

On first instinct, women are more altruistic than men

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Women are intuitively more altruistic than men, even women who identify with traditionally masculine traits such as power, dominance, and independence, a new Yale-led meta-analysis of 22 studies shows.

"We live in a society where [women](#) are expected to be altruistic, much

more so than men," said David Rand, associate professor of psychology and economics, and corresponding author of the study published Feb. 25 in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*. "So women suffer more negative consequences for not being altruistic, which leads to them to develop intuitive responses that favor generosity."

Rand and Victoria Brescoll at the Yale School of Management along with co-authors Jim Everett, Valerio Capraro, and Helene Barcelo, analyzed the role gender plays in responses in the Dictator Game, which tests economic self-interest of individuals by asking them how they would split money with a stranger.

In previous research, Rand had found little difference between men and women in how intuition affects cooperation, where people work together to create mutual benefits. Both men and women were less likely to cooperate with others when they had a chance to deliberate and think carefully about their decision.

However, in experiments that measure altruism—or giving without the possibility of receiving anything from the recipient—only women tended to be more generous when nudged to respond quickly, or intuitively; men were more selfish regardless of whether acting intuitively or deliberating.

Interestingly, say the researchers, this held true even for women who viewed themselves as having traditionally [masculine traits](#) such as power, dominance, or independence. When nudged to deliberate, however, the women who viewed themselves as having more masculine traits were, like [men](#), less likely to be altruistic.

Women who viewed themselves as having more traditionally feminine traits—such as compassion and kindness—continued to be altruistic even when given the chance to deliberate on their choice.

Provided by Yale University

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