

# What do we know about the impact of COVID-19 on the health of LGBTQIA+ older adults? Results of a systematic literature review



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## INTRODUCTION



On March 11, 2020, the novel **coronavirus** pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization. The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), which causes COVID-19, has had major health effects around the world. However, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on **minority groups**, including the **elderly** and **sexual minorities**. Studies point to the increased risk of infection and serious consequences in older adults compared to younger people.

In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexual orientation and gender expression (LGBTQIA+) older adults present **higher risks** of poverty, inadequate healthcare, discrimination, and mental health problems. There is a knowledge gap regarding the **intersection** between diversity regarding **sexual orientation, gender identity, and ageing** in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on health.

## OBJECTIVE

To provide a comprehensive description of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LGBTQIA+ older adults regarding their **physical** and **psychosocial** health, including **risk** and **protective** factors.

## METHODOLOGY

A systematic review of the literature was conducted by three librarians with expertise in Psychology and Geriatrics using a combination of keywords including **Aging, COVID-19, and Sexual and Gender Diversity**.

Two independent reviewers screened the records/full-text articles with the **following inclusion criteria**:

- Records addressing the physical and psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- LGBTQIA+ older adults (age of 65 years or older);
- published after 2019;
- research articles, comments or letters to the editor, conference abstracts, or grey literature; and
- available in French or in English.

**COVIDENCE** software was used to identify and remove duplicates. The selection process and the exclusion criteria are illustrated in [Figure 1](#).

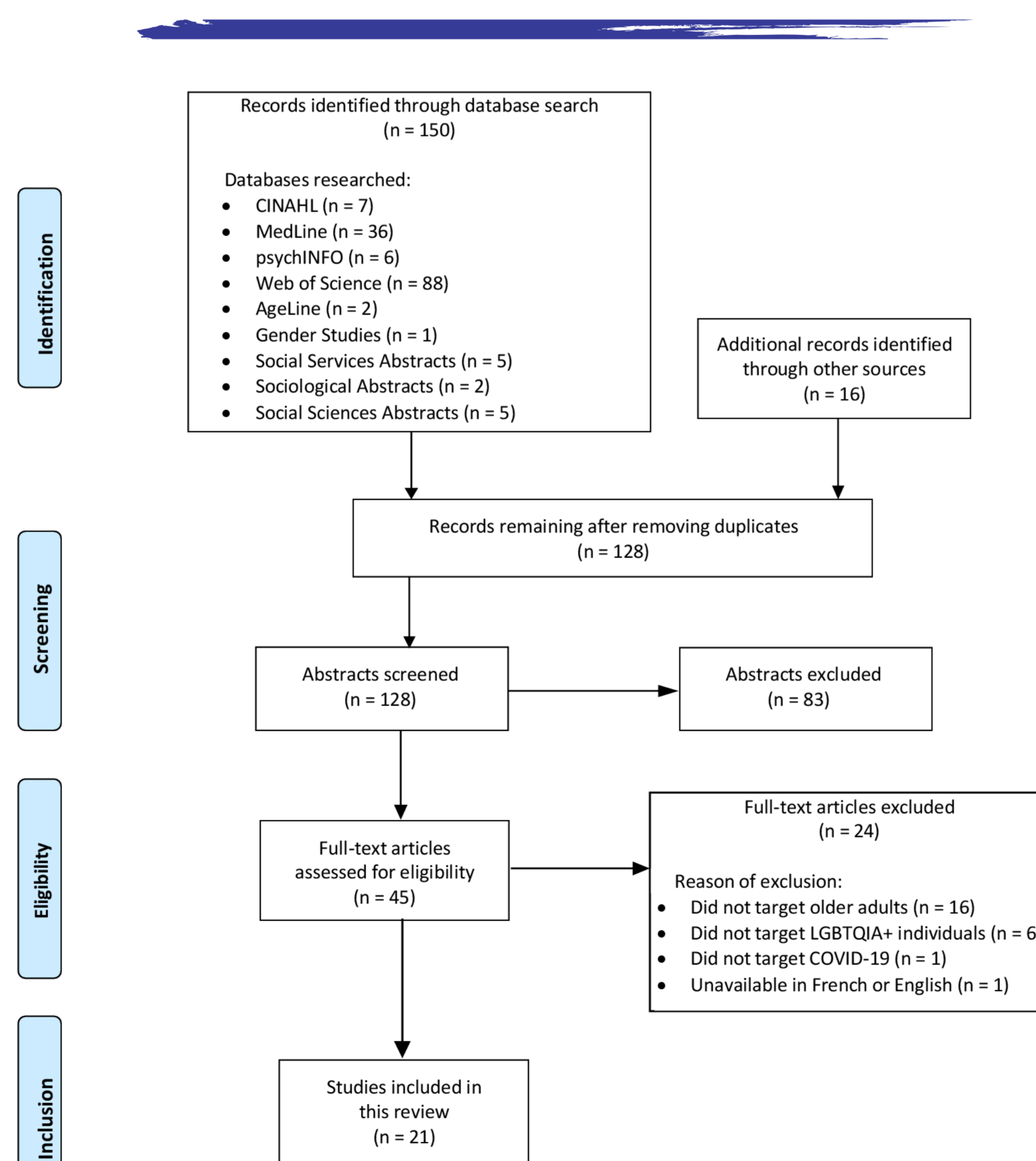


Figure 1  
PRISMA flow diagram

## RESULTS

Of the 21 records meeting inclusion criteria, only **61.9%** (n=13) recruited LGBTQIA+ participants. The remaining references consisted of **literature reviews**, fact sheets, letters to the editor, and commentaries.

Of the **13** studies, three were secondary data from larger studies including a fact sheet and secondary data from a study with older gay men.

Of the 10 remaining studies, 50% were **quantitative** and 50% were **qualitative**. Fifty percent (n=5) of the studies were conducted in the **United States**, 30% (n=3) in the **United Kingdom**, 10% in **Canada**, and 10% in **India**. The collective sample of the 10 studies includes **1258 LGBTQIA+ older adults**. The distribution is presented in [Figure 2](#).

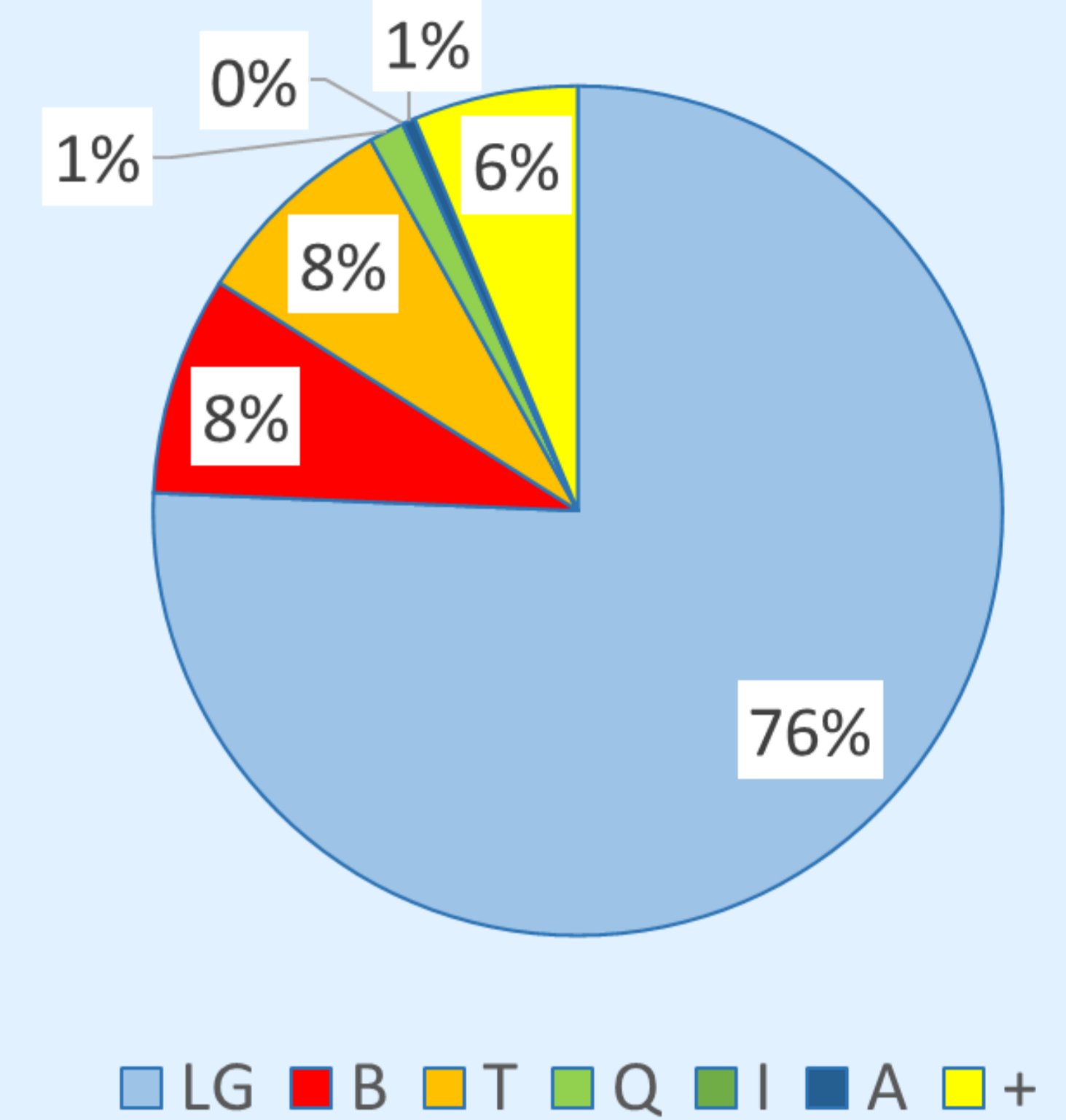


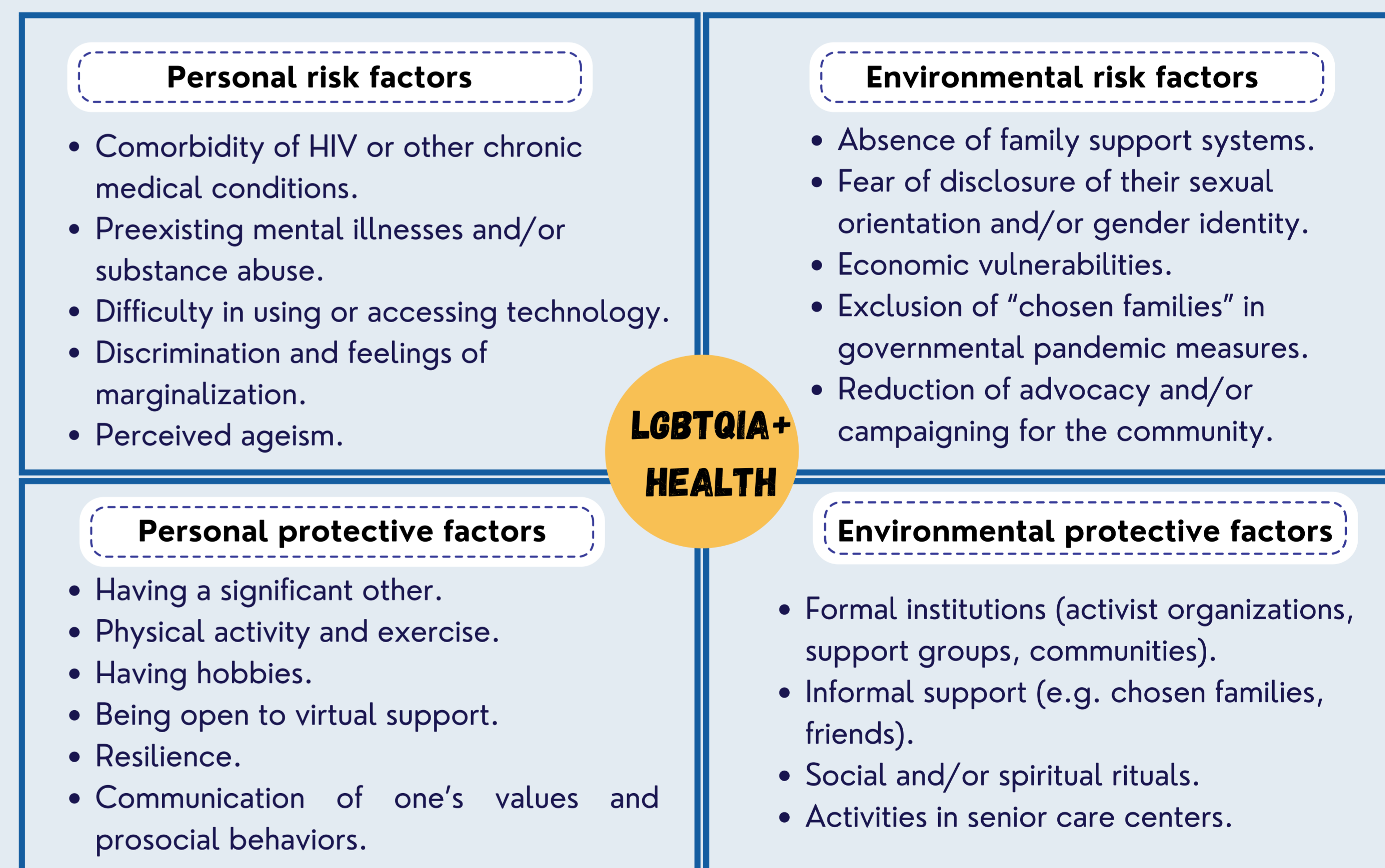
Figure 2  
Total distribution of LGBTQIA+ older adults

## CONCLUSIONS

In terms of **physical** health, there have been repercussions on **medical care** for HIV patients, canceled **gender reaffirming** procedures, restricted access to **gender identity** clinics, fear of being **discriminated** against by healthcare providers, difficulty relying on **technology** to access care, and issues related to **intimacy**.

Diminished **psychosocial** health included recurrent **panic attacks, depression, suicidal ideation, and social isolation**.

Figure 3  
Main risk and protective factors



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### For LGBTQIA+ older adults

- To reach out to **online** LGBTQIA+ resources and organizations.
- To encourage LGBTQIA+ older adults to share their **resilience**.

### For families and family caregivers

- To ensure LGBTQIA+ care receivers complete **advanced directives**.
- To provide resources to support caregivers **emotionally** and **financially**.

### For community and society

- To establish more **virtual programs** in senior centers.
- To offer LGBTQ-friendly **housing** and/or senior homes for LGBTQIA+ older people.
- To provide **diversity, equity, and inclusion training** and LGBTQIA+-specific training for organizations.



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