

# Highland Park + Eagle Rock's Unsheltered Population Is Unchanged from 2020

Louis Abramson, PhD, and Brian Kohan

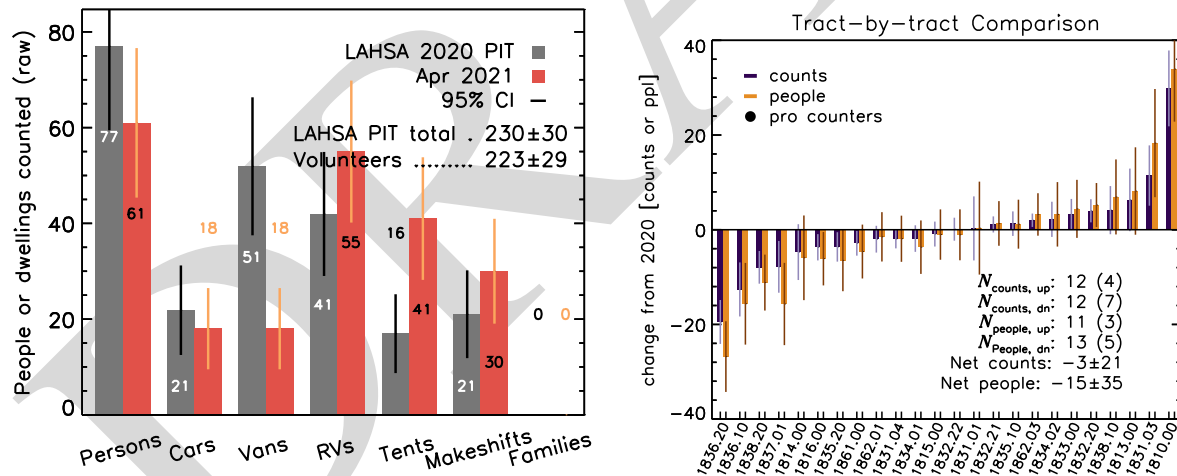
May 2, 2021 -- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

**Summary:** Volunteers surveying Highland Park and Eagle Rock (HPER) on 29 April 2021 found a non-significant change in adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness compared to the 2020 LAHSA Count:  $-5\% \pm 16\%$  (90% CI). Declines of 20% and 65% in the number of identified rough sleepers and vans, respectively, were offset by an 87% increase in tents and makeshift dwellings (Figure 1). This near-doubling of the most visually salient part of unsheltered living would support subjective impressions that the state of homelessness worsened despite the total population remaining statistically unchanged. Data from the Co-ordinated Entry System will reveal how changes in sheltered homelessness affected HPER's total unhoused population.

**Table 1:** Unsheltered Data for Eagle Rock/Highland Park

	Persons	Car	Van	RV	Tent	Makeshift	2021 Total	2020 Total	% change*
Counts	61	18	18	55	41	30	223	226	1%
Inhabitants	61 (16)	29 (10)	32 (11)	79 (15)	60 (14)	51 (13)	310 (53)	326	-5% (16%)
Category share	20% (5%)	9% (3%)	10% (3%)	25% (5%)	19% (4%)	16% (4%)	-	-	-

\*Neither the raw counts nor inferred population change is statistically significant (parentheses denote 90% uncertainties). No minors or families were sighted; two transition aged youth tallied as "Persons."



**Figure 1:** Left: total tallies of unsheltered persons + dwellings in Eagle Rock and Highland Park from the 2020 and 2021 PIT counts (grey/rust). Persons and vans fell while RVs, tents, and makeshift structures rose. Overall, roughly the same number of people + dwellings were identified as in 2020. Right: tract-level results (see also Figure 2, Table 2). Three tracts added significantly more unsheltered people, 5 lost them (parentheses denote significant changes). Tract 1836.20 at York/Figueroa saw the largest drop ( $-28$  people); 1810.00 along US 134 saw the largest gain ( $+34$ ).

**Context:** To compensate for the [cancellation](#) of the annual LAHSA Count, volunteers in Highland Park and Eagle Rock<sup>1</sup> conducted a grassroots vehicle-based enumeration of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in those communities' 24 census tracts on April 29, 2021 (Figure 2, top). Surveying ran from 7:00

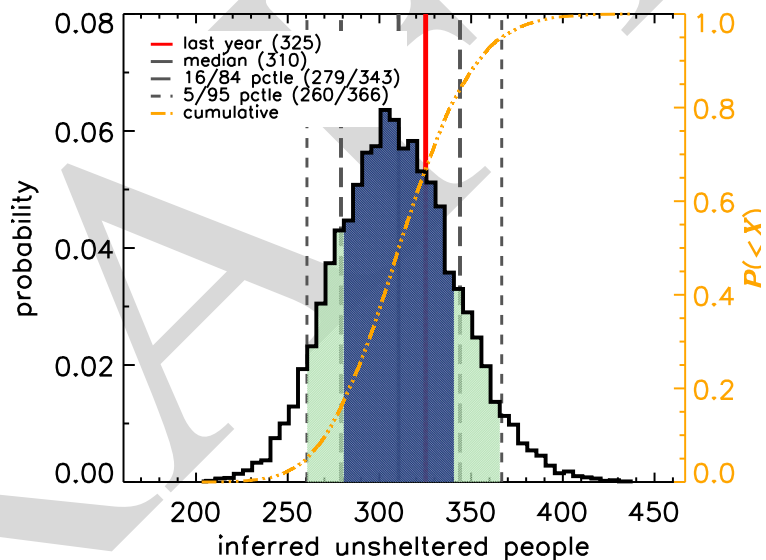
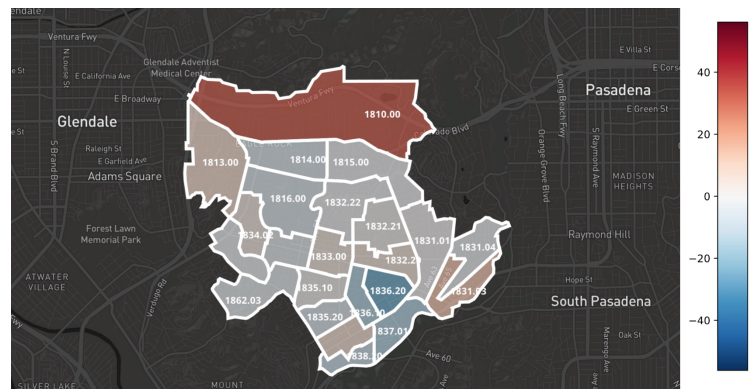
<sup>1</sup>ERN, HHPNC

PM to 11:00 PM.

**Results:** The population estimates in Tables 1 and 2 reflect all identified persons, cars, vans, RVs, tents, and makeshift structures with each dwelling weighted by its average occupancy. The weights were set as the SPA4/CD14 weights adopted in the last official LAHSA Community Summaries. Results are unchanged if the SPA4-wide occupancies are used instead, or if the tent weight is updated based on a survey performed by SELAH.<sup>2</sup>

Using Monte Carlo methods, HPER's unsheltered population is inferred to be 310 people—16 people lower than 2020's value. However, counting and weighting uncertainties lead to a 90% confidence interval of  $\pm 53$  people (Figure 2, bottom). The inferred 5% decrease is therefore consistent with HPER's true unsheltered population remaining the same as it was last year.

Each of the 24 total tracts were counted once, with daytime surveys of parkland areas in two tracts (Table 2). Additionally, only the “B” splits were counted in two additional tracts to conform the survey to HPER borders as defined by LAHSA and the Statistical Atlas. Splits 1851.00c and 1994.00a—which some sources affiliate with “Highland Park”—were also not counted. The latter of contained 32 unsheltered people in 2020. The count uncertainty is  $\pm 13\%$  (95% CI), with the remainder of the  $\pm 16\%$  total population margin of error due to ranges in dwelling occupancies.



**Figure 2:** Top: count area with census tracts colored by changes in unsheltered population from 2020 (red+, blue−). Tracts 1836.20 (−28 people) and 1810.00 (+34) saw the largest swings. Bottom: the probability distribution for HPER's total unsheltered population. The median is 5% below 2020's value, but this change is not statistically significant. Explore more at [pit.demoply.org](http://pit.demoply.org).

**Comments:** The above results reflect a  $\sim 20\%$  drop in the number of adult individuals seen on the street—mirroring trends in Hollywood and Mid City West—combined with a 65% drop in identified van dwellings, and offset by an 87% increase in tents and makeshift structures. Government initiatives to stop evictions and move people off the streets may be responsible. If CD14's 11% share of LA County's unsheltered seniors is an indication, 200 CD14 residents might have been in any of Project Roomkey's 1826 active rooms

<sup>2</sup>Outreach teams assessed that XX people occupied YYY surveyed tents the HPER communities, yielding an estimated  $XX \pm YY$  people per tent vs. LAHSA's 2020 value of  $1.48 \pm 0.11$ .

on the night of the count, including those in **known shelters**.<sup>3</sup> **New Safe Parking responsible for the van decline? But it's not seen in cars.** Coordinated Entry System data will show if the above scenarios are true.

While the number of people on the street may be unchanged, their quality of life has worsened. COVID has restricted or eliminated access to restaurant bathrooms, libraries (*The Source*), DPSS (EBT, Medi-Cal), DMV (IDs), and DMH facilities. Physical limits on client access at hospitals has also kept caseworkers from managing successful discharges. These harms are reflected by a 33% increase in **over-dose deaths** and made more visible by **suspended** tent folding and sanitation practices as tents increased. Of course, with no drop observed with them in place, a substantial rise in unsheltered homelessness is likely **once the eviction moratoria lapse**.

The data support the effectiveness of programs aimed at curbing a rise in street homelessness. Yet, they do *not* suggest that the state of homelessness has improved. In the fight to rebuild lives as we build homes, that fact must remain paramount.

**Table 2:** Eagle Rock/Highland Park Tract-level Unsheltered Data

Tract	Counter	Passes	Median Est.	90% CI
1810.00 <sup>a</sup>	V	1	59	44–74
1813.00	V	1	33	22–45
1814.00	V	1	21	10–31
1815.00	V	1	4	0–11
1816.00 <sup>a</sup>	V	1	2	0–9
1831.01	V	1	31	19–43
1831.03	V	1	40	25–58
1831.04	V	1	1	0–8
1832.20	V	1	6	0–13
1832.21	V	1	3	0–10
1832.22	V	1	4	0–11
1833.00	V	1	11	1–19
1834.01	V	1	4	0–11
1834.02	V	1	12	3–22
1835.10	V	1	6	0–13
1835.20	V	1	5	0–13
1836.10	V	1	15	5–24
1836.20	V	1	1	0–8
1837.01	V	1	15	6–23
1838.10	V	1	22	11–32
1838.20	V	1	3	0–10
1861.00 <sup>b</sup>	V	1	3	0–10
1862.01	V	1	4	0–11
1862.03 <sup>b</sup>	V	1	3	0–10
<b>All</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>250–366</b>

<sup>a</sup> Rec center surveyed on foot circa 3:00 PM; <sup>b</sup> “Split B” only.

<sup>3</sup>Due to the presence of Skid Row, CD14-level trends may not reflect those in HPER.