

Sociology Department Vision Statement

The LSE sociology department draws upon strong and distinctive intellectual and scholarly traditions. It occupies a unique place in the development of the discipline nationally, internationally, and locally. We remain committed to the highest standards of academic excellence manifested in innovative, ethically driven, compelling sociological research that is theoretically informed, empirically rich and conceptually sophisticated, as well as socially and politically relevant.

We build on and extend the best traditions of the discipline and play a key role in the development of social science by leading sociological inquiry into new areas where the changing character of social relations can be identified and understood. In particular, we engage with the social problems and ethical dilemmas that face contemporary societies. These include broad strands of research: politics, citizenship, inequality and social exclusion engaged through studies of the nature of power and political institutions, work and employment, bioscience and technology, risk and regulation, economic processes, crime and violence, human rights and urbanisation as well as postcolonial and culturally diverse societies.

Research activity across the department is conditioned by our development of long-term and emergent methodological traditions as much as through substantive research foci. The department has built on its international reputation for pioneering sociological approaches to ethnography, historical sociology, comparative and survey approaches to social mobility and employment. More recent and emergent methodological strands include visual methods, spatial and morphological analysis and action research.

The strategic orientation of our current research is rooted in a blend of traditional and forward-looking projects around which our output is integrated. Currently, that evolving mix encompasses diverse research on the sociology of economic life; political sociology; ethnicity and postcolonial relations; and crime and control. Other research, for example work engaging questions of risk, gender inequality and culture, recurs in several programmes of work and is lodged in various clusters. Research in many areas of substantive scholarship is associated with an M.Sc. programme and with an overlapping cohort of doctoral students. In some cases our research has resulted in the emergence of flagship centres which have grown out of our practice over the years. These include the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, LSE Cities and BIOS. The work of these units helps to define our distinctive intellectual agenda but the resulting research culture extends beyond and between them.

The department is committed to a high level of interaction with a variety of users and publics engaged by our research. These include government bodies, businesses and NGOs, journalists, broadcasters and educators as well as students and teachers of sociology elsewhere in the educational system.