**Support for Conversion Therapy in Jamaica**

**Data from the 2016 and 2019 Awareness, Attitude & Perception Survey About Issues Related to LGBT People in Jamaica**

Since 2011, J-FLAG commissioned the national survey to track Jamaicans’ attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons and establish key indicators to measure attitudes and views in this regard. The surveys seek to assess the extent to which Jamaicans, including the general public, employers and politicians assess their own feelings and views of LGBT people and issues. The 2016 and 2019 surveys were conducted by Market Research Survey Ltd (MRSL)[[1]](#footnote-1) while the 2011 and 2012 surveys were conducted by Prof. Ian Boxhill at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.

In 2016, 1003 interviews were conducted with members of the public, including the general populace (n=942), employers (n=27) and politicians (n=33) across all the thirteen parishes of the island between June and July 2015. The margin of error associated with the results from these surveys is + or – 3.3% points at the 95% level of confidence.

**Demographic & Geographic Profile of Respondents (Residents Sample)**

| Sample Group | National (%)[[2]](#footnote-2) | Sample (%) | Sample Size (n) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender:**  Males  Females | 49%  51% | 45.5%  54.5% | 429  513 |
| **Age Group:**  18-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65+ | 15%  22%  21%  13%  19%  10% | 20%  21%  22%  18%  12%  5% | 190  212  204  171  117  48 |
| **Social Class[[3]](#footnote-3):**  Upper Income  Middle Income  Low Income | 14%  28%  58% | 4%  34%  62% | 40  322  580 |
| **Household Income Group:**  Less than $50,000  $50,000-$150,000  $151,000-$250,000  $251,000-$350,000  $351,000-$500,000  $500,000+ | NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA | 33%  33%  11%  3%  2%  1% | 307  311  105  23  15  6 |
| **Education:**  Primary  Secondary  Vocational  Undergraduate/Graduate  Professional Certification  Post Graduate  None/refused | NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA | 14%  40%  16%  26%  1%  3%  <1% | 39  114  21  54  3  9  25 |
| **Parish:**  Kingston & St. Andrew  St. Catherine  St. Thomas  Portland  St. Mary  St. James  Hanover  St. Ann  Westmoreland  St. Elizabeth  Manchester  Trelawny  Clarendon | 25%  19%  4%  3%  4%  7%  3%  7%  5%  6%  7%  3%  9% | 27%  19%  4%  3%  5%  5%  3%  7%  5%  5%  8%  <1%  9% | 254  179  38  30  44  51  27  62  46  51  71  3  86 |

In 2019, 1043 interviews with members of the public as well as 33 interviews among employers in the workplace and 21 politicians between November 12 and December 11, 2018. The survey had a total of 447 males and 596 females. The margin of error associated with the results from these surveys is + or - 3.3% points at the 95% level of confidence.

**Demographic & Geographic Profile of Respondents (Residents Sample)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sample Group | National (%)[[4]](#footnote-4) | Sample (%) | Sample Size (n) |
| **Gender:**  Males  Females | 50%  50% | 43%  57% | 447  596 |
| **Age Group:**  18-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65+ | 19%  17%  13%  12%  9%  9% | 23%  26%  21%  17%  11%  3% | 238  268  216  173  118  30 |
| **Social Class[[5]](#footnote-5):**  Upper Income  Middle Income  Low Income | 14%  28%  58% | 4%  34%  62% | 44  352  647 |
| **Household Income Group:**  Less than 50,000 JMD  51,000 JMD - 100,000 JMD  101,000 JMD - 160,000 JMD  161,000 JMD - 200,000 JMD  Over 200,000 JMD  Refused | NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA | 42%  22%  6%  2%  2%  26% | 436  234  62  23  17  271 |
| **Education:**  Primary  Secondary  Vocational  Undergraduate/Graduate  Professional Certification  Post Graduate  None/refused | NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA  NA | 6%  59%  15%  17%  1%  2%  26% | 65  354  154  181  4  31  8 |
| **Parish:**  Kingston & St. Andrew  St. Catherine  St. Thomas  Portland  St. Mary  St. James  Hanover  St. Ann  Westmoreland  St. Elizabeth  Manchester  Trelawny  Clarendon | 25%  19%  3%  3%  4%  7%  3%  6%  5%  6%  7%  3%  9% | 24%  19%  5%  3%  2%  5%  3%  6%  6%  5%  7%  3%  10% | 255  194  54  35  22  53  31  65  58  55  75  34  112 |

**Thoughts about conversion and the feelings/emotions experienced by homosexuals – 2016**

*Q41-Q43. In your opinion, is it possible for gays and lesbians to be changed or converted to heterosexuals? Why do you say so? Do you believe that LGBT people who are in a relationship experience the same feelings and emotions of love and affection as heterosexuals in a relationship?*

In 2016, The majority share the view that gays and lesbians may be converted to heterosexuals. Politicians were especially more likely to express this view, 64% said so compared to 54% of employers and 59% of the general public. Politicians and employers explained that they feel this way due to Biblical reasons as well as the fact that it is their view that homosexual desires are born out of social factors which may be adjusted. Members of the general public on the other hand typically had no special reason for saying so but were convinced that they could change. A significant 23% of them also expressed the view that change is possible because of Biblical reasons.

With regards to views on the feeling and emotions experienced by homosexuals, most employers and politicians agree that homosexuals experience the same feelings and emotions as heterosexuals while just less than 50% of the general public shared this view.

**Drivers of opinions about conversion – “YES THEY CAN BE CONVERTED”**

|  | **General Public**  **n=560** | **Employers/Politicians\***  **n=36** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| They were not born that way | 13% | 20% |
| Biblical reasons/God can | 23% | 22% |
| They can be helped professionally/ medically | 17% | 3% |
| It’s a state of mind/based on socialisation | 11% | 57% |
| No special reason, they can just change | 43% | - |
| It has happened before | - | 6% |

\*Note: The number of respondents in each sub group is too small to allow trending/analysis by sub-group.

**Thoughts about conversion and the feelings/emotions experienced by LGBT People – 2019**

*Q41-Q43. In your opinion, is it possible for gays and lesbians to be changed or converted to heterosexuals? Why do you say so? Do you believe that LGBT people who are in a relationship experience the same feelings and emotions of love and affection as heterosexuals in a relationship?*

In 2019, there is a strong body of opinion across all the groups that gays and lesbians can be converted to be heterosexual. This is generally consistent with the indications from the 2015 survey. This view is particularly held by politicians where 71% feel strongly that such conversion is possible. 50% of the general public and 49% of the employers also shared this view on the possibility of conversion to heterosexuality.

The primary reason why persons were convinced this change could take place is a religious perspective. 27% say that this view stems from their belief in God and the conviction that God can alter any situation. This is consistent with the previous survey.

18% however feel that homosexuality is a learnt behaviour and as such can be “unlearnt”, depending on how much the individual wants to make this transition.

Other clear views as to why change was possible were presented by 16% who indicated that nothing is impossible, and this includes the ability of persons to reflect and retreat from homosexuality.

12% are convinced that persons are not born as LGBT and hence this change can be effected.

At the same time, the sample was generally convinced that homosexuals experience the same kinds of emotions as heterosexuals.

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**Drivers of opinions about conversion – “YES THEY CAN BE CONVERTED”**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **General Public**  **n=1043** | **Employers**  **n=33** | **Politicians**  **n =21** |
| Once you get past the point of being curious | 5% | 6% | - |
| It’s a psychological situation that needs medical attention | 13% | 6% | 7% |
| If they truly want to they can | 18% | 13% | 13% |
| I believe people can change | 23% | 6% | 53% |
| Religion can play a great part in their lives | 27% | 6% | 13% |
| If you are attracted/love someone you can change | 2% | 13% | 7% |
| They are going through a phase | 3% | 19% | - |
| They have a mind of their own | 2% | 19% | - |
| They were never born that way | 12% | 13% | - |

\*Note: The number of respondents in each sub-group is too small to allow trending/analysis by sub-group.

1. Market Research Services Ltd., (MRSL) is a full-service marketing research organisation that was founded in 1975 and offers a comprehensive range of information gathering and analysis capabilities. *See* [*http://mrslja.com/*](http://mrslja.com/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: Demographic Statistics, Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2013 publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Source: Market Research Services Ltd. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Source: Demographic Statistics, Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2013 publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Source: Market Research Services Ltd. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)