

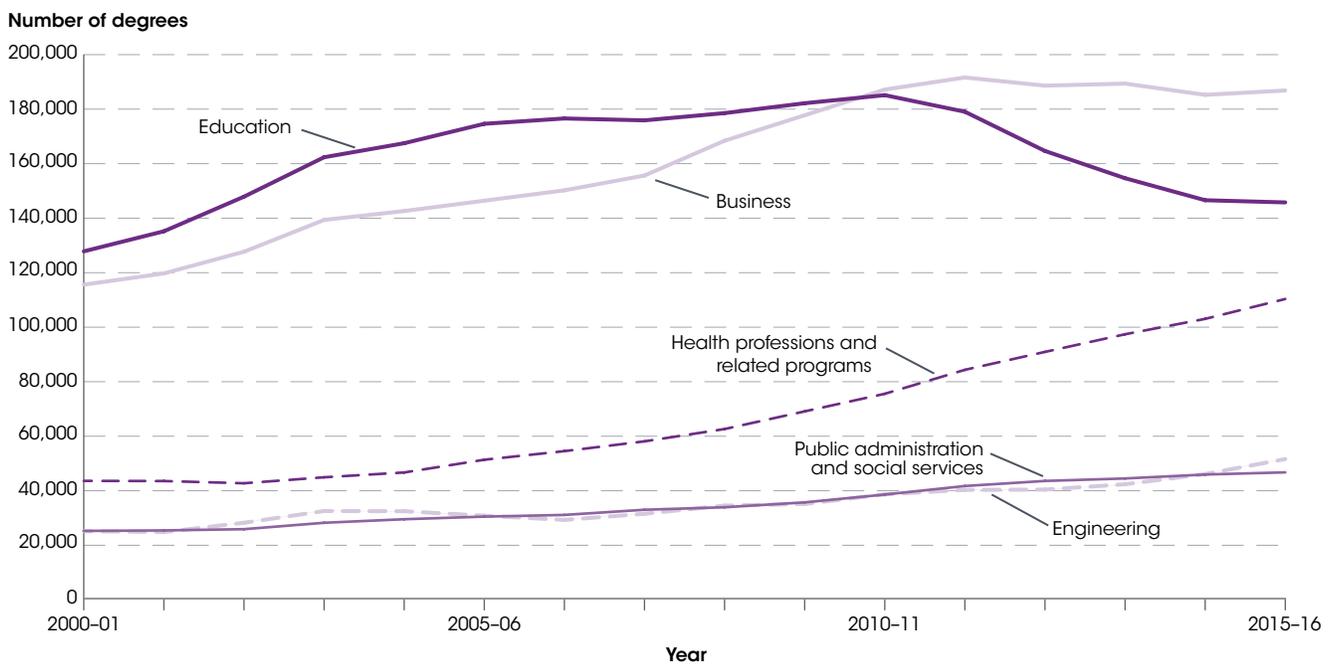
## Graduate Degree Fields

*In 2015–16, over half of the 786,000 master’s degrees conferred were concentrated in three fields of study: business (187,000 degrees), education (146,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (110,000 degrees). Of the 178,000 doctor’s degrees conferred, almost two-thirds were concentrated in two fields: health professions and related programs (73,700 degrees) and legal professions and studies (37,000 degrees).*

In academic year 2015–16, postsecondary institutions conferred 786,000 master’s degrees. Over half of the master’s degrees conferred in 2015–16 were concentrated in three fields of study: business (24 percent, or 187,000 degrees), education (19 percent, or 146,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (14 percent, or 110,000 degrees). The fields in which the next largest

percentages of master’s degrees were conferred were engineering (7 percent, or 51,600 degrees) and public administration and social services (6 percent, or 46,800 degrees). Overall, 129,000 master’s degrees (16 percent) were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)<sup>1</sup> fields in 2015–16.

**Figure 1. Number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2015–16**

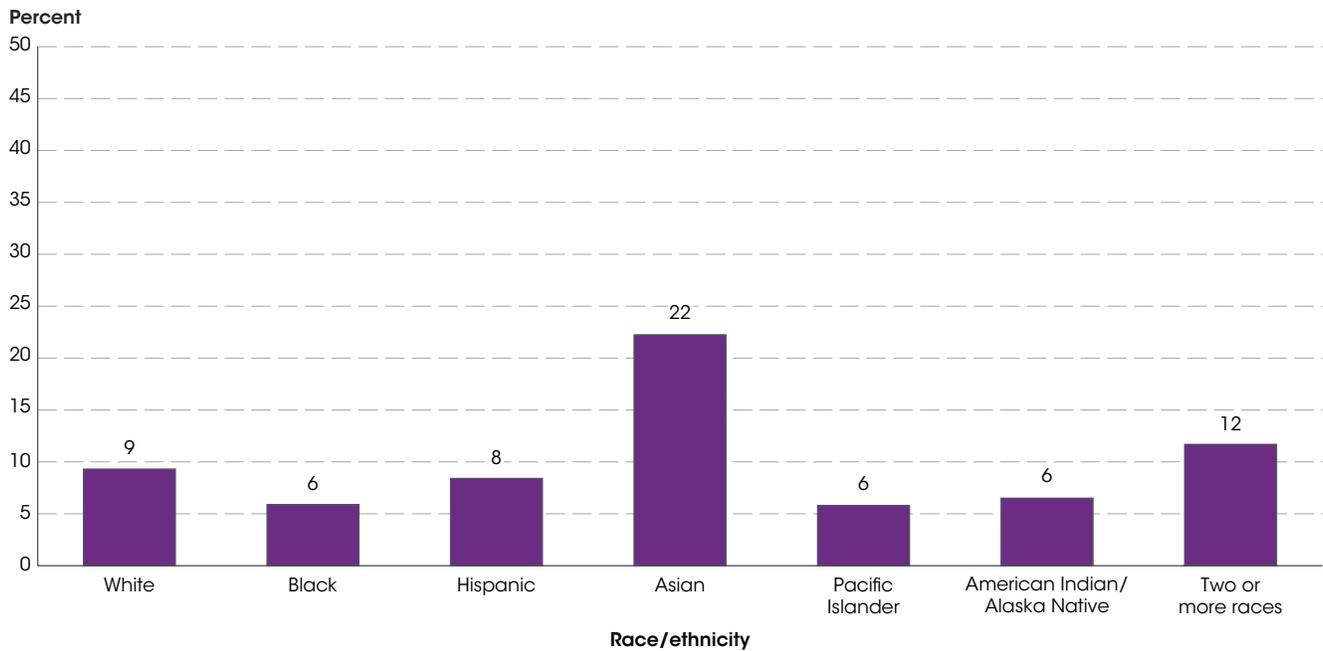


NOTE: The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master’s degrees were conferred in 2015–16. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where necessary to conform to the 2009–10 Classification of Instructional Programs.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 through Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 314; *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 323.10.

Between 2000–01 and 2015–16 the number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 66 percent, from 474,000 to 786,000. During this period the number of master’s degrees conferred in business rose by 66 percent from 116,000 degrees in 2000–01 to 192,000 degrees in 2011–12, and showed no clear trend between 2011–12 and 2015–16 (187,000 master’s degrees were conferred in business in 2015–16). In 2010–11, business surpassed education as the field in which the largest number of master’s degrees were conferred and has remained the largest field in each subsequent year. The number of master’s degrees conferred in education rose by 45 percent from 128,000 degrees in 2000–01 to 185,000 degrees in 2010–11, and then fell by 21 percent to 146,000 degrees

in 2015–16. In each of the three next largest fields of study, the number of degrees conferred increased between 2000–01 and 2015–16: health professions and related programs (by 153 percent, from 43,600 to 110,000), engineering (by 105 percent, from 25,200 to 51,600), and public administration and social services (by 85 percent, from 25,300 to 46,800). Among other degree fields in which at least 10,000 master’s degrees were conferred in 2015–16, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2000–01 and 2015–16 in computer and information sciences (from 16,900 to 40,100, an increase of 137 percent) and biological and biomedical sciences (from 7,000 to 15,700, an increase of 124 percent).

**Figure 2. Percentage of master’s degrees awarded in science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity: Academic year 2015–16**

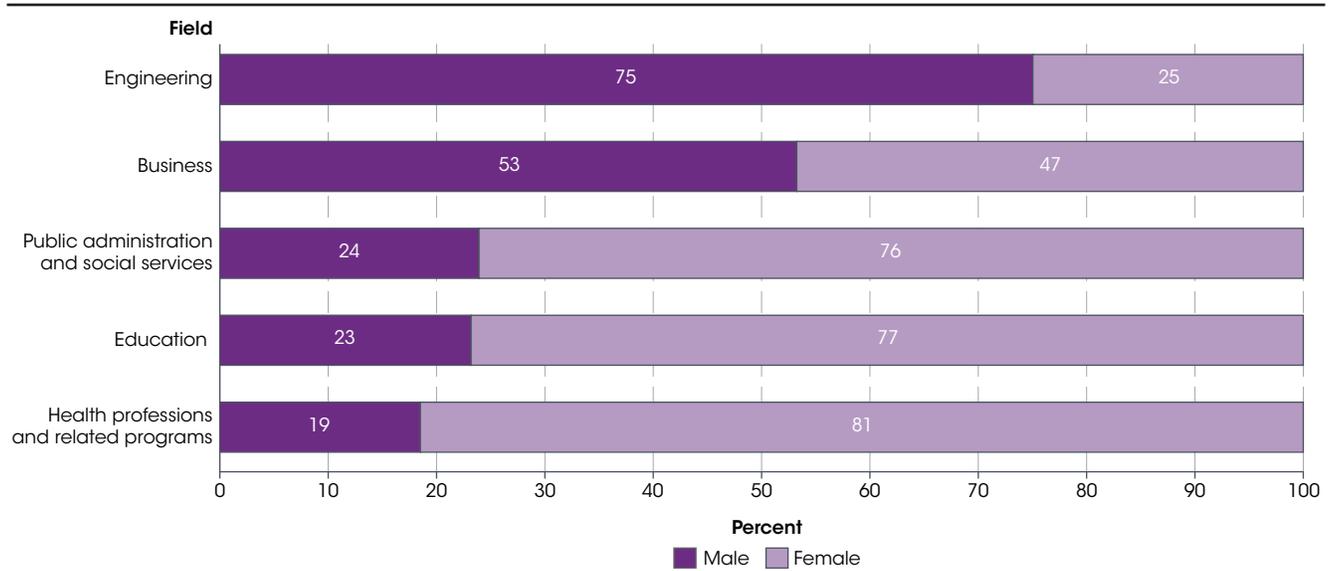


NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 318.45 and 323.30.

In 2015–16, the three fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred—business, education, and health professions and related programs—were the same for all racial/ethnic groups, although the rank order of these fields differed across groups. The percentage of master’s degrees conferred in STEM fields varied by race/ethnicity in 2015–16. Some 22 percent of master’s degrees conferred

to Asian graduates were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentages for graduates who were of Two or more races (12 percent), White (9 percent), Hispanic (8 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (6 percent), Black (6 percent), and Pacific Islander (6 percent).

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in largest fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2015–16**



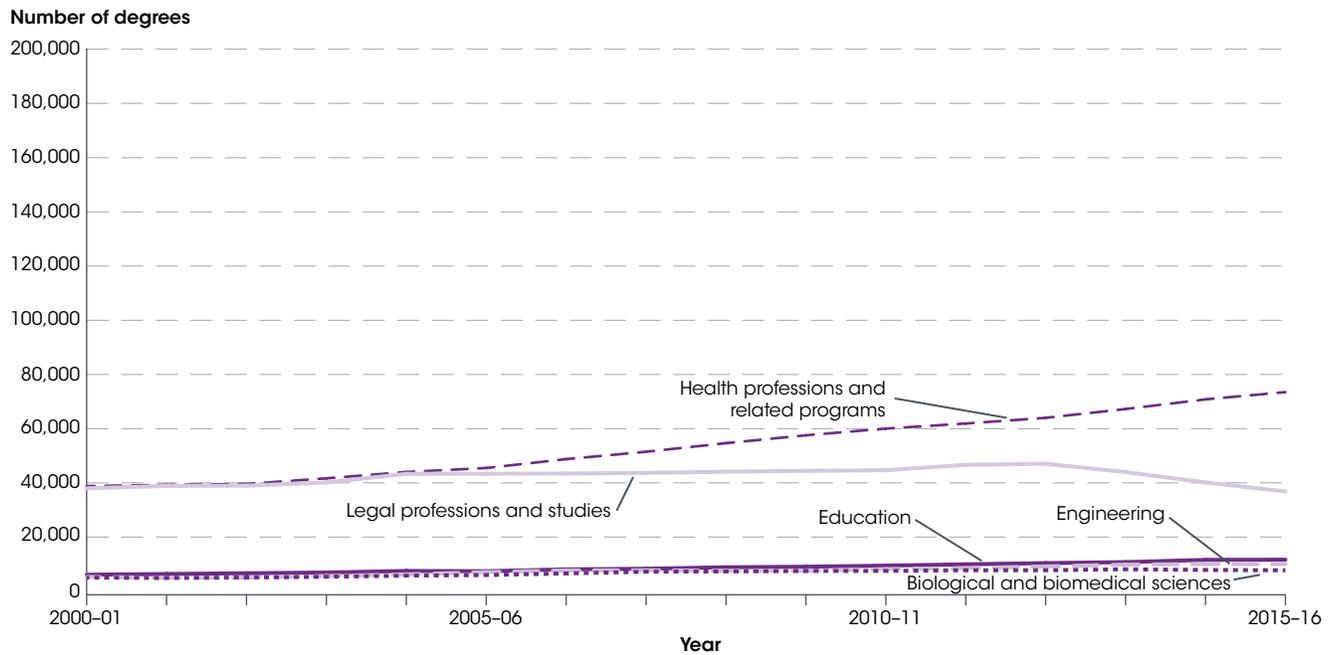
NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 323.40 and 323.50.

In 2015–16, females earned 465,000 master’s degrees, representing 59 percent of all master’s degrees conferred. Males earned the remaining 41 percent (320,000 degrees). Of the five fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred in 2015–16, females earned the majority of degrees in health professions and related programs; education; and public administration and social services (81 percent, 77 percent, and 76 percent, respectively). Males earned the majority of degrees conferred in business and engineering (53 percent and 75 percent, respectively).

Of the 178,000 doctor’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in 2015–16, almost two-

thirds were concentrated in two fields of study: health professions and related programs (41 percent, or 73,700 degrees) and legal professions and studies (21 percent, or 37,000 degrees). The three fields in which the next largest percentages of doctor’s degrees were conferred were education (7 percent, or 11,800 degrees), engineering (6 percent, or 10,200 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (4 percent, or 7,900 degrees). 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.

**Figure 4. Number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000-01 through 2015-16**

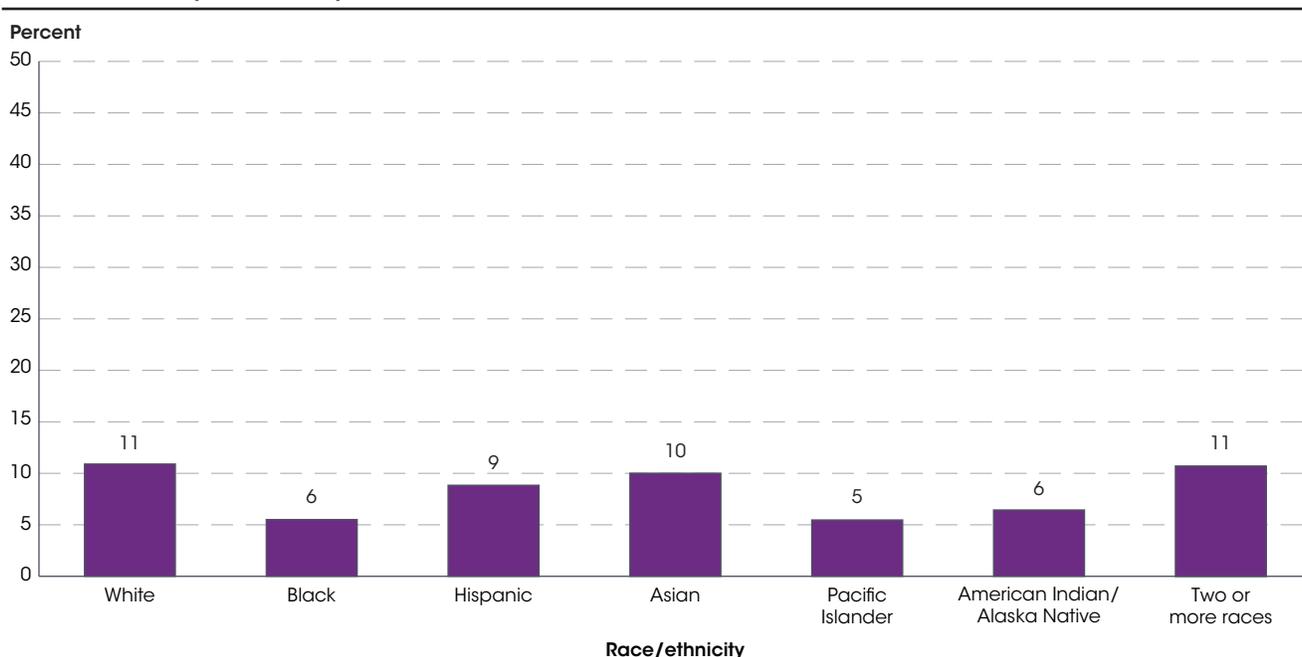


NOTE: Doctor's degrees include Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level, as well as such degrees as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees that were formerly classified as first-professional degrees. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor's degrees were conferred in 2015-16. 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.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 through Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 315; *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 324.10.

Between 2000-01 and 2015-16, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased by 49 percent, from 120,000 to 178,000. Over this time period, the number of doctor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 89 percent, from 39,000 in 2000-01 to 73,700 in 2015-16. The number of doctor's degrees conferred in legal professions increased by 24 percent from

38,200 in 2000-01 to 47,200 in 2012-13 and fell in each subsequent year, to 37,000 in 2015-16. Between 2000-01 and 2015-16, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased in each of the next three largest fields: education (by 88 percent, from 6,300 to 11,800), engineering (by 86 percent, from 5,500 to 10,200), and biological and biomedical sciences (by 51 percent, from 5,200 to 7,900).

**Figure 5. Percentage of doctor’s degrees awarded in science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity: Academic year 2015–16**



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. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 318.45 and 324.25.

In 2015–16, the two fields in which the most doctor’s degrees were conferred—health professions and related programs, and legal professions and studies—were the same for all racial/ethnic groups, although the rank order of these fields differed across groups. As with master’s degrees, the percentage of doctor’s degrees conferred in STEM fields varied among racial/ethnic groups.

Some 11 percent of doctor’s degrees conferred to White graduates and graduates of Two or more races were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentages for Asian (10 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (6 percent), Black (6 percent), and Pacific Islander graduates (5 percent).

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> 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 2012*, tables 314 and 315; *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.20, 323.30, 323.40, 323.50, 324.10, 324.20, and 324.25

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

**Related indicators and resources:** [Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred](#); [Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Fields \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Undergraduate Degree Fields](#); [Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers \[The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight\]](#)