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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

Edited by Montserrat Gas-Aixendri, Adelaide Madera

# Gender, Law, and Religion During the COVID-19 Health Crisis

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## Gender, Law, and Religion During the COVID-19 Health Crisis

Edited by  
Montserrat Gas-Aixendri, Adelaide Madera

### About the editors

**Montserrat Gas-Aixendri** is Full Professor of Law at Universitat Internacional de Catalunya. She holds a European JD in Law (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and a JD in Canon Law (Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome). She serves as a Board Member of the Consociatio Internationalis Studio Iuris Canonici Promovendo (2022). Member of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief (2019–2025). She has held research fellowships at Georgetown University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has been a visiting scholar at institutions across Europe and Latin America. Author or editor of seven books and over eighty academic works, her research focuses on religious freedom, gender equality, religious autonomy, and canon and family law. Recent publications address gender identity, religious discourse, and Church-State legal intersections.

**Adelaide Madera** received her PhD in Ecclesiastical Law and Canon Law in 2000. She was an international scholar at the Catholic University of Leuven from November 1999 to May 2000. She is a Full Professor at the Department of Law of the University of Messina, Italy, where she currently teaches Canon Law, Law and Religion, and Religious Factor and Antidiscrimination Law. She is a member of the Academic Board of the PhD School in Legal Studies at the University of Messina and serves on the Editorial Committee of the Journal "Quaderni di Diritto e Politica Ecclesiastica", Issue no. 3.

### Summary

Looking at COVID-19 infection through a gendered lens reveals its deep impact on individuals in vulnerable positions, especially women. It raised new concerns about gender equity and inclusion, particularly when gender intersects with other identity markers such as religious affiliation. This intersection creates a "double vulnerability," heightening the risk of discrimination, violence, hate speech, and harassment against women.

In various legal contexts, women bear multiple roles and responsibilities. The interaction between gender, law, religion, and the pandemic has often resulted in disempowerment in shaping female identity. This is evident both in Western countries—where migrant women struggle for full integration—and in their countries of origin, where they often face the consequences of normative pluralism and insufficient state legal responses. The pandemic has generated not only a health crisis but also exacerbated social and economic issues, including increased gender-based violence in family settings and growing inequalities in access to fundamental rights such as healthcare, education, employment, and justice. In this complex framework, religious leaders face new challenges and must provide effective responses. Female leadership within religious contexts can play a crucial role in advocating for new paradigms that address evolving social, cultural, and legal needs. Religious actors are thus called upon to offer both guidance and support to vulnerable and marginalized members of their communities and to collaborate with governments in shaping a future where religious freedom, gender equality, gender justice, and freedom from discrimination are upheld.

This volume aims to investigate the pandemic's impact on women within faith communities, examine emerging balances between female religious/cultural claims and public welfare imperatives, and develop gendered, intersectional perspectives that promote women's full integration, equality, and participation in civil society.

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