

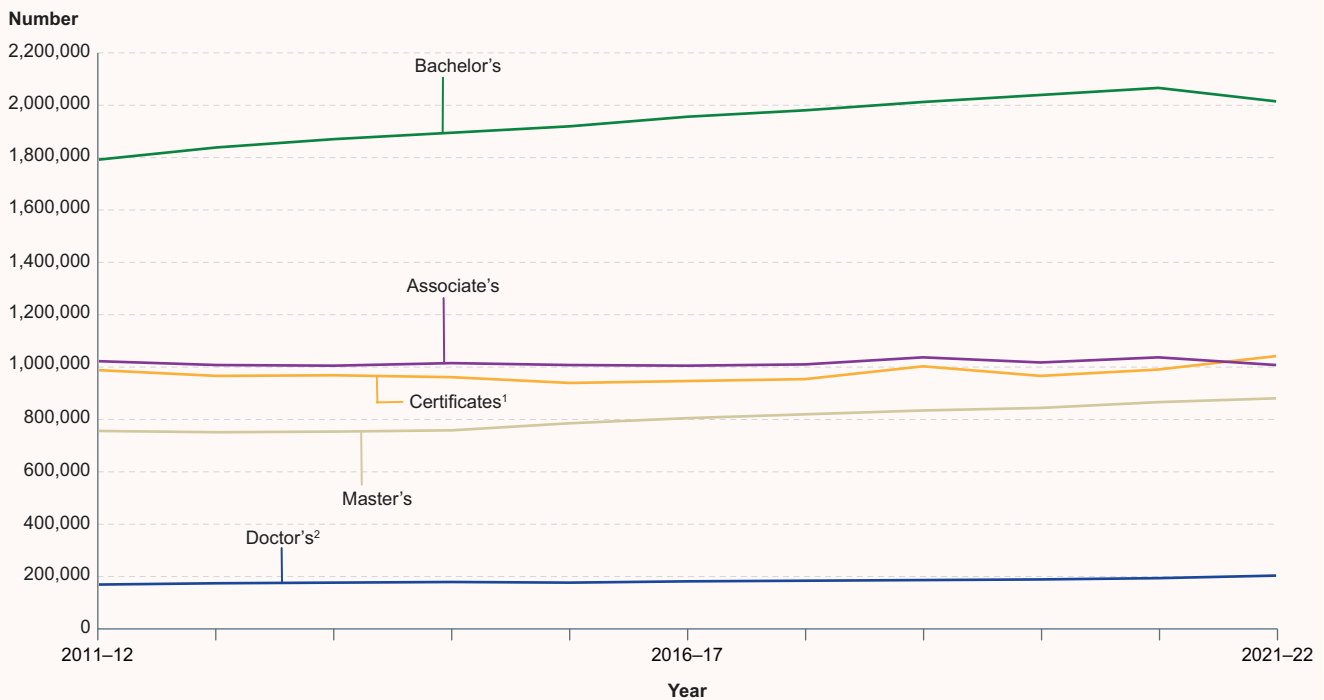
Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred

Between 2011–12 and 2021–22, the number of awards conferred increased at the bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degree levels. In 2021–22, institutions with an open admissions policy conferred the majority of certificates and associate's degrees (93 and 92 percent, respectively) and a comparatively small percentage of bachelor's (9 percent), master's (11 percent), and doctor's degrees (4 percent).

Overall Awards Conferred

FIGURE 1.

Number of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by award level: Academic years 2011–12 through 2021–22



¹ Data are for certificates below the baccalaureate level.

² 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 in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and U.S. service academies. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. Certificate counts include both degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2012 through Fall 2021 (final data) and Fall 2022 (provisional data), Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 318.40.

In academic year 2021-22, postsecondary institutions conferred 5.1 million awards, ranging from certificates below the bachelor's level to doctor's degrees.¹ The number of awards conferred above the associate's level increased between 2011-12 and 2021-22 for

- bachelor's degrees, by 12 percent (from 1.8 million to 2.0 million);
- master's degrees, by 16 percent (from 756,000 to 880,200); and
- doctor's degrees, by 20 percent (from 170,200 to 203,900).

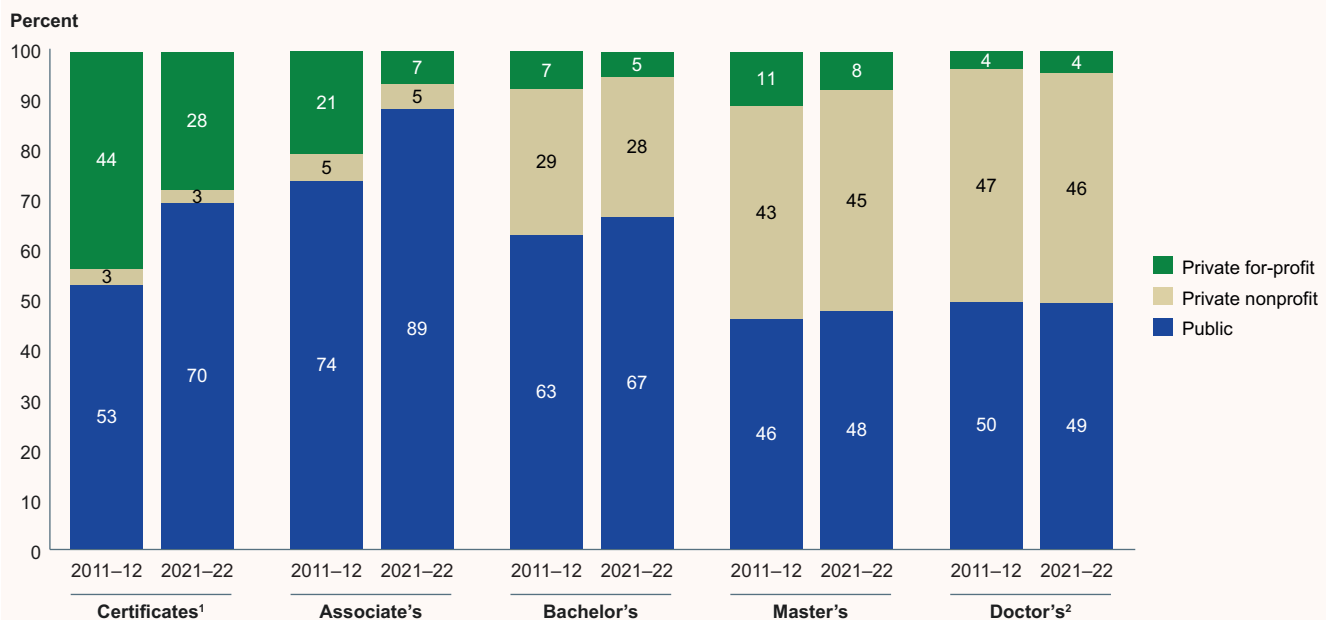
Meanwhile, the number of certificates awarded was 5 percent higher and the number of associate's degrees was 1 percent lower in 2021-22 than in 2011-12, although both were about 1.0 million in both years.

The coronavirus pandemic brought disruptions to education beginning in spring 2020.² It is not possible to determine the extent to which the pandemic may have impacted degree completion, because it is unknown how many students would have completed degrees in the absence of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it is important to understand patterns of degree completion before and since the onset of the pandemic. At the certificate and associate's degree levels, the number of awards conferred in 2019-20 was lower than in 2018-19 but still higher than in 2017-18. In contrast, at the bachelor's degree level and above, more awards were conferred in 2019-20 than in 2018-19. In 2020-21—during the first full academic year of the pandemic—more awards were conferred at every level than in 2019-20. This pattern continued in 2021-22 for certificates, master's degrees, and doctor's degrees. However, fewer associate's and bachelor's degrees were awarded in 2021-22 than in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Awards Conferred, by Control of Institution

FIGURE 2.

Percentage distribution of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2011-12 and 2021-22



¹ Data are for certificates below the baccalaureate level.

² 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 in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and U.S. service academies. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. Certificate counts include both degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2012 (final data) and Fall 2022 (provisional data), Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 318.40.

The proportion of awards conferred by institutional control (public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit) changed between 2011-12 and 2021-22. Specifically, the proportion of all certificates conferred

- increased at public institutions (from 53 to 70 percent);
- ranged from 3 to 5 percent at private nonprofit institutions (peaking in 2014-15); and
- decreased at private for-profit institutions (from 44 to 28 percent).

The proportion of associate's degrees conferred between 2011-12 and 2021-22

- increased at public institutions (from 74 to 89 percent);
- ranged from 5 to 6 percent at private nonprofit institutions (peaking in 2014-15); and
- decreased at private for-profit institutions (from 21 to 7 percent).

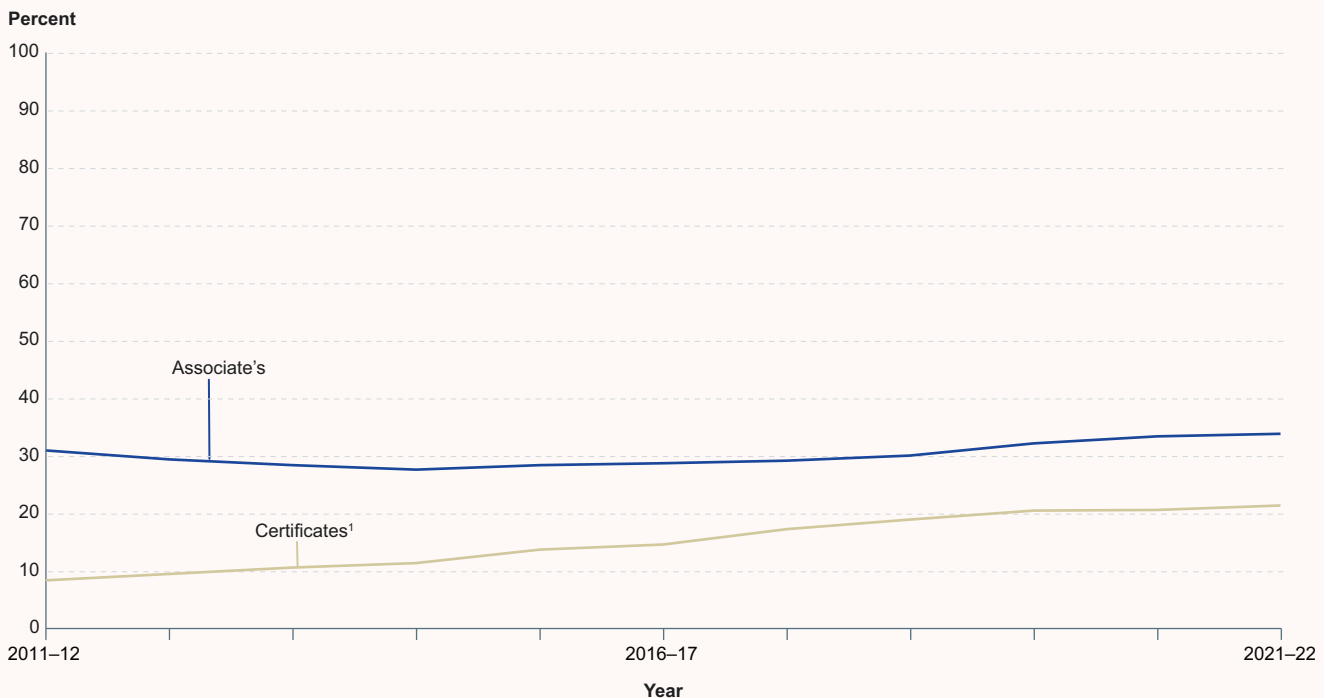
At the bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degree levels, the proportion of degrees conferred by institutional control type differed by 4 percentage points or less in 2021-22 than in 2011-12. For example, the percentage of doctor's degrees conferred at private nonprofit institutions was 1 percentage point lower in 2021-22 compared with 2011-12.

Private for-profit institutions were the only institutional control type to confer the majority of their awards below the bachelor's degree level, including just over half (54 percent) at the certificate level in 2021-22.

Certificates and Associate's Degrees Conferred, by Level of Institution

FIGURE 3.

Percentage of certificates and associate's degrees conferred by 4-year postsecondary institutions: Academic years 2011–12 through 2021–22



¹ Data are for certificates below the baccalaureate level.

NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and U.S. service academies. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. Certificate counts include both degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2012 through Fall 2021 (final data) and Fall 2022 (provisional data), Completions component. See <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/trend-table/4/24?trending=column&f=33%3D1%7C2%7C4&rid=5> and <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/trend-table/4/24?trending=column&f=33%3D3%3B2%3D1&rid=5>.

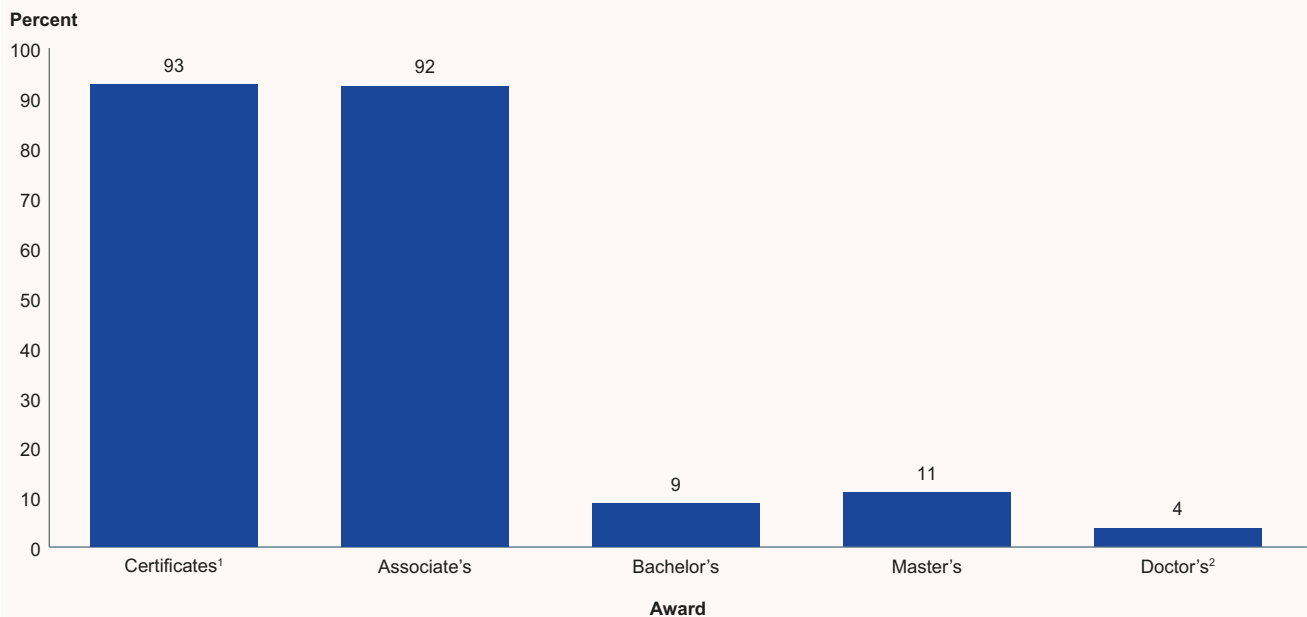
While 4-year institutions confer all bachelor's or higher degrees by definition, they may also award certificates or associate's degrees. From 2011-12 to 2021-22, the percentage of these sub-baccalaureate awards conferred at 4-year institutions

- increased from 9 to 22 percent for certificates; and
- increased from 31 to 34 percent for associate's degrees.

Awards Conferred, by Open Admissions Policy

FIGURE 4.

Percentage of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions with an open admissions policy, by award level: Academic year 2021–22



¹ Data are for certificates below the baccalaureate level.

² 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 in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and U.S. service academies. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. Certificate counts include both degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2022 (provisional data), Completions component. See <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/SummaryTables/report/300?templateId=3000&year=2022&tt=aggregate&instType=2&sid=15888238-2a9e-44a5-9fd4-129041016440>.

In 2021-22, most certificates and associate's degrees were awarded by institutions with an open admissions policy (93 and 92 percent, respectively). By comparison, the percentage of degrees above the associate's level conferred by institutions with an open admissions policy was

- 9 percent for bachelor's degrees;
- 11 percent for master's degrees; and
- 4 percent for doctor's degrees.

Endnotes:

¹ For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the Reader's Guide.

² Office of Postsecondary Education. (2020, June 16). *Guidance for Interruptions of Study Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Retrieved October 26, 2023, from <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/>

knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2020-03-05/guidance-interruptions-study-related-coronavirus-covid-19-updated-june-16-2020. Office of Postsecondary Education (2020, August 13). *CARES Act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund*. Retrieved October 26, 2023, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opecaresact.html>.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 318.40; *IPEDS Trend Generator*, number of certificates awarded at postsecondary institutions by level of institution: 2002-03 through 2021-22; *IPEDS Trend Generator*, number of associate's degrees awarded at postsecondary institutions by level of institution: 2002-03 through 2021-22; *IPEDS Summary Tables*, Completions–Degrees/certificates by gender, 2021-22

Related indicators and resources: *Degrees Awarded [Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups]*; *Graduate Degree Fields*; *Postsecondary Outcomes for Nontraditional and Traditional Undergraduate Students*; *Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers [The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight]*; *Undergraduate Degree Fields*; *Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates*

Glossary: *Associate's degree*; *Bachelor's degree*; *Certificate*; *Control of institutions*; *Doctor's degree*; *Master's degree*; *Open admissions*; *Private institution*; *Public school or institution*