

# the condition of education 2008



## INDICATOR 39

# Undergraduate Fields of Study

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2008*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2008*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008031>) or contact ED PUBS at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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# Programs and Courses

## Undergraduate Fields of Study

In 2005–06, degrees in the field of business made up 21 percent of the bachelor’s degrees awarded. Over 318,000 bachelor’s degrees were awarded in business that year.

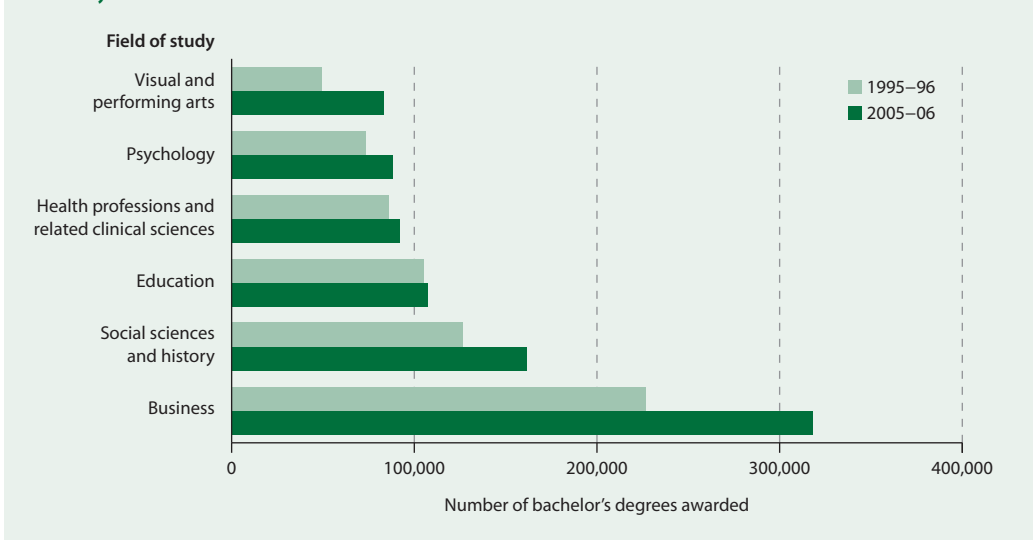
In each year shown (1990–91, 1995–96, and 2005–06), three broad areas of study—liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; health professions; and business—made up 65 to 69 percent of associate’s degrees awarded (see supplemental table 39-1). In 2005–06, nearly 245,000 degrees were awarded in the first area, and over 114,000 degrees were awarded in each of the other two areas. Other prevalent degrees at this level in 2005–06 included engineering (32,600 degrees) and computer and information sciences (31,200 degrees).

Overall, 158,000 more associate’s degrees were awarded in 2005–06 than in 1995–96 (a 28 percent increase). Increases in the number of associate’s degrees awarded in the three major areas of study above and in computer and information sciences contributed to 85 percent of this overall growth. The number of degrees awarded in computer and information sciences has increased by 150 percent since 1995–96. Fields including visual and performing arts had a smaller impact on the overall growth but had notable increases during this period (61 percent increase for a total of 21,800 degrees in 2005–06). Also, during this period, the number of associate’s degrees awarded in engineering decreased by 23 percent.

In each year shown, between 63 and 66 percent of bachelor’s degrees were awarded in seven fields: business; social sciences and history; education; health professions; psychology; visual and performing arts; and engineering (see supplemental table 39-2). In 2005–06, some 318,000 degrees were awarded in business, 161,000 were awarded in social sciences and history, 107,000 were awarded in health professions, and between 81,600 and 92,000 degrees were awarded in each of the other four fields.

Overall, 320,000 more bachelor’s degrees were awarded in 2005–06 than in 1995–96 (a 28 percent increase). Increases in the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded in business; social sciences and history; visual and performing arts; communication, journalism, and related programs; and computer and information sciences made up 66 percent of this overall growth. Fields including parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies had a smaller impact on the overall growth in bachelor’s degrees awarded but had notable increases during this period (96 percent increase for a total of 25,500 degrees in 2005–06).

**FIELDS OF STUDY: Number of bachelor’s degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 1995–96 and 2005–06**



NOTE: The six most common fields of study at the bachelor’s degree level in academic year 2005–06 are featured for academic years 1995–96 and 2005–06; the remaining fields of study are not shown. The contribution of growth is calculated as the increase in the number of degrees for a particular field divided by the increase in the total number of degrees. See supplemental note 10 for more information on fields of study. The new *Classification of Instructional Programs* was initiated in 2002–03. Estimates for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See supplemental note 9 for more information on the Classification of Postsecondary Education Institutions. See supplemental note 3 for more information on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007* (NCES 2008-022), tables 259 and 261, data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1995–96 and 2005–06 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Completions Survey” (IPEDS-C:96), and Fall 2006.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Supplemental Notes 3, 9, 10  
Supplemental Tables 39-1,  
39-2



Indicators 26, 27, 40

## Undergraduate Fields of Study

**Table 39-1. Number of associate's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: Academic years 1990–91, 1995–96, and 2005–06**

Field of study	1990–91		1995–96		2005–06		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1995–96	1995–96 to 2005–06	1990–91 to 2005–06
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>481,720</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>555,216</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>713,066</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>48.0</b>
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	142,722	29.6	174,970	31.5	244,689	34.3	22.6	39.8	71.4
Health professions and related clinical sciences	71,921	14.9	104,775	18.9	134,931	18.9	45.7	28.8	87.6
Business	98,018	20.3	98,665	17.8	114,095	16.0	0.7	15.6	16.4
Engineering and engineering technologies	46,638	9.7	42,605	7.7	32,623	4.6	-8.6	-23.4	-30.1
Computer and information sciences and support services	11,533	2.4	12,500	2.3	31,246	4.4	8.4	150.0	170.9
Security and protective services	13,564	2.8	19,196	3.5	26,425	3.7	41.5	37.7	94.8
Visual and performing arts	9,126	1.9	13,534	2.4	21,754	3.1	48.3	60.7	138.4
Multi/interdisciplinary studies	7,458	1.5	8,619	1.6	14,473	2.0	15.6	67.9	94.1
Education	7,928	1.6	9,809	1.8	14,475	2.0	23.7	47.6	82.6
Mechanics and repairers	7,613	1.6	12,519	2.3	14,454	2.0	64.4	15.5	89.9
Legal professions and studies	7,341	1.5	11,916	2.1	10,509	1.5	62.3	-11.8	43.2
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	7,764	1.6	7,651	1.4	9,488	1.3	-1.5	24.0	22.2
Agriculture and natural resources	4,910	1.0	6,182	1.1	6,168	0.9	25.9	-0.2	25.6
Social sciences and history	2,505	0.5	4,021	0.7	6,730	0.9	60.5	67.4	168.7
Communications and communications technologies	4,984	1.0	4,994	0.9	6,009	0.8	0.2	20.3	20.6
Public administration and social services	2,779	0.6	4,218	0.8	4,415	0.6	51.8	4.7	58.9
Physical sciences and science technologies	2,091	0.4	2,612	0.5	2,902	0.4	24.9	11.1	38.8
Precision production trades	1,632	0.3	1,727	0.3	1,977	0.3	5.8	14.5	21.1
Psychology	997	0.2	1,583	0.3	1,944	0.3	58.8	22.8	95.0
Biological and biomedical sciences	1,121	0.2	2,049	0.4	1,827	0.3	82.8	-10.8	63.0
Transportation and material moving workers	2,609	0.5	1,551	0.3	1,472	0.2	-40.6	-5.1	-43.6
Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics	555	0.1	1,612	0.3	1,161	0.2	190.5	-28.0	109.2

<sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.

NOTE: See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. The new *Classification of Instructional Programs* was initiated in 2002–03. Estimates for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See *supplemental note 9* for information on the *Classification of Postsecondary Education Institutions*. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007* (NCES 2008-022), table 259, data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1990–91, 1995–96, and 2005–06 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Completions Survey” (IPEDS-C:91 and 96), and Fall 2006.

## Undergraduate Fields of Study

**Table 39-2. Number of bachelor's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: Academic years 1990–91, 1995–96, and 2005–06**

Field of study	1990–91		1995–96		2005–06		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1995–96	1995–96 to 2005–06	1990–91 to 2005–06
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1,094,538</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,164,792</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,485,242</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>35.7</b>
Business	249,165	22.8	226,623	19.5	318,042	21.4	-9.0	40.3	27.6
Social sciences and history	125,107	11.4	126,479	10.9	161,485	10.9	1.1	27.7	29.1
Education	110,807	10.1	105,384	9.0	107,238	7.2	-4.9	1.8	-3.2
Health professions and related clinical sciences	59,875	5.5	86,087	7.4	91,973	6.2	43.8	6.8	53.6
Psychology	58,655	5.4	73,416	6.3	88,134	5.9	25.2	20.0	50.3
Visual and performing arts	42,186	3.9	49,296	4.2	83,297	5.6	16.9	69.0	97.5
Engineering and engineering technologies	79,751	7.3	78,086	6.7	81,610	5.5	-2.1	4.5	2.3
Communication, journalism, and related programs	51,650	4.7	47,320	4.1	73,955	5.0	-8.4	56.3	43.2
Biological and biomedical sciences	39,377	3.6	60,750	5.2	69,178	4.7	54.3	13.9	75.7
English language and literature/letters	51,064	4.7	49,928	4.3	55,096	3.7	-2.2	10.4	7.9
Computer and information sciences and support services	25,159	2.3	24,506	2.1	47,480	3.2	-2.6	93.7	88.7
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	30,526	2.8	33,997	2.9	44,898	3.0	11.4	32.1	47.1
Security and protective services	16,806	1.5	24,810	2.1	35,319	2.4	47.6	42.4	110.2
Multi/interdisciplinary studies	17,879	1.6	27,149	2.3	32,012	2.2	51.8	17.9	79.0
Parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies	4,315	0.4	12,974	1.1	25,490	1.7	200.7	96.5	490.7
Agriculture and natural resources	13,124	1.2	21,425	1.8	23,053	1.6	63.3	7.6	75.7
Public administration and social services	14,350	1.3	19,849	1.7	21,986	1.5	38.3	10.8	53.2
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	13,920	1.3	14,353	1.2	20,775	1.4	3.1	44.7	49.2
Physical sciences and science technologies	16,334	1.5	19,627	1.7	20,318	1.4	20.2	3.5	24.4
Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics	13,937	1.3	14,832	1.3	19,410	1.3	6.4	30.9	39.3
Mathematics and statistics	14,393	1.3	12,713	1.1	14,770	1.0	-11.7	16.2	2.6
Philosophy and religious studies	7,423	0.7	7,541	0.6	11,985	0.8	1.6	58.9	61.5

<sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.

NOTE: See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. The new *Classification of Instructional Programs* was initiated in 2002–03. Estimates for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See *supplemental note 9* for information on the Classification of Postsecondary Education Institutions. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

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