

Unsheltered Homelessness in Hollywood Is Down from January 2020 Levels

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March 16, 2021 -- NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Summary: February 25, 2021 censuses of Hollywood and East Hollywood suggest that unsheltered homelessness has fallen in those communities by 10% and 15%, respectively, compared to the 2020 LAHSA Count. A 30% drop in people seen on the street drives this change (Figure 1). At the same time, however, tents doubled in 28% of US Census tracts. This phenomenon might drive subjective impressions that the state of homelessness has worsened. Given COVID-related contractions in health, hygiene, and social services, those perceptions are likely to be accurate despite a drop in raw numbers. 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.

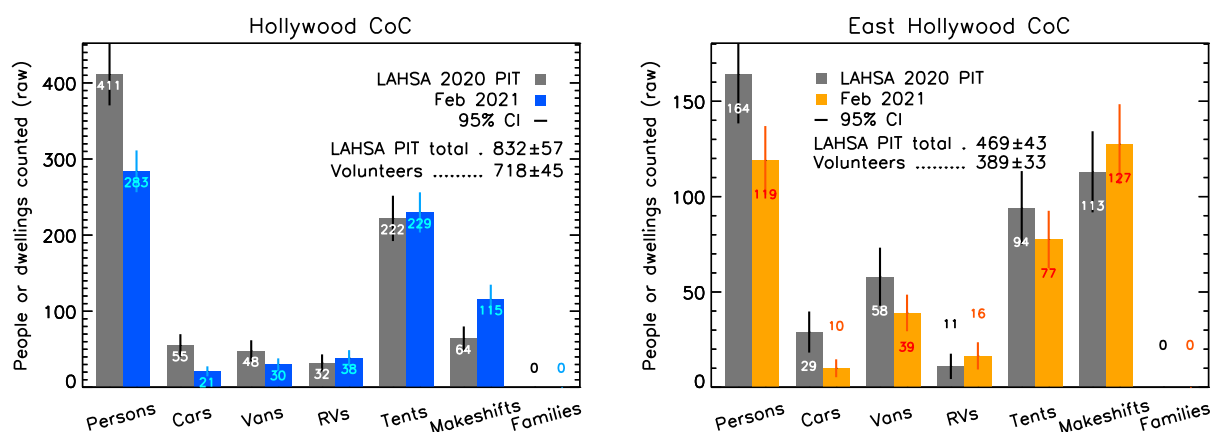


Figure 1: Raw tallies of unsheltered persons and dwellings in Hollywood and East Hollywood (left/right) from the 2020 and 2021 PIT counts (grey/colors). Persons, cars, and vans fell in both communities while RVs and tents stayed statistically flat. Makeshift structures are the only category to show a potential common increase. Overall, we identified 208 fewer people and dwellings compared to 2020, with similar 16% decreases assessed by almost entirely independent teams in both communities. “Persons” are TAY+Adults.

Table 1: Greater Hollywood 2021 PIT Unsheltered Data and Population Estimates

	Adult	TAY	Car	Van	RV	Tent	Makeshift	2021 Total	2020 Total	Difference
Hollywood										
Counts	282	2	21	30	38	230	116	718	831	–14%
Inhabitants	282 (28)	2 (3)	32 (11)	54 (14)	56 (14)	339 (29)	195 (24)	957 (94)	1058	–10% (9%)
Category share	29% (3%)	0% (0%)	3% (1%)	6% (1%)	6% (1%)	35% (3%)	20% (3%)	–	–	–
East Hollywood										
Counts	114	4	10	39	16	77	127	389	469	–17%
Inhabitants	114 (19)	4 (4)	15 (8)	70 (15)	24 (9)	115 (19)	216 (23)	557 (83)	656	–15% (12%)
Category share	20% (3%)	1% (1%)	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. No unaccompanied minors or families were observed.

Context: Government, nonprofit, and volunteer organizations in Hollywood¹ conducted a census of people

¹ 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.

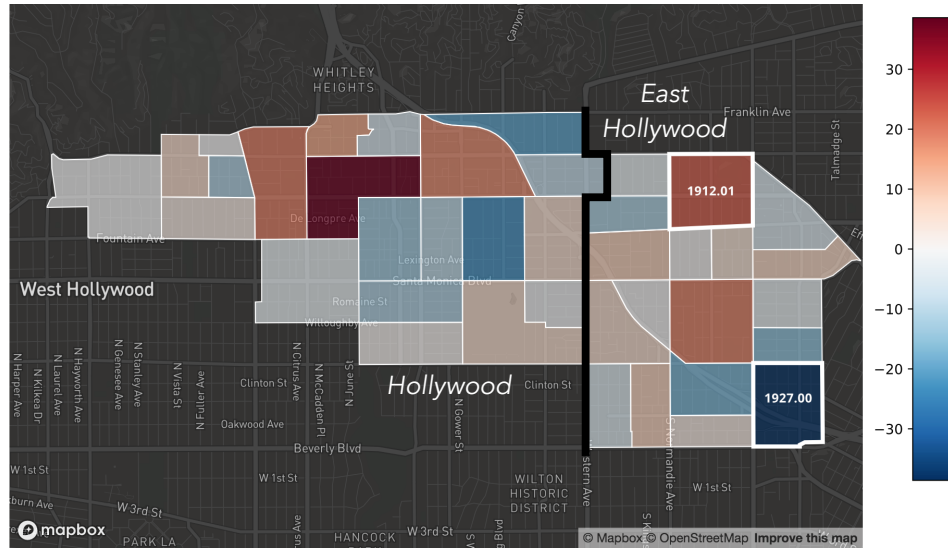


Figure 2: The Greater Hollywood PIT survey area with census tracts colored by inferred changes in total unsheltered population from 2020 (red+, blue–). Hollywood (21 tracts) spans Crescent Heights/Franklin to Western/Melrose; East Hollywood (18 tracts) spans Hollywood/Western to Hoover/Beverly. East Hollywood saw to the largest tract-level changes, with 1912.01 (NE box, volunteer-tallied) rising by 40 people and 1927.00 (SE box, pro-tallied) falling by over 120 people. Subsequent cross-checks support both tracts’ PIT counts.

experiencing unsheltered homelessness on 25 Feb. to compensate for the [cancellation](#) of the official 2021 Count. All 40 census tracts in the LAHSA-defined Hollywood and East Hollywood communities were surveyed, mainly between 7:00 and 10:00 PM (Figure 2).

Each volunteer team counted two tracts. To increase the accuracy of our count, each tract was counted by at least two teams. Seven tracts saw significant increases; 14 saw declines. The tracts with the largest increase (1912.01; Barnsdall Park) and decrease (1927.00; US 101) are both in East Hollywood.

Results and uncertainties: Table 1’s population estimates come from our count data with tallies for cars, vans, RVs, tents, and makeshift dwellings weighted by their average number of occupants. Our baseline result uses the same [SPA4/CD13 weights](#) as the last official [Community Summaries](#). Changing the weights based on a survey of tent-dwellers or using the last [SPA4-wide](#) values has no significant effect: all suggest at least an 89% chance of a decline compared to 2020.

The weights are still uncertainties, but the size of the drop in unweighted counts means that, to erase the trend we find, tents and makeshifts must now shelter 2.1 and 2.5 people on average compared to 1.5 and 1.7 people last year. At least since 2018, such a large change has never been seen, and the aforementioned tent survey—which showed a value consistent with 2020’s—makes it more unlikely.²

Other cross-checks suggest that our 2021 PIT enumeration is accurate:

1. Our 38 duplicate tract measurements suggest counting uncertainties are consistent with random errors, which the analysis accounts for.
2. A census by [The Hollywood Partnership](#) from 19 Feb. agrees with our data in a common tract.
3. Trends are common to Hollywood and East Hollywood despite being counted by different teams.

²SELAH outreach teams surveyed 47 tents in Hollywood on 28 Feb., finding an average of 1.50 ± 0.22 people per tent. This value is consistent with the LAHSA 2020 weight of 1.48 ± 0.11 .

4. A recount of one tract in East Hollywood by SELAH on 27 Feb. agrees with our data.

Finally, if the 80 car and van dwellers that might have been at safe parking sites are added to our estimate, the chance of a decline from 2020 is still 88%. All of the above suggests that our results are reliable.

Comments: The drop we find mainly reflects ~30% fewer individuals seen on the street. Government initiatives to move people indoors and stop evictions may be responsible. Indeed, if CD13's 6.5% share of LA County's unsheltered seniors is an indication, perhaps 100 Greater Hollywood residents occupied Project Roomkey's 1608 active rooms on the night of our 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 reveal if those scenarios are true.

If there are fewer people on the street today, though, their quality of life is worse. COVID has restricted or eliminated access to restaurant and park bathrooms, libraries (and *The Source* service days), DPSS (EBT, Medi-Cal), DMV (ID replacement), and DMH facilities. Physical limits on client access at hospitals and clinics has also kept caseworkers from managing successful discharges. These harms are reflected by a 25% increase in overdose deaths and made more visible by a doubling of tents in 28% of tracts as tent folding laws and sanitation programs were suspended. Of course, the ~10% decline we measure does not necessarily bode well for the period after the eviction moratoriums end.

So, while our census may support the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce 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.