

## What Economists Do

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 newsletters and academic journals

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, exchange rates, 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.

More than half of all economists work in federal, state, and local government. Federal government economists collect and analyze data about the U.S. economy. They also project spending needs and inform policy makers 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. Minneapolis is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the United States for the number of Fortune 500 Companies such as Target, Best Buy, 3M, United Health, etc. making it a robust market for aspiring economists.

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

The following are examples of common economist specialties:

***Econometricians***  
***Financial Economists***  
***Industrial Organization Economists***  
***International Economists***  
***Labor Economists***  
***Monetary Economists***  
***Public Finance Economists***  
***Health Economists***  
***Extension Economists***  
***Resource Economists***  
***Energy Economists***  
***Agribusiness Economists***

# Work Environment

Economists held about 21,500 jobs in 2014, of which 45 percent were in government.

The following industries employed the most economists in 2014:

- Federal Government Excluding the Postal Service: 21%
- Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services: 18%
- State and Local Government Excluding Education and Hospitals: 15%
- Scientific Research and Development Services: 15%
- Finance and Insurance: 5%

Economists often 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.

## How to Become an Economist

Most economist jobs require an advanced degree, but some entry-level jobs are available with a bachelor's degree.

### Education

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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 advanced 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 doing 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 analysts, and similar positions in business and finance.

### Undergraduate Coursework

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- Economic History of the United States
- Intermediate Microeconomics
- Econometrics
- Managerial Economics
- Principles of Microeconomics
- Public Finance
- Theories of Economic Development
- Fundamentals of Accounting
- Intermediate Macroeconomics
- Investment Analysis
- Money and Banking
- Principles of Macroeconomics
- Statistics
- Wage and Price Theory

## Internships

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

## Minnesota Colleges and Universities with a major in Economics

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Augsburg University	Bemidji State University	Bethel University
Carleton College	College of St. Benedict	College of St. Scholastica
Concordia College	Gustavus Adolphus College	Hamline University
Macalester College	Metropolitan State University	Minnesota State University, Mankato
St. John's University	St. Catherine's University	Minnesota State University, Moorhead
St. Cloud State University	St. Olaf College	University of MN - Duluth
University of MN – Morris	University of MN – Twin Cities	University of St. Thomas
	Winona State University	

## Important Qualities

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**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.

**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.

**Speaking 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.

**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 and Job Outlook

### Economists

\$101,050

### Social Scientists and Related Workers

\$75,280

### Total, All Occupations

\$37,040

The median annual wage of economists was \$101,050 in May 2016. 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 \$55,150, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$181,060.

Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of economists in May 2016 were as follows:

- Finance and Insurance \$124,660
- Federal Government Excluding the Postal Service: \$111,310
- Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services: \$110,900
- Scientific Research and Development Services: \$102,000
- State and Local Government Excluding Education and Hospitals: \$71,120

Employment of economists is projected to grow 6.0 percent from 2014 to 2024, 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. 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 expected to decline. As a result, demand for economists in the federal government is likely to be limited.

### **Job Outlook**

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Job opportunities for individuals with a master's degree or Ph.D. are expected to be good. In particular, those with strong quantitative and analytical skills and related work experience should have the best job prospects. As more companies contract out economics-related work, most job openings for economists will be in consulting services.

Applicants with a bachelor's degree are expected to face stiff 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 and finance.

For more information about a career in Economics, go to *The Occupational Outlook Handbook* .Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Life-Physical-and-Social-Science/Economists.htm>

### **For More Information:**

Contact ARCC Career Counseling: (763) 433-1240 (CR campus), (763) 433-1840 (Cambridge campus) or stop by the campus Information Desk