Graduate Enrollment and Degrees 2025

Findings from the 2024 Survey and Insights on the Evolving Graduate Education Landscape

The annual CGS/ETS Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees is jointly sponsored by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). For more information about the survey or survey reports, please contact:

Council of Graduate Schools
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 230
Washington, DC 20036-1146
www.cgsnet.org
Email: research@cgs.nche.edu

Educational Testing Service
660 Rosedale Road
Princeton, NJ 08541-6000
www.ets.org/gre
Email: CGSEnrollmentSurvey@ETS.org

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This report would not have been possible without the graduate deans, institutional researchers, and staff at the colleges and universities who completed the CGS/ETS Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees in 2024 and CGS Flash Surveys throughout 2025. CGS would like to express its appreciation to ETS for ensuring the quality and continuity of these important data and gratefully acknowledges the contributions of CGS staff, whose expertise, insights, and dedication were essential to the collection, analysis, and reporting of the data.

Quick Takes

Below are key results from the CGS/ETS 2024 Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees.

Larger Institutions More Resilient Against Changing Tides

Although small and medium institutions experienced a decrease in either average applications, first-time enrollment, or total enrollment, large institutions experienced mostly positive and notable growth in all three metrics. Large institutions received on average 555 more applications, 149 more first-time enrollees, and 374 more enrolled students in 2024 than 2023. Large institutions' greater financial resources and institutional capacity likely contribute to this growth, but as the higher education landscape continues to change shape, this resiliency may be challenged further and warrants ongoing monitoring and attention in the coming years.

Small and Medium Institutions Face Challenges Across Key Metrics

While average graduate first-time and total enrollment increased between 2023 and 2024 at large institutions, average first-time and total enrollment at small institutions decreased: on average, small institutions saw a drop of six new enrollees compared to last year and a drop of 28 total enrolled students compared to 2019. Smaller institutions have continued to struggle to reach pre-pandemic levels. Further analysis also shows that this drop is likely due to U.S. citizens and permanent residents' enrollment, whose average total enrollment dropped by 23 from 2023 to 2024. Meanwhile, medium institutions on average saw 110 fewer master's-level applicants in 2024 than in 2023. They also saw on average ten fewer first-time enrollees, a smaller drop than applications, but 34 fewer international first-time enrollees than last year.

First-Time and Total Enrollment for International Students Down from Previous Year

The average first-time enrollment of international graduate students decreased across institution sizes from 2023 to 2024; small institutions on average went down by three enrollees, medium institutions by 34, and large institutions by 72. Although the average first-time international graduate enrollment in 2024 was down from the previous year, this figure was still larger than the average enrollment in 2019 across all institution sizes. The average first-time international graduate enrollment decreases was likely influenced by the decreased first-time enrollment in Mathematics and Computer Sciences. For total enrollment, international graduate students declined, on average, by 24 students at medium institutions and by 76 at large institutions, yet remained flat at small institutions.

Large Gains for Health Sciences First-Time Enrollment

Health Sciences saw the largest average first-time enrollment across institution sizes from 2023 to 2024; 53 for small institutions, 121 for medium institutions, and 289 for large institutions. This may indicate that graduate schools are actively helping to meet the demand for healthcare professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that healthcare and social assistance will account for the largest job growth in the U.S. economy over the next decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025). This is likely in response to a growing aging population and the rising prevalence of chronic conditions, as well as an increased number of individuals seeking social services such as family and substance abuse counseling. These factors have heightened the demand for healthcare workers, creating incentives for individuals to pursue a master's degree, in particular, to upskill or reskill.

Increases in Education First-Time Enrollment Across Institution Sizes

Average first-time enrollment in Education increased across all institution sizes between Fall 2023 and Fall 2024. Education saw the greatest gains in first-time enrollment at large institutions. The average cohort size at large institutions increased from 32 to 57. Medium-sized and small institutions saw modest increases in average first-time enrollment with average cohort sizes growing from 22 to 33 at medium institutions and 15 to 19 at small institutions. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects annual openings for about 21,900 instructional coordinators and 13,500 librarians and library media specialists—occupations that typically require a master's degree—over the next ten years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). It remains to be seen whether this increase in first-time enrollment in Education for 2024 is a one-time event or is a sign of shifts in the education workforce toward specialized occupations requiring a graduate degree.

Fewer Degrees Conferred for Both Doctoral and Master's Level

This year saw a marked decrease in doctoral and master's level degrees conferred by institutions of all sizes and types. Notably, medium-sized institutions saw a drop of 121 master's degrees on average for private institutions and a drop of 89 master's degrees on average for public institutions. Meanwhile, large private and public institutions experienced a drop of 419 and 382 respectively in master's degrees conferred from 2023 to 2024. This finding reflects how individuals may extend or abandon their studies, or shift to part-time enrollment, to balance academic demands with financial and economic pressures. It warrants further analysis of the 2025 survey data, as continued economic uncertainty may accelerate a decline in degrees conferred.

Contents

Introduction

Graduate education equips individuals with advanced expertise, research skills, and problem-solving capacity that strengthen society and the workforce. Master's and doctoral graduates contribute to innovation, deliver critical professional services, and generate new knowledge that informs policy and practice. By preparing leaders, advancing discovery, and addressing complex challenges, graduate education drives economic growth, enhances community well-being, and ensures a more resilient and competitive future. The Council of Graduate Schools hopes that the findings in this report will assist leaders and policymakers in improving and advancing graduate education.

The CGS/ETS Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees is jointly sponsored by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Global Higher Education. The annual survey is designed to provide information about applications for admission to graduate school, graduate student enrollment, and graduate degrees and certificates conferred. It is the only national survey that collects data on first-time and total graduate enrollment across all fields of master's and research doctorate programs in the United States. It is also the only source of data on first-time and total graduate enrollment by degree level (master's/certificates versus research doctorate) and the only national survey that collects data on applications to graduate school by broad field of study.

The CGS/ETS 2024 Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees was launched in November 2024 and sent to U.S.-based institutions that were members of the Council of Graduate Schools or one of the four regional graduate school associations—the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS), the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS), the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools (NAGS), and the Western Association of Graduate Schools (WAGS). The 2024 survey was sent to a total of 760 colleges and universities. Useable responses were received from 536 institutions, for an overall response rate of 71%. Data from the 2024 survey primarily reflect the graduate education landscape in Fall 2024, as reported by participating institutions, and may also reflect the broader political, economic, and social conditions influencing graduate education before and during that time.

The report begins with "Quick Takes" summarizing key survey results, followed by a brief overview of what is new or different in this year's report. The main body of the report is organized into four sections: **Graduate Applications Received and Accepted, First-Time Graduate Enrollment, Total Graduate Enrollment**, and **Graduate Certificates and Degrees Conferred**. Each section presents significant findings from the 2024 survey along with any notable one- and five-year (Fall 2023 vs. Fall 2024 and Fall 2019 vs. Fall 2024) comparisons for selected metrics. A supplementary appendix—available separately on the CGS website—includes complete data tables (Appendices B and C), definitions (Appendix A), the taxonomy of fields of study (Appendix D), and the survey instrument (Appendix E). Full data for all reported metrics are provided in these appendices and referenced throughout the report.

What's New in the 2025 Report?

Participating Institutions

This year's report provides high-level information about the institutions that participated in the 2024 survey to provide additional context for the survey findings. Table 1 shows the Top 10 reporting states based on the number of institutions that completed the survey. Table 2 shows the regional split of reporting institutions based on IPEDS' regional grouping structure.

Table 1. Top 10 Reporting States by Institution Count

State	Institutions Reporting
New York	42
California	41
Texas	41
Massachusetts	27
Illinois	25
Pennsylvania	25
North Carolina	19
Ohio	19
Michigan	17
Georgia	16

Table 2. Regional Split of Reporting Institutions

Region	Institutions Reporting
Midwest	117
Northeast	121
South	189
West	76

Although the 536 institutions that answered the survey vary widely in size, degrees and programs offered, and funding, the figures below represent the average per responding institution for 2024.[1]

6,015 graduate applications received

2,412 offers of admission

1,003 first-time graduate enrollees

3,258 total enrolled graduate students

532 master's degrees conferred

80 doctoral degrees conferred

1 The averages were calculated based on the number of reporting institutions that reported a value of 0 or greater.

Comparing Across Years

This year's report provides notable one- and five-year comparisons for select metrics, based on institutional averages rather than totals. Because the institutions responding differ each year, observed differences may reflect both changes in the composition of reporting institutions and actual shifts in the underlying data. Year-to-year and multi-year results are therefore descriptive, intended to illustrate general patterns rather than direct longitudinal trends. For comparisons, averages are grouped by institution size, determined by total enrollment figures reported by institutions in the respective year. In some cases, survey respondents were unable to provide data for one or more categories or variables but were able to provide data for categories representing totals. As a result, averages for total categories may be much greater than those reported for constituent categories or variables.

Institution Size Categories and Total Graduate Enrollment

Institution Size	Total Enrollment
Small	0–1,050 total enrolled graduate students
Medium	1,051–3,050 total enrolled graduate students
Large	3,051 or more total enrolled graduate students

Finally, in order to be able to include two years of comparable data and have increased uptake in implementation of the new Carnegie Classification system, this report does not include 2024 survey results by Carnegie Classification.

Graduate Applications—Received and Accepted

Snapshot of Graduate Applications Received and Accepted in 2024

In 2024, there were 899,141 applications for doctoral programs and 1,961,548 applications for master's/other programs. See Supplementary Appendix A for the definition of "other" programs. In 2024, for doctoral programs, the fields with the most applications were Biological and Agricultural Sciences (125,185), Social and Behavioral Sciences (123,853), and Engineering (116,249) among the 11 broad fields of study. The fields with the most applications for master's/other programs were Mathematics and Computer Science (330,894), Business (276,825), and Engineering (206,419); see Appendix Table B.1. Of the 2024 total applications for doctoral programs, 168,015 were accepted (19%) while 1,016,113 applications for master's/other programs were accepted (52%); see Appendix Table B.1.

Tables 3 and 4 show the highest and lowest application acceptance rates in 2024 by degree level and field.

Table 3. Acceptance Rates by Doctoral Degree and Field, 2024

Doctoral Degree	
Highest Acceptance Rates	**Percent**
Education	45%
Health Sciences	38%
Public Administration and Services	24%
Engineering	21%
Lowest Acceptance Rates	**Percent**
Social and Behavioral Sciences	12%
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	14%
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	15%
Business	15%

Table 4. Acceptance Rates by Master's/Other Degree and Field, 2024

Master's/Other Degree	
Highest Acceptance Rates	**Percent**
Education	70%
Public Administration and Services	69%
Business	56%
Other Fields	56%
Lowest Acceptance Rates	**Percent**
Physical and Earth Sciences	38%
Arts and Humanities	38%
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	45%
Health Sciences	46%

In 2024, public institutions had a higher overall application acceptance rate (42%) than private institutions (36%). Considering master's and doctoral degrees combined, the highest acceptance rates for public institutions were in the fields of Public Administration and Services (68%), Education (67%), and Business (60%). Private institutions' acceptance rates were highest for Public Administration and Services (59%), Education (59%), and Business (46%); see Appendix Table B.2. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate 2024 acceptance rates by institution type, field, and degree.

Figure 1. Acceptance Rates by Field and Degree for Public Institutions, 2024

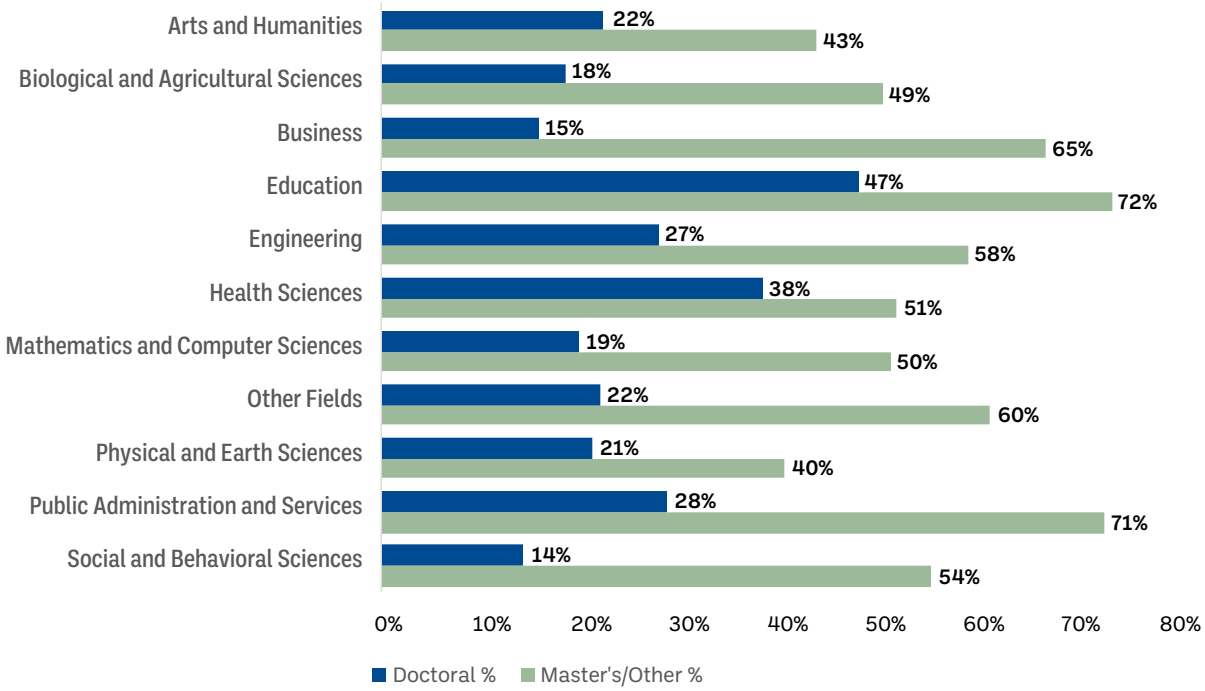
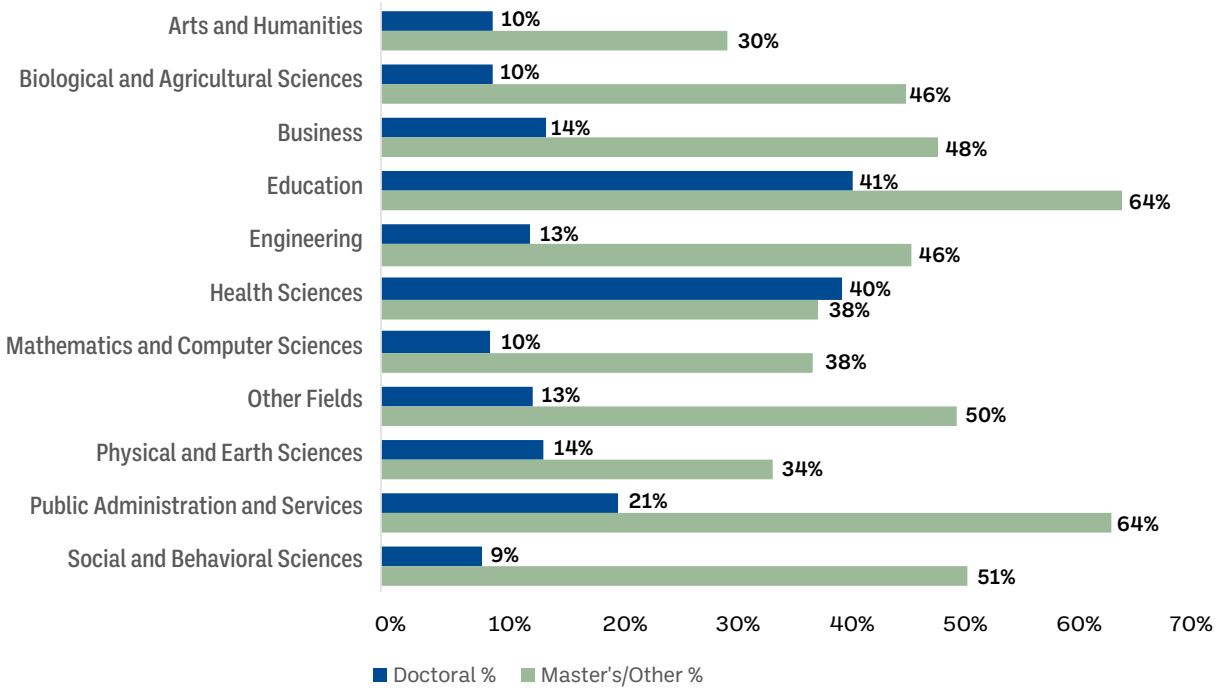


Figure 2. Acceptance Rates by Field and Degree for Private Institutions, 2024



Medium-Sized Institutions Experienced a Decline in Application Volume

In 2024, small institutions averaged 616 graduate applications per institution, showing little change from 2023 (average of 619) but an increase from an average of 510 in 2019. Medium institutions averaged 2,695, down from an average of 2,807 in 2023 and up from an average of 1,902 applications in 2019. Large institutions saw the highest average application volume, with 12,776 in 2024, rising from an average of 12,221 applications in 2023 and an average of 9,645 in 2019; see Appendix Table C.1.

Select fields of study continued to grow in 2024, with Business and Engineering experiencing an increase in average applications across all institution sizes. Public Administration and Services and Social and Behavioral Sciences also experienced modest gains across all institutions. The average number of applications in Mathematics and Computer Sciences, however, dropped rather sharply across institution sizes, likely due to a lower international student application base. Generally, larger institutions experienced a substantial increase in application volume from 2023 to 2024, while medium-sized institutions experienced a substantial decrease in average application volume.

Table 5. Change in Average Applications by Institution Size and Field of Study, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	-6	5	27
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	34	1	75
Business	29	60	234
Education	8	24	56
Engineering	10	36	250
Health Sciences	-13	-1	-11
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-13	-83	-95
Other Fields	21	15	23
Physical and Earth Sciences	8	24	116
Public Administration and Services	15	24	108
Social and Behavioral Sciences	7	17	107
All Fields	**-3**	**-112**	**555**

Doctoral Applications Rise Across Institution Sizes, Master's Applications Decline Most at Medium-Sized Institutions

Table 6 shows that from 2023 to 2024 average doctoral applications increased across all institution sizes for all fields of study: small (18), medium (14), and large (385). Major growth was seen in Engineering, Physical/Earth Sciences, Social/Behavioral Sciences, and Mathematics/Computer Sciences at large institutions. Health Sciences was the only field with notable declines in average doctoral applications across all institution sizes; see Appendix Table C.2.

Table 6. Change in Average Applications by Field of Study for Doctoral Level, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	0	0	5
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	21	-5	19
Business	0	-3	24
Education	1	4	13
Engineering	4	16	91
Health Sciences	-12	-16	-29
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-1	2	61
Other Fields	11	7	12
Physical and Earth Sciences	8	19	95
Public Administration and Services	-1	2	10
Social and Behavioral Sciences	7	6	51
All Fields	**18**	**14**	**385**

Table 7 below shows that from 2023 to 2024, average master's/other applications did not increase like average doctoral applications. Average applications decreased by 20 applications for small institutions and by 110 for medium institutions while they increased by 143 for large institutions. Business, Engineering, Education, and Public Administration and Services all saw higher application averages, especially at large institutions. The biggest decreases were in Mathematics/Computer Sciences and Arts and Humanities, although the latter had marginal gains at medium-sized institutions and a moderate gain for large institutions.

Table 7. Change in Average Applications by Field of Study for Masters and Other Level, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	-7	4	21
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	11	6	53
Business	29	61	210
Education	8	22	43
Engineering	6	21	159
Health Sciences	-1	19	21
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-12	-86	-159
Other Fields	9	9	10
Physical and Earth Sciences	0	6	13
Public Administration and Services	16	22	98
Social and Behavioral Sciences	0	11	54
All Fields	**-20**	**-110**	**143**

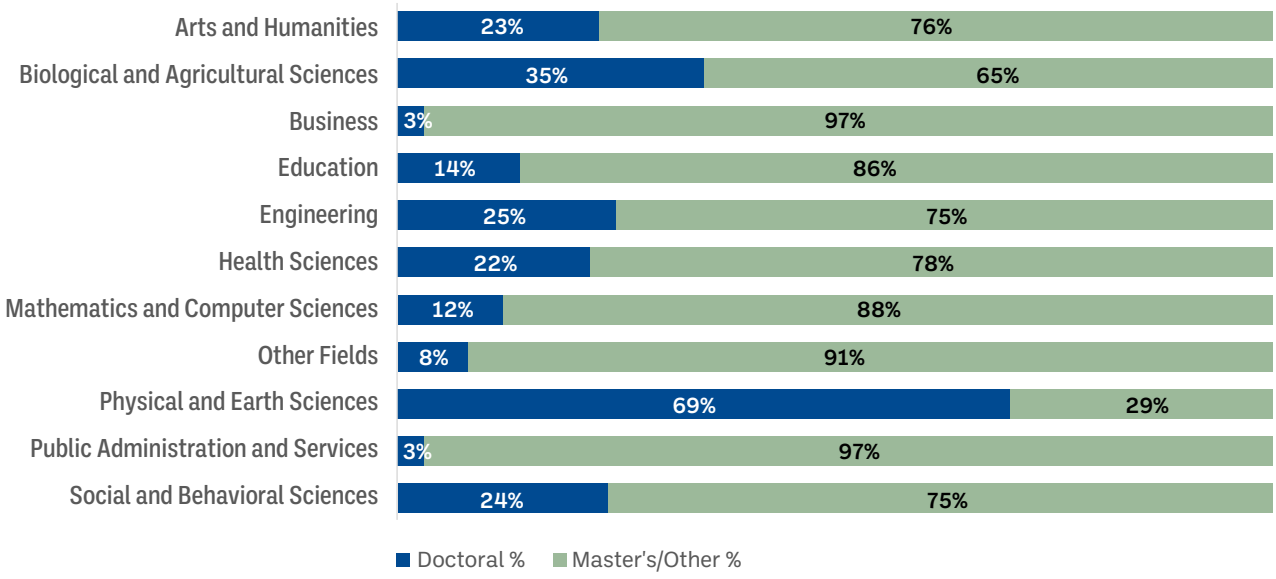
First-Time Graduate Enrollment

Snapshot of First-Time Graduate Enrollment in 2024

First-time graduate enrollment remained strong in 2024, with 537,850 total students enrolled for the first time. Of these, 83% were enrolled into master's/other programs while 17% were enrolled in doctoral programs. For master's/other programs, first-time enrollment was highest in Business (71,796), Health Sciences (50,520), and Education (46,864). For doctoral programs, first-time enrollment was highest in Health Sciences (13,957), Engineering (11,551), and Biological and Agricultural Sciences (10,142).

The largest percentage split in favor of master's degrees were Business (97%), Public Administration and Services (97%), and Other Fields (91%). For doctoral degrees, Physical and Earth Sciences had the largest share of first-time doctoral students enrolled (69%), followed by Biological and Agricultural Sciences (35%) and Engineering (25%); see Appendix Table B.3 and Figure 3.

Figure 3. First-Time Enrollment by Field and Degree Type, 2024



In 2024, men made up 44% of first-time enrollment in doctoral programs and 41% in master's/other programs. Men enrolled primarily in Mathematics and Computer Sciences (71%), Engineering (68%), and Physical and Earth Sciences (58%) at the doctoral level and Engineering (71%), Mathematics and Computer Sciences (67%), and Business (54%) at the master's/other level. Women were primarily enrolled in Health Sciences (74%), Public Administration and Services (72%), and Education (70%) at the doctoral level and the exact same programs at the master's/other level, but at the following rates, respectively: 81%, 78%, and 77%; see Appendix Table B.4 and Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. First-Time Enrollment by Degree, Gender, and Field for Doctoral Level, 2024

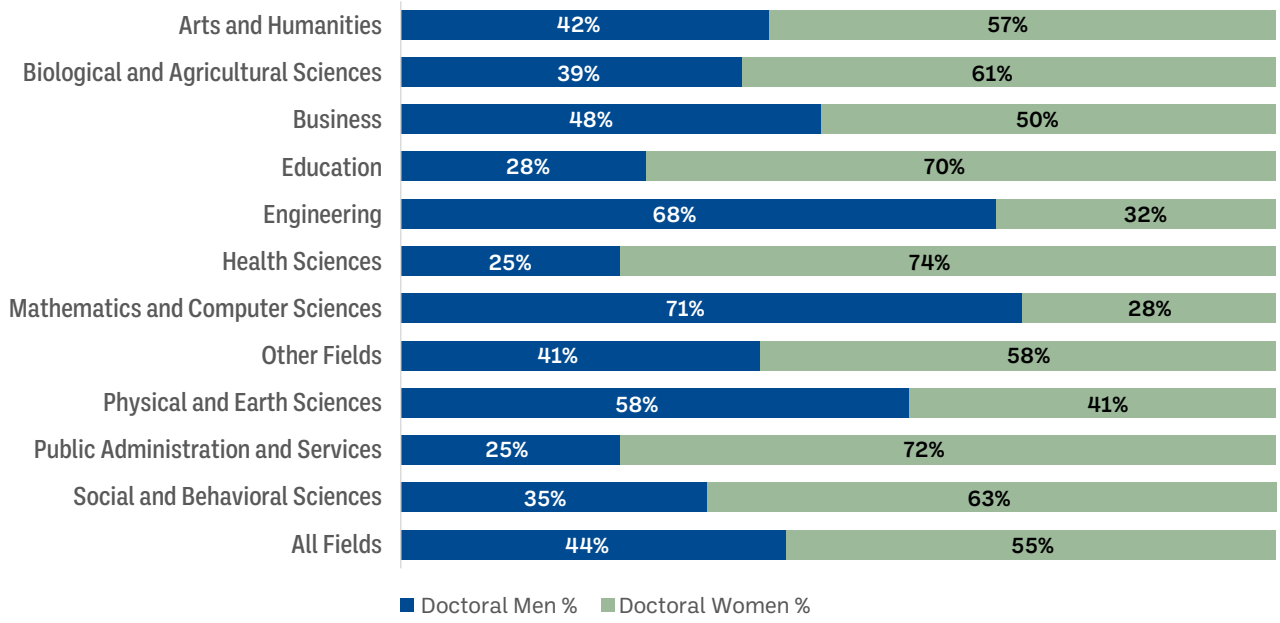
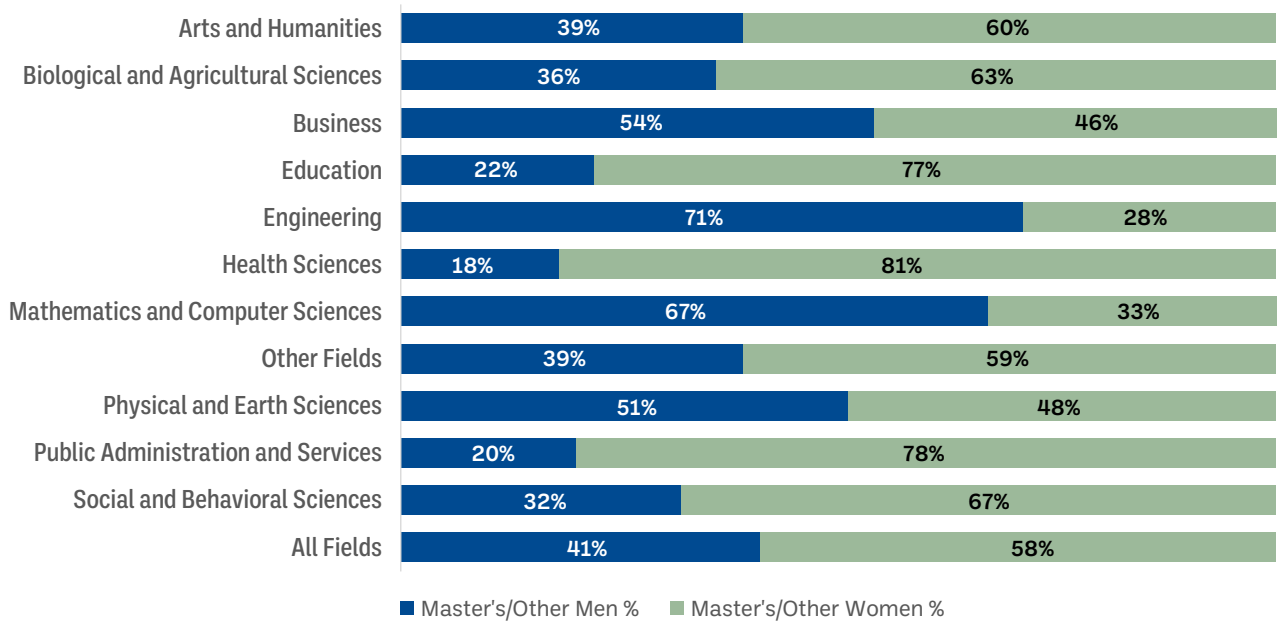


Figure 5. First-Time Enrollment by Degree, Gender, and Field for Master's/Other Levels, 2024



Students who identified as American Indian/ Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander continued to enroll in small numbers, with a total of 1,871 and 586 new students respectively across all fields and degree types in the 2024 survey; see Appendix Table B.10. Students who identified as Hispanic or Latino across all degree levels made up about 15% of all first-time enrollees across all fields. For select fields, the percentage of enrolled first-time graduate students who identified as Hispanic or Latino was greater than 15%: Public Administration and Services (19%), Social and Behavioral Sciences (18%), and

Education (17%). Approximately 12% of first-time enrollees across degree levels and fields of study identified as Black or African American with enrollment varying from 4% in Physical and Earth Sciences to 17% in Public Administration and Services. First-time enrollment of students who identified as Asian ranged from 4% for Education and Public Administration and Services to 28% for Mathematics and Computer Sciences. Students who identified as White accounted for the largest proportion of new enrollees. Mathematics and Computer Sciences is the only field where students who identified as White accounted for fewer than half of all new students (40%); see Figure 6.

Figure 6. First-Time Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity and Broad Field for Domestic Students Only, 2024

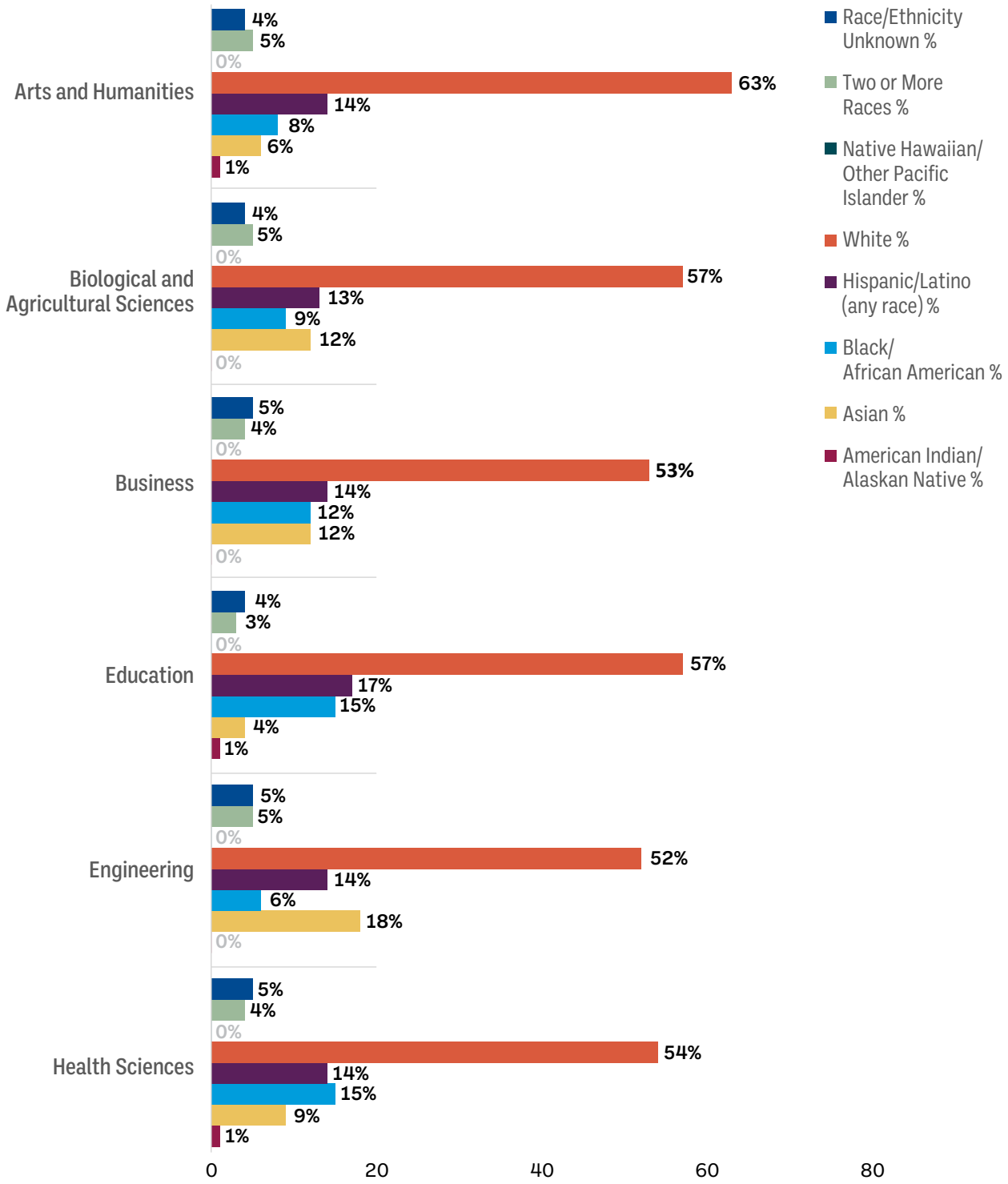
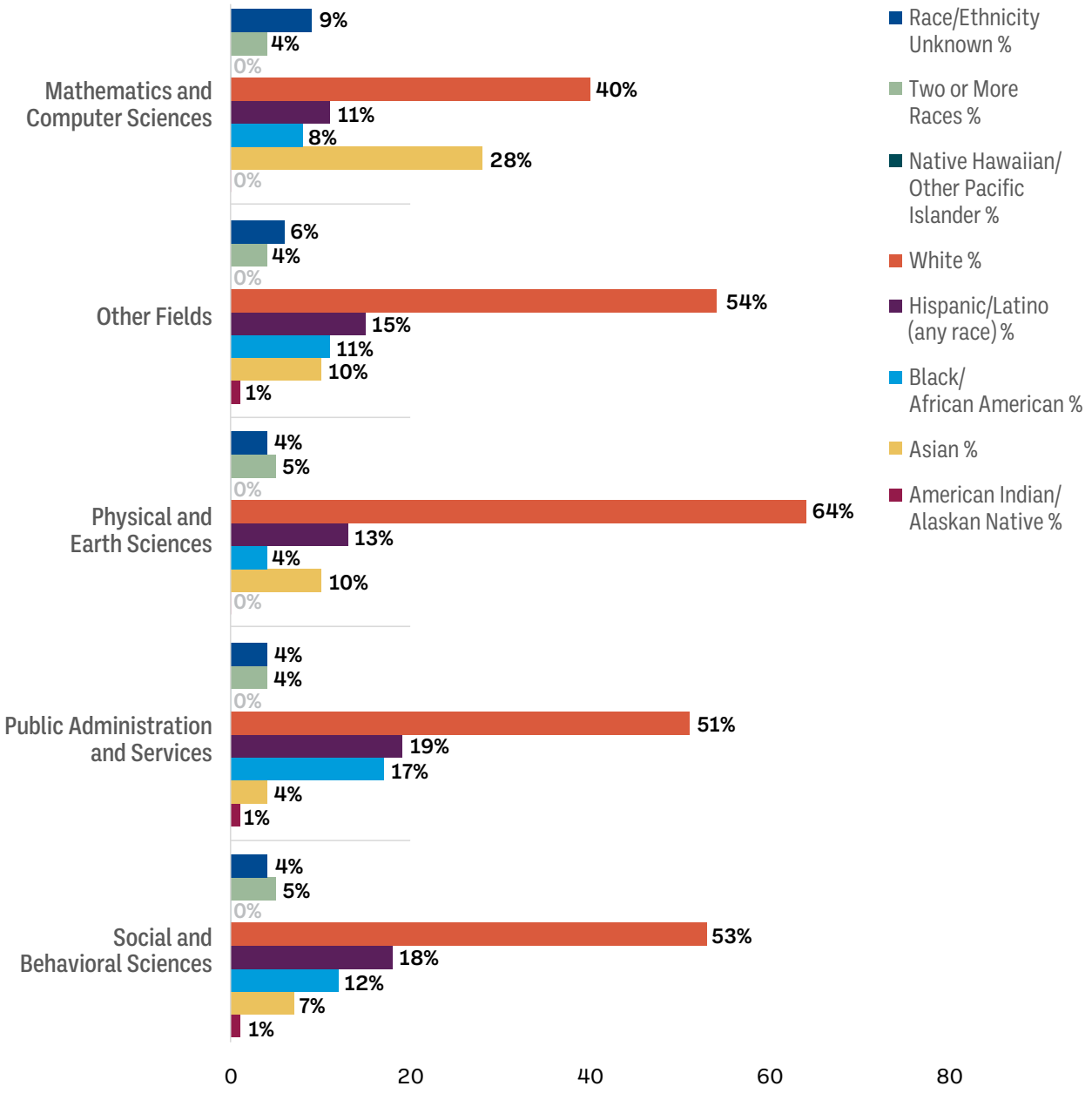


Figure 6. First-Time Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity and Broad Field for Domestic Students Only, 2024, continued



Despite Growth in Select Fields, First-time Enrollment at Small and Medium Institutions Either Flat or Down in 2024

Overall, in 2024, small institutions averaged 178 first-time enrollees, slightly down from 184 in 2023 and matching the 2019 average. Medium institutions averaged 589 first-time enrollees in 2024, slightly below the 2023 average of 599 but above the 2019 figure of 563. Large institutions saw the highest average first-time enrollment, with 2,195 enrollees in 2024, up from 2,063 in 2023 and 1,867 in 2019; see Appendix Table C.3.

Business was the most successful field in terms of first-time enrollment, increasing on average by five at small institutions, by 13 at medium institutions, and by 58 at large institutions. Health sciences saw similar success at medium and large institutions, increasing first-time enrollment on average by seven and 32 respectively. Math and Computer Sciences, meanwhile, is the only field to experience decreases in first-time enrollment across all three institution sizes.

Figure 7. Average First Time Enrollment by Institution Size and Field, 2023-2024

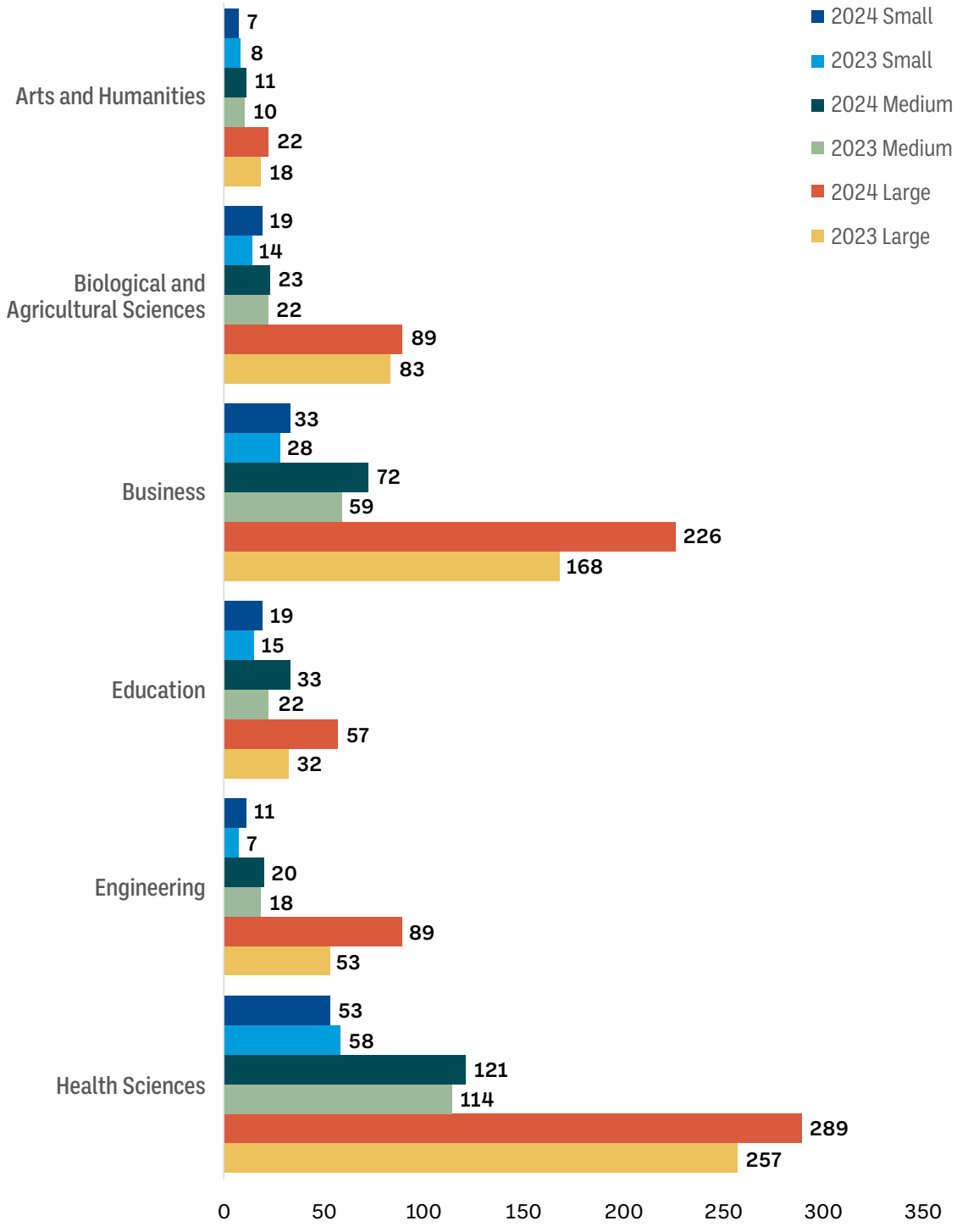
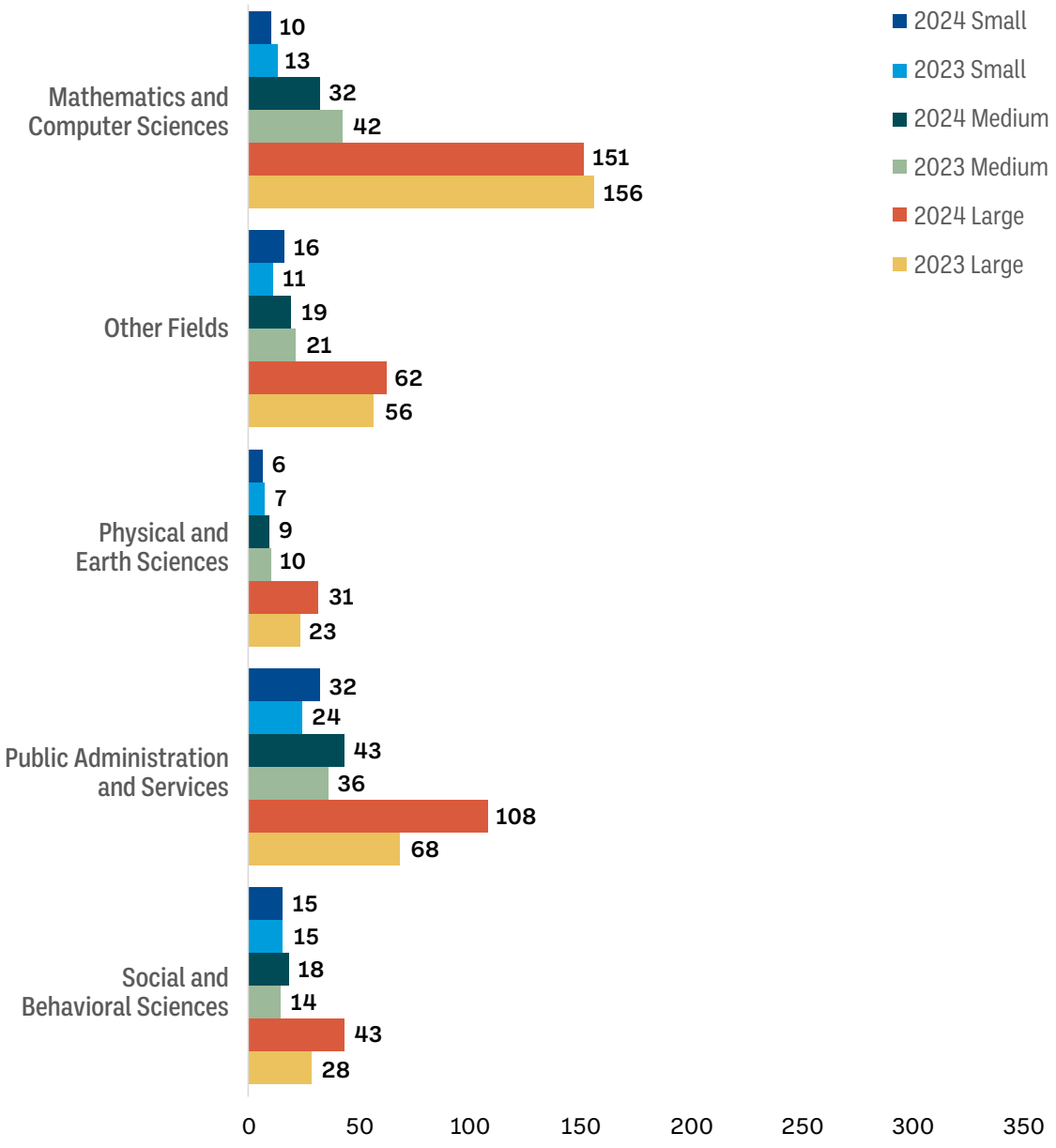


Figure 7. Average First Time Enrollment by Institution Size and Field, 2023-2024, continued



First-Time International Students Decline

In 2024, small institutions averaged 14 first-time enrollees with international student status, down from 17 in 2023 and up from 11 in 2019. Medium institutions averaged 84 in 2024, a decrease from 118 in 2023 but an increase from 69 in 2019. Large institutions also experienced a decrease in average first-time enrollment of international students, with 593 in 2024, down from 665 in 2023 and up from 496 in 2019; see Appendix Table C.5.

Across broad fields, international first-time enrollment either flattened or experienced decreases. The largest decreases were seen in the field of Mathematics and Computer Science, which also experienced decreases in applications across institution sizes. As graduate education in the U.S. continues to adapt to evolving geopolitical conditions and shifts in immigration policy, first-time enrollment of international students in 2024 provides a useful baseline for evaluating the following year's first-time enrollment trends.

Table 8. Change in Average First-Time Graduate Enrollment by Broad Field for International Students, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	-1	-1	0
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	0	-1	1
Business	1	0	7
Education	0	0	1
Engineering	1	-1	14
Health Sciences	-1	-1	-6
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-2	-14	-21
Other Fields	2	-1	3
Physical and Earth Sciences	-1	-1	2
Public Administration and Services	0	0	3
Social and Behavioral Sciences	0	0	2
All Fields	**-3**	**-34**	**-72**

Plateau of First-Time Enrollment of Domestic Students

In 2024, small institutions averaged 24 first-time enrollees with U.S. citizen or permanent resident status, which was down from 26 in both 2023 and 2019. Medium institutions averaged 77 in 2024, up from 74 in 2023 and slightly above the 2019 average of 76. Large institutions saw the highest average first-time enrollment, with 238 in 2024, rising from 215 in 2023 and 212 in 2019; see Appendix Table C.5.

Domestic first-time enrollment mostly plateaued: many fields did not not experience a change in average first-time enrollment. Large institutions experienced greater gains in first-time enrollment of domestic students relative to other sized institutions. This gain was buoyed by notable increases in Business and Public Administration and Services.

Table 9. Change in Average of First-Time Graduate Enrollment by Broad Field for U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	0	1	0
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	0	0	1
Business	1	2	8
Education	1	2	3
Engineering	0	1	2
Health Sciences	-1	0	5
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	0	0	1
Other Fields	1	0	0
Physical and Earth Sciences	0	0	1
Public Administration and Services	1	1	6
Social and Behavioral Sciences	0	0	2
All Fields	**-2**	**3**	**23**

Small and Medium-Sized Institutions Lag Behind Large Institutions in First-Time Enrollment Across Racial and Ethnic Groups

From 2023 to 2024, the largest increases in average first-time graduate enrollment per institution were observed among students who identified as White, with increases of seven at medium institutions and 58 at large institutions, although small institutions saw a drop of eight. At large institutions, average first-time enrollment for students who identified as Black/African American saw gains of 34, but stagnated at small and medium institutions. Students who identified as Asian also experienced increases of five at medium institutions and 29 at large institutions, while small institutions declined by two; Appendix Table C.6 and Table 10.

Table 10. Change in Average First-Time Graduate Enrollment by Citizenship, Race, and Ethnicity, 2023-2024

	Small	Medium	Large
US Citizens and Permanent Residents	-10	18	150
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	0	0
Asian	-2	5	29
Black/African American	-1	1	35
Hispanic/Latino	0	5	27
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders	0	0	0
Other/Unknown	1	2	8
White	-8	7	58
International Students	-4	-35	-61
All Groups	**-8**	**-9**	**149**

First-Time Enrollment Grows Equally for Full- and Part-Time Students at Large Institutions

In 2024, small institutions averaged 112 first-time full-time enrollees, a slight decrease from 116 in 2023, but still above the 2019 average of 108. Medium institutions averaged 383 first-time full-time enrollees in 2024, down from 394 in 2023 but up from 343 in 2019. Large institutions saw the highest average first-time full-time enrollment, with 1,565 enrollees in 2024, rising from 1,522 in 2023 and 1,347 in 2019; see Appendix Table C.4.

Again, small and medium institutions saw a plateauing of first-time enrollment for full-time enrollees from 2023 to 2024. Large institutions saw a minimal increase, buoyed primarily by Business, Education, Engineering, and Public Administration and Services.

Table 11. Change in Average First-Time Enrollment by Broad Field for Full-Time First-Time Graduate Students, 2023-2024

Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	-1	0	3
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	4	0	5
Business	4	8	33
Education	2	4	10
Engineering	2	1	29
Health Sciences	-4	7	8
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-2	-11	-15
Other Fields	3	0	5
Physical and Earth Sciences	0	-1	7
Public Administration and Services	5	5	29
Social and Behavioral Sciences	1	4	11
All Fields	**-4**	**-11**	**43**

In 2024, small institutions averaged 66 first-time part-time enrollees, a slight decrease from 67 in 2023 and down from 74 in 2019. Medium institutions averaged 206 first-time part-time enrollees in 2024, up slightly from 205 in 2023 but below the 2019 average of 220. Large institutions saw the highest average first-time part-time enrollment, with 627 enrollees in 2024, rising from 541 in 2023 and 510 in 2019.

Like full-time first-time enrollment, part-time first-time enrollment plateaued for small and medium institutions. However, large institutions saw larger increases in part-time enrollment of first-time graduate students as compared with full-time enrollments. This is likely due to the continuing growth of online, part-time programs in popular fields such as Business and Health Sciences. Whether the continued growth in the popularity of online course offerings reflects lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased economic pressures in 2024, or both, it warrants continued attention from researchers and program administrators.

Table 12. Change in Average First-Time Enrollment by Broad Field for Part-Time First-Time Graduate Students, 2023-2024

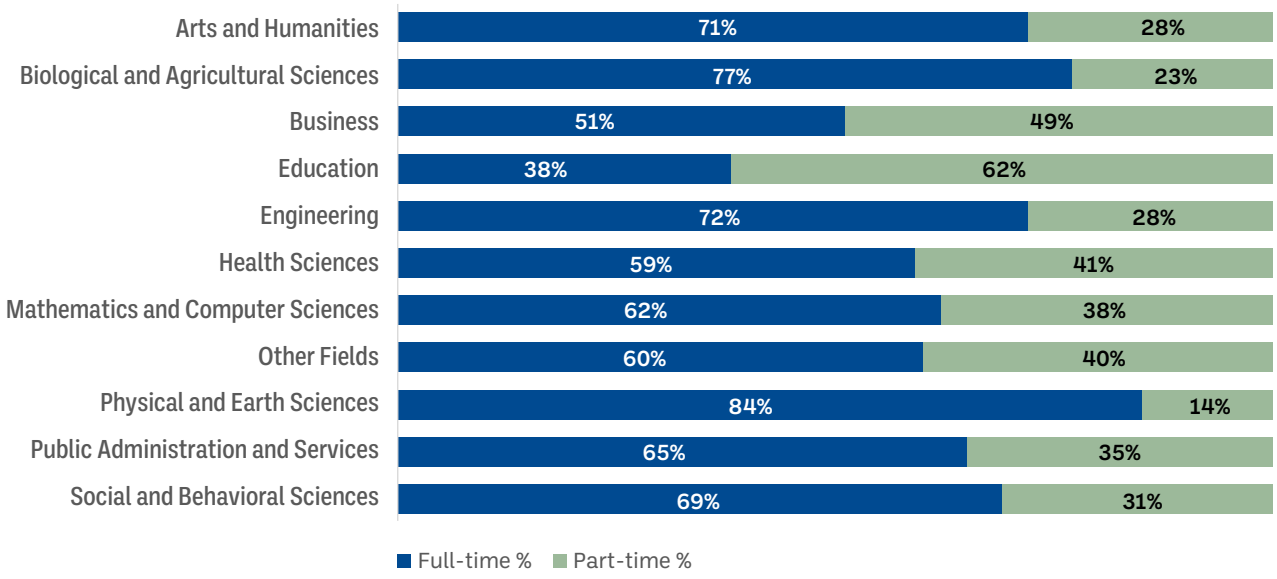
Field	Small	Medium	Large
Arts and Humanities	-1	0	1
Biological and Agricultural Sciences	1	1	2
Business	1	6	25
Education	2	8	14
Engineering	2	1	8
Health Sciences	-2	0	24
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	-2	1	11
Other Fields	1	-1	1
Physical and Earth Sciences	-1	0	1
Public Administration and Services	3	2	11
Social and Behavioral Sciences	-1	0	4
All Fields	**-1**	**1**	**86**

Total Graduate Enrollment

Snapshot of Total Graduate Enrollment in 2024

Institutions responding to the 2024 survey enrolled more than 1.7 million graduate students in Fall 2024. The three largest broad fields of study, Health Sciences (227,387), Business (203,563), and Education (190,558), experienced some of the largest proportions of part-time graduate students. More than six out of ten (62%) graduate students in Education, nearly one-half (49%) graduate students in Business, and four out of ten (41%) graduate students in Health Sciences were enrolled part-time; see Appendix Table B.11 and Figure 8.

Figure 8. Total Graduate Enrollment by Attendance Status and Broad Field, 2024

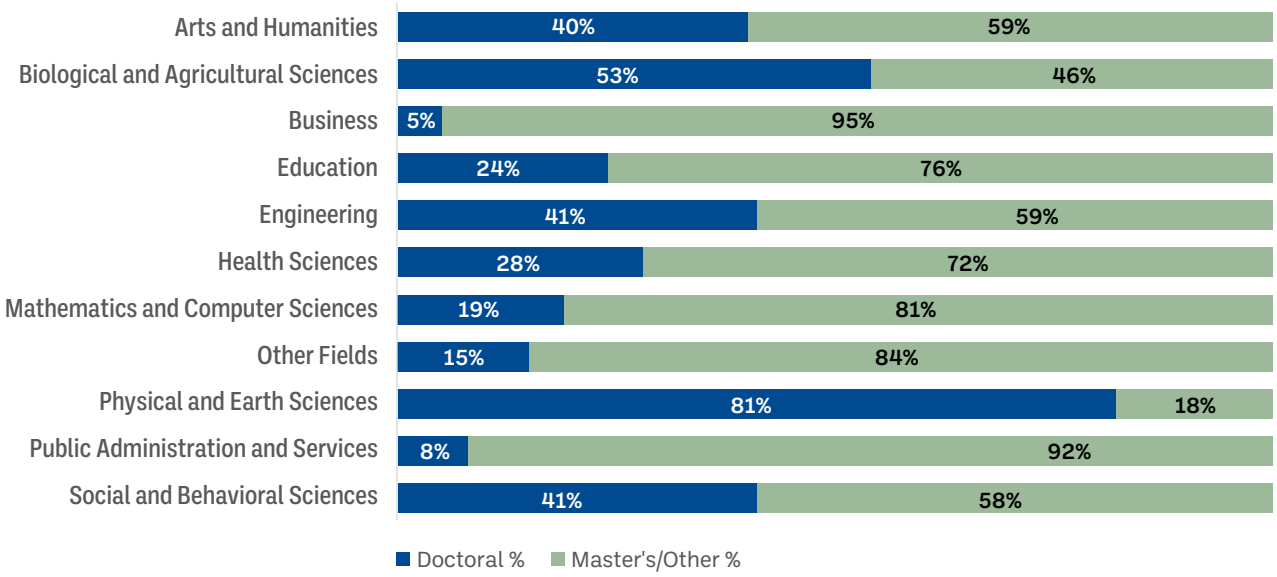


Total Enrollment in the Largest Fields Was Driven by Master's Programs and Sustained by Part-Time Enrollment

From 2023 to 2024, institutions saw increased growth in average part-time graduate enrollment in the three largest fields, Health Sciences, Business, and Education. Average part-time graduate enrollment at small institutions increased by 12 students in Education and by five in Business. As a point of comparison, across all fields, average part-time graduate enrollment at small institutions only increased by one from 2023 to 2024. Medium institutions saw increases of 27 and 28 enrollees in Education and Business respectively, compared to an increase of three across all fields. There were increases in average part-time enrollment in all three of the largest fields at large institutions. Between 2023 and 2024, average part-time enrollment at large institutions grew by 111 in Health Sciences, by 52 in Education, and by 81 in Business; see Appendix Table C.11.

Similar to the previous year, 72% of total graduate enrollment was in master's programs, with the remaining 28% in doctoral programs. For Business (95%), Public Administration and Services (92%), and Other Fields (84%), the majority of total graduate enrollment was focused in these master's degree programs. As in 2023, Biological and Agricultural Sciences (53%) and Physical and Earth Sciences (81%) were the two fields where this pattern was reversed, with greater doctoral enrollments than master's; see Appendix Table B.12 and Figure 9.

Figure 9. Total Graduate Enrollment by Degree Level and Broad Field, 2024

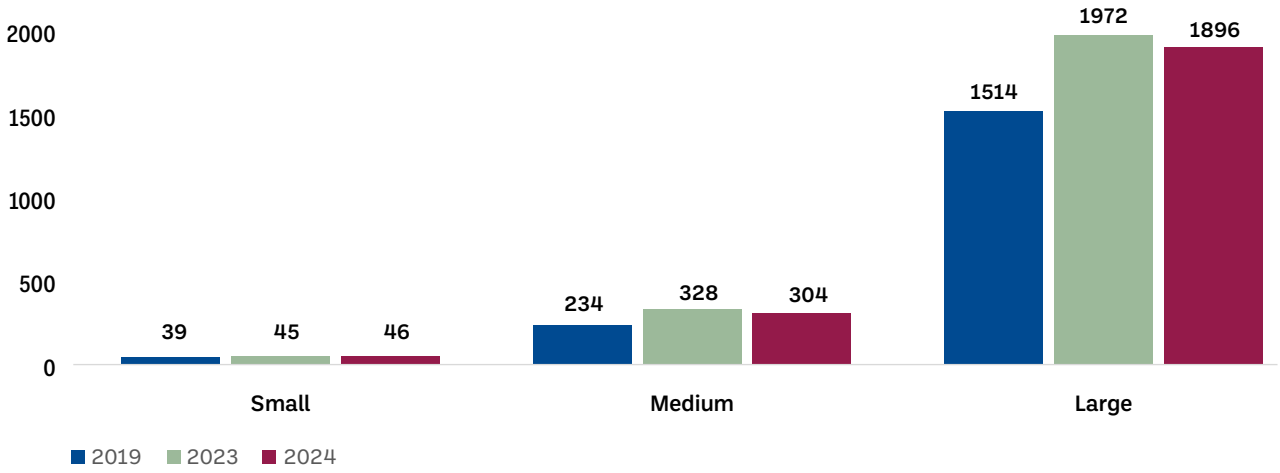


Total International Enrollment Stagnates from Previous Year, Remains Larger than Before COVID-19 Pandemic Levels

International graduate students constituted 23% of total enrollment in Fall 2024, compared with U.S. citizens and permanent residents, who constituted 75%; see Appendix Table B.13.

In 2024, small institutions averaged 46 graduate enrollees with temporary resident status, up only slightly from 45 in 2023 and 39 in 2019. Medium institutions averaged 304, down from 328 in 2023, but up from 234 in 2019. Large institutions saw the highest average graduate enrollment, with 1,896 in 2024, down from 1,972 in 2023 and up from 1,514 in 2019; see Figure 10.

Figure 10. Changes in Average Total Enrollment of International Students by Year and Institution Size

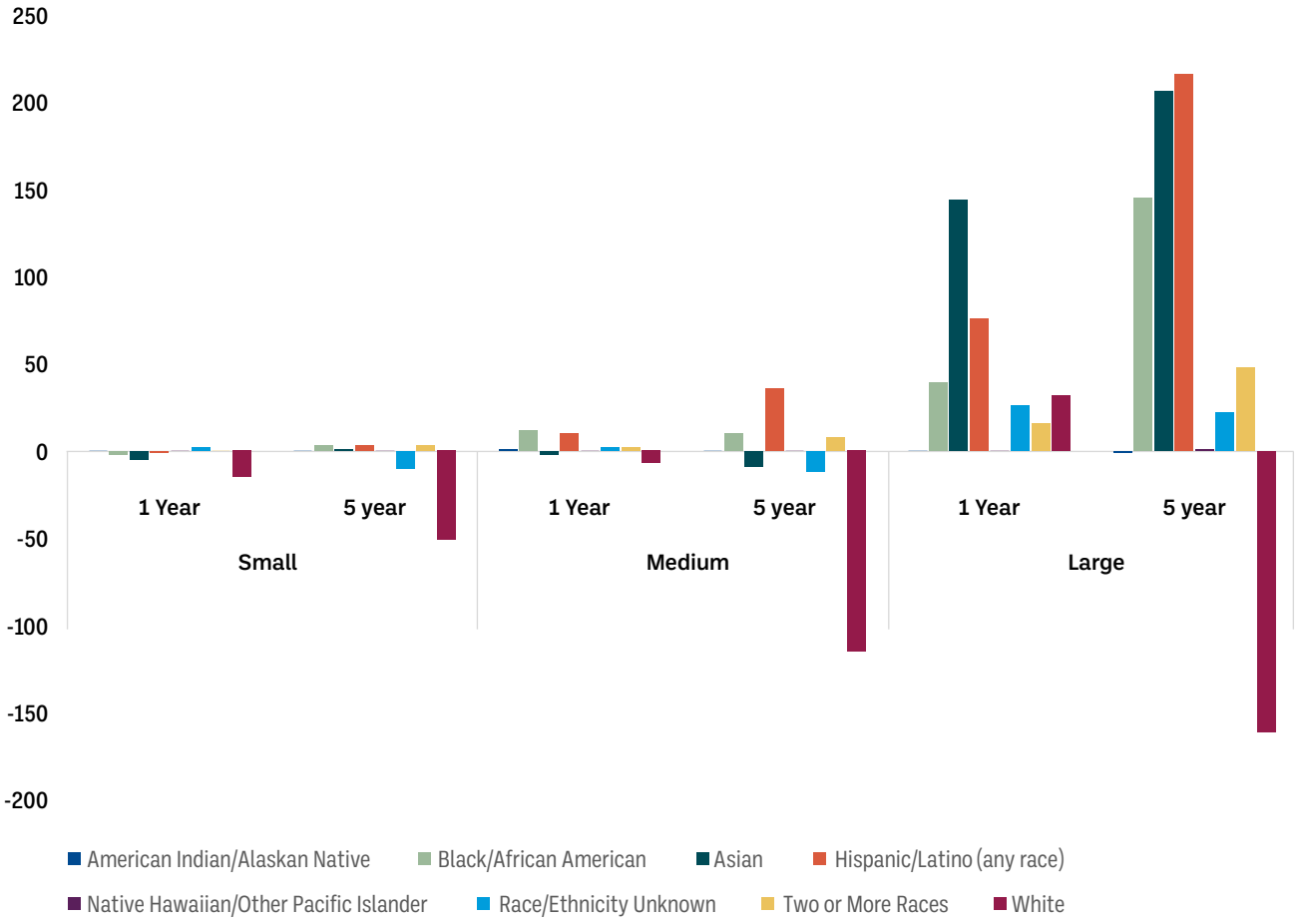


From 2023 to 2024, even the fields with the largest increases in average graduate enrollment among international students saw only slight growth. Average graduate enrollment of temporary residents in Engineering rose by four at small institutions, three at medium institutions, and 50 at large institutions. Business saw increases in average total graduate enrollment of three at small institutions, four at medium institutions, and 23 at large institutions. Public Administration and Services rose by zero at small institutions, one at medium institutions, and 12 at large institutions, and Education rose by zero at small institutions, one at medium institutions, and five at large institutions.

Total Graduate Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity Shifted in 2024

Within total graduate enrollments in 2024, the largest proportion of students identified as White (53%), followed by students who identified as Hispanic/Latino (15%), Black/African American (12%), and Asian (10%). While the share of students who identified as White made up the bulk of enrollees, from 2023 to 2024 the number of enrollees who identify as White declined. In fact, the largest decreases in average graduate enrollment per institution were seen among students who identify as White. At small universities, average enrollment of students who identify as White declined by 15 students over the one-year period and by 51 students over the five-year period. The average enrollment of students who identify as White saw a decrease of seven at medium institutions over the one-year period and a decrease of 115 over the five-year period. From 2023 to 2024, average enrollment of White students increased at large institutions, which saw enrollment grow by 32 students. However, over the five-year period there was a decline of 161 students; see Figure 11.

Figure 11. Changes in Average Total Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, Domestic Students Only



Graduate Certificates and Degrees Conferred

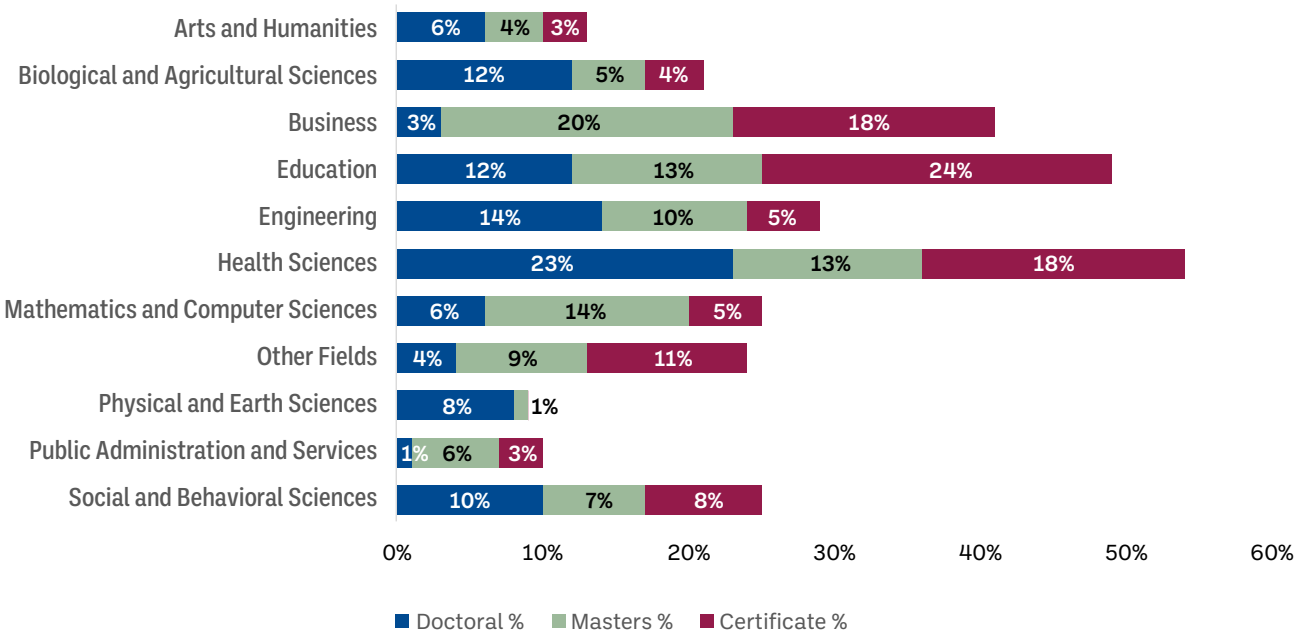
Snapshot of Graduate Certificates and Degrees in 2024

Institutions responding to the 2024 survey awarded more than 714,000 graduate certificates and degrees from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, including 86,212 doctoral degrees, 575,536 master's degrees, and 52,562 graduate certificates; see Appendix Table B.18.

The large majority (81%) of degrees awarded were master's degrees, followed by doctoral degrees (12%) and graduate certificates (7%); see Appendix Table B.19. By field of study, Health Sciences accounted for the largest number of doctoral degrees awarded, with 23% of the total, followed by Engineering (14%), Education (12%), and Biological and Agricultural Sciences (12%); see Appendix Table B.18.

At the master's degree level, Business and Mathematics and Computer Sciences programs awarded the largest number of degrees, accounting for 20% and 14%, respectively. Of the broad fields in this report, Education (24%), Health Sciences (18%), and Business (18%) had large shares of certificates awarded by institutions participating in the 2024 survey; see Appendix Table B.18 and Figure 12.

Figure 12. Degrees and Graduate Certificates by Broad Field, 2024



Decreases for Degrees Awarded, Certificates Relatively Stable

Between 2023 and 2024, there were decreases across the board for doctoral degrees awarded, master's degrees awarded, and certificates awarded at both public and private, not-for-profit institutions. Some of the most notable decreases were large institutions who had on average 382 fewer master's degrees awarded at public institutions and 419 fewer master's degrees awarded at private, not-for-profit institutions, and an average decrease of 50 and 40 doctoral degrees awarded at public and private not-for-profit institutions respectively. Small institutions, either public or private not-for-profit, saw very little change in doctoral degrees awarded (decreases of two and three respectively) as well as in certificates awarded (no change and a decrease of four respectively); see Appendix Table C.16 and Table 13.

Table 13: Change in Average of Degrees and Graduate Certificates Awarded by Institution Size and Type, 2023-2024

	Doctoral			Master's			Certificates		
Institution Type	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Medium	Large
Private, not-for-profit	-3	-14	-40	-43	-121	-419	-4	-14	-28
Public	-2	-12	-50	-39	-89	-382	0	-6	-32

Looking Forward

While the 2024 Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey findings revealed some warning signs for smaller and medium-sized institutions as well as international graduate enrollment in some fields, there was stability and continuity across much of the graduate education landscape. By contrast, 2025 has been defined by instability—termination of national research grants, restrictions on visa access for international students, an uncertain job market for recent graduates, and stricter federal borrowing limits for students—to name but a few of the many disruptions to higher education.

Although the 2025 Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey is currently being fielded to collect Fall 2025 applications, enrollment, and degrees data, early prognostications combining insights from the 2024 survey with recent reports from other organizations foretell changes to graduate education that both accelerate recent developments and break with earlier precedent. A sample of these early predictions include:

Large universities remain strong, while smaller and medium sized universities face challenges. One of the major takeaways from the 2024 survey was that large, prestigious universities were growing across degree types. Despite limits on international student enrollment and reductions in research funding, we predict that large universities will continue to see growth driven by expanded online offerings and a weak job market. Small and medium sized universities, by contrast, will continue to shrink due to a smaller pool of international students and easier access to online programs offered by large universities.

International student enrollment will decline precipitously, but the declines will not be shared evenly. According to a recent study by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, international enrollment across undergraduate and graduate higher education is projected to decline between thirty and forty percent (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2025). While international enrollment in 2024 was less robust than previous years, 2025 international graduate enrollment will likely see a steep decline. Given previous international student preferences for large institutions, it is likely that smaller and medium sized graduate programs will face disproportionate challenges.

Professional degree programs will grow as students look for job stability and accelerated return on investment for their degrees. A weak job market for recent graduates, even those with degrees from in-demand fields like computer and information science, will mean students looking at graduate education in 2025 will be particularly discerning in choosing a program with clear workforce alignment. Universities are already hearing student demands and making the shift. As one respondent to a recent Deloitte survey wrote, “the new era of higher education is an era of employers and workforce.” (Clark et al., 2025). Incoming graduate students will gravitate toward degrees with well-articulated career pathways and measurable employment prospects.

Taken together, these projections suggest that graduate education is entering a period of realignment, where institutional scale, workforce relevance, and global accessibility will determine long-term resilience. As the 2025 data emerges, understanding and adapting to these shifts will be essential for graduate schools seeking to sustain enrollment and uphold their educational missions.

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