

Asian LGBT Life Quality Assessment Report

Prepared by:

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Introduction

This is the first survey report on the lives of the Asian LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) population. The survey reveals the intolerance and marginalization faced by the Asian LGBT population within Asian communities, as well as the lack of attention and support from American mainstream society. This report demonstrates the limitations for Asian LGBT individuals to access LGBT public services and resources. Furthermore, the Asian LGBT surveyed display a lack of awareness in exercising their rights and protecting their interests. Overall, the Asian LGBT population is in strong need of HIV prevention and treatment resources, sexual awareness education, networking events, mental health support and legal assistance. The participants also expressed the need for LGBT organizations that provide services specifically for the Asian population.

Asian Development Service Group NFP has been able to obtain the above survey results thanks to 302 participants from thirty-six states and the District of Columbia. The questionnaires were distributed online, with the assistance of Asian LGBT networking groups in the United States, such as China Rainbow Network. This is the first survey that gauges the needs and difficulties of the Asian LGBT population. The results provide valuable insight for a wide range of individuals and groups, including: policy makers, LGBT activists, non-profit organizations, and academic researchers. However the conservative cultural environment of the Asian community presented challenges in distributing this survey among certain groups of individuals. Elderly, low-income, and individuals with lower education levels tend to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity, which prevented this survey from reaching them. Therefore the results of this report are mainly drawn from young Asian LGBT individuals with higher education levels, who tend to openly express their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, the reality for Asian LGBT individuals is even harsher than what this report reveals.

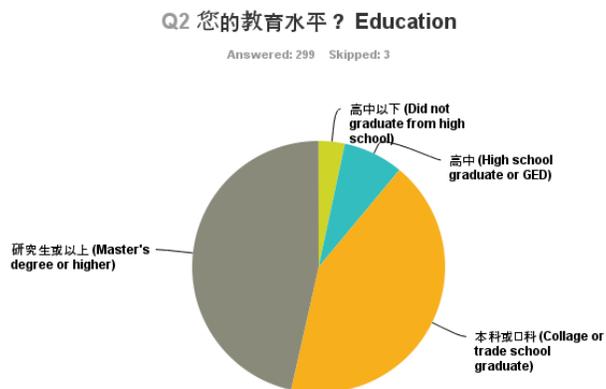
I. Personal background

- Age

Among 297 valid responses, the vast majority (83.5%) are participants of the 18-29 age group. 12.5% are between ages 30-50, 3% are under 18, and 1% are above 50.

- Education

According to 299 valid responses, 89% of the participants have an above-college education, with 46.5% reporting graduate-level degrees or higher and 42.5% college degrees. 7.7% have completed high school or high school equivalency, and the remaining 3.3% have less than a high school education.



- Residency

In total, 271 participants answered the question about their residency. The top three states which most participants reported are CA (18.5%), NY (17%) and IL (35%). In addition, 6.6% live in WA, 5.5% in MA, 4.1% in PA, and 3.31% in D.C. Nearly seventy percent of all participants combined live in the states or district mentioned above.

- Gender identity

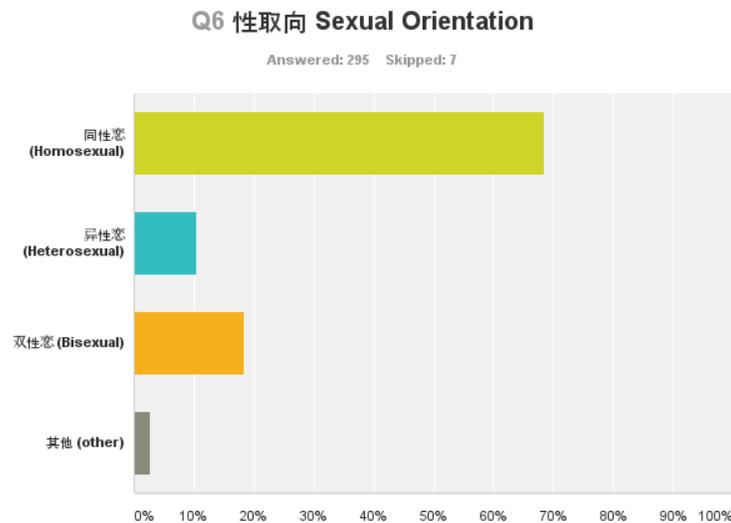
293 valid responses were collected regarding participants' gender identity. 176 participants (60.1%) identify as male while 107 (36.5%) identify as female. The remaining 3.2% chose other.

- Gender identity and biological sex

294 participants responded to the question of whether their gender identity matches their biological sex. The vast majority, at 91.8%, said yes and 7.9% said no.

- Sexual orientation

According to the 295 responses collected on the question of sexual orientation, 68.5% participants identify themselves as gay or lesbian, 18.3% identify themselves as bisexual, 10.5% as heterosexual, and 2.7% chose other.



II. Sexual orientation and coming out

Based on the data collected so far, 68% of the participants identify themselves as homosexuals, and 19% as bisexuals.

- Sexual orientation recognition age

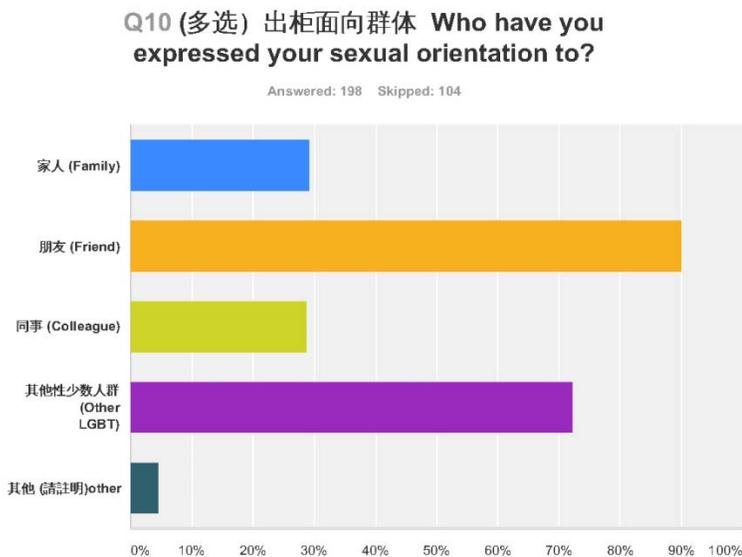
The majority, 62.6% of the participants became aware of their sexual orientation in their teens, while 18.7% formed their identification during adulthood and 17.4% during pre-teen. 1.4% of the participants remained unsure of their sexual orientation until later years. No one reported forming their sexual orientation identification during middle age years.

- Sexual orientation and stress

In terms of the attitudes towards their sexual orientation, only 7.2% of the participants reported feeling very distressed; 23.2% expressed that they are distressed to some extent; 42.3% said that they used to be distressed, but no longer experience it now; 27.3% said that they have never felt upset about their sexual orientation.

- Disclosure of sexual orientation

More than three quarters of these participants (78.8%) have disclosed their sexual orientation to others. Of these, only 29.3% of them have come out to their families and 28.8% to their colleagues. Most of them (89.9%) chose to come out to their friends. 72.2% have come out to other sexual minority groups.



Among those who have come out to someone, 54.3% think that the disclosure of their sexual orientation didn't have a negative impact on their life. Yet some participants admit that they will only come out if the act won't impact their lives negatively, and that they dare not to come out to those who may hold influence over their lives and may impact their lives negatively. 34% of the participants believe that coming out has had a negative impact on their family relationships. 18.8% think the disclosure of their LGBT identity has negatively affected their relationship with friends. 9.1% mentioned that their work has been negatively affected due to their sexual orientation, while some specifically wrote that they will never come out in the workplace.

III. Marriage and relationship

- **Marital and relationship status**

The vast majority (90%) who took the survey are unmarried. Only 8.5% of the participants are currently married. 1.2% of the surveyed are divorced while less than 1% are widowed. Of the 24 participants who have ever married, 64% are or were in same-sex marriages while the rest entered heterosexual marriages. 20% of the respondents are married to opposite-sex spouses who are aware of their partners' sexual orientation, while 16% have not informed their spouses of their real sexual orientation.

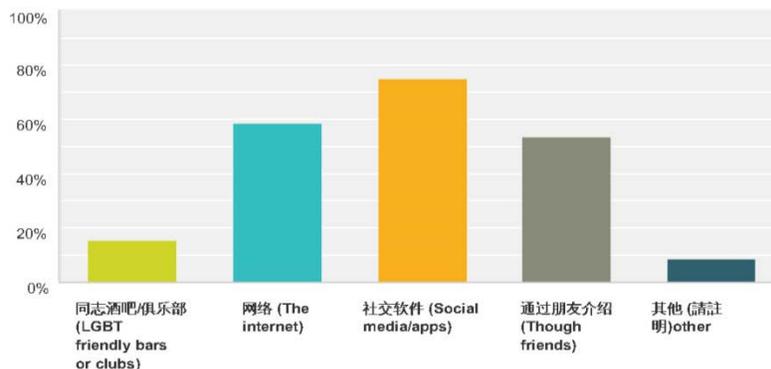
Less than half of the participants (45.9%) do not have a sexual partner; 35.3% of them have a stable and exclusive partner; 13.7% have temporary sexual partners; 5.1% have open relationships.

- **Ways to find partner**

According to participants, one of the most common methods of finding sexual partners is through the use of social apps. 74.8% of all participants have found at least one sexual partner this way. 58.7% reported finding their sexual partners through the internet and 53.7% through friend networks. 16% of the participants met their sexual partners in gay bars or clubs. 8.3% of the participants said that they met their partners through other channels such as school or via LGBT events.

Q15 (多选)交友方式 In the past, how did you find your sexual partners?

Answered: 242 Skipped: 60



IV. Access to sexual education

- Access to sexual education

224 valid responses to the question about access to sexual education were given. Most participants (95.1%) acquire this kind of information from the internet. The second most common answer is from people of the same sexual orientation, with 125 participants accounting for 59.4% choosing this option. Books and magazines are the third most popular source of information (46.9%). 36.2% obtained sexual education from friends. 26.8% listed professionals, such as teachers and doctors, as important sources for such information. Only 4.5% of the participants claimed acquiring sexual education and sexual orientation education from their parents. Those who chose others gave examples of movies and academic research as alternative channels.

- Whether participants are satisfied with their access to sexual education

Among the 224 valid responses received, the majority (58%) indicated that they are satisfied with their level of sexual education, whereas the remaining 42% replied that “I’m not satisfied and I think there should be more access to sexual education”.

V. Safe sexual conduct and HIV

There are 176 male participants in the survey. This section of the questionnaire reveals their conditions and attitude concerning safe sexual conduct and HIV.

- Condom use

91% of the participants suggest that they may use condoms while having sex. However, less than half of the participants (47.6%) said that they would use condoms every time. 4.8% reported never using condoms, and 36.6% of the participants use condoms most of the time; 7.6% use condoms half the time, and 3.5% use condoms only occasionally.

- Knowledge and testing of HIV/AIDS

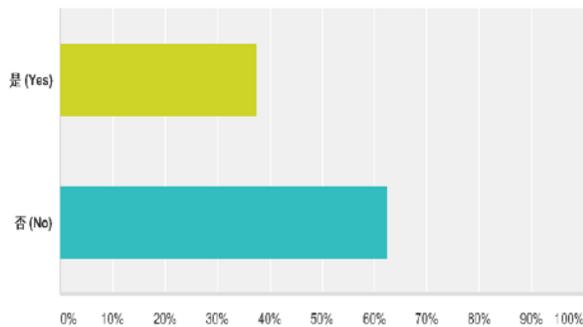
According to the survey, 66.9% of MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) feel that they are quite knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS. 31.7% of them think that they have some knowledge of HIV/AIDS. 1.4% said they have no knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

Only 37.4% of MSM participants of the survey have received tests or treatment for HIV in the US. Something to note is that such data is collected from a selective group where the majority have a higher education level. According to UNAIDS SA report of 2009, for the general population with lower education levels, the ratio of people who have knowledge about HIV/AIDS will likely be even lower¹.

Meanwhile, when asked the question “Do you think you should take an HIV test?” 46.2% of the participants indicated they should. 44.1% of the MSM participants don’t think there is any need for them to get HIV testing. 9.7% said that they are unsure. However, it is worth noting that when asked “Would you be willing to take a free HIV test?” 93.1% of the responses were positive, while only 6.9% indicated unwillingness to get a free HIV test.

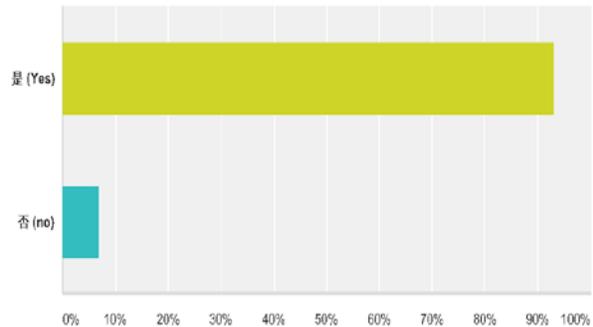
Q21 您是否在美国接受过HIV艾滋病测试或治疗？ Have you received HIV testing or treatment in the United States?

Answered: 146 Skipped: 30



Q23 您是否愿意接受免费的HIV艾滋病病毒测试？ Are you willing to take a free HIV test?

Answered: 144 Skipped: 32



¹ HIV and AIDS in South Africa, UNAIDS SA, available from: <http://www.avert.org/aidssouthafrica.htm>

In this survey, only 6.2% of the participants claimed they will only get a HIV test when there is Asian language assistance available; 26.2% think that Asian language service would be helpful for them during the tests; but the majority (67.6%) said that they do not need language services.

From the responses to the section of “safe sex and HIV”, it is evident that most of the participants are aware of the harm of HIV, yet a large number of them have not taken effective self-protection measures or HIV tests. Even in such a highly educated MSM group with little language difficulty, the proportion of MSM taking HIV tests remains low. Based on the fact that 93.1% of the respondents would get tested if they had access to a free HIV test, it can be concluded that the best method to encourage testing within this group is to direct free HIV testing services to Asian LGBT and increase awareness of these services.

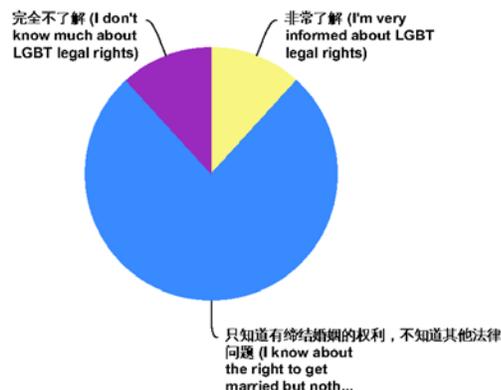
VI. Awareness of legal rights

Although 98.6% of the participants are aware that same-sex marriage is now legal in the U.S., there are still several participants who are unaware.

To the question “Do you know about the legal rights that LGBT people have in the U.S?” 76.5% of the participants said that they have no clear understanding of other relevant legal issues except the right to marry. 11.8% chose “I don’t know much about LGBT legal rights.” Only 11.8% think that they are very informed about LGBT legal rights.

Q26 您是否了解美国性少数人群权益的相关法律? Do you know about the legal rights that LGBT people have in the U.S?

Answered: 221 Skipped: 81



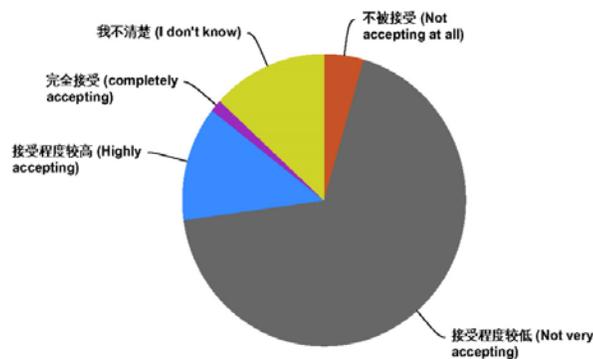
VII. Social acceptance of Asian LGBT

- Acceptance within Asian communities

Asian communities require significant improvement in their acceptance levels of LGBT individuals. 4.5% of the participants think that they are not accepted by the Asian community at all. Additionally, 68.3% feel that the acceptance level is very low. 13.1% chose “I’m not sure.” Only 12.7% feel that the acceptance level of LGBT individuals within the Asian community is high. Less than 2% think that they are completely accepted.

Q27 您认为居住在美国的亚洲群体对性少数人群
群的接受程度如何？Based on your personal
experience, how accepting is the Asian
community within the US towards LGBT
individuals?

Answered: 221 Skipped: 81

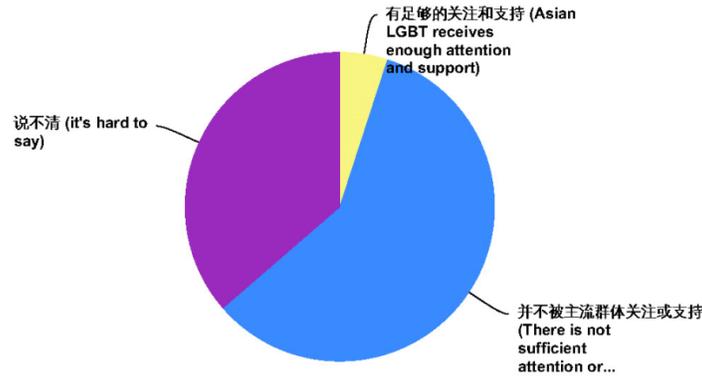


- Attention and support from American society

Most participants believe that the Asian LGBT population lacks attention and support from mainstream American society. 58.6% of them think that the mainstream society is not paying attention to or supporting the Asian LGBT population; 36.4% chose “I’m not sure”. Only 5.3% think they have received sufficient attention and support from mainstream American society.

Q28 您认为华人性少数人群是否得到美国主流社会的关注和支持？ Do you think the Asian LGBT community in the US receives enough attention and support from the US society?

Answered: 220 Skipped: 82



- **Discrimination and impact**

3.6% of the participants reported experiencing discrimination based on their LGBT identity, which led to significant negative impacts on their lives; 34.6% have also experienced discrimination but reported no severe impact. 39.1% don't feel discriminated against. The remaining 22.7% have never disclosed their sexual orientation, which mitigated the impact of discrimination on them.

VIII. Need for services and participation in activities

- **Access to services for LGBT**

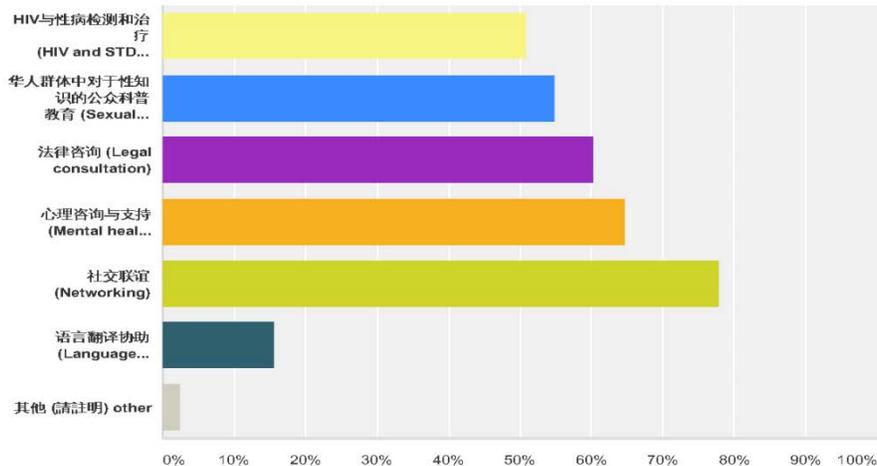
When asked "In the U.S., do you have easy access to social services and support designated for LGBT individuals?" almost sixty percent of the participants (56.4%) chose "No" while less than half (43.6%) chose "Yes."

When asked "What kind of services and resources do you wish to be provided with," 51% chose "HIV and STD testing and treatment," 78% chose "Networking events," 64.7% want "Mental health support." 60.3% said they need "Legal consultation," 54.9% chose "Sexual health awareness events within Asian communities" and 15.7% of the participants selected "language

assistance.” In addition, some participants specifically expressed a need for “psychological counseling for parents of LGBT individuals” and “emotional assistance for relationships.”

Q31 (多选) 您希望获得哪些服务或帮助？
What kind of resources do you wish you are provided with?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 98



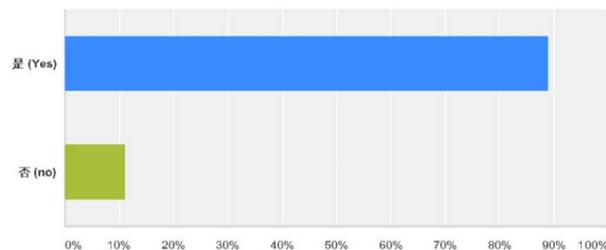
When asked “Would you like to receive the above-mentioned services in Asian neighborhoods,” more than half of the participants (54.5%) chose “No, I prefer receiving services outside of the Asian neighborhoods,” while the rest (45.5%) chose “Yes.”

- Need for Asian LGBT organizations

Responding to the question “Do you think it's necessary to have organizations working specifically for the Asian LGBT community in the U.S.?” 88.8% of the participants said “Yes,” while only 11.2% said “No.”

Q33 您是否认为在美国应有专为亚洲性少数人群服务的组织？
Do you think it's necessary to have organizations working specifically for the Asian LGBT community in the U.S?

Answered: 206 Skipped: 96



When asked “Are you willing to volunteer or participate in the activities of these organizations?” 41.1% of the participants said “Yes, and I would like to play an active part within these organizations.” 38.2% said “Yes,” 17.9% chose “I’m not sure.” Only 2.9% made it clear that they don’t want to volunteer or participate in such activities.

Conclusion

Within the last several decades, American society made tremendous progress in the legal rights as well as social acceptance of the LGBT population. In June 2015, the US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, a decision that is now the milestone achievement of the LGBT rights movement in this country. Nationwide, numerous non-profit organizations serve the broad interest of LGBT communities through advocacy, services, and special events.

Despite the remarkable social progress and the growing number of resources, the Asian LGBT population have never been directly involved in these LGBT movements, neither have they fully enjoyed the fruits of advancement in LGBT rights.

The cultural environment within the Asian community largely accounts for the relatively inactive and marginalized position of Asian LGBT individuals. The Asian community tends to be more culturally conservative and reserved in comparison to other racial or ethnic groups. This quality extends to political participation, where Asian individuals tend to be less aware of their civil and political rights. Within the Asian community, discrimination and stigmatization against LGBT individuals are prevalent as well. Biased and incorrect perceptions of LGBT individuals are widespread; such as many believe that there are no homosexuals within the Asian population. Moreover, Asian community members reinforce these negative perceptions amongst themselves. This cultural pressure creates tremendous difficulties for Asian LGBT to reveal and explore their identity within their own community.

In the meantime, the problems caused by cultural and social factors have led to a series of issues for Asian LGBT individuals, especially in terms of HIV prevention and treatment. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published an article which claimed that “ [s]ome Asians

may avoid seeking testing, counseling, or treatment because of language barriers or fear of discrimination, the stigma of homosexuality, immigration issues, or fear of bringing shame to their families.”² According to this survey, the majority of Asian MSM have never taken an HIV test, preventing them from monitoring their health conditions and seeking treatment if needed. Thus an open and accepting environment within the Asian community is crucial for controlling HIV infection and ensuring the well-being of Asian MSM.

On the other hand, the mainstream American society has not given sufficient attention or support to the Asian LGBT community. Most LGBT organizations that provide community services or health services do not include the Asian LGBT population as a main target group. However this survey has shown that, even for those with higher education and little language barrier, obtaining access to LGBT-targeted services often proves difficult for Asian LGBT. Those with relatively lower education attainment and income, or lacking English proficiency, are even further marginalized due to the lack of resources.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, Asians are the fastest growing population in the U.S. over the last ten years.³ With a population of 17,300,000, Asians account for 5.6% of the total U.S. population.⁴ A 2013 report by The Williams Institute shows that there are about 325,000 Asian LGBT individuals in the United States⁵. However this large growing group remains silent and almost invisible to the general public. Their rights are unprotected, as they conceal their LGBT identity due to social pressures within their own family and community. The American mainstream society, LGBT organizations, academia, and the Asian community should collaborate and take responsibility for advancing the rights of LGBT individuals within Asian communities.

² HIV Infection Among Asians in the United States, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, available at : <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/asians/#b>

³ The Asian Population:2010, United States Census Bureau, available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ LGBT Asian and Pacific Islander Individuals and Same-sex Couples, The Williams Institute, available at: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census-2010-API-Final.pdf>