Economists interpret and forecast market trends.

### Quick Facts: Economists

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<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012 Median Pay</strong></td>
<td>$91,860 per year</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry-Level Education</strong></td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-the-job Training</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Jobs, 2012</strong></td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>16,900</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Outlook, 2012-22</strong></td>
<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
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<td>14% (As fast as average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Change, 2012-22</strong></td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What Economists Do

Economists study the production and distribution of resources, goods, and services by collecting and analyzing data, researching trends, and evaluating economic issues.

### Work Environment

Although the majority of economists work independently in an office, some collaborate with other economists and statisticians. Most economists work full time during regular business hours, but occasionally they work long hours to meet deadlines.

### How to Become an Economist

Most economists need a master’s degree or Ph.D. However, some entry-level jobs—primarily in the federal government—are available for workers with a bachelor’s degree.

### Pay

The median annual wage for economists was $91,860 in May 2012.

### Job Outlook

Employment of economists is projected to grow 14 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Job prospects should be best for those with a master’s degree or Ph.D., strong analytical skills, and related work experience.

### Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of economists with similar occupations.
What Economists Do

Economists often present their findings.

Economists study the production and distribution of resources, goods, and services by collecting and analyzing data, researching trends, and evaluating economic issues.

Duties

Economists typically do the following:

- Research and analyze economic issues
- Conduct surveys and collect data
- Analyze data using mathematical models and statistical techniques
- Prepare reports, tables, and charts that present research results
- Interpret and forecast market trends
- Advise businesses, governments, and individuals on economic topics
- Design policies or make recommendations for solving economic problems
- Write articles for publication in academic journals and other media sources

Economists apply economic analysis to issues within a variety of fields, such as education, health, development, and the environment. Some economists study the cost of products, healthcare, or energy. Others examine employment levels, business cycles, or exchange rates. Still, others analyze the effect of taxes, inflation, or interest rates.

Economists often study historical trends and use them to make forecasts. They research and analyze data using a variety of software programs, including spreadsheets, statistical analysis, and database management programs.

Nearly half of all economists work in federal, state, and local government. Federal government economists collect and analyze data about the U.S. economy, including employment, prices, productivity, and wages among other types of data. They also project spending needs and inform policymakers on the economic impact of laws and regulations.

Many economists work for corporations and help them understand how the economy will affect their business. Specifically, economists may analyze issues such as consumer demand and sales to help a company maximize its profits.

Economists also work for research firms and think tanks, where they study and analyze a variety of economic issues. Their analyses and forecasts are frequently published in newspapers and journal articles.

Some economists work for companies with major international operations and for international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and United Nations.

Many people with an economics background become postsecondary teachers.

More Information, Including Links to O*NET

Learn more about economists by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

The following are examples of types of economists:

**Econometricians** develop models and use mathematical analyses to test economic relationships. They use techniques such as calculus, game theory, and regression analysis to explain economic facts or trends in all areas of economics.

**Financial economists** analyze savings, investments, and risk. They also study financial markets and financial institutions.

**Industrial organization economists** study how companies within an industry are organized and how they compete. They also examine how antitrust laws, which regulate attempts by companies to restrict competition, affect markets.

**International economists** study international trade and the impact of globalization. They also examine global financial markets and exchange rates.

**Labor economists** study the supply of workers and the demand for labor by employers. Specifically, they research employment levels and how wages are set. They also analyze the effects of labor-related policies, such as minimum wage laws, and institutions, such as unions.

**Macroeconomists** and **monetary economists** examine the economy as a whole. They may research trends related to unemployment, inflation, and economic growth. They also study fiscal and monetary policies, which examine the effects of money supply and interest rates on the economy.

**Microeconomists** study supply and demand decisions of individuals and firms. For example, they may determine the quantity of products consumers will demand at a particular price.

**Public finance economists** study the role of government in the economy. Specifically, they may analyze the effects of tax cuts, budget deficits, and welfare policies.

**Work Environment**

Economists typically work with computers.

Economists held about 16,900 jobs in 2012, of which 45 percent were in government. Another 19 percent worked in management, scientific, and professional consulting services.

The industries that employed the most economists in 2012 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal government, excluding postal service</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, scientific, and technical consulting services</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and local government, excluding education and hospitals</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific research and development services</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and insurance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economists typically work independently in an office. However, many economists collaborate with other economists and statisticians, sometimes working on teams. Some economists work from home, and others may be required to travel as part of their job or to attend conferences.
Some economists combine a full-time job in universities or business with part-time consulting work.

**Work Schedules**

Most economists work full time. Some work under pressure of deadlines and tight schedules that may require long hours.

**How to Become an Economist**

Most economists need a master’s degree or Ph.D. However, some entry-level jobs—primarily in government—are available for workers with a bachelor’s degree.

**Education**

A master’s degree or Ph.D. is required for most economist jobs. Positions in business, research, or international organizations often require a combination of graduate education and work experience.

Students can pursue an advanced degree in economics with a bachelor’s degree in a number of fields, but a strong background in math is essential. A Ph.D. in economics requires several years of study after earning a bachelor’s degree, including completion of detailed research in a specialty field.

Candidates with a bachelor’s degree qualify for some entry-level economist positions, including jobs with the federal government. An advanced degree is sometimes required for advancement to higher level positions.

Most who complete a bachelor’s degree in economics find jobs outside the economics profession as research assistants, financial analysts, market research analysts, and similar positions in business, finance, and consulting.

**Other Experience**

Aspiring economists can gain valuable experience from internships that involve gathering and analyzing data, researching economic issues and trends, and writing reports on their findings. In addition, related experience, such as working in business or finance, can be advantageous.

**Important Qualities**

*Analytical skills.* Economists must be able to review data, observe patterns, and draw logical conclusions. For example, some economists analyze historical employment trends to make future projections on jobs.

*Communication skills.* Economists must be able to explain their work to others. They may give presentations, explain reports, or advise clients on economic issues. They may collaborate with colleagues and sometimes must explain economic concepts to those without a background in economics.

*Critical-thinking skills.* Economists must be able to use logic and reasoning to solve complex problems. For instance, they might identify how economic trends may affect an organization.

*Detail oriented.* Economists must pay attention to details. Precise data analysis is necessary to ensure accuracy in their findings.

*Math skills.* Economists use the principles of statistics, calculus, and other advanced topics in mathematics in their economic...
analyses.

**Writing skills.** Economists must be able to present their findings clearly. Many economists prepare reports for colleagues or clients; others write for publication in journals or for news media.

### Pay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economists</th>
<th>Median annual wages, May 2012</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>$91,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social scientists and related workers</td>
<td>$69,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, all occupations</td>
<td>$34,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  

The median annual wage for economists was $91,860 in May 2012. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than the amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $51,410, and the top 10 percent earned more than $155,490.

In May 2012, the median annual wages for economists in the top five industries employing economists were as follows:

- Finance and insurance: $110,580
- Federal government, excluding postal service: 106,850
- Scientific research and development services: 94,630
- Management, scientific, and technical consulting services: 91,570
- State and local government, excluding education and hospitals: 63,880

Most economists work full time. Some work under pressure of deadlines and tight schedules that may require long hours.

### Job Outlook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economists</th>
<th>Percent change in employment, projected 2012-22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social scientists and related workers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment of economists is projected to grow 14 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

Businesses and organizations across many industries are increasingly relying on economic analysis and quantitative methods to analyze and forecast business, sales, and other economic trends. Demand for economists should grow as a result of the increasing complexity of the global economy, additional financial regulations, and a more competitive business environment. As a result, demand for economists should be best in private industry, especially in management, scientific, and professional consulting services.

However, employment in the federal government—the largest employer of economists—is projected to decline. As a result, the need for economists in the federal government is likely to be limited.

Job Prospects

Job prospects should be best for those with a master’s degree or Ph.D., strong quantitative and analytical skills, and related work experience. As companies contract out economics-related work, most job openings for economists will be in consulting services.

Applicants with a bachelor’s degree should face very strong competition for jobs. Although there will be greater demand for workers with knowledge of economics, many bachelor’s degree holders will likely find jobs outside the economist occupation, working instead as research assistants, financial analysts, market analysts, and in similar positions in business, finance, and consulting.

Employment projections data for Economists, 2012-22

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>19-3011</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>19,200</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment by Industry

Similar Occupations

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>JOB DUTIES</th>
<th>ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION</th>
<th>2012 MEDIAN PAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actuaries</td>
<td>Actuaries analyze the financial costs of risk and uncertainty. They use mathematics, statistics, and financial theory to assess the risk that an event will occur and they help businesses and clients develop policies that minimize the cost of that risk. Actuaries’ work is essential to the insurance industry.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$93,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Analysts</td>
<td>Budget analysts help public and private institutions organize their finances. They prepare budget reports and monitor institutional spending.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$69,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Analysts</td>
<td>Financial analysts provide guidance to businesses and individuals making investment decisions. They assess the performance of stocks, bonds, and other types of investments.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$76,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market Research Analysts</strong></td>
<td>Market research analysts study market conditions to examine potential sales of a product or service. They help companies understand what products people want, who will buy them, and at what price.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$60,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematicians</strong></td>
<td>Mathematicians use advanced mathematics to develop and understand mathematical principles, analyze data, and solve real-world problems.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$101,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations Research Analysts</strong></td>
<td>Operations research analysts use advanced mathematical and analytical methods to help organizations investigate complex issues, identify and solve problems, and make better decisions.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$72,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Scientists</strong></td>
<td>Political scientists study the origin, development, and operation of political systems. They research political ideas and analyze governments, policies, political trends, and related issues.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$102,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postsecondary Teachers</strong></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><strong>Statisticians</strong></td>
<td>Statisticians use statistical methods to collect and analyze data and help solve real-world problems in business, engineering, the sciences, or other fields.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$75,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Researchers</strong></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 economists, visit
[American Economic Association](http://www.aea.org)

For information about careers in business economics, visit
[National Association for Business Economics](http://www.nabec.org)

For information on federal government education requirements for economist positions, visit
[U.S. Office of Personnel Management](http://www.usajobs.gov)

To find job openings for economists in the federal government, visit
[USAJOBS](http://www.usajobs.gov)

[O*NET](http://www.onetonline.org)

[Economists](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/print/economists.htm)
Environmental Economists

Suggested citation:

Publish Date: Wednesday, January 8, 2014