Gender Parity in Nobel Prizes

What is the issue?

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- Only 6% of the total individuals who have won Nobel Prize up till 2016, are women.
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- This calls for assessing the level of gender parity in Nobel prize wining.
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How has the trend been?

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- There have been 881 Nobel Prize winners from the time that the first one was given out in 1901.
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- However, less than 50 of them have been women.
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- Moreover, in some fields of expertise, the dry spell has been carrying on for decades.
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- E.g. the last time a woman won a Nobel Prize for Physics was in 1964
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- Two of the six laureates who were awarded prizes in Physics and Chemistry this year - Donna Strickland and Frances Arnold - are women.
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- They are only the third and fifth women Nobel laureates in Physics and Chemistry, respectively, since Nobel prizes inception.
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Does a gender bias exist?

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- Despite the awareness about gender equality in the 21st century, the Nobel Prizes still show the disparity.
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- The huge gender divide clearly indicates an institutional backlog in the consideration of Nobel-worthy discoveries.
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- It is also to be noted that black and minority ethnic men are also underrepresented.
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- The demographic of winners perpetuates a stereotype of old white men being the only achievers in science.
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- The Nobel Museum curators found no proof as such of the committee refusing to give an award because of the gender of the nominee.
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- Many women were nominated for their groundbreaking revelations a number of times, but have not won prize.
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- These call for the community of scientists to introspect over what makes an enabling environment for women to practise science in.
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Source: The Hindu, India Today

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