



DISABILITY AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

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Outline

- Background
- Data Challenges
- Research Question
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Elders

Experienced stigma and discrimination over life course

- Declassification of homosexuality as mental disorder
- Violence
- HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Decriminalization in *Lawrence v. Texas*
- Repeal of DADT & DOMA
- Same-sex marriage in 18 states

Rarely the focus in aging or disability studies

Three Previous Studies

California Health Interview Study

LGB elders more likely to report a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting or carrying

Washington State BRFSS & *Aging with Pride* Study

LGB elders more likely to experience limitations in any activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems or any health problem that required the use of special equipment

Limitations & Research Gaps

Studies limited in size and scope

- Restricted to individual states: California & Washington
- Few dimensions of disability
- Sometimes no heterosexual comparison
- Non-representative sample of LGB population

Data on sexual orientation & gender identity

- Rarely included on federal or state health surveys
- Almost never ask transgender identity

Why is this research important?

A diverse aging population

The number of LGB older adults will more than double and likely exceed 6 million by 2013

Healthy People 2020 Goals

“Improve the health, safety, and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals”

LGB elders less likely to have kin caregivers

Gap between health needs and necessary resources may exacerbate disparities

Research Opportunity

What can the American Community Survey tell us about the prevalence of disability among older adults in same-sex relationships?

American Community Survey, 2009-2011

Disability questions updated in 2008

Cognitive Disability	Having difficult remembering, concentrating, or making decisions because of a physical, mental or emotional problem
Ambulatory Disability	Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs
Independent Living Disability	Having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping because of a physical, mental or emotional problem
Self-Care Disability	Having difficulty bathing or dressing
Sensory Disability	Deaf or having serious difficulty hearing; Blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses

American Community Survey, 2009-2011

Large sample size!

- 3 million people each year
- Leading data resource for same-sex couples

Rich data resource

- Age, race/ethnicity, education, couple's combined income relative to FPG, labor force participation, metropolitan status, biological/adopted/step-child in household

GLB Population in the ACS

Same-sex spouses / unmarried partners

3 What is Person 1's sex? Mark (X) ONE box.

Male

Female

2 How is this person related to Person 1? Mark (X) ONE box.

Husband or wife

Biological son or daughter

Adopted son or daughter

Stepson or stepdaughter

Brother or sister

Father or mother

Grandchild

Parent-in-law

Son-in-law or daughter-in-law

Other relative

Roomer or boarder

Housemate or roommate

Unmarried partner

Foster child

Other nonrelative

3 What is Person 2's sex? Mark (X) ONE box.

Male

Female

Limitations to the ACS

Missing Information

- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity
- Married vs. Unmarried
- Health conditions

Missing Same-Sex Couples

- If identified as roommates or unrelated adults
- If neither is the respondent
- Missing LGB singles
- If in institutionalized or group quarters

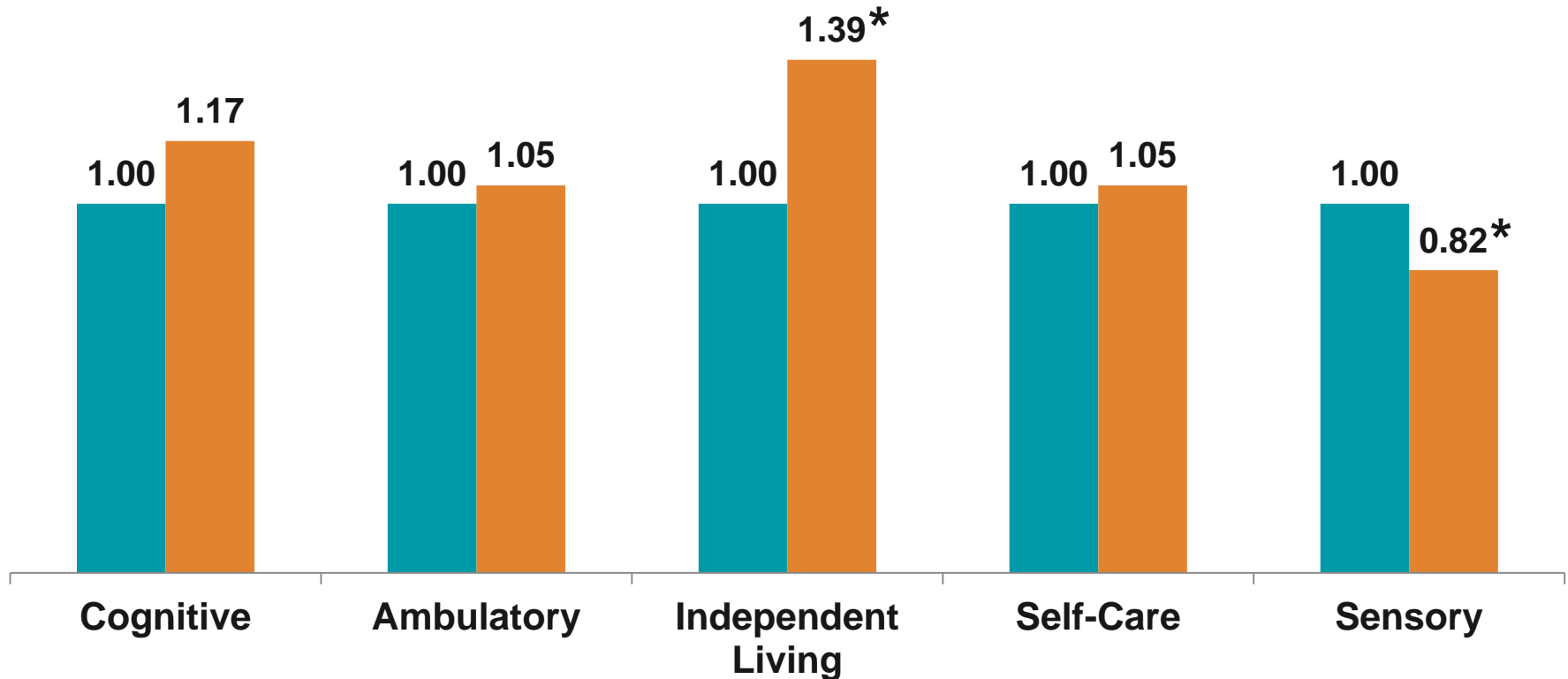
Methods

Logistic regression on five disability outcomes

- Older partnered adults (50+ years)
- Same-sex relationships vs. married opposite-sex relationships
- Controlling for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

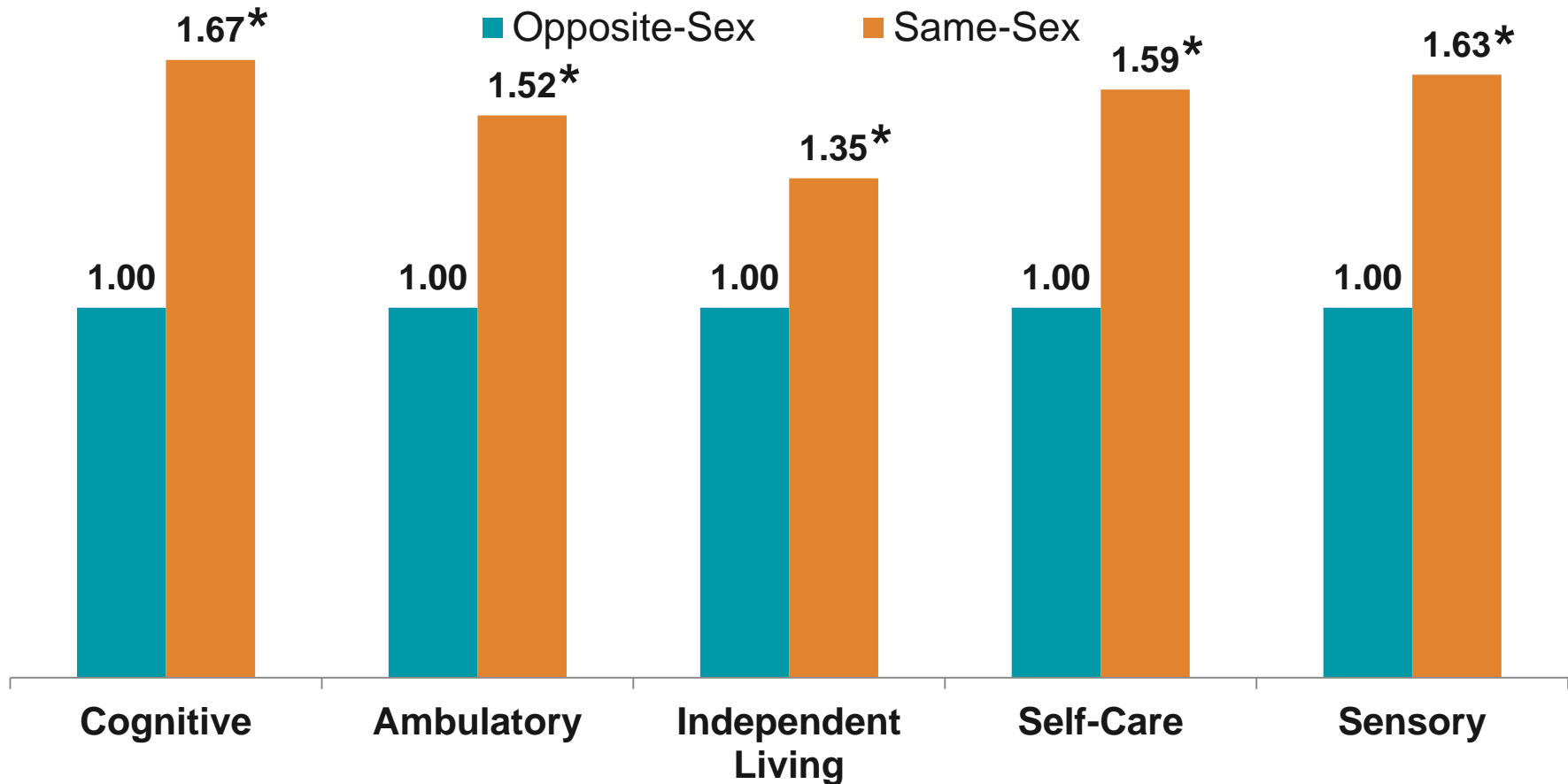
Odds Ratios of Disability for Men

■ Opposite-Sex ■ Same-Sex



Adjusts for age, race/ethnicity, education, couple's combined income relative to FPG, labor force participation, metropolitan status, and child in household. Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2011. * indicates $p < 0.05$

Odds Ratios of Disability for Women



Adjusts for age, race/ethnicity, education, couple's combined income relative to FPG, labor force participation, metropolitan status, and child in household. Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2011. * indicates $p < 0.05$

Why might there be gender differences?

Partnership Bias

- 50% gay men & 30% lesbian women live alone

Selection Bias

- Lesbian women more likely to report same-sex relationship status compared to gay men

Survival Bias

- Missing widows who lost partners
- Partnered men may be more resilient

Key Findings

- Older women in same-sex relationships more likely to exhibit disability compared to their peers in married opposite-sex relationships
- Gender differences are consistent with data from the NHIS
- Yet, living independently still difficult for older men and women in same-sex relationships

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