

Research Findings Drive Scientific Workforce Changes for Women

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes that a skilled, diverse scientific workforce is an integral element of supporting the best biomedical research for the country. In 2009, NIH made an unprecedented investment of \$16 million in research grants to study the barriers to the progress of women in the scientific workplace. Six years later, that research investment is paying dividends, with significant findings contributing to our understanding of how individuals make career choices and how workplaces may inadvertently get in the way of advancement. For example, research found that when workplaces offer flexibility policies, they can provide assistance in work-life integration, but these programs are still under-used by employees.

Through this grant funding, NIH supports research on the reasons underlying current patterns observed in the careers of women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering, and the efficacy of programs designed to promote the careers of women in these enterprises. Topics of study include:

- **Educational Pathway**
 - Entry and persistence in academic programs
 - Unequal representation of women in some scientific fields
 - Educational challenges of underrepresented groups
 - Role of bias, prejudice, and stereotype threat
- **Institutional Factors**
 - Influence of institutional and departmental environment
 - The role of leadership to achieve sex/gender equity
 - Institutional arrangements that help or hinder the professional development of women
- **Individual Factors**
 - Financial factors that affect recruitment and retention of women
 - The role of child-care and caregiving arrangements
- **Career Trajectories**
 - Analysis of differences between day-to-day activities of men and women
 - The role of environment on differences between activities of men and women
- **Intervention Strategies**
 - Efficacy of intervention strategies in addressing barriers for women

Researchers presented their data at the Causal Factors and Interventions Workshop held at the NIH in November 2012. To date, researchers funded through this program have published nearly 40 manuscripts and have given more than 120 presentations of their research. In 2013, these researchers created the Research Partnership on Women in Science Careers to build support and awareness of the critical need for improving career advancement, leadership responsibility, and research opportunities for women. In June 2014, NIH convened leaders from private industry, scientific societies, academia, and the medical establishment. NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins challenged the group to tackle this systemic issue by collaborating to conceive and implement innovative solutions.

Read the [full report](#) on this funding, and visit the Career Development page at www.nih.gov/women to learn more.

