



PAJARO VALLEY  
**COMMUNITY  
HEALTH TRUST**



2013

# A GLIMPSE OF REALITY:

Health & Other Disparities in the Pajaro Valley

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# Overview

While the United States leads the world in medical research and medical care, not all of us are benefiting equally from this excellence in medicine. Health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities. The Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust (Health Trust) is pleased to provide this distinctly local report on the state of health in the Pajaro Valley.

The Health Trust hired Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct telephone surveys among Pajaro Valley (PV) residents to compare these findings to the responses for the residents in the Rest of the County (ROC).<sup>1</sup>

The Health Trust is committed to addressing both the symptoms and root causes of the health challenges facing Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley.

## Highlights

When comparing PV telephone survey respondents and respondents from the ROC, **PV respondents had:**

- Lower overall health status
- Much lower rates of health insurance coverage
- Higher rates of obesity, diabetes and fast food consumption
- Lower levels of physical activity
- Higher rates of sadness
- Much higher poverty and unemployment
- Much higher spending on housing--as a percentage of income
- More overcrowding in homes
- Higher needs for food and money for utilities
- More concern about crime, violence and gangs
- Lower satisfaction with schools

The data also showed high quality of life in several areas, **PV respondents had:**

- Increasing physical activity
- Someone to turn to when they needed help
- People in their neighborhood that helped each other
- Increasing volunteerism
- Increasing charitable giving
- Used farmer's markets more than ROC
- Children walked to school more than ROC
- Used alternative transportation more often
- Gave high ratings for their overall quality of life

## Survey Demographics

### Legend

PV = Pajaro Valley  
ROC = The Rest of the County

Since the majority of PV residents are Latino, ASR made special efforts in 2013 to survey a majority of Latinos (63%) for this study in PV, as compared to Caucasians (30%). The ROC survey population was 10% Latino and 83% Caucasian. PV residents tended to have much lower incomes than ROC. Almost one-quarter (23%) of PV family income was less than \$15,000 per year as compared to 9% of ROC.

*Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were completed comparing the PV and ROC responses. Wherever appropriate, significance has been indicated by an asterisk (\*) in this report.*

# Overall Health

Residents were asked to rate their own health on a scale from poor to excellent, and research shows a high similarity between how individuals rate their own health, and doctor's records of their health.<sup>2</sup> **Data from the surveys in Santa Cruz County showed big differences between people's perception of health in PV as compared to ROC.**

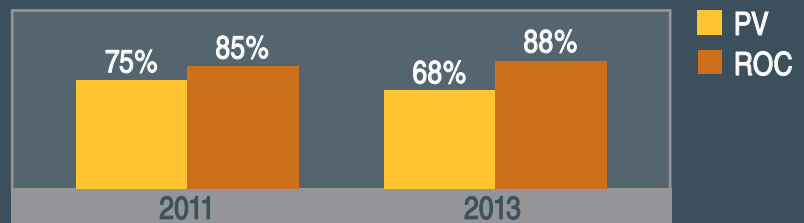
- 28% said that their overall health was "fair" or "poor" in PV compared to only 14% in ROC.\*

## Access to Health Care

Over 47 million Americans do not have a regular source of health care, such as a community clinic or a personal doctor.<sup>3</sup>

- People are losing their health insurance in PV, while insurance coverage is increasing in ROC in 2013. 68% of PV had health insurance in 2013, down from 75% in 2011. Meanwhile, 88% of ROC had health insurance in 2013, up from 85% in 2011.
- 18% said they used the emergency room (ER) as their regular source of care in PV in 2013, as compared to 8% of ROC.\*

### DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE? (ANSWERING "YES")



Source: Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project, Telephone Survey, 2013.

### EMERGENCY ROOM AS REGULAR SOURCE OF CARE



Source: Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project, Telephone Survey, 2013.

## Mental Health

The term "mental health" historically has been used in reference to mental illness; however, mental health is increasingly now viewed as a state of well-being. Individuals with major mental illnesses have a higher risk of having a chronic disease and of dying much earlier than their peers without mental illness.<sup>4</sup>

- There was a recent trend towards less sadness in PV, and more sadness in ROC. In 2011, 18% reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in PV, decreasing to 15% in 2013.
- 11% reported feeling sad or hopeless in ROC in 2011, increasing to 13% in 2013.

## Physical Activity

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. It also helps control weight, improves bone health, reduces anxiety and depression and is linked to fewer hospitalizations, doctor visits and prescribed medications.<sup>5</sup>

- 33% of children walked to school in PV, as compared to 22% of ROC children in 2013.
- People used alternative transportation in PV more, 44% walked and 36% rode the bus, compared to 40% and 23%, respectively, in ROC.
- 71% reported engaging in physical activity for a combined total of 30 minutes or more for three or more days a week in PV in 2013, up from 65% in 2011.



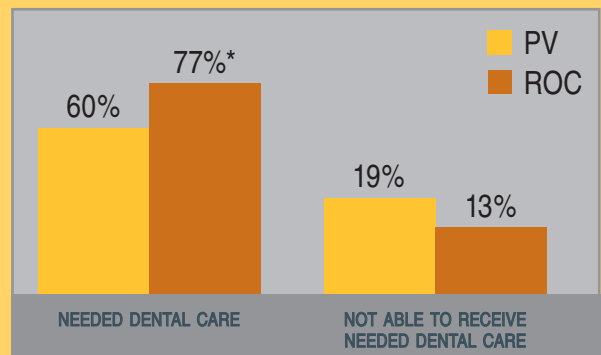
## Dental Care

Oral health problems can lead to serious health consequences down the road.<sup>6</sup> Research shows a connection between oral health and heart disease, stroke, diabetes and premature births. Bacteria in the mouth can cause inflammation and infections that impact the heart. Gum disease is more frequent and severe among people with uncontrolled diabetes.<sup>7</sup>

- 19% who needed dental care in the past year in PV were not able to receive it, compared to 13% in ROC in 2013.
- The top two reasons people couldn't get dental care in PV was that it was too expensive (46%), or they had no insurance (27%) in 2013.



HAVE YOU NEEDED DENTAL CARE IN THE PAST YEAR? WERE YOU ABLE TO RECEIVE THE DENTAL CARE YOU NEEDED? (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING "NO") - 2013



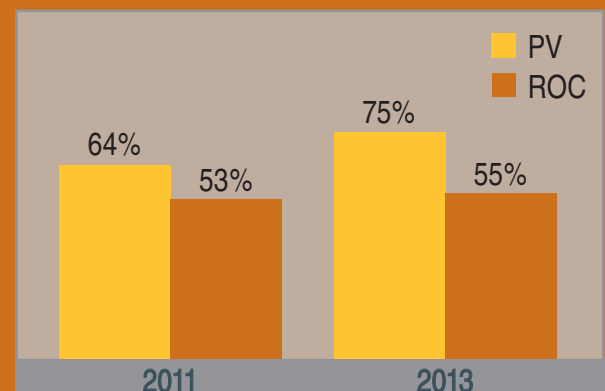
Source: Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project, Telephone Survey, 2013.

## Diabetes and Obesity

Diabetes is a top contributor to the nation's leading cause of death: heart disease. The biggest risk factor for Type 2 diabetes is obesity. Mexican Americans are 50% more likely to die from diabetes.<sup>8</sup>

- There is a steady increase in diabetes in Pajaro Valley with 14% of respondents saying they were told by a doctor that they had diabetes or pre-diabetes in 2007, rising to 17% in 2011, and 20% in 2013.<sup>9</sup>
- Overweight and obesity is increasing in Pajaro Valley. In 2013, three out of four (75%) PV respondents were overweight or obese, up from 64% in 2011.
- Overweight and obesity was much higher (75%) in PV adults than ROC adults (55%) in 2013.

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) OF ADULTS (OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE)



Source: Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project, Telephone Survey, 2013.



# Farmer's Markets and Healthy Eating

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables help to reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, chronic disease and cancer.<sup>10</sup>

- Half (51%) shopped at farmer's markets or produce stands at least once a week in PV, as compared to 39% of ROC.
- 54% said they ate five or more fruits and vegetables per day in PV compared to 59% in ROC.
- Half (51%) stated that they consumed fast food at least one time in the past week compared to 36% in ROC.\*

## Safety

When residents feel safe in their homes and feel that their children are safe at school, their quality of life improves.<sup>11</sup>

- Only 43% of adults felt very safe in their neighborhood in PV, as compared to 67% in ROC in 2013.\*
- 37% felt very concerned about gangs in their neighborhoods in PV as compared to 12% in ROC.\*
- Discrimination seems to be going down in PV, especially due to race and ethnicity. In 2011, 21% of PV respondents had felt discriminated against in the past year, dropping to 16% in 2013.

## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important indicator of future success, and impacts residents in other quality of life areas such as access to health care and life expectancy.<sup>12</sup>

- People are becoming somewhat more satisfied with the education system in PV, with 37% saying they were very satisfied in 2013, up from 27% in 2011.



RESPONDENTS WHO SHOPPED AT A FARMER'S MARKETS OR PRODUCE STANDS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

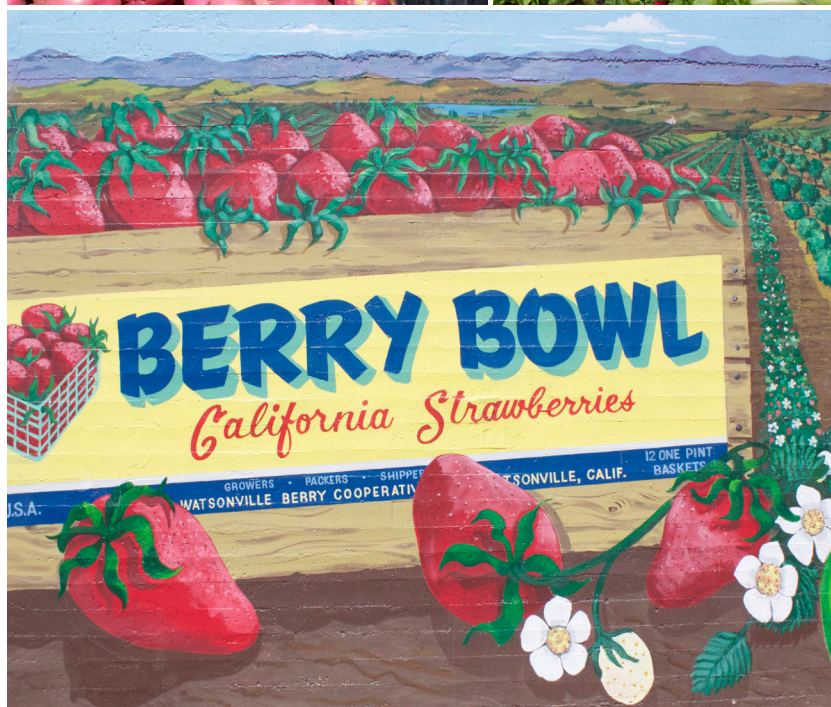
PV (51%)



ROC (39%)



Source: Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project, Telephone Survey, 2013.





# The Health Trust's Efforts

Since 1998, the Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust has targeted our support to low income and underserved residents, especially farmworkers and their families, in preventing and managing diabetes, improving oral health through prevention and treatment and gaining access to quality health care services. The Health Trust uses several approaches to achieve its goals. Examples include operation of the Diabetes Health Center (DHC), an innovative bilingual education program to decrease obesity and prevent diabetes and its complications among children and adults in our community; and through numerous collaborative efforts. The Regional Diabetes Collaborative (RDC), is a tri-county program offering health fairs, health screenings at farmer's markets and widespread public education about healthy lifestyles to prevent diabetes. Another example is the Central Coast Oral Health Collaborative (CCOHC), which strives to increase access to free dental treatment for uninsured adults with complex dental needs by recruiting volunteer dentists from throughout the county.

The Health Trust also offers grants to community organizations. Some recent grants were in the areas of: physical and nutrition education for children, youth and families, child recreation, community gardens, farm to school education, mental health care, free counseling for victims of abuse, health insurance outreach, dental care, support for youth to go into health care professions, and cancer support for women. Please join us in our efforts to improve the health and well-being in the Pajaro Valley.



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Photo Credit: "Watsonville, View from Above" by Nathan Luedtke;  
all other images by Michelle Luedtke.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The data were specific to zip codes 95019, 95076, and 95077, representing the Watsonville, Pajaro, and Freedom areas of south Santa Cruz County. The telephone surveys were conducted using a random-digit dial of cell phone and landline telephone numbers within these zip codes, in both English and Spanish. A total of 386 telephone surveys in Pajaro Valley were included in this study.

<sup>2</sup> Epstein, A.M. et al. (1989). Using Proxies to Evaluate Quality of Life. *Medical Care*: Vol 27:3.

<sup>3</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. (2013). Key Facts About the Uninsured Population. Retrieved 2013 from <http://kff.org/uninsured/fact-sheet/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>.

<sup>4</sup> Colton, C.W. & Manderscheid, R.W. (2006). Congruencies in increased mortality rates, years of potential life lost, and causes of death among public mental health clients in eight states. *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy*, 3(2): 1-14; National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). Mental illness: Facts and numbers. Retrieved from [http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=About\\_Mental\\_Illness&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=53155](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=About_Mental_Illness&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=53155).

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). Fruits and Vegetables Every Day. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.cdc.gov>.

<sup>6</sup> American Dental Association. (2010). Access to Dental Care / Oral Health Care. Chicago, IL. Retrieved from <http://www.ada.org/index.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> The Mayo Clinic. (2013). Oral Health, A Window into Your Overall Health. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001/SECTIONGROUP=2>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. (2011). Diabetes and Hispanic Americans. Retrieved 2011 from <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov>.

<sup>9</sup> The diabetes question was asked slightly differently in 2007 and 2011 as compared to 2013; in 2007 and 2011, the question was "Other than during pregnancy, has a doctor ever told you that you have diabetes or pre-diabetes?" and in 2013, it was "Has a doctor ever told you that you have diabetes or pre-diabetes?"

<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization. (2013). Promoting fruit and vegetable consumption around the world. Retrieved 2013 from [www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/fruit/en/index2.html](http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/fruit/en/index2.html).

<sup>11</sup> Baum, F.E., Ziersch, A.M., Zhang, G., & Osborne, K. (2009). Do perceived neighborhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighborhood differences in health? *Health and Place*, 15(4), 925-934.

<sup>12</sup> Hampson, S.E., Goldberg, L.R., Vogt, T.M., Dubanoski, J.P. (2007). Mechanisms by which childhood personality traits influence adult health status: Educational attainment and healthy behaviors. *Health Psychology*, Vol 26(1): 121-125.