

# Aging with Pride and Authenticity: Challenges and Supports for LGBTQIA+ Older Adults Living with HIV



UC Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services conducted **23** focus groups with **208** LGBTQIA+ older adults across California to explore the unique challenges, support systems, and aspirations of the LGBTQIA+ aging community. This handout presents findings from **67** LGBTQIA+ older adults living with HIV.

## CHALLENGES

**GENERAL:** Older HIV survivors described feeling marginalized, experiencing invisibility and a lack of understanding within both the broader community and the HIV/AIDS support networks.

**HEALTHCARE:** Healthcare providers frequently attributed all health issues to aging, overlooking HIV-specific conditions, resulting in medical neglect and frustration.

**CAREGIVING:** Significant challenges existed in accessing consistent caregiving and supportive services due to inadequate availability and resources.

**HOUSING:** Severe shortage of affordable and supportive housing specifically tailored for LGBTQIA+ and HIV-positive older adults exacerbated vulnerabilities.

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** Language barriers, particularly for Spanish-speaking individuals, severely restricted access to essential social and mental health services.



***I have damaged kidneys after being diagnosed in the early 80s. Early medication was known to harm kidneys... Doctors gaslight me [and] say 'you're old'***



## STRENGTHS & SUPPORTS

**GENERAL:** Older HIV survivors demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and leadership, providing peer support, advocacy, and mentorship while fostering intergenerational learning and community visibility.

**HOUSING:** Programs like HOPWA ensured stable housing, while advocacy efforts expanded access to safe, supportive, and affirming housing for vulnerable individuals.

**HEALTHCARE:** Specialized providers addressed complex health needs, ensuring HIV-related concerns weren't dismissed and empowering individuals through peer health navigation.

**CAREGIVING:** Peer-driven caregiving networks provided essential emotional and practical support, fostering mutual aid, strengthening social bonds, and reducing isolation among aging HIV survivors.

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** Nonprofit organizations for LGBTQIA+ older adults and people living with HIV provided emotional, social, and practical support, reducing stigma and improving overall quality of life.

***It's showing the world that I'm resilient. I'm still here. I'm thriving. I'm healthy. I have a doctor who supports me 150%, and that makes a huge difference.***



# NEEDED SUPPORTS & SUGGESTIONS

**GENERAL:** Older HIV survivors called for enhanced visibility, social connectivity, and community engagement through structured programs and regular outreach to isolated individuals.

**HEALTHCARE:** Participants wanted geriatric-specialized HIV care and culturally responsive, linguistically appropriate mental health services, particularly for underserved communities.

**CAREGIVING:** Participants wanted expanded availability and improved accessibility of caregiving services, including the return of peer support and buddy systems.

**HOUSING:** Participants advocated for more investment and development of affordable, supportive, and LGBTQ+/HIV-specific senior housing.

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** Participants suggested regular collaboration among HIV and senior advocacy organizations that could improve resource sharing and community integration.

*We need real, on-the-ground outreach consistently—find those who pulled away and get them back into supportive spaces.*

## IF GIVEN A MAGIC WAND, THEY WOULD WISH FOR:

### RESPECTFUL AND ATTENTIVE HEALTHCARE:

Trained providers who understand the complexity of aging with HIV and acknowledge survivors as fully aware and cognizant individuals deserving respect.

### ENHANCED COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT:

Robust networks and caregiver alliances, promoting better collaboration among HIV and aging organizations to reduce isolation and ensure comprehensive care.

### AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE HOUSING AND CARE NETWORKS:

Programs and funding for affirming and inclusive housing that builds community, including networks of care among LGBTQIA+ communities and HIV survivors.

### REDUCTION OF STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION:

Programs and services that reduce stigma surrounding HIV and disabilities and that foster empathy and inclusion across communities.

**FURTHER DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:** This handout includes data from five focus groups with 40 older adults living with HIV in San Francisco and Riverside Counties. Four focus groups were conducted in English, and one was conducted in Spanish. Participants included 30 BIPOC older adults 50 to 81 years old. It also includes data from 16 older adults with HIV from other focus groups.

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