

More Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in physical sciences and engineering

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A new report from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) Statistical Research Center has found that the number of Hispanic students receiving bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences and engineering has increased over the last decade or so, passing 10,000 degrees per year for the first time in 2012. The overall number of U.S. students receiving degrees in those fields also increased over the same time, but it increased faster among Hispanics.

From 2002 to 2012, the number of Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in the [physical sciences](#) rose 78 percent compared to an overall increase of 47 percent in all U.S. bachelor's degrees earned in those same fields. Similarly, Hispanics earning bachelor's degrees in engineering rose 64 percent, compared to just a 34 percent increase in the overall population.

"While those numbers are encouraging, Hispanics are still underrepresented in many fields, including astronomy and Earth sciences," said Laura Merner, a research associate at AIP and author of the report. "More Hispanic students earning physical science degrees is a good thing, but it does not mean the representation gap has closed."

"We still have a long way to go," she said.

Merner and her colleagues analyzed data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, a database maintained by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. This allowed them to determine how Hispanic involvement in physical

sciences and engineering has changed over the past decade.

Among other observations, the research found:

- The number of Hispanics earning undergraduate degrees of all types increased 85 percent over the decade, from 95,492 in 2002 to 176,699 in 2012;
- A total of 87,906 new bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences and engineering were earned by Hispanics in the United States between 2002 and 2012;
- In 2012 alone, 10,563 Hispanics earned bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences and engineering, a historic high;
- The number of degrees obtained by Hispanic students increased in all nine fields of engineering that were examined, doubling in more than half of the fields between 2002 and 2012; and
- The number of Hispanics who earned physics bachelor's degrees has doubled over the last 10 years.

The study also found that the representation gap has already closed in engineering technology, civil, electrical and industrial engineering—four fields in which Hispanics are earning bachelor's [degrees](#) at approximately the same proportion as the total population.

However, Hispanics are still underrepresented in most of the other fields of physical sciences and engineering, Merner said.

More information: The full report, part of a series on underrepresented minorities in physical sciences and engineering, can be viewed online at [aip.org/statistics/reports/his ... nces-and-engineering](http://aip.org/statistics/reports/his...nces-and-engineering)

To view the raw data used in the compilation of the report, visit
www.ncsedata.nsf.gov

Provided by American Institute of Physics

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