

Nelson says the city should be "keeping the homeless from gathering back here, so we won't live in fear of our back fence catching on fire."

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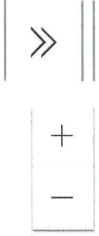
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Upset about the lack of response from the city, Nelson said she has a message for LA Mayor Eric Garcetti.

"Where is the protection? If the homeless starting a fire is not a threat, maybe they should start a fire behind your house and see how much of a threat that is to you," Nelson said.

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HOMELESS

Portland Fire & Rescue has responded to more than 1,000 homeless-related fires in last 3 years

New numbers show just how frequent homeless-related fires are in the city of Portland. Portland Fire and Rescue responded to more than 1,000 fires in three years.

Homeless camp fire spreads to nearby home

Author: Brittany Falkers
Published: 7:11 PM PDT July 30, 2019
Updated: 7:17 PM PDT July 30, 2019



PORTLAND, Ore. —

New numbers show just how frequent homeless-related fires are in the city of Portland. Portland Fire and Rescue responded to more than 1,000 fires from July 2016 to July 2019,

according to statistics from the department.

KGW dug into those figures as Portland Fire and Rescue continues to investigate what caused a fire at a homeless camp which ignited the roof of a nearby home in Southeast Portland.

RELATED: Portland homeless camp fire ignites roof of nearby house

It happened Monday evening in the 5300 block of Southeast 96th Avenue. Neighbors say they heard explosions and could see smoke from the other side of the freeway.

"I heard a big boom and when I came out the flames were like 10-15 feet tall and a lot of smoke coming this way," Corise Lee, who lives on the same block, said.

Portland Fire and Rescue responded to the scene just after 4 p.m. Monday.

They were able to put the fire out at the camp, but less than a half-hour later the roof of a home across the street ignited.

"We looked up and her roof was smoking and flaming," neighbor Aletha Chavis said.

Fire crews used chainsaws to cut off parts of the roof to make sure it was fully extinguished.



No one was injured in the fire and the residents of the home were able to stay living in their home.

"It was pretty ghastly," Chavis said.

This is not a new issue for the city of Portland. Numbers show that from July 30, 2016 - July 28, 2019 Portland Fire and Rescue has responded to a total of 1,170 homeless-related fires.

Those numbers include garbage fires, fires caused by squatters, homeless camps and other homeless-related causes.

Homeless-related fires more than doubled from 2017 to 2018. Numbers from 2016-2017 show that there were 231 fires and from 2017-2018 there were 497 fires.

This year those numbers are down, but only slightly. Since July 28, 2018 there have been 442 homeless-related fires in Portland.

From 2016 to 2017 these types of fires resulted in a total \$1.3 million in damaged or destroyed property.

In December 2018, a Portland lawyer filed \$500,000 lawsuit against the city after a fire in 2016 at a homeless camp seriously damaged her home and business.

Although Portland Fire and Rescue has not determined an official cause of this recent homeless campfire, Lt. Laurent Picard says the number one concern for homeless camp fire safety is propane.

"We're asking the campers to be very careful with propane. Many of them do use propane to cook and that's just the reality of life with this homeless crisis," he said.

Picard advises those using propane to ensure it is shut off after cooking, keep open flames away, and to have a fire extinguisher whenever possible.

"Also, it can be really dangerous around tents and tarps, because they are petroleum-based products and they can catch on fire very readily," Picard said.

Picard is also warning homeowners to be vigilant about protecting their homes in dry hot weather.

"An ember is an ember whether it comes from a homeless camp or a backyard BBQ or a fire pit," he said.

As the weather gets hotter and drier, Portland Fire and Rescue reminds the public to keep all backyard fires in fire pits at least 15 feet from a structure, have a hose available, make sure all fires are fully extinguished, and never burn garbage or anything other than firewood.

Meanwhile, neighbors say they've contacted Portland Police about this camp before, but they do not see camps like this here often.

The camp that sparked the fire Monday had been there for about two weeks with at least two people living there, according to neighbors.

"Scary, because there's a lot of kids here. I have two granddaughters here and so we'd prefer not to have them," Lee said.

Portland police tell KGW they are providing focused patrols in the area.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Fire officials do not have an estimate on how much the damage done to the home will cost.

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Malfunctioning stove sparks fire, burning Portland homeless camp, neighboring house

Updated Jan 09, 2019; Posted Dec 06, 2016

[Fire damage at 2743 N. Kerby Ave.](#)



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By [Everton Bailey Jr. | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Daniel Johnson and Sydni Harvey watched as a Multnomah County inmate work crew hauled out burnt mattresses, charred wood and other debris from a fire that tore through a North Portland homeless camp Monday.

The couple said their two dogs were some of the last few possessions they still have.

Harvey said she didn't immediately know where she, her boyfriend and the dogs, Bronson and Charlotte, would live now.

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"Everything inside is burnt," she said. "It's devastating."

A camp stove that malfunctioned when it was lit sparked the fire around 6:35 a.m., displacing two groups of residents at the Forgotten Realms camp in the 2700 block of North Kerby Avenue, the Portland Fire Bureau said. The agency reported no one was



Harvey and Johnson were at a menu nearby tent when the fire broke out. Johnson said the fire started at a structure next to theirs while one of the neighbors was trying to make coffee.

The heat became so great that it melted the siding on the side of a neighboring building that houses a law office.

A worker at the firm said the business had to close for at least the morning because of the fire damage. The firm owner lives in the house and had to rush out of the home to safety, an office employee told The Oregonian/OregonLive.

The encampment is across the street from Legacy Emmanuel Medical Center.

Tony Hernandez and Stephanie Yao Long of The Oregonian/OregonLive staff contributed to this story.

-- Everton Bailey Jr.

ebailey@oregonian.com

503-221-8343;

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NEWS

Thousands of pounds of human waste, close to 14,000 hypodermic needles cleaned out from Santa Ana River homeless



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along the Santa Ana River in an informal camp, on Wednesday, February 14, 2018.
(Photo by Mark Rightmire, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **THERESA WALKER** | thwalker@scng.com | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: March 8, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. | UPDATED: March 9, 2018 at 6:02 p.m.

Orange County Public Works released eye-popping figures Thursday, March 8, on the total amount of debris, needles and hazardous waste removed when crews cleaned up the area along the Santa Ana River Trail once populated by the encampments of homeless people.

Here's what was collected between Jan. 22 and March 3 from a more than two-mile stretch of bike trail roughly from I-5 in Orange to Ball Road in Anaheim, according to OC Public Works spokesman Shannon Widor:

- 404 tons of debris
- 13,950 needles (a...qqspyjnbufo vncfs cbtfe po xibu ejtuptbm dpoubjofst

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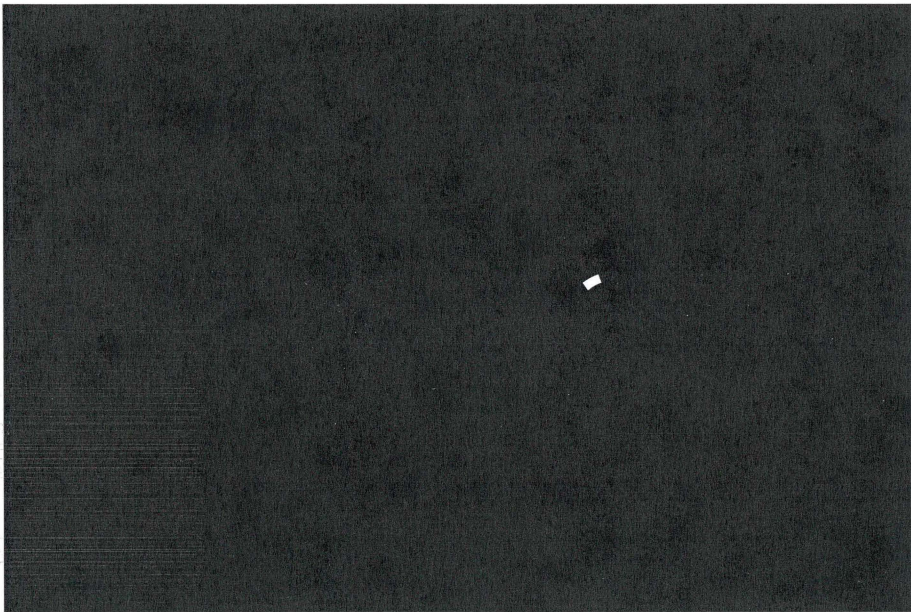
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Debris From Homeless Camps Ending Up In Local Waterways After Storms

By [Steve Large](#) January 9, 2018 at 11:23 pm Filed Under: [american river](#), [garbage](#), [homeless](#), [news wire](#), [Sacramento News](#)



SACRAMENTO (CBS13) – The first big rain of the year is flushing massive amounts of debris from homeless camps down the American River in Sacramento County, and into California waterways.

The storm hit just as the state's Water Quality Control Board begins to look at the pollution problem along the river. The rising water is pushing more waste into the river in an area that is also home to wildlife.

Lisa Lindberg lives nearby. She keeps a folder of the river waste she sees every day.


"I think its been way too long and not enough has been done," Lindberg said.

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Sacramento County supervisors approved \$5 million for new ranger and maintenance positions last year to clean up the mess. A county spokesperson says crews pulled out 6 tons of debris last week, yet tons of trash remains.

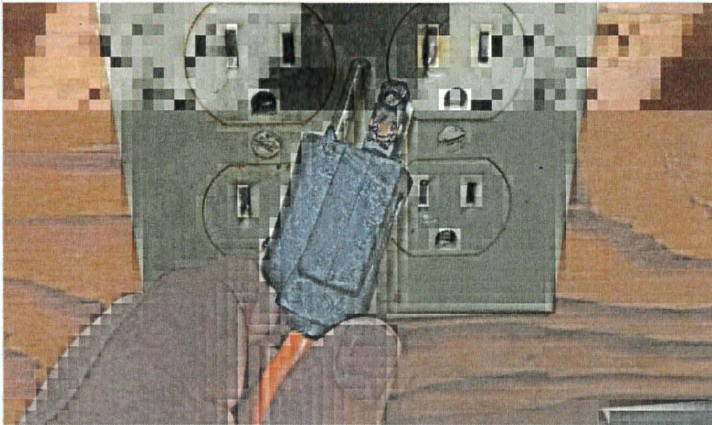
The California Water Quality Control District 5 is planning to convene a panel to address the toxic water problems.

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Geologist Roland Brady will serve on the panel.

“It’s a health issue,” Brady said. “You know there’s E.coli, there’s fecal-born coliform in this water from these buckets and their toilets that are all along the stream.”

A winter homeless shelter that opened in December is blocks away from the encampments. Its impact is not leading to a cleaner American River.

“I am beside myself,” Lindberg said. “I worry about my community. I’m worried about the drinking quality of the water. I’m worried about the homeless people.”

It’s supposed to be Sacramento’s scenic American River. But after the big rain, it’s a scene of squalor.

The state panel on water quality will include city and county officials.

No date for the first meeting has been set.

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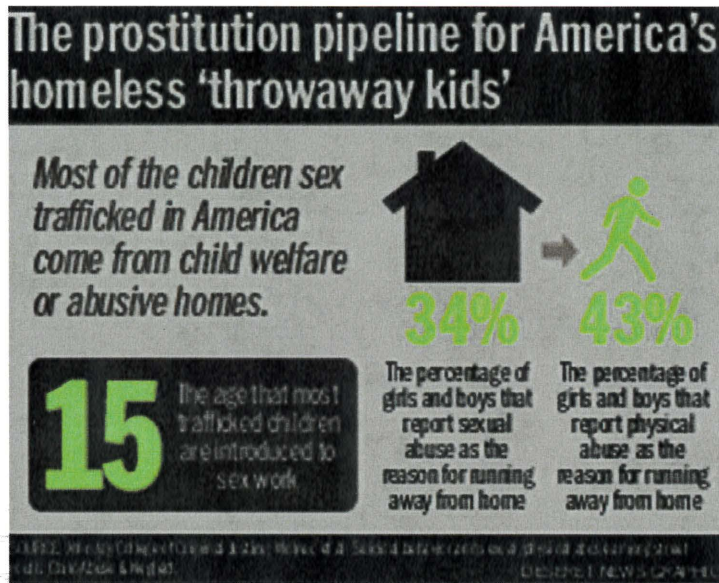
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U.S. & WORLD WORLD & NATION

Saving 'Throwaway Kids.' In Los Angeles, sex trafficking doesn't look like it does in the movies

By Lane Anderson | Dec 31, 2015, 9:20am MST

GRID VIEW



John Jay College of Criminal Justice; Molnar, et al. Suicidal behavior and sexual/physical abuse among street youth. **Child Abuse & Neglect.** | Aaron Thorup, John Jay College of Criminal Justice; Molnar, et al. Suicidal behavior and sexual/physical abuse among street youth. **Child Abuse & Neglect.**

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Just a few blocks east of the gleaming glass office buildings and new lofts of downtown Los Angeles, the streets make an abrupt change from vegan bakeries and Starbucks to sidewalks lined with trash, shopping carts stuffed with belongings and people sleeping in tents. This is Skid Row, where 2,000 homeless take up a 54-block radius, forming what is the largest homeless encampment in the United States.

It's a warm summer evening in July, and Lt. Andre Dawson of the Los Angeles Police Department is steering his blacked-out SUV across South Los Angeles Street. Skid Row is an emblem of L.A.'s notorious designation as the nation's unsheltered homeless capital: the city has 82,000 homeless on any given night, and most people don't realize that up to one in eight of the homeless are unaccompanied minors, according to the Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty at the Weingart Center.

Dawson, 56, is stylish and well-spoken. He's wearing a pink button-down shirt with dark jeans, reflective sunglasses and a mustache that he is in the habit of smoothing with one hand. Dawson has been a detective with the Los Angeles Police Department for 33 years, and since 2010, he's run the LAPD team dedicated to stopping child commercial sex exploitation.

While headlines tout stories of women and children trafficked from overseas, Dawson says you need look no further than the streets of Los Angeles to find America's sexually exploited kids. Over 90 percent of children under 18 rescued by his team are "domestic cases," he says, meaning they are kids born and raised in America. And they have not been kidnapped and stuffed into the back of a van, which is Hollywood's version of sex trafficking.

"It's not what everybody thinks; it's not what the movies tell you it is," says Dawson. "What we see are — what's the term to refer to girls that nobody cares about? Throwaway kids."

It's a term used to describe the thousands of children in America who are abandoned, abused, neglected and often in and out of foster care. Although "orphan" isn't a term we use anymore in the United States, Dawson sees sexually exploited kids who are essentially without families, or without reliable, safe homes, day in and day out.

There are between 4,800 and 10,000 homeless minors in Los Angeles on any given night, most of them concentrated around downtown L.A. and Hollywood, and many find themselves in a Dickensian scramble to survive. Some come from out of state, in search of warm weather and a better life, but most are local kids from Southern California's poor neighborhoods. Many will fall into, or be pressed into, sex work.

Exact stats on minors in the sex trade are dicey — information is hard to get and tough to confirm. One oft-quoted but unverified figure says that one in three teens will be recruited into sex work the first 48 hours on the street according to the National Runaway Switchboard. Another embattled University of Pennsylvania study claimed that most kids enter the sex trade at age 13; a more recent peer-reviewed 2008 report puts the average age at 15. What is known is that homeless teens, at any age, are vulnerable.

The federal definition for what constitutes trafficking is broader than most people realize. While “trafficked” implies transportation of victims across borders, anyone compelled to perform commercial sex acts by force, fraud or coercion is legally defined as a trafficking victim. Therefore, anyone under age 18 performing commercial sex acts is considered a trafficking victim because they aren’t old enough to give consent—whether or not there is evidence of force or coercion.

Rather than treated as victims that need help, most children in the sex trade have been arrested on prostitution charges and put behind bars while their adult johns usually get off scot-free. Dawson’s CSEC (Commercially Sexually Exploited Children) unit is one of the first in the country to adopt a “first responders” protocol that trains officers to recognize and talk to minors and bring them into the station to put them in touch with social services, instead of landing them in juvenile court.

Dawson knows there's no silver bullet solution to stopping sex trafficking. But it's a step forward for law enforcement, and a model for cities across the country.

The tracks

It's just after 5 p.m., and the sun is still high in Southern California's hazy sky. Dawson heads toward "the tracks" in Compton, or what locals call “the Blade,” stretches of city streets where sex is sold. This is the time of day when women will hit the sidewalks looking to pick up guys who are just getting off work, Dawson says. They will walk up and down streets like Figueroa Avenue, which is lined with strip malls, liquor stores and cheap hotels, while working cellphones, talking to their pimps and looking out for regulars and new customers.

The sidewalks in South Central are thick with foot traffic, from kids who are out of school to shift workers waiting for buses. As we crawl up Figueroa Avenue in rush-hour traffic, Dawson calls out the action on the street.

“She’s working,” he nods toward a woman strolling casually in spandex leggings and a not-especially revealing striped top. “Those two are working.” He points out two young women, one black and one Latina, walking past a McDonald’s, who appear to be in their late teens or early twenties. They’re wearing stretchy jeans and crop tops and talking on their cellphones through their earbuds.

When Dawson’s team does recon on the street, they’re scanning young women and looking for underage girls. It takes a trained eye to tell the difference between a sixteen-year old and an eighteen-year old, but sometimes it’s painfully obvious that a child is on the street—the youngest girl Dawson has rescued from the street was ten years old. Dawson's team will also pose as johns on social media to bust pimps that are trafficking children online, gather intelligence from informants, and try to persuade victims to testify against their traffickers.

When Dawson suspects someone on the street is underage, he approaches her and introduces himself as an officer from the trafficking unit, and notes that her behavior has been consistent with commercial sex activity in the neighborhood. Then, instead of arresting her, he takes her into custody to put her in touch with social services.

Until recently, “child prostitutes,” a term that Dawson, and anti-trafficking advocates recoil at, were seen as willful criminals instead of victims.

It's hard to know how many minors are involved in trading sex, because a teenager coming to a shelter or nonprofit in crisis won't usually say they need help because they're being trafficked.

“They say, ‘I need food, or I need a place to sleep.’ They may report that they are trading sex, or not,” says Johannah Westmacott of Safe Horizon, an anti-trafficking and homeless drop-in center.

Dawson’s perspective has changed over the years; he has brought in girls who were abused and exploited by pimps but faced worse trauma in foster care, or homes plagued by abuse, drugs and poverty.

And many of the young women and girls “in the life,” the insider term for sex work, have a history of abuse at home or in the foster care system before they ever end up on the tracks. Forty-six percent of runaway and homeless youths report having being physically abused, and 17 percent report being forced into unwanted sexual activity by a family or household member, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This is part of what advocates call the “foster care to prostitution pipeline” that sets kids up from a childhood of abuse into a future in sex work.

“There’s a conversation to be had that a lot of these adult women were just kids that never got rescued,” Dawson says. “Now it’s all they know.”

First responders

When Dawson’s unit picks up a minor, after contacting DCFS, they call someone from Amber Davies’ team. Davies works for Saving Innocence, a Los Angeles advocacy and outreach nonprofit founded in 2010 by Kim Biddle, who is herself a child survivor of commercial sexual exploitation. Within 90 minutes, one of the five caseworkers— all women — will be on the scene to meet with the child.

An example of a typical young woman that Davies has met with is a 14-year-old girl, African-American, who has been in foster care since age 9 and has a history of sexual abuse. But girls like this aren’t usually rejoicing to be “rescued.” In fact, they are usually afraid of law enforcement and attached to their pimp, who often plays simultaneous roles of exploiter and boyfriend/father figure.

“What we hear from youths is that they’ve had bad experiences with law enforcement before, and it’s hard to talk about what they’ve been through,” says Davies. And the girls themselves report that law enforcement officers are “tricks,” or trade sexual favors in exchange for avoiding arrest. “So if they bring us in and we say these officers are the good guys, it helps immensely.”

Davies' team tries to create a safe relationship with teenagers using “their language.” “I’ll say, ‘I have not been in the life but I want to understand what you’ve been through.’”

Saving Innocence is part of an innovative initiative called First Responders Protocol for CSEC. Initiated by the Long Beach Police Department, it's one of the first of its kind. Just a few years ago, Long Beach, home of the notorious Long Beach Boulevard track, had the highest number of arrests of minors in the sex trade in Los Angeles. Last year, it had zero.

Now, minors detained by police are connected to services like Davies' instead of put behind bars. While Long Beach has been praised for this progressive protocol, all 50 states, including California, have sentencing laws that criminalize minors for "juvenile prostitution" rather than treating them as child-abuse victims.

Malika Saada Saar is executive director of advocacy group Rights4Girls, which launched the No Such Thing campaign earlier this year to end arrests for so-called "child prostitution."

"In California and almost every other state, trafficked kids — the majority of them black and brown — are contemplated and treated as criminals," Saada Saar said in a press conference, "when in fact they have been subjected to repeated commercial rape."

"There is no such thing as a child prostitute, there are only victims and survivors of child rape."

A clean, well-lighted place

The teen girl who gets kidnapped and sold into sex trafficking does exist—but it's a very small percentage of cases. What advocates call the "kidnapped innocent girl narrative" makes up about 10 percent of cases according to Alexandra Lutnick, a researcher at RTI San Francisco who specializes in young people and the sex trade. The rest of sex trafficking cases are "more complicated."

"To only focus on the one narrative pulls heartstrings, but it does a disservice to other youth who can benefit from resources and support," says Lutnick, who points out that most of these kids aren't like Elizabeth Smart—the 14-year-old Salt Lake City girl whose 2002 kidnapping from her home set off a national search. They can't be rescued and returned to loving homes.

Westmacott agrees. The story of a trapped white, middle class girl from the suburbs can be compelling and get laws passed. "But that leads to solutions that do nothing for a person running away from an abusive group home, or LGBT youth that has nowhere to stay."

The girls that Davies meets with, for example, often come from a family where she was already being sexually abused. "A child is already being molested or raped by a stepfather or abused in foster care, and then an older guy comes along and pays to get their nails done, hair done, takes them to McDonald's. Nobody has treated them that well," she says.

A minor in that situation is choosing between what she sees as the better of two bad options. She may not see her relationship with her pimp, or "Daddy," or "boyfriend" as abusive, or she may not realize it until he threatens her, or threatens to hurt her family.

"We want them to understand that help is out there — their pimp has told them time and again that nobody cares for you or understands you, you're just going to end up in jail," says Davies. "We don't want that to be true. We want to make sure that their pimps are liars."

Unfortunately, it's harder for Davies to help victims than it should be. After she meets with a girl, she will try to find a place for her to stay. There aren't many. Shelters have long waiting lists, and few allow unaccompanied minors. "The Youth Welcome Center [the Los Angeles County youth shelter] is the county equivalent of a flophouse," says Davies. "It's a bunch of mattresses thrown on the floor."

The need for foster homes outstrips demand by 30 percent nationally. An L.A. Times report earlier this year found that shelter social workers made up to 100 phone calls to place a single child in foster care, and staff were concerned that traffickers were recruiting from the youth shelter itself.

As a result, a lot of kids in shelters run back to the street. A 14-year-old is a child, after all, and between sleeping on the floor alone with strangers, and going back to the life she knows — she will often choose the second. Most kids "in the life" will run anywhere from three to seven times before they leave the streets, says Davies. That might improve if they had a decent place to stay.

Nowhere to call home

Covenant House Los Angeles is in Hollywood, just a few miles from Mann's Chinese Theater and the Walk of Stars, where tourists pose for sidewalk photos next to the name of Taylor Swift or Angelina Jolie.

Covenant House is a shelter and outreach center for homeless youth, with 94 beds. The vacancy rate is zero, and last month the waiting list had 100 names on it.

Bill Bedrossian is the executive director at Covenant House California, and if you ask him what would abate sex exploitation of young people, one answer is simple: beds.

Covenant House is on a short list of places that law enforcement calls when it is trying to place young people living on the street. "They have a scared kid from Idaho who they found in front of a store, or at the train station, or on Skid Row; that's not a safe place for a young person to be," he says.

About 65 to 70 percent of the youths Covenant House serves are locals from L.A. County, about 30 percent are from other states. Nearly all are coming from foster care, or are running from abuse, he says.

Bedrossian says he has trouble placing the youth that walk in his door or are sent to him by police. On average, it can take about six weeks for a bed to open up at Covenant House, or to find a bed in another handful of youth centers like this.

In the meantime, young people are on the street. "I had an 18-year old come in the other day that I had to waitlist, and he said he preferred the stairwell to adult homeless shelters that are not safe, and people are getting raped there."

Many kids on the street that are trading sex are involved in "survival sex," which refers to youths trading sex for a place to sleep, or money for basics like food. In 2009, Chicago's Young Women's Empowerment Project for girls in the sex trade conducted its own research, and found that while 35 of 200 respondents said that they had been pimped or trafficked, 119 had engaged in survival sex.

At the Los Angeles LGBT Center in Hollywood, sexual health classes for homeless youths openly address survival sex and "harm reduction." In Hollywood, many

homeless youths include boys and transgender youths who trade sex for money, or for a place to stay.

A 2015 Urban Institute study found that young people who engaged in survival sex used the money to buy food first. Covenant House did a study with Fordham University in 2013 that interviewed 200 homeless youth, and found that almost half—48 percent—of those that traded sex did so because they didn't have a place to stay.

What this says is that even those who aren't pimped depend on sex to survive, says Johannah Westmacott of Safe Horizon. "We're talking about the basics — food, shelter."

Money. Food. A place to sleep.

As the sun starts to set over South Central, the sky turns a brilliant pink, and the action on the street picks up as Dawson and I cruise Long Beach Boulevard. He spots two women standing on a corner — one black, wearing a miniskirt, and one white wearing tall boots.

Dawson pulls into a parking lot where we can watch them discreetly with binoculars. A green late-model Lexus pulls up and the black woman walks up to the car. "That's her pimp," Dawson announces. How does he know? "She's not negotiating with him, she's just getting right into his car."

Dawson flips around and stomps on the gas to give chase, then, once we catch up, he eases off to act natural. When we pull up to the light we can see that the driver is a woman, which Dawson identifies as the pimp's "bottom," or right-hand help. "Or, that's the pimp," he says. "Don't assume a pimp is always a man. Some of the meanest pimps I've ever met have been women."

The woman in the passenger seat looks young, but not under 18. If she did, Dawson could pull them over, citing the burned out left tail light, and ID them both. But this approach can make for tough work busting pimps and identifying underage victims.

Dawson tells me, not for the first time, a story about a 10-year-old girl he rescued several years ago that really affected him. He rescued a 15-year-old earlier this year — and it was the same girl. She was back in the life. "That one really got to me," he says.

Even Dawson is aware of the limited role of law enforcement in helping sexually exploited kids. When I asked Westmacott from Safe Horizon what the young people she works with ask for most, the answer is so obvious that a smile almost plays on her lips. “Money. A place to sleep. Food. Better economic opportunities.”

Dawson’s philosophy on long-term solutions to child trafficking is about the same. “Kids need a safe place to be and someone who cares about them. Now why should that be so hard?”

This article was written while reporter Lane Anderson was participating in the National Health Journalism Fellowship, a program of the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School of Journalism. Email: laneanderson@gmail.com

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SAN FRANCISCO

Mayor Breed's First Year: Feces, Needles Complaints Decline; Trash Gripes, Homelessness Rise

The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit spoke to San Francisco Mayor London Breed and reviewed thousands of city records to determine what her administration has accomplished, and what it has been unable to achieve over the past year

By Bigad Shaban, Robert Campos, Anthony Rutanashoodech, Mark Villarreal and Jeremy Carroll • Published July 10, 2019 • Updated on December 11, 2019 at 2:00 pm



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A figurative and literal mess awaited Mayor London Breed as she officially took the helm of San Francisco City Hall last July.

At the time, the city averaged more than 2,000 complaints per month over feces, car break-ins were at a record high with roughly 92 smash-and-grabs a day, and 568 homeless tents lined neighborhoods across town.

The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit obtained and reviewed thousands of city records to determine what San Francisco's 45th mayor has done to address the city's most pressing issues, including homelessness and the level of filth strewn across the city's streets and sidewalks.



Since July 2018, the number of homeless tents in San Francisco has declined from 568 to 380, according to the city's latest tally that was completed in April.

Homeless Population Rises as Homeless Tents Decline

Breed rounds out her first year as San Francisco mayor boasting a decline in homeless tents across the city. Her administration plans to make good on a campaign promise of eliminating "long-term homeless encampments" by the end of the month.

While the number of homeless tents has declined 33% since Breed took office, the number of homeless in the city has increased to 8,011 people – a 17% increase from the city's last tally two years ago. When using San Francisco's "expanded" definition of homelessness – which includes individuals in jail, hospitals, and residential treatment facilities – the spike is even more dramatic, a 30% increase that equates to a total homeless population of 9,784 people.

SF Homeless Population Point-in-Time Counts

The homeless population in SF increased by 16.81 percent from 2017-2019, according to the SF Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

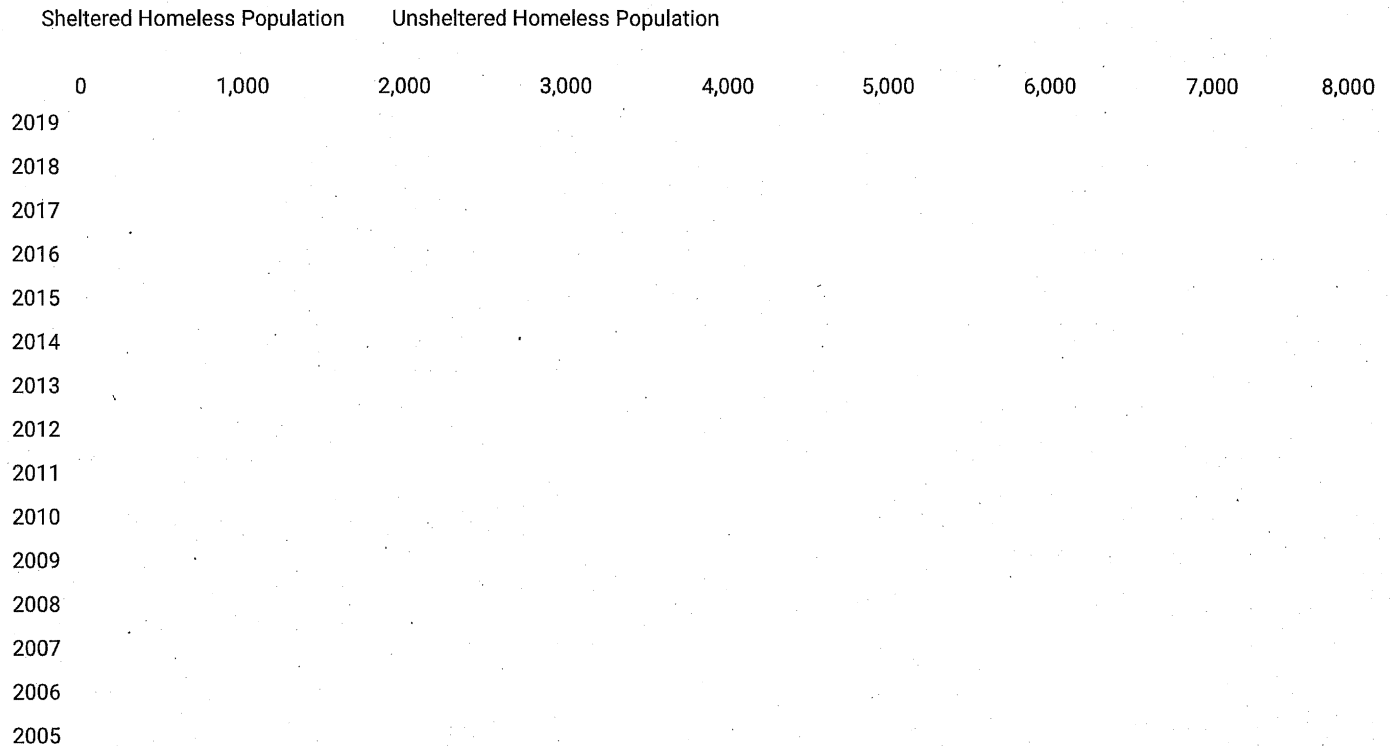


Chart: Sean Myers/NBC Bay Area • Source: San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

Since Breed took office, the city has added 216 shelter beds, bringing the total to 2,974. According to the administration, the city has helped more than 1,300 people exit homelessness since Breed was sworn in as mayor. For every homeless person housed, however, about three more people in San Francisco wind up homeless.

In a recent interview with the Investigative Unit, Breed discussed what she has accomplished during her first year in office, what she hasn't, and what she now views as the biggest challenge facing San Francisco.

"My proudest accomplishment is helping almost 1,500 people exit homelessness into permanent housing, permanent supportive housing, reconnecting with their family members and other cities throughout the

country," Breed told the Investigative Unit.



"My proudest achievement is helping almost 1,500 people exit homelessness into permanent housing," said Mayor London Breed while reflecting about her first year in office (June 28, 2019).

'The Biggest Challenge Our City Faces'

Local



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3 HOURS AGO

Police Find Man Shot and Killed on Alum Rock Avenue in San Jose

The mayor describes her actions as "progress," saying she is "trying to address what we know is the biggest challenge our city faces and that is homelessness."

As a candidate, Mayor Breed also [promised to eliminate long-term clusters of tents within one year of taking office](#). According to the city's last count, there are nine encampments of six or more tents across

San Francisco. The city, however, said it is on track to eliminate those encampments by the end of the month.

"People don't just disappear," said Kelley Cutler, Human Rights Organizer for the Coalition on Homelessness. "It's like this sidewalk shuffle that keeps shuffling people around because they're not actually being given a real alternative."

Cutler believes city officials focus too many of their resources on cleaning out tent encampments, rather than focusing on providing more housing to the homeless.

"As the cost of housing goes up, homelessness is going to go up. It just goes hand in hand," Cutler said. "We have a housing and a health crisis, and this city is often responding with law enforcement."



Kelley Cutler, Human Rights Organizer for the Coalition on Homelessness, says that as the cost of living goes up, so does homelessness (June 25, 2019).

'They Took My Tent'

Since 2014, San Francisco police have issued 1,200 citations to people "lodging" on city sidewalks, according to data obtained by the Investigative Unit.

"They came up and they took my tent. My tent was about right here," said Marquis Ausby, a homeless man who said police and public works officials swept through Willow Alley in San Francisco and removed tents, clothing, and bedding.

Since Mayor Breed took office, the number of tents across San Francisco dropped from 568 to 380, reflecting a 33% decline, according to the latest city survey completed in April.

Marquis, 30, said losing his tent means he is left without any sort of protection and no place to go. He's said he's tried the shelter system, but the current waiting list has about a thousand people on it. "You have to go through the process of going to a shelter signing up, waiting, coming back. It's a whole process."

"My goal is to change that," said Breed. "I mean since I've been in office, we've had almost 400 new shelter beds. I'm pledging to make sure that we have a thousand by 2020."

City officials say the homelessness problem is growing faster than they can fix it, adding that while the city is able to help 50 people out of homelessness and into housing each week, another 150 people wind up homeless during the same time period.

While San Francisco's homeless population is up 17% from two years ago, other Bay Area counties are experiencing larger increases: Santa Clara County, 31% increase; Alameda, 43%; Contra Costa, 43% increase.

Mayor Proposes \$364 Million to Tackle Homeless Crisis

The mayor is proposing to spend more than \$364 million next year on the city's homeless crisis – that's \$80 million more than this year.

Her plan includes expanding housing grants to help keep families from becoming homeless, adding more shelter nurses and social workers, and building another 820 permanent housing units for the homeless.

Another \$4 million would go towards the city's efforts to clear away homeless encampments. It remains unclear, however, just how many homeless get housed after being forced to give up their tents and ordered to move elsewhere. A recent report by the San Francisco Controller's Office found "at present, there is no means to track ... linkage to care."

'Things Have Gotten Worse'

"They're still homeless. Just because they don't have a tent doesn't mean the homeless people are gone," said business owner Matthew Zimmerman. He and his fiancée Andrea Boomer run the Aspect Framing Studio and Art Gallery on Polk Street, but the view outside their studio isn't so picture perfect. Heaps of trash, sleeping bags, and used syringes line the alley bordering his business.

"The last couple of years, things have gotten worse as far as the amount of people that are on the streets and the amount of open drug use is another thing that is pretty detrimental to the community," said Zimmerman.

He's convinced conditions on the streets are hurting his studio's bottom line.

"I actually just checked my revenue from last year to this year, and I'm down 25%," he said.



Matthew Zimmerman blames the growing homeless population outside his San Francisco business for his 25 percent drop in sales. He and his fiancée, Andrea Boomer, run the Aspect Frame Studio and Art Gallery on Polk Street.

Breed Struggles to Open Nation's First Supervised Injection Site

While campaigning, Breed said as mayor she'd work to have San Francisco open the nation's first supervised injection site, where people can openly use drugs under the care of medical supervision. While controversial, the centers claim success abroad in European countries and Canada. The sites, which have

been the subject of [previous NBC Bay Area investigations](#), offer clean syringes, drug counseling, and have been shown to decrease the number of discarded drug needles along streets and sidewalks.

When California lawmakers struggled to legalize the centers in San Francisco, Breed vowed to move ahead anyway, even though the sites would violate federal law.

The mayor, however, now concedes her plan to forge ahead isn't a realistic one.

"If it were just me and, you know, I was only putting myself at risk, it would be one thing, but in looking into the weeds of safe injection sites, it does potentially put, unfortunately, nonprofit and city workers at risk of being imprisoned," Breed told the Investigative Unit. "I want to make sure that when we do this, we do it responsibly and we don't create another unintended consequence as a result. We need the support from the state."

Breed Proposes \$3.4 Million Hike for Street Cleaning Budget

San Francisco's dirty streets have also been a focus for the mayor. Last year, an [NBC Bay Area investigation](#) went viral after exposing an alarming amount of trash, feces, and used syringes scattered across parts of San Francisco.

The city now has a dedicated four-person team to clean feces five days a week.

The city contracts a separate crew to pick up used syringes 12 hours each day. The San Francisco AIDS Foundation, which is paid \$700,000 a year to run the program, began its work one month prior to Breed taking office and has collected 142,781 syringes since Breed was sworn in as mayor.

As part of the mayor's \$12 billion budget proposal, Breed plans to add \$3.4 million to the city's street cleaning budget over the next two years.

San Francisco already spends more on street cleaning than many other larger cities, including Los Angeles and Chicago.



The San Francisco Board of Supervisors reviews Mayor Breed's \$12 billion budget, which includes \$364 million to combat homelessness (June 20, 2019).

Trash, Needles, and Feces

"The fact is the number of calls [311] are down for needles, for feces, for trash pickup all over the city. If you look at the data ... to me, that's progress," Breed said.

Complaints over feces have declined 17% in the past six months compared to the mayor's first six months in office. Complaints over needles declined, too, about 12.3%. Trash complaints, however, have increased nearly 3.9% over the same period, according to city records.

Feces 311 Reports

Feces reports rose sharply following Mayor London Breed's inauguration on July 11, 2018, but have since returned to pre-inaugural levels.

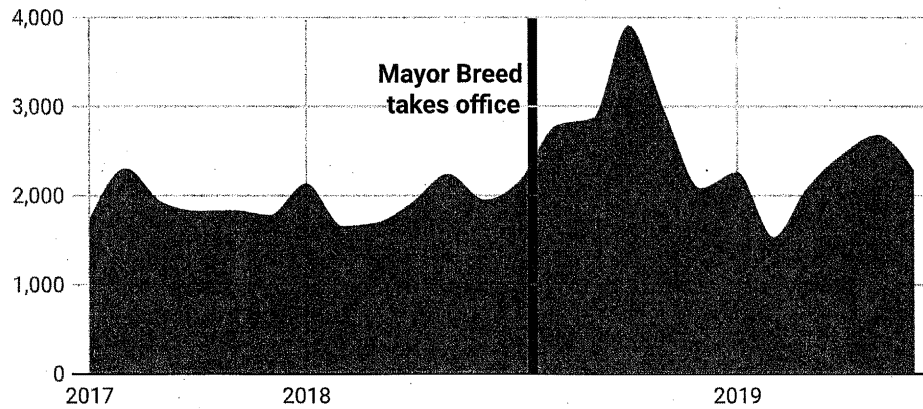
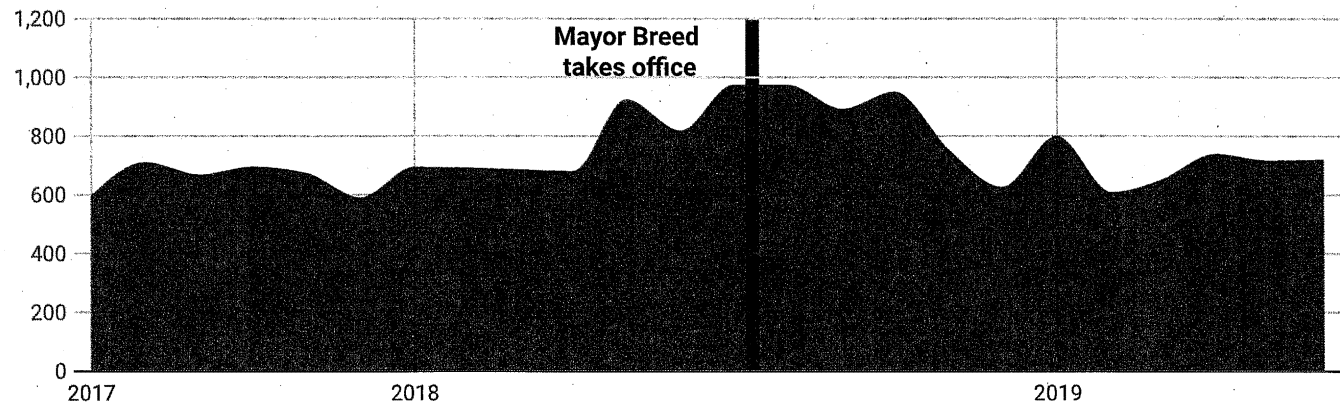


Chart: Sean Myers/NBC Bay Area • Source: DataSF.org • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

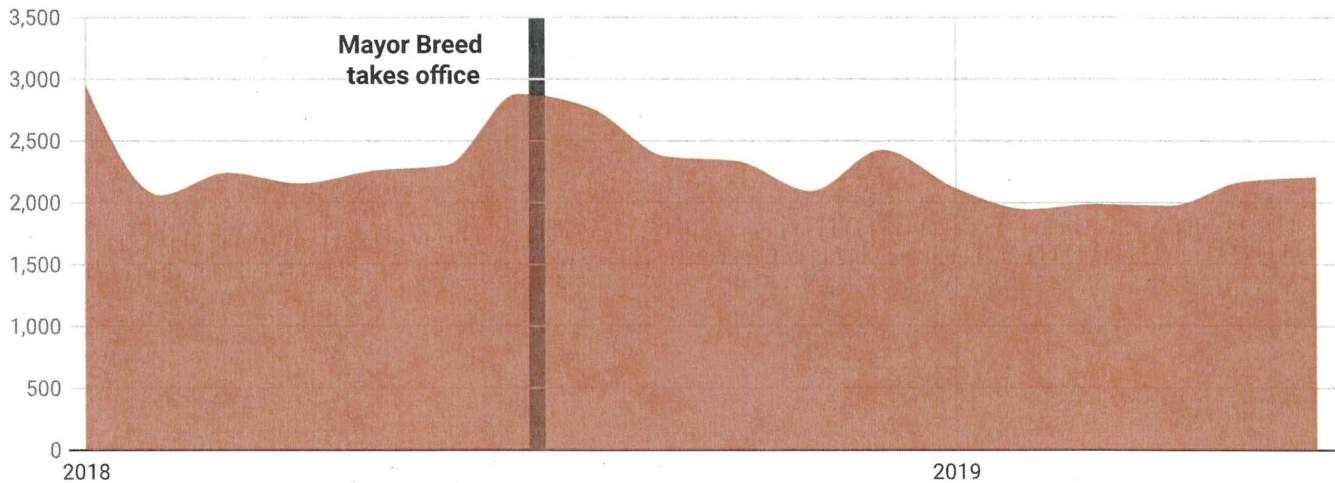
Needles 311 Reports

Reports of needles increased in the months before and after Mayor London Breed's inauguration. Reports decreased by 12 percent during the first half of 2019 versus the second half of 2018.



Vehicle Breakins Involving Theft or Burglary

In June 2019, there were on average 73 incidents per day involving theft and burglary from vehicles. In addition, there were on average 13 stolen vehicles per day.



In comparing Breed's first year in office to the year prior, complaints increased across all three of those categories: trash, up 13.1%; needles, up 10.2%; feces, up 30.7%.

In the past, the mayor has argued spikes in complaints over dirty streets does not mean San Francisco is any dirtier. Instead, Breed has said the city's cleanup efforts have helped people become more aware on how to complain.

"There has been change," Breed said. "Everyone has to feel responsible for cleaning up after themselves whether you're homeless or not."

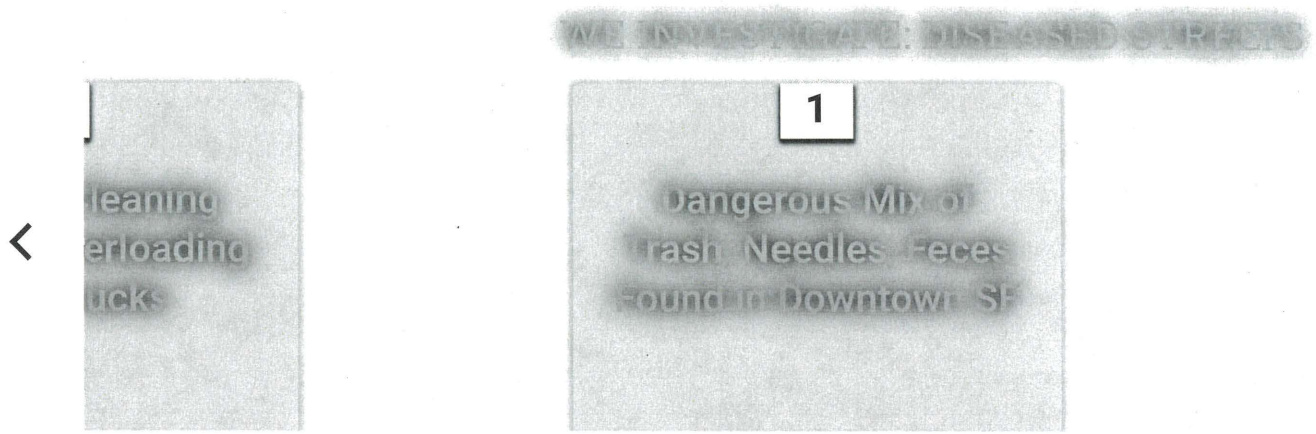
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