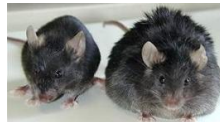
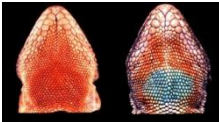




**Groningen, 1-3 November 2013**  
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## Fewer invited talks by women in evolutionary biology

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Lower ‘visibility’ of female scientists, compared to male scientists, is a potential reason for the under-representation of women among senior academic ranks. Visibility in the scientific community stems partly from presenting research as an invited speaker at organised meetings. We analysed the sex ratio of presenters at the European Society for Evolutionary Biology Congress 2011, where all abstract submissions were accepted for presentation.

Women were under-represented among invited speakers at symposia (15% women) compared to all presenters (46%), regular oral presenters (41%) and plenary speakers (25%). This trend was also observed at the ESEB congresses in 2001–2011, where 8–23% of invited speakers were women. Under-representation of women was partly attributable to a larger proportion of women, than men, declining invitations: in 2011, women were twice as likely to decline an invitation to speak as men.

To establish whether gender bias in invited speakers occurred, we compared with baseline populations of high-quality ‘invitable’ speakers: faculty at top ranked institutions or authors of recent papers in high-impact journals. Considering all invited speakers (including declined invitations), 23% were women. This was lower than the baseline sex ratios of early–mid career stage scientists, but was similar to senior scientists and authors published in high-impact journals.

In comparison, at the Individual Differences Conference, 50% plenary, 14% symposia keynote & 36% symposia invited speakers were women. Although there were few women keynote speakers, this did not differ from random expectation, and women were equally likely to decline invites as men (33% v 38%, respectively).

High-quality science by women can therefore be under-represented at international meetings, which will constrain research fields from reaching their full potential. This has widespread implications – reduced visibility can affect the careers of female scientists, reducing the number of female role models for students and contributing to the leaky pipeline.