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The Bureaucracy of Gender: Administrative Violence and Trans Resistance in America from 2015-2025

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**The Bureaucracy of Gender:
Administrative Violence and Trans Resistance in America from 2015-2025**

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Abstract

This case study examines how administrative systems distribute life chances through identity documentation requirements, focusing on transgender experiences in the United States from 2015-2025. Using critical trans politics theory and mixed methods—including policy analysis across 50 states, digital ethnography of r/asktransgender (809 posts), and interviews with transgender organizers – the research investigates how seemingly neutral bureaucratic processes create systemic and violent barriers for transgender people seeking to obtain identity documents that reflect their lived identities. Findings reveal that administrative violence against transgender people occurs at the federal and state levels, regardless of partisan control. The study documents extensive transgender solidarity networks providing mutual aid in all aspects of navigating documentation processes. This work advances understanding of how bureaucratic systems perpetuate settler colonial violence while highlighting transgender communities' remarkable resilience and resistance strategies

Key words: transgender, queer studies, critical trans politics, administrative violence, identity documentation, abolition, collective liberation

To my *beloved* trans siblings. To the trans elders whose resilience has fueled the queer resistance for decades. To the eggs who haven't hatched yet and the flowers who have yet to blossom. You are beautiful, you are worthy, and you are so loved. You deserve a world that cherishes you and flourishes with you. May we make it that way.



And for Dr. Ray Patt, my friend, research mentor, and biggest cheerleader. If you were still here, my graphs would have been prettier, my data analysis more sophisticated, and my life so much brighter. You were in my heart and my head with every word I wrote. Thank you for reminding me that I can do hard things. I hope I made you proud.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This case study investigates how administrative systems in the United States (US) classify, regulate, and enforce gender norms through various bureaucratic mechanisms, and how these systems create conditions of vulnerability for transgender people. Building on Dean Spade's work on administrative violence, this case study seeks to describe how seemingly neutral administrative practices create inequities and barriers for transgender individuals.

Transgender people in the United States face an ever-growing barrage of anti-trans legislation, hate crimes, and social alienation for simply existing. According to data from the Trans Legislation Tracker, an independent research organization tracking legislation in the United States, legislation aimed at restricting the rights of transgender people and children has proliferated over the past decade. In 2015, Trans Legislation Tracker documented a total of 21 bills filed across all 50 states and the federal legislature that sought to limit or revoke the rights of transgender people and children. As of April 2025, that number has skyrocketed to 859, representing a 3,990% increase in anti-trans legislation since 2015 (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2025). And that number could grow, as legislative sessions continue throughout the year.

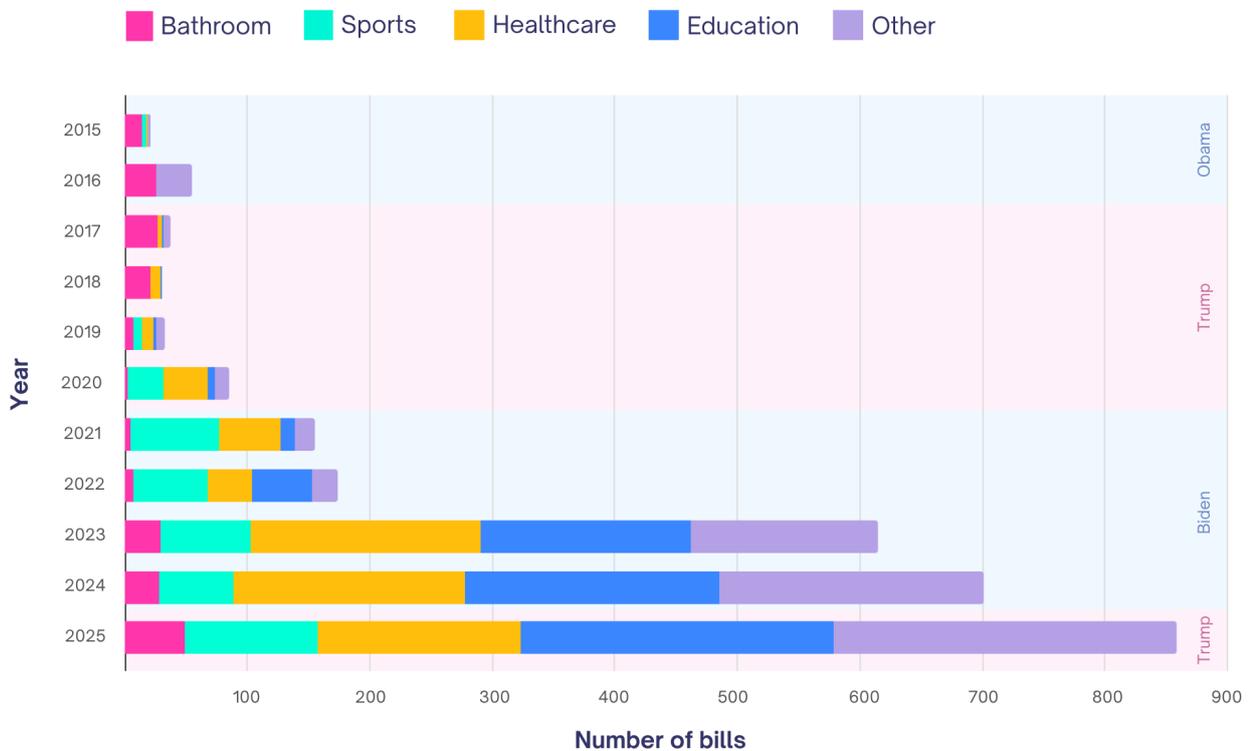
A decade ago, anti-trans legislation in the United States was largely centered around bathroom bans, which seek to limit which bathrooms people use, based on their (perceived) sex assigned at birth and/or genitalia (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2025). However, by 2020, bathroom bans became an almost negligible portion of anti-trans legislation, as sports bans, healthcare restrictions, and education bills became predominant topics of trans legislation (*Trans Legislation Tracker*, 2025). Notably, anti-trans legislation aimed at regulating healthcare for trans people largely insignificant until 2018, when they became a mainstay

portion of anti-trans bills, hovering around 25% of total anti-trans legislation since then (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2025).

Figure 1.1

Stacked bar chart with data collected by the Trans Legislation Tracker depicting the total number of anti-trans bills introduced each year from 2015-2025, by subject area.

Anti-Trans Legislation by Subject from 2015-2025



While existing literature and data collection has primarily focused on the political science and public policy implications of anti-trans legislation in the United States (Armstrong, 2017; Brightman et al., 2024; Crasnow, 2021; Greenwood & Pacey, 2023; Khonina & Salway, 2025; Quinan, 2025; Travers, 2024; Vedder, 2024; Wickel, 2023), this has mainly centered on the ways in which policymaking and gender interact. However academic

research on the *administration* of gender—how the government surveils and separates people based on gender — and how policies tied to gender are implemented—and how it critically impacts transgender people has remained largely untouched. Little research has been done on the implementation of such legislation and the impact that existing and seemingly neutral systems of public administration impart unequal harm on transgender people.

Existing literature examining gender and public administration largely focuses on a male-female binary and the experiences of cisgender men and women in the public sphere. Relevant literature that addresses the complex and nuanced experiences of transgender people is limited, with Dean Spade's 2015 book *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* as the most comprehensive literature on the subject.

The crux of the problem specific to gender administration for transgender people is that they experience "a series of interlocking problems related to being basically unfathomable to the administrative systems that govern the distribution of life chances: housing, education, health care, identity documentation and records, employment, and public facilities, to name but a few" (Spade, 2015). Beyond transgender people, these administrative hurdles particularly impact poor people, immigrants, and Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), with intersections of those identities compounding the degree of subjection an individual faces.

Research Question

This research seeks to contribute to the nascent academic literature on the convergence of gender, queer studies, and public administration through the lens of critical trans politics. The following research question guides the case study to describe transgender experiences in the bureaucracy of identity documentation in the United States:

RQ: How do administrative policy frameworks and partisan politics in the United States impact the experiences of transgender people in obtaining identity documentation that reflects their identity, and how do transgender communities resist and produce solidarity in response?

Organized as a case study, I will examine this question from the top down to the grassroots, examining political and policy dimensions of identity documentation in the United States from 2015-2025 on both the federal (passport, social security) and state (driver's license, state-issued ID) levels, and the state-level legal mechanisms for changing one's name. Zooming further in, I will seek information on the lived experiences of transgender people navigating name change and gender marker change procedures in the US through digital ethnography on the social media site Reddit and through interviews with trans organizers in the US who have gone through the process and supported hundreds of other trans people through these processes. I have architected a theoretical grounding in postcolonial, queer, critical trans, and abolitionist frameworks to develop a level of inquiry that synthesizes the findings in a critical discussion of the power structures and fundamental systemic oppression symptomatic of these processes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Historical Roots of Contemporary Gender Subjection

Postcolonialism: Settler Colonialism and Gender Policing as Nation-Building

As a nation built on settler colonialism and the genocide of Native peoples, the United States has a storied history of colonizing and policing gender as a tool of nation-building. Modern understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality arise in American culture as a function of the biopolitics of settler colonialism, in what Morgensen calls "settler sexuality" (2011; 65). Settler sexuality is "a white and national heteronormativity formed by regulating Native sexuality and gender while appearing to supplant them with the sexual modernity of settlers," essentially a mode of white supremacy that contextualizes modern queerness in relationship to how white settlers promulgated colonial heteropatriarchy (Morgensen, 2011). Speaking of sex, gender, and sexuality as a whole, Morgensen writes that, "modern sexuality was not a product of settler colonialism, as if it came into being in the United States after settlement. Rather, modern sexuality became a method to produce settler colonialism, and settler subjects, by facilitating ongoing conquest and naturalizing its effects. If this transpired in close relationship to Native people's institutionalized education in colonial heteronormativity, it arose more broadly in any promotions of sexual modernity within a settler colonial society defined by the seeming finality of Native disappearance and replacement" (2011; 83).

In the precolonial era, the status quo was not explicitly heteronormative and perceptions of gender were diverse and expansive (Morgensen, 2011). As a result, there was no conceptualization of what "queerness" was, as a deviation from the norm. During the colonial era, settlers introduced the concept of "queerness" as a means to subjugate Native populations for elimination and regulation (Morgensen, 2011).

This white nationalist sentiment, rooted in US settler colonialism, is still evident today, as settlers, particularly white gay cisgender men, often romanticize Indigenous notions of other genders and affirm their social belonging through Indigenous notions of two-spirit (2S). Seeking inclusion and political recognition in the settler society, white gay cisgender men in the US appropriated Native culture to claim a universal social minority while failing to acknowledge the systemic disappearance, reeducation, and murder of Natives and adapted those notions to claim the rights of settler belonging for themselves:

white men argued on behalf of all sexual minorities that their civil rights and national belonging were affirmed by berdache¹. This affirmation appeared in late-twentieth-century gay liberation and lesbian/gay civil rights organizing [...] Such claims motivated mid-twentieth-century U.S. sexual minority politics toward seeking political inclusion in a settler society that was still consolidating its rule over Native peoples, while framing Native peoples' importance to them as a disappeared history that non-Natives sought to incorporate as their own. The hegemonic effect of these discourses was to ground modern sexual minority identities and politics in the appropriation of Native culture by white men who then represented the sexual nature of a universal social minority. Despite appearing to reference to Native people, the activists' purpose was to define themselves in relation to a primitivity projected onto Native Americans whose disappearance they could recover and redeem. (Morgensen, 2011; 93)

This process served to validate the personhood of white cis gay male citizens by "translating primitive roots coded as Native American into white settler modernity and its hegemonic role in a multiracial capitalist settler society" (Morgensen, 2011; 89). While subsuming the acceptance of gender expansiveness within non-western cultures can provide hope for a world in which transgender people do not experience gender oppression, that risks assuming that transphobia is purely a colonial phenomenon (Roan, 2013).

¹According to the *Historical Dictionary of the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements*, berdache is "a colonist term used by French explorers who observed a woman or man in Native American culture who lived as either the opposite sex/gender or somewhere in between. These people were usually thought of as shamans and healers. Female berdache took wives, and male berdache took husbands; they were also recognized as guides and warriors" (Myers, 2013).

Conceptualizing Indigenous notions of gender is complicated by the lack or inaccessibility of pre-colonial narratives due to centuries of Native erasure, as well as the diversity of Indigenous practices across the continent. In modern discourse, Indigenous gender is often broadly categorized as two-spirit (2S), although that is not a universal term used by all tribes, as Morgensen explains:

Two-Spirit identity is a modern Native recollection of subjugated traditional knowledges that contests the terms of colonial modernity—in anthropological discourse, queer colonial desires, and the heteropatriarchy of settler and Native societies—through a resurgence of Native peoplehood. Yet, describing Two-Spirit with its many ascribed meanings as a Native queer modernity does not frame it only in terms of the present. By recalling and reimagining subjugated knowledges that exceed the temporality of settler colonialism, Two-Spirit does not merely imagine or invoke their existence but connects genealogically to their continuation through time. The multiplicity of languages, memories, and ontologies of embodiment, desire, kinship, and collectivity invoked by Two-Spirit already carried a power to provincialize Western universalisms (of sex, race, nation, humanity) and displace their imperialist ruses. (Morgensen, 2011)

Research on the use of gendered categorization as a tool of nation-building has been intertwined with the field of public administration insofar as that categorization contradicts the putative neutrality of bureaucracy. This happens through the process of both gendered racial categorization and racialized gender categorization (Spade, 2015). In the United States, these dual processes of subjection are enforced differently on racialized people: for example, there is no singular norm of womanhood, but rather norms that are imposed on people based on their race, class, nationality, or ability (Spade, 2015; 45).

The state uses the gendered racialization of society to promote formally neutral policies which nonetheless contain clear gendered-racialized consequences for the most vulnerable people. For example, Ronald Reagan caricatured Black mothers as “welfare queens” to scapegoat them for their poverty and gain public support for slashing welfare

programs in the 1980s (Baekgaard et al., 2023; Dow, 2015; Hancock, 2004; Kohler-Hausmann, 2015). At the end of the day, "support for these population-level programs is mobilized by the use of racist and sexist images that construct ideas of "us" and "them" – a national population that needs protection and constitutive others who are cast as threats and drains to that population" (Spade, 2015; 59). There is a constant necessity of othering part of the population, which has consistently occurred along racialized and gendered lines. Therefore, racialized gendered systems of categorization are a clear continuation of the settler colonialist and white supremacist roots of the United States.

Critical Trans Politics and Administrative Violence

This study is grounded in Critical Trans Politics (CTP), which rejects narrow legal equality frameworks in favor of examining how administrative systems distribute life chances. From the unique positionality of transgender people in the United States has emerged a new theoretical lens of CTP. Its foundations are rooted in critical race theory, abolitionism, postcolonialism, critical disability theory, theories on gender and the body, Foucault's repression framework, and a pointed critique of white feminist and gay and lesbian politics frameworks. CTP analyzes how administrative systems produce and manage gender categories that maldistribute security and vulnerability. In particular, CTP explains how administrative systems classify people in ways that invent and produce meaning for the categories they administer, and how those categories manage the population in ways that distribute security and vulnerability. In essence CTP views administrative systems as distributing life chances, not just "equality" (Spade, 2015; 11). This administrative categorization, because it affects the life chances of certain groups of people deemed undesirable by the settler colonial state, is what Spade refers to as administrative violence: racialized gendered categorization causes violent harm and systematically reduces the life

chances of those who are victims of such categories imposed by an administration. A central goal of CTP is an analysis of power that transcends what can be won within a legal system founded on capitalism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy, instead creating a shared imagination of a world wherein imprisonment, colonialism, immigration enforcement, sexual violence, and wealth disparities no longer exist (Spade, 2015; XVI).

CTP is rooted in an intersectional framework that recognizes multiple vectors of subjection, beyond just gender identity. Spade defines subjection as central to CTP analysis, to describe state systems of meaning and control, including but not limited to gender, immigration status, race, socioeconomic status, indigeneity, (dis)ability, and how those vectors indicate the impact that power has on how we view ourselves as subjects of such systems of control and categorization (Spade, 2015).

CTP explores the ways in which these vectors of subjection, not innate to an individual but rather imposed by the settler colonial state, compound and systematically redistribute the life chances of the people they impact (Spade, 2015). This framework builds on Kimberlé Crenshaw's Black feminist analysis of intersectionality, which observes how there are unique harms that occur at the intersections of subjections that are often overlooked by traditional feminist movements that center the white woman's experience as the norm (Crenshaw, 1990).

CTP argues that for trans people, the administrative classification of gender and the problems associated with not meeting population-level conventions of binary gender is a major vector of violence that impacts the distribution of life chances for transgender people (Spade, 2015). The consequences of ID discrepancies or inconsistencies are manifold, and trans people are uniquely at risk of such consequences due to name and gender marker changes. Spade writes that:

the use of gender as a category for sorting populations – something that is taken as neutral and obvious to most administrators – operates as a potential vector of vulnerability. In the context of massive administrative systems mobilized to produce and manage targeted populations, such as public welfare systems, criminal punishment systems, and immigration enforcement systems, trans people face particular vulnerability to displacement, violence, and early death (2015; 83-4).

When one is misclassified – for example, a trans woman is arrested but is sent to a men’s jail because her ID states that she is a male – it creates a vector of vulnerability unique to the transgender experience (Spade, 2015). Beyond interacting with police or carceral institutions, transgender people face vulnerability when interacting with anyone that requires an ID, such as when traveling, purchasing alcohol, or attending an age-restricted event. In any of these interactions, having an ID that does not match the presentation of the person carrying it establishes vulnerability for that person.

Since the War on Terror, US security and surveillance culture has continually increased, with individuals being compelled to sacrifice their privacy in the name of national security. For trans people whose immigration status and/or race puts them at risk of more intense surveillance, this difficulty compounds (Gillespie, 2015; Spade, 2015). Before the War on Terror, government agencies largely collected demographic data for their own internal use. However, in the post-9/11 security landscape, agencies are comparing data and seeking out mismatched information in the name of terrorism prevention (Spade, 2015). Spade theorizes that security policy is intertwined with the racialized nation-building goals of the government. The ultimate goal here is to protect the national subject the state deems worthy of protection – a national subject who views identity classification and verification categories as uncontroversial (Spade, 2015). Indeed, cisgender people – those whose gender assigned at birth matches their identity – rarely, if ever, stop to think before checking a box for male or female on a form. This perceived neutrality of security policy and its gendered implications

acts as a guise for enacting policies that in fact have severe impacts on transgender communities, and all communities deemed "other" than the national subject: white, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, able-bodied, American-born men (Spade, 2015).

Models of Perpetrator/Victim Power

"Power is not simply about certain individuals being targeted for death or exclusion by a ruler, but instead about the creation of norms that distribute vulnerability and security"

– Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Critical Trans Politics, Administrative Violence, and the Limits of Law*, (2015; 4)

It is within this context of the white supremacist settler colony that CTP examines the relationships of power, necessarily between perpetrator and victim, under the capitalist order. I will examine three models of perpetrator/victim power – (1) exclusion and subtraction; (2) disciplinary power; and (3) population management power – and explain how each of these models of power are leveraged against trans populations in the US.

The first model of perpetrator/victim power is exclusion and subtraction, which seeks to remove the victim of the power struggle from society, opportunities, health, or even life and is rooted in Foucault's theories of power (Spade, 2015; 51). This is "a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them," working to incite, monitor, and control the people under it (Foucault, 1976, p. 136). While this model of perpetrator/victim power is longstanding, CTP posits that there are other models of power that are crucial to understanding the landscape of settler colonial state power in modern society. An exclusion and subtraction model alone fails to resolve harm on a systemic level and adds two further

analyses of power that shape the theory and integrates this model as a part of a complex architecture of power and repression tactics (Spade, 2015).

Disciplinary power

Disciplinary power provides a critical complement to the power mode of exclusion and subtraction, by focusing on how racism, transphobia, sexism, ableism, and homophobia can operate through norms and produce ideas about groups of people and "proper" ways to exist in the world (Spade, 2015). The key technologies of disciplinary power are social institutions such as medicine, social sciences, or education, that teach, establish, and normalize certain standards of socialization (Spade, 2015). Categorization is the first step of establishing disciplinary power; only once the "others" have been established – the transgender, the addict, the immigrant – can society then establish norms and reinforce those norms against the "others" (Spade, 2015). This is critically a more internalized form of control, in some ways self-regulating: the norms produced by disciplinary power permeate every area of life to the broadest systemic standards of how we keep time, measure productivity, and come to identify and understand human life" (Spade, 2015; 55). Ultimately, within the disciplinary mode of power, whether or not norms of society are met is determined at the individual level, and is rendered less visible as so (Spade, 2015). If the norms of society are not met, one can face discrimination, shame, isolation, or other forms of social or state-induced punishment. In order to challenge the disciplinary mode of power, Spade offers three types of resistance strategies:

1. Exposing disciplinary norms as norms
2. Proposing alternative ways of being as legitimate
3. Focus on opposing norms that center whiteness, heterosexuality, gender binarism, standards of health and beauty, etc.

These strategies should be practiced simultaneously, and have clear roots in queer theory, which will be discussed in the following section.

Population Management Power

Finally, population management power (PMP) serves as a forceful, but understudied mode of power that distributes life chances among populations and leverages laws to enforce power and distribute those life chances. Technologies of population management power include taxation, social welfare programs, immigration policy, the census, ID programs, and essentially anything that impacts the population as a whole, typically under the framing of promoting the health or security of the state at large (Spade, 2015). This kind of power is central to the concept of the modern-day nation-state by pacifying a population and "producing population-wide regimes of authorized, standardized practice [that] produce and require the identification of 'othered' populations" (Spade, 2015; 57).

The production of PMP in the settler-colonial context of the American nation-state is complexly intertwined with gendered racialization and the mobilization of racism and sexism to construct the "us" — a nation-state in need of protection — versus "them" — others who are cast as threats and drains to the nation-state (Spade, 2015). The PMP model is particularly insidious in that it is leveraged to promote policies that are neutral at face value, but in practice serve to wedge the us versus them divide. In the context of the US, look to Republican claims that Latin American immigrants are taking white American jobs as a tool of promoting violent immigration restrictions. PMP is inherent to the concept of settler colonial statehood and necessarily establishes a hierarchy of identities for what is desirable versus what is a state threat (Spade, 2015). Under PMP, as opposed to disciplinary power, meeting the norms of society is not individual, but rather impacted by the methods of control and distribution established by the state and applied across subjects.

The perceived neutrality is strengthened in the eyes of the ruling class with the existence of anti-discrimination laws under the simplistic, isolated assumption that we made discrimination based on gender/race/religion/politics illegal (Freeman, 1978). The logic follows that discrimination is no longer a plausible problem, and if it is a problem, we now have a legitimate mechanism to rectify it. This logic is what Freeman describes as the perpetrator perspective, wherein the legal understanding of racism is so severely narrow that one must prove intent and action of the alleged perpetrator's individual discrimination (1978). This favors the perspective of the perpetrator, giving them the benefit of doubt, and places the onus of proving the perpetrator's intent and actual harm on the victim.

I will give an example that synthesizes Freeman's framework of discrimination law through a transgender perspective: say a transgender person applies to a job — their deadname² is on the application because they have not legally changed it — and when they show up in person for an interview, they present differently than the hiring manager was expecting. In the end they did not get invited back for the next round. The applicant was qualified, available, and eager for the position and they recall the shock and disgust on the face of the hiring manager when they walked in. In the end, someone with no experience in the field was hired for the job. While discrimination based on gender is illegal, if the trans applicant wanted to legally claim discrimination and seek legal rectification, they would have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that their gender was the deciding factor in why they did not move forward in the hiring process and that the hiring manager was intentionally transphobic in that decision. Unless they had a recording of the hiring manager admitting to it, it is a near-impossible burden of proof to achieve. The administrative, cognitive, and

² A deadname is the predominant terminology for referring to a name a trans person formerly went by but no longer uses. Postcolonial scholars, however, caution that this term is rooted in settler colonial ideology and propose a movement towards an explicitly anti-colonial trans vocabulary (Pehl, 2024).

emotional burdens of a lawsuit with such abysmal chances of success are simply not worth it – in effect, the law disincentivizes victims from taking legal recourse for discrimination.

Now imagine different vectors of subjection intersecting in this person's story, and how these further complicate the situation and harm the victim:

1. **Disability:** The applicant is experiencing severe gender dysphoria and is struggling with their mental health. The reaction of the hiring agent intensified that struggle.
2. **Poverty:** The applicant is unemployed and unable to pay the court and publication fees associated with changing their name. They need a job in order to afford the name change, in addition to basic living expenses.
3. **Immigration Status:** The employer was one of very few in the applicant's field that sponsors work visas for immigrants, and their visa requires sponsorship. They are now at risk of losing their status.

When we envision this situation through the lens of PMP, not only are the experiences of those harmed centered, but we expand the interrogation of possibilities for why harm occurred. It could very well be true that the hiring manager was not, in their true self, transphobic. But their reaction caused harm, and that reaction was rooted in a media-sensationalized, fear-mongered, propagandized societal interpretation of a class of people. Transphobia occurred, and the problem is bigger than the hiring manager.

PMP challenges the idea that individuals are individual victims of isolated bad events, instead positing that systemic architectures constructed on gendered racialization create seemingly neutral systems of power that in fact develop groups of "othered" people to maintain the us versus them mode of control (Spade, 2015). The challenge of CTP, therefore, is to conceptualize the intersections of population-level interventions of power and practices of gender classification to identify the ways in which controlling powers use gender as a

technology of population control. Critically, this investigation must not examine transness in isolation, but rather in the context of categorical systems derived from settler colonialism which distribute life chances (Spade, 2015).

To illustrate the difference between these three modes of power, consider the fact that predominantly-Black neighborhoods in the US are more likely to have had their property devalued, and as a result majority Black schools are underfunded because schools are funded based on property taxes (Potter, 2022; Turner, 2016).

The subtraction mode of power would suggest that that is due to bad ideas put into action by racist perpetrators; a racist city council implemented zoning policies that redlined Black people and devalued their properties.

Disciplinary power might suggest that Black people have the freedom to move anywhere they like and could take a number of measures to increase their property value or move to a better-funded school district. The norms of racism and the devaluation of Black people in American society are pervasive in this context, where racist interpretations of what Black people "should" do to improve their personal situation are rooted in ideas that Black people don't know any better or do not care enough to improve their own lives.

PMP differs, therefore, insofar as it considers school funding and where one is able to live as key factors of distributing life chances among populations. A critical PMP interpretation of this fact recognizes that differences in funding and educational outcomes for white and Black students are upheld by population-level interventions that have historically secured the accumulation of wealth for a small number of white people and ensured the inability to accumulate wealth for everyone else, particularly people of color. This mode of power is systemic, not just built by the people who write laws, but also academia that

pathologizes the “other” and internalized systems of power like racism, sexism, and transphobia that are held by Americans and promulgated by the media (Spade, 2015).

Resistance strategies therefore also look much different under the PMP, since they are focused on systems rather than individuals. Whereas in an individual discrimination model, resolving inequality might look like passing laws that punish people who discriminate on the basis of ability in hiring decisions, a population-level model recognizes that the mere existence of the able-bodied/disabled dichotomy is artificial and establishes underlying societal norms that distinguish us from them. Therefore, a PMP-based analysis of trans subjection asks us to find where and how the life chances of a society are distributed and then figure out how to compel redistribution (Spade, 2015; 64). Resistance under this model is a process, rather than a checklist. First, we must identify and analyze the use of gender as an administrative category – on a passport, within the prison industrial complex, in schools, in shelters and group homes, in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities. Then, we can cultivate understandings of the racialized-gendered mechanics of population-level interventions. It is only with this context and nuanced critical analysis that we can then formulate strategies for resistance that fundamentally and tangibly transform the harmful practices that shorten trans lives (Spade, 2015). The design of this study, as detailed in Chapter 3, follows the PMP of resistance in examining and answering the research question.

Queer Theory and Queer Identities

Queer is more than sexuality, gender, or community. It is an alternative way of existing in the world, one that constantly challenges – or *queers* – the norms of quotidian life and societal existence (de Lauretis, 1991). Queer, in this instance, is a verb; we take on the act of queering something – rather than simply being queer. Some aspects of queering are inherent and resilient products of the banes of queer existence. The idea of “queer time” is

perhaps one of the most pertinent examples of such: in the height of the AIDS epidemic, the horizons of possibility for gay communities were severely diminished. Under the ubiquitous weight of a constantly diminishing future, the gay community responded by emphasizing the present moment and living here and now (Halberstam, 2005). The queering of time also brought a new sense of freedom to the lives of the community, opening the potential of "a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" (Halberstam, 2005; 2). This is a real-world example of resisting disciplinary power: the gay community proposed and adopted new ways of existing in the world and perceiving time as legitimate. Thus, time was queered, and life fundamentally restructured in the strength of resilience.

A fundamental component of queer theory is that it is not a theory *about* queer people, but rather a practice of *queering* theory by exposing the assumptions of heteronormativity and cisnormativity, and highlighting their societal pervasiveness (Bacon, 2006; Butler, 2014; Halperin, 2003; Trentham, 2022). Queer theory has also been extended to the field of social sciences and academic research, with a growing body of literature on queering methodology. Tom Boellstorff offers developing emic theory as a method of queering methodology, arguing that researchers should develop theories that reflect the lived experiences of those they study (2010). The emic approach to theory considers the beliefs, values, and practices of a culture from the perspective of those who live within that culture, which offers research a unique lens of lived human experience (Boellstorff, 2010). Boellstorff also contends that queering methodology navigates a nuanced understanding of binary oppositions as unavoidable in human thought, such as the homosexual/heterosexual binary (2010). Rather than trying to transcend or deconstruct such binaries, Boellstorff offers that queer theorists should "surf" them, meaning recognize the social power of such binaries without treating them as universal truths (2010).

Ethnography, which will be leveraged as a methodology in this study, has also been the subject of queering in recent waves of ethnographic methodology academia (Lewin, 2016; Rooke, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2021) Queer experiences are inherently hard to identify and qualify because the nature of queerness is kaleidoscopic and fluid. Therefore, ethnography offers a toolkit for grounding theoretical comprehension in a social context (Rooke, 2009). Methodologically, that means the approach to research must acknowledge that queer identities and their meanings and manifestations are more than discursive formulations, but the actual lived practices of our neighbors, and there are real consequences associated with that (Rooke, 2009, pp. 27–28). This methodological practice is therefore also queer insofar as it is emic and centered on lived experiences (Boellstorff, 2010).

Sex, Gender, and Identity

Sex is often considered a binary option based on chromosomal, genital, and phenotypic characteristics of an individual: male or female. Chase describes the concept of bodily sex as referencing "multiple components including karyotype (organization of sex chromosomes), gonadal differentiation (e.g. ovarian or testicular, genital morphology, configuration of internal reproductive organs, and pubertal sex characteristics such as breasts and facial hair) (2006, p. 301). Sex is typically what doctors assign to an individual at birth (Elias & Shields, 2022). From here, the terms assigned-female-at-birth (AFAB) and assigned-male-at-birth (AMAB) emerge as a shorthand for describing sex designation, particularly for people for whom their sex designation at birth does not correlate to their current gender or sex identity.

However, this male–female dichotomy is largely a western concept complicated by the fact that the biological designation is not either-or, but rather spectral. This presents us with

the concept of intersexuality³, which is a term constructed to reflect the broad biological variation of sex. According to the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), "intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male." (*Intersex Society of North America*, n.d.). Because the term intersex encompasses a lengthy list of medical conditions or phenomena that account for the ambiguity of a person's sex, it is difficult to determine exactly how prevalent it is in society. The statistic most commonly cited by intersex advocacy organizations is that about 1.7% of the US population is intersex, which translates to about five million people at the time that data was synthesized (Blackless et al., 2000). However, this number is now a quarter of a century old, and no new data has been introduced to adequately update this number. We can assume that, if anything, this number is in actuality higher, considering the fact that intersexuality goes underreported due to stigma, the lack of a sex designation besides M or F on birth certificates, and that some people do not know if they are intersex until later in adulthood, if at all.

What we do know is that, according to data collected by a team of researchers in 2017, the vast majority of infants born with genital atypia or ambiguity had genitoplasty performed on them as infants (Nokoff et al., 2017). These findings are significant, particularly in considering the ethical implications, because the genitoplasty is not medically necessary but rather cosmetic, and the decision to perform the surgery was made by parents, not the individual undergoing care (Nokoff et al., 2017). Research focused on adults who underwent

³It is important to distinguish sex from sexuality here. Intersex(uality) is a designation of sex. Sexuality is "socially constituted, with heterosexuality produced as a norm through the production of homosexuality as its abnormal opposite [...] how sexualities [...] are understood entails and produces assumptions about what it is to be a man or a woman, or what it means to be masculine or feminine" (Taylor, 2016).) Examples of sexuality include homosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, etc. Examples of sexes are male, female, and intersex.

genitoplasty as an infant experienced negative effects throughout life, including medical harms, decreased sexual function, and physical and psychological trauma from the non-emergent and non-consensual surgeries (Carmack et al., 2016; Flewelling et al., 2022; Hart & Shakespeare-Finch, 2022; Jesus, 2018; Köhler et al., 2012; Rapp et al., 2021; Snodgrass & Bush, 2017). However, it is critical to note that "existing outcome studies have overwhelmingly focused on gender identity, surgical outcomes, and sexual orientation, rather than on broader quality-of-life issues, partially because physicians and researchers have viewed "correct" gender assignment and genital surgery as the most important aspects of treatment" (Karkazis, 2008, p. 218). It is again difficult to determine the exact prevalence of involuntary infant genitoplasty in the US due to the fact that there is no central database or data collection effort on the subject.

Whereas sex is, to a certain extent, a medical or biological designation of one's body, gender is a personal designation related to how one feels internally and presents externally. A person's gender identity, which may or may not correspond to one's sex assigned at birth, can be fixed or fluid. Gender modality is defined as the relationship between someone's current gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth (Lowik et al., 2025). The cisgender modality, as the prefix suggests, is when one's gender aligns with their assigned gender at birth (AGAB). The transgender modality⁴, therefore, is when one's gender identity is different from their AGAB.

Another important set of terms to demarcate are gender identity and gender expression. Gender identity is a deeply rooted, internal, and often central part of many

⁴For the purposes of this paper, identities such as non-binary, genderqueer, agender, genderfluid, demi-genders, polygender, queer, transsexual, and others fall under the umbrella term transgender. These identities are valid, and particularly useful and affirming for people of trans experience; however, naming or abbreviating all non-cisgender identities would be impractical for this paper considering the multiplicity of diverse gender identities.

people's sense of self, often considered a snapshot of how a person currently perceives their own gender to be. Gender expression is what everyone around us sees and perceives. Butler theorizes gender identity and expression as a performance under disciplinary power, summarizing them as "simply the result of repeated, compulsory performances of gender mandated by the constructs and socio-political norms of sex and sexuality" (Taylor, 2016). Butler's performative theory of gender intertwines well with indigenous theories and expressions of gender, particularly in literature that seeks to decolonize gender from western settler-colonial narratives.

Gender marker refers to an indication on an identifying document, typically either M for male or F for female, with some states offering an X option for those who do not wish to disclose their gender, or who do not identify with the M/F dichotomy. While a gender marker is often an indication of sex, the definitions of sex and gender used by each state vary, and therefore to avoid confusion, I will exclusively use the term gender marker to describe this designation.

Trans and intersex scholarship also has significant intersections with human rights studies, particularly in the context of depathologization. Depathologization – a queer response to the pathologization of queer identities – envisions sexual, gender, and bodily diversity as a human right, rather than a mental disorder or malformation (Davy et al., 2018, 2018; Kara, 2017; Suess et al., 2014, 2014; Theilen, 2014).

Abolition

Prison abolition is a key feature of CTP, as "there is no way that transgender people can ever be 'safe' in prisons as long as prisons exist" (Bassichis et al., 2011). With the largest prison population of any country in the history of humanity, the US prison industrial complex is a massive apparatus of state control and state violence. In fact, incarceration in the US is

the legalized extension of chattel slavery; the thirteenth amendment to the US constitution, the very amendment that outlawed slavery, carves out a crucial exception: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (*U.S. Constitution - Thirteenth Amendment | Resources | Constitution Annotated | Congress.Gov | Library of Congress*, n.d.). Carving out the exemption for slavery's persistence despite its perceived banishment therefore is a pervasive extension of anti-Black racism in America (DuVernay, 2016).

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is also leveraged as a tool of anti-trans sentiment in the US. A common phrase coined by the trans community is "walking while trans," which describes the pervasive experience, particularly of transgender women, of being stopped by police, harassed, demanded to show ID, and even arrested for low-level offenses that are often tied to an officer's suspicion of prostitution (Redcay et al., 2020; Carpenter & Marshall, 2017). Therefore, CTP places a large emphasis on reducing the capacities of the prison industrial complex with the end goal of its complete abolition. Focusing on decarceration, CTP advocates for increased access to adequate, safe drug treatment programming, rehabilitative alternatives to imprisonment, access to competent and trans-affirming counsel, access to resources for people coming out of incarceration to ensure transportation, housing, and economic stability to prevent recidivism, and direct support for people currently imprisoned (Spade, 2015).

Jenness and Rowland build upon this framework by introducing the concept of the transgender criminal legal system nexus, which is: "structured by White cisheteronormative assumptions that shape the structure and content of the criminalization of transgender bodies, people, and lives (2024, p. 283). They theorize that the ways in which state policy and

actors construct the administrative illegibility of gender nonconformance results in trans people disproportionately being controlled by institutions that are not designed for them, which often inflict further violence upon them (Jenness & Rowland, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

"Now, we've got to have some changes in this country. And not only changes for the black man, and not only changes for the black woman, but the changes we have to have in this country are going to be for liberation of all people—because nobody's free until everybody's free"

— Fannie Lou Hamer, from her speech delivered at the founding of the National Women's Political Caucus, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971 (Hamer, 2010, p. 136)

The concept of administrative violence further builds on existing public administration literature to address the ways in which administrative systems that are seemingly neutral in fact impart harm and unequally distribute life chances to the most vulnerable among a population. For transgender people, that means they are systematically deprived of opportunities and rights due to their illegibility to the law in areas where gender surveillance is imposed by the state (Jenness & Rowland, 2024; Spade, 2015). Administrative violence rejects the "general trend in neoliberal politics of denying that unequal conditions exist, portraying any unequal conditions that do exist as natural or neutral, and suggesting that key access or resource issues are a matter of individual 'freedom' and 'choice'" (Spade, 2015, p. 28). Instead, Spade argues that administrative practices in the US are anything but neutral, and in fact thinly veiled attempts by a neoliberal settler-colonial state to subjugate its population and maintain control (2015). The leverage of population management power by

the state and disciplinary power by the state and society are two key functions of administrative violence that guide my research.

My theoretical framing for this research is deeply rooted in abolition, not just of the PIC, but of all systems of oppression and settler colonial power. By constantly questioning *why* things are the way they are, we begin to unfold ideas of *how the world could be*. Queer theory, in this context, allows us to dream of a better world, and then develop resistance strategies to make it that way. With that in mind, I theorize that abolition and collective liberation go hand in hand – we cannot have one without the other. My belief in the possibility of a world in which all beings can thrive, where subjection is replaced with liberation, is a driving force in the inquiry of this research. Trans people are suffering in the US, and they are subjected to violence at every facet of their existence. But what if the world loved trans people? What would that look like? My research aims to take on the PMP resistance framework in an attempt to structure these inquiries, so that we may collectively resist, embolden our networks of solidarity, and radically build towards a world of collective liberation.

A final tenet of my theoretical framework is an expansion of this concept of collective liberation. The manifesto of the Combahee River Collective (CRC), a Black feminist organization active in the mid-1970s through 1980 in Boston, serves as the guiding thought on collective liberation. Their analysis of the world is explicitly Marxist, demanding that “the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy” (Combahee River Collective, 1977). What is missing from the CRC manifesto is an explicit exploration of gender – sexism and heterosexism are identified as vectors of subjection within American society, but the analysis remains rooted in the gender binary. In this respect, my theoretical framework aims

to queer the CRC's concept of collective liberation and expand its applications beyond the gender binary, while still surfing that binary and recognizing its role in the subjection of trans society.

The queering of theory and academic standards is prominent throughout this study as part of a deliberate attempt to uproot and question prevailing norms. For example, instead of giving pseudonyms to the trans people who were interviewed for this study, they have all been asked to choose a drag name for themselves. Drag is a symbol of queer resistance, particularly within the Trump era (Greenhalgh, 2018), and wearing queerness on one's sleeve while having to shield one's identity for their own safety, is in itself an act of queer resistance. Queering academic vocabulary and replacing sterile words with charged, explicitly queer concepts, is in itself an act of resistance in this framework.

Positionality

It is important to disclose my own positionality in this research since my interest and investment in the topic stems from my experiences in queer communities. I am a cisgender, white, queer, American citizen researching for my Masters degree in Public Administration in the Netherlands. My interest in this topic stems from my relationships with transgender family, friends, and community. However, as a cisgender white woman, regardless of my proximity to the trans community, I am not part of it and therefore have inherent biases, as I operate in society through a cisgendered lens. Analyzing qualitative data will inherently reflect these biases.

To address these biases, I am continually examining and re-examining my positionality and following the lead of many sources that provide guidelines for cisgender people conducting research on trans topics. Trans standpoint theory (TST) offers guidance here by highlighting academic knowledge as socially situated and that trans people have a level of

awareness about trans issues that cis people simply do not have (Galupo, 2017; Gleisberg et al., 2024; Veale, 2017). TST posits that, especially for cis people, we must base our inquiry on the perspectives, voices, and experiences of trans people (Gleisberg et al., 2024, p. 45).

Therefore, my theoretical research and review of relevant academic literature prioritizes trans scholarship, written by people who identify as transgender. Reading, citing, and fully considering research conducted by trans people is critical in academic research, according to TST (Galupo, 2017). I also look to queer theory and queer methodology for guidance on constant inquiry of why norms exist, who they serve to benefit, and seek out and uplift those who say they are harmed by those norms and imagine ways of queering existence to a greater benefit.

I have also sought feedback and guidance from trans people from start to finish, and who have recommended readings, theories, and inquiries that have led me through this process. Their continued feedback has been crucial in helping me untangle my own cis biases from the research I seek to conduct. Recognizing that this labor is an undue burden on the trans people from whom I have asked to share their experiences and time, I am extremely grateful for their support: thank you to Chamomile, Dillon, and Lizzie, for sharing your trans wisdom. My goal with this research is to contribute to the nascent academic body of public administration and transgender experiences in the hopes that eventually we will together build a world in which all trans people are liberated and thriving.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I have designed this research as a case study to examine the social, cultural, and political nuances associated with the treatment of transgender people in the US. Because the theoretical framework for this study emphasizes a deep analysis of the context of a situation, a case study is the best methodology for understanding the nuances of this situation as it is. Whereas taking a comparative approach could offer unique insights, it would diminish the uniquely American context in which the anti-trans sentiment is happening. Violent discrimination against trans people is evident in several places throughout the world. But that violent discrimination is especially prominent and growing in American society and therefore merits the scrutiny of a case study. In addition, a lot of the vocabulary surrounding gender is unique to the English language. For example, the third person singular pronoun they/them/theirs is utilized by many trans people who do not resonate with gendered pronouns such as she/her or he/him. But in languages that are more gendered, such gender-neutral pronouns do not exist. Therefore, the linguistic bounds and conceptualizations of trans existence vary widely between linguistic cultural dominations. It is for these reasons that I have selected a case study methodology.

This research situates itself within the discipline of public administration through the lens of CTP, an area of ever-increasing importance but with very little existing literature. This paper will seek to build upon Spade's 2015 foundations of CTP and the administration of gender to describe the existing structures of gender policing in the US from 2015-2025 and how the administration of gender inflicts violence upon the transgender population, increasing with the number of vectors of subjection they face. Employing an embedded case study design, I will examine the domain of identity documentation and how it is used to

enforce gender binarism in the United States, and the resistance strategies leveraged by transgender communities in navigating bureaucracies.

The parameters of the case will be examined from the beginning of 2015 up until April 29th, 2025. This time parameter has been set for several theoretical, political, and logistical reasons. This period encompasses four executive administrations: the last half of the Obama administration, the first Trump administration, the Biden administration, and the first 100 days of the second Trump administration – this offers a unique Democrat-Republican-Democrat-Republican pattern in the ruling party of the executive branch. The first 100 days of a presidential administration has, since the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, been viewed as a crucial bellwether of an administration's goals and intended accomplishments (Rice et al., 2021). Given significant developments in the second Trump administration's first 100 days in office regarding transgender people, I chose to also include it in this study. In addition, the final half of a two-term presidency, in this case the Obama administration from January 2015-January 2017 is also often regarded as a high time for legislative output, as the administration seeks to cement their legacy. Covering a decade of policy, both public and administrative, this case study seeks to understand the modern landscape of gender surveillance and administrative violence against transgender people in the United States through a public administration lens. Another reason for this temporal parameter is because it marks the beginning of data collection on transgender people, transgender youth, and transgender people facing incarceration. Before 2015, there is very little data on the trans population in the US.

Analysis will span both state- and federal-level administrative checkpoints that impose gender surveillance in necessary and/or forced ways. Before identifying the specific data

collection and analysis plan for each case, I will first briefly introduce the institutional framework of the case.

Institutional Framework: Identity Documentation

The focus of this research is on identity documentation (ID), and the processes for changing both the name and gender marker on critical IDs including driver's licenses, social security cards, and passports. Transgender people face unique barriers to accessing these kinds of official documentation in the case that they wish to change their name or gender marker. The existing landscape for changing identity documentation is difficult to generalize since most of these are issued at the state level and therefore have 50 different sets of rules for if and how one can make changes. While changing your legal name is possible in every state, many states have laws mandating the name change must be publicly published or have complex judicial processes for bypassing the requirement. Only some states allow people to change the sex designation (M or F) on their ID, with some requiring a doctor's note, or even proof of a medical transition. And while some states have introduced an X designation for sex on certain forms of ID, the Trump administration has issued an executive order saying they do not recognize forms of ID with an X on them (Exec. Order No. 14168, 2025).

This case study will explore both federal and state level architectures for identity documentation procedures. In addition, the processes for changing one's name will be collected and analyzed across both levels to identify the administrative processes transgender people must go through. Navigation strategies to be examined in this case include document inconsistency tactics, bureaucratic appeals, and strategic disclosure. Particular focus will be on areas where the policy for changing identity documents to better reflect one's identity (i.e. name and gender marker) has changed in the last decade, how

those changes were implemented (legislation, department policy, court rulings, etc.), and under what political circumstances those changes occurred.

Partisan Score

For each state, I have compiled data to calculate a partisan score to determine whether there is a relationship between partisanship and a change in policies related to gender marker and name changes on IDs. Using Ballotpedia's historical data of state government trifectas (the partisan majority in each of the upper and lower chambers of a state legislature and the political party of the Governor) from 2015-2025, as well as state voting outcomes in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections, I compiled a state- and federal- level partisan score for each state. For each year between 2015-2025, I noted which party was in control of the lower and upper chambers of each state's bicameral legislature, and which party the Governor was a member of, to gain a picture of the state-level partisan makeup. Equal weight was given to each chamber and the executive branch.

To calculate the state-level partisanship score (SLS), I first calculated the percentage of years that Republicans controlled each chamber of the legislative branch and the executive branch by adding up the total number of years of control for each party in each state and dividing by 33 (11 years each for the lower chamber, upper chamber, and governor). I then performed the same calculation for the percentage of time Democrats were the majority party. Nebraska and DC are exceptions for this methodology, since Nebraska has a unicameral state legislature, and DC does not have a legislature, since it is not a state. In the case of DC, it does not have a state-level score. For Nebraska, its state-level percentages were calculated using only one chamber; therefore, the total number of years to divide by was 22, rather than 33 for the rest of the states. In this study, the SLS is indicated next to a state name in the following format:

(SLS= [__%] [R or D])

where the percentage indicates the percentage score of majority party rule, and either R or D indicates the majority party in that state. In the two mixed states, the percentages for both parties are provided. The percentages of R and D may not always add up to 100% due to periods of Independent party rule, or a split legislature.

To calculate the presidential partisanship score (PS), I tallied how each state voted in the presidential elections of 2016, 2020, and 2024. If a state voted for the same party in each of those elections, they are considered a solid Republican (R) or Democratic (D) state. If a state voted for different parties across this time period, then they are categorized as a swing state, and a tendency (Swing-R/Swing-D) is noted.

The full database of partisan history and scoring can be found in Appendix A.

Empirical Evidence

Documentary evidence is a major source of data for this research. Government policies and regulations regarding gender classification and the historical changes in administrative gender policies will be instrumental. A temporal analysis will be employed to analyze the fluctuations in policies to discern possible factors contributing to any changes. In addition, forms and applications requiring gender identification, and any corresponding agency guidelines for handling gender markers and changes will be collected in each case. A potential complicating factor in this data collection will be the fact that the Trump administration is currently wiping all references or acknowledgement of transgender people from government websites, so in some cases internet archives such as the Wayback Machine will be necessary to uncover such information.

Database 1: Driver's Licenses – Gender Marker Changes and Options

In the United States, the primary form of state-issued ID is a driver's license. While the primary purpose of a driver's license is to permit the holder to legally drive, it also is viewed as a legitimate form of ID for all kinds of quotidian activities: entering an age-restricted venue like a bar, domestic air travel, and obtaining other kinds of ID. Driver's licenses contain information including a person's legal name, birth date, address, eye color, and sex or gender. State IDs are similar to a driver's license insofar that the information they convey is often identical, as are the protocol and paperwork for applying for each (aside from confirming driving capabilities). For this study, because a driver's license is more common than a state ID, I speak solely of driver's licenses.

For transgender people, they face unique barriers in obtaining an ID that matches their identity if their AGAB differs from the sex or gender they identify with or present as. In addition, their ID may have their deadname on it – a name that they no longer use, that can often be seen as triggering or a reminder of a person they are not (Sinclair-Palm & Chokly, 2023). They risk outing themselves if they need to present an ID that does not match how they look or identify, which presents a heightened risk to trans people living in states with so-called Trans Panic Defense Laws. Trans panic laws are laws that "seek to partially or completely excuse crimes such as murder and assault on the grounds that the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant's violent reaction" (American Bar Association, 2013, p. 1). As of 2025, the majority of states – 30 out of 50 – allow such defenses as permissible in court (Movement Advancement Project, 2025). Essentially, this means that in most parts of the country, a transgender person could be assaulted or murdered, and their perpetrator could be excused for their crimes based on the claim that they perceived the victim to be transgender. Since a driver's license is an essential and

primary form of ID for the majority of people in the US, transgender people are uniquely disadvantaged and at risk simply by having an ID that does not match their presentation or identity.

The starting point for creating this database is from the independent, non-profit think tank Movement Advancement Project (MAP), who publish the report titled *Identity Document Laws and Policies: Gender Markers on Driver's Licenses* (2024), which compiles two sets of data for each state and the District of Columbia (DC)⁵: (1) the procedure for changing the gender marker on a driver's license; and (2) the options available for the gender marker. The first is coded on a scale from 1 to -1, with seven options among them, specifying the level of ease (1) or impossibility (-1) of changing your gender marker in that state. The latter is coded as either 0.5 – there are options to mark your driver's license as M (male), F (female) or X (uncategorized, rather not disclose, non-binary, etc.) – or 0 – meaning there are only M or F options for driver's licenses.

While MAP has compiled documentation of these policies, their information is incomplete, not always up-to-date, and in some cases the links to relevant forms and policies are no longer available online. Due to the aforementioned Trump administration's efforts to erase the existence of policies regarding transgender people, as well as the constantly changing nature of these policies in several states, there are significant gaps and several broken links in the existing MAP data. Because of these issues, MAP's report serves as a guide for my data collection, particularly with the coding system for process and options, as

⁵ MAP also reports the relevant policies and options for the US Territories of American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. However, I have made the decision to not include the US Territories in my research and database, since there is very little relevant information available. In addition, given their status as US Territories, the IDs offered to people there come with different rights and privileges than that of a US citizen residing in the 50 states or D.C. While the existence of transgender people in the US Territories is indisputable, and their right to ID that correctly aligns with their identity is incontestable, it is beyond the scope of this study.

detailed in the table below. Therefore, I started with the information published by MAP, then cross referenced their citations, fact checked each entry and built out a database that includes not only the current (as of April 2025) policies of each state, but also significant changes to the process of changing gender marker on a driver's license or the options for gender markers available. I then coded them based on the categories and scoring below:

Table 3.1

Definitions of Process Category scores and Option Category scores for Driver's Licenses and State-Issued IDs

Process Categories and Scoring System	
Score	Description
1	State uses easy to understand form and does not require any provider certification
0.75	State uses easy to understand form and requires provider certification, accepted from a broad range of licensed professionals
0.5	State uses easy to understand form and requires provider certification, accepted only from a limited range of licensed professionals
0.25	State has no form. No proof of surgery or court order required but does have burdensome process requirements and/or required provider certification accepted only from a limited range of licensed professionals. [Note: in these states, a court order may be an available method to change a driver's license, but alternative options such as a physician's letter are also available.]
0	State has unclear, unknown, or unwritten policy regarding gender marker changes
-0.75	State requires proof of surgery, court order, and/or amended birth certificate
-1	State does not allow for changes to gender marker on driver's license

Option Categories and Scoring System	
Score	Description
0.5	State allows residents to mark M, F, or X on their driver's license
0	State only allows residents to identify as male or female

In addition to this information, my research will seek to identify the relevant changes in policies and procedures for changing the gender marker on a driver's license over the past

decade. Then, that information will be coded to determine whether a state's policies have remained the same, made positive progress, negative progress, or have gone back and forth between positive and negative progress between 2015 and 2025. I will also determine the relevant agency, bureaucrat, judicial authority, or other agent who is in charge of issuing driver's licenses and creating the relevant policies, since this varies greatly between states.

Finally, I will supplement this data with the partisan makeup of each state's government using the SLS scores as calculated above. The full database is available in Appendix A, and a summary of the landscape across the country, followed by detailed accounts of states with significant changes in their policies will be detailed in the Chapter 4.

Database 2: Name Change Procedure

The second database will compile each state's procedure for officially changing one's name. While there are federal procedures for changing one's name, starting with the Social Security Administration, each state has different procedures for starting that process at the state level. Compared to changing gender markers on IDs, changing a name is fairly accessible and possible in every state. This is likely due to the fact that there are other non-gender related reasons for people to change their name, such as marital status.

This database will be founded in the research compiled by MAP and released in their report titled *Identity Document Laws and Policies: Name Change Laws (2025)*. Their report contains information on the procedure for changing an individual's name in each state and codes it on a scale of 1, 0, and -1, where 1 corresponds to no requirement for publishing a name change, 0 corresponds to unclear publication requirements or some degree of waiving the requirement, and -1 corresponds to a limited or no ability to waive the requirement of publishing the name change. Whether or not a name change must be published in a publicly available space (most often a county newspaper) is often a matter of privacy for transgender

people who risk being outed as transgender, or their safety from transphobic people in their lives. While many people change their name for marital purposes (marriage or divorce), transgender people have unique, personal reasons for changing a name and therefore have a different level of sensitivity necessary when it comes to publicizing their information.

Table 3.2

Process score descriptions for name change processes.

Categorizations	
Score	Description
1	State law does not require publication of name change announcement (Note, this may include states that typically require publication, but have explicit exceptions for gender-identity related name changes)
0	State law has unclear publication requirement, or requires publication but allows individual court discretion and/or broad option to waive requirement
-1	State law requires publication of name change announcement, and/or includes only narrow option to waive requirement

Similarly to the first two databases, I will first fact check and update all information compiled by MAP and translate it to my own tabular format. Then, I will research the relevant policy changes over the past decade and code the changes in terms of a positive, negative, or mixed/back-and-forth impact on transgender people. The summary of process score by state is available in Appendix B, and a summary of the landscape across the country, followed by detailed accounts of states with significant changes in their policies will be detailed in the findings chapter.

Resistance and Solidarity Strategies: Interviews with Trans People

I conducted interviews with two transgender people in the US with the goal of hearing firsthand accounts of the name change and gender marker change process and resistance

and solidarity practices among the transgender community in navigating the bureaucratic structures entangled in ID systems. Both interviewees identify as transgender and are American citizens currently residing in the US who have updated their IDs to reflect their identity. They have each chosen a drag name to protect their privacy. Shira (they/them) a transfeminine person who has "genderqueer tendencies" is based in Massachusetts (MA) and has helped hundreds of trans people across the country to change their IDs between the reelection of Donald Trump in November 2024 and his inauguration in January 2025. Hannah M. (she/they⁶) who identifies as genderfluid and nonbinary, has also helped several people navigate the name change and gender marker change process in Virginia (VA) during that time period. While Hannah and Shira are far from a representative sample of the trans community, their insights from personally changing their ID and helping other trans people do so sheds critical light on the lived experiences of transgender people in the US. The interviews seek to understand who is seeking support, why they are doing so, how mutual aid networks are being leveraged to support trans people in the current moment and over the past decade, and challenges faced by trans people in the bureaucratic process. The interview protocol and questions asked of Shira and Hannah are available in Appendix C.

Digital Ethnography and Thematic Analysis: Documenting Trans Experiences with IDs on the r/asktransgender online forum

Due to safety concerns for trans people in the US, particularly under the current Trump administration, it is particularly challenging to collect novel data on trans experiences. However, that does not neutralize the imperative of witnessing and archiving transgender experiences. In fact, in the face of increasing hostility, the imperative only grows stronger.

⁶She/they pronoun designation indicates that a person would like to be referred to both with she/her/hers and they/them/theirs pronouns. I switch back and forth between these pronouns throughout the paper when referring to Hannah.

The methodology of digital ethnography and thematic analysis of online posts was selected specifically to account for safety concerns while still centering the voices and experiences of trans people who have already consented to publicly sharing their experience on online forums. The goal of utilizing digital ethnography in this research is to triangulate existing research and reporting on the transgender experience with ID changes and to validate the implications that strict name and gender marker change policies have on trans individuals. Furthermore, it seeks to identify resistance and mutual aid strategies focused on IDs that trans communities use to support each other in navigating relevant bureaucracies.

Reddit was chosen as the platform of observation in this research because it is a unique social media platform that is specifically geared towards information sharing. The site is organized in communities called subreddits, centered around a specific topic where people can share text or multimedia content, ask questions, and have discussions. The platform is largely discussion-based and has numerous existing subreddits with frequent, heavy traffic that are dedicated specifically to trans communities. An inherent shortcoming of this methodology is the inability to independently confirm all of the posts and experiences posted online and the identities of those posting.

The online community that is the subject of this ethnography is *r/asktransgender*, a subreddit page that has over 358,000 members as of April 29, 2025, and is one of the top 1% most popular subreddits on Reddit. The page description lists the purpose as: "Questions and discussions about, for, to, or from the Reddit transgender community. Open to anyone with a question." The first rule listed on the page is that all posts should be relevant, inclusive, and encourage discussion — the latter of which is especially applicable to the goal of observing resistance and solidarity patterns among the transgender community. This page

was selected over other similar subreddits due to its longevity since 2009, its explicit focus on questions asked to the trans community, and its status as the largest such forum.

The inability to export Reddit discussion threads into a compatible tabular format confined the scope of this study to just one subreddit because of the time it takes to manually copy that data. In order to find relevant posts, searches were conducted directly on r/asktransgender for the following terms: ID, license, gender marker, name change, social security, and passport. All relevant posts were copied into a spreadsheet (available in the Case Study Database), along with the date of the original post, and brief notes indicating the general themes of each post. Each post is marked with which search term produced it. In cases where posts showed up in multiple searches, only the first search that produced that post is indicated. The link to each post was also captured. To account for posts being removed, edits, or other changes beyond the scope of this study occurring, a corresponding pdf of each full discussion thread as it appeared online at the time of observance was captured and is available in the Case Study Database. The benefit of capturing a pdf version of each post is it captures the flair below their username, which is a tag where they can indicate relevant identifying information. For many users on r/asktransgender, this includes their gender identity, age, and even transition history.

While r/asktransgender is not explicitly for trans Americans, the searches conducted generally led to posts that indicate a person's general location, down to the state they live in, which matches with the geographical scope of this study. Posters that explicitly stated they were based in another country were excluded, as well as posts that contained language suggesting the poster was not in the US (i.e. referring to living in a 'province' or using British English words, such as 'surname'). A total of 809 posts were identified that met the geographical and temporal restrictions of this study.

From there, a two-fold coding methodology was utilized to code, analyze, and interpret the data. The first phase was open coding, wherein I identified meaningful units in each post, often regarding the purpose of the post, any specific elements of the post that help identify or complicate the user's situation (such as immigration status, whether they were a minor, etc.). Then, after open coding all 809 posts, I conducted a second coding step to evaluate and categorize the meaningful units identified during open coding. During step two, I identified four thematic areas, and a fifth theme for miscellaneous areas that I found were prevalent or important to code during the first read through.

1. **Purpose:** refer to the purpose of a post and the main question or reason the user is posting
2. **Subject:** refer to the subject of a post beyond the initial search terms; this excludes references to IDs
3. **Status:** specify relevant status indicators of the user that impact the information they give and receive
4. **Political:** refer to relevant political events mentioned in a post
5. **Miscellaneous:** other relevant codes that do not fit an above thematic area

Table 3.3

Codes associated with each thematic area, sorted by the frequency with which they appeared.

Purpose (n=8)	
Code	Instances
Process Questions	500
Community Questions	150
Validity Questions	78
Advice	75
Legal Questions	58
Sharing Experiences	39
Community Updates	26
Call to Action	2

Status (n=5)	
Code	Instances
Minor	23
Trans Refugees	9
Immigrant	7
Emigrant	3
Homelessness	2

Political (n=2)	
Code	Instances
Executive Order 14168	30
Election	17

Subject (n=13)	
Code	Instances
Travel	53
X Gender Marker	36
SLB Issues	14
Moved	13
Medical Requirements	8
Education	6
Taxes	6
Marriage	5
Employment	4
Health Insurance/Medicaid	4
Car Insurance	2
Inheritance	2
Adoption	1

Misc (n=2)	
Code	Instances
Fear	91
Legal Gray Area	15

Other Data Collection

Formal studies and evaluations related to the purpose of this study will also be utilized to examine the specific impact on transgender people, where government data is unavailable or incomplete. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) is the largest and most recent

publicly available survey of transgender individuals in the US, and the data will be used to illuminate and supplement other documentation data. While the USTS was also administered in 2022, the full dataset has yet to be published as of the time of writing. Limited data has been published through the Early Insights Report, and that data will supplement the original 2015 survey results in my analysis. The Early Insights Report contains some relevant statistics regarding healthcare, incarceration and policing, and identity documentation. Relevant data available from both the 2015 and 2022 USTS will be compiled and compared to determine any significant changes over the years.

The Center for Disease Control also issues an annual survey, compiled in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, which has begun collecting data on transgender middle and high school youth. In addition, Bureau of Justice statistics data, health care access statistics, and credit and financial data related to name changes will be collected and synthesized in this research. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data from the National LGBTQ Prisoner Survey conducted by Black and Pink National and from the Vera Institute of Justice, the Advancing Transgender Justice: Illuminating Trans Lives Behind and Beyond Bars report will be used specifically for the sex-segregated facilities case study.

Determining the prevalence of trans people in American society is extremely difficult for several reasons, and to date, no solid evidence exists to demonstrate a real number of trans people in America. The biggest challenge in this data collection is the fact that the US Census Bureau does not collect information on transgender identity – and even if they did, it could pose a threat to transgender people to answer questions on gender identity truthfully, as they could face persecution by the government. Especially since the Trump administration does not recognize the existence of transgender people, I do not expect to see this kind of tabulation any time soon.

Another significant barrier in collecting inclusive gender demographic data is that there is no standard way to collect that data or to write questions that accurately and completely capture gender identities. Gallup, one of the largest polling nonprofits in the US, has tested out different question sets to identify which most accurately captures gender identity data, and how different questions produce different results (Marlar, 2023a, 2023b; Marlar & Willcoxon, 2023). Gallup's methodology testing resulted in different ways of calculating whether someone was transgender by collecting AGAB data and gender identity data, then comparing whether or not these match, as per the definition of trans used in this paper. However, this categorization of transgender does not always match the ways a person personally identifies (Marlar & Willcoxon, 2023). They further conclude that researchers should not collect data regarding AGAB unless it is relevant to the research (Marlar, 2023b). Simply put, there is no standard methodology for collecting inclusive gender demographic data.

Despite these methodological challenges, several researchers, pollsters, and non-profit organizations have attempted to calculate or estimate the number of transgender people living in the US. The Williams Institute has compiled the most comprehensive estimates of trans populations by age, state, and race/ethnicity, declaring approximately 1.3 million adults identify as trans in the US, and an average of 0.5% of US adults (Herman et al., 2022). Their methodology relies on data provided from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRSS), the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), and "advanced statistical modeling" (Herman et al., 2022). The numbers in the BRSS and YRBSS, however, are likely under-representative of the trans population due to hesitance of individuals to officially disclose their transgender status to the US government. This is supported by the fact that polling data conducted by Gallup and Pew Research Center have estimated that 1.3% and

1.6% of US adults, respectively, identify as transgender, indicating upwards of 4 million adults in America (Jones, 2025; Brown, 2022). These numbers are still likely lower than the actual population of transgender people in the US considering safety and privacy concerns of transgender people in officially reporting their status.

Because the Williams Institute contains the most detailed data, it will be used as a very conservative estimate of transgender populations in each state. However, in reality, it should be noted that the number of trans people living in the US is likely as much as twice the reported numbers by Williams Institute, or perhaps even more.

Limitations

I have opted not to conduct any surveys but rather use existing survey data on trans experiences for several reasons. The primary reason is due to limited resources including time and money. With a limited amount of time for survey recruitment, I certainly would not achieve a representative sample but rather collect anecdotal and incomplete vignettes. Trans Bodies, Trans Selves (TBTS), which conducts one of the largest transgender surveys in the US, noted that it is extremely difficult to get a representative sample without having researchers dispatched on the ground, and without having access to funding for paid advertisements to attract survey responses (Gleisberg et al., 2024). As a researcher currently based in the Netherlands, it is impractical for me to collect surveys in person. Without any funding to advertise a survey, the responses I collect would likely be very limited. Lacking these elements often leave survey responses skewed heavily towards white respondents and AFAB respondents, as similar studies have noted (Gleisberg et al., 2024). Furthermore, TBTS is only issued in English, which researchers note further limits the ability of surveys to reach a diverse range of respondents (Gleisberg et al., 2024). As I could only offer a survey in English as well, this would also limit my attempts at a survey.

There are also concerns about digital security and privacy for trans people who are increasingly under surveillance and scrutiny by the US government. Without formal experience in data privacy and security, asking people to potentially out themselves could be dangerous in the current political climate. Similarly, administering a survey targeted at public administrators and street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) would be complicated in this climate since the Trump administration has ordered all government agencies to wipe any mention of transgender people from government websites (Exec. Order No. 14168, 2017). While seeking more input on the experiences of individual trans people, public administrators, and SLBs would complement the focus of this case study, it stands beyond the scope of my research.

Further research by those with more time and resources to administer a survey should be led by scholars who identify as transgender. There are inherent shortcomings and limitations in this research because I cannot fully account for my own cisgendered assumptions in the analysis conducted.

Chapter 4: Findings

The goal of this research is to identify and describe the administrative processes for identity documentation and the strategies transgender communities use to navigate those processes. First, I will present findings from the partisan scores and correlating data available on transgender populations. Then, I will review the process of updating one's most important identifying documents. While the order in which each process is presented is a common order for the name change and gender marker change process, it is not reflective of every person's experience, and it varies depending on the state(s) involved and the time at which people go through the process. After outlining the process, I detail significant policy changes in select states between 2015-2025, along with relevant findings from the interviews and digital ethnography. Then, I share code-categorized observations from the digital ethnography data to characterize what conversations people on r/asktransgender had about identity documentation and to delineate political and temporal layers of analysis. Finally, I synthesize the evidence across all methods of data collection to illustrate solidarity and resistance in the trans community.

Partisan Scores

In total, 18 states scored 100% Republican, 17 of which also exclusively voted for the Republican presidential candidate (Georgia scored 100% Republican, but Swing-R for the presidential election). In contrast, only 6 states scored 100% Democrat, all of which exclusively voted for the Democratic presidential candidate. Another 12 states scored majority Republican (between 64%-94%) and 12 states scored majority Democrat (between 67%-91%). Only two states, Pennsylvania (SLS=56.25% R / 43.75% D) and Virginia (SLS=45.45% R / 54.55% D), had less than a 30-point difference between partisan scores,

earning them a mixed partisan rating. The full listing of partisan scores by state is provided in Appendix A.

Of the total six swing states identified, only Nevada swung Democratic, while Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin swung Republican. Notably, all swing states except for Pennsylvania had a significant partisan preference at the state level, with greater than a 30-point preference for one party over the other.

Table 4.1

Swing states with their corresponding state-level scores and presidential scores.

State	State-Level Score		Presidential Score
	R-%	D-%	Designation
Arizona	90.91%	9.09%	Swing-R
Georgia	100.00%	0.00%	Swing-R
Michigan	63.64%	36.36%	Swing-R
Nevada	30.30%	69.70%	Swing-D
Pennsylvania	56.25%	43.75%	Swing-R
Wisconsin	78.79%	21.21%	Swing-R

When cross referenced with estimates on the transgender population from the 2022 Williams Institute report, just over half of trans people (50.84% or 832,300 people) live in states with a Republican SLS. Another 42.83% of trans people, or 701,100 people, live in states with a Democrat SLS⁷, and 103,600 (6.33%) live in a mixed SLS state.

However, when controlling for age, young trans people are more likely to be in states with a Democratic SLS (49.17% in SLS=D vs. 45.43% in SLS=R vs. 5.40% in SLS=Mixed). This could be due to the fact that data on youth trans populations was largely based on data from

⁷This calculation includes DC, despite not having an SLS and not being a state. On a federal level, DC has a strong partisan correlation with the Democratic party.

the YRBSS, which is a survey implemented in schools by the federal government. Students in states with restrictions on queer and trans representation or acknowledgement in schools (such as with Florida's "Don't Say Gay" policy) are presumably less likely to willingly disclose their trans identity due to concerns for their safety and privacy (Barbeault, 2014; Goldberg & Abreu, 2024). We are also seeing states beginning to enact policies that forcefully out trans students – for example, in Indiana, if a student wants to go by a name different from their legal name or "pronouns of the opposite sex", the school must get parental permission (Rokita, 2023). These intimidation tactics are likely negatively impacting the reporting levels of transgender youth in the US.

Name Change Process

In 2015, according to the US Transgender Survey (USTS), approximately one third (36%) of respondents tried to obtain a legal name change, and 30% were successful in the process. 2% of those who attempted to legally change their name were forced to discontinue the process because they ran out of money, and another third of respondents (35%) reported not initiating the legal name change process because they could not afford the associated fees (James et al., 2016). At the time, only 30% of trans people surveyed had their correct name on all IDs, compared to 49% who did not have any ID with their correct name (James et al., 2016). The discrepancies became more severe with intersecting vectors of subjection: 68% of immigrants reported having no ID reflecting their name, and trans people experiencing poverty were also less likely to have a correct ID, although USTS did not specify by exactly how much (James et al., 2016).

By 2022, the next time the USTS was issued, the outcomes for ID were largely unchanged, with 48% of respondents reporting that none of their IDs listed the name they wanted, a 1% reduction since 2015 (James et al., 2024). There was a slight increase in people

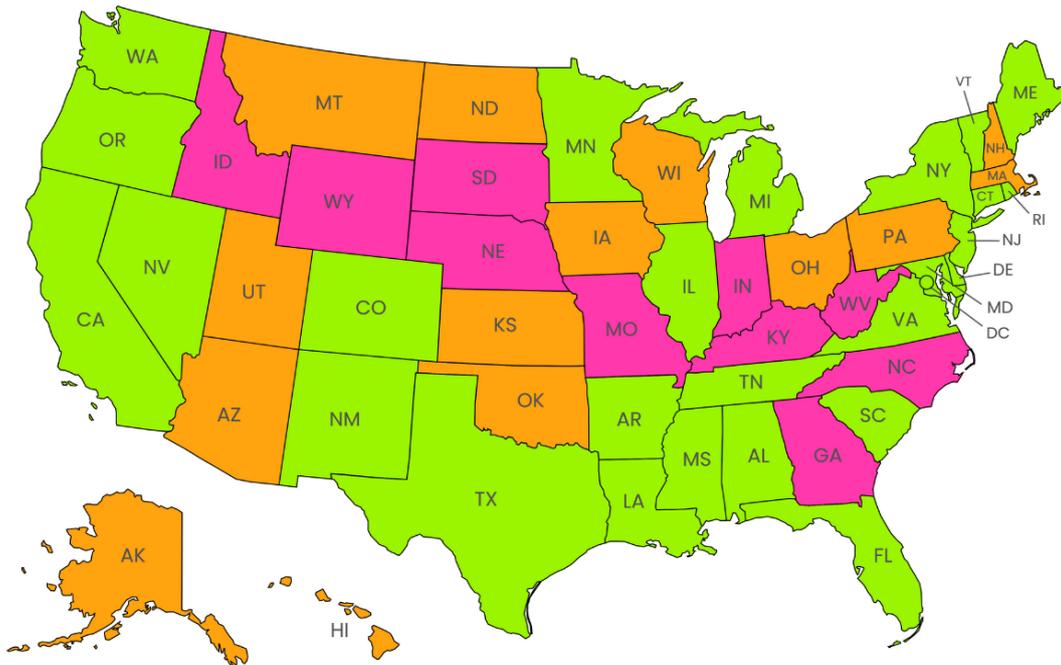
with all of their IDs showing the correct name, increasing three points to 33% by 2022 (James et al., 2024). While the full report of the 2022 USTS has yet to be publicly released, I would expect that the impact of compounding vectors of subjection remains a pertinent factor in whether or not people are able to obtain a legal name change.

The process for legally changing one's name in each state has remained largely stable over the past decade, with 44 states and DC maintaining functionally the same policy during that time period. For the remaining six states who had relevant policy changes between 2015 and 2025, all of them enacted positive changes that made the process simpler. 26 states and DC – more than half of the country – have the easiest process currently possible: they either do not require publication of a name change at all, or they have an exemption for those seeking to change their name because of their gender identity (Process Score: 1). 14 more states require publication of the name change but offer individual court discretion and/or a broad option to waive the requirement (Process Score: 0). The remaining 10 states, representing approximately 14% of the estimated trans population, require publication and do not allow a waiver, or only offer them under limited circumstances (i.e. a domestic violence case, or an existing restraining order) (Process Score: 0).

Figure 4.1

US map chart depicting the process code for the name change process as of April 2025.

Name Change Policy as of April 2025

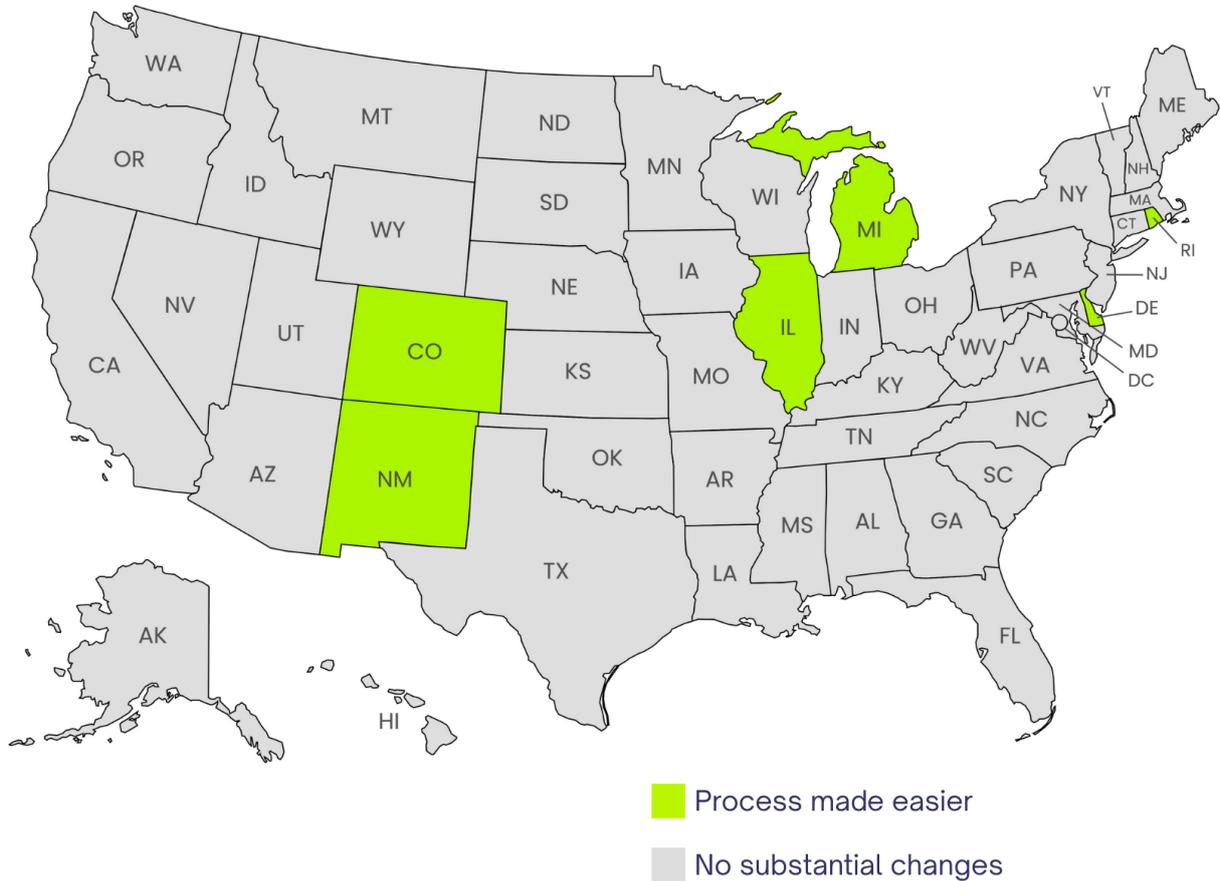


- State law does not require publication of name change announcement, or offers a waiver in the case of changing one's name for gender identity purposes
- State law has unclear publication requirement, or requires publication but allows individual court discretion and/or broad option to waive requirement
- State law requires publication of name change announcement, and/or includes only a narrow option to waive requirement

Figure 4.2

US map chart depicting policy changes to the name change process from 2015-2025.

Name Change: Policy Changes from 2015-2025



Delaware: Unanimous legislative success in removing all publication requirements for name changes

Prior to 2022, the state of Delaware (SLS=100% D; PS=D) had a process score of -1 for name change procedures, requiring that the name change be published in a county newspaper at least once a week for three weeks prior to petitioning the court for the change (Change of Name, 2021). The only exception to the publication requirement was if the name

change is under the jurisdiction of the Family Court, either as part of divorce proceedings, establishing paternity, or if the subject of the petition is a minor (Change of Name, 2021).

A bill was presented in January 2022 to the Delaware House of Representatives completely striking § 5903 of the name change law, which contained the publication requirement. According to the bill synopsis provided by the bill sponsors, the reasoning for the bill was to align with the existing policies of neighboring states without such a requirement, and an acknowledgement that the publication requirement "serves to only add an additional financial barrier to those seeking to change their name" (An Act to Amend Title 10 of the Delaware Code Relating to Change of Name, 2022). The bill was passed swiftly and unanimously in both chambers, being enacted and going into effect on April 22, 2022, just 16 weeks after its introduction. Because § 5903 was struck from the law, the state procedure for changing one's name in Delaware became 1, meaning it's now among the easiest possible procedure in the country with no requirement for publication.

No posts were identified on r/asktransgender that specifically pertain to the Delaware name change process.

Michigan: Explicit recognition of privacy for name changes related to gender identity

While all other states that improved their name change process were states with solid democratic state level partisanship scores and presidential voting scores, one republican state – Michigan (SLS=64% R; PS=Swing-R) – made positive changes to their policy. House Bill 5300, introduced in November 2023, sought to specify the reasons an individual could request to waive the publication requirement for their name change by explicitly including the reason "to affirm their gender identity" in Sec 3(1)(ii) (*House Bill 5300 of 2023 (Public Act 229 of 2024) - Michigan Legislature, 2023*). The bill stalled waiting for a second reading for over a year, until it was picked up again in December 2024 to be passed unanimously by the

Michigan House (*House Bill 5300 of 2023 (Public Act 229 of 2024) - Michigan Legislature, 2023*). One week later, the Senate took up the bill, and in a close 20-18 vote, the bill narrowly passed the Senate (*House Bill 5300 of 2023 (Public Act 229 of 2024) - Michigan Legislature, 2023*).

Senator Jim Runestad, a Republican, moved for his statement against the bill to be published in the official record of the bill, offering critical insight to the opposition in the Senate to House Bill 5300, stating:

"this bill seeks to amend the name-change petition process but fails to include critical safeguards to ensure a person's criminal history follows them when they petition the court for a name change [...] Without this safeguard, someone previously prohibited from firearm possession could exploit a name change to legally acquire one. [...] As drafted this bill undermines the efforts of the 102nd session, particularly regarding the Democrats' virtue signaling about firearms legislation. The Democrats virtue signal but here is a real opportunity to make sure we work with law enforcement to safeguard vulnerable populations and stop this bill's loophole that endangers the public, but the Democrats don't care."

Critically, the opposition voiced against House Bill 5300 was framed as an issue of firearms safety and focused on the expanded ability of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to change their name, rather than the removal of the publication requirement for people seeking to change their name for gender identity reasons. Nonetheless, in January 2025, the Governor signed the bill into law, and it subsequently went into effect, enshrining the ability of transgender Michiganders to change their name without public notice.

Anecdotal evidence from r/asktransgender confirms that the process prior to House Bill 5300 going into effect was complicated for trans people trying to change their name in Michigan. User Willing_Bee_9278, whose flair identifies them as nonbinary, posted on June 28, 2023, asking for support in changing their gender marker and legal name with the goal of updating their birth certificate and driver's license. Interestingly, they note that changing

their gender marker seemed pretty straightforward compared to the name change, a claim which was supported by commenters on the discussion, agreeing that “Name is trickier” (kawaiwitchboi, 2023; Willing_Bee_9278, 2023). Several commenters offered support and shared their own experiences or interpretations of what they could find online, a sample of which is shown in the screenshots below.

Figure 4.3

Screenshot of the post by Willing_Bee_9278 regarding Michigan's name change process.



Figure 4.4

Screenshot of the response to Willing_Bee_9278 from kawaiiwitchboi and robotblockhead regarding Michigan's name change process.

The screenshot shows a forum thread on a dark background. At the top, a user named **kawaiiwitchboi** (2y ago) has a post titled "Genderqueer-Transgender" with a timestamp of "Wednesday, June 28, 2023 at 6:45:45 PM GMT+2". The post contains three paragraphs of text: the first says "Gender marker is easy - go to your nearest SOS office with your old ID and \$9-10, fill out some papers, and you're golden."; the second says "Name is trickier. I live on the southwest side, and where I live it's all a matter of money, and that's where I get stuck. When I went to the courthouse, I was given all of the paperwork and instructions, including where to get everything done, and including legal papers and fees (around \$200, unless you live in a county that will waive the fee for trans people, like mine), background check and fingerprints (around \$45), and getting the change published in a legal newspaper (around \$100 last I checked)."; the third says "Your best place for resources and questions is your local courthouse. I'd either call or go in person, as the website is a little difficult to navigate." Below this is another paragraph: "Just make sure when you get your gender marker changed, you remember to change it everywhere that matters - I recently had to fight with my insurance company through my job to change it because I forgot to change it when I got my ID changed". The post ends with "Good luck! 🍀👍". Below the post are icons for "3" upvotes, "Reply", "Award", and "Share".

Below that, a user named **robotblockhead** (2y ago) has a post with one paragraph: "When you get your name changed, make sure the court order includes that your old birth certificate be sealed. Without that, they will just add your new name at the bottom of the birth certificate, and your dead name will still be there." Below this post are icons for "4" upvotes, "Reply", "Award", and "Share".

At the bottom, the original poster **Willing_Bee_9278** (2y ago) has a post with the title "Non Binary" and the text "thank you! ill keep this in mind". Below this post are icons for "2" upvotes, "Reply", "Award", and "Share".

Another discussion thread from January 2020 asks about the name change process in Michigan, specifically in regards to doing the process around the same time as applying to college (Useless_Lamp, 2020). Users offer suggestions in the comments regarding the college application process, as well as in submitting assignments and writing papers in college with their name on them.

Colorado: Expanded access for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people seeking a name change for gender identity

The state of Colorado (SLS=79% D; PS=D), similarly to Delaware, passed legislation recently to explicitly allow a waiver from the public notice requirement of a name change in the case that the petitioner is doing it for their gender identity (Name Change to Conform with Gender Identity, 2024). The law states: "A petitioner need not give public notice of a name change as required by subsection (1) of this section if the petitioner is changing the petitioner's name to conform with the petitioner's gender identity" (Publication of Change, 2024). The bill passed 44-17 in the Colorado House and 23-12 in the Senate, and was enacted into law exactly 100 days after it was initially presented (Name Change to Conform with Gender Identity, 2024).

The bill crucially also expanded access to name changes for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people by explicitly allowing them the right to change their name for the purpose of gender identity (Name Change to Conform with Gender Identity, 2024).. Section 3(b) (II) specifies that for "good cause," – including "changing the petitioner's name to conform with the petitioner's gender identity" – the court may permit the change of name (C.R.S. 13-15-101 Petition - Proceedings - Applicability., 2024). However, there remains a stipulation that at the court's discretion, they may require someone who has been convicted to publish their name change before granting the name change order.

Reddit user parfaye asked the r/transgender community for input in March 2022 regarding whether they should change their name and gender marker in Texas, where they resided at the time, or wait two months until they moved to Colorado (parfaye, 2022). The comments were mixed on whether it would be simpler or quicker to do it in TX versus CO, since at the time it was still possible to change the gender marker on one's ID in Texas (now it

is illegal to do so). In 2025, surely the process would all be easier, and feasible, in CO versus in TX. parfaye also noted that the time crunch was unintended, writing: "I just couldn't bring myself to do it [name change] because my emotions towards these changes are tied to me finally cutting off my family for good (something I'm struggling with)." These intense emotions tied to changing one's name, deadnames, and family names are echoed in the experiences of many other users on this subreddit, as well as by Hannah M., an interviewee.

Figure 4.5

Screenshot of the post by parfaye seeking advice on pursuing the name change process in Colorado versus Texas.



Updating the Name on a Social Security Card

Established in 1935 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Social Security Administration (SSA; then called the Social Security Bureau) is the main agency in the US administering welfare benefits including retirement, disability, survivor, family, supplemental security income, and enrollment in Medicare (*Social Security History*, n.d.). A Social Security card with a nine-digit unique number and the bearer's legal name is issued to all Americans

and people who wish to work in the US. From paying taxes, to applying for jobs, or taking out loans, a Social Security card is an essential document for everyone in the US. While a Social Security card does not have a gender marker on it, it does list a person's legal name on it. This means that for trans people who decide to change their name, getting their name updated on their Social Security card is an essential step in the bureaucratic process. In many states, updating one's name on their Social Security card is a necessary first step in obtaining a driver's license that reflects their new name. Regardless of other ID purposes, if an individual legally changes their name, they must immediately update their name on their Social Security card, as it is the primary federal ID system in the US.

The steps in obtaining an updated Social Security card include filling out form SS-5 and gathering proof of identity, obtaining a court order or other official proof of a legal name change, and then making an appointment to physically show up at an SSA branch to confirm identity and finalize the change (*How Do I Change or Correct My Name on My Social Security Number Card?*, 2024). While form SS-5 does ask individuals to indicate their sex, that information does not show up externally on the card.

Of the posts on r/asktransgender related to social security, the vast majority (78%) are process questions, many of which are questions about how/when to report a name change to SSA and who the SSA then reports the name change to. The top five codes for posts mentioning social security, unlike the top five codes in general, are all purpose codes, which suggests the questions about social security are largely logistical. Only 9 of the 204 posts discussing social security express feeling fear, or about 4%. Across all 809 posts, 11% of them express fear, indicating that in comparison to all ID questions, the social security process could be less likely to incite fear among trans people. Additionally, several users noted that SSA office closures during the COVID-19-related government closures posed a

barrier in updating the gender marker on their social security, since an in-person appointment is required.

Updating the Gender Marker on a Driver's License

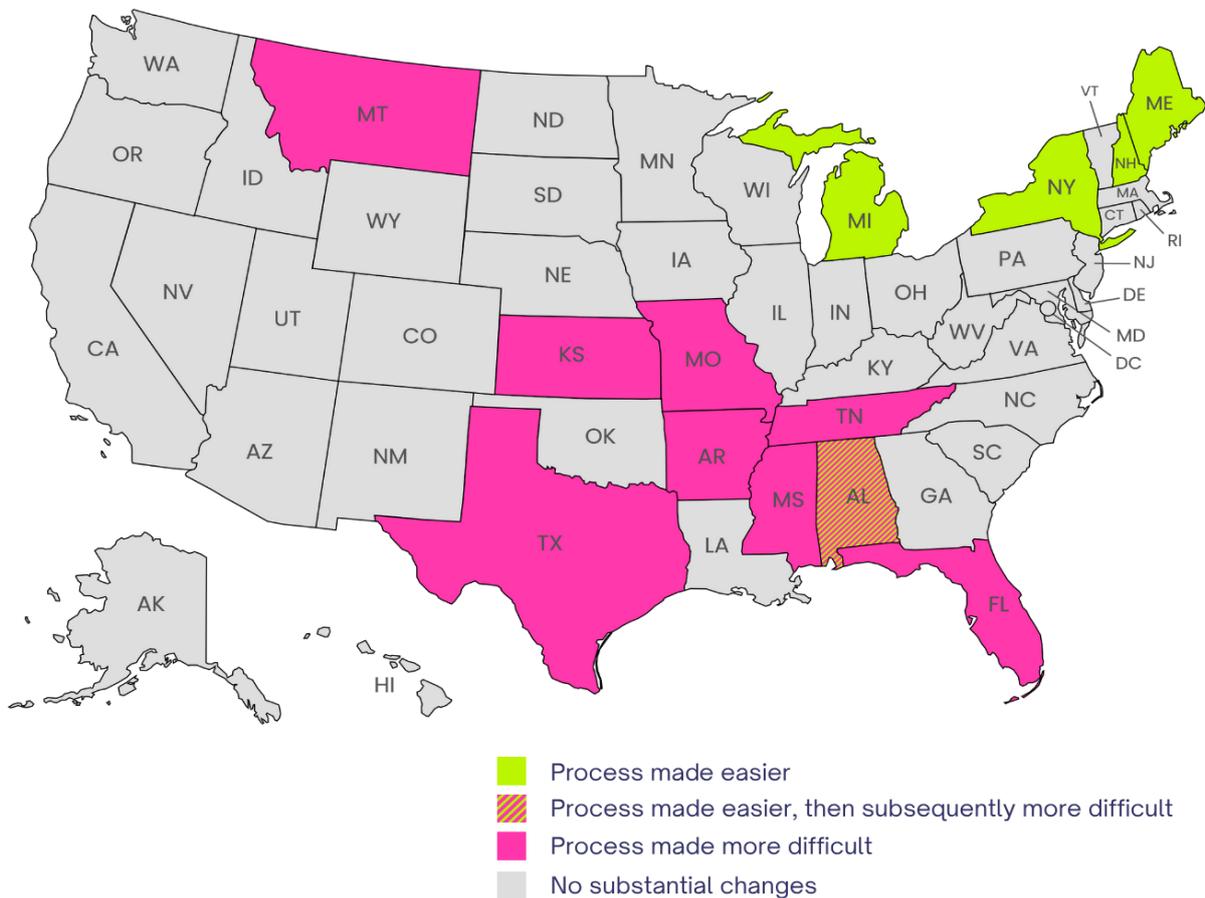
There are two relevant score codes for gender markers on driver's: process score and options score. A figure summarizing the latest gender marker options and process for each state can be found in Appendix D. The process scores for updating the gender marker on a driver's license remained stable across 37 states and DC (see Figure 4.6). Four states improved their process score, making it easier to change the gender marker on a driver's license: Maine (SLS= 75.8% D / PS=D), Michigan (SLS=63.6 D / PS=Swing-R), New Hampshire (SLS=81.8% R / PS=D), and New York (SLS=87.9% D / PS=D). Notably, these four states have diverse partisan makeups, with Maine and New York representing solid Democratic states, and Michigan and New Hampshire with mixed partisanship.

Of the states that have made policy changes regarding gender markers on driver's licenses in the past decade, eight of them made negative changes, meaning they further restricted or completely eliminated the ability to change the gender marker on a driver's license: Arkansas (SLS=100% R / PS=R), Florida (SLS=100% R / PS=R), Kansas (SLS=78.8% R / PS=R), Mississippi (SLS=100% R / PS=R), Missouri (SLS=93.9% R / PS=R), Montana (SLS=81.8% R / PS=R), Tennessee (SLS=100% R / PS=R), and Texas (SLS=100% R / PS=R). In addition, one state, Alabama (SLS=100% R / PS=R) made positive changes and then subsequently made negative changes to once again restrict gender marker changes on driver's licenses.

Figure 4.6

Map of the United States depicting the impact of changes in the process for changing the gender marker on an individual's driver's license between 2015 and 2025. Eight states (Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Tennessee, and Texas) have made the process more difficult, three states (Maine, Michigan, and New York) have made the process easier, and one state (Alabama) has made the process easier and then subsequently made it more difficult.

Driver's License: Gender Marker Process Changes 2015-2025



The options score describes the options for gender markers on driver's licenses, namely whether or not they include the X gender marker. Prior to 2015, only one state reportedly allowed X gender markers: Arkansas (SLS=100% R / PS=R) – this case will be detailed in a later section. A total of 22 states and DC had positive improvements in options

score during the time period studied, including two states that are solidly Republican (Utah, New Hampshire), one that leans Republican (Michigan), and both mixed partisan states (Virginia, Pennsylvania). The remaining 18 states were Democratic. Only Arkansas made negative changes during this period. Additionally, Indiana cycled through positive and negative changes. A full summary of option score changes can be found in Table 4.2, along with the SLS and PS of each state. A visual representation of yearly changes in gender marker options can be found in Appendix E. The following section will highlight several states with relevant policy changes during 2015-2025.

Table 4.2

Summary of changes to options score for driver's license gender markers, ordered by the year of change in policy.

State	Options Score	Options Change	Year of Change	SLS	PS
Arkansas*	0.5	POSITIVE	2010	100% R	R
District of Columbia	0.5	POSITIVE	2017	-	D
Oregon	0.5	POSITIVE	2017	100% D	D
Colorado	0.5	POSITIVE	2018	78.8% D	D
Maine	0.5	POSITIVE	2018	75.8% D	D
Utah	0.5	POSITIVE	2018	100% R	R
California	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	100% D	D
Illinois	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	87.9% D	D
Indiana*	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	100% R	R
Maryland	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	75.8% D	D
Massachusetts	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	75.8% D	D
Minnesota	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	66.7% D	D
Nevada	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	69.7% D	Swing-D
New Mexico	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	84.9% D	D
Vermont	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	72.7% D	D
Washington	0.5	POSITIVE	2019	90.9% D	D
Connecticut	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	100% D	D
Hawaii	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	100% D	D

Indiana*	0	NEGATIVE	2020	100% R	R
New Hampshire	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	81.8% R	D
Pennsylvania	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	56.3% R	Swing-R
Rhode Island	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	100% D	D
Virginia	0.5	POSITIVE	2020	54.6% D	D
Michigan	0.5	POSITIVE	2021	63.6% R	Swing-R
New Jersey	0.5	POSITIVE	2021	90.9% D	D
Indiana*	0.5	POSITIVE	2022	100% R	R
New York	0.5	POSITIVE	2022	87.9% D	D
Arkansas*	0	NEGATIVE	2024	100% R	R
Indiana*	0	NEGATIVE	2024	100% R	R

**State appears multiple times on the chart due to changes in options score*

Indiana: Back-and-forth-and-back-again, Court Orders, Administrative Policy Changes, and the battle for X Gender Markers

In March 2019, in response to demand from constituents, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) of Indiana (SLS=100% R; PS=R) announced a new policy that they would provide a third gender marker option – X – on driver’s licenses. The initial policy required proof of a permanent gender change either by an amended birth certificate or with a physician’s statement, which placed it with a process score of 0.5 and an options score of 0.5 (Hwang, 2019).

However, just a week later, the House Committee on Roads and Transportation swiftly passed Amendment #7 to Senate Bill 182 – a bill regarding issuing mobile driver’s licenses that was unrelated to gender marker changes – which restricted the ability of people to change the gender marker on their driver’s license to only those who had successfully amended the gender marker on their birth certificate, demoting the process score to -0.75 (Proposed Amendment #7 to Senate Bill 182, 2019). Despite questions from Democratic members of the committee acknowledging that this amendment would create a further

burden on people seeking to change their gender marker, particularly trans people, the amendment passed 9-4, along party lines. The committee meeting had no members of the public, which according to local reporting, was "because it wasn't publicized far in advance" (Lange, 2019).

For the next year, the BMV was allowed to issue driver's licenses with an X gender marker under the revised rule of requiring an updated birth certificate, up until March 9th, 2020, when the Attorney General (AG) of Indiana issued an official non-binding opinion stating that the BMV did not have the authority to do so, ordering:

No state agency has the authority to create a third non-binary gender because that authority has not been granted to any agency by the Indiana General Assembly. Only the General Assembly may determine whether the state of Indiana will codify any non-binary designations on State documents. Individuals wishing to change their binary designation on a driver's license or identification card may continue to utilize the process currently provided by the BMV rules (Hill, 2020, p. 5).

Following this opinion, the BMV subsequently stopped offering or processing requests for driver's licenses with an X gender marker and required those who currently had an X gender marker to revert to their old binary gender marker upon renewal of their license, reverting the options score for Indiana back to 0.

After the AG's opinion was released, a group of non-binary Hoosiers (residents of Indiana) filed a lawsuit after their requests for driver's licenses with the X gender marker were denied by the BMV. In 2022, the Monroe Circuit Court VI ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, confirming that their rights were violated under the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution regarding equal protection, among other violations of the Administrative Rules and Procedures Act (*Fitz Simmons et al., v Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles and Joseph Hoage*, 2022). Because of this lawsuit, the options score for Indiana went back to 0.5 as Hoosiers were once again able to obtain a driver's license with an X gender marker.

However, the battle continued from there: in April 2023, *Simmons v. BMV* was brought back into limbo by AG Todd Rokita's office who reopened the case and sent it to the Indiana Court of Appeals (*Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, et al. v. Fitz Simmons, et al.*, 2024; Kelly, 2024). The Appellate court ruled in favor of the BMV this time, overturning the Monroe Circuit Court's decision, and therefore once again ending the X gender marker option for Hoosiers and demoting the options score back to 0 (*Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, et al. v. Fitz Simmons, et al.*, 2024). In the end, the decision was made on the opinion that the non-binary appellees did not sufficiently demonstrate a "rational basis" for needing an X classification on a driver's license (*Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles, et al. v. Fitz Simmons, et al.*, 2024). In December 2024, the Indiana Supreme Court denied the transfer of the case to their jurisdiction and affirmed the decision made by the Court of Appeals, marking the end of the road for the legal battle surrounding X gender markers on Indiana driver's licenses.

As of March 2025, the Governor of Indiana has issued an executive order (EO) ending the process of updating gender markers on birth certificates in the state, and leaving the ability of changing a driver's license gender marker in limbo (Braun, 2025). In summary, the changes in Indiana driver's license gender marker policy are as follows:

Table 4.3

Summary of changes in Indiana's driver's license gender marker policies from 2019-2025 including process score, options score, a summary of changes, and the relevant decision maker at each point of policy change.

Date	Process Score	Options Score	Summary	Decision Maker
Pre-March 2019	0	0	Unclear policies, only M/F gender markers	N/A
Early March 2019	0.5	0.5	Clear policy requiring either an amended birth certificate OR a physician's note; M/F/X gender markers	Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles
March 20, 2019	-0.75	0.5	M/F/X options remain, but it becomes much more difficult to make gender marker changes (eliminate the option for a physician's certification)	Indiana House Committee on Roads and Transportation
March 9, 2020	-0.75	0	Only M/F gender markers	Indiana Attorney General
December 29, 2022	0.5	0.5	Reinstates clear policy requiring either an amended birth certificate OR a physician's note; M/F/X gender markers	Monroe Circuit Court
April 9, 2024	0.5	0	Only M/F gender markers	Indiana Court of Appeals
December 2024	0.5	0	Only M/F gender markers	Indiana Supreme Court
March 4, 2025	0	0	Unclear policies, only M/F gender markers	Governor

In June 2023, user ArrantOsprey, an 18 year old trans woman in Indiana posted to r/asktransgender posted about their confusion in changing their name and gender marker,

writing "it seems everything is designed to not make this easy" (ArrantOsprey, 2023). A user who writes that they are a lawyer in IN and had helped their child go through the same process shared the link to a website for Indiana Legal Services, which has information packets for the process and offered help via private messages (No-Exit3978, 2023).

Figure 4.7

Screenshot of post by ArrantOsprey and the response from No-Exit3988.

←  r/asktransgender · 2 yr. ago
ArrantOsprey Transgender-Asexual

Trying to get a name/gender marker change in Indiana

I posted not long ago inquiring about this but, after attempting to do research into how to do this myself, I've only become more confused than I was before

I'm an 18 year old trans woman who doesn't currently have a driver's license/state ID and I'm trying to go through the process of at least getting my name/gender marker displayed *correctly* on my ID when I get it. I don't, however, know the best way of going about this as it seems everything is designed to not make this easy.

Any resources that any of you may have would be incredibly beneficial for me

↑ 1 ↓ 2  Share

Join the conversation

Sort by: Best ▾  Search Comments

 **No-Exit3978** · 2y ago · Edited 2y ago

If you're going only concerned about your ID, you could have your doctor fill out the form on the bmv website, and just take that in.

I'm a lawyer in Indiana. I changed my child's birth certificate and name about a year ago. I just filled out these forms and filed them: <https://www.indianalegalservices.org/NameGenderMarkerforms>

Just message me if you need help, I'll help you fill them out and file them, but there's not much to it. Just fill in the blanks. I live in a very red county and my child was 15 when I did this, and it was pretty painless. It did take about 6 months.

Then when I took her to get her license, I just gave them the new birth certificate and didn't mention anything else. The SS card is also very easy.

Arkansas: Over a decade of X gender markers and simple procedures overturned by emergency administrative rule

Despite other claims by D.C. and Oregon, in fact the first place in the US to issue driver's licenses with an X gender marker is the deep red southern state of Arkansas. (SLS=100% R; PS=R) Though it was never explicitly in statute, according to emails obtained by several news outlets and trans advocacy organizations, the official internal policy of the Driver's License Issuance department of Driver Services was "to allow the licensee to change their gender as requested, no questions asked, no documentation required," as per an internal email sent by Assistant Commissioner of Operations and Administration Mike Munns (Boliou, 2011; Grajeda, 2024; Sosin & Lang, 2018).

This policy was circulated to all relevant offices in December 2010, but no formal public facing announcement was made, meaning it flew under the radar and didn't receive much of any public scrutiny until a 2018 article popularized the policy (Grajeda, 2024; Sosin & Lang, 2018). Arkansans were able to obtain a driver's license according to the no-questions-asked policy up until 2024, when the Office of the Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) proposed an "emergency" administrative rule to require an individual's gender marker on their driver's license to be either M or F exclusively, and for it to match the marker indicated on their birth certificate, passport, or other ID issued by the US Department of Homeland Security (Hudson, 2024). This rule would mandate the department to revert all driver's licenses with an X gender marker (516 IDs at the time of the rule being issued) to the gender marker indicated on their birth certificate (Hudson, 2024).

When testifying in front of the Arkansas State Legislature Executive Subcommittee in favor of the passage of the emergency rule, DFA Director Jim Hudson claimed the policy in place over the past 13.5 years posed an imminent peril to public safety (*ALC Executive*

Subcommittee Meeting Mar 14 2024, 2024). When Representative Tippi McCullough (D-74) questioned Hudson to specify what the imminent peril is, as required to prove under the emergency rules, he said:

“In terms of whether or not there have been any issues, we’re not a law enforcement agency. So, we don’t maintain any records about law enforcement issues that may come up. I will tell you that as we were looking at this issue, I had conversations with members of the law enforcement community, just to ask were they even aware of this existing policy by DFA, and they weren’t even aware of it. So in the sense of, you know, it is a document that law enforcement relies upon, and if law enforcement cannot have confidence in that it’s a validly issued document that gives them information about the person they’re encountering, I do believe that is a public safety issue. And the law enforcement members I spoke with would agree with that as well.”

The emergency rule was subsequently approved by the subcommittee. The next day, the Arkansas Legislative Council approved the emergency rule on a voice vote (meaning there is no recorded vote of the Ayes and Nays by legislator) (*Arkansas Legislative Council - Meeting March 15 2024, 2024*). In addition, because it was an emergency rule, there was no requirement of public comment on the rule (*Arkansas Legislative Council - Meeting March 15 2024, 2024*).

A month later, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Arkansas filed a lawsuit against DFA seeking an injunction against the DFA to halt the enforcement of the emergency rule and require the DFA to revert to the previous policy (*Brandyn Gallagher et al., v Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, 2024*). While the plaintiffs were originally granted a temporary injunction halting the enforcement of the emergency rule, the DFA successfully appealed the decision and was able to reinstate the emergency rule restricting gender marker options and changes. Similarly to the Indiana judicial fight for the X gender marker, the case made it all the way up to the State Supreme Court, only to be dismissed (*Brandyn*

Gallagher et al., v Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, 2024; LeMaster, 2024).

Missouri: Administrative-activist collaboration unravels without explanation or public input

In 2016, in collaboration with local queer organizations in Missouri (SLS=94% R; PS=R), the Department of Revenue (DOR) – the relevant agency in charge of distributing drivers licenses in the state – released Form 5532: Gender Designation Change Request Form (Fischer, 2024) (Available in Appendix F). The form required a provider certification from a physician, therapist, counselor, or social worker, and offered M or F gender marker, giving it a process score of 0.75, in the second easiest tier of gender marker change categories. However, after approximately eight years of the form being in use, the DOR suddenly removed the form from circulation and discontinued its use entirely.

According to captures of the DOR website stored in the internet archive Wayback Machine, sometime between August 7, 2024 and August 15, 2024, the Form 5532 was removed from the Missouri DOR website (Missouri Department of Revenue, 2024). Other internet archives did not have further captures of the website between those dates, so it's unclear exactly when the form was removed. News reports from the week of the 15th confirm that Form 5532 was removed from the internet and from physical offices of the Department (Cross, 2024; Fischer, 2024).

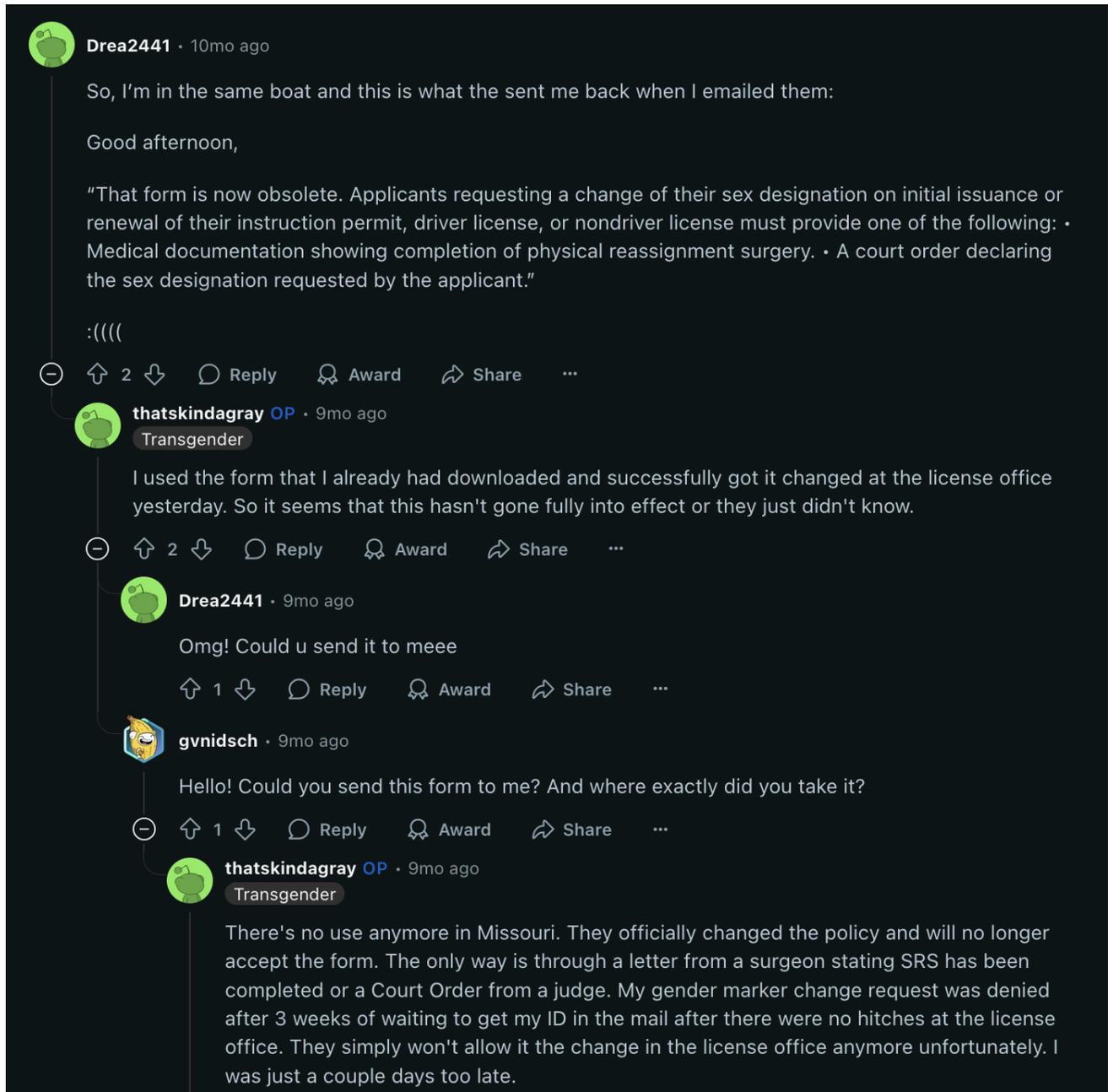
The DOR did not make any public announcements or solicit any public comment before discontinuing the form and only released a statement once prompted by local news outlets to explain the change, stating: "Form 5532 is no longer needed. Customers are required to provide either medical documentation that they have undergone gender reassignment surgery, or a court order declaring gender designation to obtain a driver license or nondriver ID card denoting gender other than their biological gender assigned at birth" (Cross, 2024).

Because of this change, the ability of trans Missourians to obtain a driver's license that matches their identity was significantly complicated, rendering their process score -0.75. The opacity of the process, the absence of public oversight, and lack of explanation for the quiet policy change marks a significant episode of anti-trans administrative policy in the US.

There was in fact a discussion thread started on August 12, 2024 about the removal of Form 5532 on r/asktransgender in which several users discussed the form suddenly disappearing from the website and confusion over whether it was still valid (thatskindagray, 2024). Some users reported going to the DOR licensing office and being able to submit the form without issue, using a pdf they obtained either before it was removed from the DOR website, or by using an internet archive site. However, they reported receiving denials of their gender marker claims and instructions to obtain medical documentation or a court order, similar to the statement released by DOR to the press.

Figure 4.8

Screenshot of the discussion under *thatskindagray's* post about Missouri DOR Form 5532.



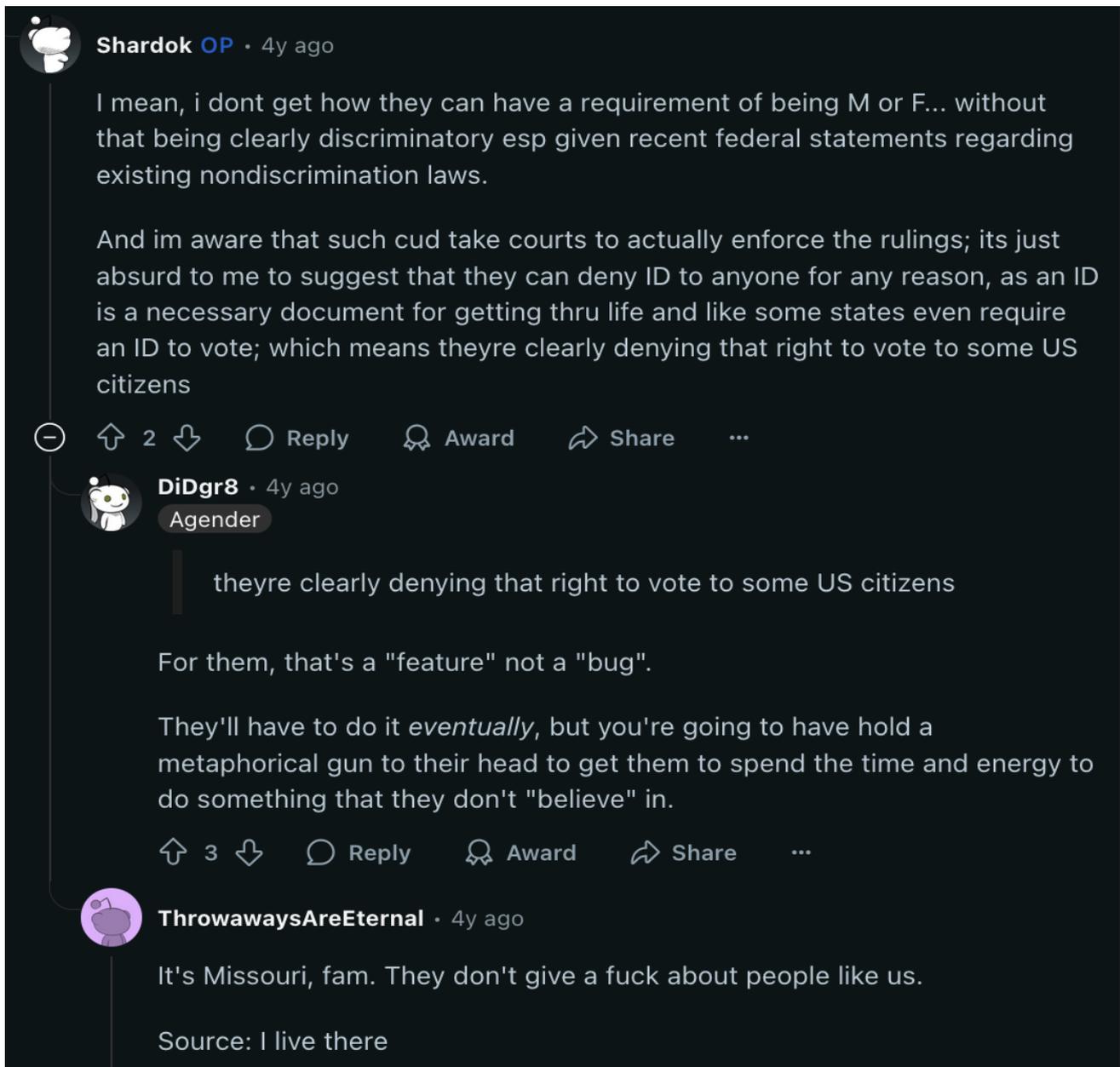
A few months later in a different thread, a now-deleted user posted asking about the new medical requirements for changing a gender marker in MO ([deleted], 2024). While nobody commented and was able to share information, the user later edited the post to share that they had to hire a lawyer to help, which cost \$750. It seems that they were

successful in changing their gender marker with proof of top surgery. The cost of obtaining a lawyer, however, seemed to have caused the user a financial burden, as they mentioned putting the payment on credit.

Years before Missouri implemented the stricter gender marker change requirements, in July 2021, user Shardok posted about their upcoming move to Missouri with a birth certificate and state ID that had an X gender marker on them. Much of the thread goes back and forth establishing more details of Shardok's situation, without much resolve to their ability to get a state-issued ID as required by MO state law. Interestingly, several users also discuss how the illegibility of X gender markers could lead to voter disenfranchisement, as shown in the screenshot below.

Figure 4.9

Screenshot of discussion under Shardok's post regarding voter disenfranchisement.



New York: A dual-levered success in increasing gender marker options and reducing barriers in the change process

Despite the trend of decreased access and options in changing gender markers across the nation, New York (SLS=88% D; PS=D) is one of very few states that have actually improved their driver's license policies to better accommodate trans people. The story

begins in 2020 when a trans non-binary New Yorker, Sander Saba, sued then-Governor Andrew Cuomo over the existing version of Form MV-44 from the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), which required them to choose either an M or F gender marker and swear under penalty of perjury that the information they gave in the form was truthful in order to obtain a New York driver's license (*Saba v Cuomo and Shroeder*, 2021). While the state tried to get the case dismissed on the grounds that the DMV did not currently have the technological capacity to indicate anything other than M or F on a driver's license but said they were working on it, the court ruled in April 2021 that that did not render the case moot and that the case could continue (*Saba v Cuomo and Shroeder*, 2021).

Concurrently, in February 2021, the New York State Assembly, the legislative body of the state, filed the Gender Recognition Act (Bill A5465D). The bill enshrined the ability to designate M, F, or X as one's gender on any state-issued identification, and the ability to change one's gender marker without any medical proof or requirements necessary (*NY State Assembly Bill 2021-A5465D*, 2021). Passed in July 2021, the Gender Recognition Act served as a crucial bargaining chip in the *Saba v Cuomo* case. The plaintiffs agreed to pause the case against Cuomo on the terms that the Governor would sign the Gender Recognition Act into law and the state would fully update their DMV computing system by May 2022 to be compatible with the new X gender marker option (Nemir, 2021). In the case that the Governor did not follow through on the agreement, the plaintiff threatened to continue the case (Nemir, 2021).

In the end, the bill was signed into law and by May 2022, the state of New York officially began implementing the policy with a fully compatible technology system capable of issuing IDs with X gender markers. The updated process for changing one's gender marker on a driver's license is now all done through Form MV-44: Application for Permit, Driver License, or

Non-Driver ID Card, the same document used to apply for or renew a license. The state has also now made it possible to update the gender marker on a driver's license online without having to appear in person (*NYS DMV: Update Sex Identifier*, n.d.).

Updating the Gender Marker on a Passport

There have been several significant policy changes regarding gender markers on US passports over the past decade. Policy approaches to gender markers on passports correlates with political administration changes this time period, with a tendency for Democrats to maintain or improve existing policy and for Republicans to dismantle and restrict gender marker changes on passports.

Prior to June 2021, it was possible to change the gender marker on a passport with supporting documentation from a medical provider (*Change of Sex Marker*, 2020). The Department of State published a web page titled "Change of Sex Marker" with instructions and requirements for changing the gender marker, and specifying the special validity periods of passports for trans people:

Table 4.4

Validity of a US passport according to a transgender person's transition status, policy valid before June 2021.

Status of Transition	Validity of Passport
You have had appropriate clinical treatment for transition from male to female or female to male, as determined by your physician	10 years (Adult) or 5 years (Child under 16)
You are in the process of getting appropriate clinical treatment for transition from male to female or female to male	2 years

At the time, trans people applying for a passport with a new gender marker had to use form DS-11, which is required to be completed and submitted in person to a designated acceptance agent (clerk of a court, judge or clerk of probate, municipal or county official, postal employee, agent at a passport agency, or US consular official).

In June 2021, the Biden administration moved to simplify the gender marker change process by removing all previous requirements for proof of transition and validity lengths related to transition status (Blinken, 2021). Then-Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that "Most immediately, we will be updating our procedures to allow applicants to self-select their gender as "M" or "F" and will no longer require medical certification if an applicant's self-selected gender does not match the gender on their other citizenship or identity documents" (Blinken, 2021). In addition, he announced that the Department was working on creating an option for non-binary, intersex, and gender non-conforming people to designate their gender as such on passports. However, he noted that, "the process of adding a gender marker for non-binary, intersex, and gender non-conforming persons to these documents is technologically complex and will take time for extensive systems updates" (Blinken, 2021).

The State Department created a website for tracking updates on their progress towards adding the X gender marker option on passports, including frequently asked questions to help guide people in the interim. Notably, this page was titled, "Selecting your Gender Marker," as compared to the previous iteration of the page titled, "Change of Sex Marker." The site specifically stated that the gender marker selected for a passport did not need to match the gender marker indicated on the supporting identity verification documents.

On March 31, 2022, the State Department announced they had successfully equipped their information technology systems to be able to comprehend and process the X gender marker and that the option would be available starting on April 11, 2022 (Blinken, 2022). As part of the process, the government solicited public feedback and consulted with other countries who had already implemented an X gender marker on passports (Blinken, 2022). They also reported collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics to conduct qualitative research about the significance and meaning behind an X gender marker, with a particular focus on the LGBTQI+ community (Blinken, 2022).

On the new iterations of the DS-11 and DS-82 (the two most common passport application forms), in use from April 2023-January 2025, instructions were included clarifying the gender markers available and the process for selecting one, noting that no medical documentation was required, and that the gender marker on supporting evidence of citizenship and identity need not match their selection for their passport.

However, the availability of the X gender marker on passports was short lived: as soon as entering office in January 2025, Trump issued EO 14168, mandating the federal government only recognize two sexes: M and F (Exec. Order No. 14168, 2025). Soon thereafter, Secretary of State Marco Rubio sent an internal memo to State Department staff instructing them to suspend processing all passport applications with a pending gender marker change or request for an X gender marker (Gedeon, 2025; Kingston & Alfonseca, 2025; Yurcaba & Williams, 2025). By February 2025, the DS-11 and DS-82 had been reverted to old versions that only included M/F gender marker options (See Appendix G for before and after comparison of the DS-11 form and Appendix H for before and after comparison of the DS-82). The internal memo stated that current valid passports that had an X gender marker

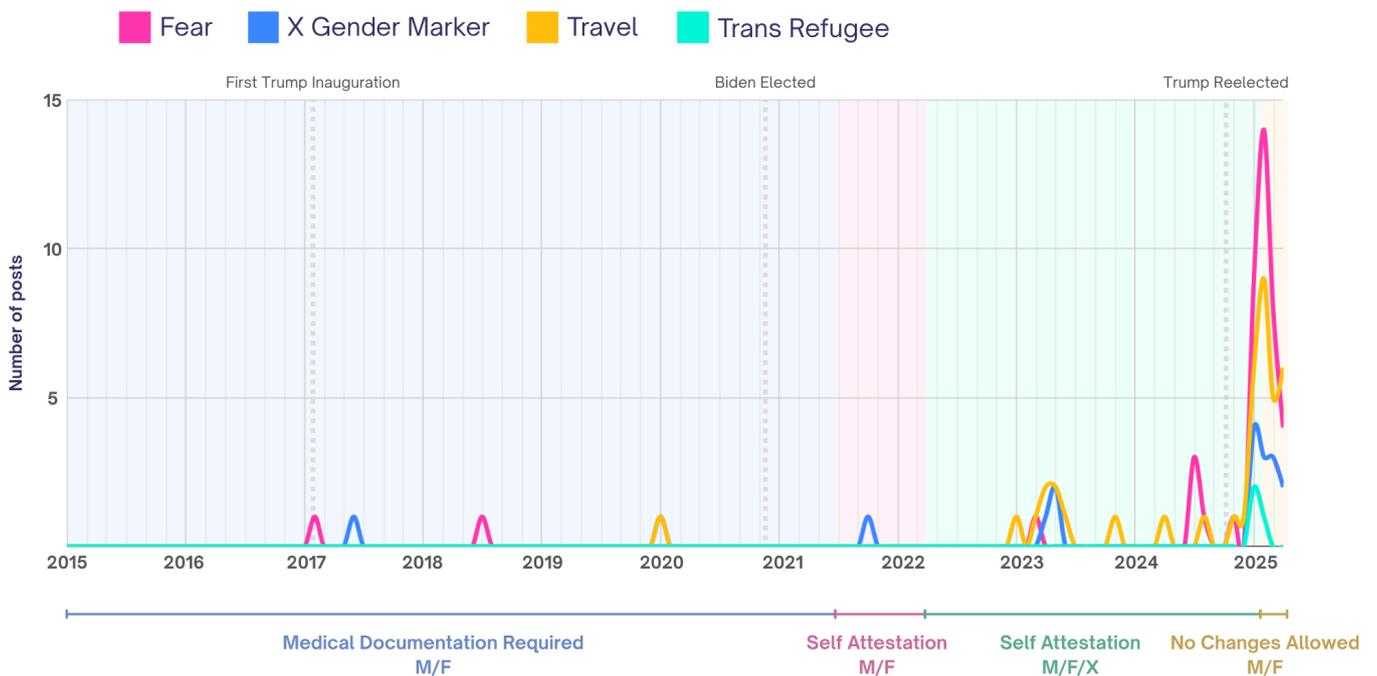
would remain valid until their expiration, upon which point they should be reverted to their initial gender marker.

In response, a lawsuit was filed by seven trans Americans challenging the policy of denying them passport applications with accurate sex designations (*Schlacter et. al. v. U.S. Department of State et. Al.*, 2025). Filed on April 25, 2025, the suit falls just within the temporal limits of this study. Paragraph 6 of the complaint reads: "The Passport Policy has caused and is causing grave and immediate harm to transgender people like Plaintiffs, in violation of their constitutional rights to equal protection, travel, privacy, and speech, and the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"), 5 U.S.C. §§ 500 et seq." (*Schlacter, Tran, Hepler-Mackey, Doe, Roe, Poe, and Koe v US Department of State, Marco Rubio, and United States of America*, 2025). They argue that this policy discriminates against transgender people on the basis that cisgender people are offered a passport that reflects their gender, but trans people are not. The plaintiffs have moved for an injunction on the policy, which as of the timing of this research has not yet been acted upon by the courts. Therefore, Trump and Rubio's policy of M/F only gender markers and no further gender marker changes on passports remains in place as of 29 April 2025. The reactions to passport gender marker policy changes on r/asktransgender are particularly informative.

Figure 4.10

Graph depicting the prevalence of passport-related posts referencing fear, X gender marker, travel, and trans refugee coding between 2015-2025, with corresponding passport gender marker policy and significant changes in executive administration.

Content of posts on *r/asktransgender* regarding changing gender marker on a passport



Four codes experienced remarkable shifts in passport discussions throughout this time period: expressions of fear, X gender markers, travel, and trans refugees. In conversations about passports on *r/asktransgender*, there were only four posts with these codes from 2015-2021, none of which were related to trans refugees. Moderate spikes occurred between 2022-2023 as the passport gender marker policy became significantly less restrictive. After Trump was reelected in November 2024, there was a dramatic surge in all of the codes, and the emergence of a new code: trans refugees. The emergence of trans

refugee discussions coincides with the restrictive policy period implemented in January 2025, and the anticipation of restrictions in the months between the election and inauguration of Trump. The highest concentration of posts where users express fear occurred immediately after Trump's second inauguration on January 20, 2025, the same day he enacted EO 14168. This trend is the same when looking at all posts in general but is particularly prevalent in passport discussions. There was also a significant spike in posts concerning travel, especially for people who currently have a passport with an X gender marker on it.

This data suggests that the r/asktransgender community's anxiety about passport gender markers increases significantly during restrictive policy periods, and those negative policy changes directly impact online discussions and community concerns.

Observations and findings in r/asktransgender ID posts

Observations of Purpose Codes

Several general trends are evident in the coding of posts on r/asktransgender between 2015-2025. Approximately three in five posts across that entire time period included process questions (n=500), suggesting that the majority of posts regarding ID procedures in this subreddit were asking how to go about changing the name or gender marker on IDs. Approximately two in five posts were community questions (n=150) – i.e. asking people to share their experiences or if they relate to the content of the post – which lends credence to the assumption that r/asktransgender is a place where transgender people ask and answer questions about trans experiences. In addition, there were numerous community questions from cis people whose profession requires them to check ID (such as bartenders or human resources professionals) asking how to validate an ID that seems to mismatch a person's

presentation in a respectful way. This could be interpreted as evidence of solidarity in ID discrepancies for the transgender community from cisgendered allies.

Asking for advice was relatively uncommon as a purpose code, representing less than one in ten posts. Posts whose sole purpose was asking for advice (n=27) were most likely to be about name changes, often asking for opinions on names they were deciding between.

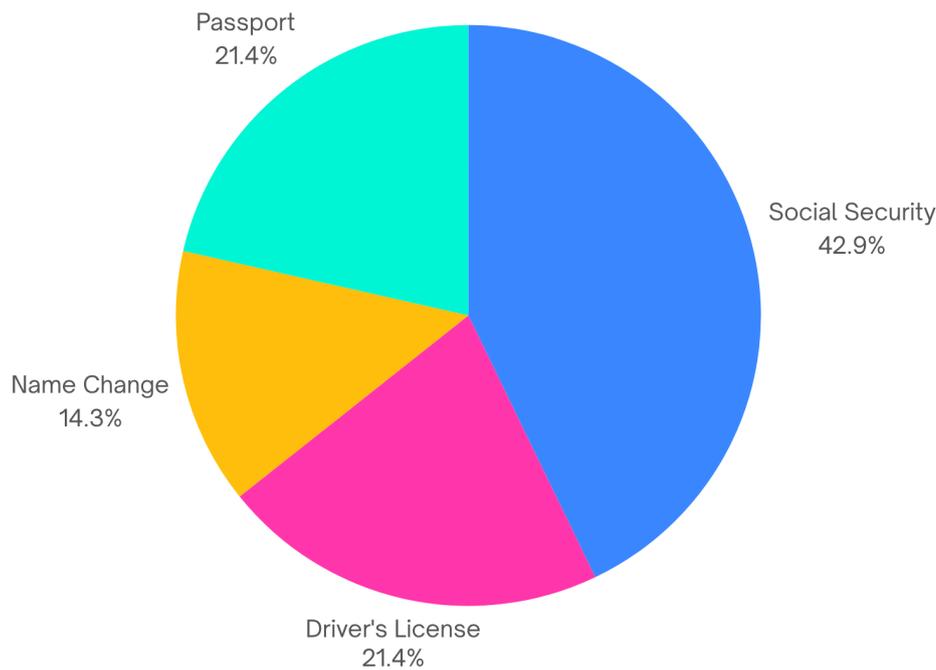
Observations of Subject Codes

The most prevalent subject discussed in ID posts was related to travel (n=53; 6.55%), followed by discussions regarding the X gender marker (n=36; 4.45%). The content of these posts covered a rich array of challenges transgender Americans have faced in obtaining or changing an ID that matches their identity that impact their daily lives: education, taxes, marriage, employment, health insurance, car insurance, and inheritance were all named as common challenges trans people have experienced because of their mismatched ID. Additional challenges were identified when the user was moving to a different state (n=13), since critical parts of the process are under the jurisdiction of the state in which one resides and policies vary widely between states. In addition, transferring a driver's license between states with different policies was a common challenge. Transphobia, misgendering, and lack of knowledge about policy were noted as issues trans people faced with SLBs (n=14). People most often reported having issues with SSA, as compared to the passport administration, state-level driver's license administration, or name change proceedings.

Figure 4.11

Pie chart showing the distribution of where SLB issues encountered in the name and gender marker change processes.

Distribution of ID-related SLB issues according to *r/asktransgender* posts from 2015 to April 2025



Observations of Status Codes

The instability and complexity of administrative ID policy does not just impact trans Americans. As evidenced by the posts in *r/asktransgender*, both immigrants (trans non-citizens living in the US) and emigrants (trans US citizens living outside of the US) face uniquely compounded challenges in obtaining an ID that accurately reflects their identity. Seven immigrants and three emigrants posted to *r/asktransgender* over the temporal period observed. While they represent a very small portion of people seeking support on this subreddit, trans immigrant and emigrant experiences might be more likely found in forums dedicated to their unique situations with more people experiencing similar situations who can

advise and support. Similarly, only 0.25% (n=2) of posts pertain to trans people experiencing homelessness. This is likely also not a representative sample, as people experiencing housing insecurity are less likely than others to have valid forms of ID. But without reliable access to the internet, power and electricity, or even devices that connect to the internet, it's less likely that people experiencing homelessness are able to access resources like Reddit than people with stable housing.

Judicial Roadblocks for Transgender People

One of the most common codes that occurred in concurrence with posts about name changes was community questions asking others to share their experience going before a judge. While the majority of community experiences describing the process of going before a judge for a name change and/or gender marker change were neutral or positive, there were limited instances of judges preventing transgender people from doing so. On 4 April 2025, user Arachnabyss, a 19-year-old trans man in Ohio, shared their experience with a judge who refused to issue a decision at their assigned court date. Arachnabyss described being "grilled" by "a very republican judge [who] is known for her bad rep" and categorized the judge's line of questioning as "VERY rude" (Arachnabyss, 2025).

Another user posted in June 2021 about another negative experience with a judge in Missouri during their name change hearing. They describe the judge's demeanor immediately shifting from professional affability to scowling scrutiny upon examining their case. While their name change ultimately was approved, the user expressed that the judge's scowls "put a dent in to what was supposed to be a really happy day" ([deleted], 2021). The post received over 1,100 upvotes and 114 comments with significant portions of the discussion congratulating the user on their name change, celebrating the fact that the name change went through despite the judge's apparent transphobic sentiments, and trans people from

outside the US shocked to find out that going in front of a judge was even a requirement ([deleted], 2021).

Trans Youth: Posts Coded for Minors

A small but statistically significant subset of posts (n=23; 3%) pertained to identity documentation for transgender youth, authored either by adolescent transgender individuals themselves or by parents seeking guidance regarding documentation processes for their transgender children. Quantitative analysis reveals that only 3% of the total dataset addresses procedures for individuals under 18 years of age.⁸ Notably, approximately 33% of posts coded for minors solicit advisory input, compared to merely 10% across the comprehensive dataset. This disproportionate representation indicates that discourse surrounding transgender minors has a pronounced orientation toward normative consultation—predominantly framing inquiries as "should" questions rather than, or in addition to, procedural "how" questions.

Gray Areas: Legally Murky Questions and Experiences

A small selection of posts (n=15; 1.85%) mention a legal gray area, either sharing their experiences with an action of uncertain legality or asking about the possibility of a gray area. Multiple posts asked about ways to cover up one's deadname or the wrong gender indicated on their ID, which is technically considered illegal. However, it is a temporary solution for people experiencing dysphoria from seeing the incorrect information on their ID. For example, in 2019, one user posted asking for resources for taping a note over their deadname with their preferred name that folds open to reveal their birth name if necessary (canigetuhhhhhhhhh, 2019). Another user commented to share their workaround strategy,

⁸Reddit's Terms of Use, and the rules of r/asktransgender require that users be at least 13 years of age, which could limit the sample of trans youth experiences.

posting: "I literally used a paperclip and attached a little index card that says hi! I am Trans with the flag and then my preferred name and used that until I changed my name legally. Never had any issues...and I live in WV" (djroomba24, 2019). Other gray area posts were about experiences informally or incorrectly changing the gender marker on an ID, which were limited anecdotal accounts.

Another gray area instance came from my interview with Shira, who shared about their experience helping Pussy Galore⁹ (she/her) obtain an emergency passport with her new name and correct gender marker in the days before the second Trump inauguration. I was able to independently confirm the story with Pussy Galore and that she was able to successfully obtain a passport with the correct name and gender marker through this strategy.

Due to an error with the passport photo taken by a US Postal Service worker, Pussy's passport application was initially denied. With mere days until the Trump administration would take office, Shira and Pussy devised a strategy to obtain a passport by booking a refundable hotel in Canada and making an urgent passport appointment in a nearby state with an emergency passport processing facility. Intended for people with "urgent" international travel (within the next two weeks) these appointments allow people to obtain a passport on an expedited timeline, and in some cases, get one printed the same day. Pussy borrowed a friend's car and drove about two hours to the passport facility for her emergency appointment. Upon showing proof of her hotel booking in Canada and waiting over five hours, she was finally handed a passport with the correct name and gender marker. She then drove two hours back home and was able to cancel and refund the hotel booking. While the cost of

⁹Pussy Galore is a drag name she chose to obscure her identity. She gave written informed consent to share this story for this research, under this name.

booking the hotel was refunded, she lost wages from not being able to work that day, and incurred gas costs for the long drive. While booking the appointment and providing proof of urgent travel were done under false pretenses, if Pussy had resubmitted her passport application through the regular channel, she would not have gotten a corrected passport before EO came into effect and the State Department stopped processing passport applications requesting a gender marker change.

Temporal and Political Analysis

In the period after Trump's second inauguration, from January 20, 2025, through April 29, 2025, one in five posts about ID expressed fear — this is almost double the rate of fear posts in the entire dataset (11.25%). In addition, one in ten posts in this period was about EO 14168. Concerns about travel also shot up during this period, accounting for 10.41% of posts post-inauguration in comparison to 6.55% of total posts. These correlations between increased fear, concerns and questions about travel, and discussions about EO 14168 suggest that this period of increased restriction has significant impacts on the trans community in regards to accessing IDs that match their lived identity. While the emergence of the trans refugee code came before the 2024 presidential election (the first post mentioning trans refugee status was in February 2024), two thirds of those posts came after the election results. Prior to 2024, there were no discussions pertaining to IDs that mentioned trans refugees.

Another observation is that the reactions of trans people, particularly about IDs, was astronomically more pronounced around the second Trump election and inauguration as compared to the first in 2016. This suggests that trans people are more fearful of his second term and have come to rely more on the trans community for support and validation now than in the first Trump administration.

Evidence of Solidarity and Resilience in the Trans Community

In addition to over 800 posts in r/asktransgender, the interviews revealed evidence of hundreds more trans people across the US building networks of solidarity to navigate the bureaucracy of IDs. Both Shira and Hannah indicated that they were not alone in helping other trans people change their name and gender markers. Whether posting on their personal social media accounts offering to help their trans friends with the process, reposting someone in the area who can help, or in casual interactions between trans people, the offer of support is ubiquitous. "Anyone I've met in the trans community who has changed their name is willing to help someone else change their name," shared Hannah (Hannah M., personal communication, 21 May 2025). They expanded on the importance of trans people supporting fellow members of the trans community particularly because of the complex emotions associated with the process: it can be exciting, and like a weight off your shoulders, but also terrifying to feel like you're shutting off who you were before, they described. Having someone to support you through the nuanced and often intense emotions, who has similarly gone through that experience, is critical, she explained (Hannah M., personal communication, 21 May 2025). Hannah added that support from the cisgender community is also important, but it is not the same level of emotional support and empathy that comes from trans people helping each other through this process.

Shira also expressed the importance of intra-community solidarity and trans people supporting each other in updating IDs. They described the process as culturally and technically informed: not only in how to interact with each other as human beings, but also transgender people have lived experience in the technical processes required here. They noted that the cultural and technical literacy were mutually facilitated, and it grew to establish a strong sense of community in the process.

Shira was part of a group of 15-20 trans people organizing in a mutual aid network¹⁰ that mobilized to support trans people to update their documents in the time between the November 2024 election and the January 2025 inauguration (Shira, personal communication, 19 May 2025). Shira found out about the network through a graphic on social media demonstrating the procedures required for updating various IDs. The group offered "start-to-finish" support in changing names and gender markers on federal documents and Real ID, including procedural and financial support. Shira personally interacted with hundreds of people somewhere along in the name/gender marker change process through this network and noted that several thousand transgender people in total went through the network for support in the process (Shira, personal communication, 19 May 2025). In addition to technical support, there was also a financial arm of the network which provided direct aid to transgender people to cover the costs associated with the ID changes. They did not know the origin of the funding beyond that it was from individual donors. There were no means tests applied to people who sought funding, an individual simply provided their Venmo information and the cost of their ID processes was transferred directly to their account.

In addition to their work with the network, Shira also helped several more people in their individual work with the transgender community in MA, where they reside. They wrote and maintained a guide to all of the procedural and bureaucratic nuances of updating name and gender markers on critical IDs, available in the Case Study Database. They close the document with the following quote from Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*:

¹⁰ The name of the mutual aid network is deliberately left out of this paper for safety reasons. Shira shared the name of the network off the record so that I could independently verify the information. However, they noted that the name has changed to be inconspicuous and avoid scrutiny and harassment from transphobic agitators.

With the triumph of neoliberalism, bureaucracy was supposed to have been made obsolete; a relic of an unlamented Stalinist past. Yet this is at odds with the experiences of most people working and living in late capitalism, for whom bureaucracy remains very much a part of everyday life. Instead of disappearing, bureaucracy has changed its form; and this new, decentralized, form has allowed it to proliferate.

An apt critique of late stage capitalism and the consequent proliferation of bureaucratic systems, Shira queers a final conclusion in this document, encouraging the reader to think beyond their own personal frustrations with bureaucracy, to rather imagine it as a symptom of a greater evil. After delineating all the steps to match one's ID to their lived identity, sprinkled with self-care directives and resilient humor, they use their final words to call attention to the entire system of bureaucracy within the neoliberal capitalist order and its failures and harms.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The reality of trans experiences on the ground

An overwhelming theme throughout this study, from literature review to digital ethnography and interviews, is a ubiquitous sense of fear and unsafety among trans people, that compounds as more vectors of subjection intersect. Simply put, trans people in America are scared for their lives, and they have reason to be. This observation is supported by existing data; the 2022 USTS reports that 44% of respondents experienced serious psychological distress in the last 30 days, based on the Kessler 6 Psychological Distress Scale, a clinical diagnostic tool for mental health disorders (James et al., 2024). Considering the fact that the USTS was conducted in 2022, I would predict that that number has increased in the years since, similarly to how posts about fear have proliferated on r/asktransgender.

It would be a faulty conclusion to draw here that any partisan majority has demonstrated capability and commitment to protect trans people in the US. While in states with an SLS aligned with the Democratic party, the barriers to obtaining ID are lower compared to their Republican counterparts, administrative violence occurs against transgender people no matter the party in control. Trans outcomes are systematically reduced through methods of managing power at population levels and through administrative violence. The illegibility of trans existence within existing ID architectures in the US thus poses unique theoretical importance: if the entire system of government ID is not capable of comprehending the existence of an entire group of people, it begs the question of why that system exists at all.

Postcolonial theory posits that the architectures of white nationalist settler colonial societies are deliberately designed to other people deemed undesirable and inferior to the

ruling class. ID systems are an arm of postcolonial control and are inherently rooted in white supremacy and settler colonial ideologies. CTP takes this assumption further, noting that the architectures of ID are a critical point of life chance distribution, determining who can get what resources, how they will be treated, and whether or not they are viewed as desirable and worthy within the nation-state regime.

Queer theory would then interrogate why we even need ID. Does a gender marker on ID tell us anything? If other things on ID are fluid, independent of gender – you can change your eye color, hair color, appearance, address – what purpose do any of those “identifying” factors serve? Arkansas DFA Director Jim Hudson, whose testimony was scrutinized in the section on Arkansas’s gender marker policy in Chapter 4, said the quiet part out loud when he admitted that the department had no evidence of “imminent peril” based on the fact that X gender markers existed, aside from law enforcement thinking it *could* be a public safety issue if they did not know the identity (read: genitals) of an individual they are interacting with (*ALC Executive Subcommittee Meeting Mar 14 2024, 2024*).

Therefore, abolitionist theory would question the possibility of abolishing gender on ID entirely, and abolishing gender as a societal norm. If the categorization of people by gender causes harm and illegibility to an entire group of people, then that system of categorization is bad and should be abolished. Australia issues driver’s licenses without a gender marker and I was not able to find any instances where that became a detriment, suggesting that this is not only a possible, but also feasible solution (*Licence Types, Classes and Conditions / Driver Licensing, n.d.*).

Through this theoretical framework, it is clear that, at the very least, gender markers on ID are unnecessarily harmful and do not convey information that is pertinent for the purposes of state understandings of individual identity. I argue that expanding the options

available for gender markers – such as the X gender marker, or an open-ended or fill-in-the-blank option – does not address the root causes of maldistribution of life chances for trans people. There is evidence that this theory is shared by members of the trans communities, who affirm that name and gender recognition by the government is not a validation of their identity. As Shira aptly put it: "We don't look to the state for gender affirmation, but it's affirming to have your name show up as it is." (Shira, personal communication, 19 May 2025).

Seeking validation from the settler colonial ruling class in one's gender identity does not liberate one from the white supremacist violence inherent to the state's structure. In fact, it opens up people with gender markers other than the binary M/F to increased scrutiny, transphobia, and outing. If anything, expansion of gender markers could cause further harm to trans communities by creating further categorizations by which the settler colonial state can "other" groups of genders. While a mismatched gender marker, particularly within the false M/F binary, can cause harm and dysphoria for people whose lived experience exists outside the gender binary, the expansion of gender marker options would not address that dysphoria but rather seek to abate it under the false guise of recognition while opening up new arenas of subjection.

The increasing risks of having a gender marker besides M/F are evident in transgender conversations about the X gender marker, particularly on passports. Particularly when the option of an X gender marker was added to passports, the number of questions and confusion among trans conversations on r/asktransgender proliferated. Questions about whether an X gender marker passport is still valid after EO 14168 and where a passport with such designation may or may not be recognized became increasingly prominent over the past decade. While the availability of an X gender marker could decrease dysphoria for trans

people outside the gender binary, it necessarily also decreases the freedom of movement of trans people.

Instead of expanding gender marker options, I argue that the abolition of a state-recognized gender category is the best solution to the issues and harms ID architectures cause to gender diverse people addressed in this paper. Gender is an artificial category of separation that, regardless of intent, harms trans people and renders them illegible to a major system of distributing life chances. There is no existing evidence that the identification and categorization of subjects by gender is necessary for security or that it enhances the equal distribution of life chances. However, the existing evidence is clear: gender identification causes harm to transgender people and markedly decreases their life outcomes. A queer abolitionist perspective recognizes and calls out the PMP mode of power leveraged by the settler colonial state, insisting that we recognize the structures of categorization that cause harm, and imagine new ways of living that relieve that harm.

Compounding vectors of subjection and the necessity of abolition

The name change process is especially difficult, if at all possible, for people with a criminal record or who are experiencing incarceration. Trans people are already forcefully entangled with the PIC at higher rates than the general population (Davis, 2003; Ezie & Saenz, 2023; James et al., 2016, 2024). Trans people already face excruciating barriers to accessing safety, gender affirming care, and community when imprisoned, and often face voter disenfranchisement due to their carceral status. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people face subjection at every turn of life. It is under these circumstances that I propose the complete abolition of the PIC, police, prisons, jails, juvenile detention, immigration detention, and prison labor as an integral component of gender liberation and the dismantling of PMP.

Another salient vector of subjection that severely complicates a trans person's experience is immigration status. There is very little data available on trans immigrants in the US, likely due to safety concerns and the ensuing unwillingness of trans immigrants to come forward and share their stories. Under the current Trump administration, warrantless arrests of suspected immigrants have proliferated and the increased presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) policing communities cannot be understated (Bass, 2025; Gammage & Bernard, 2025; Miller, 2025; Rios, 2025). A collective liberation approach mandates solidarity between the trans and immigrant communities in the US, with special care paid to those whose identities cross both vectors.

Heteronormative "protections" of the name change tradition do not facilitate collective liberation

While the fact that name change policy has not become further restricted over the past decade is, at surface level, perhaps surprising, it is within the context of heteronormativity that the relative ease of name changes becomes more conspicuous. The ability of a person to change their name is deeply ingrained in heterosexual marriage culture, where a woman changes her last name to that of her husband (Heinemann, 2023). An old tradition representing the ownership of women by men, this ceremony is widely popular in contemporary American culture (Heinemann, 2023). I theorize that because this name change process benefits men and affirms their superior position in American settler colonial society, it has remained largely unscathed by the transphobia fueling other ID change architectures. The fact that heteronormativity is still subject to misogynist power structures indicates the fact that just because name change policies are relatively unscathed, there is still necessarily an "us" and a "them," and therefore a power dynamic between man and woman, heterosexual and queer, cisgender and transgender. However, there is always the

threat of making the name change process exclusive to married women, or some other way of making it even more challenging for trans people to exist.

A collective liberation analysis of name change policy posits that if/when such policies are harming one population or community, everyone is being harmed. The same publication requirements that could put trans people at risk of outing or violence could also pose similar risks for cis women whose privacy is also stripped in this process. Queer theory, therefore, activates the process of theoretical interrogatory analysis of name change policy by questioning why women change their names at all. If it is a relic of the ownership of women by men, why does this tradition live on, and why do the majority of married women subscribe to this norm? This interrogation must still surf binaries here: we can imagine a world in which the name change tradition is a relic of the past and everyone has ownership over their bodies while also imagining a world in which someone wants to take on their partner's name for any list of reasons. Queering this perspective means allowing cognitive space for the people to live their lives in a way that makes them feel liberated, including taking on their husband's name. To lean fully into the notion that no woman can take her husband's last name for a legitimate reason under heteropatriarchy would be a faulty analysis of this theoretical framework.

Postcolonialism offers further answers to this theoretical inquiry by forcing us to recognize these norms in the context of white supremacy and settler colonialism and to delineate how those norms create systems of categorization that create an us-versus-them. CTP and PMP then critically recognize and draw attention to the ways in which the system of ID treats those different categories of people differently, and how that leads to a maldistribution of life chances to the disadvantage of trans communities. Through the collective liberation lens, we are then called to solidarity, to recognize that harm to any one

person is harm to all of us, and that we must create networks of solidarity to collectively take action and overthrow these violent systems.

Lessons in resistance from trans organizing and solidarity on identity documentation

Through this study, I have developed an analysis to describe the administrative structures for identity documentation and their impact on trans experiences. This leads us to the final part of this study's research question: how do transgender communities resist and produce solidarity in response?

Shira's resources document serves as a token of trans resistance in ID systems navigation. In critically analyzing Shira's resource document, I was struck by the recurrent integration of humor as a rhetorical strategy. For example, in their instructions for changing one's gender marker with the SSA, they write: "Some people online will say you need a doctor's note. Those people will also tell you that Billie Eilish is straight, that a beard looks good on me in a fun nonbinary way, and that they can't wait to rewatch the Bo Burnham special, because **they wrote that in 2021, prior to the current policy that I am telling you about**" (Bolded in original text). While they could have simply written that advice that a doctor's note is necessary is outdated and no longer the policy, they cleverly integrated jokes to give context (that the advice is referring to a policy that was in place several years ago), and to ease the frustration of only being about halfway into this document and still having more hurdles to cross in order to update their IDs. They also integrate humor into the verbiage used by these administrative systems, writing "The wizard will reveal truth from its crystal orb" in reference to navigating the "U.S. Passport Form Wizard" which is an interactive survey on the State Department website that helps indicate which form one should use to obtain or renew a passport.

Despite MA's relatively progressive policies for name change and gender marker changes on state-issued ID, the administrative protocols still carry a substantial burden of cognitive labor, time, and patience. The juxtaposition between technical instructions/advice and their lived experiential complexities represents a noteworthy resistance strategy in contemporary transgender administrative experiences. To laugh in the face of violent authority is resistance.

A second particularly salient theme of the document was Shira's incorporation of self-care directives, such as reminders to drink water and nourish oneself. The document is 27 pages long, and it details procedures that are technically complex and often emotionally charged. These reminders to attend to basic needs are crucial for a body enduring stress, as the majority of transgender people observed in this study and by Shira and Hannah report feeling. The amount of information can be overwhelming, and particularly in a time when trans people online are expressing an exponential increase in feeling fear, these self-care directives are striking and important. By combining these self-care directives with reassurance and validation for bureaucratic frustration, and sprinkling humor throughout, Shira's document serves as a powerful example of transgender resistance. Beyond instructional utility, the document is an artifact of community resilience with apt critiques of administrative burden and violence at every step of the way.

In reviewing Shira's resource document, I was reminded of a quote from the Combahee River Collective's mission statement: "We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work." The contemporary trans resistance has clear roots in the 70s Black lesbian feminist movement for collective liberation. Rooted in love and self compassion, trans

resistance is an intersectional approach to navigating violent bureaucracy within the settler colonial state.

Transnational solidarity and transgender resistance: from the Mississippi River to the Mediterranean Sea

While Anthony Blinken was the US Secretary of State credited with establishing the most accessible passport change policies to date (removing the requirement of medical documentation and adding the X gender marker), it is crucial under the CTP lens to understand his actions in the context around him. While he made significant strides in reducing the administrative violence that transgender people experience in obtaining a passport in the US, he also facilitated the American backing of the genocide in Gaza and has been accused of violating the Leahy Laws¹¹, the Geneva Conventions, and international humanitarian and human rights law, to name a few (Decamp, 2025; Harb, 2024; Johnstone, 2024). His barbaric foreign policy is a continuation of the violent settler colonial history of the US, extended to a fellow settler colony.

This critical analysis is reflected in Shira's resource document, which reads: "May we all live to see Palestine freed from the colonial entity that issued my birth certificate" and asks those using the document to consider donating to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. They conclude: **"The harm that our dying empire inflicts against its domestic trans population are inseparable from the harm it inflicts on colonial frontiers, on racialized populations, and on the Global South"** (bolded in the original text) and recommend the book "A Short History of Trans Misogyny" by Jules Gill-Peterson for further analysis of the intersection of trans and Palestinian liberation.

¹¹ The Leahy Laws are a group of laws that prohibit the US from selling weapons to foreign militaries or other security forces that have committed human rights violations, and establish a protocol for vetting those foreign military and other security forces (Starr, 2014)

From the standpoint of collective liberation, we must recognize that trans liberation is not secured in a vacuum: there is no trans liberation without Palestinian liberation. Both transgender people in the US and Palestinians in Gaza (as well as the rest of Palestine and the diaspora) are suffering violence at the hands of settler colonialist norms, albeit to much different degrees. Ultimately, there is no way Palestinians and trans people can be liberated so long as the US maintains the neoliberal capitalist superpower status it has now. When it comes to resisting this status, there is power in developing empathy for the ways in which other people suffer at the hands of the ruling classes, sometimes referred to as the collective struggle or the worker's struggle. That power, when evaluated within the context of PMP, can be leveraged to effectively and collectively liberate the people from the harm imposed by the settler colony. Further research and analysis of the ways other concurrent struggles resist such powers can be used to inform trans liberation movements in the name of collective liberation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

Throughout this paper, I have documented how administrative violence against trans people in the US occurs across partisan lines and has trended to be more restrictive over the past decade. In addition, while the expansion of gender marker options can help assuage gender dysphoria on IDs, this is more an illusion of progress than actual progress. In fact, the X gender marker has demonstrably created a new form of subjection rather than liberation, by forcefully outing the person who carries an ID with that gender marker and limiting their freedom of movement based on where that gender marker will be recognized as valid. This research also contributes to the field of resistance studies by highlighting the remarkable solidarity networks and mutual aid systems developed by transgender communities in the face of such administrative violence.

Critically, this study attempts to queer the field of public administration by bringing queer theory and trans experiences into mainstream PA scholarship. By reflecting on the norms of administrative and bureaucratic structures and questioning why they are that way, I have arrived at the queer conclusion that gender markers – and perhaps even IDs entirely – are unnecessary and in fact inflict violence upon categories of people based on settler colonial norms. Furthermore, by providing concrete examples of how PMP operates through seemingly neutral documentation systems, the critical interrogation of the existence of gender markers on IDs is strengthened and applied to PA frameworks.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

A significant limitation of this study was the challenge of researching vulnerable populations within a hostile political climate. While the use of drag names was an act of queering academia, it was also rooted in necessity to protect the trans people involved in this study. To express queerness is inherently dangerous in the contemporary context of the

settler colony. In addition, the methods used, while adequately addressing these security concerns, also limit the information available to analyze, including race, ability, indigeneity, immigration status, and carceral status. These vectors of subjection are already known to impact trans people's lives, however, their examination in this study was very limited because demographic information was not collected as part of the digital ethnography. While the theoretical framework was largely based on theories by people of color, the focus of the study did not adequately address the racial vector of subjection: both interviewees are white, and there is no way to know the race of the users on r/asktransgender.

The geographic and temporal scope of this study serves as a launchpad for future research. There are opportunities for comparative international research, such as in comparing the US and UK, or historical comparison between the US and Nazi Germany, which already has a growing body of literature on the administration of gender and transgender existence (Caplan, 2011; Sutton, 2012). Ideally, such research would be led by transgender people, whose lived experience can help upend the inherent cisnormative biases of my own research.

A flag for genocide scholars and human rights academics: the possibility of trans genocide in America

A term I came across a lot in this research and in communicating with transgender people in the US lately is genocide. Future research, particularly in the fields of human rights and genocide studies, should investigate these claims, hear them, amplify them, and analyze them. When genocide is suspected it is of moral imperative to investigate and intervene. With a proven history of genocide on US soil – of Native people, Black people, and Japanese

people, to name a few – the possibility of trans genocide should be alarming to scholars and people of conscience alike.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The policy implications of this research are nuanced, yet obvious: gender markers on ID are unnecessary and inflict harm upon transgender populations that lead them to shorter lifespans; therefore, we should abolish gender markers on ID. In the short term, to immediately reduce harm, the US could adopt a model similar to that of Australia, wherein identity documents simply do not display a gender marker. At the state level, this is legislatively feasible and could be implemented almost immediately.

In the long term, we should look at methods of structural transformation that will address the root causes of this administrative violence and hierarchical categorization. Anti-colonial resistance, such as the Land Back movement to return stolen land to its indigenous stewards, can inform strategies for better organizing society. Furthermore, decades of Black feminist scholars and organizers have been theorizing the feasibility and reality of what an anti-racist society could look like. Long term methods, in order to dismantle the settler colonial white supremacist order, must center and uplift the voices of those who experience converging vectors of subjection, to ensure that no stone is left unturned and we are uprooting every form of violence. Policy changes and structural transformation must account for multiply marginalized communities and repair the harms those communities face under the current order.

Concluding thoughts and radical hope for the world we can win

It is impossible to oversimplify the situation here: a group of people is being targeted for their existence, and they are experiencing harm. Therefore, everyone of conscience, everyone who has experienced harm at the hands of the state – especially cisgender people

whose bodies hold more political value under the settler colonial regime — must band together to resist the architectures and norms of administrative violence. Researchers also have an academic and ethical responsibility to amplify marginalized voices. I encourage future research within the field of public administration, gender studies, and queer studies, to examine the impacts of the current world order on the most marginalized people in our communities, including transgender folks.

While the themes of this study are overwhelmingly negative, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon in the transformative power of transgender organizing and resistance. In the face of administrative violence, Hannah and Shira decided to resist and navigate such administrative burdens for themselves and carry hundreds of others through the process too. This collective responsibility, rooted in an intersectional resistance architecture that acknowledges multiple vectors of subjection, is proof that the heart of trans resistance is beating and a better world is possible. Creating networks of solidarity across other movements for justice — like for the liberation of Palestine, Land Back, anti-racism, and climate justice — will strengthen not only the body of the trans resistance but inform the movement with more nuanced understandings of marginalization as required in resisting PMP. A better world is possible, and the trans resistance in America is showing us how to make it that way.

Appendices

Appendix A. Partisan Scoring by State Level Score and Presidential Score for each state.

Note: A detailed breakdown of each state score can be found in the Case Study Database.

State	State-Level Score		Presidential Score
	R-%	D-%	Designation
Alabama	100.00%	0.00%	R
Alaska	100.00%	0.00%	R
Arizona	90.91%	9.09%	Swing-R
Arkansas	100.00%	0.00%	R
California	0.00%	100.00%	D
Colorado	21.21%	78.79%	D
Connecticut	0.00%	100.00%	D
Delaware	0.00%	100.00%	D
District of Columbia*	-	-	D
Florida	100.00%	0.00%	R
Georgia	100.00%	0.00%	Swing-R
Hawaii	0.00%	100.00%	D
Idaho	100.00%	0.00%	R
Illinois	12.12%	87.88%	D
Indiana	100.00%	0.00%	R
Iowa	93.94%	6.06%	R
Kansas	78.79%	21.21%	R
Kentucky	75.76%	24.24%	R
Louisiana	75.76%	24.24%	R
Maine	24.24%	75.76%	D
Maryland	24.24%	75.76%	D
Massachusetts	24.24%	75.76%	D
Michigan	63.64%	36.36%	Swing-R
Minnesota	33.33%	66.67%	D
Mississippi	100.00%	0.00%	R
Missouri	93.94%	6.06%	R
Montana	81.82%	18.18%	R
Nebraska**	100.00%	0.00%	R

Nevada	30.30%	69.70%	Swing-D
New Hampshire	81.82%	18.18%	D
New Jersey	9.09%	90.91%	D
New Mexico	15.15%	84.85%	D
New York	12.12%	87.88%	D
North Carolina	72.73%	27.27%	R
North Dakota	100.00%	0.00%	R
Ohio	100.00%	0.00%	R
Oklahoma	100.00%	0.00%	R
Oregon	0.00%	100.00%	D
Pennsylvania	56.25%	43.75%	Swing-R
Rhode Island	0.00%	100.00%	D
South Carolina	100.00%	0.00%	R
South Dakota	100.00%	0.00%	R
Tennessee	100.00%	0.00%	R
Texas	100.00%	0.00%	R
Utah	100.00%	0.00%	R
Vermont	27.27%	72.73%	D
Virginia	45.45%	54.55%	D
Washington	9.09%	90.91%	D
West Virginia	90.91%	9.09%	R
Wisconsin	78.79%	21.21%	Swing-R
Wyoming	100.00%	0.00%	R

Appendix B. Process score summary for name changes

State	Score	Description
Alabama	1	State law does not require publication of name change announcement (Note, this may include states that typically require publication, but have explicit exceptions for gender-identity related name changes)
Arkansas	1	
California	1	
Colorado	1	
Connecticut	1	
Delaware	1	
District of Columbia	1	
Florida	1	
Illinois	1	
Louisiana	1	
Maine	1	
Maryland	1	
Michigan	1	
Minnesota	1	
Mississippi	1	
Nevada	1	
New Jersey	1	
New Mexico	1	
New York	1	
Oregon	1	
Rhode Island	1	
South Carolina	1	
Tennessee	1	
Texas	1	
Vermont	1	
Virginia	1	
Washington	1	
Alaska	0	State law has unclear publication requirement, or requires publication but allows individual court discretion and/or broad option to waive requirement
Arizona	0	
Hawaii	0	
Iowa	0	
Kansas	0	
Massachusetts	0	

Montana	0	
New Hampshire	0	
North Dakota	0	
Ohio	0	
Oklahoma	0	
Pennsylvania	0	
Utah	0	
Wisconsin	0	
Georgia	-1	State law requires publication of name change announcement, and/or includes only narrow option to waive requirement
Idaho	-1	
Indiana	-1	
Kentucky	-1	
Missouri	-1	
Nebraska	-1	
North Carolina	-1	
South Dakota	-1	
West Virginia	-1	
Wyoming	-1	

Appendix C. Interview Protocol

Introduction

This research is being conducted as part of my Masters Thesis in Public Administration at Leiden University in the Netherlands. I am studying the bureaucratic procedures for obtaining identity documents – driver’s licenses, birth certificates, passports, social security cards – with an amended name and/or gender marker, and how the barriers to obtaining IDs that accurately match one’s identity could constitute administrative violence against transgender people. In addition to this interview, I am conducting a qualitative analysis of current policies for obtaining name and gender marker changes on IDs and how those policies have changed since 2015. If you choose to be a part of this project, here is what will happen:

The purpose of this interview is to understand what resistance strategies and mutual aid projects queer and transgender communities are leveraging to deal with the administrative violence they face in obtaining IDs. The interview structure will be semi-structured, and I will ask a number of prepared questions that have been provided to you ahead of this interview with the potential for ad hoc questions to come up during our conversation.

The answers you give me will inform the basis of my thesis. On a practical level, my thesis advisor and the second reader of my thesis, two academic faculty members at the University of Leiden, may have access to the information from this interview, including personal or sensitive information you share. I will store this data safely and confidentially on a T2-encrypted hard drive.

With your permission, I would like to make an audio recording of our interview to make sure I’m getting an accurate record of the interview. It will be manually transcribed by myself **without**

the use of AI or other transcription software and stored on a T2-encrypted hard drive. The interview manuscript and recording will be made available on request **solely** to my thesis advisor and the second reader of my thesis, who are both academic staff at Leiden University, for the purposes of verification. Do I have your consent to make an audio recording of this interview?

You may choose a drag name to be identified by in the outputs of this research, namely the thesis paper. Otherwise, your identity will be obscured.

The following risks are involved in taking part in this interview: we will cover sensitive issues that may be politically contentious. You might find aspects of this interview difficult or distressing as I'll be asking for your opinions and experiences with bureaucracy and administrative violence against the transgender community. In order to reduce any potential risks, you are able at any time to refuse to answer a question, ask that we stop recording, take a break or stop the interview, or request time and/or support in regulating yourself.

You don't have to take part in this interview. You can ask me any questions you want before or throughout, and you can withdraw at any stage of the interview, without giving reason. After the interview, you can withdraw your information until June 6th, 2025, when it will be submitted for my thesis.

This project may be published as a thesis or in an academic journal. A copy of the thesis will be deposited online in the Leiden University archives.

If you have any complaints or concerns, please feel free to contact me using the same method we used to set up this interview.

Do you have any questions?

Do you give your permission for me to interview you?

Do you give your permission for me to make an audio recording of this interview?

Do you give me permission to quote you directly without identifying you?

Are you happy for me to collect sensitive personal data including gender identity and political activity?

Are you happy to take part in this interview?

Identity Questions

1. What is your full name?
2. What name would you like me to use for this interview?
3. What name would you like me to use in the publication of this research?
4. What are your pronouns?
5. How do you currently identify your gender?
6. Do you identify as part of the trans community?

Questions on ID: General

1. Is the name you currently use different from the name you were given at birth?
2. Do you have a driver's license?
 - a. IF YES: Does the name you currently use match the name on your driver's license?
 - b. IF YES: Does the gender marker on your driver's license match your identity?
 - c. How much did it cost you to update the information on your driver's license?
3. Do you have a US-issued passport?
 - a. IF YES: Does the name you currently use match the name on your passport?
 - b. IF YES: Does the gender marker on your passport match your identity?
 - c. How much did it cost you to update the information on your passport?
4. Do you have a US-issued birth certificate?
 - a. IF YES: Does the name you currently use match the name on your passport?

- b. IF YES: Does the gender marker on your passport match your identity?
 - c. How much did it cost you to update the information on your birth certificate?
5. Have you legally changed your name? If so, in which US state?
 - a. How much did it cost you to change your name?
6. If they updated ID docs: Why did you decide to update your IDs?

Questions on ID: Community-Based

1. Tell me about your work with [Network]. How did you get involved?
2. Approximately how many people are involved in this work?
3. Are you aware of other mutual aid networks or individuals doing this type of work?
4. What fears or concerns do trans people have when it comes to changing their IDs?
5. What are the benefits of updating IDs for trans people in particular?
6. Are many people attempting to change their name and gender marker right now?
7. Did you notice an influx of people attempting to change their name and gender marker around the last election, in November/December 2024?
8. What are some of the most common barriers trans people face in obtaining ID that matches their identity?
9. Can you recall any unusual or particularly challenging experiences people had when trying to update their ID?
10. What risks do trans people face when they have an ID that does not match their identity in terms of name and/or gender marker?
11. Why is it important for people to be able to change their name and/or gender marker on their ID?
12. What trends or common experiences do you see in the experiences of the trans community in changing their ID?

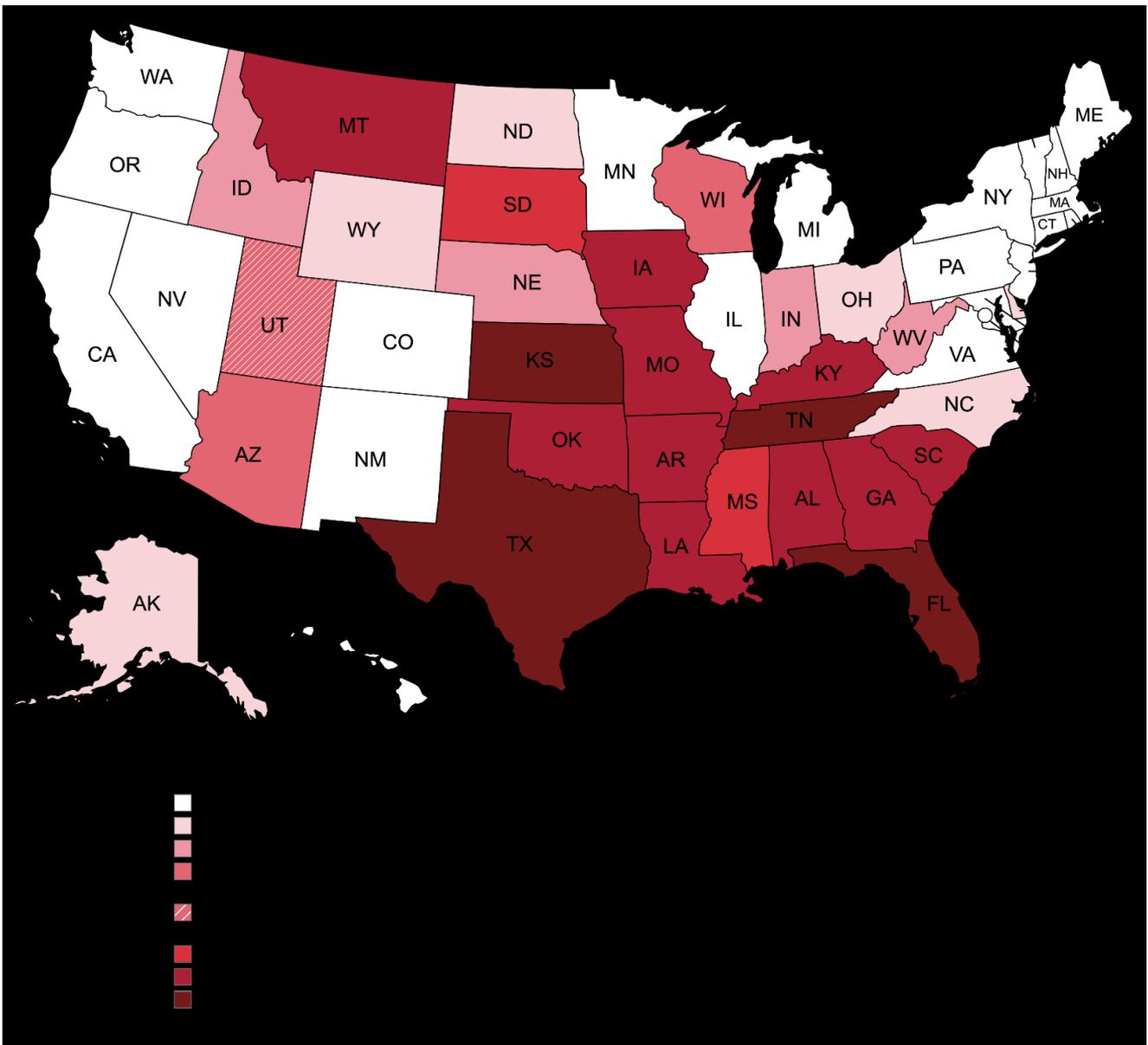
13. What elements of solidarity and intersectionality do you notice in this work?

Final Questions

1. Who else should I talk to about this?
2. Is there anything I didn't ask that you expected me to ask? Or is there anything else you want to share?

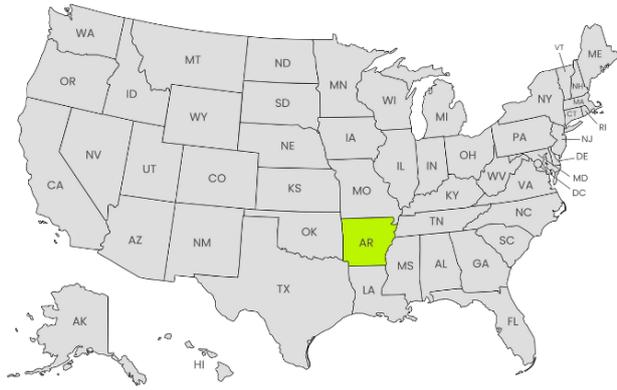
Appendix D. Summary of process and options scores for driver's license gender marker policy by state, as of April 29, 2025.

Map of the United States depicting the process for changing the gender marker on an individual's driver's license and the options for gender markers. Four states – Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Florida – do not allow the option to change gender marker on a driver's license at all.



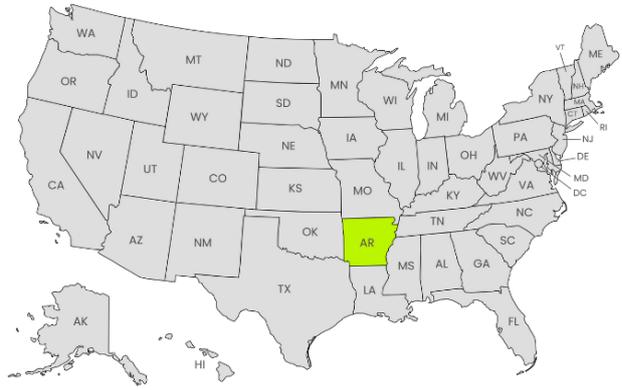
Appendix E. Yearly map chart of driver's license gender marker options by state, 2015-2025

2015



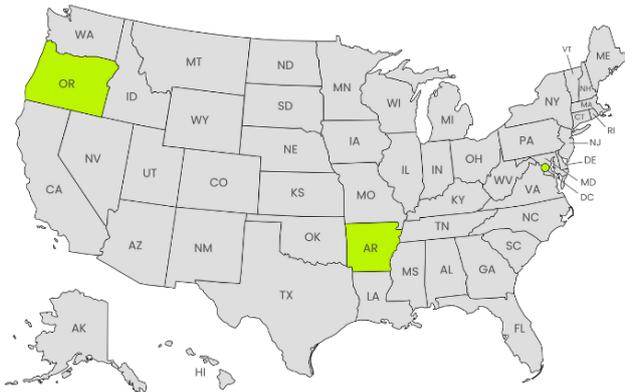
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only

2016



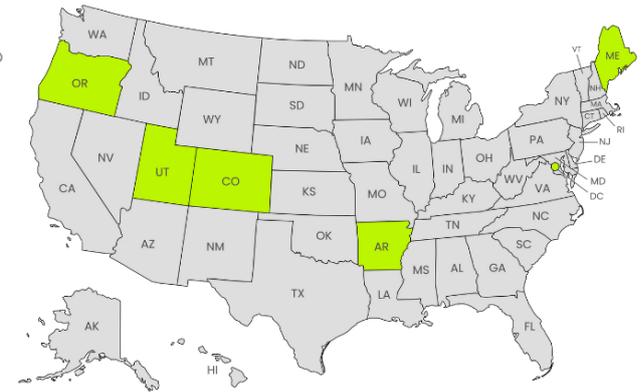
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only

2017



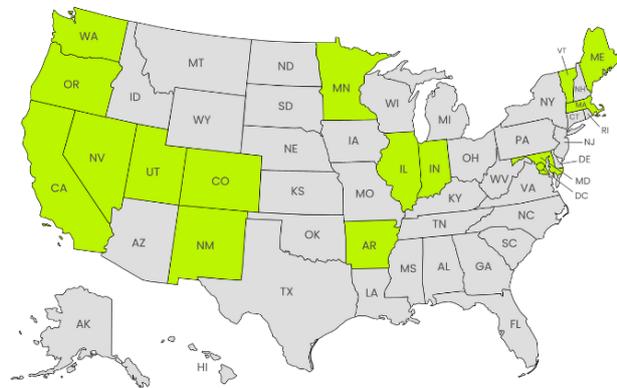
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only

2018



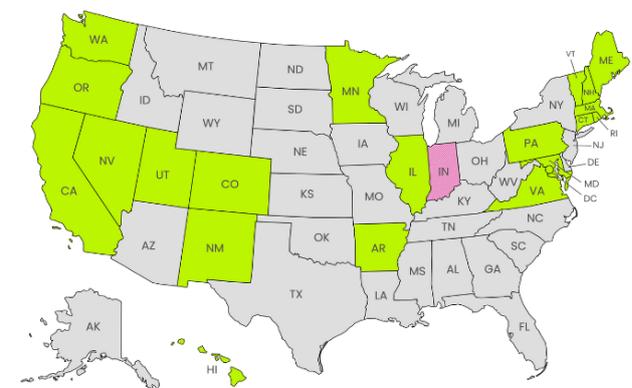
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only

2019



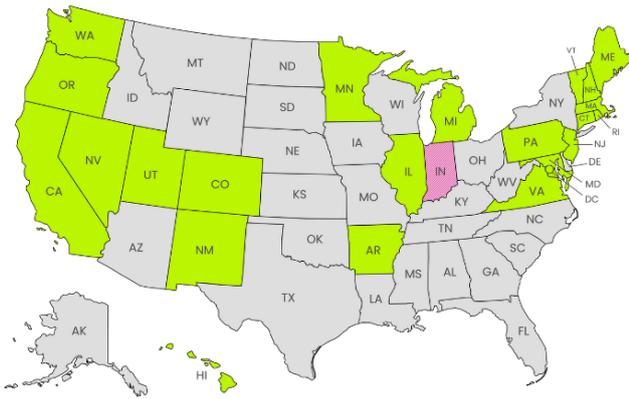
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only

2020



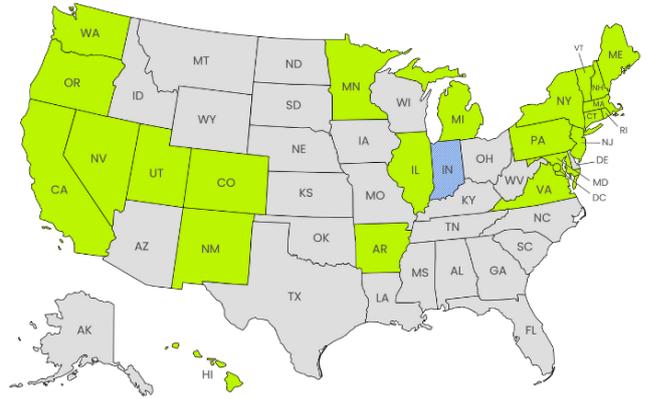
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only ■ X Option Removed

2021



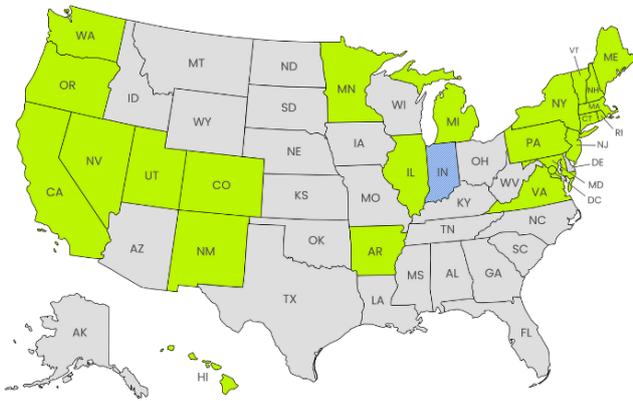
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only ■ X Option Removed

2022



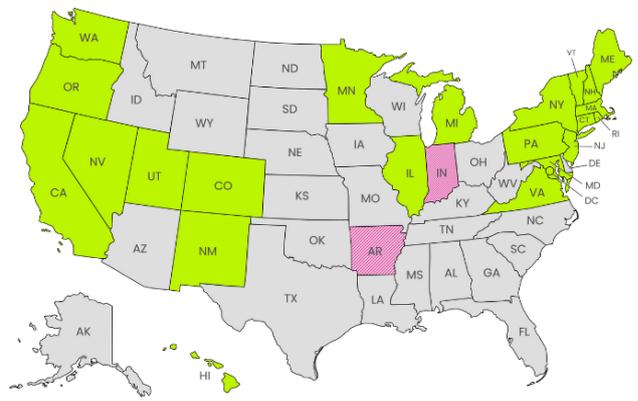
■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only ■ X Option Reinstated

2023



■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only ■ X Option Reinstated

2024



■ M/F/X ■ M/F Only ■ X Option Removed

Appendix G. Comparison of DS-11 Passport Application form with the X gender marker option (April 2023-January 2025) and with only M/F gender marker option (February 2025).

DS-11 Passport Application Form, as of February 2025

U.S. Department of State
APPLICATION FOR A U.S. PASSPORT

OMB CONTROL NO.: 1405-0004
EXPIRATION DATE: 05-31-2025
ESTIMATED BURDEN: 85 MIN

Use black ink only. If you make an error, complete a new form. Do not correct.

Select document(s) for which you are submitting fees:

U.S. Passport Book U.S. Passport Card Both
The U.S. passport card is **not** valid for international air travel. (See Instructions Page 3)

Regular Book (Standard) Large Book (Non-Standard)
The large book is for frequent travelers who need more visa pages.

1. Name Last _____ D O S NFR
 First _____ Middle _____ End. # _____ Exp. _____

2. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) _____ 3. Sex M F 4. Place of Birth (City & State if in the U.S. or City & Country as it is presently known.) _____

5. Social Security Number _____ 6. Email (see application status at passportstatus.state.gov) _____ 7. Primary Contact Phone Number _____

8. Mailing Address Line 1: (Street/RFD#, P.O. Box or URB) _____
 Address Line 2: (Include Apartment, Suite, etc. If applicant is a child, write "In Care Of" of the parent. Example: In Care Of - Jane Doe, mother) _____

DS-11 Passport Application Form, April 2022 - January 2025

U.S. Department of State
APPLICATION FOR A U.S. PASSPORT

OMB Control No. 1405-0004
Expiration Date: 04/30/2025
Estimated Burden: 85 Minutes

Use black ink only. If you make an error, complete a new form. Do not correct.

Select document(s) for which you are submitting fees:

U.S. Passport Book U.S. Passport Card Both
The U.S. passport card is **not** valid for international air travel. See Instruction Page 3

Regular Book (Standard) Large Book (Non-Standard)
The large book is for frequent international travelers who need more visa pages.

1. Name Last _____ D O S NFR
 First _____ Middle _____ End. # _____ Exp. _____

2. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) _____ 3. Gender (Read Instruction Page 1) M F X Changing gender marker? Yes _____ 4. Place of Birth (City & State if in the U.S. or City & Country as it is presently known.) _____

5. Social Security Number _____ 6. Email (See application status at passportstatus.state.gov) _____ 7. Primary Contact Phone Number _____

8. Mailing Address Line 1: Street/RFD#, P.O. Box, or URB _____
 Address Line 2: (Include Apartment, Suite, etc. If applicant is a child, write "In Care Of" of the parent. Example: In Care Of - Jane Doe) _____

Appendix H. Comparison of DS-82 Passport Renewal Application form with the X gender marker option (April 2023-January 2025) and with only M/F gender marker option (February 2025).

DS-82 Passport Renewal Application Form, as of February 2025

 **U.S. PASSPORT RENEWAL APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS** OMB CONTROL NO. 1405-0020
 Use **black ink** only. If you make an error, complete a new form. Do not correct. OMB EXPIRATION DATE: 03-31-2023
 ESTIMATED BURDEN: 40 MIN

Select document(s) for which you are applying:
 U.S. Passport Book U.S. Passport Card Both
The U.S. passport card is **not** valid for international air travel. (See instruction page 3)
 Regular Book (Standard) Large Book (Non-Standard)
The large book is for frequent international travelers who need more visa pages.

1. Name Last (Your name must match previous passport or name change document) D O DP DOTS Code _____
 First _____ Middle _____ End. # _____ Exp. _____

2. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) 3. Sex M F 4. Place of Birth (City & State if in the U.S., or City & Country as it is presently known)

5. Social Security Number 6. Email (See application status at passportstatus.state.gov) 7. Primary Contact Phone Number

8. Mailing Address Line 1: (Street/RFD#, P.O. Box, or URB) @ _____
 Address Line 2: (Include Apartment, Suite, In Care Of or Attention if applicable.)

DS-82 Passport Renewal Application Form, April 2023 - January 2025

 U.S. Department of State
U.S. PASSPORT RENEWAL APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OMB Control No. 1405-0020
 Use **black ink** only. If you make an error, complete a new form. Do not correct. Expiration Date: 04/30/2025
 Estimated Burden: 40 Minutes

Select document(s) for which you are applying:
 U.S. Passport Book U.S. Passport Card Both
The U.S. passport card is **not** valid for international air travel. (See instruction page 3)
 Regular Book (Standard) Large Book (Non-Standard)
The large book is for frequent international travelers who need more visa pages.

1. Name Last (Your name must match previous passport or name change document) D O S NFR
 First _____ Middle _____ End. # _____ Exp. _____

2. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) 3. Gender (Read Instruction Page 2) M F X Changing gender marker? Yes _____ 4. Place of Birth (City & State if in the U.S., or City & Country as it is presently known)

5. Social Security Number 6. Email (See applicaon status at passportstatus.state.gov) 7. Primary Contact Phone Number

8. Mailing Address Line 1: (Street/RFD#, P.O. Box, or URB)
 Address Line 2: (Include Apartment, Suite, In Care Of or Attention if applicable.)

Case Study Database

To access the Case Study Database, click [here](#) or copy the following URL into your browser:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1y-EY-71V_vzMQITWyGppSYVZMEFcibSS

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