

## PRESS RELEASE

## ***New Study Highlights Systemic Challenges Facing Singapore's Transgender Community, Calls for Comprehensive Support and Understanding***

- *In collaboration with TransgenderSG and Transbefrienders, The Courage Lab at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health of the National University of Singapore reveals the need for the public and policymakers to engage with the marginalised community to foster understanding and uphold the dignity of every individual.*
- *Findings report that transgender graduates are four times more likely to be unemployed as compared to the general unemployment percentage in Singapore.*
- *Almost 50% of the community has avoided seeking reproductive and sexual healthcare services because of reported stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings.*
- *Over 65% reported negative experiences in the workplace related to their transgender status, such as harassment and verbal abuse.*

**Singapore, February 3, 2025** – The Courage Lab at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, in collaboration with TransgenderSG and Transbefrienders, has released results from their latest study, revealing the profound challenges Singapore's transgender community faces. Titled "*Measuring Public Sentiments and Challenges Faced by Singapore's Transgender and Gender-Diverse Community*," the [report](#) sheds light on multiple areas where transgender<sup>1</sup> people are disadvantaged due to social stigma.

Drawing on responses from 394 transgender and 407 cisgender people, this report is the most thorough inquiry to date into the lives of this marginalised group in Singapore. It builds upon other studies of the community, including a 2020 study conducted jointly by TransgenderSG, the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN) and the University of Waikato Transgender Health Research Lab <sup>2</sup>. The results provide a holistic view of community issues, delving deeper into understanding key figures such as how trans men and trans women were 7.2 times more likely to be fired<sup>3</sup>, and how half (51.0%) of 107 trans youth seen at IMH were also diagnosed with a mood disorder<sup>4</sup>. The report details severe impediments faced by transgender residents of Singapore, from high unemployment rates to pervasive discrimination in employment, education and healthcare.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of reporting, the term 'transgender' will be used to cover transgender men and women as well as non-binary people.

<sup>2</sup> TransgenderSG et al, "Challenges faced by the Transgender Community in Singapore", 2020.

<sup>3</sup> NUS and Same But Different, "Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace: The Lived Experiences of Singaporean LGBTQ+ Individuals", Dec 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Goh, "Gender dysphoria in children and adolescents: A retrospective analysis of cases in Singapore", Nov 2024.

### Key Insights from the Study:

- **Employment Discrimination:** Transgender people face significant employment discrimination both during the hiring process and in workplaces. Transgender graduates have an unemployment rate of 11%, almost four times higher than Singapore's overall rate of 3% over the same period. Over 65% reported negative experiences in the workplace related to their transgender status, such as harassment and verbal abuse.
- **Healthcare Access:** Transgender persons often face stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings that deter them from seeking healthcare. Almost half avoided seeking reproductive and sexual healthcare services in particular.
- **Legal Gender Recognition:** 68% of respondents<sup>5</sup> were unable to change the gender markers on their NRICs as they did not meet the criteria of having had their genitalia "completely" changed from that of one sex to the other. Many did not wish to undergo genital surgery for reasons including cost, medical and safety concerns, and personal choice. Most had instead taken other steps (e.g. social transition, hormone replacement therapy, other gender-affirming surgeries) that enabled them to live as and be consistently perceived as their gender.
- **Educational Challenges:** There is a lack of support for transgender students in schools - 72% reported negative experiences associated with their transgender identity at school or university. 55% reported verbal abuse, 15% physical abuse and 9% sexual abuse while schooling.
- **Public Support:** The report found a high level of support for trans-inclusive statements (>85%), such as supporting better ease of access to the change of legal sex marker, allowing change of name on educational transcripts, and protecting transgender persons against discrimination. However, respondents were mostly from the public who knew a trans person (75%). This indicates that further public education will build understanding and support.

"Social stigma and cultural perceptions have gravely impacted the lives of transgender individuals in Singapore," said Dr Rayner Tan, Assoc. Professor of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, at the National University of Singapore. "It is essential for the public and policymakers to engage with this long-marginalised community to foster understanding and uphold the dignity of every trans individual."

"We have observed a widespread lack of understanding and considerable misinformation surrounding transgender individuals and gender dysphoria globally," said Mr. Coen Teo, Director

---

<sup>5</sup> Respondents who are binary transgender persons - those who identify as the opposite gender of their birth sex.

of Transbefrienders. “This report sheds light on the lived experiences and challenges faced by our community. We hope it will foster greater understanding and empathy among the public, inspiring meaningful change to ensure that no Singaporean is left behind.”

“Having mismatched documentation complicates matters for the trans community, regularly exposing them to harassment and discrimination in their daily lives. ” Mr. Rain Khoo, a study co-investigator from TransgenderSG says. “The community is highly concerned that trans identities are being politicised in some countries. We would like to work with government agencies to build understanding based on community-verified facts and lived realities, so that decisions and policies about us are not made without us.”

For more information, please visit <https://transendersg.com/community-challenges-2025/>

#####

Please refer to the [media info pack](#) for more study findings.

**For any media enquiry and information, please contact:**

Dinie Aryal

PR Manager

[dinie@elliottcommunications.com](mailto:dinie@elliottcommunications.com)

88690473

### **About The Organisations**

**The Courage Lab:** The Courage Lab, led by Dr. Rayner Kay Jin Tan, was named after the Ph.D. scholarship (The Courage Fund) that supported his postgraduate training at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore. This ‘dry lab’ is a consolidation of academic and community-based research projects that focus on health equity and the health of vulnerable communities in Singapore. It has a keen focus on issues relating to sexual health and mental well-being, with research projects specifically addressing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention, substance use and dependence, trauma-informed approaches in health, stigma, suicide, community and patient involvement in healthcare, as well as the social determinants of health for communities that face disparities in access to health and healthcare.

**Transbefrienders:** Transbefrienders was founded in 2019 by a group of transgender volunteers who understood the challenges of living with gender dysphoria. They saw the lack of support available for transgender and gender-diverse youths in Singapore and knew they had to take action. As a registered non-profit organisation, they provide comprehensive information and emotional support to help transgender youths navigate their transitioning process. Their team of experienced volunteers has been there before and is dedicated to empowering each individual on their unique path to self-discovery.

THE COURAGE LAB



**TransgenderSG:** TransgenderSG (TransSG) is a grassroots collective which envisions a Singapore where trans and gender-diverse people can live their lives to the fullest, safe, supported and free from discrimination. TransSG is dedicated to pooling together the knowledge and experiences of the community and its allies to enable trans and gender-diverse people to better navigate life in Singapore. They provide resources and advocate for trans people across all life stages and situations, and work to educate the public on issues that impact the community. As part of this work, TransSG promotes dialogue and builds bridges between the transgender community and other parties to build a more supportive and equitable society for all trans and gender-diverse people in Singapore.