

# OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK

[OOH HOME](#) | [OCCUPATION FINDER](#) | [OOH FAQ](#) | [HOW TO FIND A JOB](#) | [A-Z INDEX](#) | [OOH SITE MAP](#)

Search Handbook

Go

## Sociologists

PRINTER-FRIENDLY 

[Summary](#)

[What They Do](#)

[Work Environment](#)

[How to Become One](#)

[Pay](#)

[Job Outlook](#)

[State & Area Data](#)

[Similar Occupations](#)

[More Info](#)

### Summary



#### [Job Outlook](#)

Employment of sociologists is projected to grow 7 percent from 2023 to 2033, faster than the average for all occupations.

About 300 openings for sociologists are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

#### [State & Area Data](#)

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for sociologists.

#### [Similar Occupations](#)

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of sociologists with similar occupations.

#### [More Information, Including Links to O\\*NET](#)

Learn more about sociologists by visiting additional resources, including O\*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

[What They Do ->](#)

## What Sociologists Do



Some sociologists conduct interviews for their research.

Sociologists study society and social behavior by examining the groups, cultures, organizations, social institutions, and processes that develop when people interact and work together.

### Duties

Sociologists typically do the following:

- Design research projects to test theories about social issues
- Collect data through surveys, observations, interviews, and other sources
- Analyze and draw conclusions from data
- Prepare reports, articles, or presentations detailing their research findings
- Collaborate with and advise other social scientists, policymakers, or other groups on research findings and sociological issues

Sociologists study human behavior, interaction, and organization. They observe the activity of social, religious, political, and economic groups, organizations, and institutions. They examine the effect of social influences, including organizations and institutions, on different individuals and groups. They also trace the origin and growth of these groups and interactions. For example, they may research the impact of a new law or policy on a specific demographic.

Sociologists often use both quantitative and qualitative methods when conducting research, and they frequently use statistical analysis programs during the research process.

Their research may help administrators, educators, lawmakers, and social workers to solve social problems and formulate public policy. Sociologists may specialize in a wide range of social topics, including, but not limited to:

- education and health;
- crime and poverty;
- families and population;
- and gender, racial, and ethnic relations.

Sociologists who specialize in crime may be called *criminologists* or *penologists*. These workers apply their sociological knowledge to conduct research and analyze penal systems and populations and to study the causes and effects of crime.

Many people with a sociology background become [postsecondary teachers](#) and [high school teachers](#). Most others find work in related jobs outside the sociologist profession such as policy analysts, demographers, [survey researchers](#), and [statisticians](#).

[<- Summary](#)

[Work Environment ->](#)

## Work Environment



Sociologists may work outside of an office setting when conducting research through interviews or observations or presenting research results.

Sociologists held about 3,300 jobs in 2023. The largest employers of sociologists were as follows:

Scientific research and development services	30%
Educational services; state, local, and private	23

State government, excluding education and hospitals 19

Local government, excluding education and hospitals 6

Sociologists typically work in an office. They may work outside of an office setting when conducting research through interviews or observations or presenting research results.

## Work Schedules

Most sociologists work full time during regular business hours.

[← What They Do](#)

[How to Become One →](#)

# How to Become a Sociologist



Many sociology programs offer opportunities to gain experience through internships or by preparing reports.

Sociologists typically need at least a master's degree to enter the occupation. Bachelor's degree holders may find positions in related fields, such as social services, education, or public policy.

## Education

Sociologists typically need a master's degree or Ph.D. to enter the occupation. There are two types of sociology master's degree programs: traditional programs and applied, clinical, and professional programs. Traditional programs prepare students to enter a Ph.D. program. Applied, clinical, and professional programs prepare students to enter the workplace, teaching them the necessary analytical skills to perform sociological research in a professional setting.

Courses in research methods and statistics are important for candidates in both master's and Ph.D. programs. Many programs also offer opportunities to gain experience through internships or by preparing reports for clients.

Jobseekers who have a bachelor's [degree](#) in sociology may find entry-level positions in related fields, such as social services, education, or public policy.

## Other Experience

Candidates with a bachelor's degree may benefit from internships or volunteer work when looking for entry-level positions in sociology or a related field. These types of opportunities give students a chance to apply their academic knowledge in a professional setting and develop skills needed for the field.

## Important Qualities

**Analytical skills.** Sociologists must be able to examine data and other information, often using statistical methods to test their theories.

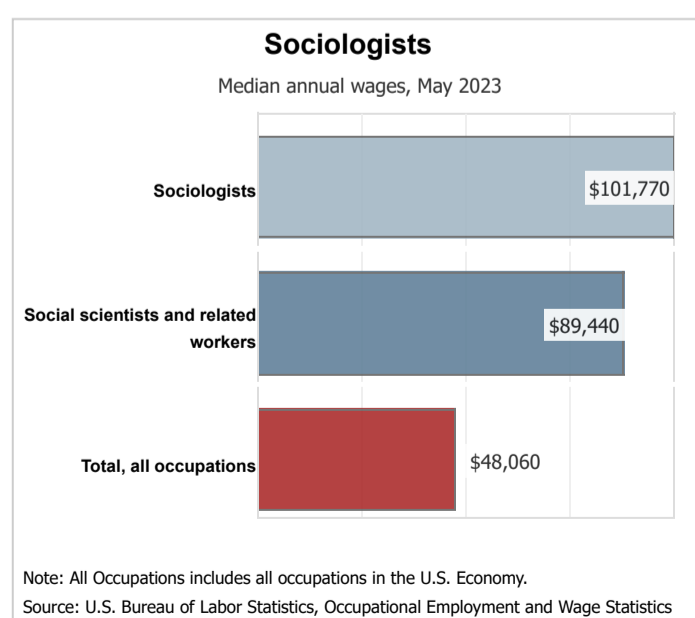
**Communication skills.** Sociologists need strong communication skills when they conduct interviews, collaborate with colleagues, and write and present research results.

**Critical-thinking skills.** Sociologists design research projects and collect, process, and analyze information to draw logical conclusions about society and various groups of people.

[← Work Environment](#)

[Pay →](#)

# Pay



The median annual wage for sociologists was \$101,770 in May 2023. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$59,960, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$165,280.

In May 2023, the median annual wages for sociologists in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

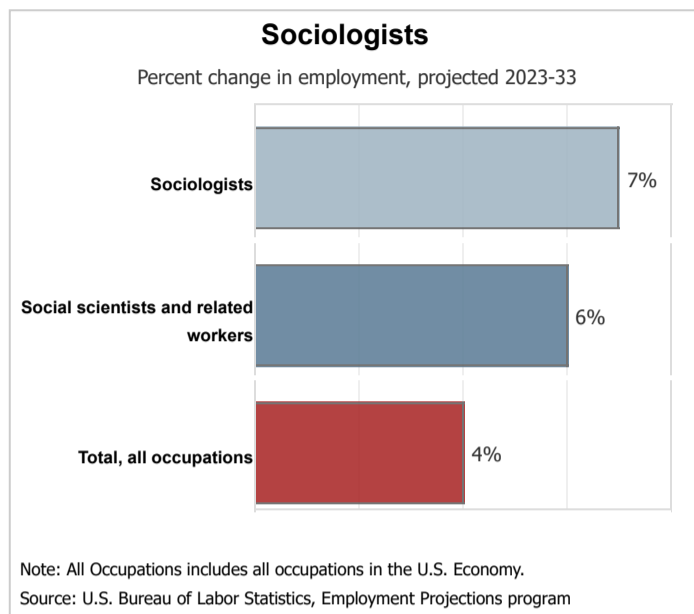
Scientific research and development services	\$98,040
State government, excluding education and hospitals	93,800
Local government, excluding education and hospitals	88,380
Educational services; state, local, and private	86,800

Most sociologists work full time during regular business hours.

[<- How to Become One](#)

[Job Outlook ->](#)

## Job Outlook



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About 300 openings for sociologists are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

### Employment

Sociologists will continue to be needed to apply sociological research to other disciplines. For example, sociologists may collaborate with researchers in other social sciences, such as [economists](#), [psychologists](#), and [survey researchers](#), to study how social structures or groups influence policy decisions about health, education, politics, criminal justice, business, or economics.

### Employment projections data for sociologists, 2023-33

<b>Sociologists</b>
<b>SOC Code:</b> 19-3041
<b>Employment, 2023:</b> 3,300
<b>Projected Employment, 2033:</b> 3,600
<b>Change, 2023-33 (Percent):</b> 7
<b>Change, 2023-33 (Numeric):</b> 200
<b>Employment By Industry:</b> <a href="#">Get data</a>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

[<- Pay](#)

[State & Area Data ->](#)

## State & Area Data

### Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)

The [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics](#) (OEWS) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OEWS data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

[Sociologists](#)

### Projections Central

Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at [www.projectionscentral.org](http://www.projectionscentral.org). Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state's websites where these data may be retrieved.

CareerOneStop includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

[<- Job Outlook](#)[Similar Occupations ->](#)

## Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of sociologists.

### [Anthropologists and Archeologists](#)

**Job Duties:**

Anthropologists and archeologists study the origin, development, and behavior of humans.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$63,800

### [Economists](#)

**Job Duties:**

Economists conduct research, prepare reports, and evaluate issues related to monetary and fiscal policy. They also may collect and analyze statistical data.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$115,730

### [Geographers](#)

**Job Duties:**

Geographers study the Earth and the distribution of its land, features, and inhabitants.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Bachelor's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$90,880

### [Historians](#)

**Job Duties:**

Historians research, analyze, interpret, and write about the past by studying historical documents and sources.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$72,890

### [Mathematicians and Statisticians](#)

**Job Duties:**

Mathematicians and statisticians analyze data and apply computational techniques to solve problems.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$104,860

### [Political Scientists](#)

**Job Duties:**

Political scientists study the origin, development, and operation of political systems.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$132,350

### [Postsecondary Teachers](#)

**Job Duties:**

Postsecondary teachers instruct students in a variety of academic subjects beyond the high school level.

**Entry-Level Education:**

[See How to Become One](#)

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$84,380

### [Psychologists](#)

**Job Duties:**

Psychologists study cognitive, emotional, and social processes and behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people relate to one another and to their environments.

**Entry-Level Education:**

[See How to Become One](#)

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$92,740

### [Social Workers](#)

**Job Duties:**

Social workers help people prevent and cope with problems in their everyday lives.

**Entry-Level Education:**

[See How to Become One](#)

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$58,380

**[Survey Researchers](#)****Job Duties:**

Survey researchers design and conduct surveys and analyze data.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$60,960

**[Urban and Regional Planners](#)****Job Duties:**

Urban and regional planners develop comprehensive plans and programs for use of land and physical facilities in cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and other jurisdictions.

**Entry-Level Education:**

Master's degree

**2023 Median Pay:**

\$81,800

[-< State & Area Data](#)

[More Info ->](#)

## Contacts for More Information

For more information about careers in sociology, visit

[American Sociological Association](#) 

O\*NET

[Sociologists](#) 

[-< Similar Occupations](#)

**SUGGESTED CITATION:**

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Sociologists, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/sociologists.htm> (visited September 27, 2024).

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U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections PSB Suite 2135 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE Washington, DC 20212-0001

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