

Pursuing a Career in Quantitative Psychology

ALL ABOUT QUANTITATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

As research questions become more complex and diverse, the research methods used to answer them must evolve as well.

Individuals who have a passion for psychology and an interest in using data and statistics to solve complex issues — such as developing test score baselines and evaluative measures to determine who might qualify for public health services — are well-suited for a career in quantitative psychology.

While all psychology graduate programs require that individuals take courses in statistics and quantitative methods, only a handful of students specialize in the subfield of quantitative psychology — a diverse, yet small, subfield that includes research and development in areas including statistics, measurement and methodology.

The demand for psychologists with a strong quantitative background is high, especially as innovations and complex new research methodologies continue to emerge. In fact, the demand for data-driven decision-making grows within both the public and private sectors.

Quantitative psychologists study and develop methods and techniques for the measurement of human behavior and other attributes. Their work involves the statistical and mathematical modeling of psychological processes, the design of research studies and the analysis of psychological data.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Students trained in quantitative psychology may focus their work on improving research methods, exploring various applications of statistical models or identifying new ways to apply methodologies to find answers to complex research questions. For example, quantitative psychologists might focus on improving the design of questionnaires and surveys to generate the most accurate responses. Quantitative psychologists also serve as experts in measurement, statistics, research methodology and program evaluation at major universities and colleges across the nation.

The most common private-sector employers for quantitative psychologists are test-publishing companies such as the College Board, ETS, ACT and Pearson. These psychologists design tests for educational purposes, personnel selection and psychological assessment. Their work informs college admissions, employee recruitment and professional certifications.

However, quantitative psychologists can pursue careers in almost any area. They conduct their own research and help researchers in a variety of fields to design experiments and interpret their results. Quantitative psychologists work as faculty at major universities, as researchers at testing companies and medical centers, or at private research firms and government agencies.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

While an advanced degree in psychological measurement or statistics is preferred, a degree in nearly any subfield of psychology involving advanced classes in measurement and statistics could be acceptable for employment in the test-publishing industry. Those not graduating from a quantitative psychology program can ask advisors to direct them to coursework that will prepare them for the field. Many graduate programs prefer applicants who have taken college-level calculus and linear algebra as well as coursework in psychology. Students interested in a career in quantitative

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Pursuing a Career in Quantitative Psychology, continued

psychology should also consider taking graduate-level statistics courses. Quantitative psychologists possess doctoral degrees.

According to APA Division 5 (Evaluation, Measurement, & Statistics), students can gain experience in quantitative methods by pursuing data-specific projects where they are required to conceptualize a research problem, select an appropriate design and analyze data.

WHAT YOU CAN EARN

Salaries for quantitative psychologists vary widely depending on where they work. For example, a nine-month academic salary at a top research university in a metropolitan area starts around \$65,000, according to APA's salary survey. In comparison, entry-level quantitative psychologists in the government sector could expect to earn about \$55,000 annually and a senior government researcher might earn \$120,000 or more.

Entry-level salaries for quantitative psychologists working in the private sector tend to start a bit higher, ranging between \$85,000 and \$111,000 per year.

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