



Office of Women's Health  
Los Angeles County  
Department of Public Health



Healthy Aging: Emerging Issues: A community dialogue  
A Community Dialogue

***LBT 50+: Unique Health & Aging Issues***  
**Moderated by Kathleen Sullivan, PhD**

# Why are we talking about this?

- Studies have shown that lesbian and bisexual women have higher rates of breast and cervical cancer.
- Transgender women are vulnerable to contract prostate cancer as they age.
- Barriers to care can result in women forgoing care resulting in high acuity of illness.
- Economic barriers are a constant with lesbian couples in particular who have the highest rate of poverty when same sex and heterosexual couples are compared.
- Just as the general population, the LBT population is aging and is part of the “age wave.”

# Order of our presentation

- National perspective on health of LBT and barriers to accessing care.
- What we know locally about the LBT population.
- One woman's experience.

# In California

- A conservative estimate is that there are approximately 861,000 lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women living in California. That translates into 112,000 LGBT people 65 or older nearly half of which live in Los Angeles.
- There are no figures on percentage of transgender men and women.
- There are a reported 109,000 same-sex couples living in California.
- Latinos and Latinas represent 25% of same-sex couples in the LGB population (Gates & Ramos, 2008).

# LA City & County Projections

	Senior Population 65 and older	Estimate LGBT 3% 65 and older	Estimate LGBT 5% 65 and older	Estimate LGBT 8% 65 and older
<b>Entity today</b>				
LA County	1,298,570	38,957	64,928	103,885
LA City	501,410	15,042	25,075	40,112
<b>Entity 2020</b>				
LA County	1,742,082	52,262	87,104	139,366
LA City	680,066	20,401	34,003	54,405
<b>Entity 2030</b>				
LA County	2,477,272	74,318	123,863	198,181
LA City	981,220	29,436	49,061	78,497

# Los Angeles Lesbian and Bisexual Women

In a study by the LA Gay & Lesbian Center lesbian and bisexual women reported the following:

- 7.3% prefer the pronoun they and them rather than she or her
- 19% live on \$999/mo. or less & 47% live on between \$1000-1999/mo.
- 26% are food insecure and 50% report having a physical or mental disability
- ADL and IADL issues: for the women in the study doing house work and using technology were the most challenging

# Los Angeles Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- 66% live alone
- 37% report having arthritis
- 40% report having hypertension
- 17% are diabetic
- **SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health** reported that 5.2% of seniors use illegal drugs (at least once per year). In the LGBT community, 12% of seniors reported using illegal drugs. Lesbians have the lowest rate at 9%, all others are 13-14%.

# Lesbian and Bisexual Women: Focus group interviews

Iris Cantor - UCLA Women's Health Education & Resource Center and Office of Women's Health Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

**Objective:** To understand the healthcare experiences of lesbians and bisexual women who also identify as racial and/or ethnic minorities, veterans, or elders.

**Methods:** Five focus groups, 35 self-identified bisexual or lesbian women. Diverse groups including: African American, Latina, Asian American or Pacific Islander, or a veteran & an elders (65 years or older).

# Findings of the study

- Latina and Asian American report concerns
  - providers from their communities might hold to homophobic cultural norms
  - disclose a patients orientation within their community
  - conflicted with desires to have providers with linguistic and/or cultural skills relevant to them.
- Elders reported and identified
  - **Barriers** to exercising rights of hospital visitation
  - Power of medical decision making is a major concerns for older lesbian couples.
- For all groups
  - Incorrect assumptions about sexual orientation and practices frequently compromise care for women of all groups studied.
  - Poor interpersonal skills of providers is a barrier to disclosure.
  - Support the **idea** of certification for providers & expressed skepticism that such programs would deliver better care.