



# Transgender Rights and Access

December 18, 2024

*Transgender rights and access* was among the least important of 17 issues surveyed among Utah voters as part of the 2024 Utah Priorities Project. At the same time, each of these priorities represented the 17 top issues from an initial list of 51 issues suggested by Utah voters. The initial survey also took place early in the year, when there was much attention given to transgender rights and access, as two bills were being discussed by the Utah Legislature – HB 257 and HB 303.<sup>1</sup> The second survey was later in the spring. Perhaps *transgender rights and access* ranked lower on the priorities list at that time because the media attention surrounding the two bills had softened. **When thinking about transgender issues, most Utahns are focused on gender-affirming healthcare for adults and minors. The issue itself is divided issue in Utah. Out of every five voters, one thinks that the current level of societal acceptance for transgender people is about right, two think society has gone too far, and two think acceptance has not gone far enough.**

In early 2024, the Utah Legislature passed HB 257, which restricted transgender individuals from using public school bathrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms of their gender identity as opposed to their assigned sex at birth.<sup>2</sup> Changing rooms and locker rooms were restricted in all other government-owned buildings.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, HB 303 was being discussed. Although it did not pass, HB 303 would have limited teachers from “endorsing, promoting, or disparaging certain beliefs or viewpoints” including gender identity, sexual orientation, and political and social viewpoints.<sup>4</sup>

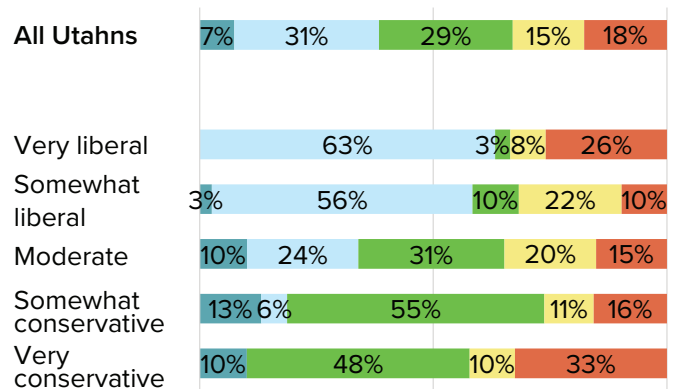
These two bills and the timing of the Utah Foundation’s initial survey were likely part of the reason transgender rights and access was among the top 17 issues of the 51 issues suggested.

When Utah voters think about transgender issues, most are considering access to gender-affirming healthcare. Liberal voters tend to focus on the accessibility of gender-affirming healthcare for adults, while conservatives tend to be more focused on gender-affirming healthcare for minors. Other concerns include transgender participation in competitive sports, transgender access to public facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms,

transgender issues being discussed in schools, mental health treatment for transgender individuals, and how accepted transgender individuals should be in society.

### Liberal voters are more concerned about gender-affirming healthcare for adults while conservative voters focus on minors.

Figure 1: “When Thinking About Transgender Rights and Access, What is Your Top Priority?”



- Transgender participation in competitive sports
- Access to gender-affirming healthcare for adults
- Minors (children under 18) undergoing medical gender transitions
- Public facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms
- Other

Source: Utah Foundation Survey.

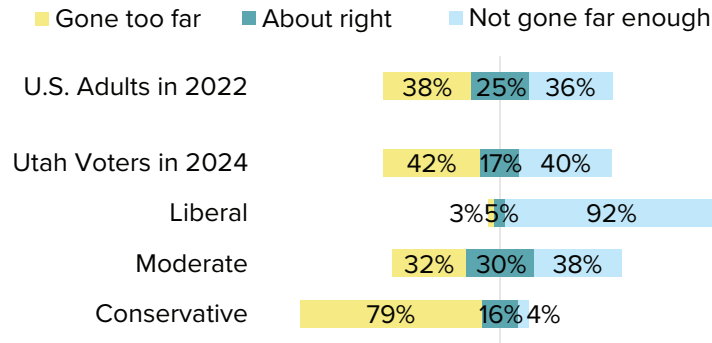
While the Utah Priorities Project highlights many issues that unite Utah voters, *transgender rights and access* is not one of those issues. Nearly 17% of Utah voters think the current level of acceptance of transgender individuals in society is about right, 42% of voters think acceptance has gone too far, and 40% think acceptance has not gone far enough. This is not dissimilar from a 2022 national survey from Pew Research, which found that 23% of U.S. adults considered the current level of acceptance

about right, 38% think it has gone too far, and 36% think it has not gone far enough.<sup>5</sup>

Religiously active, conservative, Republican, and Hispanic/Latino voters were more likely to say social acceptance has gone too far. Voters who prioritized transgender rights and access in the Utah Priorities Project were more likely to think societal acceptance has not gone far enough.

### Utahns are divided on the level of transgender acceptance in society.

Figure 2: Percent Who Say Society Has [choose one] In Accepting People Who Are Transgender



Source: Pew Research (2022), Utah Foundation (2024).

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This research brief was written by Research Director Christopher Collard with assistance from other Utah Foundation staff.

## Endnotes

1. McKellar, Katie, 2024, "Bill would require Utah teachers be politically 'neutral' in what they say and display in class," Utah News Dispatch, February 12, <https://utahnewsdispatch.com/2024/02/12/utah-bill-requires-teachers-be-politically-neutral/>; Gurr, Alessandra Haris, 2024, "Talk of some political beliefs in Utah schools limited with this proposed bill," KSL, <https://kslnewsradio.com/2073102/proposed-bill-limit-discussions-political-beliefs-in-utah-public-schools/>; Jarvis, Caroline, 2024, "Jarvis: Utah's sneaky 'don't say gay' bills", Daily Utah Chronicle, <https://dailyutahchronicle.com/2024/02/25/jarvis-dont-say-gay-bills/>; Beal-Cvetko, 2024, "Utah Legislature gives final approval to transgender bathroom bill after last-minute tweaks," Deseret News, <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2024/1/26/24052193/utah-legislature-gives-final-approval-to-transgender-bathroom-bill/>; Stern, Emily Anderson, 2024, "Fear of lawsuits shifts Utah lawmakers' approach to transgender bill," Salt Lake Tribune, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2024/01/24/certain-that-well-see-litigation/>; Seikaly, Simone, 2024, "Gov. Cox signs bathroom and diversity bills into law," KSL, <https://kslnewsradio.com/2076234/utah-gov-signs-bathroom-and-diversity-bills/>.
2. ACLU of Utah, 2024, "FAQs on HB 257: what people need to know about Utah's new bathroom law," ACLU of Utah, <https://www.acluutah.org/en/know-your-rights/faqs-hb-257>; House Bill 257: Sex-Based Designations for Privacy, Anti-Bullying, and Women's Opportunities, 2024 General Session, <https://le.utah.gov/~2024/bills/static/HB0257.html>
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5. Lipka, Michael and Patricia Tevington, 2022, "Attitudes about transgender issues vary widely among Christians, religious 'nones' in U.S." Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/07/07/attitudes-about-transgender-issues-vary-widely-among-christians-religious-nones-in-u-s/>

Special thanks to the following for providing project-based support:

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