Psychologists

Summary

Psychologists diagnose and evaluate mental and emotional disorders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Facts: Psychologists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012 Median Pay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$69,280 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$33.31 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry-Level Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-the-job Training</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship/residency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Jobs, 2012</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Outlook, 2012-22</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12% (As fast as average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Change, 2012-22</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18,700</td>
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</table>

**What Psychologists Do**

Psychologists study cognitive, emotional, and social processes and human behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people relate to one another and their environments.

**Work Environment**

Some psychologists work independently, conducting research or working with patients. Others work as part of a healthcare team, collaborating with physicians and social workers or in school settings, working with students, teachers, parents, and other educators. Those in private practice often work evenings and weekends to accommodate clients.

**How to Become a Psychologist**

Although psychologists typically need a doctoral degree or specialist degree in psychology, a master’s degree is sufficient for some positions. Practicing psychologists also need a license or certification.

**Pay**

The median annual wage for psychologists was $69,280 in May 2012.

**Job Outlook**

Employment of psychologists is projected to grow 12 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Job prospects should be best for those who have a doctoral degree in an applied specialty and those with a specialist or doctoral degree in school psychology.

**Similar Occupations**
What Psychologists Do

Industrial-organizational psychologists apply psychological research and methods to workplace issues.

Psychologists study cognitive, emotional, and social processes and human behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people relate to one another and their environments.

Duties

Psychologists typically do the following:

- Conduct scientific studies of behavior and brain function
- Collect information through observations, interviews, surveys, and other methods
- Research and identify behavioral or emotional patterns
- Test for patterns that will help them better understand and predict behavior
- Use their knowledge to increase understanding among individuals and groups

Psychology seeks to understand and explain thoughts, emotions, feelings, and behavior. Depending on the topic of study, psychologists use techniques such as observation, assessment, and experimentation to develop theories about the beliefs and feelings that influence a person's actions.

Psychologists often gather information and evaluate behavior through controlled laboratory experiments, psychoanalysis, or psychotherapy. They also may administer personality, performance, aptitude, or intelligence tests. They look for relationships or patterns of behavior between events, and use this information when testing theories in their research or treating patients.

The following are examples of types of psychologists:

**Clinical psychologists** assess, diagnose, and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. Clinical psychologists help people deal with problems ranging from short-term personal issues to severe, chronic conditions.

Clinical psychologists are trained to use a variety of approaches to help individuals. Although strategies generally differ by specialty, clinical psychologists often interview patients, give diagnostic tests, and provide individual, family, or group psychotherapy. They also design behavior modification programs and help patients implement their particular program.

Some clinical psychologists focus on certain populations, such as children or the elderly, or certain specialties, such as the following:

- **Health psychologists** study how psychological factors affect health and illness. They educate both patients and medical staff on psychological issues and promote healthy-living strategies. They also investigate health issues, such as substance abuse or...
teenage pregnancy, and develop programs to address the problems.

- **Neuropsychologists** study the relation between the brain and behavior. They typically work with patients who have sustained a brain injury.

Clinical psychologists often consult with other medical personnel regarding the best treatment for patients, especially treatment that includes medication. Two states, Louisiana and New Mexico, currently allow clinical psychologists to prescribe medication to patients. In most states, however, only psychiatrists and medical doctors may prescribe medication for treatment. See the profile on [physicians and surgeons](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/print/physicians.htm) for more information.

**Counseling psychologists** advise people on how to deal with problems. They help patients understand problems, including issues at home, at the workplace, or in their community. Through counseling, they work with patients to identify their strengths or resources they can use to manage problems. For more information, see the profiles on [mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/print/mental-health-counselors.htm), [substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/print/substance-abuse-counselors.htm), and [social workers](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/print/social-workers.htm).

**Developmental psychologists** study the psychological progress and development that takes place throughout life. Many developmental psychologists focus on children and adolescents, but they also may study aging and problems facing the elderly.

**Forensic psychologists** use psychological principles in the legal and criminal justice system to help judges, attorneys, and other legal specialists understand the psychological aspects of a particular case. They often testify in court as expert witnesses. They typically specialize in family court, civil court, or criminal court.

**Industrial-organizational psychologists** apply psychology to the workplace by using psychological principles and research methods to solve problems and improve the quality of work life. They study issues such as workplace productivity, management or employee working styles, and employee morale. They also work with management on matters such as policy planning, employee screening or training, and organizational development.

**School psychologists** apply psychological principles and techniques to education-related and developmental issues. They may address student learning and behavioral problems; design, implement, and evaluate performances; and counsel students and families. They may also consult with other school-based professionals to suggest improvements to teaching, learning, and administrative strategies.

**Social psychologists** study how people’s mindsets and behavior are shaped by social interactions. They examine both individual and group interactions and may investigate ways to improve negative interactions.


### Work Environment

Counseling psychologists often have their own practices.

Psychologists held about 160,200 jobs in 2012. About 31 percent worked in educational services, and 29 percent worked in healthcare and social assistance.

Nearly one-third of all psychologists were self-employed.

Some psychologists work alone, which may include independent research or patient counseling. Others work as part of a healthcare team, collaborating with physicians, social workers, and others to treat illness and promote overall wellness.
Many clinical and counseling psychologists in private practice have their own offices and can set their own schedules. Other typical workplaces include clinics, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, and community and mental health centers.

Most research psychologists work in colleges and universities, government agencies, or private research organizations.

Most school psychologists work in public schools, ranging in level from nursery school through college. They also work in private schools, universities, hospitals and clinics, community treatment centers, and independent practice.

**Work Schedules**

Psychologists in private practice often set their own hours, and many work part time as independent consultants. They may offer evening or weekend hours to accommodate clients. Those employed in hospitals, nursing homes, or other healthcare facilities may also have evening or weekend shifts. Most psychologists in clinics, government, industry, or schools work full-time schedules during regular business hours.

**How to Become a Psychologist**

School psychologists may administer psychological tests to students.

Although psychologists typically need a doctoral degree or specialist degree in psychology, a master's degree is sufficient for some positions. Practicing psychologists also need a license or certification.

**Education**

Most clinical, counseling, and research psychologists need a doctoral degree. Psychologists can complete a Ph.D. in psychology or a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree. A Ph.D. in psychology is a research degree that culminates in a comprehensive exam and a dissertation based on original research. In clinical, counseling, school, or health service settings, students usually complete a 1-year internship as part of the doctoral program. The Psy.D. is a clinical degree and is often based on practical work and examinations rather than a dissertation.

School psychologists need an advanced degree and certification or licensure to work. The advanced degree is most commonly the specialist degree (Ed.S. degree, which requires a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours and a 1,200-hour supervised internship), a doctoral degree in school psychology, or in some instances, a master's degree. School psychologists' training includes coursework in both education and psychology, because their work addresses education and mental health components of students' development.

Graduates with a master's degree in psychology can work as industrial-organizational psychologists. When working under the supervision of a doctoral psychologist, master's graduates can also work as psychological assistants in clinical, counseling, or research settings. Master's degree programs typically include courses in industrial-organizational psychology, statistics, and research design.

Most master's degree programs do not require an undergraduate major in psychology, but do require coursework in introductory psychology, experimental psychology, and statistics. Some doctoral degree programs require applicants to have a master's degree in psychology; others will accept applicants with a bachelor's degree and a major in psychology.

Most graduates with a bachelor's degree in psychology find work in other fields such as business administration, sales, or education.

**Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations**

In most states, practicing psychology or using the title of “psychologist” requires licensure or certification. In all states and the District
of Columbia, psychologists who practice independently must be licensed. Licensing laws vary by state and type of position. Most clinical and counseling psychologists need a doctorate in psychology, an internship, at least 1 to 2 years of professional experience, and to pass the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology. Information on specific requirements by state can be obtained from the Association of State and Provincial Licensing Boards. In many states, licensed psychologists must complete continuing education courses to keep their licenses.

The American Board of Professional Psychology awards specialty certification in 13 areas of psychology, such as clinical health, couple and family, psychoanalysis, or rehabilitation. The American Board of Professional Neuropsychology also offers certification in neuropsychology. Although board certification is not required for most psychologists, it can demonstrate professional expertise in a specialty area; however, some hospitals and clinics do require certification. In those cases, candidates must have a doctoral degree in psychology, state license or certification, and any additional criteria of the specialty field.

Training

To become licensed, psychologists must have completed one or more of the following:

- pre-doctoral or post-doctoral supervised experience
- internship
- residency program

Important Qualities

**Analytical skills.** Psychologists must be able to examine the information they collect and draw logical conclusions from them.

**Communication skills.** Psychologists must have strong communication skills because they spend much of their time listening to and speaking with patients.

**Observational skills.** Psychologists study attitude and behavior. They must be able to watch people and understand the possible meanings of people's facial expressions, body positions, actions, and interactions.

**Patience.** Psychologists must be able to demonstrate patience, because research or treatment of patients may take a long time. They must also be patient when dealing with people who have mental or behavioral disorders.

**People skills.** Psychologists study people and help people. They must be able to work well with clients, patients, and other medical professionals.

**Problem-solving skills.** Psychologists need problem-solving skills to find treatments or solutions for mental and behavioral problems.

**Trustworthiness.** Psychologists must keep patients' problems in confidence, and patients must be able to trust psychologists' expertise in treating sensitive problems.

Pay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychologists</th>
<th>Median annual wages, May 2012</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists, all other</td>
<td>$90,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial-organizational psychologists</td>
<td>$83,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>$69,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists</td>
<td>$67,650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The median annual wage for psychologists was $69,280 in May 2012. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $38,720, and the top 10 percent earned more than $110,880.

The median annual wages for psychologist occupations in May 2012 were as follows:

- $83,580 for industrial-organizational psychologists
- $67,650 for clinical, counseling, and school psychologists
- $90,020 for psychologists, all other

Psychologists in private practice often set their own hours, and many work part time as independent consultants. They may offer evening or weekend hours to accommodate clients. Those employed in hospitals, nursing homes, or other healthcare facilities may also have evening or weekend shifts. Most psychologists in clinics, government, industry, or schools work full-time schedules during regular business hours.

### Job Outlook

Overall employment of psychologists is projected to grow 12 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Employment growth will vary by specialty.

Employment of clinical, counseling, and school psychologists is projected to grow 11 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Greater demand for psychological services in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, and social services agencies should drive employment growth.

Demand for clinical and counseling psychologists will increase as people continue to turn to psychologists to help solve or manage their problems. More psychologists will be needed to help people deal with issues such as depression and other mental disorders, marriage
and family problems, job stress, and addiction. Psychologists will also be needed to provide services to an aging population, helping people deal with the mental and physical changes that happen as they grow older. Psychological services are also needed for veterans suffering from war trauma, for survivors of other trauma, and for individuals with autism.

Demand for psychologists in the healthcare industry is also expected to increase because their collaborative work with doctors, social workers, and other healthcare professionals provides patients with comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatments. In addition to treating mental and behavioral health issues, psychologists will be needed to work on teams to develop or administer prevention or wellness programs.

School psychologists will be needed to work with students, particularly those with special needs, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. Schools also rely on school psychologists to assess and counsel students. In addition, school psychologists will be needed to study how both in-school and out-of-school factors affect learning, which teachers and administrators can use to improve education.

Employment of industrial-organizational psychologists is projected to grow 53 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. Organizations use industrial-organizational psychologists to help select and keep employees, increase productivity, and improve office morale. However, because it is a small occupation, the fast employment growth will result in only about 900 new jobs over the 10-year period.

Job Prospects

Competition for jobs for psychologists will vary by specialty. Overall, candidates with a doctoral or specialist degree and post-doctoral work experience will have the best job opportunities.

Job prospects should be best for those who have a specialist degree or doctoral degree in school psychology. Employment of school psychologists will continue to grow because of the raised awareness of the connection between mental health and learning and the need for mental health services in schools. Given the limited number of graduates in this specialty and the growing need of mental health services in schools, school psychologists are expected to have good job opportunities.

Candidates with a master’s degree will face competition for most positions, and many of them will find jobs in a related field outside of psychology. Even industrial–organizational psychologists, despite much faster-than-average employment growth, are expected to face competition for positions due to the large number of qualified graduates. Industrial-organizational psychologists with extensive training in quantitative research methods and computer science may have a competitive edge.

Most graduates with a bachelor’s degree in psychology find work in other fields such as business administration, sales, or education. However, they may be able to find work in the field of psychology as assistants.

Employment projections data for Psychologists, 2012-22

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>19-3030</td>
<td>160,200</td>
<td>178,900</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical, counseling, and school psychologists</td>
<td>19-3031</td>
<td>145,100</td>
<td>161,500</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial-organizational psychologists</td>
<td>19-3032</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists, all other</td>
<td>19-3039</td>
<td>13,400</td>
<td>14,900</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,400</td>
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</tbody>
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Similar Occupations

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

<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>Anthropologists and</td>
<td>Anthropologists and archeologists study the origin, development, and behavior of humans. They examine the cultures,</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>$57,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Education Required</td>
<td>Average Annual Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archeologists</td>
<td>Study languages, archeological remains, and physical characteristics of people in various parts of the world.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$60,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research Analysts</td>
<td>Study market conditions to examine potential sales of a product or service. 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>Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists</td>
<td>Help people manage and overcome mental and emotional disorders and problems with their family and relationships. Listen to clients and ask questions, to help the clients understand their problems and develop strategies to improve their lives.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$41,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians and Surgeons</td>
<td>Diagnose and treat injuries or illnesses. Examine patients; take medical histories; prescribe medications; and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests. Counsel patients on diet, hygiene, and preventive healthcare. Operate on patients to treat injuries, such as broken bones; and diseases, such as cancerous tumors; and deformities, such as cleft palates.</td>
<td>Doctoral or professional degree</td>
<td>This wage is equal to or greater than $187,200 per year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Teachers</td>
<td>Instruct students in a wide variety of academic and vocational subjects beyond the high school level. Conduct research and publish scholarly papers and books.</td>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
<td>$68,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Career Counselors</td>
<td>Help students develop social skills and succeed in school. Assist people with the process of making career decisions, by helping them choose a career or educational program.</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$53,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers</td>
<td>Help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives. One group of social workers, clinical social workers, also diagnose and treat mental, behavioral, and emotional issues.</td>
<td>See How to Become One</td>
<td>$44,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociologists</td>
<td>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>Special Education Teachers</td>
<td>Work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. Adapt general education lessons and teach various subjects, such as reading, writing, and math, to students with mild and moderate disabilities. Teach basic skills, such as literacy and communication techniques, to students.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$55,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors

Substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors advise people who suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, or other behavioral problems. They provide treatment and support to help the client recover from addiction or modify problem behaviors.

High school diploma or equivalent $38,520

Survey Researchers

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.

Master's degree $45,050

Contacts for More Information

For more information on careers in all fields of psychology, visit
American Psychological Association

For more information on careers for school psychologists, visit
National Association of School Psychologists

For more information on state licensing requirements, visit
Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards

For more information about psychology specialty certifications, visit
American Board of Professional Psychology

For more information about industrial-organizational psychologists, visit
Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology

For more information about careers and certification in neuropsychology, visit
American Board of Professional Neuropsychology

O*NET

Counseling Psychologists
Neuropsychologists and Clinical Neuropsychologists
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists
School Psychologists
Clinical Psychologists
Industrial-Organizational Psychologists
Psychologists, All Other

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