

# What is Gender Identity?

How an individual perceives themselves and their gender.



## Why does it matter?

8% of the US population identifies as LGBT (1% as transgender)

### Aging

3 million LGBT over the age of 50 (projected to be 7 million by 2030)

- 4x less likely to have children
- 2x more likely to live single or alone

### Suicide

40% of transgender individuals have attempted suicide (only 4.6% of total US population has attempted suicide)

- 80% of transgender individuals report experiencing suicidal ideation.

### Violence

At least 32 violent deaths of transgender individuals (2024)

- Many violent deaths of transgender persons are not accurately reported.

# Everyone deserves a voice in death.



"We are advocates for the dead, for it is not justice that we seek, but the truth in death so that justice may be served."

## Support

Contact Juniper Fedor at [juniper@transmldi.org](mailto:juniper@transmldi.org) for assistance with gender diverse cases, training and education, or speaking opportunities.

## Contributors

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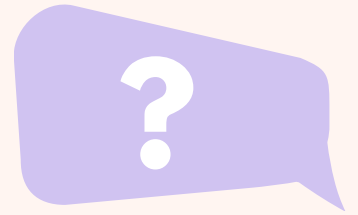
Alison Krywaczyk, MD

Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office

## References

1. National Center for Transgender Equality
2. SAGE (Services & Advocacy for LGBT Elders)
3. interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
4. US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey
5. Human Rights Campaign
6. UCLA Williams Institute

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# GENDER IDENTITY IN MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATION

Information, Statistics, and Investigative References



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# Terminology

## transgender

gender identity differs from assigned sex at birth

Outdated Terminology:  
transvestite, transexual

## assigned sex at birth

the birth marker (M or F) assigned to the original birth certificate

Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB)  
Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB)

"The decedent is a transgender man who was assigned female at birth."

## nonbinary

identity that falls outside of the gender binary (male or female)

Some nonbinary people identify as trans, but some do not!

## intersex

genetic differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy

Outdated Terminology:  
hermaphrodite

1.7% of people are intersex  
2.0% of people have red hair

## gender affirming care/surgery

care received to feel more aligned with one's gender

Outdated Terminology:  
sex change surgery  
sex reassignment surgery



# Approaches to Investigation

## Scene Markers

- **Incongruity** in government IDs
- State of **gender affirming care**
- **Clothing or tattoos** indicative of gender diverse identity
- Notes, literature, or **social media posts**

## Interview Techniques

- Routinely ask about **sexual orientation and gender identity** information:
  - especially in all suspected suicides, homicides, and youth/childhood deaths
  - from family of origin and friends/partners
- **Suggested Questions and Responses:**
  - "Did the decedent ever discuss their sexuality or gender identity?"
  - "What can you **tell me** about your loved one's gender identity?"
  - "Did they ever go by a **different name**?"
  - "What **pronouns** did [NAME] use? Have they used **different pronouns in the past**?"
  - "These questions are part of our **routine** process; we ask them to everyone."

# Resources

## Trans Doe Task Force LAMMP Database

- LGBTQ+ Accountability for Missing and Murdered Persons
- Free access for MDIs
- [transdoetaskforce.org](https://transdoetaskforce.org)



## AJFMP Review Article

Gender Identity in Forensic Death Investigation  
A Narrative Review and Suggested Guidelines for Documenting and Reporting  
Juniper Fedor, MS, PI (ASCP)CM,\* Alison Krywanycz, MD,† and Anthony Redgrave, EdD,‡



# Documenting Transgender Deaths

## Writing Suggestions and Guide

## Investigative Narratives

- "...reported the death of **[LEGAL NAME]**, who is a **[transgender woman/nonbinary individual]** assigned **[male]** at birth."
- "The decedent used the name **[CHOSEN NAME]** and the pronouns **[they/them, he/him]**,
  - which will be utilized in reference to the decedent throughout the remainder of this report."
- If unsure if transgender:
  - "**possible transgender identity**"

## Autopsy Reports

- "The body is that of an adult **[transgender man]** who was assigned **[female]** at birth,
  - and has undergone **gender affirming care**, to include a double mastectomy and hormone replacement therapy."
- "The external genitalia are those of a **phenotypic** adult **[female]**."
- "The external genitalia consist of a **[vulva/penis]**."
  - Describe various stages of gender affirming care using anatomic terms.

## Death Certificates

- Regulations **vary by jurisdiction**.
- Defer to **guidance** and policies from your state vital registrar.
- Use **gender identity at time of death**, if possible.