

African American bachelor's degrees see growth, behind in physical sciences, engineering

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African Americans are seeing growth in many engineering and physical sciences fields, but they are not progressing at the same rate when compared to the general population.

A report from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) Statistical Research Center (SRC) examined the [number](#) of bachelor's degrees earned from 2005 to 2015 and separated out the numbers for African Americans from the rest of the students. The data was gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics from postsecondary institutions in the United States.

The SRC found the number of degrees earned by African Americans in physical sciences fields grew by 36% over 10-year period, which was less than the growth of degrees by all students, 55%, during the same time.

In four of the seven physical sciences fields, the number of degrees earned by African Americans grew faster (by percentage) than the growth overall, but those fields were among the smallest number of degrees earned. The other fields, which had larger numbers of graduates, showed a slower than overall growth rate.

In engineering, the number of bachelor's degrees earned by African Americans increased by 19%, less than half of the overall growth in the

field of 44%.

Only two fields in engineering ([civil engineering](#) and [materials engineering](#)) showed growth in the number of African American graduates when compared to the rest of the students in those fields. The other seven disciplines showed slow or negative growth.

To get the complete statistical breakdown, [visit the Statistical Research Center online](#).

SRC senior survey scientist Laura Merner said it was heartening to see growth for African Americans overall in the science and engineering fields, but it is not fast enough.

"We're hopeful that this report could help intervention programs to be more successful to improve representation," Merner said. "Clearly, more research is needed to find out why African Americans are underrepresented in these fields, and there is still work that needs to be done."

The number of African Americans earning bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences and engineering has grown during the 10-year period from just under 6,000 degrees earned in 2005 to more than 7,000 degrees earned in 2015. While more African Americans earned degrees in 2015 than in 2005 in the physical sciences, for engineering, the number for men earning degrees showed an increase while the number of women earning [degrees](#) decreased.

Provided by American Institute of Physics

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