

Who is sponsoring the study?

The study is conducted on behalf of the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics of the U.S. National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

SED data are collected under contract by RTI International,¹ a nonprofit research organization based in North Carolina.

How will my information be protected?

The confidentiality of any information provided as part of the SED is safeguarded under the Privacy Act of 1974 and the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. Staff working with data are required to sign binding confidentiality affidavits with fines up to \$250,000 or imprisonment as punishment for disclosure. In addition, the processing facilities and computer equipment used to store or access data are designed and maintained to ensure confidentiality.

¹ RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

How do I participate?

You can complete the SED at:

<https://sed-ncses.org>



If you have any questions, please contact:

U.S. National Science Foundation
National Center for Science and
Engineering Statistics
Attention: SED
2415 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22314

RTI International – Project: SED
3040 E. Cornwallis Rd.
Durham, NC 27713
877-256-8167
sed@rti.org

Survey Sponsors



U.S. National
Science Foundation



Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)

Your participation counts.
Make a difference by sharing
your experiences with the SED.

Why does the SED need the partial Social Security number (SSN)?

We use the last four digits of the SSN for two reasons:

- to identify duplicate records for doctorate recipients in historical SED data files
- to match SED data to information on federal funding support for graduate education
- SED safeguards all responses, including participants' partial SSN, with the utmost security. The partial SSN will not be used for any purpose other than those listed above.

How will my information be used?

Your information will be combined with that of approximately 58,000 other research doctorate recipients from your academic year. These combined data will be used by various entities (e.g., universities and federal and state agencies) to inform governmental policy, evaluate graduate education programs, and make labor force projections. Additionally, graduate deans receive aggregated data on their graduates and may conduct additional analyses for statistical purposes only.

Any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Only data aggregated to levels that will not allow the identification of individual respondents are released for publication.

What is the SED?

The Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) is an annual census of individuals who were awarded a research doctorate from an accredited U.S. institution.

Why am I being asked to participate?

As a recipient of a research doctorate, your participation is essential to the federal agencies that sponsor this study to learn more about those who graduate.

Key takeaways from the 2023 SED data include the following:

- The number of doctorate recipients from U.S. universities increased from 57,448 in 2022 to 57,862 in 2023. This small increase (< 1%) contrasted with the sharp 1-year increase (10%) in 2022, which followed 2 years of decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that the number of doctorate recipients from U.S. universities may have stabilized following the onset of the pandemic.²
- In 2023, 34% of doctorate recipients with definite non-postdoctoral study (postdoc) employment commitments in the United States reported that their principal job would be in academe, down from 54% in 2003. The proportion of doctorate recipients who reported non-postdoc employment commitments in academia in 2023 was highest in non-S&E fields (61%) and lowest in engineering (10%) and physical sciences (12%).³
- Between 2022 and 2023, the postdoc commitment rate declined in most fields. The largest decline was in agricultural sciences and natural resources (from 50% in 2022 to 46% in 2023).⁴
- In 2023, 54% of doctorate recipients indicated that the timeline for completing their doctoral degree was delayed by the pandemic, similar to the 53% who reported a delayed degree in 2022 and higher than the 39% in 2021. Ten percent of doctorate recipients said funding for their doctoral studies had been reduced or suspended, a slight decrease from 2022 (12%).⁵

Data from the survey are available on the NSF website and in annual reports published online; see [Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities](#).

² National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES). 2024. *Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities*: 2023. Figure 1. NSF 25-300. Alexandria, VA: U.S. National Science Foundation. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf25300>.

³ See (NCSES/NSF 2024, figure 13).

⁴ See (NCSES/NSF 2024, figure 15).

⁵ See (NCSES/NSF 2024, figure A).