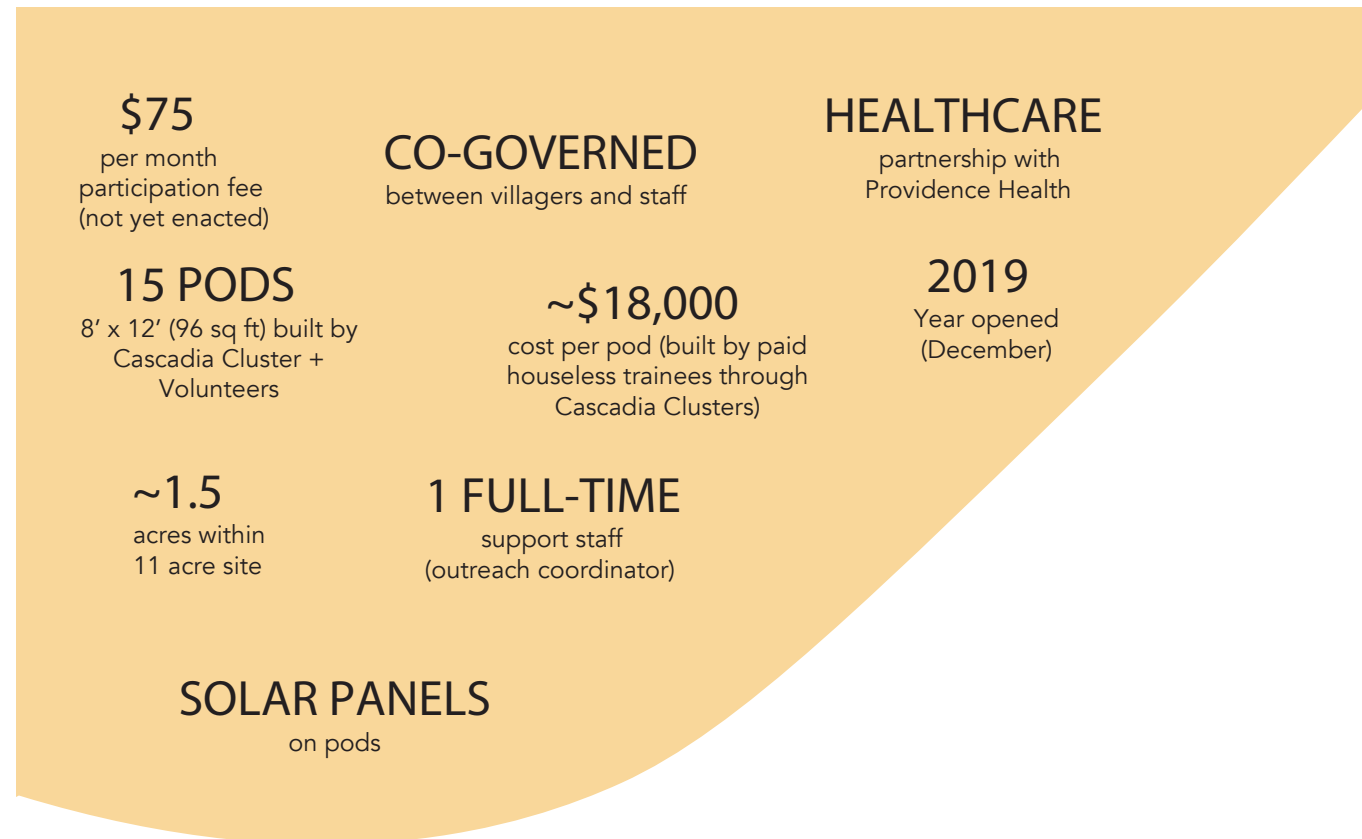




Agape Village



Agape Village

[Village Profile]

Agape Village is a community for people experiencing homelessness located at the base of Kelly Butte in Southeast Portland on the property of the Portland Central Nazarene Church. The village is capable of hosting up to 15 people. The site was previously a quarry and remained largely vacant until church leadership and nonprofit partners decided to build a village to serve the houseless community.

Beginning in late 2017, a group called Faith Leaders on Homelessness began discussing the village model in collaboration with the Village Coalition. The idea for a transitional housing village was conceived by the church as a humanitarian response to the influx of people experiencing homelessness seeking shelter on their grounds and in the surrounding area. Leadership at the Portland Central Nazarene Church recognized the underutilized land they held adjacent to the church as a potential site for a village and they hoped the effort could also serve as a model for other faith-based organizations.

From the onset of the village efforts, the church and project organizers brought together stakeholders to seek input on the vil-

lage design, as well as the creation of community agreements and governance structures. Students and faculty at PSU's Center for Public Interest Design supported the village with site plans and pod designs based on stakeholder feedback. This steering committee included people experiencing homelessness that camped on or near the village site. A horseshoe configuration for the site was chosen by the stakeholders with the intention of strengthening a sense of community, providing clear sight lines for security, and creating a large open space for common activities. The site design also takes into account 10' spacing between pods, accessibility for emergency/construction vehicles, and preservation of views.

The village was built with nonprofit Cascadia Clusters leading the development. As part of Cascadia Clusters' model, the pods were constructed by members of the houseless community who earn an income and learn the construction trade through the process. In this case, the construction crew consisted of several villagers from Hazelnut Grove who were also able to apply their expertise of life in a village to the project. Another one of Cascadia Clusters' innovations is

“When I was in seminary I ended up serving as a chaplain at a rescue mission in Kansas City and later started a women’s shelter in Prineville, Oregon, so homelessness work was not totally foreign to me. I feel like a rescue mission setting is like triage whereas a village has the opportunity to offer more support and help. Mission type work meets an immediate need for those on the street and a village isn’t going to fit everyone, so I think that there’s a real need for both.”

—Matt Huff, pastor, Portland Central Nazarene Church, Agape Village organizer

the creation of a portable “Maker Village” which they use to house the builders and provide a tool shop on the site. Once a project is complete, the Maker Village is relocated to help seed another future village in Portland. Volunteers from groups like Tivnu were also instrumental in the construction of the pods. The “Condo Pod” was designed specifically for the needs of Agape Village and provided the basis for the 15 pods built on site. Led by CPID student Melissa Mulder-Wright, the design features a sleeping loft, floor-level living space, flexibility of use, and an attached ‘garage’ at the rear of the pod (under the loft). This design was further developed by Cascadia Clusters to meet the needs of the village and include solar-powered charging and light stations.

Agape Village was completed in late 2019, so it only had a few short months of operating before the COVID-19 pandemic upended plans. While the village has 15 pods, the number of villagers has not risen above

7 (through 2021). The village benefits from its proximity to the church and occasional access to the bathrooms, kitchen, and gathering areas, but issues around water, sewer, and power specifically for the village have been a challenge. To other faith-based organizations considering a village, the village operators recommend creating the common facilities first and letting the pods grow over time, as opposed to the other way around. Currently, Agape Village has a shared barbecue and sink which serve as the communal kitchen, portable toilets, a fire pit, and an indoor gathering space with a television operated with a generator.

The village has one (ultimately) full-time Outreach Coordinator with an office at the church whose time is paid for by both the church and a partnership with Union Gospel Mission. Agape village could be considered co-governed. The villagers have regular general assemblies where they can make significant decisions about the village, but the

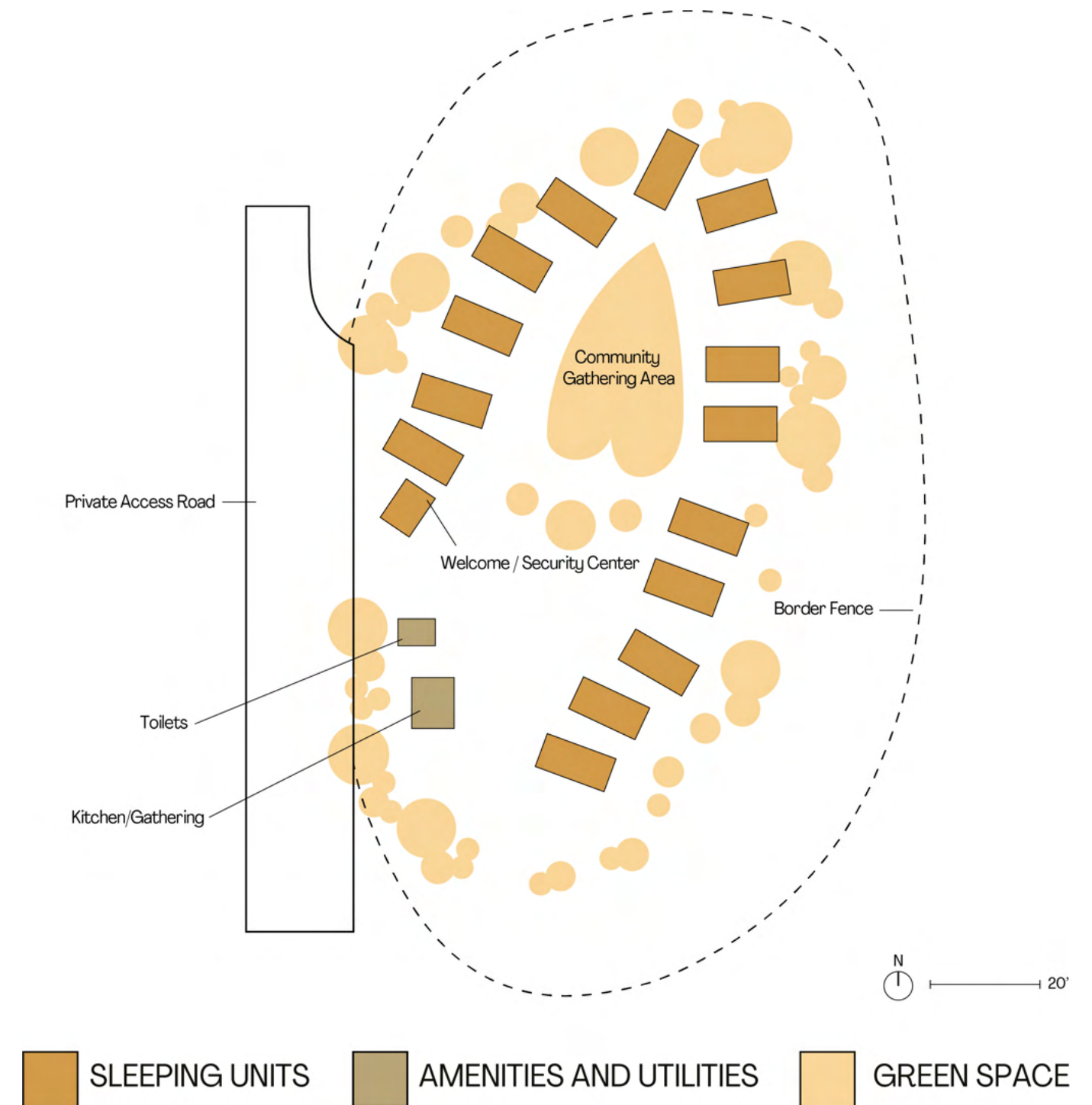


*Volunteers and Cascadia Clusters building pods
Image credit: Agape Village*

church ultimately has the final say on big picture things related to the village. Their numbers have also been too small for an elected village council deciding that it would be counterproductive to have a village council of 4 people in a village of 6 people total.

One particularly unique aspect of Agape Village's model is its partnership with Providence Health. Providence built two pods at the village dedicated for participants in their Better Outcomes thru Bridges (BOB) program. To get into one of those pods, a potential villager has to go through Providence, but then join the village with no distinction between them and the rest of the community. Providence provides ongoing case management and peer support for those two individuals, as well as providing additional support for anybody else in the village that needs assistance with things like connection to services, help clarifying medical information, or other aid. Prior to COVID there was a Providence case manager or peer support specialist that came to the village for about 8-12 hours a week, spread over several days.

Agape Village has relied on developing mission-driven partnerships with other organizations to support its development and operations that are otherwise funded through private donations. Eventually the village plans to charge dues to the villagers (\$75/mo.), but has yet to enact this policy in recognition of the unique challenges presented by the pandemic. Agape Village is developing a village model that may be useful to others as faith-based organizations are increasingly called to become more active participants in efforts to address homelessness.



The Faith Leaders on Homelessness collaborated with the Village Coalition to discuss new space for a village in 2017.



Leadership at the Portland Central Nazarene Church offered an underutilized section of their property as a potential location for a village.



The church and other partner organizations formed the nonprofit Agape Village.

People experiencing homelessness were invited by the organization to join the Agape Village Board and asked to help develop next steps.



PSU's Center for Public Interest Design students provided pod designs, and Cascadia Clusters provided workers and volunteers to build the pods.

Residents new to Agape go through an application and screening process as well as familiarize themselves with the rules and expectations before joining the village.



The village, complete with 15 pods, opened at the end of 2019.

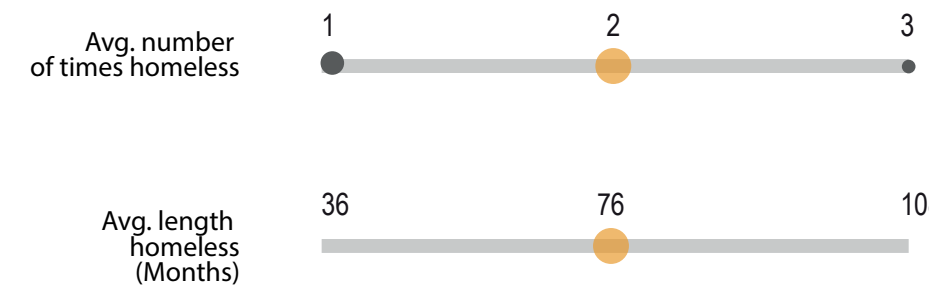
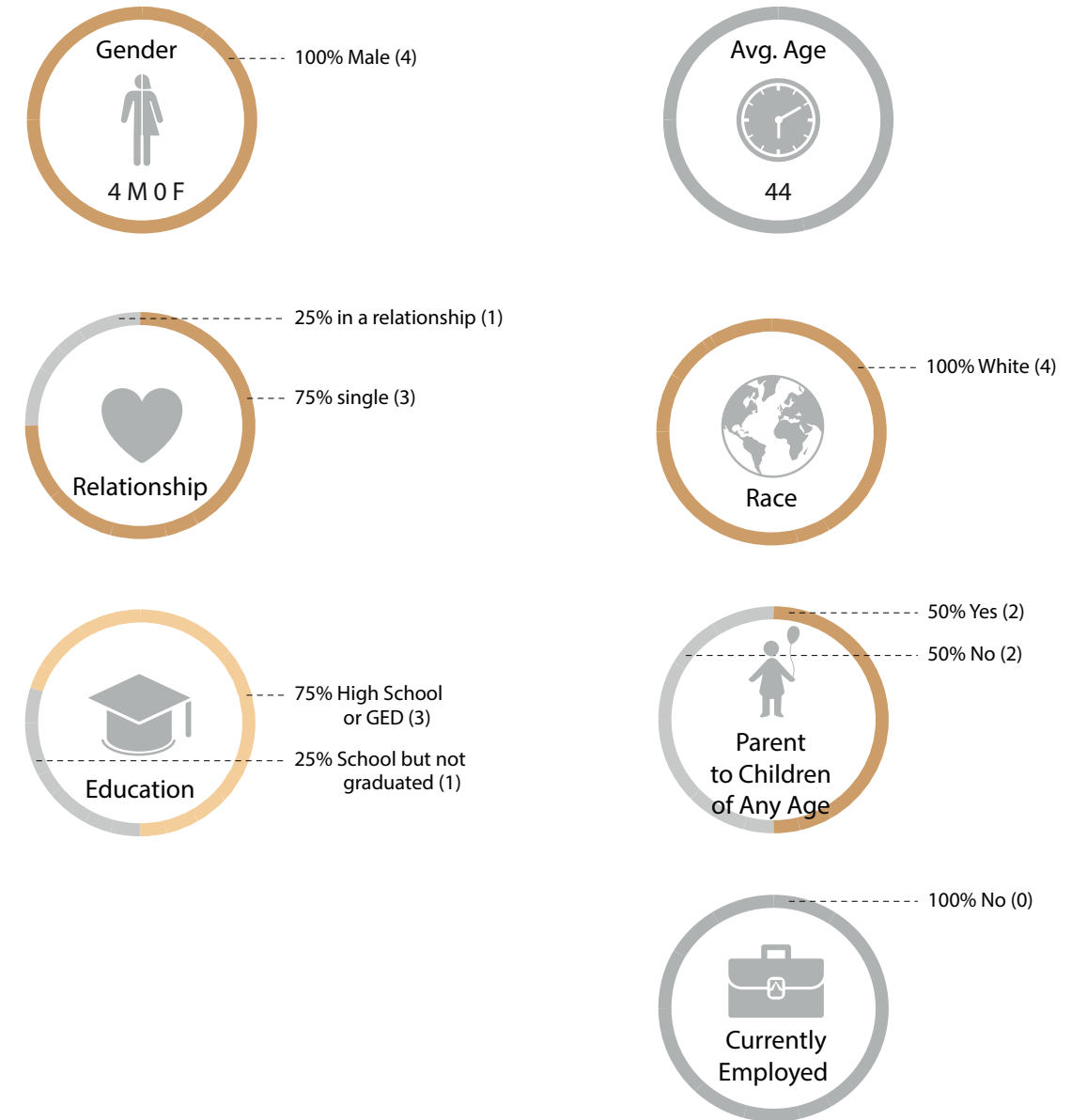


At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.

Agape Village

[Villager Interview Results]

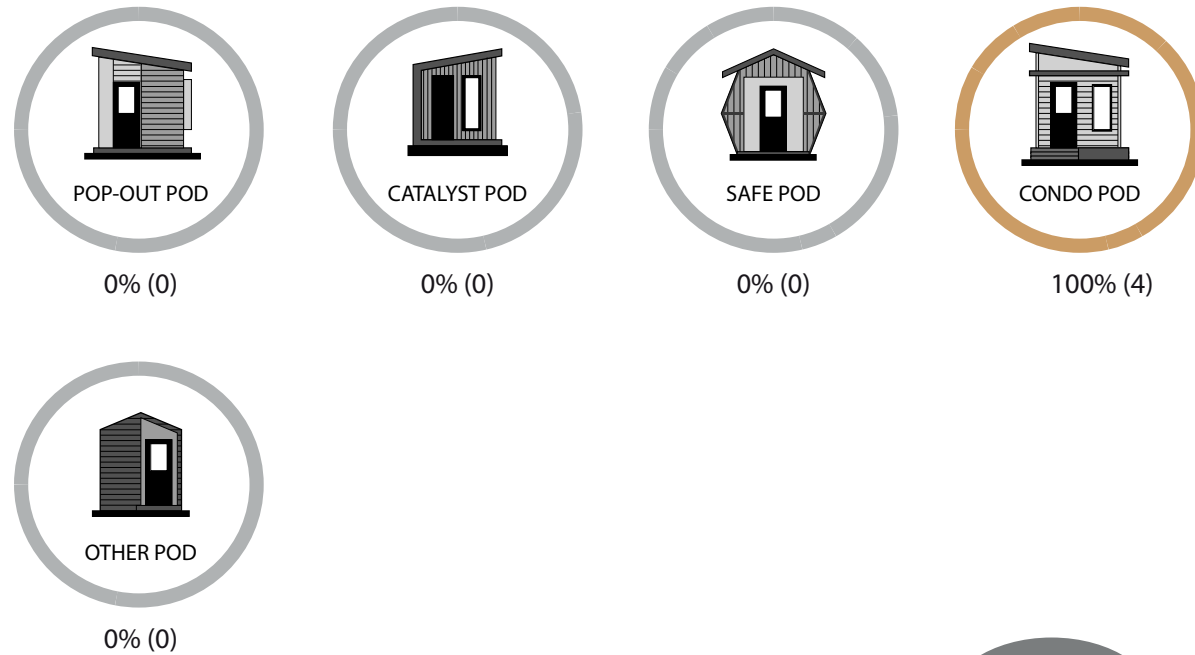
RESIDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS



RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE



PODS POD TYPE



POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

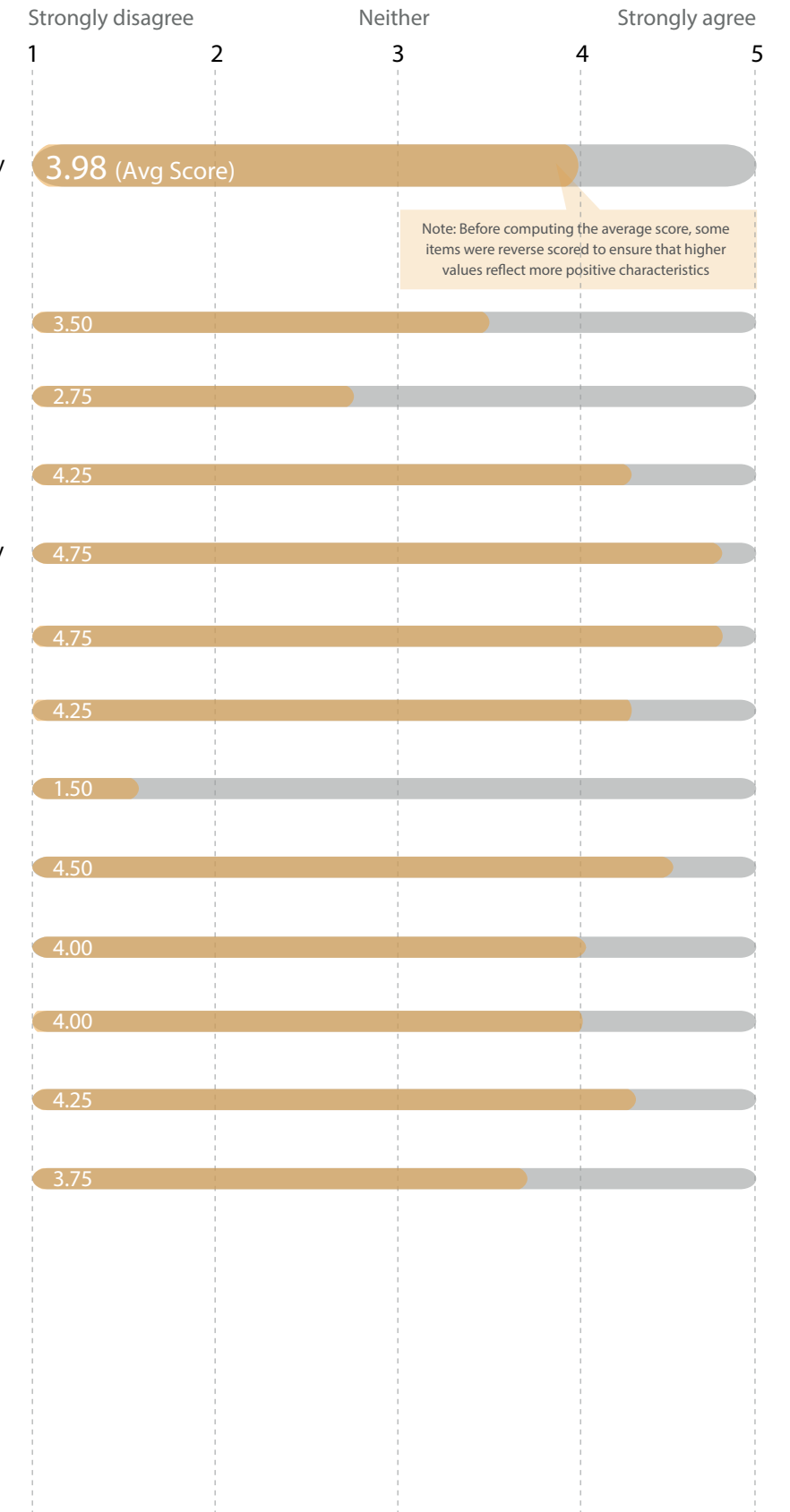


POD QUALITY



Pod Quality

1. I have enough space in my pod.
2. My pod is usually a comfortable temperature
3. My pod looks nice
4. There is enough space between my pod and my neighbors' pod
5. The common facilities are easily accessible
6. I like the common facilities
7. I have problems with privacy where I live
8. The floors, ceilings, and walls in my pod are in good condition
9. The windows in my pod are in good condition
10. I have access to working appliances at the village
11. The locks on the doors and windows in my pod work well
12. There are problems with the electrical system in my pod.



VILLAGE
VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE



Village Social Climate

Strongly disagree Neither Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

4.21 (Avg Score)

Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

1. I feel like part of this village, like I belong here.

3.5

2. I know the rules in this village, and I can fit in with them.

3.75

3. I feel safe in the village.

3.75

4. Sometimes I feel unwelcome in the village because of my ethnicity and my cultural background.

1.00

5. There are other aspects of who I am that make me feel unwelcome in the village

1.00

6. People in the village are friendly to everybody no matter what the person's skin color or ethnic

4.5

7. People in my village treat me as an equal.

4.00

VILLAGE SENSE OF
COMMUNITY



Village Sense of Community

Strongly disagree Neither Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

3.50 (Avg Score)

Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

1. I think this village is a good place for me to live

4.25

2. Other residents and I want the same things from the village

2.75

3. I feel at home in the village

3.75

4. I care about what other villagers think of my actions

3.50

5. I have no influence over what this village is like

3.5

6. If there is a problem in the village people who live there can get it solve

3.25

7. I feel a strong sense of community in this village

3.33

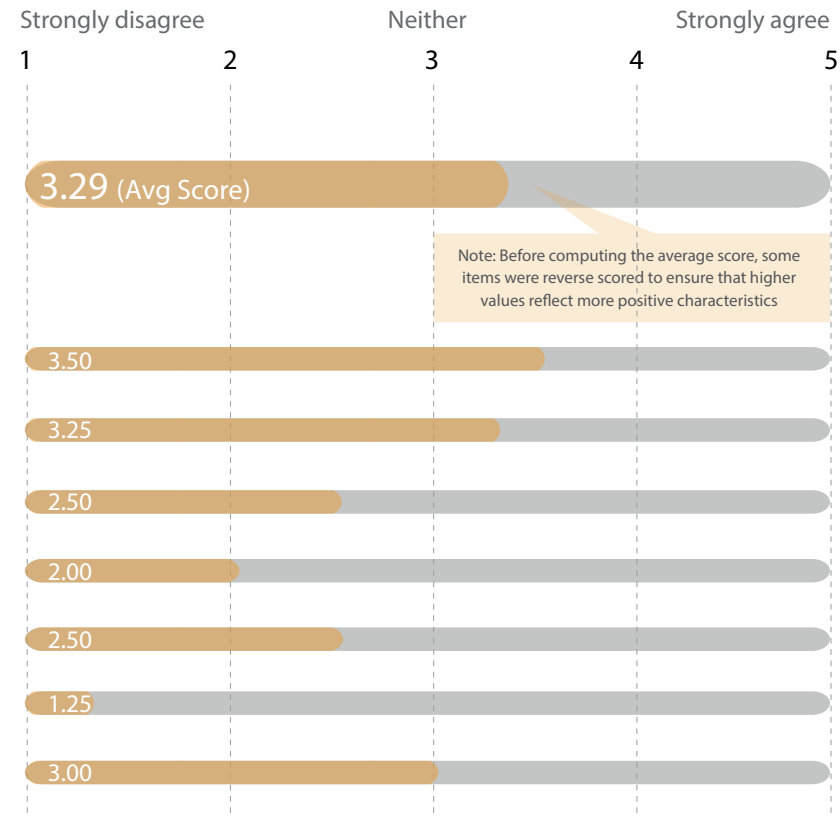
8. People in this village generally don't get along with each other

2.25

VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

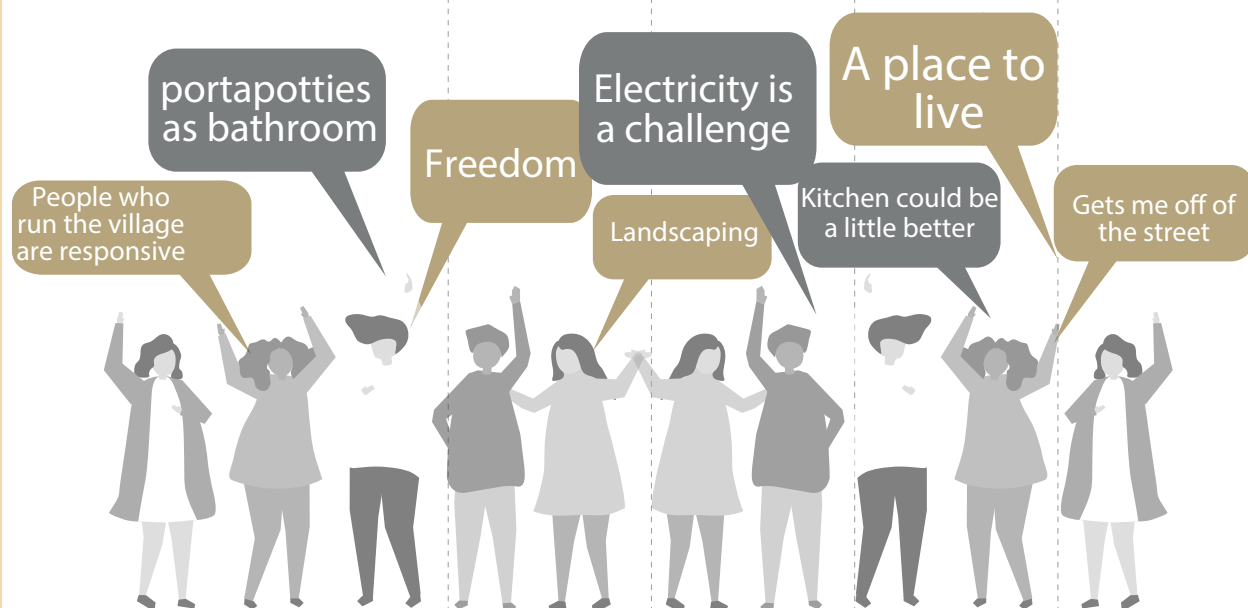


Village Neighbor Scale



VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

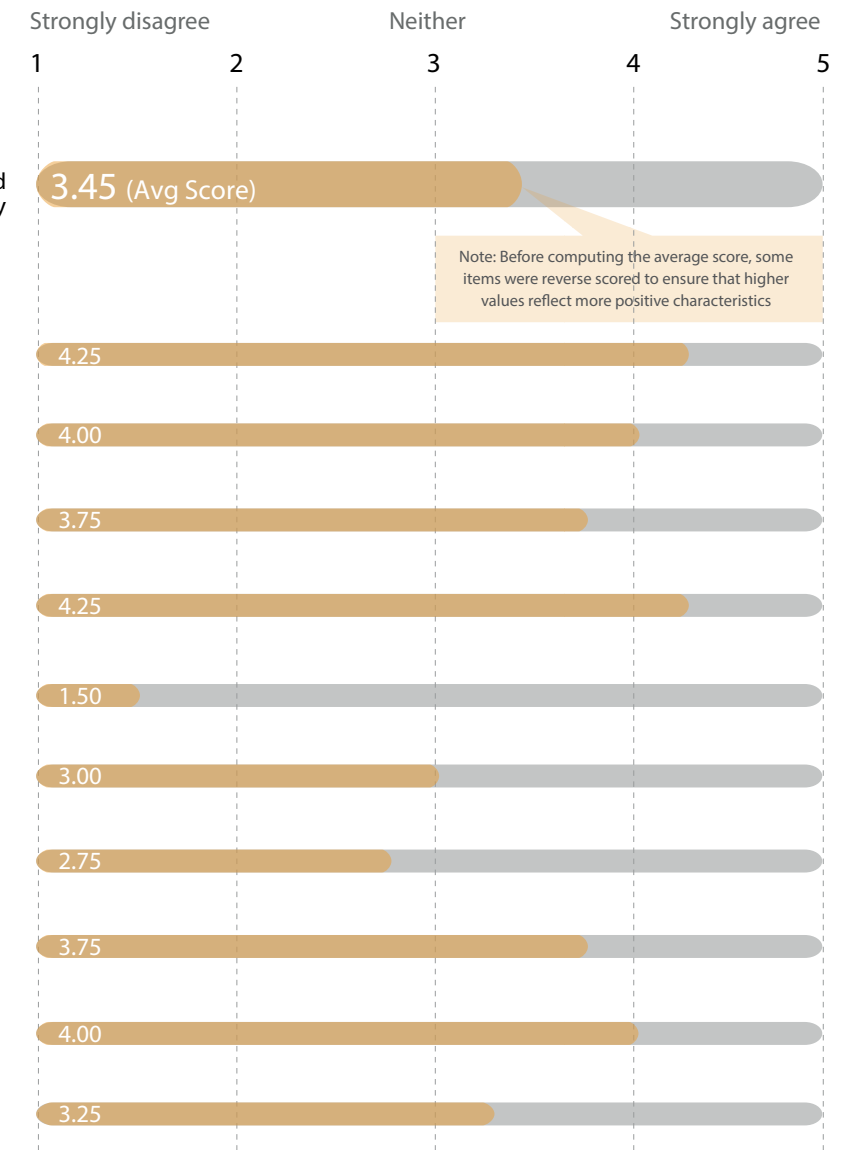
■ Likes ■ Dislikes



NEIGHBORHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY



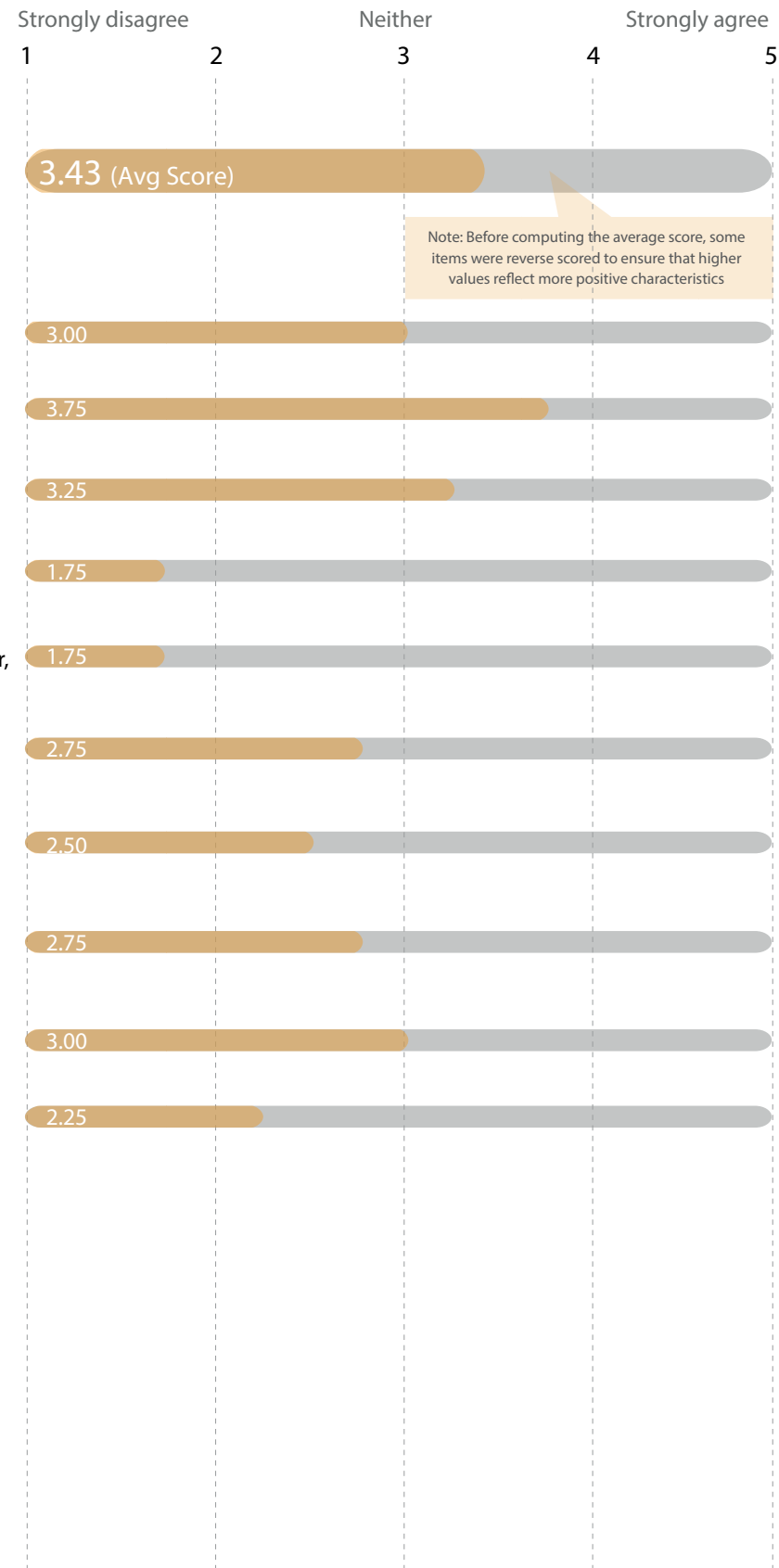
Neighborhood Quality



NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE



Neighborhood Social Climate



RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"



VERY DISSATISFIED
0% (0)



NEITHER DISSATISFIED
OR SATISFIED
25% (1)



SATISFIED
50% (2)



VERY SATISFIED
25% (1)

2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"



VERY DISSATISFIED
25% (1)



NEITHER DISSATISFIED
OR SATISFIED
50% (2)

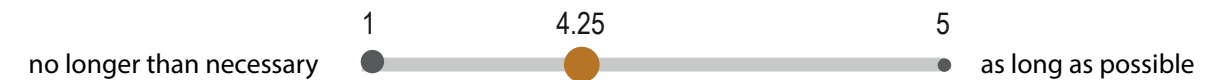


SATISFIED
25% (1)



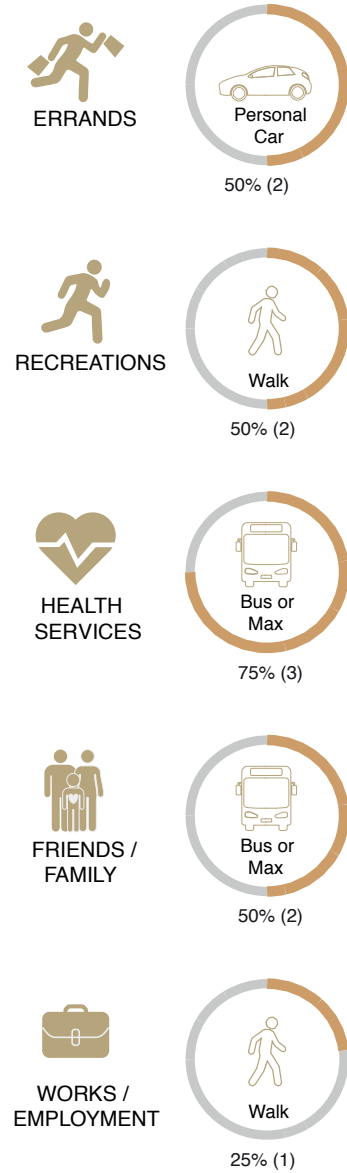
VERY SATISFIED
0% (0)

3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"



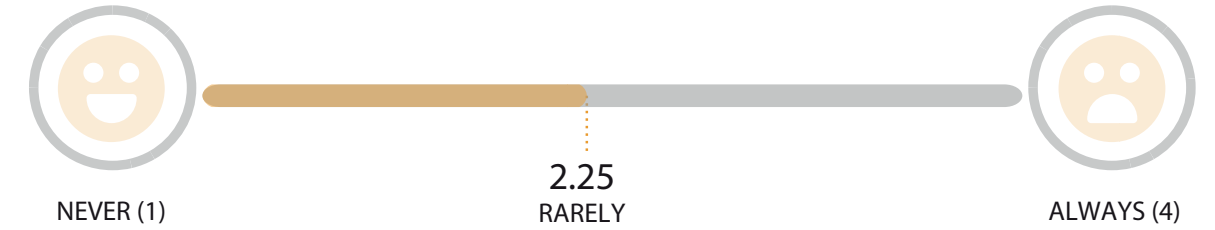
TRANSPORTATION

1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.

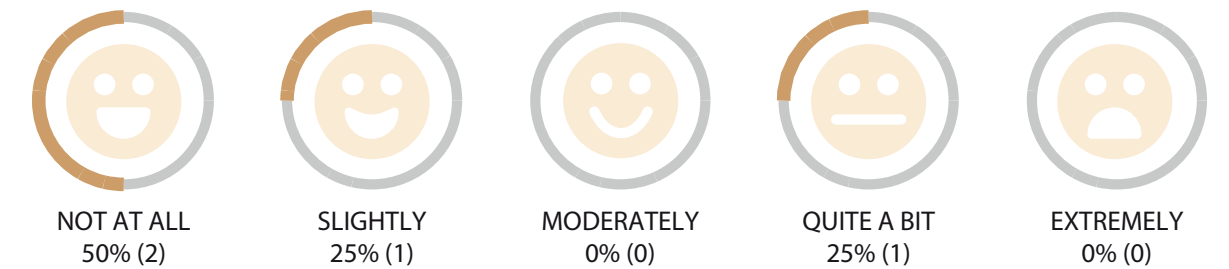


LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

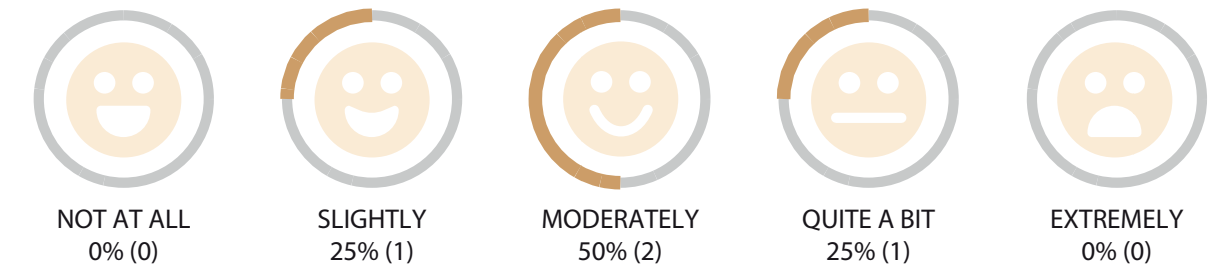
1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:



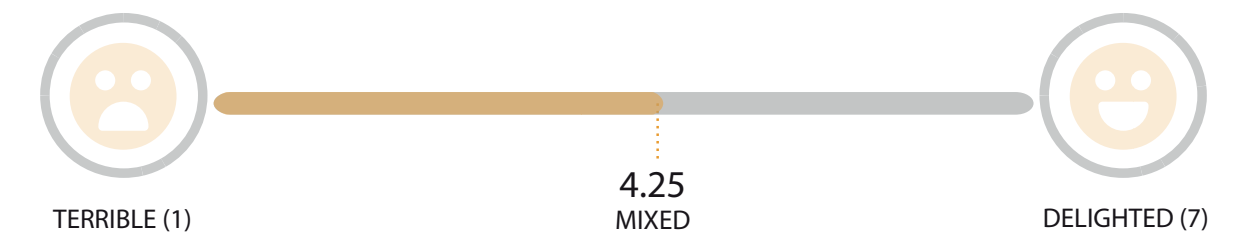
2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:



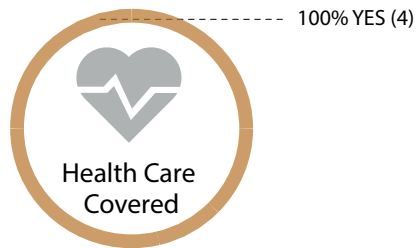
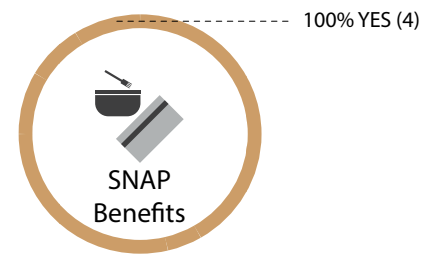
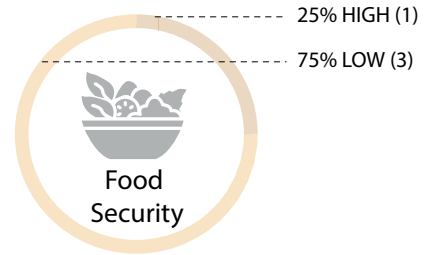
3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:



4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:



HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS



Travel and time are barriers

Change my meds. My doc is my psychiatrist. I'm trying to decide how to have effective medication, not take another one. It's not the best for my liver



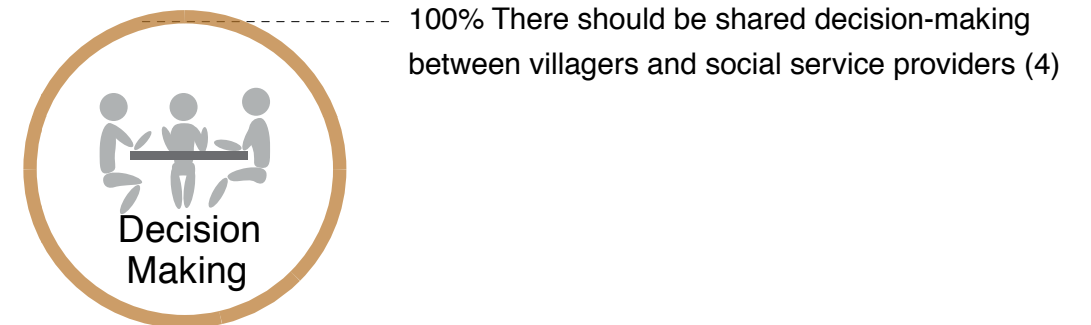
Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

(1= most important, 6= least important)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Adequate space to meet indoors	1 (100%)	-	-	-	-	-
Adequate space to meet outdoors	-	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	-	1 (25%)	1 (25%)
Outside (non-villager) facilitators	-	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	-	-
Established rules for the meeting	-	2 (50%)	-	2 (50%)	-	-
Comfortable seating	-	-	2 (50%)	-	2 (50%)	-
Food/Drinks provided at meeting	-	-	-	-	1 (25%)	3 (75%)

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?



Villager Experiences and Recommendations

Just like filling out an application for an apartment. You give the application, they do a background check. If you pass that you get in. The way I look at it, it's a 50/50 chance. You either get it or you don't. And I'm glad I did.

I mean, yeah, you got to be sober. There's no drugs or alcohol on the property. And they do random UAs and stuff like that where if you're using, I'm not really sure, but I think if you're using and you're caught using, you're either... If you're caught here using, I think you're kicked out. But if not, if you're not caught here, but have dirty UAs, they ask you to leave for a couple of days and come back when your UA's clean and stuff like that. But at the same time, they pretty much give everybody a chance.

I mean, I think the pods are a good size. I mean, all you really need is a bed and a place to keep your stuff. I think if they had bigger common areas where if we had more... So because you don't always just want to be in your room. It's like you want to get out and do something. So if they had a common area where they had like, I don't know. This sounds silly, but maybe games or TVs or something like that, just where you can interact with others.

I mean, the staff do most of the decision making. I mean, we do have our say and we're allowed to speak for ourselves and what we think. But when it comes down to it, it's mainly up to the staff and the facilities.

