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Being LGBT in Jamaica

National Survey for Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
Persons in Jamaica

March 2023

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Abbreviations

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JFLAG	Equality for All Foundation
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Glossary of Terms

Cisgender Woman	A woman whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth i.e., female.
Cisgender Man	A man whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth i.e. male.
Non-binary/Queer	A person whose gender is not exclusively female or male
Transgender woman	A woman who was assigned male at birth.
Transgender man	A man who was assigned female at birth.
Gay	A man that is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men.
Lesbian	A woman that is emotionally and or sexually attracted to other women.
Bisexual	A man or woman that is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one gender.
Heterosexual	A man or woman that is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to the opposite gender.
Gender identity	A person's self-identified gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.
Gender Expression	A person's visible representation of their gender identity to others, including their appearance, behavior, and mannerisms.
Sexual orientation	A person's enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to either or both genders or neither gender.
Asexual	The lack of sexual attraction to others or a low or absent interest in sexual activity.
Demisexual	A person who only experiences sexual attraction after a strong emotional connection has been formed.
Pansexual	A person's sexual attraction that is not limited to traditional gender binary identities, i.e., any gender identity or biological sex.
Gender Non-conforming	A person who does not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

1. Executive summary

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Jamaica, as in many other countries globally, face challenges often due to a lack of support; stigma and discrimination; as well as violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. These inequities result in a difference in the enjoyment of basic human rights when compared to the general population.

The national LGBT survey aimed to assess and produce insights on the impact of exclusion, stigma, and discrimination on the lived experiences of LGBT persons in Jamaica. In addition, the survey endeavoured to provide actionable recommendations that may inform the development and implementation of inclusive public policies to aid in establishing an equitable and just society. The research considers eight thematic areas where exclusion, stigma, and discrimination may be experienced:

- › Violence due to prejudice and discrimination
- › Human Rights
- › Education
- › Employment and Employability
- › Sense of Belonging
- › Health
- › Standard of Living
- › Political and Social Participation

1.1. Methodological Approach

The study utilized a mixed methods approach through a four-step process, namely:

- › An Environmental Scan & Desk Review – An environment scan of existing data and good practices in conducting similar national surveys were undertaken.
- › Survey Instrument Consultation, Development and Adaptation – The National LGBT Survey in Jamaica adapted a questionnaire previously used in a similar study by UNDP in the Dominican Republic. The survey was adapted with input from key stakeholders, some of whom formed the Technical Advisory Committee, and secondary data from a desk review. The stakeholders included representatives from JFLAG, TransWave, WE-Change Jamaica, Jamaica Network of Seropositives (JN+) and Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL).
- › Survey Engagement – The survey was administered using the “Going Online” framework between October 26, 2022, and November 27, 2022. Sponsored ads were used to support the dissemination of the survey via social media platforms such as Facebook, and Instagram. Additionally, key stakeholders helped to distribute the survey on their social media pages.
- › Results Analysis – Survey results were interpreted and analyzed. They were also informed by the results of the desk review and discussions with the Technical Advisory Committee.

1.2. Summary of Findings

1.2.1. Survey Respondents Characteristics

Survey respondents had to self-identify as LGBT, be 18 years or older, and reside in Jamaica during the period of the study. In total 1,108 persons started the survey, but the final completed sample consisted of 962 Jamaican residents. Of the 962 respondents, eighty-nine (89) per cent were between the ages of 18-35, and the remaining eleven (11) percent were 36 years old and above. Given that the universe of LGBT persons in Jamaica is unknown, the survey provides results for a convenience sample, that should not be extrapolated to the totality of LGBT persons in the country. However, the results of the survey do provide important insight into the lives of LGBT persons in Jamaica and can help identify trends and patterns and entry points for national dialogue and discussions.

The survey captured key socio-demographical data of all respondents, broken down in the following eight (8) categories:

- > Gender identity
- > Sexual orientation
- > Age
- > Ethnicity
- > Geographical location
- > Education and Literacy
- > Disability
- > Civil Status

The survey captured the views of 962 respondents living throughout all 14 parishes of Jamaica and offers a snapshot of the structural barriers experienced by LGBT persons. The survey was completed by respondents who identified as cisgender women (44%), cisgender men (36%) and given the small number of respondents identifying as non-binary, queer or transgender, they were grouped together for a total of (20%) of survey responses. In terms of sexual orientation, respondents identified as bisexual (44%), gay (29%), lesbian (26%), and heterosexual (1%).

Survey respondents highlighted that family support, or the absence thereof remains a key factor in their wellbeing. Over 75% of respondents indicated that the absence of family support affects them and remains a major concern. This lack of support may lead to experiences of homelessness, suicidal ideation (over 69% of survey respondents reported having suicidal thoughts) and other negative consequences experienced by LGBT persons.

LGBT persons also perceived a lack of support from government, as well as discrimination within public services, programmes and agencies that were designed to help and support all Jamaicans. For example, only 5% of respondents felt that local government officials cared about LGBT persons. Respondents also shared negative experiences accessing critical life services such as health, educational and social services.

The report highlights that within educational settings, one (1) in every three (3) LGBT person indicated that they were discriminated against or outright denied access to educational support. Accessing health services was no different, with more than half (55%) reporting that they did not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to medical staff. Transgender persons reported having to leave the country for treatment because of the absence of services to support their transition.

While discrimination seems to be pervasive, affecting almost all aspects of daily life, in terms of settings where experiences of discrimination were greatest, survey respondents identified the top three as entertainment centers such as shopping malls and cinemas (49%); neighborhood and communities (43%); and family (40%).

Respondents also shared that within the wider community, more work is needed to address stigma and discrimination towards LGBT persons. For example, respondents shared that discrimination against LGBT persons is high, with one (1) out of every three (3) respondents experiencing threatening language directed at them within the last six months; and 61% facing discrimination because of their gender identity or sexual orientation over the last twelve months.

These wider community experiences have contributed to the migration of LGBT persons both internally between parishes and externally to other countries. The negative consequence of this is that LGBT persons are leaving communities, taking their talents and gifts with them. This brain drain can lead to wider economic and social consequences (Crehan, P. et al, 2021).

Despite these and other challenges faced by LGBT persons, the survey also identified a level of resilience among respondents. Respondents were actively involved in their communities and had an overall desire to see Jamaica change for the better. The negative experiences did not always deter respondents, as demonstrated by 75% of respondents remaining committed to defending the rights of LGBT persons. It is therefore incumbent on persons within families, local communities, and government to do more to help protect the human rights and dignity of LGBT persons and to truly build a society that is more inclusive.

Finally, the report offers key recommendations for the government, private sector, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, media, and the public, to ensure the rights of all citizens, including LGBT persons, are upheld. The recommendations include:

- › Strengthening local capacities in both the public and private sectors to ensure equal access to service.
- › Creating an enabling legal and policy environment to strengthen the inclusion of LGBT persons, working in close consultation with LGBT organizations.
- › Creating conditions for open dialogue with LGBT persons and organizations to ensure services meet the needs of these communities.
- › Increasing training and sensitization opportunities focused on building awareness of the human rights of LGBT persons, and Jamaica's responsibilities under regional and universal human rights bodies and treaties.
- › Fostering safe learning environments within educational institutions by adopting anti-discriminatory policies for students, thus preventing discrimination and exclusion
- › Developing supportive and inclusive policy frameworks that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- › Sustaining support networks through fostering relationships with LGBT organizations through expanding public commitments, financial support, and other initiatives.
- › Providing social services into the realm of family reconnect work that can aid in reducing discrimination within families.

The implementation of these recommendations not only improve the lives of LGBT persons, but they can have wider societal impact, resulting in a reduction of stigma and discrimination, greater access to services, improved family relations, and mental health support. They can also promote civic engagement and participation, ultimately increasing opportunities to build a better society.

2. Introduction

2.1. Study Background

In keeping with 'leaving no one behind', a central principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDP remains committed to end discrimination and exclusion. The regional 'Being LGBTI in the Caribbean' (BLIC) project, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to enhance knowledge, partnerships, and capacities of LGBTI communities, civil society, and States to reduce human rights violations towards LGBTI people in four countries within the region – Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica

(UNDP, 2022). In September 2022, MOBAK was contracted to undertake the National LGBT Survey to assist in expanding the existing data regarding the socioeconomic conditions of LGBT people in Jamaica. To accomplish this, MOBAK utilized a mixed method methodological approach to generate and analyze the data. It is expected that the survey results will increase available knowledge and data on situations of violence, stigma, and discrimination faced by LGBT persons, as well as aid in assessing the levels of fundamental rights and freedoms enjoyed.

2.2. Study Context: Being LGBT in Jamaica

With a population of approximately 2.8 million, Jamaica is the third largest Caribbean territory, and like many other Caribbean territories has a rich history entrenched in slavery. Jamaica's society is predominantly of Afro descent (76.3%), followed by Afro-European (15.1%), East Indian 3.4% and Caucasian (3.2%) (STATIN, 2012). Through the constitution, Jamaicans experience the freedom of worship, with the largest denominations being Seventh Day Adventist and Pentecostal. Other denominations include Anglican, New Testament Church of God, Baptist, and Rastafarian. Jamaica comprises of diverse groups and individuals, including LGBT persons. However, for many LGBT persons, the existing legal framework, and lack of robust implementation of human rights protection have led to greater inequity, discrimination and inaccessibility to services experienced by this group versus the general population.

Jamaica is a member state of the Organization of American States (OAS) and of the United Nations (UN). As a member of the OAS, Jamaica is held party to the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and its human rights policies and practices are monitored by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. At both the global and regional levels, Jamaica has ratified the following human rights treaties:

- › American Convention on Human Rights
- › Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women
- › International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- › International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- › Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- › Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- › Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- › International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- › International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and
- › Accepted the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Under these ratified treaties, Jamaica must submit State reports periodically and describe the steps the country has taken to implement the treaty provisions. These changes and ratifications have demonstrated the engagement of the Government and Civil Society. However, additional work is required at the constitutional and legislative levels to improve the outcomes for LGBT persons in Jamaica.

In a joint report to the United Nations, several leading LGBT organizations in Jamaica presented a comprehensive account detailing the unique experiences of stigma and discrimination. This report highlighted some unique areas of this research. Based on research done in several areas, experiences of discrimination. (Human Rights Shadow Report, 2011).

These reports continue to highlight that in law and practice, discrimination exists toward LGBT persons. Two examples that are raised are:

- 1) The retention of the colonial law, the Offences Against the Person Act (OAPA) (1864) criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual acts making it legally punishable by imprisonment of up to ten years. This law under Article 77 and the criminalization of ‘acts of gross indecency’ under Article 79, generally interpreted as an act between males, have often been regarded as the basis to discriminate against LGBT people and perpetuate the culture of homophobia within Jamaican society.
- 2) The amended 2011 Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms outlined the grounds for protecting its citizens from discrimination. The Charter does not contain protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but rather, protection is provided based on sex.

Unfortunately, these laws provide broad discretion for the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) to arbitrarily detain LGBT persons on charges that are not well-defined, such as “suspicion of buggery” and “gross indecency.”

So, while Jamaica has made several strides, based on the tremendous advocacy done by LGBT civil society organizations, much work remains. However, the implementation of the non-binding 2004 staff orders within the public service that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the introduction of the diversity policy within the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) prohibiting police officers from discriminating based on sexual orientation, are steps in the right direction.

The presence of discriminatory laws creates an environment within which discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity seems to be sanctioned. Jamaicans account for more than 40% of requests to Rainbow Railroad (an LGBTI organization based in Canada that assists members of the LGBTI community worldwide to relocate to Canada) for relocation from Jamaica.

Reports from those experiencing persecution in Jamaica are staggering. Rainbow Railroad caseworkers frequently help individuals who have been brutally attacked, sexually harassed, assaulted, burned with acid or fire, received death threats or had gang violence occur in their neighbourhoods. Although victims sometimes report these crimes to police, they rarely result in protection or charges against perpetrators.

[Rainbow Railroad \(2023\)](#)

Transgender persons are afforded no legal recognition of their gender identity, which leaves them vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination. Furthermore, without legal documents that recognize their gender identity transgender persons often have difficulty in accessing public services and social assistance programmes.

There are no legal safeguards in Jamaica that guarantee transgender persons the right to gender identity, which leaves them further vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination. This in turn results in them having limited access to public services as they have no legal documents that recognizes their gender identity and expression.

3. Literature Review

The literature review undertaken for this study comprised of several academic and policy-related sources published regionally and internationally mainly between 2015-2022. The literature revealed varied experiences of, and attitudes towards, LGBT people in the Caribbean and Jamaica more specifically and highlighted the following:

3.1. Experiences in the Health Sector

In a 2015 survey, 316 LGBTI Jamaicans shared their views of the discriminatory practices within the health sector from both medical and non-medical staff. The survey highlighted that “52.5% of respondents reported being forced to undergo seemingly unnecessary medical or psychological testing, 32.2% experienced inappropriate curiosity regarding their identity. Approximately 17% felt they had not received equal treatment, and 15% declined treatment because they felt fear or discrimination or intolerance, and 15% also felt the need to change their general practitioner or specialist because of negative reactions.” (JFLAG, 2016)

Additionally, the report highlighted the lack of access to hormonal and surgical treatments to support transgender persons in their transition. This lack of access, the report indicated, often led to persons seeking other means to self-medicate or participate in the purchasing of hormonal treatments without the appropriate medical guidance, supervision, and quality assurance. Similarly, a study by Ross et al. (2016) found that LGBT individuals in the Eastern Caribbean experienced discrimination in healthcare settings and had lower rates of healthcare utilization compared to the general population.

In terms of mental health, a study by Logie et al. (2019) found that LGBT individuals in Jamaica experienced high levels of depression and anxiety, which were linked to experiences of stigma and discrimination. However, the study also found that social support from family and friends could buffer the negative impact of stigma and discrimination on mental health.

3.2. Experienced in the Employment Sector

Research on employment discrimination against LGBT individuals in Jamaica is limited, as the topic remains largely unexplored. However, available studies suggest that LGBT individuals experience significant barriers to employment and workplace discrimination.

A 2012 study by JFLAG found that 44% of LGBT Jamaicans surveyed had experienced employment discrimination. Discrimination ranged from being fired from a job or not being hired due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, to being subjected to homophobic slurs and harassment in the workplace. Many reported being forced to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity to secure and maintain employment (JFLAG, 2012). Likewise, data from JFLAG’s 2015 study indicated that persons who tend to be more open about their sexual orientation and gender identity are more likely to be denied a job.

In the wider Eastern Caribbean region, data surrounding employment discrimination is even more limited. However, a 2017 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted that LGBT individuals across the Caribbean experience employment discrimination and lack of access to decent work. ILO describes discrimination to be instances of being denied employment or promotions due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, to being subjected to harassment and abuse in the workplace (ILO, 2017).

3.3. Experiences in housing and homelessness

LGBT individuals have been forced to leave their homes and communities and are homeless due to lack of tolerance, violence, and threats of violence. A study by the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) in Jamaica found that 35% of LGBT persons surveyed reported experiencing homelessness or being forced to leave their home due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (CVC, 2014).

“Between January 2012 and July 2014, JFLAG received 61 reports from LGBT people, including children, who were displaced and denied their right to shelter and a family. All of the twelve reports received in 2012 were from boys under 18 years of age” (JFLAG, 2016).

The study also revealed that LGBT persons experienced discrimination when seeking housing, with some landlords refusing to rent to them or evicting them once their sexual orientation or gender identity was revealed. Moreover, LGBT people who were able to secure housing often had to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid discrimination and violence (Lugg et al., 2018). Similarly, a survey by CVC and the Center for Integral Orientation and Investigation (COIN) reported that approximately 44% of LGBT people in the Dominican Republic experienced housing discrimination (CVC/COIN, 2012). The report also highlighted that this discrimination was not an isolated incident but a systemic problem across the Caribbean.

Additionally, LGBT persons who experience homelessness are often caught in an unending cycle of violence. They have been forced to leave their communities because of the fear and threats of violence, which forces them to live on the streets where they are often faced with more extreme violence. While direct statistical data on the violence experienced by homeless LGBT people are limited, numerous studies and reports have suggested that they face significant violence and discrimination. In a study by Human Rights Watch (2012), it was revealed that homeless LGBT persons in Jamaica are frequently subjected to vicious attacks and sexual violence, and they lack adequate protection from the law enforcement agencies that are supposed to safeguard their rights. This is further substantiated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report which highlighted that homeless LGBT persons are at a higher risk of being victims of physical and sexual violence, especially transgender women (UNHCR, 2016).

3.4. Gaps in recognition and protection

The criminalization of same-sex relationships also creates significant gaps in recognition and protection for LGBT individuals in Jamaica. The enforcement of anti-sodomy laws contributes to stigma and discrimination and may discourage LGBT persons from seeking legal recourse for violations of their rights (Barron et al., 2020).

The Jamaica Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (2011) guarantees the rights to equality before the law, to equitable and human treatment by a public authority in the exercise of any function, and to freedom from discrimination. The freedom from discrimination, however, does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The effect of this is that discriminatory treatment in employment, education, healthcare, and housing (as exemplified above) at the hands of non-state actors is allowed to occur with impunity.

While Jamaica has general protection against discrimination within the Charter, it does not have anti-discrimination legislation. This means that LGBT persons have limited domestic legal recourse for the different forms of discrimination they face, especially at the hands of private actors. This presents a large gap in the protection of LGBT people as the stigma and discrimination that is perpetuated in different areas of their lives remains unaddressed.

3.5. Experiences of Violence

During interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch in April and June 2013, with 71 self-identified LGBT Jamaicans, twelve of the people interviewed reported that “they knew of a friend, partner, lover, or associate who had been murdered because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity” (JFLAG, 2016). Similarly, in a 2015 JFLAG survey, of 316 LGBT Jamaicans, 43% of respondents reported receiving threats of physical violence in the last 5 years, and 18% reported being threatened with sexual violence. On average, these individuals received two or three such threats each. Unfortunately, this violence continues. From January to June 2016, 23 individuals reported to JFLAG that they had been physically assaulted or attacked due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (JFLAG, 2016).

Transgender persons are confronted with the reality of legal non-recognition. Jamaica has no legislative or policy framework which would allow for transgender persons to have their gender identities formally and institutionally recognized through changes on their birth certificates and other forms of identification.

Furthermore, laws which have gender-specific provisions treat transgender persons differently. For example, Section 3 of the Sexual Offences Act of Jamaica (2009) provided that only women can be victims of rape. As such, under the current legislation, this means in the case of a transwoman victim, the perpetrator cannot be convicted under the Act, but only of the lesser offence of indecent assault. This differential treatment infringes on two key rights of transgender people; violating their right to be recognized everywhere as a person (Article 16) and it infringes on their right to equal protection under the law (Article 26).

Amid these reviews, efforts to address violence against LGBT persons in Jamaica have been hampered by a lack of political will and entrenched cultural attitudes, but some progress has been made in recent years. For example, advocacy groups have been successful in raising awareness of LGBT issues and promoting legal protections for LGBT persons (UNDP, 2015).

3.6. Experience of bullying

In Jamaica there are no state laws or policies which address explicitly homophobic and transphobic bullying and harassment in schools and other educational settings. This means that LGBT youth have little legal protection against the targeted physical and verbal abuse in schools.

Day et al. (2018) solidified this idea as LGBT youth in Jamaica were more likely to experience bullying and discrimination than their heterosexual peers, with higher rates of verbal abuse, physical assault, and exclusion from school activities. This has resulted in some stagnant effect that impedes the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education, which would enable LGBT youth to actualize their sexual and reproductive rights. Both issues are compounded with policies and practices within public and private educational institutions which perpetuate stigma and discrimination against LGBT people. The failure of the State to implement policies which would protect LGBT youth from physical and psychological harm is a violation of article 24, which outlines the need to provide special protection for all children.

3.7. Experience with Police

In 2011, the Jamaica Constabulary Force took an important step forward by introducing its diversity policy to guide police response to violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity (JCF, 2011). Notwithstanding this milestone, more needs to be done to prevent, prosecute and punish violent attacks, including mob violence and sexual assault against LGBT persons, including cases where the police themselves have stood by or been the perpetrators (Human Rights Watch, 2016). According to the 2012-2013 Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey, 46.5% of residents in Kingston reported that they feel that the police treat homosexual persons worse than those who are heterosexual. The percentages in other parishes were – St. Andrew (16.5%), St. Thomas (19.1%), St. Mary (31.8%), St. James (32.3%), Clarendon (28.2%), St. Catherine (22.3%) and Trelawny (28.3%). In 2011 the Jamaica Constabulary Force issued a Policy on Diversity with the aim to “effectively transform the negative aspects of police culture manifested in the scant regards paid to reports made by members of diverse groups, as it relates to the incidence of crimes committed against them.”

3.8. Experiences with reporting acts of violence

Research has indicated that LGBT persons do not report acts of violence because of fear, lack of faith in the system, and a feeling that their concerns are not as important to be addressed. For example, after interviewing 71 LGBT persons during April and June 2013, Human Rights Watch Shadow report highlighted that “most of the LGBT people we interviewed said they did not even report criminal acts to the police, fearing they would be unresponsive because of the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity” (Human Rights Watch, 2016). This same view was widely expressed at a focus group discussion in Kingston in October 2015 with ten homeless gay men and transgender persons. LGBT NGOs in Jamaica report the same, based on their extensive work with LGBT victims of hate crimes.

Thirty percent (30%) of the people did not report because they felt the incident was too minor to be reported, while 40.5% did not report because they felt the police would not address the matter. (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

3.9. Perceptions of the General Public

A 2015 survey of 942 members of the Jamaican public, which was commissioned by JFLAG, confirmed the pervasive nature of homophobia. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents said that gay people should not be allowed to work with children. Only 36% of respondents said they would allow their gay child to continue living in their home, and 43% of respondents said they would not let a gay child be around his or her siblings. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents said they avoid gay people, and 75% agreed that gay sexual behaviour should be illegal. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents reported that they would physically hurt a gay person who approached them, and 58% have used a derogatory term (JFLAG, 2015).

3.10. Experiences with the law

Jamaica's legal environment is often considered hostile towards the LGBT community. The country's "buggery law," dates back to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which calls for a punishment of up to 10 years of imprisonment with hard labor for those convicted of the "abominable crime of buggery". Article 76 is only one of several articles that codify homophobia into law. While arrests under these laws are rare, they are used to justify other rights violations, legitimizing discrimination and violence toward LGBT people based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The 2014 report, "Not Safe at Home" highlights the impacts of these laws on LGBT people, noting that they contribute to an environment of fear and discrimination. This discriminatory environment limits access to employment, healthcare, housing, and justice for LGBT persons (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Laws concerning LGBT rights differ significantly across the wider Caribbean region. Countries, including Grenada, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like Jamaica, still uphold laws criminalizing same-sex activities (Human Dignity Trust, 2019). These laws contribute to a climate of discrimination and stigma. However, progress is evident in places like Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago, where the High Court declared the country's sodomy laws unconstitutional between 2018 and 2022. These decisions marked significant victories for LGBT rights in the Caribbean (Shaw, 2023,).

3.11. Experiences of rights and freedoms

In 2011, Jamaica's Parliament approved the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. While the charter outlines protections from discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity are not included in the list of protected classes. Activists in Jamaica urged parliament to include broad non-discrimination language to ensure protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, and health status (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Sexual orientation was excluded from the charter.

Family laws in Jamaica include the Property (Rights of Spouses) Act 2004, The Maintenance Act 2005, The Intestates' Estate and Property Charges Act 1937, The Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act, 1993. Each of these laws offers certain legal protections and benefits to married and unmarried heterosexual couples. However, these legal protections and benefits do not extend to same-sex unions, further emphasizing the legal challenges faced by the LGBT community in Jamaica.

4. Methodology

The National LGBT Survey sought to ascertain the lived realities of LGBT persons in Jamaica impacted by structural barriers that hinder the enjoyment of their human rights. To achieve this, MOBAK engaged in a mixed methods approach utilizing quantitative and qualitative data (Forest et al., 2021). This approach provided opportunities to triangulate the findings for validity and reliability. It included the adaptation based on an expert review of an online survey used in a similar survey in the Dominican Republic in 2021. The online survey was the primary source of data collection. A desk review was also conducted and served to contrast the information gathered through the survey. This methodological approach was implemented through a four-step process described below:

4.1. Qualitative Approach

4.1.1. Environmental Scan & Desk Review

An environmental scan was executed to obtain a thorough understanding of each of the variables that have significantly influenced and shaped the lived realities of LGBT persons. During this scan, MOBAK evaluated existing relevant literature on LGBT persons in Jamaica and the broader Caribbean region over the last 15 years (2004-2022). The following knowledge resources were reviewed for insights on best practices and gaps that informed the analysis and discussion of the study's findings:

- Relevant legislations and policies in Jamaica
- Academic publications on gender, sexuality, equity, diversity and inclusion of LGBT persons
- Relevant newspaper articles and publications
- Reports published by CSOs and international developmental organisations

4.1.2. Stakeholder Consultations

MOBAK engaged key stakeholders through consultative sessions. Stakeholders consulted include JFLAG, TransWave, WE-Change Jamaica and Jamaica Network of Seropositives (JN+); these organizations also formed the Technical Advisory Committee for the study. The consultative sessions assisted with adapting the survey to the local context. Through further consultations, the research team was able to document and utilize the expertise and experiences of LGBT organizations to understand better the complex lived realities of LGBT persons in Jamaica.

4.1.3. Participants' Online Feedback

The online survey tool used in this study included a comment field that allowed respondents to provide additional feedback on various survey questions or general feedback related to their experiences as members of the LGBT community in Jamaica. This comment field was an important feature of the survey, as it allowed participants to share their unique perspectives and insights on various topics, such as discrimination, access to healthcare, and employment opportunities. The comments received through this field were analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by LGBT persons in Jamaica and to identify potential areas for recommendation. Overall, the inclusion of a comment field in the survey tool allowed for a more nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the issues affecting the LGBT community in Jamaica and highlighted the importance of engaging with marginalized communities to gain a better understanding of their experiences and perspectives (see Appendix B for samples of the comments received).

4.2. Quantitative Approach

4.2.1. Adaptation of the Survey Instrument

MOBAK benefited from the experience UNDP gained through a similar National LGBTI Survey that was conducted in the Dominican Republic in 2022. This aided in the customization of the survey instrument in relation to its relevance to the Jamaican context. As a result, some survey questions were modified or replaced to ensure their relevance to Jamaica. Given previous experiences on similar surveys it was agreed that this national LGBTI survey would not cover intersex persons, as reaching this population requires a differentiated strategy. In addition to the feedback from the stakeholders' analysis and desk review, Survey Monkey was selected as the online survey tool best suited to administer the data collection exercise. This was due to its convenience and reach, data analysis reporting capabilities and security features of encryption and password protection. No personal information or data was necessary to fill the survey and participants were not required to provide contact details.

4.2.2. Engagement Strategy - Data Collection Procedure

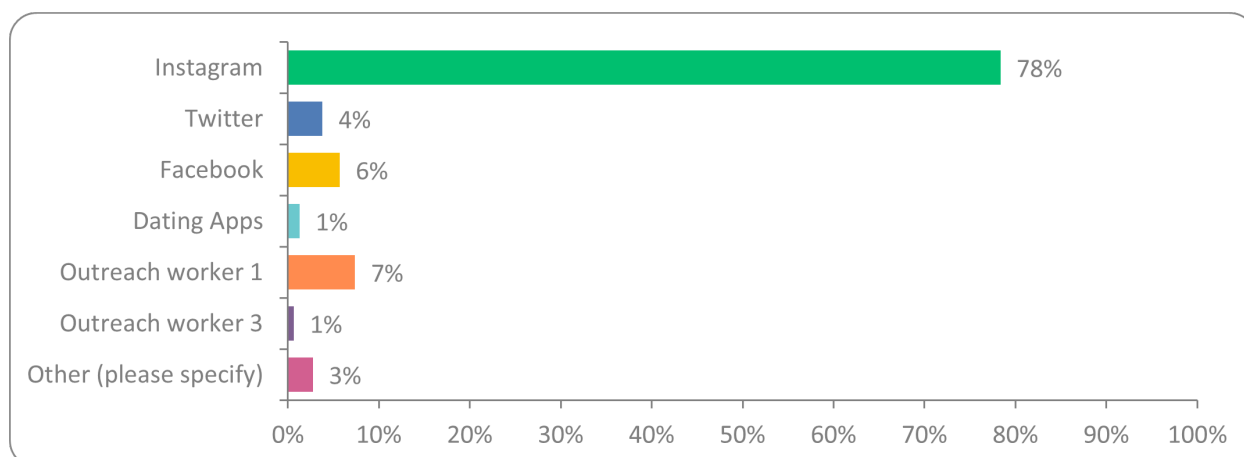
MOBAK utilized the "Going Online" framework to target potential respondents by using online and social media platforms to accelerate the uptake of the survey. This included the use of popular social media platforms Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The survey was also advertised via the primary social media platforms of the Being LGBT in the Caribbean project and through the networks of local LGBTQI+ stakeholders.

MOBAK also administered some of the surveys face-to-face to bridge the digital divide and connect with persons who were not on social media and/or did not have access to devices or internet service. These were facilitated by trained MOBAK field team members who supported the data collection, especially in rural communities. MOBAK also partnered with local LGBTQI+ stakeholders who, through their own outreach campaigns, were able to connect other LGBT persons through peer-to-peer outreach. These partner agencies also promoted the survey on their own social media platforms and engaged in paid promotions.

The survey was administered online between October 26, 2022, and November 27, 2022, mainly with the use of a link or a QR code. The survey took approximately 35 minutes to complete and to meet the specific requirements for enrollment in the study, a respondent had to identify as LGBT, be 18 years or older, and reside in Jamaica during the study. Respondents were informed that the survey was completely voluntary and confidential, and that they may withdraw their consent at any time without penalty or consequence. As the universe of the LGBTI persons in Jamaica is unknown, it was not possible to calculate a representative sample; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the entire LGBT+ population in the country but can give important insight into their lived realities.

Figure 1: Data Collection Method Accessed by Respondent

Numbers have been rounded up to whole numbers.



Throughout the survey, MOBAK engaged in assessing and improving data collection using an agile approach; testing and tweaking new ideas, discontinuing the use of ineffective approaches, and scaling what works through real-time monitoring and evaluation of data collected.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

As a critical part of the study, MOBAK remained committed in safeguarding the participation of vulnerable populations. Ethical issues that may cause harm before, during and after the execution of the study were considered, especially risks that may exacerbate fear, stigmatization and discrimination against LGBT persons in Jamaica.

Given that the survey addresses delicate matters such as suicidal ideation and attempts, violence and abuse, a trigger warning was displayed at the onset of the survey. Additionally, information on locally available psychosocial support services was made available to all survey respondents, upon completion of the survey.

4.3.1. Privacy and Confidentiality

Respondents' privacy and confidentiality were high priority for the study, as such all data collected, meetings or consultative sessions were treated as private and confidential. This is to ensure compliance with ethical research practices that reduce the furthering of risks such as fear, stigmatization and discrimination, and promote the health and well-being of LGBT persons in Jamaica (Padilla-Walker et al. 2013). For example, a privacy statement was developed and shared to all respondents before the commencement of the survey. This statement assured respondents that no identifiers such as names, telephone numbers and email addresses were being collected and participation was voluntary. The handling of respondents' data was restricted and stored in a password protected online cloud file. Also, any data that could potentially reveal the identity of the respondents was not included in the compilation of the final research.

4.4. Limitations

The study yielded several positive outcomes. However, three limitations were identified, and steps were taken to address them. These were 1) the stigma related to gender identity and sexual orientation and its potential impact in getting respondents, 2) Increasing participation among transgender persons, and 3) Bridging the digital divide to increase participation.

Acknowledging the local realities related to existing stigma pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity, a targeted approach was required to encourage the participation of respondents who feared that their information may not remain confidential. The chosen platform provided anonymity and easy access for potential respondents. The team also adopted the snowball sampling method, which relied on respondents to share the survey link with persons they knew and were not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Secondly, it was identified through our literature review that transgender persons did not often participate in many of the previous LGBT studies within Jamaica. The team understood that, according to Bauer, Scheim, and Pyne (2015), the lack of inclusive survey designs and recruitment strategies might be the reason why transgender persons might be underrepresented in LGBT surveys. Therefore, the team implemented several approaches to ensure the inclusion of transgender people, including early involvement in reviewing the survey instrument and adjusting the tool based on feedback, partnership with transgender CSOs to post the survey link on their social media pages and engagement in direct peer-to-peer outreach to transgender persons.

Thirdly, the team identified that the questionnaire in a virtual format would be most effective in increasing confidentiality and ease of access. It also could act as a barrier to persons who were unable to access technology. Thus, to bridge the digital divide and reduce this barrier, the team extensively tested the tool for efficacy, and responders' interpretation and understanding, reliability, logic, flow, and technical or security glitches to reduce any challenges. Additionally, outreach workers and volunteers visited spaces frequented by members of the LGBT community to assist in promoting the survey.

5. Survey findings and analysis

The National LGBT Survey received 1,108 attempted responses, but only 962 respondents completed all the relevant sections. Rejected responses were due to incomplete attempts and responses which did not meet the inclusion criteria (for instance, cisgender heterosexuals or persons below the age of 18 years). Among the survey respondents, 98% indicated they live in Jamaica, while 2% live abroad. However, all respondents were in Jamaica when completing the survey.

The Survey Findings and Analysis are presented in two sections. The first provide an overview of the key characteristics of all survey respondents. The characteristics were the key socio-demographical data of all respondents and is broken down in the following seven (7) categories listed below:

- > Gender identity and Sexual orientation
- > Age
- > Ethnicity
- > Locality
- > Education and Literacy
- > Disability
- > Civil Status

The second section provided eight (8) themes that emanated from this report. Those themes helped to identify what it meant to be living as an LGBT person in Jamaica. Those themes are listed below:

1. Violence due to prejudice and discrimination
2. Human Rights
3. Education
4. Employment and Employability
5. Sense of Belonging
6. Health
7. Standard of Living
8. Political and Social Participation

5.1. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

In terms of gender identity, 8 in 10 (80%) of survey respondents identified as cisgender, i.e., they identified with the sex that they were assigned at birth. Of the 80% of cisgender respondents, 421 respondents (44%) identified as cisgender women and 345 respondents (36%) identified as cisgender men. 166 (17%) respondents identified as non-binary/queer and only 30 (3%) respondents identified as transgender. Of the three (3%) of respondents who identified as transgender, (2%) identified as transgender men, while (1%) were transgender women (See Table 1).

Among the survey respondents, 422 (44%) identified as bisexual, while just over half 54% identified as either gay 275 (27%) or lesbian 254 (25%), and 11 (1%) identified as heterosexual. 29 respondents self-identified as genderfluid, asexual, demisexual, bigender and pansexual. Definitions of these terms are provided in the glossary table.

Table 1: Respondents by Gender identity and Sexual orientation

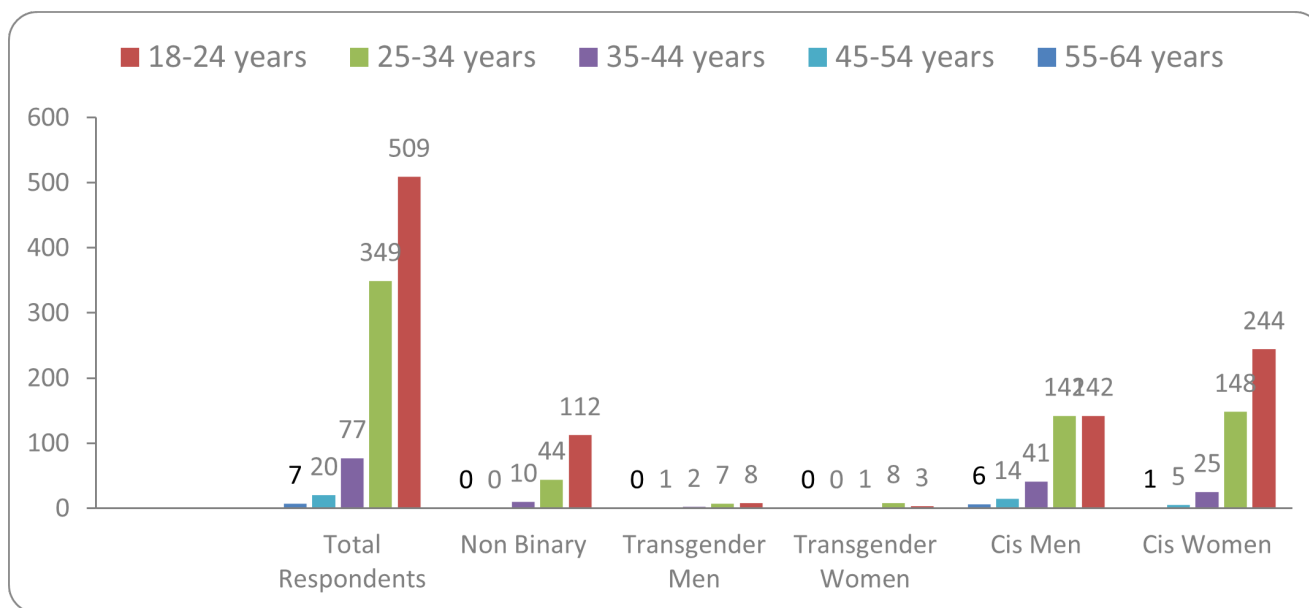
Numbers have been rounded up to whole numbers.

	HETEROSEXUAL	GAY	LESBIAN	BISEXUAL	TOTAL
Cis Woman	0% (0)	0.5% (2)	46% (194)	53% (225)	44% (421)
Cis Man	0% (0)	67.5% (233)	0% (0)	32% (112)	36% (358)
Non-Binary/Queer	2% (3)	17% (28)	34% (57)	47% (78)	17% (166)
Transgender woman	25% (3)	67% (8)	8% (1)	0% (0)	1% (12)
Transgender man	28% (5)	22% (4)	11% (2)	39% (7)	2% (18)
Total Respondents	11	275	254	422	962

5.2. Age Range

Of the 962 respondents, 858 persons (89%) were under the age of 34 years. Of this subset of individuals 509 (53%) of respondents were between the ages of 18 – 24 years. The second highest group was 25-34 years, totaling 349 (36%), followed by ages 35-44 with 8%, while 2% of respondents were from the 45-54 age group, and 0.7% were over 55. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Respondents by Age



Based on 962 Responses

386 (76%) of respondents between the ages of 18-24 years identified as being cisgender. Of which 244 (63%) identified as cisgender women, 142 (37%) identified as cisgender men and 112 (22%) identified as being non-binary/queer. While only 11 (2%) of respondents in the 18-24 age group identified as transgender.

Regarding the 349 respondents between the ages of 25-34 years, (83%) identified as being cisgender. With 148 identifying as cisgender women and 142 identifying as cisgender men. Only 44 respondents identified as being non-binary/queer and (4.2%) identified as being transgender. Interestingly, the number of transgender persons were slightly higher amongst this age group as compared to the respondents in the 18-24 years age group.

In total, 104 respondents were 35 years and older with the highest group being persons between the age range of 35-44 years old. Of this group, 90 respondents identified as cisgender. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents' gender identity based on age.

Table 2: Respondents by Gender Identity and Age.

Numbers have been rounded up to whole numbers.

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	TOTAL
Cis Women	58% (244)	35% (148)	5% (23)	1% (5)	0.2% (1)	44% (421)
Cis Men	41% (142)	41% (142)	12% (41)	4% (14)	2% (6)	36% (345)
Non-Binary/Queer	67% (112)	27% (44)	6% (10)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	17% (166)
Transgender women	25% (3)	67% (8)	8% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	1% (12)
Transgender men	44% (8)	39% (7)	11% (2)	6% (1)	0.00% (0)	2% (18)
Total Respondents	509	349	77	20	7	962

5.3. Locality

The Island of Jamaica is divided into 14 parishes that forms the three (3) counties of Cornwall, Middlesex, and Surrey. The survey respondents were asked to identify where they lived, and the results indicated that 467 respondents (48%) were from the County of Surrey, which includes St. Andrew, Kingston, Portland, and St. Thomas. From this proportion, 442 respondents (95%) indicated that they live in the urban area of Kingston and St. Andrew, one of Jamaica’s most populated areas. Within the County Middlesex, 350 respondents (36%) live in St. Catherine, St. Mary, St. Ann, Manchester, and Clarendon parishes. The remaining 144 respondents (15%) identified the Cornwall County as their place of residence. This encompasses Hanover, Westmoreland, St. James, Trelawny and St. Elizabeth.

Table 3: Respondents by Parish

Numbers have been rounded up to whole numbers.

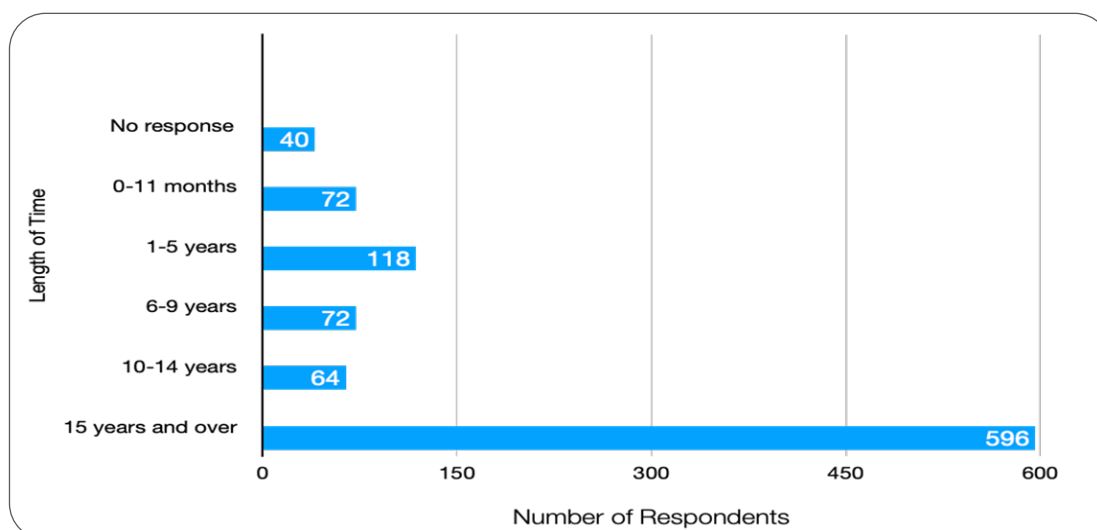
Parish	Respondents by numbers	Respondents by Percentages
Kingston	260	27%
St Andrew	182	19%
Portland	15	2%
St Mary	20	2%
St Ann	38	4%
Trelawny	14	1%
St James	77	8%
Hanover	16	2%
Westmoreland	23	2%
St Elizabeth	15	2%
St Manchester	38	4%
Clarendon	40	4%
St Catherine	214	22%
St Thomas	10	1%

Based on 962 Responses

5.3.1. Migration

Of the total respondents, 62% indicated that they lived in their current communities for over 15 years, while 12% indicated their duration of residence was between 1 to 5 years. 7% of respondents recently moved to new communities over the last 11 months or less, and 4% chose not to indicate how long they have been living in their identified community (see figure 3).

Figure 1: Number of years residing in Parish.



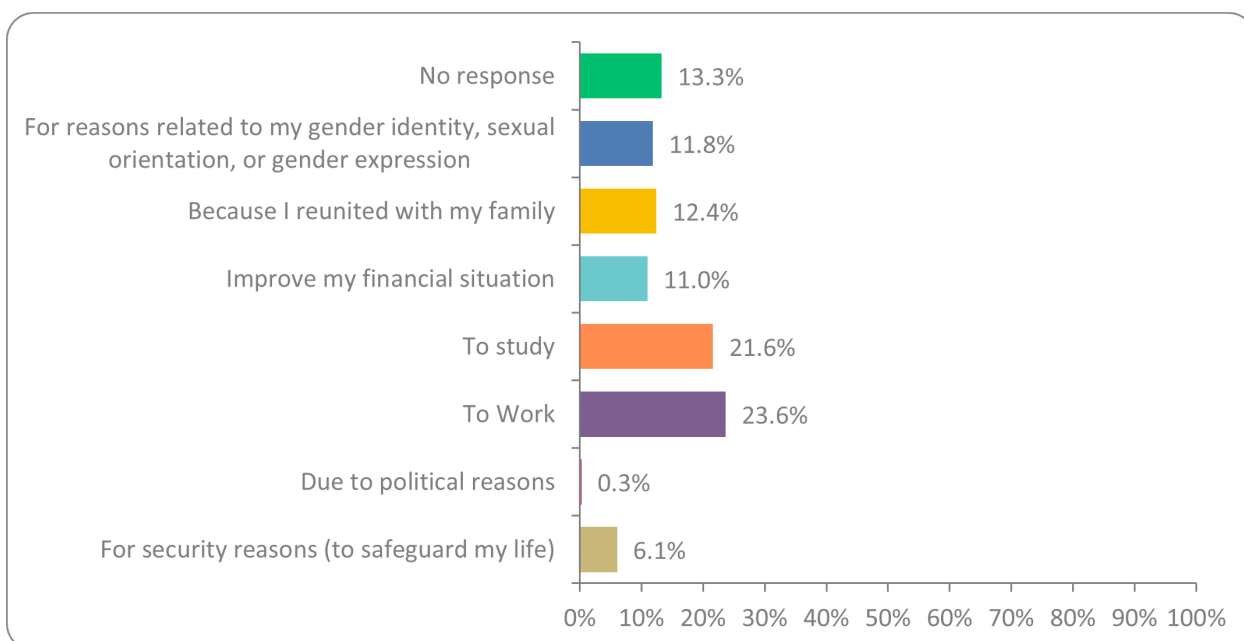
Based on 962 Responses

Over 50% of respondents living in communities for 15 years and more tended to be youth (18-24 years). This finding may indicate that the youth are still residing in their family homes since they may not yet be financially independent.

Interestingly, 48% of respondents who lived in their communities for 1 to 5 years tended also to be youth (18-24 years), this finding might be attributable to young people moving to complete tertiary education. This statistic is similar to the experiences of young adults in Jamaica, who generally represent the highest levels of rural-to-urban migration in Jamaica, according to Gayle (2017).

For those respondents who relocated, Figure 4 highlights some overarching factors that led to their decision to move, including the need to work (23.6%) or study (21.6%). Of respondents in the 18 - 24 age group, 53% have moved because of the need to study. While for respondents aged 25-34 years, 57.3% moved because of the need for work. The survey results also indicated that 12% of respondents relocated because of reasons related to their gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression.

Figure 2: Reason for Relocation



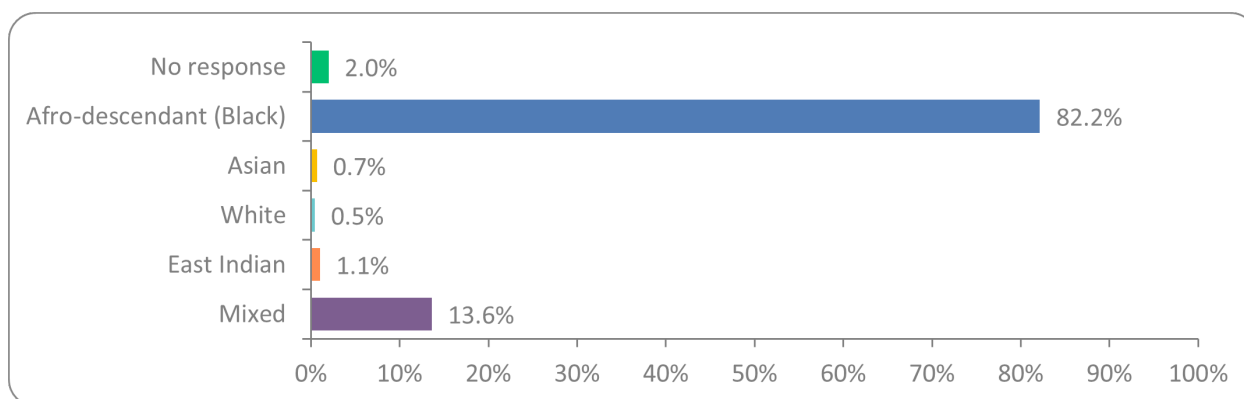
Based on 347 Responses

These results were significantly higher for transgender respondents, with 100% of the transgender women and 40% of the transgender men in the survey indicating that they relocated from their communities for reasons related to their gender identity. While 6% of all respondents indicated that they moved for security reasons, for transgender men, security reasons accounted for 20% of them relocating. Overall, in terms of safety, gay and lesbian persons were more likely to move compared to persons who identified as bisexual.

5.1.4. Ethnicity

Respondents were asked to indicate which ethnicity they identified with and 82% stated that they were Afro descendant (Black), 14% highlighted that they were mixed and another 2% identified as either Asian, White, or East Indian. The ethnic breakdown mirrors the national ethnic composition of Jamaica's population according to the UN World Populations Prospect, (2022) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Ethnicity of Respondents

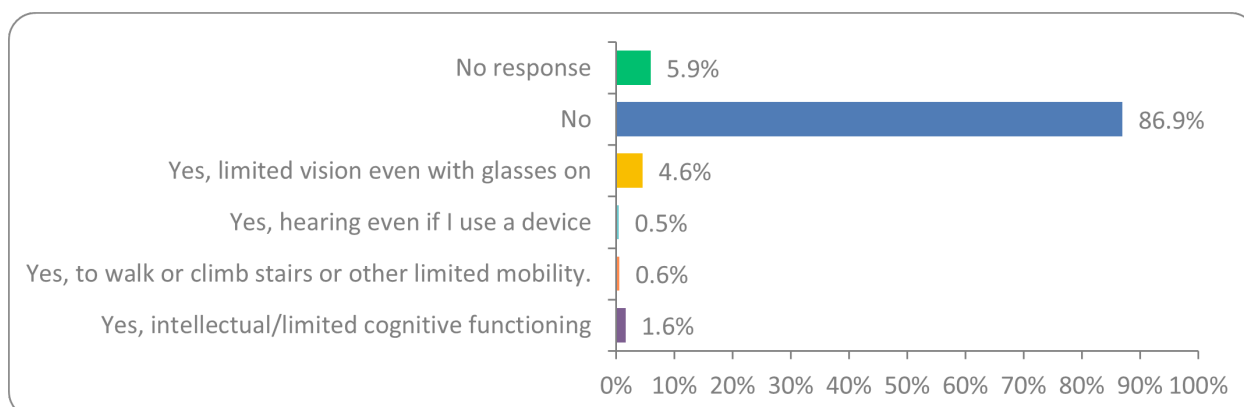


Based on 852 Responses

5.1.5. Disability

Overall, 87% of respondents stated that they had no disabilities (i.e. visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive disability) and another 5% opted not to provide a response. For those with a disability, 5% indicated that they had limited vision even with glasses on, and 3% indicated other disabilities including impairment with hearing, walking, climbing stairs or other limited mobility and intellectual/limited cognitive functioning.

Figure 6: Respondents Reporting living with Disabilities



Based on 880 Responses

5.1.6. Educational & Literacy Rates

The survey indicated that the literacy rate (ability to read and write) of respondents was 99% which was higher than the 89% overall literacy rate of the Jamaican population (Espeut,P (2023). The Survey also revealed that besides English, 87% of respondents spoke Jamaican patois, 17% spoke Spanish and 8% indicated that their additional language is French. A further 5% indicated other languages including Japanese, Dutch, German and Mandarin.

Table 4: Respondents Ability to Read and Write

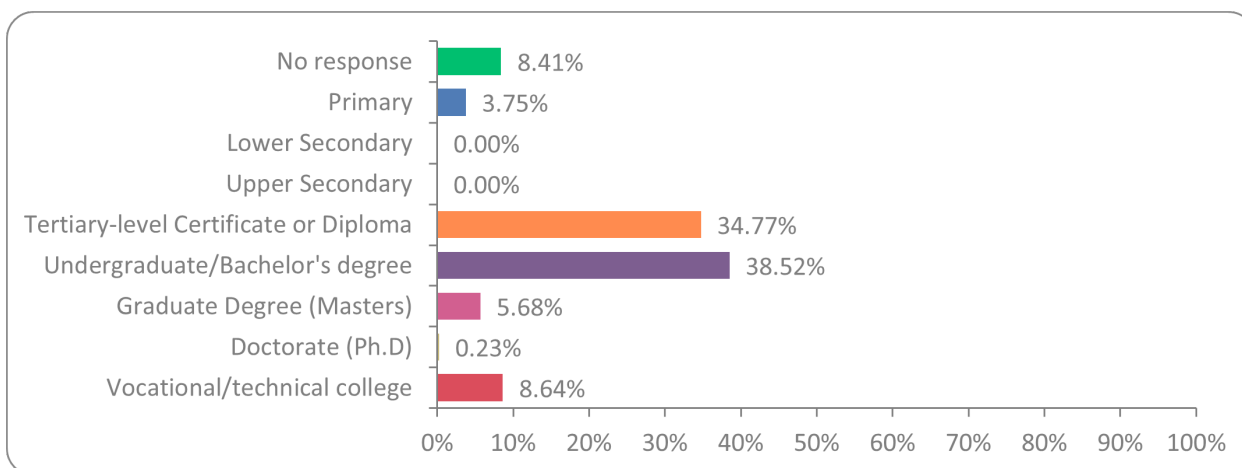
Answers Choices	Responses in Percentages	Responses in Numbers
No response	0.23%	2
Yes	99.43%	957
No	0.23%	2
When assisted	0.11%	1
TOTAL		962

From the survey, 4% achieved only a primary level education, 9% achieved vocational/technical college education, and the highest portion of respondents indicated that they achieved either tertiary-level certificate or diploma (35%) or undergraduate/bachelor's degree (39%). Of the respondents with degrees, 19% were between the ages of 18-24 years old, which is identical to the national average for the general population (Jason Cross, 2018).

For persons with degrees, 47% identified as bisexual, 32% identified as gay and 21% as lesbian. 6% of respondents achieved a graduate degree, either a masters or doctorate. Significantly, 8% of respondents did not provide a response, and of this total, 62% of these were youth between the ages of 18-24 years old.

47% of Cisgender women had tertiary-level certificates or diplomas compared with 27% of cisgender men and 25% of non-binary/transgender persons. The academic performance of cisgender women compared to cisgender men mirrors an ongoing national discussion on the underrepresentation of males in higher education. Data from the World Bank (2020) indicated that 20% of males attended tertiary-level institutions in Jamaica as of 2015, with the current ratio of females to males being almost six to one (UNESCO, as cited in Hurtado, 2021). Figure 7 provides a further breakdown of the educational levels achieved by respondents.

Figure 7: Highest Educational Level Attained



Based on 880 Responses

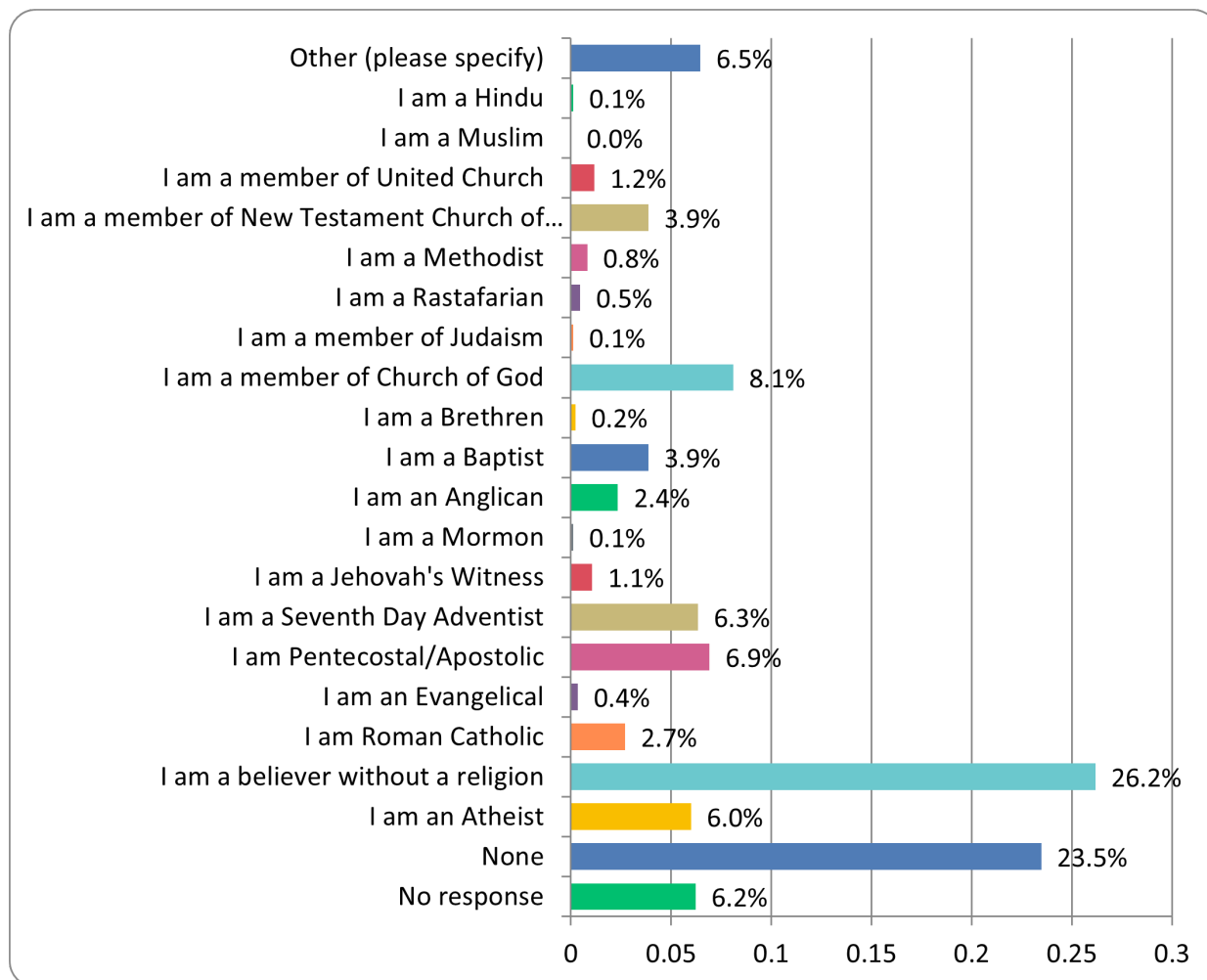
The survey also revealed that factors connected to poverty i.e., the lack of money, the need to work, and homelessness, were the main reasons why respondents were not able to advance to or complete tertiary education. 47% of persons stated that their lack of money was the cause and another 24% indicated that they had to work. Of this 47%, 21% of cisgender women, 17% of cisgender men and 9% of non-binary/queer and transgender respondents indicated that the lack of money prevented their continued advancement in education.

5.1.7. Religion

Jamaica is often touted as having more churches per square mile than any other country (Dennis-Benn, 2023). According to a US State Report (2021), over 79% of the population is associated with various denominations, with Jamaica's religious demography being defined as largely Christian.

According to the survey findings, spiritual beliefs continued to play a major part in the lives of LGBT persons. Similar to the US State Report (2021), 71% of respondents indicated that they held some belief system in a higher power, with Christianity being the major religious affiliation. This response slightly mirrors the national religious practice of many Jamaicans (Dennis-Benn, 2023). Of those who had a belief system, 45% identified with a specific religious denomination as follows: 8% were members of Church of God; 7% Pentecostal/Apostolic/Evangelical; 6% were Seventh Day Adventist; 4% New Testament Church of God; 2% Anglican; 2% Baptist; and 3% identified as other Christian groups such as Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Brethren, Methodist and United Church. Almost 2% of respondents identified with a range of other religious groups including Jewish, Rastafarian, or Hindu. For 6% of others, they provided a range of other groups including Moravian, Buddhism, Presbyterian, and Paganism that they belonged to (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Respondents by Religion or Denomination practiced.



Based on 911 Responses

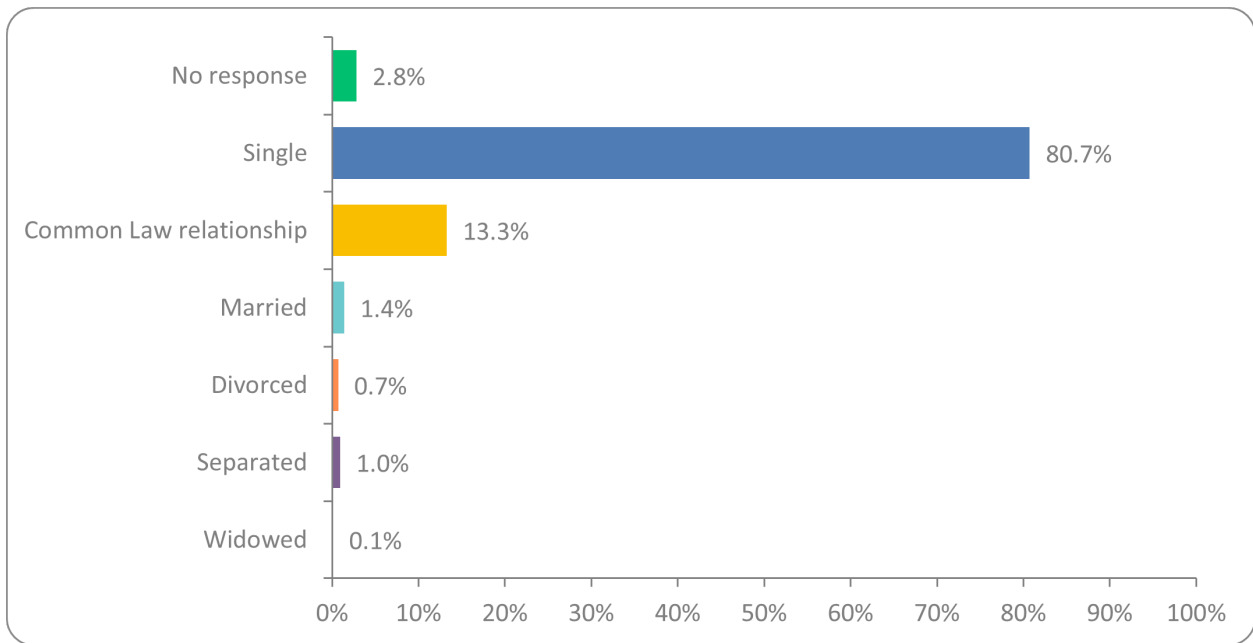
Of the total respondents, 26% indicated that they believed in God but did not practice a religion. The survey did not investigate why such a high number of respondents were not connected to a particular religious group. The results also revealed that 23% of respondents stated they had no religion or denomination, and 6% identified as atheists.

5.1.8. Civil Status

Regarding civil status, 81% of respondents highlighted that they were single, 13% were in common law relationships, 1% reported being married, and 2% were divorced, separated, or widowed (Figure 9). Of the single respondents, 40% were cisgender women, 39% were cisgender men, 19% were non-binary, and 2% were transgender people. Additionally, of the single respondents 44% identified as bisexual, 32% as gay and 24% as lesbian.

Like many other Caribbean countries, Jamaica has provided some protections for persons in common-law relationships. In Jamaica, the Property (Spouse Rights) Act 2014 recognizes common law unions of heterosexual couples once they have lived together for five years or more. However, the legal protection of common law unions with same-sex partners is not regarded similarly under the Act. Therefore, of the 13% of respondents who indicated being in common law relationships, if their partner is of the same sex, they will have little or no legal protection.

Figure 9: Civil Status of Respondents

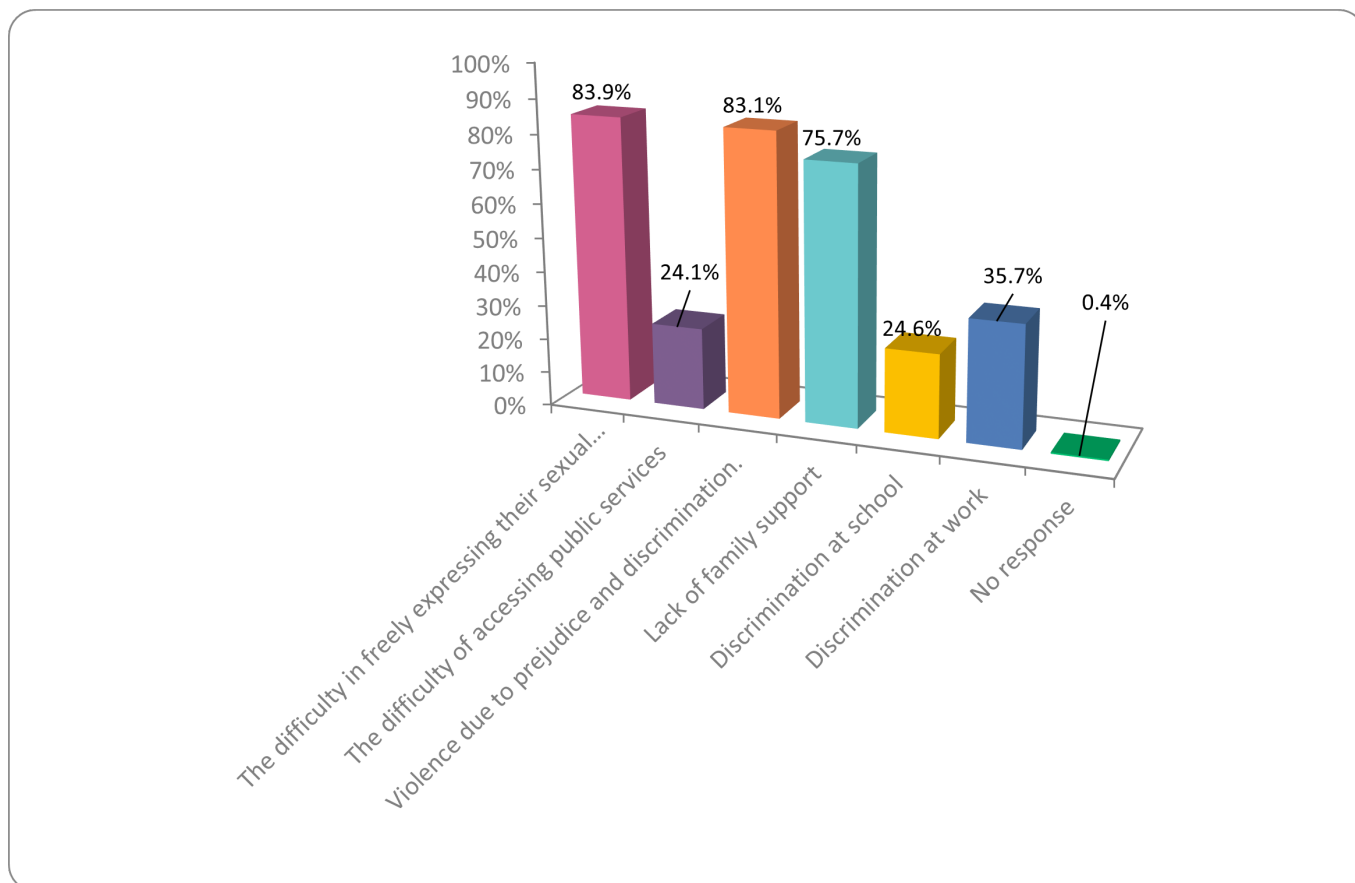


Based on 845 Responses

6. Survey Findings and Analysis – Key Themes

When respondents were asked what the key issues facing LGBT persons in Jamaica were, results varied. From a set of possible answers, and with the option to choose multiple responses, respondents identified the following as the main issues affecting LGBTI persons in Jamaica: Difficulty in freely expressing their sexual orientation and gender expression (83.9%), violence due to prejudice (83.1%) and lack of family support (75.7%). These are highlighted in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Key issues facing LGBT persons in Jamaica.



Based on 962 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

VIOLENCE



83%

highlighted that one of the key issues faced by LGBT persons in Jamaica is violence due to prejudice and discrimination.



82%

expressed fear of verbal or physical abuse due to "looking gay".



54%

reported knowing someone from the LGBT community who had died violently or was killed in the last 12 months due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.



73%

expressed fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.

6.1. Violence due to prejudice and discrimination

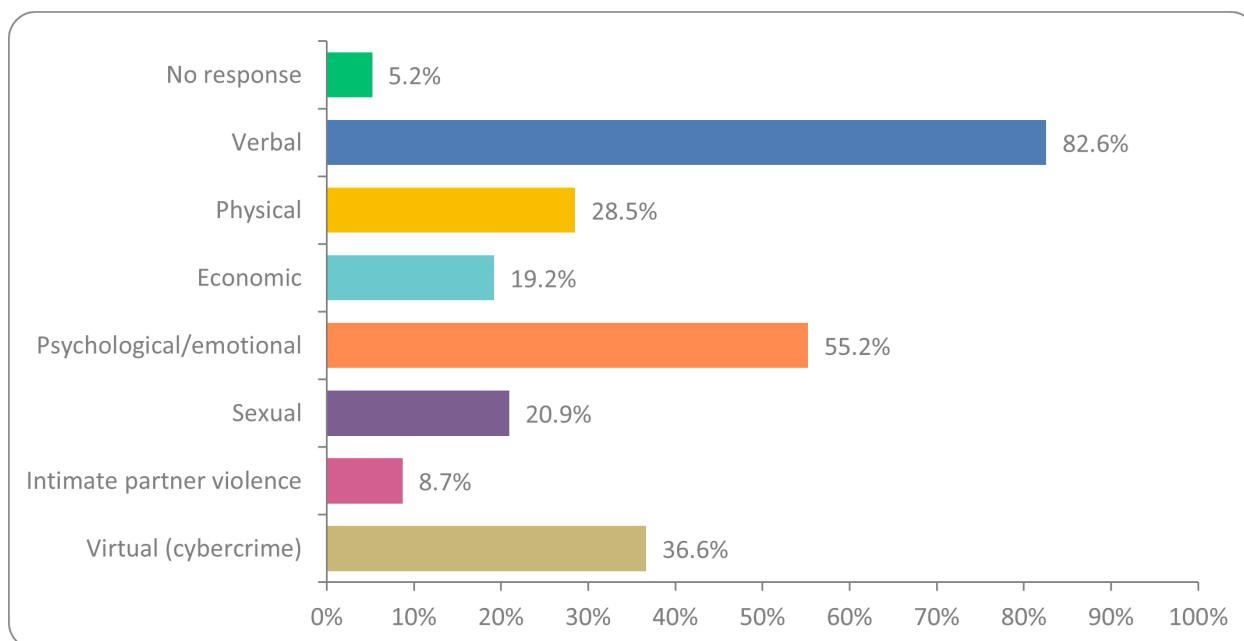
In 2004, the Jamaica Observer published a letter following the death of a well-known gay activist entitled “If you’re gay in Jamaica, you dead” (Laville, 2004). Almost 20 years later, Rainbow Railroad, an LGBTI organization based in Canada that assists members of the LGBTI community worldwide to relocate to Canada, highlighted that Jamaica “continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world to be LGBTIQI+” (Rainbow Railroad, 2023). This feedback indicates that there has been little reduction in the violence experienced by members of the LGBT community in Jamaica.

The LGBT survey found that a significant majority (83%) of respondents highlighted that one of the key issues facing LGBT persons in Jamaica is violence due to prejudice and discrimination. This discrimination is expressed and evidenced by the difficulty they experience in freely expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sadly, more than half (54%) of the respondents reported that they knew someone from the LGBT community who died violently or was killed in the last 12 months due to their sexual orientation or gender expression.

LGBT persons continue to be afraid to engage in any outward expressions or associations aligned with their gender identity or sexual orientation, with 73% of respondents expressing a fear of being assaulted, threatened, or harassed solely because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression. According to one respondent who is in a relationship, they live in fear that... ***we might get killed or end up worse, with broken bones or injuries that leave a long-lasting scar or pain on our lives*** (Respondent 828-Non-binary/Queer -gay).

The survey also show a vast majority of respondents reporting that they were victims of some form of violence, and this included high levels of recent exposure to violence. 83% of those surveyed reported experiencing verbal violence, 55% experienced psychological/emotional violence, 37% reported experiencing virtual violence (cybercrime), 29% reported physical violence, and 21% reported experiencing sexual violence (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Types of Violence Experienced by Respondents



Based on 172 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

The respondents shared actual experiences of violence, including the following:

- *Slur, un-aliving comments, having religion thrown at you because it's said to be just a phase, having men try to force them self on you because they are trying to turn you straight* (Respondent 1063 – Lesbian/nonbinary)
- *Shit being thrown at my house stones being thrown at me while I walk* (Respondent 1012 – gay-cisman)
- *I was raped* (Respondent 993 – bisexual/cisman)
- *Beating and threat of been killed and throw in bush r sea* (Respondent 924 – bisexual/cisman)
- *Beaten badly because of been a lesbian* (respondent 667 – bisexual/ciswoman)

6.1.1. Appearance

From the survey, 82% of respondents expressed fear of verbal or physical abuse due to “looking gay” with one in two (50%) expressing that they had received negative public comments about their appearance at least once in the last six months. Based on assumptions about the respondents’ sexual orientation and gender identity, one in three (33%) of the respondents reported being threatened with aggressive language at least once in the last six months, while one in ten (10%) were threatened at least six times or more within the last six months.

For some respondents, they hid behind their ability to be “straight-acting” to navigate living in Jamaica. As shared by one respondent:

I am gay but I can pass for the stereotypical “straight”, however, members of the queer community who do not identify as the stereotype are in extreme danger. Even breathing is a fight for their lives. It needs to end, something has got to give.

But it is not a universal feeling as stated by Respondent 1099

No. I am not 100% out to the public. In my profession, based on society, I cannot be exposing that part of me. Colleagues in their general conversations express dismay for the LGBTQI community. Moreover, I tend to keep my private life private. It's no benefit for anyone. So, most questions such as violence, etc. towards me because of my sexual orientation, I did not get that, because I'm not out. Only close family and friends know. And a person might guess that I am based on how I dress outside of work

(Respondent 1099 – Bisexual/ciswoman)

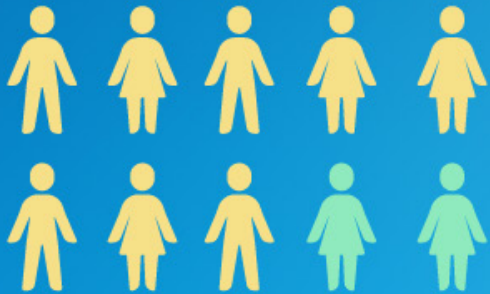
Respondent 1099 views echo the minority of views around violence but nonetheless an important lived experience of some LGBT persons in Jamaica.

Overall, violence against LGBT persons remains a serious issue. The ongoing violence against the community has left some respondents feeling shattered. This could be observed by the feedback received from respondent 968

Jamaica is a very dangerous country for LGBT people. I'm tired of it here. I am tired of living to “defend” my identity. I am tired of simply surviving

(respondent 968 – Gay/cis man).

HUMAN RIGHTS



8 out of 10 respondents expressed they felt a difference in human rights enjoyment for LGBT persons when compared to the general public.



95%

disagreed or strongly disagreed that local government officials in Jamaica supported LGBT persons.



49%

said they experienced discrimination in entertainment facilities such as shopping malls, cinemas, theatres, parks, and restaurants.



61%

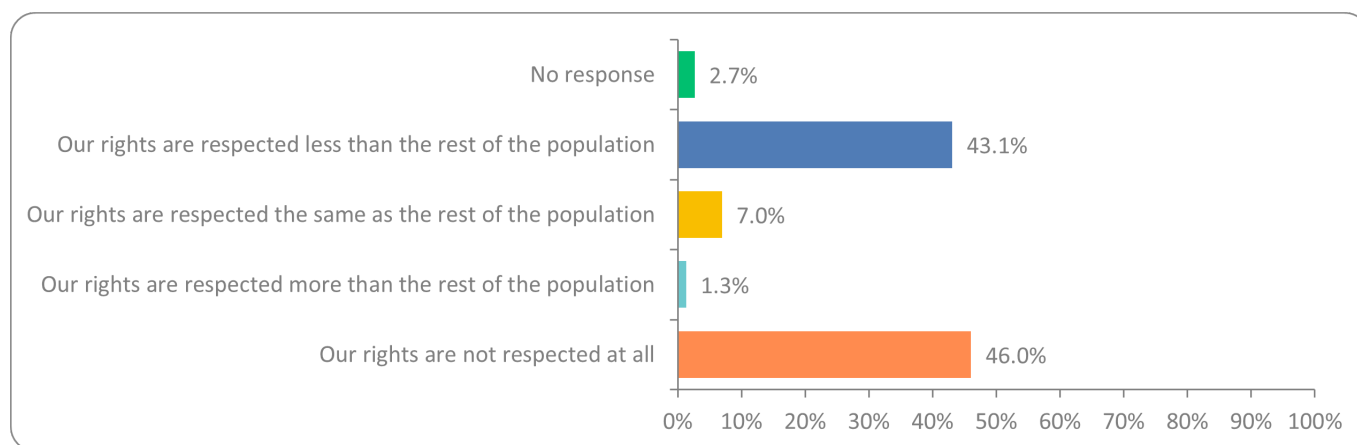
felt discriminated against over the last 12 months.

6.2. Human Rights

Human rights are fundamental to the existence of any society, and though Jamaica seeks to guarantee protection against discrimination under the Jamaica Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedom (2011), based on feedback from the LGBT community, 90% of persons believe that there is a gap which fails to provide protection based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Respondent 413 reflected that... ***sometimes it seems just being gay and alive now (in) this country feels like a crime against humanity*** (Respondent 413 – gay/non-binary/queer), summarizing how nine out of ten respondents feel about their rights.

Eight (8) out of ten (10) respondents expressed feeling that there was a difference in human rights enjoyment for LGBT persons when compared to the general society. As Figure 12 indicates, a significant number (90%) of respondents shared that their rights were not respected or perceived as less than those of the general population. As indicated by Respondent 207... ***They don't treat us as if we are humans; they see LGBTI people as a virus that needs to be extinguished*** (Respondent 207 – gay/cis man).

Figure 12: Human Rights of LGBT persons compared to the general population.



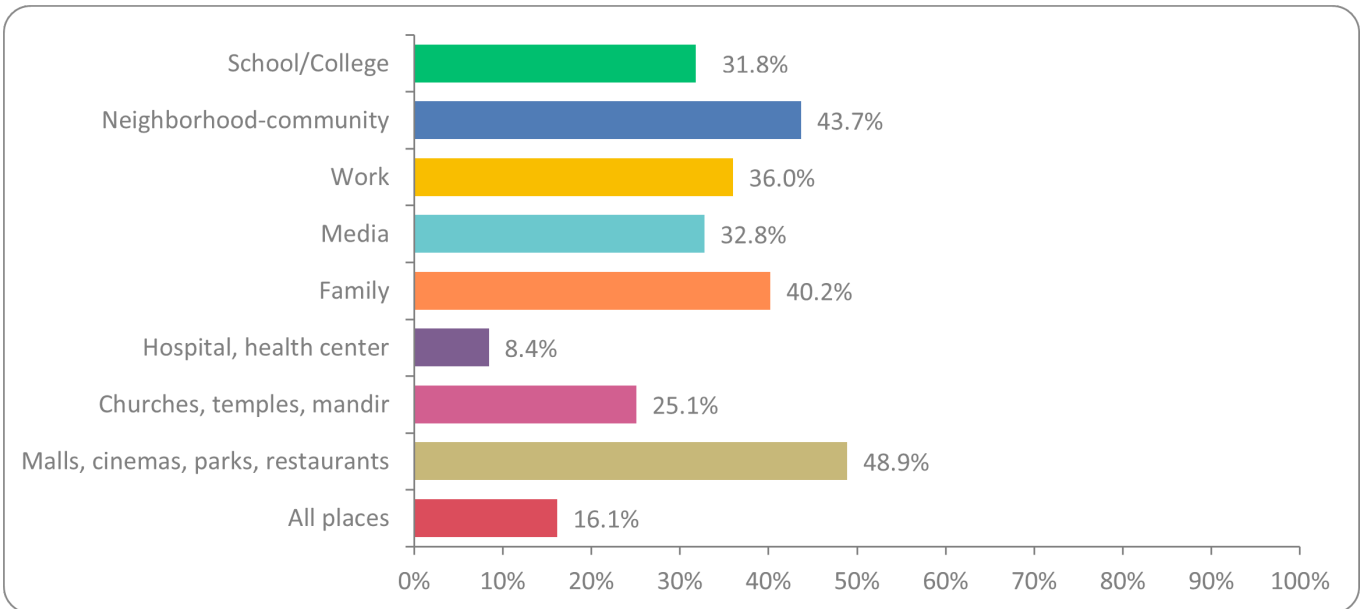
Based on 676 Responses

6.2.1. Feelings of discrimination

Over the last 12 months, 61% of the respondents felt discriminated against, and 34% said their human rights were violated. In terms of sexual orientation, respondents who identified as bisexual (36%) tended to feel discriminated against slightly more than persons who identified as gay (33%) or lesbian (31%). In terms of gender identity, cisgender women (41%) expressed that they experienced higher levels of discrimination over the last 12 months compared to cisgender men (39%) and persons who identified as non-binary/queer and transgender (20%).

Respondents indicated that they experienced discrimination in various spaces, with the greatest discrimination (49%) in entertainment facilities such as shopping malls, cinemas, theatres, parks, and restaurants. Other spaces where discrimination is experienced include the community, family, work, educational settings, and the media. That is, almost half of all respondents stated having experienced discrimination in just about every social setting including within families, demonstrating the pervasiveness of stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Figure 13: Places where discrimination is experienced.



Based on 403 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

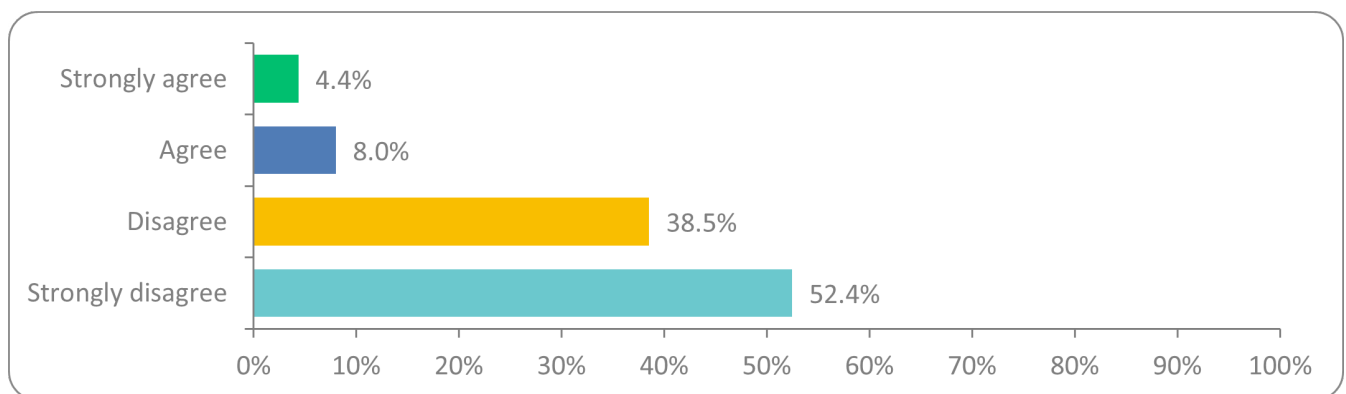
6.2.2. Protection against discrimination

One in three (33%) respondents believed their human rights were violated in the last 12 months. 95% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that local government officials in Jamaica supported LGBT persons. As indicated by Respondent 35... *In terms of basic civil and human rights. LGBT people in Jamaica are treated like second-class citizens. Our existence as part of the fabric of the Jamaican society is largely unrecognized or acknowledged in any capacity by our government and elected officials. We are the country's dirty little secret (Respondent 35 -gay/cisman).*

This feeling of being unheard members of society echoes throughout the survey, with 98% of the respondents indicating that the Government did not include or collaborate with the LGBT communities or organizations to design inclusive public policies.

Regarding discrimination and disclosing gender identity or sexual orientation, a majority (51%) of those surveyed stated that their main reasons for not disclosing were related to fear of rejection, verbal abuse, physical abuse, embarrassment and/ or religious condemnation. As advocated by one respondent... *We need legislation that acknowledges crime and acts of violence against LGBT persons as hate crime (respondent 35-gay/cisman).* In understanding and appreciating that human rights are everybody's rights, some respondents echoed the importance of acceptance of LGBT persons (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Respondents views on whether Jamaica's fundamental laws protect the human rights of LGBT persons



Based on 593 Responses

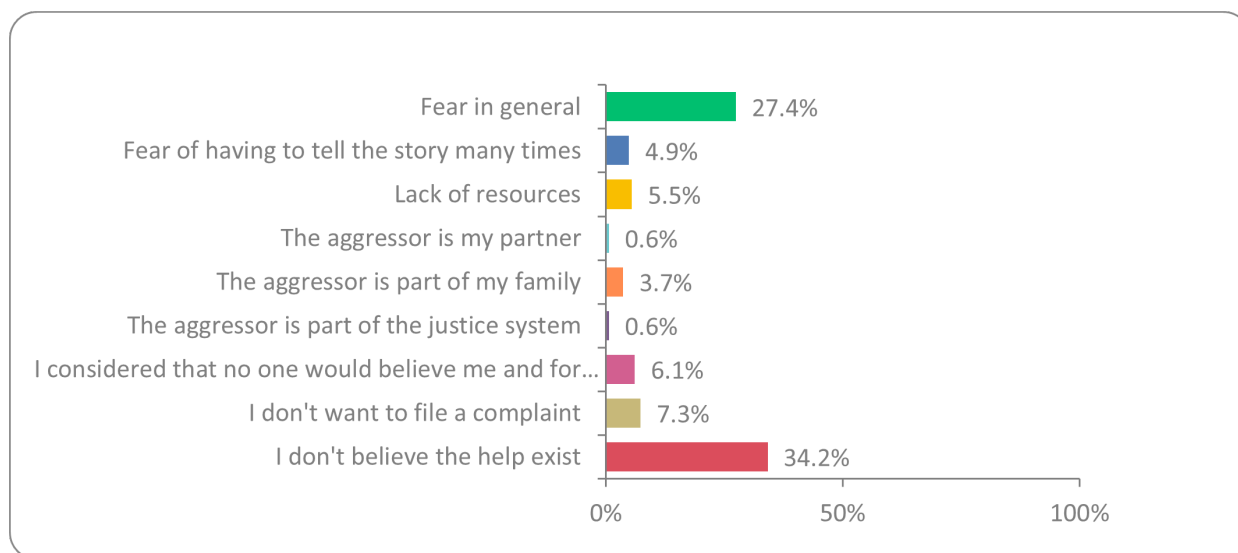
6.2.3. Access to Justice

Access to justice is a basic principle of law as enshrined within the United Nations Conventions. The Rule of Law emphasizes the right to equal access to justice for all, including members of vulnerable groups (United Nations, 2019). Therefore, access to justice is promoted as fundamental for member states and encompasses all the elements needed to **“enable people to identify and manage their everyday legal needs and address their legal problems, seek redress for their grievances, and demand that their rights be upheld”** (Gavrielides, 2017).

Despite it being a basic principle of law for member states, LGBT people largely do not enjoy this right. Based on the survey results, 40% felt access to justice did not exist for members of the LGBT community. LGBT persons felt that several factors affected their reporting of incidences of violence perpetrated against them and access to justice. 32% of LGBT persons in the survey chose not to report incidents because they believe nothing would come of them. As shared by one respondent... **Nothing would be done about it. It would be labelled a “batty story”** (respondent 579 – gay/cisman). Another 27% indicated that fear greatly affected not accessing justice. Other fears of losing their child/children, having to tell their stories, or not being believed, also impacted the decision to access justice.

As shown in Figure 15 below, other factors affecting reporting and access to justice include the lack of resources; the perpetrator being their partner, family member or member of the justice system; and the fear of impartiality within the legal and justice system. These factors are echoed by Respondent 375 who expressed that the - **Legal issues with Jamaica takes too long and cost too much money for a simple complaint so it makes no sense** (Respondent 375 – Lesbian/Ciswoman).

Figure 15: Respondents reasons for not reporting acts of violence.



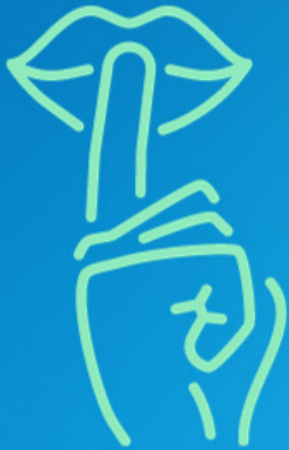
Based on 164 Responses

7% of respondents who reported incidents in the last 12 months shared that they were unreasonably denied or restricted access to justice based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The lack of access to justice has significantly impacted the safety and well-being of LGBT persons in Jamaica. In the last 12 months, 10% of respondents indicated that due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, the police or security forces have questioned them for no apparent reason. While a further 6% of respondents shared that in the police interrogated them for no apparent reason, and 2% of respondents indicated that their questioning and interrogation by police led to their detainment solely based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Of those detained, 72% were cisgender men, and 18% were nonbinary and transgender persons.

Although efforts have been made to improve the relationship between the Jamaica Constabulary (JCF) and LGBT persons, such as introducing a diversity policy in 2011 that prohibits police officers from discriminating based on sexual orientation, stigma and discrimination persist. Additional efforts are required to ensure that the 10% of respondents who believed that their sexual orientation or gender identity hindered their access to justice are given the necessary assistance and resources (JCF, 2020). Overall, what LGBT persons desire is to, according to Respondent 521, ...to be seen as me and judged fairly as a human being not my gender identity/ expression. I want to feel free to pursue life, love and happiness without fear of discrimination or death (respondent 521 – gay/non-binary queer).

EDUCATION



55%

stated they never received any information about sexual orientation and gender identity as part of their educational content and that communication from education practitioners about these topics was mainly negative.

80%



identified that the education system and the practitioners were not supportive of promoting messages of inclusion and respect for LGBT people.

33%



felt discriminated against or were denied access to education (i.e., were unable to receive educational support) because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

6.3. Education

One of the central functions of education is the fulfillment of socialization for children. Children learn important norms, values, and skills through the educational system, to navigate and function within society. In Jamaica, the Ministry of Education and Youth’s mission statement reads, “Providing quality education and training in a caring, inclusive and enabling environment to engender sustainable development” (MOEY, 2023).

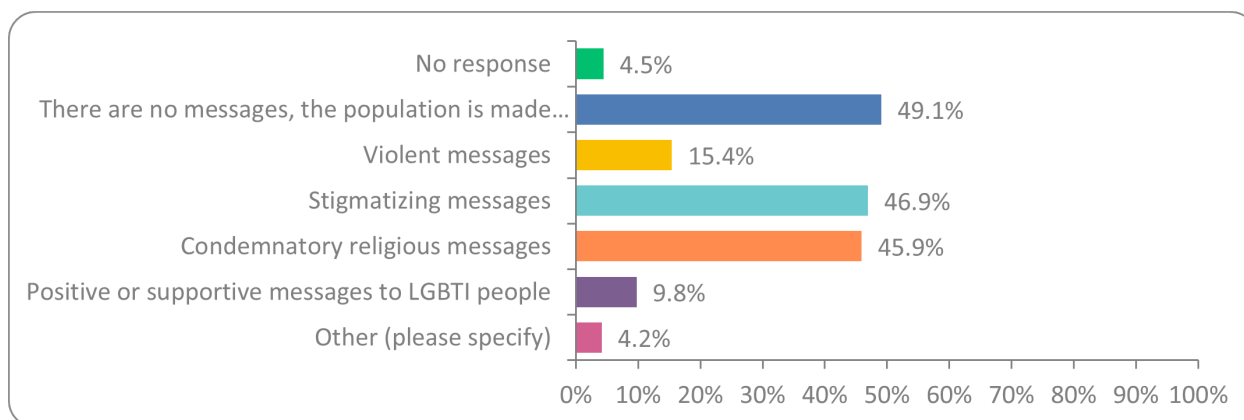
6.3.1. Discrimination in Education

A significant majority (80%) of those surveyed identified that the education system (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and the practitioners (lecturers and teachers) were not supportive of promoting messages of inclusion and respect for LGBT persons. Most respondents (55%) stated that they had never received any information about sexual orientation and gender identity as part of their educational content/curriculum and that communication from education practitioners about such topics was mainly negative. One respondent stated

Most of my negative experiences have been at school, and I would credit that environment with causing my anxiety and depression during my teenage years. Schools are the source of verbal abuse and trauma common to almost all queer children in Jamaica (respondent 539 – bisexual/non-binary).

As highlighted in Figure 16, respondents stated that the messages from educational practitioners are overwhelmingly negative and either make them invisible (49%), promote violence against LGBT persons (15%), stigmatization (47%) and condemnatory religious overtures (46%).

Figure 16: Messages conveyed about LGBT persons by teachers/lecturers within educational settings



Based on 695 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

As shared by one respondent...

It’s strange y’know... You question why you’re even here. Question a lot of things. You feel isolated, feel hated and just overwhelmed. You didn’t ask for this and yet you have to deal with other people’s negativity. It’s hard sometimes and I cry, for this world and myself. Once in class this idiotic lady said that all gay people should be locked up to protect the children or some shit. I was absolutely flabbergasted? Really surprised? Like- Idk how someone can be so stupid. It’s like they don’t view queer people as people at all. How can you genuinely utter such foolishness out of your mouth so righteously at that. Why should people who have not done any wrong be put in jail solely because they’re gay.....Smh. (Respondent 953 – Demi-woman (preferred not to have a sexual orientation or gender identity label).

Disaggregating further, 43% of bisexual, 30% of gay men and 27% of lesbian respondents indicated they felt invisible within educational spaces. Negative messages, whether violent, stigmatizing, or condemnatory religious messages, tended to disproportionately target gay and bisexual individuals compared to those who identified as lesbian.

The negative consequence of such negative messaging may be associated with increased harassment and bullying of youth who identify as LGBT within schools. As highlighted in other studies on bullying in Jamaica, bullied youth often do not feel supported by teachers within educational spaces (Walker, 2014). LGBT youth often find themselves in challenging situations when positive messages are absent in school settings, with limited support. According to one respondent, they faced daily microaggressions, while another felt that there were subtle implications that something was wrong with them, and a third felt as if being LGBT was a “disease”.

In contrast, 10% of the respondents indicated that some teachers did convey positive messages to students within educational spaces, which helped students to feel safer and think better about themselves. According to some respondents, the level of education and the institution a teacher works in can have a significant impact.

It depends on the teacher/lecturer and their social conditioning. Some are very supportive and include LGBTI+ topics in lectures. But, quite a few Jamaican teachers are religious and their religious beliefs come before their professionalism.
(Respondent 842 – gay-cisman).

Another view expressed indicated that it

Depends on the teacher. Most will not discuss it, but if it is brought up, they mention their religious beliefs, make jokes that disrupt class, even mention things like HIV. Only two teachers I remember ever making some positive message about LGBTI people.
(Respondent 346 – Bisexual -Non-binary/queer).

Biegel and Garofalo (2017) found that college campuses with a strong LGBT presence and support network tend to impact the mental health and well-being of LGBT students positively. This suggests that tertiary institutions that are more welcoming and inclusive of LGBT students may positively impact their overall experience and success in education.

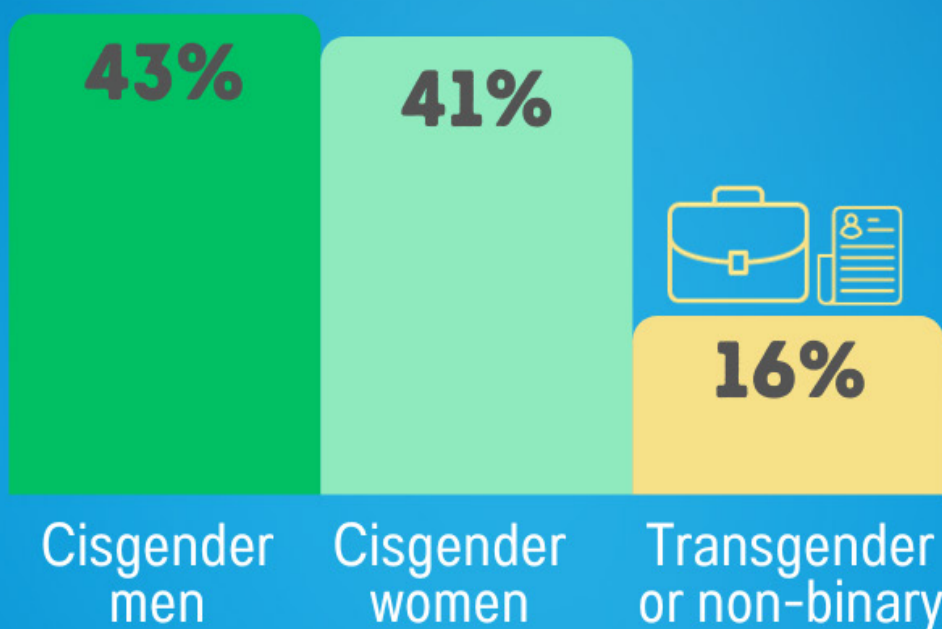
6.3.2. Access to Education

Regarding overall access to education, one in three (33%) of the respondents felt discriminated against or were denied access to education (i.e., were unable to receive educational support) because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, 55% of respondents indicated that they never received information about gender identity or sexual orientation in the school system at any level (primary, secondary, or tertiary level).

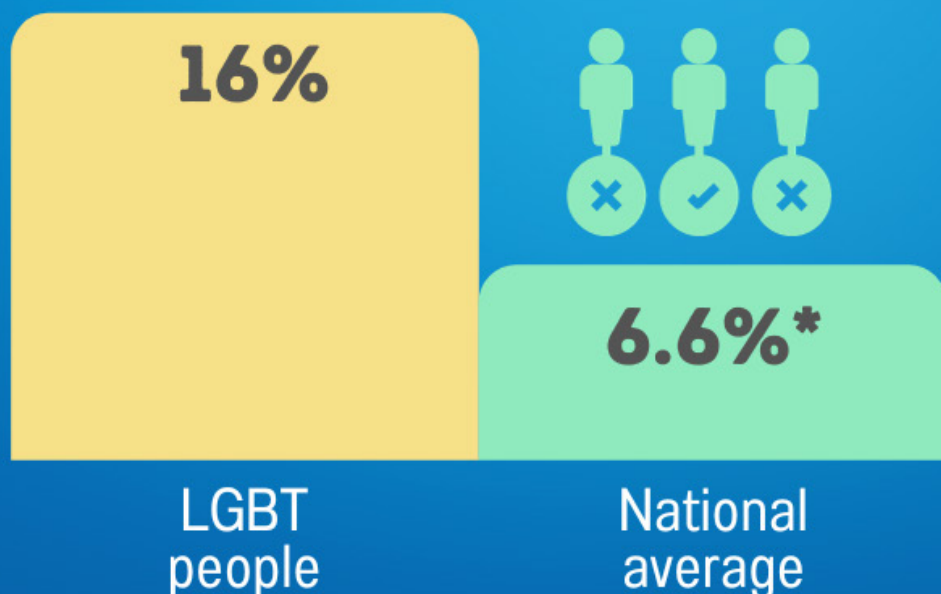
According to some respondents, discrimination, or ill-treatment, as well as suspension or expulsion from the education system because of their gender identity, were the reasons why they could not progress or complete their tertiary education. These factors, along with poverty-related factors such as the need to work, not having money or experiencing homelessness, have prevented LGBT persons in Jamaica from achieving academic success.

EMPLOYMENT

Employed or self-employed respondents



Unemployment

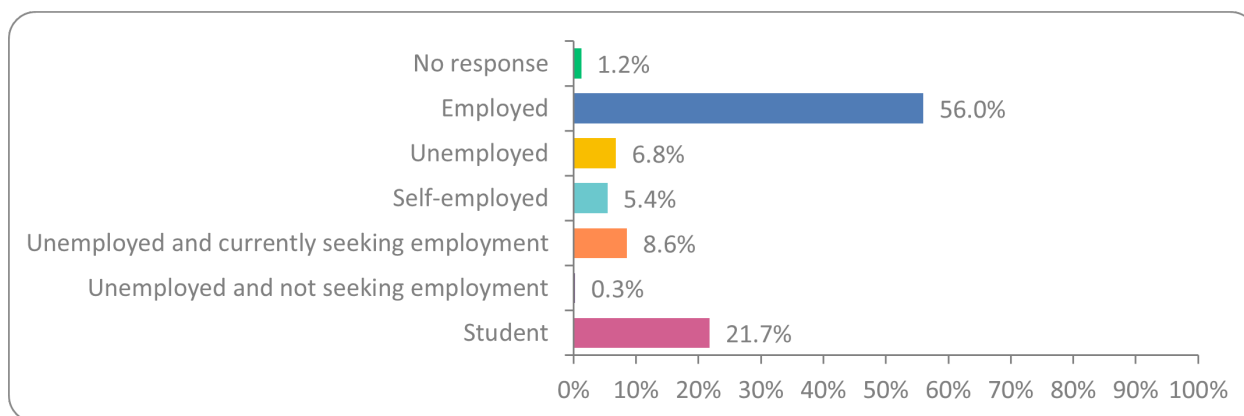


*Source: STATIN, 2022.

6.4. Employment and Employability

Jamaica has an overall employment rate of 93% and a general unemployment rate of 7%, with youth unemployment at 17%. These rates are lower than those during the pandemic, which saw national unemployment rates as high as 9% and youth unemployment rates over 20%. (STATIN, 2022). For LGBT persons, employment and unemployment rates experiences varied, as evidenced in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Respondents by Employment status



Based on 736 Responses

The data revealed that over 61% of respondents were employed or self-employed. Of those employed, 60% of LGBT persons worked within the private sector, civil society organisations, daily paid labour, or as entrepreneurs. In comparison, 24% were employed within the public sector, working within various government agencies and offices. Gay (37%) or bisexual (36%) persons were more likely to be employed than lesbian women (26%), and the employment rate among cisgender men (43%) was higher than that of cisgender women (41%) and non-binary/transgender persons (16%).

16% of respondents indicated they were unemployed, which is higher than Jamaica's national average. Out of the unemployed respondents, 9% were actively seeking employment. In comparison, 7% indicated that they were unemployed and remained so for various reasons, including being unable to work because of disability, being required to stay home to take care of family/children, and studying at school. Providing family care and disability are major factors that keep unemployed individuals outside of the job market and could indicate a need for more support and resources for caregivers and persons with disabilities. Bisexual persons represented the highest percentage (45%) of unemployed respondents.

There is also a correlation between lower employment rates and higher poverty rates among vulnerable groups compared to the general population (The Williams Institute, 2020). As such, LGBT persons in countries with high levels of discrimination and stigma, such as Jamaica, may face additional obstacles to employment and economic opportunities, leading to increased poverty and social exclusion (Human et al., 2019). These factors likely contribute to negative impacts on the economic well-being of LGBT individuals.

Similarly, the migration of LGBT youth from Jamaica can affect the country's development. It can lead to losing talent and potential economic contributors as they seek better opportunities in more inclusive environments. Migration can result in a further brain drain and a loss of diversity in the local workforce.

22% of respondents indicated that they were currently students, with 88% between the ages of 18 to 24. While only 5% of LGBT persons were self-employed, this is significantly lower than the 20% of self-employed persons based on the Statistical Institute of Jamaica's Labour Force Survey for October 2021.

6.4.1. Discrimination in the Workplace

The results showed that within the last 12 months, 11% of the respondents reported experiencing restrictions to opportunities in the workplace. Those restrictions were because of their gender identity, resulting in a lack of work opportunities and promotions. Discrimination in the workplace can negatively affect the economic well-being of LGBT individuals, as it limits their ability to secure stable employment and advance in their careers.

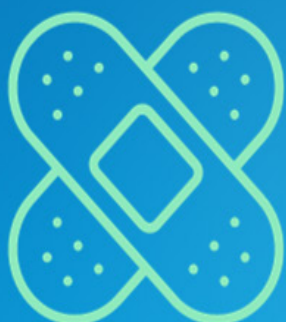
Furthermore, discrimination against LGBT persons in the workplace can also contribute to higher poverty levels and social exclusion, negatively affecting their mental health and overall well-being.

Studies have shown that LGBT individuals who experience discrimination in the workplace are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues (Badgett et al.,2013). As recommended by a Respondent 652...

There is a need for Greater emphasis should be place on enforcing laws that protect LGBT people. More opportunities need to be given to LGBT people to be a part of the workforce. Laws need to enforce this.

(Respondent 652 -Bisexual-Cisman).

HEALTH CARE



13%

reported being hesitant to utilize public hospital services due to fear of stigma and discrimination.



43%

considered whether they could access health services without stigma and discrimination before deciding to seek medical attention.



50%

of transgender participants stated that transgender-specific healthcare services were inaccessible or nonexistent.



90%

did not know of public health programs or services specifically tailored to LGBT persons.

6.5. Health Care

Jamaica's primary Health Care system comprises thirty (30) public hospitals and clinics, and ten (10) private hospitals (MOHW, 2021). Access to public hospitals and clinics is free at the point of service, while private facilities charge a fee in order to access service. According to the Ministry of Health Primary Health Care Reform programme, the organization and scope of the primary health care services have remained the same despite the population's changing needs (MOHW, 202).

The national LGBT survey sought to assess the experiences of LGBT persons accessing healthcare services. The survey found that access to health services among LGBT persons in Jamaica varied depending on their gender, social class, age, and where they lived. Those who identify as bisexual (64%) had greater access to healthcare services, while those who identify as gay and lesbian shared the same level of access (21%).

A range of health-related questions were asked of the respondents, including whether they had any health challenges, the type of challenges experienced, the institutions in which they sought medical help and the reason for their preference. The results showed that 74% of the respondents sought medical help for health challenges in the previous 12 months. Medical care was sought from civil society clinics (12%), private facilities (24%) and public hospitals (38%).

Most respondents accessed healthcare services from public hospitals. Approximately fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents preferred public hospitals because of their low cost or free charge. Another thirty-three percent (33%) indicated that it was the closest facility to where they lived, while eight percent (8%) attended because they did not have medical insurance, and another (2%) attended because they were well taken care of by healthcare staff.

Despite the ease of access, some LGBT persons were hesitant to utilize public hospital services due to fear of stigma and discrimination (13%), because they had independent health coverage (17%), because of concerns surrounding patients' confidentiality (8%), unsatisfactory care from public health workers (14%), and the unwillingness of public health workers to prescribe medicine to them (2%). Other respondents, accounting for 7%, indicated they preferred treating themselves with natural remedies. Interestingly, twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents did not seek medical attention.

6.5.1. Discrimination in Health Care

The findings from the survey suggested that although 74% of the respondents sought medical help for health challenges, more than half (55%) of the total respondents did not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity with a healthcare or medical staff, while only (24%) indicated sharing it with just a few. When disaggregated among the different identities, 65% of bisexual respondents were likelier to have never been open with healthcare staff than 54% lesbian and 41% gay. As expressed by respondents, the top three reasons for this were fear of rejection (27%), it is their private life (24%), and 20% indicated that it was not relevant information to share.

Fear of discrimination or stigmatization in the context of access to healthcare and lack of confidence in healthcare workers can cause some LGBT persons to delay treatment or even avoid seeking healthcare altogether (Norman et al., 2006). These are valid concerns given the prevailing culture and negative cultural rhetoric surrounding LGBT persons in Jamaica. However, the lack of disclosure can negatively affect the quality of care received by LGBT persons, as healthcare providers may lack the necessary information to provide appropriate and effective treatment.

Furthermore, according to the Human Rights Watch report (2021), there were several instances in Jamaica where LGBT persons were ill-treated by nurses and other members of the healthcare profession or denied services altogether. Respondent 299 shared that...

The last time I went to seek help it felt as if I was being judged by the psychiatrist in the public health facility
(respondent 299 – gay/cisman)

The fear of rejection can be because of concerns about mistreatment or negative attitudes from healthcare providers, which may lead to avoidance of seeking medical care altogether. The data also indicated that bisexual persons were particularly likely to have never disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to a healthcare provider. This lack of disclosure can be for varied reasons, including fears and misconceptions about a person's sexual orientation.

6.5.2. Access to Healthcare Service

The responses also highlighted that there was a greater preference to access private healthcare services as opposed to public facilities. This preference was aggregated by identities, with bisexual persons (50%) in the majority, followed by lesbian (22%) and gay (21%) respondents. As noted, bisexual persons (27%) expressed that they had to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity when accessing medical services, followed by gay (25%) and lesbian (20%) respondents.

All LGBT persons in the survey identified a gap in accessing health insurance and having the financial means to pay for healthcare services. Before deciding to seek medical attention, 62% considered whether:

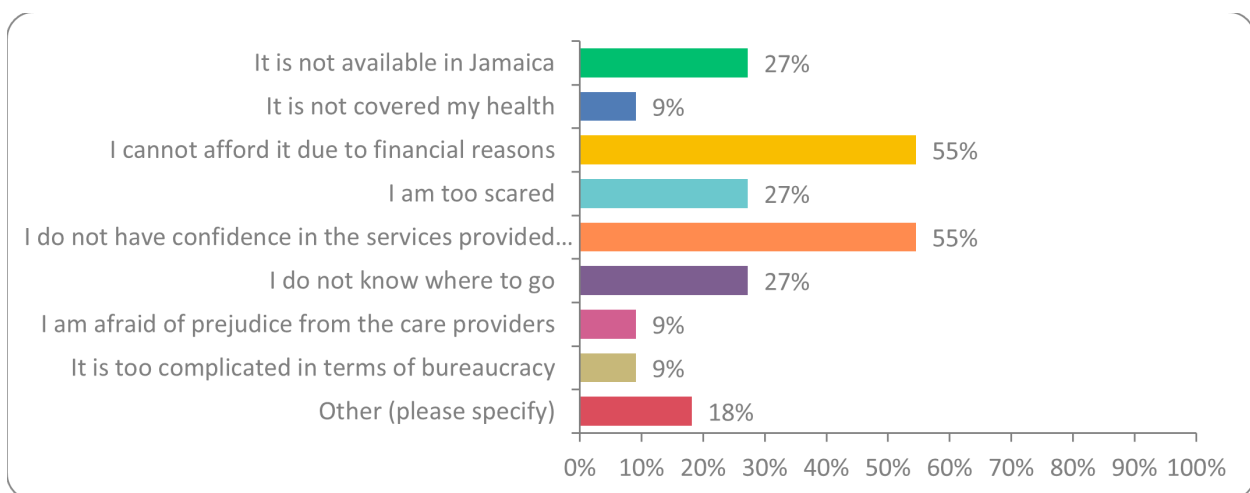
1. they had the money to pay for it;
2. they could access health services without stigma and discrimination (43%); and
3. the quality of public health services (34%).

A significant majority of respondents (91%) did not know of public health programmes/services specifically tailored to LGBT persons. Approximately seventy-seven percent (77%) of LGBT persons who participated in the survey indicated that their knowledge mostly encompassed available Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) services, 40% on sexual reproductive health, 36% for sexual violence services and 35% for psychological services. Conversely, when disaggregated by different gender identities, only 6% were knowledgeable of support services for transgender persons in transition.

6.5.3. Transgender Access to Health Care

In terms of access to health services, fifty percent (50%) of transgender respondents stated that transgender-specific healthcare services were inaccessible or nonexistent. The absence of these services can hurt the ability of transgender persons to access the support they may need. Figure 18 below indicates that the major reason (55%) transgender persons have not begun the transitioning process is a lack of financial resources and not having confidence in the health services. Other highlighted reasons include the lack of availability, the lack of awareness of where to go, and the fear of transitioning. The lack of available and appropriate resources within health services to support transgender people is particularly concerning, emphasizing the potential dangers they may face.

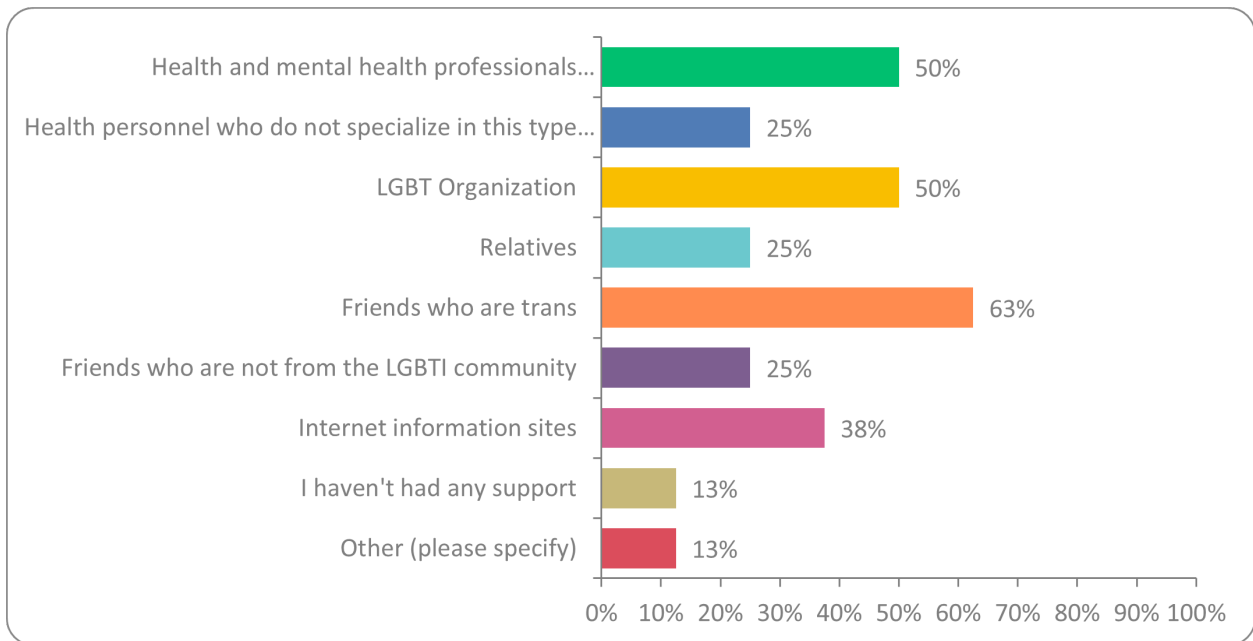
Figure 18: Transgender Respondents reasons for not starting the transitioning process



Based on 11 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

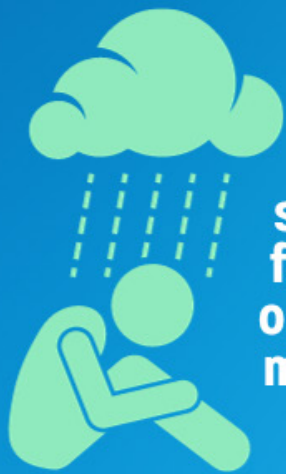
Additionally, the survey highlighted that 88% of transgender persons have already begun hormonal treatment, and 75% have socially transitioned. In both instances, transgender persons indicated that 63% of their support came from transgender friends, 50% from LGBT organizations and other healthcare professionals. These are all not within the formal health sector (public or private).

Figure 19: Support for Transgender persons



Based on 8 Responses – Multiple answers were allowed

BELONGING



75%

stated that lack of family support was one of the top three major issues facing LGBT persons in Jamaica.



68%

reported experiencing acceptance from most people who knew about their sexual orientation or gender identity.



45%

are members of a religious denomination.



12%

had to relocate from their original communities due to discrimination or safety concerns related to their gender identity or sexual orientation.

6.6. Belonging

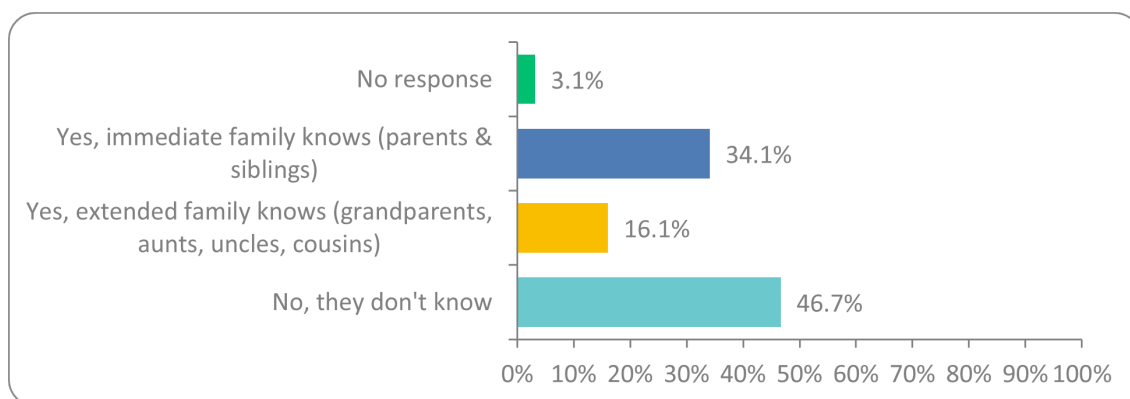
Belonging is a critical human need for overall well-being and personal development, and it is significant for members of the LGBT community, who face ongoing stigma, discrimination, and marginalization. Belonging is tied to social identity, which refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms that define a person's sense of self within a larger community. Establishing a sense of belonging within this context can significantly impact an individual's health, social and emotional well-being, and quality of life (Mereish et al., 2015). This section will review belonging from the interconnected relationships of family, community, relationships, faith, and abilities.

6.6.1. Familial Relationships

Over 40% of respondents who had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months indicated that this came from within their family. For many respondents, acceptance and support from their family was a major indicator of their ability to live comfortably as an LGBT person in Jamaica. The vast majority of respondents (75%) stated that lack of family support was one of the top three major issues facing LGBT persons in Jamaica.

Many respondents seem to struggle between their ability to share their status with family members and the fear of feeling rejected or ostracised. For 44% of respondents living with family, being open about identity is not always easy. The survey indicated that only 46% of respondents had disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to family members. As highlighted in Figure 20, 34% of respondents' immediate family and 16% of extended family members were aware of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. 47% of respondents had not disclosed this to family members.

Figure 20: Respondents disclosure of sexual orientation and/or gender identity to family members

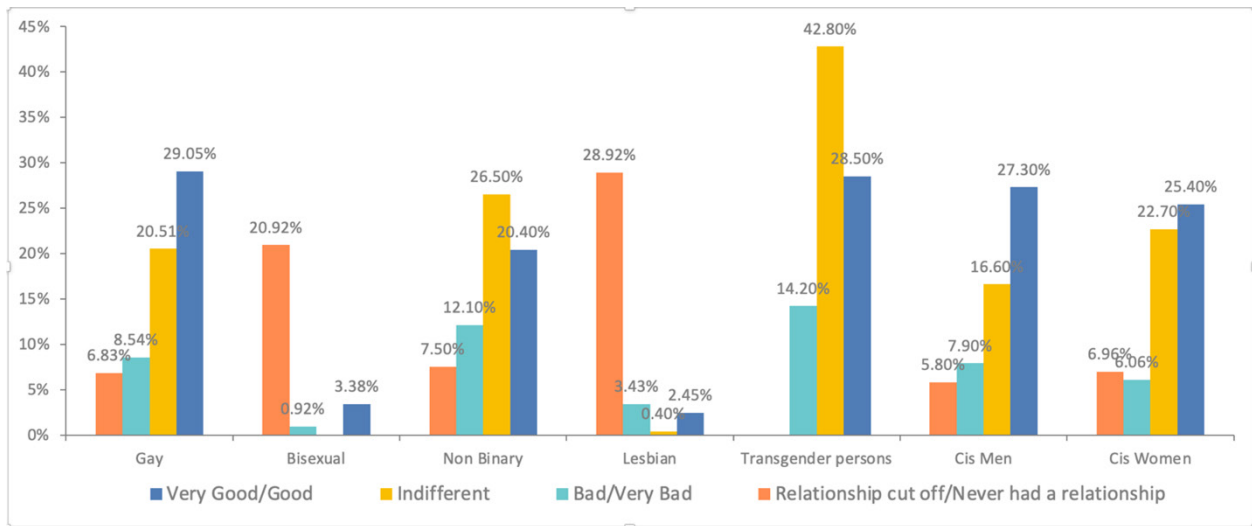


Based on 765 Responses

Cisgender women tended to disclose their sexual orientation to immediate family members and/or extended family members more than cisgender men or non-binary/transgender persons. For cisgender men, one in every three (33%) opted to share their gender identity and orientation with an immediate family member, more so than extended family members. Many people in Jamaica live in extended family households, i.e., with cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, so that disclosure can happen within a wider unit.

After becoming aware, relationships between family members and a quarter (25%) of the respondents were good or very good (see Figure 21). The result indicates that at least one in four respondents experience positive results after sharing their identity. However, 75% of LGBT people's disclosure led to indifference or worse outcomes. The indifference experienced by 21% of respondents reflected that their disclosure did not alter relationships. Unfortunately, for 11% the response was described as bad, very bad, or being cut off, with both cisgender women and men experiencing their family members having cut them off completely because of the disclosure. Respondent 700 expressed that...**Brother tried killing me** (Respondent 700 – gay/cisman) when they found out about their sexual orientation.

Figure 21: Respondents Relationship with their Family after disclosing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

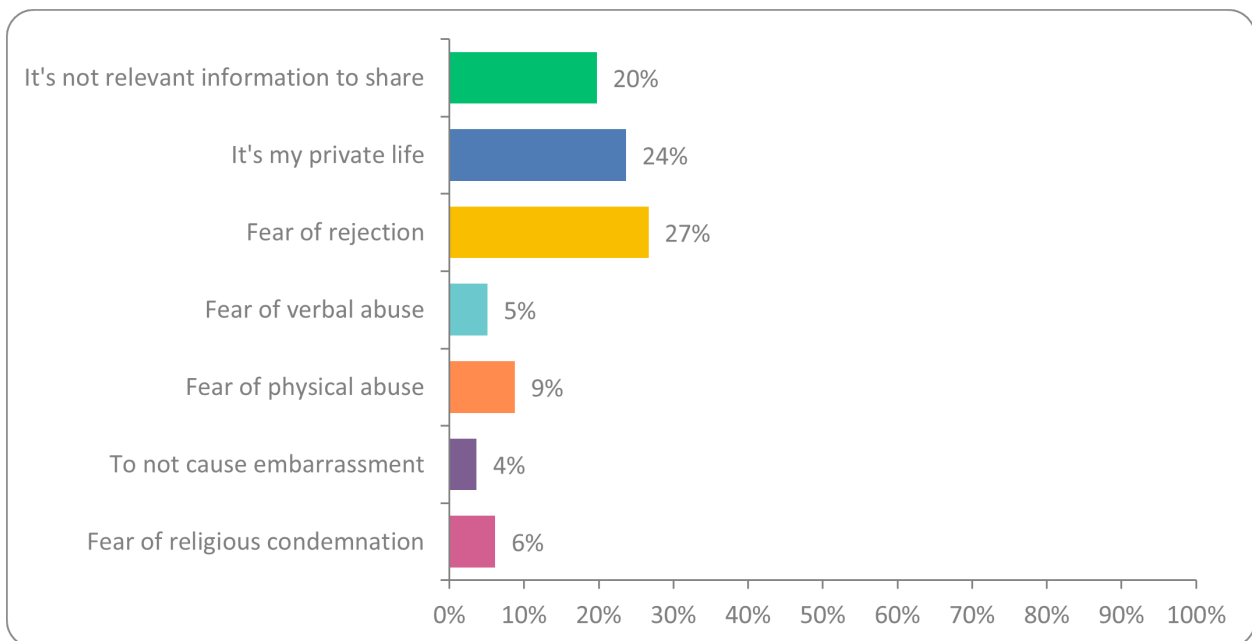


Based on 765 Responses

47% of the respondents did not share their identity with family members because of fear (see Figure 22). These include fear of rejection (27%), fear of verbal or physical abuse (14%) or religious condemnation (6%). A further review of the results indicated that bisexual respondents (48%) were the highest group of persons who were not open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The second group was persons who were gay (40%), followed by lesbians (25%).

44% of respondents felt it was unnecessary to share their sexual orientation or gender identity with their family because they felt it was irrelevant information, or their private life. At the same time, 4% opted not to share because they felt it would cause embarrassment.

Figure 22: Respondents reasons for non—disclosure to family members



Based on 765 Responses

Family relationships, where they existed, were important for LGBT persons. The survey results indicated that 39% of respondents struggled with being open about their sexual orientation and gender identity. The absence of supportive family relationships can impact the overall mental, emotional, and physical health of LGBT youth (Ryan et al., 2010).

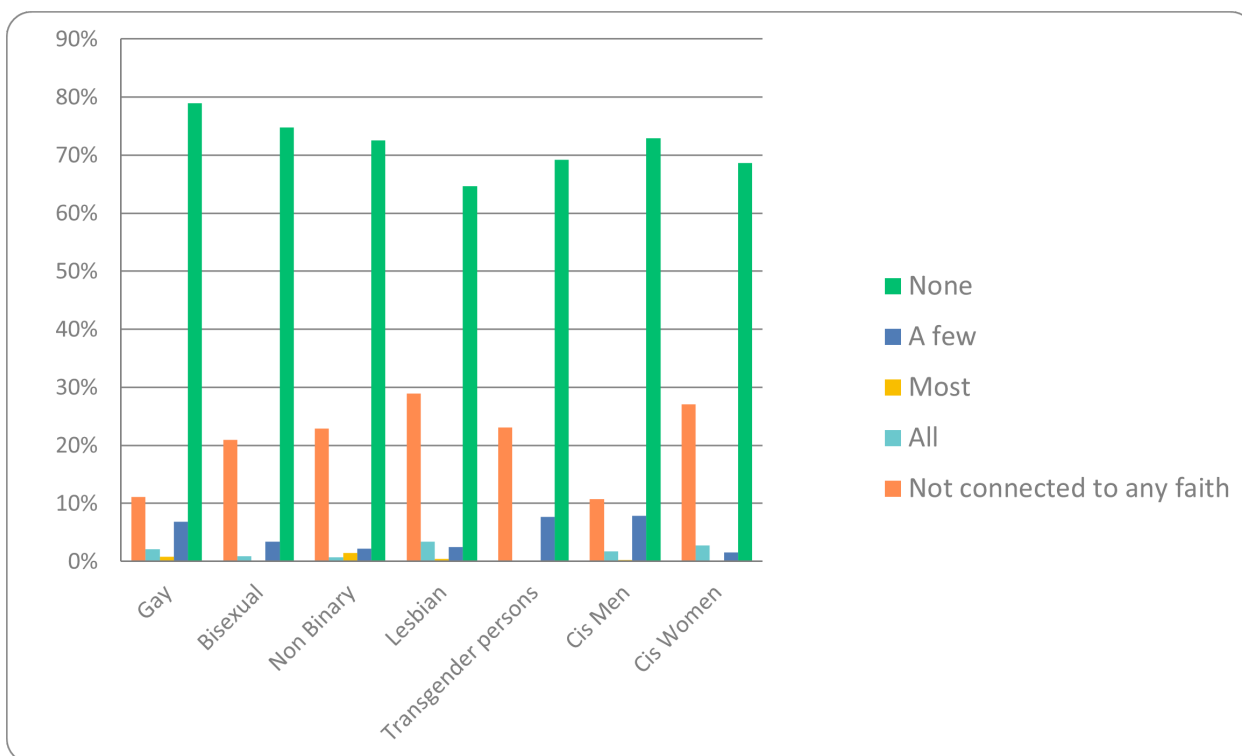
Other studies have also shown that LGBT persons who have faced family rejection are also more likely to report attempted suicide, high levels of depression, illegal drug use, and engagement in unprotected sexual intercourse (Ryan et al., 2009). Conversely, family support in LGBT disclosure can create positive protective factors that can build self-esteem, build social support, improve mental health, and leads to less depression, less substance abuse and less suicidal ideation among LGBT persons (Padilla et al., 2014)

6.6.2. Religion

Religion plays a significant part in the Jamaican national psyche and identity. It is therefore not surprising that 71% of LGBT persons indicated that they believed in a higher power, and 45% of them are members of a religious denomination. Despite having strong connections with faith, 73% of LGBT persons have not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to their religious leaders. (See Figure 23).

Of the 73% of LGBT persons who have not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to their religious leaders, 33% are gay, 43% are bisexual, and 24% are lesbian. Cisgender women, non-binary and transgender persons were more likely not to share their gender identity with their religious leaders compared with cisgender men. Based on the survey findings, 69% of cisgender women, 73% of non-binary and 69% of transgender persons have not shared, compared to 73% of cisgender men.

Figure 23: Number of Respondents who have shared their sexual orientation or gender identity with their religious leaders



Based on 765 Responses

Fear of rejection is one of the major reasons respondents were uncomfortable disclosing their sexual orientation and gender identity. Figure 13 indicates that in the last 12 months, 25% of respondents experienced discrimination at their religious place of worship (churches, temples and mandirs), and 72% reported having never seen any programme or awareness campaign addressing discrimination based on religion and belief.

Religious leaders could play a vital role in providing secure environments where LGBT persons can openly discuss their gender identity and sexual orientation. The survey revealed that 78% of transgender respondents would feel more at ease living in Jamaica if their religious leaders respected them. Failure to have these dialogues could increase violence and deaths within the LGBT community. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the core of every religion is safeguarding and promoting the equal dignity of every human being (UNHRC, 2021).

6.6.3. Relationships: Personal and Community

For 43% of respondents, a significant factor for not disclosing their gender identity and sexual orientation is the belief that it is their private life and is not relevant information to share. As shared by one Respondent, they choose to not disclose their identity...

to avoid the unnecessary speech, like I don't fear being judged or anything "me just cyah bother wid di bag a chatting" and I don't wanna have to be rude. (Respondent 112 - Lesbian -Ciswoman).

However, for some respondents, the fear of rejection, condemnation and abuse prevents them from disclosing, as shared by one Respondent...

my sexuality can actually be the cause of my death in Jamaica which is absolutely absurd but to keep out of harms way, I keep my business to myself. (Respondent 493 - Gay-Cisman).

Respondents indicated that the decision to disclose is influenced by feelings of safety that are experienced either in their family, faith or community, which may indicate that treatment experienced in the community influences the ability of LGBT persons to be open about their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, the survey revealed that 12% of the respondents had to relocate from their original communities due to discrimination or safety concerns related to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Further disaggregation of these results based on gender identity indicates that 34% of both cisgender men and cisgender women, 20% of non-binary individuals, and 12% of transgender respondents have relocated because of real or perceived acts of aggression, abuse and fear.

As expressed by respondent 592,

...verbal abuse and threats were made against me because of my perceived orientation. This caused me to move and rent a place in a nicer, more civilized community, and the new rent is difficult to maintain
(Respondent 592 – bisexual/non-binary).

Another respondent reported that

My partner was beaten up because someone found out about him (Respondent 469, Heterosexual/Transgender Woman)

These findings underscored the need for communities to be more inclusive and safer spaces for all residents, without fear of discrimination or violence based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Respondents living in middle to upper-income communities, tended to express greater feelings of safety and acceptance when compared those living in other communities, as stated by one Respondent,

Middle class gays have a fair amount of privilege in Jamaica, hence my answers. But I know the situation is very different for others in lower socio-economic, inner-city, rural Jamaica (Respondent 231 - Gay-Cisgender Man).

6.6.4. Public display of affection

A key aspect of belonging is the ability to establish relationships with significant others if a person chooses to do so, and the freedom to express affection. However, it was also shared that for many, there was a fear of entering into relationships, and of public displays of affection in those relationships when formed. As shared by one respondent...

Jamaica is not a safe place for the LGBT community especially for the man the woman can walk in public and hold hands and stuff without being discriminated but men can't it's hard being gay in Jamaica trust me and that I am gay and I've been looking for a partner for over 10 years now I go on dating apps and stuff like that but I'm scared to go out and meet people I only talk to them over the phone because I see on the news when they meet people on these apps and then go to meet him straight guys be pretending to be gays and when they go to meet them they never returned they always find their body (Respondent 226 – gay cis man).

Most of the survey respondents (84%) reported that the challenges of openly expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity represent a significant problem for LGBT persons in Jamaica. Among those in relationships, an overwhelming proportion (78%) felt uneasy about displaying public affection toward their partners. The main reason cited by 82% of respondents for their discomfort was the fear of experiencing verbal or physical abuse. These concerns highlighted the difficulties they faced in expressing their affection publicly due to the potential for negative reactions from others.

Over 60% of respondents felt judged, and one in every two felt they were being unfavourably watched. Some respondents indicated that lesbians are often sexualized and have experienced assault from people who believe they can be made straight. As shared by one respondent...

As a bisexual cis woman, I'm allowed to live freely however that is not due to people respecting my sexuality- it's due to their fetishization of it. Bisexual and lesbian women that are not masculine presenting don't face as many issue simply because we are seen as potential threesome partners. (Respondent 666 – Bisexual/ciswoman).

Based on the survey, 88% of gay persons expressed discomfort with public display of affection compared to 76% of lesbian persons and 72% of persons identified as bisexual. For persons who identified as transgender, 80% expressed being uncomfortable and as shared by one respondent...

It's very unfortunate that all LGBT members have to face this in our own Country that we are born in. A lot of us is afraid to truly be yourselves (Respondent 115 – Bisexual/non-binary).

6.6.5. Being LGBTI and living with a disability

Jamaica has an estimated 410,000 to 540,000 persons with disabilities (PWDs), accounting for 15% to 18% of the total population (Lyons, 2022). Many of these persons are exposed to social exclusion and discrimination, historically forcing PWDs to be isolated. Similar to global trends, PWDs in Jamaica largely encompass the proportion of the population with the lowest standard of living, the highest unemployment and the lowest educational and health status. Nationally, LGBT persons with disabilities are less likely to access education, employment, health, and social programmes (Wilson-Scott, 2018).

Of the respondents who participated in the survey, approximately 8% indicated living with a disability. The distribution of the different disability groups is as follows: visually impaired (5%), intellectual/limited cognitive functioning (2%), physically challenged (1%), and hearing impaired (1%). 8% of unemployed LGBT persons indicated that their permanent disability impacted their employability. Additionally, 2% of LGBT persons shared that their disability has impacted their continued involvement in or completion of tertiary education.

Positively, of the PWDs who participated in the survey, 4% were employed in the last 12 months. Additionally, 3% indicated the completion of undergraduate studies, while 3% completed tertiary-level diplomas.

6.6.6. Mental Health

As a result of exposure to acts of discrimination and violence, most LGBT persons reported being depressed and having suicidal ideations. 69% of those surveyed reported that they contemplated suicide, while worryingly, 43% attempted suicide. One Respondent shared, that

I wish God would just kill me being born gay is the worst thing on this planet wish I could just stop being gay or there was a cure for being gay (Respondent 1,012 Gay/cis man).

Overall, a decrease in suicide rates in Jamaica has been recorded. Historically, it has impacted men by 86% and females at 14%, with men between the ages of 20 and 29 accounting for the majority of reported cases in the country over the last two years (Jamaica Observer, 2021).

Survey results indicate that bisexual respondents were the highest group of persons (75%) who reported having suicidal ideation. This number was followed by lesbian respondents (74%) and gay respondents (58%). This finding is consistent with international data, that indicates that bisexual youth tend to have higher suicide ideation compared to gay and lesbian persons (The Williams Institute, 2019).

As it relates to gender identity, non-binary youth were more likely to contemplate suicide and attempt suicide compared to any other group. Out of the total non-binary youth responding to the question, 79% indicated suicide ideation, compared to 77% of cisgender women and 56% of cisgender men. All transgender men indicated that they had contemplated suicide at some point. The numbers for attempted suicide mirrored those of suicide contemplation, with non-binary youth indicating higher attempted numbers than cisgender women or men. Transgender men also reported the highest suicide attempts compared to any other group.

Not only were the numbers for suicide ideation and attempted suicide disturbing, but some of the comments offered by respondents indicated a deep cry for help and support in navigating life as a person who is LGBT. An example is the view provided by a respondent, who shared

Please remember that not everyone appears queer. Some of us seem normal but live lives of solitude and quiet suffering due to mental illness and lack of support. I don't come off as queer but my anxiety has led to a life of extreme isolation. I want to die every day and that has not stopped for many years (Respondent 352 – Gay/Cisman).

15% of respondents indicated that they were receiving treatment for mental health disorders/depression. Of this 15%, cisgender women represented 47% of LGBT persons accessing treatment for mental health, followed by 30% of nonbinary respondents and 23% of cisgender males. Overall, there is a need for greater access to mental health support to assist LGBT persons in navigating the somewhat perilous journey of being LGBT in Jamaica. Such support must reach persons from less privileged backgrounds who are often unable to access these services because of cost, accessibility, or fear of being discovered.

Despite the low levels of respondents accessing mental health treatment, it is encouraging that some support is being accessed, given the significant trauma some LGBT persons have around the fears of violence, their experience with suicide ideation, and the reality that their lived experiences seem to be filled with microaggressions. As recommended by one respondent, there is a need for..

I would like to see more access for mental health care for lgbt people especially boys and young men. These mental health care can be online, private and confidential to ensure no stigma and abuse to persons (Respondent 463 – Gay/Cisgender man).

STANDARD OF LIVING



67%

expressed a strong desire to migrate to another country.



33%

reported that they either had insufficient money or just enough money to cover only their basic needs.



39%

of respondents earned less than the estimated average household monthly income.



100%

of transgender respondents were in this group.

6.7. Standard of Living

LGBT respondents were asked to share several reflections on their overall well-being, economic livelihood, and expectations for the future.

6.7.1. Acceptance of identity

Although they faced numerous obstacles, 42% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their sexual orientation or gender identity, while another 31% indicated self-acceptance (see Figure 24). Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents felt comfortable with their identity but preferred to remain anonymous, while 11% did not accept or like who they were. As shared by one respondent,

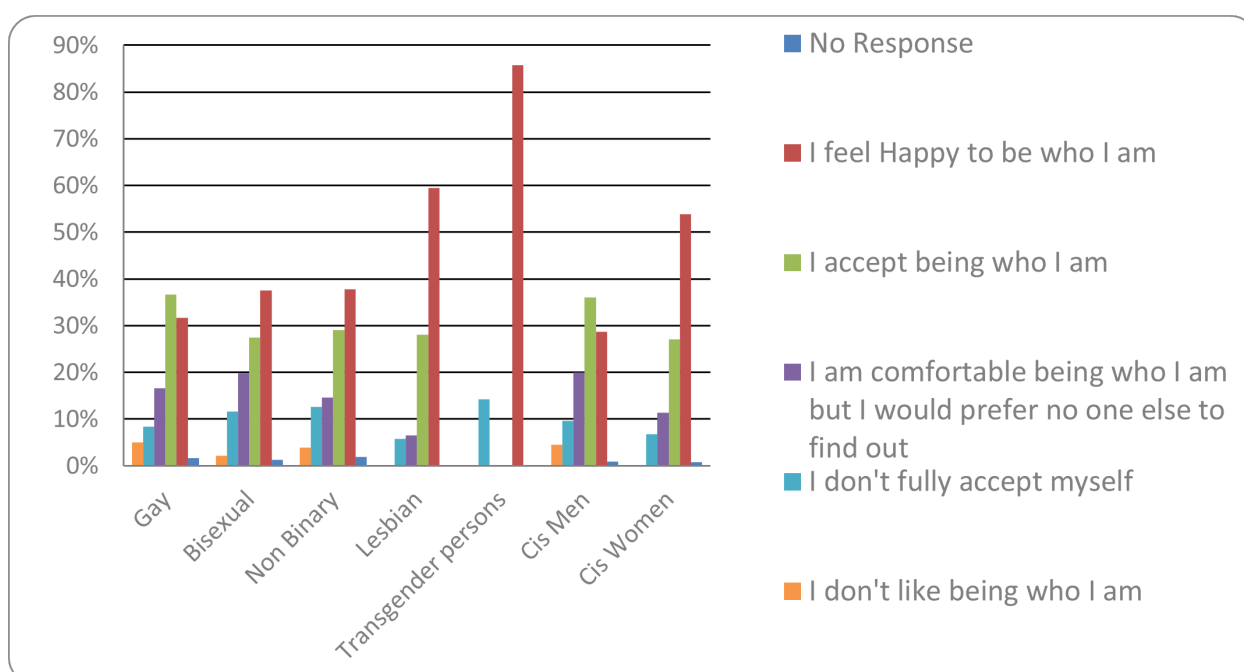
...I have reached the point where I have accepted who I am but there is still some internalized homophobia due to religious upbringing and societal views (Respondent 821 – Lesbian/ciswoman).

There has been a journey toward acceptance among some respondents, and several shared that it was difficult for them to arrive at this position. As offered by another respondent,

...I was not comfortable before. I was suicidal almost but with meeting others that are like me from school and seeing other LGBT people online especially from Jamaica I was able to form peace with my sexual orientation (Respondent 369 – gay/cisman).

The survey showed that 54% of cisgender women felt happy about their gender identity, while 27% expressed acceptance. In contrast, 29% of cisgender men expressed happiness about their gender identity, and 36% accepted their identity. Cisgender men were likelier to prefer anonymity despite feeling comfortable with their identity than other groups. Only 5% of cisgender men and 4% of non-binary respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their identity, while 13% of non-binary/transgender respondents, 10% of cisgender men, and 7% of cisgender women reported not fully accepting themselves (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Respondents feelings about their sexual orientation and gender identity



Based on 565 Responses

6.7.2. Acceptance of Others

Some respondents' feelings of happiness and comfort were related to the attitudes of others toward their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. According to the survey results, 68% of respondents reported experiencing acceptance from most people who knew about their sexual orientation and gender identity, while 27% felt indifferent attitudes toward them.

The acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity among respondents varied based on gender identity. A majority of cisgender men (65%), cisgender women (62%), nonbinary persons (55%), and transgender persons (50%) reported positive acceptance of their identity from individuals to whom they chose to disclose their identity. In addition, a significant number of cisgender women (29%), cisgender men (21%), and nonbinary respondents (34%) reported a neutral response from those they disclosed their identity to.

6.7.3. Expression of Freedom

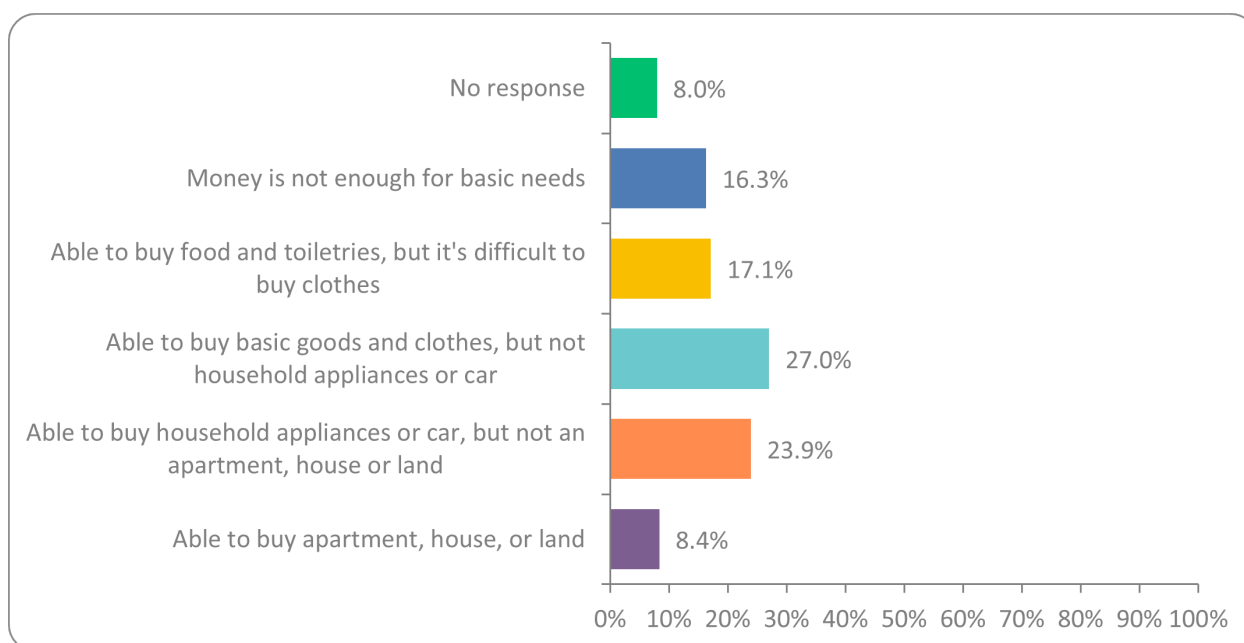
Respondents were asked what would allow them to live more comfortably in Jamaica and be better able to have freedom of expression. Most respondents (78%) indicated a need for legal procedures, gender protection and recognition. These protections should also be related to workplace anti-discrimination policies referring to gender identity or sexual orientation; national authorities who promote the rights of transgender persons; or training of public servants (e.g., police, teachers) on the rights of all LGBTI persons. 72% of respondents also strongly agreed that less promoting of anti-trans messages in music and cultural activities would make them more comfortable. Moreover, 67% of respondents highlighted the importance of support from public figures in business, politics, and sports, in enabling respondents to live more comfortably.

6.7.4. Purchasing Power

Regarding their financial situation, 56% of the respondents stated they were employed. In comparison, 33% of respondents reported that they either had insufficient money or just enough money to cover only their basic needs. Of this latter group, lesbians and gay men, each accounting for 19%, identified that they did not have enough money for basic needs compared to 13% of bisexual persons. Additionally, 29% of bisexual persons were able to buy basic goods and clothes but not household appliances or cars, compared to 25% and 26% of persons who identified as lesbians and gay men, respectively.

Only 8% of the respondents could purchase an apartment, house or land, and 44% lived with family/friends. For persons who identified as non-binary/queer or transgender, only 8% of them were able to purchase an apartment, house or land, and 29% were able to buy basic goods and clothes (see Figure 25)

Figure 25: Respondents Financial Situation

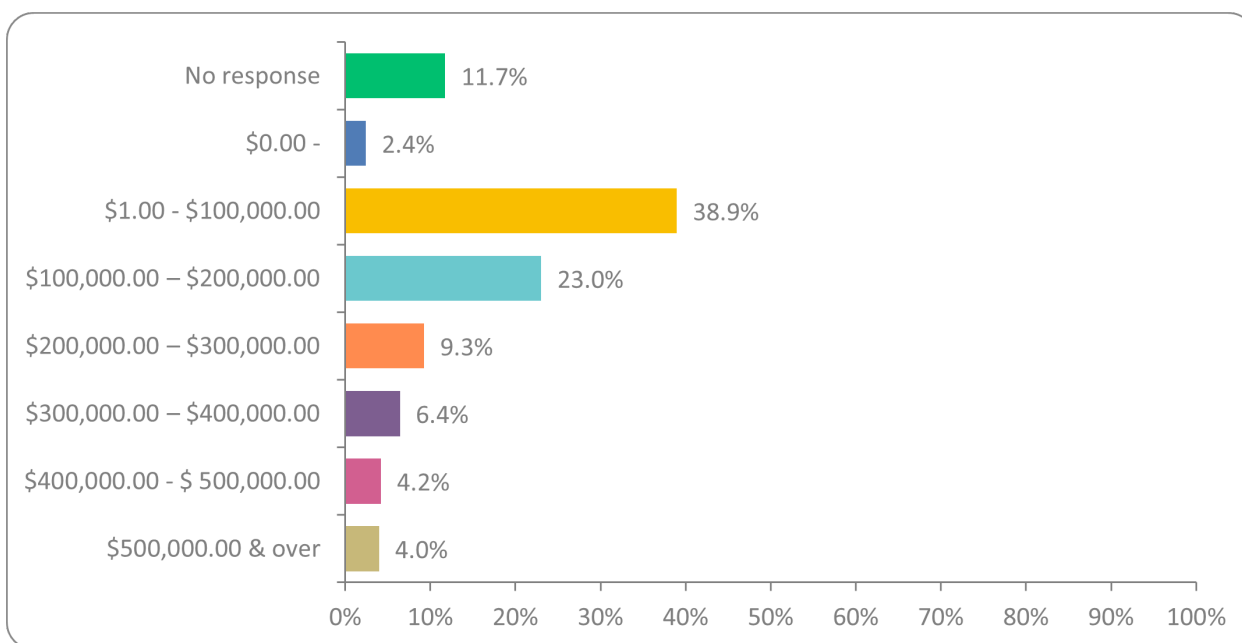


Based on 736 Responses

The survey asked respondents to indicate their total monthly household income, including salaries, business income, pensions, dividends, rent, remittances, or any other type of income received. Based on this, 39% of respondents earned JMD 100,000 or less per month, compared to Jamaica's national household income. According to Numbeo, the estimated monthly cost for a family of four is JMD 413,392, exclusive of rent, and for a single person, it is estimated at JMD 116,273 (Numbeo, 2022). Therefore, 39% of respondents earned less than the estimated average household income monthly. Based on the survey, all transgender respondents earned JMD 100,000 and under, along with 44% of cisgender women, 31% of cisgender men and 46% of non-binary persons. Overall, the majority of respondents were at this income level.

23% earned between \$100,000 to \$200,000 per month, which was the second highest income level, meaning that over 60% of all respondents earned less than \$200,000 JMD. There is a direct correlation between the level of income and the ability to access services and resources. The income level might be because 22% of respondents were active students, which meant that their earning potential was likely to increase in later years. It also demonstrates that respondents' ability to access resources is reduced because they need more income to do so sufficiently.

Figure 26: Household Income in Jamaican Dollars



Based on 452 Responses

6.7.5. Migration

The survey results indicated that due to high levels of discrimination and violence against the LGBT community, 7% of the respondents have internally migrated for security reasons or to safeguard their lives. For persons who have internally migrated, 12% of respondents said they did so because they wanted to better express their gender identity and sexual orientation in a safer environment.

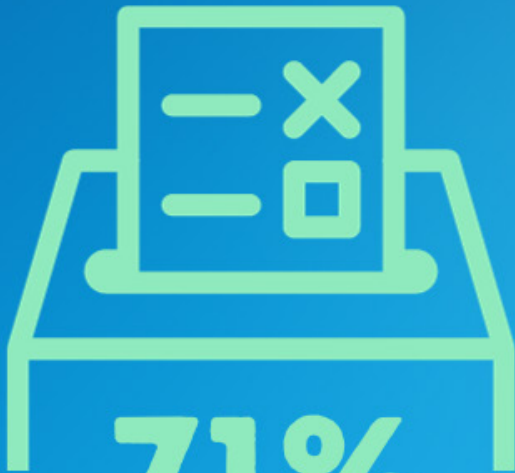
For 67% of LGBT persons, there was a strong desire to migrate externally to another country. One of the common reasons for migration was the lack of opportunities to express their authentic selves without fear of persecution. Furthermore, 28% of the transgender respondents who desired to transition reported that they did not believe it was an option to do so while living in Jamaica. The lack of access to transition-related healthcare is a significant concern for transgender persons, as it has been linked to poor mental health outcomes and a lower quality of life (White Hughto et al., 2021; Winter et al., 2016).

Additionally, 55% of the respondents who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual also expressed the desire to migrate because they lacked confidence in any of the services within Jamaica, specifically those that provided health care and access to justice. As noted, discrimination and acts of violence significantly impact the mental, emotional, and physical health of LGBT persons and have increased rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicide (Hatzenbuehler, 2010; Meyer, 2003). Moreover, such discrimination can prevent access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for LGBT persons (Chakrapani et al., 2015; Human et al., 2016).

It is therefore not surprising that there is an increasing desire of LGBT persons to leave the country. As shared by a respondent...

Jamaica is not a safe place for persons of the LGBTQ+ community. Many of the persons like myself are finding ways to migrate to another country that will accept us. It has gotten so bad, I fear walking in my community because of the verbal abuse and uncomfortable staring eyes and whispers. It has gotten so bad, men are posing on dating app (Grindr) as gay only to target other gay men to rob and inflict bodily harm. Now persons are being killed because of their sexual orientation. There has been more than 3 deaths in the past couple of months and countless robberies that lead to hospitalization this year. I am fearful to go out in public (Respondent 339- Bisexual Cis Man).

PARTICIPATION



71%

of respondents did not vote in the last general elections held in 2020.



50%

expressed that they did not believe they were entitled to any subsidies or financial assistance.



4%

indicated they were denied a subsidy or financial assistance because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.



67%

expressed that having an equal marriage law in Jamaica was fundamental.

6.8 Political and Social Participation

Despite the fear of violence, discrimination, and lack of human rights protections, those who completed the survey showed a high level of willingness to defend the rights of LGBT persons. 67% of the respondents expressed that it was essential for LGBT persons to have greater civic participation. 75% of the respondents also highlighted that if given the opportunity, they would defend the rights of LGBT persons. The survey revealed that some respondents were actively engaged in public spaces to promote visibility (17%), advocate for inclusive public policies and programmes (14%), and engage in public dialogues (24%).

67% of respondents expressed that having an equal marriage law in Jamaica was fundamental. Likewise, 95% of the respondents highlighted that it was important to have Gender Identity Law in Jamaica that allowed persons to change their names and gender markers.

However, despite the expressed willingness to see change, the survey also showed high levels of abstention from political processes at the national level. A significant portion of respondents (71%) did not vote in the last general elections held in 2020. It was higher when compared to the general population, where 63% of persons did not vote (Electoral Commission of Jamaica, 2020).

In terms of access to Government grants, subsidies or other forms of financial aid, the survey demographics meant that most respondents were not eligible for many of the assistance programmes. I.e., because 53% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-24, and 99% were below the age of 55, which is younger than the retirement age in Jamaica, none of the respondents were accessing Old Age, National Insurance Scheme (NIS) or Retirement Pensions. However, 4% of respondents receive subsidies or financial assistance from the Government of Jamaica.

It is important to note that 4% of respondents indicated they were denied a subsidy or financial assistance because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Gay and transgender persons were the main respondents who indicated they were denied financial assistance because of their orientation.

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected LGBT persons, like many other persons in Jamaica. As a result of lockdowns and restrictions, one in four (25%) of the respondents lost their jobs; 17% were unable to pay their rent; 26% had to reduce meals due to loss of income; and 23% were unable to start or continue their education. Therefore, during COVID-19, respondents could have heavily relied on government social programs or assistance. Interestingly 50% of the respondents expressed that they did not believe they were entitled to any subsidies or financial assistance.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the National LGBT Survey of Jamaica are significant and highlight some of the lived realities of LGBT persons related to the ten thematic areas reviewed. The survey results confirm that LGBT persons continue to experience social exclusion, prejudice, violence, stigma, and discrimination in these areas, especially regarding access to education, health, employment, and justice.

Although 74% of respondents sought medical help in the 12 months preceding the survey, more than 55% did not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to providers. Of those surveyed, 83% reported experiencing verbal violence, and 54% knew of an LGBT person who died violently or was killed due to their sexual orientation or gender expression in the last 12 months of the survey.

Further discrimination occurred in the education sector, where 61% of the respondents felt discriminated against in the 12 months preceding the survey. Similarly, 80% indicated that educational institutions were not supportive of promoting messages of inclusion and respect for LGBT persons.

These experiences of stigma and discrimination negatively impacted the well-being and quality of life LGBT people experience, with two out of every three respondents (67%) expressing the desire to migrate. Furthermore, such experiences harm the mental health of LGBT persons: nearly 69% of all survey respondents experienced suicidal ideation; 75% of bisexual persons reported the highest rate of suicidal ideation among all respondents; and 43% of all respondents said they had attempted suicide.

Survey findings highlight the importance of designing, enacting, and implementing enabling legal and public policy environments, to ensure that LGBT persons can live, work, thrive and raise families while supporting the overall development of the country and, by extension, the Sustainable Development Goals.

7.1. General recommendations

The National LGBT Survey is a crucial resource that can be leveraged to enhance the quality of life for all LGBT individuals in Jamaica. By revealing their aspirations, concerns, and suggestions, it highlights their perspectives and affirms the value of their contributions. The survey highlights the need for legislative reforms that prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and provides legal safeguards to the LGBT community.

These safeguards include improving access to justice and combating hate crimes within Jamaica. This research can inform the development of evidence-based policies and programmes that are responsive to their immediate needs. Additionally, it is recommended that the Government and the media partner with local LGBT and human rights organizations to establish a national public education campaign and other relevant public interventions for LGBT Jamaicans. These efforts can help to promote a more inclusive society.

7.1.2. Specific Recommendations

7.1.3. Violence due to Prejudice and Discrimination

It is recommended that the legal and judicial services must adopt all necessary measures to guarantee and protect the human rights of LGBT persons. As such, the justice system must be strengthened to ensure respect for and protection of LGBT persons and include a due diligence standard. This standard of due diligence will assist in the prevention of discrimination and will provide an effective, prompt, and impartial investigation, along with appropriate sanctions for those who discriminate against LGBT persons, or those perceived as such, as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) indicates.

It is also recommended that ongoing training and sensitization of security forces in Jamaica be developed, particularly regarding the human rights of LGBT persons, as well as Jamaica's responsibilities under regional and universal human rights bodies and treaties, as part of the standard training of law-enforcing officials.

It is also recommended that a specialized department be established to respond to violence and discrimination experienced by vulnerable groups, including LGBT persons, in their interactions with public authorities and the general public. By doing this, the Government will be able to address the main cause of underreporting, fear, and lack of knowledge of available resources.

7.1.4. Human Rights

It is recommended that Jamaica seeks to guarantee protection against discrimination under the Jamaica Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedom for LGBT persons. It is also recommended that public and private sector agencies develop policies and practices that help to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, and protection of LGBT persons.

It is recommended that there are improved opportunities for LGBT persons to access judicial and other processes to address instances of human rights infringement. It is also recommended that a promotional campaign is undertaken to bring greater awareness of avenues that LGBT persons can pursue to seek judicial redress.

It is also recommended that public agencies make a concerted effort to include LGBT persons as an identified vulnerable group and collaborate with the LGBT communities and organizations to design inclusive public policies.

It is recommended that work continues with protective service agencies to reduce the stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBT persons.

7.1.5. Education

While many respondents have tertiary-level qualifications, the cost of tertiary education remains a barrier. Access to financing through public and private means remains challenging. It is recommended that these and other barriers be addressed by those responsible for education and human development. In keeping with Vision 2030 to make Jamaica the place to live, work and raise families (PIOJ, 2009), less onerous administrative terms should be implemented to facilitate increased access to financing from public institutions such as the Students' Loan Bureau (SLB).

What is also evident is that while LGBT persons appear to be accessing educational opportunities, they experience significant levels of discrimination within these systems. It is recommended that educational institutions at all levels foster safe environments by adopting anti-discriminatory policies for students, and thus creating a culture of inclusiveness among the school communities to prevent discrimination and exclusion.

It is also recommended that schools include positive messaging around sexual orientation, gender identity and expression to ensure a safer and more inclusive space for all. Additionally, educational institutions should undertake anti-bullying initiatives to protect LGBTI students, as well as those perceived to be so.

7.1.6. Employment and Employability

It is recommended that the private sector develop supportive and inclusive policy frameworks that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. According to research, workplace policies should address and prevent harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. This is in tandem with the Sexual Offences Act of 2009 in Jamaica; though it does not specifically address LGBT individuals in the workplace, it criminalizes certain acts of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.

The Act also makes it illegal for employers to retaliate against an employee who has complained about sexual harassment or given evidence in a sexual harassment case, section 34 (Sexual Offences Act, 2009). It is also recommended that workplaces develop or promote a framework for appropriate reporting, and procedures for resolving instances of harassment (Barron, Day & Bradley, 2020; Cortina et al., 2001).

It is recommended that sensitivity and anti-discriminatory workshops and training programmes are conducted routinely. Additionally, for the periodic updating of practices and staff training modules to ensure they align with global trends and standards. And finally, to intentionally implement mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance and exercise due diligence in reporting to the appropriate channels.

It is recommended to sustain support networks through fostering relationships with LGBT organizations, for example, the Equality for All Foundation Jamaica (EFAF), whose leaders and primary service providers provide direct interventions for its employees. In addition, to make tangible public commitments, especially financial ones, to support the LGBT community. For example, contributing to causes supporting LGBT-focused programmes and activities.

7.1.7. Belonging

It is recommended that more family-centered engagement be promoted to encourage conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also recommended that organizations that work on behalf of and with LGBT persons consider extending services into the realm of family reconnect work that can aid in reducing discrimination within families.

Additionally, it is recommended that government institutions and other providers of family mediation be encouraged to expand their service offerings to include support regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also recommended that family mediation and support services consider sexual orientation and gender identity as part of their service offering. According to Toomey (2018), family support and acceptance are significant protective factors against negative outcomes for LGBT youth, including mental health problems, substance use, and suicidal ideation.

Although there has been some progress in recognizing the rights of LGBT persons and ending their exclusion from society, there is still a long way to go in achieving full inclusion. The deep-seated hostility towards LGBT individuals by Christian leaders in Jamaica is likely to persist for some time. Therefore, faith-based organizations should adopt strategies that promote dialogue and foster understanding, such as engaging in conversations with LGBT civil society organizations to address discrimination against LGBT persons. It is important to note that this recommendation is not without its challenges, particularly given the deeply entrenched views of some faith leaders towards LGBT persons. Nonetheless, research suggests that engagement and dialogue can effectively shift attitudes and reduce discrimination toward LGBT persons (Ortega et al., 2021).

It is recommended that Government officials and policymakers engage in continuous sensitization of public and private sectors to ensure the awareness of the rights and needs of PWDs.

It is also recommended that policies and practices are in tandem with key legislations such as the Disabilities Act of 2014 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This may take a wide-scale approach, particularly those involved in the direct service provision to LGBT PWDs (such as healthcare and justice providers) and who function as existing or potential employers (students/police in training). Special attention should be dedicated to all PWDs, regardless of lifespan, gender issues and the type and severity of disabilities, to ensure that the critical needs of all sub-populations are met. For the sustainability of this process, actions must include permanent measures in training professionals from all sectors and at all levels.

It is recommended that strategies aimed at addressing the mental health needs of the LGBT community in Jamaica be developed and implemented. These should be multifaceted, involving the rebuilding of family support and addressing the availability of personal support systems, especially for young LGBT persons. Identifying effective family-based psychotherapeutic approaches and family integration initiatives, exploring disclosure, and subsequent family dynamics would also be useful.

7.1.8. Health

Fear and discrimination are valid concerns given the prevailing culture and negative cultural rhetoric surrounding LGBT persons in Jamaica. It is recommended that there be direct and clear messaging from public health facilities that all persons are welcomed and all persons will be treated fairly. This should be complemented by sensitivity training for first responders and other healthcare professionals. This may remove the perception of fear and increase the use of public facilities by LGBT persons. Additionally, medical universities and schools of medicine should include LGBT sensitivity training as part of the medical and nursing programmes in order to train the next generation of healthcare workers to be more sensitive and inclusive.

It is also recommended to increase the level of services NGO and CSO providers offer, to include gender-affirmative care specifically for transgender persons. Bringing additional services directly to spaces where transgender persons are already comfortable may assist in removing several of the access barriers.

In 2020, EFAF published a list detailing LGBT-friendly mental health service providers who participated in LGBT sensitivity training and demonstrated a willingness to provide services to LGBT persons. It is recommended that this list be expanded to include other private medical services – including family medicine – that are LGBT-friendly and willing to offer services. This will allow LGBT persons to be more comfortable disclosing their identities, considering it as part of their person-centred health profiles.

As it relates to policy and legislation, it is recommended that an assessment be conducted to update the National Health Policy of 2005 with international standards that address the exclusion of LGBT persons, hold healthcare workers accountable, and have clear sanctions for violations. This will help to eliminate discrimination and violence against the LGBT community. Over the years, the difficulty in seeking redress has been exacerbated due to the continuous criminalization of same-sex penetration. Furthermore, evidence has also shown that this impedes HIV/STI prevention efforts (Human et al. 2004).

It is recommended that all health facilities, where possible, be retrofitted to ensure accessibility for PWDs. This moves beyond the mere installation of ramps to include accessible bathrooms, appropriate seating systems and adjustable beds that allow all PWDs to maintain their privacy, dignity, and independence. In addition, daily living coaching support should be made available, especially for those with intellectual disabilities.

It is recommended that there is consistency in research and documentation of demographic data on the population of LGBT PWDs. This ensures an accurate representation of the population and more efficient targeting of redress efforts. Data should be captured and shared by various agencies with direct responsibility for service provision to PWDs. For instance, the Ministry of Education and Youth ought to have a current database that tracks students with disabilities in both public and private schools. This would help to evaluate the effectiveness of programme and policy changes on the performance of these students, and thus better inform further programmatic changes.

Training programs are recommended to be developed and implemented to provide a holistic, patient-centred approach to the LGBT community, focusing on positive mental health outcomes. Additionally, studies have shown that interventions that involve families in supporting LGBT youth can lead to improved mental health outcomes for both the youth and their families (Ryan et al., 2009; Woodford et al., 2012).

It is also recommended that college health facilities ensure that students are trained to respond to the mental health needs of LGBT persons. Additionally, ongoing training should also be offered to mental health professionals in partnership with LGBT CSOs and practitioners. Training programmes should be developed and implemented so that mental health and other professionals lacking cultural competency avoid actions and treatments that revictimize LGBT persons. A concerted effort to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should also be established. This is to ensure that there is an improvement in the provision of mental services to LGBT persons, especially concerning the use of public health facilities.

Finally, it is recommended that the Government (national and local) develop awareness-raising actions regarding the human rights of LGBT persons with neighbourhood councils, community organizations, institutions, and businesses in their respective spaces. There should be purposeful attempts to remove the stigma and reduce the fear associated with gender and sexual identities, as well as address issues associated with depression and hiding within the LGBT community.

7.1.9. Standard of Living

It is recommended that workplaces develop and implement anti-discrimination policies referring to gender identity or sexual orientation as part of creating safer spaces for LGBT persons.

It is also recommended that national authorities expand training to promote the rights of all LGBTI persons. Special focus should be placed on less promotion of anti-trans messages in music and cultural activities.

It is recommended that local authorities consider the impact of migration on Jamaica's overall economy and offer strategies to reduce the migration of citizens.

7.1.8. The political and social participation

Although LGBT persons showed lower levels of electoral participation (29% voted in the last general elections) than the general population (49% voted in the last general elections), their integration and willingness to engage in advocacy for various social issues for the LGBT community is not diminished.

It is therefore recommended that LGBT organizations continue to carry out political advocacy aimed at getting Jamaican lawmakers to address and change some of the repressive laws and discriminatory practices towards LGBT persons. The community should continue to acquire support from international organizations, to encourage government compliance, but not to the detriment of destroying political relationships.

It is recommended that political parties take progressive action to encourage the political participation of LGBT persons, preventing discrimination in their organizations, and putting an end to hate speech and other negative public expressions that encourage violence against the community. The survey highlighted that 2 out of 3 respondents (66%) strongly agreed that if public figures in politics spoke out in support of the LGBT Community, changes would occur in society.

Finally, it is recommended that parties ensure the inclusion of the LGBT community in government programs and public policies they promote. Of the respondents, 98% expressed that their voices were ignored regarding policies and programs. This is an ideal opportunity for the engagement of government and LGBT persons.

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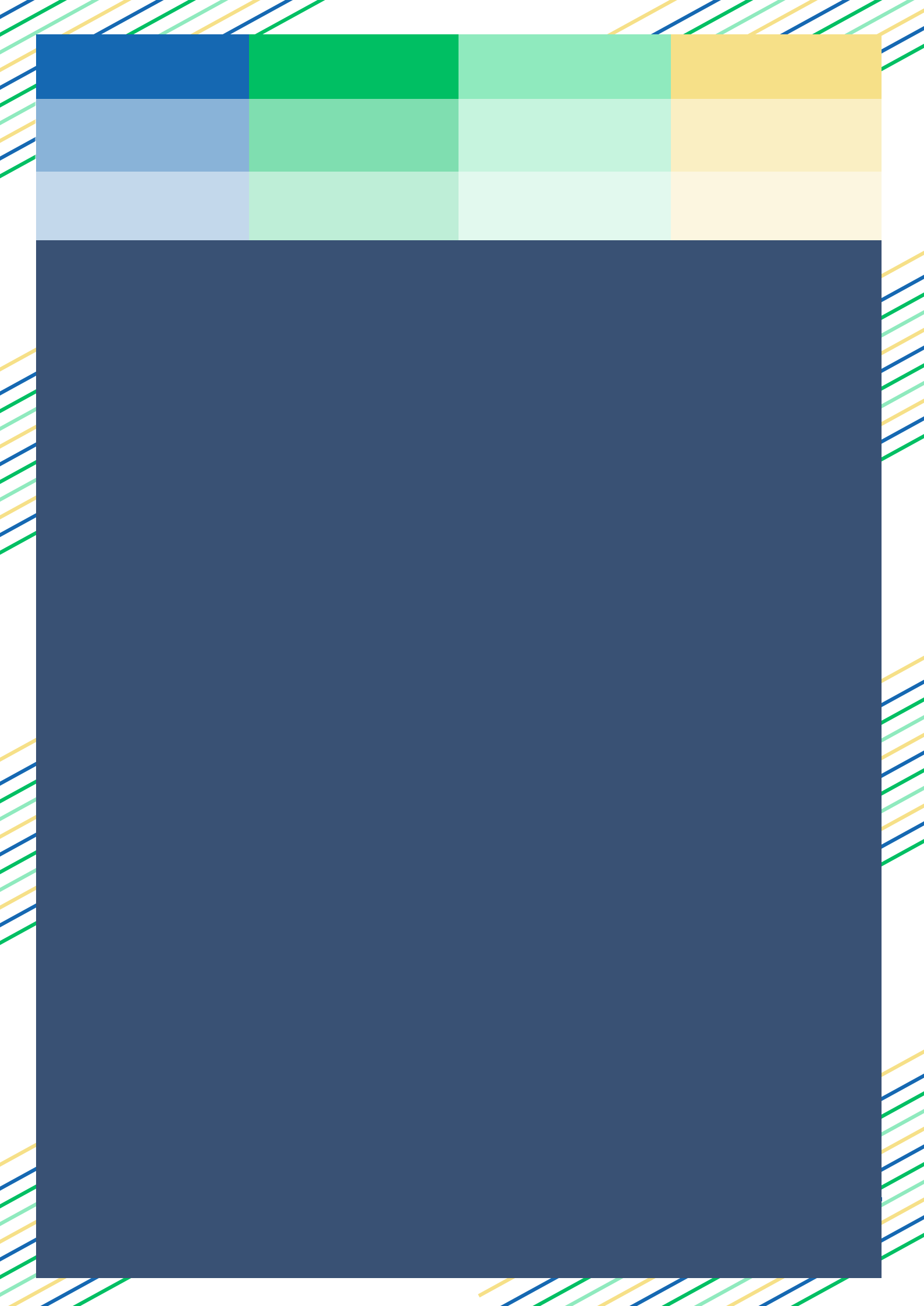
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Dark Blue	Bright Green	Light Green	Yellow
Medium Blue	Medium Green	Very Light Green	Light Yellow
Light Blue	Very Light Green	White	Very Light Yellow

