



Findings From ASA Surveys of Bachelor's, Master's and PhD Recipients: Implications for Departments in a Jobless Recovery



Roberta Spalter-Roth

Director of Research

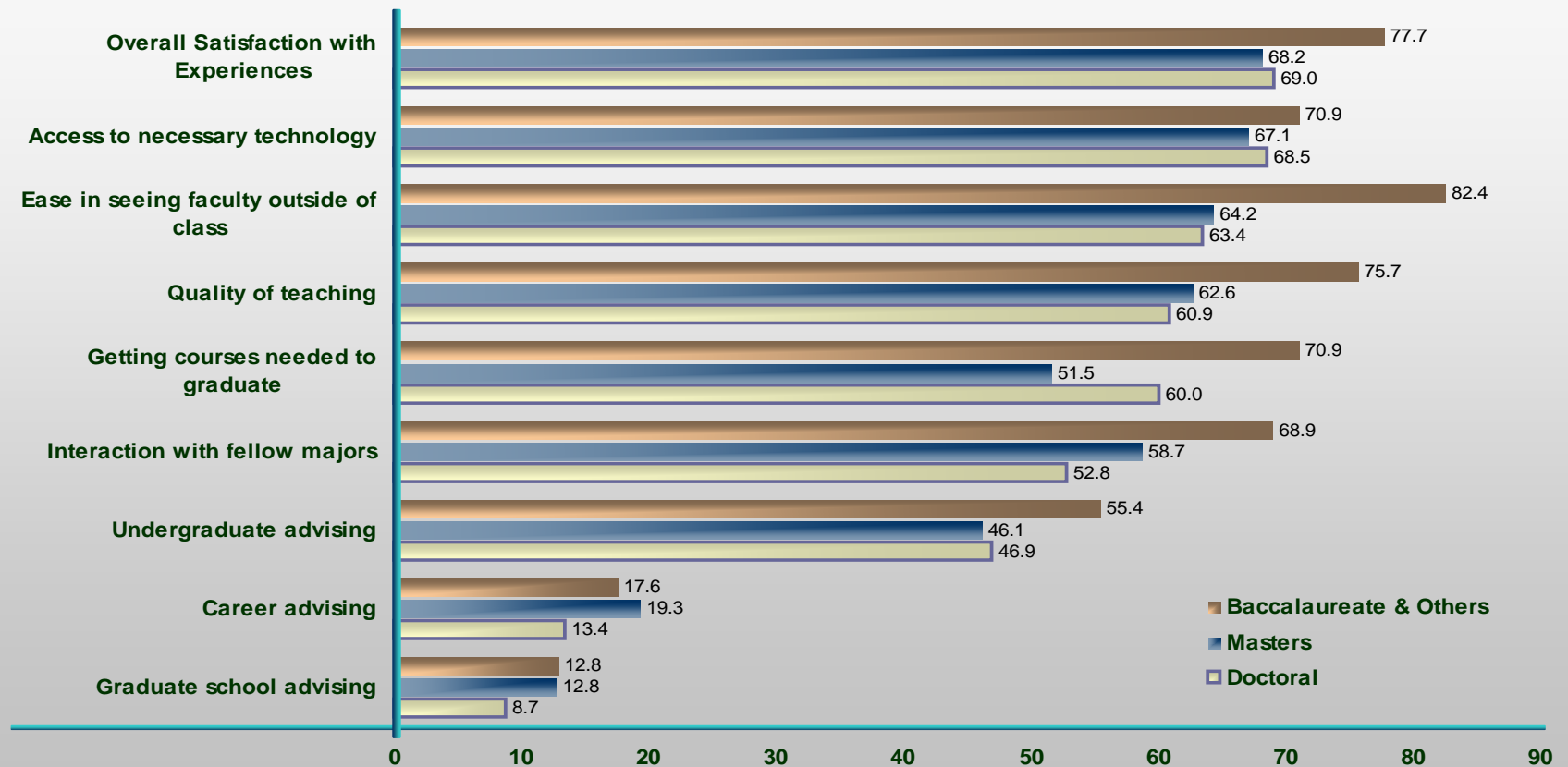
American Sociological Association

Overview

- **Purpose:** Results from studies about sociologists' participation in the non-academic job market.
- **List of surveys used**
 - "What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?"
 - 3 year longitudinal survey starting in 2005
 - "What Can I do with a Master's Degree in Sociology?"
 - 3 year longitudinal survey starting in 2006
 - "Beyond the Ivory Tower: Professionalism, Skills Match in Sociology" (non-academic PhD survey)
 - One-time survey, 2006

Figure 1. Senior Majors' Overall Satisfaction with Outcomes of Sociology Programs by Type of School Attended: 2005

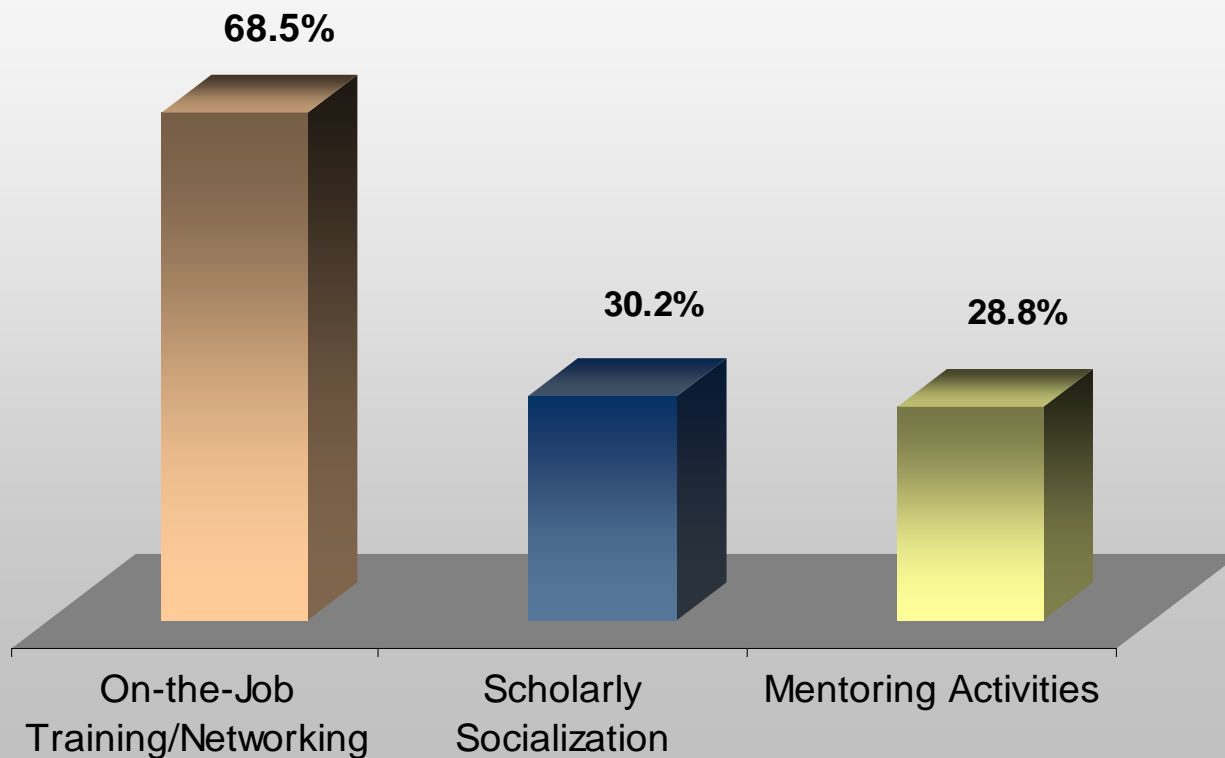
(Percent Very Satisfied; Weighted Data)



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, What Can I Do With a Bachelors in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave I, 2005.

Students are particularly satisfied with the quality of teaching, their ability to see faculty outside of class, the availability of technology, the availability of courses they need to graduate, and the interaction with fellow majors. Students at baccalaureate schools are the most satisfied with these aspects of their major (about 80 percent).

Figure 2. Senior Majors' Participation in Broad Categories of Activities: 2005
(in percents)

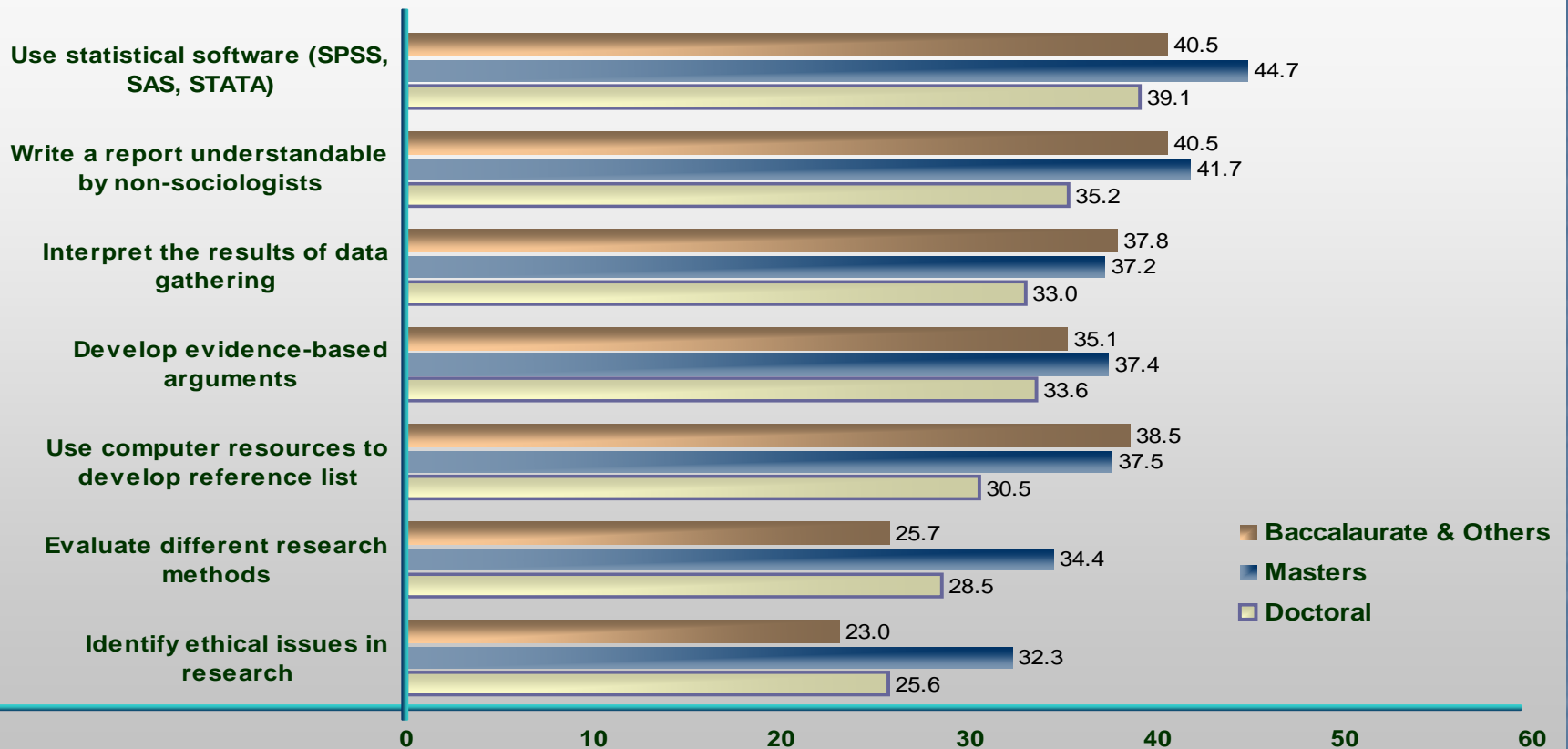


Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I do With a Bachelor's in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave I, 2005 and Wave II, 2007.*

Majors who intend to go into the workforce directly after graduation are most likely to participate in activities outside the classroom that expose them to the workforce. Majors who go on to graduate school participate in sociology clubs or are mentored by faculty through working on research projects, as well as other scholarly activities.

Figure 3. Top Seven Skills Listed by Graduating Senior Majors on their Resumes by Type of School: 2005

(Percent Listing Skill on Their Resume; Weighted Data)

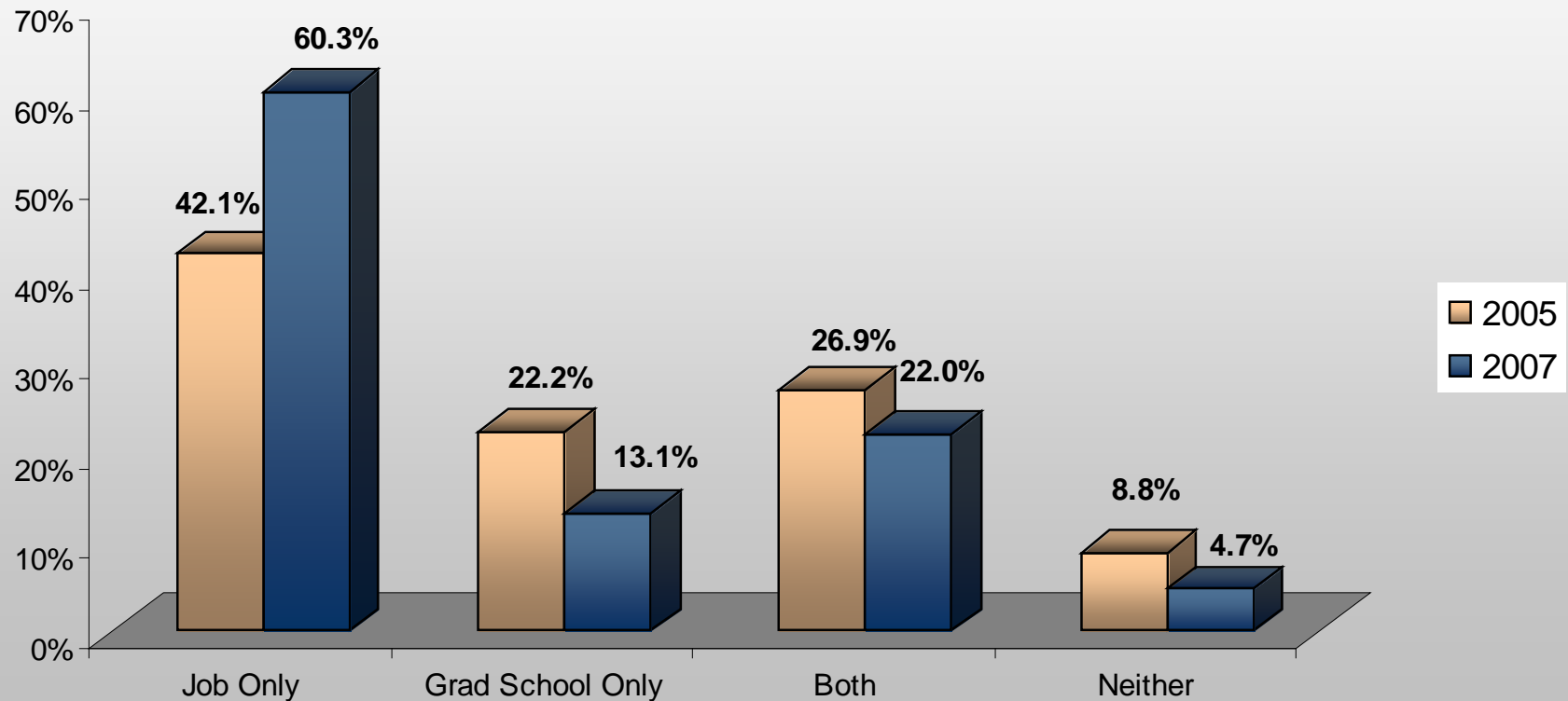


Source: ASA, Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelors in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave I*, 2005.

The highest percentage of responding senior majors report that they will list their ability to use statistical packages in the social sciences on their resumes (with 4 out of 10 strongly agreeing that they will list this skill), yet, this is the same skill that these majors were least likely to strongly agree that they learned. These results suggest a mismatch between vocational skills used in job searches and the conceptual and methodological skills learned as part of the sociology curriculum.

Figure 4. More Sociology Bachelor's Recipients are in the Labor Market

Plans for Future in 2005 versus Status in 2007



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I do With a Bachelor's in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave I, 2005, and Wave II, 2007.*

During their senior year, nearly a quarter of students planned on attending graduate school after graduation, yet only 13.1% ended up doing so as of 2007. A large majority of students reported working while not enrolled in a graduate program 2 years after graduation.

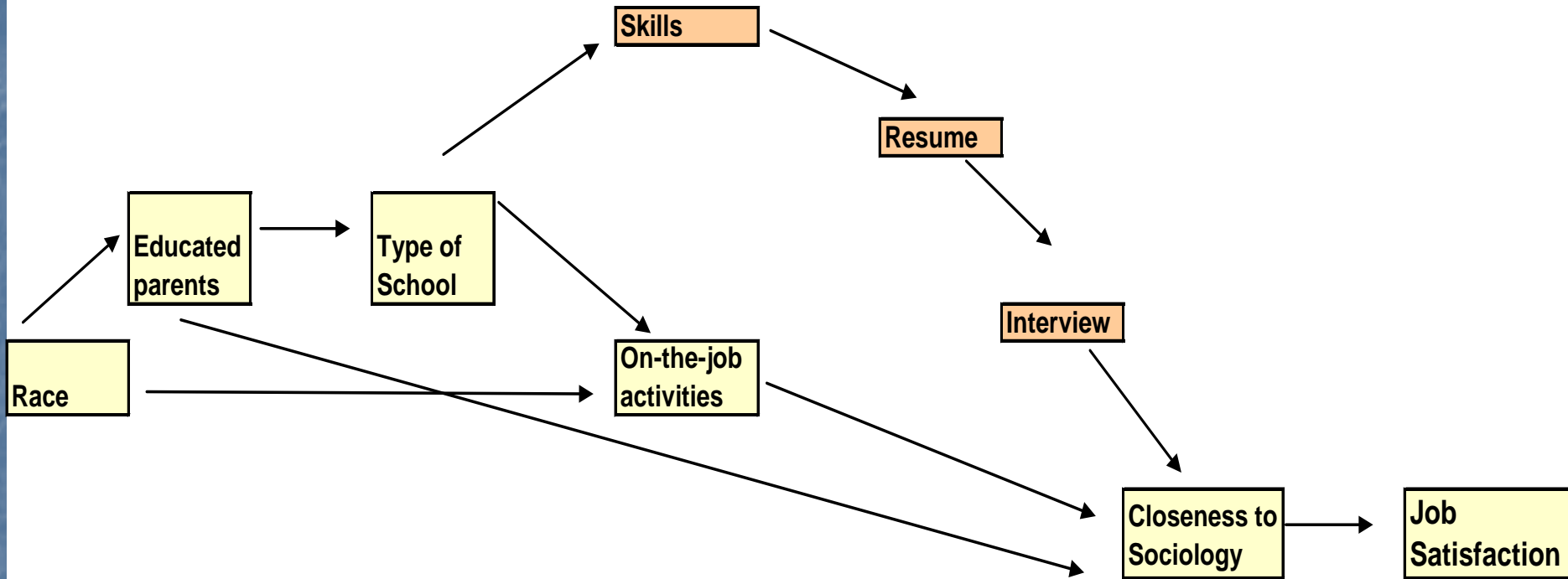
Table 1. Types of Occupations of Sociology Bachelor's Degree Recipients: 2007

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Social Services, Counselors, Psychologists</i>	<i>Oversee AIDS outreach team</i>	<i>26.5%</i>
<i>Administrative support</i>	<i>Scheduler for State Representative</i>	<i>15.8%</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>Handle employment and labor relations</i>	<i>14.4%</i>
<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Planning and developing marketing strategies</i>	<i>10.1%</i>
<i>Services</i>	<i>Crime scene technician</i>	<i>8.3%</i>
<i>Teachers, Librarians</i>	<i>Provide reference, research, and database searching</i>	<i>8.1%</i>
<i>Social Science, Researchers</i>	<i>Research climate change policies</i>	<i>5.7%</i>
<i>Others Professionals</i>	<i>Website design</i>	<i>6.8%</i>
<i>Other</i>		<i>4.4%</i>

Source: ASA Research and Development Department, What Can I do With a Bachelor's in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave II, 2007.

Two-years after graduation, about one-quarter of former majors employed full-time are in social service and counseling occupations, most in non-profit organizations dealing with a variety of social problems they explored as part of the major.

Figure 5. Sociology Bachelor's Degree Recipients' Pathways to Job Satisfaction



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I do With a Bachelor's in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology Wave I, 2005 and Wave II, 2007.*

Those who communicated their sociological skill set to potential employers in interviews and/or on resumes were more likely to use them on the job, which led to increased satisfaction in jobs that were closely related to sociology.

Table 2. Comparison of Characteristics of Master's Programs*

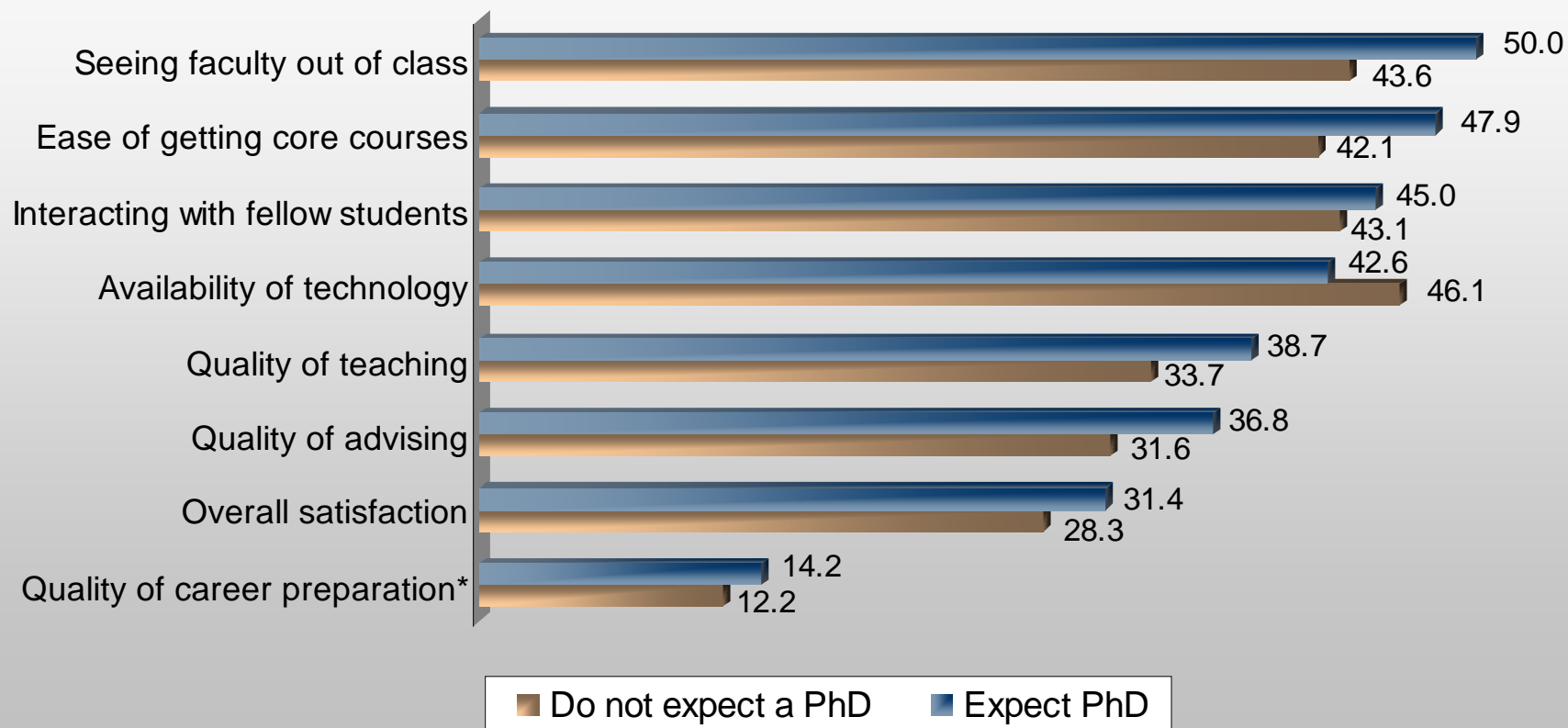
<i>Master's Program Characteristics</i>	<i>Departments Offering a Professional, Applied, or Clinical Track</i>	<i>Departments Without a Professional, Applied, or Clinical Track</i>
Master's thesis required	56.6%	58.3%
Non-thesis option	70.4%	68.8%
Internship required	33.3%	4.1%
Has an external advisory board	9.8%	2.0%
Faculty members have non-academic professional experience	33.3%	24.5%
Majority of candidates received their BAs from the same department	40.4%	20.4%
Offers online master's courses	26.9%	2.0%

* Includes freestanding master's programs only.

Source: *ASA 2009 Survey of Graduate Directors*

There are significant differences between applied and traditional master's programs. The greatest differences are that applied programs are significantly more likely to offer an internship program and to offer on-line courses.

Figure 6. Satisfaction with Activities Varies by Future Degree Plans for Master's Students
(Percentage of Respondents Selecting "Very Satisfied")

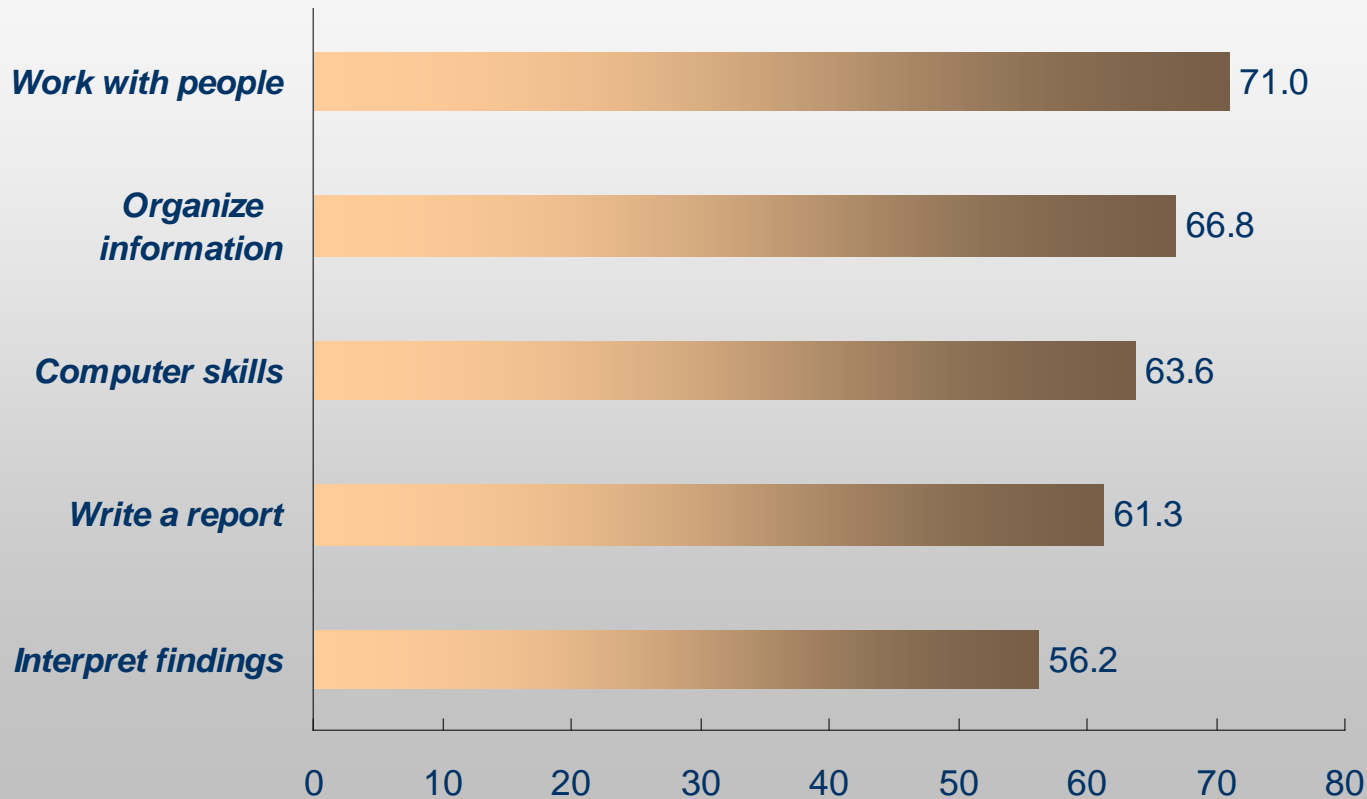


*statistically significant, chi square ($p < 0.05$)

Source: ASA Research Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Master's Degree in Sociology?* 2009

The study of master's students show less overall satisfaction with their programs than baccalaureate students (less than 13% compared to more than 2/3). Along with baccalaureate students, master's students are similarly not satisfied with career preparation.

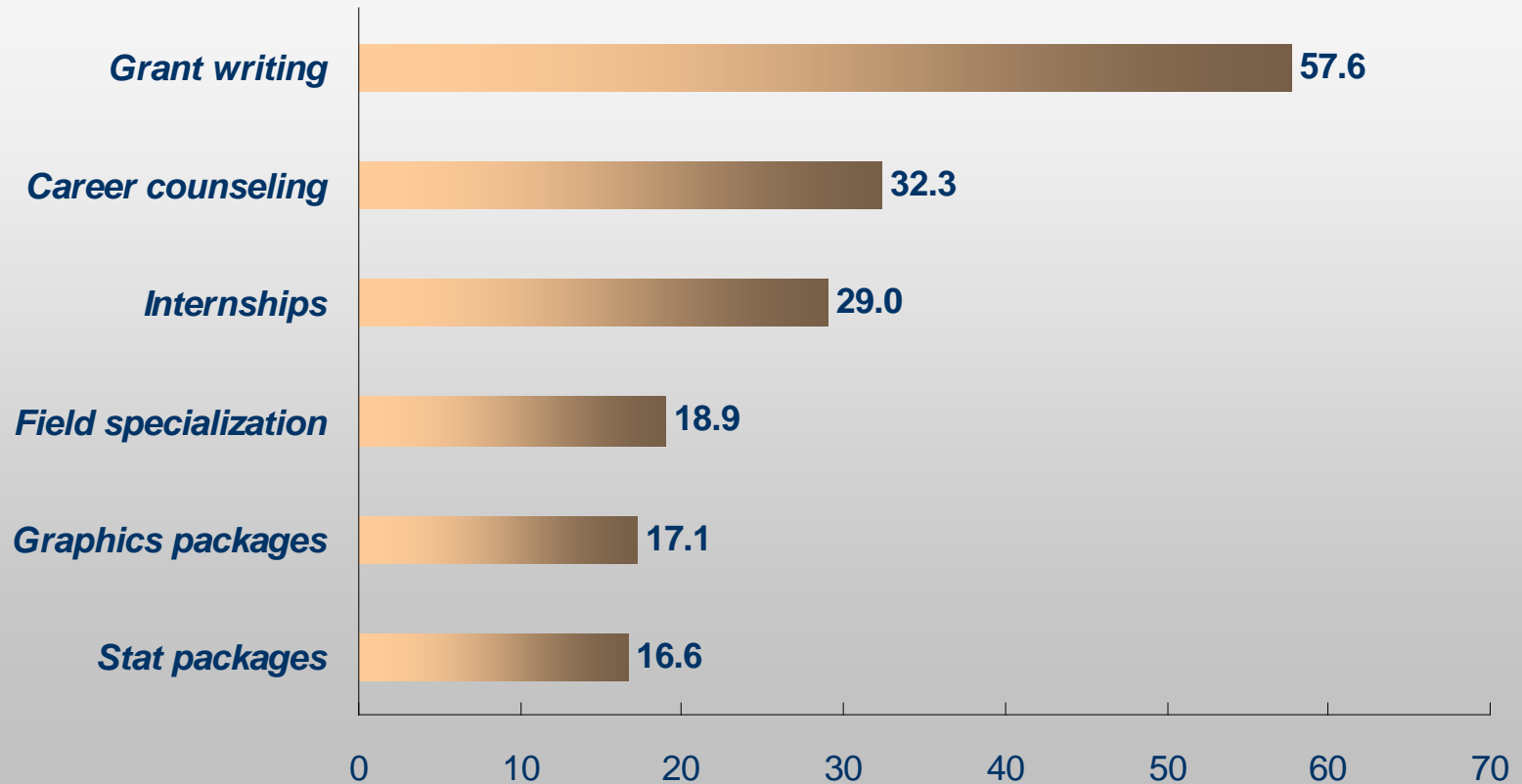
Figure 7. Skills Used by Sociology Master's Recipients Most Often on the Job
(in percents)



Source: ASA Research Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Master's Degree in Sociology?* 2009

Even though 2/3 of jobs require technical skills including computer, organizational, and report-writing skills, master's graduates report that "people skills" are the most widely used skills in their jobs.

Figure 8. What Do Working Sociology Master's Grads Wished They Had Learned?
(in percents)



Source: ASA Research Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Master's Degree in Sociology?* 2009

The majority of master's graduates wished they had learned grant-writing skills.

Table 3. Where Are They? Master's Degree Recipients: 2009

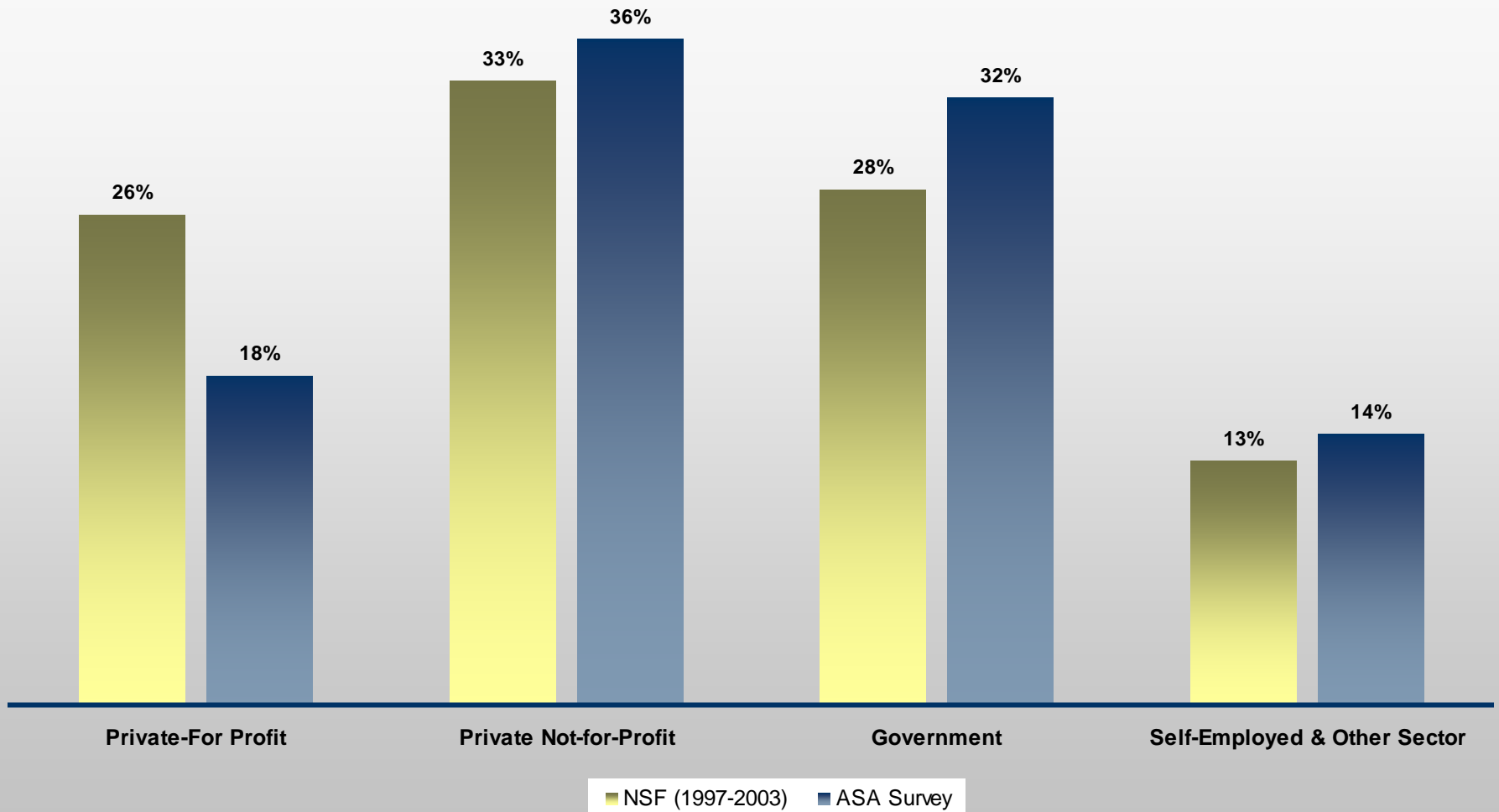
<i>Working Full-Time Jobs</i>	40%
<i>Research Assistants, Associates, Directors</i>	
<i>Program Coordination & Management</i>	
<i>Case Work & Counseling</i>	
<i>Attending Graduate School</i>	60.0%

Source: ASA Research Development Department, What Can I Do With a Master's Degree in Sociology? 2009

The majority of master's graduates were attending graduate school during the 2009 short follow-up survey. The 40% who were working in full time jobs clustered into 3 types of occupations: Research, Program Coordination and Case Work/Counseling.

Figure 9. PhD Sociologists Working in Non-Academic Employment Sectors

(Percentage of Total Non-Educational Labor Force)



Source: American Sociological Association, Research and Development Department, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: A Survey of Non-Academic PhD's in Sociology* (Washington, DC: ASA, 2006); National Science Foundation, Science Resource Statistics, *Characteristics of Doctoral Scientists and Engineers in the United States* (Arlington, VA: NSF, 1999-2006), retrieved December 15, 2006 (http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/pubseri.cfm?seri_id=13#1993).

The largest group (36%) of PhD sociologists are in applied, research, and policy positions in the private, not for profit sector and another 32% are working in the government sector.

Figure 10. Topical Area Characteristics of Non-Academic PhD Sociologists

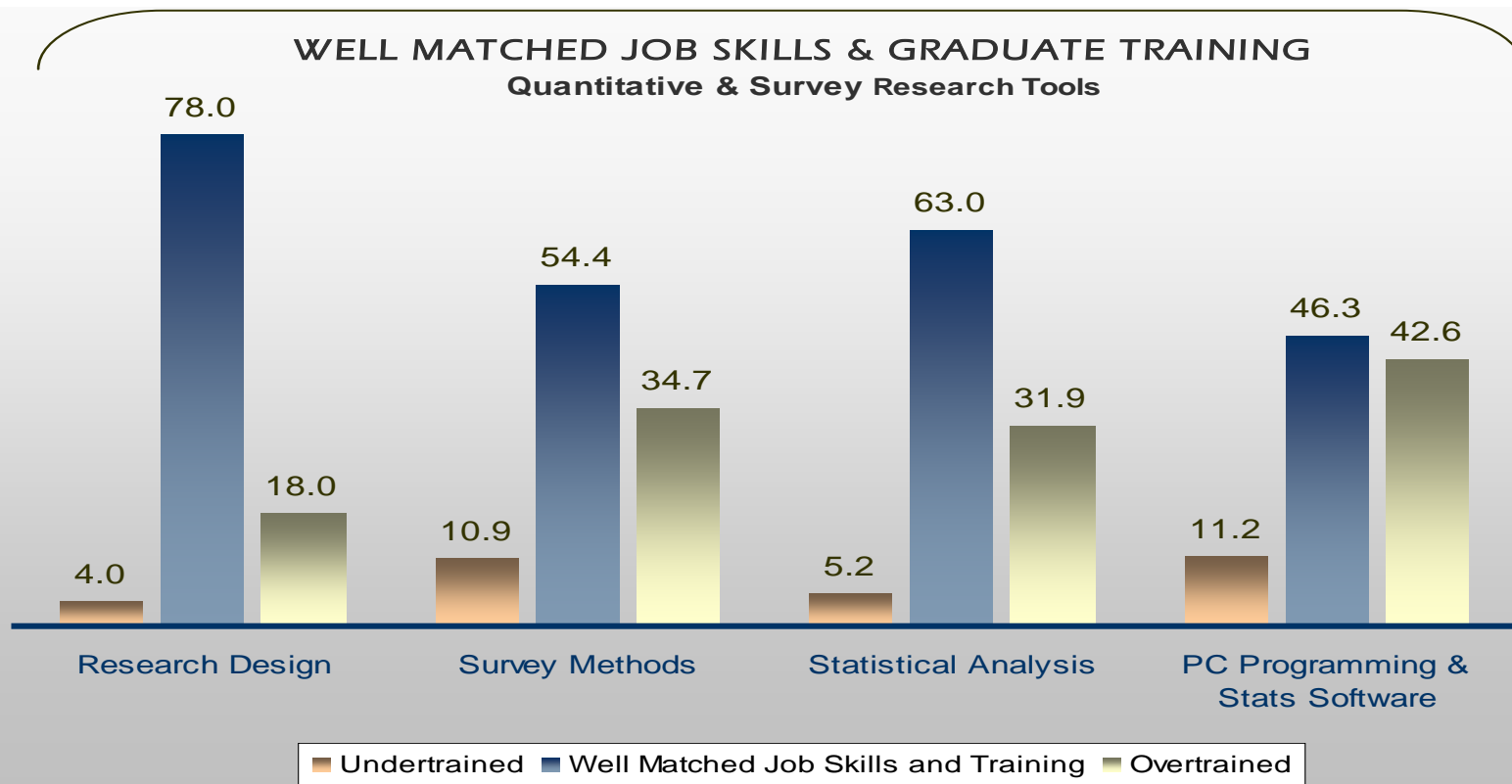
(Percentage of Respondents)



Source: American Sociological Association, Research and Development Department, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: A Survey of Non-Academic PhD's in Sociology* (Washington, DC: ASA, 2006).

Applied and public sociology PhD sociologists work on a wide variety of topics, with close to 1/3 working on health issues.

Figure 11. Skills Match between Graduate Training and Current Job for PhD Sociologists Working in Applied and Research Settings
(Percentage of Respondents)



NOTE:

Under Trained: Important skills for current job but less than adequate training in graduate school.

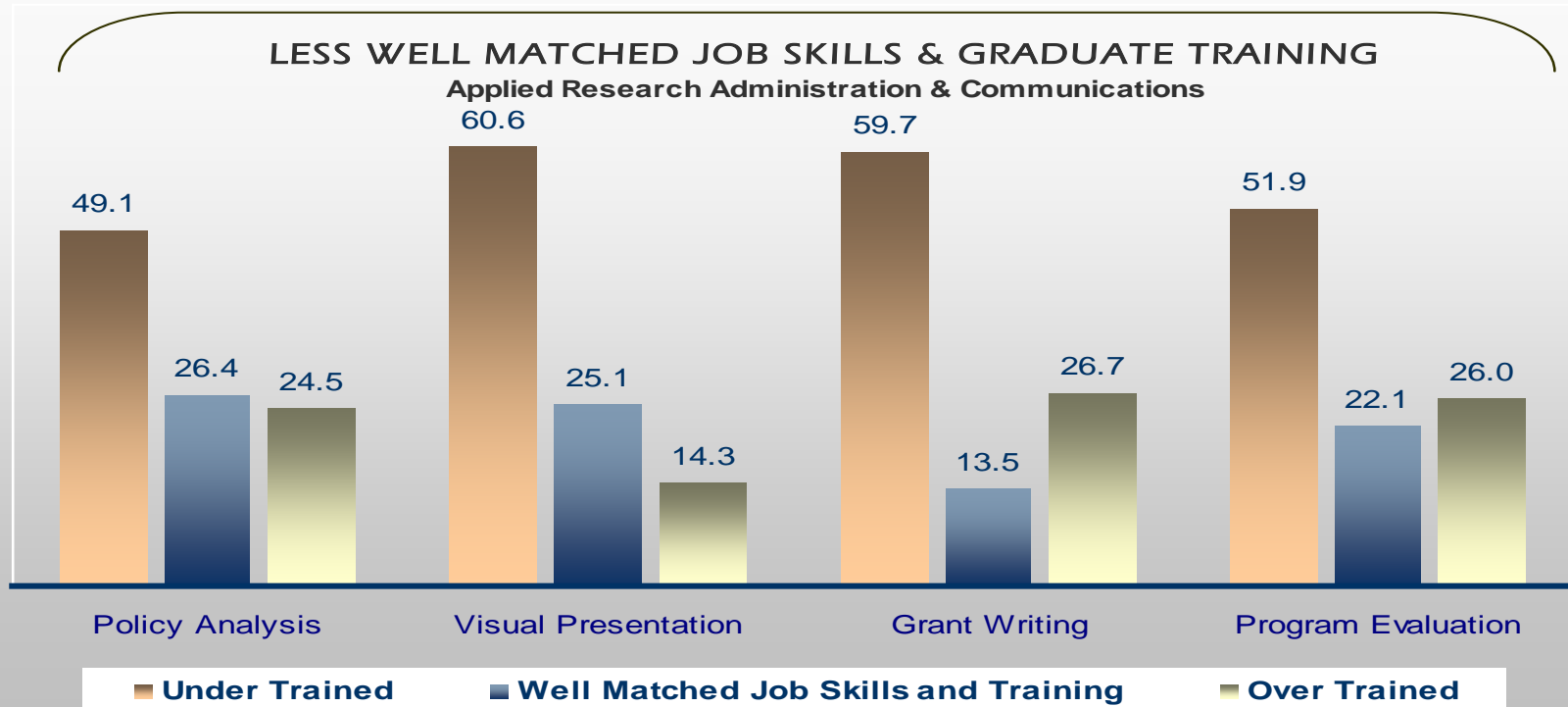
Well Matched Job Skills and Training: Important for current job and adequate graduate training.

Over Trained: Less important skill for current job although adequate graduate training.

Source: American Sociological Association, Research and Development Department, *Beyond The Ivory Tower: A Survey for the Ford Foundation of Non-Academic PhD's in Sociology: First Results* (Washington, DC: ASA, 2005, p.4).

Applied and public sociology PhD sociologists think that the best training they received was in research design and statistical analysis.

Figure 12. Skills Match between Graduate Training and Current Job for PhD Sociologists Working in Applied and Research Settings
(Percentage of Researchers Responding)



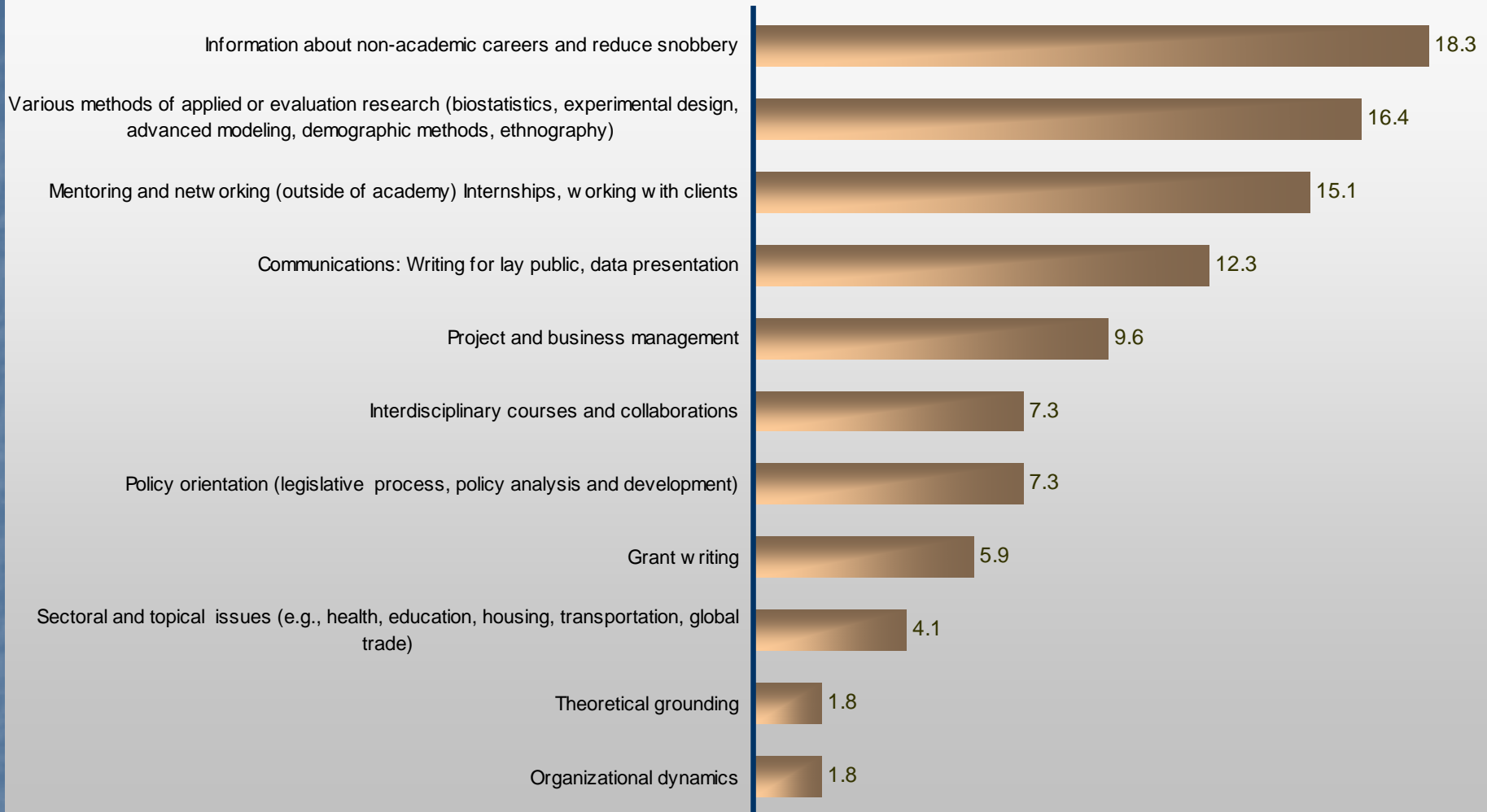
NOTE:

- Under Trained:** Important skills for current job but less than adequate training in graduate school.
- Well Matched Job Skills and Training:** Important for current job and adequate graduate training.
- Over Trained:** Less important skill for current job although adequate graduate training.

Source: American Sociological Association, Research and Development Department, *Beyond The Ivory Tower: A Survey for the Ford Foundation of Non-Academic PhD's in Sociology: First Results* (Washington, DC: ASA, 2005, p.4).

Applied and public sociology PhDs think that more training is needed in preparing visual presentations, grant writing and program evaluation.

**Figure 13. PhD Respondent Recommendations for Improving Graduate School Curriculum
(Percentage of Respondents)**



Source: American Sociological Association, Research and Development Department, *Beyond The Ivory Tower: A Survey for the Ford Foundation of Non-Academic PhD's in Sociology: First Results* (Washington, DC: ASA, 2005, p.4).

Applied and public PhD sociologists want more career information and less snobbery.

Suggestions for a "Jobless Recovery"

- Understand that a large majority of baccalaureate and master's graduates go into the paid labor market rather than to graduate school. The majority of those who go on to graduate school do not go on in sociology.
- Departments need to learn how to guide students to focus on careers that use their sociological skills without becoming career counselors. ASA's *Launching Majors into Satisfying Careers* <http://e-noah.net/asa/asashoponlineservice/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=ASAOE630R10> has many suggestions, as does information on the ASA career page.
- Set up external advisory boards, internships, alumni sessions, and other ways for students to network with non-academics.

Suggestions (cont.)

- Include grant-writing, graphics, and evaluation skills either in your department or via on-line courses or other departments.
- Ensure students learn research and computer skills and list these on their resumes.
- Emphasize health care as a subject area via courses on medical sociology, internship programs, or pairing with a professional program.
- Show data presented here to careers departments so they have a better idea of what sociologists do.
- Emphasize how sociology teaches about race, class, gender and working with diverse groups.
- Encourage PhD students to think about non-academic careers.