



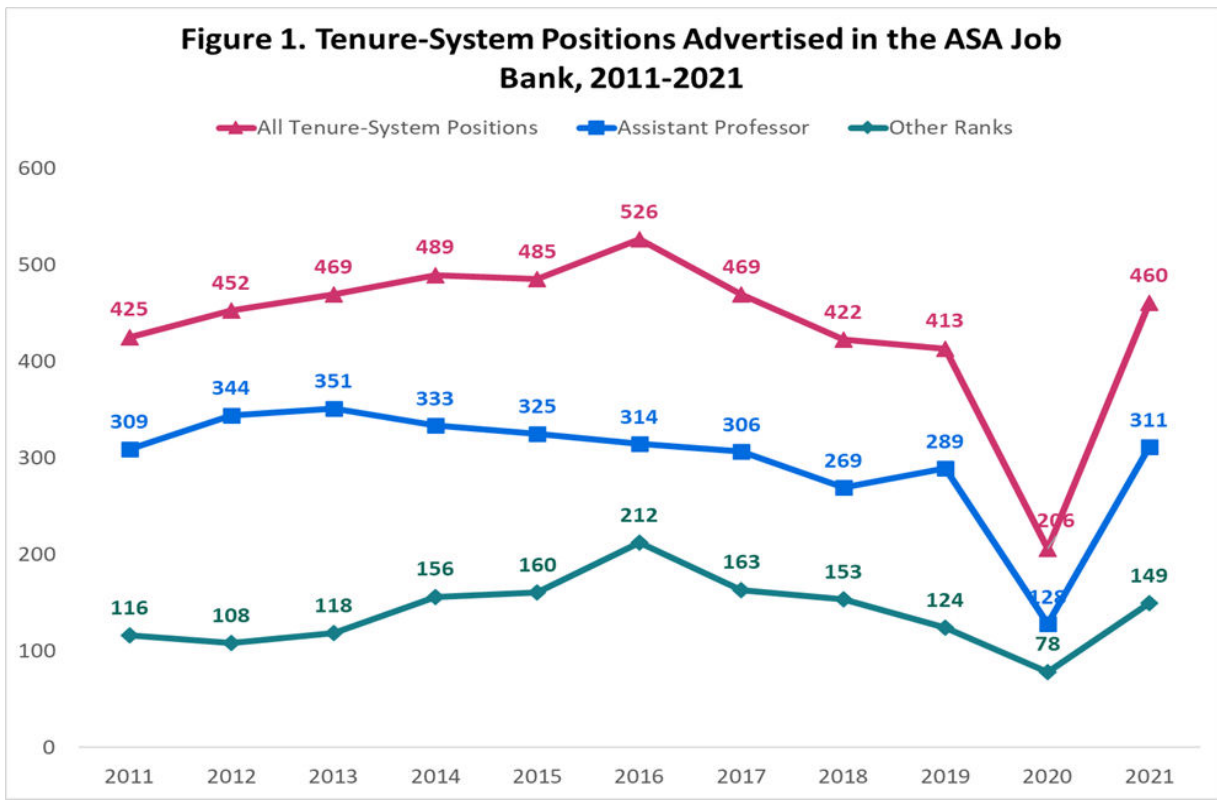
Positions Advertised in the ASA Job Bank Rebound in 2021

This brief reports on the positions advertised in the 2021 American Sociological Association (ASA) Job Bank. We report on each year’s Job Bank listings to document the direction of sociology as a field, and to inform job seekers and hiring units about the larger context in which their activities take place.

The ASA Job Bank is a primary source for job advertisements that may be of interest to sociologists, particularly for tenure-line and full-time visiting academic positions. There is no comprehensive source of job listings for sociologists with graduate degrees, but ASA is likely the best proxy available. We recognize that the ASA Job Bank does not represent the

universe of jobs available to sociologists; contingent and community college faculty positions and jobs outside of academia are likely underrepresented, for example, and most positions advertised are located in the United States. Thus, these data represent recent trends in the jobs advertised in the ASA Job Bank, not the jobs available for MA- and PhD-level sociologists more broadly.

Figure 1 presents trend lines for the number of tenure-system positions advertised in the ASA Job Bank from 2011 to 2021 (for detailed trend analysis and previous job bank reports, see [ASA Reports | American Sociological Association \(asanet.org\)](http://asanet.org)).



In 2021, the number of tenure-system positions recovered from the sudden drop in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and even surpassed some of the recent pre-pandemic numbers. There were 460 tenure-line positions advertised, more than double the 206 advertisements in 2020. While the number of positions had slowly been declining since the 2016 peak, the 2021 numbers rebounded to nearly the 2017 level.

The ASA Job Bank generally includes more academic positions at the rank of assistant professor than other ranks, and a large proportion of job seekers are recent or upcoming graduates interested in these entry-level rank positions. The number of tenure-track assistant professor positions more than doubled from 2020 to 311, and was comparable to the 2016 peak of 314. This recovery is seen across higher education during the 2021-22 academic year. (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/higher-eds-work-force-has-returned-to-its-pre-pandemic-size>.)

Table 1 reports the number and percent of all U.S.-based jobs advertised in the ASA Job Bank. In 2021, 857 positions in the U.S. were advertised, compared to 439 positions in 2020 and 734 in 2019.

While the overall number of jobs increased, the types of jobs advertised were proportionally similar to those in 2019. Nearly three-quarters (73.6 percent) of the 2021 positions were in the academic sector, up from 64.9 percent in 2020: 53.7 percent were for tenure-track positions, 16.2 percent were for non-tenure-track academic positions, and 3.7 percent were for academic administrators. Among the tenure-track positions, 67.6 percent were for assistant professors with an additional 8.3 percent open to either the assistant or associate level. This is slightly down from the assistant professor positions available in the Job Bank in 2019 (70 percent and 9.2 percent respectively) and similar to the proportion available in 2020. For the non-tenure-track academic positions, half (49.6 percent) were at the assistant professor

Table 1: All Positions in the ASA Job Bank by Category, 2021

	Count	Percent
Academic: Tenure-Track Positions		
Assistant Professor	311	67.6%
Associate Professor	36	7.8%
Full Professor	6	1.3%
Assistant or Associate Professor	38	8.3%
Open Rank	66	14.3%
Tenure Track Instructor	3	0.7%
Subtotal	460	100.0%
<i>Percentage of Total Positions Advertised</i>		53.7%
Academic: Non-Tenure-Track Positions		
Instructor/Lecturer	54	38.8%
Assistant Professor	17	12.2%
Visiting Assistant Professor	52	37.4%
Other	16	11.5%
Subtotal	139	100.0%
<i>Percentage of Total Positions Advertised</i>		16.2%
Academic: Administrators		
Chair/Head	10	31.3%
Other Administrator	22	68.8%
Subtotal	32	100.0%
<i>Percentage of Total Positions Advertised</i>		3.7%
Fellowships		
Predoctoral	6	3.5%
Postdoctoral	128	74.9%
Other	37	21.6%
Subtotal	171	100.0%
<i>Percentage of Total Positions Advertised</i>		20.0%
Sociological Practice		
Researcher/Statistician	32	58.2%
Director/Assistant Director	17	30.9%
Other	6	10.9%
Subtotal	55	100.0%
<i>Percentage of Total Positions Advertised</i>		6.4%
Total U.S. Positions Advertised	857	100.0%

level, with 37.4 percent explicitly calling these “visiting assistant positions”. This makes up a slightly smaller proportion of non-tenure-track positions than in 2019, where more than half (57.5) were advertised this way. Thirty-nine percent were for instructors or lecturers. Academic administrators were coded separately and not included in the tenure-track category. These positions include both department chairs/ heads (31 percent of this category) and other administrators (69 percent), which includes deans, program directors, and other administrative positions in the academic sector.

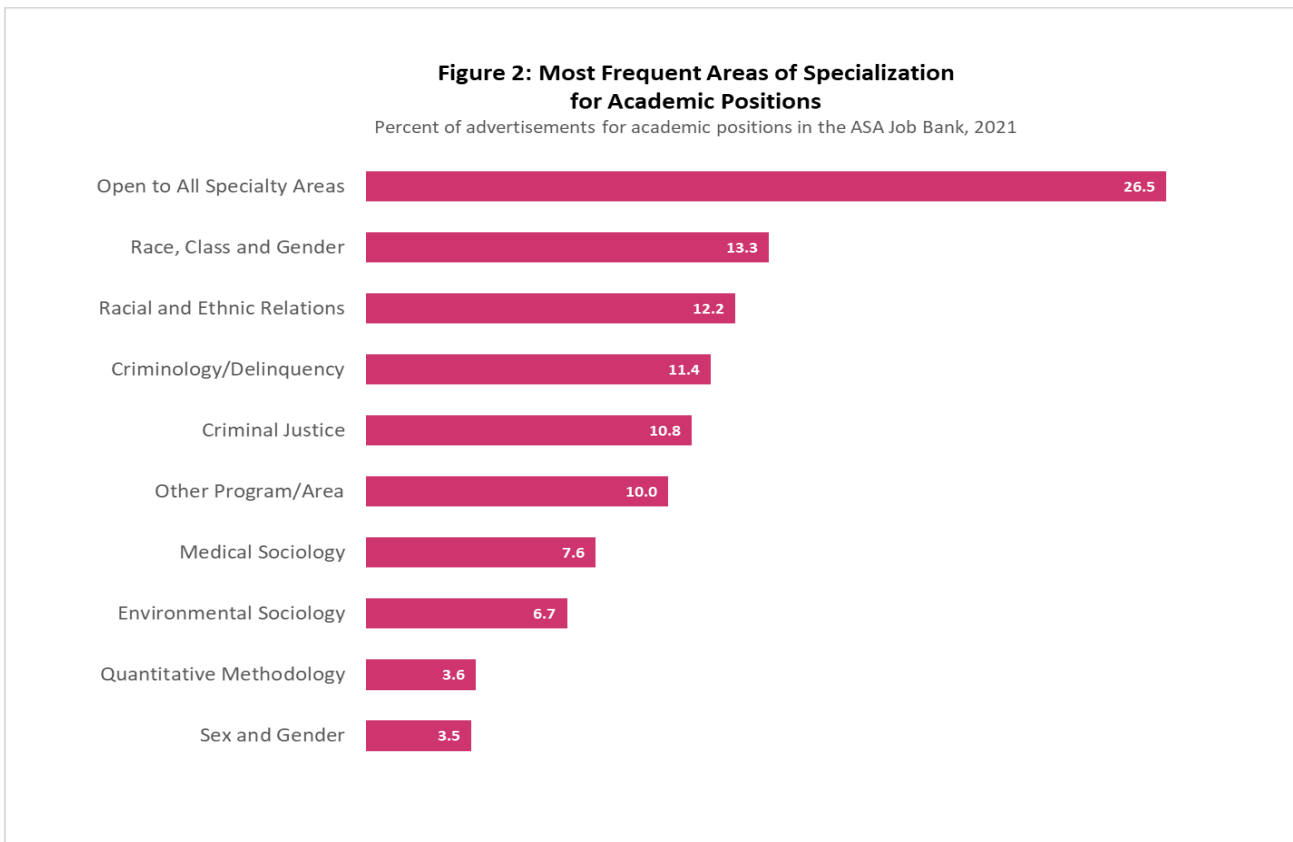
Twenty percent of the positions advertised in 2021 were fellowships, primarily postdoctoral fellowships, which is comparable to the proportion in 2019.

Finally, 6.4 percent of the positions in the Job Bank in 2021 were for jobs in sociological practice, down from a temporary bump in 2020 to 8.9 percent, but up from 4.6 percent in 2019 (these percentages represent 55 positions in 2021, 39 positions in 2020, and 35 positions in 2019). These positions include research

scientists, policy analysts, statisticians, and center directors. This is likely an undercount of the number and kinds of positions available to PhD sociologists in the non-academic sector. According to the 2021 Survey of Earned Doctorates, 28 percent of new PhD recipients in sociology had definite employment plans other than postdoctoral study and academic employment(<https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf23300/data-tables#group2>, Table 6-1).

Areas of Specialization

Figure 2 shows the areas of specialization sought most frequently in advertisements for academic positions, both tenure-track and non-tenure-track, in 2021. (For a complete list of the 61 areas that were sought in the advertisements, see Appendix A.) Like in previous years, open area positions were mentioned most frequently. When employers listed a specialization, race, class, and gender was the most frequently sought, followed by racial and ethnic relations. Other areas that were frequently requested in advertisements for academic positions were criminology; criminal justice; medical



sociology; environmental sociology; quantitative methodology; and sex and gender. Together, 69 percent of the academic positions advertised in 2021 were seeking sociologists with expertise in at least one of these eight topical areas.

As noted in Table 1, fewer fellowships and sociological practice positions are advertised in the ASA Job Bank than academic positions. Appendix B and Appendix C list the areas of specialization for these positions. The largest number of fellowships (113) were open to all areas, followed by racial and ethnic relations with 15 positions, and race, class, and gender, and science and technology, each with 10 positions. Twenty-three of the 55 positions in sociological practice were advertising open areas of specialization. Criminal justice was mentioned in nine of the advertisements for practice positions, followed by demography, public policy, and quantitative methodology, with four mentions each.

Although we do not have measures for the areas of expertise of graduate student job seekers, the sociology interest areas identified by student members of ASA could be a proxy measure. Appendix D presents these data. In 2021, the top five areas of interest for student members of ASA were education; race, class, and gender; family; migration/immigration; and theory. There seems to be a mismatch between the areas sought after by employers and the areas that ASA students are interested in. With the exception of race, class, and gender and sex and gender, the top specialties advertised, including criminal justice and medical sociology, are not among the top 10 interest areas among students. Similarly, the high proportion of student members in 2021 interested in education, family, and migration/immigration is not reflected in the position advertisements. A similar mismatch was evident in previous years.

Regions

Table 2 shows the geographic distribution of the academic, fellowship, and practice positions advertised in the ASA Job Bank in 2021. The

regions are based on U.S. Census Bureau definitions. Academic positions are pretty evenly spread throughout the country, with only a somewhat higher proportion in the Northeast (29 percent) and lower in the West (21 percent). Fellowships advertised in the Job Bank were more heavily concentrated in the Northeast (40 percent). For positions in practice settings, 35 percent of the advertisements were for positions in the South, followed by the Midwest (26 percent) and then the Northeast (22 percent).

Table 2: All Listings in the ASA Job Bank by U.S. Region, 2021

	N	Percent
Academic Positions		
Midwest	154	24.4%
Northeast	180	28.5%
South	163	25.8%
West	134	21.2%
All US Regions	0	0.0%
Total	631	100.0%
Fellowships		
Midwest	31	18.1%
Northeast	69	40.4%
South	23	13.5%
West	41	24.0%
All US Regions	7	4.1%
Total	171	100.0%
Practice Positions		
Midwest	14	25.5%
Northeast	12	21.8%
South	19	34.5%
West	6	10.9%
All US Regions	4	7.3%
Total	55	100.0%

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant dip in available jobs in 2020. Prior to the pandemic, the number of overall positions advertised in the Job Bank had been decreasing

since 2016. This report shows that the number of jobs available in 2021 rebounded above the most recent pre-pandemic years. The proportions of the types of jobs that were advertised also seemed to normalize as they were more like what was advertised in 2019. While the overall number of job advertisements increased from 2020, the number of assistant professor positions increased at a slightly higher rate compared to other ranks. The areas of specialization of interest to employers do not fully align with the research interests specified by ASA student members, although the largest share of positions is open to any specialty. The top areas desired by employers seem to reflect current issues, including those related to race relations, criminal justice, and climate change.

The recovery we see in the Job Bank is promising in that it not only made up for the dip in positions we saw in 2020, but increased to a level we had not seen since 2016. The subsequent analysis of the 2022 Job Bank will better show whether this was the result of departments temporarily overcompensating for the hiring freeze during the pandemic, or if this is a new, positive trend.

(For details on the methods used to conduct this analysis, see Appendix E at the end of this document.)

Appendix A. All Areas of Specialization or Expertise for Academic Positions Advertised in the ASA Job Bank, 2021

Area	Count	Percent	Area	Count	Percent
Open to All Specialty Areas	167	26.5%	Social Change	5	0.8%
Race, Class and Gender	84	13.3	Work and Labor Markets	5	0.8
Racial and Ethnic Relations	77	12.2	Collective Behavior/Social Movements	4	0.6
Criminology/Delinquency	72	11.4	Deviant Behavior/Social Disorganization	4	0.6
Criminal Justice	68	10.8	Peace, War, World Conflict, and Conflict Resolution	4	0.6
Other Program/Area	63	10.0	Rural Sociology	4	0.6
Medical Sociology	48	7.6	Biosociology	3	0.5
Environmental Sociology	42	6.7	Development	3	0.5
Quantitative Methodology	23	3.6	Sexualities	3	0.5
Sex and Gender	22	3.5	Stratification/Mobility	3	0.5
Law and Society	18	2.9	Alcohol and Drugs	2	0.3
Latina/o Sociology	17	2.7	Children and Youth	2	0.3
Public Policy	17	2.7	Comparative Sociology/Historical Sociology	2	0.3
Migration/Immigration	13	2.1	Labor and Labor Movements	2	0.3
Organizations, Formal and Complex	13	2.1	Occupations/Professions	2	0.3
Social Welfare/Social Work	13	2.1	Political Economy	2	0.3
Asians/Asian-Americans	12	1.9	Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity	1	0.2
Education	12	1.9	Ethnography (Anthropology)	1	0.2
Global and Transnational Sociology	12	1.9	Human Ecology	1	0.2
Social Psychology	12	1.9	Language/Social Linguistics	1	0.2
Communication and Information Technologies	11	1.7	Military Sociology	1	0.2
Economic Sociology	10	1.6	Policy Analysis	1	0.2
Family	10	1.6	Sociological Practice	1	0.2
Qualitative Methodology	9	1.4			
Urban Sociology	9	1.4			
Religion	8	1.3			
Aging/Social Gerontology	7	1.1			
Cultural Sociology	7	1.1			
Demography	7	1.1			
Social Organization	7	1.1			
Applied Sociology/Evaluation Research	6	1.0			
Community	6	1.0			
Science and Technology	6	1.0			
Statistics	6	1.0			
Theory	6	1.0			
Human Rights	5	0.8			
Mental Health	5	0.8			
Political Sociology	5	0.8			

Note: Employers can select up to two areas of specialization. Counts indicate the number of times each area was selected. The percentage indicates the proportion of the 631 academic positions that list the area.

Appendix B: All Areas of Specialization or Expertise for Fellowship Positions Posted in the ASA Job Bank, 2021

Area	Count	Percent
Open to All Specialty Areas	113	66.1%
Racial and Ethnic Relations	15	8.8
Race, Class, and Gender	10	5.8
Science and Technology	10	5.8
Aging/Social Gerontology	9	5.3
Economic Sociology	9	5.3
Public Policy	9	5.3
Demography	8	4.7
Comparative Sociology/Historical Sociology	7	4.1
Education	7	4.1
Global and Transnational Sociology	7	4.1
Other Program/Area	7	4.1
Religion	7	4.1
Asians/Asian-Americans	5	2.9
Criminal Justice	5	2.9
Latina/o Sociology	5	2.9
Political Economy	5	2.9
Sex and Gender	5	2.9
Social Psychology	5	2.9
Cultural Sociology	4	2.3
Medical Sociology	4	2.3
Policy Analysis	4	2.3
Political Sociology	4	2.3
Environmental Sociology	3	1.8
Work and Labor Markets	3	1.8
Development	2	1.2
Mental Health	2	1.2
Migration/Immigration	2	1.2
Quantitative Methodology	2	1.2
Alcohol and Drugs	1	0.6
Biosociology	1	0.6
Collective Behavior/Social Movements	1	0.6
Communication and Information Technologies	1	0.6
Community	1	0.6
Criminology/Delinquency	1	0.6
History of Sociology/Social Thought	1	0.6
Labor and Labor Movements	1	0.6
Occupations/Professions	1	0.6
Qualitative Methodology	1	0.6
Sociological Practice	1	0.6
Urban Sociology	1	0.6
Social Networks	1	0.6

Note: Employers can select up to two areas of specialization. Counts indicate the number of times each area was selected. The percentage indicates the proportion of the 171 fellowship positions that list the area.

Appendix C: All Areas of Specialization or Expertise for Practice Positions Posted in the ASA Job Bank, 2021

Area	Count	Percent
Open to All Specialty Areas	23	41.8%
Criminal Justice	9	16.4
Demography	4	7.3
Public Policy	4	7.3
Quantitative Methodology	4	7.3
Economic Sociology	3	5.5
Other Program/Area	3	5.5
Race, Class and Gender	3	5.5
Science and Technology	3	5.5
Statistics	3	5.5
Applied Sociology/Evaluation Research	2	3.6
Children and Youth	2	3.6
Education	2	3.6
Medical Sociology	2	3.6
Qualitative Methodology	2	3.6
Biosociology	1	1.8
Criminology/Delinquency	1	1.8
Cultural Sociology	1	1.8
Development	1	1.8
Environmental Sociology	1	1.8
Family	1	1.8
Global and Transnational Sociology	1	1.8
Labor and Labor Movements	1	1.8
Racial and Ethnic Relations	1	1.8
Social Change	1	1.8
Social Psychology	1	1.8
Social Welfare/Social Work	1	1.8
Sociological Practice	1	1.8
Stratification/Mobility	1	1.8
Work and Labor Markets	1	1.8
Social Networks	1	1.8

Note: Employers can select up to two areas of specialization. Counts indicate the number of times each area was selected. The percentage indicates the proportion of the 55 positions in practice settings that list the area.

Appendix D: ASA Student Member Interest Areas, 2021

Interest areas	Count	Percent	Interest areas	Count	Percent
Education	348	9.8%	Social Change	66	1.9%
Race, Class and Gender	332	9.4	Deviant Behavior/Social Disorganization	67	1.9
Family	311	8.8	Law and Society	68	1.9
Migration/Immigration	248	7	Mass Communication/Public Opinion	64	1.8
Theory	216	6.1	Ethnography (Anthropology)	64	1.8
Political Economy	204	5.7	Environmental Sociology	60	1.7
Disabilities	197	5.5	Organizations, Formal and Complex	60	1.7
Alcohol and Drugs	197	5.5	Labor and Labor Movements	58	1.6
Sex and Gender	191	5.4	Teaching and Learning in Sociology	52	1.5
Urban Sociology	184	5.2	Demography	53	1.5
Latina/o Sociology	179	5	Criminology/Delinquency	55	1.5
Art/Music	167	4.7	Religion	54	1.5
Qualitative Methodology	167	4.7	Rational Choice	54	1.5
Quantitative Methodology	163	4.6	Body and Embodiment	50	1.4
Racial and Ethnic Relations	151	4.3	Mathematical Sociology	48	1.4
Cultural Sociology	142	4	Animals and Society	45	1.3
Stratification/Mobility	134	3.8	Marxist Sociology	46	1.3
Rural Sociology	135	3.8	Applied Sociology/Evaluation Research	44	1.2
Children and Youth	130	3.7	Aging/Social Gerontology	44	1.2
Political Sociology	130	3.7	Emotions	40	1.1
Criminal Justice	132	3.7	History of Sociology/Social Thought	38	1.1
Community	128	3.6	Statistics	39	1.1
Global and Transnational Sociology	121	3.4	Communication and Information Technologies	34	1
Medical Sociology	119	3.4	Knowledge	37	1
Science and Technology	122	3.4	Language/Social Linguistics	35	1
Social Psychology	110	3.2	Human Rights	32	0.9
Comparative Sociology/Historical Sociology	105	3	Socialization	32	0.9
Development	108	3	Other	31	0.9
Collective Behavior/Social Movements	107	3	Sociological Practice	28	0.8
Economic Sociology	100	2.8	Evolution and Society	28	0.8
Occupations/Professions	96	2.7	Social Control	28	0.8
Public Policy	88	2.5	Policy Analysis	25	0.7
Small Groups	88	2.5	Military Sociology	26	0.7
Sexualities	84	2.4	Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity	20	0.6
Work and Labor Markets	86	2.4	Leisure/Sports/Recreation	20	0.6
Clinical Sociology	74	2.1	Visual Sociology	23	0.6
Biosociology	75	2.1	Consumers and Consumption	20	0.6
Asians/Asian-Americans	75	2.1	Social Welfare/Social Work	19	0.5
Social Networks	73	2.1	Penology/Corrections	17	0.5
Social Organization	72	2	Ethnomethodology/Conversational Analysis	15	0.4
Mental Health	68	1.9	Human Ecology	9	0.3
Peace, War, World Conflict, and Conflict Resolution	67	1.9	Microcomputing	0	0
				Total Student Members	3550

Source: American Sociological Association Membership Database, 2021

Note: Members may select up to four areas of "sociological interest" on their membership forms.

Appendix E: Methodological Notes

The data used in this report come from all advertisements that appeared in the ASA Job Bank in 2021. Information for the Job Bank is entered by employers, including department chairs, human resource professionals, and administrative staff. From these administrative data, an analytical dataset with one record for each advertisement was created; each record included the job titles, descriptions, position ranks, areas of expertise, tenure status, and regions that were provided by the employers. Additional cases were added to the dataset for any job descriptions advertising more than one position (11 percent of the ads) to ensure each available position would be included in the analysis. Any positions based outside of the U.S. or that were identified as duplicate advertisements were removed from the dataset.

Employers were required to select a position-rank from a dropdown menu of 25 options: Academic Positions: All; Academic Positions: Instructor; Academic Positions: Lecturer; Academic Positions: Assistant Professor; Academic Positions: Associate Professor; Academic Positions: Full Professor; Academic Positions: Other; Academic Positions: Assistant/Associate Professor; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: All; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Researcher; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Director; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Assistant Director; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Training; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Program Manager; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Statistician; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Human Relations/Personnel; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Clinical Work; Sociological Practice/Applied/Other: Other; Fellowships/Post-docs: All; Fellowships/Post-docs: Predoctoral; Fellowships/Postdocs: Postdoctoral; Fellowships/Postdocs: Other; and Open. When the position-rank chosen by the employer from the dropdown was inconsistent with the job title as entered by the employer, the job description was used to determine the position-rank to include in the analysis. In addition, a “Visiting Assistant Professor” position was created using the job title and job description. Fifty-two of the 69 non-tenure track assistant professor positions were coded as “Visiting”. Every position labeled “open” was also reviewed and recoded into one of the other categories as appropriate; 3 were academic positions, 7 were positions in the practice sector, and 12 were fellowships. The remaining 11 were open rank academic positions and were renamed to reflect this.

For job descriptions with two ranks indicated, a standard set of recategorization rules was applied. Jobs that were at the assistant or associate level are coded in their own category; and jobs at the associate or full level are included in the associate category. In total, 213 position-ranks were recoded.

Employers could describe the tenure status of the position by selecting one of the following categories from a dropdown menu: tenure-track, tenured, tenure-eligible, not tenure-track, and not applicable. For all academic positions, the tenure status item was reviewed. If the status chosen by the employer was inconsistent with the job title entered by the employer (e.g., a “Visiting Assistant Professor” position was listed as tenure-track), tenure status was coded to reflect the information in the job description. If the description was ambiguous, tenure status was left as the employer submitted it. In all, tenure status was recoded for 161 positions. The tenure-track category in the analysis includes both tenure-track and tenured positions.

The academic administrator category was created based on job title, position-rank, and job description. Administrators who are also professors (e.g., department chairs) are not included in the professor counts.

Employers are required to select one area of expertise from a dropdown list of 82 areas of specialization in sociology; they have the option to select a second area as well. The areas of “teaching and learning in sociology,” “education,” and “sociological practice” are sometimes chosen by employers to describe the sector or type of employment, rather than the area of sociological specialization for the position.

Advertisements that had one of these three areas as an area of expertise were reviewed: when the job description indicated an area of specialization that was inconsistent with the one chosen by the employer, it was recoded to be consistent with the description. This was the case for almost half of the 25 positions labeled with “education” and 5 of the 8 positions labeled “sociological practice.” In addition, all 4 of the positions labeled as “teaching and learning in sociology” were also recoded to reflect areas of expertise in the descriptions. Counts for areas of specialization are based on the number of times the area was selected as the first or second area of specialization. Percentages report the proportion of positions that mention that area.

When joining or renewing their ASA membership, sociologists are asked to identify their areas of interest from among the same list of 82 areas. The areas of interest selected by ASA student members was used as a proxy measure of interest area supply.

The geographic location of each position was recoded into Census categories based on the location of the employer. The “All U.S. Regions” category includes fully remote positions and positions that could be filled in one of several regional offices.