

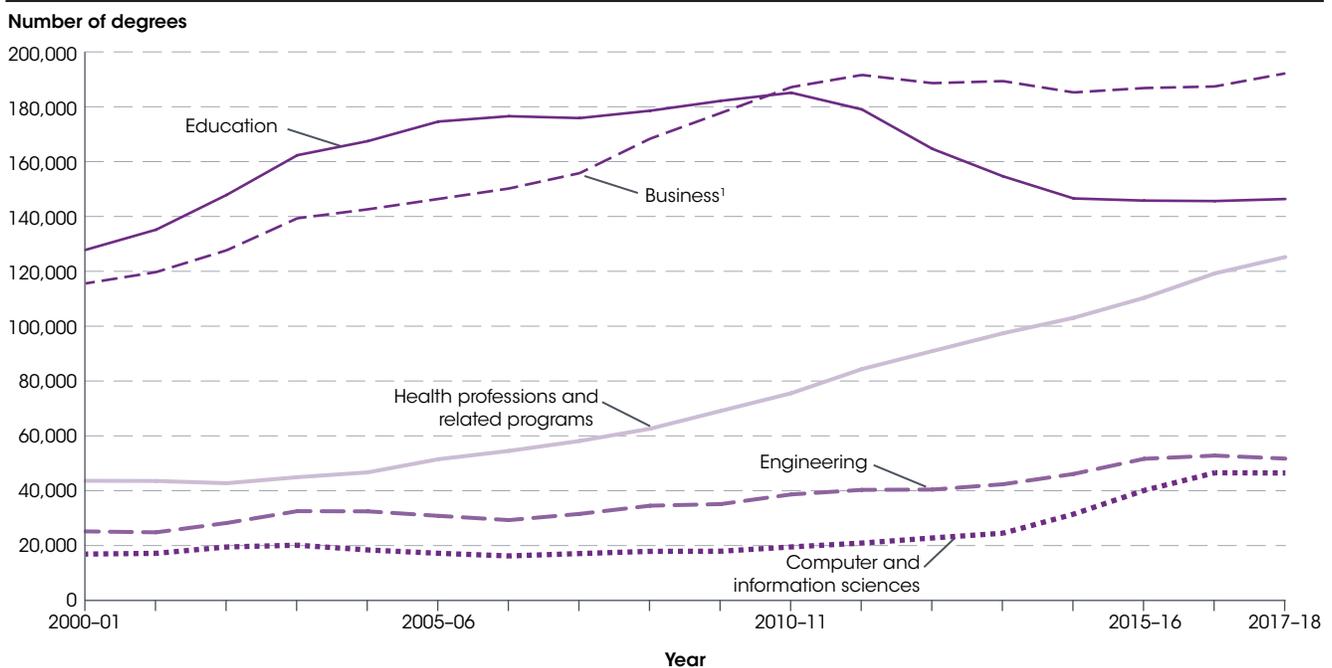
Graduate Degree Fields

In 2017–18, over half of the 820,000 master’s degrees conferred were concentrated in three fields of study: business (192,000 degrees), education (146,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (125,000 degrees). Of the 184,000 doctor’s degrees conferred, 62 percent were concentrated in two fields: health professions and related programs (80,300 degrees) and legal professions and studies (34,500 degrees).

In academic year 2017–18, postsecondary institutions conferred 820,000 master’s degrees. Over half of the master’s degrees conferred were concentrated in three fields of study: business (23 percent, or 192,000 degrees), education (18 percent, or 146,000 degrees), and health professions and related programs (15 percent, or 125,000 degrees). The fields in which the next largest percentages

of master’s degrees were conferred were engineering (6 percent, or 51,700 degrees) and computer and information sciences (6 percent, or 46,500 degrees). Overall, 140,000 master’s degrees (17 percent) were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)¹ fields.

Figure 1. Number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2017–18



¹ In order to be consistent with the definition of “business” for bachelor’s degree data, “business” is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

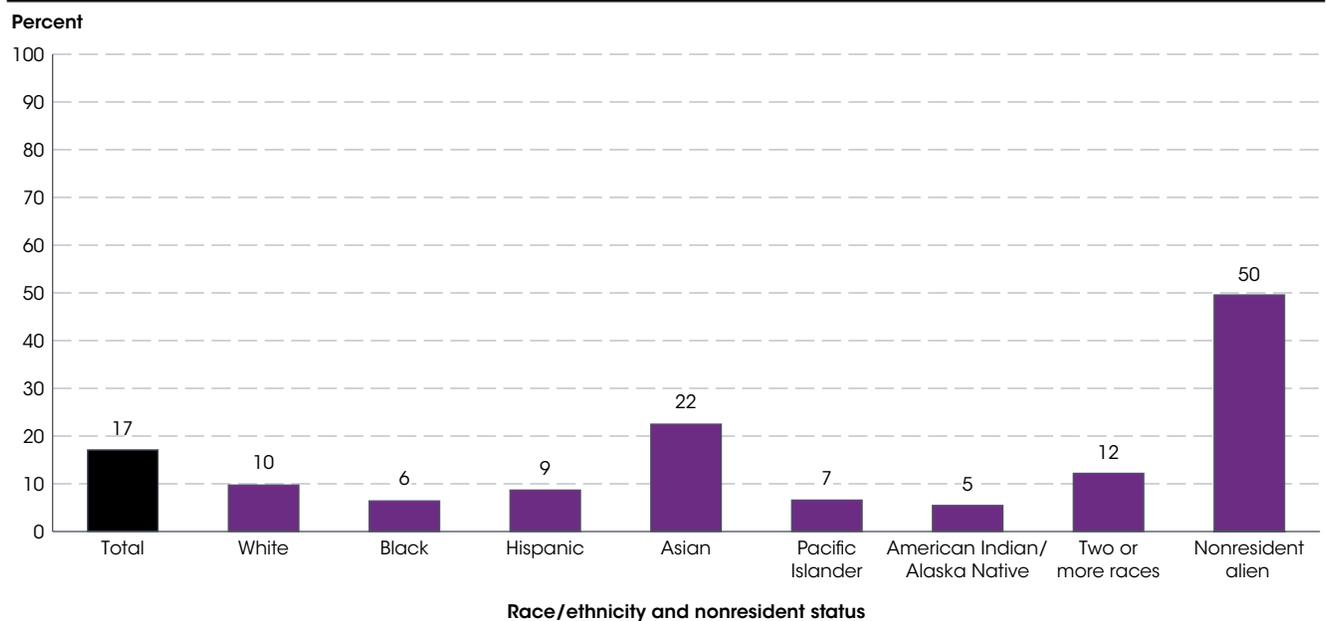
NOTE: The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where necessary to conform to the 2009–10 Classification of 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 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 323.10; *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 314.

Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 73 percent, from 474,000 to 820,000 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 2017–18 (192,000 degrees were conferred in business in 2017–18). 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 147,000 degrees in 2014–15 and remained flat through 2017–18. Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of master’s degrees conferred increased in each of the three next largest

fields: health professions and related programs (from 43,600 to 125,000 degrees, an increase of 187 percent), engineering (from 25,200 to 51,700 degrees, an increase of 105 percent), and computer and information sciences (from 16,900 to 46,500 degrees, an increase of 175 percent). Among other fields in which at least 10,000 master’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2000–01 and 2017–18 in biological and biomedical sciences (from 7,000 to 17,200 degrees, an increase of 145 percent), mathematics and statistics (from 3,200 to 10,400 degrees, an increase of 225 percent), homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (from 2,500 to 10,300 degrees, an increase of 309 percent), and multi/interdisciplinary studies² (from 3,400 to 10,200 degrees, an increase of 198 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 2017–18

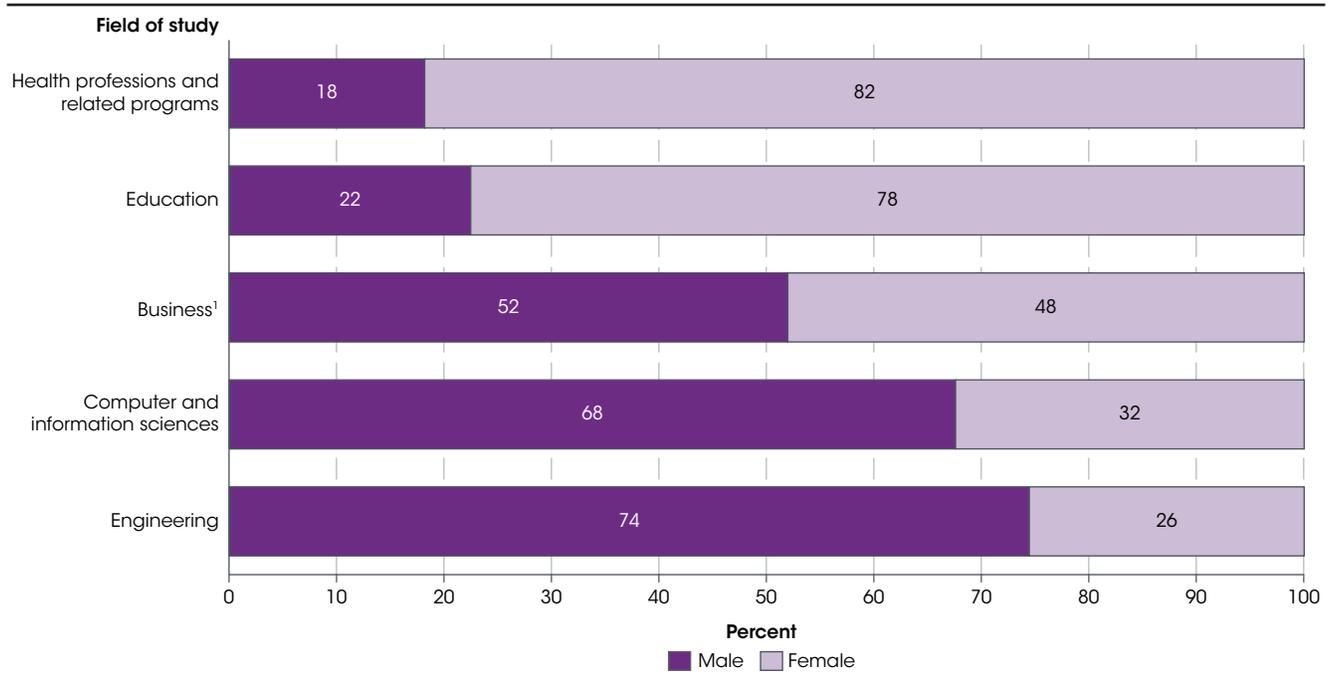


NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering, engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident alien students. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 323.30.

In 2017–18, 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 alien³ students, the three fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred were business, computer and information sciences, and engineering. The percentage of master’s degrees conferred

in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Twenty-two 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 (10 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), Pacific Islander (7 percent), Black (6 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (5 percent). Notably, 50 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 selected fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2017–18



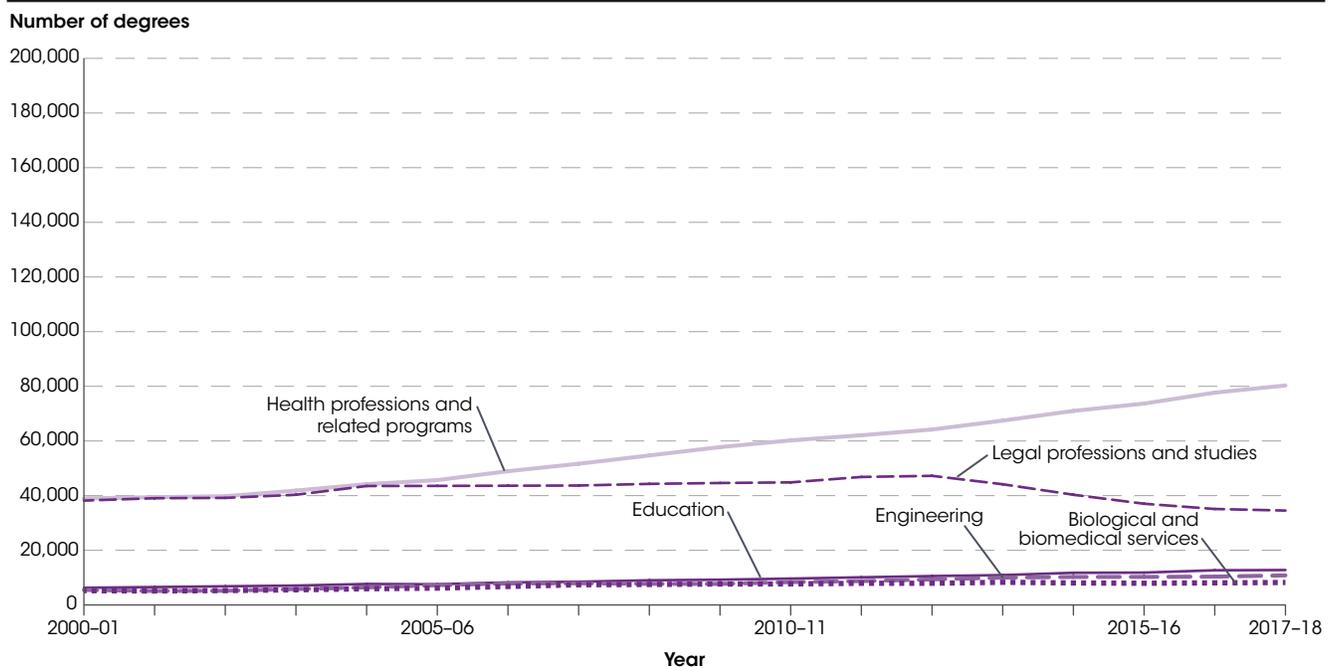
¹ In order to be consistent with the definition of “business” for bachelor’s degree data, “business” is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.
 NOTE: The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18. 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 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 323.40 and 323.50.

In 2017–18, females earned 60 percent (493,000 degrees) and males earned 40 percent (327,000 degrees) of all master’s degrees conferred. Of the five fields in which the most master’s degrees were conferred, females earned the majority of degrees in health professions and related programs (82 percent) and education (78 percent). Males earned the majority of degrees in business (52 percent), computer and information sciences (68 percent), and engineering (74 percent).

Two fields accounted for 62 percent of the 184,000 doctor’s degrees conferred in 2017–18: health professions

and related programs (44 percent, or 80,300 degrees) and legal professions and studies (19 percent, or 34,500 degrees). The three fields in which the next largest percentages of doctor’s degrees were conferred were education (7 percent, or 12,800 degrees), engineering (6 percent, or 10,800 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (4 percent, or 8,200 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 as M.D., D.D.S., and J.D. that were previously classified as first-professional degrees.⁴

Figure 4. Number of doctor’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2017–18



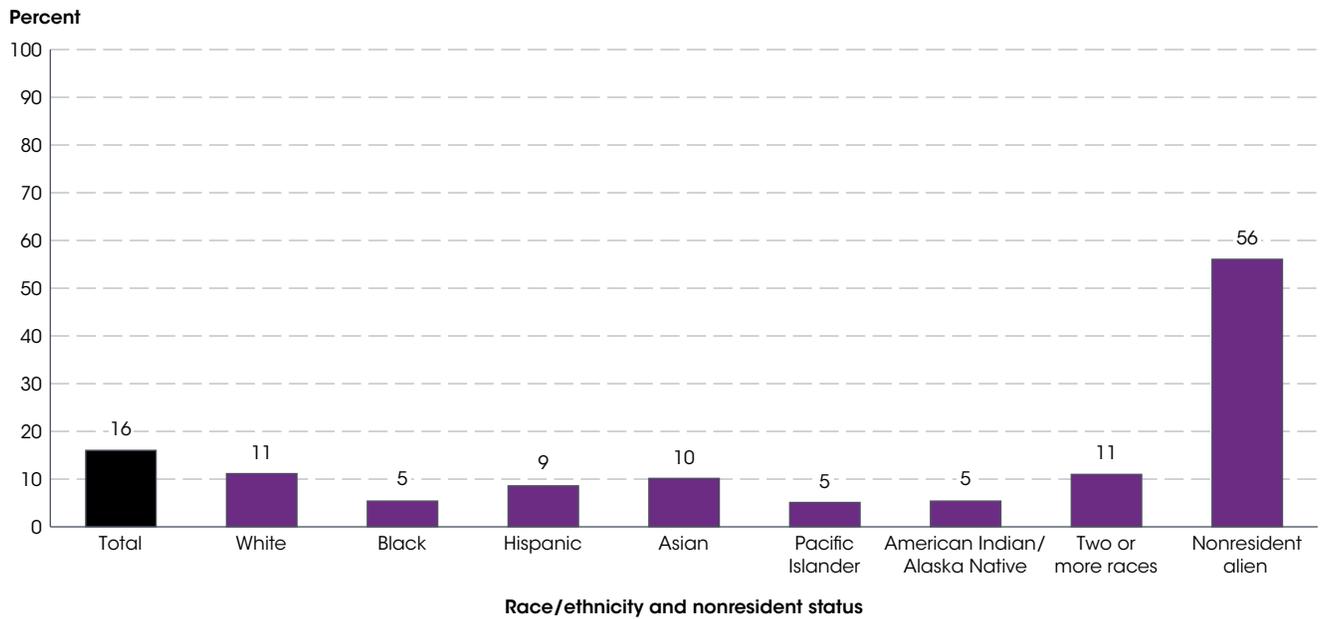
NOTE: Doctor’s degrees include Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level, as well as such degrees as M.D., D.D.S., and J.D. that were formerly classified as first-professional degrees. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor’s degrees were conferred in 2017–18. 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. 2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used. 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 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, table 324.10; *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 315.

Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased by 54 percent, from 120,000 to 184,000 degrees. Over this time period, the number of doctor’s degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 106 percent, from 39,000 degrees in 2000–01 to 80,300 degrees in 2017–18. 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 34,500 degrees in 2017–18 (a decrease of 27 percent). Between 2000–01 and 2017–18, the number of doctor’s degrees conferred increased in each of the next three largest fields: education (from 6,300 to 12,800 degrees, an increase of 103 percent), engineering (from 5,500 to 10,800 degrees, an increase of 97 percent), and biological and biomedical sciences (from 5,200 to 8,200 degrees, an increase of 57 percent).

Figure 5. Percentage of doctor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Academic year 2017–18

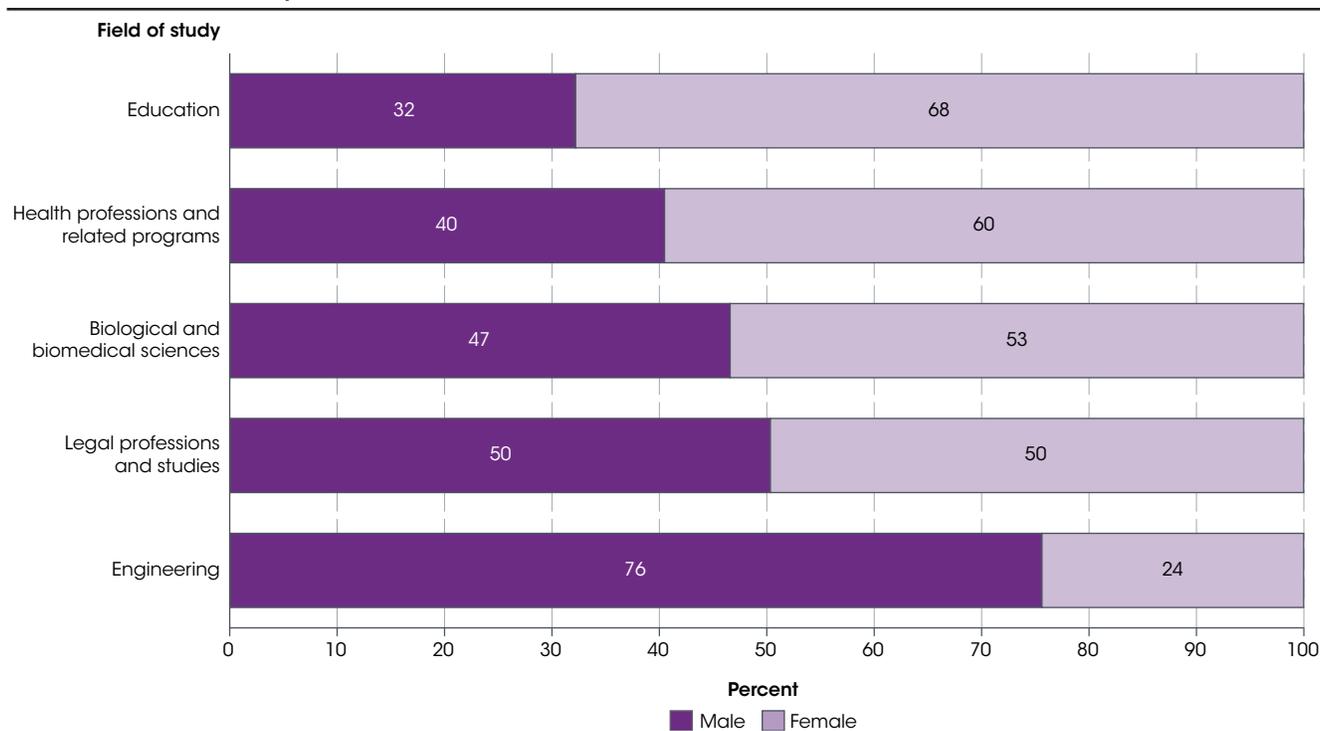


NOTE: STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering, engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident aliens. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 318.45 and 324.25.

In 2017–18, 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. For nonresident alien students, the two fields in which the most doctor’s degrees were conferred were engineering and health professions and related programs. The percentage of doctor’s degrees conferred in a STEM field varied among racial/ethnic

groups. The percentage of doctor’s degrees conferred in a STEM field was highest for nonresident alien students (56 percent). Eleven percent of doctor’s degrees conferred to White students and students 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 (5 percent), Black (5 percent), and Pacific Islander (5 percent) students.

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2017–18



NOTE: The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor's degrees were conferred in 2017–18. 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. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. 2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used. 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 2018, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 324.30 and 324.35.

In 2017–18, females earned 54 percent (98,500 degrees) and males earned 46 percent (85,600 degrees) of all doctor's degrees conferred. Of the five fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred, females earned the majority of degrees in education (68 percent), health professions and related programs (60 percent), and biological and biomedical sciences (53 percent).

Doctor's degrees in legal professions and studies were split evenly 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 (24 percent). In contrast, of the five fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred, males earn the most in engineering (76 percent).

Endnotes:

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

² Multi/interdisciplinary studies are instructional programs that derive from two or more distinct programs to provide a cross-cutting focus on a subject concentration that is not subsumed under a single discipline or occupational field. Examples include

biological and physical sciences; peace studies and conflict resolution; systems science and theory; and mathematics and computer science.

³ In the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), racial/ethnic data were not collected for nonresident alien students, and their data were compiled as a separate group.

⁴ 2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.20, 323.30, 323.40, 323.50, 324.10, 324.20, 324.25, 324.30, and 324.35; *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 314 and 315

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](#)

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