Modern Language Association MLA

Report on the Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2006

Print publication, *ADE Bulletin* Spring 2008

Web publication, March 2008, revised August 2008

The initial preprint version of this report, published on the ADE and ADFL Web sites in March 2008, reflected the suppression of small numbers in the Survey of Earned Doctorates' *Summary Report 2006*. The National Opinion Research Center, which conducts the survey, subsequently released those small numbers. The current version of this report, updated on 1 August 2008, includes the supplemental data, as does the print version.

© 2008 by The Modern Language Association of America

All material published by the Modern Language Association in any medium is protected by copyright. Users may link to the MLA Web page freely and may quote from MLA publications as allowed by the doctrine of fair use. Written permission is required for any other reproduction of material from any MLA publication.

Send requests for permission to reprint material to the MLA permissions manager by mail (26 Broadway, New York, NY 10004-1789), e-mail (permissions@mla.org), or fax (646 458-0030).

PREPRINT RELEASE

Report on the Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2006

DOUG STEWARD

EACH year the United States government's Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) provides a census of doctorate recipients from United States universities. The survey is filled out by individual degree recipients at the time they file to receive their degrees. The results—broken out by field, gender, and race and ethnicity—appear annually as *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report.* The report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the Web site of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, the contractor that administers the survey. Totals for each year since 1966 can also be developed using the online data analysis tools of the National Science Foundation's *WebCASPAR* Web site.[1] This report presents some of the latest survey's data of interest to those in the modern language fields. The survey covers graduates who received their doctorates between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006. For the full results of the survey, see Thomas Hoffer et al.

Summary

In 2006, the 954 doctorates in English and American language and literature remained fairly level with the 960 in 2005 and represented a 12.8% decline from the recent high of 1,094 in 1997. In foreign languages and literatures, there were 614 doctorates in 2006, on a par with the 609 in 2005 and 5.8% below the recent high of 652 in 1997.

In 2006, 55.0% of English and 56.2% of foreign language doctorate recipients reported that they had definite employment after graduation. Such employment could be in higher education or not, full-time or part-time, tenure-track or non-tenure-track. In foreign languages, this rate of definite employment is the highest in the past twenty years. In English, the highest rate of postgraduation employment in the last twenty years is 1989's rate of 60.3%.

2006 Profiles in Detail

Table 1 outlines characteristics of recipients of 2006 doctorates in language and literature. Of 954 recipients in English, 41.3% were men, 58.7% women. Of 614 recipients in foreign languages, 38.4% were men, 61.6% women. United States citizens composed 84.1% of English and 56.8% of foreign language doctorates. Those on permanent and temporary visas together made up 11.4% of English and 38.6% of foreign language doctorates.

Of English doctorate recipients, 55.3% also held a bachelor's in the same field, while 47.6% of foreign language recipients did. In English, the median times from receipt of the bachelor's to receipt of the doctorate were 10.8 years (total) and 9.0 years (registered); in foreign languages, they were 11.6 years (total) and 9.7 years (registered).

Definite postgraduation employment was had by 55.0% of English and 56.2% of foreign language respondents. In English, 27.6% of respondents were seeking employment or postdoctoral study; in foreign languages, 26.9% were seeking employment or postdoctoral study. Some definite form of postdoctoral study was had by 6.7% of English and 6.2% of foreign language recipients. Postgraduation plans were unknown for 2.8% of English and 3.6% of foreign language respondents. Some categories of employment or study are marked NA (not available); in these cases, data were few and have been suppressed to protect the identity of respondents. Percentages under "Definite employment after doctorate" total to 100 and are based on the 55.0% of English and 56.2% of foreign language doctorate recipients who reported definite employment.

The author is associate director of MLA Programs and the ADE.

Forthcoming in the *ADE Bulletin*
© 2008 BY THE ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH

Table 1
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2006[1]

Characteristics	English and American Language and Literature (%)	Foreign Languages and Literatures (%)
Total doctorates earned (no.)	**954**	**614**
Gender		
Men	41.3	38.4
Women	58.7	61.6
Citizenship status		
US citizen	84.1	56.8
Non-US, permanent visa	1.9	10.3
Non-US, temporary visa	9.5	28.3
Unknown	4.5	4.6
Bachelor's in same field as doctorate	**55.3**	**47.6**
Master's	**88.0**	**89.3**
Median time lapse from baccalaureate to doctorate		
Total time (yrs.)	10.8	11.6
Registered time (yrs.)	9.0	9.7
Postdoctoral plans		
Definite employment	55.0	56.2
Seeking employment or study	27.6	26.9
Definite postdoctoral study	6.7	6.2
Postdoctoral plans unknown	2.8	3.6
Definite employment after doctorate[2]		
Educational institution	93.1	92.5
Industry or business	1.3	NA
Government	NA	NA
Nonprofit	NA	NA
Other or unknown	3.6	NA
Definite postdoctoral study[3]		
Fellowship	79.7	71.1
Research associateship	NA	NA
Traineeship	NA	NA
Other study	10.9	NA
Employment commitments after doctorate		
Primary activity		
R&D	11.8	9.6
Teaching	78.9	83.0
Administration	5.1	4.6
Professional services	NA	NA
Other	NA	NA
Secondary activity		
R&D	56.0	65.7
Teaching	13.9	11.1
Administration	10.7	3.1
Professional services	1.0	NA
Other	2.3	NA
No secondary activity	15.0	17.9
Activities unknown	4.8	6.1
Region of employment after doctorate		
New England	8.8	9.9
Middle Atlantic	15.4	15.4
East north central	14.5	13.9
West north central	7.0	5.8
South Atlantic	19.4	16.5
East south central	5.5	5.5
West south central	6.7	8.4
Mountain	6.1	4.6
Pacific and insular	12.4	11.6
Foreign	4.2	8.1
Region unknown	0.0	0.3

1. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding. Totals include only doctorate recipients who reported sex.
2. Percentages are based only on those doctorate recipients who indicated definite employment and specified the type.
3. Percentages are based only on those doctorate recipients who indicated definite postdoctoral study and specified the type.
NA = not available

Percentages under "Definite postdoctoral study" total to 100 and are based on the 6.7% of English and 6.2% of foreign language doctorate recipients who reported definite postdoctoral study.

Of graduates with definite employment, by far the largest percentages—93.1% of English and 92.5% of foreign language doctorate recipients—indicated that the employment was in education. These percentages suggest that just over half of all doctorate recipients in English and foreign languages had some form of definite postgraduation employment in education when they submitted the SED.

Of employed graduates, teaching was the primary employment activity of 78.9% in English and 83.0% in foreign languages. The secondary activity of 56.0% in English and 65.7% in foreign languages was research and development, a clear indication that while most of these doctorate recipients considered research a significant component of their employment, teaching remained the primary anticipated responsibility. In English and foreign languages, the highest percentages of definite employment were in the south Atlantic (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia), east north central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin), Pacific and insular (Alaska, California, Hawai'i, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Trust Territory, Virgin Islands), and the middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania) sections of the country.

Of graduates with definite postdoctoral study, for 79.7% of those in English and 71.7% of those in foreign languages the type was fellowship.

Table 2 outlines available data for 2006 degree recipients' citizenship, and table 3 does so for race and ethnicity. The only categories of race or ethnicity in which foreign languages show a significantly higher percentage than English are the three Hispanic ones—the only ones that imply a first or heritage language other than English. In 2006, Hispanic recipients accounted for 17.7% of foreign language doctorates in the United States cohort. Despite years of good intentions on the part of many members of the profession, the percentages of doctorate recipients of color remain disproportionately low.

Because of regulations governing confidentiality, information in some cells is suppressed when 2006 SED data are disaggregated for doctorate recipients' race and ethnicity. The suppression of some data results in reported numbers for English and foreign languages that may appear at a significantly lower level than in 2005. For this reason, table 3 provides 2006 data only at the level of the humanities, while table 4 provides 2005 data for the humanities and for English and foreign languages. Data on degree conferrals do not change dramatically from one year to the next, so it is reasonable to assume relative stability from 2005 to 2006 in the ratio of degrees in the humanities in general to degrees in English and foreign languages specifically.

Table 2
US Doctorate Recipients by Citizenship, 2006

Field	US citizens	Non-US citizens	Unknown citizenship	Total
Language and literature				
Number	1,151	346	71	1,568
Percentage	73.4	22.1	4.5	100.0
English and American language and literature				
Number	802	109	43	954
Percentage	84.1	11.4	4.5	100.0
Foreign languages and literatures				
Number	349	237	28	614
Percentage	56.8	38.6	4.6	100.0

Historical Timelines

Figure 1 shows the number of doctorates in foreign languages and literatures, English and American language and literature, language and literature (the modern languages combined), and the humanities as a whole between 1958 and 2006. While all the lines in the figure show an increase from 1958 to 1973, a drop from 1973 through the mid-1980s, and an increase beginning in the late 1980s, humanities degrees in general have rebounded more vigorously than degrees in language and literature since the late 1980s. Figure 1 should be compared with figure 2, which shows the number of doctorates conferred in all fields from 1958 to 2006. While the shape of this line is similar to those in figure 1, doctorate conferrals in all fields slow or drop off very slightly. The more distinct drop in language and literature PhDs beginning in the early 1970s can be attributed, in part, to the widely discussed PhD employment crisis, which emerged at the 1969 MLA convention and has been a preoccupying concern ever since.

Table 3
US Doctorate Recipients in the Humanities, US Citizens by Race/Ethnicity, 2006

	American Indian	Asian	Black / African American	White	Puerto Rican	Mexican American	Other Hispanic	Other / unknown race	Total
Humanities									
Number	23	157	164	3,358	34	75	101	151	4,063
Percentage	0.6	3.9	4.0	82.6	0.8	1.8	2.5	3.7	100.0

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 4
US Doctorate Recipients, US Citizens by Race/Ethnicity,[1] 2005

	American Indian	Asian	Black / African American	White	Puerto Rican	Mexican American	Other Hispanic	Other / unknown race	Total[2]
Humanities									
Number	22	140	172	3,217	41	77	76	150	3,895
Percentage	0.6	3.6	4.4	82.6	1.1	2.0	2.0	3.9	100.0
Language and literature									
Number	6	44	58	903	21	35	31	58	1,156
Percentage	0.5	3.8	5.0	78.1	1.8	3.0	2.7	5.0	100.0
English and American language and literature									
Number	6	32	51	660	8	15	4	44	820
Percentage	0.7	3.9	6.2	80.5	1.0	1.8	0.5	5.4	100.0
Foreign languages and literatures									
Number	0	12	7	243	13	20	27	14	336
Percentage	0.0	3.6	2.1	72.3	3.9	6.0	8.0	4.2	100.0

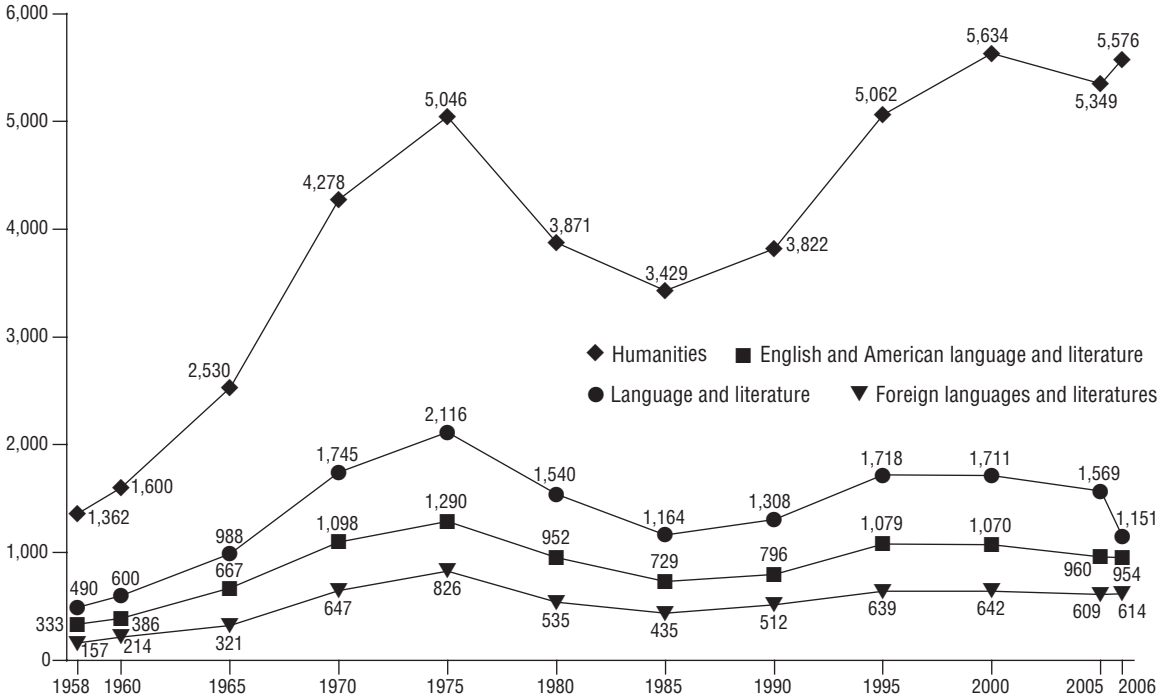
1. Previously, non-US citizens with temporary visas were reported in this category, and those with permanent visas were combined with US citizens. Beginning in 2005, all non-US citizens were reported together, and US citizens were reported alone.
2. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Figure 3 shows the number of doctorates in the humanities and in language and literature per one hundred doctorates in all fields from 1958 to 2006. From this figure, we can see that since 1958 the humanities' and language and literature's share of all doctorates has declined noticeably but not precipitously, reaching highs in 1960 and 1973 and a low in the late 1980s.

Figures 4 and 5 show 2006 doctorate recipients' reported employment. As the questionnaire is worded, "definite employment" at the time of graduation could be a tenure- or non-tenure-track position or a job in a sector other than higher education. For the period between 1984 and 2006, about half of any given year's graduates report having definite employment at the time of graduation. For 2006 the figures are 55.0% for English, 56.2% for foreign languages. Across the twenty-two years, the SED data on doctorate recipients with definite employment show a range from a low of 44.0% in 1997 to a high of 60.3% in 1989 for English and a low of 47.5% in 1998 to a high of 61.0% in 2005 for foreign languages.

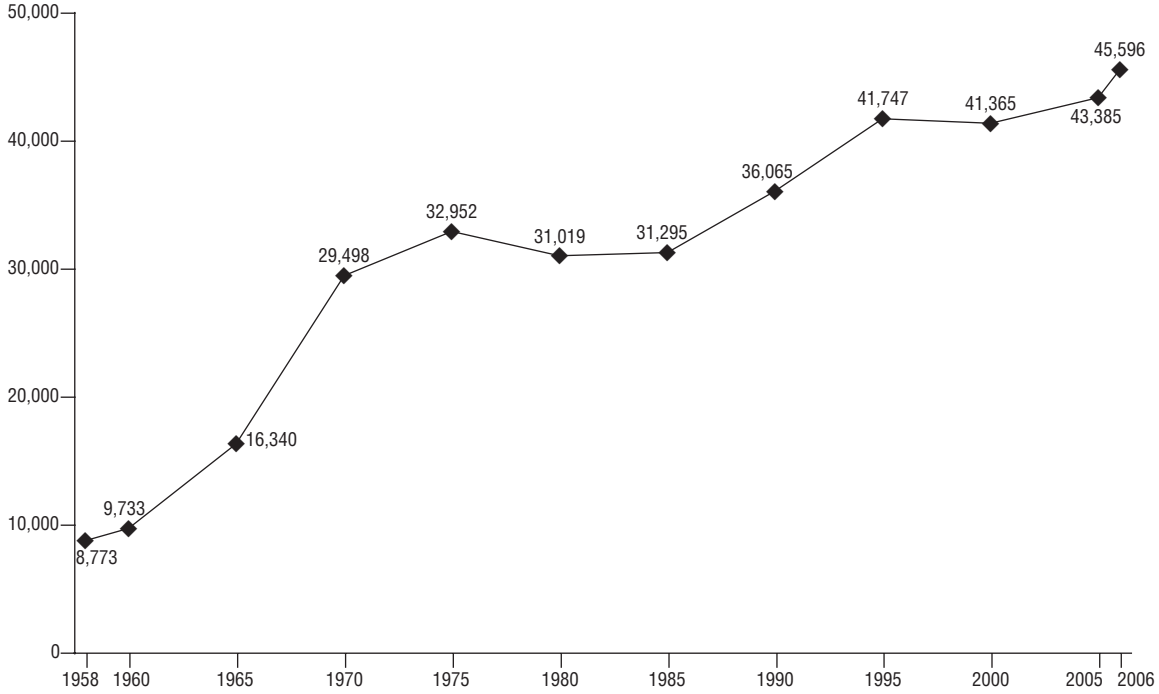
Figure 6 illustrates that the increasing number of PhDs granted since 1958 has been most dramatically represented in women's greater access to graduate study. In 1958 only 991 of 8,773 PhDs in all fields, or 11.3%, were granted to women. By 2006 this number had risen to 20,539 of 45,596 doctorates, or 45.0%. This represents a difference of 1,972% in the number of PhDs granted to women yearly. The number of PhDs granted to men in 2006 was only 221% greater than in 1958. As figure 7 shows, the increase in this period in PhDs granted to women in the humanities is similarly striking: in 1958, 202 PhDs were granted to women in the humanities, while 2,821 such degrees were conferred in 2006. In fact, women have for the past several years surpassed men in earning PhDs in the humanities.

Fig. 1
Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature, 1958–2006



Note: Data conform to latest print edition.

Fig. 2
Doctorates Earned in All Fields, 1958–2006



Note: Data conform to latest print edition.

Note

1. *WebCASPAR* data differ from the SED's published data in the *Summary Report*. Though the two are based on the same survey results, they are aggregated differently. The SED *Summary Report* publishes data for American literature and English language and literature. Also included under the *WebCASPAR* heading "English and literature" are classics, comparative literature, speech and rhetorical studies, general letters, and other letters. Of particular interest in the *Summary Report* is appendix table A-1 (113–18). *WebCASPAR*'s "Table Builder" has the advantage of allowing tailored cross-year analyses back to 1966.

Works Cited

Hoffer, Thomas B., et al. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report, 2006*. Chicago: Natl. Opinion Research Center, 2007. 7 Jan. 2008 <www.norc.org/projects/survey+of+earned+doctorates.htm>.

"Table Builder." *WebCASPAR: Integrated Science and Engineering Resources Data Analysis System*. Natl. Science Foundation. 11 Jan. 2008 <http://webcaspar.nsf.gov>.

Fig. 3

Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature per 100 Doctorates in All Fields, 1958–2006

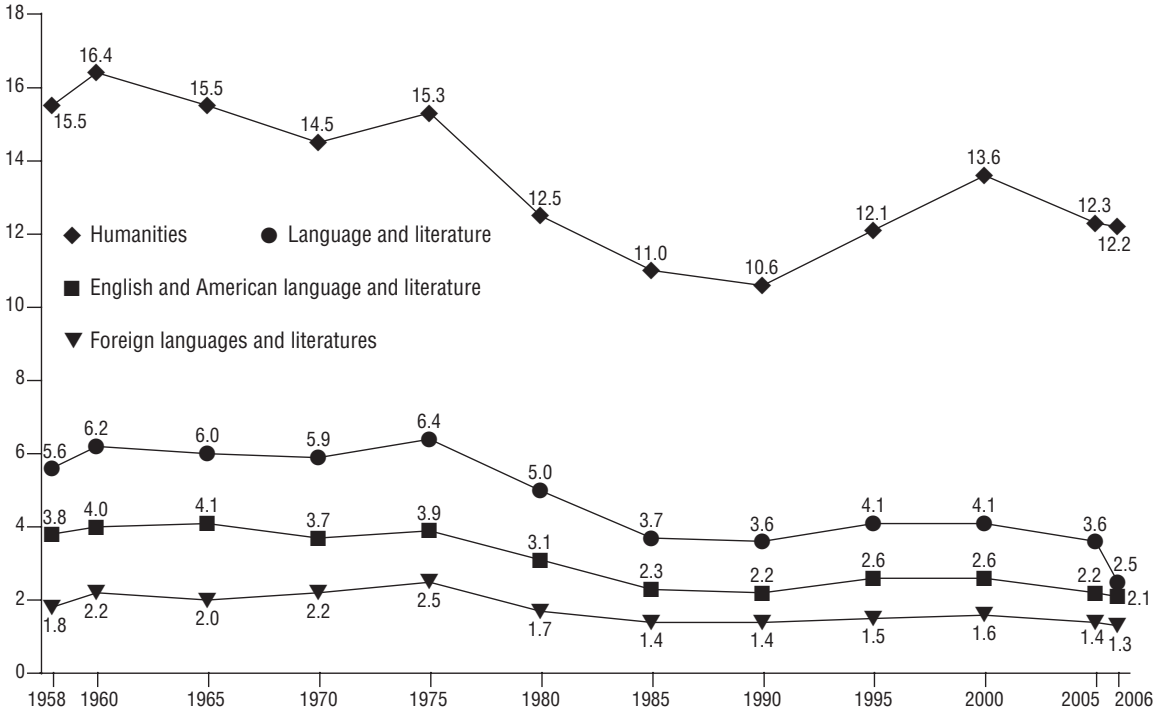


Fig. 4
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in English and American Language and Literature by Percentage, 1984–2006

Fig. 5
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in Foreign Languages and Literatures by Percentage, 1984–2006

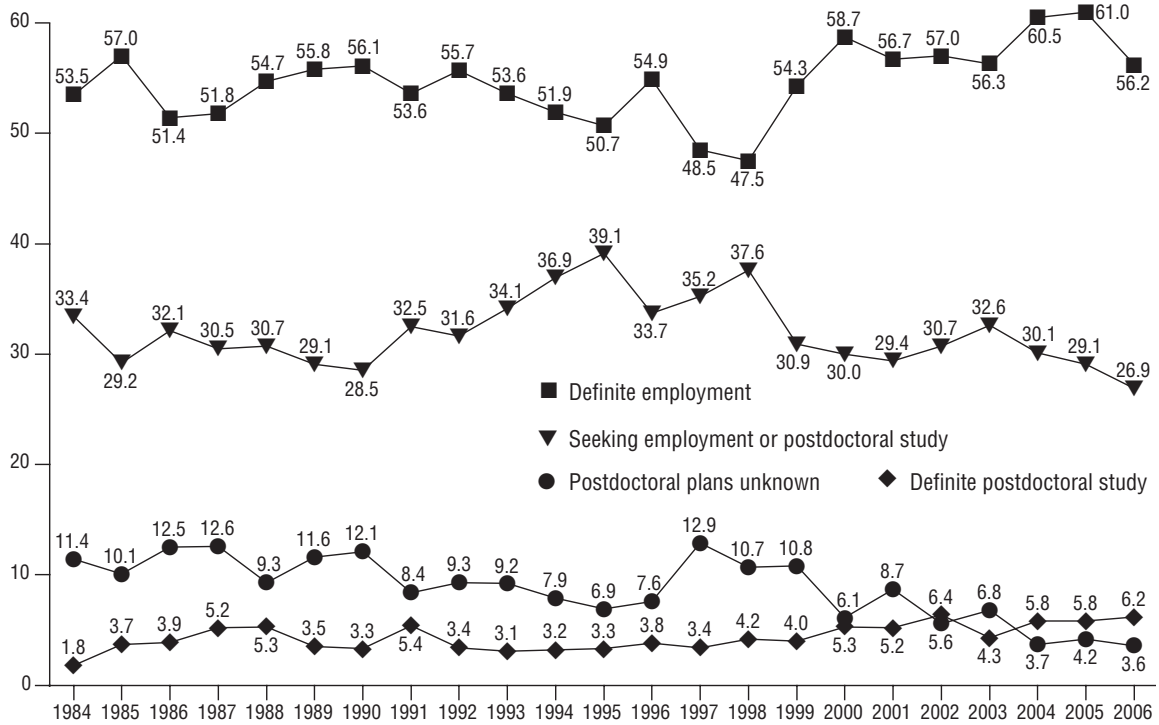
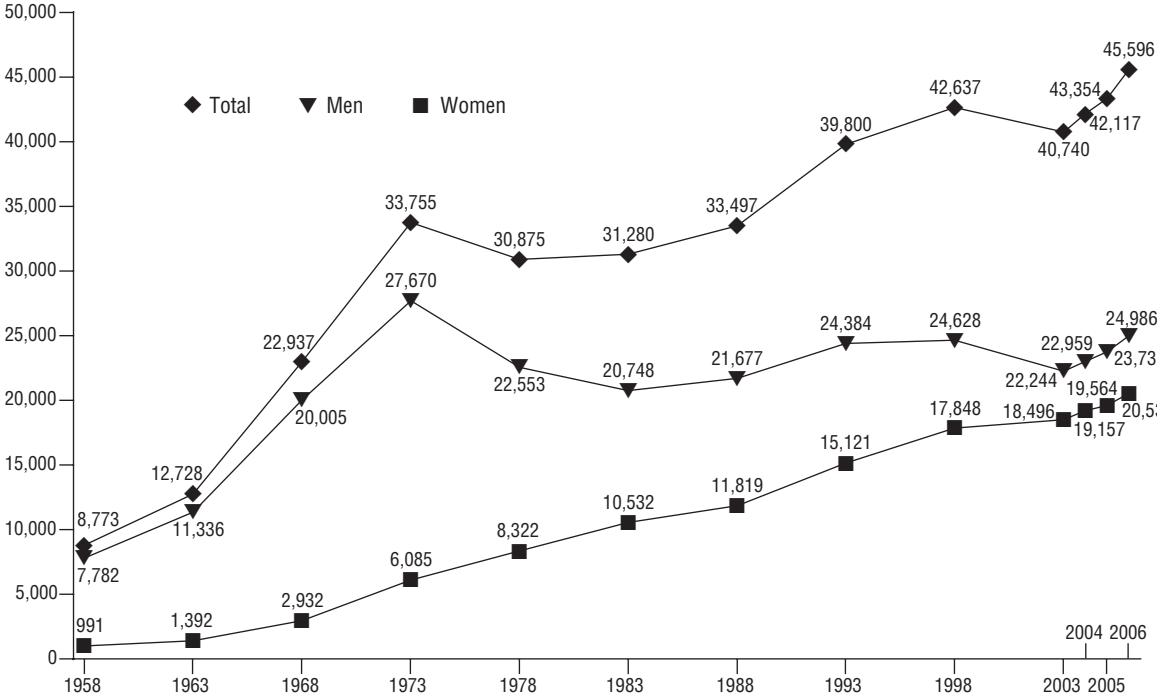
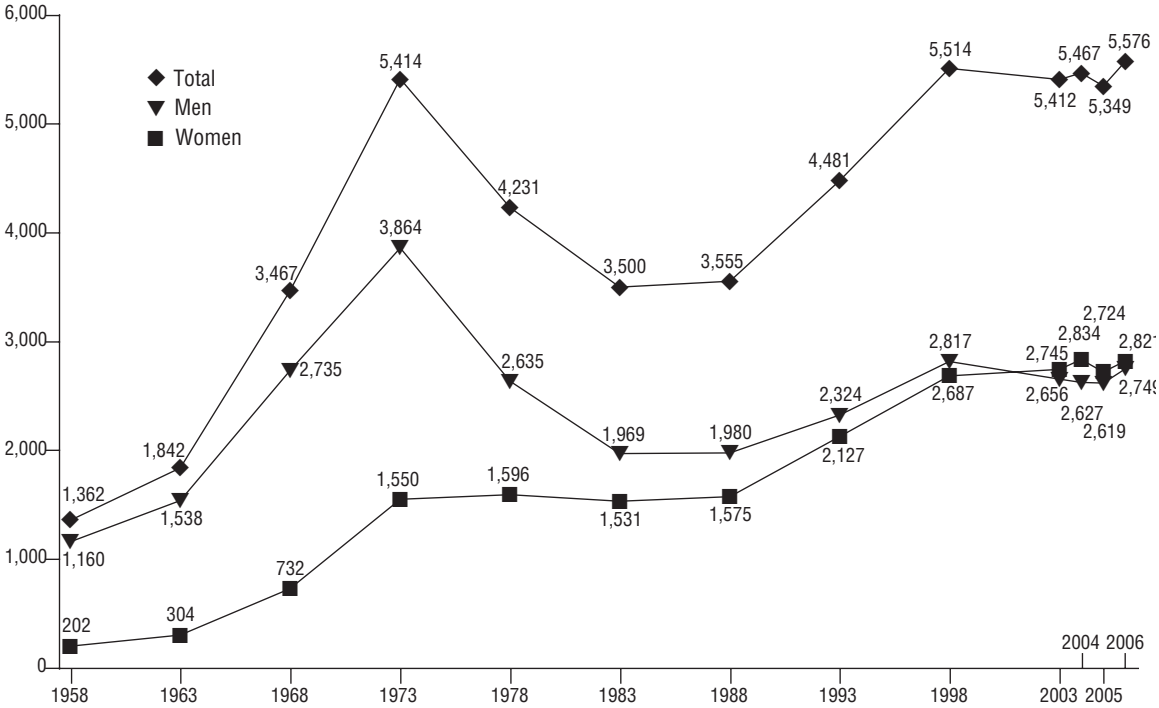


Fig. 6
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in All Fields, Selected Years, 1958–2006



Note: Data before 1966 and for 2006 are those reported in the print edition. 1966–2005 data conform to the latest available online, 11 Jan. 2008. Totals include unknown gender.

Fig. 7
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in the Humanities, Selected Years, 1958–2006



Note: Data are those reported in the print edition. Totals include unknown gender.