



AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION

From Curriculum to Career:  
Measuring the Success of Graduate Education

# AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The [American Historical Association](#) promotes historical work and the importance of historical thinking in public life. Incorporated by Congress in 1889, its mission to enhance the work of historians also encompasses professional standards and ethics, innovative scholarship and teaching, academic freedom, and international collaboration. As the largest membership association of professional historians in the world (over 11,000 members), the AHA serves historians in a wide variety of professions, and represents every historical era and geographical area.

## AHA Career Diversity (2011-2020)

- Where Historians Work
- Five Skills

## Survey of Graduate Education (2021)

## Humanities Indicators Project: State of the Humanities 2022



Robert B. Townsend

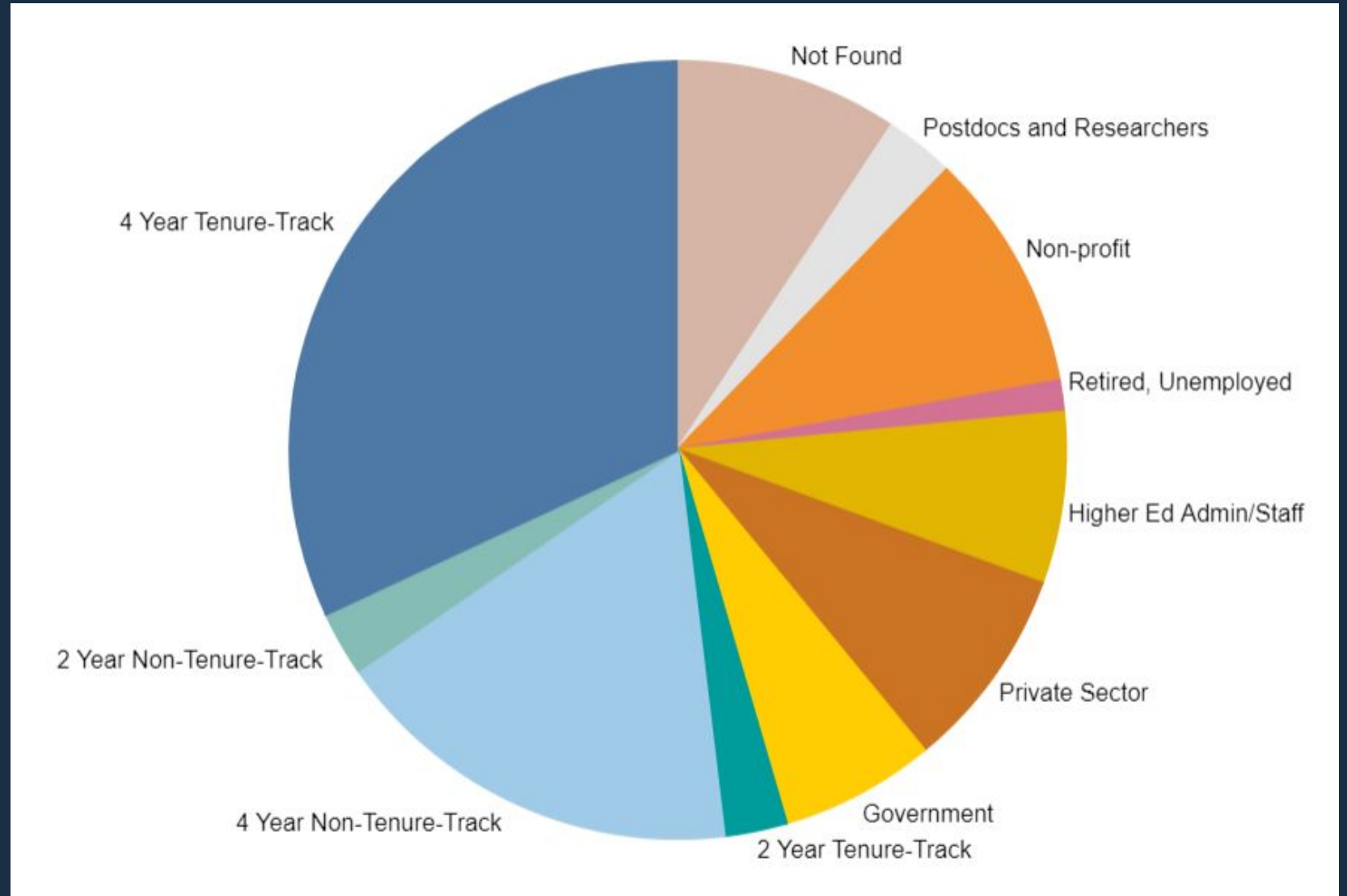
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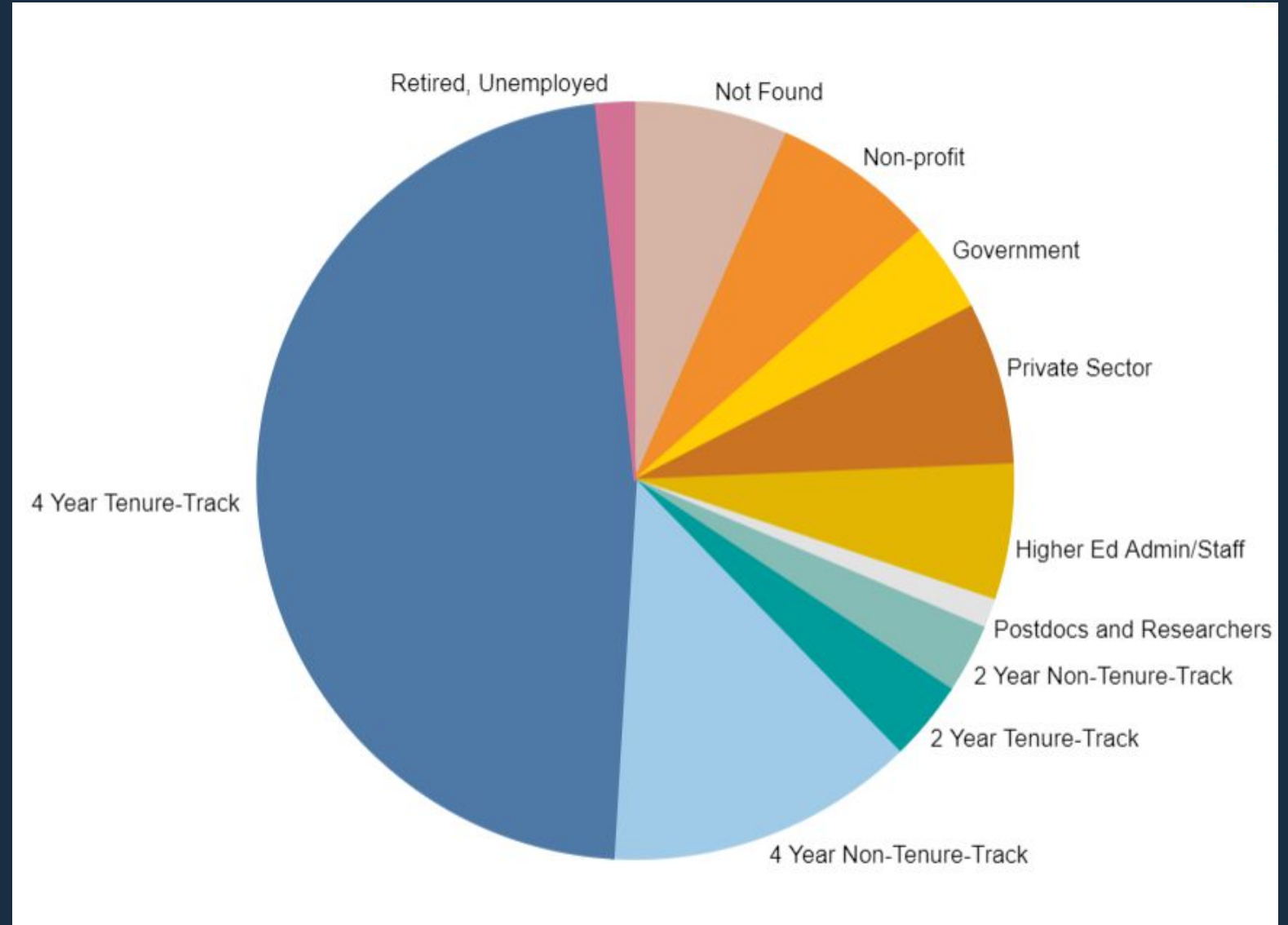
# Where Historians Work (2014-2017 PhDs, as of 2021, n=3,787)

- 4 year TT, 31.94%
- 4 year non-TT, 17.3%
- 2 year TT, 2.61%
- 2 year non-TT, 2.66%
- Postdocs/researchers, 2.90%
- Non-profit, 9.95%
- Private sector, 8.46%
- Higher Ed Admin/Staff, 7.13%
- Government, 6.44%
- Retired, 1.3%
- Not found, 9.29%



# Where Historians Work (2004-2013 PhDs, as of 2017, n=8,523)

- 4 year TT, 47.41%
- 4 year non-TT, 13.21%
- 2 year TT, 3.41%
- 2 year non-TT, 2.94%
- Postdocs/researchers, 1.24%
- Non-profit, 7%
- Private sector, 6.91%
- Higher Ed Admin/Staff, 5.8%
- Government, 3.85%
- Retired, Unemployed, 1.64%
- Not found, 6.57%



All historians should emerge from their graduate training with **five key skills**:

- **Communication**, in a variety of media and to a variety of audiences
- **Collaboration**, especially with others who don't share the same worldview
- **Quantitative literacy**: a basic understanding of the way numbers convey information
- **Intellectual self-confidence**: the ability to step beyond the comfort zone of expertise and experience
- **Digital literacy or engagement**, which is not so much a separate skill set as a thread that runs through the previous four

# Survey of Graduate Education (2021)

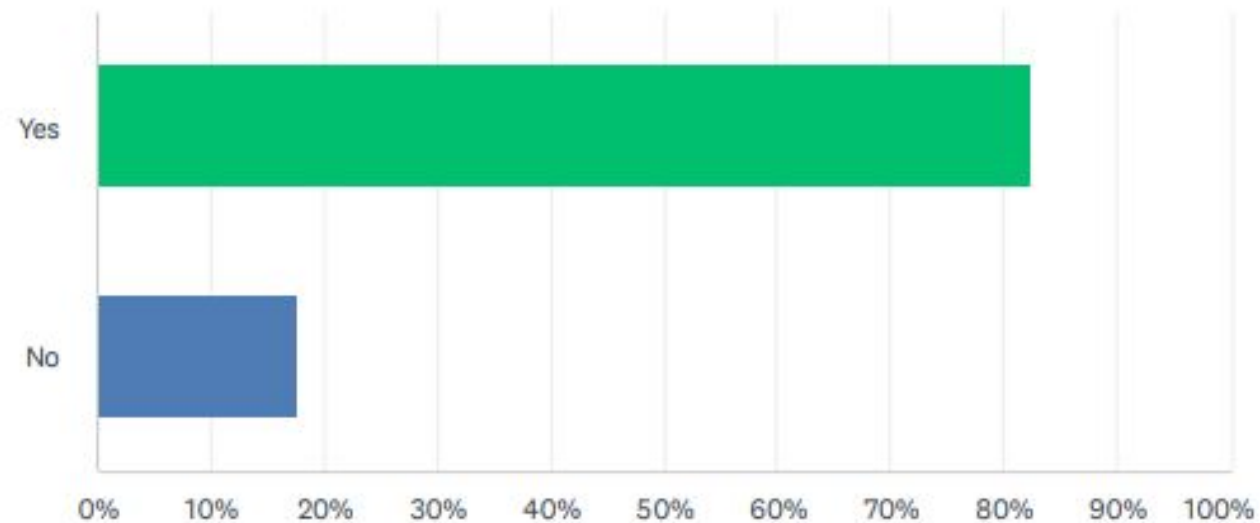
In 2021, the American Historical Association surveyed **884 students** enrolled in MA or PhD programs in history. This included 207 MA students and 677 PhD students.

In addition, the AHA replicated the 2001 Survey of Doctoral Programs, polling graduate faculty (many DGSs) at **86 universities** across North America.

These data highlight both causes for serious concern and reasons to remain optimistic about the viability of graduate education in the humanities.

Q140 Considering what you have learned and experienced in your current graduate program, would you still choose to pursue a graduate degree in history if you had to make the choice all over again?

Answered: 866 Skipped: 20

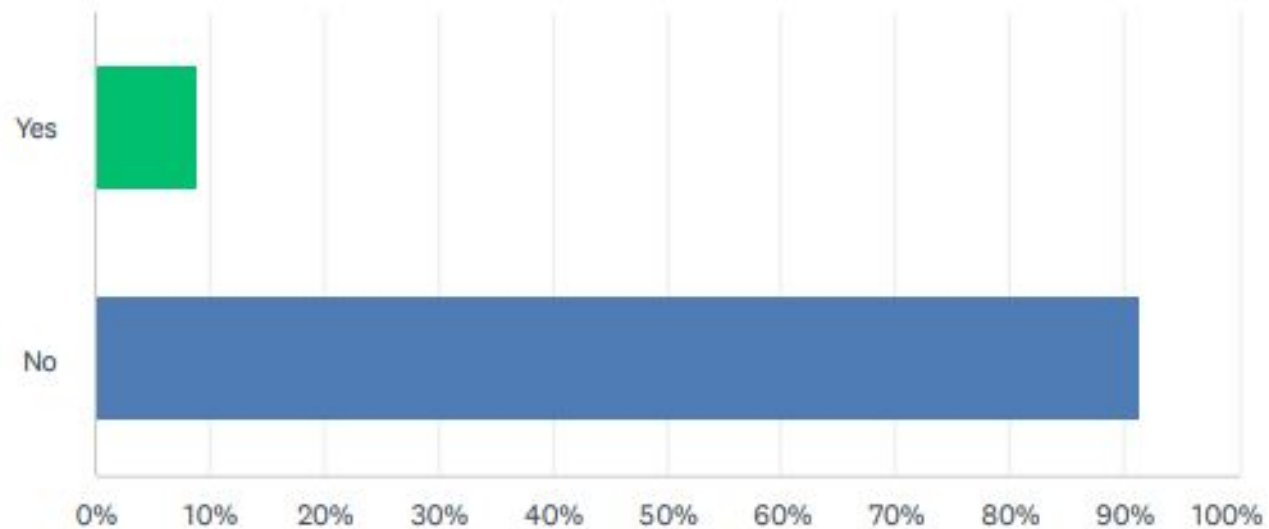


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.33%	713
No	17.67%	153
TOTAL		866



# Q34 Have you experienced homelessness or housing insecurity while in your current graduate program?

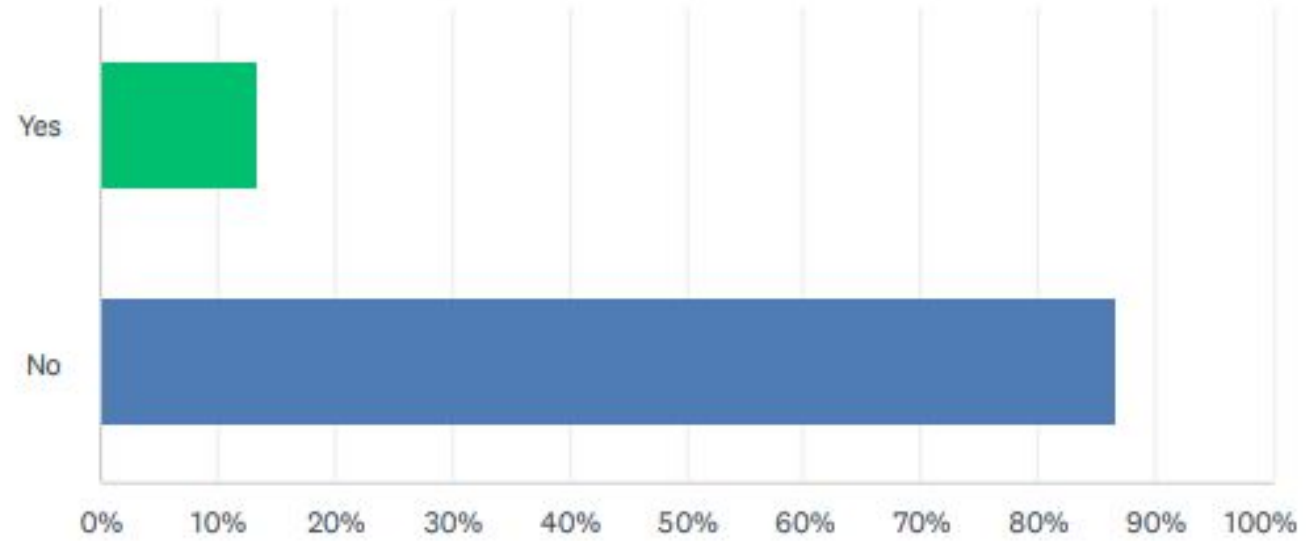
Answered: 883 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	8.72%	77
No	91.28%	806
TOTAL		883

# Q35 Have you experienced food insecurity while in your current graduate program?

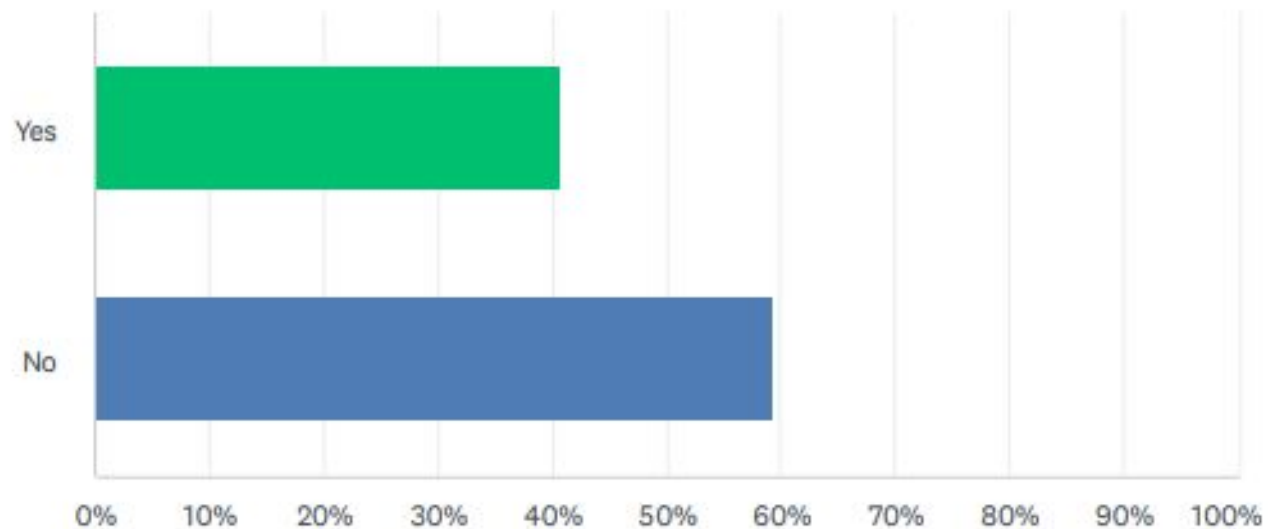
Answered: 882 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13.49%	119
No	86.51%	763
TOTAL		882

## Q36 Have you delayed medical procedures for financial reasons while in your current graduate program?

Answered: 882 Skipped: 4

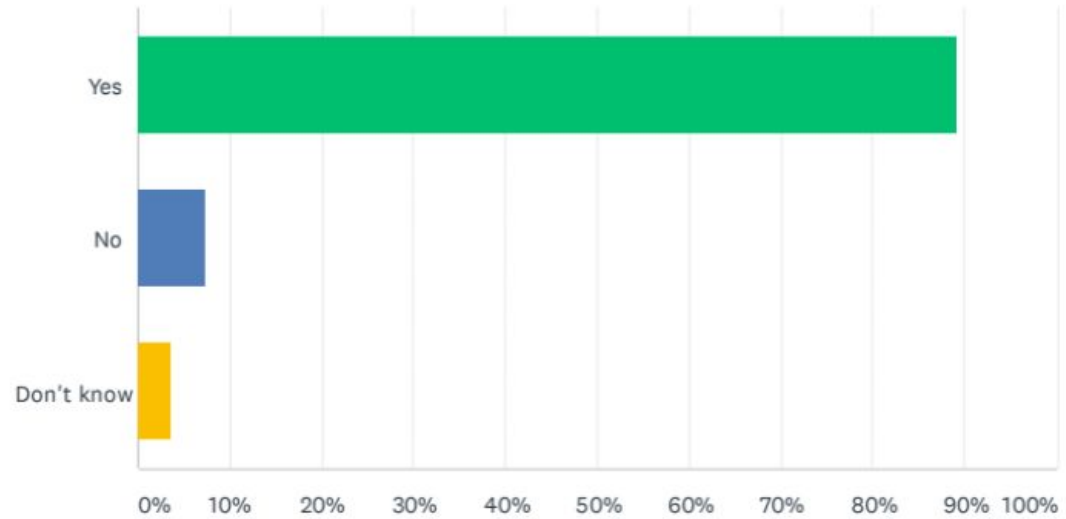


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	40.70%	359
No	59.30%	523
TOTAL		882

89.02% of faculty respondents expressed confidence that “the main goals of your department’s doctoral program are being met.”

### Q20 Do you think the main goals of your department’s doctoral program are being met?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	89.02%	73
No	7.32%	6
Don't know	3.66%	3
TOTAL		82

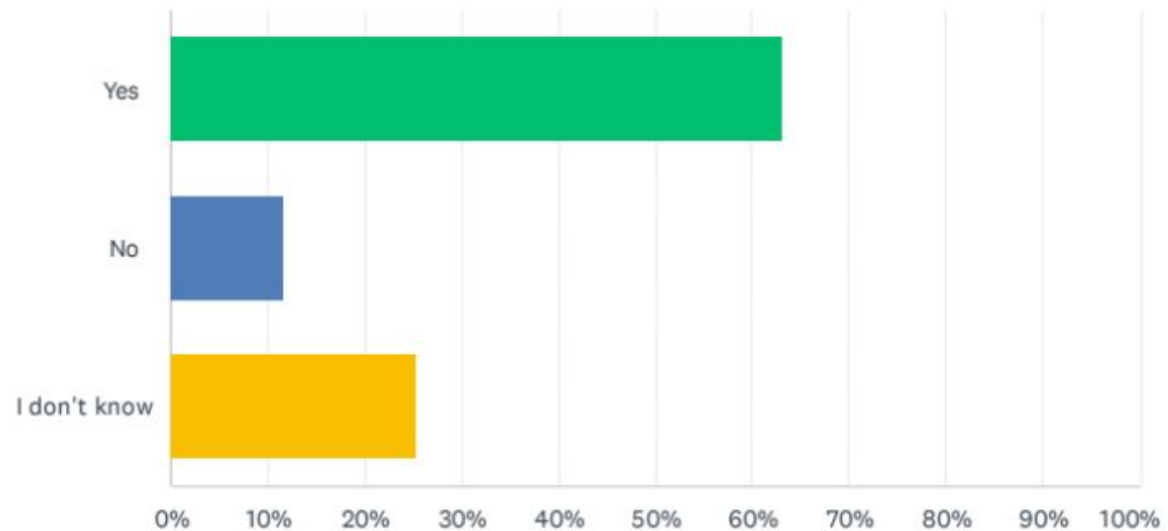
Overall, only 63.06% of students reported that they believed the goals of their graduate program were being met.

MA students: 79.8%

PhD students: 63.06%

### Q17 Do you think those goals are being met?

Answered: 850 Skipped: 36



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	63.06%	536
No	11.65%	99
I don't know	25.29%	215
TOTAL		850

# What are the goals of your degree program?

Faculty responses include responses that echo 2001:

“To train students to become faculty members elsewhere.”

“To produce competitive students for the academic job market.”

“Production of scholarly historians”

As well as evidence of career diversity initiatives:

“Preparing students to pursue careers within or outside of the academy.”

“We do make a concerted effort to train students widely, but it is difficult for tenured and TT faculty to train and advise students on career paths that they themselves have not taken.”

# What are the goals of your degree program?

Student responses range from **satisfied**:

“To educate and train historians to perform work with integrity both in and outside of academia. To ensure that we are able to communicate history with numerous groups of people both in and outside of academia. To prepare us for diverse history careers.”

“Prepare students for a career in the public history field”

To **less impressed**:

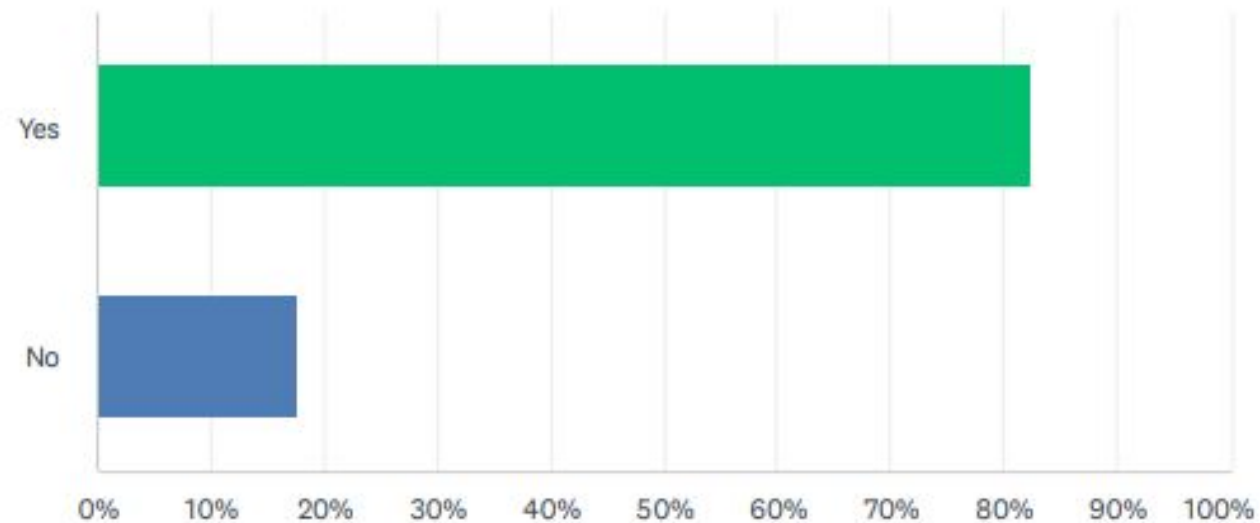
“Getting us done with PhDs.”

“They don't appear to have clear goals as a program aside from getting people through and into jobs.”

“of my program: phd; of the department's program: vague and ill defined.”

Q140 Considering what you have learned and experienced in your current graduate program, would you still choose to pursue a graduate degree in history if you had to make the choice all over again?

Answered: 866 Skipped: 20

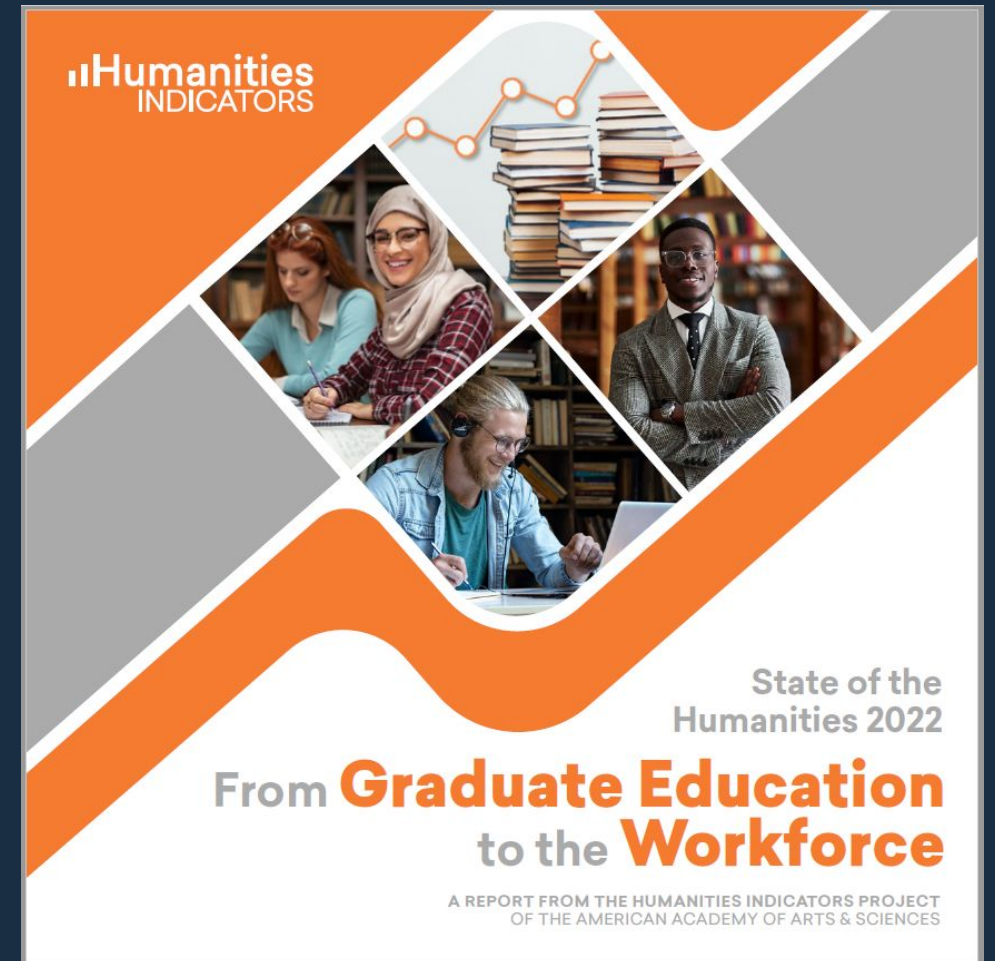


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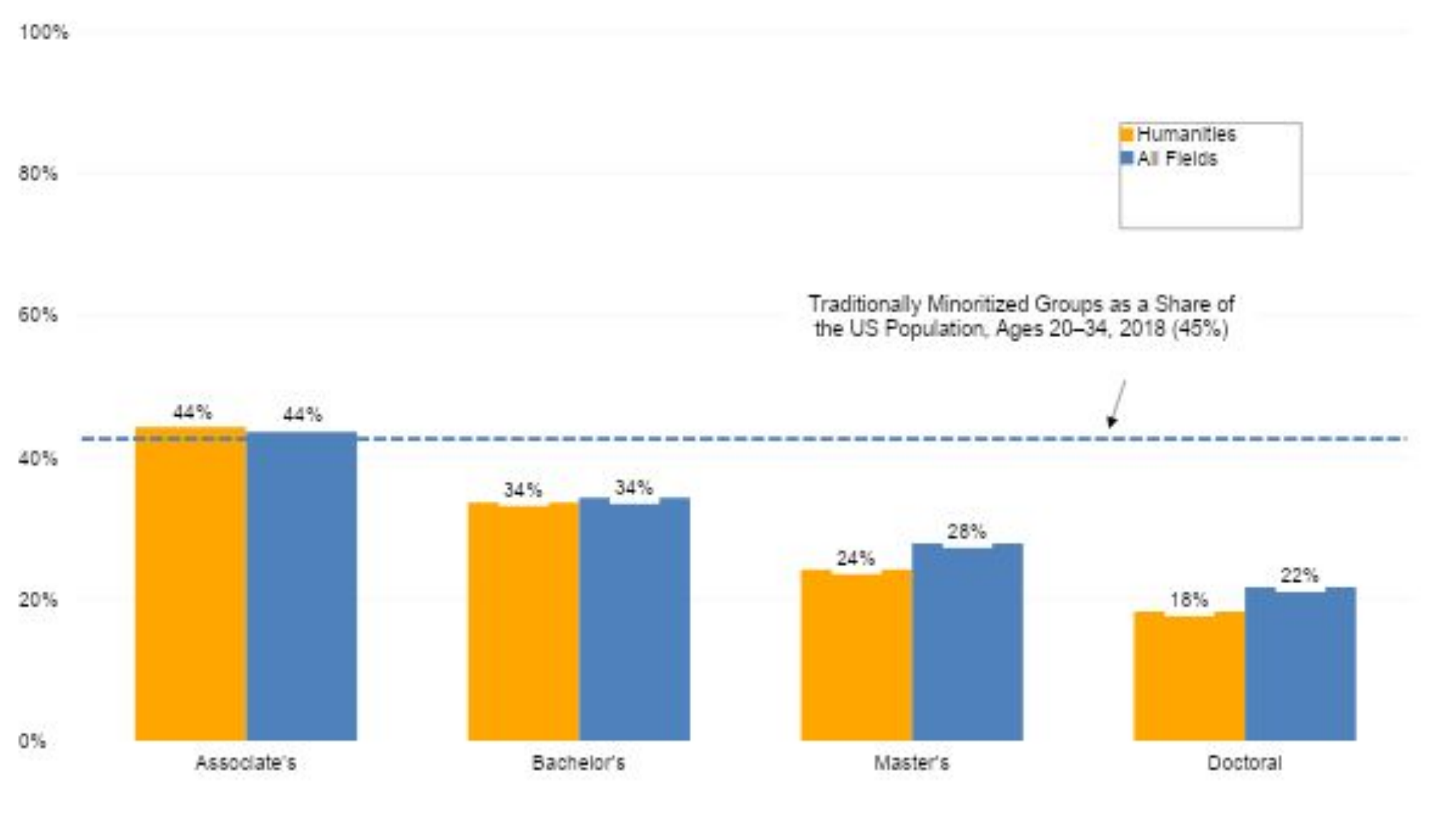


State of the Humanities 2022:  
From Graduate Education to the Workforce

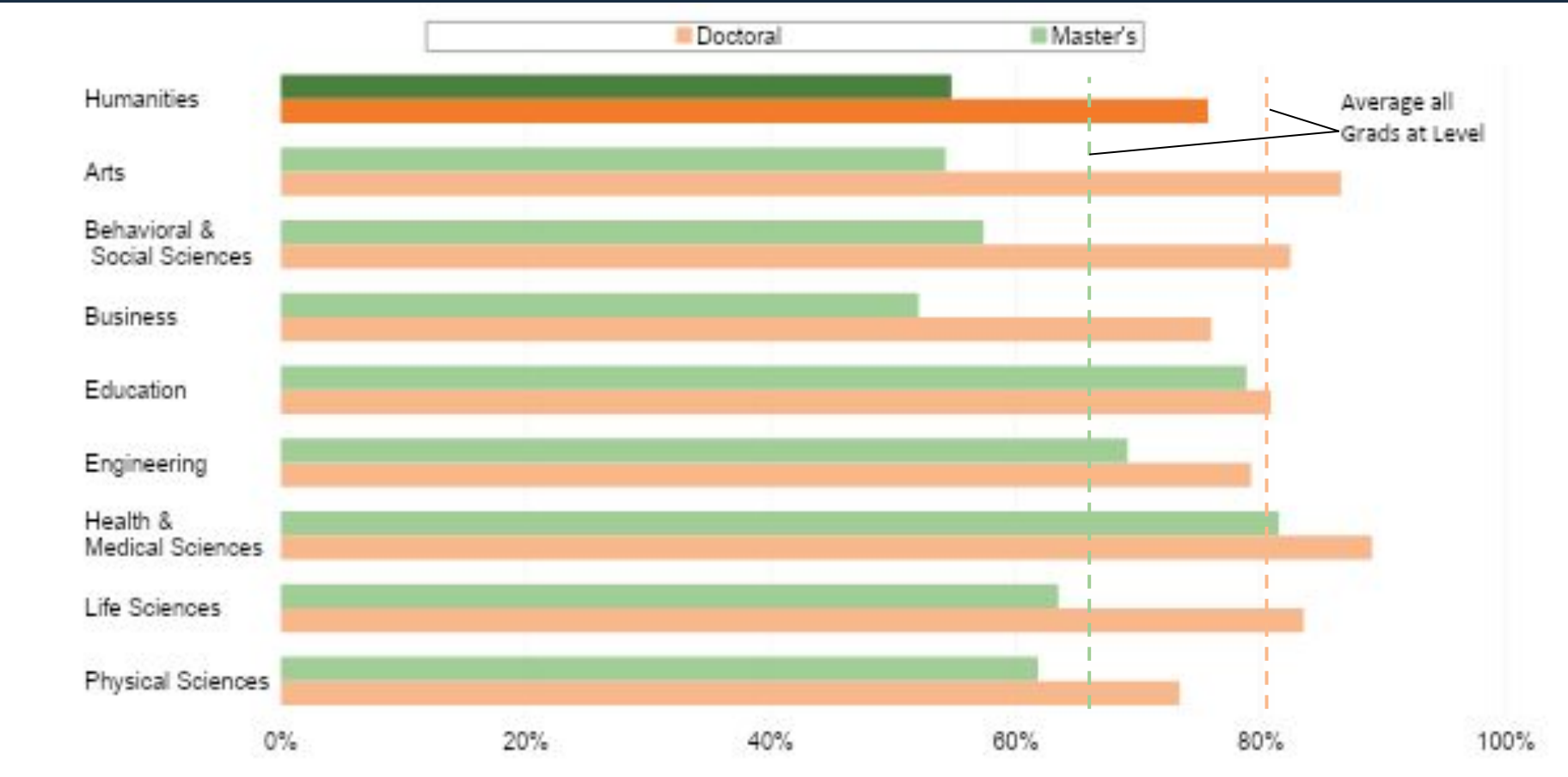
Data/slides courtesy of:  
Rob Townsend  
American Academy of Arts and Sciences



# Share of Humanities Degrees Conferred on Members of Traditionally Minoritized Racial/Ethnic Groups Over Five-Year Period, by Degree Level (2016–2020)

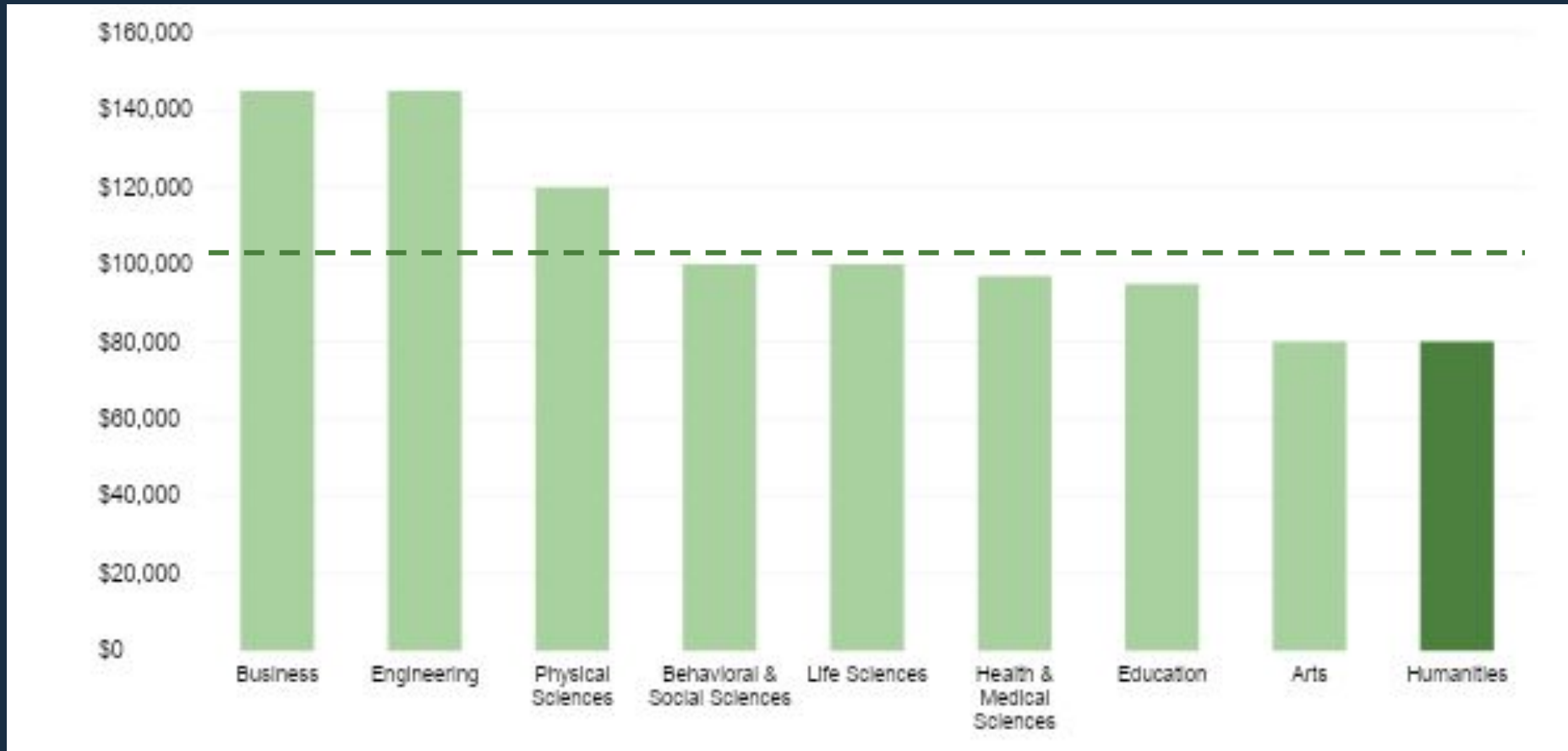


# Share of Graduate Degree Holders Who Perceive a Close Relationship between Job and Degree, by Field and Level of Highest Degree, 2019



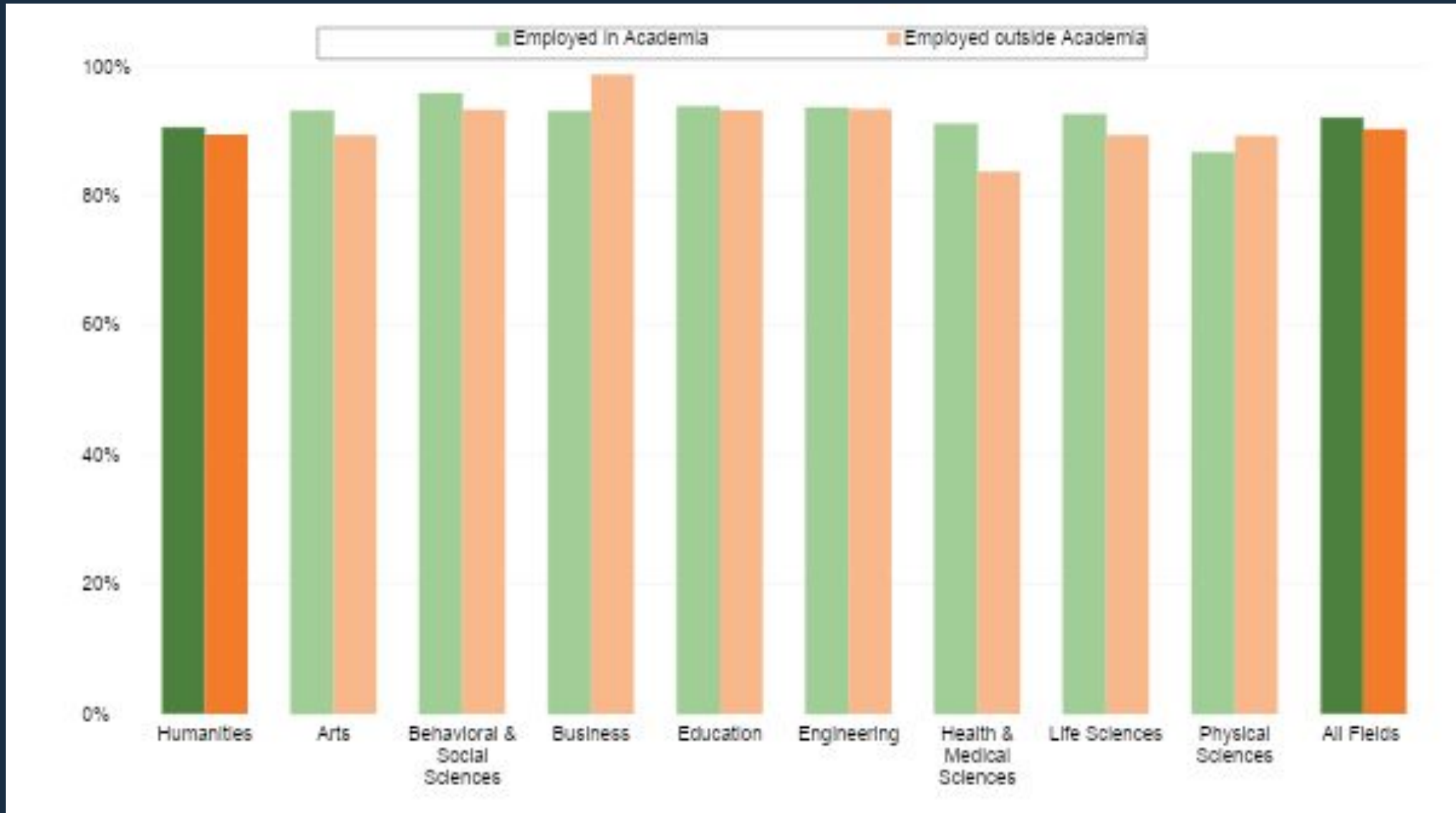
Source: National Survey of College Graduates.

## Median Annual Earnings of Doctoral Degree Holders Employed Full-Time, by Field of Degree, 2018



Source: National Survey of College Graduates

# Job Satisfaction among Doctoral Degree Holders, by Field of Degree and Academic Status, 2019 by Highest Degree, 2019



Source: National Survey of College Graduates, 2019

## GET IN TOUCH:

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State Board of Education February meeting in Richmond. Photo: Eva Russo, Times-Dispatch