

# ASA RESEARCH BRIEF

AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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## Sociology and Other Social Science Salary Increases: Past, Present, and Future\*

Three years ago, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that faculty salaries in academic year 2003/2004 were the lowest in 30 years (Wilson 2004). In contrast, an April 2007 headline in the *Chronicle* exclaimed that AY 2006/2007 salaries outpaced inflation for the first time in three years (Millman 2007). The overall salary increase of 3.8 percent between AY 2005/2006 and 2006/2007, was just 1.3 percent over the rate of inflation (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) meaning that faculty members could purchase only a slightly more expensive market basket of goods and services than in the previous year. Items that could be found in the average faculty member's market basket that outpaced inflation more than salaries include gasoline, health care, and college tuition.

The salary data reported in the *Chronicle* are from an annual survey conducted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Data are collected by faculty rank and type of institution. No comparative information is available for disciplines. As a result, sociologists cannot see how their AY 2006/2007 salary increase compared to the increase of all college and

university faculty or to faculty in other social sciences. To answer these questions we turn to the National Faculty Salary Survey (NFSS), conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). The NFSS gathers data by discipline, rank, and type of institution.<sup>1</sup> The data show that the AY 2006/2007 raises for all faculty (regardless of rank, type of university, or discipline) were 3.9 percent (0.1 percent higher than the AUUP findings), or 1.4 percent higher than the rate of inflation.

### SOCIOLOGY FACULTY SALARIES

This research brief uses NFSS data to examine changes in sociology faculty salaries since the turn of the century, that is, from AY 2000/2001 through AY 2006/2007, whether they have increased above the rate of inflation in the last year, and how these changes vary by faculty rank and by type of institution. Finally, changes in sociology faculty salaries will be compared to those in

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<sup>1</sup> Conducted annually since 1981, CUPA-HR's NFSS asks human resource departments to provide salary data for instructors and ranked professors in 332 academic disciplines (CUPA-HR 2007). The sociology salaries for AY 2006/07 reported in this brief represent over 3,000 assistant, associate, and full professors from about 425 four-year institutions.

other social and behavioral sciences including anthropology, economics, political science, and psychology. As with all faculty, sociologists saw salary increases that were higher than inflation in the latest academic year. This last year followed years of salaries that did not keep pace with inflation resulting in less purchasing power. There was notable variation in the increase of purchasing power by rank, by type of institution, and by discipline, however.

The average sociology faculty salary increased by almost \$10,000 or 16 percent in current dollars—i.e., not controlling for inflation, since AY 2000/2001 (see “All

Ranked Faculty” in Table 1, Panel A). When salaries were controlled for inflation, there was an actual decrease of \$114 dollars during this period. Table 1 (Panel B) shows the percentage change in current dollars minus the rate of inflation for each year. Sociology saw an above inflation salary increase between AY 2005/2006 and AY 2006/2007, as did the average of all ranked faculty members (including full professors, associate professors, and assistant professors) in all disciplines. The increase was 1.2 percent above inflation, slightly less than the increase for all faculty. Despite this latest increase, sociology professors lost buying power in three of the last seven academic

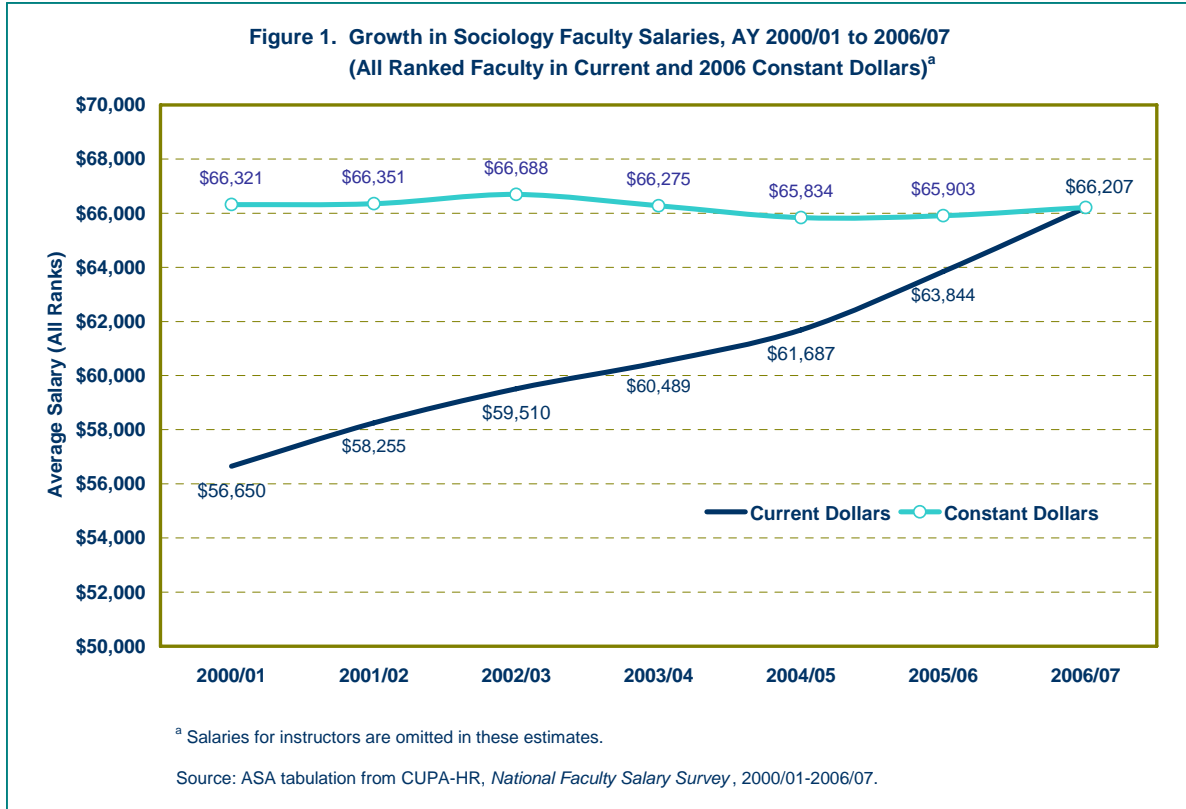
**Table 1. Sociology Faculty Salaries by Rank, AY 2000/01 to 2006/07  
(Current Dollar Salaries; Percentage Change Less Inflation Rate).**

Academic Year	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	All Ranked Faculty <sup>a</sup>
<b>Panel A: Average Salaries</b>				
2000/01	\$70,071	\$52,336	\$43,081	\$56,650
2001/02	\$72,472	\$54,233	\$44,285	\$58,255
2002/03	\$74,027	\$55,296	\$45,565	\$59,510
2003/04	\$76,200	\$56,212	\$46,409	\$60,489
2004/05	\$77,598	\$57,721	\$47,971	\$61,687
2005/06	\$80,487	\$59,903	\$49,519	\$63,844
2006/07	\$83,708	\$61,838	\$51,337	\$66,207
<b>Panel B: Annual Percentage Change (Above Inflation Rate)<sup>b</sup></b>				
2000/01	+0.66	+0.29	+0.76	+0.11
2001/02	+1.83	+2.02	+1.20	+1.23
2002/03	-0.25	-0.44	+0.49	-0.25
2003/04	+1.04	-0.24	-0.05	-0.26
2004/05	-1.47	-0.61	+0.07	-1.32
2005/06	+0.32	+0.38	-0.17	+0.10
2006/07	+1.50	+0.73	+1.17	+1.20
<b>Average Annual Percentage Change</b>	<b>+0.52</b>	<b>+0.30</b>	<b>+0.49</b>	<b>+0.12</b>

<sup>a</sup> Salaries for instructors are omitted in these estimates.

<sup>b</sup> Percentage change in salaries (in current dollars) from previous year less the December-to-December inflation rate from US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers* (Washington, DC: 2007), retrieved May 8, 2007 (<ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiiai.txt>).

Source: ASA tabulation from CUPA-HR, *National Faculty Salary Survey*, 2000/01-2006/07.



years and had salary increases that just kept up with inflation (.10 and .11 percent above the CPI) in two years (see Table 1, Panel B). Aside from the 1.2 percent increase in AY 2006/2007, the only other year with an above inflation increase for all ranks of sociology faculty was AY 2001/2002.

Figure 1 compares the change in sociology faculty salaries in current and in constant 2006 dollars. Once inflation is taken into account, sociology faculty salaries in constant dollars have remained stable since at least AY 2000/2001. Prior to the year 2000, sociology salaries outpaced inflation by as much as 5 percent only during the mid-1980s (ASA 2004).

### Rank

No rank of faculty precisely followed the pattern of salary increases and decreases experienced by all sociology faculty as a group, although there were not large overall differences by rank. As Table 1 (Panel A) shows, salaries in current dollars for full

professors and assistant professors increased the most since AY 2000/2001 (19.5 percent and 19.2 percent, respectively). Associate professors saw the smallest increases (18.2 percent).

When the CPI is taken into account, full professors had the highest above inflation increases (1.5 percent) in AY 2006/2007 and the highest overall increase (0.5 percent) despite some years of declining purchasing power (see Table 1, Panel B). Associate professors had the lowest increases in AY 2006/2007 (0.73 percent) and experienced three straight years of salary declines from AY 2002/2003 to AY 2004/2005.

Further examination of the years in rank and gender structure could explain some of the differences between salary increases for full and associate professors. The need to be competitive with other institutions is the usual explanation for the relatively higher increases for assistant professors compared to associate professors, although their average salaries in current dollars are the

lowest of all ranks (see Table 1, Panel A). Full professors earn the highest salaries, of course, with an average of \$83,708 in AY 2006/2007.

### Type of Institution

The NSFF survey provides data on three types of higher education institutions: public institutions with collective bargaining units, 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. As Table 2 (Panel A)

shows, when averaged, sociology salary increases at private universities were larger than at both public universities with union contracts and those without such contracts since the turn of the century (18.7 percent, 16.2 percent, and 16.0 percent, respectively).

Despite lower rates of growth overall, unionized faculty in public universities had the highest overall salaries—\$70,365 compared to \$63,903 for non-unionized public universities and \$66,043 in private institutions (see Table 2, Panel A). Between AY 2005/2006 and AY 2006/2007, faculty at public universities without union contracts experienced the highest above-

**Table 2. Sociology Faculty Salaries by Institution Type, AY 2000/01 to 2006/07**  
(Current Dollar Salaries; Percentage Change Less Inflation Rate).

Academic Year	Public Institutions			Private Institutions	All Institutions
	Unionized	Non-Unionized	All		
<b>Panel A: Average Salary (All Ranked Faculty)<sup>a</sup></b>					
2000/01	\$60,558	\$55,099	\$57,129	\$55,646	\$56,650
2001/02	\$62,882	\$56,796	\$58,730	\$57,286	\$58,255
2002/03	\$64,069	\$57,232	\$59,647	\$59,240	\$59,510
2003/04	\$64,266	\$57,896	\$60,048	\$61,329	\$60,489
2004/05	\$65,540	\$59,010	\$61,395	\$62,242	\$61,687
2005/06	\$66,864 <sup>b</sup>	\$60,385 <sup>b</sup>	\$63,252	\$65,053	\$63,844
2006/07	\$70,365	\$63,903	\$66,291	\$66,043	\$66,207
<b>Panel B: Annual Percentage Change (Above Inflation Rate)<sup>c</sup></b>					
2000/01	-1.33	+1.31	+0.12	+0.21	+0.11
2001/02	+2.24	+1.48	+1.20	+1.35	+1.23
2002/03	-0.51	-1.63	-0.84	+1.01	-0.25
2003/04	-1.59	-0.74	-1.23	+1.63	-0.26
2004/05	-1.32	-1.38	-1.06	-1.81	-1.32
2005/06	-1.38	-1.07	-0.38	+1.12	+0.10
2006/07	+2.74	+3.33	+2.30	-0.98	+1.20
<b>Average Annual Percentage Change</b>	-0.17	+0.19	+0.02	+0.36	+0.12

<sup>a</sup> Salaries for instructors are omitted in these estimates.

<sup>b</sup> Actual salary data not available. This estimate is based on average annual percentage change since AY 2000/01.

<sup>c</sup> Percentage change in salaries (in current dollars) from previous year less the December-to-December inflation rate from US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers* (Washington, DC: 2007), retrieved May 8, 2007 (<ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiat.txt>).

Source: ASA tabulation from CUPA-HR, *National Faculty Salary Survey, 2000/01-2006/07*.

inflation salary increase (3.3 percent), followed by public institutions with union contracts (2.7 percent). Both types of public institutions, however, had experienced years of below-inflation growth (see Table 2, Panel B). The general explanation for these losses for faculty in public institutions was the decline in state education budgets. However, in fiscal year 2005/2006 spending for higher education at public institutions grew at the fastest rate in five years (Fischer 2006).

Private institutions, on the other hand, experienced below-inflation growth between AY 2005/2006 and AY 2006/2007 (-0.98 percent), but fewer years of negative growth since AY 2000/2001.

## SOCIOLOGY COMPARED TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

How does sociology compare with its sister social and behavioral sciences? Table 3 (Panel A) shows that overall growth rates in faculty salaries were relatively similar to anthropology, political science, and psychology over the last seven years (between 15 and 18 percent). The growth rate for economics was somewhat higher between AY 2000/2001 and AY 2006/2007 at 21 percent. The overall percentage increase in sociology salaries in current dollars between these years was 16.9 percent, similar to anthropology, higher than political science, and lower than psychology and economics.

**Table 3. Sociology Faculty Salaries in Selected Disciplines, AY 1982/83 to 2006/07**  
(Current Dollar Salaries; Percentage Change Less Inflation Rate).

	Sociology	Anthropology	Political Science	Psychology	Economics
<b>Panel A: Average Salary (All Ranked Faculty)<sup>a</sup></b>					
2000/01	\$56,650	\$57,945	\$60,303	\$58,242	\$71,382
2001/02	\$58,255	\$61,187	\$59,374	\$59,860	\$73,699
2002/03	\$59,510	\$62,534	\$62,567	\$60,907	\$76,312
2003/04	\$60,489	\$62,435	\$63,640	\$62,630	\$78,075
2004/05	\$61,687	\$64,456	\$65,070	\$63,991	\$79,928
2005/06	\$63,844	\$65,840	\$66,530	\$66,109	\$83,078
2006/07	\$66,207	\$69,605	\$69,386	\$68,724	\$86,294
<b>Panel B: Annual Percentage Change (Above Inflation Rate)<sup>b</sup></b>					
2000/01	+0.11	-3.59	+1.97	-1.03	+2.19
2001/02	+1.23	+3.99	-3.14	+1.18	+1.65
2002/03	-0.25	-0.20	+2.98	-0.65	+1.15
2003/04	-0.26	-2.06	-0.19	+0.93	+0.41
2004/05	-1.32	-0.06	-1.05	-1.13	-0.93
2005/06	+0.10	-1.25	-1.16	-0.09	+0.54
2006/07	+1.20	+3.22	+1.79	+1.46	+1.37
<b>Average Annual Percentage Change</b>	<b>+0.12</b>	<b>+0.01</b>	<b>+0.17</b>	<b>+0.10</b>	<b>+0.91</b>

<sup>a</sup> Salaries for instructors are omitted in these estimates.

<sup>b</sup> Percentage change in salaries (in current dollars) from previous year less the December-to-December inflation rate from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers* (Washington, DC: 2007), retrieved May 8, 2007 (<ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiat.txt>).

Source: ASA tabulation from CUPA-HR, *National Faculty Salary Survey, 2000/01-2006/07*.



Although the percentage increase in sociology salaries was not particularly low, compared to the other social and behavioral sciences, their salaries were the lowest among the social science disciplines in absolute terms. In AY 2006/2007, the average salary of sociology faculty was \$66,207. The average salary for anthropologists, political scientists, and psychologists was close to \$70,000. Economists had the highest average salaries at \$86,294—almost exactly \$20,000 more than the annual salary of sociologists (see Table 3, Panel A).

When the percentage change is calculated in terms of above inflation dollars, we see varying patterns of increase and decrease among the disciplines over time (see Table 3, Panel B). The annual above-inflation salary increase for sociology (0.12 percent) was in the middle of the range, with anthropology experiencing the lowest increase and economics the highest increase.

Some of the differences in average salaries among the social and behavioral sciences, and especially the relatively low salaries of sociologists, can be explained by variation in the structural composition of the five disciplines. Economics, the discipline with the highest average salary had the greatest share of high-paid full professors (43.5 percent) and the smallest share of lower paid assistant professors (26.5 percent). In contrast, only 35.4 percent of sociology faculty were full professors and almost an equal share (32 percent) were assistant professors. Anthropology, political science, and psychology have rank structures that fell between the two extremes.

Disciplinary structure may not account for all of the salary differences among social and behavioral science disciplines. 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? In spite of the AY 2006/2007 above inflation increases, the data suggest that purchasing power will remain flat unless there are major salary increases in the next few years. Such increases will probably be the result of state increases in funding for higher education. Alternatively, salary increases can be the result of greater competition for sociology PhDs by government or by firms in the for-profit or non-profit sector, especially in the health sector which is the largest employer of non-faculty sociology PhDs. Without salary growth, current and future sociology graduate students may experience growing financial pressures to seek employment outside the academy, hold joint appointments in higher paying 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.

The gap between public and private institutions (especially those public institutions without union contracts) will probably continue to narrow. We can expect the salary of new assistant professors to continue to grow at a greater rate than those of associate professors, with full professors experiencing the highest growth rates.

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