

# the condition of education 2007



## INDICATOR 43

# International Comparisons of Degrees by Field

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2007*. 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 2007*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007064>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

**Suggested Citation:**

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Condition of Education 2007* (NCES 2007-064). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



# Programs and Courses

## International Comparisons of Degrees by Field

*Compared with students in other OECD countries, U.S. students are more likely to complete degrees in arts and humanities and in business, social sciences, law, and "other" fields, and less likely to complete degrees in engineering and health.*

Internationally comparable data on degrees conferred at the postsecondary level have been collected through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This indicator presents data on academic postsecondary programs (ISCED levels 5A and 6) in 2004 corresponding to bachelor's, master's, first-professional, and doctoral degrees in the United States.

For many fields, the differences between the proportions of graduates earning postsecondary degrees in the United States and other OECD countries in 2004 were relatively small. In education, physical and biological sciences, computer science, and mathematics, the United States was within 1 percentage point of the OECD average. In contrast, the United States was 7.7 percentage points higher than the international average in business, social sciences, and other fields combined<sup>1</sup> (47.7 vs. 40.0 percent), and 3.8 percentage points higher in arts and humanities combined. The U.S. proportion of degrees in business, social sciences, and other fields combined<sup>1</sup> (47.7) was higher than

in any other reporting OECD country, except for Hungary (49.3) and Poland (66.8). Fields in which the U.S. proportion of graduates earning degrees was somewhat lower than the OECD average included health (4.1 percentage points) and engineering (5.8 percentage points).

While the total number of engineering degrees conferred in the United States was relatively high compared with other OECD countries, the proportion of graduates earning degrees in engineering in the United States was relatively low. The proportion of U.S. graduates earning their degrees in engineering (6.4 percent) in 2004 was lower than the other five Group of Eight (G-8) countries reporting data, including Canada (7.8 percent), France (12.4 percent), Italy (15.5 percent), Germany (16.5 percent), and Japan (20.2 percent). Compared more generally with the other 27 OECD countries reporting data, Hungary (6.3 percent), Iceland (5.6 percent), Greece (5.2 percent), and New Zealand (4.9 percent) had proportions lower than the United States, while the remaining 23 countries had higher proportions of graduates earning degrees in engineering.

<sup>1</sup> Includes journalism, agriculture, and services.

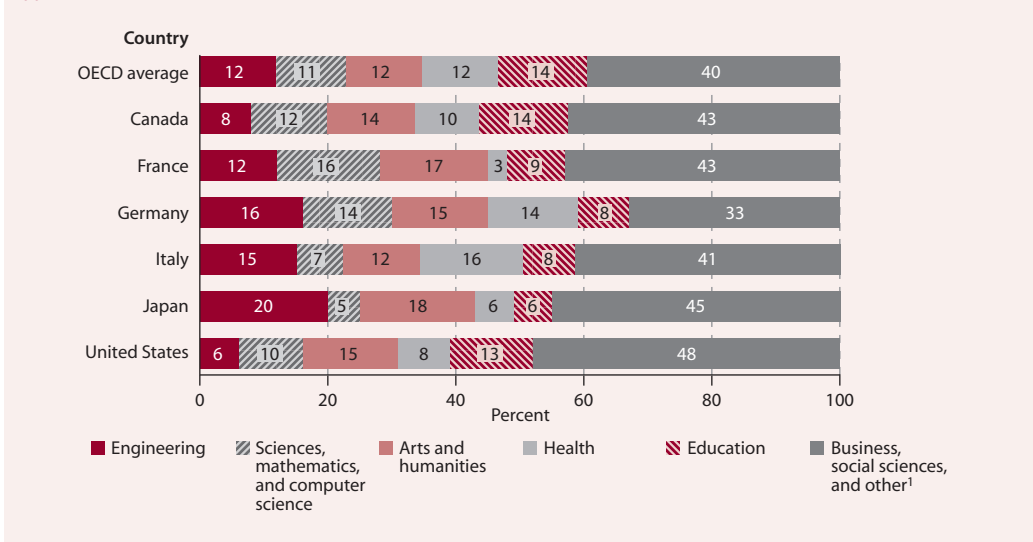
NOTE: Includes academic degrees conferred at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), levels 5A and 6. These levels correspond to bachelor's, master's, first-professional, and doctoral degrees in the United States. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. The G-8 countries, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, are among the world's most economically developed countries. Data for the United Kingdom and Russian Federation were not available. OECD average is computed on the basis that each country contributes equally, without respect to size of the country. See *supplemental note 6* for more information on the ISCED.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Center for Educational Research and Innovation. Retrieved December 23, 2006, from <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/default.aspx>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Supplemental Note 6  
Supplemental Table 43-1



**DEGREES AWARDED: Percentage distribution of degrees conferred by field of study among reporting G-8 countries: 2004**



## International Comparisons of Degrees by Fields

**Table 43-1. Number of academic postsecondary degrees conferred, and percentage distribution of degrees conferred by field of study and country: 2004**

Country	Total number of degrees conferred	Education	Arts and humanities	Health	Sciences, mathematics, computer science, and engineering					Business, social sciences, law, and other <sup>1</sup>
					Total	Physical and biological sciences	Mathematics	Computer science	Engineering	
OECD country mean <sup>2</sup>	6,230,006	13.5	11.7	11.7	23.1	5.7	1.3	4.1	12.2	40.0
OECD weighted mean <sup>3</sup>	6,230,006	12.0	13.4	8.6	21.1	5.2	1.0	3.4	11.5	44.9
Australia	209,115	11.7	11.1	13.2	21.8	5.4	0.5	8.9	7.0	42.2
Austria	23,071	9.8	10.6	8.5	26.8	5.7	0.7	4.9	15.6	44.3
Belgium	38,304	7.8	14.1	12.9	23.0	7.9	1.0	2.7	11.5	42.1
Canada	177,433	13.9	13.9	9.6	19.4	6.8	1.2	3.6	7.8	43.2
Czech Republic	46,097	23.7	8.4	6.3	24.5	4.3	0.8	2.8	16.6	37.1
Denmark	39,236	9.7	15.4	28.6	18.3	3.9	1.7	3.2	9.6	27.9
Finland	38,819	7.4	12.5	19.2	29.9	3.8	0.8	4.4	20.8	30.9
France	412,346	9.3	16.9	2.7	28.6	10.6	2.5	3.0	12.4	42.6
Germany	219,746	7.6	14.6	14.2	30.8	7.7	1.7	4.9	16.5	32.9
Greece	35,779	17.7	17.1	1.7	27.6	13.6	4.4	4.4	5.2	35.8
Hungary	72,652	23.9	9.9	7.3	9.5	1.3	0.1	1.9	6.3	49.3
Iceland	2,600	24.5	11.2	10.7	16.9	5.0	0.6	5.8	5.6	36.7
Ireland	37,069	9.2	13.9	12.4	23.4	6.7	0.9	7.0	8.7	41.1
Italy	321,284	8.5	12.2	15.5	22.9	4.8	1.5	1.2	15.5	40.9
Japan	646,983	5.6	17.8	6.3	25.0	4.8	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	20.2	45.3
Korea	303,559	5.3	20.5	8.2	38.6	6.4	1.8	3.3	27.1	27.4
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mexico	324,013	16.1	3.7	8.5	25.4	2.7	0.5	7.7	14.6	46.3
Netherlands	96,890	17.4	6.9	18.9	16.1	3.1	0.4	3.7	9.0	40.7
New Zealand	38,730	12.5	15.9	14.1	18.6	6.6	1.1	6.0	4.9	39.0
Norway	30,476	19.1	6.5	25.9	16.2	1.9	0.3	5.7	8.3	32.3
Poland	479,458	12.3	6.4	2.3	12.1	1.8	0.6	2.7	7.1	66.8
Portugal	4,649	12.2	12.3	5.5	34.7	12.9	4.8	4.5	12.5	35.3
Slovak Republic	32,537	16.8	5.4	10.3	26.0	5.4	0.7	4.0	15.9	41.4
Spain	210,603	13.6	9.9	13.0	24.9	5.1	1.0	3.9	14.9	38.6
Sweden	54,504	16.7	5.4	25.8	28.6	4.5	0.7	3.2	20.3	23.5
Switzerland	28,549	8.3	12.5	10.0	25.1	7.9	0.9	3.4	13.0	44.1
Turkey	215,603	25.1	7.1	7.4	17.3	5.1	2.0	1.0	9.3	43.1
United Kingdom	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>United States</b>	<b>2,089,901</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>47.7</b>

— Not available.

<sup>1</sup> Includes journalism, agriculture, and services.

<sup>2</sup> Each country contributes equally to the OECD mean.

<sup>3</sup> Each country contributes to the OECD mean in proportion to the number of degrees awarded by that country.

<sup>4</sup> Included under science.

NOTE: Includes academic degrees conferred at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), levels 5A and 6. Data include all degrees awarded by institutions located in the country, even when the degree awards were made to foreign students. These levels correspond to bachelor's, master's, first-professional, and doctoral degrees in the United States. See *supplemental note 6* for more information about the International Standard Classification of Education. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Center for Educational Research and Innovation. Retrieved December 23, 2006, from <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/default.aspx>.