Preference for Leaders with Masculine voices holds in the case of feminine leadership roles

* Previous research focused on perceptions of attractiveness, strength and social dominance
* Here we examine the influence of pitch on selection of leaders, and whether this influence varies by leadership role
* Male and female leaders with lower-pitched (ie masculine) voices are generally preferred by both men and women
* We asked whether this preference shifts to favour higher-pitch (ie feminine) voices within the specific context of leadership positions that are typically held by women (id feminine leadership roles)
* In hypothetical elections for two such positions, men and women listened to pairs of male and female voices that differed only in pitch, and were asked which of each pair they would vote for. As in previous studies, men and women preferred female candidates with masculine voices. Likewise, men preferred men with masculine voices. Women, however, did not discriminate between male voices. Overall, contrary to research showing that perceptions of voice pitch can be influenced by social context, these results suggest that the influence of voice pitch of perceptions of leadership capacity is largely consistent across different domains of leadership.
* Men with lower-pitched (id masculine) voices are perceived as more attractive (3), physically stronger (4), and socially dominant (5). Women with masculine voices are also perceived to be socially dominant (6). In contrast, however, women with higher-pitched voices are perceived as more attractive (eg Jones et al, 2008)
* Both men and women prefer male leaders with lower-pitched voices, and associated lower-pitch with traits such as integrity, strength and competence (7, 8). Men and women also prefer female leaders with lower-pitched voices, and similarly associate them with traits such as competence and trustworthiness (7).
* Leadership is seen as a masculine role. Men are overrepresented in leadership roles and are perceived to be more assertive, controlling, and confident than women (10). This perception can be moderated if the leadership role in question is perceived to be feminine; that is, a position typically occupied by women, or that is congruent with the stereotype of women caretakers of families and children (10)
* While feminine qualities are generally perceived to be desirable in individuals holding feminine leadership roles (10), we find that this is not the case for voice pitch
* Our research suggests that that the influence of voice pitch on perceptions of leadership capacity can be consistent across different types of leadership roles