AAUW

Breaking through Barriers for Women and Girls
Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
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Women’s representation among STEM bachelor’s degree holders has improved over time but varies by field.

Bachelor’s Degrees Earned by Women in Selected Fields, 1966–2006

Women’s representation among STEM doctorates has also increased dramatically over time, although it varies by field.


Women are well represented among biological scientists but makeup a small minority of engineers.

Women are underrepresented in many science and engineering occupations.

Percentage of Employed STEM Professionals Who Are Women, Selected Professions, 2008

AAUW drew on the large body of academic research on gender in science in a number of fields and identified eight research findings that help to explain the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM.
The climate of science and engineering departments at colleges and universities is especially important for women—both students and faculty.
STEM departments in colleges and universities should focus on “fit” to improve female faculty satisfaction.

Percentage of Faculty Who Are Women

- Provide mentoring for junior faculty.
- Implement effective work-life balance policies to support faculty.

Bias, often unconscious, limits women’s progress in scientific and engineering fields.
Even people who consciously reject negative stereotypes about women in science can still hold those beliefs at an unconscious level.

Most people associate science and math fields with “male” and humanities and arts fields with “female.”

- Take a test to learn about your unconscious bias at https://implicit.harvard.edu.
- Take steps to address your biases.
Women in nontraditional fields can find themselves in a “double bind.”

- Women in “male” jobs are viewed as less competent than their male peers.
- When women are clearly competent, they are often considered less “likable.”

- Raise awareness about bias against women in STEM fields.
- Create clear criteria for success.