

20 Highest-Paying Careers

By Anthony Balderrama, CareerBuilder.com writer



Celebrity blogs and magazines are plastered with pictures of high-profile [actors](#), [athletes](#) and [business](#) leaders, so you might think that these occupations are your only route to wealth.

If you want to make several million dollars for a few months' work, then, yes, you probably should star in a Hollywood blockbuster. But if you're looking for careers to lead you to financial success, remember to put everything into perspective.

You will rarely find a [physician](#) making as much money as George Clooney, but remember that he's one of only a few celebrity actors. The majority of actors aren't recognizable faces and they surely are not earning seven figures. The odds of being a famous athlete or [CEO](#) are just as slim.

If money's what you're after, then set your sights on more realistic goals by looking at the everyday occupations around you. The 20 highest-paying jobs in the U.S. are within your grasp. That's not to say they're easily attained -- they all require hard work and years of experience, and most of them require extensive education. Still, your odds of becoming a [physicist](#) are probably better than becoming quarterback for the New England Patriots.

Hopefully your name's at the top of the draft picks next season. Until then, look over this list of the 20 highest-paying jobs, according to CBSalary.com, and their projected employment in 2016. The education and experience for each of these jobs vary.

Physicians provide health care to patients in private practices or clinics.

Mean annual salary: \$147,405*

2006 employment (including surgeons): 633,000**

2016 projected employment (including surgeons): 723,000

Top corporate controllers supervise the financial and budget departments of corporations and create financial reports that assess the company's financial situation.

Mean annual salary: \$115,818

2006 employment (all financial managers): 506,000

2016 projected employment (all financial managers): 570,000

Engineering managers oversee the engineers designing and producing products and machinery.

Mean annual salary: \$100,038

2006 employment: 187,000

2016 projected employment: 201,000

Corporate attorneys work for corporations and do trial work and consultation, and handle all legal issues that impact the company.

Mean annual salary: \$93,250

2006 employment (all attorneys): 761,000

2016 projected employment (all attorneys): 844,000

Physicists observe the laws of physics, develop new theories and apply their knowledge to the development of products and scientific processes.

Mean annual salary: \$93,073

2006 employment: 17,000

2016 projected employment: 18,000

Systems and programming managers draw up plans for an organization's computer network and its security.

Mean annual salary: \$90,138

2006 employment: n/a***

2016 projected employment: n/a

Pharmacists fill prescriptions for patients and administer medical advice in pharmacies.

Mean annual salary: \$89,564

2006 employment: 243,000

2016 projected employment: 296,000

Marketing managers create the marketing plan for a company or organization, including how it will be publicized and who the target audience is.

Mean annual salary: \$87,038

2006 employment: 167,000

2016 projected employment: 192,000

Financial analysis managers assess the state of financial investments and decide what course of action should be taken based on economic data and trends.

Mean annual salary: \$86,739

2006 employment: 506,000

2016 projected employment: 570,000

Lead computer programmers oversee a group of programmers and delegate work as needed, often for a specific project.

Mean annual salary: \$80,182

2006 employment (all programmers): 435,000

2016 projected employment (all programmers): 417,000

Lead systems analysts oversee a group of analysts who address computer problems for an organization and ensure that the computer system fulfills the demands of that organization.

Mean annual salary: \$79,479

2006 employment (all analysts): 504,000

2016 projected employment (all analysts): 650,000

Personnel managers are involved in the creation, development and implementation of human resources policies and activities for an organization.

Mean annual salary: \$77,984

2006 employment: n/a

2016 projected employment: n/a

Benefits managers ensure that employee benefits programs are administered properly within an organization.

Mean annual salary: \$75,425

2006 employment: 49,000

2016 projected employment: 55,000

Electrical engineers are involved in the planning, development and creation of electrical equipment.

Mean annual salary: \$75,094

2006 employment: 153,000

2016 projected employment: 163,000

Sales area managers are in charge of an organization's sales group, including who is assigned to what territory and what the sales strategy is.

Mean annual salary: \$73,146

2006 employment: 318,000

2016 projected employment: 351,000

Chemical engineers use their knowledge of chemicals to handle any issues that arise during the production of chemicals or biochemicals or of products that use chemicals in a variety of industries.

Mean annual salary: \$71,942

2006 employment: 30,000

2016 projected employment: 33,000

Purchasing managers often supervise purchasing agents in the purchase of a good, such as steel or lumber.

Mean annual salary: \$69,980

2006 employment: 70,000

2016 projected employment: 72,000

Mechanical engineers are involved in the creation, production and use of mechanical equipment and machines that vary from everyday consumer goods to large-scale, commercial items.

Mean annual salary: \$68,775

2006 employment: 226,000

2016 projected employment: 235,000

Civil engineers oversee the design and construction of public structures, such as roads, airports and bridges.

Mean annual salary: \$61,681

2006 employment: 256,000

2016 projected employment: 302,000

Computer programmers create and troubleshoot the programs that computers use to perform tasks.

Mean annual salary: \$60,682

2006 employment: 435,000

2016 projected employment: 417,000

*Salary figures based on data from CBSalary.com.

**Employment projections based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

***Employment data pertaining to this specific position was unavailable.

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