

# COACHELLA VALLEY RESIDENTS LESS HEALTHY THAN CALIFORNIA PEERS

STAFF REPORTS

Statistics released this month from the United Health Foundation's annual America's Health Rankings survey showed California ranking 40th nationwide when looking at the number of adult residents considered to be in fair or poor health. Disappointing as that figure may be, it pales in comparison to the Coachella Valley, where 17.4% of residents – more than twice California's 8.1% – fall in to that category.

The local data comes from the Palm Desert-based Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC), which conducts and publishes research data on the health of eastern Riverside County every three years. Its 2010 data, published in its *Community Health Monitor*, was released earlier this year. Like the national survey, the HARC regional assessment is used to track health trends and changes at the household level.

Other key health measures that show the Valley lagging behind the state of California include binge drinking and dental visits (those seeing a dentist in the past year); smoking and diabetes. Conversely, two bright spots, at least in relative terms, were the number of local people who lack health insurance and the number of those classified as obese (with a Body Mass Index of 30.0 or higher).

A comparative summary of the national, statewide and regional numbers can be found in the chart that follows:

In national terms California ranks 24th out of the 50 states in overall health, moving up from 26th in 2010. Unfortunately, the overall health of the nation did not improve between 2010 and 2011.

Commenting on the findings, HARC Board President Glen Grayman, M.D., said, "The reason that organizations like ours and the consortium behind *America's Health Rankings* undertake this type of research is to better understand the degree of health challenges we face in our individual towns and communities. Before we can develop effective solutions, we must first understand the problems. If you subscribe to the notion that knowledge is power, the data above gives all of us in the medical community a potent weapon in our collective battle to improve the health and well-being of our people."

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research.

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Adult (18 and older) Measure	Coachella Valley Percent*	California Percent **	California Rank (lower is better)**	National Percent ***
Smoke Everyday or Some Days	13.4%	12.1%	2	17.3%
Obese (BMI >= 30)	17.5%	24.7%	10	27.6%
Diabetes Diagnosis	9.1%	8.6%	24	8.7%
Dental Visit in Past Year	66.8%	69.6%	27	69.8%
Binge Drinking in Past 30 Days (5+ (men) or 4+ (women) drinks on one occasion)	21.3%	15.8%	28	15.0%
Fair or Poor Health	17.4%	8.1%	40	15.1%
Lack of Health Insurance	17.0%	19.4%	45	17.9%

\* Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC), 2010 Community Health Monitor Report  
 \*\* America's Health Rankings, released 2011  
 \*\*\* Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2010