

# AAUW Palos Verdes Peninsula Branch

## Overview of South Bay Homelessness, Services, Programs

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## OVERVIEW

- General understanding of homelessness in the South Bay
- Fact-based reality-check that debunks commonly held stereotypes
- LA County homelessness services and funding
- Engagement suggestions
- Q&A

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## General Understanding of South Bay Homelessness

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## WHO IS CONSIDERED HOMELESS?




People who do not have a fixed place to live,  
including those who live:

- On the sidewalks, in tents, makeshift shelters cobbled together with tarps
- In vehicles, including cars, campers and RVs
- In shelters, or motels where government is paying for the stays
- People “doubled up” not considered homeless

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## SOUTH BAY HOMELESSNESS


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- Since 2015, homelessness has steadily risen (Year 2015: 3,006 to Year 2020: 4,560)
- People living in vehicles represent half of the unsheltered people experiencing homeless
- Others living along the sidewalks or in encampments are generally visible in commercial corridors or parks
- Many more are part of the “hidden homeless”


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## South Bay Homeless Count 2020 Demographics




**What are their ages?**


	<b>12% or 532</b> are under 18 <b>3% or 135</b> are 18-24 <b>61% or 2,780</b> are 25-54 <b>11% or 521</b> are 55-61 <b>13% or 592</b> are 62+
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**What is their gender?**


	<b>67% or 3,056</b> are male* <b>33% or 1,504</b> are female* <b>1% or 28</b> are transgender
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\* Includes transgender


  
**81% or 3,684 (-3%)**  
 Are individuals


  
**19% or 874 (+53%)**  
 Are in families with minor-aged children


  
**33% or 1,413 (+227)**  
 Have a substance use disorder\*

  
**9% or 420 (+60%)**  
 Are veterans

  
**45% or 2,059 (+47%)**  
 Are persons experiencing chronic homelessness\*  
(1+ year homeless with a disabling condition)

  
**20% or 816 (-11%)**  
 Have a serious mental illness

  
**24% or 979 (+27%)**  
 Have a physical disability

  
**29% or 1,172 (-37%)**  
 Have experienced domestic violence

Note: Percent difference from the 2019 Count shown in parenthesis

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## SOUTH BAY HOMELESSNESS

Based on the 2020 Homeless Count communities in and around PV had

**937 Persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness**

City	2020 Total Unsheltered	Breakdown: Living on the Streets	Breakdown: Living in Vehicles
Palos Verdes (4-Cities)	0	0	0
Redondo Beach	177	73	104
Torrance	270	75	195
San Pedro	490	264	226

Note: 145 addition people were in shelters

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## Causes of Homelessness, Debunking Myths

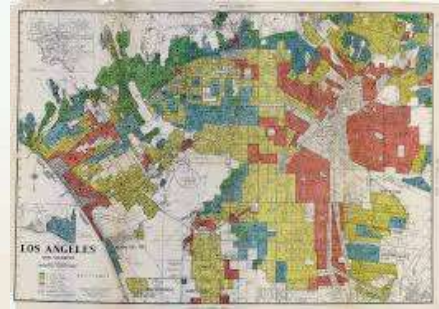
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## CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

### Systemic Challenges (partial list)

- Severe lack of affordable housing
- Wages not keeping pace w/rising rents
- Poverty
- Gentrification that causes a sudden and drastic increase in local housing costs
- Historical consequences of “redlining”
- Race, gender, age, sexual discrimination



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## CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

### Personal Factors Causing Homelessness (partial list)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Low income, including having a fixed income; loss of income | • “Aged out” of foster care                                   |
| • Domestic violence   | • Sexual orientation causing family conflict                  |
| • Human trafficking   | • Unresolved trauma, including Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome |
| • Physical or mental health challenges                        | • Prison or jail release                                      |
| • Substance use   | • Immigration   |

Many causes of homelessness have **nothing** to do with personal choice. **Everyone’s story is unique.**

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## **Myth: “All homeless people have a mental illness or are on drugs”**

**Fact:** Based on the Homeless Counts, year-to-year **approximately 25-30% of the those experiencing homelessness have a severe mental illness, and approximately 30% have a substance use disorder**

- While drugs or alcohol are major factors causing homelessness, many others start self-medicating as a coping mechanism for surviving on the streets
- Regardless if it is “a cause or an effect,” addictions should be viewed as illnesses requiring treatment and support to overcome



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## **Myth: “People experiencing homelessness are just lazy and need to get a job”**

**Fact:** Many have jobs but do not earn enough to pay for the high cost of LA housing. According to recent Homeless Counts, **about 60% of newly homeless individuals cite economic hardship for the reason they become homeless.**

### **Barriers to Employment**

- Lack of documents needed for employment eligibility
- Lack of life skills
- Disabling conditions
- Criminal record
- Inconsistent access to showers
- Transportation challenges
- Lack of a permanent address
- People of color often experience prejudice and hidden racism

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## OTHER COMMONLY HELD MYTHS

**Myth: "Arresting the homeless is the best solution"**

**Fact:** It is **not against the law to be homeless**. Arresting people for petty "nuisance" crimes might take people off the streets temporarily, but they are quickly released from jail. The courts have upheld there must be shelter beds available before ordinances can be enforced (*Martin vs. City of Boise*).

**Myth: "They just made bad choices"**

**Fact:** People's actions are often **influenced by circumstances beyond their control**, such as losing a job, being a victim of domestic violence, and having a physical or mental disability.

**Myth: "Homeless people don't need cell phones"**

**Fact:** People experiencing homelessness typically have a **basic cell phone** that they received free through government programs. They are a lifeline to their case manager, employment and housing opportunities.

**Myth: "Most people experiencing homelessness are from out of town"**

**Fact:** The annual Los Angeles Homeless Counts consistently show that LA is home to 80% of unsheltered for more than 5 years.

**Myth: "People experiencing domestic violence (DV) just need to leave their abuser and then they'll be ok"**

**Fact:** DV is an extremely complicated problem **with victims often feeling trapped in the relationship**. The Homeless Count consistently shows about 35% of those homeless have some DV history. Reasons victims are reluctant to leave their abuser include: Fear of losing custody of their children; Lack of money or resources; Cultural or religious reasons; Believing abuse is normal if they grew up in a home where it was common; Embarrassment or shame; Language barrier; Immigration status; Low self-esteem.

**Myth: "People on the streets don't want help, they like this lifestyle"**

**Fact:** No one wants to be homeless: **it's dangerous, stressful, and humiliating**. Living on the streets statistically shortens one's life, "aging" people by 20 years. In recent years, over 1,000 people died annually on the streets of LA County.

**Myth: "Only people who can demonstrate they can follow rules can be successfully housed"**

**Fact:** Using a proven method called "Housing First," we know through several studies that first getting people into stable housing **without preconditions like sobriety** and then **following up with supportive services and treatment** provide successful long-lasting solutions. Many people cannot make healthy life changes until they lose the instability, fear, and trauma associated with being unhoused.


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## LA County Homeless Services, Funding

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## HOMELESS SERVICES

- There are many **publicly-funded homelessness programs** and for those at-risk of becoming homeless
- The South Bay also has **privately-operated programs** such as food pantries and meal programs, often operated by the faith community

*Reducing homelessness takes everyone working together*

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## COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM (CES)

### Los Angeles County's Homelessness Response System

- CES provides a **unifying formal framework and coordination of services** among regional agencies and County departments
- Other stakeholders align with the CES, including local cities, school districts, faith community, medical centers, etc.
- Harbor Interfaith Services is the South Bay's lead CES agency, subcontracting with other agencies to provide full geographic coverage

#### CES Highlights

- CES is the entryway for Homelessness Prevention, Street Outreach, Shelter, Housing and Case Management services
- "No wrong door" approach is designed into the system so there are numerous ways to access CES



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## FUNDING: MEASURE H HIGHLIGHTS

- Measure H passed in March 2017
  - Quarter cent LA County sales tax, estimated revenue stream: \$355 million annually
  - For homelessness services, rental subsidies (no “brick and mortar” construction)
- Measure H resources are directed to the eight county regions (“Service Planning Areas”) based on Homeless Count results
  - Over \$63.5 million to South Bay service provided in first four years (FY17-20)
- Cumulative outcomes since inception in July 2017 to June 2021:
  - 53,145 interim housing placements
  - 30,310 permanent housing



Visit LA County CEO's Homeless Initiative's website for more info:  
<https://homeless.lacounty.gov/>

Federal COVID relief funding have brought an an additional \$468 million to LA County for homelessness programs

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## Engagement Suggestions

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## REFERRING PEOPLE TO SERVICES



Los Angeles County  
**la-hop.org**  
 homeless outreach portal

- This countywide program assists people living unsheltered by first connecting them to street outreach staff
- Access it via the web at [la-hop.org](http://la-hop.org), or by calling "211"

**Everyone is encouraged to it**, including city officials and staff, law enforcement, the business and faith communities, and the general public

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## LOCAL ADVOCACY

- If you live in Torrance or Redondo Beach, contact me!
  - Advocate with your city council to support shelters
- Join established local advocacy organizations
  - South Bay Coalition to End Homelessness ([sbceh.org](http://sbceh.org))
  - NAMI South Bay ([namisouthbay.com](http://namisouthbay.com))
  - Neighborhood Council's Homelessness Committee



For advocacy opportunities at the County, State, and Federal levels, please contact me

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