

# New survey suggests general society not willing to allow more rights for transgender people

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With the subject more in the public eye than ever before, you might assume transgender people's quest for rights would be gaining significant

support across the country. Not so, reveals a survey conducted in three southwestern and western states, and released today.

"While we expected restrictive responses from conservative Texas and moderate Arizona, it was interesting to see the same attitudes hold, although less firmly, in the progressive state of California," said Mark P. Jones, senior research fellow at the University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs and political science fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.

"That uniformity holds across the geographic reach of our research. But digging deeper into the data, we did uncover dividing lines. Most of those divisions fell along political affiliation and religiosity. But other distinctions—race, age, gender, level of education—were notable, too," he added.

This survey, 2023 Transgender Legislation and Policies, is the second in a series of five surveys to be examined by a collaboration of researchers at the UH Hobby School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, Stanford University's Bill Lane Center for the American West, and the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR). The series kicked off with the June 22 release of a survey examining the three states' changing attitudes on abortion.

"In our current study, which examines transgender issues, we focused on three main controversies: bathroom choice, [transgender women](#) and girls' place in sports, and whether gender-affirming [medical treatment](#) should be available to persons younger than 18," said Patrick Kenney, dean of The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, foundation professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies and vice provost for academic enterprise strategy at Arizona State University.

Later this week, on Sept. 1, Texas laws that will ban participation of

transgender women in women's collegiate sporting events (Texas Senate Bill 15) and gender-affirming treatment for transgender children (Texas Senate Bill 14) will take effect.

For Senate Bill 14, the road is proving particularly bumpy. On Friday, Aug. 25—one week before the law would be in effect—a state district court judge issued a temporary injunction to halt its progress. Within hours, the state attorney general's office appealed to the Texas Supreme Court, automatically pausing the judge's injunction and allowing the bill to proceed as scheduled.

While there were no majorities supporting lenient laws on those controversies among these states—Republican-led (red) Texas, Democratic-led (blue) California and the mixed politics in (purple) Arizona—the researchers did find significant pluralities, signaling the existence of support in varying levels for lenient approaches on transgender issues.

"Support of restrictive transgender laws have long been part of conservative political views, Republicans and those affiliated with traditional religious groups. Loyalty may be one influencer," said Richard Murray, senior research fellow at UH's Hobby School of Public Affairs.

Among the issues examined, the survey found the sports issue drew the most agreement and the issue of making gender-affirming medical treatment available to transgender children drew the least solidarity.

Looking further, in addition to finding that restrictive policies had overwhelming support among Republicans, the team also found—and this is a key factor—a significant number of Democrats to also be hesitant for lenient laws to be set, throwing more numbers to the side of opposition.

Among the other survey findings:

- Bathroom access—By a margin of more than two to one, an absolute majority of Texans (61% to 25%) and Arizonans (54% to 27%) believe transgender people should not be allowed to choose for themselves which bathroom to use. In California, the population is closer to an even divide (45% for choice, 35% opposing).
- Women's sports—The survey found strong support for barring [transgender](#) females from playing women's sports. Divided by state: Four times as many Texans (68% vs. 16%), three times as many Arizonans (63% vs. 20%) and two times as many Californians (53% vs. 26%) said no on the issue.
- Gender-affirming medical care—When it comes to banning gender-affirming [medical care](#) available for children under the age of 18, there was a majority support in Texas (53% vs. 32%) and Arizona (51% vs. 30%). There was agreement in California, but only with a narrow plurality (41% vs. 35%) in favor of the ban.
- Religion—Across Texas, Arizona and California, residents who regularly attend religious services are significantly more likely than residents who never attend [religious services](#) to favor restrictions on the rights of [transgender people](#) to choose which bathroom to use, participate in women's sporting events and receive gender-affirming medical treatment for children.

"The issues we examine in this survey might long hold true for the majority opinion. Or they may be one point along the road to equal treatment that many groups continue to travel. It is for the future to reveal," said David W. Brady, senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and SIEPR.

The 2023 Transgender Legislation and Policies [survey](#) was conducted

between May 31 and June 6 among respondents 18 and older: 1,051 were in Arizona; 1,045 in California; and 1,067 in Texas. The margin of error is +/-3%.

In the three surveys to follow in the series, the research team will examine and compare attitudes on immigration, the influence political affiliation has on voters and how each of these key issues is perceived in each state.

**More information:** Survey results:  
[uh.edu/hobby/jointpollingproject\\_transgender](https://uh.edu/hobby/jointpollingproject_transgender)

Provided by University of Houston

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