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**2020 GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNTY SHOWS 12.7% RISE IN HOMELESSNESS
DESPITE SUSTAINED INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE REHOUSED**

Homeless services system continues to grow, but economic conditions and legacy of systemic racism push more into homelessness even before effects of COVID-19 are seen

LOS ANGELES, CA—The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority released the results of the 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, which showed 66,433 people in Los Angeles County experiencing homelessness, Friday. This represents a 12.7% rise from last year's point-in-time count of 58,936. The city of Los Angeles saw a 13.6% rise to 41,290.

The report captures a picture of homelessness in Los Angeles County as it was in January 2020, the time of this year's Homeless Count, and before the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic could be felt, measured, or responded to through efforts such as Project Roomkey, rent freezes, and eviction moratoriums.

The count results also come as protests across Los Angeles and the nation force attention to the effects of systemic racism on policing and human services, highlighting the alarming result that black people are four times more represented among people experiencing homelessness than in the County population overall, and renewing attention to the recommendations of the report issued by LAHSA's [Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness](#).

Three years into the 10-year investment from Measure H, LA County's homeless services system has doubled the number of annual housing placements. Improvements in coordination across agencies through the LAHSA based Housing Central Command have increased the speed of placements. And efforts to protect the most vulnerable people from COVID-19 led to the rapid sheltering of 6,010 people since the March Safer at Home order (4,056 through Project Roomkey, 1,708 in Rec and Parks shelters, and 246 in trailers)—and a [goal to move 15,000 of the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness into housing](#).

Most of the people experiencing homelessness that the homeless system helps house stay housed. Eighty-eight percent of the people placed in permanent housing through our system in 2018 have not returned to homelessness. In 2019, the rehousing system helped 22,769 people move into permanent housing. And many more people occupy interim housing this year: 18,395 people experiencing homelessness in L.A. County were sheltered, up from 14,722 the previous year, a 27% increase. The impact of the "A Bridge Home" program was seen in the 39% increase in the city of Los Angeles sheltered population, from 8,944 to 12,438.

Meanwhile, 732 new permanent supportive housing units opened in 2019, and thousands more are expected soon, including 2,360 scheduled to open in the next 12 months of a total construction pipeline of 10,638 homes.

“LAHSA does not like these numbers because we know first-hand that we have done so much to increase the effectiveness of our systems and bring tens of thousands of people inside,” said Heidi Marston, Executive Director of LAHSA. “This year’s results reinforce that our community must address the deep-rooted causes within larger safety net systems that stop people from falling into homelessness.”

“We have doubled the number of housing placements since the implementation of Measure H, we introduced Housing Central Command to speed up placements and, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, we sheltered over 6,000 people in just a few months. Our homeless services system is helping more people than ever, and it’s operating in better alignment with the city, county, and other agencies than ever before. And it’s not enough.”

Steeplly rising inflow estimates indicate that economic precarity has made homelessness more volatile as well. An estimated 82,955 people fell into homelessness during 2019, and an estimated 52,689 people “self-resolved” out of homelessness—in addition to the 22,769 placed into housing through the homeless services system despite the tight housing market. Put another way, an average of 207 people exit homelessness every day—while 227 people become homeless.

This year’s Count revealed that two-thirds of the unsheltered adults experiencing homelessness were homeless for the first time last year, and 59% of them cited economic hardship as the cause.

Public investments continued to be reflected in a growing system that reached more people. Compared to 2015, the system has placed twice as many people into permanent homes (22,769), prevented more than three times as many people from falling into homelessness (4,257), and completed outreach to three times as many people (38,865).

In addition to the enduring impact of systemic racism, an inadequate housing supply, and income inequality drive inflows to homelessness. Homelessness starts rising when median rents in a region exceed 22% of median income and rises even more sharply at 32%; in Los Angeles, the median rent is 46.7% or nearly half of median income. The California Housing Partnership Corporation reports that Los Angeles County would need 509,000 units of affordable housing to meet current demand. Homelessness is also a regional challenge. In Southern California, only San Diego county’s homeless Count decreased, while the other five counties saw increases between 3% and 20%.

City, community, and neighborhood-level data on homelessness will be released with the Homeless Count results on [LAHSA’s website](#). However, the initial results provide a snapshot of homelessness in Los Angeles County as it was January 2020, the time of this year’s Homeless Count. Amid the 12.7% overall countywide rise, notable Count results appeared for several subpopulations:

- The number of seniors 62 and over rose 20%, an alarming increase receiving sharp focus during the pandemic. 1,953 seniors have been sheltered in Project Roomkey over the past few months, meaning that 37% of seniors 62 and over are now sheltered.
- We saw a 19% increase in Transition-Aged Youth (18-24) experiencing homelessness. 7% of the people experiencing homelessness are youth.
- As was the case last year, the number of veterans remained relatively steady (0.6% increase), demonstrating that deploying more resources to house people gets results. Veterans have been the focus of the most federal, state and local investment over the past decade.

- Improvements in the Count methodology resulted in new baselines for family homelessness and chronic homelessness. A new, more accurate baseline for unsheltered families reflects a doubling of the number of surveys to those families. Better survey methods revealed that chronic homelessness is more widespread than previously understood.
- However, the rise in sheltered family members by 39% reflects the increased financial pressures on low-income families.
- [Restructuring survey questions](#) gave us new specificity on substance use while confirming previous estimates of mental health conditions. 14,284 unsheltered people (32%) report substance use, roughly double the prevalence under the previous methodology (this does not reflect population growth, only data refinement). 26% of unsheltered, or 11,711 people, report long-term mental health conditions.

Homelessness remains a problem of local system failures, debunking long-held myths. 80% of unsheltered Angelenos have lived here for more than five years. Two-thirds of unsheltered Angelenos became homeless in Los Angeles County.

“Our plan going forward requires everyone to have their hands in and their funds in,” said Marston. “Our new strategic plan and command structure lets us see what housing is available in real-time. We’ll need support from the state, county, and city to fund our Homeless COVID-19 recovery plan while we prevent a flood of post-moratorium evictions.”

“We can settle for nothing less than ending homelessness for those who experience it and stopping it before it begins for anyone else. That requires us to increase our housing supply. It requires us to transform our foster care, health care, criminal justice, and other systems to stop them from pushing people into homelessness. And it required us to dismantle the legacy of racism that still shapes our region’s vast inequalities of income, wealth, and opportunity.”

Thousands of volunteers participated in the January 2020 point-in-time census of the tens of thousands of homeless youth and families, veterans of the armed forces, and men and women who are our neighbors. The information gleaned from the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is used by policymakers, advocates, and service providers to understand better and implement solutions to address homelessness.

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LAHSA is a joint powers authority of the city and county of Los Angeles, created in 1993 to address the problem of homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAHSA is the lead agency in the HUD-funded Los Angeles Continuum of Care, and coordinates and manages over \$300 million annually in federal, state, county, and city funds for programs providing shelter, housing, and services to people experiencing homelessness.