

# California Will Require Large Retailers to Provide Gender-Neutral Toy Sections

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California became the first state in the nation Saturday to adopt a law requiring large retail stores to provide gender-neutral toy sections under a bill signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The new law, which takes effect in 2024, says that retail stores with 500 or more employees must sell some toys and child-care products outside of areas specifically labeled by gender. Retailers can continue to offer other toys and child-care goods in traditional boys and girls sections if they choose to.

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Campbell Leaper, a distinguished professor of psychology at UC Santa Cruz, said companies began using gender labels and pink and blue indicators to market products specifically to girls or boys during the 1940s and 1950s.

Research into developmental psychology says children become aware of gender categories as early as age 3 and are very sensitive to gender-based labels, he said.

“We know from a variety of different research once they have those categories in their heads and if you label something for girls or boys, children will often ignore it if it’s labeled for the other gender,” Leaper said.

Children use toys to practice skills that become helpful in their lives, and stereotypes around what toys are acceptable for girls and boys can lead to disparities among genders, he said.

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