

American Sociological Association  
*Research Program on the Discipline and Profession*

# Data·Brief

## Use of Adjunct and Part-time Faculty in Sociology

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Recent research from the Survey of Doctorate Recipients suggests that there has been a steady growth in the number of doctorates employed as part-time and adjunct faculty.<sup>1</sup> This research-in-brief takes a slightly different tack and examines the current use of part-time and adjunct faculty by graduate sociology departments. It also examines the employment status of “new” sociology PhD.s to see if they are finding full-time jobs in the current job market.

### Data from Graduate Department Survey

- Employment of adjunct faculty is a widespread practice among reporting graduate degree-granting sociology departments. Eight out of 10 of reporting departments reported doing so in 1997-98. MA/MS-only departments were more likely to hire adjuncts than PhD-granting departments. More than nine out 10 (93 percent) of departments whose highest degree offered was an MA/MS and 73 percent of PhD-granting departments employed faculty in this category (see Table 1).
- Graduate degree-granting departments reported employing an average of 5.7 adjunct faculty in 1997-98, with MA/MS-only departments employing an average of 7.6 adjunct faculty and PhD-granting departments employing an average of 4.6 adjunct faculty (see Figure 1).
- About one-quarter of all sociology faculty employed in graduate-degree granting departments were employed on a part-time or adjunct basis. The ratio of adjunct to full-time faculty varied by rank and by highest degree granted by department. At the instructor/lecturer rank there were 7 adjunct faculty for every one full-time faculty. Fully 92 percent of instructors/lecturers in MA/MS granting departments

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte V. Kuh *Part-time and Non-Tenure Track PHD.s: A Statistical Look*, unpublished paper, National Research Council, prepared for American Historical Association conference on part-time and adjunct faculty, September 1997.

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and 84 percent of instructors/lecturers in PhD-granting departments were adjunct faculty. Many of these adjuncts may be graduate students. The ratio switched at the Assistant Professor level to five full-time faculty for every one adjunct. About one in five assistant professors in MA/MS granting departments and about one in seven assistant professors in PhD granting departments were adjunct faculty. In contrast, at the full-professor level fewer than four percent of full professors are adjunct, regardless of highest degree offered by their department (see Table 2)

- The term adjunct faculty includes those who were hired at proportional salaries (defined here as 1/6 of the low end of the range for full-time salaries at the appropriate rank for teaching one course) as well as those who were not. Sixteen percent of departments who employ adjunct faculty at the rank of instructor/lecturer (the vast majority of adjuncts) paid at a proportional rate. Only one out of 32 departments paid assistant professors proportional salaries. About 17 percent of adjunct faculty hired at the associate professor level and, a sizably larger (42) percent of adjunct faculty at the full-professor level were paid at a proportional rate (Figure 2).
- If adjunct and part-time faculty are being used to replace full-time faculty, we would expect a greater use of adjunct by departments with a declining number of full-time faculty. In fact, there did not appear to be significant differences in the use of adjunct faculty between departments who experienced growth in full-time faculty the prior year and departments who that experienced a decline in the number of full-time faculty in the prior year. About 81 percent of “growth” departments compared to about 84 percent of “decline” departments report using adjunct faculty. This finding suggests that adjunct faculty were not being substituted for full-time faculty. The departments least likely to use adjunct faculty were those termed “no change” departments (in which the number of hires and departures of full-time faculty balanced out or there were neither hires nor departures during the prior year). About 78 percent of these departments employed adjunct faculty, but here again the differences were not dramatic. (see Table 3).

### Preliminary Data from the New PhD Tracking Survey

Although much has been written about the job market for new PhDs, little is based on the experience of an entire cohort of new degree recipients. The ASA is engaged in a collaborative project with other scientific disciplines to assess the employment situation for recent PhD graduates. The Tracking Survey followed a cohort of new PhDs who were awarded their degrees between July 1, 1996 and June 30, 1997

- New PhDs in Sociology report relatively high success at obtaining full-time jobs. Of the 309 new PhD who had responded to the survey as of July 7, 1998, fully 93 percent reported being employed during of the survey week (October 13, 1997). (Figure 3).

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- More than nine out of 10 of those who were employed during the survey week, reported employment at a full-time job. Of those who were employed during the survey week, 84 percent had a single job, rather than patching together two or more jobs. About one-third reported that their job was temporary, of these 44 percent were post-docs (Figure 3).
  - More than 80 percent of those employed during the survey week reported that their primary employer was a post-secondary educational institution. An additional 16 percent reported secondary employment in an educational institution—these new PhDs may be employed as adjunct faculty along with regular full-time jobs (data not shown)

*Prepared by Roberta Spalter-Roth and Andrew Sutter, ASA Research Program on the Discipline and Profession*

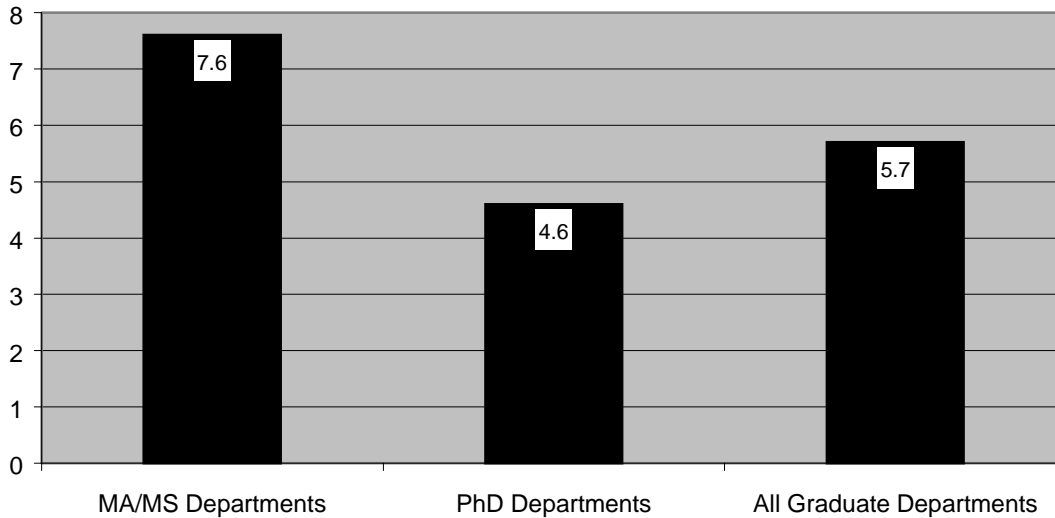
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**Table 1. Percentage of Departments Using Part-Time or Adjunct Faculty, 1997-98**

	Percentage of Departments With Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty
<b>MA/MS Departments</b>	93.0 (53)
<b>PhD Departments</b>	72.6 (69)
<b>All Departments</b>	80.3 (122)

Valid N=152 (57-MA/MS; 95-PhD)

Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Graduate Departments of Sociology



**Figure 1. Mean Number of Part-Time or Adjunct Faculty Employed by Department Type, 1997-98**

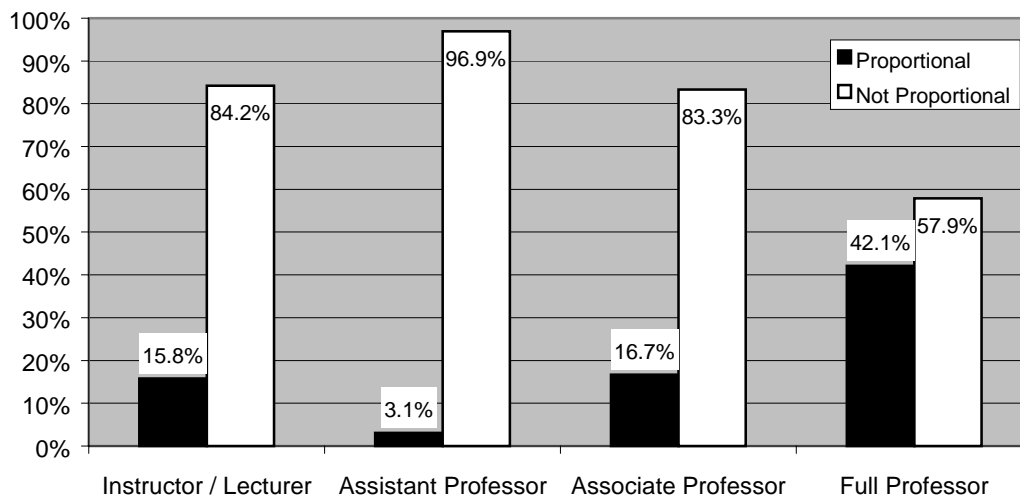
Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Graduate Departments of Sociology

Valid N=152 (57-MA/MS; 95-PhD)

**Table 2. Percent and Ratio of Full-Time Faculty to Part-Time or Adjunct Faculty by Rank, 1997-98**

	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor / Lecturer
<b>PhD Departments</b>				
Percent Full-time	96.3 (887)	94.5 (496)	86.0 (355)	16.3 (58)
Percent Part-time/Adjunct	3.7 (34)	5.5 (29)	14.0 (58)	83.7 (298)
Ratio Full-time to Adjunct	<b>26:1</b>	<b>17:1</b>	<b>6:1</b>	<b>1:6</b>
<b>MA/MS Departments</b>				
Percent Full-time	97.3 (323)	93.0 (254)	79.1 (163)	7.7 (28)
Percent Part-time/Adjunct	2.7 (9)	7.0 (19)	20.9 (43)	92.3 (336)
Ratio Full-time to Adjunct	<b>36:1</b>	<b>13:1</b>	<b>4:1</b>	<b>1:12</b>
<b>All Responding Departments</b>				
Percent Full-time	96.6 (1210)	94.0 (750)	83.7 (518)	11.9 (86)
Percent Part-time/Adjunct	3.4 (43)	6.0 (48)	16.3 (101)	88.1 (634)
Ratio Full-time to Adjunct	<b>28:1</b>	<b>16:1</b>	<b>5:1</b>	<b>1:7</b>

Valid N=3,390 total faculty (2,564 Full-time; 826 Part-time or Adjunct)  
 Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Graduate Departments of Sociology



**Figure 2. Percentage of Departments Employing Part-Time or Adjunct Faculty at a Proportional Rate of Pay, 1997-98**

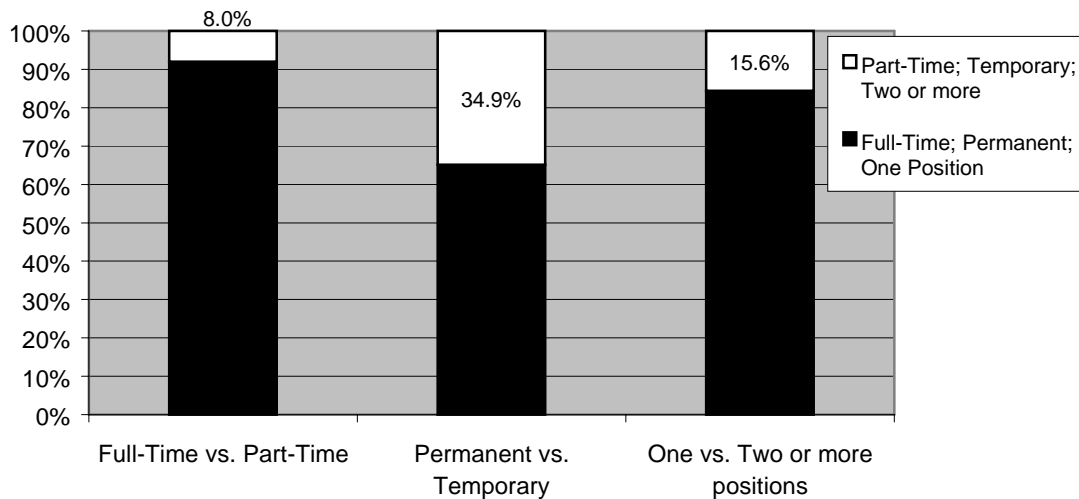
Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Graduate Departments of Sociology

**Table 3. Percent of Departments Using Part-time or Adjunct Faculty by Growth or Decline in Number of Full-time Faculty, 1997-98**

	Departments Use of Adjunct/ Part-Time Faculty		Total
	Yes	No	
<b>Faculty Growth</b>	81.3 (39)	18.8 (9)	100.0 (48)
<b>No Change</b>	77.8 (56)	22.2 (16)	100.0 (32)
<b>Faculty Decline</b>	84.4 (27)	15.6 (5)	100.0 (32)
<b>Total</b>	80.3 (122)	19.7 (30)	100.0 (152)

Valid N=152

Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Graduate Departments of Sociology



**Figure 3. Employment Status of Recent Sociology Doctorates, 1997**

Source: American Sociological Association, 1998 Survey of Recent PhD Graduates in Sociology