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Secret Lives of the Hidden Physicists—from Spandex to Spintronics

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What is a physicist? A case is made for defining a physicist as anyone with a bachelor's degree (or higher) in physics. Under this definition, a large fraction of physicists are hidden, that is, they have left, or never belonged to, the traditional lot of Ph.D. academicians. Data from the Statistical Research Center at the American Institute of Physics and from a survey of members of the national physics honor society, Sigma Pi Sigma, show the vast array of actual career paths taken by physicists. From spandex to blackberries to bioinformatics to flight control to wind energy to spintronics, physicists can be found in nearly every job sector in some of the coolest and most farfetched careers imaginable.