

Aging with Pride and Authenticity: Challenges and Supports for Black LGBTQIA+/Same-Gender Loving (SGL) Older Adults



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 **43** Black LGBTQIA+/Same-Gender Loving older adults.

CHALLENGES

GENERAL: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults faced health issues, isolation, discrimination, and economic hardships, with political uncertainty heightening concerns.

HEALTHCARE: Many Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults struggled to access quality healthcare due to high costs, limited insurance, and a lack of culturally responsive providers, often receiving lower-quality care.

CAREGIVING: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults faced mistrust and stigma, hindering community connections and service access, and increasing feelings of invisibility.

HOUSING: Some Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults struggled with housing costs, fearing homelessness, moving for affordable housing, or seeking shelter where they can't live openly as LGBTQIA+.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Many Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults faced barriers due to bureaucracy and discrimination, and struggled to secure benefits and access culturally responsive care.



Finding a queer community. I've never seen this many people in my life. I'm glad to know you're alive somewhere. That's the biggest part... Invisibility. As far as I'm concerned, I am a lone ranger. All by myself.



STRENGTHS & SUPPORTS

I've had a lot of lifelong experiences, good and bad, and if it had not been for the good and the bad. I would not be the person that I am today.



GENERAL: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults found strength in chosen family, faith, therapy with Black therapists, personal growth, and financial and legal preparedness.

HEALTHCARE: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults benefitted from quality medical care, reduced financial barriers, strong doctor-patient relationships, and better healthcare access.

CAREGIVING: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults relied on family, friends, and support groups for emotional and practical help, with children, pets, and deep friendships offering companionship and stability.

HOUSING: Many Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults found support through affordable housing programs.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults found affirming social service support through caring caseworkers, LGBTQIA+-friendly agencies, and aging-focused organizations.

NEEDED SUPPORTS & SUGGESTIONS

GENERAL: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults called for targeted resources, improved financial planning, clearer service access, a resource guide, and stressed the need for Black voices in decision-making.

HEALTHCARE: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults advocated for better mental healthcare and inclusion of aging and queer topics in medical curricula to improve cultural responsiveness.

CAREGIVING: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults suggested more support groups and community centers to foster connection, along with practical services like companion programs to reduce loneliness.

HOUSING: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults called for eliminating senior housing waitlists and advocated for communal living or co-housing as solutions.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults suggested improving social service access with information on senior programs, community advocates, and more public service announcements.

I would like to have either a club, or places that people can come and gather like this... There used to be lots of clubs that were open, people could go to and have a laugh.

IF GIVEN A MAGIC WAND, THEY WOULD WISH FOR:

PHYSICAL & SOCIETAL WELL-BEING:

The elimination of prejudice, trauma, and stigma that compounds health ailments.

ECONOMIC SECURITY & JUSTICE:

Policies that support programs and services for older adults by redistributing taxes including decreasing taxes for low-income older adults.

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES:

Free and equitable healthcare and housing, more caregiving services, and fully integrated wraparound services available through the life course.

COMMUNITY & CONNECTION:

Programs that build community by spreading love and joy and connecting generations.

My magic wand, if I had, would be to see more harmony among us as a community...the youngsters can help the older people, and the older people can help the younger people get to be old.

FURTHER DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: This handout includes data from four focus groups with 33 Black LGBTQIA+/SGL older adults (15 women, 10 men, 1 transgender man, 4 transgender women, 1 two-spirit, 2 non-binary), aged 50-74, with findings from 10 additional Black participants from multi-racial focus groups.

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