

## Trans People are Dangerous

Anti-trans rhetoric often portrays transgender people as violent, predatory, or hypersexual.<sup>1 2</sup> In reality, transgender people are far more likely to experience harassment and violence than to inflict harm on others.<sup>3 4 5</sup> Myths about transgender people often fall into two main categories: claims that transgender people are inherently violent and/or that they are sexual predators. Neither of these claims is supported by evidence.<sup>6 7</sup> Instead, such false narratives distort public perception and fuel policies that put transgender communities in danger.<sup>8 9 10 11 12</sup>

These false narratives are not just misunderstandings; they are part of what scholars call a *moral panic*. This is when fear is exaggerated and directed at a marginalized group, painting them as a threat to society.<sup>13</sup> Moral panics recycle old stigmas and anxieties (usually about race, gender, or sexuality) to justify discrimination and criminalization. Scholars note that moral panics often emerge as a response to social change; a way for communities to make sense of changing norms or perceived threats to traditional values.<sup>14 15 16</sup> Throughout U.S. history, “protect the children” rhetoric has been used to vilify different groups: casting Black men as threats to white women, branding gay men as predators, and now portraying transgender people as dangerous in schools and public bathrooms.<sup>17 18</sup> These myths follow the same pattern, weaponizing fear to roll back civil rights under the guise of safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<sup>2</sup> GLAAD

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics

<sup>4</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>5</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2023

<sup>6</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>7</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2023

<sup>8</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>10</sup> James, Sandy E.

<sup>11</sup> King, W. M.

<sup>12</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2023

<sup>13</sup> King, W. M.

<sup>14</sup> Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<sup>15</sup> GLAAD

<sup>16</sup> King, W. M.

<sup>17</sup> Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<sup>18</sup> GLAAD

## Are transgender people a threat to public safety?

No. There is no evidence that transgender people are more likely to engage in violent or criminal behavior than cisgender people.<sup>19 20 21 22 23</sup> Research conducted on criminology and public safety consistently shows that gender identity does not predict criminal behavior. Studies find no evidence that transgender people commit crimes at higher rates than cisgender people; instead, they are more likely to experience discrimination and over-policing, facing disproportionate surveillance and punishment by law enforcement even when no offense has been committed.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>25 26 27</sup>

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, transgender people were about 2.5 times more likely to be victimized by violent crimes than cisgender people between 2017 and 2020. Studies also document that transgender individuals experience disproportionately high rates of harassment, intimate partner violence, and hate crimes compared to cisgender people.<sup>28 29</sup> These patterns show that transgender communities are more vulnerable to violence, not more likely to commit it.

These findings extend to public spaces, especially bathrooms. Studies consistently find that gender-inclusive restrooms and nondiscrimination policies do not compromise safety.<sup>30 31</sup> In fact, places that have passed inclusive bathroom laws remain just as safe as they were before and had no rise in crime or misconduct.<sup>32 33</sup> Conversely, evidence shows that transgender people are at greater risk in bathrooms and other public facilities.<sup>34 35</sup> Research from medical, legal, and policy organizations consistently finds that gender-inclusive restrooms and

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<sup>19</sup> Breiding, M. J.

<sup>20</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics

<sup>21</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>22</sup> James, Sandy E.

<sup>23</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2023

<sup>24</sup> Breiding, M. J.

<sup>25</sup> James, Sandy E.

<sup>26</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2023

<sup>27</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>28</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>29</sup> James, Sandy E.

<sup>30</sup> American Medical Association

<sup>31</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>32</sup> American Medical Association

<sup>33</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>34</sup> James, Sandy E.

<sup>35</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality

nondiscrimination policies do not compromise safety.<sup>36 37 38</sup> Many transgender people avoid public bathrooms altogether, leading to health problems, missed school, and limited participation in daily life.<sup>39 40 41</sup>

As Woodhull emphasized in [testimony](#) opposing Montana's HB 121, bathroom bans do not make anyone safer; they increase harassment of everyone, force people into unsafe conditions, and violate basic rights to dignity and privacy. These laws and stereotypes isolate transgender people from public life, increase vulnerability to violence, and shift attention away from the real issue: transgender people's basic right to safety, dignity, and access to public spaces.

## Are transgender people hypersexual or predatory?

No. Research does not suggest that transgender people are hypersexual or more likely to be sexually aggressive.<sup>42 43</sup>

Research shows that transgender folks are not more likely than cisgender people to sexually hurt or exploit others. In fact, research shows that transgender people are often the ones getting sexually assaulted. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that nearly half (47%) of respondents had been sexually assaulted at some point. To put that in perspective, about 19.3% of cisgender women and 1.7% of cisgender men experience sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>44</sup> Despite being feared as predators, transgender people are far more likely to be victims of abuse and exploitation.

The "predatory" framing does more than misrepresent reality: it legitimizes harmful policies and fuels harassment.<sup>45</sup> Incorrect framings of transgender individuals as fundamentally dangerous or abnormal are used to justify increased surveillance of transgender people, keeping them out of certain public areas, and limiting their access to healthcare. For example, Texas Senator Ted Cruz warned that allowing transgender people to use bathrooms matching their gender identity would be "opening the door for predators," claiming that such laws would let "any man enter a women's restroom, a little girl's restroom and stay there."<sup>46</sup> This rhetoric directly ties trans inclusion to threats against

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<sup>36</sup> American Medical Association

<sup>37</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality

<sup>38</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>39</sup> American Medical Association

<sup>40</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality

<sup>41</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>42</sup> Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<sup>43</sup> Flores, Andrew R.

<sup>44</sup> Breiding, M. J.

<sup>45</sup> King, W. M.

<sup>46</sup> ABC News

women and children, echoing the same moral panic used against earlier marginalized groups.

Rather than protecting communities, this myth perpetuates stigma and violence against transgender people. The stereotype that transgender people are hypersexual or predatory plays on long-standing fears about women's safety.<sup>47</sup> <sup>48</sup> Throughout history, claims that marginalized groups were sexually dangerous have been used to justify exclusion and violence — first against Black men, then gay men, and now transgender people. Not only does this lead policymakers to overlook the needs of transgender people, but it also overlooks real threats to women, children, and other marginalized people.

## Policy Suggestion:

- **Reject bathroom bans.**

Restricting restroom access harms public health, increases harassment, and violates basic rights to dignity and privacy.<sup>49</sup> <sup>50</sup> Policies that ensure gender-inclusive restrooms and nondiscrimination protections reduce stigma, improve safety, and affirm the humanity of all people.<sup>51</sup>

- **Affirm access to safe public spaces.**

Policies that provide gender-inclusive restrooms and nondiscrimination protections, such as ensuring access to single-stall facilities in schools, workplaces, and transportation hubs, reduce harassment and support the health and well-being of all individuals.

- **Protect dignity, privacy, and rights.**

Bathroom bans undermine the human rights to privacy and personal dignity. By singling out transgender people for surveillance and exclusion, they erode trust in public institutions and create unsafe conditions for everyone. Protecting access to public facilities is not only a matter of health, but also a matter of fundamental human rights.<sup>52</sup>

- **Promote education and awareness.**

Misinformation about transgender people fuels stigma and violence. Public education campaigns, inclusive school curricula, and professional training can help

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<sup>47</sup> Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<sup>48</sup> GLAAD

<sup>49</sup> American Medical Association

<sup>50</sup> Woodhull Freedom Foundation

<sup>51</sup> The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law 2025

<sup>52</sup> United Nations

counter harmful myths.<sup>53</sup> These interventions reduce prejudice, build safer communities, and affirm the dignity of transgender people. In addition, funding more research on gender diversity and inclusion can help policymakers make evidence-based decisions rather than relying on fear or misinformation.

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