

# [Male-Pattern Sexuality in Transwomen in Ontario Study](#)

## **Sex-Differences and Segregation**

Why do we segregate men and women's change rooms? Why do we have a problem with men and women being naked next to one another, changing or showering? (I am not referring to situations where there are separate stalls.) For a small minority of people this may not be a problem, but most Canadians would react forcefully against such an idea. While I don't intend to answer those questions fully in this article and while answers may vary slightly person to person, the issue has to do not only with privacy, but also with protection. There are well-established patterns of violence, criminality, and sexuality in males in the literature that are beyond dispute. When you factor in the general size and strength differences between the sexes, you have a situation where females are right to have a healthy fear of males in their safe spaces, especially in open change rooms or showers where they are most vulnerable.

The main argument here at WOMAN Means Something is that Bill C-16 completely erases a woman's identity, distinctiveness, protections and freedoms. But within the realm of women's protections, we further believe that the deliberate gender ambiguity in the bill creates opportunities for predatory men to prey on women in particularly vulnerable situations in women's safe spaces.

But there is a further question; are women right or wrong to be concerned about trans-identified males in their spaces? For many, this very question is inflammatory, but the point here is not that trans-identified males are particularly dangerous, but that they may be as "dangerous" as men. To put it another way, are females in the right to feel concerned about these biologically-male women the same way they might feel concerned about biologically-male men. In another article I have pointed out that one of the best studies on post-op transsexuals states that trans-identified males retain male-patterns of violence and criminality. Here I want to point you to an article that demonstrates that trans-identified males retain, in significant ways, male patterns of sexuality as well.

## **Sample Size and Group**

[The study](#), by Bauer et al., published in 2012, is a survey of 433 Trans people in Ontario. This represents quite a large sample size for a trans study. The purpose of the study is to survey sexual behaviors of the trans community to discover HIV-related risk behavior. Recruiting was done via seed-based chain-referral sampling which is a technique being increasingly used in trans studies and probably provides a larger and more representative sample than other recruiting techniques. If you aren't already

aware, recruiting methods can severely skew results in smaller sample sizes.

There are many interesting and sobering findings of the study, including higher levels of poverty among the trans population. An important aspect of this study is that “Trans was defined inclusively, and it was made explicit to potential participants that they were not required to have begun a social gender transition or to have undertaken interventions to medically transition sex.” The sample group here likely includes those with gender dysphoria, as well as transvestites, and other groups. This inclusive definition matches the inclusiveness/ambiguity of gender that we find in Bill C-16 and the Justice Department’s statement on gender identity and expression. So the direct applicability of this study to Bill C-16 is high, as far as the sample group is concerned.

## **Sexual Behaviour**

I always recommend reading the full results of a study, including the tables, and not just relying on researcher’s conclusions or summaries. There have been a number of studies where I have felt either liberal or conservative biases have been clear in how researchers read the data. It’s always best to read the data yourself.

In this study I think the results summarized in the abstract are very reflective of the findings. They highlight a couple significant and perhaps surprising findings. The first is that the trans population surveyed is not very sexually active. “High proportions – 25% of female-to-male (FTM) and 51% of MTF individuals – had not had a sex partner within the past year.” This seems low for MTF individuals. For a breakout of this aspect of the study, you can see the sex partner/lifetime stats in Table 2.

The second surprising finding is the kind of sexual behaviours reported. “The largest behavioural contributors to HIV risk were sexual behaviours some may assume trans people do not engage in: unprotected receptive genital sex for FTMs and insertive genital sex for MTFs.” The details behind this statement are found in Table 2. 68% of transwomen had a sexual partner in their lifetime who was a non-trans woman. This was the highest lifetime prevalence, far ahead of non-trans men (40%). However, the direct applicability of this percentage is debatable, as some transwomen may have had sexual partners prior to any transition or gender identification as a woman. The more useful measure is “sex partners, past yr”. Here we find that non-trans women are still the most likely sexual partners for MTF, although it is much closer than the lifetime measure – 24% to 23%. When it comes to “sexual behaviours, past yr” we find more detail. Unsurprisingly, oral sex is the most common sexual behaviour in the past year; 45% giving oral sex, and 37% receiving. However, there is no breakout for the sex or gender of the partners under this measure, or indeed, whether the groups are giving or receiving fellatio or cunnilingus (remember inclusiveness of the sample). So there is a lot of ambiguity in that measure. But with this measure removed, we see that for MTF individuals the most common sexual behaviour is “insertive partner in genital sex”, at 32%.

Let's put this together with some of the other data in the study on MTF individuals. We know that 51% did not have a sexual partner the past year (Table 3). We know that fully 32% had insertive genital sex the last year (Table 3). We know that more than half (54%) are not living full time in their "woman" gender, with fully 30% not living in their "woman" gender at all (Table 2)! We know that only 25% have completed a medical transition, with 32% in process, and thus it is likely that a high majority, perhaps as high as 75%, still have male genitalia. This would correlate with insertive genital sex being the most frequent sexual behavior (Table 2).

## **Other Explanations**

Before I draw some conclusions to the broader concern around Bill C-16 and safe spaces, there is a question of whether these findings are indeed representative, or whether there are other explanations. "Indeed, the greatest contributors to HIV-related sexual risk were the two sexual activities some might assume trans people are unlikely to engage in: receptive genital sex for FTMs, and insertive genital sex for MTFs. For MTFs at least, this differs from some previous studies. For example, in one San Francisco study, of over 300 MTFs, only 2 had insertive genital sex in the prior 6 months.

Is it possible that the largely male-pattern sexuality found in this study is not representative? The [San Francisco study](#) mentioned is one that I would think most trans-advocates would want to stay away from. That study finds a lifetime incarceration prevalence of 65% among MTF individuals, and fully 30% had been incarcerated within the last 6 months! (Table 2) This correlates with 80% being involved in sex work or survival sex (Table 2) which explains why 37% had more than 10 sex partners within the last 6 months (Table 3). In addition, 18% had injected street drugs over the last 6 months (Table 3).

Is this San Francisco study more representative of the current MTF population than the Ontario study? I hope not - and for multiple reasons, including the protection and health of MTF individuals. But I think there is good reason to believe that the Ontario study is more representative. The sampling of the San Francisco study probably lends itself more to street culture, and is based in an urban setting, while the Ontario study casts a wider geographic net. "Staff recruited individuals from street settings, bars, and social gatherings catering to transgender persons, and agencies referred clients to the study. We also initiated respondent-driven sampling; each study participant received an incentive for eligible persons recruited." I suspect that if the Ontario study was limited to Toronto, the findings would trend, at least a little bit, toward the San Francisco study.

Probably more significant, however, is the 11 years between the San Francisco study (2001) and the Ontario one (2012). Tremendous changes have taken place in the trans community and in the broader culture's interaction and response to transgendered individuals over the last decade. I think it highly likely that due to social and cultural

changes, the trans community has widened and deepened, which is represented in the findings of the Ontario study. Although I don't know any studies that would show this, anecdotally I think the transgendered population is growing.

## Conclusions

Either transwomen do not have male patterns of sexuality, but are predominantly sex workers and criminals, which I think highly unlikely, or transwomen are a diverse and wide group who retain male genitalia and male patterns of sexuality in significant and majority numbers. According to the Ontario study, the most common sexual behaviour is for these (biologically-male) women to insert their penises into women (with the oral sex caveat noted above).

The mass media narrative is that trans women are women. Full-stop. I am not concerned with arguing against that point of view in this article. I am concerned to demonstrate that trans women retain male patterns of sexuality in significant numbers - even majority numbers. Part of what makes women uncomfortable naked or partially clothed around men is that they have male sexuality; sexual attraction and arousal to women, penises, and that in sexual acts they use these male parts insertively into women's vaginas. This study shows if women are right to be concerned with letting men around them when they are vulnerable or exposed because of their distinct male sexuality, they are right to also be concerned with letting transwomen around them when they are vulnerable or exposed.

Thus, the question, "why shouldn't men and women change or shower together?" becomes an unanswerable question to those who support Bill C-16 and similar policies. To answer in the affirmative in any way is also an effective argument against Bill C-16. There may be those who are then tempted to respond in the negative - men and women ought to be changing and showering side by side naked without distinction or "discrimination", and that nakedness shouldn't be sexualized. If that's where you stand, here's my challenge; go ask ten women how they would feel about that - because you're probably a man.

\* Photo

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