



AGING AND THE LGBT COMMUNITY

LGBT older people (65+) are the Stonewall generation – a resilient, growing demographic with pronounced needs.

Upbeat Despite Setbacks

LGBT elder pioneers and older people living with HIV are a resilient population. They fought for much of the progress on LGBT rights that we have seen in recent years. They led the Stonewall uprising, founded Act Up, helped end “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and won marriage equality. Unfortunately, LGBT older people and those living with HIV face pronounced rates of social isolation, higher rates of poverty, and a lack of access to culturally competent services and supports compared to their straight, cisgender, and HIV-negative counterparts.



The Lifelong Toll of Discrimination

Similar to the older population in general, LGBT older people face challenges as they age, including declining health, diminished income, and the loss of friends and family. LGBT older people, however, also face the added burden of discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Many choose to go back into the closet for fear that caregivers or other providers might discriminate against them. Most transgender people do not even have that option. Despite advances in civil rights, LGBT older people remain one of the most invisible, underserved, and at-risk populations among U.S. elders.

Isolated from Society, Services, and Supports

Studies show that LGBT older people are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to live alone. They are half as likely to have life partners or significant others; half as likely to have close relatives to call for help; and four times less likely to have children to provide care. Heartbreakingly, almost a quarter of LGBT older people have no one to call in case of an emergency.

At the same time, LGBT older people access essential services much less frequently than the general aging population, studies show. These services can include visiting nurses, food

stamps, senior centers, and meal programs. As a result of actual or feared discrimination and abuse, this population shies away from availing itself of the services that could otherwise be helpful. Diminished social supports have been correlated with health problems that can have serious consequences for older people, including premature institutionalization and early death.

Higher Rates of Poverty

LGBT older people have average household incomes that are much lower than their straight and cisgender counterparts. Studies show that this is primarily because they are much more likely to live alone. In fact, 35 percent of SAGE's New York City clients are Medicaid eligible, with annual pre-tax incomes below \$10,000. An additional 35 percent subsist on annual pre-tax incomes of \$20,000 or less. Those who are partnered or married still face higher poverty rates than married heterosexual couples.



Lack of Access to Culturally Competent Care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has found that LGBT older people face additional barriers due to isolation combined with a lack of access to social services and culturally competent providers. As such, LGBT people experience increased rates of depression; higher rates of alcohol and tobacco use; and lower rates of preventive screenings.

Congressional Support

We ask Congress to act to ensure that LGBT older people are able to live free from discrimination, with access to culturally competent services and supports that are necessary to remain independent.



Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders

We refuse to be invisible



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SAGE is the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older people. Founded in 1978, SAGE is a national organization that offers supportive services and consumer resources to LGBT older people and their caregivers. SAGE also advocates for public policy changes that address the needs of LGBT elders, provides education and technical assistance for aging providers and LGBT community organizations through its National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, and cultural competency training through SAGECare. With staff located across the country, SAGE also coordinates SAGENet, a growing network of affiliates in the United States.

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