About the Report

In March, a survey of APSA members indicated needs for assistance with the transition to online remote learning as well as concerns about the job market. These needs remain as the rest of the 2020-2021 academic year remains highly uncertain. At the same time, protests against systemic racism and police brutality have continued across the US since the end of May.

As of the beginning of August 2020, many colleges and universities in the US that did have plans for in-person learning for their fall semesters are now returning to remote learning or hybrid plans due to surges in COVID-19 across the United States.

Toward these ends, the Association launched APSA Educate, an online portal for teaching and learning resources, as part of a solution to help members with this transition to virtual teaching and learning, and have collected resources available for addressing systemic racism and social justice. We also we note that as a proportion of the total positions advertised, the number of positions in race, ethnicity and politics have increased slightly and now compose about 15% of the positions advertised.

In line with all other current economic indicators, the 2019-2020 eJobs Report shows that job postings have decreased across the country, with the sharpest downturns in April, May, and June. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting recession accentuate a discipline-specific theme that has been prevalent in APSA reports on the profession for years: more and more, new graduates with doctoral degrees in political science are prudent to consider pursuing alternative careers to academics due to a decreasing proportion of political science PhDs being placed immediately in tenure-track academic positions.

While we propose that temporary hiring freezes at universities across the country likely have worsened the job market for tenure-track academic positions, we will not know until late fall, when the job market is in full swing, what the full effect has been.

As always, we remain open to questions, suggestions, and comments at surveys@apsanet.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Key Findings for the 2019-2020 Academic Year

Volume and Timing of Position Openings/ Advertisements in Political Science

- During the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of 967 job advertisements were posted on APSA’s eJobs site. This was a significant decrease (-18.33%) from the 2018-2019, which saw 1184 postings.

- Nearly every month in the 2019-2020 academic year saw a decrease in postings compared to 2018-19. The decline was especially prominent in the months of November, December, April, May, and June, with the greatest decrease (-60%) occurring in June 2020. The severe drop in the last three months of the academic year can most likely be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic recession.

Geography of Political Science Positions

- Colleges and Universities in California, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania supplied the highest number of job postings. Together, postings in these states comprised 41.54% of all postings in the US in the academic year 2019-2020, an increase of about 3.5% from 2018-19. The most advertisements for jobs in the US were for positions in the Northeast (32.94%), followed by the Midwest (18.31%), the Southeast (15.1%), and the West (14.27%).

- Postings for international jobs outside the U.S. made up 17.3% of all postings from July 2019 through June 2020. This proportion was slightly higher than in 2018-2019, when just under 15% of all job postings were international, indicating that international postings decreased at a slower rate than in the US job market. Most international postings were in Europe (44.91%), followed by Asia (26.95%) and Canada (14.97%).
Job Postings by Political Science Subfields

- The subfield category with the highest number of postings was American Government and Politics, which offered 19.86% of jobs. International Relations had the next highest proportion of postings, at 18.1%, followed by Comparative Politics at 13.75%. The “Other” category—one often used for specific research areas like those defined in post-doctoral positions—supplied 12.1% of positions advertised.

- The categories Public Policy, Political Theory, and “Open” also supplied a significant number of positions, at 8.69%, 7.55%, and 7.45%, respectively. The categories Methodology, Public Law, Public Administration, Administration, and Non-Academic each offered less than 4% of job postings.

- Although the four subfield categories with the highest number of job postings together offered the majority of positions, their share of the job market decreased compared to the academic year 2018-2019. The categories American Government and Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and “Other” together supplied 72.13% of all positions in 2018-2019. This proportion dropped to 63.81% in 2019-2020. The difference can be explained by an increase in the proportion of jobs offered by all other subfield categories.

What eJobs Tells us About the 2019-2020 Job Market

1. Job posting numbers dropped for the 2019-2020 academic year compared to the previous year. The largest drops in the Spring likely reflect the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic recession.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of 967 job advertisements were posted on APSA’s eJobs site. This was a significant decrease (-18.33%) from the previous year, which saw 1184 postings.
Every month except for July and January saw a decrease in the number of positions posted in comparison to 2018-2019, but some months had an outsized effect on the overall -18.33% decline. Significantly fewer jobs were posted during the last two months of 2019 compared to the end of 2018, with job postings dropping in November and December by 33.04% and 26.03%, respectively. Job posting numbers remained steady in January 2020, but then dropped again in February and continued their downwards slide through the spring and into early summer. 12.86%, 43.59%, 39.39%, and 60% fewer jobs were posted in March, April, May, and June, respectively. The decline in these four months coincided with the onset and rapid worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic. We emphasize that the level of advertisements generally posted in these months is at the lowest level of new positions posted for the entire calendar year (less than 50 positions each month).

Subsequently, the job market opens in late July, peaks in August, and winds down in November, with a bump for the secondary market for post-docs and other temporary positions in late winter/early spring.

This decrease in job postings from March to June 2020 was seen in nearly every US region. The largest declines occurred in the North, South, and East, although it is important to note that in some cases we are looking at small populations (for example, there was just one position advertised in the North in 2018-2019, so the drop to 0 positions advertised in 2019-2020 created a 100% decline). The Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast also experienced decreases in job postings. The West was the only region to experience positive growth compared to 2018-2019.

The drop in job postings in the last four months of the 2019-2020 academic year also affected jobs of nearly every rank. Within academic positions, the greatest decline in postings occurred for positions labeled “Other” (75% decrease in postings compared to 2018-2019) or for assistant professorships (60.53% decrease). Job advertisements also dropped significantly for visiting professorships and assistant/associate professorships, by 53.85% and 45.45%, respectively. The only academic positions that experienced an increase in postings were those for instructors or full professors.
Figure 1. Total eJobs Postings, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020

Figure 2. Monthly Change in eJobs Postings from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020
3. **Positions on eJobs are more diverse in terms of subfields.** In comparison to 2018-2019, three of the four largest subfield categories significantly decreased in their share of the job market. Categories with generally fewer job postings increased their proportion of position advertisements.

In both 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, four subfield categories—American Government and Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and “Other”—supplied the majority of positions advertised. These four categories’ combined share of the job market decreased, however, from the academic year 2018-2019 to the year 2019-2020.

In 2018-2019, these four categories supplied 72.13% of all positions. American Government and Politics was the leading subfield, supplying 22.97% of all job postings, followed by International Relations (20.1%), “Other” (15.88%), and Comparative Politics (13.18%).

In 2019-2020, three of these four subfields each offered a smaller percentage of total job postings compared to 2018-2019. American Government and Politics experienced the greatest decrease, supplying 19.86% of total job postings (a drop of 3 percentage points from 2018-2019). International Relations and “Other” offered 18.1% and 12.1%, respectively. Together, the top four subfields supplied 63.81% of all job postings, down 8.32 percentage points from 2018-2019.

This difference of 8.32 percentage points was made up by seven of the eight smaller subfields—Public Policy, Political Theory, “Open,” Methodology, Public Law, Administration, and Non-Academic. These seven subfields offered a higher percentage of total job postings compared to 2018-2019. Together, they supplied 36.21% of all jobs advertised in 2019-2020, compared to 27.86% in 2018-2019. The greatest increase occurred in the “Open” subfield, which went from offering .08% of postings to 7.45%.
4. The proportion of positions posted with a focus in race, ethnicity, and/or gender and politics increased slightly to about 15% of all positions. Race, ethnicity and politics-focused positions increased, while gender and politics-focused positions decreased.

Positions posted include a description specifying the political science background, field of study, and area of expertise they are looking for from candidates. These descriptions allow job-seekers to filter postings and target their efforts at jobs for which they are best suited. To measure how the types of positions offered on eJobs have changed from the academic year 2018-2019 to the year 2019-2020 we analyzed the job descriptions for keywords related to the study of race, ethnicity, gender, and politics.
Figure 4. Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Politics in eJobs Position Descriptions, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020

From the academic year 2018-2019 to the year 2019-2020, the number of times keywords related to race, ethnicity, and gender were mentioned in job advertisements increased as a proportion of total eJobs postings, from 12.51% to 14.29%. This growth can largely be attributed to the higher frequency of words associated with race and ethnic politics which rose several percentage points from about 5% to about 8%; the increase in these keywords offset the small decrease in keywords associated with gender politics, which fell to about 5%.