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CAREERS IN PSYCHOLOGY

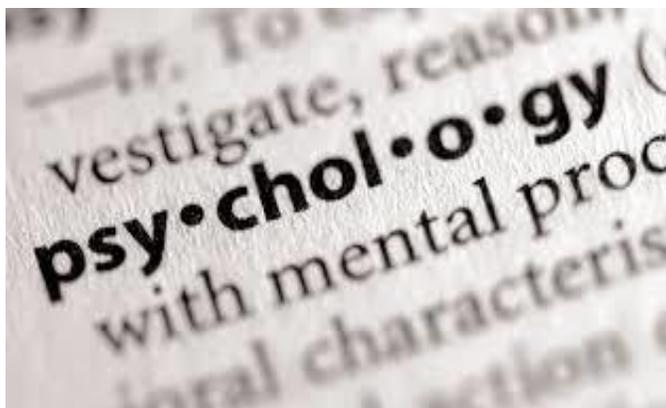
Professional Options in the Field of Psychology

Psychology ranks among the top three majors at the undergraduate level.

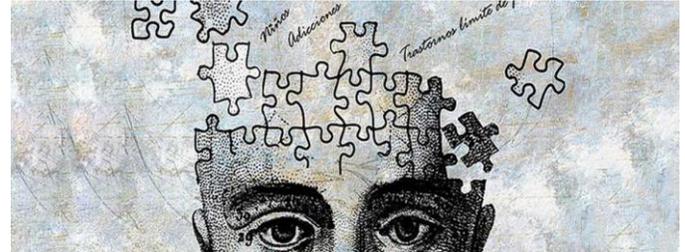
Psychology jobs are expected to soar between 2014-2024, at a rate of 19 percent – which is much faster than average. This is driven in part by the need for trained psychologists in mental health centers, schools, social service agencies, mental health centers, and in business.

That said, careers in psychology remain highly competitive.

Few fields are as far-reaching as psychology. This discipline requires mastery in a variety of topics, including sociology, behavioral research, medical science, and legal issues. In order to succeed in this field, advance on the job, gain seniority, and earn a higher wage, aspiring psychologists must obtain the best education possible. Typically, individuals will need a doctoral degree in psychology in order to build a career. However, a therapist can often hold a successful career with a master's degree, but most therapists will agree that a doctoral degree can go a long way in ensuring success in this field.



The “best” job for an individual who holds a psychology degree at any level will vary, as does the definition of the word, best. Best career path is a personal decision, and may be based on earning potential, job satisfaction, company, or geographic location. Although the question has been raised, “Are there too many psychology majors for the amount of jobs available?” The APA disagrees, stating that an undergraduate psychology major is still one of the best choices a college student can make. Read reports and brochures published by the American Psychological Association.



Best Jobs for Psychology Associate Degree Graduates

Each year, more than 1.5 million students begin their college degree at a community college. Of these 1.5 million students, nearly 80% say they intend to go on to earn a bachelor's degree. Yet, only about one-fourth of these students end up transferring to a four-year college, and only about one-third complete their associate degree first.

Nevertheless, there are a number of career options for students with an associate degree in psychology. Sometimes, individuals will use their AA/AS degree to gain experience or as a steppingstone to their bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree.

Top job opportunities with an AA/AS psychology degree:

Human Services Careers: Although some positions may require licenses or certifications, or a higher degree, students with an AA/AS degree in psychology should find a job working as a social service clerk or an assistant in welfare agencies, detention centers, or group homes.

Mental Health Careers: AA or AS graduates cannot diagnose illnesses, for instance, but they can find positions in mental health, including mental health technicians in a treatment center, counselor assistant, operator for a crisis hotline, or as a medical record keeper in a medical facility.

Business Careers: Employers covet students with an education in psychology. With an AA/AS degree, psychology students can find many opportunities in business, such as jobs in human resources, sales, and customer service.

Careers in Education: Many public schools, daycare centers, head start programs, and preschools hire individuals with a psychology background to work with students. Positions include, paraprofessional or teacher's assistants, or jobs working with special needs students.

Other positions for students with an AA or AS degree in psychology include: Psychiatric nursing assistant, youth counselor, case technician, home care aide, and rehabilitation assistant.

The average wage will vary depending upon geographic location, career field, and opportunity for advancement. According to PayScale (Dec 2015), examples of the average hourly wage by job for individuals with an associate degree in psychology include:

- Behavioral Health Technician – \$14.50 / hr.
- Pharmacy Technician – \$13.35 / hr.
- Community / Home Health Aid – \$11.00 / hr.
- Office Manager – \$11.98 / hr.
- Certified Nursing Assistant – \$11.07 / hr.



Best Jobs for Psychology Bachelor Degree Graduates

Although the most common career goal of most undergraduate psychology students is to become a psychologist or counselor, there are many career paths a student can pursue with a bachelor's degree in psychology. However, it should be noted that the amount of direct client contact is limited for individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Many of the skills student's learn within a bachelor's psychology program will open numerous and often unexpected career opportunities, as well as provide training for many other types of jobs outside the field.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that in 2011-2012, there were 1.8 million bachelor's degrees granted. Of the degrees awarded, six-percent went to psychology students. However, only about one quarter of psychology undergraduates end up working in psychology, or a closely-related field, and nearly three-quarters of psychology students who earn a bachelor's degree do not go on to pursue a graduate degree in psychology.

Many students who graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology enter the workforce as a specialist or technician in human and social services, or education. A few of the most common job titles in these areas include:

- Case manager
- Rehabilitation specialist
- Psychiatric technician
- Human Resource manager
- Business administration
- Top- or mid-level management
- School Counselor
- Marketing or advertising manager
- Laboratory assistant
- Law enforcement and corrections
- Career Counselor

A bachelor's degree, along with state certification, can also lead to a career as a high school psychology teacher.

The average wage will vary depending upon geographic location, career field, and opportunity for advancement. According to PayScale (Dec 2015), examples of the average annual salary (by job) for individuals with a bachelor's degree in psychology include:

- Human Resources Manager (HR) – \$62,133
- Case Manager – \$34,210
- Administrative Assistant – \$39,651
- Executive Assistant – \$47,095

For someone who wants to earn a salary prior to enrolling in graduate school, or just needs the time to decide if graduate school is the best choice, John Cornthwait, an undergraduate Psychology student and a partner at Firefli, says, "One of the best jobs out there for folks with a Psychology background is a User Experience Designer (median pay: \$89,300; 10-year job growth: 18-percent). The profession, which is essentially a user advocate, relies heavily on empathy, a deep of understanding of cognitive processes about how information is both best and easily consumed, and the ability to create, administer, and evaluate behavioral tests."



Best Jobs for Psychology Master Degree Graduates

Graduates with a master's degree in psychology have the opportunity to work in a wide variety of sectors. Overall job outlook and the focus or specialty of your master's degree will help determine the best path for your future. Many grads will choose to conduct research, work directly in the field as a therapist, or work outside the field with business executives, athletes, and attorneys, within the school system, law enforcement, or in public health agencies.

Although earning a master's degree in psychology opens the door to numerous areas of practice, career options are still limited if you are interested in entering the field of professional psychology. However, a terminal master's program (a type of degree that is designed to prepare students for professional practice within their specialty area) will clear the way to entry-level jobs in fields such as forensic psychology and mental health counseling.



Career options and salary vary by geographic location, sector, and specialty. An extensive list of careers, both inside and outside the field of psychology, for individuals with a master's degree in psychology, includes, but is certainly not limited to:

- Executive coach
- Life coach
- Media psychologist
- Counselor aide
- Psychology professor
- Behavior analyst
- Psychological associate
- Addictions psychologist
- Residential youth counselor
- Human service worker
- Hospital patient service representative
- Legal psychologist
- Statistical assistant
- Community recreation worker
- State agency counselor
- Victims advocate
- Director of volunteer services
- Child care worker
- Diversity manager
- Juvenile justice detention officer
- Correctional field officer
- Employment counselor
- Special education teacher
- Behavioral therapist
- Court consultant
- Marketing or advertising manager
- Behavior health psychiatric nurse
- Psychologist supervisor
- Social service director
- Media buyer
- Director of fundraising
- Social service counselor
- Mental health counselor
- Child custody worker

- College admissions counselor
- Job analyst
- Psychological technician
- Substance abuse counselor
- Human resources professional
- Judicial service coordinator
- Rehabilitation counselor
- Veterans counselor
- Probation/parole officer
- Sales representative
- Guidance counselor
- Army psychologist
- Family services worker
- Public information officer
- Instructional systems design consultant
- Child protection specialist
- Sports psychology professor
- Social worker
- Rehabilitation adviser
- Geriatric Care Specialist
- Business Owner
- Consulting Services Director
- Director of Business Development
- Pain Psychologist
- Sport Rehabilitation Therapist
- Business Intelligence Specialist
- Supervisory Clinical Psychologist

The average wage will vary depending upon geographic location, career field, specialty, and opportunity for advancement. According to PayScale (Dec 2015), examples of the average annual salary by job for individuals with a master's degree in psychology include:

- Mental Health Therapist – \$50,601
- Program Manager (non-profit) – \$50,000
- Human Resources Manager – \$64,500
- Market Research Analyst – \$41,271
- Mental Health Clinician – \$36,973



Nathan Driskell, a Licensed Professional Counselor who holds a Master's Degree in Psychology, says, "Entering into the field, I wanted to have my own practice as I wanted the freedom to make my own decisions. I wanted the freedom to see the clients I choose, the freedom to choose how much I charge, and the freedom to choose when I work. Working for a hospital or an agency was not my goal, as those locations do not have the freedom I require. Thus, for me, freedom is a requirement in my personal definition of "Best."

Best Jobs for Psychology Doctorate/PhD Degree Graduates

The decision to earn a doctoral degree in psychology is something most every master's graduate will consider. Although earning a master's degree will give you more job opportunities than at the bachelor degree level, you can still be limited if you are interested in entering professional psychology. After all, earning a doctorate and passing the licensing exams, you can diagnose mental disorders, conduct research, administer evaluations, and teach at the university level. You can work within various settings, such as mental health clinics, government offices, hospitals, or choose to open a private practice, just to name a few possible choices.

The percentage of students who enter a doctoral program after completing their master's program varies – from 67-percent for counseling psychology, to 20-percent for clinical psychology. Depending on career aspirations, master's degree grads may or may not choose to earn a doctorate. Time (graduate school can range from an additional two to eight years of study) and money (the average debt of psychology doctoral students tripled from 1995 to 2005, according to APA's Center for Workforce Studies) can play a key role in determining whether to earn your doctoral degree, or not.

Overall, if you want to do clinical work and/or therapy independently (e.g., not work under someone else's supervision), conduct research, work within a government agency, or teach at the university level, you will most likely need a doctoral level degree.

Career options and salary will vary by geographic location, sector, and specialty. A list of careers for individuals with a PhD or PsyD degree in psychology includes all the above job listings at the Master's level, and also the following:

- Clinical psychologist
- Counselor
- Private practice
- Engineering psychologist
- Industrial/organizational psychologist
- Administrative hospital psychologist

- Neuropsychologist
- Forensic psychologist
- School psychologist
- Researcher/Experimental psychologist
- University professor
- Applied psychologist
- Cognitive Psychologist
- Psychotherapist

The average wage will vary depending upon geographic location, career field, specialty, licensing and/or certification, and opportunity for advancement. According to PayScale (Dec 2015), examples of the average annual salary by job for individuals with a PhD or PsyD degree in psychology include:

- Licensed Psychologist – \$81,847
- Professor, Postsecondary – \$109,182
- Clinical Psychologist – \$72,000
- Research Scientist – \$70,000
- Executive Director – \$79,497

One thing is glaringly obvious – salary increases dramatically with level of education. One example is a career as an Industrial/Organizational Psychologist. According to the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, an I/O psychologist's salary is often determined by the level of education completed. Professionals with master's degrees, for instance, can expect starting salaries of around \$38,750. Those with Ph.D's can expect starting salaries of around \$55,000.

According to Lisa Phalen, certified coach, HR consultant, and speaker with over 25-years of experience coaching and leading HR functions contends, “The best job in the field of psychology is Industrial/Organizational Psychology. In this field, practitioners are trained to understand human behavior in organizational and work settings. This insight and knowledge allows I/O practitioners to provide guidance to organizational leaders on the most effective ways to communicate, improve employee engagement, and ultimately optimize workforce performance. Industrial/Organizational Psychologists can engage in many activities to improve organizational performance such as team facilitation, leadership and executive coaching, talent development, and organizational design. It's the best job on earth!”

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The logo for Birmingham-Southern College, consisting of the letters 'BSC' in a large, stylized, gold-colored serif font.

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