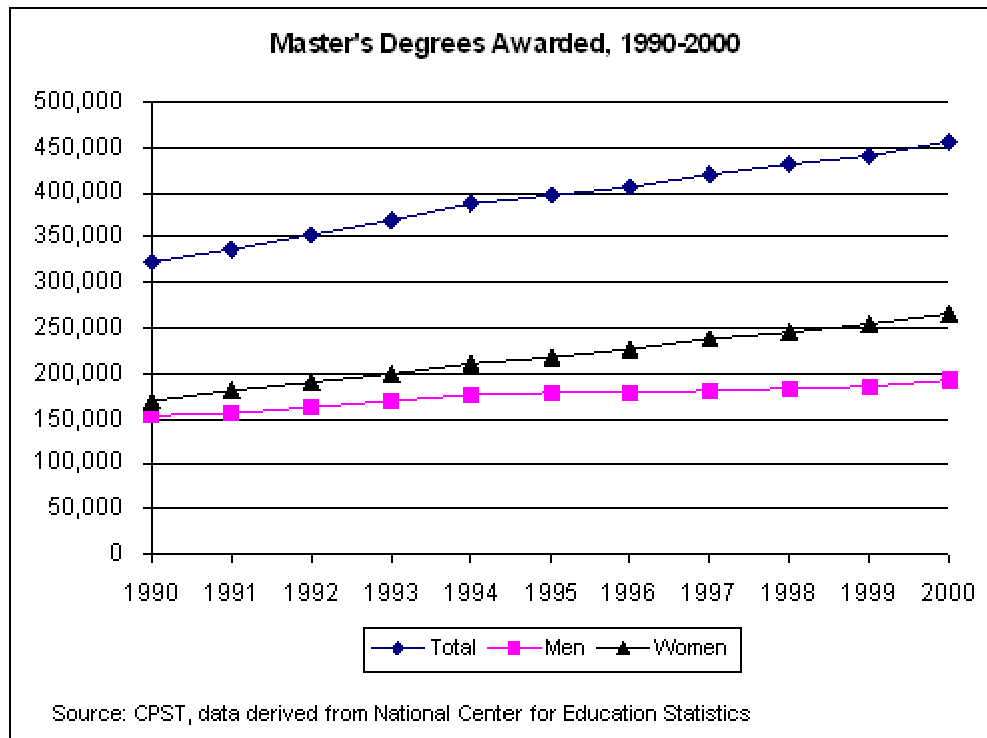


MASTER'S DEGREES 1990-2000

[CPST Comments](#), Vol. 40, No. 4, June 2003

The number of master's degrees granted annually increased 42% from 1990 to 2000, with much of the growth attributable to the increased participation of women in graduate education, according to the **Council of Graduate Schools**, using data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

- Women's participation in master's education has increased steadily for nearly two decades. In 1985, women earned 50% of the master's degrees awarded. By 1990, women had increased their share to 52.6%, and by 2000, to 58%, as seen in the accompanying chart. The number of master's degrees awarded to women increased by 56% in the same time period, while the number granted to men increased by only 25%, and the total number of degrees granted increased by 42%.



- Minorities have also made significant progress in master's degree attainment over the last decade. The number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanics increased 146% from 1990 to 2000, while the number granted to Africans Americans increased 132%, and the number earned by American Indians increased 101%. In contrast, the number of degrees awarded to White students increased only 27% in the same time period.
- Much of the growth in master's degree production in the last decade was in non-S&E (science and engineering) fields. The number of master's degrees granted in

business and education increased by 47% from 1990 to 2000. These two fields now account for over 50% of the master's degrees awarded annually.

- In S&E fields, health sciences showed the largest increase, jumping 110%. Growth was more moderate in the life sciences (29%), social sciences (29%), math and computer sciences (28%), and engineering (7%). In the physical sciences, the number of master's degrees decreased by 11%, from 5,468 in 1990 to 4,877 in 2000. Despite the overall growth in some S&E fields over the decade, some year-to-year declines have occurred. For example, master's degrees in the life sciences and social sciences decreased slightly from 1998 to 2000, and master's degrees in engineering peaked in 1994 and have declined 11% since then.
- Results from the **CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment** indicate a 3% overall increase in master's degrees granted in 2001, with much of the growth the result of 5% increases in business and physical science. CGS is predicting a continued overall increase in master's degrees in the coming years, even as specific fields expand or contract.

For more information on master's degrees, see <http://www.cgsnet.org/PublicationsPolicyRes/Communicatorpdfs/2003/March2003.pdf>.