

# What can I do with a degree in Sociology?

# Sociology.



## What is Sociology?

Sociology is the rigorous study of society. It involves understanding how people, cultures, societies and ideas interact and impact upon each other. If you want to study how the modern world came to be the way it is, what is happening and why, and what alternatives are possible, Sociology is for you.

Sociology is a craft, a vocation, and to study and engage with the subject can be transformative. Once you have acquired a sociological imagination you will never be able to see the world in quite the same way again.

Sociologists investigate the structure of societies, organisations, groups and everyday lives. They explore things like environment and social action, disasters, migration and well-being, technology, religion, sexualities and gender.

## Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

### Examples of professional bodies

- Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand [www.saanz.net](http://www.saanz.net)
- The Australian Sociological Association [www.tasa.org.au](http://www.tasa.org.au)
- The International Sociological Association [www.isa-sociology.org](http://www.isa-sociology.org)

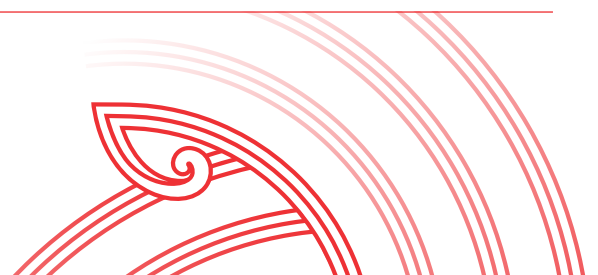
## Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

### Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at [www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/sociology](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/sociology)
- Job profiles on career websites like [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





## What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Sociology, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies that are transferable to a range of careers. These can include:

- Practical application of sociological theory
- Understanding the influences of human behaviour
- Thinking critically, creatively, and challenging ideas
- Problem solving skills
- Interpretive and analytical thinking
- Oral and written communication
- Research and computing.

## What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability are important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.\*

\*World Economic Forum: [www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills)

## How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

## Where have graduates been employed?

UC graduates have been employed in:

- Government e.g. Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development, Inland Revenue, District Councils, Parliamentary Services
- Social work and counselling services e.g. Child & Family Specialty Service, Lifeline Christchurch, Odyssey House Youth Programme
- Corrections e.g. NZ Police, Community Probation Service
- Banking and financial services e.g. ANZ, Deloitte
- Research companies e.g. Clarity Research
- Education e.g. University of Canterbury, Ara | Te Pūkenga
- Iwi eg. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu
- Private companies in retail, healthcare, legal, energy, software, media, human resources, debt collection, training, insurance, manufacturing, and other sectors.

## What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

### Social researcher

- Design and develop research projects
- Use a range of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain insight
- Analyse data and findings to write reports

### Policy analyst / advisor

- Identify and investigate issues and opportunities e.g. in society, law or governance
- Interpret and consult on existing policies
- Prepare reports and recommend changes

### Research analyst / advisor

- Organise and conduct research
- Develop and test theories, interpret results
- Write reports, make recommendations and publish research

### Social worker

- Support and guide individuals and whānau
- Build relationships and link people to resources, services, groups and events
- Write reports and coordinate budgets

### Analyst

- Collect, analyse and interpret data
- Identify and forecast trends and needs
- Present information to assist decision-making

### Market researcher

- Develop research strategies
- Analyse and evaluate results and information
- Provide advice and recommendations

### Advocate

- Advise and represent individuals, groups or a cause
- Examine and draft contracts
- Provide relevant information to clients

### Human resources advisor

- Advertise vacancies and recruit staff
- Advise on workplace policies and procedures
- Oversee activities such as staff development, health and safety, pay and reward

### Counsellor

- Support a client to talk about their feelings and experiences
- Listen to and reflect upon the client's issues
- Raise self-awareness and understanding
- Discuss options and assist the client to make choices

### Probation officer

- Manage, supervise and monitor the behaviour of offenders
- Provide assessments of an offender's likelihood of recidivism and suitability for parole
- Enable and monitor access to services and programmes

### Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Community development worker
- Secondary school teacher
- Academic, lecturer
- Marketing coordinator
- Housing manager / officer
- Police officer
- Youth worker
- Charity officer
- Family support worker
- HR administrator
- International aid / development worker.

## Further study options

Sociology graduates can progress their studies from honours right through to PhD level. These degrees provide advanced research, project and writing skills. Postgraduate study can also lead to an academic career in teaching and research.

UC offers a range of conversion qualifications e.g. in Teaching and Learning, Social Work, Journalism, Applied Data Science, Policy and Governance, Business Management, Counselling, and Māori and Indigenous Leadership.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study)

## How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

### Career planning checklist

#### Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

#### Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

#### Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

#### Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)



## What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories)



### Morgan

Senior Analyst, Te Arawhiti

Past experience: Analyst, Treasury and MBIE

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

### Why did you choose to study sociology?

Originally I took a sociology paper in first year out of interest, but I was immediately in love and made it one of my majors. I love that sociology covers everything, it gives you the space to learn while also being creative and making sense of the world around you. Through sociology I got to study economics, indigenous cultures, gender, religion, the role of cities, death, crime, politics and just about anything else. This set me up to thrive in any environment, and led me into a PhD focused on capitalism in New Zealand where I got to use memes to make my argument.

### Are there any student experiences that stand out for you?

One of my highlights was doing an internship through the university as part of my degree. I got to work with the Canterbury Refugee Council on a community art project followed by a festival which I finished by writing a report on why art is valuable to refugee communities in New Zealand to support future funding requests. I also got to film the process, and my film was shown at UNESCO in France.

### Did you have any challenges at uni?

An ongoing challenge was working fulltime while studying, and this became a fundamental feature of my PhD! Both as subject matter, where I considered the cost of living in New Zealand

and how this impacts upon time as a resource, and as a life circumstance.

### What have been the highlights of your career so far?

I worked on the COVID-19 response, with a particular focus on how economic packages are delivered for Māori and Pacific communities, the Treasury's first wellbeing report where I led the development of the Māori wellbeing chapter, and a number of Māori economic strategy projects, including the recently released He Kai Kei Aku Ringa as the lead analyst. I now get to work directly with hapū in Te Tai Tokerau on Te Tiriti matters.

### How has sociology informed your career?

I've found sociology endlessly valuable in the public service as it helps me to consider problems from a variety of perspectives and think broadly about potential consequences and outcomes. I feel like sociology has given me the skills to adapt to any new subject matter, and to form a career focused on people and making the world a better place. I wouldn't change a thing.

## Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: [careers@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:careers@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)

### Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

## Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support)

### Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: [futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz)

### First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors

T: +64 3 369 0409

E: [firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

### Continuing students – contact:

Toi Tangata | Arts

T: +64 3 369 3377

E: [artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts)

