

AAA Members Outside the Academy

2016 Membership Survey, Report #2

Introduction

From April 27 – May 25, 2016, members of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) were invited to participate in an online survey regarding their personal demographic information, career trajectories, current professional situation and association membership. Invitations were sent via email to 9,218 current AAA members, of whom 1,988 (21.57%) successfully participated in the survey.

In the last report, [Survey Respondents At-A-Glance](#) (Ginsberg, 2016), we counted 262 survey respondents employed outside of higher education. This accounts for 19.1% of currently employed respondents, or 13.2% of all respondents (including full-time students and retirees). In this report, we offer an overview of who these anthropologists are and where they work.

Throughout this analysis, it is important to keep in mind a significant sampling bias: the data comes from a survey of AAA members, but AAA membership is not representative of the field as a whole. While academic respondents outnumber non-academics by four to one, this is not reflective of the field at large; the Bureau of Labor Statistics counts [7,700 non-academic anthropologists and archaeologists](#) in the U.S. in 2014, compared to only [6,000 teachers of anthropology and archaeology](#) at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions. As a result, the degree to which non-academic AAA members are representative of practicing anthropologists more broadly is a question for future research.

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Definitions

Non-academic respondents (N = 262) are identified as those who indicated that they were employed, and that their primary employer is not a college, university or other institution of higher education. This report also addresses *non-faculty academic* respondents (N = 155), who indicated that their primary employer is an institution of higher education, but that they are not members of the teaching faculty. I refer to non-academic and non-faculty academic respondents in the aggregate as *non-faculty*.

Key Findings

- 24% of non-academic respondents are self-employed, compared to 1% of academics.
- Most graduate degrees in anthropology are master’s degrees (Figure 1). Among survey respondents, however, two thirds of non-faculty, and over 95% of faculty, have PhDs.
- Most non-faculty respondents’ jobs do not specifically require training in anthropology, but they have found their anthropology background to be helpful both in getting the job and in doing the work.
- Salaries vary greatly within employment sectors and from one sector to another. Anthropologists in government, particularly in federal jobs, are paid well, while independent consultants and non-faculty in higher education tend to be relatively poorly compensated.
- Non-academic and academic respondents express similar levels of job satisfaction, but non-academics are more satisfied with their work-life balance.

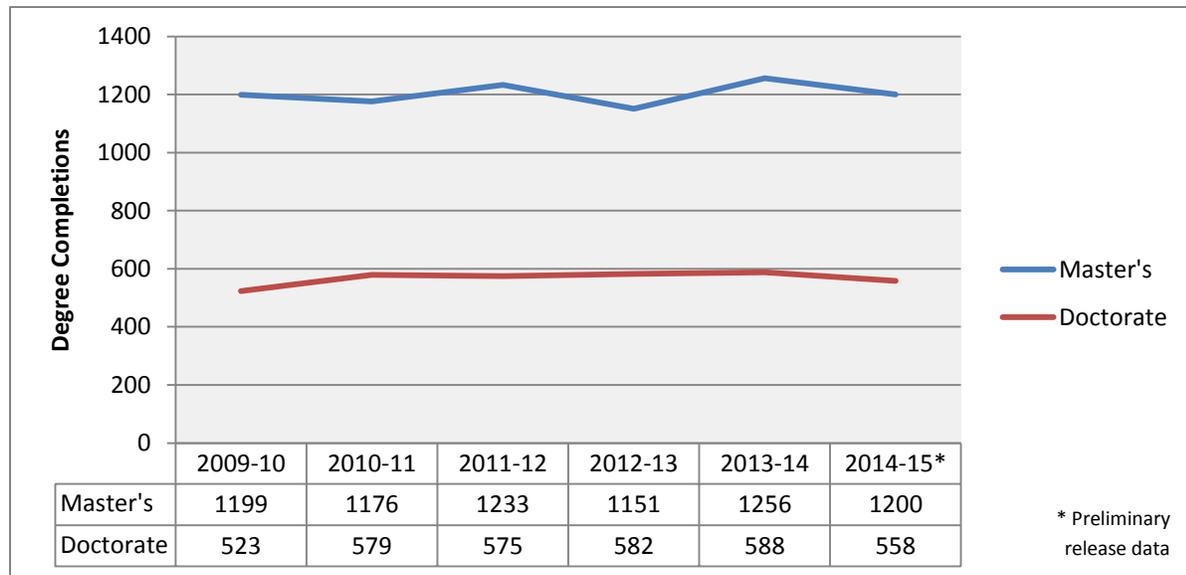


Figure 1: Anthropology graduate degrees granted in the U.S., 2009-15 (Source: IPEDS)

Demographics

There is no significant difference among faculty, non-faculty academics and non-academics with regard to race ($\chi^2 = 43.511$, $df = 42$, $p = 0.407$), gender ($\chi^2 = 0.462$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.794$) or age ($r = 0.053$, $p = 0.054$).

Employment sector and status

Non-academic respondents were asked their type of employer. Response rates are given in Table 1, along with aggregated responses by employment sector. Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses.

Table 1: Type and sector of non-academic employer

| Sector | Type | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| Nonprofit | | | |
| | Nonprofit organization or association | 32 | 12.4% |
| | Nongovernmental or community-based organization | 14 | 5.4% |
| | International organization or institution | 6 | 2.3% |
| | Foundation / Philanthropic | 2 | 0.8% |
| | <i>Total nonprofit</i> | 54 | 20.9% |
| Government | | | |
| | Government (federal) | 34 | 13.2% |
| | Government (state or local) | 14 | 5.4% |
| | Tribal government or organization | 5 | 1.9% |
| | <i>Total government</i> | 53 | 20.5% |
| Self-employed | | | |
| | Self-employed or have own business | 32 | 12.4% |
| | Independent consultant | 20 | 7.8% |
| | <i>Total self-employed</i> | 52 | 20.2% |
| Private for-profit | | | |
| | Larger corporation (100 or more employees) | 19 | 7.4% |
| | Consulting firm | 13 | 5.0% |
| | Small or medium business or LLC (under 100 employees) | 12 | 4.7% |
| | <i>Total private for-profit</i> | 44 | 17.1% |
| Non-academic research | | | |
| | Research institution / organization | 20 | 7.8% |
| | Museum / Exhibition / Curatorial | 17 | 6.6% |
| | <i>Total non-academic research</i> | 37 | 14.3% |
| Other | | | |
| | K-12 education | 2 | 0.8% |
| | Other | 16 | 6.2% |
| | <i>Total other</i> | 18 | 7.0% |
| Total | | 258 | 100.0% |

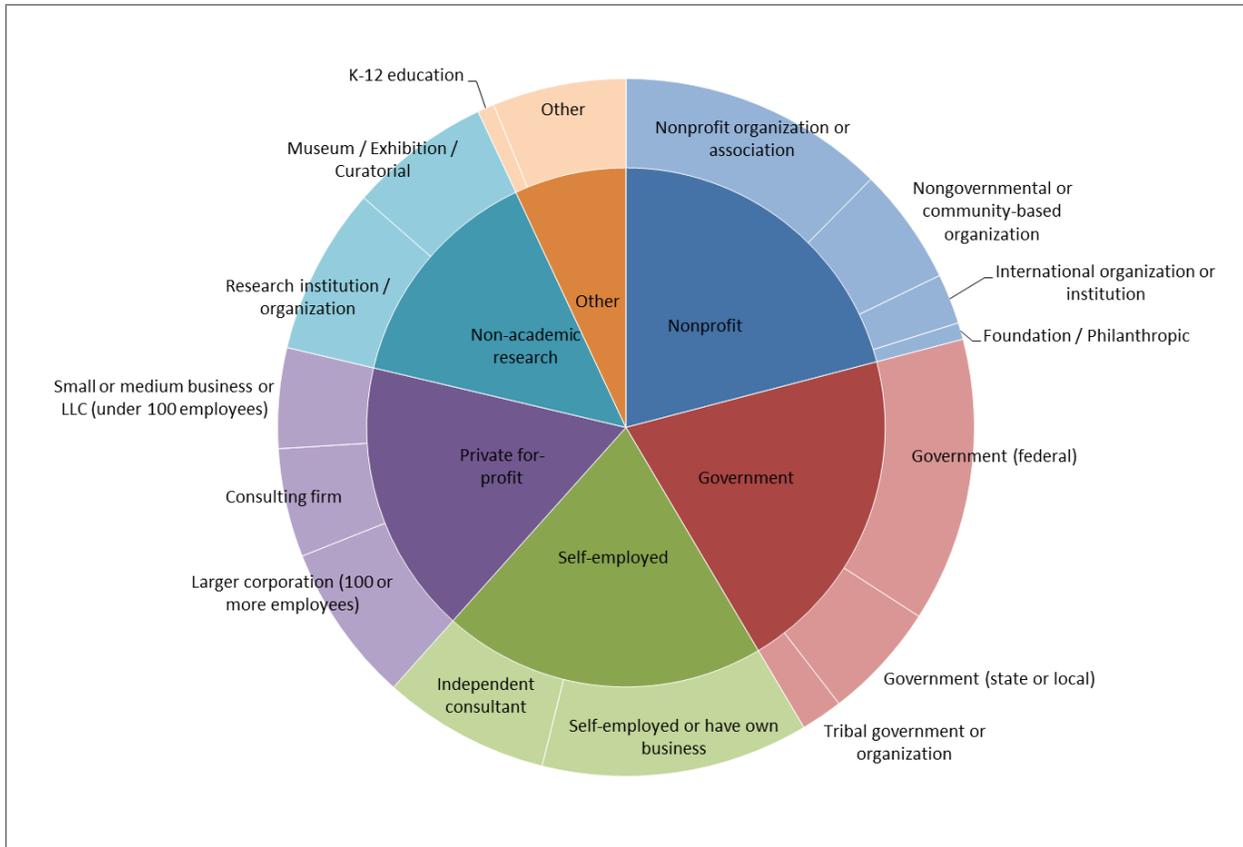


Figure 2: Type and sector of non-academic employer

Compared to respondents who work in higher education, non-academic respondents are much more likely to be self-employed. 61 of the 262 non-academic respondents, or 23.8%, are self-employed or freelance, compared to 11 of 1081, or 1.0%, of academics. Rates of part-time and multiple employment are similar across academic and non-academic respondents. These responses are illustrated in Figure 3.

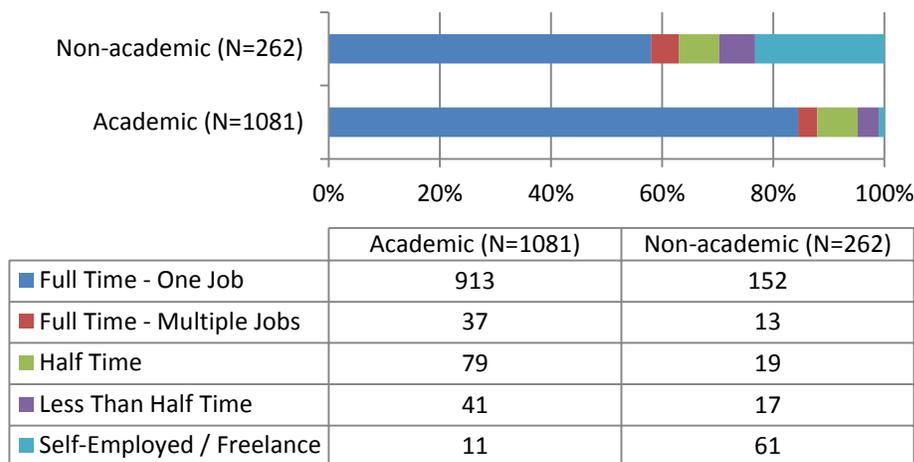
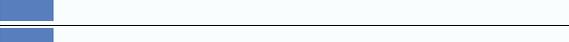
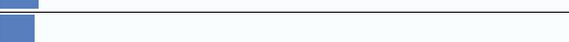


Figure 3: Employment status

In addition to employment sector, non-faculty survey respondents, including non-faculty in higher education, were also asked about their field of employment (e.g. public health, evaluation, cultural resource management), as well as their primary work activities (e.g. research, teaching, management, grant writing). The responses are displayed in Table 2 and Table 3. Notably, while 155 non-faculty respondents said that their primary employer was an institution of higher education, only 100 of these participants listed “higher education” as their field of employment; the other 33 “higher education” responses in Table 2 come from a mix of nonprofit, government, self-employed and non-academic research sectors.

Table 2: Field of employment. Percentages added exceed 100 since a participant may select more than one answer.

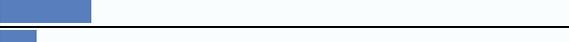
| Responses | Count | % | Percentage of total respondents (N=351) |
|---|------------|-------|--|
| Higher education | 133 | 37.9% |  |
| Administration / Management | 89 | 25.4% |  |
| Public health / Healthcare | 81 | 23.1% |  |
| Evaluation / Assessment | 60 | 17.1% |  |
| Advocacy / Human rights / Social justice | 51 | 14.5% |  |
| Libraries / Museums | 45 | 12.8% |  |
| Community development | 44 | 12.5% |  |
| Archaeology / CRM / Historic preservation | 43 | 12.3% |  |
| Environment / Natural resources | 33 | 9.4% |  |
| Social and economic impact assessment | 33 | 9.4% |  |
| International development / Humanitarian | 31 | 8.8% |  |
| Management consulting / development | 28 | 8.0% |  |
| Human services | 25 | 7.1% |  |
| Tourism / Heritage | 23 | 6.6% |  |
| Mass communication / media | 21 | 6.0% |  |
| K-12 education | 19 | 5.4% |  |
| Market research | 13 | 3.7% |  |
| Banking / Finance | 5 | 1.4% |  |
| Total Responses | 778 | |  |

In Appendix A, these fields are cross-tabulated with employment sector (academic non-faculty, nonprofit, government, etc.). The main findings of that analysis are as follows:

- Non-faculty in higher education mainly list higher education as their field (76%), followed by administration / management (22%) and public health / healthcare (21%).
- Respondents in the nonprofit sector mainly do administration / management (39%), public health / healthcare (31%), advocacy / human rights / social justice (29%) and international / humanitarian work (24%).

- Respondents in government mainly work on public health / healthcare (30%), archaeology / cultural resource management (28%), administration / management (26%) and evaluation / assessment (20%).
- Self-employed respondents mainly do management consulting (31%), community development (26%) and evaluation / assessment (26%).
- Respondents in the private sector mainly work on public health / healthcare (33%) and administration / management (30%).
- Non-academic researchers mostly work in libraries and museums (50%), higher education (26%), administration / management (24%) and public health / healthcare (24%).

Table 3: Primary work activities. Percentages added exceed 100 since a participant may select more than one answer.

| Responses | Count | % | Percentage of total respondents (N=377) |
|---|-------------|-------|--|
| Research | 264 | 70.0% |  |
| Planning / Program development | 148 | 39.3% |  |
| Administration | 120 | 31.8% |  |
| Assessment / Evaluation | 110 | 29.2% |  |
| Teaching | 102 | 27.1% |  |
| Management | 98 | 26.0% |  |
| Fundraising / Development / Grant writing | 71 | 18.8% |  |
| Organizational change | 60 | 15.9% |  |
| Social services | 24 | 6.4% |  |
| Translation services | 17 | 4.5% |  |
| Total Responses | 1019 | |  |

Advanced degrees

The last report showed that 74% of survey respondents claimed to have PhDs, although this number is somewhat inflated; some of those respondents are PhD candidates who reported graduation dates between 2017 and 2020. The high number of respondents with PhDs is not surprising, however, since 46.5% of respondents are higher education faculty, and an additional 9% are retired, mostly from jobs in higher education. For the purposes of this report, we ask how those advanced degrees are distributed across academic and non-academic employment sectors. Table 4 shows that analysis, excluding two respondents who did not claim a bachelor’s degree: a non-faculty academic with an associate’s, and a non-academic with an unspecified “Other” degree.

Table 4: Highest degree, by employment sector

| Highest Degree | | Sector | | | Total |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------|
| | | Higher ed non-faculty | Higher ed faculty | Non-academic | |
| Bachelor's | Count | 16 | 4 | 30 | 50 |
| | % within Sector | 10.6% | 0.4% | 11.7% | 3.8% |
| Master's | Count | 32 | 33 | 59 | 124 |
| | % within Sector | 21.2% | 3.6% | 23.0% | 9.3% |
| Doctorate | Count | 103 | 885 | 168 | 1156 |
| | % within Sector | 68.2% | 96.0% | 65.4% | 87.0% |
| Total | Count | 151 | 922 | 257 | 1330 |
| | % within Sector | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Unsurprisingly, faculty are more likely to have PhDs ($\chi^2 = 232.119$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$), with 96% of faculty having doctorates, while only 66.4% of non-faculty do. However, since two MAs in anthropology are awarded for every one PhD (Figure 1; cf. [Fiske et al., 2010](#), who report a three-to-one ratio), this suggests that terminal MA recipients are underrepresented among AAA members.

Non-faculty respondents in and out of academia fit a similar profile: 10–12% have bachelor's degrees, 21–23% have master's degrees, and about two thirds have doctorates. Drilling down, there are significant differences of graduate degree attainment from one non-academic sector to another ($\chi^2 = 21.513$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.043$). As Table 5 shows, PhDs are most common at non-academic research institutes and museums, where 81% of respondents hold doctorates. Conversely, in the private sector, only 55% have doctorates, and 27.5% report a BA or BS as their highest degree.

Table 5: Highest degree, by non-academic sector

| Highest Degree | | Non-Academic Employment Sector | | | | | Total |
|----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------|
| | | Nonprofit | Government | Self-employed | Private for-profit | Non-ac research | |
| Bachelor's | Count | 6 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 3 | 27 |
| | % Sector | 11.1% | 7.5% | 5.8% | 27.5% | 8.1% | 11.4% |
| Master's | Count | 13 | 14 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 51 |
| | % Sector | 24.1% | 26.4% | 25.0% | 17.5% | 10.8% | 21.6% |
| Doctorate | Count | 35 | 35 | 36 | 22 | 30 | 158 |
| | % Sector | 64.8% | 66.0% | 69.2% | 55.0% | 81.1% | 66.9% |
| Total | Count | 54 | 53 | 52 | 40 | 37 | 236 |
| | % Sector | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Given the diversity of non-academic careers and levels of degree attainment among non-faculty survey respondents, we wanted to learn more about these AAA members' relationship to the discipline of anthropology. (Recall that these results are based on a self-selected group of AAA members, and thus unlikely to be representative of all practicing anthropologists.) To address this topic, seven questions appeared on the survey, two yes/no and five five-point Likert scales. Results were tested for significance using chi squared for the yes/no questions (Table 6) and Kendall's tau for the rating questions (Table 8).

Table 6: Relationship to anthropology, yes/no questions

| | Highest Degree | | | | Non-Faculty Employment Sector | | | |
|---|----------------|----|----------------|-----|-------------------------------|----|----------------|-----|
| | Chi squared | df | Sig. (2-sided) | N | Chi squared | df | Sig. (2-sided) | N |
| Is your most advanced degree required in your official job description? | 3.374 | 2 | .185 | 397 | 34.506 | 5 | <.001 | 386 |
| Is a degree in anthropology required in your official job description? | 7.196 | 2 | .027 | 392 | 7.02 | 5 | .219 | 381 |

53.9% of non-faculty respondents reported that their most advanced degree was required for their job. This did not vary significantly across levels of degree attainment, but there were significant differences across employment sector. 72.7% of non-faculty academics and 67.6% of non-academic researchers were in jobs that required their most advanced degree, compared to only 34.0% of self-employed and 40.9% of private sector respondents.

21.1% of non-faculty respondents reported that a degree in anthropology was required for their job. This did not vary significantly across employment sector, but it did vary across academic attainment: only 7% of bachelor's degree holders are in jobs that require anthropology training specifically, compared to 20% of master's holders and 25% of doctorates.

Table 7: Relationship to anthropology, rating questions

| | | Not applicable | Very unhelpful / Never | Unhelpful / Rarely | Neutral / Sometimes | Helpful / Often | Very helpful / Always |
|---|-------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Was your most advanced degree helpful in obtaining your job? | Count | | 18 | 7 | 67 | 104 | 201 |
| | % | | 5% | 2% | 17% | 26% | 51% |
| Was your anthropology training helpful in obtaining your job? | Count | | 16 | 8 | 69 | 124 | 178 |
| | % | | 4% | 2% | 17% | 31% | 45% |
| How consistently do you identify as an anthropologist day-to-day? | Count | | 10 | 24 | 84 | 115 | 168 |
| | % | | 2% | 6% | 21% | 29% | 42% |
| How frequently do you use the skills and perspectives provided by your anthropology training? | Count | | 1 | 7 | 48 | 154 | 192 |
| | % | | 0% | 2% | 12% | 38% | 48% |
| How frequently do you use knowledge of your dissertation / thesis topic? | Count | 23 | 26 | 84 | 103 | 107 | 52 |
| | % | 6% | 7% | 21% | 26% | 27% | 13% |

Overall, non-faculty respondents expressed a strong identification with the discipline, as measured by the rating questions. The results are reported in Table 7 and displayed in Figure 4.

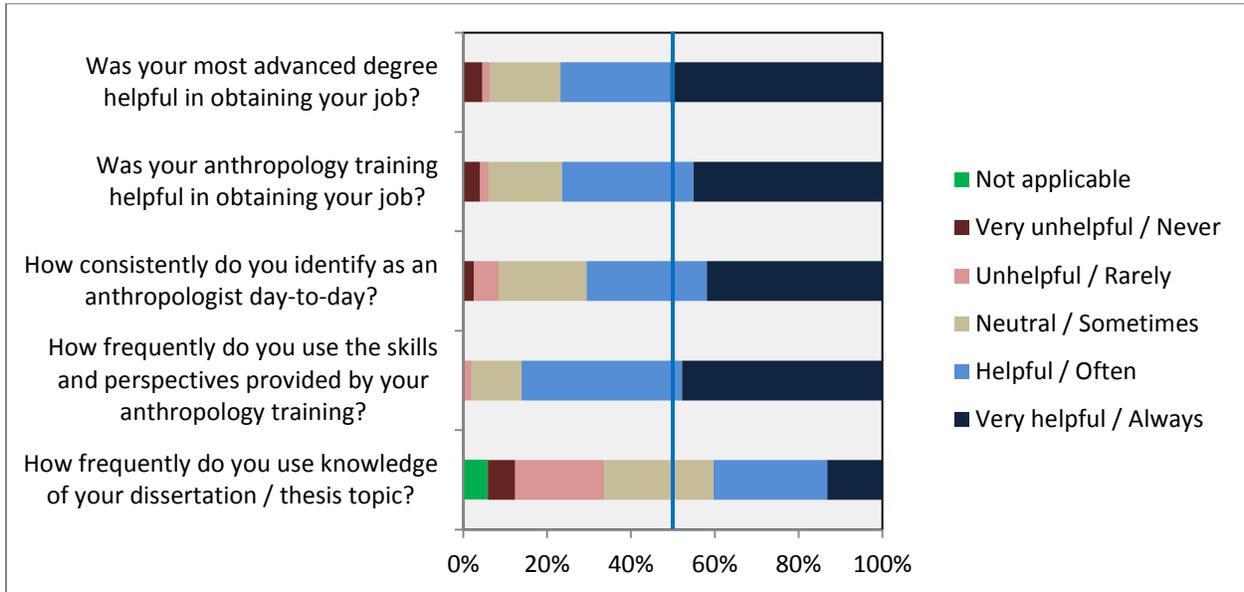


Figure 4: Relationship to anthropology, rating questions (Reference line at median)

Among these questions, dissertation / thesis topic was the only one that showed significant variation across employment sector: the median non-faculty academic uses knowledge of their thesis topic “often,” while the median private sector anthropologist uses it “rarely.” All of these questions show significant variation across levels of degree attainment: more advanced degrees correlate with higher ratings. For example, 52.9% of non-faculty with PhDs always identify as anthropologists, compared to 29.5% with bachelor’s degrees.

Table 8: Relationship to anthropology, rating questions: Significance testing

| | Highest Degree | | | Non-Faculty Employment Sector | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| | Kendall's tau | Sig. (2-tailed) | N | Kendall's tau | Sig. (2-tailed) | N |
| Was your most advanced degree helpful in obtaining your job? | .155 | .001 | 392 | -.083 | .053 | 380 |
| Was your anthropology training helpful in obtaining your job? | .162 | <.001 | 390 | -.050 | .249 | 378 |
| How consistently do you identify as an anthropologist day-to-day? | .136 | .003 | 394 | -.010 | .820 | 383 |
| How frequently do you use the skills and perspectives provided by your anthropology training? | .121 | .009 | 395 | -.055 | .206 | 384 |
| How frequently do you use knowledge of your dissertation / thesis topic? | .162 | <.001 | 390 | -.176 | <.001 | 378 |

Salary

The survey addressed salary by asking respondents to sort themselves into one of eight income classifications. While faculty respondents mainly reported annual salaries between \$50,000-100,000 and most non-faculty academics make less than \$75,000, non-academics' salaries are distributed more evenly across the entire range of responses. These results are illustrated in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

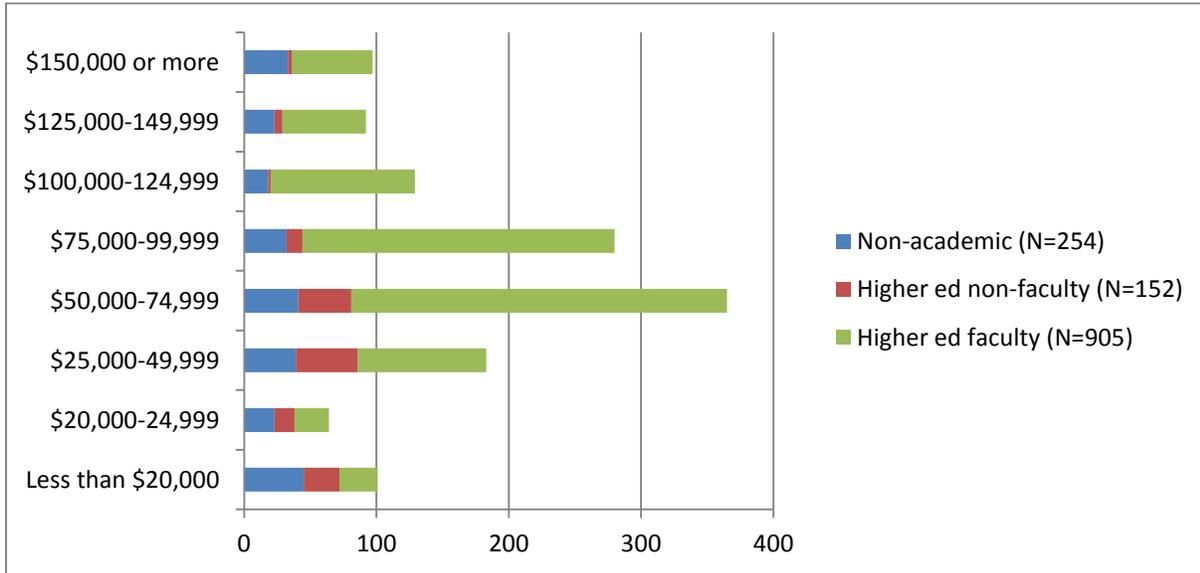


Figure 5: Salary levels, by employment sector

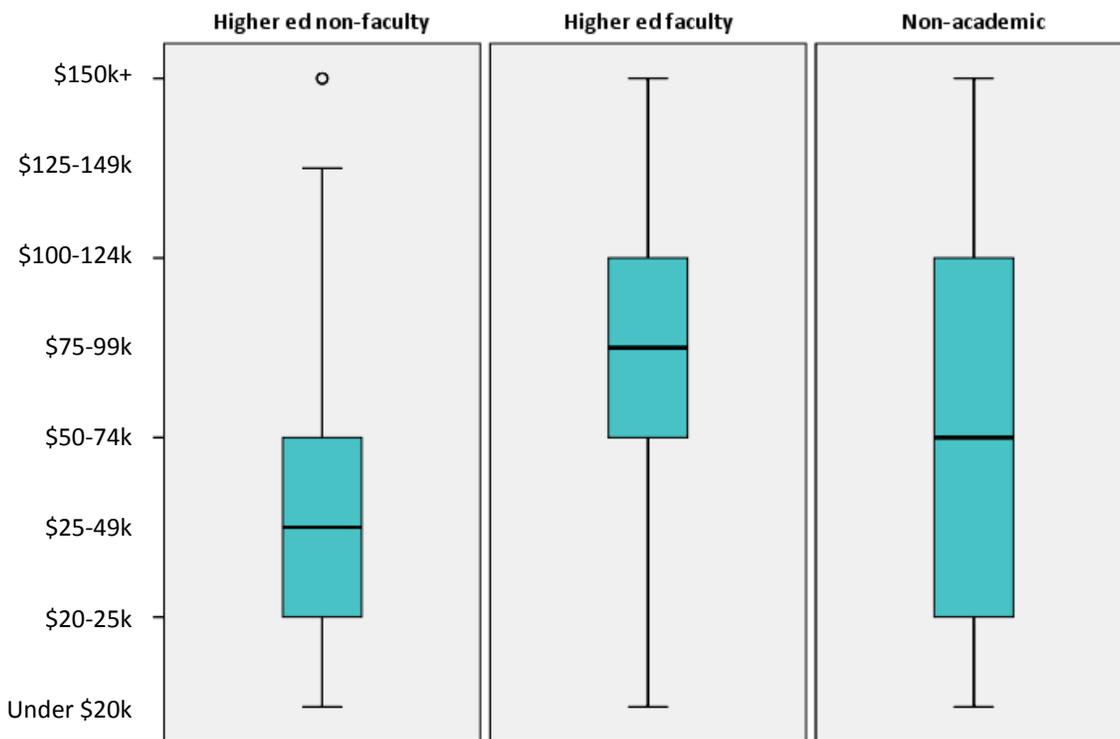


Figure 6: Salary distributions, by employment sector

These numbers are comparable to those provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which lists the median income of anthropology professors at \$77,650 and non-academic anthropologists at \$61,220.

Since non-academic employers as well as non-academic salaries are so diverse, it makes sense to investigate whether non-academic anthropologists are better paid in some sectors of employment than in others. Disaggregating the non-academic column in Figure 6, we obtain Figure 7, which indicates that anthropologists in government and high-paying private sector jobs tend to be better compensated, while self-employed respondents tend to fall in the lower end of the range. Appendix B further disaggregates these results according to employment type, using the categories listed in Figure 2.

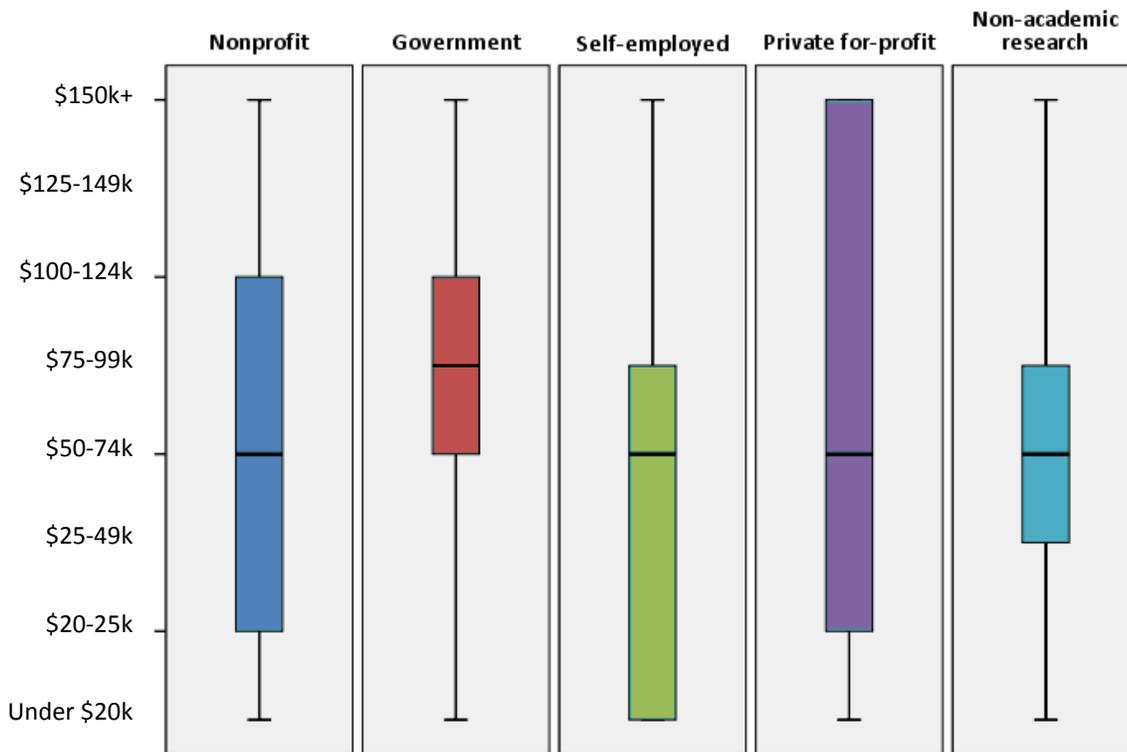


Figure 7: Salary distributions by non-academic sector

Since income correlates with age ($r = 0.554, p < 0.001$), one potential explanation for this pattern would be if practicing anthropologists tend to begin their career as freelancers and eventually find full-time jobs in industry. However, employment sector and age are independent ($r = -0.062, p = 0.340$), so the observed relationship between salary and employment sector seems to hold true.

Job satisfaction

Respondents' job satisfaction was measured through a series of five rating questions on a five-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their job and work responsibilities, the resources available in the workplace, their income, balance between work and family and work-life balance in general. Combined results across academic and non-academic respondents are displayed in Figure 8.

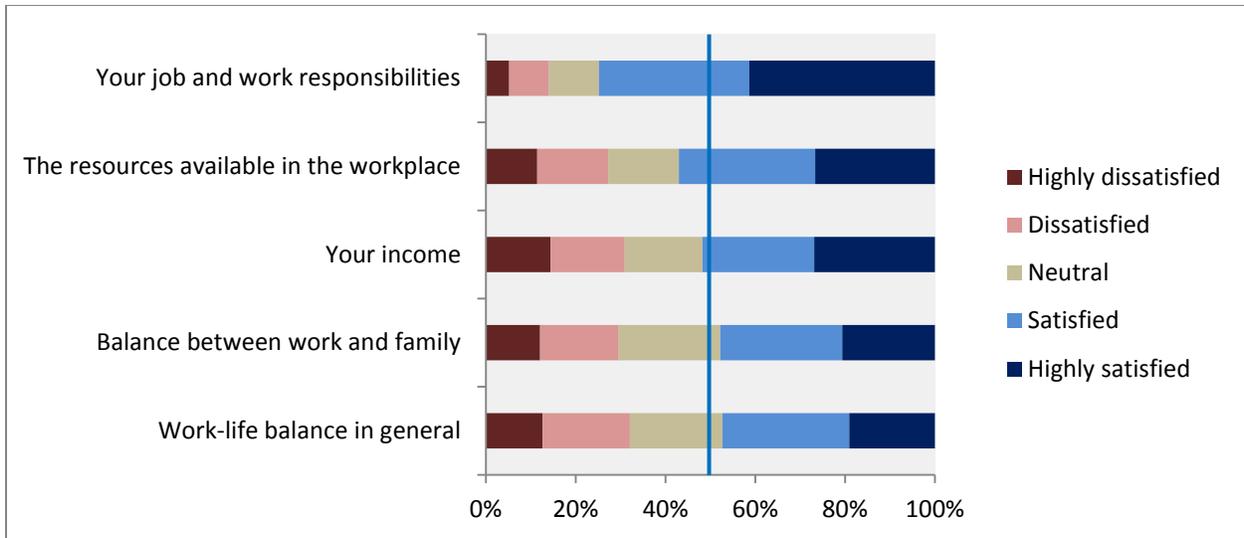


Figure 8: Job satisfaction (Reference line at median)

Between academic and non-academic respondents, there were significant differences in satisfaction with income ($\tau = 0.075, p = 0.003$), work-family balance ($\tau = 0.094, p < 0.001$) and work-life balance ($\tau = 0.088, p < 0.001$). As outlined above, academic respondents tend to earn higher salaries, and when we correct for the actual amount of income, the correlation between employment sector and satisfaction with income disappears; in other words, academic and non-academic respondents making under \$25,000 are equally dissatisfied. As Figure 9 shows, however, non-academics are more satisfied with their work-life balance, with 56.8% reporting that they are satisfied or highly satisfied, compared to 49.7% of non-faculty academics and only 44.3% of faculty.

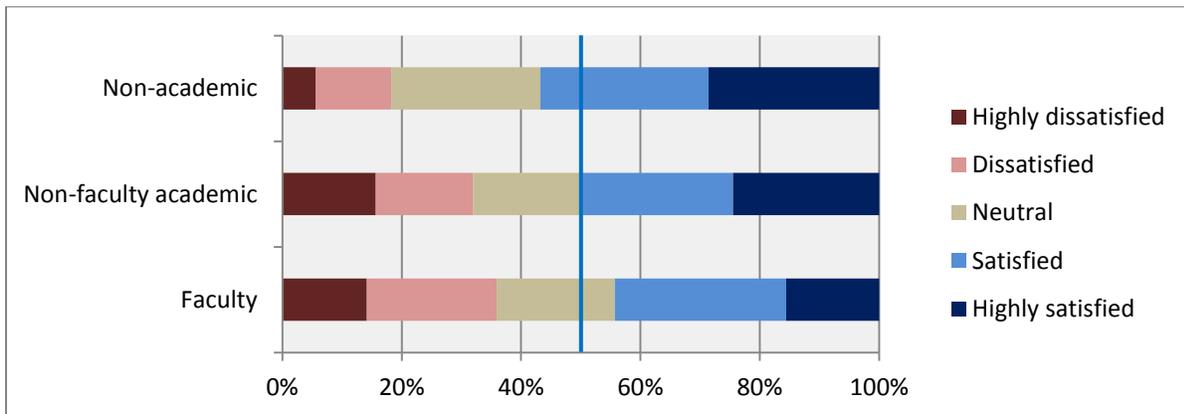


Figure 9: Satisfaction with work-life balance (Reference line at median)

References

- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition*, Anthropologists and Archeologists. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/anthropologists-and-archeologists.htm>
- . *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2015*, Anthropology and Archeology Teachers, Postsecondary. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes251061.htm>
- Fiske, Shirley J., Linda A. Bennett, Patricia Ensworth, Terry Redding, and Keri Brondo. 2010. The Changing Face of Anthropology: Anthropologists Reflect on Education, Careers, and Professional Organizations. AAA/CoPAPIA 2009 Anthropology MA Career Survey. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.
- Ginsberg, Daniel. 2016. Survey Respondents At-A-Glance. 2016 Membership Survey, Report #1. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.
- Sources available on [Anthropology Information Central](#)

Appendix A: Sector by Field cross-tabulation

| | | Non-Faculty Employment Sector | | | | | Total | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | | Academic non-faculty | Nonprofit | Government | Self-employed | Private for-profit | | Non-academic research |
| Current Field | Administration / Management | 29 | 19 | 13 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 86 |
| | Advocacy / Human rights / Social justice | 13 | 14 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 49 |
| | Banking / Finance | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | Community development | 9 | 11 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 4 | 43 |
| | Archaeology / Cultural resource management / Historic preservation | 6 | 3 | 14 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 42 |
| | Environment / Natural resources | 7 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 32 |
| | Evaluation / Assessment | 16 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 59 |
| | Higher education | 100 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 132 |
| | Human services | 2 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 23 |
| | International development / Humanitarian efforts | 5 | 12 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 29 |
| | K-12 education | 4 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| | Libraries / Museums | 12 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 17 | 44 |
| | Management consulting / Organizational development | 2 | 4 | 1 | 13 | 7 | 0 | 27 |
| | Market research | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 11 |
| | Mass communication / media | 5 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 20 |
| | Public health / Healthcare | 28 | 15 | 15 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 80 |
| | Social and economic impact assessment | 5 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 32 |
| | Tourism / Heritage | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 22 |
| Total respondents | | 132 | 49 | 50 | 42 | 30 | 34 | 337 |

Appendix B: Salary ranges by employment type

