

Physics Bachelor's One Year Later

Data from the degree recipient follow-up survey for the classes of 2006 and 2007

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**REPORTS ON
PHYSICS
BACHELOR'S**

Physics Bachelor's, One Year
Later (May 2010)

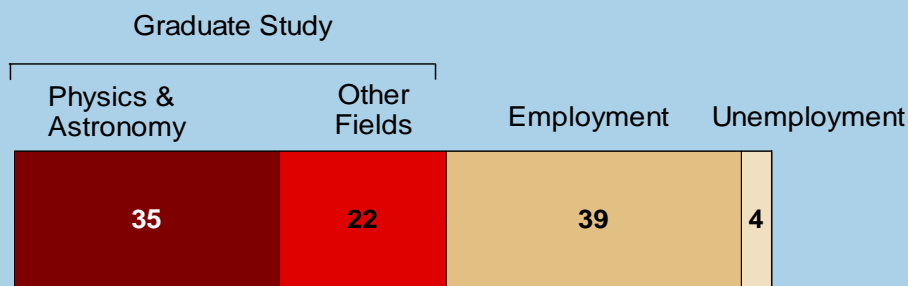
[Physics Bachelor's, Initial
Employment \(June 2010\)](#)

[Physics Bachelor's, Demographic
Profiles \(August 2010\)](#)

New physics bachelor's follow two main career paths: continuing their education at the graduate level or entering the workforce. Over a third of the combined degree classes of 2006 and 2007 immediately enrolled in a physics or astronomy graduate program with another fifth entering a graduate or professional program in another field.

Figure 1

**Initial status after degree for physics bachelor's classes of
2006 & 2007.**



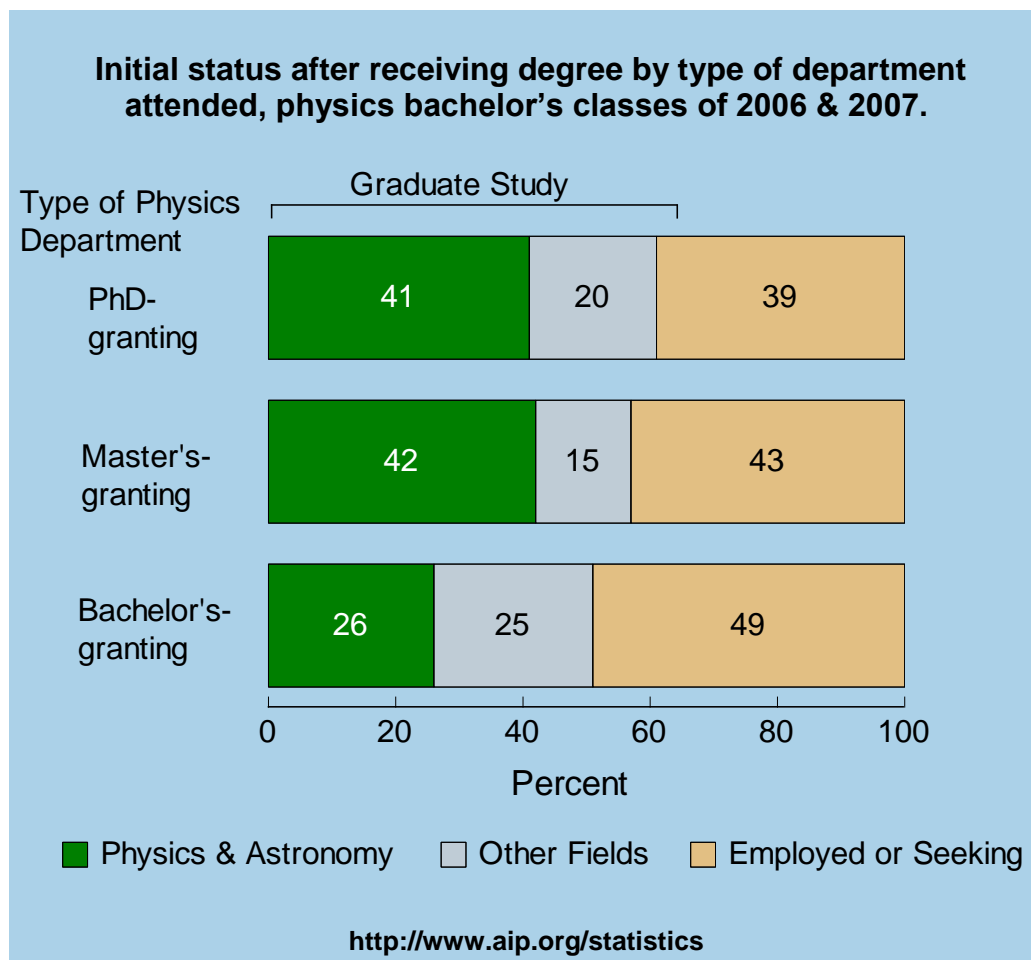
<http://www.aip.org/statistics>

**THE 2006 AND 2007
FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS OF
PHYSICS BACHELOR'S**

Physics bachelor's are contacted in the winter following the academic year in which they receive their degree. They are asked to share their employment or graduate school experiences. These reports describe our findings.

There were 5,373 and 5,755 physics bachelor's conferred in the classes of 2006 and 2007. In the United States, the number of physics bachelor's awarded has been rising steadily for 8 consecutive years, reflecting a total increase of 58%. This surge in bachelor's degrees awarded follows steady declines during the 1990s and brings physics bachelor's degree production to its highest level in almost 40 years.

Figure 2



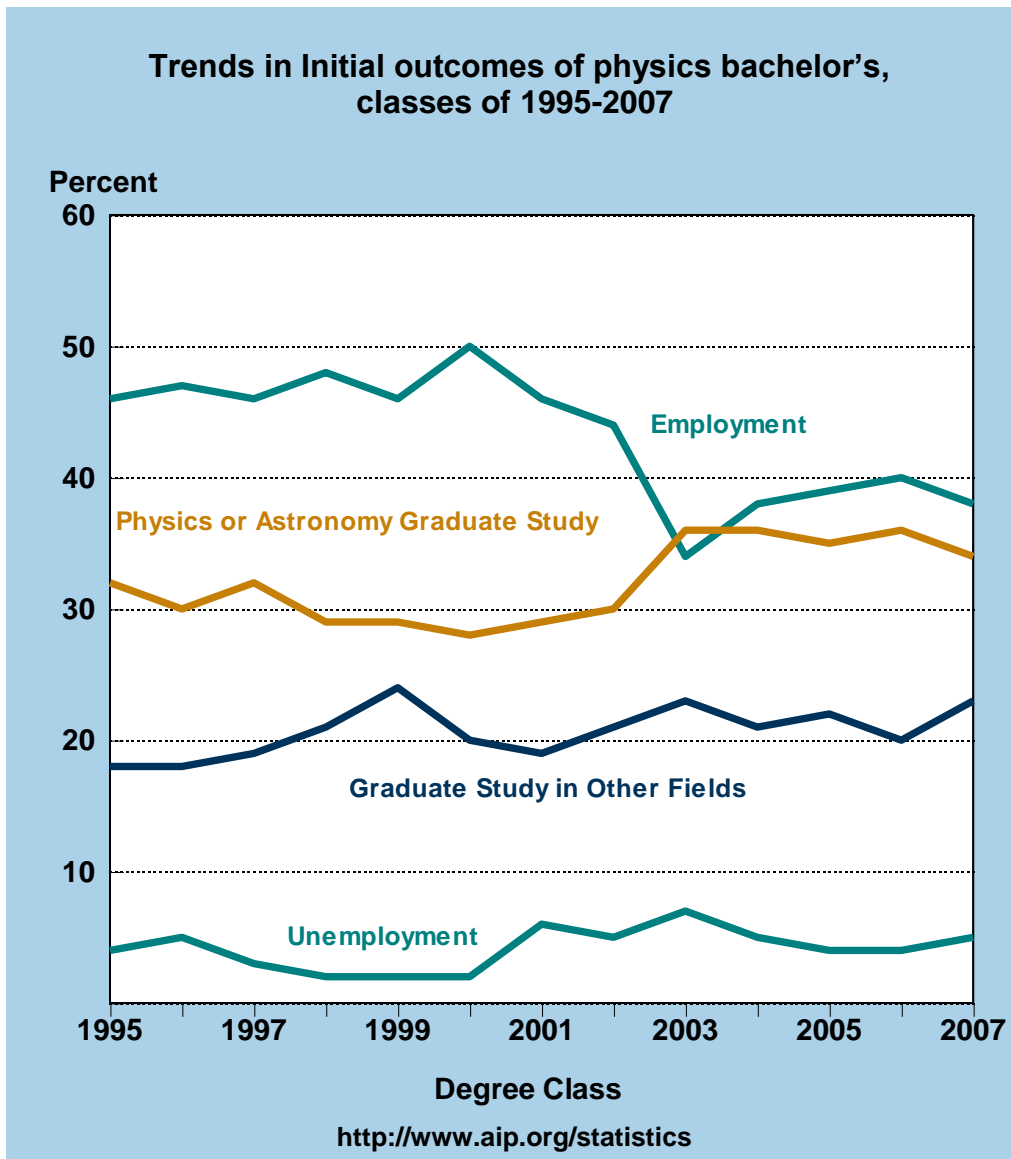
Physics bachelor's receiving their degrees from departments that grant graduate-level physics degrees are more likely to pursue graduate study in physics.

The paths that physics bachelor's pursue differ by the highest physics degree offered by the department from which they received their bachelor's. It is unclear the extent to which this difference is the result of the undergraduate experiences they had in the physics department or career goals that they had prior to starting college.

The initial status of new physics bachelor's differed little by gender, with similar proportions pursuing graduate study. Of the 43% of the new bachelor's who immediately entered the workforce, a significant number indicated they planned to enroll in a graduate program after working for a year or two.

In the late 1990s, about half of the physics bachelor's entered the workforce upon receiving their degree. In more recent years, this has dropped by 5 – 7% with a commensurate increase in the proportion going to grad school in physics and astronomy.

Figure 3



The initial outcomes of physics bachelor's have remained relatively unchanged in recent years.

Survey Methodology

Each fall, the Statistical Research Center conducts its Survey of Enrollments and Degrees which asks physics and astronomy departments to provide information concerning the numbers of students they have enrolled and counts of recent degree recipients. In connection with this survey, we ask for the names and contact information for their recent degree recipients. This degree recipient information is used to conduct our follow-up survey in the winter following the academic year in which they received their degree.

Recent degree recipients can be very difficult to reach because they tend to move after receiving their degree. Many times the department does not have accurate contact information for their alumni. To assist us in determining outcome information and to help obtain updated contact information, we contact the advisors of non-responding degree recipients.

The follow-up surveys for the classes of 2006 and 2007 were administered with both a web-based and paper form. The majority of our respondents answered via the online survey. The physics classes of 2006 and 2007 consisted of 5,273 and 5,755 bachelor's respectively. We received post-degree information on about 40% of these degree recipients. Four percent of the bachelor's were pursuing employment or graduate study outside the U.S. and were not included in the analysis.

We would like to thank the many physics and astronomy departments, degree recipients, and faculty advisors who made this publication possible.