GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4099
ANSWERED ON 12/08/2026

CAREER PROGRESSION FOR WOMEN RESEARCHERS

4099. Dr. D RAVI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has assessed the participation and retention of women in science, technology, engineering and research careers and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether any study has been undertaken to identify barriers to career progression for women researchers and if so, the details thereof;

(c) the schemes currently being implemented to support women scientists returning to research after career breaks; and

(d) the outcomes of such initiatives?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES
(DR. JITENDRA SINGH)

(a) The Government has assessed the participation of women in science, technology, engineering, and research careers through its national statistical frameworks. The Department of Science and Technology (DST), through its Research & Development Statistics 2025-2026 report, has documented a steady increase in women's participation in STEM research careers, from 13% in 2000–01 to 18.6% in 2020–21 and further to 29% in 2023-24. These statistics provide an assessment of women's participation in the STEM research workforce.

(b) Several studies have been undertaken by policy and research institutions, including NITI Aayog, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR), to identify barriers to the career progression of women researchers. These include NITI Aayog's "From Intent to Impact: A Compendium of Good Practices on Gender Parity at Workplace (2025)", CSIR-NIScPR's "Women in STEM - A CSIR Survey

Towards Gender Parity (2022)", and DST's "Research and Development Statistics reports (2026)". The studies indicate that while a significant number of women complete postgraduate and doctoral education, they continue to face structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers that impede their career progression. Key challenges identified include career interruptions due to caregiving responsibilities; inadequate childcare infrastructure; limited availability of structured returnship programmes, flexible work arrangements and mentorship opportunities; work-life balance pressures and the impact of these factors on health and well-being.

(c) to (d): The Government is implementing several schemes to support women scientists returning to research after career breaks across different stages of their careers. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) implements the Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN) scheme, which includes WISE-PhD, WISE Post-Doctoral Fellowship (WISE-PDF), WISE-Societal Challenges with Opportunities (WISE-SCOPE), WISE Internship in Intellectual Property Rights (WISE-IPR) and WIDUSHI. These programmes support women in pursuing doctoral and post-doctoral research, translational research, intellectual property rights training, and continued research engagement for senior women scientists.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) implements the Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation (BioCARe) scheme to facilitate the re-entry of women scientists into biotechnology and allied research after career breaks. The Department of Health Research (DHR), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, implements the Women Scientist Scheme (WSS) under the Central Sector Scheme Human Resource Development for Health Research to support women researchers returning to biomedical and health research after career breaks due to motherhood or family responsibilities.

These initiatives have yielded significant outcomes. Under WISE-KIRAN, over 4,000 women scientists have been supported for research, while 942 women have been trained in Intellectual Property Rights, of whom 413 have become registered patent agents. Under the BioCARe scheme, 415 women researchers have been supported across research institutions and universities in the country, facilitating their re-entry into research careers.

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