

## Instructions for session hosts that agreed to take part in our question asking experiment.

First of all, many thanks for volunteering as a session host during the Behaviour 2023 congress!

The Organising Committee of the Behaviour 2023 prioritises **equity, diversity, and inclusivity** (EDI) at our scientific event. Despite increasing awareness regarding inequities and injustices and active top-down and bottom-up change, inequalities continue to appear in various forms: from chilly climates to institutionalised inequalities. Also at scientific events, inequalities tend to show: it is common that men tend to ask more questions than women during Q&A sessions <sup>1-6</sup>. Over time, this could affect one's scientific and/or social reputation in combination with various other factors.

### Objective

To tackle gender inequality during Q&A sessions, we are conducting a study to test whether session host behaviour could close potential gender inequalities in question-asking behaviour.

As a session host, we therefore kindly ask you to follow the instructions detailed below.

### Instructions

The opportunity to ask a question is both affected by the session chair's choice, as well as the competition for asking a question. We aim to manipulate which gender gets to ask the **first** question after a talk, to see how this affects subsequent question-asking behaviour within that talk and session. For example, women might be more encouraged to raise their hand if another woman already asked a question.

After a talk is finished, please give the **first question to the gender as listed in the additional document that you will receive**. The document will contain the instructions per talk within the session you will host: you will be instructed to either allocate the first question after the talk to a woman or to a man. This instruction only involves the first question after each talk. After the first question is answered, please choose question askers as you normally would regardless of their gender.

### Inferring gender

We recognise that gender is not binary, and that inferring someone's gender merely from their appearance is flawed. To aid correct gender inference, people could opt to print their preferred pronouns on their name tag. If possible, please use the printed pronouns to infer whether the person identifies as a woman/man/other. If the pronouns aren't printed, you cannot read them, or did not have time to read them, you can infer someone's gender from their appearance (e.g. hair length, clothing, facial features, voice pitch, etc.).

### Alternative scenario's

We also acknowledge that Q&A sessions might not always be as straight-forward. You will find some examples of different scenario's and what to do below.

Only men raise their hand for the first question while I am instructed to allocate the first question to a woman – In this case, just choose one of the men to ask a question as you normally would.

Only women raise their hand for the first question while I am instructed to allocate the first question to a man – In this case, just choose one of the women to ask a question as you normally would.

**Only one person raises their hand** – Just give the question to this person, regardless of gender.

**The presenter assigns the first question themselves and/or someone asks the first question without being assigned to** – As the first question is already asked right now, you don't have to follow the instructions for that talk. You can just continue the session as you normally would.

**I made clear eye contact with someone raising their hand and it would be rude to not give them the question** – Just give the question to this person, regardless of gender. The same applies to any other situation where it would be awkward or rude to not give the question to the person, even if they are not of the gender you were supposed to allocate the question to.

**The talk was cancelled** – We can't predict the unforeseen, and cancellations might happen. Of course, you can ignore the instruction for the cancelled talk and please keep following the instructions that are assigned to the time slot each talk is given.

**NB:** It is okay if you are not able to follow the instructions: scientific exchange will always be prioritised over the instructions for this study. Also, we do not want this intervention to cause any awkward situations.

### **Further information**

These instructions on how to allocate first questions after each talk is all we are asking for from your side. We have a great team of volunteers that will help us collect data during the sessions, such as the base-line distribution of men and women in the audience, who did not get to ask their question, who did ask their question, and the type of questions asked. If you did not manage to follow the instruction, there is no need to inform us – our volunteers will note this down.

If you are hosting the session with multiple people, such as for the symposia, please share this information within your team. However, **please do not talk about this study** until after the conference, to minimise audience bias!

### **Questions?**

We really appreciate your willingness to take part in our study. We believe that an experiment that involves a small intervention like described above will allow us to answer a lot of questions about gender-related dynamics within Q&A sessions.

We aim to write up the results in a paper and will inform you once the results are published.

If you are interested in learning more about the study, please don't hesitate to reach out and we would be more than happy to elaborate. If you have any questions regarding the instructions above, please write us an email or you can come and find us at the conference. Additionally, you can contact Rebecca Chen through mobile/WhatsApp during the congress or Öncü Maracı through WhatsApp.

## References

1. Davenport, J. R. A. *et al.* Studying Gender in Conference Talks -- data from the 223rd meeting of the American Astronomical Society. Preprint at <http://arxiv.org/abs/1403.3091> (2014).
2. Hinsley, A., Sutherland, W. J. & Johnston, A. Men ask more questions than women at a scientific conference. *PLoS ONE* **12**, e0185534 (2017).
3. Käfer, J. *et al.* Progress and Prospects in Gender Visibility at SMBE Annual Meetings. *Genome Biology and Evolution* **10**, 901–908 (2018).
4. Lupon, A. *et al.* Towards women-inclusive ecology: Representation, behavior, and perception of women at an international conference. *PLoS ONE* **16**, e0260163 (2021).
5. Pritchard, J. *et al.* Asking gender questions. *Astronomy & Geophysics* **55**, 6.8-6.12 (2014).
6. Schmidt, S. J. & Davenport, J. R. A. Who asks questions at astronomy meetings? *Nat Astron* **1**, 0153 (2017).