



Equity of Access in Public Sanitation: Why Sex-Segregated Facilities Still Matter

J. S. Monaghan, Bachelor of Nursing Sciences, Master of Health Management, Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Teaching, Registered General and Obstetric Nurse, Registered Midwife.

J. Webster, Bachelor of Social Science, Registered Nurse: General, Midwifery, Geriatrics, Developmental Disability.

ARTICLE INFO Sit100 Working Paper

Keywords: Public toilets • Women • Needs • Single-sex • Design • Governance

ABSTRACT

As single-sex public toilets throughout Australia are systematically being supplanted by unisex only facilities, women are finding that their biological, cultural, hygiene and safety needs are being ignored. By making decisions that bypass effective community consultation, local governments (LGs) risk operating outside accepted good governance guidelines, therefore neglecting their duty of care towards the public. This paper identifies the range of women's needs and rights that are being omitted in the design and provision of public toilets. As a result, women's ability to enjoy public spaces is being significantly compromised.

Introduction

This article examines the rationale for the ongoing provision of single-sex toilets by local councils in Australia (rather than designating all public toilets as unisex only) from an equity and women's health viewpoint. For the purposes of this paper, a public toilet is defined as a room or small building containing toilets and sinks accessible to the general public. This definition also acknowledges that local councils bear the primary, informal responsibility for planning, building, and maintaining public toilets in public spaces such as parks, reserves and town centres.

While unisex toilets are intended to be more inclusive, they can create disadvantages for women if existing facilities are converted into shared spaces or if new facilities offer only shared space options. The growing consensus among many Australian women's advocacy groups (Affiliation of Australian Women's Action Alliances, 2025; Australian Feminists for Women's Rights, 2025) is that true equality requires ensuring adequate, private, and clean, single-sex facilities for women while also providing safe, all-gender options.

While this article utilises the term women, it encompasses the spectrum from infants through to the elderly, addressing their developmental needs. The provision of unisex public toilets only, places women at an unfair disadvantage. This disadvantage can be broken down into several salient issues that affect or limit women's experience and use of public toilets.

The Role of Public Toilets

It is recognised that public toilets play a key role in the health and wellbeing of all and are considered a wider facilitator of good public health practice (Lake Macquarie City Council Public Amenities Strategy, 2021; Webber & Grant-Smith, 2024; Mancuso & Lundkvist, 2025). However, there are benefits from appropriate access to public toilets, ranging from helping people achieve good health outcomes Webber (2018), to supporting local tourism, to enabling local communities to exercise in public spaces, all of which also lead to increased support for the local economy. Therefore, it is evident that access to suitable public toilets can only benefit the public.

Design of Public Toilet Spaces

The layout of a traditional public toilet is a large room with shared entry and wash basin area, with multiple individual lockable cubicles divided by partition walls (often called multi-stalls). Each room is designated for male or female use only. Conversely, the current trend for unisex/all-gender toilet

design, consists of a single, outward facing room containing one toilet, often with an external shared hand basin. These toilets often have floor to ceiling doors and walls. This unisex toilet layout is increasingly adopted by local councils within Australian, with women and men expected to use the same toilet facility, even though these spaces don't address women's specific biological and cultural needs, as addressed in this paper. There has also been limited consideration by planners on the impact or potential impact on women in adopting this toilet design, although there is a small body of research that examines these specific outcomes (Greed, 2019; Kalms & McVey, 2024).

Other public toilet layouts include accessible/ambulant toilets featuring grab rails and wider turning circles that are specifically designed for individuals with mobility issues, and Changing Places which are toilets with extra space and features providing people with disability and high support needs with secure, accessible bathroom facilities.

Girls and Women's Need for Single-Sex Public Toilets

Women have unique urination and sanitation needs that are not always considered during the planning and design of public toilet facilities (Kalms & McVey, 2024). Appropriately designed toilets ensure privacy, comfort and dignity, while decreasing any anxiety, embarrassment or discomfort when managing these needs. Blake et al (2025) note some of these unique needs, stating that toilets such as "menstrual friendly" public toilets for women make "urban public spaces accessible, contributing to stronger social infrastructure", while their absence "contributes to anxiety, embarrassment, and shame: a burden that disproportionately falls on girls and women, and undermines gender equitable access to public space."

Women's concerns are that traditionally, men's public toilet facilities were more likely to be urine splattered and malodorous, contributing to their general uncleanliness. There is a reasonable assumption that this pattern will now be noted in unisex toilets, considering that both men and women will now share these facilities. Although those defending this concept make the argument that unisex toilets are just as clean (or dirty) as single-sex toilets, it has been the personal experience of the authors and others, that this is not the case.

Women who feel that their need for cleanliness, comfort and dignity are not met alter their usage of public toilets or avoid using public toilets altogether (Stuart Reynolds et al, 2020). There appears to be a mismatch between the Council's reporting on public toilet cleanliness and women's lived experience, which notes a trend for avoidance of these toilets. Avoiding public toilets undermines public health goals, can

have detrimental health effects and can restrict women's participation in public spaces and community life.

Ultimately, when toilets are configured as fully unisex and used by people with different toileting behaviours (sitting vs standing), seat and floor contamination becomes more frequent and foreseeable, and women's usage of public toilets diminishes (Greed, 2019). It is apparent that through the current trend of only providing unisex toilet options at public toilet facilities, councils are ignoring women's need for single-sex toilets, without considering the impact of their failure to account for women's unique health and sanitation needs and their preference for single-sex spaces (Kalms & McVey, 2024). A lack of consideration of women's needs when designing toilets is nothing new, with Lewkovitz and Gilliland's (2020) systematic review of the provision and experience of public toilets in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand noting that "no studies addressed directly the specific cultural needs of women and girls."

Discussion

Sex-Based Biological Considerations

Women have specific and predictable needs that are a product of their biological, physiological and developmental stage; needs that are not shared by men. Reduced access, therefore, becomes a health issue, not a preference issue.

Urination Method: In general, females sit during urination or defecation. Sitting assists in ensuring good pelvic health by relaxing the pelvic floor muscles and urinary sphincters, which in turn promotes complete bladder and bowel emptying. Sitting also provides stability and comfort, and prevents muscle fatigue in the legs, thighs and back.

Altered Toilet Use: Many women consider that urine splattered toilet seats and surrounds decrease their comfort and ability to safely use public toilets (Stuart Reynolds et al 2020). One of the most common responses to urine splatter is to use a "hovering" position to urinate. This necessitates a woman positioning herself in a shallow squat above the toilet bowl to avoid touching the toilet seat.

This commonly adopted position, however, can cause various health problems, including:

Incomplete bladder emptying. Hovering inhibits the relaxation of those pelvic floor muscles necessary for full bladder emptying. Repeated inefficient bladder emptying can in turn increase the risk of urinary tract infections (Stuart Reynolds et al 2020).

Pelvic floor dysfunction. The constant muscle tension required can disrupt the coordination between pelvic floor muscles and the bladder, causing weakness or over-activity. This in turn can lead to urine leakage due to poor muscle control (incontinence) and increased risk of urinary tract infections. Unlike men, women lack a prostate, meaning that their pelvic organs do not receive the support to the base of the bladder that a prostate provides, increasing this risk.

Risk of prolapse. The increased, constant downward pressure from hovering also weakens pelvic floor muscles, leading to incontinence, chronic pelvic tension, and increased risk of uterine prolapse.

Risk of falls and injury. Hovering above a toilet places women at risk of falls and injury, due to muscle fatigue and the instability of such a stance. Slipping on a wet floor is another falls risk, particularly for the elderly.

Studies of toilet usage in a developed country by Kowalik et al (2019) found that when using the toilet at home, 99.4% of women sit on the toilet. However, they also note that 88% of women worried about the cleanliness of public toilets, with 25-85% of women who used these toilets reporting that they have

adopted non-sitting urination positions as a result. While an unintended consequence of hovering is that it may itself contribute to urine splattering on toilet seats, it is nonetheless a direct consequence of being confronted by urine splattered toilets.

Some commentators have indicated that women should sit on public toilet seats, no matter the state of toilet hygiene. American sociologist Laura Norén has commented that this is, in part because "Urine is sterile so just having a lot of it around does not cause a public health problem" (2011), referencing her 2010 text *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*: 1. However, enhanced pathology culturing techniques, have disproved this assumption (Hilt et al, 2014), revealing that urine is not sterile, and even in the absence of obvious urinary tract infections, may carry a variety of pathogenic bacteria. However, there is a risk of catching a bacterial infection from a toilet seat if the skin on the legs or genital area is broken. The argument that women should just accept unsanitary conditions even if the risk is considered low is unlikely to be persuasive.

Both men and women are also disadvantaged by the removal of urinals in unisex public toilet cubicles. It is an important point to note that the greater use of urinals means that toilets are less likely to become urine splattered, decreasing toilet aversion.

Toilet Avoidance: Hartigan et al (2020) noted strategies women employ to avoid using shared facilities, including:

- Planning ahead to reduce the need to use a public toilet, or to know where an acceptable public toilet can be found. Anecdotally, women report that shopping centres generally provide appropriate and comfortable toilet facilities and therefore prioritise these over public toilets.
- Ensuring that they always carry their own wipes and hand sanitiser for a safer and more comfortable bathroom experience.
- Resisting or delaying urination. Chavoustie (2024) noted that delaying urination can lead to bladder and kidney pain, increases the risk of urinary tract infection (due to an abnormal backward flow of urine from the bladder into the ureters and kidneys), kidney stones and damage to pelvic floor muscles, as well as contributing to bladder leakage. Delaying urination may include returning home to urinate or "holding on" for extended periods.

A particular occupational group that avoids public toilets usage are women who work in transport. These women are faced by limited time to use toilets but also limited acceptable choices. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union's (2025) survey of 821 women, found that three in four women reported suffering health problems such as urinary tract infections, dehydration or stress due to being unable to find acceptable public toilets while at work. Ironically, at least one NSW government department, Transport for New South Wales, has acknowledged the need for dedicated toilets for female workers, with its ministerial media release (2025) noting that "For too long these most basic of needs have not been met and it is frankly unbelievable that female drivers have not had designated facilities of their own at all locations until now." As of October 2025, at least two dedicated female facilities have been opened for female bus drivers in Western Sydney, with 34 more to follow.

- Restricting fluids, which in turn will reduce the need to use a bathroom. Pierce et al (2019) found that nurses often restrict fluids due to work constraints, making them at greater risk of urinary tract infections and pelvic floor dysfunction. Restricting fluids in Australia's climate is potentially dangerous, as it can lead to severe

dehydration, a significantly increased risk of heat stroke and associated problems.

Some women choose to empty their bladder before leaving home to avoid using shared public toilets (premature voiding or a “just in case pee”). However, if done frequently, this may lead to an overactive or unstable bladder and is associated with urinary incontinence (Newman et al, 2019).

Menstruation and Pregnancy: While nearly half our population will menstruate at some time during their life, data indicates that about 25% of the women of reproductive age in Australia are menstruating at any given time, meaning that their needs are ongoing, and are also often unpredictable. Women need to be able to manage this function in a dignified, healthy and hygienic manner. This means that they may need to change tampons and sanitary pads often, wash hands before and after managing menstrual items/underwear, as well as dispose of used menstrual products safely and discreetly. This may also include the washing of menstrual cups, as well as the cleansing of the perineal area and inner thighs following unexpected heavy menstrual flow. The provision of appropriate toileting and sanitation facilities, which include private hand basins in a dedicated female area, will support women’s menstruation management in public places and decrease toilet avoidance.

Avoidance places women at more risk of anxiety due to the fear of blood leakage through clothing, and stress from the inability to find a private place to change their pads, tampons or clothing. The prolonged use of tampons or pads increases the risk of urinary and reproductive tract infections and may exacerbate abdominal pain and discomfort.

The Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation for the United Nations (nd) notes that to allow young girls to manage menstruation safely “Hygiene facilities must be private, and not shared with men” as they are a key factor in ensuring dignity around menstruation management. As women are turning to more sustainable methods of menstruation management, such as the reusable menstrual cup, they may also need washing facilities inside the toilet cubicle to preserve their dignity as they wash out these aids or any blood soiled underwear or clothing.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy as well as increased abdominal pressure mean that pregnant women are likely to need access to toilets more frequently and often more urgently. Unclean toilets place pregnant women at greater risk of urinary tract infections.

However, many pregnant women avoid using public toilets during pregnancy. As the centre of gravity shifts during pregnancy, squatting or hovering makes it more difficult to maintain balance, increasing the risk of falls and injuries, while it is also more strenuous and places a greater burden on these women.

Ageing: Elderly people make up 17% of the Australian population, with women representing 53% of this group (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024).

Frailty, disability or illness complicate toilet usage for the elderly, as they can necessitate urgent and more frequent access to toilets. Bladder and bowel problems become more frequent as we age (Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, 2019), while general frailty often makes it more difficult to navigate narrow spaces or stand up from low toilets. Furthermore, balancing while wiping, lifting clothing and avoiding urine contamination is biomechanically unstable, increasing the risk of falls for those with instability problems. As concerns about unclean seats may cause older women to “hover”, the fear of slipping or contact with urine may result in older women avoiding the use of public toilets entirely.

Urinary and/or faecal incontinence complicates toilet usage for older women and men, meaning that private facilities, including dedicated hand basins, are essential to maintain hygiene (NSW Parliament’s Inquiry into Public Toilets, 2025). The elderly, however, are not the only group affected. In 2024, Deloitte Access Economics reported that “there were over 7.2 million Australians aged 15 and over affected by continence to some degree”, meaning that 19% of the total population of men in Australia and 37% of women are likely to find their use of public toilets complicated by the need to manage this condition.

Cultural Considerations

Clothing: The nature of some types of female clothing (skirts/dresses, robes, multiple layers), as well as the need for it to be adjusted or held means that clothing may be soiled through contact with urine splatter on seats and floors. This reduces the acceptability and therefore use of public toilets by women (Greed 2019). Such difficulties can also create the potential for falls, especially for the elderly.

Faith-based Considerations: Women from faith-based traditions, such as Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism, may find that sharing sanitation facilities with men is religiously impermissible or deeply distressing, while some, including Jewish women, are strictly forbidden from sharing toilets with male strangers when menstruating. Religious or cultural principles based on modesty, ritual purity, and sex-segregated spaces (Kalms & McVey, 2024) mean that an exclusively unisex public toilet arrangement can effectively exclude these women from accessing any public facilities (Greed, 2019).

In their submission to the NSW Parliament’s Inquiry into Public Toilets (2025), the Access Institute identified concerns and fears that people may feel related to their use of public toilets (toilet anxiety). They contended that ‘sharing toilets can be a significant cultural issue’ and that ‘modesty, including separation of male and females is an important consideration for groups such as Muslim and Orthodox Jewish communities as well as some Australian Indigenous communities’. Despite this, Recommendation 13 of the Customer Service Committee’s Report into Public Toilets states that ‘all-gender single-use cubicles must be provided, either instead of or in addition to gendered facilities.’ The recommendation ‘instead of’ in effect completely excludes a significant number of women, suggesting that their needs have been dismissed.

As some cultural or religious groups are prohibited from using unisex toilets, the lack of single-sex toilets therefore means they have no access to any public toilet facilities. As Australia becomes more multicultural, it is incumbent on councils to consider the unique public toilet needs of diverse groups.

It is interesting to note that in developing countries, the UN is consistently working to segregate public toilets between girls and boys – and men and women – to preserve the dignity and health of women, while in many developed countries, including many areas of Australia, the opposite is happening (WaterAid et al, 2018).

Parenting Needs: Women may also have a young child they need to place on the toilet or manage while they use the toilet themselves. However, they are unlikely to place a child on a toilet they do not wish to use themselves, or an infant on a urine splattered floor.

Historical Disadvantage: Women’s access to suitable public toilet facilities has historically been problematic. The City of Sydney Archives (n.d.) note that it was not until 1910 that the first above-ground public toilet for women was constructed in Sydney. The impact of providing public toilet facilities for women freed them from what was termed the “Urinary Leash”, which refers to the distance that one could be from a toilet.

Women had to restrict their movements, limiting the time they could spend in public spaces so that they could return home to use a toilet, or alternatively, endured physical discomfort to avoid having to utilise unsuitable toilets.

The provision of public toilet arrangements that women and girls are unable or unwilling to use reintroduces the Urinary Leash, a retrograde step for women and girls' engagement in public life.

Good Governance

To meet the needs of the community that they serve, local governments should solicit their views. The Municipal Association of Victoria's Good Governance Guide: Helping Local Governments Govern Better (2012), suggests that local governments (LGs) must be:

- Accountable.
- Transparent.
- Following the rule of law.
- Responsive.
- Equitable and inclusive.
- Effective and efficient.
- Participatory.

The principles within these guidelines, which are mirrored by all local governments within New South Wales and throughout Australia, are based on the idea that effective consultation with community is vital in ensuring that the needs of that community are met (Mancuso & Lundkvist, 2025).

However, while many local and state governments within Australia are currently re-examining the provision of public toilets, few appear to be either actively or effectively soliciting or listening to the voices of women. A Community Survey (2021) by Lake Macquarie City Council did not appear to have included any specific questions on the option of the removal of single-sex public toilets and their replacement with unisex toilets only. However, the Lake Macquarie City Council Public Amenities Strategy (2021) stated that "all cubicles to be accessible design and preference for unisex". The link between the questions and answers from this survey, and the subsequent decision making is not clear, suggesting that it may have been made without valid community input.

Further design limitations include the small number of respondents to the above survey ($n = 217$), suggesting that community views and needs were not addressed in any wide or meaningful way and therefore the needs of women were likely underrepresented due to the low sample size. Significantly, the option to replace all single-sex toilets with unisex toilets was omitted from the survey. This gap in information resulted in flawed responses, as women were not fully informed of Council's intentions and therefore could not comment realistically.

In addition, until women in the affected community have had the lived experience of shared toilet facilities, they will also be unlikely to provide responses that demonstrate an understanding of their new experience. It becomes clear that there has been a mismatch between the structure of the survey, the quality of the information gained and the Council's resultant decisions. Kalms and McVey (2024) noted that proposed legislative changes to the provision of public toilets in Victoria have had a similar issue, with their failure to acknowledge that "one in two Victorians are women, and that these women are most impacted by this legislative change."

The group, Australian Feminists for Women's Rights (AF4WR, 2025), argue that any decision-making around the provision of public toilets should also be in harmony with existing policies, including the National Construction Code and relevant NSW legislation such as the Anti-Discrimination Act (1977). As Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW), the removal of sex as a criterion for appropriate allocation of public toilet facilities would constitute a breach of Australia's treaty obligations under CEDAW. CEDAW's definition of discrimination against women is that "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women..."

In a media release (2021) for the Greens New South Wales, MLC Dr Amanda Cohn suggested that: "Something as simple as getting public toilets right can make or break whether a significant number of people are able to fully participate in community life - from people with chronic medical conditions to parents of young children, people with a disability and carers, people on their period or who are pregnant and people who are transgender or gender diverse." While only one respondent in the submissions to the NSW Government's Inquiry into Public Toilets (2025) specifically addressed women's needs, a key recommendation was that "All-gender bathrooms either in addition to or instead of gendered facilities" be implemented, suggesting that the biological and cultural needs of women and girls were unlikely well considered. The authors are not suggesting the elimination of unisex toilets *per se*, but that the imbalance of representation be corrected and a preference for a high proportion of single-sex toilets for women *per site* be implemented, so that they are adequately represented (this could be as simple as changing signage).

When women are effectively surveyed on their preferences, the majority of women have indicated that they do not want to share public toilets with men and prefer single-sex facilities. Bichard and Ramster (2025) noted that the 2025 YouGov, an international online research data and analytics technology group, found that 59% of those surveyed in the UK supported gender separated toilets only, with 32% supporting a combination of "gender-neutral" alongside gender separated. While not wanting to share public toilets is often considered a women's issue, the survey noted that most men also do not wish to share public toilets.

YouGov also reported that the peak support for gender-neutral toilets is in the 18–24 age group and peak support for separate gender toilets only in the over 65 age group, with toilet cleanliness and smell the most common reason for not wanting to share toilets. While no analysis of the findings has linked the age of recipients to their choice, their age alone suggests that it is likely that older women have based their vote on their lived experiences of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth, as well as the development of conditions that impair their use of public toilets, conditions that the younger age group are less likely to have experienced or understand.

In New South Wales, many local governments have surveyed their community, and some are also planning to change many single-sex public toilets into shared toilets. Consultation by City of Sydney Council (2014) noted that 75% of women, and a significant number of men, preferred single sex public toilets. Following their survey of women transport workers' access to toilet and sanitary facilities (2025), the Rail, Tram and Bus Union made a key recommendation that the Union should "Ensure guaranteed access to dedicated women's toilet facilities whenever needed."

As a preliminary step for this article, a convenience sample of approximately 80 women and girls in the Lake Macquarie area was informally questioned in the second half of 2025 to gauge their experience of using unisex public toilets. All stated that they have altered their usage of public toilets since the introduction of unisex public toilet options only, with many either restricting their use or avoiding using them at all. While it is acknowledged that this sample may not be representative of the general population in the Lake Macquarie area, it was interesting to note that 100% of all sampled expressed

dissatisfaction with the current provision of unisex toilets only, while most also expressed a feeling of strong disappointment that their views had not been sought prior to the implementation of this policy.

The widespread dissatisfaction with public toilets expressed by women in the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle area led to the authors undertaking a more formalised survey to further examine this issue. The survey will systematically collect data from the above group and consists of multiple-select questions that focus on three main areas: women's posture and cautions when using public toilets, reasons for avoiding their use and alternative options used. The survey results will help us gain a better understanding of women's use of these facilities and allow us to lobby our local council for public toilets that match the wants and needs of local women. Initial results suggest that most women are avoiding these facilities and strongly support the retention of single-sex public toilets. The survey may be expanded to include other local government areas with the findings to be published in time.

Policy decisions concerning public amenities must be informed by the perspectives of all of those affected. As the literature reviewed noted that most women and girls prefer single-sex toilets, dismissing their concerns risks marginalising their voices and reproducing historical patterns in which female needs are subordinated to competing priorities. The provision of a female-only public toilet alongside other toilet options does not remove access from others. Instead, it represents a proportionate solution that improves overall access while ensuring that women and girls are not excluded and reflecting that decision makers have acted in the interests and needs of all stakeholders. Inclusive design is best achieved by providing multiple options, rather than a single model that does not work for all users.

Duty of Care

In Australia, councils have a duty of care to maintain public facilities, such as public toilets, in a reasonably safe condition. It could be argued that a council has breached its duty of care if toilets have not been adequately cleaned, the floor became contaminated with urine and there were no safe alternatives for users.

It is foreseeable that women are likely to change their behaviour, choosing to hover rather than sit, when faced with visible urine splatter on the seat, floor and surrounding surfaces. This posture is also more likely to be adopted when there are no safe alternative facilities to use, or cleaning supplies and sanitary paper seat covers are not provided. Such increased instability, however, creates a falls risk.

While hovering (or squatting) may be considered a voluntary choice and even though women could be said to be assuming some risk by choosing not to sit, this nonetheless raises a question of council liability. If a toilet environment was so unsanitary that a reasonable woman would feel compelled to avoid sitting, then hovering becomes a foreseeable behavioural response, not reckless behaviour.

Urine on a floor or toilet surrounds, whether seen or not, also creates a slip hazard. If urine on seats and floors is a regular and foreseeable outcome of design, then any council claims of poor individual user behaviour, when sanitation is a matter of efficient, ongoing management, are unlikely to succeed. It is the authors' experience that such spills are frequently observed in local public toilets.

While there are almost no reported Australian legal cases that explicitly discuss hovering above toilets, there are several concerned with slips associated with unclean toilets or bathrooms, including *Rodd v Hall* (2019) and *Gaskell v Denkas Building Services Pty Limited* (2008). International cases that have more specifically considered this issue include *Ellis v*

Bristol City Council (2007) and *Lowe v Cairnstar Limited* (2020).

Conclusion: Rethinking Public Toilet Provision

The WaterAid, UNICEF and Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (2018) guide for the provision of female-friendly public and community toilets explains why toilets must be "female friendly", detailing essential and desirable features. As part of their good governance requirements, any local bodies that are responsible for public toilet provision should consider these same features when planning public toilets facilities in their area, along with direct consultation with women when making decisions about sanitation infrastructure that primarily affects them (Greed, 2019). This would demonstrate local government's genuine commitment to access, equity, women's health, religious accommodation, hygiene, safety, and dignity.

The allocation of public toilets based on biological and cultural needs is not discriminatory. It is practical, evidence-based and fair, and upholds the longstanding expectation of sex-based privacy in such spaces and supported by principles of personal autonomy. The continued provision of single-sex public toilets for women will support higher standards of hygiene and sanitation, reduce unsafe and unsanitary behaviour, increase women's confidence that facilities can be used with comfort and privacy, and lead to improved participation for all women in public life.

It has only been in the last century that women's demands for adequate toilet provision have been considered at all. In her 2019 book "Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men", Caroline Criado Perez concludes "when planners fail to account for gender, public spaces become male spaces by default... male-biased public space masquerading as equal access by design. ...women have an equal right to public resources: we must stop excluding them by design." The recent trend for predominantly (or only) unisex toilets, however, favours access for the standing part of the population and again leaves the sitting part of the population with unmet needs.

Feedback on Women's Experiences of Public Toilet

An ongoing survey that aims to increase the body of knowledge pertaining to women's experiences using public toilets can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/88LSVYC>

This survey is open to all women over the age of 18, whether they are utilising local public toilets in their own area, or using public facilities as a visitor elsewhere.

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