

Research Report

Understanding Adverse Childhood
Experiences (ACEs) and Addressing
Social-Mental Health Needs in
Public Housing

PREPARED FOR :



BY:

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Demographics

There were 61 total respondents who had filled out the majority of the survey. 18 respondents (**29.5%**) were from the Villages at Alton Park, 13 respondents (**21.3%**) were from Cromwell, 8 respondents (**13.1%**) were from Greenwood Terrace, 7 respondents (**11.5%**) were from Emerald Villages, 2 respondents (**3.3%**) were from Maple Hills, 1 respondent (**1.6%**) were from Oaks at Camden, 1 respondent (**1.6%**) were not currently living at a CHA site (there information was still used for survey purposes since they still fall into the same demographics and socioeconomic status as the participants from the sites). 11 responses (**18%**) for site were missing.

The largest age group was ages 35 – 39, making up **16.4%** of respondents, followed by 25 – 29, making up **13.1%** of respondents, and then 30 – 34, making up **11.5%** of respondents. **86.9%** of respondents were female and **4.9%** were male. Regarding race, **75.4%** of respondents were African American, **9.8%** were Caucasian, and **6.6%** selected other. All responding participants selected that they were **not** Hispanic or Latino for ethnicity. The majority of participants were unemployed (**32.8%**), followed by “other” (**14.8%**), which included write in responses that were mainly disabled or on SSI. The majority of participants were single (**62.3%**) or divorced (**9.8%**). Regarding education, the majority of participants had their High School diploma or GED (**50.8%**) followed by some High School but did not graduate (**16.4%**). Detailed bar graphs showing all percentages of the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Most Relevant Needs

Though the survey questions inquired about many possible needs of the residents, below are listed the needs that received the highest number of responses, and therefore are most relevant.

Food

- **44.3%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” paying for food.
- **34%** of participants selected that they had trouble paying for food in the past 3 months.
- **27.9%** of participants selected that in the past 3 months they “often” or “very often” worried that food would run out before they were able to buy more.

Recommendations for Food-Related Needs

- Several local organizations assist individuals in applying for SNAP benefits such as the Rural Health Association of Tennessee and other organizations. It may be beneficial to either bring representatives from organizations such as that to come in and talk to the residents and answer questions regarding applying for SNAP or create flyers to put up with contact information for those organizations.
- Another option would be to create a Food Pantry that would be available to residents of CHA. This would be quite an endeavor, as there is a need for constant food drives and fundraising to ensure that there is enough food always available, amongst other hurdles. However, if this is something that could be set up ever, it really would be beneficial in combating hunger and food insecurity at the housing sites.
- Another option is making current services more frequent and available at all sites. When working at Gateway, I knew there was both the truck that had the little store in it that would come and park in front of Boynton, as well as the commodities that were delivered to residents. I am not sure if that was just for senior sites or if it is available at all sites, but both of those could be beneficial to these residents with food insecurity.

Utilities

- **49.2%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” paying for utilities.

Recommendations for Utility-Related Needs

- Resources for assistance with utilities seem to be ever-changing. The Resident Engagement team does a great job of keeping up with what resources are currently available.
- There may be two reasons for this issue: There may currently not be enough utility resources available, *or* the residents don’t realize that Resident Engagement can assist with that sort of issue. It may be beneficial to make an updated flyer that lists the various services that Resident Engagement can help with, including referrals to organizations that assist with utilities.

Dental and Vision Needs

- **49.2%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” paying for dental services.
- **29.6%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” paying for vision services.

Recommendations for Dental and Vision-Related Needs

- Partnering with free and low-cost clinics in the area to bring these services to our residents or at least to share the resources with the residents so that they know these services are available to them.
- Those who are uninsured may also benefit from organizations such as the Rural Health Association of Tennessee which can inform them about available insurance benefits to them and assist them in signing up for those benefits. Though TennCare does not cover vision benefits, as of January 1, 2024, it does cover many dental benefits, so this could help those who need these types of benefits.

Finances

- **41%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” with debt or loan repayment.
- **31.1%** of participants selected that they “could use a little more help” or “need a lot more help” managing finances.
- **19.7%** of participants selected that they have had trouble paying for debts in the past 3 months

Recommendations for Financial-Related Needs

- It may be valuable to bring the services of an accountant, perhaps the one who works with FSS, to residents at the sites. This could either be done with him having either one-time or reoccurring classes with the residents on topics such as debt management or general financial planning, or by offering direct financial advisement services for them at the sites.
- Alternatively, if he, or another advisor, would be unable to visit the sites, we could be active in sharing this resource and referral with residents. This may best be done by posting

or sharing flyers with them. I hypothesize that many are struggling with debts and finances and may not necessarily come to Resident Engagement seeking help with this due to shame or pride, so sharing this resource in a way that allows them to pursue it themselves may be beneficial. They also may not be aware if the Resident Engagement Team has resources may help address unique financial needs.

Social Needs

- **45.9%** selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” on the question, “I am comfortable reaching out to my neighbors for social support or assistance.”
- **37.7%** of participants selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” on the question, “My social needs are adequately met at my housing site.”
- **37.7%** also selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” on the question, “I am satisfied with the availability of common areas or spaces for socializing at my housing site.”
- **36.1%** of participants selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” on the question, “My housing site provides opportunities for social interaction and engagement.”

Qualitative Responses on Social Needs

- Two individuals wrote in responses that they are harassed and feel threatened by their neighbors.
- No common spaces including no playground for children.
- Transportation (Though on the questions about transportation, there was not a significant response to considering this a major issue).
- More activities for both adults and children.
- More sitting areas in the neighborhood.

Recommendations for Social-Related Needs

- The results of the questions above as well as some of the qualitative questions below suggest that there is a need for more common areas at the sites. One suggestion would be creating new as well as improving old common areas at the sites.

- There also seems to be the need to build more comradery between neighbors. Ways to improve this may include, again, better common areas where people want to spend time, community and cultural events, and addressing safety and security concerns.
- Taking into consideration the lack of people feeling that they can reach out to their neighbors as well as those who were concerned with their safety due to being harassed by neighbors, it would be very beneficial to have an effective conflict management protocol/SOP in place (I am not sure if there is currently) to address tense situations such as this. This could best be put together as a collaboration with Public Safety, a mental health professional such as a social worker or counselor specializing in conflict management, and site management.

Mental Health Needs

- **32.8%** of participants have received a diagnosis of anxiety and/or are receiving treatment for it.
- **31.2%** of participants have received a diagnosis of depression and/or are receiving treatment for it.
- **9.9%** of participants have received a diagnosis of more serious mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.
- **9.8%** of participants responded that they are currently receiving mental health counseling and **26.2%** responded that they would be interested in receiving therapy or counseling.
 - The types of mental health services that they were most interested in were individual counseling (**19.7%**), education on mental health issues (**4.9%**), family counseling (**3.3%**), and “all of the above” (**1.6%**).

Recommendations for Mental Health-Related Needs

- It would be great to partner with a mental health agency that could come on-site and provide counseling services to residents and share mental health education with residents.
- If the above cannot occur, it would be important to provide residents with a list of available mental health resources, particularly practitioners who take TennCare or are low-cost.

- It would also be important to provide residents with mental health-related information and work on reducing the mental health stigma that notoriously exists in the cultures of many of our residents.

ACEs Scores

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) scores of 4 or higher are directly related to “toxic stress” and can lead to an increased risk of both mental health as well as medical issues, as well as life challenges such as financial and relationship problems. It is important to use trauma-informed care in working with individuals with toxic stress and past childhood trauma to avoid re-traumatization.

- **24.6%** of participants had ACEs scores of 4 or higher
- It may be safe to estimate this percentage (or higher) across all sites, which is still about a quarter of our residents, so I believe that it is important to focus on trauma-informed care for all residents.

Recommendations for Providing Trauma-Informed Care

- Having **all** staff participate in training on how trauma affects a person's health and behavior, and how to provide trauma-informed care.
- Integrating knowledge about trauma and adversity into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Taking special care in working with residents who we know have experienced trauma.
- Creating safe environments.

Concerns with Current Living Situation

Below are the most *significant* general results on the participant's current living situation. I will break it down by site after the summary.

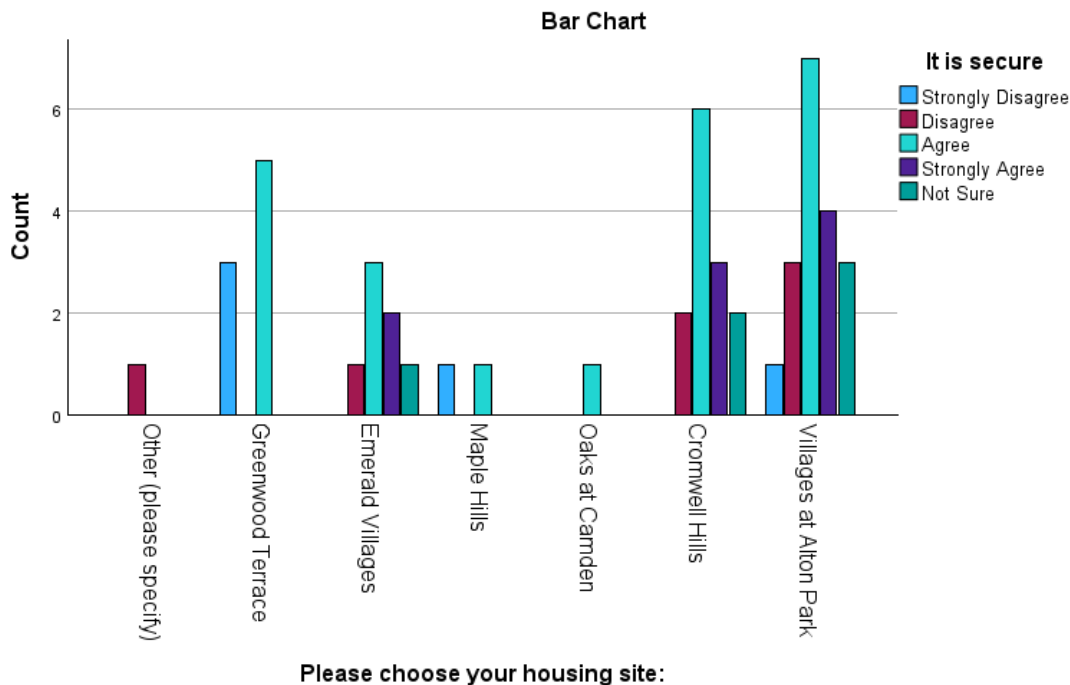
- **37.7%** of participants selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” regarding if they felt that their housing site was safe.
- **34.5%** of participants selected “agree” or “strongly agree” that mold is an issue in their units.

Recommendations for Assisting with Current Living Situation Concerns

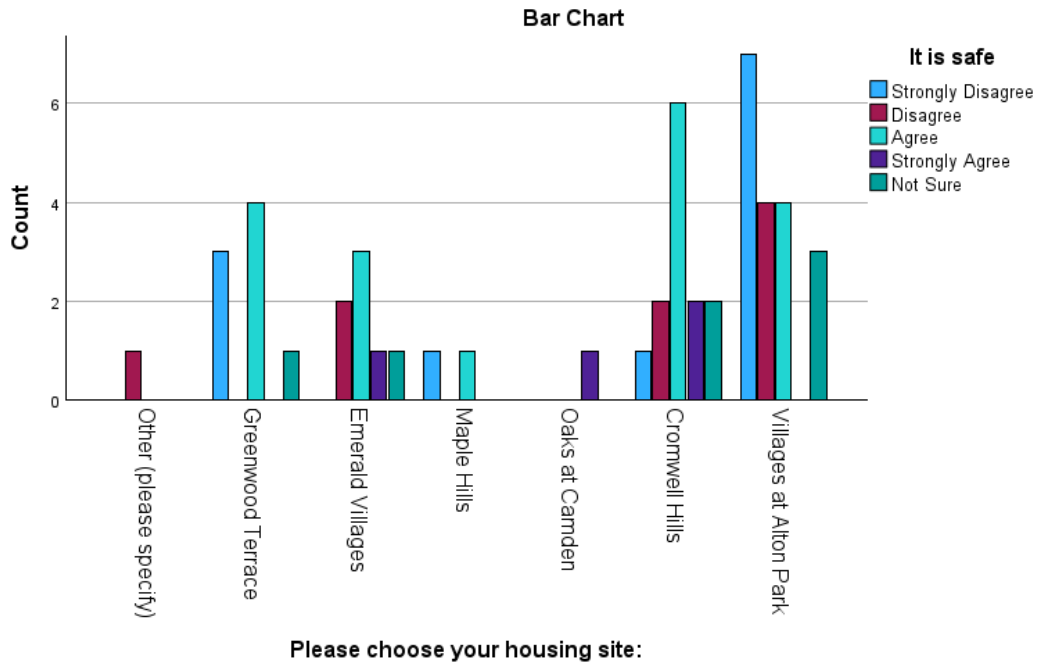
- As mentioned above, a solid conflict resolution protocol would be essential in working out issues between neighbors.
- Increased security at the housing sites including more cameras and police patrol, particularly after business hours.
- Mold is an issue that occurs everywhere, and it most likely does not have anything to do with how CHA cares for or manages the units and more to do with people not knowing how to prevent mold. It would be recommended to educate residents on mold, what it looks like, what problems it can cause, and how it can be prevented and resolved, so they can learn to manage the mold problem in their units.

Below are some graphs that show which concerns with current living situation were shown at each site where the survey was administered:

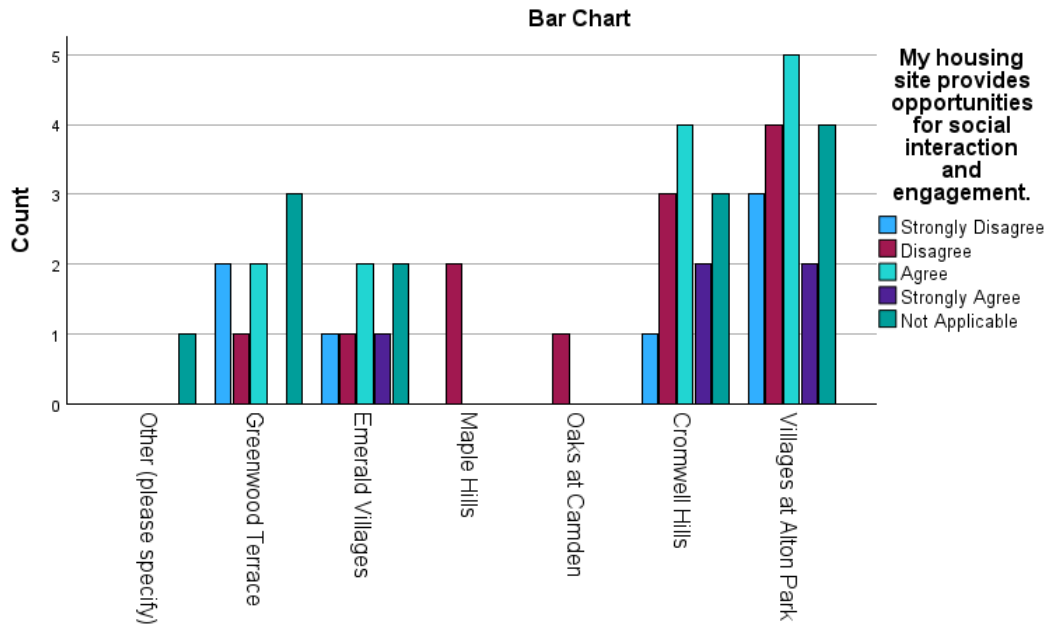
For the statement, “It is secure”:



For the statement, “It is safe”:

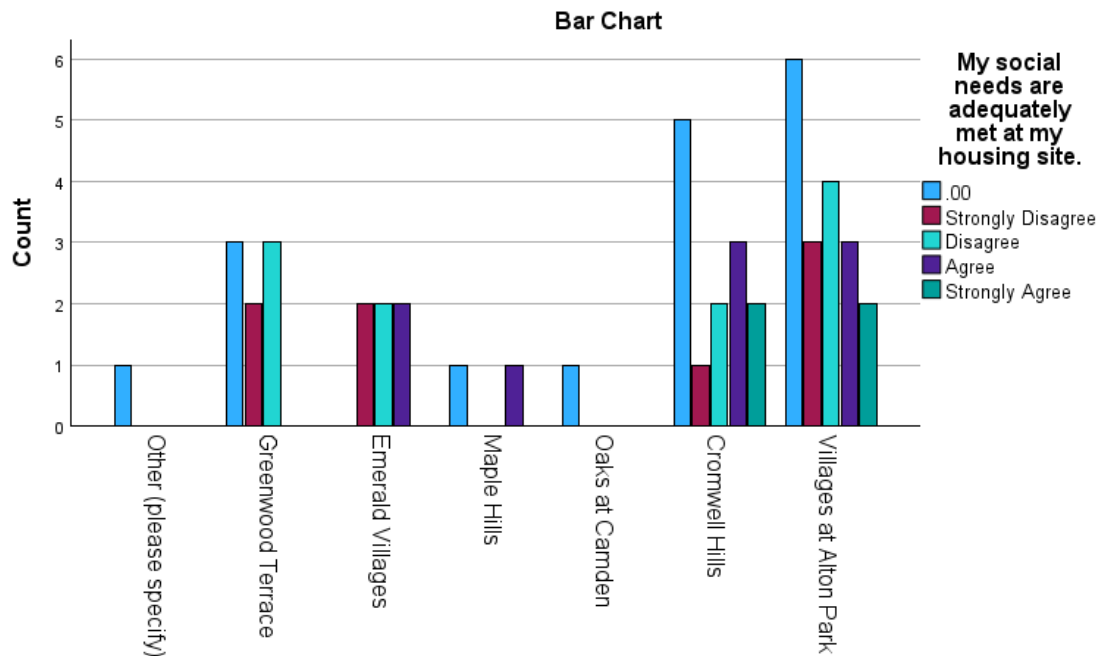


For the statement, “My housing site provides opportunities for social interaction and engagement”:



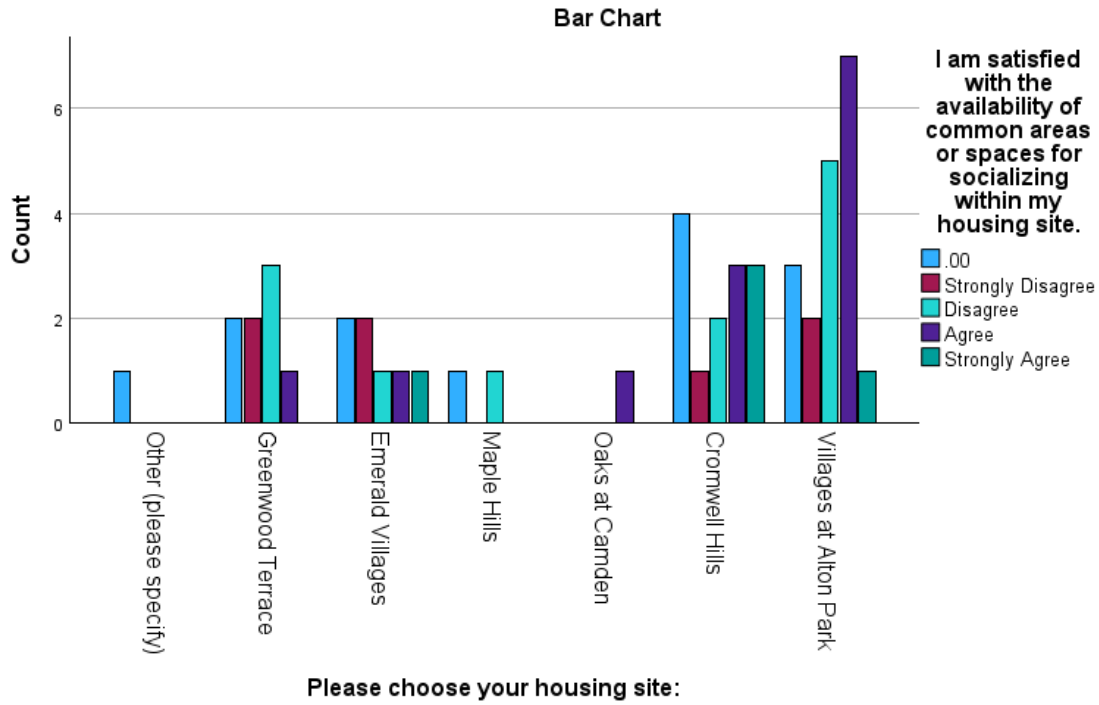
Please choose your housing site:

For the statement, “My social needs are adequately met at my housing site”:

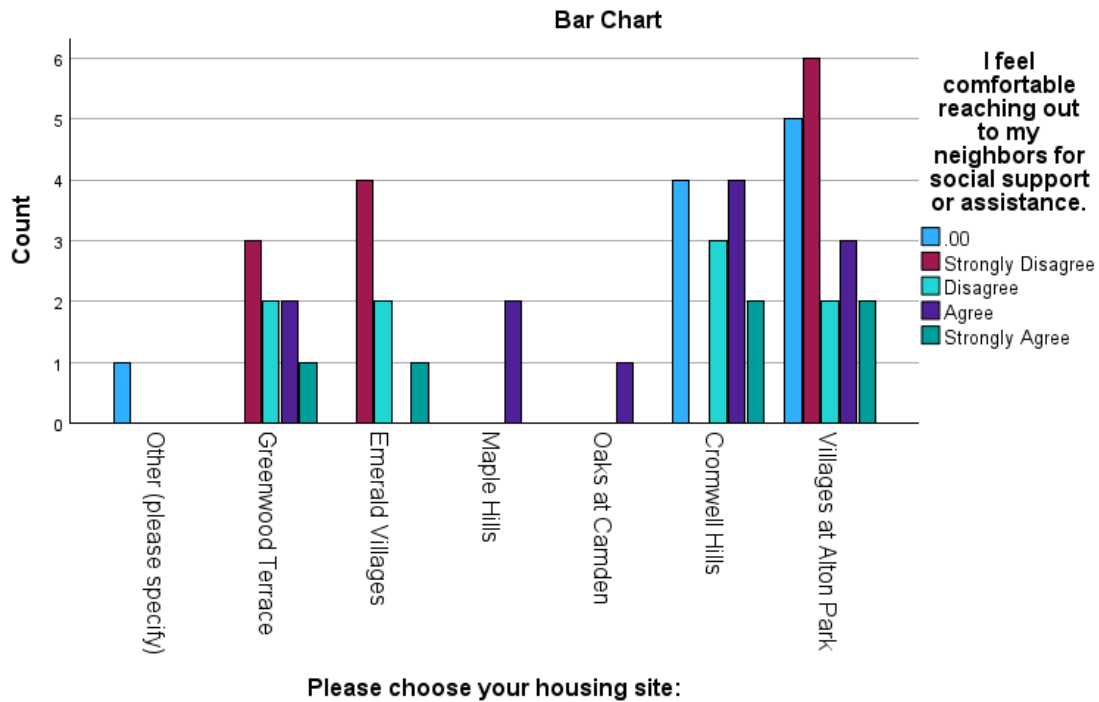


Please choose your housing site:

For the statement, “I am satisfied with the availability of common areas or spaces for socializing within my site”:



For the statement, “I am comfortable reaching out to my neighbors for social support or assistance”:



Additional General Recommendations

- A small percentage of participants selected that they have been victims of domestic violence. Even though it was a small percentage, it may be important to still spread awareness and share available resources to victims of domestic violence. Many organizations place flyers in bathroom stalls with phone numbers to text if the person is a victim of domestic violence, since they may be able to text when they are alone in the bathroom away from their abuser.
- On the medical condition questions, there wasn't any overwhelming number of conditions, but the most prevalent one was high blood pressure. It may be beneficial to provide "Dinner with the Doctor" type programs at the sites, or available for residents to attend elsewhere, where residents can learn more about particular health conditions and how to manage them, as well as have a doctor available to answer questions.

Qualitative Responses on Events, Activities, and Services

- Which past events or activities that they enjoyed
 - Fair/Carnival
 - Resource Fairs
 - Holiday Parties
 - Block Parties

Please choose your housing site: * What have been some events or activities through Chattanooga Housing Authority and/or the Resident Engagement team that you have attended and enjoyed in the past (such as a resource fair, holiday party, craft activity)? Crosstabulation

Count		Please choose your housing site:							Total
		Other (please specify)	Greenwood Terrace	Emerald Villages	Maple Hills	Oaks at Camden	Cromwell Hills	Villages at Alton Park	
	What have been some events or activities through Chattanooga Housing Authority and/or the Resident Engagement team that you have attended and enjoyed in the past (such as a resource fair, holiday party, craft activity)?	1	5	5	2	1	10	11	35
	A fair	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Calvin Donaldson had a community resource block party	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Carnival	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Fair	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Party's	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Resource	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Resource fair, holiday party, pool	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	senior events	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Summer camp years ago	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	The block parties when churches came out	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	The fair	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	There was a holiday party or two I attended a few years back....	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	1	8	7	2	1	13	18	50

- Which events they would like to see in the future
 - Crafts
 - Block Parties
 - Cooking Classes
 - Holiday Parties
 - Resource Fair
 - Job Fairs
 - Playground for the Kids/Places for Kids to Play
 - Pool Opened Back Up
 - Family Game Nights

Please choose your housing site: * What kinds of events and/or activities would you like to see in the future (such as a resource fair, holiday party, craft activity)? Crosstabulation

Count

	Other (please specify)	Please choose your housing site:						Total	
		Greenwood Terrace	Emerald Villages	Maple Hills	Oaks at Camden	Cromwell Hills	Villages at Alton Park		
What kinds of events and/or activities would you like to see in the future (such as a resource fair, holiday party, craft activity)?		0	3	6	0	1	5	11	26
Activities for kids		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Age appropriate community events		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
All listed		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Block party for residents		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Craft		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Craft activities		0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fair, knowledgeable information expo,		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
GED class		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Holiday parties		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holiday parties craft		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holidays party resource fair		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Job fairs, teaching how to own own home		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
More affordable housing		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
More fairs for the communities		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Party		0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Places for the kids to play		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Playground build for kids		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pool open back up, use the community center, have community fairs, something for the youth, basketball tournaments, able to obtain housing if you love public housing for a lot of years		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Resource fair		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Resource fair's, holiday parties, boys and girls club in every neighborhood		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Resource/job fair		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Senior events bingo etc		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Site meetings for different conflicts		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Things for the kid to keep them outta trouble		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		1	8	7	2	1	13	18	50

- Which services they would like to see at the housing sites
 - Dental Services
 - Food Resources (including Food Boxes)
 - Mental Health
 - Clinics
 - Transportation Services
 - Conflict Resolution

Please choose your housing site: * Are there any services you believe the Chattanooga Housing Authority should provide for the residents in addition to current services? (example: mental health services, ride services, etc.) Crosstabulation

Count

	Other (please specify)	Please choose your housing site:						Total	
		Greenwood Terrace	Emerald Villages	Maple Hills	Oaks at Camden	Cromwell Hills	Villages at Alton Park		
Are there any services you believe the Chattanooga Housing Authority should provide for the residents in addition to current services? (example: mental health services, ride services, etc.)		1	5	5	1	1	10	14	37
Dental clinic, cooking classes..		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Food resources		0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Help with light bill		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Help with the elderly		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
mental health		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Ride service's, clinics, and free dental wash		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ride services perhaps because a lot of people struggle with transportation		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ride services to grocery stores		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ride services, mental health services, bank locally here, grocery store		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Summer camps an ride services		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
To actually have the resources versus only information.		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation routes, monthly family game nights, free food boxes with meals for families struggling		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
We should be able to have face to face meetings with managers for conflict on sites if we make appointments to see if a resolution can be made with residents and the management team.		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		1	8	7	2	1	13	18	50

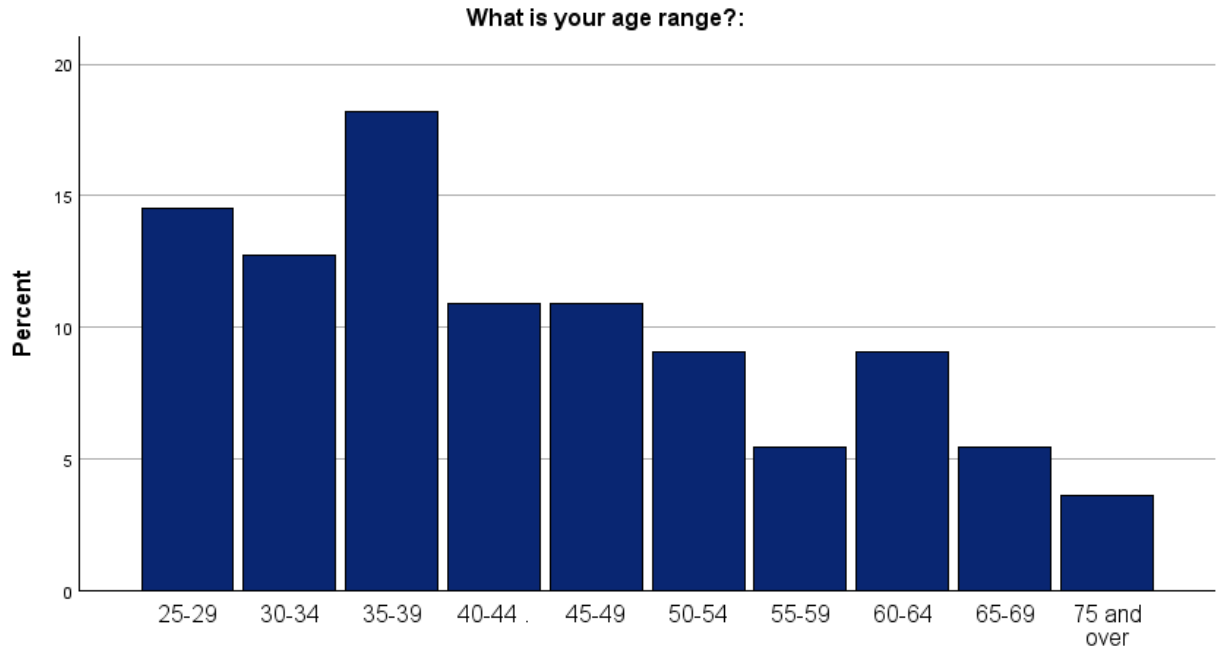
Limitations

The limitations of this study were primarily the small percentage of respondents, despite the incentive of gift cards for participating. Ways to improve this in future research might include using additional channels for recruitment such as sending emails to residents or door-to-door recruitment, as well as increasing the incentive amount. Another limitation was that not all respondents fully completed the survey. Ways to improve this in future research might include

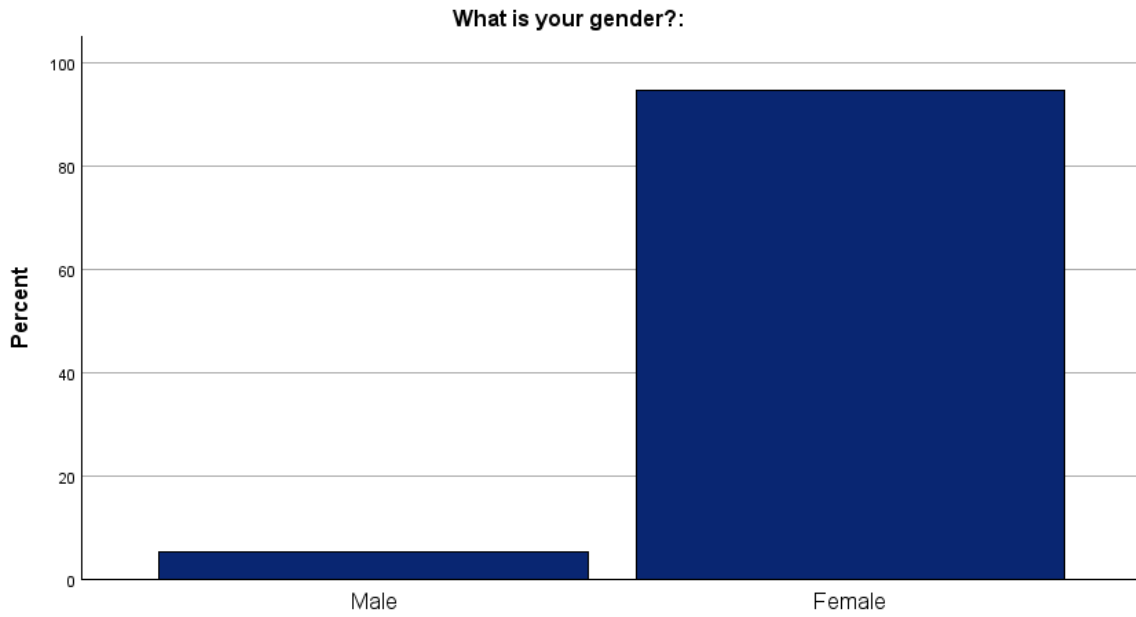
more in-depth questions in the areas that did not receive full attention, and conducting focus groups at the sites to better understand residents unique situations and experiences.

Appendix

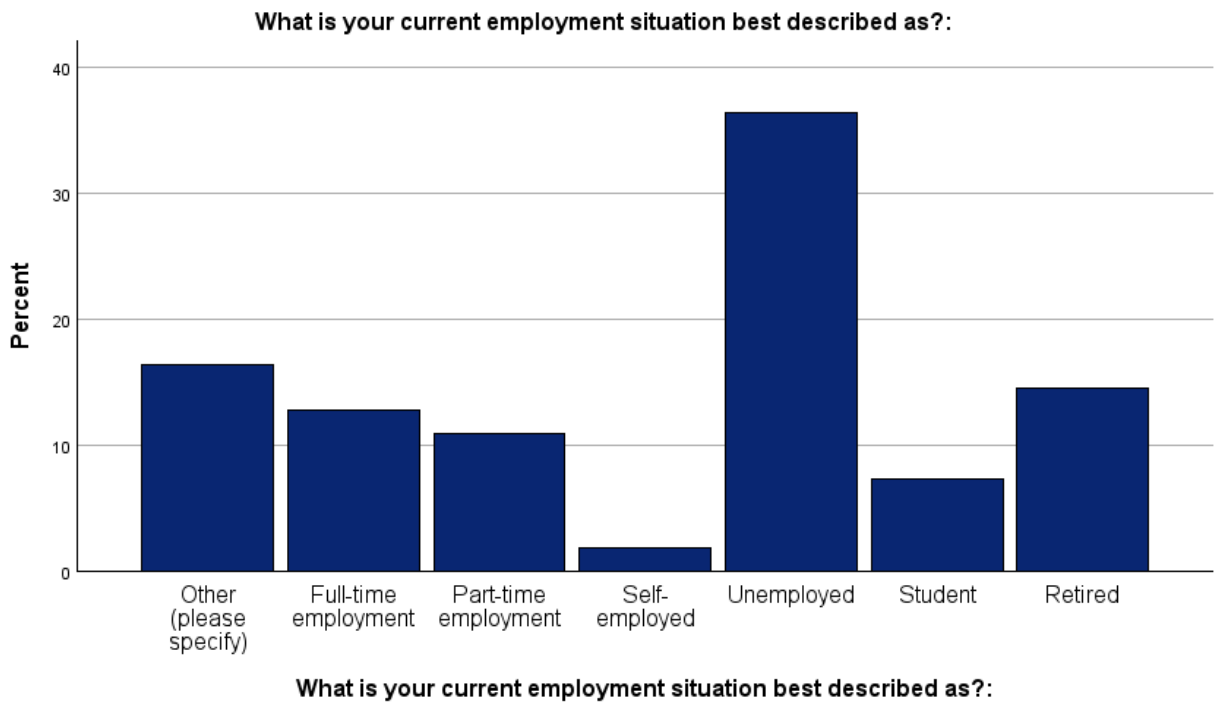
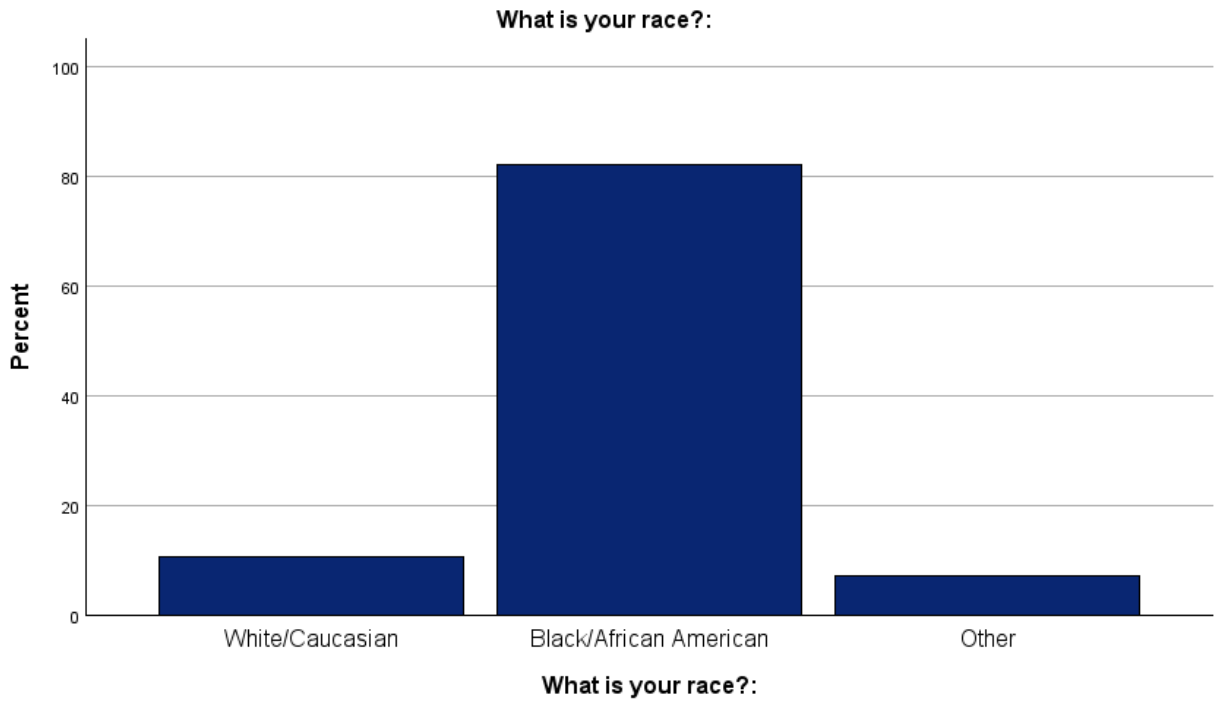
All of the specific demographic information is below:



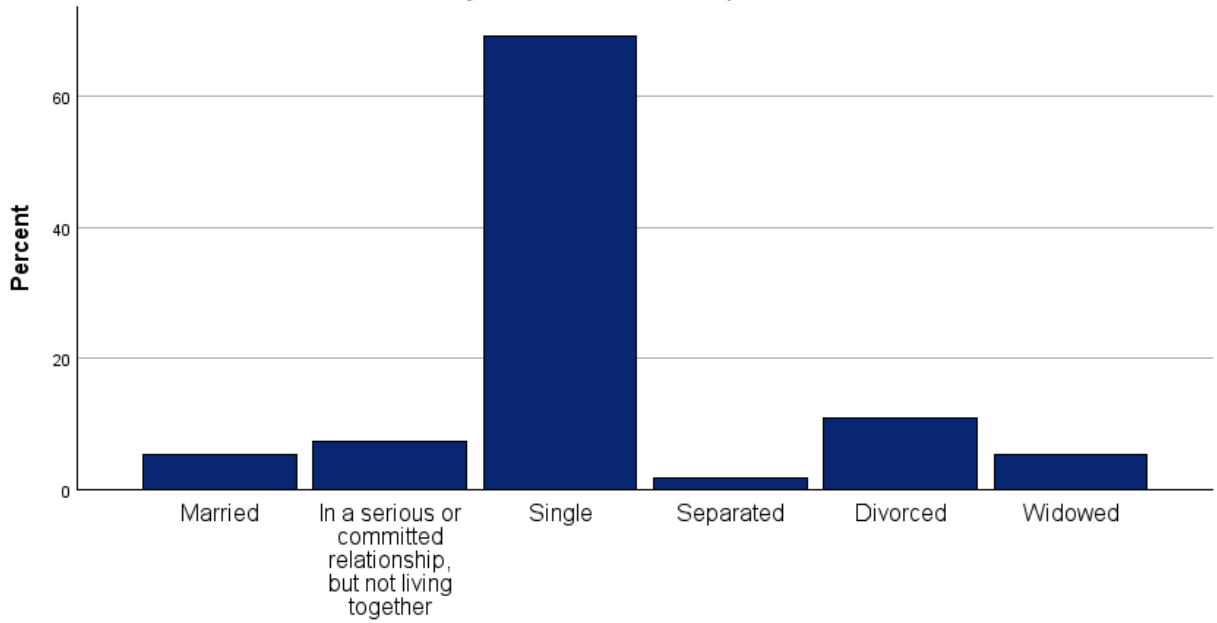
What is your age range?:



What is your gender?:

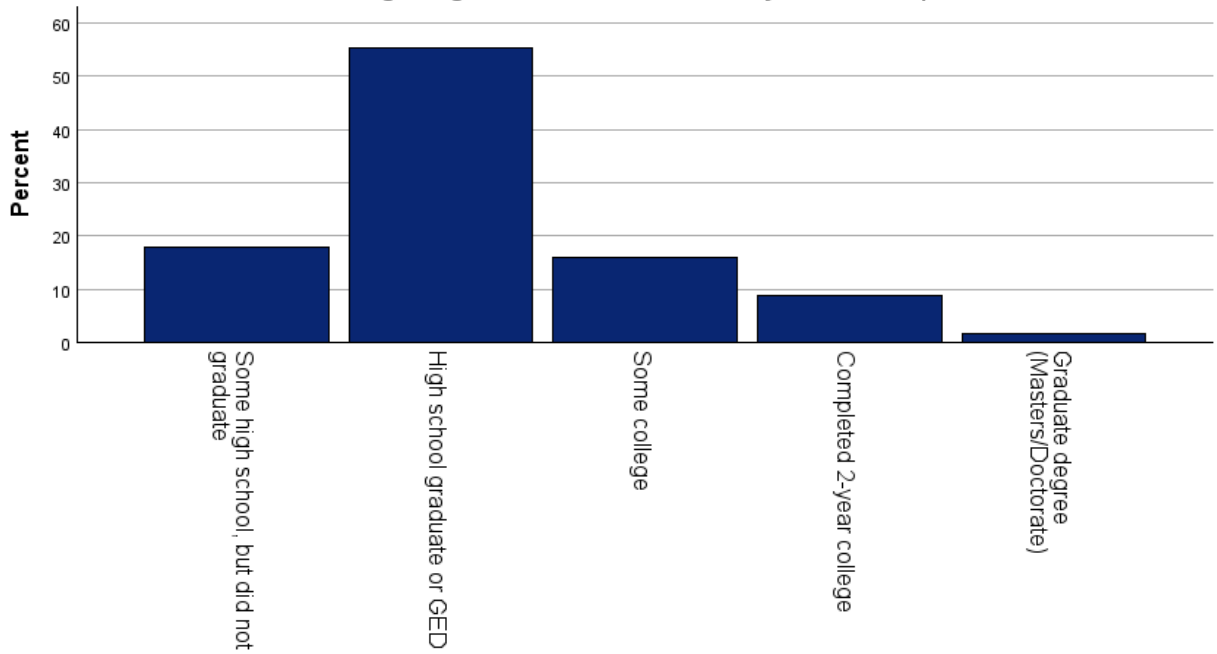


What is your current relationship status?



What is your current relationship status?

What was the highest grade or level of school that you have completed?



What was the highest grade or level of school that you have completed?

How many people live in your household?

