

Pima County

Health Needs Assessment Snapshot

The Pima County Community Health Needs Assessment was conducted during 2014-2015 in an effort to gain a more comprehensive picture of health issues facing Pima County residents. The report uses secondary data from the state of Arizona and qualitative and quantitative data from research conducted to present a status of health care in Pima County. The findings help identify four key health priorities among Pima County residents and provide solutions for improving these issues.



Pima County ranks at the top of Arizona for a variety of health behaviors, including teen birth rates, adult obesity and lower infant death rates.

Strengths of Pima County

Pima County is the best of Arizona's 15 counties based upon health factors, and in the top third of all counties in health outcomes. Specifically, Pima County performs better than much of the state of Arizona in several areas including tobacco use, adult obesity, physical inactivity, and utilization of cancer screenings and diabetes monitoring. Pima County has been active and vigilant in ensuring that retailers do not sell tobacco to kids under 18 years of age, helping to prevent young people from smoking. Municipal and community organizations, in addition to the weather, contribute to approximately 80 percent of Pima County residents being physically active. Finally, making mammograms, Pap tests, and colon cancer screenings more accessible aids in the lower cancer death rate of Pima County.

The percentage of uninsured adults within Pima County, while still a problematic area, has been declining significantly. The decline is attributed to a countywide collaboration among health care providers and community organizations to advance health insurance enrollment. Specifically, Southern Arizona Cares, sponsored by several local providers, created an ad campaign to assist with health insurance enrollment.

Pima County has a very high vaccination rate, especially among kindergarteners, which helps prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Pima County performs better than the state of Arizona in terms of Tuberculosis (TB) incidence rates. Finally, Pima County performs better than the state in teen birth rates, preterm births, and infant mortality rates.

Areas for Improvement

Although Pima County has many strengths in health care, there are four main areas that need improvement. Each area is impacted by two major factors: poverty and access to health care. Pima County has a higher percentage of persons living below the federal poverty level, and a greater number of residents without a high school diploma than other residents in the state of Arizona. The poverty level of Pima County also makes obtaining health insurance a major problem for residents, contributing to health problems. Moreover, the majority of Pima County residents live in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for primary care, mental health care, and dental care, simply demonstrating that residents do not have access to appropriate health care. Both of these factors have overarching implications for personal health and therefore, the research of this project has identified four areas of priority:

1. **Anxiety and depression spectrum disorders**
2. **Substance abuse and dependency**
3. **Injuries and accidents**
4. **Diabetes**

Anxiety and Depression Spectrum Disorders



Three root causes were identified as causal determinants of anxiety and depression spectrum disorders. The causes are poverty and limited economic opportunities, social isolation, and poor treatment options. Study participants reported living in rural areas, compounded with past trauma (i.e. refugees and veterans), to create feelings of social isolation. Poor treatment options were characterized by an overreliance on medication, which can exacerbate existing conditions.

In addition to the root causes, respondents identified three barriers. First, the mental health stigma that can bring feelings of shame and distress to mental health patients, which often deters them from seeking treatment. Second, a lack of mental health care providers within Pima County makes obtaining quality care more challenging. Finally, poor transportation options were identified as a logistical barrier to receiving care and treatment.

Although anxiety and depression spectrum disorders are a high priority within Pima County, three solutions are advanced by the research findings. Training and education, service provisions, and government policy are changes proposed improvements.

Substance Abuse and Dependency



Pima County has higher rates of adults who binge drink, teens who have smoked, teens who use alcohol, and teens who use marijuana, than other areas of Arizona and the nation. The causes of substance abuse and dependency within Pima County are geographic proximity, poverty and lack of employment opportunity, adverse childhood experiences, easy access, and acceptability of substance abuse. For example, many respondents explained that their lack of employment opportunities increases their stress levels and subsequently engages their negative coping mechanisms.

Since the sole barrier identified was a lack of preventive activities related to substance use and dependency, three solutions are advanced. The first solution is an increase in prevention activities that focus on family support, youth engagement, and job training. Secondly, targeted programming and services should be available such as providing affordable housing with on-site community services. Finally, additional strategies such as audit provider programs and alcohol distribution zoning laws should be examined for improvement and implementation.



Pima County has a higher percentage of persons living below the federal poverty level, and a greater number of residents without a high school diploma than other counties in the state of Arizona.

Injuries and Accidents



Total accidents, including motor vehicle crashes and other fatal injuries, were the third leading cause of death among Pima County residents in 2013. These can be split into two categories: accidental and intentional. Accidents account primarily for motor vehicle crashes, but also includes drownings, unintentional poisoning, and falling. Intentional injuries and accidents include domestic violence, assaults, homicide, and self-harm. The sole barrier for accidental and intentional injuries identified by respondents is a lack of awareness of preventive resources. Four solutions are suggested to help prevent accidents both intended and accidental: better access to prevention resources and education, community building with social opportunities for elders, environment enhancement, and research and policy development.

Diabetes

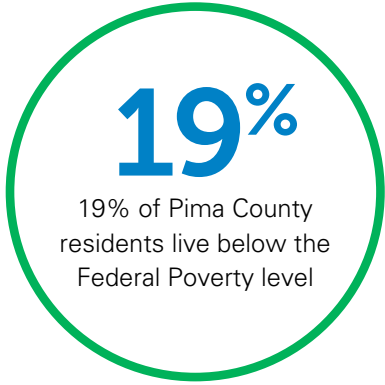


The prevalence of diabetes in Arizona has more than doubled since 2003 and respondents identified Type II diabetes as a major threat to community and public health in Pima County. Lifestyle and environmental policy factors are correlated with an increase in Type II diabetes among all age groups in Pima County. Participants noted high stress leading to poor diet and decreased physical activity contribute to diabetes. However, low wages in tandem with poor investment in progressive food policies limits food choices for low-income residents. The two barriers identified were low education and health literacy rates paired with manipulative food marketing practices. These barriers were related to an increase in the incidence of diabetes.

There are four solutions proposed. First, education and training including health literacy and school based nutrition and physical education programs. Second, prevention resources such as free, early screenings and employer based incentives. Third is increasing bike paths, walkable areas and other opportunities and venues for physical activity for Pima County residents. Finally, revise and create new policies such as standardizing school-based meals and focusing on wellness over disease.

Conclusion

Access to care is a theme throughout each issue identified. Health insurance is imperative for Pima County residents to receive regular health care and maintain better physical, mental, and emotional health. In addition to providing health insurance to residents, improving healthy lifestyles is an area where improvement is needed. Finally, greater attention to physical and mental health problems is needed to prevent a further increase in this area among Pima County residents. A full copy of the report can be found at www.healthypima.org.



Majority of Pima County residents live in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA's) for primary care, mental health, and dental care.



Pima County vaccination rates among kindergarteners is greater than 96% for recommended vaccines in the 2014-2015 school year.

Hispanic adults aged 18-34, and people living in low-income households are the most likely to be uninsured.



Those without health insurance are significantly less likely to:

- see a doctor when sick or for routine visits
- take prescribed medication due to cost
- receive dental care.



Less than 62% of Pima County adults reported visiting a dentist or dental clinic within the last year.



The leading cause of unintentional injury for Arizonans age 65+ is falls, followed by vehicle crashes in a distant second.



1 in 7 adults aged 35 – 44 years old have periodontal (gum) disease.

Cancer and heart disease are the leading causes of death among Pima County residents.

HEALTH STATS OF PIMA COUNTY



More than 1 in 4 survey respondents did not eat fruit or vegetables more than once a week in the last month.



61% of respondents engage in moderate physical activities for at least 30 minutes outside of work.



24% of high school students have been diagnosed with asthma.

Pima County is below the U.S. averages for social support.



Pima County performs better than the state in:

- teen birth rates
- vaccination rates
- mammograms
- infant mortality.



1 in 3 survey respondents reported they sometimes, rarely, or never get the emotional support they need.