

2017-18

Undergraduate Degree Earners

REPORT

First-time Graduates and Graduates with Prior Awards

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE[®]
RESEARCH CENTER[™]

The number of students earning their first undergraduate degree in 2017-18 (first-time graduates) was 2,254,846, an increase of 1.5 percent compared to 2016-17 (**Figure 1**). The number of graduates earning their second or third undergraduate credential (graduates with prior awards) grew by 4.4 percent to 722,547. The overall number of students who earned an undergraduate degree in 2017-18 was 2,977,393 a 2.2 percent increase from 2016-17.

Overall, more first-time college graduates were added to the population in 2017-18, but the trend varies markedly by age group (**Figure 2**) and credential type (**Figure 3**). First-time graduates (associate and bachelor's degrees combined) in the 25 and over age group decreased by 23,909 (-4.0 percent) compared to the previous year, reflecting post-recession enrollment declines among older students. However, first-time graduates under the age of 25 saw continued growth in 2016-17, with their numbers having increased by 58,566 (+3.6 percent) compared to the previous year. When examined by credential type awarded, first-time associate degree earners dropped by 1.2 percent since 2016-17, while first-time bachelor's degree earners grew by 2.9 percent (**Figure 3**). Graduates under the age of 25 are the main drivers for the increase of first-time bachelor's degree earners (**Table 2**). Compared to 2012-13, the total number of first-time bachelor's degree earners increased by 7 percent; however, only the under 25 age group saw an increase (11.9 percent), while all the other age groups suffered loss of students. First-time bachelor's

degree earners aged between 40 and 49 fell by 21 percent (**Figure 4**). This is partially due to an increasing share of graduates aged 40 and above having prior credentials. Only 42 percent of bachelor's degree recipients aged 40 and above did not have a prior credential in 2017-18, which is a drop from 48.6 percent in 2012-13 (**Figure 8**). For associate degree recipients aged 40 and above, 66 percent did not have a prior credential in 2017-18. This number dropped by almost 10 percentage points since 2012-13, when 75.5 percent did not have a prior credential (**Figure 9**).

As a share of all undergraduate degree earners, first-time graduates declined from 76.3 percent to 75.7 percent in 2017-18. This continues a recent trend, in which the share of first-time graduates has dropped around half a percentage point per year since 2012-13 (**Figure 6**). For bachelor's degree earners, the most common prior credential level was an associate degree. Of students who earned a bachelor's degree in 2017-18, 74 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 3.3 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 21.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 1.4 percent had previously earned a certificate (**Figure 7**). For associate degree earners, certificates were the most common prior credential levels. Of students who earned an associate degree in 2017-18, 79.4 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 4.1 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 8.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 8.4 percent had previously

earned a certificate (**Figure 8**). The share of bachelor's degrees awarded to first-time earners has been shrinking since 2012-13. In other words, people with prior credentials are gradually making up a bigger share of the bachelor's degree earner population. Almost half (46 percent) of the growth in bachelor's degrees awarded between 2012-13 and 2017-18 went to those who already had a postsecondary credential (**Table 1**). Seventy percent of the growth in all undergraduate degrees awarded (bachelor's and associate degrees combined) during this time period went to those who already had a credential.

About the Data

Based on student-level enrollment and degree data from the National Student Clearinghouse, the *Undergraduate Degree Earners Report* differentiates between students earning their first postsecondary award and students earning additional undergraduate awards on top of ones earned in prior years. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary award. In Figures 1 and 2 only recipients of associate and bachelor's degrees are counted as first-time graduates. However, the prior awards which distinguish first-time graduates from repeat graduates include both degrees and certificates. Counts may differ from those reported in earlier versions of this report, to reflect additional historical data reported to the Clearinghouse since publication. More information on Clearinghouse degree coverage and definitions can be found in the notes section at the end of this report.

Figure 1: Number of First-Time Graduates and Graduates with Prior Awards

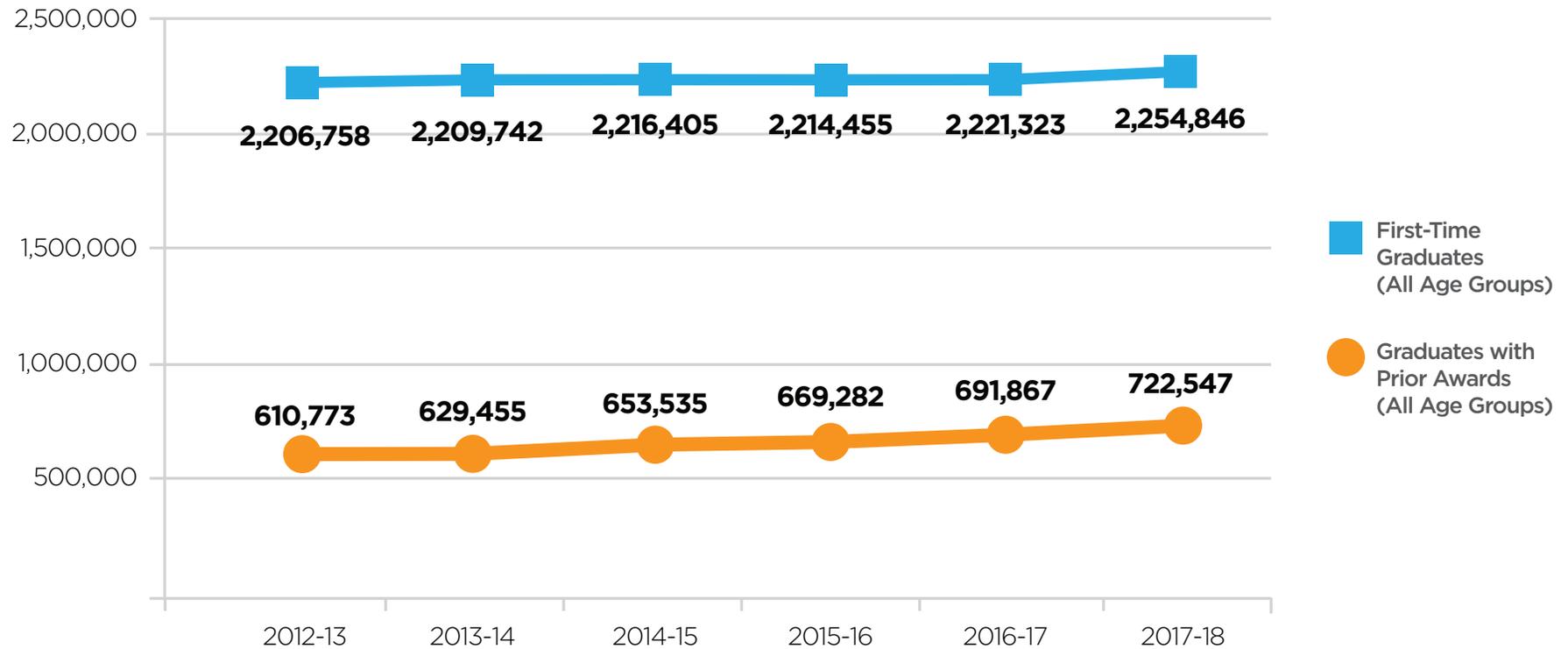


Figure 1 shows counts of students earning undergraduate degrees (bachelor's and associates combined) in each academic year, disaggregated by first-time graduate status. The number of graduates with prior awards (which may include degrees or certificates) has increased steadily in recent years.

Figure 2: Number of First-Time Graduates by Age Group

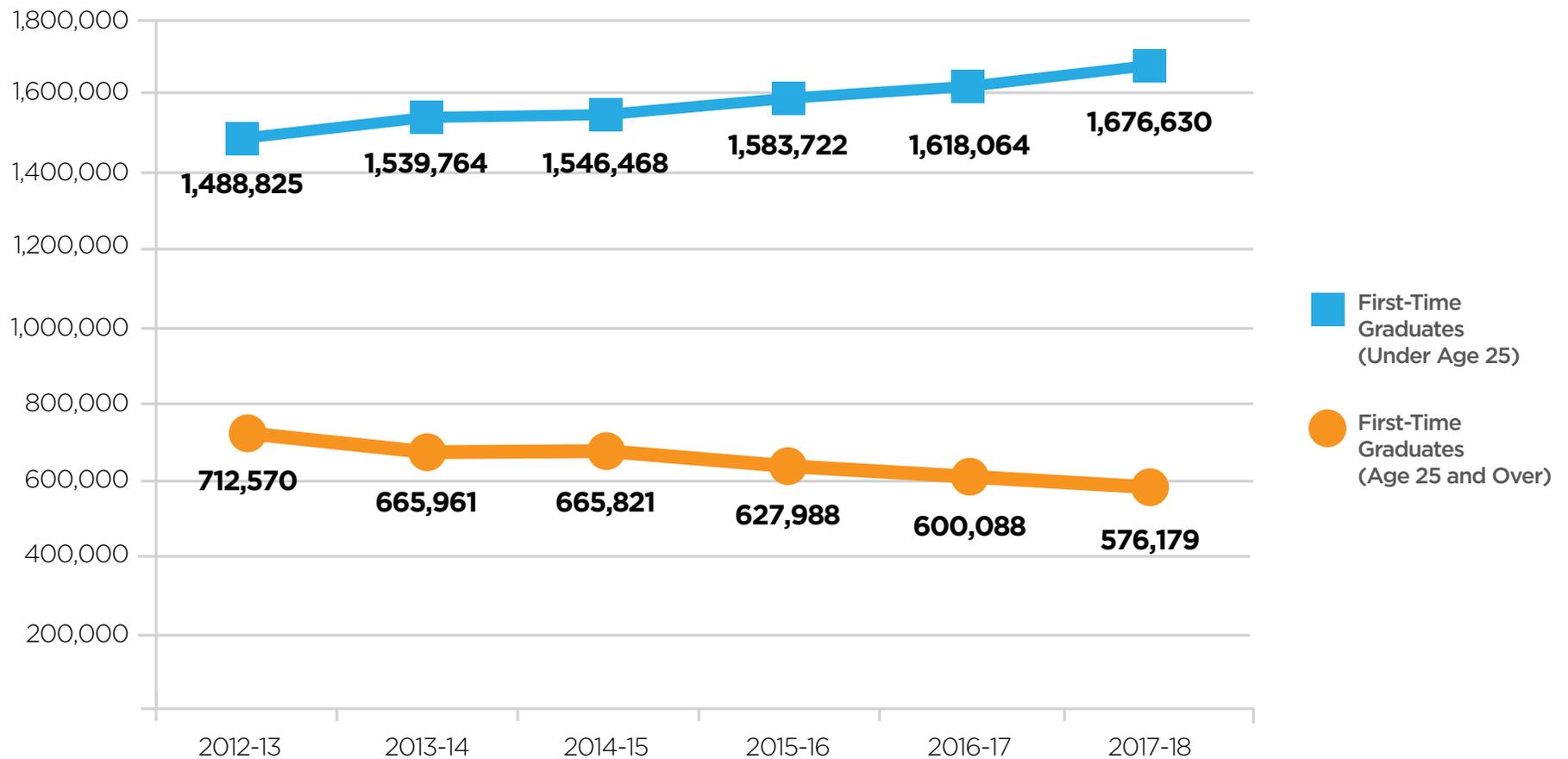


Figure 2 shows counts of students earning undergraduate degrees (bachelor's and associates combined) in each academic year, disaggregated by age group. Since 2012-13, the number of first-time graduates in the 25 and over group has declined by nearly 136,400, while the number of first-time graduates in the under 25 category has increased by over 187,800.

Figure 3: Number of First-Time Graduates by Credential Type

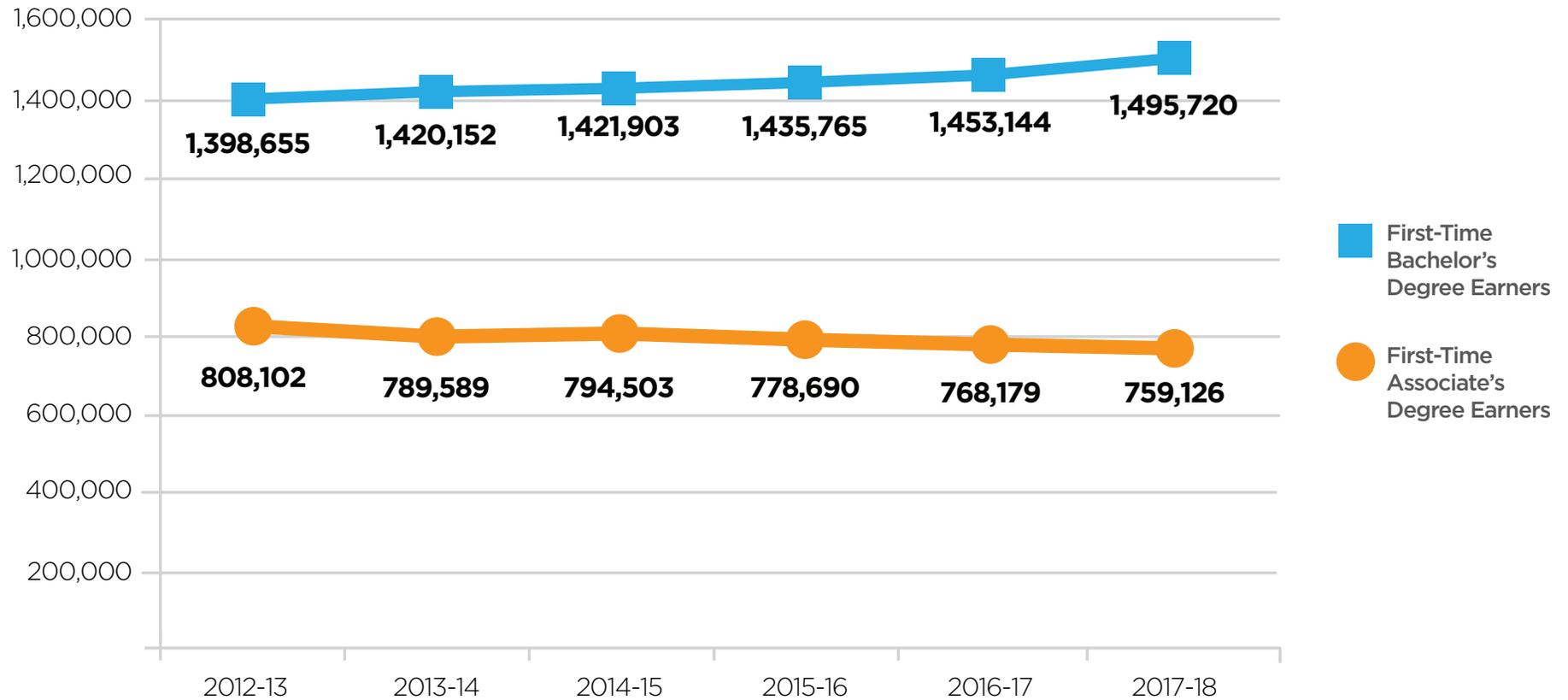


Figure 3 shows counts of first-time graduates disaggregated by the type of credentials awarded in each academic year. Since 2012-13, the number of first-time bachelor's degree earners has increased by 6.9 percent, while the number of first-time associate degree earners dropped by 6.1 percent.

Figure 4: Percent Change in Number of First-Time Degree Recipients, 2012-13 to 2017-18, by Credential Type and Age of Recipient

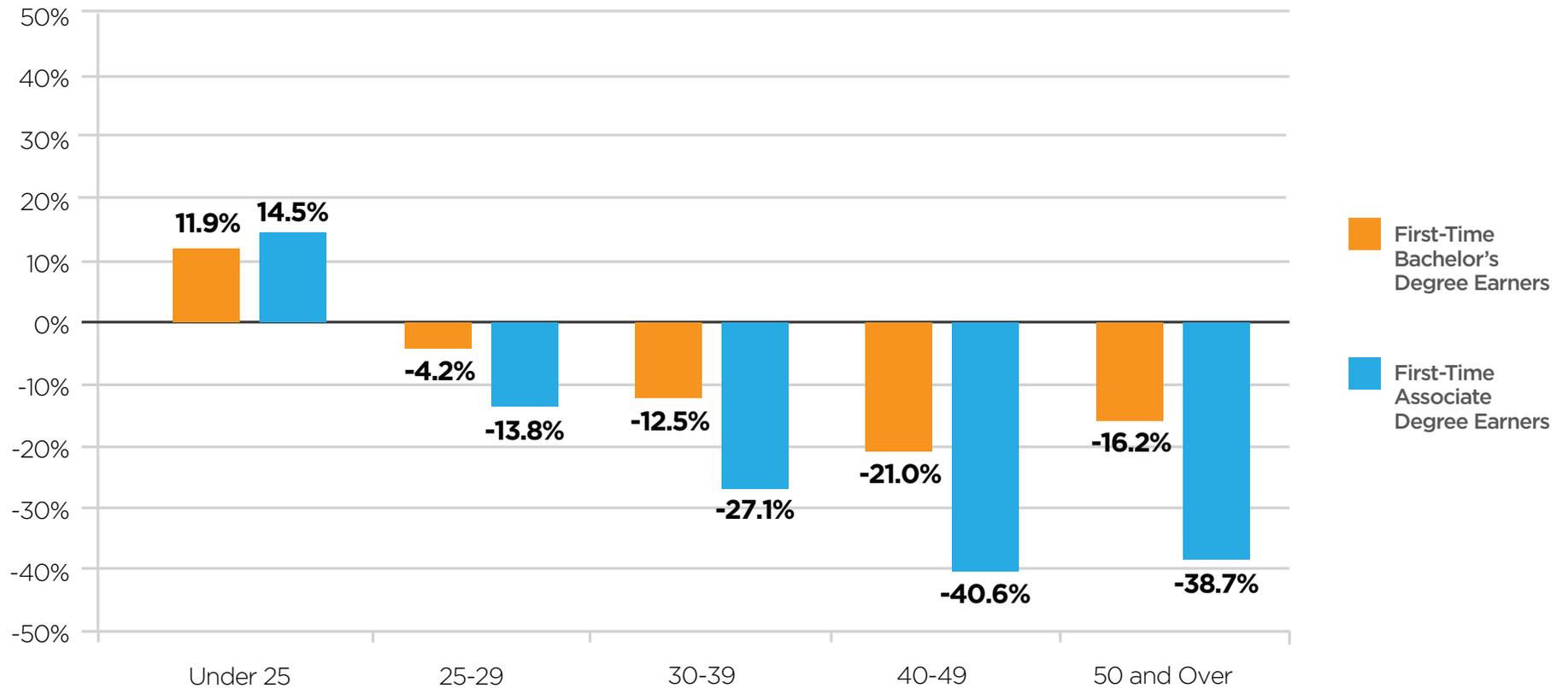


Figure 4 shows that the number of first-time bachelor's and associate degree earners has declined in almost all age groups since 2012-13 except for the under 25 group.

Figure 5: Distribution of Undergraduate Degree Earners by Prior Award Status

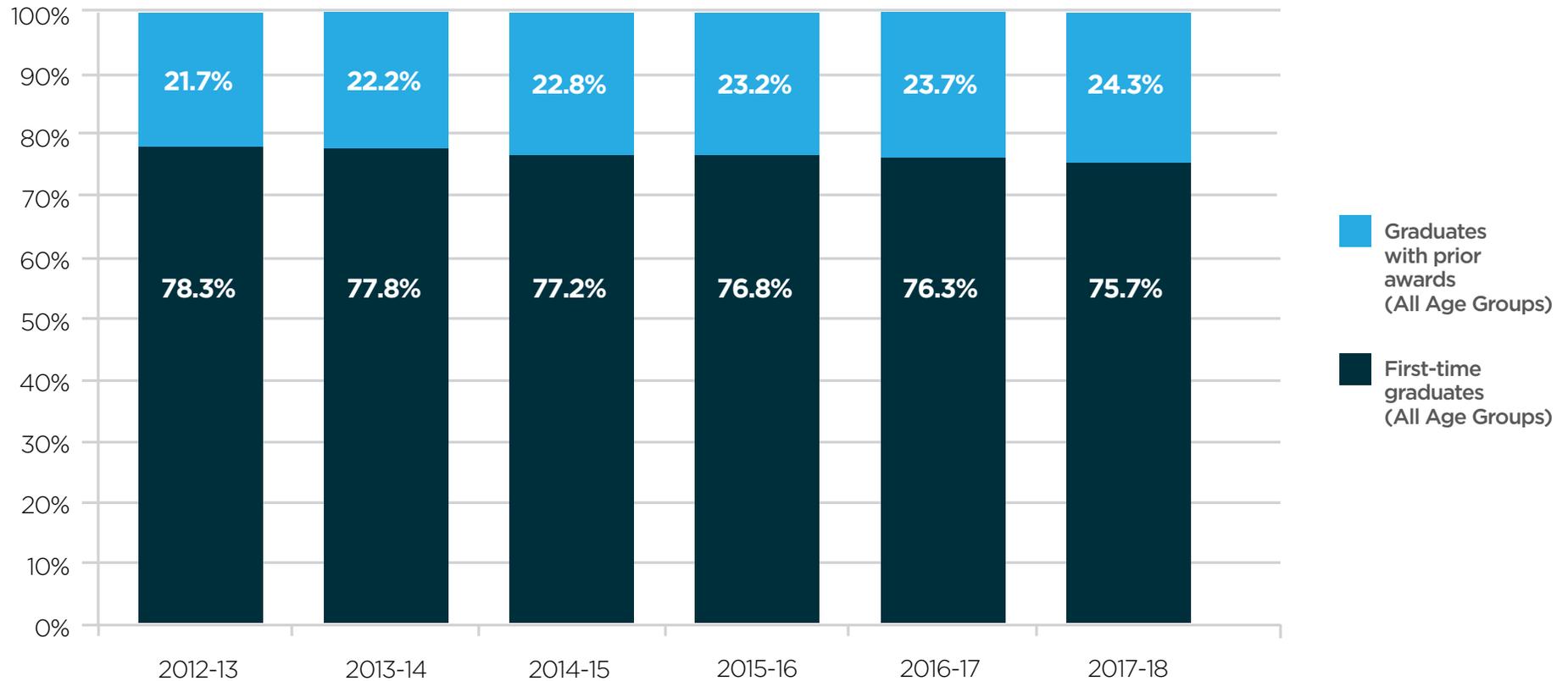


Figure 5 shows that in 2012-13, 21.7 percent of all bachelor's and associate degree recipients were students who had already earned a postsecondary award in a previous year. By 2017-18, students with prior awards accounted for 24.3 percent of all undergraduate degree recipients.

Figure 6: Bachelor's Degree Earners - Distribution of Prior Awards

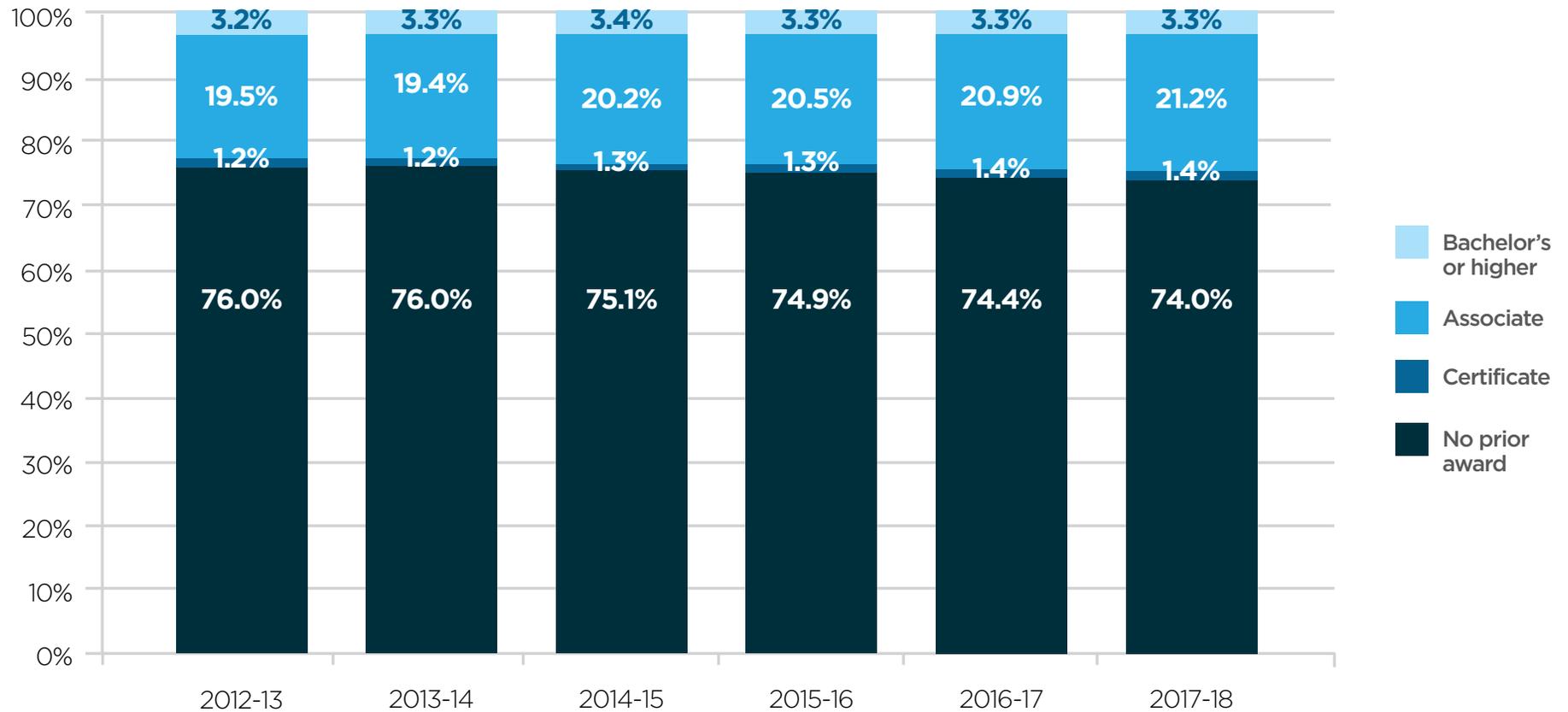


Figure 6 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned a bachelor's degree in each of the last five academic years. In 2017-18, 74 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 3.3 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 21.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 1.4 percent had previously earned a certificate.

Figure 7: Associate Degree Earners - Distribution of Prior Awards

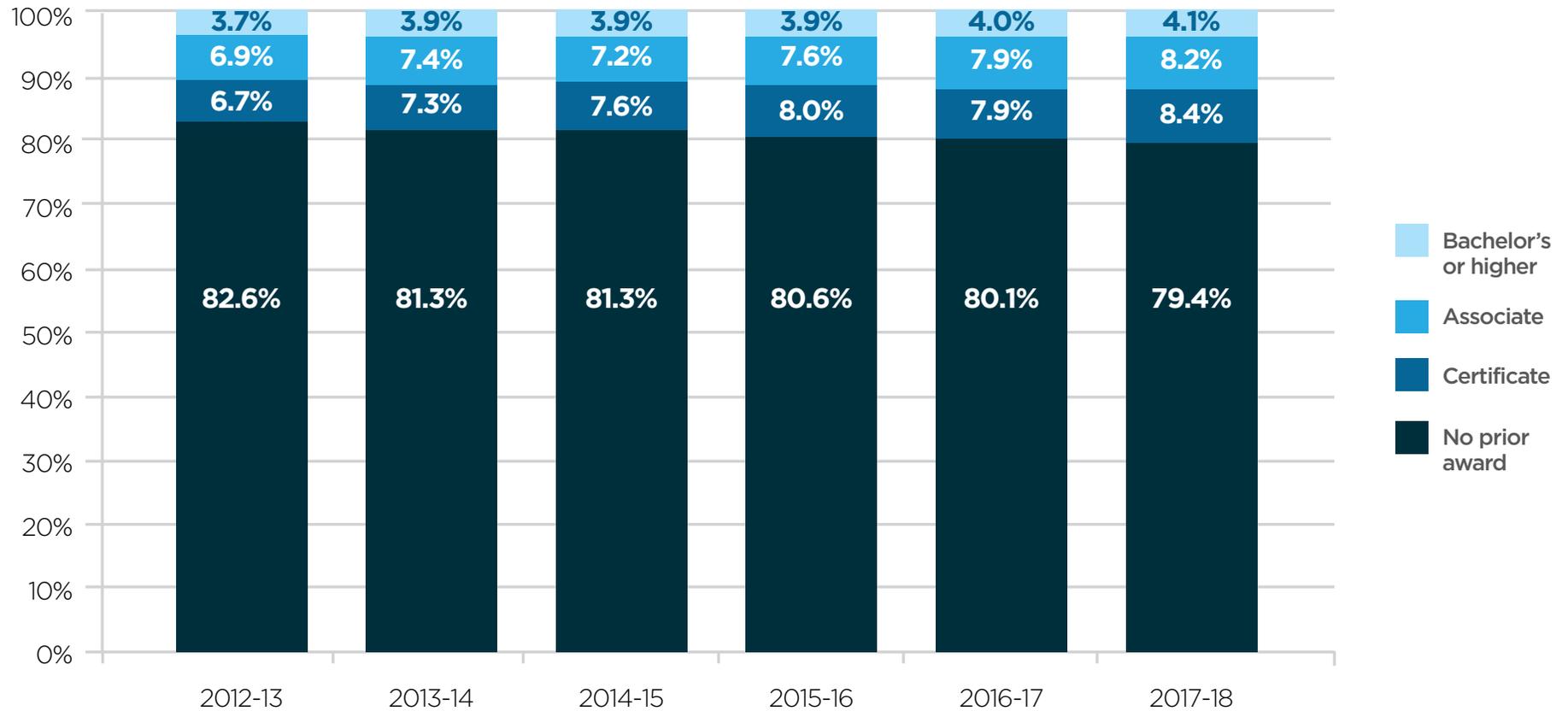


Figure 7 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned an associate degree in each of the last six academic years. In 2017-18, 79.4 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 4.1 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 8.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 8.4 percent had previously earned a certificate.

Figure 8: Bachelor's Degree Earners Aged 40 and Above - Distribution of Prior Awards

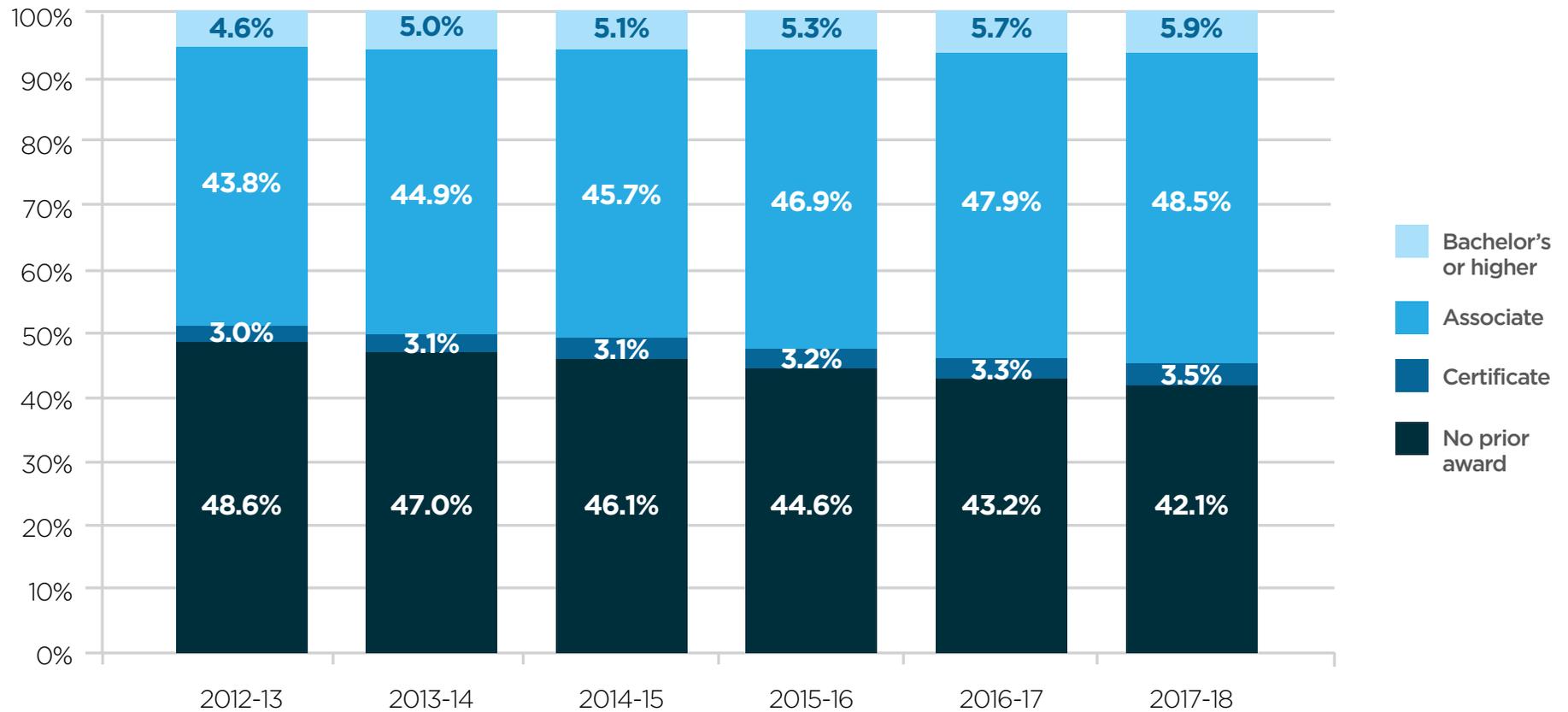


Figure 8 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned bachelor's degrees at age 40 or older in each of the last six academic years. An increasing number of graduates had prior credentials in each year since 2012-13. In 2017-18, 42 percent of bachelor's degree recipients aged 40 and above did not have a prior credential, which is a drop from 48.6 percent in 2012-13.

Figure 9: Associate Degree Earners Aged 40 and Above - Distribution of Prior Awards

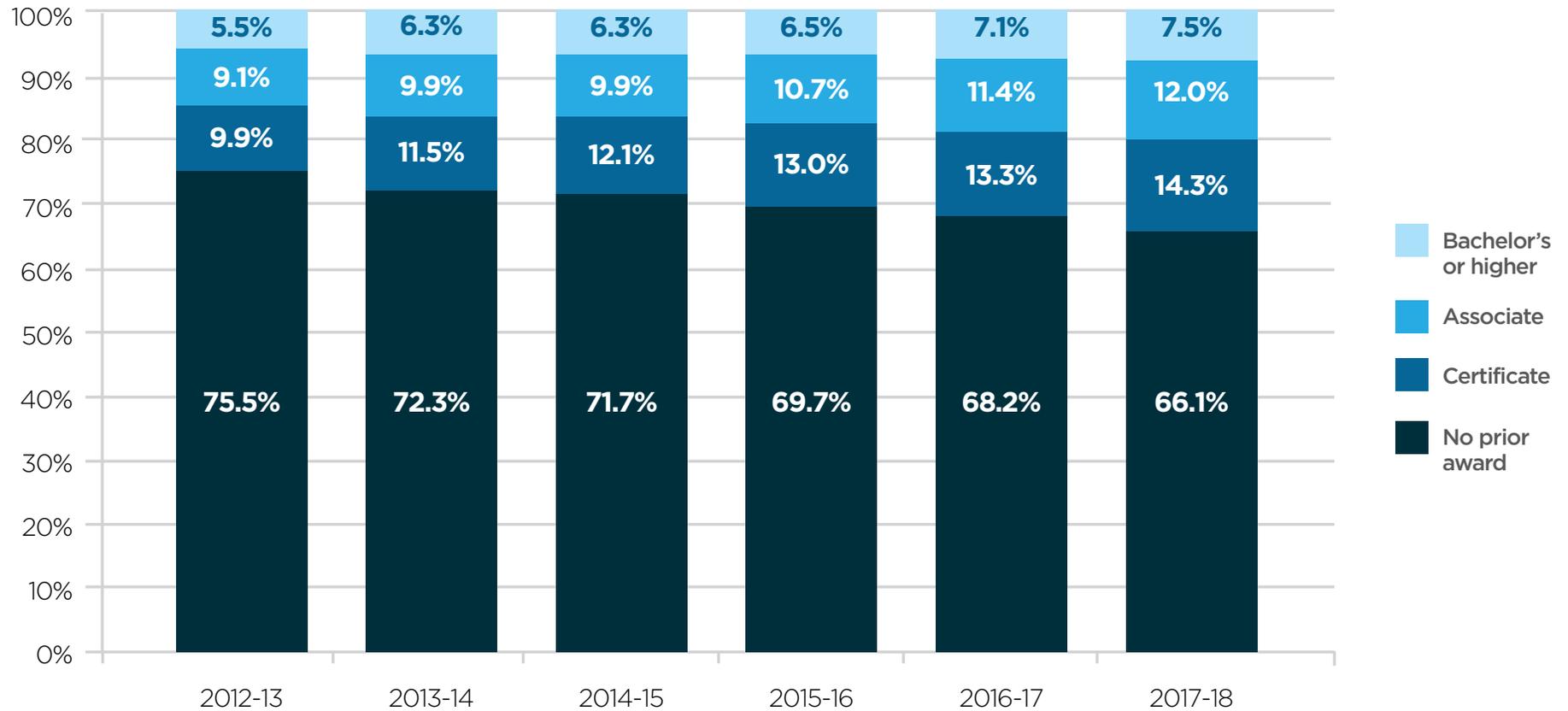


Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned associate degrees at age 40 or older in each of the last six academic years. An increasing number of graduates had prior credentials in each year since 2012-13. In 2017-18, 66.1 percent of associate degree recipients aged 40 and above did not have a prior credential, which is a drop from 75.5 percent in 2012-13.

Table 1: Undergraduate Degree Earners by Level of Prior Award

| | 2012-13 | | 2013-14 | | 2014-15 | | 2015-16 | | 2016-17 | | 2017-18 | |
|--|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| BACHELOR'S DEGREE EARNERS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prior Master's | 4,007 | 0.2% | 3,992 | 0.2% | 4,276 | 0.2% | 4,331 | 0.2% | 4,277 | 0.2% | 4,610 | 0.2% |
| Prior Bachelor's | 55,664 | 3.0% | 57,814 | 3.1% | 59,330 | 3.1% | 59,795 | 3.1% | 61,097 | 3.1% | 62,571 | 3.1% |
| Prior Associate | 358,978 | 19.5% | 362,986 | 19.4% | 381,992 | 20.2% | 392,256 | 20.5% | 409,097 | 20.9% | 429,227 | 21.2% |
| Prior Certificate | 22,408 | 1.2% | 23,259 | 1.2% | 24,599 | 1.3% | 24,924 | 1.3% | 26,686 | 1.4% | 28,897 | 1.4% |
| First-Time Graduates (No prior award) | 1,398,655 | 76.0% | 1,420,152 | 76.0% | 1,421,903 | 75.1% | 1,435,765 | 74.9% | 1,453,144 | 74.4% | 1,495,720 | 74.0% |
| Total Bachelor's Degree Earners | 1,839,712 | 100.0% | 1,868,204 | 100.0% | 1,892,099 | 100.0% | 1,917,071 | 100.0% | 1,954,301 | 100.0% | 2,021,024 | 100.0% |
| ASSOCIATE DEGREE EARNERS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prior Master's | 3,129 | 0.3% | 3,341 | 0.3% | 3,515 | 0.4% | 3,300 | 0.3% | 3,234 | 0.3% | 3,470 | 0.4% |
| Prior Bachelor's | 33,449 | 3.4% | 34,968 | 3.6% | 34,859 | 3.6% | 34,152 | 3.5% | 35,267 | 3.7% | 35,804 | 3.7% |
| Prior Associate | 67,863 | 6.9% | 71,833 | 7.4% | 70,610 | 7.2% | 73,077 | 7.6% | 76,110 | 7.9% | 77,951 | 8.2% |
| Prior Certificate | 65,276 | 6.7% | 71,262 | 7.3% | 74,355 | 7.6% | 77,447 | 8.0% | 76,099 | 7.9% | 80,018 | 8.4% |
| First-Time Graduates (No prior award) | 808,102 | 82.6% | 789,589 | 81.3% | 794,503 | 81.3% | 778,690 | 80.6% | 768,179 | 80.1% | 759,126 | 79.4% |
| Total Associate Degree Earners | 977,819 | 100.0% | 970,993 | 100.0% | 977,841 | 100.0% | 966,666 | 100.0% | 958,889 | 100.0% | 956,369 | 100.0% |
| CERTIFICATE EARNERS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prior Master's | 18,981 | 3.1% | 21,596 | 3.5% | 21,960 | 3.5% | 20,822 | 3.3% | 21,775 | 3.4% | 20,622 | 3.2% |
| Prior Bachelor's | 57,758 | 9.5% | 56,887 | 9.1% | 57,196 | 9.2% | 55,644 | 8.9% | 54,116 | 8.6% | 53,571 | 8.4% |
| Prior Associate | 44,368 | 7.3% | 44,745 | 7.2% | 47,327 | 7.6% | 50,670 | 8.1% | 51,030 | 8.1% | 52,806 | 8.3% |
| Prior Certificate | 46,632 | 7.6% | 50,012 | 8.0% | 54,130 | 8.7% | 58,851 | 9.4% | 64,156 | 10.1% | 65,214 | 10.2% |
| First-Time Graduates (No prior award) | 442,266 | 72.5% | 449,190 | 72.2% | 443,856 | 71.1% | 442,308 | 70.4% | 441,204 | 69.8% | 444,073 | 69.8% |
| Total Certificate Earners | 610,005 | 100.0% | 622,429 | 100.0% | 624,469 | 100.0% | 628,295 | 100.0% | 632,281 | 100.0% | 636,287 | 100.0% |

Table 1 provides counts of undergraduate degree earners grouped by the level of their most recent prior award (if any). Students with no prior award are classified as first-time graduates. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30.

Table 2: Count of First-Time Graduates Earning Bachelor's Degrees by Gender, Age, and Institutional Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|--|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Bachelor's Degrees | 1,398,655 | 0.1% | 1,420,152 | 1.5% | 1,421,903 | 0.1% | 1,435,765 | 1.0% | 1,453,144 | 1.2% | 1,495,720 | 2.9% |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 780,134 | -0.5% | 790,560 | 1.3% | 788,092 | -0.3% | 795,926 | 1.0% | 805,177 | 1.2% | 828,089 | 2.8% |
| Men | 618,522 | 0.8% | 629,592 | 1.8% | 633,811 | 0.7% | 639,839 | 1.0% | 647,967 | 1.3% | 667,631 | 3.0% |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 1,087,862 | 1.8% | 1,123,610 | 3.3% | 1,120,575 | -0.3% | 1,144,428 | 2.1% | 1,169,116 | 2.2% | 1,217,528 | 4.1% |
| 25-29 | 143,349 | 0.2% | 141,844 | -1.0% | 141,690 | -0.1% | 140,821 | -0.6% | 138,033 | -2.0% | 137,303 | -0.5% |
| 30-39 | 93,965 | -1.8% | 88,095 | -6.2% | 90,719 | 3.0% | 86,646 | -4.5% | 84,199 | -2.8% | 82,199 | -2.4% |
| 40-49 | 48,091 | -17.8% | 43,353 | -9.9% | 44,288 | 2.2% | 41,460 | -6.4% | 39,251 | -5.3% | 37,977 | -3.2% |
| 50 and Over | 23,154 | -18.5% | 21,492 | -7.2% | 23,151 | 7.7% | 21,442 | -7.4% | 20,702 | -3.5% | 19,407 | -6.3% |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 883,777 | -0.3% | 916,049 | 3.7% | 896,972 | -2.1% | 915,449 | 2.1% | 933,843 | 2.0% | 972,930 | 4.2% |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 441,111 | 1.7% | 446,761 | 1.3% | 449,991 | 0.7% | 453,676 | 0.8% | 455,406 | 0.4% | 461,915 | 1.4% |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 72,974 | -5.1% | 57,317 | -21.5% | 74,938 | 30.7% | 66,627 | -11.1% | 63,890 | -4.1% | 60,872 | -4.7% |

Table 2 shows the count of bachelor's degree recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time college graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30.

Table 3: First-Time Graduates Earning Bachelor’s Degrees as Percentage of All Bachelor’s Degree Earners by Gender, Age, and Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|---|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Bachelor’s Degrees as Percentage of All Bachelor’s Degree Earners | 76.0% | -2.0 | 76.0% | 0.0 | 75.1% | -0.9 | 74.9% | -0.3 | 74.4% | -0.5 | 74.0% | -0.3 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 74.0% | -2.3 | 73.9% | 0.0 | 72.8% | -1.1 | 72.5% | -0.3 | 71.9% | -0.6 | 71.5% | -0.4 |
| Men | 78.8% | -1.6 | 78.8% | 0.0 | 78.3% | -0.5 | 78.1% | -0.1 | 77.7% | -0.4 | 77.4% | -0.3 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 88.1% | -0.5 | 87.8% | -0.2 | 87.7% | -0.2 | 87.4% | -0.2 | 86.9% | -0.5 | 86.4% | -0.5 |
| 25-29 | 56.1% | -1.4 | 55.2% | -0.9 | 54.1% | -1.1 | 53.0% | -1.0 | 51.5% | -1.5 | 50.4% | -1.1 |
| 30-39 | 47.2% | -3.3 | 46.0% | -1.3 | 44.6% | -1.4 | 43.3% | -1.3 | 42.2% | -1.1 | 40.9% | -1.3 |
| 40-49 | 47.9% | -11.5 | 46.0% | -1.9 | 45.0% | -1.0 | 43.6% | -1.5 | 41.9% | -1.7 | 40.9% | -1.0 |
| 50 and Over | 49.9% | -15.4 | 49.2% | -0.7 | 48.4% | -0.8 | 46.9% | -1.5 | 45.8% | -1.1 | 44.5% | -1.3 |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 76.1% | -2.0 | 75.5% | -0.6 | 74.9% | -0.6 | 74.5% | -0.4 | 73.9% | -0.6 | 73.5% | -0.4 |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 81.3% | -1.8 | 80.9% | -0.4 | 80.5% | -0.4 | 80.2% | -0.3 | 79.5% | -0.7 | 79.0% | -0.5 |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 54.3% | -3.1 | 55.9% | 1.6 | 55.6% | -0.3 | 54.7% | -0.9 | 54.5% | -0.2 | 54.5% | 0.0 |

Table 3 shows the percentage of bachelor’s degree recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor’s degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30.

Table 4: Count of First-Time Graduates Earning Associate Degrees by Gender, Age, and Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|---|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Associate Degrees | 808,102 | -4.8% | 789,589 | -2.3% | 794,503 | 0.6% | 778,690 | -2.0% | 768,179 | -1.3% | 759,126 | -1.2% |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 488,621 | -5.2% | 474,605 | -2.9% | 476,629 | 0.4% | 469,219 | -1.6% | 460,114 | -1.9% | 454,472 | -1.2% |
| Men | 319,481 | -4.1% | 314,985 | -1.4% | 317,874 | 0.9% | 309,471 | -2.6% | 308,064 | -0.5% | 304,654 | -1.1% |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 400,963 | -0.4% | 416,154 | 3.8% | 425,894 | 2.3% | 439,295 | 3.1% | 448,948 | 2.2% | 459,102 | 2.3% |
| 25-29 | 143,466 | -5.5% | 136,386 | -4.9% | 137,211 | 0.6% | 132,590 | -3.4% | 128,494 | -3.1% | 123,672 | -3.8% |
| 30-39 | 149,852 | -7.7% | 137,135 | -8.5% | 135,373 | -1.3% | 123,208 | -9.0% | 116,280 | -5.6% | 109,219 | -6.1% |
| 40-49 | 76,081 | -14.7% | 66,598 | -12.5% | 63,454 | -4.7% | 55,265 | -12.9% | 49,648 | -10.2% | 45,184 | -9.0% |
| 50 and Over | 34,612 | -14.3% | 31,058 | -10.3% | 29,935 | -3.6% | 26,555 | -11.3% | 23,481 | -11.6% | 21,219 | -9.6% |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 109,589 | -7.4% | 125,752 | 14.7% | 119,508 | -5.0% | 123,714 | 3.5% | 146,196 | 18.2% | 159,009 | 8.8% |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 41,605 | 5.8% | 42,067 | 1.1% | 40,437 | -3.9% | 40,987 | 1.4% | 38,808 | -5.3% | 39,148 | 0.9% |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 106,545 | -15.4% | 73,668 | -30.9% | 81,608 | 10.8% | 55,350 | -32.2% | 46,827 | -15.4% | 39,582 | -15.5% |
| 2-Year Public | 490,776 | -0.7% | 497,478 | 1.4% | 505,507 | 1.6% | 515,859 | 2.0% | 493,813 | -4.3% | 498,497 | 0.9% |

Table 4 shows the count of associate degree recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30.

Table 5: First-Time Graduates Earning Associate Degrees as Percentage of All Associate Degree Earners by Gender, Age, and Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|---|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Associate Degrees as Percentage of All Associate Degree Earners | 82.6% | -2.6 | 81.3% | -1.3 | 81.3% | -0.1 | 80.6% | -0.7 | 80.1% | -0.4 | 79.4% | -0.7 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 81.3% | -2.8 | 79.9% | -1.4 | 79.9% | 0.0 | 79.2% | -0.7 | 78.8% | -0.4 | 78.0% | -0.7 |
| Men | 84.8% | -2.3 | 83.6% | -1.2 | 83.4% | -0.2 | 82.7% | -0.7 | 82.2% | -0.5 | 81.5% | -0.7 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 90.3% | -1.2 | 89.8% | -0.5 | 89.8% | 0.0 | 89.2% | -0.6 | 88.9% | -0.3 | 88.4% | -0.5 |
| 25-29 | 77.5% | -2.1 | 75.2% | -2.2 | 75.0% | -0.3 | 73.4% | -1.5 | 72.2% | -1.2 | 70.9% | -1.3 |
| 30-39 | 76.0% | -3.1 | 73.1% | -2.9 | 72.7% | -0.4 | 71.0% | -1.7 | 69.6% | -1.3 | 67.8% | -1.8 |
| 40-49 | 75.8% | -7.0 | 72.9% | -3.0 | 72.2% | -0.6 | 70.3% | -1.9 | 68.8% | -1.5 | 66.4% | -2.4 |
| 50 and Over | 74.8% | -7.8 | 71.2% | -3.6 | 70.7% | -0.5 | 68.6% | -2.0 | 67.1% | -1.5 | 65.6% | -1.5 |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 82.5% | -3.6 | 82.5% | 0.0 | 82.0% | -0.4 | 81.6% | -0.4 | 81.6% | 0.0 | 81.2% | -0.4 |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 84.5% | -1.4 | 84.4% | -0.1 | 84.5% | 0.1 | 85.5% | 1.0 | 84.6% | -0.9 | 84.2% | -0.4 |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 92.3% | -1.5 | 90.8% | -1.6 | 88.8% | -2.0 | 85.1% | -3.7 | 83.3% | -1.7 | 80.4% | -2.9 |
| 2-Year Public | 80.7% | -2.4 | 80.0% | -0.7 | 79.8% | -0.2 | 79.6% | -0.2 | 78.7% | -0.9 | 78.5% | -0.3 |

Table 5 shows the percentage of associate degree recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30.

Table 6: Count of First-Time Graduates Earning Certificates by Gender, Age, and Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|--|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Certificates | 442,266 | -5.5% | 449,190 | 1.6% | 443,856 | -1.2% | 442,308 | -0.3% | 441,204 | -0.2% | 444,073 | 0.7% |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 261,827 | -7.5% | 260,590 | -0.5% | 256,395 | -1.6% | 250,811 | -2.2% | 249,132 | -0.7% | 252,551 | 1.4% |
| Men | 180,439 | -2.3% | 188,600 | 4.5% | 187,460 | -0.6% | 191,497 | 2.2% | 192,072 | 0.3% | 191,522 | -0.3% |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 205,713 | 1.4% | 213,098 | 3.6% | 218,319 | 2.5% | 223,471 | 2.4% | 229,637 | 2.8% | 240,086 | 4.6% |
| 25-29 | 78,331 | -1.9% | 75,583 | -3.5% | 75,441 | -0.2% | 75,604 | 0.2% | 74,108 | -2.0% | 73,195 | -1.2% |
| 30-39 | 82,786 | -7.2% | 81,710 | -1.3% | 78,275 | -4.2% | 75,931 | -3.0% | 74,484 | -1.9% | 72,275 | -3.0% |
| 40-49 | 46,041 | -19.4% | 46,262 | 0.5% | 42,879 | -7.3% | 39,884 | -7.0% | 38,335 | -3.9% | 36,142 | -5.7% |
| 50 and Over | 28,318 | -24.6% | 31,390 | 10.8% | 27,991 | -10.8% | 26,524 | -5.2% | 24,026 | -9.4% | 21,882 | -8.9% |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 24,963 | -40.5% | 27,759 | 11.2% | 33,050 | 19.1% | 35,889 | 8.6% | 39,340 | 9.6% | 42,302 | 7.5% |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 3,884 | 27.0% | 5,145 | 32.5% | 4,475 | -13.0% | 4,245 | -5.1% | 3,726 | -12.2% | 3,703 | -0.6% |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 19,304 | 0.1% | 20,509 | 6.2% | 18,443 | -10.1% | 18,098 | -1.9% | 21,554 | 19.1% | 25,937 | 20.3% |
| 2-Year Public | 276,103 | -1.7% | 289,055 | 4.7% | 293,859 | 1.7% | 296,796 | 1.0% | 290,613 | -2.1% | 310,740 | 6.9% |

Table 6 shows the count of certificate recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30. Certificate earners with no prior awards are classified as first-time graduates.

Table 7: First-Time Graduates Earning Certificates as Percentage of All Certificate Earners by Gender, Age, and Sector

| | 2012-13 | Change from Prior Year | 2013-14 | Change from Prior Year | 2014-15 | Change from Prior Year | 2015-16 | Change from Prior Year | 2016-17 | Change from Prior Year | 2017-18 | Change from Prior Year |
|--|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| OVERALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-Time Graduates Earning Certificates as Percentage of All Associate Degree Earners | 72.5% | -2.8 | 72.2% | -0.3 | 71.1% | -1.1 | 70.4% | -0.7 | 69.8% | -0.6 | 69.8% | 0.0 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Women | 73.1% | -3.1 | 72.6% | -0.5 | 71.9% | -0.8 | 70.9% | -1.0 | 70.6% | -0.3 | 70.3% | -0.3 |
| Men | 71.7% | -2.3 | 71.5% | -0.1 | 70.0% | -1.5 | 69.8% | -0.2 | 68.8% | -1.0 | 69.1% | 0.3 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 85.5% | 0.4 | 85.5% | 0.0 | 84.9% | -0.6 | 84.1% | -0.8 | 83.6% | -0.5 | 83.3% | -0.3 |
| 25-29 | 65.7% | -0.3 | 64.9% | -0.8 | 64.2% | -0.7 | 62.8% | -1.5 | 62.2% | -0.5 | 61.9% | -0.4 |
| 30-39 | 63.8% | -3.0 | 62.8% | -1.0 | 60.9% | -1.9 | 59.6% | -1.3 | 58.5% | -1.0 | 58.2% | -0.4 |
| 40-49 | 63.0% | -11.0 | 61.7% | -1.4 | 59.4% | -2.2 | 58.4% | -1.0 | 57.1% | -1.3 | 56.1% | -1.0 |
| 50 and Over | 61.9% | -14.0 | 62.8% | 1.0 | 58.7% | -4.1 | 58.8% | 0.1 | 55.5% | -3.2 | 54.0% | -1.5 |
| INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-Year Public | 47.3% | -8.8 | 46.7% | -0.5 | 47.1% | 0.3 | 49.1% | 2.1 | 47.7% | -1.4 | 50.5% | 2.8 |
| 4-Year Private Nonprofit | 32.5% | 0.3 | 35.2% | 2.6 | 34.0% | -1.2 | 31.2% | -2.8 | 29.4% | -1.8 | 29.7% | 0.3 |
| 4-Year Private For-Profit | 67.1% | -1.1 | 71.2% | 4.1 | 66.1% | -5.0 | 66.1% | -0.1 | 72.0% | 5.9 | 73.9% | 2.0 |
| 2-Year Public | 73.1% | -3.1 | 72.8% | -0.3 | 71.9% | -0.9 | 71.5% | -0.4 | 70.4% | -1.1 | 71.1% | 0.7 |

Table 7 shows the percentage of certificate recipients in each year and category who were first-time graduates. First-time graduates are defined as students who earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate as their first postsecondary credential. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30. Certificate earners with no prior awards are classified as first-time graduates.

NOTES ON THE DATA

Definition of *First-Time Graduate*

The *Undergraduate Degree Earners Report*, published annually by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, provides counts of first-time graduates and graduates with prior awards by institutional sector, award level, age group, and gender. Award recipients are considered to be first-time graduates if the award received in the report year is their first postsecondary award from a U.S. Title IV, degree-granting institution. Each student is counted as a first-time graduate only once, in the academic year of his or her first postsecondary credential. Academic years run from July 1 to June 30. A student who earned two credentials in the year of his or her first credential is counted under the highest credential level earned in that year. For example, if a student whose first award was a certificate received in December 2017 subsequently received an associate degree in May 2018, this student would be counted in this report as a first-time graduate at the associate's degree level in academic year 2017-18. Certificate earners with no prior awards are classified as first-time graduates.

Degree Coverage and Weighting

The National Student Clearinghouse collects graduation information from its participating institutions via two data reporting services: Enrollment Reporting (ER) and DegreeVerify (DV). Enrollment Reporting has slightly higher data coverage rates, but for credentials reported prior to 2013-14, it generally includes only basic completion information, such as graduation indicator and the date of graduation. DV includes enhanced information on completions, including degree title, major, level, and CIP code, and comprised 94 percent of credentials granted by U.S. Title IV degree-granting institutions as of fall 2017. The overall set of undergraduate degree earners for a particular year is based only on awards reported to DV, but prior award status was assigned using records from both ER and DV. In cases where the prior award did not appear in a DV record (approximately 2.2% of the 2016 bachelors' degree earners, 2.8% of associate degree earners and 2.8% of certificate earners), the level of the prior award was imputed based on the institution level and related enrollment records. To

adjust for the DV participation rate, weights were applied to each degree record included in this report. Weights were derived by calculating the inverse of the rate of degree data coverage for each combination of year, institution sector, award level (bachelor's, associate's, or certificate), and student gender. To obtain degree data coverage for each combination of year, sector, and award level, Clearinghouse degree data were compared to IPEDS Completions data for all U.S. Title IV, degree-granting institutions.

Imputation of Gender

Institutions reported student gender to the Clearinghouse for approximately half of all students included in this report. The genders of the remaining students were imputed using a table of name-gender pairs that the Research Center developed using data publicly available from the Census Bureau and the Social Security Administration as well as the institution-reported data. The imputation used only those pairs in which the name had at least two instances and was associated with a single gender in at least 95 percent of the instances. The imputation is accurate in 99.6 percent of the cases with known gender. A detailed document on the development of our approach resides on the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's "[Working with Our Data](#)" Web page.

Degree-Granting Status

When referencing IPEDS counts of postsecondary awards, it is important to distinguish degree-granting institutions from non-degree-granting institutions. Clearinghouse certificate and degree data, as well as the IPEDS comparison data used for the weighting calculation in this report, are limited to degrees and certificates awarded by U.S. Title IV-eligible, degree-granting institutions.