

# Unsheltered Homelessness in Hollywood Is Down from January 2020 Levels

Louis Abramson, PhD, and Brian Kohan for the *Hollywood 4WRD Coalition*

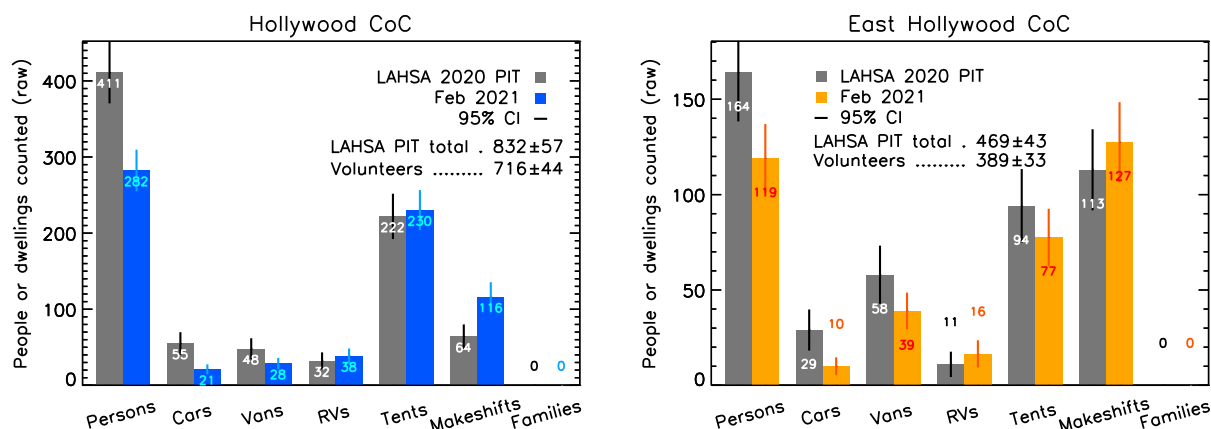
March 17, 2021 -- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

**Summary:** Volunteers surveying Hollywood and East Hollywood on February 25, 2021, found 12% fewer people experiencing unsheltered homelessness compared to the 2020 LAHSA Count. A 30% drop in individuals on the street—as opposed to dwellings—drives this change (Figure 1) even as tents doubled in over 1/4 of census tracts. This phenomenon could support subjective impressions that the state of homelessness has worsened despite a drop in raw numbers. Given COVID-related contractions in health, hygiene, and social services, such perceptions may in fact be accurate. Data from the Coordinated Entry System data will reveal if homelessness has declined generally, or if government initiatives have reduced only Greater Hollywood’s share of it.

**Table 1:** Greater Hollywood 2021 Unsheltered Counts and Population Estimates

	Persons	Cars	Vans	RVs	Tents	Makeshifts	2021 Total	2020 Total	% change
<b>Hollywood</b>									
Counts	282	21	28	38	230	116	<b>716</b>	<b>831</b>	–14%
Inhabitants	282 (28)	32 (11)	51 (14)	56 (14)	339 (29)	196 (24)	<b>956 (94)</b>	<b>1058</b>	–10% (9%)
Population share	29% (3%)	3% (1%)	5% (1%)	5% (1%)	35% (3%)	20% (3%)	–	–	–
<b>East Hollywood</b>									
Counts	118	10	39	16	77	127	<b>389</b>	<b>469</b>	–17%
Inhabitants	118 (19)	15 (8)	70 (15)	24 (9)	115 (19)	216 (23)	<b>557 (83)</b>	<b>656</b>	–15% (12%)
Population share	21% (3%)	3% (1%)	13% (3%)	4% (2%)	20% (3%)	39% (4%)	–	–	–

Parentheses denote 90% uncertainties. Uncertainties larger than estimates mean that only upper limits are available.



**Figure 1:** Raw tallies of unsheltered persons and dwellings in Hollywood and East Hollywood (left/right) from the 2020 and 2021 PIT counts (grey/colors). Persons, cars, and vans fell in both communities while RVs and tents stayed statistically flat. Makeshift structures are the only category to show a potential common increase. Overall, nearly 200 fewer people and dwellings were spotted compared to 2020. “Persons” are TAY+Adults.

**Context:** To compensate for the [cancellation](#) of the 2021 LAHSA Count, nonprofit and volunteer organizations in Hollywood<sup>1</sup> conducted a grassroots enumeration of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

<sup>1</sup> *The Center at Blessed Sacrament, The Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council, Covenant House, Hang Out Do Good, Hollywood 4WRD, My Friend’s Place, and resident organizers.*

in all census tracts in Hollywood and East Hollywood on February 25, 2021 (Figure 2).

**Results:** The population estimates in Table 1 reflect all people, cars, vans, RVs, tents, and makeshift dwellings seen that night with each dwelling weighted by its average occupancy. We use the same SPA4/CD13 weights as the last official LAHSA Community Summaries. Using weights based on a February tent survey or the last SPA4-wide values has no significant effect. All suggest at least an 89% chance of a decline compared to 2020.

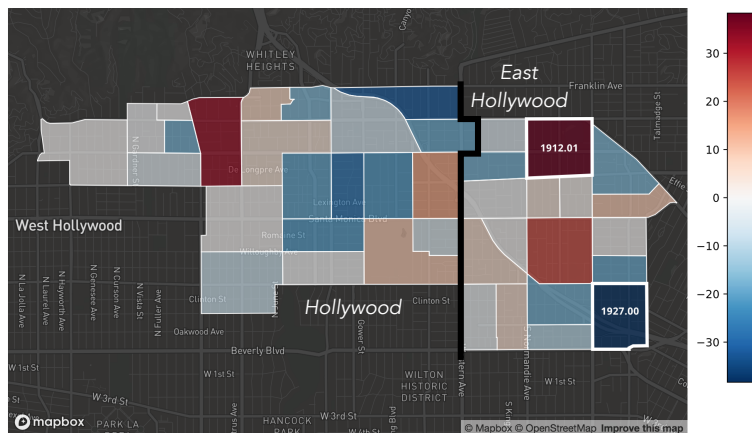
To erase the decline we infer, tents would have to shelter ~45% more people on average now compared to last year. At least since 2018, such a large change has never been seen. The aforementioned tent survey showed that tent occupancies are similar to 2020, making the shift even more unlikely.<sup>2</sup>

Other data suggest that our 2021 enumeration is accurate: (1) 38 duplicate tract measurements show that counting errors are consistent with random mistakes, which the analysis accounts for; (2) *The Hollywood Partnership* found the same result for a common tract on 19 Feb.; (3) trends in Hollywood and East Hollywood agree despite being counted by different teams; (4) a SELAH recount of a tract in East Hollywood two days later agrees with our data. Finally, if cars and vans in safe parking spots were missed, the chance of a decline from 2020 is still 89%.

**Comments:** The drop we find mainly reflects ~30% fewer adults seen on the street. This fact has caused the total number of unsheltered people to shrink even as tents more than doubled in 28% of tracts. Government initiatives to stop evictions and move people indoors and may be responsible. If CD13's 6.5% share of LA County's unsheltered seniors is an indication, 100 Greater Hollywood residents might have been in any of Project Roomkey's 1608 active rooms on the night of the count—about half the inferred change. The new Riverside *A Bridge Home* and 120 PATH supportive housing units may also have contributed. Coordinated Entry System data will show if the above scenarios are true.

If there are fewer people on the street, however, their quality of life is worse. 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 25% increase in overdose deaths and made more visible by suspended tent folding and sanitation practices as tents increased in many places. Of course, a decline of just 12% means substantial coming challenges as eviction moratoriums lapse.

If our data support the effectiveness of programs aimed at reducing street homelessness, they do *not* suggest that the state of homelessness has improved. In the fight to rebuild lives—as well as build homes—that fact must remain paramount.



**Figure 2:** The count area with census tracts colored by changes in unsheltered population from 2020 (red+, blue–). Hollywood spans Crescent Heights/Franklin to Western/Melrose. East Hollywood spans Hollywood/Western to Hoover/Beverly and saw the largest changes: tract 1912.01 rose by 40 people and 1927.00 fell by over 120 people.

<sup>2</sup>SELAH outreach teams surveyed 47 tents in Hollywood on 28 Feb., finding an average of  $1.50 \pm 0.22$  people per tent vs. LAHSA's 2020 value of  $1.48 \pm 0.11$ .