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(G*) Closing the Gender Gap in Physics and Engineering: The Role of High School Physics

Thursday 10 June 2021 16:45 (15 minutes)

Recent decades have seen many advances towards gender parity in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). But while biology, chemistry, and mathematics have all achieved >40% female undergraduate enrollment, there remains a significant dearth of women in physics and engineering. Both disciplines have plateaued at ˜20% women since the mid-nineties. This issue, however, does not begin at university. Grade 10 science, the last mandatory science credit for most Canadian students, coincides with the single largest loss of potential female physicists. To better characterize the current state of Canadian STEM education, gendered, school-level enrollment data has been collected for all secondary schools across Ontario. This data was then combined with the Canadian census to provide detailed demographic information about each school catchment areas. Demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, immigrant status, and major employment sectors can all impact the gender gap at a given school. This talk will present the results from a statistical analysis of this novel data set, providing a detailed picture of who is and isn't taking high school physics.

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