



The Role of the Associate Degree in the US

THE EQF LEVEL 5 INTERNATIONAL FORUM

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Overview

- (Brief) historical context of two-year colleges
- Institutional, degree, student, and faculty demographics
- Role and purpose of the Associate Degree
- Current issues and the forces driving them

Historical Context of the 2-Year College in the US

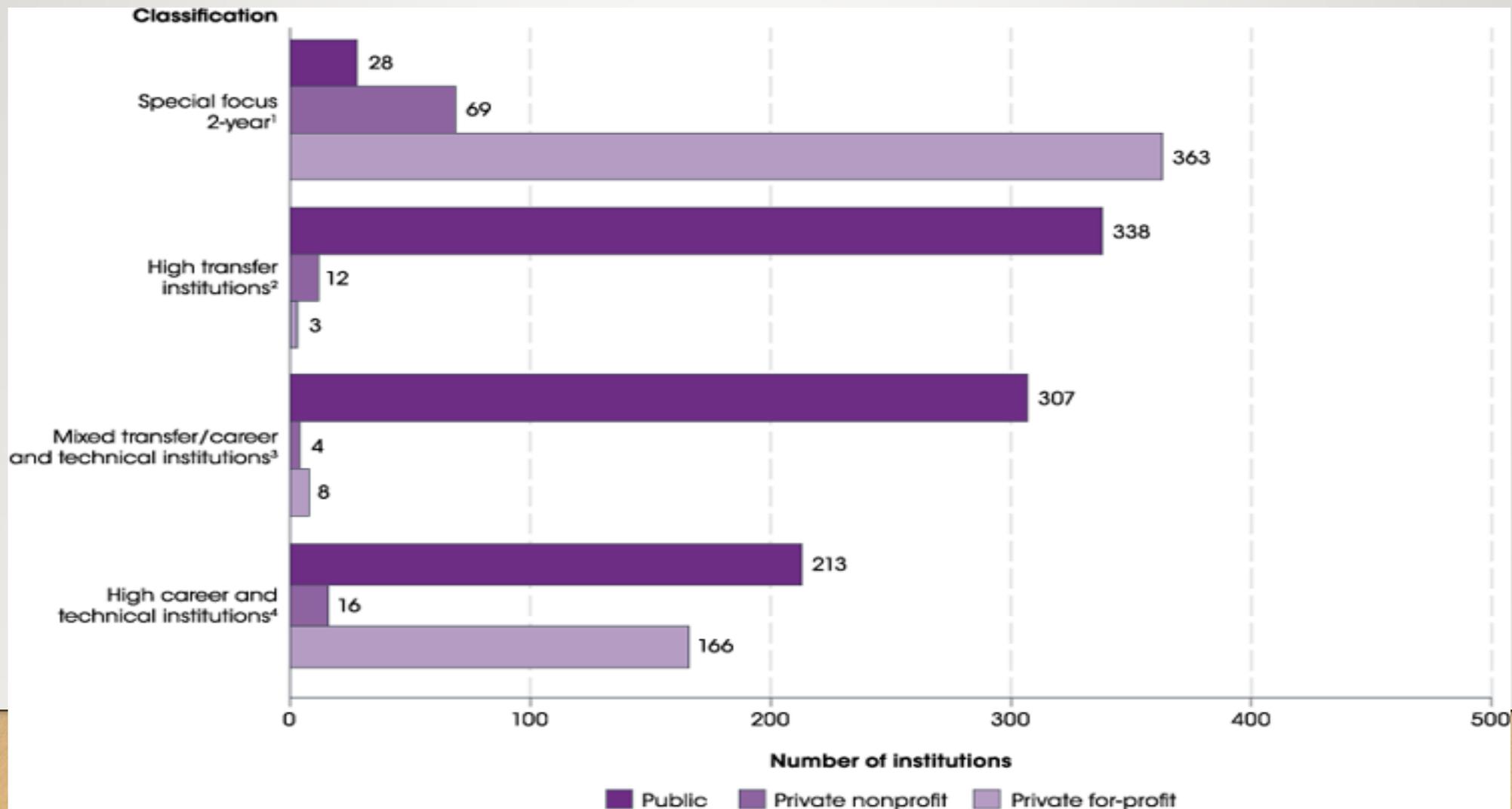
- In 1901, Joliet Junior College, the first “junior college” was established in a high school.
- In 1947, the name 'community college' was suggested to be applied to 2-year institutions
- In the 1960s and 70s the modern community college came into its own, as 2-year campuses multiplied nationwide.
- Within the last decade, the goal of increasing the number of Americans with a postsecondary degree or certificate became framed as an economic imperative. Policymakers turned to community colleges.
- In 2015, President Obama called for 2 free years of community college for all Americans.
- Today, community colleges educate nearly ½ of all postsecondary students. Community colleges have become an essential part of what policymakers envision as a seamless educational experience that begins in kindergarten and ends with a postsecondary degree or credential with workplace value.



Two-year College Forms and Purposes

- Multi-Campus Systems
- Career and Technical
- Community Colleges
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)
- Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)
- Public
- Private

Number of 2-year degree-granting institutions, by Carnegie classification and control of institution: Fall 2016



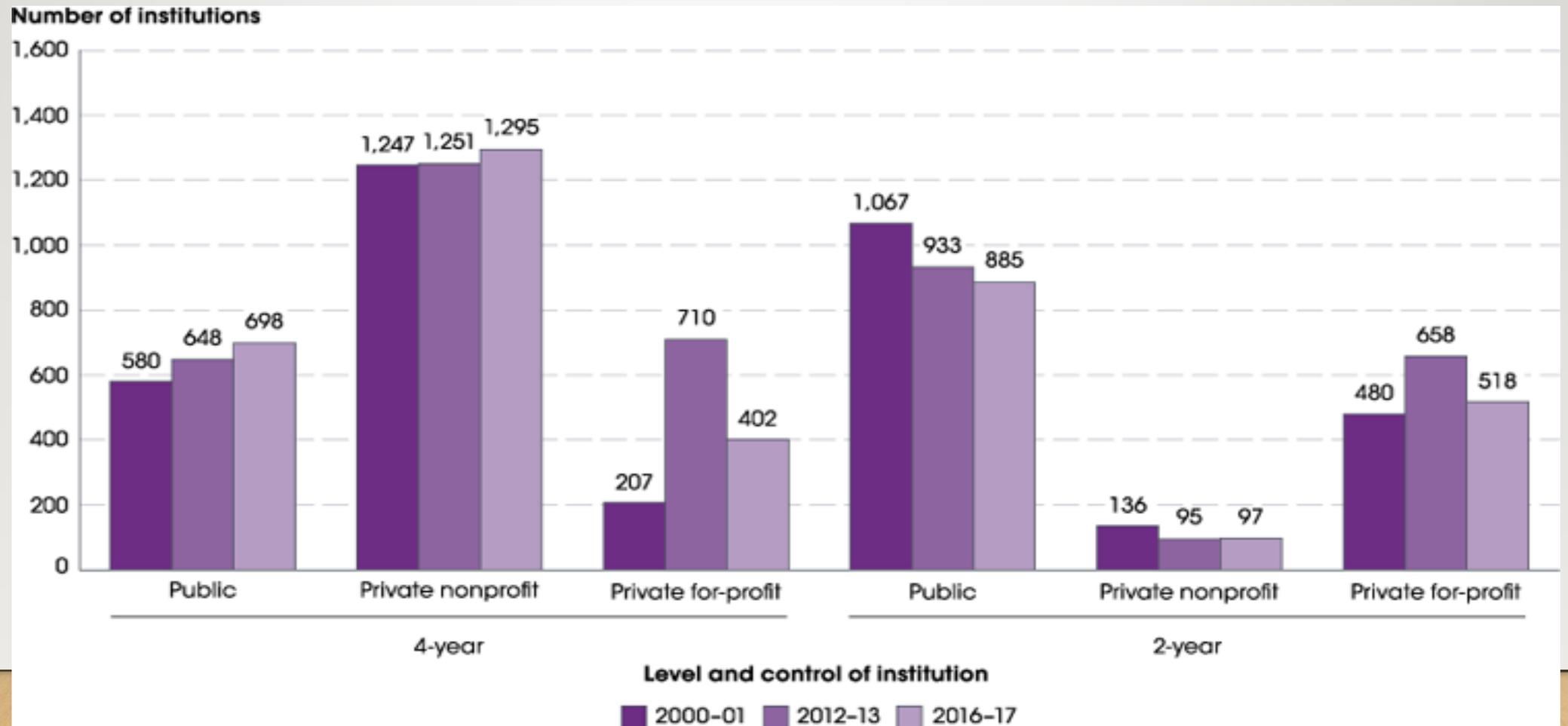
Purpose of Associate Degree

- Associate degree is synonymous with Community College
- First associate degrees were awarded in the US in 1898.
- Associate degrees are usually earned in 2 years or more at community colleges, technical colleges, vocational schools, as well as at some colleges and universities.
- Students can earn an Associate of Arts/Associate in Arts (AA) or an Associate of Science/Associate in Science (AS).
- Students who complete a 2-year technical or vocational program can earn an Associate of Applied Science/Associate in Applied Science
- Transfer admissions allow courses taken and credits earned on an AA, AS, or AAS course to sometimes be counted toward a bachelor's degree via articulation agreements or recognition of prior learning.

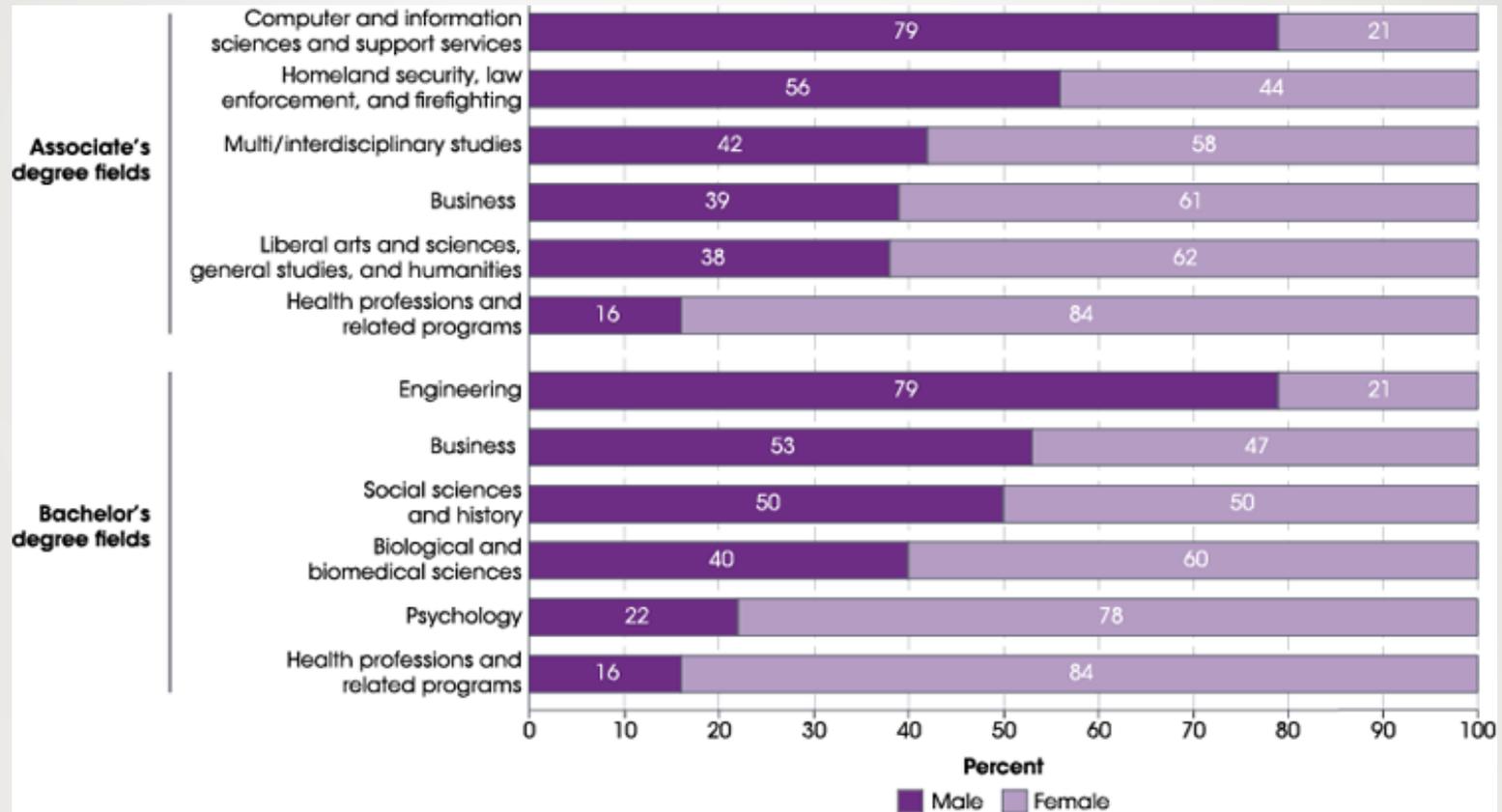
Reason to get an associates degree

- It can lead to better job prospects and a higher salary than what can be obtained with just a high school diploma.
- It can provide the occupational training needed to enter a specific business field.
- Most associate degree programs have reasonable tuition costs.
- Most of the credits earned in an associate degree program can be transferred to a bachelor degree program.
- Employers may hire applicants who have associate degrees over applicants who have high school diplomas.
- In only two years, the necessary training to enter fast growing business fields like accounting, information technology, and finance are acquired

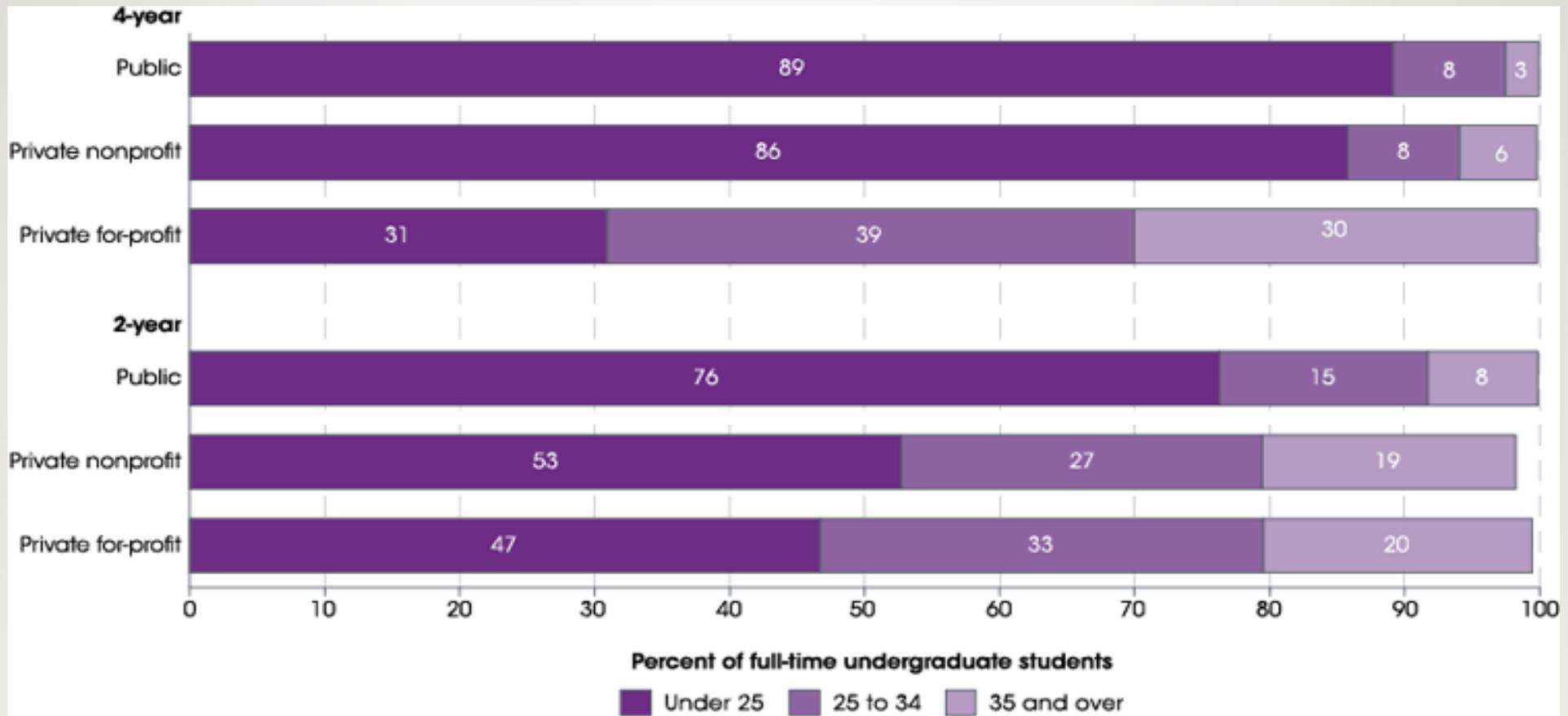
Number of degree-granting institutions with first-year undergraduates, by level and control of institution: Academic years 2000–01, 2012–13, and 2016–17



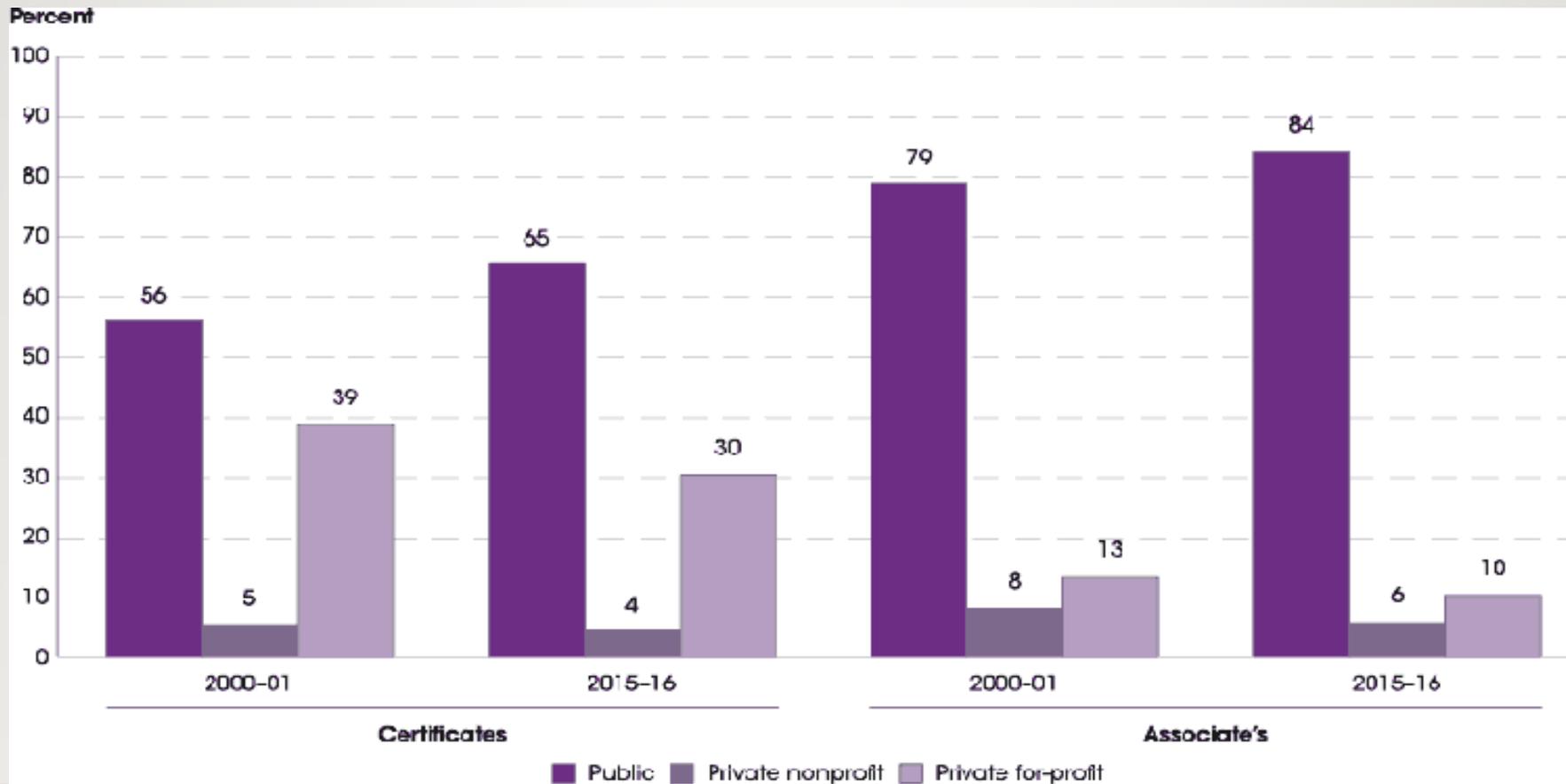
Percentage distribution of associate's and bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in largest fields of study, by sex: Academic year 2015–16



Percentage of full-time undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional level, control and student age: Fall 2015



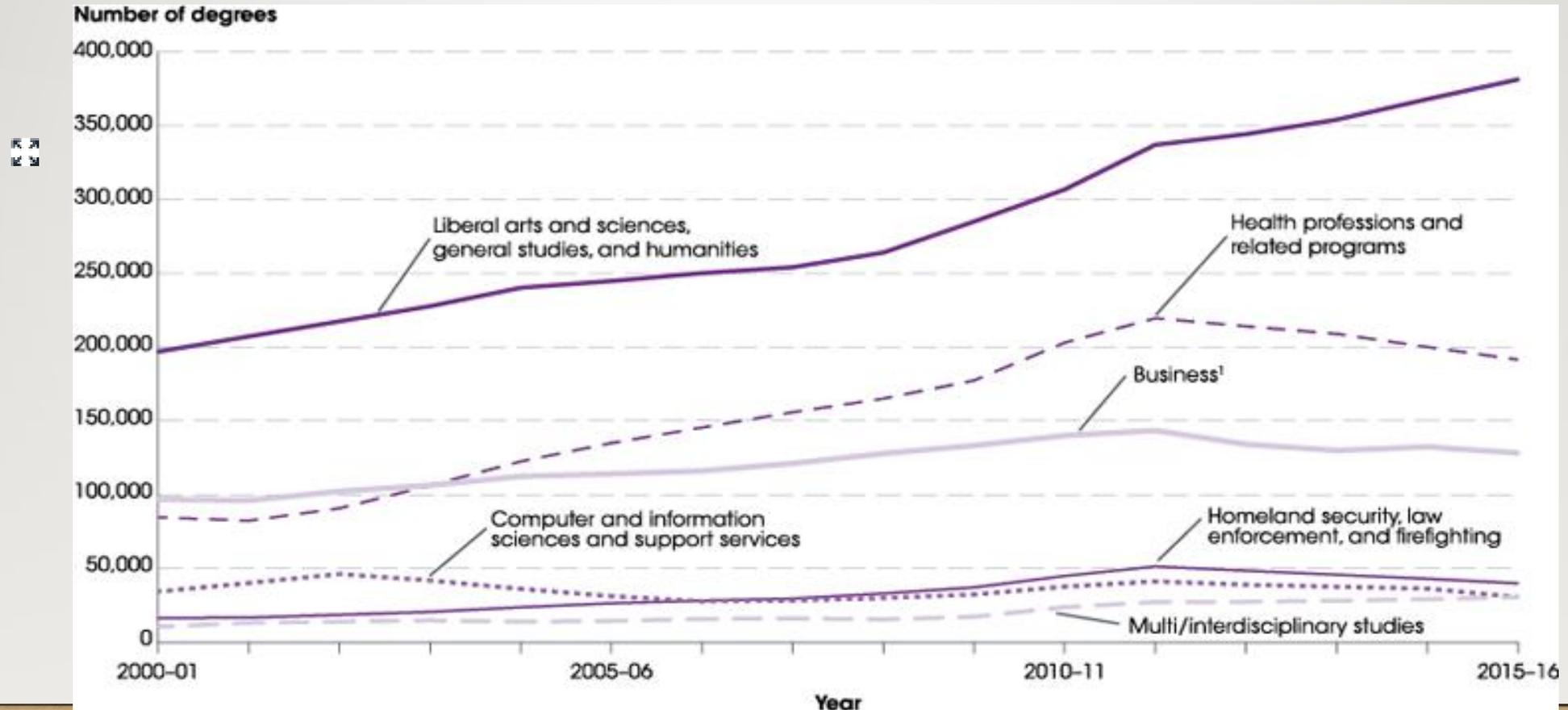
Percentage distribution of certificates and associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Academic years 2000–01 and 2015–16



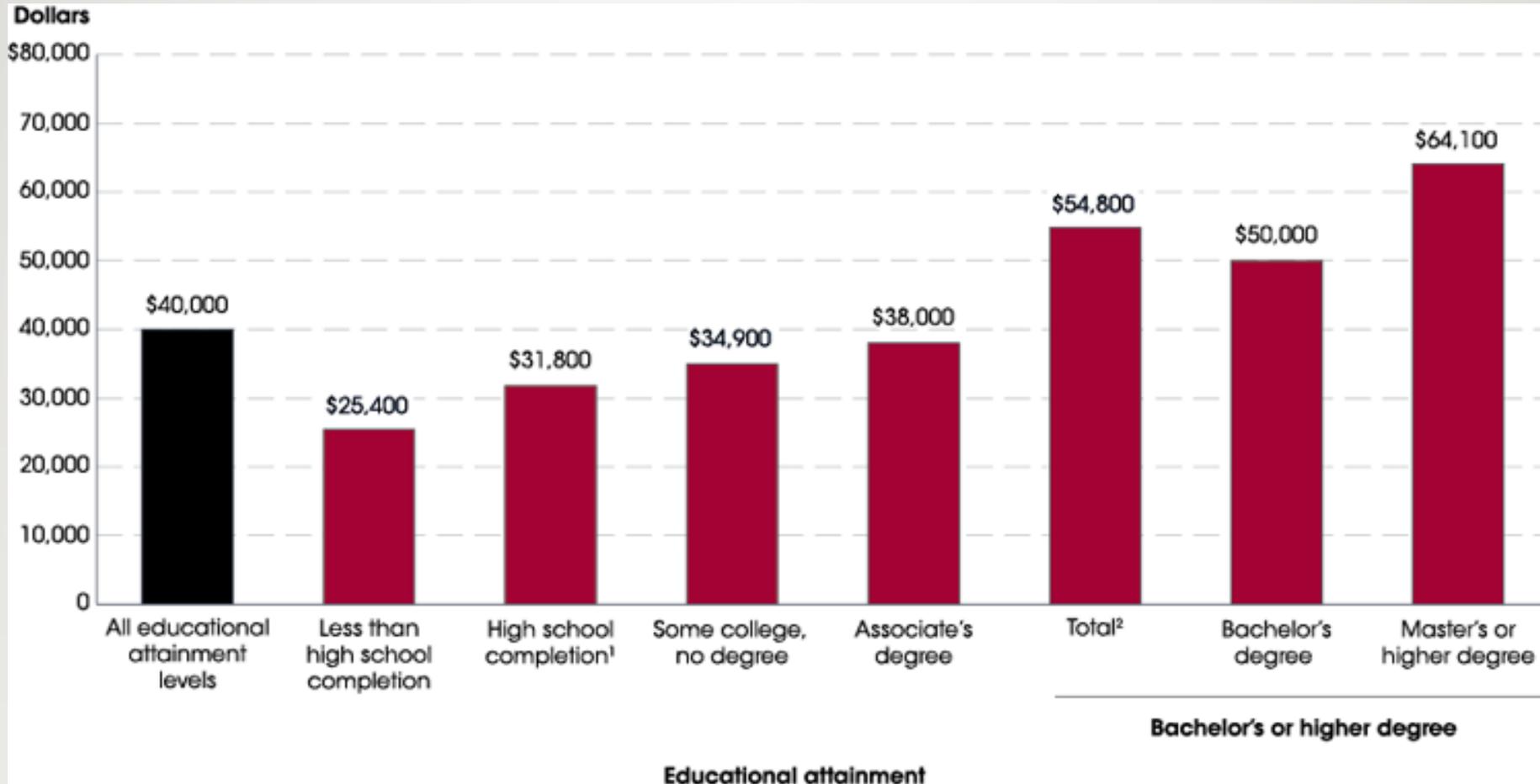
Enrollment by Program

- In 2015–16, over 2/3 of the 1.0 million associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions were concentrated in three fields of study:
 - liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (381,000 degrees);
 - health professions and related programs (191,000 degrees); and
 - business (128,000 degrees)
- Of the 1.9 million bachelor's degrees conferred in 2015–16, over 1/2 were concentrated in six fields of study:
 - business (372,000 degrees), health professions and related programs (229,000 degrees),
 - social sciences and history (161,000 degrees), psychology (117,000 degrees), biological and biomedical sciences (114,000 degrees),
 - and engineering (107,000 degrees)

Number of associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected fields of study: Academic years 2000–01 through 2015–16



Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2016



Number and Percentage of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty by Control

	Public		Private, Not-for-Profit		Private, For-Profit	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Full-time	111,976	31.9%	2,748	54.7%	9,402	41.9%
Part-time	238,729	68.1%	2,277	45.3%	13,032	58.1%
Total	350,705	100%	5,025	100%	22,434	100%



Flexibility – Issues and Strategies

- No anticipation that the number of public community colleges will grow. That number, around 900, has remained relatively constant since 1975, when a community college was available within commuting distance of nearly all people in all but a few states.
- The community college's recent entrance into early college initiatives and baccalaureate programs will likely continue, shifting the institution's emphases, and offering flexibility.

Flexibility - Issues and Strategies

- Dual Enrollment - sometimes known as dual credit or concurrent enrollment—it enrolls high school students in college-level courses.
- Early College –similar to dual enrollment programs that can accelerate postsecondary attainment, except that it can be directed more toward low-achieving high school students.
- Baccalaureate Degrees - 25 states granted authority to offer baccalaureate degrees in selected fields

Adult (Post-Traditional) Learning – Issues and Strategies

Of all American adults with some college but no degree, more than 1/2 have spent 2 or more years in college, making them a ready-made population for institutions to support in returning to complete their degree.

- Recognition of prior learning/Competency-based education
- Certificate Programs
- Accelerated course formats
- On-line community college – California
- Programs/strategies designed to attract adults to complete or attain their degrees



Accessibility – Issues and Strategies

- Free Community College – As of August 2017, 4 states and one city have enacted measures for free tuition. Conditions apply and vary by program.
- The College Promise Campaign - a national nonpartisan initiative, builds public support for funding the first two years of postsecondary education, beginning with community colleges.



Critical Issues:

- Financial Constraints and Affordability
- Completion Rates and Student Success
- Enrollment
- Skills Gap