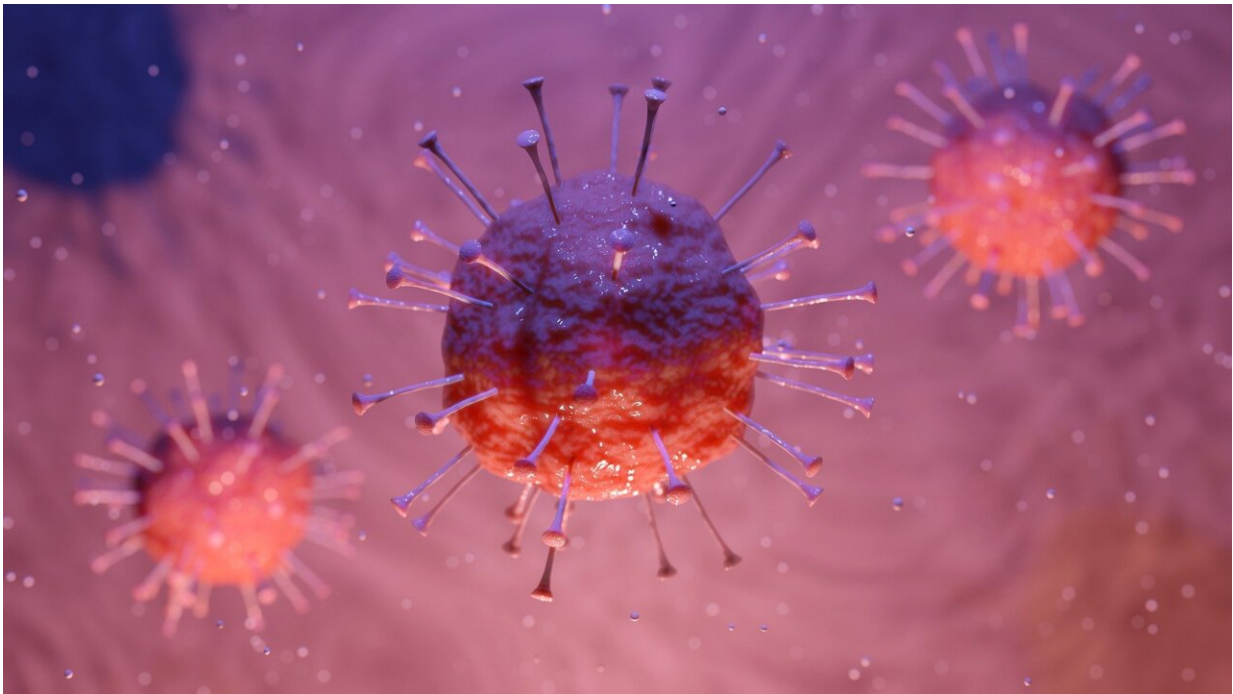


# Countries with female leaders suffer six times fewer COVID-19 deaths

May 29 2020, by Thomas Deane

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The COVID-19 crisis points to female leadership as a marker for healthier and more equal societies that are more receptive to political agendas placing social and environmental wellbeing at the core of national policymaking, according to a new analysis involving Lorenzo Fioramonti from the University of Pretoria and Luca Coscieme from Trinity.

The researchers ran some [statistical analyses](#) on available COVID-19 pandemic data and a series of dimensions of basic human needs, inequality and economic resilience. For the analyses, they used continuous daily data of the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths for a total of 35 countries from December 31st 2019 to May 11th 2020 (data is available from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control).

They today report a summary of some of the stunning correlations, which include:

- Countries with women in position of leadership suffered six times fewer confirmed deaths from COVID-19 than countries with governments led by men
- Female-led governments were more effective and rapid at flattening the epidemic's curve, with peaks in daily deaths roughly six times lower than in countries ruled by men
- The average number of days with confirmed deaths was 34 in countries ruled by women and 48 in countries ruled by men

Luca Coscieme, Marie Skodowska-Curie and Irish Research Council CAROLINE Fellow in Trinity College Dublin's School of Natural Sciences, is one of the authors of the study. He said, "Female-led governments shared similar approaches to the crisis, characterized by early consultation with national health experts and advisors, and containment measures were implemented early. On the other hand, most male-led governments downplayed initial warnings and acted with substantial delays to respond to the crisis."

For example, while on March 14 (with only 102 confirmed cases of [coronavirus](#)) the New Zealand's government led by Jacinda Ardern announced stringent lockdown and quarantine measures, at a similar time the UK [government](#) led by Boris Johnson allowed on March 10 to

13 (with over 700 confirmed cases), the gathering of many thousands of people at large events such as UEFA Champions League soccer fixtures, the Cheltenham Festival, Crufts, and music gigs.

A similarly positive pattern occurred in Denmark, Norway and Finland, all ruled by women, as opposed to Sweden, ruled by a man, where economic considerations trumped health concerns, and ultimately resulted in the highest death toll per capita in Europe.

The authors of the study added:

"Over the past few years, most women-led governments have also placed a stronger emphasis on social and environmental wellbeing, investing more in public health and reducing air pollution—which seems to be closely [associated with COVID-19 deaths](#). Our analysis shows that countries with women-led governments better deliver on Basic Human Needs, one component of the [Social Progress Index](#), which considers aspects of basic medical care, sanitation, shelter and personal safety."

## **Income distribution and economic recovery**

Other key results from the analysis include the finding that countries with [women leaders](#) tend to be more equal, with, on average, a 5-point lower Gini Index of income distribution than countries with male leaders.

With regards to resilience and recovery after the crisis, the results show that women-led countries are likely to suffer the least from the ensuing economic recession: GDP growth forecasts for 2020 indicate that they will experience a decline less than 5.5%, while countries with male leaders will shrink by over 7%.

Some of these women-led governments have recently launched an

international alliance to promote 'social and ecological wellbeing' as the cornerstone of their economic policies.

The authors said:

"There is evidence for women to be more likely to take up positions of leadership in societies that value equity, solidarity and collaboration, which are usually associated with healthier communities. As the risk of pandemic and vector-borne diseases increases, we might want to reconsider what is good policymaking, and what policies make our economies and societies resilient to shocks."

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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