

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

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Summary: Volunteers surveying Highland Park and Eagle Rock (HPER) on 29 April 2021 identified a total of 310 ± 53 adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness—a non-significant change of $-5\% \pm 16\%$ compared to the 2020 LAHSA Count (90% CI). Declines of 20% and 65%, respectively, in the number of rough sleepers and vans 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 Coordinated 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 change in raw counts nor inferred population is statistically significant (parentheses denote 90% uncertainties). No minors or families were sighted; two transition aged youth are tallied as “Persons,” above.

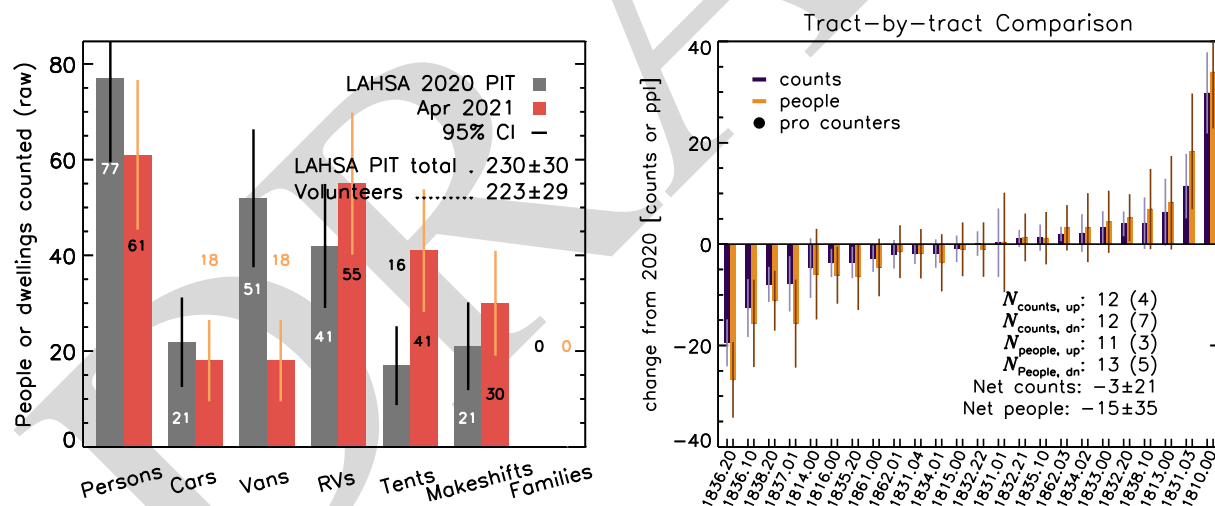


Figure 1: Left: total tallies of unsheltered persons + dwellings in Eagle Rock and Highland Park from the 2020 and 2021 PIT counts (grey/red). Persons and vans fell while RVs, tents, and makeshift structures rose. Overall, roughly the same number of people + dwellings were identified as in 2020. Right: 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 (-27 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 Rock¹ conducted a grassroots vehicle-based enumeration of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in those communities' 24 census tracts on April 29, 2021 (Figure 2, top).

¹ERN, HHPNC, who else?

Surveying ran from 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM.

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

Using Monte Carlo methods, we infer HPER’s total unsheltered population to be 310 people—16 people lower than 2020’s value. However, counting and weighting uncertainties lead to a 90% confidence interval of ± 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.

At the community level, Highland Park’s 17 tracts saw a 23% drop (183 ± 41 vs. 220 people last year; 92% chance of decline); Eagle Rock’s 7 tracts saw a 21% rise (127 ± 28 vs. 105; 92% chance of increase). The latter is attributable to tract 1810.00, wherein new encampments have arisen along US 134. If that tract is excluded, Eagle Rock’s unsheltered population remained statistically stable (68 ± 22 people vs. 79 in 2020).

Each of the 24 total tracts were counted once, with parkland areas in two tracts surveyed on foot earlier in the day (Table 2). In two additional tracts, only the “b” splits were counted to conform the survey to HPER borders as defined by LAHSA and the Statistical Atlas. Splits 1851.00c and 1994.00a—which LAHSA may affiliate with “Highland Park” and which contained 37 unsheltered people in 2020—were also not counted. The count uncertainty is $\pm 13\%$ (95% CI), with the remainder of the $\pm 17\%$ total population margin of error due to ranges in dwelling occupancies.

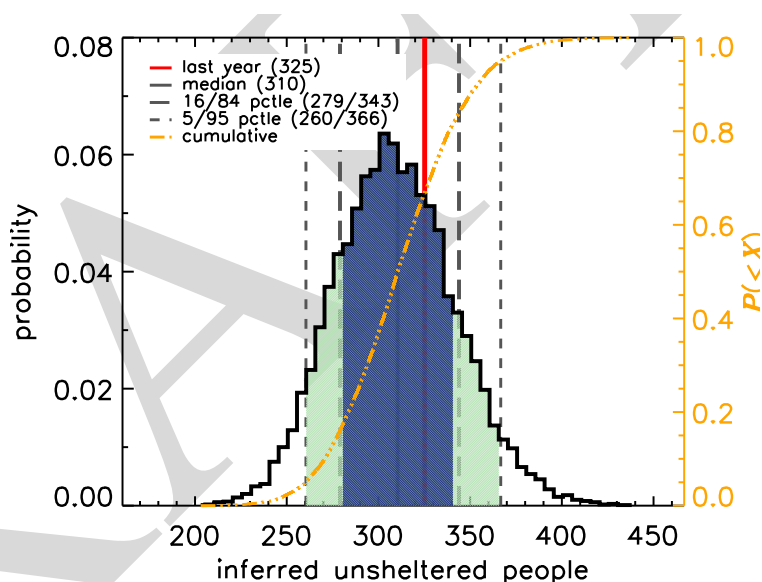
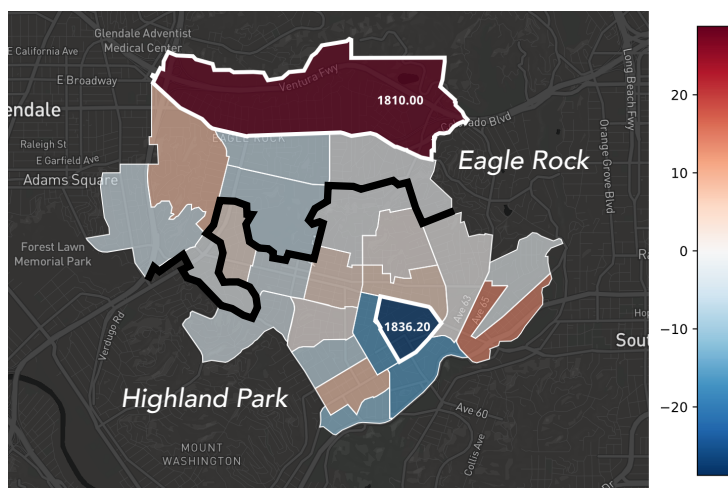


Figure 2: Top: count area with census tracts colored by changes in unsheltered population from 2020 (red+, blue–). Tracts 1836.20 (–28 people) and 1810.00 (+34) saw the largest swings. Bottom: the probability distribution for HPER’s total unsheltered population. The median is 5% below 2020’s value, but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

²Outreach teams found 23 people occupying 24 tents in Eagle Rock, yielding an estimated 0.96 ± 0.20 people per tent vs. LAHSA’s 2020 value of 1.48 ± 0.11 . Updating the tent weight accordingly implies a total HPER unsheltered population of 296 ± 49 people. The implied 2021 occupancy rises to 1.35 ± 0.20 if 7 tents found to be used for storage are excluded—consistent with LAHSA’s value, which neglects unoccupied tents.

Comments: The above results reflect a **20% drop in adult individuals** seen on the street—mirroring trends in [Hollywood](#) and Mid City West—a **65% drop in identified van dwellings**, and an **87% increase in tents and makeshift structures**. While the decline in vans is too large to reflect the 10–20 Safe Parking spots in neighboring Glassell Park, government initiatives to stop evictions and move people off the street may have done enough additional work to hold the total population stable. 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 [1,826 active rooms](#) on the night of the count.³ **Other known shelters?** 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 [overdose deaths](#) and made more visible by [suspended](#) tent folding and sanitation practices as tents increased. Of course, with no significant decline 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: Tract-level Unsheltered Populations

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

^a Rec center surveyed on foot circa 3:00 PM; ^b Split “b” only.

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