

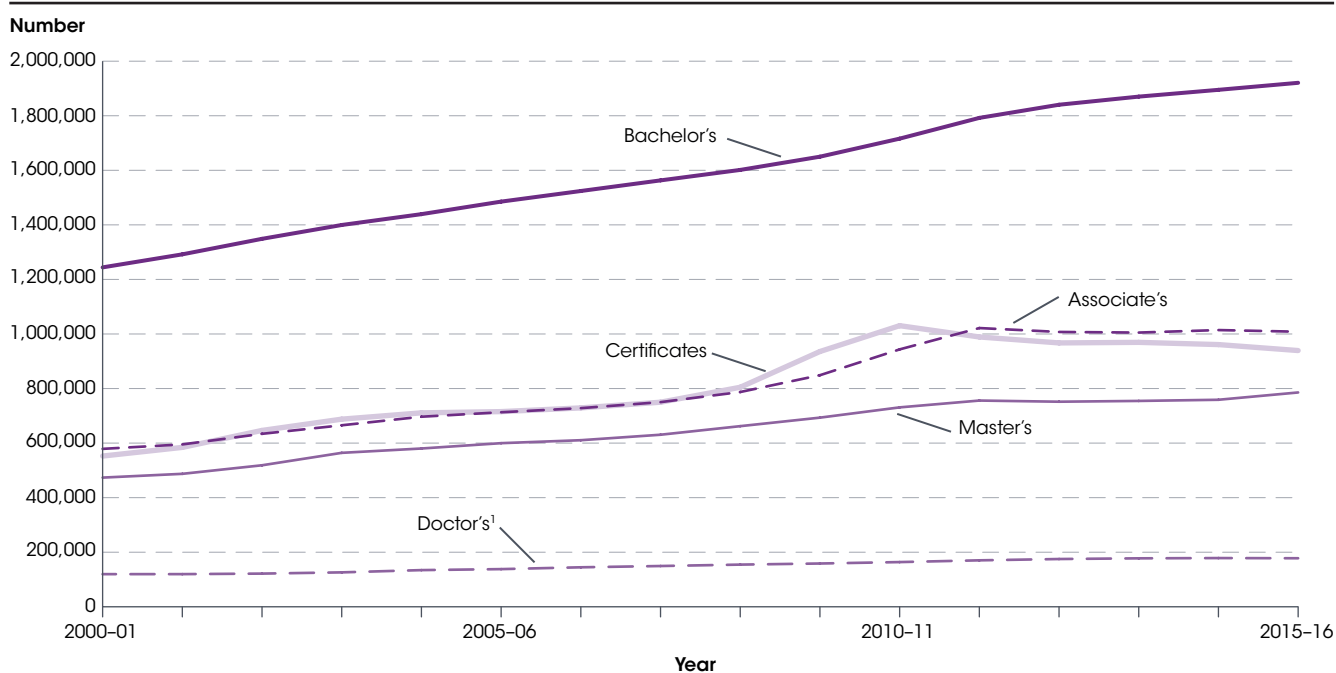
Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred

The number of postsecondary certificates and degrees conferred at each award level increased between 2000–01 and 2015–16. The number of certificates below the associate’s level conferred during this period increased by 70 percent. The number of degrees conferred during this period increased by 74 percent at the associate’s level, by 54 percent at the bachelor’s level, by 66 percent at the master’s level, and by 49 percent at the doctor’s level.

In academic year 2015–16, postsecondary institutions conferred 939,000 certificates¹ below the associate’s level, 1.0 million associate’s degrees, 1.9 million bachelor’s degrees, 786,000 master’s degrees, and 178,000 doctor’s

degrees. The number of postsecondary certificates and degrees conferred at each award level increased between 2000–01 and 2015–16.

Figure 1. Number of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions: Academic years 2000–01 through 2015–16



¹ 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 are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data for associate’s degrees and higher awards are for degree-granting institutions. Data for certificates are for certificates below the associate’s degree level. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

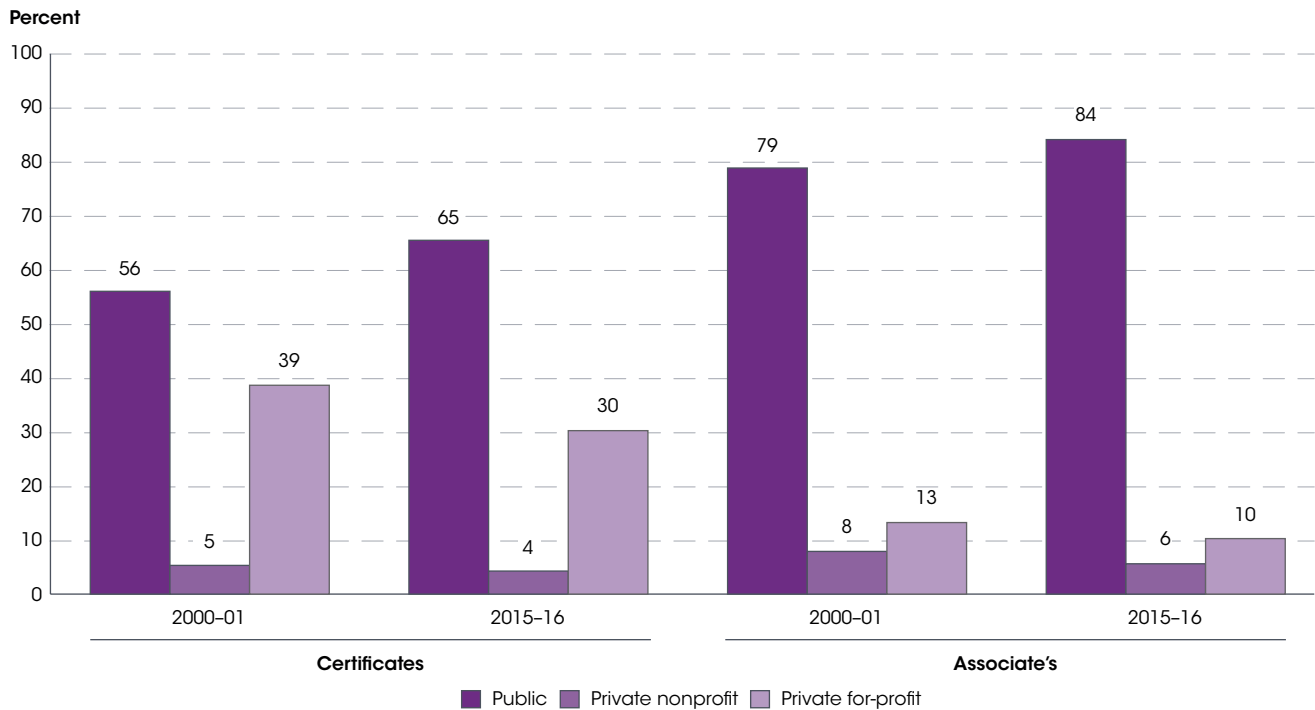
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 through Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 318.40.

The number of certificates conferred below the associate’s level increased by 87 percent between 2000–01 and 2010–11, from 553,000 to 1.0 million. The number of certificates conferred then decreased by 9 percent to 939,000 in 2015–16. In contrast, the number of associate’s degrees conferred peaked one year later in 2011–12. Between 2000–01 and 2011–12 the number of associate’s degrees increased by 77 percent, from 579,000 to 1.0 million. The number of associate’s degrees conferred then fluctuated and was 1 percent lower in 2015–16 than in 2011–12. The number of bachelor’s degrees conferred rose each year

between 2000–01 and 2015–16, increasing by 54 percent (from 1.2 million to 1.9 million) during this period.

Between 2000–01 and 2011–12 the number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 60 percent, from 474,000 to 756,000, but showed no clear trend between 2011–12 and 2015–16, when 786,000 master’s degrees were conferred. The number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased by 49 percent (from 120,000 to 178,000) between 2000–01 and 2015–16.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of certificates and associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2000–01 and 2015–16

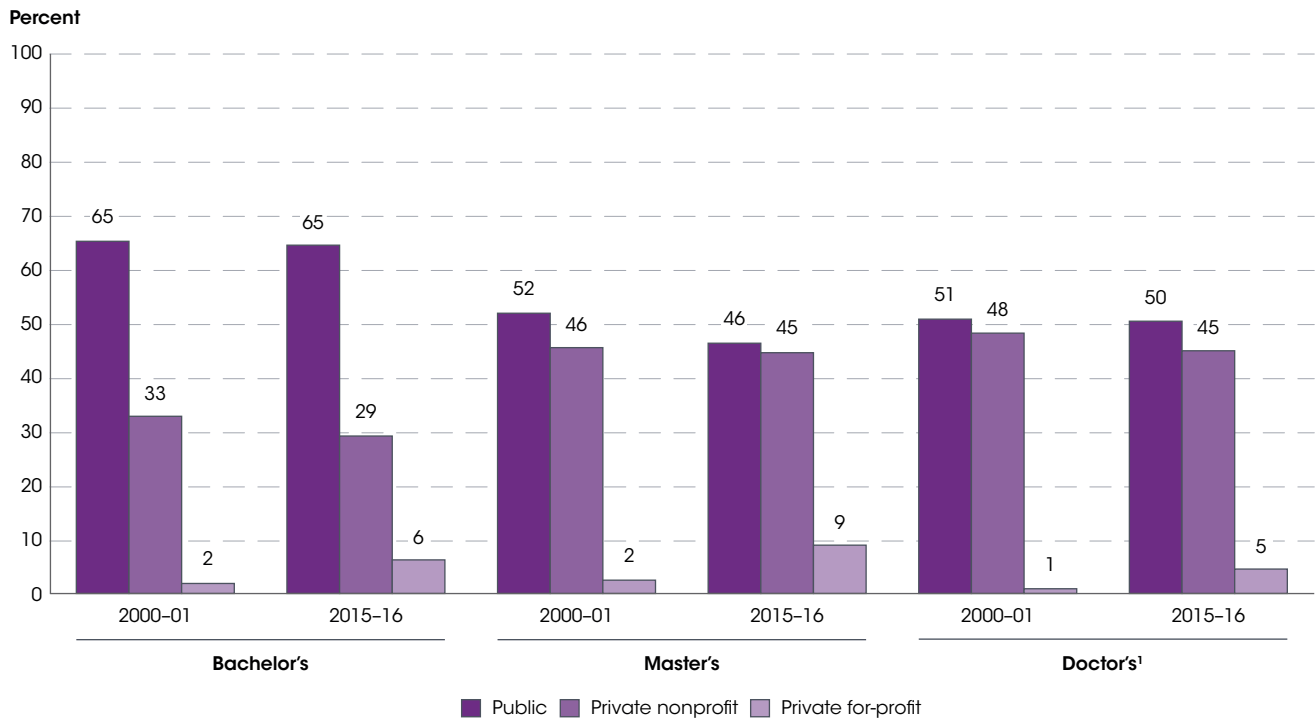


NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data for associate’s degrees are from degree-granting institutions. Data for certificates are for certificates below the associate’s degree level. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 and Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 318.40.

From 2000–01 to 2015–16, the number of certificates below the associate’s level conferred by public institutions increased by 99 percent (from 310,000 to 615,000). The number of certificates conferred by private nonprofit institutions was 37 percent higher in 2015–16 (40,000) than in 2000–01 (29,000), but showed no clear trend during this period. The number conferred by private for-profit institutions increased by 33 percent (from 214,000 in 2000–01 to 284,000 in 2015–16). Over this period, the proportion of certificates conferred by public institutions increased from 56 to 65 percent, while the proportion of certificates conferred by private nonprofit institutions decreased from 5 to 4 percent. The proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions was lower in 2015–16 (30 percent) than in 2000–01 (39 percent).

Likewise, from 2000–01 to 2015–16, the number of associate’s degrees conferred increased by 86 percent at public institutions (from 456,000 to 848,000), by 24 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 46,000 to 57,000), and by 35 percent at private for-profit institutions (from 77,000 to 104,000). The proportion of associate’s degrees conferred by public institutions was higher in 2015–16 (84 percent) than in 2000–01 (79 percent). By contrast, the proportion of all associate’s degrees conferred by private nonprofit institutions was lower in 2015–16 (6 percent) than in 2000–01 (8 percent), as was the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions (10 percent in 2015–16 vs. 13 percent in 2000–01).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2000-01 and 2015-16



¹ 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 are for degree-granting 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 2001 and Fall 2016, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 318.40.

From 2000–01 to 2015–16, the number of bachelor’s degrees conferred by public institutions increased by 53 percent (from 812,000 to 1.2 million), the number conferred by private nonprofit institutions increased by 37 percent (from 409,000 to 561,000), and the number conferred by private for-profit institutions increased by 419 percent (from 23,000 to 120,000). While the proportion of all bachelor’s degrees conferred by public institutions was 65 percent in both 2000–01 and 2015–16, the proportion conferred by private nonprofit institutions decreased over that period (from 33 to 29 percent) and the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions increased (from 2 to 6 percent).

The number of master’s degrees conferred increased from 2000–01 to 2015–16, by 48 percent at public institutions (from 246,000 to 365,000), by 63 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 216,000 to 351,000), and by 505 percent at private for-profit institutions (from

12,000 to 70,000). Over this period, the proportion of all master’s degrees conferred by public institutions decreased (from 52 to 46 percent), as did the proportion conferred by private nonprofit institutions (from 46 to 45 percent). In contrast, the proportion of all master’s degrees conferred by private for-profit institutions increased (from 2 to 9 percent).

From 2000–01 to 2015–16, the number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased by 48 percent at public institutions (from 61,000 to 90,000), by 39 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 58,000 to 80,000), and by 671 percent at private for-profit institutions (from 1,000 to 8,000). Over this period, the proportion of doctor’s degrees conferred decreased at public institutions (from 51 to 50 percent) and at private nonprofit institutions (from 48 to 45 percent). At private for-profit institutions, however, the proportion conferred increased (from 1 to 5 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ A formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of a postsecondary education program.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 318.40

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

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