

# Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) | Tijuana River Sewage Crisis

## Background

Ongoing sewage contamination from the Tijuana River is affecting the South region of San Diego County, impacting local waterways and posing potential health risks and environmental damage. The County of San Diego and Health and Human Services Agency requested assistance from CDC/ATSDR to complete a survey called a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) to help public health and emergency response leaders to learn more about health concerns and impacts from sewage and pollution in the Tijuana River Valley.

## CASPER Objectives

- Determine the community’s health needs and status, including behavioral and mental health
- Understand household (HH) concerns of air and water exposure from the sewage
- Describe household health experiences related to the sewage contamination
- Identify preferred methods of communication and resource needs

## Response Rates

- Teams approached 480 HHs
- Contact rate (HHs that completed an interview after contact was attempted) of HHs= **39.4%**
- Cooperation rate (HHs that completed an interview after contact was made) of HHs = **56.8%**
- Total number of completed interviews = **189 (90% completion rate)**

Although teams approached 480 randomly selected households, not all of them finished an interview. This was because some residents were not home, did not answer the door, or chose not to take part in the survey.

## Household Communications



**45%**

19,329 HHs

**Of HHs Speak primarily Spanish**

3% spoke languages other than English and Spanish



**67%**

24,460 HHs

**Of HHs use word of mouth for information**

57% used social media



**55%**

23,865 HHs

**Of HHs stated the health department was the most trusted source of information**

44% trusted friends/family

## Key Findings

**94%** noticed a **SEWAGE SMELL** in the past month

**72%** are **VERY CONCERNED** about the sewage crisis

**65%** took steps to **AVOID AREAS** because of the sewage crisis

**70%** said the sewage crisis **DISRUPTED** one or more parts of their **LIFE**

**75%** reported a **DECREASE** in one or more **OUTDOOR** activities

# Tijuana River Valley Sewage Contamination Crisis

## South Region, San Diego County

### Household Opinions about the Sewage Crisis



### Household Disruptions

28% changed their **SOURCE** of **DRINKING WATER** because of the crisis

56% had one or more member experiencing **TROUBLE SLEEPING**

38% have **CONSIDERED MOVING**

### Household Health

- **67%** believe the sewage has negatively affected their household's health
- **69%** indicated at least one member with a health symptom(s) caused by the crisis, with 70% of those households believing their symptoms improved when they left the area
- **65%** reported worsening of one or more chronic health conditions in the past month
- **18%** sought medical care because of the crisis

### Behavioral & Mental Health

Stress and behavioral health indicators are **HIGH**.



**59%**

25,141 HHs

**Household overall stress increased**



**38%**

16,293 HHs

**Increased Anxiety/Worry**



**65%**

28,045 HHs

**Experienced 1+ Behavioral Health indicator**

