AGING WITHIN THE HOMELESS POPULATION

More than 280,000 Americans currently live in permanent supportive housing (PSH), and nearly half of those residents are over 50. As more Americans move into PSH, there is an increasing need to address aging in place. The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the first of its kind, will be instrumental in developing a framework to match PSH residents with facilities that meet their needs as they age.

Within the study, 240 PSH residents over the age of 45 were interviewed about chronic physical and mental health conditions associated with aging. Participants had lived in PSH for an average of 4.7 years and experienced homelessness for an average of eight years prior to entering housing.

They reported experiencing negative health conditions and impairments in the following proportions:

Physical & Mental Health Conditions

- Hypertension: 56%
- Arthritis: 37%
- Asthma: 20%
- Diabetes: 22%
- Depression (diagnosed): 67%
- Depression (scored on PHQ-9): 88%

Impairment

- Impaired ability to perform basic personal care*: 50%
- Urine incontinence: 39%
- Impaired ability to live independently**: 47%
- Hearing loss: 32%
- Vision impairment: 50%
- Falls in past year: 56%
- Cognitive impairment: 11%
- Poor self-rated mobility: 49%

* Otherwise known as impairment of activities of daily living (ADL). These are personal care activities critical to caring for oneself, such as walking, bathing or dressing.
** Some impairment of instrumental activities of daily living (IADL). These are activities related to independent living, including cooking, managing medication and doing housework.

Food Security

66% of PSH residents report low or very low food security.