

Unsheltered Homelessness in Hollywood Is Down from January 2020 Levels

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

March 16, 2021 -- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Summary: Volunteers surveyed all of Hollywood and East Hollywood on February 25, 2021, finding the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to have fallen by 10% and 15%, respectively, 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 28% of census tracts. This phenomenon could support subjective impressions that the state of homelessness has worsened despite a drop in raw numbers. Indeed, COVID-related contractions in health, hygiene, and social services, mean that such perceptions may also be accurate. Data from the Coordinated Entry System data will reveal if homelessness has declined generally, or if government initiatives have reduced 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
Hollywood									
Counts	284	21	30	38	230	116	718	831	–14%
Inhabitants	284 (28)	32 (11)	54 (14)	56 (14)	339 (29)	195 (24)	957 (94)	1058	–10% (9%)
Population share	29% (3%)	3% (1%)	6% (1%)	6% (1%)	35% (3%)	20% (3%)	–	–	–
East Hollywood									
Counts	118	10	39	16	77	127	389	469	–17%
Inhabitants	118 (19)	15 (8)	70 (15)	24 (9)	115 (19)	216 (23)	557 (83)	656	–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.

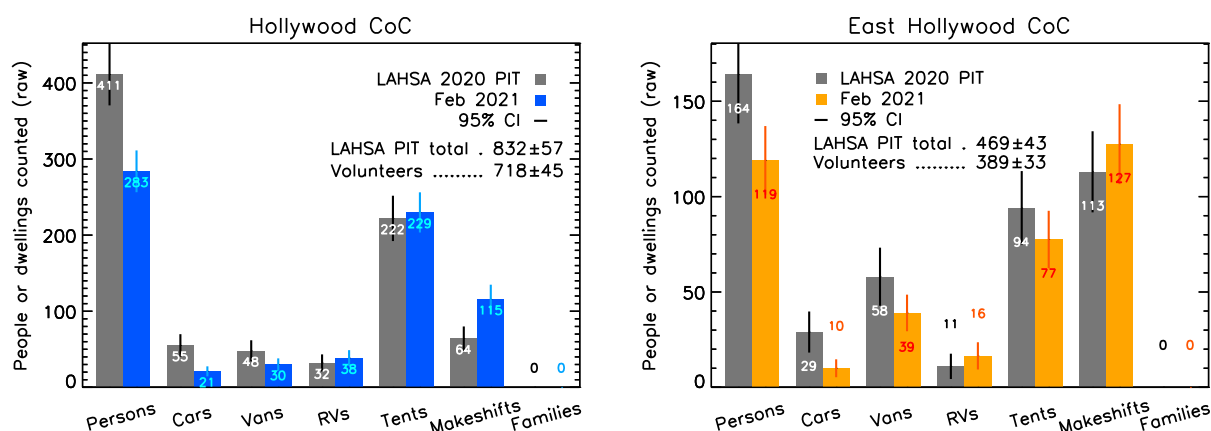


Figure 1: Raw tallies of unsheltered persons and dwellings in Hollywood and East Hollywood (left/right) from the 2020 and 2021 PIT counts (grey/colors). Persons, cars, and vans fell in both communities while RVs and tents stayed statistically flat. Makeshift structures are the only category to show a potential common increase. Overall, we identified 194 fewer people and dwellings compared to 2020, with similar 15% decreases assessed by almost entirely independent teams in both communities. “Persons” are TAY+Adults.

Context: To compensate for the [cancellation](#) of the 2021 LAHSA Count, nonprofit and volunteer organizations in Hollywood¹ conducted a grassroots enumeration of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

¹ *The Center at Blessed Sacrament, The Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council, Covenant House, Hang Out Do Good,*

in all census tracts in Hollywood and East Hollywood on Feb. 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. Our baseline result uses the same SPA4/CD13 weights as the last official LAHSA Community Summaries. Changing weights based on a tent survey or using the last SPA4-wide values has no significant effect. All suggest at least an 89% chance of a decline compared to 2020.

Tents would have to shelter ~45% more people on average now to erase the decline we infer. At least since 2018, such a large change has never been seen. The aforementioned tent survey—which showed that tent occupancies are similar to 2020—makes it even more unlikely.²

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, assuming 80 people may have been at safe parking sites, the chance of a decline from 2020 is still 88%.

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 may have occupied Project Roomkey's 1608 active rooms on the night of the count—enough to account for 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, the ~10% decline we infer does not bode well for the period after the eviction moratoriums end.

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.

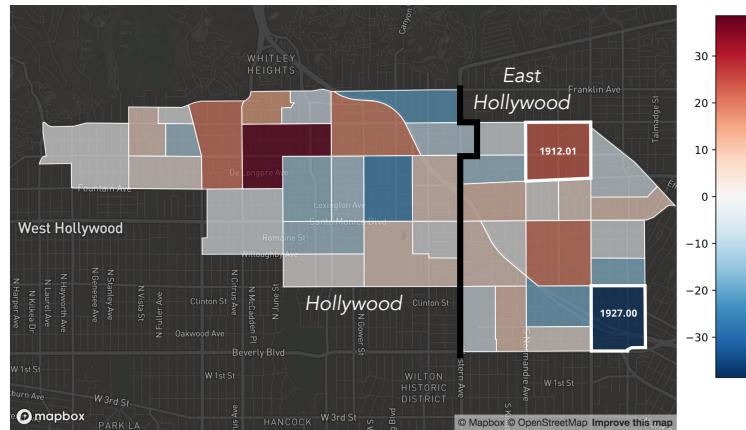


Figure 2: The count area with census tracts colored by changes in unsheltered population from 2020 (red+, blue–). Hollywood spans Crescent Heights/Franklin to Western/Melrose. East Hollywood spans Hollywood/Western to Hoover/Beverly and saw the largest changes: tract 1912.01 rose by 40 people and 1927.00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

Hollywood 4WRD, *My Friend's Place*, and resident organizers.

²SELAH outreach teams surveyed 47 tents in Hollywood on 28 Feb., finding an average of 1.50 ± 0.22 people per tent vs. LAHSA's 2020 value of 1.48 ± 0.11 .