



THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
SOCIOLOGISTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY

Briefing document: statistical overview and commentary

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ESRC International Benchmarking Review of Sociology

Briefing document: statistical overview and commentary

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August 2009*

1 Summary of Key Points

1.1 *Research funding*

- Funding council research income totalled almost £17 million for 2009/10. This is a little less than in some comparable disciplines, although it is related to the volume of activity which was slightly lower in Sociology than similar subjects, partly due to some sociology departments being submitted under other disciplines in the Research Assessment Exercise 2008.
- The overall quality of research, as assessed in the Research Assessment Exercise 2008 was good, being closely comparable to similar social science disciplines. There was a fairly even spread of mean scores across institutions.
- Departments earned around £150 million of research income for 2001/02 – 2006/07, most of which came from public bodies. Six departments (out of 39) account for more than half of this. Average year-on-year growth in earned research income was eleven per cent.
- There is a very strong positive correlation between funding council research income and research income earned from other sources.
- The ESRC funds active research projects in Sociology totalling £54.8 million. Sociology has one of the highest numbers of funded projects, but also has a relatively low success rate for ESRC grant applications.
- ESRC-funded projects include large and small research grants, research programmes and various fellowship schemes together with a large number of projects funded under specific initiatives.
- Sociology has the joint-second-largest allocation of ESRC quota studentships. The number of awards across the 23 institutions which have a 'quota' allocation ranges from one to seventeen.

1.2 *Staff*

- There were around 1,320 FTE staff in the Sociology Unit of Assessment for RAE 2008, making the discipline it similar in size to Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Economics, Geography, Politics, Social Policy.
- Measured by the subject discipline in which their highest qualification was awarded, there were about 3,670 staff who could be classified as sociologists, only 610 of whom were known to be in the Sociology Unit of Assessment.
- Others with a 'home' discipline of sociology were broadly distributed across the social sciences and beyond.
- Three-quarters of FTE staff are permanent. About seventeen per cent were on research-only contracts in 2006/07.
- Roughly two-thirds of FTE staff are in pre-1992. Most institutions have fifteen or fewer FTE staff, but most staff are in one of the larger departments.

- The age profile of staff in the Sociology UoA is similar to that for other social sciences and there appears little prospect of a retirement-related recruitment crisis.
- UK nationals form a large majority of sociologists, although there is evidence of more international recruitment among younger staff.
- Women are in a minority in the profession, particularly at senior levels. However there is some sign that this is changing among younger cohorts.
- The proportion of staff in sociology from the White ethnic group is higher than among the student body. There is little evidence that this situation is changing for younger cohorts.

1.3 *Students*

- Applications for undergraduate study are stable in absolute terms, with little change in numbers between 2004 and 2008. However in the context of overall growth in applicant numbers, this represents a slight relative decline. Applications from outside the UK have increased, offset by a slight decline in home applications. Quality is generally lower than for several other social science subjects.
- Similar patterns are seen for undergraduate student numbers. Despite a period of stasis however, sociology remains one of the largest social science subjects. There are many medium- to large-sized sociology departments in UK universities, judging by student numbers per institution.
- Postgraduate numbers have increased since 2002/03, with a slight downturn in 2006/07. Full-time numbers have grown more quickly than part-time. Masters courses have seen the strongest growth. Most of the research-led departments are 25 per cent postgraduate or higher. A large number of institutions have only a few postgraduate students each.
- International recruitment of research students is broad, with 93 nationalities represented. The US and Germany are the single biggest providers, but Ireland and Greece are top in terms of 'market penetration'.
- It would appear that women and students from black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented among research students in sociology.

1.4 *Careers*

- Sociology graduates' unemployment rate is the same as the overall average from all subjects, a rate slightly better than for Economic and Politics.
- Common 'first destinations' include clerical work, social and welfare jobs and management roles. About one-fifth continue to further study, either as a main activity or in combination with employment. Generally however sociology graduates seem to be less likely to enter 'graduate-level' jobs than those from other social science subjects, reflected in a low wage premium, especially for men.
- About half of 2005/06 Sociology PhD graduates enter academia as lecturers or researchers. Others entering employment headed for professional roles in the public sector.

1.5 *Overall*

- Providing a definitive statistical overview of sociology is difficult because there is no agreed definition of where sociology begins and ends and hence what should be included and excluded.

- In terms of its size (staff and student numbers), sociology appears to be in stasis, there being little evidence of growth or contraction. However in the context of overall growth in the higher education system, this implies a (small) relative decline. This may in part be due to the growth of subjects which have 'spun off' from sociology.
- Judged by the quantity and quality of research activity, a more positive picture emerges. Research income, particularly earned income, has grown and there is an apparently broad range of sociological research taking place in sociology departments and beyond in the UK.

2 The scope of this document

The purpose of this briefing document is to provide background statistical information on sociology in UK higher education in support of the ESRC/BSA international benchmarking review of the discipline.

Sociology as a discipline presents a substantial challenge to anyone hoping to provide a definitive account of it, even where this account is limited to a single country, like this review. Since its emergence in the nineteenth century, sociology has been characterised by disagreement and debate about the nature of the discipline, its scope and range. Whilst some claim large areas of intellectual and scholarly inquiry for sociology, others see the subject as legitimately operating only in certain ways and in particular defined fields. British sociologists certainly know few limits when it comes to the areas of social life they write about. A glance at the list of projects currently funded by ESRC (see Appendix) shows the very broad coverage of the discipline in the UK. There are projects looking at consumption, crime, culture, development, disability, the economy, education, the environment, ethnicity, food, gender, health, law, the lifecourse, methods, migration, politics, religion, science, stratification, theory, time, work and youth.

There are many areas of intellectual endeavour which could be said to border on or overlap sociology. This probably includes all of the social sciences, but possibly other areas as well such as literature, history, aspects of statistics and mathematics, cognitive science and so on. Some social science subjects which overlap with sociology, such as economics or geography are essentially distinct disciplines. However others, particularly newer subjects, can be seen to have ‘spun off’ from sociological beginnings. Examples are media studies, criminology, cultural studies and socio-legal studies which now exist as disciplines in their own right.¹

A pragmatic solution is to ignore the intellectual debates about the definition of sociology and simply present an analysis of that which is conventionally called sociology: the activity of named departments of sociology in UK higher education institutions. Unfortunately, that raises further practical problems. One such is perhaps easily dealt with. A good deal of applied social science research is undertaken by government bodies, think tanks, charities, research consultancies and other organisations. In an inclusive definition, this might count as sociology (and indeed it is sometimes funded by ESRC).² However the focus of ESRC’s International Benchmarking Reviews is the health of *academic* research and so such activities are excluded from the analysis presented here. A more intractable practical problem concerns sociology’s status as an ‘exporter’ discipline (in Mills *et al*’s terms).³ Whilst many, if not all of those working in UK sociology departments would count themselves as sociologists, many sociology PhD-holders go to work in other disciplines. There are sociologists in business schools, medical schools, law schools, in departments of social policy, education, area studies and so on.

Data limitations mean that it is only possible to report a limited amount of information about sociologists working in higher education but outside sociology departments. Data about research income, performance, student numbers and so on are typically available at the department or subject level. This report therefore concentrates on providing an overview of sociology as it takes

¹ This phenomenon has been well discussed within British sociology (such as in Professor Sue Scott’s Presidential Address to the British Sociological Association Conference, Cardiff, April 2009).

² The British Sociological Association has a large special interest group for ‘Sociologists Outside Academia’.

³ Mills, D., Jepson, A., Coxon, A., Easterby-Smith, M., Hawkins, P. and J. Spencer (2006) *Demographic Review of the UK Social Sciences*. ESRC, Swindon.

place within UK sociology departments.⁴ The convention employed in this document is to refer to the discipline in general in lower case ('sociology'); where reference is made to an official category used by organisations which generate higher education statistics such as HESA, UCAS, ESRC and the funding councils the word is capitalised ('Sociology'). The same applies to other subject disciplines.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this document are those of the author alone and should not be taken to represent those of the Economic and Social Research Council, the British Sociological Association, the Higher Education Statistics Agency or the University of York.

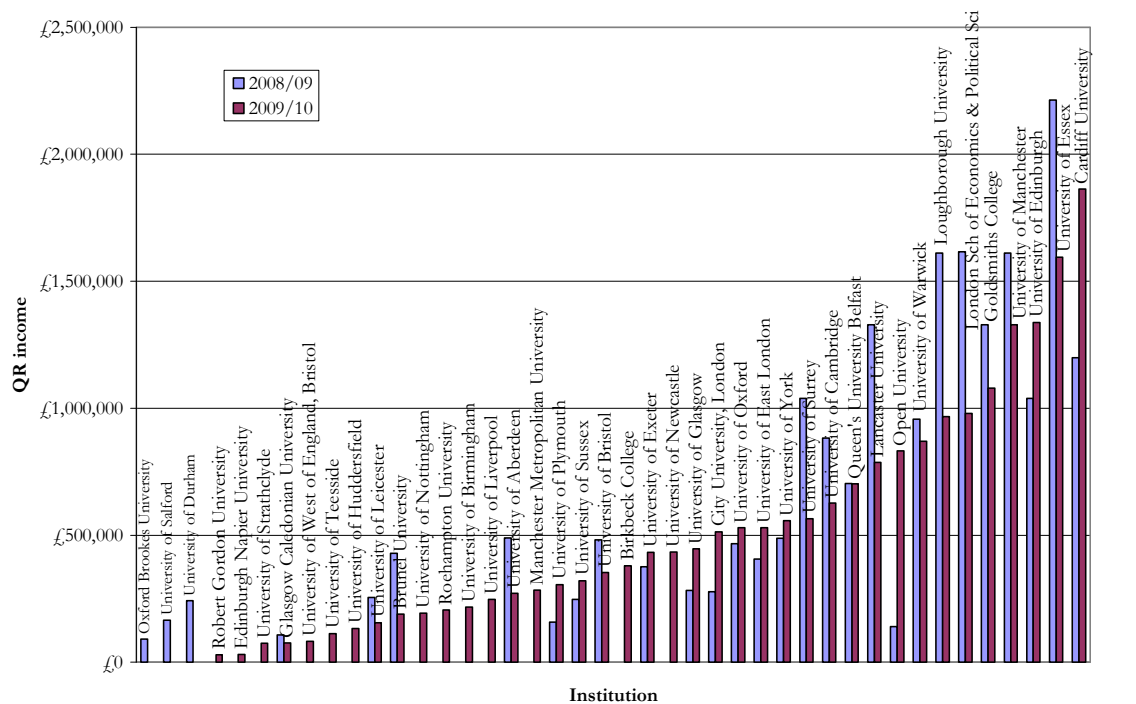
⁴ The term 'sociology department' is not meant to exclude sociologists and sociology degree programmes which are offered by organisational units (faculties, schools, divisions, departments and so on) which incorporate other subjects (e.g. a school of social science).

3 Research funding

3.1 'Core' research funding

A considerable part of sociology's research funding comes from the 'block' grant provided to institutions by their national funding council. This comprises one strand of the UK's dual funding system, whereby support for research infrastructure and 'blue skies' research is channelled through the higher education funding councils and more targeted, prioritised and thematic research funding is provided on a competitive basis through the research councils.

Figure 3.1: Quality-related funding council research income for Sociology by institution, 2008/09 and 2009/10



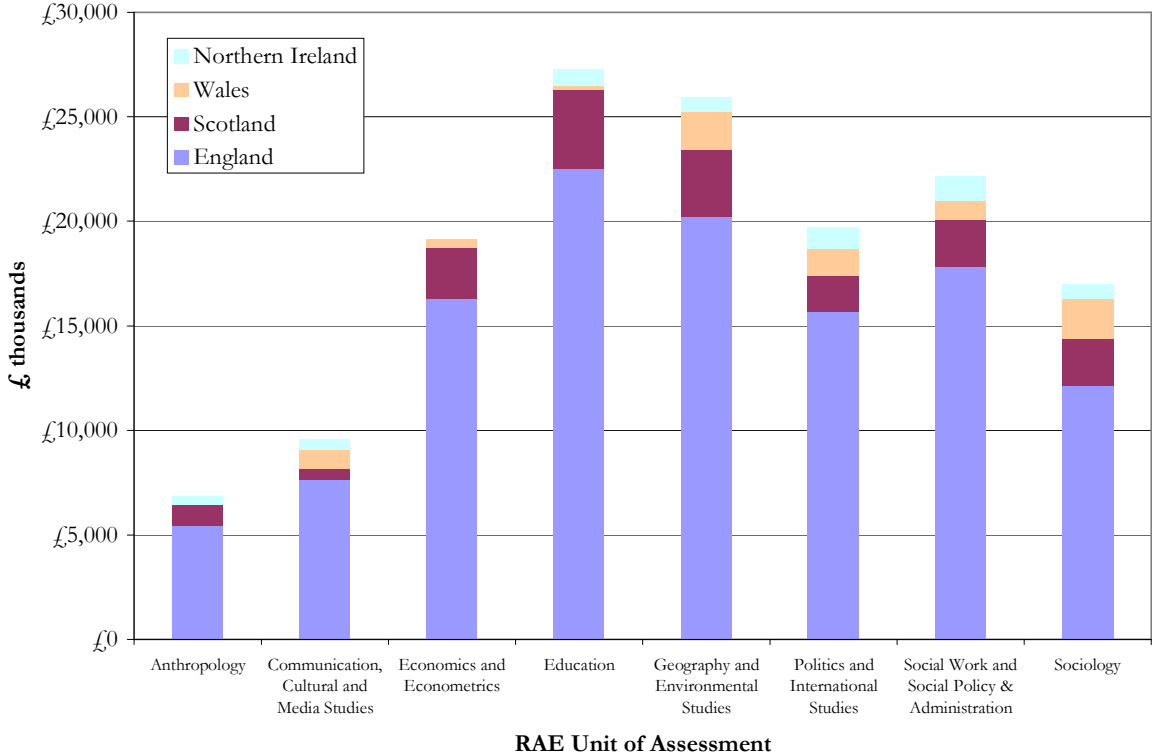
Sources: HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW, DELNI

The 'core' funding element has become increasingly selectively allocated over the past 25 years or so, based on periodic Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) where the quality of research in different subjects is evaluated by an expert panel.⁵ In previous RAEs there was a tendency for the most highly-ranked sociology departments to be based in the 'old' universities (which achieved their university status before 1992).⁶ That remained the case in RAE 2008, although changes in the scoring system meant that this sectoral cleavage between 'old' and 'new' universities began to break down somewhat, with a consequent impact on the distribution of funding (as shown in Figure 3.1). In general, institutions which received the highest levels of 'quality related' ('QR') income from the funding councils following the 2001 RAE saw their income decline following the 2008 RAE. Sociology, along with many other social sciences and humanities disciplines, saw its income fall in absolute terms as a consequence of a government policy of protecting the income of science disciplines (at least in England). The wider distribution of research excellence

⁵ The 2008 RAE was the last in the current format and will be replaced by a 'Research Excellence Framework' in future. At the time of writing the precise format of this framework has yet to be determined.

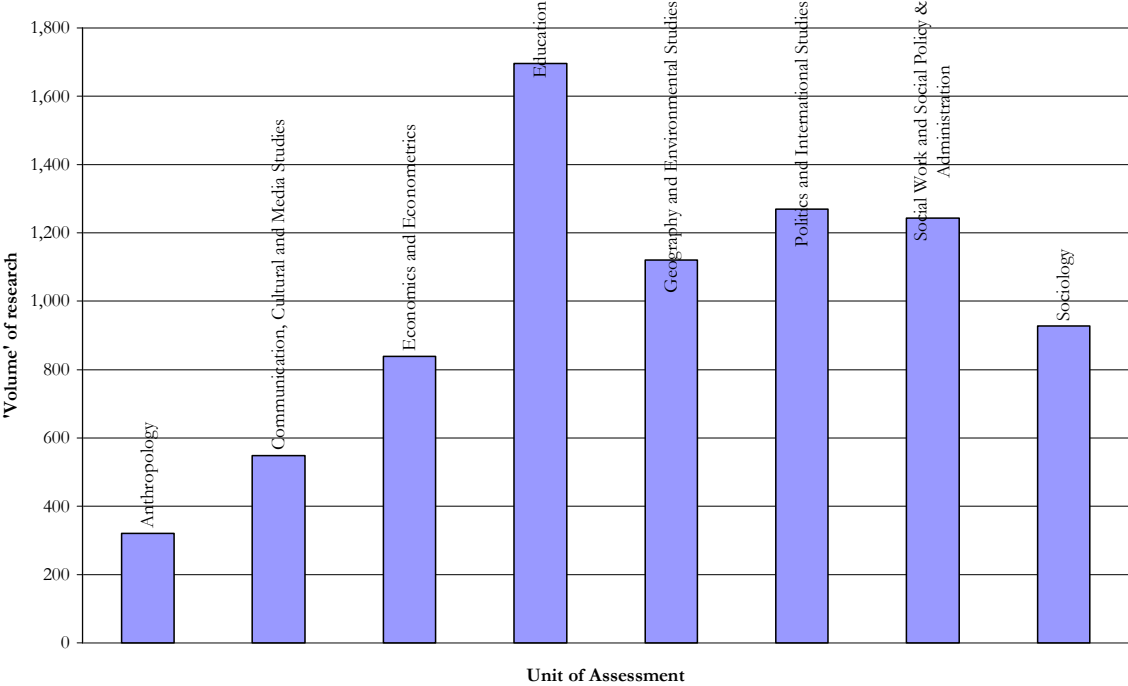
⁶ In the 2001 RAE, the highest grade achieved by a post-1992 university was 4 (UEL, Oxford Brookes and Plymouth). None achieved grades of 5 or 5*.

Figure 3.2 Quality-related funding council research income for selected social science disciplines by home nation, 2009/10



Sources: HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW, DELNI

Figure 3.3 Volume of activity for selected social science disciplines in RAE 2008



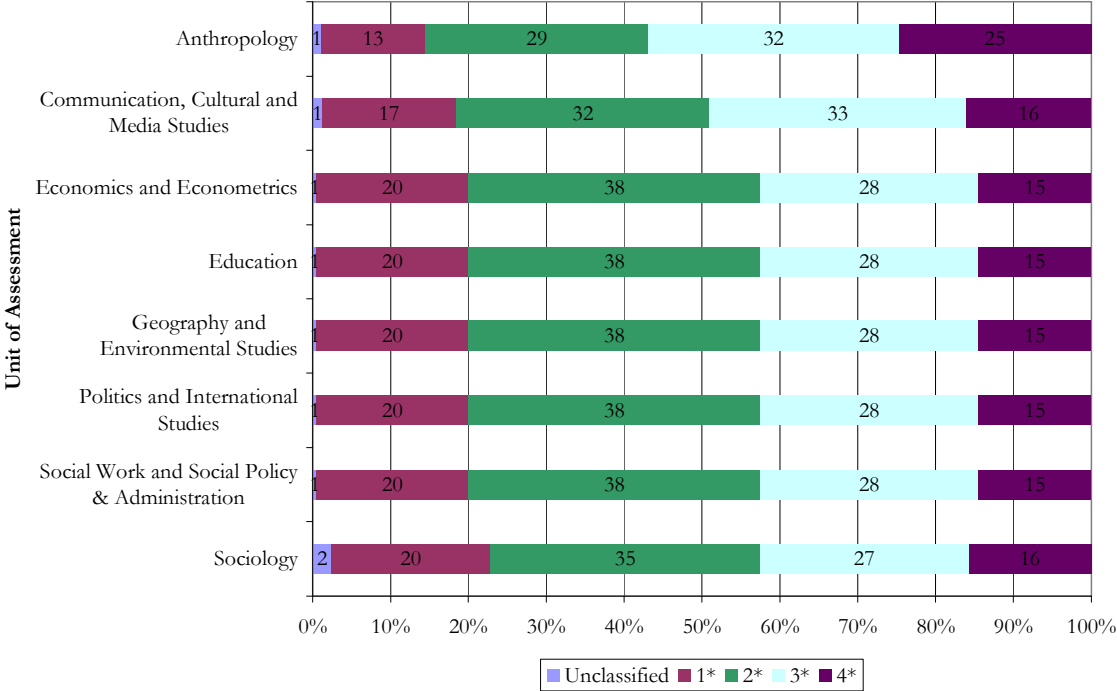
Source: RAE 2008

identified in 2008 meant some departments which were not funded in 2008/09 have attracted income for 2009/10. This has also affected the position of the ‘top’ departments.

As a Unit of Assessment (UoA), Sociology does slightly less well than its main comparators in terms of funding council support for its research (see Figure 3.2). It attracts less funding overall than either Politics or Economics and substantially less than Geography, Economics, Politics and Social Policy. Only one institution in Wales (Cardiff) and one in Northern Ireland (Queen’s) attracts QR funding for sociology.

The QR funding model is essentially supply-side led: funding is driven largely by the ‘volume’ of research activity in a discipline and its relative quality in comparison to other subjects. This partly explains the very large QR income for education, where there are more academics than in sociology. Comparison on the basis of (weighted) QR unit-funding shows that in England, Sociology receives a somewhat lower amount of resource than all its comparator subjects, with the exception of Anthropology and Communication, Cultural and Media Studies.

Figure 3.4: Quality profiles, RAE 2008



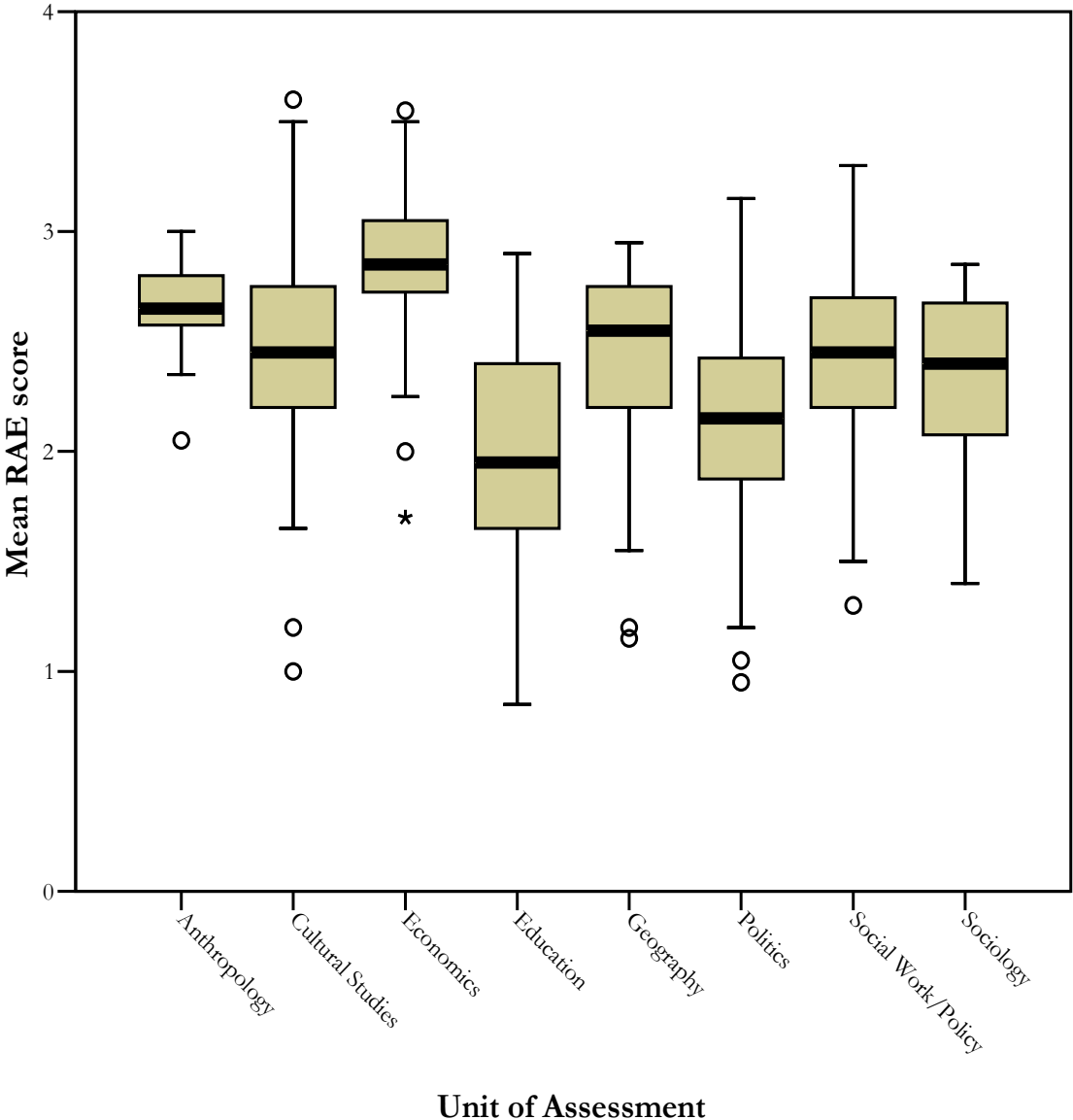
Source: RAE 2008

To put these figures into context, it is worth briefly considering the ‘quality profile’ and size of Sociology in comparison to similar disciplines from the 2008 RAE (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). Sociology is slightly smaller than many of the other established social science disciplines (Education, Geography, Politics and International Studies, Social Work etc) but larger than both Economics and Econometrics, and Anthropology. More staff were returned as ‘Category A’⁷ in Sociology in RAE 2008 than in 2001 (927 against 859 respectively). Quality-wise, Sociology shows a similar grade profile in RAE 2008 to most comparator disciplines. Indeed there is a remarkable degree of consistency across disciplines (scores were not standardised). As noted above, the replacement of the single overall score for a department used in RAE 2001 with a

⁷ This roughly equates to a member of academic staff in a ‘typical’ role (teaching and research contract, funded by funding council general funds rather than a research grant).

grade profile in RAE 2008 has led to a shift in outcomes as ‘pockets’ or ‘islands of excellence’ in departments which formerly achieved a lower grade have now been identified (and, one might add, ‘pockets of mediocrity’ appear in departments which achieved a high grade in 2001). However there was no noticeable change in the number of departments submitted to the RAE overall. Some departments which did not submit in 2001 did so in 2008; conversely some departments which submitted in 2001 were missing in 2008. Often staff were returned to the RAE, but in another unit of assessment (e.g. Politics and International Studies, Social Work and Social Policy & Administration, Communication, Cultural and Media Studies).⁸ There are thus quite a lot of departments (32) where a sociology single-honours degree programme is offered for entry in 2009, but no RAE submission was made in 2008.

Figure 3.5: Distribution of mean grades across institution, by Unit of Assessment, RAE 2008



Source: RAE 2008

⁸ This is another instance of sociology’s ‘border’ problem.

Figure 3.5 provides an alternative view of sociology's profile of research quality. It is a box-and-whisker plot of the 'grade point average' obtained by institutions in Sociology and comparator UoAs. The GPA represents the mean score obtained by an institution in a unit of assessment. The diagram therefore indicates the spread of quality in a discipline, as measured by the RAE. It shows, for instance, that there was a greater range of departmental scores in Education than in Anthropology. Most sociology departments scored GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0; the highest-scoring departments were clustered between 2 and 3; and there was a long tail of departments scoring between 2.0 and about 1.3. Whilst Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Geography and Social Work and Social Policy & Administration showed similar concentration around the 2.0 – 3.0 score, their overall score distributions differed.

Looking at the number of staff submitted to the Sociology UoA in RAE 2008 in comparison to the number notionally in the Sociology UoA in HESA 2006/07 staff data it would *appear* that a lower proportion of staff were submitted in the Sociology UoA in RAE 2008 than was the case in Politics and Economics. However HESA has cautioned against such comparisons. Recall that departments submitted to the Sociology UoA in RAE 2001 were not identical to those submitted to the 2008 exercise and so a like-with-like comparison is not possible. Furthermore, data from the 2007/08 exercise have not been released by HESA on the grounds that such comparisons made from this data would not be safe.

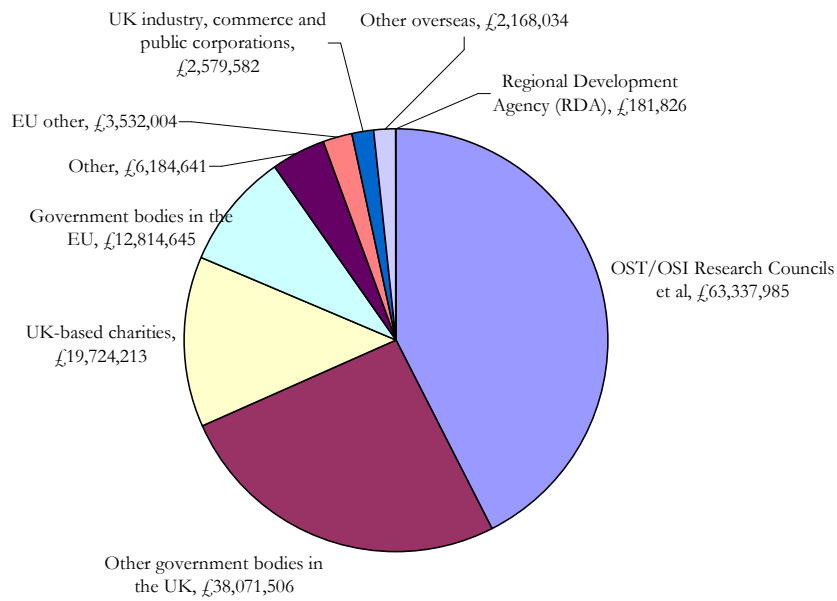
3.2 *Research grants from other sources*

Funding council research income is intended to support research infrastructure and the research environment. Funding for specific research projects in sociology where there are direct costs (e.g. research staff) comes from various other sources, including the research councils, government bodies, charitable trusts and industry, with some funding coming from overseas. Obtaining information on these funding sources is not possible since HESA data on earned research income subsumes sociology in the broad category 'Social Studies'. Data collected as part of RAE 2008 provide a breakdown of research income for each submission. This is useful in that it is recent, but of course excludes those departments not submitted to the Sociology UoA.

According to the RAE data, total non-QR research income for sociology for the five year period 2001/02 – 2006/07 was just under £150 million. This compares to annual QR for 2009/10 of about £17 million. The largest single source of research income was the UK research councils (which would principally mean the ESRC), representing just over two-fifths of the total. A further quarter of earned research income came from other UK government bodies, with thirteen per cent from charitable bodies. The RAE data show year-on-year growth in research grant income averaging about eleven per cent between 2001/02 and 2006/07, with overall growth across the period of two-thirds. Proportionally the largest growth in income has come from Regional Development Agencies, although these account for only £1.23 of every £1,000 of research grant income. Most of the absolute growth in research income has come from the research councils.

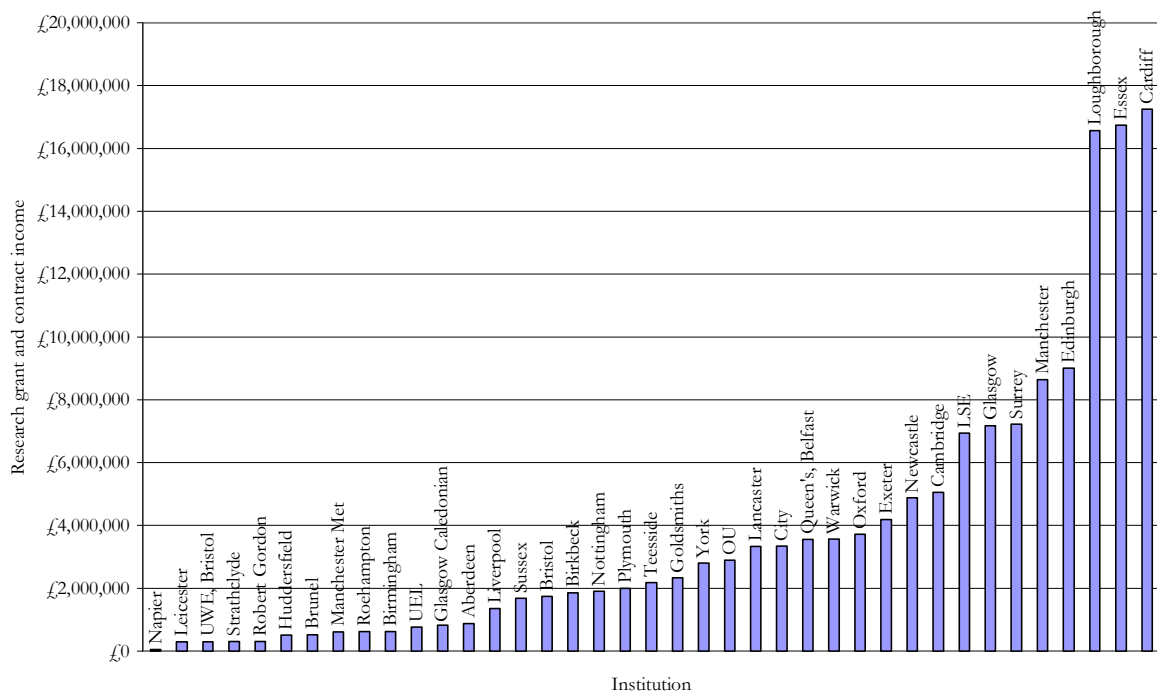
As with QR, there is a heavily skewed distribution of the research income across individual departments. Over one third of all the earned income is accounted for by just three out of the 39 departments in RAE 2008; and six departments together earn over half of the sociology total. A correlation coefficient was calculated for departments between QR and earned research income (comparing QR for 2009/10 with research income for 2006/07). A strong positive association is seen ($r^2 = 0.84$). A scatter plot of the same data showed that Loughborough earned substantially more research grant income than would be predicted based on its QR income, whereas Goldsmiths, the OU and UEL earned substantially less than predicted.

Figure 3.6: Sources of research income for sociology departments, 2001/02 – 2006/07



Source: RAE 2008

Figure 3.7: Research grant income of sociology departments, 2001/02 – 2006/07



Source: RAE 2008

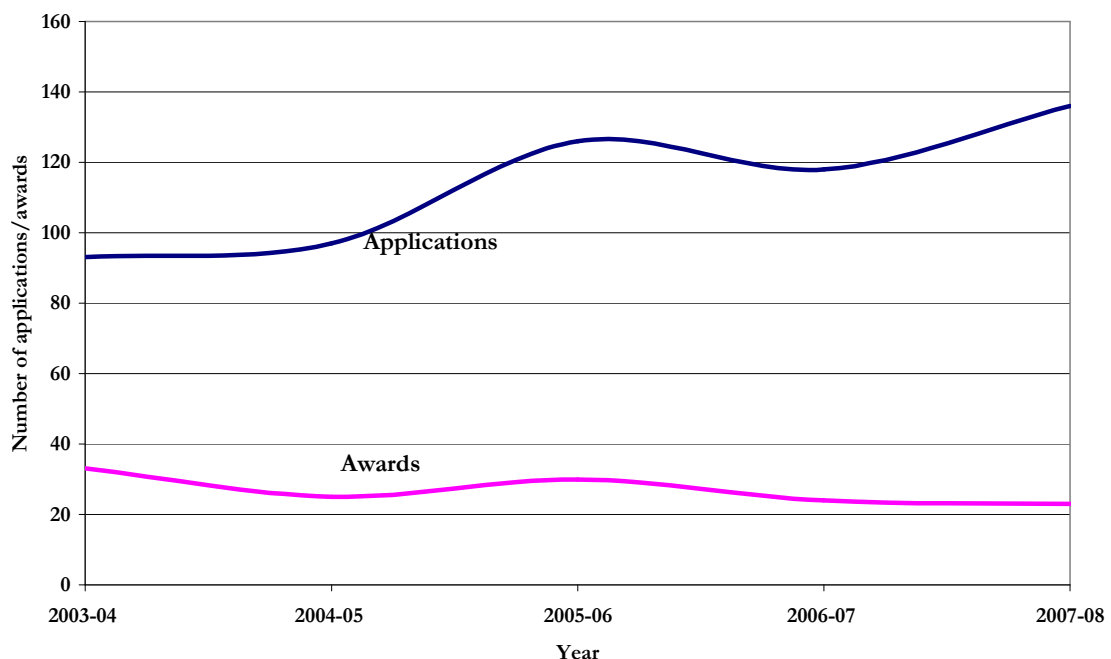
4 ESRC-Funded Research in Sociology

4.1 Funding for sociologists

The Council's current portfolio⁹ of research in Sociology comprises 135 separate projects amounting to around £54.8 million in total. A breakdown of this activity is given in Table 4.1. Full details are provided in the Appendix.¹⁰ As the table shows, the Council funds a range of different kinds of research activity in sociology. This includes:

- large and often multi-institutional research centres such as the National Centre for Research Methods, the Centre for Time Use Research and the International Centre for Lifecourse Studies.
- Facilities for researchers, such as the Sample of Anonymised Records from the UK Population Census
- 'Responsive mode' grants to support the best ideas of sociologists in the UK, with 'large' and 'small' grants offered.
- Various targeted programmes, addressing such themes as ageing, climate change and new bioscience technologies.
- Fellowships for researchers at different career stages, from Postdoctoral Fellowships for new PhD graduates through to Professorial Fellowships for senior academics.

Figure 4.1: ESRC funding opportunities in sociology - applications and awards



Source: ESRC Annual Report 2007/08

⁹ Defined as projects which were 'active' in July 2009.

¹⁰ Panel members are also referred to the ESRC Society Today website (www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk) where a fully searchable database of ESRC awards in all subjects is available, giving details of awards and, where available, project outputs.

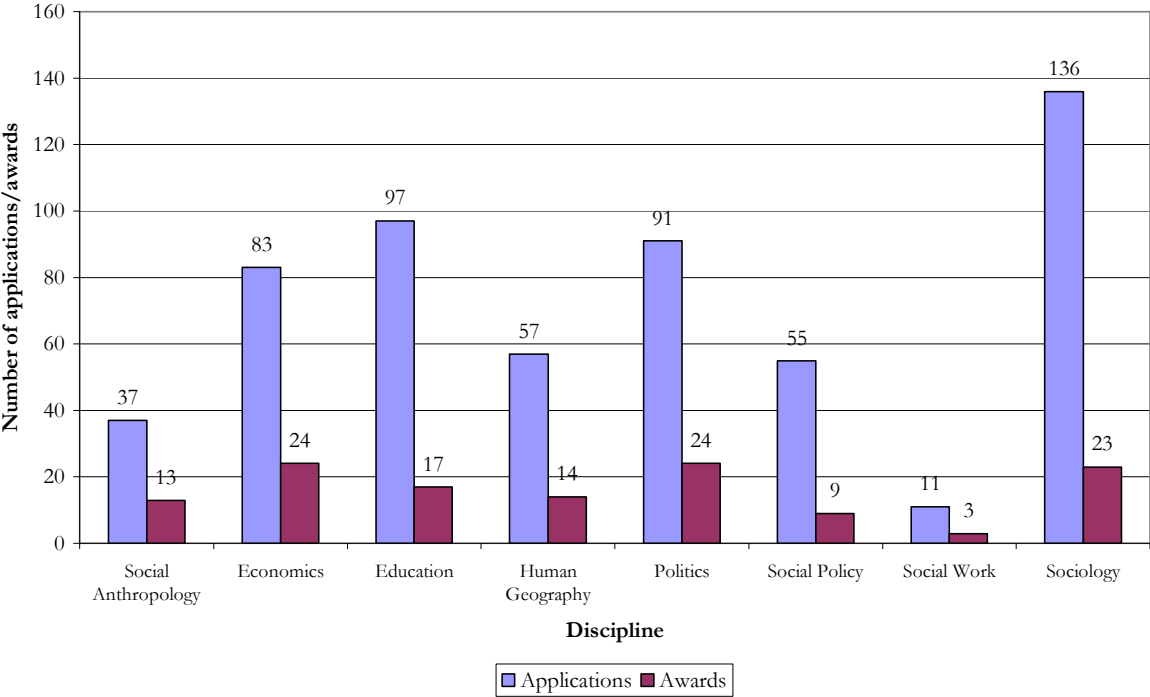
Funding is split between responsive-mode grants and specific initiatives roughly 1:2 (although one very large initiative in genomics skews this distribution). Many different institutions host funded projects, although at present only ten post-1992 universities and two non-higher-education-sector bodies hold an award. Again, a relatively small number of institutions account for a large proportion of the total, but they are not all institutions which feature prominently in the RAE for sociology. The University of Leeds, for instance, has ten current awards but did not submit researchers to RAE 2008 in sociology; nor did the Institute of Education, which holds eight awards at present.

Table 4.1: Current ESRC-funded research projects in sociology

Project type	No. of projects	Funding
<i>Standard schemes</i>		
Standard research grants	19	£7,525,812
First grants scheme	12	£2,501,046
Large grants scheme	1	£2,469,076
Realising Our Potential Awards	24	£2,078,066
Postdoctoral fellowships	17	£1,471,305
Research fellowships	5	£1,283,828
Small grants scheme	9	£821,188
Professorial fellowships	1	£541,199
Placement fellows	7	£331,741
Researcher Development Initiative	3	£234,995
Seminar competitions	14	£224,372
Follow-on fund	1	£79,985
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>£19,562,613</i>
<i>Specific programmes and initiatives</i>		
Genomics	2	£14,501,322
Qualitative Longitudinal Study	1	£4,449,997
International Centre for Lifecourse Studies	1	£3,565,553
New Dynamics of Ageing	3	£3,437,737
Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy	1	£2,698,488
E-Science programme	2	£1,695,457
National Centre for Research Methods	2	£1,680,038
ESRC-JISC Census programme	1	£1,043,259
World Economy and Finance	1	£466,092
Climate change fellowships	1	£398,428
National Child Development Study	1	£298,548
Targeted Initiative in Innovation	1	£250,000
Understanding Population Trends and Processes	2	£242,362
PTD Recognition Exercise	1	£159,440
Research Directors Fellowships	1	£151,308
RIGT/ESRC Research into Problem Gambling	1	£147,498
ERA-Sage	1	£35,515
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>£35,221,042</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>£54,783,655</i>

Source: ESRC

Figure 4.2: ESRC funding opportunities – applications and awards by discipline, 2007/08



Source: ESRC Annual Report 2007/08

Sociology’s success rate for ESRC grant applications has halved over the period 2003/04 to 2006/07 (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Sociology is second only to Psychology (not shown) in the number of applications made, with a steady increase across the period. However the number of awards made has actually declined leading to a low success rate. It is not clear why this is the case.

4.2 Research Council Studentship Awards

ESRC studentship awards to sociology departments are not strictly research income, since they are as much about research *training* as about original contributions to knowledge. However such awards are a useful indicator of sociology’s position in competition with other social science subjects in attracting support for PhD students. Research council studentships offer tuition fees, a stipend of £13,290 plus research training support funds of £750 for full-time students (2009/10) and other enhancements for various schemes. They are thus the premium form of support for doctoral students in the social sciences.

The ESRC now operates a ‘quota’ system of allocating studentships, largely replacing the previous open competition. There were 56 new quota awards in Sociology in 2007/8, some eleven per cent of the total awards. This was the joint second largest individual subject allocation behind Economics. There were nineteen further studentships allocated to Sociology through the open competition, project-linked studentships and collaborative schemes. Twenty-three individual institutions have a quota allocation, with the number of awards per institution for the three-year period 2008 – 2010 ranging from one to seventeen. Only one of the institutions is a post-1992 university (Plymouth) and only one is Welsh (Cardiff).

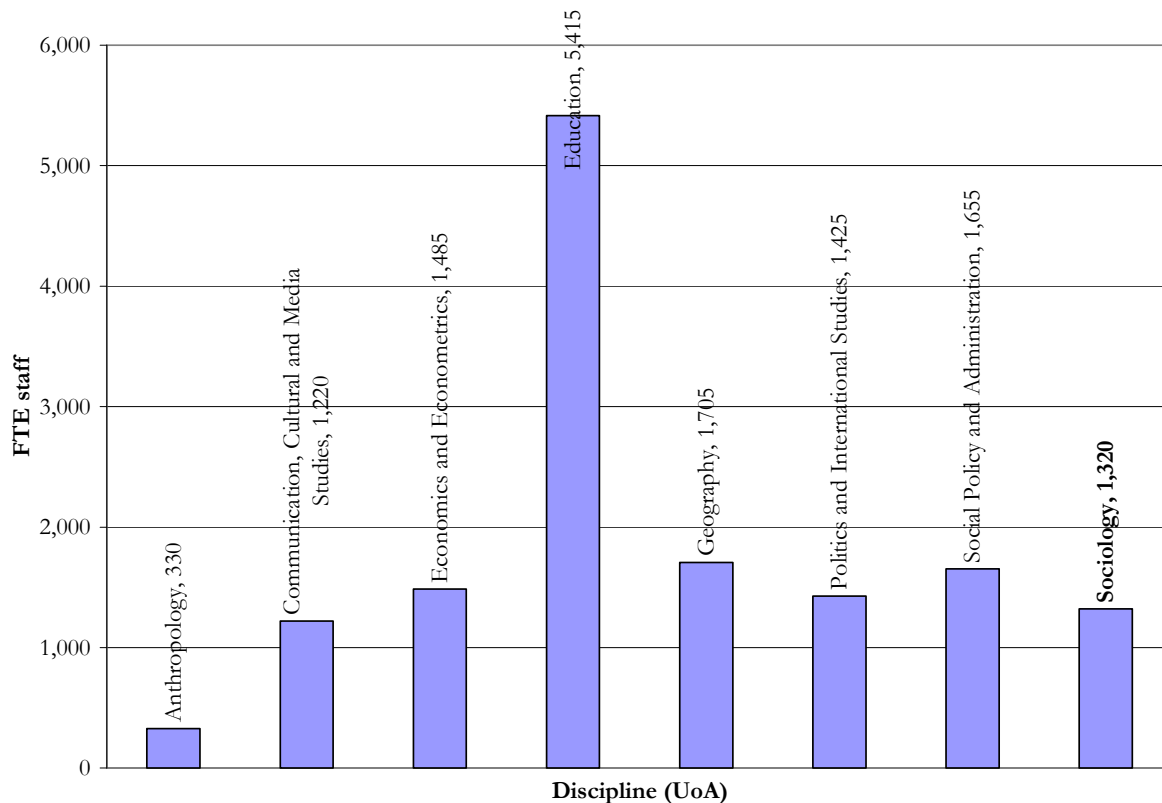
5 Staff Demographics

As already stated, definitively identifying sociologists is tricky because the ‘borders’ of the discipline of sociology are porous and because sociologists are ‘exported’ into other discipline areas (see section 2 above). The approach adopted here is to look at HESA data on staff¹¹ according to the RAE Unit of Assessment with which they were actually or notionally associated and also to analyse their ‘home’ discipline, based on the field of study of their highest qualification. These data need to be treated with caution however as there are a large number of ‘not known’ values, both for UoA and home discipline. Thus establishing the ‘true’ size of UK sociology becomes even more difficult.

5.1 Overall numbers

Using UoA figures, Sociology appears to be slightly smaller than most of its comparator disciplines, particularly those in the ‘research focused cluster’ of subjects identified by Mills *et al* (see Figure 5.1). It is slightly larger than Cultural Studies but smaller than Economics, Geography, Politics and Social Policy. Staff numbers in 2006/07 on this measure (1,320) had decreased slightly against 2004/05 (1,370) and 2005/06 (1,390). However using the alternative measure of ‘home’ subject discipline there were 3,700 sociologists in 2006/07 according to HESA.

Figure 5.1: Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff by selected Unit of Assessment, 2006/07



Source: HESA Staff Record 2006/07

Matters become complicated when cross-classifying ‘home’ discipline and UoA. Just under half of those classified as sociologists in the UoA data do not have sociology as their home discipline.

¹¹ Staff data are for 2006/07. HESA identified quality issues in relation to 2007/08 data and have decided not to release this for analysis. Staff are therefore classified into RAE units of assessment in relation to the previous RAE (2001), not the most recent.

Those with a highest qualification in sociology are also spread liberally across other UoAs, as shown in Table 5.1. There are large numbers of sociologists working in social policy, education, business schools and social work, with other pockets across the social science disciplines. Perhaps most surprisingly, there are almost 800 sociologists identified as working outside social science departments altogether.¹²

Table 5.1: Location of staff with ‘home’ discipline of sociology, by UoA (FTE)

Unit of Assessment	FTE staff
Sociology	610
Social Policy and Administration	375
Education	200
Business and Management Studies	160
Social Work	115
Law	70
Communication, Cultural and Media Studies	65
Politics and International Studies	45
Psychology	40
Geography	40
Town and Country Planning	20
History	15
Anthropology	10
Economics and Econometrics	10
Other	795
Not known	1,130
<i>Total</i>	<i>3,670</i>

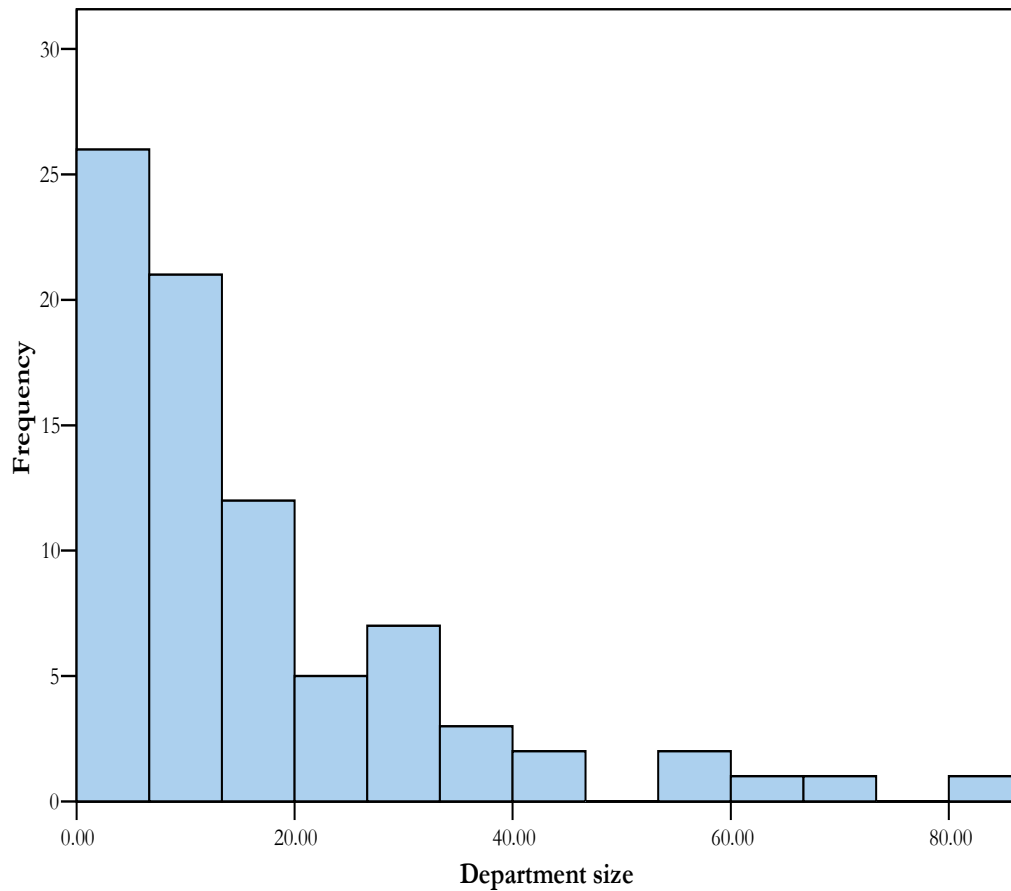
Source: HESA Staff Record 2006/07

Slightly over three-quarters of FTE staff in the Sociology UoA are employed on permanent contracts. There is little variation across sociology’s comparator disciplines on this measure. The proportion of permanent staff in a discipline relates closely to the proportion of staff that are research-only (i.e. research assistants and similar), who are much more likely to be fixed-term than those engaged in teaching and research. Around 17 per cent of FTE staff in the Sociology UoA were on research-only contracts in 2006/07. This is higher than in all the comparator subjects, with the exception of Social Policy and Administration.

Just less than two-thirds of Sociology UoA staff FTEs reported to HESA in 2006/07 were located in pre-1992 universities. Most institutions with staff in the Sociology UoA reported fifteen or fewer FTE staff. However about two-thirds of the FTE staff were in the larger departments (more than twenty staff). In other words, although there are a large number of departments, many of these are quite small and there is some degree of concentration of personnel. The largest departments measured using the HESA data are at Essex, Leicester, Portsmouth, Manchester and City. Using data from the RAE in 2008, the largest submissions (in terms of staff FTE) were made by Cardiff, Manchester, Loughborough, Edinburgh, Essex and the Open University.

¹² Data on the location of these staff were not available.

Figure 5.2: Size of UK Sociology ‘departments’¹³ (in terms of staff FTE, using UoA data for 2006/07)



Source: HESA Staff Record 2006/07

5.2 Grade profile

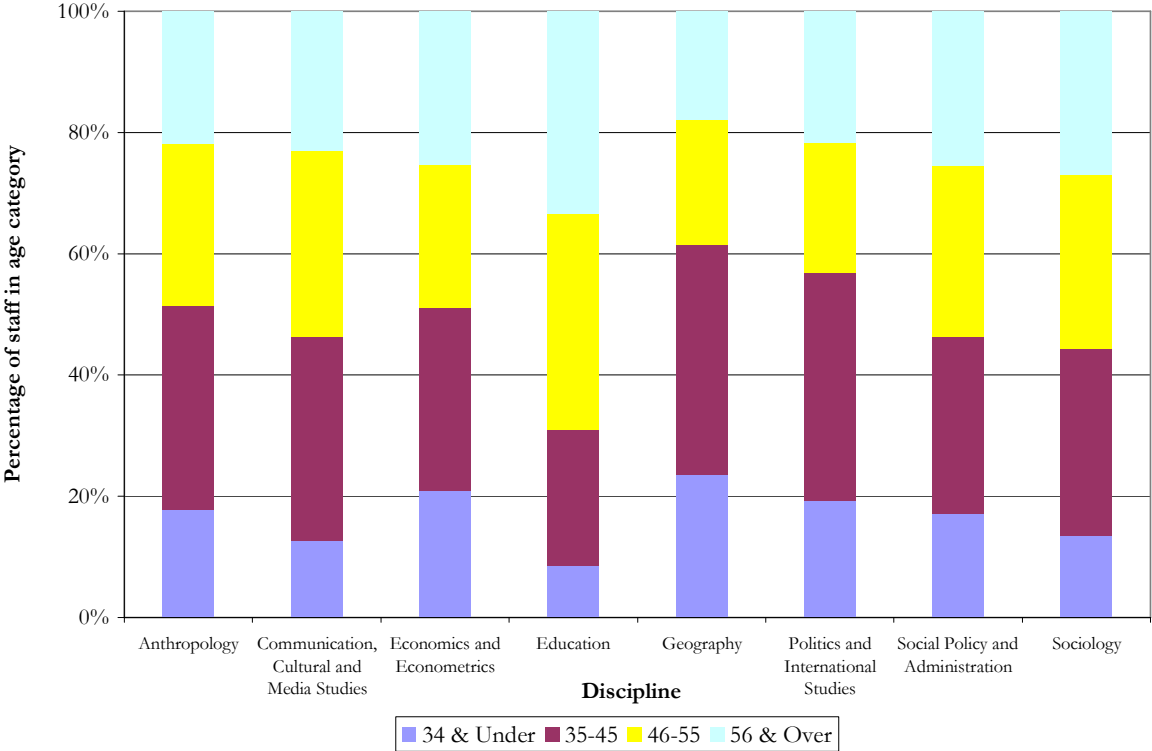
About one-fifth of FTE staff in the Sociology UoA are of professorial status or equivalent, with a further quarter at senior lecturer grade. This is a more senior profile than Education or Cultural Studies, similar to Geography, Anthropology and Social Policy, but slightly less senior than Politics or Economics. It is not possible to calculate the proportion of staff who were ‘research active’ for RAE 2008. However using RAE 2001 data, Mills *et al.* estimated that some 63 per cent of those located in departments submitted to the Sociology UoA were submitted in the exercise. Figures for comparator disciplines were 93 per cent (Anthropology, Social Policy), 79 per cent (Politics), 74 per cent (Geography), 57 per cent (Economics) and 43 per cent (Education).

5.3 Socio-demographic characteristics

Concern has been expressed recently about the demographic profile of the social sciences in two respects. The first concerns the continued supply of academic labour to sustain high quality teaching and research, manifested as worries about the age of social scientists and a possible dependence on non-UK nationals. The second relates to equity and diversity and under- or overrepresentation according to gender, race/ethnicity, social class and other characteristics.

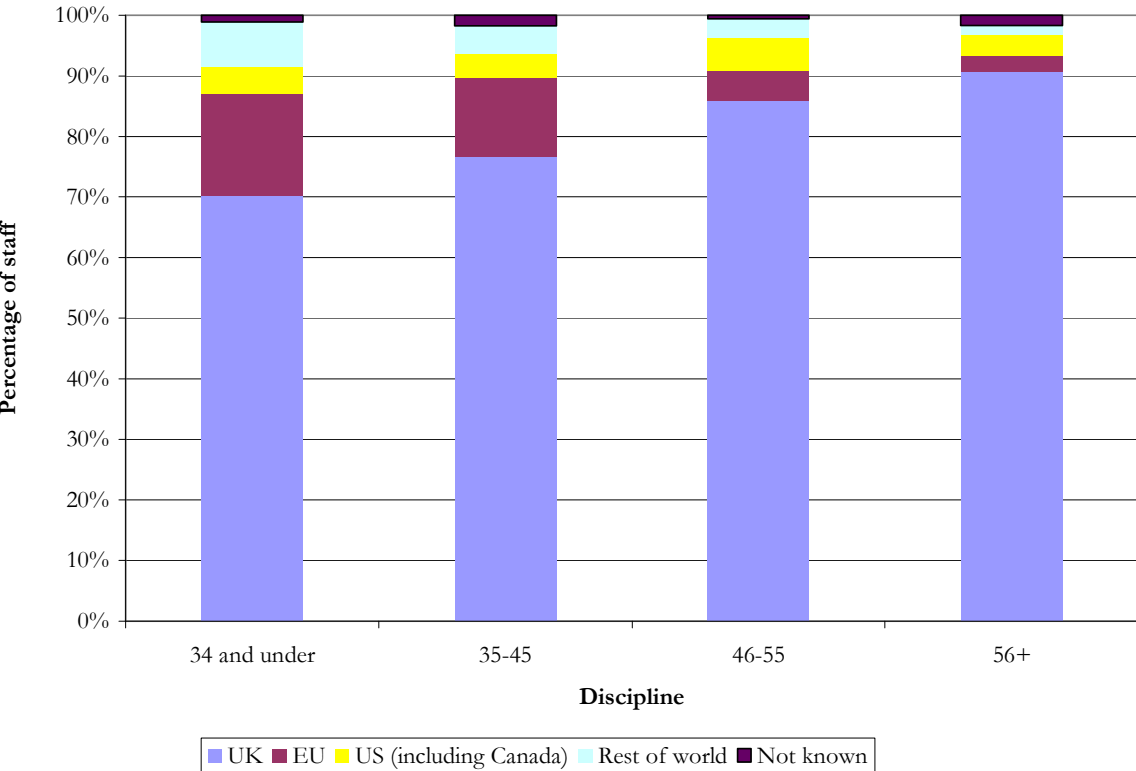
¹³ These figures do not represent actual organisational units, but rather the FTE of staff reported in the Sociology UoA by each institution.

Figure 5.3: Age profile of FTE staff in selected disciplines, 2006/07



Source: HESA Staff Record 2006/07

Figure 5.4: Nationality of UoA Sociology FTE staff 2006/07 by age group



Source: HESA Staff Record 2006/07

Sociology has been largely ignored regarding the first set of concerns. That the age and nationality of academics are issues at all might make an interesting sociological study in itself! However it is worth briefly reviewing the profile of the discipline in these respects.

The age profile of FTE staff in the Sociology UoA is somewhat older than in all of its comparator subjects except for Education (Figure 5.3). A retirement-induced recruitment crisis seems unlikely however. It is perhaps worth noting the relatively low proportion of staff under the age of 35 compared to the other social sciences shown, although the discipline's profile does not look particularly unusual otherwise. Looking at sociologists working in other UoAs gives a similar impression in relation to age.

Some 82 per cent of staff in the Sociology UoA are UK nationals. Perhaps surprisingly, the proportion of UK nationals increases among older staff and among those in senior grades. One might have expected international competition for academic talent to have been more visible among senior grades, perhaps driven by the recruitment of international 'stars' for RAE purposes. However the patterns no doubt reflect more general trends in labour and student migration across all disciplines and more generally within the UK economy and population. Given the concerns of sociology as a discipline, internationalisation of the sociological workforce is likely to be of benefit.

Discussions about the socio-demographic profile of the academic profession from the perspective of diversity and equity have tended to focus on gender in science and engineering subjects. Within British sociology, the feminist tradition has highlighted both epistemological questions in respect of gender and also the quantitative (under)representation of women at different levels of seniority. There has been, perhaps surprisingly, less focus on questions of social class and ethnicity.

Women are in a minority among professional sociologists whether looking at those with a home subject of sociology or those in the Sociology UoA. The position is similar in the comparator disciplines, with the exceptions of Social Policy and Education. About 46 per cent of Sociology academics are women, according to the HESA data. This is the same as in Anthropology, but a higher representation than in Economics, Politics, Geography and Cultural Studies. As is well-established across the board in universities, women tend to comprise a higher proportion of those in lower grades; sociology is no exception. There are more women in researcher positions than men; at lecturer level there is almost a 1:1 male:female ratio; this shifts to 5:4 among senior lecturers and 2:1 at chair level. This *might* be affected by the differing age profile of men and women. Men are in the majority in the oldest age group by some way; the reverse is true in the youngest age group. Since professors and senior lecturers are likely to be older, it follows that there will be some gender differences in grading. This ignores the possibility of differential attrition from the profession by gender. There also appears to be a downward shift in women's representation starting after undergraduate level: the ratio of men:women among undergraduates is approximately 1:3, whereas the ratio among staff under 35 is closer to 1:2.

There are no available data on the social class background of UK sociologists, although this has been the focus of some sociological research.¹⁴ There are however some data on the ethnic background of UK sociologists. These indicate that 92 per cent of staff of known ethnicity submitted to the Sociology UoA were classified as White British, a figure which is similar across

¹⁴ See for instance (on the US case) Grimes, M. D. and Morris, J. M. (1997) *Caught in the Middle: Contradictions in the Lives of Sociologists from Working-Class Backgrounds*. Westport, CT: Praeger; and British research summarised in Wakeling, P. (forthcoming, 2010) Is there such thing as a working-class academic? In Taylor, Y. (ed.) *Classed Intersections: Spaces, Selves, Knowledges*. Farnham: Ashgate.

many of the comparator disciplines and among those with a home discipline of sociology. Excluding non-UK nationals increases the representation of the White British ethnic group to 94 per cent. There were fewer than five FTE staff from each of Black African, Other Black and Bangladeshi backgrounds. There were fewer than ten FTE staff from each of the Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Chinese groups. The largest defined ethnic group was Indian (20 FTE staff); there were fifteen staff from the Other Asian group and 35 from the 'Other' group. Whilst the proportion of staff from the White British group did not change among the professoriate (92 per cent), this meant that the number of professors from most of the other ethnic groups were very small indeed. However among women, 97 per cent of professors were from a White British background.¹⁵ There is also no indication that ethnic group representation among sociologists in the UK are different for younger cohorts. Although the White group is largest among the over-55s, it represents 91 per cent of the under-35s too.

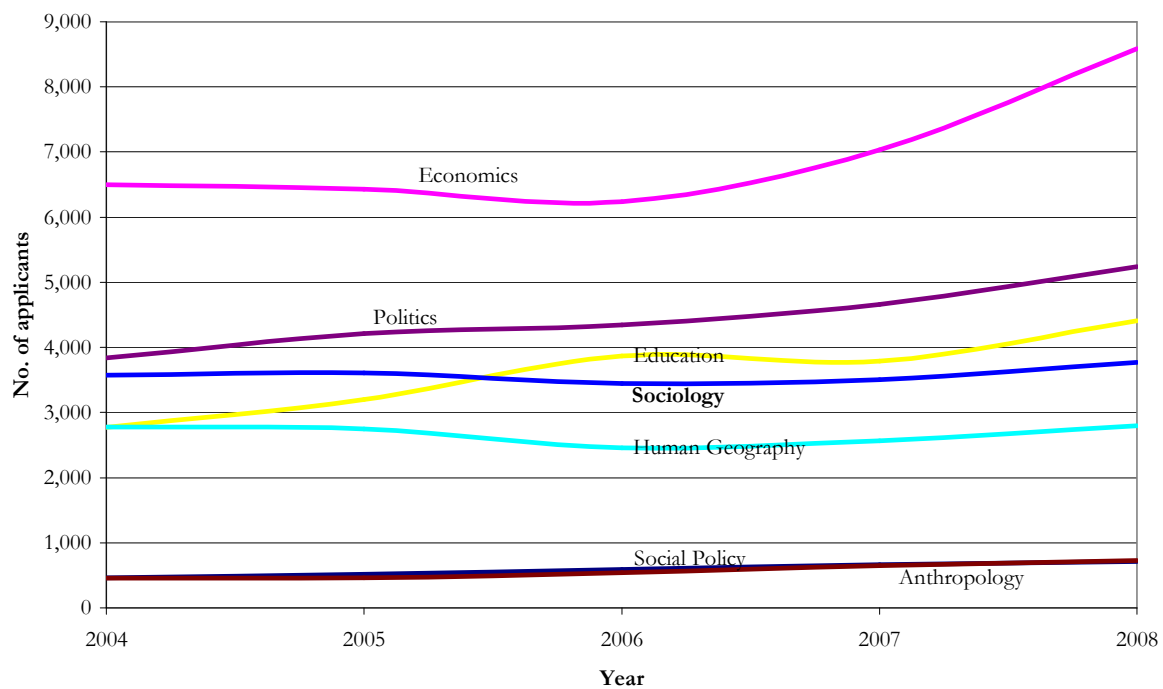
¹⁵ For more on this issue, see Fenton, S., Carter, J. and Modood, T. (2000) Ethnicity and academia: closure models, racism models and market models. *Sociological Research Online*, 5 (2), <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/5/2/fenton.html>; and Wakeling, P. (2007) White faces, black faces: is British sociology a white discipline? *Sociology*, 41 (5): 945 – 960.

6 Applicants, Students and Graduates

6.1 Undergraduate applicants

UCAS lists single honours sociology courses at 67 institutions for 2009 entry, with hundreds more combinations which incorporate sociology. For 2008 entry, UCAS reports 3,755 applicants with a subject preference of sociology.¹⁶ This is more than Anthropology (716), Human and Social Geography (2,800) and Social Policy (727) but less than Education (4,800), Politics (5,239) and Economics (8,582). Since there were 4,705 applicants accepted to sociology degrees in 2008, it appears to be undersubscribed (supply exceeds demand), a situation shared by Education and Social Policy. Overall in the UCAS scheme there were around 1.3 applicants for every place in 2008. About 1,000 Sociology applicants were accepted through the ‘Clearing’ system, which is intended to place applicants who have not been offered a place through the ‘normal’ application cycle. This was a higher proportion than any of the comparator subjects except for Social Policy and slightly higher than the UCAS average.

Figure 6.1: Applicants via UCAS for selected subjects 2002 - 2006



Source: UCAS

Sociology's popularity among applicants for full-time undergraduate study has remained relatively constant in recent years, with numbers fluctuating little over the period 2004 – 2008, a fate shared with Geography, Social Policy and Anthropology, all of which are less popular in absolute terms. In contrast, Politics, Education and especially Economics have seen recent increases in applicant numbers. The UCAS scheme as a whole grew by 26 per cent during the same period, which means sociology experienced a slight decline in relative terms. These figures should be read with care however as they do not give a detailed understanding of changes in the popularity of the various subjects as part of combined degrees.

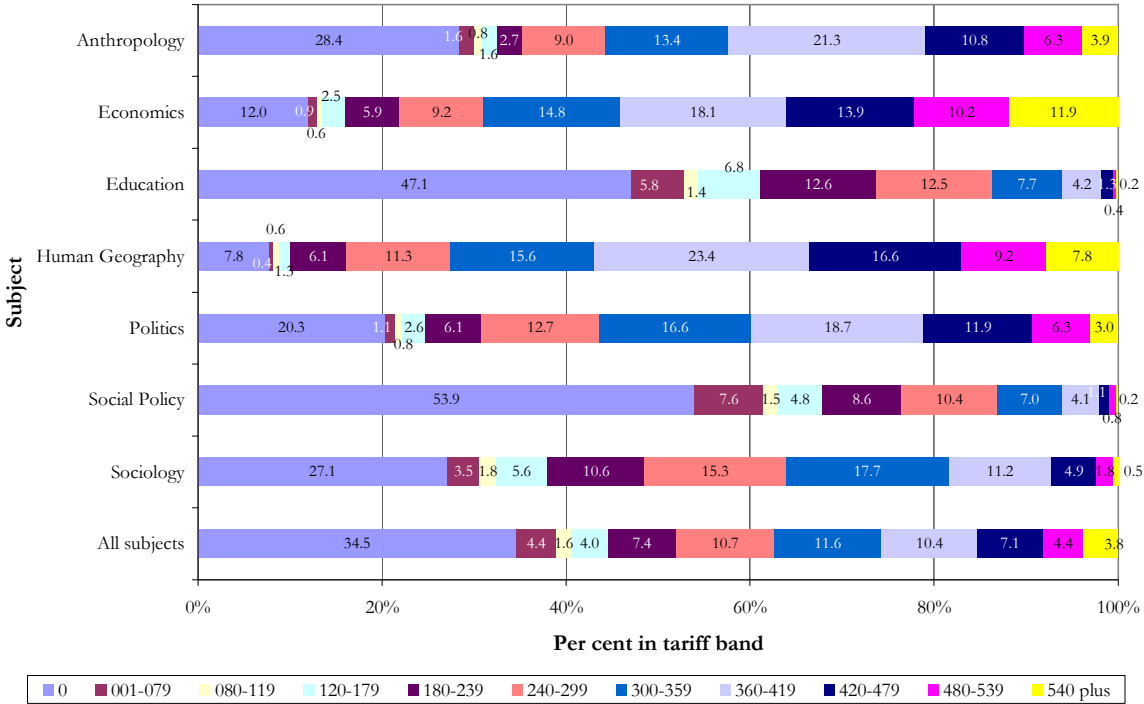
¹⁶ It is difficult to record precisely the number of applications for a subject because each applicant can make up to five applications through the UCAS scheme, to a range of subjects if they wish— applications are therefore not equal to applicants. UCAS thus computes an applicant's *preference*, based on their most common choices.

There is also perhaps a manifestation of the ‘boundary’ problem in sociology here. Applications for criminology degree programmes, for instance, are not recorded under sociology but are quite difficult to separately identify as they are typically coded as ‘Others in law’ (despite many being offered in sociology departments). This category of applicant grew by 21 per cent between 2004 and 2008.

Figure 6.2 shows the *quality* of applicants to sociology degrees via UCAS measured using the UCAS ‘tariff’. A tariff score is calculated by aggregating the scores for individual qualifications which an applicant possesses, such as AS and A2 qualifications, Scottish Highers, BTEC qualifications and others. Grade ‘A’ at A-level is equivalent to 120 tariff points; an ‘E’ grade is worth 40. Unlike previous systems for calculating A-level ‘points’, there is no maximum score. The tariff thus represents a somewhat crude measure of quality, but it does allow some comparison across subjects. Applicants to Sociology courses are reasonably well qualified when measured against the average UCAS applicant and have higher tariff scores on average than those applying to Social Policy and Education. However they are on the whole less well-qualified than applicants to Anthropology, Economics, Geography and Politics.

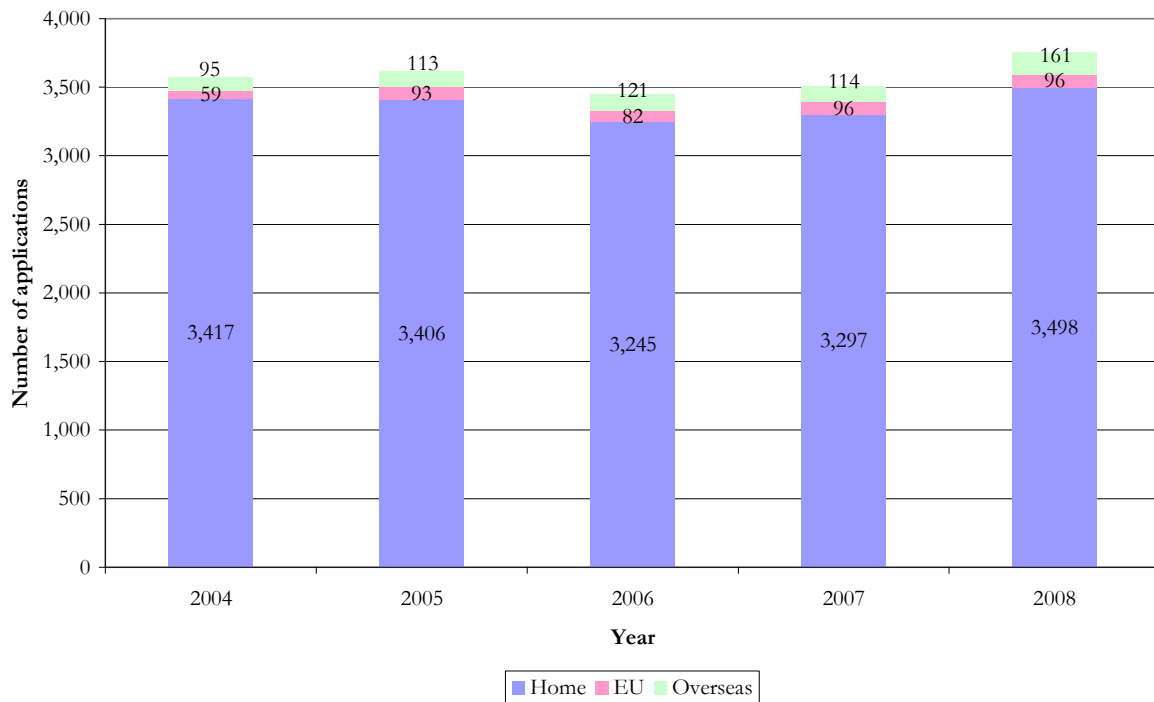
As one might expect, entry requirements are higher for degree courses at institutions with strong performance in research and lower at institutions with a teaching mission. To pick a few examples: LSE, Edinburgh and Manchester require three ‘B’ grades at A2 level, Essex, requires 300 tariff points (equivalent to BBB at A2 level) and York BBC at A2. LSE and Edinburgh also require GCSE Mathematics at grade C. At Glamorgan, Huddersfield and Teesside the tariff requirement is 200 points (equivalent to BB or CCD at A2) and at the University of East London, 160 points. A-level Sociology is not usually a requirement anywhere.

Figure 6.2: Tariff score of UCAS applicants accepted to degree courses in selected subjects, 2008 entry



Source: UCAS

Figure 6.3: Applicants for sociology via UCAS by domicile, 2004 - 2008



Source: UCAS

For 2008 entry, the ratio of male:female applicants for sociology was roughly 1:3. Approximate ratios for other subjects were: Anthropology 2:5; Economics 2:1; Education 2:25; Geography 9:10; Politics 5:4; and Social Policy 1:1. The overall gender ratio for all UCAS undergraduate applicants was about 4:5. About 17 per cent of sociology applicants were classed as ‘mature’ (over 21 years of age) in 2008.

According to UCAS for 2008 entry, sociology attracted 161 applications from overseas fee-payers, compared to 44 for Anthropology, 2,234 for Economics, 90 for Education, 72 for Geography, 646 for Politics and 13 for Social Policy. There were 132 overseas acceptances for sociology in 2008. In addition there were 96 EU applicants for sociology from the European Union (103 accepted applicants). EU application numbers grew 63 per cent between 2004 and 2008; overseas applications grew by 69 per cent; and home applications by just two per cent. The relative growth in EU applications may be partly a consequence of the change in the countries included in the category ‘EU’ following the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the Union. However as Figure 6.4 clearly shows, applicants from outside the UK represent only a small proportion of the total applicants to sociology. This is perhaps not a reflection on the quality of sociology programmes at undergraduate level as international applicants opt mainly for law, medicine, business studies, economics and engineering (both in the UK and elsewhere).

6.2 Undergraduate students¹⁷

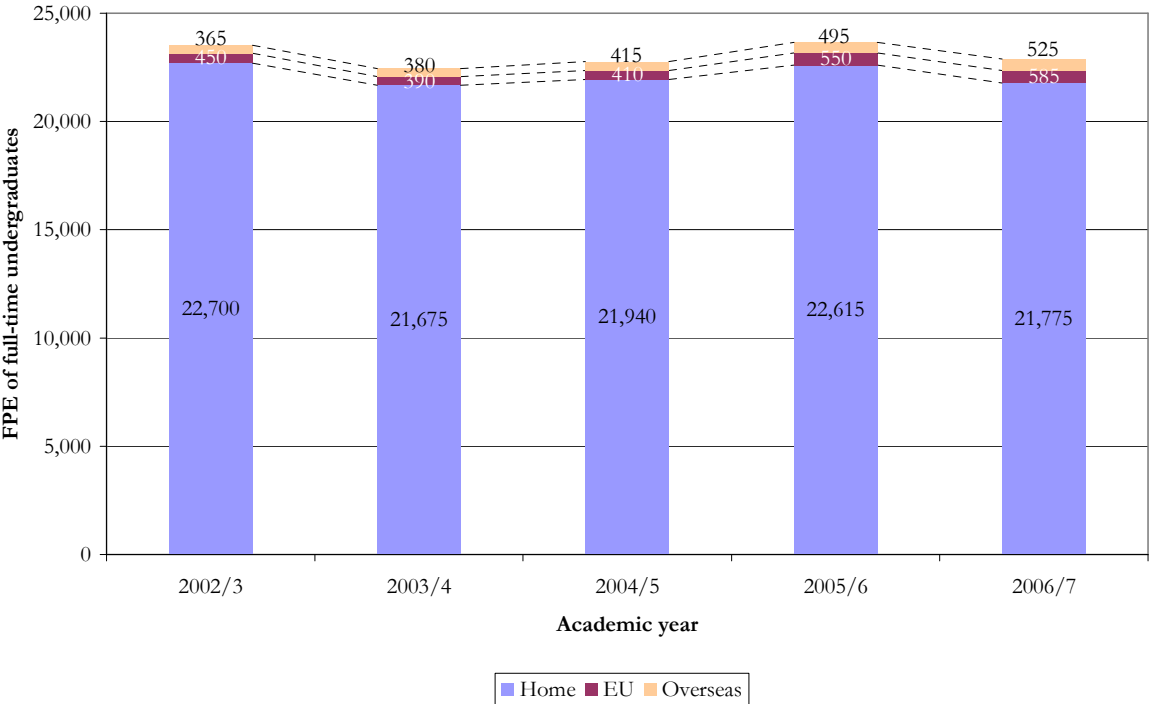
There is a major drawback in interpreting student numbers provided by HESA in that they provide ‘full person equivalents’ (FPEs), not head counts. This means that two different students taking joint honours sociology (2×0.5) will be equivalent in the figures to one person taking a

¹⁷ Data in sections 6.2 - 6.4 are principally obtained from the CD-ROM included with the Higher Education Statistics Agency’s publication *Students in Higher Education Institutions* for 2002/3, 2003/4, 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/07. All HESA data reproduced in this report are subject to HESA’s rounding strategy which is described in the note at the end of the document.

single honours degree (1 × 1.0). Since there are a large number of combined degrees incorporating sociology across higher education institutions in the UK, a headcount of all those taking some kind of sociology degree would give a larger population than the FPE figures suggest. However it is not possible, from publicly available information, to accurately determine how many students are studying joint honours or indeed what the most popular combinations are. A huge range of combined programmes are available. Judging by the number of times particular combinations are offered through the UCAS system, popular partner subjects for sociology include criminology, education, history, media studies, politics, psychology and social policy. A somewhat crude idea of the distribution of students across different types of degree is available from HESA data for 2004/05 which suggests a split of roughly 10:7:3 between single honours, joint honours and other types of combined degree.

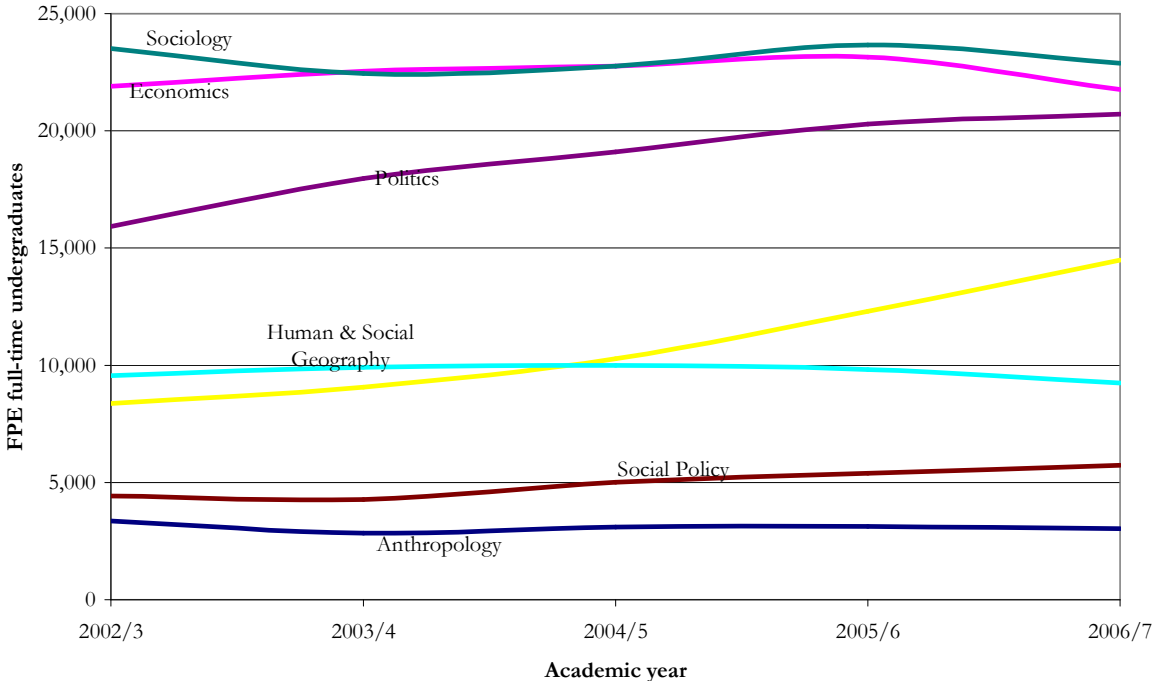
In 2006/07 there were 22,285 full- and 3,705 part-time FPE undergraduates studying Sociology. It is thus the largest single subject in HESA’s category of ‘Social Studies’ and indeed is larger than each of the other social sciences at undergraduate level, with the exceptions of business studies, management studies, education and psychology. Sociology comprises about 1.9 per cent of all full-time undergraduate study. However full-time Sociology FPEs have actually contracted by three per cent and part-time FPEs grown by only one per cent between 2002/03 and 2006/07. Overall growth in other Social Studies subjects over the same period was nineteen per cent for full-time and 41 per cent for part-time study. Sociology full-time undergraduate FPEs have declined slightly among home students (down four per cent across the period), but grown substantially among EU (30 per cent) and other overseas students (44 per cent). This is somewhat better than the growth rate for other Social Studies subjects where EU FPEs rose by nineteen per cent and overseas by 38 per cent. However the absolute growth in EU FPEs (135) and overseas FPEs (160) did not compensate for the drop in home FPEs of 925.

Figure 6.4: FPE full-time undergraduate sociology students, 2002/03 – 2006/07 by domicile



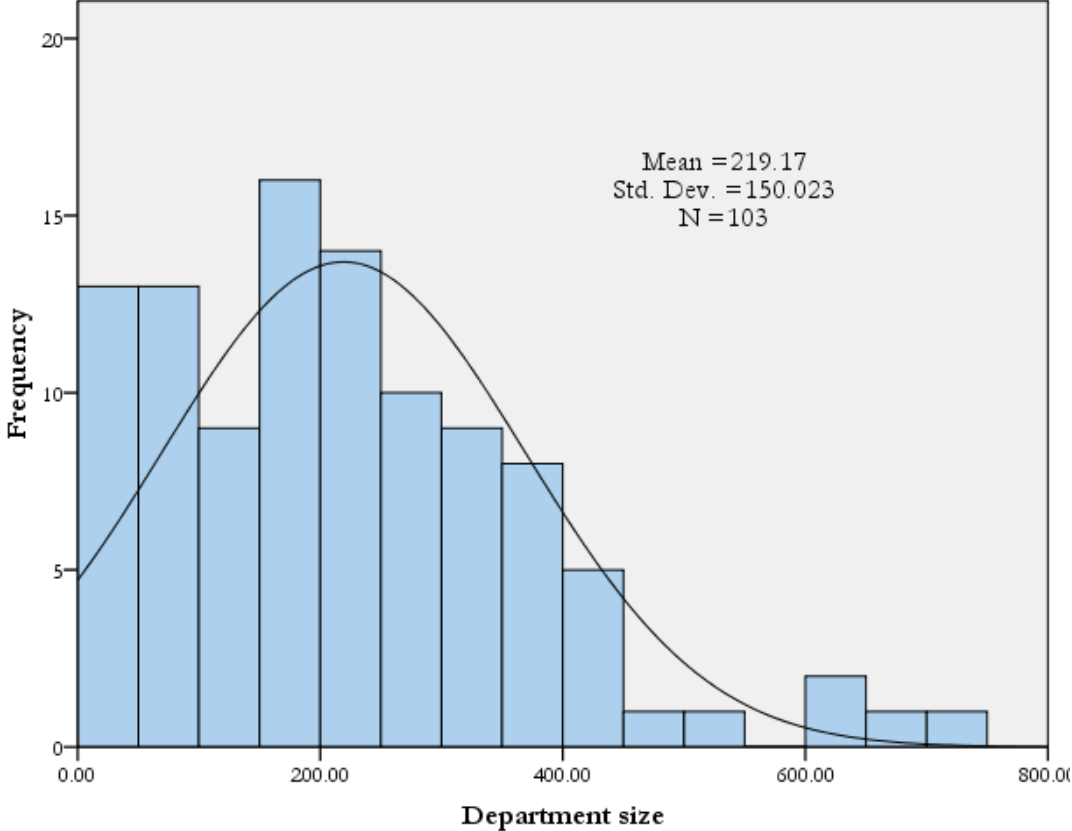
Source: HESA Student Record 2002/03 - 2006/07

Figure 6.5: FPE full-time undergraduate students, 2002/03 – 2006/07, selected subjects



Source: HESA Student Record 2002/03 - 2006/07

Figure 6.6: Histogram of FPE Sociology full-time first-degree undergraduates by department, 2006/07



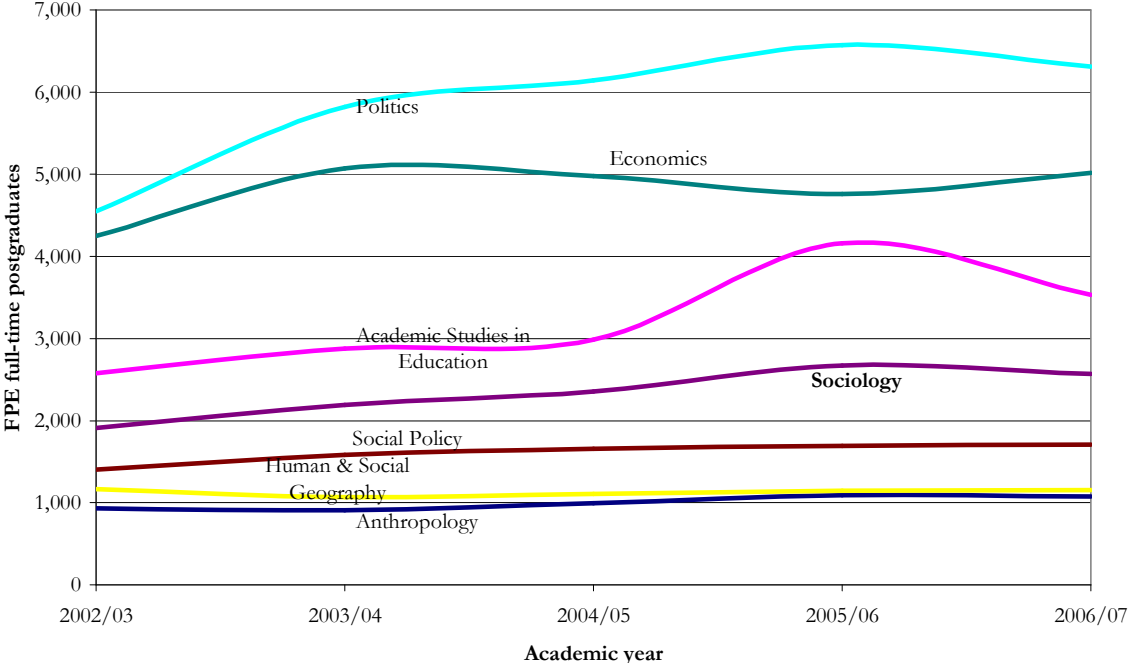
Source: HESA Student Record 2006/07

As already mentioned in respect of staff numbers, obtaining accurate figures on the size of sociology departments is difficult. The closest approximation is to list the number of FPE sociology undergraduates at each institution (see Figure 6.6). Most institutions with full-time Sociology undergraduates have between 100 and 400 full-time first degree students. Some institutions have fewer than 100 undergraduates, but these are unlikely to have a department as such. Comparing the distribution of students across institutions with those seen in briefing documents for the previous International Benchmarking Reviews of Economics, and Politics and International Studies, it would seem that sociology departments are more likely to be medium-to-large in size than in the former disciplines.

6.3 Postgraduates

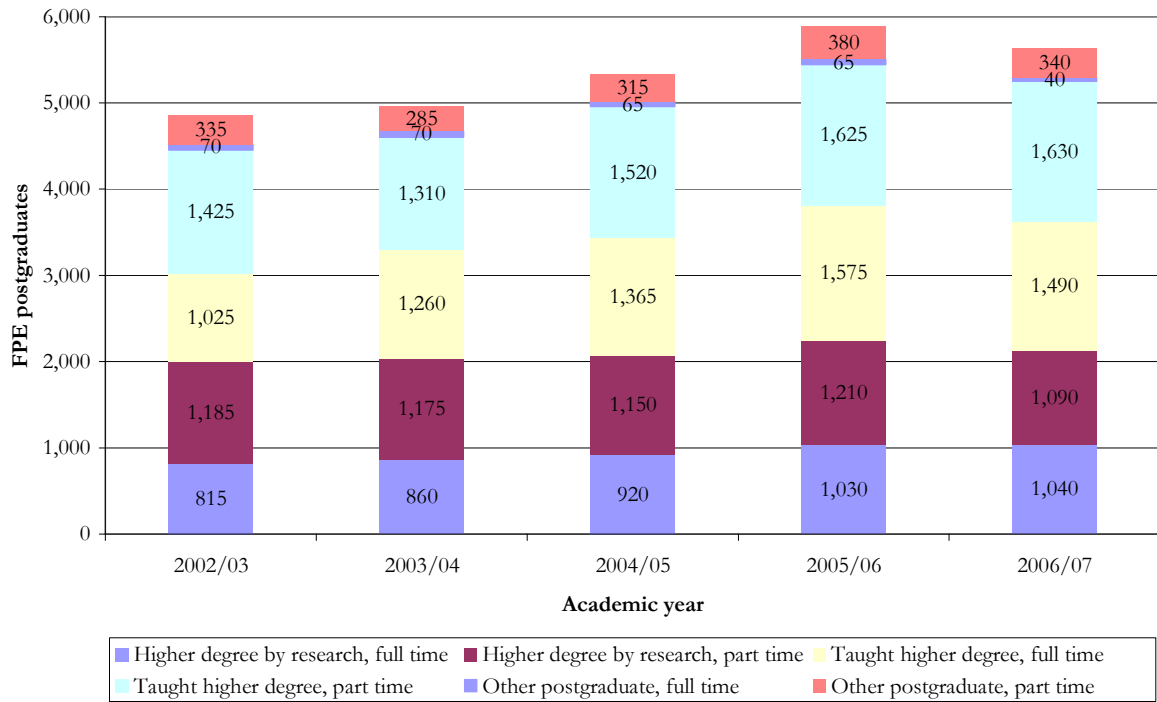
In 2006/07 there were 2,570 full-time and 3,060 part-time FPE postgraduate students in Sociology. This makes Sociology larger than Anthropology, Geography and Social Policy, at postgraduate level but smaller than Academic Studies in Education, Economics and Politics. Academic Studies in Education in particular has very large numbers of part-time postgraduate students. Full- and part-time Sociology postgraduate FPEs have grown by 35 per cent and four per cent respectively between 2002/03 and 2006/07. Overall growth in other Social Studies subjects over the same period was 25 per cent for full-time and fourteen per cent for part-time study. However as Figure 6.7 shows, growth occurred between 2002/03 and 2005/06, with a slight downturn (both in Sociology and comparator subjects) in 2006/07. This pattern is consistent across home, EU and overseas students, with particularly strong growth among full-time overseas postgraduates. In 2006/07, FPE Sociology students comprised about one per cent of both full-time and part-time postgraduates. There are no national data available about numbers of applications for postgraduate programmes in sociology.

Figure 6.7: FPE full-time postgraduate students, 2002/03 – 2006/07, selected subjects



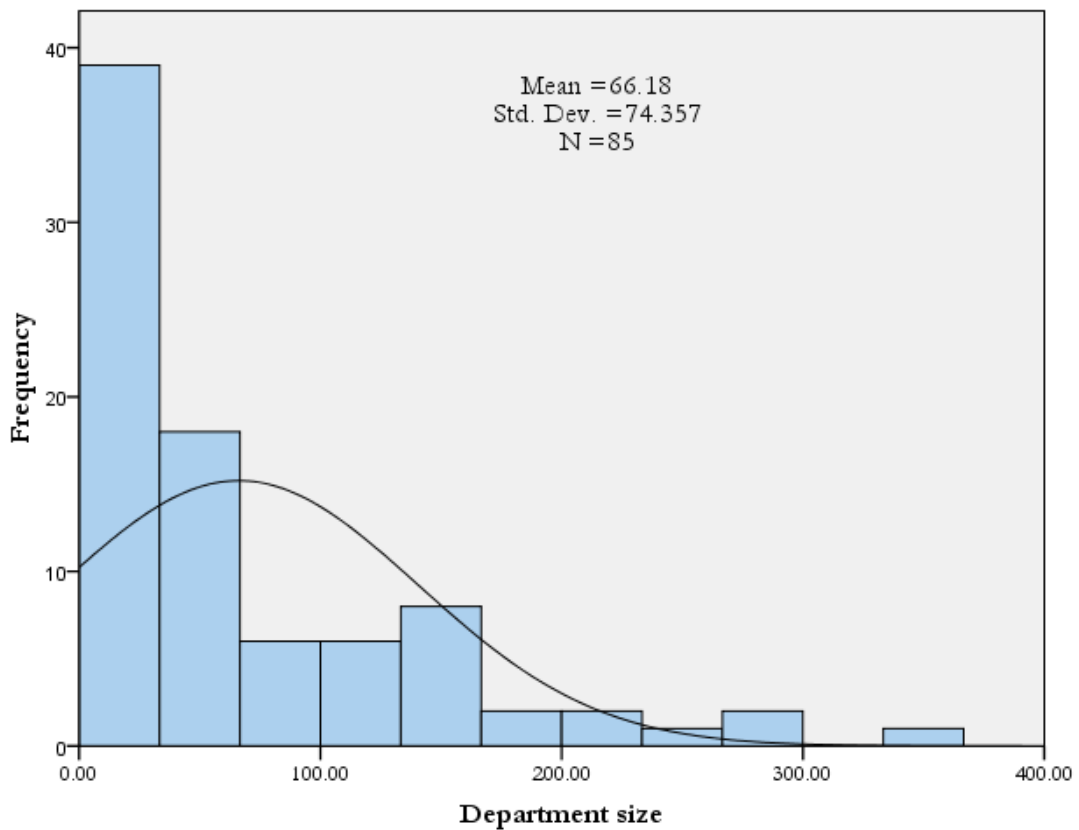
Source: HESA Student Record 2002/03 - 2006/07

Figure 6.8: FPE postgraduate students in Sociology by mode and level of study, 2002/03 – 2006/07



Source: HESA Student Record 2002/03 - 2006/07

Figure 6.9: Histogram of FPE Sociology postgraduates by department, 2006/07



Source: HESA Student Record 2006/07

Figure 6.8 shows the split of taught and research students in Sociology. Compared to comparator subjects, such as Politics and Economics, there is a reasonably even split between taught (MA/MSc) and research degree (largely PhD) study. Very few are taking an 'other' postgraduate qualification (typically diplomas and certificates). Full-time research student numbers have grown over the five-year period, although part-time numbers in this category have declined. There has been growth in both full-time and part-time masters study, although this reflects a general growth in this area across all subjects.

There are several institutions with large numbers of postgraduates in Sociology. LSE, Cambridge, City, Portsmouth, Nottingham Trent and Manchester each have over 200 postgraduates. Manchester Metropolitan University, which has the largest number of full-time undergraduates in Sociology has only 30 postgraduates. Just under one fifth of Sociology students are postgraduates, but at some institutions the proportion is much higher. City and Loughborough, for instance are over 50 per cent postgraduate and sociology is largely a postgraduate subject at Oxford and Cambridge. Of the major research-led departments, most are over 25 per cent postgraduate. Some institutions with reasonably-sized undergraduate cohorts in Sociology have no postgraduates. Figure 6.9 clearly shows that there are a large number of departments with few postgraduates and a small number of departments with many postgraduates.

Recent data on the institutional location of research students in Sociology are not readily available. Older data (for 2004/05, home postgraduates only) suggest that research student numbers are quite concentrated: half of the research students were in sixteen institutions with the other half in the remaining 62. In 42 of the departments there were ten or less research students.

More recent aggregate data on research students in Sociology show a very international student body. Asides from UK nationals (720), the remaining 670 research students are nationals of 93 different countries. This includes 24 of the 27 EU member states (only Slovakia, Luxembourg and Latvia are not represented). The USA has the single biggest representation, followed by Germany, Greece, China, Taiwan, Canada, South Korea, Turkey, Ireland and Italy. There are at least twenty nationals of each of these states represented. There are some differences in the market for international research students across the social sciences. For Economics, China and Italy are the top providers by some way; for Politics the US and Germany are also the two lead providers, but send at least twice as many students each as come for Sociology. Viewed in terms of 'market penetration',¹⁸ Ireland is by far the biggest sender of research students, followed by Greece, with Taiwan and Portugal following.

No social class data are available on postgraduate sociology students. However ethnicity and gender data have been procured for doctoral students for 2007/08. Some 58 per cent of UK-domiciled research students in Sociology were female, compared to 71 per cent of undergraduates in the previous year. Recall however that the male:female ratio among staff under 35 is 1:2; more precisely 65 per cent of staff of this age are female. It *might* be evidence that the apparent attrition through levels of study does not continue into the profession itself. This would need more detailed investigation to be confirmed, however, not least because of the age of research students. More than half of UK-domiciled research students in Sociology are aged over 30; indeed less than ten per cent are in the 21-24 years bracket, suggesting that the so-called traditional BA → MA → PhD route is actually quite unusual in the discipline (as it is across the other social sciences).

¹⁸ This is a crude calculation of the number of research students of a particular nationality per head of population in the 'home' nation (based on CIA Factbook population estimates for 2008).

Table 6.1 sets out the ethnic background of research students in Sociology. The proportion of non-white students is higher in Sociology than in Human & Social Geography, Media Studies, Academic Studies in Education and Politics, but lower than Economics and Anthropology (Social Policy is roughly equal). Students from Black/Black British backgrounds have a higher representation in Sociology than its comparator subjects. However a more appropriate comparison is with the first-degree student body in the same discipline; unfortunately recent data are not available for such an analysis. It is disappointing to note that the relative representation of different ethnic groups among Sociology research students has barely shifted since 2004/05,¹⁹ despite a general trend for an increase in the proportion of students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds among the first-degree population as a whole.

Table 6.1: Ethnic group of Sociology research students, 2007/08, where known

Ethnic group	Female	Male	Total
White	88.3	85.0	86.9
Black or Black British - Caribbean	1.1	0.9	1.0
Black or Black British - African	1.2	3.4	2.1
Other Black background	0.4	0.2	0.3
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1.7	2.2	1.9
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1.1	1.3	1.2
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.7	0.6	0.6
Chinese	0.2	0.9	0.5
Other Asian background	1.2	1.9	1.5
Other (including mixed)	4.2	3.6	4.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

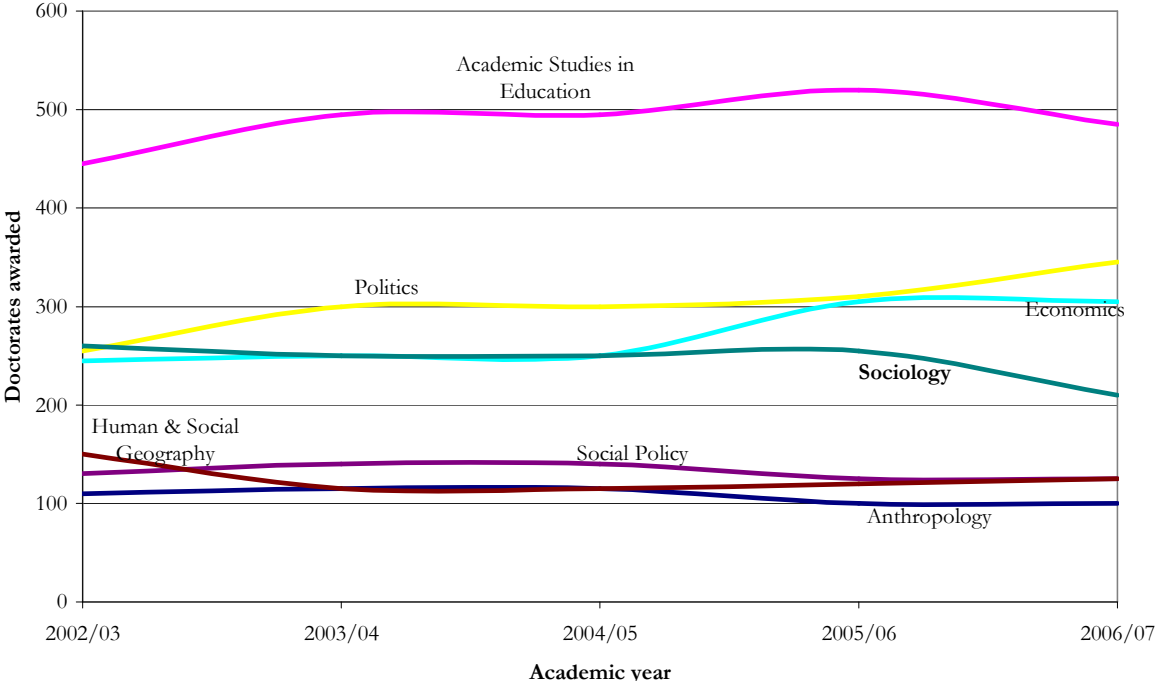
Source: HESA Student Record 2007/08

6.4 *Qualifications awarded*

Data are available on the first degrees and doctorates awarded in Sociology and comparator disciplines. First degree awards are not reproduced here as the data essentially mirror the trends seen in undergraduate student numbers (see section 6.2). Figure 6.10 shows doctorates awarded in Sociology and comparator subjects across the period 2002/03 to 2006/07. The number of doctorates awarded in the discipline has dipped slightly over the period although when seen together with awards in comparator subjects, the overall impression is one of ‘trendless fluctuation’. Doctoral awards would seem to be neither in decline nor growing across the social sciences, with an element of random variation from year to year. Given that student numbers in general have grown across the period though, the stability of doctoral awards implies a relative decline.

¹⁹ See the data in Wakeling (2007) op. cit.

Figure 6.10: Doctorates awarded in selected social science disciplines, 2002/03 – 2006/07



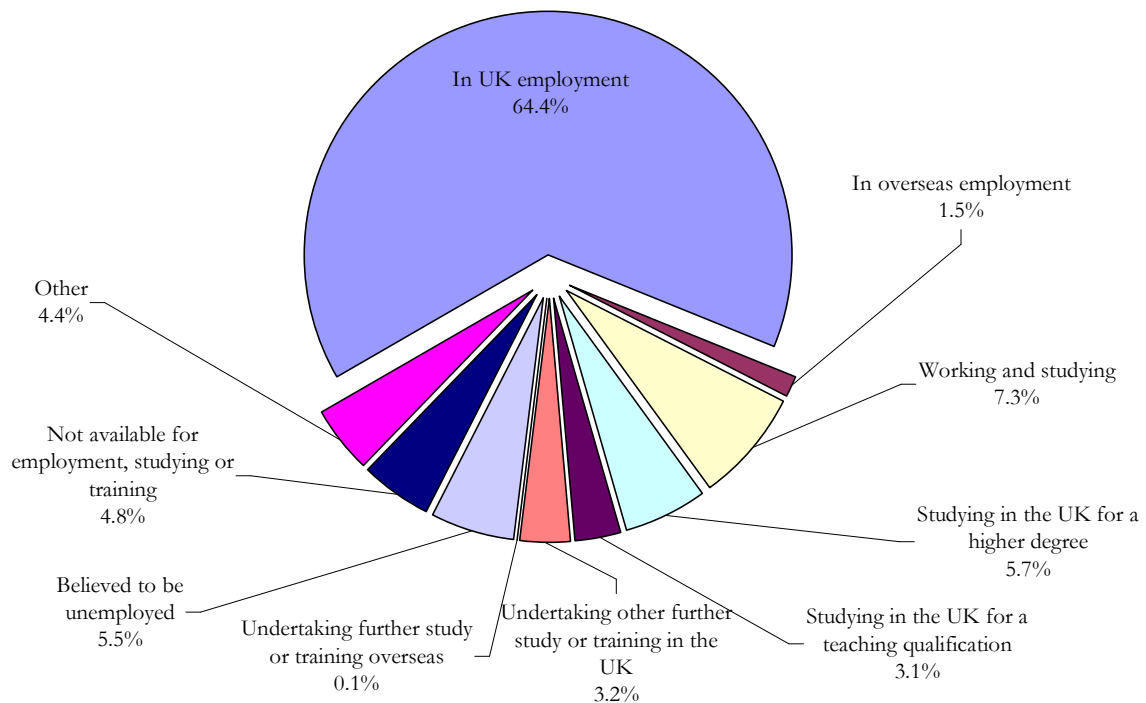
Source: HESA Student Record 2002/03 - 2006/07

7 Careers

7.1 First degree graduates²⁰

Most UK-domiciled Sociology graduates obtain employment or enter further study (or both) within six months of their graduation. Around 5.5 per cent are assumed to be unemployed; in 2006/07 Sociology graduates were slightly less likely to be unemployed than graduates in Politics and Economics. The mean unemployment rate for all first-degree graduates was also 5.5 per cent. Graduates find employment in a range of occupations, although it is not clear that many of these would be considered 'graduate' occupations. In 2006/07, the most popular employment categories for Sociology graduates were 'other clerical and secretarial jobs' (18.6 per cent), 'other jobs' (17.1 per cent), 'social and welfare' (14.7 per cent) and 'commercial, industrial and public sector managers' (12.1 per cent). A full 6.2 per cent of Sociology graduates became probation officers.

Figure 7.1: Destination of UK-domiciled Sociology graduates 2006/07, where known



Source: HESA Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey, 2006/07

These 'first destination' data are limited in that they provide a snapshot at a very early point in a graduate's career of their employment situation. Research on the financial returns to different first degrees using data from the Labour Force Survey²¹ estimates that Sociology graduates enjoy a return (in terms of wages) which places them 24th for men and sixteenth for women out of 25 disciplines.

²⁰ For further information on this subject, see the *Future Prospects* website at: [http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/What do graduates do_/charts and tables_page/pleefffpL?subject_id=28](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/What_do_graduates_do_/charts_and_tables_page/pleefffpL?subject_id=28)

²¹ O'Leary, N. C. and P. J. Sloane (2005) The return to a university education in Great Britain. *National Institute Economic Review*, 193 (1), pp. 75 – 89.

7.2 *Masters graduates*

Separate information is not readily available on masters graduates in Sociology. Information on masters graduates in social sciences as a whole indicates an employment rate (UK and elsewhere) of about 81 per cent and an unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent. Masters graduates were much less likely to enter 'non-graduate' jobs, although it is not clear whether this also applied to masters graduates in sociology. Furthermore, as many masters graduates study part-time whilst already in employment, it is impossible to determine whether their masters degree led directly to their current position.

7.3 *PhD graduates*

Research indicates that the majority of social science PhD holders move into academic employment. However an increasing minority pursue other career options outside of university teaching and research: recent information (to which the panel is referred for further detail) found around one third working in non-academic settings,²² a proportion which has been constant for five years.²³

Turning to PhD graduates in Sociology specifically, of those completing in 2005/6 from whom information was available (~60 graduates),²⁴ two-thirds entered full-time employment, with a handful of others entering freelance work, choosing not to enter the labour market or unable to work for other reasons. About one-fifth entered part-time work. None entered further study or were assumed to be unemployed. Just over half of the PhD graduates were working in higher education; the remainder were distributed across a wide range of industries, almost entirely in public-sector professional work. The most commonly cited specific occupations were 'University and higher education lecturers' and 'Researchers (university – discipline not specified)' which comprised around 20 per cent of the graduates each.

²² Purcell, K. and P. Elias (2006) *The employment of social science PhDs in academic and non-academic jobs: research skills and postgraduate training*. Swindon: ESRC; Vitae (2009) What do social science researchers do, available at: <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/1367/Social-sciences.html>.

²³ UK Grad Programme (2004) *What do PhDs do? 2004 analysis of the first destinations for PhD graduates*. Cambridge: Graduate Prospects.

²⁴ This data covers UK and EU-domiciled graduates only.

8 Concluding comments

As many sociologists have pointed out before, concern about the nature and health of the discipline is a recurring feature of sociological debate. As delineated by Professor Sue Scott, President of the British Sociological Association in her 2009 Presidential Address there are essentially two strands to this discussion. The first concerns the broad intellectual project of sociology, taking in questions of epistemology and methodology. This strand is manifested in such debates as whether sociology should be considered a science; concerns over a shortage of quantitative skills among sociologists; fashions and fads in sub-fields; the quality of sociological research; and sociology's intellectual reputation in and beyond the social sciences. These concerns will no doubt be paramount in the Panel's deliberations but are beyond the scope of this document.

However the second strand of recurring sociological interest is critical: what 'size' and 'shape' does sociology have? Where does it begin and end? It is relatively straightforward to summarise the state of 'Sociology' in the UK – that which is defined as sociology in official categories – but it remains far from clear how accurately this represents 'sociology' in its broader sense. It is difficult to conceive of a means of measuring this 'greater sociology'. This is not the fault of official statistics, which have to draw category boundaries somewhere; it is perhaps simply an intrinsic characteristic of the discipline. The analysis presented here covers what we might call 'inner sociology', what John Scott refers to as core or disciplinary sociology.²⁵

What size and shape does the UK's contemporary inner sociology have? The impression given by the analyses in preceding sections is of a medium-sized discipline undergoing a period of quantitative stasis. That is to say, sociology is one of the larger social science subjects in terms of student numbers, although it is nowhere close to the scale of the largest such disciplines (business and management, education, psychology). There are sociology staff and students across a large number of universities, with generally good-sized departments. Overseas numbers are small but growing and the subject is not dependent on particular overseas countries. However generally there has been little growth (and indeed a slight retrenchment) in sociology student numbers, which in the context of overall growth in student numbers in the UK, suggests relative decline. The quality of sociology students, as judged by their entry qualifications and their graduate destinations also gives some cause for concern; it is probably affected by the apparently low-level of competition for places at undergraduate level. No doubt part of the cause is sociology's ability to generate its own competitors – criminology is the latest example.

Quantitative indicators regarding research are substantially more positive. Research income from funding council, research council and other sources appears healthy and RAE performance was in-line with social science averages. The discipline's role as a large net 'exporter' of academic labour ensures a very positive intellectual 'balance of payments' which is no doubt reflected in the quality and variety of the projects funded by the ESRC under the heading 'Sociology'.

Sociology is not immune from problems of equity and diversity (in terms of race/ethnicity, class and gender, for instance) which sociologists have identified elsewhere. The analyses presented here suggest there is room for improvement in this regard.

²⁵ Scott, J. (2005) Sociology and Its Others: Reflections on Disciplinary Specialisation and Fragmentation. *Sociological Research Online*, 10 (1): <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/1/scott.html>

APPENDIX

Full details of current ESRC-funded projects in Sociology

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
Main awards			
<i>First grants scheme</i>			
Disruptive Behaviour in the Classroom: Exploring the Social Subjectivity of Disaffection	London South Bank University	January 2007 – May 2010	£363,765
Recruitment into Insurgency and Extra-Legal Organizations	University of Oxford	September 2006 – August 2010	£399,877
Making time use explicit in an investigation of social exclusion in the UK	National Centre for Social Research	January 2008 – January 2010	£95,231
Behind closed doors: older couples and the management of household money	King's College London	February 2008 – April 2010	£330,422
Learning across occupational and organisational boundaries within Treatment Centres: the implications for clinical quality and patient safety	University of Nottingham	February 2008 – January 2010	£227,105
At home abroad: The life experiences of children of Eastern European migrant workers in Scotland	University of Strathclyde	January 2008 – May 2010	£230,801
Re-organising the Museum Professions: Policies, Perceptions and Practices	King's College London	January 2008 – December 2009	£95,269
Social capital and small worlds: theoretical and empirical advances	University of Sheffield	June 2008 – June 2010	£111,709
Negotiating Danger, Risk and Safety: An Exploration with Young People in an Urban Neighbourhood	Institute of Education	November 2008 – October 2010	£195,031
Campaigning for Social Change: Understanding the motives and experiences of people with dementia	University of Bradford	January 2009 – December 2010	£164,943
The development of a psychosocial methodology for investigating the production of knowledge in higher education	Institute of Education	October 2008 – April 2011	£107,833
Food Matters: A sociological case study of food and eating across the life course in York c. 1945 - 2010	University of York	January 2009 – December 2011	£179,060
<i>Large grants scheme</i>			
Developing the Centre for Time Use Research	University of Oxford	October 2008 – September 2013	£2,469,076
<i>Placement fellows</i>			
The Development of Proposals for a Robust Rural Evidence Base to Underpin Rural Policy Making in Northern Ireland	Queen's University of Belfast	October 2008 – November 2009	£83,464
Developing a Research Framework to Underpin the Productive Ward Programme	University of East Anglia	February 2009 – January 2010	£74,475
Placement Fellowship within Family Strategy at the DCSF: understanding the pathways and dynamics for families and children with early risk factors	Lancaster University	May 2009 – October 2009	£39,378
Engaging & Understanding BME Communities in Kingston with a Particular Focus on the Muslim Community.	Kingston University	May 2009 – April 2010	£15,956
Engaging & Understanding the BME Communities in Kingston with a Particular Focus on the Muslim Community.	Kingston University	May 2009 – April 2010	£18,492

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>Placement fellows</i>			
Placement Fellowship with Strategy Unit	University of Leicester	April 2009 – September 2009	£34,490
East of England Strategic Health Authority Research Fellowship	University of East Anglia	July 2009 – June 2010	£65,486
<i>Postdoctoral fellowships</i>			
Adaptation or Development: Finding Global Solutions for Problems of Livelihood Sustainability in Rural Impoverished Area	University of Cambridge	September 2008 – August 2009	£74,694
Dismantling Mantelpieces: bringing culture home	Cardiff University	July 2008 – August 2009	£76,078
Global Exhibitions and Theorizing Chineseness	The University of Manchester	September 2008 – September 2009	£80,360
Postdoctoral Fellowship Application [British National Party Local Politics]	University of Leeds	September 2008 – August 2009	£84,848
Examining Agency and the Politics of Reproductive Choice.	University of Edinburgh	November 2008 – October 2009	£111,177
Changes in employment conditions and employed individuals' membership and activity in voluntary associations	The University of Manchester	September 2008 – August 2009	£91,713
Somali and Afghan refugees: asylum seekers, recognised refugees and vulnerability.	University of Oxford	September 2008 – August 2009	£91,720
Work, self-employment and enterprise in the cultural sector	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	May 2009 – April 2010	£91,683
The Individualized Worker	University of Bristol	April 2009 – March 2010	£84,690
The Rhetoric of Racist Humour: Analyzing the role of humour in racism	Loughborough University	April 2009 – March 2010	£75,552
The Meaning of Locality in Social and Economic Transformation in Old Industrial Regions	Cardiff University	June 2009 – May 2010	£85,309
Religious Transnationalism: The case of Zimbabwean Catholics in Britain	University College London	July 2009 – June 2010	£95,784
The gender division of domestic work, parenthood, and relationship quality of British couples: Disseminating theoretical and social implications	University of Cambridge	June 2009 - May 2010	£75,148
Religion, Ethnicity and Political Participation: A Study of Young British Pakistani Muslims in the UK	University of Bristol	November 2008 - October 2009	£82,849
Quangos Revisited: The Social Networks of the Public Elite	University of Stirling	December 2008 - November 2009	£86,108
Spectacular political experiments: public participation and the constitution of publics	Open University	April 2009 - March 2010	£85,980
Understanding Community Responses to Wind Power	University of Edinburgh	July 2009 – June 2010	£97,612
<i>Professorial Fellowship</i>			
Brain, Self and Society: The Social and Political Implications of the New Brain Sciences	London School of Economics and Political Science	September 2007 – August 2010	£541,199
<i>Realising Our Potential Awards (ROPA)</i>			
Video and Voice: Video as a means of creating critical dialogue within the participatory research process	University of Nottingham	March 2007 - August 2009	£99,138

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>Realising Our Potential Awards (ROPA) (contd)</i>			
Contemporary Anglo-Jewish Community and Leadership: Coping with Multiculturalism	Goldsmiths College	September 2008 - August 2009	£86,321
Radicalisation: The Life Narratives of Political Prisoners	University of Hull	September 2008 - September 2009	£85,595
Young women, agency and intimacy in sexual relationships	Institute of Education	November 2007 - September 2009	£99,564
Vertical and Horizontal Gender Segregation: Cross-National Comparison and Analysis	University of Cambridge	July 2008 - September 2009	£93,788
Reconstructing intersubjectivity: Adaptation and identity in informal care relationships which have been disrupted by aphasia	University of Stirling	January 2008 - October 2009	£99,679
Obesity surgery: a clinical ethnography	University of Warwick	May 2008 - October 2009	£35,274
Situating men within global care chains: the migrant handyman phenomenon	University of Hull	June 2008 - October 2009	£98,657
The Promise of a Transformative Arts: A Political and Cultural Analyses of the Amber Collective	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	December 2008 - November 2009	£99,346
The work of Jean-Claude Passeron, 1960-present: a case-study analysis of the development of a philosophy of social science	University of East London	September 2007 - December 2009	£80,987
The meaning of wellness and resilience for older people with osteoarthritis: a qualitative longitudinal study	Keele University	July 2008 - December 2009	£99,611
The Regulatory Dance: Investigating the Structural Integration of Sexual Consumption into the Night Time Economy.	University of Leeds	January 2009 - December 2009	£96,714
Becoming a Mother: A research synthesis of women's views on the experience of first time motherhood.	Institute of Education	January 2009 - January 2010	£93,642
The experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic practitioners in the UK Public Relations industry: An exploratory study	Leeds Metropolitan University	January 2009 - January 2010	£52,928
"New" Philanthropy, education policy and the State	Institute of Education	May 2008 - April 2010	£94,732
Gender Diversity, Recognition and Citizenship	University of Leeds	May 2008 - May 2010	£99,977
Clothing, Age and the Body	University of Kent	August 2007 - July 2010	£99,943
Indigenous and international non biomedical treatments for diabetes in Brazil: an exploratory study of use in social context.	University of Leeds	February 2008 - July 2010	£93,418
Irish Bilateral: Religion in Ireland North and South - The Exceptional Hypothesis Revisited.	University of Aberdeen	August 2008 - July 2010	£58,482
The Political Participation of Private Business Owners in China	University of Durham	April 2009 - September 2010	£61,529
Migration, ICTs and the Transformation of Transnational Family Life	University of Cambridge	June 2007 - November 2010	£97,557
Social Issues in Primetime Television: Production Processes and Audience Responses	University of Leeds	January 2009 - December 2010	£69,253

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>Realising Our Potential Awards (ROPA) (contd)</i>			
The Nation, Region and the World: A Comparative and Longitudinal Study of Curricula and Schoolbooks in Europe and Asia	University of Essex	July 2009 - December 2010	£96,394
Globalisation, the 'academy' system and the migration of football labour in Ghana and baseball labour in the Dominican Republic	University of Ulster	January 2008 - January 2011	£85,537
<i>Research fellowships</i>			
Max Weber Biography and Letter Database	London Metropolitan University	February 2008 - January 2010	£215,806
Globalisation and New Religious Movements. Kabbalah Centres in Britain, France, Israel and Brazil.	University of Cambridge	May 2007 - April 2010	£234,188
Ethnicity, Religion & Citizenship among the Children of Immigrants in the UK and USA	Rochampton University	January 2008 - December 2010	£248,026
The Impact of Neo-Liberal Globalisation on Ethnic and Class Identities since the 1970s	University of Strathclyde	July 2008 - June 2011	£317,730
Exploring and evaluating the use of configurational methods in large n contexts: transitions in the English and German educational systems	University of Durham	June 2009 - May 2012	£268,078
<i>Researcher Development Initiative (RDI)</i>			
Building Capacity in Visual Methods	University of Leeds	November 2006 - October 2009	£76,474
SRA Proposal for Development Programme for Advanced Training for mid-career and senior Social Research practitioners	Social Research Association	January 2007 - December 2009	£102,256
Scottish Social Survey Network	University of Stirling	February 2007 - July 2010	£56,265
<i>Seminar competitions</i>			
Coping with Uncertainty: European Labour Markets and the Politics of Social Reform in Comparative Perspective	University of Warwick	October 2007 - October 2009	£17,833
Changing Cultures of Competitiveness: Conceptual and Policy Issues	Lancaster University	December 2007 - October 2009	£14,596
Exploring the impact of public involvement: Understanding the role of theory, practice and culture	University of Warwick	November 2008 - November 2009	£10,465
Government and Freedom: Histories and Prospects	Open University	January 2008 - January 2010	£17,869
Interrogating 'harm' and 'abuse': protection and citizenship across the lifespan	University of Stirling	October 2008 - March 2010	£14,957
Conceptualising the contemporary 'professions': interdisciplinary debates	University of Leeds	January 2009 - March 2010	£14,000
Thinking About Mixedness and Mixing: International and Interdisciplinary Dialogue	London South Bank University	November 2008 - April 2010	£17,020
Changing Parenting Culture	University of Kent	December 2008 - April 2010	£17,628
LGBT lives: the biographies and lifecourse of sexual/gender dissidents	Queen Margaret University Edinburgh	October 2008 - May 2010	£16,655
Chronic pain management for older adults living in the community	University of Aberdeen	October 2008 - September 2010	£11,799
Sickness Absence research collaboration seminar series on the health consequences of sickness absence.	University of College London	November 2008 - October 2010	£17,750

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>Seminar competitions (contd)</i>			
Ethical Consumption in the UK and Europe: New Developments and New challenges for policy, Practice and Research	University of Exeter	January 2009 - December 2010	£17,810
Rethinking Youth cultures in the age of Global media	Institute of Education	January 2009 - December 2010	£17,990
Retheorising Women's Health: Shifting Paradigms and the Biomedical Body	Queen's University of Belfast	April 2009 - March 2011	£18,000
<i>Small grants scheme</i>			
Global Welcome? Migrant workers, service cultures, tourist places.	Lancaster University	February 2009 - February 2010	£84,724
Intergenerational Relationships and Support Networks of Older South Asians: a Comparison of Elders Living in the UK, India and Bangladesh	Swansea University	March 2009 - February 2010	£90,871
Historical Comparative Analysis of Family and Parenting: A Feasibility Study Across Sources and Timeframes	London South Bank University	April 2009 - March 2010	£96,191
Constituting Neurologic Subjects: Neuroscience, Identity and Society after the 'Decade of the Brain'	University of Edinburgh	May 2009 - March 2010	£99,920
The national DNA database and newspaper debate in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1991-2008	Loughborough University	May 2009 - May 2010	£96,491
British participation in the European Values Study	The University of Manchester	July 2009 - June 2010	£99,619
Hungarian and Romanian migrant workers in the UK: Racism without racial difference?	University of Bristol	March 2009 - August 2010	£89,917
Exploring Trust between Service-Users and Professionals in Acute Mental Health Services	University of Kent	June 2009 - August 2010	£68,402
The Last Census: Governing Britain with Metrics	Open University	May 2009 - April 2011	£95,053
<i>Follow-on fund</i>			
Normalizing new health technologies: building a web-enabled toolkit for implementation practitioners	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	July 2009 – June 2010	£79,985
<i>Standard grants</i>			
Taxonomy at a Crossroads: science, publics and policy in biodiversity	Lancaster University	July 2006 - September 2009	£226,821
Migrant Workers in the UK Sex Industry	London Metropolitan University	January 2007 - July 2009	£201,647
Disability Equality in English Primary Schools: exploring teaching about disability equality and non-disabled children's	University of Leeds	September 2007 - August 2009	£204,588
Rural and Urban Solo Living: Social integration, Quality of Life and Future Orientations.	University of Edinburgh	April 2007 - November 2009	£264,675
Someone to talk to: public views and experiences of emotional support	University of Stirling	February 2007 - December 2009	£222,400
Organisational Change, Resistance and Democracy: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equalities Initiatives in Local Government	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	October 2007 - March 2010	£287,629
The Social Impact of 'New Surveillance' Technologies: An Ethnographic Study of the Surveilled	University of Hull	July 2008 - June 2010	£132,415

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>Standard grants (contd)</i>			
A sociological investigation into the everyday lives of recovering heroin users	Oxford Brookes University	October 2008 - September 2010	£327,633
The political and moral economy of cord blood stem cell banking	University of York	January 2009 - December 2010	£283,147
The social production of the contemporary British military memoir.	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	April 2009 - March 2011	£290,160
Just like marriage? A study of young couples' civil partnerships	The University of Manchester	November 2008 - April 2011	£391,343
Assessing Eye Sight and Ocular Health: The Practical work of optometrists	King's College London	January 2009 - June 2011	£277,444
Technology, Action and Cognition in Online Anonymous Markets: A Sociological Study of Non-institutional Traders	University of Edinburgh	October 2008 - September 2011	£198,825
Kinship and genetic journeys: A study of the experiences of families who are referred to paediatric genetics	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	November 2008 - October 2011	£476,204
New Urbanisms, New Citizens: Children and Young People's Everyday Life and Participation in Sustainable Communities	University of Leicester	December 2008 - November 2011	£853,148
Researching and analysing Olive Schreiner's letters: the epistolarium in social science perspective	University of Edinburgh	October 2008 - December 2011	£731,142
ECRP08 Collaboration led by the University of Antwerp: Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualising Contestation (CCC)	University of Southampton	May 2009 - April 2013	£507,980
Fathers across three family generations in Polish, Irish and UK origin white families	Institute of Education	January 2009 - July 2011	£388,615
British Election Study Ethnic Minority Survey	University of Oxford	June 2009 - October 2011	£1,259,996
<i>Other named initiatives</i>			
<i>Climate Change Fellowships</i>			
Transitions in practice: climate change and everyday life	Lancaster University	October 2008 – September 2011	£398,428
<i>ERA-SAGE</i>			
ERA-SAGE	University of Edinburgh	May 2005 – April 2010	£35,515
<i>E-Science Programme</i>			
Data Management through e-Social Science: Case studies, Provision and Support (DAMES)	University of Stirling	February 2008 – January 2011	£911,154
The Oxford e-Social Science (OeSS) Project: Ethical, Legal and Institutional Responses to Emerging e-Research Infrastructure Policies and Practices	University of Oxford	December 2008 – November 2011	£784,303
<i>ESRC-JISC Census programme 2006 – 2011</i>			
Samples of Anonymised Records at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research	The University of Manchester	August 2006 – July 2011	£1,043,259
<i>Genomics</i>			
Centre for Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics	Lancaster University	October 2007 – September 2012	£9,923,695
ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society (Egenis)	University of Exeter	October 2007 – September 2012	£4,577,627
<i>International Centre for Life Course Studies</i>			
International Centre for Life Course Studies in Society and Health	University College London	January 2008 – December 2012	£3,565,553

Type of award/Title	Institution	Date	Amount
<i>National Centre for Research Methods</i>			
Qualitative Innovations in CAQDAS (QUIC)	University of Surrey	September 2008 – September 2011	£754,097
Realities (REAL Life methods for researching relationships)	The University of Manchester	October 2008 – March 2011	£925,941
<i>National Child Development Study</i>			
Social Participation and Identity: combining quantitative longitudinal data with a qualitative investigation of a sub-sample of the 1958 Cohort study	Institute of Education	December 2007 – May 2010	£298,548
<i>New Dynamics of Ageing</i>			
Families and Caring in South Asian Communities	University of Reading	October 2007 – September 2010	£376,180
Transitions, choices and health at older ages: life course analyses of longitudinal data.	Imperial College London	October 2007 – October 2009	£196,004
Optimising Quality of Sleep Among Older People in the Community and Care Homes: An integrated approach	University of Surrey	December 2006 - November 2010	£2,865,553
<i>PTD Recognition Exercise</i>			
Time, Texture and Young Lives: Developing Qualitative Longitudinal Research	University of Leeds	January 2005 - December 2010	£159,440
<i>Qualitative Longitudinal Study</i>			
Changing Lives and Times: Relationships and Identities Through the Lifecourse	University of Leeds	February 2007 - January 2012	£4,449,997
<i>Research Directors Fellowships</i>			
Identities and Social Action Programme	Open University	April 2009 - March 2010	£151,308
<i>RIGT/ESRC Research into Problem Gambling</i>			
Situating Problem Gambling: The Social Context of 'Gambling Careers'	University of Glasgow	April 2006 - September 2009	£147,498
<i>Targeted Initiative in Innovation</i>			
The transition to a sustainable bio-economy: innovation and expectations	University of Essex	October 2007 - March 2010	£250,000
<i>Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy</i>			
Research on Lifestyle, Values and Energy Consumption (RESOLVE)	University of Surrey	May 2006 - May 2011	£2,698,488
<i>Understanding Population Trends and Processes</i>			
Exploring the Goodhart thesis at the local scale: neighbourhood social heterogeneity and perceptions of quality of life in the British Crime Survey	University of Portsmouth	February 2008 - October 2009	£96,152
Racial discrimination and health: exploring the possible protective effects of ethnic density	University College London	January 2008 - December 2009	£146,210
<i>World Economy and Finance</i>			
Risk Cultures in China: An Economic Sociology	Goldsmiths College	November 2006 - October 2009	£466,092

Note on representation of numbers

Data sourced from the Higher Education Statistics Agency are subject to their rounding strategy, which they describe as follows:

“Due to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, HESA implements a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. These tabulations are derived from the HESA non-statutory populations¹ and may differ slightly from those published by related statutory bodies. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest 5. A summary of this strategy is as follows:

- 0, 1, 2 are rounded to 0
- All other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5

“So for example 3 is represented as 5, 22 is represented as 20, 3286 is represented as 3285 while 0, 20, 55, 3510 remain unchanged.

“This rounding strategy is also applied to total figures; the consequence of which is that the sum of numbers in each row or column will rarely match the total shown precisely. Note that subject level data calculated by apportionment will also be rounded in accordance with this strategy.

“Average values, proportions and FTE values prepared by HESA will not be affected by the above strategy, and will be calculated on precise raw numbers. However, percentages calculated on populations which contain 52 or fewer individuals will be suppressed and represented as ‘.’ as will averages based on populations of 7 or fewer.”

Acknowledgements

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