

The District's Humanities Majors at Work: What They Earn, What They Do

In the first study of its kind, the Humanities Indicators developed a series of [profiles](#) about the career outcomes of humanities majors residing in the District of Columbia and the other 49 states, drawing on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Among the key findings:

- The 50,289 humanities graduates residing in D.C. and working full-time account for 17% of the District's full-time workforce (looking across all the states, the average share is 4%). Bear in mind that 75% of D.C.'s full-time workers have a bachelor's degree (an exceptionally large share relative to the states), so humanities graduates account for approximately 23% of that share.
- The median earnings of humanities majors in the District's full-time workforce (\$105,313 per year) are 159% higher than the median earnings of workers with just a high school degree (\$40,679). Even those at the bottom quartile of earnings for graduates from the humanities (\$72,646) are earning \$31,966 more than the median for those in the workforce with just a high school diploma. And one in four humanities graduates in the District earns more than \$154,489.
- The median earnings for humanities majors in D.C. are similar to or higher than the earnings of graduates from the behavioral and social sciences, natural sciences, business, arts, and education. Engineering graduates earn substantially more than college graduates from every other field, both nationally and in D.C.
- The unemployment rate for humanities majors is similar to other college graduates in the District at 2%, and considerably lower than the rate for those in the labor force with just a high school degree (18%).
- Humanities graduates in the District are most likely to be found in management positions, with 22% employed in that category.
- Older humanities graduates make considerably more than their younger counterparts. Full-time workers aged 22–26 have median earnings of \$55,882, but that rises to \$117,351 for those aged 30–59.

- Humanities graduates in D.C. with an advanced degree have a 39% boost in median earnings (rising from \$84,570 for full-time workers with just a bachelor's degree to \$117,351 for workers with a higher degree).
- Areas of employment with substantial shares of humanities graduates are the legal profession (where humanities graduates account for 34% of bachelor's degree holders employed in those jobs) and museum/library professions (where they are 59% of college graduates in those occupations). Approximately 26% of college graduates working in the not-for-profit sector majored in the humanities.

Note that unless otherwise specified, earnings and unemployment estimates are for workers aged 25–59.

Earnings and occupation are not the only measure of success in one's career or life. See the recent [Workforce and Beyond](#) report from the Indicators for measures of job and life satisfaction for humanities graduates.

These profiles are being released for the National Humanities Conference, which starts in Indianapolis on October 26, 2023. See the project [home page](#) for additional details about our methodology, as well as supplemental information later in the fall, including earnings estimates by gender, race/ethnicity, and humanities discipline.

Finally, if you have any questions about this profile, the larger project, or the Humanities Indicators, please contact Robert Townsend (the Director of Humanities, Arts, and Culture Programs at the Academy) at rtownsend@amacad.org.