

MARYAM MIRZAKHANI

1977–2017



EARLY LIFE

She grew up during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) which resulted in a tough childhood.

She aspired to be writer as a child, and found stories of people like Marie Curie and Helen Keller inspiring.

She was initially dissuaded from math after being told she lacked talent, but a new teacher's support brought back her interest in the subject.

EDUCATION

She received her B.S. in Mathematics from Sharif University of Technology in Tehran in 1999.

She earned her PhD at Harvard University in 2004 under Fields Medallist Curtis McMullen.

She started at Princeton University as an Assistant Professor before becoming a Professor at Stanford University.

CONTRIBUTIONS

She made major advancements to the study of geodesics and moduli spaces, answering long-standing mathematical problems.

In 2014, she became the first woman and Iranian to win the Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics.

Her work with Alex Eskin led to major developments in understanding the dynamics of moduli spaces.

ADVERSITY

She grew up in a world where women had fewer chances in STEM fields.

She fought to participate in math competitions that were usually solely open to boys.

She was the first Iranian woman who earned worldwide fame in mathematics.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013; she continued to research until her death in 2017.

FUN FACTS

- She survived a tragic bus accident in 1998, which killed seven of her classmates.
- She received gold medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) in 1994 and 1995, the second time with a perfect score.
- She and her best friend, Roya Beheshti, enjoyed browsing Tehran's bookshops as children. They would often purchase books at random.