

# Trust breeds resilience

Societies that trust one another recover faster from a Covid wave.

This is the striking conclusion reached by Professor Marten Scheffer in a study published in the *Scientific Reports of Nature*. Rather than trust in the government and its institutions, people's trust in one another turned out to be related to the speed at which infections and hospital admissions fall during a Covid wave.

**Collective action is easier in countries where people trust one another**

Scheffer and his co-authors studied the first coronavirus waves in more than 150 countries. Most followed an exponential pattern, meaning that the rate at which the

wave declined could be summarized in a single number, the exponent. There were big differences between countries in the rate of decrease (their resilience).

## **Sacrificing freedom**

Trust in one another was the deciding factor. The more people agreed with the statement 'most people can be trusted', the more resilient the recovery from the Covid wave.

Scheffer refers to collective action to explain the resilience. 'Collective action – such as vaccination campaigns – is easier in countries where people trust one another. In such societies, people are willing to sacrifice a little of their own freedom because they trust other people to do the same.'

The Covid vaccinations are an example of collective action, says Scheffer. 'Trust in one another makes societies more resilient when faced with unexpected, far-reaching disruptions.' <sup>RK</sup>