

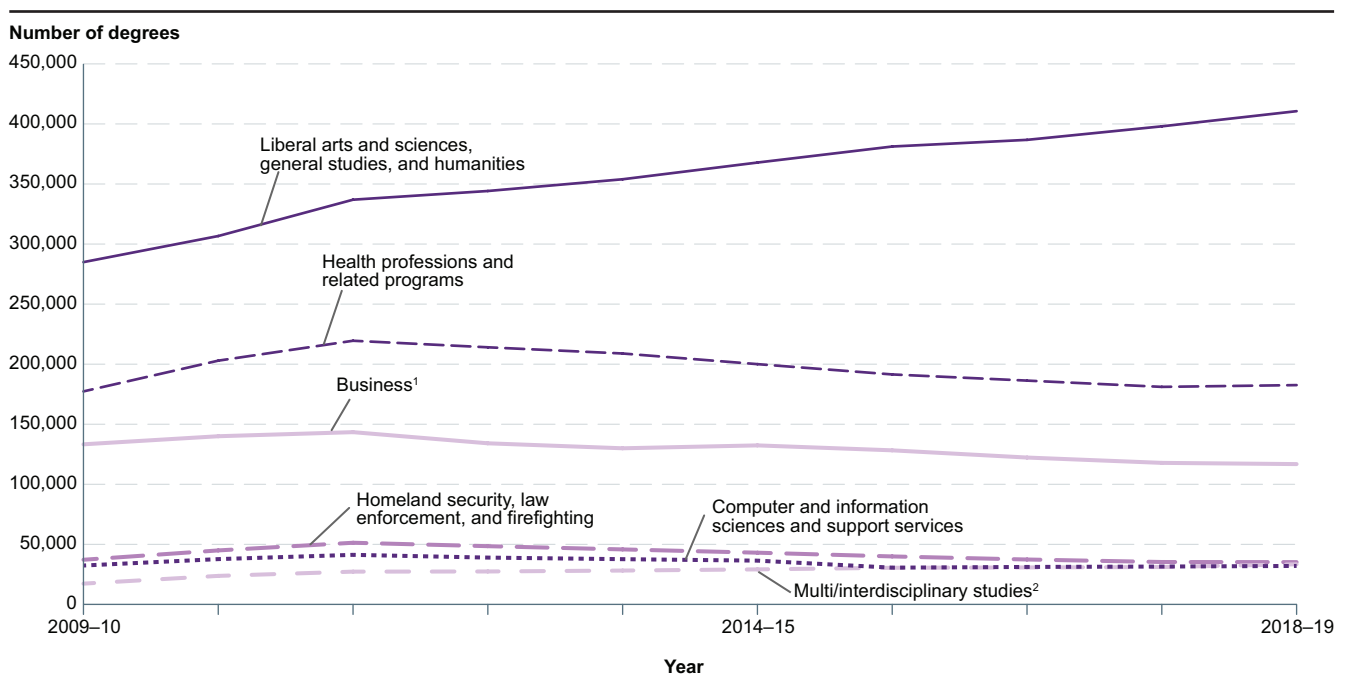
Undergraduate Degree Fields

In 2018–19, over two-thirds of the 1.0 million associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions within the United States were concentrated in three fields of study: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (410,600 degrees); health professions and related programs (182,600 degrees); and business (116,800 degrees). Of the 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2018–19, some 58 percent were concentrated in six fields of study: business (390,600 degrees); health professions and related programs (251,400 degrees); social sciences and history (160,600 degrees); engineering (126,700 degrees); biological and biomedical sciences (121,200 degrees); and psychology (116,500 degrees).

In 2018-19 postsecondary institutions within the United States¹ conferred 3.0 million degrees. These included 1.0 million associate’s degrees and 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees, up from 848,900 and 1.6 million in

2009-10, respectively. At both levels, business and health professions and related programs were among the most common fields of study in which degrees were conferred.

Figure 1. Number of associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: 2009–10 through 2018–19



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.

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.

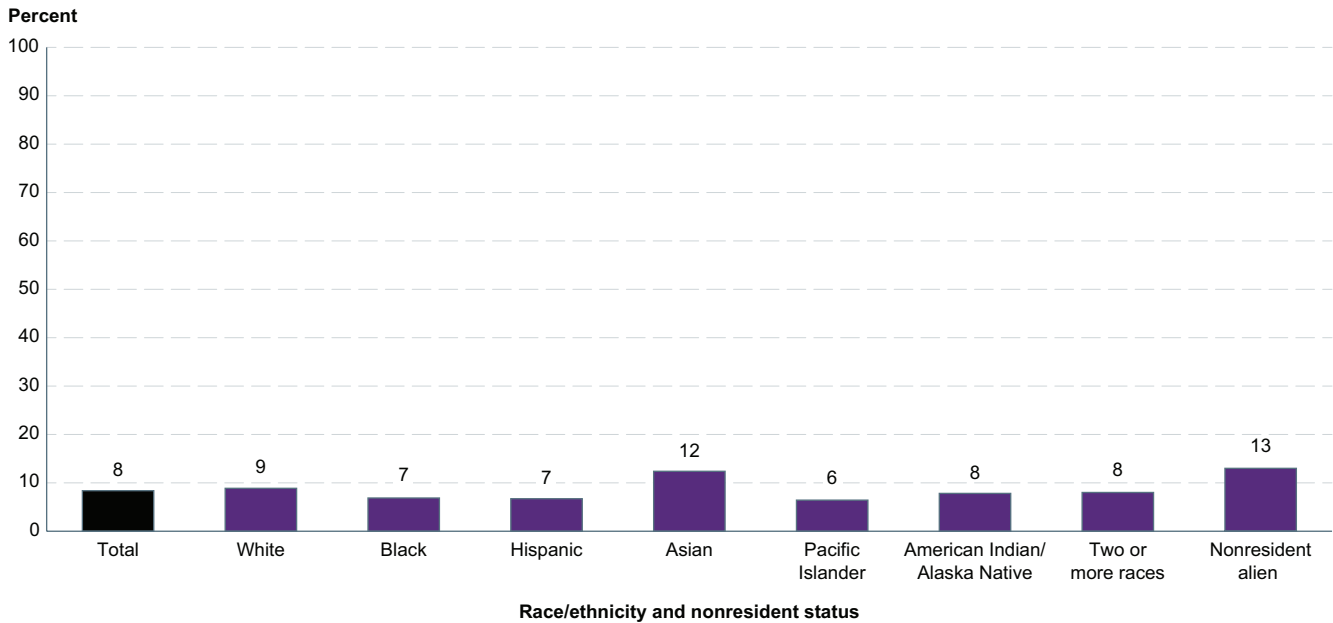
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of associate’s degrees were conferred in 2018–19. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted 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 2010 through Fall 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 321.10.

In 2018-19, postsecondary institutions conferred 1.0 million associate's degrees. Over two-thirds (68 percent) of these degrees were concentrated in three fields of study: liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (40 percent, or 410,600 degrees); health professions and related programs (18 percent, or 182,600 degrees); and business² (11 percent, or 116,800 degrees). These three fields were the most common fields for students who earned associate's degrees across all racial/ethnic groups and for nonresident alien³ students in 2018-19. The three fields that constituted the next largest percentages of associate's degrees conferred in 2018-19 included the following: homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (3 percent, or 35,200 degrees); multi/interdisciplinary studies⁴ (3 percent, or 33,400 degrees); and computer and information sciences and support services (3 percent, or 32,000 degrees).

Between 2009-10 and 2018-19, the total number of associate's degrees conferred increased by 22 percent, from 848,900 degrees to 1.0 million degrees. Over this time period, the number of associate's degrees conferred in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities increased by 44 percent, from nearly 285,000 degrees in 2009-10 to 410,600 degrees in 2018-19. The number of associate's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs was 3 percent higher in 2018-19 (182,600) than in 2009-10 (177,300) but showed no clear trend during this period. The number of associate's degrees conferred in business decreased by 12 percent between 2009-10 and 2018-19, from 133,300 to 116,800 associate's degrees. Among other fields in which at least 10,000 associate's degrees were conferred in 2018-19, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2009-10 and 2018-19 in the following fields: psychology (from 6,600 to 14,500 degrees, an increase of 120 percent); social sciences and history (from 10,600 to 26,000 degrees, an increase of 144 percent); and physical sciences and science technologies (from 4,100 to 10,600 degrees, an increase of 155 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of associate’s degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2018–19



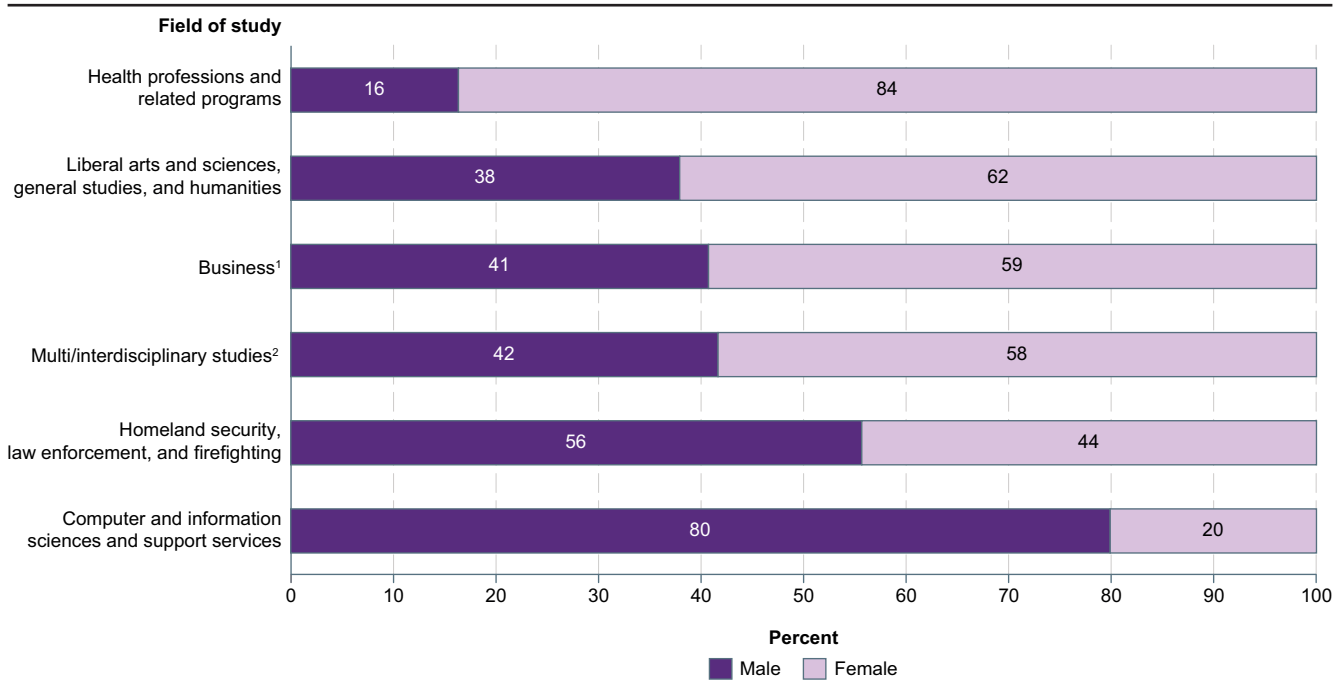
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. STEM fields include biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technologies, mathematics and statistics, and physical sciences and science technologies. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident aliens. 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 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 318.45 and 321.30.

Eight percent (86,800 degrees) of associate’s degrees were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)⁵ fields in 2018-19. The percentage of associate’s degrees conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Thirteen percent of associate’s degrees conferred to nonresident alien students were in a STEM

field, which was higher than the percentage conferred to Asian students (12 percent) and to students who were White (9 percent), of Two or more races (8 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (8 percent), Black (7 percent), Hispanic (7 percent), and Pacific Islander (6 percent).

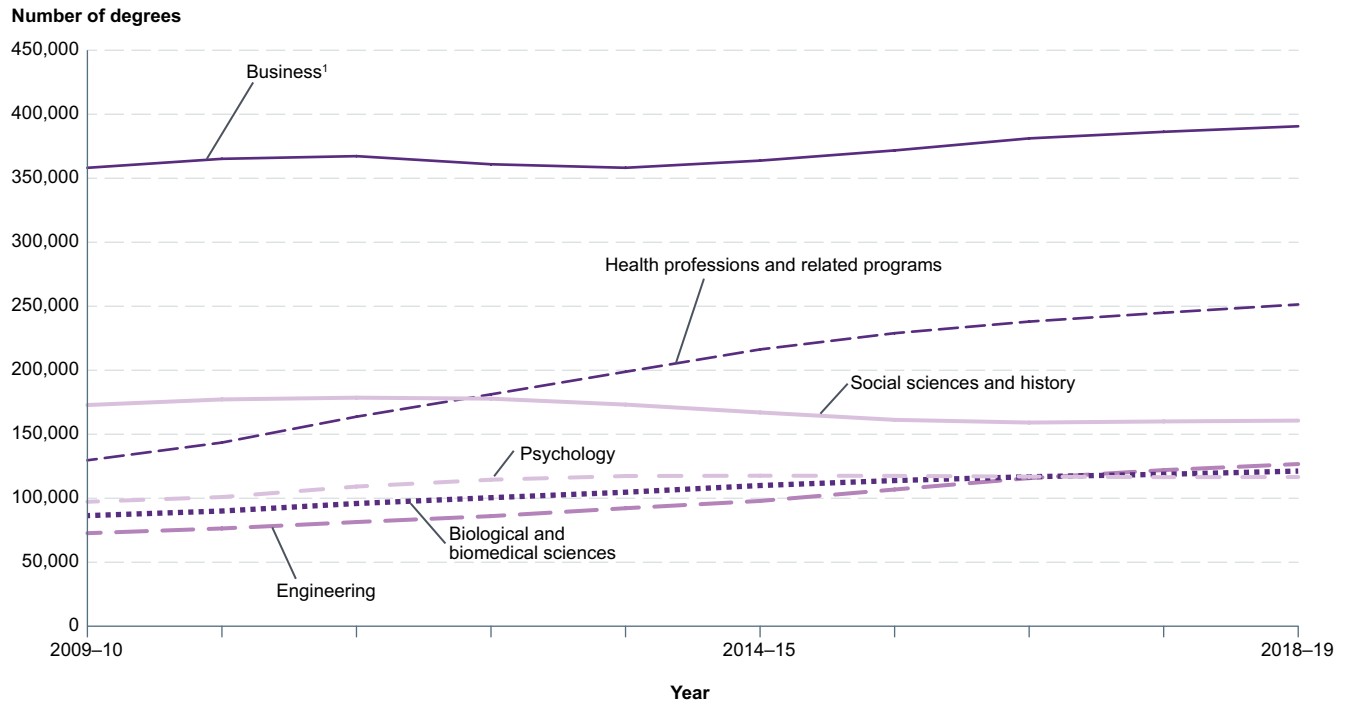
Figure 3. Percentage distribution of associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: 2018–19



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.
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.
 NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of associate’s degrees were conferred in 2018–19. 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 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 321.10.

In 2018-19, females earned 61 percent (629,400 degrees) and males earned 39 percent (407,200 degrees) of all associate’s degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most associate’s degrees were conferred in 2018-19, females were conferred the majority of degrees in four: health professions and related programs (84 percent); liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (62 percent); business (59 percent); and multi/interdisciplinary studies (58 percent). Males were conferred the majority of associate’s degrees in computer and information sciences and support services (80 percent) and in homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (56 percent).

and humanities (62 percent); business (59 percent); and multi/interdisciplinary studies (58 percent). Males were conferred the majority of associate’s degrees in computer and information sciences and support services (80 percent) and in homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (56 percent).

Figure 4. Number of bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: 2009–10 through 2018–19

¹ "Business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

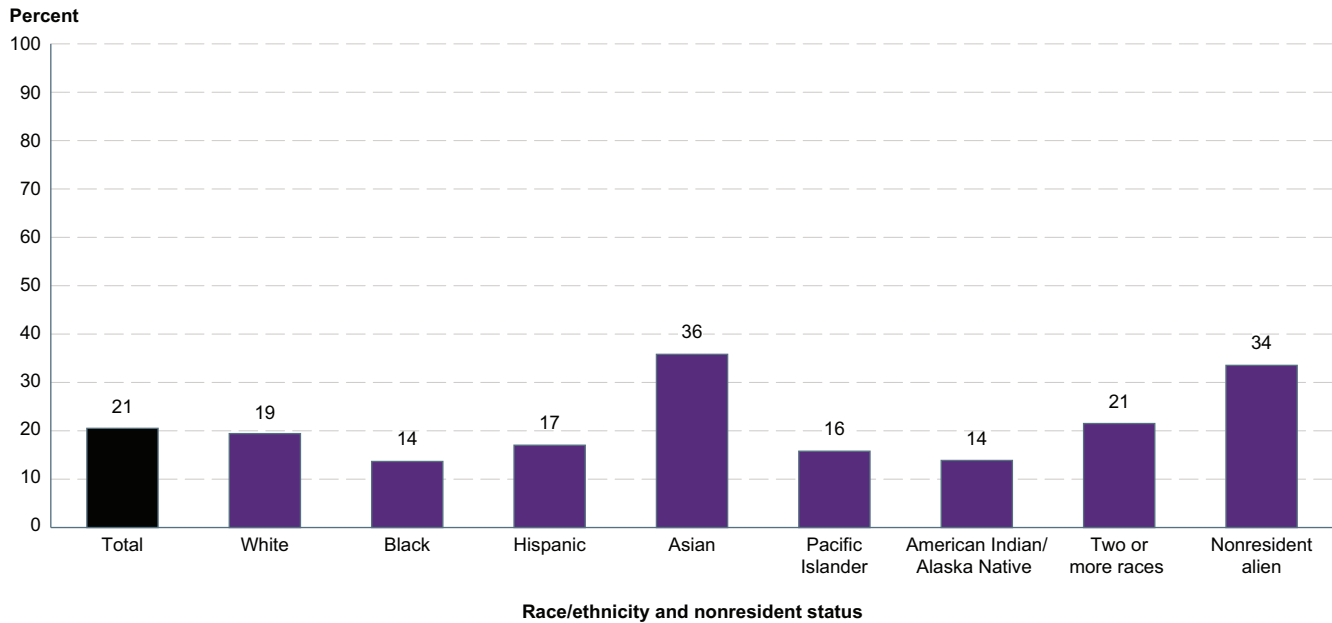
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2018–19. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data have been adjusted where 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 2010 through Fall 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 322.10.

Postsecondary institutions conferred 2.0 million bachelor's degrees in 2018–19. More than half (58 percent) were concentrated in six fields of study: business (19 percent, or 390,600 degrees); health professions and related programs (12 percent, or 251,400 degrees); social sciences and history (8 percent, or 160,600 degrees); engineering (6 percent, or 126,700 degrees); biological and biomedical sciences (6 percent, or 121,200 degrees); and psychology (6 percent, or 116,500 degrees). The fields in which the next largest percentages of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2018–19 were communication, journalism, and related programs (5 percent, or 92,500 degrees); visual and performing arts (4 percent, or 89,700 degrees); computer and information sciences (4 percent, or 88,600 degrees); and education (4 percent, or 83,900 degrees).

Between 2009–10 and 2018–19, the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 22 percent,

from 1.6 million degrees to 2.0 million degrees. Business was the most common field of study for bachelor's degrees conferred in 2018–19 within each racial/ethnic group and for nonresident alien students. Between 2009–10 and 2018–19, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in business increased by 9 percent, from 358,100 to 390,600 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 94 percent between 2009–10 and 2018–19, from 129,600 to 251,400 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in social sciences and history decreased by 7 percent between 2009–10 and 2018–19, from 172,800 to 160,600 degrees. Among other fields in which more than 10,000 bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2018–19, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2009–10 and 2018–19 in computer and information sciences (from 39,600 to 88,600 degrees, an increase of 124 percent).

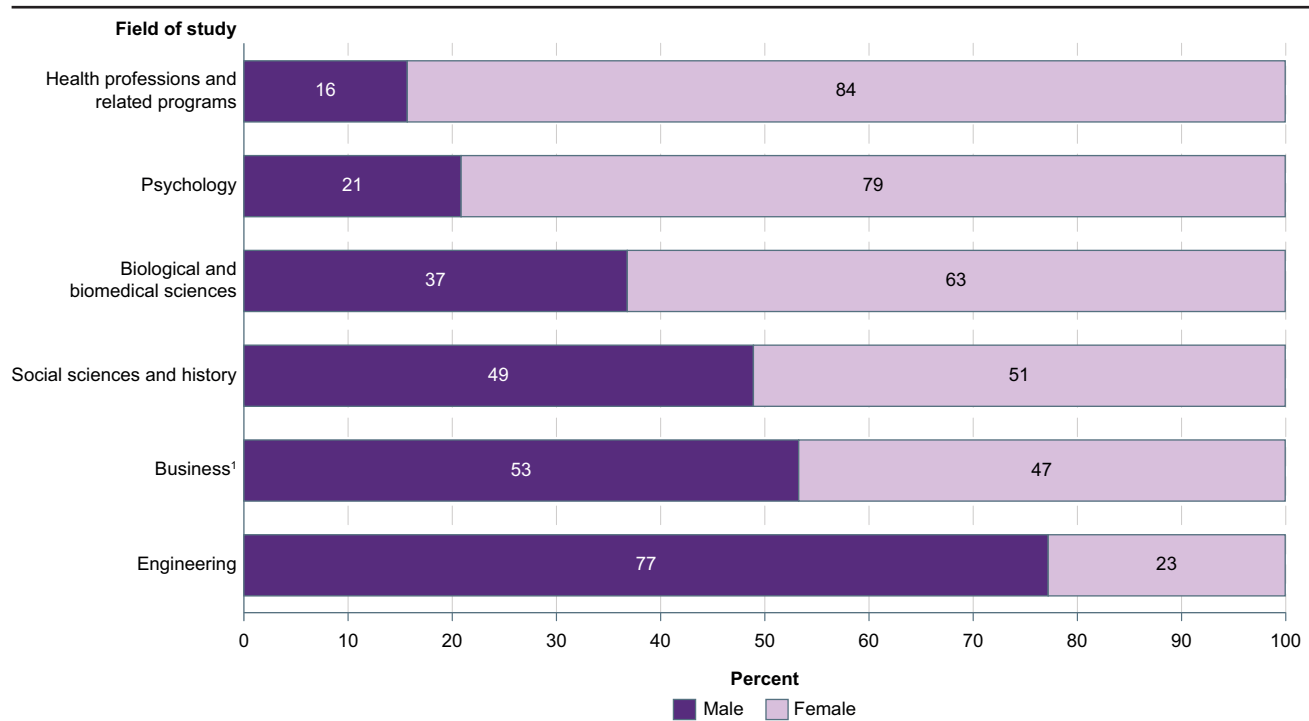
Figure 5. Percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2018–19

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 aliens. 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 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 318.45 and 322.30.

Twenty-one percent (412,900 degrees) of bachelor's degrees were conferred in a STEM field in 2018–19. As with associate's degrees, the percentage of bachelor's degrees that were conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Over one-third (36 percent) of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian students were in a STEM field, which was higher than the percentage conferred

to students in all other racial/ethnic groups. Also, the percentage of nonresident alien students (34 percent) receiving bachelor's degrees in a STEM field was higher than that for students who were of Two or more races (21 percent), White (19 percent), Hispanic (17 percent), Pacific Islander (16 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (14 percent), and Black (14 percent).

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: 2018–19

¹ "Business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2018–19. 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 2019, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 322.40 and 322.50.

In 2018–19, females earned 57 percent (1.2 million degrees) and males earned 43 percent (857,500 degrees) of all bachelor's degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2018–19, females earned the majority of degrees in four: health professions and related programs (84 percent),

psychology (79 percent), biological and biomedical sciences (63 percent), and social sciences and history (51 percent). Males earned the majority of degrees conferred in engineering (77 percent) and business (53 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

² Personal and culinary services have been added to the definition of "business" for associate's degree data in order to be consistent with the definition of "business" for bachelor's degree data. Thus, for all data in this indicator, "business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as personal and culinary services.

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 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.

⁵ 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 2020*, tables 318.45, 321.10, 321.30, 322.10, 322.30, 322.40, and 322.50

Related indicators and resources: [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Holders](#); [Graduate Degree Fields](#); [Post-Bachelor's Employment Outcomes by Sex and Race/Ethnicity \[The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight\]](#); [Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred](#); [Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Fields \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#)

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