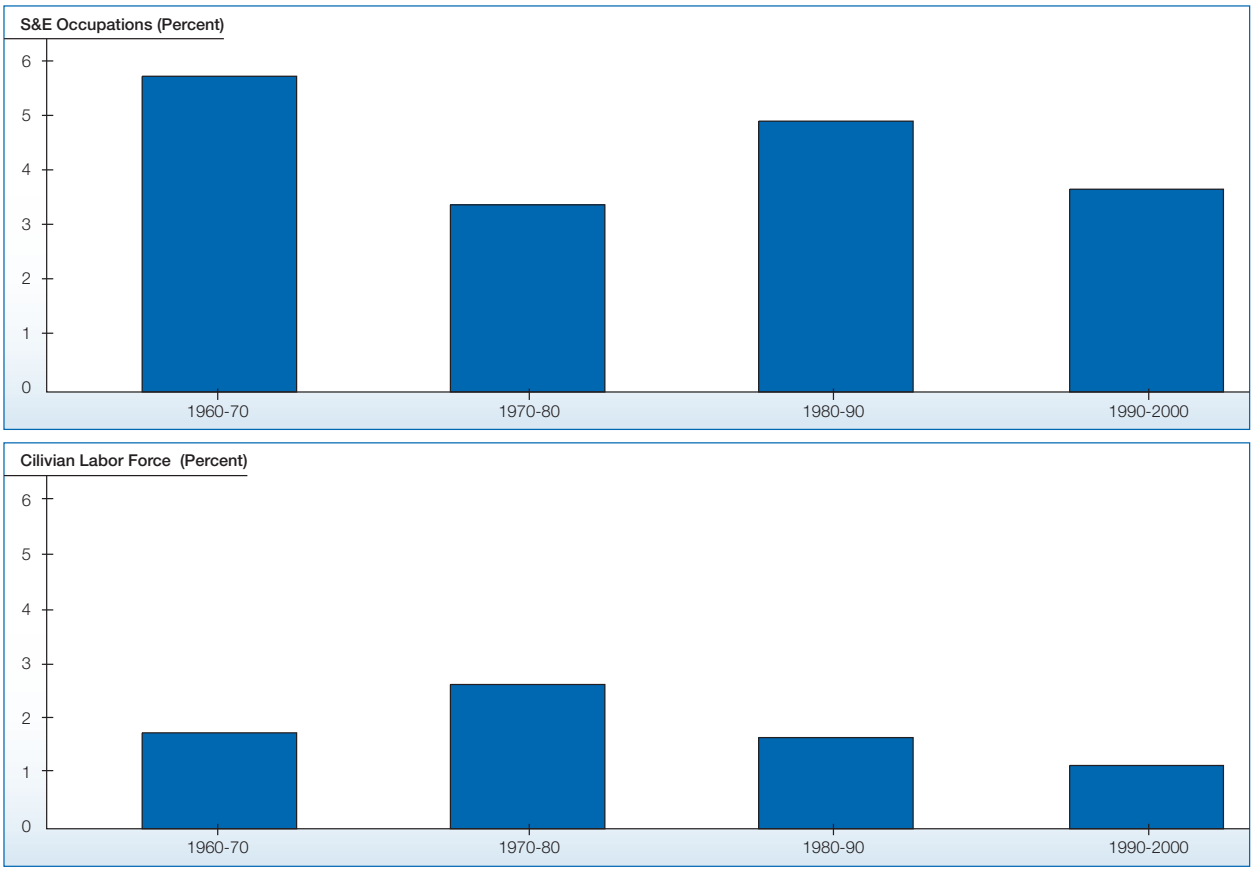
Since 1960, the U.S. science and engineering workforce has grown faster than the full workforce.

Figure 7. Average annual growth rates of S&E occupations versus all workers: 1960 - 2000



SOURCE: Figure 3-2, *Science and Engineering Indicators 2008*, National Science Foundation.

Why is this indicator important?

- A growing S&E workforce is an indicator of increased capacity for innovation.

Key Observations

- S&E employment grew at an average annual rate of 3.6% between 1990 and 2000, compared with an average annual rate of 1.1% for the U.S. workforce as a whole.

Related Discussion

- Today, S&E workers make up approximately 4% of the total U.S. civilian labor force, up from 2.6% in 1983.
- Growth in the S&E workforce in the United States was made possible by three factors:

  (1) Increases in S&E degrees earned by both native and foreign-born students,

  (2) Both temporary and permanent migration to the United States of those with foreign S&E education, and

  (3) The relatively small number of scientists and engineers old enough to retire (*SEI 2008* Chapter 3).