

Question time

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There is a phenomenon that women ask fewer questions than men[1] at seminars (see Fig. 1), for which the hypothesis is supported by data in a new working paper. One theory to explain the low share of women[2] in senior academic jobs is that they have less self-confidence than men.

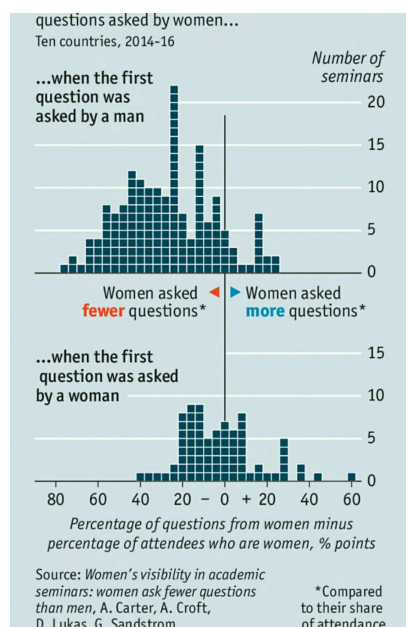


Figure 1: percentage of question and attendees

On average, half of each seminar's audience was female. Men, however, were over 2.5 times more likely to pose question to the speakers—an action that may be viewed as a sign of greater competence. When a woman did so, the gender split in question-asking was, on average, proportional to that of the audience. But if a man did so, there will be a reverse result depending on who asked the first question.

References

- [1] M. Kuo, “Women ask fewer questions than men at conference talks, new studies suggest,” *Science*, 2017.

- [2] E. Holst and A. Kirsch, “Financial sector: Share of women in top decision-making bodies remains low.,” *Diw Economic Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 49–58, 2014.