

Women in science

1. Read the first paragraph of the article and find four facts about women in science. Which fact(s) do you find most surprising? Discuss.

A. According to the campaigning group – WISE (women in science and engineering) – in the UK, only 12.8% of jobs in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) are held by women. Similarly, the proportion of boys studying science at school-leaving age is still much higher than girls, especially physics, where (1) **it's** about 78%. (2) **This** continues at university, (3) **where** 52% of male undergraduates take a science degree, compared with 40% of women. The situation is not dissimilar in the United States, where only 1/5 of physics degrees are awarded to women. But why is this?

2. Make a list of possible reasons why there are far fewer women studying and working in science than men.

3. Now read the rest of the article. What is the main idea in each paragraph? Compare the ideas in the article with your ideas.

B. It seems that girls are often put off early by an assumption that girls don't do science, especially chemistry and physics. The scientists in films and on TV are usually men (though (4) **this** does now appear to be changing), and when female scientists do make it onto TV, there is still often a focus on (5) **their** looks, rather than their science. Research by the University of Cardiff analysed 51 newspaper interviews with scientists and found that half of the profiles of women referred to their looks, compared with 21% of the male profiles.

C. Women may have what is known as an 'internal bias', causing them to undervalue their own abilities or intelligence. Research has shown that if women are told that men do better in maths tests than women, this can affect their score negatively.

D. And there is certainly also some external bias. A study carried out by the American Institute of Physics, looking at 1,500 physicists from 130 different countries, found that almost always the female scientists received less money, less space to work in and fewer opportunities to travel. Another study showed that both male and female professors were more likely to give the job to a male candidate than a female one, when given the same curriculum vitae, with a male or female name attached. They also planned to pay the 'male' candidate more.

E. Finally, childcare may also be an issue. Probably because fewer women work in science, there is often some difficulty in taking time out to have children, or in working flexible hours to fit around their needs.

4. Discuss the following questions.

Do you particularly agree (or disagree) with any of the reasons given?

What could be done to change any of the situations described in the article?

Using Reference words

When you read (or write) a text, reference words are used to link parts of the text. Usually a reference word points backwards to another word or an idea in the text.

Reference words are often personal pronouns (he, she, they, etc.), possessive pronouns (his, their, etc.), demonstratives (this, that, these, those).

We can also use 'one' or 'ones' to substitute a noun, for example: 'I'd like a small one, please.'

5. Look at the underlined words in *italics> in the article (1-5). In each case, what does the highlighted word refer to?*

6. Now choose the best reference word from the box to put in each gap in the text below.

one	this	they	their
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