

Data Analytics Final Project:  
Homeless Challenges and Crime Trends in Los Angeles

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## **I. Homelessness in Los Angeles Dilemma:**

The homeless plight in Los Angeles is the most challenging concern today next to the pandemic of 2020. The current crime data at Olympic division of the Los Angeles Police Department will be analyzed using the location of crimes in relation to the homelessness in the same vicinity. Public safety concerns for increased crimes by the homeless, as well victimization of homeless, have inundated and vilified policing efforts. The community is concerned with the unhealthy conditions of their streets and sidewalks. Businesses, religious houses, schools, and neighbors have been negatively affected with the build-up of homeless encampments and its residual problems. This project will provide data-driven information on the criminal impact of the homeless populations rise in the city of Los Angeles.

Moreover, the data will highlight the age, race, background, and other significant concerns that these homeless are suffering from. This information can better prepare social workers, policing entities, lawmakers, and communities, in furtherance of finding remedies to this epidemic, and possibly find working solutions in a collaborative effort for the benefit of public safety and humanity.

### **Community Impact:**

Governor Gavin Newsom recently spoke about the state's massive crisis with the homeless, and its effect on the community, and possible solutions. "People shouldn't be living out in the streets and sidewalks ... and the notion that until everything is perfect, we can't do anything [about encampments], I completely reject. I also think it lacks compassion, because so many people's lives have been changed, despite their obstinance in opposition to these things; it forces a different pathway in

decision making” (Oreskes). The first step in finding collaborative solutions is to identify and understand the people that are homeless in our communities, their respective age groups and conditions that have resulted in their homeless state, as well as their inability to transition to housing.

**HOMELESS POPULATION COUNTS & AGE GROUP IN CITY AND COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES:** (LA ALMANAC 2021). Figure 1

Year	City of Los Angeles			All Los Angeles County		
	Total	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total	Unsheltered	Sheltered
2020	41,290	28,852	12,438	66,436	48,041	18,395
2019	36,300	27,221	8,944	58,936	42,471	13,786
2018	31,285	22,887	8,398	52,765	39,396	13,369
2017	34,189	25,237	8,952	57,794	42,828	14,966
2015	25,686	17,687	7,999	44,359	31,018	13,341

The population of homeless people in the city of Los Angeles has magnified in the last few years. As exemplified in figure 1, the city counted over 25,680 individuals who were defined as homeless in 2015. The figure also shows the yearly growth upward to over 41,200 in 2020. Within five years, there has been a 62% increase in homeless individuals in the city of Los Angeles. In comparison, the city of Los Angeles accounts to 62% of the Counties total homeless population of 66,436 (LA Almanac, 2021; See Figure 1).

**Racial Ethnicity:** Over 70% of homeless in Los Angeles consists of Blacks (37.8%) and Hispanic (32.5%). Whites represent the thirds largest group with 24.9% (LA Almanac, 2021; see Appendix 1). “Government created the differences we see in housing...touching on the long history of housing discrimination that drove segregation, and redlining, the practice of refusing to issue or insure mortgages in African American communities. A lot of people are on the cliff edge of homelessness every day, and if you are poor and a person of color, you’re always with your feet half off that block” (Lopez, 2020).

**Age Group of Homeless** (LA ALMANAC, 2021). Figure 2

Age Group/ Percentage	City of Los Angeles			All of Los Angeles County*		
	2020	2019	2018	2020	2019	2018
Under 18	4,923 (11.9%)	3,305 (9.1%)	3,022 (9.7%)	7,491 (11.8%)	5,061 (9.0%)	4,731 (9.5%)
18 - 24	2,910 (7.0%)	2,272 (6.3%)	2,052 (6.6%)	4,181 (6.6%)	3,527 (6.3%)	2,955 (5.9%)
25 - 54	23,479 (56.9%)	21,788 (60.1%)	18,446 (59.0%)	37,138 (58.3%)	24,063 (42.8%)	29,571 (59.2%)
55 - 61	5,898 (14.3%)	5,654 (15.6%)	4,755 (15.2%)	8,606 (13.5%)	8,375 (14.9%)	7,871 (15.8%)
62 and Over	4,080 (9.9%)	3,146 (8.7%)	3,010 (9.6%)	6,290 (9.9%)	5,231 (9.3%)	4,827 (9.7%)

The data represented in figure 2 shows that just under 57% of homeless in 2020 were persons within the age group of 25-54. This percentage is the highest of all age

categories. This compounds to the problem, as this age group represents those persons involved in society's workforce. Instead, this group has separated from the workforce and has become dependent on private and governmental resources.

### **Senior Homeless:**

The senior population, those 55 and over, represent just under 25% of homeless. This is critical as these seniors are most susceptible and vulnerable by living on the streets. "Shelters are unsuitable for the frail and disabled, and emergency housing is focused on families going through a rough patch, who can recover financially and move on. Many older people live on fixed, limited incomes" (Holland, 2018). The increased senior population is straining adequate resources for their care, pitting many for these seniors on our streets in peril. "Even as L.A. struggles to help its oldest homeless people, an additional 8,000 people in their mid-50s to early 60s are living on the county's streets and in shelters. And many of them have the same disabilities and health problems as their elders" (Holland, 2018).

### **Youth Homeless:**

The homeless youth, aged 18-24, have faced increased difficulty in the current Covid climate, and their rate of growth have increased since 2018. Unsheltered youth has surpassed 1,470 in 2020 (see figure 3). "Youth are falling into homelessness at a faster rate than we've ever seen in Los Angeles, and most acutely youth of color and LGBTQ youth" (Littlejohn, 2020). There have been increases in bridge housing and specified services for youth homeless. "Data released [by LAHSA] in June [(2020)]... found that 38% of homeless youth were Black and 43% were Latino...They also suffer

from not having a job or housing history, a support system, or positive adult relationships” (Littlejohn, 2020).

**Homeless Young People** (LA ALMANAC, 2021). Figure 3

Youth Age Group	City of Los Angeles			All of Los Angeles County*		
	2020	2019	2018	2020	2019	2018
Transitional Age Youth (18-24): <b>Total</b>	<b>2,083</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>3,029</b>	<b>2,818</b>	<b>2,274</b>
Transitional Age Youth (18-24): <b>Sheltered</b>	613	569	576	1,005	931	864
Transitional Age Youth (18-24): <b>Unsheltered</b>	1,470	1,237	997	2,075	1,887	1,410

**II. HOMELESS RELATED CRIME ANALYSIS**

**Homeless Related Crimes:**

Two significant part-1 crimes, Aggravated Assaults and Thefts, have been affected by the rise in the homeless population. The analysis of the homeless influence will be conducted between years 2018 thru 2020. “The number of crimes that listed homeless people as suspects had increased significantly in the first 11 months of 2018, based on an analysis of crime data obtained from the LAPD...those increases continued in the first month of 2019, with 920 incident reports filed by officers between Jan. 1 and Jan. 31 that described a suspect as homeless, or a 29 percent increase over January 2018” (Leonard, 2019).

**Olympic Aggravated Assaults & Thefts 4 Year Comparison  
2021 YTD & 2020-2019-2018**

**Aggravated Assaults: Figure 4. (LAPD CAD, 2021)**

Aggravated Assaults 4 Year Comparison												
	YTD 2021	2020	Change	% Change	2020	2019	Change	% Change	2019	2018	Change	% Change
<b>Aggs Total</b>	516	819	-303	-37.00%	819	698	121	17.34%	698	722	-24	-3.32%
<b>Transient Suspect</b>	72	145	-73	-50.34%	145	99	46	46.46%	99	76	23	30.26%
<b>Transient Victim</b>	44	84	-40	-47.62%	84	53	31	58.49%	53	43	10	23.26%
<b>Transient Vs Transient</b>	21	38	-17	-44.74%	38	26	12	46.15%	26	20	6	30.00%

**\*\*YTD 2021 - 01.01.21 to 07.28.21**

Aggravated assaults have significantly been impacted with the increase of rise in homelessness in the division. 2019 showed a slight reduction in total crimes (698), compared to 722 in 2018. However, 2020 accounted for 819 assault related crimes. Moreover, transient suspects that were associated with this crime rose from 76 in 2018, 99 in 2019, and almost doubling to 145 in 2020. There was a 46% increase in homeless suspects from 2019 to 2020. As of July 28, 2021, Olympic division had 516 total aggravated assaults, 72 of those suspects were categorized as homeless (LAPD; See Figure 4).

Transient Suspects in Aggravated Assault crimes rose 190%, from 76 in 2018 to 145 in 2020. “According to a Los Angeles Police Department's crime analysis from the North Hollywood area, transient robberies jumped 40% and transient aggravated

assaults were up 30% in just one year. A reason for a lot of these random type attacks is these people are usually high on meth and they're delusional... they're thinking that something's going on that's not, and they think our potential victim is part of that delusion and they attack them" (CBSLA, 2021). Many factors can contribute to this rise, including the reduction in police proactivity towards the homeless due to allegations of police bias from advocates. The recent changes of the criminal justice system and policing has yielded less incarceration and consequences for people's actions. The zero dollar bail and lack of prosecution for drug offenses and misdemeanor crimes from the District Attorney has created additional public safety concerns. Transient victims of Aggravated Assaults have also risen from 43 in 2018, 53 in 2019, and 84 in 2020, a 51% increase overall (LAPD; See Figure 4).

**Thefts:** Figure 5. (LAPD CAD 2021)

Thefts 4 Year Comparison												
	YTD 2021	2020	Change	% Change	2020	2019	Change	% Change	2019	2018	Change	% Change
<b>Thefts Total</b>	571	1,127	-556	-49.33%	1,127	1,493	-366	-24.51%	1,493	1,348	145	10.76%
<b>Transient Suspect</b>	13	64	-51	-79.69%	64	44	20	45.45%	44	34	10	29.41%
<b>Transient Victim</b>	6	19	-13	-68.42%	19	18	1	5.56%	18	25	-7	-28.00%
<b>Transient Vs Transient</b>	0	7	-7	-100.00%	7	2	5	250.00%	2	3	-1	-33.33%

Theft crimes have been constantly high in Olympic division. However, there was only a 10% increase from 2018 (1,348), to 2019 (1,493). Conversely, homeless suspects rose from 44 in 2019, to 64 in 2020. Transient victims remained the same at 18 overall in 2019, and 19 in 2020. These were a slight decrease from 2018 with 25

victims (LAPD, See Figure 5).

### **III. SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES AMONG THE HOMELESS POPULATION**

“The first step in housing a large community of unhoused individuals is recognizing the dignity of the encampment residents. This process can be difficult and it is essential that we build trust and rapport with individuals to get them safely housed” (LAHSA, 2021). Understanding the complexities of the homeless population on the streets is vital in seeking possible remedies and solutions for prevention and ultimately transition to housing. The homeless face some of these substantial challenges in their lives. These include: Chronic Homeless, Mental Illness, Substance abuse/addiction, Physically Disabled, and experience with Domestic Violence. Substance abuse (24%) and Mental Illness (22%) account for 46% of the homeless population in Los Angeles. Moreover, the Chronic homeless represents 38% of those affected (LA Almanac, 2021; See Appendix 1).

**Substance Abuse:** The lack of misdemeanor prosecution, AB 109 (early release), and Proposition 36 (Drug Diversion), have contributed to increased narcotic usage on the streets. In the past, arrests for possession of narcotics would relieve the number of users and homeless on the streets. Due to the lenient change in the criminal justice policy, many of these narcotic abusers remain in the streets with no ramifications.

**Mental Health:** Calls for mental health services have continued to inundate police response on a daily basis. The likelihood of a use of force incident or officer involved shooting remains high in these unpredictable calls. Moreover, advocates have called for a non-police response to mental health calls. “LAPD’s Mental Evaluation Unit... currently has 63 officers who deploy in 12 teams, called SMART units, across the city

per day, waiting for requests to help respond to calls involving people in mental health crises” (Cain, 2021).

**Chronic homeless:** 38% of the homeless population in the County of Los Angeles are chronically homeless. The strain on resources providers and the unhealthy streets contribute to more hazardous conditions to these severely chronic homeless. “Many people who live on the streets are unable or unwilling to accept services because of crippling mental illness, addiction or both” (Sherin & Stern, 2020). The refusal of services and housing has been frustrating for resource providers and first responders.

**Summary:**

In conclusion, the city of Los Angeles is facing an epidemic and rise in homelessness. Over 70% of these homeless are disproportionately Black and Hispanic neighbors. The youth and senior population has increased challenges due to the housing crisis amidst the covid pandemic. The crime rates, specifically aggravated assaults and theft, have seen a rise in homeless suspects involved in these crimes. Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in homeless victims in aggravated assault crimes. The special challenges that homeless face include an overwhelming number of substance abuse and mental illness. The chronic homeless add additional strain to city resources, as the refusal to transitional housing continues. The LAPD has been overwhelmed with the high number of calls for service with the homeless, as the potential for use of force involvement and police involved shootings remain a concern. The homeless population continues to grow at an alarming rate in Los Angeles. Resources providers and first responders will see increased challenges with this population, as public safety and healthy communities remain at risk.

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Appendix 1

**Race/Ethnicity of Homeless (2018-2020): (LAALMANAC, 2021).**

Race/Ethnic Group	City of Los Angeles			All of Los Angeles County*		
	2020	2019	2018	2020	2019	2018
American Indian/Alaska Native	430 (1.0%)	530 (1.5%)	324 (1.0%)	686 (1.1%)	975 (1.7%)	565 (1.1%)
Asian	502 (1.2%)	299 (0.8%)	352 (1.1%)	774 (1.2%)	455 (0.8%)	545 (1.1%)
Black/African American	15,622 (37.8%)	13,629 (37.7%)	12,235 (39.1%)	21,509 (33.8%)	18,719 (33.3%)	17,825 (35.7%)
Hispanic/Latino	13,424 (32.5%)	12,403 (34.3%)	10,813 (34.6%)	23,005 (36.1%)	20,523 (36.5%)	17,540 (35.1%)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	76 (0.2%)	100 (0.3%)	77 (0.2%)	205 (0.3%)	314 (0.6%)	221 (0.4%)
White	10,293 (24.9%)	8,223 (22.7%)	6,978 (22.3%)	16,208 (25.4%)	13,871 (24.7%)	12,538 (25.1%)
Multi-Racial/Other	943 (2.3%)	981 (2.7%)	506 (1.6%)	1,319 (2.1%)	1,400 (2.5%)	721 (1.4%)

## Appendix 2

### Characteristics of Homeless

Characteristic/ Percentage	City of Los Angeles			All of Los Angeles County*		
	2020	2019	2018	2020	2019	2018
Veterans	2,120 (5.1%)	2,197 (6.1%)	2,048 (6.5%)	3,681 (5.8%)	3,879 (6.9%)	3,886 (7.4%)
Chronically Homeless Individuals	14,896 (36.1%)	10,084 (27.9%)	8,360 (26.7%)	23,075 (36.2%)	15,855 (28.2%)	13,559 (25.7%)
Chronically Homeless Family Members	867 (2.1%)	632 (1.7%)	278 (0.9%)	1,407 (2.2%)	674 (1.2%)	516 (1.0%)
Substance Use Disorder†	10,357 (25.1%)	4,888 (2%)	4,738 (15.1%)	15,203 (27.0%)	7,829 (13.9%)	7,117 (13.5%)
Persons with HIV/AIDS†	904 (2.2%)	1,221 (3.4%)	588 (1.9%)	1,165 (2.1%)	1,309 (2.3%)	740 (1.4%)
Serious Mental Illness†	9,123 (22.1%)	12,869 (35.6%)	7,843 (25.1%)	14,125 (25.1%)	13,675 (24.3%)	12,748 (24.2%)
Physical Disability†	6,955 (16.8%)	6,095 (16.9%)	4,391 (14.0%)	10,833 (19.3%)	9,232 (16.4%)	6,756 (12.8%)
Developmental Disability†	4,064 (9.8%)	3,089 (8.5%)	1,764 (5.6%)	5,292 (9.4%)	4,370 (7.8%)	2,530 (4.8%)
Domestic Violence Experience†	11,622 (28.1%)	12,860 (35.6%)	9,088 (29.0%)	18,345 (32.6%)	20,265 (36.0%)	13,374 (25.3%)
Homeless Due to Fleeing Domestic Violence†	2,741 (6.6%)	1,870 (5.2%)	1,913 (6.1%)	3,884 (6.9%)	3,940 (7.0%)	3,076 (5.8%)

Appendix 3

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES FOR HOMELESS (IN PERCENTAGE): (LA ALMANAC, 2021).**

- Under 18
- Female
- Family Units
- Phys Disabled
- Chronic Hom
- Subst Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Vict/Dom Viol

