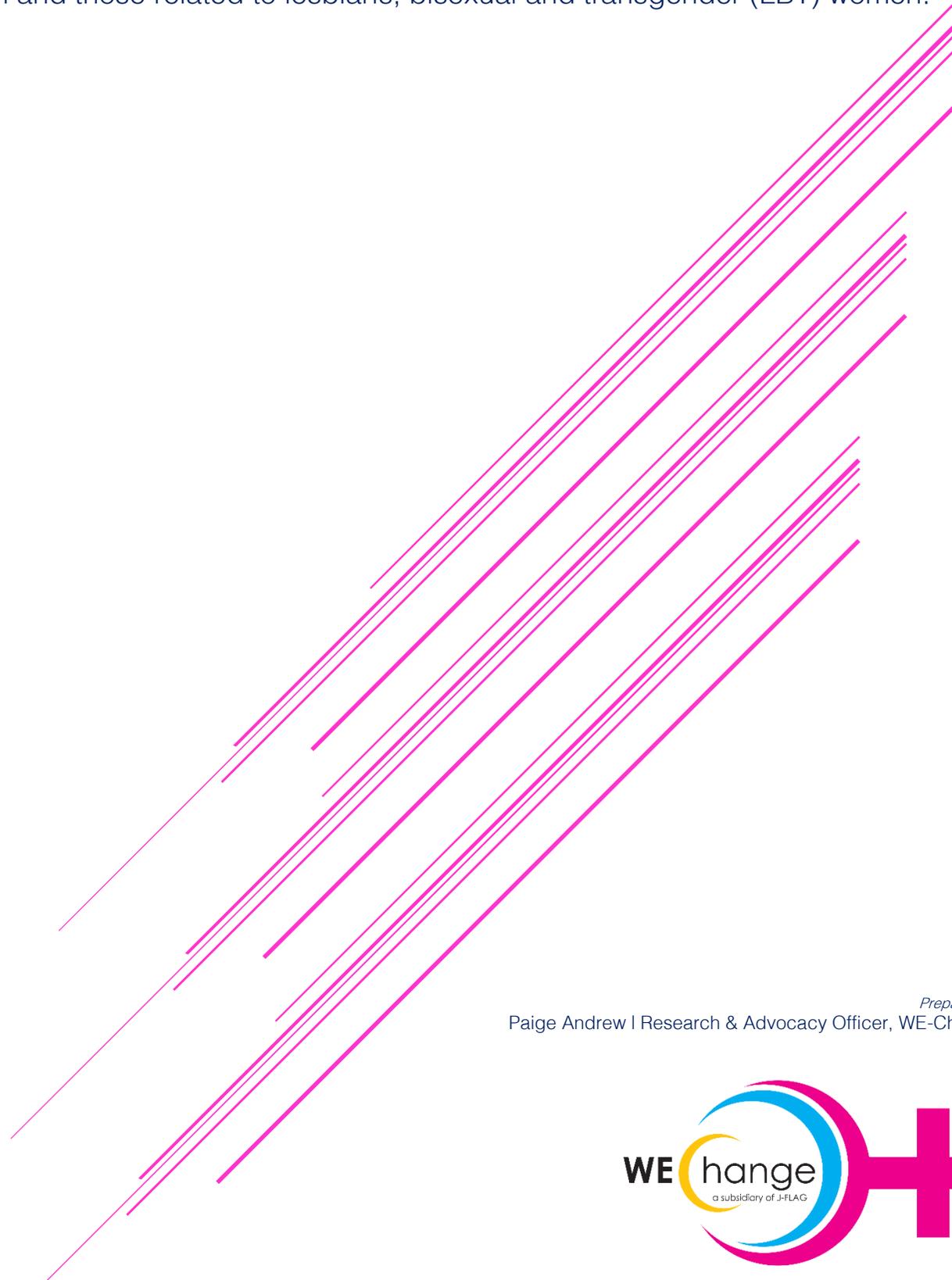


MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS REPORT ON JAMAICAN LBT WOMEN

An investigation into the disparity that exists between media coverage of issues related to gay men and those related to lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women.



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ABOUT US

Women's Empowerment for Change (WE-Change) is a rights-based, women-led, community-based advocacy group committed to increasing the participation of lesbians, bisexual and transgender [LBT] women in social justice advocacy in Jamaica and the Caribbean. WE-Change was founded by twenty LBT women out of a need to strengthen the women's movement within the LGBT community given LGBT advocacy spaces in Jamaica have been largely controlled by, and focused on men, which has inadvertently marginalised and invisibilised women. In May 2015, the organisation was officially launched in Kingston, Jamaica.

Our Vision

WE-Change envisions a society where the rights of every person are recognised, respected, and protected, and where duty bearers and caregivers commit to creating an enabling environment for every person to contribute to the sustainable development of Jamaica.

Our Mission

WE-Change is committed to

- increasing the participation of LBT women in local and regional social justice advocacy;
- creating alternative and safe spaces for LBT women;
- reducing homophobia and transphobia among duty bearers and caregivers.

WE believe that empowered women transform communities, and are guided by one of the tenets of the 1995 Beijing Declaration, that:

'Women's participation in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process, and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace.'

Executive Members:

- Associate Director - Latoya Nugent, MSc., PGDip, BA.
- Research & Advocacy Officer - Paige Andrew, BA.
- Community Mobilisation & Outreach Officer - Nicolette Bryan, BSc.
- Monitoring & Evaluation Officer - Rochelle McFee, MSc., BSc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WE wish to thank Gillian Mason for her guidance and support, which were critical to the completion of this study.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates whether a disparity exists between media coverage of issues related to gay men and those related to lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women. Over a four-month period between May 2015 and August 2015 Women's Empowerment for Change (WE-Change) undertook a media content analysis of the two most trusted and widely read electronic versions of print media in Jamaica. It was found that a considerably wide disparity exists between media coverage of LBT women and gay men. Matters specifically concerning LBT women were rarely discussed over the period, while those related specifically to gay men populated the media in significantly more numbers. WE believe that this research and its findings can be useful for organisations that work with, and for LBT women, and for raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by this invisibilised and vulnerabilised community. More information in traditional and new media can assist with the education of Jamaicans on issues pertaining to LBT women and this has the potential to change the attitudes of many Jamaicans towards the LBT community and the attitudes members of the community have toward self.

INTRODUCTION

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement in the Caribbean has always been dominated by gay men. Unfortunately, the issues which are brought to the forefront by activists and covered by traditional and new media tend to make lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women invisible. Issues such as sexual violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights and intimate partner violence (IPV) in LBT relationships are rarely discussed. This lack of information on LBT issues has an impact on both the attitude many have towards LBT women and the attitude LBT women have toward self.

The formation of Caribbean women-led groups for LBT women such as WOMANTRA (Trinidad), United and Strong (St. Lucia), Women's Way Foundation (Suriname) and Quality of Citizenship (Jamaica) have ensured that issues relating to LBT women have become part of the discourse in the region, and have made information about issues affecting LBT women more easily accessible. However, it is important to note that the LGBT movement is still heavily focused on issues concerning gay men and by doing so, inadvertently silences LBT women. Given the role of media in society, it is plausible that inadequate coverage of LBT women's issues in media may correlate with the invisibility of LBT women's issues in the LGBT community and wider society.

Many persons rely on media as the primary source of information in any country, therefore, if the LBT community is rarely topical, it will have an impact on the knowledge level of the general population about the community, and even the knowledge level the community has of self. This is in keeping with the Agenda Setting Theory that

The power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues is an immense and well-documented influence. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the news media, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

We share the view of Agenda Setting theorists that media entities influence what we think about and how we think about it; this, we believe is also true about the media's role in how Caribbean people perceive the LGBT community. If media do in fact pay more attention to issues relating to gay men when compared to those that affect LBT women, this will have an impact on the discourse surrounding LBT

women, the information available for LBT women and affect the general attitude towards LBT women in the region.

This study seeks to investigate the extent of media coverage for LBT women's issues and whether a disparity in fact exists between the media's coverage of gay men and LBT women. The study also delves into how the media present different groups, the general nature and tone of the articles written, and the stories covered. Over the four-month period May to August 2015 we surveyed the Jamaican electronic version of the print media, and investigated media coverage of issues relating to Jamaican LBT women and gay men. We believe this study can potentially give organisations that work predominantly with, and for LBT women, scientific evidence to support anecdotal claims that there is a lack of adequate coverage for LBT women's issues in Jamaican media, and where LGBT issues are covered they more often than not focus on gay men. The study will quantify the disparity in coverage of gay men and LBT women, given the media entities were monitored on a daily basis over the four-month period. It is expected that these findings will encourage organisations to increase their media output about issues that (uniquely) affect LBT women, which are largely ignored or addressed in traditional media spaces, and find innovative and effective ways of sharing information about the LBT women's community.

METHODOLOGY

From May 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015 the electronic versions of the Jamaica Observer and Jamaica Gleaner were monitored daily for articles specifically about LBT women, gay men and issues relating collectively to the LGBT community. These two (online) newspapers were chosen because of the wide reach they have individually and collectively across the island, within the Caribbean region, and among the Jamaican Diaspora. Both the Observer and Gleaner have wide readership. In fact, the Gleaner's website is the most visited local newspaper website in Jamaica (The Gleaner Company Annual Report, 2010) and the Observer enjoys a high readership of its print newspaper, and is regarded by 43% of the population as not only the primary source of news, but the most credible source (Readership Survey, 2008).

A total of 103 articles were monitored and analysed over the four-month period for their content and tone. Notice was also made of the section of the paper which the majority of the articles were found, as well as the nature of the coverage - whether it dealt with the legislative framework, sociocultural, or psychosocial issues. Articles that spoke about general issues concerning the entire LGBT community such as same-sex marriage, homophobia and human rights were labelled as 'articles where entire community is mentioned'. Articles that focussed on issues concerning LBT women such as rights for transgender women, or spoke directly about LBT women, were labelled as 'articles where LBT issues are mentioned'; articles that focussed on issues concerning gay men or spoke directly about gay men such as the rights of gay men or the rate of HIV and AIDS among gay and bisexual men were labelled as 'articles where gay men's issues are mentioned'.

In cases where articles did not fall neatly into the thematic frames established, the researcher placed them under the theme that would have some relationship with those variables. Such articles were explored in the discussion of findings as they amplify the ways in which overgeneralizations invisibilised and silenced other issues and voices, particularly the voices and issues of LBT women.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

While the majority of the content was about the entire LGBT community, it is important to note that content about gay men appeared much more regularly than content about LBT women. And as will be shown in the discussion of findings, many of the articles that dealt with the LGBT community as a whole, magnified gay men's issues in a way that suggested that such issues were representative of the entire community.

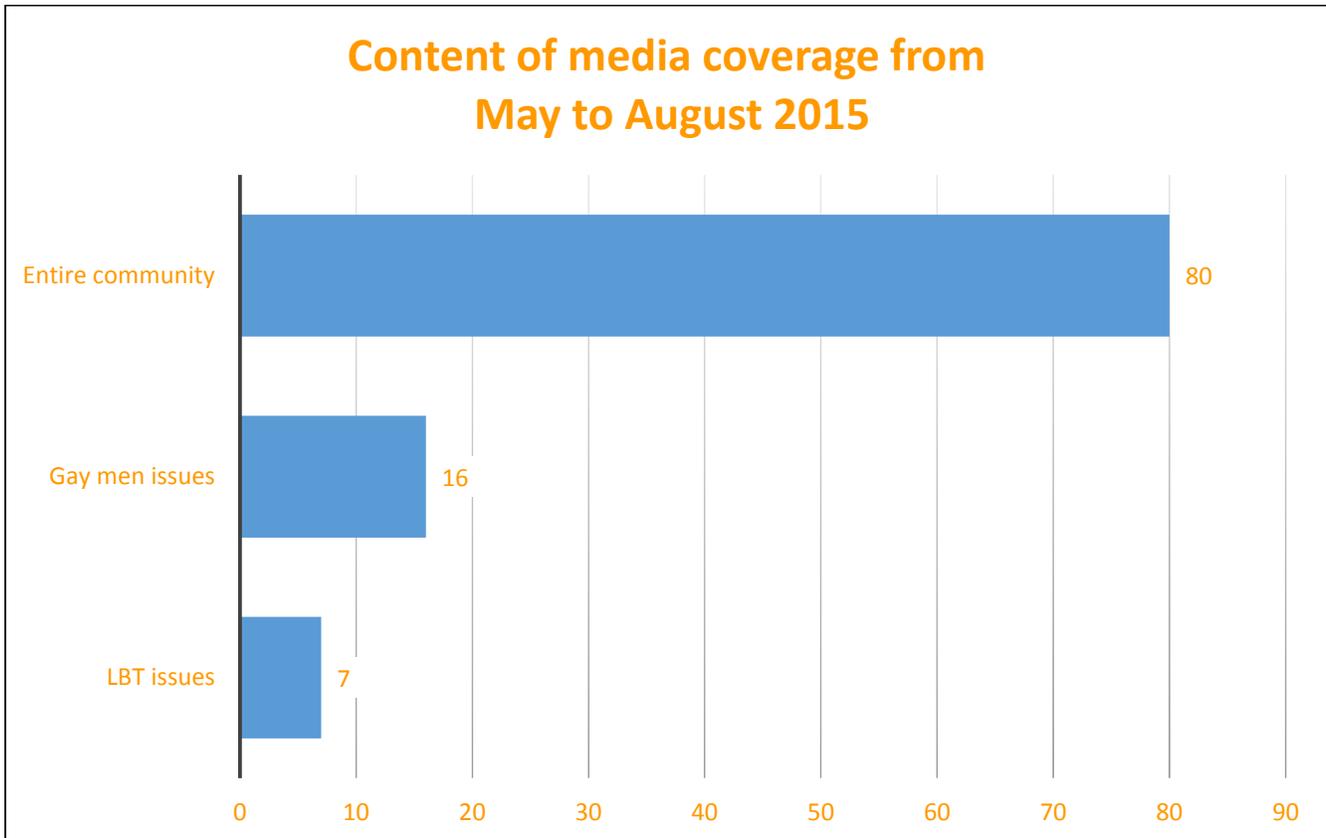


Figure 1. Content of media coverage May to August 2015

The percentage of articles which *specifically* covered issues facing gay men was noticeably greater (70%) than articles that *specifically* related to LBT women (30%).

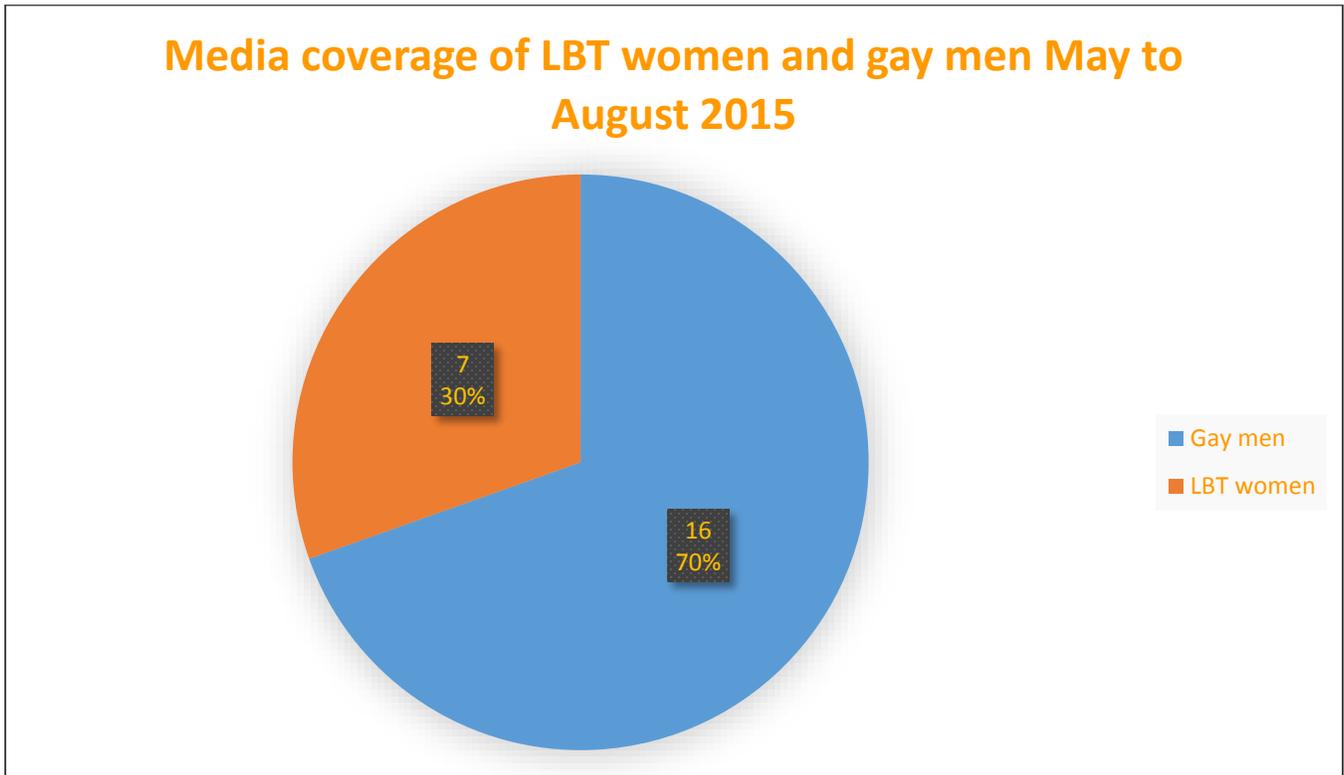


Figure 2. Media coverage of LBT women and gay men May to August 2015

Articles *specifically* about gay men made up 16% of **all** articles found relating to the LGBT community from May to August 2015.

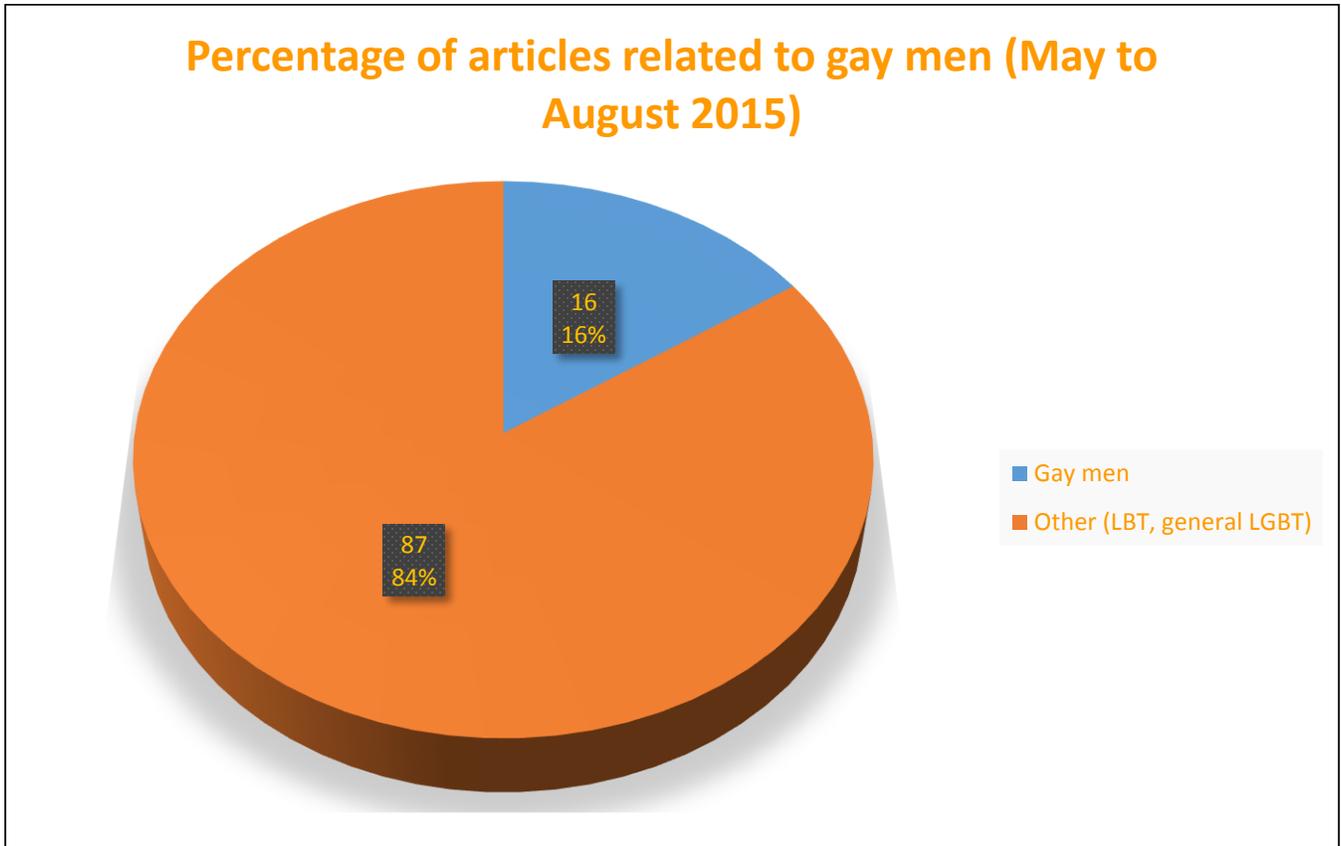


Figure 3. Percentage of articles published related to gay men from May to August 2015

Articles dealing with LBT women made up 7% of **all** articles found relating to the LGBT community from May to August 2015.

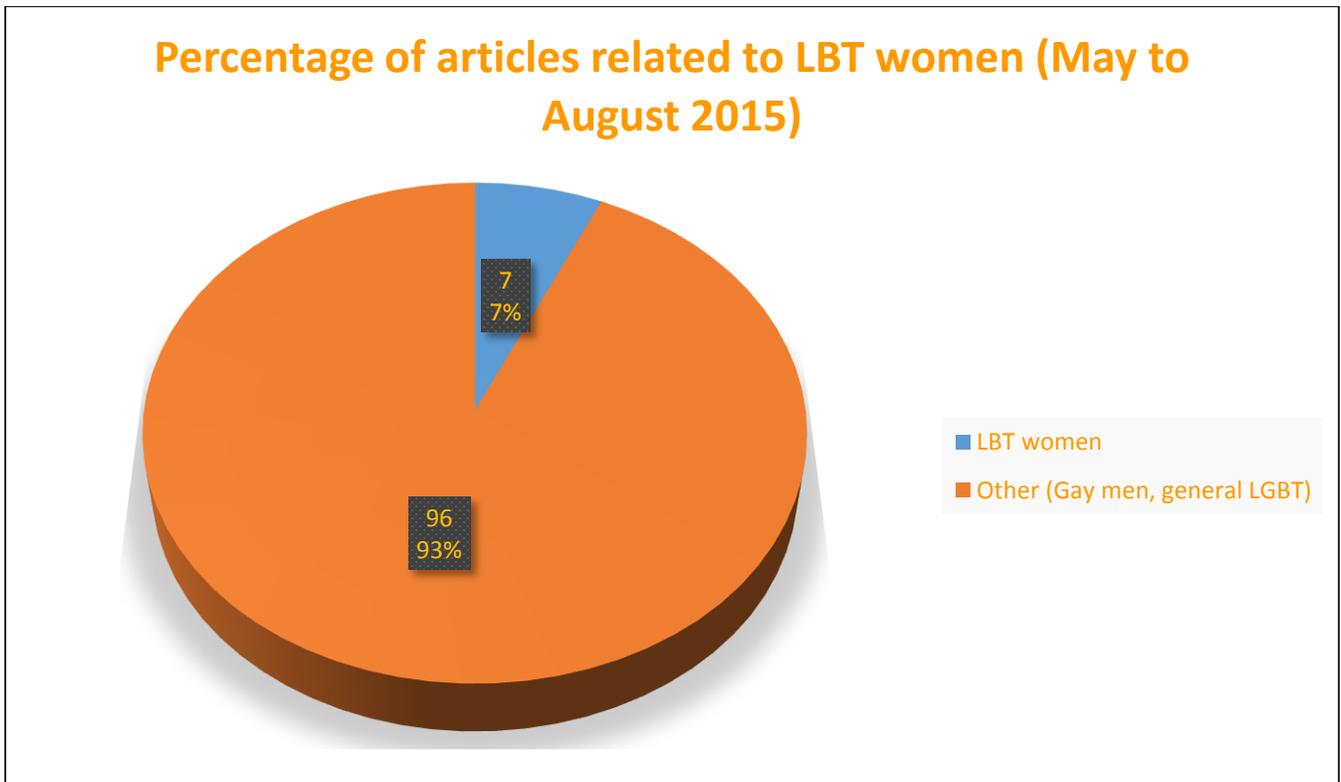


Figure 4. Percentage of articles related to LBT women from May to August 2015

The majority of articles related to the LGBT community were published in the Editorial/Commentary section of each newspaper, with the News section also seeing a considerable number of articles.

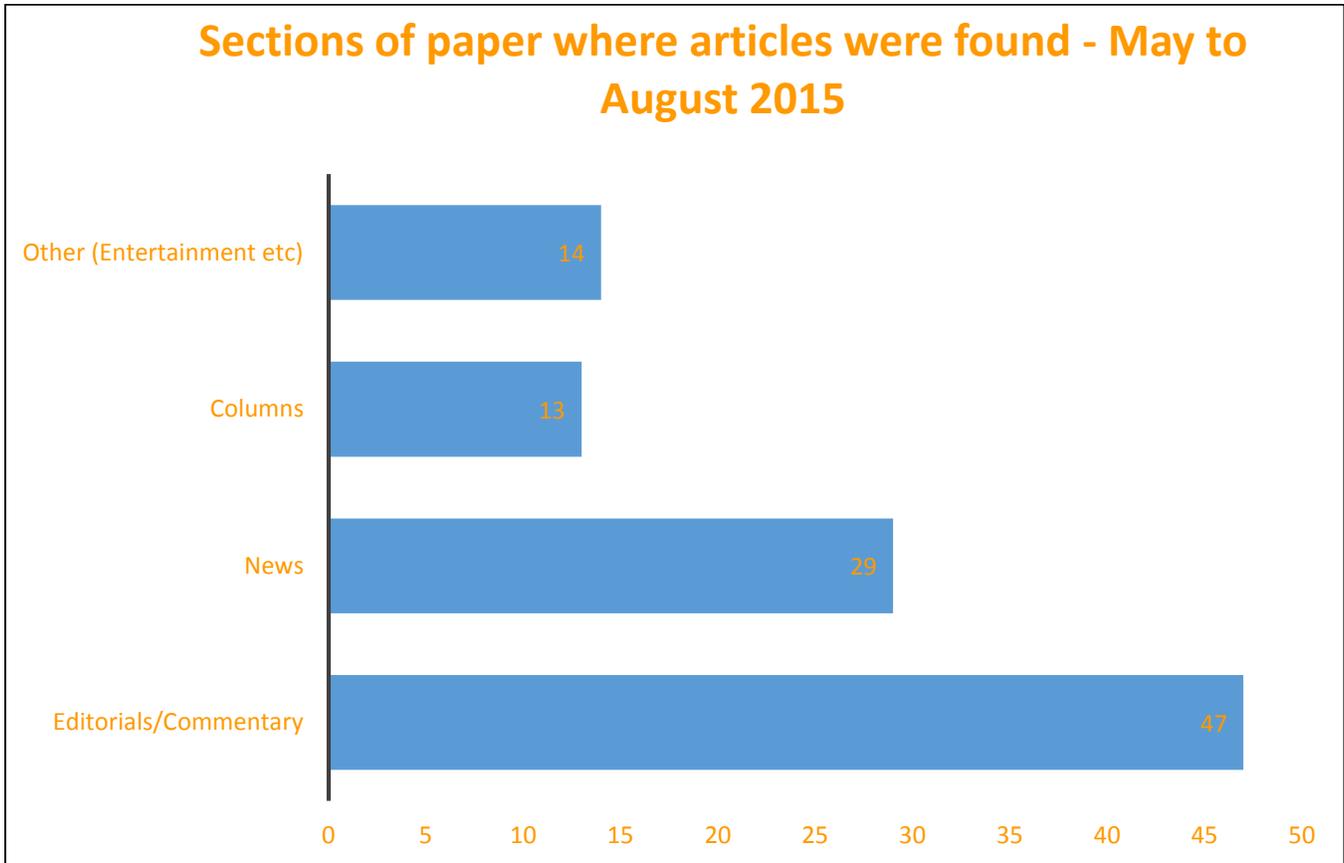


Figure 5. Sections of paper where articles were found from May to August 2015

The majority of articles published about LBT women over the period of time was positive.

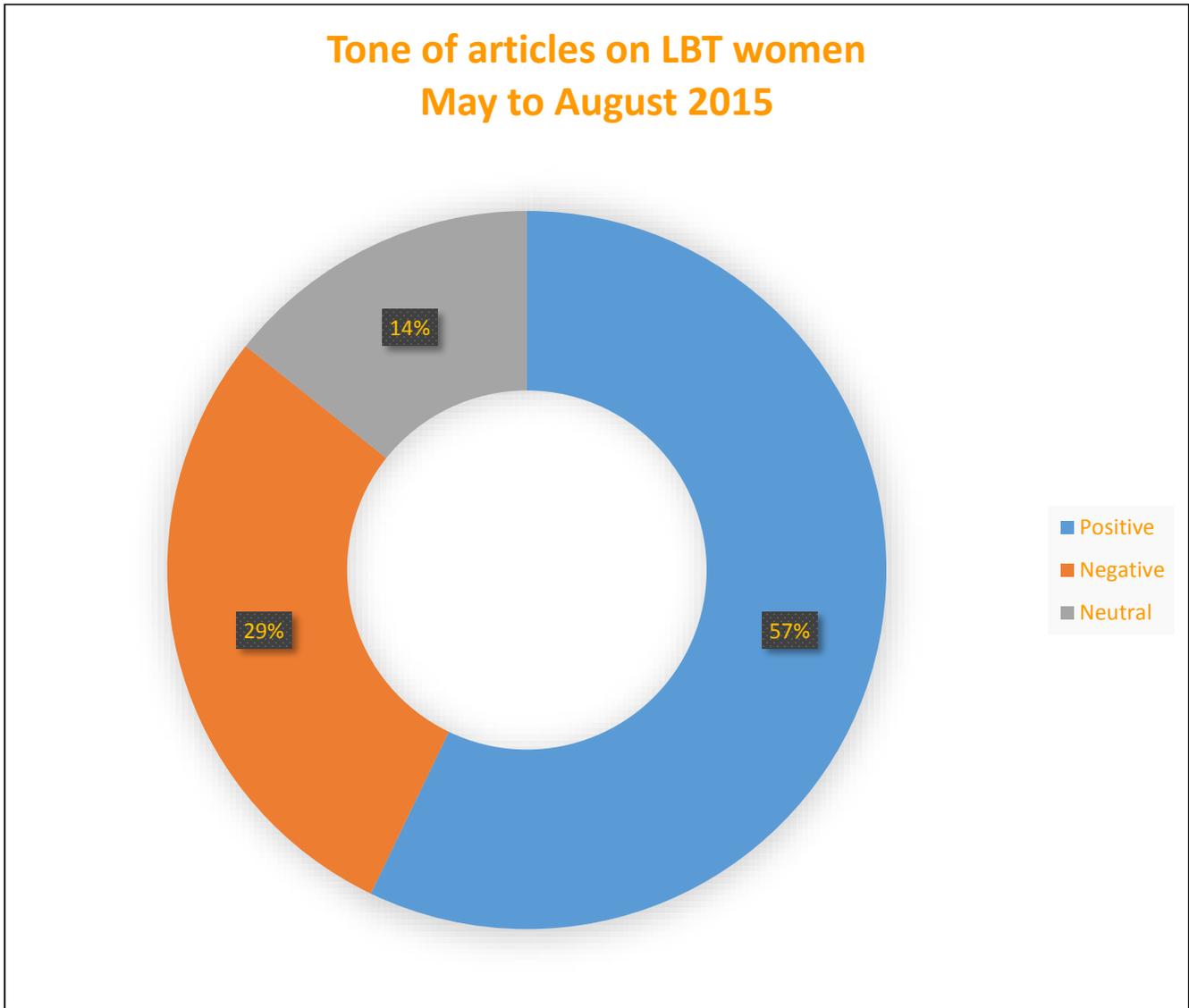


Figure 6. Tone of articles published on LBT women from May to August 2015

Transgender women dominated the discussion about LBT women in Jamaica between May to August 2015.

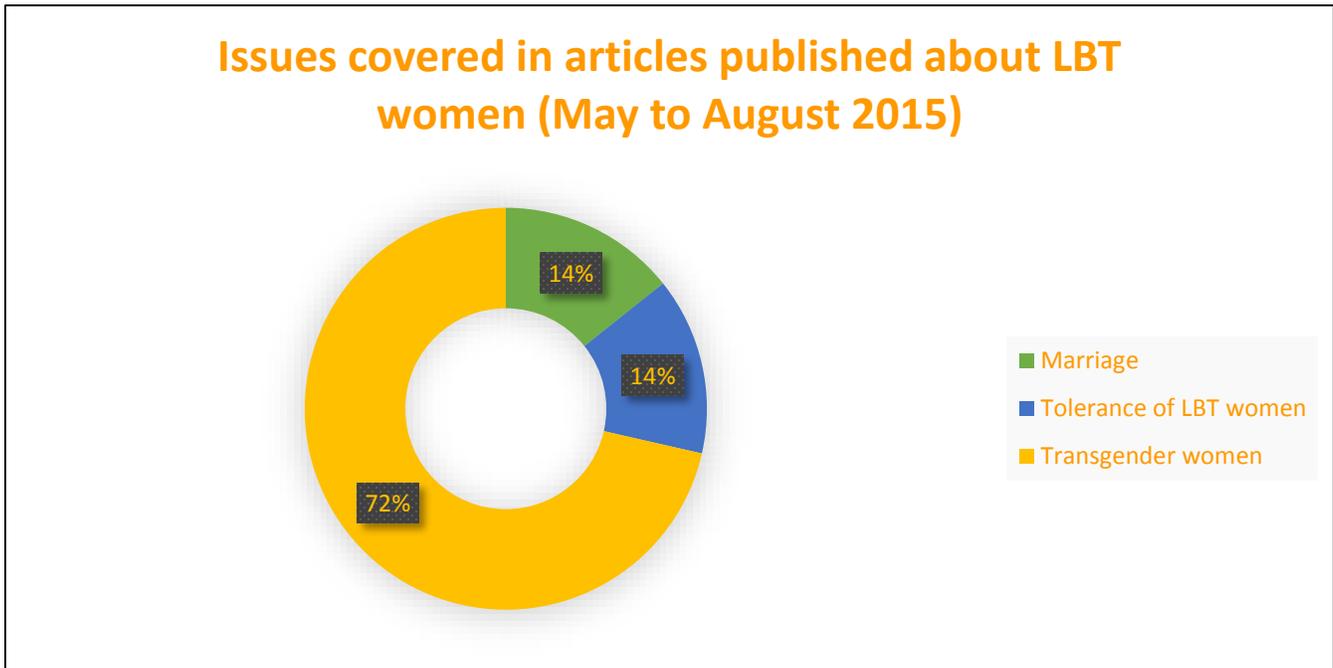


Figure 7. Issues covered in articles published about LBT women from May to August 2015

Data Disaggregated by Month

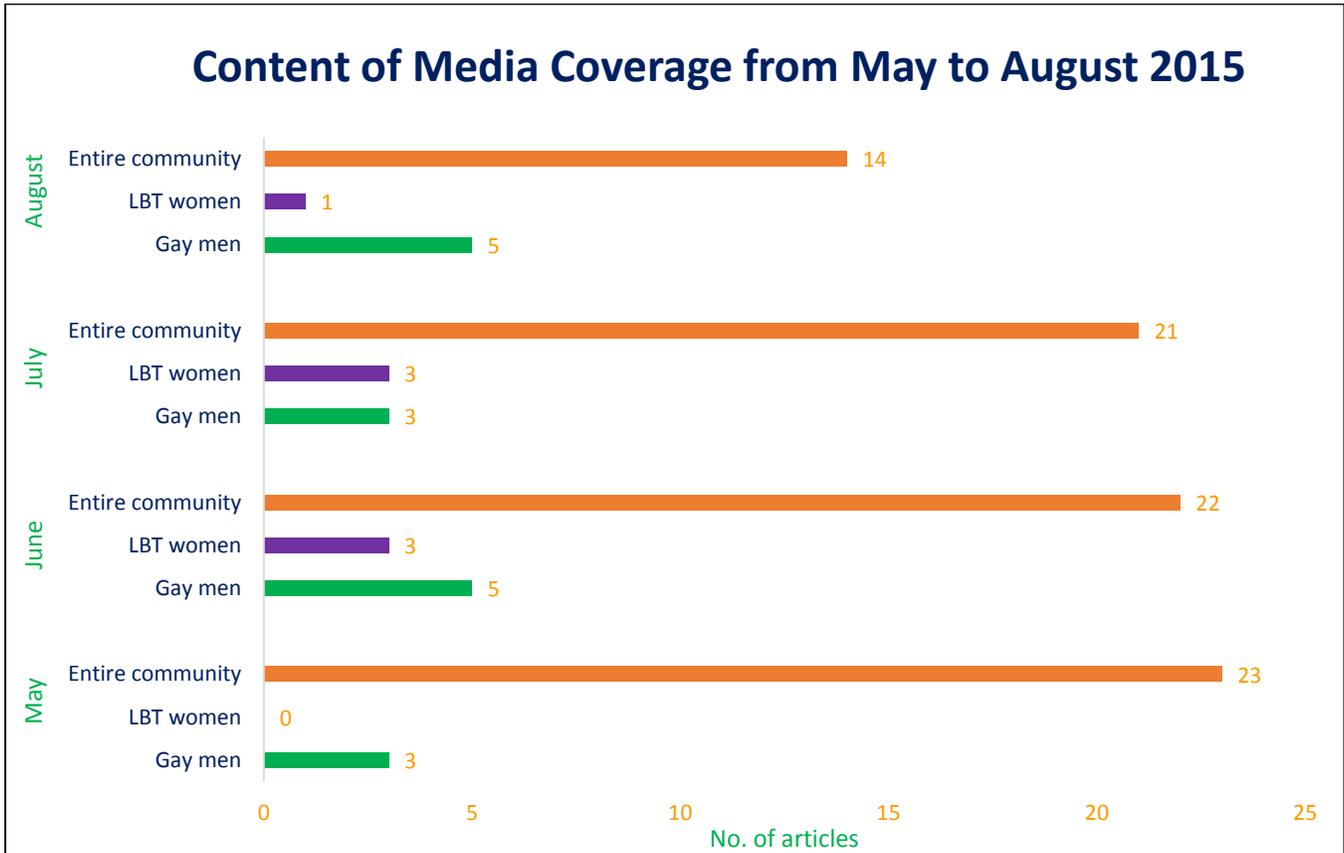


Figure 8. Content of media coverage for May to August 2015 separated by month

MAY

A total of 26 articles were found in the month of May. The majority (88%) of the coverage related to the LGBT community as a whole; 12% of the articles were about gay men *specifically*, while no article was published *specifically* about LBT women.

JUNE

A total of 30 articles were found in the month of June. The large majority (73%) of the coverage related to the LGBT community as a whole; 17% related *specifically* to gay men and the remaining (10%) *specifically* covered issues related to LBT women.

JULY

A total of 27 articles were found in July. The large majority (78%) of the content related to the LGBT community as a whole, while 11% related *specifically* to gay men and the same percentage *specifically* to LBT women.

AUGUST

A total of 20 articles were found in August. Similar patterns of May and June were recorded as 70% of the content related to the LGBT community as a whole, while 25% related *specifically* to gay men and only 5% related *specifically* to LBT women.

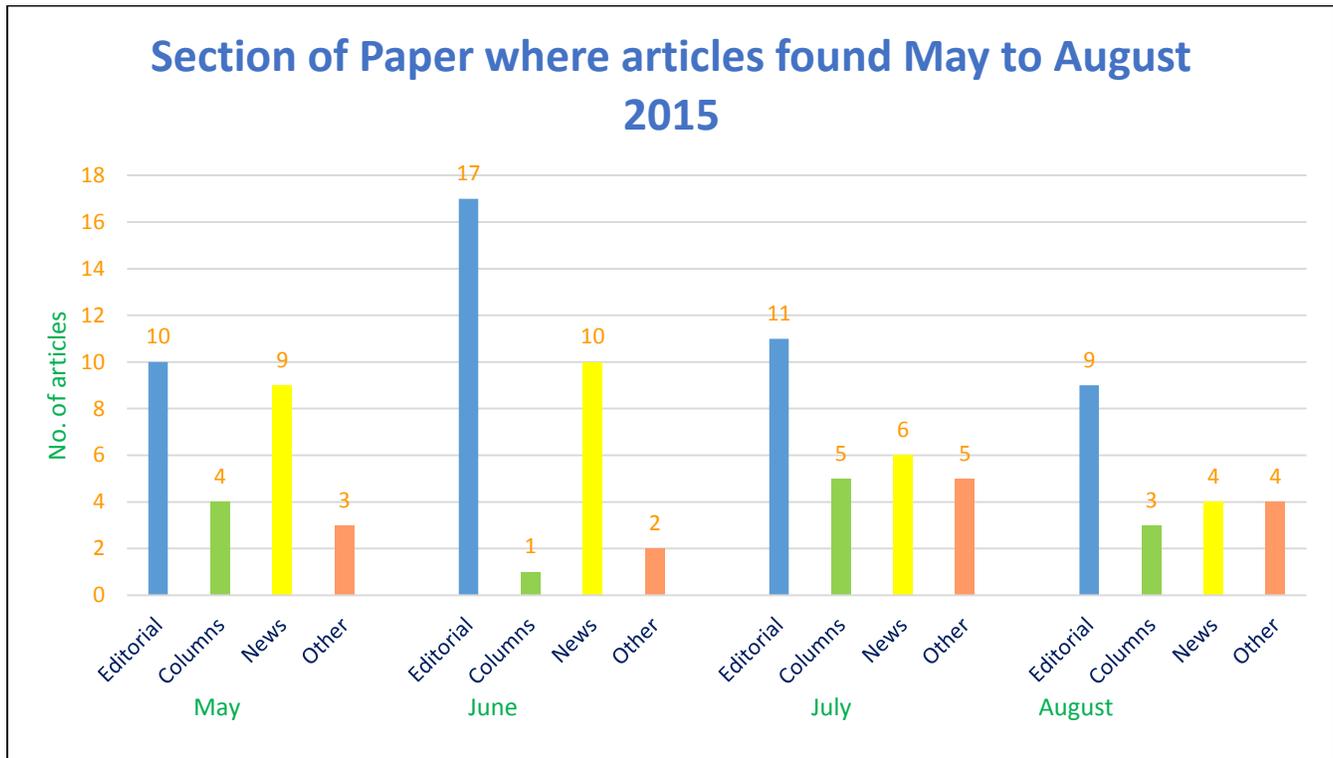


Figure 9. Sections of paper where articles were found May to August 2015 separated by month.

MAY

The majority of articles were found in the Editorial/Commentary (39%) section of the paper with a significant number (35%) being found in the News section.

The majority of the coverage dealt with homophobic/anti-homophobic sentiments (50%), and legal issues relating to the 'buggery law' (30%); domestic violence, sexual violence, and bullying were issues addressed in the remaining 20%. The tone of the coverage was mostly negative but many were objective and positive, calling for equality, tolerance and a review of the 'buggery law'.

JUNE

The majority of articles (57%) were found in the Editorial/Commentary section of the paper.

The majority of the coverage dealt with homophobic/anti-homophobic sentiments (50%) while legal issues relating to same sex-marriage, change in policy dealing with LGBT people, domestic violence, sexual violence, and bullying were addressed in the remaining 20%. The tone of the coverage was more positive (30%) than negative (10%) but the majority (60%) of the articles were neutral.

JULY

As found in the two previous months, most (41%) of the articles were found in the Editorial/Commentary section and a notable number were in the News section.

Most of the coverage dealt with same-sex marriage (50%) while the issues of bullying, discrimination and HIV/STI were also mentioned often. The tone of the coverage was largely neutral (50%) with 25% of articles having a positive tone and the remaining 25% carrying a negative tone.

AUGUST

Similar patterns were once again recorded in August, 2015 as most (45%) of the articles were found in the Editorial/Commentary section of the paper.

Most (35%) of the coverage related to the Pride celebrations in Jamaica, while issues of bullying, discrimination and tolerance were also mentioned often. The tone of the coverage was largely neutral (60%) but there was a notable number of positive (25%) and negative (15%) articles.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The study investigated whether a disparity exists between media coverage of issues relating to gay men and LBT women. The study also gave an idea of how much media coverage the LGBT community receives as a collective – the nature of this coverage, and the sections of each newspaper where the coverage could be found.

Overall, the large majority of articles (77%) dealt with issues relating to the entire LGBT community such as stigma and discrimination, the rights of LGBT people in Jamaica and the topical issue of same-sex marriage.

The data show that a wide disparity exists between media coverage of LBT women and gay men. Articles about gay men accounted for 16% of all articles published about the LGBT community from May to August 2015, while articles about LBT women accounted for a mere 7% of all articles which dealt with issues relating to the LGBT community during the same period.

“The data show that a wide disparity exists between media coverage of LBT women and gay men.”

The majority of articles (46%) were found in the Editorial/Commentary section of the newspapers, which speaks volumes regarding the interest in, and attitude of the Jamaican public to LGBT-related issues. Of the seven articles that focused on LBT women from May to August 2015, the majority (85%) were found in the Columns and Editorial/Commentary section of the paper, which demonstrates that most of the commentary came from the Jamaican public and not the media houses. The majority of the coverage was focused on transgender women’s issues given this was topical in June and July.

Several key events were responsible for the large number of published articles that referred to the entire LGBT community. Firstly, the visit of the President of the United States of America to Jamaica in May and the subsequent visit of Randy Berry, Special Envoy for the human rights of LGBT persons in the US State Department, and Todd Larson, Senior LGBT Coordinator for the United States Agency for International Development sparked discussions relating to LGBT people in Jamaica. There was extensive feedback from several individuals and groups in Jamaica who expressed their disdain, indifference or support for the numerous LGBT-related issues through Letters to the Editor, newspaper-sanctioned editorials, op-eds, and columns in the print media. The ‘buggery law’ and a possible

referendum was one of the topics that remained at the forefront for some time. Nothing was mentioned specifically or generally about issues related to the LBT women's community during the month of May.

Additionally, the ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States of America (which enabled same-sex couples in all states to legally marry) at the end of June 2015 dominated the discourse in July, while PRiDE JA 2015 (LGBT Pride celebrations in Jamaica) was topical during August. These events led to a lot of coverage which spoke very generally of the entire LGBT community and very little of the LBT women's community in Jamaica.

Caitlyn Jenner coming out as a transgender woman led to discussions on transgender issues in Jamaica in June. Of the seven articles published about LBT women from May to August 2015, transgender issues dominated with 72% of the coverage (5 articles) dealing with transphobia, the legitimacy of Caitlyn Jenner as a woman, and respect for transgender individuals. All of these articles were a response, whether directly or indirectly to Caitlyn's coming out. The remaining two articles dealt with a Jamaican lesbian couple who wished to see same-sex marriage become a reality in the near future in Jamaica, and a personal story in the editorial calling for compassion and respect for a young woman who 'came out' as lesbian and was put out of her parents' home.

Of these articles, the majority (57%) were positive and called for respect toward transgender women (namely Jenner) and lesbians. The negative articles dismissed Jenner's coming out as treatable gender dysphoria¹ and negated her right to be called a woman, while the neutral article focused on the idea of marriage between women in Jamaica. There was no specific mention or coverage of *Jamaican* transgender or bisexual women over the period. Overall, the data show that a wide disparity exists between media coverage of LBT women's issues and coverage of issues relating to gay men in Jamaica.

¹the *condition rather than the identity* of feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as man or woman to be opposite to one's biological sex

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study show that media coverage of issues relating to gay men is significantly higher than coverage of issues relating to LBT women in Jamaica. Issues not covered by traditional media tend to be regarded as unimportant or perhaps not newsworthy, which implies that LBT women's issues are of little concern to traditional media entities and conceivably to the rest of the society. The inadequacy of coverage for LBT women's issues also has an

“The findings of this study show that media coverage of issues relating to gay men is significantly higher than coverage of issues relating to LBT women in Jamaica.”

impact on the gay (men) community and the heterosexual community who do not realise the existence and extent of the (unique) issues affecting LBT women. This lack of coverage normalises the invisibility of LBT women's issues and concerns.

It is interesting and important to note that some articles which appeared to be about the LGBT community as a whole tended to place the microscope on gay and bisexual men by referring specifically to homosexual and/or bisexual men and issues relating to this population. In several instances where HIV/STI and AIDS were mentioned, for example, the author neglected to talk about how these health concerns also affect the LBT women's community. There were no articles about the entire LGBT community that placed the microscope on issues related to LBT women. This speaks volumes about what is regarded as important in/to the LGBT movement and is also a clear indication of the gaps in media coverage. It is also an indication that there is a gap in the knowledge and understanding of issues relating to LBT women in Jamaica.

LBT women in Jamaica and the Caribbean are uniquely, and in some instances disproportionately affected by inadequate legal coverage, recognition and protection, the absence of adequate non-discriminatory healthcare; street harassment, unemployment in the transgender community and among lesbians or bisexual women whose gender expression may be more masculine than feminine, intimate partner violence, 'corrective' sexual violence, and a lack of comprehensive health and family life education. LBT women are also disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and patriarchy.

The large majority of these issues were not mentioned during May to August 2015 in the electronic versions of the two most widely read and trusted newspapers in Jamaica. Many persons are not familiar, for example, with the frequency of 'corrective' sexual violence perpetrated against lesbians in Jamaica,

given it is rarely discussed in media spaces and many cases are unreported. Many LBT women do not know how to protect themselves from STIs when engaging in sexual activities, and many others are unable to recognize intimate partner violence in their relationships, given the widely held misconception that violence is only physical. Same-sex or same-gender domestic partnerships are also not recognized by law, which makes it impossible in many instances for the community to take advantage of the State benefits of such partnerships. Lesbians in same-sex relationships are not adequately protected by the Domestic Violence Act, and the gender identity of transgender women is not recognised by law. Legally, transgender women cannot be raped, and if they identify as straight/heterosexual, they are prohibited from engaging in any form of sexual intimacy with men. Transgender women are also disproportionately affected by HIV and other STIs.

It is a fact that there are organizations such as Quality of Citizenship Jamaica and Aphrodite's PRIDE working tirelessly to improve the lives of LBT women in Jamaica; however, more focus needs to be placed on raising awareness about issues relating to LBT women in traditional media. More Letters to the Editor and op-eds can be sent to the main newspapers covering the aforementioned issues and others that affect LBT women. Women who are well versed in the issues that affect the community should ensure their voices are heard in these media spaces once the opportunity presents itself. Opportunities should also be created for disseminating information about challenges experienced by, and that may be unique to the LBT women's community in Jamaica. Any opportunity for media coverage which can empower, uplift or educate LBT women should be exploited as this is one of the more effective ways of disseminating information about, and for the community.

Additionally, organisations and groups that serve LBT women should engage the online population in a meaningful way given it is estimated that over 35% of Jamaica's population have access to the Internet (Mona School of Business Survey, 2011). A group which aims to empower and educate LBT women with a strong following on social media can publish short, user-ready, visual, and reader-friendly educational material on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ and interact with the community to fill information gaps and educate their followers. Such organisations should also consider blogging about LBT women's issues. Infographics and short videos can be published on social media that speak to the myriad of rights issues affecting LBT women as citizens of Jamaica, tips on how we may resolve discrimination at the workplace and in other spaces, and comprehensive information on STIs - highlighting the fact that many of these infections can in fact be contracted through several different types of sexual activity in which LBT may women engage.

Information on sexual orientation and gender identity being made available in traditional media may reduce violence such as 'corrective' sexual violence, especially among parents who encourage older

“The fact that of the 103 articles over a four month period, only 7 were related to LBT women, speaks volumes about the marginalisation of the LBT community.”

males to have unwanted sexual intercourse with their daughters to 'make them heterosexual.' There should be a specific focus on LBT relationships and IPV to ensure victims can identify it and perpetrators can seek help and support.

The fact that of the 103 articles over a four month period, only 7 were related to LBT women, speaks volumes about the marginalisation of the LBT women's community, not only within the general population, but within the LGBT community. One of the possible reasons for this is the status quo of patriarchy. While patriarchy is often not discussed

among gender and sexual minorities, this system in which men hold primary power may, and does have significant impact on which issues are regarded as important to, and within the LGBT community. Issues related to gay men are discussed more often in the media as seen in the presentation of data. Even in instances where the same issues affect LBT women, a lack of knowledge about the LBT women's community results in the absence of its acknowledgement when discussing LGBT-related issues. One can infer that issues relating to LBT women are rarely covered or discussed because they are not seen as important, as this group holds less power than gay men, which is not uncommon, given the LGBT community, like many subpopulations, is a microcosm of the wider society.

Happenings such as Caitlyn Jenner coming out as a transgender woman are excellent as they encourage dialogue on transgenderism, which is rarely ever discussed in public fora or traditional media. However, we cannot wait for these events to start much needed dialogue on matters that affect the LBT women's community in Jamaica. Issues that are specific to transgender women are not heard often enough and it is important for organisations working to improve the lives of this population to ensure that this information is easily accessible.

We need to think of innovative and effective ways to educate Jamaicans about the issues that affect the LBT women's community, while also attempting to reduce the disparity between coverage of issues affecting LBT women and gay men in traditional print media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organisations working in the interest of LBT women need to ensure that issues relating to this population are covered more extensively in traditional (print and electronic) media locally and regionally where the opportunity arises.
- More educational material (infographics, short videos and blogs) covering issues relating to the LBT community should be created and disseminated through social media channels, e-newsletters and websites.
- Media entities as the primary source of information in the country need to encourage dialogue on LBT women by doing feature stories or articles on members of the community, and organisations working for the improvement of LBT lives in Jamaica. Articles on issues such as street harassment, IPV, and sexual health for women should be published.
- More literature should be written and disseminated by feminists and other influencers on sexual and reproductive health as regards LBT women, the importance of non-discriminatory healthcare for LBT women, IPV, and the importance of legal protection for LBT women.
- A nationwide campaign on SOGI needs to be executed. A comprehensive understanding of the differences among biological sex, gender expression, sexual orientation and gender identity can ensure that people are more knowledgeable, which may enable persons to appreciate the LGBT community and gender and sexual diversity within our society.
- More research needs to be done to investigate the extent of the lack of information among the general public on issues relating to LBT women and the most effective ways to ensure that the population is educated.
- More workshops can be executed with civil society organizations, healthcare workers, religious organisations and other opinion-shapers that explore SOGI discrimination, the impact of stigma and discrimination on LBT women and other pressing matters related to the community. Encouraging attendees to write about what they learned in these workshops and ensuring that their writing is published in traditional and new media can ensure that people who may not be

open to hearing the views of LBT organisations, are reached through the published views of workshop participants.

- Partnerships can be formed with the Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies and other tertiary level entities whose interests align with those of LBT organisations to educate opinion leaders and influencers at these institutions (such as the Guild Council, Club leaders, Resident Advisors) on issues which may affect LBT university students and those with whom they study, work and live. IPV, stigma and discrimination and sexual health are often ignored during important sessions such as orientation at tertiary level institutions in Jamaica.
- LBT organisations in Jamaica can partner to execute educational campaigns for LBT women on rights, sexual health, facts about IPV (including where survivors and perpetrators can seek support). Online and/or face-to-face support groups specifically for transgender women should also be included as part of these organisations' programming to provide psychosocial support.

CONCLUSION

The research shows that a wide disparity exists between media coverage of LBT women's and gay men's issues. The electronic versions of the two most trusted and read print newspapers in Jamaica were surveyed from May 2015 to August 2015 and it was found that publication of articles about issues related to gay men were much higher than those related to LBT women. It was also found that a considerable number of articles which spoke of the LGBT community as a whole, acknowledged issues affecting gay men while failing to acknowledge that some of these said issues also affect LBT women.

Several happenings during the four-month period led to the high number of articles which spoke of the entire community. One of these occurrences - Caitlyn Jenner coming out as a transgender woman - was responsible for the majority of the articles which were published on LBT issues. A lot of the articles on both the LBT women's community and the LGBT community as a whole were found in the Editorial/Commentary section of the newspaper, and was indicative and representative of the general knowledge and attitudes people in Jamaica have towards the community. The articles were almost equally negative, positive and balanced.

Armed with this information, organisations that work with, and for LBT women should aim to ensure more information regarding issues that affect the community be disseminated in the traditional print and electronic media. Advantage must be taken of new media to educate both LBT women and the general population about said issues. Education can assist with the way Jamaicans see and treat with LBT women. Knowledge of SOGI and the effects of stigma and discrimination can encourage people to be more respectful. Knowledge of IPV and safe sexual practices can limit the incidents of abuse in LBT relationships and STIs among the LBT women's population.

It is therefore extremely important that more be done by media practitioners, feminists and LBT activists to ensure information about the LBT women's community is easily accessible, reader-friendly and disseminated as far and wide as possible. Importantly, every opportunity that arises to publish articles relating to LBT issues in traditional print media or speak about such in fora that reach large audiences should be exploited.

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APPENDIX

List of articles that were analysed over the research period May to August 2015

MAY

1. [Civility and the politics of selective indignation](#)
2. [No healthy society without equality](#)
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