

Examining Social Science Occupations

By Ben Cover

According to *The Princeton Review*, the most popular college major is psychology, with three other social sciences—history, political science, and sociology— included in the top 10. However, employment in occupations such as psychology, history, political science, and other social science occupations together account for less than 1 percent of U.S. employment. This article examines employment and wages for workers in these and other social science occupations, pointing out where people in these occupations work and how their wages vary with the area, industry, and occupation in which they are employed.

Employment

Social science occupations account for 416,980 of the more than 130 million workers in the United States. Almost half of the workers in those occupations (195,710) are market research analysts. All of the other social science occupations account for fewer than 100,000 employees each. Table 1 lists the national distribution of employment in social science occupations.

State-level estimates show that there are large differences

Table 1. National employment in social science occupations

Occupation	Employment
Market research analysts	195,710
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists...	98,820
Social scientists and related workers, all other...	31,900
Urban and regional planners	31,650
Survey researchers	21,650
Economists	12,470
Psychologists, all other.....	6,750
Political scientists	5,010
Anthropologists and archeologists.....	4,790
Sociologists	3,500
Historians.....	2,850
Industrial-organizational psychologists.....	1,070
Geographers.....	810

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in numbers employed in social science occupations across States (including the District of Columbia). Indeed, numbers employed ranged from a low of 520 in North Dakota to a high of 52,830 in California. Chart 1 shows States with high social science employment.

As one might expect, in many cases the largest States have the most employment in social science occupations. Another way to look at social science occupational employment across States is to examine the employment shares, or concentrations, within each State. This approach renders the size of the State unimportant as a factor in the analysis of social science occupations. Nationally, social science workers account for 0.32 percent of all employees. However, the percent varies from State to State. For instance, in the District of Columbia, social science employees make up almost 3 percent of total employment, whereas in Mississippi, social science employees account for only one-tenth of 1 percent of total employment. Table 2 lists States with a high concentration of employment in social science occupations.

Because the District of Columbia has such a high concentration of social science workers, it is worthwhile to look into those occupations in the District that have a large percentage of social science employment. Although market research analysts are the largest social science occupation nationally, more notable in the District of Columbia is the large number of economists and political scientists. (See chart 2.)

Like the District of Columbia, many States show a differ-

Table 2. States with a high concentration of employment in social science occupations

Area	Percent
District of Columbia	2.58
Washington.....	.52
Virginia.....	.52
Massachusetts.....	.50
Vermont.....	.48
New York47
Minnesota.....	.47
Maryland.....	.43
Connecticut.....	.42
New Jersey.....	.38

Chart 1. States with high social science employment

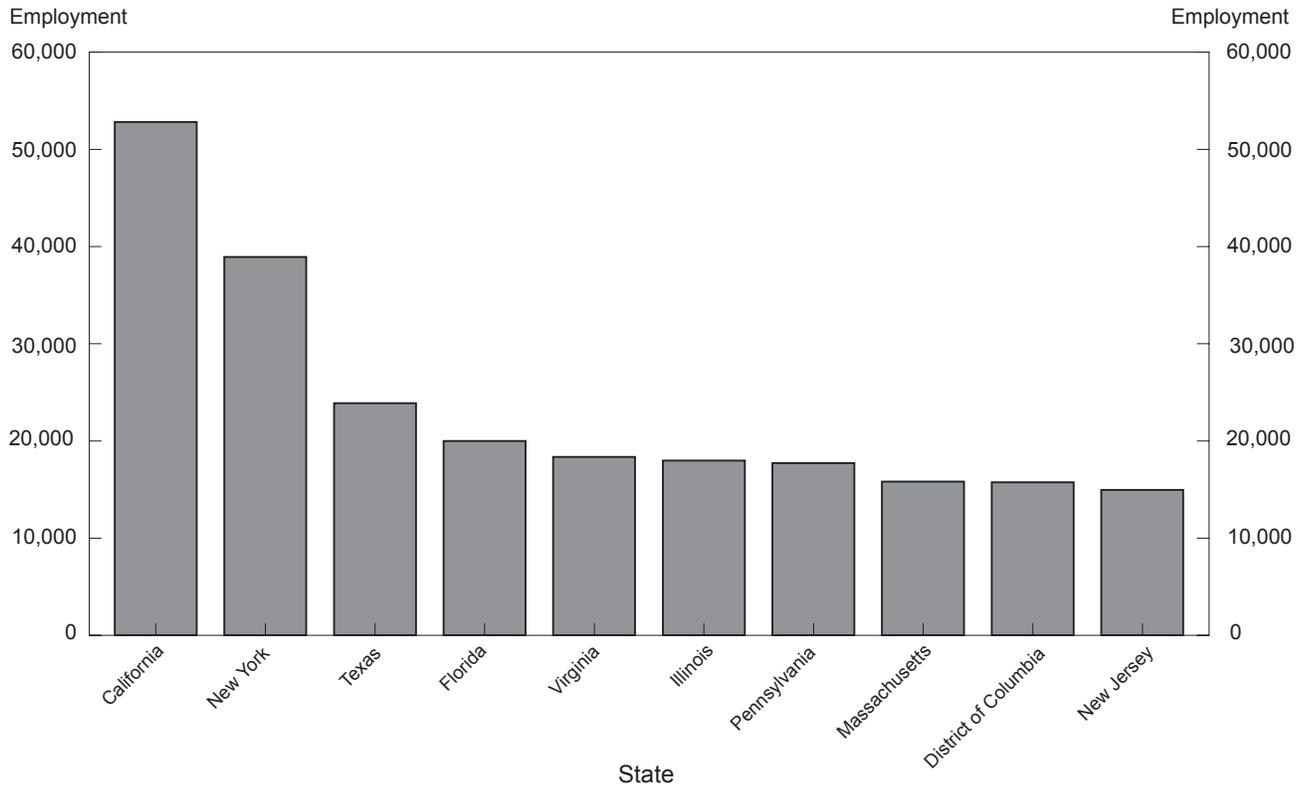


Chart 2. Social science occupational employment in the District of Columbia

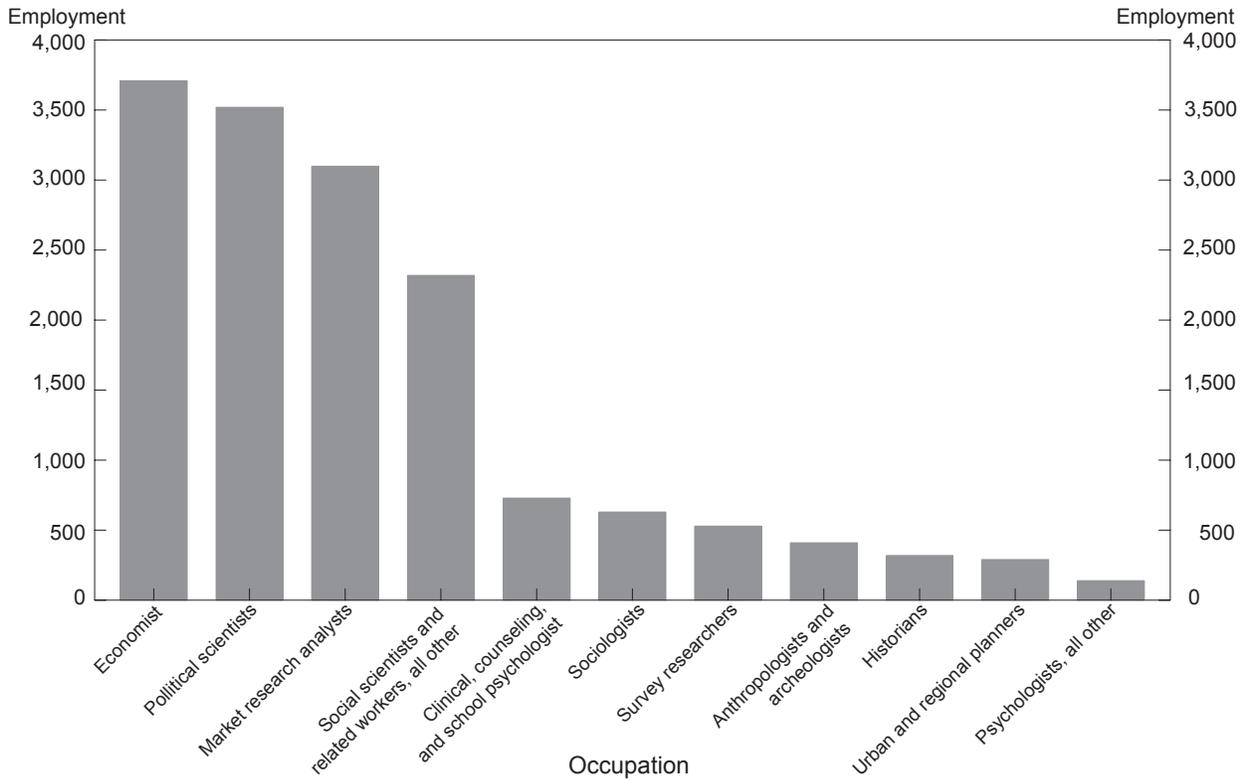


Table 3. Industries with high social science employment

Industry	Social science employment
Elementary and secondary schools.....	41,920
Local government (OES designation).....	30,750
Federal executive branch (OES designation).....	27,900
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	22,510
Other professional, scientific, and technical services	20,230
Management of companies and enterprises	19,360
Scientific research and development services	17,110
State government (OES designation).....	14,650
Offices of other health practitioners.....	12,390
Colleges, universities, and professional schools....	11,100

ent employment distribution than that of the Nation. Some States have a large number of clinical, counseling, and school psychologists, while others have a large number of urban and regional planners or social scientists and related workers. Most States do, however, follow the national trend, with a large number of market research analysts.

The variation in social science occupations may be partially explained by the distribution of industries that employ social scientists. Elementary and secondary schools have high social science employment, with 41,920 workers. Federal, State, and local governments also have large numbers of social science employees. (See table 3.)

The industries with high social science employment get their large totals from different occupations. For instance, 41,720 clinical, counseling, and school psychologists account for almost the entire elementary and secondary school total. On the other hand, 22,310 urban and regional planners make up the majority of social science occupations in local government. Chart 3 shows each of the social science occupations and its share of employment in different industries. For example, 27 percent of anthropologists are employed by scientific research-and-development firms, while the Federal Government accounts for more than half of the employment of geographers.

Wages

Wages for social science occupations tend to be high, averaging \$30.34 across the Nation, compared with the national average wage of \$18.21 for all occupations. Social science wages range from \$43.26 for industrial-organizational psychologists to \$18.13 for survey researchers. The national mean wage for each of the social science occupations is depicted in table 7.

Across States, mean wages for all social scientists combined vary from \$19.38 in South Dakota to \$38.71 in the District of Columbia. (See table 4.) Because overall wages vary by State, it is useful to look at *wage premiums* in comparing occupational wages across States. This approach enables the comparison of State social science wages relative to State average wages. The State wage premium is calculated by sub-

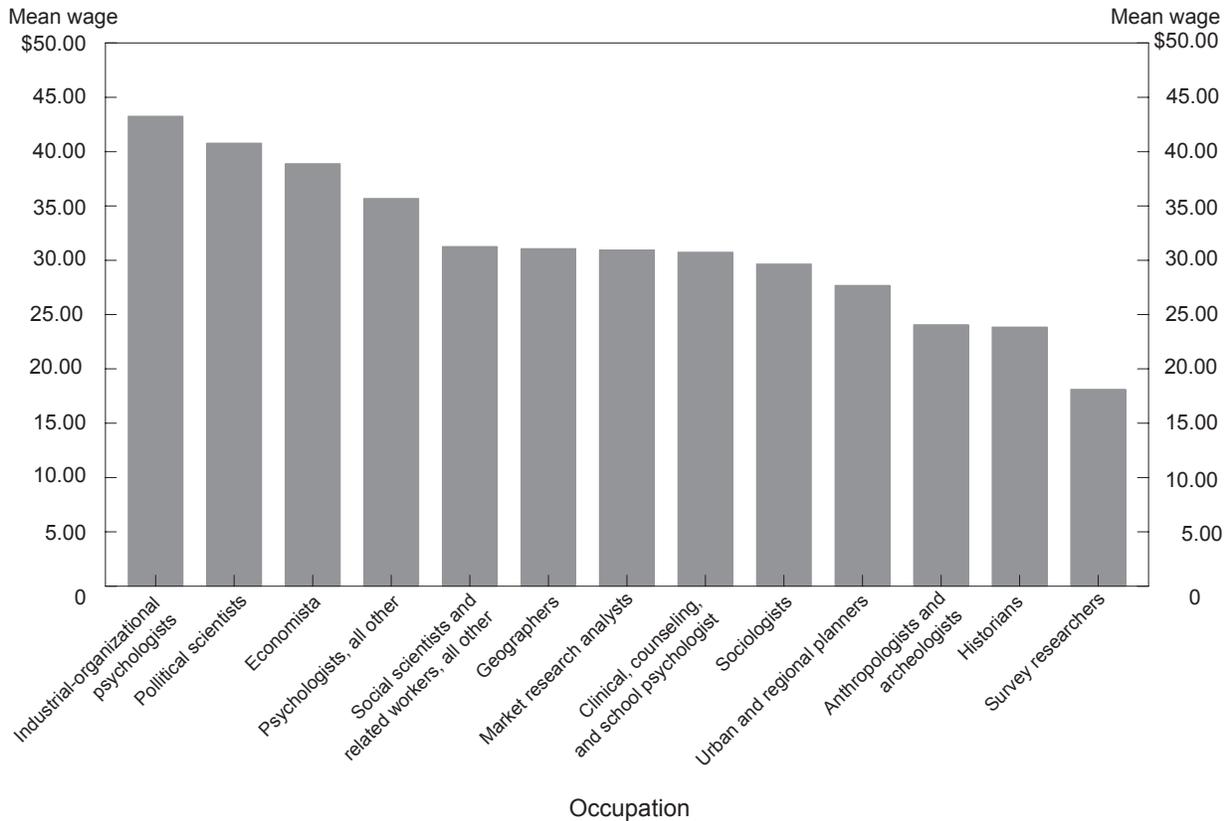
Table 4. Mean wages and wage premiums for all social science occupations combined

Area	Mean wage	State wage premium	Percent
Virginia.....	\$35.21	\$16.10	46
New Jersey.....	35.09	14.00	40
Rhode Island	32.62	13.88	43
Washington.....	33.62	13.69	41
North Carolina	29.80	13.23	44
Hawaii.....	30.95	13.14	42
Texas.....	30.14	13.09	43
Arkansas.....	27.22	12.91	47
California	33.09	12.65	38
Delaware.....	31.23	12.39	40
Connecticut.....	33.79	12.22	36
Michigan	31.43	12.18	39
Ohio	29.44	12.00	41
Wisconsin	29.07	11.92	41
Colorado	31.03	11.67	38
Georgia.....	29.11	11.66	40
Oregon.....	29.28	11.36	39
Alabama	26.79	11.25	42
Kansas.....	27.32	10.99	40
New York	31.91	10.73	34
Florida.....	27.09	10.54	39
District of Columbia	38.71	10.29	27
Minnesota	29.66	10.27	35
Tennessee	26.16	10.17	39
Pennsylvania	27.43	9.97	36
Missouri.....	26.60	9.94	37
North Dakota	24.68	9.85	40
New Hampshire	27.92	9.66	35
Nebraska	25.57	9.56	37
Kentucky.....	25.12	9.47	38
Illinois.....	28.30	9.41	33
Louisiana	24.47	9.36	38
Maryland.....	29.50	9.27	31
Iowa	24.81	9.26	37
New Mexico.....	25.10	9.15	36
Nevada	25.82	9.11	35
Maine.....	25.16	8.85	35
Vermont.....	25.60	8.74	34
South Carolina.....	23.84	8.34	35
Arizona	24.99	8.19	33
West Virginia	22.69	8.00	35
Oklahoma	22.93	7.81	34
Indiana.....	24.07	7.69	32
Mississippi.....	21.00	7.01	33
Massachusetts.....	29.02	6.92	24
South Dakota.....	20.33	6.31	31
Wyoming.....	22.01	6.17	28
Utah	22.61	6.13	27
Alaska.....	26.54	5.99	23
Idaho.....	21.80	5.91	27
Montana.....	19.38	4.85	25

tracting the average State wage from the occupational wage. For example, social scientists have a mean wage of \$35.21 in Virginia. The average mean wage in Virginia is \$19.11, making the State wage premium for social scientists in Virginia \$16.10. In addition to listing State wages for social science occupations, table 4 shows the wage premium and the percent wage premium for social science occupations in each State.

Wage premiums vary with the specific occupation and State. Each of the 13 social science occupations has a large wage premium in some States. A glance at the high-paying

Chart 3. National mean wages for social occupations



States for each occupation (see table 5) reveals that Virginia is near the top for a good number of the social science occupations. This observation goes along with the fact that Virginia has the largest wage premium for all the social science occupations combined.

As with employment, State wage trends for social science occupations may be explained in part by industry concentrations. Table 6 lists each social science occupation and some of the highest-paying industries in that occupation. The table illustrates the fact that industries which pay high wages are different for each of the social science occupations. In addition, table 6 shows the industry wage premium, which compares the wage of one occupation with that of other occupations within the same industry. This wage premium is calculated by subtracting the average wage for the occupation in the industry from the average industry wage. For example, anthropologists have a mean wage of \$24.52 in the local government industry. The average mean wage for the entire local government industry is \$18.79, making the wage premium for anthropologists in the local government industry \$5.73.

Summary

In spite of the large number of people with college majors in the social sciences, employment in specific social science fields is limited. This constraint suggests that people studying the subjects that offer entry into those fields tend to go into other, but perhaps related, fields. In addition, employment in most social science occupations tends to be concentrated in just a few industries. The exceptions, market research analysts and industrial-organizational psychologists, are found in many different industries.

Despite the large supply of college graduates who majored in the social sciences, the wages for these workers remain relatively high. Like employment, wages vary by industry, and although the largest employers sometimes pay the highest wages, that is not always the case. As regards particular jurisdictions, the District of Columbia had a high concentration of employment, while Virginia had high wages, for all social science occupations combined. Other States had a high concentration of employment or high wages for a particular social science occupation.

Table 5. States with a high wage premium, by social science occupation

Occupation	State	Mean wage	State wage premium	Percent
Anthropologists and archeologists.....	Montana	\$27.03	\$12.50	46
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists.....	New Jersey	45.03	23.94	53
Economists.....	Delaware	45.64	26.80	59
Geographers.....	Virginia	39.24	20.13	51
Historians.....	Virginia	33.59	14.48	43
Industrial-organizational psychologists.....	Colorado	51.03	31.67	62
Market research analysts.....	Washington	37.22	17.29	46
Political scientists.....	Virginia	48.97	29.86	61
Psychologists, all other.....	Alabama	40.69	25.15	62
Social scientists and related workers, all other.....	Virginia	40.99	21.88	53
Sociologists.....	Florida	38.19	21.64	57
Survey researchers.....	Michigan	24.90	5.65	23
Urban and regional planners.....	Nevada	31.84	15.13	48

Table 6. Industries with high wages, by social science occupation

Industry	Mean wage	Industry wage premium	Employment
Anthropologists and archeologists			
Federal executive branch (OES designation).....	\$30.14	\$0.32	1,280
Local government (OES designation).....	24.52	5.73	40
Architectural, engineering, and related services.....	23.80	-4.04	390
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services.....	22.52	-6.33	1,120
Scientific research and development services.....	21.30	-11.55	1,280
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists			
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services.....	\$64.79	\$35.94	n/a
Other ambulatory healthcare services.....	49.03	32.97	50
Offices of physicians.....	40.95	14.07	5,160
Offices of other health practitioners.....	39.21	18.71	10,920
Religious organizations.....	35.79	20.88	n/a
Economists			
Depository credit intermediation.....	\$51.21	\$32.17	50
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services.....	48.39	19.54	1,310
Scientific research and development services.....	47.15	14.30	1,620
Other financial investment activities.....	46.19	10.91	50
Monetary authorities, central bank.....	46.05	21.08	250
Geographers			
Federal executive branch (OES designation).....	\$32.12	\$2.30	580
Architectural, engineering, and related services.....	26.77	-1.07	80
Historians			
Federal executive branch (OES designation).....	\$35.07	\$5.25	560
Architectural, engineering, and related services.....	33.04	5.20	n/a
Museums, historical sites, and similar institutions.....	25.20	10.12	150
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services.....	24.62	-4.23	240
Scientific research and development services.....	24.21	-8.64	520

Table 6. Industries with high wages, by social science occupation—Continued

Industry	Mean wage	Industry wage premium	Employment
Industrial-organizational psychologists			
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	\$52.52	\$23.67	270
Semiconductor and other electronic component manufacturing	40.67	15.81	n/a
Management of companies and enterprises	39.41	12.28	40
Scientific research and development services	37.65	4.80	190
Colleges, universities, and professional schools	29.96	6.41	50
Market research analysts			
Scenic and sightseeing transportation, water	\$62.29	\$47.99	30
Chemical and allied products merchant wholesalers	43.77	21.02	290
Software publishers	41.42	4.84	4,780
Computer and peripheral equipment manufacturing	41.41	6.18	3,190
Metal and mineral (except petroleum) merchant wholesalers	40.50	20.06	120
Political scientists			
Federal executive branch (OES designation)	\$46.56	\$16.74	3,150
Scientific research and development services	37.97	5.12	550
Business, professional, labor, political, and similar organizations	31.95	10.71	560
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	23.95	-4.90	n/a
Psychologists, all other			
Offices of physicians	\$45.88	\$19.00	440
Federal executive branch (OES designation)	37.66	7.84	3,600
Offices of other health practitioners	37.18	16.68	580
Management of companies and enterprises	35.46	8.33	120
Local government (OES designation)	33.90	15.11	150
Social scientists and related workers, all other			
Business, professional, labor, political, and similar organizations	\$40.63	\$19.39	n/a
Wired telecommunications carriers	35.62	8.96	n/a
Federal executive branch (OES designation)	33.85	4.03	12,850
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	33.40	13.07	n/a
Offices of other health practitioners	32.40	11.90	680
Sociologists			
Federal executive branch (OES designation)	\$44.17	\$14.35	30
Social advocacy organizations	36.86	19.87	430
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	33.71	4.86	110
Scientific research and development services	33.22	0.37	1,380
Local government (OES designation)	25.59	6.80	240
Survey Researchers			
Colleges, universities, and professional schools	\$24.37	\$0.82	1,280
Educational support services	24.09	4.08	100
State government (OES designation)	24.08	3.69	800
Employment services	22.24	8.32	120
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	20.89	-7.96	1,100
Urban and regional planners			
Federal executive branch (OES designation)	\$37.50	\$7.68	520
Electric power generation, transmission, and distribution	34.77	8.02	50
Residential building construction	32.03	12.21	30
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	31.47	2.62	840
Architectural, engineering, and related services	31.35	3.51	4,190

Table 7. Occupational employment of social science occupations, by industry

[In percent]

Occupation	Scientific research and development services	Federal executive branch (OES designation)	Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	Local government (OES designation)	Other professional, scientific, and technical services	Elementary and secondary schools	Management of companies and enterprises
Anthropologists and archeologists.....	26.8	26.8	23.4	0.8	.7	–	–
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists.....	.4	–	.3	4.5	–	41.8	.6
Economists.....	13.0	32.0	10.5	6.7	.2	–	2.2
Geographers.....	1.9	71.4	1.3	1.5	–	–	.1
Historians.....	18.4	19.7	8.4	22.9	.4	.1	.1
Industrial-organizational psychologists.....	17.3	–	25.2	1.1	.1	1.8	3.8
Market research analysts.....	1.7	.7	8.3	.5	3.9	.1	9.0
Political scientists.....	10.9	62.8	9.2	1.1	.4	–	.1
Psychologists, all other.....	1.9	53.3	.1	2.3	–	3.2	1.8
Social scientists and related workers, all other.....	14.7	40.3	1.7	3.0	.8	.2	.7
Sociologists.....	39.4	.9	3.1	7.0	.7	2.9	–
Survey researchers.....	13.0	–	5.1	.2	56.9	–	2.1
Urban and regional planners.....	.4	1.6	2.7	70.5	–	–	.3

NOTE: Dash indicates less than 0.1 percent.