PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN QUESTION ASKING

Finding: Proportionally more women asked questions when the first question came from a female.*

Tips:
- Organisers: State expectations for behaviour that supports inclusivity
- Moderators: Choose someone who would normally not ask a question first, if possible.
- Audience: Consider holding onto your question briefly, to provide an opportunity for someone whose voice is heard less often.

*these data are correlational, but the tips can’t hurt to implement, just in case.

Finding: When more questions were asked, the gender balance in the questions from the audience increased.*

Tips:
- Organisers: Allow more time for questions after a seminar
- Moderators: Keep questions and answers short; intercept ‘showing off’ questions or comments
- Audience: Ask questions after talks; save statements and comments for after the talk

Finding: Women report feeling more nervous than men about asking questions, but men get nervous, too.

Tips:
- Organisers: Allow a small break for time to formulate questions
- Moderators: Be encouraging and keep an eye peeled for questions from less confidently-raised hands
- Audience: Recognise that many others feel the same way as you; it’s ok to feel nervous!

Visibility matters: people tend to judge whether they "belong" in a career based on who they see in it. Low visibility may lead to the attrition of women and other minorities in academia.

But for every question asked by a woman, men ask 2–3 times as many.

1 in 2 audience members in academic seminars are women.