

# Developing an online platform to improve social connections for older adults aging with HIV:

## Lessons learned from multi-site discussion groups

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## ▸ Background and Objective

### Presenting problem

Older PLWH age 50+ face unique health challenges and social isolation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Study objective

Create an online platform to connect older PLWH to:

- community resources,
- service providers, and
- each other.

## Today's Presentation Topic

- ▶ Lessons learned regarding the technological barriers encountered during the facilitation of focus groups with older PLWH

## ▸ Methods

The study includes 2 phases:

- (1) Formation of a **Community Advisory Board (CAB; n=24)** of older PLWH from three study sites: Palm Springs, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and Tampa, FL
- (2) Conduct **virtual focus groups (n=9)** to characterize the challenges faced during the pandemic and solicit feedback on developing an online platform

The research team identified cross-cutting themes related to technological barriers encountered while conducting the focus groups.

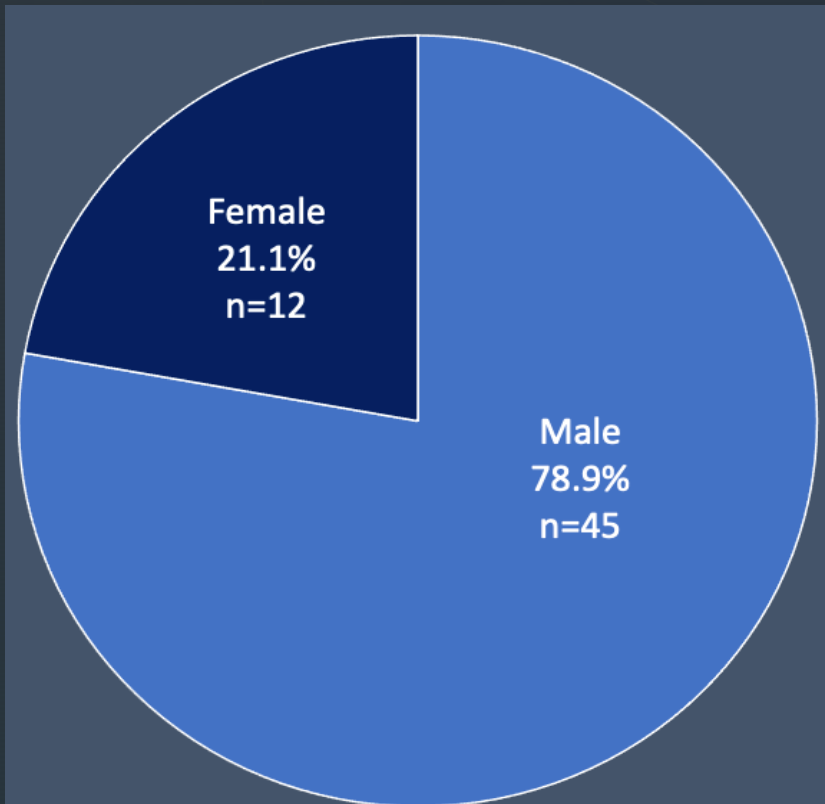


Community Advisory Board Member Screenshot  
CAB Meeting #3 May 2021

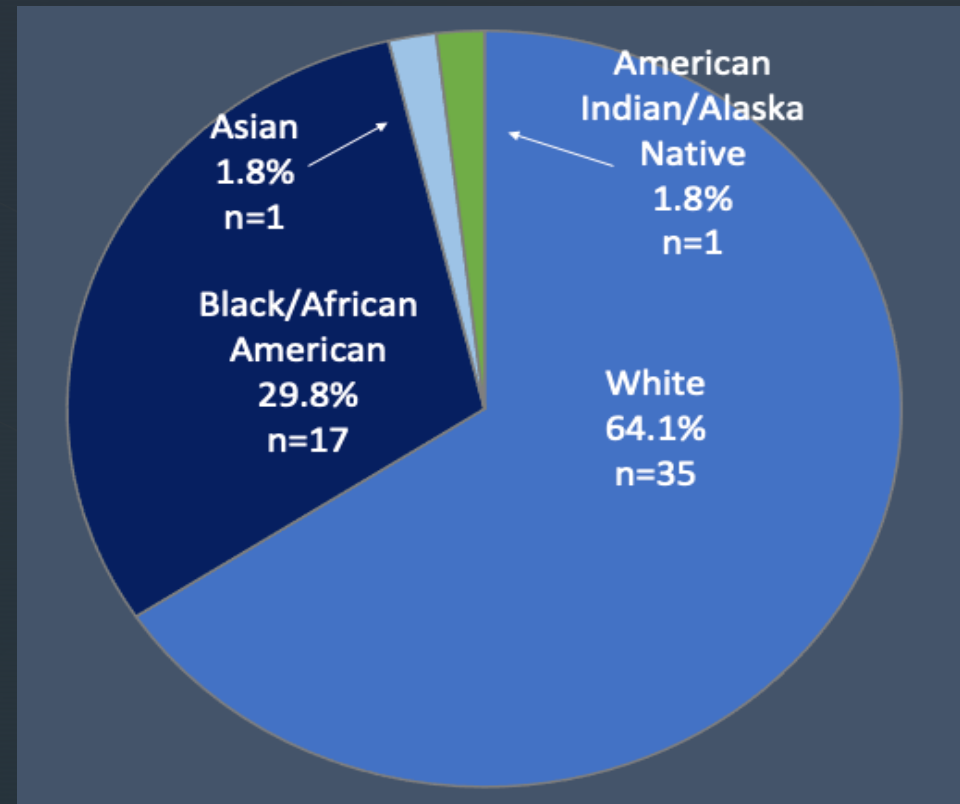
## Results

- 57 PLWH aged 50-82 years (mean=59.8)
- 17.5% identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x (n=10)

### Gender Identity



### Race



# Lessons Learned



Optimize access to Zoom by providing user-friendly, simple instruction prior to the start of sessions.



Be flexible with varying internet connectivity and bandwidth issues.

# Lessons Learned



Create an alternative approach to incentives.



Use individualized methods of communication to inform and remind participants.



## Future Directions

Following the “lessons learned” may help

- facilitate research activities in a virtual setting,
- ease participant and research staff burden, and
- eventually lead to a successful development of the online platform.

*These lessons learned can be transferable to other studies that use virtual settings to conduct research activities.*

