

OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK

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Summary



The median annual wage for survey researchers was \$60,960 in May 2023.

[Job Outlook](#)

Employment of survey researchers is projected to show little or no change from 2023 to 2033.

Despite limited employment growth, about 800 openings for survey researchers are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Most of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

[State & Area Data](#)

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for survey researchers.

[Similar Occupations](#)

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of survey researchers with similar occupations.

[More Information, Including Links to O*NET](#)

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

What Survey Researchers Do



Survey researchers often present their findings.

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.

Duties

Survey researchers typically do the following:

- Conduct background research on survey topics
- Plan and design surveys, and determine appropriate survey methods
- Test surveys to make sure that people will understand the questions being asked
- Coordinate the work of survey interviewers and data collectors
- Account for and solve problems caused by nonresponse or other sampling issues
- Analyze data, using statistical software and techniques
- Summarize survey data, using tables, graphs, and fact sheets
- Evaluate surveys, the methods underlying them, and their performance to improve future surveys

Survey researchers design and conduct surveys for different research purposes. Surveys for scientific research cover various topics, including government, health, social sciences, and education. For example, a survey researcher may try to capture information about the prevalence of drug use or disease.

Some survey researchers design public opinion surveys, which are intended to gather information about the attitudes and opinions of society or of a certain group. Surveys can cover a wide variety of topics, including politics, culture, the economy, or health.

Other survey researchers design marketing surveys which examine products or services that consumers want, need, or prefer. Researchers who collect and analyze market research data are known as [market research analysts](#).

Survey researchers may conduct surveys in many different formats, such as interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups (in-person, small group sessions led by a facilitator). They use different methods to collect data, including the Internet, mail, and telephone and in-person interviews.

Some researchers use surveys to solicit the opinions of an entire population. The decennial census is an example of such a survey. Others use surveys to target a smaller group, such as a specific demographic group, residents of a particular state, or members of a political party.

Researchers survey a sample of the population and use statistics to make sure that the sample accurately represents the target population group. Researchers use a variety of statistical techniques and analytical software to plan surveys, adjust for errors in the data, and analyze the results.

Survey researchers sometimes supervise interviewers who collect survey data through in-person interviews or by telephone.

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Work Environment



Survey researchers often work alone, compiling results and analyzing data.

Survey researchers held about 9,700 jobs in 2023. The largest employers of survey researchers were as follows:

Other professional, scientific, and technical services	32%
Educational services; state, local, and private	21
Scientific research and development services	14
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	6
Self-employed workers	6

Survey researchers work in research firms, polling organizations, nonprofits, and corporations.

Survey researchers who conduct interviews have frequent contact with the public. Some may work outside the office, traveling to meet with clients or conducting in-person interviews and focus group sessions. When designing surveys and analyzing data, they usually work alone in an office setting, although some work on teams with other researchers.

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How to Become a Survey Researcher



Many research positions require a master's degree or Ph.D., though a bachelor's degree may be sufficient for some entry-level positions.

Survey researchers typically need at least a master’s degree to enter the occupation. However, a bachelor’s degree may be sufficient for some entry-level positions.

Education

Survey researchers typically need a master’s degree or Ph.D. The master’s degree may be in a variety of fields, including marketing or survey research, statistics, or social sciences. A bachelor’s [degree](#) is sufficient for some entry-level positions.

To prepare to enter this occupation, students should take courses in research methods, survey methodology, computer science, mathematics, and statistics. Many also may benefit from taking business courses, such as marketing and consumer behavior, and social science courses, such as psychology, sociology, and economics.

Other Experience

Prospective survey researchers can gain experience through internships or fellowships. Many businesses, research and polling firms, and marketing companies offer internships for college students or recent graduates who want to work in market and survey research. These opportunities, which provide valuable experience, can be very helpful toward getting a job.

Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

Although survey researchers are not required by law to be licensed or certified, certification can show a level of professional competence.

The [Insights Association](#) offers the Professional Researcher Certification for survey researchers. To qualify, candidates must have at least 3 years of experience working in opinion and marketing research, pass an exam, and be a member of a professional organization. Researchers must complete continuing education courses and apply for renewal every 2 years to maintain their certification.

Important Qualities

Analytical skills. Survey researchers must be able to apply statistical techniques to large amounts of data and interpret the results correctly. They also should be proficient in the statistical software used to analyze data.

Communication skills. Survey researchers need strong communication skills when conducting surveys and interpreting and presenting results to clients.

Critical-thinking skills. Survey researchers must design or choose a survey and a survey method that together best capture the information needed. They must also be able to look at the data and draw reasonable conclusions from the results of the survey.

Detail oriented. Survey researchers must pay attention to details, because survey results depend on collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data accurately.

Problem-solving skills. Survey researchers need problem-solving skills when identifying survey design issues, adjusting survey questions, and interpreting survey results.

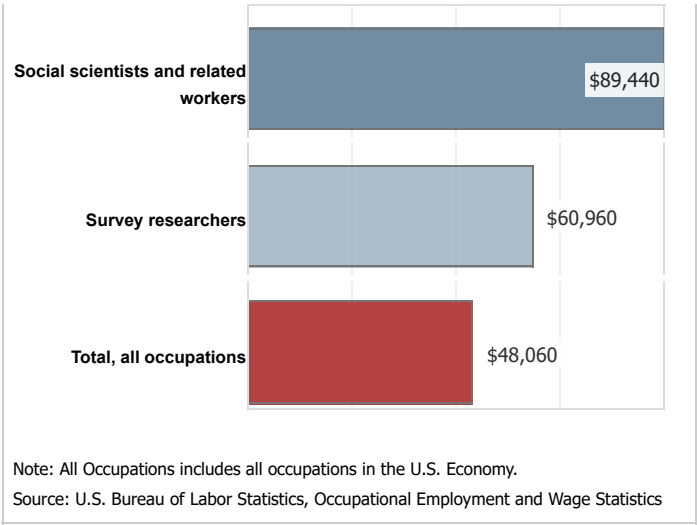
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Pay

Survey Researchers

Median annual wages, May 2023



The median annual wage for survey researchers was \$60,960 in May 2023. 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 \$30,790, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$107,790.

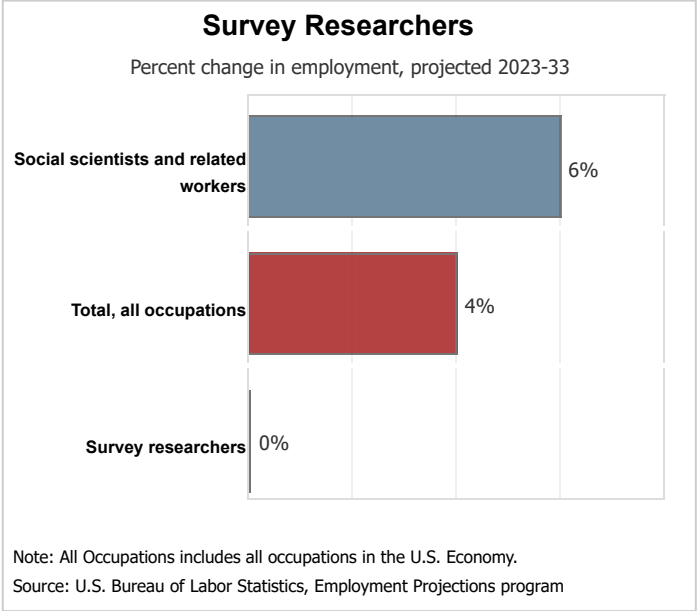
In May 2023, the median annual wages for survey researchers in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Scientific research and development services	\$77,580
Educational services; state, local, and private	63,330
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	62,440
Other professional, scientific, and technical services	56,240

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Job Outlook



Employment of survey researchers is projected to show little or no change from 2023 to 2033.

Despite limited employment growth, about 800 openings for survey researchers are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Most of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

Employment

Survey researchers will continue to be employed in marketing, research, and polling establishments to plan and design surveys and to analyze data. However, ongoing adoption of data mining—finding trends in large sets of existing data—and collecting information from social media sites are expected to lessen the need for some traditional survey methods, such as telephone and in-person interviews. The use of big data in market research will reduce the demand for survey researchers to gather survey information.

Employment projections data for survey researchers, 2023-33

Survey researchers
SOC Code: 19-3022
Employment, 2023: 9,700
Projected Employment, 2033: 9,700
Change, 2023-33 (Percent): 0
Change, 2023-33 (Numeric): 0
Employment By Industry: Get data

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

State & Area Data

Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)

The [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics](#) (OEWS) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OEWS data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

[Survey researchers](#)

Projections Central

Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at www.projectionscentral.org. Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state’s websites where these data may be retrieved.

CareerOneStop

CareerOneStop includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

Similar Occupations

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

Advertising Sales Agents Job Duties: Advertising sales agents sell promotional space to businesses and individuals. Entry-Level Education: High school diploma or equivalent 2023 Median Pay: \$61,270
Advertising, Promotions, and Marketing Managers Job Duties: Advertising, promotions, and marketing managers plan programs to generate interest in products or services. Entry-Level Education: Bachelor's degree 2023 Median Pay: \$156,580
Data Scientists Job Duties: Data scientists use analytical tools and techniques to extract meaningful insights from data. Entry-Level Education: Bachelor's degree 2023 Median Pay: \$108,020
Economists Job Duties: Economists conduct research, prepare reports, and evaluate issues related to monetary and fiscal policy. They also may collect and analyze statistical data. Entry-Level Education: Master's degree 2023 Median Pay: \$115,730
Market Research Analysts Job Duties: Market research analysts study consumer preferences, business conditions, and other factors to assess potential sales of a product or service. Entry-Level Education: Bachelor's degree 2023 Median Pay: \$74,680
Mathematicians and Statisticians Job Duties: Mathematicians and statisticians analyze data and apply computational techniques to solve problems. Entry-Level Education: Master's degree 2023 Median Pay: \$104,860

[Operations Research Analysts](#)

Job Duties:

Operations research analysts use mathematics and logic to help solve complex issues.

Entry-Level Education:

Bachelor's degree

2023 Median Pay:

\$83,640

[Political Scientists](#)

Job Duties:

Political scientists study the origin, development, and operation of political systems.

Entry-Level Education:

Master's degree

2023 Median Pay:

\$132,350

[Project Management Specialists](#)

Job Duties:

Project management specialists coordinate the budget, schedule, staffing, and other details of a project.

Entry-Level Education:

Bachelor's degree

2023 Median Pay:

\$98,580

[Psychologists](#)

Job Duties:

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

Entry-Level Education:

[See How to Become One](#)

2023 Median Pay:

\$92,740

[Sociologists](#)

Job Duties:

Sociologists study society and social behavior.

Entry-Level Education:

Master's degree

2023 Median Pay:

\$101,770

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Contacts for More Information

For more information about careers in survey research, visit

[American Association for Public Opinion Research](#) 

[Insights Association](#) 

O*NET

[Survey Researchers](#) 

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SUGGESTED CITATION:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Survey Researchers, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/survey-researchers.htm> (visited *October 24, 2024*).

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