

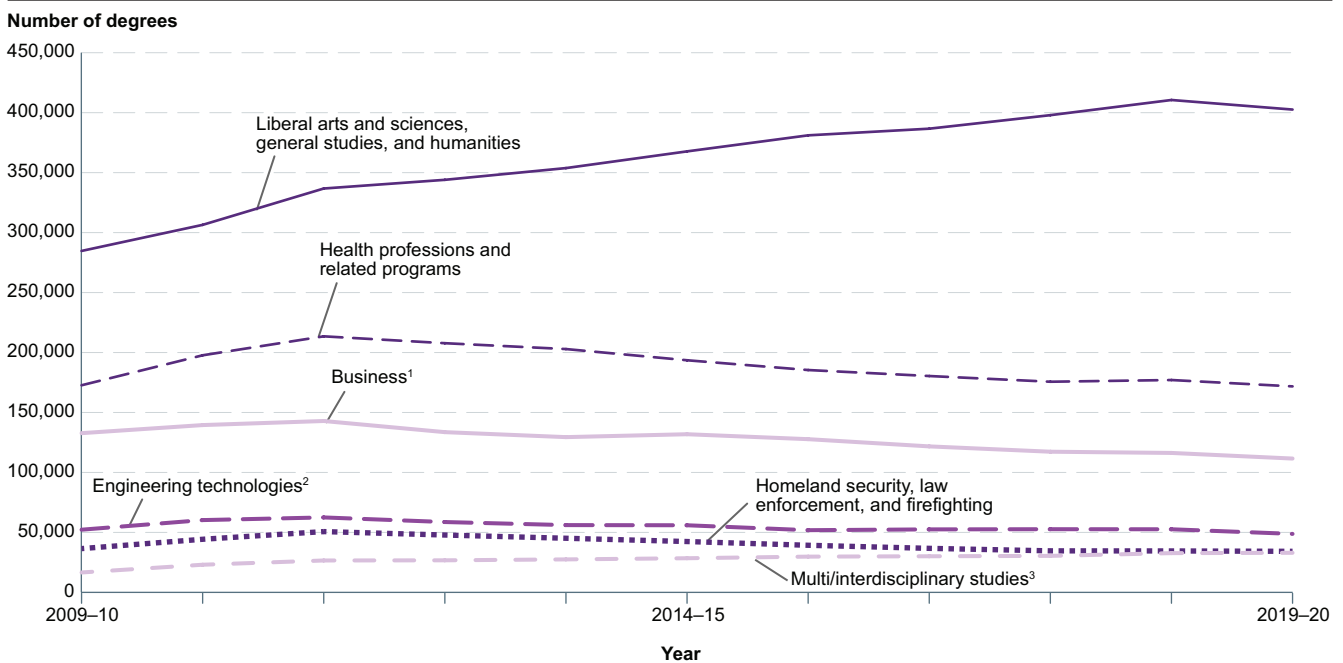
## Undergraduate Degree Fields

In 2019–20, over two-thirds of the approximately 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 (402,700 degrees); health professions and related programs (172,200 degrees); and business (112,100 degrees). Of the 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2019–20, some 58 percent were concentrated in six fields of study: business (387,900 degrees); health professions and related programs (257,300 degrees); social sciences and history (161,200 degrees); engineering (128,300 degrees); biological and biomedical sciences (126,600 degrees); and psychology (120,000 degrees).

Postsecondary institutions within the United States<sup>1</sup> conferred approximately 3.0 million undergraduate degrees in 2019–20. These included approximately 1.0 million associate’s degrees and approximately 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees. Female students earned

the majority of both associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. At both levels, business and health professions and related programs were among the most common fields of study in which degrees were conferred for all racial/ethnic groups.

**Figure 1. Number of associate’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 well as culinary, entertainment, and personal services.

<sup>2</sup> Includes engineering technologies and engineering-related fields; construction trades; and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

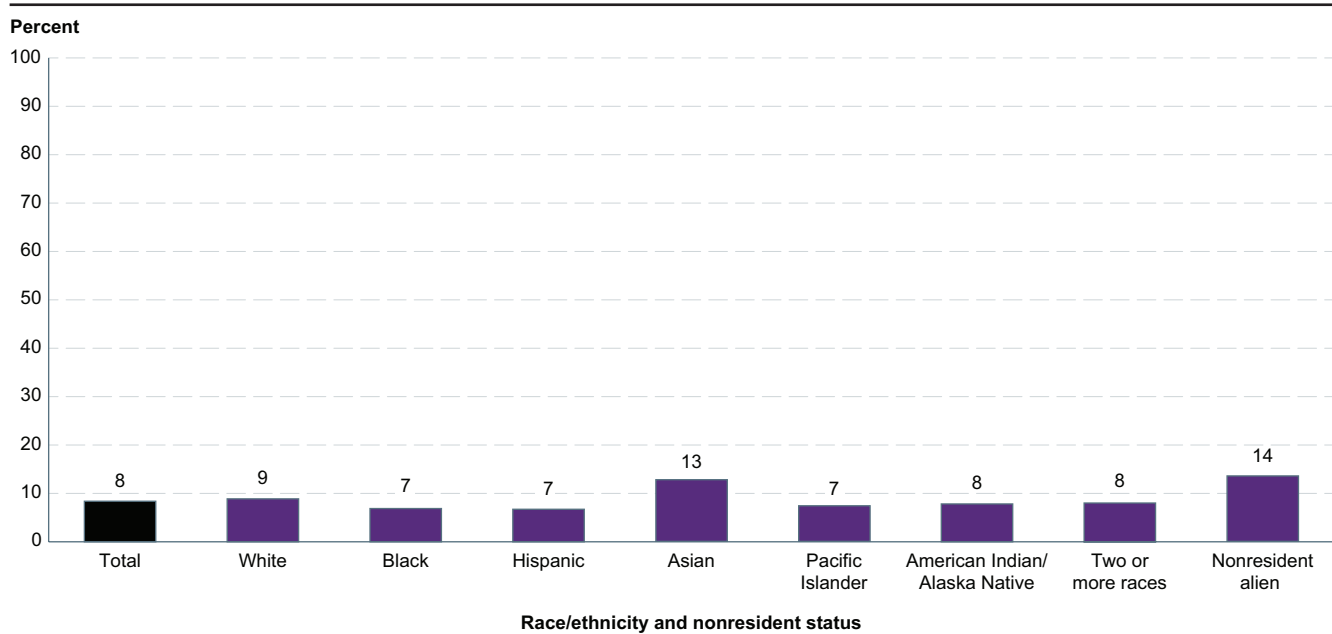
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of associate’s degrees were conferred in 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. 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 321.10.

In 2019-20, postsecondary institutions conferred over 1.0 million associate's degrees. Over two-thirds (67 percent) of these degrees were concentrated in three fields of study: 40 percent (402,700 degrees) were conferred in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; 17 percent (172,200 degrees) in health professions and related programs; and 11 percent (112,100 degrees) in business.<sup>2</sup> These three fields were also the most common fields for students who earned associate's degrees across all racial/ethnic groups and for nonresident alien<sup>3</sup> students in 2019-20. The next largest numbers of associate's degrees conferred to students in 2019-20 were in the following three fields: engineering technologies<sup>4</sup> (49,400 degrees, or 5 percent); homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (34,900 degrees, or 3 percent); and multi/interdisciplinary studies<sup>5</sup> (33,700 degrees, or 3 percent).

The total number of associate's degrees conferred increased from 848,900 degrees to approximately 1.0 million degrees between 2009-10 and 2019-20. Over

this time period, the numbers of associate's degrees conferred have followed patterns that varied by field of study. The number of associate's degrees conferred in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities increased from nearly 285,000 degrees in 2009-10 to 402,700 degrees in 2019-20. The number of associate's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs, however, was lower in 2019-20 (172,200 degrees) than in 2009-10 (173,100 degrees). This reflects a peak of 213,900 degrees in 2011-12, followed by a decrease between 2012-13 and 2019-20. The number of associate's degrees conferred in business decreased throughout the period between 2009-10 and 2019-20, from 133,300 to 112,100 associate's degrees. Among other fields in which at least 10,000 associate's degrees were conferred in 2019-20, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2009-10 and 2019-20 in the following fields: social sciences and history (from 10,600 to 28,200 degrees), physical sciences and science technologies (from 4,100 to 10,700 degrees), and psychology (from 6,600 to 16,200 degrees).

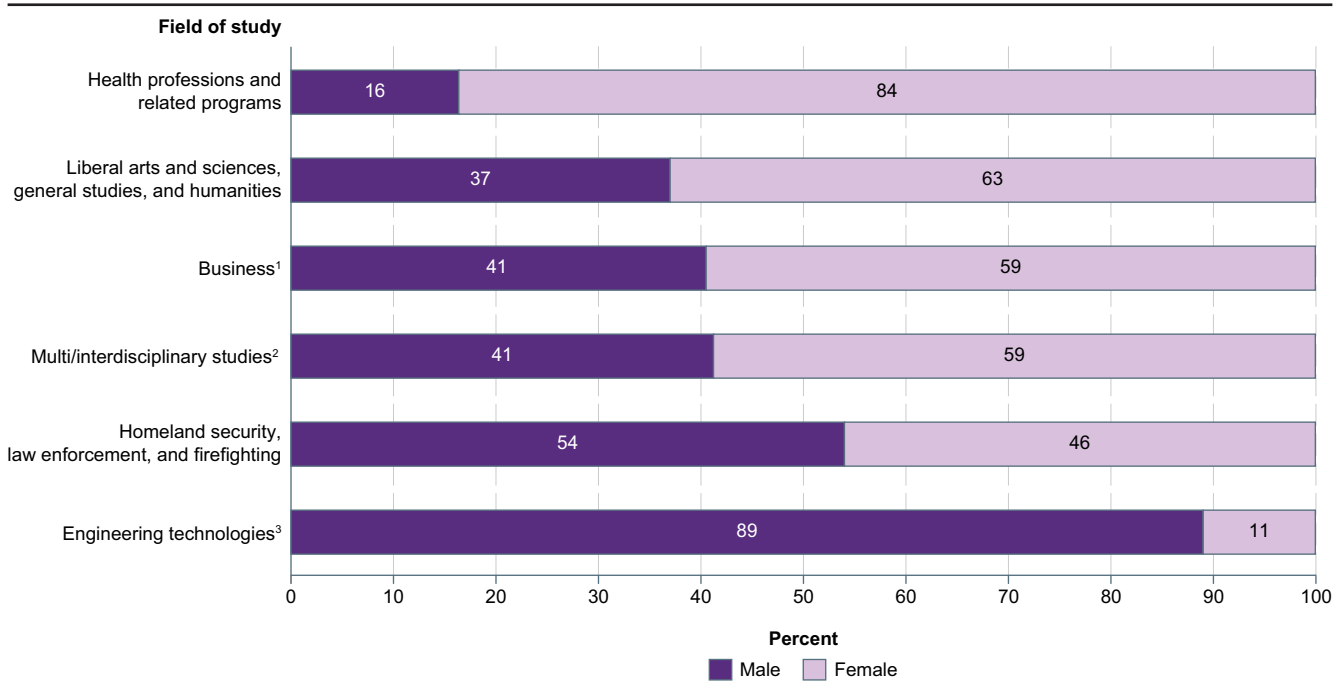
**Figure 2. Percentage of associate's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2019–20**

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. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. 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 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 318.45 and 321.30.

Eight percent (85,200 degrees) of associate's degrees were conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)<sup>6</sup> fields in 2019-20. Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the overall percentage of associate's degrees conferred in a STEM field remained between 8 and 9 percent. In 2019-20, the percentage of associate's degrees conferred in a STEM field varied by race/ethnicity. Thirteen percent of associate's degrees conferred to Asian students were in a STEM field. The next highest percentage

of associates degrees conferred in STEM was among White students (9 percent). American Indian/Alaska Native students and students of Two or more races followed, with 8 percent each. Finally, 7 percent each of associate's degrees conferred to Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic students, respectively, were in a STEM field. Among nonresident alien students, 14 percent of associate's degrees conferred were in a STEM field.

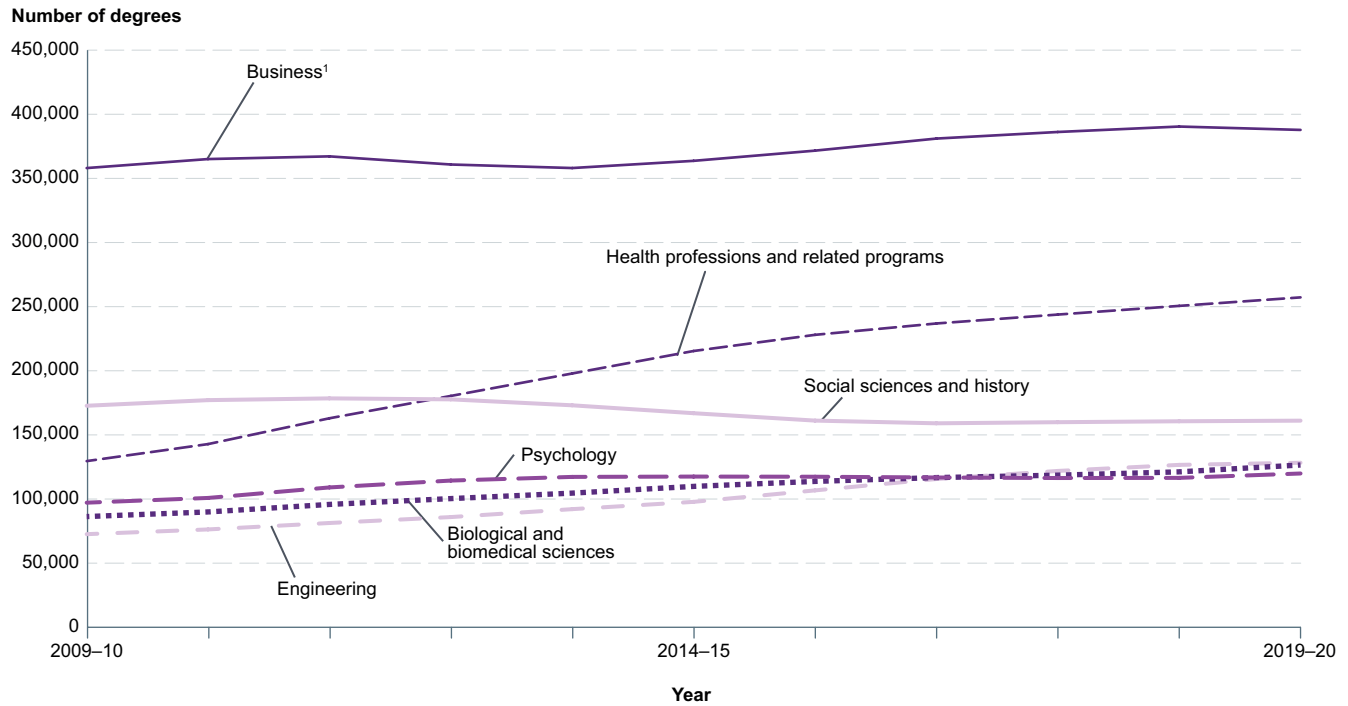
**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of associate’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: 2019–20**



<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.  
<sup>2</sup> 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.  
<sup>3</sup> Includes engineering technologies and engineering-related fields; construction trades; and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians.  
 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 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Degree counts are limited to degree-granting institutions. 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*, table 321.10.

In 2019-20, females earned 61 percent (625,200 degrees) and males earned 39 percent (393,100 degrees) of all associate’s degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most associate’s degrees were conferred in 2019-20, females were conferred the majority of degrees in four: health professions and related programs

(84 percent); liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (63 percent); business (59 percent); and multi/interdisciplinary studies (59 percent). Males were conferred the majority of associate’s degrees in engineering technologies (89 percent) and in homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (54 percent).

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

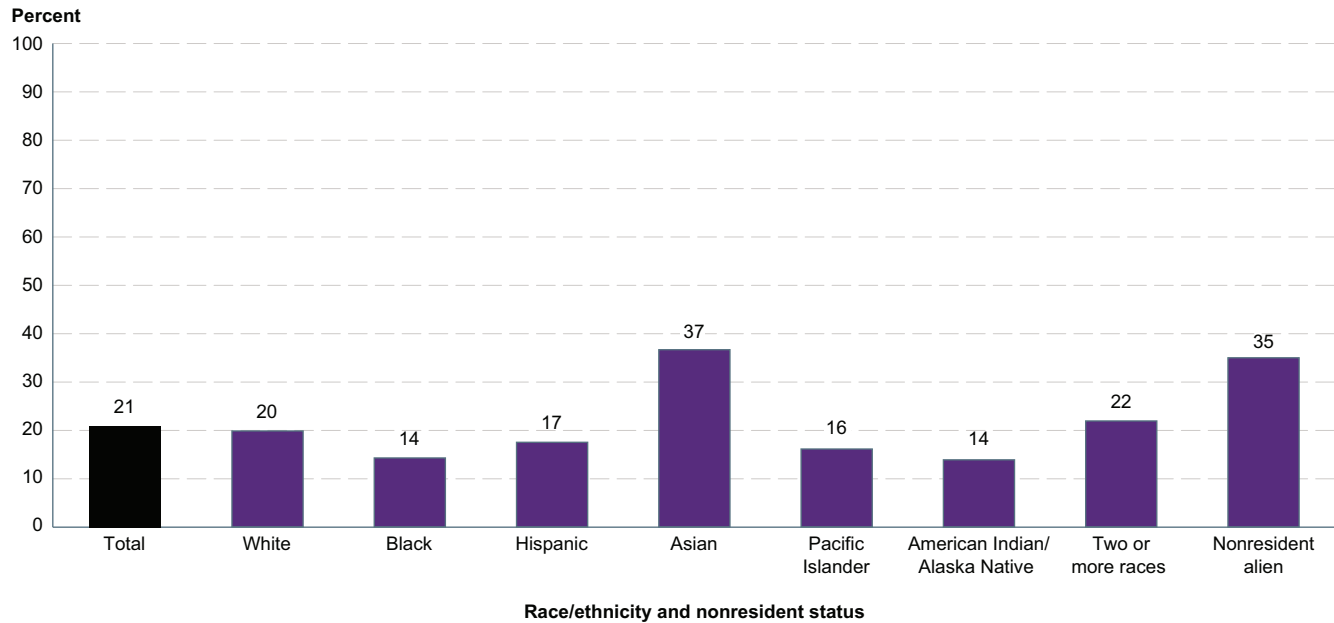
<sup>1</sup> "Business" is defined as business, management, marketing, and related support services, as well as culinary, entertainment, and personal services.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The fields shown are the six programs in which the largest number of bachelor'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 322.10; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 322.10.

Postsecondary institutions conferred about 2.0 million bachelor's degrees in 2019–20. More than half (58 percent) were concentrated in six fields of study. In the most prevalent field of study, business, 19 percent (387,900 degrees) were conferred. Business was the most common field of study for bachelor's degrees conferred in 2019–20 within each racial/ethnic group and for nonresident alien students. Thirteen percent (257,300 degrees) were conferred in health professions and related programs, and 8 percent (161,200 degrees) were conferred in social sciences and history. Six percent each were conferred in engineering (128,300 degrees), biological and biomedical sciences (126,600 degrees), and psychology (120,000 degrees). The next largest percentages of bachelor's degrees conferred in 2019–20 were in the following fields: computer and information sciences and support services (5 percent, or 97,000 degrees); visual and performing arts (5 percent, or 92,300 degrees); and communication, journalism, and related programs (5 percent, or 91,800 degrees).

Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 24 percent, from approximately 1.6 million degrees to approximately 2.0 million degrees. This pattern differed among the three most common bachelor's degree fields. Between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in business increased by 8 percent, from 358,100 to 387,900 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in health professions and related programs increased by 98 percent between 2009–10 and 2019–20, from 129,600 to 257,300 degrees. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred in social sciences and history decreased by 7 percent between 2009–10 and 2019–20, from 172,800 to 161,200 degrees. Among other fields in which more than 10,000 bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2019–20, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2009–10 and 2019–20 in computer and information sciences (from 39,600 to 97,000 degrees, an increase of 145 percent).

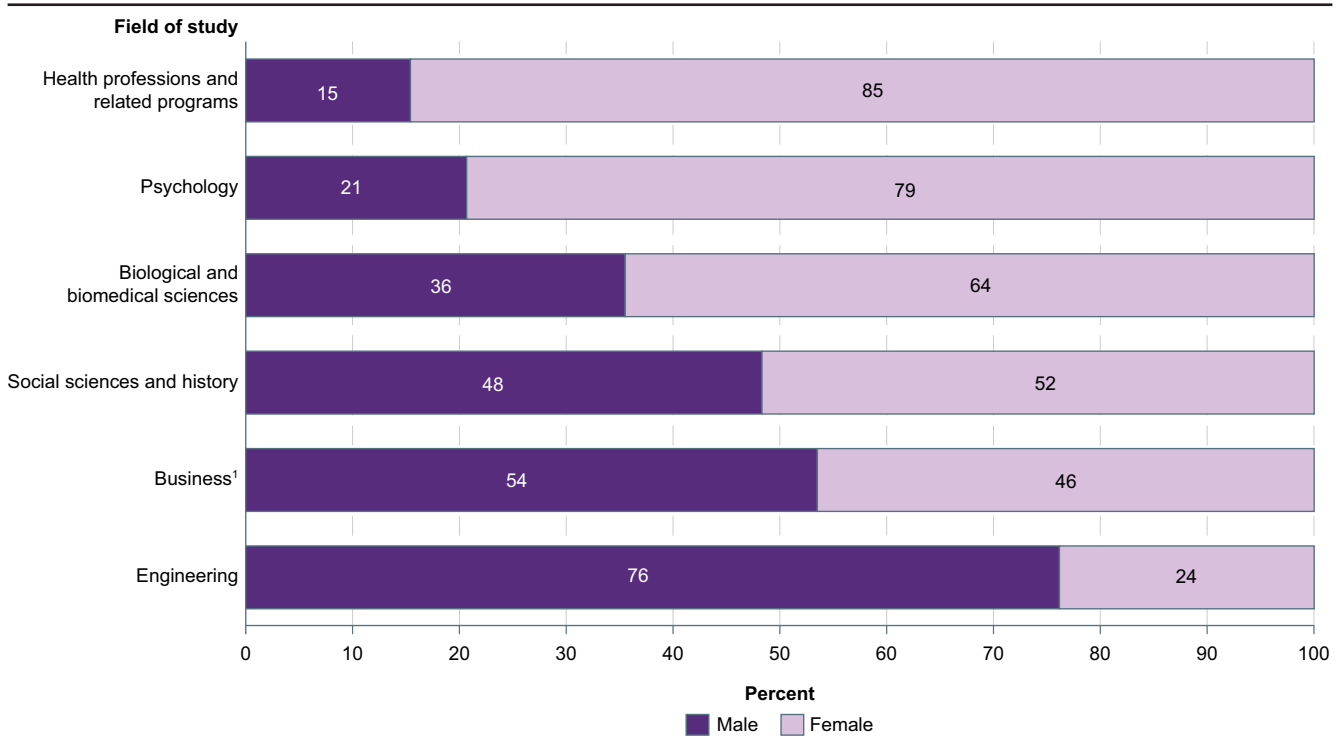
**Figure 5. Percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: 2019–20**

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. Data in this table are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional 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 2020, Completions component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 318.45 and 322.30.

Among bachelor's degrees conferred in 2019-20, some 21 percent (429,300 degrees) were in a STEM field. 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 (37 percent) of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian students were in a STEM field. This was the highest percentage of degrees conferred in a STEM field for students in any racial/ethnic group. The next highest percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred

in a STEM field was conferred to students of Two or more races (22 percent). The percentages conferred to White (20 percent), Hispanic (17 percent), and Pacific Islander (16 percent) students followed. Finally, 14 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred respectively to Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students were in a STEM field. Among nonresident alien students, 35 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred were in a STEM field.

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



<sup>1</sup> "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 six programs in which the largest number of bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2019–20. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Data in this table 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 322.40 and 322.50.

Similar to the pattern observed for associate’s degrees, females earned the majority of bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2019-20. In 2019-20, females earned 58 percent (1.2 million degrees) and males earned 42 percent (861,300 degrees) of all bachelor’s degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most bachelor’s degrees were conferred in 2019-20, females earned the

majority of degrees in four: health professions and related programs (85 percent), psychology (79 percent), biological and biomedical sciences (64 percent), and social sciences and history (52 percent). Males earned the majority of degrees conferred in engineering (76 percent) and business (54 percent).

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

<sup>2</sup> Culinary, entertainment, and personal 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 culinary, entertainment, and personal services.

<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> Includes engineering technologies and engineering-related fields; construction trades; and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</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, 321.10, 321.30, 322.10, 322.30, 322.40, and 322.50; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 318.45 and 322.10

**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