

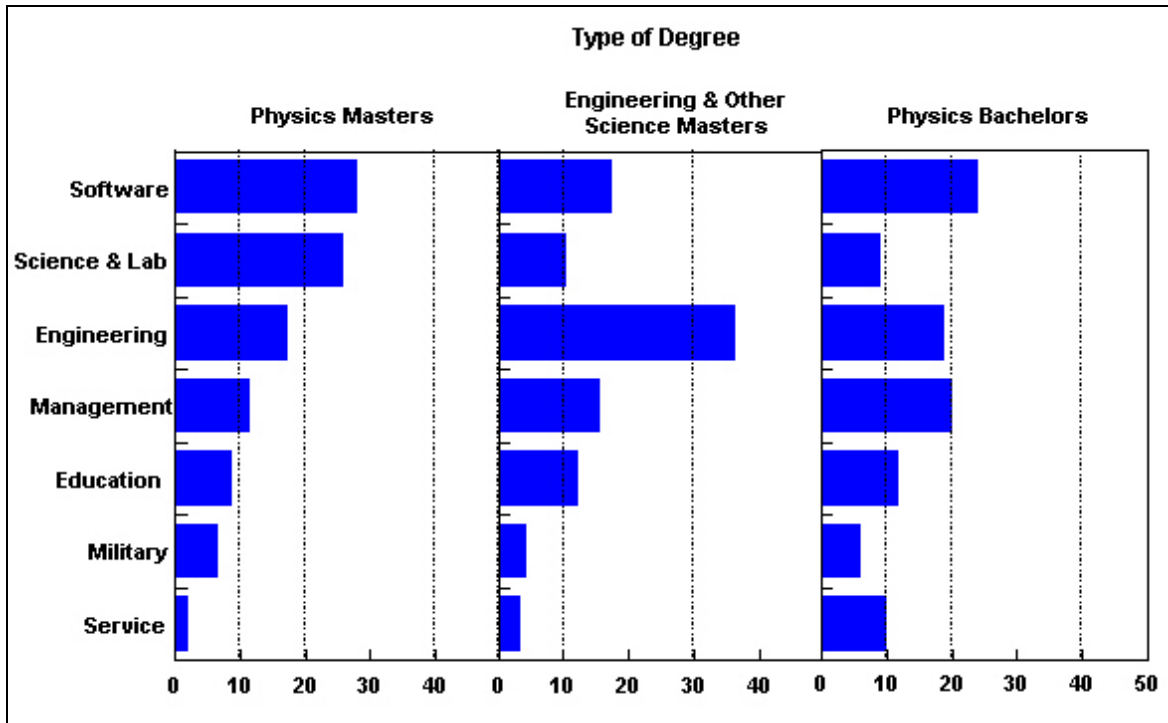
PHYSICS MASTER'S EMPLOYMENT

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

One quarter of the physics bachelor's who earned their degrees between 1990 and 1993 had a master's degree and were in the workforce in 1999, according to a new report from the **American Institute of Physics**. The report analyzes responses from 1,200 physics bachelor's degree recipients. Among the highlights:

- Of the physics bachelor's degree recipients who received master's degrees, 39% received degrees in physics and astronomy, 28% in engineering, 10% in math or other sciences, 4% in computer science, and the remainder received master's degrees in non-science fields.
- Among those who received master's degrees, 60% said they attended graduate school in order to get a better job, one quarter cited a lack of job opportunities, and more than 40% said they were uncertain about their career plans. Respondents could choose more than one reason. Individuals citing lack of job opportunities as their reason for attending graduate school were more likely to earn their master's degree in engineering and other sciences rather than in physics and non-sciences.
- When asked how well their physics bachelor's degree prepared them for graduate school, those who earned a master's degree in engineering or a non-physics science field generally rated their preparation higher than those who earned a master's degree in physics. This was particularly the case in rating preparation in terms of problem solving, mathematical skills, physics principles, and knowledge of physics.
- Physics bachelors who went on to receive a master's degree in physics were most likely to be working in a software field or science or lab jobs as seen in the accompanying chart. Of the physics bachelors who received a master's degree in engineering or a non-physics science field, less than 40% were employed in an engineering field in 1999. Individuals with only a bachelor's degree in physics were more likely to be employed in management or service fields than their master's degree counterparts.

Field of Employment Five to Eight Years After Receiving a Physics Bachelor's Degree



Source: AIP Statistical Research Center

- The report analyzed the affect of various factors on the salaries of physics bachelors five to eight years after graduation and found that those working in a software job earned \$8,900 more on average than the mean salary of all respondents. It also found that those with a master's degree in engineering or a non-physics science field earned \$4,300 more on average than those with bachelor's degrees in physics, and those with master's degrees in physics earned \$3,900 more. Length of experience also had a positive effect on salary, with those employed longer earning \$800 more per year of experience. In addition, being male positively contributed to salary. Males earned \$2,600 more on average than females, even after controlling for other factors such as field of employment and degree.

The complete report, *Physics Bachelors with Master's Degrees*, is available online at <http://www.aip.org/statistics/trends/emptrends.htm>.