

4.1 Who are we listening to?

Step 4. Experience Time: 30 min 2-20 people

Summary

If a group systematically has less access to being heard, their thoughts, suggestions and input are likely to be missed. It also shapes our view of who is competent and contributing in the workplace, for example. Who talks the most in your team? In this exercise, you will have the opportunity to measure speaking time linked to gender via an app, or manually via Excel sheets. Based on statistics from the school, national media and the results of your own speech time measurements, the question should be asked how your meetings can be optimized? Because who are we really listening to on a daily basis?

What to do:

- Appoint one or more people to be responsible for the exercise.
- Those responsible either download the Time to talk* app on their mobile phone NOTE! unfortunately only available for iPhone. The app helps you measure speaking time at meetings linked to gender. Or they can use the instructions below to calculate speaking time without the app. NOTE! The advantage of counting on your own is that you can include more categories than two so that non-binary people (people who do not identify as either women or men) are also included. You can also measure speech time more accurately on your own by not running the risk of the app measuring the speech time of trans people incorrectly, for example.
- Decide for how long you will measure speech time in your meetings, ideally at least one week and at least three meetings.
- At the end of the measurement period, those responsible compile your results and provide feedback to others.
- Then discuss your results and what you can do in the future to make your meetings even better. Suggestions for discussion questions are given below.
- Feel free to read the fact box, individually or in groups. Can be done at any time during the exercise.

Conversation guidelines

- Assume that "everyone" is in the room ("those of us who...").
- Remember that we have different prior knowledge and experience of the themes raised, so show respect.
- Think freely and interpret each other kindly.

Exercise

Number of participants: optional

This exercise only works in mixed gender teams, i.e. where more than one gender is represented. It should not be done in groups where one gender is represented by less than three people.

Discussion questions

- What are your results? Look at both the speaking time and the number of contributions.
- Was it as expected? If not - how does it differ?
- Is it important that people are given the same amount of time and space regardless of their gender?
- Do you think that everyone in the team, regardless of gender, feels that they can speak on equal terms? If not, what could be possible reasons?
- Is there anything you can think of to make the speaking time more evenly distributed between everyone in the group?

Fact box

Is it important who talks the most?

In gender research related to the world of schools, there is the "two-thirds rule" which means that the time in the classroom that is not occupied by the teacher is distributed 2/3 to the boys and 1/3 to the girls. When this is the case, the majority feel that everyone, regardless of gender, speaks about the same amount and takes about the same amount of space. However, when the speaking space is equalized, the lessons are perceived as girl-dominated. As recently as 2016, a report was published confirming that girls still speak less than boys in classroom settings.

Kichisaga, a gender equality consultancy that measures speaking time in the media, said: "Both women and men often believe that speaking time is equally distributed, when in fact it is usually men who do most of the talking. We have found that measurement often leads to aha moments when the statistics show how much or little people talk in practice. There is no end to everyone talking EXACTLY the same amount.

But if the distribution is uneven in the long run, it is perhaps time to ask whether the climate of conversation is really good, and discuss what can be done to develop it. Are we really getting the most out of our meetings? Are all the ideas and input coming through?"

If a group systematically has less access to being heard, there's a significant risk that their thoughts, suggestions, and input will be missed. It also shapes our view of who is competent and contributes in the context. On a societal level, for example, we can see that of those who participate in Swedish news media, 31% are women and 69% are men. Four out of five experts are men. Women are often invited to share personal experiences instead.

In light of statistics from schools, national media, and the results of your own speaking time measurements, the question should be raised about how your meetings can be optimized. Considering the gender aspect, but also more broadly. Working for secure and inclusive meetings can be done with the aim of highlighting a particular group but generally proves to contribute to everyone experiencing meetings more positively and contributing more. It can involve other grounds for discrimination or our different personalities and ways of processing information. Some simple tips for better meetings can be, for example, to use speaking time rounds (everyone gets to say something in turn without interruption) or to give priority to those in the meeting who haven't spoken previously. Conversation rules, similar to those we use in our work with the Respect Ladder, often work well. Sending out the agenda and any documents in advance can also help those who need time to think before speaking. Things like the sound environment during meetings and how long they last without a break can also affect people's ability to participate actively. In very talkative groups, the need for the meeting leader to control the agenda and keep to the schedule may be greater. Decide collectively how to take the floor, for example, if someone talks, we raise our hand, but if it's silent, it's okay to speak up or something similar. To avoid repetition, rules such as "if I agree, it's enough to say that, I don't need to repeat the same point" are good to save time.

Read more:

Skolverket's report from 2016 on speaking time in schools:

[Skolverket's Report](#)

Get tips on how to interpret your results: [Look Who's Talking](#)

About the Time to Talk App:

The app is available for download in the App Store, unfortunately not in Google Play.

- Set how many women and men are participating in the meeting (adjust if someone leaves or joins).

- At the top, you can see the audio coming in and whether the app interprets it as a woman or a man. The reliability of the interpretation is 90-95% for Scandinavian and American speech according to the app's own description.
- You can see both the actual speaking time used by women and men and the distribution adjusted for different numbers of participants of each gender.
- Remember to measure over several meetings and/or a long time to reduce the impact of random effects, such as the topic happening to concern a male/female participant more, the arrival of a male/female guest speaker, etc.

Instructions for measuring speaking time and the number of contributions without the app:

1. Count how many people of different genders are in the room. Remember that not everyone identifies with the categories "women" and "men," so create space for a third group, "others," if necessary.
2. Draw the groups on a piece of paper and make a mark each time someone from one group says something. This way, you will get a count of the number of contributions per group.
3. Use a mobile phone or another timer to measure the time someone speaks. Note the number associated with the group to which the person belongs.
4. After the meeting, compile the total number of contributions and total speaking time for the entire meeting and for each individual group. Then, by comparing a group's results with the figure for the whole, you can determine the group's percentage share of the total. Compare this with the number of people in the relevant group versus the whole group to see if the group takes up more or less space than their share.

Tips! It's a good idea to have at least two people measuring so that one person can count the number of contributions, and another can measure speaking time. If necessary, you can have more people measuring speaking time, with each person responsible for measuring the speaking time of a specific group.