

## Winds of change in climate science

For many years, the under-representation of women in science has vexed science policymakers across the world. The concern now is that the problem may also affect climate change-related studies. 'Climate for women in climate science: Women scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change', a study published online in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, has looked at the question of gender in the authorship of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most authoritative compendium on the science of climate change.

The authors, who are based at the University of Arizona, report that the proportion of female IPCC authors has seen an increase from less than 5% in 1990 to about 20% in the most recent set of assessment reports. They interviewed over 100 women IPCC authors across the world and found that while 87% of women reported a positive experience in the way they are treated, and in their ability to influence the report, there were many barriers such as race, nationality and command over English that prevented women scientists from contributing to the best of their capacity.

Sixty per cent of women reported that discussions and writing of IPCC reports were controlled by a few scientists, and half reported that the workload was not equally distributed. The authors note that "several felt that more work was required from women than from men, but without appropriate credit." There were respondents who said: "There was no equal opportunity to contribute... decisions were unilateral, non-transparent, a few scientists controlled the write-up" and "the leadership... [was] rather arrogant and not very inclusive. He only seemed to be interested in your opinion if you were an Ivy League-tenured, white male professor. In particular, researchers from developing countries felt excluded by him."

It's a common misconception that the humanities alone lends itself to feminist critique. Donna J. Haraway, biologist and primatologist at the University of California, argued that the study of human evolution and culture has suffered due to a historical lack of observation of female primates. Ruth Bleier of the University of Wisconsin-Madison earlier called for a "feminist" view to understanding the mechanics of cell biology and sex selection.

Climate science, it follows, can only be the wiser with newer perspectives.

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