

## Background

Research has shown that measures of social isolation- the number of social contacts and the amount of social engagement are associated with poor health outcomes.

Linkage House (LH), a federally funded Section 202 housing development in East Harlem, New York City, aims to help residents maintain independence while aging in place through on-site Social Work care coordination, recreation, educational and social programs.

Over 11 % of East Harlem's population is over the age of 65 years, 90% are either African American or Hispanic and a 3% increase of Asians.

## Study Rationale

TABLE 1 POPULATION COMPOSITION, Comparison Ethnicity/Racial Diversity

LH Resident	Hispanic	African American	Chinese	Caucasian
1987	79%	25%		
2011	71%	10%	13%	6%

Linkage House is diverse and therefore in need of social cohesion for the multicultural and multilingual population at housing site.

## Study Objective

To identify social cohesion among the diverse multicultural and multilingual older adults who reside at Linkage House community.

## Methods

- A short 4 item survey was developed, referred to as The Social Integrative Tool (SIT) to assess social cohesion among the residents.
- The SIT survey was administered by on-site social worker to all residents who agreed to participate in English, Spanish and Mandarin.
- Data was recorded and collected using Excel.

## Results

TABLE 2 Participants Response to SIT Questions

	Close knit community	Comfortable knocking Neighbor's door	At ease attending LH events/programs	Open-minded Question LH Programming
YES	83%	88%	88%	54%†
NO	7%	11%	7%	45%†
No R	5%	1%	5%	2%††

†Satisfied with established programming †† Frailty impedes participation

††Medical appointments conflict

No R = No Response

- Response rate was 67%, all multicultural and multilingual groups included.
- Positive social cohesion was determined by responding Yes to the first three questions.

Of the respondents, 88%-89% reported living in a close knit community with "neighbors helping neighbors", and were at ease knocking on a neighbor's door in case of emergency and attending Linkage House events.

Respondents lacking social cohesion (10% -11%) were either Caucasian and Hispanic males.

## Conclusions

Based on these findings, the SIT tool proved to be a good method to evaluate and measure social cohesion in a multicultural, multilingual independent living facility for elderly by helping to identify those who need targeted interventions to reduce social isolation.

Interventions to sustain and increase social engagement and decrease social isolation were designed and tailored to the multilingual and multicultural composition of the residents.

## Future Goals

- To re-implement the SIT tool annually to assess social cohesion and social engagement.
- To design interventions to increase social engagement and to decrease social isolation among older adult residents at Linkage House.
- To continue to develop and implement educational, social and recreational programs in partnership with four East Harlem organizations, Union Settlement Association, Mount Sinai Medical Center, The Greater Emmanuel Baptist Church and the Community Association of EH Triangle.

## Acknowledgements

We want to acknowledge all of Linkage House residents that participated in this survey with their time and attention and the support of the Department of Geriatrics and Adult Development and Social Work Services, Mount Sinai Medical Center.

