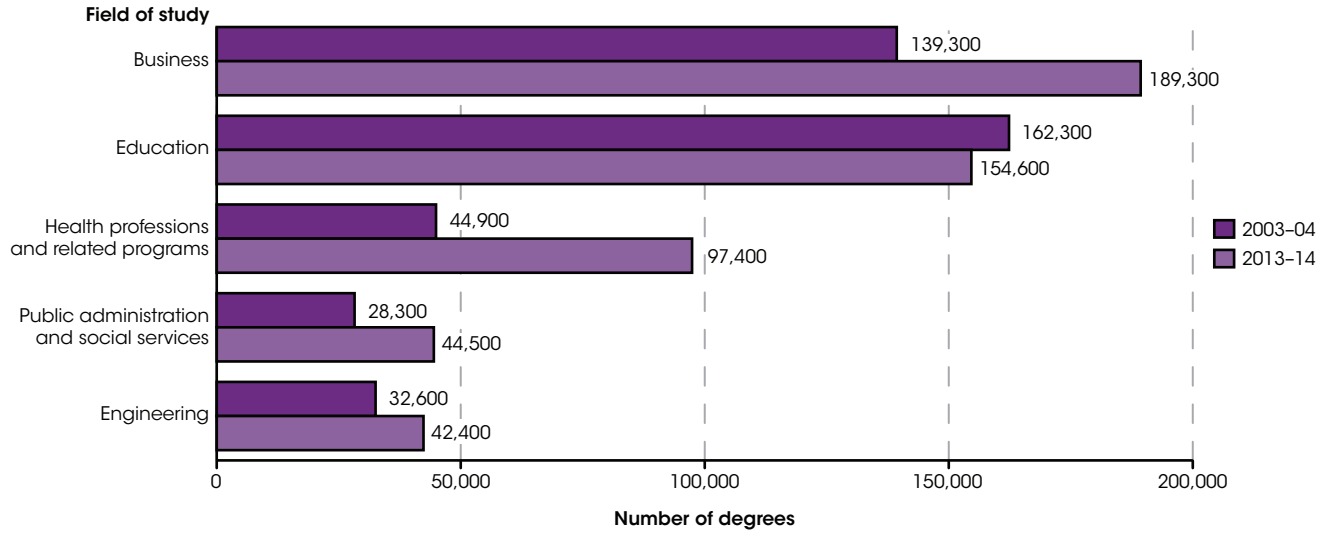
Graduate Degree Fields

Between academic years 2003–04 and 2013–14, the number of master's degrees conferred increased by 34 percent, from 564,300 to 754,500, and the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased by 41 percent, from 126,100 to 177,600.

The number of master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by less than 1 percent between academic years 2012–13 and 2013–14 (from 751,700 to 754,500 degrees). Of the 754,500 master's degrees conferred in 2013–14, nearly half were concentrated in two fields: business (25 percent) and education (20 percent). The three fields in which the next largest percentages of master's degrees were conferred were health professions and related programs (13 percent), public administration and social services (6 percent), and engineering (6 percent). Not only did these five fields account for the largest percentages of master's degrees conferred in 2013–14, they also accounted for the largest percentages conferred in 2003–04 (one decade earlier) and 2012–13 (one year earlier).

Figure 1. Number of master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2003–04 and 2013–14



NOTE: The five fields of study shown were the fields in which the largest number of master's degrees were conferred from the 754,500 master's degrees conferred in 2013–14. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2009–10. The estimates for 2003–04 have been reclassified when necessary to make them conform to the new taxonomy. "Business" includes Business, management, marketing, and related support services and Personal and culinary services.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2004 and Fall 2014, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 323.10.

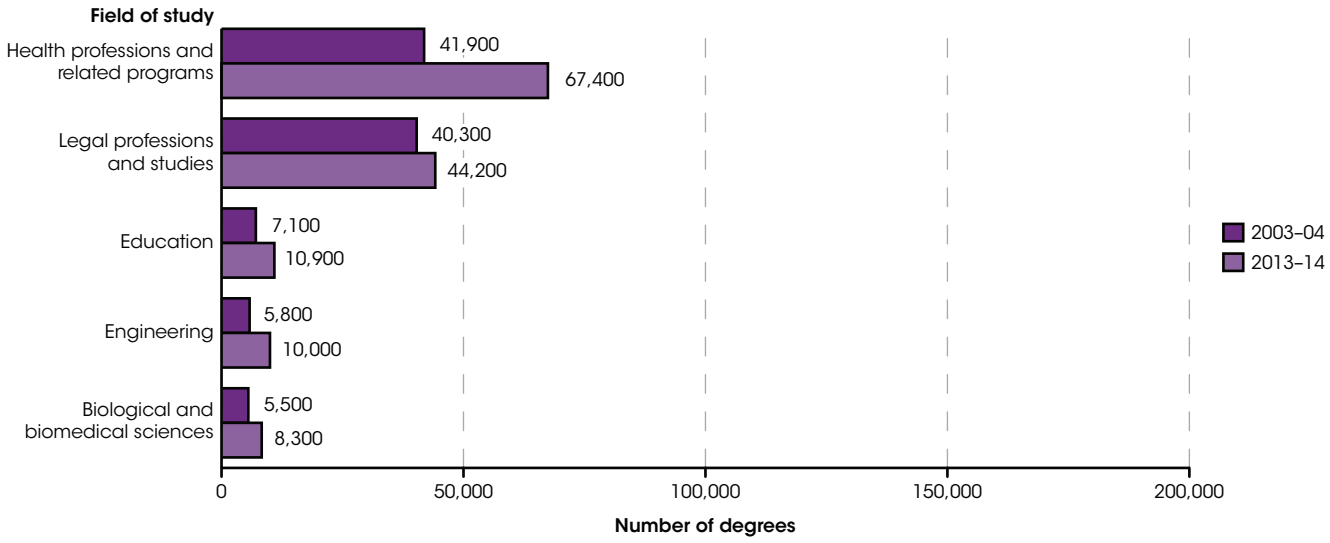
Between 2003–04 and 2013–14, the number of master's degrees conferred increased by 190,200, reflecting an increase of 34 percent. In 2013–14, the three degree fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred were business (189,300), education (154,600), and health professions and related programs (97,400). The number of business degrees conferred increased by less than 1 percent from 2012–13, and the number of education degrees conferred decreased by 6 percent. All of the 20 largest degree fields in 2013–14 had increases compared to 2003–04, except the field of education. The largest percentage increase in the number of master's degrees conferred between 2003–04 and 2013–14 was in the field of homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (150 percent, from 3,700 to 9,300 degrees). The next largest percentage increase was in the field of parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies (138 percent, from 3,200 to 7,600 degrees). Of the 20 fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred in 2013–14, English language and literature/letters was the field in which there was the smallest percentage increase in the master's degrees conferred between 2003–04 and 2013–14 (17 percent, from 8,000 to 9,300 degrees).

In 2013–14, all racial/ethnic groups conferred the most master's degrees in the same top three degree fields (business, education, and health professions and related programs); however, not all were ranked within the same order. The largest numbers of master's degrees conferred were in business, education, and health professions

and related programs. The distribution of graduates earning degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields differed from the overall distribution of master's degrees by race/ethnicity. The percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates earning STEM master's degrees (15 percent) was higher than the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates earning master's degrees in all fields (7 percent). In contrast, the percentage of White (67 percent), Black (8 percent), and Hispanic (8 percent) graduates earning STEM degrees was lower than the percentage of these graduates earning master's degrees overall (68 percent, 14 percent, and 9 percent, respectively).

The number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by 1 percent between 2012–13 and 2013–14 (from 175,000 to 177,600 degrees). The percentages of doctor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs (38 percent) and legal professions and studies (25 percent) combined made up almost two-thirds of the 177,600 doctor's degrees conferred in 2013–14. The three fields in which the next largest percentages of doctor's degrees in were conferred in 2013–14 were education (6 percent), engineering (6 percent), and biological and biomedical sciences (5 percent). These fields were the same fields in which the largest percentages of doctor's degrees were conferred in each year during the past decade.

Figure 2. Number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2003–04 and 2013–14

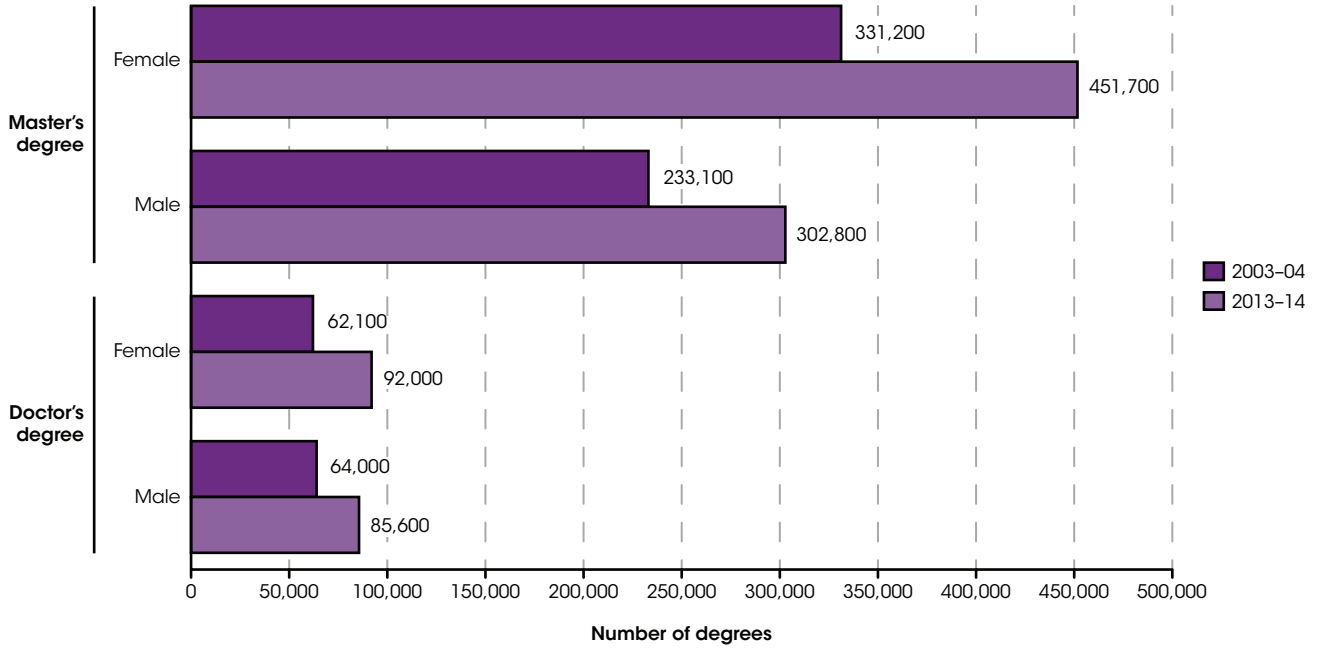


NOTE: The five fields of study were the fields in which the largest number of doctor's degrees were conferred from the 177,600 doctor's degrees conferred in 2013–14. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2009–10. The estimates for 2003–04 have been reclassified when necessary to make them conform to the new taxonomy.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2004 and Fall 2014, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 324.10.

Between 2003–04 and 2013–14, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased from 126,100 to 177,600, reflecting an increase of 41 percent. Health professions and related programs, and legal professions and studies were the fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred. The number of degrees conferred in those fields increased by 61 percent (from 41,900 to 67,400 degrees) and 10 percent (from 40,300 to 44,200 degrees), respectively, over the period. All of the 20 largest fields in 2013–14 showed increases compared to 2003–04. Among these fields, the field of computer and information sciences had the largest percentage increase in the number of doctor's degrees conferred between 2003–04 and 2013–14 (118 percent, from 900 to 2,000 degrees). The next largest percentage increase during the period was in the field of business (105 percent, from 1,500 to 3,000 degrees).

Among all racial/ethnic groups in 2013–14, the most doctor's degrees were conferred in the same two degree fields; however, not all ranked in the same order. The largest numbers of doctor's degrees conferred were in health professions and related programs, and legal professions and studies. As with master's degrees, the distribution of graduates earning doctor's degrees in STEM fields differed from the overall distribution of doctor's degrees by race/ethnicity. The percentage of White graduates earning STEM doctor's degrees (75 percent) was higher than their percentage of all doctor's degree recipients (70 percent). The percentage of Black graduates receiving doctor's degrees in STEM fields (5 percent) was lower than their percentage among all doctor's degree recipients (8 percent), while the percentage Hispanic STEM recipients (6 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander STEM recipients (12 percent) were one percent or less different compared to their overall percentages among doctor's degree recipients.

Figure 3. Number of master's and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by level of degree and sex: Academic years 2003–04 and 2013–14



NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2004 and Fall 2014, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 323.20 and 324.20.

More master's degrees were conferred to females than males in 2013–14 (451,700 vs. 302,800 degrees), as well as in nearly the past decade. Between 2003–04 and 2013–14, the number of master's degrees conferred to females increased by 120,500, reflecting an increase of 36 percent. Over the same period, the number of master's degrees conferred to males increased by 69,800, reflecting an increase of 30 percent. The number of master's degrees conferred between academic years 2012–13 and 2013–14 increased by less than one-half of 1 percent for both females and males.

Females earned more doctor's degrees than males in 2013–14 (92,000 vs. 85,600 degrees) as well as in every year since 2005–06. In contrast, males earned more doctor's degrees than females in 2003–04 (64,000 vs. 62,100 degrees). Between 2003–04 and 2013–14, the number of doctor's degrees conferred to females increased by 29,900, reflecting an increase of 48 percent. The number of doctor's degrees conferred to males increased by 21,600 between 2003–04 and 2013–14, reflecting an increase of 34 percent. Between academic years 2012–13 and 2013–14, the number of doctor's degrees conferred to females increased by 2 percent, and the number conferred to males increased by 1 percent.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.20, 323.30, 324.10, 324.20, and 324.25

Related indicators: Annual Earnings of Young Adults, Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, Undergraduate Degree Fields, Degrees Conferred by Public and Private Institutions

Glossary: Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), Doctor's degree, Master's degree, Racial/ethnic group, STEM fields