



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 5, 2022

## LGBTQ Advocacy Group Estimates Nearly 17,000 Will Pick “Gender-neutral” Option on U.S. Passports

Beginning April 11, all passport seekers in the United States will have the option of choosing an “X” for their gender instead of the traditional M for male and F for female. The Williams Institute — an LGBTQ advocacy organization at the University of California-Los Angeles — predicts that as many as 16,700 people who classify themselves as non-binary (neither male or female) will choose the new marker every year going forward.

“We estimate that 1.4% of the nonbinary LGBTQ population in the U.S., or 16,700 people, may request passports with an X gender marker each year. This estimate is based upon current demand for X gender markers on driver’s licenses in states which allow such an option,” The [Williams institute](#) said.

Currently, 21 states in the United States allow the option of choosing X on drivers licenses rather than male and female.

The State Department [first started](#) issuing gender-neutral passports in October of 2021 as a part of the Biden administration’s [National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality](#). The United States joins Argentina, Austria, Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, India, and Nepal as nations that deny biology and allow passport-seekers to choose a third option for their gender.

The White House says the new strategy acknowledges that it is adopting an “intersectional approach” to combat what it calls “discrimination and bias related to gender, race, and other factors, including sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, and socioeconomic status.”

According to Jessica Stern — the U.S. Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+) Persons — the new passports are more in line with the “lived reality” of people who do not believe that they are either male or female.

“When a person obtains identity documents that reflect their true identity, they live with greater dignity and respect,” Stern said in October.

According to the Williams Institute, it’s a matter of great distress to ask certain people whether they are male or female.

“Accurate identification documents are required for participation in many aspects of life, including voting and travel,” the Williams Institute explains. “Inaccurate IDs have been associated with



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discrimination and harassment, and possession of inaccurate IDs has been associated with higher rates of psychological distress among transgender adults.”

The State Department was proud to [announce](#) that it had become the first federal agency to offer the choice of X on identity documents.

“The [State] Department is setting a precedent as the first federal government agency to offer the X gender marker on an identity document,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

“After thoughtful consideration of the research conducted and feedback from community members, we concluded that the definition of the X gender marker on State Department public forms will be ‘Unspecified or another gender identity.’ This definition is respectful of individuals’ privacy while advancing inclusion,” Blinken concluded.

In addition to the new passports, the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) recently [announced](#) new screening procedures designed to advance the civil rights of LGBTQ passengers. The new procedures were announced on March 31, the so-called International Transgender Day of Visibility.

“On this internationally recognized day for the transgender community, TSA is proud to announce significant initiatives as a direct result of close partnership with community stakeholders,” said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. “Over the coming months, TSA will move swiftly to implement more secure and efficient screening processes that are gender neutral, as well as technological updates that will enhance security and make TSA PreCheck enrollment more inclusive. These combined efforts will greatly enhance airport security and screening procedures for all.”

It’s important to remember that up until 2012 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders — pretty much the gold standard when it comes to diagnosing mental disorders — still classified “gender identity disorder” as a mental illness. The World Health Organization continued to list the condition as a mental illness as late as 2019.

The science on the issue hadn’t changed — only the political pressure did.



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