

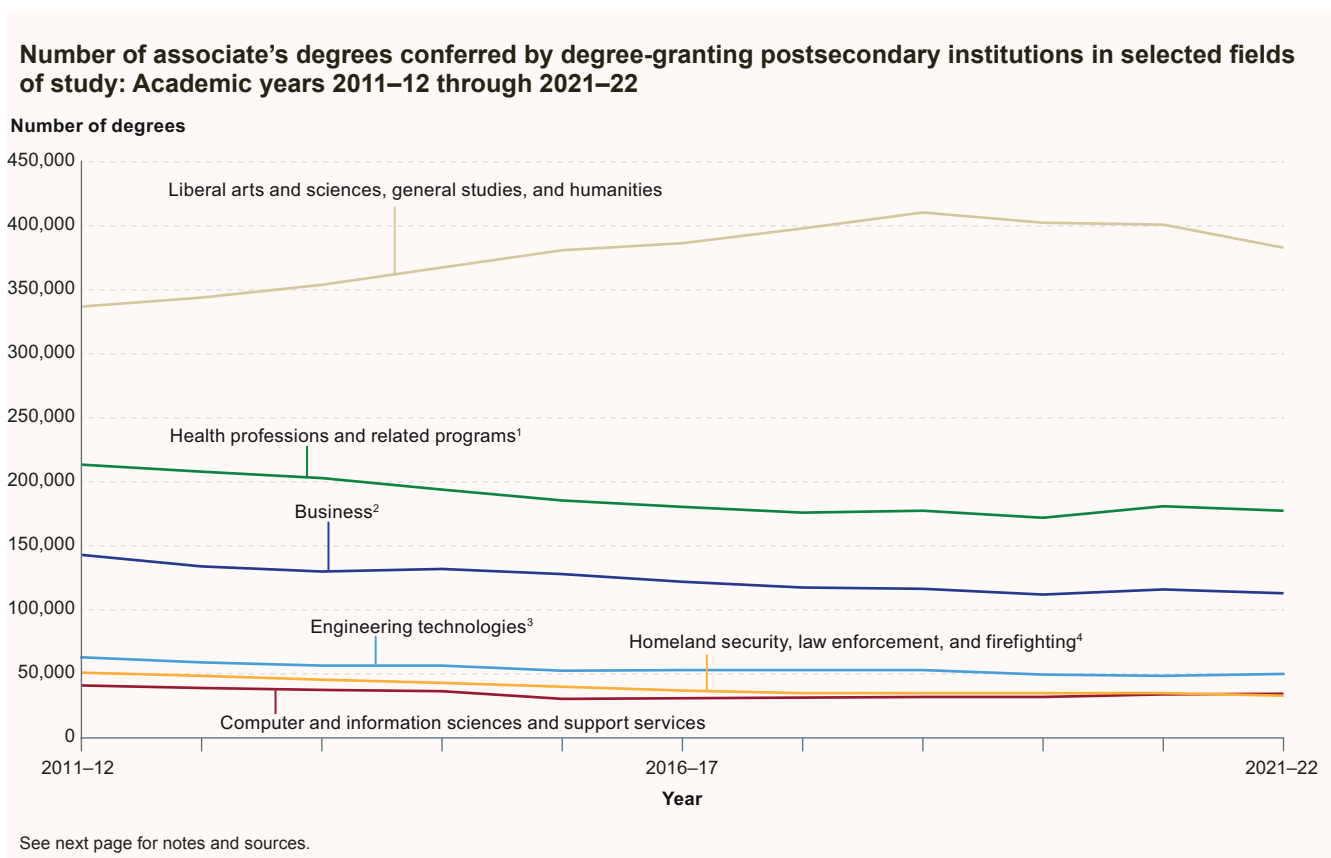
Undergraduate Degree Fields

In 2021–22, approximately 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 (383,300 degrees); health professions and related programs (177,400 degrees); and business (113,100 degrees). Of the 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2021–22, some 58 percent were concentrated in six fields of study: business (375,400 degrees); health professions and related programs (263,800 degrees); social sciences and history (151,100 degrees); biological and biomedical sciences (131,500 degrees); psychology (129,600 degrees); and engineering (123,000 degrees).

Postsecondary institutions within the United States¹ conferred 3.0 million undergraduate degrees in 2021–22.² These included 1.0 million associate’s degrees and 2.0 million bachelor’s degrees. The majority of both associate’s and bachelor’s degrees were conferred to female students. At both levels, business and health professions and related programs were among the top three most common fields of study in which degrees were conferred overall and to students across racial/ethnic groups.

Associate’s Degrees by Field of Study

FIGURE 1.



¹ Includes dental assisting; emergency medical technician; clinical/medical lab science; medical and other health assisting; nursing; and health sciences.

² 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.

³ Includes engineering technologies and engineering-related fields; construction trades; and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians.

⁴ Includes criminal justice and corrections; fire control and safety; homeland security and related protective services; and security science and technology.

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 2021–22. 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. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions component, Fall 2012 through Fall 2021 (final data) and Fall 2022 (provisional data). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 321.10.

In 2021–22, postsecondary institutions conferred 1.0 million associate's degrees. Seventy-nine percent of these degrees were concentrated in six fields of study:

- liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (383,300 degrees, 38 percent of associate's degrees conferred)
- health professions and related programs³ (177,400 degrees, 18 percent)
- business⁴ (113,100 degrees, 11 percent)
- engineering technologies⁵ (50,200 degrees, 5 percent)
- computer and information sciences and support services (34,800 degrees, 3 percent)
- homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting⁶ (33,400 degrees, 3 percent)

The top three fields alone accounted for approximately two-thirds of associate's degrees conferred and were the most common fields of study in which associate's degrees were conferred to students in each racial/ethnic group and to U.S. nonresident⁷ students.

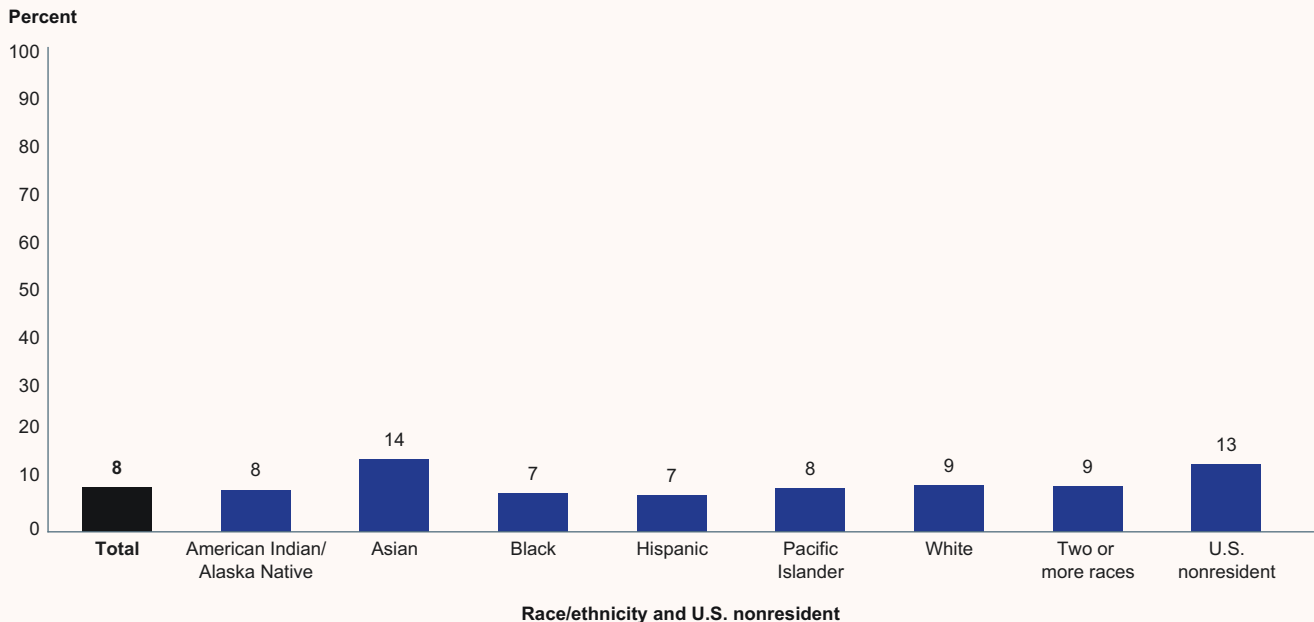
Between 2011–12 and 2021–22, the total number of associate's degrees conferred fluctuated between 1,005,200 degrees in 2013–14 (the lowest total) and 1,037,300 degrees in 2020–21 (the highest total). Over this time period, trends in the number of associate's degrees conferred varied by field of study. Of the top six fields of study in 2021–22, only the field of liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities showed an increase in the number of associate's degrees conferred (from 336,900 to 383,300 degrees, a 14 percent increase, with a peak of 410,600 in 2018–19). The remaining five fields each showed a decrease in the number of associate's degrees conferred between 2011–12 and 2021–22:

- homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting (from 51,300 to 33,400 degrees, a 35 percent decrease)
- business (from 143,400 to 113,100 degrees, or 21 percent)
- engineering technologies (from 63,100 to 50,200 degrees, or 20 percent)
- health professions and related programs (from 213,900 to 177,400 degrees, or 17 percent)
- computer and information sciences and support services (from 41,300 to 34,800 degrees, or 16 percent)

Among other fields in which at least 10,000 associate's degrees were conferred in 2021–22, the largest change was in psychology, for which the number of degrees more than quadrupled since 2011–12 (from 4,700 to 19,300 degrees, or 309 percent).

Associate's Degrees and STEM**FIGURE 2.**

Percentage of associate's degrees conferred by degree-granting postsecondary institutions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and U.S. nonresident status: Academic year 2021–22



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 figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude U.S. nonresidents. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions component, Fall 2022 (provisional data). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables 318.45 and 321.30.

In 2021-22, of the 1.0 million associate's degrees conferred, 8 percent (84,900 degrees) were in a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)⁸ field. Between 2011-12 and 2021-22, the overall percentage of associate's degrees conferred in a STEM field remained between 8 and 9 percent. Of all the associate's degrees conferred to each racial/ethnic group in 2021-22, the percentage conferred in a STEM field varied by group and was highest for Asian students. Specifically, of the associate's degrees conferred to each group, the percentage conferred in a STEM field was

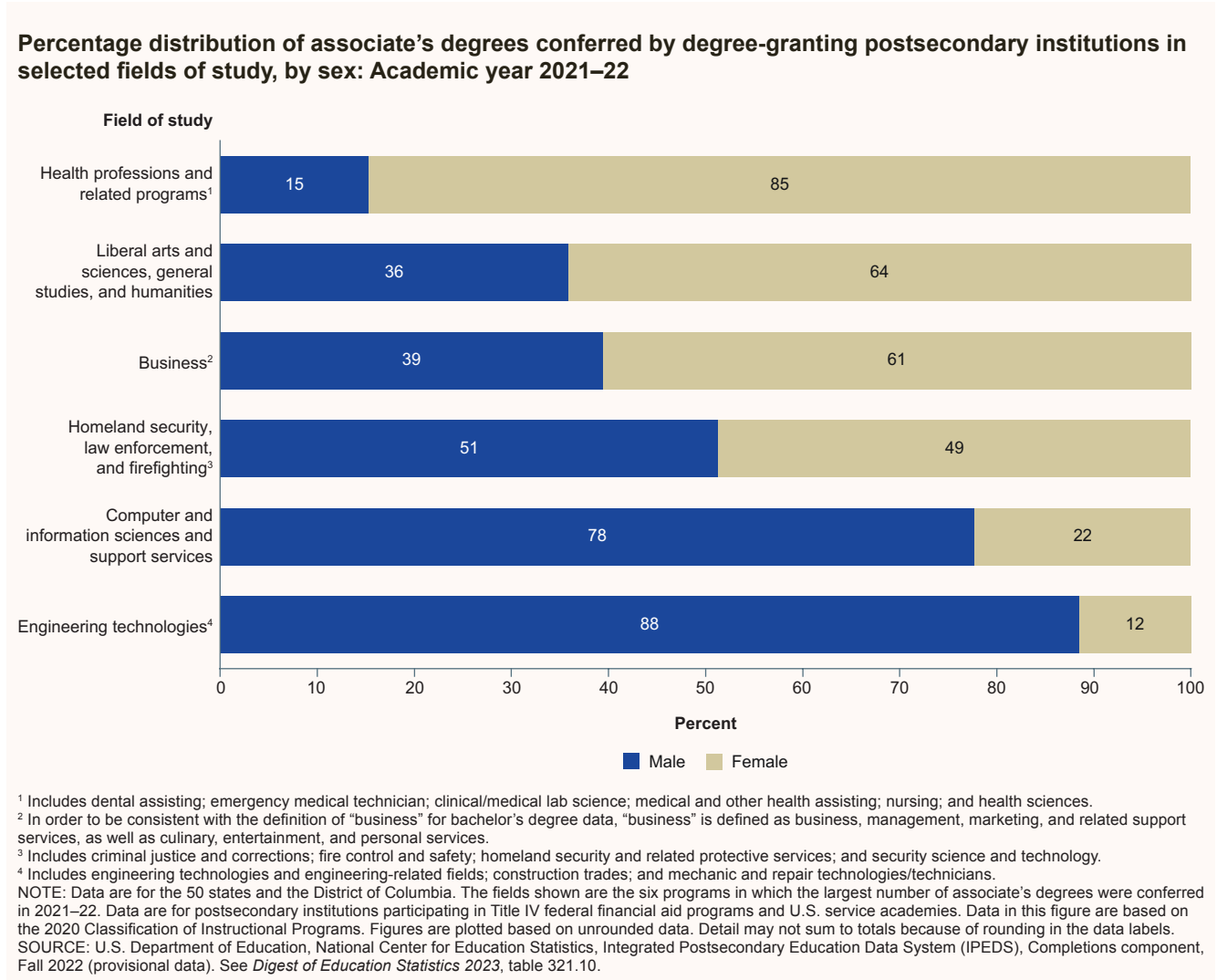
- 14 percent for Asian students;
- 9 percent each for White students and students of Two or more races;
- 8 percent each for Pacific Islander students and American Indian/Alaska Native students; and
- 7 percent each for Black students and Hispanic students.

Among U.S. nonresident students, 13 percent of associate's degrees conferred were in a STEM field.

Because students in different racial/ethnic groups earned different shares of overall associate's degrees conferred, the groups with the highest rates of STEM degrees conferred may not make up the largest shares of all STEM degrees. Of the 84,900 associate's degrees conferred in a STEM⁹ field in 2021-22,

- 50 percent were conferred to White students;
- 21 percent were conferred to Hispanic students;
- 10 percent each were conferred to Black students and Asian students;
- 4 percent were conferred to students of Two or more races;
- 1 percent were conferred to American Indian/Alaska Native students; and
- less than one-half of 1 percent were conferred to Pacific Islander students.

Some 3 percent of associate's degrees in a STEM field were conferred to U.S. nonresident students in 2021-22.

FIGURE 3.

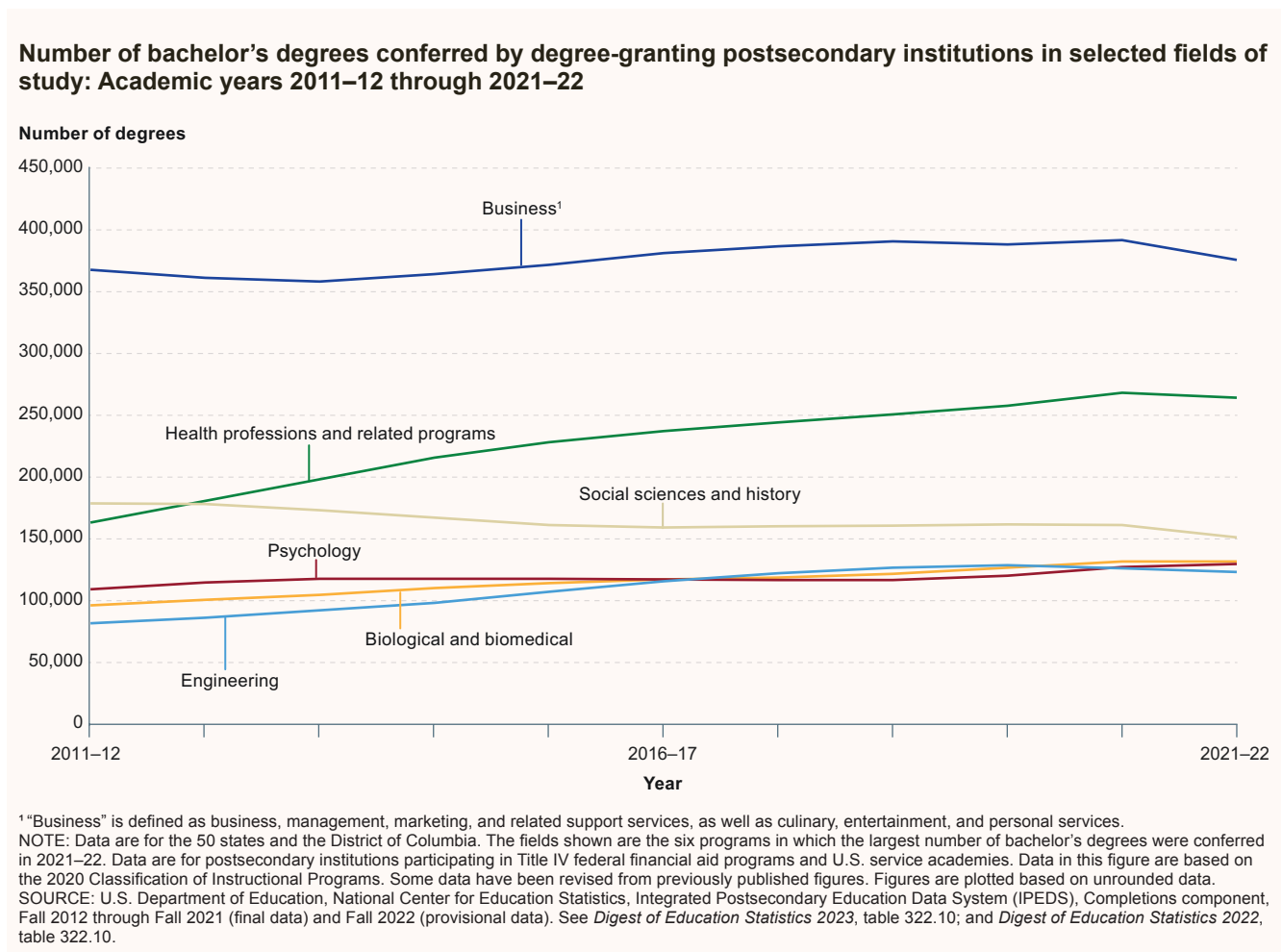
Associate's Degrees by Sex

In 2021–22, females earned 63 percent (632,800 degrees) and males earned 37 percent (375,500 degrees) of all associate's degrees conferred. Of the six fields of study in which the most associate's degrees were conferred, females were conferred the majority of degrees in the top three fields:

- 85 percent in health professions and related programs
- 64 percent in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities
- 61 percent in business

The majority of associate's degrees in the three remaining top fields were conferred to males:

- 88 percent in engineering technologies
- 78 percent in computer and information sciences and support services
- 51 percent in homeland security, law enforcement, and firefighting

Bachelor's Degrees by Field of Study**FIGURE 4.**

Postsecondary institutions conferred 2.0 million bachelor's degrees in 2021-22. Of the 2.0 million bachelor's degrees conferred in 2021-22, some 58 percent were concentrated in six fields of study:

- business (375,400 degrees, or 19 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred)
- health professions and related programs (263,800 degrees, or 13 percent)
- social sciences and history (151,100 degrees, or 7 percent)
- biological and biomedical sciences (131,500 degrees, or 7 percent)
- psychology (129,600 degrees, or 6 percent)
- engineering (123,000 degrees, or 6 percent)

Business and health and related programs were also the top two fields for which degrees were conferred to students in each racial/ethnic group in 2021-22. However, the top two fields of study for which degrees were conferred to U.S. nonresident students were business and engineering.

Between 2011-12 and 2021-22, the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 12 percent, from 1.8 million to 2.0 million. Over this time period, trends in the numbers of bachelor's degrees conferred varied by field of study. Of the top six fields of study in 2021-22, the following five fields each saw an increase in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred relative to 2011-12:

- health professions and related programs (from 163,000 to 263,800 degrees, a 62 percent increase)
- engineering (from 81,400 to 123,000 degrees, or 51 percent)
- biological and biomedical sciences (from 95,900 to 131,500 degrees, or 37 percent)
- psychology (from 109,100 to 129,600 degrees, or 19 percent)
- business (from 367,200 to 375,400 degrees, or 2 percent)

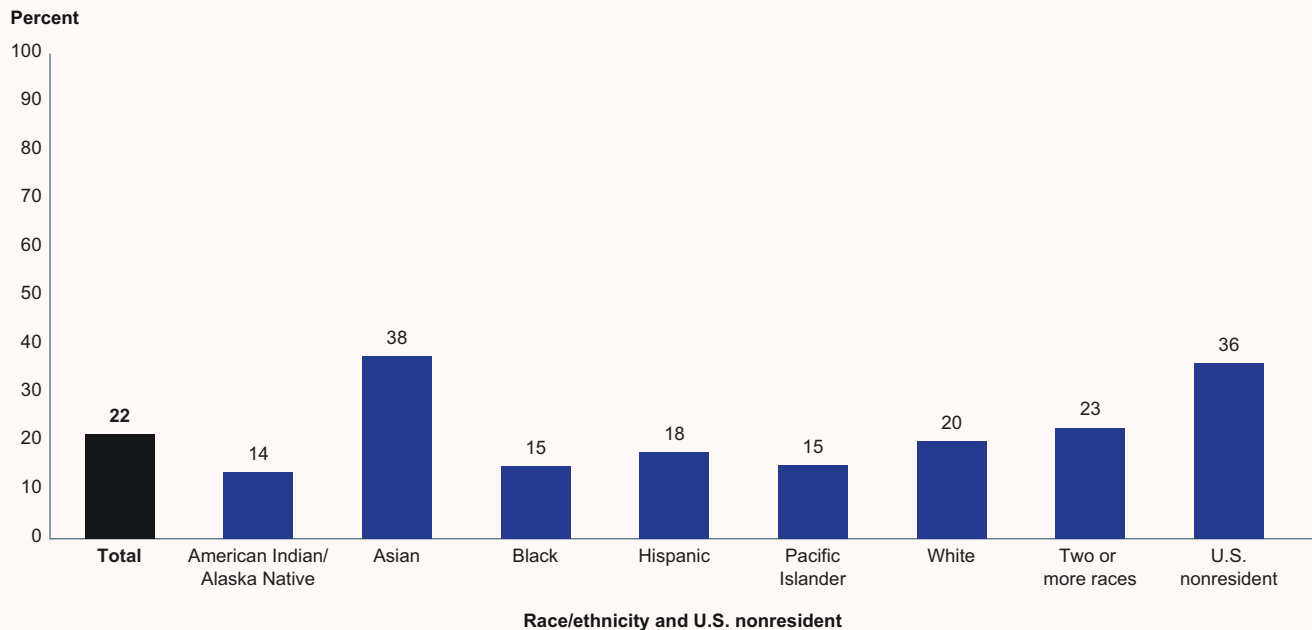
Of the top six fields in 2021-22, only the field of social sciences and history showed a decrease in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred (from 178,500 to 151,100 degrees, a 15 percent decrease).

Among other fields in which more than 10,000 bachelor's degrees were conferred in 2021-22, the number of degrees conferred more than doubled between 2011-12 and 2021-22 in the field of computer and information sciences and support services (from 47,400 to 108,500 degrees, an increase of 129 percent).

Bachelor's Degrees and STEM

FIGURE 5.

Percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred by degree-granting postsecondary institutions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by race/ethnicity and U.S. nonresident status: Academic year 2021–22



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 and U.S. service academies. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude U.S. nonresidents. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions component, Fall 2022 (provisional data). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables 318.45 and 322.30.

Among the 2.0 million bachelor's degrees conferred in 2021-22, some 22 percent (435,500 degrees) were in a STEM field. Of all the bachelor's degrees conferred to each racial/ethnic group in 2021-22, the percentage conferred in a STEM field varied by group and was highest for Asian students. Specifically, of the bachelor's degrees conferred to each group, the percentage conferred in a STEM field was

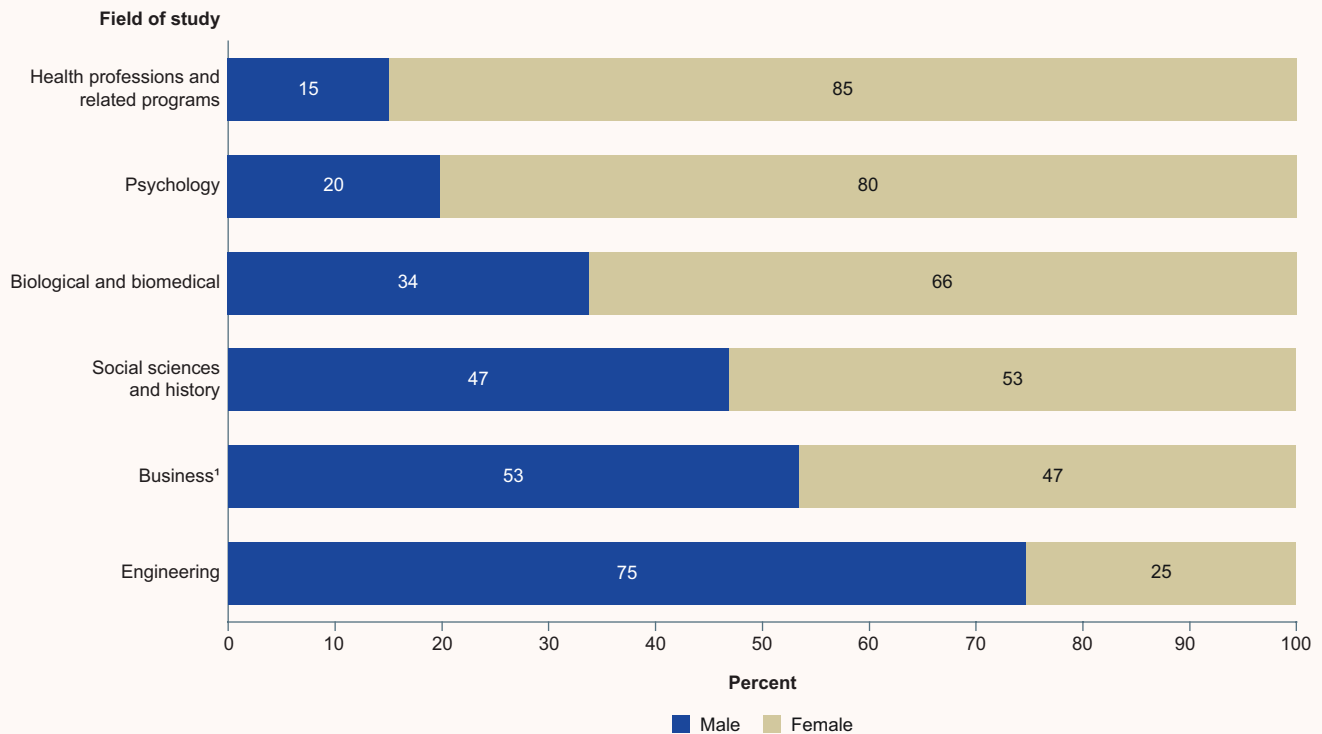
- 38 percent for Asian students;
- 23 percent for students of Two or more races;
- 20 percent for White students;
- 18 percent for Hispanic students;
- 15 percent each for Pacific Islander students and Black students; and
- 14 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students.

Among U.S. nonresident students, 36 percent of bachelor's degrees conferred in 2021-22 were in a STEM field.

Similar to associate's degrees, White students earned the majority of the bachelor's degrees in a STEM field. Specifically, of all bachelor's degrees conferred in a STEM⁹ field,

- 52 percent were conferred to White students;
- 15 percent were conferred to Asian students;
- 13 percent were conferred to Hispanic students;
- 7 percent were conferred to Black students;
- 4 percent were conferred to students of Two or more races; and
- less than one-half of 1 percent each were conferred to American Indian/Alaska Native students and Pacific Islander students.

Some 8 percent of bachelor's degrees in a STEM field were conferred to U.S. nonresident students in 2021-22.

Bachelor's Degrees by Sex**FIGURE 6.****Percentage distribution of bachelor's degrees conferred by degree-granting postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2021–22**

¹ "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 2021–22. Data are for postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and U.S. service academies. Data in this figure are based on the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions component, Fall 2022 (provisional data). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables 322.40 and 322.50.

As with associate's degrees, the majority of bachelor's degrees were conferred to females in 2021-22. Specifically, females earned 59 percent (1,179,700 degrees) and males earned 41 percent (835,300 degrees) of all bachelor's degrees conferred. Of the six fields in which the most bachelor's degrees were conferred, females earned the majority of degrees in these four:

- health professions and related programs (85 percent)
- psychology (80 percent)
- biological and biomedical sciences (66 percent)
- social sciences and history (53 percent)

Males earned the majority of degrees conferred in engineering (75 percent) and business (53 percent).

Endnotes:

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

² For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the [Reader's Guide](#).

³ Includes dental assisting; emergency medical technician; clinical/medical lab science; medical and other health assisting; nursing; and health sciences.

⁴ 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 culinary, entertainment, and personal services.

⁵ Includes engineering technologies and engineering-related fields; construction trades; and mechanic and repair technologies/technicians.

⁶ Includes criminal justice and corrections; fire control and safety; homeland security and related protective services; and security science and technology.

⁷ In the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), racial/ethnic data were not collected for U.S. nonresident students, and their data were compiled as a separate group.

⁸ 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 in the *Digest of Education Statistics* to facilitate trend comparisons but are not included as STEM fields in this indicator.

⁹ The percentage distribution of STEM degrees conferred by race/ethnicity presented here differs from the distribution in table 318.45 of the *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, which excludes U.S. nonresident students from the distribution.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables [318.45](#), [321.10](#), [321.30](#), [322.10](#), [322.30](#), [322.40](#), and [322.50](#); and *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, 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](#)