

Gender differences in fear and risk perception during COVID-19

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Research from Virginia Tech suggests that men and women worry about the impact of COVID-19 in far different ways. For example, men are more likely to be concerned about financial consequences from

COVID-19 while women report greater fear and more negative expectations about health-related outcomes.

The researchers, Sheryl Ball and Alec Smith, conducted an [online survey](#) in April 2020 to measure emotions, behaviors and expectations connected to gender and the pandemic. The study was published in *Frontiers in Psychology* earlier this month.

"We found that [women](#) reported a higher fear of the health risks of COVID-19 than men. Men expressed more fear about the [economic implications](#) of the pandemic than women," said Smith.

In the initial days of the pandemic, Ball and Smith were interested in how the COVID-19 pandemic would change people's economic preferences—things like how willing someone is to take a financial risk or to trust someone. Previous research shows that women are often less willing to take risks than men.

"The [average person](#) is probably less afraid of COVID-19 now than in April 2020," said Ball. "The reason we believe this is that we originally collected data in the beginning, middle and end of April 2020, and we found that fear decreased substantially even during that month. We expect that it has continued to decrease since then."

"The big takeaway from our research is that people have economic as well as health care concerns about the pandemic," said Smith. "We know that [preventative measures](#) like mask wearing are effective. We think that messages that encourage people to take these preventative measures might want to emphasize not only the health consequences and benefits, but also the economic benefits."

More information: Abdelaziz Alsharawy et al, Gender Differences in Fear and Risk Perception During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Frontiers in*

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