

More S&E Bachelor's Degrees Are Being Earned by Racial/Ethnic Minorities

by Susan T. Hill

The gap once found between the percent of underrepresented minorities and whites who chose S&E majors at the bachelor's level has disappeared.

The number of bachelor's degrees in science and engineering (S&E) fields awarded to underrepresented minority students showed robust growth in the early 1990s, after a period of slow growth from 1985 to 1990. From 1990 to 1993 the number of baccalaureate recipients with degrees in S&E increased 34 percent for blacks, 32 percent for Hispanics, and 43 percent for American Indians. The percentage increases for underrepresented minority groups were higher than such increases for white recipients (10 percent) and Asian recipients (26 percent) (table 1).

Table 1. Science and engineering bachelor's degrees, by race/ethnicity of recipients: percentage change, 1985-90 and 1990-93

Race/ethnicity	1985-90	1990-93
White, non-Hispanic.....	-4	10
Asian or Pacific Islander.....	46	26
Underrepresented minorities, total.....	10	34
Black, non-Hispanic.....	7	34
Hispanic.....	16	32
American Indian or Alaskan Native.....	8	43

SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

In 1993 there were similar numbers of black bachelor's degree recipients in S&E (24,421) and Asian recipients (24,504). The number of Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in S&E fields hit an all-time high of 18,442, as did American Indians, at 1,819.

Even with this growth, minority students are still underrepresented. Underrepresented minorities comprised 28 percent of the "college-age" population (18-24 years old) in 1993, whereas baccalaureates earned by

underrepresented minority students accounted for only 12 percent of the total S&E degrees in 1993.

Among underrepresented minority groups, the increases in baccalaureate degrees vary by field of science or engineering. From 1990 to 1993 the percentage changes in baccalaureates awarded to underrepresented groups ranged from a 1-percent decrease in computer science degrees to an increase of 48 percent in psychology degrees (chart 1, next page).

Degree awards have increased more in the social sciences, fields in which there is a slightly higher concentration of S&E bachelor's degree recipients among underrepresented minorities (59 percent) than among whites (56 percent). Among S&E baccalaureate recipients in 1993, a slightly lower percent of underrepresented minorities majored in engineering (13 percent) than did whites (15 percent), and the percents of these groups choosing natural sciences were even more similar (table 2).

Table 2. S&E bachelor's degree recipients, by broad field: percentage distribution, 1993

Race/ethnicity	Engineering	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences
Underrepresented minorities.....	13	28	59
Whites.....	15	29	56
Asians.....	26	39	35

SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

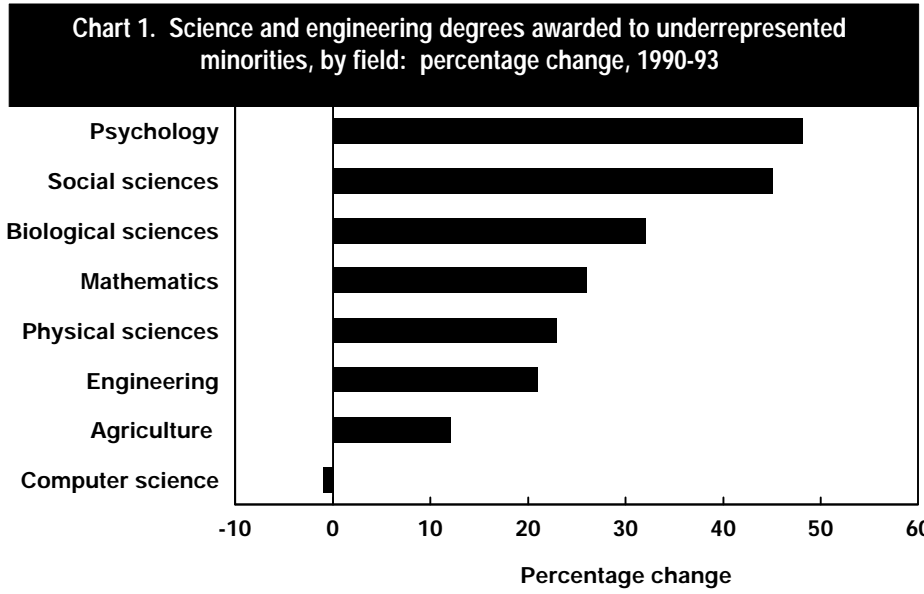
Although these slight differences exist, the gaps once found between the field choices of underrepresented minorities and whites have

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virtually disappeared. One-third of all bachelor's degree recipients of all racial/ethnic groups (except Asians, at 49 percent) chose S&E fields in 1993.

The data presented here are taken from the forthcoming NSF report *Science and Engineering Degrees, by Race/Ethnicity of Recipients: 1985-93*, Detailed Statistical Tables. The report will include additional data on numerous S&E fields by bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The data in the report are derived from two Federal agencies. The bachelor's and master's degree data are from the Department of Education's Completions Survey of all universities and colleges. The doctorate data are from the Survey of Earned Doctorates, which is conducted among all individuals earning a research doctorate. Both the report and the *Data Brief* were prepared by Susan T. Hill, Division of Science Resources Studies, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 965, Arlington VA



SOURCE: NSF/SRS tabulations of National Center for Education Statistics Completions Survey data

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