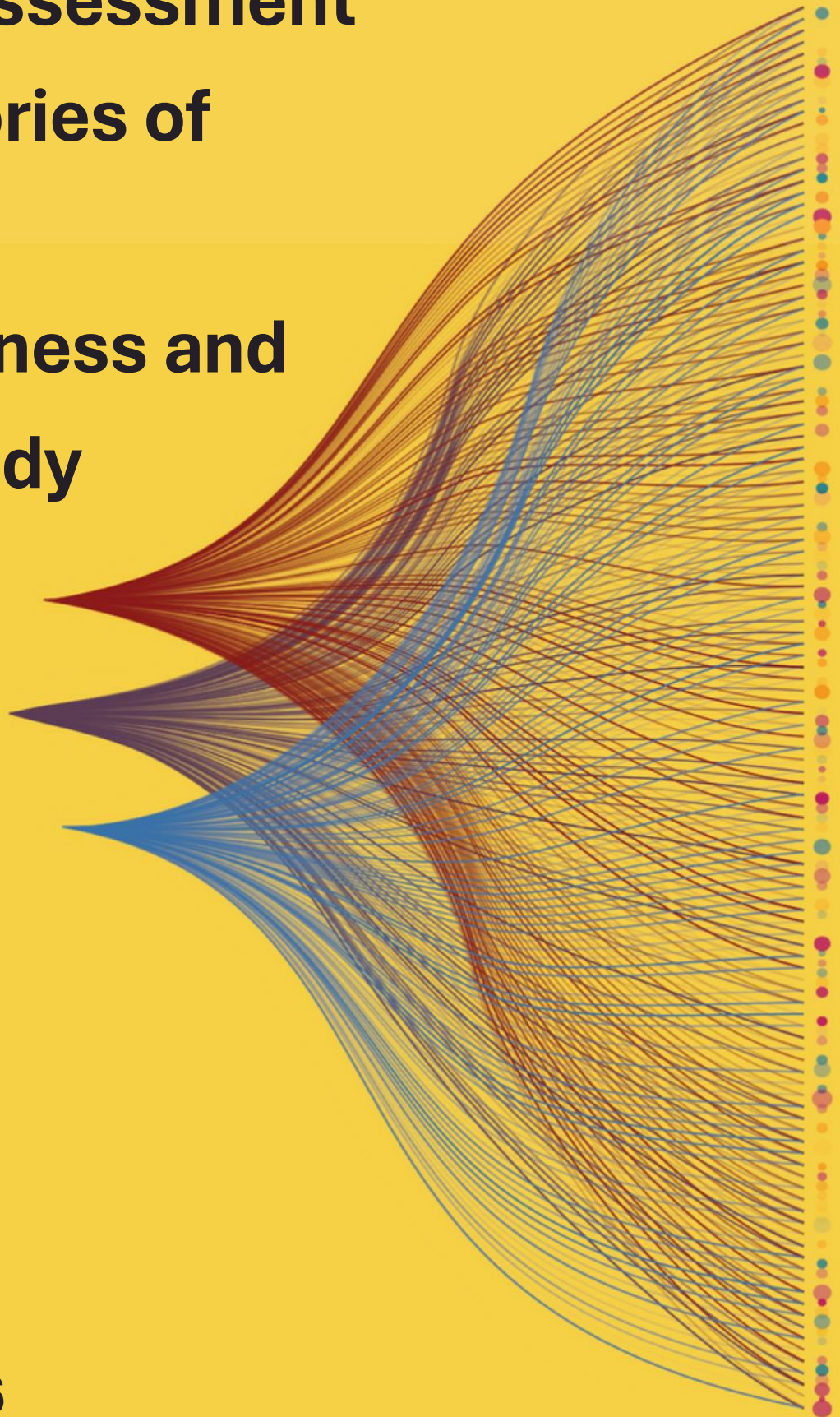


# **Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Homelessness and Health Study (PATHS)**



**October 2026**

# Clearing Encampments or Resolving Homelessness?

Evidence on encampment sweeps and encampment resolution programs from a longitudinal study of unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles County

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A COLLABORATION BETWEEN



USC Homelessness Policy  
Research Institute

UCLA Fielding  
School of Public Health



Housing & Olympics: Monitoring for Equity  
Research on housing, homelessness and the Los Angeles 2028 Games

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## About this report

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Proposed solutions to homelessness are usually made about unhoused people rather than with them. A survey can measure how often someone is swept, cited, or offered shelter. However, it cannot illustrate what it means to be offered temporary shelter or a place to live, or to have your tent taken from you and be forced to move when there is nowhere else to go. Understanding those experiences requires the knowledge of people who have lived them.

This report combines two sources of evidence about encampment clearance and resolution efforts in Los Angeles. The first is academic research, namely the Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Health and Homelessness Study (PATHS), which is a longitudinal study led by UCLA and USC investigators that has followed a cohort of unsheltered Angelenos through monthly surveys since 2021. The second is “WeSearch,” a poor people–led research practice grounded in poverty scholarship: the understanding that surviving poverty and houselessness produce real expertise, and that this expertise belongs at the center of how problems are defined and solutions are designed. At a Street-Writing Workshop held on September 27, 2026, in Van Nuys by POOR Magazine and Aetna Street Solidarity, poverty scholars with current and past experience of houselessness wrote about their own experiences of sweeps, displacement, and policing. Their narratives appear throughout the report alongside the survey results, written by the people who live with the policies the data describe.

The pressure to clear encampments will grow in Los Angeles as we approach the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This report gives policymakers two things together: population-level evidence on what current approaches achieve, and the analysis from the people those approaches are meant to serve. We see this partnership as a model for how monitoring of sweeps and ERPs should continue through 2028 and beyond.

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## List of Acronyms

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|       |                                                                               |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PATHS | Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Health and Homelessness Study |
| PEH   | People experiencing homelessness                                              |
| LA    | Los Angeles                                                                   |
| SPA   | Service Planning Area                                                         |
| ERP   | Encampment Resolution Program                                                 |
| CARE+ | Comprehensive Cleaning and Rapid Engagement Plus                              |
| DiD   | Difference in differences                                                     |
| UCLA  | University of California, Los Angeles                                         |
| USC   | University of Southern California                                             |
| RV    | Recreational vehicle                                                          |
| PTSD  | Post-traumatic stress disorder                                                |

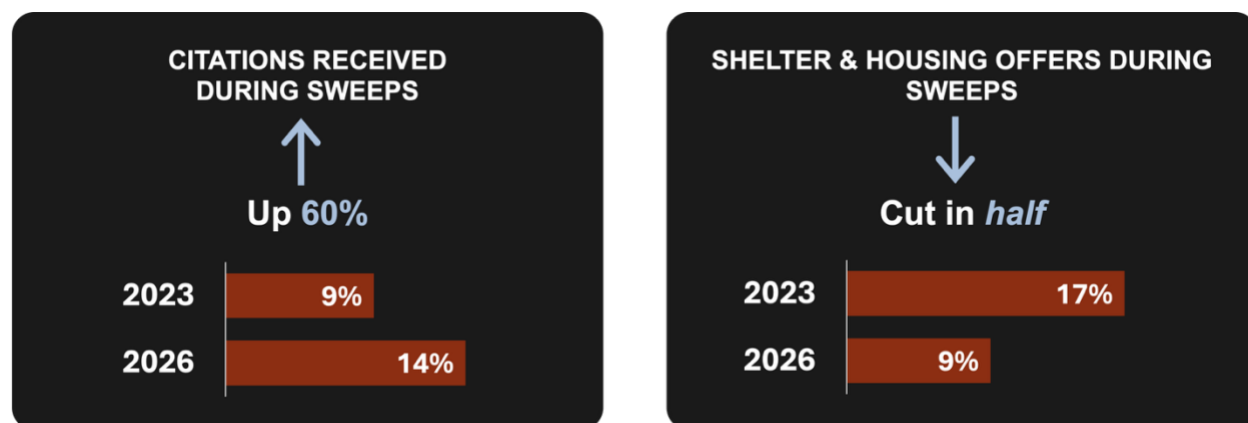
## Executive Summary

Los Angeles has invested heavily in supportive and interim housing, rental assistance, and homelessness services, yet the supply still falls well short of demand. As the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games approach, officials face growing pressure to address unsheltered homelessness, particularly in highly visible areas. Los Angeles currently relies on two principal approaches to address encampments. Conventional encampment clearances, commonly called sweeps, direct people to move and may involve sanitation workers, law enforcement, citations, arrests, and the removal of personal belongings. Encampment Resolution Programs, or ERPs, are intended to offer a more service-oriented alternative. Programs such as the City of Los Angeles's Inside Safe initiative and Los Angeles County's Pathway Home use targeted outreach and offers of interim housing, typically in hotels or motels, with the stated goal of helping participants reach permanent housing.

This report examines how these approaches operate in practice, whom they reach, and what happens to the people affected by them. The quantitative analysis draws on ~17,000 monthly surveys completed by 1,600 participants in the Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Health and Homelessness Study (PATHS) between April 2023 and July 2026. Because PATHS follows the same people over time, including after they enter shelter or housing, it allows us to examine not only whether someone experienced a sweep or was invited to participate in an ERP, but what happened afterward. Alongside these quantitative findings are first-person accounts developed through WeSearch, a poor people-led research practice grounded in the principle that people who have experienced homelessness possess expertise essential to understanding and addressing it. Through a Street-Writing Workshop and data walk convened by POOR Magazine and Aetna Street Solidarity, currently and formerly houseless poverty scholars documented their experiences of sweeps, policing, displacement, and interim housing, interpreted the PATHS findings, and identified consequences the survey data could not capture.

### Key findings

**Sweeps are a routine experience for unsheltered Angelenos, but they rarely provide a pathway indoors and are becoming more punitive.** On average, one in four PATHS respondents reported experiencing a sweep in any given month. Between 2023 and 2026, the proportion of sweeps that included a shelter or housing offer fell from approximately 17% to 9%. Over the same period, the proportion resulting in a citation rose from approximately 9% to 14%.



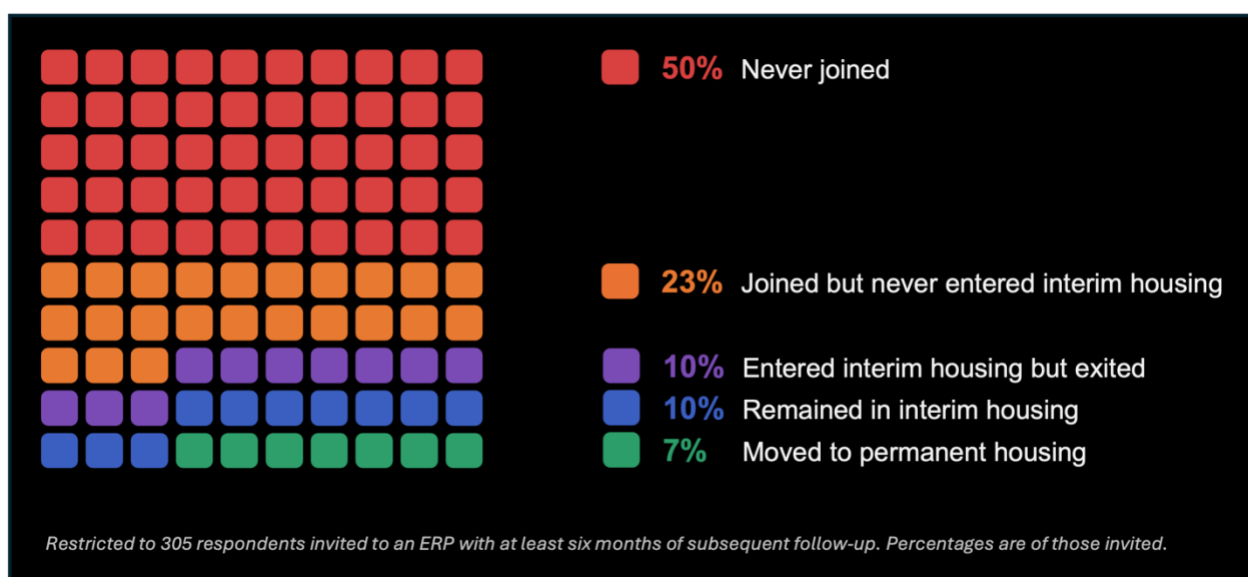
**The constraint is the short supply meaningful offers, not an unwillingness to accept help.** Two-thirds of respondents who received a shelter or housing offer during a sweep accepted it, reaching 78% for motel or hotel placements and 80% for bridge or transitional housing. Even congregate shelter, which very few identified as a preferred option, was accepted by nearly half of those offered it. These findings challenge the common assumption that people choose to stay outside.

**The consequences of sweeps extend well beyond being told to move.** Sweep exposure was associated with increases in forced displacement, police contact, property loss, food insecurity, emergency department use, harassment, physical or sexual violence, poorer self-rated physical health, and greater psychological distress. Poverty scholars described losing tents, medications, identification, clothing, phones, memorials, and other possessions that could not easily be replaced as well as being separated from outreach workers and their communities. As one scholar explained, the trauma follows people and affects their health, relationships, and ability to regain stability.

**ERPs perform substantially better than conventional sweeps in shelter yield and retention as well as service access, but their reach is limited.** From December 2023 through July 2026, 22% of the cohort reported an ERP invitation, while 60% experienced a sweep over the same period. The housing pathways of the two approaches diverged sharply at the point where assistance was offered. Among 305 respondents invited to an ERP, 79 entered interim or permanent housing (26%), and 50 (16%) remained sheltered or housed after six months. Among 744 respondents who experienced a sweep without a concurrent ERP invitation, only 21 (3%) entered shelter or housing, and 10 (1.3%) remained indoors after six months. On a per-person-reached basis, ERPs produced roughly twelve times the shelter retention rate of sweeps. ERPs also avoided many of the immediate harms associated with sweeps and were associated with a 10-percentage-point increase in

receiving help applying for services. These findings suggest that sustained outreach and immediate access to private interim accommodations can reduce the harms associated with conventional encampment clearances.

**Better than a sweep, however, is not the same as resolving homelessness.** Among people invited to an ERP and followed for six months, half never joined, and a further 23% joined but never entered interim housing. Of the roughly one quarter who did get indoors, 10% had already exited by six months. That leaves 10% still in interim housing and 7% in permanent housing — about one in six of those invited, and fewer than 2% of the full PATHS cohort. Most people approached through an ERP either never entered interim housing or did not remain indoors.



First-person accounts help explain this attrition. Poverty scholars acknowledged the immediate benefits of a private room, including safety, warmth, showers, and a bed. They also described interim housing settings with restrictions on visitors and activities that gave structure and meaning to their lives, conditions some characterized as institutional or prison-like, with some noting that even prisoners are allowed visitors. As the wait for permanent housing lengthened and confidence in the pathway diminished, some concluded that the autonomy of living outside outweighed the benefits of remaining indoors. Their accounts make clear that the conditions of interim housing and the credibility of the pathway to a permanent home determine whether people stay.

## What the findings mean

If the goal was to design an encampment operation that fares better than a conventional sweep, ERPs appear to accomplish it. They are more likely to bring people indoors, more likely to connect them with services, and less likely to expose them to enforcement, displacement, and property loss. But ERPs are costly and resource-intensive operations that reach a relatively small share of the unsheltered population, and their apparent success depends heavily on which outcomes are measured and which people remain in the denominator. A retention rate of approximately 60% among those who enter interim housing may appear encouraging, but it excludes people who were never invited, those who did not enroll, those who enrolled but never received a placement, and those who returned outside. These groups constitute most of the people encountered through the intervention.

An operation may successfully clear a location while leaving most of the people who lived there homeless and increasingly scattered from the relative safety of large encampments in accessible locations into rough sleeping or smaller encampments in isolated locations where they become even harder to reach. If the objective is resolving homelessness rather than resolving the visible presence of an encampment, the current results remain inadequate.

## Implications for Los Angeles

With approximately 21 months remaining before the 2028 Games, improving ERPs will be important, but it will not be enough. The findings point to three priorities for a more responsible and effective response to encampments.

**Expand access to permanent housing within the remaining time.** Los Angeles cannot build all the affordable housing it needs before the Games, but it can examine whether additional housing can be secured through rental subsidies, flexible financial assistance, master leasing, property acquisition or conversion, and stronger incentives for landlords accepting tenants with vouchers. Without more housing at the end of the pathway, interim placements will remain as bottlenecks instead of bridges to permanent homes.

**Strengthen the pathway from outreach to permanent housing.** ERPs need multiple placement options, interim settings that preserve greater autonomy, and continued engagement when an initial offer does not result in placement. People with lived experience should be compensated and given meaningful authority in designing, operating, and evaluating these programs. Poverty scholars highlighted the eagerness of mutual aid organizations to provide peer support both inside motels and to reengage people who have

exited. The PATHS survey illustrates how even relatively simple and low-cost electronic connection platforms can keep people engaged with the system.

**Develop safe options for people who cannot be placed indoors.** Most people living outside are never reached by ERPs or do not get placed in interim housing. If they cannot remain where they are and no appropriate indoor option exists, they still need somewhere safe and lawful to go. Repeatedly directing people to another sidewalk merely transfers the problem and exposes them to another cycle of displacement. Los Angeles should consider a broader range of alternatives, including safe parking and sanctioned camping programs that provide sanitation, water, storage, health care, outreach, transportation, and continuing pathways toward housing. Such programs are not substitutes for permanent housing, but the absence of any viable alternative leaves repeated displacement as the default.

Los Angeles must pursue two objectives at once: maintaining safe and accessible public spaces and reducing the number of people who remain unsheltered. ERPs are better positioned than conventional sweeps to advance both objectives, but because they are resource intensive relative to their reach and capacity, their benefits must therefore be weighed against what the same investments might accomplish if directed toward permanent housing, broader access to interim shelter, sustained outreach not tied to encampment clearance, and safer alternatives for people who cannot immediately be placed indoors, including safe parking and sanctioned camping programs. Access to assistance and basic safety should not depend on living in an encampment selected for clearance.

This report establishes a baseline for continued monitoring of sweeps, policing, ERP reach, and housing outcomes as Los Angeles approaches 2028. Success cannot be measured solely by the disappearance of an encampment--It must account for everyone affected by an operation. Where did people go? Are they safer? Do they remain connected to assistance? Are they closer to permanent housing, or are they simply waiting to be moved again? Until Los Angeles can answer those questions, encampments may be cleared, but they cannot credibly be called resolved.

# Introduction

Homelessness is fundamentally a housing problem ([Colburn & Aldern, 2022](#)), yet decades of inadequate federal investment in affordable housing have left state and local governments to manage the resulting homelessness crisis with solutions that do not always involve housing. The mismatch is especially stark in Los Angeles (LA) County, home to the nation's largest unsheltered population, with an estimated 50,000 people living on the streets, in tents or makeshift shelters, or in vehicles on any given night ([Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2026](#)). While the ultimate solution lies in expanding the supply of affordable housing, local governments must still decide what to do in the short term when tens of thousands of people are living outside and sufficient housing does not exist.

This impossible question is particularly important in the run-up to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, with as many as [6,000 people living in the path of security buffer zones](#). With the eyes of the world turning to LA for the next two years, demand is mounting to clear streets by any means necessary. Olympic history demonstrates the harms of fragmented, reactive approaches that rely heavily on enforcement and temporary displacement to manage visible poverty ([Chew, 2026](#)). Los Angeles has both an opportunity and an obligation to do better. Without transparency and accountability, the harms of the worst approaches will remain invisible.

## Box 1. Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games and unsheltered Angelenos

The [HOME2028.la](#) website documents the long history of displacement of unhoused people at global sporting mega-events like the Olympics. Los Angeles (LA) has hosted the Games twice before, and the 1984 Olympics offer the closest precedent. In the lead-up, LA Police Department conducted large-scale sweeps of unhoused people, who were predominantly Black and Latino, in Downtown and South LA. This included a Skid Row operation in which mounted officers dispersed residents under an explicit order to "sanitize the area." Between 1980 and 1984, the City also banned public camping and sleeping in vehicles. The pattern is not unique to LA: Atlanta issued roughly 9,000 arrest citations to unhoused people before the 1996 Games, and Paris bused nearly 5,000 people out of the city before 2024.

Whether 2028 repeats that history is still an open question. Reporting on the LA 2028 Olympic Games indicates that officials have been told to plan for security perimeters as wide as one mile around venues. In a separate analysis, we estimate that at least 5,975

unsheltered people countywide and 5,501 in the City of Los Angeles live inside that security footprint — 13.6% of LA County's unsheltered population and 19.8% of the City's. Each of them will need somewhere to go, and where they go will determine whether LA28 is remembered as the housing Olympics or the displacement Olympics.

[HOME2028.la](#) hosts these estimates and will be updated as more becomes known about the impacts of the Games on homelessness in the region.

In the absence of sufficient permanent housing, LA County's policies toward unhoused people are defined in large part by efforts to address the presence of encampments, predicated on the enforcement of local ordinances prohibiting camping in public spaces ([Giamarino & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2024](#); [Herring, 2024](#)). These local responses have generally taken two forms. The first includes encampment clearances, often termed homeless “sweeps,”<sup>1</sup> and other forms of anti-homeless policing, which have proven to be harmful to unhoused individuals and ineffective as a pipeline to housing, yet nevertheless persist in the name of sanitation and public safety ([Roy et al., 2022](#); [Roy et al., 2025](#); [Kennedy et al., 2026](#)). The second includes the more recent rise of “Encampment Resolution Programs” (hereafter referred to as “ERPs”)<sup>2</sup>, such as the City of LA's Inside Safe initiative, which purport to work closely with encampment residents to ensure that all individuals are placed in interim housing with opportunities to move into permanent housing ([Dunton et al., 2025](#)). Together, sweeps, criminalization, and ERPs constitute the primary ways LA currently responds to unsheltered homelessness. Yet little is known about how many unhoused people these approaches actually reach, how often they lead to shelter or housing, and what they mean for people's lives.

As Los Angeles considers its options in the run-up to the 2028 Olympics, this report reviews the current status of these encampment clearance and resolution efforts. Primary evidence

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “homeless sweeps” because it is widely recognized by both the unhoused community and the general public and is the terminology used in the surveys underlying this report. We recognize, however, that the term has been criticized for its associations with the removal and stigmatization of unhoused people. Terms such as “encampment eviction” and “encampment removal” may more precisely describe the actions at issue while avoiding these associations. We retain “sweeps” primarily for consistency and continuity with commonly understood language.

<sup>2</sup> The State of California funds many of these efforts through Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF), so they are often called ERFs. Programs often carry local brand names as well: in Los Angeles, Inside Safe and Pathway Home. Smaller individual operations are sometimes simply called encampment resolutions. We use Encampment Resolution Programs, or ERPs, as a catchall throughout the report, because our interest is in what these programs do rather than where the money comes from.

comes from the Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Health and Homelessness Study, or [PATHS](#), a joint initiative between USC and UCLA aimed at shining a light on the lives and experiences of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) in LA County ([Kuhn et al., 2025](#)). PATHS features a representative sample of PEH who were unsheltered at study enrollment, with ongoing monthly survey tracking on housing, health, and well-being, even if respondents move into housing or shelter. We augmented and interpreted these quantitative findings by engaging with WeSearch, a poor people-led research practice through which poverty scholars with current and past experience of homelessness wrote narratives and held discussions with PATHS researchers during a Street-Writing Workshop held by [POOR Magazine](#) and [Aetna Street Solidarity](#) in Van Nuys. Some of these narratives appear alongside the relevant survey findings, and the poverty scholars who wrote them also shaped how those findings are presented. This report builds on our earlier 2023 report on [Encampment Sweeps and Housing Trajectories](#). With the launch of the “Housing & Olympics: Monitoring for Equity” platform at <https://home2028.la/>, research including the use of PATHS data, together with continued WeSearch partnerships, can be used to understand changes in the individual experiences of housing outreach, encampment sweeps, policing, and other factors affecting the lives of unhoused Angelenos.

## Research questions

This report offers a baseline for that monitoring effort. It examines the two main approaches LA currently uses to address encampments, conventional homeless “sweeps” and ERPs, and is guided by the following questions:

1. How common are sweeps among unhoused Angelenos, how often do sweeps result in a meaningful offer of shelter or housing versus criminalization, and how have these patterns shifted over time?
2. What are the consequences of exposure to sweeps on people’s livelihoods and well-being?
3. How many people do ERPs approach, and what proportion of those approached enroll in the program, enter interim housing, remain indoors, and reach permanent housing?
4. How do ERPs compare with conventional sweeps in terms of their impacts on housing outcomes and consequences for livelihoods and well-being?

## Background

Local decisions on how to address unsheltered homelessness are being made in an increasingly permissive federal environment for anti-homeless policing. For several years, federal court precedent limited the ability of jurisdictions in the western United States to enforce camping prohibitions when adequate shelter was unavailable. However, in its June 2024 decision in [City of Grants Pass v. Johnson](#), the United States Supreme Court held that enforcing generally applicable camping laws does not violate the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, even when adequate shelter is unavailable, thereby reaffirming municipalities' ability to utilize criminalization tactics. Within a month, California Governor Newsom pressured cities in the state to clear encampments, issuing an [executive order in July 2024](#) that declared, "there is no longer any barrier to local governments utilizing the substantial resources provided by the State, in tandem with federal and local resources, to address encampments with both urgency and humanity, or excuse for not doing so." Municipalities across the state followed suit: a 2025 review documented at least three counties and 50 cities passing new anti-camping ordinances with increasingly punitive provisions, shortened procedural safeguards, and escalating penalties, while many others began enforcing previously dormant ones ([Riley et al., 2025](#)).

Furthermore, on July 24, 2025, the Trump administration issued a sweeping [executive order](#) asserting the right to reserve federal funding for states and municipalities that actively "enforce prohibition on camping and loitering" and adopt more aggressive standards for involuntary commitment of unhoused people. A month later, on August 11, the administration federalized the Washington, DC, police force and deployed 800 National Guard troops to fight crime and homelessness, with the president telling unhoused people that they "will give you places to stay, but FAR from the Capitol."

These legal and political developments removed an important constraint on enforcement and placed more punitive approaches squarely back on the policy table, and their effects are already visible on the ground. In Oakland, [Kaur et al. \(2026\)](#) documented a rise in encampment clearance operations following the Grants Pass ruling. Statewide, a CalMatters investigation found that arrests and citations for homelessness-related offenses soared in the months after the ruling ([Kendall, 2025](#)). In Los Angeles, arrests rose 68%, despite Mayor Karen Bass's public opposition to the decision and her stated commitment to lead with housing rather than enforcement. But whether unsheltered people are being

policed more often, or simply policed differently, is an open question that requires following individuals instead of counting operations.

Anti-homeless policing takes several forms, including laws prohibiting activities like sleeping or camping in public, move-along citations and arrests, and homeless sweeps. Sweeps remove tents, belongings, and people from particular sidewalks, parks, and neighborhoods, providing an immediate and visible response to public pressure without creating housing. A sweep may be carried out without a single citation being issued, but it is enforcement nonetheless: someone with the power to compel movement tells a person that they cannot remain where they are. When people have nowhere else to go, they relocate, return, or establish another encampment nearby. Sweeps may therefore change where homelessness is visible without changing who is homeless. Many camping ordinances in Southern California cities direct local officials to provide notice and make a reasonable effort to identify and offer available shelter before clearing an encampment. Despite these provisions, our [2023 report](#) found that respondents experiencing a sweep were far more likely to receive a police citation (9%) than to receive shelter (5%) as a result of a sweep. A follow-up peer-reviewed analysis demonstrated how each additional sweep produced both short- and long-term harm in the form of increased psychological distress, poorer self-rated physical health, and increased loneliness, with physical displacement identified as one core mechanism underlying these effects ([Chien et al., 2026](#))

Amidst concerns about the inhumanity and ineffectiveness of sweeps, California and Los Angeles have pursued an alternative approach through Encampment Resolution Programs, or ERPs. ERPs are funded through the [State of California's Encampment Resolution Funding program](#), which had awarded \$856 million and reported \$258 million in expenditures as of December 31, 2024, as well as through county and local funding. These programs have been presented as a middle ground between a housing-first approach in which people can move directly into permanent housing and a sweep-based one, in that an outreach worker is intended to be the first point of contact, participation is framed as voluntary, and the goal is placement into interim shelter (often a motel or hotel) paired with case management services to create a pathway to permanent housing, rather than a legal order to vacate ([Dones & Espinoza, 2024](#)). In the City of LA, Mayor Karen Bass launched [Inside Safe](#) in December 2022, while LA County launched [Pathway Home](#) in August 2023. Both reflect an approach developed through earlier Encampment to Home initiatives, including the 2021 Ocean Front Walk effort in Venice ([Galliani & Weinmeister, 2023](#)). ERPs offered several innovations intended to maximize the acceptability of interim housing offers, including the use of a by-name list to identify target individuals, the provision of motel rooms to maximize privacy, and an effort to keep members of the same encampment together.

ERPs offer an appealing alternative to enforcement, but their effectiveness remains uncertain. Inside Safe has moved thousands of people from encampments into interim housing, an outcome that conventional sweeps rarely achieve. At the same time, administrative data indicate that many participants have returned to unsheltered homelessness and only a minority have reached permanent housing ([Zahniser, 2026](#)). An [audit of Inside Safe by the LA City Controller](#) found that out of 6,400 program entrants, 25% had entered permanent housing, 27% remained in interim housing, and 47% had exited, including 126 (2.0%) who passed away. Still, the placement of 6,400 people into private motel rooms over a three-year period, with a quarter eventually moving into permanent supportive housing, represents one of the largest and most extensive initiatives to pair shelter and housing provision with encampment clearances in US history.

Yet the data also make clear that ERPs do not always deliver for the people who enter the programs. Clearing an encampment, moving someone into a motel, retaining someone in interim housing, and helping someone obtain a permanent home are not equivalent outcomes. More importantly, the evaluations leave out how many people are reached by ERPs in the first place and how many of those targeted ever enter shelter. Nor do administrative data fully capture people who decline to enroll, accept but never move indoors, or experience both an ERP and a sweep. Determining whether ERPs resolve homelessness, manage it more humanely, or simply constitute sweeps under another name requires following the people these interventions are intended to serve and situating ERPs within the broader systems of care and punishment in which they operate.

As LA prepares for the 2028 Games, the central issue is not simply whether particular locations can be cleared. It is whether the people living there will be displaced, temporarily sheltered, or helped to leave homelessness, and what each response means for their well-being. With two years left, understanding how each current approach functions—and what outcomes it has produced so far—can help develop responses that meaningfully support unhoused Angelenos and ensure that Olympic preparations are grounded in housing rather than displacement.

## Methods

In contrast to previous PATHS reports, this report weaves together two complementary sources of evidence. The first is quantitative data from the PATHS longitudinal survey. The second is narratives written by currently or recently houseless people, or poverty scholars, who have been exposed to repeated sweeps and ERP programs such as Inside Safe. These houseless Herstories and Histories were produced through a “Street-Writing Workshop” conducted by Aetna Street Solidarity and POOR Magazine in the San Fernando Valley, using a community-led process called “WeSearch” that reassigns authorship and control to the people whose lives are being described. Major findings were then reviewed with the HPRI Lived Expert Advisory Board. Together, these sources give a fuller account of encampment policy in Los Angeles. Future PATHS reports will build on this partnership by involving WeSearchers in questionnaire design, analysis, and interpretation. We describe each source below.

Table 1. Academic research and WeSearch: Not either/or but both/and

|               | Academic researchers / scholars                        | Poor people / poverty scholars                                                          |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expertise     | Academic training                                      | Lived experience                                                                        |
| Incentives    | Publications, prestige, impact                         | Visibility, reclaiming narratives, ending the 6-7 deaths per day on Los Angeles streets |
| Methodologies | Mixed, but favoring quantitative                       | Mixed, but favoring narrative                                                           |
| Resources     | Federal and foundation grants, institutional privilege | Solidarity, crowdfunding                                                                |

## PATHS Longitudinal Study

PATHS features a representative sample of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness at study baseline, with ongoing monthly survey tracking on housing, health, and well-being, even if respondents move into housing or shelter ([Kuhn et al., 2025](#)). Since the study launched in December 2021, a total of 20,800 monthly surveys has been collected among 1,910 respondents through July 2026. Funding for PATHS comes from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR), L.A. CARE, and other funders. Protection of human subjects is overseen by the UCLA Institutional Review Board

(#21-001148). To learn more about the study design and past findings, visit <https://www.paths.la/>.

After publication of our November 2023 report, the PATHS team worked with city and county officials, including staff of Pathway Home and Inside Safe, to develop a set of questions that could capture experiences of ERPs. These questions were developed in November 2023 and introduced into the survey in December 2023 following Institutional Review Board approval. Critically, this allows us to observe a single cohort of people as they experience both sweeps and ERPs. For ERPs, we are not limited merely to those who enter the program; we also track the fairly large number of people who never make it into a hotel/motel.

This report is divided into two sections, the first focused on sweeps and the second on ERPs. In the ERP section, we describe the effectiveness of ERPs as a standalone intervention and compare the two approaches, which are sometimes juxtaposed against one another. In each section, we focus on the extent of program exposure, the experience of the operations, the resulting housing experience, and the subsequent impacts on policing, livelihood, and health.

### Definitions of key measures

Table 2 presents the definitions of the four key outcomes used throughout this report: sweep exposure, police contact, citation, and encampment resolution invitation. Each is measured over a 30-day recall window, corresponding to the interval between monthly surveys. Each reported sweep is followed by questions about any offers of shelter or housing received as part of that sweep, and each reported ERP invitation is followed by a question about whether the respondent enrolled in the program. Because sweeps and ERP invitations are asked about separately, respondents can report both in the same month, and sweep-related shelter and housing offers are distinct from ERP participation.

Table 2. Summary of key measures

| Measure      | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sweep</b> | Told in the past 30 days you had or were going to have to move from the area you were sleeping in because of a “sweep” or enforcement of a no-camping or sitting, sleeping, or lying law by the following: police or other law enforcement; sanitation workers; homeless outreach workers; or other public enforcement personnel (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Department of Transportation, Caltrans) |

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|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              | Follow-up questions asked whether respondents were offered shelter or housing as part of the sweep, what they were offered, and whether they accepted it. If they were not offered or did not accept shelter or housing, respondents were asked whether they subsequently relocated from the location where the sweep occurred.                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Police contact</b>        | Had any contact with police or law enforcement in the last 30 days (e.g., were approached by an officer, spoke with them, or had further interaction).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Received a citation</b>   | Ticketed or cited at least once in the past 30 days for staying on the street.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Encampment Resolution</b> | Whether the respondent was approached about enrolling in the LA Mayor’s program (Inside Safe), the LA County program (Pathway Home), or an unidentified program in the past 30 days. Program names were not used in the survey item itself, as government partners indicated these names were not necessarily in wide use among outreach teams. Follow-up questions asked whether the respondent enrolled in the program they were approached about. |

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## Study sample

The study sample consists of 1,667 individuals who contributed 17,149 monthly surveys in total from April 2023 through July 2026. Respondents completed an average of 21 monthly surveys each (median 18, maximum = 39) within the study period.

Table 3 presents sociodemographic characteristics of the study sample. Just under a fifth (17%) were 18–29, 46% were aged 30–44, 29% were 45–59, and 8% were 60 or older. The sample was 54% male and 44% female, and predominantly Hispanic/Latino (40%), White (26%), or Black (23%). The majority (81%) had been homeless for more than a year at the time of enrollment, and 56% reported prior criminal justice involvement. Nearly half (46%) reported a prior diagnosis of a physical health condition and nearly a third (31%) a prior substance use disorder. The sample is concentrated in the Metro (24%), San Fernando Valley (17%), and South (15%) regions of the county.

Compared to LA County’s broader unsheltered population, as characterized by the respondents of LA’s [Homeless Count Demographic Survey](#) conducted from 2022 to 2026 (N=20,173), the PATHS analytic sample skews younger, with a higher share aged 30–44 (46% vs. 39%) and fewer in the 60+ group (8% vs. 16%). It also includes a notably higher proportion of women (44% vs. 28%). Physical health conditions are more prevalent in the analytic sample (46% vs. 35%), while substance use (31% vs. 40%) and prior criminal justice

involvement (56% vs. 65%) are lower. The sample is somewhat more concentrated in the South Bay region (e.g., Torrance, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach; 14% vs. 9%) and less concentrated in Metro LA (e.g., downtown LA, Hollywood; 24% vs. 30%). Race/ethnicity and rates of chronic homelessness are broadly similar across the two groups.

**Table 3. Sociodemographic characteristics of the PATHS study sample (N=1,667)**

| Characteristic                                   | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Age                                              |     |
| 18–29                                            | 17% |
| 30–44                                            | 46% |
| 45–59                                            | 28% |
| 60 and above                                     | 8%  |
| Sex                                              |     |
| Male                                             | 54% |
| Female                                           | 44% |
| Other                                            | 1%  |
| Race/ethnicity                                   |     |
| Hispanic or Latino/a/x (alone or in combination) | 40% |
| White                                            | 26% |
| Black                                            | 23% |
| Asian                                            | 2%  |
| American Indian or Alaska Native                 | 1%  |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander              | 1%  |
| Multiracial                                      | 4%  |
| Chronically homeless (homeless > 1 year)         | 81% |
| Previously incarcerated                          | 56% |
| Prior diagnosis of a physical health condition   | 46% |
| Prior diagnosis of a substance use disorder      | 33% |
| Service Planning Area                            |     |
| Antelope Valley                                  | 4%  |
| San Fernando Valley                              | 17% |
| San Gabriel Valley                               | 7%  |

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|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Metro     | 24% |
| West      | 13% |
| South     | 15% |
| East      | 7%  |
| South Bay | 14% |

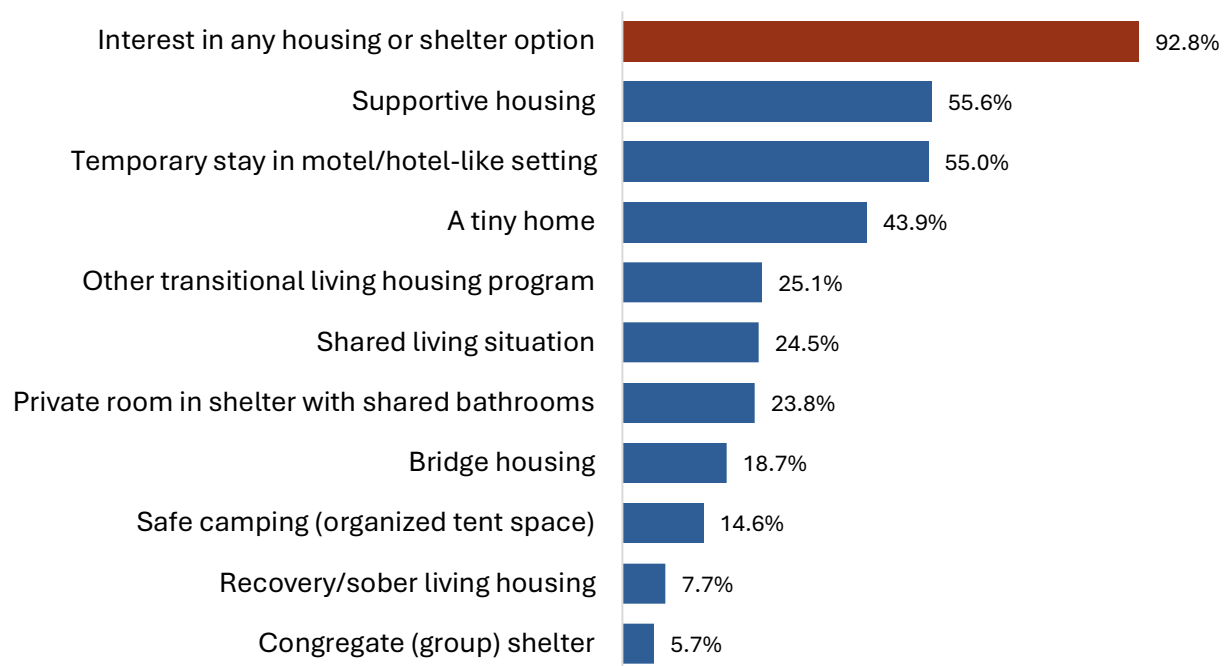
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*Notes: Values reported reflect participants' status at enrollment. "Prefer not to answer" responses are not shown but factored into the column percentages. Service Planning Areas (SPAs) are eight geographic subdivisions of LA County used for service planning, resource allocation, and reporting; percentages were calculated excluding respondents who declined to report their location.*

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Low rates of shelter and housing placement from sweeps and ERP programs are sometimes attributed to the misperception that unhoused people do not want what is offered. To provide a baseline for the offers and placements examined in this report, we report the housing and shelter options respondents said they were interested in receiving when they enrolled in the study (Figure 1). Respondents were open to a wide range of options: 93% expressed interest in at least one, and on average they selected between two and three. Around a third selected only a single option, indicating some degree of selectivity. Interest was highest for supportive housing (56%), while more than half (55%) were interested in a temporary stay in a motel or hotel, the main form of interim housing used by ERPs such as Inside Safe. Interest in tiny homes followed (44%), then a shared living situation with one's own room (25%), other transitional living (25%), and a private room in a shelter with shared bathrooms (24%). By contrast, just 6% expressed interest in congregate shelter, even though it is among the most common offers made during sweeps.

Figure 1. Housing and shelter options respondents would be interested in receiving



Notes: Respondents could select multiple options. Prefer not to answer responses are not shown but factored into the column percentages.

## The HERstories and HISstories of “Sweeps Survivors”: A Collaborative WeSearch Project of POOR Magazine and Aetna Street Solidarity

### Poverty scholarship and WeSearch

The narratives in this report are grounded in poverty scholarship, a framework pioneered by [POOR Magazine](#), a poor and Indigenous people-led media, arts, and education organization. Poverty scholarship holds that people who have survived houselessness, poverty, racism, disability, and criminalization hold expert knowledge that formal credentials do not provide, and that this knowledge should determine research, media, and policy about their communities ([Gray-Garcia, 2007](#)). [WeSearch](#) puts this framework into practice as research led by poor people themselves, establishing them as authors, reporters, and teachers of their own experience rather than subjects of study.

### Poverty Scholars Street-Writing Workshop and Data Walk

For this report, POOR Magazine and [Aetna Street Solidarity](#), a mutual aid group that grew out of the Aetna Street encampment in Van Nuys, held a workshop at an encampment in the

Tovaangar and Tatavian Lands, in what is now known as the San Fernando Valley. Nine participants, all currently or recently houseless individuals and self-described as Survivors of Sweeps and Homelessness, took part. During this workshop, these scholars created their own WeSearch findings on the impact of targeted sweeps, responding in writing to the following questions:

1. What is your homeless origin history or herstory?
2. What is your experience with sweeps?

These HERstories and HISstories, gathered in full, can be found on POOR Magazine's website.

Afterwards, about a dozen poverty scholars took part in a data walk with members of the PATHS team at the Aetna Street Solidarity Community Space in Van Nuys. The data walk was designed as an exchange, in which the scholars were the teachers of their experiences. As the PATHS team presented survey findings, the scholars related the findings to their own lives, explained what the numbers meant as well as what they obscured and conflated, and taught the researchers how sweeps and ERPs actually unfold on the street.

### Integration

Integrating the two sources was an iterative process. After the data walk, the PATHS team revised the language used to describe and frame the findings as well as the design of data visualizations in response to what the poverty scholars shared. Several written narratives from the Street-Writing Workshop are quoted directly in the Findings, alongside the quantitative results they speak to, and the points raised during the data walk are also summarized throughout. We treat these narratives and summaries as an integrated component of the analysis with their own authority and show how sweeps and ERPs are experienced and why people respond as they do, surfacing consequences that are not captured in survey measures. They also challenge how outcomes are framed, for instance by questioning whether "declining" an offer reflects a real choice, and point to solutions from the people most affected.

## Findings

### Part 1: Homeless sweeps and policing experiences

*So many deaths  
From the perp called swept  
Swept and swept and swept to death  
From East LA to West  
til we have nothing left  
No belongings, no homes,  
no tents, no cars, no phones  
They even swept our hope...  
Excerpt from Swept to Death*

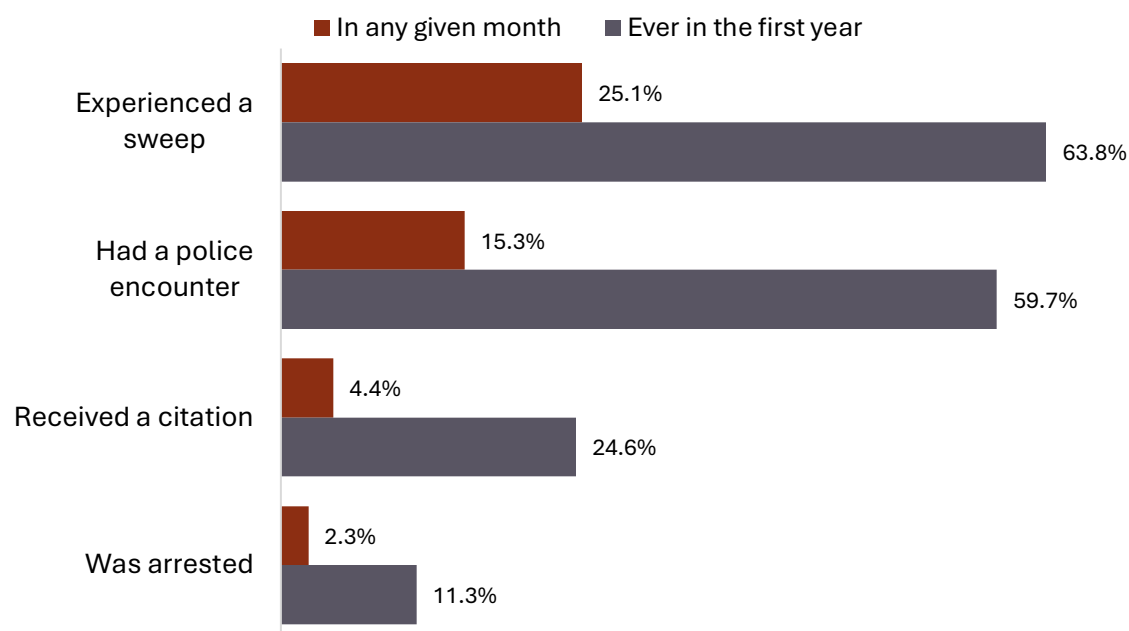
*by tiny gray-garcia aka povertyskola*

#### How common are sweeps for unsheltered Angelenos?

PATHS data can answer this question at a monthly level and cumulatively across all months of follow-up. From April 2023 through July 2026, an average of one in four respondents reported experiencing a sweep in any given month (Figure 2). These experiences add up across multiple months: almost two-thirds of returning respondents experienced a sweep in their first year in the study (across an average of 9 survey months) and over half experienced at least two sweeps.

Rates of police contact are similarly high, driven both by sweeps and from day-to-day exposure to law enforcement. Six in ten respondents reported police contact in their first year in the survey. Almost three in ten of these police encounters led to a citation, and one in six leads to an arrest. While these more extreme outcomes are less common in a single month, they accumulate as well, with a quarter of respondents receiving a citation in their first year in the study and more than one in ten being arrested. By comparison, the annual arrest rate of US adults is about 5 in 1,000 (Kennedy & Lopez, 2025), making PATHS respondents more than 20 times more likely to report an arrest. We note that these estimates reflect only the average nine months per year in which respondents completed a survey. Furthermore, arrests may lead to loss of phone or email contact with the study surveys, meaning that these figures likely underestimate the true level of police contact.

Figure 2. Exposure to policing among PATHS respondents



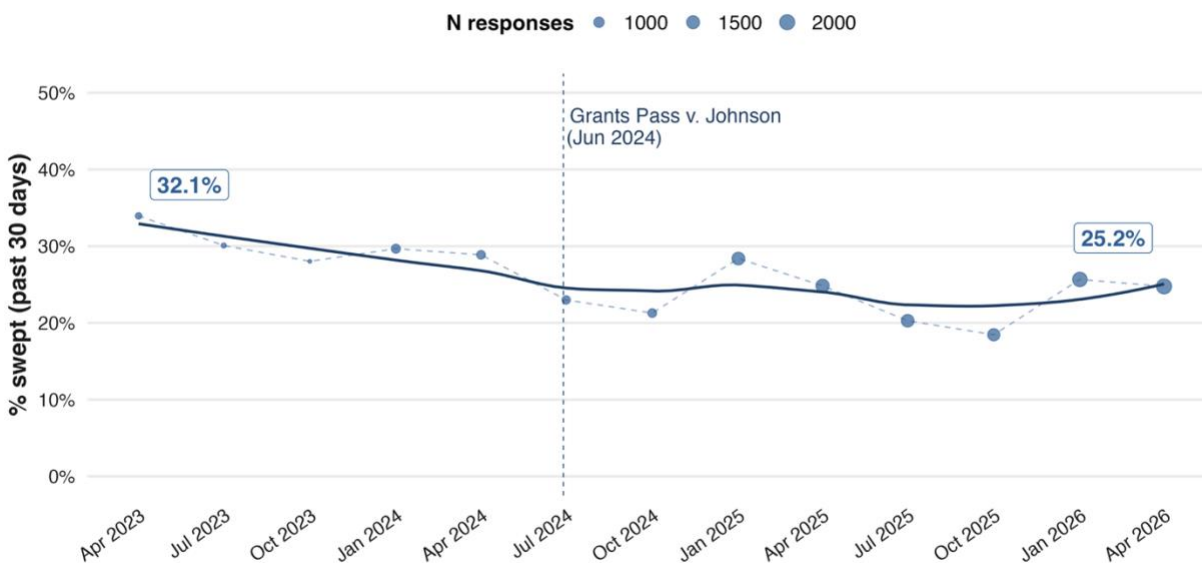
Notes: Monthly  $n = 14,431$ – $16,456$ ; Annual  $n = 580$ – $648$ , restricted to individuals with  $\geq 6$  observed months during the first 12 months of follow-up.

While there is a perception that sweeps may have dramatically risen since the Grants Pass ruling and the start of President Trump’s second term, this pattern does not appear in our data. At face value, exposure to sweeps among our sample declined, from 32% reporting a sweep in a given month in the first six months of the panel (April–October 2023) down to an average of 23% across 2025, before rising modestly to ~25% in the first half of 2026 (Figure 3). This trend held even when the sample was restricted to respondents in the City of LA. The decline is surprising given reports of a rising number of sweep operations, including a 30% increase in the number of CARE+ sweep operations in the City of LA. However, we note that the scattering of encampments and the rise of rough sleeping mean that each sweep likely targets a smaller number of individuals than before. Furthermore, many sweeps involve repeat operations concentrated at previously cleared sites, meaning that more sweeps would target fewer people. What can be said with certainty is that sweeps remain a routine feature of life for unsheltered Angelenos, so we treat the trend as less central to our analysis; instead, we focus on how the character and consequences of sweeps have changed, including shifts in the provision of housing and shelter, as the following section shows.

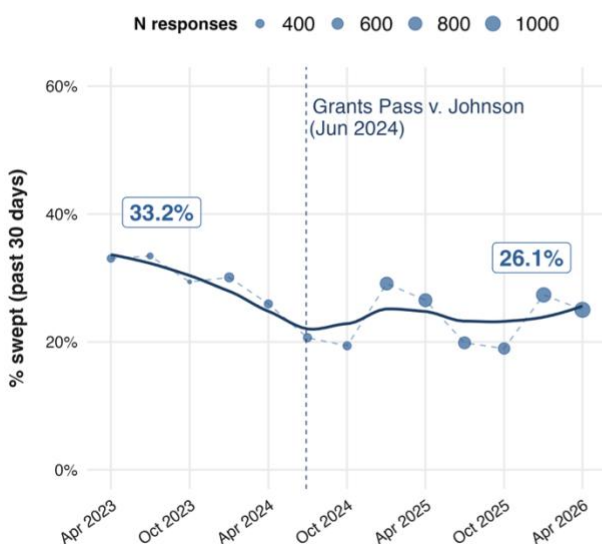
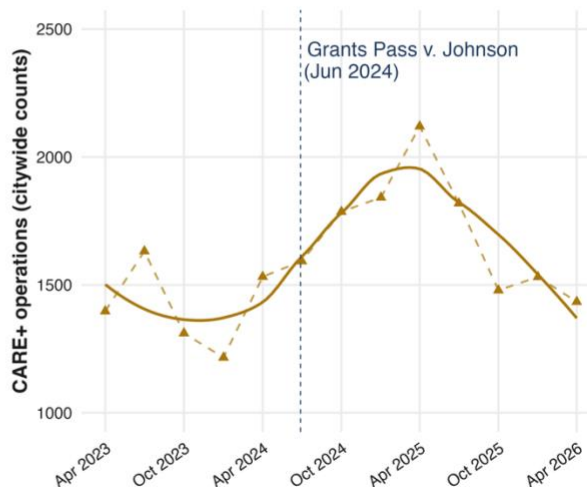
Figure 3. Trends in the frequency of homeless sweeps, April 2023-July 2026

**A. Rate of sweep exposure among the PATHS sample**

Overall across sample: 25.1%

**B. Rate of sweep exposure among PATHS respondents in the City of LA**

Overall across subsample: 25.7%

**C. Counts of official CARE+ operations in the City of LA**

Notes: Monthly rates in Panels A and B were averaged within each calendar quarter; boxed labels = N-weighted % pooled over the first two and last two quarters of follow-up. Sweep exposure among PATHS respondents in Panels A and B is reported as rates, whereas official CARE+ records in Panel C are reported as counts; therefore, levels should not be compared directly across these sources; compare trends over time within each source.

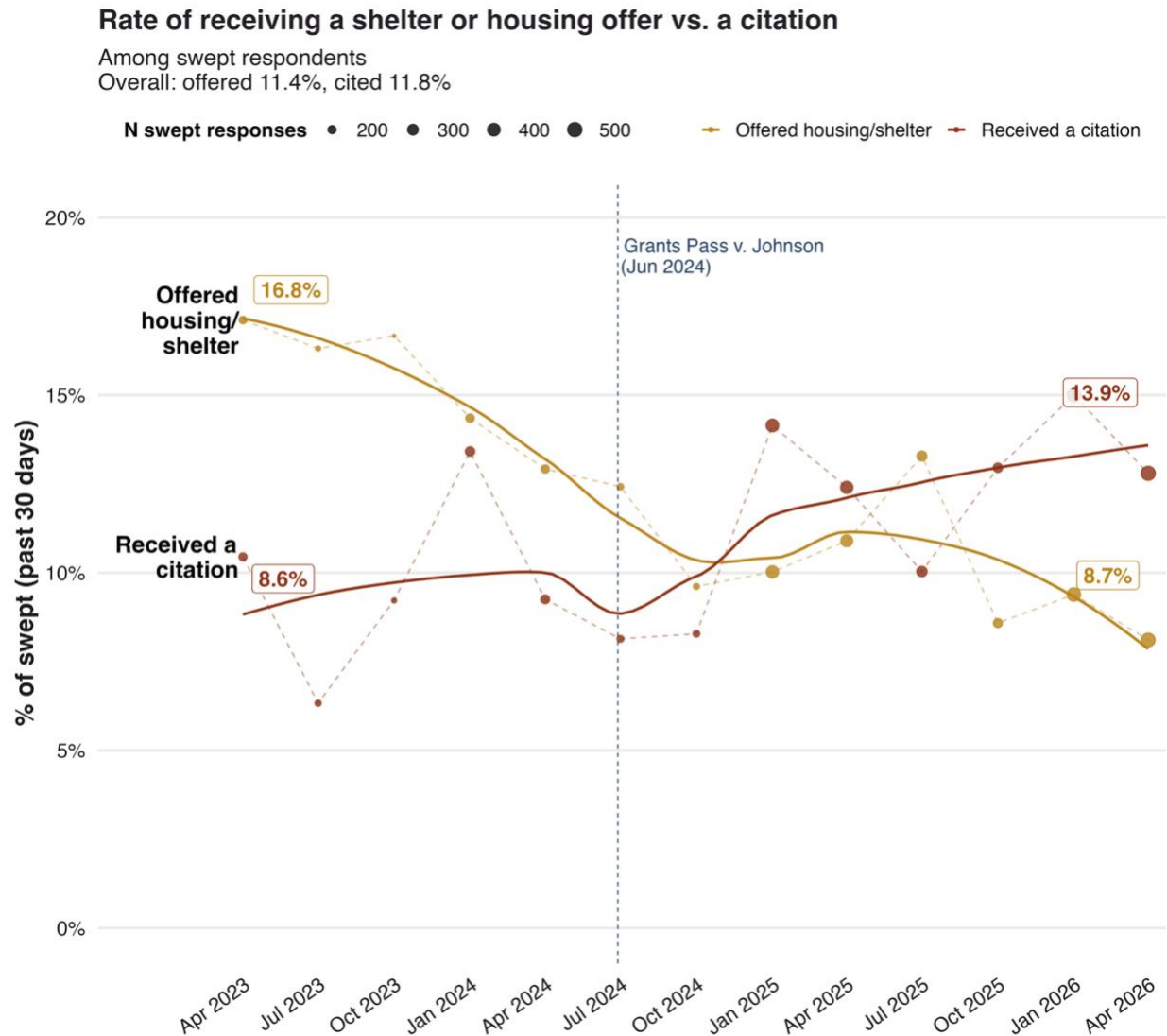
### How often do sweeps result in a meaningful shelter offer and stay?

Sweeps in LA rarely include an offer of interim housing or shelter, and such offers are becoming rarer. **Just one in nine sweeps (~11%) was associated with a shelter or housing offer**, an even lower rate than the 13% we reported in 2023.

The very nature of sweeps appears to have changed over time. Trend data shown in Figure 4 track a 50% decline in the rate at which sweeps involved a shelter or housing offer, from ~17% in 2023 to ~9% in 2026. Over the same period, the share of sweeps leading to a citation rose from ~9% in 2023 to ~14% in 2026. This is consistent with the CalMatters investigation of administrative police records discussed above, which similarly found an increase in citations across California cities following Grants Pass ([Kendall, 2025](#)).

Whereas our 2023 report noted that a sweep was more likely to lead to a citation than a shelter move, we can now say that in 2026, a sweep is far more likely to lead to a citation than a shelter offer (14% vs. 9%). In short, the enforcement component of sweeps has grown while the housing component has declined. The implications of this shift toward citations can be consequential. Citations carry repercussions beyond the fine itself: unpaid or unresolved citations can trigger a bench warrant for arrest and a cascade of downstream negative effects, including on housing access and employment ([Herring et al., 2019](#)).

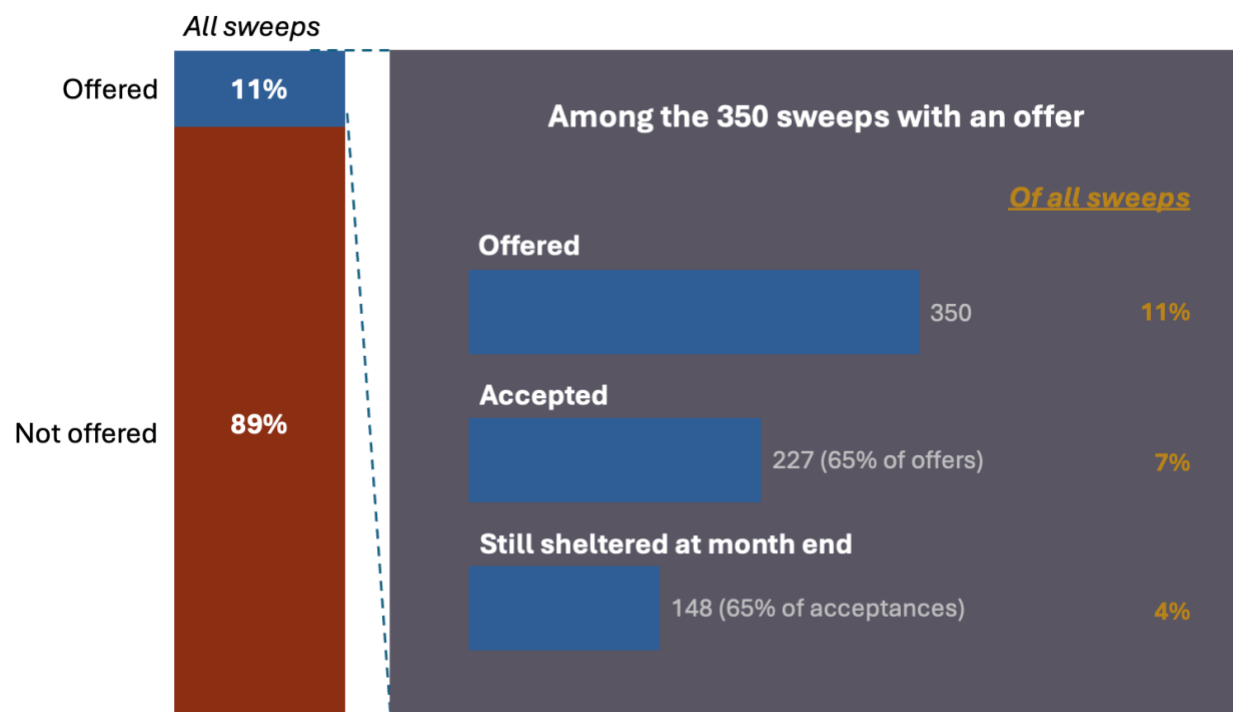
Figure 4. Trends in shelter or housing offers and citations during homeless sweeps, April 2023–July 2026



Notes: Monthly rates were averaged within each calendar quarter; boxed labels = N-weighted % pooled over the first two and last two quarters of follow-up.

These trends also mirror changes in the composition of sweep teams, based on a question asking respondents about who notified them of a sweep. Even more so than in 2023, sweeps remain predominantly an enforcement encounter instead of a service encounter. Across the study period, respondents most commonly reported being notified by police or law enforcement (~63% of sweeps), followed by sanitation workers (~38%), and homeless outreach workers (~17%). From 2023 to 2026, the share of people who reported being notified of sweeps by outreach workers declined from 18% to 15%, while the share involving police rose from 64% to 68%.

Figure 5. Outcome of sweep-related shelter and housing offers



Notes: Shelter or housing offer, acceptance, and retention pathway within the same month for respondents who were swept. These do not include offers made through encampment resolution programs

When offers are made, most people accept them (Figure 5). While popular media and public sentiment often portray unhoused people as resistant to shelter, around two-thirds of respondents who received an offer (227 of 350) accepted it. Acceptance was highest for settings that met basic expectations of privacy and stability (Table 4). Across all of the different housing options provided, the rates at which people actually reported accepting the offers were considerably higher than the hypothetical interests in different housing options reported in Figure 2, meaning that people are open to accepting options that may not reflect their stated preferences. Among those offered a motel- or hotel-like setting, 78% accepted, compared to 53% who indicated a general interest in a hotel or motel stay. More strikingly, while just 10% of respondents had expressed a general interest in congregate shelter, nearly half (46%) accepted congregate/group shelter options. Notably, supportive housing offers were accepted at the same rate (78%) as motel and hotel offers, but this may be due to the conditions of the specific supportive housing placements that our data does not currently capture. Declining an offer, in other words, usually reflects a mismatch between what was offered and what people need, such as privacy and safety. But on the whole, respondents are considerably more willing to accept whatever option is offered.

Table 4. Acceptance rates of shelter and housing offers made during sweeps

| Offer type                                     | Share accepted | Number offered     |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| <b>Any shelter or housing offer</b>            | <b>65%</b>     | <b>227 of 350*</b> |
| Temporary stay in a motel/hotel-like setting   | 78%            | 100 of 128         |
| Bridge housing or transitional housing program | 80%            | 49 of 61           |
| Supportive housing                             | 78%            | 28 of 36           |
| Private room in shelter                        | 68%            | 30 of 44           |
| A tiny home                                    | 55%            | 17 of 31           |
| Congregate (group) shelter                     | 46%            | 36 of 79           |

Notes: Thirty-seven respondents who reported being offered shelter or housing during a sweep selected “prefer not to answer” when subsequently asked whether they accepted the offer and are therefore excluded from the acceptance-rate denominator.

Among those who accepted an offer, approximately two-thirds (148 of 227, 65%) remained in shelter the same month, suggesting that offers made during sweeps can result in short-term shelter stays. However, when we put that in context of the entire sweep-to-placement pipeline, we see that the largest limitation is that most people who are swept never receive an offer in the first place.

**When shelter stays are calculated across all sweeps, not just those in which an offer was made, just 4% resulted in a meaningful shelter stay (Figure 5).** Thus, while retention is relatively high among those who accept an offer, the overall placement rate is much lower when measured across all sweeps. Taken together, high acceptance and retention among those offered shelter and low placement across all sweeps indicate that the primary constraint lies in the supply of offers instead of people’s willingness to accept them.

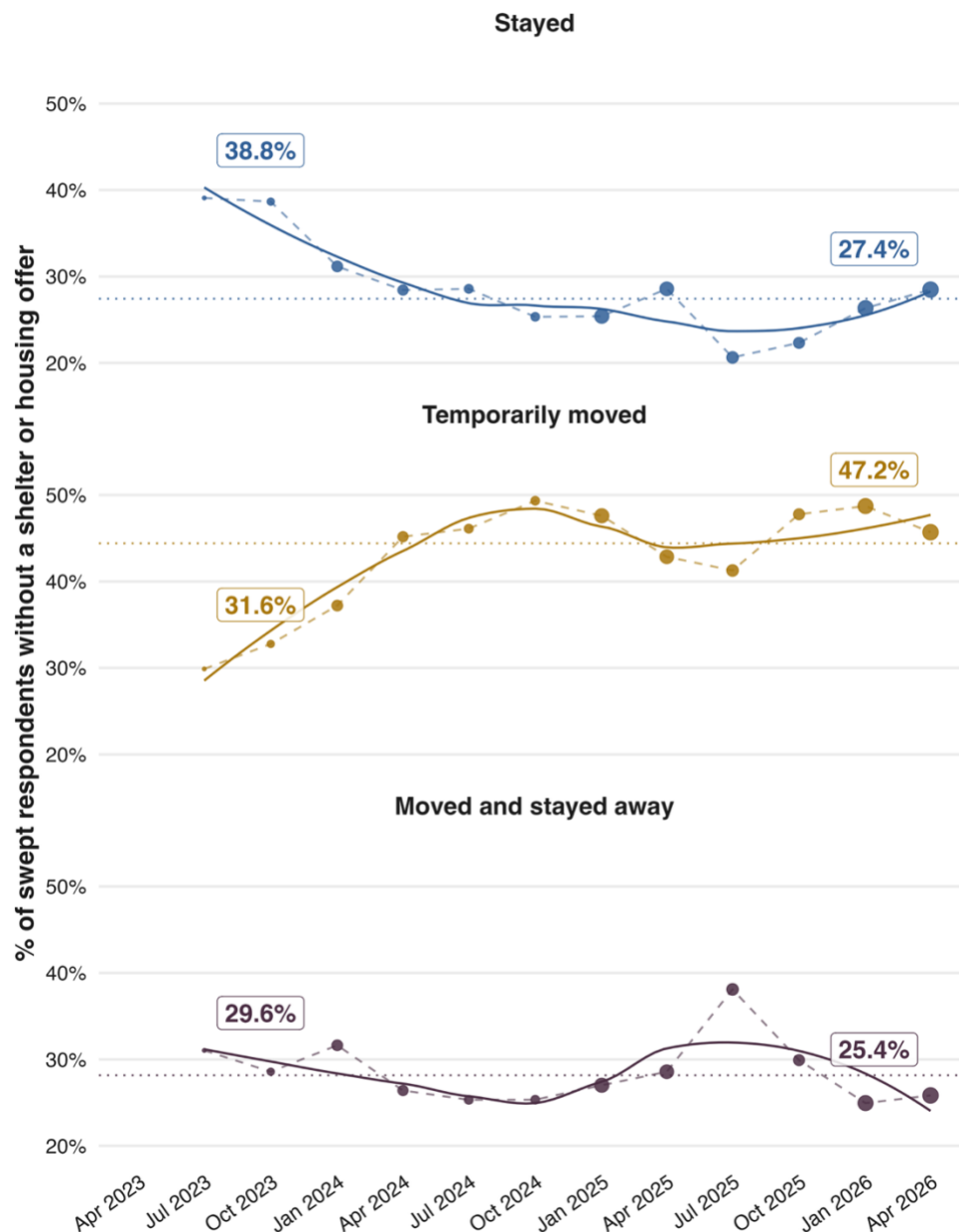
Among those who received no shelter or housing offer—the vast majority of people swept—we see a clear shift in how sweeps resolve (Figure 6): the share who stayed put at the swept location has fallen (39% to 27%), while the share who temporarily left and later returned has risen (32% to 47%). Only 1 in 4 people move and stay away, which is arguably the outcome a sweep is intended to achieve. Compliance with sweeps, in the sense of moving when told, has increased without translating into shelter or housing.

Figure 6. Trends in movement after sweeps among respondents without a shelter or housing offer, April 2023-July 2026

### Rate of post-sweep movement outcomes

Among swept respondents without a shelter or housing offer  
Overall: Stayed 27.4%; Temporarily moved 44.4%; Moved and stayed away 28.2%

N swept person-months • 100 • 200 • 300 • 400



Notes: Monthly rates were averaged within each calendar quarter; boxed labels = N-weighted % pooled over the first two and last two quarters of follow-up.

## What are the consequences of sweep exposure on people's livelihood and well-being?

Because so few sweeps lead to shelter or housing, the impact of a sweep is felt almost entirely by people who remain on the street afterward.

Narratives from the Street Writing Workshop convey the scale of loss and mental distress that stems from sweeps. Most poverty scholars had been swept multiple times. Across their histories and herstories, they described a persistent lack of respect for their possessions and their livelihoods and, more fundamentally, having their dignity stolen from them. Their accounts also show that the consequences of a sweep do not end when the operation does. As one scholar wrote:

*I have dealt with countless sweeps. In those I have lost a home. I have lost my favourite trench coat—that could keep you warm on the coldest night. I have lost friends and their memorials. I have lost stability in the aftermath of sweeps' violence because the trauma doesn't disappear when cops and sanitation do, it moves through us into each other: RV break-ins and breakdowns, fights breaking out around me. Also, my car got towed.*

*Paisley*

This account illustrates several dimensions of harm at once. There is material loss, but also a loss of community, safety, and stability. Moreover, the trauma resulting from a sweep can spread outward among those who remain on the streets, surfacing as conflict and instability rooted in state violence.

Therefore, for the majority of sweeps that do not result in a shelter stay, a sweep means far more than simply being forced to move. It can mean having your belongings taken, experiencing trauma, and having daily routines, access to basic needs, and connections to services disrupted. The outcomes examined below capture these broader and continuing consequences.

Policing and citation rates capture the direct consequences of sweeps. The PATHS monthly survey framework is also well-suited to track downstream consequences of sweeps for individual livelihood and access to care. A previous analysis by our team, using the same cohort, found that sweep exposure was associated with both short- and long-term increases in poor self-rated physical health and psychological distress ([Chien et al., 2026](#)) (Box 2).

**Box 2. The Physical and Psychological Toll of Criminalization**

Using monthly surveys from 731 PATHS participants between 2021 and 2024, the research team examined both the immediate and cumulative impacts of homeless sweeps and police encounters on physical and psychosocial health.

Health worsens in the month of a sweep. People reported poorer physical health and higher psychological distress in months they were swept, compared with their own months when they were not. Police encounters were also associated with poorer physical health, greater psychological distress, and increased loneliness.

Repeated exposure to sweeps compounds these effects. People who experienced sweeps more frequently over the study period had consistently worse physical health, more distress, poorer sleep, and greater loneliness than those who experienced fewer sweeps.

Displacement is a key mechanism linking criminalization to poor health. Being forced to move explained about a third of the same-month increase in distress after a sweep. These effects may reflect disruption to housing, routines, social connections, and community ties.

*Chien J, Henwood BF, Kuhn R. Criminalizing homelessness: Longitudinal associations of police encounters and homeless sweeps with psychosocial health among the unhoused community in Los Angeles. Social Science & Medicine. 2026;393:119033.*

For this report, we focus on a different set of outcomes. Comparing unsheltered respondents who have been swept to those who have not is vulnerable to the fact that the two groups may differ systematically in other respects. With repeated monthly surveys per person, we can instead ask a more precise question: within the same person's timeline, what changes are reported in the month they are swept, relative to the preceding month, when they were not? To isolate the effect of the sweep itself from ordinary month-to-month change, we make the same before-and-after comparison for a matched group of unsheltered respondents who were not swept over a similar period of time, and net out whatever change that group also experienced. This approach, known as a difference-in-differences design, produces an estimate of how much a given outcome shifts specifically because of a sweep, net of the change we would expect to see over the same interval regardless of exposure.

We found that several of these consequences were substantially and consistently more common in the month of a sweep than in the same person's previous month without a sweep (Figure 7). The largest and most consistent differences were in police contact and forced displacement, both approximately 16 percentage points higher, which correspond to the mechanics of the operation itself: a police-involved event that requires someone to move. Also notable were the increases observed in rates of property loss, food insecurity, emergency department visits, verbal harassment, and sexual or physical violence in the same month someone is swept compared to the previous month without a sweep.

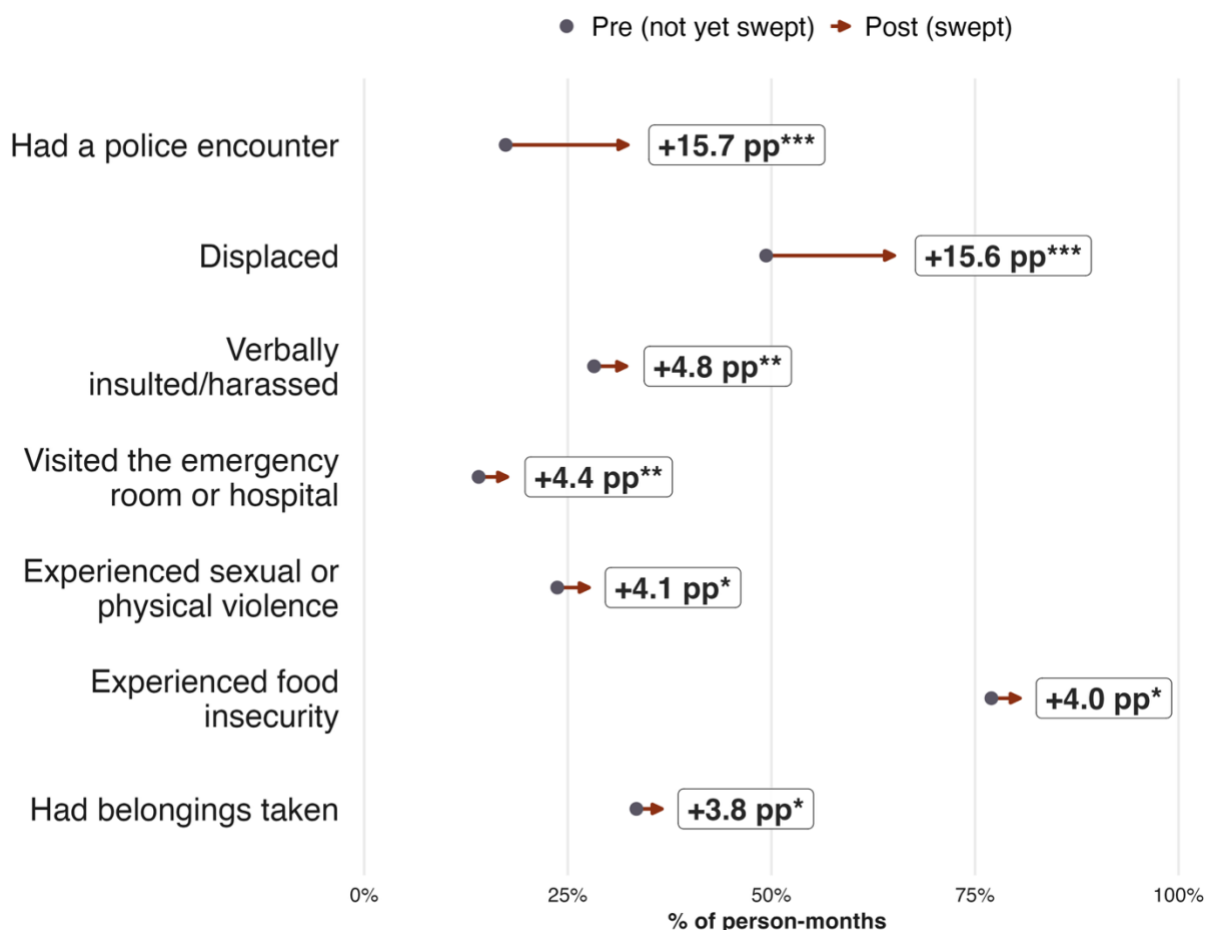
We note that these increases are measured against baselines that are already extraordinarily high. Even in months without a sweep, roughly three in four respondents experienced food insecurity, about half were displaced, one in three lost their belongings, and nearly one in four experienced physical or sexual violence (Figure 7). With baseline levels this high, there is limited room for any single event to push these outcomes much higher, so even an increase of a few percentage points represents a substantial added burden on people already living under extreme hardship.

After learning about these results, one poverty scholar shared this reflection during the workshop:

*Sweeps itself are like a very very big thing. You have to look at it like this. If you're inside and living in a house...Say moving day is already happening. You're trying to pack up your stuff, trying to fill you know what you're gonna not want, what you're gonna need, and you move into your apartment or whatever, and everything starts to calm down. Your anxiety, your you know, your mental state starts to get better suited into that new space. But for outside people, mental health becomes a problem because it impacts a person's mental health when you have to throw your stuff away continuously, and then do it again and again...If you ask anybody who lives on the streets what's your biggest fear of anything in the morning, they're gonna say a garbage truck. The sound of a garbage truck is very scary in the morning you know. The beep beep beep, you know? You're thinking oh shit because the city's here you know? You jump up you're you frantic and that becomes a problem, like people get scared of garbage trucks. You know increased PTSD, exactly, that's a problem...Mental stability during the sweep and after the sweep...You would see the numbers go up and down because there'll be some people who'll be really scared, and someone will be like scared even during the sweep...For other people, it's like, oh my God, I got to get rid of this, and I love this, and I like that. Am I gonna get rid of that, or should I keep it? You know, and that, it's almost like an abandonment issue of your certain life, and that becomes a mental thing on people.*

Ron

Figure 7. Effect of homeless sweeps on policing, displacement, health, and well-being



\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . pp = percentage points

Boxed labels = double-difference (DiD) estimate as a percentage-point difference.

Notes: The figure shows only the exposed group's pre-to-post change. The DiD estimate nets that against the matched change among the control group (unswept person-months) over the same window, which moved by only 0.6 pp on average (close to 0) across these outcomes. The exposed pre-to-post gap shown here closely approximates the DiD estimate itself. Models compare swept versus still-unswept person-months among unsheltered responses, with person and year-month fixed effects and cluster-robust standard errors.

The survey results reveal how people's circumstances change when they are swept, but they cannot convey what it is like to be swept. Therefore, we close this section with a longer account from a poverty scholar. In their own words:

*"You have 5 minutes to leave"... BEEEP BEEEEP [trash truck horn]*

*Not sure if I ever actually slept but they were here. Again. A strange collection of armed robots. Their weapons; shovels, trash cans, rakes, and guns. The cops didn't used to accompany this army but now they did. Ready with zip ties and shackles to arrest us. For sleeping.*

*BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEEP*

*The incessant and non-stop beeping was like a nail being slowly pounded into the side of my head. We couldn't figure out what to leave or bring. Mama had already lost her insulin and her walker yesterday in another sweep and I'm not sure what hoops we would have to go through to get those replaced. I lost my Aunti's urn with her ashes and the only picture I had left of my brother, not to mention my school ID, and my last dry blanket. I'm numb from the loss. I guess that's their point, to destroy our spirits.*

*I had one warm jacket and some underwear and my lotion. I could barely feel my hands in this cold anyway. I think I have one more plastic bag somewhere....Mama aint moving at all now.*

*BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP*

*Why can't I open this fuckin hefty bag? OMIGOd They can't see me struggling, my broken fingertips can't separate the opening -- the shiny black/brown plastic shimmers in the moonlit sky and slides through my moist fingers -what is it 4am? I need both hands for this but I can't put down my other bag cause they will take it. It's got all the rest of mama's medicine.*

*Excerpt from the forthcoming book "Swept" by tiny gray-garcia*

## Part 2: Encampment Resolution Programs (ERPs)

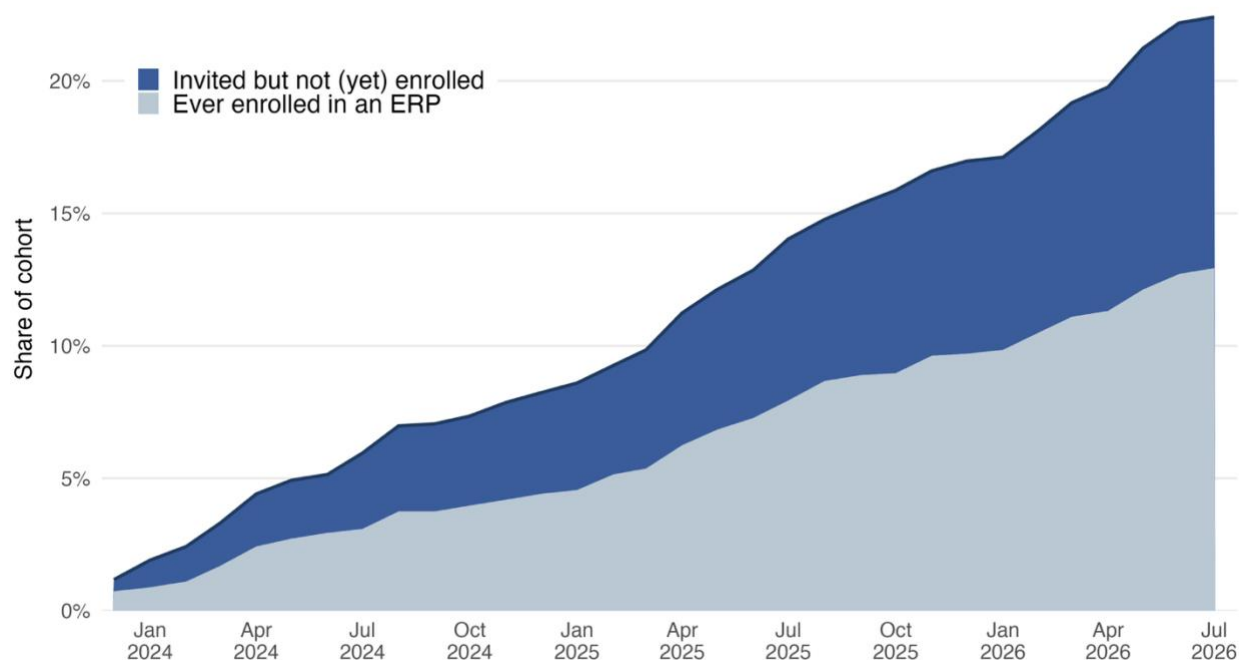
### How many people do ERPs approach?

We turn next to ERPs. Our first question concerns the reach of these programs. While they are pitched as a solution to unsheltered homelessness as a whole, in practice they specifically target large encampments, typically defined as those with five or more dwellings. The high intensity of outreach and the limited availability of hotel rooms have limited the total number of operations to 136 in the City of LA's Inside Safe program and 77 in LA County's Pathway Home since they launched in December 2022 and August 2023, respectively. There are also separate ERPs run by other cities such as Long Beach, by specific City Council districts, and by other jurisdictions (Cueller et al., 2024).

Given the potentially limited reach, one crucial question is how many PATHS respondents have ever been invited into an ERP. Reach within our sample is correspondingly narrow. Figure 8 shows that 22% of respondents reported ever being invited and 13% enrolled. By comparison, 60% reported ever experiencing a sweep over the same period (December 2023 to July 2026). Sweeps are also far more frequent: for every person exposed to an ERP operation in a given month over this period, around four experienced a sweep (~5% vs. ~20%).

**Figure 8. Exposure to Encampment Resolution Programs (ERP), December 2023-July 2026**

% of cohort (N=1,361) ever invited / ever enrolled in an ERP by month t.  
As of Jul 2026: ~22% ever invited, ~13% ever enrolled.



ERP=Encampment Resolution Program

Notes: Cumulative estimates represent the proportion of the full PATHS cohort that had been invited or enrolled in an encampment resolution program by each point in follow-up.

As LA County has two primary ERPs, Inside Safe (City of LA) and Pathway Home (LA County), the survey asked respondents to identify which one invited them, with an “unsure” option for those who could not say. Inside Safe invitations reached approximately 6% of the cohort (83 of 1,361), while Pathway Home reached 13% (179 of 1,361 respondents). Another 12% (168 of 1,361) indicated they were unsure which program they were invited to, which points to real difficulty among respondents in identifying which agency is reaching out to them.

Most people who are ever invited reported exactly one invitation (13% of the full cohort, 174 of 1,361); a smaller share (10%, 131 of 1,361) reported repeat invitations. Invitation and sweep exposure also overlap substantially at the person level: among everyone ever invited to an ERP (n=305), 76% (233) had also been swept at some point, and 53% (161) experienced a sweep in the very same survey month as an invitation.

How does the housing pipeline of ERPs compare to sweeps?

ERPs are substantially more likely than sweeps to result in a shelter or housing offer and subsequent move-in. This is not entirely unexpected: although recent sweep operations have been directed to include an offer of shelter or housing before enforcement proceeds, this offer is often minimal, cursory, or nonexistent in practice, whereas ERPs are designed around a more sustained, service-oriented connection to immediate shelter and eventual housing placement.

Although sweeps and ERP invitations are tracked monthly, we make an apples-to-apples comparison at the person level, using each respondent’s first ERP invitation and first sweep without a concurrent ERP invitation. We construct funnels for ERP invitations and sweeps and present the two side by side (Table 5). Unlike the single-month sweep statistics presented in the previous section, this funnel follows each respondent for six months after their first ERP invitation or first sweep to examine longer-term housing retention.

Table 5. Comparing the housing pathways of Encampment Resolution Program (ERP) invitations and homeless sweeps

Person-level comparison among full tracked cohort (N=1,361)

| Stage                                             | ERP-invited               | Swept-only                  |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Experienced                                    | 305 (22% of cohort)       | 744 (55% of cohort)         |
| 2. Enrolled/accepted a shelter or housing offer   | 152 (50%)                 | 30 (4%)                     |
| 3. Sheltered or housed within 2 months            | 79 (26%)                  | 21 (3%)                     |
| 4. Sheltered or housed most of a month            | 61 (20%)                  | 16 (2%)                     |
| 5. Remained sheltered or housed at last follow-up | 50 (16%;<br>4% of cohort) | 10 (1.3%;<br><1% of cohort) |

Notes: Person-level comparison of outcomes among ERP-invited and swept-only respondents, using each respondent’s first observed event in the panel and capping follow-up at six months after that event. Percentages represent the share progressing from the previous stage unless otherwise noted. The ERP-invited group includes any respondent invited to ERP, while the swept-only group includes respondents who were swept but not invited to ERP at any point during the 6-month follow-up window.

Walking down the two columns shows where the paths diverge and where they run in parallel. The gap between ERP and sweeps is concentrated almost entirely at the top, at the point of invitation or exposure. Once people enter their selected shelter option, ERP and sweep-related housing outcomes differ little. Only half of people who accepted an ERP offer entered interim housing (79 of 152, 52%). Widening the window, 57% (88 of 152) of those who accepted an invitation had entered interim or permanent housing within three months,

though this figure may overstate ERP impact since some people may have found shelter by other means. After accounting for ERP acceptance and actual move-in, 26% of invitees (79 of 305) and 6% of the overall PATHS sample (79 of 1,361) had ever been moved indoors as a result of ERPs.

The next stage in the progression reflects the widely studied question of whether people actually stay in their ERP housing. On this note, our results are mostly comparable to the 60% figures reported by the *Los Angeles Times*, LA City Controller audit, and other sources. Of the 79 people who moved indoors, we found that 50 of 79 (63%) remained in shelter at the end of follow-up.

Taken together, this means that just 50 of the 305 ERP invitees, or 16%, remained housed at the end of follow-up. This compares favorably with 1.3% of people who were ever swept (10 of 744). Even though ERPs reached far fewer people in the PATHS sample than sweeps did, they resulted in five times as many enduring shelter placements (50 vs. 10). Even so, those 50 individuals still only constituted 3.6% of the full PATHS sample. In other words, ERPs deliver roughly twelve times the shelter yield of sweeps on a per-person-reached basis yet still result in an enduring placement for fewer than 1 in 25 respondents overall.

Furthermore, the stated end goal of an ERP is permanent housing, not interim housing. Our data suggest that just 23 enrollees progressed to permanent housing within the first six months of invitation. As a share of the 50 who ever remained sheltered/housed at last follow-up, the 46% conversion rate sounds promising. But if we instead think in terms of the entire group of 305 ERP-exposed individuals, the 7.5% housing rate ( $23/305 = 7.5\%$ ) is less impressive. Taken as a share of the entire sample of 1,361 individuals, we observe that just 1.7% of people were placed in permanent housing as a result of ERPs.

Poverty scholars described what life in interim housing can be like as they wait to be placed into permanent housing, providing insight into why some people end up leaving. Many described their motel and hotel placements as institutional and even jail-like, with rules that restrict visitors, prevent residents from cooking for themselves, and limit their freedom to come and go or to pursue their own interests and hobbies. One scholar even noted the irony that people in jail can receive visitors, while residents of some interim housing sites cannot. Others described these settings as fostering dependency on the system and treating residents as victims rather than supporting their independence. Such conditions can make staying in interim housing difficult, particularly as the wait for permanent housing stretches on:

*One thing that that I have noticed for myself, when I had to go into temporary housing in a motel, that was cool and everything, but now I cannot be, I can't do what I need to do to keep my mind able to function as a human being. Because I couldn't go build bikes, I couldn't go out do recreational things that I needed to do to keep myself at a steady mental pace, and I think that that's a very big thing on people's mental health, you know. So, I'm going to immediately return to that, you know, the comfortability of me just being me. So, the first time I was put into the hotel, I think I stayed there for about three months when I left, because it was more comfortable for me to be outside because I was able to be me. I can do whatever I want to do, you know, no restrictions or anything. Now I'm not saying that the hotel wasn't cool. Yeah, it was cool to take showers and be able to have your own space for a second. But it comes to a certain level where okay, that's cool, but is it worth the lack of visitation from my family or friends, or being able to cook for myself, or being able to do anything that I'm normally naturally doing to just, you know, be myself? So you kind of have to, it's kind of have like it's a scale that just keeps tilting, tilting, it's just going back and forth and back and forth.*

*So I think the best thing that we can do is try to tell or try to force those who are trying to help. Because I'm not saying that to help is not appreciated; it's definitely appreciated. But it's like it comes to a point where it comes to handicap a person. You know, it's like too much help is like poisonous to the tree because now I'm waiting for somebody to do something for me versus me being able to do it for myself. No one can do anything for themselves and try to help somebody else do something to better themselves if they can't do it for themselves.*

*Ron*

## Do ERPs carry the same health and social consequences as sweeps?

Proponents present ERPs as a housing-focused intervention that does not have the same consequences of sweeps; critics describe an ERP as a sweep by another name. PATHS data allow us to shed light on this concern by examining how exposure to each intervention affects key health and access-related indicators in a given month. We extend the difference-in-differences design introduced in Part 1 from two groups to three: (1) respondents exposed only to a sweep in a given month; (2) respondents invited to an ERP in that month; and (3) respondents exposed to neither intervention. As before, we compare each respondent's outcome to their own previous, unexposed survey and then net that change against the change observed among respondents exposed to neither intervention. From these models, we can estimate how much an outcome shifts in a month of sweep exposure relative to no exposure, how much it shifts in a month of ERP invitation relative to no exposure, and whether sweeps and ERP invitations move the outcome by significantly different amounts.

ERP invitations do not produce significant increases in any of these harms, though they also produce few improvements (Table 6). One notable change is a significant 10-percentage-

point increase in the share of respondents who got help applying to services (from 51% to 61%). By comparison, sweeps produce statistically significant increases in displacement, property theft, police contact, and citations.

We ran a separate version of this comparison restricted to people who go on to enroll in an ERP (not merely receive an invitation), and found two additional, statistically significant improvements: enrolled respondents report a 9-percentage-point decrease in poor self-rated physical health and an 11-percentage-point decrease in feeling unsafe where they sleep, relative to their own non-enrolled months. The long-term health effects of ERPs are the subject of a separate ongoing study, which is constrained by the relatively small number of people who entered ERPs.

**Table 6. Comparing the effects of Encampment Resolution Programs (ERP) and homeless sweeps**

| Outcome                                | Sweep vs. neither | ERP invitation vs. neither | Difference (invitation – sweep) |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Had a police encounter                 | <b>+15 pp***</b>  | +6 pp                      | <b>–9 pp*</b>                   |
| Cited for staying on the street        | <b>+5 pp***</b>   | +2 pp                      | –3 pp                           |
| Displaced                              | <b>+17 pp***</b>  | +3 pp                      | <b>–13 pp**</b>                 |
| Had property/belongings taken          | <b>+6 pp**</b>    | –7 pp                      | <b>–12 pp**</b>                 |
| Visited the emergency room or hospital | <b>+4 pp**</b>    | +5 pp                      | +2 pp                           |
| Got help applying for services         | +1 pp             | <b>+10 pp*</b>             | <b>+9 pp*</b>                   |

pp = percentage points. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Notes: Estimates show changes in outcomes associated with sweep exposure and ERP invitation relative to no intervention and are reported as change in percentage points (pp). The Difference column is the ERP-invitation estimate minus the sweep estimate, indicating whether outcomes changed more or less following an ERP invitation than a sweep. Models include person and year-month fixed effects with cluster-robust standard errors

Although ERP invitations were not associated with a significant increase in reported property loss in the survey, narratives from the poverty scholars reveal that relocation itself can still involve substantial loss. One participant recalled: “I lost all of the personal stuff, clothes, personal items. They only let us carry 1 bag which was barely a couple items so we had to start all over.” Limits on what people can bring into interim housing may mean that some loss is built into the move itself.

## Discussion

As LA prepares for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, pressure to remove encampments from highly visible and secured areas will grow. Some encampments may need to be moved to address health and safety concerns, preserve access to public spaces, or secure areas surrounding Olympic venues. The urgent question is how to do so responsibly when there is not enough housing or appropriate interim shelter for everyone who must leave. The PATHS findings point to a relatively straightforward interpretation that sweeps remain an omnipresent and increasingly toxic fixture in the lives of unhoused people, and that encampment resolution programs, while both far more effective and less harmful, lack both the reach and the retention to solve the homelessness crisis.

Sweeps remain a routine feature of life for unsheltered Angelenos and are harmful to the people who experience them. Almost two-thirds of returning respondents experienced a sweep during their first year in the study, yet only 11% of sweeps included an offer of shelter or housing and just 4% resulted in a meaningful shelter stay. Between 2023 and 2026, the share of sweeps involving a shelter or housing offer fell by nearly half, while the share resulting in a citation increased by almost 60%. Sweeps were also associated with displacement, property loss, police contact, food insecurity, emergency department use, harassment, and increased exposure to violence. These findings reinforce earlier published studies demonstrating the short-term and long-term impacts of sweeps on depression, anxiety, sleep, and loneliness ([Chien et al., 2026](#)).

These consequences extend beyond the immediate disruption. Repeated displacement can separate people from outreach workers, health care providers, medications, documents, belongings, and social networks ([Chang et al., 2022](#)). It can also undermine trust in the systems that must eventually help them leave homelessness ([Darrah-Okike et al., 2019](#)). If people are moved to another sidewalk, scattered into less visible locations, or disconnected from services, clearing an encampment does not resolve the underlying problem ([Herring et al., 2019](#)). It relocates it while potentially making the people involved harder and more expensive to assist ([Dubois, Herbert, & Sowards, 2025](#)).

The findings also reveal an important divergence between public records and survey data. City records indicate that encampment operations are increasing ([Leifheit, 2026](#)), even as the share of PATHS respondents experiencing sweeps has declined. More operations may be reaching fewer people, including through repeated clearances of previously targeted locations and smaller encampments created by earlier displacement ([Abramson et al., 2026](#)). Los Angeles may therefore be spending more resources to move a narrowing group

of people through the same cycle. The pressures surrounding the Games could intensify this pattern unless the City of LA develops a credible plan for people who cannot immediately be placed indoors.

The Encampment Resolution Fund was designed to offer a different approach. Compared with conventional sweeps, ERPs are much more likely to include an offer of interim housing and result in an indoor placement. They also are not associated with statistically significant increases in displacement, police contact, and property loss, as well as fewer citations. Although ERPs reached far fewer PATHS respondents than sweeps, they produced five times as many enduring interim housing placements. Among the small number of participants who entered an ERP, we also observed improvements in perceived safety and self-rated health. These differences are meaningful and suggest that focused outreach, voluntary engagement, and immediate access to private interim accommodations can reduce some of the harms associated with conventional sweeps. If the goal was to design an encampment operation that fares better than a sweep, ERPs appear to accomplish it.

But ERPs are also costly, resource-intensive operations with limited reach. This raises a harder question about what should count as success. If an ERP is judged by whether it clears a highly visible encampment, it may achieve an important short-term policy objective. Maintaining safe and accessible public spaces is a legitimate governmental responsibility, and that responsibility will become more urgent as LA establishes security perimeters and prepares heavily visited areas for the Games. Policymakers must therefore decide whether the immediate value of reducing visible encampments in high-profile locations justifies the resources devoted to these operations.

That decision depends on what is being counted. Judged only against those individuals who entered interim housing, the rates of retention and permanent housing placement observed in PATHS align closely with those reported directly by Inside Safe and Pathway Home. We find that 29% of people placed in interim housing through these programs progressed to permanent housing (23/79), whereas the combined dashboards suggest that 28% progressed from interim to permanent housing. Judged in comparison to any prior street-to-housing pathway program, this is an impressive result, even if many would hope it would be higher. The difference is that those dashboards focus exclusively on the group of interim housing entrants, who constitute just 6% of the total PATHS sample. Only 22% of the PATHS cohort was invited to participate in an ERP, and roughly half of them were matched into the program, and roughly half of those actually moved into interim. The same program therefore looks either impressive or inadequate depending on the denominator. Measured against those who made it into interim housing, ERPs convert to permanent housing at a rate no prior

street-to-housing program has matched. Measured against everyone they set out to reach, they leave the large majority of people where they found them, or displaced.

Administrative data from a parallel study point to the same bottleneck. In *Storing the Homeless*, published alongside this report, Roy and colleagues analyze records from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) for the Aetna Street encampments in Van Nuys and find that street outreach is by far the most common form of program enrollment, but rarely leads indoors ([Roy et al., 2026](#)). Of the 4,457 street outreach enrollments recorded across two encampments between 2014 and 2023, just 19% were followed by a shelter placement and 1% by a housing placement. The September 2023 Inside Safe operation at Aetna Street reveals a similar pattern. Among the 45 people enrolled, participants remained in interim housing for an average of 296 days, more than three times the program's anticipated 90 days. Two years later, 19% had returned to homelessness, while most participants recorded as exiting to permanent housing held subsidies whose type was unspecified or time-limited. When taken alongside our survey findings, these records suggest that the central constraint is not a lack of willingness to come indoors, but the limited and uncertain housing options available once people accept an offer.

Current definitions of encampment resolution can further obscure this distinction by treating site clearance as an outcome alongside placement into durable housing ([Dones & Espinoza, 2024](#)). An operation may be classified as resolved even when only 26% of those invited enter interim housing and 7.5% reach permanent housing within six months. Clearing a site is a visible and potentially important accomplishment, but it should not substitute for accounting for what happened to everyone who lived there. Site clearance, interim placement, continued residence indoors, and entry into permanent housing are different outcomes and should be reported as such.

Even these distinctions describe only whether people were indoors, not what being indoors required of them. Poverty scholars who had entered interim housing described placements that were institutional and even jail-like, with rules restricting visitors, cooking, and the freedom to come and go or pursue their own interests. As the wait for permanent housing stretched on, several concluded that the autonomy of living outside outweighed what a private room offered. Retention statistics record those departures as attrition, but they do not record the reasons for them. A fuller account of ERP performance would ask not only how many people stayed indoors, but what staying required of them, and whether the pathway they were offered was credible enough to be worth it.

## Implications for Los Angeles

With approximately 21 months remaining before the Games, LA must be more explicit about the tradeoffs being made, who benefits, who does not, and what these programs can realistically accomplish. Improving ERPs will matter, but it will not be enough. The findings instead point toward three hard conversations: whether more permanent housing can be made available at the end of the pipeline, how the pathway can work better for people reached by ERPs, and what should happen to the much larger number of people who remain outside it.

### 1. Housing scarcity: Can more permanent housing be made available within 21 months?

Interim housing can provide immediate safety and stability, but it is not the endpoint ERPs were designed to achieve. The limited movement from interim placements into permanent housing remains a central weakness of the current model. Greater outreach alone cannot solve this problem. ERPs cannot place people into rooms that do not exist or move people from interim settings into permanent homes without sufficient housing units, subsidies, and services. Scarcity is not a secondary implementation problem. It defines what these programs can accomplish and leaves them unable to provide a viable placement to most people affected by encampment clearance.

LA cannot build all the affordable housing it needs before the Games. The immediate question is whether any meaningful additional supply can be created or secured within the remaining time. This requires examining strategies that do not depend entirely on new construction, including rental subsidies, flexible financial assistance, master leasing, acquisition or conversion of existing properties, and stronger incentives or guarantees for landlords willing to accept tenants with vouchers. Efforts to help eligible individuals obtain or maximize Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other benefits will not overcome a rental market with too few deeply affordable units, but they may open access to existing housing for some people and free interim capacity for others.

The poverty scholars also offer an alternative model: Homefulness, POOR Magazine's permanent, rent-free housing in Oakland, CA, designed, built, and governed by houseless and formerly houseless people themselves. Homefulness took approximately ten years to build due in large part to permitting barriers, but there may be options to fast track additional permanent housing programs that incorporate a more supportive, strengths-centered care model.

## 2. The resolution pipeline: Can ERPs work better for the people they reach?

While ERPs are framed as a “pathway to housing,” our analysis suggests that the lack of rapid access to housing makes this a fraught pathway, one characterized more by exits than by successes. People face harsh tradeoffs between accessing shelter with improved access to basic needs, including showers, warmth, and a bed, and the profound loss of autonomy that they may experience indoors. The poverty scholars report prison-like or worse-than-prison conditions, including restrictions on visitors, food preparation, pets, possessions, and personal autonomy. While many are willing to endure this tradeoff for a short period in hopes of attaining their ultimate goal of permanent housing, some reach a point where the hope fades and they return to the streets.

A stronger model would retain responsibility for individuals beyond a single operation, orient assistance toward permanent housing rather than shelter alone, and increase the intensity of engagement when an initial offer does not result in placement. Field-based medical teams, homelessness outreach staff, and community organizations already demonstrate how continuing relationships can be maintained with people who are difficult to reach through one-time interventions ([Roy & Orendorff, 2026](#); [Simenz et al., 2026](#)). Encampment operations could become points of entry into that continuing system of care, but only if responsibility for the person does not end when responsibility for the site does.

The data also suggest an imbalance in the system’s persistence. People may experience repeated sweeps, but ERP invitations are much less likely to recur. LA currently appears better equipped to return and move someone again than to return with a different offer of assistance. A responsible encampment policy must include a plan for people who do not enter shelter or housing on the first attempt, not only for those who do. It also requires multiple placement options rather than a single take-it-or-leave-it offer.

One poverty scholar made a specific call for integrating peer support into motel sites:

*I can tell you how what we advocate for is peer support, for us that have been through these transitions, for us that know what it's like to be in our tents, you know what I mean? They need to be implementing shit like that. It's like they're telling us, you know, they put us in this victim state. Also, it's like, like we ain't been out here taking care of ourselves for all these months, fucking years, being resourceful and shit. And then you throw us in here and tell us, we can't cook for ourselves no more. We can't have no visitors. We can't have this. We can't have that.*

*Efolayo*

A deeper form of listening to the voices of unhoused people comes with the kind of WeSearch included in this report. When placed in leading roles as co-designers and conveners rather than consulted only as lived experts, poverty scholars diagnosed the central problem with ERPs in ways that the PATHS numbers alone could not. The solution is to speed up the pathway to permanent housing and to work collectively with poverty scholars to improve conditions in motels, both by integrating peer support and removing unnecessarily carceral aspects of the system. This expertise should not be solicited episodically or treated as voluntary testimony. Poverty scholars and other people with lived experience should be paid a living wage, provided sufficient hours to build careers from their expertise, and given meaningful roles in program design, implementation, evaluation, and governance.

The convenor of the street scholar data walk reflected on the fundamental challenge of having the voices of poor people considered in major decisions:

*I just want to note the fact that I think one of the reasons that that study is even being done is because there's millions of dollars being spent on removing us, right, but never listening to us. Because every single one of us in this room, poverty scholar, street scholars, have actionable solutions. You have this extremely brilliant scholarship. We call that poverty scholarship. You know, these politricksters don't have that for us. When they create these hotels that we can't have friends in, that we can't cook in, that we can't have our dog in, that we can't, you know, stand outside and smoke a cigarette in, they're not doing that because they're listening to us. They're coming up with solutions about us without us, to go back to that point, right? And so, the reason that these guys are here, who are doing this research, is to hear our Wesearch, which is our poor people-led research, like what you just said, like what you just said, like what you said, like all of us, because we actually have solutions. And no, they wouldn't include putting us in a fucking jail-like motel room where we can't do anything.*

*tiny gray-garcia*

### **3. Everyone else: Where can people go when no viable indoor placement is available?**

The most difficult policy question concerns the much larger group that does not enter or remain in shelter or housing. Some people decline the particular option offered. Others may want assistance but find that the available placement would separate them from a partner, pet, possessions, community, or source of income. Some accept an offer but never receive a room. Others enter interim housing and later return outside. If they cannot remain at the encampment and no viable placement is available, they still need somewhere safe and

lawful to go. Directing them to another sidewalk merely transfers the problem to another block and exposes them to another cycle of displacement.

The poverty scholars further noted that because access to interim housing is mainly reserved for ERPs, there are currently few places that an unhoused person can go or call for an immediate place to stay. The ERP model either assumes that most unhoused people are resistant to housing and need a “push” from the program or that only those in designated encampments should be offered access to interim housing. Yet PATHS data suggest that 93% of respondents express direct interest in some form of housing or shelter. Data from hundreds of sweep operations further suggest that unhoused people are willing to accept housing and shelter options even when they are not their preferred choice. For instance, while only 10% expressed interest in congregate shelter, nearly half accepted it when offered.

Encampment operations should not be the only point of entry. The poverty scholars described a housing system with no “front door” and little access to help outside of enforcement. As one scholar put it:

*There is no program where a person living on the streets where a person can just come in and say I want to be done being homeless can you just help me?*

In their experiences, help now arrives mainly when an encampment is targeted for clearance, either through a sweep, which now includes an offer of shelter or housing less than one time in ten, or through an ERP, which reached just over one in five respondents over nearly three years. The result is a system in which the most reliable way to be offered a room may be to live in an encampment selected for clearance, while people who ask for help on their own have few places to turn.

Before Olympic-related clearances accelerate, LA needs an explicit plan for people who cannot be placed indoors. That requires a serious public conversation about whether safe and lawful places should be designated where people can remain temporarily when housing and shelter are unavailable. Sanctioned encampments or other designated sites are not substitutes for housing and should not become permanent holding areas. They raise difficult questions about location, governance, safety, neighborhood impact, and whether participation would genuinely be voluntary. But refusing to discuss them does not eliminate the underlying choice. In the absence of sufficient housing and shelter, the practical alternatives are to permit people to remain in some public spaces, provide safer designated places with basic infrastructure, or repeatedly move them at considerable human and public cost.

Any designated location would need more than permission to pitch a tent. At minimum, it would require sanitation, water, secure storage, protection from violence, access to health care and outreach, transportation, and a continuing pathway toward housing. It would also require firm protections against becoming another coercive or carceral setting. People with lived experience should have meaningful authority over the design, location, operation, and evaluation of any such model.

## Conclusion

How will LA garner the resources to expand housing, improve interim placements, restore outreach beyond encampments, and develop responsible options for people who remain outside, especially given funding cuts, restructuring of lead homelessness agencies, and low morale among case managers and other program staff? The challenge is immense. More financial resources will be needed from the LA 2028 organizing committee and from federal, state, and local sources. But LA will also need a new level of innovation, transparency, and accountability, beginning with listening to the voices of unhoused people.

Ultimately, LA must pursue two objectives at once: maintaining safe and accessible public spaces and reducing the number of people who remain unsheltered. ERPs are better positioned than conventional sweeps to advance both objectives, but their current reach and capacity are too limited to meet the scale of the challenge. Improving ERPs in isolation, without addressing housing scarcity or the continued primacy of enforcement, risks giving the same underlying system of displacement a more humane appearance without fundamentally changing it. Access to help should not depend on having one's encampment targeted for clearance.

This report establishes a baseline for continued PATHS monitoring of sweeps, policing, ERP reach, and housing outcomes as LA approaches 2028. The measure of success cannot be how many sites disappear or how many people remain indoors after everyone else has been excluded from the calculation. It must include what happens to every person affected by an operation. Where did they go? Are they safer? Are they still connected to assistance? Are they closer to permanent housing, or merely waiting to be moved again? LA has approximately 21 months to decide what can realistically be added to the permanent housing supply, how the pathway through interim housing can be improved, and what responsible options will be provided to everyone who remains outside it. Until those questions are answered, encampments may be cleared, but they cannot credibly be called resolved.

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