

The transgender 'bathroom bill': Who wants it—men or women?

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Most women are not bothered much about the fact that they might at times share public bathrooms designated for females with transgender women who were registered as men at birth. Men on the other hand take umbrage, and worry about the safety and privacy of the women in their lives. Such male transphobia has its roots in how men see themselves as the so-called protectors of women, says Rebecca Stones of Nankai University in China and Monash University in Australia, in an article in Springer's journal *Gender Issues*.

Transgenderism is a controversial topic about which opinions vary greatly. It also has practical implications. In the USA, for example, so-called "bathroom bills" are being considered. These bills will have to decide whether transgender people are allowed to use facilities that are in line with their current [gender identity](#), or should rather go to ones set aside for the sex they were registered as at birth. Some people feel that allowing the former will cross a societal boundary, and legislators cite concerns about the safety and privacy of the women and children with whom transgender females would be sharing a bathroom.

Stones analyzed 1,035 comments posted by readers of 190 related online [news articles](#) to gauge public opinion about the presence of transgender females in women's only bathrooms. Men were found to be around 1.55 times more likely to express safety and privacy concerns than the very women who would be sharing facilities with transgender females. Women were much less likely to comment on news articles related to the topic, and when they did they used muted, less intense phrases. Women

were much more concerned about the possible presence of so-called 'perverts' who pose as transgender females.

Stones says that male transphobia is linked to the male gender role of protector. It is reflected in comments such as, "I don't want some guy-turned-girl in a restroom while my wife is in there" and, "I have a teenage daughter and I demand that her privacy be protected from a gender-confused pervert that may walk in on her while she's in the restroom!" She theorizes that the concerns expressed by men in their online comments are also rooted in how they view transgender females. They see them not as [women](#), but still as men who are just lying or are merely mistaken about their gender identity.

"Consequently they view themselves as protecting females from these males intruding into private, female-only spaces," explains Stones. "This may be further exacerbated by a fear of deception and a belief that [transgender people](#) are mentally ill or 'sick'."

More information: Rebecca J. Stones, Which Gender is More Concerned About Transgender Women in Female Bathrooms?, *Gender Issues* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s12147-016-9181-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-016-9181-6)

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