

Diversity in Economics Seminars: Who Gives Invited Talks?

Jennifer L. Doleac
Texas A&M University

Erin Hengel
University of Liverpool

Elizabeth Pancotti
Employ America

Why should we care about invited seminar talks?

- Invited seminar talks are a primary way that economists:
 - Get feedback on their work
 - Disseminate their research
 - Build their professional networks
- There are benefits to faculty who extend the invitations, but those invitations also have positive externalities to the speaker and to graduate students (e.g. role model effects)
 - This could lead to an inefficient allocation of seminar invites
- Current gender and racial disparities in economics may be exacerbated by disparities in who is invited to give seminar talks
 - Data limitations have prevented an informed discussion of this possibility
- In this paper we provide descriptive evidence on who gives invited seminar talks in economics, based on an extensive, ongoing data collection effort

Data

- We developed a list of economics and econ-adjacent departments using a variety of sources
 - Includes departments in the US and abroad
- Beginning in January 2019, we've pulled information on seminar schedules directly from department websites
 - Many, but not all, departments post archives of previous schedules
- The current paper uses a balanced panel of 66 departments
 - August 2014 through December 2019
 - Numbers from these departments are very similar to those from other departments, in later years
- RePEc rankings: Retrieved August 2019
 - 1 (top) - 298 (bottom), with many departments unranked
 - Within a university, econ-adjacent departments get the econ department's ranking

Characteristics of departments

<i>N</i>	66
Ph.D. program	34
External speakers/term	9.89

Location (%)	
U.S. Northeast	24.24
U.S. Midwest	12.12
U.S. South	31.82
U.S. West	21.21
International	10.61

RePEC ranking (%)	
1-10	6.06
11-25	7.58
26-50	7.58
51-100	13.64
101+	28.79
Unranked	36.36

Demographic coding

- Coded gender (male or female)
- Coded underrepresented minority (URM) status as follows:
 - URM-US = Black, Latinx, or Native American and grew up in the US
 - URM-International = Black (grew up anywhere), Latinx (grew up in the US or Latin America), or Native American (grew up in the US)
- Took our best guess based on publicly-available information like name, photo, citizenship (when listed on CV), and location of undergraduate institution
 - We acknowledge that this is imperfect; our coded demographic groups are best interpreted as how the person is perceived by others

Other sample restrictions

- Our sample of talks and speakers includes only:
 - Economists (econ or econ-adjacent PhD, or affiliated with an econ department)
 - PhD-level scholars (must have a PhD at the time of the talk)
 - External speakers (scholars from other institutions)

Characteristics of seminar talks and speakers

URM-US:

	Seminars	Speakers
<i>N</i>	6,997	3,459
Demographic category (%)		
Non-URM female	22.78	22.03
Non-URM male	76.12	76.87
URM female	0.47	0.40
URM male	0.63	0.69
Years since PhD (%)		
<6 years	31.87	30.52
6–11 years	24.58	23.54
12+ years	43.55	45.94
RePEc ranking of speaker affiliation (%)		
1-10	20.77	16.80
11-25	21.09	16.42
26-50	13.31	12.89
51-100	11.88	12.14
101+	12.53	14.92
Unranked	20.42	26.83

Characteristics of seminar talks and speakers

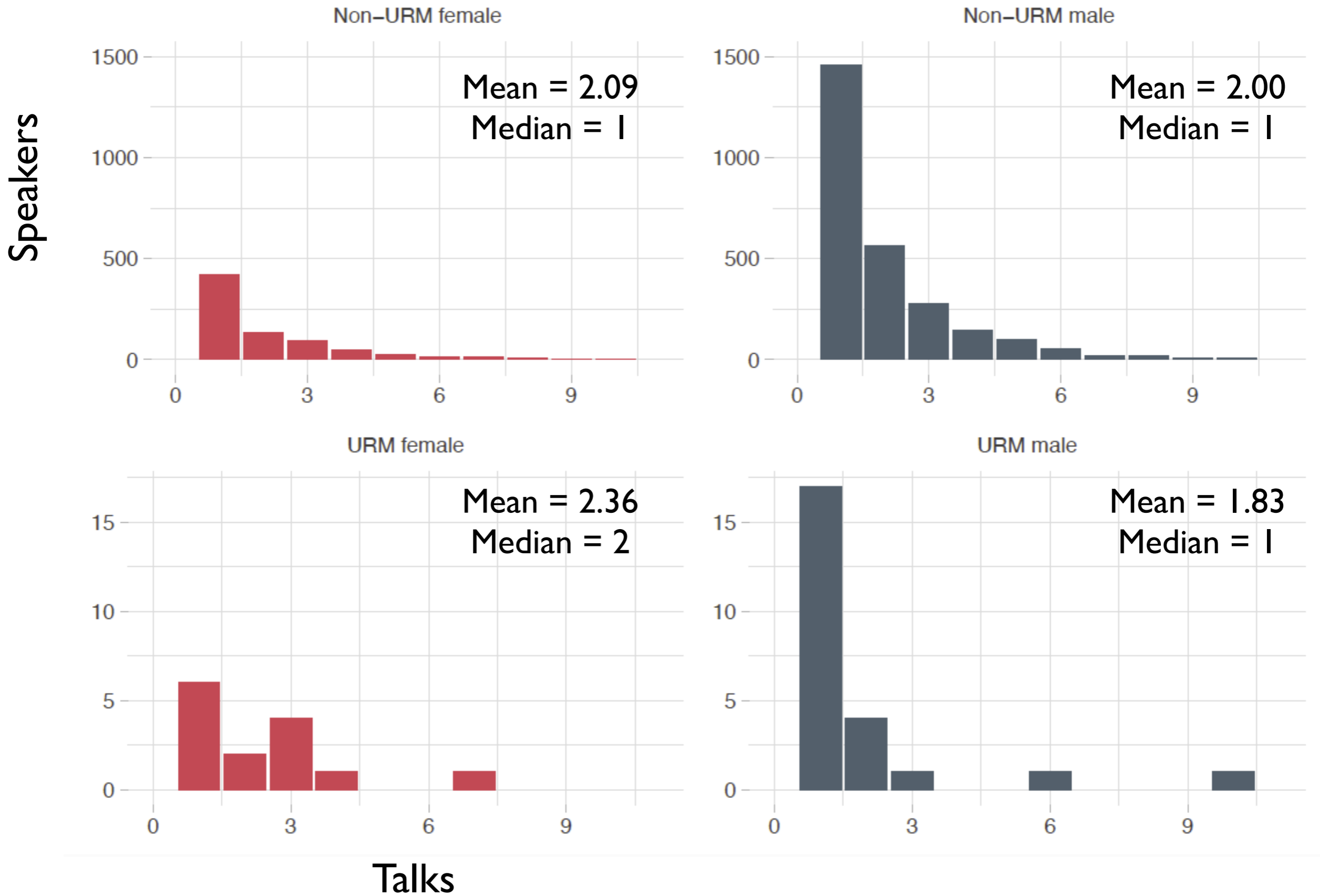
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URM-Intl:

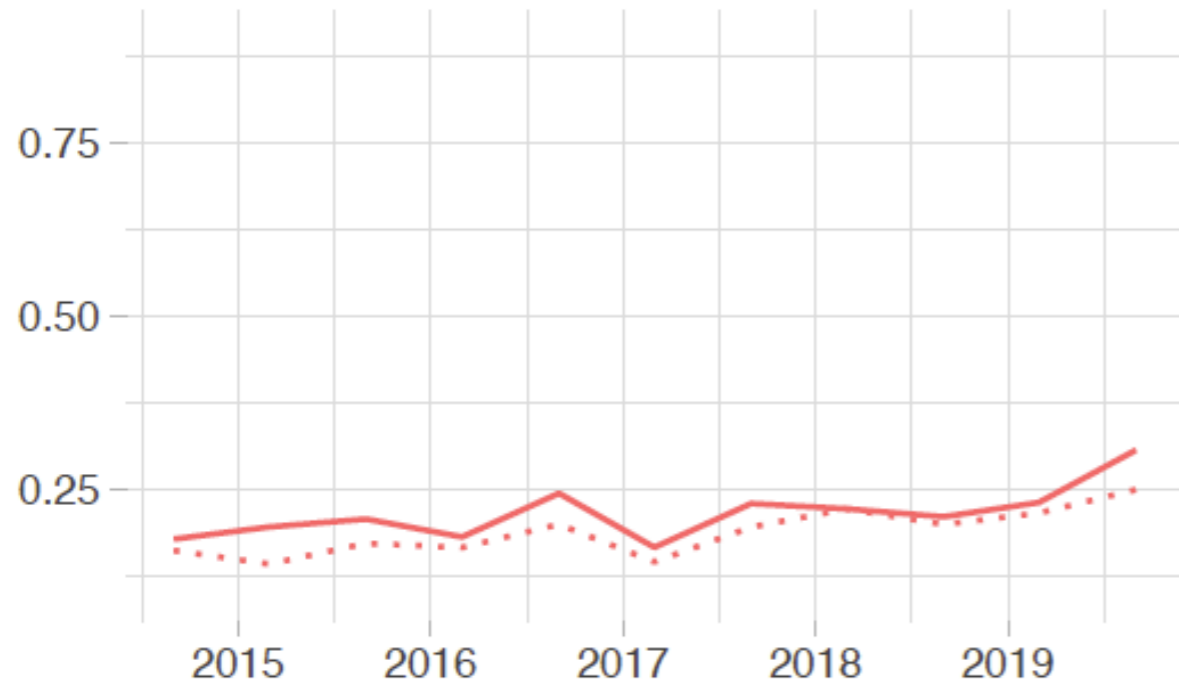
	Seminars	Speakers
Non-URM female	21.55	20.90
Non-URM male	70.99	72.13
URM female	1.70	1.53
URM male	5.76	5.44

Each unique speaker in our sample gives ~ 2 talks (URM-US)

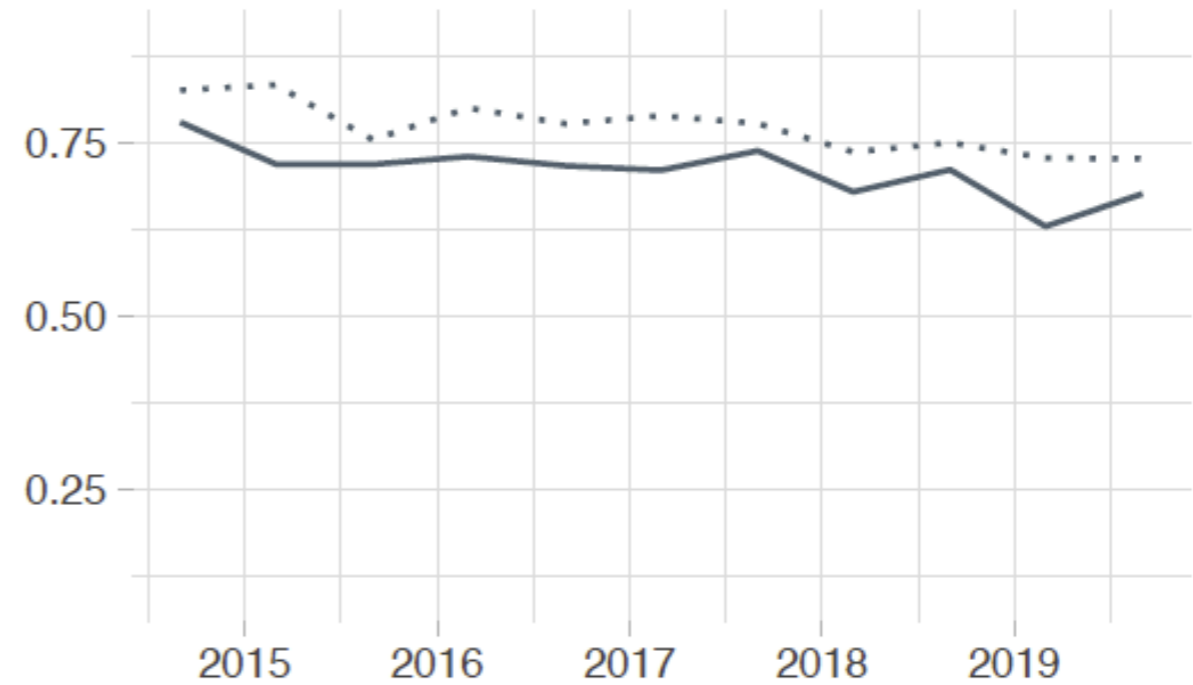


Trends in seminar composition over time (URM-US)

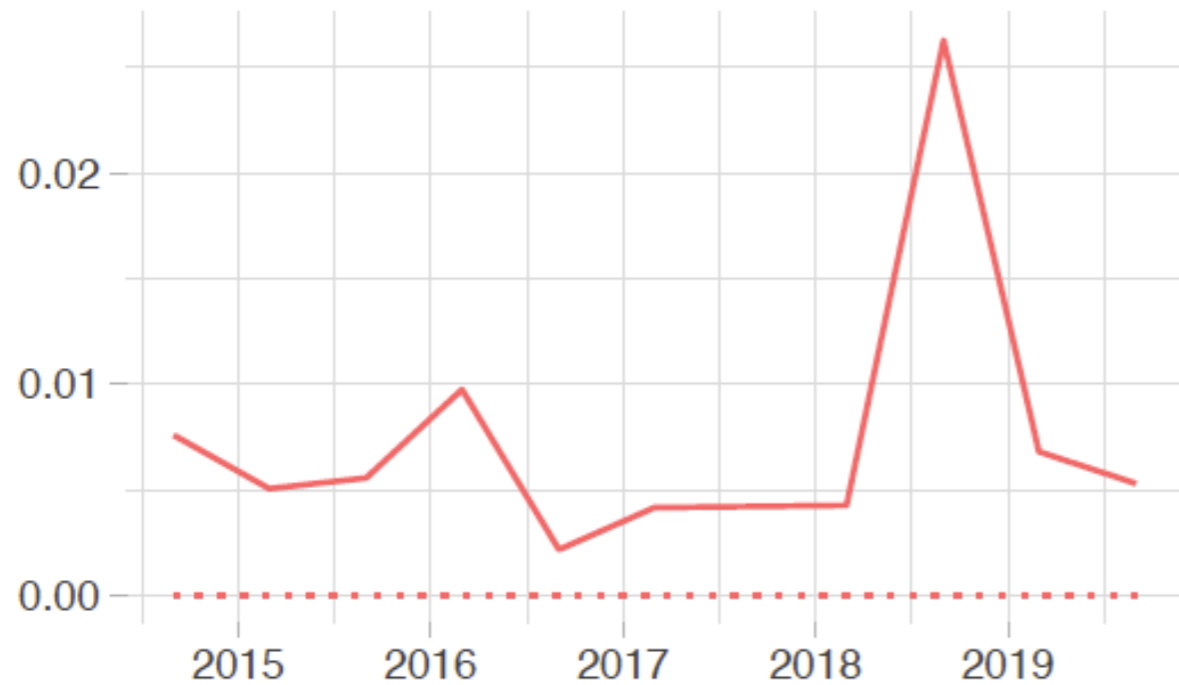
Share of departmental talks by non-URM women



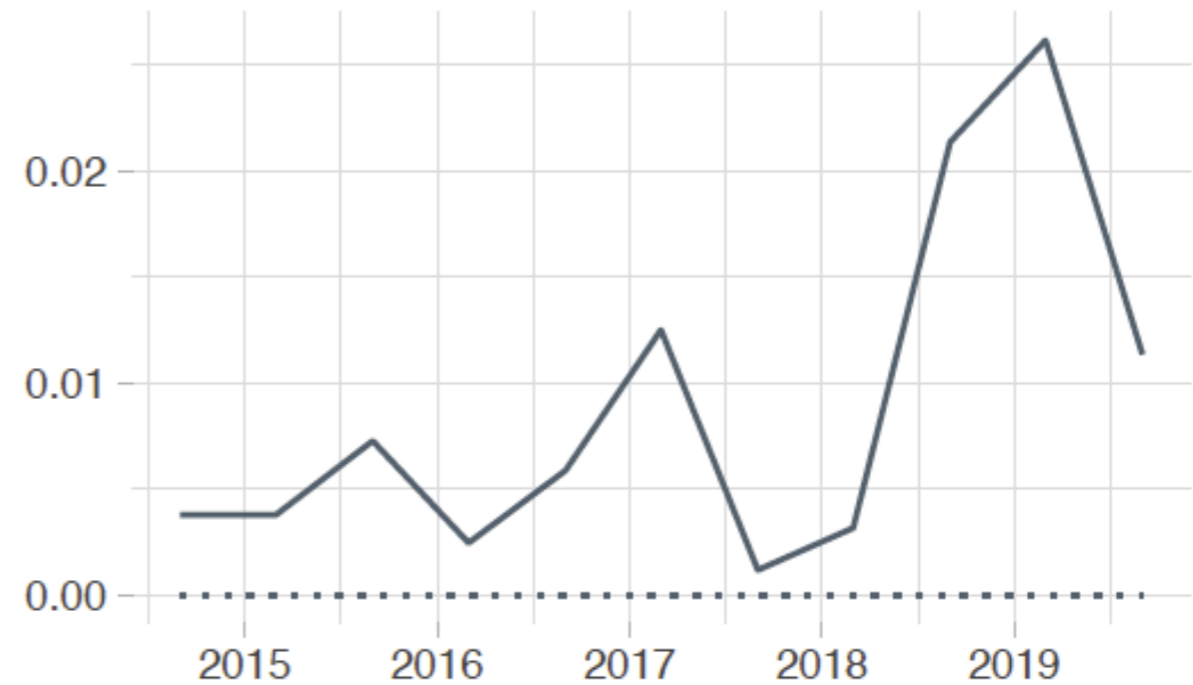
Share of departmental talks by non-URM men



Share of departmental talks by URM women



Share of departmental talks by URM men

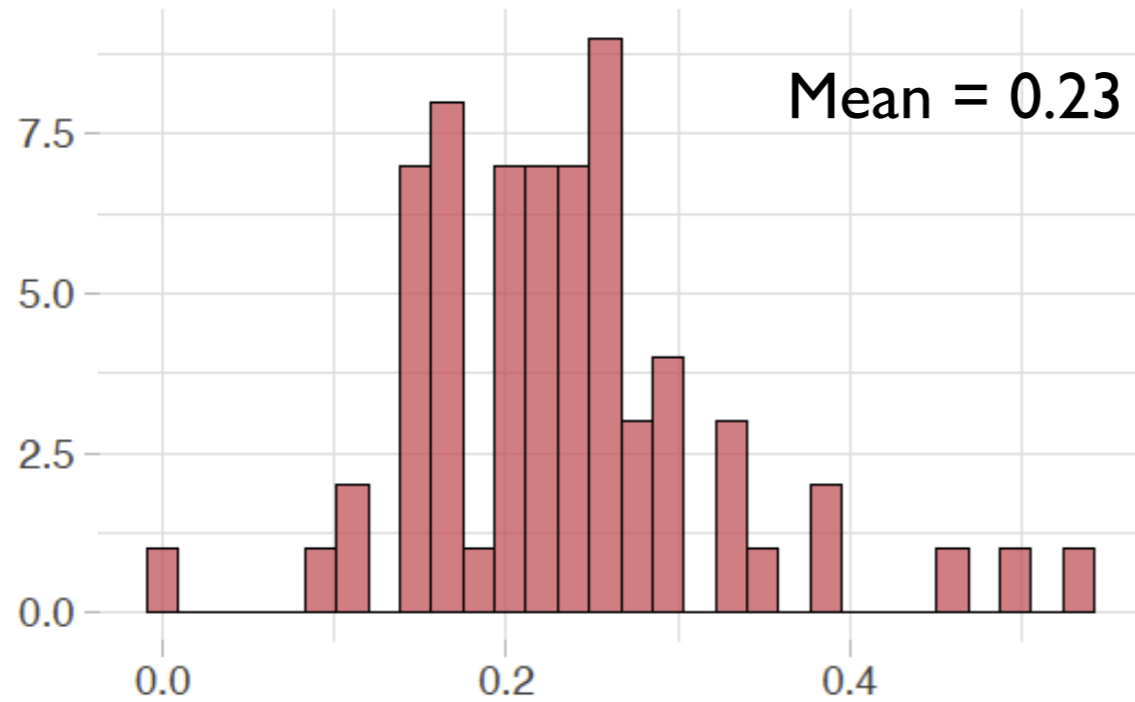


— dept. (mean) · dept. (median)

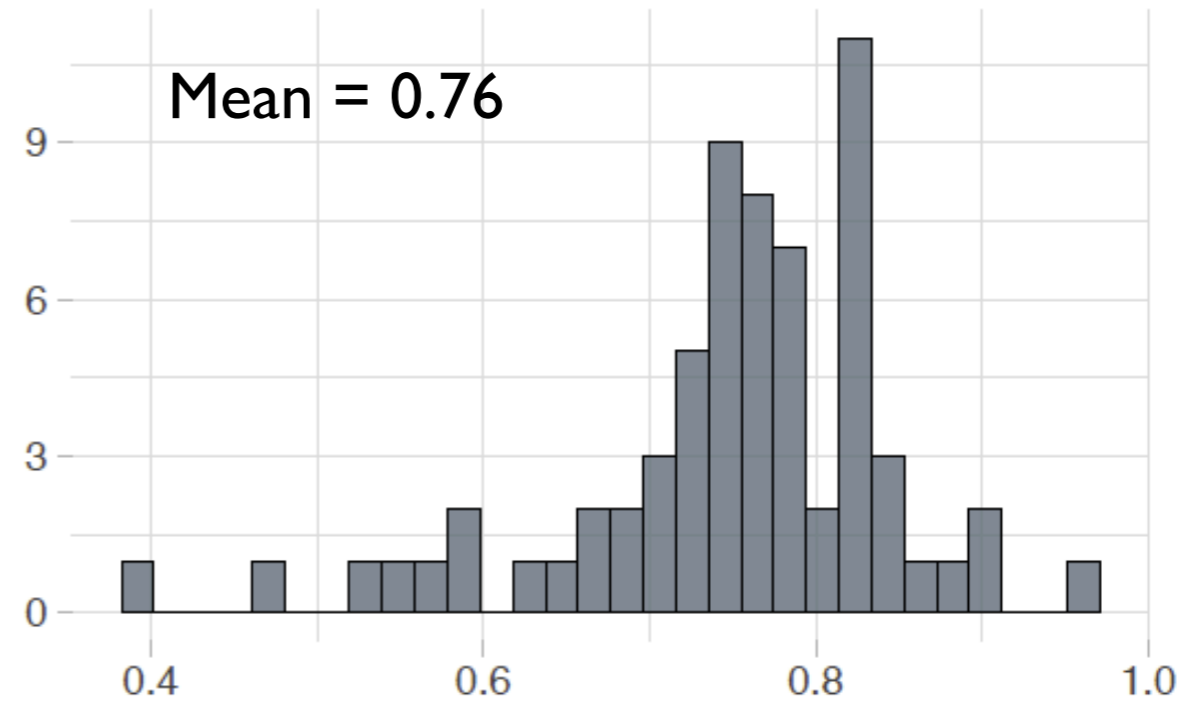
Averages mask substantial heterogeneity across departments

Number of depts

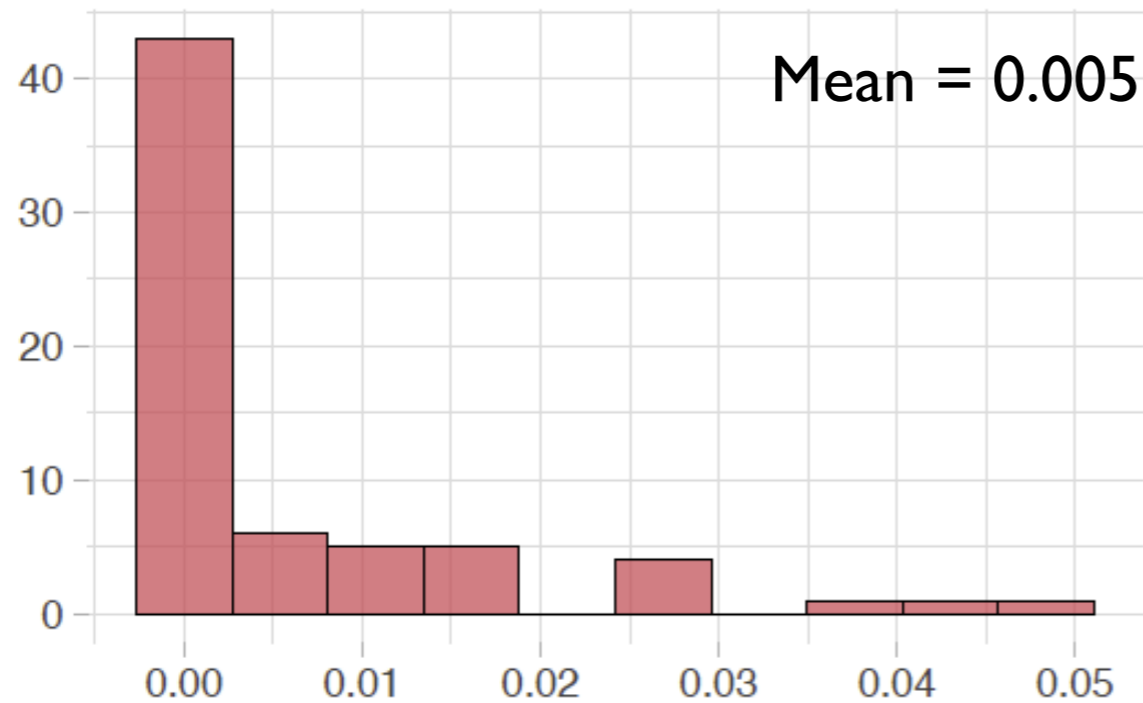
Distribution of the share of non-URM female speakers



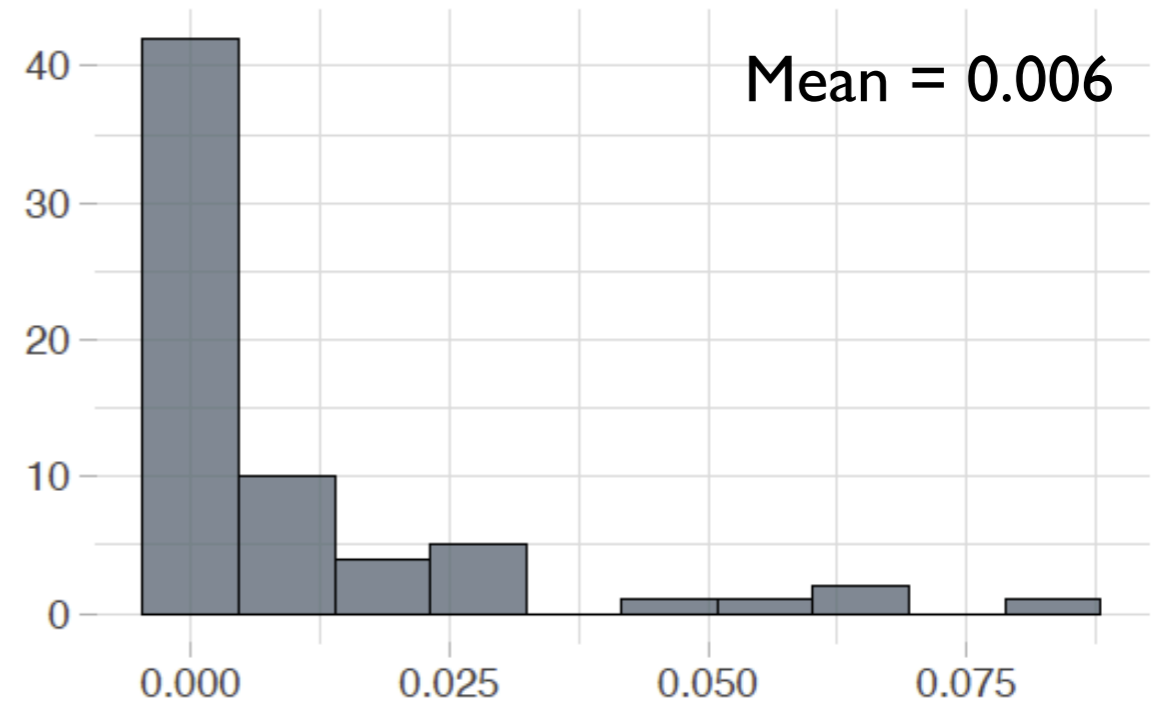
Distribution of the share of non-URM male speakers



Distribution of the share of URM female speakers



Distribution of the share of URM male speakers



Share of speakers

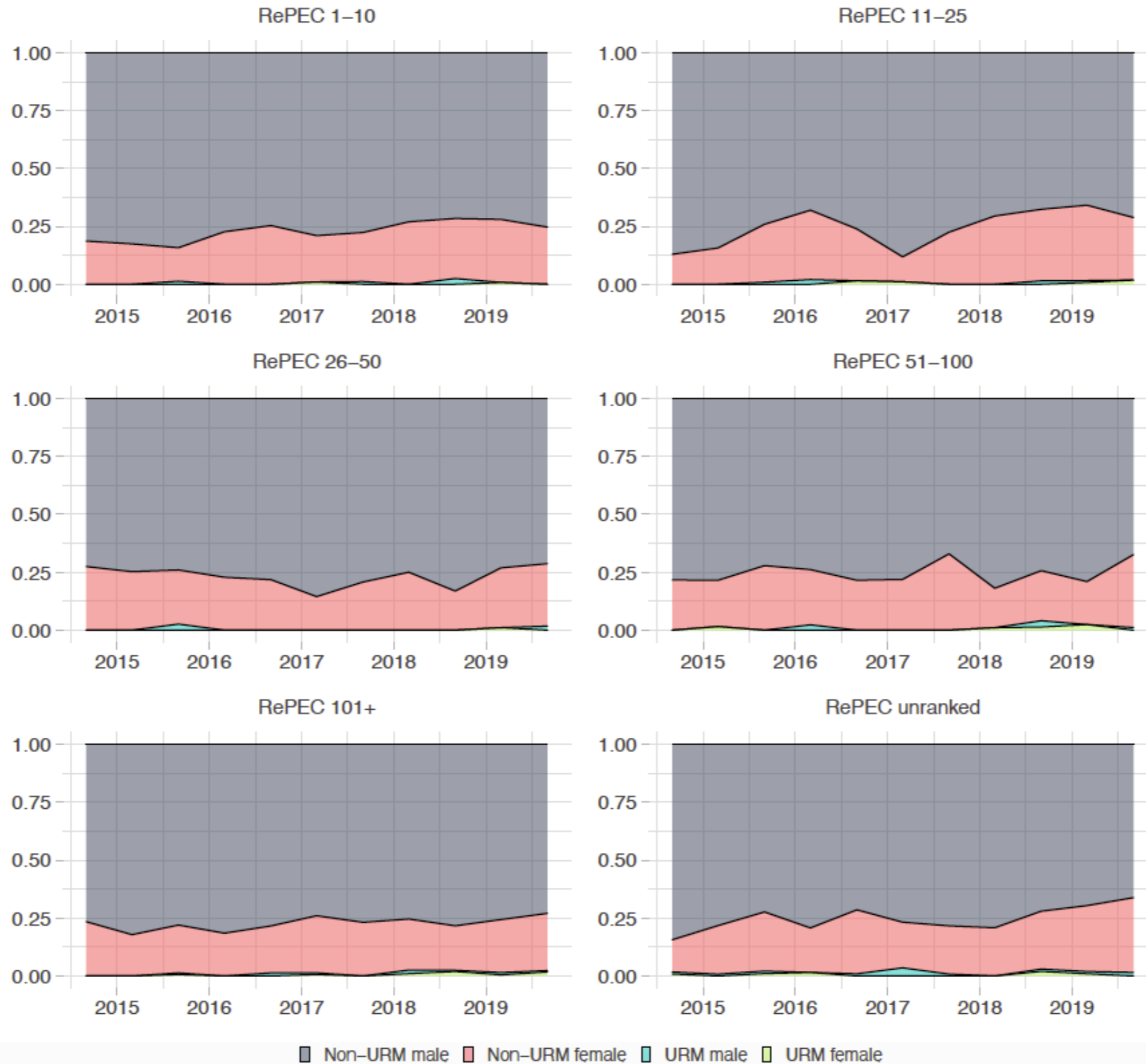
Diversity by seminar series topic (URM-US)

	Non-URM		URM		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Ag./Enviro.	73.53	26.47	0.00	0.00	68
Applied Micro	69.77	28.92	0.38	0.94	1,065
Behavioral	69.30	29.77	0.47	0.47	215
Business	83.47	14.05	0.00	2.48	121
Department	74.64	23.73	1.03	0.61	2,145
Development	61.56	37.99	0.00	0.46	437
Econometrics	83.28	15.33	1.39	0.00	574
Intl./Trade	80.67	19.33	0.00	0.00	150
IO	67.01	32.99	0.00	0.00	97
Macro	83.01	16.73	0.26	0.00	771
Micro Theory	86.09	13.78	0.13	0.00	769
Other	76.11	22.16	1.16	0.58	519

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Share of talks given by each group, by host ranking (URM-US)



Host department ranking vs. speaker affiliation ranking

Where
are the
talks?

	Non-URM women (1594 talks)	Non-URM men (5326 talks)	URM women (33 talks)	URM men (44 talks)
Top-25	31%	30%	21%	23%
Unranked	18%	18%	21%	32%
For talks at top-25:				
Top-25	59%	61%	86%	90%
Unranked	9%	11%	14%	0%

Where
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Where are the talks?

Where are the speakers from?

Discussion: What is the optimal composition of seminar talks?

- Gender composition of profession (CSWEP survey):
 - 21% of tenure-track faculty, 32% of new econ PhDs
- URM composition of profession (CSMGEP survey - closer to URM-Intl definition?):
 - 7% of full-time faculty, 10% of new econ PhDs
- Should we be targeting the current composition of the profession? Or ***what we aspire for that composition to be?***
- We suspect that the current number of women and URM speakers is sub-optimal
- Increasing the number of women and URM scholars we invite to give seminar talks could have big returns, and help shift us to a more diverse equilibrium on other metrics as well
 - **Channels:** increases quality & dissemination of new work, role model effects, broadening networks (which could further enhance innovation/collaboration)
 - **Relatively easy change for departments to make** (relative to, say, hiring more people from these groups)
- Causal effect of changing the composition of speakers is still an open question: stay tuned!

Thank you!

Email: `jdoleac@tamu.edu`

- Thanks to our amazing data collection team!
 - Will McGrew
 - Ashwin Ashok, Abby Byrd, Hudson Blom, Anne Burton, Brandon Casper, Elissa Cohen, Karl Dunkle Werner, Kyle Faldyn, Svetlana Galvez, Jessica Goode, Gavin Greene, Oliver Hannaoui, Madeline Hinojosa, Haris Jaffer, Jack Jenson, Samantha Kim, Dana Kraus, Eric Krebs, Margarita Montalvo, Kate Musen, Brendan Ok, Grace Phillips, Ananya Prakash, Brian Prescott, Arjun Ravi, Rebecca Regan, Cecilia Rodarte, Eric Russell, Lauren Schechter, Rachel Schuh, Sarah Shi, Anna Stansbury, Chelsea Temple, Madeline Tweden, Avie Vaidya, and Natalie Wilson