

Which is the most talkative gender? It all depends

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A Gallup poll recently confirmed that men and women both believe that it is women who are most likely to possess the gift of gab. Some even believe that women are biologically built for conversation. This widespread belief is challenged in research published by SAGE in the November issue of *Personality and Social Psychology Review*.

The article describes a recent set of meta-analyses conducted by Campbell Leaper and Melanie Ayres. These analyses collect all of the available evidence from decades of scientific study and systematically combine the findings into an overall picture of the differences between men and women regarding talkativeness.

The authors found a small but statistically reliable tendency for men to be more talkative than women overall – especially in certain contexts, such as when they were conversing with their wives or with strangers. Women talked more to their children and to their college classmates.

The type of speech was also explored in the analyses, which looked at verbal behavior in a wide variety of contexts. The researchers discovered that, with strangers, women were generally more talkative when it came to using speech to affirm her connection to the listener, while men's speech focused more on an attempt to influence the listener. With close friends and family, however, there was very little difference between genders in the amount of speech.

“These findings compellingly debunk simplistic stereotypes about gender

differences in language use,” conclude Leaper and Ayres. “The notion that the female brain is built to systematically out-talk men is hard to square with the finding that gender differences appear and disappear, depending on the interaction context. The results of the meta-analyses bolster arguments for social rather than strong biological influences of gender differences in language use.”

Source: SAGE Publications

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