

JASON M. WARD, RICK GARVEY, SARAH B. HUNTER

Annual Trends Among the Unsheltered in Three Los Angeles Neighborhoods

The Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS) 2023 Annual Report



Photos by Rick Garvey and April Motola-Burgomaster

Despite substantial ongoing efforts to resolve homelessness in Los Angeles, data from Los Angeles County's January 2023 point-in-time count found a 9 percent increase from the previous year in the estimated number of people experiencing homelessness countywide and a 10 percent increase in the City of Los Angeles (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority [LAHSA], 2023). These sobering estimates underscore the need to continue efforts to address homelessness in the Los Angeles region and to monitor the progress of these efforts.

This report provides another year of results from the Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS), a first-of-its-kind longitudinal data collection effort in three neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

This report presents findings from the 2023 Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS). This update includes comparisons with the data from previous years and additional information about the experiences and needs of unsheltered populations across three Los Angeles neighborhoods: Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice. Our key findings are as follows:

- On average, the number of unsheltered residents in these neighborhoods did not grow, a notable change from late September 2021 through 2022, when the rate of growth was 10 percent on an annual basis.
- In areas that had substantial encampment resolution activities, we observed temporary declines in the unsheltered population that lasted two to three months on average. Because of policy changes regarding tent encampments in Venice, the share of unhoused people living literally unsheltered (e.g., without a tent) increased from 20 percent to 46 percent.
- More than one-half of respondents reported a chronic mental health condition, about one-half of respondents reported a chronic physical health condition, and about one-half of respondents reported a substance use disorder. Respondents in Skid Row were older and less healthy than respondents from the other two neighborhoods. Twenty-nine percent of all respondents reported one or more past overdoses, and probable rates of lifetime substance use disorder were 84 percent.
- About one-half of respondents reported being on the streets for three years or longer. About two-thirds of respondents were actively looking for housing. Respondents in Venice were less likely to be actively looking for housing, experienced less time on the streets on average, and were less likely to have been last housed in California.
- About one-half of respondents reported recent engagement with a homelessness outreach worker or case manager. Respondents in Hollywood had more-frequent contacts and higher reports of receiving assistance. Around 45 percent of all respondents reported never receiving an offer of housing or shelter while experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles.
- On average, 10 percent of respondents reported being employed. Three-quarters of respondents had an income of less than \$600 per month, with incomes higher in Skid Row and among people who were employed. People living in vehicles were more likely to be employed.

These findings demonstrate the diverse characteristics and acute needs among the unsheltered population in these three Los Angeles neighborhoods that are known for high rates of homelessness. Although the growth rate in unsheltered homelessness appears to have flattened, there is evidence that remaining unsheltered residents may be, on average, more vulnerable.

Since fall 2021, RAND researchers have conducted regular enumerations of the unsheltered population in Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice. These three neighborhoods are well known for having high concentrations of people living unsheltered. In addition to counts, we conducted surveys with people living unsheltered in these neighborhoods to better understand the characteristics, experiences, and needs of this population. The results of the first year of this study—including enumeration data showing substantial growth in the size of these populations and survey results providing new evidence on the housing

needs and experiences of unsheltered individuals—were presented in Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a).

We continued our enumeration and survey efforts in these three neighborhoods in 2023 using an updated survey instrument to learn more about the experiences of respondents with the homelessness outreach system, shelter and/or housing services, and street health care services. In addition to continuing to collect data on many key survey items so that we could compare our results across time, we added new questions about employment, income, experiences with service providers, health conditions, and substance use.

Effective monitoring of the state of unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles is a critical task. The results from this ongoing study can continue to provide important evidence on the extent of progress in addressing the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles, but it is also important to stress that the localized nature of our study is an important limitation on the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Most importantly, although we focus on neighborhoods with persistent and large populations of unsheltered residents, we cannot rule out important sources of change in the sizes of the populations we observe, such as the migration of individuals into or out of these neighborhoods.

This report is aimed at a broad audience of policymakers, community stakeholders, and interested members of the general public. For this reason, we have attempted to keep our analysis at a relatively high level. Interested readers are directed to the separate annex, which provides more-detailed data and much greater methodological detail on this study. The annex to this report is available at www.rand.org/t/RRA1890-4.

Study Geography

As mentioned above, our ongoing study focuses on three Los Angeles neighborhoods—Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice—because of their ongoing relevance to local homelessness policy. We established boundaries for each neighborhood via a combination of input from service providers, other stakeholders, and our own site assessments to identify areas in each of these broader neighborhoods with significant levels of unsheltered residents. In Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2022), we describe the factors that motivated the inclusion of these neighborhoods in the study and our approach to defining the survey geography in more detail. Figure 1 maps these three neighborhoods in relation to the rest of central Los Angeles.

Enumeration Study Methodology

During the first year of data collection for this project, which ran from September 2021 through September 2022, we conducted counts on a

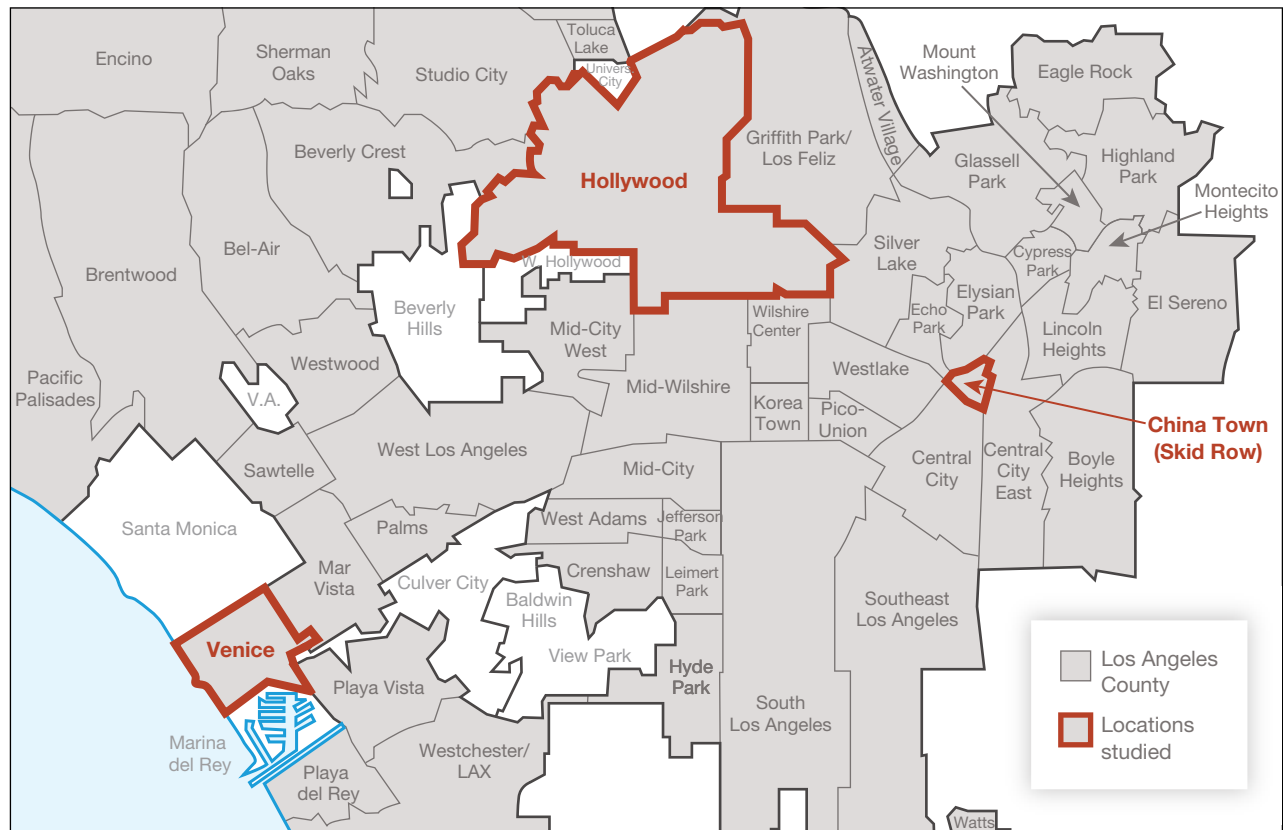
Abbreviations

CIRCLE	Crisis and Incident Response Through Community-Led Engagement
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
LAHSA	Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
LA LEADS	Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey
RV	recreational vehicle
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income

biweekly basis in Skid Row and on a monthly basis in Hollywood and Venice (see Ward, Garvey, and Hunter [2022] for more detail on this data collection). From October 2022 through December 2022, we continued conducting counts in these three neighborhoods on a monthly basis. Over calendar year 2023, because of budget constraints, we reduced the frequency of our counts to every other month, which yielded six enumerations for each site. This report adds these new data to our past enumeration data and updates and expands the relevant analyses. This means that, since our last annual report, we are adding nine new count data points for each neighborhood spanning a period of 15 months. Adding these new data to our first year of collection means that we have a full time series of enumeration data covering approximately 27 months for each of the three neighborhoods.

From November 2022 onward, we conducted our enumerations on weekday evenings from approximately 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.¹ For each distinct count in a neighborhood, we varied the starting location and the direction of movement of our survey teams to ensure that the counts were not influenced by patterns, such as individuals moving from one area to another in a systematic way. For additional details on our enumeration methodology, see Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2022).

FIGURE 1
Map of Study Sites in Central Los Angeles (city)



NOTE: LAX = Los Angeles International Airport; V.A. = West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Campus. LA LEADS study areas are subareas of the neighborhoods indicated on this map. See Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023b) for more-detailed geographical renderings of the study areas.

Unsheltered Population Counts

Next, we present findings from our count data. We present the adjusted estimates of the total number of unsheltered individuals in the three neighborhoods across the entire study period from September 2021 through December 2023. We incorporate multipliers (i.e., weights used to estimate the number of people associated with tents, makeshift structures, and vehicles) that we generated using information from our survey effort, which queried people about these informal shelter types. Specifically, we collected data on the number of people occupying each kind of informal shelter that we considered, as well as the share of people who reported not occupying any type of informal shelter.

We present two related adjusted population estimates. The “full multiplier” approach assumes

that each counted tent, makeshift shelter, and vehicle (i.e., informal shelter type) was associated with different individual(s) from those individuals who were observed on the street and counted by the field team. Therefore, we multiplied each observed tent, makeshift shelter, or vehicle by the average number of occupants we estimated from our survey data. We believe that this approach may result in an overestimate because some of the individuals observed on the street and counted by the field team were likely associated with informal shelter types observed in the same area. The “hybrid multiplier” approach accounts for this potential by subtracting some individuals from the estimated population totals using data from our survey effort on the share of people not living in any of these informal shelter types.

Our working hypothesis is that the true number of unsheltered residents in these areas likely lies

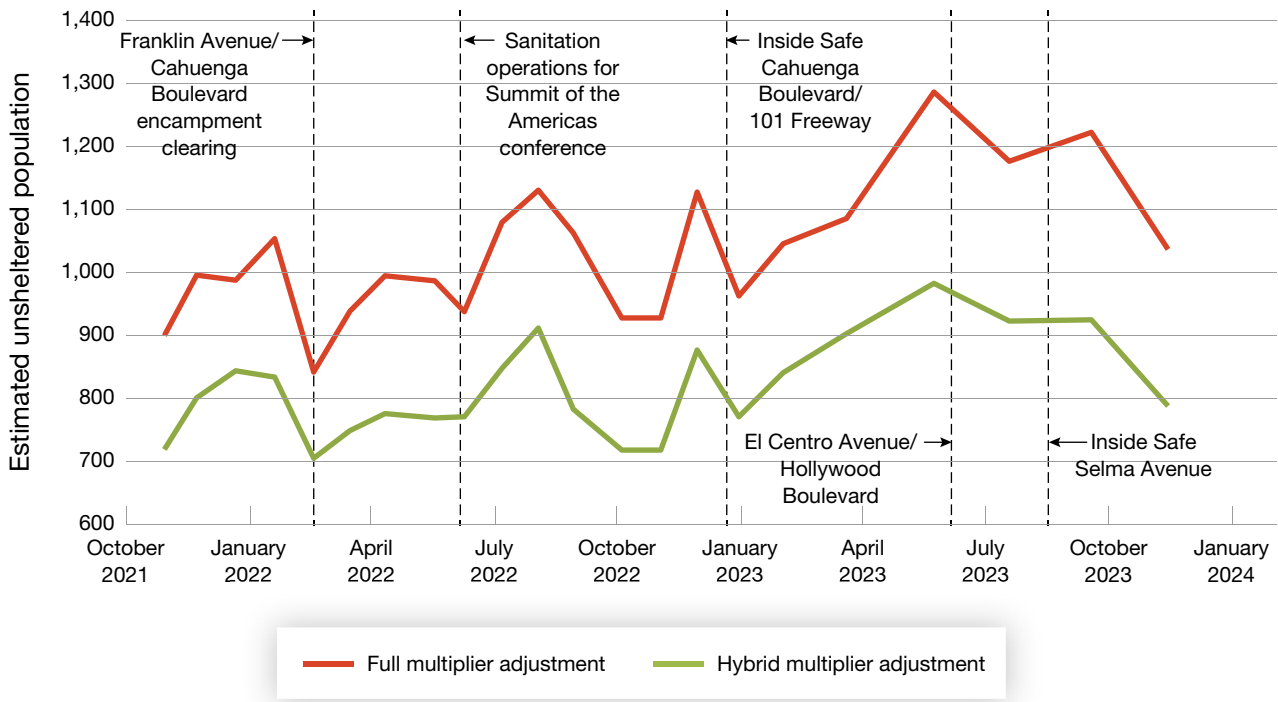
somewhere between the hybrid and full multiplier estimates. Specifically, the full multiplier approach is likely too high because, as mentioned above, we do not account for the fact that many people we count may be associated with a tent, makeshift shelter, or vehicle, which leads to double counting. Conversely, the hybrid multiplier approach is likely too low because we are assuming that no one is in their associated informal shelter as we count. We believe that the most likely scenario is that, at any given time, some people are in their informal shelters and some are not, which would lead to a “true” population count somewhere in between these two approaches. We provide more-extensive details on the construction of these adjusted estimates in Appendix B in the annex to this report.² For interested readers, we also present figures with unadjusted estimates in Appendix D in the annex to this report.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 each present the totals from the full and hybrid multiplier approaches.³ Appendix C in the annex to this report contains the discrete values for each figure. These figures also include the

timing of any events we are aware of that we believe influenced the size of the unsheltered populations, including notable sanitation activities and encampment clearings. For example, in January 2023, Mayor Karen Bass’s Inside Safe program was deployed to a long-standing encampment near 3rd Avenue and Hampton Drive in Venice (Zahniser and Molina, 2023). This deployment reduced the number of tents in our counts by around 60 percent between December 2022 and February 2023.⁴

Our field teams also noted weather events, including particularly cold days or days it was raining. Examples of such dates were in November 2022, December 2022, and February 2023, when temperatures were between the mid-40s and mid-50s for most of our counts. However, we did not find that these weather events had a substantial effect on the number of individuals we counted overall. In a few cases, we rescheduled the counts because of extreme weather, including in December 2021 in Skid Row and in March 2022 and February 2024 in Venice.⁵ Our conjecture was that the severity of the weather

FIGURE 2
Hollywood Unsheltered Population



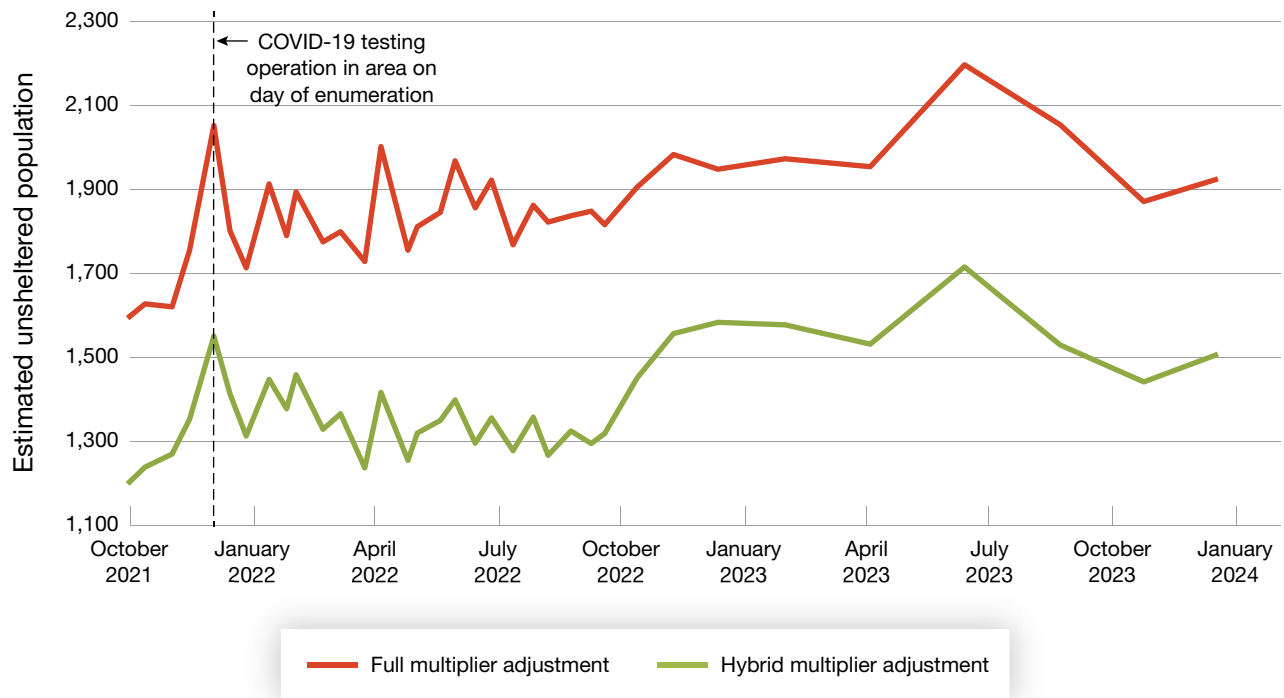
on these days (characterized by heavy rain) would have led to uninformatively low counts because of a combination of winter shelter availability and, in at least some cases, significant efforts to induce unsheltered residents to use them (Sievertson, 2024).

Both estimates for Hollywood in Figure 2 suggest an upward trend from late 2022 through early summer 2023, followed by a notable decline through the end of 2023. This figure includes vertical dashed lines associated with five notable encampment and sanitation activities.⁶ The broad patterns we observe in 2023 appear to have been affected only temporarily by these events. The first two events—at Cahuenga Boulevard and the 101 Freeway in January 2023 and near Hollywood Boulevard and El Centro Avenue in June 2023—are associated in time with large, but temporary, declines in our unsheltered population estimates. However, the count of 30 or so individuals reported as being moved indoors by these operations (Lindahl, 2023a; Zahniser, Vives, and Smith, 2023)

is too low to fully account for these declines, and we found other fluctuations of a similar magnitude in the surrounding months. The third Inside Safe operation on Selma Avenue, across the street from Larchmont Elementary School, conducted in mid-August 2023, is reported to have moved around 45 people indoors (Lindahl, 2023b), but we actually observe a modest increase in the estimated unsheltered population in Hollywood around this date.

Figure 3 presents results for Skid Row. Broadly, these estimates suggest that over 2023, there was a very modest decline in estimated totals of the unsheltered population from around 2,000 people to 1,900 people using the full multiplier adjustment and from approximately 1,600 people to 1,500 people using the hybrid adjustment. There was a notable spike in our estimated totals during our count in mid-June 2023, but at our next count in late August, the numbers were consistent with the downward trend just mentioned. We are unaware of any spe-

FIGURE 3
Skid Row Unsheltered Population



NOTE: COVID-19 = coronavirus disease 2019.

cific event that may have driven the high numbers we observed in June.

Results for Venice are presented in Figure 4. This figure includes vertical dashed lines indicating a total of four encampment clearings that all appear to have temporarily affected the size of the unsheltered population. The first two encampment clearings in 2022 were reported in Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a). The third dashed line indicates the previously mentioned Inside Safe encampment clearing at 3rd Avenue and Hampton Drive in early January 2023. This event moved a reported 82 people (Zahniser and Molina, 2023) and resulted in a 60 percent decline in the number of tents in our study area across the two counts surrounding this event. The population then began to rebound, returning to close to the level seen before the event by June 2023. Roughly one week later, another encampment clearing took place at Venice Boulevard and Dell Avenue that resulted in a 40 percent decline in the number of tents we recorded during our late July enumeration; see Cota-Robles (2023) for local media coverage of this event. However, this decline was, again, tem-

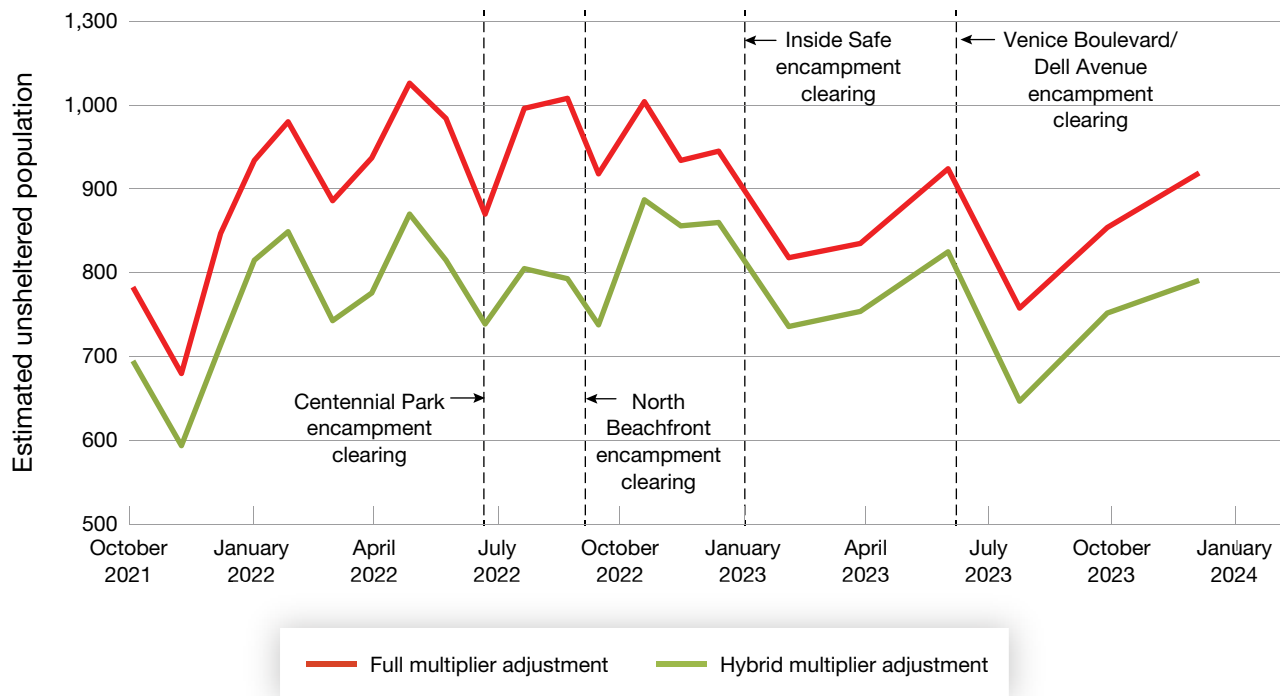
porary, and the count returned to roughly the level observed before the Inside Safe operation.⁷

Assessing Longer-Term Trends in the Unsheltered Population

To better understand both recent and longer-term trends in the sizes of unsheltered populations in the three neighborhoods we study, we employed a regression-based approach to estimate linear trends in population changes over time across three distinct data collection periods: the 15-month period from late 2021 through the end of 2022; the most recent year of data collection, 2023; and the full 27-month period. Beyond the fact that 2023 is the most recent year for which we have collected data, that year corresponds with the first full year of the administration of Mayor Bass and five new city council members (one-third of the council).

We begin our analysis with three figures that plot trend lines for each of these periods using the simple average of the full and hybrid multiplier esti-

FIGURE 4
Venice Unsheltered Population



mates over a scatterplot of the discrete data points from both of these adjusted counts.

In Figure 5, the picture that emerges for Hollywood is a modest upward trend from late 2021 through 2022, equal to around a 4 percent annual increase, a flat trend in 2023, and, across the full study period, a more pronounced upward trend equal to a roughly 10 percent per year increase in the population. This unusual pattern, two flat trends over partial periods but an upward trend over the longer period, appears to be related to a meaningfully higher peak in the spring and summer months of 2023 than in previous years. Combined with seasonally lower numbers in the early and late parts of the year, this flat pattern over 2023 was higher on average than the peak population numbers in the warmer months of 2022. This difference becomes apparent in the longer trend, which covers both of these times of year.

In Skid Row (Figure 6), the notable upward trend lines for the earlier data collection period and the full time series are virtually indistinguishable, both indi-

cating a roughly 8 percent annual increase. However, the trend for 2023 alone is substantially different, suggesting a decline of around 6.5 percent over the course of that year.

Finally, Venice (Figure 7) shows a steep rate of increase over the period from late 2021 through 2022, equal to roughly 17 percent per year. The upward trend that focuses only on 2023 is much less pronounced, at around a 5 percent annual rate. Most notably, across the full study period, the trend in Venice is flat, indicating an annualized rate of change of zero over this full 27-month period.

This combination of patterns (two local upward trends resulting in a flat trend over a longer period) is likely attributable to a large degree to two important events. First, as mentioned earlier, an Inside Safe operation conducted at 3rd Avenue and Hampton Drive in early January 2023 led to a major drop in our area counts for approximately three months before we saw numbers rebound toward previously observed levels. Second, in summer 2021, shortly

FIGURE 5
Trends in the Unsheltered Population of Hollywood

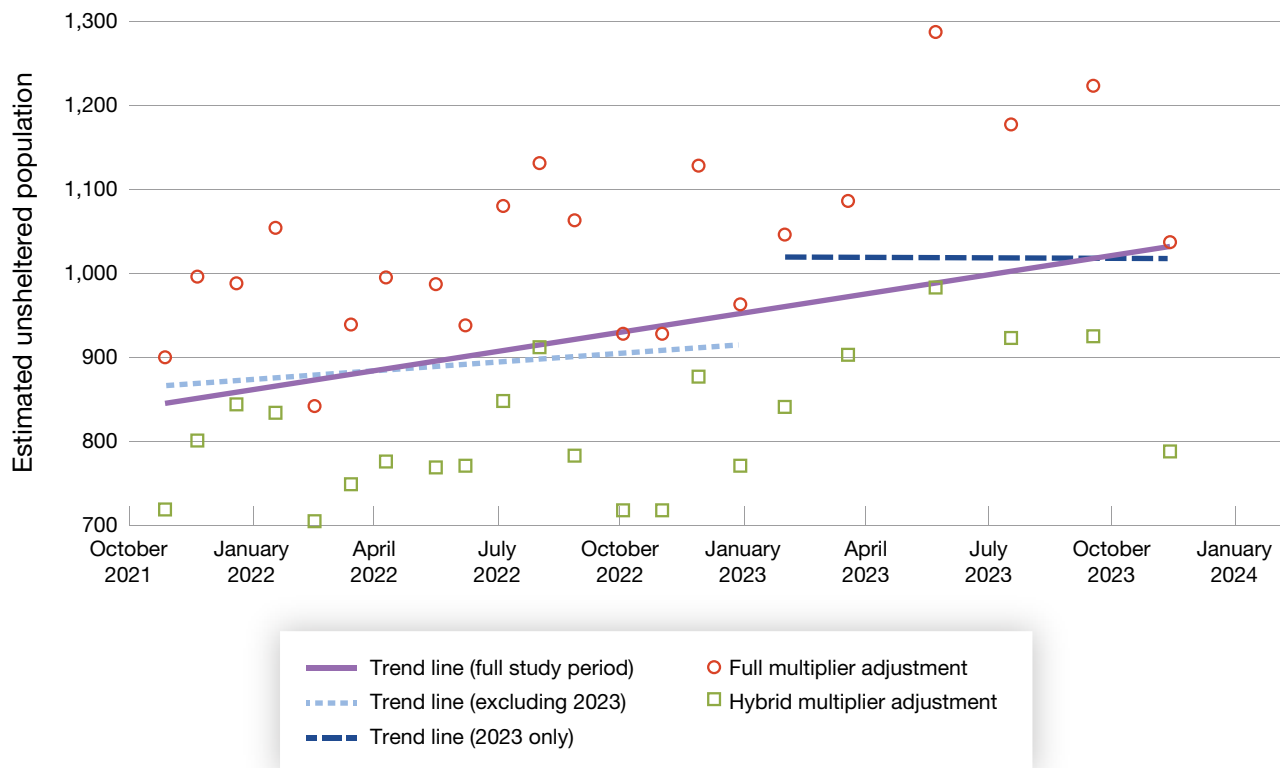
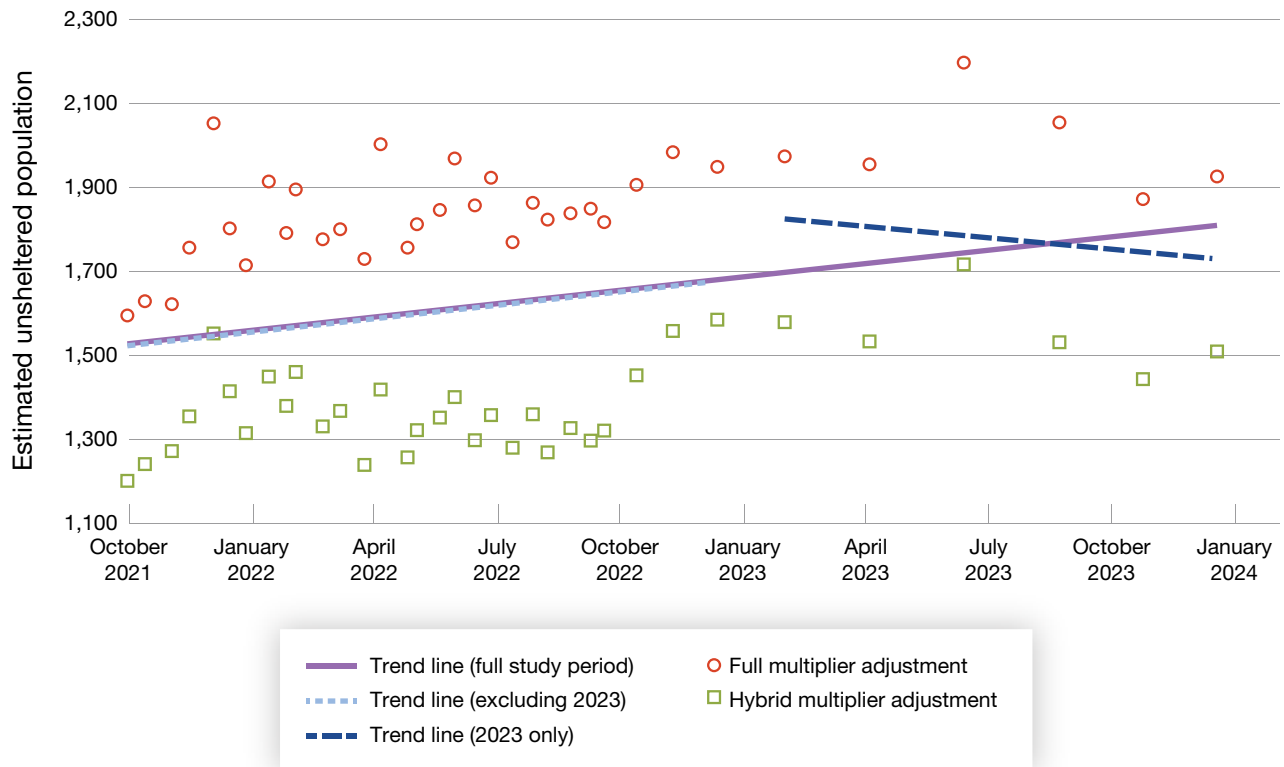


FIGURE 6
Trends in the Unsheltered Population of Skid Row



prior to the start of our data collection for this study, a major, monthslong effort to clear the Venice boardwalk resulted in more than 200 people being moved off the streets (Oreskes and Molina, 2021; Tchekmedyian, Smith, and Rector, 2021). In Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a), we conjectured that the substantial increase in unsheltered homelessness over the following year or so was likely driven at least in part by a reversion to mean levels of unsheltered homelessness in the area. These two major events that led to declines in unsheltered homelessness in the neighborhood may be a key factor for understanding this seemingly contradictory pattern.

Table 1 presents numerical results from the same type of regression exercise used to generate these figures, with one important difference. We use the natural logarithm of the estimated population totals. Regression modeling allows us to calculate an explicit estimate of the annualized rate of change over the three periods, accompanied by statistical inference providing information on the level of con-

fidence in these estimates (how well changes can be distinguished from the hypothesis that there was no growth in the unsheltered populations). In this non-graphical approach, we can also estimate an overall annualized average rate of change for the three neighborhoods together.⁸

Despite using a mathematical transformation of the outcome (the natural log of the estimated counts), these estimates are virtually identical to the trends above, which are estimated using the actual estimated counts. In Table 1, each trend estimate has an associated *p*-value reflecting the level of statistical precision associated with it. Estimates with *p*-values of less than 0.05 are a standard measure of statistical significance. The estimates for the full time series are all highly precise except for Venice, which is typical for a near-zero estimate with relatively few data points. In the period prior to 2023, only the large annual estimate for Venice (17 percent) is highly precisely estimated. Finally, the average estimate across all three neighborhoods for 2023 is very close to zero,

FIGURE 7
Trends in the Unsheltered Population of Venice

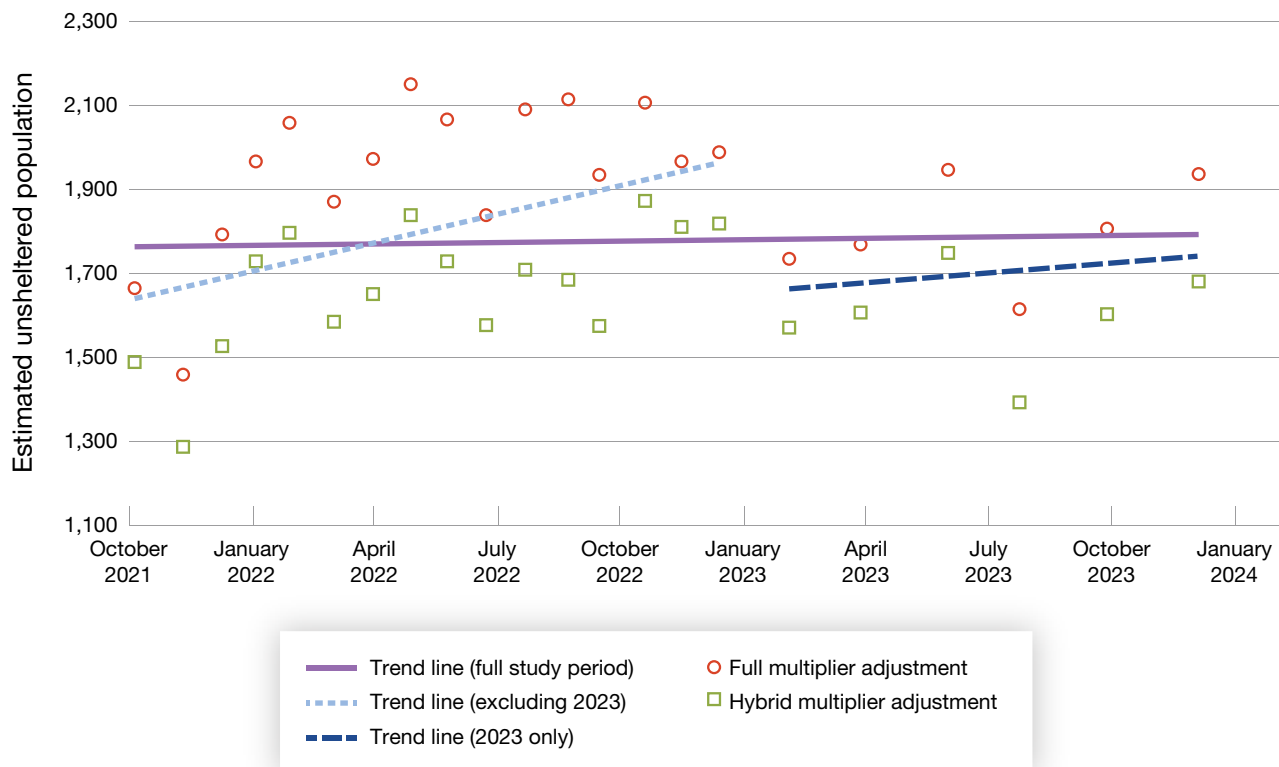


TABLE 1
Regression Estimates of Trends in the Unsheltered Populations of Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice

Percentage Change and Observations	Overall ^a	Hollywood	Skid Row	Venice
Panel A: Annual percentage change using the full time series from September 2021 through December 2023	6.3% [0.000]	9.6% [0.004]	7.8% [0.000]	1.1% [0.762]
Observations	79	22	35	22
Panel B: Annual percentage change from late September 2021 through December 2022	9.6% [0.001]	4.5% [0.425]	8.0% [0.017]	17.1% [0.011]
Observations	61	16	29	16
Panel C: Annual percentage change from January 2023 through December 2023	-0.7% [0.909]	-0.4% [0.980]	-6.4% [0.453]	5.5% [0.673]
Observations	18	6	6	6

NOTE: Results are from a bivariate ordinary least squares regression of the natural log of the average of our two adjusted estimates for each neighborhood-by-enumeration wave on a numeric count of weeks. The percentage change value is scaled from the change-per-week point estimate to reflect an annual change through the following formula: point estimate × 100 × 52 (weeks). The p-value of the regression point estimate is in square brackets. Estimates in bold type are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

^a The overall estimate includes neighborhood fixed effects to control for overall differences in levels across each neighborhood.

and none of the estimates in Panel C in Table 1 are close to conventional levels of statistical precision, which means that we cannot reject the hypothesis that the trend in the growth of unsheltered individuals in any of these neighborhoods or overall was equal to zero.

These results are consistent with a flattening of the upward trajectory of street homelessness in Los Angeles. But, as mentioned in the introduction to this report, since we focus on strictly defined geographic areas, we cannot definitively say whether a flattening of the rate of growth in unsheltered residents in these areas represents an overall trend or simply a local one. We note, however, that we selected these sites in large part because of their histories as areas with concentrated populations of unsheltered residents, suggesting some level of representativeness for broader trends in the unsheltered population of the city.

Survey Results

We collected survey data between August 2023 and October 2023 from 203 respondents ($n = 103$ from Skid Row, $n = 54$ from Hollywood, and $n = 46$ from Venice). In 2022, we surveyed roughly twice this many individuals (a total of 418). Our 2023 survey included many of the same core questions as our 2022 survey. For some of these key items, we compare changes in responses from 2022 to 2023. We also added new questions related to employment and income, as the unhoused face considerable barriers to gaining and maintaining employment (Shier, Jones, and Graham, 2012). Measures of employment and income also relate importantly to understanding the true extent of disabling conditions among unsheltered populations in order to better target resources related to fostering either employment or income support.

We also included new questions concerning interactions with service providers and more-detailed questions regarding substance use to deepen our understanding of both the needs of unsheltered Angelenos and how well they are being met by current approaches. Recent findings from a symposium we held with an array of service providers and developers of permanent supportive housing (Abramson,

Hunter, and Ward, 2024) pointed to important gaps in street outreach, limitations in the ability to expand street medicine, and other issues that suggest an increased focus on such topics. More-detailed information about our survey methodology is available in Appendix B in the annex to this report.

Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Educational Attainment, and Veteran Status

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the survey sample by neighborhood, along with comparisons with respondents in each neighborhood from our 2022 survey as reported in Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a). Appendix D, Table D.2, in the annex to this report presents a more-detailed breakdown of the data for the 2023 survey cohort, including overall averages and statistical testing of differences across sites. Table 2 presents age, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment. We conducted statistical tests to determine whether differences between 2022 and 2023 were statistically significantly different at the 90 percent confidence level or greater.

In terms of age, the Hollywood respondents were the youngest group, with a median age of 37, fol-

Measures of employment and income relate importantly to understanding the true extent of disabling conditions among unsheltered populations.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents from 2022 to 2023 (percentages)

Characteristic	Hollywood		Skid Row		Venice	
	2021–2022 (n = 104)	2023 (n = 54)	2021–2022 (n = 212)	2023 (n = 103)	2021–2022 (n = 103)	2023 (n = 46)
Age						
18–24	5	11	2	2	9	0
25–34	40	30	8	15	17	28
35–44	21	24	13	22	28	33
45–54	14	24	29	23	25	20
55–64	13	9	32	29	19	13
65 and older	7	2	16	10	2	7
Gender						
Male	73	70	69	67	67	74
Female	22	22	28	33	27	24
Nonconforming	3	6	1	0	4	0
Race						
American Indian or Alaska Native	13	19	16	3	17	7
Asian American	7	2	4	3	7	4
Black/African American	49	50	66	68	26	28
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	6	3	0	4	4
White	35	37	15	24	60	65
Other	15	15	13	15	17	13
Hispanic/Latinx	18	28	21	16	22	22
Educational attainment						
Less than high school	29	35	31	41	26	24
High school graduate	23	33	38	31	28	33
Some college or vocational school	40	22	24	18	36	35
Bachelor's degree or higher	8	11	7	10	10	9

NOTE: Statistically significant differences at the 90 percent confidence level or greater for the same characteristic in a given study site between 2021–2022 and 2023 are indicated by bold type.

lowed by Venice, with a median age of 42, and then Skid Row, with a median age of 51. Table 2 indicates notable shifts in the age composition of unsheltered residents in Skid Row. The share of individuals between ages 25 and 44 nearly doubled, while the share of individuals 45 and older (which made up around 75 percent of total respondents in Skid Row) declined by an average of almost 20 percent. In other words, the unsheltered population of Skid Row was younger in 2023 than in 2022 by a statistically significant average of 3.2 years. This change may reflect an increased pace of housing individuals experiencing long-term chronic homelessness, an increase in the rate of mortality, or a combination of these factors.

These are issues we consider in more depth below, in our assessment of the time respondents have spent on the streets.

We found few changes in the gender composition of unsheltered residents across the three neighborhoods, with the exception of a small increase in male residents in Venice.

In terms of race/ethnicity, respondents from Hollywood were more likely to report that they were Hispanic (28 percent) relative to Skid Row (16 percent) and Venice (22 percent). Respondents from Skid Row predominantly reported that they were Black/African American (68 percent), compared with 50 percent in Hollywood and 28 percent in

Venice (all statistically significant differences). Relatedly, the share of White respondents from Venice (65 percent) was higher and statistically significantly different from the two other sites (37 percent in Hollywood and 24 percent in Skid Row). As Table 2 indicates, these patterns are similar to our results from 2022, including the fact that respondents identifying as Black/African American (54 percent) remain substantially overrepresented at a rate nearly seven times their share of the population of the City of Los Angeles.

Respondents from Venice reported higher educational attainment, with 35 percent reporting some college or vocational school compared with around 20 percent in Skid Row and Hollywood. The overall educational attainment of respondents was slightly lower in 2023 relative to 2022, with 35 percent reporting less than high school education across the three sites compared with 29 percent in our 2022 survey.

Since military veterans experiencing homelessness have access to additional benefits and services, this year we added a question about whether the respondent served in the U.S. armed forces.⁹ In each of the three neighborhoods, about 6 percent reported serving in the U.S. armed forces (see Appendix D, Table D.2, in the annex to this report). This is consistent with other recent estimates for the City of Los Angeles (LAHSA, 2022).

Benefits, Income, and Employment

Table 3 presents the results from new survey questions related to benefits, income, and employment. One-half or more of unsheltered individuals reported receiving the following three most common benefits in 2023:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (72 percent)
- Medi-Cal or another public health insurance program (71 percent)
- General Assistance or General Relief Program (50 percent).¹⁰

The median income in the prior month was \$370 and the mean was \$508, but there were notable differences across the sites in reported income over the prior 30 days. Respondents in Hollywood reported

income that was around 60 percent of the income reported by respondents in Skid Row (\$373 versus \$614). This is likely related to increased levels of benefit eligibility among the older and less healthy population residing in Skid Row.

About 10 percent of the sample reported working, with the highest employment rate in Venice (22 percent). Among those employed, about three-quarters reported being informally employed. Respondents from Hollywood were less likely to report being disabled (9 percent) than respondents from Skid Row and Venice (21 and 15 percent, respectively).

Unsheltered individuals who reported living in recreational vehicles (RVs) were much more likely to be employed than respondents in any other type of unsheltered setting (cars and vans or tents and makeshift shelters). Consistent with recent anecdotal evidence on RV dwellers and their socioeconomic circumstances (Karron, 2023), the employment rate among RV dwellers was 44 percent, versus 7 percent for the rest of the sample, a difference that was highly statistically significant. See Appendix D in the annex to this report for more details about these findings.

Not surprisingly, respondents reporting any kind of employment had incomes that were about 40 percent higher than non-employed respondents (\$694 versus \$487). Recipients of General Assistance or

Unsheltered individuals who reported living in recreational vehicles were much more likely to be employed than respondents in any other type of unsheltered setting.

TABLE 3

Employment, Income, and Benefit Receipt in 2023 (percentages)

Income or Employment Measure	All (<i>N</i> = 203)	Hollywood (<i>n</i> = 54)	Skid Row (<i>n</i> = 103)	Venice (<i>n</i> = 46)
Benefits receipt				
SNAP (food stamps)	72	70	76	65
Medicaid or other public health care	71	69	74	70
General assistance	50	50	50	52
SSI, SSDI, disability payments	11	6*	16	7*
Veteran benefits	1	2	1	0
Unemployment	0	0	0	0
Income (past 30 days)				
Mean	\$508	\$373*	\$614	\$426*
25th percentile	\$205	\$100*	\$221	\$100*
50th percentile (median)	\$370	\$300*	\$400	\$350
75th percentile	\$553	\$500	\$700	\$525
Employment status ^a				
Unemployed (seeking work)	36	37	37	33+
Not employed (not actively looking for work)	32	43	30	24+
Employed	10	9	6	22*+
Disabled (with benefits or not)	17	9*	21	15
Employment type (among those employed)	(<i>N</i> = 21)	(<i>n</i> = 5)	(<i>n</i> = 6)	(<i>n</i> = 10)
Informal employment	76	80	67	80
Gig employment (delivery app, etc.)	14	20	0	20
Formal employment	10	0	33	0

NOTE: *N* and *n* = sample size for, respectively, the total survey sample and each site-specific subsample. Results for Hollywood and Venice that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*). Results for Venice that are statistically significantly different from Hollywood at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with a plus sign (+).

^a We report results on employment for four distinct categories: *employed* (meaning working for pay either formally or informally), *unemployed* (meaning not employed but actively seeking work), *disabled* (whether or not a respondent is receiving disability benefits), or *not employed and not actively looking* (a state referred to as *not in the labor force* in official employment statistics). Although these categories seem to be exhaustive, we allowed a response of "none of the above," and a small number of respondents (between 2 and 7 percent across the three sites) chose this answer.

General Relief had an average income of \$478, while recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) had a considerably higher average monthly income of \$993.

Put in context, our estimates of employed unsheltered individuals from the three Los Angeles neighborhoods were much lower (10 percent) than the employment rates implied in a recent study of the earnings of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. That study found that 18 percent of individuals had earnings subject to unemployment taxes (i.e., formal employment) in the quarter prior to their enrollment in the homelessness management infor-

mation system of Los Angeles County (von Wachter, Schnorr, and Riesch, 2020). Enrollment in this system implies that the individual sought and received homelessness services in Los Angeles County. This distinction between the two studies suggests that our survey is reaching people affected by some combination of having more-severe levels of acuity (i.e., people who are less likely to have been working recently), being less likely to have used homelessness services, and experiencing more-significant barriers to becoming or remaining employed.

Health Status, Substance Use and Consequences, and Criminal Justice Involvement

As shown in Table 4, around 30 percent of our 2023 respondents reported “excellent” or “very good” health, another 30 percent reported “good” health, and the remaining roughly 40 percent reported “fair” or “poor” health. This overall rate is slightly better

than what was reported at the state level among people experiencing homelessness, with 45 percent of respondents reporting “fair” or “poor” health (Kushel et al., 2023).

Respondents from Skid Row were more than twice as likely to report “poor” health than respondents from the other two sites (17 percent versus 7 percent in both Hollywood and Venice). These overall patterns in self-reported health status were

TABLE 4
Health, Substance Use, and Criminal Justice Involvement Among Survey Participants in 2023 (percentages)

Health or Substance Use Measure	All (n = 203)	Hollywood (n = 54)	Skid Row (n = 103)	Venice (n = 46)
Self-reported health status				
Excellent	17	26*	13	16
Very good	15	22*	11	16
Good	30	22	29	40*
Fair	27	22	31	22
Poor	12	7*	17	7*
Do you have, have you ever had, or has a health care provider ever told you that you have the following chronic, long-term condition?				
Mental health condition	56	54	59	51
Substance use disorder	48	46	49	47
Physical health condition	45	37*	54	33*
Traumatic brain injury	17	20	14	20
Developmental disability	15	24	14	9+
HIV/AIDS-related illness	5	13*	3	0*+
Trimorbidity conditions ^a (simultaneously having physical, mental health, and substance use disorder)	18	13	21	17
Screening for substance use disorder (GAIN short screener)				
Probable substance use disorder (lifetime)	84	87	80	87
Probable substance use disorder (past year)	57	50*	57	63
Number of times overdosed (lifetime)				
Zero times	71	59	72	84*
1 to 4 times	22	31	21	12*
5 or more times	7	9	7	5
Have been arrested in the past year	26	30	21	33
Spent 1 or more nights in jail or prison in the past year	19	22	15	27

NOTE: GAIN = global appraisal of individual needs; HIV/AIDS = human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. n = number (sample size). Results for Hollywood and Venice that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*). Results for Venice that are statistically significantly different from Hollywood at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with a plus sign (+).

^a See Appendix B in the annex to this report for a description of the GAIN short screener score methodology (Dennis, Feeney, and Titus, 2013). We defined the trimorbidity conditions variable as the intersection of respondents who reported having or having been told that they have all three of the listed conditions, a definition commonly used in the field of providing health and behavioral care to chronically homeless individuals (see Rountree, Hess, and Lyke, 2019).

broadly similar to our findings from 2022 (Table 5 shows these comparisons), but we found some evidence of a shift toward worse self-reported health in Skid Row.

We changed the way we asked about chronic health conditions in 2023 compared with 2022, given that unsheltered individuals may not have regular access to care (see Appendix B in the annex to this report for more details). However, overall reports of having a physical health or mental health condition did not change: 45 percent reported a chronic physical health condition and 56 percent reported a mental health condition across the three sites. We also added questions about traumatic brain injury, developmental disability, and HIV/AIDS-related illness but do not have comparable data from 2022 on these items.¹¹ Rates of self-reported developmental disability were lower in Venice (9 percent) compared with the other two sites (24 percent and 14 percent in Hollywood and Skid Row, respectively), and rates of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses were highest in Hollywood (13 percent, compared with 3 percent in Skid Row and 0 percent in Venice).

We also included a short screener to identify individuals with a probable substance use disorder (see Appendix B in the annex to this report for more details about the instrument). Most respondents (84 percent) met the criteria for a probable lifetime substance use disorder; there were no differences

across the three sites. These results, using a reliable substance use screener, demonstrate higher shares of people with a probable disorder than other survey efforts that employed self-reported substance use disorder status. For example, 2023 LAHSA survey findings show 30 percent of people with a self-reported substance use disorder (LAHSA, 2024). However, a statewide survey of people experiencing homelessness showed that nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the sample reported regular use (i.e., three times a week) of amphetamines, cocaine, or non-prescribed opioids (Kushel et al., 2023), indicating increased risk for developing a disorder. Answers to the questions in this screener suggest that most respondents who are living unsheltered have experienced negative consequences from substance use and are in need of additional clinical assessment to determine whether substance use disorder treatment is recommended. These findings underscore the need for outreach efforts to incorporate substance use screening and low-barrier substance use treatment options for the unsheltered.

We also asked about lifetime overdose experiences. Overall, 29 percent of respondents reported having overdosed one or more times, with this rate lowest among respondents in Venice (16 percent), higher among Skid Row respondents (28 percent), and much higher among respondents in Hollywood (40 percent). Consistent with a pattern of recent

TABLE 5
Changes in Self-Reported Health from 2022 to 2023
(percentages)

Characteristic	Hollywood		Skid Row		Venice	
	2021–2022 (n = 104)	2023 (n = 54)	2021–2022 (n = 212)	2023 (n = 103)	2021–2022 (n = 103)	2023 (n = 46)
Self-reported health status						
Excellent	24	26	15	13	19	16
Very good	22	22	18	11	22	16
Good	27	22	32	29	28	40
Fair	15	22	21	31	23	22
Poor	12	7	14	17	9	7

NOTE: Statistically significant differences at the 90 percent confidence level or greater for the same characteristic in a given study site between 2022 and 2023 are indicated by bold type. Note that for current shelter status, we used data from our screener, which was not completed for all survey respondents (see the item-specific sample sizes). This missingness was larger in our 2023 screening data, so we interpret these results with some caution in Skid Row, where we were missing the most responses.

increases in overdose fatalities among the unhoused in Los Angeles (Chang et al., 2022; Shover et al., 2023), these figures are higher than those reported in a statewide study that collected data from fall 2021 to fall 2022, which found that 20 percent of people reported at least one overdose (Kushel et al., 2023). These data can also help shed light on potential risk levels in these neighborhoods, as past overdose experiences are a risk factor for future overdoses and potential fatalities (Caudarella et al., 2016; Goldman-Mellor et al., 2020).

Finally, Table 4 presents the share of respondents who report being arrested or spending time in jail or prison in the past year. We changed the window of time from our prior survey effort (from the past 30 days in 2022 to the past year in 2023), so the results are not comparable. Unsurprisingly, the percentage of respondents reporting an arrest (26 percent) or incarceration (19 percent) was significantly higher than in 2022, given the longer window of time.

To explore whether criminal justice involvement tends to precede homelessness or is a consequence of it, we also examined the association between being arrested or jailed in the past year and reporting being homeless continuously for one year or more. Arrest rates were modestly lower among those reporting being homeless more than one year (24 percent) compared with those reporting that their current homelessness episode was shorter than one year (32 percent). Similarly, rates of being jailed in the past year were around 50 percent lower for those who reported being homeless for more than a year (17 percent versus 26 percent, although this difference was not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level).¹² These patterns are consistent with homelessness being more commonly observed as a consequence of criminal justice involvement than as a cause of criminal justice involvement.

Homelessness Experiences

Table 6 presents the results from respondents regarding their experiences with homelessness. More than one-half of respondents (52 percent) reported that their current homelessness duration was three years or longer. This was slightly less than the 57 percent who reported spells of three or more years in our

More than one-half of respondents reported that their current homelessness duration was three years or longer, slightly less than the 57 percent who reported three or more years in our 2022 survey.

2022 survey (these comparisons are reported in Table 7), although this difference is not statistically significant, likely because of our smaller sample size in 2023. This overall decline was driven by decreases in the share of respondents in Hollywood and Skid Row reporting being currently homeless for three years or more.

There are at least two factors that may be behind the observed declines of people experiencing long-term homelessness. The first is the significant recent increase in new permanent supportive housing units coming online in Los Angeles, as well as expansions of other temporary and permanent housing programs, including Inside Safe and Project Homekey. This new capacity has led to greater numbers of chronically homeless individuals becoming housed or being provided with long-term shelter (Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, undated). The second, more grim, factor is increased mortality contributing to a reduction in the share of individuals reporting very long spells of living continuously on the streets. A recent report from the Los Angeles County Coroner's office shows that deaths of people experiencing homelessness doubled between 2018

TABLE 6

Measures of Homelessness Experiences of Survey Participants
(percentages)

Homelessness Experience Measure	All (n = 203)	Hollywood (n = 54)	Skid Row (n = 103)	Venice (n = 46)
Duration of current spell of homelessness				
Less than 1 year	25	30	20	28
1 to 2 years	15	15	14	17
2 to 3 years	8	15*	6	7
3 years or longer	52	41*	60	48
Duration at current location				
Less than 90 days	17	19	13	26*
3 to 12 months	13	20	11	11
12 to 36 months	14	9	17	11
More than 36 months	56	52	59	52
Past 30-day housing search status				
Looked on my own	36	31*	46	22*
Looked with case manager	27	30	28	20
Haven't looked but plan to	27	33*	20	35*
Haven't looked, don't plan to	10	6	6	24*+
Factors that have forced a move in the past year				
Law enforcement	54	58	51	57
Sanitation activities	45	47	48	37
Neighborhood housed residents	27	29	26	28
Ambassadors or business improvement district representatives	19	19	19	20
Urban Alchemy or CIRCLE teams	17	21	15	15
Other factors	14	19	10	17
Location when last housed				
Los Angeles County	59	61	64	46*
Elsewhere in California	9	13	6	11
Outside California	31	26	28	41
Missing	1	0	2	1
Lost housing due to eviction	22	28	18	22

NOTE: CIRCLE = Crisis and Incident Response Through Community-Led Engagement. *n* = number (sample size). Mutually exclusive percentages may not add to exactly 100 because of rounding. We perform statistical tests of differences across sites for each category by creating indicator variables for membership in each group (e.g., age 18–24) and then regressing those group variables on indicator variables for the Hollywood and Venice sites (with Skid Row as the omitted site so that coefficients measure differences with the mean value for Skid Row). A second analogous regression tests differences between Venice and Hollywood (omitting Hollywood). The results that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*). The results for Venice that are statistically significantly different from Hollywood at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with a plus sign (+).

TABLE 7

Comparison of Changes in Homelessness Duration from 2022 to 2023 (percentages)

Characteristic	Hollywood		Skid Row		Venice	
	2021–2022 (<i>n</i> = 104)	2023 (<i>n</i> = 54)	2021–2022 (<i>n</i> = 212)	2023 (<i>n</i> = 103)	2021–2022 (<i>n</i> = 103)	2023 (<i>n</i> = 46)
Duration of current spell of homelessness ^a						
Less than 1 year	25	30	18	20	25	28
1 to 2 years	13	15	8	14	15	17
2 to 3 years	13	15	8	6	15	7
3 years or longer	50	41	66	60	46	48

^a For current shelter status, we used data from our screener, which was not completed for all survey respondents (see the item-specific sample sizes). This missingness was larger in our 2023 screening data, so we interpret these results with some caution in Skid Row, where we were missing the most responses.

and 2021, increasing beyond 2,200 in 2021. Much of this rise has been driven by a substantial increase in deaths related to fentanyl (Levin and Craft, 2024).

The length of these observed durations of homelessness is important, because those who are *chronically homeless* (i.e., those who experience either one continuous year of homelessness or up to one year of homelessness in a three year span) are eligible for such programs as permanent supportive housing. We estimate that 60 percent of unsheltered individuals qualified as chronically homeless in 2023, ranging from a low of 50 percent in Venice to a high of 66 percent in Skid Row.¹³ Although these rates are higher than reported in a recent state sample (Kushel et al., 2023), that study also included sheltered populations.

The length of time people report spending at their current location closely mirrors the length of their current spell of homelessness across all three neighborhoods, suggesting relatively low levels of mobility across locations for our respondents. This pattern is similar to what we observed in our 2022 survey data, although we limited the question about duration at current location to six months or longer, so these questions are not directly comparable across survey waves.

Because of a recent focus among policymakers on the issue of *vanlords*—those who rent out vehicles to people experiencing homelessness (Esquivel, 2023)—we asked respondents in our screener who reported living in a vehicle about their relationship to that vehicle. Eleven percent of the sample reported

living in a vehicle (see Appendix D, Table D.4, in the annex to this report for breakdowns by neighborhood and across survey periods). Fifty-two percent reported owning the vehicle, 9 percent reported that a family member owned the vehicle, and 39 percent reported an “other” situation, including that the vehicle belonged to a friend (*n* = 4) or someone else (*n* = 1). No one reported, “I am renting the vehicle from someone else.”

For the first time in 2023, we asked respondents about their housing searches in the past 30 days. Overall, 36 percent reported that they “seriously looked for housing on my own,” 27 percent looked for housing with “a case manager or other service provider,” and 27 percent reported that they “have not looked, but plan to do so soon.” In Hollywood, a total of 61 percent reported actively looking for housing (one-half reported doing so with the help of a case manager), 74 percent in Skid Row reported looking (46 percent reported that they “looked on my own” and 28 percent reported looking with the help of a case manager), and in Venice, a total of 42 percent reported looking for housing (around one-half with the help of a case manager).¹⁴ Other respondents reported not having looked, which we framed in two ways: “haven’t looked but plan to” and “haven’t looked but don’t plan to.” For Hollywood and Skid Row, only 6 percent responded that they hadn’t looked and did not plan to, but this answer was given four times as frequently in Venice, where 24 percent of respondents gave this answer. We are not aware of

any other recent studies that have asked similar populations about the nature of their housing searches in a comparable way. These findings suggest that different interventions may be needed across these neighborhoods, as nearly one in four respondents in Venice are not actively seeking housing.

In 2023, we also asked if any of the following six causes had forced respondents to move in the past year: law enforcement, sanitation, ambassadors or business improvement district representatives, Urban Alchemy or CIRCLE teams, neighborhood residents, or “other (please describe).” Respondents could select as many options as they had experienced. By far, law enforcement and sanitation were the most common factors forcing a move (54 percent and 45 percent, respectively). Next, 27 percent of respondents reported neighborhood housed residents as forcing a move, 19 percent reported ambassadors or business improvement district representatives, and 17 percent reported Urban Alchemy or CIRCLE teams. There were no differences across neighborhoods in these reported rates.

In 2023, we also asked respondents to tell us where they were last housed (in our previous survey effort, we asked where they lived before their current

location). Our findings are confluent with those from other recent research on homelessness in the state (Kushel et al., 2023), which indicates that most people experiencing homelessness in California were last housed in the county in which they were residing. Fifty-nine percent of the sample reported that they were last housed in Los Angeles County; this rate was lower in Venice (46 percent) than in Hollywood or Skid Row (61 percent and 64 percent, respectively). Forty-one percent of respondents in Venice reported being last housed outside California, compared with 26 and 28 percent in Hollywood and Skid Row, respectively.

Considerable media coverage accompanied the ending of long-standing eviction moratoriums in Los Angeles County, with many reports suggesting that this policy change could lead to a spike in homelessness (Wagner, 2023). Twenty-two percent of the sample told us that they lost their housing because of eviction; reporting of this item was not different across respondents from the three neighborhoods. We also examined whether an eviction was related to time since the respondent was last housed, given the ending of COVID-19 pandemic eviction moratoriums, but we did not find a statistically significant relationship.

Ample media coverage accompanied the ending of long-standing eviction moratoriums in Los Angeles County, with many reports suggesting that this policy change could lead to a spike in homelessness.

Outreach Services

Table 8 presents the results from our survey questions related to outreach services. Most of the people we surveyed had contact with the homelessness outreach system during their current episode of homelessness. In fact, nearly one-half of the sample has frequent contact with the system. About 25 percent reported having one caseworker, 35 percent reported having interacted with two to four caseworkers, and another 18 percent interacted with five or more caseworkers. The remainder reported no contact with caseworkers.

For the 79 percent of the sample who reported engaging with an outreach or case manager, we asked when their last contact with the worker occurred. Thirty percent reported within the past week. From among these respondents, 40 percent were from Hollywood, indicating higher engagement rates in this neighborhood compared with the two other sites. About 20 percent of respondents had not had any

TABLE 8

Outreach and Service Utilization Among Survey Participants (percentages)

Outreach or Service Measure	All (n = 203)	Hollywood (n = 54)	Skid Row (n = 103)	Venice (n = 46)
Number of outreach or case management workers in contact with since becoming homeless this time				
None	22	22	23	17
One	26	22	25	30
Two	15	11	17	15
Three	15	17	13	17
Four	5	4	7	4
Five or more	18	24	16	15
(For those with one or more caseworkers) When was your last contact with a caseworker or manager?	n = 163	n = 43	n = 81	n = 39
Within past 7 days	30	40*	25	31
7–14 days	15	14	14	21
14–30 days	17	19	16	15
30–60 days	11	5*	14	13
60–90 days	6	5	10	0*
More than 90 days	21	19	22	21
(For those with one or more caseworkers) Outreach services received in the past 30 days				
Water or snacks	64	74	66	48*+
Condoms, safe sex resources	46	50	51	30*+
Harm reduction supplies (e.g., naloxone, clean needles)	46	49	46	39
Help obtaining documents (identification, benefits)	36	50*	32	30+
Assessment of housing needs	28	39*	20	33
Transportation to services	23	32	23	11*+
Offer of temporary group shelter	24	33	23	13+
Offer of temporary individual shelter	9	15	7	9
Offer of permanent housing	8	11	10	2+
Other	2	1	0	4
	n = 203	n = 54	n = 103	n = 46
Received medical services since being on the streets				
(Of those receiving medical services since being on the streets) When did you last receive medical services?	n = 98	n = 28	n = 52	n = 18
Within past 30 days	57	57	63	39*
Within past 2–3 months	13	21	12	6
Within past 3–6 months	9	14	10	0*+
Within past 6–12 months	11	7	8	28*+
More than 12 months ago	9	0*	8	28*+

NOTE: n = number (sample size). Mutually exclusive percentages may not add to exactly 100 because of rounding. We perform statistical tests of differences across sites for each category by creating indicator variables for membership in each group (e.g., age 18–24) and then regressing those group variables on indicator variables for the Hollywood and Venice sites (with Skid Row as the omitted site so that coefficients measure differences with the mean value for Skid Row). A second analogous regression tests differences between Venice and Hollywood (omitting Hollywood). The results that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*). The results for Venice that are statistically significantly different from Hollywood at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with a plus sign (+).

contact within the past 30 days. Taken together with the findings from the previous survey question, about one-half of respondents were not actively engaged with the homelessness outreach system. Respondents who reported living currently in a car reported a longer elapsed time on average since their last contact with a caseworker and also reported receiving fewer distinct services in the last 30 days (around 1.4 on average, versus 3.4 for respondents residing in tents, the comparison group in our regression model).

We also asked what sort of support respondents had received from an outreach worker or case manager. The most common response was water or snacks (64 percent). Across several categories, respondents from Venice reported receiving fewer services than respondents in Hollywood or Skid Row. Conversely, Hollywood respondents reported the highest levels of receipt of nearly every service we asked about. Broadly, the less frequently reported services were transportation, temporary group shelter, individual group shelter, and permanent housing. Two percent of respondents reported being provided with other services, including help receiving mail and health and hygiene resources.

We also asked in our 2023 effort whether respondents had received any medical support since being on the streets (e.g., “has a doctor checked your heart, bandaged a wound?”). Nearly one-half of our sample reported receiving street medicine, and this level of service did not differ meaningfully across the three

Nearly one-half of our sample reported receiving street medicine, and this level of service did not differ meaningfully across the three neighborhoods.

neighborhoods. This finding may be related to recent reforms to Medicaid billing (California Health Care Foundation, 2022) and increased funding levels for street medicine (Callaghan, 2024; “UCLA Health Receives \$25.3 Million . . .”, 2023). Additionally, across the sample, more than one-half (57 percent) of respondents who were served by street medicine reported receiving these services within the past 30 days, although this rate was notably lower in Venice.

Homeless Housing Needs and Preferences

Table 9 presents the results from the survey questions related to housing needs and preferences. As in 2022, the overwhelming majority of respondents (92 percent) indicated in 2023 that they were interested in receiving housing. Thirty-nine percent of our sample reported currently being on a waiting list for housing, a (statistically significant) 9.5 percentage point increase from 2022. Respondents from Hollywood reported higher rates than respondents from Skid Row (48 percent relative to 32 percent, also a statistically significant difference).

In 2023, we also asked when respondents were last offered housing by a service provider. Forty-two percent reported never being offered housing, with no statistically significant differences across the three neighborhoods. One-quarter of respondents reported last being offered housing more than 12 months ago, again with no differences across neighborhoods. Fourteen percent reported last being offered housing within the past 30 days, again with no statistical differences found across neighborhoods.

Like our last survey effort, we asked respondents whether they had any specific needs or requirements for housing or shelter. The most frequently mentioned need, which 62 percent of respondents reported, was storage for their possessions. The next most frequently reported item was “allowed to stay with partner, spouse, child, roommate,” at 45 percent. Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported “allowed to stay with pet(s).” These reported ratings were notably higher in 2023 than in 2022. About one-third of the sample reported that housing “needs to be in particular neighborhood.” Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that they

TABLE 9

Housing Experiences, Needs, and Preferences of Survey Participants in 2023 (percentages)

Housing Need or Preference Measure	All (<i>n</i> = 203)	Hollywood (<i>n</i> = 54)	Skid Row (<i>n</i> = 103)	Venice (<i>n</i> = 46)
Interested in housing ^a	92	94	94	85*
Currently on a waiting list	39	48*	32	43
Last time you were offered housing by a service provider				
Never	42	44	37	49
More than 12 months ago	25	19	29	24
Within past 6–12 months	6	13*	4	4
Within past 3–6 months	3	4	3	2
Within past 2–3 months	9	6	11	11
Within past 30 days	14	15	17	9
Specific housing or shelter needs or requirements				
Storage for possessions	62	67	62	58
Allowed to stay with partner, spouse, child, roommate	45	56*	38	49
Allowed to stay with pet(s)	37	39	39	29
Needs to be in particular neighborhood	32	31	33	31
Handicap accessible	25	26	29	16*
Other	20	26	17	20
Recoded “Other” responses, grouping common categories	<i>n</i> = 40	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 9
Privacy or private space	23	29	12	33
Supportive or medical services on site	23	21	29	11
Safe area or safe community	10	7	12	11
Few or no rules, curfew, etc.	5	0	0	22
Otherwise uncategorized issues	40	43	47	22

NOTE: *n* = number (sample size). Mutually exclusive percentages may not add to exactly 100 because of rounding. We perform statistical tests of differences across sites for each category by creating indicator variables for each category and then regressing those category variables on indicator variables for the Hollywood and Venice sites (with Skid Row as the omitted site so that coefficients measure differences with the mean value for Skid Row). A second analogous regression tests differences between Venice and Hollywood (omitting Hollywood). The results for Hollywood or Venice that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*).

^a Among respondents not answering “yes” to this question, between 2 percent and 7 percent answered “maybe” and between 4 percent and 9 percent answered “no” (the highest prevalence of both of these responses was in Venice).

needed a handicap-accessible dwelling; however, that number was significantly lower in Venice, at 16 percent. Twenty percent of respondents indicated another need or requirement, with the most frequent responses being the need for privacy or private space, the need for supportive or medical services on site, and the need for a safe area or community.

Our first survey effort filled an important evidence gap regarding the types of housing or shelter solutions that unsheltered residents report that they would accept if offered. However, we are unaware of any research on the extent to which offers of vari-

ous types of housing or shelter were accepted when proffered by service providers. By definition, our respondents have not accessed housing solutions that provide a long-term resolution to their homelessness, since we encounter them as unsheltered. But beginning to understand the relative levels of availability and uptake of different types of housing and shelter options can inform a more effective allocation of these resources.

Table 10 presents results from a set of new questions exploring this topic. We asked respondents whether they had been offered any of ten differ-

TABLE 10

Survey Participants' Past Experiences with the Homeless Housing System
(percentages)

Homeless Housing or Shelter Measure	All	Hollywood	Skid Row	Venice
Group shelter	(n = 203)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 46)
Ever been offered?	31	37	28	28
	(n = 62)	(n = 20)	(n = 29)	(n = 13)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	45	40	45	54
Recovery or sober living housing	(n = 201)	(n = 54)	(n = 102)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	20	28	18	18
	(n = 41)	(n = 15)	(n = 18)	(n = 8)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	51	47	67	25*
Long-term stay in a hotel or motel (e.g., Inside Safe)	(n = 203)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 46)
Ever been offered?	13	11	17	7*
	(n = 25)	(n = 5)	(n = 17)	(n = 3)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	52	20	59	67
Safe camping (organized tent space)	(n = 202)	(n = 54)	(n = 102)	(n = 46)
Ever been offered?	12	15	9	15
	(n = 24)	(n = 8)	(n = 9)	(n = 7)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	50	25	44	86* +
Shared housing (shared apartment or house)	(n = 202)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	12	19	9	13
	(n = 25)	(n = 10)	(n = 9)	(n = 6)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	24	30	22	17
Bridge housing (temporary shelter with on-site services)	(n = 200)	(n = 54)	(n = 101)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	11	9	10	16
	(n = 22)	(n = 5)	(n = 10)	(n = 7)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	55	40	60	57
Supportive housing	(n = 201)	(n = 54)	(n = 102)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	11	19*	8	9
	(n = 22)	(n = 10)	(n = 8)	(n = 4)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	45	50	63	0* +
"Tiny" home (small shed used as an individual dwelling)	(n = 201)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 44)
Ever been offered?	10	15	7	11
	(n = 20)	(n = 8)	(n = 7)	(n = 5)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	25	0*	57	20
Other transitional living situation (interim housing with access to services)	(n = 202)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	7	7	7	9
	(n = 15)	(n = 4)	(n = 7)	(n = 4)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	40	25	57	25
Permanent stay in a motel or hotel-like setting (e.g., Project Homekey)	(n = 202)	(n = 54)	(n = 103)	(n = 45)
Ever been offered?	5	6	7	2
	(n = 11)	(n = 3)	(n = 7)	(n = 1)
(Of those offered) Ever accepted?	36	0*	57	0*

NOTE: n = number (sample size). In this table, we display distinct sample sizes for each question for which a sample restriction was made based on the answer to the prior question. We perform statistical tests of differences across sites for each category by creating indicator variables for each category and then regressing those category variables on indicator variables for the Hollywood and Venice sites (with Skid Row as the omitted site so that coefficients measure differences with the mean value for Skid Row). A second analogous regression tests differences between Venice and Hollywood (omitting Hollywood). The results for Hollywood or Venice that are statistically significantly different from Skid Row at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with an asterisk (*). The results for Venice that are statistically significantly different from Hollywood at the 90 percent confidence level are indicated with a plus sign (+).

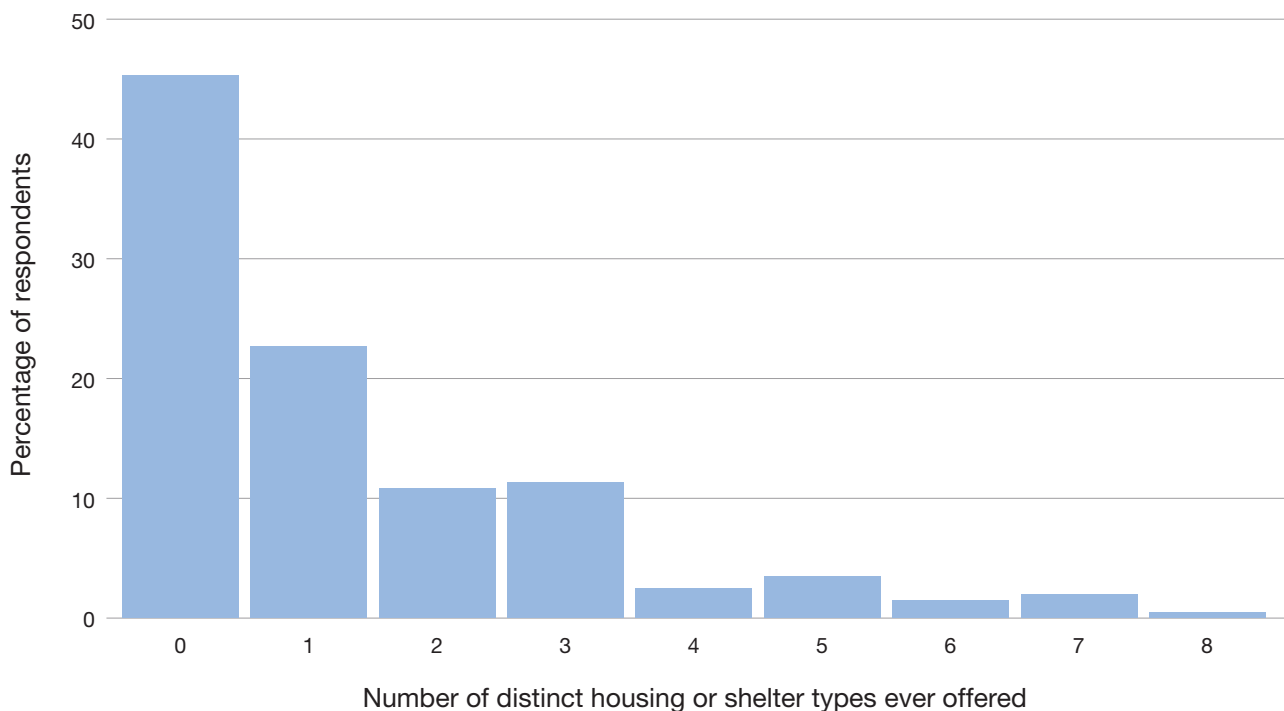
ent options since being homeless in Los Angeles. If respondents reported that they had been offered any one of these options, we then asked whether they had accepted that option. If respondents reported that they had accepted that option, we then asked how long their most recent stay in that setting was and whether they left voluntarily (i.e., “I chose to leave”) or involuntarily (i.e., “Someone else made the decision for me to leave”).

Figure 8 shows the distribution of distinct offers of housing or shelter reported by respondents (for example, a respondent who reported being offered group shelter *and* a long-term stay in a hotel or motel would show up as having received two distinct offers of housing). Around 45 percent of participants reported never receiving an offer for any of these housing or shelter solutions. Among those who reported receiving at least one offer, roughly 20 percent received one offer and the remaining roughly 30 percent received between two and eight offers of distinct housing or shelter options.

The results presented in Table 10 focus first on asking respondents whether they have ever been offered a certain type of housing or shelter and second on whether respondents accepted the offer. In Appendix D, Table D.5, in the annex to this report, we present additional information we collected on the length of time respondents who accepted an offer of housing or shelter remained in it and whether they left for a voluntary or involuntary reason. However, the relative infrequency of having received and accepted offers of housing or shelter, combined with our relatively small sample size, resulted in very sparse data for these additional questions.

The main finding from this line of inquiry is that offers of housing are relatively rare among this sample of unsheltered people. Group shelter was the most common offer respondents reported receiving (31 percent). We found that 40 percent to 50 percent of those offered a housing option accepted it. The sparse data in Table D.5 on the length of stay and the voluntary or involuntary nature of the departure did

FIGURE 8
Number of Distinct Housing or Shelter Types Ever Offered to Survey Participants



NOTE: This figure is a histogram of the total number of offers of distinct housing or shelter types ever received by survey participants using the housing or shelter categories reported in Table 10.

not show any general patterns, and, in many cases, these questions may have been informed by very few responses. Despite the limitation in statistical power, these results are a useful starting point for understanding the experiences that people living unsheltered in these neighborhoods have had with the homeless housing and shelter systems, and we plan to continue collecting these data with a larger sample going forward.

In an acuity-based system, individuals with more-significant physical or behavioral health issues should receive more offers of housing than others. Additionally, an increased focus in recent years on addressing racial inequities in both rates of homelessness and the homelessness service system (LAHSA, 2018; Milburn et al., 2021) suggests that racial and ethnic minorities who are disproportionately experiencing homelessness should receive a higher number of offers of housing or shelter. Results from regression-based tests of this hypothesis using our new data on offers of housing or shelter are shown in Table 11. We regressed the number of distinct offers of housing or shelter that respondents have received since becoming homeless on a selection of respondent demographic characteristics to assess whether individuals with certain characteristics are more likely to report housing or shelter offers.

Overall, we found few statistically significant relationships among these characteristics and more offers of housing or shelter, although we found sug-

gestive patterns in other cases. In model 1 in Table 11, our results for age were inconclusive, with all results highly imprecisely estimated.

For self-reported health (model 2), we found only suggestive results, although the pattern exhibited was not consistent with an acuity-based system of making offers of housing or shelter. Using those reporting “excellent” health as the comparison group, we found that those reporting “very good” health were statistically significantly more likely to receive offers but that estimates for those in worse health were increasingly negative. Although not statistically precise, these results are counterintuitive and concerning. The results in model 3, which looks at the association between reporting a chronic physical or long-term physical health condition and a mental health condition or a substance use disorder, are imprecise and characterized by both positive and negative signs. We also (in model 4) used an indicator for reporting “yes” to all three of these questions—trimorbidity—as a measure of particularly high acuity that is common in the literature on unsheltered homelessness (Himsworth, Paudyal, and Sargeant, 2020; Vickery et al., 2021) but found no meaningful association between this condition and offers of housing or shelter.

Model 5, which explores the conjecture above about offers of housing and racial and ethnic minorities, suggests that participants self-reporting as non-White were associated in a statistically significant manner with receiving roughly double the offers of housing or shelter on average compared with White respondents. However, in model 6, we found no meaningful association with offers of housing or shelter for respondents reporting Hispanic ethnicity.

Cell Phone, Internet, and Current Document Status of Respondents

Table 12 presents the results from our survey questions related to cell phone, internet, and digital app use, as well as reports of what identification and related documents respondents currently have in their possession. Both of these measures relate to addressing barriers to becoming housed. A working cell phone can be key to connecting with services

In an acuity-based system, individuals with more-significant physical or behavioral health issues should receive more offers of housing than others.

TABLE 11

Associations Between Survey Participant Characteristics and Distinct Offers of Housing and Shelter

Model Characteristics	Model Outcome Is Number of Distinct Offers of Housing or Shelter Received Since Becoming Homeless					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ages 25–54 (compared with 18–24)	-0.395 (0.634)					
Ages 55–61 (compared with 18–24)	-0.292 (0.702)					
Age 62 or higher (compared with 18–24)	0.089 (0.699)					
Self-reported poor health (compared with excellent)		-0.706 (0.452)				
Self-reported fair health (compared with excellent)		-0.187 (0.371)				
Self-reported good health (compared with excellent)		0.461 (0.364)				
Self-reported very good health (compared with excellent)		0.794 (0.425)				
Have you ever had a chronic or long-term physical health condition? (yes compared with no)			-0.275 (0.252)			
Have you ever had a chronic or long-term mental health condition? (yes compared with no)			0.246 (0.270)			
Have you ever had a chronic or long-term substance use disorder? (yes compared with no)			0.142 (0.264)			
Co-occurrence of physical, mental health, and substance use disorder (yes to all compared with no to one or more)				-0.028 (0.317)		
Non-White (yes compared with no)					0.861 (0.267)	
Hispanic ethnicity (yes compared with no)						0.080 (0.305)
Average number of distinct offers received by the comparison group	1.625 (0.617)	1.206 (0.291)	1.245 (0.215)	1.325 (0.135)	0.696 (0.227)	1.311 (0.137)
Observations	202	202	202	203	203	202

NOTE: An easy approach to interpretation of these models is to begin with the second to last row ("Average number of distinct offers received by the comparison group") and then compare the estimate (both sign and magnitude) for the relevant group membership above with this average. For example, in column 5, White respondents received an average of 0.696 offers of housing or shelter and non-White respondents reported receiving an additional 0.861 offers of housing, an increase of more than 100 percent. Standard errors of each estimate are in parentheses. Bold type indicates results that are statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level or higher.

TABLE 12

Access to Cell Phones and the Internet and Current Document Status of Survey Participants in 2023 (percentages)

Characteristic	All (<i>n</i> = 202)	Hollywood (<i>n</i> = 54)	Skid Row (<i>n</i> = 103)	Venice (<i>n</i> = 46)
Currently have a cell phone	49	48	49	49
(Of those with a cell phone) Can connect to internet with it?	87	93	81	92
(Of those with a cell phone) Use digital apps on it?	81	79	77	92
Currently have the following documents				
Other state identification	38	41	40	31
Social Security card	29	26	32	24
Proof of citizenship	26	25	27	27
Birth certificate	19	15	20	20
Driver's license	14	11	12	22
Veteran identification	1	0	2	2

NOTE: *n* = number (sample size of who provided a valid response to each question). The questions on accessing the internet and using digital apps were asked only of participants who reported currently having a working cell phone.

(Clark, 2023; Kritz, 2019). Additionally, identification documents are a requirement for accessing many resources, including, in most cases, permanent and supportive housing (Smith, 2023).

Nearly one-half of the sample reported having a cell phone. Among those with a cell phone, most reported being able to connect to the internet and using digital apps. There were no differences across the three neighborhoods on these items. Age or gender was not associated with having a cell phone. However, non-White individuals and those who reported having a long-term or chronic physical health condition were more likely to have a cell phone.¹⁵

Our results on the possession of key identification documents that may be required for important housing and service connections suggest that the lack of these documents is an ongoing problem. If we assume that a driver's license and other state identification are mutually exclusive, then the results suggest that around one-half of the population is missing this form of identification. Fewer than one-third of respondents report having a Social Security card, and fewer than one-fifth report having a birth certificate, suggesting that outreach aimed at helping secure and maintain these key documents is a valuable activity that may benefit from greater scale.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is its focus on only three neighborhoods. Although we chose the neighborhoods this study focuses on because of the presence of persistent and substantial communities of unsheltered residents in each of them, they are still small geographic areas that may not generalize to the rest of Los Angeles. Additionally, a focus on small areas limits our ability to generalize too much from increases or reductions in these local populations, as the changes may relate to broader trends in Los Angeles but may also be driven, at least in part, by migration into and out of these neighborhoods.

Additionally, the infrequent nature of our enumerations (roughly bimonthly over 2023) might mean that we failed to capture certain high-frequency events affecting the sizes of the unsheltered populations in our study areas (such as encampment clearings); these events may have occurred and been resolved within two months. However, evidence in our report around various encampment clearings suggests that this limitation may not be too consequential.

Our sample of survey respondents for 2023, as discussed previously, was around one-half the size of our 2022 sample. This means that we had less sta-

tistical power to detect change over time from 2022 to 2023. Thus, we likely underreported meaningful changes. Because of the smaller number of individuals we surveyed, we were also less able to understand individuals' rates of acceptance of various offers of shelter and housing and how these events were resolved. We plan to address that by continuing to survey in these areas in 2024.

Conclusions

This report provides another year of results from LA LEADS, a first-of-its-kind longitudinal data collection effort in three neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles that are known for high concentrations of unsheltered homelessness. We examined trends in the number and characteristics of unsheltered individuals over a 27-month period, spanning 2021 through 2023, and provided evidence from new survey data on unsheltered residents in these areas.

We found that the number of people living unsheltered has leveled off in 2023 compared with the substantial increases observed in the previous year. But when we assess the trajectory of the full 27-month study period, we still observe a longer-term upward trajectory in the number of unsheltered people across the three neighborhoods. Our 2023 results are suggestive of a possible leveling off in the growth of unsheltered homelessness, but assessing the stability of this trajectory is complicated by an increase in large encampment clearances through Inside Safe and other related events, which we observe to temporarily reduce the number of people living unsheltered in a neighborhood. This reduction is followed by a reversion toward previous levels within two to three months. This pattern has been particularly pronounced in Venice, where the largest and most-frequent encampment clearings occurred in 2023.¹⁶ Additionally, over the course of 2023, our field teams reported anecdotal evidence of increases in the unsheltered population in Venice east of our study area, a part of Venice that had relatively lower numbers of people living unsheltered when we began our study. In 2024, we will expand our study area to better understand potential migration to eastern Venice.

Our 2023 results are suggestive of a possible leveling off in the growth of unsheltered homelessness, but assessing the stability of this trajectory is complicated by increased encampment clearances.

Over the course of 2023, we observed other patterns of persistence and turnover that differed across neighborhoods and were not captured by the overall trends in these populations. Anecdotal reports from our field teams suggest that overall turnover of unsheltered residents during our year of counts was highest in Venice, consistent with our survey data finding relatively lower durations of time in this neighborhood among respondents. The field teams also noted a greater incidence of ad hoc encampment communities moving together within a neighborhood because of sanitation activities or other similar events forcing individuals to relocate.

We expanded our 2023 survey to collect important new data on the employment and income of respondents and much more-detailed data on their interactions with the homelessness services system, including housing offers. From these new questions, we have gleaned initial evidence suggesting very precarious finances among respondents; they had a median monthly income of \$370, and one-quarter of respondents had an income of less than \$205 per month.

We also collected new data in 2023 showing substantial levels of benefits program participation

among unsheltered respondents, particularly SNAP and Medicaid. These are encouraging signs that the social safety net is providing important benefits to this highly vulnerable population. We also saw evidence that the expansion of street medicine services is having a widespread impact, as nearly one-half of the sample had received street medicine and about one-quarter of the sample had received it within the past month. This finding demonstrates that Los Angeles County and other entities have prioritized these high-concentration areas for mobile health care. We plan to continue to monitor these policy-relevant topics going forward.

Our new explorations of the incidence of offers and acceptance of various housing and shelter options revealed substantial heterogeneity across various housing solutions in both the level of offers being received by respondents and their level of acceptance. We plan to return to these questions using a larger sample in 2024 to bolster this evidence base that has important implications for policy.

Other key findings from our 2023 survey results include the following:

- We found that about 60 percent of people living unsheltered in these neighborhoods as

One-half of respondents indicated that they had a cell phone that they could use to access the internet and apps. Fewer respondents indicated that they had personal identification.

of 2023 may qualify for permanent supportive housing (i.e., meet the federal definition of *chronic homelessness*).

- The homeless populations differ across the three neighborhoods. For example, Skid Row has an older, less healthy population. In contrast, Venice has a younger, more educated, and predominantly White population that is more likely to be working and less likely to report being actively looking for housing compared with the other two neighborhoods. People living unsheltered in Venice also are more likely to have been last housed outside California.
- The three neighborhoods appear to provide different levels of homelessness outreach services. Hollywood appears to be in the lead in terms of more-frequent contacts with people living unsheltered and higher reports of obtaining assistance to acquire critical resources, such as obtaining documents and housing need assessments. Venice, on the other hand, appeared to provide fewer resources and services.
- Using a more reliable screening measure, we found that 84 percent of respondents met the criteria for a probable substance use disorder. Moreover, three in ten respondents had experienced an overdose. More-rigorous efforts to clinically assess and potentially engage this population in substance use treatment are warranted.
- One-half of respondents indicated that they had a cell phone that they could use to access the internet and apps. Fewer respondents indicated that they had personal identification that could be used to help them access housing and other benefits, indicating an area for improvement for homelessness outreach services.

Overall, our findings for 2023 point to signs of progress in slowing the growth of unsheltered homelessness in Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice. However, this evidence should be viewed as tentative because of a substantial increase in encampment clearings that may primarily be moving people to

areas outside our study zone or to temporary shelter or housing rather than providing long-term resolution from homelessness. We found evidence of impressive levels of medical care being provided in these three neighborhoods.

There are still substantial areas of concern. The majority of our survey respondents still report living continuously on the streets for three years or longer.

This suggests that the majority of people living unsheltered in these neighborhoods have never been successfully connected to even long-term interim housing or shelter. And we continue to observe very high levels of chronic health conditions among the populations that continue to live unsheltered in these neighborhoods.

Notes

¹ In the first year of this study, we alternated the timing of our enumerations between mornings and evenings to provide evidence on variation in population estimates related to the time of day that counting was conducted. We found some modest evidence of temporal patterns, but these patterns did not substantially affect any analysis of longer-term patterns, so we opted for evening hours for multiple logistical and methodological reasons, including that we felt that there was a lower likelihood of incorrectly assessing an individual as unsheltered in the late evening hours.

² In Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a), we refer to these adjustments as *upper bound* and *lower bound* estimates. In this report, we opted to adopt the terms *full multiplier* and *hybrid multiplier* to more clearly refer to the procedures that yield these adjusted population estimates.

³ For visual clarity, we use connected lines between each distinct enumeration event. This does not imply that the linear imputations between discrete count events are accurate estimates of the unsheltered population in these unobserved periods, which became longer in 2023 because of our change to bimonthly enumerations. These figures use adjustments based on two distinct sets of weights. We use the 2021–2022 weights and shares of individuals literally unsheltered for enumeration results prior to January 2023, as reported in Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a), and apply the new shares from our 2023 survey data to the enumeration data collected from January 2023 through December 2023.

⁴ Other changes in the shares of informal shelter types and, thus, the share of literally unsheltered individuals may have been affected by policies that did not change as discontinuously between discrete enumerations, as was the case with the deployment of the Inside Safe Program to the encampment in Venice. Thus, the estimation approach of applying the weights associated with our 2022 and 2023 survey efforts to the related annual count data may introduce some measurement error into our estimates at any specific point in time between these two periods of survey data collection. This is a limitation of the study approach, which relies on the combination of more high frequency (enumerations) and low frequency (periodic surveying) data collection activities.

⁵ Specifically, we moved our planned enumeration in Skid Row from December 14, 2021, to December 15, 2021, our planned enumeration in Venice from March 29, 2022, to March 31, 2022, and our planned enumeration in Venice from February 6, 2024, to February 13, 2024.

⁶ After Ward, Garvey, and Hunter (2023a) was released, we became aware of a substantive encampment clearing effort at the intersection of Franklin Avenue, Wilcox Avenue, and Cahuenga Boulevard initiated by Councilmember Nithya Raman's office prior to our mid-February count that was reported to have moved 44 people indoors (Zahniser, 2024). We added this event to our pre-2023 data and find a large, but temporary, corresponding decline in our count data.

⁷ Anecdotally, our field team observed in the latter months of 2023 that the increase in encampment clearings and related enforcement policies regarding camping in public areas had the effect of displacing unsheltered residents farther east, out of our study area. Our planning for 2024 data collection involves

expanding the Venice study site to include more of the eastern portion of Venice to accurately assess the evolving enforcement policy landscape of this neighborhood.

⁸ These results are from a pooled bivariate regression of the natural logarithm of each pair of adjusted estimates (the full and hybrid multiplier approaches) for each data collection event on a time variable (a count of weeks). The single estimate for this regression (an average weekly change) is then multiplied by 52 to generate an annualized rate of change. For the overall estimate, we add in neighborhood fixed effects so that we control for the fact that, for example, the average level of the unsheltered homeless population in Skid Row is much higher than in Venice or Hollywood.

⁹ Because of these relative advantages, past research has suggested that self-reports of veteran status may be unreliable (Metraux, Stino, and Culhane, 2014).

¹⁰ The General Assistance or General Relief program is designed to provide support for indigent adults who are not supported by their own means or other public funds or assistance programs. Each county in California's program is established and funded by its own County Board of Supervisors. Los Angeles County's program provides up to \$221 per month.

¹¹ These items are also part of the LAHSA demographic survey, but we did not have access to those data.

¹² As a point of comparison, among a recent California statewide sample, reported arrest rates during respondents' most-recent homelessness episodes were 30 percent, and close to 15 percent of the statewide sample reported being in jail or prison immediately prior to their most-recent homelessness episodes (Kushel et al., 2023).

¹³ By using the self-reported physical and mental health issues from Table 4 that would have a high probability of being associated with a disability (a chronic, long-term physical health condition, mental health condition, substance use disorder, traumatic brain injury, developmental disability, or HIV/AIDS-related illness), we can provide an estimate of the likely chronicity of our sample. We note, however, that our criteria are likely more inclusive (e.g., not all developmental disabilities may be considered chronic health conditions) and therefore may result in higher estimates in the receipt of services associated with chronic homelessness than one might be able to credibly document. The federal *chronic homelessness* definition also requires documentation of a diagnosed disability, including a chronic physical health, mental health, or substance use disorder condition. Our measure of a chronic condition is based on a self-report item and may not accurately reflect the true underlying prevalence rate. We note, however, that our estimate may be high because we ask respondents, "Do you have, have you ever had, or has a healthcare provider ever told you that you have any of the following chronic, long-term health conditions?" Thus, it is possible that people do not still have these conditions, although we would suggest that experiencing unsheltered homelessness is not typically associated with improvements in chronic conditions.

¹⁴ Although the recent statewide study found that approximately 46 percent of respondents reported receiving help to find housing from a case manager, a housing navigator, or someone else

from an agency during their current episode of homelessness, the share of the unsheltered receiving such help in the past six months was only 20 percent (Kushel et al., 2023).

¹⁵ These findings relate to recent efforts to conduct homelessness research using cell phones (Smith, 2022). The findings suggest that, while the subpopulation of people experiencing homelessness who are cell phone users may not be representative of the overall population of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness, this subpopulation overrepresents more—historically vulnerable groups and groups with higher levels of acuity,

so such research efforts may play an important role in monitoring progress on these subgroups of particular policy interest.

¹⁶ These enumeration findings are consistent with a recent report indicating that encampment resolution activities may not have a long-term impact on unsheltered homelessness in high-concentration areas (Rubenstein, 2023), although we note that the validity of the methods used in this report has been challenged by city policymakers (Gerda, 2024) and associated reporting has found results that are not entirely consistent with this study (Smith, Vives, and Zahniser, 2024).

References

- Abramson, Louis, Sarah B. Hunter, and Jason M. Ward, *Identifying Policy and Research Gaps in Addressing Homelessness in Los Angeles: Conference Proceedings*, RAND Corporation, CF-A1890-1, 2024. As of April 22, 2024: https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CFA1890-1.html
- California Health Care Foundation, *A Game Changer for Street Medicine: Key Takeaways from New Medi-Cal Guidelines*, December 2022.
- Callaghan, Dylan, “USC Street Medicine Surpasses Growth Expectations, Hitting Multiple Milestones to Start 2024,” Keck School of Medicine of USC, March 21, 2024.
- Caudarella, Alexander, Huiru Dong, M. J. Milloy, Thomas Kerr, Evan Wood, and Kanna Hayashi, “Non-Fatal Overdose as a Risk Factor for Subsequent Fatal Overdose Among People Who Inject Drugs,” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Vol. 162, May 2016.
- Chang, Alicia H., Jennifer J. Kwon, Chelsea L. Shover, Lisa Greenwell, Ayodele Gomih, Jerome Blake, Aubrey Del Rosario, Padma S. Jones, Rebecca Fisher, Sharon Balter, and Hannah K. Brosnan, “COVID-19 Mortality Rates in Los Angeles County Among People Experiencing Homelessness, March 2020–February 2021,” *Public Health Reports*, Vol. 137, No. 6, November/December 2022.
- Clark, Moe, “Cellphones Are a Lifeline for Unhoused People—but Barriers Abound,” *Shelterforce*, November 1, 2023.
- Cota-Robles, Marc, “Homeless Encampments Along Venice Boulevard Removed for Beautification Project,” ABC 7 Eyewitness News, June 7, 2023.
- Dennis, Michael L., Tim Feeney, and Janet C. Titus, *Global Appraisal of Individual Needs—Short Screener (GAIN-SS): Administration and Scoring Manual*, Chestnut Health Systems, version 3, July 2013.
- Esquivel, Paloma, “L.A. City Council Backs Effort to Regulate ‘Vanlords’ Who Rent RVs to Homeless People,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2023.
- Gerda, Nick, “Encampment Analysis,” LAist, March 3, 2024.
- Goldman-Mellor, Sidra, Mark Olfson, Cristina Lidon-Moyano, and Michael Schoenbaum, “Mortality Following Nonfatal Opioid and Sedative/Hypnotic Drug Overdose,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 59, No. 1, July 2020.
- Himsworth, Catherine, Priyamvada Paudyal, and Christopher Sargeant, “Risk Factors for Unplanned Hospital Admission in a Specialist Homeless General Practice Population: Case-Control Study to Investigate the Relationship with Tri-Morbidity,” *British Journal of General Practice*, Vol. 70, No. 695, June 2020.
- Karron, Robert, “We Are Some of the ‘Working Poor’ Who Get by in L.A. by Living in RVs,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 2023.
- Kritz, Fran, “Expired, Lost and Stolen: Cell Phones, Critical for Homeless People, Can Be Tough to Get and Keep,” *California Health Report*, January 11, 2019.
- Kushel, Margot, Tiana Moore, Jennafer Birkmeyer, Zena Dhatt, Michael Duke, Kelly Ray Knight, and Kara Young Ponder, *Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness*, University of California San Francisco, Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, June 2023.
- LAHSA—See Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.
- Levin, Sam, and Will Craft, “Revealed: 300% Surge in Deaths of Unhoused People in LA amid Fentanyl and Housing Crises,” *The Guardian*, February 22, 2024.
- Lindahl, Chris, “One of Hollywood’s Largest Encampments Cleared, 32 People Housed as Part of Inside Safe,” *Patch*, June 7, 2023a.
- Lindahl, Chris, “Notorious Encampment on Selma Avenue Cleared, 45 People Housed by City,” *Patch*, August 11, 2023b.
- Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, “Permanent Housing,” webpage, undated. As of February 29, 2024: <https://homeless.lacounty.gov/permanent-housing/>
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness*, December 2018.
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, “City of LA HC22 Data Summary,” webpage, September 7, 2022. As of April 22, 2024: <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=6516-city-of-la-hc22-data-summary>
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, “LAHSA Releases Results of 2023 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count,” press release, June 30, 2023.
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, “2023 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count Data” webpage, last updated May 20, 2024. As of June 19, 2024: <https://www.lahsa.org/news?article=944-2023-greater-los-angeles-homeless-count-data>
- Metraux, Stephen, Magdi Stino, and Dennis P. Culhane, “Validation of Self-Reported Veteran Status Among Two Sheltered Homeless Populations,” *Public Health Reports*, Vol. 129, No. 1, January–February 2014.
- Milburn, Norweeta G., Earl Edwards, Dean Obermark, and Janey Rountree, *Inequity in the Permanent Supportive Housing System in Los Angeles: Scale, Scope and Reasons for Black Residents’ Returns to Homelessness*, California Policy Lab, October 2021.
- Oreskes, Benjamin, and Genaro Molina, “How L.A. Cleared Most Venice Beach Homeless Camps and Sheltered Many Unhoused People,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 2021.
- Rountree, Janey, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke, *Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the U.S.*, policy brief, California Policy Lab, October 2019.
- Rubenstein, Paul, “Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 41.18 Effectiveness Report (21-0329-S4),” memorandum to Henry Flatt, Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, November 28, 2023.
- Shier, Micheal L., Marion E. Jones, and John R. Graham, “Employment Difficulties Experienced by Employed Homeless People: Labor Market Factors That Contribute to and Maintain Homelessness,” *Journal of Poverty*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2012.
- Shover, Chelsea L., Joseph R. Friedman, Ruby Romero, Russell Buhr, Brian Chu, Amber Tang, Jesus A. Medina, Lauren Wisk, Jonathan Lucas, and David Goodman-Meza, “Longitudinal Changes in Co-Involved Drugs, Comorbidities, and Demographics of Methamphetamine-Related Deaths in Los Angeles County,” *Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment*, Vol. 151, August 2023.
- Sievertson, Makenna, “Unhoused Communities Urged to Seek Shelter, More Vouchers Promised,” LAist, February 2, 2024.

Smith, Doug, “Mobile Phones Give Researchers a Deeper Look into Living Homeless in L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 2022.

Smith, Doug, “Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass Scores a U.S. Policy Shift to Expedite Homeless Housing,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 2023.

Smith, Doug, Ruben Vives, and David Zahniser, “Are L.A.’s Anti-Camping Laws Failing? We Went to 25 Sites to Find the Truth,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 2024.

Tchekmedyan, Alene, Doug Smith, and Kevin Rector, “Sheriff Villanueva Deploys Deputies to Venice Encampments, but Is He Overstepping His Authority?” *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 2021.

“UCLA Health Receives \$25.3 Million for Street Medicine Program Caring for Homeless,” *Santa Monica Daily Press*, March 5, 2023.

Vickery, Katherine Diaz, Tyler N. A. Winkelman, Becky R. Ford, Andrew Busch, Danielle Robertshaw, Brian Pittman, and Lillian Gelberg, “Trends in Trimorbidity Among Adults Experiencing Homelessness in Minnesota, 2000–2018,” *Medical Care*, Vol. 59, Suppl. 2, April 2021.

von Wachter, Till, Geoffrey Schnorr, and Nefara Riesch, *Employment and Earnings Among LA County Residents Experiencing Homelessness*, California Policy Lab, February 2020.

Wagner, David, “LA’s Expiring COVID Protections Raise Fears of an Eviction Crisis. For Many Renters, the Crisis Is Already Here,” *LAist*, March 30, 2023.

Ward, Jason M., Rick Garvey, and Sarah B. Hunter, *Recent Trends Among the Unsheltered in Three Los Angeles Neighborhoods: An Interim Report on the Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS) Project*, RAND Corporation, RR-A1890-1, 2022. As of October 19, 2022: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1890-1.html

Ward, Jason M., Rick Garvey, and Sarah B. Hunter, *Recent Trends Among the Unsheltered in Three Los Angeles Neighborhoods: An Annual Report from the Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS) Project*, RAND Corporation, RR-A1890-2, 2023a. As of February 29, 2024: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1890-2.html

Ward, Jason M., Rick Garvey, and Sarah B. Hunter, *Recent Trends Among the Unsheltered in Three Los Angeles Neighborhoods: An Annual Report from the Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey (LA LEADS) Project—Appendixes*, RAND Corporation, RR-A1890-3, 2023b. As of March 4, 2024: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1890-2.html

Zahniser, David, “In Hollywood, Homeless Encampments Fuel Neighborhood Frustration with Bass and Raman,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 2024.

Zahniser, David, and Genaro Molina, “Amid Heavy Rain, Bass Takes on a Huge, Long-Standing Homeless Encampment in Venice,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2023.

Zahniser, David, Ruben Vives, and Doug Smith, “Bass, One Year In: Progress on Homelessness but Still a Steep Climb,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 2023.



About This Report

Since fall 2021, we have conducted regular enumerations of the unsheltered population in three Los Angeles neighborhoods: Hollywood, Skid Row, and Venice. These three neighborhoods are well known for having high concentrations of people living unsheltered. Using an updated survey instrument to learn more about the experiences of respondents with the homelessness outreach system, shelter and/or housing services, and street health care services, we continued our enumeration and survey efforts in these three neighborhoods in 2023. This report presents findings from the 2023 Los Angeles Longitudinal Enumeration and Demographic Survey. This update includes comparisons with the previous year's effort and additional information about unsheltered populations' experiences and needs in these neighborhoods.

Community Health and Environmental Policy Program

RAND Social and Economic Well-Being is a division of RAND that seeks to actively improve the health and social and economic well-being of populations and communities throughout the world. This research was conducted in the Community Health and Environmental Policy Program within RAND Social and Economic Well-Being. The program focuses on such topics as infrastructure, science and technology, industrial policy, community design, community health promotion, migration and population dynamics, transportation, energy, and climate and the environment, as well as other policy concerns that are influenced by the natural and built environment, technology, and community organizations and institutions that affect well-being. For more information, email chep@rand.org.

Funding

This research was supported by the Lowy Family, whose generous gift supported the establishment of the RAND Center on Housing and Homelessness. The A-Mark Foundation contributed support for the survey effort.

Acknowledgments

We thank the RAND Survey Research Group field staff, including April Motola-Burgomaster, who dedicated many late nights to executing our study. Homelessness outreach service providers, including the Downtown Women's Center, the Homeless Health Care Los Angeles ReFresh Spot program, The People Concern, and the St. Joseph Center, also assisted in our efforts. The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority allowed us to borrow flashlights and other equipment. Tiffany Hruby provided administrative assistance throughout the project. We thank our RAND colleague Heather Schwartz and Nichole Fiore at Abt Global for providing peer review for this report.

RAND is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

Research Integrity

Our mission to help improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis is enabled through our core values of quality and objectivity and our unwavering commitment to the highest level of integrity and ethical behavior. To help ensure our research and analysis are rigorous, objective, and nonpartisan, we subject our research publications to a robust and exacting quality-assurance process; avoid both the appearance and reality of financial and other conflicts of interest through staff training, project screening, and a policy of mandatory disclosure; and pursue transparency in our research engagements through our commitment to the open publication of our research findings and recommendations, disclosure of the source of funding of published research, and policies to ensure intellectual independence. For more information, visit www.rand.org/about/research-integrity.

RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark.

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This publication and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited; linking directly to its webpage on rand.org is encouraged. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of its research products for commercial purposes. For information on reprint and reuse permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.

For more information on this publication, visit www.rand.org/t/RR-A1890-4.

© 2024 RAND Corporation

www.rand.org