



What Are the Occupations of Sociology Bachelor's Degree Recipients?

Evidence from the American Community Survey, 2016-2019
and 2021-2024¹

This report provides information on the most common occupations of graduates from sociology bachelor's programs, nationally and by state. Data come from the 2016-2019 and 2021-2024 waves of the American Community Survey (ACS), accessed via IPUMS USA (<https://usa.ipums.org/usa/index.shtml>). We did not include the 2020 wave due to data quality issues resulting from COVID-19 disruptions.

The data set includes college graduates (4-year degree or higher) ages 21-45 at the time of data collection. Respondents were living in the United States and were not living in “group quarters—institutions” or “other group quarters.” Earnings are inflated to 2024 dollars. Estimates are weighted to reflect the complex survey sampling design of the ACS.

For comparison we report on all bachelor's degree recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients. Those with a sociology degree can report sociology as the first or second bachelor's degree field.

An interactive version of the data story included in this report can be accessed [here](#).

The most common top 10 occupations of college graduates across states are shown by degree field in Slide 1. Across all bachelor's fields the most common occupations are Elementary/Middle School Teachers and Miscellaneous Managers, while the

¹ Analysis completed by Margaret Gough Courtney, Director of Programs and Research, ASA, using IPUMS USA data. Data Citation: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>.

most common for those with social science degrees is Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers², and the most common among those with sociology degrees are Counselors and Social Workers.

Most Common Top-10 Occupations of College Graduates Nationwide: The most common top 10 occupations of college graduates across states are shown by degree field. Across all bachelor's fields the most common occupations are Elementary/Middle School Teachers and Miscellaneous Managers, while the most common for those with social science degrees is Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers, and the most common among those with sociology degrees are Counselors and Social Workers.

Circle sizes represent how frequently the occupation is in the top 10, within degree field, across 50 states and Washington, DC.

All



Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org. American Community Survey 2016-2019, 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

² For complete names of occupations, as reported in the ACS, see Appendix A.

The most common top-10 occupations for all degree fields across states, in order from most common in the top 10 across states to 10th most common are: Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Miscellaneous Managers; Registered Nurses; Accountants/Auditors; College Teachers; Secondary School Teachers; Software Developers; Counselors; Customer Service Representatives; and Retail Supervisors.

The most common for social science degree fields, across states, in order are Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers; Miscellaneous Managers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; College Teachers; Social Workers; Management Analysts; Accountants/Auditors; Financial Managers; Customer Service Representatives; and Counselors.

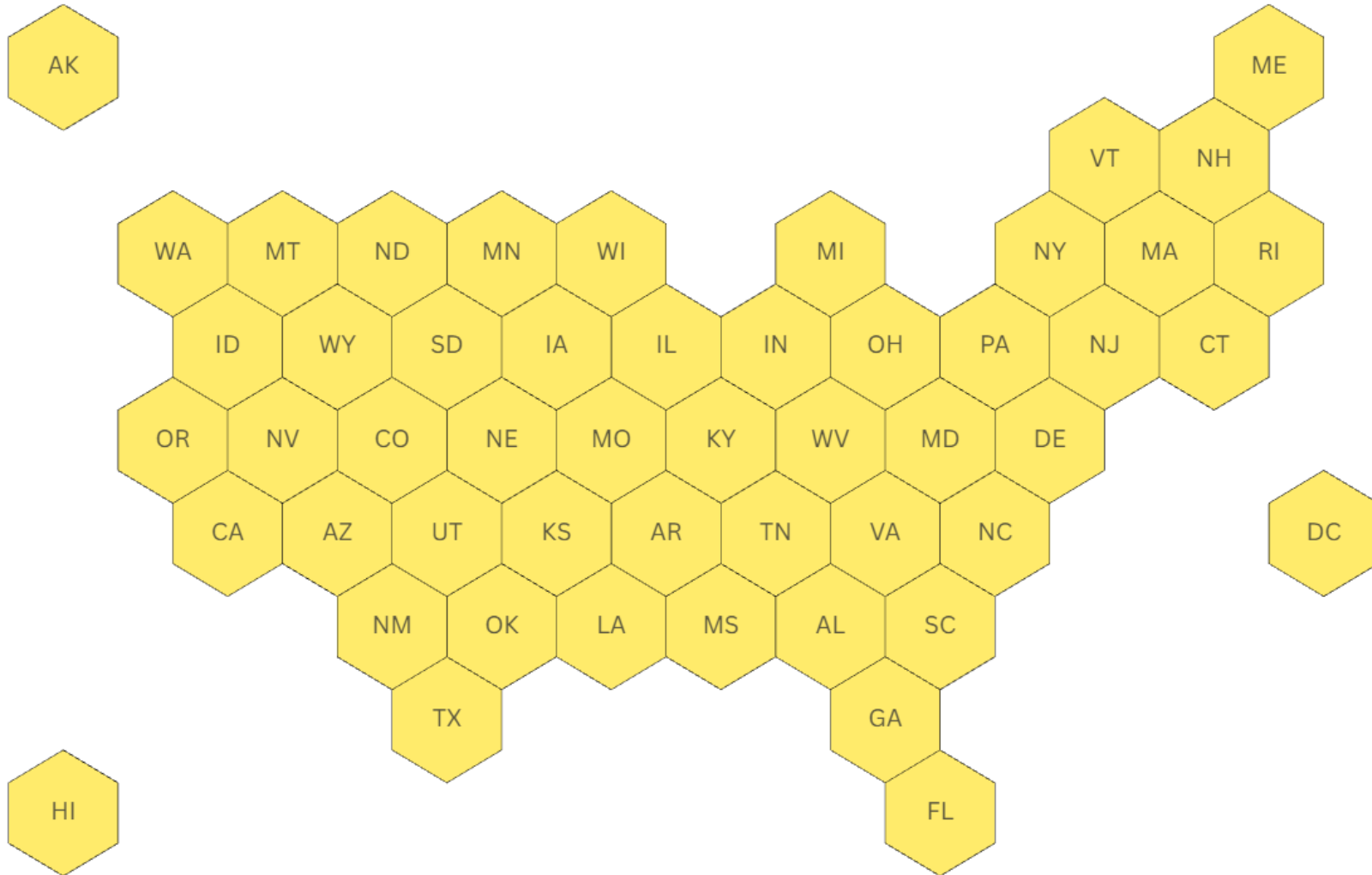
The most common for sociology degrees, across states, in order are Counselors; Social Workers; Miscellaneous Managers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers; College Teachers; Secretaries and Administrative Assistants; Human Resources Workers; Customer Service Representatives; and Police Officers.

Slide 2 provides the top 10 occupations by state for all college degrees, social science fields, and sociology. In the interactive map, clicking on the state will bring up the lists. Alternatively, readers can access the underlying data table [here](#).



Top 10 Occupations by State: Shown for all college degree fields, social science fields, and sociology. Click on the state to see a popup list of occupations.

2 of 8



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#), [VizPainter](#) • IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](#). American Community Survey 2016-2019, 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

Slide 3 shows the demographics of the ACS sample across degree fields. The figures in the panel show proportions of sociology degrees recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients in different demographic categories. The highest proportion of sociology graduates is in the West. Compared to those with degrees in other fields, those with a sociology degree are more likely to identify as female, Non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic. The full table of data is available here.



Demographics: Figures below show proportions of sociology degrees recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients in different demographic categories. The highest proportion of sociology graduates is in the West. Compared to those with degrees in other fields, those with a sociology degree are more likely to identify as female, Non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic.



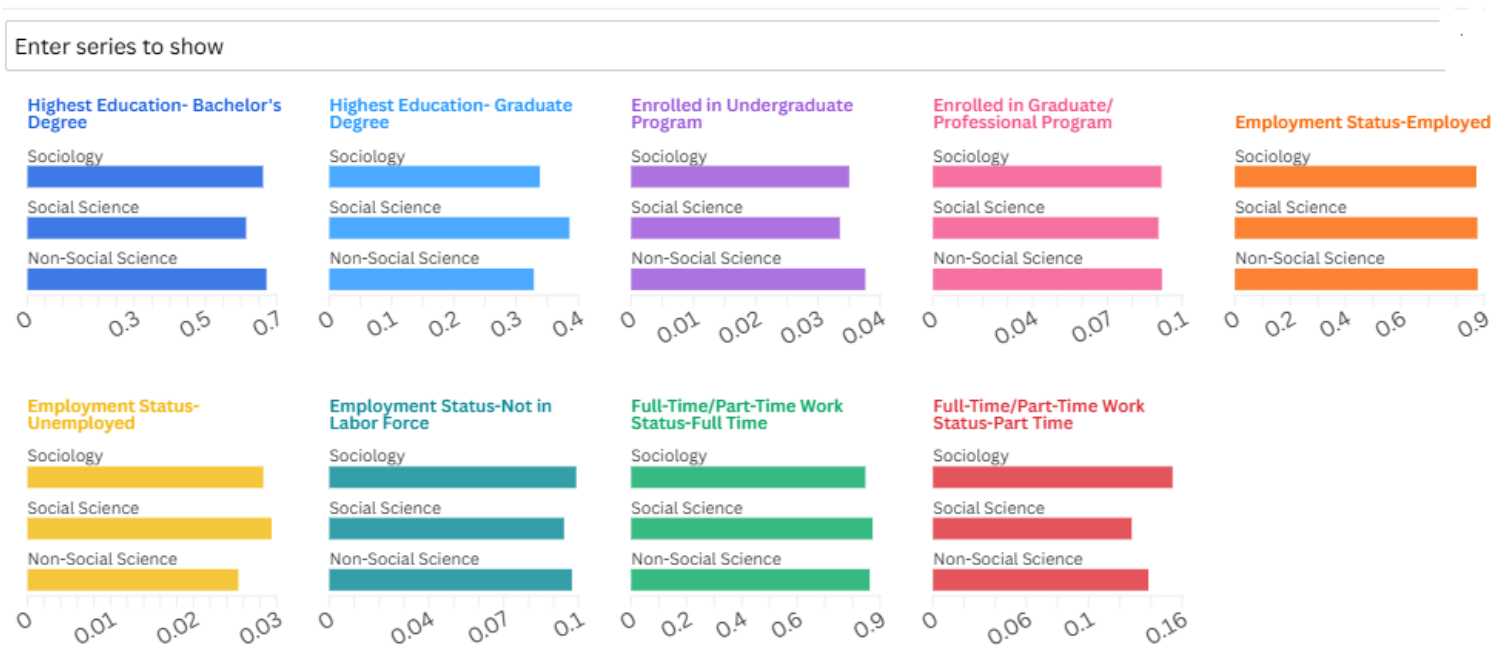
Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org. American Community Survey 2016-2019, 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

Slide 4 shows the education and employment status of the ACS sample across degree fields. The figures in the panel show proportions of sociology degree recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients in different education and employment statuses. Those with sociology degrees are somewhat less likely to hold a graduate degree compared to those in the social science category. Employment status is very similar across degree fields, with more than 87% of graduates employed. The full table of data is available [here](#).



4 of 8

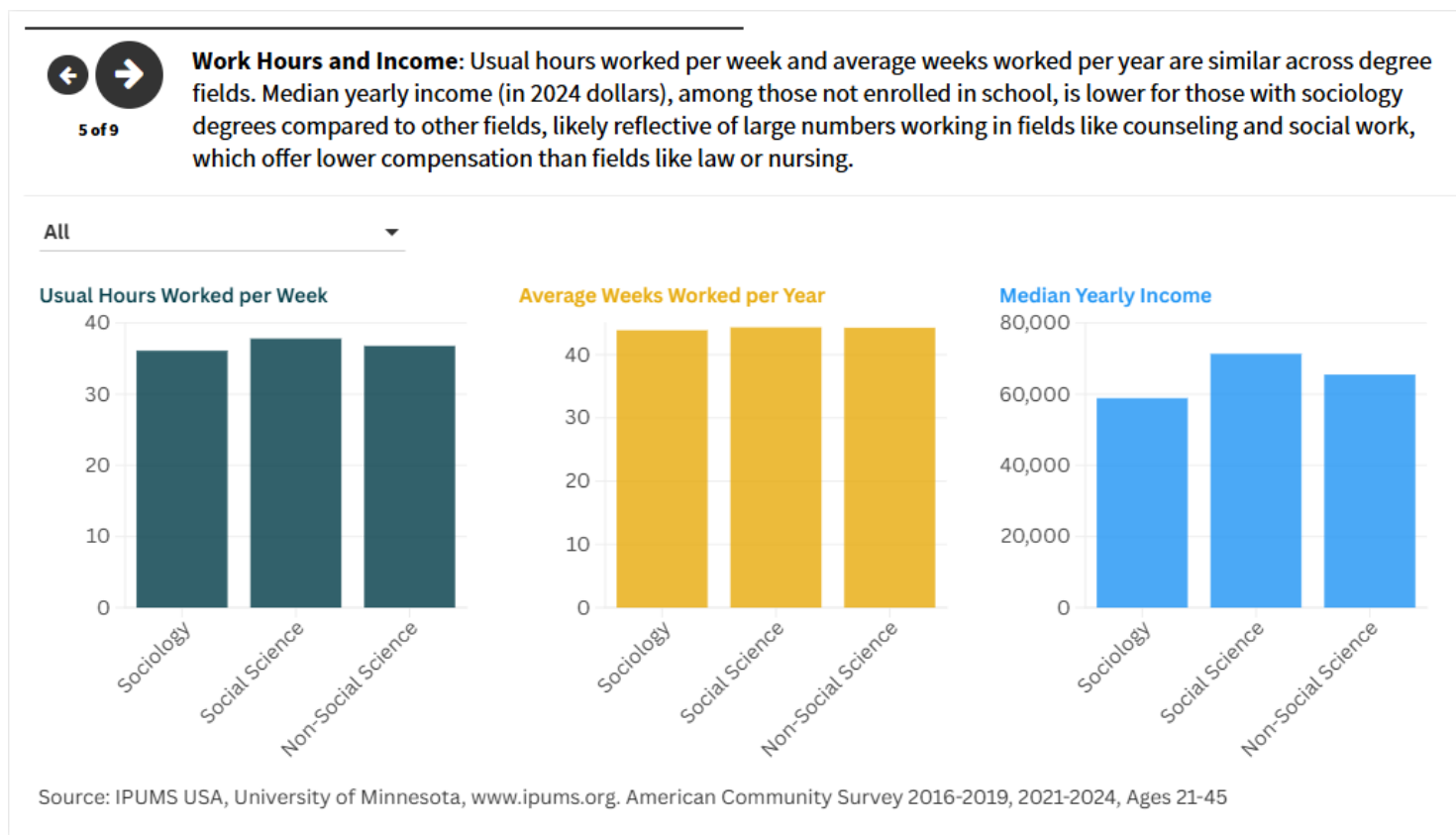
Education and Employment: Figures below show proportions of sociology degree recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients in different education and employment statuses. Those with sociology degrees are somewhat less likely to hold a graduate degree compared to those in the social science category. Employment status is very similar across degree fields, with more than 87% of graduates employed.



Source: IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org. American Community Survey 2016-2019, 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

In Slide 5, figures in the panel show average usual weekly work hours, average weeks worked per year, and median yearly income for sociology degree recipients, social science degree recipients, and non-social science degree recipients. Usual hours worked per week are highest for social science degree holders at 37.81 hours and lowest for sociology degree holders at 36.1 hours. Average weeks worked per year are highest for social science degree holders at 44.31 and lowest for sociology degree holders at 43.85.

Median yearly income (in 2024 dollars), among those not enrolled in school, is lower for those with sociology degrees compared to other fields, likely reflective of large numbers working in fields like counseling and social work, which offer lower compensation than fields like law or nursing. Median yearly income is highest for social science degree holders at \$71,340 and lowest for sociology degree holders at \$58,880.



Slide 6 shows the proportions of sociology bachelor's degree holders by state. The highest proportion of sociology bachelor's degree recipients is in California (0.1872), followed by New York (0.0871). To see more on degrees awarded by state, click [here](#).

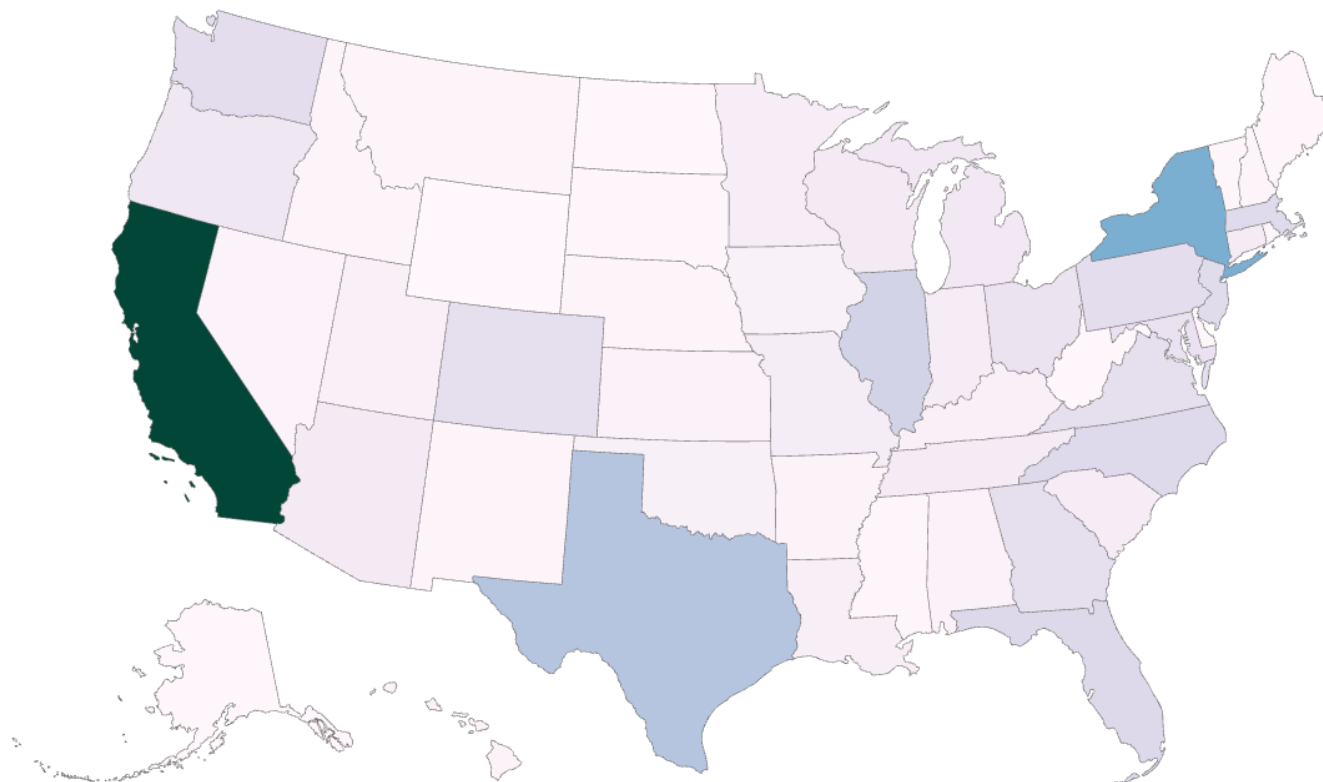


6 of 8

Sociology Bachelor's Degrees: Proportion by State

The highest proportion of sociology bachelor's degree recipients is in California (0.1872), followed by New York (0.0871). To see more on degrees awarded by state, click [here](#).

0.001  0.1872



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau 2021 boundaries](#), [summitpost.org](#) • IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](#). American Community Survey Data, 2016-2019 and 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

In Slide 7, the top occupations of sociology degree recipients are provided in the interactive map by state and highest level of education. The full table of data is available here. For illustrative examples, in California, where the highest proportion of sociology degree holders lives, the most common occupation with only a bachelor's degree is Miscellaneous Manager, while the most common with a graduate degree is Social Worker. In Texas, the most common occupation with a bachelor's degree is Elementary/Middle School Teacher, and the most common with a graduate degree is Lawyer, Judge, Judicial Worker.

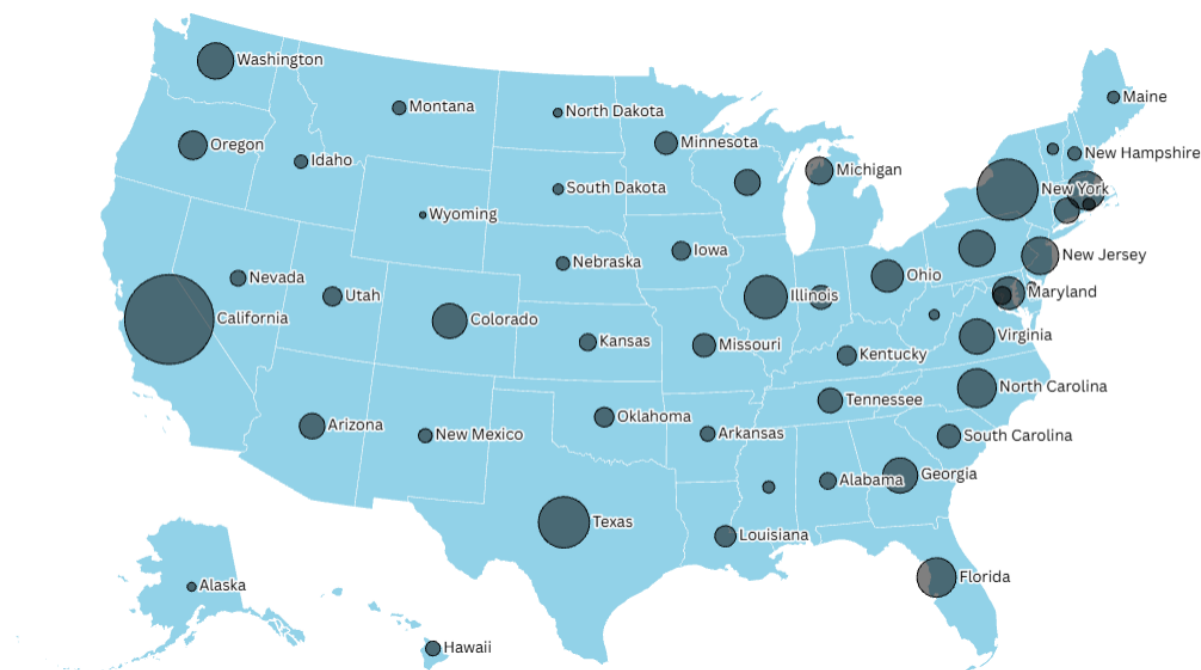


7 of 8

Top 5 Occupations of Sociology Degree Recipients by State and Highest Education: In California, where the highest proportion lives, the most common occupation with only a bachelor's degree is Miscellaneous Manager, while the most common with a graduate degree is Social Worker. In Texas, the most common occupation with a bachelor's degree is Elementary/Middle School Teacher, and the most common with a graduate degree is Lawyer, Judge, Judicial Worker.

Click each state's bubble for the table of occupations

Proportion of National Sociology Degrees in the State 0.004 ○ ○ 0.008



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau 2021 boundaries](#), [summitpost.org](#) • IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](#). American Community Survey Data, 2016-2019 and 2021-2024, Ages 21-45

Finally, in Slide 8 we show the top 10 occupations of sociology degree recipients by highest degree level. There are similarities in top occupations across degree levels (e.g., Miscellaneous Managers). We looked at bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, and professional degree recipients. The most common occupations in these categories were Miscellaneous Manager; Social Worker; College Teacher; and Lawyer, Judge, Judicial worker, respectively.

The 10 most common occupations for sociology bachelor's degree holders whose highest degree is a bachelor's degree are: Miscellaneous Managers; Social Workers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Secretaries/Administrative Assistants; Customer Service Representatives; Human Resources Workers; Police Officers; Counselors; Registered Nurses; and Retail Supervisors.

The 10 most common occupations for sociology bachelor's degree holders whose highest degree is a master's degree are: Social Workers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Counselors; Miscellaneous Managers; Education Administrators; College Teachers; Social/Community Service Managers; Other Therapists; Human Resources Workers; and Secondary School Teachers.

The 10 most common occupations for sociology bachelor's degree holders whose highest degree is a doctoral degree are: College Teachers; Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers; Psychologists; Education Administrators; Physicians/Surgeons; Physical Scientists, All Other; Miscellaneous Managers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Pharmacists; and Physical Therapists.

The 10 most common occupations for sociology bachelor's degree holders whose highest degree is a professional degree are: Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers; Physicians/Surgeons; Miscellaneous Managers; Elementary/Middle School Teachers; Counselors; Paralegals/Legal Assistants; College Teachers; Judicial Law Clerks; Compliance Officers; and Social Workers.



8 of 8

Top 10 Occupations of Sociology Degree Recipients by Highest Degree Level: There are similarities in top occupations across degree levels (e.g., Miscellaneous Managers). We looked at bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, and professional degree recipients. The most common occupations in these categories were Miscellaneous Manager, Social Worker, College Teacher, and Lawyer, Judge, Judicial Worker, respectively.

All ▾



Appendix A: Occupation Nomenclature

Occupation Name in Analysis	Original Occupation Name in ACS
Accountants/Auditors	Accountants and Auditors
Athletes/Coaches/Umpires	Athletes, Coaches, Umpires, and Related Workers
Bartenders	Bartenders
Biological Scientists	Biological Scientists
Carpenters	Carpenters
Cashiers	Cashiers
Chief Executives and Legislators	Chief Executives and Legislators
Childcare Workers	Childcare Workers
College Teachers	Postsecondary Teachers
Compliance Officers	Compliance Officers
Computer Analysts	Computer Systems Analysts
Construction Managers	Construction Managers
Counselors	Counselors
Customer Service Reps	Customer Service Representatives
Data Entry Keyers	Data Entry Keyers
Diagnostic Technology	Diagnostic Related Technologists and Technicians
Drivers/Sales Workers	Drivers/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers
Education Administrators	Education Administrators
Elementary/Middle School Teachers	Elementary and Middle School Teachers
Eligibility Interviewers, Gov't	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs
Financial Managers	Financial Managers
Food Service Managers	Food Service Managers
Human Resources Workers	Human Resources Workers
Inspectors and Samplers	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
Janitors	Janitors and Building Cleaners
Judicial Law Clerks	Judicial Law Clerks
Lawyers, Judges, Judicial Workers	Lawyers, and Judges, Magistrates, and Other Judicial Workers
Management Analysts	Management Analysts

Marketing/Sales Managers	Marketing and Sales Managers
Medical/Dental/Ophthalmic Lab	Medical, Dental, and Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians
Medical/Health Services Managers	Medical and Health Services Managers
Misc. Math/Stat Occupations	Miscellaneous Mathematical Science Occupations, Including Mathematicians and Statisticians
Misc. Office and Administrative	Miscellaneous Office and Administrative Support Workers, Including Desktop Publishers
Miscellaneous Managers	Miscellaneous Managers, Including Funeral Service Managers and Postmasters and Mail Superintendents
Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	Nonfarm Animal Caretakers
Office Clerks	Office Clerks, General
Office Supervisors	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers
Other Teachers/Instructors	Other Teachers and Instructors
Other Therapists	Other Therapists, Including Exercise Physiologists
Paralegals/Legal Assistants	Paralegals and Legal Assistants
Personal Care Aides	Personal Care Aides
Pharmacists	Pharmacists
Physical Scientists, All Other	Physical Scientists, All Other
Physical Therapists	Physical Therapists
Physicians and Surgeons	Physicians and Surgeons
Police Officers	Police Officers
Postal Service Clerks	Postal Service Clerks
Preschool/Kindergarten Teachers	Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers
Probation Officers/Corrections	Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists
Production, Planning	Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks
Property Management	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers
Psychologists	Psychologists
Real Estate Brokers/Agents	Real Estate Brokers and Sales Agents
Receptionists	Receptionists and Information Clerks
Recreation/Fitness Workers	Recreation and Fitness Workers
Registered Nurses	Registered Nurses

Retail Supervisors	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales
Sales Reps., Wholesale	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing
Sales Workers	Sales and Related Workers, All Other
Secondary School Teachers	Secondary School Teachers
Secretaries and Admin. Assistants	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
Security Guards	Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers
Social Workers	Social Workers
Social/Community Svc. Managers	Social and Community Service Managers
Social/Human Services Assts.	Social and Human Services Assistants
Software Developers	Software Developers, Applications and Systems Software
Special Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
Teacher Assistants	Teacher Assistants
Training/Development Managers	Training and Development Managers
Urban/Regional Planners	Urban and Regional Planners
Waiters and Waitresses	Waiters and Waitresses