

Career Choices in Planning: A Diagnosis of Planning Related Tasks and Specializations

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Abstract

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a steady increase in employment in the field of urban and regional planning over the last decade. There is a clear shift in sector choices over this time period in the urban and regional planning profession away from public and towards the private and the non-profit sectors. Retirement of baby-boomers and attractiveness of new graduates to work in the non-public sector can result in dearth of new graduates choosing public sector for their career. The purpose of this study is to analyze the distinction of choice to work in public, private, or non-profit sectors in field of planning based on task value and job-specific specializations. This research explains the sector choice of planners and identifies important factors affecting their choices using the APA Job Salary Survey and the AICP Job Analysis Survey. The tasks that reported a positive association with private sector were the administrative and the research and analysis tasks. Communication and implementation tasks reported a negative association with choice of working in the private sector. Tasks related to implementation and administration reported a negative and positive association respectively, with working in nonprofit sector versus the public sector. Planners in public sector specialize in land use or code enforcement while planners with specializations such as land use law and environmental and natural resources are attracted to work in private and non-profit sectors. The results from the study emphasizes the need to encourage and enhance the motivation of professionals in their workplace while the implication for planning pedagogy is to provide planning education through public service that can help support and strengthen the commitment to the public sector.

Keywords: urban planning; sector choice; planning education; public sector, careers in planning; service motivation

INTRODUCTION

Planning, has traditionally been a profession engaged in land use planning. Planning professionals engaged in tasks and activities primarily related to estimating population growth and land development scenarios while planning academics engaged in teaching knowledge and skills relevant to these tasks. Planning has gradually over decades become more interdisciplinary and both planning profession and academics have addressed this change by providing knowledge and skills in teaching to respond to the required tasks at work. However, studies (Friedman, 1996; Ozawa & Seltzer, 1999; Seltzer & Ozawa, 2002) have confirmed a disparity and mismatch in the overall

skills required by planning in practice than those supplies by the planning education. Understanding this mismatch and how it impacts the choice of career of planning graduates can have important implications for both planning practice and academics.

Until the recent economic meltdown, the baby boomers were enroute to retire this decade. Although it is not a problem at present, as this huge wave of baby boomer retirement swells, the public sector may face increasing difficulty in finding enough workers, especially young college graduates. For the past two decades, economists and political scientists have warned that this is due to a

“quite crisis” of steadily deteriorating “quality, morale, and effectiveness of public sector” that has resulted in the shift of career choices towards the private and nonprofit sectors by young college graduates (Levine, 1986; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2005). Similar trends can be observed in the field of urban and regional planning in the U.S. (Figure 1). How should we understand this trend away from the government and towards the private and nonprofit sector?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a steady increase in employment in the field of urban and regional planning over the last decade (Figure 1). Employment in planning increased by 11% from 1997 to 2008 with a decrease in public sector employment by about 2.5% and an increase in private sector employment by about 69%. The public sector share of planning employment changed little due to a 41 percent decrease in employment at state agencies. How do we account for this shift from public to private planning employment?

This shift can be attributed to the following causes. It is clear that the lion’s share of planning jobs is in the public sector. Most public sector jobs, especially the managerial positions, host individuals with longer work experience (Pynes & Spina, 2009; Su & Bozeman, 2009) although the analysis in planning profession by Dalton (2010) is contrary to common trend, probably owing to the variation of only four years of study. Also, the increasing attractiveness of the private sector coupled with the negative views of public bureaucracy makes civil service opportunities less attractive to planning job candidates. Private sector incentives and salaries are often more attractive than the benefits and security of public sector jobs (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000)

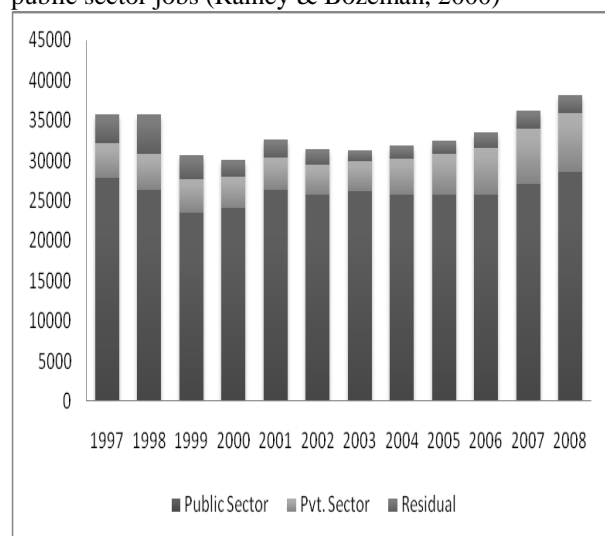


Figure 1: Trend in planning employment based on sectors

Employment in private sector in planning increased in response to the robust worldwide demand for planning services during the real estate boom leading up to the 2007 crisis. Additionally, public contracting for private planning services increased private sector planning employment as firms worked as sub-contractors for government. We do not delineate what difference these changes had the most impact on the shift from public to private. We do not possess the relevant information and what information we possess does not clearly distinguish between public and private sector jobs¹. Many organization scholars argue that the shift may reflect an emerging “boundary less” division of labor as project based activity and specialties defines contemporary professional careers more than sector affiliation or organizational loyalties (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009). Others ascribe the drop in public sector employment to a shift away from public service (Rainey, 1982, 2003; Wright, 2001). Henceforth, this study analyzes the determinants of this shift in sector choices for employment in planning from public to private and non-profit sectors. In our study we analyze sector choice for planning using score of task value and job-specific specialization. We use data from the APA Job Salary Survey and the AICP Job Analysis Survey to test for these effects.

The paper has four sections. First, we review relevant literature on theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding career choices and identify propositions about task value and specialization as indicators of career choice for planners. Second, we detail our research design including: the survey data, variable operations, and method of analyses. Next, we present and discuss the regression results. In the final section, we discuss the professional and educational implications of the findings and provide suggestions for future research.

SECTOR CHOICES: A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MODEL

Public management scholars offer competing theories on the interaction between public service motivation and sector choice. The seminal Federal Executive Study by Warner, Van Riper, Martine, and Collins (1963) set in motion public management research focusing on psychological indicators: public service prestige, belief in service, and commitment as antecedents to public sector jobs (Guyot, 1962; Rainey, 1982, 2003; Wright, 2001). For instance, Rainey's

¹ Subcontracting, during this time period government staffs were cut and the government was outsourcing much of the necessary work to private providers (both consultants and nonprofits).

(2003) recent public service motivation research compared public and private sector employees and found public employees more committed to altruistic goals and less interested in monetary reward than private sector employees. Others found a relationship between public service motivation and perceived civil service security due in part to differences public and private sector job structure (Bozeman & Kingsly, 1998; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000).

Working in the nonprofit sector presents a complex and conflicting motivation and value. Participation in the nonprofit sector demands passion for the mission, engagement, entrepreneurship and service commitment because employees in nonprofit sector are generally focused and interested in the task itself rather than external conditions of job such as financial incentives or job security. A central theory of nonprofit organizations therefore suggests that intrinsically motivated employees prefer to work in nonprofit sector as they can directly engage in tasks they value without rigid bureaucracy or strict restriction (Ben-Ner & Ren, 2015). As presented in the Figure 1, the planning jobs in nonprofit sector have increased recently. Parallel to the increase in number of jobs created in the nonprofit sector is the greater recognition nonprofit organizations enjoy job flexibility and expertise than private or government agencies (Salamon, 2003; Frumkin, 2002).

To understand the job sector choice in planning, we employ and extend the proposition of Perry and Wise (1990, p. 370) that “the greater an individual’s public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization” by incorporating the important task behavior differences in public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Public sector choice research assumes that psychological motives are the most important factors contributing to sector employment choice. While other studies focused on the psychological motives, our study focuses instead on the effects of task value for sector choice in public, private, and nonprofit jobs. We assume that people not only choose a sector based on goal aspirations, but also because they perceive doing different kinds of work in that sector. Their perception of these differences in task activity influences choice of job by sector. Our approach cuts across the grain of those who claim few meaningful differences exist in the work people do in public and private organizations (Allison, 1979; Perry & Porter, 1982; Perry & Rainey, 1988; Boyne, 2002). The debate lacks much evidence linking task value and sector choice mostly owing to the difficulty of obtaining useful data. Studies of public sector job usually rely on data for employees by organization and not survey data from the public and private employees within the same

occupation. The organization studies cannot properly compare sector choice differences based on the tasks performed at work. Access the APA survey data enables us to conduct a systematic comparison of sector choice and task value for urban planners.

Task Value-Oriented Sector Choice Model in Planning

The sector differences emerged with dominance of market economies. Private firms make and sell commodities to earn a profit, public agencies require taxes to fund provision of public goods and nonprofit agencies provide services for a fee and often with philanthropic support and cannot earn a profit. The labor market for each reflects the difference in both the economic purpose and the kind of work. Some work tasks will be the same regardless of sector, but others will vary. However this study investigates not the items that vary for each task, but the variation of overall tasks as inquired by the job survey. It is important to look at the overall variation of each task with respect to each sector owing to the difference in the structure and function of the public, private and non-profit organizations.

Government agencies are owned collectively by members of a political community and funded by taxation while private firms are owned by private stakeholders and operated by customer fees. Nonprofit organizations rely on diverse sources of funds, including private donations, membership and client fees, private foundations, and government grants and contracts and serve multiple stakeholders (Jang&Feiock, 2007). Because of the nature of funding sources and ownerships of each sector, distinctive work tasks and work expectations lead planners to choose to work in one sector over the other.

Due to the public nature of government agency jobs, political forces and policy directives predominantly control public employees whereas economic market forces control private firm employees. It is important to make these distinctions between controlling forces because they dictate an employee's subsequent value of the task they perform at work. For example, political control and policy focus in the public sector leads to more involvement in implementation tasks and political communication activities with a variety of stakeholders such as elected decision makers, interest groups, and tax payers who place demands and constraints on public employees. Thus, two of the main task behaviors expected in public sector planners are attending community meetings to listen to stakeholders and implementing policies and plans. On the other hand, the main concerns of planners in the private sector are to

satisfy individual consumer demands and provide competitive and quality services to attract higher profits. However planners in the nonprofit organizations must serve many stakeholders, including, donors, clients, board members, workers, and communities, yet none of them can claim ownership of nonprofit organization. This structural feature gives a unique advantage to planners in nonprofit sector to focus on organizational missions or perform social functions that neither the government nor the market is able to match (Frumkin, 2002). Henceforth, *the first proposition is to test if planners in the public sector are more likely to be motivated in the administrative, implementation and communication tasks than planners in the private and non-profit sector. On the contrary, planners in private and non-profit sector are more likely to be motivated in the research and analysis and the plan and policy development tasks than planners in the public sector.*

One of the most highlighted characteristics of public sector jobs is its high demand of accountability through strong monitoring requirements. This regulatory nature of most government agencies might create a less flexible and more bureaucratic environment than that of the private sector. Presumably, persons choosing planning positions in the public sector over the private and nonprofit sectors are aware of the bureaucratic constraints including rigid personnel and budgeting rules and understand the highly political environment of government agencies. In contrast, planners who seek employment in private firms or nonprofit organizations strive to achieve expertise and specialization in narrowly defined areas of work for the purpose of competing in the job market and possibly earning higher salaries; hence, certain specializations are more important in the private and the non-profit sectors than in the public sector. Therefore, *the second proposition is to test if planners in the private and non-profit sectors are more likely to have specializations not unique to planning than the planners in the public sector.*

Besides the task values and the specializations, personal characteristics such as AICP certification, scale of work, respondent age are posited to influence sector choice. *The third proposition tests if planners with certification, working at a particular scale of work, and of certain age are more likely to work in private and non-profit sector than the planners in public sector.*

Results from these propositions will inform the tasks, specializations and individual characteristics that report higher odds of planners working in the public versus private and non-profit sectors. This will have implications for both the supply and the demand side of the planning profession. Planning schools can focus

their courses to meet the demand of the sector or sectors that are major employers of their graduates and planning professionals can either before or at job specialize in the tasks relevant to their respective sectors, to advance their career.

Investigating Sector Choice In Planning

This study investigates the proposed research inquiries using data from two surveys: (1) APA Planners Salary Survey, and (2) AICP Job Analysis Survey. To investigate the trends and the job-specific characteristics in sector choices in planning, we use the APA Planners Survey data collected in 2004, 2006, and 2008. To conduct the investigation on the indicators of sector choices in planning, we use the AICP Job Analysis Survey. It has to be noted that although both surveys ask similar questions regarding the respondent's background, the APA Planners Salary Survey inquires the salary information while the AICP Job Analysis Survey does not. Hence, while we use the APA Planners Salary Survey for trend analysis of change in salary across sectors, we could not use salary as an indicator for sector choice for the AICP Job Analysis Survey. Studies have reported mixed results regarding salary as a determinant of sector choice (Houston, 2000; Buelens & Van den Broek, 2007). Salary has been incorporated in the sector choice model as an indicator to differentiate job choice especially between public and private sectors; however, some of the current researches have not shown a significant statistical difference in the needs of money from the public versus the private sector (Gabris & Simo, 1995; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Christensen & Wright, 2009). Lack of salary information limits the inferential analysis of this study. Conversely, the AICP survey inquired on the performance of tasks and its importance. Responses from these inquiries were used to develop the score of the task value in the planning profession.

To follow the common referencing system by Dalton, we will refer to the APA Planners Salary Survey as the "salary" surveys and the AICP Job Analysis Survey as the "job analysis" survey hereon. Besides the limitation stated above, other limitations that apply to these datasets are similar to those indicated in the studies by Hoch (2010) and Dalton (2010).

Data

The salary survey data for 2004, 2006, and 2008 are used for the trend analysis. An average of 4378 individuals responded to the survey with highest respondents from the states of California and Florida. Interestingly, for all the three survey years, not a single response from the state of Wyoming was reported (Figure 2).

To analyze the trend in sector choices, responses from the salary survey are categorized based on the sector of employment, AICP membership, highest degree in planning, and salary by sector. The total number of individuals in the public, private, and nonprofit sector are grouped based on the variables listed above for the three years and are discussed to better understand the trend of employment towards private sector and away from public sector. The job analysis survey is used to analyze the indicators that influence sector choice. Specifically, we examine the role of performing job-specific tasks and the specializations in the planning

field in terms of an individual's choice to work in a specific sector.

SECTOR CHOICES

The dependent variable, sector of respondent's job, is dummy coded (public sector-1, private sector-2 and nonprofit sector-3). About 68.6% (1772) of the respondents work in public sector, 28.8% (744) respondents work in the private sector and 2.6% work in the nonprofit sector.

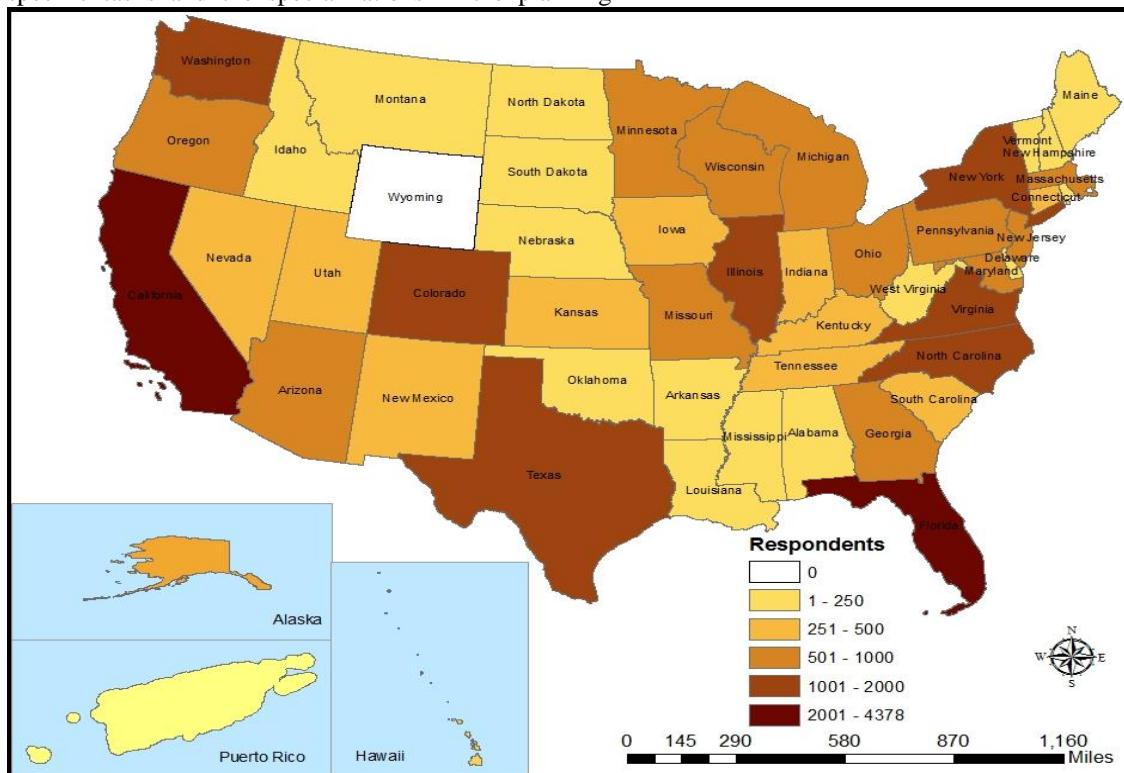


Figure 2: Distribution of average number of respondents of Salary Survey (2004, 2006, 2008)

DETERMINANTS OF SECTOR CHOICES

The independent variables are grouped in three categories: (1) Respondent characteristics, (2) Job characteristics, and (3) Task value characteristics. Respondent characteristics include variables such as the age, gender, level of education, AICP certification, and planning as the highest degree. Job characteristics include the number of years of experience, scale of work and the field of specialization. The task value characteristics is the importance each respondent placed to perform and/or manage the five tasks inquired by the job survey which includes research and analysis, communication, plan and policy development, implementation, and administration.

Task Value Score: The task value characteristics are operationalized using the responses from the task related inquiries in the job analysis survey. These queries required the respondents to rate the performance and the importance of the task in their current job position. Performance was measured on the scale of 0 to 3 (0-neither perform nor manage the work; 1-perform the work; 2-manage the work; 3-both perform and manage the work) and importance was measured on the scale of 0 to 4 (0-not important, 1-little important, 2-moderately important; 3-important; 4-very important). These responses were recorded as 0 and 1 (Figure 3). Performance was recorded as 1 if individuals performed, managed or performed and managed the work. Similarly, importance of the task at the job was

coded as 1 if the task was considered important or very important.

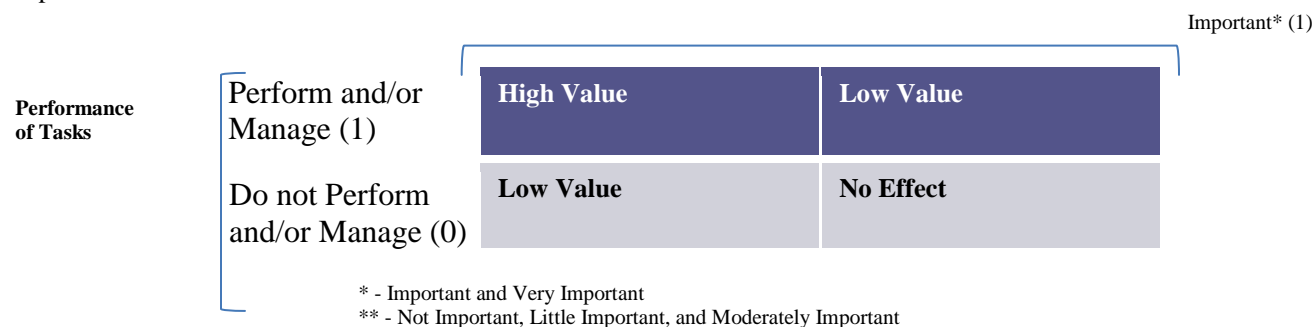


Figure 3: Task value scoring

The logic behind this coding was if individuals performed and/or managed tasks that they deemed important or very important, they would value those tasks more than usual. It has to be noted that this is a proxy measure of ‘task value’ to perform the task at their current job. This measurement of motivational factors affecting individuals’ perception regarding diverse tasks would be a best alternative to draw empirical evidence about relationship between work motivation and job choice of planners. We believe that exploring dimensions of the importance and performance of diverse task behaviors allow us to capture task oriented motivational factors and contribute current organization literature which has mainly focused on psychological aspect of motivational factors (Perry & Wise, 1990; Rainey, 2003; Wright, 2001). Five domains were covered in the job analysis survey, (1) Research and Analysis, (2) Communications, (3) Plan and Policy Development, (4) Implementation, and (5) Administration. Task value scores for each of these domains were calculated and used for further analysis.

STATISTICAL METHOD

To test the propositions listed, we used the sector choices as the dependent variable and the respondent characteristics, job characteristics, and task value characteristics as the independent variables. We used the multinomial logistic regression with the public sector as the base category. Our study compared the public to private and to nonprofit sector, to test the variables that report higher odds of individuals choosing to work in the private versus public and the nonprofit versus the public sector. We identify two major limitations of this study: (1) the data used to analyze the determinants of sector choice was from the AICP survey collected in 2008. The trend of sector choices in planning may have seen a shift since 2008. However, the results are still valid as planning education and the sectors have the same motivations to attracts its employees, and (2) income data was not available for

the AICP survey and hence its impact on sector choice, although can be inferred, could not be tested in this study.

UNDERSTANDING PLANNING SECTOR CHOICE

To investigate the trends in sector choices in planning, we analyzed the change in the number of planning jobs, by sector, for each state in the US. There was a minor percent change (about 2%) in sector employment in the planning profession during the period of 2004 to 2008 (see Appendix A for the trend in planning profession analyzed from the salary survey). This indicates a limitation of using a voluntary survey by the APA members. The APA may not be recruiting the private sector planners the BLS counts or the APA members from the private sector are less willing to fill out the salary surveys. This indicates that the APA should use random samples of membership rather than just ask folks. However, this does not impact the proposition this study set out to investigate.

The outcome of the multinomial logistic regression comparing the public sector to the private and nonprofit sector was statistically significant. The outcomes are discussed primarily for two constructs: value score for tasks performed at the current job and the specialization in planning as reported by the respondents of the job analysis survey.

Private vs. Public Sector Choice

The task value score indicates the value respondents place on the task they perform or manage a task that they perceive as important in their everyday work. The tasks that reported a positive association with the private sector were the administrative tasks and the research and analysis tasks. Plan and policy development did not report a statistically significant association with any particular sector. Communication and implementation tasks reported a negative association with choice of working in the private sector. For every unit increase in

the task value score of research and analysis tasks and the administrative tasks, the odds of being in the group of respondents who would work in private sector increased by 26.9% and about 6 times respectively.

Administrative Task Value: Although the association of the administrative task was contrary to our proposition, this can be explained by the fact that planners in the public arena do not always lead organizations. Government agencies often hire generalist managers who can oversee the entire planning operations

including funding, implementation, and reporting. Since planning has been traditionally characterized by more skill-based and technique-specialized functions compared to other service management functions, it would not be unusual to separate administrative and implementation tasks in the public sector. For example, city managers perform the administrative tasks and planners are generally involved in professional tasks such as land-use planning and comprehensive planning for the metropolitan areas.

Table 1: Results of the Multinomial Logistic Regression in the model showing significant effects on an individual's choice to work in non-public sector (Model included only significant variables at .05 level)

Individual's choice to work in public sector		Estimate	SE	z	p (Sig.)	Odds ratio
Private	Value*: Research and Analysis	0.238	0.120	1.98	0.048	1.269
	Value: Communication	-0.706	0.187	-3.78	0.000	0.494
	Value: Implementation	-1.768	0.136	-13.00	0.000	0.171
	Value: Administration	1.799	0.157	11.44	0.000	6.044
	Spl: Environmental and Natural Resource Planning	0.351	0.123	2.87	0.004	1.421
	Spl**: Facilities and Infrastructure Planning	0.501	0.156	3.22	0.001	1.650
	Spl: Information Technology	-0.738	0.275	-2.68	0.007	0.478
	Spl: Land-use or code enforcement	-0.491	0.113	-4.36	0.000	0.612
	Spl: Park and Recreation Planning	0.504	0.166	3.04	0.002	1.655
	Spl: Participation and Empowerment	0.511	0.166	3.08	0.002	1.667
	Spl: Planning Law	0.600	0.196	3.06	0.002	1.822
	Spl: Planning Management, budgeting and finance	-1.067	0.178	-5.99	0.000	0.344
	Spl: Preservation	-0.563	0.191	-2.95	0.003	0.570
	Spl: Urban Design	0.613	0.129	4.76	0.000	1.846
	Spl: Other	0.389	.167	2.33	0.020	1.474
	AICP Certification	0.311	0.116	2.68	0.007	1.365
	Nonprofit	Employment in Suburb	-0.731	0.289	-2.53	0.012
Employment in Small town		-0.338	0.171	-1.97	0.049	0.713
Age: 50-64 Years		-0.545	0.186	-2.92	0.003	0.580
Intercept		-5.380	1.740	-3.09	0.002	
Value: Implementation		-2.126	0.340	-6.25	0.000	0.119
Value: Administration		1.942	0.420	4.63	0.000	6.973
Spl: Economic Planning and Development		0.819	0.315	2.60	0.009	2.268
Spl: Environmental and Natural Resource Planning		0.706	0.307	2.30	0.021	2.026
Spl: Housing		0.761	0.336	2.27	0.023	2.140
Spl: Land-use or code enforcement		-0.942	0.334	-2.82	0.005	0.390
Spl: Participation and Empowerment	1.270	0.353	3.60	0.000	3.561	

N = 2582 (Public = 1772; Private = 744; Nonprofit = 66). Model chi-square = 723.936; p<0.0001, -2 log likelihood = 2945.708, Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke) = 0.322. * Job Value Score; **Specialization

Research and Analysis Task Value: Although there is no generalizable theory that research and analysis task behaviors are more prevalent in the private sector, the competitive nature of the private sector could explain this association. The finding is consistent with market competition in the private sector since planners in that sector strive to prove their technical advancement by spending more time in research and analysis tasks than planners in the public sector. You are shooting in the dark here.

Communication and Implementation Task Value: It is an interesting discovery that communication and implementation tasks are negatively associated with private sector choices. The odds of being in a group of

respondents who work in the private sector decreased by over 50% and 80% respectively for communication and implementation tasks at work. The negative association displayed in communication task behavior which was measured by eight activities such as preparing communication strategies, organizing or conducting meeting, and making public presentations, indicates that planners in private companies are less likely committed to internal and external communication tasks in comparison to those in public sector. This result is consistent with proposition 1 that planners in the public sector are more likely to be motivated in the communication tasks than planners in private sector. The negative association of implementation tasks measured by eight activities such as preparing capital

improvement programs, evaluating outcomes, and preparing development regulations or ordinance, allow us to understand that those implementation tasks are generally conducted by planners in public organizations. Thus, its association with public sector over the private sector and this finding is consistent with proposition 1.

Specialization: The specializations that reported a positive association with choosing the private sector for employment are the environmental and natural resources (odds increase by 42%), facilities and infrastructure planning (odds increase by 65%), parks and recreation (odds increase by 65%), participation and empowerment (odds increase by 67%), planning law (odds increase by 82%), urban design (odds increase by 85%) and other specializations (odds increase by 47%). Specializations in information technology (odds decrease by 52%), land-use and code enforcement (odds decrease by 38%), planning management, budget, and finance (odds decrease by 66%) and the preservation (odds decrease by 43%) reported negative association with respondent choosing to work in private sector versus the public sector. The expectation of proposition 2 appears well founded from the positive associations between specializations and private sector choices. It was proposed that planners in the private sector are more likely to have job-specific specializations than planners in the public sector.

In general the results show a division of labor for planning project work as respondents working for private firms reported doing work in specialized topical areas while public sector planners emphasized skill areas, plan review and public management activity. This reflects the fact that respondents who work for private firms work in specialized areas offering consulting advice to public agencies precisely because the firm routinely does the same kind of project over and over again for different clients while the public agency planner has to do many different tasks for different project areas. Building expertise in narrowly defined technical areas as in planning is very critical to pursue and even required to survive in private sector positions. The negative associations found from specializations such as information technology, land-use enforcement, and planning management, are somewhat predictable since those are more expected functions in the public sector as opposed to the private and non-profit sectors.

In support of the proposition 3, certification, place of employment (scale of work), and respondents aged between 50 and 64 years had a significant statistical association with the odds of working/ not working in the private sector. Being a certified planner increased the odds that the respondent would work in the private

sector by about 36%. Although this positive association punctuates proposition 1 of above, it further indicates that AICP certification is not exclusively for public services only and should consider private sector goes as well. We also found that for every job in a suburb and small town the odds decreased by 52% and 29% respectively. Respondents aged between 50 and 65 years, reported a decrease in the odds of working in the private versus the public sector by 42%.

Nonprofit vs. Public Sector Choice

Value to work in tasks related to implementation and administration reported a negative (odds decrease by 88%) and positive association (odds increase by about 7 times), respectively, with working in the nonprofit sector over the public sector. This indicates that planners who perform and/or manage implementation tasks for plans tend to be in the public sector more than the nonprofit sector. Administrative tasks include activities such as supervising or directing the work of others, managing client relationships, and determining the strategic direction of the organization. These activities, although somewhat common in all three sectors of employment, are representative of the private and nonprofit organizations more than public agencies. For every unit increase in planners who specialize in land-use or code enforcement, the odds of being in the group of respondents who would work in the nonprofit sector decrease by 61%. However, the odds of being in the group of respondents who would work in the nonprofit sector increase by 2 to 3.5 times for respondents specializing in economic planning and development, environmental and natural resources, housing, and participation and empowerment.

In general, respondents working in nonprofit sector tend to do specialized work like those in the private sector, but they do advocacy work that private and for profits do not. The nonprofit agencies that do planning include universities and community or civic organizations whose mission explicitly includes affordable housing, economic development, environmental sustainability and empowerment. For instance, students often choose to work in community based non-profit organizations even as they understand that they will not be able to practice the tasks they most enjoy or want to do. They make a commitment to the specialized purpose of the agency both because of its nonprofit status and because of its advocacy for a purpose they believe in.

INFLUENCE ON PLANNING PRACTICE AND ACADEMICS

This present study investigated the trends and determinants of sector choices in the urban and regional planning profession. The trend in planning employment

across the sectors indicates a shift in the planning profession. The employment in private and nonprofit sectors has increased while the employment of planning professionals in the public sector has declined. However, it is not clear if this shift is owing to increased job opportunities in the private and nonprofit sector or choice of planning graduates to work in non-public sectors (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Urban Institute, 2005). This study also investigated the job values and the specializations of planning professionals that are associated with working in the private and nonprofit sectors versus the public sector. The results of this study can help provide implications for the supply and the demand side of planning professionals. The implications are discussed for enhancing the practice and educational outcomes in planning followed by suggestions for future research using the current and future survey data.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study for planning practice focus on the strategies to maintain and increase the odds of working in the public sector. Specific strategies include encouraging and enhancing the motivation of professionals in their workplace. It is clear from this study that most planners in the public sector are engaged primarily in land-use planning. For planners, land-use planning is the most basic yet most important knowledge they acquire and use in the profession, obviously more in the public rather than in the private or nonprofit sectors. Both the private and the nonprofit sectors engage in providing design and research services that includes a good share of subcontracted services by the public sector. Although this study does not segregate the specializations that relate to the subcontracted services, the results do indicate a trend of certain services moving towards the private and nonprofit sectors. The individuals with specializations in participation and empowerment and planning law in particular tend to work in the private sector. However, the services that the private and the nonprofit organizations provide, such as research and analysis and public involvement in urban design process, provide evidence for decision-making in the public sector. For instance, several transportation planning agencies subcontract the research and design tasks to improve the land-use-transportation connectivity to private agencies because of the lack of human resources and at times the lack of sufficient expertise and/or technology to conduct such studies in-house.

This leads to a dilemma: should the public sector try to acquire such specialized knowledge and technology or should it maintain its status-quo? We believe that the public sector should try to enhance the services they provide currently while maintaining their status-quo.

This is important for two reasons. First, in the current economy, the public sector does not have enough human and financial capital to invest in acquiring the required expertise and knowledge in all the specializations, especially with planning becoming more interdisciplinary than before. Second, subcontracting can at times save money for the public sector and help the limited human resources to focus and enhance the quality of the current services to the community (Warner & Hedbon, 2001; Savas, 2005).

Functionally, one of the major drawbacks perceived in the public sector is the non-formalization of personnel practices and performances. For example, supervisors find it difficult to hire, fire, or reward their employees based on their individual performance. This also results in constraints of rewards such as higher pay. Therefore, a change in the personnel rule structure of public organizations can help reward the experienced individuals who might otherwise shift to the private sector. One way to do so is to provide additional benefits to make the public sector attractive by providing incentives such as underwriting educational expenses of employees working in the organization for a certain amount of years. Although this might not guarantee retention, it can attract new graduates to the public sector and help change their perceptions about the public sector. Also, the public sector would have to move away from rule-bound and rigid hierarchical approaches. New graduates can be motivated to choose the public sector for their initial employer and continue their career in the public sector from the attractive aspects of professional development and fast growth within their careers in their organization.

Implications for Academics

The Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) suggests curriculum components for the self-study conducted by planning programs to achieve or maintain their accreditation. The curriculum component matrix lists the knowledge, skills, and values delivered by the courses taught in the planning program. Planning programs have to identify the courses that deliver any of the listed knowledge, skills, and values. The implications of this study can help enhance the courses that complement the tasks statements in the job analysis survey. Specifically, the courses can be modified to reflect the sector that reports higher odds of employing planning professionals with that set of knowledge, skills and values. As noted by Myers and Banerjee (2005) “these components are consistent with the shifting directions in planning practice and ... are meant to increase planning faculty’s connection to the profession and to involve practitioners in the pedagogy of planning.”

Table 2: Curricular components delivered via learning activities matched with value at work

4.2 CURRICULUM COMPONENTS MATRIX: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND VALUES	Research and Analysis	Communication	Implementation	Administration
4.2.1 Human Settlement				
(a) Social Sciences				
(b) Environmental Sciences				
(c) Design Arts				
(d) Legal Studies				
4.2.2 History and Contemporary Planning Practice				
(a) Purpose and Meaning of Planning				
(b) History of Urban Planning				
(c) Economic, Social and Political Institutions				
(d) Methods and Tools	x			
(e) Creation, Use and Knowledge of Plans				
(f) Adoption, Administration and Implementation of Plans			x	
(g) Equity and Social Justice				
(h) Environmental Planning and Resource Assessment				
4.2.3 Practice of Planning				
(a) Problem Solving Skills	x			
(b) Research Skills	x			
(c) Written, Oral and Graphic Communication Skills		x		
(d) Numerical Reasoning and Computation Skills	x			
(e) Collaboration, Mediation, Interpretation and Negotiation		x		
(f) Creation of Plans, Programs and Projects		x		x
(g) Anticipation of Future Change			x	
(h) Techniques for the Adoption and Implementation of Plans			x	
(i) Working with Diverse Communities				x
4.2.4 Values and Ethics				
(a) Discriminating Among Competing Goals				
(b) Forms of Decision Making				x
(c) Social, Historical and Ecological Legacies				
4.2.5 Specializations (Optional)				

Source: PAB Self-Study Report Manual, Pg. 24

For example, research and analysis tasks complement the curriculum components 4.2.2.d (Methods and Tools) and 4.2.3.a, b, d (Problem solving skills, research skills, and numerical reasoning and computation skills). Courses that deliver the above set of knowledge, skills

and values can add components of the private sector because planning professionals who have these skills report higher odds of task value to work in the private sector. Similarly, courses that deliver the curriculum components 4.2.3.f, i (Creation of plans, programs and projects and working with diverse communities) and 4.2.4.b (Forms of decision making), that complement the administrative task value, can be modified to include private and nonprofit sector components in their syllabi. One such approach was the use of SimCity as a pedagogical tool by John Gaber (2007) to provide a learning environment which benefits the student's computational abilities for problem solving and decision-making. Enhancing the course syllabus to adhere to the tasks in the private and nonprofit sector can introduce and/or improve the skills of prospective employees of the non-public sector.

Conversely, the curriculum components 4.2.3.c, e, and f (Written, oral and graphic communication skills; collaboration, mediation, interpretation, and negotiation; creation of plans, programs and projects) complement the communication tasks and, as the results of this study report, planning professionals with these skills have higher odds of working in the public sector. The implementation tasks complement the curriculum components 4.2.2.f (Adoption, administration and implementation of plans) and 4.2.3.g, h (Anticipation of future change, and techniques for the adoption and implementation of plans), that again report higher odds of being associated with the public sector. Some approaches to improve communication and implementation skills are well discussed in the study conducted by Dandekar and Clark (1992). Although this study conducted over a decade ago identified communication skills as an important component of planning education, its recommendation to "keep the practitioner in the game" over a considerable period of time can still benefit students' skills regarding communication and implementation.

Students in planning can focus their interest either based on the sector they might choose to work for after their graduation or choose to apply in sectors that report higher odds of employing planners with their specialization. The results from this study indicate that planners with certain specializations such as environmental and natural resource and participation and empowerment have higher odds of working in private or nonprofit organizations. Planners who specialize in land-use or code enforcement; information technology; planning management, budgeting and finance; and preservation report higher odds of working in the public sector. However, a recent study by Edwards (2007) reported a dearth in planning programs

that teach specializations, such as public finance, as part of their curriculum. It is especially important in the current economic downturn to focus on specializations that can help graduates land a job, possibly in the sector they target or the sector that employs graduates with such specializations.

It can be argued that graduates may choose to work in any sector, as being employed may be more important than the sector they choose. However, awareness and knowledge to focus their efforts in sectors that report higher odds to employing planners with their specialization can actually improve their opportunities to land a job, thus benefiting both the supply side and demand side of the planning profession jobs. As succinctly put by Anthony and Forkenbrock (2006), "carrying out this analysis is [important] to assist the planning programs in assessing the efficacy of their curricula in meeting this important need of the planning profession...and tailor both the[ir] programs of study and their search for planning jobs upon graduation."

In choosing the public sector for their respective careers, the influence of graduate programs on students' career orientation is important. Education through public service can help support and strengthen the commitment to the public sector. This could be done through research projects or studio projects in planning that enhance the students' understanding of the public sector. Also, an appreciation for the market should be accompanied by a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the government and the market. This can help students appreciate the value of public service and the sector considerably. Finally, courses that sustain the commitment to work in the public sector should be part of the curriculum. Leadership training and personal development should be given particular attention in the planning curriculum.

Future Directions for Planning: Practice and Academics

A shift in careers in planning is happening and will continue to happen. It is therefore important to understand the characteristics of this shift. In the future, the salary survey and the job analysis survey should plan to include questions that can account for the career-shift trends. Some of the leg-work regarding career-shift has already been done in the field of public administration by organization scholars Bozeman and Ponomariov (2009). Questions regarding salary and expertise should be included in the job analysis survey. Sector choices, as much as a personal choice, can also be influenced by the knowledge acquired by students through their curriculum. This would require an assessment of the knowledge statements from the job

survey to identify respondents who acquired the knowledge in relation to their current practice or job through their education.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Trend in Sector Choices in Planning

To investigate the trends in sector choices in planning, we analyzed the change in the number of planning jobs, by sector, for each state in the US. Figure 4 represents the change in the number of sector jobs with respect to change in total number of employment in planning from 2004 to 2008. In other words, with every increase in the number of planning job, what was the increase in the number of all planning jobs in each sector? Most states reported a marginal increase in the number of jobs in public sector for every change in all planning jobs with the exception of Vermont (Figure 1a).

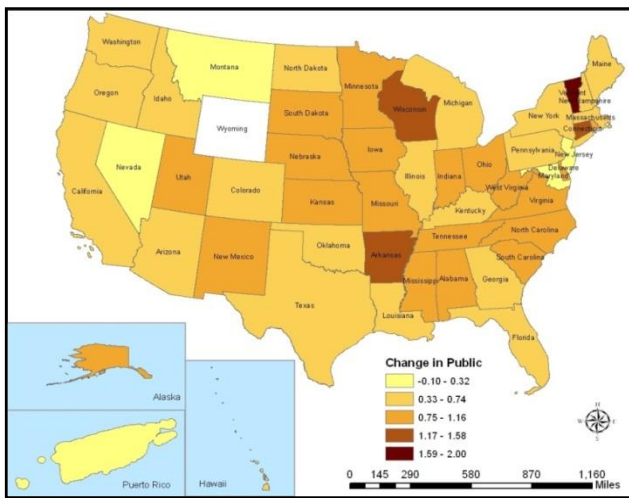


Figure 1a. Change in public sector employment based on salary survey respondents

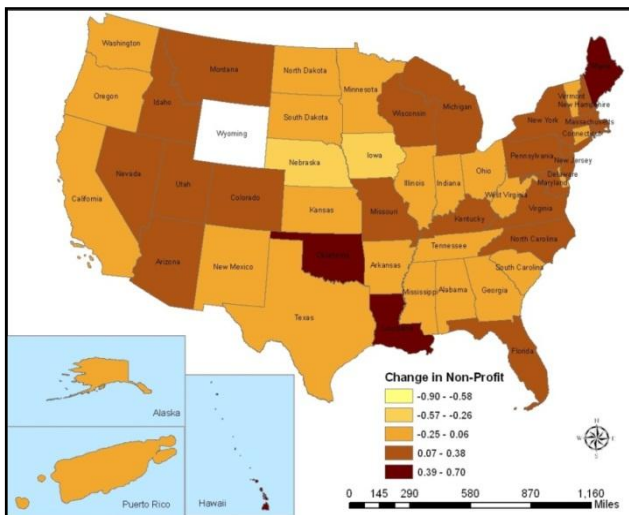


Figure 1b. Change in private sector employment based on salary survey respondents

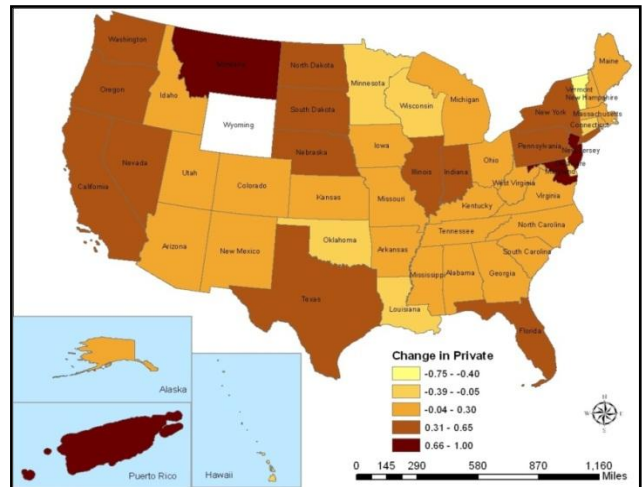


Figure 1c. Change in nonprofit sector employment based on salary survey respondents

On the contrary, the number of overall jobs in private sector showed an increase in several states with Puerto Rico and Montana leading the way (Figure 1b). Although the shift is small, it is something to be aware of, especially with the changing attitude of new graduates towards the private sector. The nonprofit sector exhibits a similar trend (Figure 1c), with most states reporting an increase in planning jobs in the nonprofit sector.

Respondent characteristics such as the AICP certification, their highest degree in planning, and the income were categorized based on the sector of employment. The frequency distribution from the responses of the job survey indicates roughly a 2% increase in private sector employment and about 2% decrease in public sector employment (Figure 1a). Although a small change, this change occurred over a period of just four years (2004 to 2008). Also with the changing perception of young graduates and the retirement of baby-boomers in the next decade, these percentages can change significantly. For the distribution of AICP members out of the total number of planning jobs in each sector, both the private and nonprofit sectors reported higher percentages of AICP members compared to public sector, which is low and decreasing (Figure 1b). One can assume that given the nature of the job in both the private and nonprofit sectors, individuals with the highest degree in planning or an AICP certification are preferred over other degrees. Certification, in most private and nonprofit organizations, has financial incentives. For example, in several private organizations individuals receive a bump in their salary after they are certified, which encourages individuals outside the public sector to get certified.

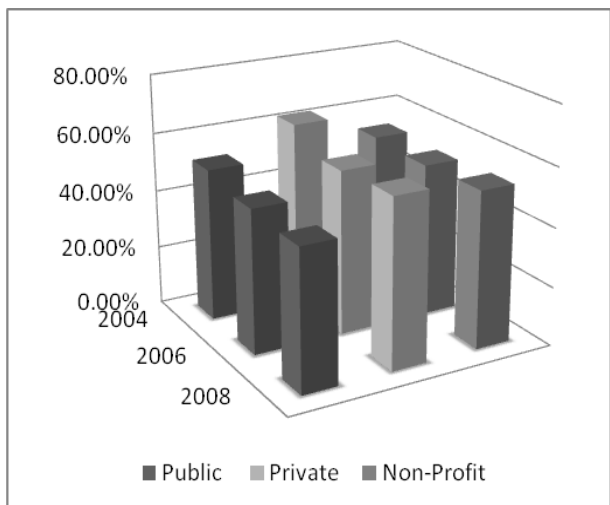


Figure 2a. Planning employment by sector

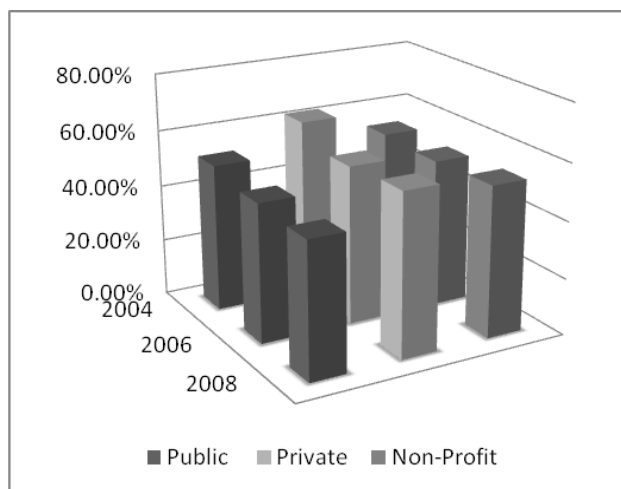


Figure 2b. AICP certification by sector

Normalized by the total jobs in each sector, nonprofit sector employs the highest percentage of individuals with the highest degree in planning (Figure 5c). This can be explained by the fact that the nonprofit sector specializes in specific tasks, and therefore requires individuals with education in planning for their tasks. For instance, in planning, several nonprofit organizations are involved in investigating the impact of existing and new policies on the environment and therefore require individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in planning. Since many nonprofit organizations in planning are functioning as a third party watchdogs to governmental policy legislations and implementations, nonprofit positions ask planners to be more experienced and educated for evaluating the long-term and short-term impacts of public policies.

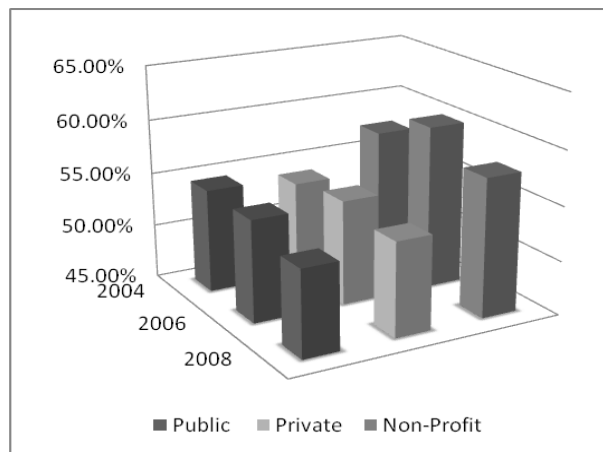


Figure 2c. Highest degree in planning by sector

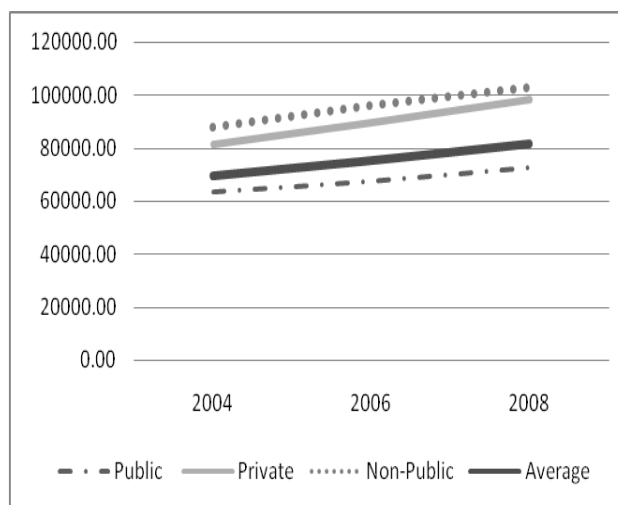


Figure 3. Average income by sector

Given the nature and specialty of jobs in the nonprofit sector, the income of individuals working for nonprofits is higher compared to the private and public sectors (Figure 3). This could be because the nonprofit sector employs individuals with several years of experience over new graduates and thus it reports high salaries. Although data is not available to see whether planners in the nonprofit sector had previous work experiences from the public sector or were sector switchers, it is highly likely, since positions in nonprofits may require them to show an in-depth understanding of government operations and policy implementation.