

TABLE 1-12

Median years to research doctorate, by trend broad field of doctorate: Selected years, 1973–2023

(Median years)

Field and time to degree	1973	1978	1983	1988	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	2023
All fields											
Since earning bachelor's	8.5	9.0	9.9	10.6	10.7	10.5	10.2	9.4	9.0	8.6	8.6
Since starting graduate school	7.2	7.7	8.2	8.7	8.7	8.3	8.5	7.7	7.5	7.3	7.2
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.8	5.7
Science and engineering											
Since earning bachelor's	7.3	7.6	8.2	8.9	9.3	9.0	8.9	8.4	8.1	8.0	8.0
Since starting graduate school	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.2	7.7	7.2	7.5	7.0	6.9	6.8	6.8
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.7	5.6
Agricultural sciences and natural resources											
Since earning bachelor's	8.2	8.2	8.7	10.0	10.9	11.1	10.5	9.7	9.4	8.9	8.8
Since starting graduate school	6.7	6.3	6.9	7.8	8.7	8.7	8.2	7.9	7.7	7.3	7.3
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.0	5.0
Biological and biomedical sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	7.0	7.0	7.5	8.3	8.7	8.3	8.1	8.0	8.0	7.8	7.9
Since starting graduate school	6.1	6.1	6.7	6.9	7.2	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.5	6.4
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.8	5.7
Computer and information sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	-	7.7	8.5	9.5	9.6	10.3	9.6	8.7	8.5	8.6	8.2
Since starting graduate school	-	6.9	7.2	7.7	7.9	8.2	8.2	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.0
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.8	5.6
Engineering											
Since earning bachelor's	7.9	7.6	8.1	8.2	9.0	8.9	8.6	7.9	7.4	7.3	7.4
Since starting graduate school	6.7	6.2	6.7	6.7	7.2	7.2	7.3	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.6
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.3	5.3
Geosciences, atmospheric, and ocean sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	7.8	8.0	8.5	9.3	10.4	10.5	9.4	8.6	8.2	8.0	8.1
Since starting graduate school	6.8	6.7	7.5	8.2	8.7	8.4	8.0	7.3	7.0	7.0	6.8
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.5	5.7
Health sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	8.3	8.7	11.2	13.0	14.5	14.9	13.6	12.6	11.9	11.0	11.0
Since starting graduate school	6.7	7.2	9.5	10.8	11.8	11.7	10.9	9.7	9.2	8.9	8.8
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.0	5.0
Mathematics and statistics											
Since earning bachelor's	7.0	7.2	7.3	8.2	8.6	8.0	8.0	7.6	7.0	6.8	7.0
Since starting graduate school	6.2	6.2	6.7	6.9	7.2	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.3	6.2	6.0

TABLE 1-12

Median years to research doctorate, by trend broad field of doctorate: Selected years, 1973–2023

(Median years)

Field and time to degree	1973	1978	1983	1988	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	2023
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.3	5.3
Physical sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	6.6	6.9	6.7	6.9	7.6	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.0	6.6	6.7
Since starting graduate school	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.0	6.7	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.0	6.0
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.7	5.7
Psychology											
Since earning bachelor's	6.7	7.5	9.0	10.2	10.0	9.2	9.2	8.6	8.4	8.3	8.5
Since starting graduate school	5.9	6.2	7.7	8.3	8.2	7.3	7.2	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.9	5.9
Social sciences											
Since earning bachelor's	8.4	9.0	10.0	11.1	11.0	10.6	10.9	10.4	10.3	10.2	10.3
Since starting graduate school	7.4	7.9	8.7	9.4	9.2	8.7	9.0	8.7	8.6	8.7	8.7
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	6.0	6.0
Non-science and engineering											
Since earning bachelor's	10.9	11.6	13.0	14.9	16.0	15.0	14.0	13.7	12.2	12.2	12.3
Since starting graduate school	8.9	9.7	10.9	12.3	12.7	11.7	11.2	10.7	9.9	10.0	10.0
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	6.0	5.9
Business											
Since earning bachelor's	9.0	10.0	11.1	11.8	12.0	12.6	12.6	11.3	11.1	10.4	10.3
Since starting graduate school	7.2	8.0	9.0	9.2	9.7	9.7	9.9	8.4	8.7	8.9	8.8
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.0	5.0
Education											
Since earning bachelor's	12.6	12.9	14.2	17.0	19.3	20.0	18.1	17.0	15.0	14.7	15.0
Since starting graduate school	9.9	10.2	11.7	13.9	15.7	15.0	13.2	12.7	11.7	11.9	12.0
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.8	5.6
Humanities and arts											
Since earning bachelor's	9.3	10.4	11.3	12.3	12.1	11.7	11.5	11.4	11.0	11.0	11.3
Since starting graduate school	8.4	9.3	9.9	10.7	10.2	9.7	9.7	9.3	9.3	9.4	9.7
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	6.8	6.8
Other non-science and engineering											
Since earning bachelor's	11.6	11.0	12.6	14.8	15.5	15.0	13.5	12.8	11.9	12.0	12.0
Since starting graduate school	9.2	8.7	10.3	12.2	12.2	10.9	10.7	10.0	9.6	9.8	9.4
Since starting doctoral program ^a	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	5.7	5.3

- = not calculable. na = not applicable; data were not collected prior to 2014.

^a 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 field of study or was a prerequisite to the doctorate; otherwise, it is based on doctoral program entry.

Note(s):

Beginning in 2021, a modified version of the 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes was used in the survey data collection; the trend fields were constructed using the SED-CIP code crosswalk in table A-6. Therefore, the field of doctorate data prior to 2021 may not be comparable to subsequent years. For more information about the field taxonomy changes, see the "Technical Notes."

Source(s):

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Earned Doctorates.