

For Immediate Release
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**Alcohol in the Coachella Valley:
Nearly 2 in 5 residents have had at least one binge drinking
incident in the last month**

The month of April marks the beginning of National Alcohol Awareness month, dedicated to reducing the stigma of alcoholism and providing help to those who need it. Alcohol is one of the most common drugs used for recreational purposes; however, it is also a widely abused drug. That said, about 8.9% of the Coachella Valley population, about 27,125 people, drink for at least half of the month. ***In this Press Release, we provide information about alcohol use, health outcomes that accompany excessive drinking, and local statistics on alcohol use in the Coachella Valley. Interview opportunities are available.***

Palm Desert, CA (April 3, 2018) – The consumption of alcohol, a legal psychoactive and addictive drug, has long been a social behavior locally and worldwide. More than half (50.5%) of the Coachella Valley population, about 154,304 people, report drinking at least once in the past month. However, some people consume so much alcohol that they begin to become dependent on the substance, thus negatively affecting their lives and the lives of those around them.

What is Excessive Alcohol Usage?

Excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking, heavy drinking, alcohol usage under the age of 21, and alcohol usage by pregnant women. Binge drinking specifically refers to having a blood alcohol content level of 0.08% or more, which typically means five or more drinks for men, and four or more drinks for women within a single two-hour period. Heavy drinking, on the other hand, refers to drinking 15 or more drinks per week for men, and eight or more drinks per week for women. Sometimes, excessive drinking can become a psychological disorder, which is a mental, emotional, or behavioral condition causing impairment for everyday life.

Not all who drink excessively would be considered to have alcoholism, or alcohol use disorder, which is a severe chronic disease that impairs basic functioning. Some signs of alcohol use disorder may include someone exhibiting signs the inability to limit drinking, continuation of drinking despite personal and professional problems, needing to drink more, and significant cravings for alcohol.

Health Outcomes of Alcohol Usage

About 37.3% of the Coachella Valley population has had at least one binge drinking episode within the past month, about 58,903 people.

These estimates are exceedingly high given that drinking too much alcohol can increase the risk for significant health problems, can lead to bodily injuries, and can negatively impact one's social life.

First, some health problems that can result from excessive drinking/alcohol include chronic diseases (liver disease, pancreatitis, and various cancers), high blood pressure, and psychological disorders. Second, there is an increased risk for unintentional injuries and violence. Some of these injuries are the direct result of driving while under the influence. About 2.7% of the Coachella Valley population, or 4,251 people, have driven while under the influence within the past month, which puts both the individual and others on the road at risk. Lastly, drinking too much alcohol can also have a negative impact on one's social life, such as family, work, and other social pursuits.

If you have had a concern about your drinking behaviors, now is the time to improve your health. Fortunately, there are many resources to help. One approach is to discuss your drinking concerns with your healthcare provider who can help you change your behaviors or direct you to more resources. There are also local recovery centers such as ABC Recovery Center and Betty Ford Center, just to name a few. There is always hope for a healthier and happier future and there are many resources available to help.

To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, you can visit: <http://survey.HARCdata.org>

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email Jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org