

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FACT SHEET: A Project of Women Leaders Count

Women and the Nobel Prize

The Institute for Women's Leadership is committed to increasing the numbers of women in decision making and leadership positions across all sectors and professions. Our series of Women's Leadership Fact Sheets is designed to increase awareness of women's current progress and continued underrepresentation. A total of 853 Nobel Prizes have been awarded between 1901 and 2011.¹ Five percent (43) of the 826 individual Nobel Prize winners have been women.² Of the 43 female laureates, 32 (74.4 %) were honored between 1963 and 2011. Women have won in all six Nobel Prize fields. Peace, with 15 (34.1 %) prizes, and Literature, with 12 (27.3 %) prizes, have the highest number of female laureates. These fields are followed by Physiology or Medicine, with 10 (22.7 %), Chemistry, with 4 (9.1 %), Physics, with 2 (4.5 %), and Economics, with 1 (2.3 %).³ (Women's age at the time they won Nobels averages 58, one year younger than male laureates whose age averages 59.)

Gender Distribution of Individual Nobel Prizes		
FIELD & NUMBER OF AWARDS	WOMEN	MEN
Peace (101)	15 (14.9 %)	86 (85.1 %)
Literature (108)	12 (11.1 %)	96 (88.9 %)
Physiology or Medicine (199)	10 (5.0 %)	189 (95.0 %)
Chemistry (161)	4 (2.5 %)	157 (97.5 %)
Physics (192)	2 (1.0 %)	190 (99.0 %)
The Prize in Economic Sciences (69)	1 (1.4 %)	68 (98.6 %)
TOTALS (830 individual prizes)	44 (5.3 %) prizes	786 (94.7 %) prizes

The 826 individuals and 20 organizations awarded Nobel Prizes represent 74 countries. The largest number of Nobel Prize winners (332) has come from the United States, followed by the United Kingdom (120), Germany (102), France (58), Switzerland (26), Sweden (29), Russia (27), Canada (20), Italy (20), Japan (19), Austria (19), and Denmark (14).⁴

In the United States, 325 individuals and 7 organizations won the Nobel Prize between 1901 and 2011. Of the 325 individual Nobel Prize laureates in the United States, only 15 (4.6%) have been women. U.S. women laureates have won in Physiology or Medicine (8 prizes), Peace (3), Literature (2), Physics (1), and Economics (1). No woman from the U.S.

¹ At times prizes are shared and in a few cases laureates have received more than one prize. Because of this, 830 prizes have been awarded to individuals and 23 prizes have been awarded to organizations. Overall 826 individuals and 20 organizations have won the Nobel Prize.

² The exact percentage is 5.2%. Marie Curie was awarded the Nobel Prize twice, in Physics (1903) and in Chemistry (1911). This makes a total of 44 prizes awarded to women.

³ The Prize in Economic Sciences was first awarded in 1969.

⁴ These countries include both country of birth and country of institutional affiliation. If, at the time of the award the laureate was affiliated with an institution in a country other than his or her country of birth, our table lists the country of institutional affiliation. For other countries and nationalities, see the Nobel Prize website from which we drew our data: www.nobelprize.org.

has yet won the prize in Chemistry. Of the 15 female Nobel laureates in the United States, only one, Toni Morrison, is a woman of color. Morrison won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993.

Nobel Prize Laureates in the United States		
Field and Number of Awards	Women	Men
Physiology or Medicine (95)	8 (8.4 %)	87 (91.6 %)
Peace (21)	3 (14.3 %)	18 (85.7 %)
Literature (11)	2 (18.2 %)	9 (81.8 %)
Physics (87)	1 (1.1 %)	86 (98.9 %)
The Prize in Economic Sciences (49)	1 (2.0 %)	48 (98.0 %)
Chemistry (62)	0 (0 %)	62 (100 %)
TOTALS (325)	15 (4.6 %)	310 (95.4 %)

Between 1901 and 2011, 21 individuals residing and/or affiliated with institutions in New Jersey were awarded the Noble Prize. These 21 prizes comprise 6.8 % of all U.S. individual prizes and are distributed through all the Nobel Prize fields except Peace:⁵ 11 prizes were in Physics, 5 in Economics, 2 in Chemistry, 2 in Physiology or Medicine, and 1 in Literature.⁶

Nobel Prize Laureates in New Jersey		
Field and Number of Awards	Women	Men
Physiology or Medicine (2)	0	2
Peace (0)	0	0
Literature (1)	1	0
The Prize in Economic Sciences (5)	0	5
Physics (11)	0	11
Chemistry (2)	0	2
TOTALS (21)	1 (4.8 %)	20 (95.2 %)

⁵ Woodrow Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919, while he was president of the U.S. and residing in Washington D.C. He is not considered a Nobel laureate in New Jersey since, despite being New Jersey's governor (1911 and 1913), and president of Princeton University (1902 and 1910), he did not reside in, nor was affiliated with an institution in New Jersey at the time of the award.

⁶ Writer Toni Morrison was affiliated with Princeton University at the time of her acceptance of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993.