little salary advance over the 21-year period when inflation is taken into account.



Do any categories of sociologists deviate from this pattern? Salary analysts usually focus on the rank of faculty and the type of institution. We examine each in turn and then the two categories together.

Rank

Table 1 shows average annual sociology salaries in current dollars between AY 1983/1984 and AY 2003/2004 by rank. Salaries for all ranks of sociology faculty have more than doubled, over the course of the 21 years, when inflation is not taken into account. Salaries for new assistant professors increased the most (144 percent), followed by full professors of sociology (132 percent), while those of associate and assistant professors increased the least (121 percent and 129 percent, respectively). The need to be competitive with other institutions is the usual explanation for the relatively higher increases for new assistant professors with associate professors receiving the smallest percentage increases. Further examination of the age and gender structure could possibly explain some of the differences between salary increases for full

and associate professors. When inflation is taken into account, however, sociology salaries increased by a range of 15 percent to 27 percent over the 21-year time span. In fact, associate professors' salaries increased by less than one percent per year in constant dollars (Table 2).

Table 1. Sociology Faculty Salaries in Current Dollars by Rank, Academic Year 1982/83 to 2003/04

	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	New Assistant	All Ranks
1982/83	\$32,881	\$25,397	\$20,308	\$18,762	\$25,557
1983/84	\$33,777	\$26,162	\$21,114	\$20,283	\$26,399
1984/85	\$36,059	\$27,903	\$22,691	\$21,385	\$28,626
1985/86	\$37,605	\$29,223	\$24,034	\$22,271	\$30,206
1986/87	\$39,615	\$31,018	\$25,141	\$22,680	\$31,835
1987/88	\$41,627	\$32,864	\$26,471	\$24,142	\$33,918
1988/89	\$43,987	\$34,199	\$27,870	\$26,301	\$35,610
1989/90	\$45,930	\$36,144	\$29,591	\$27,689	\$37,473
1990/91	\$48,678	\$38,209	\$30,867	\$29,128	\$39,655
1991/92	\$50,734	\$39,907	\$32,451	\$31,026	\$41,583
1992/93	\$51,641	\$41,072	\$33,149	\$31,905	\$42,607
1993/94	\$53,472	\$42,440	\$34,129	\$32,379	\$44,121
1994/95	\$55,905	\$43,575	\$35,390	\$33,602	\$45,564
1995/96	\$57,115	\$44,561	\$36,165	\$34,079	\$46,543
1996/97	\$59,417	\$46,165	\$37,303	\$35,255	\$48,424
1997/98	\$61,564	\$47,263	\$38,383	\$36,779	\$50,037
1998/99	\$64,639	\$48,801	\$39,743	\$37,860	\$52,250
1999/00	\$67,334	\$50,472	\$41,359	\$39,465	\$53,899
2000/01	\$70,071	\$52,336	\$43,081	\$41,589	\$55,849
2001/02	\$72,472	\$54,233	\$44,285	\$42,812	\$57,434
2002/03	\$74,027	\$55,296	\$45,565	\$44,580	\$58,756
2003/04	\$76,200	\$56,212	\$46,409	\$45,722	\$59,686

Source: ASA tabulation from various issues of *National Faculty Salary Survey*, 1982/84-2003/04, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).

Table 2. Sociology Faculty Salaries by Faculty Rank and Academic Year, 1982-83 to 2003-04 (in Constant 2003 Dollars)

	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	New Assistant
1982/83	\$63,234	\$48,839	\$39,054	\$36,080
1983/84	\$62,550	\$48,448	\$39,101	\$37,561
1984/85	\$64,391	\$49,827	\$40,519	\$38,188
1985/86	\$64,837	\$50,385	\$41,438	\$38,398
1986/87	\$66,026	\$51,696	\$41,901	\$37,800
1987/88	\$67,140	\$53,007	\$42,696	\$38,939
1988/89	\$68,730	\$53,436	\$43,547	\$41,095
1989/90	\$68,553	\$53,946	\$44,165	\$41,327
1990/91	\$68,561	\$53,815	\$43,475	\$41,025
1991/92	\$68,560	\$53,929	\$43,852	\$41,927
1992/93	\$67,949	\$54,042	\$43,617	\$41,980
1993/94	\$67,686	\$53,721	\$43,202	\$40,986
1994/95	\$69,019	\$53,797	\$43,691	\$41,484
1995/96	\$68,813	\$53,688	\$43,572	\$41,059
1996/97	\$69,902	\$54,311	\$43,886	\$41,477
1997/98	\$70,763	\$54,325	\$44,119	\$42,275
1998/99	\$72,628	\$54,832	\$44,655	\$42,540
1999/00	\$73,993	\$55,464	\$45,450	\$43,369
2000/01	\$74,544	\$55,677	\$45,831	\$44,244
2001/02	\$75,492	\$56,493	\$46,130	\$44,596
2002/03	\$75,538	\$56,424	\$46,495	\$45,490
2003/04	\$76,200	\$56,212	\$46,409	\$45,722

Source: ASA tabulation from various issues of *National Faculty Salary Survey*, 1982/84-2003/04, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).

Note: Constant dollars based on average 2003 Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Type of Institution

The CUPA survey provides data on three types of higher education institutions: public institutions with collective bargaining, public institutions without collective bargaining, and private institutions. Across types, there is probably the most diversity within private institutions; they include the richest universities in the country, such as Harvard University, along with small church-related schools. When averaged, however, private universities saw larger sociology salary increases than public universities. In contrast, public institutions, with and without collective bargaining, saw a small decrease in constant dollars over the last two academic years (Table 3). The general explanation for these losses was the decline in state education budgets that decreased for the first time in 11 years.²

Table 3. Average Salaries of Sociology Faculty at Public and Private Institutions (Constant 2003 Dollars)

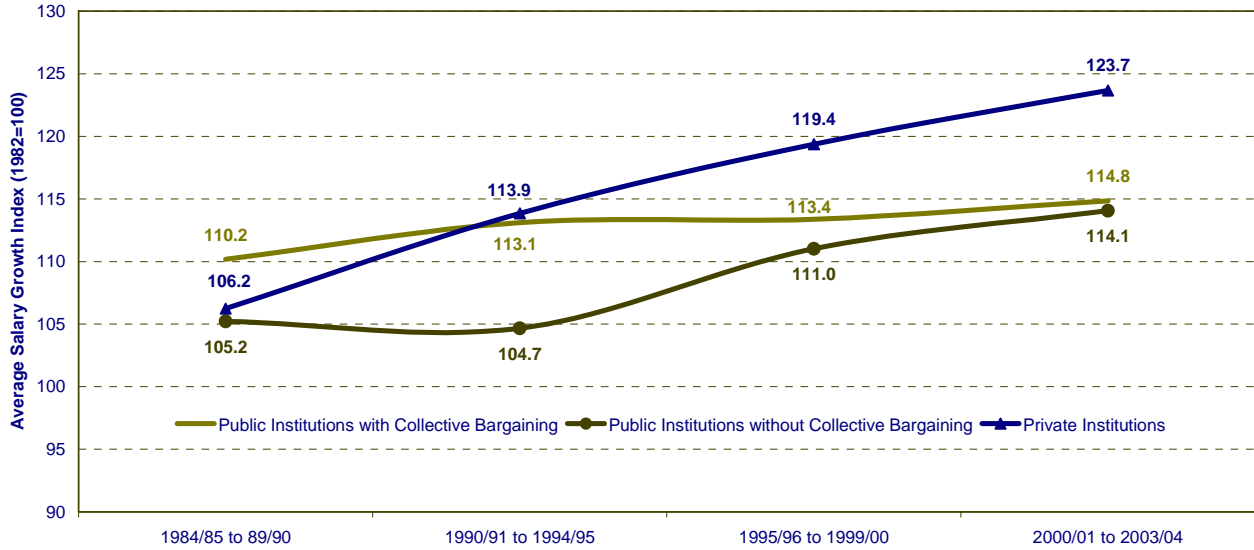
	Public Institutions with Collective Bargaining	Public Institutions without Collective Bargaining	Private Institutions	All Institutions
1983/84	\$55,823	\$50,300	\$48,436	\$51,117
1984/85	\$57,984	\$51,259	\$48,652	\$52,080
1985/86	\$59,783	\$51,973	\$49,857	\$53,058
1986/87	\$61,348	\$52,981	\$52,190	\$54,706
1987/88	\$62,767	\$53,606	\$52,502	\$55,641
1988/89	\$63,946	\$53,949	\$52,701	\$55,930
1989/90	\$63,190	\$53,823	\$52,841	\$55,852
1990/91	\$64,203	\$53,314	\$53,791	\$56,194
1991/92	\$63,453	\$51,463	\$55,053	\$56,062
1992/93	\$62,713	\$52,204	\$55,177	\$55,849
1993/94	\$63,512	\$52,711	\$55,849	\$56,252
1994/95	\$61,798	\$53,553	\$55,853	\$56,076
1995/96	\$63,318	\$54,448	\$55,798	\$56,969
1996/97	\$62,489	\$54,309	\$57,228	\$57,514
1997/98	\$62,862	\$56,003	\$59,048	\$58,708
1998/99	\$64,416	\$57,043	\$58,508	\$59,229
1999/00	\$63,346	\$57,401	\$58,502	\$59,414
2000/01	\$64,490	\$57,732	\$59,142	\$59,827
2001/02	\$64,454	\$57,431	\$59,902	\$59,956
2003/04	\$63,384	\$56,970	\$60,662	\$59,686

Source: ASA tabulation from various issues of National Faculty Salary Survey, 1982/84-2003/04, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).
Note: Constant dollars based on average 2003 Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 2 illustrates these inequalities in sociology salary increases by type of institution, with private institutions experiencing the sharpest real gains over the 21 years, while, the highest average salaries (\$63,384) can still be found at public institutions with collective bargaining. Dominance may not remain if current trends continue.

² Arrone, Michael. 2004. "State Spending in Colleges Drops for the First Time in 11 Years." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50 (9). Retrieved February 9, 2004 (<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i19/19a02301.htm>).

Figure 2. Sociology Faculty Salary Growth by Type of Institution, 1983/84-2003/04 (2003 Constant Dollars)

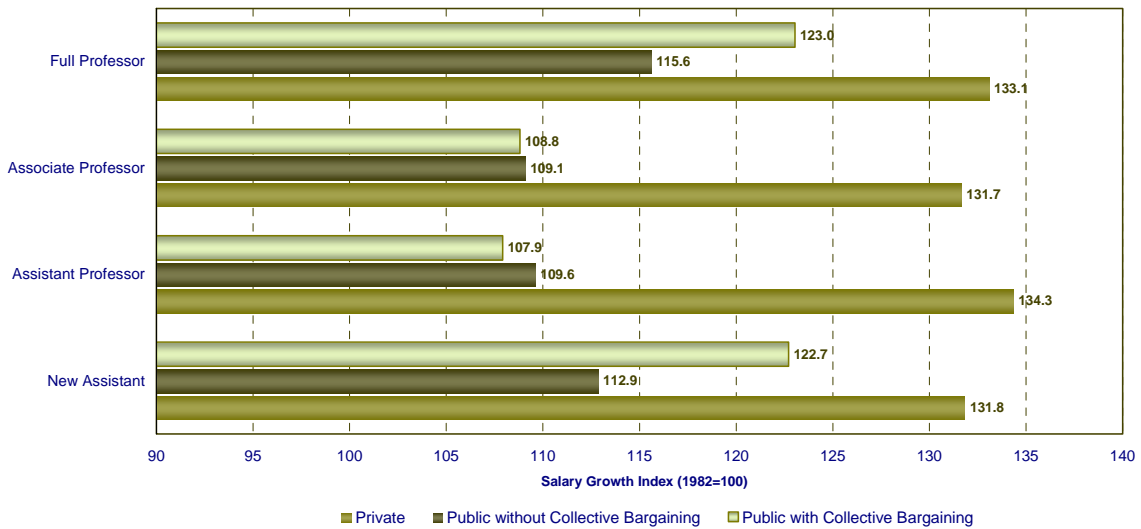


Source: ASA tabulation from various issues of *National Faculty Salary Survey*, 1982/84-2003/04, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).

Rank and Institution

As illustrated in Figure 2, the steepest real gains in sociology faculty salaries occurred at private institutions of higher education. Figure 3 shows that this pattern occurred across all faculty at ranks. Even the “steepest” increases are relatively flat when salaries are indexed for inflation with associate professors at public institutions without collective bargaining experiencing the smallest salary growth and assistant professors at private institutions experiencing the most real salary growth. As of AY 2003/2004, however, public institutions with collective bargaining still had the highest salaries of all ranks except for assistant professors, with full professors earning \$81,429, associate professors earning \$58,357, and new assistant professors earning \$46,475 (data not shown).

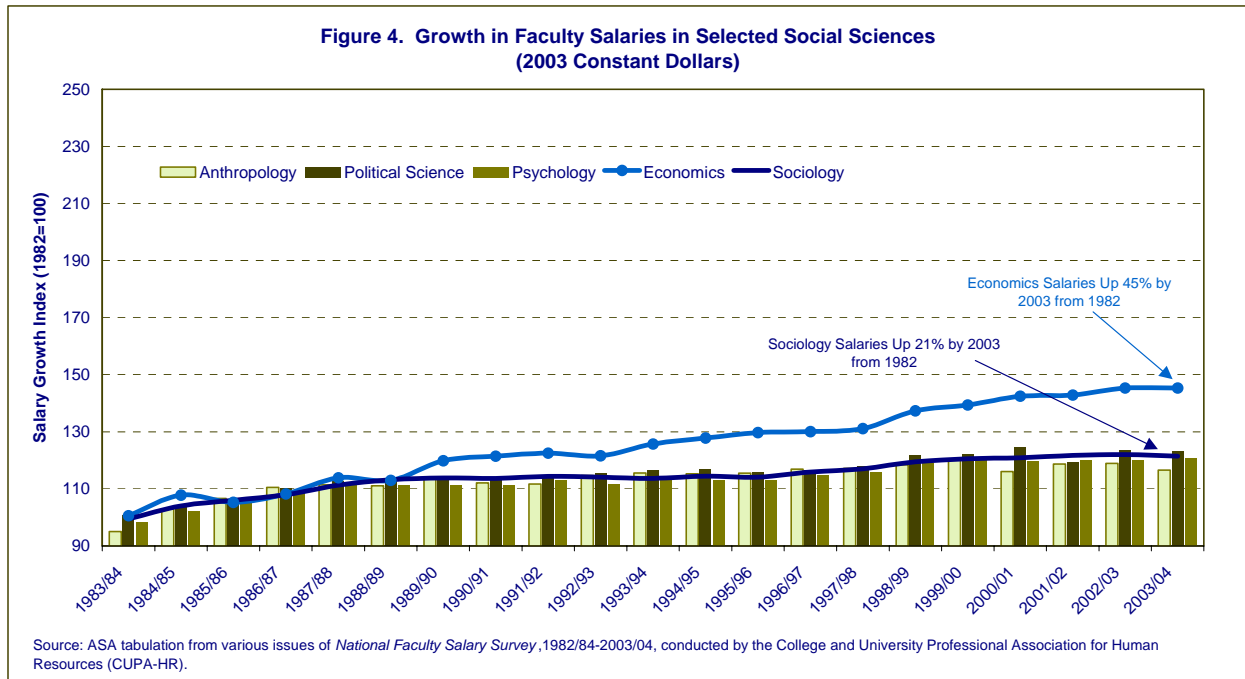
Figure 3. Average Sociology Salary Growth by Rank and Institution Type (2003 Constant Dollars)



Source: ASA tabulation from various issues of *National Faculty Salary Survey*, 1982/84-2003/04, conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).

SOCIOLOGY COMPARED TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

How does sociology compare with its sister social sciences? The growth rates in faculty salaries were relatively similar in anthropology, political science, and psychology over the last 21 years. Sociology more than kept pace with these three disciplines in terms of real (constant dollar) salary growth on a year-by-year basis. During the mid- to late-1980s, the growth of sociology salaries also kept pace with economics. By the beginning of the 1990s, however, salaries in economics took off and the growth rates were double those of the other social and behavioral science disciplines (see Figure 4). Although sociology salaries kept up with the other disciplines in terms of percentage change, they were the lowest among the social science disciplines in absolute terms. In AY 2003/2004, the average salary of sociology faculty was \$59,686, as previously noted. In contrast, the average salary for anthropology faculty was \$61,549, \$62,094 for psychology, and \$62,949 for political science. The average salary for economics faculty was \$75,000.



There is also an increasing gap in salaries between faculty in the social sciences and the humanities and those in the professional schools. Compared to the \$76,200 earned by a full professor in sociology in AY 2003/2004, a full professor in the law school earned \$129,440. Compared to an assistant professor in sociology who earned \$46,409, an assistant professor in the law school earned \$76,951, surpassing a full professor in sociology (data not shown). Many argue that these differences are a result of market forces with a much stronger demand and salary structure for lawyers outside of the academy resulting in higher salaries inside the academy. The higher salaries in economics may be the result of the demand for economists outside the academy, with about 45 percent of PhD economists holding non-academic jobs (compared to 17 percent of sociologists) and/or the location of

many economics departments in higher-paying schools of business rather than colleges of arts and sciences.

THE FUTURE

What does the future hold for sociology faculty? If the trends outlined in this brief continue, we can expect over-all average salaries to remain relatively flat in inflation-free dollars. According to our estimates, by about 2006, salaries at private institutions will surpass those in public institutions with collective bargaining, other factors being equal. We can expect the average starting salary of new assistant professors to continue to grow at a greater rate than other ranks. And without any “catch-up” in actual salary dollars, not just rate of increase, sociology salaries will remain lower than those in its sister social science disciplines. Current and future sociology graduate students may experience growing financial pressures to seek employment outside the academy, hold joint appointments in professional schools, find additional sources of income to augment their faculty salaries, as well as continue to do stellar (and well-publicized) work in sociology in order to increase their relatively low salaries.

This brief is by [Roberta Spalter-Roth](#), Director, and [William Erskine](#), Associate, Department of Research and Development.