

## **May is Older Americans Month:**

### *A Look at Key Household, Neighborhood and Wellbeing Factors*

Each May, this country celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize and celebrate older Americans for their contributions and provide them with information to help them stay healthy and active. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's estimate, adults 65 years of age and older will account for 18.9% of the total population by 2020—an estimated 63.3 million adults. The projected population of those 65 and older in year 2060 is 118 million. With the growing older adult population in this country, it is important to assess and address the diversity of needs of this population. Older Americans Month allows us to do just that and raise awareness about the critical issues impacting older adults in this country.

In honor of Older Americans Month, PHMC's Community Health Data Base (CHDB) is highlighting data from the 2015 Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) Household Health Survey on older adults in the region. The SEPA Household Health Survey is a survey of 10,000 households in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties. This article specifically examines key household, neighborhood, safety and overall wellbeing factors affecting older adults 65 years of age and older.

### **The Older Adult Population in the Region**

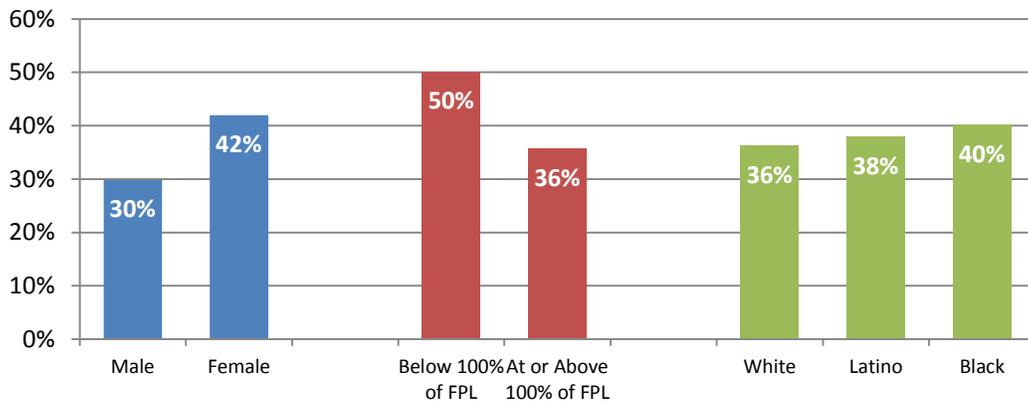
There are approximately 700,000 adults 65 years of age and older in the SEPA region, according to 2018 U.S. Census updates. Of the five counties, Bucks has the largest percentage of older adults (18.0%), followed by Montgomery (17.6%), Delaware (17.6%), Chester (15.8%), and Philadelphia (14.0%) Counties.

### **Living Alone**

More than one-third of adults 65 years of age and older live alone (37.0%) across the SEPA region. (Figure 1)

- The percentage of older adults living alone is highest in Philadelphia County (41.6%) followed by Montgomery (37.9%), Chester (34.5%), Delaware (32.8%), and Bucks (32.5%) Counties.
- Women 65 and older are more likely to live alone (42.0%) compared to men (29.8%).
- One-half of older adults living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level live alone (50.1%) compared to approximately one-third of adults at or above 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (35.7%).
- In addition, one-third of older adults who are Latino or White live alone (37.9% and 36.2%, respectively) compared to four in ten Black adults (40.3%).
- Older adults who live alone are more likely to experience signs of major depression (14.8%) compared to adults who do not live alone (9.4%). Major depression is defined as experiencing four or more depressive symptoms according to a 10-item depression scale.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Older Adults (65+) Who Live Alone by Gender, Poverty Status, and Race/Ethnicity, Southeastern PA, 2015**



Source: PHMC Southeastern PA Household Health Survey, 2015

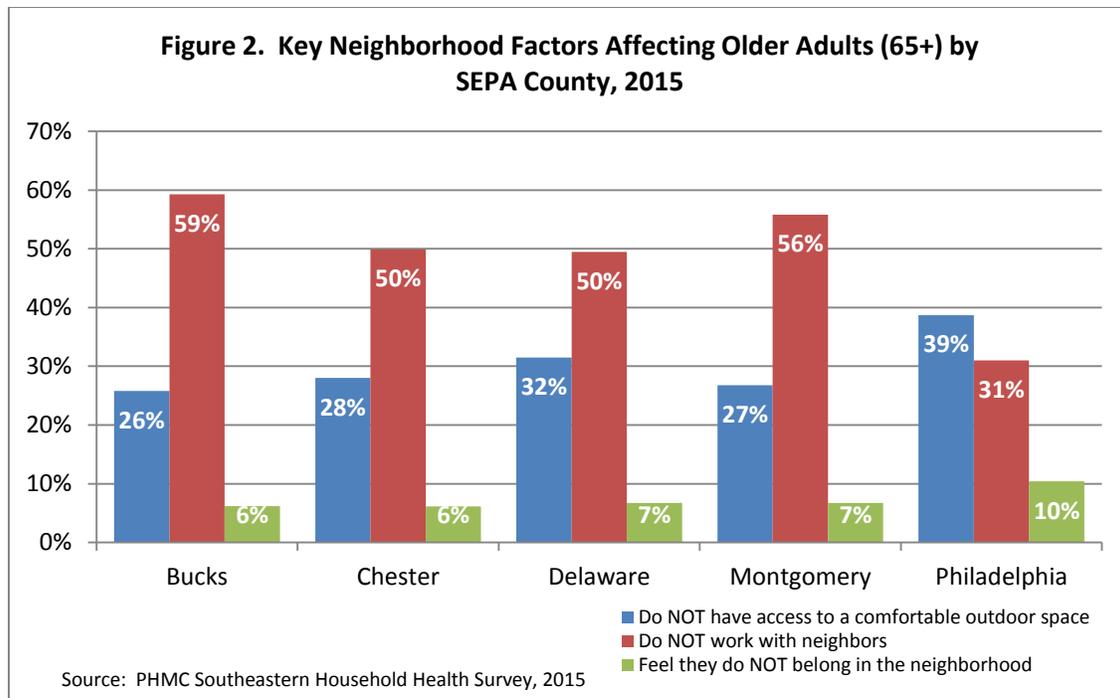
### **Safety, Neighborhood and Community Factors**

#### *Access to Outdoor Space*

- Older adults in Philadelphia County are the most likely NOT to have a park or outdoor space they are comfortable visiting (38.7%) compared to Delaware (31.5%), Chester (28.0%), Montgomery (26.8%), and Bucks (25.8%) Counties. (Figure 2)
- Women who are 65 years of age or older are more likely NOT to have a comfortable park or outdoor space to visit (34.1%) in comparison to 27.3% of men.
- This percentage is highest among Black older adults (42.2%) compared to 29.3% of White and 27.0% of Latino adults.

#### *Feelings of Neighborhood Togetherness*

- When looking at adults 65 years of age and older, those living in Bucks County are more likely NOT to work with their neighbors on improvement projects (59.3%) compared to older adults in Montgomery (55.8%), Delaware (49.5%), Chester (49.9%), and Philadelphia (31.0%) Counties. (Figure 2)
- In addition, when looking at race/ethnicity, seven in ten Latino adults (72.5%) and 47.1% of White adults do NOT work with their neighbors compared to 26.5% of Black adults.



#### *Feelings of Neighborhood Belonging*

- Older adults (65+) in Philadelphia County are the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree that they feel they belong and are part of their neighborhood (10.4%); Chester County has the smallest percentage of older adults who disagree/strongly disagree they belong in their neighborhood (6.1%). (Figure 2)
- Older adults who are living below 100% of the Federal Poverty are slightly more likely to feel they do not belong in their neighborhood (10.1%) compared to those at or above the Federal Poverty Level (7.5%).

#### *Participation in Neighborhood Organizations*

- More than half of Philadelphia older adults (65+) do NOT participate in any local groups or neighborhood organizations (53.9%). This percentage is lowest in Chester County with 34.3% of older adults not participating in neighborhood groups.
- Older adults living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Line are more likely not to participate in local groups (58.0%) compared to those at or above the Federal Poverty Level (44.0%).
- In addition, more than half of Latino older adults do not participate in neighborhood organizations (56.8%) in comparison to Black (52.5%) and White (43.1%) older adults.

These household, neighborhood and community factors are important social determinants of health and can have a significant impact on the overall wellbeing of older adults, many of whom have additional health-related needs. As the older adult population in our region, state and across the country grows, it is critical that we raise awareness around the disparities and outstanding needs experienced by older adults. Older Americans Month is one way to raise awareness and encourages us to think about the unique needs of this population.

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