

Lesbians are Women Too: A Set of Fact Sheets from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute In Observation of Women's History Month, March 2005

Introduction

“As women and as lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, we must continue our work to break down the barriers that render our lives invisible—invisible to public policy, to health services, to military service, to our neighbors, and in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement. The information about women in these fact sheets is testament to the routine struggle for equality that is our daily lives.” —Rea Carey, Deputy Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

During the last century, women in America have struggled for basic rights in voting, employment, marriage, and reproductive freedom. Although many victories have been won, women continue to be underrepresented in social and scientific research and in government policy. When researchers and politicians consider the lives of women, they often leave out lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women entirely. Further marginalized, LBT women of color find themselves as minorities within a minority, rendered virtually invisible in comparison to other women. For this reason, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has chosen to observe Women's History Month by releasing a set of fact sheets with a focus on black, Hispanic/Latina, and Asian Pacific American (APA) lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women. The research findings about these women reveal remarkable similarities with heterosexual women and households, but they also show significant instances of inequality.

The data for the following fact sheets comes from three studies the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute published during the last year: *Black Same-Sex Households in the United States: A Report from the 2000 Census*; *Hispanic and Latino Same-Sex Households in Florida: A Report from the 2000 Census*; and *Asian Pacific American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People: A Community Portrait*. The Black and Hispanic/Latino fact sheets are based on analysis of data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the largest random-sample dataset available on same-sex couples. The Asian Pacific American women's fact sheet is based on an innovative study of attendees at New York's Queer Asian Pacific Legacy Conference (2004).

Critical findings from the studies include the following:

- The Census reveals that **black women** in same-sex households and black married opposite-sex households parent at similar rates (61% vs. 69%). In contrast, black women in same-sex households earn substantially less annually (21%) and are less likely to own their own homes (50% vs. 68%).

- The Census reveals that **Hispanic/Latina** female same-sex households and Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households in Florida have comparable rates of living in the same residence for the previous five years (41% vs. 46%), and almost equal rates of home ownership (66% vs. 65%), which are key indicators of family stability.
- The **Asian Pacific American** report reveals that a majority (52%) of APA LBT women report that hate violence and/or harassment is the most important issue facing their community.

“These three studies profile women who are consistently overlooked by other research and are a significant contribution to the shamefully small body of research on these vital segments of our broader lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community,” said Ms. Carey. “Nonetheless, these data only begin to scratch the surface. Further research is critical to understand fully the issues facing lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, with particular emphasis on women of color. With a greater body of research, data, and stories revealing the lives of LBT women generally, and LBT women of color specifically, we will all be able to better advocate for policy changes that break down the barriers to full participation in society.”

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH FACT SHEET

BLACK WOMEN IN SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS

Parenting

- Black female same-sex households are parenting children (61%) at rates comparable with black married opposite-sex households (69%) and black cohabiting opposite-sex households (51%).
- Black female same-sex households include children at rates higher than black male same-sex households (61% vs. 46%) and white female same-sex households (61% vs. 38%).
- Black female same-sex households include non-biological children (14%) at rates comparable with black married opposite-sex households (13%) and black male same-sex households (10%).
- Black female same-sex households include non-biological children (14%) at more than twice the rate of white female same-sex households (6%).

Income

- Black female same-sex households earn an annual median household income of \$42,000.
- Black married opposite-sex households report an annual median household income of \$51,000 or 21% greater than black female same-sex households.

Residency Patterns and Home Ownership

- Black female same-sex households (45%) report living in the same residence for the previous five years at rates comparable with black married opposite-sex households (58%), a key indicator of relationship stability.
- Black female same-sex households are significantly less likely to own their own homes than black married opposite-sex couples (50% vs. 68%).
- Black female same-sex households own homes at rates comparable to black male same-sex households (50% vs. 54%).

Military Service

- Black women with same-sex partners are eleven times more likely to serve in the military (11%) than all women generally (1%), and almost four times more likely to serve in the military than black women living with a husband (3%), almost three times more likely than black women cohabiting with a male partner (4%), and slightly more likely than white women with same-sex partners (9%).
- Black women make up less than 1% of all servicemembers, yet they are discharged at three times the rate at which they serve in the military (3.3%) under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Public Sector Employment

- Black women in same-sex households report working in the public sector (17%) at rates comparable to black men and women in married opposite-sex households (20%).
- Black women in same-sex households report working in the public sector (17%) at rates higher than white men in same-sex households (11%) and white women in same-sex households (15%).

Data for this fact sheet is taken from Dang, A., & Frazer, S. (2004). *Black same-sex households in the United States: A report from the 2000 Census*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Black Justice Coalition. Available online at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/ourprojects/pi/blackcensus.cfm>.

This is the first study to analyze the demographics captured by the 2000 U.S. Census about black same-sex households. (Data provided by Lopez and Cheung, Inc.) The 2000 U.S. Census is the largest random-sample dataset available on same-sex households.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH FACT SHEET

HISPANIC/LATINA SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN FLORIDA

Parenting

- Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households are parenting non-biological (foster or adopted) children (3%) at rates almost equal with Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households (4%)

Income

- Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households report an annual median household income of \$40,000.
- Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households report an annual median annual household income that is \$44,420, which is 11% greater than Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households.

Residency Patterns and Home Ownership

- Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households (41%) report living in the same residence for the previous five years at rates comparable with Hispanic/Latina married opposite-sex households (46%), a key indicator of relationship stability.
- Hispanic/Latina women in same-sex households (66%) own homes at rates almost equal to Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households (65%).
- Hispanic/Latina women in same-sex households are less likely to own their own homes (66%) than white non-Hispanic/Latina women in same-sex households (75%).

Military

- Hispanic/Latina women in same-sex households in Florida serve in the military at six times the rate of women in Florida (6% vs. 1%), six times the rate of all women nationally (6% vs. 1%), and six times the rate of Hispanic/Latina women living with a husband or cohabiting with a male partner (6% vs. 1%).
- Hispanic/Latina women make up just 0.31% of service members, yet they are discharged at twice the rate at which they serve in the military (0.60%) under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Immigration

- Almost three-quarters of Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households report that at least one household member was born outside of the U.S. (70%). This is comparable with Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households (75%) and Hispanic/Latino cohabiting opposite-sex households (60%).
- More than one-quarter of Hispanic/Latina female same-sex households report at least one household member who is not a U.S. citizen (28%). This is comparable with Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex (31%) and Hispanic/Latino cohabiting opposite-sex households (33%).

Language

- The overwhelming majority of Hispanic/Latino same-sex households report Spanish as their primary personal language (84%), which is almost equal to Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households (88%).
- Hispanic/Latina women in same-sex households who are non-native English speakers report equal or comparable rates of English language ability to individuals in Hispanic/Latino married opposite-sex households who are non-native English speakers: very well (37% vs. 37% respectively), not well (18% vs. 17% respectively), or not at all (7% vs. 9%) respectively.

Data for this fact sheet is taken from Cianciotto, J. & Lopez, L. (2005). Hispanic and Latino same-sex households in Florida: A report from the 2000 Census. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Available online at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/LatinoSSHInFlorida3-03-05.pdf>.

This is the first study to analyze the demographics captured by the 2000 U.S. Census about Hispanic/Latino same-sex households. (Data provided by Lopez and Cheung, Inc.) The 2000 U.S. Census is the largest random sample dataset available on same-sex households. The originality of the study and this fact sheet provides insight into a community that little has been known about and suggests patterns that may have significance beyond the state of Florida. A similar national study based on Census data is expected in the summer of 2005.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH FACT SHEET LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN WOMEN

Most Important Issues Facing Asian Pacific American (APA) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People

According to APA Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender (LBT) Women

1. Hate Violence/Harassment (52%)
2. Immigration (38%)
3. Marriage/Domestic Partnership (30%)

According to APA Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (GBT) Men

1. Media Representation (48%)
2. HIV/AIDS (45%)
3. Immigration (43%)

Assessment of Personal Experiences in LGBT Communities

- Some 40% of the women surveyed said that their experience with non-APA LGBT people in non-APA LGBT organizations was mostly positive, with 35% of the women saying that their experience was equally positive and negative.
- Similarly, 34% said that their experience with non-APA LGBT people in bars and clubs was mostly positive.
- A far greater percentage (57%) said that their experience with non-APA LGBT people at LGBT community events was mostly positive.

Assessment of Race and Gender in LGBT Organizations

- More than half (60%) of the women surveyed said that LGBT organizations inadequately address issues of race, with only one-third (34%) saying that this issues was addressed at least “somewhat” adequately.
- In contrast, three-quarters (75%) said that LGBT organizations address gender at least “somewhat” adequately.

Assessment of Racism and Ethnocentrism in LGBT Communities

- Three-quarters (76%) of the women surveyed agreed with the statement, “LGBT APA experience racism within the white LGBT community,” with 34% saying that they strongly agreed.
- Two-thirds (66%) agreed that LGBT APA people experience racism when dealing with other LGBT people of color.
- Just over half (52%) said that LGBT APA people experience racism or ethnocentrism with other LGBT APA people.

Assessment of LGBT Issues and Rights in APA Communities

- Almost all (94%) of the women surveyed agreed that homophobia and/or transphobia is a problem within the APA community, with 58% strongly agreeing.
- Over four-fifths (83%) said that mainstream and national APA organizations address LGBT rights less than adequately, with 35% saying that they addressed LGBT rights not at all.
- 67% said their experience with non-LGBT APA people influenced their willingness to participate in non-LGBT APA organizations.

The demographics of women survey respondents by native language were: English (58%), Mandarin (22%), Hindi (6%), and Tagalog (6%). The demographics of women survey respondents by citizenship status were: U.S. born citizen (60%), naturalized U.S. citizen (20%), and non-U.S. citizen (20%).

Data for this fact sheet is taken from Dang, A., & Hu, M. (2005). *Asian Pacific American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people: A community portrait. A report from New York's Queer Asian Pacific Legacy Conference, 2004*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Available online at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/APAstudy.pdf>.

This study reveals the perceptions and experiences of APA LGBT people in both APA and LGBT communities.