

# Transgender voters across the US may face additional hurdles when voting this November

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Thirty-one percent of voting eligible trans people do not have an ID with the person's correct name, according to a 2020 [study at the Williams Institute](#) on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at the UCLA School of Law.

- According to a 2018 survey from the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#), presenting an ID which shows a different gender or name to someone's gender presentation led to a denial of services for 16 percent of respondents.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has closed the offices of many clerks and courts around the country, substantially increasing the wait times to receive judges orders, certified documents, and more.
- The final dates for registering to vote and updating voter registrations are looming as the November election approaches. People awaiting court rulings to update documents may inadvertently become disenfranchised as a result.

As the upcoming November election approaches amid a global pandemic, transgender voters may face increased challenges while while voting.

The spread of COVID-19 has brought the speed of courts and filing systems across the United States to a crawl. While patience is an option for some, the November presidential election is quickly approaching and the deadlines for updating voter registrations are looming.

As transgender Americans, newlyweds and many more change their name every year, those who are stuck in the laborious filing processes may inadvertently become disenfranchised for the 2020 election as filing times grow increasingly longer.

There are currently 34 states which have varying [voter identification laws](#) in place for its elections. Six states currently have strict photo ID laws, meaning you are barred from voting without a photo ID. Twelve states currently have non-strict photo ID laws, allowing you to vote using a provisional ballot which will only be counted if additional proof of residency is brought to election officials.

According to a 2020 [study at the Williams Institute](#) on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at the UCLA School of Law, an estimated 384,350 citizens, or 31% of voting eligible trans people do not have identifying documents with their correct name. A lack of proper identifying documents is traditionally considered an issue for any American, but one which is exacerbated in the year of a presidential election in which the [Pew Research Center](#) reported "really matters" to 83 percent of respondents.

In 2018, a [study by the National Center for Transgender Equality](#) found that when showing an ID that had a name or gender incongruent with the person's gender presentation, "25% of people were verbally harassed, 16% were denied services or benefits, 9% were asked to leave a location or establishment, and 2% were assaulted or attacked."

"In states that have strict voter ID laws, trans people tend to have a lot more barriers to accessing updated, accurate IDs so that they can walk into their polling place and vote without fear of harassment or discrimination and be turned away," said Arli Christian, campaign strategist for the [ACLU](#).

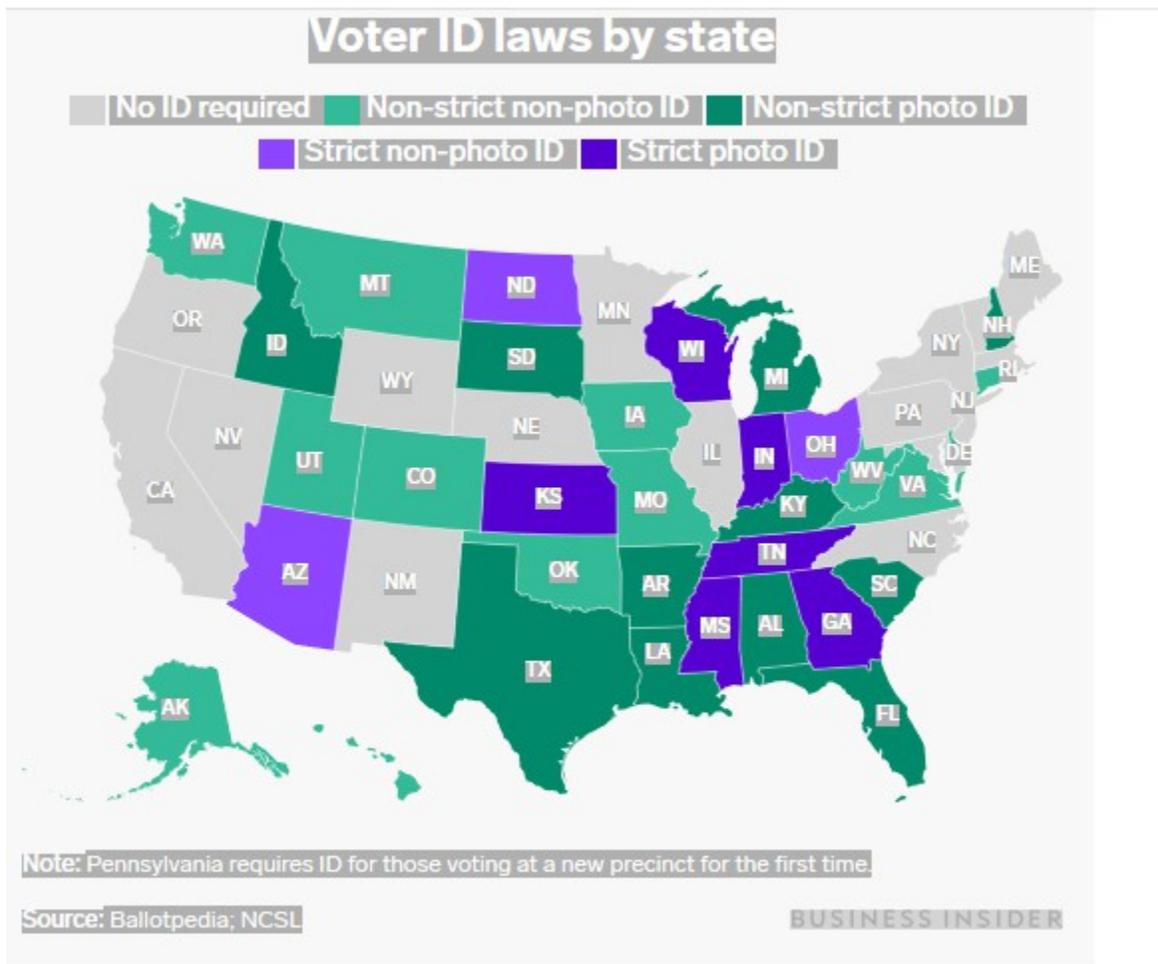
It used to take mere minutes to receive a name and gender marker change in person in Texas' Travis County. Now, the average waiting time to receive a court order for an e-filed name and gender marker change can take anywhere from 1-6 weeks, according to the Travis County District Clerk's office.

Even with a streamlined e-filing system like the one Travis County currently has in place, it may still take over a month to receive the signed court order and an additional week or two to order and obtain the certified copies needed to update the name and gender marker on a driver's license, Social Security card, passport, or birth certificate.

"In this COVID world, it is increasingly difficult to get a legal name change because of the number of legal steps that a person has to go through in order to update it, get a court order for name change, update their legal name with Social Security, update it with the DMV, and then get updates on any other documents and records. Each of these agencies may or may not be open, may or may not have mail processes for doing updates, and likely have seen some pretty severe slow downs," said Christian.

Due to increased COVID-19 related precautions, many Departments of Public Safety and Departments of Motor Vehicles around the country are currently serving customers on an appointment-only basis. Some waiting periods for updating drivers licenses currently take up to 4 months.

According to the [Texas Department of State and Health Services](#), it will also currently take 75 to 90 days to amend a birth certificate after sending the necessary materials in by mail.



While wait times for updating IDs and legal documents are prolonged, the increased availability of mail-in voting around the country may prove to be a panacea for some trans people as it would prevent harassment from polling workers.

"Often the barrier that trans folks face in the voting process is that they walk into a polling place and encounter a poll worker who may not understand that their ID or name on their ID may not match their gender presentation and the poll worker may unnecessarily question a trans person's identity," Christian said.

And while mail-in voting may not solve every trans person's voting struggles, it will prove to be helpful for many.

"Some of that risk can be alleviated by the vote by mail process."

How to vote this November

- The 2020 presidential election is on November 3, but voter registration deadlines in some states are quickly approaching. See what the [voter registration deadline is where you live is here](#).
- The majority of US states will offer some form of [in-person early voting](#). [Check when early voting starts and ends in your state](#).
- If you plan to [vote by mail](#), request your ballot now and vote early. [Vote by mail rules differ by state](#).
- Here's [when you can expect to receive your mail ballot](#), [when you must return it by in your state](#), and [some common mistakes to avoid](#) when filling out and mailing in your ballot.
- In 34 states, you'll need to show ID to vote this November. [See what the law requires in each state](#) and what you need to know about voting and getting an ID [if you've recently moved due to COVID-19](#).