



## Defining Gender

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, May 24, 2016

Americans divide about how society should define gender, according to an [Exclusive Point Taken-Marist Poll](#), commissioned by WGBH Boston for its new late-night, multi-platform PBS debate series *Point Taken*. Most Americans do, however, recognize greater acceptance of transgender or gender fluid people in the United States. In fact, nine in ten Americans think transgender individuals should receive equal protection under the law when it comes to both employment and housing. Although fewer, nearly two-thirds of residents nationally also think the transgender community should have the same type of legal protection when it comes to public restrooms.

The national survey was conducted by The Marist Poll in advance of this week's *Point Taken* episode, airing Tuesday, May 24th at 11pmET (check local listings) and streaming on [pbs.org/pointtaken](http://pbs.org/pointtaken). The series is hosted by Carlos Watson, Emmy Award winning journalist and OZY Media co-founder and CEO.

45% of Americans think the sex listed on a person's birth certificate is the only way to define a person's gender. 41% of residents, though, think that definition is outdated and needs to be updated to include a person's gender identity. A majority of Americans who know a transgender or gender fluid person, 50%, are more likely than those who do not, 34%, to say the definition of gender should be revised to include identity. Women, 48%, and residents under 45 years old, 47%, are more likely than men, 33%, and Americans 45 or older, 35%, to have this view. Regional differences are also present. Americans living in the Northeast, 51%, and West, 49%, are more likely than residents in the Midwest, 24%, to believe the meaning of gender should move beyond the sex listed on a person's birth certificate and should include how a person self-describes his or her identity. Americans who live in the South divide. 41% share this view, and 43% believe gender should remain defined as an individual's sex at birth.

"These results help set the table for tonight's *Point Taken* as we go beyond the headlines to explore Americans' point of view about gender rights," says Denise Dilanni, series creator and Senior Executive-in-Charge.

Despite the divide about how gender should be defined, most Americans, 80%, think greater acceptance of transgender and gender fluid people exists in today's society than a decade ago. 90% of U.S. residents also think the transgender community should receive the same rights and protections as other Americans when it comes to both employment and housing. However, support is not as overwhelming when it comes to public restrooms. While nearly two-thirds of residents, 64%, report transgender people should have equal rights in this area, 27% do not think they should receive equal protection under the law when it comes to public restrooms. Americans under 45 years

\*All references to the survey must be sourced as "Exclusive *Point Taken*-Marist Poll"



of age, 70%, are more likely than their older counterparts, 57%, to say transgender people should receive the same rights as other Americans. Interestingly, 22% of those who know someone who is transgender or gender fluid do not think rights pertaining to public restrooms should be the same for all Americans.

On the question of whether public restrooms should be gender neutral, six in ten Americans, 60%, think restrooms should be separated as male and female and should not be gender neutral. 31% say public bathrooms should be gender neutral for anyone to use. Residents 45 years of age and older, 67%, men, 66%, and white Americans, 65%, are more likely than those under 45 years old, 54%, women, 55%, and non-white Americans, 52%, to say public restrooms should be labeled as “male” or “female.”

Should transgender and gender fluid individuals be allowed to choose the public restroom with which they identify? Americans divide. 43% report individuals should be allowed to make that decision while 44% say transgender people should use the bathroom that correlates with the sex on his or her birth certificate. Americans who know someone who is transgender, 51%, and women, 50%, are more likely than those who do not know someone who is transgender, 39%, and men, 37%, to assert transgender individuals should be able to choose which restroom they use. Americans living in the Northeast, 53%, and West, 52%, and Millennials, 54%, are more likely than their counterparts to have this view.

Close to six in ten Americans, 59%, say they do not know someone who is transgender or gender fluid. A notable 39% of the American public say they do.

This survey of 507 adults was conducted May 12th through May 14th, 2016 by The Marist Poll sponsored and funded in partnership with WGBH’s *Point Taken*. Adults 18 years of age and older residing in the contiguous United States were contacted on landline or mobile numbers and interviewed in English by telephone using live interviewers. Results are statistically significant within  $\pm 4.4$  percentage points. The error margin was not adjusted for sample weights and increases for cross-tabulations.

For more on *Point Taken*:

[pbs.org/pointtaken](http://pbs.org/pointtaken)

#pointtakenPBS

For more on The Marist Poll:

[Maristpoll.marist.edu](http://Maristpoll.marist.edu)

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### **About The Marist Poll**

Founded in 1978, The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (MIPO) is a survey research center at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. The Marist Poll has conducted independent research on public priorities, elections, and a wide variety of social issues. Through the regular public release of surveys, MIPO has built a legacy of independence, reliability, and accuracy. Its results are featured in print and electronic media throughout the world.

### **About WGBH Boston**

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster and the largest producer of PBS content for TV and the Web, including Frontline, Nova, American Experience, Masterpiece, Antiques Roadshow, Arthur, Curious George and more than a dozen other primetime, lifestyle, and children's series. WGBH also is a major supplier of programming for public radio, and oversees Public Radio International (PRI). As a leader in educational multimedia for the classroom, WGBH supplies content to PBS LearningMedia, a national broadband service for teachers and students. WGBH also is a pioneer in technologies and services that make media accessible to those with hearing or visual impairments. WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors. More info at [www.wgbh.org](http://www.wgbh.org).

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