



2021-2022

ACADEMIC JOB LISTINGS
IN COMMUNICATION REPORT



NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

Transforming Lives Through Communication

WASHINGTON, DC | 2023

The National Communication Association (NCA) conducts an annual analysis of college and university searches to fill academic and industry positions in Communication. We collect data from job postings in the online NCA Career Center and COMMNotes. COMMNotes, which replaced CRTNET in 2020, is a daily email sent to NCA members and subscribers in which potential employers may post position announcements. If a job is posted in more than one outlet, it is counted only once.

About this report

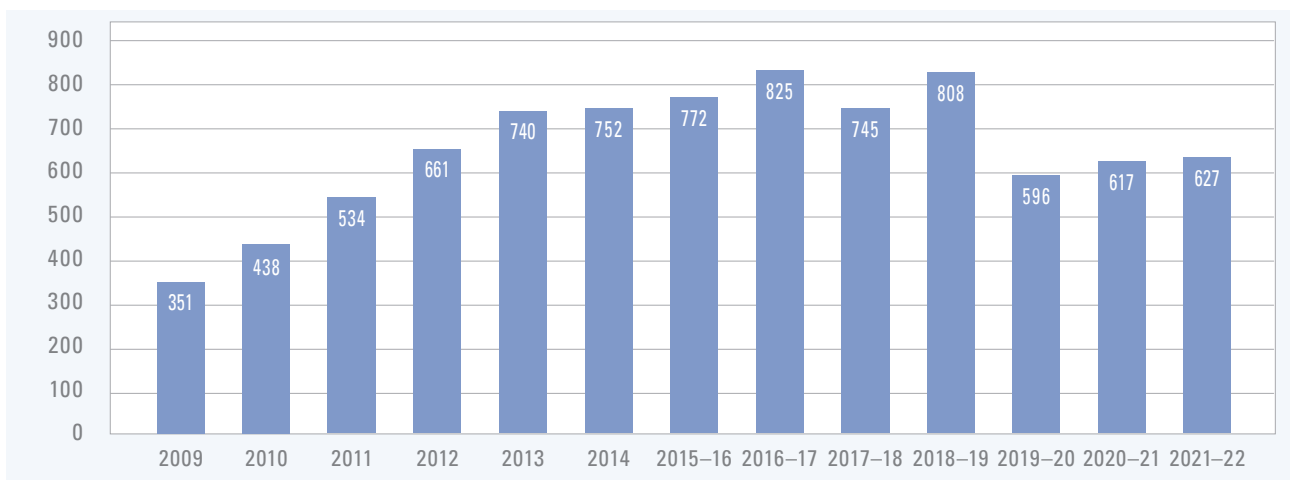
This report provides a descriptive account of the job market in Communication over the past 13 years, as well as a comparative analysis that includes other humanities and social science disciplines. We also provide an assessment of jobs posted during the period of September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022, with respect to areas of research and teaching specialty as well as rank and type of position.

This report has many purposes and potential uses. It may help academic institutions and other employers decide when to post job advertisements based on when other employers are and are not posting job advertisements. This report may help potential job applicants predict when they are likely to be most and least involved in applying for jobs. It may help doctoral program directors and other administrators at universities decide whether to increase, maintain, or decrease enrollments in their Ph.D. programs if they are concerned about linking Ph.D. enrollments to how many and which jobs likely will be available for their Ph.D. graduates. This report may help those considering applying to Ph.D. programs decide whether and where to do so. It may help employers decide how specific to be about specialties or other job requirements. This report also will be useful to officials in other academic disciplines, as they compare their own discipline's job market and Ph.D. graduations with those of Communication. It also may have other uses not identified here.

Multi-Year Trends

The total number of advertised Communication positions increased by 130% from 2009 to 2018–19, before decreasing by 26% in 2019–20. In 2020–21, the total number of positions advertised increased by 3.5% from the previous year, and in 2021–22, it increased by about 1.6% to 627. Figure 1 shows 351 jobs advertised in 2009, followed by steady, year-by-year increases to 825 jobs during the 2016–17 academic year. A slight decline in job advertisements occurred during the 2017–18 academic year, but the number rebounded in 2018–19, before declining significantly in 2019–20. Based on monthly posting patterns, about half the decline in 2019–20 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting during March 2020, but 2019–20 postings apparently were going to be down even without the pandemic. In any case, 2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22 were the weakest years for employment since 2011.

Figure 1: Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication

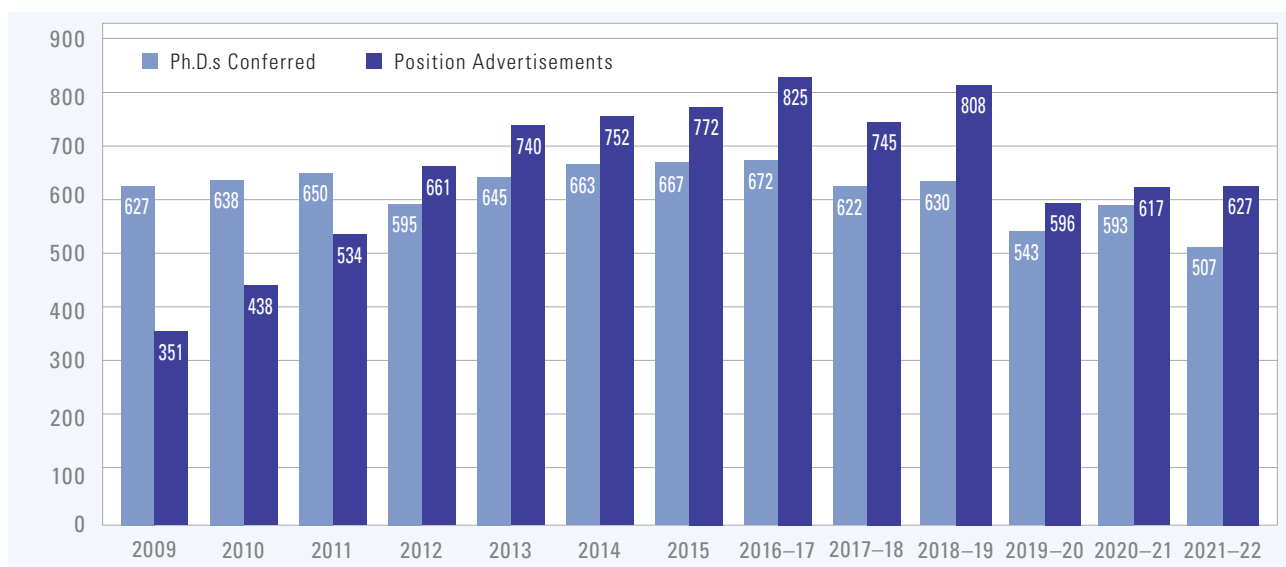


Ph.D. Production and Job Openings in Communication

One method of examining the job market in a discipline is to explore the production of Ph.D.s relative to the available positions being advertised to people with Ph.D.s and usually require or prefer people with Ph.D.s to apply. Much attention has been paid to the seeming over-production of Ph.D.s relative to the evolving academic job market. To explore this concern, the NCA uses the National Science Foundation's *Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)*. Between 2009 and 2020, institutions awarded a high of 672 doctorates in 2016, and a low of 543 in 2019. In 2020, institutions awarded 593 doctorates, but the number dropped more than 14% to 507 in 2021.

Figure 2 compares the number of advertisements for positions in Communication with the number of Ph.D. graduates in Communication. These data reflect the availability of only those Communication positions advertised in the NCA Career Center, CRTNET (and COMMNotes as of June 2020), and *Spectra* (following its May 2020 issue, *Spectra* stopped including job advertisements), and therefore do not include listings from other higher education media or other relevant academic associations.

Figure 2. Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication and Communication Doctorates Conferred, 2009 through 2021–2022.



Note: Because the *SED* reports data based on a calendar year, the 2021-22 figure reflects the total number of 2021 graduates in Communication, as reported in the *SED*, while positions advertised reflects the total number of advertisements during the 2021-22 academic year. The *SED*'s Communication classification does not include those who earn doctorates in "Speech & Rhetorical Studies," "Rhetoric & Composition," or "Letters," at least some of whom pursue academic jobs in Communication.

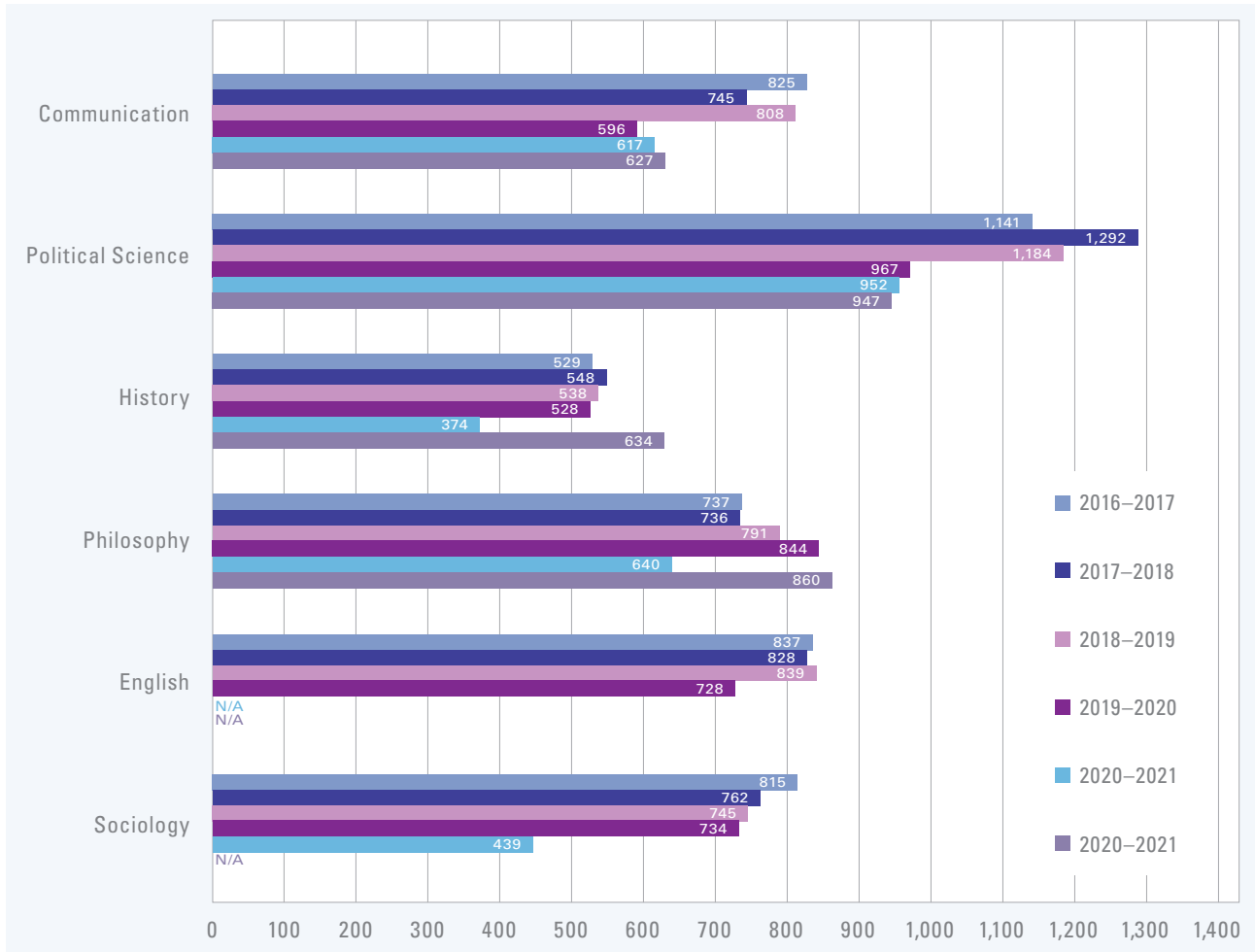
Communication in Comparison

Higher education news media regularly cover the annual rate of job growth (or decline) as reported by individual disciplines. Despite concerns about relying on job postings (especially not from an exhaustive data collection) as an exclusive measure of academic job markets, higher education economists and researchers have concluded that such analyses are nonetheless useful and positively correlate with the "set of variables that plausibly should influence the demand for new Ph.D.s."¹

¹ See <https://www.amacad.org/content/research/dataForumEssay.aspx?i=21673> and Jeffrey A. Groen, "The Impact of Labor Demand on Time to the Doctorate," *Education Finance and Policy*, available at https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/EDFP_a_00177. See also Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Harriet Zuckerman, Jeffrey A. Groen, and Sharon M. Brucker, *Educating Scholars: Doctoral Education in the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Figure 3 compares the number of Communication job postings to the numbers posted by similar disciplines. Not all disciplines have released current job data. As a result, the data reported here reflect what is currently available from the other learned societies.

Figure 3. Number of Job Postings in Communication, Political Science, History, Philosophy, English, and Sociology, 2016–2017 to 2021–2022



Note: Both the Philosophy and Sociology job posting numbers reflect data collected per calendar year rather than academic year. Less data than usual is available from other academic associations due to long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources: American Historical Association, Modern Language Association, American Philosophical Association, American Political Science Association, and American Sociological Association.

Distribution of Jobs by Research/Teaching Specialties

Not all academic jobs in Communication have requirements that align with the backgrounds of all Communication Ph.D.s. Thus, the number of advertised jobs by sub-field or specialty is also of interest to job seekers and employers. Specialties are presented in Table 1 (*next page*).

More than one specialty may appear in any given job posting. In fact, many postings advertise for individuals who possess more than one specialty. Table 1 indicates that in 2021–22, there were 25 postings for generalist positions. Specialists in Strategic Communication/Public Relations/Advertising remained the most sought after, with 75 postings, accounting for 11.96% of the total number of postings, a slight decline from 12.53% the previous year. The next most common research/teaching specialties sought in position

postings were Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies, with 46 mentions. These were followed in frequency by advertisements seeking specialties in health communication (33), basic course (30), rhetoric (26), and journalism (26). A total of 136 postings did not specify a required specialty and 25 were classified as “other” specialties, a large increase and a large decrease respectively, from the previous year.

Table 1. Primary Research/Teaching Specialties Requested in Job Advertisements, 2019–2020

PRIMARY SPECIALTY	NUMBER OF JOBS	PERCENTAGE
Communication Theory	1	0.16%
Visual Communication	2	0.32%
Political Communication	3	0.48%
Science Communication	3	0.48%
Communication Education	4	0.64%
Risk/Crisis/Conflict Communication	5	0.80%
Research Methods	6	0.96%
Debate/Forensics	7	1.12%
Sports Communication	7	1.12%
Environmental Communication	8	1.28%
Performance Studies/Theatre	9	1.44%
Media Production	13	2.07%
Applied Communication	14	2.23%
Business/Corporate Communication	16	2.55%
Communication Technology	19	3.03%
Interpersonal Communication	19	3.03%
Organizational Communication	22	3.51%
Digital/New/Emerging Media	23	3.67%
Intercultural/International/Global Communication	24	3.83%
General Communication	25	3.99%
Other	25	3.99%
Journalism	26	4.15%
Rhetoric	26	4.15%
Basic Course	30	4.78%
Health Communication	33	5.26%
Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies	46	7.34%
Strategic/Public Relations/Advertising	75	11.96%
None Specified	136	21.69%
Total	627	100.00%

Notes: “Other” includes all specializations not commonly found in job postings. “None specified” may include advertisements for administrators or advertisements that specified teaching need but did not require applicants to have a specific specialization.

Job Advertisements by Rank or Type of Position

The figures below show that 317 of the 2021–22 job openings (59.04%) sought individuals for tenured or tenure-track positions, an increase of 15.69% from the previous year. The number of non-tenure track position advertisements decreased since 2020–21, accounting for 29.98% of the 2021–22 job postings. Fifty postings (7.97%) sought individuals for administrative positions (some of which are tenure-bearing), which included advertised department chair positions. During the 2021–22 academic year, 72 non-academic positions were advertised (11.48%).

Figure 4. Number of Communication Job Postings by Rank or Type of Position, 2021–2022

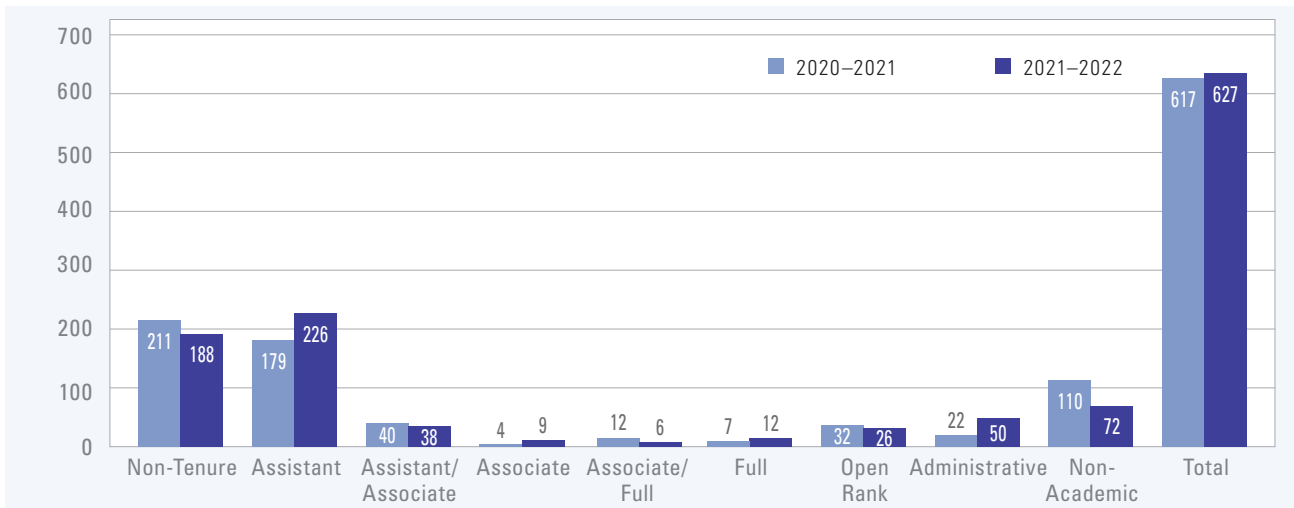


Figure 5. Communication Job Postings by Rank or Type of Position, in Percentage, 2021–2022

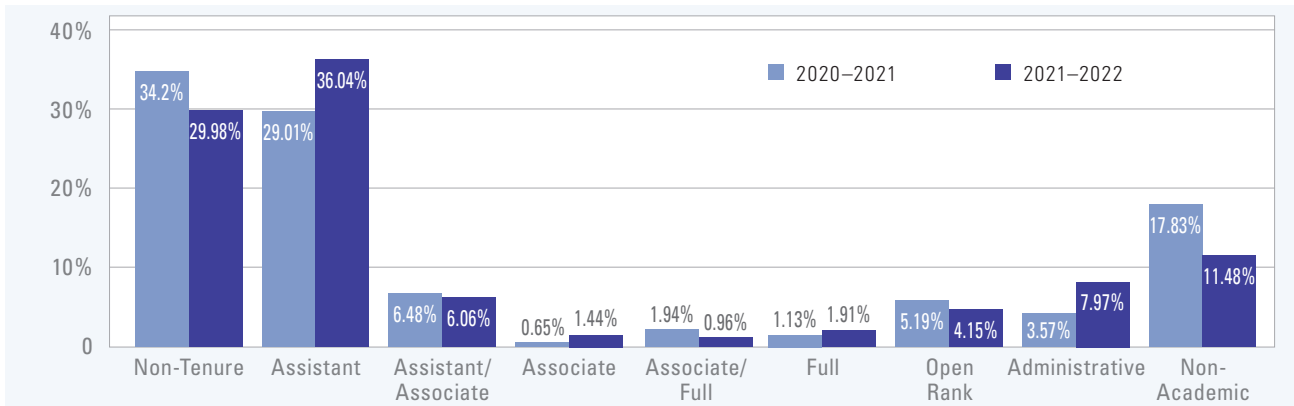
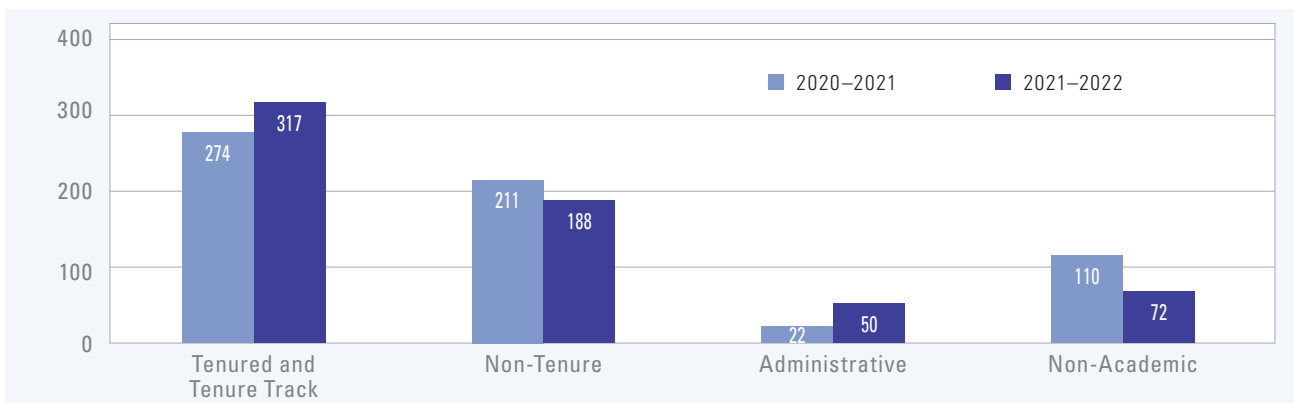


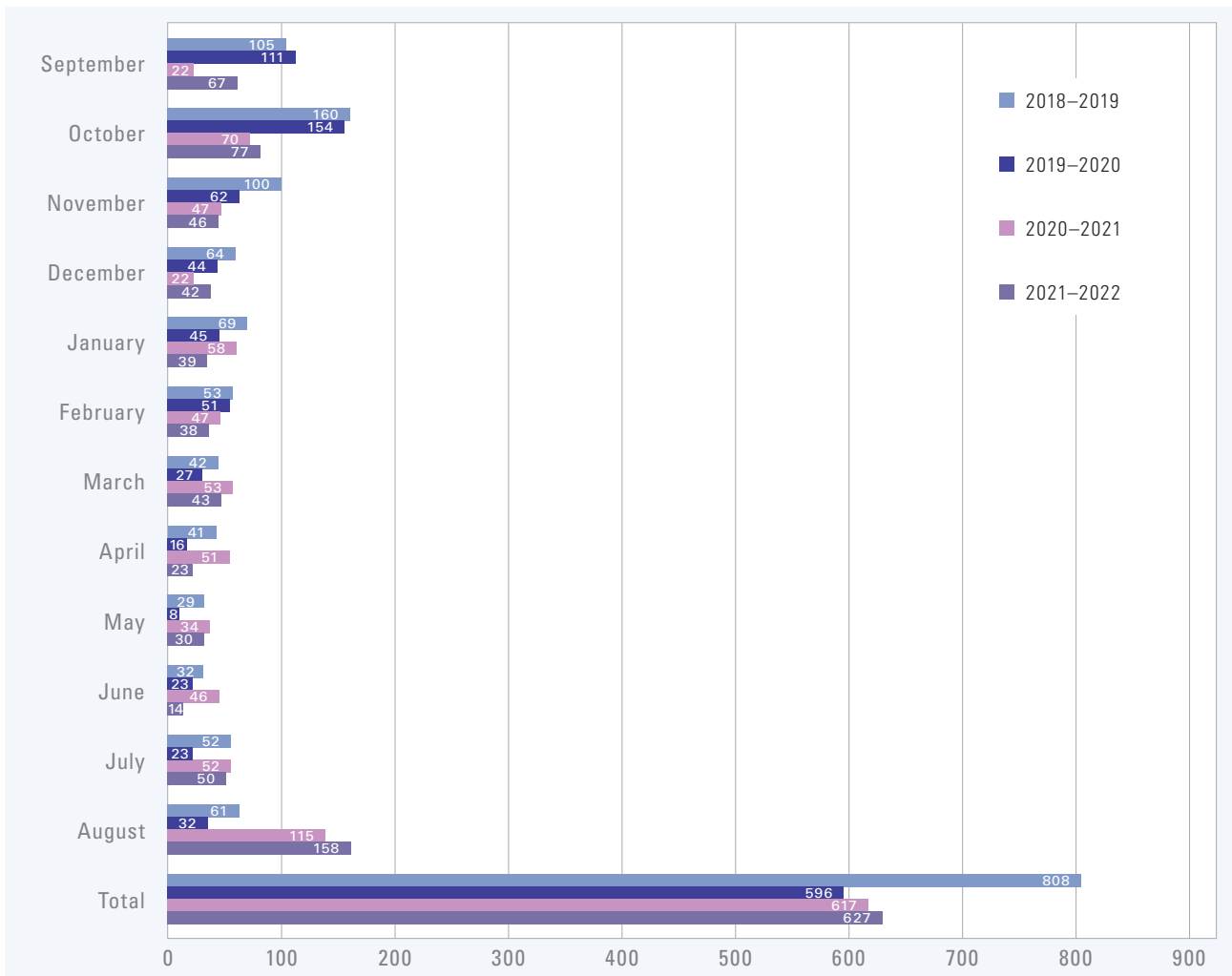
Figure 6. Number of Communication Job Postings by Rank, 2021–2022



Monthly Job Postings, 2018–2019 to 2021–2022

To understand the annual cycles of Communication job advertising and to get some idea of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on job postings, Figure 7 shows how many jobs were posted each month during four consecutive academic years (2018–19 to 2021–22). Notable is the significant difference between the 2019–20 academic year and other academic years; the number of advertisements dropped dramatically starting in March 2020 and stayed lower than usual for the remainder of 2020. The numbers started returning to normal in January 2021, with strong numbers running from March 2021 to August 2021. During 2021–22, monthly numbers were generally at or below historical patterns, with the exception of August 2022, with 158 advertisements, even more than the strong August 2021 number of 115; programs may be advertising more often at the beginning of the academic year to maximize the quantity and quality of candidate pools and/or trying to get searches completed quickly because they fear hiring freezes later in the academic year.²

Figure 7. Monthly Job Postings, 2018–2019 to 2021–2022

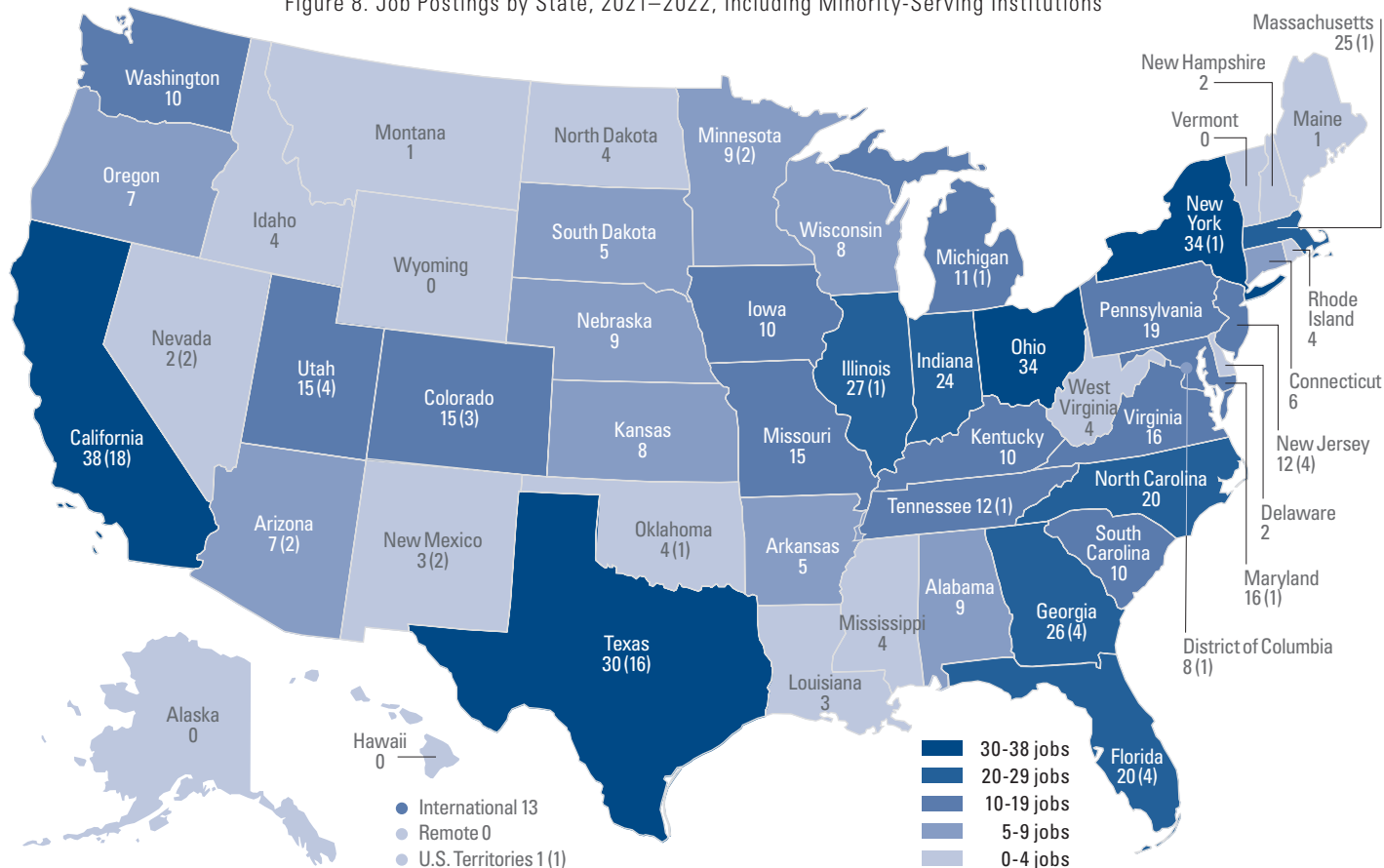


² Scott Jaschik, "Early Decision—for Faculty Jobs," *Inside Higher Ed*, July 31, 2008. available at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/08/01/early-decision-faculty-jobs>; American University, "Hiring Freeze Frequently Asked Questions," May 8, 2020. Available at <https://www.american.edu/hr/how-we-work/hiring-freeze-faqs.cfm>; Colleen Flaherty, "Frozen Searches," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 31, 2020; available at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/01/scores-colleges-announce-faculty-hiring-freezes-response-coronavirus>; Marketing Director, "Dealing with Uncertainty in the Academic Job Market," Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, Oct. 5, 2021. Available at <https://www.hercjobs.org/dealing-with-uncertainty-in-the-academic-job-market/>.

Job Postings by State, 2021–2022, with MSI and HBCU Posts Specified

Despite collecting geographical data, the NCA has not included this information in its Academic Job Listing in Communication Report since the 2015–16 report. The reintroduction of these data (see Figure 8) is important information for many job seekers, especially new Ph.D.s and those in dual-earner households. This report also begins to report positions at all types of designated minority-serving institutions (see Table 2). Of the 582 jobs in academia and administrative roles (see Figure 8), 13 were international (with nine posting advertisements from Canada) and one was a United States territory. Of the domestic positions advertised, states in the South posted the most advertisements with 150, while states in the Northeast had 91, the Midwest 113, and the West 122 (see Table 3). Four states—Texas, New York, Ohio, and California—had thirty-plus job advertisements while Alaska, Hawaii, Vermont, and Wyoming did not have any job advertisements.

Figure 8. Job Postings by State, 2021–2022, Including Minority-Serving Institutions



Note: Numbers in parentheses represent Communication job openings at federally designated Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). If a job was at an institution that is designated as an MSI in two categories or more, that opening was counted as many times as the institution's MSI classifications. Job openings at MSIs are included in, not added to, total numbers for each state.

Table 2

TOTAL NUMBER OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs) AND MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS (MSIs) BY TYPE	NUMBER
Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions	0
Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions	27
Hispanic Serving Institutions	51
Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions	5
Predominantly Black Institutions	4
Historically Black Colleges and Universities	2
Tribal Colleges and Universities	0

Table 3

REGION	NUMBER OF JOBS
Northeast	91
South	150
Midwest	113
West	122
International	13
Remote	0

Note: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), institutions that are federally designated by The Higher Education Act of 1965, were established prior to 1964 to "educate black Americans." Also federally designated, Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) acknowledge the presence of and serve undergraduate minority student populations (of at least 10%).

Analysis and Context

The growth of the Communication discipline is part of a larger transformation in American higher education that began after World War II as college education became an increasingly middle-class experience. Following the influx spurred by the GI Bill came the first wave of Baby Boomer men starting in 1964, then a large influx of women soon after that, followed by more non-traditional students in the 1970s and early 1980s. This demand for admission reinforced the growing importance of postsecondary education to the marketplace and society at large and provided colleges and universities with an increasing annual income from tuition. With the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and introduction of grants and loans for undergraduates, federal support was extended to all levels of higher education. And, just as important, institutions were enabled to increase tuition without fear of losing enrollment.³

These years of expansion included radical revisions in undergraduate and graduate liberal arts curricula. Following student unrest in the 1960s and 1970s, academic institutions revised or eliminated historically required undergraduate “bread and butter” courses. Disciplines such as English, modern and classical languages, philosophy, and history that had long composed much of undergraduate core curriculum courses scrambled to maintain student enrollment. From then until now, the traditional disciplines of the humanities have been embattled, continually seeking to prove their worth compared to sciences, social sciences and professional fields within the university and in the wider marketplace.³ Communication straddles the lines among the humanities, social sciences and professions, with both teaching and research grounded in all three traditions and practices and has grown because of this.⁴

Overall Enrollment Trends

So, while the Communication discipline overall has grown and not shrunk with the decline in the humanities, it is not immune to larger trends and events that have affected higher education. Many assumed, for instance, that the decline in U.S. birth rates per capita, which started in 2007 and continued almost every year since then, and the overall decline in total U.S. births, which also started in 2007 and has continued most years since then, would not significantly affect enrollments in U.S. colleges and universities until 2025 and later. It has also been widely assumed, so far correctly, that inbound immigration would not make up for declines in births. Some also have assumed incorrectly that enrollment declines started only with the COVID-19 pandemic around March 2020.⁵

However, data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) shows undergraduate enrollment declines predated the COVID-19 epidemic, especially at community colleges and other two-year institutions. For instance, total U.S. undergraduate enrollment declined 3.3%, from just over 17 million to 16.4 million, from 2017 to 2018; a decline of almost 1%, from over 16.4 million to almost 16.3 million, from 2018 to 2019; a decline of 3.7%, from almost 16.3 million to 15.7 million, from 2019 to 2020; a decline of 3.5%, from 15.7 million to 15.1 million, from 2020 to 2021, and a decline of 0.6%, from 15.1 million to 15 million, from 2021 to 2022. Declines of various sizes occurred during all of those years in undergraduate enrollments at both U.S. public four-year institutions and U.S. private nonprofit institutions. (In Fall 2022, the 0.6% decline reflects very small changes enrollment at community colleges and private, nonprofit institutions, and an increase at private, for-profit institutions, but a 1.4% decline at public, four-year institutions.) Total U.S. enrollment in Fall 2022 was still 5.8%—1.1 million students—below 2019 and the NSCRC can say only that undergraduate enrollment “began to stabilize” in Fall 2022.⁶

3 Roger L. Geiger, *American Higher Education since World War II: A History* (Princeton University Press, 2019); John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 3rd Ed. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).

4 William F. Eadie, “Communication as an Academic Field: USA and Canada”; Peter Simonson and John Durham Peters, “Communication and Media Studies, History to 1968”; and Lisa Mullikin Parcell, “Communication and Media Studies, History Since 1968,” all in *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, Wolfgang Donsbach (ed.), Boston, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008; Gustav W. Friedrich, “Speech communication education in American colleges and universities” (pp. 235-252) in Thomas W. Benson (ed.), *Speech communication in the twentieth century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985); and Everett M. Rogers, *A history of communication study: A biographical approach* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

5 Mongoose Research, “Preparing for the 2025 Enrollment Cliff & Other Higher Ed Challenges,” 2023, available at <https://www.mongooseresearch.com/blog/preparing-for-the-2025-enrollment-cliff-mongoose>; Steven Mintz, “Higher Education’s Biggest Challenge: Rethinking Ingrained Assumptions,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 27, 2021, available at <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/higher-education%E2%80%99s-biggest-challenge-rethinking-ingrained-assumptions>; Liam Knox, “After a Decade of Growth, Degree Earners Decline,” March 16, 2023, *Inside Higher Ed*, available at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/17/undergrad-degree-completion-falls-first-time-decade>.

6 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, “Enrollment Coverage 2017–2022 (April 2023),” available at: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/workingwithourdata/>.

Communication Among the Disciplines

In the job market for Communication Ph.D.s, Communication has not been immune to the increasing number of U.S. higher education faculty (68%) who are contingent.⁷ But the total number of Communication jobs recorded by the National Communication Association (NCA), a high percentage of which require or prefer applicants with doctoral degrees in Communication, exceeds the number of new Ph.D.s in Communication each year and the NCA is not recording all public job advertisements aimed at Communication Ph.D.s.

The most important factor in the strong employment market for those holding Ph.D.s in Communication is the growth of the field, broadly defined. For example, from the 2005–06 academic year to the 2019–20 academic year, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in liberal arts and sciences, general studies and humanities declined from 44,898 to 42,903; bachelor's degrees in philosophy and religious studies declined from 12,841 to 11,889; bachelor's degrees in social sciences and history were about steady, dropping slightly from 161,468 to 161,164; and bachelor's degrees in English language and literature dropped dramatically from 55,094 to 38,036. In contrast, the number of bachelor's degrees in psychology increased from 88,132 to 119,968, and the number of bachelor's degrees in Communication, journalism and related fields increased from 73,658 to 91,752.⁸

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook for 2022 projected a 6% increase in Communication jobs for the current decade. This, the report states, is "about as fast as the average for all occupations," and will result in a combined total of about 115,800 new and replacement positions over 10 years."⁹

Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics reported that the number of master's degrees in Communication, journalism and related programs increased every year but one from 2005–06 to 2019–20, growing from 7,106 to 10,588.¹⁰

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7 Glenn Colby, "Data Snapshot: Tenure and Contingency in U.S. Higher Education," American Association of University Professors, March 2023, available at <https://www.aaup.org/article/data-snapshot-tenure-and-contingency-us-higher-education>.

8 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, "Enrollment Coverage 2017–2022 (April 2023)," available at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/workingwithourdata/>.

9 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Media and Communication Occupations," *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, September 2022, available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/home.htm>.

10 National Center for Education Statistics, "Graduate Degree Fields," in *Condition of Education*, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ctb>.



About NCA

The National Communication Association (NCA) aims to advance Communication scholarship, teaching, and practice to foster a better world. The NCA serves the scholars, teachers, and practitioners who are its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests in research and teaching. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, the NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems. The NCA supports inclusiveness and diversity among our faculties, within our membership, in the workplace, and in the classroom; the NCA supports and promotes policies that fairly encourage this diversity and inclusion.

