

PERSONALITY TYPE & CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

Does Your Type Predict How Far You'll Climb?

A survey of career outcomes among Briggs Myers' 16 personality types

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960's, when Isabel Briggs Myers introduced her MBTI®¹ personality type assessment, career advisors have been interested in using personality type to coach their clients to success. Much research has been done to examine career trends among types; studies have looked at the prevalence of the 16 types in a wide range of occupations and found marked differences in the careers that people of different personality types choose for themselves.² Career advisors now have a broad body of information to guide clients in selecting satisfying careers.

However, research into more general career outcomes among the 16 personality types is somewhat more sparse. Are certain types more likely to earn more, or progress to higher rungs on the corporate ladder? Are some types more satisfied with their work, regardless of the occupation they choose? Are some types more likely to choose alternatives to full-time work, for example self-employment or stay-at-home parenting?

A survey conducted by CPP, Inc., publisher of the MBTI® instrument, yielded some suggestive data on the topic. In the *MBTI Manual*, CPP researchers reported that a national survey revealed a clear income differential between types, with ENTJs earning the highest average income and ISFPs the lowest. They also reported differences in overall job satisfaction, with Extraverted and Judging types reporting higher levels of satisfaction.³ While these details are interesting, the *Manual* includes only selected findings from the study, and a full report of the results does not appear to be readily available.

Similarly, an infographic⁴ illustrating average incomes for each of the personality types recently received wide attention in online media. Although the information presented aroused considerable interest, its reliability is questionable. The source of the data was not made explicit by the publisher of the graphic, and it is not clear how the sample was collected, how large it was, and how it was analyzed.

¹ MBTI is a registered trademark of the Myers & Briggs Foundation, Inc., which is not affiliated with this study.

² Schaubhut & Thompson, 2008.

³ Myers, McCauley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2003.

⁴ See <http://www.careerassessmentsite.com/mbti-personality-types-socioeconomic-infographic>.

While data on career outcomes among the types is scant, assumptions are rampant. Descriptions of the 16 personality types typically include many claims about the various types' predisposition to particular career paths. Some types are described as being especially ambitious and inclined to leadership (i.e. ENTJ and ESTJ),⁵ others are described as entrepreneurial (ENTPs especially),⁶ while still others are described as particularly nurturing and focused on the task of parenting (i.e. ESFJs).⁷ These portrayals are rarely, if ever, supported by specific data; rather, they are proposed and accepted as self-evident. However, if these descriptions of various types are valid, then they should not be difficult to verify through an analysis of relevant career trends among the types.

Our goal in this study was to do a comprehensive analysis of various career outcomes among the 16 personality types and examine what differences, if any, exist between types. Where our survey replicated existing research, our intent was to do a more complete analysis of the relevant phenomena and make the full results of the study freely available to the public.

METHODS

MEASURE

We designed a web-based questionnaire to capture data related to personality type and career outcomes, and published the questionnaire to our website at <http://www.truity.com>. The questionnaire was available to both anonymous and registered users who volunteered to complete it. Responses were collected and stored in our secure database.

The first section of the questionnaire was a shortened version of our TypeFinder® personality assessment, which we have previously established⁸ to be a reliable indicator of personality type according to the theories of Isabel Briggs Myers.

⁵ Keirsey, 1998.

⁶ Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 2001.

⁷ Keirsey, 1998.

⁸ Owens and Carson, 2015.

The original TypeFinder assessment includes an initial set of 36 questions and a variable number of follow-up questions depending on the subject's initial responses. For the purposes of this study, we wanted all subjects to answer the same questions, so we formulated a new version of the measure which contained a fixed number of 52 items. Based on our original research on the TypeFinder, we estimated that this shorter, simplified version of the instrument would allow us to definitively score a personality type for one-third to one-half of our respondents, which was sufficient for our analysis.

The shortened TypeFinder consisted of 52 questions to determine the respondent's preferred style on each of the four dimensions of personality type:

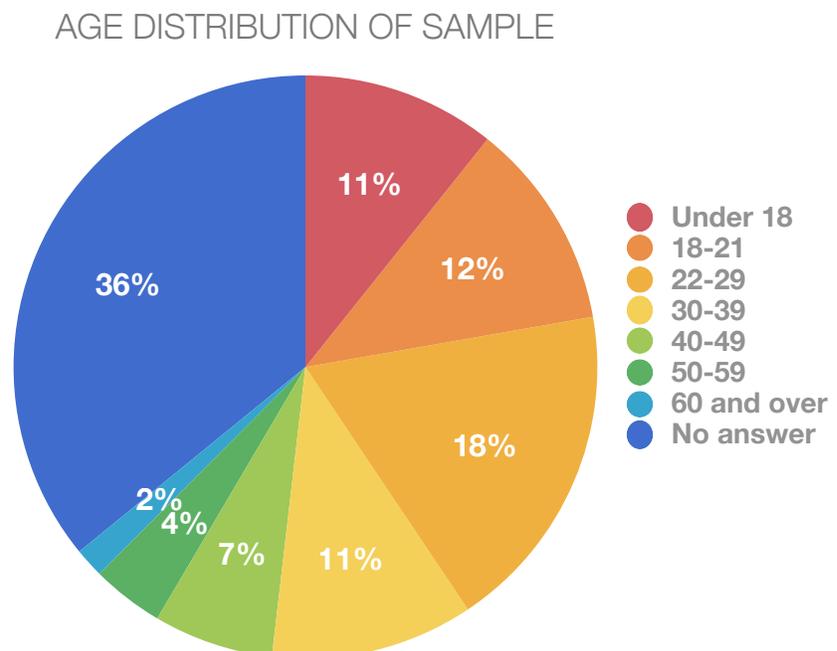
- Extraversion vs. Introversion - one's style of managing and replenishing personal energy
- Sensing vs. Intuition - one's style of gathering and processing information
- Thinking vs. Feeling - one's style of prioritizing personal values
- Judging vs. Perceiving - one's style of organizing and structuring daily life and work

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of questions about income, employment status, job satisfaction, and basic demographics including age and gender. These questions were optional and participants could choose to answer all, some, or none of them.

SAMPLE

Our subjects were volunteers who elected to complete the questionnaire on our website. Subjects completed the measure out of personal interest and received feedback about their personality at the end of the questionnaire.

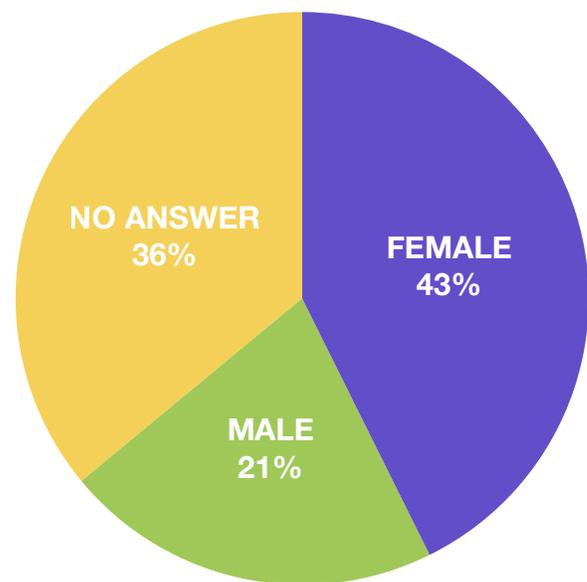
While a total of 25,759 volunteers completed the questionnaire, only about half answered some or all of



the career survey questions. The question “What is your yearly income?” received the lowest response rate, with only 12,559 subjects responding.

Our overall sample was skewed towards younger subjects, particularly volunteers under 30, and appeared to be composed of about 2/3 women and 1/3 men.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE



SCORING

We scored each volunteer’s result on the TypeFinder assessment to determine their personality type designation. The scoring process evaluates the overall trends in responses for each of the four dimensions to determine which style is preferred.

Each respondent was assigned a personality type based on their scores. The personality type designations follow the four-letter code format developed by Isabel Briggs Myers, where each preference is signified by its initial, i.e., ISFP, ENTJ, ENFP, and so on.

Because we used a shorter version of the TypeFinder assessment, we concluded that we could be sure of our respondent’s personality types only if their raw scores were outside a certain midrange. For the purposes of our analysis, we excluded respondents whose scores put them close to the cutoff point for any of the four dimensions. Our goal in doing this was to include only people whose personality types were clear and reduce the chances that we were analyzing data from respondents who had been classified into the incorrect personality type. While this method diminished our sample size, it improved our ability to find trends among different personality types.

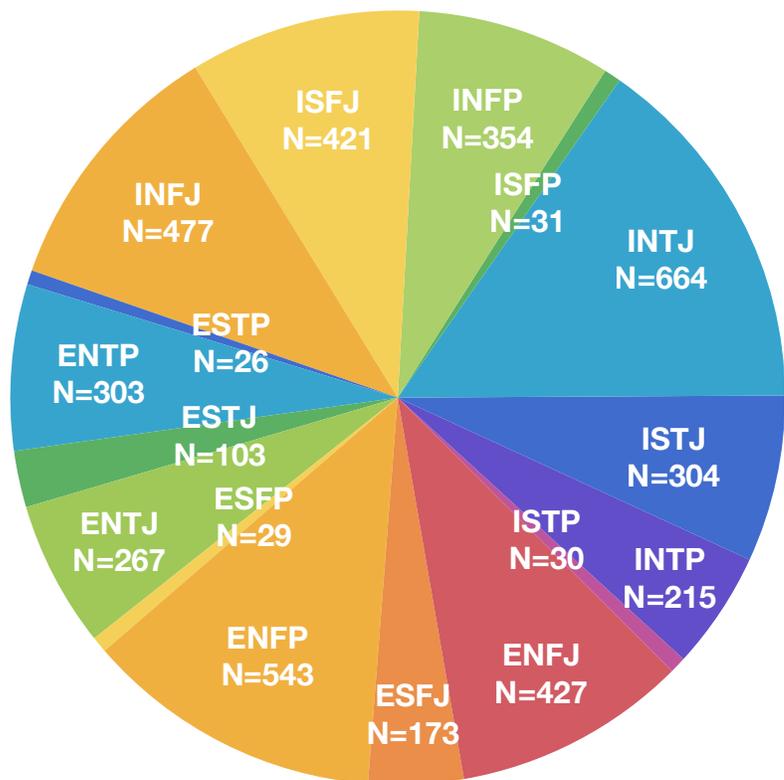
RESULTS

PERSONALITY TYPE DISTRIBUTION

The personality types of our volunteers are representative of samples with similar collection methods, if not the general population. Although Introverted Intuitive types are relatively rare in the population,⁹ online traffic data indicates that websites focusing on personality type are visited predominantly by these types.¹⁰

As expected, IN types made up the majority of our sample, while SP types were severely under-represented. However, all the types were represented in sufficient numbers for a valid analysis.

PERSONALITY TYPE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE



PERSONALITY TYPE AND INCOME

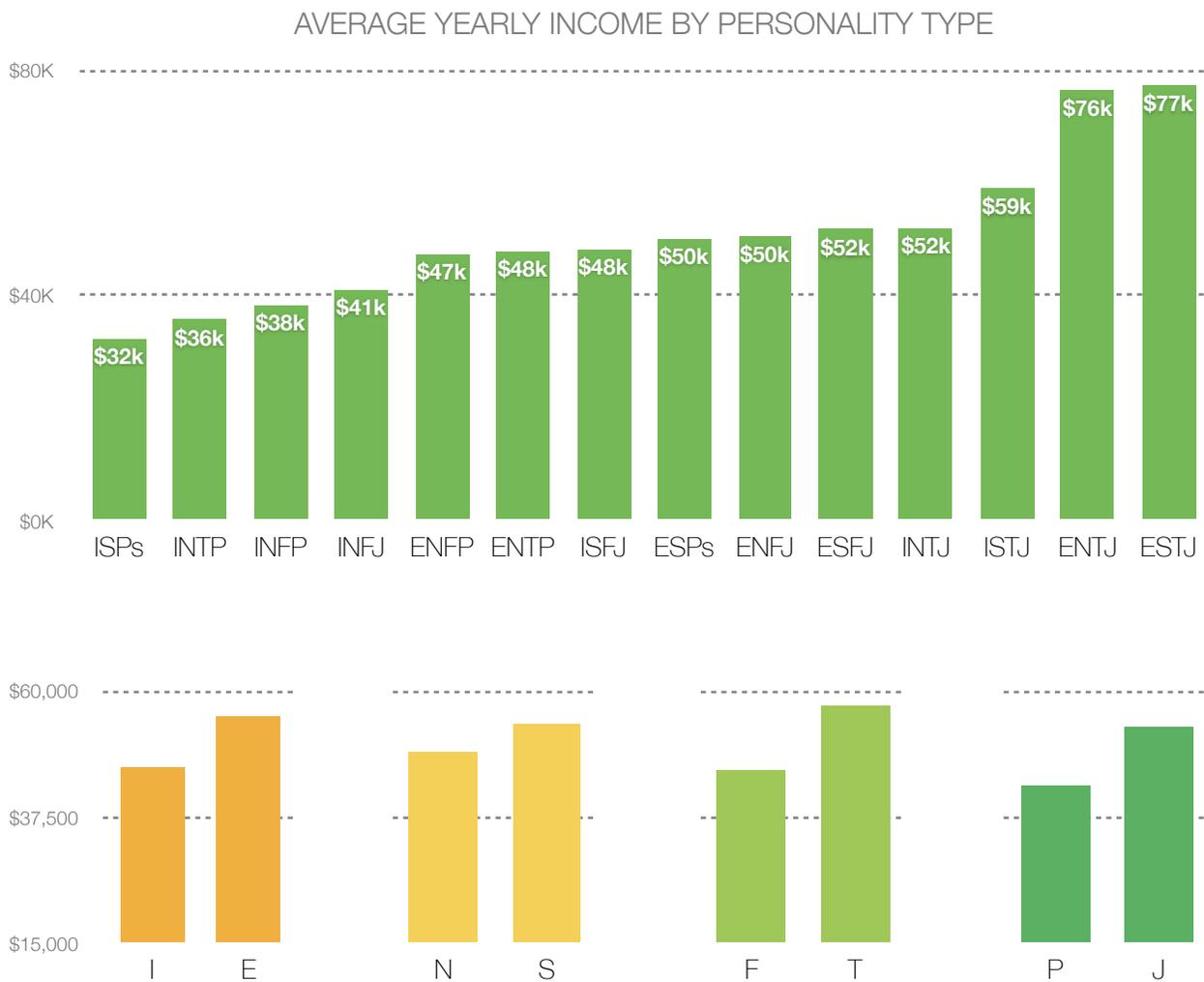
Our sample included 4,367 subjects who answered the question “What is your yearly income?” To examine income, we further narrowed the pool to respondents who said they were over 21, to eliminate confounding due to subject age. Our final sample consisted of 1,505 subjects.

⁹ Approximately 11% of the general population according to Myers, et al (2003).

¹⁰ For instance, the [PersonalityCafe forum](#) has over ten times the number of posts in its [INFP forum](#) as compared to its [ESTP forum](#).

This sample included very few people with SP personality types (ESTP, ESFP, ISTP, and ISFP). We found that based on our limited data, average incomes were similar for ISFP/ISTP and ESFP/ESTP, so our graph below groups ISPs and ESPs together.

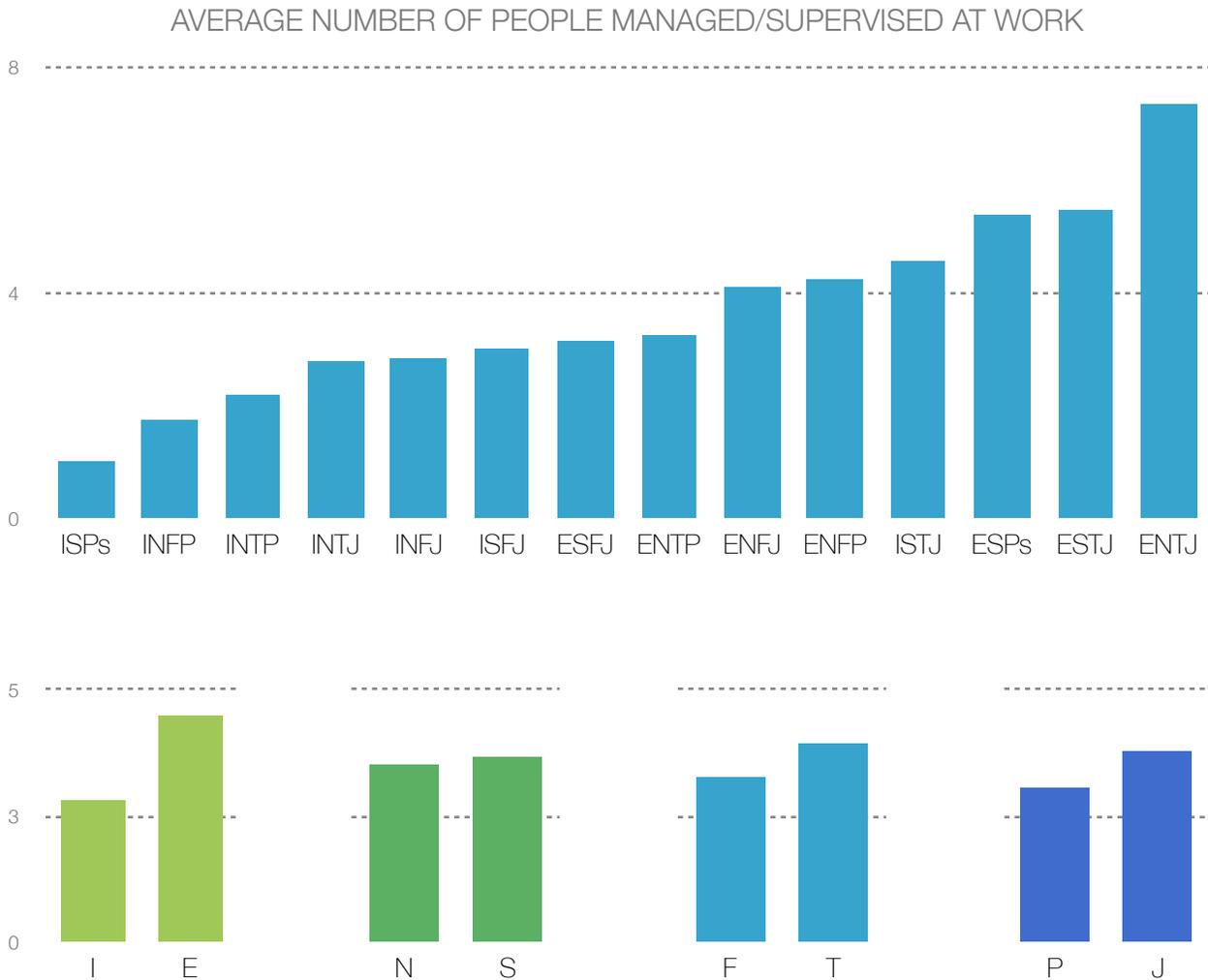
Our findings are consistent with previous studies in that ENTJ appears near the top of the income chart, although our measures put income among ESTJs slightly ahead. The top of the chart is dominated by Thinking Judging (TJ) types, while Introverted Perceiving (IP) types make up the bottom of the income scale.



Analysis by individual dimensions also showed an income differential. Overall, Extraverts, Sensors, Thinkers, and Judgers have higher average incomes than their counterparts.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND MANAGERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

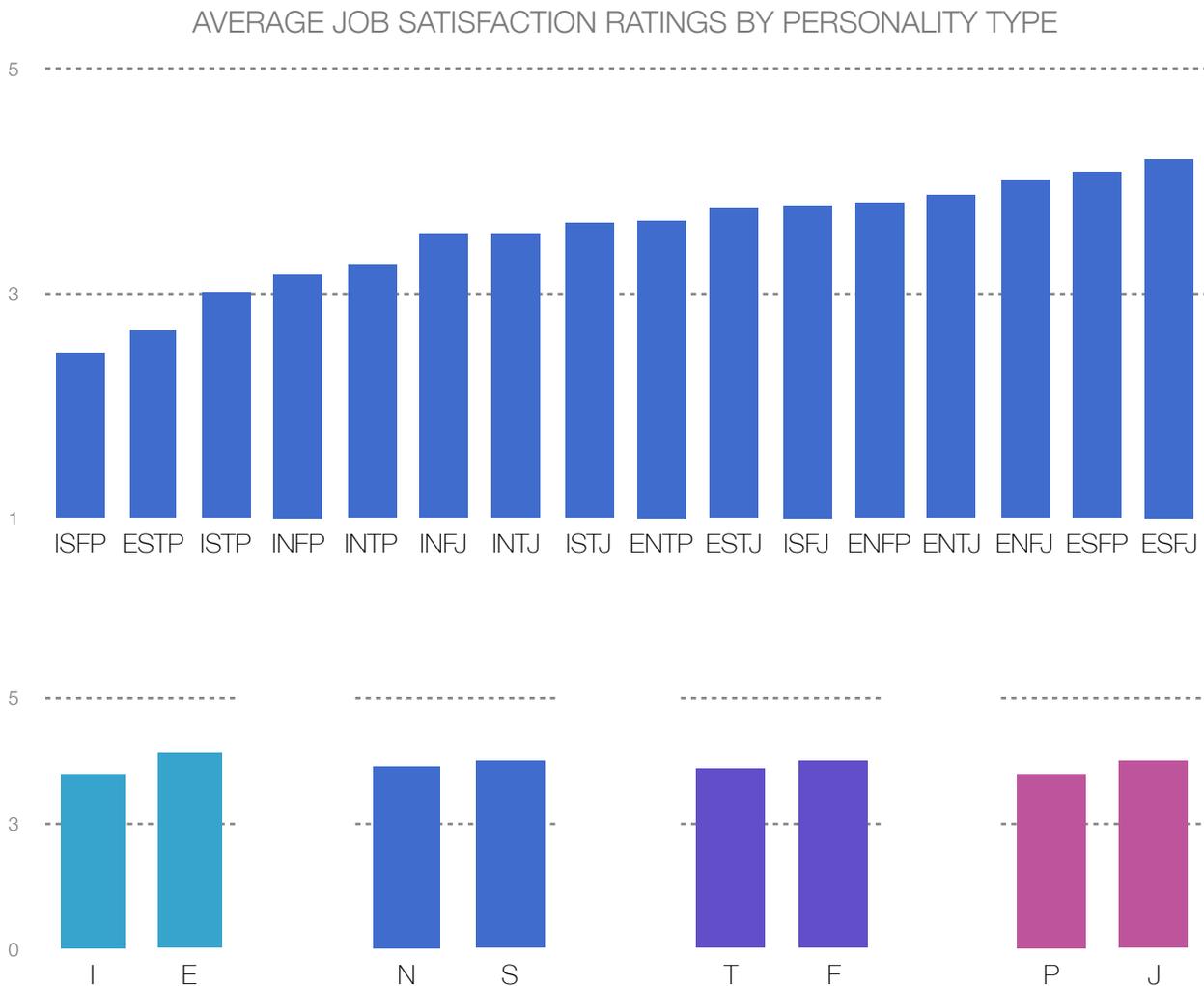
We analyzed data from 2,501 respondents who answered the question, “How many people do you supervise or manage at work?” We found marked differences in managerial responsibility across the 16 personality types, with ENTJs supervising the largest average number of employees.



We also found differences in managerial responsibility across the four dimensions of personality type. Extraverts tend to manage larger teams, as do Thinkers and Judgers; Sensors are slightly more likely to manage larger teams than are Intuitives.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND JOB SATISFACTION

A total of 2,053 respondents answered the question, “How satisfied are you with your job?” The question was multiple choice, with five options from Very Satisfied to Very Dissatisfied. In the chart below, a score of five represents the highest level of satisfaction possible, and a score of one indicates the lowest level of satisfaction.



ESFJ ranked as the most satisfied type, followed by ESFP and ENFJ. ENTJs, despite earning more and having more responsibility, came in fourth in terms of job satisfaction.

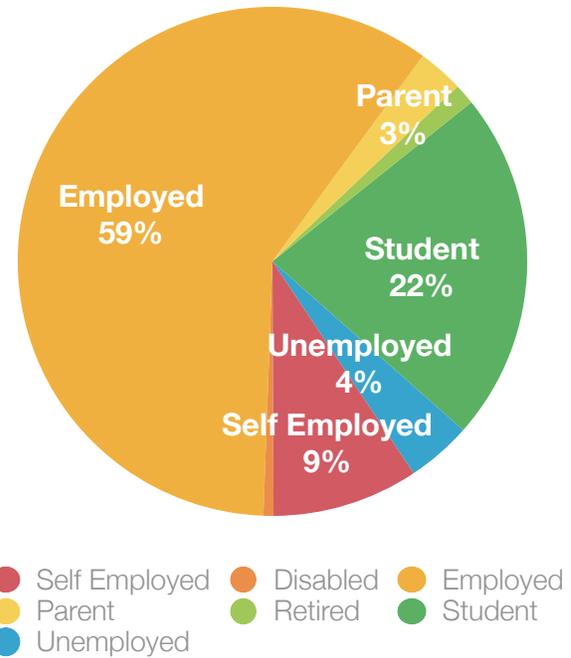
Overall, Extraverts, Sensors, Feelers, and Judgers were more satisfied at work than their counterparts.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

We asked respondents to select their employment status from a list of options including Employed, Unemployed, Self-Employed, Stay-at-Home Parent, Student, Retired, and Disabled. The majority of our sample was employed, with a large proportion of students as well.

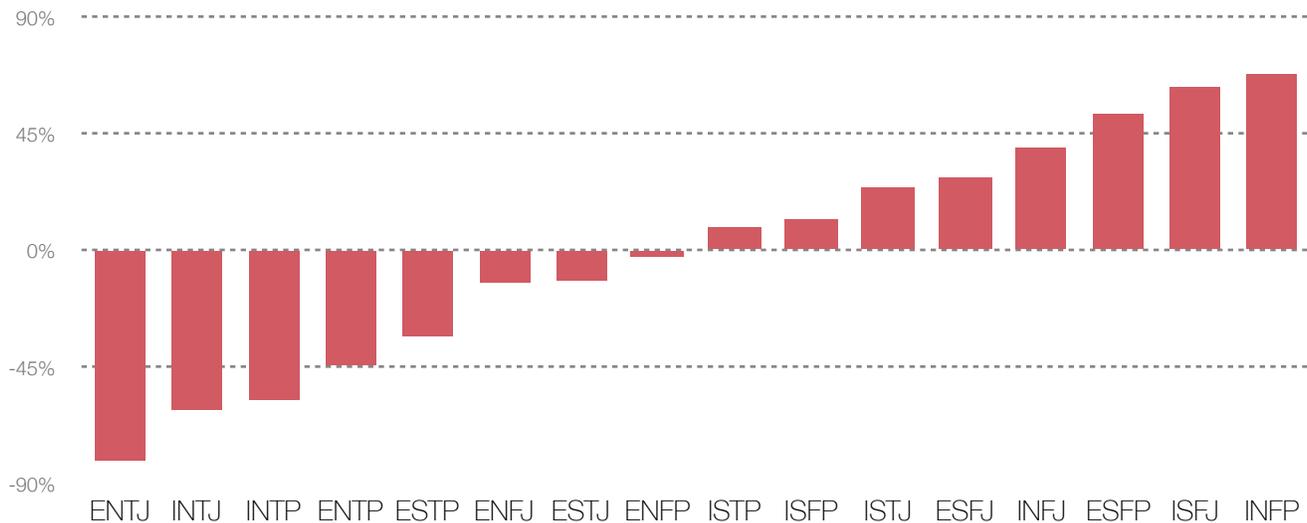
We compared the percentage of each personality type in the overall sample with its equivalent among respondents in each employment status. Our analysis showed that certain personality types were much more likely to report particular employment statuses. There were particularly large effects for Self-Employed and Stay-at-Home Parent statuses.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ALL RESPONDENTS (AGE 18+)



The following graph shows the relative likelihood that a person will report being a stay-at-home parent, based on their personality type.

LIKELIHOOD OF BEING A STAY-AT-HOME PARENT



To calculate the relative likelihood that a person of a particular personality type would report being a stay-at-home parent, we used a ratio which compared the percentage of a particular personality type in our entire sample with the percentage of that personality type in the sample of stay-at-home parents. For instance, INFPs represented 7.8% of our overall sample, but 13.1% of stay-at-home parents. This indicates that INFPs are overrepresented among stay-at-home parents by a factor of nearly 70%. On the other end of the spectrum, ENTJs are 81% less likely than average to be found parenting full-time.¹¹

We performed a similar analysis on our sample of respondents who said they were self-employed. The results are graphed below. Our results indicated that ENTPs are considerably more likely to be self-employed compared with the other 15 personality types.



Overall, Intuitive Perceiving (NP) types appear to choose to work for themselves more than other types, while Introverted Sensors (IS) are underrepresented among the self-employed.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND GENDER

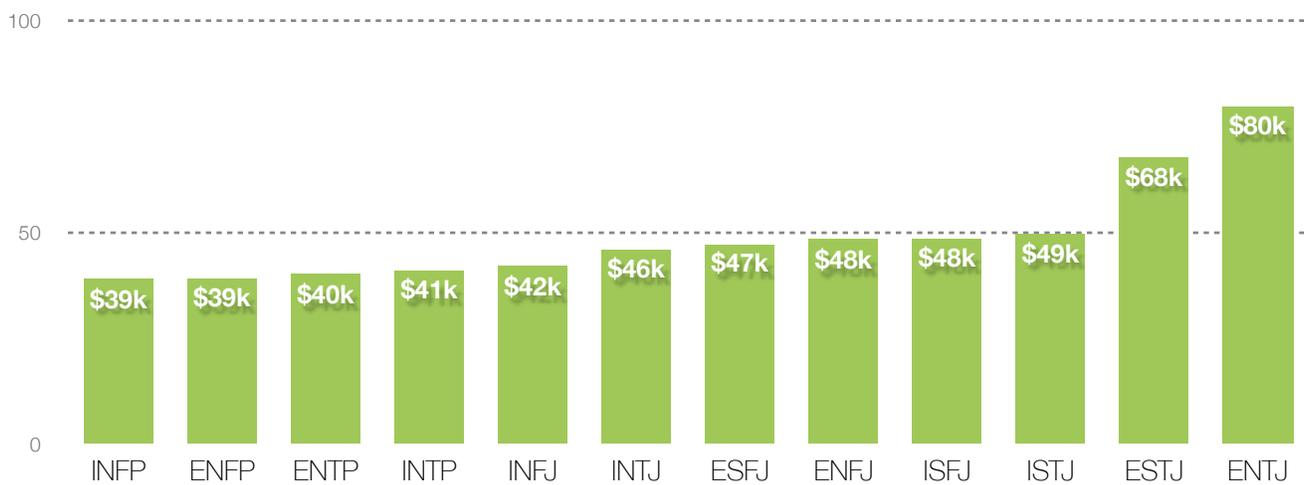
We performed several analyses to study what, if any, effect gender might have on our results. Since men and women exhibit significant differences in certain career outcomes (for

¹¹ For the purposes of this analysis, we used a looser method of scoring the TypeFinder assessment which excluded fewer subjects with borderline scores. This allowed us to increase our sample size and find trends among less common employment statuses.

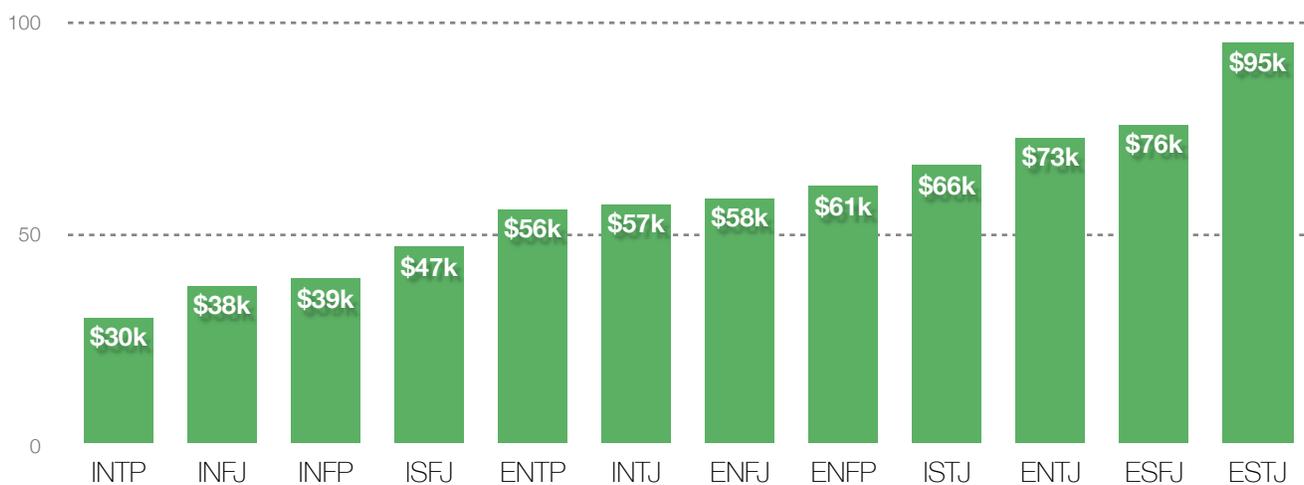
instance, it is estimated that women earn between 70-80% less on average¹²⁾ and certain personality types are also either predominantly male or female, it is possible that our results were confounded by the effects of gender. For example, perhaps ESTJs appeared to be especially high earners partially because this type is predominantly male.¹³

To examine the effects of gender on income for the 16 personality types, we calculated average incomes for men and women separately. The results are graphed below. Note that these graphs do not include SP types; these types were not present in sufficient numbers to analyze the data separately by gender.

AVERAGE INCOME FOR WOMEN BY PERSONALITY TYPE



AVERAGE INCOME FOR MEN BY PERSONALITY TYPE



¹² Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2009.

¹³ According to Myers et al (2003), about 2/3 of ESTJs are men.

ENTJ, ESTJ, and ISTJ are top-earning types for women as well as men, indicating that these types' position in the top-earning positions is not simply due to their overrepresentation among men.

We also considered that our conclusions about which personality types are more likely to choose stay-at-home parenting might be biased by gender, since women are vastly more likely to stay at home with their children. However, a simple count of the men and women in our sample put this question to rest. Out of 271 respondents who said they were stay-at-home parents, only 10 were men; thus, any impact gender might have had on biasing our results would be negligible.

DISCUSSION

Recent articles in the popular press have claimed that assessing personality type is a pointless exercise, and a waste of time and money. In “The Mysterious Popularity Of The Meaningless Myers-Briggs,” Forbes contributor Todd Essig (2014) says that the MBTI® “has no more reliability and validity than a good Tarot card reading.” Writing for Vox, Joseph Stromberg (2014) asserts that “the test is completely meaningless.”

These are fairly revolutionary claims given the extreme popularity of personality type assessments. Approximately 2 million people take the MBTI® each year,¹⁴ and although it's not clear how many people complete the numerous other personality assessments based on Briggs Myers' theory, we can assume it is substantial. According to its publisher, the MBTI® is the most widely used personality assessment in the world.¹⁵ Are all these people wasting their time and money on meaningless fortune-telling?

Our data indicates that they are not. Our volunteers showed clear differences in career outcomes depending on their personality type. When the average income for ENTJ types is over twice that of INTP types, it is hard to imagine that personality type is meaningless. In

¹⁴ Cunningham, 2012.

¹⁵ Thompson, 2013.

fact, this information provides a rich source for understanding how and why we achieve career success.

More than that, these findings provide insight into why we are innately driven to make certain decisions in our work lives. Why do some of us take the substantial risk to start our own businesses, while others wouldn't dream of leaving the security of a paycheck? Why do some new parents pause their careers to stay home with young children, while others can't imagine straying from the corporate climb? The answer seems to lie, at least in part, in our personality type.

THE INCOME EFFECT

The effect of personality factors on income has been well established. Research focused on the Big Five model of personality has found repeatedly that people with high scores on the personality dimension of Conscientiousness tend to earn more and be more successful in their careers.¹⁶ Conscientiousness is defined as a person's tendency to persist towards a goal; Conscientious people tend to be organized, structured, and responsible.¹⁷ In personality type parlance, this dimension corresponds to the Judging vs. Perceiving preference,¹⁸ indicating that we can assume Judgers will be more likely to achieve high incomes and other measures of career achievement. In fact, our research showed that this is the case.

Similarly, work with the Big Five has found that people who are relatively low in Agreeableness tend to rise to higher rungs on the corporate ladder.¹⁹ Agreeableness is defined as the tendency to prioritize the needs of the group over the needs of oneself; Agreeable people tend to be cooperative, empathetic, and concerned with maintaining harmonious relationships.²⁰ Researchers have theorized that less Agreeable people are more inclined to advance their own interests, and thus more likely to achieve higher status at work.²¹ Agreeableness maps well to Briggs Myers' Thinking vs. Feeling,²² again providing a hint that

¹⁶ Nettle, 2007.

¹⁷ McCrae & John, 1992.

¹⁸ McCrae & Costa, 1989.

¹⁹ Nettle, 2007.

²⁰ McCrae & John, 1992.

²¹ Nettle, 2007.

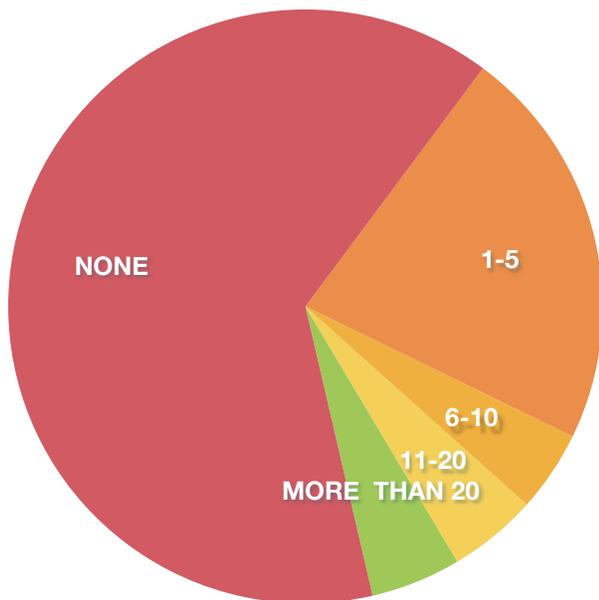
²² McCrae & Costa, 1989.

we can expect Thinkers to earn more. Once again, our research is consistent with the previous findings.

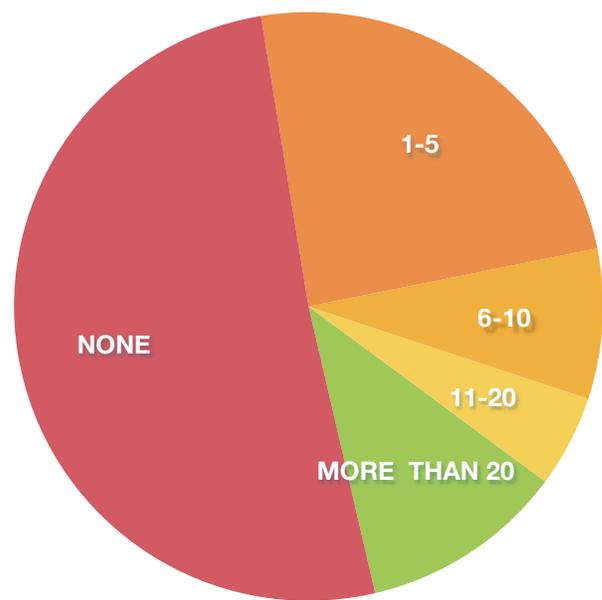
However, what Big Five research has not delved into is the interplay between various personality dimensions. Because the Big Five model speaks about each dimension separately, findings using this model don't show us that, for instance, Perceiving types are especially likely to earn low salaries when they are also Introverted. However, our results did show this effect.

Our findings also showed an overall income disadvantage to being an Introvert, which has not been widely reported in the literature. We theorize that this has to do with Introverts' relative disinclination to take on managerial positions. While the average Introvert reported supervising 2.8 employees at work, Extroverts had an average number of 4.5 reports. Quite apart from overall competence or skill level, a willingness to take on managerial responsibility means an increase in income, and Extroverts are likely more interested in this type of role.

OF PEOPLE SUPERVISED BY INTROVERTS



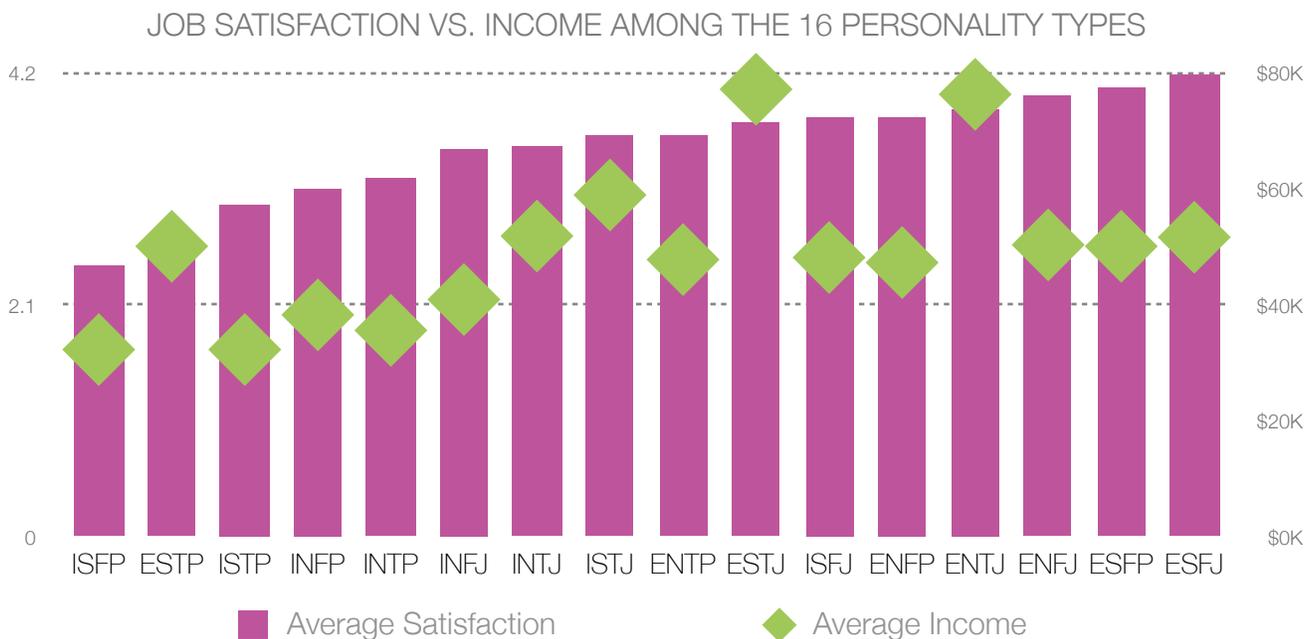
OF PEOPLE SUPERVISED BY EXTROVERTS



SIXTEEN PATHS TO JOB SATISFACTION

One of our more interesting findings is that the personality types who are most successful on the job—based on standard metrics like income and responsibility—are not necessarily the most satisfied. The difference seems to boil down to the Thinking vs. Feeling dimension.

While the top four spots on the income scale are all occupied by Thinkers, the top of the satisfaction graph is heavily weighted towards Feelers. Similarly, Thinkers are more likely to supervise others, but this additional responsibility doesn't seem to translate into an advantage in job satisfaction.



Why would Feelers be more satisfied with their work, when they earn less and have less responsibility? Our theory is that the effect runs to the core of why Feelers choose the work they do. Thinkers are more likely to choose a job based on its potential for personal achievement, prioritizing factors like a large income, high social status, the opportunity to demonstrate competency, and the ability to wield power and influence.²³

Feelers, on the other hand, are more likely to choose a career that allows them to serve others and live out their personal values. Feelers are much more likely to be found in occupations

²³ Myers et al, 2003.

like teaching, counseling, nursing, and social work, where they can care for others and pursue humanitarian goals.²⁴ They are less likely to be motivated by money in their choice of career, and tend to prioritize making a positive impact on the world.

If this is in fact the source of the Thinking/Feeling satisfaction divide, then the data provides an interesting insight into what makes us happy at work. While Thinkers may imagine that a high income is a priority for them in choosing a career, in the end, they're less satisfied than Feelers who gravitate towards careers that resonate with their personal values. Perhaps Thinkers would do well to spend a bit more time reflecting on more philosophical questions of meaning and purpose before they settle on a career path.

PERSONALITY TYPE OR GENDER: WHICH MATTERS MORE?

As we analyzed the data, it occurred to us that looking at personality type alone was insufficient to understand factors like income and employment status. It is well established that women earn from 70-80% less than their male counterparts,²⁵ and women are also more likely to pursue higher education²⁶ and become stay-at-home parents. Because there is also a bias in the gender ratios of personality types,²⁷ to fully understand the effects of personality type on career outcomes, it is helpful to look at some factors separately for women and for men.

Our primary concern in examining gender was to determine the extent to which our results might have been affected by the gender gap in wages. As we looked at the average incomes of the various personality types, we wondered how much of the differences could be accounted for by the fact that men tend to earn more than women, and also tend to dominate certain personality types. For instance, ENTJs tend to be top earners, and they are also predominantly male.²⁸ Do ENTJs earn more because they are ENTJs, or because they are men?

²⁴ Myers et al, 2003.

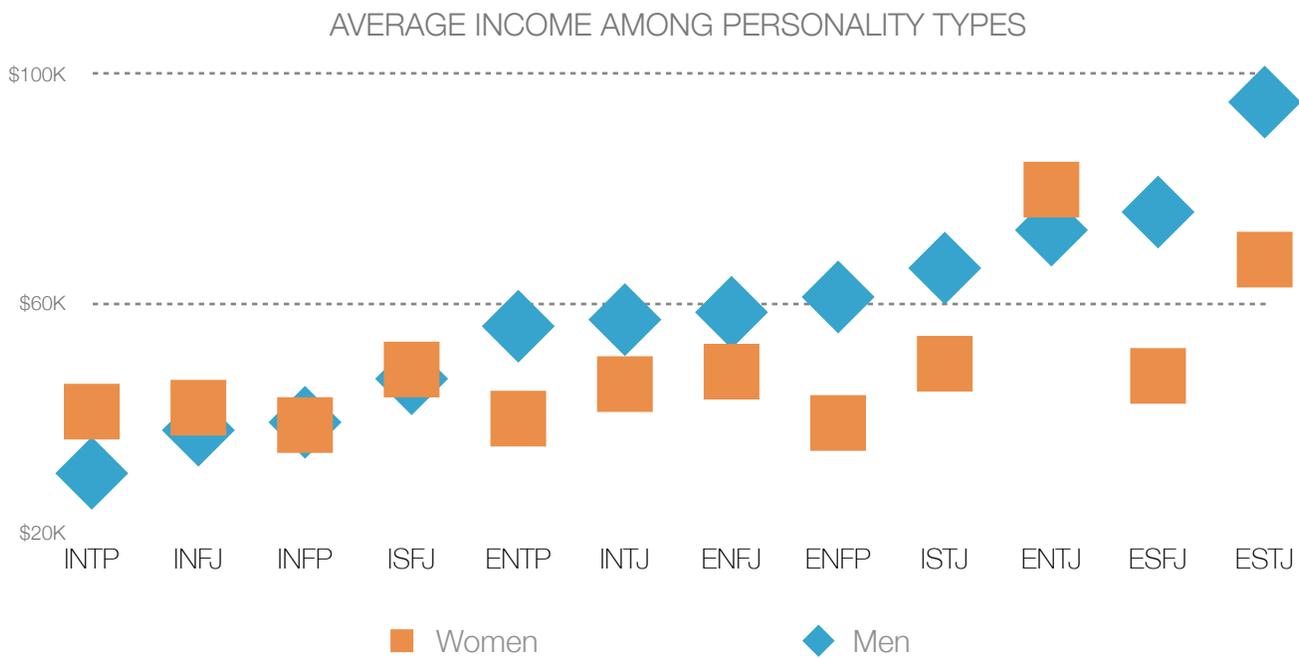
²⁵ Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2009.

²⁶ Francis, n.d.

²⁷ This is primarily due to the gender bias in the Thinking/Feeling dimension; according to Myers et al (2003) about two thirds of men are Thinkers, and two thirds of women are Feelers.

²⁸ According to Myers et al (2003) ENTJs make up 2.7% of men and only .9% of women.

The following graph illustrates average incomes by type, with women and men graphed separately, to allow us to more easily see the contrast in income trends between men and women. As before, SP types are omitted due to insufficient sample size.



It appears that personality type might actually be *more* powerful than gender in determining income—but only for certain types. Interestingly, ENTJ women appear to actually earn more than ENTJ men. This is also true of INTP women and to a lesser extent, INFJ and ISFJ women. The rest of the female sample, however, didn't fare so well; overall, the women in our sample earned more than \$10,000 less per year than the men. While we found ample evidence of an overall gender gap in income, women of certain personality types seem to be bucking the trend. For ENTJ women, it seems the income disadvantage of being female is no match for their earning prowess.

Overall, the trends towards the top of the income charts were similar for both genders. For both women and men, Thinking Judging (TJ) types tend to out-earn other types. However, towards the bottom of the income scale, we see some interesting gender differences. For women, being an Intuitive Perceiver (NP) seems to be a recipe for a meager income. For men, the unfortunate combination seems to be Introversion and Feeling (IF). This suggests that Introverted men who also have a gender-atypical preference for cooperative, compassionate values may be at a special disadvantage in the workplace.

PERSONALITY TYPES OF STAY-AT-HOME MOMS

Our analysis indicated that gender was not a significant confounding factor when looking at which personality types choose to stay at home with their children. In fact, the number of male stay-at-home parents in our sample was so tiny (a total of 10) that our examination of which types were most likely to stay at home was effectively a study of the personality factors that influence *women specifically* to choose to parent full-time.

Looked at this way, the data yield some interesting conclusions. The four types least likely to be stay-at-home moms are the four Intuitive Thinking types. In exploring why this might be, it's useful to think about why women might choose to stay at home in general. Perhaps NT women earn more, so it makes less financial sense to stay home. Perhaps they tend towards a philosophical belief that working mothers are a positive influence on their children. Or perhaps they consider themselves generally ill-suited for domestic life.

Although we can't directly peer into the mind of an NT woman contemplating full-time parenthood, we can examine some suggestive trends in the data. For instance, it does appear that Thinking women find less fulfillment in the job of stay-at-home mothering. While overall, women showed higher levels of satisfaction when they were full-time parents versus employed,²⁹ stay-at-home mothers who preferred a Thinking style showed no advantage in satisfaction.³⁰ Perhaps NT women anticipate that full-time parenting will not bring them a boost in fulfillment, and choose instead to continue on their career paths.



²⁹ Average satisfaction ratings among all women were 3.65 for employed women and 3.87 for stay-at-home mothers.

³⁰ Average satisfaction ratings among women with a Thinking preference were 3.61 for employed women, and 3.59 for full-time mothers.

To examine the effect that earning potential might have on a woman's decision to stay home, we looked at income across personality types for our female subjects over age 21. Our analysis showed that while earning potential may be a factor in a woman's decision to stay home, it does not fully explain the tendency of NT women to avoid this choice. While ENTJ women out-earn their peers, the other NT types do not earn more than average.

The question of why NT women are so unlikely to stay home with their children is not one we can answer conclusively at this time, however we plan further research to explore this effect.

STEREOTYPE OR PERSONALITY TYPE?

Our analysis presented a unique opportunity to test some common notions people have about various personality types. For instance, ENTJs are typically portrayed as natural leaders; ESFJs are often described as “motherly;”³¹ and ENTPs are often considered entrepreneurial.³² Our analysis allowed us to see whether these portrayals are borne out by the data.

Commanding ENTJs

Most profiles of ENTJs describe them as take-charge types and natural leaders with an assertive, commanding presence.³³ Our data showed that ENTJs are, indeed, more likely to be found in leadership positions. Of all the personality types, ENTJs had the highest average number of employees reporting to them.

ENTJs are also commonly portrayed as extremely career-driven. Our finding that ENTJs have one of the highest average incomes of all the types (and the highest among women) seems to confirm the veracity of this perception.

Entrepreneurial ENTPs

It's not clear where the concept of the entrepreneurial ENTP originated, but our research attests that it is no myth. ENTPs are more likely than any other type to be self-employed—68% more likely than average, to be exact. They are nearly twice as likely to be self-employed as ENFPs, the type that comes in second on this measure. It seems that ENTPs are indeed remarkable in their entrepreneurial tendencies.

³¹ For instance, see Keirsey, 1998.

³² See Barron & Tieger, 2001.

³³ See Berens et al, 2001.

Nurturing SFJs

ESFJs and ISFJs, nicknamed “The Provider” and “The Protector” respectively,³⁴ are often thought of as the most nurturing and stereotypically maternal of the types. Our analysis showed that both ESFJs and ISFJs are more likely than average to be stay-at-home parents, although the effect was larger for ISFJs.

However, it seems the title of “most maternal” personality type should in fact go to INFPs, who are the most likely of all the types to be found staying home with their children.

Organized ISTJs

ISTJs, often thought of as the world’s super-organizers, were the only Introverted type to report managing more employees than the average. Although ISTJs may not have an Extravert’s natural inclination to surround themselves with hordes of underlings, it seems their organizational abilities do lend them to the task of getting a team in shape.

Absentminded INTPs

INTPs, and especially male INTPs, reported some of the lowest incomes of all of the types. Often portrayed as intellectual and complex, INTPs are also thought of as “absentminded professor” types: the unconventional geniuses who leave the house without their shoes on.³⁵ Although we didn’t gather data about intelligence, we can conclude that INTPs do underperform when it comes to income.

If indeed INTPs do possess some special brilliance (Albert Einstein is the most commonly cited member of the INTP tribe) then it seems that some factor is stopping them short of translating this trait into earnings. Perhaps INTPs’ nontraditional qualities put them at a disadvantage in the typical workplace.

Action-Oriented SPs

One group of personality types revealed something about themselves by their relative absence from our study. Although SP types are estimated to make up 27% of the general population,³⁶ they made up less than 3% of our sample. SPs are commonly thought of as

³⁴ Keirsey, 1998.

³⁵ Kroeger, Thuesen, & Rutledge, 2002.

³⁶ Myers et al., 2003.

sensible, action-oriented people who prefer to spend their time experiencing life rather than analyzing it. One would expect that these practical ESTP, ESFP, ISTP and ISFP types might not see a need to spend much time contemplating their personalities. Our data indicate that in fact, very few people of these types chose to participate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

There is a good chance that individuals reading these results will take them fairly personally. For ENTJs, the results are likely to provide a healthy ego boost, but for types like ISFPs, who seem to have neither an advantage in income nor one in satisfaction, the results may be a bit more disheartening.

For people of those types who do not typically have outstanding career outcomes, and who are troubled by the idea that their personalities may put them at a disadvantage at work, there are two apparently divergent options: one, they may simply accept themselves for who they are, and avoid wasting time and energy aspiring to a path that doesn't suit them; and two, they can identify potentially advantageous personality traits, and devote time and energy to developing those qualities. Although these strategies seem in opposition—accept oneself, and also try to be different—we would argue that they are actually complementary.

First and foremost, the purpose of personality typing is to know and understand oneself. Isabel Briggs Myers was a passionate advocate for the individual and, in her assertion that no type is better than any other, implicitly urged people to accept themselves for who they truly are. Briggs Myers saw a place for everyone in society; indeed, her original intention with the MBTI® instrument was to help people find their niches in the post-war workplace.³⁷ In this tradition, we would argue that the first task for a person wishing to achieve their potential is to reflect inward on who they are and what is truly important to them.

In this respect, we can learn much from the Feelers in our study. Although we found that Feelers tend to earn less and manage fewer people, we also found that they are generally more satisfied with their work. Only the most rapacious career advisor would suggest that a Feeling person give up their natural inclination to choose personally meaningful work in the interest of making a few extra bucks. Rather, it seems we should all reflect on this evidence that indeed, money does not buy happiness.

³⁷ Saunders, 1995.

While markers of career success like income and position are highly prized in our society, there are strong indications that we are in fact placing a bit too much importance on them. Our own data indicate that the types which earn the most are not necessarily the happiest at work, and larger studies have found that societies which place more emphasis on family and relationships are happier overall than societies which value earning above all else (of which the U.S. is the most obvious example).³⁸

It is important to remember that while work is a significant part of life, it is still only one part. For some people, it is more central than for others, and personality typing can help us to understand why. ENTJs may find it rewarding to work long hours and doggedly climb the corporate ladder. But perhaps one reason ISFPs don't perform well on measures of career success is that they are busy succeeding elsewhere—with happy families, warm friendships, and active hobbies and leisure interests.

This is not to say that we have evidence that there is an inverse relationship between success at work and success outside of work; we don't. But it is useful to remember—especially within our work-obsessed American society—that a high income is not the ultimate measure of a life well lived. Some types, particularly the laid-back, affiliative types, may simply not want to make their careers the focus of their lives. This tendency may dispose them toward the bottom of an income ranking, but we do not know what other benefits they may reap from this philosophy.

Our finding that Introverts tend to earn less, possibly because they take on less managerial responsibility, presents an interesting dilemma. As Introvert champion Susan Cain argues, Introverts have many qualities that are often undervalued in the workplace,³⁹ and we are hesitant to place the onus of change on the Introvert himself. It seems short-sighted, and perhaps a bit cruel, to suggest that Introverts must emulate life-of-the-party types if they are to achieve success. Rather, we would prefer to encourage Introverts to seek out industries and workplaces where their gifts are valued.

Although we propose that first and foremost, the goal should be to encourage people to be who they are, it is likely that most people would be interested to learn how they can achieve greater success in the workplace. Perhaps they do not want to do a complete personality overhaul, and they may not aspire to helm a Fortune 500 company, but people of all types are

³⁸ Layard, 2006.

³⁹ Cain, 2013.

probably interested to know what they might do to ensure they are getting all they can out of their time at work. Our data indicate some key areas where these efforts may bear fruit.

For those individuals who wish to set themselves up for greater success in the workplace, it seems safe to recommend that they focus their efforts on cultivating a Judging style—or at least the ability to fake it. As we discussed previously, research based on the Big Five model has shown that the dimension of Conscientiousness (equivalent to Briggs Myers' Judging/Perceiving) is the most strongly correlated to income and overall career achievement.⁴⁰ Indeed, for every Perceiving type in our study, we can see that the corresponding Judging type earns more (ISTJs earn more than ISTPs, ENFJs more than ENFPs, and so on). This demonstrates that if you are a Perceiving type, adopting some key behaviors of your Judging counterpart has a good chance of advancing your success at work.

We should be clear that we are not claiming that people can fundamentally change their personalities. While research has indicated that personalities do shift subtly over time,⁴¹ it is unlikely that anyone can engineer a drastic and sudden change in character. Behavior, on the other hand, is malleable. A Perceiving type can choose to adopt a personal organization system to keep track of schedules and tasks; they can set alarms to be sure to attend meetings on time; they can make checklists to prepare for important events. All of these behaviors come more naturally to Judgers, but they are not the Judgers' exclusive domain. Paying more attention to organization and scheduling at work is something that anyone can do, and is especially likely to bring benefits to people who naturally tend towards a Perceiving style.

Although there is potential to use the results of this study to pigeonhole people, and to assume that some types simply have more potential than others, we hope that these results are taken in the spirit in which they are intended. That is, we hope that this study has helped its readers to understand the qualities that predispose a person to career success, without implying that career success is what makes a person valuable. In the spirit of Isabel Briggs Myers, we hope to encourage people of all types to reflect on what *success* truly means to them.

⁴⁰ Nettle, 2007.

⁴¹ Nettle, 2007.

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APPENDIX

DATA TABLES

Table I: The average incomes for each personality type.

AVERAGE INCOME BY PERSONALITY TYPE

Personality Type	Average Yearly Income
ENFJ	\$50,398
ENFP	\$47,348
ENTJ	\$76,348
ENTP	\$47,850
ESFJ	\$51,714
ESTJ	\$77,219
ESTP & ESFP	\$50,153
INFJ	\$40,976
INFP	\$38,338
INTJ	\$51,915
INTP	\$35,660
ISFJ	\$48,216
ISFP & ISTP	\$32,357
ISTJ	\$58,990

Table II: The average number of people managed or supervised by each personality type.

AVERAGE PEOPLE MANAGED BY EACH PERSONALITY TYPE

Personality Type	Average People Managed
ENFJ	4.12
ENFP	4.22
ENTJ	7.33
ENTP	3.22
ESFJ	3.13
ESPs	5.40
ESTJ	5.49
INFJ	2.82
INFP	1.75
INTJ	2.80
INTP	2.19
ISFJ	3.02
ISPs	1.00
ISTJ	4.54

Table II: The average job satisfaction rating for each personality type, with a value of one indicating “Very Unsatisfied” and a value of five indicating “Very Satisfied.”

AVERAGE JOB SATISFACTION BY PERSONALITY TYPE

Personality Type	Average Satisfaction Rating (1-5)
ENFJ	4.00
ENFP	3.80
ENTJ	3.86
ENTP	3.64
ESFJ	4.19
ESFP	4.07
ESTJ	3.75
ESTP	2.67
INFJ	3.52
INFP	3.16
INTJ	3.53
INTP	3.25
ISFJ	3.79
ISFP	2.46
ISTJ	3.62
ISTP	3.00

Table IV: The representation of various personality types among our entire sample, as compared with our sample of people who reported being self-employed or stay-at-home parents.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Personality Type	Percent of Full Sample	% of Self Employed	% of Stay-Home Parents
ENFJ	12.30	12.20	10.80
ENFP	9.40	12.70	9.20
ENTJ	7.90	8.60	1.50
ENTP	4.80	8.10	2.70
ESFJ	5.70	5.40	7.30
ESFP	1.50	1.10	2.30
ESTJ	3.50	3.50	3.10
ESTP	0.60	0.60	0.40
INFJ	11.60	11.10	16.20
INFP	7.80	8.50	13.10
INTJ	11.00	10.80	4.20
INTP	4.50	5.50	1.90
ISFJ	9.90	6.70	16.20
ISFP	1.70	0.70	1.90
ISTJ	6.50	4.10	8.10
ISTP	1.10	0.60	1.20