

New findings reveal health, aging experiences of LGBT older adults across nation

February 14 2017

In a first-of-its-kind study, researchers from the University of Washington's School of Social Work have released new findings this month on the health and aging of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults in the U.S.

Approximately 2.7 million adults age 50 and older self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This number is expected to increase to more than five million by 2060, yet this population is critically understudied. UW researchers have been working to change that through the first longitudinal study of LGBT older adults, called Aging with Pride: National Health, Aging, Sexuality/Gender Study.

"It's important to understand the health and well-being of LGBT older adults so we can take steps to reduce [health disparities](#)," said principal investigator Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen, professor and director of the UW's Healthy Generations Hartford Center of Excellence.

"This research highlights pathways to better understand health for all marginalized communities."

New findings from the [longitudinal study](#), published in a 2017 supplement of *The Gerontologist*, will increase understanding of the challenges, strengths and needs of this growing yet underserved population. Funded by the National Institute on Aging, the research will help develop community-based interventions to improve the health and well-being of at-risk LGBT older adults.

The team surveyed 2,450 adults aged 50 to 100, studying the impact of historical, environmental, psychological, social, behavioral and biological factors on LGBT adult health and well-being. The 10 articles that make up the supplement focuses on three themes: influence of [life events](#); diversity and subgroup differences; and processes and mechanisms underlying health and quality of life.

The findings reported in the supplement revealed that LGBT older adults are both resilient and at-risk, with higher rates of disability, cardiovascular disease, depression and social isolation. The findings documented how key life events ? including coming out, work and relationships ? are associated with health and quality of life. Articles examined factors such as race/ethnicity, partnership status, resiliency among HIV-positive gay and bisexual men, and transgender older adults with prior military service. The role of social networks, mental health, high-risk alcohol consumption and health care engagement were also studied.

"The insights gleaned from this study of aging among LGBT [older adults](#) can deepen our understanding of the richness, diversity and resilience of lives across the life course," Fredriksen-Goldsen said. "As we move forward in aging-related research, services and policies, it's important to understand that these communities are diverse, and that unique groups face distinct challenges to their [health](#)."

More information: Karen I. Fredriksen-Goldsen et al, The Science of Conducting Research With LGBT Older Adults- An Introduction to Aging with Pride: National Health, Aging, and Sexuality/Gender Study (NHAS), *The Gerontologist* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/geront/gnw212](https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnw212)

Provided by University of Washington

Citation: New findings reveal health, aging experiences of LGBT older adults across nation (2017, February 14) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-02-reveal-health-aging-lgbt-older.html>

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