

# Kids Draw Female Scientists More Often Than They Did Decades Ago

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When asked to draw a scientist, children often reproduce common stereotypes about who scientists are and what they do. However, new research, which I led, shows that these stereotypes have changed over time, at least within the United States. My study, which was [published March 20 in \*Child Development\*](#), finds that U.S. children now draw female scientists more often than ever before.

In the 1960s and 1970s, [one landmark study](#) asked nearly 5,000 elementary school children to draw a scientist. Their artwork almost exclusively depicted men, often with lab coats, working indoors with lab equipment. Of those nearly 5,000 drawings, only 28 depicted a female scientist, which were all drawn by girls. Not a single boy drew a woman.

Those findings were striking to me. But they also made me wonder: how have children's stereotypes changed over time? Women have made substantial gains in educational attainment and employment since the 1960s, especially in science fields. For instance, [women earned](#) 19 percent of U.S. chemistry bachelor's degrees in 1966, compared to 48 percent in 2015.

Female scientists are also now more often depicted in children's media. [One content analysis](#) found evidence for this change in the popular magazine *Highlights for Children*. Women and girls were 13 percent of images of people in the magazine's science feature stories in the 1960s, compared to 44 percent in the 2000s. Other research [has found](#) that women and girls were 42 percent of scientist characters in popular children's television programs in 2006.