

# THE INCOME EFFECT OF PERSONALITY TYPE



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# HOW DOES YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE AFFECT YOUR INCOME?

How much we earn depends on many factors, most of them fairly obvious. We all know that pursuing higher education, gaining on-the-job experience, and demonstrating leadership skills can boost our paychecks. But did you know that how much you earn may also depend on your personality type?

Multiple studies have demonstrated a link between income and personality traits such as extraversion, goal orientation, and the willingness to put one's own interests ahead of the interests of others. In this report, we will outline the results of our research on income and personality type, as described by the theories of Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs. Although Myers and Briggs' theory is not widely used in academic research, it is the personality theory most familiar to the general population, and so allows us to describe the associations between personality and earning potential in a way that is easily understood.

For those unfamiliar with the theory, Myers and Briggs proposed four major dimensions of personality, each of which is described in terms of two ends of a spectrum:

- **Extraversion vs. Introversion** describes how a person gains and manages their energy: through interacting with others, or by being solitary and quiet.
- **Sensing vs. Intuition** describes how a person processes information: with a concrete and matter-of-fact style, or through imagination and inference.
- **Thinking vs. Feeling** describes how a person makes decisions: based on logic, or based on moral and personal concerns.
- **Judging vs. Perceiving** describes how a person organizes their life: in a structured, orderly manner, or a looser, more spontaneous manner.

A person's scores on each dimension are combined to create 16 distinct personality types, each coded by the initials of the four preferences. Thus, a person who prefers Introversion, Intuition, Feeling, and Judging would be called an INFJ.

Thanks to previous research investigating similar personality factors, we can expect that Myers and Briggs' four dimensions of personality will have a clear impact on income. For instance, academic research has shown that higher earners tend to be more focused on long-term goals, a trait that Myers and Briggs would classify as part of a Judging preference. In



interpreting these effects through Myers and Briggs' popular theory, we hope that our analysis can provide individuals with an accessible and actionable understanding of how their personality traits may be impacting their earning potential.

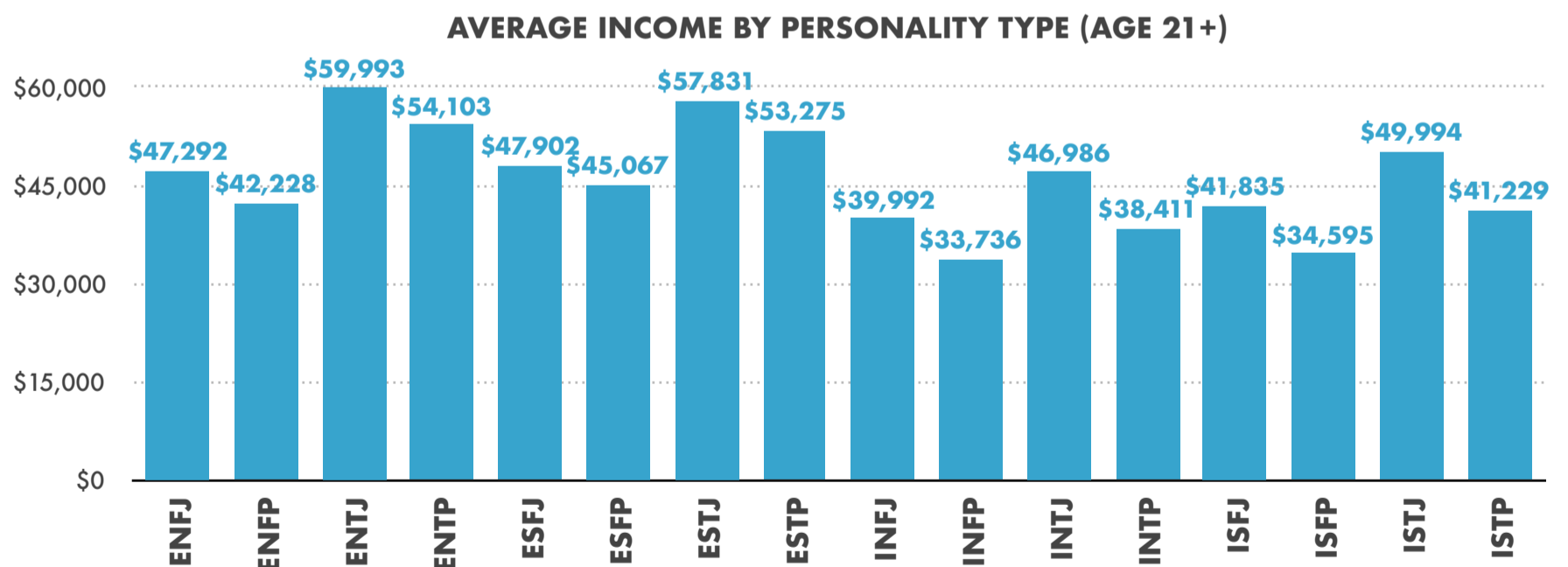
## METHODS

We conducted this research using data provided by 72,331 respondents to our online TypeFinder® personality assessment from late 2018 to early 2019.

The TypeFinder personality assessment is a measure of personality type based on the theories of Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs. The assessment has been shown to be valid and reliable. It assesses preferences on each of the four major dimensions of personality as well as 23 more detailed facets of personality, which allow more insight into specific traits and characteristics.

## FINDINGS

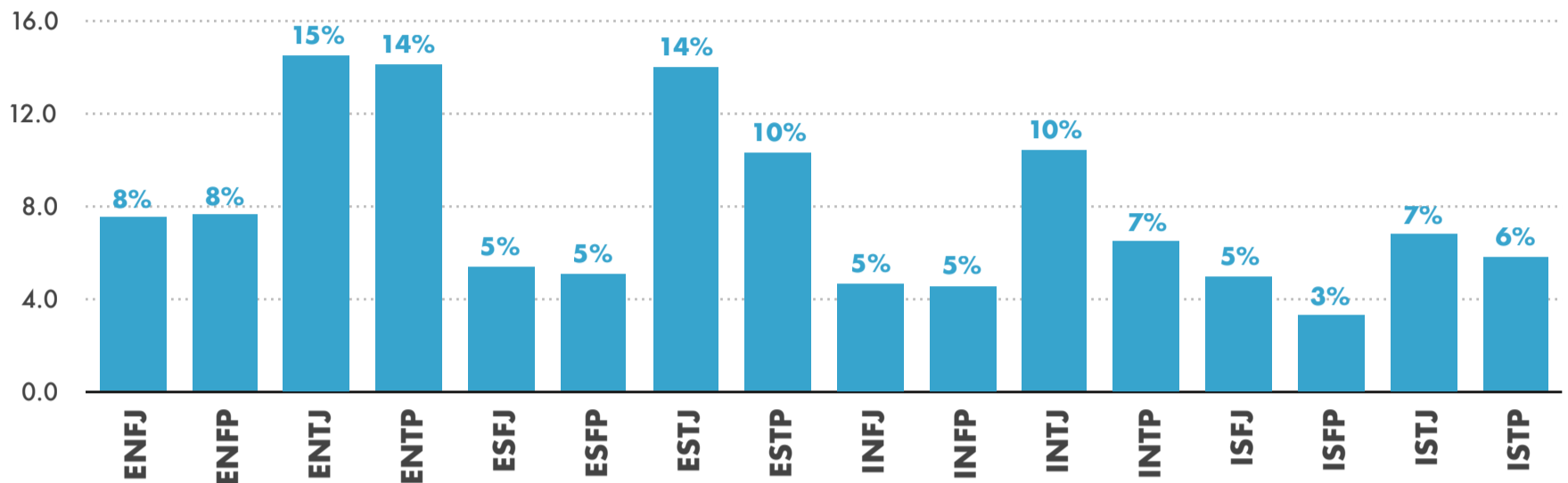
To examine the connection between personality type and income, we first estimated an average income for each of the personality types, using data provided by respondents over the age of 21.



This analysis showed that income was highly variable from one personality type to another, with some types much more likely to achieve high earnings. Extraverted and Thinking types dominated the top of the earnings charts, with ENTJs earning the highest salaries of all.

Looking at this a different way, we can see the percentage of each personality type which falls into the category of very high earners. For respondents in the midst of their earning years, ages 30-59, we calculated the percentage of people earning a very high salary (\$150,000 USD and up).

**PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE EARNING \$150K+ (RESPONDENTS AGE 30-59)**

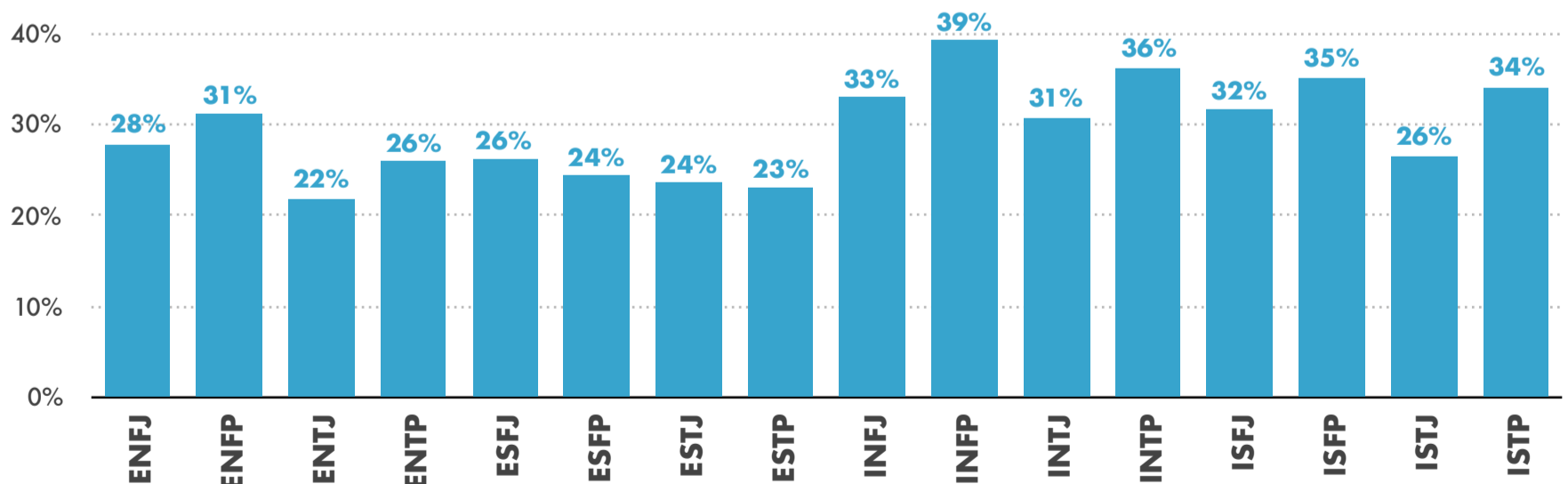


The Extraverted Thinking types again dominated the ranks of the very high earners, along with INTJs.

## WHY SOME PERSONALITY TYPES EARN LESS

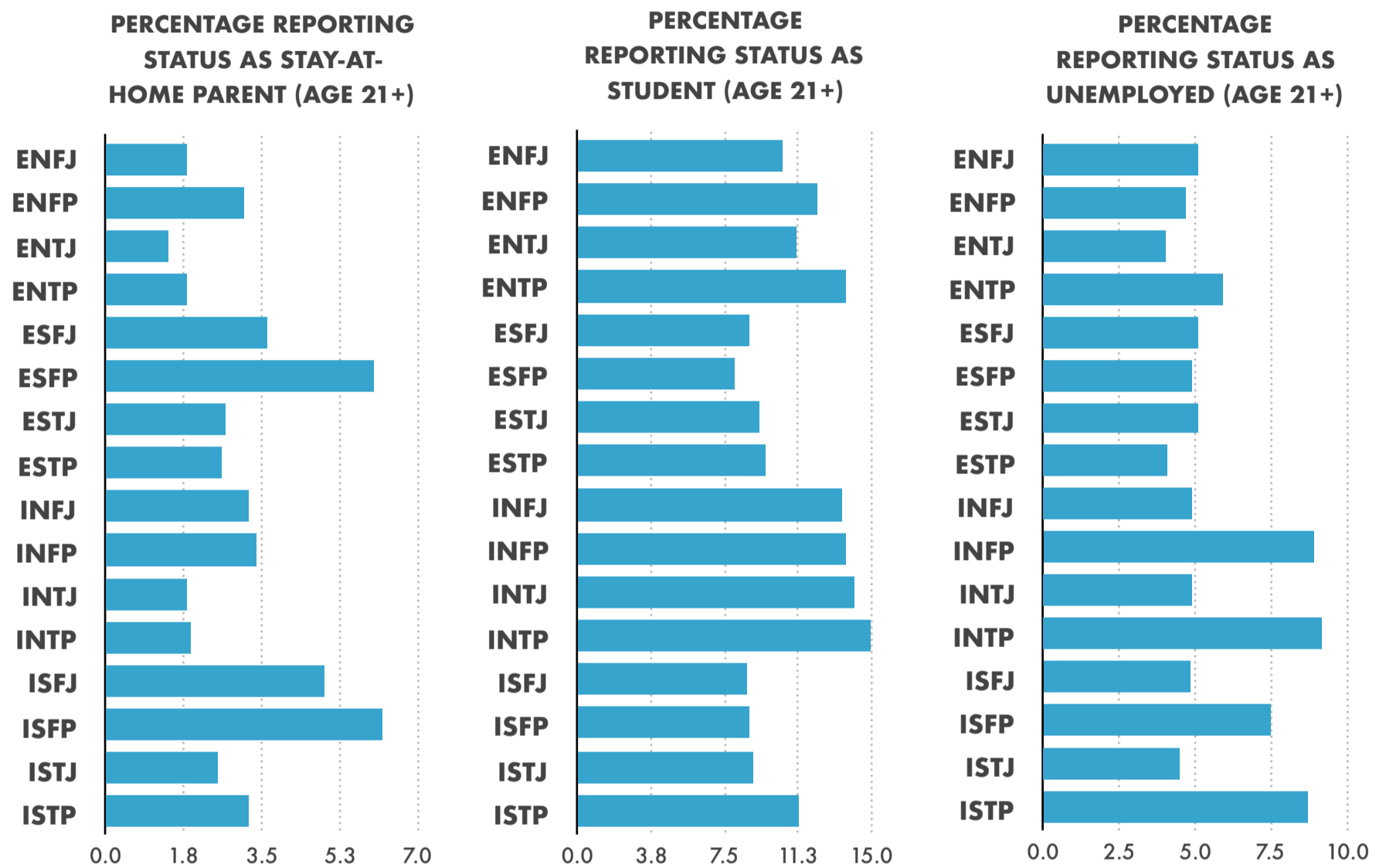
Some personality types were quite a bit more likely to earn very low salaries or no salary at all.

**PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE EARNING LESS THAN \$15K PER YEAR (RESPONDENTS AGE 21+)**



For respondents over age 21, we found that overall, Introverts were more likely to earn very little as compared to Extraverts. Perceivers were also more likely to be low earners.

Digging into employment status data revealed that different personality types varied in their reasons for earning little income. ISFPs, ISFJs, and ESFPs were much more likely to report that they were staying at home to parent their children. All four of the Introverted Intuitive types (INFJ, INFP, INTJ, and INTP) were more likely to report that they were students, while Introverted Perceiving types were more likely to say that they were simply unemployed.

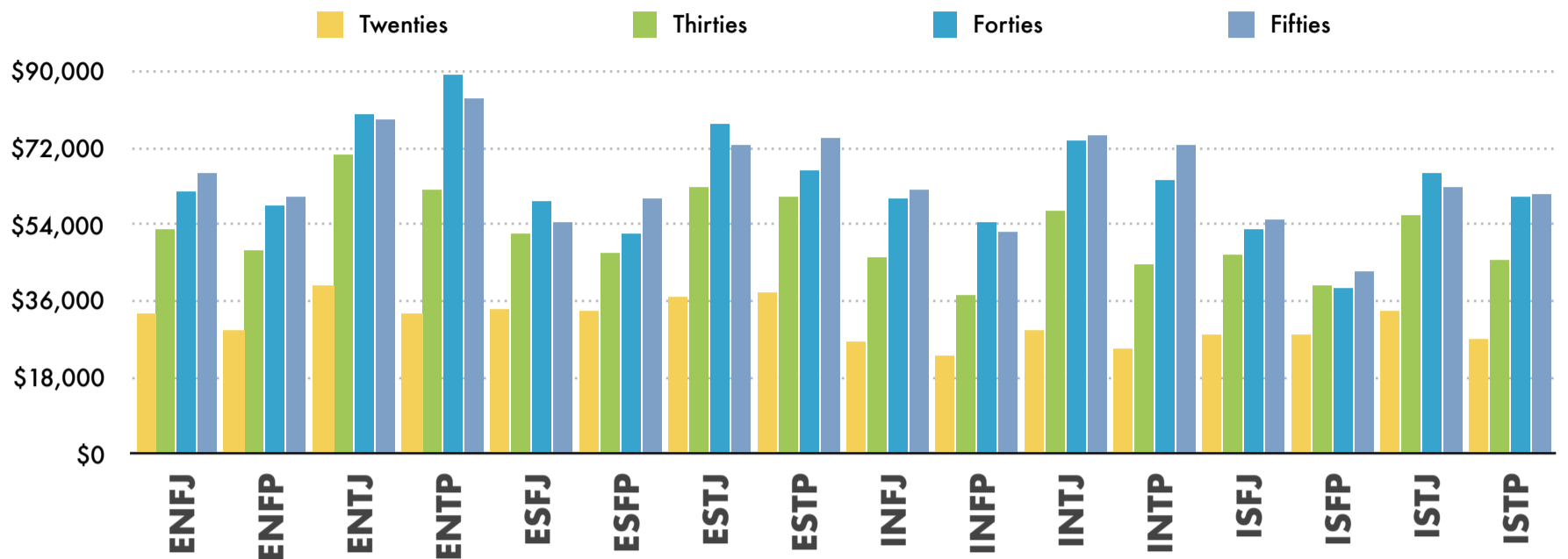


## INCOME OVER TIME

Personality factors have an impact in the career decisions people make, including how long they spend on their education and whether they take time off to raise families. It follows, then, that we might see different trends in earning power over the lifespan for different personality types. To investigate this, we looked at average income for each personality type in each decade of a typical working life.

This analysis showed that different personality types do have distinct career arcs. ENTJs, who tend to be the highest earners overall, start strong: they out-earn all the other types in their twenties and thirties. However, once we reach the 40s, ENTJs' earnings are eclipsed by

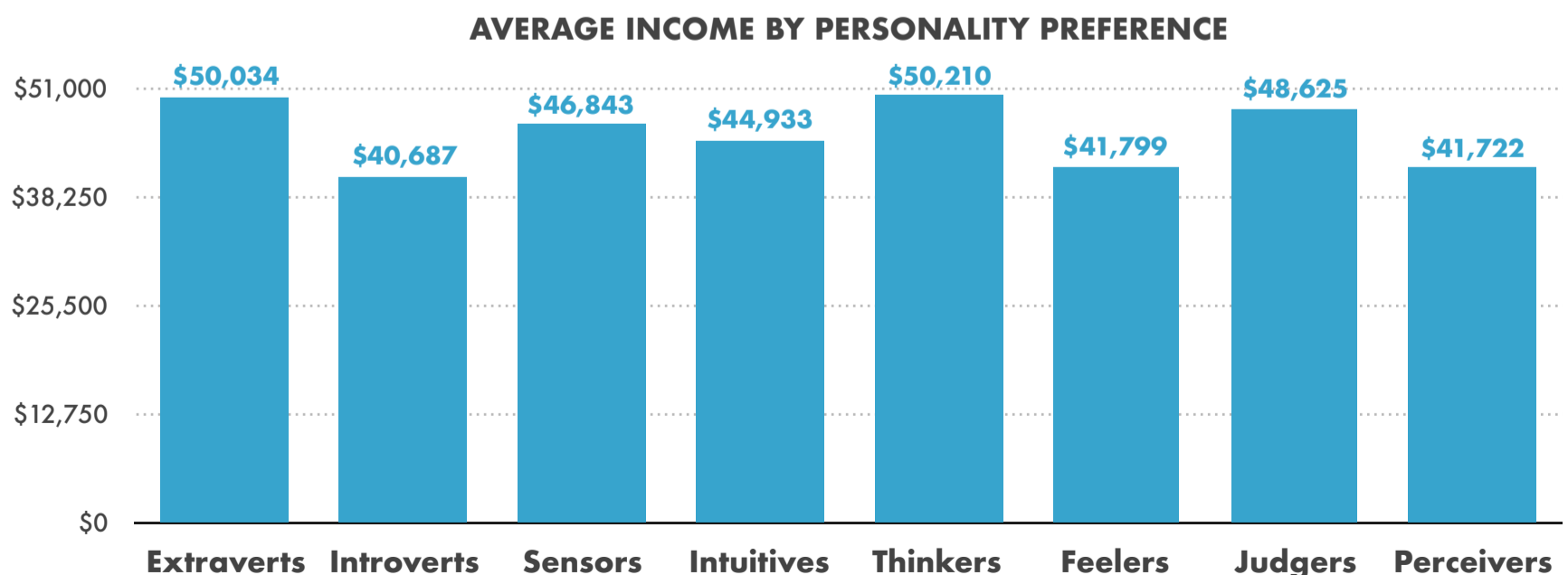
late-blooming ENTPs, who are fairly average earners until they reach their stride in middle age and become the highest-earning types of all.



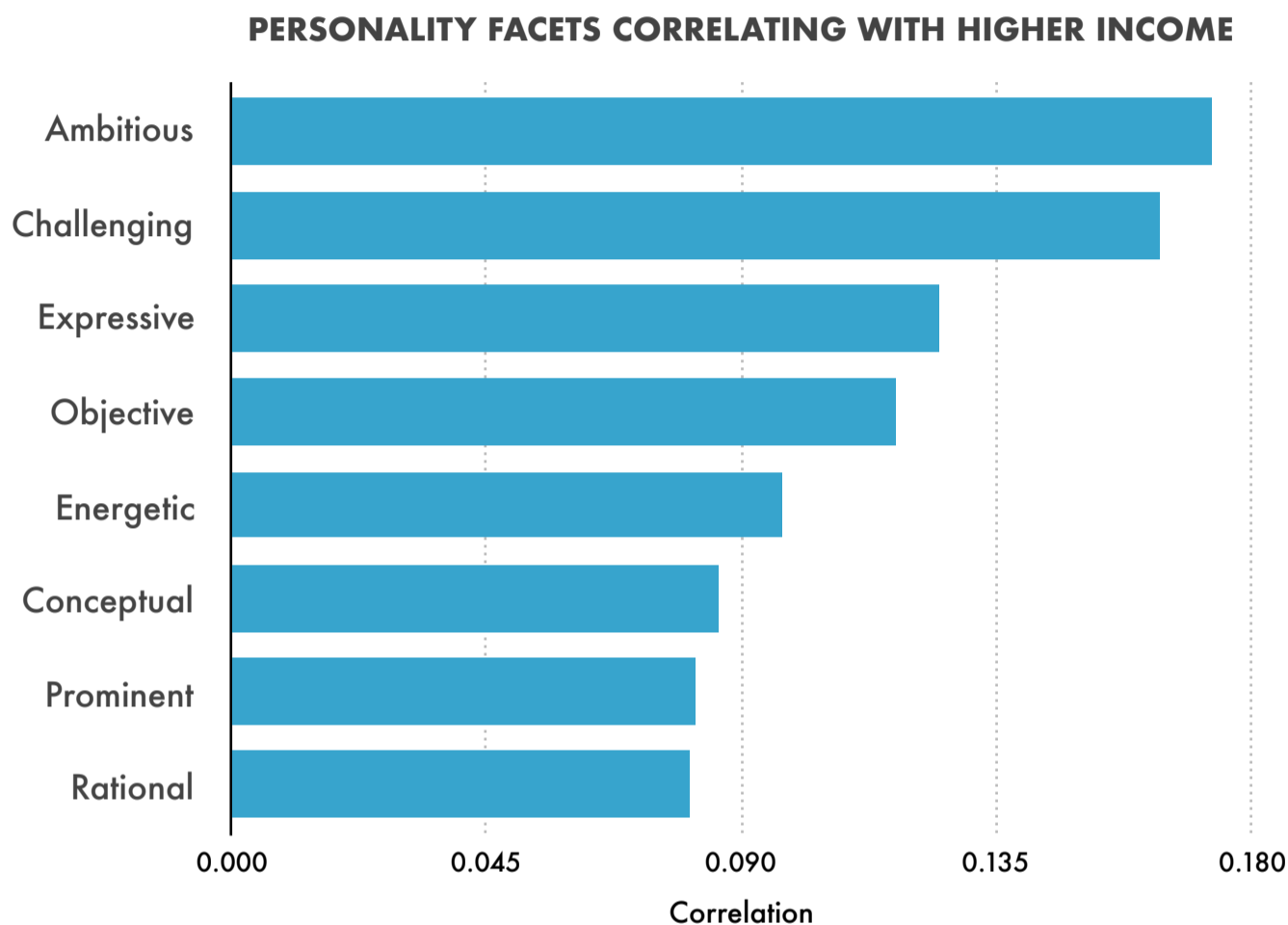
Other late-blooming types include ESTP, INTJ, and INTP, who all tend to earn their highest incomes in their fifties. ESFPs, ISFPs, and ISFJs also have incomes which reach a peak later in life, perhaps because these types are more likely to take time off to care for children in the midst of their earning years.

## THE TRAITS THAT PREDICT HIGH EARNINGS

Extraversion, Thinking, and Judging preferences were associated with higher incomes. This finding duplicates existing research showing similar trends. In the chart below, we can see that having an Extraverted preference commands a premium of nearly \$10,000 in income. Thinkers out-earn Feelers by nearly \$8,000 per year.



However, this connection is not as simple as it seems. This research was conducted using the TypeFinder personality assessment, which breaks down each of the four major personality dimensions into 5-6 more detailed facets. With access to this more granular data, we were able to analyze more closely the personality traits that correlate with high income. We discovered that specific personality facets were more closely tied to income, while others were not correlated at all.



Within the dimension of Extraversion, the facets that are most correlated with high earnings are the Expressive, Energetic, and Prominent facets.

- **Expressive** indicates a person who is quick to speak and shares their thoughts and feelings readily.
- **Energetic** describes a person who has a high energy level and prefers to keep busy.
- **Prominent** describes a person who likes to be in the public eye and values social status over privacy.

Other facets of Extraversion did not seem to have much impact on income. Friendly people have incomes on par with the more standoffish. Earnings also did not seem to be associated with a person's tendency to experience positive emotions like joy or excitement, which is a core aspect of Extraversion.



Most aspects of the Sensing/Intuition dimension did not seem to be correlated with higher income. The exception was the **Conceptual** facet, which indicates a person who likes to see the big picture and is interested in understanding theories and principles.

Within the Thinking dimension, we found a few facets tied to income:

- **Challenging** denotes a person who does not avoid conflict and enjoys debate.
- **Objective** describes a person who makes decisions based on data and rational arguments, rather than personal concerns.
- **Rational** indicates a person who prefers not to get emotional or be around others who are expressing strong emotions.

In contrast, several facets of Thinking were mostly irrelevant to income, including how likely someone is to forgive others, and how likely they are to cooperate rather than work alone.

Within the Judging dimension, one key facet stood out as a relatively strong predictor of high income: **Ambitious**, which describes a person who sets lofty goals for themselves and is highly driven by achievement. Other Judging facets showed weaker associations or none at all. An individual's level of discipline and resistance to distractions had a positive correlation, but only a very small one. One's preferences for following a schedule and maintaining a high level of personal organization appeared mostly irrelevant to income.

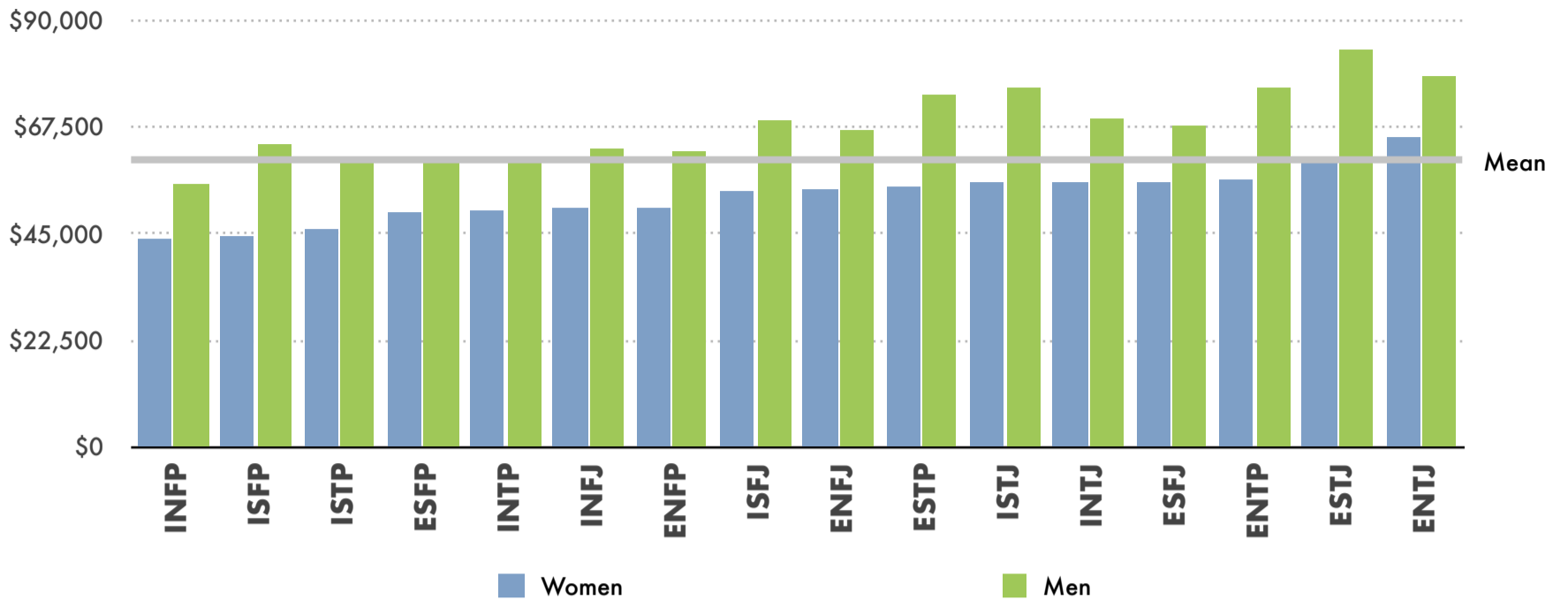
These findings point to the surprising conclusion that ambitious goal-setting appears to be the primary reason that Judgers tend to out-earn Perceivers—more important, even, than persistence or meticulous organization.

## **PERSONALITY AND THE GENDER PAY GAP**

In 2018, the Pew Research Center found that, on average, women earn 85% of what men earn. We were interested to explore how this gender pay gap might shift depending on personality factors.

We first looked at average income by personality type, considering men and women separately, for employed U.S.-based respondents over the age of 21. While personality type had a large effect on income for both genders, the effect of personality type paled in comparison to the effect of simply being a man or a woman. Men of nearly all types earned over the average income for the sample as a whole, while all but two types of women earned below the average.

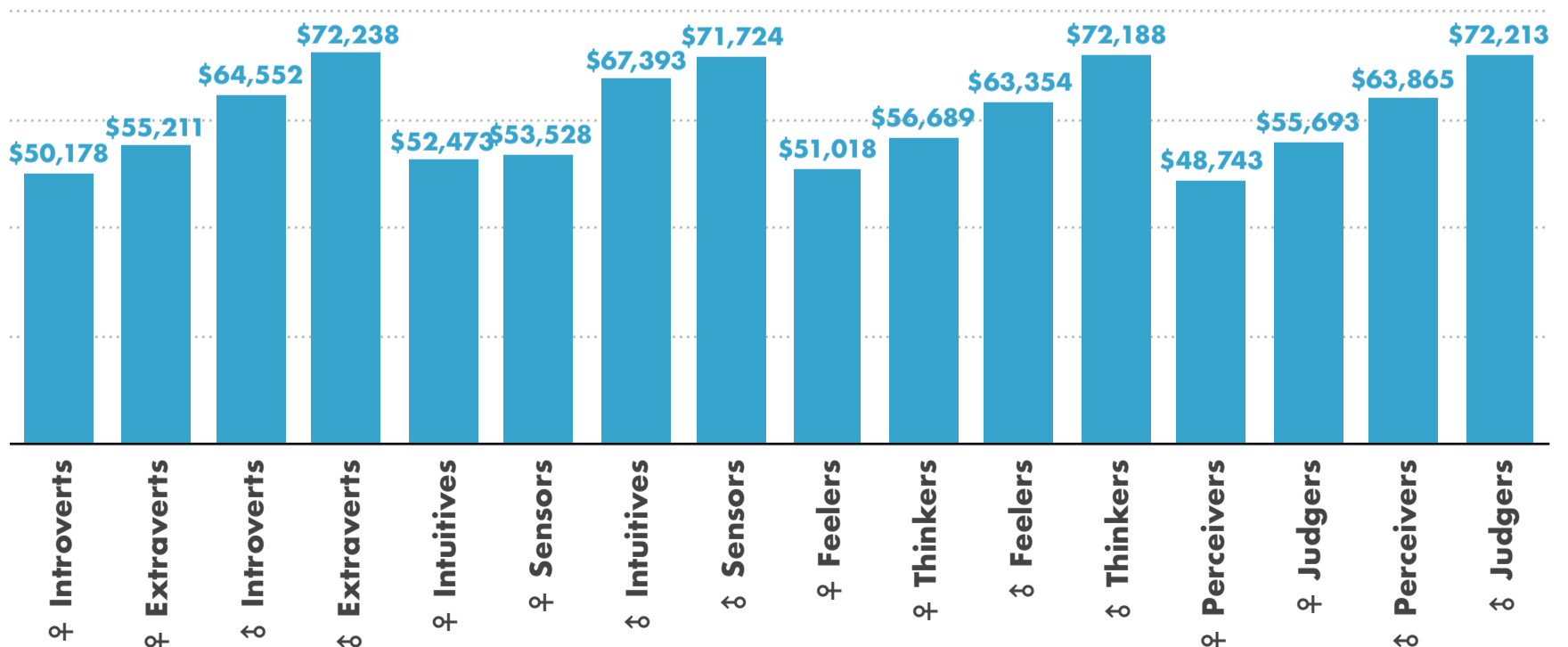
### AVERAGE SALARIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN, BY PERSONALITY TYPE



Some researchers have suggested that the gender pay gap may be due to personality differences between men and women. For instance, women’s higher level of agreeableness may make them less prone to negotiate salary. However, we found little evidence to indicate that women attain incomes on par with men when they possess certain personality traits.

Although we know that Extraversion, Thinking, and Judging are associated with higher incomes, we found that women who exhibit these high-earning preferences still earn less than men who do *not* possess these traits. Overall, Extraversion confers an income advantage; nonetheless, Introverted men earn more than Extraverted women. The same holds true for Feeling men, who out-earn Thinking women, and Perceiving men, who earn more than Judging women.

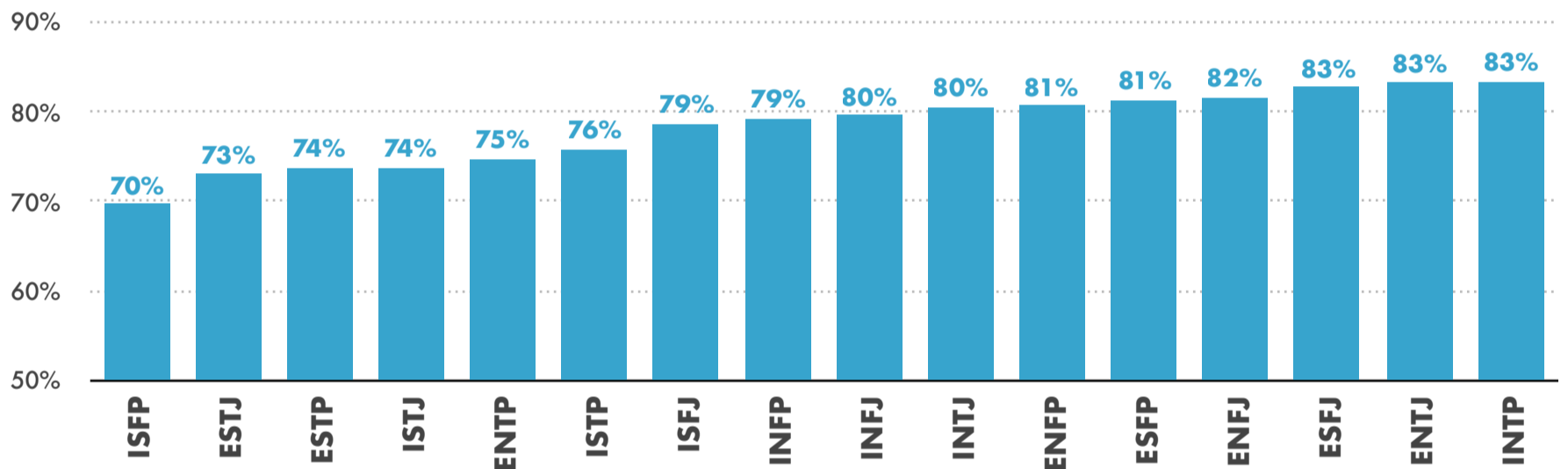
### AVERAGE INCOME BY PERSONALITY PREFERENCE FOR EMPLOYED U.S. MEN AND WOMEN AGE 21+



Among women, the only two personality types to attain earnings that exceeded the overall average were ESTJ and ENTJ, types which share all three of the personality preferences known to boost income. This suggests that women must possess the full complement of advantageous personality traits in order to approach the incomes of men.

Looking at more specific facets of personality produced similar conclusions. For both men and women, being Ambitious was the trait most associated with higher income. Ambitious women earn \$14,338 more than their more easygoing counterparts, while Ambitious men see an income advantage of \$19,240 when compared to less driven men. However, being Ambitious is not nearly as beneficial to income as simply being a man. The most Ambitious women in our sample (the top third of all scores) earned \$9,498 less per year than men who scored around the average on Ambition.

**RATIO OF WOMEN'S EARNINGS TO MEN'S, BY PERSONALITY TYPE**



We also looked at the ratio of women's salaries to men's, organized by personality type. We found that this ratio varied quite a bit by type. ISFP women earned only 70% of what ISFP men earned, while at the other end of the spectrum, the ratio for INTPs was 83%. This suggests that the dynamics of personality type—while not powerful enough to completely overcome the effects of gender on income—do affect the extent to which an individual is impacted by the wage gap.

## IN CONCLUSION

Our research demonstrates that personality type can be a valuable framework for understanding how individual differences drive differences in earning power. Although some experts have challenged the validity of Myers and Briggs' theory, it is hard to imagine how this system of understanding could be "meaningless" when we found such clear differences

in the earnings of, for instance, ENTJs (average income of \$59,993) as compared to ISFPs (average income of \$34,595). It is apparent that Myers and Briggs were attuned to key differences among people that impact the career choices they make and how they are rewarded for them in the workplace.

For individuals reading these results, it is important to understand that while your personality type can help you to improve your understanding of yourself, it cannot predict your destiny. Although it may seem discouraging to find that your personality type is among the lower earners, these are statistics, not prescriptions. There are a multitude of factors—aside from personality type—which also play a fundamental role in determining your career success and earning power, many of them squarely within your control.

Perhaps the most important takeaway for individuals who wish to maximize their incomes is our finding on the trait most highly correlated with income: Ambition. More so than any other characteristic you might possess, your tendency to set ambitious goals for yourself is predictive of your earning power. To put it more simply: if you can dream it, you can likely do it.

# DATA TABLES

Average Income by Personality Type (Age 21+)

Type	N	Average Income
ENFJ	2572	\$47,292
ENFP	2706	\$42,228
ENTJ	1885	\$59,993
ENTP	1513	\$54,103
ESFJ	1314	\$47,902
ESFP	630	\$45,067
ESTJ	977	\$57,831
ESTP	482	\$53,275
INFJ	1946	\$39,992
INFP	2135	\$33,736
INTJ	1869	\$46,986
INTP	1736	\$38,411
ISFJ	1140	\$41,835
ISFP	648	\$34,595
ISTJ	1142	\$49,994
ISTP	723	\$41,229

% of Each Type Earning \$150k + (Age 30-59)

Type	N	Percent
ENFJ	105	7.5%
ENFP	109	7.6%
ENTJ	148	14.5%
ENTP	110	14.1%
ESFJ	44	5.4%
ESFP	19	5.1%
ESTJ	83	14.0%
ESTP	27	10.3%
INFJ	45	4.7%
INFP	47	4.6%
INTJ	96	10.4%
INTP	53	6.5%
ISFJ	33	5.0%
ISFP	12	3.3%
ISTJ	46	6.8%
ISTP	22	5.8%

Average Earnings by Preference (Age 21+)

Preference	Average Income
Extraverts	\$50,034
Introverts	\$40,687
Sensors	\$46,843
Intuitives	\$44,933
Thinkers	\$50,210
Feelers	\$41,799
Judgers	\$48,625
Perceivers	\$41,722

Facets Correlating with Higher Income

Facet	Correlation
Ambitious	0.173
Challenging	0.164
Expressive	0.125
Objective	0.117
Energetic	0.097
Conceptual	0.086
Prominent	0.082
Rational	0.081



% of Each Type Earning Under \$15k (Age 21+)

Type	N	Percent
ENFJ	2572	27.8%
ENFP	2706	31.1%
ENTJ	1885	21.8%
ENTP	1513	25.9%
ESFJ	1314	26.2%
ESFP	630	24.3%
ESTJ	977	23.5%
ESTP	482	23.0%
INFJ	1946	32.9%
INFP	2135	39.2%
INTJ	1869	30.7%
INTP	1736	36.2%
ISFJ	1140	31.6%
ISFP	648	35.2%
ISTJ	1142	26.4%
ISTP	723	34.0%

Employment Status of Respondents Age 21+

Type	Self-Employed	Disability	Employed	SAH Parent	Retired	Student	Unemployed
ENFJ	11.9%	0.9%	68.3%	1.8%	1.7%	10.4%	5.1%
ENFP	14.4%	1.6%	62.5%	3.1%	1.5%	12.2%	4.7%
ENTJ	12.9%	0.5%	68.5%	1.4%	1.4%	11.2%	4%
ENTP	14.6%	0.7%	61.6%	1.8%	1.6%	13.7%	5.9%
ESFJ	7.7%	0.5%	72.4%	3.6%	2.1%	8.7%	5.1%
ESFP	10.9%	0.8%	67.5%	6%	1.9%	8%	4.9%
ESTJ	9.1%	0.2%	71.3%	2.7%	2.2%	9.3%	5.1%
ESTP	11.6%	0.8%	68.2%	2.6%	3.1%	9.6%	4.1%
INFJ	9.7%	1.8%	64.7%	3.2%	2.3%	13.5%	4.9%
INFP	10%	2.7%	59.4%	3.4%	1.9%	13.7%	8.9%
INTJ	10.8%	1%	66.1%	1.8%	1.2%	14.1%	4.9%
INTP	10.1%	1.4%	61.3%	1.9%	1.3%	14.9%	9.2%
ISFJ	6.4%	1.6%	70.7%	4.9%	3.1%	8.6%	4.8%
ISFP	5.6%	3.6%	66.4%	6.2%	1.9%	8.8%	7.5%
ISTJ	6.9%	0.8%	73.3%	2.5%	3.1%	9%	4.5%
ISTP	7%	1.2%	66.6%	3.2%	2.1%	11.3%	8.7%

Average Incomes by Personality Type and Age Group

Type	Under 18	18-21	Twenties	Thirties	Forties	Fifties	60+
<b>ENFJ</b>	\$7,102	\$11,772	\$32,787	\$52,875	\$61,837	\$65,982	\$57,637
<b>ENFP</b>	\$6,628	\$9,887	\$28,860	\$47,868	\$58,447	\$60,520	\$46,824
<b>ENTJ</b>	\$6,208	\$13,029	\$39,403	\$70,632	\$79,845	\$78,579	\$84,114
<b>ENTP</b>	\$6,458	\$11,813	\$32,938	\$62,246	\$88,926	\$83,505	\$75,152
<b>ESFJ</b>	\$6,279	\$10,167	\$34,182	\$51,812	\$59,343	\$54,311	\$60,233
<b>ESFP</b>	\$6,838	\$7,874	\$33,297	\$47,247	\$51,948	\$59,763	\$62,773
<b>ESTJ</b>	\$11,271	\$11,489	\$36,599	\$62,883	\$77,564	\$72,804	\$69,229
<b>ESTP</b>	\$13,879	\$14,905	\$37,739	\$60,511	\$66,500	\$74,277	\$59,275
<b>INFJ</b>	\$3,427	\$5,679	\$26,514	\$45,898	\$59,805	\$62,252	\$44,425
<b>INFP</b>	\$1,643	\$5,268	\$22,991	\$37,440	\$54,485	\$52,039	\$39,475
<b>INTJ</b>	\$8,409	\$10,774	\$29,231	\$57,131	\$73,676	\$74,956	\$54,128
<b>INTP</b>	\$3,341	\$6,692	\$24,458	\$44,365	\$64,408	\$72,488	\$54,189
<b>ISFJ</b>	\$5,601	\$7,438	\$28,164	\$46,676	\$52,510	\$54,797	\$45,943
<b>ISFP</b>	\$3,416	\$6,181	\$27,933	\$39,317	\$39,089	\$42,589	\$29,060
<b>ISTJ</b>	\$5,642	\$9,144	\$33,273	\$55,825	\$65,897	\$62,435	\$49,420
<b>ISTP</b>	\$6,835	\$5,390	\$26,852	\$45,595	\$60,757	\$61,030	\$67,674
<b>All</b>	\$6,359	\$9,128	\$30,059	\$51,919	\$64,075	\$64,034	\$55,788

Average Income (Age 21+, US, Employed Only)

	Women	Men	Women/Men Income Ratio
<b>ENFJ</b>	\$54,504	\$66,776	82%
<b>ENFP</b>	\$50,371	\$62,432	81%
<b>ENTJ</b>	\$65,378	\$78,468	83%
<b>ENTP</b>	\$56,469	\$75,551	75%
<b>ESFJ</b>	\$56,027	\$67,702	83%
<b>ESFP</b>	\$49,593	\$60,992	81%
<b>ESTJ</b>	\$61,018	\$83,558	73%
<b>ESTP</b>	\$54,787	\$74,406	74%
<b>INFJ</b>	\$50,186	\$63,024	80%
<b>INFP</b>	\$43,828	\$55,359	79%
<b>INTJ</b>	\$55,959	\$69,552	80%
<b>INTP</b>	\$49,872	\$59,773	83%
<b>ISFJ</b>	\$54,053	\$68,747	79%
<b>ISFP</b>	\$44,371	\$63,679	70%
<b>ISTJ</b>	\$55,840	\$75,756	74%
<b>ISTP</b>	\$45,745	\$60,375	76%
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$53,000</b>	<b>\$67,884</b>	<b>78%</b>

Avg. Income by Gender & Preference

	Average Income
♀ <b>Introverts</b>	\$50,178
♀ <b>Extraverts</b>	\$55,211
♂ <b>Introverts</b>	\$64,552
♂ <b>Extraverts</b>	\$72,238
♀ <b>Intuitives</b>	\$52,473
♀ <b>Sensors</b>	\$53,528
♂ <b>Intuitives</b>	\$67,393
♂ <b>Sensors</b>	\$71,724
♀ <b>Feelers</b>	\$51,018
♀ <b>Thinkers</b>	\$56,689
♂ <b>Feelers</b>	\$63,354
♂ <b>Thinkers</b>	\$72,188
♀ <b>Perceivers</b>	\$48,743
♀ <b>Judgers</b>	\$55,693
♂ <b>Perceivers</b>	\$63,865
♂ <b>Judgers</b>	\$72,213