

PROFESSIONAL

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Occupation 20
Occupation 25

PSYCHOLOGISTS

Similar Occupations

Clergy 10, Counselors 15, Funeral Directors 20, Human resources 25, Market & survey researchers 30, Recreation workers 35, Social workers 40, Sociologists & political scientists 45, teachers—special education 50

Earnings

Median annual wages of wage and salary clinical, counseling, and school psychologists were **\$64,140** in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between **\$48,700** and **\$82,800**. The lowest 10 percent earned less than **\$37,900**, and the highest 10 percent earned more than **\$106,840**. Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of clinical, counseling, and school psychologists were:

Offices of other health practioners	\$68,400
Elementary and secondary schools	\$65,710
State government	\$63,710
Outpatient care centers	\$59,130
Individual and family services	\$57,440

Nature of the Work

Psychologists study mental processes and human behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people and other animals relate to one another and the environment. To do this, psychologists often look for patterns that will help them understand and predict behavior using scientific methods, principles, or procedures to test their ideas. Through such research studies, psychologists have learned much that can help increase understanding between individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, nations, and cultures.

Like other social scientists, psychologists formulate theories, or hypotheses, which are possible explanations for what they observe.

But unlike other social science disciplines, psychologists often concentrate on individual behavior and, specifically, in the beliefs and feelings that influence a person's actions.

Research methods vary with the topic which they study, but by and large, the chief techniques used are observation, assessment, and experimentation. Psychologists sometimes gather information and evaluate behavior through controlled laboratory experiments, hypnosis, biofeedback, psychoanalysis, or psychotherapy, or by administering personality, performance, aptitude, or intelligence tests. Other methods include interviews, questionnaires, clinical studies, surveys, and observation—looking for

cause-and-effect relationships between events and for broad patterns of behavior.

Research in psychology seeks to understand and explain thought, emotion, feelings, or behavior. The research findings of psychologists have greatly increased our understanding of why people and animals behave as they do. For example, psychologists have discovered how personality develops and how to promote healthy development. They have gained knowledge of how to diagnose and treat alcoholism and substance abuse, how to help people change bad habits and conduct, and how to help students learn. They understand the conditions that can make workers more productive. Insights provided by psychologists can help people function better as individuals, friends, family members, and workers.

Psychologists may perform a variety of duties in a vast number of industries. For example, those working in health service fields may provide mental healthcare in hospitals, clinics, schools, or private settings. Psychologists employed in applied settings, such as business, industry, government, or nonprofit organizations, may provide training, conduct research, design organizational systems, and act as advocates for psychology.

Psychologists apply their knowledge to a wide range of endeavors, including health and human services, management, education, law, and sports. They usually specialize in one of many different areas.

Clinical psychologists—who constitute the largest specialty—are concerned with the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders. While some clinical psychologists specialize in treating severe psychological disorders, such as schizophrenia and depression, many others may help people deal with personal issues, such as divorce or the death of a loved one. Often times, clinical psychologists provide an opportunity to talk and think about things that are confusing or worrying, offering different ways of interpreting and understanding problems and situations. They are trained to use a variety of approaches aimed at helping individuals, and the strategies used are generally determined by the specialty they work in.

Clinical psychologists often interview patients and give diagnostic tests in their own private offices. They may provide individual, family, or group psychotherapy and may design and implement behavior modification programs. Some clinical psychologists work in hospitals where they collaborate with physicians and other specialists to develop and implement treatment and intervention programs that patients can understand and comply with. Other clinical psychologists work in universities and medical schools, where they train graduate students in the delivery of mental health and behavioral medicine services. A few work in physical rehabilitation settings, treating patients with spinal cord injuries, chronic pain or illness, stroke, arthritis, or neurological conditions. Others may work in community mental health centers, crisis counseling services, or drug rehabilitation centers, offering evaluation, therapy, remediation, and consultation.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

Areas of specialization within clinical psychology include health psychology, neuropsychology, geropsychology, and child psychology. Health psychologists study how biological, psychological, and social factors affect health and illness. They promote healthy living and disease prevention through counseling, and they focus on how patients adjust to illnesses and treatments and view their quality of life. Neuropsychologists study the relation between the brain and behavior. They often work in stroke and head injury programs. Geropsychologists deal with the special problems faced by the elderly. Work may include helping older persons cope with stresses that are common in late life, such as loss of loved ones, relocation, medical conditions, and increased care-giving demands. Clinical psychologists may further specialize in these fields by focusing their work in a number of niche areas including mental health, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, or substance abuse. The emergence and growth of these, and other, specialties reflects the increasing participation of psychologists in direct services to special patient populations.

Often, clinical psychologists consult with other medical personnel regarding the best treatment for patients, especially treatment that includes medication. Clinical psychologists generally are not permitted to prescribe medication to treat patients; only psychiatrists and other medical doctors may prescribe most medications. However, two States—Louisiana and New Mexico—currently allow

Significant Points

- › About 34 percent of psychologists are self-employed, mainly as private practitioners and independent consultants.
- › Employment growth will vary by specialty; for example, clinical, counseling, and school psychologists will have 11 percent growth; industrial-organizational psychologists, 26 percent growth; and 14 percent growth is expected for all other psychologists.
- › Acceptance to graduate psychology programs is highly competitive.
- › Job opportunities should be the best for those with a doctoral degree in a subfield, such as health; those with a master's degree will have good prospects in industrial-organization; bachelor's degree holders will have limited prospects.

appropriately trained clinical psychologists to prescribe medication with some limitations.

Counseling psychologists advise people on how to deal with problems of everyday living, including problems in the home, place of work, or community, to help improve their quality of life. They foster well-being by promoting good mental health and preventing mental, physical, and social disorders. They work in settings such as university or crisis counseling centers, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and individual or group practices.

School psychologists work with students in early childhood and elementary and secondary schools. They collaborate with teachers, parents, and school personnel to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students. School psychologists address students' learning and behavioral problems, suggest improvements to classroom management strategies or parenting techniques, and evaluate students with disabilities and gifted and talented students to help determine the best way to educate them.

They improve teaching, learning, and socialization strategies based on their understanding of the psychology of learning environments. They also may evaluate the effectiveness of academic programs, prevention programs, behavior management procedures, and other services provided in the school setting.

Industrial-organizational psychologists apply psychological principles and research methods to the workplace in the interest of improving the quality of worklife. They also are involved in research on management and marketing problems. They screen, train, and counsel applicants for jobs, as well as perform organizational development and analysis. An industrial psychologist might work with management to reorganize the work setting in order to enhance productivity. Industrial psychologists frequently act as consultants, brought in by management to solve a particular problem.

Developmental psychologists study the physiological, cognitive, and social development that takes place throughout life. Some specialize in behavior during infancy, childhood, and adolescence, or changes that occur during maturity or old age. Developmental psychologists also may study developmental disabilities and their effects. Increasingly, research is developing ways to help elderly people remain independent as long as possible.

Social psychologists examine people's interactions with others and with the social environment. They work in organizational consultation, marketing research, systems design, or other applied psychology fields. Many social psychologists specialize in a niche area, such as group behavior, leadership, attitudes, and perception.

Experimental or research psychologists work in university and private research centers

and in business, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. They study the behavior of both human beings and animals, such as rats, monkeys, and pigeons. Prominent areas of study in experimental research include motivation, thought, attention, learning and memory, sensory and perceptual processes, effects of substance abuse, and genetic and neurological factors affecting behavior.

Forensic psychologists use psychological principles in the legal and criminal justice system to help judges, attorneys, and other legal professionals understand the psychological findings of a particular case. They are usually designated as an expert witness and typically specialize in one of three areas: family court, civil court, and criminal court. Forensic psychologists who work in family court may offer psychotherapy services, perform child custody evaluations, or investigate reports of child abuse. Those working in civil courts may assess competency, provide second opinions, and provide psychotherapy to crime victims. Criminal court forensic psychologists often conduct evaluations of mental competency, work with child witnesses, and provide assessment of juvenile or adult offenders.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

Training / Other Qualifications / Advancement

A master's or doctoral degree, and a license, are required for most psychologists.

Education and training A doctoral degree usually is required for independent practice as a psychologist. Psychologists with a Ph.D. or Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) qualify for a wide range of teaching, research, clinical, and counseling positions in universities, healthcare services, elementary and secondary schools, private industry, and government. Psychologists with a doctoral degree often work in clinical positions or in private practices, but they also sometimes teach, conduct research, or carry out administrative responsibilities.

A doctoral degree generally requires about 5 years of full-time graduate study, culminating in a dissertation based on original research. Courses in quantitative experimental methods and research design, which include the use of computer-based analysis, are an integral part of graduate study and are necessary to complete the dissertation. The Psy.D. degree may be based on practical work and examinations rather than a dissertation. In clinical, counseling, and school psychology, the requirements for the doctoral degree usually include an additional year of post-doctoral supervised experience.

A specialist degree or its equivalent is required in most States for an individual to work as a school psychologist, although some States credential school psychologists with

master's degrees. A specialist (Ed.S.) degree in school psychology requires a minimum of 2 years of full-time graduate study (at least 60 graduate semester hours) and a 1-year full-time internship during the third year. Because their professional practice addresses educational and mental health components of students' development, school psychologists' training includes coursework in both education and psychology.

People with a master's degree in psychology may work as industrial-organizational psychologists. They also may work as psychological assistants conducting research under the direct supervision of doctoral-level psychologists. A master's degree in psychology requires at least 2 years of full-time graduate study. Requirements usually include practical experience in an applied setting and a master's thesis based on an original research project.

Competition for admission to graduate psychology programs is keen. Some universities require applicants to have an undergraduate major in psychology. Others prefer only coursework in basic psychology with additional courses in the biological, physical, and social sciences, and in statistics and mathematics.

A bachelor's degree in psychology qualifies a person to assist psychologists and other professionals in community mental health centers, vocational rehabilitation offices, and correctional programs. Bachelor's degree holders may also work as administrative assistants for psychologists. Many, however, find employment

in other areas, such as sales, service, or business management.

In the Federal Government, candidates must have a bachelor's degree with a minimum of 24 semester hours in psychology, or a combination of education and experience to qualify for entry-level positions. However, competition for these jobs is keen because this is one of the few ways in which one can work as a psychologist without an advanced degree.

The American Psychological Association (APA) presently accredits doctoral training programs in clinical, counseling, and school psychology, as well as institutions that provide internships for doctoral students in school, clinical, and counseling psychology. The National Association of School Psychologists, with the assistance of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, helps to approve advanced degree programs in school psychology.

Clinical psychologists in Louisiana and New Mexico who prescribe medication are required to complete a post-doctoral master's degree in clinical psychopharmacology and pass a National exam approved by the State Board of Examiners of psychologists.

Licensure Psychologists in a solo or group practice or those who offer any type of patient care—including clinical, counseling, and school psychologists—must meet certification or licensing requirements in all States and the District of Columbia. Licensing laws vary

by State and by type of position and require licensed or certified psychologists to limit their practice to areas in which they have developed professional competence through training and experience. Clinical and counseling psychologists usually need a doctorate in psychology, an approved internship, and 1 to 2 years of professional experience. In addition, all States require that applicants pass an examination. Most State licensing boards administer a standardized test, and many supplement that with additional oral or essay questions. Some States require continuing education for renewal of the license.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) awards the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) designation, which recognizes professional competency in school psychology at a national, rather than State, level. Currently, 31 States recognize the NCSP and allow those with the certification to transfer credentials from one State to another without taking a new certification exam. In States that recognize the NCSP, the requirements for certification or licensure and those for the NCSP often are the same or similar. Requirements for the NCSP include the completion of 60 graduate semester hours in school psychology; a 1,200-hour internship, 600 hours of which must be completed in a school setting; and a passing score on the National School Psychology Examination.

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Other qualifications Aspiring psychologists who are interested in direct patient care must be emotionally stable, mature, and able to deal effectively with people. Sensitivity, compassion, good communication skills, and the ability to lead and inspire others are particularly important qualities for people wishing to do clinical work and counseling. Research psychologists should be capable of detailed work both independently and as part of a team. Patience and perseverance are vital qualities, because achieving results in the psychological treatment of patients or in research may take a long time.

Certification and advancement The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) recognizes professional achievement by awarding specialty certification in 13 different areas, such as psychoanalysis, rehabilitation, forensic, group, school, clinical health, and couple and family. To obtain board certification in a specialty, candidates must meet general criteria which consist of having a doctorate in psychology, as well as State licensure. Each candidate must then meet additional criteria of the specialty field, which is usually a combination of postdoctoral training in their specialty, several years of experience, and professional endorsements, as determined by the ABPP. Applicants are then required to pass the specialty board examination.

Psychologists can improve their advancement opportunities by earning an advanced degree and by participation in continuing education.

Many psychologists opt to start their own private practice after gaining experience working in the field.

Employment

Employment of psychologists is expected to grow as fast as average. Job prospects should be the best for people who have a doctoral degree from a leading university in an applied specialty, such as counseling or health, and those with a specialist or doctoral degree in school psychology. Master's degree holders in fields other than industrial-organizational psychology will face keen competition. Opportunities will be limited for bachelor's degree holders.

Employment change Employment of psychologists is expected to grow 12 percent from 2008 to 2018, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Employment will grow because of increased demand for psychological services in schools, hospitals, social service agencies, mental health centers, substance abuse treatment clinics, consulting firms, and private companies.

Demand for school psychologists will be driven by a growing awareness of how students' mental health and behavioral problems, such as bullying, affect learning. School psychologists will also be needed for general student counseling on a variety of other issues, including working with students with disabilities or

with special needs, tackling drug abuse, and consulting and managing personal crisis.

Spurring demand for clinical psychologists will continue to be the rising healthcare costs associated with unhealthy lifestyles, such as smoking, alcoholism, and obesity, which have made prevention and treatment more critical. An increase in the number of employee assistance programs, which help workers deal with personal problems, also should lead to employment growth for clinical and counseling specialties. More clinical and counseling psychologists will be needed to help people deal with depression and other mental disorders, marriage and family problems, job stress, and addiction. The growing number of elderly will increase the demand for psychologists trained in geropsychology to help people deal with the mental and physical changes that occur as individuals grow older. There also will be increased need for psychologists to work with returning veterans.

Industrial-organizational psychologists also will be in demand to help to boost worker productivity and retention rates in a wide range of businesses. Industrial-organizational psychologists will help companies deal with issues such as workplace diversity and antidiscrimination policies. Companies also will use psychologists' expertise in survey design, analysis, and research to develop tools for marketing evaluation and statistical analysis.

Job prospects Job prospects should be best for people who have a doctoral degree from a leading university in an applied specialty, such as counseling or health, and those with a specialist or doctoral degree in school psychology. Psychologists with extensive training in quantitative research methods and computer science may have a competitive edge over applicants without such background.

Master's degree holders in fields other than industrial-organizational psychology will face keen competition for jobs because of the limited number of positions that require only a master's degree. Master's degree holders may find jobs as psychological assistants or counselors, providing mental health services under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist. Still, others may find jobs involving research and data collection and analysis in universities, government, or private companies.

Opportunities directly related to psychology will be limited for bachelor's degree holders. Some may find jobs as assistants in rehabilitation centers or in other jobs involving data collection and analysis. Those who meet State certification requirements may become high school psychology teachers.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

Projections Data

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupation Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2008	
Psychologists	19-3030	170,200	
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists	19-3031	152,000	
Industrial–organizational psychologists	19-3032	2,300	
Psychologists, all other	19-3039	15,900	
Occupation Title	Projected Employment, 2018	Change, 2008-18 Number	Percent
Psychologists	190,000	19,700	12
Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists	168,800	16,800	11
Industrial–organizational psychologists	2,900	600	26
Psychologists, all other	18,300	2,300	14

NOTE: Data displayed is rounded.

