

**LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER FEMALE ELDERS
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2007
FACT SHEET**

The research presented in this fact sheet is a collection of available limited information. It is not meant to serve as a generalizable set of facts for LBT female elders. The Task Force calls for social science researchers and policy makers to focus more time, energy and resources on this underserved population.

“I am in my 70s and I see other gay women in my neighborhood who I grew up with and who have no Social Security benefits and I see how they have to live and it scares me. I have worked hard all of my life but my jobs never had things like pensions or old age benefits, they were just regular jobs. Those Social Security benefits really matter because as an African-American woman who is a butch lesbian, I do not want to think about what would happen to me if I couldn't take care of myself financially.”

— Ira J., Harlem, N.Y

Numbers

- There are 21,377, 476 women ages 65 to 100-plus years old in the United States, according to U.S. Census bureau estimates (July 2005)

- An estimated 500,000 to 1 million women ages 65 and over in the U.S. are lesbian or bisexual. (Based on the best available research, the Task Force estimates that three to five percent of women in the U.S. population identify as lesbian or bisexual. Available research on the prevalence of transgender people in the U.S. is too limited to provide a reliable estimate.)

Discrimination

- 26 percent of lesbians report their greatest concern about aging is discrimination based on sexual orientation. This fear is most acute for those in civil unions or domestic partnerships, which could make their sexual orientation more visible.

Financial security

- Lesbians feel generally less financially prepared for retirement than do gay men.
- 60 percent of lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women express concern about outliving their income as they age.
- LBT women are less likely than gay and bisexual men to have purchased long-term care insurance or to have written wills.

Health care concerns

- Approximately 12 percent of lesbians have no confidence they will receive appropriate and unbiased treatment from medical personnel in old age.
- Only 35 percent of older LBT women are out to all of their health care providers.

Caregiving responsibilities

- Almost 19 percent of LBT female elders care for their aging partners.
- 20 percent of older LBT women spend 41 or more hours a week assisting a care recipient.
- LBT female elders also report “always or often” assisting their families of origin or parent(s) with healthcare providers (81 percent), arranging for medical care (73 percent) and helping with advice or decision-making (87 percent).
- 70 percent of these women report that the strain of taking care of their family of origin places limits on their social lives and requires them to take time off from work.

Military veterans

- **Though women accounted for 15 percent of the total armed forces in 2005, they accounted for 30 percent of all “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” dismissals.**
- Lesbian and bisexual women of color are discharged disproportionately to all other women service members under the military “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy.
- Those not dismissed under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” are still unable to have their partner’s access veterans’ benefits.
- Nearly one in 10 coupled lesbians ages 63 to 67 served in the military in Korea, as compared to less than one in 100 other women.
- Older lesbian and bisexual women of color are more likely to be military veterans than older heterosexual women of color and older lesbian and bisexual white women.

Data for this fact sheet taken from:

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Dang, A. & Frazer, S. (2005, December). *Black same-sex households in the United States: A report from the 2000 Census*. New York City: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. (www.theTaskForce.org/downloads/reports/reports/2000BlackSameSexHouseholds.pdf)

MetLife. (2006, November). *Out and aging: The MetLife study of lesbian and gay baby boomers*. Westport, Connecticut: MetLife Mature Market Institute. (<http://www.metlife.com/WPSAssets/15374435731164722885V1FOutandAging.pdf>)