Gender Gaps at the Academies

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Historically, a large majority of the newly elected members of the National Academy of Science (NAS) and the American Academy of Arts and Science (AAAS) were men. Within the past two decades, however, that situation has changed, and in the last 3 years women made up about 40 percent of the new members in both academies. We build lists of active scholars from publications in the top journals in three fields – Psychology, Mathematics and Economics – and develop a series of models to compare changes in the probability of selection of women as members of the NAS and AAAS from the 1960s to today, controlling for publications and citations. In the early years of our sample, women were less likely to be selected as members than men with similar records. By the 1990s, the selection process at both academies was approximately gender-neutral, conditional on publications and citations. In the past 20 years, however, a positive preference for female members has emerged and strengthened in all three fields. Currently, women are 3-15 times more likely to be selected as members of the AAAS and NAS than men with similar publication and citation records.

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