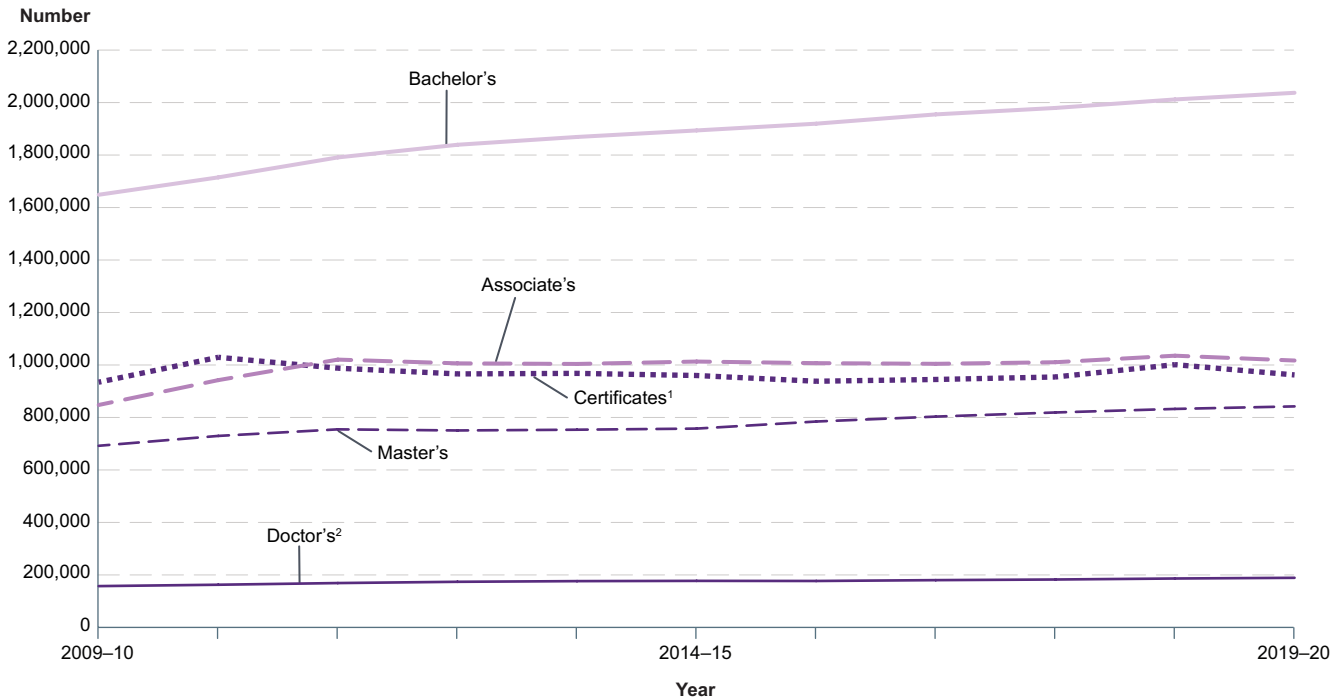


## Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred

Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the number of postsecondary certificates and degrees conferred by public institutions increased at every award level. The number conferred by private nonprofit institutions increased at every award level above associate’s. Private for-profit institutions, however, conferred fewer certificates and degrees in 2019–20 than in 2009–10, with the exception of doctor’s degrees.

Figure 1. Number of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by award level: 2009–10 through 2019–20



<sup>1</sup> Data are for certificates below the associate’s degree level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level. Includes most degrees formerly classified as first-professional, such as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees.

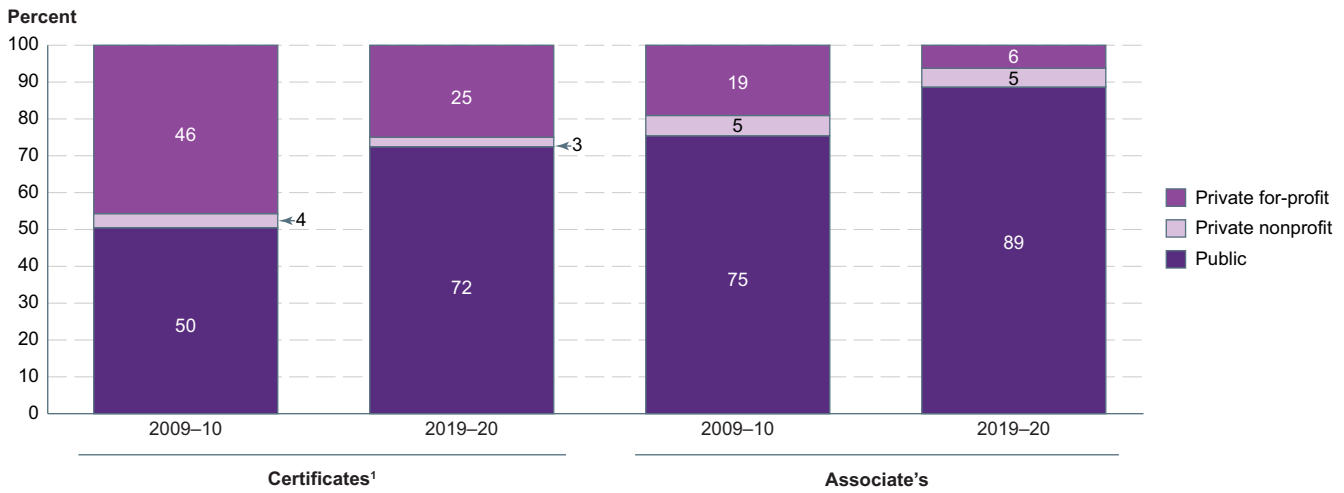
NOTE: Data in this table represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions; certificate counts include both degree- and non-degree-granting institutions. 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 2010 through Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 318.40.

In 2019–20, postsecondary institutions conferred about 5.1 million awards, ranging from certificates below the associate’s level to doctor’s degrees. At all award levels, the number conferred was higher in 2019–20 than in 2009–10. Above the certificate level, the number of degrees conferred increased by 20 percent or more. The number of associate’s degrees conferred increased by 20 percent (from 848,900 to 1.0 million). The number of bachelor’s degrees conferred increased by 24 percent

(from 1.6 million to 2.0 million). The number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 22 percent (from 693,300 to 843,400). Finally, the number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased by 20 percent (from 158,600 to 190,200). Although the number of certificates conferred below the associate’s level was 3 percent higher in 2019–20 than in 2009–10 (963,300 vs. 935,700), there was no consistent pattern of change over the period.

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of certificates and associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: 2009–10 and 2019–20**



<sup>1</sup> Data are for certificates below the associate's degree level.

NOTE: Data in this table represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions; certificate counts include both degree- and non-degree-granting institutions. 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 2010 and Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 318.40.

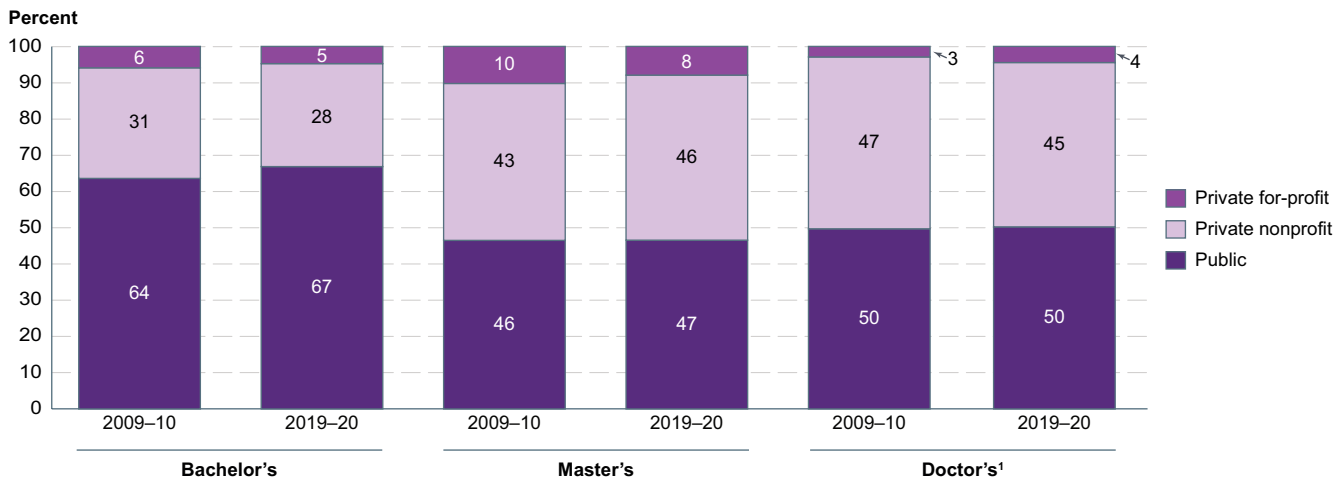
The change in the number of certificates conferred between 2009-10 and 2019-20 differed by control of institution (public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit). Public institutions conferred 48 percent more certificates in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (increasing from 472,400 to 698,100). In contrast, private for-profit institutions conferred 44 percent fewer certificates over the same time period (decreasing from 427,600 to 240,400). The number of certificates conferred by private nonprofit institutions, however, showed no consistent trend overall during this period. First, this number decreased by 14 percent between 2009-10 and 2013-14 (from 35,700 to 30,700). It then spiked to 46,100 in 2014-15 before decreasing 46 percent to 24,900 by 2019-20.

In 2019-20, some 72 percent of certificates were awarded by public institutions. This reflects an increase from 50 percent in 2009-10. Meanwhile, the proportion of certificates conferred by private for-profit institutions decreased from 46 to 25 percent. For private nonprofit institutions, the proportion of certificates conferred decreased between 2009-10 and 2013-14 (from 4 to

3 percent). It then peaked in 2014-15 at 5 percent before decreasing to 3 percent by 2019-20. Overall, these trends show similar patterns to those noted in the numbers of certificates conferred during this time period.

For associate's degrees, the number of degrees conferred at public institutions increased by 41 percent between 2009-10 and 2019-20 (from 640,300 to 902,800). The number of associate's degrees conferred at private nonprofit institutions fluctuated over the same period, but was 11 percent higher in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (51,700 vs. 46,700). In contrast, the number conferred by private for-profit institutions decreased by 61 percent over the same period (from 161,900 to 63,800). With these changes in number of associate's degrees, the proportion conferred by public institutions increased between 2009-10 and 2019-20 (from 75 to 89 percent). The proportion of associate's degrees conferred by private nonprofit institutions stayed between 5 and 6 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions decreased from 19 percent to 6 percent.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctor’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: 2009–10 and 2019–20**



<sup>1</sup> Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level. Includes most degrees formerly classified as first-professional, such as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees.  
NOTE: Data in this table represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions; certificate counts include both degree- and non-degree-granting institutions. 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 2010 and Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 318.40.

The number of bachelor’s degrees conferred between 2009-10 and 2019-20 increased by 30 percent at public institutions (from 1.0 million to 1.4 million). It also increased by 15 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 503,300 to 578,900). In contrast, the number of bachelor’s degrees conferred by private for-profit institutions was slightly lower in 2019-20 (96,700) than in 2009-10 (97,500). In the intervening years, there was a peak of 140,800 degrees in 2012-13, followed by a decrease. In 2019-20, public institutions conferred 67 percent of all bachelor’s degrees, an increase from 64 percent in 2009-10. Over the same period, the proportion conferred by private nonprofit institutions decreased (from 31 to 28 percent). The proportion of bachelor’s degrees conferred by private for-profit institutions increased from 2009-10 to a peak in 2012-13 (from 6 to 8 percent) and then decreased to 5 percent by 2019-20.

The number of master’s degrees conferred between 2009-10 and 2019-20 increased by 22 percent at public institutions (from 322,400 to 392,800). It also increased by 28 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 300,100 to 383,900). Meanwhile, the number conferred

by private for-profit institutions decreased by 6 percent (from 70,900 to 66,800). Over this period, the proportion of master’s degrees conferred by public institutions stayed about the same (46 percent in 2009-10 vs. 47 percent in 2019-20). In contrast, the proportion conferred by private nonprofit institutions increased (from 43 to 46 percent), and the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions decreased (from 10 to 8 percent).

The number of doctor’s degrees conferred between 2009-10 and 2019-20 increased by 21 percent at public institutions (from 78,800 to 95,500). It also increased by 15 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 75,200 to 86,200). At private for-profit institutions, the number of doctor’s degrees increased by 83 percent (from 4,600 to 8,500). This is the only degree type conferred by private for-profit institutions for which the number of degrees was higher in 2019-20 than in 2009-10. Over this period, the proportion of all doctor’s degrees conferred remained the same at public institutions (50 percent in both 2009-10 and 2019-20). Meanwhile, it decreased 2 percentage points at private nonprofit institutions (from 47 to 45 percent) and increased 1 percentage point at private for-profit institutions (from 3 to 4 percent).

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 318.40

**Related indicators and resources:** [Degrees Awarded \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Graduate Degree Fields; Postsecondary Outcomes for Nontraditional Undergraduate Students \[The Condition of Education 2019 Spotlight\]](#); [Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers \[The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight\]](#); [Undergraduate Degree Fields](#); [Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates](#)

**Glossary:** Associate’s degree; Bachelor’s degree; Certificate; Control of institutions; Doctor’s degree; Master’s degree; Private institution; Public school or institution