

News Release



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60% of LGBTQ+ older adults experienced discrimination in the past year, study says

Salem, OR – Nearly 60% of older adults – who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two Spirit and non-binary as well as sexual or gender diverse (LGBTQ+) – report experiencing discrimination within the past year and 24% experienced abuse. Of those who experienced abuse, 76% did not report it, according to a study commissioned by the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS).

Risk of discrimination was high among:

- Asian and Pacific Islanders at 94%;
- Black/African Americans at 91%; and
- Native American/Alaska Natives at 86%.

Over half of participants reported having unmet needs for at least one service, including aging, social, medical and health services, and/or social support services in the past year.

These findings are based on responses from 1,402 demographically diverse participants in research led by [Karen Fredriksen Goldsen](#), Ph.D., of the University of Washington, who is a national expert on aging in communities that are underserved. The study, which was the first of its kind in Oregon, sought detailed input from adults 55 and older on the needs and supports of Oregon’s LGBTQ+ older adults. Survey participants were also asked to highlight strengths within the state’s various LGBTQ+ communities.

“This survey has set a standard for how state agencies can work with the community to identify challenges and strengths. With community input, agencies can develop impactful strategies, programs, services, and resources to meet those needs,” Goldsen said.

The ODHS Office of Aging and People with Disabilities supported this research to help strengthen and direct its future program development, community education and advocacy efforts.

Among the other findings:

- 21% of participants do not disclose their sexual or gender identity to healthcare, aging or other service providers.
- 21% experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, which is significantly higher than the general population.
- One-third have difficulty paying bills or buying nutritious meals due to financial instability., with elevated risks observed among those who are younger, people of color, those living with HIV, and those living in communities at heightened risk.

But, resilience reported among LGBTQ+ older adults was also high. Some findings include:

- More than 70% of LGBTQ+ older adult participants have three or more people they can count on for social and emotional support.
- The majority are actively engaged in LGBTQ+ communities through helping others, 79%; receiving help, 62%; and being involved in advocacy activities, 60%.
- Participants who are 75 and older reported the highest resilience.

“Older adults in Oregon are increasingly diverse, but we lacked data to guide us on what they are experiencing and how to best overcome disparities,” said Jane-ellen Weidanz, Administrator of the Long Term Services and Supports Unit within the ODHS Office of Aging and People with Disabilities. “This research will be instrumental in helping us understand the greatest needs and how to build upon the strengths that already exist in our communities.”

The Oregon LGBTQ+ Older Adult Survey had widespread support from many community organizations and LGBTQ+ advocates. The Governor’s Commission on Senior Services, the Oregon LGBTQ+ Aging Coalition and SAGE Metro Portland were instrumental in advocating for the project. Other community partners supporting the research include:

- Aging Well of Cascade AIDS Project
- Alzheimer’s Association
- AARP Oregon
- EngAGE NW
- HIV Alliance
- Metropolitan Community Church of Portland
- Oregon Home Care Commission
- Pride Foundation
- Quest Center for Integrative Health.

Read the full report: [Oregon LGBTQ+ Older Adult Report](#) or [Executive Summary](#).

Learn more about [The Goldsen Institute](#).