



David Binder Research

**Qualitative Research Summary**  
**Conducted December 13, 15 and 16, 2021**

**Key Findings**

Six focus groups were conducted with voters in Los Angeles County. One focus group was conducted with white Democratic and independent men ages 45 – 74 in Encino, one with white Democratic, independent, and Republican women ages 45 – 74 in Pasadena, one with Latino voters of both genders in Encino, one with Chinese American voters of both genders who live in the San Gabriel Valley, one with a mixed gender, mixed ethnicity group of millennial voters ages 22-34 in Los Angeles, and one with African American voters of both genders in Los Angeles.

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1. **In Los Angeles, there is an absolute, universal lack of faith in City and County government to address homelessness among voters, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, or age.**
2. **Voters perceive a complete lack of accountability in the way public funds are spent.**
3. **Voters desire specific goals that feel realistic, but are ambitious enough to generate momentum to move people into housing.**
4. **They have more faith in non-profits and other private organizations working on homelessness and see real potential for an independent entity that will fill the strategic void by formulating and generating consensus around a comprehensive, realistic plan.**
5. **They believe this entity will need to be accountable to the public for achieving its objectives.**
6. **There is a very positive response to the idea of people who have experienced homelessness playing a major role.**
7. **Voters view the coordination of homelessness programs that are currently in the hands of the County's 88 cities and the County itself as a critical mission of this entity.**
8. **Voters do not feel that homelessness can be completely eradicated in Los Angeles.**
9. **Voters remain compassionate toward and empathetic with people experiencing homelessness. They do not see LA County's homeless population as monolithic and believe a thorough and reliable survey of the individuals experiencing homelessness will be important to determine what kinds of approaches work best.** Voters divide LA County's homeless population into several categories, including:

- Those with serious mental health issues,
- Those with drug addiction issues,
- Those who are otherwise healthy and capable of work but prefer to live outside
- Those who have simply fallen on hard times due to the economy.

**10. Most feel that any viable long-term solution will need to empower authorities to compel people with serious mental health and addiction issues to seek care.**

## Detailed Findings

### Broad Attitudes Toward Homelessness

Without exception, the issue of homelessness is at or near the top of voters' minds throughout Los Angeles County and is the primary driver of a widely held sense of local decline. Universally, voters have observed the situation worsening over the past few years as homeless encampments have expanded from something people would see in select areas like Skid Row to something that they unavoidably encounter daily in their neighborhoods.

- *"They had an article like 5-6 years ago that we had 30,000 homeless just in LA, and it's just getting worse." -Latino voter*
- *"There's a lot more homelessness than I noticed before. I see it on my street now." -Chinese American Voter*

The sense of a weak and ineffectual response in the face of this rapidly growing and all-encompassing problem is contributing to a powerful sense of frustration directed toward some of the chronically homeless people that voters are seeing, and—above all—the people responsible for dealing with the problem. Many voters have difficulty talking about the issue without becoming visibly frustrated that more can't be done. They are becoming increasingly pessimistic that tangible progress can be made due to both the seeming incompetence of those in charge of addressing the problem, and the sense that many people simply can't or won't be helped.

- *"I've been here 35 Years, and the past 5 years, the degradation of life in LA is exponential, and I don't see an end. The politicians are dufuses." -White male voter*
- *"It just pisses me off, because CA is the 5th largest economy in the world. Why can't we do anything?" -African American voter*

Although they are in many cases scared and disgusted by homelessness, and deeply frustrated by the intractability of the problem, voters also maintain a sense of sadness on behalf of the people they see living on the street. There's a widespread awareness that many people are homeless due to factors outside of their control. Consistent with public polling on the issue, many participants have had personal experience with homelessness, either themselves or a family member. Many speak about having complicated conflicting emotions of sadness, empathy, disgust, and frustration when they encounter the homeless.

- *“I feel pity, but at the same time, it’s repulsive. So many mixed emotions.” -White male voter*
- *“I run into one or two every day, and I wonder: this is someone’s son. Did he refuse help? How can you help them? We’re failing them.” -Latino voter*
- *“It’s just sad. You look at someone and say it could be you.” -African American voter*

Through all of this, only a few say that they are seriously considering leaving Los Angeles County due to homelessness, mostly concentrated among long-time residents. Others say they or people they know have moved to different neighborhoods in LA County to avoid the problem.

- *“I do have a friend who moved out of K-town because it got so bad.” -Chinese American voter*
- *“I’m not optimistic to the point where I’d prefer not to be here, and if it weren’t for my grandkids, I’d be out of here. Every day it’s a constant struggle with trash on the street, irresponsibility of people. It’s all going downhill, and they’ve become too big for anyone to fix.” -White male voter*

### **Causes of Homelessness and Perceptions of the Homeless Population**

When asked about the factors that are contributing to the increase in homelessness, voters give nuanced responses based on a widely held sense that the local homeless population cannot be viewed as a monolith. Across the County, voters roughly segment the homeless population into a few distinct categories, and in this context, many bristle at the notion of ascribing overarching causes, since they think it’s not appropriate to paint with a broad brush.

- *“I think that that there’s different factors for different people.” -Millennial voter*
- *“I think there needs to be an understanding of mental health, drug addiction and homelessness. Everybody wants to say ‘Oh, my gosh, everybody’s losing their job, and they’re becoming homeless’ That’s not the case for everyone.” -White female voter*

One major category of homeless people that voters mention is those experiencing serious mental illness. While estimates vary as to what percentage of the County’s homeless population fall into this category, there is a widespread sense that they constitute a significant portion of the homeless population, with estimates ranging from 20 percent to over 50 percent. The sense that this category constitutes a significant portion of the homeless population is likely due at least in part to their visibility, and the fact that encounters with these individuals seem to be the most jarring, and—therefore—the most memorable. Many also assume that there is a significant drug addiction problem among this population.

- *“I would say like 40 to 50 percent [fall into this category]. Just because they’ve been there for so long, right? It’s a mental health thing.” -Millennial voter*

In thinking about the root causes for this population, many point out that the systems in place simply aren’t designed to help these people get off the streets. Most start with the supposition that these individuals aren’t able to take the initiative to help themselves, and therefore need to somehow be compelled to be moved into shelters where they can receive the intensive treatment that many of them need. Among older voters in particular, many remember that mental health institutions were shut down

under the Reagan gubernatorial administration. Even among those who are less aware of the specifics, there's a sense that authorities used to have more ability to require people experiencing severe mental health issues to enter professional facilities, and their inability to do that today is a major impediment to solving the homelessness crisis. While they are unclear exactly why authorities no longer seem to have this authority, for most it is wrapped up in the broad impression that California has moved to softer, more voluntary approaches to dealing with crime and homelessness. Until this changes, most believe that these types of individuals will remain intractably homeless.

- *"When I was young, there were still mental hospitals. It's like, 'I'm sorry, you're crazy.' So they go off with the people with the white coats, and they were in a hospital. And it wasn't like they could just roll in the streets because there was a place to take them and keep them there."*  
-White female voter
- *"I would just make it a law that you can't be homeless, and then force them into housing. A lot of them can't be helped otherwise"* -Millennial voter
- *"A voluntary program is not going to solve anything."* -Latino voter

While much of the conversation focuses on those with extreme mental health illness, several also think about those experiencing less serious mental health issues that nonetheless prevent them from maintaining stable housing. In thinking about this segment of the homeless population, many envision veterans suffering from PTSD. In contrast to those experiencing severe mental health illness, most believe that these individuals can be helped with more access to treatment and services. However, they believe a portion of these people simply prefer not to live indoors.

- *"There's this Vietnam vet that I met who cannot live in a house. He's a total sweetheart, he just can't live in 4 walls."* -White male voter

Most also have the impression that many homeless people are suffering from addiction, elaborating that they see this as being closely intertwined with mental illness. They see those with mental health issues as being more likely to use drugs, and drug addiction creating mental health issues in those who had not previously experienced these issues. There's an awareness of newer drugs like fentanyl getting people hooked on opioids and making homelessness worse, and a sense that those experiencing homelessness for any reason are simply going to be more vulnerable to addiction due to proximity to drugs.

- *"Unless we stop the drugs, homelessness isn't going anywhere. 90 percent is drugs."* -Latino voter
- *"People who just end up homeless due to bad luck and end up doing substances based off their situation to try and get away from their reality. And then they get stuck in that cycle. Once you're in that, it's really hard to pull yourself out."* -Millennial voter
- *"The homeless people on the street are vulnerable to the drug dealers."* -Chinese American voter
- *"When drugs came, it screwed everything up."* -African American voter

In addition, the issue of drug use is tied up in the broader sense of lawlessness that colors many voters' attitudes toward homelessness. There's a general sense that law enforcement and policymakers are either unwilling or unable to hold people accountable for public drug use. While there's an impression that many homeless individuals experiencing addiction issues can be helped with better access to

services, several also articulate a sense that authorities need to do more to compel people to access these services.

- *“The drug addicts want to sit on the street on the corner. We can't help them. I've got one in the middle of my street. The police come and take him and put him in jail. And two days later, he's back out.” -White female voter*
- *“I used to be homeless. It's 1,000 times worse today, because they don't lock up people who are doing drugs.” -White male voter*

While mental health and addiction dominate much of the conversation on the root causes of homelessness, there is also a strong sense that economic conditions have a lot to do with the crisis. Specifically, voters single out the meteoric rise in the cost of housing in Los Angeles as a cause of the crisis. They note that wages have not come close to keeping up with the cost of renting a home in Los Angeles County, and that certain landlords require specific income levels to even be considered or refuse to accept Section 8 vouchers. In these circumstances, it's not difficult for voters to understand how people can easily be evicted from their homes.

- *“If you made 10-15 thousand dollars a year when we moved here, you could live fairly decently.” -White male voter*
- *“When I rented my apartment in 2012, my rent was my rent was \$850. Now my rent is \$1,500. My income hasn't gone up like that. If my husband and I both weren't working, we wouldn't have a place to live.” -White female voter*
- *“I have friends living in their cars that have jobs, and they're people who went to school. I think it's just they couldn't afford the cost of rent. And it's the requirements: I was looking at a place a couple of months back, and you have to make three times the rent every month. And they require credit scores.” -Millennial voter*

In voters' eyes, this issue has been exacerbated by the economic crisis caused by COVID. People living paycheck to paycheck have found themselves unable to pay for rent after being suddenly laid off or losing their business. However, most estimate that those who are simply down on their luck, and homeless due to the dire economic circumstances, comprise only a minority of the overall homeless population.

- *“Housing costs and the costs of living - COVID has made homelessness even worse with the loss of jobs.” -Latino voter*
- *“It happened so quickly, that a lot of people just didn't know how to recover. Plenty of businesses lost everything because of COVID.” -Millennial voter*

Many also speak of a category of homeless individuals in Los Angeles County who are otherwise healthy and well, but simply prefer to live outside. While they don't necessarily see these people as suffering from severe mental illness or addiction issues, they tend to lump this group in with those categories in a broad group for whom the services being offered simply won't work, because these individuals are not interested in being housed. Voters largely express less empathy with this category, frequently referring to them as “lazy” and failing to take responsibility for themselves.

- *“A lot of them have a personal attitude that they don’t want to do anything.” -Latino voter*
- *“Some people do choose to be homeless. Some people want to be free.” -Chinese American voter*
- *“There are plenty of homeless people that prefer to be homeless. Like they don't have to worry about everything we do. There's a lot less stress. It's kind of just like they enjoy the lifestyle.” -Millennial voter*
- *“It’s a mixture of everything. Mental health and stability. Laziness too - a lot of them are comfortable being where they are.” African American voter*

Regardless of the categories that voters think about when they think about Los Angeles County’s unhoused population, they tend to share a general belief that current policies make it too easy for people to continue living on the streets. In addition to the inability to compel people to come inside, there is a sense that many of the services being provided, like food, sanitary resources, and temporary housing are being offered without providing real incentive or encouragement for people to move off the streets. The effect is to make it easier for people to continue to live without housing, which they believe makes the problem worse. Some even speculate that people are coming to Los Angeles County because they have heard they can live unhoused and receive generous resources.

- *“If you offer too much assistance, it’s kind of magnet to come. That’s why people migrate here.” -Chinese American voter*
- *“Our numbers are just skyrocketing because we have so many resources for food and stuff like that, but they don't want to live in society.” -White female voter*
- *“These charities that go and they give sandwiches to the homeless. In a way, it’s a good, thing, but it’s also a negative reinforcement. Now they know they can sit here and get fed.” -Millennial voter*

### **Impressions of the Government’s Response**

There’s no clear sense of which level of government should be most responsible for addressing homelessness, with most saying that there is a role for city, county, state, and federal governments to play. Some specifically say that the problem has become too big to handle without some assistance from state and federal government. Part of this is driven by the sense that other counties and states are sending their homeless to Los Angeles because LA has more generous services. This suggests a need for higher levels of government to coordinate between counties and states. Others also say that higher levels of government simply have more resources to dedicate to the problem.

- *“It has to come from the top. We need federal help. And then we need the states to like follow that and do programs that actually work.” -White female voter*
- *“A lot of people come from out of state. Why should California carry this burden?” -Chinese American voter*
- *“The state has the money to solve problems.” -White male voter*
- *“There has to be some unanimity between the state and the local governments.” -White male voter*

What is clear to voters is the dramatic variance in the way that cities within Los Angeles County handle homelessness. Specifically, voters have observed that some cities are much more assertive about

clearing homeless encampments than others. In particular, there is a strong sense that the City of Los Angeles has made a decision to be more lenient toward homeless encampments, which has resulted in a much worse and much more visible problem in the City than in neighboring towns. There are complicated feelings about this. Most who don't live in the City say they are grateful for their town government's more assertive response relative to the City of Los Angeles, which they broadly see as completely lacking in leadership and initiative. Many direct specific criticism toward Mayor Garcetti, whom they see as having abdicated responsibility on this issue. However, smaller-city residents are self-aware that their cities' and police forces' aggressiveness in clearing homeless encampments is not a sustainable long-term solution and just push people elsewhere.

- *"Inconsistency within the County of Los Angeles. We had a huge problem within the City, but elsewhere you don't see these problems. You get the impression that the city is lenient on these issues. I don't understand why." -White male voter*
- *"These small little cities close the parks, and so they go to the big city, which is LA." -Latino voter*
- *"There aren't actually as many homeless people in Santa Monica because they push them out. But the solution of just pushing them out isn't a solution." -Millennial voter*
- *"Under the freeway in Culver City, the homeless only stay on one side of the street. They keep them off the Culver City side." -White male voter*

While voters generally assign poor grades to both their cities and the County for their homelessness efforts, most tend to assign higher grades to their local city government than to the County as a whole. This is based largely on the fact that most participants were not residents of the City of Los Angeles, and at least saw their community as being more effective relative to the City. Those in the City of Los Angeles were less inclined to see a significant difference between the City and County in terms of their handling of homelessness. Most voters who don't live in the City show some awareness of their localities at least working on the issue, either by clearing out encampments or providing services. This stands in marked contrast to their impressions of the rest of the county—namely the City of Los Angeles—where they see the problem as being worse.

- *"Gardena has their own police, and I've only seen one person there who is homeless." -African American voter*
- *"I think our police department [in the San Gabriel Valley] does a great job. Homelessness is not as big an issue." -Chinese American voter*

Voters perceive a lack of coordination between County government and various city governments. In addition, some voters say they have personally experienced a lack of accountability and clear lines of jurisdictions between County and city authorities.

- *"They don't have a plan. They just transport people to a certain area. I don't know if there's a bigger plan." -Chinese American voter*
- *"You can call Pasadena Police and they'll tell you one thing. Then you call the Sheriff and they'll tell you something else. So I don't think they even talk to each other." -White female voter*
- *"Who is in charge right now? Nobody. They only care about the homeless in their city." -Latino voter*

Overall, voters express a complete lack of faith in any level of government to solve the problem. They are largely unaware of any local leaders who are really working on the issue, with only a couple aware of figures like Senator Susan Rubio, or Senator Alex Padilla who they have seen helping to deliver food and services on an Ad Hoc basis. However, they are not aware of anyone leading on the policy front. There is particular ire directed at Mayor Garcetti, who is seen as being AWOL.

- *“Alex Padilla volunteered with law enforcement to go bring people to a shelter, and they refused, because they don’t want to live a structured life.” -Latino voter*
- *“The Mayor should know more about the problems of the City than anyone. If you’re going to run to govern a city, and then once you get there, you can’t fix the issues, why did you even run in the first place?” -Millennial voter*

A few show familiarity with Sheriff Villanueva’s push to use law enforcement to disperse encampments more aggressively. Despite the inclination of many to want to compel people to move off the streets, they generally do not approve of this approach. There is little sense that this amounts to a serious, comprehensive plan, or anything more than just grandstanding. Some juxtapose the Sheriff’s stance with what they see as a softer approach being advanced by the city, with a few mentioning Mayor Garcetti and District Attorney Gascón as examples of public officials advocating this approach. However, they appear equally frustrated by this soft approach, which they think results in public spaces being overrun with encampments. Voters’ general sense is that politics permeates these kinds of discussions, and the two sides of this debate refuse to talk to one another or work constructively.

- *“Villanueva really has a very hard stance view on homelessness that just wants to put every homeless person like either in jail, or like basically destroy their life. And we’ve seen that it doesn’t do anything.” -Millennial voter*
- *“We’ve got an issue with law enforcement where Venice is policed by LAPD, and there’s an LA councilman who is interested in doing something, and the sheriff is going in and screwing things up.” -White male voter*

Adding to voters’ sense of frustration and pessimism is the widespread familiarity with the fact that voters already approved a sizable bond measure (Proposition HHH) in 2016. Simply put, voters have not seen the fruits of this bond initiative, which they understand as ostensibly being dedicated to the construction of housing options for people experiencing homelessness. There’s a pervasive sense that the money from this bond measure has been misspent or outright stolen, with many voters concluding—as they often do when frustrated with a lack of tangible results from spending measures—that their money is likely being siphoned off by corrupt officials. Perceptions of the failure of HHH led many to state that the County will never get full control over homelessness until there is greater accountability over how money is spent. It also contributes to a strong perception that government has sufficient funding to deal with the crisis, but simply isn’t using it effectively.

- *“The hard thing is that we all hear that the government is spending, but we don’t see it. Like, we the residents of LA County, cannot see it. They always say like, ‘Oh, we’re building these,’ or ‘we’re going to build these,’ or ‘we have this project’ and it’s like ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah.’” -Millennial voter*

- *“The plan is HHH, but we’re 5 years in and it hasn’t made a difference. You’ve got to follow the money and hold people accountable. It’s just the red tape and who’s taking, who’s skimming.”*  
-African American voter

There is some moderate familiarity with state efforts to house homeless people through efforts like Roomkey, although few associate these efforts with Governor Newsom or even with state government specifically. In general, most of the efforts that people are aware of involve providing temporary housing through programs like Roomkey, and the construction of tiny houses. There is general skepticism toward these policies on several dimensions. First, there is a strong sense that housing is not being built and allocated efficiently. There’s also a sense that it’s not being used due to the segments of the unhoused population described above who do not want housing. Several say they have seen the tiny houses but have not seen people coming in and out of them. Related to this second concern, many say that they simply don’t think these kinds of options will be heavily used unless individuals can be compelled to come off the streets. Overall, voters show little awareness of anything concrete that the Governor has done to address this issue.

- *“They use like a bunch of hotels to house the homeless as much as they could. But at the end of the day, you can make all these plans, but people that are homeless have to go with the plan. Not everyone wants to be housed.”* -Millennial voter
- *“The bottom line is they do have the money, but it’s being used in vain paying money to abandoned hotels, making them homeless shelters. That’s not going to solve anything.”* -White male voter

Voters react with indifference to the idea of Governor Newsom declaring a “state of emergency” on homelessness. They are at a loss as to what this would accomplish practically. Some speculate that it could bring in more federal and state dollars but are still lukewarm due to the fact that they think the city already has enough money to deal with the problem, and more funding is likely to be wasted. Some specifically reference that the state has been declaring states of emergency on other topics like drought, and it hasn’t seemed to make a difference.

- *“We’re already in a state of emergency now. What are they going to do?”* -Latino voter
- *“What does a state of emergency even mean? What actions will they take? What would they do? Are they just going to throw money at it that’s just going to be unaccounted for, again?”*  
-White female voter

When asked whether Californians should have a “right to housing,” the phrase does not positively resonate. Few fully understand what this concept entails, and there is a general sense among some that a “right to housing” represents an entitlement that absolves homeless individuals from responsibility. This reaction comes despite an acknowledgment that some people do need housing assistance, and that housing and shelter options do need to be provided in order to solve the problem.

- *“Sounds like a socialist agenda.”* -White male voter
- *“It doesn’t mean they’re entitled, but if they need the help with assistance, they should get it.”*  
-Latino voter

Voters have a range of opinions on whether they would accept a homeless shelter being built within a block or two of their homes. For older white voters from the San Fernando Valley and the eastern part of the county, and—to a lesser extent—Chinese American voters in the San Gabriel Valley, the answer is a clear no. These voters generally have fewer encounters with homeless people than people in other parts of the county, and the idea of bringing more to their area is a non-starter. There is less outright objection from African American and Millennial voters, who reason that there are already many homeless people living in their area, and at least this way there would be some sense of control. However, even these people want some reassurance that the shelters will not allow people to be outside creating disturbances.

- *“I don’t want them anywhere close to me. 5 miles.” -White male voter*
- *“I would say maybe 20 miles away is OK.” -Latino voter*
- *“I wouldn’t mind because you have to start somewhere. As long as they have security.” -African American voter*
- *“I’m not against it as long as they’re inside getting help. As long as they’re not outside screaming and trying to hurt people, but they’re inside getting help.” - Millennial voter*
- *“Right now they’re already all over, and I prefer to have a shelter that is organized.” -Latino voter*

There is broad support for prioritizing homeless veterans for services like affordable housing and mental health care, however this support is tempered slightly by the realization that veterans are supposed to already have access to this kind of support through the VA.

- *“That goes back to the VA and making sure they’re doing what they’re supposed to.” -African American voter*

African American and millennial participants in Los Angeles were asked their opinions on a potential ballot measure that would place a 4% tax on residential and commercial real estate transactions of more than \$5 million and a 5.5% tax on transactions greater than \$10 million in order to fund housing and shelter options for homeless people. In the context of widespread cynicism over Proposition HHH, reaction to the measure is lukewarm, at best. While some say that taxing the ultra-wealthy to reduce homelessness sounds good on paper, they have no confidence the money would be used for its intended purpose.

- *“They would have to allocate the money they already have. They have \$1.5 billion over a 10-year period. What are they doing with it?” -African American voter*
- *“I don’t think the problem is a lack of money in the slush fund.” -Millennial voter*

When asked what they would do if they were placed in charge of homelessness in Los Angeles County, many answers revolve around the need to be more assertive in requiring that people who need care get care. This reflected the mix of emotions described above, with a desire for both a tougher stance against living on the streets and a recognition that most people need care and support. Several articulate a sense that the situation will not change until it becomes illegal or quasi-illegal to live on the streets, even as they express an understanding of the legal complexities of such an idea. Others suggest that it is

important to perform a thorough census of the homeless population in order to determine the root causes for each individual and provide appropriate resources.

- *“Without law enforcement, nothing works. You, as a citizen will not have a right to camp out on sidewalks and parks. If you don’t criminalize it, people will keep doing what they’re doing.”*  
-White male voter
- *“I would just make it a law that you can’t be homeless, and then force them into housing.”*  
-African American voter
- *“You need to go evaluate why they’re there. If it’s mental health, help them into a mental health institution. If it’s drugs, they go to a rehab center. If it’s just bad luck, give them the resources to help them get back on their feet.”* -Millennial voter

## The Center

When presented with the idea for the Center, most voters are initially supportive, despite some doubts about how well it could work, and desire for more detail. Overall, the idea of an entity to coordinate the activities of various local actors working on homelessness addresses some of the key issues voters had earlier identified with regards to scattered local policies from city to city. Most see very little objectionable about the idea of creating a Center, with only a few complaining that it seems like more bureaucracy, and others initially wondering where funding would come from. However, they are left wanting more information about who would be involved and how it would function before becoming unambiguously supportive.

**Description Tested**  
*One proposal to address homelessness calls for elected officials from the County and cities to team up with local business leaders, service providers like mental health counselors, addiction recovery programs, and food providers, and other civic groups to help create a single entity—known as the Center—that would create, coordinate, and oversee a unified homelessness plan for Los Angeles County and its 88 cities.*

- *“It sounds really good on paper, but to get 88 cities together is impossible.”* -Chinese American voter
- *“If it’s executed well, it would work.”* -Millennial voter
- *“I think the idea is good – to have somebody to control it. Will it work? We don’t know yet.”*  
-Latino voter
- *“The issue here is what is that plan going to be? If it’s a plan that gets the homeless off the street in 3 years, then I support it. If it’s just building the same infrastructure, I’d rather leave LA.”*  
-White male voter

One initial source of confusion is that several voters initially see the Center as a physical location where people who are experiencing homelessness can visit to obtain a variety of services. Those confused about this say that name “the Center” led them to believe this. Those initially confused by this tended to be excited by their erroneous initial conception of the Center and are less enthusiastic about the Center when they have more clarity.

- *“It’s a great idea to have a single center that would handle you know, everything that homeless person needs.” -White female voter*

For some long-time Los Angeles County residents, the idea reminds them of the system that was put in place for the Olympic Games in 1984, in which a CEO was tasked with coordinating the activities of the various entities within the County. Most remember this being a successful system.

- *“Having been in LA since the mid-70’s and seeing how LA transformed for the Olympics, it had an Olympic Czar who really put things in shape.” -White male voter*

Voters in Pasadena and Los Angeles were exposed to a series of details describing the way the Center might potentially operate, and asked whether each detail makes them more or less confident in the Center. They respond most positively to the idea of a primary goal being to create accountability structures for the various entities involved in fighting homelessness. Voters express hopes that this could head off misspending like that seen with HHH. While response to this detail is nearly universally positive, some are left wanting more detail about how exactly the Center would keep people and agencies accountable.

- *“I like it, because I think the issue is less creating a larger pot of money than it is about being more exacting about how that’s spent and then having accountability.” -Millennial voter*
- *“Who’s going to keep them accountable? What happens if they don’t get to 50 percent?” -Chinese American voter*
- *“We give you this money, and what are you going to do with it? With HHH, nobody is fessing up.” -African American voter*

There is also strong positive reaction to the idea of an oversight board that includes people who have experienced homelessness. There is a belief that people who have experienced homelessness have a better sense of what will and won’t work than government bureaucrats or other officials, and their expertise should be tapped.

- *“What better person than someone who has lived in that situation and overcome that situation.” -Millennial voter*

**1 = Much less confident in the Center; 5 = Much more confident in the Center**

		White Women (n=7)	Chinese American voters (n=6)	Millennial Voters (n=7)	African Americans (n=8)	Total (n=28)
A primary goal of the Center will be to create accountability structures, both for the Center itself, and for the various entities involved in fighting homelessness in Los Angeles County	4 or 5	6	4	4	7	<b>21</b>
	1 or 2	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
In addition to the governing board, a larger oversight board consisting of civic leaders, and people who have experienced homelessness will serve in an advisory role	4 or 5	4	3	6	5	<b>18</b>
	1 or 2	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>

Upon forming, the Center will be responsible for creating a plan to reduce by 50% street homelessness in Los Angeles County with access to permanent (and if necessary, supportive) housing within five years of the establishment of the entity.	4 or 5	3	3	5	7	<b>18</b>
	1 or 2	1	1	0	1	<b>3</b>
The Center will provide online access to citizens who can report the presence of homeless encampments, uploading smart phone photos and providing the location. It will then follow up on a regular schedule with both the reporting citizen and with the appropriate governmental and private agencies in whose jurisdiction the site is located.	4 or 5	3	4	6	5	<b>18</b>
	1 or 2	0	1	0	3	<b>4</b>
The Center would be run as an independent organization outside of government, and funded by philanthropy, state, and private revenue.	4 or 5	6	2	4	4	<b>16</b>
	1 or 2	0	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
The Center will advocate for policy changes at the federal and state levels that can help these local officials and organizations contribute to the common mission.	4 or 5	3	3	4	3	<b>13</b>
	1 or 2	2	2	1	0	<b>5</b>
The Center will be governed by a 7-member board that includes the Mayor of Los Angeles, the chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, an appointee from the Governor's office, among other members.	4 or 5	0	2	1	1	<b>4</b>
	1 or 2	4	3	3	3	<b>13</b>

\*Exercise not conducted in Encino with white men and Latino voters

Voters also have a generally positive response to the detail that the Center will be responsible for creating a plan to reduce by 50% street homelessness within five years of the establishment of the entity. The state of affairs in Los Angeles County is such that voters do not feel that anything resembling such a plan exists, and there's some enthusiasm for at least creating a set goal for which to strive and be held accountable. However, there are mixed opinions on whether the specific goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent in 5 years feels realistic, and whether it is ambitious enough. Some believe that 50 percent is unrealistic, given their belief that a significant portion of LA County's homeless population may not even want to come off the street. Others say that only striving for 50 percent will inevitably lead to fewer than half of the homeless population being reduced, and the goal should be set higher. Overall, though, most appear appreciative of there being a specific goal about reducing homelessness itself. The importance of setting goals and timelines is also illustrated by the initial response from some voters to the overall concept, in which some voters were skeptical that this would be an open-ended commitment that could last decades.

- *"It gives you a tangible goal. Not just give them money and whatever happens." -African American voter*
- *"50 percent is a nice chunk, but it's not saying we're going to eradicate 90 percent or something nobody would believe." -White female voter*
- *"50 percent is a highly ideal number." -Millennial voter*
- *"I have confidence they can get to 50 percent if they can construct that housing and really follow up with these people and make sure they're not falling back into homelessness." -Millennial voter*
- *"Why can't they do 100 percent. In 5 years, they went to the moon." -Chinese American voter*

Most prefer for the Center to be an independent organization outside of government. This is due in large part to voters having lost faith in local government officials to solve the issue. This is reflected in the fact that the only detail that makes voters less confident is the idea of the Center being governed by a 7-member board that includes the Mayor of Los Angeles, the chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, an appointee from the Governor's office. In explaining this, voters say that they simply don't want the Mayor—particularly the current Mayor—or members of the Board of Supervisors anywhere near the Center due to their failures addressing the issue to date. There's also a sense that government inevitably mispends money when bureaucrats siphon off funding.

- *"It's kind of appealing that it's an independent organization outside of government. If you put it in the private sector, you can get shit done instead of going through government. Everything is stalled. Money doesn't go to the right areas." -White female voter*
- *"Clearly it's a bunch of incompetent people. Why am I putting people in charge who have proven to be incompetent?" -Millennial voter*
- *"If it were outside of government, you'd hope the money would go to something other than lining one person's pocket." -Latino voter*

While there's a desire to see the Center located outside of government, referring to this arrangement as a "non-profit" has some negative connotations, with people seeing non-profits as being all talk and no action or guilty of lining their own pockets. There is a more positive response to simply referring to it as an "independent organization."

- *"As soon as I see that word non-profit, I am a little bit prejudiced." -Latino voter*

While there is advantage to insulating the Center—at least in the eyes of voters—from the current slate of government leaders, many do recognize that most true solutions will have to incorporate government entities. Specifically, there's a sense that only government has the necessary funding to deal with the issue, and the ability to deploy services like law enforcement and social workers where necessary. This sense of the continuing necessity of government agencies, even as voters have low opinions of them, underscores the importance the Center's role to hold government agencies accountable.

- *"Non-profit would not get that kind of money. The government has the money." -Chinese American voter*
- *"Having the law involved is important. We've got to get past people not wanting to go. Somebody has got to put up boundaries." -White male voter*

There is generally favorable—albeit mixed—response to the idea of a tool to provide online access to citizens who can report the presence of homeless encampments via smartphone for follow-up with the appropriate governmental and private agencies in whose jurisdiction the site is located. Voters generally see it as empowering to individual citizens, and a potentially useful tool to help authorities monitor encampments. However, some also say the tool sounds legally dubious or—at the very least—a violation of peoples' privacy. Even some who support it use terms like "ratting out" to describe the process. When tested as an alternative to the idea of the Center as a coordinating body, most say it falls short. They see other tools already available for reporting, and don't think

that this would lead to progress unless there is a solution for what to do with the individuals being reported beyond simply moving them elsewhere.

- *“It gets everyone involved. If you see something, say something. That would be great.” -White female voter*
- *“This way you give the control to us.” -Chinese American voter*
- *“I’d want to know that now that I’ve ratted on these people, are they going to jail, or are they just going down the street.” -White female voter*
- *“It’s suggesting that this is a solution. It’s not a solution, just a tool.” -White male voter*

Overall, voters say they may be slightly more likely to support a candidate who favors the creation of the Center, but most appear unenthusiastic about this without sufficient authority and the ability to hold government accountable. They are left wanting more details about the exact plan that the Center would seek to enact. However, given their lack of faith in current leadership, there’s a clear desire to see any organization enact a comprehensive plan and hold government officials and bureaucrats accountable. Some voters also express hope that the creation of a Center could remove politics from the current discussion of homeless policy by creating a central plan.

- *“If somebody comes out and has a plan specifically, sure, I’d be more likely to support them.” -White female voter*
- *“I would support it. At least we’re trying to do something. I want a whole group of people to be accountable.” -African American voter*
- *“When candidates come with a real plan versus just the premise, then you can hold them accountable because we have numbers and we have the plan and when we don’t see the work, we can say so.” -Millennial voter*
- *“If you take politics out of the equation, you don’t have people running for city and county government who don’t have homelessness in their platforms.” -White male voter*

## Methodology

Location	Date	Participants	Composition
Encino	December 13, 2021	7	Democrats & Independents, men, White, 45-74
		5	Democrats & Independents, mixed gender, Latino, 25-64
Pasadena	December 15, 2021	6	Republicans, Democrats & Independents, women, White, 45-74
		6	Republicans, Democrats & Independents, mixed gender, Chinese, 25-64
Los Angeles	December 16, 2021	7	Democrats & Independents, mixed gender, mixed ethnicity, 22-34
		8	Democrats & Independents, mixed gender, African American, 25-64