

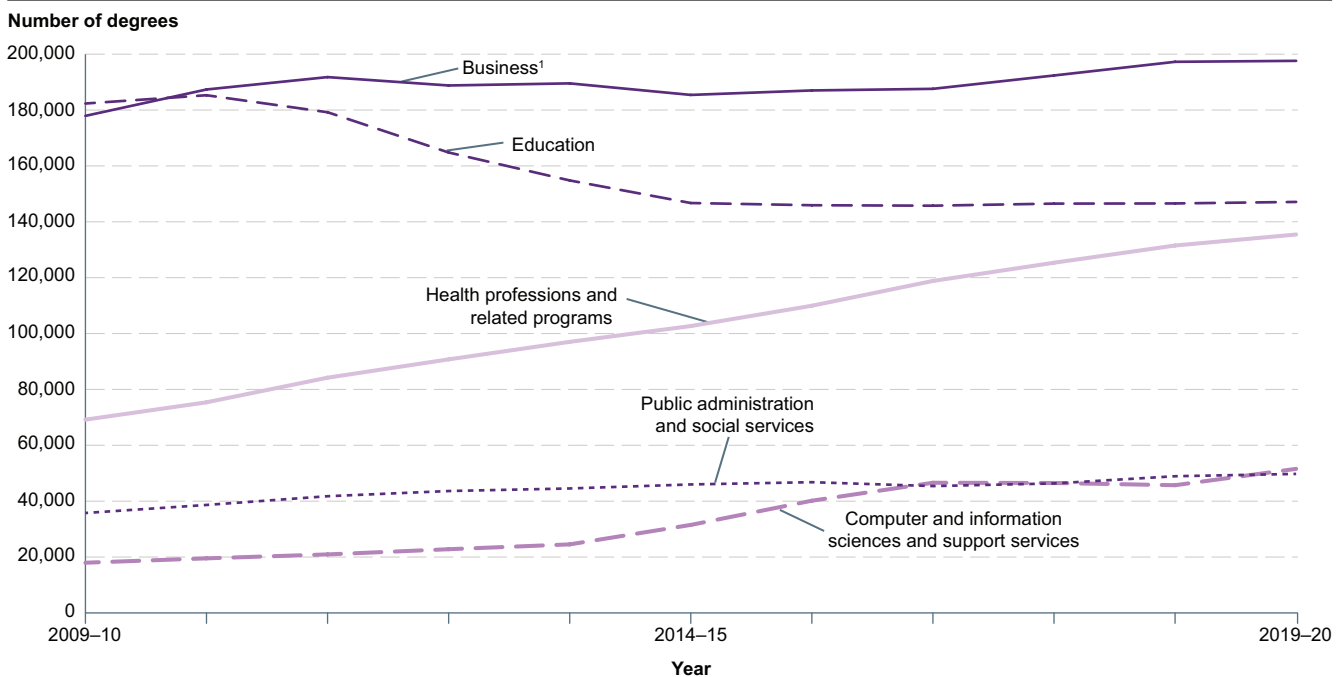
## Graduate Degree Fields

*Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the total number of master’s degrees conferred increased by 22 percent, from 693,300 to 843,400 degrees. In 2010–11, business surpassed education as the field in which the largest number of master’s degrees were conferred. Meanwhile, the number of master’s degrees conferred in education declined by 19 percent between 2009–10 and 2019–20, from 182,200 to 147,000 degrees.*

In 2019–20, postsecondary institutions in the United States<sup>1</sup> conferred about 1.0 million graduate degrees, an increase of 21 percent since 2009–10. These included 843,400 master’s degrees and 190,200 doctor’s 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.<sup>2</sup> Health professions and related programs were among the top three most popular fields of study at both award levels, as was education.

**Figure 1. Number of master’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: 2009–10 through 2019–20**



<sup>1</sup> 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 culinary, entertainment, and personal services.  
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master’s degrees were conferred in 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 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 2010 through Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 323.10 and *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 323.10.

In 2019-20, over half of master's degrees were conferred in three fields of study: business, education, and health professions and related programs. Specifically, 23 percent of master's degrees were conferred in business (197,400); 17 percent in education (147,000); and 16 percent in health professions and related programs (135,500). Postsecondary institutions conferred the next largest percentages of master's degrees in computer and information sciences and support services (6 percent, or 51,500 degrees) and in public administration and social services (6 percent, or 49,700 degrees).

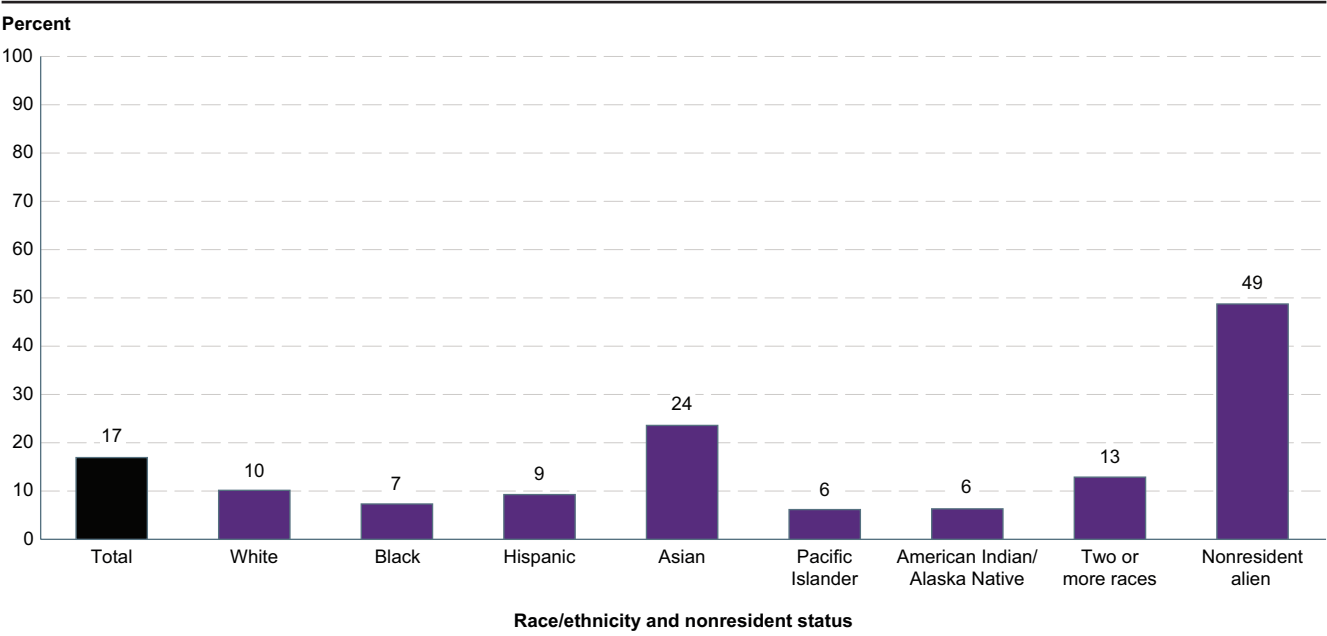
Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the total number of master's degrees conferred increased by 22 percent, from 693,300 to 843,400 degrees. Over this period, the number of master's degrees conferred in business rose by 11 percent, from 177,700 to 197,400 degrees. In 2010-11, business surpassed education as the field in which the largest number of master's degrees were conferred. Business has remained the largest field in each following year. Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the number of master's degrees conferred in education declined by 19 percent, from 182,200 to 147,000 degrees.

Over this same time period, the number of master's degrees conferred increased in each of the three next

largest fields of study. The number of master's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 96 percent, from 69,100 to 135,300. The number of degrees conferred in computer and information sciences and support services increased by 187 percent, from 18,000 to 51,500 degrees. Finally, the number of master's degrees conferred in public administration and social services increased by 39 percent, from 35,700 to 49,700 degrees. Among other fields in which at least 10,000 master's degrees were conferred in 2019-20, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2009-10 and 2019-20 in one field: mathematics and statistics (from 5,600 to 12,000 degrees, an increase of 113 percent).

In 2019-20, the three fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred overall (business, education, and health professions and related programs) were also the top three for all racial/ethnic groups. The rank order of these fields in terms of the number of degrees conferred, however, differed across groups. Business was the top field for all but White students, whose top field was education. For nonresident alien<sup>3</sup> students, the three fields in which the most master's degrees were conferred were business, computer and information sciences and support services, and engineering.

Figure 2. Percentage of master's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2019–20

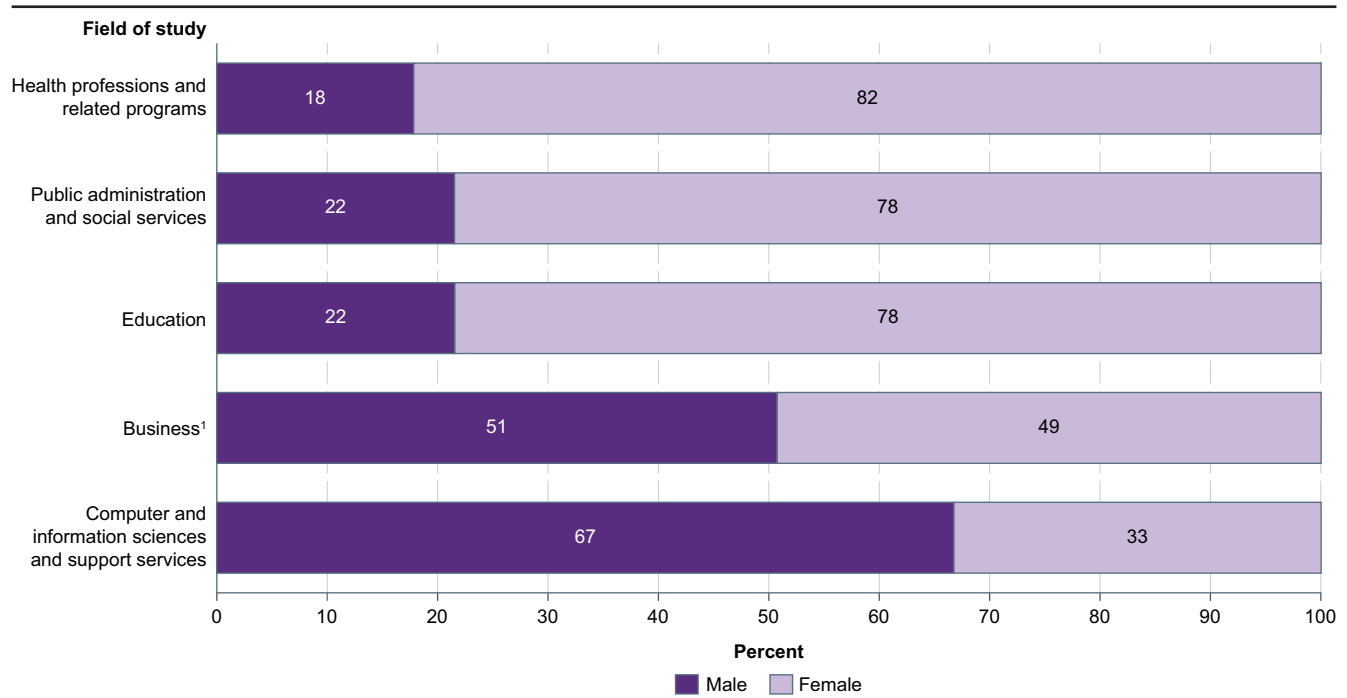


NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident alien students. 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 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 318.45 and 323.30.

In 2019-20, postsecondary institutions conferred 17 percent (142,800 degrees) of master's degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)<sup>4</sup> fields. The percentage of master's degrees conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Twenty-four percent of master's degrees conferred to Asian students were in a STEM field. This percentage was

higher than the percentages for students who were of Two or more races (13 percent), White (10 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), Black (7 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (6 percent), and Pacific Islander (6 percent). The percentage of master's degrees conferred in a STEM field was highest for nonresident alien students (49 percent).

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: 2019–20**



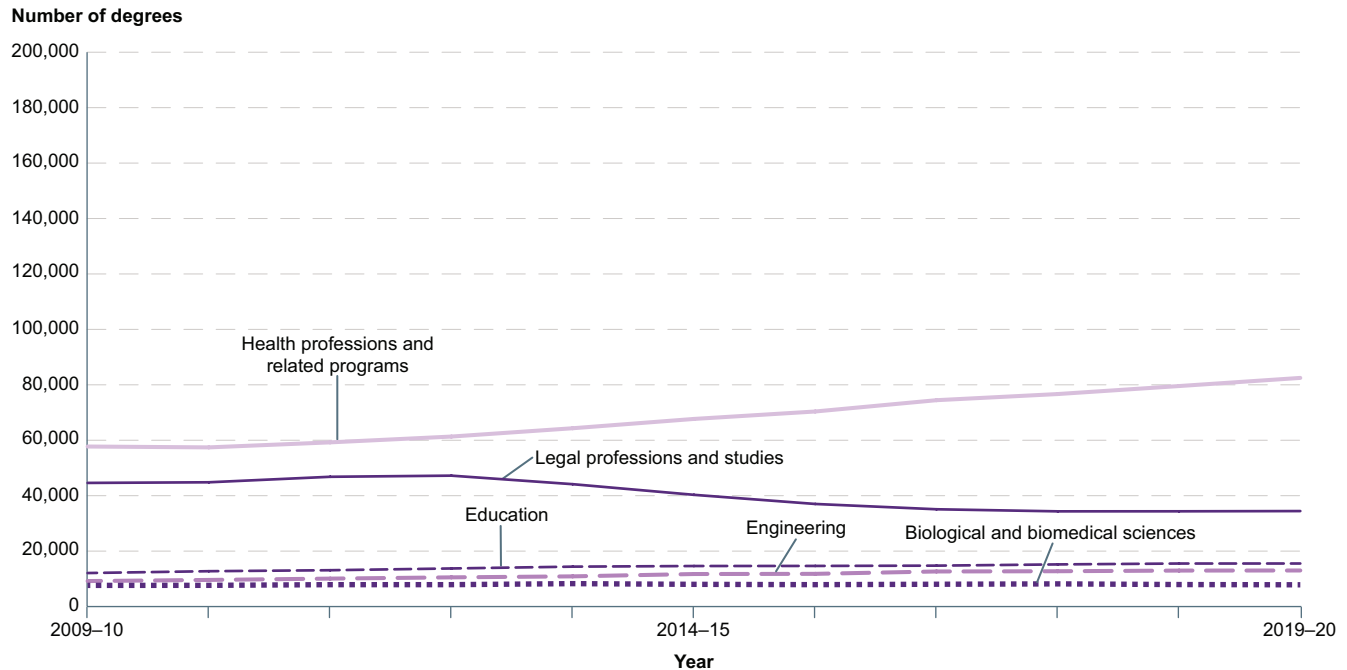
<sup>1</sup> In order to be consistent with the definition of "business" for bachelor's degree data, "business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as culinary, entertainment, and personal services.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of master's degrees were conferred in 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional 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 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 323.40 and 323.50.

In 2019–20, females earned 61 percent (517,800 degrees) and males earned 39 percent (325,700 degrees) of all master's degrees conferred. Females earned the majority of degrees in three of the five fields of study in which the most master's degrees were conferred. Females earned 82 percent of master's degrees in health professions and

related programs. Additionally, females earned 78 percent each in public administration and social services and education. Males earned the majority of degrees in computer and information sciences and support services (67 percent) and business (51 percent).

**Figure 4. Number of doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: 2009–10 through 2019–20**

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. 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 year 2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor's degrees were conferred in 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

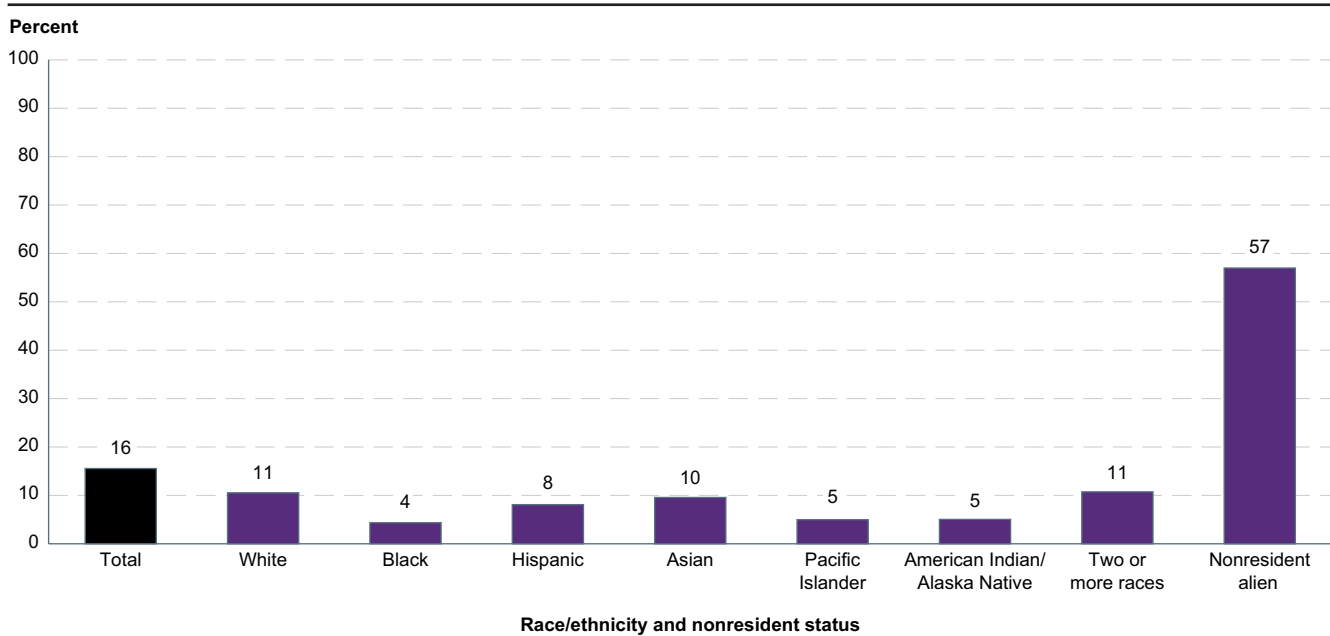
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2010 through Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 324.10.

Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the total number of doctor's degrees conferred increased by 20 percent, from 158,600 to 190,200 degrees. In 2019–20, two fields accounted for 62 percent of the doctor's degrees conferred: health professions and related programs (43 percent, or 82,500 degrees) and legal professions and studies (18 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 13,100 degrees), engineering (6 percent, or 11,100 degrees), and biological and biomedical sciences (4 percent, or 7,900 degrees).

Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the number of doctor's degrees conferred in health professions and related

programs increased by 43 percent, from 57,800 to 82,500 degrees. Over the same period, the number of doctor's degrees conferred in legal professions and studies decreased by 23 percent, from 44,600 to 34,500 degrees. In each of the next largest fields of study, the number of doctor's degrees conferred was higher in 2019–20 than in 2009–10. In education, the number of doctor's degrees increased by 41 percent, from 9,200 to 13,100 degrees. In engineering, the number of degrees increased by 45 percent, from 7,700 to 11,100 degrees. In biological and biomedical sciences, the number of degrees conferred was higher in 2019–20 (7,900 degrees) than in 2009–10 (7,700 degrees), but there was no consistent trend throughout the period.

**Figure 5. Percentage of doctor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2019–20**



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and 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. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

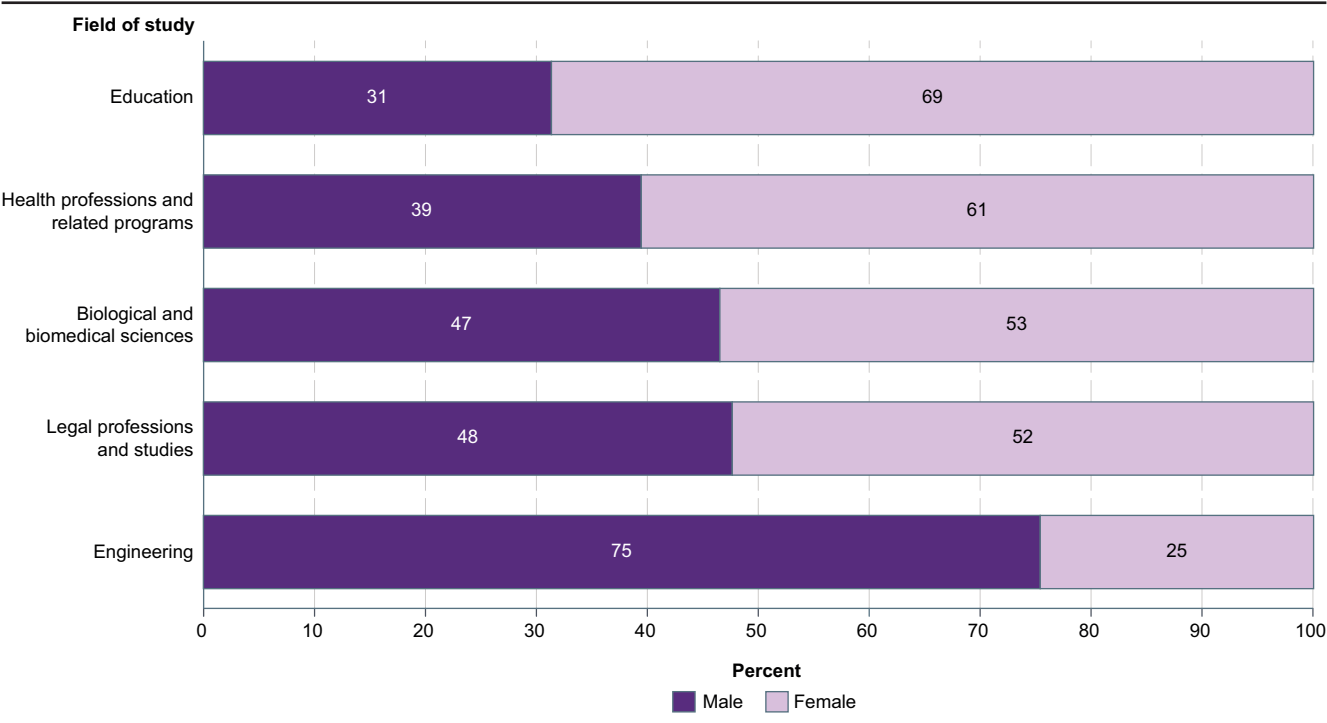
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 318.45 and 324.25.

In 2019-20, the two fields in which the most doctor's degrees were conferred were the same for all racial/ethnic groups. These fields were health professions and related programs and legal professions and studies. For nonresident alien students, the most doctor's degrees were conferred in engineering and health professions and related programs.

Postsecondary institutions conferred 16 percent (29,600 degrees) of doctor's degrees in STEM fields in 2019-20. The percentage of doctor's degrees conferred in

a STEM field varied among racial/ethnic groups. Among students of Two or more races and White students, 11 percent each of doctor's degrees were in a STEM field. Of doctor's degrees conferred to Asian students, 10 percent were in a STEM field. These percentages were higher than the percentages of doctor's degrees conferred in a STEM field for students who were Hispanic (8 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (5 percent), Pacific Islander (5 percent), and Black (4 percent). The percentage of doctor's degrees conferred in a STEM field was highest for nonresident alien students (57 percent).

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of doctor’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: 2019–20



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the five programs in which the largest numbers of doctor’s degrees were conferred in 2019–20. 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. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional 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 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 324.30 and 324.35.

Just as females earned the majority of master’s degrees conferred in 2019–20, they also earned the majority of doctor’s degrees conferred that year. In 2019–20, females earned 55 percent (105,000 degrees) and males earned 45 percent (85,200 degrees) of all doctor’s degrees conferred. Females earned the majority of degrees in four of the five fields of study in which the most doctor’s degrees were conferred. Females earned 69 percent of

doctor’s degrees in education. They earned 61 percent in health professions and related programs. Females also earned 53 percent of doctor’s degrees in biological and biomedical sciences and 52 percent in legal professions and studies. Of the five fields of study in which the most doctor’s degrees were conferred, males earned the majority of doctor’s degrees in engineering (75 percent).

Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- <sup>2</sup> The year 2010–11 was the last year the classification of first-professional degrees was used.
- <sup>3</sup> 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.

- <sup>4</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. Construction trades and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians are categorized as engineering technologies in some tables to facilitate trend comparisons but are not included as STEM fields in this indicator.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 318.45, 323.10, 323.30, 323.40, 323.50, 324.10, 324.25, 324.30, and 324.35; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 318.45, 323.10, and 324.10

**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](#)