# Homelessness Crisis in California:

# A Comparative Analysis Between Brentwood, Compton, and Los Angeles.

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Homelessness is one of the biggest societal issues today, especially in the state of California, that continues to affect the lives of many minority communities. Victims of homelessness are individuals who lack a stable place of residence and either live in shelters, temporary housing, or public places that are not necessarily arranged for permanent sleeping accommodations. This research paper discusses the several different paths that lead an individual to become unhoused and possible solutions to overcome it. Furthermore, this paper will analyze in depth case studies between more affluent cities versus minority cities. This thesis will then examine the disparities of each by focusing on the population, median housing prices, and the presence or absence of programs and acts of legislation on affordable housing. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to analyze how these certain factors increase or decrease rates of homelessness. Finally, the results of this study yield that high rate of homelessness in California are due to the lack of affordable housing. Therefore, more housing programs and policies should be implemented to appropriately combat the struggles that lead people to homelessness.

Homelessness is one of the biggest complex social problems that continues to remain today especially in the state of California as it has the third highest rate of homeless across the United States. This issue generally targets people of low socioeconomic status as many of these individuals are more susceptible to become victims of homelessness due to not having enough means to be able to afford a stable living environment. The lack of stable affordable housing is the foundation of many of America's social problems. As many may know California is

a very expensive place to live as it continues to have an increasingly red-hotreal estate market. California remains in such a housing crisis due to "themedian home price in the Los Angeles Metro area being\$725,000" and the market ofmedian sale prices in the condos and townhouses continuing to rise,making many residents and families forced to move from these urban areas to others with more affordable places of living (Kamin, 2021). Moreover, manyindividuals can become victims of homelessness due to other possible factors such as unemployment, lack of

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housing and affordable housing, poverty, mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, violence, and much more.

Like previously mentioned, homelessness is not just due to housing scarcity or availability of affordable places. This issue can also becaused by many other factors such as job insecurity, health issues like severe mental illnesses, lack of family or familial issues, drug and substance abuse, and even being victims of domestic violence. However, the main objective of this thesis focuses on the rise of homelessness as a result of the lack of affordable housing and the continuous rise of housing prices in the Los Angeles County area. This thesis will utilize qualitative data to conduct a good research design to help reveal what factors ultimately cause individuals to become victims of homelessness and the analysis will help one to understand the certain demographics of individuals.

Cases to be studied show a clear distinction that there is lack of affordable housing units especially in low income and minority communities. Examining several examples of different areas located in the Los Angeles County area will expose how people, specifically minorities, continue to be burden of economic and social factors of homelessness. This leads to the question of: What is the main leading cause for why minorities become victims of homelessness more than majorities in Los AngelesCounty? The main concepts or ideas of this research question is the reasons that make an individual, in this case minorities, become homeless. Additionally, why minorities are more likely to be homeless as opposed to majorities. The argument made for this thesis is that the main leading cause of homelessness is due to inadequate affordable housing, discrimination, and low wages. With that being said there are some possible ways to solve this problem which would be by providing assistance to help build career pathways, have more federal housing assistance, and programs such as section 8 vouchers, that may help reduce the rates of homelessness in the specific area.

When looking at the demographics of Los Angeles County it is found to be home to the United States' most ethnically diverse counties based on race, ethnicity, and nationality. In Los Angeles County, 47.7% of hispanic or latinos make up almost half of Los Angeles' demographics and 50.3% whites make up the majority of the population(American Community Survey,2019). Due to there being a larger white population than hispanics, it shows that as more affluent groups move into urban areas, lower income families and large portions of the working class are priced out of their neighborhoods. This is a result of gentrification in Los Angeles county as more housing prices and property values rise, a shortage of affordable rental housing grows as well.

The assumption here is that the lack of affordable housing in Los AngelesCounty causes minorities to become victims of homelessness more than majorities. This question of why minorities become victims of homelessness more than majorities in Los Angeles county, is important to consider because homelessness is a major problem in today's ethnically diverse society that continues to grow. It also helps to show the casual relationship ofLos Angeles County not having enough affordable housing so it is causing more people to become homeless since they cannot afford rent or a stable living environment. With more affordable housing and assistance there would not be as many homeless people.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Homelessness is a serious issue in the United States, especially in the state of California as it has the third highest rate following behind New York and Hawaii as of 2020. The purpose of this literature review is to create an understanding of homelessness which is one of the biggest complex social problems that remains today. The following literature review will be broken down into five sections. The first section will examine the populations that are primarily affected by homelessness and how most are often underrepresented in housing and homeless assistance programs that could potentially help with their needs. The second and third section will focus on some of the main leading factors that cause people to become victims of homelessness, will explain how lack of affordable housing leads to homelessness and what causes a lack of affordable housing. The fourth section lists the other possible factors that may lead to homelessness. Lastly,the final section will describe possible solutions in tackling this societal problem in order to reduce homelessness and prevent more cases from rising.

# Populations Likely to Suffer from Homelessness

This section provides a literature analysis on the specific populations that are the main targets of homelessness. Housing costs are an essential component of the way households spend funds and are usually the largest expenditure for most households (Mcconell, 2013). This article examines how housing affordability problems in the United States vary based on race, where they were born, and citizenship, specifically in Los Angeles. The author points out that housing affordability is problematic in the city of Los Angeles especially for those with lower incomes since "Los Angeles County had the largest Latino population, the largest foreignborn population, and the largest unauthorized immigrant population in the nation" (Mcconnell, 2013). Mcconnell examines descriptive data to indicate that black and latino households were more likely to be cost burdened as opposed to white households and that immigrants were more likely to contribute a larger percentage of their income to housing costs than those born in the country (2013).

When it comes to homelessness there are specific ethnicities that frequently experience high rates of homelessness. One specific ethnicity group scholars' focused on were hispanic households and how they predominantly face poor housing conditions and high rents that eventually lead them to fall into homelessness. They explain how hispanics are often those who are underrepresented in housing and homeless assistance programs by looking at the type of resources they do or do not have access to. The authors use a national analysis from the American Community Survey, Picture of Subsidized Households, and Point in time counts of

homelessness to find that Hispanics face severe housing challenges and when they experience homelessness, their access to homeless shelters are lower than non-Hispanics (Aiken, Reina, Culhane, 2021). Through their analysis they found that being hispanic especially an undocumented hispanic is directly linked to housing challenges and access to programs. Some of the challenges they face mentioned are undocumented hispanics being taken advantage of by landlords when it comes to neglecting of maintenance due to them not have any legal recourse and living in poor housing conditions such as overcrowded housing. Other challenges the authors found that undocumented hispanics face is their lack of participation in housing assistance programs because they are restricted based on their legal status (Aiken, Reina, Culhane, 2021).

In addition, they conducted a case study that focused on Philadelphia because the city has a large growing hispanic population that helps demonstrate the barriers they face when it comes to accessing housing and homelessness programs. In the case study, the authors used a combination of interviews with local stakeholders and focus groups with hispanic residents in order to understand the nature of housing challenges Hispanics in Philadelphia face. Their findings were regulations housing programs required "discouraged hispanics non citizens from applying for HUD assistance" because they knew they would not be admitted due to being undocumented (Aiken, Reina, Culhane, 2021). In sum, this article highlighted challenges hispanics face when it comes to housing programs and homeless services.

Another subgroup of a specific ethnicity that makes up a percentage of the homeless population is the elderly. Two case studies were conducted that consisted of records from a public agency and from a private agency in Chicago during 1987. The main reason for these studies were to create a more visible picture of the older homeless population. The methodology consisted of 157 cases files of people over the age of 55 from the private agency of the Health Care for Homeless Project and the "second study drew its sample from the files of the Department

of Human Services Emergency Services" with data from 125 case files of clients aged 55 and over (Kutza and Keigher, 1991). The analysis of the data revealed differences between the older and younger homeless population as the elder between the ages of 55-75, "typically suffered from psychological or alcohol problems, had multiple contacts with emergency service workers, were frequent users of public shelters, and lived in cities with high incidence of homelessness" (Kutza and Keigher, 1991). The studies also suggest that the risk of homelessness, especially for elderly women are high as they are becoming the newest group in the widening of homelessness.

Scholars also found and studied children and families who are another subgroup that make up a portion of the homeless population throughout the United States. Homelessness can be described by multiple different definitions and by using common methods to estimate the size of the homeless population such as the census, which will give an estimated count from local shelters officials, and from the department of housing and urban development. It can be defined by two different ways: "literally homeless" which means they have no permanent home and as "precariously housed" which means they are at risk of being literally homeless (Lewit and Schuurmann Baker, 1996). Their use of methodologies to count homeless helped give an estimate of the numbers of homeless children and families and found "estimates of 68,000 children literally homeless" in 1989 (Lewit and Schuurmann Baker, 1996). The authors concluded that information about size, distribution, and composition of the homeless population is key to adapting effective planning for job, housing, and public support for those in need of service.

Overall, this research focuses on the different types of populations affected by homelessness and helps provide a general sense of how serious and important this complex societal issue is as it affects not just one single group, but many others as well. These scholars help to show throughout their research certain populations are more susceptible to be victims of homelessness as people of color are predominantly left out from

being provided resources they need to better their lives.

#### Main Leading Causes of Homelessness

There is not a single factor that only leads to homelessness. It can be caused by multiple different reasons and in this second section of the literature it will demonstrate the possible different aspects that can lead a person to become homeless. Affordable housing is a major issue for people in many cities and leads people to become homeless, specifically those in cities with low-income residents. In a study, authors focus on four examples of the struggles of affordable housing in San Francisco, Chile, New Orleans, and Indonesia based on an everyday basis and the aftermath of the disasters. From these cases, the authors point out that low income groups are often those most vulnerable to "socioeconomic, environmental, and political shocks" due to them being less likely to have financial safety nets to protect themselves from those threats and are less likely to afford new housing and reformation (Vale, et al., 2014). Chi and Laquatra also indicate that the "burden of housing costs increases since the 1970s has affected American households disproportionately (1998.)

There are a number of issues that affordable housing entails which include housing policies issue, racial and ethnic issues, and barriers to homeownership. In a piece of literature it argued that "the number one housing problem is the lack of affordable housing for extremely low-income households" and states that voucher programs would be the best solution in order to alleviate the problem (Sard, 2001). Other literature studied by authors found that "minorities and immigrants are less likely to be homeowners" from barriers of unemployment uncertainty, lack of understanding the whole process, and the credit requirements homeownership entails (Sirmans and Macpherson, 2003). As the authors encompassed bodies of literature they concluded housing programs should be tailored to local housing conditions for minorities and immigrants and other extremely low-income households that are mainly affected by housing cost burdens.

The article by Chinchilla and Gabrielian

composed an analysis of the 2019 Los Angeles County homeless count data to identify the factors associated with unsheltered latinx homelessness in Los Angeles County. The authors conducted a comparison between unsheltered latinx and sheltered latinx based on age, gender, income, length of homelessness, and health characteristics. They focused on a region with one of the highest unsheltered homeless and latinx populations as "latinx made up 37 percent of the total population identified as experiencing homelessness in 2019 (Chinchilla and Gabrielian, 2021). As they compared demographic data, employment and income information, health characteristics of these individuals they found differences between the populations. The data from these key factors showed that unsheltered latinx were more likely to be male between the ages of 25-30, reported higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, had lower rates of public benefits enrollment, more likely reported to be homeless longer than 2 years, and were less likely to be working full time, and less likely to be looking for employment compared to sheltered latinx (Chinchilla and Gabrielian, 2021).

### Gentrification and Its Importance

There are many reasons for why there is a lack of affordable housing and gentrification is one of them. Hwang and Lin they mention the "gentrification of neighborhoods in U.S central cities has attracted notice at least since the 1970s" (2016). Just like homelessness, gentrification has multiple definitions and they refer to gentrification as "the process in which neighborhoods with low SES experienced increased investment and an influx of new residents of higher SES" (Hwang and Lin, 2016). Several characteristics of gentrification include improvements in amenities like safety, increase in housing values and rents, and changes in physical, cultural and demographic characteristics of an area. Throughout their research, the authors highlight features of recent gentrification and identify some causal factors by examining recent research. Recent studies by Edlund, Machado, and Sviatschi, suggest that "changes in job access have affected recent gentrification" such as the cost of commuting for college educated workers (2015). Additionally, the researchers noted that you see most gentrification occurring in downtown areas due to "large shifts in the composition of households, towards higher SES residents" which has also increased the value of amenities (Hwang and Lin, 2016). The authors find that an increase in SES residents, more college educated households in cities and downtown neighborhoods have increased safety and amenity values and led to them being gentrified.

Gentrification can be measured by income, indicators of education level, age, and household types. The two measures of gentrification to discern how it is related to neighborhood-level diversity and metropolitan-level segregation in the U.S. are race and class. Comparisons of two analyses are used to assess how gentrification is related to neighborhood socioeconomic diversity in the United States. The first approach is an analysis of trends in neighborhood socioeconomic diversity by measuring socioeconomic diversity over time from the beginning of the decade to the end and contrasting them. The second approach comparison between socioeconomic diversity in gentrifying neighborhoods with all other neighborhoods to determine trends that are specific to gentrifying neighborhoods and affecting all urban neighborhoods. Through this study, it found that "gentrifying neighborhoods started more diverse than other neighborhoods" and remained consistent throughout the study (Freeman, 2009). These approaches help gain a long term overview of how gentrification is related to diversity and to distinguish which trends in neighborhood diversity are specific to gentrifying ones.

To address the racial dimension of gentrification and the reality of it being white gentrifiers displacing low-income blacks is to examine the direct displacement induced by public housing redevelopment and demolition between 1996-2007. Also, an analysis of indirect displacement triggered in neighborhoods surrounding the HOPE VI redevelopment projects from the 1990s. Throughout this study, the evidence the author found from the HOPE VI project that

"displaced residents typically move to other disadvantaged neighborhoods, with poverty rates considerably above city wide averages" (Goetz, 1584). His findings also suggested that "public housing demolition" plays a significant role in current patterns of gentrification in the US (Goetz, 2011). In all, results show efforts of demolition of older public housing projects have displaced hundreds of thousands of low income families and have a disproportionate impact on AfricanAmericans.

#### Other Possible Factors to Homelessness

Further research studies show that there is not a single root cause of homelessness. Shlay and Rossi review research on homelessness from the 1980s and suggest people have severe chronic problems including mental illness, alcoholism, physical disabilities, and poor health, and even criminal histories that correlates to them being homeless (1992). As they studied previous research they found "the majority of homeless persons are mentally ill with severe chronic illnesses such as schizophrenia or manic depression" or even have personality disorders (Shlay and Rossi, 1992). They also found that along with people suffering from mental illness they also accompanied drug and alcohol use. The lack of rehabilitation programs is another source to homelessness as "an average of 41% of the population of homeless persons experienced some form of incarceration within the criminal justice system" (Shlay and Rossi, 1992).

In an exploratory study, the homeless population was examined in a moderately sized community with data of individuals that included characteristics of their age, gender, race, reasons for homelessness, and needs for services of the clients. The sample population consisted of families divided by men and women in order to discover any differences between the two. Results showed that women and men experience homelessness somewhat differently. Author concluded that women were more likely to become homeless because of eviction and domestic violence as 92% of the domestic violence cases were primarily women (Hagen, 1987). Additionally, Hagen found that men were

more likely to become homeless because of "unemployment, alcohol abuse, and jail release" (1987). The article indicates that both men and women experience homelessness differently and the need for services can help parallel the differences.

#### Solutions to Reduce Homelessness

Throughout the literature review we learned that there isn't a single indicator to what causes homelessness. In the article by Moulton, he tests whether programs that provide housing assistance to homeless people can reduce chronic homelessness. In his attempt to do so, he analyzes data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for 130 communities across the United States over the period 2005 to 2007. He chooses to focus on those considered chronically homeless as he mentions that "an estimated 170,000, or 23%, of the 754,000 homeless people in America were chronically homeless in 2005" and they are very costly to serve (2013). Throughout his study he aimed to answer three questions which are: do increased federal funding for homeless programs reduce chronic homelessness? If so, what's the cost of reducing it and which programs are most effective at reducing chronic homelessness? To address the questions the author uses data of counts provided on the number of chronically homeless, the amount of money given to new and renewal homeless projects for communities in the US between 2005 and 2007. Through the combination of data, Moulton concludes that "increased funding for homeless programs can reduce chronic homelessness", specifically long-term housing and services for people with disabilities (2013). Moreover, "homelessness funding has increased over 100% since 2005, exceeding \$5 billion in 2013" and shows that with more funds the less homeless people there are (Lucas, 2017). Further conclusions indicated new federal funding is associated with new housing units for homeless individuals who are alone with disabilities and that increased federal funding can reduce homelessness.

In order to have successful solutions to homelessness there needs to be a focus on the

role of subsidized housing. The article by Dirk W. Early, focuses on additional funding to subsidized housing as being one of the most proposed solutions to homelessness. This study combines data from the American Housing Survey (AHS) with a survey of the homeless to estimate the effectiveness of subsidized housing in reducing homelessness. Early's findings suggest "an increase of 100 subsidized housing units would reduce the numbers of homeless households by less than five" (1998). For example, the renewal of section 8 contracts on rental units would help reduce numbers of homelessness as the "units house 4.4 low-income people" (HUD). This indicates that if programs were to be modified to reduce homelessness like subsidies at each income level being reduced and eliminating the least poor of the current eligible in the programs could create savings used "to provide subsidies to the poorest of the poor" who are more likely to become homeless (Early, 1998).

Similarly, another way of solving the issue of homelessness and putting an end to it is when there is a "widespread recognition that all societies have a responsibility to provide their citizens with decent and affordable housing, excellent health care, stable, meaningful, and well-paid unemployment" (Wright, 2000). By examining previous studies Wright found that mental illness, substance abuse and the inability to keep relationships are some of the factors that cause homelessness. Another factor that causes homelessness is the lack of low-cost housing or lack of income says Wright, as well as the increase of income inequality and poverty whom it affects predominantly people of color (2000). He concludes that proposals of substantial change like reforms and initiatives are solutions to reduce homelessness globally, nationally, and locally.

The last solution proposed is figuring out how to reduce repeated episodes of homelessness by addressing the root cause of it. A study examined individuals who returned back to homeless shelters and the factors that led to the return. The scholars used a sample of 634 adult men to participate in a transitional programming at a large homeless shelter in Montreal. Findings showed that people returned back to the shelter due

"psychosocial and demographic characteristics "like the lack of support from family and friends (Duchesne and Rothwell, 2016). The authors concluded that building more social networks and altering programs to accommodate those at high risk of something preventing them from leaving, may lead to fewer returns of homelessness and better health conditions.

Overall, this literature review depicts the primary target populations of homelessness, the different factors and causes associated with homelessness, and ways to reduce it. The literature emphasizes the importance of understanding what homelessness is and how it affects people in multiple different ways.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The way this thesis is conducted in order to figure out what causes so many minorities to be victims of homeless in Los Angeles County is byemploying a qualitative research design. In this thesis I will be analyzing case studies in order to prove the argument that the lack of affordable housing is the main reason there is such a high rate of homelessness in Los Angeles County. The ultimate goal will be to demonstrate a positive relationship between the lack of affordable housing and the percentage of homelessness in Los Angeles County by comparing three cases: 1) the city of Los Angeles located within the county 2) the city of Compton and 3) Brentwood, a suburban neighborhood in Los Angeles area. As previously mentioned, Los Angeles County is the best region to select potential cases to analyze and compare because it is home to the country's most diverse population, has some of the highest rate of homelessness, and the largest population of minorities compared to others.

Furthermore, both units of analysis are commonly understood to be either an affluent neighborhood like Brentwood, or a minority community like the city of Los Angeles or Compton. To obtain a better understanding of where these three communities are located within Los Angeles and size, Brentwood is a neighborhood located on the west side area of the county that is about 15 square miles, the city of Los Angeles is an area that is just about 503

square miles that is neighbored by Hollywood, Downtown Los Angeles, Venice, and the city of Comptonthat is about 10 square miles is just south of downtown Los Angeles. The process in deciding which cities or neighborhoods would be viable candidates for this analysis depends on firstly, the percentages of homeless in the cities, the population information of them provided by the decennial Census Data, the median household income in these neighborhoods, and the median housing prices of each.

When analyzing these three case studies, I will befocusing on the population in each neighborhood, specifically numbers of race and size of each, the median household income, and the median housing price to live in those specific regions. The presence or absence of measures, such as programs or acts of legislation for affordable housing in those areas are also viable and will be examined to determine their impact on the rate of homelessness for each city and neighborhood. Essentially, the independent variables in this study are programs or legislative acts and policies on affordable housing with the dependent variable being the percentage of homeless in Los Angeles County.

# Census Data

The main reason for gathering statistics from the Census is to accumulatequality data of the people and the economy. TheCensus occurs every ten years and is a great procedurein a way to calculate, acquire, and record informationthat helps give insight into the socioeconomic status of a certain community and when it is used in a comparative analysis, the census data can be used to highlight the disparities between communities as well. This thesis will use those disparities between these communities and analyze how they contribute to high rates of homeless specifically for minorities or people of low socioeconomic status.

Specific categories to be compared include population, race, income, and median housing prices. The categories listed above are typically the criteria needed in order to determine whether a specific community is considered to be an affluent or a minority group. Furthermore, I will determine the percentage of homeless in each neighborhood and find, if any, housing assistance programs provided to those in need.

Up to this point, the general assumption is that the city of Los Angeles and Compton are the minority cities when compared to Brentwood, being an affluent community in Los Angeles County. This thesis provides a community assessment between Brentwood, Compton, and the city of Los Angelesto clearly define each, instead of depending on an assumption. For example, when considering the categories listed above, the most recent 2020 census data will be used to compare Brentwood, Compton, and the city of Los Angeles and will later demonstrate Brentwood to be the affluent community, while the other two are minority cities. Since the city of Los Angeles holds a 48.5% of Hispanic orLatino population and an 8.9% of black of AfricanAmerican population, which makes up nearly half of the population according to the 2020 census data of Los Angeles city, it will be a great community to use in comparing how there are more minorities homeless due to their being lack of affordable housing in the area (Census Data, 2020). Brentwood, Compton, and the City of Los Angeles' census data can be found atwww. data.census.gov. This website allows one to be able to localize data based on the city, town, or zip code and provides the most accurate information (Census Data, 2020).

Ultimately, the framework of this analysis is that the City of Los Angeles and Compton are home to some of the largest populationsconsisting of minorities, with high rates of homelessness that will be compared to its affluent counterpart Brentwood. It is known as amore suburban neighborhood in Los Angeles County that has less minorities and verylittle to no homeless population. This framework of analysis is going to provide the results of the disparities found between the communities and can be further analyzed to prove the overall argument that the lack of affordable housing is the root cause for minorities being victims of homelessness.

When doing this type of methodology there are some things to keep in mind. Some things to be kept in mind are one of the strengths of this

type of study which is having high internal validity which is the ability to conclusively prove a causal relationship between variables without systematic bias. However, other things to keep in mind are some of the drawbacks to take into consideration when using this type of research design as well. Since qualitative data involves a small number of cases, it has low external validity, which is defined as the extent to which the research design is able to support the inference about the population of interest and with qualitative studies it is difficult to do so. Overall, the use of qualitative data and case studies to be specific, is a beneficial way to gain concrete, in depth knowledge about these specific areas as the characteristics and implications are explored.

#### **RESULTS**

#### **Community Assessment**

The Community Assessment section will examine various disparities found in a comparison between a more affluent suburban neighborhood and two minority communities. This assessment will help to answer the question of what are the causes or factors that lead more minority communities like Los Angeles or Compton residents to become victims of homelessness rather than an affluent neighborhood like Brentwood? This section will begin first by defining Brentwood as the affluent neighborhood and continue to show Los Angeles and Compton as the minority communities. Additionally, it will provide an analysis of how race, income, housing prices, and housing programs may cause or prevent homelessness.

# Case Study #1: Brentwood, Los Angeles

The suburban neighborhood of Brentwood, California has a total population of 64,292 as of the 2020 Census. It is to be considered the affluent neighborhood when compared to other cities like Los Angeles and Compton. The characteristics that will support this definition of Brentwood being an affluent neighborhoodinvolves examining the population, race, median household income, median listing home price, and housing programs available

while comparing it to the other cities such as Los Angeles and Compton. Based on the most recent decennial 2020 United States Census, 63.3% of the neighborhood's population is white, making up most of the population and leaving little of minorities in the area (Census Data, 2020). According to niche.com, Brentwood's median household income is found to be around\$154,159 whereas the median household income for Compton is \$58,703 and Los Angeles median household income being \$75,627.

As of January 2022, the Brentwood Housing Market lists the median listing home price at \$2.3 million and the median sold price of a house being at \$2.2 million (Realtor, 2022). Also, the average cost to rent aone-bedroom apartment in Brentwood is about \$2,874 a month and only continues to increase depending on the amount of rooms the apartment has. In order to be able to afford the average rent of \$2,874, a person needs to makeat least 40 times the amount of the average cost. This 40x rule is a rule that most landlords follow in pretty much every major city. So, for the neighborhood of Brentwood, people need to make at least \$110,000 in order to be able to the afford rent to live. Since, the average household income is around\$154,159 or morefor those living in Brentwood, many can afford the highexpensive housing costand living without any worries.

For a better understanding of why housing prices aremuch on the higher end in Brentwood, Los Angeles is due to the locationof where the area is located. It is located on the westside region of Los Angeles and is a neighbor to other high valued neighborhoods to live in such as Santa Monica, Bel Air, and Westwood, with a land square mileage of 15.2. It is also home to many celebrities, has many site seeing attractions, and a world class museum known as the Getty Museum, that attracts the eyes of many. When comparing it to the city of Los Angeles and the city of Compton it is fair to say that Brentwood is considered to bethe affluent community of the three since more residents in the area are able to afford the cost of living with the median household income and more.

#### Homeless in Brentwood

In the neighborhood of Brentwood there are few homeless individuals living in vehicles or hillside areas when compared to Los Angeles and Compton. According to the Brentwood Community Council, their "annual homeless count rarely tops 60 people" ever since the cityfirst started to participate in the annual homeless count in 2014 (BCC, 2021). The city has been facing an issue with homeless encampment alongside San Vicente Boulevard, where dozens of homeless can be found. As mentioned by the community council, based on data reported from "county outreach teams from 2015 - 2020, about 50% of the homeless along the fence are Veterans" (BCC, 2021). The outreach teams also found that the other 50% of homeless individuals in the encampment tend to be long term transient homeless, that consist of 90% being adult, white males, who move back and forth from DTLA, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, Malibu, Santa Monica (BCC, 2021). The homeless population in Brentwood is immensely different from the homeless population in Los Angeles and Compton. In this neighborhood, the homeless are typically white, adult, maleveterans that likely suffer from PTSD, alcoholism, or drug use with no family to turn to. These individuals cannot afford the cost of living in the area, do not qualify for certain benefits or programs, or are not simply ready for change.

# Homeless Programs & Government Assistance

Brentwood offers assistance to those in need suffering from homelessness and even offers programs for the median individual to be able to afford to live in the area. Even though the neighborhood of Brentwood is known to be an exceedingly expensive area to live in, celebrities with an immense about of money are not the only ones who are able to live there. This is due to the local government realizing the high cost of housing in the area which ultimately lead to "20% of multifamily units in the neighborhood qualifying for Fannie Mae loans" and the use of \$100 of HUD vouchers in Los Angeles for studios and one-bedroom units (Neamt, 2020).

As a result of there being predominantly veterans that make up Brentwood's homeless population, they are also offered Veterans Affairs assistance provided by the government that can help eligible dependents obtain compensation, education, health care, home loan, insurance, pension, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and burial and memorial benefits. These government assisted programs are designed to assist veterans who are homeless and in need of treatment and social services. The county also provides transitional housing, which is temporary housing for homeless population, who are working and earning too little money to be able to afford long term housing, in hopes to transition residents from temporary to permanent affordable housing one day. Overall, there are housing programs and government assistance offered to residents in Brentwood and those who face homelessness in the area that will aid them into obtaining affordable housing.

### Case Study #2: Los Angeles, California

Home to 3,898,747 people, the city of Los Angeles can often be defined as a minoritybasedcommunity even though it is considered to be one of the richest cities based on GDP. Additionally, even though the city of Los Angeles is found to have one of the highest square mileage in land area with one of the most diverse populations, it is still home to many minorities as itconsists of a vast amount of poverty within its neighborhoods. In order to display Los Angeles as a minority community same characteristicsused to analyze Brentwood abovewill be examined. It will focus on the population, race, median household income, median listing home price, and housing programs available in the city, while comparing it to another minority-basedcity and an affluent neighborhood like Brentwood.

As previouslymentioned, according to the 2020 Census, Los Angeles' population is 3,898,747 with minorities making up 57.4% of the population (2020 Census). The statistics mentioned shows that over half of the population in the city of Los Angeles are majority people of color and minorities. When looking at the median

household income for those living in the city of Los Angeles as stated from the 2020 census, the average household income is found to be \$75,624, whereas the median household income for Compton is \$58,703 and for Brentwood is \$154,159(2020 Census). To live in the city of Los Angeles, according to Redfin, the median listing housing price as of January 2022, was \$949,000 and the median home sold price was \$912,800. Additionally, the average rent for apartments is about \$2,545 meaning a person would have to make at least \$102,000 per year in order to be able to afford the average cost of apartments for rent. However, data from the most recent census shows that median household income for Los Angeles is \$75,624 indicating that most individuals cannot even afford to pay the average cost of rent for apartments, let alone houses in the area. As a result of the high housing cost in the city, it leads many people to become victims of homelessness as they are barely able to afford he cost of living.

For a better insight of the city of Los Angeles, its location lies adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, Santa Monica mountains, and a little into the San Fernando Valley which helps to explain why the cost of living and rents may be so high. It is surrounded by other great neighborhoods, close to many attractions, and also home to some of the best scenery making prices go up very high. In comparison to Brentwood, the city of Los Angeles is found to have higher percentages of minoritiesmaking up majority of it's population, with high costs of living showing that Los Angeles is considered to be more of a minority community rather than an affluent one.

# Homeless in Los Angeles

Homelessness continues to rise in Los Angeles as the city has experienced a 14.2% increase over the last year of people experiencing homelessness making it total to 41,290 individuals (Scott, 2020). The Homeless Services Authority indicates that "black people make up only 8% of the total population but 34% of people experiencing homelessness" in LA County (Scott, 2020). The agency also claims that on top of high rents and a shortage of affordable housing, stagnant wages, and systemic racism is what affects housing,

health care, justice, economic policies which are the major contributors to this crisis. It is important to know about the epicenter of the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles which is known as Skid Row today. Skid Row, located in downtown, is home tonearly 4,700 individuals experiencing homelessness and as of 2020 according to LAHSA,"59% identified as Black and 23% as Latino" (Ward, 2021). The lack of affordable housing plays a huge role in the homelessness crisis, but so does Los Angeles' history of redlining, as it forced manyBlack and Latino communities to emergemultiple households under one roof. The issue of redlining is of great importance as well because it was a time of discriminatory houselending practices that emerged from Roosevelt's New Deal, that helps to reveal why Black people are overrepresented in the unhoused population (Ward, 2021). The legacy of redlining in Los Angeles is valuable as the origins of those lending habits show why intergenerational poverty and the wealth gap between white Americans and everyone else is so large.

The Greater Los Angeles Homeless count was stopped in 2021 due to the pandemic as the organization did not want thousands of volunteers coming together for sake of their own safety. However, because of the pandemic it has made homelessness become more visible as many more individuals, especially minorities, and those of low socioeconomic status, fell victims of this horrific crisis. This issue continues to rise in the city of Los Angeles and targets people of color as this ever-growing population of individuals are not able to afford the high housing costs to live. Lastly, the city continues to see rising numbers in this crisis even though there have been millions of dollars spent to house individuals.

# Homeless Programs & Government Assistance

Los Angeles continues to see increasing numbers of homeless throughout the city and county. In order to help assess the issue there are some programs and assistance provided to those experiencing homelessness. Some of these include Proposition HHH, Measure H, Project RoomKey, and an executive order banning landlords from evicting tenants for not paying rent during covid-19. Proposition HHH is a \$1.2 billion bond measure that was approved by voters in 2016 and was created to support the development of 8,000-10,000 permanent supportive housing units within the city of Los Angeles over 10 years. Measure H is a Los Angeles County sales tax to fund homeless services that was approved by voters in 2017. It raises \$335 million annually for 10 years to coordinate outreach services such as street engagement and to subsidize housing costs. The measure help contribute funds to \$571 million that is for homeless initiatives through July 2022 and to interim, permanent and rapid re-housing efforts (Ward, 2021).

Another federally funded program launched in order to combat the issue of homelessness in Los Angeles is Project RoomKey which was a joint effort by the state, county and city of Los Angeles and LAHSA in 2020. This project secured hotel and motel rooms for unhoused people to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The hotels and motels were rented by the county and the program was initially supposed to put 15,000 people in shelter but was only able to shelter8,900 people (LAHSA, 2021). However, the project began winding down and led to a new project called Project Home-key. This project is joint effort by Los Angeles County and the state to purchase and rehabilitate hotels and motels from the previous Project RoomKey, that will be converted to permanent housing for unhoused people.LAHSA mentions that the state of California provides \$78 million in funding for this project and found that during its 2021 shelter count presentation that "Project Home-key has served more than 1,100 people" in receiving permanent housing (2021). Other governmental efforts to reduce homeless was Governor Gavin Newsom's executive order on pending evictions. This orderprohibited law enforcement and courts from enforcing evictions due to covid-19. These governmental actions saved many families and individuals from becoming homeless during a national pandemic crisis. There has already been a high demand for affordable housing in Los Angeles, but as a result of the pandemic it led to an even greater demand and has spiked the percentage of the homeless population.

### Case Study #3: Compton, California

Even though 95,740 people refer to the city of Compton as their home, it is commonly referred to as the poorest city in Los Angeles County, with its people being perceived as a minority community. It's also considered as a minority community when compared to others because it has some of the greatest rates of poverty. The city is located just south of downtown Los Angeles with a smaller land area than both Brentwood and Los Angeles which is about 10 squared miles. Compton has a below average in median household income and is a city with a low socioeconomic status thatclearlyhelps to define it as a minority community when compared the neighborhood of Brentwood and city of Los Angeles.

According to the 2020 Census, Compton's population is made up of 28.5% of the population beingwhite,69.3% being Hispanic or Latino, and 27.6% being Black. The census shows that the city is predominantly full of minorities and people of color which are the individuals that are typically affected by socioeconomic factors that lead them to homelessness. The average household income in Compton from the latest census shows that it averages to about \$58,703 (Census,2020). According to the realtor. com, Compton's housing marketas of February 2022, lists the median listing home price value of \$549,900 and the median home sold price at \$587,500. The average cost of rent for apartments in Compton is approximately \$1,511 and in order to afford the average cost of an apartment, following the 40x rule, an individual must make about \$60,000.Since, the median household income falls at \$58,703 individuals living in the area are not even able to afford the cost to live in rent for apartments. Additionally, the cost of rent varies depending on factors such as the location, size, and quality of the apartments making manymore people not able to afford a decent and safe place to live. Moreover, if individuals making on average a median household income of \$58,703, there is slight to no chance that they can afford houses ranging from \$550,000 and up. Overall, in comparison to Brentwood, minorities make up most of Compton's populationmaking it a minority community as well as having a high enough cost of living for those in the city to barely be able to afford it.

#### Homeless in Compton

Los Angeles county continues to suffer from the issue of homelessness as numbers continue to rise through the cities within and their growing population. Compton, a city otherwise known as the "working class" is a neighborhood home to many minorities that seems to be negatively affected by this issue. According to the latest homeless count for cities in Los Angeles county it found that the city of Compton has 652 people as of 2020 facing homelessness (LAHSA, 2021). The datashows that about 40 percent of the homeless population in Compton are reported to be African American and about 20 percent are hispanics, making up more than half of the homeless population to be people of color. Although, Compton is much smaller when compared to Brentwood or Los Angeles, it is still home to almost 100,000 individuals with majority being people of color that are the ones who continue to face this historical pattern of racism. A report on black homelessness found racism to be a root cause for why many black individuals are victims of homelessness. The report found that "black homeownership in L.A. County has declined to 36 percent from 44 percent" which indicates how minorities have and continue to be victims of a never ending cycle of discrimination that must come to an end first in order to end homelessness (NY Times, 2020).

# Homeless Programs & Government Assistance

As more and more working-class individuals find their way into Compton the numbers of homelessness rises. According to the statistics mentioned about, minorities who make up most of Compton's population are unable to afford the cost of living in the area. Since the median average income for individuals does not seem to be enough to even afford a

mediocre apartment, let alone a house, it leads to many of them to suffer becoming homeless. Compton provides numerous homeless shelters and services for those in need. As found from the homelessshelterdirectory.org, it lists several different types of shelters near the area of the city of Compton and services, like transitional resources and more for the needy. The city continues to battle the issue of homelessness as it has created an emergency solution grant (ESG) for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, housing relocation and stabilization services for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and homeless management information systems. This grant was created by the city for the sole purpose of providing emergency shelter and street outreach, emergency shelter operation and renovation, and short-term and mediumterm rental assistance for those at risk of being homeless.

Based on this case study analysis, it is found that minorities are predominantly to be victims of homelessness more than majorities in Los Angeles County as they are affected by barriers such as the lack of affordable housing and discrimination. Although, results indicated show that anyone of color can be victims of homeless, focusing specifically in Los Angeles County, statistics show that more minorities are those experiencing it most. This thesis suggests that those living in more minority based communities like Compton and the city of Los Angeles, are more likely to be homeless and may continue to be due to lack of inadequate affordable housing in the areas. As demonstrated, individuals living in Compton and Los Angeles make a median income of about \$58,700 and \$75,000 which is barely enough to be able to afford homes at a median price of \$550,000 in Compton and \$949,000 in Los Angeles, let alone be able to afford the cost of living. In the neighborhood of Brentwood, residents living in the area make an average income of \$154,000 are able to afford the cost of living and housing due to the fact that their income wage is at least doubled when compared to those living in Compton or the city of Los Angeles.

For the neighborhood of Brentwood, there is a disproportionate rate of homelessness when compared to the neighborhood's overall population size of 64,292 people. In the neighborhood there were only about 60 people found to be homeless that consisted of mostly white, adult, veterans. Now for Compton being a city with about 95,000 people there is about 652 individuals who are homeless as of 2021. For the city of Los Angelesis it home to about 4 million people and about 41,290 homeless individuals. The size of each neighborhood and city population helps to demonstrate how disproportionate homelessness is.

For Brentwood, the homeless population of veterans are likely to remain in the neighborhood to due to the fact that there are resources nearby such as the Veteran Affairs agencies that will provide them with any resources and services they may need. Additionally, since Brentwood itself, is a neighborhood that does not directly have its own city councils or members, it relies more on the residents to maintain the community. With that being said more residents of the neighborhood need to come together to form solutions and their own programs or organizations that will help provide resources to their unhoused in order to eliminate the issue of homelessness overall. However, the community members seem to be doing a decent job at assessing the homeless since their numbers never reach over 60 individuals. Since Brentwood is a neighborhood and not necessarily a city within Los Angeles County, their efforts are more of a hands-on base where residents and community members are able to directly assist and aid their homeless population.

For Compton and Los Angeles, it is a bit different since they are both actual cities within the county. As indicated, Compton and Los Angeles are home to many more minorities than Brentwood, with even larger rates of homelessness. Both these cities need more city officials engaged and community involvement to see any achievements in reducing the rates of homelessness in both areas. As minorities and people of color have been underrepresented for many years, there needs to be more city officials that can properly and accurately represent the minority communities, as well as more members of the community getting involved with this issue in order for change to actually occur.

Overall, as more minorities in Los Angeles County are found to be majority of the homeless populations in the area the focus and goal should be to have government officials and representatives of color, to eliminate any discrimination and help show minorities that they do have someone that understands what they have been through and will ensure that their efforts will be in their bests interest. With more individuals of color in governmental positions and power it will give hope to the homeless population and other minorities seeking change for such an issue. The overall findings of this thesis suggests there needs to be more governmental assistance such as federal funding for housing programs and more subsidized housing to combat the issue of homelessness as it is tied to the lack of affordable housing in Los Angeles County, so that waythe average person or even an individual of low socioeconomic status is able to afford a place they can call home. In addition, there also needs to be reforms or initiatives in place to address other homeless populations like the individuals affected by alcoholism, drugabuse, violence, and as well as a need to have better community engagement and more individual activists seeking change toassist the homeless population and achieve any success. But, to do so, it all must start with having political will and the individuals of a community having a sense of drive to wanting to solve these problems by doing it themselves.

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