Actuary

Put a price on risk. A math degree, a long ladder of exams, and one of the best paid desk jobs in the country.

TYPICAL PAY **$130,000** a year, full time	PAY RANGE **$79k to $215k** starting to experienced	TIME TO QUALIFY **7 to 12 years** after high school
DEMAND **Very high** job outlook	LICENCE NEEDED **No** anyone can do it	WHERE YOU WORK **Insurance companies, consulting firms, pension funds, government...**

How you get there

1. **High school** — Grades 11 and 12
   Calculus and statistics if your school has them, plus any programming course. Strong grades matter for university entry, not for the exams.
2. **Bachelor's degree** — 4 years
   Actuarial science, mathematics, statistics or economics. Sit the first one or two exams while you are still a student.
3. **Internship and first job** — During and after year 4
   A summer internship at an insurer or a consulting firm is the normal way in. You are now paid, and studying on the side.
4. **Associate level** — 3 to 5 years of work
   Pass the early exams, finish the Validation by Educational Experience requirements in economics, finance and statistics, and take the professionalism course.
5. **Fellow level** — 3 to 5 more years
   The advanced exams in your chosen track. Fellowship is the top credential and it is what people mean by fully qualified.

Pros and cons

+ High pay from the very first year
+ Employers pay for the exams and give you study time
+ Very stable, and largely recession resistant

– The exams take most of your twenties
– Failing an exam is normal and it stings
– Small field, so jobs cluster in a few cities

Good to know

It is a tiny profession
The Department of Labor counts about 33,600 actuaries in the whole United States, with roughly 2,400 openings projected over a decade. Compare that with more than a million accountants. Scarcity is part...

Failing is part of the route
Actuarial exams are famously hard and people routinely sit the same one twice. Nobody in the field treats a failed exam as a disqualification, because almost everyone has one.

Optional boosts

Property and casualty. Life and annuities. Health. Retirement and pensions.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Actuaries (15-2011.00)
O*NET OnLine: Actuaries, wages and outlook
Society of Actuaries
Casualty Actuarial Society

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: https://career.help/us/careers/actuary

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