

Graduate Study in Psychology 2016

Summary Report: Student Attrition

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Graduate Study in Psychology Summary Report: Student Attrition

The 2016 Graduate Study in Psychology Summary Report reflects data collected from nearly 500 departments and programs offering master's and doctoral degrees in psychology and related training. Participating departments and programs are listed in the annual *Graduate Study in Psychology* book; published each August as a joint effort of the APA Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education and Training and the APA Office of Publications and Databases. The 2016 book and this report represent data from the 2013-2014 academic year and aggregate these data on program-level attrition rates by subfield at both the master's and doctoral levels. Where meaningful, descriptive statistics are reported by type of department (e.g., university-based, professional school) and/or institution type (e.g., public, not-for-profit), as reported by the department.

Tables and figures contained in this report are reflective of the self-reporting of participants. As such, analyses are drawn from the subset of those departments and may not be generalizable to the population of graduate departments with psychology offerings. Where indicated, some data are reported at the departmental level and others at the program level. Information on master's programs housed within doctoral departments or part of doctoral degrees (i.e., non-terminal master's degrees) is included in doctoral department data. Master's-level information in departments where the master's is the highest degree offered and some terminal-level master's program information are presented by that level of training. Tuition and financial data are reported in the local currency; U.S. dollars for departments in the United States and Canadian dollars for Canadian departments. Please direct any questions to Daniel Michalski, PhD dmichalski@apa.org or Caroline Cope, MA ccope@apa.org with the APA Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education and Training.

This report was produced by the Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education and Training and reviewed by the Center for Workforce Studies within the APA Education Directorate. We are grateful for the support of Cynthia Belar, PhD, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the APA, and Jaime Diaz-Granados, PhD, Executive Director of the APA Education Directorate. Most importantly, we recognize the department chairs, program directors, faculty, and staff who take the time each winter to participate in the Graduate Study in Psychology survey and assist prospective psychology students with selecting programs.

Method

Each January, the APA Education Directorate contacts chairs of graduate psychology departments regarding the upcoming annual Graduate Study in Psychology survey. In February, chairs receive a secure URL to access and complete the survey. Up to five reminders are sent to departments until the survey is completed. Departments not updating information for two subsequent years are removed from the database and their information not included in the updated version of the book. Information not updated in a single year is incorporated in that year's edition, but notated that data are from the prior year in the publication.

To calculate a ratio for attrition, the reported number of a program’s withdrawing students was divided by the sum of each program’s total enrollment and the number of withdrawals for that application cycle. Programs not providing complete data on these variables were excluded from analysis. Similarly, programs not reporting any withdrawals during the application cycle were excluded from the attrition rate calculation defined above. Thus, mean attrition rates are calculated based on only programs reporting attrition. The data included in the 2016 Graduate Study in Psychology book were collected in 2015 and reflects program information from the 2013-2014 academic year. Thus, in tables and figures contained in this report, data are labeled consistent with the year in which programs were surveyed.

Survey Participation

Departments participating in the 2016 Graduate Study in Psychology survey represented 1,688 programs as shown in Table 1. Attrition information is collected at the program level and the majority of participating programs were housed in colleges of arts and sciences at universities. Nearly 20% of programs (primarily counseling and school psychology programs) were housed within university-based colleges or schools of education. A total of 1,552 or 92% of the programs participating in the survey provided information necessary to compute attrition rates and program size.

Table 1. Program Participation in Graduate Study in Psychology Survey by Department Location, 2013-2014

Type of Department	N	%
University College of Arts and Sciences	1,068	63.3
University College/School of Education	324	19.2
Free-standing Professional School	124	7.3
University-based Professional School	68	4.0
Medical School/Health Sciences University	23	1.4
Other	81	4.8
Total	1,688	100.0

Note. N=1,688 programs. Departments not identifying an institutional location were excluded from analysis.

Master's Attrition

Descriptive statistics on attrition rates and programs sizes for terminal master's programs are presented in Table 2. Within terminal master's programs, experimental and health service provider programs (clinical, counseling, and school) were most represented compared to other subfields. The highest mean program sizes across the years of 2011-2015 were found in counseling. Figure 1 plots the mean attrition rate percentages by subfield for the same time period. Attrition rates spiked highest in neuropsychology/biological, social, and developmental psychology programs while conversely, rates were lowest in counseling at just under 5%. For neuropsychology/biology programs, attrition rate percentages in 2012 were markedly higher at nearly 18% compared to other years. However, the total number of neuro/bio programs participating was nine for that year. Additionally, in some subfields (e.g., social, developmental), the number of programs reporting attrition were low, possibly contributing to the variability across years.

Table 2. Master's Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015

Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total N of Programs by Year		590	557	564	575	579
Experimental	Total Programs	88	77	89	93	107
	Programs with Attrition	25	24	26	39	34
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	8.41 (4.9)	6.81 (4.7)	7.41 (3.9)	7.56 (4.3)	8.59 (5.2)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	23.18 (29.9)	23.12 (34.7)	21.93 (30.4)	24.51 (42.1)	20.98 (26.2)
Neuro/Bio	Total Programs	11	9	7	5	6
	Programs with Attrition	3	3	2	1	1
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	8.17 (6.84)	17.43 (18.6)	6.97 (1.0)	7.84 *	14 *
	Mean Program Size (SD)	19.91 (23.1)	19.67 (23.0)	20.29 (20.8)	15 (18.3)	19.17 (32.8)
Social	Total Programs	10	11	12	13	17
	Programs with Attrition	2	3	1	3	3
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	9.23 (10.5)	3.00 (1.2)	18.18 *	11.62 (7.3)	4.51 (1.9)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	13.90 (15.5)	22.36 (26.5)	9.92 (6.0)	16.46 (15.8)	18.94 (23.1)

Table 2. Master's Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015 (con't)

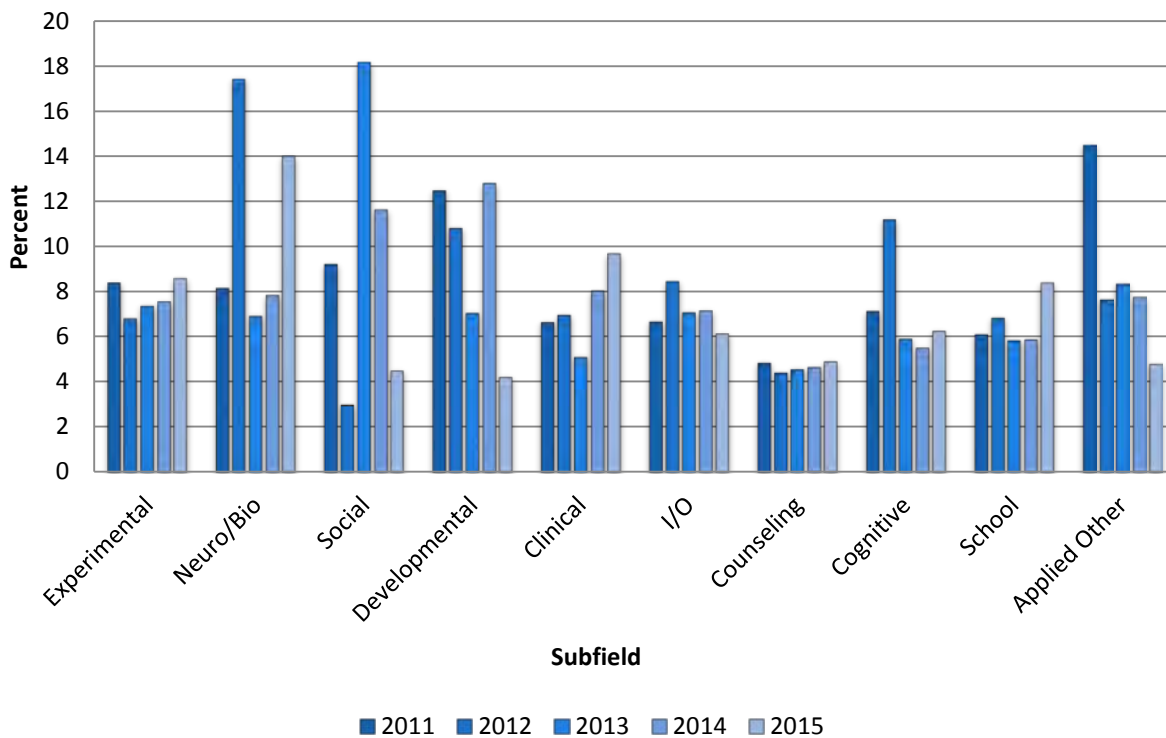
Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Developmental	Total Programs	20	20	16	23	23
	Programs with Attrition	1	2	1	3	2
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	12.5 *	10.83 (13.0)	7.1 *	12.8 (17.8)	4.26 (2.3)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	17.2 (18.5)	21.35 (24.6)	17.81 (16.8)	18.96 (17.5)	15.04 (13.9)
Clinical	Total Programs	76	72	70	72	68
	Programs with Attrition	36	32	28	38	30
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	6.68 (3.3)	6.98 (4.4)	5.15 (2.9)	8.03 (10.8)	9.68 (18.1)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	40.66 (48.7)	37.74 (46.9)	46.06 (65.5)	37.99 (55.2)	37.44 (50.1)
Industrial/ Organizational	Total Programs	67	66	70	64	68
	Programs with Attrition	15	18	16	10	14
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	6.7 (3.7)	8.46 (7.2)	7.13 (3.8)	7.16 (4.1)	6.16 (3.8)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	43.96 (101.5)	24.92 (27.4)	34.86 (66.2)	35.98 (71.6)	33.78 (60.0)
Counseling	Total Programs	151	132	148	144	129
	Programs with Attrition	76	71	74	67	62
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	4.87 (4.2)	4.42 (3.4)	4.62 (3.2)	4.67 (2.9)	4.93 (3.6)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	75.89 (95.7)	75.67 (102.9)	66.44 (85.6)	76.83 (121.0)	77.95 (106.0)
Cognitive	Total Programs	11	12	13	12	13
	Programs with Attrition	1	4	4	3	2
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	7.14 *	11.20 (6.4)	5.96 (2.3)	5.52 (1.4)	6.28 (0.6)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	15.09 (8.7)	14.17 (7.7)	13.62 (8.3)	12.33 (5.6)	14.77 (8.2)
School	Total Programs	100	95	89	91	73
	Programs with Attrition	37	44	22	32	20
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	6.14 (4.6)	6.85 (4.9)	5.89 (4.2)	5.89 (3.7)	8.40 (5.0)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	36.22 (36.8)	32.77 (32.5)	26.12 (23.3)	27.57 (23.6)	29.81 (23.9)

Table 2. Master’s Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015 (con’t)

Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Applied Other	Total Programs	56	63	50	58	55
	Programs with Attrition	21	19	20	16	19
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	14.52 (22.5)	7.66 (6.3)	8.39 (6.8)	7.75 (4.7)	4.82 (2.3)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	55.29 (121.2)	44.84 (83.1)	64.58 (132.8)	62.86 (143.0)	52.84 (95.2)
Other Psychology	Total Programs	**	**	**	**	20
	Programs with Attrition	**	**	**	**	10
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD%)	**	**	**	**	10.06 (9.6)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	**	**	**	**	60.7 (83.3)

Notes. Programs not reporting total enrollment and withdrawal numbers were excluded from analysis.
 * Insufficient “Programs with Attrition” value precludes SD analysis. ** Data were not categorized into the “Other Psychology” subfield prior to 2015.

Figure 1. Master’s Attrition Rates by Subfield, 2011-2015



Doctoral Attrition

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics related to doctoral program attrition by subfield for years 2011-2015. Clinical programs represent the largest participation proportion at the doctoral level (between 234 and 247 programs), followed by cognitive and developmental consistently across this time period. Figure 2 plots the attrition rate percentages by subfield across the years 2011-2015. The lowest overall rates (less than 6%) were found in the health service provider subfields: clinical, counseling, and school psychology. In 2013, attrition rates noticeably spiked in social, cognitive, and other applied subfields.

Table 3. Doctoral Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015

Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total N of Programs by Year		954	966	976	979	973
Experimental	Total Programs	50	41	48	48	74
	Programs with Attrition	17	10	16	16	23
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	5.90 (4.6)	5.05 (3.1)	6.02 (3.9)	5.55 (2.7)	6.15 (4.4)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	24.4 (21.2)	25.78 (17.2)	23.10 (18.7)	24.5 (16.5)	19.08 (15.6)
Neuro/Bio	Total Programs	87	89	89	88	86
	Programs with Attrition	14	21	19	15	19
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	12.67 (7.8)	8.82 (6.1)	8.47 (4.2)	8.98 (5.7)	10.64 (6.8)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	11.74 (8.15)	11.97 (7.8)	12.55 (9.5)	12.39 (8.5)	12.26 (7.8)

Table 3. Doctoral Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015 (con't)

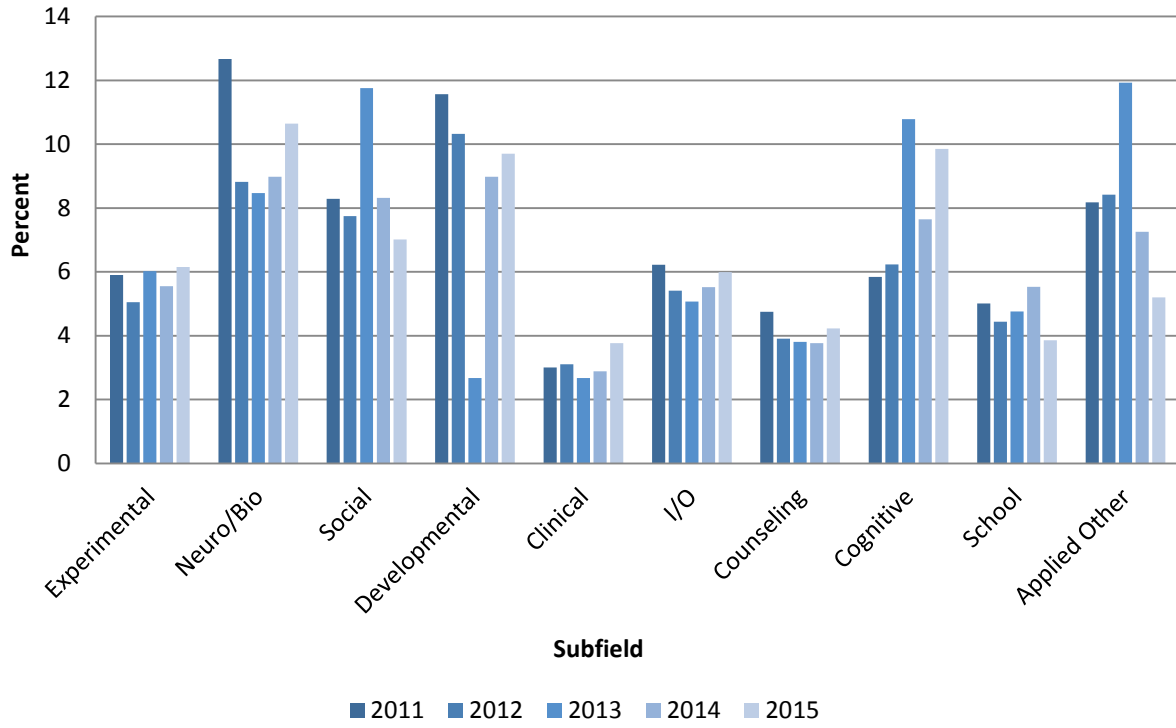
Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Social	Total Programs	85	96	96	97	102
	Programs with Attrition	18	15	21	19	17
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	8.29 (5.7)	7.75 (4.2)	11.76 (10.6)	8.32 (7.0)	7.01 (4.4)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	16.13 (9.8)	15.75 (9.5)	15.34 (10.0)	16.62 (11.9)	16.15 (11.6)
Developmental	Total Programs	99	102	102	107	102
	Programs with Attrition	19	14	22	18	23
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	11.57 (12.6)	10.32 (8.3)	2.67 (1.5)	8.98 (5.3)	9.70 (7.4)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	15.03 (10.9)	14.54 (11.1)	15.20 (11.4)	15.50 (14.5)	15.12 (10.5)
Clinical	Total Programs	234	237	238	237	247
	Programs with Attrition	111	117	102	105	100
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	3.00 (1.8)	3.10 (3.1)	2.67 (1.5)	2.88 (2.6)	3.77 (9.86)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	74.79 (85.9)	72.00 (70.3)	73.40 (78.1)	77.49 (88.9)	75.30 (85.9)
Industrial/ Organizational	Total Programs	56	55	58	55	55
	Programs with Attrition	14	17	11	8	14
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	6.22 (3.9)	5.41 (3.6)	5.07 (2.6)	5.52 (2.2)	5.99 (3.7)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	27.75 (19.4)	23.76 (12.9)	28.19 (34.2)	29.35 (42.3)	32.62 (51.6)

Table 3. Doctoral Attrition Rates and Program Sizes by Subfield, 2011-2015 (con't)

Subfield		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Counseling	Total Programs	87	81	87	87	81
	Programs with Attrition	26	26	29	22	22
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	4.75 (4.2)	3.91 (2.2)	3.81 (2.7)	3.77 (1.6)	4.23 (2.2)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	35.07 (16.9)	33.85 (12.9)	33.10 (16.3)	33.32 (42.3)	34.98 (17.7)
Cognitive	Total Programs	107	109	114	121	114
	Programs with Attrition	24	24	30	28	31
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	5.84 (2.8)	6.23 (4.1)	10.78 (8.9)	7.65 (5.4)	9.85 (5.6)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	17.43 (10.8)	16.87 (10.6)	17.13 (11.2)	16.98 (11.6)	17.25 (11.4)
School	Total Programs	91	90	87	89	66
	Programs with Attrition	32	33	28	28	31
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	5.01 (2.7)	4.44 (2.7)	4.76 (3.1)	5.53 (3.1)	3.86 (1.94)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	32.59 (22.5)	31.42 (21.6)	34.41 (26.3)	31.22 (21.1)	34.79 (21.9)
Applied Other	Total Programs	58	66	57	50	46
	Programs with Attrition	10	21	10	14	10
	Mean Attrition Rate % (SD %)	8.18 (7.4)	8.42 (13.9)	11.93 (15.2)	7.25 (4.0)	5.20 (2.8)
	Mean Program Size (SD)	51.19 (171.7)	40.15 (160.9)	41.65 (133.6)	45.36 (163.9)	23.8 (18.7)

Note. Programs not reporting total enrollment and withdrawal numbers were excluded from analysis.

Figure 2. Doctoral Attrition Rates by Subfield, 2011-2015



Appendix

I. Subfields (2015)

Survey respondents were provided a complete list of subfields as shown in the left column of the table below. These categories were then collapsed into broader subfields as shown on the right for reporting purposes. For 2015, the category of “other psychology” was introduced.

Subfield Response Options	Collapsed Subfield
Experimental Psychology (Applied)	Experimental Psychology
Experimental Psychology (General)	
Biological	Neuroscience
Comparative Psychology	
Neuropsychology	
Neuroscience	
Physiological	
Psychopharmacology	
Health*	Social Psychology
Personality	
Social	
Child and Adolescent	Developmental Psychology
Developmental	
Human Development and Family Studies	
Geropsychology	
Clinical	Clinical Psychology
Health*	
Primary Care	
Psychoanalytic	
Consulting	I/O Psychology
Industrial/Organizational	Counseling Psychology
Counseling Psychology	
Community Counseling	
Family Psychology	
Marriage and Family Therapy	
Mental Health Counseling	
Rehabilitation	
Cognitive Psychology	Cognitive Psychology
Human Factors	
Psycholinguistics	
School Psychology	School Psychology
School Counseling Psychology	
Applied Behavior Analysis	Other Applied Psychology
Community Psychology	
Educational Psychology	
Forensic Psychology	
Sport Psychology	
Quantitative Psychology	
Behavioral	
Environmental	Other Psychology
General Psychology	
Humanistic	
Multicultural	

*Depending on the nature of training, clinically-oriented Health programs are included in the collapsed Clinical subfield. Other Health programs are included in Social/Personality category.

II. Subfields (2011-2014)

Subfield Response Options	Collapsed Subfield
Experimental Psychology (Applied)	Experimental Psychology
Experimental Psychology (General)	
Biological	Neuroscience
Comparative Psychology	
Neuropsychology	
Neuroscience	
Physiological	
Psychopharmacology	
Health*	Social Psychology
Personality	
Social	
Child and Adolescent	Developmental Psychology
Developmental	
Human Development and Family Studies	
Geropsychology	
Clinical	Clinical Psychology
Health*	
Primary Care	
Psychoanalytic	
Consulting	
Industrial/Organizational	I/O Psychology
Counseling Psychology	Counseling Psychology
Community Counseling	
Community Psychology	
Family Psychology	
Marriage and Family Therapy	
Mental Health Counseling	
Rehabilitation	
Cognitive Psychology	Cognitive Psychology
Human Factors	
Psycholinguistics	
Educational Psychology	School and Educational Psychology
School Counseling	
School Psychology	
Applied Behavior Analysis	Other Applied Psychology
Forensic Psychology	
Sport Psychology	
Quantitative Psychology	
Behavioral	
Environmental	
General Psychology	
Humanistic	
Multicultural	
Other	

*Depending on the nature of training, clinically-oriented Health programs are included in the collapsed Clinical subfield. Other Health programs are included in Social/Personality category.