

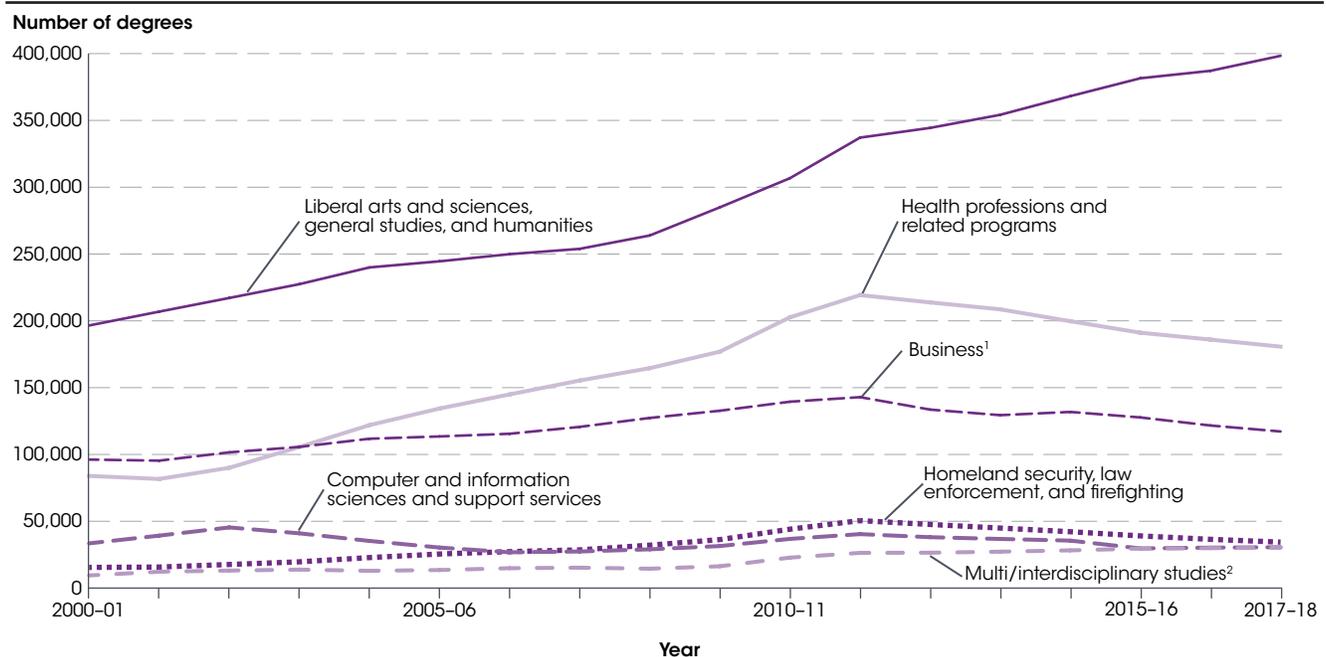
Undergraduate Degree Fields

In 2017–18, over two-thirds of the 1.0 million associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions were concentrated in three fields of study: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (398,000 degrees); health professions and related programs (181,000 degrees); and business (118,000 degrees). Of the 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2017–18, more than half were concentrated in five fields of study: business (386,000 degrees); health professions and related programs (245,000 degrees); social sciences and history (160,000 degrees); engineering (122,000 degrees); and biological and biomedical sciences (119,000 degrees).

In academic year 2017–18, postsecondary institutions conferred 1.0 million associate’s degrees. Over two-thirds (69 percent) of these degrees were concentrated in three fields of study: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (39 percent, or 398,000 degrees); health professions and related programs (18 percent, or 181,000 degrees); and business¹ (12 percent, or 118,000 degrees). The three fields that constituted the next largest percentages of associate’s degrees conferred in 2017–18

were the following: homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (3 percent, or 35,300 degrees); computer and information sciences and support services (3 percent, or 31,500 degrees); and multi/interdisciplinary studies² (3 percent, or 31,100 degrees). Overall, 85,300 associate’s degrees or certificates (8 percent) were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)³ fields in 2017–18.

Figure 1. Number of associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2017–18



¹ In order to be consistent with the definition of “business” for bachelor’s degree data, “business” is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

² Multi/interdisciplinary studies are instructional programs that derive from two or more distinct programs to provide a cross-cutting focus on a subject concentration that is not subsumed under a single discipline or occupational field. Examples include biological and physical sciences; peace studies and conflict resolution; systems science and theory; and mathematics and computer science.

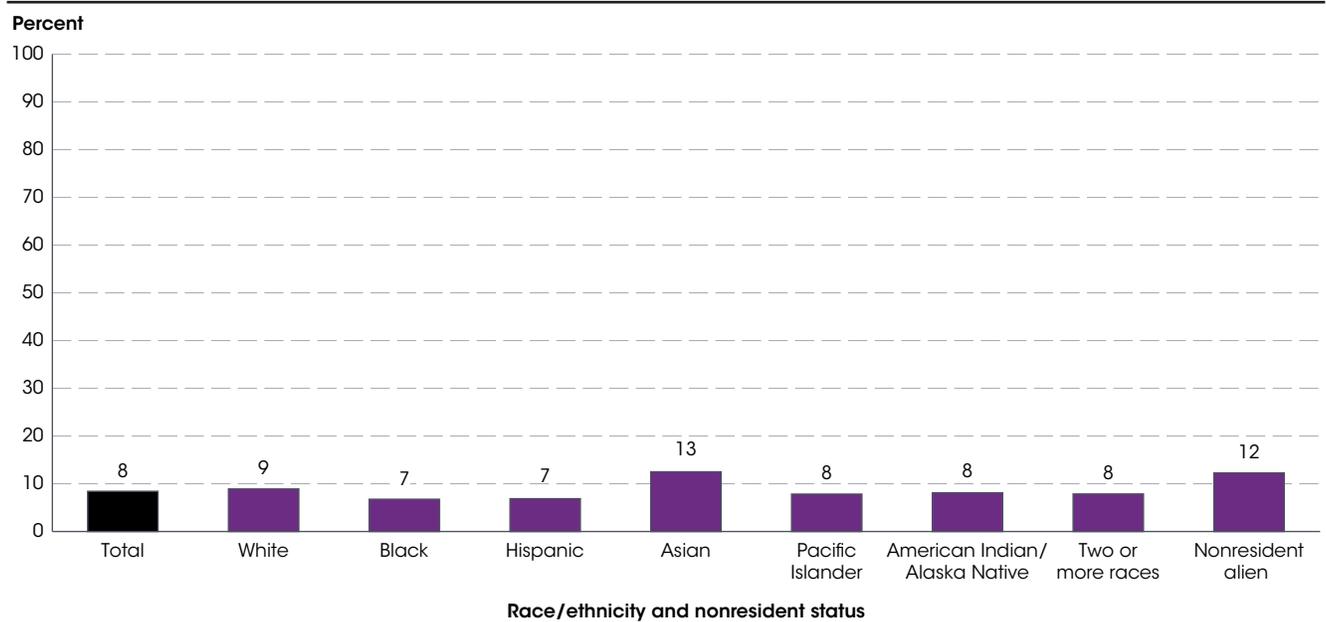
NOTE: The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of associate’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where necessary to conform to the 2009–10 Classification of Instructional Programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 through Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 321.10; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 312.

Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of associate’s degrees conferred increased by 75 percent, from 579,000 degrees to 1.0 million degrees. Over this time period, the number of associate’s degrees conferred in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities increased by 102 percent, from 197,000 degrees in 2000–01 to 398,000 degrees in 2017–18. The number of associate’s degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 159 percent between 2000–01 and 2011–12, from 84,700 to 219,000 degrees, and then decreased by 18 percent, to 181,000 associate’s degrees, between 2011–12 and 2017–18. The number of associate’s degrees conferred in business increased by 48 percent between 2000–01 and 2011–12, from 96,800 to 143,000 degrees, and then

decreased by 18 percent, to 118,000 associate’s degrees, between 2011–12 and 2017–18. Among other fields in which at least 10,000 associate’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2000–01 and 2017–18 in the following fields: homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (from 16,400 to 35,300 degrees, an increase of 115 percent); multi/interdisciplinary studies (from 10,400 to 31,100 degrees, an increase of 198 percent); social sciences and history (from 5,100 to 23,700 degrees, an increase of 361 percent); psychology (from 1,600 to 12,500 degrees, an increase of 704 percent); and physical sciences and science technologies (from 2,400 to 10,100 degrees, an increase of 330 percent).

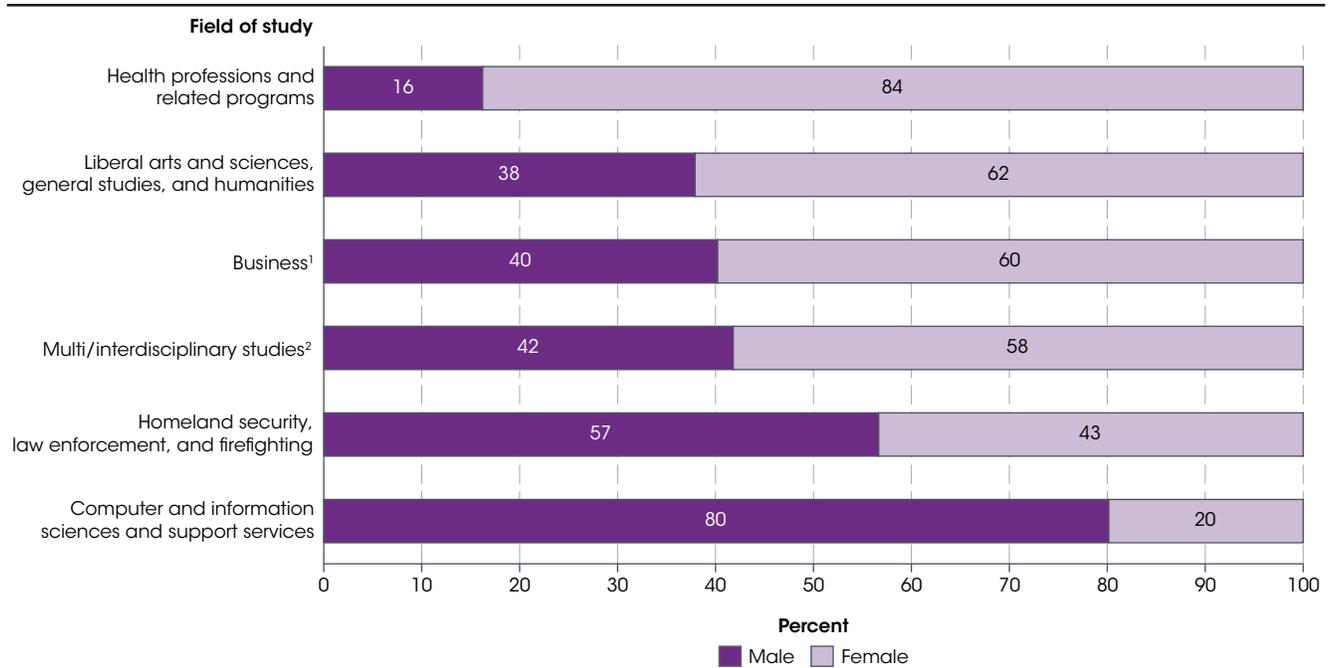
Figure 2. Percentage of associate’s degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Academic year 2017–18



NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident aliens. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 318.45 and 321.30.

Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; health professions and related programs; and business were the top three associate’s degree fields of study for all racial/ethnic groups and for nonresident alien graduates in 2017–18. The percentage of associate’s degrees conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Thirteen percent of associate’s degrees conferred to Asian graduates were

in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentage conferred to nonresident alien⁴ graduates (12 percent) and to graduates who were White (9 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (8 percent), of Two or more races (8 percent), Pacific Islander (8 percent), Black (7 percent), and Hispanic (7 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2017–18

¹ In order to be consistent with the definition of "business" for bachelor's degree data, "business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

² Multi/interdisciplinary studies are instructional programs that derive from two or more distinct programs to provide a cross-cutting focus on a subject concentration that is not subsumed under a single discipline or occupational field. Examples include biological and physical sciences; peace studies and conflict resolution; systems science and theory; and mathematics and computer science.

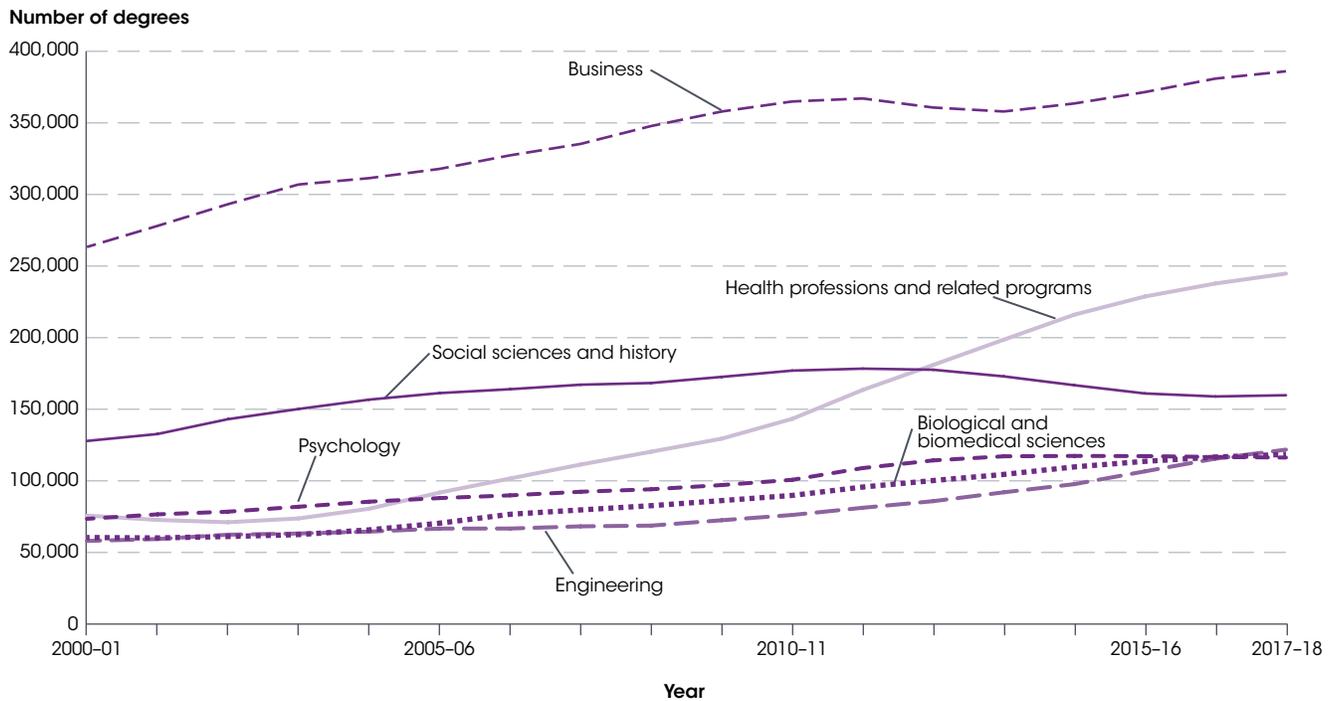
NOTE: The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of associate's degrees were conferred in 2017–18. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 321.10.

In 2017–18, females earned 61 percent (613,000 degrees) and males earned 39 percent (399,000 degrees) of all associate's degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most associate's degrees were conferred in 2017–18, females were conferred the majority of degrees in four: health professions and related programs (84 percent); liberal arts and sciences, general studies,

and humanities (62 percent); business (60 percent); and multi/interdisciplinary studies (58 percent). Males were conferred the majority of associate's degrees in homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (57 percent) and in computer and information sciences and support services (80 percent).

Figure 4. Number of bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2017–18



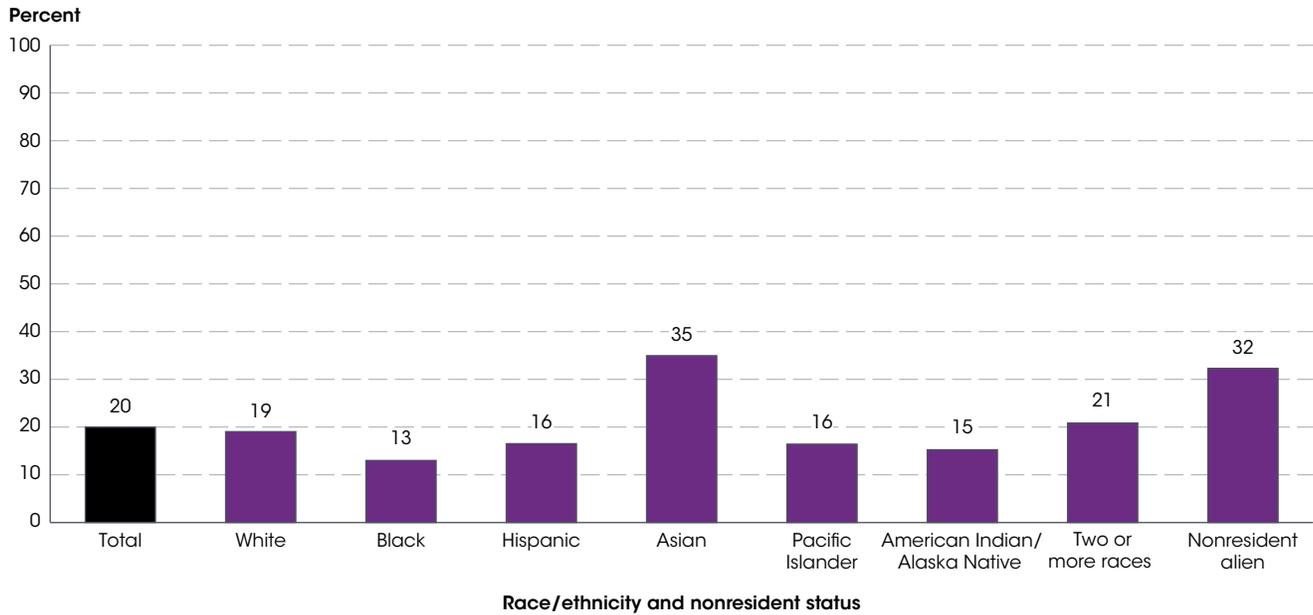
NOTE: The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where necessary to conform to the 2009–10 Classification of Instructional Programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 through Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 322.10; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 313.

Postsecondary institutions conferred 2.0 million bachelor's degrees in 2017–18. More than half were concentrated in five fields of study: business (19 percent, or 386,000 degrees); health professions and related programs (12 percent, or 245,000 degrees); social sciences and history (8 percent, or 160,000 degrees); engineering (6 percent, or 122,000 degrees); and biological and biomedical sciences (6 percent, or 119,000 degrees). The fields in which the next largest percentages of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18 were psychology (6 percent, or 116,000 degrees); communication, journalism, and related programs (5 percent, or 92,300 degrees); visual and performing arts (4 percent, or 88,600 degrees); education (4 percent, or 82,600 degrees); and computer and information sciences (4 percent, or 79,600 degrees). Overall, 395,000 bachelor's degrees (20 percent) were conferred in a STEM field.

Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 59 percent, from 1.2 million degrees to 2.0 million degrees. Between

2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in business increased by 47 percent, from 264,000 to 386,000 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 223 percent between 2000–01 and 2017–18, from 128,000 to 245,000 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in social sciences and history increased by 39 percent between 2000–01 and 2011–12, from 128,000 to 179,000 degrees, and then decreased by 10 percent to 160,000 degrees in 2017–18. Among other fields in which more than 10,000 bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2000–01 and 2017–18 in each of the following fields: engineering (from 58,200 to 122,000 degrees, an increase of 110 percent); homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (from 25,200 to 58,100 degrees, an increase of 131 percent); parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies (from 17,900 to 53,900 degrees, an increase of 200 percent); and mathematics and statistics (from 11,200 to 25,300 degrees, an increase of 126 percent).

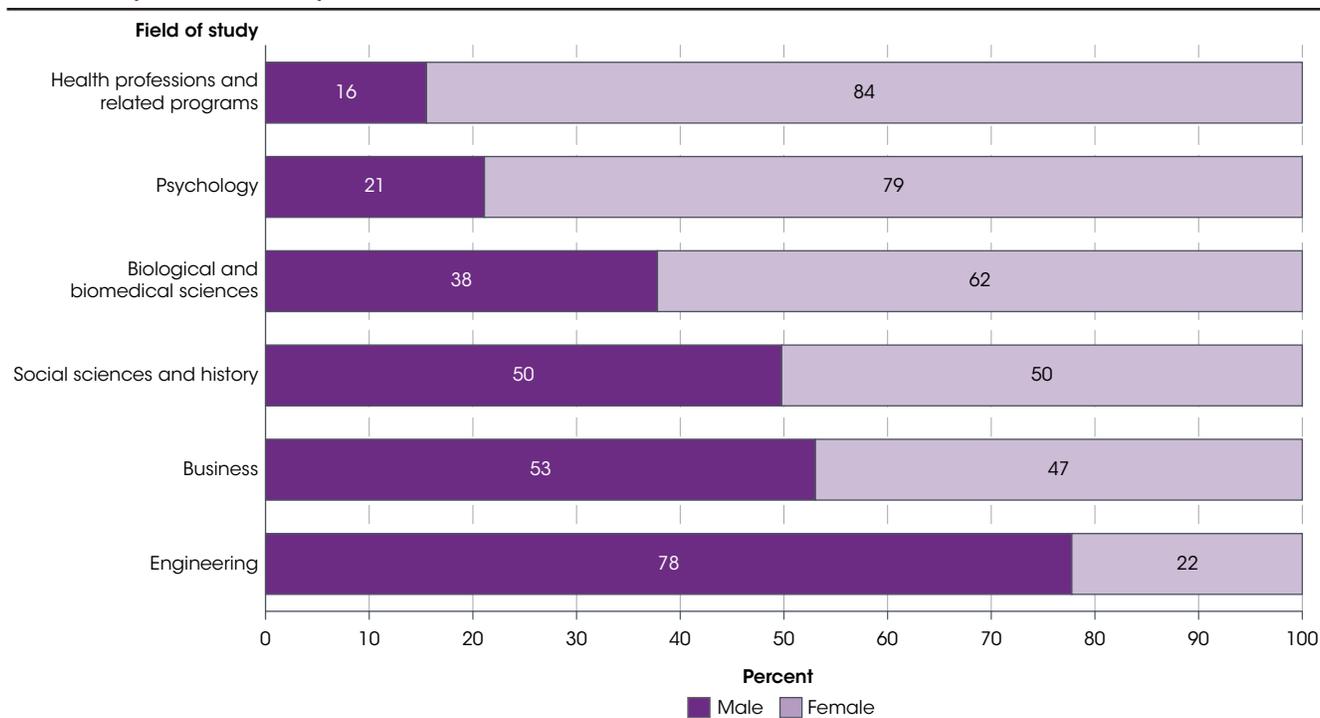
Figure 5. Percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Academic year 2017–18

NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident aliens. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 318.45 and 322.30.

Business was the most common field of study for bachelor's degrees conferred in 2017–18 within each racial/ethnic group and for nonresident alien graduates. As with associate's degrees, the percentage of bachelor's degrees that were conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Over one-third (35 percent) of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian graduates were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentage conferred

to graduates in all other racial/ethnic groups. Also, the percentage of nonresident aliens (32 percent) receiving bachelor's degrees in a STEM field was higher than that for students who were of Two or more races (21 percent), White (19 percent), Hispanic (16 percent), Pacific Islander (16 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (15 percent), and Black (13 percent).

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2017–18

NOTE: The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 322.40 and 322.50.

In 2017–18, females earned 57 percent (1.1 million degrees) and males earned 43 percent (845,000 degrees) of all bachelor's degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18, females earned the majority of degrees in three: health professions and related programs (84 percent);

psychology (79 percent); and biological and biomedical sciences (62 percent). Bachelor's degrees conferred in social sciences and history were equally divided between males and females (50 percent each). Males earned the majority of degrees conferred in business (53 percent) and engineering (78 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ Personal and culinary services have been added to the definition of “business” for associate's degree data in order to be consistent with the definition of “business” for bachelor's degree data. Thus, for all data in this indicator, “business” is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

² Multi/interdisciplinary studies are instructional programs that derive from two or more distinct programs to provide a cross-cutting focus on a subject concentration that is not subsumed under a single discipline or occupational field. Examples include biological and physical sciences; peace studies and conflict resolution; systems science and theory; and mathematics and computer science.

³ STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences; computer and information sciences; engineering and engineering technologies; mathematics and statistics; and physical sciences and science technologies. Construction trades and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians are categorized as engineering technologies in some tables to facilitate trend comparisons but are not included as STEM fields in this indicator.

⁴ In the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), racial/ethnic data were not collected for nonresident alien students, and their data were compiled as a separate group.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 318.45, 321.10, 321.30, 322.10, 322.30, 322.40, and 322.50; *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 312 and 313

Related indicators and resources: [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Holders](#); [Graduate Degree Fields](#); [Post-Bachelor's Employment Outcomes by Sex and Race/Ethnicity](#) [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*]; [Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred](#); [Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Fields](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]

Glossary: Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP); Racial/ethnic group; STEM fields