

March 6, 2019

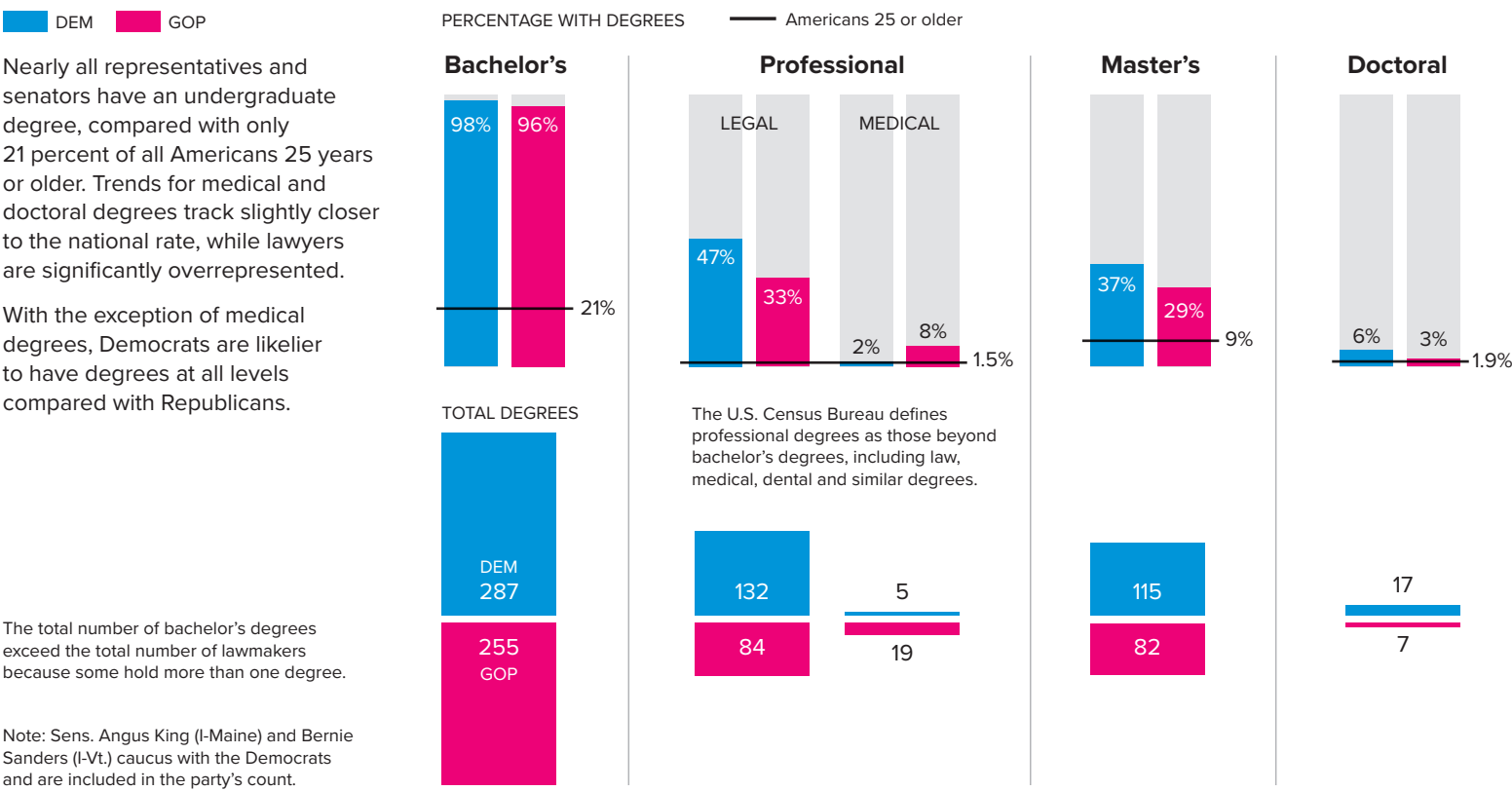
Alma Maters of the 116th Congress

BY TAYLOR MILLER THOMAS, POLITICO PRO DATAPOINT

Members of Congress share responsibility for setting federal education policy, including postsecondary education, an experience that nearly all lawmakers have in common — 519 of 538 sitting Senators, Representatives and non-voting delegates have an undergraduate degree. The collegiate backgrounds of Congress, however, look very different from the typical American educational experience.

While almost the entire legislative body has at least a bachelor's degree, only 21 percent of the country as a whole does. Graduate and doctoral degrees are also more common in Congress than they are across the rest of the country. Senators, in particular, are likelier to have attended private college and universities, compared with most Americans and members in the House.

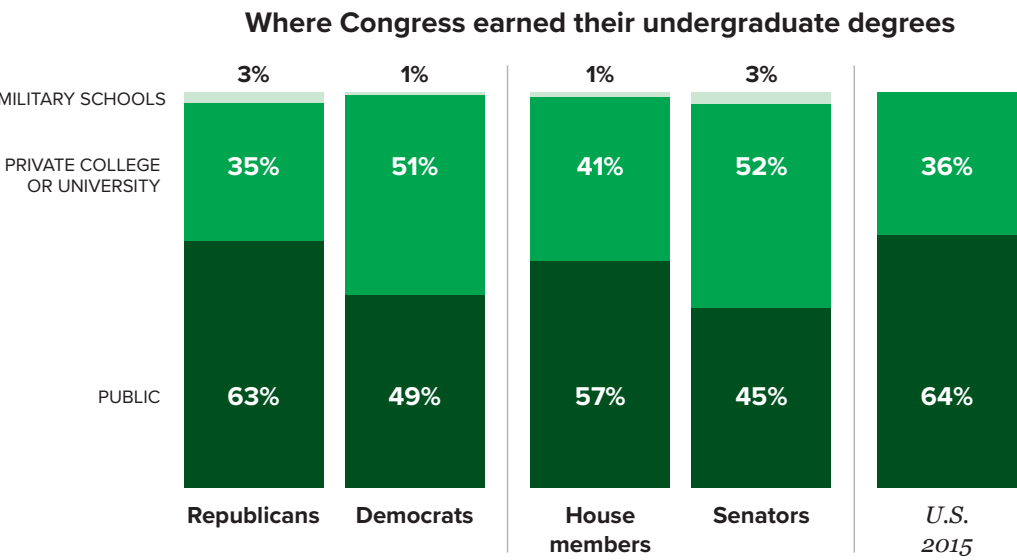
Types of college degrees held by Congress compared with U.S. population



Representatives, Republicans likelier to have attended public universities

Public institutions account for a higher total of degrees awarded across the entire U.S. population — about 64 percent of undergraduate degrees awarded in 2015 were from public colleges and universities.

This trend holds true for House members, where 57 percent of all undergraduate degrees earned by Representatives were from public institutions. However, Senators were likelier to have attended private colleges and universities — 52 percent of their undergraduate degrees were from private schools.



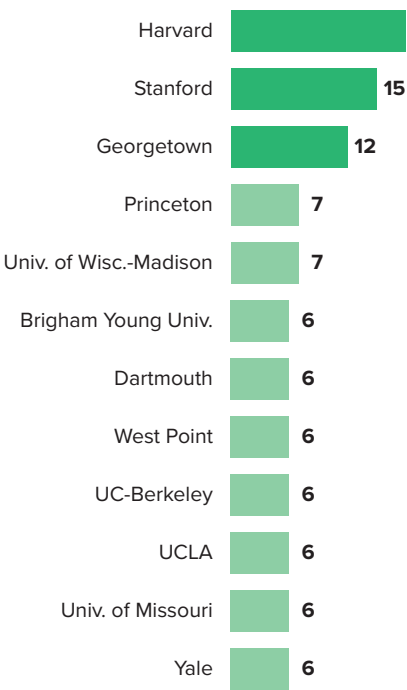
Harvard, Ivy League, University of California system lead most popular institutions

Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), Reps. Ron Kind (R-Wis.) and Van Taylor (R-Texas) are 4 of 18 members with Harvard undergraduate degrees, the most common alma mater in Congress. The cohort represents three percent of Congress — although Harvard, with a total undergraduate enrollment of 6,699 in the 2017-18 school year, represents less than 0.1 percent of total U.S. undergraduate enrollment.

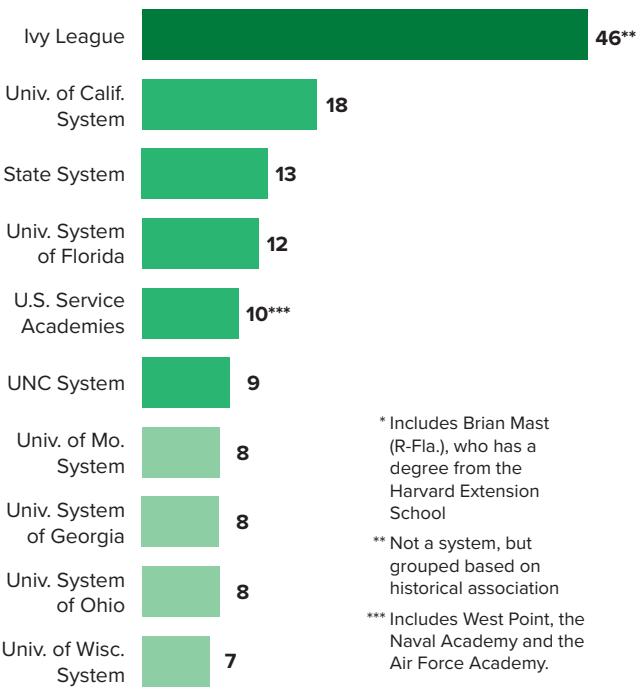
Forty-six members attended Ivy League schools, the most of any system, though these schools represent less than a percent of total U.S. postsecondary enrollment.

Nearly 200 schools can boast of one current Congressional alum.

Top Congressional alma maters



Most popular college systems



Congressional alma maters by state

This map shows all undergraduate and associate degrees earned by members of the House and Senate; some members have more than one undergraduate degree or have both an associate's and bachelor's degree.

