

WHY ARE WOMEN SO RARE IN ACADEMIES?

A first-of-its-kind survey of 69 science academies across the world found that women make up only 12% of their membership on average.

A report launched by the Academy of Science of South Africa has found that across 69 national science academies, women make up just 12% of academy members on average. In 30 of those academies, the share of women members was 10% or less.

The report, “Women for Science: Inclusion and Participation in Academies of Science” was supported by IAP – the global network of science academies, which is now a part of The InterAcademy Partnership under the name “IAP For Science”.

It documents the results of two surveys undertaken by the Inter-American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS) and the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) targeting member countries of the IAP. The work was conducted with input from the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), and the report was launched at the annual IAP Conference on 29 February 2016 in South Africa.

As the first comprehensive survey of its kind – and representing 63% of national science academies globally – the report investigates women’s representation in membership, governance and academy activities.

Among its findings are that the Cuban Academy of Sciences has the largest share of women: 27%. The national science academies of Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Honduras are also among the list of the top 10 academies with the largest percentages of women members.

The push to make science more inclusive to women is a broad effort that stretches from the very top tier, such as science academies and the prestige they carry, to the education of young scientists in the earliest stages of their careers. IAP has been promoting the role of women in science

for years, and although great strides have been made in enrolling more women in undergraduate courses, especially in the biological and chemical sciences, success has been more limited in the areas of physics, mathematics and engineering.

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Significant challenges remain in ensuring that the best women scientists are able to have fulfilling careers with increasing levels of responsibility, eventually taking up leadership and decision-making positions as well as membership in national and regional academies.

IAP and TWAS have a close affiliation, and TWAS hosts IAP offices on the campus of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy. TWAS also hosts the offices of OWSD. ■

For a full copy of the report:
www.bit.do/WomenInAcademies

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