



A PROFILE OF THE COMMUNICATION DOCTORATE VIII:

THE 2019 NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION'S
SURVEY OF EARNED DOCTORATES



NATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
ASSOCIATION

Each year, the National Communication Association (NCA) generates “A Profile of the Communication Doctorate,” based on data contained in the National Science Foundation’s Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). The 2019 SED was released in December 2020 and this report serves as an update to the previously released profiles of the Communication doctorate.

A Note on Disciplinary Classification

Since 2009, the complete set of responses to the SED has included specific information about doctorates received in Communication.¹ Communication is classified in the SED as “Other non-science and engineering.” In addition to Communication, this “broad field” category includes “Business management and administration,” “Non-S&E fields not elsewhere classified,” and “Unknown field.” Additional non-S&E broad fields include “Education” and “Humanities and Arts.”

Respondents to the SED are asked to write the name of the primary field of their dissertation research and to select a code from a list of fields to classify their dissertation research. The broad field classification of Communication includes the subfield designations of Communication Research, Communication Theory, Film/Radio/TV & Digital Communication, Mass Communication/Media Studies, Communication/General, and Communication/Other. The broad field classification for Letters includes the sub-fields of Speech & Rhetorical Studies and Rhetoric & Composition. It is possible that some Communication doctorates selected Speech & Rhetorical Studies or Rhetoric & Composition as their field, and thus would not be classified in the field of Communication by the SED.

Data about Communication doctorates should be read broadly, with the understanding that some doctorates may not be included (i.e., doctorates self-classified as Letters), while others from related disciplines (i.e., Journalism) may be counted toward the total number of Communication doctorates.

Doctorate Recipients and Institutions

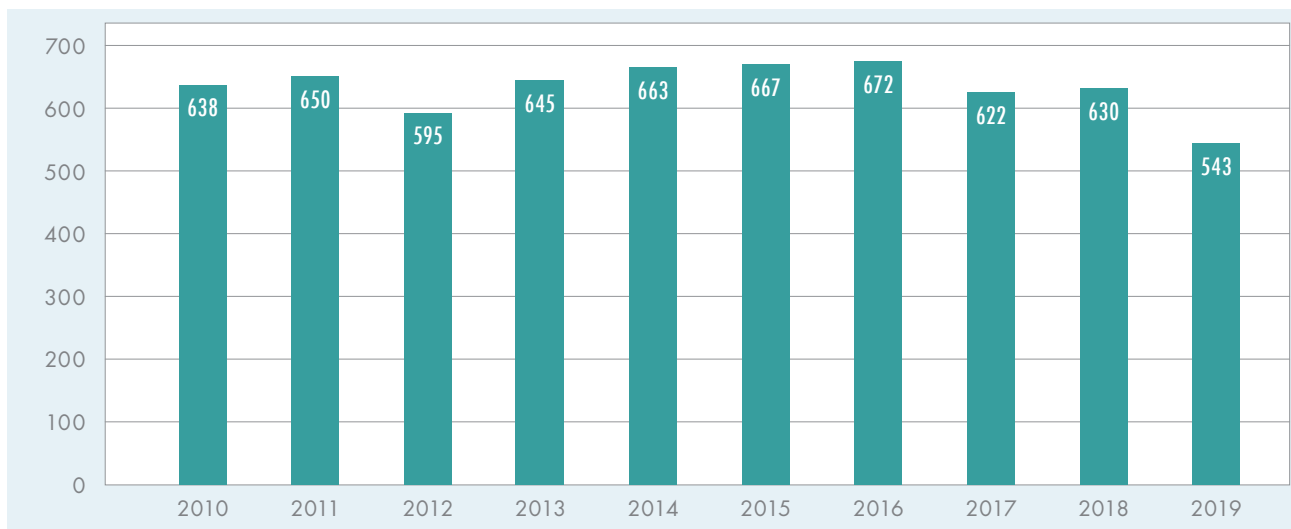
The population eligible for the 2019 SED included all individuals who received a research doctorate from a U.S. academic institution between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. This population consisted of 55,703 persons at 448 institutions. The survey response rate was 92.1 percent.²

Of the 55,703 doctorates reported in the 2019 SED, 543 (.97 percent) were classified as in the Communication discipline. This represents a decrease of 87 doctorates since the 2018 SED, which reported 630 doctorates in Communication. In comparison, Political Science and Government produced 707 doctorates (down from 734 in 2018), Sociology produced 633 doctorates (down from 668 in 2018), and Anthropology produced 445 doctorates (up from 424 in 2018). In the humanities, History produced 912 doctorates (down from 948 in 2018), and Foreign Languages and Literature produced 610 doctorates (a decrease of seven since 2018).

¹ Though the SED reports some data on Communication doctorates from 1981 on, full responses organized by field that include Communication are only available from the 2009 SED to the present.

² See: <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/report/data-source>.

Communication Doctorates Conferred, 2010-2019



Source: 2019 SED, Table 13. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.

Of the 543 Communication doctorates conferred in 2019, 161 (29.7 percent) were in Communication Research, 24 (4.4 percent) were in Communication Theory, 171 (31.5 percent) were in Mass Communication/Media Studies, 12 (2.2 percent) were in Film/Radio/TV & Digital Communication, 118 (21.7 percent) were in Communication/General, and 57 (10.5 percent) were in Communication/Other. In the broad field of Letters, doctorates identified as Speech & Rhetorical Studies numbered 50 in 2019, or 3.6 percent of all doctorates in Letters, and the number of doctorates in Rhetoric & Composition totaled 191 in 2019, or 13.8 percent of all doctorates in Letters.

The University of Texas granted the highest number of Communication doctorates in 2019, awarding 22. A total of five institutions awarded more than 15 doctorates each, while another 11 institutions conferred at least 10 doctoral degrees. The table to the right displays universities conferring 10 or more doctorates in 2019.

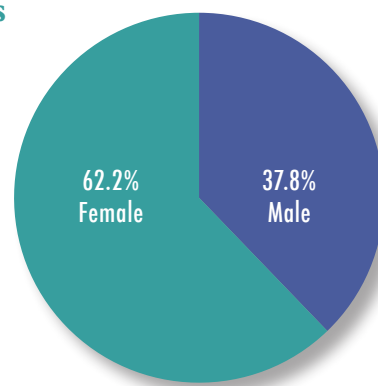
INSTITUTIONS CONFERRING 10+ COMMUNICATION DOCTORATES, 2019	
University of Texas at Austin	22
Michigan State University	18
Texas Tech University	18
University of Southern California	18
University of Pennsylvania	17
Ohio University	14
University of Florida	14
Regent University	11
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	11
University of Maryland, College Park	11
University of Missouri, Columbia	11
Arizona State University	10
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge	10
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick	10
Texas A&M University, College Station and Health Science Center	10
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	10

Source: 2019 SED, Table 8. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.

Demographic Data—Communication Doctorates

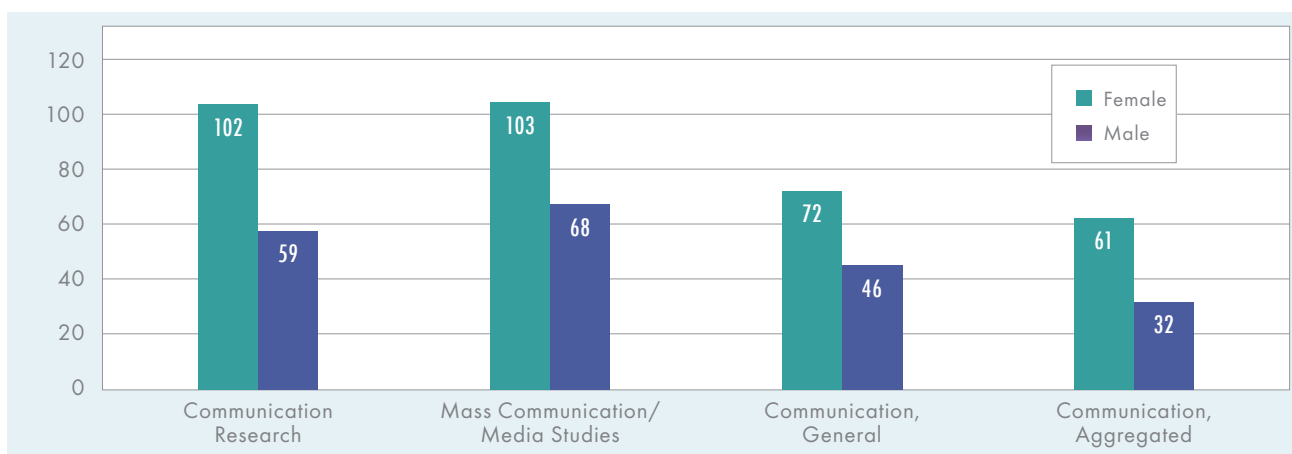
Just over 62 percent of 2019 doctoral recipients in Communication were female. By way of comparison, among the social sciences, 38.8 percent of doctorates in Political Science and Government were awarded to females, while 63.8 percent of doctorates in Sociology went to females, and 65.2 percent of 2019 doctorates in Anthropology were awarded to females. In the humanities, 42 percent of History doctorates were awarded to females, and 59.6 percent of doctorates in Letters went to females.

Source: 2019 SED, Table 16. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.



The chart below indicates that females received more Communication doctorates in the discipline’s sub-fields as well. This difference is most noticeable in the Communication, Research sub-field.

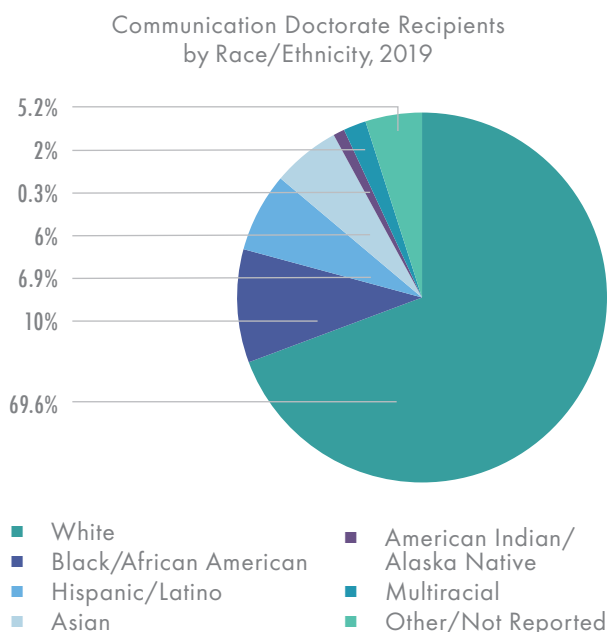
Doctoral Recipients by Sub-field and Sex, 2019



Source: 2019 SED, Table 16. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.

Of the 543 Communication doctorates awarded in 2019, 30 percent (163) were received by “Temporary Visa Holders,” suggesting that more than one in four Communication doctoral recipients are international students. Of the 349 doctoral recipients who were not temporary visa holders and who responded to queries about race/ethnicity, 69.6 percent (243) were classified as “White,” 10 percent (35) were classified as “Black or African American,” 6.9 percent (24) were classified as “Hispanic/Latino,” 6 percent (21) were classified as “Asian,” 0.3 percent (1) were classified as “American Indian or Alaska Native,” 2 percent (7) identified as being “more than one race,” and 18 (5.2 percent) either reported “other race or race not reported” (6) or did not answer ethnicity questions (12).

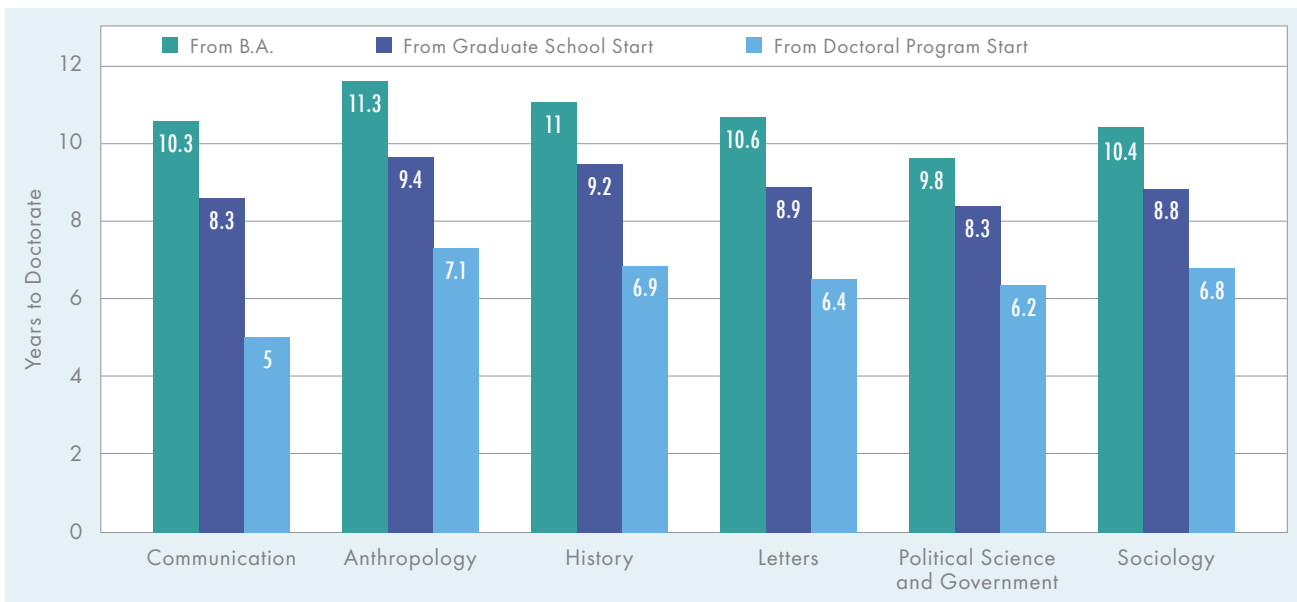
Source: 2019 SED, Table 22. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.



Other Information—Communication Doctorates

For the 543 Communication doctorates included in the 2019 SED, the time to degree was less than in most comparable disciplines. In the broad field (“Other Non-S&E Fields”) that includes Communication, the time to degree was 11.4 years from the B.A., 9.3 years from entering graduate school, and 5.1 years from the start of the doctoral program. These time-to-degree figures for this broad field have declined from a 2001 high of 14.0 years since the B.A., and 10.7 years since entering graduate school. In Communication, the 2019 time-to-degree figures were 10.3 years from the B.A., 8.3 years from entering graduate school, and 5 years from the start of the doctoral program. The chart below compares Communication doctorate time-to-degree with comparable social science and humanities disciplines. As is noted here, the time-to-degree from the start of the doctoral program is lowest in Communication. Communication and Political Science and Government share the lowest time-to-degree from graduate school start, and Communication trails only behind Political Science and Government in lowest time-to-degree from the B.A. degree.

Time to Doctorate, 2019



Source: 2019 SED, Tables 62, 68, & 70. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables/#group7>.

Note: Time to doctorate from doctoral program start is based on master’s degree entry if the master’s degree was at the doctoral institution in the same fine field of study or was a prerequisite to the doctorate; otherwise, it is based on doctoral program entry.

Additional characteristics surveyed by the SED include marital status, degree status, and age at doctorate.

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION DOCTORATE RECIPIENTS, 2019	
Never Married	28.9%
Married	42.5%
B.A. in Same Field	43.3%
M.A. Earned	84.3%
Median Age at Doctorate	34 years

Source: 2019 SED, Table 70. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.

Postgraduation Plans—Communication Doctorates

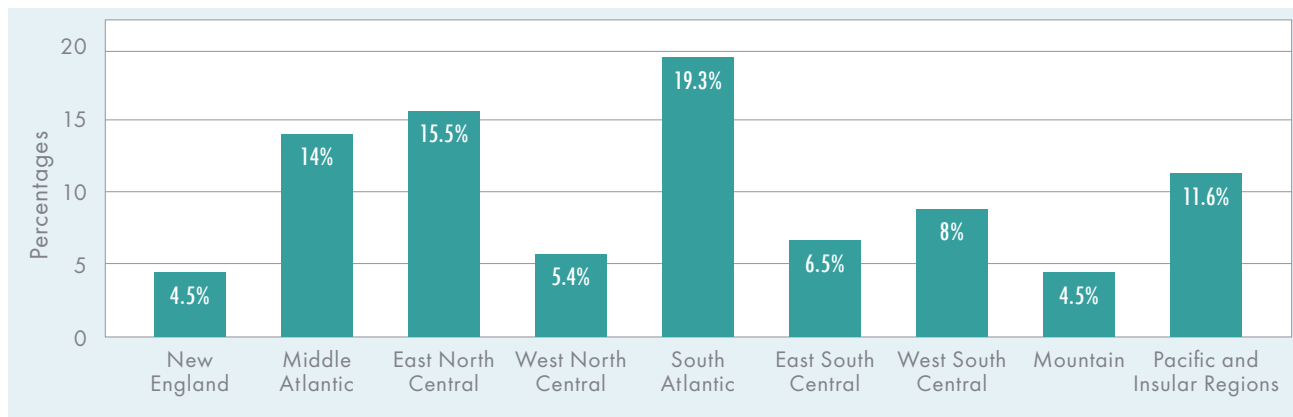
The SED asked respondents for an indication of their postgraduation plans. Of 543 Communication doctorates, 6.1 percent (33) reported “definite postgraduation study”; of that number, 93.9 percent reported receiving either a postdoctoral fellowship or a postdoctoral research associateship.

Another 55.8 percent (303) of the Communication doctorates reported “definite employment” as their postgraduate plans (a minor increase from 55.5 percent in 2018). Of those reporting definite employment, 84.5 percent reported employment in academe (a slight increase from 84 in 2018) and 7.9 percent reported employment in business or industry (a 1.5 percent decrease since 2018). Nearly 23 percent (124) of respondents reported that they were “seeking employment or study” at the time they answered the SED, and less than 2 percent (9) reported “other” as their postgraduate plans. “Other” includes those who indicated having no plans to work or study, those who indicated some other type of postgraduation plans, and those who indicated definite plans for other full-time degree programs.

Female doctoral recipients reported higher numbers of both definite postgraduate study and postgraduate employment. Of the 33 respondents with definite postgraduate study plans, 60.6 percent of females reported definite postgraduate study, compared with 39.4 percent of males. Of the 303 respondents with definite employment plans, 62.7 percent of females reported definite employment versus 37.3 percent of male respondents. More females (85.3 percent) also reported definitive employment in academia than their male counterparts (83.2 percent).

Of those Communication doctorates reporting definite postgraduation plans, most (89.9 percent) plan to stay in the United States, with many graduates planning to locate within the South Atlantic and East North Central regions. This is consistent with findings from the 2018 SED, which also highlighted the popularity of the South Atlantic and East North Central regions. The planned postgraduation locations of Communication doctorates are found in the chart below.

Planned Postgraduation Locations, Communication Doctorates, 2019



Source: 2019 SED, Table 71. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables>.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

The National Communication Association advances Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

NCA serves the scholars, teachers, and practitioners who are its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests in research and teaching. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems. NCA supports inclusiveness and diversity among our faculties, within our membership, in the workplace, and in the classroom; NCA supports and promotes policies that fairly encourage this diversity and inclusion.

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