



DOWNTOWN **WOMEN'S** CENTER

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**First Ever Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment, Nation's Largest Study
Exclusively Focused on the Needs of Women Experiencing Homelessness, *Offers
Concrete Policy Recommendations to Improve Women's Lives***

Los Angeles, CA – The Downtown Women's Center (DWC), the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering women experiencing homelessness and formerly unhoused women, applauded the release of the first ever Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment. Authored by Urban Institute and Hub for Urban Initiatives researchers and funded by the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative and DWC, the 2022 Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment is the nation's largest study focused on the needs of women experiencing homelessness.

On any given night in 2022, over 14,000 women were experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles County Continuum of Care. The Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment identifies the barriers and challenges that unaccompanied woman (women seeking services without partners or children) face in accessing housing. In Los Angeles, unaccompanied women are one in five of all individuals experiencing homelessness, a growing population both locally and across the nation.

The landmark study is based on the realities of more than 580 women experiencing homelessness across every Service Planning Area (SPA) in Los Angeles. Each woman who participated in the study completed a 78-question survey from October to December 2022. The survey documents the needs, experiences with homelessness and response systems, and barriers and challenges women face when trying to access housing, reaffirming DWC's mission to end homelessness.

Key assessment findings include:

- **More than 80% of women surveyed have experienced lengths of homelessness of over a year**, with more than half of those individuals experiencing homelessness for longer than five years.
- **Nearly 70% of women surveyed most often slept in unsheltered locations**, including on the streets (40%), in cars, vans, or RVs (23%), beaches or riverbeds (4%), and in public transportation (2%).
- **Nearly 30% of the women surveyed were working for pay**, trading goods or services with others, or both.
- **More than half of women surveyed** felt that they did not have a social support network.
- **61% of survey respondents had a disability.**

The study also showed that women experiencing homelessness confront high levels of gender-based violence:

- **Over 90% of women surveyed experienced some form of victimization in their lifetime**, including having something stolen (74%), being repeatedly harassed or threatened (57%), and being threatened, physically hit, or made to feel unsafe by a romantic partner (48%).
- **Over 28% of women surveyed reported domestic or intimate partner violence** as the reason they left permanent housing.

The report highlights key areas for policy and programmatic work to most dramatically improve women's lives, including:

- **Support efforts to collect data on and tailor services** to women experiencing homelessness as individuals.
- **Funding housing assistance** at a level needed to house all women experiencing homelessness.
- **Prioritizing safety** throughout the homeless response system.
- **Providing dignity** in the absence of housing.
- **Ensuring programmatic response accountability for outcomes** for historically marginalized groups, particularly Black, Latina, Indigenous, and other women of color, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals.

“Homelessness does not discriminate based on gender, but its impact on women is distinct, often ignored, and often compounded by additional challenges,” said **Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis of the First District**. “To truly address the homelessness crisis in our County, we need to recognize and prioritize the needs of homeless women. This report confirms what we already know: if we provide women with access to safe housing, hygiene, healthcare, and opportunities for economic stability, we can break the cycle of poverty and pave the way for a more equitable future. This is why I worked with the Downtown Women’s Center to launch the Every Women Housed Plan, providing the resources to house every woman on Skid Row. The County invested \$4M and received a \$15M grant from the state to support this initiative. To that end, we must stand together, ensure that women experiencing homelessness are seen and heard, and give them the support they need to reclaim their lives with dignity and hope.”

“The 2022 Los Angeles County Women’s Needs Assessment is a policy blueprint, compelling us to care, to act, and to advocate for the specific needs of women experiencing homelessness,” said **Amy Turk, CEO of Downtown Women’s Center**. “It is a stark reminder that these women are not faceless statistics – they are mothers, daughters, and sisters who have faced unimaginable hardships. With the release of these findings and recommendations, we can create a Los Angeles where every woman has a safe place to call home and a chance to thrive.”

“The 2022 Los Angeles County Women’s Needs Assessment findings illustrate that caring for women is an imperative within our communities,” said **Cheri Todoroff, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative (HI)**. “Every woman experiencing homelessness deserves our attention, empathy, and commitment. Let us take this opportunity to translate this report into action, and work tirelessly to provide permanent housing, supportive services, and pathways to independence for every woman experiencing homelessness.”

“The 2022 Los Angeles County Women’s Needs Assessment began with a foundation of listening, and our findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive, tailored solutions to address the unique challenges faced by women experiencing homelessness,” said **Samantha Batko, principal research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute**. “The study was not just about numbers – it was about real

women with real stories. It is our hope that these findings will drive meaningful policy changes and inspire collective action to end homelessness for women in Los Angeles and beyond.”

“Society’s true measure of compassion lies in how we uplift and empower the most vulnerable among us. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that no woman is left behind,” said **Dr. Sofia Herrera, Director of Research, Planning, & Policy at the Hub for Urban Initiatives.**

“While these findings are illuminating, they also provide a roadmap for how we can dramatically improve the lives of women experiencing homelessness.”

“There needs to be a more humane approach to the root causes of homelessness. A lot of women are fleeing domestic violence. I was one. We can’t paint homelessness with one brush,”- said **Lorinda Hawkins Smith, Artist and Lived Experience Advocate.**

“The 2022 Los Angeles County Women’s Needs Assessment reminds us that women experiencing homelessness are not invisible, we are human beings with stories, dreams, and untapped potential,” said **Suzette Shaw, United States of Women Ambassador and Skid Row Advocate.** “I want to thank the team engaged in developing this report for taking the time to immerse themselves into what it means to be a woman experiencing homelessness, particularly in Skid Row. Thank you for giving women like me a voice, making us feel seen, and most importantly, giving us a seat at the table.”

The report is accessible at DowntownWomensCenter.org.

About The Downtown Women’s Center

The Downtown Women’s Center (DWC) is the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering women experiencing homelessness and formerly unhoused women. DWC envisions a Los Angeles with every woman housed and on a path to personal stability. Our mission is to end homelessness for women in greater Los Angeles through housing, wellness, employment, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.DowntownWomensCenter.org.

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