

A Conscientious Response: The Effect of Gender Policies on COVID-19 Response

by Sarah Gaines, Anna Lauer, Kailen Roop, Maria Ruedisueli

In this presentation we will explore the relationship between gender-sensitive policies and satisfactory COVID-19 response. Within the pandemic, through each country designing and implementing individual policies to combat the pandemic, we have seen inadequate governmental responses to the risks and challenges that women and girls face during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically violence against women and girls, unpaid care work, and economic insecurity. Women are disproportionately affected by global health crises because they represent the majority of health care workers, workers in the informal economy, and primary care-takers that correlates to an increased infectivity rate with a lack of governmental social protections. The goals of our research are to deepen our understanding of how government policies affect how countries respond to the 2019 pandemic, and if gendered policies produce a more positive response. Gender-sensitive policies include protection in labor markets, protection for violence against women and girls, and gender-specific fiscal and economic policies. To support our hypothesis we will be using Varieties of Democracy: Women's Rights and Political Empowerment Dataset in correlation with the World Health Organization's Coronavirus Disease Dashboard. With the pandemic still affecting the majority of peoples' actions, the research that is accessible is limited. We will use data sets from past pandemics such as Ebola, SARS and Zika to supplement our findings with comparable gendered responses in other health emergencies. Our expected findings are that the more gendered policies a country has in place, the better COVID-19 response that country will have.