

# Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred

*The number of postsecondary degrees and certificates conferred at each degree level increased between 2004–05 and 2014–15. The number of certificates below the associate’s degree level conferred during this period increased by 35 percent. The number of degrees conferred increased by 46 percent at the associate’s level, by 32 percent at the bachelor’s level, by 31 percent at the master’s level, and by 33 percent at the doctor’s level.*

In academic year 2014–15, postsecondary institutions conferred 961,000 certificates below the associate’s level, 1.0 million associate’s degrees, 1.9 million bachelor’s degrees, 759,000 master’s degrees, and 179,000 doctor’s degrees. This indicator discusses trends over time in

the number of certificates and degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions. It also compares the numbers of certificates and degrees conferred by public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions.

**Table 1. Number of degrees and certificates conferred by postsecondary institutions and percentage change, by control of institution and level of degree: Academic years 1994–95, 2004–05, and 2014–15**

Level of degree/certificate and academic year	Total	Public	Private		
			Total	Nonprofit	For-profit
Sub-associate certificates					
1994–95	—	—	—	—	—
2004–05	710,873	370,683	340,190	35,968	304,222
2014–15	961,167	602,895	358,272	46,082	312,190
Percent change from 1994–95 to 2004–05	†	†	†	†	†
Percent change from 2004–05 to 2014–15	35.2	62.6	5.3	28.1	2.6
Associate’s					
1994–95	539,691	451,539	88,152	48,643	39,509
2004–05	696,660	547,519	149,141	45,344	103,797
2014–15	1,013,971	821,874	192,097	58,622	133,475
Percent change from 1994–95 to 2004–05	29.1	21.3	69.2	-6.8	162.7
Percent change from 2004–05 to 2014–15	45.5	50.1	28.8	29.3	28.6
Bachelor’s					
1994–95	1,160,134	776,670	383,464	373,454	10,010
2004–05	1,439,264	932,443	506,821	457,963	48,858
2014–15	1,894,934	1,209,438	685,496	553,534	131,962
Percent change from 1994–95 to 2004–05	24.1	20.1	32.2	22.6	388.1
Percent change from 2004–05 to 2014–15	31.7	29.7	35.3	20.9	170.1
Master’s					
1994–95	403,609	224,152	179,457	176,485	2,972
2004–05	580,151	291,505	288,646	253,564	35,082
2014–15	758,708	351,119	407,589	336,182	71,407
Percent change from 1994–95 to 2004–05	43.7	30.0	60.8	43.7	1,080.4
Percent change from 2004–05 to 2014–15	30.8	20.5	41.2	32.6	103.5
Doctor’s <sup>1</sup>					
1994–95	114,266	58,788	55,478	54,675	803
2004–05	134,387	67,511	66,876	65,278	1,598
2014–15	178,547	90,252	88,295	80,092	8,203
Percent change from 1994–95 to 2004–05	17.6	14.8	20.5	19.4	99.0
Percent change from 2004–05 to 2014–15	32.9	33.7	32.0	22.7	413.3

— Not available.

† Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

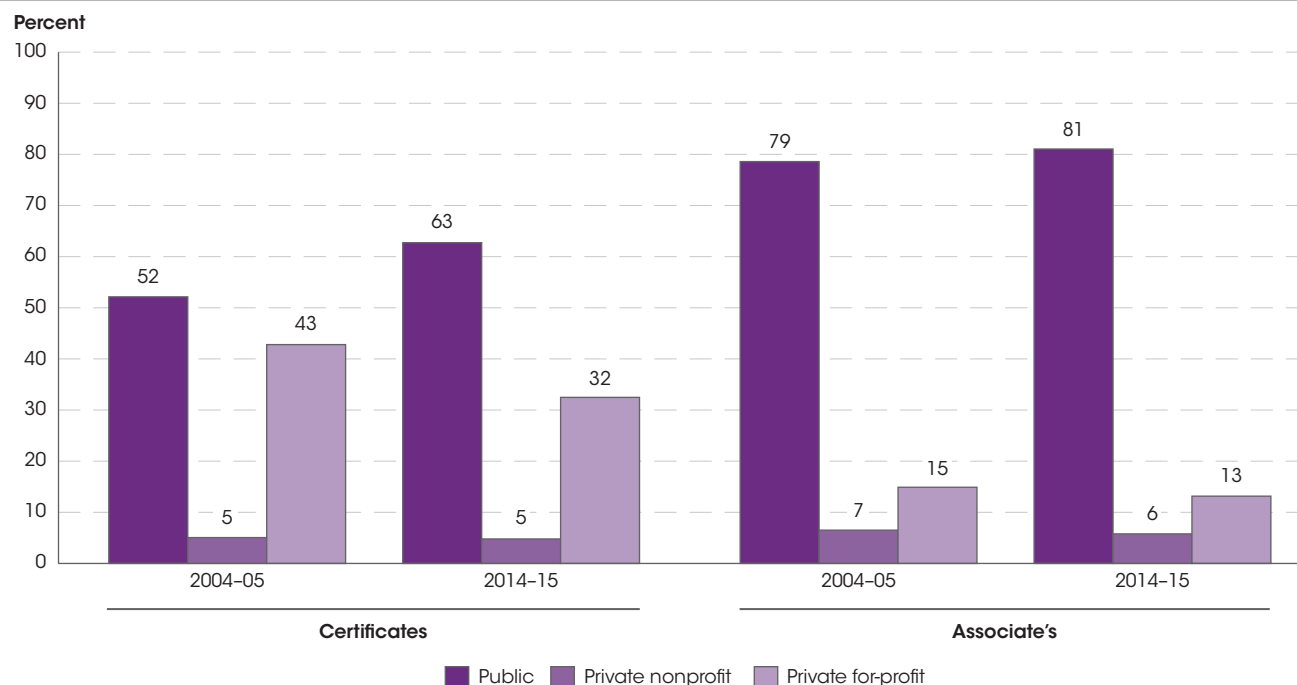
NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), “Completions Survey” (IPEDS-C:94); and Fall 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 318.40.

The number of postsecondary degrees and certificates conferred at each degree level increased between 2004–05 and 2014–15. The number of certificates below the associate's degree level conferred during this period increased by 35 percent. The number of degrees conferred increased by 46 percent at the associate's level, by 32 percent at the bachelor's level, by 31 percent at the master's level, and by 33 percent at the doctor's level. At all levels except for master's degrees, the percentage increases in the number of degrees conferred were greater

in the most recent 10-year period (from 2004–05 to 2014–15) than in the previous one (from 1994–95 to 2004–05).<sup>1</sup> For example, the total number of bachelor's degrees increased by 32 percent from 2004–05 to 2014–15, compared with an increase of 24 percent from 1994–95 to 2004–05. Between 2013–14 to 2014–15, the total number of associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred each increased by 1 percent, while the number of certificates conferred decreased by 1 percent.

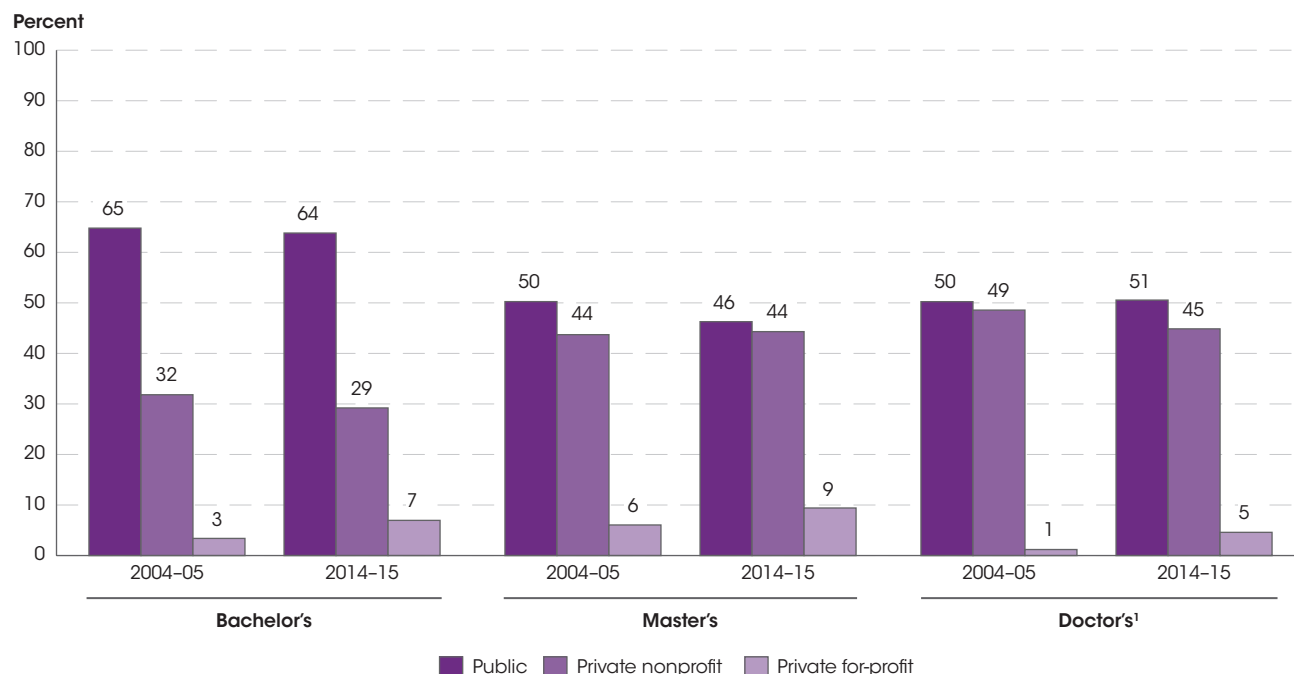
**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of associate's degrees and certificates below the associate's degree level conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2004–05 and 2014–15**



NOTE: Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data for certificates are for certificates below the associate's degree level. 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 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 318.40.

From 2004–05 to 2014–15, the number of certificates below the associate's level conferred by public institutions increased by 63 percent (from 371,000 to 603,000). The number of certificates conferred by private nonprofit institutions was 28 percent higher in 2014–15 (46,000) than in 2004–05 (36,000), and the number conferred by private for-profit institutions was 3 percent higher in 2014–15 (312,000) than in 2004–05 (304,000). As a result, over this period the proportion of all certificates conferred by public institutions also increased from 2004–05 (52 percent) to 2014–15 (63 percent). The proportion of certificates conferred by private nonprofit institutions was 5 percent in both 2014–15 and 2004–05, and the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions was lower in 2014–15 (32 percent) than in 2004–05 (43 percent).

The number of associate's degrees conferred increased from 2004–05 to 2014–15 by 50 percent for public institutions (from 548,000 to 822,000), by 29 percent for private nonprofit institutions (from 45,000 to 59,000), and by 29 percent for private for-profit institutions (from 104,000 to 133,000). The proportion of associate's degrees conferred by public institutions was higher in 2014–15 (81 percent) than in 2004–05 (79 percent). By contrast, the proportion of all associate's degrees conferred by private nonprofit institutions was lower in 2014–15 (6 percent) than in 2004–05 (7 percent), as was the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions (13 percent in 2014–15 vs. 15 percent in 2004–05).

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2004-05 and 2014-15**

<sup>1</sup> 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 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 2005 and Fall 2015, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 318.40.

From 2004–05 to 2014–15, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred by public institutions increased by 30 percent (from 932,000 to 1.2 million), the number conferred by private nonprofit institutions increased by 21 percent (from 458,000 to 554,000), and the number conferred by private for-profit institutions increased by 170 percent (from 49,000 to 132,000). As a result, over this period the proportion of all bachelor's degrees conferred by public institutions decreased (from 65 to 64 percent), as did the proportion conferred by private nonprofit institutions (from 32 to 29 percent), and the proportion conferred by private for-profit institutions increased (from 3 to 7 percent).

The number of master's degrees conferred by public institutions from 2004–05 to 2014–15 increased by 20 percent (from 292,000 to 351,000), although the percentage of all master's degrees conferred by these institutions declined from 50 to 46 percent over this period. While the number of master's degrees conferred by private nonprofit institutions increased by 33 percent

(from 254,000 to 336,000) over the period, the percentage of all master's degrees conferred by these institutions was 44 percent at both the beginning and the end of the period. In contrast, the number of master's degrees conferred by private for-profit institutions increased by 104 percent (from 35,000 to 71,000) over the period, resulting in an increase in these institutions' proportion of total master's degrees conferred, from 6 to 9 percent.

From 2004–05 to 2014–15, the number of doctor's degrees conferred increased by 34 percent at public institutions (from 68,000 to 90,000), by 23 percent at private nonprofit institutions (from 65,000 to 80,000), and by 413 percent at private for-profit institutions (from 2,000 to 8,000). At public institutions, the proportion of doctor's degrees conferred was 50 percent in 2004–05 and 51 percent in 2014–15. At private nonprofit institutions, the proportion of all doctor's degrees conferred decreased over the period (from 49 to 45 percent), while at private for-profit institutions, the proportion conferred increased (from 1 to 5 percent).

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The number of certificates below the associate's level conferred in 1994–95 is not available; therefore, certificates are not included in these comparisons.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 318.40

**Related indicators and resources:** Undergraduate Degree Fields, Graduate Degree Fields

**Glossary:** Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Certificate, Control of institution, Doctor's degree, Master's degree, Private institution, Public school or institution