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WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN TECH, BY THE NUMBERS

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CompSci Degrees by Sex & Race

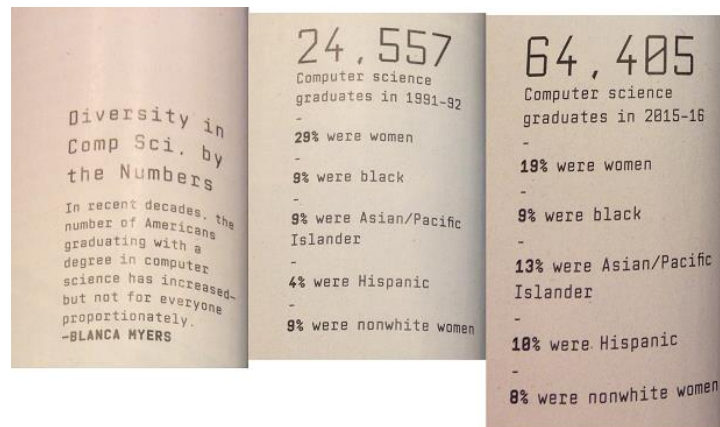
By [Joe Chiarella](#)

April 20, 2018

In the March 27th issue of Wired Magazine, Blanca Myers offers us this article: <https://bit.ly/2pIOb4P> which enumerates the results of some recent research into college Computer Science degrees over time - awarded to the sexes and the races. There were some surprising, to me, results.

I took a photo of a short graphic that was tucked into the fold on page 20-something... and I did some additional math - both are shown in the adjoining graphic.

While the total number of Computer Science degrees awarded grew by 262% in the 25-year period from 1992-2016, those awarded to women rose a mere 172% or only 65.5% of the overall rate. This resulted in the percentage of degrees going to women dropping from 29% to 19% (or basically 1 in 3 dropped to 1 in 5). As a personal anecdote, the all science & technology college I attended way back in the early 1980's had an overall 12:1 ratio of males to females... the only degree program that held a slightly higher ratio (maybe 9:1 or 10:1) was the information services program - so even in the early '80s this problem existed... and was worse. So, point being, while painfully slow, we were making progress until recently.



	1991-92	2015-16	1991-92	2015-16	Change	
Total	24557	64405	24557	64405	262%	100%
Women	29%	19%	7122	12237	172%	65.5%
African-American	9%	9%	2210	5796	262%	100.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9%	13%	2210	8373	379%	144.4%
Hispanic	4%	10%	982	6441	656%	250.0%
nonwhite women	9%	8%	2210	5152	233%	88.9%
Presumably White Men	40.0%	41.0%	9823	26406	269%	102.5%

Returning to the findings, compare the gender ratio to the racial ones. Asians in Comp Sci grew at a rate of 144% of the national average (rising from 9% to 13%) and Hispanics grew at an astounding 2.5x the national average (go Hispanics!) climbing to 10% from 4%. Curiously only African Americans stayed on par with the national average in terms of growth rate - still also underrepresented at a mere 9% of all graduates.

We all know that women in STEM is an issue and so, some might say, this is simply quantified evidence of what we all know anecdotally. True enough. And yet, I think the takeaway here for me is that with all the news froth over the sexism in Silicon Valley and elsewhere - the fact is that companies cannot hire women with CS degrees - if there aren't any. This problem starts way before Silicon Valley.

Now, one small but important note: there is a lot more to the 'tech industry' than just Computer Science degrees. There are many other degree types that round out that industry and I would have liked to see Wired do a more comprehensive study - which I suspect would not be quite as dramatic. Perhaps they would consider doing so for a followup article.

If you are a woman who considered earning a Computer Science degree but decided against it - I would like to hear from you. Please tell me (and the other readers) why you made that choice. We're not going to solve this issue with one article - but all civil dialog on this - can be both instructive and constructive. Please contribute.