



Highlights of [GAO-04-639](#), a report to congressional requesters

GENDER ISSUES

Women's Participation in the Sciences Has Increased, but Agencies Need to Do More to Ensure Compliance with Title IX

Why GAO Did This Study

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 extended protections against sex discrimination to students and employees at institutions receiving federal assistance for educational programs or activities. In the 32 years since Title IX was enacted, women have made significant gains in many fields, but much attention has focused on women's participation in the sciences.

Because of the concern about women's access to opportunities in the sciences, which receive billions of dollars in federal assistance, this report addresses: (1) how do the Department of Education (Education), the Department of Energy (Energy), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) ensure that federal grant recipient institutions comply with Title IX in math, engineering, and science; (2) what do data show about women's participation in these fields; and (3) what promising practices exist to promote their participation?

What GAO Recommends

In this report, we make recommendations to the Administrator of NASA, the Secretary of Energy, and the Director of NSF that they take actions to ensure that compliance reviews of grantees are conducted as required by Title IX.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-639.

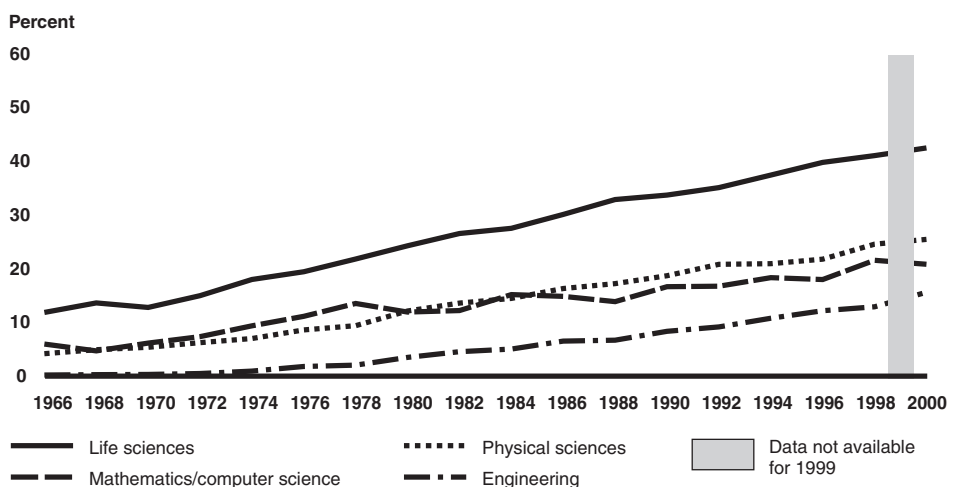
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-8403 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Four federal science agencies have made efforts to ensure that grantees comply with Title IX in the sciences by performing several compliance activities, such as investigating complaints and providing technical assistance, but most have not conducted all required monitoring activities. Agency officials at Energy, NASA, and NSF told us that they refer complaints to Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, where they are investigated. However, only Education has monitored its grantees by conducting compliance reviews—periodic, agency-initiated assessments of grantees to determine if they are complying with Title IX.

Women's participation in the sciences has increased substantially in the last three decades, especially in the life sciences, such as biology. The proportion of women science students has grown, but to a lesser extent at the graduate level than the undergraduate level. Meanwhile, the proportion of faculty in the sciences who are women has also increased, but they still lag behind men faculty in terms of salary and rank. However, studies indicate that experience, work patterns, and education levels can largely explain these differences. Studies also suggest that discrimination may still affect women's choices and professional progress.

Percentage of Doctoral Degrees Earned by Women from 1966-2000



Source: NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates.

We found several examples of agencies and grantees that have instituted practices designed to foster greater women's participation in the sciences. While some of the practices are aimed at encouraging more women to pursue the sciences, others provide time off and fewer teaching duties so faculty can balance work and family life. Finally, a few practices seek to expand the recruiting pool for jobs in the sciences and make them more attractive to a greater portion of the U.S. population, including women.