



The Wellesley Effect:

Career Outcomes and
Professional Achievement
of Wellesley Alumnae
(1950–2024)





The Power of a Wellesley Education at Work

In 2025, Wellesley is celebrating 150 years of providing an excellent liberal arts education to women who will make a difference in the world. At a time when some question the value of higher education, and of the liberal arts in particular, this historic milestone inspired us to examine the impact of the Wellesley experience on the careers of generations of our alumnae.

To inform this effort, Wellesley's Lulu Chow Wang '66 Center for Career Education partnered with the research firm Lightcast to produce a report that looks at alumnae career pathways and outcomes from the classes of 1950 to 2024 currently in the workforce and compared them with those of other highly selective liberal arts colleges and universities. Lightcast identified 18,500 publicly available records to supplement our institutional data.

The findings show what we have always known about the power of a women's college and a liberal arts education. Our graduates study, choose to work in, and succeed in fields where women are traditionally underrepresented, such as business, STEM, and government, and they achieve positions of leadership regardless of major—proof that a liberal arts education prepares students for success in any career they choose. From the data, we see that our alumnae are both better represented at Fortune 500 companies and advance into management and leadership positions more rapidly than graduates from peer institutions. All of this is undeniable evidence of the Wellesley effect at work in the professional lives of our alumnae across generations.

This record of success and level of impact did not come about by chance. First, we credit the world-class academic program, led by our outstanding faculty, that defines a Wellesley education and builds the critical skills our graduates need to navigate an ever-evolving economy and professional landscape. Faculty have long championed the development of experiential opportunities as complementary to classroom learning, and in 2024 they approved the new experiential learning degree requirement to ensure that all students have access to—and complete—critical applied learning opportunities, such as internships and research, prior to graduation.

Second, we credit the tremendous investments we have made in our innovative approach to career education, which have made us a leader in this area for nearly a decade. From the moment they arrive to the day they graduate, Wellesley students are supported by advisors for career exploration as well as industry advisors who guide them as they begin to hone their career focus. In addition, this fall we are launching two exciting initiatives that are available to all students. The Business, Entrepreneurship, and Money Management (BEAM) program will enhance students' financial literacy skills—crucial across all disciplines—and prepare the next generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs as well as students looking to explore these fields. And a new cocurricular course will teach students across majors and disciplines about the fundamentals of ethical AI leadership, part of an immersive hands-on opportunity designed to build skills in this area that will translate to multiple areas of interest.

And finally, we can point to the brilliance and determination of our alumnae, who have opened doors and *held them open* for future generations to walk through. Together, they are more than just the most powerful women's network in the world—they are a force for progress and change.

Looking forward, we are ever more committed to ensuring that our students and alumnae can reach their highest professional aspirations while making the difference they want to make in the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paula A. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paula" being more prominent and the last name "Johnson" following in a similar style.

Paula A. Johnson
President
Wellesley College



Methodology

Wellesley commissioned Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm, to conduct research into our alumnae outcomes. In collaboration with Wellesley, Lightcast matched and supplemented Wellesley's internal employment dataset and National Student Clearinghouse graduate school records with information pertaining to more than 18,500 professional profiles within Lightcast's database. Profiles are created by aggregating public source information such as LinkedIn profiles. The Lightcast research team compared these Wellesley graduate records to the same publicly available profile information of a defined list of peer women's colleges, peer liberal arts institutions, and a larger defined list of selective colleges and universities. The data represents available digital information from graduates in the class of 1950 to the class of 2024 and where they reside in the labor market today.

Executive Summary

The world has understood for a long time that a Wellesley education produces leaders. It's frequently been called the "Wellesley effect." Thirty years ago, the *New York Times* ran a piece whose title offered a simple formula: "How to Succeed? Go to Wellesley."

In honor of Wellesley's 150th anniversary, the Lulu Chow Wang '66 Center for Career Education joined forces with the labor market analytics firm Lightcast to see if the Wellesley effect could be quantified.

Together, they made three key findings, which are discussed in this report:

1. Wellesley graduates break barriers—entering fields where women are traditionally underrepresented, such as business, STEM, and politics.

- They lead in employment at Fortune 500 companies, and more recent graduate cohorts have increased Wellesley's edge.
- More than 500 Wellesley alumnae have launched startups.
- Data from the National Science Foundation shows that Wellesley's graduates go on to earn doctorates in science and engineering at higher rates than the women graduates of any other liberal arts college in the country, and nearly 60% of Wellesley alumnae have pursued advanced degrees overall.
- They are 17% better represented in executive, legislative, and other government roles than the alumnae of other selective colleges and universities.

2. A Wellesley liberal arts education leads to career success. Wellesley graduates who reached the executive level were just as likely to have majored in humanities as in the social sciences or STEM.

- Wellesley has ranked first or second for first-destination career outcomes compared to other selective colleges and universities since 2016, when this metric became a national standard. Six months after commencement, 97% of the members of the class of 2024 were employed, attending graduate school, or participating in military or service programs.
- Ten percent of all alumnae are serving in executive level positions in their careers, with just as many humanities majors represented in this group as other disciplinary areas.
- Wellesley alumnae most commonly cite "research" as a top skill in their professional profiles, followed by public speaking and leadership. These skills are all cornerstones of a Wellesley liberal arts education.

3. Wellesley graduates succeed and lead more often than the alumnae of other peer women's colleges and peer liberal arts institutions.

- Within 15 years of graduating, over 40% of alumnae have ascended into management roles. The most common titles are chief executive officer, president, and executive director.
- Wellesley ranks fourth among the other selective colleges and universities for alumnae serving on corporate and nonprofit boards.

These findings affirm the impact of a Wellesley education. As one of the world's best liberal arts colleges, Wellesley develops skills in critical inquiry and cross-disciplinary thinking that are transferable to success in any field. As a women's college, Wellesley educates women confident in their ability to take charge and make a difference in many different fields. As the most powerful women's network in the world, Wellesley alumnae not only break barriers, but they hold these doors open for generations of Wellesley graduates to follow.

From Liberal Arts to Leadership

Lightcast's findings provide quantitative data to support the long-standing anecdotal evidence that Wellesley graduates are not simply represented in diverse sectors of the economy—they are the leaders within their workplaces. Some of the key findings include the following:

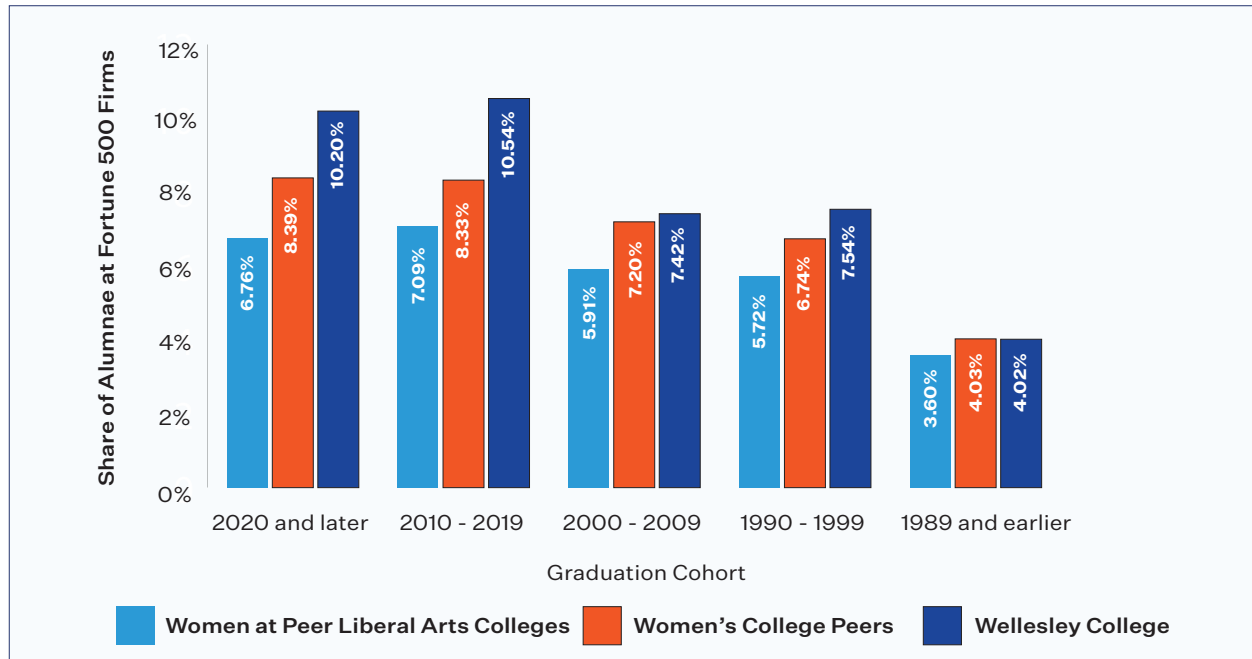
Within 15 years of graduating, over 40% of Wellesley alumnae have ascended to management roles. Notably, the most common titles for Wellesley graduates in these roles include chief executive officer, president, and executive director. The top management destinations for alumnae are Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Bank of America. The research identified more than 200 alumnae who are law firm partners and, on the entrepreneurial side, more than 500 who launched startups or own businesses.

Lightcast found Wellesley graduates rose to leadership roles regardless of their major at Wellesley. Alumnae at the c-suite executive level studied across a wide range of disciplines: 10% of all humanities majors, 11% of social science majors, and 5% of STEM majors.

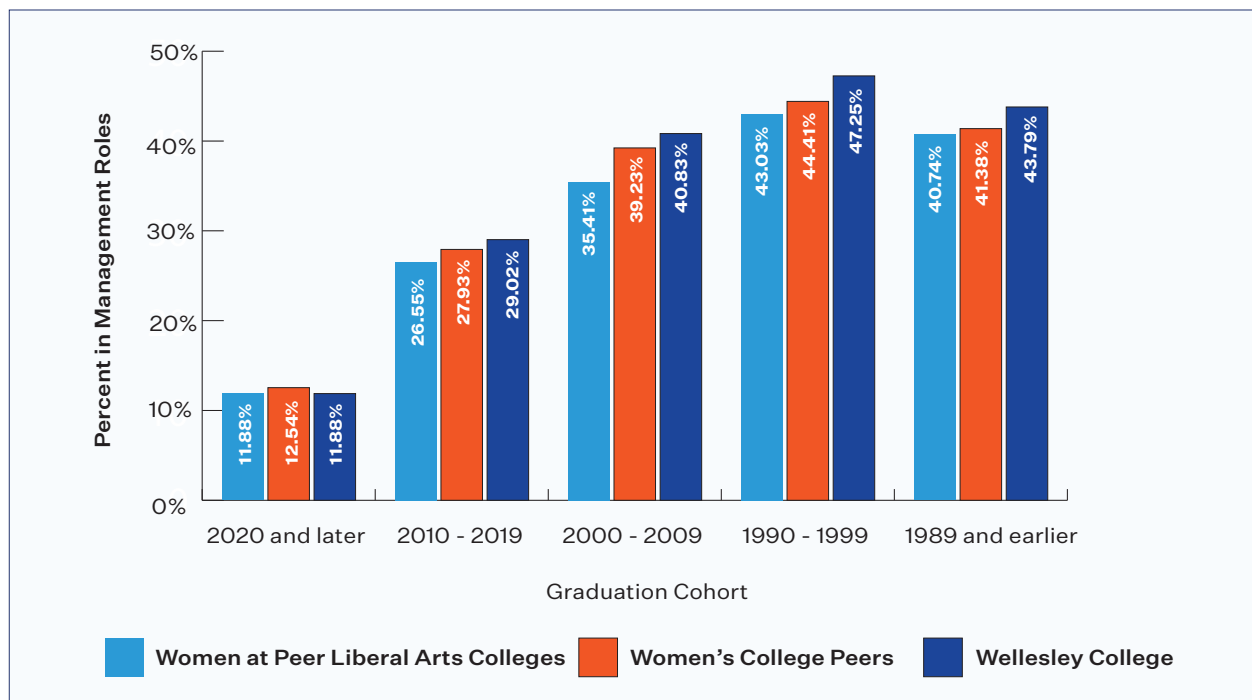
Wellesley graduates also achieve management roles at higher rates than women who graduate from other peer women's colleges and peer liberal arts colleges.

The research found that as they progress and begin to enter mid-career, Wellesley women advance into management roles rapidly and at higher rates than women from peer co-ed institutions.

Share of Wellesley Alumnae at Fortune 500 Companies, By Graduation Cohort



Rise of Graduates Into Management Roles, By Graduation Cohort



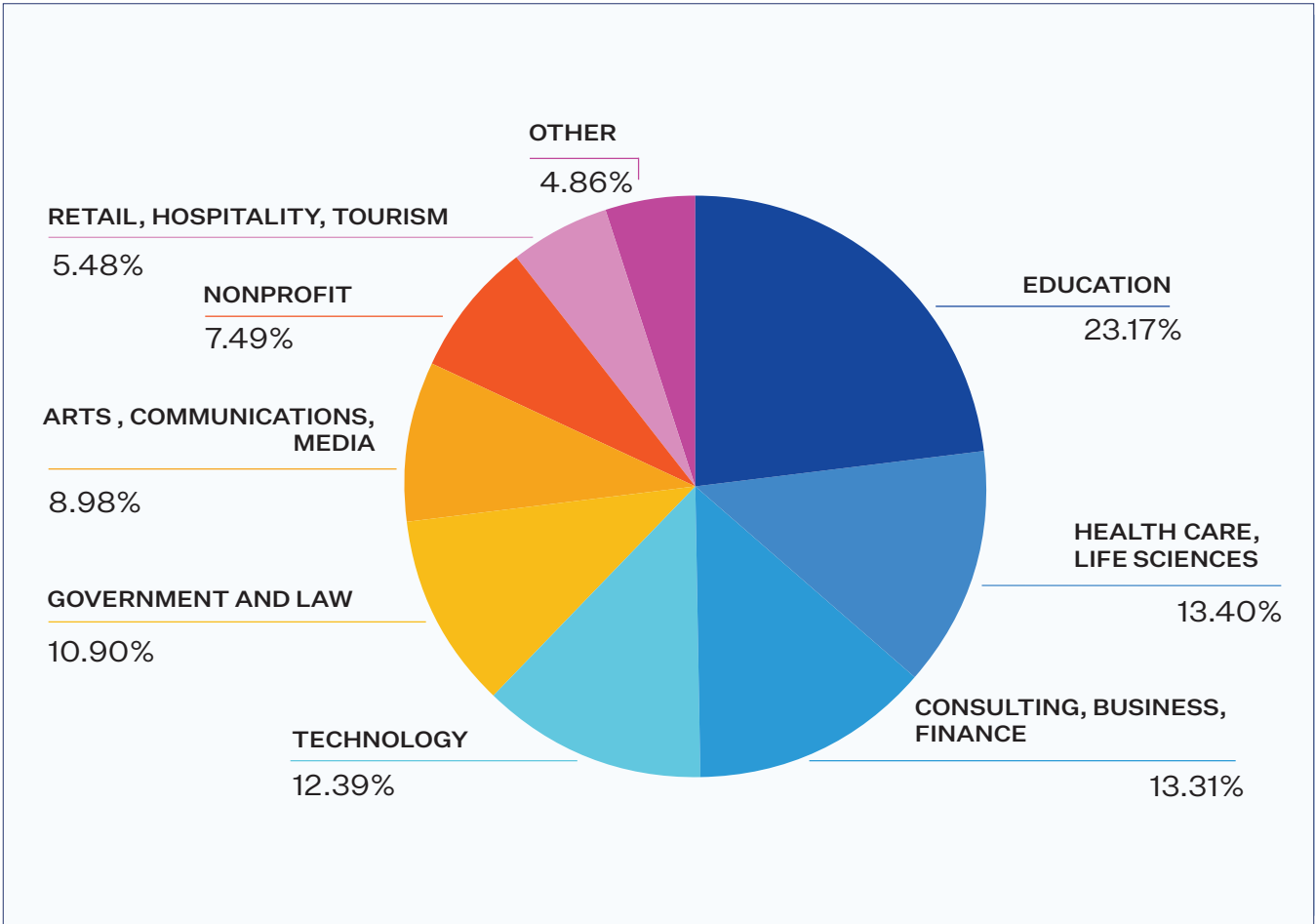
Wellesley graduates lead among their peers from other women’s colleges *and* among female graduates from peer liberal arts colleges **in their presence at Fortune 500 companies, the largest and highest revenue-generating organizations across all industries.** In graduation cohorts since 2010, over 10% of Wellesley alumnae are employed at Fortune 500 firms.

Notably, Wellesley alumnae are also 17% better represented in executive, legislative, and general governmental positions than alumnae from other selective colleges and universities.

150 Years of Global Industry Impact

More than 24,000 Wellesley alumnae from the classes of 1950 to 2024 are currently in the workforce, and their presence can be felt in nearly every corner of the economy—especially in the top industry areas of education; health care and life sciences; consulting, business, and finance; technology; and government and law.

Wellesley Alumnae in the Current Workforce (1950–2024)



Top Organizations for Currently Employed Wellesley Alumnae

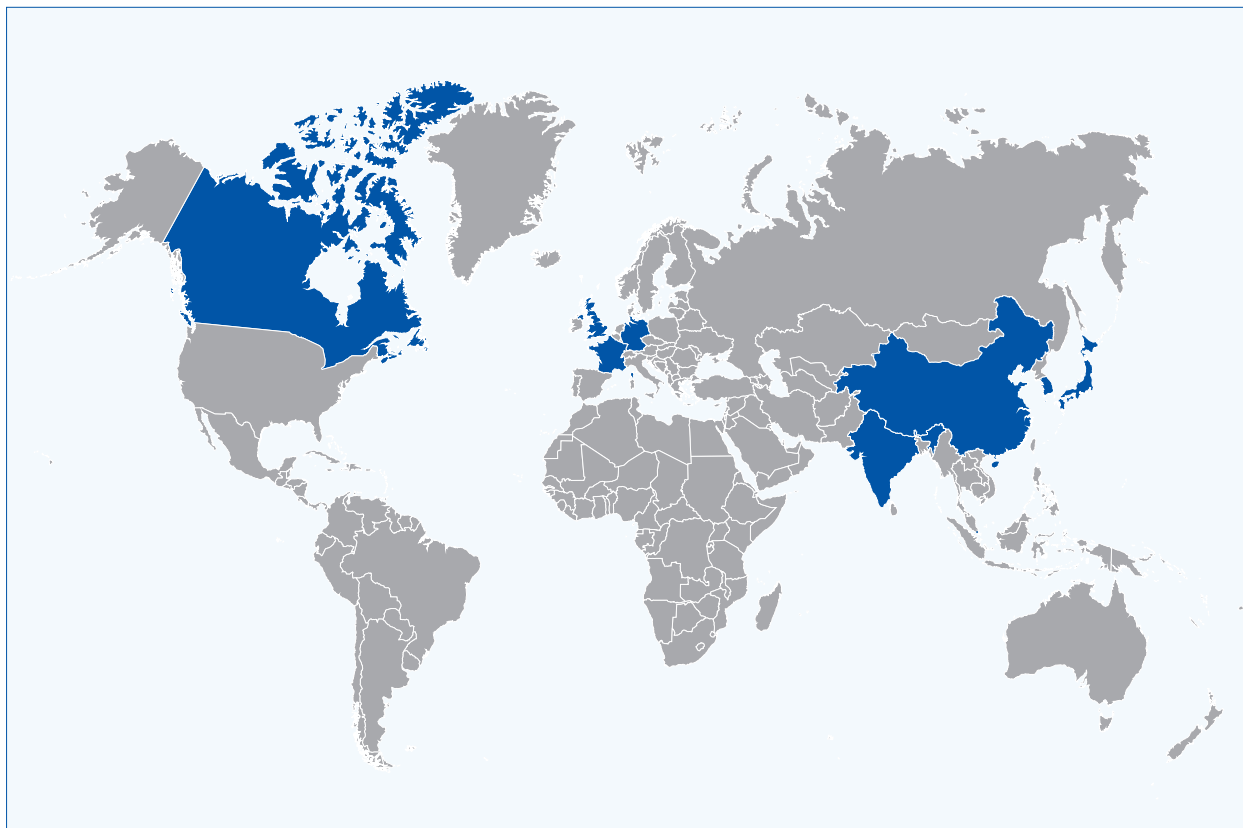
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Harvard University | 26 Goldman Sachs |
| 2 Massachusetts Institute of Technology | 27 Morgan Stanley |
| 3 University of California System | 28 Accenture |
| 4 Google | 29 Beth Israel Lahey Health |
| 5 Amazon | 30 United States Congress |
| 6 Columbia University | 31 University of Washington |
| 7 Microsoft | 32 University of North Carolina |
| 8 Mass General Brigham | 33 United States Department of Justice |
| 9 JPMorgan Chase | 34 Northeastern University |
| 10 Bank of America | 35 Salesforce |
| 11 Meta | 36 Capital One |
| 12 Yale University | 37 Brown University |
| 13 Boston Children's Hospital | 38 University of Illinois |
| 14 Stanford University | 39 Boston Consulting Group |
| 15 United States Department of State | 40 EY-Parthenon |
| 16 Boston University | 41 McKinsey & Company |
| 17 Fidelity Investments | 42 Duke University |
| 18 University of Massachusetts System | 43 Wells Fargo |
| 19 Tufts University | 44 Kaiser Permanente |
| 20 New York University | 45 Pfizer |
| 21 Johns Hopkins University | 46 Broad Institute |
| 22 Citigroup | 47 United States Department of Health and Human Services |
| 23 Apple | 48 IBM |
| 24 Federal Reserve Bank | 49 Bain & Company |
| 25 Deloitte | 50 Dana-Farber Cancer Institute |

* Wellesley College was not included in the list as an employer.

Top Job Titles for Currently Employed Wellesley Alumnae

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Owner | 11 Consultant |
| 2 Partner | 12 Assistant professor |
| 3 President | 13 Teacher |
| 4 Associate | 14 Professor |
| 5 Software engineer | 15 Vice president |
| 6 Research assistant | 16 Board member |
| 7 Director | 17 Managing director |
| 8 Executive director | 18 Physician |
| 9 Attorney | 19 Founder |
| 10 Principal | 20 Project manager |

Top 10 Global Work Countries for Wellesley Alumnae



The top 10 work locations outside the U.S. for Wellesley alumnae are the United Kingdom, Canada, China, South Korea, Hong Kong, France, India, Germany, Singapore, and Japan. Wellesley ranks 28th out of 42 selective colleges and universities analyzed in this report in share of alumnae employment abroad.

Wellesley Alumnae Rank First in Finding Employment After Commencement

Six months after commencement, **97% of the members of the class of 2024** were embarking on careers in fields including technology, media, art, education, business, and research, or pursuing graduate study in areas such as law, medicine, and public health. Wellesley has ranked first or second for first-destination career outcomes compared to peer and other selective colleges and universities since 2016, when this metric became a national standard. Further, our graduates' success is consistently strong across the spectrum of all majors. An analysis of Wellesley's first-destination results from the past five years (2020–2024) shows that graduates across all academic departments found opportunities at a rate of 88% or higher, with a five-year average of 97% across all majors—proof of the power of the liberal arts in action.

Wellesley has ranked at the top for first-destination career outcomes since tracking began in 2016

Education curriculum and early investment in student success translates to not only leading career outcomes, but also higher-quality opportunities. Since the new career education model launched in 2016, 99% of graduates described their first employment position as an opportunity to engage in meaningful work, and 97% described their position as related to or in their desired career path.

**Wellesley leads the way
in career education and
experiential learning**

The commitment to future success begins in the first year when entering students are matched with exploration advisors. As students hone in on individual interests and goals, they have access to industry advisors, skill-building programs, and alumnae mentors who all support their resilient career action planning. Beginning in 2024, students must now complete two units of experiential learning in order to graduate, ensuring critical applied learning opportunities, such as internships and research, are not left to chance. Most recently in 2025, Wellesley launched the Business, Entrepreneurship, and Money Management (BEAM) Initiative and a new co-curricular course, as part of the innovative Upskill program where students across majors and disciplines will learn the fundamentals of ethical AI leadership for social impact.

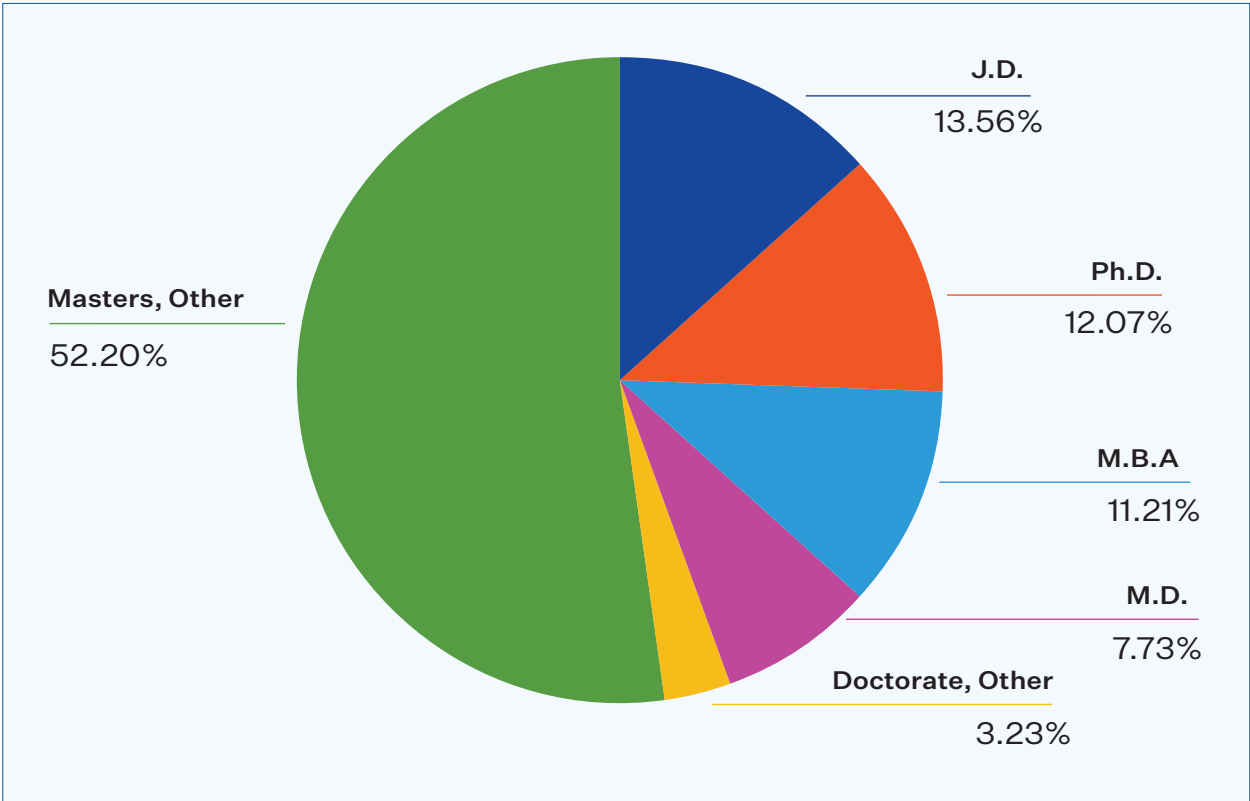
A Legacy of Learning

More than 20,000 alumnae, or nearly 60%, have pursued advanced degrees at the master's level or above. Of the Wellesley alumnae who go on to subsequent education, 13.56% study law, 11.21% study business administration, and 7.73% study medicine.

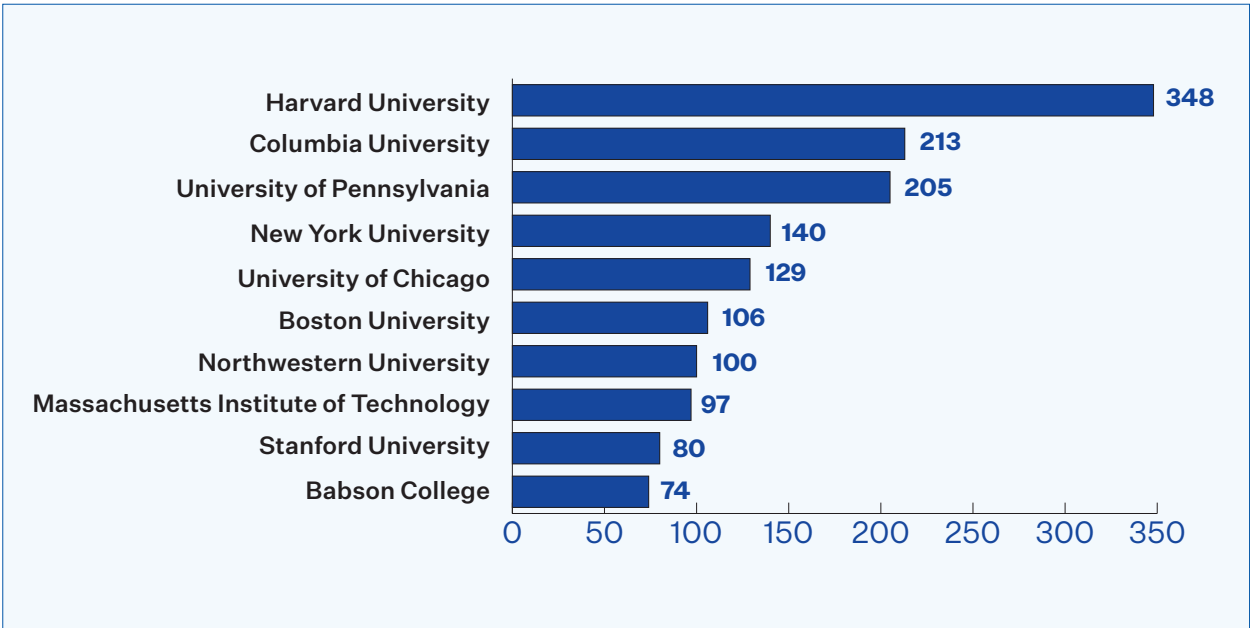
**Wellesley College is the
#1 liberal arts college for
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earn Ph.D.s in science and
engineering**

Wellesley College is the number one liberal arts college for educating women who earn Ph.D.s in science and engineering, per the most recent National Science Foundation report. Across all Ph.D. programs, our graduates are accepted to and attend Harvard University; Columbia University; Yale University; University of California, Berkeley; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at higher rates than all other graduate schools. Our students are also twice as likely to be admitted to medical school as graduates from peer institutions.

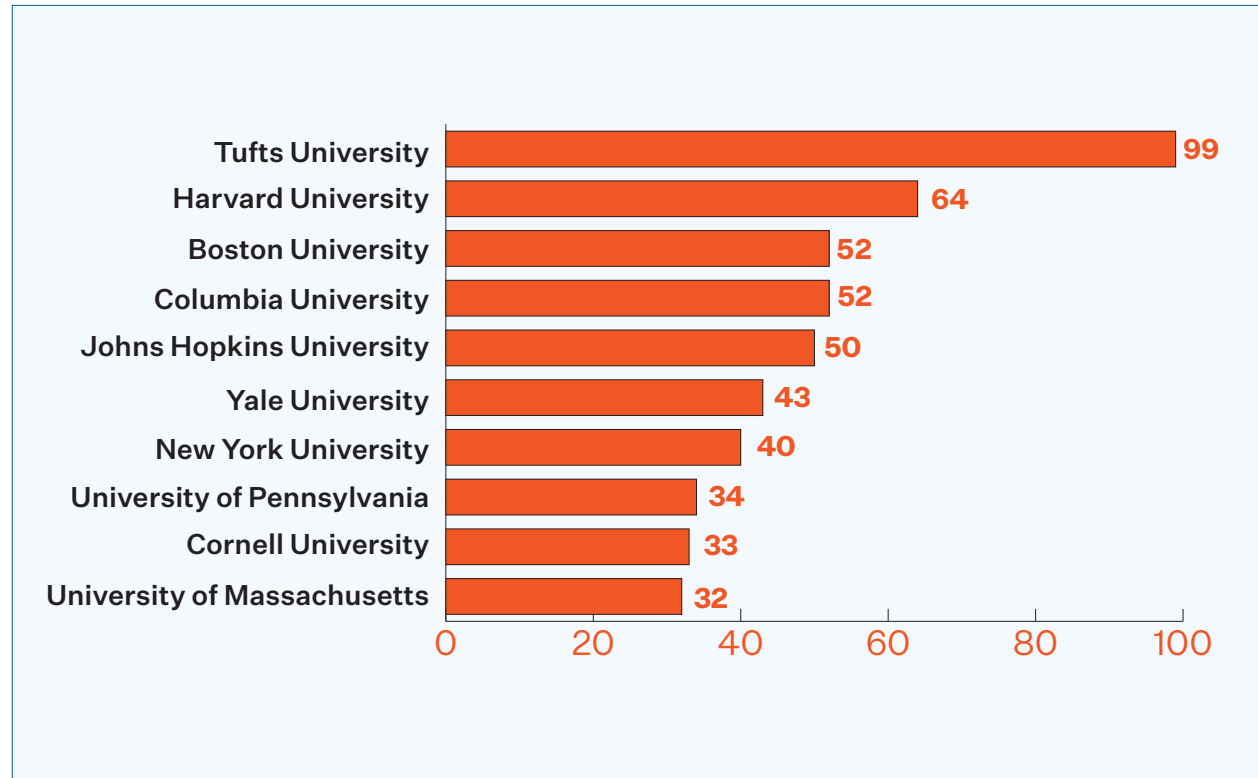
Advanced Education by Degree Type (1950–2024)



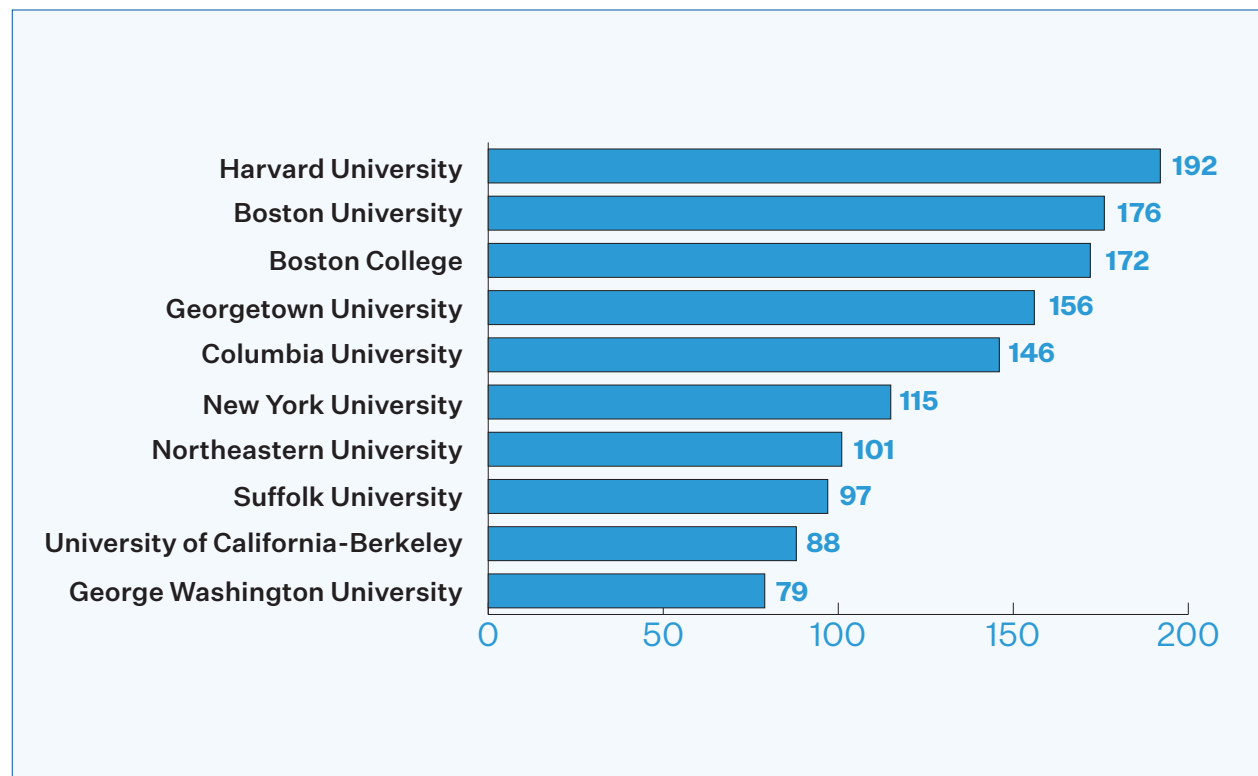
Top M.B.A. Institutions for Wellesley Alumnae (1950–2024)



Top Medical Schools for Wellesley Alumnae (1950–2024)



Top Law Institutions for Wellesley Alumnae (1950–2024)





From Academic Excellence to Career Achievement and Impact

For 150 years, Wellesley College has focused on educating empowered leaders who improve the world around them. This study confirms that Wellesley is succeeding in its aims. Wellesley graduates are able to break barriers in greater numbers than the alumnae of other peer women's colleges and of peer liberal arts institutions. They rise in fields where women are traditionally underrepresented, such as in business, STEM, and politics. They lead in management roles. They lead in employment at Fortune 500 companies, and more recent graduate cohorts have only increased Wellesley's edge. Wellesley alumnae not only break barriers, but they also offer their insights and support to the generations that follow—amplifying the force of a Wellesley education and the ability of Wellesley women to build a better world.

APPENDIX

Peer/Comparison Institutions, by Group

Peer Women's Colleges

Barnard College
Bryn Mawr College
Mount Holyoke College
Scripps College
Smith College
Spelman College

Peer Liberal Arts Colleges

Amherst College	Oberlin College
Barnard College	Pomona College
Bowdoin College	Smith College
Bryn Mawr College	Swarthmore College
Carleton College	Trinity College
Middlebury College	Wesleyan University
Mount Holyoke College	Williams College

Selective Colleges and Universities

Amherst College	Northwestern University
Barnard College	Oberlin College
Bowdoin College	Pomona College
Brown University	Princeton University
Bryn Mawr College	Rice University
California Institute of Technology	Smith College
Carleton College	Stanford University
Columbia University	Swarthmore College
Cornell University	Trinity College
Dartmouth College	Tufts University
Duke University	UC Berkeley
Emory University	University of Chicago
Georgetown University	University of Pennsylvania
Harvard University	University of Rochester
Haverford College	Vanderbilt University
Johns Hopkins University	Vassar College
Macalester College	Washington Univ. in St.Louis
Middlebury College	Wesleyan University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Williams College
Mount Holyoke College	Yale University

