

progressive pruders

A survey of attitudes towards
homosexuality & gender
non-conformity in South Africa

Other 
THE OTHER FOUNDATION

progressive

adjective – a person favouring social reform

This report was produced by the Other Foundation and the Human Sciences Research Council, working with a team of researchers that was convened by the Other Foundation. See the end of this report for a full list of the authors, editors, members of the research reference group.

prudes

noun – people who are or claim to be easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity

This report is named “progressive prudes” because the majority of South Africans think that gay and lesbian people should have the same human rights as other people and should be part of the cultures and traditions of South Africa – even though the majority **also** think that sex between people of the same sex is morally wrong.



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What does the South African public think?

The findings of the study are summarised in this report. Among other things, it was discovered that:

530,000

adult men and women, of all population groups, both rural and urban dwelling, and across age groups self-identify as either homosexual, bisexual, or gender non-conforming in some way – the same ratio as observed in other countries around the world



More than six times as many people (approximately 430,000 men and almost 2.8 million women) present themselves in public (i.e, they dress and act) in a gender non-conforming way



South Africans were interviewed in their choice of eight different languages

More than 2 in 4 of all South Africans indicated that they will 'accept' a gay family member,

55%



but only

27%



of all South Africans (1 in 4) have a friend or family member whom they know is homosexual

51%

of all South Africans believe that gay people should have the same human rights as all other citizens



even though



72%

feel that same-sex sexual activity is 'morally wrong'



1 out of every 2 people believe that gay and lesbian people should be included in 'my culture and tradition'

52%



2:1

A ratio of 2:1 of South Africans supported keeping the current Constitutional protections against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation; compared to those who thought it should be removed



Between 2012 and 2015, there has been a tenfold increase in the number of South Africans who "strongly agree" with allowing same-sex marriage



During the same period, the number of people who 'strongly disagree' with allowing same sex marriage dropped by half



48%

23%

however, between 14% (with regard to allowing same sex marriage)



and 27% (with regard to supporting constitutional protection)



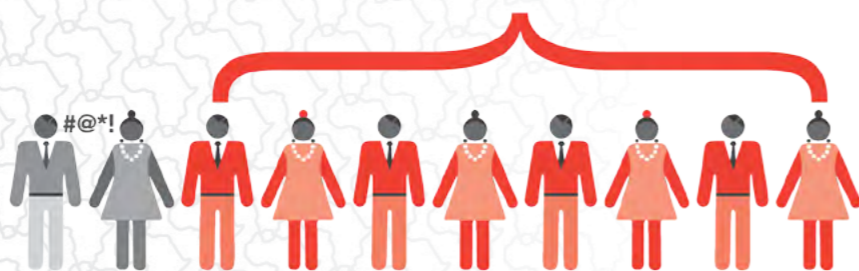
of South Africans did not take a definite position either way

'moderately religious'
people tend to be the
most tolerant



80%

8 out of 10 people said they have not –nor would they ever consider– verbally or physically abusing someone who was gender non-conforming



but

450,000

South Africans have physically harmed women “who dress and behave like men in public” in the prior 12 months



90%

of both black and white adults say they have not physically hurt gender non-conforming women ‘and would never do it’

black adults



white adults



1%

of both black and white adults reported physically harming gender non-conforming women in the past year

black adults



white adults





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summary

1



There is a general belief that people in Africa are deeply homophobic and unaccepting of gender diversities, but what does the African public really think? The truth is that we haven't really known because hardly any work has been done to gather and analyze the views of the public in a structured way in Africa.

Now, the results of a ground-breaking survey of what all South Africans think about homosexuality and gender non-conformity – and how they behave, based on that – is available. For the first time, there is scientifically valid, nationally representative data to inform social dialogue and advocacy, public policies, and academic debate.

The results confirm some common-sense realities which are often denied by those who oppose equality and social acceptance of gay and lesbian people – but which have not been tested in research on this scale up to now. The results also reveal some surprising new findings.

In South Africa, over half a million adult women and men, across all population groups, living in both rural and urban areas, and across all age groups identified themselves as homosexual, bisexual, or gender non-conforming – consistent with similar population ratios in many different parts of the world. Almost six times that number of South Africans (3 million) present themselves in public (“dress and act”) in a gender non-conforming way: about 430 thousand men and nearly 2.8 million women.

One in four people (27 percent) in South Africa report having a friend or family member who is homosexual and well over half the population (55 percent) said that they would “accept” a gay family member. Despite almost three quarters (72 percent) of the South African population feeling that same-sex sexual activity is morally “wrong”, more than half (51 percent) believe that gay and lesbian people in South Africa should have the same human rights as all South Africans and that gay and lesbian people should be included in “my culture and tradition” (52 percent).

The vast majority (8 out of every 10 people) have not, nor would they ever consider, verbally or physically abusing someone who was gender non-conforming. Alarming, though, about half a million (450,000) South Africans over the prior 12 months, have physically harmed women who dressed and behaved like men in public, and 240,000 have beaten up men who dressed and behaved like women. About 3 million South Africans say that they might commit acts of violence against gender non-conforming people in the future.



27%

(more than 1 in 4) of South Africans stated that they know of a friend or family member who is homosexual



The depth and scale of this survey is unprecedented on the continent.

A uniformly high number (about 90 percent) of black African, white, and coloured adults say that they have not physically hurt gender non-conforming women, “and would never do it”. Nonetheless, white and black African adults also reported the same level (about 1 percent) of physically harming gender non-conforming women in the last year. A significantly higher propensity for violence against gender non-conforming women, however, is evident amongst Indian/Asian adults.

“Moderately religious” South Africans are the most tolerant of gay and lesbian people and moderately and highly religious people are less likely than the general population to keep away from gay and lesbian people.

South Africans support keeping the current Constitutional protections against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation at a ratio of 2:1 compared to those who think it should be taken out. Since 2012 there has been a tenfold increase of South Africans who “strongly agree” with allowing same-sex marriage - from 1 in a hundred then, to 1 in 10 now. The proportion of people “strongly disagreeing” dropped from almost half (48.5 percent) to less than a quarter (23.4 percent) in the same period.

However, in relation to questions about protecting the equality of gay and lesbian people, a fairly large number of people do not take a strong position either way – 14 percent on allowing same-sex marriage and 27 percent on

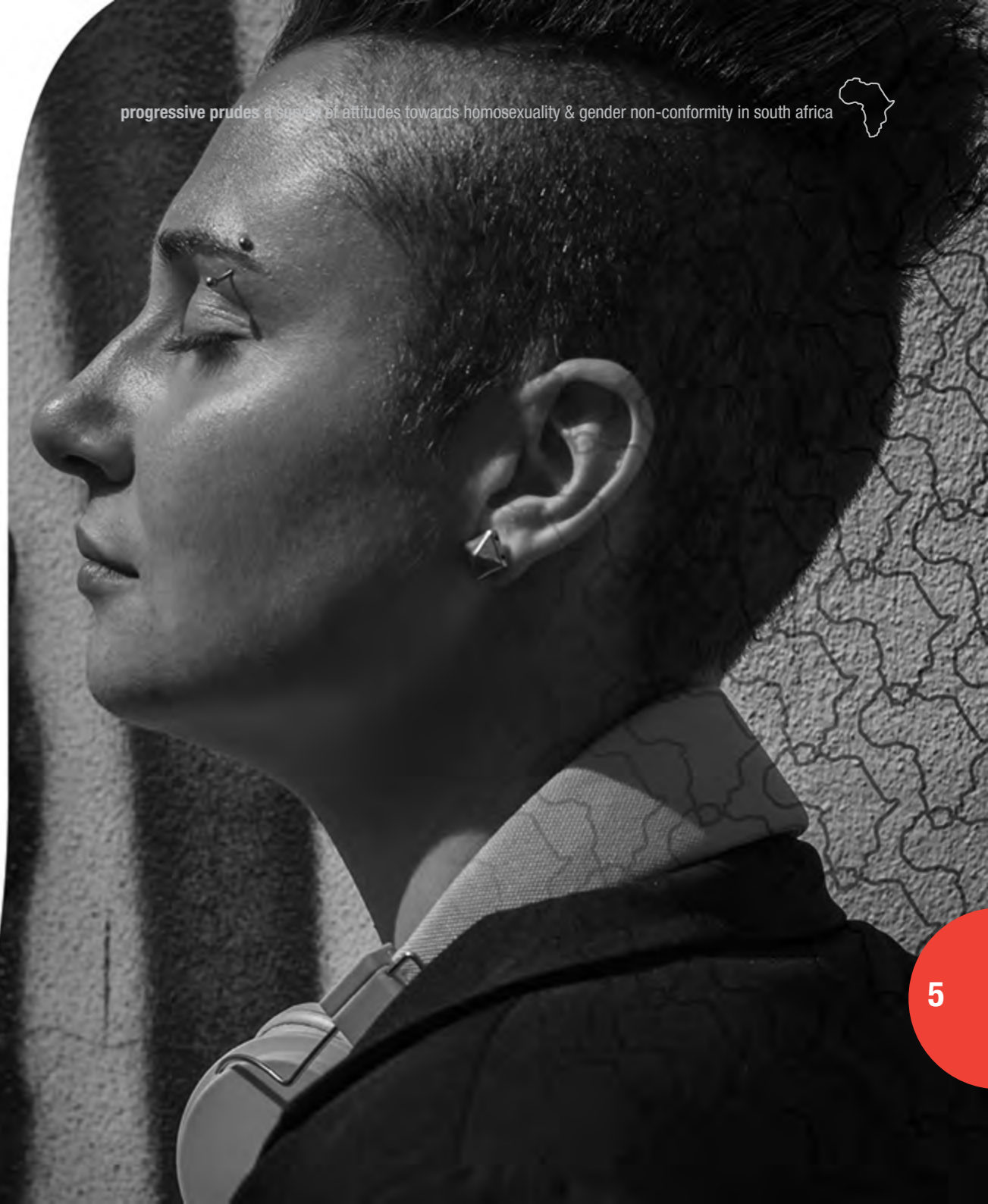
Constitutional protections of the human rights of gay and lesbian people. This ‘movable middle’ might be persuaded to move in either direction.

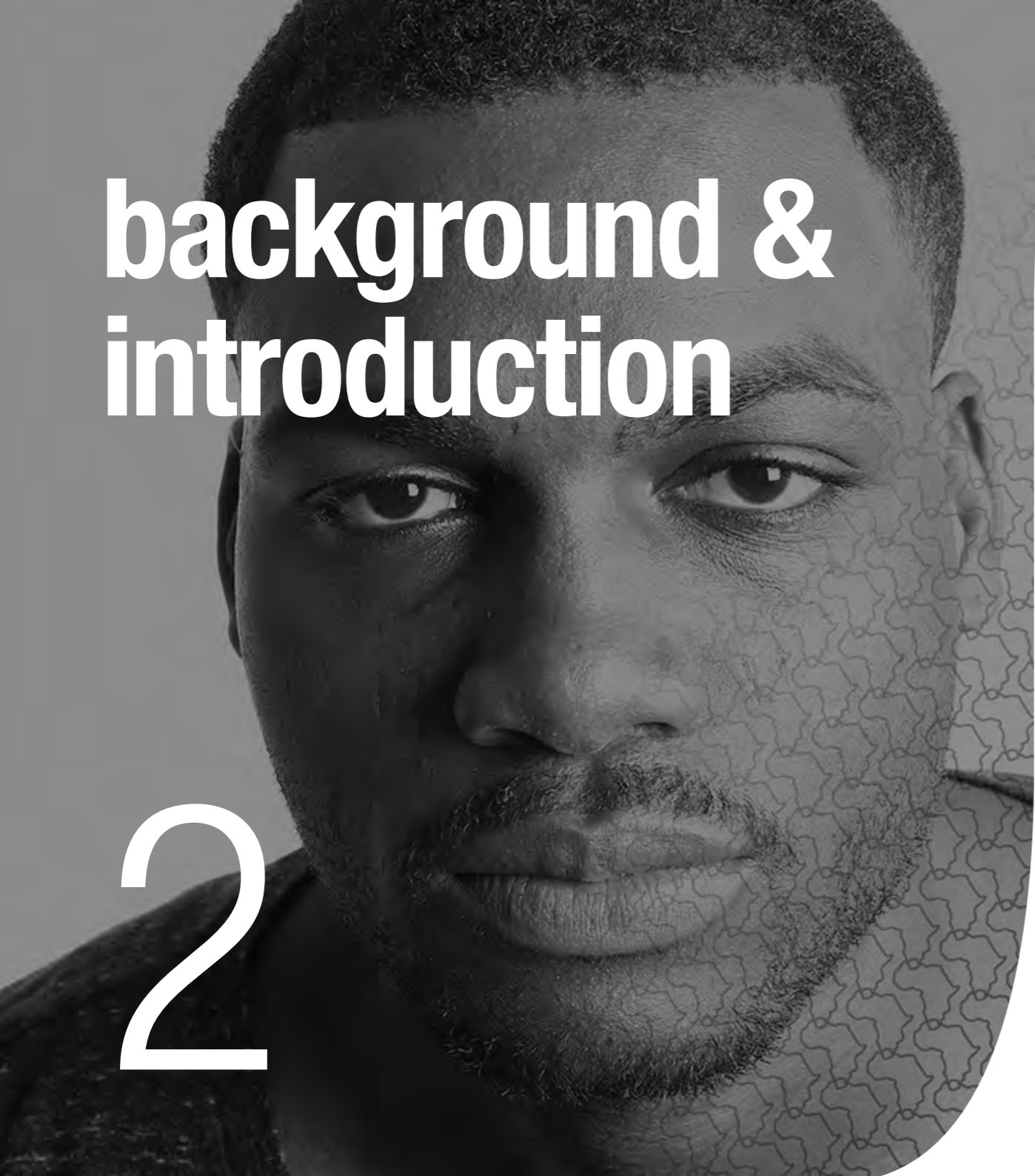
The depth and scale of this survey is unprecedented on the continent. More than 3,000 South Africans were interviewed in their choice of 8 of South Africa’s most widely spoken languages.

The survey was commissioned by the Other Foundation and undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) as part of the 2015 South African Social Attitudes Survey. The framework that conceptualized the research was developed by a reference group of academics from a number of universities in South Africa, that was convened by the Other Foundation.

The Other Foundation has embargoed the data from the survey beyond this initial report for 12 months, to give African researchers who live and work on the continent the opportunity to explore the data first. Institutions and individuals interested in having access to the data set during this embargoed period can apply for access to it.

The Other Foundation will also offer limited research funds to support work in selected areas of interest to strengthen and support activism to advance the human rights, safety, and social inclusion of homosexual and bisexual women and men, as well as transgender and intersex people in southern Africa.





background & introduction

2



This report describes the results of the first nationally representative survey exploring South African's attitudes, understanding and experiences of sexual orientation and gender identity. More than 3,000 South Africans across a geographically representative process were interviewed in person in their choice of eight of the most widely spoken languages in South Africa. The depth and scale of the work is unprecedented on the continent.

The module of 32 questions was included in the 2015 round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) that was conducted at the end of 2015. SASAS is an annual survey that has been carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) every year since 2003. It is administered through face-to-face interviews and is designed to be representative of the adult population aged 16 years and older, living in private residence. The survey series looks at a wide range of social issues including racism, xenophobia, democracy and governance, moral values, poverty and inequality, gender, and violence. This is the first time that a detailed module has been included on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Over the 12 years that the survey has been conducted a rigorous scientific methodology has been refined to enable the results to provide reliable insights and evidence into everyday thinking about particular social issues by South Africans.

3003

South Africans were interviewed in their choice of eight different languages



7

why a survey on sexual orientation and gender identity?

3



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

While the vast majority of people are heterosexual (i.e. attracted to people of the opposite sex), there are significant numbers who are emotionally and sexually attracted to persons of the same sex (i.e. homosexual) or both sexes (i.e. bisexual). Currently there is a deeply polarized global debate about how society, particularly the law and religion, should deal with this reality.

In many countries human sexuality is understood to naturally include different sexual orientations, and hence it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the basis of their sexual identity. Many governments have enacted special measures to ensure that sexual minorities are protected from discrimination, violence and abuse. In other countries, human sexuality is understood to only naturally include heterosexuality. Other orientations are regarded as abnormal, and something that society needs to be protected from. In these countries, homosexuality is actively discouraged, discrimination and abuse is tolerated, and consensual same-sex sexual activity is criminalized.

The majority of countries that criminalize consensual same-sex activity are in Africa (37 countries). These laws are largely a legacy from a common British colonial history, during which time laws about “unnatural desires” were enacted. In parts of Nigeria, Mauritania, Sudan and Somalia the death penalty is a potential punishment.

The first country in the world to enshrine protection for its citizens on the basis of sexual orientation is also in Africa. Provision 9 (3) in the South African constitution specifically includes sexual orientation as a category protected from discrimination. South Africa is also the only country in Africa to have legalised same-sex marriage, and was the fifth country to have done so worldwide.

Since the late 2000s there have been an increasing number of countries around the world making significant changes in laws and policies dealing with sexual orientation. Changes have included the decriminalization of consensual sexual relations between adults of the same sex; the inclusion of sexual orientation in non-discrimination policy and legislation; and perhaps most contentiously the recognition of same-sex marriage. These changes have been hard won through widespread advocacy, public outreach and political lobbying. However, in other parts of the world similar activism has been met with much

There is a general belief that people in Africa are deeply homophobic and unaccepting of gender diversities



what does the African public really think? The truth is that we haven't really known because hardly any work has been done to gather and analyze the views of the public in a structured way in Africa

greater opposition, and in many cases ridicule, abuse and violence. In a small number of countries governments have sought to prevent this kind of advocacy by introducing legislation that prevents it, and strengthening laws and policies that criminalize consensual sexual activities between adults.

In many ways South Africa can be seen as a microcosm of these global trends and contradictions. The constitutional protection clause was won through hard work by activists to get 'sexual orientation' included by leveraging the widely held sentiment in a post-apartheid South Africa that no-one should suffer discrimination, exclusion and violence because of who they are. The constitutional clause, however, did not in any way reflect a consensus - nor even a common understanding - about sexual orientation within the wider public. While gay and lesbian people have been much more visible and vocal in post-apartheid South Africa, in particular by successfully ensuring that discriminatory laws that violated the constitutional guarantee of equality were repealed or enacted, disturbing levels of violence against lesbian and gay people persisted and increased (in reporting at least) both in number and brutality. Worryingly, more recently there have also been some calls to repeal the sexual orientation clause in the Constitution.

Research in South Africa around sexual orientation has primarily involved people who self-identify as not being

heterosexual. Until this study, there was remarkably little empirical evidence to show what the attitudes, understanding, and experiences of ordinary South Africans are with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. This study fills that gap.

GENDER, GENDER IDENTITY, AND GENDER NON-CONFORMITY

Violence directed towards sexual minorities is best understood within the broader context of gender-based violence. The pervasive nature of violence against women in South Africa has been widely documented, and there is increasing attention being given to develop a better understanding of the nature and extent of violence against men as well. South Africa's rate of rape as a particular form of gender-based violence, has been found to be one of the highest in the world.

Most compelling explanations of gender based violence point to gender inequality and the prevalence of strong patriarchal norms and values, including ones that excuse or legitimate the use of violence. Patriarchy can be understood as any social system which has a gender-based hierarchy, in which most power is assigned to men. It is rooted in a deeply binary notion of gender, in which men are seen as very different from, and more highly valued than women. It is

maintained, in part, by strongly defined and enforced gender roles.

This survey included questions that explored gender roles and authority in South Africa, as well as questions about attitudes and violence towards people who break gender norms – as separate from (although related to) sexual orientation.

It is important to make the distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity clear. "Gender identity" refers to a person's own inner sense of whether they are male or female. It is not about sexual attraction, desire or behaviour. A "transgender" person is someone whose inner gender identity does not match their (external) biological sex. Saying that one is "transgender" is not just another way of saying "gay" or "homosexual".

People express their inner gender identity in a variety of different ways such as dress, speech, mannerisms, and behaviour.

Gender conformity is behaviour and appearance that closely matches socially acceptable gender norms; gender non-conformity is when behavior or appearance conflict with socially acceptable gender norms. So, for example, gender conforming women behave and appear in ways that are considered feminine, and gender non-conforming women behave and/or dress in ways that are considered appropriate for men, rather than women. A widely

held misperception is that all gender non-conforming people are gay or lesbian, and most gender conforming people are wrongly assumed to be heterosexual.

If there is little empirical evidence on attitudes, understandings and experiences of sexual orientation there is even less available on the questions of gender identity and expression. This survey also addresses that gap.

To facilitate a fuller understanding of the report, a glossary of terms is provided. While there continues to be much debate over specific aspects of various definitions, there are also commonly agreed core components. These have been compiled from a variety of different sources.

51%

believe that gay people should have the same human rights as all other South Africans





WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Biological sex

“Sex” refers to a person’s biological anatomy and physical attributes. These include external sex organs, sex chromosomes and internal reproductive structures. Typically, these are “male” and “female”.

Intersex

For most people, the anatomical indicators of sex line up in a way that is typically understood as male or female. Intersex refers to a variety of conditions in which an individual is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t fit the typical understanding of female or male bodies. With the advent of new scientific knowledge, it is increasingly evident that biological sex does not fit a binary model. Intersex conditions are increasingly being recognized as naturally occurring variations of human physiology.

Gender identity

Gender identity is an individual’s deeply held sense of being male, female or another gender. This is separate from biological sex. Some children become aware at a very young age that their gender identity does not align with their physical sex characteristics, even expressing the disconnect as soon as they can talk. More commonly, people recognize their gender identity during adolescence or adulthood.

Cisgender

People whose gender identity and biological sex align are called cisgender. Cisgender is an important word because it names the dominant experience rather than simply seeing it as the default.

Gender expression

Gender expression can be defined as the way ‘gender’ is shown by individuals to the external world. Societal expectations of gender expression are reinforced in almost every area of life. Even very young children are clear about the gendered choices that boys and girls are “supposed to” make in relation to toys, colors, clothes, games and activities. Girls whose gender expression is seen as somewhat masculine are often considered ‘tomboys’. Depending on the context and the degree to which they transgress norms, tomboys might be seen positively, neutrally or negatively. Positive or neutral labels are harder to come by for boys whose sex and gender expression are seen as incongruent. Common words used to describe such boys tend to be delivered with negative—sometimes hateful—intentions, words like sissy and faggot.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is about a person’s physical, emotional and/or romantic attractions to others. Like gender identity, sexual orientation is internally held knowledge. A person could be ‘heterosexual’ (attracted to the opposite sex); ‘homosexual’ (attracted to the same sex); ‘bisexual’ (attracted to both sexes) or ‘asexual’ (attracted to neither sex). The overwhelming medical and scientific evidence points to all these options being a natural part of human sexuality.

For a full discussion see Baum, J and Westheimer, K *Sex? Sexual Orientation? Gender Identity? Gender Expression? Knowing the difference can make all the difference to students who do not conform to binary norms, Teaching Tolerance / Issue 50 / Summer 2015 pp 34 - 38*



about the other foundation

4



The survey was commissioned by the Other Foundation. The Other Foundation is an African community trust that advances human rights and social inclusion in southern Africa, with a particular focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Underpinning this mission is the understanding that same-sex sexual orientation is a natural aspect of human sexuality, and that it is not pathological to identify or express a gender identity different from biological sex. The purpose of commissioning the study is to provide a rich empirical resource to deepen the knowledge and understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa. In particular it is hoped that the data will be used to challenge some of the most pervasive myths and misperceptions about sexual orientation and gender identity, and to strengthen activism and advocacy to promote the human rights, safety, and social inclusion of LGBTI people in southern Africa.

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approach and methodology

5



The Other Foundation approached the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) to include a module on attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity in the 2015 South African Social Attitudes Survey. The Foundation, in collaboration with the HSRC, brought together a reference group to develop a framework about the factors that might influence people's attitudes, experiences, and behaviour in relation to sexuality and gender identity.

A short description of the people who participated in the reference group is contained at the back of this report. As Figure 1 sets out, the framework hypothesized that some of the key factors that are likely to influence attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity include: direct personal experience of sexual orientation and gender identity; the depth and quality of information and understanding of the nature of sexual orientation and gender identity; the extent of direct contact with gender non-conforming people and people with non-heterosexual orientations; and the type of moral frame that people have, particularly relating to the religious, traditional and cultural affinities that people use to inform their judgments about sexuality and gender.

The framework further hypothesized that people's behaviour would then be influenced by their attitudes towards sexuality (in general), gender (including expression and identity), and sexual orientation (specifically homosexuality and bi-sexuality). Finally, it was also hypothesized that there would be a link between the amalgamation of these kinds of experiences and attitudes and behavior and the levels of social acceptance of non-conforming gender identity and expression, and homosexuality.

It was also hypothesized that the ways in which sexuality and gender were 'policed', recognized, and/or protected in a society (through, for example, laws and policies) would similarly reflect an amalgamation of attitudes, experiences and behaviour around a broader set of issues than simply beliefs about 'homosexuality' or 'gender identity' in themselves.

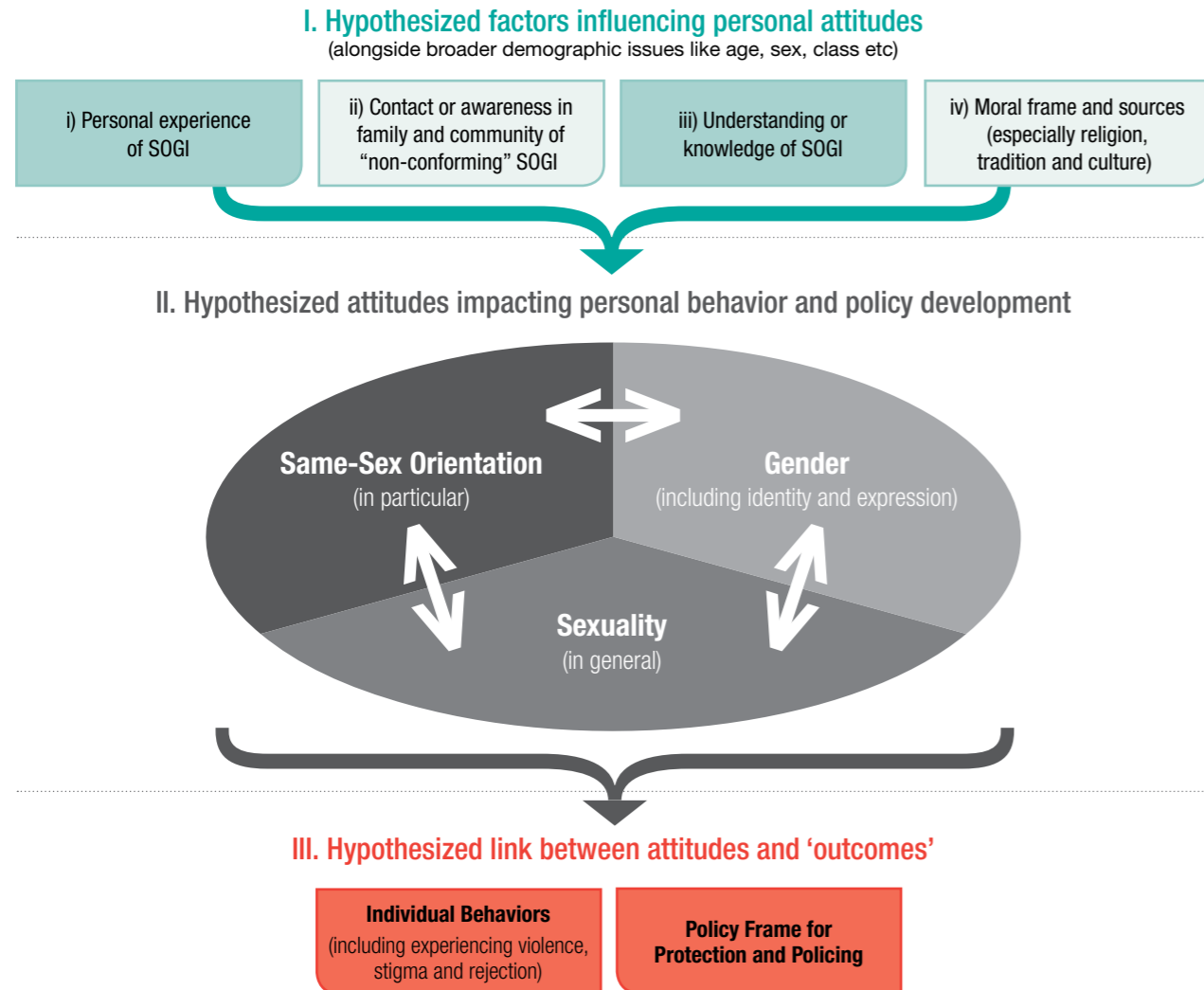
An initial set of over 90 questions was developed alongside this frame. It was eventually whittled down to 32 questions. The research module included a number of questions adapted from international surveys that had been developed to explore similar issues, so that we could compare South African responses with other countries. Some questions



32 questions were included in the survey



FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE RESEARCH



that were included were adapted from previous SASAS modules exploring similar issues such as gender-based violence and xenophobia.

A team at the HSRC finalized the module after it had been piloted internally. Given the sensitive nature of the questions, the experienced team of enumerators received special training for this module. The interviews were undertaken between October and December 2015 as part of the overall SASAS field round. Participants were randomly selected,

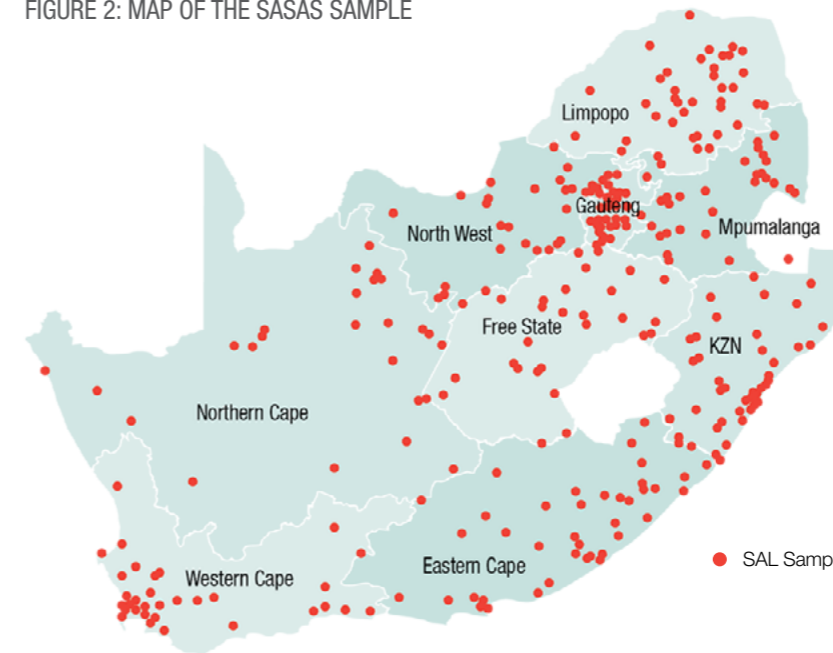
using a sample design across a number of geographical spaces, to ensure national representativeness. One-on-one interviews with an enumerator took place in private in a language that could best be understood by the participants.

A major concern was how to be sure that respondents understood what was meant by 'sexual orientation' and 'gender expression', as these are English language terms that do not have equivalents in some languages. Further they are both relatively abstract concepts that might

not be understood fully, even by English speakers. Hence one of the first questions included in the module asked participants if they knew words in their own languages that described men who had sexual relationships with other men (and women with other women); or men and women who dressed and acted like people of the opposite sex in public. The responses were all recorded, which has resulted in a rich data set of words across all major language groups in South Africa.

The HSRC has a rigorous method of entering and cross-checking data for any errors before using statisticians to apply 'weights' to the results so that the complete data set is nationally representative of the adult population, benchmarked against Statistics South Africa's mid-year population estimates. This methodology is important to explain, because the results outlined below may surprise people, and challenge some widely held perceptions about these issues.

FIGURE 2: MAP OF THE SASAS SAMPLE





caveats and next steps

6

This report presents, for the first time, the nationally representative results of the survey. The data is robust and scientifically valid. The purpose of this initial report is to provide a descriptive overview of the key results, as well as describing in a little more detail some of the demographics of those responses (by sex, population group, age, level of education, level of income and geography). There is a need to do a much deeper analysis for subtle patterns and variants of the results in order to explore factors that might produce the kind of results discussed below.

To foster this kind of investigation the Other Foundation will seek expressions of interest to work with the data in a variety of ways. The Foundation's intent is for the data set to be publicly available in the longer term. However, the results are embargoed for a 12 month period to enable African researchers who live and work on the continent the opportunity to explore the data first. Institutions and individuals interested in having access to the data set during this embargoed period can apply for permission, in the ways set out at the end of this report. The Other Foundation will also provide limited research funds to support work in selected areas of interest to strengthen and support activism to advance the human rights, safety, and social inclusion of LGBTI people across southern Africa.

The Foundation's intent is for the data set to be publicly available in the longer term.



moral framework

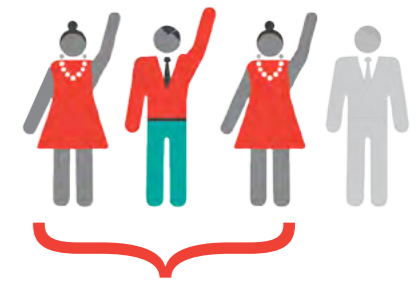
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South Africa is considered a religious society, as the survey results confirm, with 84 percent of adults reporting that they belong to a religion and 45 percent considering themselves to be ‘highly religious’ (values of between 8 and 10 on a 0-10 scale, with a national mean of 6.92). It is only a small minority (about 1 person in 10) who are not “very religious” and who never attend a regular religious institution. This religious attachment finds expression in the moral beliefs of South Africans.

Three quarters (76 percent) of respondents agreed with the statement “God’s laws about abortion, pornography and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late”, with one in three people voicing “very strong” support. A very similar pattern of responses was recorded for the statement “Women should obey their husbands”, demonstrating the continuing strength of patriarchal norms and values in South Africa.

The strength of these opinions, across all demographic categories, shows that a very large segment, if not the majority, of the South African population hold conservative moral beliefs about individual sexual activity and gender roles, which corresponds with their religious affiliation. This suggests that engagement of the population about equality, safety, and social inclusion for LGBTI people should necessarily pay attention to religious affinities and raises questions about the efficacy of advancing LGBTI equality and freedom at a social level through a moral argument based on individual sexual rights.



76%

agreed with the statement “God’s laws about abortion, pornography and marriage must be strictly followed before it’s too late”



For the first time, there is scientifically valid, nationally representative data to inform social dialogue and advocacy, public policies, and academic debate.



The results confirm some common-sense realities which are often denied by those who oppose equality and social acceptance of gay and lesbian people – but which have not been tested in research on this scale up to now. The results also reveal some surprising new findings.

the importance of language

8



Previous research has suggested that there may be an array of terms or phrases that derive from South Africa's multiple languages to describe people who have sex with someone of the same sex or who are gender non-conforming.¹

This is a profoundly important starting point: it would be unusual to have such a widespread concept embedded across so many languages to describe something that did not exist. While many words used to describe gay and lesbian people were pejorative, not all were. This is potentially a very rich research area, building on work that is already being done by some academics, to explore the origin, meaning and use (in different contexts) of language describing same-sex sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities.

This is potentially a very rich research area, building on work that is already being done by some academics, to explore the origin, meaning and use (in different contexts) of language describing same-sex sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities.

¹For a full discussion see Sigamoney, V and Epprecht, M Meanings of Homosexuality, Same-Sex Sexuality, and Africanness in Two South African Townships: An Evidence-Based Approach for Rethinking Same-Sex Prejudice, African Studies Review / Volume 56 / Issue 02 / September 2013, pp 83-107

self-identity

9



Just over half a million South Africans identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or “other” than ‘straight’ or heterosexual.² Adult (over 16 years) men and women identify in this way across all population groups, living in both rural and urban areas, across all age groups, at all levels of educational attainment (primary, secondary and tertiary), and in almost all income groups.

TABLE 1: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU THINK OF YOURSELF? (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	Total Population		Male		Female	
Heterosexual or Straight	97.1	(96.1 – 97.8)	97.0	(95.5 – 98.0)	97.1	(95.7 – 98.0)
Gay or Lesbian	0.7	(0.4 – 1.3)	0.7	(0.3 – 1.8)	0.7	(0.3 – 1.5)
Bisexual	0.5	(0.2 – 1.1)	0.2	(0.1 – 0.6)	0.7	(0.3 – 2.0)
Other	0.2	(0.1 – 0.6)	0.3	(0.1 – 1.0)	0.2	(0.0 – 0.6)
(Don't know)	0.2	(0.1 – 0.6)	0.2	(0.1 – 0.4)	0.3	(0.1 – 0.8)
(Refused to answer)	0.2	(0.0 – 0.8)	0.3	(0.1 – 1.7)	0.0	(0.0 – 0.2)
(No answer provided)	1.1	(0.7 – 1.7)	1.3	(0.7 – 2.4)	0.9	(0.5 – 1.8)
Total	100.0		100.0		100.0	
% LGBT	1.4	(0.9 – 2.2)	1.2	(0.7 – 2.3)	1.6	(0.9 – 2.9)

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the 95% confidence intervals on the point estimates. The percentage identifying as LGBT is derived by combining the share reporting as ‘gay or lesbian’, ‘bisexual’ or ‘other’.

² Results from the survey show that 530,000 self identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual (or other), with a 95% confidence interval showing that the numbers range between 290,000 and 780,000.



The results of the survey confirm some common-sense realities which are often denied by those who oppose equality and social acceptance of gay and lesbian people – but which have not been tested in research on this scale up to now.

The total percentage of the population identifying as LGBT (1.4 percent) is within the range observed in other countries around the world. Studies from several countries, conducted at various times, have produced a statistical range of 1.2 to 6.8 percent of the adult population identifying as LGBT, with many countries clustered around the 2 percent level.

These figures are lower than the commonly cited statistics of 'between 5 and 10 percent of the population' being homosexual, though one does need to consider that this figure may be affected by underreporting due to reluctance to disclose to an enumerator. This question asked respondents about an 'identity', rather than about same-sex "attraction" (have you ever been attracted to someone of the same sex?) or behaviour (have you had a sexual experience with someone of the same sex?). When survey questions are asked in this way, the response rate tends to be significantly higher³:

- United States:** 8 percent of people
- United Kingdom:** 7 percent of men, and 16 percent of women
- Australia:** 8.6 percent women; and 5.9 percent men
- Ireland:** 7.1 percent men and 4.7 percent women

Just over three million South Africans present themselves in public ('dress and act') in a gender non-conforming manner: around 430 thousand South African men dress and act in 'strongly and exclusively feminine' ways; and nearly two million eight hundred thousand South African women dress in 'strongly and exclusively masculine' ways.⁴ This suggests that significant numbers of women in particular, but also men, are breaking gender norms in South Africa.

Additional analysis is needed to better understand the demographic profile of these groups.

³ The British Office of National Statistics (ONS) which designed the question for use in surveys in the UK has suggested that focusing on sexual identity, though narrower in scope than sexual orientation, is nonetheless most closely related to experiences of disadvantage and discrimination, which is why its measurement matters fundamentally for policy.

⁴ More specifically, 433,000 men (2.4 percent) reported that they present themselves as 'strongly and exclusively feminine', with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 190,000 to 676,000 (1.4 – 4.2 percent). Among women, 2.79 million (14.5 percent) reported that they presented themselves as 'strongly and exclusively masculine', with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 2.11 to 3.47 million (11.5 – 18.0 percent).



TABLE 2: WHAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF IN PUBLIC IN TERMS OF HOW YOU DRESS AND ACT? (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	Male		Female	
Strongly, and exclusively masculine	57.5	(52.9 – 62.0)	14.5	(11.5 – 18.0)
Mostly masculine	26.4	(22.6 – 30.5)	6.8	(5.1 – 9.0)
A mixture of both masculine and feminine	3.2	(2.1 – 5.0)	4.2	(3.0 – 5.7)
Mostly feminine	5.2	(3.6 – 7.5)	41.4	(37.3 – 45.6)
Strongly, and exclusively feminine	2.4	(1.4 – 4.2)	27.0	(23.5 – 30.7)
Neither masculine or feminine	2.4	(1.3 – 4.3)	4.8	(3.2 – 7.0)
(Don't know)	0.9	(0.5 – 1.8)	0.8	(0.5 – 1.4)
(Refused to answer)	0.5	(0.2 – 1.2)	0.1	(0.0 – 0.2)
(No answer provided)	1.5	(0.8 – 2.7)	0.7	(0.4 – 1.3)
Total	100.0		100.0	
N	1,233		1,882	



In South Africa, approximately 350,000 men and almost 2.6 million women present themselves in public – i.e, they dress and act – in a gender non-conforming way

violence

10



Although almost 90 percent of respondents say that they have not been physically violent against gender non-conforming people and “would never do that”, there are still disturbingly high levels of self-reported prejudice, abuse and violence against people who are gay and lesbian, and in particular those who do not conform to gender norms in South Africa.

Based on the survey it is estimated that over the previous 12 months, around half a million (450,000) South Africans have physically harmed women who dressed and behaved like men in public,⁵ and 240,000 have beaten up men who dressed like women.⁶ Approximately 700,000 South Africans verbally abused (shouted at or teased) gender non-conforming people.⁷ Perhaps of most concern is that between 6.2 and 7.4 percent of South Africans felt that they might use violence against gender non-conforming people in the future. This is about three million South Africans who think that they might commit acts of violence against gender non-conforming people.⁸

⁵ The 95% confidence interval on the number of adults reporting that they had harmed a woman who dressed and behaved like a man in the last year ranges between 260,000 and 650,000.

⁶ The 95% confidence interval on the number of adults reporting that they had beaten up a man who dressed like a woman in the year prior to interviewing ranges between 96,000 and 380,000.

⁷ The 95% confidence interval ranges between 440,000 and 960,000.

⁸ This figure may in fact be higher if one factors in possible underreporting due to a reluctance to admit participation in violent action to a fieldworker.

A uniformly high number (about 90 percent) of black African, white, and coloured adults say that they have not physically hurt gender non-conforming women, “and would never do it”.



TABLE 3: SELF-REPORTED ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	Keep well away from people I think are gay or lesbian		Has shouted at or teased people who dressed up and acted like someone of the opposite sex		Has beaten up men who behaved like women		Has physically hurt women who dressed and acted like men in public	
Have done it in past year	9.1	(7.5-10.9)	1.9	(1.3-2.7)	0.6	(0.4-1.2)	1.2	(0.8-1.9)
Have done it in the more distant past	9.9	(8.1-11.9)	4.3	(3.3-5.5)	1.4	(0.9-2.0)	1.9	(1.2-3.0)
Have not done it, but might do it	17.7	(15.5-20.2)	11.7	(9.9-13.7)	7.4	(6.0-9.2)	6.2	(4.9-7.6)
Have not done it and would never do it	60.5	(57.3-63.5)	79.8	(77.3-82.1)	88.3	(86.1-90.1)	88.2	(86.3-89.9)
(Can't choose)	2.0	(1.3-2.9)	1.2	(0.8-1.9)	1.1	(0.7-1.8)	1.4	(0.9-2.1)
(No answer provided)	0.9	(0.6-1.5)	1.1	(0.7-1.8)	1.2	(0.8-2.0)	1.1	(0.7-1.8)
Total	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the 95% confidence intervals on the point estimates.

Unsurprisingly, men are around two times more likely than women to report using violence against gender non-conforming people, and to report that they keep well away from people they think are likely to be gay and lesbian. Of most concern is that young people (16 - 19 years old) are up to three times more likely than other age categories to report on the use of violence, especially towards gender non-conforming women. However, verbal abuse and physical violence was reported across all age categories, including people over 65 years.

Prejudice, abuse and violence is reported across all racial categories. White and

black African adults reported the same rate of physically harming gender non-conforming women in the last year, compared to “the more distant past” where black African adults reporting being about three times more likely than other groups to have harmed gender non-conforming women.

Nonetheless, a uniformly high number (about 90 percent) of black African, white, and coloured adults say that they have not physically hurt gender non-conforming women, “and would never do it”. However, Indian/Asian adults, reported the lowest rate of people who “have not done it and would never do it” as well as



TABLE 4: SELF-REPORTED HARMFUL PHYSICAL ACTION TAKEN AGAINST GENDER NON-CONFORMING WOMEN, BY RACE (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

I have physically hurt women who dressed and acted like men in public	Black African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	
Have done it in the past year	1.1	(0.7-1.9)	1.7	(0.7-4.2)	2.6	(0.9-7.0)	1.0	(0.2-4.7)
Have done it in the more distant past	2.2	(1.4-3.6)	0.6	(0.2-1.7)	0.7	(0.2-2.5)	0.7	(0.2-3.0)
Have not done it but might do it	6.8	(5.4-8.7)	3.5	(1.9-6.3)	9.7	(4.0-21.6)	2.3	(1.1-5.1)
Have not done it and would never do it	87.5	(85.1-89.6)	92.3	(88.7-94.9)	80.4	(69.4-88.2)	91.9	(87.7-94.8)
(Can't choose)	1.4	(0.9-2.3)	0.7	(0.2-2.2)	2.3	(1.0-5.1)	1.5	(0.6-3.7)
(No answer provided)	0.8	(0.4-1.7)	1.2	(0.5-2.9)	4.3	(1.4-12.0)	2.5	(1.1-5.7)
Total	100		100		100		100	

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the 95% confidence intervals on the point estimates.

the highest propensity for violence against gender non-conforming women in the past 12 months, and potential to do it in the future.

Violence against men who dress and act like women, whilst less common, is still widely prevalent. Men and young people are much more likely to engage in this kind of violence. From an initial analysis of the survey responses there appear to be two “clusters” of demographics reporting on violence against non-conforming men. The first cluster consists of young, less educated and less well-off men who live in traditional authority rural areas. The second cluster comprises middle aged

men who are well educated, relatively well-off and living in urban areas.

These figures are lower than self-reported xenophobic violence, though, which was also explored in the 2015 SASAS round. In the survey, respondents were asked ‘Have you taken part in violent action to prevent immigrants from living or working in your neighborhood?’ In response, 2.4 percent reported that they had perpetrated such violence in the past year; 3.4 percent said that they had done it in the more distant past; and a further 13 percent reported that while they had not, they might do so in the future.

attitudes

11



A large majority (about 7 out of 10 South Africans) feel strongly that homosexual sex and breaking gender dressing norms is simply “wrong” and “disgusting”.

TABLE 5: ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY AND GENDER NON-CONFORMITY (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

Question:	Sex between two men is just plain wrong.	Sex between two women is just plain wrong.
Strongly agree	46.2	44.6
Agree	26.2	26.3
Neither agree nor disagree	7.6	8.0
Disagree	12.0	11.6
Strongly disagree	5.7	7.5
(Do not know)	1.2	0.9
(No answer provided)	1.1	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0

In terms of people who are ‘disgusted’ by homosexual or gender non-conforming people, the numbers are smaller than the more neutral view of those behaviours being ‘wrong’

70%



7 out of 10 South Africans feel strongly that homosexual sex and breaking gender dressing norms is simply “wrong” and “disgusting”



TABLE 6: ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY AND GENDER NON-CONFORMITY (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	I think gay men are disgusting.	I think lesbians are disgusting.	I think it is disgusting when men dress like women and women dress like men.
Strongly agree	34.1	35.0	33.1
Agree	27.1	25.2	33.4
Neither agree nor disagree	11.3	12.1	10.8
Disagree	19.3	18.9	16.7
Strongly disagree	6.6	7.3	4.1
(Do not know)	0.5	0.6	0.6
(No answer provided)	1.0	0.9	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Men, especially those aged between 45 - 54 years old, are most disapproving of gay and lesbian people. This is an important demographic, particularly in terms of policy change, as it matches the profile of the politically and economically powerful in South Africa. Surprisingly, it was also the youngest aged group (16- 19 years) that were also more likely to report that homosexuality and gender non-conformity is wrong or disgusting. However, there is a sharp drop in the next age bracket (20 - 24 years) - which is the most tolerant age bracket.

Highly religious people most strongly agree that homosexuality is “wrong” and “disgusting” when compared with the general South African population.

“Moderately religious” people tend to be the most tolerant, however, even when compared with the least religious. Moderately and highly religious people are less likely than the general population to keep well away from gay and lesbian people, but report roughly the same levels of violence and abuse against non-conforming men and women.

While roughly equal proportions of all race groups feel strongly that sex between two men is just plain wrong, black African and coloured people are twice as likely to express strong disgust about homosexual people than Indian/ Asian and white people. However, much stronger clustering of attitudes is apparent when looking at income,



TABLE 7: ACCEPTANCE OF GAY PEOPLE AS PART OF FAMILY AND CULTURE AND TRADITION (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

Question:	I would accept a family member who told me they were gay or lesbian	I think a gay person should be allowed to be part of my culture and tradition
Total agreement (strong agreement in brackets)	55.6 (17.7)	51.7 (12.4)
Total disagreement (strong agreement in brackets)	17.7 (10.6)	12.4 (9.6)
Neutral	14.3	17.0
(Don't know / no answer)	4.6	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0

education and geography than by race. Given that income and education levels as well as geographic areas still very much reflect racial patterns as a result of the legacy of apartheid, those factors are likely to be much stronger influencers that race in this indicator.

About two thirds of people who have no schooling think sex between two men is wrong, compared with less than half of people holding tertiary level qualifications. A similar profile emerges when looking at income.

However, as the tables above also show, there is a solid core of South Africans (around 1 in 5) who disagree with these dominant viewpoints. Tolerant views are held across all race groups, with the strongest disagreement with dominant views that homosexuality is wrong

being held by Black Africans (at a ratio of around 2:1 when compared with Coloured and White people holding the same viewpoint).

More than half of all South Africans think that gay people “should be allowed to be part of my culture and tradition”, with only 1 in 10 respondents “strongly disagreeing” with this statement. These results suggest the notion that “homosexuality is un-African” may not be a widely held sentiment amongst the general population. While black African adults most strongly disagreed with this sentiment, it was still only a small percentage, with nearly half of all black African adults agreeing.

Well over half (55 percent) of respondents agreed (17.7% strongly) that they would “accept” a gay family member.

‘moderately religious’ people tend to be the most tolerant, even when compared to the ‘least religious’

the role of contact

12



One of the most compelling explanations for differing views on homosexuality is that one of the best predictors of a person's attitude towards homosexuality is the amount of direct contact they have with gay and lesbian people. In numerous studies it has been shown that what most effectively shifts people's negative perceptions of homosexual people is increased contact, especially with family members and friends.

About two out of every five (41 percent) South Africans report not knowing any gay or lesbian people but 57 percent report knowing more than one gay or lesbian person, with more than a quarter who report knowing at least one or two and 7.8 percent who report knowing more than 10.

Of those that know at least one gay person, only half report that they consider them to be friends or family. One in four people (27 percent) in South Africa have a friend or family member is homosexual.

One in four people (27 percent) in South Africa report having a friend or family member who is homosexual and well over half the population (55 percent) said that they would "accept" a gay family member.



41%

2 out of 5 South Africans report not knowing any gay or lesbian people



TABLE 8: SELF-REPORTED CONTACT WITH GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	How many people do you know who are gays or lesbians?	For those who know gays or lesbians: How many would you consider to be friends or family?	Percentage of all South African adults who have friends or family who are gay or lesbian
None	41	52	71
One or more	57	45	27
(One to Five)	(42)	(40)	(24)
(More than Five)	(15)	(6)	(3)
(Don't know / no answer)	2	3	2
Total	100	100	100

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding off.

people under the age of 24 are twice as likely to have gay and lesbian friends than people over 65 years old



Factors that appear to affect the likelihood of knowing and reporting to have close contact with gay and lesbian people are sex, race; and religion.

Factors that appear to affect the likelihood of knowing and reporting to have close contact with gay and lesbian people (especially more than one or two) are sex (women are more likely than men), race (black Africans are much less likely); and religion (the least religious have the largest numbers).

The two biggest factors that affect knowingly having contact with gay and lesbian people are age and education. People under the age of 24 are more than twice as likely to know gay and lesbian friends and family members than people over 65 years old. While two out of every three people who have no formal education report having no close contact with gay and lesbian people, only one in every three people who have graduated from college or university report the same.





constitutional protections

13

Despite widespread and strongly held negative moral beliefs about gay and lesbian people - a majority of South Africans think that gay and lesbian people should have the same human rights and social acceptance as all South Africans.

Moreover, on a ratio of close to 2:1, South Africans support keeping the current Constitutional protections on the grounds of sexual orientation, compared to those who think it should be taken out. This was after the clause had been explained to respondents if they did not understand it. Just 20 percent of South Africans feel that these protections should be removed.

However, it should also be noted in terms of responses to these questions was the relatively large number of people who did not take a strong position either way. This group is important to understand and engage with as they are people who might be persuaded to move in either direction.

Since 2012 there has been a tenfold increase of South Africans who “strongly agree” with allowing same-sex marriage - from 1 in a hundred then, to 1 in 10 now.



A ratio of 2:1 of respondents supported keeping the current Constitutional protections against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation compared to those who thought it should be removed



TABLE 9: VIEWS ON CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

Gays and Lesbians deserve the same human rights as all South Africans		Which of the following statements comes closest to your view about the [sexual orientation protection clause] in the Constitution.	
	Col %		Col %
Strongly Agree	14.0	It is important that it remains in the Constitution	39.0
Agree	36.6	I do not care about whether it remains or not	27.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16.1	It should be taken out of the Constitution	20.7
Disagree	14.0	(Don't know)	10.4
Strongly Disagree	15.3	(Refused)	1.3
(Don't know / no answer)	4.0	(No answer provided)	1.2
Total	100.0	Total	100.0

in terms of responses to these questions was the relatively large number of people who did not take a strong position either way. This group is important to understand and engage with as they are people who might be persuaded to move in either direction.



education

14



In terms of reaching the 'movable middle' it is clear that there is a need for more information and engagement, not only about sexual orientation and gender identity, but also about the Constitution itself. More than half of respondents indicated that they had never heard of the constitutional protection clause and/or did not understand it. Only 1 in 5 South Africans report understanding it very well.

There is modest support for more education about the human rights and social inclusion of gay and lesbian people in South Africa, both for learners in school as well as community based education. There was a significant number of people who neither agreed nor disagreed with these sentiments, making it potentially an important area for more analysis and engagement by human rights and social justice actors.

There is modest support for more education about the human rights and social inclusion of gay and lesbian people in South Africa, both for learners in school as well as community based education.



TABLE 10: SUPPORT FOR MORE EDUCATION ABOUT GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	Learners should be taught about gay and lesbian rights at school.	There should be community-based education to make South Africans aware of gay and lesbian rights.
Strongly agree	9.4	9.3
Agree	24.1	29.0
Neither agree nor disagree	14.3	16.2
Disagree	24.2	21.6
Strongly disagree	25.1	20.0
(Don't know)	1.9	2.8
(No answer provided)	1.0	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Public education ought to be grounded in a scientific understanding of human sexuality. Reputable psychological, sociological, legal and medical bodies globally agree that same-sex attraction, behaviour and identity are a natural part of the spectrum of human sexuality. A multitude of studies, across a range of geographies, time periods, cultures and traditions have repeatedly shown this to be the case. Most recently, an eminent collection of South African national medical and other research associations released the results of an exhaustive

research program drawing on evidence from a wide range of disciplines that endorses this view.¹⁰

However, this does not reflect the view of the South African public. Only in 1 in 10 South Africans believe that same-sex orientation is best explained as people being born that way (10.7 percent). One in five explain it in terms of it just being natural for some people (17.3 percent). Most South Africans regard people who have sex with someone of the same sex as follows:

¹⁰ Diversity in Human Sexuality: Implications for Policy in Africa, The Academy of Science in South Africa, May 2015 A copy of the report can be downloaded here: <http://www.assaf.org.za/8-June-Diversity-in-human-sexuality1.pdf>



TABLE 11: POPULAR EXPLANATIONS ABOUT SAME-SEX ORIENTATION (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

A lifestyle choice	34 percent
An illness	12 percent
A sin	5.1 percent
A result of a person's upbringing	3.8 percent
Ancestral spirits	3.7 percent

Men are more likely than women to believe having same-sex relationships is an illness, while women hold a stronger view that is the result of a person's upbringing. Younger people are more inclined to think people are born that way or that it is just natural for some people. People with no formal education are three times less likely than the general population to believe that some people have same-sex relationships because it is natural or because they were born that way.



20%

only 1 in 5 South Africans report understanding the Constitution very well

changing attitudes to same-sex marriage

15



Opinions change. Information and advocacy about homosexuality and gender non-conformity is therefore very important – including advocacy for the human rights, safety, and social inclusion of gay and lesbian people.

In 2012, a question on 'gay marriage' was included in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). At that time, 13.5 percent of the population indicated that they approved of same-sex couples getting married; and only one in a hundred South Africans approved strongly. Since then (approximately three years) there has been a significant increase in support: one in ten (a tenfold increase) strongly agreed and the proportion of people strongly disagreeing dropped from just under half (48.5 percent) to just under a quarter (23.4 percent).

14% of South Africans did not take a definite position, either for or against, allowing same sex marriage



and 27% were neither for nor against the constitutional protection of the rights of LGBT people



in relation to questions about protecting the equality of gay and lesbian people, a fairly large number of people do not take a strong position either way – 14 percent on allowing same-sex marriage and 27 percent on Constitutional protections of the human rights of gay and lesbian people. This 'movable middle' might be persuaded to move in either direction.



TABLE 12: APPROVAL OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, 2012 AND 2015 (COLUMN PERCENTAGES)

	2012 question: To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the following: Same-sex couples (gay men / lesbian women) getting married.	Gays and Lesbians should be able to get married in South Africa
Strongly agree	1.5	9.9
Agree	12.0	26.7
Neither agree nor disagree	8.3	14.2
Disagree	28.1	22.6
Strongly disagree	48.5	23.4
(Don't know / no answer)	1.6	3.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: the 2012 question used a similar five-point scale, ranging from 'strongly approve' to 'strongly disapprove'.



Between 2012 and 2015, there has been a tenfold increase in the number of South Africans who “strongly agree” with allowing same-sex marriage



2012



2015

conclusion

16



The results of the SOGI module contained in the 2015 SASAS survey have the potential to play an important role in identifying key issues that need to be addressed if attitudes and norms about sexual orientation and gender identity are to be shifted in South Africa and Africa in general. This report, which describes the initial results is only a first small step in that process.

The Other Foundation will support interested researchers to work with activists and advocates to deepen this knowledge and analysis further, so that more insights can inform their efforts to advance the human rights, safety, and social inclusion of gay and lesbian people in South Africa.

The Other Foundation has embargoed the data from the survey beyond this initial report for 12 months, to give African researchers who live and work on the continent the opportunity to explore the data first. Institutions and individuals interested in having access to the data set during this embargoed period can apply for access to it.

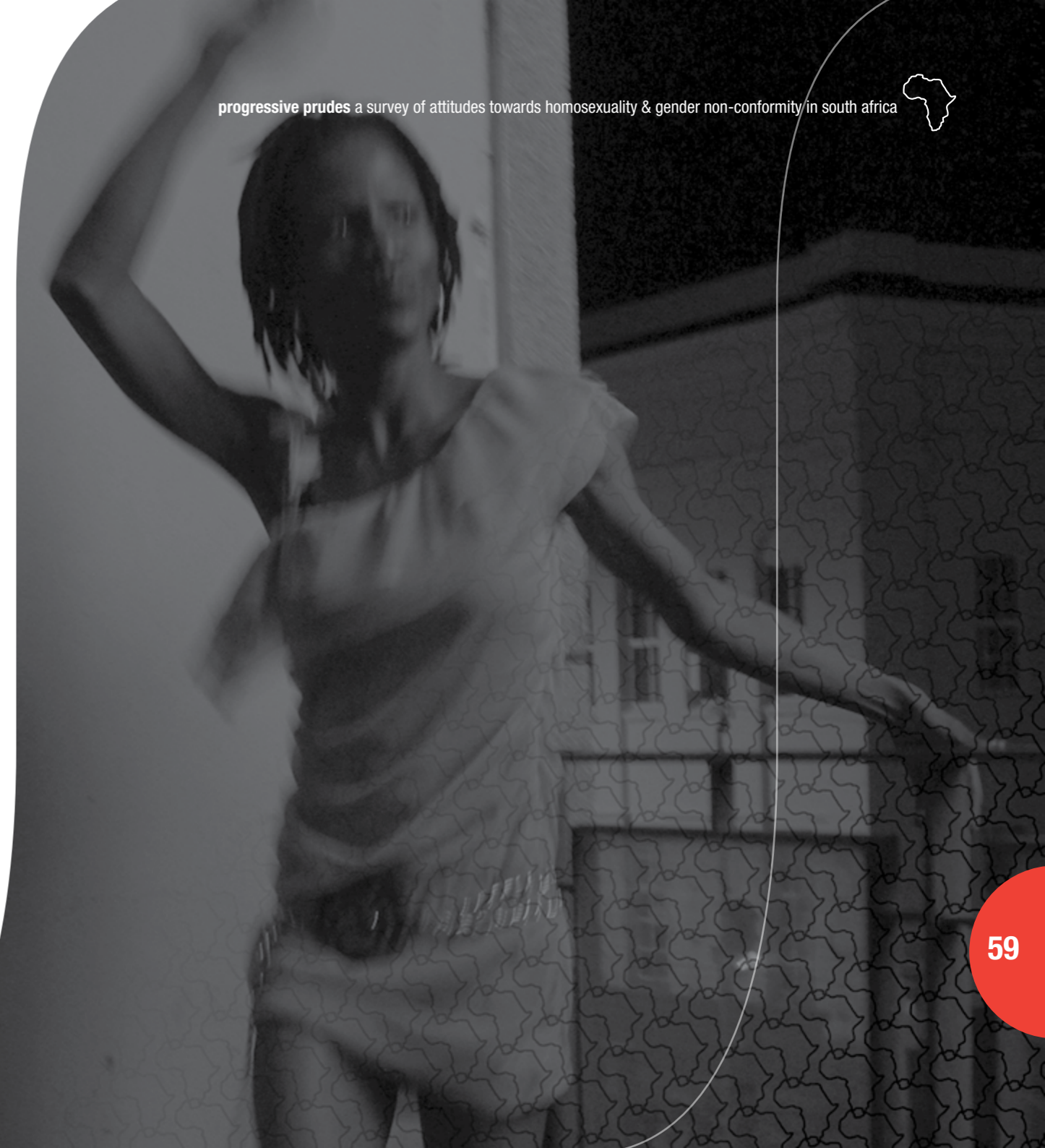


In particular, the Other Foundation is interested in supporting work that explores:

- The ways in which language, culture and tradition reflect and reinforce or transform attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The implications of the research results for public advocacy and campaign messaging by human rights activists, including testing in focus groups and recommendations for mass media work.
- The nuanced ways in which religion influences attitudes and behaviour towards homosexual and gender non-conforming people in South Africa.
- A better understanding of the demographic profile and the key influencers of people who share harmful attitudes and behaviour, based on perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.
- A better understanding of the values that might account for the shift in attitudes towards same-sex marriage and the ways in which these might be harnessed for a broader shift in attitudes towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity.
- Further analysis of geographic (especially rural vs. urban) as well as age and sex cross-tabulations of the research results.
- The public policy implications of the research results for South Africa, especially in relation to (but not limited to) violence against homosexual and gender non-conforming people.

The Foundation is also open to hearing other ideas and proposals.

Please visit the Foundation's website www.theotherfoundation.org to download an application form. More details and a deadline for submission of proposals will also be available on the Foundation's website. All proposals must be submitted electronically in the format provided on the website.





acknowledgements

17

This groundbreaking report is the result of many months of intensive work by a large number of people, too many to all mention in this brief note of acknowledgement.

The idea of doing this study was first proposed by Carla Sutherland, who took forward the idea in consultation with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) with strong support from Vasu Reddy and Ben Roberts at the HSRC. The research framework and survey questions were developed in consultation with a research reference group whose members are profiled below, and finalized by Carla Sutherland. The initial analysis of the raw data was prepared by Ben Roberts and the first draft of this report was written by Carla Sutherland with input from Ben Roberts and Neville Gabriel. Additional inputs were sought from the research reference groups, with special appreciation to Pierre Brouard, Melanie Judge, Niel Victor, and Finn Reygan for detailed inputs.

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research reference group

18



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Dr Finn Reygan

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Mr Niel Victor

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