

Understanding Long-Term Same-Sex Couples

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Introduction

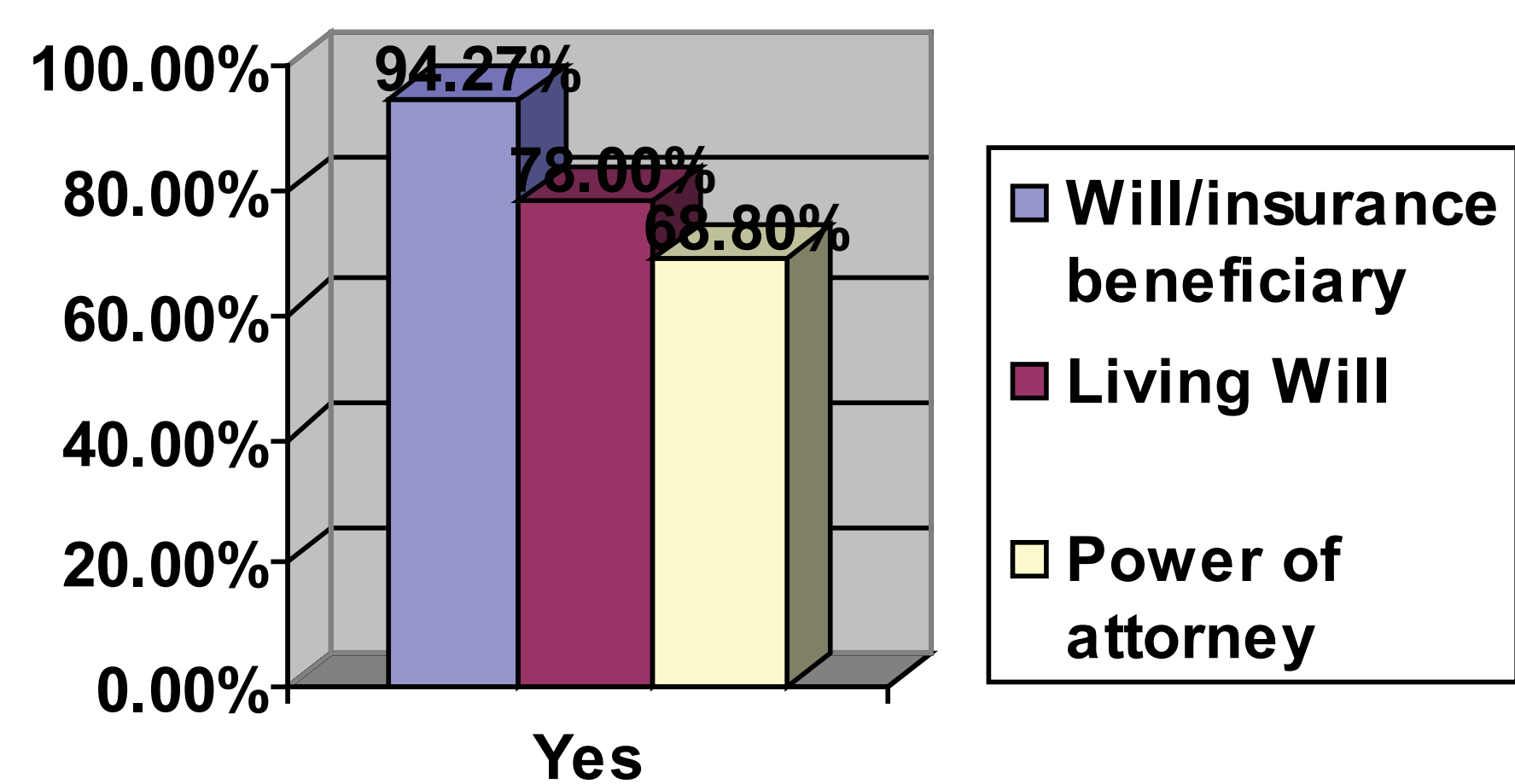
157 people participated in the study. At the time of the survey, all of the participants were in a same-sex relationship that had lasted at least 10 years and in which one or both members of the couple were aged 50 or older. Participants completed a survey that assessed their relationship satisfaction, life events shared as a couple, household roles, caregiving roles, shared assets, relationship protections (e.g., power of attorney), and relationship supporters and detractors. Data was collected in 2006 and 2007.

Demographics of Study Participants (n=157)

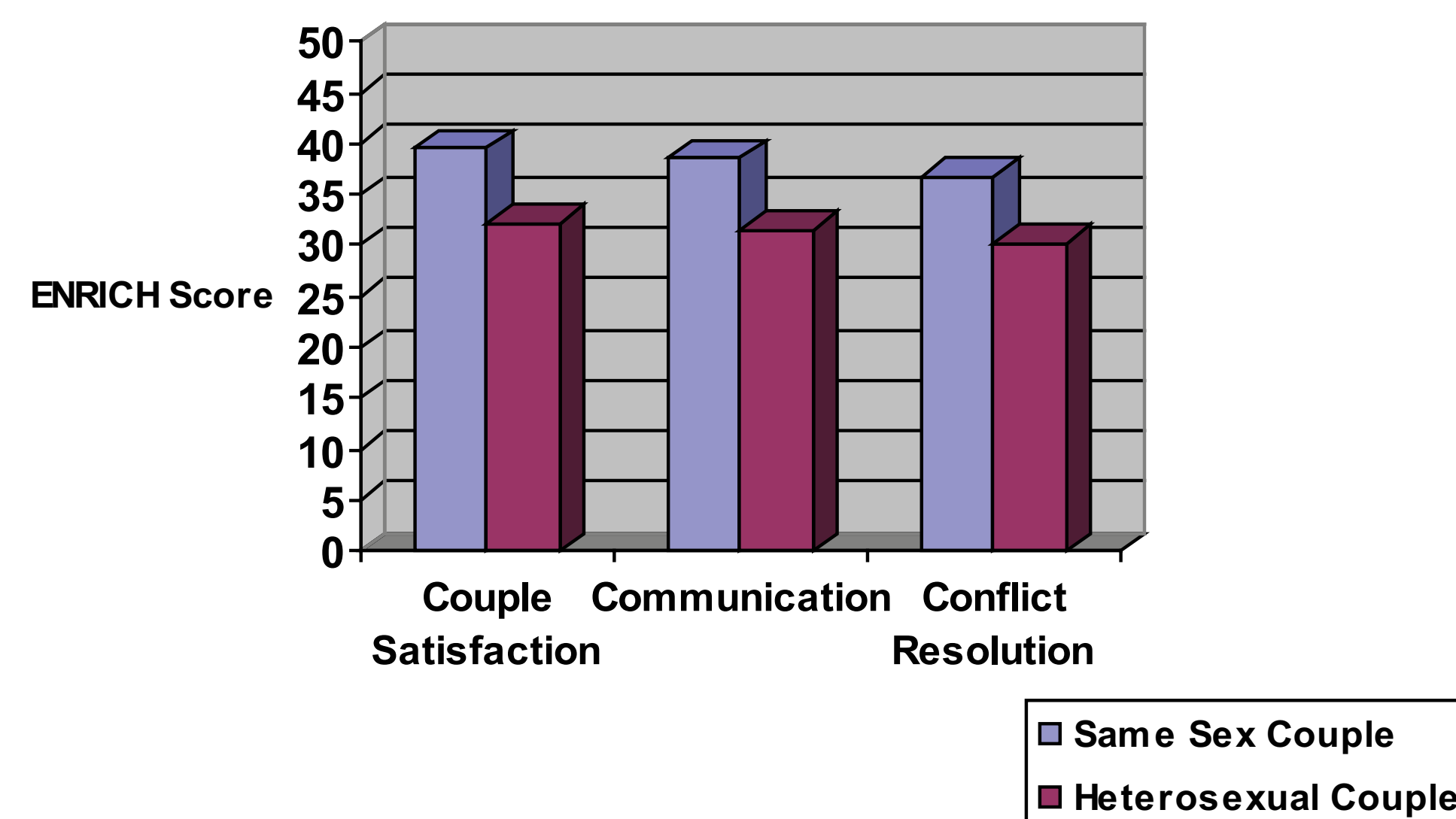
Age in years <i>mean (s.d.)</i>	57.55 (6.87)
Range	44-81
Years in relationship <i>mean (s.d.)</i>	21.99 (7.08)
Range	10-40
Gender	
Female	86 (55.13%)
Male	70 (44.87%)
Personal Annual Income	
Less than \$25,000	21 (13.7%)
\$25,000 - \$49,000	48 (31.4%)
\$50,000 - \$74,999	33 (21.6%)
\$75,000 - \$150,000	35 (22.8%)
More than \$150,000	16 (10.5%)
Population of community of legal residence	
Over 1 million	58 (38.2%)
100,000 - 999,999	47 (30.9%)
10,000 - 99,999	28 (18.4%)
Less than 10,000	14 (9.2%)
Rural area	3 (2.0%)
Not sure	2 (1.3%)
Geographical location	
Midwest	91 (60.0%)
Northeast	26 (17.4%)
Pacific West	20 (12.9%)
South	13 (8.4%)
Outside of U.S.	2 (1.3%)
Race	
Caucasian	150 (95.5%)
All other races	7 (4.5%)

Note: Data are mean (standard deviation) for continuous variables and frequency (percentage) for categorical variables.

Relationship Protections Acquired by Same-Sex Couples



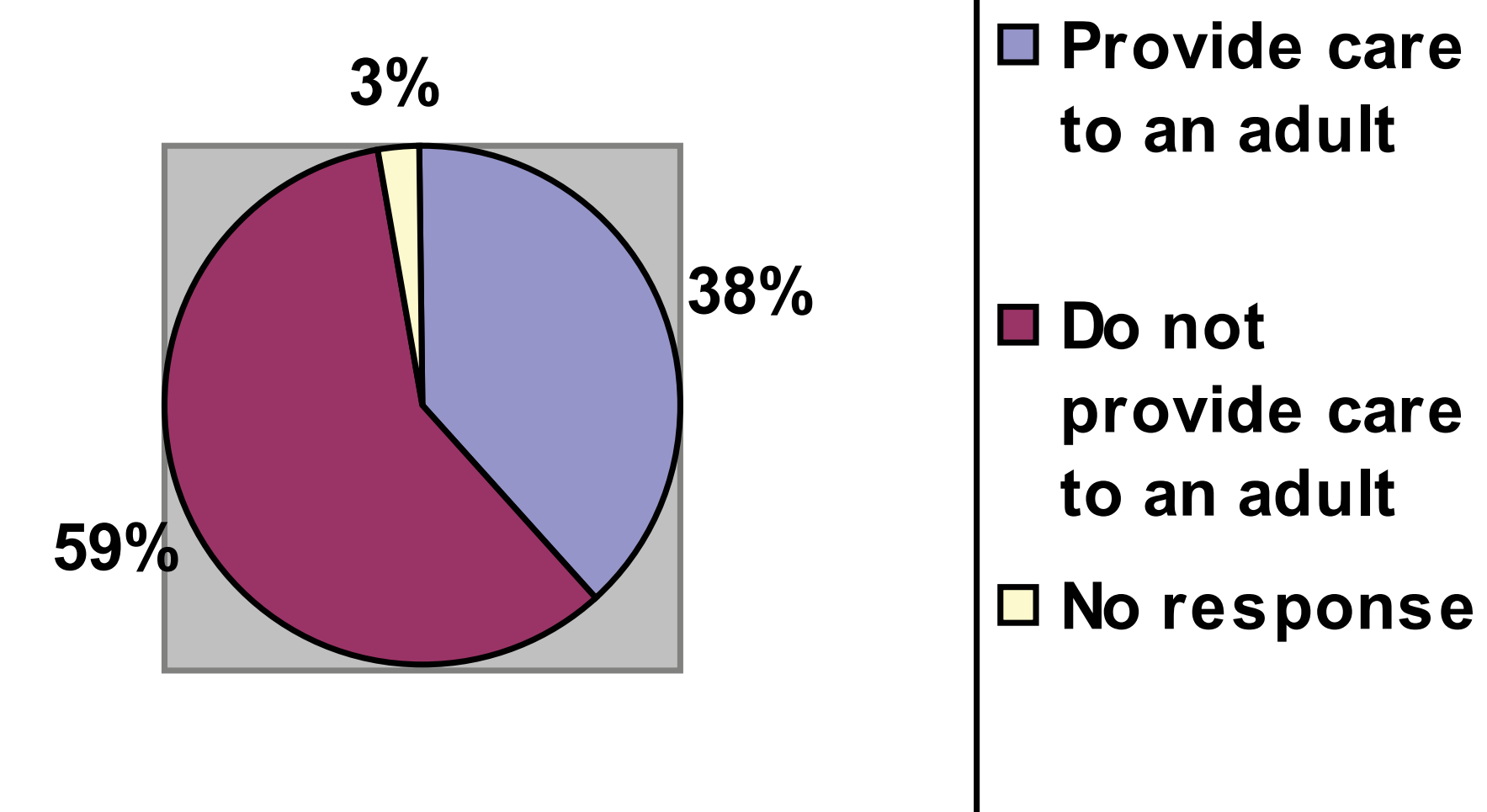
Relationship Satisfaction: A Comparison of Same-Sex Couples and Heterosexual Couples by ENRICH Scale Scores



The results for same-sex couples are based on the 157 participants in this study. The results from the heterosexual couples are based on the 43,002 participants in Olson, D.H., & Olson-Sigg, A.K. (2000) National survey on marital strengths.

Same-sex couples had higher mean scores than heterosexual couples on the Couple Satisfaction, Couple Communication and Conflict Resolution scales. When comparing same-sex couples to one another, no statistically significant variations were found based on age or years in relationship. Gender was a statistically significant variable in Conflict Resolution (women scored an average of 2.4 points higher than men) and Communication (women scored an average of 2.6 points higher than men).

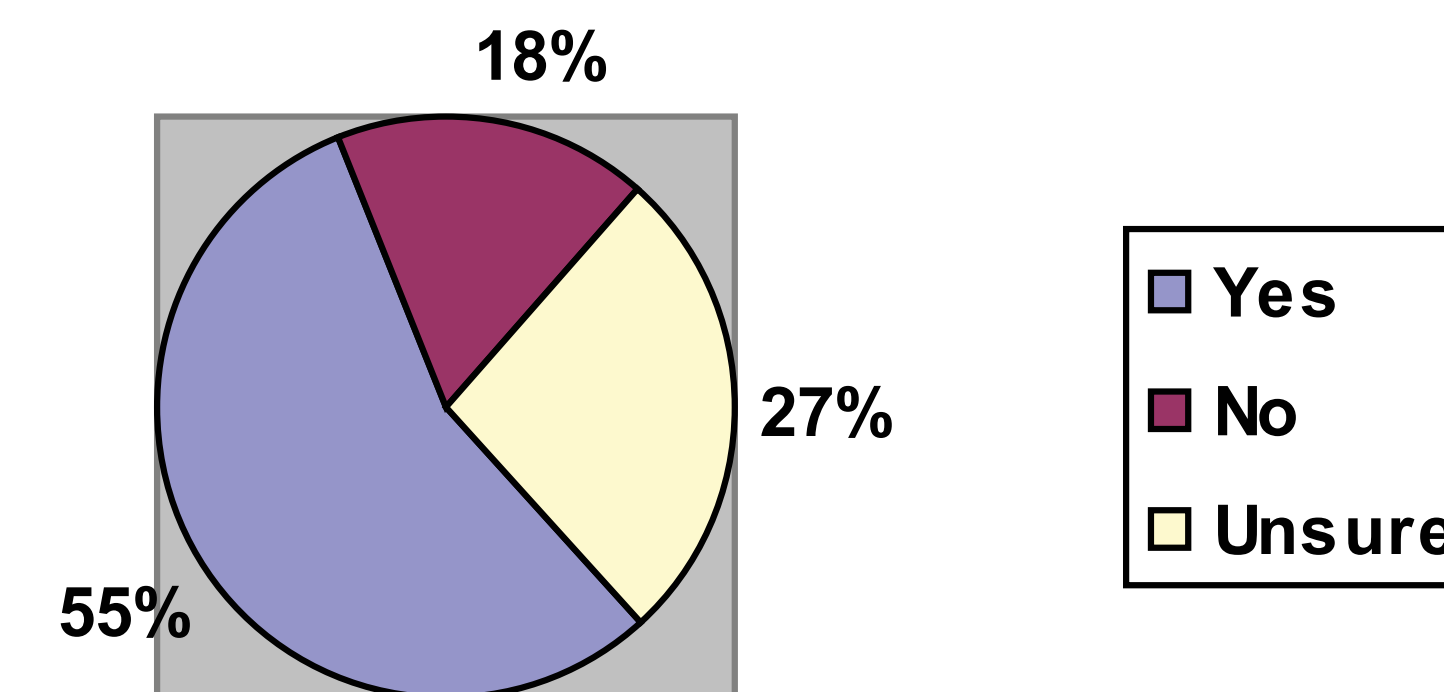
Adult Caregiving Responsibilities of Same-Sex Households



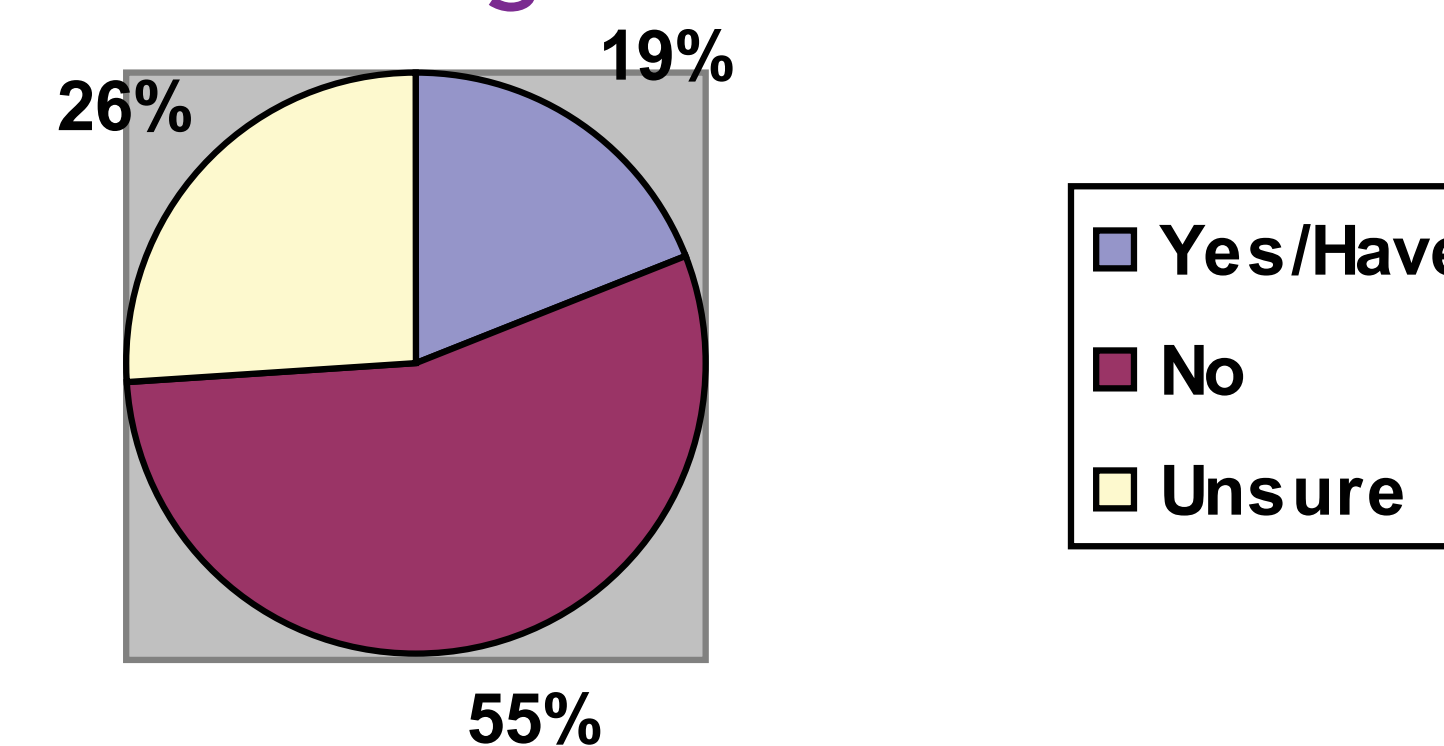
An independent groups t-test was performed that compared adult caretaking by males ($M=.1143$, $SD=.32046$) and females ($M=.1279$, $SD=.33595$), and showed no statistically significant difference ($p=.31$) between levels of caretaking by gender. These results are consistent with the MetLife Mature Market Institute (2006) findings that LGBT men and women share caretaking more equally than their heterosexual counterparts.

Likelihood of Marriage

Percentage who would marry if it were legal in their home state



Percentage who would marry if it were legal in another state



More than half of participants (53.8%) report that they would marry their same-sex partner if it were legal in their home state. Gender was a statistically significant variable (women were more likely than men to marry in-state). Only 19% of participants report that they would travel to another state to get married. Age was a statistically significant variable (people over age 65 were less likely to travel to get married than those under age 65).

Division of Roles in Same-Sex Households

Household Role	I do the task.	Partner does the task.	We share the task.	Not applicable.
Make major decisions	6.5%	5.2%	87.1%	1.3%
Start argument	19.0%	14.4%	48.4%	18.3%
Plan vacation	21.9%	23.2%	54.8%	0.0%
Initiate sex	18.7%	21.3%	47.7%	12.3%
Pay bills	33.3%	30.8%	34.6%	1.3%
Do dishes	26.9%	16.7%	55.8%	.6%
Cook meals	34.0%	28.2%	35.9%	1.9%
Do yard work	22.7%	14.9%	43.5%	18.8%
Clean house	24.7%	14.3%	42.4%	18.8%
Do laundry	31.4%	23.7%	41.0%	3.8%
Fix car	23.2%	19.4%	29.0%	28.4%

Gender had a statistically significant effect on making major decisions ($p=.001$) and starting an argument ($p=.039$). A greater proportion of female participants shared responsibility for starting arguments and making decisions, while a greater proportion of male participants made the decisions and initiated arguments themselves. Gender did not have a statistically significant impact on division of household chores (bills, dishes, meals, yard work, housecleaning, laundry, car repair).

Tips for Working with Same-Sex Couples

- Do not assume that same sex couples are childless. 51% of female study participants and 34% of male study participants report having children.
- Do not assume that their biological families are supportive. Twenty-eight percent of study participants identified family members as their biggest relationship obstacle.
- Ask them to define their family and their support network. It may include family members (43% of participants listed family as their greatest support). It likely includes friends (listed as their greatest support by most study participants).
- Work with same sex couples to protect their legal right to care for one another in illness and death. If the couple has registered a civil union or other relationship protection in a place where this is legal, make sure they understand that they are not legally protected outside of that location. While a majority of the survey participants have taken legal steps to protect their relationship, nearly one-third have not established power of attorney.
- Ask same sex couples about their caregiving activities and activities. More than one-third of the survey participants care for a dependent adult, and research indicates that gay and bisexual men are more likely to act as caregivers than their heterosexual counterparts.
- Respect a same sex couple's decision to come out or to be private about the nature of their relationship. Be cautious about identifying GLBT persons to others (including other GLBT people) unless you have their permission **GUARANTEE CONFIDENTIALITY**.
- Become aware of GLBT resources in your community including: attorneys, health care providers, clergy, therapists, friendly visitors, funeral directors, hotlines and GLBT senior organizations.
- Take extra steps to assist GLBT people in getting the medical care and services they need and deserve.
- Advocate for inclusive policies securing equal treatment and respect for GLBT clients.

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