



EMPOWERED

Colorado LGBTQ+ Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Initiative

Aging is a Privilege

An often overlooked and understudied population, LGBTQ+ elders face a disparate amount of challenges compared to others in their age group. According to the **American Psychological Association**, about 2.4 million people in the U.S. that are over the age of 65 identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. That number is expected to double in the next few decades as more Americans enter retirement age.

Older LGBTQ+ adults have lived through less accepting times than the current political and social climate. **More than two-thirds** of LGBTQ older adults have experienced victimization and discrimination more than three times in their lives, including discrimination in health, aging, and disability services. These experiences and their frequency vary between the older generations. Those who came of age during the height of the gay liberation movement report the most instances of discrimination. This is most likely due to a higher likelihood of identity disclosure. While those who came before the movement,

often had to live with the weight of silence. And of course, those who lived through the '80s and '90s witnessed the HIV/AIDs epidemic.

According to the CDC, 448,060 people in the U.S. died of AIDs between 1981 to 2000. **Many LGBT lives were lost**, the majority of which would now be between the ages of 60-80.

A lifetime of discrimination has led to reduced economic security, healthcare disparities, and a lack of community supports. Many LGBTQ+ elders have faced employment discrimination, and this, combined with other factors, has led to disproportionately higher poverty rates. The **health disparities** that exist for LGBTQ+ elders are numerous: they are more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions and be diagnosed with a mental health disorder; they are less likely to pursue help from a healthcare professional; and when they do seek medical care, the majority of healthcare providers are not equipped to provide **culturally relevant care**. A major stressor for many aging adults is who will take →

5 HEALTHY TIPS

...for ways to help others:

- 1 **Get to know someone** and find out what kind of help would be valuable to them.
- 2 **Share your resources**, whether that's time, knowledge, or something more tangible.
- 3 **Show gratitude** when someone helps you by returning the favor. Generosity is contagious, and you never know who you could inspire.
- 4 **Get creative!** Remember that the little things matter just as much as grand gestures, and they add up fast.
- 5 **Acknowledge** the good you are doing and the benefits you get from helping others.

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ADVOCATE GOVERNOR JARED POLIS

As a dedicated advocate for improving mental health and the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, Governor Jared Polis is the well-deserved recipient of Envision:You's 2021 Lean On Me Award. He has demonstrated his commitment to equality time and again, having signed several pieces of legislation into law that protect the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and improve Colorado's behavioral healthcare system.



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AGING *continued*

care of them at the end of their life. This is particularly true for the aging LGBTQ+ population, who are twice as likely to be single and three to four times less likely to have children. Social isolation is another concern for many LGBTQ+ elders who often face discrimination among their peers, rejection from family members, and difficulty finding social events friendly to their identity.

It is important to recognize the incredible strengths and



resilience that LGBTQ+ elders possess. **Research** suggests that those with a strong sexual minority identity may be better equipped to manage minority stressors, invalidate stereotypes, and dismiss homophobia while affirming a positive self-image. And despite the

profound challenges LGBTQ+ older folks have faced throughout their lifetime, many of them have paved the way for LGBTQ+ rights — **three quarters of LGBTQ+ older adults reported engaging in antidiscrimination activism.**

Resources:

Sage: Advocacy & Service for LGBT Elders

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS AVAILABLE

The Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program was created to address a need for LGBTQ+ affirming behavioral health care. This multi-level training program provides education on the unique risk factors and behavioral health concerns of LGBTQ+ individuals. The training is for behavioral health professionals, including licensed mental health clinicians, social workers, or anyone working in direct care with LGBTQ+ folks. Currently 10 CE credits are awarded to psychologists or social workers who complete the Level 1 & 2 training, or 1 CEU for LPCs. Before the end of the year continuing education credits will also be available for psychiatrists, licensed addiction counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists.

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FRESH PRESS

Last month, Ipsos, a market research company, released a LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey which found a significant generational gap around gender identity and sexual attraction. The survey was conducted virtually and had 19,069 respondents ranging from the ages of 16 to 74, across 27 countries. According to the findings, 4 percent of Gen Z (born since 1997) identify as transgender, non-binary, non-conforming, or gender-fluid compared to 1 percent among older adults. They also found that 18 percent of Gen Z respondents identified as something other than heterosexual compared to 9 percent of overall respondents. The Ipsos survey also examined opinions on anti-discrimination laws and equality for LGBT+ individuals, which varied between countries. Overall, Ipsos found that there is more support globally for LGBT+ equality than opposition, though the variance across countries and topics still indicates there is more work to be done.

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COMMUNITY PARTNER

Envision:You is pleased to recognize the Rx Abuse Leadership Initiative with its 2021 Lean on Me Award. Through its work, RALI helps reduce the number of drug overdoses across the country, providing resources on best practices to prevent misuse of prescription



medications. **According to SAMHSA**, 9.6 percent of LGB adults report opioid misuse compared to 3.7 percent of the general population.

"In Colorado and across the United States, RALI is committed to supporting innovative programming that reduces the dependence and impact of substance use disorders among LGBTQ+ individuals," says Steven Haden, CEO of Envision:You.

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