

# Gender Inequality and Deliberation: a meta-analysis

Masood Gheasi  
Matthew Ryan  
(University of Southampton)

## Abstract

Deliberation is an essential component of a healthy democracy. Through deliberation citizens listen to, learn from, and they engage with different opinions. Diversity of inclusion of different genders, race, and ethnicity among other identities is very important for deliberative equality. Among a larger volume of research on diversity and in particular gender differences in deliberation, researchers find a significant gender gap, and therefore have tried to find an optimal solution for facilitating equal voice across genders in a deliberative discussion groups. The aim of our study is to test whether the pooling of study results that are individually inconclusive, maybe able to jointly explain the difference in gender deliberation. There are several qualitative studies on gender inequality in deliberation, but this topic is and less studied using large-N approaches. We encountered several challenges in consolidating information from existing quantitative research articles (lack of solid empirical estimation, much focus on description over causal analysis, difficulty in interpretation of results etc.). Still, we succeeded in gathering 13 studies which yielded 201-point estimates allowing us to conduct a quantitative meta-analysis on gender inequality in deliberation. In order to gather a representative set of published papers in different publication outlets, we selected from various political science literature databases all refereed articles that included an estimation of deliberation in which gender has been included as an explanatory variable. It is also important to mention that our database only includes paper written in the English language, and we do not expect this to reduce validity. The set of papers were selected using google scholar. Our initial results indicate that women are in a disadvantageous position in political deliberation. However, the result changes when controlling for factors such as number of women, and whether women hold majority in a deliberative group. Our results suggest that individual knowledge and capacities for deliberation as well as the design of experimental conditions are important predictors of measured outcomes in deliberative fora when included in modelling with gender-related variables. We interpret this as a caution against assumptions that gender inequalities observed in small fora are artefacts of recruitment design and are more likely to reflect wide societal inequalities.