

# **A Demographic Profile of Village Members**

June 2010

University of California Villages Project

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The University of California Villages Project is an initiative of the Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services at UC Berkeley in partnership with NCB Impact and supported by the SCAN Foundation.

## **BACKGROUND**

Nearly all older adults (93%) would like to stay in their own homes and neighborhoods for as long as possible, surrounded by familiar physical and social environments (Feldman, Oberlink, Simantov, & Gursen, 2004). Further, aging in place can promote health and help to forestall disability, in part by maintaining relationships with health care providers and well-established social ties. The likelihood that an older adult will be able to remain in their current residence, however, is quite limited and decreases markedly with age; among individuals older than 70 years of age, only 5% can expect to age in place (Sabia, 2008). In addition, without adequate support, aging in one's home can be accompanied by unmet needs, social isolation, inadequate access to health care and other services, physical and emotional vulnerability, and risk of institutionalization.

In recent years, older adults in communities around the United States have begun to gather together in their own neighborhoods to develop innovative, grassroots peer support organizations designed to help members age in place. The most widely known of these organizations is Beacon Hill Village (BHV), a consumer-driven, membership association started in 2001 by a group of older adults living in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston. Currently there are nearly 50 of these grassroots neighborhood-based associations throughout the United States, and hundreds of others are in formation. In return for annual dues, members of these associations, many of which are known as "Villages," receive a variety of services and support (e.g., transportation, grocery shopping, referrals to home care and other discounted services, care coordination, volunteer opportunities, social and cultural events) specifically designed to help them age in place and avoid institutionalization. These "Villages" have received substantial media attention (Adler, 2009; Festa, 2007; Gleckman, 2010; Greene, 2008; Gross, 2007), an online Village-to-Village network [www.vtvnetwork.org](http://www.vtvnetwork.org) has been established, and there is at least one active list-serve of Village organizations (<http://groups.google.com/group/beaconhillvillagemodel?hl=en>).

To date, however, there have been no empirical examinations of what has become known as the "Village model." In partnership with NCB Capital Impact and with the support of the SCAN Foundation, UC Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services surveyed "Villages" nationwide to learn more about their membership composition. This report documents for the first time the characteristics of seniors served by these innovative organizations.

## **METHODS**

A brief survey was emailed to a contact person at Villages across the United States. The survey asked respondents to provide (or estimate) basic demographic information about their membership, including age, gender, race and ethnicity, living arrangement, and need for assistance. In addition, the survey asked Villages to describe their membership categories and associated annual costs. Data collection took place between April and June of 2010.

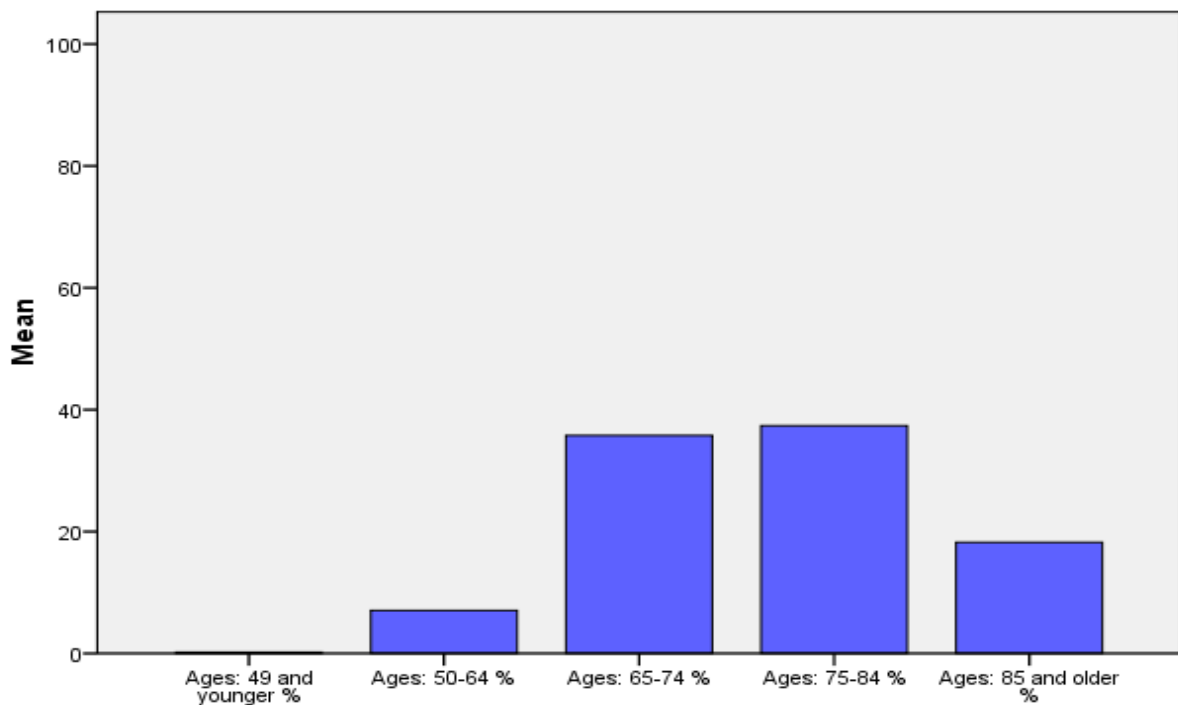
## Villages Member Demographics Survey Report

Fifty-one Villages were identified in consultation with Beacon Hill Village and the Village-to-Village network. Four Villages were excluded prior to data collection because the researchers determined they are not yet operational (i.e., no enrolled members and not yet providing services or access to services), resulting in a total sample size of forty-seven Villages. Thirty-three Villages completed and returned the online survey, resulting in a response rate of 70%, and five indicated that they are not yet operational. The following results section presents information from the 28 Villages that were providing services and had an enrolled membership as of June 1, 2010.

### RESULTS

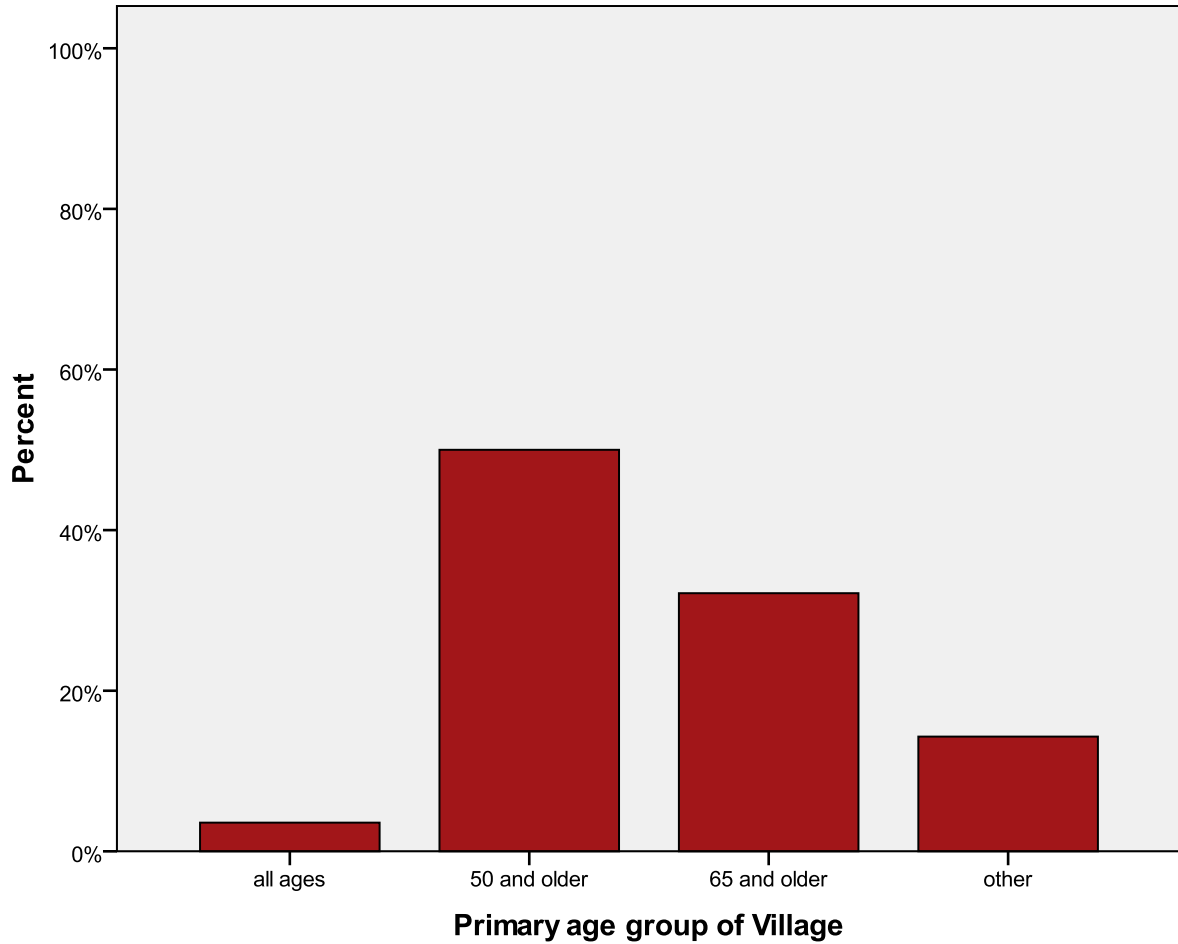
Existing Villages report an average of 157 members per organization, but the number varies widely from 8 to a high of 476 members.

**Age Distribution of Village Members**



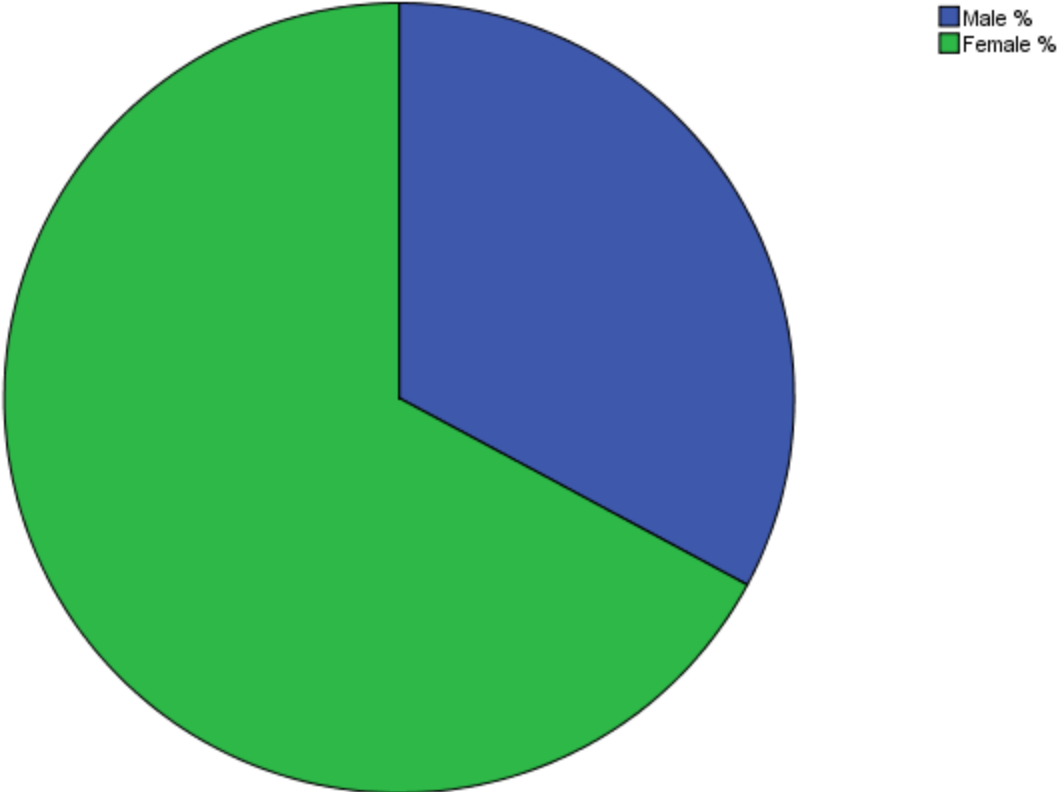
Villages predominantly serve individuals age 65 and older, who constitute more than 90% of the membership in these organizations. Less than 1% of Village members are age 49 and younger, and another 7% are between the ages of 50 and 64.

## Villages Member Demographics Survey Report



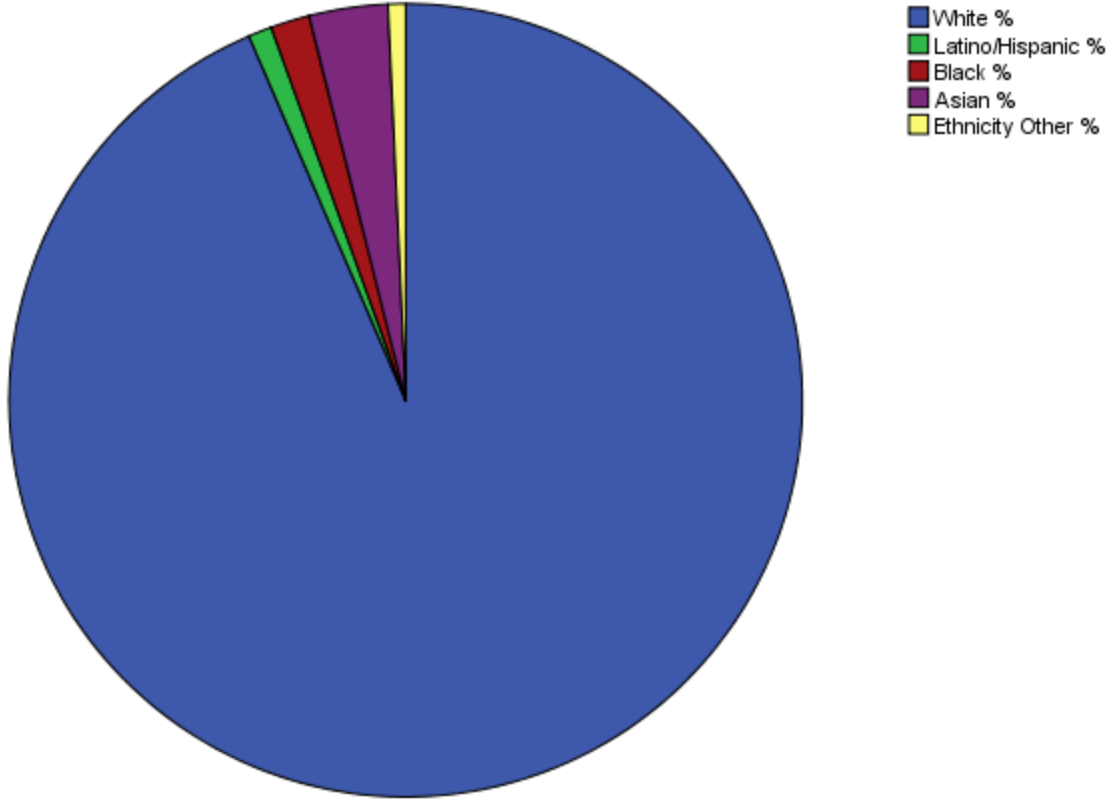
Half of Villages indicated that individuals age 50 and older are their target population. Thirty-two percent target their services towards individuals age 65 and older, and one is open to those of any age. An additional 14% list other age groups as their primary age group, including ages 60 and older and ages 75-84.

**Gender of Village Members**



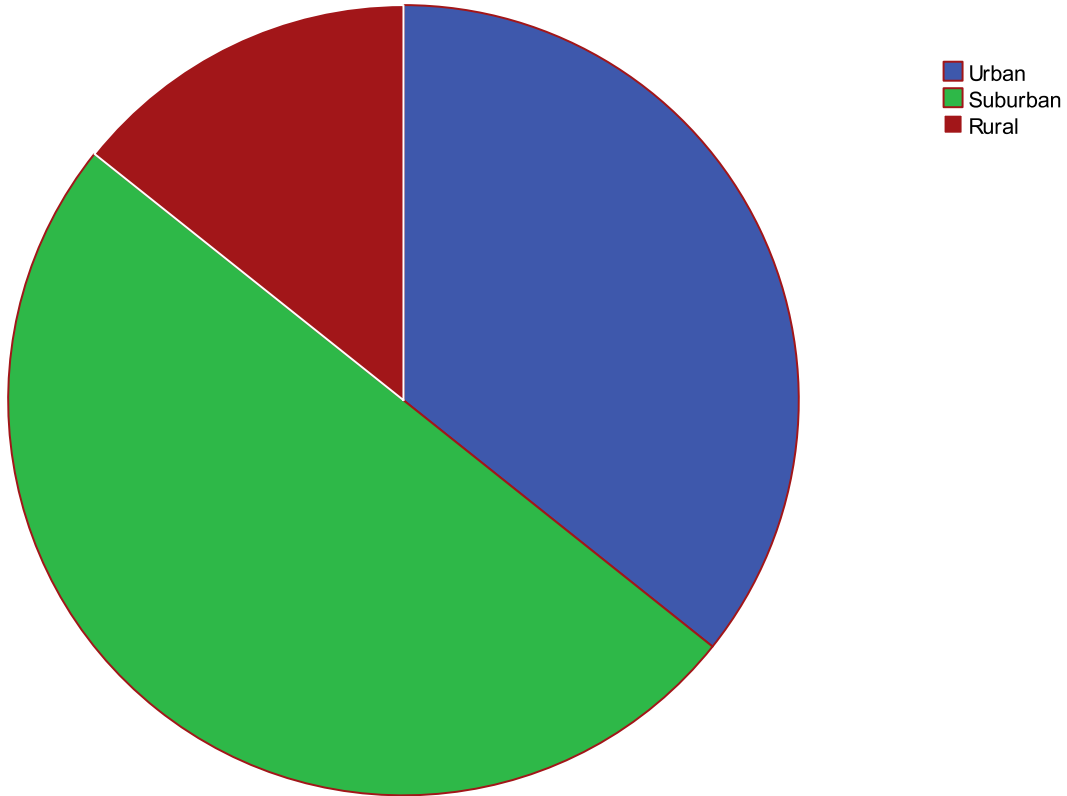
Among Village members, females outnumber males by two to one, a higher sex ratio than found in the U.S. population age 65 and older, which is 59% female (He, Sengupta, Velkoff, & DeBarros, 2005).

**Race/Ethnicity of Village Members**



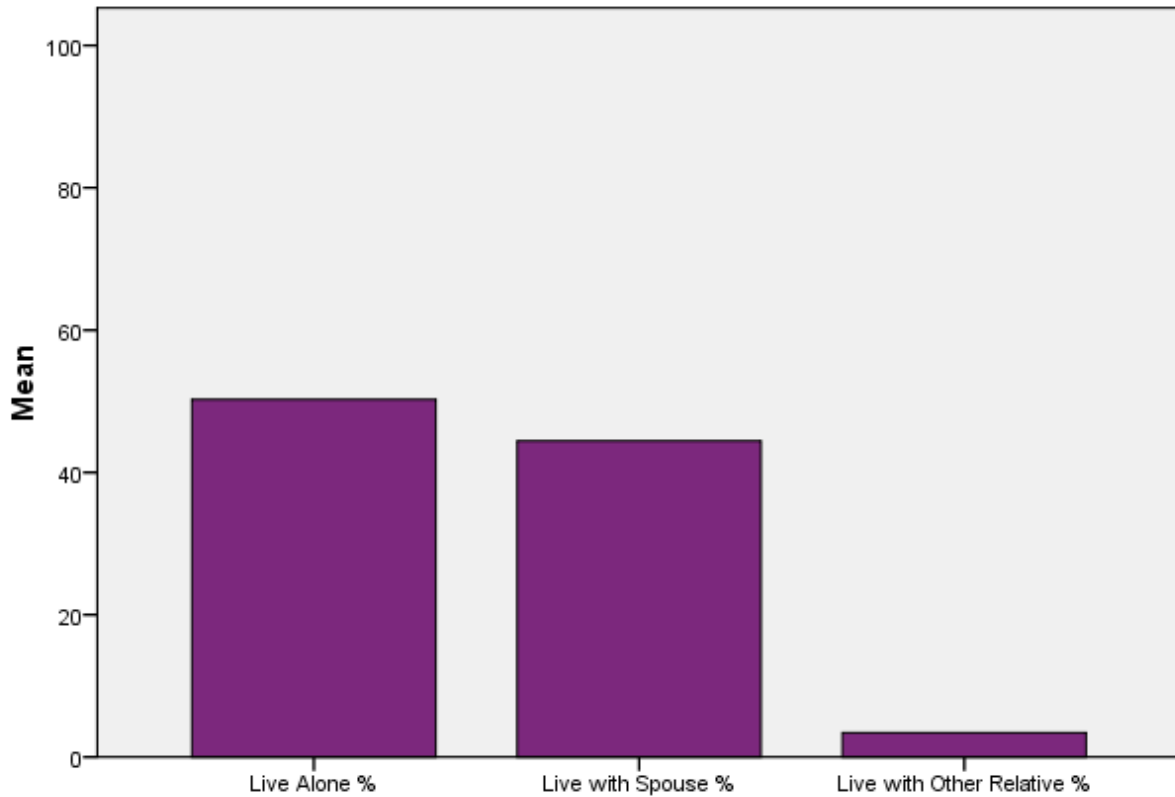
Village membership is comprised of more individuals who are White compared to the U.S. population age 65 and older. More than 90% of Village members are White, about 3% are Asian, less than 2% are Black or African American, and 1% are Latino or Hispanic, while 83% of U.S. older adult population is White, 3% Asian, 8% African American, and 6% Hispanic ((He, Sengupta, Velkoff, & DeBarros, 2005).

### Primary Service Area of Villages



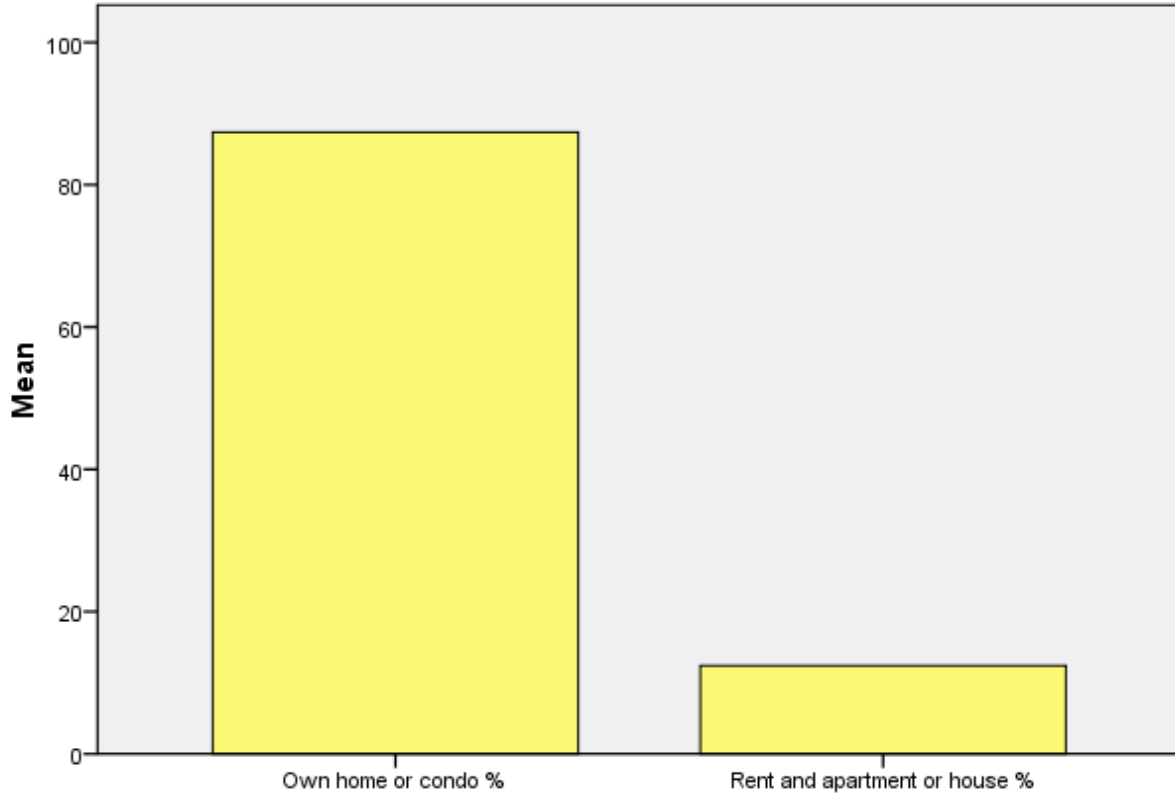
Most Villages serve elders who live in metropolitan areas. As shown above, 50% of Villages are located in suburban neighborhoods, over one-third are in urban areas and less than 15% are in rural areas. In comparison, according to He and colleagues (2005), 77% of older adults live in suburban or urban geographic regions and 23% live in rural areas.

### Living Arrangement of Village Members



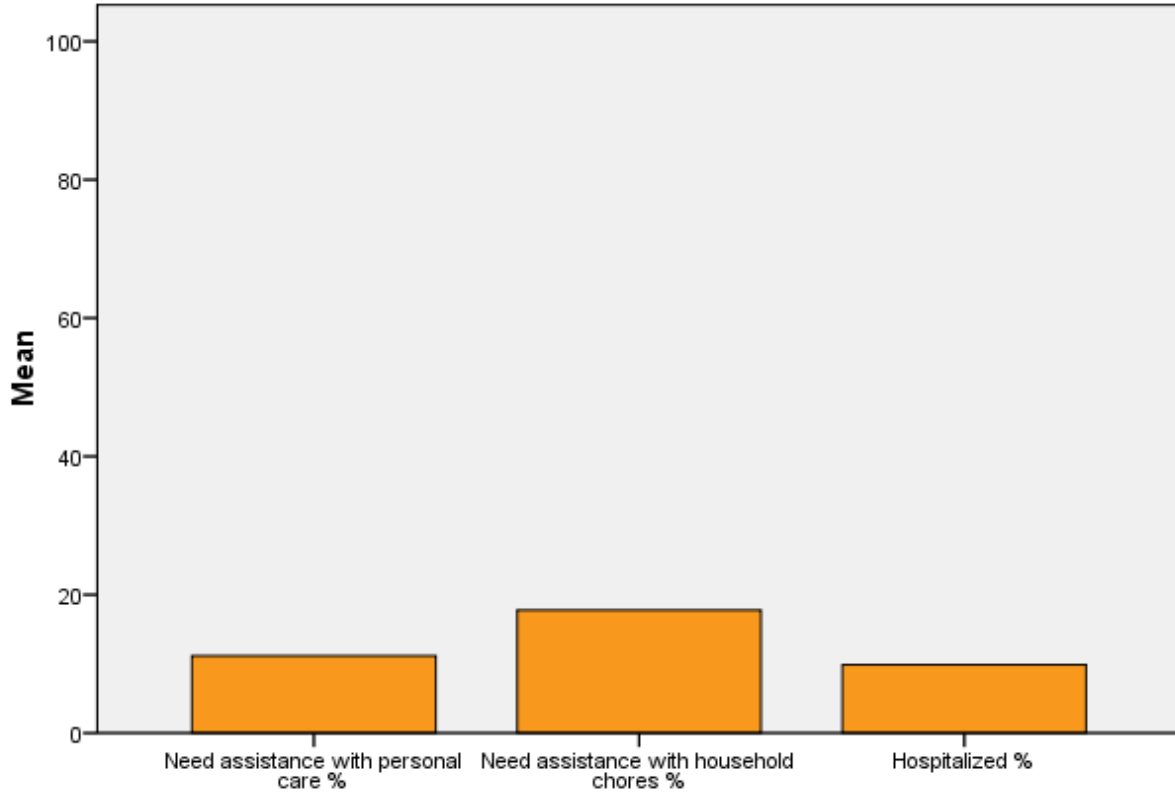
Village members are more likely to live alone or with another relative or non-relative and less likely to live with a spouse compared to the larger U.S. elderly population. Village members are fairly evenly split between living alone (50%) and living with a spouse or partner (44%), and only 3% live with another relative or non-relative. Among the elderly population as a whole, 31% live alone, 54% live with a spouse, and 15% with other individuals (He, et al., 2005).

### Home Ownership



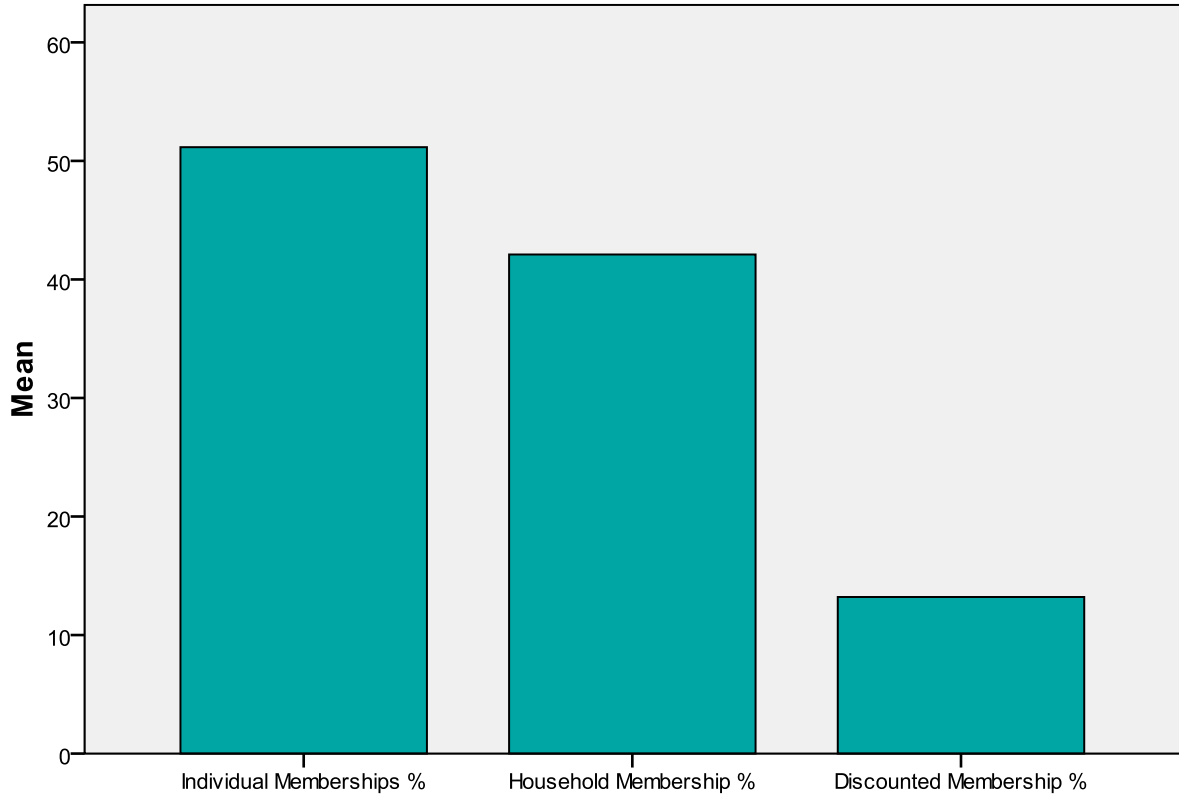
In 2009, approximately 80% of older adults in the United States owned their own home (Callis & Cavanaugh, 2010). Similarly, an overwhelming majority of members (87%) own their own home or condo and only 1 of 8 rent an apartment or house.

### Need for Assistance



The majority of Village members do not require assistance on a regular basis to perform personal care or household chores. This may reflect the age distribution of Village members, as only 20% are age 85 and older. The need for assistance increases with age. In 2005, for example, 7.6% age 65 and older, 9.4% ages 70-74, 16.1% ages 75 to 79, and 29% ages 80 and older require assistance with personal care activities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). An average of less than 10% of members has been hospitalized in the past year, also suggesting that members tend to be in good health.

### Types of Membership



Almost all Villages offer the option of either an individual or household membership, though two survey respondents indicated that their Village does not have an individual membership type. Averaged across all 28 Villages that completed a survey, slightly more than 55% of members hold individual memberships, and over 44% hold household memberships. Seventeen Villages that participated in the survey also offer a discounted membership.

## Villages Member Demographics Survey Report

*Table 1: Membership Types and Costs*

Annual Membership Cost (in dollars)	Mean	Lowest	Highest
Individual	427.7	50	900
Household	603.5	100	1200
Discounted	89.2	0	150
Discounted Income Cut Off	Number of Villages (%)		
Less than \$30,000	4 (23.5)		
\$30,000 - \$40,000	4 (23.5)		
Greater than \$40,000	3 (17.7)		
Other (e.g., case-by-case basis)	6 (35.3)		

Annual dues for individual memberships range from \$50 to \$900 and average almost \$430, while household memberships cost between \$100 and \$1200 and average over \$600.

Among those Villages who completed surveys, 13% of members have a discounted membership. In a few cases, Villages offer services for free to those who meet income requirements, but most charge a reduced fee of an average of \$90 per year. The annual income cut off for an individual discounted membership varies from a low of \$16,000 to almost \$55,000. Six Villages do not have a specific income cut off as of yet and evaluate the need for discounted membership, for example, on a case-by-case basis.

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