

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the City of Los Angeles, there has been an observable increase in people experiencing homelessness over recent years. As of 2018, the Los Angeles metro area had one of the largest populations experiencing homelessness in the country (52,765), second only to New York City. While housing insecurity affects various populations, female-identifying people who experience homelessness face unique challenges. In 2018, there were just over 9,500 females of any age experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, accounting for 30% of the city's entire population experiencing homelessness (LAHSA, 2018). The prevalence of female homelessness has multiple drivers, including unemployment, various physical and mental health issues, lack of social support networks, and domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence. These challenges are further exacerbated by the lack of safe, available, and affordable housing in the City of Los Angeles, which disproportionately affects women across age groups. Accordingly, connecting people experiencing homelessness to stable housing is critical to addressing homelessness in general and female homelessness specifically.

In response, the City of Los Angeles, in partnership with researchers at the University of Southern California Price Center for Social Innovation and the Downtown Women's Center, has conducted an analysis to identify the needs of self-identifying females experiencing homelessness in the city. This report focuses specifically on individual women ages 25 and older to measure the gap between their needs and the availability of resources and affordable housing options across the region.

KEY FINDINGS:

Women Experiencing Homelessness

- According to LAHSA's 2018 Homeless Count, there were **7,032 females** ages 25 and older (women) experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, **the vast majority of whom were unsheltered (73%) and living without partners or children (82%)**.
- Compared to the city's overall population, **women ages 51 to 60 and women who identify as Black were overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness**.
- Among women ages 25 and older experiencing homelessness, **over a third were chronically homeless, over half had experienced domestic or intimate partner violence, and over a third reported having a mental illness**. Each of these conditions were reported at higher rates among the unsheltered population compared to the sheltered population.
- Unsheltered women most frequently reported social challenges (e.g. marital break-up, household conflict) and economic barriers (such as unemployment or eviction) as causes of homelessness.

Immediate Shelter Availability

- As of 2018, there were 2,407 existing emergency shelter beds in programs whose target populations included individual females age 18 and over across the city.
- This means that **there were 2,435 more unsheltered individual women experiencing homelessness than existing emergency shelter beds in programs that serve individual women.** Further, given that the majority of the beds were in programs serving a broader target population than just individual women, the gap between the number of unsheltered individual women and existing shelter beds available to them is likely even larger than 2,435.

Affordable and Available Rental Housing in Los Angeles County

- Individual female households were more likely to be rent burdened (paying more than 30% of their incomes on rent) and extremely rent-burdened (paying more than 50% of their incomes on housing costs) than other renter households, including individual male households. **Nearly 70% of individual female households were considered rent burdened in 2016.**
- **Nearly half of individual female renter households (27,340) were considered Extremely Low Income (ELI),** meaning they had an income less than or equal to 30% of the area median income (\$64,800 in LA County in 2016).
- **ELI households struggled with housing affordability at vastly higher rates than other income groups – paying an average of 80% of their incomes towards housing costs.**