

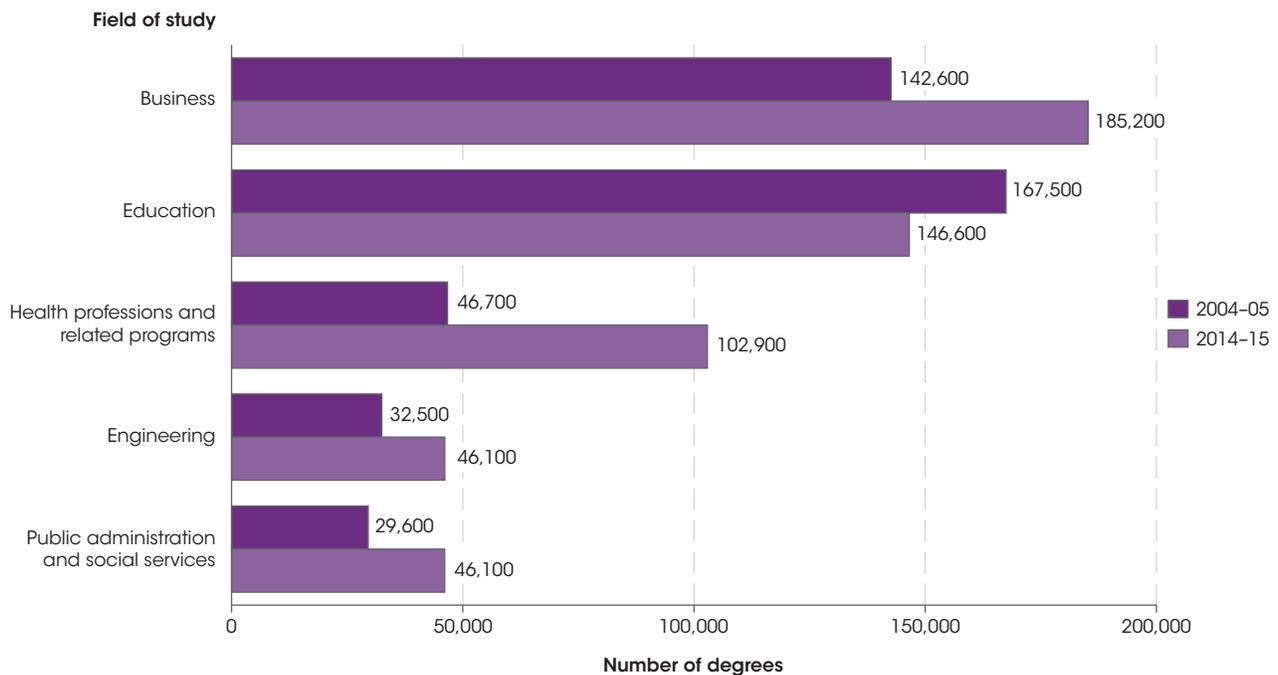
Graduate Degree Fields

In 2014–15, nearly half of the 759,000 master’s degrees conferred were concentrated in two fields of study: business (185,000 degrees) and education (147,000 degrees). Of the 179,000 doctor’s degrees conferred, almost two-thirds were concentrated in health professions and related programs (71,000 degrees) and legal professions and studies (40,300 degrees).

Between 2004–05 and 2014–15, the total number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by 31 percent, from 580,000 to 759,000. During the same period, the overall number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased by 33 percent, from 134,000 to 179,000. This indicator examines the fields of study in which these degrees were conferred, and how the number awarded in each field has changed across time. For the purposes of this analysis, doctor’s degrees include Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level, as well as first-professional degrees such as M.D., D.D.S., and J.D. degrees.

Of the 759,000 master’s degrees conferred in 2014–15 by postsecondary institutions, the largest percentages were in three fields of study: business (24 percent, 185,000 degrees), education (19 percent, 147,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (14 percent, 103,000 degrees). The fields in which the next largest percentages of master’s degrees were conferred were engineering (6 percent, 46,100 degrees) and public administration and social services (6 percent, 46,100 degrees). These five fields also accounted for the largest percentages conferred in 2004–05 and 2013–14.

Figure 1. Number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2004–05 and 2014–15



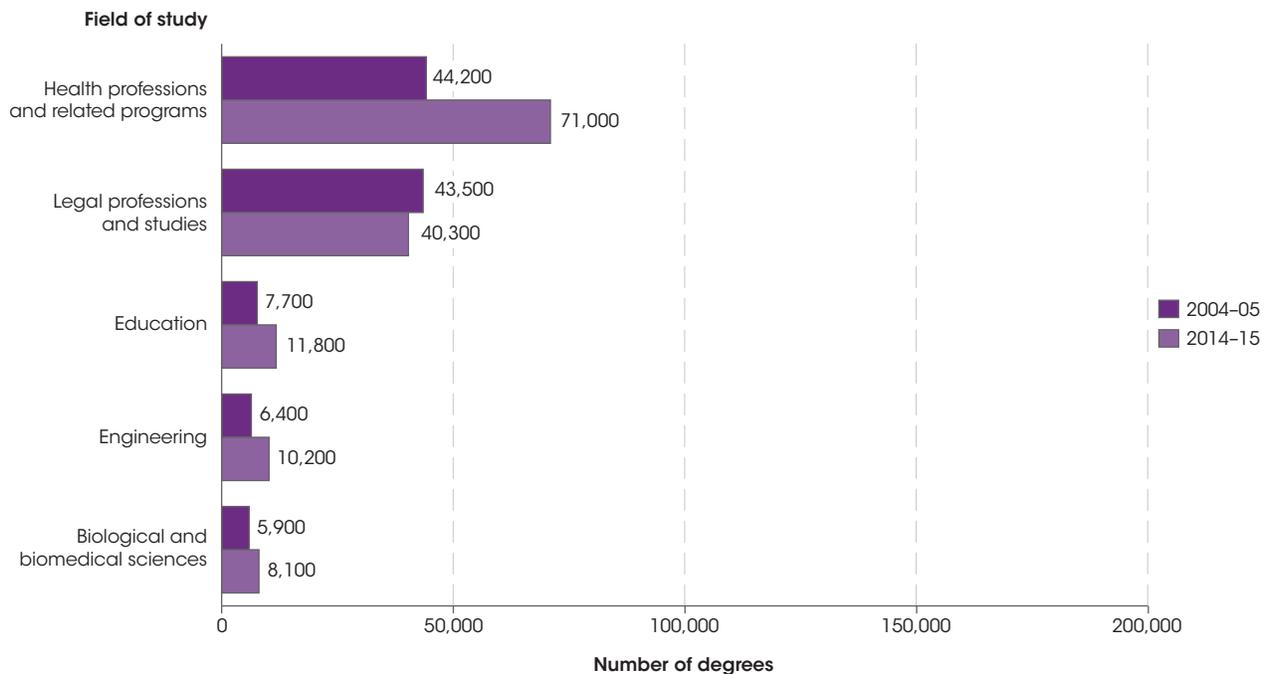
NOTE: The five fields of study shown are the fields in which the largest number of master’s degrees were conferred of the 758,700 master’s degrees conferred in 2014–15. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2009–10. The estimates for 2004–05 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 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 323.10.

Of the 20 fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred in 2014–15, more degrees were conferred in 2014–15 than in 2004–05 for all fields except education. During this period, the largest percentage increase in the number of master's degrees conferred was in the field of homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (142 percent, from 4,000 to 9,600 degrees). The next largest percentage increase was in the field of health professions and related programs (120 percent, from 46,700 to 103,000 degrees). Of these 20 fields, the field with the smallest percentage increase since 2004–05 in degrees conferred was English language and literature/letters (5 percent, from 8,500 to 8,900 degrees). The number of degrees conferred in education was lower in 2014–15 (147,000) than in 2004–05 (167,000). More recently, between 2013–14 and 2014–15 the number of business degrees conferred decreased by 2 percent (from 189,000 to 185,000 degrees) and the number of education degrees conferred decreased by 5 percent (from 155,000 to 147,000 degrees). In comparison, the overall number of master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by 1 percent.

In 2014–15, the top three master's degree fields were the same for all racial/ethnic groups: business, education, and health professions and related programs, although

the rank order of these fields differed across groups. The racial/ethnic distribution of graduates earning degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)¹ fields differed from the racial/ethnic distribution of master's degree graduates overall. The percentage of STEM master's degrees conferred to Asian/Pacific Islander graduates (15 percent) was higher than the percentage of master's degrees conferred to Asian/Pacific Islander graduates overall (7 percent). In contrast, the percentages of STEM master's degrees conferred to White (65 percent), Black (8 percent), and Hispanic (8 percent) graduates were lower than the percentages of master's degrees conferred to each group overall (68 percent, 14 percent, and 9 percent, respectively).

Similar to master's degrees, of the 179,000 doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, almost two-thirds of degrees were concentrated in two fields of study: health professions and related programs (40 percent, 71,000 degrees) and legal professions and studies (23 percent, 40,300 degrees). The three fields in which the next largest percentages of doctor's degrees were conferred were education (7 percent, 11,800 degrees), engineering (6 percent, 10,200 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (5 percent, 8,100 degrees).

Figure 2. Number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2004–05 and 2014–15

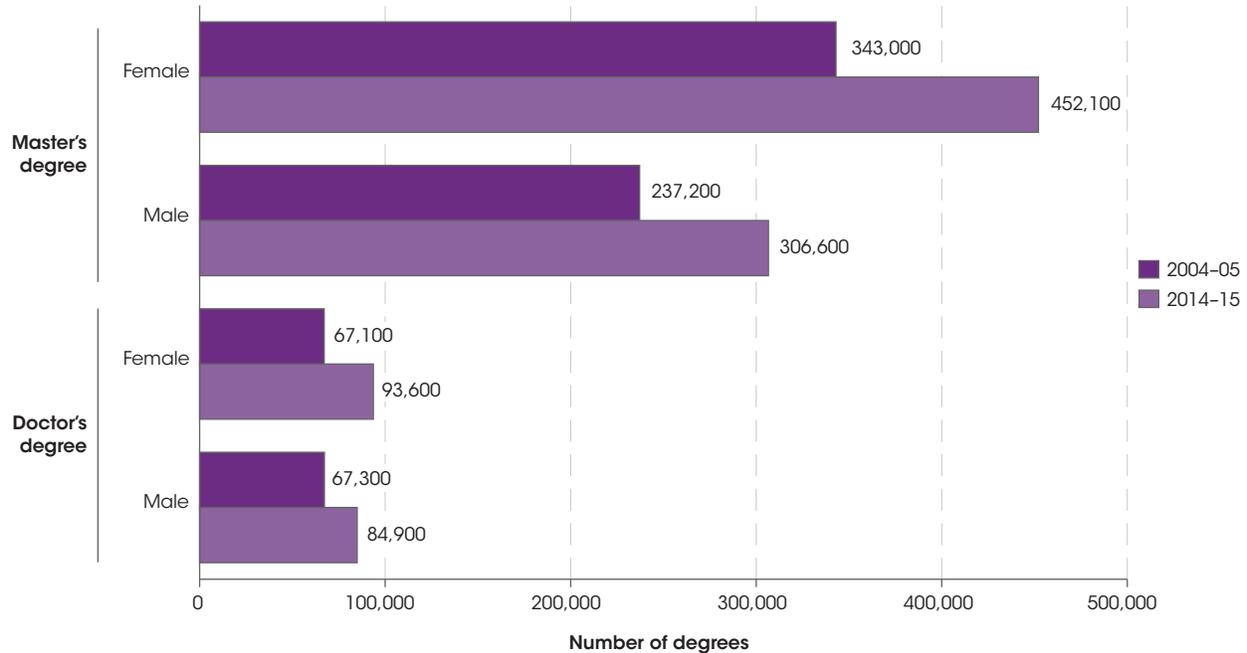
NOTE: The five fields of study are the fields in which the largest number of doctor's degrees were conferred of the 178,500 doctor's degrees conferred in 2014–15. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2009–10. The estimates for 2004–05 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 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 324.10.

The largest number of doctor's degrees were conferred in health professions and related programs and in legal professions and studies in each year from 2004–05 through 2014–15. The number of degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 61 percent over this period (from 44,200 to 71,000 degrees); however, the number of degrees conferred in legal professions and studies was lower in 2014–15 than in 2004–05 (40,300 vs. 43,500 degrees). Among the 20 largest fields of study in 2014–15, the field of business had the largest percentage increase in the number of doctor's degrees conferred between 2004–05 and 2014–15 (108 percent, from 1,500 to 3,100 degrees). The field with the next largest percentage increase during this period was computer and information sciences (79 percent, from 1,100 to 2,000 degrees). Of these 20 fields, the field with the smallest percentage increase between 2004–05 and 2014–15 was English language and literature/letters (17 percent, from 1,200 to 1,400 degrees). More recently, between 2013–14 and 2014–15, the number of health professions and related programs degrees conferred increased by 5 percent (from 67,400 to 71,000 degrees) and the number of legal professions and studies degrees

conferred decreased by 9 percent (from 44,200 to 40,300 degrees). In comparison, the overall number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions increased by 1 percent.

In 2014–15, the top two doctor's degree fields were the same for all racial/ethnic groups: health professions and related programs, and legal professions and studies; however, the rank order of these fields differed across groups. As with master's degrees, the racial/ethnic distribution of graduates earning doctor's degrees in STEM fields differed from the racial/ethnic distribution of graduates earning doctor's degrees overall. The percentage of STEM doctor's degrees conferred to White graduates (74 percent) was higher than their percentage of doctor's degrees overall (69 percent), while the percentage of STEM doctor's degrees conferred to Black graduates (4 percent) was lower than their percentage of doctor's degrees overall (8 percent). The percentages of STEM doctor's degrees conferred to Asian/Pacific Islander (13 percent) and Hispanic graduates (6 percent) were both within 1 percentage point of their overall percentages of doctor's degrees.

Figure 3. Number of master's and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by level of degree and sex: Academic years 2004-05 and 2014-15



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 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 323.20 and 324.20.

More master's degrees were conferred to females than to males in 2014-15 (452,000 vs. 307,000 degrees), consistent with the pattern of each year from 2004-05 through 2014-15. Over this period, the number of master's degrees conferred to females increased by 109,000, or 32 percent. Over the same period, the number of master's degrees conferred to males increased by 69,400, or 29 percent. More recently, between 2013-14 and 2014-15 the number of master's degrees conferred increased by less than one-half of one percent for females and by 1 percent for males.

in every year since 2005-06. In contrast, more doctor's degrees were conferred to males than to females in 2004-05 (67,300 vs. 67,100 degrees). Between 2004-05 and 2014-15, the number of doctor's degrees conferred to females increased by 26,500, or 39 percent. Over the same period, the number of doctor's degrees conferred to males increased by 17,700, or 26 percent. More recently, between academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15, the number of doctor's degrees conferred to females increased by 2 percent, and the number conferred to males decreased by 1 percent.

More doctor's degrees were conferred to females than to males in 2014-15 (93,600 vs. 84,900 degrees) as well as

Endnotes:

¹ STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.20, 323.30, 324.10, 324.20, and 324.25

Related indicators and resources: Undergraduate Degree Fields, Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*

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