

Trans Economic Survivability in Jamaica



Research Findings: November 2019

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This research project was made possible by the kind support of the following partners:



Acknowledgments

Ms. Renae Green and the Transwave Ambassadors provided invaluable support in mobilising participants for this survey. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the overall health and well-being of Jamaica's trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary community. A special note of appreciation also goes out to our note-takers Ms. Madeline Green and our transcriptionist Mrs. Reshawna Chamberlain Barrett. And as always we are grateful to our lead researcher Ms. Carla Moore. Finally to our participants: thank you for sharing the truth of your lives with us in full honesty and hope. We appreciate you.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIV	Human Immune-Deficiency Virus
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Trans	Transgender

Executive Summary

The Trans Economic Survivability Research was conducted with the kind funding support of Stonewall and the technical support of TransWave Jamaica.

Research data about Jamaica's trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary community (hereafter referred to under the umbrella term transpersons) is only now emerging. At present the community has one trans-led and trans-focused organisation (TransWave) and is also served by other Non-Government and Civil Society Organisations that offer services.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that transpersons are more likely to live in poverty than their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts and the 2017 876Study shows an HIV prevalence of 51% among 102 transwomen (in comparison to 1.8% in the general population). The high HIV prevalence is thought to be a result of commercial sex work and transactional sexual relationships for survival. This research responds to this evidence and these findings and aims to fill a gap in information about Jamaica's trans community.

This research utilises both a survey as well as focus group discussions with persons in Kingston (urban), Montego Bay (urban and rural mix) and Mandeville (rural). 35 persons completed the survey and 37 persons were engaged in focus group discussions (FGD). Focus group participants also completed the survey. The research period was July to October 2019.

Though the majority of the survey respondents (77%) were from Kingston and St. Andrew and 45.7% identified as women, the research methodology utilised a deliberately intersectional approach that aimed at inclusion of persons of diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, educational attainment, and geographic location. For example an additional focus group was scheduled when it was recognised that there was low survey uptake in rural areas, and a video introduction was added to the survey when it was recognised that some participants may have had issues with the language in the instrument.

The survey aims to understand employment histories and experiences, perceived impact of trans identity on job availability and unemployment, perception of levels of unemployment among trans persons, willingness to shift gender presentation for jobs, differences in experiences between transmasculine and transfeminine persons, preferred places of employment, necessity of financial assistance for survival, sources of support, experiences with hunger, monthly expenses, and employability and barriers to employment un-related to gender identity.

In all instances the rate of unemployment among transpersons was higher than that in the general population which was estimated at 9.54% in 2018. About 51.4% of survey respondents were unemployed at the time and focus group participants were mostly unemployed. Employed people resided almost exclusively in Kingston and St. Andrew and persons who identified as gender -fluid or non-binary (only one of which resided outside of Kingston and St. Andrew) were most likely to be employed. The most commonly reported income in the survey was \$0.00 per month (40%) and the most popular sexual orientation was straight (34.3%).

For those who were earning the most popular salary band in the survey was between JMD \$61,000.00 to JMD \$100,000.00 per month. While persons in focus groups report surviving on between JMD \$12,000 to \$60,000 per month. When asked how much they needed to survive the most popular response was between JMD \$101,000 to JMD \$300,000 per month. Some persons in the focus group indicated they could survive on as little as JMD \$40,000 but it would not be a very good life. Survival was expanded in the survey to mean pay rent, buy food, pay bills, and buy medication. Among focus group participants survival also included the ability to save, pay for education and help others.

Experiences of workplace stigma and discrimination were widespread with about 60% of survey respondents declaring such incidents. Reporting rates, however, were low due to the perception that nothing would be done about the incident and the fact that Jamaica does not have a workplace anti-discrimination policy that contemplates gender identity.

Customer service jobs (especially within the call centre industry) were considered safe because the industry has strict anti-discrimination policies. For survey respondents entrepreneurship (38.2%) and working with an NGO or CSO (29.4%) were the preferred types and places of employment.

71.4% of respondents felt trans and gender non-conforming persons had a harder time getting jobs than cisgender persons and 51.7% felt that their current or past unemployment was linked to their gender identity.

Generally trans masculine persons were thought to have an easier time accessing jobs and surviving, largely because masculinity was privileged above femininity (which impacted their experiences of stigma and discrimination and violence) and that there were more jobs available for men. Persons living in rural areas were perceived as having more difficulty finding jobs than those living in urban areas, in part because the impact of the LGBT movement was felt more strongly in Kingston than elsewhere on the island.

At the time of this research approximately 54.3% of survey respondents were being assisted financially by another person or organisation. Family members, NGOs, CSOs and transactional/commercial sex partners were popular sources of support. Approximately 45.7% of survey respondents had been hungry and unable to find food for at least a day in the past year.

The data collected suggests that trans persons are more likely to live in poverty than cisgender heterosexual persons and cisgender gay and bisexual persons. Transwomen seem to be the most vulnerable. And expansion of Jamaica's LGBT response to include a broader focus outside of Kingston as well as strategic partnership with safe employers, targeted family interventions, education and skill training, and a focus on creating safe schools is suggested to improve the well-being of trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary Jamaicans.

Demographics

Data was collected from 72 trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary persons in Jamaica. 35 persons completed the survey and 37 persons were engaged in focus group discussions (FGD). Some focus group participants also completed the survey.

The majority of the participants were from Kingston and St. Andrew - approximately 77% of survey respondents and 67% of focus group participants.

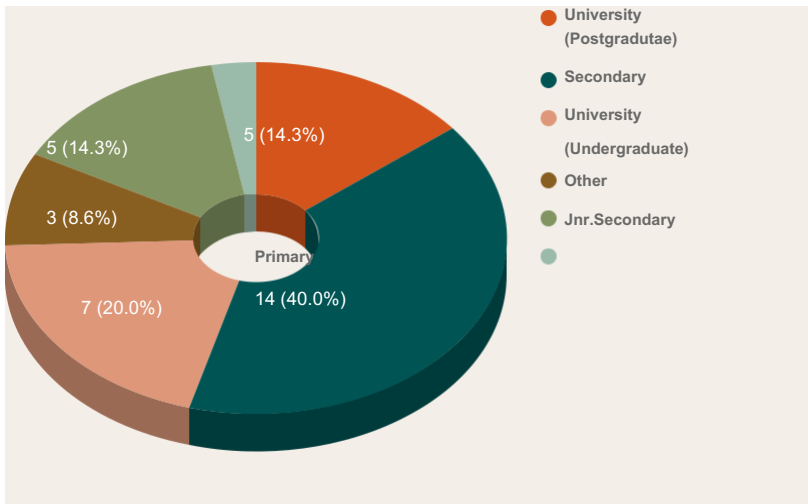


Figure 1: Educational Background of Survey Respondents

Most survey participants - approximately 45.7% - identified as women and the majority of FGD participants identified as women as well.

40% of survey respondents reported that they were from an inner-city area. Nearly half (40%) of participants reported secondary education as their highest attainment. Those who did not complete secondary school primarily reported bullying or fear on their part or the parent's part as the reason for withdrawal.

The most commonly reported income in the survey was \$0.00 per month (40%) and the most popular sexual orientation was straight (34.3%). The majority of persons (57.1%) reported being single and the most popular living situation was living alone (34.3%).

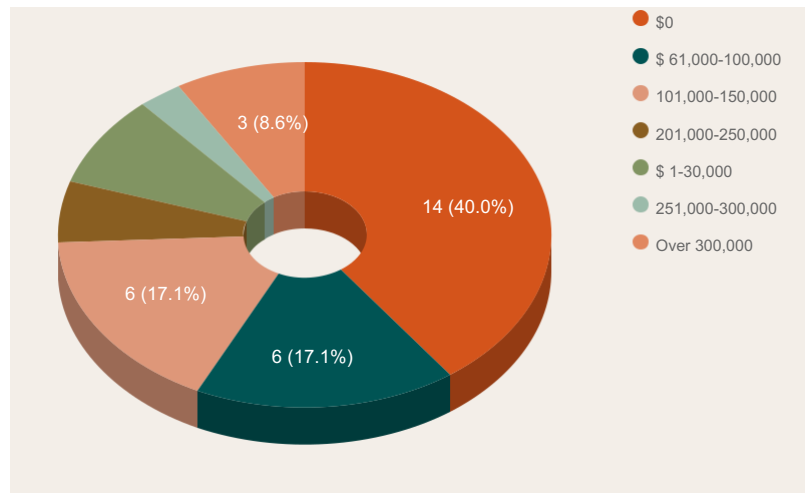


Figure 2: Monthly Income of Survey Respondents

Methodology

This research project utilised an intersectional qualitative and quantitative methodology that privileged the inclusion of trans persons from diverse geographic, income and educational backgrounds. Special emphasis was placed on the inclusion of transpersons from rural areas.

Snow-balling and convenience sampling were used to identify participants, with an original sample provided by TransWave (Jamaica's only trans-advocacy organisation). The research functioned through focus group discussions with trans persons in Kingston (urban), Montego-Bay (rural and urban), and Mandeville (rural) participants, as well as a paper and online survey instrument.

The 17 question focus group discussion guide is included in Appendix 1 and the online survey instrument is included in Appendix 2. The tools assessed employment histories and experiences, perceived impact of trans identity on job availability and unemployment, perception of levels of unemployment among trans persons, willingness to shift gender presentation for jobs, differences in experiences between transmasculine and transfeminine persons, preferred places of employment, necessity of financial assistance for survival, sources of support, experiences with hunger, monthly expenses, and employability and barriers to employment un-related to gender identity.



The survey tool utilised a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions along with scales to capture the information with room for expanding the responses. The survey was administered anonymously and featured an introductory video from the Primary Investigator which encouraged participants to complete the survey, reinforced confidentiality, and offered her support in completing the survey for those who may have challenges with literacy or with the

terminology.

Very few questions were mandatory and participants were allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time.

The FGD was conducted in small group settings with a rapporteur in two instances and with support from a transcriptionist in the other. A non-judgmental space was established before the conversation started and participants were encouraged to share freely. Data from the survey as well as the focus group was consistent. The research period was July - October 2019.

Limitations

Inability to access the online survey form due may have been a limitation to uptake, especially among low income persons who could not afford to put data plane on their cell phones. Attempts were made to circumnavigate this by offering a paper version of the survey, however economic constraints made it difficult to administer questionnaires in person.

The survey's uptake by rural persons was also comparatively low which might reflect the reach of the primary investigator and co-ordination organization in rural communities. Generally LGBT organisations have stronger networks in urban areas which creates a gap for rural dwelling persons.

The language used in the survey was inaccessible for some persons, in particular those who did not have significant exposure to LGBT organisations and the language they employ. In some instance persons had to be guided through the survey by persons they trusted and felt comfortable with.

Research Findings

1. Employment Experiences

Participants were asked to share their experiences seeking employment and in the workforce.

Employment Histories

A small majority of survey respondents (51.4%) were unemployed, while the majority of persons in the focus group reported being unemployed. The unemployment rate in the survey and the focus group were much higher than the levels of unemployment in the general population which is approximately 9.54%.

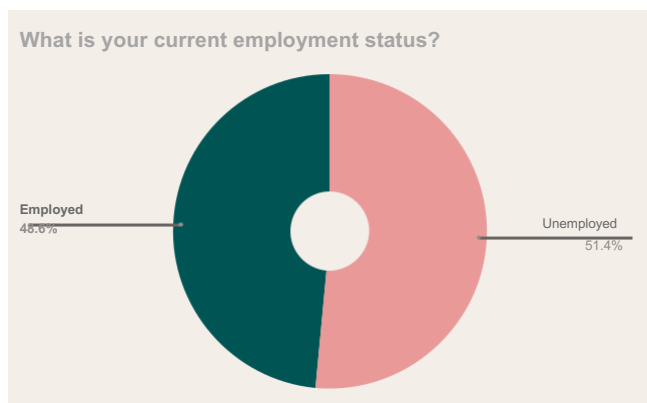


Figure 3. Employment Status of Survey Respondents

The majority of survey respondents (77.1%) reported being formally or informally employed to a person or organisation at some point in their lifetime. The majority of respondents (76.2%) had been unemployed at some point since they started working with most unemployed for a few months or more than year (40% each).

Among survey respondents employed persons seemed to reside almost exclusively in Kingston and St. Andrew with only one employed person residing in St. Catherine -which is a parish adjacent

to Kingston. Of the non-Kingstonian survey respondents only one reported being employed.

Persons living in urban areas were more likely to be employed with only 3 out of 11 respondents reporting unemployment. Persons living in inner city areas were more likely to be unemployed with 10 out of 14 respondents reporting unemployment. Persons in rural areas were as likely to be employed as unemployed according to the survey findings.

The focus group discussions mirrored these findings. In Mandeville unemployment was reported among the majority of participants, in

Montego Bay all persons were unemployed. While in Kingston many participants reported being employed.

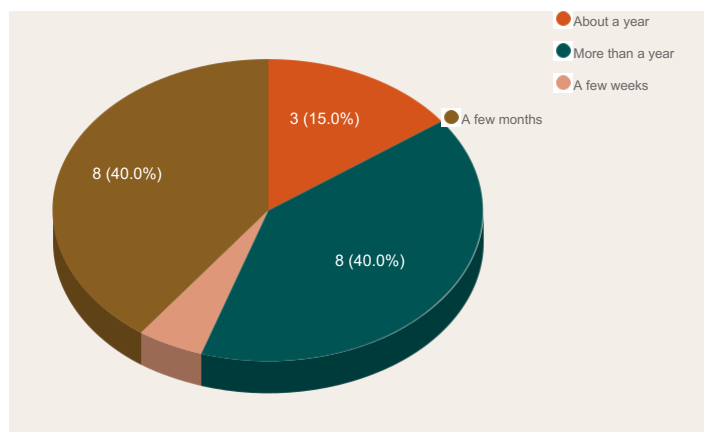


Figure 4: Longest Period of Unemployment Among Survey Respondents

In rural and urban settings, transwomen primarily reported being unemployed while transmen primarily reported being employed: 81% of the transwomen who completed the survey reported being unemployed. While 55% of transmen, 100% of gender-fluid and almost all non-binary respondents reported being employed.

Persons with University education were more likely to be employed, though 33.33% of them still encountered unemployment. For those who had completed secondary school approximately 57% were unemployed. Unemployment was highest among those who had not completed Secondary school or who had completed a Junior High School with an unemployment rate of 66.66%.

The majority (41.7%) of respondents report being unemployed occasionally since they started working. The next most popular responses were sometimes and never at 20.8% each.

Earning Ability

50% of survey respondents felt that when they were employed they made enough to survive. The next most popular answer was barely at 23.1%.

Education level seemed to have no significant bearing on ability to earn enough to survive, as persons from all academic backgrounds reported making enough to survive, barely making enough to survive, and not making enough to survive. However persons living in rural areas were more likely to report barely making enough to survive and not making enough to survive.

Focus group findings mirror the survey with participants split about their ability to earn enough to survive.

Gender Identity Disclosure in the Workplace

For 46.4% of survey respondents all their colleagues knew they were trans. For 25% of respondents nobody knew. It is important to note that some respondents were also

employed to LGBT organisations such as Equality for All (formerly JFLAG) and TransWave Jamaica, which offer accepting workspaces.

Decision making around who to tell in the workplace seemed to be linked to friendship and rank. 63% of those who shared their gender identity in the work place were comfortable telling co-workers on the same level and another 63%

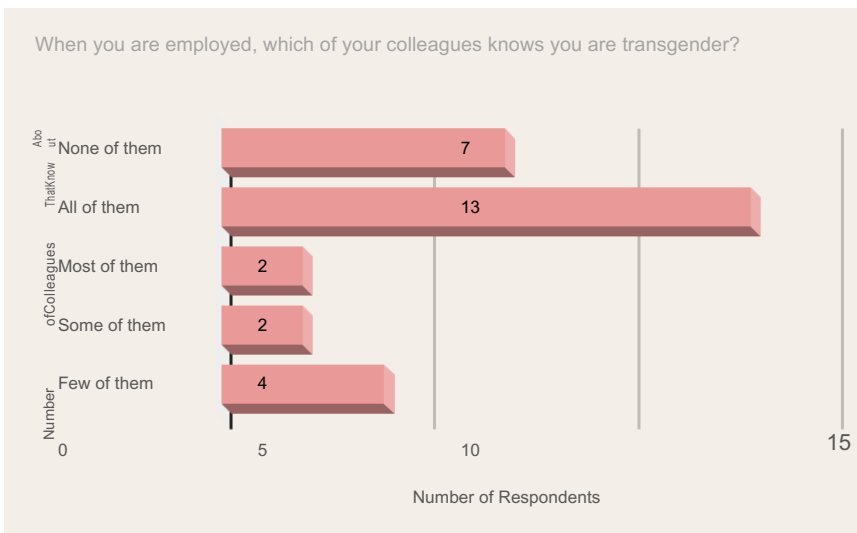


Figure 5: Disclosure of Trans Identity to Work Colleagues

were comfortable telling their workplace friends. Comfort with disclosing to clients and customers was about 40.7%. Managers and superiors were safe for about 44.4% of persons and 25.9% told no one.

Those who disclosed their gender identity in the workplace explained the decision using phrases such as *“I have no need to deny who I am and I’m comfortable in my skin”* and *“I am willing to accept the consequences of living my truth”* along with *“Because Trans representation is important and to bring awareness”*. Another respondent noted that their proximity to the LGBT community made them comfortable in disclosing. Others noted that it was hard for them to hide the fact that they were trans and one transmasculine person thought it was his duty to use his privilege as a man to create social change. Quite a few persons disclosed their trans identity as a means of advocacy.

Those who did not disclose used phrases such as *“It is my personal business and I don’t want it to be used against me, I need my job to get by,”* and indicated that they *“Don’t feel like it’s a needed discourse at work”*. They also said they *“will get hurt on the road”*. One person felt disclosing at work made no significant difference since co-workers did not understand trans identities and would still view them as their sex assigned at birth.

Focus group participants in Mandeville noted that they were more likely to disclose to women co-workers or if they were working in their communities.

Workplace Stigma and Discrimination

60.7% of respondents reported experiencing stigma and discrimination based on being transgender. Negative interactions with colleagues were among popular incidents including co-workers refusing to touch trans persons or socially excluding them. In one instance a transmasculine person was asked to wear ‘proper’ attire by co-workers.

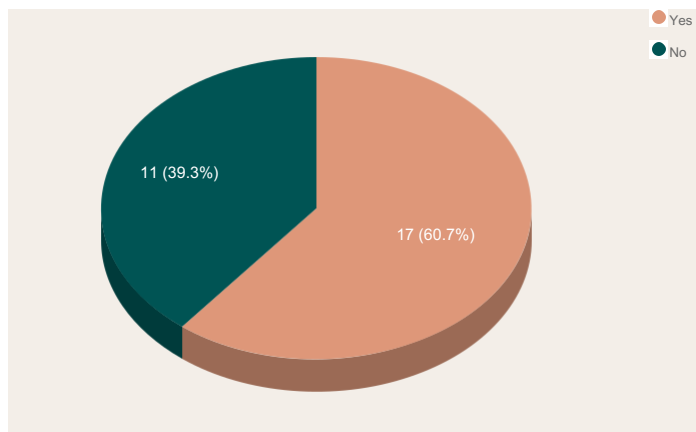


Figure 6: Responses to Have You Experienced Trans Related Stigma and Discrimination in the Workplace

However they boss was not invested in gender norms and was more invested in the quality of work as such they did not support the harassment.

Another story: *“I use to work with my father and uncle in their establishment and I was verbally abused for the way I look and how behaved”*. In another incident *“Manager sent me home because a customer pointed me out and called me by my preferred name”*.

None of the participants in the Mandeville focus group had ever been asked to leave a job because they were trans, but they agreed it had affected their treatment. Those in Montego Bay had never been asked to leave a job either. However most had limited experiences of employment. Respondents in Kingston did not answer that question but a few indicated they interviewed for jobs and suspected they did not get them because of their gender identity.

52.6% of those who had experienced discrimination did not report it. When asked why most indicated that they did not think it would go anywhere or that reporting it would have been too tedious or made them seem like the issue in the workplace. A few felt it was easier to find a new place of work. One person noted that they had made reports before and nothing happened.

Two people indicated that they did report either because their workplace had an anti-discrimination policy or they had a right to freedom of expression and to exist peacefully.

When asked if they had ever been treated badly at a workplace because of their gender identity, focus group participants reported sexual advances and persons using Christian principles as a reason to bash. In another instance co-workers would harass the person by making gun noises. The matter was reported to Human Resources and the co-worker stopped.

2. Working While Trans

Participants were asked to share their experiences trying to get and keep jobs.

Impact of Trans Identity on Job Eligibility

Most survey respondents, 48.6% ,felt that being trans or gender non-conforming had not affected their ability to get a job. 37.1% of persons felt it had.

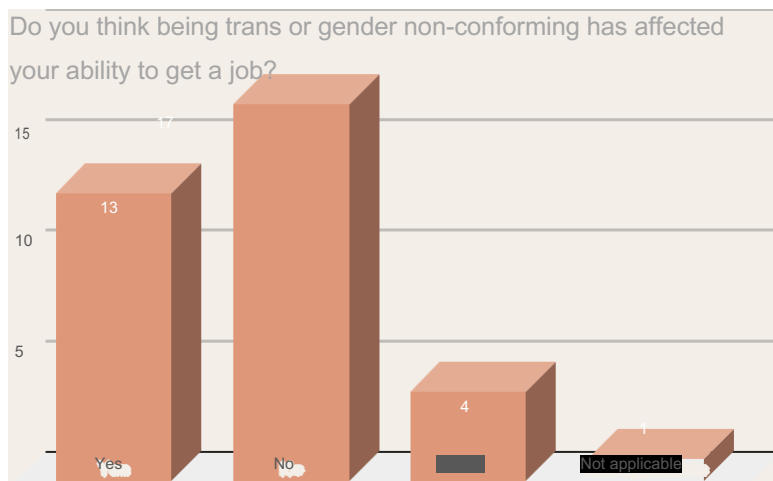


Figure 7: Survey Responses to Whether Being Trans Had Affected Ability to Get a Job

Of those who felt their gender identity had affected their employability there was a general sentiment that some employers did not want to employ trans persons or did not understand trans identities. One persons noted that *“Explaining to others around me and having them shut down the conversation because they refuse to understand it becomes draining.”*

Gender-fluid persons were most likely to feel their identity did not affect their ability to get a job with 80% of respondents

choosing no. Non-binary respondents were also less affected as 60% felt their gender identity did not negatively impact their employability. Gender fluid and non-binary almost exclusively resided in Kingston and St. Andrew (only one resided in St. Catherine) and all had Secondary, University Graduate or University Post-Graduate education. However only 44% of transmen and 37% of transwomen could clearly articulate that their gender identity had not affected their ability to get a job.

71.4% of respondents felt trans and gender non-conforming persons have a harder time getting jobs than cisgender persons and 51.7% felt that their current or past unemployment was linked to their gender identity.

When asked how they knew two (2) persons said they were told and two (2) others assumed so because they perceive Jamaica to generally be a transphobic country. A few noted that they were currently employed specifically because they are trans.

Focus group participants agreed that being trans could affect employment opportunities: because persons did not wish to employ persons of trans experience, because they felt trans persons were less educated or 'creatures', because of trans persons' mannerisms and how they speak. Some persons felt that even if they made it past the interviews, co-workers might create problems.

Types of Jobs Usually Chosen

Trans persons in Jamaica work in a wide range of jobs including:

- Human rights, social justice and advocacy
- Customer service - especially at call centres which are considered safe for the community
- Technology focused jobs including webmaster, graphics, web creation and social media management
- Administrative jobs such as secretaries and personal assistants
- Service jobs such as chefs/cooks
- Banking, engineering, bailiffs (comfortable for trans masculine people)
- Otherwise persons work in jobs that are within their areas of expertise.

Preferred Jobs/Safe Jobs

When focus group members were asked what jobs were considered safe call centres and jobs in the hospitality industry were very popular. Call centres because they have strict

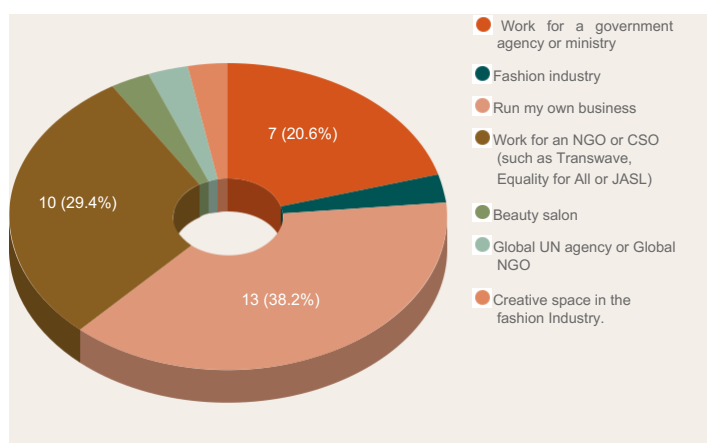


Figure 8: Preferred Places of Employment

anti-discrimination policies and hospitality because they were more open to diverse gender expression among staff. Work as a flight attendant and general customer service, in particular over the phone customer service was also considered safe. It is important to note that stereotypically feminine traits such as patience, nurturing and ability to stick with one task for

a long time, are integral to customer service jobs, especially those in call centres. As such feminine men are considered good for the jobs. Employment at Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) along with the fashion and beauty industry were also considered safe. Some persons felt transpersons could work at the bank if they had a high ranking job or a job that was not on the frontlines. One participant indicated that trans persons were safe in universities.

The most popular survey response to “Where would you prefer to work” was “Run my own business” at 38.2%. The next most attractive space was with an NGO at 29.4% or for a government ministry at 20.6%. Generally entrepreneurship was seen as an attractive option for respondents in focus groups as well as the survey.

Employment Levels within Friend Group

For 34.3% of respondents a few of their trans and gender non-conforming friends were currently unemployed. In 28.6% of the cases most were unemployed and in 5.7% all were unemployed. There was no strong consensus as to whether the unemployment was linked to trans identity with 26.5% of people responding yes as well as unsure. 17.6% of respondents offered a clear no.

When asked why they responded with yes or maybe, two answers were popular: because they had dropped out of high school or might otherwise not be employable, and because Jamaicans do not understand transgender persons.

There was also no consensus on whether how a person dressed affected their employment options. 42.9% and 40% said no and yes respectively. Persons of all gender identities indicated that their style of dress created a challenge in the workplace because it did not conform to social expectations. Of note was the mention of not being cis-passing which increased the complications.

Gender Expression at Job Interviews

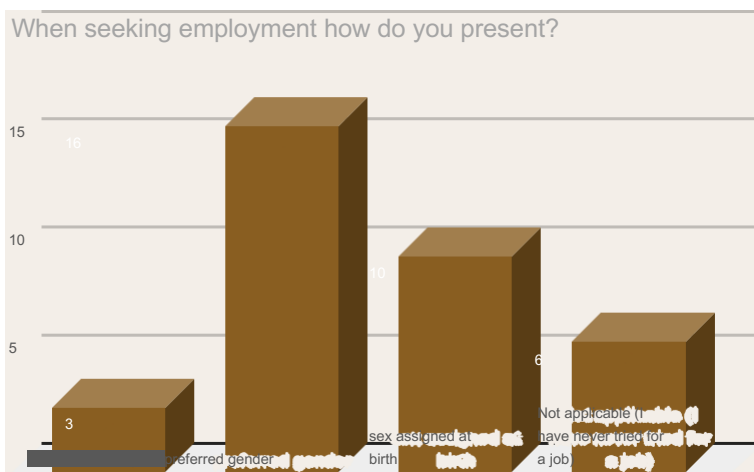


Figure 9: Gender Presentation When Seeking Employment (number of respondents)

45.7% of survey respondents presented as their preferred gender at job interviews while 28.6% presented as the sex assigned at birth. 8.6% decided how they would present based on the job. Focus group participants in Kingston were split almost evenly between showing up as their preferred gender or their sex assigned at birth while a few noted it depended on the type of job.

Among focus group participants in Mandeville they rarely attended job

interviews dressed in line with their gender identity. However in some instances they would 'mix it up' for example wearing traditionally male clothes along with facial make-up and a feminine jacket.

For others it depended on the space. Focus group participants in Montego Bay exclusively wore men's clothing to interviews, one noted that she only wore women's clothing in her house.

Focus group participants in Montego Bay felt that persons who lived in Kingston were more free to move through the world in clothing that matched their gender identity. One person offered:

You can get away with anything in Kingston. In Half Way Tree (a popular hang out spot and bus terminus) you legal. In Kingston we earned the right. We took the stoning and acid. But in Mobay, we haven't. When Bebeh (an area leader, rumoured criminal, and rumoured homosexual) was alive things were better. We had more freedom. Since Bebeh gone, everybody split up.

Willingness to Change Gender Expression to Get A Job

40% of survey respondents were willing to change their gender expression to get a job while another 40% were unwilling. For 17.1% of people it depended on the job.

Differences in Employment Experiences Between Transmen and Transwomen

60% of survey respondents felt transmen/transmasculine people did not face the same challenges in gaining employment as transwomen/transfeminine people. 25.7% felt their challenges were the same.

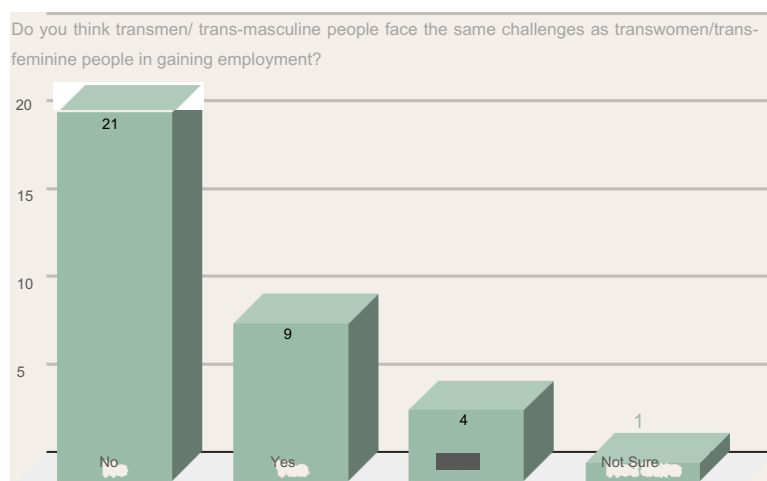


Figure 10: Survey Responses to Whether Transmasculine and Transfeminine Persons Face the Same Challenges in Gaining Employment

When asked to expound on the difference participants indicated that society was more tolerant to transmen for a number of reasons including that transmen helped cis men score women who were out of their league, there are more jobs available for men, society is more 'forgiving' of transmen, and that in general Jamaicans valued masculinity above femininity which played out in the treatment of transmen and masculine women.

Transwomen were perceived as disproportionately experiencing transphobia, attracting more violence and more likely to be hurt or harassed, ciswomen were also perceived as being afraid of transwomen which added to their difficulties.

Focus group participants in Mandeville felt transwomen faced twice the scrutiny as transmen.

Differences in Employment Experiences Between Rural and Urban

Dwelling Trans persons

40% of survey respondents thought trans and gender non-conforming persons living in rural areas faced the same challenges as those living in urban areas. 34.3% felt they did not and 20% were not sure.

When asked why most participants noted that persons in rural communities had more difficulty for a number of reasons: *“rural Jamaica is unforgiving”, “people are more aware in the city”, “urban areas have greater access to employment and greater access to resources like information and greater access to the community”* and *“it is harder for rural area community people to get by or live a full life they are exposed to violence”*.



It is important to note that most LGBT and LGBT ally organisations in Jamaica are

located in Kingston with some efforts to do outreach outside of the capital city. This is not specific to LGBT organisations, government ministries as well as large private businesses tend to localise in Kingston as well. As a result the culture in Kingston is distinct from the rest of the island on multiple levels. One participant noted research fatigue stating that organisations collected information from rural LGBT persons but when funding and resources became available they were mainly located in Kingston.

One person thought persons in rural areas might have it easier since urban people were in the *“spotlight so they care and focus on ways to judge an individual while rural isn’t all that crowded”*.

Economic Survivability

In this section respondents spoke about their living conditions and how well they were surviving.

Sources of Assistance

54.3% of survey respondents were being assisted financially by someone else. 31.4% were not being assisted.

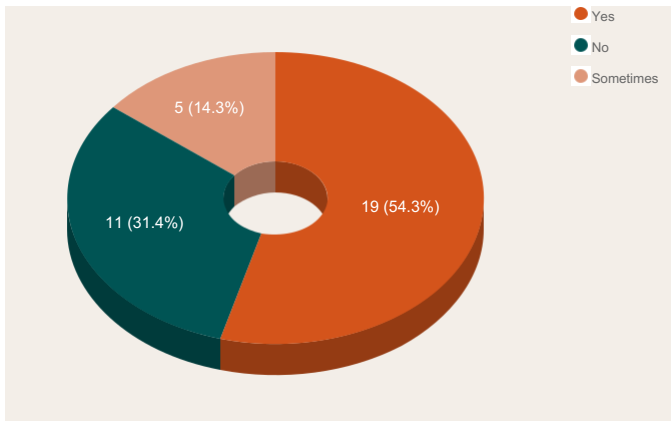


Figure 11: Survey Responses To Whether Someone Else Currently Helps/Assists Financially

Of those being assisted most (40%) received support from a family member while 22.9% received support from a transactional sex partner and another 22.9% from a romantic partner. Friends (20%), NGOs (11.4%) and Mentors (8.6%) were also sources of support.

Focus group discussions mirrored these findings with the addition of 'clients' and 'sugar daddies' which refer to commercial sex work and transactional sex partners as sources of support.

Means of Survival

When asked what they did in order to survive when they were unemployed many persons shared that they engaged in sex work of various sorts including transactional relationships and commercial sex work on the road. Others would acquire food by stealing from the super market or lie to get food through programs at the health centre. Conning people, including family members was also a necessity. Sharing clothes with other trans sisters aided in survival.

Overall reliance on sexual and romantic partners was highest among transwomen.

Experiences of Hunger

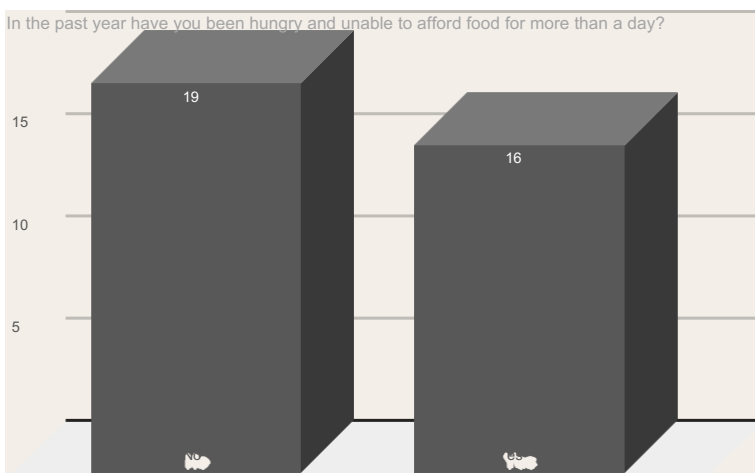


Figure 12: Experiences of Hunger for More Than A Day (Number of Respondents)

In the past year, 45.7% of survey respondents had been hungry and unable to afford food for more than a day. Focus group responses varied. In Montego Bay all participants had experienced such hunger, in Mandeville only one person had that experience. Participants in Mandeville pointed out that they had support from family and friends as well as agricultural resources since they lived in a rural area. This made it easier for them to find food.

No transmen reported experiencing hunger for more than a day without being able to feed themselves. Gender fluid and non-binary persons had

mixed experiences. The majority of transwomen reported experiencing hunger for more than a day and being unable to find food.

54.3% of persons who had been hungry for a day and unable to find food said it happened a few times while 31.3% indicated it happened regularly. For 6.3% of persons it happened very regularly.

4 out of 5 persons who indicated they experienced hunger regularly were transwomen, and the one person who experienced hunger very regularly was a transwoman.

Amount of Money Needed to Survive

Survey respondents were asked how much they needed to survive, which meant pay rent, buy food, pay bills, and buy medication.

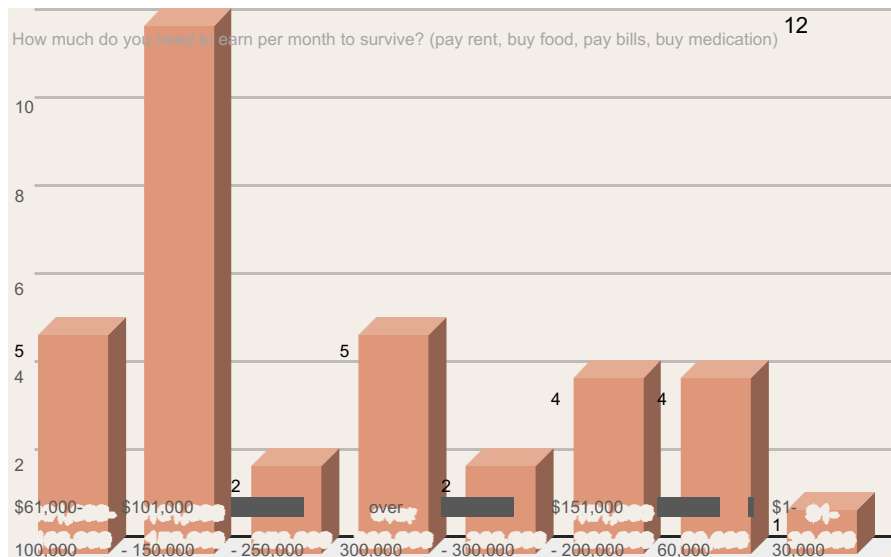


Figure 13: Amount of Money Needed Per Month to Survive (number of respondents)

When asked how much they needed to survive, focus group participants indicated that between JMD40,000.00 to 80,000.00 per month would allow them to survive but not have very good lives.

When asked how much money they needed to survive the most popular survey response was between JMD\$101,000 and JMD150,000 per month. The next most popular response was JMD\$61000 to 100,000.00 followed by a

tie at 11.4% for JMD151000-250,000 and 31,000 to 60,000.

Focus group participants were also asked how much they would like to earn to lead a comfortable life. In Mandeville their responses were between JMD\$100,000 and \$250,000. These salaries were linked to their ideal jobs in hospitality, management, and as a pilot. In Kingston the figures ranged between JMD \$250,000 to JMD350,000.00.

A comfortable life included the ability to save, clear debt, go back to school if necessary, travel, and take care for of family and community.

Survey data shows that most persons earn between \$0 and \$100,000.00 per month which means there is a difference of up to JMD \$150,000.00 between what persons need to survive and what they are able to earn.

Likelihood of Living in Poverty

Focus group participants were asked if trans persons were more likely to live in poverty than lesbian gay and bisexual persons.

Participants in Mandeville we split, they felt a trans person was as likely to live in poverty as they were unlikely. However 'flamboyant' gay men were perceived to be more likely to live in poverty than gay men. Trans persons in Montego Bay said all the trans persons they knew were living in poverty.

Poverty was understood as unemployment, homelessness, unable to afford basic necessities such as food and clothing. Also being unable to move around freely, being unable to bathe and wash clothes, needing to steal, as well as feelings of being unwanted and treated differently

Employability

In this section participants were asked to share about barriers to employability not related to their gender identity. They were also asked about their skillset.

Skillset

Survey respondents were asked what skills or training they had that could allow them to open a business. Responses included customer service training, computing and web design, early childhood and nursing skills, seamstress, project management, political science and law, hair dressing and make up, chef, logistics and administration, along with experience in advocacy.

Quite a few people indicated that they had no skills or they had not passed the necessary subjects in high school to qualify for jobs.

Generally there was a wide skillset, including bachelor and associate degrees among the respondents. There were also many persons with experience in skilled areas.

Other Barriers to Employment

When asked about barriers to employment 8 persons indicated education was a barriers, 9 indicated training was a barrier, and 8 indicated lack of work experience was a barrier.

Education training and work experience were not considered to be barriers to the majority of people who responded to this question with 18, 19, and 20 responding no.

Non-Economic Support for Survival

In this section participants were asked to talk about societal and personal factors that support survivability.

Personal Factors

Focus Group participants were asked to share what personal factors make it easier for a trans person to survive. Supportive friends and family came out strongly in this section. Having access to social media was integral here because it allowed access to community and a means to socialise. A good romantic partner who was able to offer financial support was also a popular response, especially among trans women. Access to technology was mentioned here as well since it allowed persons to interact with potential



partners and clients on dating sites. Being affiliated with an NGO such as TransWave and receiving support from them was another personal factor that supported survival.

In the Mandeville focus group support from authority and political figures was mentioned by one participant. Specifically the councillor for her community as well as her pastor and her principal.

Having the ability to hustle (make money by non-formal employment) also counted as a supportive factor.

Societal Factors

Focus group participants were asked to share what societal factors made it easier for a trans person to survive. Tolerance, decreased homophobia, decreased transphobia and equal treatment of trans folks came out strongly here.

Participants felt other members of society could offer more support, especially by not expecting persons to be gender conforming. One transwoman mentioned that they should be okay if a woman had facial hair and no breasts. Another that people should mind their own business.

The discussion of outreach centres also came up in Mandeville and was supported by all participants.

Primary Investigator's Recommendations

More than 50% of the respondents in this survey are from Kingston and St. Andrew. While the distribution of the general Jamaican population is of such that almost 50% of Jamaicans reside in that area, this still represents a bias in the representation of such persons. The survey did not ask about ability status, and based on feedback some persons had difficulties engaging the survey as a result of their literacy levels. It is significant that the language used in the survey such as gender non-conforming and non-binary, was primarily intelligible to trans persons in Kingston and St. Andrew who had been exposed to the work of LGBT NGO's. Persons engaging the Jamaican space should do so with the understanding that African-disaporic people have a long history of gender and sexual practice that pre-dates gender and sexual identities.

It is recommended that future research efforts account for this and utilise language that is less centred around identity and more around practice. Also there is space for research activities that capture the way Jamaicans as African-Diasporic people understand and live into gender non-conformity, which may be quite different from the model that is widely understood within the larger LGBT movement.

Below are the recommendations based on the survey analysis and feedback from participants

Recommendation 1: Skills Training and Education

Some survey respondents and focus group participants indicated inability to complete school as well as absence of skills that would make them eligible for employment. It is recommended that work towards the liberation of the trans community should include remedial education as well as skills training with a view to employment. Since Call Centres have been identified as safe spaces, customer service training may be of use. Similarly a number of participants express an interest in the fashion and beauty industries so partnership with HEART TRUST NTA and other such institutions that offer skill training in those areas may be advantageous.

Recommendation 2: Strategic Partnership and Strengthening of Safe Employers

Call Centres, the Hospitality Industry, and NGOs were identified as preferred places of work. It is recommended that strategic partnership be developed with these organisations with a view to securing employment for members of the trans community. Jobs in hospitality are useful because they can be secured in sections of the island outside of Kingston and St. Andrew, this fills a secondary gap wherein rural dwelling persons felt less included in the movement and distant from resources and support offered to trans persons living in the nation's capital. Existing LGBT, Trans and HIV focused NGOs and CSOs were considered ideal employers, however they would need funding support to bring more trans persons on staff. Call centres are constantly expanding their reach and will hire people with limited academic qualifications which make them ideal employers for persons who were only able to partially complete school. Funding support to take the

necessary qualifying exams would be necessary for persons to meet the bare minimum requirement for employment.

Recommendation 3: Increased Scope of Activity Outside of Kingston and St. Andrew

Trans persons living outside Kingston and St. Andrew expressed feeling left out of outreach efforts and distant from services. It is recommended that LGBT NGO's and CSOs increase their scope of activity to include a greater and more sustained emphasis on rural and non-urban areas. In particular the allocation of resources to serve these communities in consistent and sustainable ways. Increasing the scope of activities will require some restructuring and also access to increased funding. Persons in Mandeville suggested an Outreach Centre which would represent a central space for building community as well as accessing services.

Recommendation 4: Family-Focused Activities and Interventions

Since many participants and respondents indicate that a supportive family augurs well for economic survivability, and also state that their inability to complete school was linked to withdrawal of family support, it is suggested that existing organisations be strengthened in their capacity to conduct family based interventions. That is NGOs and CSOs that serve the trans community need the capacity, and legal support to negotiate for the safe return of trans youth to their families. According to Jamaica's Child Protection framework failing to send a child to school is considered neglect and can have legal ramifications. Taking legal action may not be the best line of action, but using the legal support as the basis for intervention, conversation and counselling with a view towards re-integration within the family may be useful. Funding that will support increased access to trans-friendly counsellors and to facilitate family support groups and increase in staff at these NGOs is also necessary to support this initiative.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate Development of Support Networks

A supportive network of friends and partners ranked high as working towards the economic survivability of trans persons. This network could stand in for family and even organisations that provide services. It is suggested that NGOs and CSOs that work within the community undertake activities that allows persons to meet each other and create such networks. Events in different sections of the island are suggested. Along with the creation of databases and social media groups.

Recommendation 6: Development of Anti-Discrimination Policy

Tolerant workplaces support economic survivability of trans persons. Currently Jamaica does not have workplace discrimination policy that includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, though some organisations have their own documents. The development of a national workplace policy that protects gender non-

conforming persons would be of use. It is important to note here that Jamaica's Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedom does speak to anti-discrimination but only on the basis of being male or female, not gender or sexual orientation.

Recommendation 7: Create Safer Schools

Inability to complete school was noted as disadvantageous to economic survivability of trans persons. The creation of safer school spaces is therefore integral. One transwoman in Mandeville noted her secondary school principal as a major source of support which means despite barriers, alliances are possible. Jamaican schools do have an anti-bullying policy, but it does not speak to bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, it is suggested that there should be a focus on increased enforcement of this policy or building on this policy to create conversations with administration and teachers around the importance of safe schools. Gender and sexual diversity training, human rights, and anti-discrimination training for teachers and guidance counsellors is also recommended.

Recommendation 8: Sustained Focus on HIV and Condom Negotiation

Survey and focus group data suggests that transactional sexual relationships and sex work are popular means of survival, especially for transwomen. Simultaneously data from the 2018 876Study shows an HIV prevalence of approximately 51% among 102 transwomen. A sustained focus on HIV prevention, especially around condom negotiation within sex work is imperative for interventions that focus on the community.

More generally the issue of gender norms seems to underwrite the issues affecting the trans-community. Transwomen face higher levels of violence and discrimination because of the misconception that they are 'soft' men and also because of normalised misogyny. One a larger level gender resocialisation is necessary within LGBT and non-LGBT communities towards the creation of healthy masculinity and the overall safety of women.

Appendix 1

Transwave In the Margins Research 2019

Focus Group Discussion Guide

- 1) Do you present yourself to the world in your identified gender all the time? If not, in what instances do you present outside of your identified gender?
- 2) Have you ever been employed and if so in what fields and for how long?
- 3) What would you like to do for work and how much would you like to earn per month ?
- 4) When you were employed did you make enough to survive?
- 5) Do you think being transgender affects your economic opportunities
- 6) Have you ever been unemployed and if so for how long?
- 7) Do you present in your identified gender when you go for jobs? what determines whether you do?
- 8) When you do work, do you tell people in your workplace about your gender identity? Who and why or why not?
- 9) Have you ever been asked to leave a job because of your gender identity ?
- 10) Have you ever been treated poorly in a work space because of your gender identity ? When it happened what did you do?
- 11) Do you think transgender people are more likely to live in poverty than cisgender and heterosexual people
- 12) Do you think transgender people are more likely to live in poverty than other LGB people?
- 13) In the past year have you ever been hungry or unable to afford food for more than a day?
- 14) How do you define poverty? Explain the conditions of a person in poverty?
- 15) When you're not employed, who helps you out financially
- 16) What personal factors make it easier for a transgender person to survive?
- 17) What societal factors would make it easier for transgender people to survive



This research project was made possible by the kind support of the following partners:

