

New Study Shows Gender-Inclusion Policy at Target Stores Associated with Increased Sexual Violence

February 2, 2018

A new study will be published February 3, 2018, analyzing the effects of the gender inclusion policy implemented by Target Stores in April of 2016. Independent researcher Paul Dirks, who provided testimony to the Senate Legal Committee on Canada's Bill C-16, analyzed 220 media-reported sexual incidents starting in 2003 to determine whether there were any increases in sexual offenses related to the policy.

The study, available at www.womanmeanssomething.com/targetstudy, shows that voyeurism-related offenses increased significantly after the publication of Target's policy—doubling or tripling according to all measures, while other sexual offense categories changed little. The findings are consistent with the “sex-predator” theory which has posited that sexual offenders may use gender-identity policies in private spaces to gain access to women and children in order to perpetrate sexual violence. This study is the first longitudinal analysis of risks related to gender-inclusion policies. The incident database is open-source and is available for further exploration and analysis.

Key Findings:

- Sexual incidents increased across the entire timeframe, with 44 incidents in the four pre-policy trimesters (Jan '15-Apr '16), and 80 in the four post-policy trimesters (May '16-Aug '17).
- Females were the victims in over ninety-four percent (94.5%) of the incidents, and children the victims in thirty-four percent (34%). All perpetrators were male.
- The three-season forced-category measurement found a 2.3x increase in the amount of upskirt incidents after the policy, and a 2.9x increase in peeping tom incidents after the policy.
- A Poisson regression found the 4-year pre-policy to post-policy rate change to be 3.03 for Upskirt and 3.14 for Peeping Tom, and the 2-year to be 2.16 for Upskirt and 2.34 for Peeping Tom (both using Trimester as a variable).

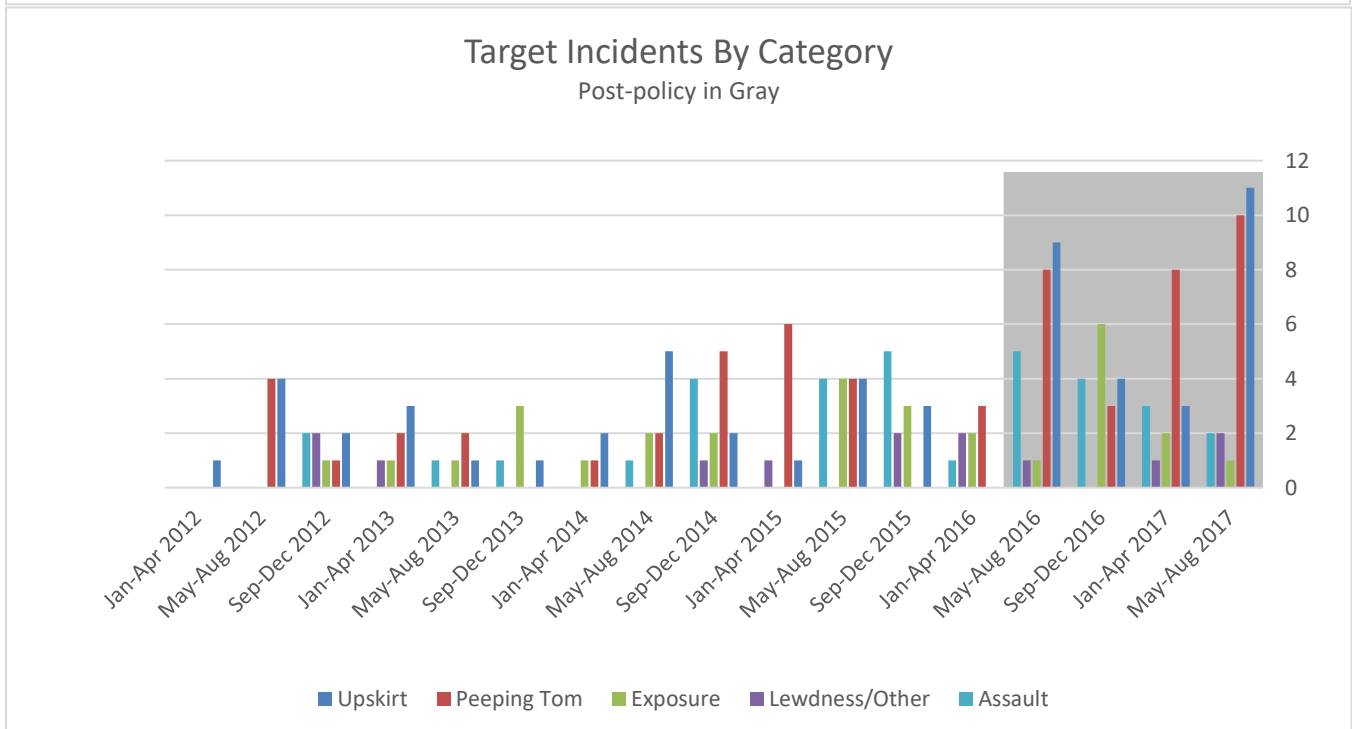
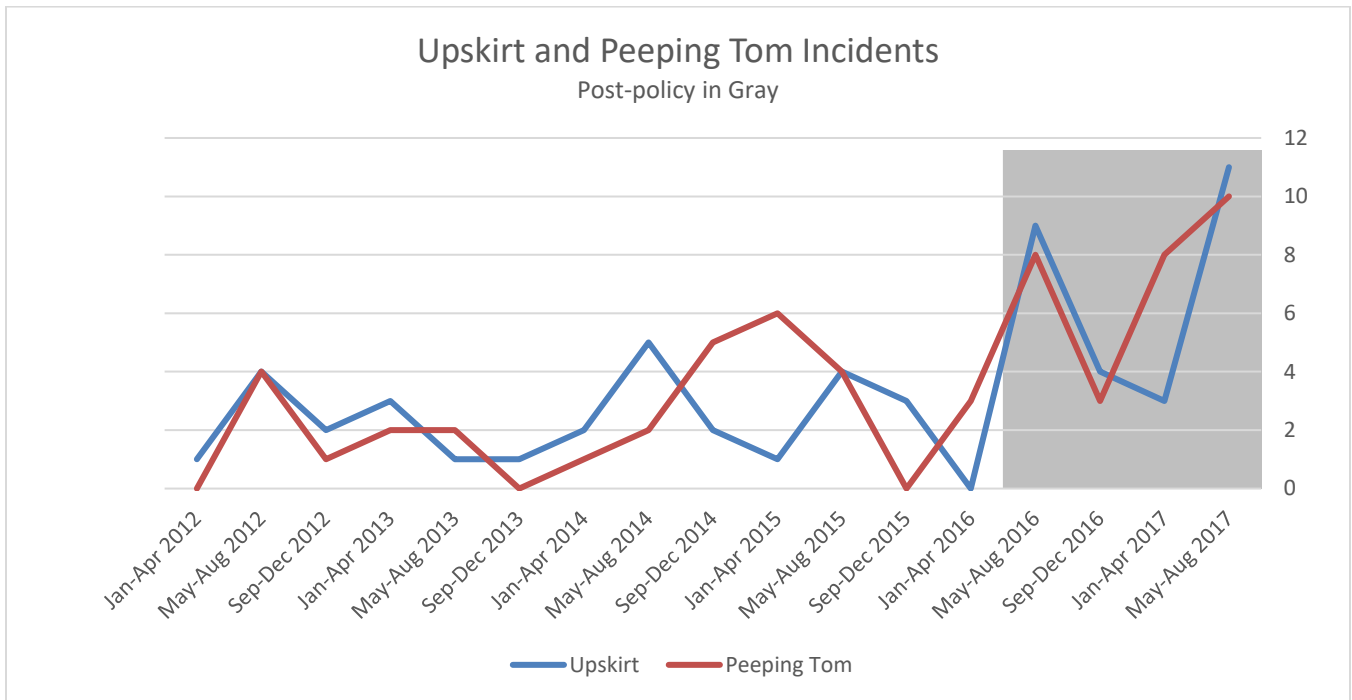
Quotes:

- Joyal (2016) found that no less than 60% of men in his population-based sample reported a desire for voyeurism, and that 50% had engaged in it.
- Leclerc (2016) says, "The immediate environment in which crime is committed is not a passive backdrop to events, but actively shapes the offender's behaviors" and cites Wortley (2001) as identifying four precipitators; prompts, pressures, permissions, and provocations."
- On Monday, July 11th, 2016, at the Ammon Target store in Idaho Sean/Shuana Smith, a transgender individual, recorded an 18-year old woman changing inside a Target dressing room. At Smith's sentencing in July 2017, Judge Joel Tingey stated, "I, perhaps along with others, thought that Target has now adopted a questionable policy (and wondered) is someone going to come in and victimize someone because of that... You took advantage of that and victimized this young lady."
- In the 16 months since the policy announcement there were 29 Peeping Tom offenses in the media reports, of which 28 were in bathrooms and changerooms.
- While it is possible that a general rise in voyeuristic sexual offenses relative to other offenses may account for some of this increase, the magnitude and precise timing of the increase suggests that Target's gender-inclusion policy accounts for the bulk of it. The most likely hypothesis to explain our findings is that Target's policy signaled to sexual offenders that voyeuristic offenses would be easier to perpetrate in their stores than elsewhere. We believe that this study shows that gender-inclusion policies can bring about increased harm to women and children

Other highlights include:

- Survey of the literature on prevalence and nature of voyeurism and exhibitionism, the two paraphilias most directly related to sexual offender access to private spaces.
- Survey of existing data on the relationship between gender identity policies and private spaces such as washrooms and change rooms.
- Geographical analysis, including incident maps, showing significant increases relative to policy in the Northeast (peeping tom voyeurism) and in the West (upskirt voyeurism).
- Investigation of alternative theories to explain the precise and significant increase of sexual offenses after the Target policy.

Recommended graphics:



Incidents Pre and Post Policy

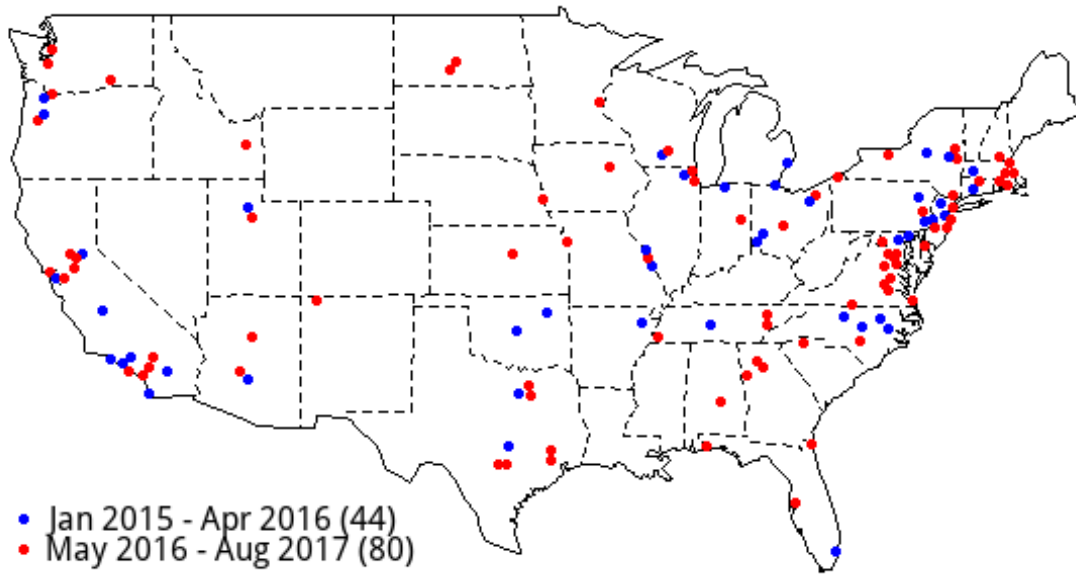


Fig. 8. Incident by Category and Year

2017 Extrapolated Over Full Year

