



## Conference Speaker Diversity Guidelines

In market research and many other industries today, women are under-represented as speakers at conferences and events. While this may have been attributed in the past to a lack of diversity in speaker applications, Women in Research has been working for several years to change this. WIRE has put together a database of female speakers through our [50/50 Initiative](#) and they offer programs to mentor and encourage women in our community to put themselves forward for speaking roles. A lack of available diverse speakers is NOT the “pipeline” problem. Why then are we still struggling to see diverse perspectives on stage at market and consumer research events?

Rather than attributing a lack of speaker diversity to a pipeline issue, we challenge you to disrupt your speaker recruitment and selection processes, and implement new processes to facilitate equal representation on stage. As part of our [50/50 Initiative](#), Women in Research has crafted the following set of guidelines to help industry conference organizers recruit a truly diverse on-stage presence and improve speaker gender ratios at events. When reaching out to procure speaker applicants, evaluate papers and studies, and craft agendas, this checklist will drive gender parity at research events.

### Conference Organizer Checklist and Guidelines for a Diverse Agenda

- ❑ **Create diverse committees**
  - Diverse event and/or paper committees have diverse networks. Ensure your committee members are demographically (e.g., sex/gender, age, ethnicity, disability) and geographically diverse.
  - Ensure committee members are well connected and can activate networks your association may not otherwise have access to, particularly as it relates to keynote speakers.
- ❑ **Adjust your call for speakers.**
  - Be clear that you are seeking new perspectives and diverse points of view.
  - Reiterate that speaking experience is not a requirement nor an advantage, and that you are seeking new topics from speakers of any background.
  - Communicate that you are building a merit-based and transparent selection process.
- ❑ **Use your network to encourage new speakers to apply.**
  - Ask people you know and past speakers to nominate speakers you may not be aware of nor connected to.
  - Note clearly that you are particularly looking to get diverse speaker perspectives.
  - Expand your call for papers to channels that are specifically designed to reach underrepresented groups, e.g., Diversity/PoC/WomenInTech groups and networks on Twitter or LinkedIn.

- Access channels you have not used before, e.g., Medium, Google+, and groups you're not a member of.
- ❑ **Follow blinded speaker selection processes to ensure unintentional bias and/or subjective discussion does not unfairly influence the selection process**
  - Eliminate intrinsic bias by requiring potential speakers to submit their topic or study with no personally identifying factors (e.g., name, city).
  - Carefully evaluate topics/papers with a transparent rating system while still remaining blind to the submitters.
- ❑ **Before releasing speaker selections, critically review your draft agenda.**
  - Ensure there are no single gender panels. (Note 1: An all-male panel with a female moderator is still considered a single gender panel. Note 2: A heavily female panel about women's opinions or diversity topics does not counteract an overall heavily male ratio).
  - Ensure there are no tracks or sessions that are heavily slanted to a single gender.
- ❑ **For "pay to play" speakers**
  - Request that sponsors put forward diverse speakers.
  - Make every effort to ensure that any "pay to play" panels are diverse.
  - If the sponsor speaker ratio isn't diverse, take the initiative to let sponsors know you and the industry value diversity and invite them to consider other experts at their company.

When conference organizers begin to communicate with a voice of inclusion and opportunity, shift the selection process, and ensure diverse agendas, many people who have held back from applying—thinking their chances are slim at selection—will put themselves forward.

If you believe that diversity is paramount to the future of our industry and critical to putting new energy and ideas into MRX conferences, then please join us by pledging to adhere to these guidelines.

YES, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] agrees!

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Event:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_