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## Doing Healthy Deeds

*August 2014*

## About HARC

Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) is the Coachella Valley's premier source for research and evaluation in the field of health and wellness.

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## About this data brief

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# INTRODUCTION

## About HARC

The Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, community-based organization developed by a collaboration of community agencies and individuals in response to a scarcity of objective, timely, and comprehensive health data for the Coachella Valley of California.

HARC conducts a regional community health survey every three years (2007, 2010, and 2013, to date). This data brief presents a sub-section of the most recent data from the 2013 Community Health Monitor. Where relevant, data are compared to the data provided in the 2007 and 2010 reports to provide data trends.

## Unemployment and Health

In today's world, work is a critical component of a healthy life. For many adults, employment is their only source of income, providing for adequate food, housing, and other health opportunities.

Previous research has shown that unemployed workers are significantly more likely to have "fair" or "poor" health instead of excellent health.<sup>1</sup> Unemployed adults experience poor mental health, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, twice as much as employed adults.<sup>2</sup> Unemployment has been linked to a loss of health insurance, increased stress and blood pressure, unhealthy coping behaviors such as substance abuse, and increased depression.<sup>3</sup> In short, it is clear that unemployed adults nation-wide are at risk for many negative health outcomes.

HARC's 2013 data shows that the Coachella Valley is home to over 34,000 unemployed adults 18 years of age or older. This comprises nearly 10% of the total adult population. Thus, HARC has created this data brief to highlight the health of the unemployed and the health disparities they experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Strully, 2009. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2831278/>

<sup>2</sup> Paul & Moser, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Pappas, 2010. <http://www.livescience.com/8122-job-loss-takes-toll-mental-health.html>

## METHOD

The data presented in this data brief are from the 2013 Community Health Monitor, a systematic survey of households in Coachella Valley to determine the health and social well-being of its adult and child residents. Telephone surveys were administered to individuals 18 years of age and older residing in randomly selected households in Coachella Valley between January and September, 2013. Surveys were conducted in English and Spanish.

Survey data were collected via a random digit dialing (RDD) sample of both landline and cellular telephones. Due to this method of phone data collection, the homeless, and persons in institutions including penal facilities, hospitals, and military barracks, are excluded from the sampling frame. The survey included two samples, representing adults and children. Due to the subject of this data brief, only data from the adult sample are included here. The sample size for the adult sample is 1,962 adults.

The information from these participants was “weighted” in a complex statistical method that allows the actual survey responses to more accurately reflect the entire population of Coachella Valley. Weighting techniques utilized in this survey are standard practice for other major surveys, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Thus, while 1,962 adult participants actually participated in this survey, the figures you will see in this brief will be closer to 350,000, the estimated adult population of the entire Coachella Valley. Please contact HARC if you would like more detailed information about population estimates.

The survey instruments were modeled after the well-respected Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). The instrument assessed topics such as access to and utilization of health care, health status indicators, health insurance coverage, and health related behaviors.

The survey asked respondents to self-identify their employment status. For the purposes of this data brief, individuals who stated that they worked for wages or were self-employed were classified as “Employed”. Individuals who indicated that they had been out of work less than one year were combined with those who indicated that they had been out of work for more than one year and classified as “Unemployed”. The remaining categories of employment included in the larger survey (homemaker, student, retired, and unable to work) were excluded from this data brief.

It is worth noting that the definition of “unemployed” used in this study is not identical to the definition used by the United States Government’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The BLS classifies an individual as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. It is likely that our population that self-designated as “out of work” is highly similar to the population described in the BLS statistics, especially given that other non-working populations, such as homemakers, retired person, and students are accounted for separately. However, the reader must note that HARC’s data on unemployed persons should not be directly compared to the BLS data concerning unemployed persons, given the possible difference in the definition of the term “unemployed”.

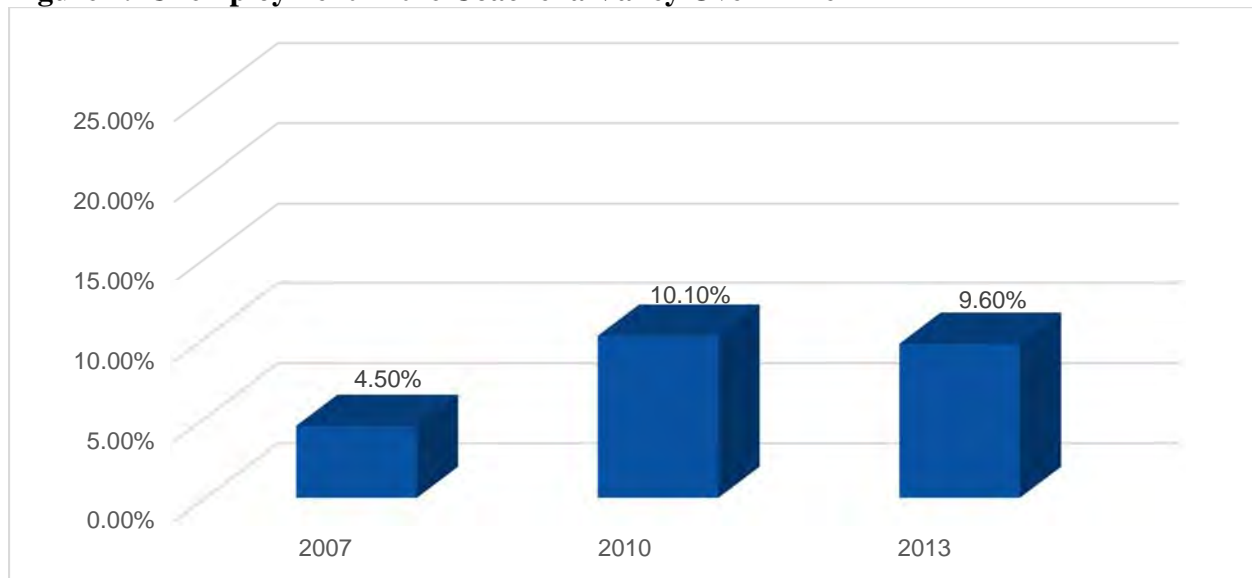
## RESULTS

Data in this brief are presented in graphs, tables and text. Pie graphs present the frequency distribution of one survey item. Tables present differences between unemployed adults and non-unemployed adults. The “Population Estimate” refers to the estimated number of adults in the population (the Coachella Valley) based on HARC’s data. The “Weighted Percent” is the proportion of adults that the population estimate represents (the population estimates for all response options are summed to arrive at the total population; this is the figure that serves as the denominator for the “Weighted Percent”). Line items in tables that are in italics are not statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level, all other differences described in the tables are statistically significant.

### Trends in Unemployment Over Time

The comparison of HARC’s 2007, 2010, and 2013 data shows that unemployment jumped sharply between 2007 and 2010, and has not subsequently decreased. As illustrated in Figure 1, the percent of adults that identified themselves as “out of work” rose significantly from 4.5% in 2007 to 10.1% in 2010; this proportion has not significantly dropped back down as of 2013, where the rate is 9.6%. This indicates that the job market may be slowly recovering, but there are still a great number of adults in our community who are out of work.

**Figure 1. Unemployment in the Coachella Valley Over Time**





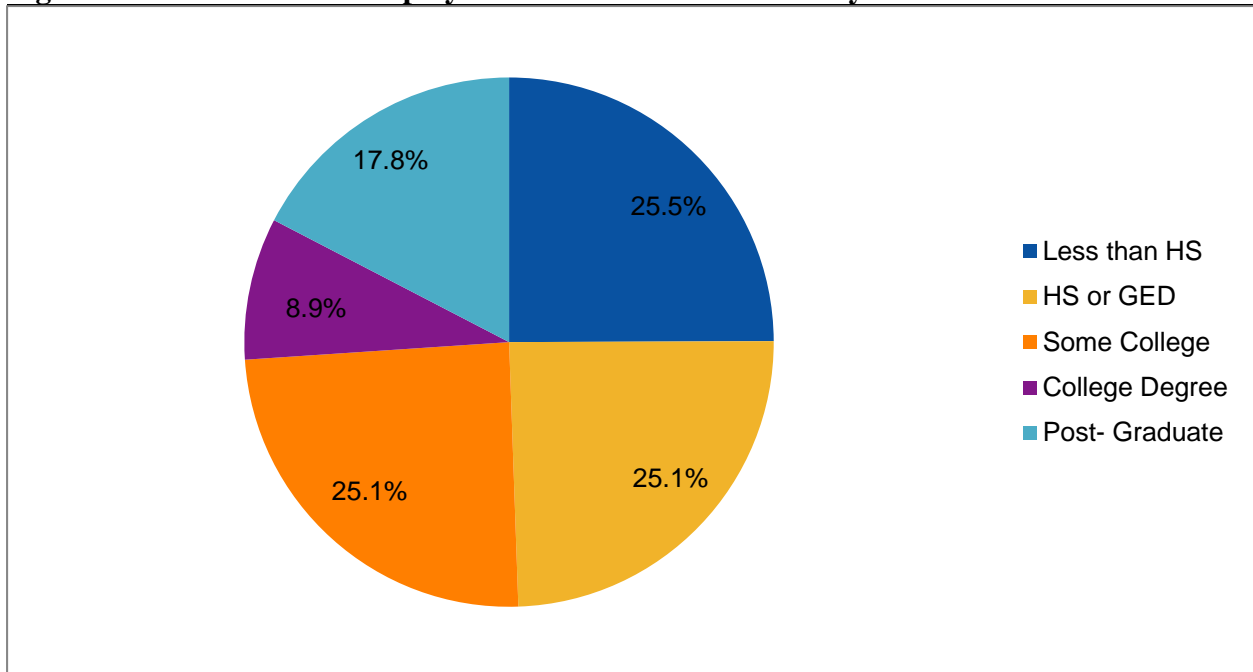
## Demographic Profile of Unemployed Adults in the Coachella Valley

A demographic profile is provided here to describe the unemployed adults in the Coachella Valley.

### *Education*

As illustrated in Figure 2, over a quarter of unemployed adults have less than a high school degree. This low level of education likely limits their employment potential, and may account for their unemployment.

**Figure 2. Education of Unemployed Adults in Coachella Valley**

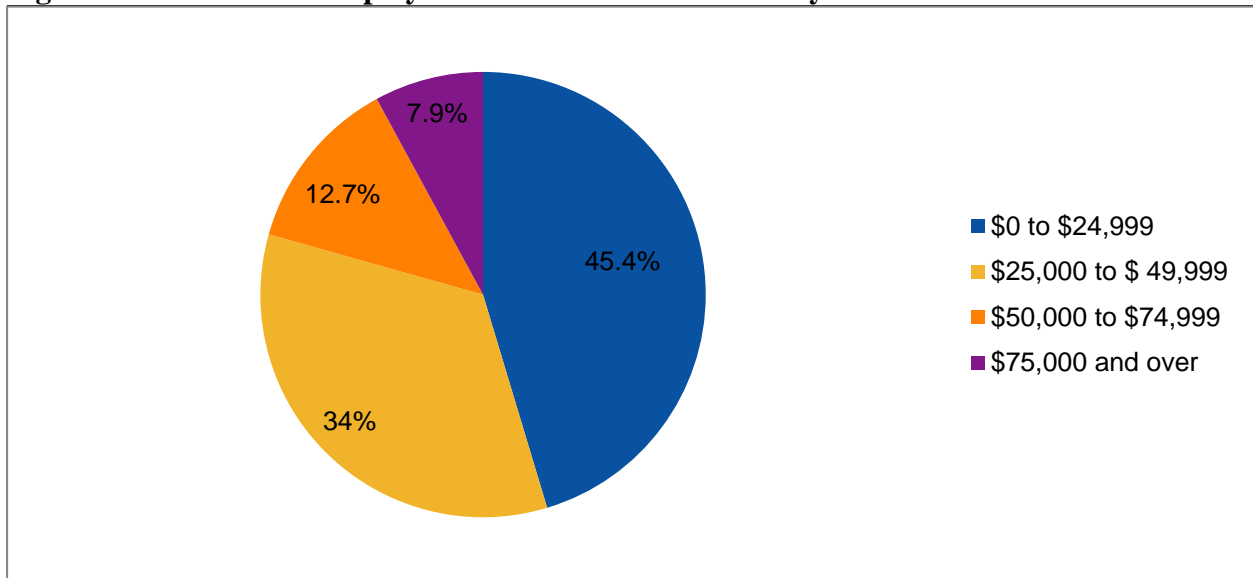




## *Income*

As illustrated in Figure 3, many unemployed adults have an annual household income in the lowest income bracket (less than \$25,000 per year). This is likely due to their unemployment. However, approximately 8% of unemployed adults have an annual household income before taxes of \$75,000 or greater, indicating that they are members of a household with at least one working adult.

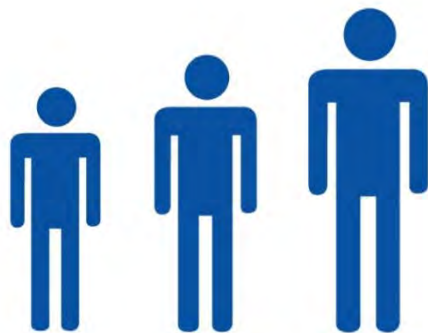
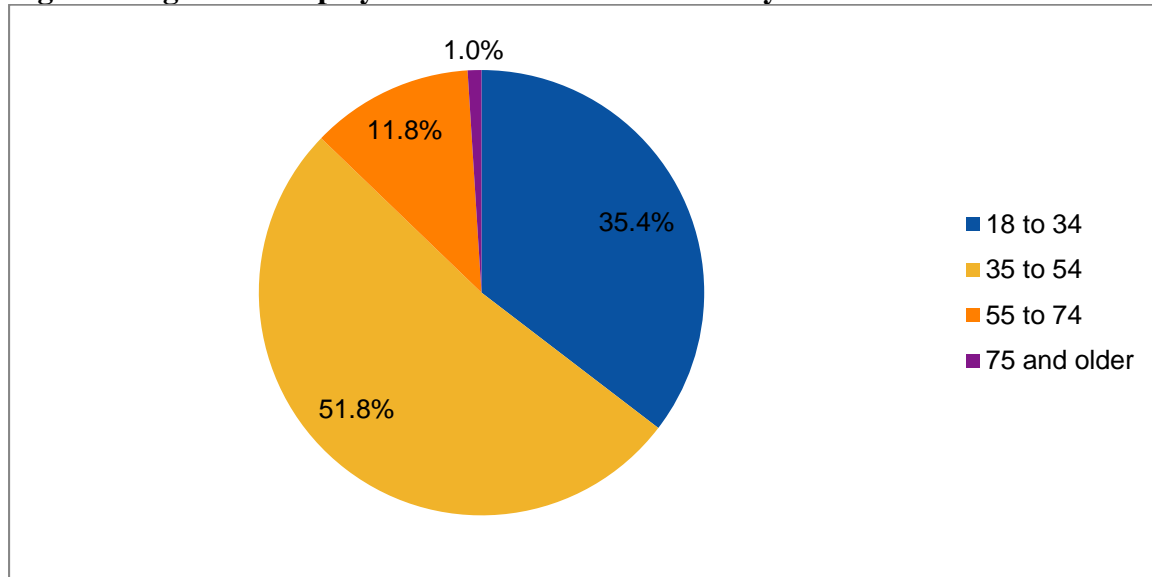
**Figure 3. Income of Unemployed Adults in Coachella Valley**



## Age

As illustrated in Figure 4, unemployed adults tend to be quite young, such that 82.7% are under the age of 55. This is logical, given the fact that most older adults who don't work are retired rather than unemployed.

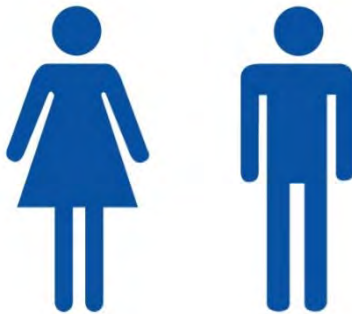
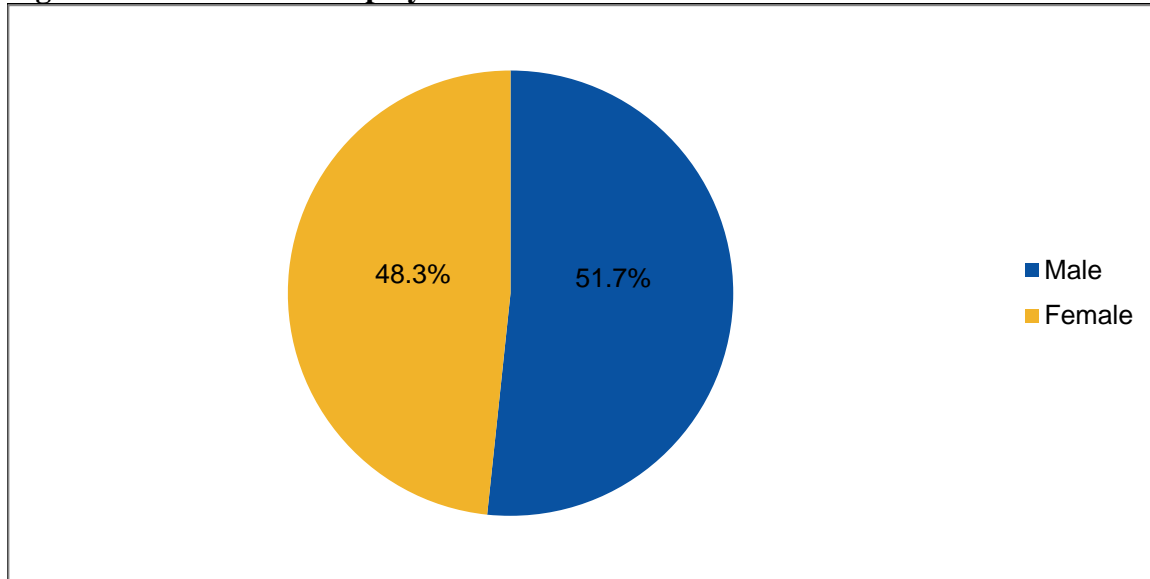
**Figure 4. Age of Unemployed Adults in Coachella Valley**



## Gender

As illustrated in Figure 5, unemployment affects men and women relatively equally in the Coachella Valley. Slightly over half of unemployed adults are male.

**Figure 5. Gender of Unemployed Adults**



## Health Disparities

As mentioned in the introduction, previous research has linked unemployment to poor health. In this section, the health of unemployed adults is compared to adults that are currently employed to provide insight into the health disparities that unemployed adults experience.

### Health Access

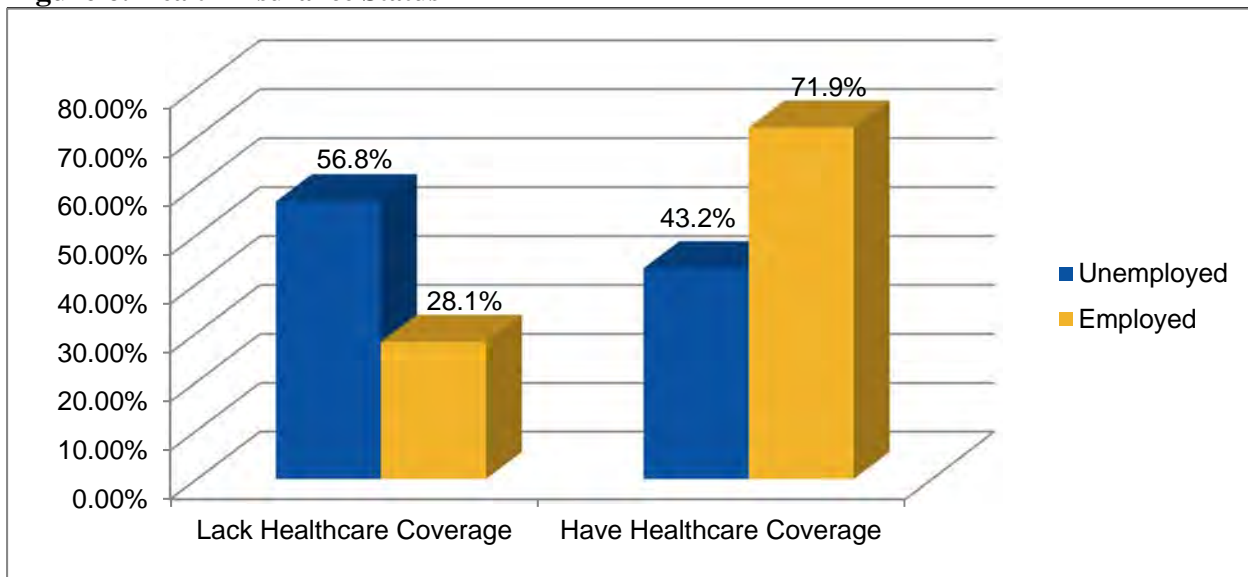
Having health insurance is an important predictor of receiving quality health care.<sup>4</sup> Individuals who have health insurance are more likely to have an ongoing relationship with healthcare providers who can coordinate services and oversee the patient's overall health. Individuals who lack insurance receive less preventative care, are diagnosed at more advanced stages of various diseases, and, once diagnosed, receive less therapeutic care than insured individuals.<sup>5</sup> Individuals who lack insurance have higher mortality rates than individuals with insurance.

As illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 6, results show that unemployed adults in Coachella Valley are significantly more likely to lack healthcare coverage than employed adults (56.8% versus 28.1%, respectively). Specifically, over half of unemployed adults have no healthcare coverage.

**Table 1. Health Insurance Status**

Healthcare coverage	Unemployed		Employed	
	Weighted Percent	Population Estimate	Weighted Percent	Population Estimate
Lack any type of healthcare coverage	56.8%	19,089	28.1%	37,805

**Figure 6. Health Insurance Status**



<sup>4</sup> Freeman, Kadiyala, Bell, & Martin, 2008. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18815523>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Having health insurance does not always guarantee quality care. Some health care plans do not cover important needs, such as prescription medications, dental care, vision care, or mental health services. Prescription drug therapy can be used to treat a wealth of disease and illnesses. However, the cost of prescription medications have drastically increased in recent years, and thus a lack of insurance coverage can make it financially impossible to access these medications. Similarly, dental services are an important part of overall healthcare, but many adults whose insurance does not cover dental services find this preventative service to be cost-prohibitive (Freeman et al., 2008) Vision care, a similar beneficial preventative service, is also often not covered in insurance plans. Finally, mental health care, when covered in insurance plans, can often come with a higher deductible than physical health treatments.

As illustrated in Table 7, unemployed adults who *do* have health insurance have significantly less coverage than their employed counterparts. Specifically, unemployed adults with health insurance are significantly less likely to have coverage for dental care, vision care, and mental health care than employed individuals. There was no significant difference in rates of prescription coverage between employed adults and unemployed adults. Overall, it seems that unemployed Coachella Valley adults are less likely to have comprehensive coverage than their employed counterparts.

**Figure 7. Types of Health Insurance Coverage**

Healthcare coverage	Unemployed		Employed	
	Weighted Percent	Population Estimate	Weighted Percent	Population Estimate
Lack dental coverage	84.2%	27,273	50.1%	67,912
Lack vision coverage	82.5%	25,851	48.9%	66,081
Lack mental health coverage	84.0%	24,782	48.3%	56,413
<i>Lack prescription coverage</i>	25.5%	3,702	22.7%	22,088

*Note.* Rows in italics are not statistically significant. All other differences are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

### *Major Disease: Diabetes*

The lack of insurance coverage among Coachella Valley unemployed adults is concerning overall. However, it is especially concerning if unemployed adults are in significantly poorer health than employed adults, as this means they are more likely to need care and less likely to receive care.

One disease diagnosis that benefits strongly from frequent interactions with healthcare providers is diabetes. Diabetes mellitus is a group of chronic diseases in which the body has exceedingly high levels of blood glucose, or sugar. When untreated or not properly managed, diabetes can lead to serious health complications such as heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, lower extremity amputations, and premature death.

Results show that unemployed adults in the Coachella Valley are significantly more likely to have been diagnosed with diabetes than employed adults. Specifically, 12.9% of unemployed adults have been diagnosed with diabetes (4,402 adults), while only 4.8% of employed adults have been diagnosed with diabetes (6,430 adults).

Preventive exams and treatment should be done regularly for those diagnosed with diabetes, as the condition can lead to other serious health complications such as heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, lower extremity amputations, and premature death. One important preventive exam is a hemoglobin A1C test. The A1C test measures the percentage of hemoglobin that is coated with sugar. A high A1C level indicates poor control over blood sugar and a high risk of complications.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, unemployed adults with diabetes are significantly less likely to have had their hemoglobin A1C checked than employed adults. Specifically, 63.2% of unemployed diabetics have never had their A1C checked, compared to only 10.1% of employed adults. This may be due to the lack of health insurance coverage to pay for these important tests.



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<sup>6</sup> Mayo Clinic, <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/a1c-test/basics/definition/prc-20012585>

### *Food Insecurity*

Due to their low income status, it is logical to surmise that unemployed adults may be going hungry in the Coachella Valley. Unfortunately, results support this supposition; unemployed adults are significantly more likely than employed adults to have needed food assistance in the past year (39.0% versus 8.2%).

To address the need for food assistance, many people utilize emergency food sources, such as food pantries, food banks, and soup kitchens. Results show that unemployed adults are significantly more likely than employed adults to have received such emergency food in the past year. Specifically, 23.5% of unemployed adults have sought out emergency food supplies in the past year, compared to only 6.3% of employed adults.

Thus, it is clear that unemployment is negatively affecting these Coachella Valley adults' ability to get adequate nutrition, and that emergency food services are a much-needed service for this population.





## CONCLUSION

In total, the data presented above paint a disturbing picture of the health of the unemployed in the Coachella Valley. Most unemployed adults in Coachella Valley are young, poor, and have low levels of education. Unemployed adults are significantly less likely to have health insurance coverage than employed adults, and when they do have coverage, that coverage is far less comprehensive than the coverage for employed adults. Unemployed adults are at a high risk for diabetes, and appear to be getting fewer preventive screenings for the disease, putting them at greater risk for complications. Finally, unemployed adults are more likely to need emergency food services to address their nutrition needs.

Please contact HARC at 760.404.1945 or [staff@harcdata.org](mailto:staff@harcdata.org) if you have any questions or would like assistance regarding using these, or other data, to achieve your organizational goals.

## APPENDIX

ZIP Code	City	Other Areas Included
92234	Cathedral City	--
92236	Coachella	--
92240	Desert Hot Springs	--
92241	Desert Hot Springs	Sky Valley
92210	Indian Wells	
92201	Indio	
92203	Indio	Bermuda Dunes
92253	La Quinta	--
92254	Mecca	North Shore
92258	North Palm Springs	--
92211	Palm Desert	--
92260	Palm Desert	--
92262	Palm Springs	Barona Rancheria, Smoke Tree
92264	Palm Springs	--
92270	Rancho Mirage	--
92275	Salton Sea	Mecca
92274	Thermal	Desert Shores, One Hundred Palms, Sandy Korner, Torres Martinez Indian Reservation, Valeri Vista Santa
92276	Thousand Palms	--