



COMMUNITY SYMPTOM SURVEY BRISTOL VA LANDFILL

From October to November 2021, HOPE for Bristol conducted a Community Symptom Survey among residents affected by the Bristol VA Landfill. Households in both Bristol, TN and Bristol, VA were included.

OBJECTIVES

This symptom survey was a monumental effort by our organization to document the suffering in our community. We knew the symptoms we were experiencing when our homes, schools, and workplaces filled with noxious gases and VOCs. Burning eyes and throat, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, nosebleeds, and mental health effects became our new "normal". While government agencies continued to talk about "odors", we collected the data to demonstrate the very real symptoms reported by residents.

Our reasons for conducting a symptom survey were two-fold. First, residents felt their symptoms were being ignored and denied by local officials. Second, our inquiries to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and other agencies indicated that the Public Health Assessments in Bristol would not include a real-time study of actual symptoms reported by residents. We felt this was unacceptable, so we worked with volunteers in the community to create a survey, collect responses, analyze the data, and summarize our findings in the form of a presentation.

RESPONSE

To our delight, 252 households responded over the course of five weeks. Of those 252 responding households, 216 households took the time to report their symptoms by number of individuals with each symptom. Those 216 households represented 653 individuals.

Household and Individual Counts	
Total Households Responding to Survey	252
Households Included in "Individual" Symptom Analysis	216
Total Individuals included in "Individual" Symptom Analysis	653

CONCERNS

Unfortunately, our data does not capture the frequency of symptoms nor the long-term effects of recurring symptoms. For example nosebleeds were reported less than other symptoms, but repeated nosebleeds can deplete iron stores over time. Nausea and vomiting over long spans of time could lead to nutritional deficiencies and dental and gastrointestinal complications. Many of the reported symptoms could affect workplace safety by impairing ones ability to operate a vehicle or heavy machinery. To our knowledge, no health-based agencies have studied these wide-ranging impacts in our community and the implications for safety or long-term health.

RESULTS

Symptomology was high among survey participants. The table shows a summary of results by both % Households and % of Individuals reporting each symptom. As might be expected, most households reported multiple symptom categories.

HOPE for Bristol 2021 Symptom Survey				
Symptoms Reported by Households and by Individuals				
	All Households		All Individuals*	
	#	%	#	%
Burning/Irritation Nose/Eyes/Throat	233	92%	518	79%
Headaches/Migraines	219	87%	433	66%
Sinus Congestion	202	80%	458	70%
Fatigue	195	77%	416	64%
Affected Sleep Patterns	185	73%	401	61%
Nausea/Vomiting	185	73%	352	54%
Trouble Breathing/Respiratory Issues	171	68%	306	47%
Brain fog/confusion	171	68%	297	45%
Anxiety	161	64%	303	46%
Dizziness	160	63%	247	38%
Depression	131	52%	232	36%
Rapid/Irregular Heartbeat	115	46%	157	24%
Nosebleeds	95	38%	136	21%
Tremors/Shaking	67	27%	80	12%
Other Symptoms	105	42%	no data	
No Symptoms	2	1%	0	0%
Total Respondents	252	100%	653	100%

*Only 216 households reported by individual.

**To see full results of our HOPE Symptom Survey, please visit our website:
www.hopeforbristol.org/symptoms**