

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

