

STATUS OF WOMEN ASTRONOMERS IN CHINA

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The percentages of women working in Astronomy including research and technical positions are as follows:

TABLE 1. Percentages of Women Astronomers

Level	High	Middle	Low
%	10	20	35

If we look at the percentages of female students:

TABLE 2. Female Students

Level	Percentage
Elementary school	50%
Middle school	40%
University, college	30%
Graduate school	25%

It is easy to see, that since fewer women have the chance of higher education, it is not a surprise that fewer women can reach to the higher level in astronomy.

Social discrimination and prejudice have been the obstacles for women to get higher education and choose a career in astronomy. For example:

- 1. Home influence. A girl from her early childhood is educated to play with dolls and help in the kitchen.
- 2. Marriage. In the view of public, a man should not choose a wife with higher education nor in a higher position as compared to him. And thus, well educated women have less chance to get married.

- 3. Hard burden. When she has a family, she has to be a good wife, a nice mother and a successful scientist at the same time. This is not so easy to accomplish.
- 4. In some countries (but not in China) women cannot enjoy the same salaries as men do. They often have less salary, less position, and less promotion.

But, the situation has been changing step by step, now it is much better than in previous generations, and will be improved in the future. Yet as the social convention has been established for some thousands of years, women workers must prepare to work hard, facing many obstacles. Only when you enter the door, you will be successful. This situation will be a fact for some generations, but it is getting better and better.

The IAU has been nice to women astronomers. We have female vice-presidents, general secretaries, presidents and vice-presidents of commissions, SOC chairpersons, invited speakers, etc. However, we all know how hard it is for a woman to become an astronomer. I do hope the IAU will take good care of women astronomers and keep at least one woman as a member of its executive committee.