

Disparities in Quality of Care Among Trans Men and Women in South Africa: Findings from Ritshidze's Community Led Monitoring

Olayiwola James Oladipo¹, Ndivhuwo Rambau¹, Luthando Sono¹, Ndilisa Damane¹, Lotti Rutter², Sibongile Tshabalala³, Elise Lankiewicz⁴, and Siena Senn⁴

¹ Ritshidze, Johannesburg, South Africa ² Health GAP, Johannesburg, South Africa ³ Treatment Action Campaign, Johannesburg, South Africa ⁴ amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, Andelson Public Policy Office, Washington DC, United States



Background

- Trans people are disproportionately affected by HIV and encounter stigma and discrimination.
- Historically, the HIV response has inaccurately grouped trans women with gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men or treated trans populations as homogenous.
- To date, little information exists on trans people within the public health system in South Africa, especially disaggregated measures. Better understanding of differences in quality of care among trans men and women may inform tailored programming.

Objective

- To leverage data from the Ritshidze Community-Led Monitoring (CLM) Programme in South Africa to explore differences in quality of care among trans men and women.

Methodology

The Ritshidze Model

- Ritshidze consists of community members and members of key populations gathering evidence on health service delivery, generating solutions, and engaging in advocacy with duty bearers.
- Besides facility-based monitoring, Ritshidze has four key population (KP) surveys, including a trans survey, that apply a community-based snowball sampling method.

Our Analysis

- Paper surveys were administered to 13,832 KP respondents across 24 districts in 7 provinces during 2023, all of which were later submitted to an electronic data collection platform, CommCare.
- We focused on questions related to staff friendliness, privacy, and respect (n=3) and limited the data to the 1,423 participants who identified as a trans men or women (Table 1).
- Descriptive statistics, Pearson's X², and independent sample t-tests were calculated to recognise significant comparisons.
- All in-depth interviews were transcribed and coded.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics.

Variable	n (%)
Age	
Under 18 Years Old	27 (1)
18-25 Years Old	549 (38)
Over 25 Years Old	830 (58)
Gender	
Trans Man	305 (21)
Trans Women	1008 (70)
Non-Binary	94 (6)
Other Gender	3 (<1)
Province	
Eastern Cape	283 (20)
Free State	163 (11)
Gauteng	185 (13)
KwaZulu-Natal	299 (21)
Limpopo	102 (7)
Mpumalanga	141 (10)
North West	250 (18)
Western Cape	-
Northern Cape	-

Results – Quantitative

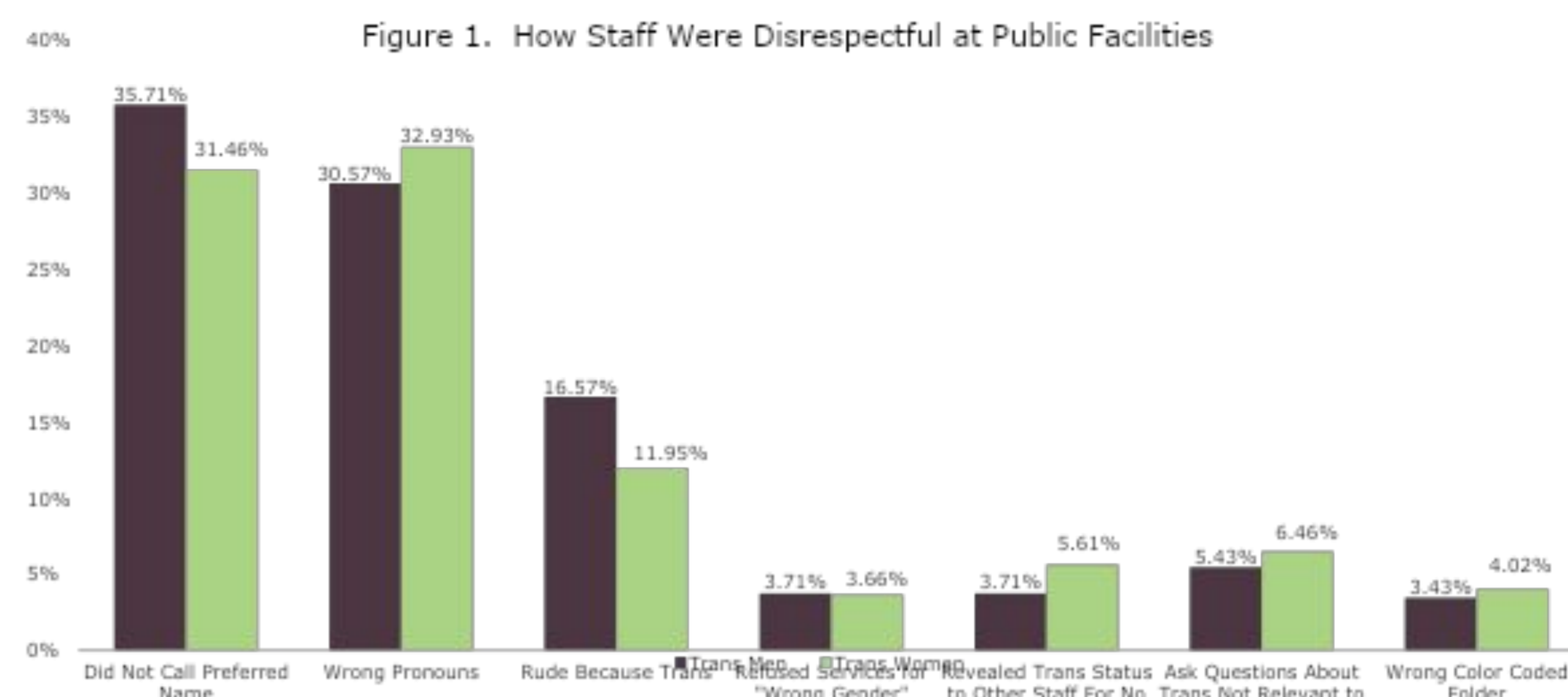
Table 2. Main Indicators Among Trans Men and Women

	Facility Staff Always Friendly n (%)	Facility Staff Keep HIV Status Private / Confidential n (%)	Facility Staff Respects Gender Identity n (%)
Trans Men	63 (24.71)**	78 (30.59)*	59 (23.14)**
Trans Women	263 (37.15)**	287 (40.54)*	240 (33.90)**

*p<0.01, **p<0.0001

- A significantly greater proportion of trans women reported that facility staff are always friendly, keep their HIV status private / confidential and respect their gender identity relative to trans men.

Results – Quantitative



- Trans men and women most commonly stated that staff did not call them their preferred name, used the wrong pronouns, or were rude because they were trans.

Results – Qualitative

"I think the staff needs **more education**, I am **not comfortable with the way they address me**. They refer to me as "he" when I prefer to be called "she". And because you are in need of assistance, you just keep quiet and do not want to speak. You just take the abuse so you can be helped." — Trans Woman, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, May 2023

"... the **nurses are rude**, they would ask why do I want to change myself from how I was created, like I have a problem. This is who I am and cannot change. I would **rather go to another clinic very far away**." — Trans Man, Ehlanzeni, May 2023

"When you go there, **they do not treat you well. You cannot use the bathroom of your choice**, they say that they are not comfortable with you in the female bathroom. I am always **so frustrated** every time I go there." — Trans Woman, City of Tshwane, October 2023

"The problem is when you get there as a trans person, **they do not have someone who is part of the LGBTQI community that you can be comfortable with**. They would say things like "you look like a girl but your ID says male", that is one of our general issues." — Trans Woman, Bojanala, June 2023

"They do not ask all the normal questions or do any examinations. **It is like our sexuality is going to jump on them like we are contagious**. If I, who is a known activist in the community, still face all these challenges, I wonder how bad the rest of the LGBTQI members in the community get treated. Especially those that are in the **rural and semi-rural clinics where they have staff that are older and are stuck in their ways**." — Trans Man, Ugu, August 2023.

- Trans men and women reported medical professionals are rude and use incorrect pronouns or names; they repeatedly mentioned feeling uncomfortable. Clinics also lacked LGBTQI representation and gender-neutral toilets.

Conclusions

Important Takeaways



- Trans people report poor quality of care at public facilities.
- Trans men generally reported worse experiences at clinics than trans women.
- Trans health services must be friendly and respectful and be tailored appropriately for different trans populations.

Limitations

- As Ritshidze employs community-based snowball sampling for members of key populations, this approach is non-random and may limit generalisability.
- This study is centered around experiences among public health facility users only.

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