

People prefer leaders with more masculine voices, even in feminine leadership roles

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Male and female leaders with masculine voices are preferred by both men and women. However, even in leadership roles that are typically held by women, both sexes prefer women leaders with low-pitched voices, according to research published December 12 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Rindy Anderson from Duke University and Casey Klofstad from the University of Miami.

Though earlier studies have shown that people prefer leaders with more masculine voices, this research adds a caveat: What happens when the leadership position is one that is typically held by women, or perceived as more feminine, such as being a school board member or president of a parent-teacher association?

In hypothetical elections for such positions, the researchers asked people to listen to the phrase "I urge you to vote for me this November" spoken by two voices that differed only in their pitch. They found that both men and women preferred female candidates with masculine voices. Men also preferred men with masculine voices but women did not discriminate between the [male voices](#) they heard. According to the authors, their results suggest that the influence of [voice pitch](#) on perceptions of leadership capacity is consistent across different domains of leadership and independent of social context.

Klofstad explains, "We often do not consider how our biology can influence our decision making. The results of this study show that voice pitch - a physiological characteristic - can affect how we select our

leaders."

More information: Anderson RC, Klofstad CA (2012) Preference for Leaders with Masculine Voices Holds in the Case of Feminine Leadership Roles. *PLoS ONE* 7(12): e51216.
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