

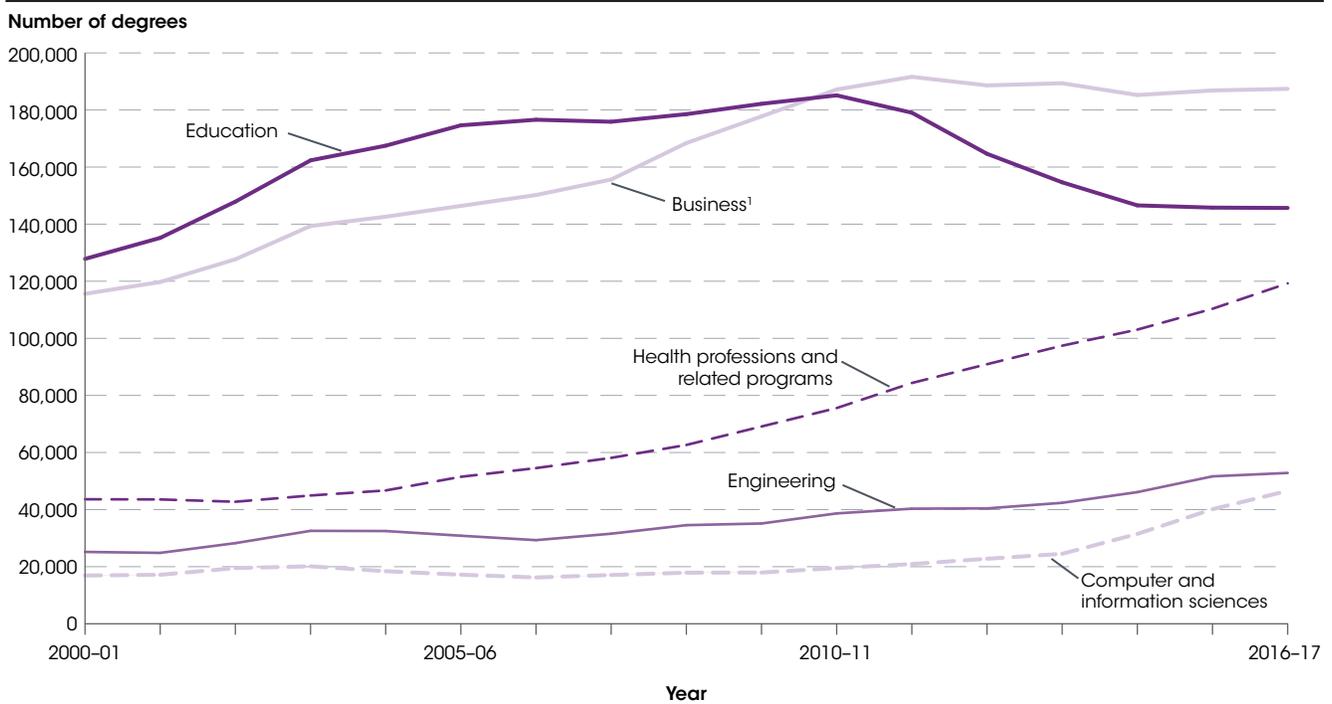
## Graduate Degree Fields

*In 2016–17, over half of the 805,000 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 (119,000 degrees). Of the 181,000 doctor’s degrees conferred, 62 percent were concentrated in two fields: health professions and related programs (77,700 degrees) and legal professions and studies (35,100 degrees).*

In academic year 2016–17, postsecondary institutions conferred 805,000 master’s degrees. Over half of the master’s degrees conferred in 2016–17 were concentrated in three fields of study: business (23 percent, or 187,000 degrees), education (18 percent, or 146,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (15 percent, or 119,000 degrees). The fields in which the next largest

percentages of master’s degrees were conferred were engineering (7 percent, or 52,800 degrees) and computer and information sciences (6 percent, or 46,600 degrees). Overall, 139,000 master’s degrees (17 percent) were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)<sup>1</sup> fields in 2016–17.

**Figure 1. Number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2016–17**



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

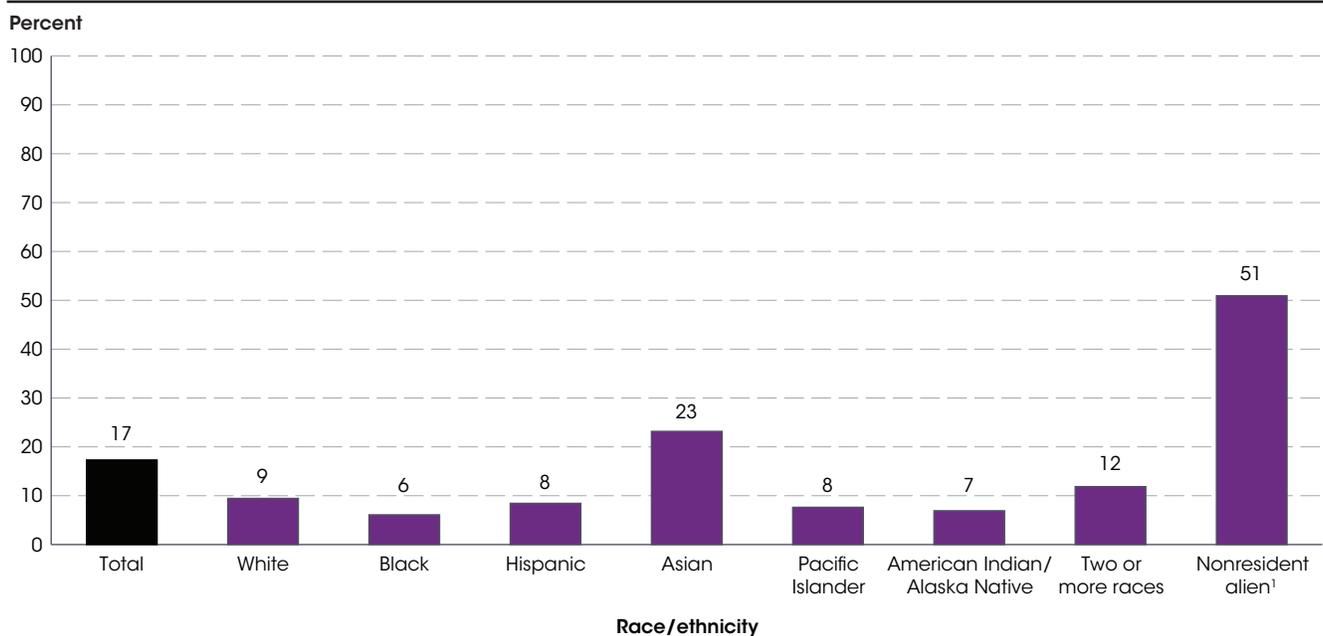
NOTE: The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master's degrees were conferred in 2016–17. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where necessary to conform to the 2009–10 Classification of 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 314; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 323.10.

Between 2000–01 and 2016–17, the number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 70 percent, from 474,000 to 805,000 degrees. Between 2000–01 and 2011–12, the number of master’s degrees conferred in business rose by 66 percent, from 116,000 to 192,000 degrees, but there was no clear trend between 2011–12 and 2016–17 (187,000 degrees were conferred in business in 2016–17). 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. Between 2000–01 and 2010–11, the number of master’s degrees conferred in education rose by 45 percent, from 128,000 to 185,000 degrees. The number of degrees then fell 21 percent to 146,000 degrees in 2016–17. In each of the three next largest fields, the number of master’s degrees conferred

increased between 2000–01 and 2016–17: health professions and related programs (by 173 percent, from 43,600 to 119,000 degrees), engineering (by 110 percent, from 25,200 to 52,800 degrees), and computer and information sciences (by 175 percent, from 16,900 to 46,600 degrees). In 2016–17 the number of computer and information sciences master’s degrees conferred surpassed public administration degrees. Among other fields in which at least 10,000 master’s degrees were conferred in 2016–17, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2000–01 and 2016–17 in biological and biomedical sciences (from 7,000 to 16,300 degrees, an increase of 132 percent) and homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (from 2,500 to 10,200 degrees, an increase of 306 percent).

**Figure 2. Percentage of master’s degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Academic year 2016–17**

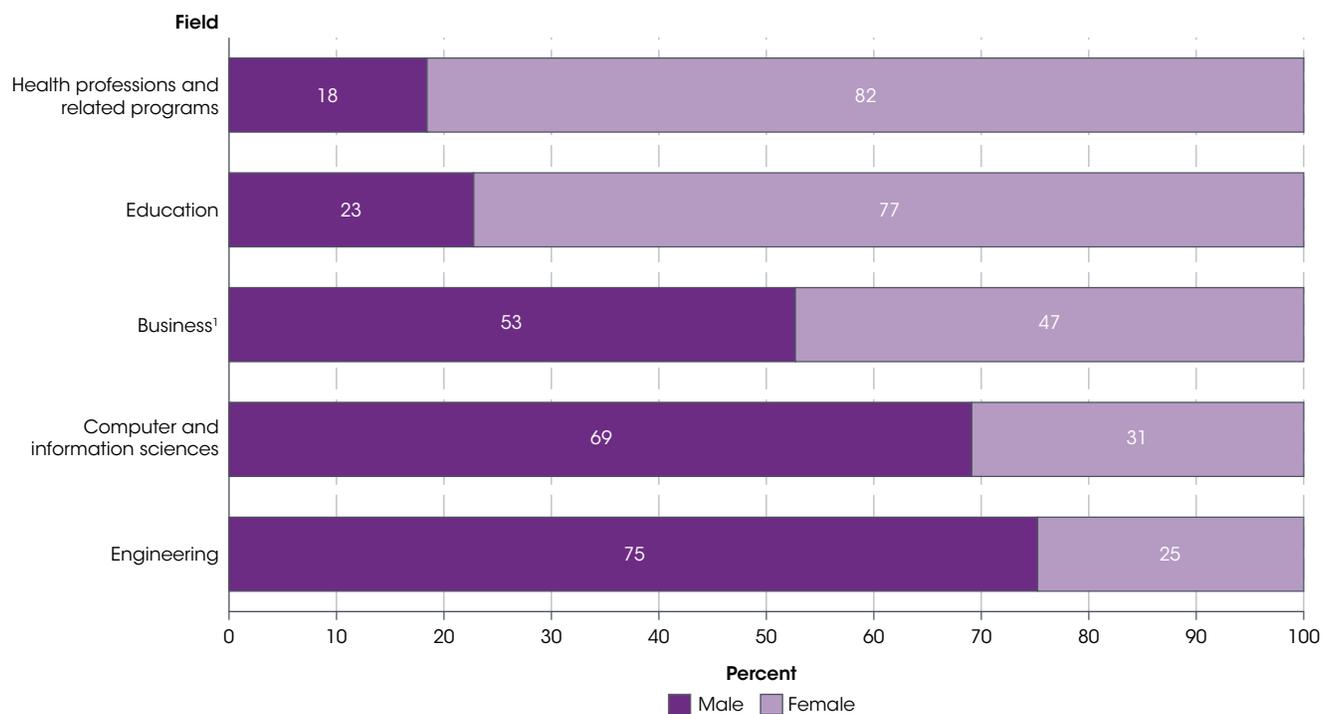


<sup>1</sup>In IPEDS, data for the nonresident alien category is collected alongside racial/ethnic categories. NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering, engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Students categorized as “nonresident alien” are not included in other race/ethnicity categories. 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 318.45 and 323.30.

In 2016–17, 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. Business was the top field for all but White students, for whom education was the top field. For nonresident alien<sup>2</sup> students, the three fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred were business, engineering, and computer and information sciences. The percentage of master’s degrees conferred

in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity in 2016–17. Some 23 percent of master’s degrees conferred to Asian students were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentages for students who were of Two or more races (12 percent), White (9 percent), Hispanic (8 percent), Pacific Islander (8 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (7 percent), and Black (6 percent). Notably, 51 percent of master’s degrees conferred to nonresident alien students were in a STEM field.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in largest fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2016–17**



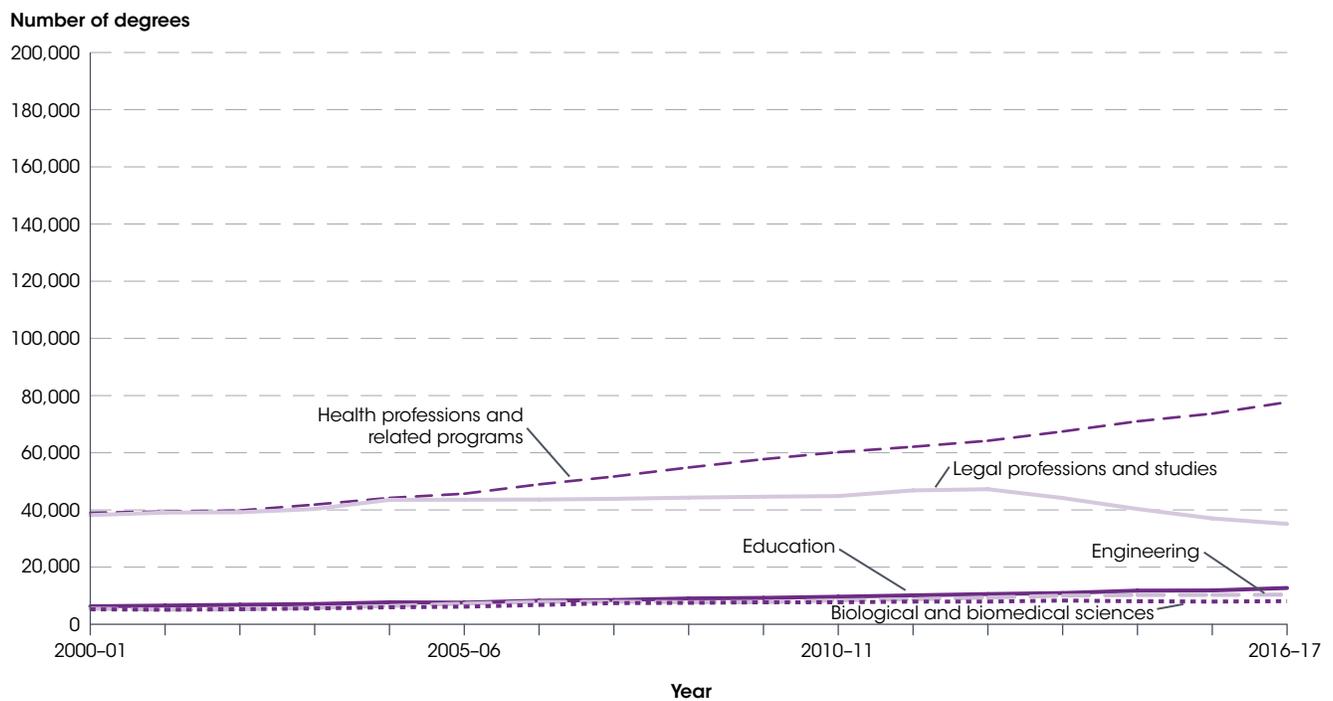
<sup>1</sup> "Business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services, in order to be consistent with the definition of "business" for bachelor's degree data.  
 NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 323.40 and 323.50.

In 2016–17, females earned 59 percent (478,000 degrees) and males earned 41 percent (327,000 degrees) of all master’s degrees conferred. Of the five fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred in 2016–17, females earned the majority of degrees in health professions and related programs (82 percent) and education (77 percent). Males earned the majority of degrees in engineering (75 percent), computer and information sciences (69 percent), and business (53 percent).

Two fields accounted for 62 percent of the 181,000 doctor’s degrees conferred in 2016–17: health professions and related programs (43 percent, or 77,700 degrees)

and legal professions and studies (19 percent, or 35,100 degrees). The three fields in which the next largest percentages of doctor’s degrees were conferred were education (7 percent, or 12,700 degrees), engineering (6 percent, or 10,400 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (4 percent, or 8,100 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 such degrees M.D., D.D.S., and J.D. degrees that were previously classified as first-professional degrees (2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used).

**Figure 4. Number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000-01 through 2016-17**

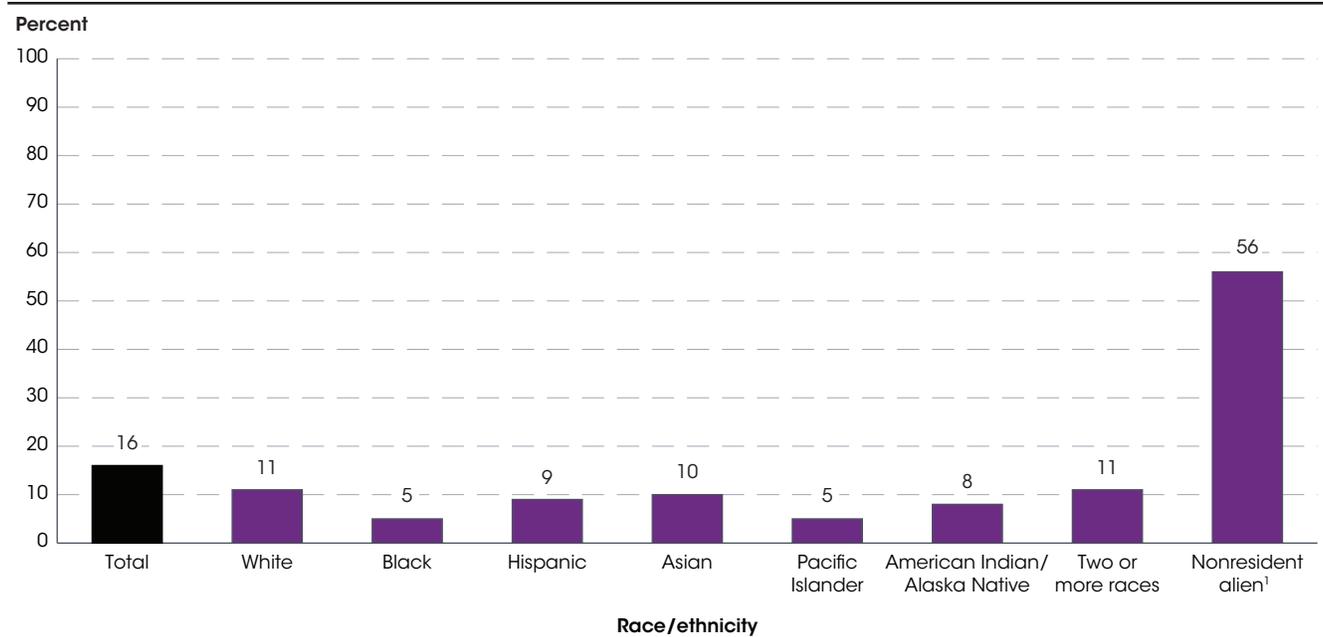


NOTE: Doctor's degrees include Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level, as well as such degrees as M.D., D.D.S., and J.D. that were formerly classified as first-professional degrees. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor's degrees were conferred in 2016-17. 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 315; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 324.10.

Between 2000-01 and 2016-17, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased by 52 percent, from 120,000 to 181,000 degrees. Over this time period, the number of doctor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 99 percent, from 39,000 degrees in 2000-01 to 77,700 degrees in 2016-17. Between 2000-01 and 2012-13, the number of doctor's degrees conferred in legal professions and studies

increased by 24 percent, from 38,200 to 47,200 degrees; the number of degrees then fell to 35,100 degrees in 2016-17. Between 2000-01 and 2016-17, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased in each of the next three largest fields: education (by 102 percent, from 6,300 to 12,700 degrees), engineering (by 89 percent, from 5,500 to 10,400 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (by 55 percent, from 5,200 to 8,100 degrees).

**Figure 5. Percentage of doctor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Academic year 2016–17**

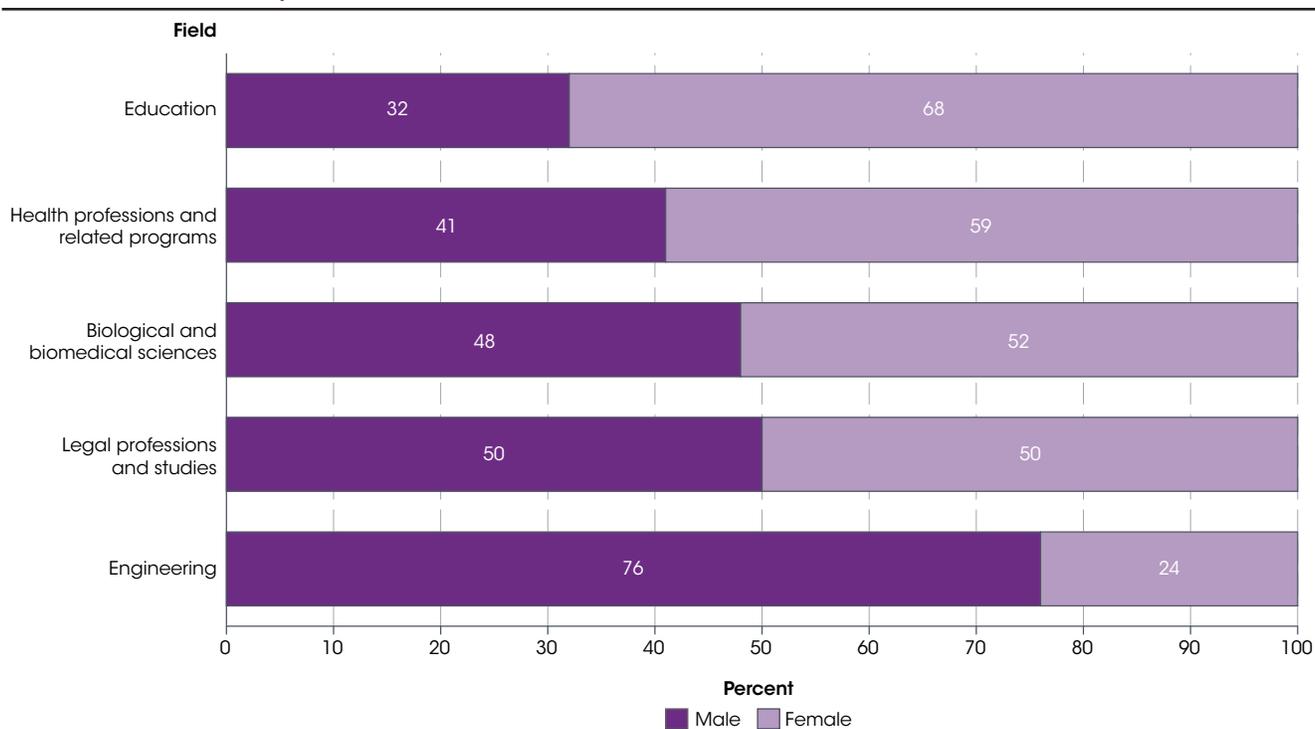


<sup>1</sup> In IPEDS, data for the nonresident alien category is collected alongside racial/ethnic categories.  
 NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering, engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Students categorized as “nonresident alien” are not included in other race/ethnicity categories. 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 318.45 and 324.25.

In 2016–17, 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, except nonresident alien students. For nonresident alien students, the two fields in which the most doctor’s degrees were conferred were engineering and health professions and related programs. As with STEM master’s degrees, the percentage of doctor’s degrees conferred in a STEM field varied among

racial/ethnic groups. The percentage of doctor’s degrees that were conferred in a STEM field was largest for nonresident alien students (56 percent). Some 11 percent of doctor’s degrees conferred to students of Two or more races and to White students were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentages for Asian (10 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (8 percent), Pacific Islander (5 percent), and Black (5 percent) students.

**Figure 6. Percentage distribution of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in largest fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2016–17**



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. 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 2017, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 324.30 and 324.35.

In 2016–17, females earned 53 percent (96,700 degrees) and males earned 47 percent (84,700 degrees) of all doctor's degrees conferred. Of the five fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred in 2016–17, females earned the majority of degrees in education (68 percent), health professions and related programs (59 percent), and

biological and biomedical sciences (52 percent). Doctor's degrees in legal professions and studies were split nearly equally between males and females (50 percent each). Of the five fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred, females earned the fewest in engineering while males earned the most (24 and 76 percent, respectively).

**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.

<sup>2</sup> In IPEDS, data for the nonresident alien category is collected alongside racial/ethnic categories.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 314 and 315; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.20, 323.30, 323.40, 323.50, 324.10, 324.20, 324.25, 324.30, and 324.35

**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](#); [Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers](#) [*The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight*]; [Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Fields](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Undergraduate Degree Fields](#)