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The best (and worst) jobs for 2014

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CareerCast is out with their annual ranking of the 10 best and 10 worst jobs for 2014, and let's just say that math and science guys everywhere are about to high-five.

Nine out of 10 of the best jobs fell into the STEM career category (science, technology, engineering and math), with the "numbers guys," in particular, locking in 3 of the top 4 spots.

"This absolutely verifies the importance of STEM careers," said Tony Lee, publisher of [CareerCast.com](#) and [JobsRated.com](#).



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CareerCast looks at 200 of the most populated jobs and then ranks them on a variety of criteria that fall into four key categories: environment, income, outlook and stress. (Stress alone has 11 different factors, from high risk to tough deadlines.)

"When you look across a range of criteria — not just salary and hiring

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outlook but also the work environment, physical factors and stress — [STEM] jobs are the best," Lee said.

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Mathematician was named the best job for 2014, followed by tenured university professor and statistician.

There were some wild swings in the rankings this year — all three of those top jobs jumped double-digits on the list. Normally, you see single-digit moves from year to year. The reason is because the Bureau of Labor Statistics just updated their database to include more recent statistics and projections through 2022.

The results weren't as dramatic in the 10 worst jobs — many of last year's worst remained on the list, only moving a few spots either way. That's because they tend to be dangerous jobs with low pay — factors that simply aren't changing for these jobs.

Lumberjack earned the distinction of being the worst job, followed by newspaper reporter and enlisted military personnel.

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The worst jobs list is where you saw residual effects of the recession peek through: Some of these jobs took an extra hit in the hiring outlook due to industry consolidation, municipal cutbacks or other factors.

One interesting thing you'll find on the worst list: Many of these people love their jobs, be they lumberjacks, firefighters or broadcasters.

"There are always going to be happy lumberjacks!" Lee quipped, adding, "We've talked to happy lumberjacks who say, 'I love what I do. I love being outdoors. I don't care that I don't make much money or that there are layoffs pending.'"

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The list has a very practical application for teachers, who use it to launch a discussion with their students about careers.

Hmm. That's a great point. You never hear a kid say he wants to be an actuary when he grows up, do you?!

Hey, someone had to get that conversation started!

The 10 best jobs for 2014

1. Mathematician

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 17

Midlevel income: \$101,360



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Key factors for ranking: work environment, high income and outlook, low stress

These are the people who figure out if a decision makes sense for a company or organization, be it digging for oil or building a car. They work in a variety of sectors, including energy, transportation and IT.

"Mathematicians have historically been thought of as academics," Lee said. "But now they do so much more — they're hired in the public and the private sector. Nonprofits."

2. Tenured university professor

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 12

Midlevel income: \$68,970

Key factors for ranking: work environment (ranks No. 1 of all jobs), lack of stress

The key word here is tenured. "That means they have a job for life," Lee said, pointing out that they also receive a six-month sabbatical every seven years. Plus, they usually teach about three to four classes per week and have a say in setting their schedule.

3. Statistician

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 17

Midlevel income: \$75,560

Key factors for ranking: work environment, outlook

"These are the people who determine the statistical likelihood of things," Lee said. "They figure out how many people will buy that new iPad or if that breakfast cereal is selling well due to changing demographics." Basically, any kind of planning for the future. And they can work across most industries.

4. Actuary

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 3

Midlevel income: \$93,680

Key factors for ranking: environment, hiring outlook

Actuaries, who came in No. 1 on last year's best jobs list, are the people who determine how long something is going to last. Typically, they work for insurance companies (this accounts for around 80 percent of actuaries), estimating how long people are going to live or the statistical likelihood that they will get a particular disease. However, they're increasingly being used for other industries, such as infrastructure: How long will that bridge last? Is it time to replaced that rail line?

5. Audiologist

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 1

Midlevel income: \$69,720

Key factors for ranking: outlook, lack of stress



Jane Wells

Based in Los Angeles, Jane Wells is a CNBC business news reporter and also writes the Funny Business blog for CNBC.com.

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Audiologists tend to work in a low-stress environment in a job that is very rewarding, since their focus is to help patients deal with hearing issues. Plus, the hiring outlook gets a boost on two fronts: aging baby boomers and retiring audiologists.

6. Dental hygienist

Change from ranking on 2013 list: no change

Midlevel income: \$70,210

Key factors for ranking: low stress (it ranks as the least stressful of all 200 jobs on this list), outlook

"Talk to a dental hygienist and they'll tell you the best part of their job is that they're in control of the situation," Lee said. They work directly with their patients and get to set their own schedule. Plus, Lee said, it's the only job in the top 10 where you don't need a four-year degree.

7. Software engineer

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 4

Midlevel income: \$93,350

Key factors for ranking: low stress, outlook

Software engineers are the people who write software code for programs that manage everything from online shopping to home heating and airport-landing schedules.

8. Computer systems analyst

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 2

Midlevel income: \$79,680

Key factors for ranking: work environment, outlook

These are the people who work with the actual hardware (from servers to laptops) to make sure that it's the right equipment, the right amount, it's doing what a company needs it to do, and there are no outages. They're always working to increase speed and efficiency. And there is a huge demand for what they do.

"We've got a technical revolution going on," Lee said. "The need for more and more hardware is just growing every year as everything migrates to online."

9. Occupational therapist

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 2

Midlevel income: \$75,400

Key factors for ranking: outlook, low stress

These are people who help patients overcome illness or accidents so they can return to the workforce. "It's very satisfying work," Lee said, explaining that it's one of those jobs that receives more thank-yous than others because its aim is to help patients overcome a major obstacle.

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10. Speech pathologist

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 2

Midlevel income: \$69,870

Key factors for ranking: low stress, hiring outlook

Here's another job that tends to be personally rewarding, because of its positive effects on a patient's life. Plus, many of the patients requiring speech assistance are children. Health-care jobs have ranked extremely well over the past few years as baby boomers age, and this year was no exception, with 4 of the top 10 jobs coming from the sector.

The 10 worst jobs for 2014 (out of 200)



Thomas Strand | Photolibary| Getty Images

200. Lumberjack

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 1

Midlevel income: \$24,340

Key factors for ranking: work environment (ranked worst of all 200 jobs), income and outlook

Lumberjack comes close to the bottom for nearly every factor, from the job being dangerous to low income. But it's also taken a hit on the outlook as the construction industry slumps and the newspaper industry shrinks. Plus, technological advancements are quickly replacing the need for humans in the wood-harvesting process.

199. Newspaper reporter

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Up 1

Midlevel income: \$37,090

Key factors for ranking: hiring outlook, stress

Reporters have always had long hours and tight deadlines with low pay, but with the move to digital, the hiring outlook is brutal. In fact, between papers shutting down, consolidating or moving exclusively online, newspaper reporter is the only career on the list to have a negative

outlook. From 2013 to 2022, the number of jobs are expected to decline 13 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

198. Enlisted military personnel

Change from ranking on 2013 list: No change

Midlevel income: \$28,840

Key factors for ranking: work environment

Soldier surfaces on the worst jobs list every year because it's such a dangerous job: Your life is always on the line, as is the life of everyone you work with. And now, with military cutbacks, the ability to re-enlist and make a career in the military is threatened, Lee said.

197. Taxi driver

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 51

Midlevel income: \$22,820

Key factors for ranking: work environment

Taxi driver has always been a tough job, from dangerous work conditions to low pay. But the fact that it fell 51 notches to land in the bottom 10 was due to two factors, Lee said. With updated statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), it has earned the distinction of being the most likely profession to be the victim of a crime. Plus, the trickle-down effect in the job market that resulted from the recession has increased competition for low-requirement jobs like taxi driver.

196. Broadcaster

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 12

Midlevel income: \$55,380

Key factors for ranking: income, stress, outlook

Broadcasting has always been a high-stress, low-pay career. But now broadcasters are also expected to do more beyond their radio or TV show, such as posting material online to increase visibility, Lee said. Plus, consolidation in the industry has taken a toll on the hiring outlook.

195. Head cook

Change from ranking on 2013 list: New to the list

Midlevel income: \$42,480

Key factors for ranking: stress, income

First, one thing to clarify for all you Food Network fans: We're not talking about head chefs; we're talking about head cooks. Chefs make the menu, but the head cook has the role of overseeing the execution of the restaurant orders. He or she is paid hourly, whereas chefs are typically on salary. And head cooks don't always work at fine-dining establishments; they also work at fast-food chains, prisons and schools — all tough working environments.

While cook has always been featured, head cook is new to the Bureau of

Labor Statistics list and therefore the CareerCast ranking. Lee said that although the pay for head cook is just a little higher, the amount of responsibility is much worse. "When the cooks don't show up, you're doing it all," he explained.

194. Flight attendant

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 3

Midlevel income: \$37,240

Key factors for ranking: income, outlook

The big factors here are consolidation and cutbacks in the airline industry. Not only are there fewer jobs to go around, but now a flight might have three attendants instead of four. It also ranks as having one of the lowest incomes. "It's a hardworking, low-reward job," Lee said.

193. Garbage collector

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 32

Midlevel income: \$22,970

Key factors for ranking: income, stress

Garbage collector has always ranked low, given the tough conditions and low pay. However, with municipal cutbacks during the recession, more waste management has been pushed to the private sector, and that means lower wages. "Privatization has been going on for a while, but the recession accelerated that," Lee said. "Municipalities just don't want to spend the money on garbage collecting."

192. Firefighter

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 25

Midlevel income: \$45,250

Key factors for ranking: stress

Putting your life on the line to fight fires is indeed stressful. But the recession has heightened the stress load even further, said Lee. "Both municipal and local municipalities went through a very tough time during the recession," Lee said. "With cutbacks, people retired and the jobs weren't filled. Pay increases aren't happening. The stress of the job goes up because you're expected to do more." Add to that the fact that the latest OSHA rankings revealed an increase in firefighter deaths.

Still, most firefighters will tell you they have the best job. "If you're an adrenaline junkie, you don't care if you're running into a burning building," Lee said.

191. Corrections officer

Change from ranking on 2013 list: Down 2

Midlevel income: \$38,970

Key factors for ranking: work environment and stress

Corrections officer is, without argument, one of the most stressful jobs.

However, this is the first time it's landed in the bottom 10 — for the same reasons other jobs have landed on the worst list — municipal budget cuts and privatization.

Cindy Perman is the **commentary** editor for *CNBC.com* and the author of the book "*New York Curiosities*." Follow her on Twitter [@cindyperman](#).



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