

Aging with Pride and Authenticity: Challenges and Supports for LGBTQIA+ Adults 75 and Older



UC Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services conducted **23** focus groups with **208** LGBTQIA+ older adults in California to explore the unique challenges, support systems, and aspirations of the LGBTQIA+ aging community. This handout presents findings from **32** LGBTQIA+ older adults 75 years or older.

CHALLENGES

GENERAL: LGBTQIA+ older adults (75+) described feeling marginalized due to societal ageism, compounded by declining health, grief from losing peers, and increasing invisibility.

HEALTHCARE: Navigating multiple disabilities and health needs created challenges in healthcare access and fragmented care, leading to long wait times, poor provider communication, and increased stress due to uncertainty of care.

CAREGIVING: Fear of institutionalization, limited access to reliable caregiving, and insufficient transportation options posed significant threats to independence.

HOUSING: Rising housing costs, difficulty in maintaining homes, and limited affordable housing options presented significant barriers for stable living.

SOCIAL SERVICES: The shift to digital platforms created barriers, and limited awareness or complexity in accessing support services that left many feeling unsupported.



The hardest thing about being my age is being my age. I have things I can't do anymore, things I can't do well, and most of my friends have died.



STRENGTHS & SUPPORTS

GENERAL: Strong resilience, adaptability, and accumulated knowledge allowed LGBTQIA+ older adults to mentor younger generations and engage actively in community-building.

HEALTHCARE: Local advocacy and inclusive community healthcare initiatives helped ensure ongoing access to critical medical and emotional support.

CAREGIVING: In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) offered critical caregiving assistance and help for maintaining independence for those aging at home.

HOUSING: Programs like HOPWA provided critical housing support for older adults with HIV, offering essential assistance during crises.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Local senior centers, virtual support groups, and legal planning services helped mitigate isolation, maintain social engagement, and secure future needs.

I'm in a good community. I'm grateful for that. I think back to the early '80's when something like this would never have taken place. It's a sign of hope for the future.



NEEDED SUPPORTS & SUGGESTIONS

GENERAL: Structured intergenerational dialogues are needed to preserve history, share experiences, and foster meaningful connections between generations.

HEALTHCARE: More advocacy for universal healthcare could better ensure comprehensive, timely, and equitable care for older adults.

CAREGIVING: Participants recommended more accessible and affordable caregiving options, including transportation services, to support independent living and reduce fears of institutionalization.

HOUSING: Expanding affordable and inclusive housing initiatives can provide stable, safe, and supportive living environments for LGBTQIA+ adults as they age.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Expanding outreach, simplifying application processes, and improving transparency in eligibility for programs will increase equitable access.

I would like to see more intergenerational LGBTQ+ groups where we come together and share our experiences and questions.

IF GIVEN A MAGIC WAND, THEY WOULD WISH FOR:

PARTICIPANTS OVERWHELMINGLY EMPHASIZED THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE HEALTHCARE.

- Having dedicated healthcare guidance from case managers who can give personalized, attentive support that acknowledges one's history and lived experiences as LGBTQIA+.
- A healthcare system, including programs, services, and policies that ensure equal access for all, including immigrants, and affirming healthcare as a fundamental human right.
- Comprehensive "cradle-to-grave" coverage, inspired by military healthcare models, ensuring that no one is financially burdened by medical needs or left behind.

My healthcare providers and case manager are too busy. I would wish for a guru that could guide me or answer all my healthcare questions.

FURTHER DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: This handout highlights findings from one focus group of six community-dwelling older adults (75+) residing in Riverside County (ages ranged from 75-90) and 26 LGBTQIA+ older adults (75+) in focus groups with LGBTQIA+ older adults younger than 75.

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