

LONG TERM TRENDS IN  
UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES  
AWARDED IN THE SOCIAL  
SCIENCES, 1949 - 2014

January 31, 2017



In this report are included figures and tables illustrating long-term trends in undergraduate degrees conferred in political science and other social sciences based on data published annually by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Digest of Education Statistics. These data in particular are from Table 325.92, “Degrees in economics, history, political science and government, and sociology conferred by postsecondary institutions, by level of degree: Selected years, 1949-50 through 2013-14”, and are available [here](#). The data was last accessed on 01/30/2017.

These data do not suggest any major shifts in trends from [data we presented last year](#). Long-term growth in the total number of undergraduate degrees awarded overall continued, but 2013-2014 was the fourth consecutive year that the number of degrees awarded in political science and the social sciences dropped. In 2013-2014, 2% of all degrees awarded were in political science. In the last thirty years, there have been two peaks in the raw number and proportion of degrees awarded in political science: a larger one in the mid- to late 1980s through the early 1990s, and a comparably smaller and shorter-lived one in the early 2000s through 2008.

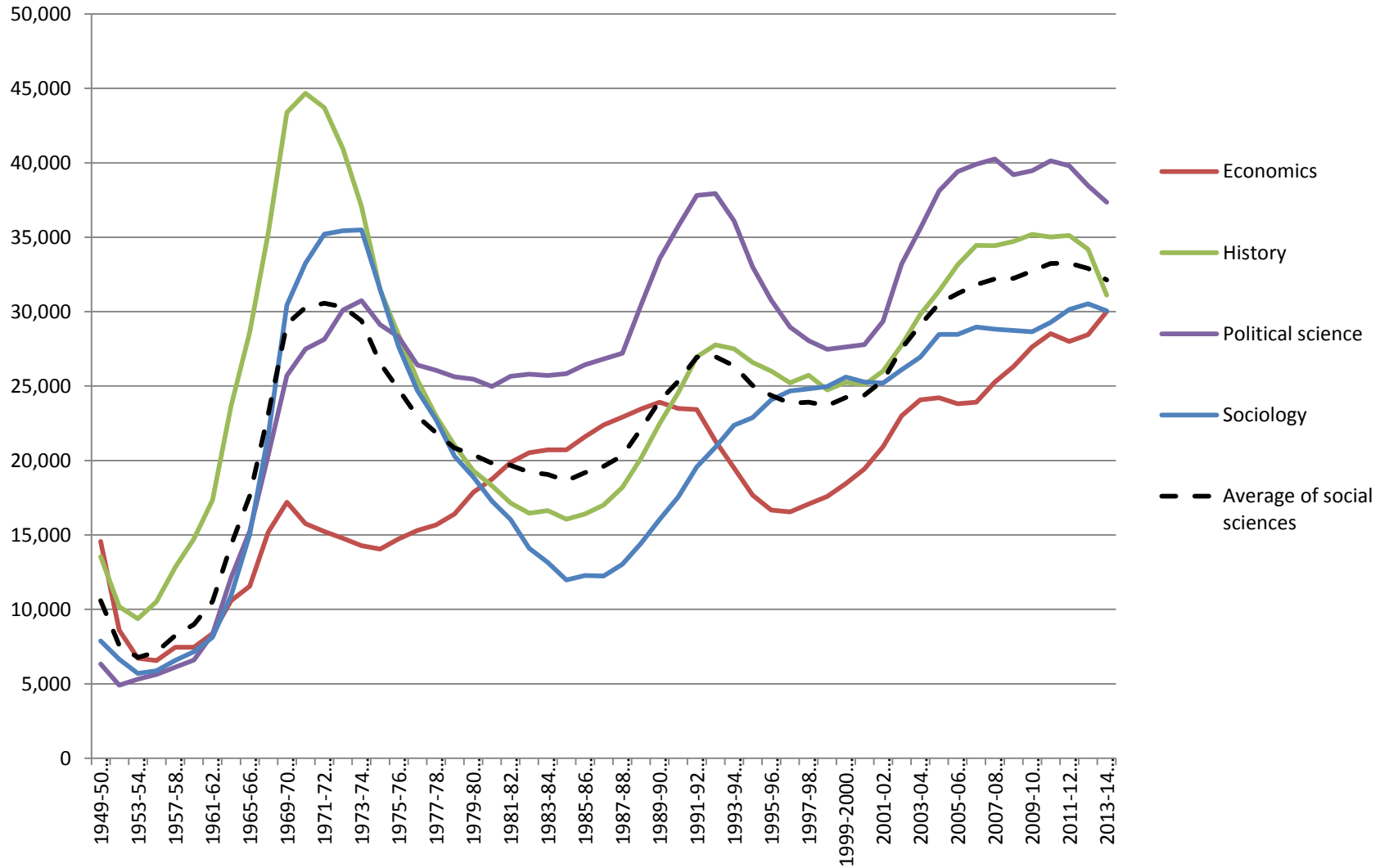
On the whole, as seen in Figure 2, the number of degrees awarded in the social sciences as a proportion of all degrees awarded is on the decline since its relative height in the early 1970s, when data collection began. Political science remains the largest proportion of social science degrees awarded, at 29% of these degrees (illustrated in figures 1 and 3).

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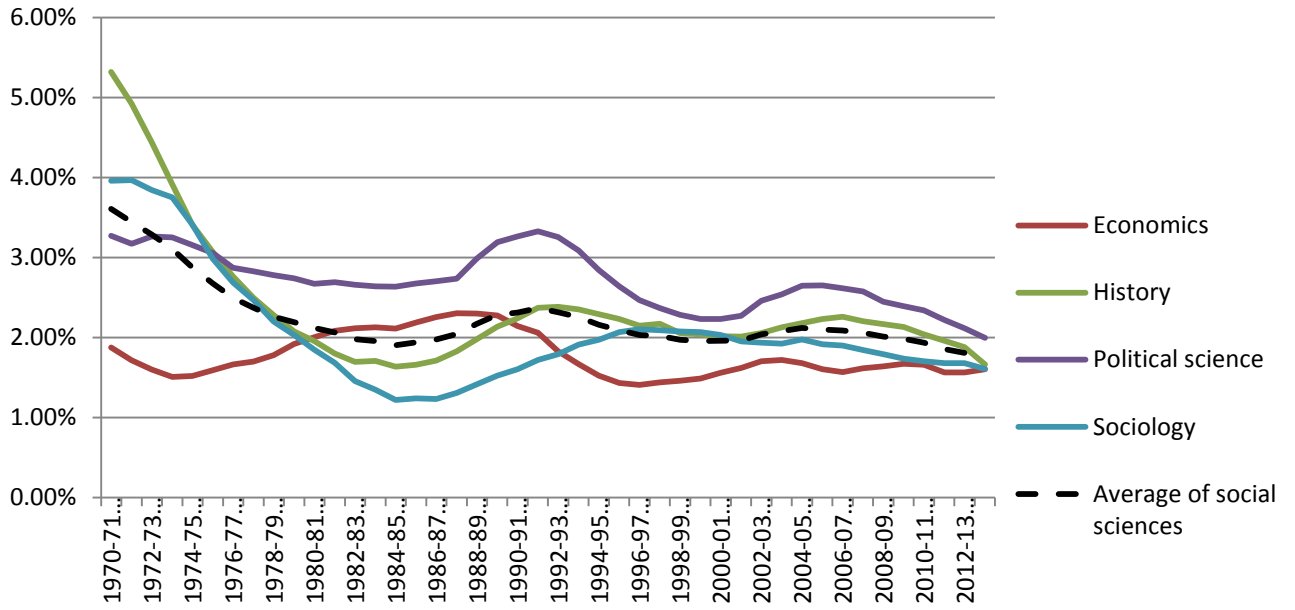
Washington, D.C.  
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**Figure 1. Degrees Awarded in Economics, History, Political Science and Government, and Sociology, 1949-2014**



**Figure 2. Economics, History, Political Science, and Sociology degrees as proportions of all undergraduate degrees conferred, 1970 - 2014**



**Figure 3. Political Science as a proportion of all Social Science degrees, 1949-2014**

