

# How name change can impact a female researcher's career

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For women who choose to get married, one decision that they may face is whether to change their last name or not. For a researcher who is published in academic journals, a marital name change may make it

difficult for others to find their work.

"Currently, there is no consistent way for a researcher to update their publication record to reflect a name change due to a [marriage](#) or divorce," says Bala Chaudhary, an assistant professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth. "This can be especially problematic when a researcher applies for grants or tenure, as a reviewer may conclude that the [researcher](#) has not done enough work in the field, when they may not have been evaluating the entire record."

Chaudhary is the author of a recent commentary, which explores how marital name change affects [women](#) researchers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In her piece, Chaudhary says that "the stakes are high as relationship status and name discrimination contribute to gender and racial inequities in faculty hiring." Her commentary was recently published in *Nature Microbiology* to coincide with Women's History Month.

"Marital name change is a major personal and professional decision for which race, ethnicity, and culture, also may play a vital role," says Chaudhary. "It's a decision that can be overwhelming." Women must determine if they want to keep their name, change their name, hyphenate it, add a middle name, create a new name with their partner, and/or use specific names for professional and personal contexts. To navigate this decision, Chaudhary proposes adopting a centralized system to dynamically and retroactively streamline name change across publications, as well as incorporating conversations around marital name change into mentor training for those who advise students.

"Deciding whether to change your name with marriage is a common conversation that women scientists are having with each other and it's important to get this on everyone's radar," says Chaudhary.

**More information:** V. Bala Chaudhary, A scientist by any other name, *Nature Microbiology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1038/s41564-022-01067-2](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41564-022-01067-2)

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