

## South Dakota'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 South Dakota and the other 49 states, drawing on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

### Among the key findings:

- The 8,221 humanities graduates residing in South Dakota and working full-time account for 3% of the state's full-time workforce (looking across all the states, the average share is 4%). Bear in mind that only 33% of the state's full-time workers have a bachelor's degree, so humanities graduates account for approximately 8% of that share.
- The median earnings of humanities majors in the state's full-time workforce (\$53,526 per year) are 30% higher than the median earnings of workers with just a high school degree (\$41,197). One in four humanities graduates in the state earns more than \$74,772.
- The median earnings for humanities majors in South Dakota are similar to or higher than the earnings of graduates from the behavioral and social sciences, arts, and education. Their earnings are lower than those of graduates from the natural sciences and business (by 19% and 17%, respectively). Engineering graduates earn substantially more than college graduates from every other field, both nationally and in South Dakota.
- Due to data limitations, it was not possible to estimate the unemployment rate for the humanities graduates alone, but the rate for humanities majors in combination with arts and behavioral/social sciences graduates is 2%.
- Humanities graduates in South Dakota are most likely to be found in service and sales occupations, with 16% employed in that category.
- Older humanities graduates make considerably more than their younger counterparts. Full-time workers aged 22–26 have median earnings of \$24,485, but that rises to \$59,306 for those aged 30–59.
- Humanities graduates in South Dakota with an advanced degree have a 34% boost in median earnings (rising from \$46,548 for full-time workers with just a bachelor's degree to \$62,525 for workers with a higher degree).
- An area of employment with a substantial share of humanities graduates is the legal profession (where humanities graduates account for 21% of bachelor's degree

holders employed in those jobs). And approximately 9% of college graduates working in the not-for-profit sector majored in the humanities.

Note that unless otherwise specified, earnings estimates are for workers aged 25–59. Unemployment estimates are for those aged 22–65.

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 as part of 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](mailto:rtownsend@amacad.org).