

News Release

First-Ever Survey of California's LGBTQIA+ Older Adults Reveals High Quality of Life and Opportunities for Inclusion

Survey data from the California Department of Aging establishes a baseline for further research and will be available to researchers nationwide

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: California has conducted the first-ever statewide survey about the current and future health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ older adults. 86% of California's LGBTQIA+ older adults surveyed gave high ratings to their quality of life, while 14% rated their quality of life as fair or poor. The survey focused on seven key quality of life areas, and the report outlines recommendations to address the challenges and opportunities shared by more than 4,000 survey respondents.

Sacramento – Results are in from California's first statewide survey about the current and future health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ older adults. The "From Challenges to Resilience" survey findings will help paint a portrait of this community and establish a baseline for future research. The online survey, conducted in early 2024, was designed and administered by research partners with assistance from a coalition of LGBTQIA+ community-based organizations. Funding support was provided by the California Department of Aging (CDA).

"This survey marks an important step in understanding the unique needs of LGBTQIA+ older adults, allowing us to take meaningful steps in shaping services that truly reflect and respond to this community," said **CDA Director Susan DeMarois**. "We're proud that so many respondents feel California offers a high quality of life, and we are committed to building on these strengths by addressing barriers and creating a more inclusive, supportive future for all older Californians."

ABOUT THE SURVEY: Aging as part of the LGBTQIA+ population can bring unique challenges that differ from those faced by other older adults. Many LGBTQIA+ adults grew up during times when discrimination in marriage, military service, employment, and other areas was legal and widespread. These experiences can lead to entering retirement with less money and access to traditional family caregiving, as well as greater feelings of isolation. The LGBTQIA+ community continues to face challenges as they age, in addition to the experiences shared by many older adults.

The "From Challenges to Resilience" survey questions focused on seven key areas:

- Economic well-being
- Social well-being

- Discrimination and safety
- Health care access
- Service utilization
- Mental health and substance use
- Cognitive and physical health

“California is leading the way in creating a future where every older adult, regardless of identity, is valued, respected, and supported,” said **Kim Johnson, Secretary of the California Health & Human Services Agency**. “These findings provide a foundation for meaningful change, guiding us as we advance the Master Plan for Aging and ensure that all older Californians feel recognized and included.”

INITIAL FINDINGS: People responded to the survey from every census region in California. Overall findings indicate that race/ethnicity and gender identity intersect to compound inequities. Most survey respondents (86%) gave high ratings to their quality of life, while 14% rated their quality of life as fair or poor. People of color and transgender respondents had higher numbers rating their quality of life as fair or poor. Suggestions from the survey team to address this inequity include continuing to expand the collection of sexual orientation/gender identity data across state-level collection forms and requiring multilingual and gender expansive-affirming design of services, resources, and research.

Among the over 4,000 survey respondents, common themes that illuminate some of the challenges LGBTQIA+ older adults face included: barriers to access; lack of social support, especially when caregiving; and ongoing mistrust in providers and authorities. The survey report outlines recommendations to address these challenges, including additional behavioral health support, increasing provider training, and expanding services provided by trusted local LGBTQIA+ organizations.

The survey team included:

- University of California, Berkeley:
 - The Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society and the Banatao Institute (CITRIS)
 - The Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services within the School of Social Welfare
- The University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing’s Department of Community Health Systems
- Openhouse, a nonprofit that supports LGBTQIA+ older adults with a variety of services

The complete [“From Challenges to Resilience” findings report](#) is available on the CDA website.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: By 2030, Californians aged 60 or older will make up 25% of the state's population – the first time the over-60 age group will be larger than the under-18 age group. According to the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, approximately 5% of those older adults identify as LGBTQIA+. This survey is part of California's [Master Plan for Aging](#) (MPA), the 10-year blueprint designed to help state and local governments prepare for this coming demographic change and create communities where people of all ages and abilities are engaged, valued, and afforded equitable opportunities.

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING: Under the umbrella of the California Health & Human Services Agency, the California Department of Aging (CDA) administers programs that serve older adults, adults with disabilities, family caregivers, and residents in long-term care facilities throughout the state. CDA actively collaborates with many State departments and other entities to deliver services and promote the Department's goal of every Californian having the opportunity to enjoy wellness, longevity, and quality of life in strong healthy communities. To learn more, visit aging.ca.gov.

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