



# Gender, Electoral Incentives, and Crisis Response: Evidence from Brazilian Mayors

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# The Paper

- ▶ Did female and male Brazilian mayors pursue different COVID policies?
- ▶ Did aspirations to be re-elected affect their choices differently?
- ▶ RDD: Compare municipalities with close male/female mayor wins
- ▶ Compare choices of mayors who were not facing term limits

## **Hesitant Integrity vs Determined Nefariousness:**

- ▶ Female mayors delayed lockdown but re-opened later
- ▶ Results driven by electorally motivated mayors

# 1. Gender & Electoral Incentives

- ▶ Response differences are based on mayors' beliefs about voters:
  - ▶ Low number of COVID deaths -> vote for incumbent female mayor
  - ▶ Low economic/social disruptions -> vote for incumbent male mayor
- ▶ How to separate leadership differences from (beliefs over) voter preferences?
  - ▶ Do findings point to gender specific crisis management?
  - ▶ Or do they just reflect different incentives?
- ▶ **Explore which strategy was ex post more successful for female, male mayors**

## 2. Building a Testable Model

- ▶ Generic known unknown about COVID policy response  
**Saving lives now vs. damaging/losing them long-term**
- ▶ When designing model elements, need to think carefully about
  - ▶ distribution of policy returns over time
  - ▶ voters' time horizons and time preferences
  - ▶ gender differences in time preferences
- ▶ **Study post-election evolution of deaths, costs and mayor approval rates**

# 3. Measuring Response and Effect

- ▶ COVID response measured using qualitative indicators (laws, decrees)
- ▶ Were there policy trade-offs within some municipalities?
  - ▶ Do dimensionality reduction (factor analysis)
  - ▶ Use proxy based on outcomes (electricity use, employment, output)
- ▶ Explain earlier in text that # of recorded COVID deaths is exogenous
  - ▶ Introduction: key institutional feature of Brazil is autonomy of mayors
  - ▶ Lots of evidence on exogeneity in appendix but little in text

# Congrats!

- ▶ Hot research topic and interesting question
- ▶ Clever use of RDD and institutional features
- ▶ Very careful and thorough econometric analysis
- ▶ Clear description of the findings
- ▶ Great empirical basis to take to a model