

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSULT FOR LGBTQI2S SENIORS



**KNOWLEDGE
SHARING FORUM:
JUNE 2017**

Egale is developing a Community Engagement Consult for LGBTQI2S seniors to investigate the pressing issues facing LGBTQI2S seniors across Canada. This project is a collaborative effort between Egale Canada, LGBTQI2S seniors, community organizations, and Egale's National Seniors Advisory Council. We hope that health practitioners, policy makers, seniors' communities and allies will find these results informative and use them to create positive change in their own community.

BACKGROUND

Despite the fact that LGBTQI2S Seniors live among our communities, very little data exists that can speak to these experiences on the national level. To address this gap, Egale hosted an LGBTQI2S Seniors Knowledge Sharing Forum in March 2016 in Toronto, ON to identify the key issues and make recommendations for the ways that government, institutions and communities can take action to improve the wellbeing of LGBTQI2S older adults. Conversations generated by the Knowledge Sharing Forum were extended to an Online Consultation Workbook that was launched nationally. To remain accountable to the diversity of the LGBTQI2S community, this project is under the supervision of Egale's National Senior Advisory Council (NSAC) -- a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and Two-Spirit seniors and allies from across the country.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING FORUM PROCESS

The Knowledge Sharing Forum was a 1-day event hosted at Ryerson University, starting with a panel of researchers, service providers, and LGBTQI2S seniors, and followed by a breakout session revolving around 6 key issues identified by NSAC. Participants then lent their own expertise to the conversation – identifying what programs and services currently exist, gaps in service provision policy and resources, and recommendations for all levels of government, institutions and communities.

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

- 1) Isolation and its effects on wellness**
- 2) Invisibility and how it intersects with identity such as race, culture and language**
- 3) Poverty, particularly among lesbian, bi and trans women**
- 4) Residential, Home, and Long Term Care, including the effects of dementia, Alzheimer's and HIV on the LGBTQI2S community in care**
- 5) Trans specific challenges, especially towards end of life**
- 6) Ageism and ableism, both within the LGBTQI2S community and beyond**

WHO ATTENDED?

Attendees of the forum were predominantly LGBTQI2S seniors (86%), with many self-describing as service providers (40%) and researchers (15%), many of which were cisgender gay men and lesbian women. It is worth noting that there were trans participants, however they were underrepresented in the forum. Folks felt their concerns were heard and acknowledged with plenty of time to share their lived experiences and knowledges, where one participant described the forum as “reaching a consensus yet listening to minority views.” The majority of folks attending (80%) felt that the recommendations produced have the potential to improve the quality of life for LGBTQI2S seniors in Canada.

Many attendees described the important role LGBTQI2S-specific organizations play in promoting safety and inclusion, either through peer support programs, drop in programs, community consultations or educational workshops. However crucial these programs are for social connection and inclusion, they were not enough to ensure health and safety in day-to-day life. Many also described how precarious and unaffordable housing, healthcare discrimination and forced re-closeting in long-term care were serious concerns, particularly within non-LGBTQI2S senior serving organizations.

Question	Highlights
What is being done for LGBTQI2S Seniors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, specialized organizations serving LGBTQI2S seniors have good programming, health provision, education and training • Large research institutions are investigating LGBTQI2S seniors issues • Urban centres have good support networks available
What is not being done for LGBTQI2S Seniors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of general support outside of LGBTQI2S-specific organizations • Lack of diversity of representation of LGBTQI2S senior issues. • Rural communities are extremely underserved. • Intergenerational connections are divided • Housing is still precarious (e.g. affordability, re-closeting in long-term care)

Using a “dotmocracy” voting process, participants cast their votes to support the most necessary and impactful recommendations for government, institutions and community. There was a predominant focus for governments and institutions to build inclusive policies and provide funding opportunities. Cultural sensitivity trainings addressing LGBTQI2S inclusion were highlighted as being priorities for both governments and institutions. Participants considered that housing in particular should be addressed through cross-disciplinary action from all levels of influence, including the crucial role research can play in generating impactful knowledge that help shape policies.

Levels of Influence	Group Recommendations
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop national and provincial policy and strategies for LGBT inclusion • Provide funding for homecare/housing • Expand healthcare to include more pharmaceuticals, optical and dental
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure LGBT inclusion training for medical, service providers, health and social workers, and funeral directors • Safe access to sex positivity in education, care provision, and built environment
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge intergenerational connections through events, spaces, and technologies • Address ageism and ableism within the LGBTQI2S community • Create shared housing/co-housing among LGBT seniors

In reflecting on the geographical location of the event, most of the conversations and resources were Toronto-centric. In other words, a more rural and/or non-urban element should be added to these conversations. In seeing this gap in perspective, findings from the Knowledge Sharing Forum were then extended to an Online Consultation Workbook as a way to expand the discussion beyond geographic borders.