

American Counseling Association

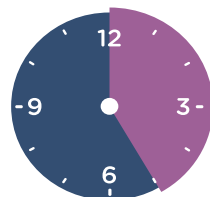
In 2014, the American Counseling Association (ACA) conducted its first-ever Counseling Workforce Survey. A decade later, ACA conducted an update to find that since 2014, the **total number of employed counselors has increased by approximately 36%**. Yet, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been notable shifts in the counseling landscape, marked by high reports of counselor burnout, an increase in telehealth utilization and a burgeoning interest among counselors in private practice.

Key Findings and Insights

COUNSELOR COMPENSATION



FULL-TIME RESPONDENTS
\$71,000



PART-TIME RESPONDENTS
\$51,000

In segmenting salary by job role, counselor educators were found to receive a higher average salary (approximately **\$77,000**) than professional counselors.

Those with less than three years of experience in the field reported an average salary of approximately **\$57,000**, increasing to nearly **\$80,000** for those with over 20 years of experience in the field.

	Average Professional Counselor Salary	Average Counselor Educator Salary
2014	\$49,589	\$66,405
2024	\$70,956	\$77,171
% increase	43%	16%

EDUCATIONAL COSTS & LIFETIME EARNINGS

> **Average Student Loan Debt = \$79,500**

113% higher than the national average and outpacing earnings.

> **Average Lifetime Earnings**

- **Counselors = \$1.3M**
With some college
- **Social workers = \$1.3M**
With a high school diploma
- **Psychologists = \$2.2M**



These differences suggest that counseling poses higher barriers to entry compared to other professions.

OBSTACLES OF COMPENSATION AND DEBT

Impacts of student debt:

- **65%** — Barriers in achieving savings and/or retirement goals
- **53%** — Purchasing of large assets such as a house or car
- **49%** — Maintaining a desired quality of life
- **46%** — Meeting other financial obligations
- **34%** — Pursuing career aspirations



Nearly one-third of survey respondents hold a second part-time job (29%), largely for additional pay (77%).

Future of the Counseling Profession



> **U.S. behavioral health market growth** is expected to grow by **\$49.3 billion** in the next decade, reaching a total of **\$136.6 billion** by 2032.

In **2022**, the most popular counseling occupations:

- Substance use, behavioral disorder and mental health counselor
- Educational, guidance, school and vocational counselors

TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

When asked about the types of training needed, respondents identified the following:



1. Specialization

Grief/loss, addiction, EMDR and dissociative disorders.



2. Business-Related

Running a private practice, billing insurance companies, note-taking and documentation of sessions, and leadership/management.



3. Ethics on Emerging Technologies

Training related to AI, telehealth, and other emerging technologies, to ensure that they are practiced ethically and are compliant with the regulatory environment.

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

Legislative advancements have the potential to positively shape the profession and increase its visibility.



- [Counseling Compact](#)
- [Mental Health Access Improvement Act](#)
- [Increased Public Awareness of Counselor Identity](#)

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