

DOES YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE PREDICT YOUR CAREER DESTINY?

A survey of career outcomes among the 16 personality types

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INTRODUCTION

Personality type assessments are one of the most commonly used tools in career planning, valued by career advisors for their strengths-based approach to helping people find satisfying work. Extensive research, much of it based on the MBTI®¹ assessment, has examined occupational trends among the 16 types, and studies have found clear differences in the occupations chosen by people of different personality types.²

However, research into more general career outcomes among the personality types is less common. 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?

Descriptions of the 16 personality types typically include many claims about the various types' predisposition to particular career choices. Some types are described as being especially ambitious and inclined to leadership (i.e. ENTJ and ESTJ),³ others are described as entrepreneurial (ENTPs especially),⁴ while still others are described as particularly nurturing and focused on the task of parenting (i.e. ESFJs).⁵ However, these portrayals are rarely, if ever, supported by specific data.

Our goal in this study was to objectively evaluate the assumptions that we make about the career paths of the 16 personality types. To this end, we aim to do a comprehensive analysis of various career outcomes among the 16 personality types and examine what differences, if any, exist between types.

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

² Schaubhut & Thompson, 2008.

³ Keirsey, 1998.

⁴ Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 2001.

⁵ Keirsey, 1998.

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 first section of the questionnaire was a shortened version of our TypeFinder® personality assessment, which we have previously established⁶ to be a reliable indicator of personality type according to the theories of Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs.

The version of the TypeFinder used for this study 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.

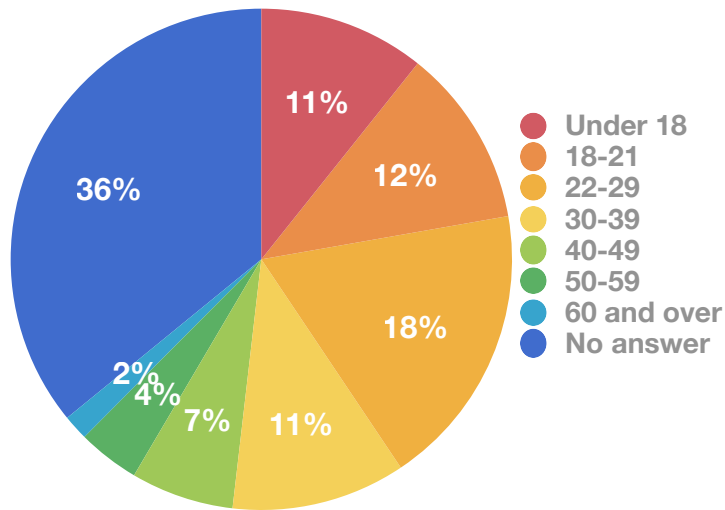
SAMPLE

A total of 25,759 volunteers completed the questionnaire. However, 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.

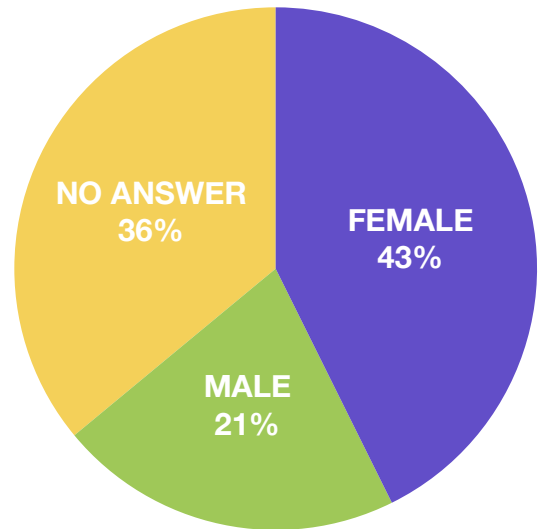
Our overall sample was skewed towards younger subjects, particularly volunteers under 30, and appeared to be composed of about 2/3 women and 1/3 men.

⁶ Owens and Carson, 2015.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE



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 Briggs and Myers, where each preference is signified by its initial, i.e., ISFP, ENTJ, ENFP, and so on.

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,⁷ online traffic data indicates that websites focusing on personality type are visited predominantly by these types.⁸

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 IN SAMPLE

	E N F J	E N F P	E N T J	E N T P	E S F J	E S F P	E S T J	E S T P	I N F J	I N F P	I N T J	I N T P	I S F J	I S F P	I S T J	I S T P
N	1145	917	738	461	540	144	341	65	1056	717	1013	425	907	158	619	101

PERSONALITY TYPE AND INCOME

Our sample included 12,559 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 18, to eliminate confounding due to subject age. Our final sample consisted of 7,534 subjects.

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

⁷ Approximately 11% of the general population according to Myers, et al (2003).

⁸ For instance, the [PersonalityCafe forum](#) has over ten times the number of posts in its [INFP forum](#) as compared to its [ESTP forum](#).

chart is dominated by Thinking Judging (TJ) types, while Introverted Perceiving (IP) types make up the bottom of the income scale.

AVERAGE INCOME BY PERSONALITY TYPE

	E N F J	E N F P	E N T J	E N T P	E S F J	E S F P	E S T J	E S T P	I N F J	I N F P	I N T J	I N T P	I S F J	I S F P	I S T J	I S T P
\$	\$43,742	\$39,305	\$58,117	\$44,165	\$45,991	\$33,604	\$58,097	\$44,231	\$36,575	\$31,508	\$43,653	\$33,831	\$38,749	\$32,608	\$47,643	\$31,406

PERSONALITY TYPE AND MANAGERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The data from respondents who answered the question, “How many people do you supervise or manage at work?” showed pronounced 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.

AVERAGE SUPERVISEES BY PERSONALITY TYPE

	E N F J	E N F P	E N T J	E N T P	E S F J	E S F P	E S T J	E S T P	I N F J	I N F P	I N T J	I N T P	I S F J	I S F P	I S T J	I S T P
#	4.58	3.69	5.76	3.79	4	2.71	4.67	4.13	3.33	2.41	3.4	2.28	2.78	2.24	3.84	2.33

PERSONALITY TYPE AND JOB SATISFACTION

The question, “How satisfied are you with your job?” was multiple choice, with five options from Very Satisfied to Very Dissatisfied. In the table 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.

JOB SATISFACTION RATINGS BY PERSONALITY TYPE (OUT OF 5)

	E N F J	E N F P	E N T J	E N T P	E S F J	E S F P	E S T J	E S T P	I N F J	I N F P	I N T J	I N T P	I S F J	I S F P	I S T J	I S T P
😊	3.94	3.7	3.8	3.58	3.96	3.84	3.83	3.48	3.53	3.24	3.53	3.14	3.63	3.22	3.66	3.17

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.

Our analysis showed that certain personality types were much more likely to report particular employment statuses. For instance, only .5% of ENTJs reported being stay-at-home parents, in comparison with 3.9% of INFPs. Similarly, 13.5% of ENTPs said they were self-employed, while only 3.2% of ISFPs reported the same.

The following table shows the percentage of each personality type reporting the various options for employment status. The Retired and Disabled statuses were omitted from this table due to small sample size.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY PERSONALITY TYPE

	Employed	Self-employed	Unemployed	Student	Stay-at-home parent
ENFJ	64.3%	7.9%	4.1%	18.9%	2%
ENFP	59.4%	10.8%	4.3%	21.7%	2.3%
ENTJ	68.8%	8.7%	3%	18.5%	0.5%
ENTP	51.4%	13.5%	6.7%	25.9%	1.3%
ESFJ	65.1%	7.5%	3.6%	17.1%	3%
ESFP	64%	5.8%	6.4%	18.6%	3.5%
ESTJ	69.3%	8%	3.4%	16.5%	2.1%
ESTP	57.7%	7%	4.2%	26.8%	1.4%
INFJ	59.3%	7.7%	5%	22.7%	3.2%
INFP	52.6%	8.7%	7.9%	25%	3.9%
INTJ	59%	7.9%	4.6%	26%	0.9%
INTP	48.4%	9.6%	7.7%	31.7%	1%
ISFJ	65%	5.4%	4.9%	18.3%	3.8%
ISFP	62.4%	3.2%	8.1%	19.4%	2.7%
ISTJ	68.7%	5.1%	3.6%	18.5%	2.9%
ISTP	55%	4.2%	4.2%	33.3%	2.5%

DISCUSSION

Contrary to the claims of critics such as Forbes contributor Todd Essig—who wrote in 2014 that the MBTI® “has no more reliability and validity than a good Tarot card reading”—our study found that personality type has a significant correlation with a wide range of career outcomes, from salary to managerial responsibility to job satisfaction. Personality type may even affect the major inflection points of our careers—whether we start our own businesses, experience periods of unemployment, or take time off work to raise a family.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND INCOME

The association between average income and personality type is striking, if not surprising. We found that types that are often described as driven, ambitious, and dominant, specifically ENTJs and ESTJs, were in fact at the top of the charts when it came to average income. In contrast, types often described as sensitive, compassionate, and gentle (i.e. INFP, ISFP) earned significantly less overall.

Our analysis also showed differences in income associated with individual personality dimensions. Overall, Extraverts, Thinkers, and Judgers earned more than their counterparts.

THE GENDER EFFECT

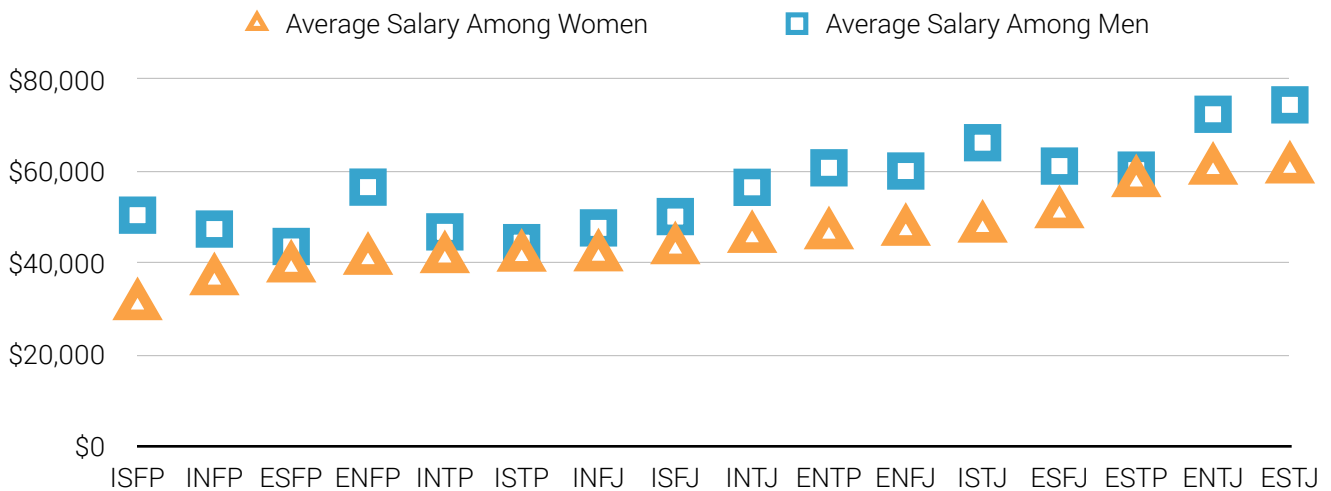
Because certain personality types are predominantly male,⁹ and it is well established that salaries for men outpace those for women,¹⁰ we wondered to what extent our data on income among the types might be confounded by gender. That is, do ESTJs earn more because they are ESTJs, or because they are (mostly) men?

To answer this question we analyzed income data for men and women separately. We concluded that gender was not a significant confounding factor, as the higher-earning types were similar for both women and men.

⁹ For instance, according to Myers et al (2003), about 2/3 of ESTJs are men.

¹⁰ Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2009.

Across all types, men earned more than women, on average. However, interestingly, this gender wage gap varied across types, with some types showing a large gap between male and female salaries (i.e. ENFP) and other types showing very little difference at all (i.e. ESTP).



PERSONALITY TYPE AND JOB SATISFACTION

Our analysis showed some interesting trends in regards to job satisfaction among the 16 types. Average satisfaction varied widely, with ESFJs reporting average satisfaction levels of nearly 4/5. On the other end of the spectrum, INTPs gave their satisfaction an average rating of just 3.14/5.

In general, personality types that were found to earn more were also found to be more satisfied, with one notable exception: although Thinkers earn more, on average, Feelers tend to be more satisfied. We theorize that this has to do with the Feeler's tendency to choose work that is personally meaningful and consistent with their values. In the long run, this strategy may produce a deeper sense of satisfaction than choosing work based on more conventional factors such as salary, prestige, or opportunities for advancement.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND MANAGERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Although people of all personality types can be successful leaders, some types are much more likely to be found in leadership positions than others. ENTJs, usually described as natural leaders, bear out that stereotype with an average of 5.76 employees reporting to them. The

ENTJ's polar opposite, the ISFP, is the least likely to manage a large team, with an average of just 2.24 employees reporting to them.

Overall, Extraverts, Intuitives, Thinkers, and Judgers are more likely to manage larger teams when compared to their counterparts.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Our data showed that in addition to influencing various aspects of career achievement, personality type may affect the larger decisions that we make in regards to our careers. When we looked at the prevalence of stay-at-home parents, self-employed people, and even the unemployed, we found significant differences among types.

Personality Types of Stay-at-Home Parents

Certain types, including INFPs, ISFJs, and ESFPs, were much more likely than the average to report that they were currently staying at home to take care of their children.

On the other hand, all the NT types (ENTJ, INTJ, ENTP, and INTP) were significantly less likely to report that they were stay-at-home parents. This was true even when we controlled for gender, indicating that NT women are less likely than women of other types to choose to become full-time mothers.

Personality Types of Entrepreneurs

Among people who reported being self-employed, ENTPs were significantly overrepresented—strong evidence that the typical description of this type as entrepreneurial is, in fact, accurate. Also heavily represented among this group were ENFPs and INTPs.

All of the Introverted Sensing types, however, were much less likely than average to report being self-employed. ISFPs were the least likely of all types to claim self-employment.

Personality Types of the Unemployed

We also found some interesting trends among those who reported being unemployed. ENTJs, ESTJs, and ISTJs—the three types who came out on top in terms of average income—were much less likely than other types to report that they were unemployed.

On the other end of the spectrum, ISFPs were the most likely of all types to report being unemployed. INFPs, INTPs, ENTPs, and ESFPs were all more likely than average to report that they were out of a job. Overall, being a Perceiver seems to be a significant factor in predicting a person's tendency to be unemployed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER PLANNING

We hope that these findings can help individuals become more aware and accepting of their own career goals, whether they aspire to scale the highest reaches of the corporate ladder or prefer to simply find an occupation that allows them to earn a decent living while maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

Often, crucial career decisions are made even more anxiety-producing by the expectations of society. Young people are pushed to choose high-earning careers with the potential to rise through the ranks of management—whether or not this is the type of career they would most enjoy. New parents who are weighing their options for work and childcare feel pressure from family, friends, and even complete strangers to make the choice that will show they are “good” parents. Those who dream of self-employment may anticipate others' disapproval at leaving the stability of a job, even though their true dream is to strike out on their own.

Our hope is that this report can validate a wide variety of career choices, and demonstrate that people who do not follow the traditional path are not misguided, but instead are likely making choices that are perfectly in tune with their personality characteristics. While banking long hours and accumulating multiple employees may suit ESTJs, that is not a path that will be satisfying to everyone. In fact, several types report more job satisfaction despite earning less.

Nothing in this report is intended to discourage a reader from pursuing a particular path. While we can observe trends among types, that does not mean that an ISFP can't earn a six-figure salary, or an INTP can't find satisfaction staying home with their children. However, we do hope that readers will feel validated and encouraged in their own career dreams, especially those that do not fit the usual 9-to-5 mold. As we have observed, there is a path for everyone—and your personality type may be the first clue to figuring out yours.

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