

# 2020 Homeless Count Results

## KEY MESSAGES



### Key Takeaways

- **Over the last five years, our homeless services system has vastly increased its performance and effectiveness**, housing double the number of people each year than before Measure H.
- **In response to Covid-19, we are making even more improvements and moving faster, sheltering 6,010 people in three months**, and we are bringing the 15,000 most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness inside.
- **Yet, despite our success ending homelessness for tens of thousands each year, the number of people falling into homelessness each year has also grown.**
- With the economic fallout of the pandemic, and systemic racism which has led to 4x overrepresentation of Black people among those experiencing homelessness, **it is clear that we need big system changes in our housing supply, economy, health care, justice systems and more to advance racial justice and stem the inflow to homelessness.**

### Key Messages

**This year's point-in-time count shows that the number of people experiencing homelessness at any point in time in LA is still unacceptably high.**

- LA County is up 13% to 66,433 people, and the City of LA is up 14%, at 41,290 people.
- This was before the pandemic, which resulted in 599,000 workers in LA County losing their jobs as of May 9.
- This news is discouraging because we've done so much to increase the effectiveness of our system, bringing tens of thousands inside.
- But it also is evidence of deeper root causes that must be addressed within larger mainstream/safety net systems to stop people from falling into homelessness.

**LA's inadequate housing supply, systemic racism and income inequality are driving inflows to homelessness.**

- Homelessness starts rising when median rents in a region exceed 22% of median income and rises even more sharply at 32%. In LA, the median rent is 46.7%--nearly half--of median income.
- This is largely due to the lack of affordable housing supply--the LA region is 509,000 units short to meet current demand.
- And systemic racism has led to a disproportionate number of Black people becoming homeless. Black people are 8% of the county population and 33.7% of people experiencing homelessness.
- Homelessness is also a regional challenge. In Southern California, only one county's homeless count decreased - San Diego - while the other five counties increased between 3% and 20%.

**Inflow increased in 2020, and it shows the dynamic nature of homelessness in our region.**

- Across the year, we prevented more than 6,000 people from becoming homeless.
- An estimated 82,955 people fell into homelessness, and our system placed 22,769 into housing.
- This year's count was 66,433, which means an estimated 52,689 self-resolved.
- This translates to every day, an average of 207 people exit homelessness, and 227 people become homeless.

**A silver lining is we sheltered more people last year. 18,395 people experiencing homelessness in L.A. County were sheltered, up from 14,722 the previous year, a 25% increase.**

- The sheltered homeless population in LA County rose 25%, from 14,722 to 18,395, even before Covid.
- This includes a 39% increase in the City of Los Angeles sheltered population, 8,944 to 12,438.
- This indicates the City's A Bridge Home shelters have successfully moved thousands of people off the street.

**And once COVID-19 hit, our new systems allowed us to shelter thousands more.**

- We moved 6,010 people into shelter over the past three months (4,056 through Project RoomKey, 1,708 in Rec and Parks shelters, and 246 in trailers).
- It was a shame it took a pandemic, but we've shown what we can do with more resources. Now, our Covid-19 Recovery plan is to move the 15,000 most vulnerable people into housing over the next year.
- We just need the local, state and federal resources to do it.

**Even in LA's tight housing market, we placed 22,769 people into housing. Another record year and an annual doubling of 5 years ago.**

- With the establishment of Housing Central Command we plan to accelerate placements even further, despite limited supply.
- Using HMIS data, we know that 88% of those placed through our system in 2018 have not returned to homelessness.

**Thousands of new PSH units are bringing our most vulnerable inside.**

- 732 permanent housing units have opened since July 2019.
- 2,360 permanent housing units will open in the next 12 months.
- Overall, 10,638 total permanent housing units are in the pipeline.

**Our systems continue to help significantly more people – even more than last year.**

- Prevention: **6,310** people helped (up from 1,346 per year before Measure H)
- Outreach: **38,865** people helped (up from 11,747 before Measure H)
- Interim Housing: **26,032** people (up from 18,979 before Measure H)
- Permanent Housing Placements: **22,769** (up from 11,904 before Measure H)

*Insights from the count*

**Seniors 62+ increased by 20% and make up 9.9% of the homeless population.**

- Seniors have been a focus during the COVID-19 crisis, with 1,023 seniors sheltered in Project RoomKey over the past few months.
- The capacity to rapidly shelter people through Project RoomKey means 34% of seniors 62+ are now sheltered, from 1,351 to 2,374.

**We saw a 19% increase in homelessness among Transition Age Youth (TAY) Households and Unaccompanied Minors, which includes both individuals 18-24 and members of families headed by persons 18-24. Minor children in TAY-headed families and unaccompanied minors comprise 7% of this population.**

**0.6% increase, which is essentially flat, in veterans experiencing homelessness demonstrates that more resources to house people are effective.**

- This population has been the focus of the most federal, state and local investment over the past decade.

**Methodological improvements have set new baselines for family homelessness and chronic homelessness.**

- A new, more accurate baseline for unsheltered families reflects a doubling of surveys to unsheltered families
- And better survey methods reveal that chronic homelessness is more widespread than previously understood.
- Because of these changes, year-to-year comparisons in chronic homelessness and unsheltered families are not comparable, and we should consider 2020 a new baseline.

**The number of sheltered family members is up 39%, reflecting the increased financial pressures on low-income families.**

- The 83% rise in unsheltered families, from 1,688 to 3,086, is largely due to increased surveying; double the number of unsheltered families were surveyed in 2020 (from 80 to 180), through Family Solution Center outreach.

**We have a new level of specificity on substance use.**

- In 2020, respondents were asked if they had “difficulties with” drug or alcohol use, while in previous years, had been asked if they had “problematic” drug or alcohol use. As a result, the number of people saying yes greatly increased.
- Also, a “permanent/long-term” option was listed separately for every health condition and disability. Previously, there was only one follow-up question.
- This resulted in a doubling of unsheltered who reported substance use in response to the new question wording: 14,284 (32%), up from 6,583, or 16% in the old methodology.
- Notably, there was not an increase in those reporting long-term mental health conditions: 26% of unsheltered, or 11,711 people.
- This should not be interpreted as growth of the population, but better data capture. It’s a new level of specificity, due to two key methodological changes.

**Changes to demographic survey give a more accurate picture of vulnerability.**

- HUD defines chronic as someone who is homeless more than a year and has a disabling condition.
- Due to the methodological changes, 54% more people in 2020 meet the HUD definition.
- Because of these changes, year-to-year comparisons in chronic homelessness are not comparable, but we should consider 2020 a new baseline.

**Structural racism causes Black people to be 4x more likely to experience homelessness.**

- Without institutional racism, there would be 15,000 fewer people experiencing homelessness, almost all coming from Black & Native American populations.

- We will be addressing institutional and structural racism through systemwide examination aimed at unpacking, naming, and eliminating the racism that has been embedded for centuries.
- This work is guided by the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness.

**Two-thirds of unsheltered adults are on their first episode of homelessness.**

- 59% of those newly homeless cite economic hardship as the main reason.
- Homelessness starts rising when median rents in a region exceed 22% of median income, and rise even more sharply at 32%. In LA, the median rent is 46.1% of median income. Until we can change that, inflow will likely continue.

*Key Demographics*

- 80% of unsheltered Angelenos have been here more than 5 years.
- Two-thirds of unsheltered Angelenos became homeless here in LA County.
- Two thirds of people experiencing homelessness identify as male
- 33% of people experiencing homelessness have had an experience of domestic violence or intimate partner violence
- Swings between neighborhoods vary widely due to movements in enforcement and cleanups; the SPA level is the most reliable view of geographic changes.

*The Plan Going Forward*

**LAHSA’s new model and COVID-19 Recovery Plan are transforming how our homeless services system is managed.**

- A new strategic plan & command structure positions LAHSA as the center of gravity for the complex homeless response system--critical in LA where governance is diffuse.
- Real-time awareness of the permanent supportive housing portfolio across government entities for the first time, and will extend to all housing interventions.
- Housing Central Command will use this model to rapidly move our 15,000 most vulnerable inside.
- The model enables real-time awareness of the entire portfolio of permanent supportive housing across government entities for the first time, and will extend to all housing interventions.
- Meanwhile, it’s clear that we also need to go upstream.

**We need a bold, creative vision to reimagine how to dramatically grow LA’s housing supply and fix systems that drive inflow.**

- We need the state, county and city to fund the Homeless COVID-19 Recovery Plan.
- We need to reimagine and expand the supply of affordable and supportive housing with a regional approach that moves toward housing for all.
- We need to target prevention resources to the most vulnerable communities to prevent a wave of evictions.
- We need to scale up anti-racist programs that change how our foster care, health care, criminal justice and other systems work to advance racial justice.

**It will take all of us to reimagine our systems. We need your help.**

- Advocate for system change to dismantle structural racism.
- Advocate for expanded state and federal funding for affordable housing and homeless services.
- Support more interim and supportive housing in your local community; Join the Everyone In Campaign to learn more.
- Donate time, supplies or resources to your local homeless services provider.

**Thanks to the investments made by the people of LA County, thousands of people have a home tonight. Our urgent mission continues to help those who don't.**