

WHY “LGBTQ-WELCOMING” WILL SOON BE A HALLMARK OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES

A PRIMER FOR OPERATORS,
MARKETERS & LEADERSHIP



sodexo
QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES

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LGBTQ-RIGHTS MILESTONES>

>1969

JUNE 28, 1969
The Stonewall riots kick off after a police raid in the early morning at the popular gay bar the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in New York City. The three days of violent demonstrations marked a major turning point in the modern gay rights movement.



>1973

DEC. 15, 1973
The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its official list of mental illnesses.

>1978

NOV. 27, 1978
Harvey Milk, an openly gay politician elected one year earlier to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, is assassinated in City Hall by former city supervisor Dan White. Mayor George Moscone is also slain. White served only five years in prison.

OCT. 14, 1979
The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights takes place in Washington and draws more than 75,000 people demanding equal civil rights.

>1979



>1982

FEB. 25, 1982
Wisconsin becomes the first state to ban discrimination for sexual orientation.



>1988

DEC. 1, 1988
The first World AIDS Day is held.

>1993

DEC. 21, 1993
Don't Ask, Don't Tell - allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military without discrimination as long as they stayed in the closet - becomes official U.S. policy.

SEPT. 21, 1996
President Bill Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act into law, a measure designed to oppose same-sex marriage.

>1996



INTRODUCTION

By 2030, the population of American adults ages 65 or older is expected to surpass 70 million according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In approaching that number, the senior housing industry continues to face challenges that impede its growth and profitability. Inert occupancy rates, dismal profit margins and shortfalls in qualified talent all represent major hurdles.

There is, however, one untapped segment of the market that presents a viable opportunity for senior living communities to grow their business—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) seniors. Perhaps little known and less understood by the industry, LGBTQ older adults experience a range of unmet needs and discrimination when looking for senior housing. This is especially unfortunate considering that it is a market poised for rapid growth as a result of increasing numbers of Baby Boomers entering retirement. In fact, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force puts the number of LGBTQ seniors in the U.S. at 3 million and notes that this figure is expected to double by 2030 (Tobijah, 2017).

Even as the U.S. celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprisings, some of the very same activists who fought so hard for equality and the right to be out now find themselves compelled to go back into the closet in order to qualify for service or benefits. Too many feel forced to make the difficult decision to endure this each and every day, hiding who they are, because the community or complex they call home is neither welcoming, informed nor respectful of their identities. Even lifelong spousal or partner relationships must be publicly reduced to “friendship” in order to conform to property rules, regulations or perceived expectations (Wheeler, 2016).

The senior living industry has a profound opportunity to rectify this and ensure a better quality of life for LGBTQ older adults. As this paper will discuss, senior living operations of all types can and should create a more welcoming and inclusive experience for both current and prospective LGBTQ residents, their families and allies. They can openly implement supportive policies, develop strategic LGBTQ organizational partnerships, prioritize

equitable and inclusive care and provide ongoing LGBTQ cultural competency training for staff and volunteers.

Developing a marketing strategy that attracts LGBTQ older adults is the right thing to do. And it's good business. Given the opportunity for senior living operators to advance their growth agenda, developing a strategic plan that attracts and retains LGBTQ older adults and allies is a vital lever to business growth and to improve quality of life. Sustained focus on key market drivers, exploring new access to growth opportunities, and establishing conviction and awareness at all levels of the organization are critical success factors for organizations seeking to develop a strong LGBTQ strategy.

>2003

JUNE 26, 2003

In the Supreme Court case *Lawrence v. Texas*, sodomy laws in the U.S. are ruled unconstitutional.
AP Photos



>2008

NOV. 4, 2008

California votes in favor of Proposition 8, which changes the state constitution to say that ‘only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized.’



FEB. 23, 2010

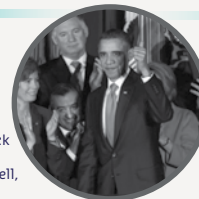
The Obama administration announces it will no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act in court.

>2011

>2010

SEPT. 20, 2011

A year after President Barack Obama signed legislation repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the policy officially ends.



>2013

JUNE 26, 2013

The Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act, the ban on federal benefits for same-sex married couples, on a 5-4 vote.



>2019

JUNE 28, 2019

50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprisings.

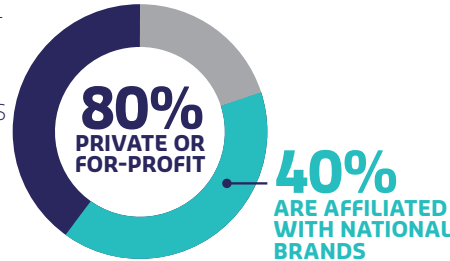
“Promoting LGBTQ inclusion in the senior living industry is the right thing to do. It opens the door to seniors who previously have not felt welcome and it offers tremendous growth potential for operators.”

— JOE CUTICELLI
CEO, SENIORS, NORTH AMERICA
SODEXO

KEY MARKET DRIVERS

Among the various residential care and housing options for seniors, more than 80 percent are private or for-profit, with 40 percent of those affiliated with national chains (Presbyterian Senior Living, 2016). As for-profit ventures, these organizations must prioritize driving return on investment, controlling costs and ensuring occupancy rates are kept high.

RESIDENTIAL
CARE AND
HOUSING
OPTIONS
FOR SENIORS



A recent study reviewing skilled nursing communities occupancy over a five-year period showed a consistent fall in rates. From 2013 through 2017 occupancy rates in U.S. skilled nursing communities fell from 83.1 percent to 80.2 percent (Marcum LLP, 2019). The report notes that during the same time skilled nursing communities were also managing through reduced reimbursements. Smaller independent communities were struggling to hang on, while still smaller groups questioned their viability.

To stay in the market, these businesses had to adapt to the changing demands of their clients. It is as true for skilled nursing communities as it is for independent living, assisted living communities, continuing care, memory care or others.



Another executive forecast on senior living (Mullaney, 2019) adds:

“Changes in the U.S. economy and healthcare system could alleviate some pressures and create business opportunities. However, to take advantage of opportunities, providers might need to ‘detonate’ standard practices.”

In other words, what might have worked in the past is not necessarily a wise growth strategy today. That same trends report also polled senior living industry CEOs regarding what they see as key pressure points for 2019. Labor and cost controls remain top of mind, with one CEO stating:

“...senior living companies will have to maintain a meaningful focus on attracting, engaging, developing and retaining key talent. And we believe that providing high quality care and personalized service to residents and their family members, making a difference one relationship at a time, will allow senior living providers to earn trust and endorsements from those they serve.”



GROWTH OPPORTUNITY: LGBTQ OLDER ADULTS

Ironically, the very market that the senior living industry seems to have overlooked—and in some instances put off—now holds potential for being a growth driver. However, to bring about that success, senior living operators, marketers and program directors must remain attuned to the insights noted earlier: (1) a need to adapt to the changing demands of clients, (2) a willingness to “detonate standard practices,” and (3) an ability to attract, engage and develop key talent. All are particularly important as it relates to LGBTQ older adults. Why?



Not all cities in the U.S. are LGBTQ-friendly and only a few select providers actively promote a safe, welcoming community. (Kozuch, 2018)

Compared to older heterosexual couples, LGBTQ* older adults are twice as likely to live alone and half as likely to have a partner.

(Adams, 2011)

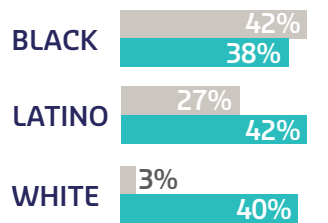
THE
**3 MILLION
LGBTQ
OLDER
ADULTS**
IN THE U.S. WILL
**DOUBLE
BY 2030.**

(TOBIJAH, 2017)

LGBTQ* older adults tend to be caregivers and are four times less likely to have children to help them.

(Adams, 2011)

Black & Latino LGBTQ adults have compound discrimination concerns about the quality of their health care as they age.

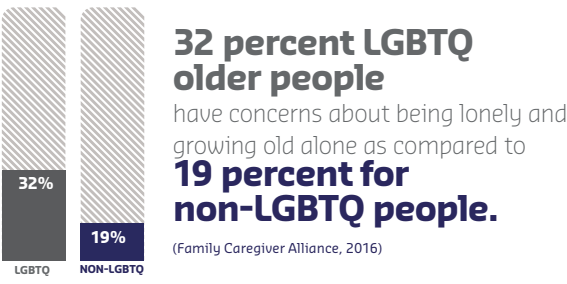


(Houghton, 2018)

A growing number of affordable senior living communities exist that welcome LGBTQ older adults, however the supply is far from adequate and few referral agencies are seriously looking at the unique needs of this demographic. One nationwide survey of 320 area and state units on aging found that less than 8 percent offered services targeted to LGBTQ older adults and only 12 percent reported outreach efforts to this population (Knochel, Croghan, Moone, & Quam, 2010).

Moreover, several studies indicate a fear of mistreatment or distrust among LGBTQ older adults in terms of the service they might receive in many senior living communities if they were open about their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI). One report (The Equal Rights Center, 2014) found that 48 percent of same-sex couples were not treated the same as heterosexual couples in terms of housing deposits, fees, availability and the application process. This is especially concerning given that only 21 states or localities currently offer fair-housing protections based on SOGI (Abrahms, 2019).

Statistics around these various areas of concern for LGBTQ older adults can be eye-opening:



Any organization with a mission to serve the nation's aging population would do well to explore ways to improve outreach and accommodation of LGBTQ older adults. For-profit senior living organizations in particular should view the aforementioned challenges as an opportunity—not just an opportunity to provide much needed services to a deserving market segment, but an opportunity to address competitive business challenges as well.

Seniors have historically opted for assisted living communities and long-term care facilities as they age, but lately researchers have predicted that within the

next 20 years aging populations will have different requirements for how they live (PGIM, 2016). It can already be seen taking place as LGBTQ Baby Boomers begin to seek services. Once this cohort begins to fully enter the pipeline of prospects, the demand for senior living accommodations of all types will be tremendous. In fact, the American Seniors Housing Association estimates that production of senior housing will need to grow from 25,000 per year between 2015 and 2020 to 96,000 units per year between 2030 and 2035.

In the short term, several senior living operators will continue to struggle with occupancy rates. Skilled

nursing communities, for example, are expected to address the issue by repurposing or converting units as low-income apartments, memory care units or assisted living according to Health Dimensions Group (Health Dimensions Group, 2018).

In the longer term, at the peak of Baby Boomer retirement, the bigger challenge will be ensuring providers are taking advantage of every market segment to include LGBTQ older adults. However, efforts to prepare a residential community, or staff to present a welcoming and inclusive environment need not wait.

READINESS ASSESSMENT: LGBTQ CULTURAL COMPETENCY

For senior living communities interested in attracting LGBTQ older adults, plenty of informative research is available. A more recent AARP survey of LGBTQ adults (Houghton, 2018) offers ideas on ways to immediately create a more welcoming impression:



Use of advertising to highlight LGBTQ-friendly services WAS NOTED AS FAVORABLE BY 86 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS.



Displaying LGBTQ-welcoming signs or symbols in facilities and online WAS NOTED AS IMPORTANT TO 82 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS.

(Houghton, 2018)

These insights only scratch the surface of what embodies cultural competency for older LGBTQ people. The organization SAGE, which provides advocacy and services for LGBTQ older adults, defines it this way:

“Cultural competency is the idea that LGBT older people are as deserving of compassionate eldercare as anyone else. The LGBT senior population—a large and growing one—has unique needs due to a lifetime of discrimination and harassment. LGBT elders should not be fearful when seeking health care or long-term care.”

SAGE makes clear that the LGBTQ community is not a monolith. This must be kept in mind when addressing the needs of LGBTQ older adults as well, who have a totally different set of life experiences than younger LGBTQ people. The former grew up in a time that was far less welcoming, when LGBTQ people guarded their sexual orientation and gender identity as a dangerous secret that could cause them to lose their homes, jobs, families and freedom. They risked being labeled anything from criminal to mentally ill. That generation still carries a lot of this baggage today as they attempt to navigate issues related to housing and health care.

LGBTQ* CONCERNS ABOUT LONG TERM CARE



(Houghton, 2018)

“Why would you just rule out a whole segment? LeadingAge, which represents many non-profit retirement communities, encouraged members to better serve the LGBT community, and interest has picked up in the last three or four years. There are a few communities that cater primarily to the LGBT population, but more hope for a diverse mix of residents.” (Burling, 2018)

— KEVIN BRADLEY
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ONLINE LEARNING,
LEADINGAGE

In addition to considering generational differences when developing LGBTQ cultural competency, it is important to also note other areas of diversity within the LGBTQ community.

- LGBTQ older people of color
- Transgender older people
- Older people living with HIV/AIDS
- LGBTQ Baby Boomers
- LGBTQ older people and families



In developing a culturally competent and welcoming environment it is important to address a number of factors including language, inclusive visuals in company materials, LGBTQ programming and outreach efforts. One of the simplest ways to cultivate both understanding and respectful relationships with LGBTQ older adults is through appropriate use of language. Keep in mind, however, that some terms still used by older LGBTQ people may be seen as outdated by younger LGBTQ people. Become familiar with key terminology and pay close attention to how residents use terms and how they refer to themselves and others.

SAGE is an excellent resource for guidance and training. It can offer counsel across a full spectrum of cultural competencies to help organizations address bias or identify and manage needs unique to the LGBTQ older adult. In responding to concerns from the LGBTQ community about a way to find competent senior care providers, and in response to concerns from the providers that they are unclear how to make their services fully competent, SAGE launched SAGECare, the only national LGBTQ Aging Competency credential (www.sageusa.care).

Companies earn the nationally recognized credential based on the amount of training their staff receives. A 2018 article in the Washington Post (Bahrapour, 2018) reported on the training by SAGECare.

“[Communities] that have received the training say it has made a difference. The New Jewish Home, a facility on New York City’s Upper West Side with over 500 residents, began working with SAGE before it started offering the credential. While there were always LGBTQ residents, it is now taking a more active approach to making them feel comfortable, said Rabbi Jonathan Malamy, its director of spiritual care and religious life and a co-chair of its LGBTQ welcoming initiative. There are now rainbow flag decals on the front door and on the doors of key administrative offices, and some staff members wear rainbow pins on their ID badges.”

A data-driven strategy supporting the realities of aging for LGBTQ older adults must also establish governance and accountability. Without firmly establishing organizational policies and procedures to instill behaviors that drive a culture of respect, inclusion and safety, it is impossible to bring about real change. Staff at all levels of the organization need to be aware of and committed to a philosophy of a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ adults.

A clear strategy for attracting and retaining older LGBTQ adults and allies will be rooted in the market drivers, open doors to new growth opportunities, and incorporate ongoing training and professional development that reflect the vision of LGBTQ inclusion. Embedding measures of governance and accountability will ensure the outcomes necessary to continually grow a culture of inclusion that is visible to residents and family members as well as employees and the broader community.



Senior living providers can further elevate visibility of their communities through strategic partnerships with organizations like Out & Equal—which recognizes companies with strong workplace equality for members of the LGBTQ community, SAGE—which provides community programs, social services and more to LGBTQ older adults, and Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRCF)—which together with SAGE have launched the first ever Long-Term Care Equality Index (theLEI.org). In addition, the FORGE Transgender Aging Network, GRIOT Circle, LGBTQ Aging Network and the LGBTQ Aging Project all have local presence across the country and assist in providing more information on aging and LGBTQ older adults.

“Three out of four adults age 45 and older who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender say they are concerned about having enough support from family and friends as they age. Many are also worried about how they will be treated in long-term care facilities and want specific LGBT services for older adults.”

— ANGELA HOUGHTON
AARP RESEARCH

POLICIES IMPACTING LGBTQ OLDER ADULTS

Many public and private senior programs do not recognize or support LGBTQ families. It may come as a surprise to know:

- **Social Security does not pay survivor benefits to unmarried, same-sex partners.**
- **Medicaid does not protect unmarried, same-sex partners' assets and homes when a partner enters a long-term care community.**
- **State laws vary regarding LGBTQ people, with over half carrying no laws to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation when applying for housing, insurance or employment.**
- **Some tax laws, pensions and 401K regulations may discriminate against unmarried, same-sex partners**

(SeniorLiving.org, 2017).



SETTING THE STANDARD WITH THE LONG-TERM CARE EQUALITY INDEX

*(Edited excerpts from Why the LEI? and theLEI.org.
Reprinted with permission from HRCF & SAGE)*

SAGE, the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ older people, and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRCF), the educational arm of the nation's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for LGBTQ people, are joining forces to address these issues by launching the Long-Term Care Equality Index (LEI) to promote equitable and inclusive care for LGBTQ older people in residential long-term care communities.

SAGE and HRCF believe that most long-term care communities do not want LGBTQ older adults to face discrimination or have to worry about the care they will receive. But these communities may be unsure how to protect their LGBTQ residents from discrimination, provide them with optimal care and extend a warm welcome to allay their concerns.

The LEI will encourage and help long-term care communities to adopt policies and best practices that provide culturally competent and responsive care to LGBTQ older adults. More than just an assessment, the LEI will provide resources and technical assistance to bring these policies and practices to life.

“Assessment is a critical first step in helping residential long-term care communities adopt policies and best practices that provide culturally competent and responsive care to LGBTQ older adults. To effect real change, however, efforts must also provide targeted resources and technical assistance that bring these policies and practices to life.”

— HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION & SAGE

An exploratory study by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and SAGE revealed that there is great interest by aging services providers to participate in the Long-Term Care Equality Index initiative. Participating aging services providers will benefit by:

- Learning best practices for LGBTQ equity and inclusion
- Having access to quality training and education
- Gaining assistance with meeting state and federal regulatory requirements, including the new CMS Phase III Requirements of Participation
- Seeing an improved ability to develop culturally appropriate marketing for future staff, clients and funders
- Earning public recognition as a leading provider of LGBTQ-welcoming services



WHERE YOU CAN BEGIN



The Commitment to Caring Pledge is the first step in the Long-Term Care Equality Index.

Senior living communities are invited to sign the pledge, indicating an intention to adopt the LGBTQ inclusive policies and practices necessary to provide culturally competent and responsive care to LGBTQ older adults.

In doing so, organizations will then have access to both an online assessment tool and resources that will help create a more informed and LGBTQ-welcoming community.

Visit theLEI.org to learn more.

“Supporting the needs of our aging LGBTQ population is the responsibility of all of us. From the need for well-trained, culturally competent staff in facilities to the need for more culturally competent systems and policies, change is something we must all work on together.”

— CHRIS GARGIULO

DISTRICT MANAGER, ON-SITE SERVICE SOLUTIONS
SODEXO

LGBTQ TERMINOLOGY

- **CISGENDER:** A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- **GENDER EXPRESSION:** External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.
- **GENDER IDENTITY:** One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **LGBTQ:** An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.”
- **QUEER:** A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with LGBTQ.
- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.
- **TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Source: HRC Glossary of Terms





“Our founders, Wybe & Marietje Kroontje, envisioned a senior living community that welcomed seniors from all walks of life. We reaffirmed their vision during our strategic planning process in May of 2019, some 45 years later, by deliberately crafting our mission and vision to place great emphasis on inclusivity.”

— **FERNE MOSCHELLA**
PRESIDENT AND CEO
WARM HEARTH VILLAGE

CONCLUSIONS

While the effort may seem insurmountable in some instances, the reality is that senior living communities can achieve wide recognition and acceptance as welcoming to LGBTQ older adults, even in supposedly unwelcoming geographies.

For example, Pennsylvania is among the 27 states in the country that ranked in the lowest-rated category, “High Priority to Achieve Basic Equality,” in HRC’s 2017 annual State Equality Index (Human Rights Campaign, 2018). The state lacks non-discrimination and hate crime laws and maintains other laws that severely undermine LGBTQ equality and allow for religious-based discrimination.

Yet in that environment many of the hospitals and health care centers around the state have embraced LGBTQ inclusion. In fact, Pennsylvania ranked fifth among states for having 19 facilities awarded “Healthcare Equality Leaders” on the HRC’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) 2018. Included on that list was the Abramson Center for Jewish Life (now part of Abramson Senior Care), one of just a few senior care communities to participate in the HEI. That accomplishment is the perfect testament to making possible, the seemingly impossible.

Still other senior living communities like Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg, Virginia have long enjoyed informal recognition and word-of-mouth endorsement for being LGBTQ-welcoming. At the same time, however, they are actively engaging credible and qualified third-party guidance on strategy, best

practices and governance structures that will ensure a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for all of their residents. Tools and resources provided by the HRC Foundation and SAGE (see sidebar *Setting the Standard with the LEI*) will help do that and more.

With 3 million LGBTQ older adults doubling in number by 2030 in the U.S., it is incumbent on organizations to continue driving strategies and policies that reflect the realities of changing demographic trends in the U.S. seniors market. That means crafting a relatable and relevant strategy that addresses the market dynamics and unprecedented growth opportunities, while also building unique competencies through awareness at all levels of the organization. It is an important effort to ensure that quality of life is improved for LGBTQ older adults.

“Understanding the needs of diverse populations is critical to our business and to providing the best possible care we can offer. As a market leader in providing in-home care for seniors and other adults, we know that creating an environment where everyone feels a sense of inclusion and belonging is key to shaping quality experiences.”

— CARL MCMANUS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
COMFORT KEEPERS FRANCHISING, INC -
NORTH AMERICA

4 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

1. **Create key partnerships** that help build an informed strategy for LGBTQ inclusion.
2. **Ensure diversity and inclusion** are on the agenda for talent and succession planning processes.
3. **Provide training and development opportunities** that help staff and volunteers use appropriate language when engaging the LGBTQ community and its allies.
4. **Visibly market your community** in a way that opens doors to potential LGBTQ residents.



ABOUT SODEXO

Sodexo is a global Fortune 500 company with a presence in 72 countries. Delivering more than 100 services that enhance organizational performance, contribute to local communities and improve quality of life, Sodexo is a leading provider of sustainable integrated facilities management and food service operations.

Backed by nearly 460,000 employees around the world, Sodexo's commitment to diversity and inclusion remains a top priority. Currently in the 16th year of metrics-driven efforts, Sodexo's diversity journey has resulted in a systemic culture change for the company and its employees, clients and customers. Diversity and inclusion are strategically woven into the very fabric of the organization as key business drivers, increasing employee engagement and expanding business development opportunities.

Sodexo remains an established thought leader and innovator in the space of diversity and inclusion—conducting ongoing, original research on topics that include gender balance and quality of life around the world. For its achievements, the company has received numerous accolades and recognition, from being ranked in the Top 10 of DiversityInc magazine's "Top 50 Companies for Diversity" list for the 11th consecutive year, to landing on *FORTUNE Magazine's* list of "World's Most Admired Companies."

For more information, visit us.sodexo.com or e-mail SodexoOfficeOfDiversity@sodexo.com

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This white paper was researched and written by Samuel Wells of S.E.Wells Communications, LLC and edited by David Boyd Williams of Sodexo.

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* THE USE OF "LGBTQ" IS FOR UNIFORMITY ONLY, THE ACTUAL STUDY USED "LGBT".

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