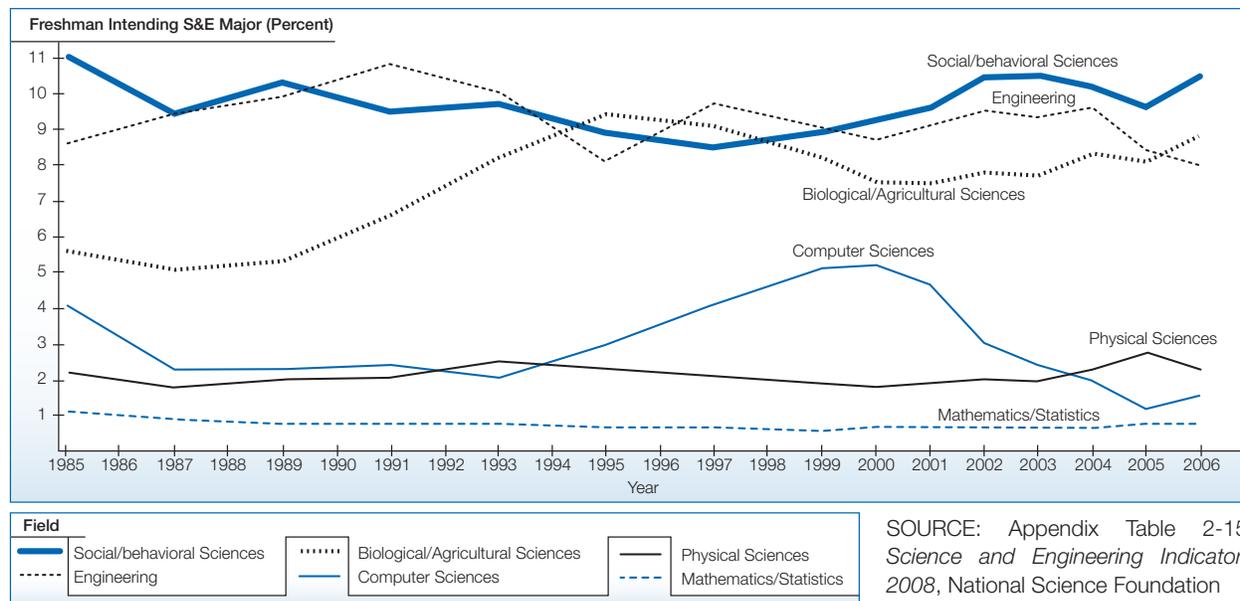


Of those college freshmen who intend to major in science or engineering, the share expressing interest in majoring in computer sciences or engineering has declined in recent years.

Figure 9. Freshmen intending S&E major by field: 1985-2006



Why is this indicator important?

- The intended major of college freshmen is a leading indicator of the relative number of bachelor's degrees awarded several years later.

Key Observations

- The social sciences and the biological/agricultural sciences are currently the most popular majors among those freshmen who identify a major at the time of entering college.
- The share of entering freshmen intending to major in the computer sciences increased significantly from 1993 to 2000 and then declined sharply from 2001 to 2005, with some evidence for recovering in 2006.

Related Discussion

- About 30% of entering freshmen do not know in which field they will major.
 - 23% eventually major in the social and behavioral sciences, 9% in the physical or computer sciences, mathematics or engineering, and 11% in the biological or agricultural science (*SEI 2008* Table 2-6).
- Students actively change majors in succeeding years of college studies.
 - For example, about half of those who majored in the biological or agricultural sciences in 1995 reported in 2001 that they had switched to another major (although science and engineering majors in other fields in 1995 had higher persistence rates) (*SEI 2008* Table 2-6).
- While undergraduate enrollments in mathematics and statistics at 4-year colleges and universities declined slightly between fall 2000 and fall 2005, they increased 26% in public 2-year colleges (*SEI 2008* Table 2-4).