

THE COURAGE LAB



*transgender*

TOPLINES FROM

# ***Measuring Public Sentiments and Challenges Faced by Singapore's Transgender and Gender-Diverse Community***

**A study conducted by:**

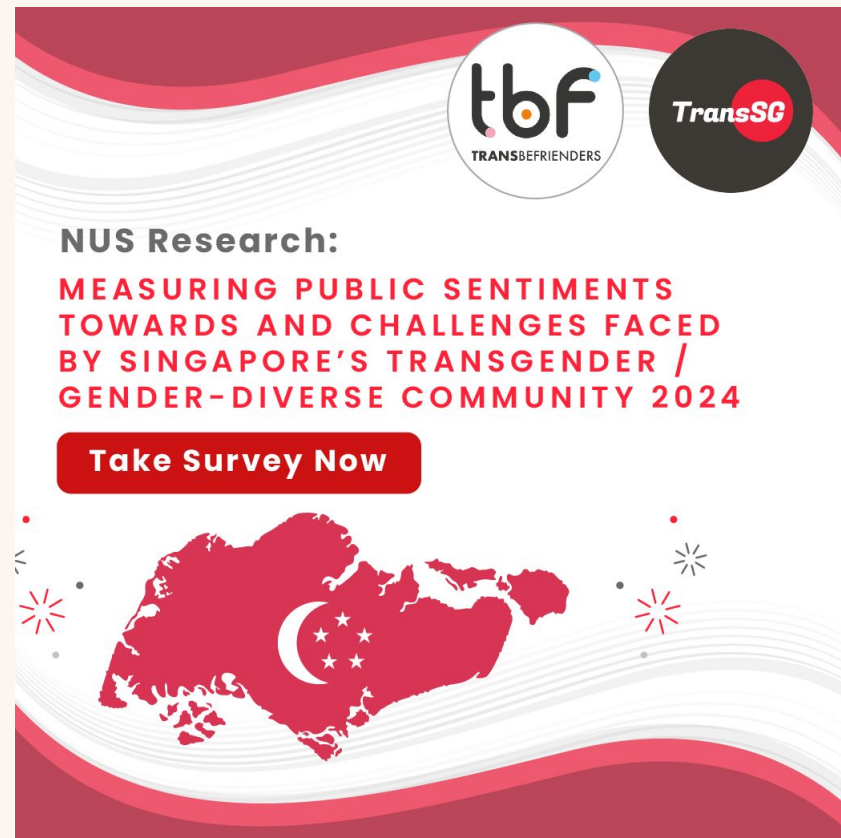
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# Background of study

- This report combined two different studies by these respective investigators:
  - **“Challenges Facing Transgender Community”**: NUS, TBF, TransSG
  - **“Public Sentiments Towards the Transgender Community”**: NUS, TransSG
- **Data collection period**: Mar–Aug 2024
- Survey was disseminated by community groups (both LGBTQ+ and non), through digital marketing and at LGBTQ+ community events.



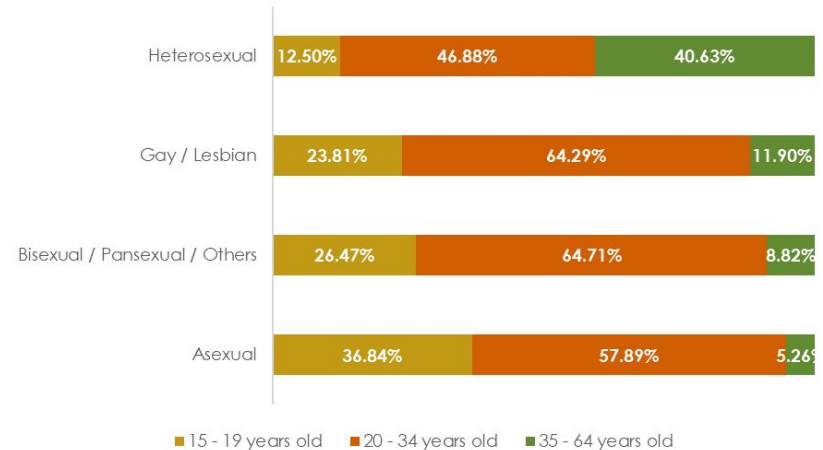
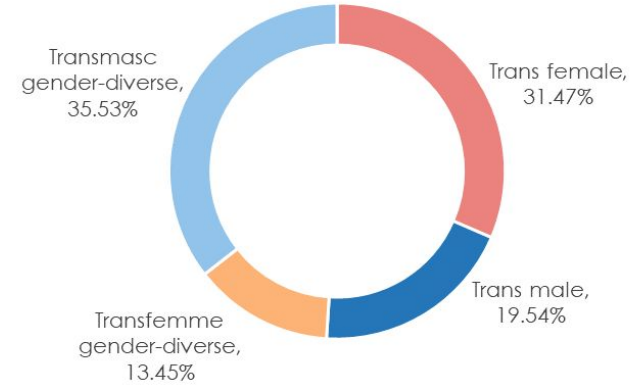
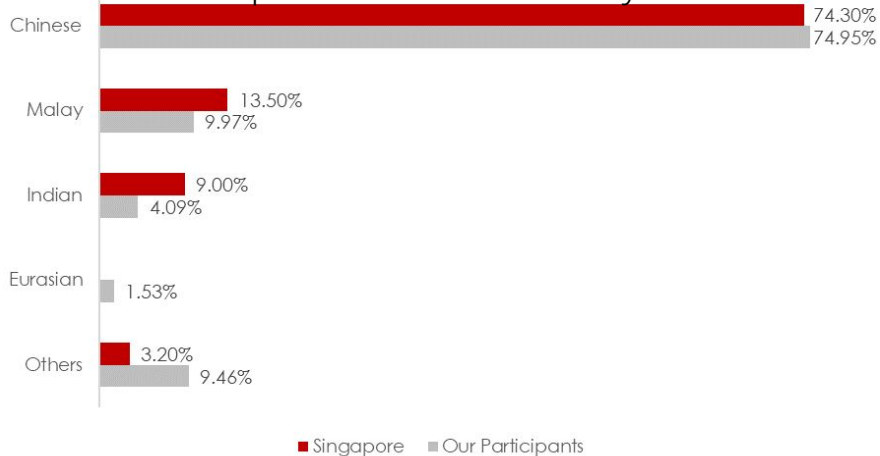
# Terminology

- **Gender identity:** One's internal sense of self as male, female or other
- **Transgender:** Having a gender identity different from that expected for one's assigned sex at birth. This disparity often causes distress known as gender dysphoria, which is resolved through socially transitioning to live as one's gender identity and/or medical interventions such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and gender-affirming surgeries.
- **Cisgender:** Not transgender
- **Trans male/man/boy:** Someone with a male gender identity who was assigned female at birth. An older term would be female-to-male (FtM).
- **Trans female/woman/girl:** Someone with a female gender identity who was assigned male at birth. An older term would be male-to-female (MtF).
- **Binary:** Having a male or female gender identity
- **Non-binary / gender diverse:** Having a gender identity other than male or female.

For the purposes of this report, "trans" includes both binary and non-binary transgender respondents. "Transmasc" will refer to non-binary persons assigned female at birth, and "transfem" to non-binary persons assigned male at birth. Outside of this report, not all non-binary people consider themselves trans, and "transmasc" and "transfem" are sometimes used as umbrella terms that include trans men and women respectively.

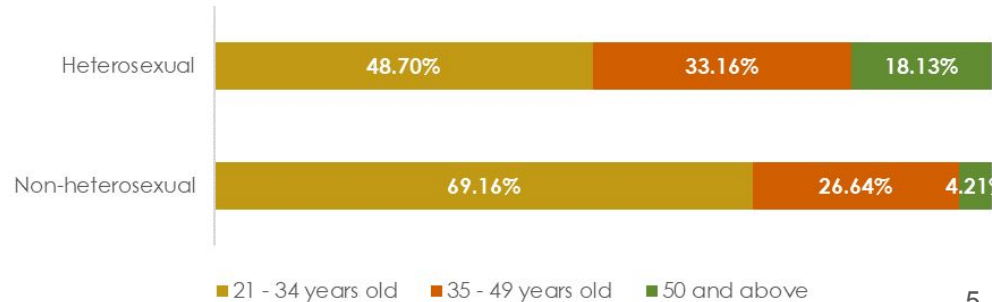
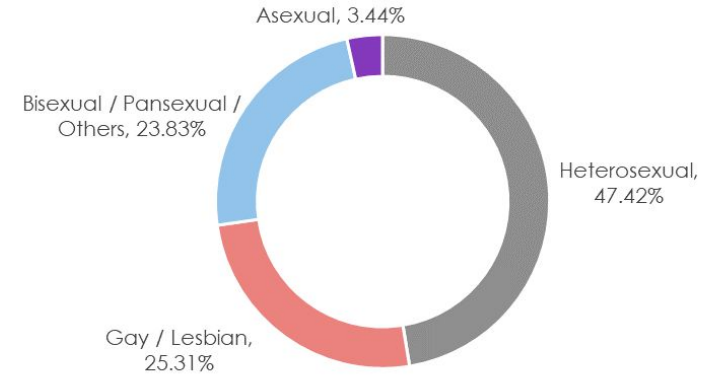
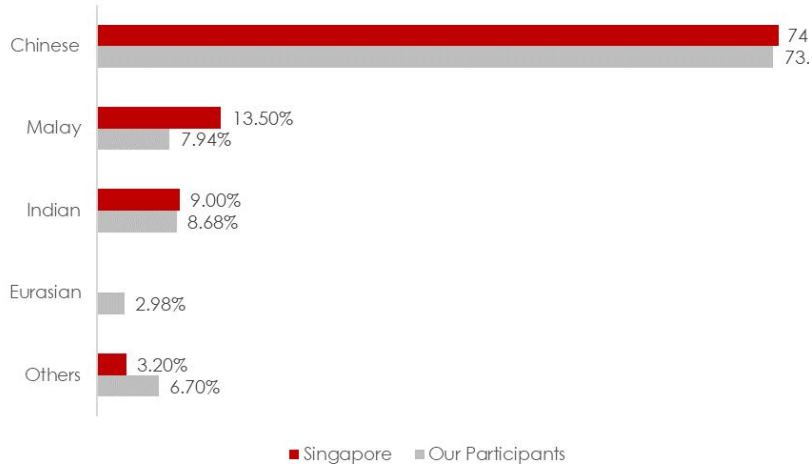
# Demographics: Transgender survey

- **394** respondents
- **31.47%** trans female, **19.54%** trans male
- **35.53%** non-binary trans masc, **13.45%** transfem
- **2** intersex, **11** possibly intersex
- Higher representation of younger residents
- Underrepresentation of Malays and Indians



# Demographics: Cisgender survey

- 407 respondents
- 60.7% female, 39.3% male
- Overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ respondents.
  - Heterosexual and LGBTQ+ responses were separately analysed
- Higher representation of younger residents
- Underrepresentation of Malays



## ***Sections in the Survey***

1. Education
2. Healthcare
3. Gender-Affirming Healthcare
4. Employment
5. Legal Gender Recognition
6. Cisgender Perspectives



# ***1: Education***

# Section 1: Education

- **High incidence of verbal, physical and sexual abuse in educational settings**
  - **55.1%** of trans respondents reported verbal abuse, **14.5%** physical abuse, and **8.9%** sexual abuse while in school
  - **39.4%** were repeatedly and intentionally misgendered
  - Only **28.4%** reported having no negative experiences
- **Lack of protective policies in educational institutions**
  - Only **30.7%** agreed that they have a school staff member for support
  - However, **60.8%** had classmates who respected their pronouns, and **20.6%** had teachers who did so



# Section 1: Education

- **There is a need for awareness in educators**
  - **49.3%** had mixed to completely negative responses with their educators
  - **4.1%** dropped out of school (5 dropped out in secondary school and 9 from tertiary education)

While school dropout rates were low, this may not reflect the true picture in the community as the respondent profile was predominantly English-speaking and trending towards the more well-educated.

# ***Education: Anecdotes***

## **Transitioning in school:**

Transmasc, 22: I cut my hair short and started tried not to wear the female school uniform as often as i could. when i was in poly I kept my short hair and dressed masculine

## **Some were only comfortable enough to begin transitioning when out of school or during university:**

Trans woman, 27: for me it (was) only possible to transition in uni, I was not really living until uni

Some schools also provided unisex toilet access, accepted name and pronoun changes, and made accommodations for gender expression and housing.

## ***2: General Healthcare***

## Section 2: General healthcare

- **Avoidance of healthcare services**
  - **28.8%** avoided seeking general healthcare due to fear of harassment related to their gender identity
  - **Almost half** avoided seeking reproductive and sexual healthcare services due to discomfort over how they would be perceived or treated
    - Trans male respondents (**68.50%**) were more than twice as likely to avoid these services compared to trans female respondents (**32.23%**)
  - **71.6%** have at least one doctor they can consult for their health

## Section 2: General healthcare

- **There is inadequate knowledge of transgender issues amongst healthcare professionals**
  - **31.6%** agreed that their mental health providers were knowledgeable about transgender related issues
  - **40.3%** agreed that their gender-affirming care doctors were well-informed about transgender issues.

## Section 2: General healthcare

- **Respect for trans identities in healthcare can be improved**
  - **47.9%** reported that healthcare providers respected their preferred names, **34.6%** for pronouns
  - **75.5%** agreed that healthcare providers treated them with respect
  - **14.3%** were asked inappropriate questions about their gender identity
- **Trust in healthcare professionals is at parity with general population**
  - **47.9%** trust their general healthcare doctors, similar to figures from an IPSOS global study. Trans respondents perceive a similar quality of general healthcare compared to the general population.
  - However, **95.4%** do not know of any complaint mechanisms they could use in the event of experiencing harassment or discrimination.

# ***3: Gender-Affirming Healthcare***

# Section 3:

## Gender-affirming healthcare

- **Need for gender-affirming services differs in the community**
  - **80.0%** of binary and **27.2%** of non-binary respondents have sought gender-affirming healthcare
  - **98.0%** of binary and **92.7%** of non-binary respondents indicated they experience body and/or social gender dysphoria
  - **66%** of binary trans respondents have an official diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria or Gender Identity Disorder vs. **16.1%** of non-binary respondents
- **There are significant difficulties in accessing gender-affirming healthcare**
  - **59.0%** of respondents faced financial limitations. **30.7%** had difficulties due to age restrictions, **50.2%** due to lack of family support, and **48.2%** due to fear of discrimination.



# Section 3:

## Gender-affirming healthcare

- **Unregulated treatments are a medical concern for those on hormone replacement therapy (HRT)**
  - **57.6%** are receiving HRT from public hospitals, **18.02%** from private doctors
  - **24.4%** are obtaining HRT from alternative sources without any medical supervision
- **The community faces significant affordability issues in getting the healthcare they need**
  - **35.3%** could only afford HRT after cutting down on other expenses
  - **14.1%** have had to stop their HRT in the past due to financial constraints
  - An average of **SGD13,000** was spent on gender-affirming surgeries. This typically did not include the genital surgery required to change one's gender marker.

# ***Gender-affirming healthcare: Anecdotes***

## **Lack of accessible information:**

Trans woman, 24: Transgender healthcare is not publicised and the general population is uneducated about both our struggles and our existence and likely have a skewed perception of us. It would be nice for both healthcare and transgender issues to be more widely talked about and accepted in public.

## **Inappropriate treatment:**

Transmasc, 34: I had an experience of a mental healthcare doctor at (public hospital) dragging gender into a consultation where it was not relevant. I was seeking an assessment for ADHD and he was prompted to ask about my top surgery from accessing my public healthcare records

# ***Anecdotes on Gender-affirming healthcare***

## **Treatment and surgeries are inaccessible:**

Trans man, 36: Too many barriers of entry and red tape, rounds and rounds of referrals and extremely long waiting times. Many of us had to bounce around different doctors until we hit the correct doctor.

## **Lack of sensitivity:**

Transmasc, 27: More sensitivity and training is needed, especially for mental healthcare professionals working with children and/or young adults. My concerns regarding my gender/sexual identity at the time were carelessly brushed off and ignored, with my therapist opting for me to explore the possibility that my "issues" were due to childhood trauma. It was an unpleasant experience that made me resistant to therapy for a while.

# 4: *Employment*

# Section 4: Employment

- **Unemployment is very high in the trans community**
  - Unemployment rate is **12.0%** (n=22), four times higher than the national average of **2.8%**.
    - Likely due to discriminatory hiring practices related to transgender identity.
    - While direct comparisons cannot be made due to the different scales of the survey, the difference is indicative.
- **Trans persons have to hide their identities to prevent repercussions.**
  - **35.3%** do not intend to be out at work.
  - **34.1%** have a supervisor that knows they are transgender.
    - Based on anecdotal accounts, this is to avoid potential negative repercussions to their career.
  - Only **29.9%** of working respondents live their daily life as their gender identity

# Section 4: Employment

- **Trans workers desire inclusive workplaces that support their identities**
  - **97.1%** indicated it was important that their trans identity would not affect their hiring, salary, or career progression
  - **91.4%** indicated it was important that a company has an anti-discrimination policy on the basis of gender identity
  - **80.7%** indicated it was important to have trans-friendly accommodations at work
- **Trans workers face high levels of harassment and discrimination**
  - **65.3%** had negative experiences at work related to their transgender identity
  - **36.0%** had received unwelcome comments and questions on their “lifestyle”, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex life

# ***Job seeking: Anecdotes***

**Trans woman, 29:** Had interviews before where the interviewers looked upset after my disclosure about being trans, the interview ended shortly after the disclosure and I ended up failing the interview. While unable to confirm, it felt like my gender identity could be the reason for the failing of interview given the interviewers' reactions.

**Transmasc, 18:** I have been shamed by recruiters in my gender identity and even after asking them to call me by a name I prefer more in my legal name, they still do not comply even when I do not state I am transgender.

**Trans woman, 43:** I was asked whether I would be presenting myself as a male or female when I was initially transitioning by one of the HR personnel that interviewed me. I told them that I will present myself as myself and was not hired by the company.

**Trans man, 20:** They would ask for my name on the application then proceed to ask for my IC when I physically arrive for my application/interview stage. I was once confronted about lying about my name, in which I apologised for as I did not want to out myself.

# ***5: Legal Gender Recognition***



# Significance

- **Hong Kong, 3 April 2024:** Government announced that it no longer requires transgender people to undergo full sex reassignment surgery in order to change the gender markers on their ID cards.
- **Japan, 10 July 2024:** High court approved a legal gender change for a transgender woman without requiring gender-affirming surgery.
- **Taiwan, 26 Aug 2024:** High court allowed change of ID for a trans woman without gender-affirming surgery.
- **Europe, 4 Oct 2024:** All member states must recognise the gender marker issued by any member states.
- What about Singapore? How much are the current gender marker requirements a barrier to access?

# Toplines from survey

- **There are significant barriers to legal gender recognition**
  - **94.7%** had not managed to change their gender marker
  - The most cited reason (**67.6%**) for binary trans respondents was not meeting the criteria
  - **87.1%** of binary respondents and **59.4%** of non-binary respondents agree that it is important for them to be legally recognised as their gender
  - Only **6.0%** of binary and **22.5%** of non-binary respondents do not wish to change their gender marker
- **94.5%** of binary and **70.0%** of non-binary respondents agreed that having the right gender marker would make them feel safe.

# Issues with current requirements

- **Unaffordability**
  - **38.1%** were unable to afford the required surgeries
- **Medical Risks**
  - **29.5%** feared medical risks and potential complications. This included **40.7%** of binary and **18.8%** non-binary respondents.
- **Lack of alternate gender marker options**
  - Not having their desired option was the top reason for non-binary persons not changing their gender marker (**55.0%**).
  - **56.5%** of non-binary persons desired **a 3rd option** specifically for non-binary persons.
  - **67.3%** of all respondents indicated that they would prefer their NRICs **not to have a gender marker.**

# ***Legal gender recognition: Anecdotes***

## **On reasons for not changing gender marker:**

Transmasc, 19: To me I am able to separate my feelings about my gender and my sex. I feel like changing my gender marker is not necessary as it will only reflect on official documents, and that those who only perceive me based on official documents are not as relevant in my life as compared to my friends and family. Therefore, as long as the people in my life know that I'm non-binary, I'm satisfied.

## **On difficulties in changing gender marker:**

Trans man, 30: The requirements to change the gender marker is archaic and really based on eugenics. Some of us are unable to remove our ovaries for medical reasons and this prevents us from being able to change our gender marker. And gender related surgeries aren't subsidised by the government and not able to claim for insurance hence making it difficult to change our gender markers. It is also out of reach for many to go overseas for bottom surgery hence affecting our ability to change the gender marker.

# ***6: Cisgender Perspectives***

# Cisgender perspectives

*Please note that 75% of respondents personally know a trans person.*

## On Education:

- There is high public support for teaching students about transgender people ( **>85%** on most statements).

## On Healthcare / Gender-Affirming Healthcare:

- **86.0%** agree that trans youths under 18 should be allowed to see therapists or counsellors without parental consent.
- **85.0%** support public hospitals providing gender-affirming healthcare.
- **80.8%** agreed that medical and surgical care should be made affordable and accessible for trans persons to change their gender marker.

## On Employment

- **90.2%** agree that trans people face discrimination in Singapore (eg. employment, housing and daily life).
- **94.1%** would be comfortable working with a transgender colleague.
- **96.0%** agree that companies should **NOT** be allowed to fire an employee or deny them promotion or employment just because that person is transgender.
- **85.9%** agree that Singapore's anti-discrimination laws should include gender identity as a protected characteristic.

## On Legal Gender Recognition

- **68.3%** agree that trans people should be allowed to change their gender markers without going through sterilising procedures.
- **62.9%** support gender marker change if someone has undergone any surgical procedure to look more like their gender.

## **On Legal Gender Recognition (continued)**

- **72.2%** support exceptions to be made for those unable to meet the criteria.
- **77.4%** agreed that it should be easier for trans persons to change their gender marker.
- **74.0%** agreed that the criteria should not require trans persons to undergo surgeries they do not want.

## **Other Issues**

- **86.5%** agreed that trans persons should have the same rights to have a family.
- **88.0%** felt that trans persons who were previously married should be allowed to keep their marriage after one spouse changes their legal sex.