

Caring and Aging with Pride

OVER TIME

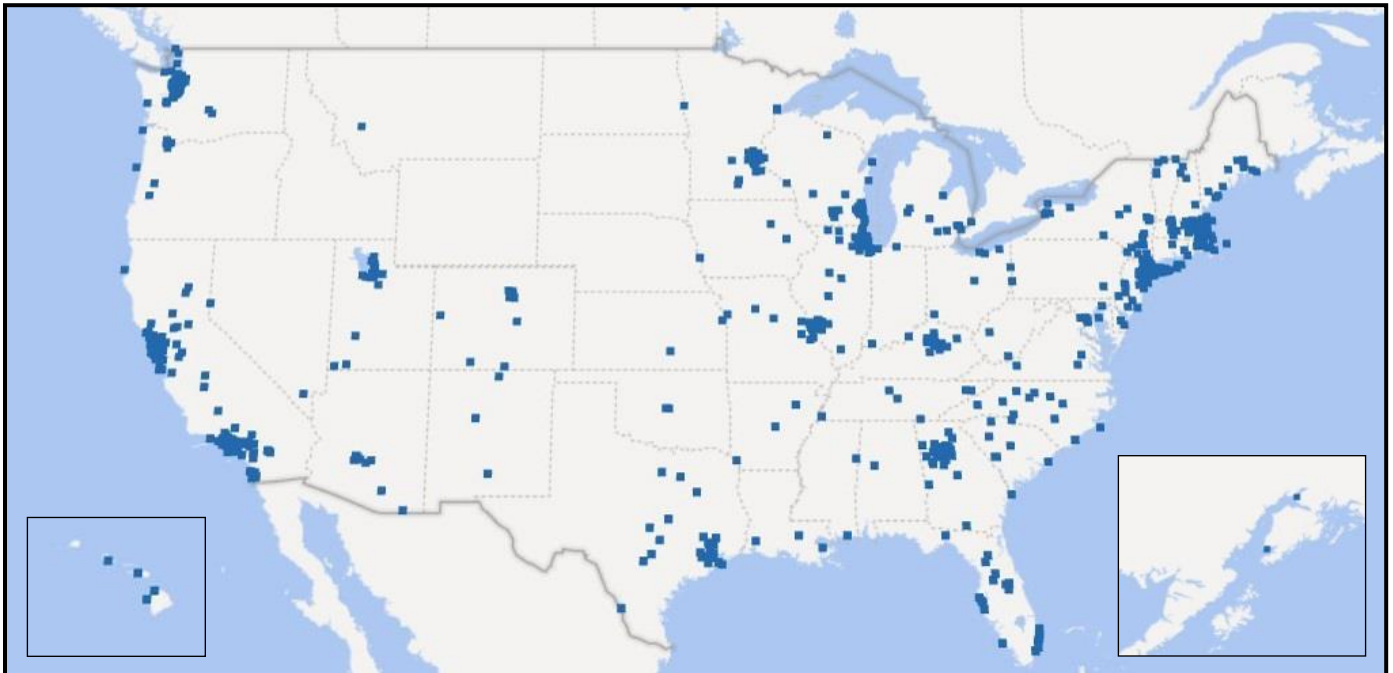
SUMMER 2015 NEWSLETTER

Welcome

It is a privilege and honor to lead the *National Health, Aging, and Sexuality Study: Aging with Pride over Time*. The overwhelming response from so many across the country reflects the passion and resilience of our communities. Across the nation 2,450 LGBT adults 50 to 100 years of age are participating in this on-going project to better understand the health, aging and well-being of LGBT communities. When I first sought funding for this project many told me that LGBT older adults would not participate in research or even complete surveys, but persistence paid off. And now the voices of those who shared their experiences, needs, strengths, and support are making a difference in our communities today and for generations to come. Findings from this project have been presented at the White House and U.S. Congressional Briefings, and have been covered in many widely distributed newspapers and publications. Below is a map of the U.S. showing that participants in *Caring and Aging with Pride* live in nearly every state of this country, which is incredible! We deeply appreciate the on-going commitment of the participants and community partners supporting this project.

Karen A. Fuchs-Goldman

U.S. cities with *Caring and Aging with Pride* participants. We are reaching out across the nation.



Resilience in Aging

LGBT older adults are aging well and with good quality of life when they are supported by their friends and family and when they are able to be active, which are important findings from *Caring and Aging with Pride*. As a community we can celebrate aging well, resilience, and resistance. Sometimes our society only focuses on the negative side of aging for LGBT older adults -- aging in isolation.



Yet, many of our participants have shared their stories of satisfied and engaged aging. Most of our 2,450 participants across the country report good quality of life despite the challenges they may have faced. Most of the LGBT older adult participants have positive feeling about belonging to the LGBT communities and report having someone to do enjoyable things with and to love them. In addition, for many, religious and spiritual activities are important: 38% attend services or activities at least once a month.

When we talked in-depth about aging with our participants, many reported feeling positive and hopeful about getting older. One man shared, “My partner and I frequently discuss issues of aging and what our older years will be like as openly and proudly gay men. We are

hopeful -- and largely optimistic.” Others have found welcoming communities in which to be themselves. One 81-year-old lesbian said, “I’m probably the happiest I have ever been, living in a gay-friendly retirement community. I’m out for the first time in my life.”

We are also a community at-risk. There are serious challenges limiting many of our participant’s ability to experience supportive aging, including low incomes and barriers to accessing housing and services. LGBT older adults experience health disparities, including elevated rates of disability and psychological distress. Over 80% have experienced victimization, including 40% who have been physically assaulted, due to the perception of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is a reflection of the historical and social times in which they came of age. Transgender older adults have the highest rates of victimization and discrimination. Victimization and discrimination are the strong predictors of poor health in these communities.

Our community needs to acknowledge our next stage...

being old...embracing it gracefully.

63-year-old lesbian participant



***Love is not easy to find gay or straight.
In general I'm a happy person and will
remain as long as I can laugh at life and
people. I have fun and keep very busy***

In-Person Interviews



This spring the *Caring and Aging with Pride* Interview Team conducted in-depth interviews with over 300 participants in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle. We want to thank all the participants that were interviewed and the interviewers from around the country. Above are the Atlanta and Seattle interview teams. From left to right: Marilyn, Annie, Karen, Terence, MC, James, Rafe, Alli, and Tasaday. (Courtney not pictured). Erica from the Los Angeles interview team said, "It was an honor to work with *Caring and Aging with Pride* and it was privilege to



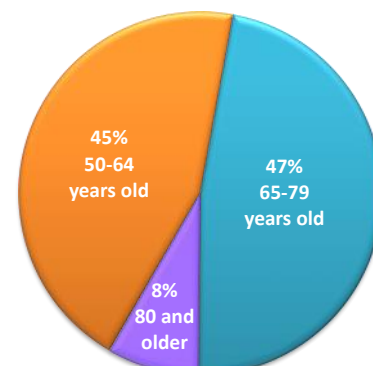
interview a community whose voices often go unheard." Additional Los Angeles interviewers include Ray (right), Sonia, Jesse, Bryan, Natasha, and Sikizi. David (left) from the New York City team commented, "Interviewing our older adults was a great pleasure. We have so much to learn from them. I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in a project that helps capture their stories". Other interviewers in New York included Joey, Colin, Madeleine, and Shelby.



At a Glance

Caring and Aging with Pride is the first study ever to include a large number of LGBT adults 80 years of age and older. These pioneers came of age prior to the modern gay rights movement when positive role models rarely existed, and homosexuality was considered a disorder and criminalized. Those 65 to 79 years old also came of age when sexual and gender minorities were considered a threat to the security of the nation during the McCarthy era. Then there was the Stonewall riots and other social movements of the 1960's when LGBT people became more visible to each other, with the birth of the modern gay rights movement.

Age of LGBT Older Adult Participants



Marriage Equality: What does it mean?

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that marriage is a fundamental right for all Americans. This decision is a monumental step toward equal rights for LGBT individuals. Marriage equality will most likely have a significant impact on LGBT older adults who are in partnerships and choose to marry. One's marital status has many legal and financial implications, including social security spousal and survivor benefits, Medicare eligibility, immigration, income and estate taxes, and health insurance, just to name a few. As important as these changes are, we know that more than half of the *Caring and Aging with Pride* participants are not currently partnered or married. Many already lost a partner through death and these changes will not grant them any protections or additional support.



While legal same-sex marriage reflects a cultural shift in attitudes, it does not protect LGBT people from discrimination; 31 states still lack fully-inclusive non-discrimination protections for LGBT people. The Equality Act of 2015 has recently been introduced in Congress to provide federal protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment,

Out and About

Caring and Aging with Pride publications can be found on our website at:

<http://caringandaging.org/wordpress/published-articles/>

The Project

The *National Health, Aging, and Sexuality Study: Caring and Aging with Pride over Time* is the first ever federally-funded and largest on-going national project designed to deepen our understanding of how various life experiences are related to changes in health, aging and well-being over time for LGBT adults 50 years of age and older. Across the nation 2,450 LGBT adults are participating. This ground-breaking project is a collaboration between 16 community agencies serving LGBT older adults and the National Health, Aging, and Sexuality Study at the University of Washington. Our community collaborators are Center on Halsted, FORGE Transgender Aging Network, Gay & Lesbian Services Organization, GLBT Generations, GRIOT Circle, LGBT Aging Project/The Fenway Institute, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, Montrose Center, Openhouse, SAGE, SAGE Atlanta/The Health Initiative, SAGE Metro St. Louis, Senior Services, Utah Pride Center, and ZAMI NOBLA.

The Seattle research team includes Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen (Principal Investigator), Hyun-Jun Kim, Charles

Recommended citation: Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I., Kim, H.-J., Goldsen, J., Jen, S., & Shiu, C. A. (Summer 2015). National Health, Aging, and Sexuality Study Newsletter. Seattle: National Health, Aging, and Sexuality Study.

Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R01AG026526 (Fredriksen-Goldsen, PI). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

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