



# UN International Day of Women and Girls in Science

11 February

## Background

A significant gender gap has persisted throughout the years at all levels of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines all over the world. Even though women have made tremendous progress towards increasing their participation in higher education, they are still under-represented in these fields.

Gender equality has always been a core issue for the United Nations. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution not only to economic development of the world, but to progress across all the goals and targets of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), as well.

On 14 March 2011, the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) adopted a report at its fifty-fifth session, with agreed conclusions on access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, and for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. On 20 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on science, technology and innovation for development, in which it recognized that full and equal access to and participation in science, technology and innovation for women and girls of all ages is imperative for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

On 22 December 2015, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to establish an annual International Day to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology communities. In welcoming the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and other relevant organizations that support and promote the access of women and girls and their participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, training and research activities at all levels decided to [proclaim](#) 11 February of each year the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.



Olga Vakula is an Associate Nuclear Information Officer at the IAEA. "Science, technology and engineering are our future. Don't be afraid of formulas and rules. Remember that you can always find a way to apply your creativity, imagination, and talents." IAEA/Dean Calma

## 2021 Theme: Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the critical role of women researchers in different stages of the fight against COVID-19, from advancing the knowledge on the virus, to developing techniques for testing, and finally to creating the vaccine against the virus.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant negative impact on women scientists, particularly affecting those at the early stages of their career, and thus contributing to widening the existing gender gap in science, and revealing the gender disparities in the scientific system, which need to be addressed by new policies, initiatives and mechanisms to support women and girls in science.

Against this backdrop, this year's celebration of the Day will address the theme "[Women Scientists at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19](#)" and will gather together experts working in fields related to the pandemic from different parts of the world.

[The 2021 event will take place online](#). A simultaneous interpretation of the debates will be provided in English and French.

Science and gender equality are both vital for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Over the past 15 years, the global community has made a lot of effort in inspiring and engaging women and girls in science. Yet women and girls continue to be excluded from participating fully in science.

At present, [less than 30 per cent](#) of researchers worldwide are women. According to [UNESCO data](#) (2014 - 2016), only around 30 per cent of all female students select STEM-related fields in higher education. Globally, female students' enrolment is particularly low in ICT (3 per cent), natural science, mathematics and statistics (5 per cent) and in engineering, manufacturing and construction (8 per cent).

Long-standing biases and gender stereotypes are steering girls and women away from science related fields. As in the real world, the world on screen reflects similar biases—the 2015 [Gender Bias Without Borders](#) study by the Geena Davis Institute showed that of the onscreen characters with an identifiable STEM job, only 12 per cent were women. In order to achieve full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls, and further achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the United Nations General Assembly adopted [resolution A/RES/70/212](#) declaring 11 February as the [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#).





**"Be brave and push for what you believe in. Be visible. If you are visible, then you will be vulnerable. But accept that vulnerability. Bring that optimism. Push and always be optimistic."**




Alice Ruhweza  
CGIAR System Board member and GDI Champion

## International Day of Women and Girls in Science

### Did you know?

-  The **STEM workforce is vital to growth**. Our research base misses out when we are not drawing scientists and engineers from as wide a talent pool as possible
-  Science and maths are essential for a wide range of careers and carry a wage premium: those working in science or technological careers are paid, on average, **19% more** than other professions
-  Revised 2016 results show that the number of girls taking maths A level has increased by **11%** and those taking physics A level increased by **14%** over the same period.
-  Approximately 20% of people in the UK workforce **need scientific knowledge and training to do their current jobs**

Department for Education | Government Equalities Office

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We need to reshape our own perception of how we view ourselves. We have to step up as women and **take the lead.**

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Source: International Day of Women and Girls in Science. (n.d.). Retrieved February 05, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/en/observances/women-and-girls-in-science-day/>