

ASA RESEARCH BRIEF

AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

February 2008



HOW DOES OUR MEMBERSHIP GROW?

INDICATORS OF CHANGE BY GENDER, RACE AND ETHNICITY,
AND DEGREE TYPE, 2001-2007

By Roberta Spalter-Roth and Janene Scelza

Over the course of its 100-year history, the American Sociological Association (ASA) has gone through cycles of growth and decline in its membership (starting with 115 members in 1906). Recent cycles included a period of small but steady decline between 1990 and 2000 followed by a turnaround with the beginning of the new century when the Association saw a period of small but steady growth each year. Between 2001 and 2007, the membership grew by 17 percent to its 2007 total of 14,763 members.¹ This latest in a series of research briefs on ASA's membership shows changes between 2001 and 2007 among regular members—the largest groups of members. It profiles overall changes in membership characteristics, but focuses mainly on changes in the gender and race/ethnic composition of regular members. In addition, it

provides a first look at the characteristics of those regular members for whom a master's is their highest degree.

The findings cited here should be read with caution since they may not reflect perfectly the changes that are occurring within ASA and may not be representative of all advanced-degree sociologists. For example, not all members answer every item and so the demographic characteristics of members who do answer these items may not be perfectly reflective of all members. Further, only about one-third of all sociology PhDs, according to the National Science Foundation's Survey of Doctoral Recipients,² and about 2 to 3 percent of all sociologists whose highest degree is a master's are members of the Association.³

¹ This figure was as of the end of October 2007, the official end of the membership year.

² These findings are based on comparisons with the National Science Foundation/Division of Science Resources Statistics 2003 Survey of Doctoral Recipients.

³ For information on the number of PhDs in sociology and the number of sociologists whose latest degree is a Masters, go to the SESTAT data base (<http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/sestat/>) and create tables using the "most recent degree type" and "field of major for most recent degree (best code)" variables.

The number of regular members who answered that they were female surpassed the number who answered that they were male (3,925 versus 3,852) for the first time in ASA's 102-year history.

OVERALL CHANGES

TYPE OF MEMBERS As of 2007, 54 percent of the membership were regular members (that is, voting members of the Association who most often are full-time faculty members in sociology departments) and 32 percent were student members (only full-time students qualify for this category), with the remainder categorized as associate, emeritus, and lifetime members. About two-thirds of the regular members hold PhD degrees. During the 2001-2007 period, student members grew by 44 percent compared to 12 percent for regular members. Student members were much more likely to cycle in and out of membership (about 40 percent do from year to year), often based on whether or not they are presenting papers at a given ASA Annual Meeting, while regular members are less likely to do so (about 5 percent do so from year to year).

TYPE OF DEPARTMENT Regular ASA members were most likely to be employed in a university offering a graduate degree in sociology. This is because graduate departments tend to be larger than other types of departments and employ more sociologists compared to the greater number of smaller departments. In 2007, 1,108 regular members were employed at four-year colleges compared to 3,853 members who were employed in graduate-degree

granting departments. Yet, between 2001 and 2007 the share of members in four-year colleges that awarded a bachelor's degree increased at nearly twice the rate as those offering a graduate degree (100 percent compared to 53 percent). Although their numbers are small, there was also a 93 percent increase in the number of ASA members at community colleges (for a total of 362 members). A smaller percentage increase (44 percent) was found at universities that only granted bachelor's degrees sociology, which may represent the loss of advanced degrees in some departments of sociology.

GROSS ANNUAL INCOME In 2007, the modal share of the membership (31 percent) reported that their gross income was \$70,000 and above (the highest income category). This income category also saw the greatest growth between 2001 and 2007. The modal category for full-time employees is \$70,000 and above. In contrast to the growth at the top of the income ladder, the second largest growth category was at the bottom. The figures show a 23 percent increase in regular members with incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Many of these members are employed part time. To our surprise, there was a decline in the share of members in the middle with a 13 percent decline in the \$30,000-\$40,000 income category and a 3 percent decline in the \$40,000-\$50,000 category. This decline in the middle of the income distribution may be explained by the increase in the average faculty member's salaries (not controlled for inflation) over this period. By academic year 2006-2007, the average assistant professor's salary was \$51,000, above the two categories that saw declines in membership.

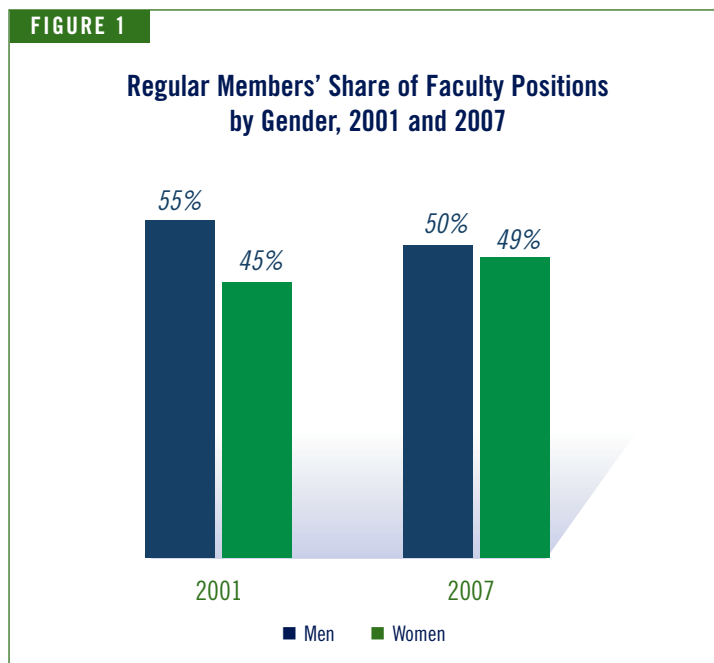
GENDER SHIFTS

Almost 100 percent of members reported their gender in 2007. The number of regular members who answered that they were female surpassed the number who answered that they were male (3,925 versus 3,852) for the first time in ASA's

102-year history. By 2007 women represented slightly more than half of the regular membership. Of these regular members 64 percent of women and 69 percent of men held PhDs.

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS Between 2001 and 2007, the membership data suggest that women sociologists had broken through the glass ceiling in an academic labor market that historically consigned many to part-time positions outside of research universities. Although some indicators suggest that women continued to make progress, others suggest standing still. For example, the gap in full-time employment between women and men who were regular members decreased between 2001 and 2007. By 2007, the numbers of women employed full time compared to men were almost at parity, with 88 percent of women employed in full-time positions compared to 92 percent of men. Yet, the percent of women in full-time positions remained unchanged since 2005, despite the increase in the number of members in this category.

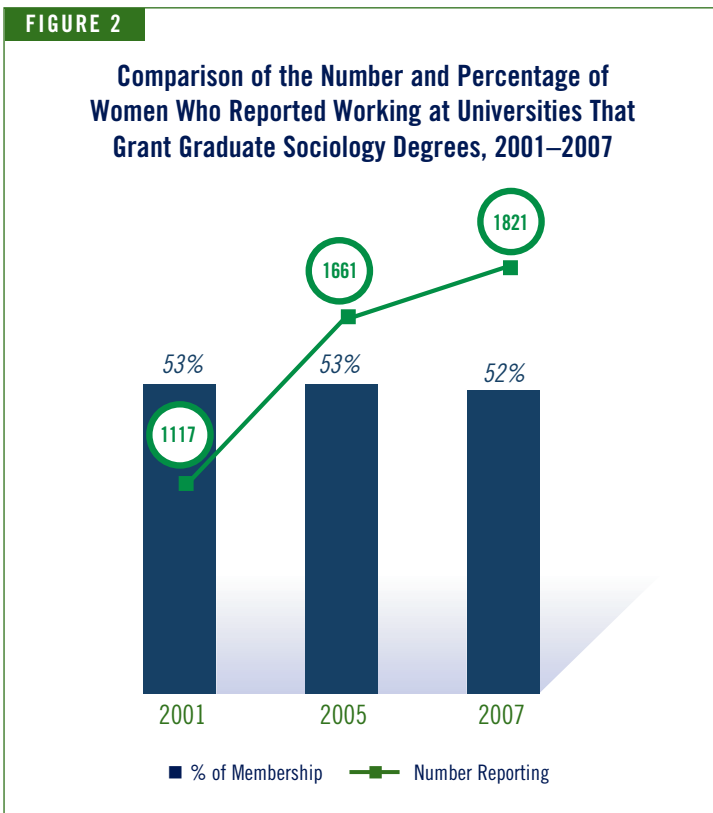
In 2001, women ASA members held 45 percent of faculty positions compared to 55 percent held by men. By 2007, the share held by women had increased to 49 percent (see Figure 1). This change does not mean that women are in similar ranks as men. Unfortunately, the membership form does not ask for information on rank. We will need to wait for the forthcoming results of the ASA Department Survey to see gender differences by rank in AY 2006–2007. In AY 2000–2001, the last time the survey was conducted, women constituted 26 percent of full professors, 42 percent of associate professors and 52 of assistant professors. These figures suggest that women who are members of ASA are moving into full-time faculty positions upon obtaining their PhDs. Additional information is needed to know if women will continue to climb the academic ladder and reach parity with men as the age gap between men and women continues to



Source: ASA Research & Development Department, ASA Membership Data 2001–2007

decrease and women have similar years of experience to men. (In 2007, the reported median age of male regular members was 51 while the reported median age of women was 44).

In 2007, 52 percent of women regular members reported that they were employed by universities that granted graduate degrees. Although the number of women in this position increased since 2001, the share of all women in the position stood still. In fact there was a 1 percent decline from 53 percent of all women in 2005 (see Figure 2). In contrast, in 2007, 57 percent of men were faculty members at universities that granted graduate degrees in sociology. The share of all men at this kind of institution also remained stable, in spite of an increase in the numbers of men in this position. In contrast, women continue to outnumber men employed as faculty members at four-year colleges by 3 percent. Between 2001 and 2007 there was an increase in the number of regular members reporting that they



Source: ASA Research & Development Department, ASA Membership Data 2001–2007

were employed at baccalaureate-only schools. In spite of this increase in numbers, the shares of women and men remained relatively stable, with 17 percent of all women and 14 percent of all men at this location.

Income is another area where women report limited progress. As of 2007, 24 percent of women earned \$70,000 or more compared to 38 percent of men. This 14 percent gap has remained steady since 2001. We know that much of this difference can be explained by differences in rank, employment status, age, and type of institution, areas in which there appears to be a recent lack of progress in breaking the glass ceiling.

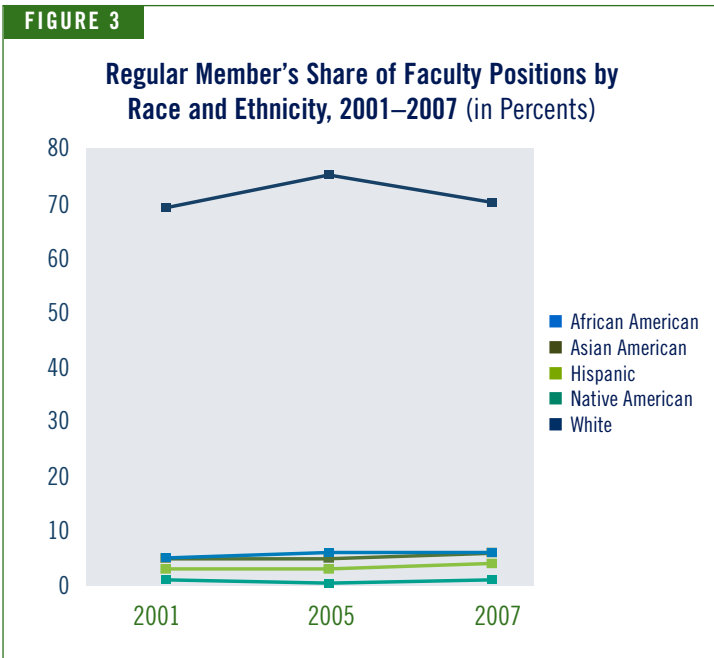
CHANGES IN RACE AND ETHNICITY

Between 2001 and 2007, there was growth in the number of regular members in each race or ethnic category, but the comparative share of members who were in each category remained relatively stable. During this period the small group that checked off that they were Hispanic/Latino(a) experienced the largest percentage increase (50 percent to a total of 232 regular members), followed by a tie between a tiny category of Native American or American Indians and a larger category of African Americans (a 44 percent increase). The smallest membership increase was among those who checked off that they were white (13 percent). Of course, this latter group had far and away the most members in both years (5,525 in 2007). In contrast to the percentage increase in the number of members, the share of members in each race/ethnic category remained stable (with a 1 percent increase in each). This 1 percent increase may be the result of the decline in the number of members who did not list their race or ethnicity (down from 16 percent in 2001 to 11 percent in 2007).

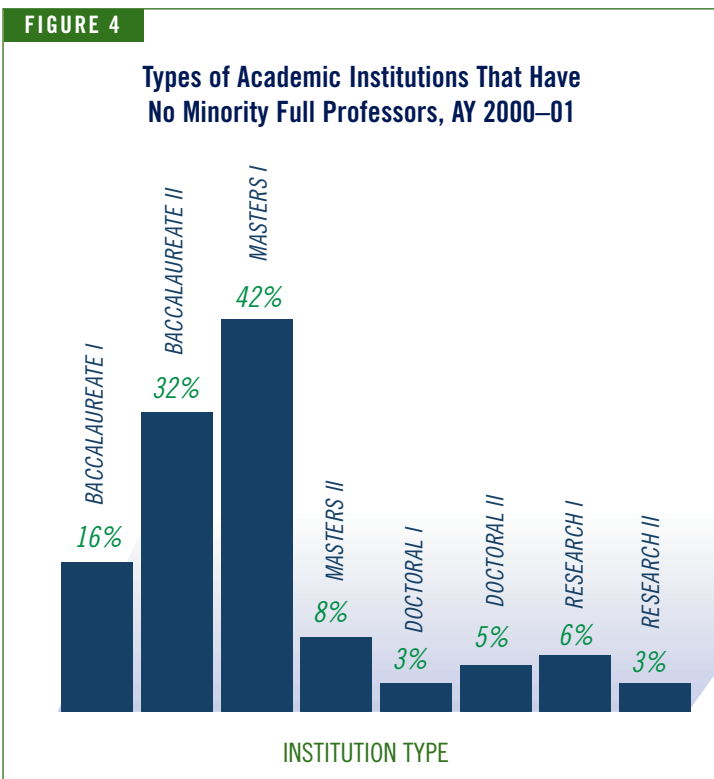
INDICATORS OF PROGRESS About 9 out of 10 regular members were employed in full-time positions in 2001, regardless of their race or ethnicity. By 2007, there were some structural changes in employment status. Hispanics experienced a 6 percent change with 96 percent out of 100 percent reporting that they were employed full-time in 2007 compared to 90 percent in 2001. The share of full-time employees in other racial and ethnic categories remained relatively stable, with a less than 1 percent decline among African Americans and a small increase among Asian Americans and whites. The dip from 30 to 24 percent of Native Americans in full-time jobs may be a result of declining membership rather than the declining number of Native Americans employed full-time.

With the exception of Native Americans all other groups experienced small percentage increases in the share that held faculty positions. Those listing themselves as African Americans or whites experienced the greatest increase (7 percent) in the share holding academic faculty positions. Hispanics and Asian Americans experienced between a 3 to a 4 percent increase in the share holding academic faculty positions. Whites held 70 percent of all faculty positions, after a decline in the percent of positions held between 2005 and 2007 (see Figure 3).

Those listing themselves as Asian Americans experienced the greatest change in the share of employment at universities offering graduate degrees in sociology. The share holding positions at universities offering graduate degrees in sociology increased from 53 percent of all Asian Americans to 63 percent. In contrast, the share of whites holding these positions very slightly decreased (by 1 percent) although in 2007 they held 4,202 of these kinds of positions, up from 2,765 in 2007. Although there was an increase in the numbers of Hispanic members teaching at universities with graduate degrees, the share of all Hispanic members at this type of institution declined by 1 percent. Just as the small group of Native Americans who were ASA members experienced declines in faculty positions from 2001 through 2007, there was 14 percent decrease in the share employed at universities offering a graduate degree in sociology, although the numbers reporting increased from 15 members in 2001 to 17 members in 2007. The results of the 2007–2008 Department Survey will provide a fuller picture of the distribution of racial and ethnic groups across sociology departments in different types of institutions of higher education. Findings from the AY 2000–2001 Department Survey found that the percent of departments with no full professors that were members of minority groups ranged from a low of 3 percent at Research II and Doctoral I departments to a high of 42 percent of Master’s I departments (see Figure 4).



Source: ASA Research & Development Department, ASA Membership Data 2001–2007

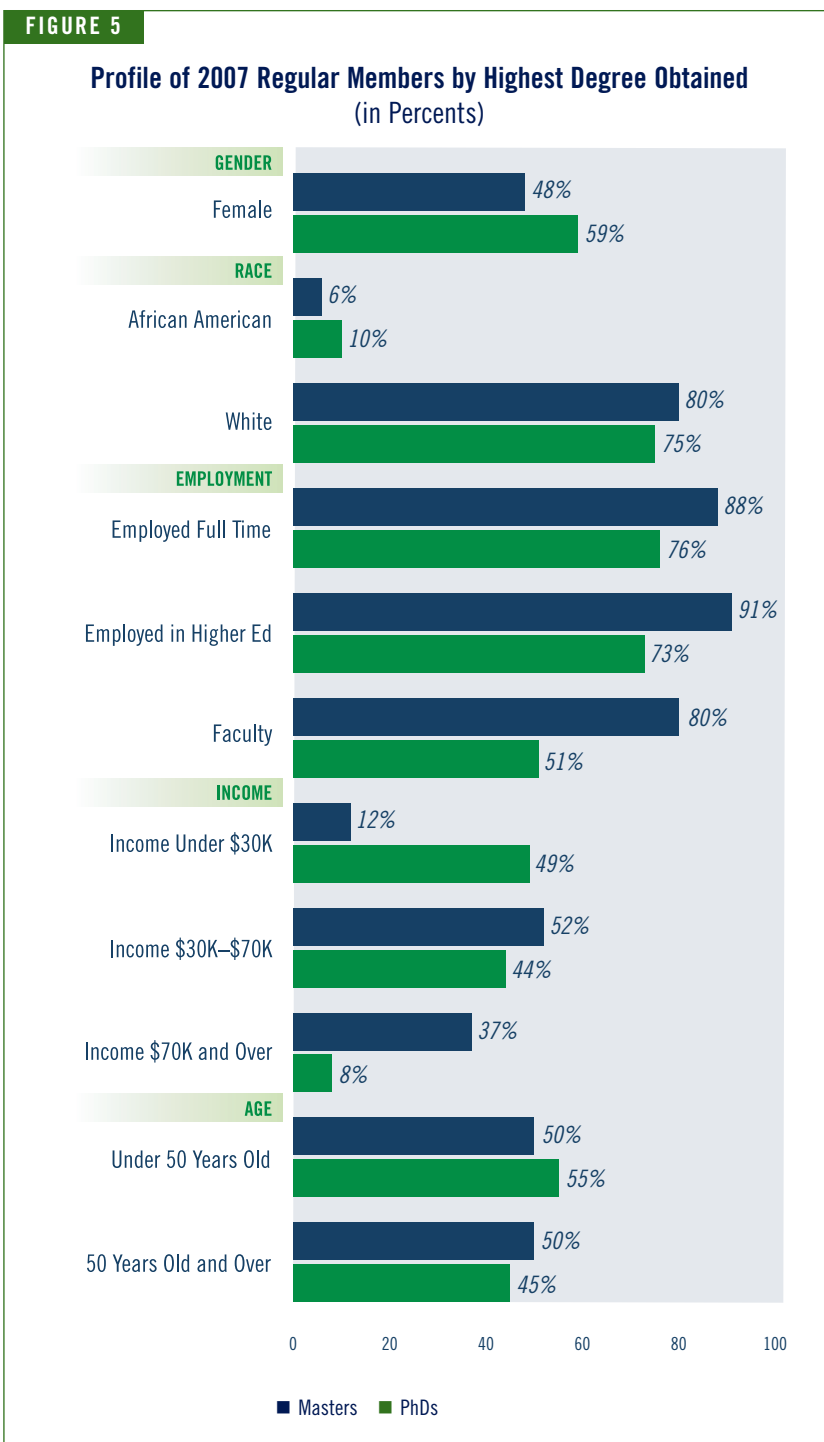


Source: ASA Research and Development Department, AY 2000-2001 Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs

Overall, there has been an increase in membership in all racial and ethnic groups, but uneven progress among minority groups as measured by a variety of indicators of professional progress.

MEMBERS WHOSE HIGHEST DEGREE IS THE MASTER'S

This is the first time that we have examined the characteristics of ASA members with a terminal master's degree and compared them to member's whose highest degree is a PhD. An estimated 33 percent of those who received their master's degree in 1996 were awarded a PhD degree six years later (the average number of years beyond a master's degree that it takes a sociology graduate to obtain a PhD degree).⁴ This means that the majority of those with graduate degrees in sociology have terminal master's degrees. Compared to the number of PhDs awarded in sociology which has remained relatively stable since 1980, the number of master's degrees awarded during this time period has doubled. Yet, only 11 percent (839) of ASA's membership in 2007 was composed of those whose highest degree is a master's. About 48 percent of these members had Master of Arts degrees and another 17 percent had Master of Science degrees, with the remainder having a wide assortment of degrees including Master's of Philosophy, Master's of Social Work, Master's of Public Administration, Master's of Business Administration, and Master's of Law. Although the median age of those whose highest degree was a master's degree



Source: ASA Research & Development Department, ASA Membership Data 2001-2007

⁴ See Sociology Degrees by Degree Level, 1966 – 2004, http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/research_and_stats/profession_trend_data/sociology_degrees_since_1966

(42 years) is the same as the median age (42) of PhDs, a higher percentage of those with master's degrees were less than 50 years old. This finding suggests that those whose highest degree is a master's may not continue in the profession for as long as those with a PhD.

Compared to PhDs, a significantly higher percentage of members with terminal master's degrees listed their sex as female rather than male (59 percent compared to 48 percent). A higher percentage of African Americans and a lower percentage of whites have terminal masters compared to those with PhDs. (See Figure 5 for comparisons between members who list the master's as their highest degree with those who list the PhD as their highest degree).

A significantly higher percentage of PhDs (88 percent) were employed full-time compared to those with terminal master's degrees (76 percent). Among those with master's degrees, men were more likely to be employed full time compared to women. Of those terminal master's who listed their employment sector, three-quarters were employed in higher education with the largest group (31 percent) employed by community and junior colleges, followed by universities offering graduate degrees in sociology (21 percent), and four-year colleges (16 percent). ASA does not appear to attract master's holders outside of academic institutions. About half reported that they had academic teaching appointments compared to 80 percent of those with PhDs.

Almost half of those with master's degrees checked that they were in the lowest income categories, (i.e., under \$30,000), compared to only 12 percent of those with a PhD. Only 8 percent claim to earn \$70,000 and over, compared to 37 percent of those with PhDs. Not all of those whose highest degree is a master's earn very low incomes. About 44 percent earn between \$30,000 and \$69,000. As was the case with all regular members, women in master's

degrees reported earning less money than men with the same highest degree in 2007. More than half (52 percent) of women were in the two lowest income categories compared to 44 percent of men. Only 6 percent of women, compared to 10 percent of men were in the highest income category. The reason for this small share of members may be programmatic in that ASA has historically been a scholarly society that emphasizes the reading of scholarly papers at its annual meetings, advertises jobs for PhDs, supports scholarly journals (with the exception of *Contexts*). With the growth of community and junior colleges, the structure of sociology and hence the structure and programs of ASA may change. We will continue to track this membership category to see what kinds of changes occur.

CONCLUSIONS

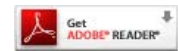
Between 2001 and 2007, ASA experienced a notable period of growth among all categories of members discussed here. In this research brief, we examined the changes in the distribution and the characteristics of regular members as they vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and type of degree. We found some indicators of a narrowing gap between categories of members but other indicators of a lack of change among them.





























ASA Research Briefs

The following are links to research briefs and reports produced by the ASA's Department of Research and Development for dissemination in a variety of venues and concerning topics of interest to the discipline and profession. These briefs can be located at http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/research_and_stats/briefs_and_articles/briefs_and_articles

You will need the Adobe Reader to view our PDF versions.



TITLE	YEAR	FORMAT
What are they Doing With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?	2008	PDF 
The Health of Sociology: Statistical Fact Sheets, 2007	2007	PDF 
Sociology and Other Social Science Salary Increases: Past, Present, and Future	2007	PDF 
Race and Ethnicity in the Sociology Pipeline	2007	PDF 
Beyond the Ivory Tower: Professionalism, Skills Match, and Job Satisfaction in Sociology (PowerPoint™ slide show)	2007	PPT 
What Sociologists Know About the Acceptance and Diffusion of Innovation: The Case of Engineering Education	2007	PDF 
Resources or Rewards? The Distribution of Work-Family Policies	2006	PDF 
Profile of 2005 ASA Membership	2006	PDF 
“What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?” A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology—First Glances: What Do They Know and Where Are They Going?	2006	PDF 
Race, Ethnicity & American Labor Market	2005	PDF 
Race, Ethnicity & Health of Americans	2005	PDF 
The Best Time to Have a Baby: Institutional Resources and Family Strategies Among Early Career Sociologists	2004	PDF 
Academic Relations: The Use of Supplementary Faculty	2004	PDF 
Have Faculty Salaries Peaked? Sociology Wage Growth Flat in Constant Dollars	2004	PDF 
Are Sociology Departments Downsizing?	2004	PDF 
Sociology Salary Trends	2002	PDF 
How Does Your Department Compare? A Peer Analysis from the AY 2000-2001 Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology	2003	PDF 
Graduate Department Vitality: Changes Continue in the Right Direction	2001	PDF 
Minorities at Three Stages in the Sociology Pipeline	2001	PDF 
The Pipeline for Faculty of Color in Sociology	2001	PDF 
Profile of the 2001 ASA Membership	2001	PDF 
Use of Adjunct and Part-time Faculty in Sociology	2001	PDF 
Gender in the Early Stages of the Sociological Career	2000	PDF 
New Doctorates in Sociology: Professions Inside and Outside the Academy	2000	PDF 
After the Fall: The Growth Rate of Sociology BAs Outstrips Other Disciplines		
Indicating an Improved Market for Sociologists	1998	PDF 
Update 1: After the Fall: Growth Trends Continue		PDF 
Update 2: BA Growth Trend: Sociology Overtakes Economics		PDF 