

IncludeAge

Inclusion of **diverse older people** in community and public places and virtual spaces

‘It’s very easy to go back’: Caring about the concerns of older LGBTQ+ people who fear the loss of their rights

Richard Vytniorgu & Kathryn Almack

University of Hertfordshire

r.vytniorgu@herts.ac.uk



Background

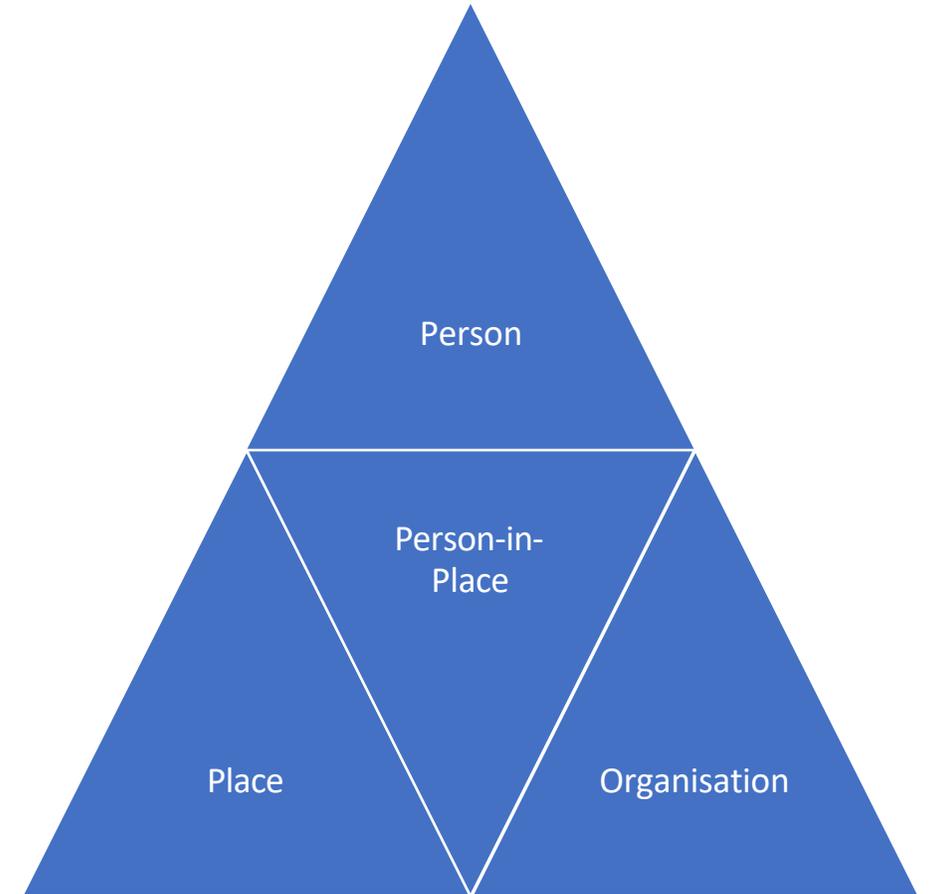
- Draws on findings from the £1.4m ESRC-funded IncludeAge project (2022-26) – focused on the LGBT+ pathway, exploring place-based experiences of inclusion / exclusion among mid-older LGBT+ people over the life course
- Why do we need to care about participants' concerns about the loss of hard-won LGBT+ rights?
- Focus on participatory responses, 'knowledge mobilisation' & co-creating spin-off impact projects.

Structure of our talk

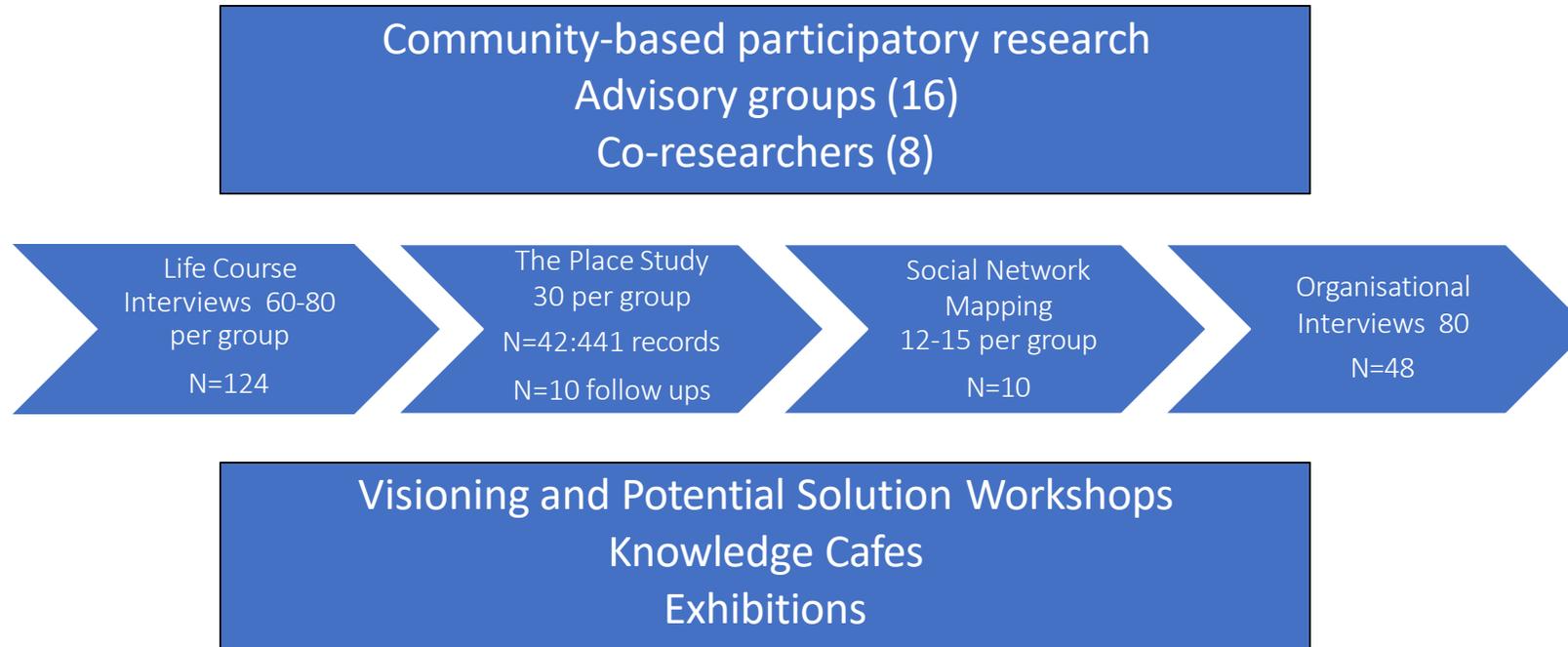
1. Context – what are we doing, and how?
2. Focusing on some of our participants' concerns...
3. Caring about them through co-analysis with co-researchers & co-created spin-off projects

Aims of the IncludeAge project

- Develop understandings of inclusion and exclusion in everyday physical and online communities with mid-older LGBT+ and mid- older people with LD (aged 40+).
- Co-create recommendations for development of inclusive spaces and places to enhance inclusion in everyday life.



How are we doing it?



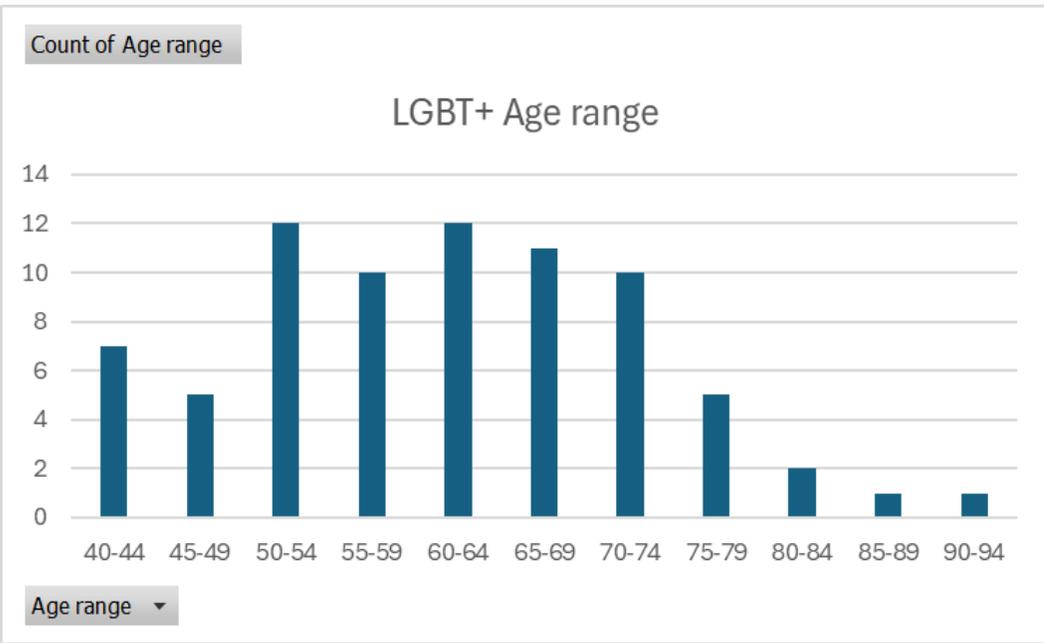
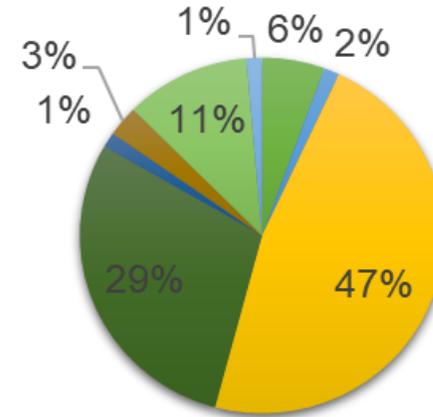
LGBT+ Life Course Interviews

76 interviews

36 conducted with a co-researcher

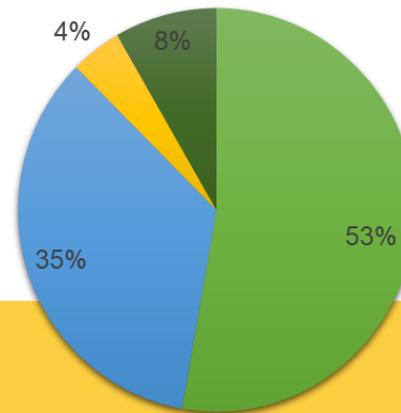
LGBT+ Identity

- Bisexual man
- Bisexual woman
- Gay man
- Lesbian
- Lesbian Trans
- Trans Man
- Trans Woman
- Non-binary



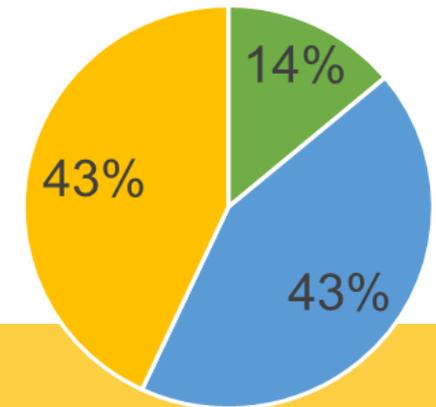
Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Transgender



Location

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban



Life course interviews – a key theme

Practices of inclusion - how participants discuss practices, processes, and ideas that help facilitate or impact the inclusivity of different spaces and places and the possible barriers to feeling included.

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Fears of rolling back the progress made – barrier to feeling included

- Several participants expressed concern about rolling back LGBTQ+ progress:
 - Pronoun usage – the right to be known by your preferred pronouns
 - Commercialisation of Pride – *‘When you see lifestyles are about materialism and commerce rather than, political rights, human rights’* (Thierry, gay man, 65-69)
 - Going back into the closet– *‘I think we’re quite advanced but I mean, it’s the same in Belgium, Holland, France, Germany. Things are better but there’s that threat hanging over us so we’re all going to have to get back in the closet and that’s a terrifying, terrifying thing.’* (James, gay man, 80-84)
 - The right to pass on your community’s ‘history’ to younger generations of that community: *‘And young gay people, particularly our lodger’s husband, [had] no clue at all about gay history...no real idea about his background as a gay man, or all the things that have happened’.* (Bow, gay man, 65-69)

The need for intergenerational dialogue

- We might be OK now, but we can't take it for granted:
 - *'I think it's important that we don't lose sight of the fact that we've come a long way, but as we've seen in America over the last few years, it's very easy to go back. So, you know, there's so many countries in the world where there's the death penalty for being LGBT+ [...] We're very lucky in this country but it doesn't mean it's perfect... we still have to protect those rights, I think. And because a lot of the younger people have grown up in an era when it's been okay, they don't think they realise what tricky ground we're on trying to protect those rights.'* (Mary, lesbian, 60-64)

The need for intergenerational dialogue

- ‘Riding on the backs of other people’ – what younger generations owe to older generations:
 - *‘I remember being young, I remember being younger. I remember being 20 and speaking to women who were in their 40s in the pubs and them saying about how, you know, they had been at Stonewall, they had been at riots and parades and really fighting for us to have rights. And I remember at the time thinking, yeah, whatever. And now, like 25 years later, and I see young people being so open. And I think, do you know, **they were right, because we've all ridden on the backs of other people.**’ (Ursula, lesbian, 40-44)*

The need for intergenerational dialogue

- Spaces for intergenerational dialogue:
 - *'I don't know how much attention there is paid to our recent history, to people who maybe fought for, you know, the '67 law, or fought their way for better healthcare and research during the AIDS epidemic. And a young person (...) can be apolitical now. **You couldn't be apolitical in the time of [Russell T. Davies's] It's a Sin.** In the mid-'80s, your life was- I'm not being dramatic, I really am not a drama queen, but **it would be great if there were places and projects which encouraged communication between people, between the generations.**' (Thierry, gay man, 65-69)*

Caring for these concerns – the role of co-researchers

- Interviews and co-analysis actively shaped by our co-researchers' concerns, which echo those of participants (overlapping demographics).
- Each brings their own professional and personal standpoint to the process, including expertise in legal changes, 'pink washing' by organisations, and the significance of culture in providing visibility to LGBTQ+ people through history.
- Because of this...co-analysis attentive to wider socio-cultural changes (Trump, Supreme Court Ruling – although many interviews took place prior to this)

Caring for these concerns – the role of co-researchers

- Through co-analysis, co-researchers have drawn our attention to:
 - The need for non-LGBTQ+ people to make heteronormative spaces more inclusive and welcoming for LGBTQ+ people who may need to enter such spaces – hospitals, care homes etc.
 - The need to focus on working with people who DO want to change things for the better – *‘if you focus on firefighting, it can waste energy’*. You bring in the *‘lump in the middle’*, and this will pull the tail and change the system.
 - Power dynamics in intergenerational dialogue – do younger generations NEED to know ‘their’ history? *‘What if someone’s just living their life?’*

Knowledge mobilisation happening

- Co-analysis part of mobilising project knowledge. Built into the project through deliberative dialogues, listening for directions, and putting these into practice in the most effective way – catered for through specific workshops (Sept-Dec 2025).
- 3 additional spin-off activities, co-created with the LGBT+ co-researchers on providing space for thinking about intergenerational practice.

Co-created spin-off activities

- ESRC Impact Accelerator Account award 2024/25 - ‘Communicating sensitively with LGBTQ+ people of different generations in healthcare & education settings’
- ‘Being an age-friendly LGBT+ ally’ event at University of Hertfordshire, LGBT History Month 2025
- ‘LGBTQ+ history and intergenerational practice – getting the balance right’ – with Queer Heritage South & Flourishing Lives (Funded by National Lottery Community Fund) – May 13, 2025

Learning points

- Participatory ways of working help destabilise hierarchies between knowledge producers – co-analysis seen as part of the knowledge mobilisation process rather than antecedent to it
- Our LGBT+ co-researchers want to amplify participants' stories, but they also want action!
- If co-creation doesn't happen from the start, it can emerge through trusted ways of working together into spin-off projects, especially action-oriented ones.
- Heightened reflexivity – how are our findings relevant NOW?

Thank you for listening

Any Questions?



r.vytniorgu@herts.ac.uk
k.almack@herts.ac.uk



info@includeage.co.uk



www.includeage.co.uk

