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## New Ballpark Statistic: Stadium's Toilet Ratio

By [JOHN BRANCH](#)

If nothing else, \$2 billion worth of baseball ballparks should buy shorter waits for the restrooms, at least for women.

Waiting in longer lines has been an uncomfortable, if not unhealthy, reality for generations of women at places like stadiums, arenas and theaters.

Men may see relatively quick marches through the lavatories as a common joke.

Women view long lines as everything from a small irritant to a persistent form of gender discrimination.

But "potty parity" laws and ever-changing plumbing codes promise relief.

And in no place in New York City will those changes be felt more than in the restroom lines at the new Yankee Stadium and the [Mets' Citi Field](#), if things go according to plan.

It may be the biggest moment "for potty parity that we have seen, to have two big facilities open at the same time, and all these restrooms open at once," said Kathryn Anthony, a professor of architecture at the [University of Illinois](#) and a board member of the American Restroom Association.

Roughly 1,500 new toilet fixtures (water closets, in plumbing parlance, and urinals for men) await fans at the two ballparks, about a 30 percent increase at Yankee Stadium and a 10 percent increase at Citi Field, which holds about 12,000 fewer fans than [Shea Stadium](#) did.

More toilets are on the way for football fans, too. About 1,350 fixtures are planned at the new stadium for the [Giants](#) and [the Jets](#), scheduled to open in the New Jersey Meadowlands in 2010.

Potty parity does not always mean that there will be the same number of toilets for women and men. Parity is measured by wait times.

Studies show that women take about twice as long as men in the restroom. The reasons vary, from the obvious (the need to secure themselves inside a stall, shed more clothes and use toilet paper)

to the not-so-obvious (menstrual cycles and the increased likelihood, compared to men, of ushering small children).

Groups including the American Restroom Association and the World Toilet Organization view quick access to clean public toilets as no laughing matter. People with medical problems, including bladder or bowel dysfunction, may not be able to wait. Long waits can exacerbate other issues, including urinary-tract infections.

For years, women have most dealt with the consequences, if not the indignity, of waiting in long lines.

New York City passed a law in 2005 requiring that all new or significantly renovated places of public assembly — concert halls, arenas, Broadway theaters, stadiums and the like — have two women’s toilet fixtures for every one devoted to men. About half of the states and many municipalities have similar laws, with varying ratios, designed to offset the extra time that women take in the restroom and slowly undo decades of male-dominated design and construction.

“Until relatively recently, most architects, contractors, engineers, building-code officials and clients were not concerned about this issue,” Dr. Anthony said. “These were very male-dominated professions, and still are. They rarely contacted women about their restroom needs.”

New York’s law came as the city was overhauling its plumbing and building codes, much of which dated to 1968. The city based its plumbing code on the 2003 version of the International Plumbing Code, which has specific requirements for toilet fixtures for various types of buildings and occupancies. Almost always, women are to be supplied with more.

But because most assembly halls in the city are decades old, they generally lack in women’s restrooms. New construction provides a rare chance to make right.

The new Yankee Stadium, with a capacity of 52,325, needed a minimum of 358 women’s toilets and 176 men’s fixtures, of which no more than half could be urinals, according to the city Department of Buildings.

Generally, once the minimum requirements are reached, the mix of toilets can be tailored to the building’s needs. Studies show that baseball crowds lean slightly male. Stadium builders tend to meet the requirements and add a bunch of urinals.

The [Yankees](#) and their architects, Populous (formerly HOK Sport Venue Event, which also designed Citi Field), gave Yankee Stadium 369 women’s toilets, and 98 toilets and 298 urinals for men, according to the buildings department. Another 78 fixtures are in unisex bathrooms, designed for families or in luxury suites.

Citi Field, with a capacity of about 45,000, was required to have 303 women's toilets and 152 men's fixtures. It was designed with 374 women's toilets, and 111 toilets and 240 urinals for men.

At the new Meadowlands football stadium, where New Jersey dictates the use of the National Standard Plumbing Code, requirements called for at least 420 toilets for women and 277 fixtures for men.

The stadium will have 608 for women (nearly a 50 percent increase from Giants Stadium) and 704 for men (a more than 40 percent increase), including 523 urinals, according to the New Meadowlands Stadium chief executive, Mark Lamping.

Football crowds tend to be overwhelmingly male — the Giants estimate 70 percent at Giants Stadium — which is why most of the extra fixtures are for men.

But the best plans do not always work. Mr. Lamping and Populous are among those with experience in the difficulty of navigating codes and predicting fan behavior.

Mr. Lamping was the president of the [St. Louis Cardinals](#) when the new Busch Stadium opened in 2006 with 37 fewer toilet fixtures for women than men. That violated Missouri's law requiring a 1-to-1 ratio. The stadium was granted a one-year extension to create fixture equality — 334 fixtures for each gender.

St. Louis University — the city, apparently, is a nexus for confusion — ran afoul of the same law when it opened Chaifetz Arena last year. Like Busch Stadium, it followed codes, but the law said it had too many fixtures for women (120, compared with 103 for men). After debate and consternation, the slight gender gap was allowed.

The fear for any new building is that opening reviews could center on long waits at the restrooms for men or women. A renovated Soldier Field opened in Chicago in 2003 with longer lines for men. Five women's restrooms were converted to men's restrooms.

A similar thing happened in Nashville when the football stadium opened for the [Tennessee Titans](#) in 1999. Architects followed a 2-to-1 women-to-men ratio requirement. Men faced long lines while women breezed through restrooms. Rather than consider it payback victory for women, state lawmakers changed the ratio to 1.65 to 1.

Just what is the right ratio? Dr. Anthony, whose work on the subject includes a book titled, "Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession," and who wrote two years ago that restrooms "remain among the more tangible relics of gender discrimination," says it is at least 2 to 1. During exhibition games at the stadiums last weekend, there were no reports of clogged lines at the restrooms. But Dr. Anthony says she wants the

Yankees and Mets to clock the wait times and adjust accordingly.

“Ideally,” Dr. Anthony said, “nobody should have to wait at all.”

No, she does not live in New York.

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