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**T**he statistics presented in a recent report on women in science make depressing reading. *Women for Science* offers a slew of figures that reaffirm just how woefully women are represented in science and engineering around the world. In Austria, only 6% of engineers working in research are women. In Japan, less than 10% of professors are women. And in Germany, only about 10% of women have research jobs in industry.

The report was produced by the InterAcademy Council, which encompasses more than 90 national science academies around the world. And perhaps the most staggering statistic of all relates to the composition of those various academies: on average only about 5% of their members are women. This is probably because entry to these august bodies tends to involve nominations by existing members, followed by a vote by the whole academy. This system has, in effect, perpetuated a kind of 'boys' club for scientists'.

The same might be said of science internationally. Over and over again, the report illustrates that, even in countries where lots of women are earning PhDs, few of them attain leadership positions. Titles such as dean, chair and president, which could make their membership of an academy little more than a formality, remain remarkably elusive. To rectify that, the report recommends that current academy members should advance women to leadership positions, encourage young women to consider science as a career and reach out to women in the developing world.

These are all laudable and worthwhile goals. But changing cultures in countries such as Austria, Germany and Japan are likely to be difficult enough. Turning the tide for women in certain developing nations — where some traditions dictate subordinate roles — may be much harder.

But there is one recommendation that the academies can control: boosting the number of women within their own memberships. After all, if you're drawing up a plan of action, you ought set your own house in order.

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