Towards Wellbeing for LGBTQ+ Older Adults: Challenge and Opportunity

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Road Map

• Intro: LGBTQ+ Older adults
  – A unique experience and reality?
• Challenges versus Opportunities
  – Challenges: The issues
  – Opportunities: The solutions
• Call to action
• Take home message

Source: Flipboard
Introduction

First, some context…

- Older adults are increasing in number:

![Number of Persons Age 65 and Older, 1900 - 2060 (numbers in millions)](attachment:image)

- Projections:
  - 2040 ~81 million older adults
  - 2060 ~95 million older adults

ACL: 2020 Profile of Older Americans
Increased Numbers = Increased Diversity

**Sexual orientation and gender identity**

- Self-identify as LGBT older adults
  - $50^+\text{ LGBT} = 3\%, \sim 3\text{million}$;
    - LGBTQ – 6%
      - By 2060 = 20 million *(Fredriksen-Golden & Kim, 2017)*
- Among 65$^+$ - 1.1 million
- **Caveat?**
  - Likely under-reported
- **Arizona?**
## Adult LGBT Population, US & AZ

### July 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBT %</th>
<th>LGBT (Total)</th>
<th>LGB (Total)</th>
<th>LGB (Cisgender)</th>
<th>LGB (Trans)</th>
<th>TRANS (Total)</th>
<th>TRANS (Straight/Other)</th>
<th>TRANS (LGB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>US</strong></td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>11,343,000</td>
<td>10,338,000</td>
<td>9,946,000</td>
<td>392,000</td>
<td>1,397,150</td>
<td>1,005,000</td>
<td>392,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AZ</strong></td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>242,000</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>212,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>30,550</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LGB = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual  
Trans = Transgender  

UCLA’s The Williams Institute on sexual orientation- [helpful interactive map](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/adult-lgbt-pop-us/) of LGBTQ data and demographics

Social Acceptance
of LGBT People
RANKED BY STATE

National Average
AGING AS LGBT: TWO STORIES

https://youtu.be/lkPJxQorieo
LGBTQ+ Older Adults

Recognize -
• Unique lived experience
• Invisibility
• Under-served
  – E.g., Policies, Healthcare, Social care, Access to services

Consequences -
• Manifold
  – Quality of life, and wellbeing
    • Health, social, economic, LTSS, etc.
Concerns for LGBTQ+ Older Adults...

- **Exclusion:**
  - services, policies and research
  - Health limiting behaviors (drinking, smoking)
- **Greater risk of physical health concerns:**
  - Chronic conditions, disability, multimorbidity, premature mortality
    - Living and aging with HIV
- **Greater risk of mental distress**
  - Depression
  - Loneliness and isolation
- **Family and Kinship (belonging)**
  - Loneliness and isolation*
  - Social support
- **Financial security**
  - Economic challenges
- **Lack of access**
  - to services, supports
    - E.g., Housing, LTSS
- **Variations exist**
  - LGBTQ not homogenous

Worse health outcomes
Higher rates of stress
Higher health risks
  e.g., Mental health, Cancer
Higher rates of poor or risky health behaviors:
  e.g., alcohol, drugs, smoking
Comparison - Health Disparities (2009)

Challenges versus Opportunities

Challenges
• Bias
• Personal beliefs/attitudes
• Ignorance/lack of awareness
• Poor/lack of training
• Lack of Process

Opportunities
• Bias
• Personal beliefs/attitudes
• Ignorance/lack of awareness
• Poor/lack of training
• Lack of Process
Opportunity: Solutions Require…

• Awareness
• Acceptance
  – meaning to the person/individual
• Avoidance of ignorance
  – about their experiences; needs
• Acknowledgement
  – of identity, and rights that accompany same
• Proactivity
  – Welcoming
  – Active engagement in bridging cultural differences
• More than tolerance
  – Creating sense of belonging
  – Shared understanding of lived experience
Inclusive Environment - Hallmarks

Best practices

- **Signals, signs, symbols**
  - Affirm, inclusive, non-judgmental
  - Forms/documents, info collecting mechanisms

- **Respect for persons/relationship building**
  - Build trust
  - Prioritize comfort, confidentiality
    - Note: visual cues/body language
  - Follow their lead (preferred pronouns)/or ask respectfully

- **Communication**
  - Language mastery
  - Gender neutral pronouns

- **Culture of accountability**
  - Training
  - Community-based resources
  - Quality services/care

- **It is okay to say “sorry”!**
LGBTQ+ Older Adults: Quality Approach to Wellbeing

**Hallmarks**

Partnership between individual and providers of care and services (e.g., health, social, housing, LTC/SS, etc.)

Goal – Holistic Approach: Work to know and accept the **full person**

Collaborative, coordinated, and accessible

Enhanced decision-making through shared information

Mutual respect and trust

*(e.g., Values, preferences, cultural traditions, SES/conditions)*

Information and data driven

*(e.g., include questions re sexual orientation & gender identity)*

Reflected in mission, vision, values, leadership, QI

*(aligned to person-affirming goals for LGBTQ+)*
Call to Action

Address or explore following issues:

• Social connections
  – Recognize challenges (paucity of familial ties? Same-age caregivers?)
  – Social isolation and impact

• Social supports for older LGBTQ adults
  – Affirming programs; housing options, activities,
  – Awareness and personnel training
  – Access to support networks

• Living arrangements
  – Aging in place? (address reluctance to seek services)
  – LTC facilities? (address harassment etc.)

• Access to health care
  – Quality, appropriate, affordable

• Access economic security
  – Employment discrimination, affordable housing,

• Double or multiple jeopardy
What we can (should) do?

**Recommendations:**

- **Address discrimination, stigma!**
- **Comprehensive protections**
  - safeguard rights of LGBTQ+
  - older adults
- **Employment, housing,**
  at local and state levels;
  recognize partnerships and marriages transacted before 2015 (marriage equality law)
- **LGBTQ+ friendly LTC facilities**
  - Affordable, affirming
- **Cultural –sensitivity**
  - Awareness training and personnel
  - Embed in systems (system approach)
- **Social isolation**
  - Innovative interventions and programs
  - Information and connection
- **Engage LGBTQ+ older adults**
  - Resource, partners,
- **Review policies, strategies, and practices**
  - Inclusive?
QoL and Wellbeing for LGBTQ+ Older Adults?

Ultimate Goal: *Optimize lived experience of all older adults*

- Includes LGBTQ+ older adults
- Focus on QoL, and well-being
  - Improve: health, social welfare, LTSS
  - Affirming lived experience

- Systems approach
  - Data driven; QI

- Service delivery/care encounters
  - Important arenas for action and change
  - Increasing satisfaction in service encounters
  - Personnel as critical change agents
Take Away - Summary Points

• LGBTQ+ older adults
  – under-served and invisible group
  – unique health, social, economic, etc. needs

• Improving wellbeing requires
  – person-centered and
  – person-affirming

• Best/evidence-based practices
  – systems based
  – tailored for LGBTQ+ older adults
    enhance encounters and optimize health, economic, & social wellbeing

Sources

- The National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center - https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/
- SAGE (Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders). National Resource Center on LGBT Aging https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resources.cfm?st=AZ
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