

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

- The scientific study of society & human behavior

RESEARCH METHODS

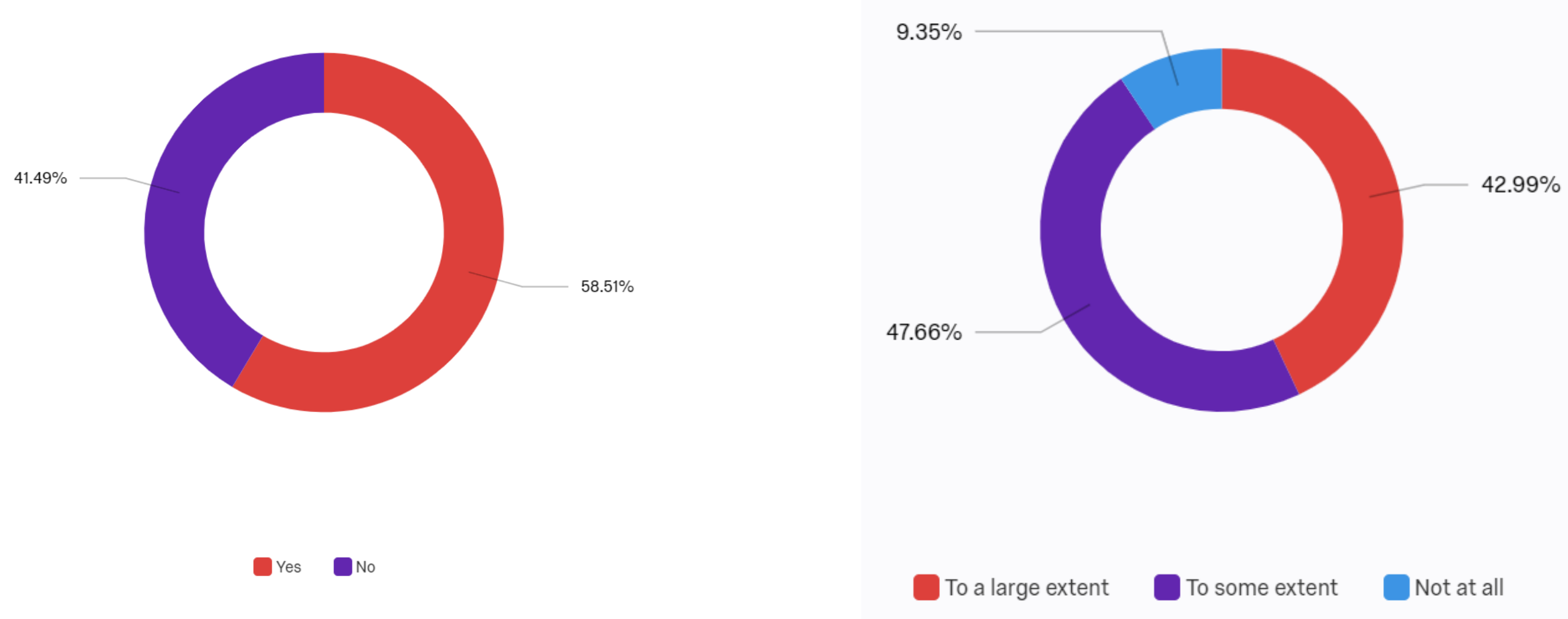
- Surveys mailed to 498 UMaine sociology alumni
- 112 responded (22.5 percent response rate)
- Interviews with 18 UMaine sociology alumni

SAMPLE

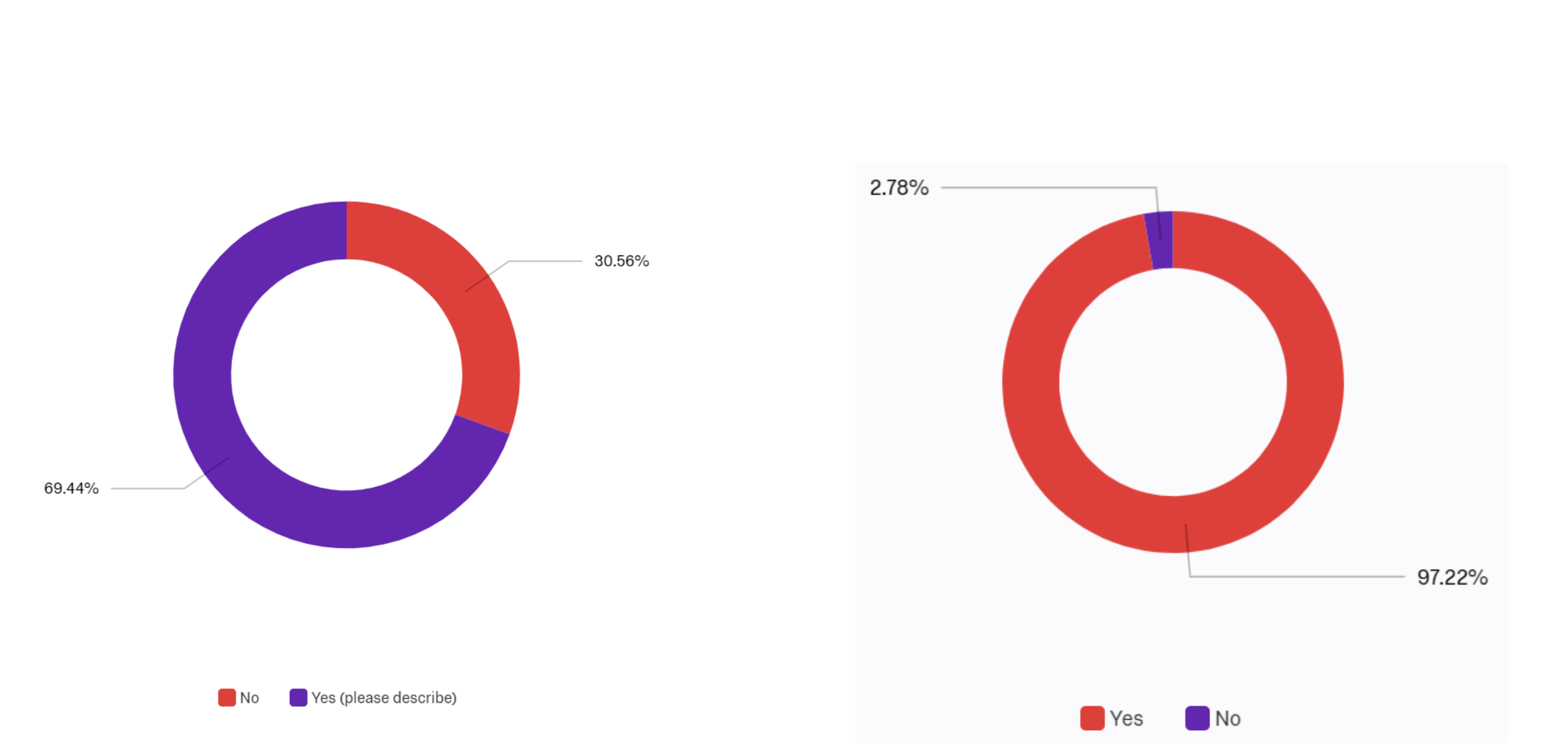
- Survey includes graduates from 1951-2018
- Interviews includes graduates from 1994-2014

SURVEY FINDINGS

- Would you say that your current position is related to your sociology major?
- In your career, to what extent have you used skills or knowledge gained as a sociology major?

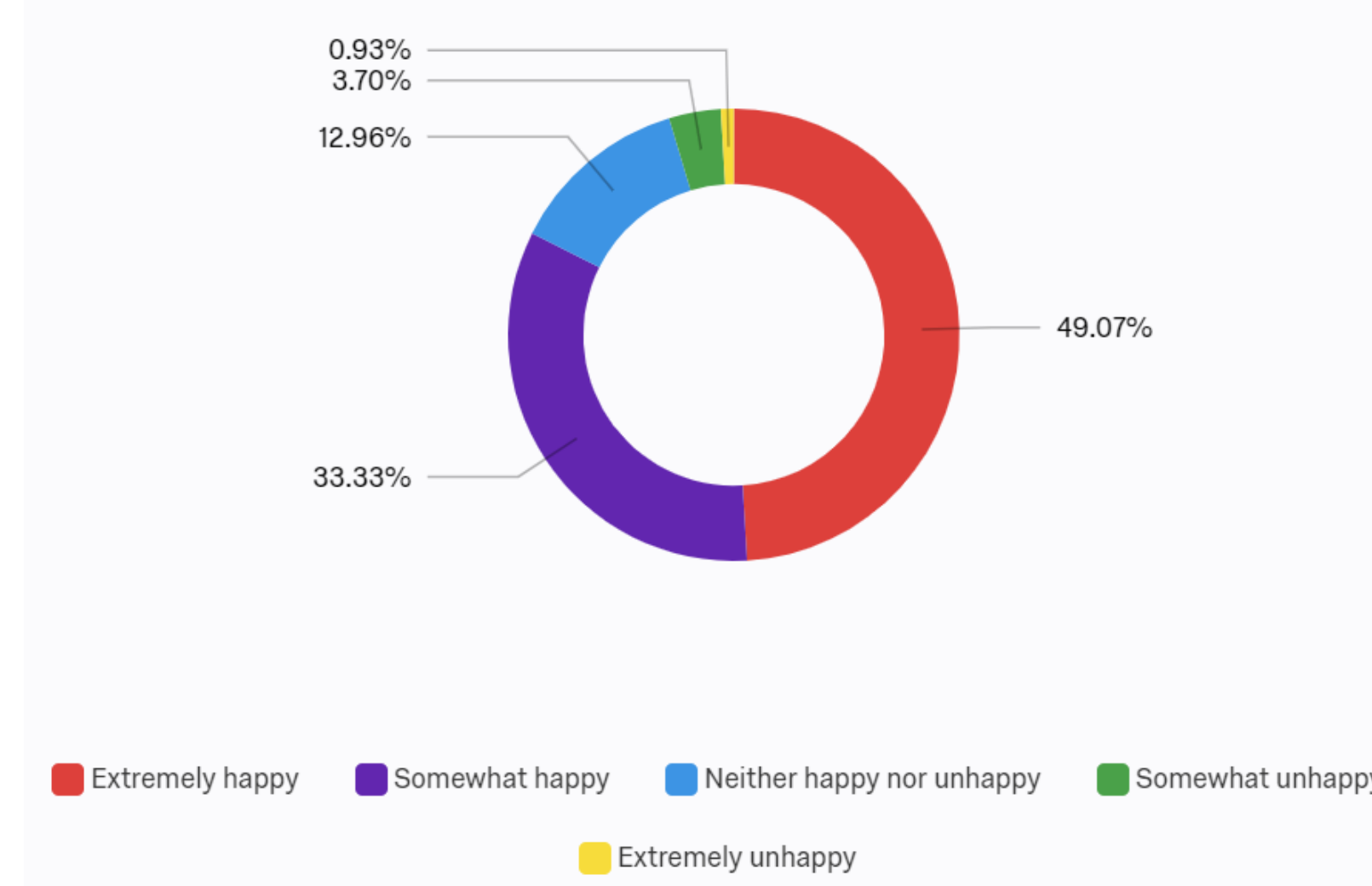


- Have you received additional education beyond your BA degree?
- Would you describe yourself as financially stable?



How do UMaine sociology alumni fare after they graduate & what do their career trajectories look like?

- Overall, how happy are you with your experience as a sociology major at UMaine?



PATTERNS OBSERVED ACROSS INTERVIEWS

- There is no "one right way" to pursue meaning or a career after graduating with a degree in sociology.
- Respondents are generally happy with the paths they have pursued since graduation but they struggled early on to find their place professionally.
- Respondents say sociology provided new ways of thinking and a better understanding of others.
- Respondents wish they had received more opportunities for internships and community engagement, research and data analysis, and help with career planning.

QUOTES (represent patterns across interviews)

"As much as UMaine can prepare the students, they don't prepare you that well because a classroom setting is so much different from a job."

"Sociology helps you relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds."

"Sociology has given me a lot of the soft skills that I've needed to be successful in life and I'm learning now as I get more and more into my career that those are more important than the hard skills because you learn the hard skills when you start a job but I feel like you either have leadership, compassion and empathy or you don't."

"I don't think there is anything you can't do with a sociology degree."

"The sociology department at UMaine wanted us to succeed and helped us achieve goals that we set for ourselves."

"When I started my career, I felt behind because I wasn't exposed to internships at UMaine."

"I wish there were more opportunities to take what we were learning in the classroom and take theories and...see how they apply in the real world and how they actually work."

RECOMMENDATIONS & ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

- Consider further education after receiving your BA
- 69% of survey respondents received additional education, as did 16 out of 18 interview participants
- Stay open to a wide variety of careers
- Respondents are employed in many sectors including business, human services, education, the arts, health care, social science research, fundraising, and others.
- Understand the transferable skills you are gaining
- Respondents said they use all of the following in their jobs: critical thinking, knowledge of social structures and change, synthesizing information, understanding human interactions, empathy, leadership, interpersonal communication, and others.
- Advice from interviewees for students:
 - "Follow your heart. HONESTLY. See what you credentials you need to become whatever you want and remember what sociology gives you as a foundation."
 - "Fake it until you become it. That is really important. You can do anything with a sociology major to the point that you don't know what to do, what to apply for, and you don't know how. Try for anything and everything even if you don't fit the criteria for it. You are more impressive than think you are – especially with a sociology background."
 - "Trust that you will find something you enjoy. Don't stress out if you have a job at first that you're not in love with. You will eventually figure it out. You have to test the field to be able to find something you love."

FOR THE DEPARTMENT

- Integrate internships and/or other community engagement into the curriculum
- Interview participants who did participate in such opportunities said they were critical to finding their paths; those who did not have such opportunities wished they had
- Integrate more research and data analysis opportunities into the curriculum
- Those who mentioned research and analysis in their interviews and survey comments talked about the need for more; no one said they wish they'd had less
- Offer more opportunities to serve as research assistants
- These experiences were critical for those who mentioned them
- Offer students more guidance toward finding a job/career after graduation
- Mentioned in all interviews and many survey comments
- Recognize that most majors need and/or choose to go on to pursue further education after graduating
- Improving applied experiences and providing more career guidance could reduce need to pursue further education
- Improve faculty/student ratio
- Several interview participants talked about the difference it made when/if they had faculty who met with them regularly, outside of advising periods, to discuss sociology, mentor them, & ask them about themselves & their goals

LIMITATIONS

- Generalizability of findings to all UMaine sociology majors is uncertain