

Report on the Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2007–08

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Summary

IN 2007, the 906 doctorates in English and American language and literature remained fairly level with the 954 in 2006 and represented a 17.2% decline from the recent high of 1,094 in 1997. In 2008, 891 doctorates were awarded in English and American language and literature. In foreign languages and literatures, there were 608 doctorates in 2007 and 627 in 2008, on a par with the 614 doctorates in 2006 and somewhat below the recent high of 652 in 1997.

In 2007, 52.3% of English and 53.1% of foreign language doctorate recipients reported that they had definite employment after graduation. In 2008, definite postgraduation employment was had by 50.2% of English and 49.1% of foreign language respondents. Such employment could be in higher education or not, full-time or part-time, tenure-track or non-tenure-track. In foreign languages, the highest rate of postgraduation employment in the last twenty years is 2005's 61.0%. In English, the highest rate of postgraduation employment in the last twenty years is 1989's 60.3%.

Humanities doctorate recipients in 2008 had a mean total debt of \$23,033, compared with \$17,544 for all fields combined. The mean debt incurred from graduate school was \$16,917 for humanities doctorates and \$12,087 for all fields.

The Survey of Earned Doctorates

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 in the annual *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report*, available in PDF at www.nsf.gov/statistics/doctorates/. 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, <http://webcaspar.nsf.gov>. This report presents some of the latest survey's data of interest to those in the modern language fields. The 2007–08 survey covers graduates who received their doctorates between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2008 (for the full survey results, see Fiegener). The report on the 2007–08 survey includes two years of data and takes into account new privacy policies.

2007 Profiles in Detail

Table 1 outlines characteristics of recipients of 2007 doctorates in language and literature. Of the 906 recipients in English, 41.6% were men and 58.4% were women. Of the 608 recipients in foreign languages, 39.0% were men and 61.0% were women. United States citizens and permanent visa holders composed 83.6% of English and 66.3% of foreign language doctorates; those on temporary United

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States visas made up 8.0% of English and 27.8% of foreign language doctorates. Just over half (51.8%) of recipients of English doctorates and just under half (49.2%) of recipients of foreign language doctorates held a bachelor's degree in the same field as their doctorate. In English, the median times from receipt of the bachelor's to receipt of the doctorate were 11.1 years (total) and 9.5 years (registered); in foreign languages, they were 11.2 years (total) and 9.0 years (registered).

Definite postgraduation employment was had by 52.3% of English and 53.1% of foreign language respondents. In English, 25.4% of respondents were seeking employment or postdoctoral study; in foreign language, 29.8%. Some definite form of postdoctoral study was had by 6.5% of recipients of English doctorates and 5.6% of recipients of foreign language doctorates. Postgraduation plans were unknown for 5.4% of English and 6.8% of foreign language respondents. In the categories of employment or study marked NA (not available), data were few and have been suppressed to protect the identity of respondents.

Of graduates with definite employment, by far the largest percentages—90.1% of recipients of doctorates in English and 88.2% of recipients of doctorates in foreign language—indicated that their employment was in education. These percentages suggest that just under 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 80.1% of those in English and 81.6% of those in foreign languages. Research and development was the secondary activity of 55.0% of graduates working in English and 65.6% of graduates working in foreign languages, 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 middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania), the south Atlantic (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia), the east north central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin), and the Pacific and insular (Alaska, California, Hawai'i, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Trust Territory, Virgin Islands) sections of the United States.

Table 2 outlines available data for the race and ethnicity of 2007 doctorate recipients. The only category of race or ethnicity in which foreign languages shows a significantly higher percentage than English (18.6% as compared with 1.6%) is Hispanic—the only category that implies a specific first or heritage language other than English. Despite years of good intentions on the part of many members of the profession, the percentages of doctorate recipients of color remained disproportionately low.

2008 Profiles in Detail

Table 3 outlines characteristics of recipients of 2008 doctorates in language and literature. Of the 891 recipients in English, 35.4% were men, and 64.6% were women. Of the 627 recipients in foreign languages, 35.2% were men, and 64.8% were

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women. United States citizens and permanent visa holders composed 86.2% of English and 61.9% of foreign language doctorates. Those on temporary United States visas made up 9.0% of English and 30.6% of foreign language doctorates. Among recipients of doctorates in English, 53.2% held a bachelor's degree in English, while only 41.8% of recipients of doctorates in foreign languages held a bachelor's degree in the same field as their doctorate. Most respondents, 86.0% of those in English and 84.2% of those in foreign languages, held a master's degree. In English, the median times from receipt of the bachelor's to receipt of the doctorate were 11.0 years (total) and 9.2 years (registered); in foreign languages, they were 11.6 years (total) and 9.1 years (registered).

Definite postgraduation employment was had by 50.2% of English and 49.1% of foreign language respondents. In English, 28.1% of respondents were seeking employment or postdoctoral study; in foreign languages, 27.1%. Some definite form of postdoctoral study was had by 7.0% of recipients of doctorates in English and 5.3% of recipients of doctorates in foreign languages. Postgraduation plans were unknown for 3.3% of English and 2.6% of foreign language respondents. In the categories of employment or study marked NA (not available), data were few and have been suppressed to protect the identity of respondents.

Of graduates with definite employment, by far the largest percentages—89.2% of recipients of doctorates in English and 94.8% of recipients of doctorates in foreign languages—indicated that the employment was in education. These percentages suggest that about 45% of all doctorate recipients in English and foreign languages had some form of definite postgraduation employment in education when they submitted the SED. This percentage is down slightly from that of 2007.

Of employed graduates, teaching was the primary employment activity of 77.9% of those in English and 77.5% of those in foreign languages. The secondary activity of 50.6% of graduates working in English and 59.5% of graduates working in foreign languages was research and development. Thus while many 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), the east north central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin), the middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania), and the Pacific and insular (Alaska, California, Hawai'i, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Trust Territory, Virgin Islands) sections of the United States.

Table 4 outlines available data for the race and ethnicity of 2008 degree recipients. Hispanic, the only category of race or ethnicity that implies a first or heritage language other than English, was also the only category to show a significantly higher percentage in foreign languages than in English. In 2008, Hispanic recipients accounted for 17.8% of all foreign language doctorates in the United States cohort. As in 2007, the percentages of doctorate recipients of color remained disproportionately low.

Tables 5 and 6 give information about 2008 doctorate recipients' debt levels and primary sources of financial support. Table 5 shows that recipients of doctorates in

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the humanities had a mean debt of \$23,033, compared with \$17,544 for recipients of doctorates in all fields. The mean debt incurred from graduate school was \$16,917 for those with humanities doctorates and \$12,087 for all doctorate recipients. A significant percentage of graduates from humanities programs reported no debt at the undergraduate level (68.6%) or at the graduate level (51.7%); 41.0% of humanities graduates and 52.8% of all doctorate recipients reported no debt at either level.

Among 2008 doctorate recipients, however, 46.2% of black, 26.2% of white, 25.6% of Hispanic, and 18.9% of Asian recipients report over \$30,000 in debt incurred from undergraduate and graduate school. Broken down by race and ethnicity, median debts reported were \$38,586 for black recipients, \$29,698 for American Indian recipients, \$27,553 for Hispanic recipients, \$21,299 for white recipients, and \$13,216 for Asian recipients. Reporting debt levels greater than \$70,000 were 24.1% of black, 13.8% of American Indian, 12.5% of Hispanic, 9.3% of white, and 5.2% of Asian doctorate recipients.

Table 6 shows that teaching assistantships (35.3%) and fellowships (37.7%) were the most common forms of financial support for 2008 humanities doctorate recipients. A notable 22.8% relied primarily on their own resources.

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 2008. While all the lines in the figure show an increase from 1958 to the early 1970s, a drop from the early 1970s 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 2008. While the shape of this line is similar to those in figure 1, doctorate conferrals in all fields only slow or drop off very slightly from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. The more distinct drop in language and literature doctorates over that period can be attributed, in part, to the doctorate employment crisis, which emerged at the 1969 MLA convention and has been a preoccupying concern ever since.

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 2008. Here we can see that since 1958 the humanities' and language and literature's share of all doctorates has declined noticeably. It reached highs in 1960 and 1973 and a low in 2008.

Figures 4 and 5 show 2008 doctorate recipients' reported employment. "Definite employment" at the time of graduation includes a tenure-track or non-tenure-track position, as well as a job in a sector other than higher education. For the period between 1984 and 2008, about half of any given year's graduates report having definite employment at the time of graduation. For 2008 the figures are 50.2% for graduates in English, 49.1% for graduates in foreign languages. Across the twenty-four years, the SED data on doctorate recipients with definite employment show a range from

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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 doctorates granted since 1958 has been most dramatically represented in women's greater access to graduate study. In 1958 only 991 of 8,773 doctorates in all fields, or 11.3%, were granted to women. By 2008 this number had risen to 22,496 of 48,767 doctorates, or 46.1%, a difference of 2,170% in the number of doctorates granted to women yearly. The number of doctorates granted to men in 2008 was only 238% greater than in 1958. As figure 7 shows, the increase in this period in doctorates granted to women in the humanities is similarly striking: in 1958, 202 doctorates were granted to women in the humanities, while 2,465 were conferred in 2008. In fact, women have for the past several years surpassed men in earning doctorates in the humanities.

Doug Steward

Work Cited

Fiegener, Mark K. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report, 2007–08*. National Science Foundation. Natl. Science Foundation, 2009. Web. 16 Feb. 2010.

Table 1
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2007¹

| | English and American Language and Literature (%) | Foreign Languages and Literatures (%) |
|--|---|--|
| Total doctorates earned (no.) | 906 | 608 |
| Gender | | |
| Men | 41.6 | 39.0 |
| Women | 58.4 | 61.0 |
| Citizenship status | | |
| US citizen and permanent visa | 83.6 | 66.3 |
| Non-US, temporary visa | 8.0 | 27.8 |
| Unknown | 8.3 | 5.9 |
| Bachelor's in same field as doctorate | 51.8 | 49.2 |
| Master's | 86.3 | 88.2 |
| Median time lapse from baccalaureate to doctorate | | |
| Total time (yrs.) | 11.1 | 11.2 |
| Registered time (yrs.) | 9.5 | 9.0 |
| Postdoctoral plans | | |
| Definite employment | 52.3 | 53.1 |
| Seeking employment or study | 25.4 | 29.8 |
| Definite postdoctoral study | 6.5 | 5.6 |
| Other | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| Definite employment after doctorate² | | |
| Educational institution | 90.1 | 88.2 |
| Industry or business | NA | 2.5 |
| Government | NA | NA |
| Nonprofit | NA | NA |
| Other or unknown | 5.4 | 6.8 |
| Definite postdoctoral study³ | | |
| Fellowship | NA | NA |
| Research associateship | NA | 38.2 |
| Traineeship | NA | NA |
| Other study | NA | NA |

(continued)

Table 1
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2007¹ (cont.)

| | English and American Language and Literature (%) | Foreign Languages and Literatures (%) |
|---|---|--|
| Employment commitments after doctorate | | |
| Primary activity | | |
| R&D | 11.5 | 12.5 |
| Teaching | 80.1 | 81.6 |
| Administration | 4.7 | 3.0 |
| Professional services | NA | 2.3 |
| Other | NA | 0.7 |
| Secondary activity | | |
| R&D | 55.0 | 65.6 |
| Teaching | 14.3 | 14.4 |
| Administration | 8.3 | 3.6 |
| Professional services | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| Other | 2.3 | 0.3 |
| No secondary activity | 17.3 | 12.5 |
| Activities unknown | 4.1 | 5.6 |
| Region of employment after doctorate | | |
| New England | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| Middle Atlantic | 20.2 | 20.7 |
| East north central | 13.7 | 13.6 |
| West north central | 6.4 | 7.7 |
| South Atlantic | 16.3 | 14.2 |
| East south central | 6.7 | 5.3 |
| West south central | 8.5 | 5.6 |
| Mountain | 4.2 | 8.7 |
| Pacific and insular | 10.8 | 9.3 |
| Foreign | 5.8 | 6.5 |
| Region unknown | 0.0 | 0.3 |

1. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

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

Table 2
US Doctorate Recipients, US Citizens by Race or Ethnicity, 2007¹

| | American Indian | Asian | Black / African American | White | Hispanic | Other / unknown race | Total ² |
|--|--------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|----------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Humanities | | | | | | | |
| Number | 14 | 202 | 185 | 3,120 | 254 | 76 | 3,920 |
| Percentage | 0.4 | 5.2 | 4.7 | 79.6 | 6.5 | 1.9 | |
| English and American language and literature | | | | | | | |
| Number | 3 | 31 | 44 | 620 | 12 | 16 | 758 |
| Percentage | 0.4 | 4.1 | 5.8 | 81.8 | 1.6 | 2.1 | |
| Foreign languages and literatures | | | | | | | |
| Number | 2 | 22 | 10 | 281 | 75 | 7 | 403 |
| Percentage | 0.0 | 5.5 | 2.5 | 69.7 | 18.6 | 1.7 | |

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.

Table 3
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2008¹

| | English and American Language and Literature (%) | Foreign Languages and Literatures (%) |
|--|---|--|
| Total doctorates earned (no.) | 891 | 627 |
| Gender | | |
| Men | 35.4 | 35.2 |
| Women | 64.6 | 64.8 |
| Citizenship status | | |
| US citizen and permanent visa | 86.2 | 61.9 |
| Non-US, temporary visa | 9.0 | 30.6 |
| Unknown | 5.5 | 7.5 |
| Bachelor's in same field as doctorate | 53.2 | 41.8 |
| Master's | 86.0 | 84.2 |
| Median time lapse from baccalaureate to doctorate | | |
| Total time (yrs.) | 11.0 | 11.6 |
| Registered time (yrs.) | 9.2 | 9.1 |
| Postdoctoral plans | | |
| Definite employment | 50.2 | 49.1 |
| Seeking employment or study | 28.1 | 27.1 |
| Definite postdoctoral study | 7.0 | 5.3 |
| Other | 3.3 | 2.6 |
| Definite employment after doctorate² | | |
| Educational institution | 89.2 | 94.8 |
| Industry or business | 1.3 | NA |
| Government | NA | NA |
| Nonprofit | NA | NA |
| Other or unknown | 3.6 | 2.3 |
| Definite postdoctoral study³ | | |
| Fellowship | NA | 75.8 |
| Research associateship | NA | NA |
| Traineeship | NA | NA |
| Other study | 0.0 | NA |

(continued)

Table 3
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2008¹ (cont.)

| | English and American Language and Literature (%) | Foreign Languages and Literatures (%) |
|---|---|--|
| Employment commitments after doctorate | | |
| Primary activity | | |
| R&D | 14.2 | 18.7 |
| Teaching | 77.9 | 77.5 |
| Administration | 2.6 | NA |
| Professional services | 2.0 | NA |
| Other | 2.1 | 0.4 |
| Secondary activity | | |
| R&D | 50.6 | 59.5 |
| Teaching | 15.2 | 18.0 |
| Administration | 8.0 | 6.0 |
| Professional services | 2.9 | 3.2 |
| Other | 3.1 | 0.7 |
| No secondary activity | 20.3 | 12.7 |
| Activities unknown | 8.7 | 7.8 |
| Region of employment after doctorate | | |
| New England | 7.5 | 11.4 |
| Middle Atlantic | 17.7 | 10.4 |
| East north central | 14.1 | 18.8 |
| West north central | 6.7 | 6.5 |
| South Atlantic | 17.9 | 16.2 |
| East south central | 6.2 | 4.5 |
| West south central | 8.1 | 4.9 |
| Mountain | 4.9 | 3.9 |
| Pacific and insular | 11.4 | 15.3 |
| Foreign | NA | 8.1 |
| Region unknown | 0.0 | 0.0 |

1. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

2. Percentages are based only on those doctorate recipients who indicated definite employment and specified the type.

3. Percentages are based on only those doctorate recipients who indicated definite postdoctoral study and specified the type.

NA = not available

Table 4
US Doctorate Recipients, US Citizens by Race or Ethnicity, 2008¹

| | American Indian | Asian | Black / African American | White | Hispanic | Other / unknown race | Total ² |
|--|--------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|----------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Humanities | | | | | | | |
| Number | 13 | 171 | 170 | 3,009 | 206 | 167 | 3,736 |
| Percentage | 0.3 | 4.6 | 4.6 | 80.5 | 5.5 | 4.5 | |
| English and American language and literature | | | | | | | |
| Number | 0 | 40 | 27 | 637 | 31 | 33 | 768 |
| Percentage | 0.0 | 5.2 | 3.5 | 82.9 | 4.0 | 4.3 | |
| Foreign languages and literatures | | | | | | | |
| Number | 0 | 21 | 12 | 268 | 69 | 18 | 388 |
| Percentage | 0.0 | 5.4 | 3.1 | 69.1 | 17.8 | 4.6 | |

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.

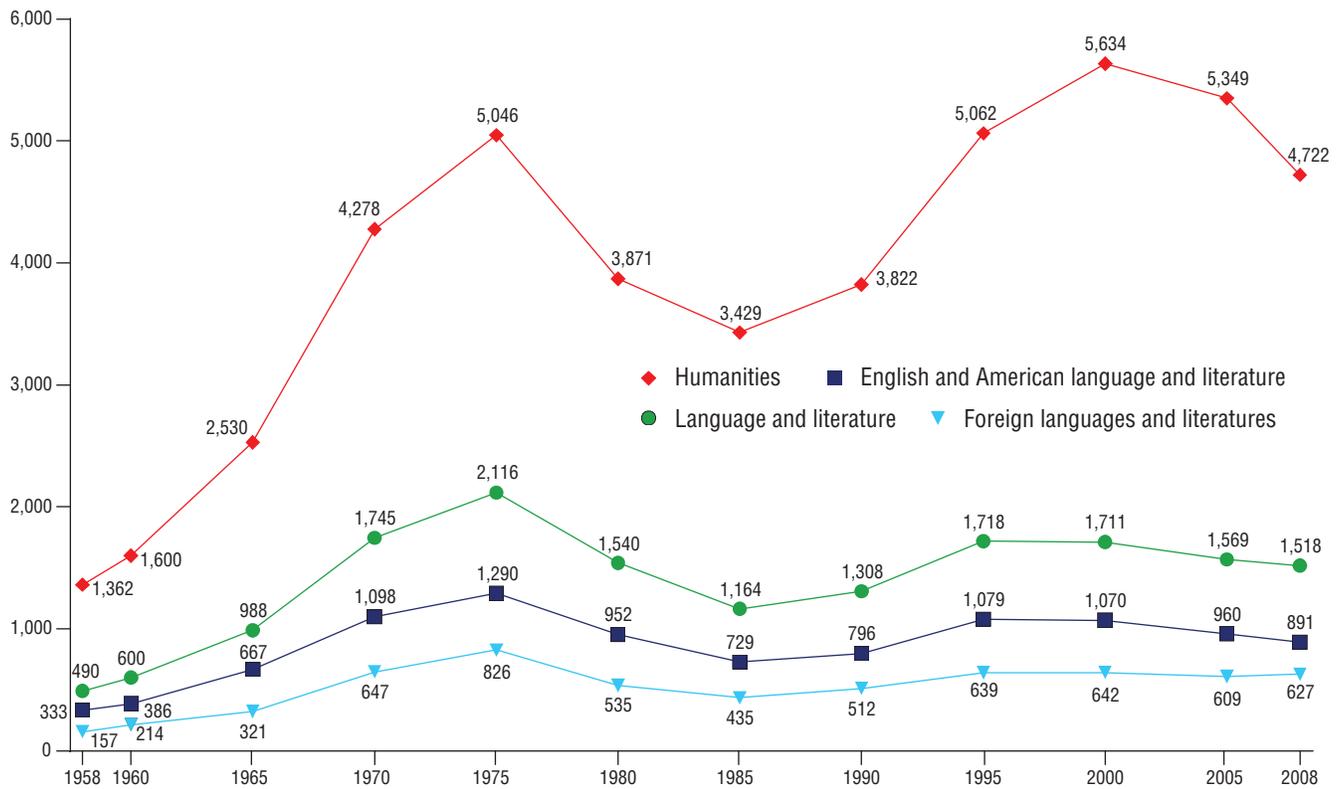
Table 5
Debt Levels for 2008 Doctorate Recipients, Humanities and All Fields

| | Humanities | | All Fields | |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Cumulative | | | | |
| No debt | 1,757 | 41.0 | 23,461 | 52.8 |
| \$10,000 or less | 523 | 12.2 | 4,690 | 10.6 |
| \$10,001–\$20,000 | 424 | 9.9 | 3,732 | 8.4 |
| \$20,001–\$30,000 | 335 | 7.8 | 2,818 | 6.3 |
| \$30,001–\$40,000 | 221 | 5.2 | 1,916 | 4.3 |
| \$40,001–\$50,000 | 225 | 5.2 | 1,621 | 3.7 |
| \$50,001–\$60,000 | 148 | 3.5 | 1,302 | 2.9 |
| \$60,001–\$70,000 | 171 | 4.0 | 1,315 | 3.0 |
| \$70,001 or more | 484 | 11.3 | 3,545 | 8.0 |
| Total | 4,288 | 100.0 | 44,400 | 100.0 |
| Mean debt | \$23,033 | | \$17,544 | |
| Graduate | | | | |
| No debt | 2,194 | 51.7 | 28,184 | 64.1 |
| \$10,000 or less | 478 | 11.3 | 3,919 | 8.9 |
| \$10,001–\$20,000 | 329 | 7.8 | 2,532 | 5.8 |
| \$20,001–\$30,000 | 242 | 5.7 | 1,919 | 4.4 |
| \$30,001–\$40,000 | 180 | 4.2 | 1,564 | 3.6 |
| \$40,001–\$50,000 | 174 | 4.1 | 1,237 | 2.8 |
| \$50,001–\$60,000 | 133 | 3.1 | 1,030 | 2.3 |
| \$60,001–\$70,000 | 146 | 3.4 | 1,184 | 2.7 |
| \$70,001 or more | 366 | 8.6 | 2,430 | 5.5 |
| Total | 4,242 | 100.0 | 43,999 | 100.0 |
| Mean debt | \$16,917 | | \$12,087 | |
| Undergraduate | | | | |
| No debt | 2,896 | 68.6 | 32,370 | 73.8 |
| \$10,000 or less | 432 | 10.2 | 3,368 | 7.7 |
| \$10,001–\$20,000 | 357 | 8.5 | 3,220 | 7.3 |
| \$20,001–\$30,000 | 250 | 5.9 | 2,176 | 5.0 |
| \$30,001–\$40,000 | 120 | 2.8 | 1,151 | 2.6 |
| \$40,001–\$50,000 | 79 | 1.9 | 697 | 1.6 |
| \$50,001–\$60,000 | 40 | 0.9 | 397 | 0.9 |
| \$60,001–\$70,000 | 24 | 0.6 | 248 | 0.6 |
| \$70,001 or more | 23 | 0.5 | 240 | 0.5 |
| Total | 4,221 | 100.0 | 43,867 | 100.0 |
| Mean debt | \$6,398 | | \$5,634 | |

Table 6
Primary Sources of Financial Support for 2008
Humanities Doctorate Recipients

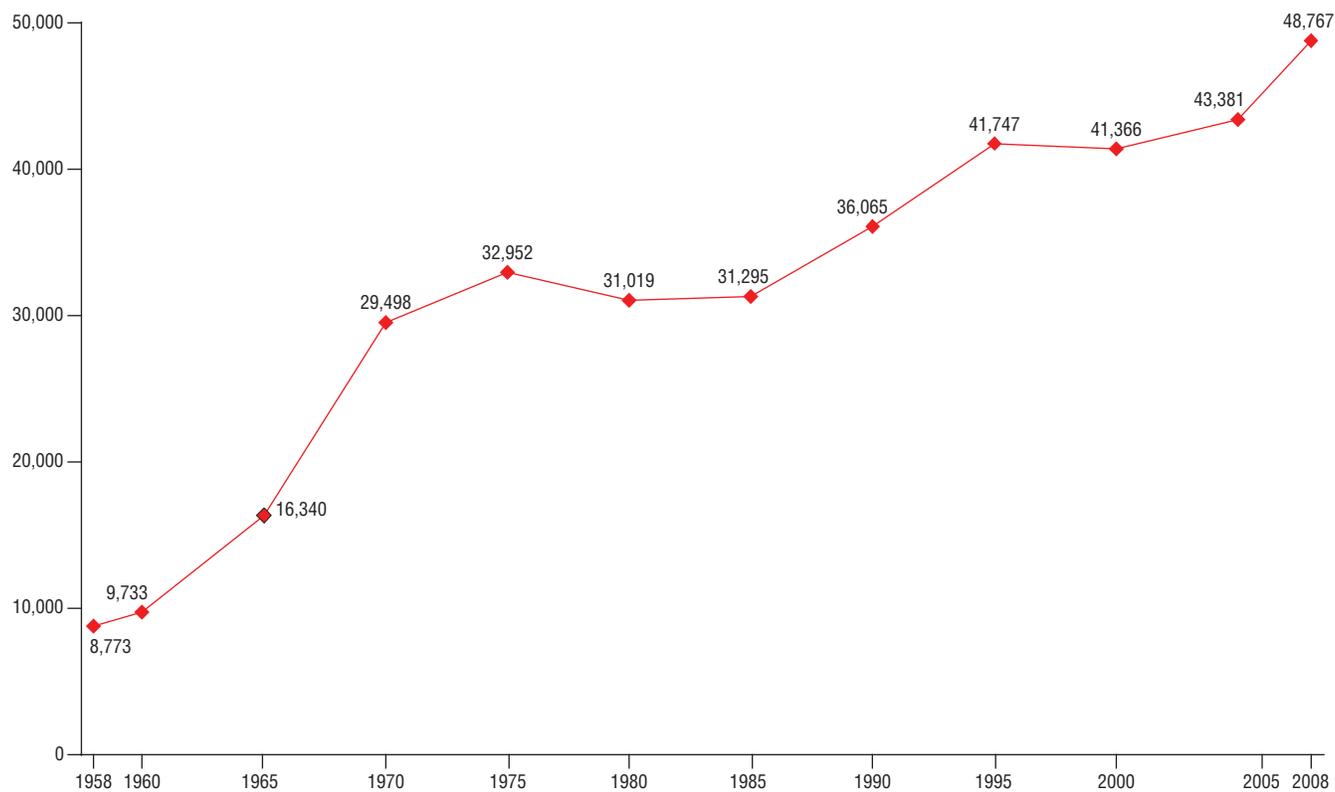
| | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Teaching assistantships | 35.3 |
| Research assistantships/traineeships | 1.9 |
| Fellowships/grants | 37.7 |
| Own resources | 22.8 |
| Foreign government | 0.7 |
| Employer | 1.6 |
| Other | 0.1 |
| Number of recipients (basis for percentages) | 4,200 |

Fig. 1
Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature, 1958–2008



Note: Data conform to latest print edition of the SED.

Fig. 2
Doctorates Earned in All Fields, 1958–2008



Note: Data conform to latest print edition of the SED.

Fig. 3
Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature per 100 Doctorates in All Fields, 1958–2008

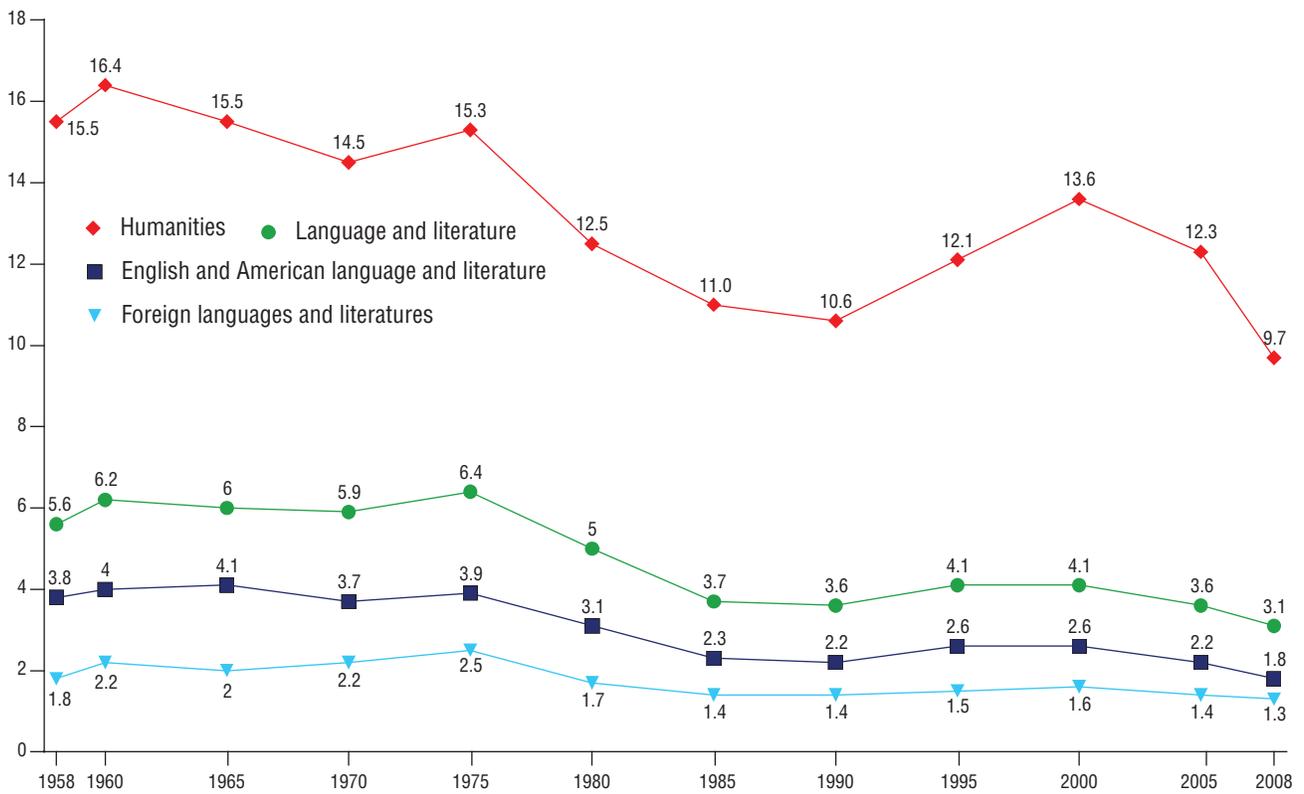


Fig. 4
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in English and American Language and Literature by Percentage, 1984–2008

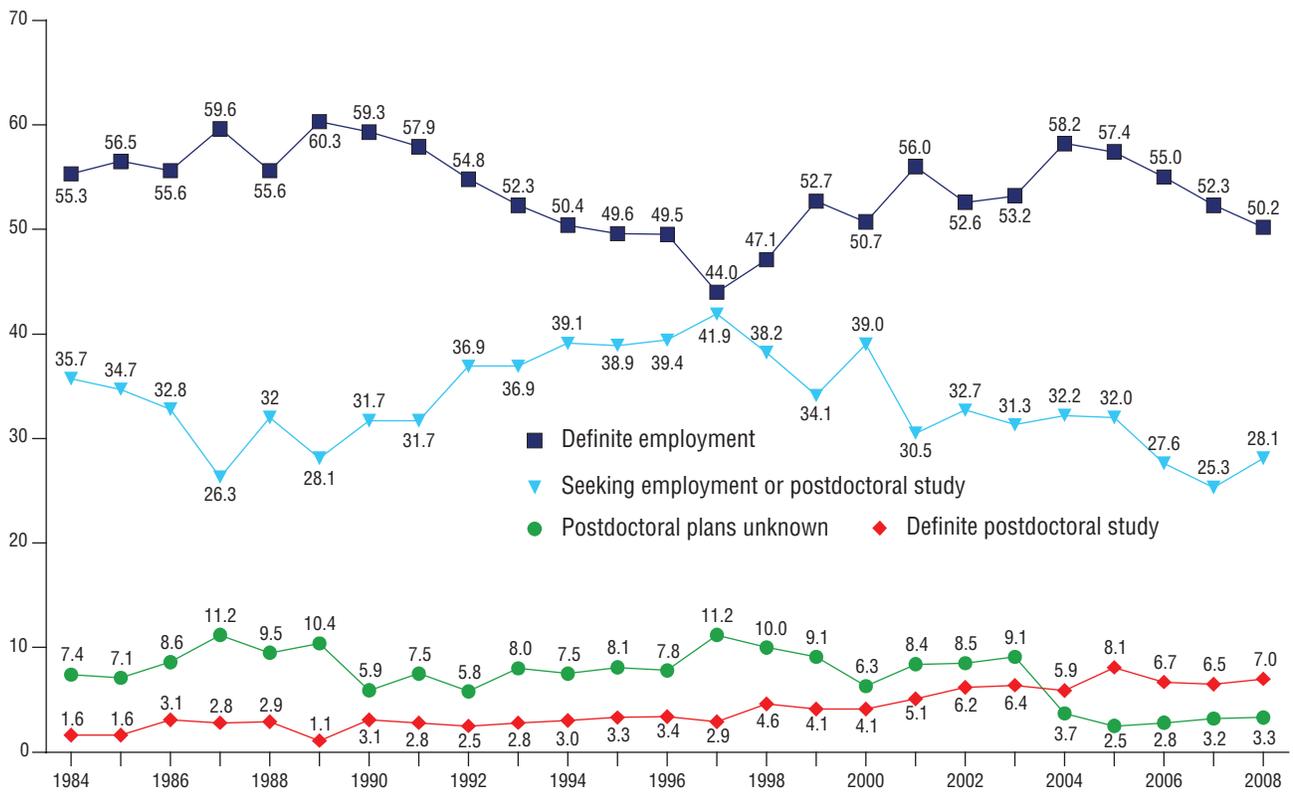


Fig. 5
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in Foreign Languages and Literatures by Percentage, 1984–2008

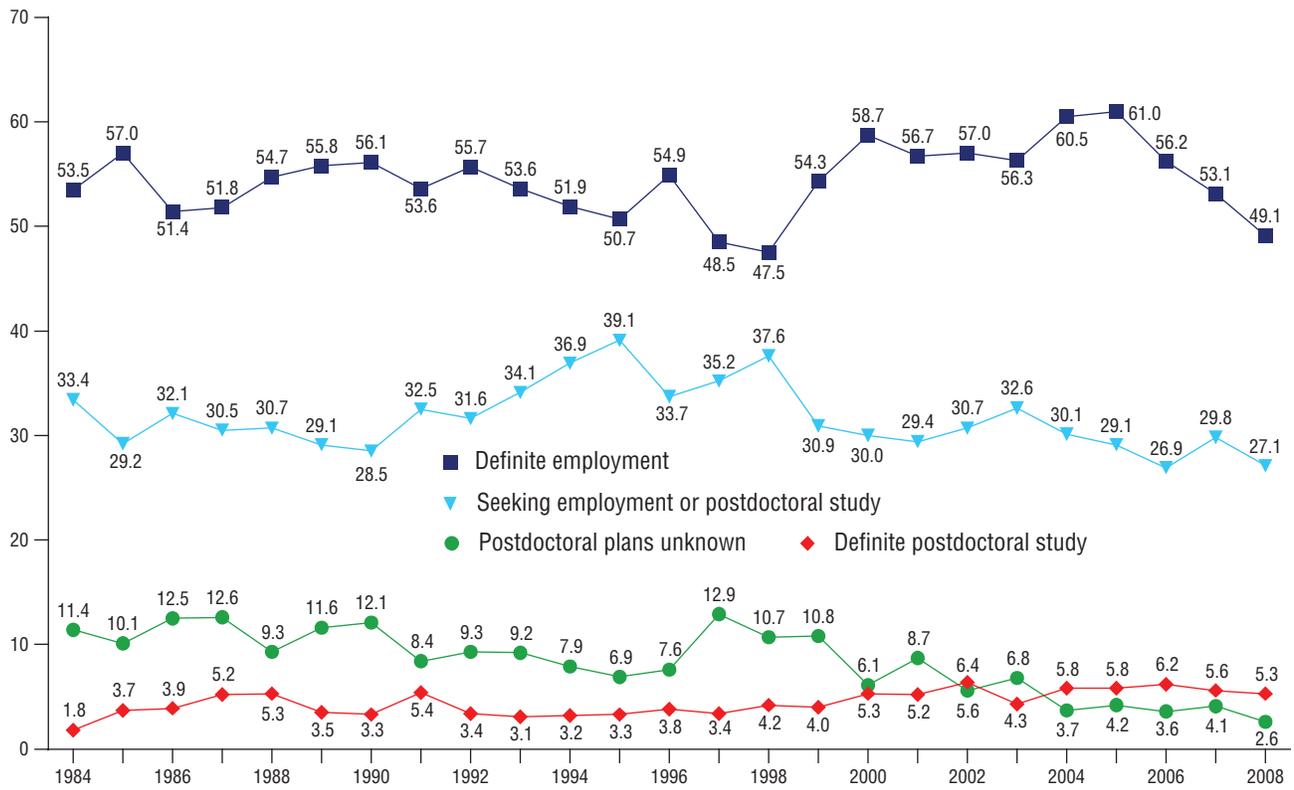
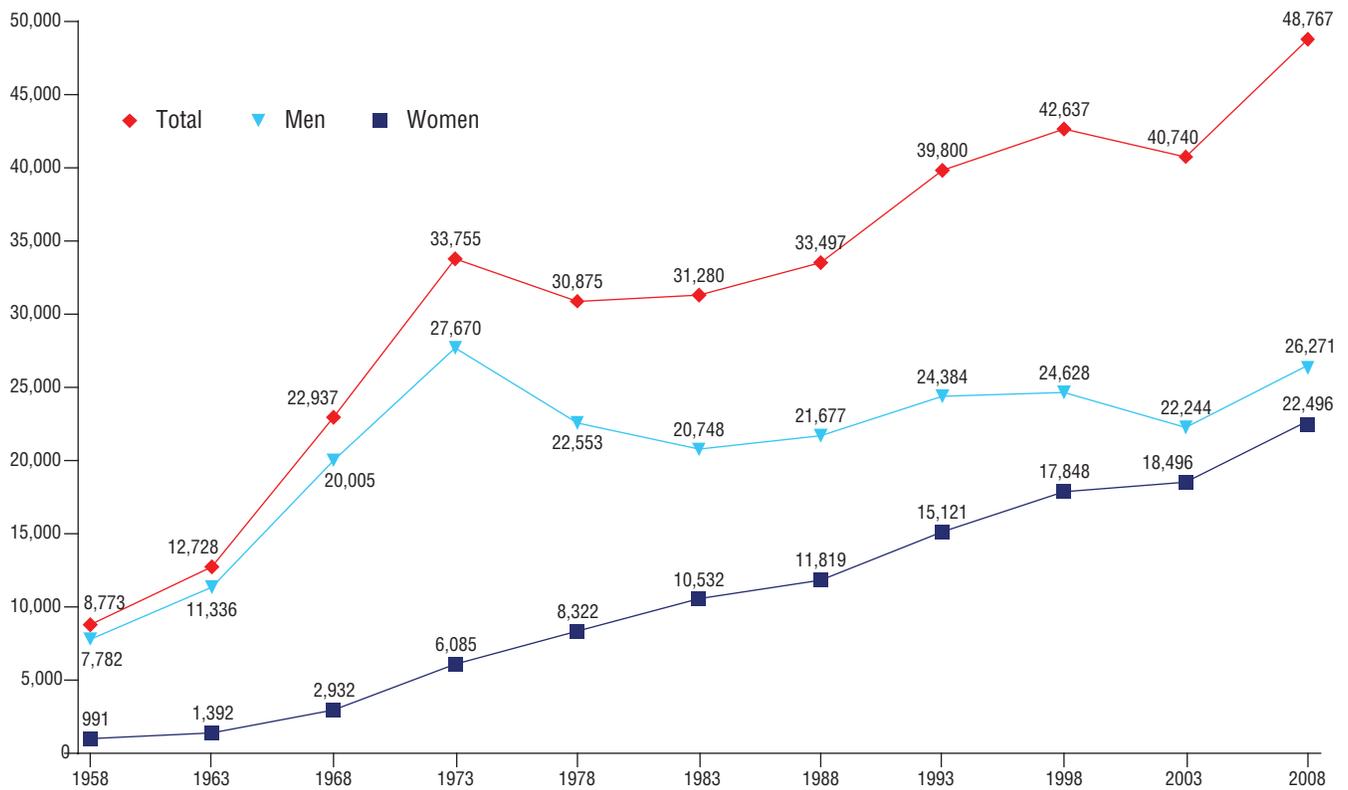
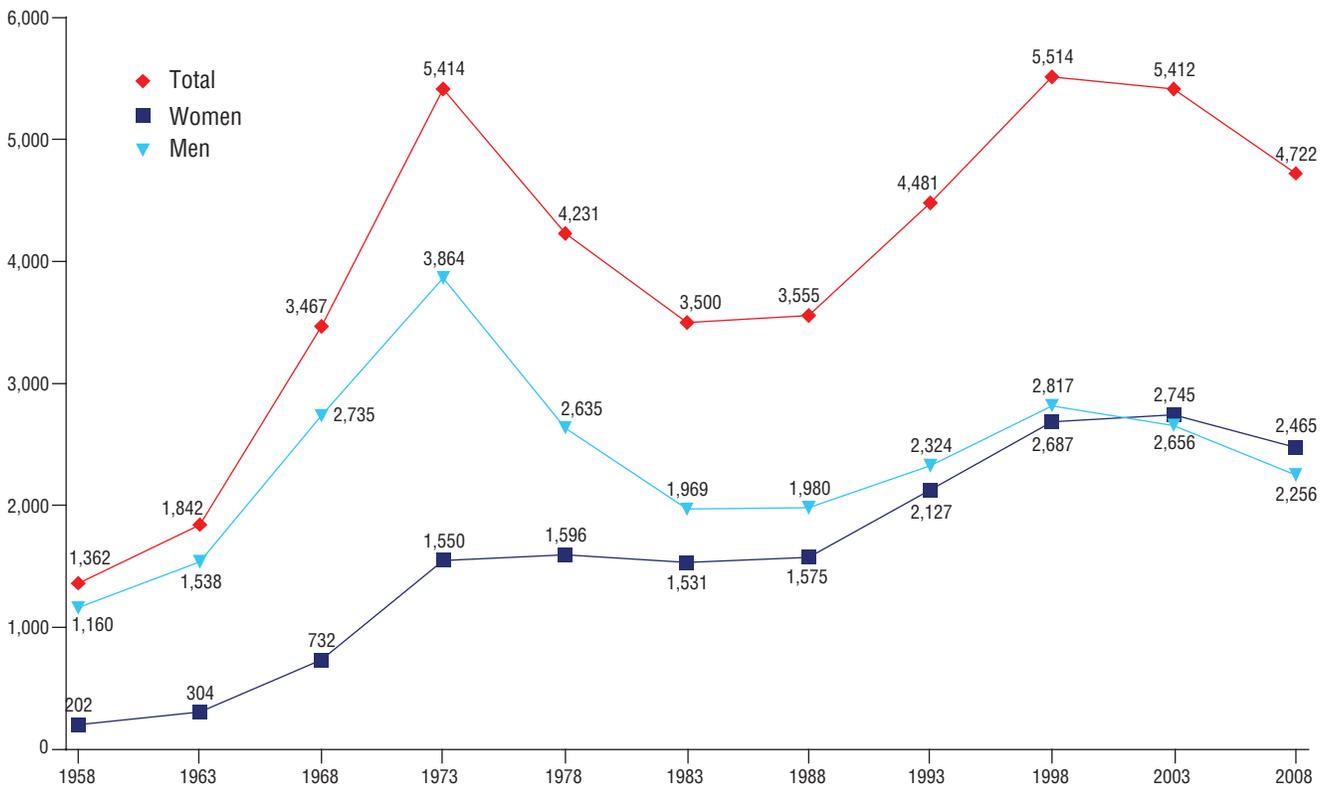


Fig. 6
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in All Fields, Selected Years, 1958–2008



Note: Data before 1966 and for 2008 are those reported in the print edition of the SED. 1966–2008 data conform to the latest available online, 17 Feb. 2010. Totals include unknown gender.

Fig. 7
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in the Humanities, Selected Years, 1958–2008



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