

# Personality changes predict early career outcomes

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Data analysis of a 12-year longitudinal study examining the importance of personality changes during young adulthood indicates personality growth has real-world career benefits. Kevin Hoff, assistant professor of industrial-organizational psychology at the University of Houston, found young people who develop higher levels of conscientiousness and emotional stability during the transition to employment tend to be more successful in some aspects of their early careers. The study findings are published in *Psychological Science*.

"Results revealed that certain patterns of personality growth predicted career outcomes over and above adolescent personality and ability," reports Hoff, adding that the findings support potential policy actions meant to help [young people](#) develop personality-based skills.

Hoff's study is the first to assess the predictive power of personality changes for a broad range of career outcomes across more than a decade of young adulthood.

For adolescents who have experienced difficulties or are dissatisfied with aspects of their personality, good news there, too.

"The study showed you're not just stuck with your [personality traits](#), and if you change over time in positive ways, that can have a big impact on your career," said Hoff.

Hoff's team tracked two representative samples of Icelandic youth for approximately 12 years, from late adolescence (about 17 years old) to young adulthood (about 29 years old) and found individuals who developed higher trait levels achieved greater success as young adults. Across both samples, he found the strongest effects for growth in conscientiousness, emotional stability and extraversion. Specifically, conscientiousness changes predicted career satisfaction; emotional stability changes were tied closely to income and career satisfaction; and extraversion changes were linked to career and job satisfaction.

Given the focus on personality changes as predictors, Hoff said it was important to include a replication sample and data from more than two time points. He used data from three and five time points.

"Adolescent trait levels also predicted career success, highlighting the long-term predictive power of personality. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of [personality](#) development throughout childhood, adolescence and young adulthood for promoting different aspects of [career](#) success," said Hoff.

**More information:** Kevin A. Hoff et al. Personality Changes Predict Early Career Outcomes: Discovery and Replication in 12-Year Longitudinal Studies, *Psychological Science* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/0956797620957998](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620957998)

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