

All-Gender Bathrooms Resource Guide

Background

With policies such as North Carolina's HB2 frequently in the news – which would make it illegal for many transgender people to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity – the debate over all-gender restrooms has become popularized over the past couple of years (HB2). In Arizona, a similar bill (SB 1045) was proposed back in 2013, and currently the state has joined Texas in challenging President Obama's directive that schools must allow transgender students to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identity (Gardiner 2013; Howard Fischer Capitol Media Services 2016). The issues itself, however, has existed for countless years prior – as gender-specific public restrooms have always posed a threat to many transgender individuals' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

FAQs

1) At UA, there is a policy that affirms an individual's right to use the restroom of their choice based on their gender identity. Why is an all-gender restroom still needed when this policy is in place?

There are a couple of reasons why all-gender restroom options are important. Firstly, gender-specific restrooms only are representative of the two binary genders. This is not representative of non-binary gender identities, which cannot be exclusively categorized as female or male. Additionally, many transgender individuals experience discomfort or even distress when using gender-specific restrooms.

Moreover, the recommendation is in line with our campus Statement on Restroom Access through the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE), which states:

The University of Arizona strives to create and sustain a campus environment that supports and values all members of our community, including visitors. One aspect of creating a comfortable environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient restroom facilities. Many people may experience difficulty and inconvenience when required to use gender-specific restrooms. Parents with children of a different gender are not able to accompany them into a gender-specific restroom and the same holds true for others with attendants/caregivers of a different gender. Additionally, transgender individuals may be subject to harassment or violence when using male- or female-specific restrooms. Consequently, this statement has been developed to declare the University's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive campus environment.

In keeping with the University's policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of gender identity, the University allows individuals to use the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity...

2) Who is allowed to use all gender restrooms?

Anyone – transgender or cisgender, gender non-conforming or gender conforming – is welcome to use an all-gender restroom. People who feel uncomfortable using all-gender restrooms or who would prefer using a gender-specific restroom (i.e. women's room or men's room) can still use these facilities instead. In addition to transgender and gender non-conforming communities, all-gender restrooms can benefit families, allowing parents with children of different genders to still accompany their child to the restroom.

3) Why use the language of “all gender” instead of “gender neutral”?

Many institutions still use the language “gender neutral” to describe their gender inclusive facilities. While this language is not “wrong” per se, there has recently been a shift to the phrasing “all-gender.” “Gender neutral” can imply an absence of expressed gender. The language of “all-gender” is preferred because it is explicitly inclusive of everyone. A 2016 focus group with transgender students at UA has shown that students prefer the language of “all-gender” to “gender neutral” or “restroom” (without any qualifiers).

4) Why use a toilet as a symbol as opposed to the half female/half male symbol?

When all-gender restrooms were first being introduced, a common symbol on signage was a hybrid image that was half-female/half-male. Some all-gender restrooms still employ this signage; however many transgender individuals find the image offensive as it harkens back to pejoratives such as “she-male.” Additionally, the image reinforces a binary understanding of gender. For these reasons, recommended signage is that of a toilet symbol for all-gender restrooms. A 2016 focus group with transgender students at UA has shown that students unanimously prefer the toilet symbol (in addition to an active wheelchair symbol for accessible restrooms).

5) Are all gender restrooms unsafe?

According to the Transgender Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign, and the American Civil Liberties, there is no statistical evidence that all-gender restrooms are any less safe than gender-specific restrooms (Bianco 2015). In fact, some assert that all-gender restrooms might in fact be safer. Even though bathroom attacks are infrequent, the signage on gender-specific restrooms only provides an illusion of safety and does not prevent perpetrators from entering these spaces (Chan 2011). Additionally, gender-specific bathrooms have been shown to pose a risk to transgender individuals. The U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS), the largest survey of transgender people (27,715 respondents) found the following:

- 59% [16,351 respondents] have avoided bathrooms in the last year because they feared confrontations in public restrooms at work, at school, or in other places.
- 12% [3,325 respondents] report that they have been harassed, attacked, or sexually assaulted in a bathroom in the last year.
- 31% [8,591 respondents] have avoided drinking or eating so that they did not need to use the restroom in the last year.
- 24% [6,651 respondents] report that someone told them they were using the wrong restroom or questioned their presence in the restroom in the last year.
- 9% [2,494 respondents] report being denied access to the appropriate restroom in the last year.
- 8% [2,217 respondents] report having a kidney or urinary tract infection, or another kidney-related medical issue, from avoiding restrooms in the last year

USTS 2015

6) Where can I find an all-gender restroom on campus?

As of Fall 2019, the location of All-Gender Restrooms at UA will be available as a filter on the UA Public Map and Campus360 map.