

## A social scientist

The study of human society and of individual relationships in and to society. A scholarly or Scientific discipline that deals with such study, generally regarded as including sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and history.

Generally speaking, the term ‘social sciences’ refers to a vast group of academic disciplines that use scientific method to study various aspects of human behavior. These disciplines include anthropology, psychology, social work, economics, and linguistics, just to name a few.

Being a social scientist is about more than just liking people. The profession requires superior research skills, the ability to analyze statistics and data, and a keen, creative mind capable of drawing conclusions from collected data. You’ll need a strong foundation in both the humanities and the sciences to launch a successful career in this dynamic field.

Social scientists hold an indispensable place in a number of industries, from government agencies that analyze socio-economic trends to businesses that assess their target demographics. Particularly in the age of social media, those with an understanding of social network analysis are more valued than ever before.

### WHAT A SOCIAL SCIENTIST DOES

As a social scientist, you’ll use scientific principles to analyze social systems, draw conclusions, and implement strategies toward affecting change or swaying opinion in a given population. In addition to long hours of research and analysis, you may be required to travel to particular sites and conduct research with populations around the globe.

The social sciences use both qualitative and quantitative methods for their research. The **quantitative method** is interested in studying human phenomena through statistical analysis and data evaluation. The quantitative method draws its conclusions from verifiable experiments. One who studies the spending trends of a population in an attempt to influence the market, for instance, would rely heavily on the quantitative method.

The **qualitative method** favors direct observation, the analysis of text, interviews, anecdotes and communication with its subjects in order to understand social phenomena. An anthropologist sent to study the family structure of a particular tribe by living with and interviewing the members of that community would rely primarily on the qualitative method.

### THE MANY HATS A SOCIAL SCIENTIST MIGHT WEAR

As we have said, the term ‘social scientist’ covers a wide range of academic disciplines. In Europe, a Bachelor of Science degree in the social sciences is a common academic track. In the United States, universities tend to offer various specializations within the social sciences college. Here are just a few of the academic disciplines to choose from in the wide world of SS.

**Anthropology:** An anthropologist studies the origins, social behavior and development of human beings. Anthropologists are divided further into four distinct fields: biological/physical, cultural/social, anthropological linguistics, and archeology. As an

anthropologist, you might be out in the field overseeing an excavation or in a library perusing ancient texts.

**Political Science:** As a political scientist, you'll be studying governmental systems, the people who created them, how they work, and the ways that populations can be manipulated using political ideology to achieve a desired outcome. Most political scientists work for the government in some way, but they are also needed for lobbying groups, think tanks, non-profit organizations, and labor groups, as well as in academia.

**History:** From a social scientist's perspective, the historian is responsible for shaping the narrative of our past using scientific method. A social historian might hone in on specific aspects of the human story, such as military, economic trends, and gender-related studies. The majority of historians work for the government; others might work in the archives department of a museum; for a historical society, research organization, or consulting firm; or lecture at the university level.

**Psychology:** Psychologists that are particularly interested in social systems might want to specialize in social psychology (sometimes known as sociology, although this distinction has become increasingly outdated). A social psychologist is concerned with the nature of social behavior and the factors that cause people and groups to behave a certain way within the sociocultural system. Someone with a background in social psychology might work in the field of marketing, using research methods to determine the spending patterns and motivations of particular demographics.

#### WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DO I NEED TO BE A SOCIAL SCIENTIST?

A career in the social sciences means you'll need a lot of schooling in order to be successful. If you're hoping to seriously make a mark in your chosen discipline, you should expect to attain at least a master's degree and preferably a Ph.D. A Bachelor of Science is essential; it will give you a strong foundation in the methodologies and practices of your future profession. Check out the *U.S. News and World Report* for their ranking of the top social science programs in the country.

#### CAREER OUTLOOK

The good news is that jobs are growing faster than the national average for many of the social science disciplines. However, with a growing need comes an influx of qualified graduates — and the competition for jobs is fierce.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment for anthropologists and archeologists is expected to grow at a rate of 21%, higher than the national average. Still, the number of good jobs in the field of anthropology is limited. Political science jobs are expected to grow at a relatively slow rate of 8%, while historians and psychologists are enjoying much faster than average job growth at rates of 18% and 22%, respectively. Those interested in psychology will fare best for those with doctoral degrees and particular specializations.

The median annual salary for social scientists was \$76,540 in 2010, according to the BLS. Obviously, this number will vary considerably depending on your level of education, experience, and specific discipline. The top employers for social scientists are the federal

government, followed by scientific research and development services, colleges and universities, state government, and consulting firms.

Degrees in social sciences remain some of the most popular among American university students. Anyone pursuing a career in the social sciences should do so with a full understanding of just how competitive the job market for these coveted jobs can be.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

If you've considered all the factors — the long thankless hours in the library, stiff competition for jobs, and the idea of sand in your shoes on hot anthropological digs — and you still know deep in your bones that a career as a social scientist is for you, then you're the perfect candidate for this line of work. Check out the following links for more information on careers in social science, a look at trends in the industry, and a general overview on just what in the heck a social scientist does.

***Such a person is Sivasamy Soundararajan. He lives in Kanjampatti Village, Pollachi Taluk, Coimbatore District, Tamil nadu province in India. He has been doing social services for the last 40 long years. Full details of his social services will be found in the upcoming postings part 1, Part2, Part3, Part 3A and Part 4***

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