

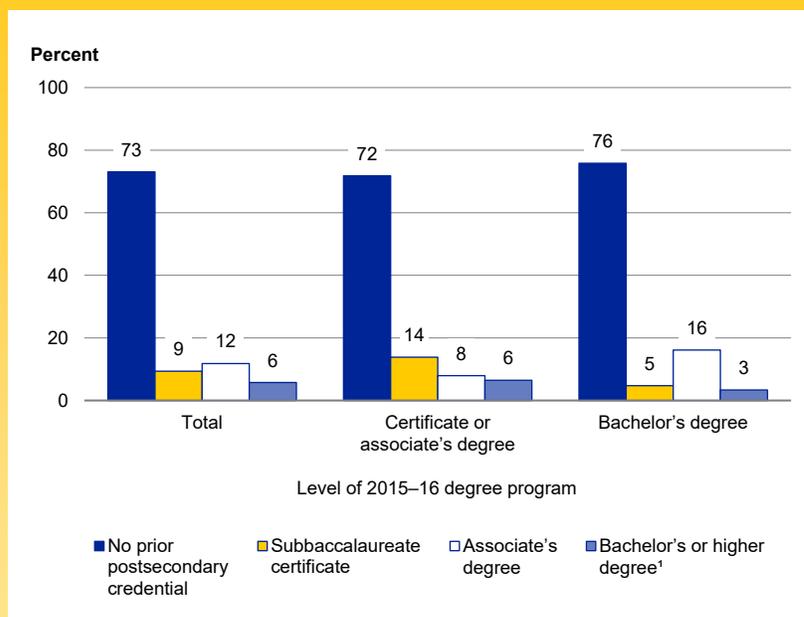
This Data Point presents the percentage of undergraduates who already held a postsecondary certificate or degree while enrolled in 2015–16 and examines the current field of study among those who held a bachelor's or higher degree. All estimates are disaggregated by students' current type of degree program. The Data Point is based on data from the 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16), which surveyed a nationally representative sample of all undergraduates enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico any time between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016.

What percentage of 2015–16 undergraduates already held a postsecondary credential, and how did this vary with the type of their 2015–16 degree program?

Of the 19.5 million 2015–16 undergraduates, 6 percent already held a bachelor's or higher degree. In addition, 12 percent already held an associate's degree, and 9 percent held a subbaccalaureate certificate as their highest prior credential (**figure 1**). Seventy-three percent had no prior postsecondary credential.

Among 2015–16 students in subbaccalaureate certificate or associate's degree programs, 6 percent already held a bachelor's or higher degree. In comparison, 3 percent of students in bachelor's degree programs already held a bachelor's or higher degree.

FIGURE 1. Percentage distribution of undergraduates' highest prior earned credential, by current type of degree program: 2015–16



¹ Includes the 1 percent of 2015–16 undergraduates who already held an advanced degree or post-baccalaureate certificate.

NOTE: The 3 percent of undergraduates who were not enrolled in a certificate or degree program in 2015–16 are included in the total but not in the distributions of students by certificate or degree program. Estimates include undergraduate students enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Standard error tables are available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019431>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16).

What were the 6 percent of 2015–16 undergraduates who already held a bachelor's or higher degree studying?

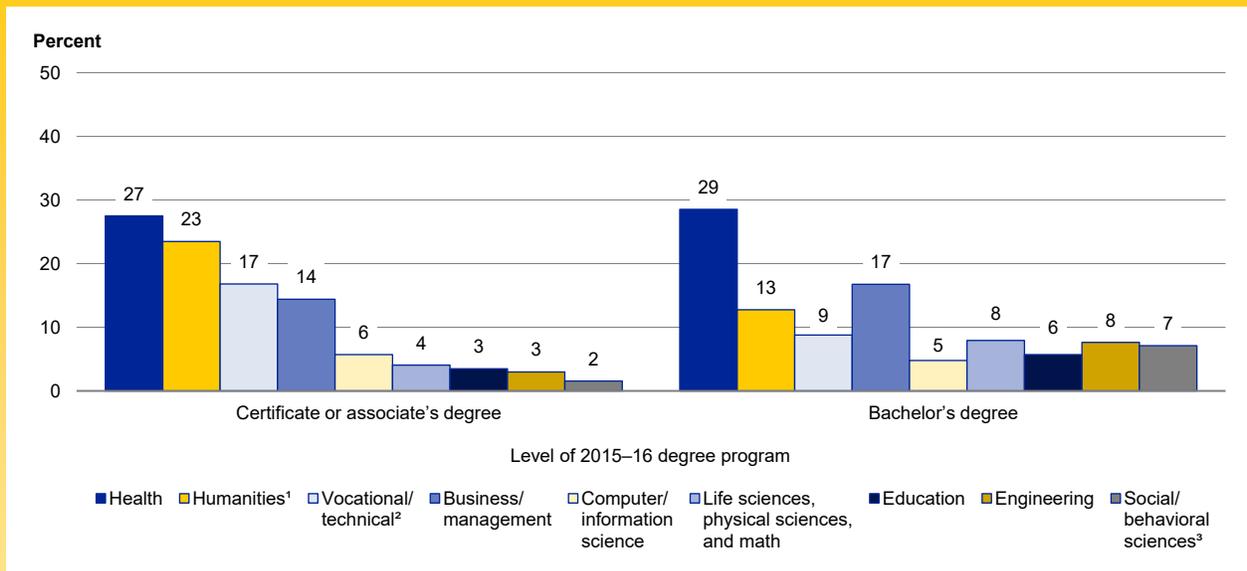
Health was the most common field of study among undergraduates who already held a bachelor's or higher degree. Given that undergraduates who already had a bachelor's degree made up 6 percent of all 2015–16 undergraduates, those who were studying health accounted for only 1 percent of all 2015–16 undergraduates.

Looking only at undergraduates who already had a bachelor's or higher degree and were enrolled in a subbaccalaureate certificate or associate's degree program, 27 percent were studying health and 23 percent were studying the humanities (figure 2).

Smaller percentages of these students were studying other fields. For example, 17 percent were in a vocational/technical program, 14 percent were studying business/management, and 2 percent were studying social/behavioral sciences.

Among 2015–16 bachelor's degree students who already held a bachelor's or higher degree, 29 percent were studying health, a higher percentage than any other field of study. Seventeen percent of bachelor's degree students who already held a bachelor's or higher degree were studying business/management, and 13 percent were studying the humanities. The percentage of students studying in each of the other fields was 9 percent or less.

FIGURE 2. Among undergraduates who already held a bachelor's or higher degree, percentage distribution of current field of study, by type of degree program: 2015–16



¹ The humanities include area, ethnic, and gender studies; foreign languages and literatures; English language and literature/letters; liberal arts, sciences and humanities; philosophy and religious studies; theology and religious vocations; and visual and performing arts.

² Vocational/technical includes science technologies/technicians; construction trades; mechanic and repair technologies; precision production; transportation and materials moving; criminology; agriculture and related sciences; architecture, planning, and related services; communication and journalism; communications technologies/technicians; personal and culinary services; family, consumer, and human sciences; legal professions and studies; library science; military technologies; security and protective services; and public administration/social services.

³ The social/behavioral sciences include psychology; history; economics; international relations and affairs; political science and government; sociology; and other social sciences.

NOTE: Estimates include undergraduate students enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Standard error tables are available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019431>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16).

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of interest. It was authored by Serena E. Hinz of RTI International. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All noted differences are

statistically significant at the .05 level, without adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.