

# Gate-keeping women's spaces doesn't protect women.

-anonymous bisexual cisgender woman

You may think from the discourse that there are at least 2.5 billion trans people, but the fact is in absolute terms there are far more women who look like me accessing women's spaces than there are trans people who exist in total. The consequence of setting up gate-keeping around women's spaces being for "biological women" is not sexual predators with male pattern baldness being kept out of women's spaces, but the constant questioning of the right of women who look like me to be there.

I get harassed constantly for the fact that I have short hair and a low centre of gravity. I last had "oi, are you a boy or a girl" shouted at me last week. Depending on the situation, I either ignore it or reply, "why does it matter?" which they always find very confusing. A woman in a group I was running at work said, "why are you wearing men's shoes?" and I said, "I'm not, they're my shoes and I'm a woman". She did not comment further.

When I booked a bed in a women's dorm room and fell asleep after arrival, I woke up to a pair of anxious eyes asking me in Spanish if I was a girl. I said, "I'm sorry"? in English, and she immediately relaxed (presumably because she heard my voice) and acted like she hadn't said anything.

The last time a conference had a designated women's space, I popped in there to have a sensory break and was followed by a woman who told me that "excuse me, this is a woman's space". And I said, "yes, I know", attempted to read my book, but had to put up with her flustering and trying to apologise because "I thought... \*gestures at my t-shirt and slacks\*". I actually left the room because she was being so weird at me and SHE FOLLOWED ME to try to apologise again. Her comfort, not mine.

The last time I had someone challenge my right to use a women's toilet, I was going into a single cubicle in a pub and the male shift manager shouted at me from the bar, pursued me across the room, knocked on the door until I unlocked and opened it and then said, "wrong toilet, I'm afraid". I replied, "I'm afraid not", and shut the door in his face. He then had to serve me a drink five minutes later. I carry a radar key for this reason.

Now, this is the reality of my life, and the one concession I was willing to make to deal with it was getting my ears pierced, which for some reason people find reassuring. My internal image of myself does not have pierced ears but I can't see or feel them so I don't care. But the fact that I had to do it should be a matter of shame for every feminist who whines on about the abolition of gender while proclaiming they can always tell. You cannot. You are, in fact, quite incompetent at telling.

In the ten years since I cut off my long hair for the final time (which in itself had been a concession to this problem), the volume of incidents has dropped significantly. Many people will initially misgender me, then quickly say, "oops" and then gender me correctly without having the emotional breakdown

they used to, which is fine. The feminist battle to challenge gender stereotypes has been working, and the effort to create inclusive spaces has been bearing fruit. The attempts of awful people (and you are awful) to turn the clock back and start demanding proof of biological womanhood isn't going to result in chromosome checks as a condition of entry to their lesbian book group. Such groups just won't have a sustainable membership because LGBT people all know perfectly well what transphobic dogwhistles look like and we will boycott them into oblivion. The broader cultural impact of such moral panics will be cis men and women who do not adhere to stereotypical gender presentation being given odd looks and treated with suspicion on entering the room. And there are millions, M.I.L.L.I.O.N.S., more of us than there are trans people.

Now, I regard every gender policing person I have embarrassed the hell out of as one more person who is going to think twice before challenging a trans person who will be more upset with having their gender questioned than I am. But it is really annoying, and it is a burden I would rather not live with. If you think that "clarifying" the Equality Act will somehow further the cause, you are quite wrong, and you and your children will suffer the consequences of your own actions. Attacks on trans women are attacks ON WOMEN, and your inability to see this is your hubris.