

What Unhoused Women Want: Findings from LA County's Women's Needs Assessment



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Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment

Findings from the 2022 Survey of Women Experiencing Homelessness

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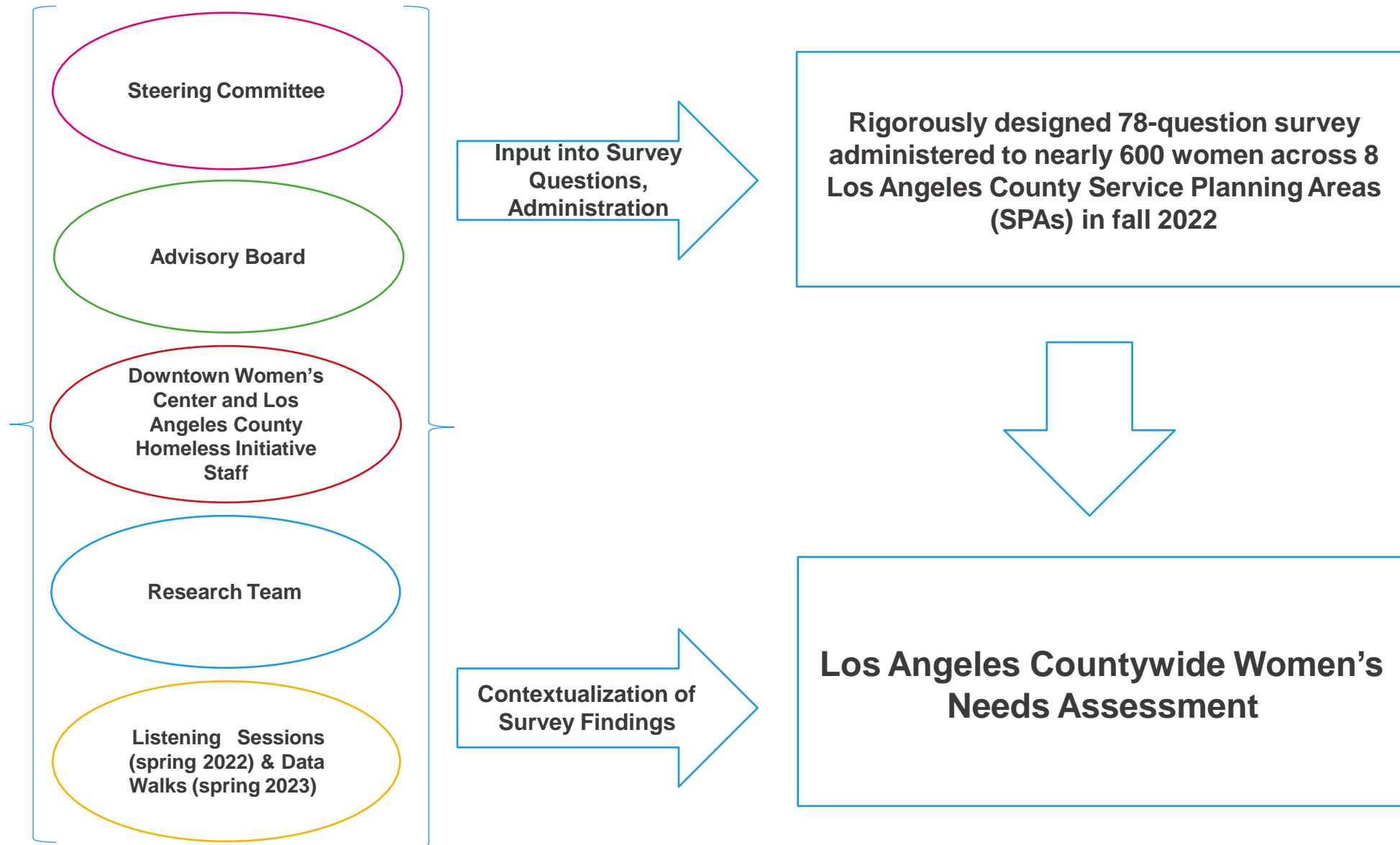
Acknowledgements

- All the women who shared their experiences with us in listening sessions and surveys
- Steering and Advisory Committee members
- Volunteers who administered surveys
- Downtown Women's Center and the County of Los Angeles Homeless Initiative



The Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment

- This study is the largest and most rigorous study to date in the nation targeted specifically to women experiencing homelessness as individuals
 - In spring 2022, nearly 100 women participated in listening sessions
 - In fall 2022, nearly 600 women completed a 78-question survey



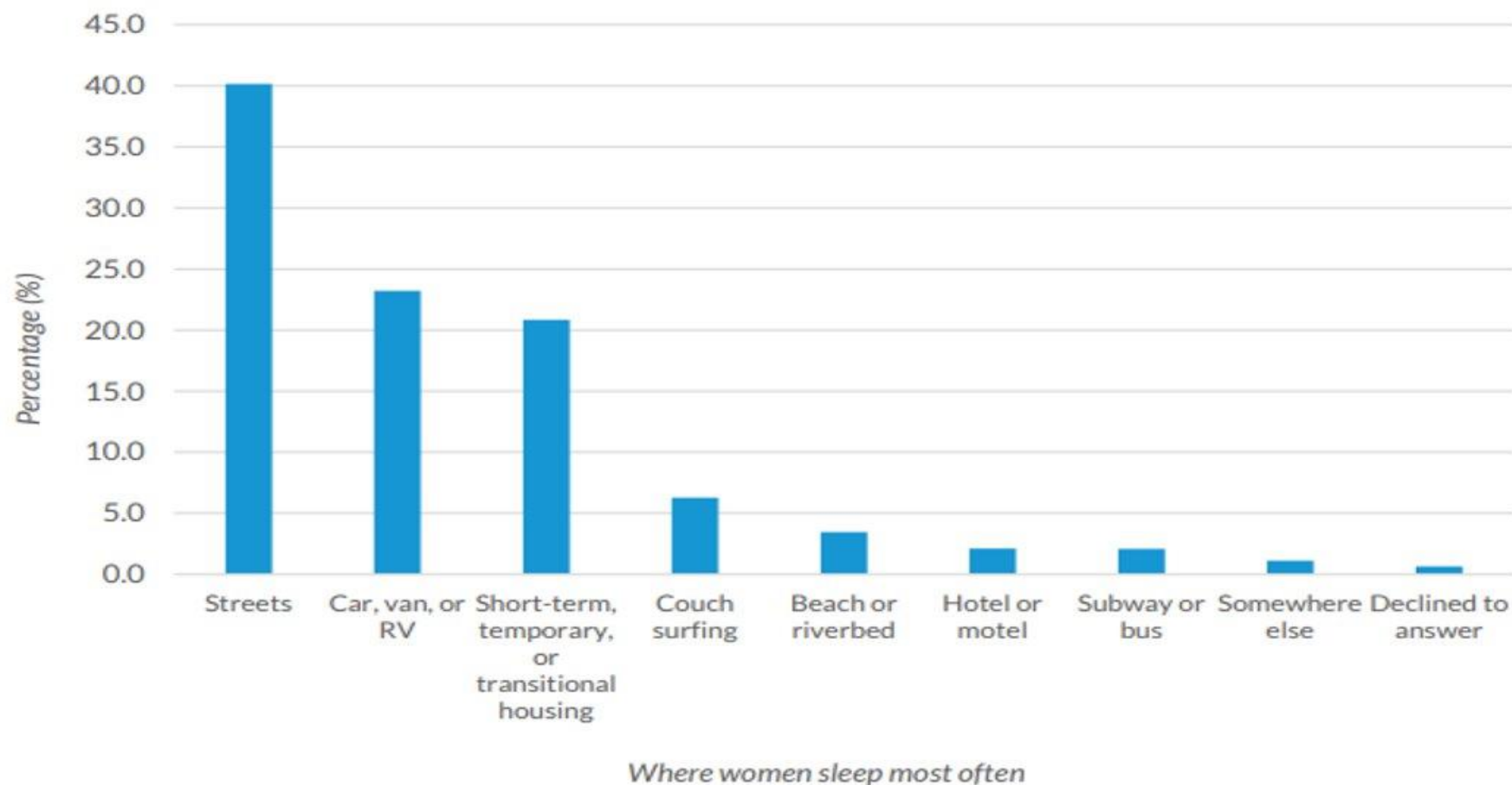
Women Experiencing Homelessness are Diverse

- Ages ranged from 18 to 83 years old.
- 34% of women identified as Hispanic or Latina, 32% percent identified as Black
- Nearly 4 percent identifying as a gender other than exclusively a woman or man, such as nonbinary or gender fluid
- Nearly 20 percent identifying as bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, or another sexual orientation other than straight
- 61 percent had a disability
- 30% were working for pay
- Over half experienced a separation from a partner or spouse
- Over half had children-either adults or children who were not currently with them
- Health rated as fair or poor, with dental health being rated the poorest.

Women Experienced Homelessness for Long Periods

- Women experienced **multiple episodes** of homelessness
- More than **8 in 10 women** had experienced lifetime lengths of homelessness **over a year**
- More than **4 in 10 women** had lifetime experiences of homelessness of **longer than five years**

Women Most Often Slept In Unsheltered Locations



Source: Weighted survey data.
Notes: Unweighted N = 581.

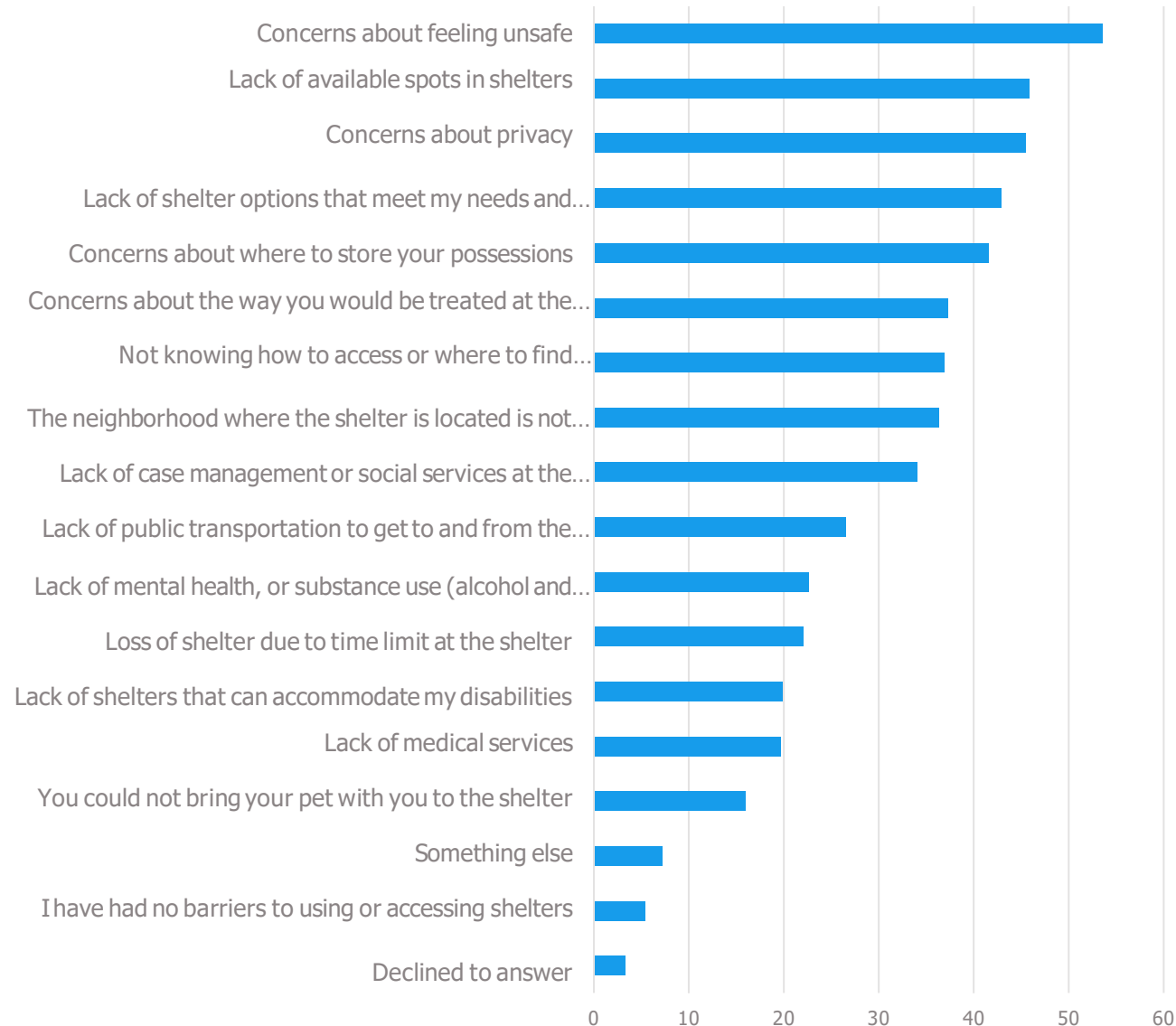
Women Experience Victimization Before and During Episodes of Homelessness

- Nearly 90 percent of women reported lifetime experiences of victimization
 - 49% reported experiencing interpersonal violence
 - 21% stated interpersonal violence was the cause of homelessness
 - 13% stayed in a DV shelter
- While experiencing homelessness:
 - 3 of 5 had something stolen from them
 - 2 of 5 were attacked
 - 1 in 5 were forced to take part in unwanted sexual activity

Women Reported Significant Barriers to Exiting Homelessness and Securing Housing



Women Reported Barriers to Accessing and Using Shelters



Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment

Survey Results are consistent with our Listening Session Findings

Women Want Safe, Affordable,
and Private Housing

Women Need Immediate Help
with Emergent Needs

Women Would Benefit from
Improved Case Management
and a Trauma-Informed
Approach to Services

Women Strongly Desired
Community, Social Connection,
and a Sense of Belonging

“

Apart from the safety, which is important, [I want] a place that is going to be like a refuge to rest and not worry that a person is going to harass me, bully me, be misunderstood. A place where you can have people visit you and accept you.

—Listening session participant

2022 County-wide Women's Needs Assessment

The 2022 County-wide Women's Needs Assessment is made possible by the County Board of Supervisors, Downtown Women's Center, Urban Institute, and Hub for Urban Initiatives

Recommendations

#1 - Support efforts to collect data on and tailor services to women experiencing homelessness as individuals.

- Collect and report on data on women's experiences, needs, and preferences
- Critical to track progress on ending homelessness among women

#2 - Fund housing assistance at the level needed to house all women experiencing homelessness

- Universal voucher program provides clear path forward to ending homelessness for all women.
- Lack of affordable housing, long waiting lists for housing assistance were primary barriers to housing.

#3 - Prioritize safety throughout the homelessness response system

- Prioritizing safety requires recognizing the unique needs and preferences of women.
- Concerns about safety was most common barrier to shelter
- Safety was a top priority in permanent housing

#4- Provide dignity in the absence of housing

- Women want dignified access to bathrooms, showers, and storage of possessions
- Remove barriers that prevent access to services and shelter

#5 - Encourage programmatic response accountability for ensuring equitable outcomes for historically marginalized groups

- Women's **needs may vary** based on a variety of characteristics, their individual histories, and where they may be in their life cycle

Full 2022 Los Angeles County Women's Needs Assessment Report





DOWNTOWN **WOMEN'S** CENTER
Every woman housed

HOUSING

Permanent Supportive
Housing

Community-Based Housing

Interim Housing

WELLNESS

Day Center Services

Clinical Services

Health Clinic

Community Health
Workers

EMPLOYMENT

Workforce
Development

MADE by DWC

ADVOCACY

DWC Advocates

Women's Needs
Assessments

Domestic Violence
Homeless Services Coalition

98%

HOUSING RETENTION RATE

120K

MEALS SERVED

5,700

WOMEN SERVED

DWC best practices

- Trauma-informed Model
- Harm Reduction
- Cultural Humility
- Critical Time Intervention



GET INVOLVED

- **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Sign up for weekly individual volunteering or join us at a cooking club.

- **IN-KIND DONATIONS**

Donate new or gently used clothing and household items or order items from our online wish-list.

- **HELP FROM HOME**

Help us build snack packs, toiletry kits, and clean home kits for our participants.

- **JOIN LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Join committed DWC supporters in holding fundraisers, coordinating volunteer activities, and hosting advocacy events.

- **ENGAGE YOUR COMPANY**

Consider DWC for your employee matching program or sponsor our annual gala.

- **SHOP MADE BY DWC**

Visit madebydwc.org to purchase items from our resale boutique, café, or home & gift department.

- **SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Advocate for affordable housing to friends, family, and your local elected officials.



Tiffany Duvernay-Smith,
Lived Experience Expert

THANK YOU!



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ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

<http://bit.ly/DWCadvocacy>

DWC WOMEN'S NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

<https://downtownwomenscenter.org/publications/>



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