

Women are given a tougher time in interviews than men, scientists find

By [Harry Yorke](#), ONLINE EDUCATION EDITOR, 3 JULY 2017

Women are given a tougher time during interviews and are interrupted more than men, a new study has found.

According to researchers, women are more likely to be interrupted mid-sentence and face more follow-up questions in academic interviews, suggesting there is a gender imbalance in top jobs.

The study, published last week in the journal of Social Sciences, found that men are also twice as likely to interject while speaking to a woman.

Analysing job interviews at two leading US universities over a two-year period, researchers found that women were questioned more by hiring panels, making them more prone to rushing through a presentation.

The findings also show that there is a pervasive “prove it again” attitude displayed towards women, which may explain why many academic fields continue to be male-dominated.

The research comes in stark contrast to recent undergraduate trends in the UK, with female students now outnumbering men in two-thirds of undergraduate courses.

It suggests that, despite greater access to higher education, there are still sizeable gender barriers for women hoping to progress in academia.

Conducted by the University of California and University of Southern California, 119 job interviews were video recorded and analysed by researchers.

They found that on average, women faced five questions in which they were interrupted by the interviewer, whereas their male counterparts only faced four.

Female academics also received two more follow-up questions, and 17 in total--at least three more than a typical male interviewee--meaning they spent a “higher proportion” of their time fielding queries.

“Questions piled on to previous questions...may indicate a challenge to the presenter’s competence – not only in their prepared talk but also in their response to questions,” the report found, adding that women are caught in a “catch-22”.

“Even shortlisted women with impressive CVs may still be assumed to be less competent, are challenged, sometimes excessively, and therefore have less time to present a coherent and compelling talk.

“[These] subtle conversational patterns...form an almost invisible bias, which allows a climate of challenging women’s competence to persist.”

In engineering departments, where female staff quotas varied between four and 18 per cent, it claims that the frequent disruption caused during their talks resulted in women “often” having less time to deliver a “compelling conclusion”.

While the study did not collect data on whether more questions helped or hindered candidates, video recordings revealed that “verbal cues...clearly indicate that they [women] are rushing to get through their carefully prepared slide decks and reach the punchline of their talk”.

As a result, many female interviewees responded by saying “for the sake of time, I’m going to skip this part”, “there’s not much time left; I will rush through this” and “I’m going really quick here because I want to get to the second part of the talk”.

This, the researchers concluded, revealed a clear correlation between the number of questions faced by women and their tendency to rush more.

They add that in a “masculine-typed job” there are “stricter standards of competence demanded by evaluators” when women are shortlisted.

The study came on the same week that PwC disclosed that women employed in its UK operations earn on average 14 per cent less than their male counterparts, and receive smaller bonuses.

Nationwide, the difference between men and women’s salaries stood at 18 per cent in 2016, according to the Office for National Statistics.