Anthropologists and Archeologists

Summary

Archeologists manage and protect archeological sites.

Quick Facts: Anthropologists and Archeologists

| 2012 Median Pay       | $57,420 per year  
                        | $27.61 per hour  
|-----------------------|------------------  
| Entry-Level Education | Master's degree  
| Work Experience in a Related Occupation | None  
| On-the-job Training | None  
| Number of Jobs, 2012  | 7,200  
| Job Outlook, 2012-22 | 19% (Faster than average)  
| Employment Change, 2012-22 | 1,400  

What Anthropologists and Archeologists Do

Anthropologists and archeologists study the origin, development, and behavior of humans. They examine the cultures, languages, archeological remains, and physical characteristics of people in various parts of the world.

Work Environment

Although most anthropologists and archeologists work in an office, some analyze samples in laboratories or work in the field. They typically work in research organizations, colleges and universities, museums, consulting firms, private corporations, and government. Fieldwork in remote areas usually requires travel for extended periods.

How to Become an Anthropologist or Archeologist

Anthropologists and archeologists need a master’s degree or Ph.D. in anthropology or archeology. Experience doing anthropological or archeological fieldwork is also important. Bachelor’s degree holders may find work as assistants or fieldworkers.

Pay

The median annual wage for anthropologists and archeologists was $57,420 in May 2012.

Job Outlook

Employment of anthropologists and archeologists is projected to grow 19 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. However, because it is a small occupation, the fast growth will result in only about 1,400 new jobs over the 10-year period. Jobseekers will likely face very strong competition.
Anthropologists and archeologists often do fieldwork.

Anthropologists and archeologists study the origin, development, and behavior of humans. They examine the cultures, languages, archeological remains, and physical characteristics of people in various parts of the world.

**Duties**

Anthropologists and archeologists typically do the following:

- Plan research projects to answer questions and test hypotheses about the interaction between nature and culture
- Develop data collection methods tailored to a particular specialty or project
- Collect information from observations, interviews, and documents
- Record and manage records of observations taken in the field
- Analyze data, laboratory samples, and other sources of information to uncover patterns about human life, culture, and origins
- Prepare reports and present research findings
- Advise organizations on the cultural impact of policies, programs, and products

By drawing and building on knowledge from the humanities and the social, physical, and biological sciences, anthropologists and archeologists examine the ways of life, languages, archeological remains, and physical characteristics of people in various parts of the world. They also examine the customs, values, and social patterns of different cultures.

Many anthropologists and archeologists use sophisticated tools and technologies in their work. Although the equipment used varies by task and specialty, it often includes excavating tools, laboratory equipment, statistical and database software, geophysical tools and equipment, and geographic information systems.

Some anthropologists study the social and cultural consequences of current human issues, such as overpopulation, natural disasters, warfare, and poverty; others study the prehistory and the evolution of humans.

A growing number of anthropologists perform market research for businesses by studying the demand for products by a particular culture or social group. For example, using their anthropological background and a variety of techniques—including interviews, surveys, and observations—they may collect data on how a product is used by specific demographic groups.

**Archeologists** examine, recover, and preserve evidence and artifacts from past human cultures. They analyze skeletal remains and artifacts, such as tools, pottery, cave paintings, and ruins of buildings. They connect artifacts with information about past environments to learn about the history, customs, and living habits of people in earlier eras.
Archeologists also manage and protect archeological sites. Some work in national parks or at historical sites, providing site protection and educating the public. Others assess building sites to ensure that construction plans comply with federal regulations on site preservation. Archeologists often specialize in a particular geographic area, period, or objects of study, such as animal remains or underwater sites.

The following are examples of types of anthropologists:

**Biological anthropologists**, also known as physical anthropologists, research the evolution of the human species. They look for early evidence of human life, analyze genetics, study primates, and examine the biological variations in humans. They analyze how culture and biology influence each other. Some may examine human remains found at archeological sites to understand population demographics or to identify factors—such as nutrition and disease—that affected these populations. Others may work as forensic anthropologists in medical or legal settings, identifying and analyzing skeletal remains and genetic material.

**Cultural anthropologists** study the customs, cultures, and social lives of groups. They investigate social practices and processes in settings that range from remote, unindustrialized villages to modern urban centers. Cultural anthropologists often spend time living in the societies they study and collect information through observations, interviews, and surveys.

**Linguistic anthropologists** study how humans communicate and how language shapes social life. They investigate nonverbal communication, the structure and development of languages, and differences among languages. They also examine the role of language in different cultures, how social and cultural factors affect language, and how language affects a person’s experiences. Most linguistic anthropologists study non-European languages, which they learn directly from native speakers.

**Work Environment**

Anthropologists and archeologists held about 7,200 jobs in 2012. They worked in research organizations, colleges and universities, museums, consulting firms, private corporations, and all levels of government.

The industries that employed the most anthropologists and archeologists in 2012 were as follows:

- Research and development in the social sciences and humanities 25%
- Federal government, excluding postal service 21%
- Management, scientific, and technical consulting services 16%

The work of anthropologists varies widely, depending on the specific job. Although most anthropologists work in an office, some analyze samples in laboratories or work in the field.

Archeologists often work for cultural resource management (CRM) firms. CRM firms identify, assess, and preserve archeological sites and ensure that developers and builders comply with regulations regarding archeological sites. Archeologists also work in museums, at historical sites, and for government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service.

Anthropologists and archeologists often do fieldwork, either in the United States or in foreign countries. Fieldwork may involve learning foreign languages, living in remote areas, and examining and excavating archeological sites.

Fieldwork for anthropologists and archeologists usually requires travel for extended periods—about 4 to 8 weeks, but sometimes
Field assignments also may require travel to remote areas or international locations, where anthropologists must live with the people they study to learn about their culture. The work may involve rugged living conditions and strenuous physical exertion. Anthropologists are expected to adapt to changing environments, integrate into new social circles, and often conduct research in a foreign language.

While in the field, anthropologists and archeologists often work long hours to meet research deadlines. In addition, many must deal with limited funding for their projects. As a result, fieldwork can be stressful.

**Work Schedules**

Many anthropologists and archeologists in government, research and consulting firms, museums, and businesses work full time during regular business hours. When doing fieldwork, however, anthropologists and archeologists may be required to travel and work long hours, including evenings and weekends.

**How to Become an Anthropologist or Archeologist**

Anthropologists and archeologists may live in the community they are studying.

Anthropologists and archeologists need a master's degree or Ph.D. in anthropology or archeology. Experience doing anthropological or archeological fieldwork is also important. Bachelor’s degree holders may find work as assistants or fieldworkers.

**Education**

Anthropologists and archeologists may qualify for many positions with a master's degree in anthropology or archeology. Most master's degree programs are 2 years in duration and include field research.

Although a master’s degree is enough for many positions, a Ph.D. may be needed for jobs that require leadership skills and advanced technical knowledge. To direct projects outside the United States, anthropologists and archeologists typically need a Ph.D. to comply with the requirements of foreign governments. A Ph.D. takes several years of study beyond a master’s degree and completion of a doctoral dissertation. Ph.D. students typically spend between 12 and 30 months doing field research for their dissertation.

Those with a bachelor’s degree in anthropology or archeology and work experience gained through an internship or field school can work as field or laboratory technicians or assistants. However, anthropologists and archeologists need a master’s degree to advance beyond entry-level positions.

Many people with a Ph.D. in anthropology or archeology become professors or museum curators. For more information, see the profiles on postsecondary teachers and archivists, curators, and museum technicians.

**Other Experience**
Anthropologists and Archeologists in government, research and consulting firms, museums, and businesses work full time during regular business hours. When doing fieldwork, however, anthropologists and archeologists may be required to travel and work long
hours, including evenings and weekends.

**Job Outlook**

Employment of anthropologists and archeologists is projected to grow 19 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. However, because it is a small occupation, the fast growth will result in only about 1,400 new jobs over the 10-year period.

Anthropologists and archeologists will be needed to study human life, history, and culture, and to apply that knowledge to current issues. Archeologists will also be needed to monitor construction projects, ensuring that builders comply with federal regulations on the preservation and handling of archeological and historical artifacts.

In addition, corporations will increasingly use anthropological research to gain a better understanding of consumer demand within specific cultures or social groups. Anthropologists and archeologists will also be needed to analyze markets, allowing businesses to serve their clients better or to target new customers or demographic groups.

Because anthropological and archeological research is highly dependent on the amount of research funding, federal budgetary decisions will affect the rate of employment growth in research.

**Job Prospects**

Overall job prospects will be best for candidates with a Ph.D. and extensive anthropological or archeological fieldwork experience.

Although job opportunities for anthropologists will continue to grow in businesses, consulting firms, and other non-traditional settings, workers will likely face very strong competition for jobs because of the small number of positions.

Archeologists should have the best job prospects in cultural resource management (CRM) firms. However, because of the large number of qualified graduates and relatively few positions available, jobseekers will likely face very strong competition. Candidates with experience in both qualitative and quantitative research methods who can communicate findings to a wide variety of audiences will be in greatest demand.

### Employment projections data for Anthropologists and Archeologists, 2012-22

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropologists and archeologists</td>
<td>19-3091</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1,400</td>
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Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of anthropologists and archeologists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>JOB DUTIES</th>
<th>ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION</th>
<th>2012 MEDIAN PAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archivists, Curators, and Museum Workers</td>
<td>Archivists appraise, edit, and maintain permanent records and historically valuable documents. Curators oversee collections of artwork and historic items, and may conduct public service activities for an institution. Museum technicians and conservators prepare and restore objects and documents in museum collections and exhibits.</td>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
<td>$44,410</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>Economists study the production and distribution of resources, goods, and services by collecting and analyzing data, researching trends, and evaluating economic issues.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$91,860</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographers</td>
<td>Geographers study the earth and its land, features, and inhabitants. They also examine phenomena such as political or cultural structures as they relate to geography. They study the physical and human geographic characteristics of a region, ranging in scale from local to global.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$74,760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historians</td>
<td>Historians research, analyze, interpret, and present the past by studying a variety of historical documents and sources.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$52,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Teachers</td>
<td>Postsecondary teachers instruct students in a wide variety of academic and vocational subjects beyond the high school level. They also conduct research and publish scholarly papers and books.</td>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
<td>$68,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>Psychologists study cognitive, emotional, and social processes and human behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people relate to one another and their environments.</td>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
<td>$69,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociologists</td>
<td>Sociologists study society and social behavior by examining the groups, cultures, organizations, social institutions, and processes that people develop.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$74,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Researchers</td>
<td>Survey researchers design surveys and analyze data. Surveys are used to collect factual data, such as employment and salary information, or to ask questions in order to understand people's opinions, preferences, beliefs, or desires.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$45,050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contacts for More Information

For more information about careers in anthropology and archeology, visit

American Anthropological Association

For more information about careers in archeology, visit
Archaeological Institute of America
Society for American Archaeology

For more information about physical anthropologists, visit
American Association of Physical Anthropologists

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