

Number of doctorates awarded continued to grow in 2009

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U.S. academic institutions awarded 49,562 research doctorate degrees in 2009, the highest number ever reported by the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), and a 1.6 percent increase over 2008's total of 48,802.

The SED is an annual census of all individuals who receive a research doctorate from a U.S. academic institution in an academic year, which is July 1 through June 30 of the following year. The 2009 census covered individuals who earned doctorates in the academic year ending June 2009. NSF's Science Resources [Statistics](#) division compiled the results of the survey.

Doctorates awarded in science and engineering (S&E) fields were up 1.9 percent over 2008, owing entirely to growth in numbers of female S&E doctorate recipients. The count of male S&E doctorate recipients declined slightly.

Doctorates awarded were up from 2008 in seven of the eight major science fields of study. Although doctorates in computer science declined 9.8 percent from 2008, the number of doctorates in this field nearly doubled between 1999 and 2009.

Doctorates awarded in engineering fields declined 2.9 percent from 2008 to 2009, the first year since 2002 to show a year-over-year drop in engineering doctorates. Aerospace/aeronautical engineering and mechanical engineering were the only engineering fields showing growth

in doctorate awards in 2009.

The number of doctorate recipients with temporary visas declined by 3.3 percent in S&E fields from 2008 levels and by 4.6 percent in non-S&E fields. Among U.S. citizens and permanent residents, the number of doctorates earned by members of racial/ethnic minority groups continued to grow at a faster rate than the number earned by white recipients.

The proportion of 2009 doctorate recipients with employment prospects in the coming year (gauged by definite commitments to a position) was slightly less than that reported in 2008 and about the same as that reported in 2007, the year before the recent economic downturn. Humanities and life sciences doctorate recipients had the lowest rates of definite commitments, at or below 65 percent in the years 2007 to 2009.

Among doctorate recipients reporting definite job commitments, a growing proportion was taking postdoctoral positions. In 2009, 33.6 percent of doctorate recipients with definite job commitments took postdoctoral positions, an increase of 2.0 percentage points over 2008.

Provided by National Science Foundation

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