

New data on gender inequality in sciences salaries

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There is a difference between male and female physics faculty salaries and the culture of physics is partly to blame, according to an article that is available for free this month from *Physics Today*, the world's most influential and closely followed magazine devoted to physics and the physical sciences community.

The article, "Salaries for female [physics faculty](#) trail those for male colleagues," identifies key factors influencing the gender pay gap and offers potential solutions that include changes in the culture in physics departments.

Staff writer Toni Feder combined data from a 2010 report, "[Gender Differences at Critical Transitions in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty](#)," from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine that looked at hundreds of institutions with unpublished data from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) Statistical Research Center (SRC). AIP is the publisher of *Physics Today*.

What the unpublished data show is that female faculty members in physics have lower salaries compared to their equally qualified male colleagues. "The model says that if we have two people who are identical in every way, the woman will make, on average, 6 percent less than the man," said Susan White, assistant director of SRC, quoted in the *Physics Today* article.

The National Academies' study also found that there were inequities between men and women. Massachusetts Institute of Technology astronomer Claude Canizares, who co-chaired the study, explained that while universities do not purposely discriminate against women and minorities, inequities nevertheless persist.

According to the *Physics Today* article, other studies and observations support the data, with two key reasons for the gender gap disparity. First, women are less aggressive in their salary negotiations and also less likely to ask for a raise during their tenure at an institution. The second reason comes from the fact that men are overrepresented in some scientific fields, which introduces an implicit bias in university departments.

"Boys in the department give money to boys in the department," said a senior researcher quoted anonymously in the *Physics Today* [article](#).

To close the pay gap, MIT Professor Emerita Nancy Hopkins suggests that senior female faculty members need to serve on the hiring, promotion and editorial boards that are positions of power at most universities.

Efforts must also include male support to promote women and minorities in science. "It's hard to break a glass ceiling by banging your head on it from below," Canizares said. "It's easier to break it from above with a sledge hammer."

More information: Toni Feder. Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues, *Physics Today* (2017). [DOI: 10.1063/PT.3.3760](https://doi.org/10.1063/PT.3.3760)

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