

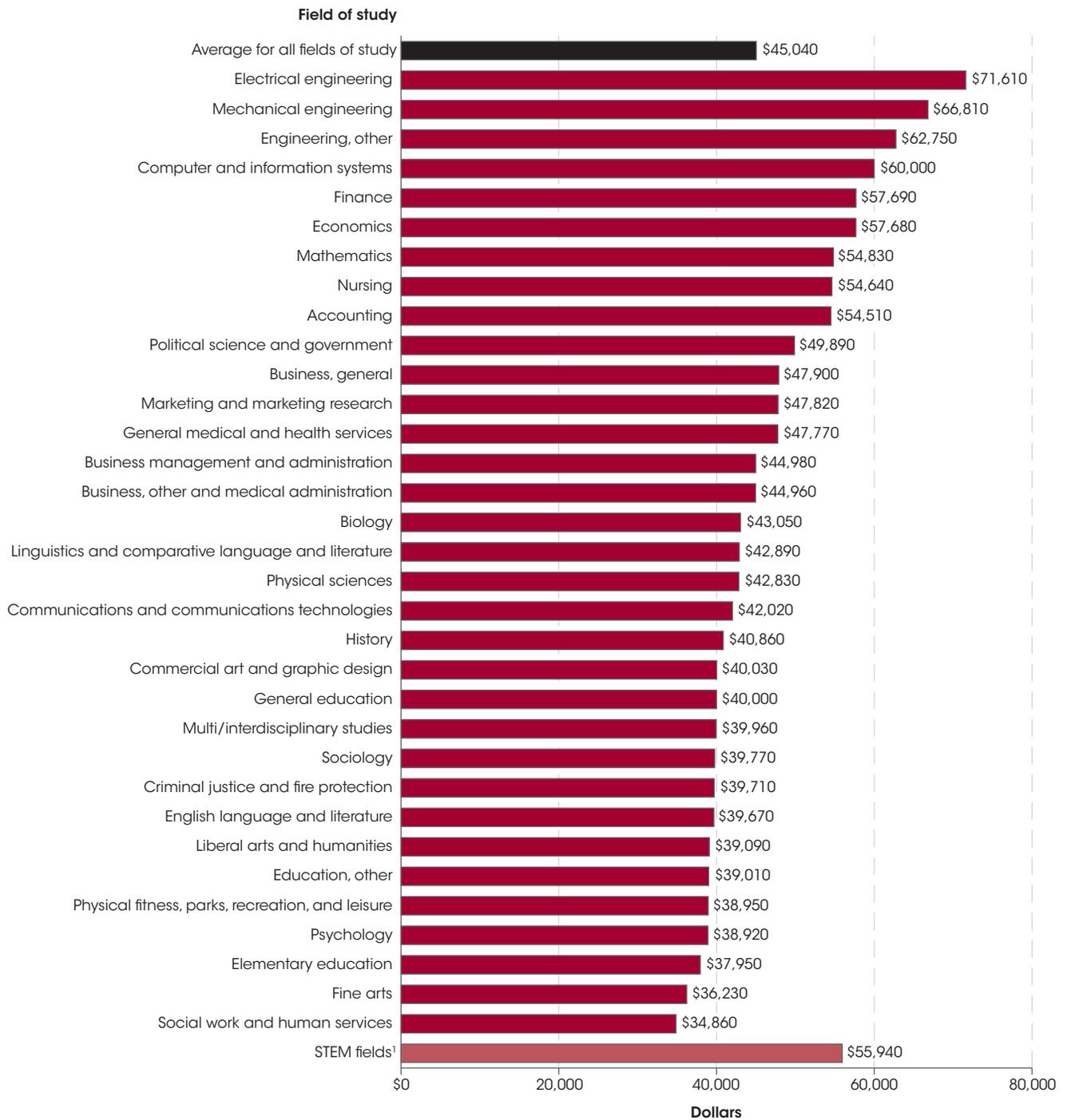
## Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients

*The average unemployment rate for young adult bachelor's degree recipients ages 25–29 was lower in 2015 than in 2010 (3.5 vs. 5.6 percent). However, the median annual earnings for these young adults were also lower in 2015 than in 2010 (\$45,040 vs. \$47,540), in constant 2015 dollars.*

In 2015, some 33 percent of young adults ages 25–29 held bachelor's degrees. This indicator examines the median annual earnings and unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> of these bachelor's degree recipients by undergraduate field of study. It also summarizes the median annual earnings and unemployment rate across science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.<sup>2</sup> Across all fields in 2015, the median annual earnings of young adult

bachelor's degree recipients who were full-time year-round workers were \$45,040, and the average unemployment rate was 3.5 percent.<sup>3</sup> For the fields of study in which 1 percent or more of bachelor's degree recipients had earned degrees, median annual earnings ranged from \$34,860 to \$71,610, and unemployment rates ranged from 0.8 percent to 6.2 percent.

Figure 1. Median annual earnings of 25- to 29-year-old bachelor's degree recipients, by selected fields of study: 2015



<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.

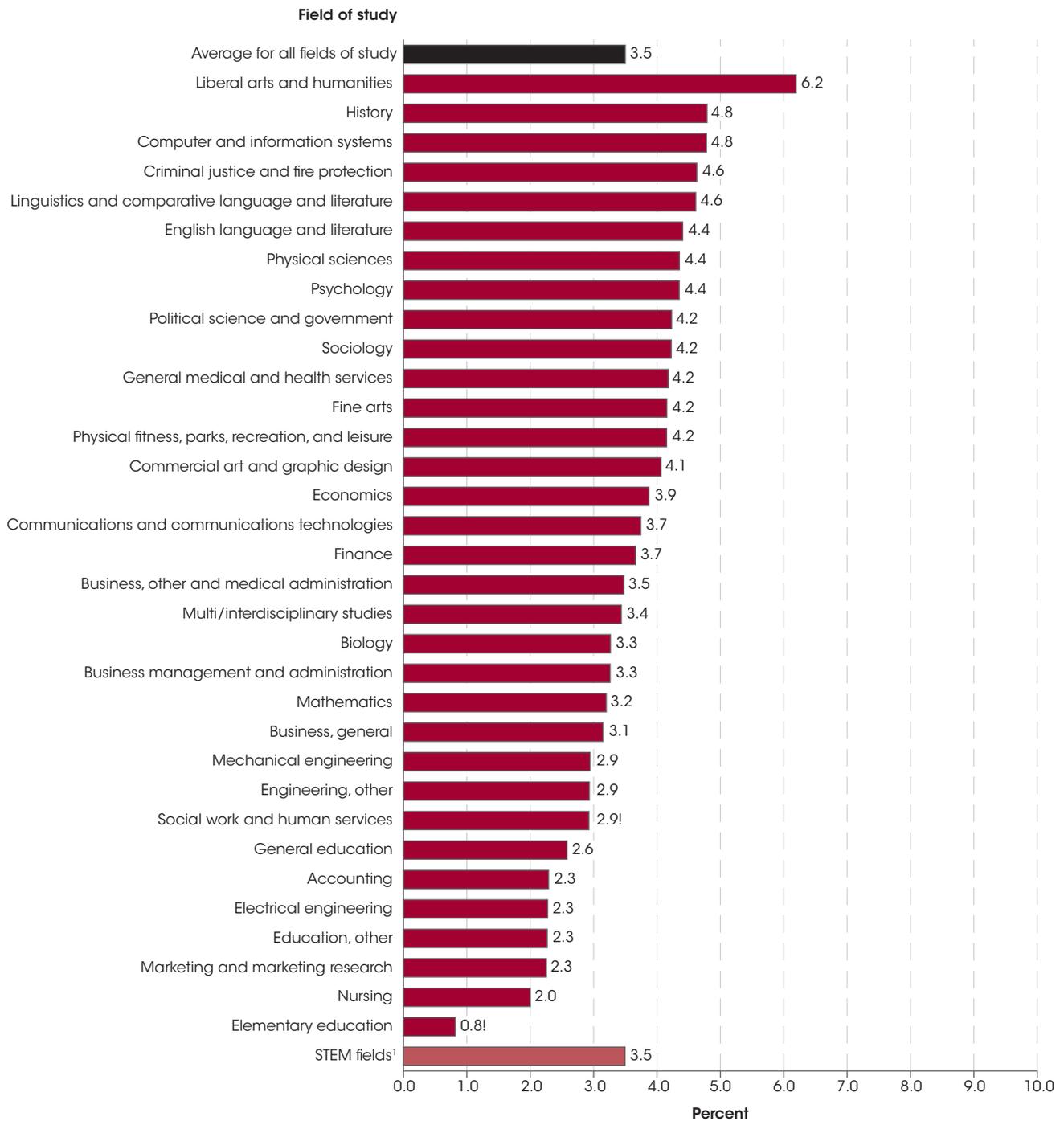
NOTE: Includes only fields in which 1 percent or more of 25- to 29-year-old bachelor's degree recipients had earned degrees, except "STEM fields." Median earnings are for full-time employees working 35 or more hours per week.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 505.10.

Median annual earnings in 2015 for young adults ages 25–29 varied depending on field of study.<sup>4</sup> For example, young adults with bachelor's degrees in electrical engineering (\$71,610), mechanical engineering (\$66,810), and computer and information systems (\$60,000) had some of the highest median annual earnings. In comparison, young adults with bachelor's degrees in social work and human services (\$34,860), fine arts (\$36,230), and elementary education (\$37,950) had some of the lowest median annual earnings. Bachelor's degree recipients in the largest fields of study, defined as fields with at least 300,000 degree recipients,<sup>5</sup> also varied

in their median annual earnings. For example, among the largest fields, young adults with bachelor's degrees in communications and communications technology (\$42,020) and psychology (\$38,920) had median annual earnings lower than the average median annual earnings for all fields of study (\$45,040), while those with degrees in business management and administration and biology had median annual earnings that were not measurably different from the average of all fields of study. Young adults with bachelor's degrees in STEM fields (\$55,940) had median annual earnings higher than the average median annual earnings for all fields of study.

**Figure 2. Unemployment rates of 25- to 29-year-old bachelor's degree recipients, by selected fields of study: 2015**



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

<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.

NOTE: Includes only fields in which 1 percent or more of 25- to 29-year-old bachelor's degree recipients had earned degrees, except "STEM fields." The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and who made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 505.10.

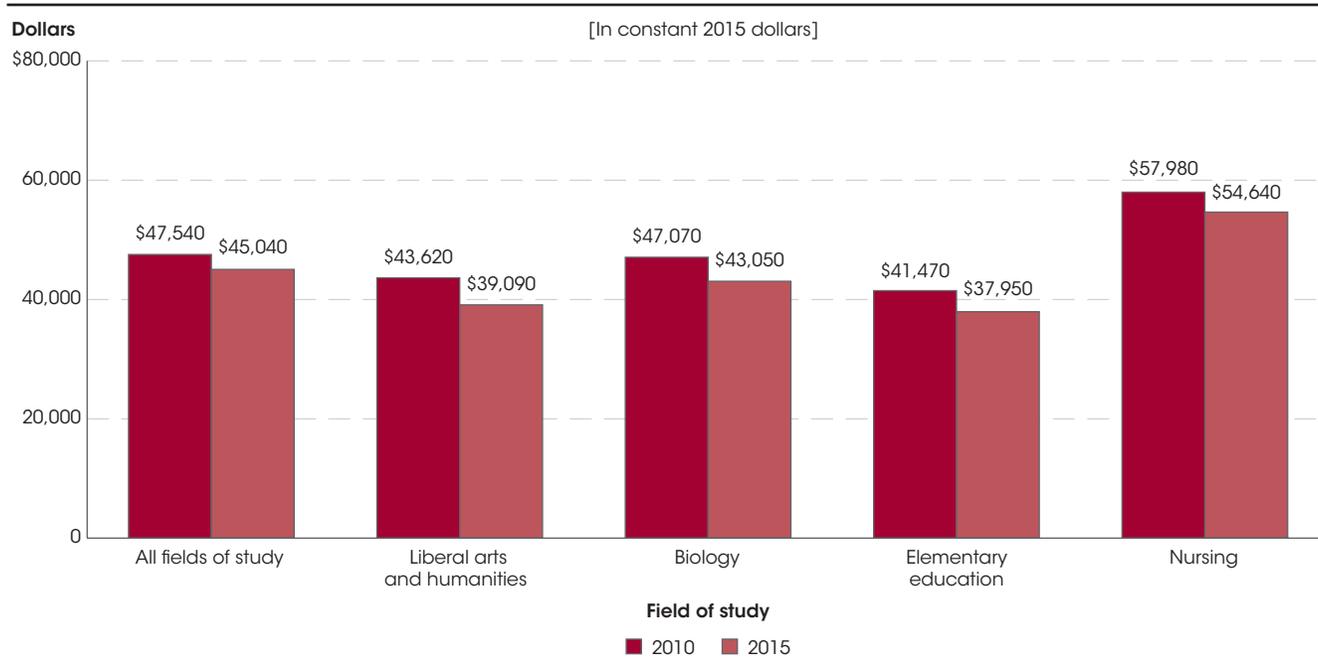
The 2015 unemployment rate for young adults ages 25–29 also varied by field of study. For example, the unemployment rates for young adults with bachelor's degrees in elementary education (0.8 percent), nursing (2.0 percent), marketing and marketing research (2.3 percent), and accounting (2.3 percent) were lower than the average unemployment rate for all fields of study (3.5 percent). In comparison, the unemployment rate for young adults with bachelor's degrees in liberal arts and humanities (6.2 percent) was higher than the average unemployment rate. The unemployment rates for young adults with bachelor's degrees in the largest fields of study—communications and communications technologies, psychology, business management and administration, biology, and fine arts—were not measurably different from the average unemployment rate for all fields of study (3.5 percent). The unemployment rate for young adults with a bachelor's degree in STEM fields was also not measurably different from the average for all fields of study.

In 2015, young adults ages 25–29 with bachelor's degrees in accounting, marketing and marketing research, and nursing had above-average median annual earnings and below-average unemployment rates. Accounting graduates had median annual earnings of \$54,510 and

an average unemployment rate of 2.3 percent; marketing and marketing research graduates had median annual earnings of \$47,820 and an average unemployment rate of 2.3 percent; and nursing graduates had median annual earnings of \$54,640 and an average unemployment rate of 2.0 percent. Liberal arts and humanities was the only field for which young adult bachelor's degree recipients had both below-average earnings (\$39,090) and an above-average unemployment rate (6.2 percent).

The average unemployment rate for young adult bachelor's degree recipients ages 25–29 was lower in 2015 than in 2010 overall (3.5 vs. 5.6 percent) and within some fields of study. For example, unemployment rates were lower in 2015 than in 2010 for young adults with bachelor's degrees in each of the largest fields of study: psychology (4.4 vs. 5.9 percent), biology (3.3 vs. 4.9 percent), communication and communication technologies (3.7 vs. 6.4 percent), business management and administration (3.3 vs. 6.5 percent), and fine arts (4.2 vs. 6.1 percent). There was no field of study where the unemployment rate for young adult bachelor's degree recipients was higher in 2015 than in 2010. The average unemployment rate was also lower in 2015 than in 2010 for young adult bachelor's degree recipients in STEM fields (3.5 vs. 5.0 percent).

**Figure 3. Median annual earnings of 25- to 29-year-old bachelor's degree recipients, by selected fields of study: 2010 and 2015**



NOTE: Median earnings are for full-time employees working 35 or more hours per week. Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2010 and 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 505.10.

While the unemployment rate for young adult bachelor's degree recipients was lower in 2015 than in 2010, their median annual earnings were also lower (\$45,040 vs. \$47,540), in constant 2015 dollars. Fields for which bachelor's degree recipients' median annual earnings were

lower in 2015 than in 2010 included biology (\$43,050 vs. \$47,070), elementary education (\$37,950 vs. \$41,470), and nursing (\$54,640 vs. \$57,980). There was no field of study where median annual earnings for young adult bachelor's degree recipients were higher in 2015 than in 2010.

**Endnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and who made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment.
- <sup>2</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>3</sup> All median annual earnings are reported in constant 2015 dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

- <sup>4</sup> The first bachelor's degree major reported by respondents was used to classify their field of study, even though they were able to report a second bachelor's degree major and may possess advanced degrees in other fields.
- <sup>5</sup> In 2015, there were at least 300,000 degree recipients in STEM fields, as well as in each of the following fields: business management and administration; biology; communications and communications technologies; psychology; and fine arts.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 505.10

**Related indicators and resources:** Annual Earnings of Young Adults, Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, Undergraduate Degree Fields, Employment of STEM College Graduates [*web-only*]

**Glossary:** Bachelor's degree, Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), Constant dollars, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Employment status, Median earnings, STEM fields