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The Not So Golden State: A Content Review of Nine

Homelessness Strategic Plans in the State of California

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Vulnerable, helpless, and stigmatized—these are the unfortunate adjectives used to describe the homeless population across the United States. According to the 2022 Point-in-Time survey, we as a nation have an estimated 582,462 people experiencing homelessness, which is 18 out of every 10,000 people in the nation ("State of Homelessness"). In addition to the significant number of persons experiencing homelessness (PEH), there are visible inequalities among the subpopulations of PEH (Fowle; de Sousa et al.).[1] The State of California is claimed to be the state of prosperity—awarded the name "The Golden State." Despite this nickname, California has 30% of the nation's homeless population and 50% of the nation's unsheltered homeless population—the highest rate of homelessness in the county, with "44 people experiencing homelessness out of every 10,000 people in the state" (de Sousa et al.). Numerous counties in California have generated strategic plans to tackle the issue of homelessness. In saying this, the choice to address specific subpopulations within these plans is at the agents' sole discretion.[2] Therefore, I must raise the question of whether they are producing these equitably. My research asks: Are California counties addressing overrepresented subpopulations within PEH? For this study, I will explore how counties in California plan to address the homelessness crisis by analyzing homelessness strategic plans using an index and examining the rates at which specific groups are experiencing homelessness for each county.

Background of the Issue:

As Dr. Mary Cleveland notes in her paper "Homelessness and Inequality," this issue is not a new phenomenon. Research shows homelessness moved into the public light in the United States around the 1980s—when then-President Ronald Reagan signed the first federal

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[1] The use of the term "persons experiencing homelessness" implies a hopeful potential for change in status and does not assign a label to these individuals. The term "homeless person" implies a permanent status and labels the individual with a negative connotation.

[2] The term "agent" refers to any organization within the state that has or is seeking to apply for grants in order to address homelessness. Agents include cities, counties, Continuums of Care, non-profits, and other organizations.

homelessness legislation (Cleveland). The McKinney Vento Act was and remains to be, the foundational piece of homeless prevention legislation at the national level—focusing on grants for support programs, allowing homeless youth to have access to public schools, and for persons experiencing homelessness to access public services (Hoch). Over the years, this legislation has been amended to fill policy gaps and is what established the basis for California-based efforts. The most significant amendment was the creation of the Continuums of Care Program (CoC) through the passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009. This act amended the McKinney Vento Act, allowing for expanded use of the funding and increasing the allowance for emergency shelters, long-term permanent housing, and rural community support (Perl and McCarty). CoCs are federally funded nonprofit, state, and local government initiative networks that aim to serve a community with the end goal of ending homelessness ("CoC: Continuum of Care Program"). Outside of this act, Homeless Assistance Grants through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) total $3.213 Billion in grants for fiscal year 2022—$2.8 Billion directed towards Continuum of Care Grant Competition projects ("FY22 Funding"; "HUD Announces"). Funding is distributed to non-profit organizations, state initiatives, and county programs. Organizations and counties apply for these grants, using documented strategies on how they aim to utilize the funds—established methods such as long-term strategic plans. The first program to incentivize counties and local governments to have a strategic plan was put forward by the National Alliance to End Homelessness. This program incentivized counties to have plans to receive additional funding to end veteran homelessness in five years and family, youth, and child homelessness in ten years (Berg). It was thoroughly adapted by the Veterans Administration, allowing researchers to observe how programming has affected veterans. Veterans, to this day, have the most institutionalized support system with specific health, mental

health, job placement, and education benefits (Tsai). By adding veterans to strategic planning, counties acknowledge the need to connect this subpopulation with resources to end homelessness. While this does provide a good path of analysis, this subpopulation is different from others as the perception of veterans is associated with their service—which unites both political parties (Tsai). Other subpopulations are not awarded this perception and cannot connect both sides of the aisle to address this systemic problem.

Significant legislation and funding for addressing homelessness have been introduced at the state level in the past few years. During the pandemic, Governor Gavin Newsom created Project Homekey, which authorized and funded the transition of commercial or hotel properties into permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness. To date, this project has funded 166 projects, equating to 6,863 homes and nearly $2 billion allocated or spent ("Homekey Awards Dashboard"). Additionally, Governor Newsom has a $14 billion commitment to homelessness prevention projects (Office of the California State Governor). This multi-year investment aims to create "55,000 new housing units and treatment slots" while reinvigorating Medi-Cal and expanding mental health support systems (Office of the California State Governor). One of the most extensive programs established under this was the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court—a system aiming to help people experiencing homelessness as a result of schizophrenia or severe mental disorders (Office of the California State Governor). Lastly, the Governor has promised 1,200 tiny homes to serve as temporary housing for many unhoused people in LA, San Diego, and Sacramento counties ("Governor Newsom Announces").

Despite significant legislation and investments aiming to end homelessness, most of these programs require counties, in partnership with local governments and CoCs, to apply for funding

from the state or federal government. Governor Newsom has proven his desire to address homelessness rapidly through recent investments, but counties' and cities' responses are varied (Christopher). Historically, these two levels of government have not had defined lines of addressing different areas within homelessness—leading to both agents applying for funding and competing against each other or duplicating efforts ("California Needs"). This has led local and county governments to call upon the Governor and the State Legislature to grant them more time to develop long-term strategies to ensure proper and effective homelessness reduction and prevention strategies ("California Needs"). To organize, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) has created the project "At Home," which focuses on developing long-term strategic plans with five main components in mind. These components are accountability, transparency, housing, outreach, mitigation, and economic opportunity ("A Comprehensive"). Additionally, these plans are supposed to help define the role of each level of governance and assign one fiscal agent to oversee the application and distribution of funding. As of October 17, 2023, 40 of the 58 counties have passed a resolution stating their intent to follow such strategic plan guidelines ("AT HOME Coalition"). The resolution allows for multiple plans and fiscal agents when a county has large cities—such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego.

Significant overrepresentation of which subpopulations are experiencing homelessness appears at the national level of data—but for this study, I refocus the attention on California. The term "subpopulation" refers to a group of people with a similar trait, identity, or experience, which may impact the rate at which this community is experiencing homelessness. As mentioned, funding is distributed from the state and federal governments through grant applications. Each level has different requirements for how the funds are used. For example, funding from HUD to county projects emphasizes "serving the worst off first" (Fowler et al.)

This, in theory, is a great practice, but the reality is that "severe resource constraints and inaccurate and racially biased risk assessments undermine decision-making" (Fowler et al.). Research has continuously noted that specific communities are overrepresented among the total population of PEH. The communities studied in this research are Black, Indigenous, persons experiencing substance use disorders, veterans, and people who have experienced domestic abuse, as these all have faced highly disproportionate rates of homelessness for various reasons—systemic racism, the effects of colonialism, mental health, access to high paying jobs, and much more (Tsai and Rosenheck; Allgood and Warren Jr.; Bufkin and Bray; Kushel and Moore). Figure 2 shows the PIT overrepresentation of each group studied across the nine counties under observation. See Methodology and Data for an explanation of how this statistic was generated.

Despite homelessness being such a significant issue, my literature review determined only a select few other researchers have indexed and scored county strategic plans. I have yet to examine the subpopulations my research seeks to study. The closest method to reference was conducted by a graduate student at San Jose State University, Guadalupe Franco, as a thesis proposal. This study looked into the overlap between a county's climate action plan and goals of reducing the impact of climate change on individuals experiencing homelessness (Franco). Franco's research found some cities and counties, within climate change prevention strategies, do address subpopulations and racial disparities of PEH. This research follows a similar line of questioning as this paper seeks to explore—are counties acknowledging subpopulation disparities? My study aims to fill the knowledge gap related to overall strategic planning to end homelessness.

Theory and Argument

Through my research, I aim to fill in the knowledge gap around whether counties in California explicitly address the overrepresentation of PEH subpopulations when developing strategic plans. As stated above, counties are generating plans to address homelessness. Such plans are critical as they persist across time, despite leadership or staff turnover. They act as a call to action, guiding the public's long-term direction, investment, and policy communication ("Section 230"). In noting this, counties of different sizes have different access to resources, staff availability, and fiscal management strategies. Furthermore, despite the importance of these plans, there are no current requirements for counties or CoCs to create or maintain homelessness strategic plans. The decision to address most subpopulations is at the sole discretion of these entities. Therefore, given the lack of requirements, limited funding, and competitive nature of grant applications, not all applicants will see their projects funded, and not all subpopulations will be addressed through general strategies.

For this research, the independent variable is the overrepresentation of each subpopulation within my analysis.[3] The subpopulation groups are Black, Indigenous/Native American, veterans, persons experiencing substance use disorders, and people who have experienced domestic abuse/violence. A statistic will be generated in a per capita measure to ensure the data is standardized. The dependent variable will be the index score determined through a content analysis of each strategic plan. A content analysis will allow me as a researcher to quantify the quality of critical aspects within a county strategic plan. Additionally, a reasonable plan is both explicit and measurable. My index will evaluate these points.

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[3] Further mentions of the term "subpopulations" is in reference to Black, Indigenous/Native American, veterans, persons experiencing substance use disorders, and people who have experienced domestic abuse/violence for this research paper.

To connect these two variables, if a county had a high overrepresentation statistic, I would predict these agents would develop specific support plans to aid these subpopulations in an equity-based approach—targeted support systems are designed to maximize how dollars are spent. On this, two testable hypotheses have been developed. Conceptually, counties with higher amounts of PEH of subpopulations are more likely to address that specific disparity within their strategic plans and with more detail. A third hypothesis in this research argues that smaller counties will produce less thorough plans and score lower on the index. This is discussed as smaller counties have less access to resources and staff to create the same level of strategic plans as large counties. Operationally, these can be observed as

H_0: No relationship exists between overrepresented subpopulations and strategic planning for addressing homelessness within counties.

H_1: Overrepresentation of subpopulations within a county will lead to more specific strategic plans for that subpopulation.

H_2: Smaller-population counties will produce less thorough strategic plans than larger counties.

I do predict most counties will mention some degree of overrepresentation among PEH who have also experienced domestic abuse due to state funding being tied to the county programming ("Sb 914"). Due to the potential legal ramifications of Proposition 209, I predict these agents will not address racial markers.[4] I also expect counties will vary in the strategy quality to manage these populations, specifically by county size, given the level of resources available.

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[4] Proposition 209 was passed by the general population in California in 1996. This proposition prohibits affirmative action, or the consideration of protected classes when making decisions about admissions to public institutions, contracting, or employment. This law could, in theory, impact an agents' ability to address a protected class within the subpopulations of PEH.

One last theory to mention is that veterans will be addressed at the highest level compared to other populations, and further, counties will score higher for this subpopulation. This theory is rooted in the significant programs developed for this community. Veterans were the first subpopulation addressed by state, county, and local governments (Tsai). As mentioned above, this was the first subpopulation to be addressed within homelessness strategic planning—therefore, it is an excellent example to observe within this study.

Methodology and Data

This small-n case study and programmatic review of a county's strategic planning have two main variables. The overrepresentation of subpopulation statistics are generated for the independent variable using the equation below.[5] To collect this data, I use the Point-in-Time (PIT) survey conducted on a CoC regional basis nationwide in January of every year. These counts show the estimated number and demographics of PEH at that time within a region—allowing for, in theory, targeted outreach and resolution.

Step 1–Persons Experiencing Homelessness Per Capita Measure for 1 Subpopulation:

$$\frac{(Subpopulation\ Y\ of\ PEH\ in\ County\ A)}{(Total\ PEH\ in\ County\ A)} * 100 = Per\ Capita\ (100\ People)\ of\ Subpopulation\ Y\ PEH$$

Step 2–Per Capita Measure of 1 Subpopulation for the Total Population of a County:

$$\frac{(Subpopulation\ Y\ in\ County\ A)}{(Total\ Population\ of\ County\ A)} * 100 = Per\ Capita\ (100\ People)\ of\ Subpopulation\ Y\ in\ County$$

Step 3–Overrepresentation of 1 Subpopulation of a Specific County Statistic:

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[5] A small-n case study was utilized for this study to allow for an in depth analysis of these specific counties. Further research should increase sample size and determine trends at a large level.

$$Per\ Capita\ Subpopulation\ Y\ PEH\ -\ Per\ Capita\ Subpopulation\ Y\ =\ Target\ Statistic$$

To further explain this equation, I am taking the number of PEH of subpopulation *Y* in a county and dividing this number by the total PEH in the same county. This percent is then standardized into a per capita of 100 persons. The secondary number is the total number of subpopulation *Y,* according to 2020 census data, divided by the county's total population. This percentage is also standardized into a per capita of 100 persons. Then, I subtracted the PEH from all counties and got the target statistic. This statistic was developed using annual point-in-time data and 2020 census data. The PIT data used for each county was determined by the year a county's homeless strategic plan was created and published. This was methodical as this was the current homelessness status in each respective county at the time of publishing. There are several exceptions to this, as mentioned below. For several counties, the year published and the year used for data collection differ. This is because, in 2021, California PIT counts were not completed and were inaccurate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the 2023 PIT counts are not available yet, as they have not been published for public viewing. A higher score within this statistic indicates that a specific subpopulation is overrepresented within that county's PEH by *X* amount of people per 100 people experiencing homelessness. Standardizing this value rather than percentages was important because I also compared counties with significantly variable population sizes—see Figure 3.

County Strategic Plan Published Year and PIT Survey Year Data Used		
County	Published	PIT
Los Angeles	2016*	2016
San Diego	2023	2022
Orange	2022	2022
Alameda	2021	2020
Santa Clara	2020	2020
Sacramento	2022	2022
Napa	2022	2022
Shasta	2019	2019
Nevada	2020	2020

* indicates a new plan is in the works

Figure 1: County-by-County Strategic Plan Published Year and PEH Data Collection Year

As stated above, my dependent variable is an index score developed using content analysis techniques. Content analysis methodology is a tool that allows researchers to produce replicable and quantitative data using criteria or a scorecard created by a researcher (Franco). The scorecard for this research was developed by pulling similar criteria and point values from Franco's research project but reframing questions and criteria toward the objective of this study. The questions within this scorecard were chosen because each plays a vital role in ensuring appropriate responses to subpopulations. First, explicitly mentioning the subpopulation is essential to ensure the institution and the public know why the policy has targeted approaches. Secondly, a good plan should explain the process of achieving a goal, and this process should mention the subpopulation to address that specific need. Lastly, plans should have a goal they aim to achieve and a metric to measure progress to ensure accountability. See Appendix 1 for the rubric and questions used for the index. Two questions used for the index are on a sliding scale for scoring because investments in homeless initiatives, even if there is no explicit mention of subpopulations, should theoretically help these groups. Some counties can score some points if

they have specific plans that will aid subpopulations, but plans that are too general receive no

points. Given these criteria, I examined each strategic plan publicly available online and scored it

appropriately. After each question's score was generated, these were summated as an index score

for that observation. Scores for each county are stacked on top of each other to produce a

graphical representation, allowing for a visual comparison of each county to one another.[6] The

counties under analysis—the units of analysis for this research—are three large-population

counties (Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange), three medium-population counties (Alameda, Santa

Clara, Sacramento), and three smaller-population counties (Napa, Shasta, Nevada).[7] These were

selected from a list of counties with strategic plans based on population sizes similar to those

above large, medium, and small population sizes. Once all the data was collected, I determined

trends between index scores and overrepresentation data. The analysis below shows a potential

connection between these variables. Additionally, I generated a Pearson's correlation coefficient

to see if the data implicates a relationship between these variables.

The limitations of this methodology are several. First, this is a small-n case study;

therefore, applying findings to a broader population should be done cautiously. This is because

there are only nine counties within this research and 58 counties across California. This research

seeks to create some initial discussion around strategic planning, and further research should

expand sample sizes. Another limitation is this research does not seek to examine the actual

implementation or the overall quality of a plan. While a county may score perfect or low on

index measures, how they address homelessness in practice may differ from these plans. While it

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[6] While some counties did score lower than others, one should not use this chart as a means to say a specific county is doing "better" than a different one. The hypothesis and theory argues a larger overrepresentation statistic should encourage a county to produce a long term strategic plan to address this subpopulation. The opposite may also be true. A county with a 0 overrepresentation statistic may not publish a long term strategic plan to address this subpopulation as there would be no need to.

[7] Mentions of counties throughout the paper may not contain the word "county" next to them. One should assume the reference is to the county, as named in this list, unless otherwise specified. Example: Los Angeles The county will appear as "Los Angeles." The City of Los Angeles will be referred to as "the City of Los Angeles."

is not necessarily a good idea to diverge from these plans, circumstances and emergencies may require it. This research examines the quality of a plan to some extent, but this quality is not comparable. For example, Question 2 asks if the county suggests a pathway to address the subpopulation but does not seek any specifics of the plan or funding mechanisms. Further research should begin to analyze and score the quality of plans compared to each other, allowing for academic discussion on best practices and methods. This is also a limitation because solving homelessness looks different for every county based on resources, subpopulations, the number of PEH, and existing CoCs. The last limitation is this research does not explore what other causal mechanisms could be impacting the formation of these strategic plans. While I account for overrepresentation prevalence and county size, one should account for county partisanship, amount of funding/annual budget, or other mechanisms that may impact these decisions.

The data collected for this research was substantial and has many implications—the figures below highlight the data. Figure 2 and Figure 3 were developed to break down the independent variable scores. Figure 2 shows each county's subpopulations in a per capita measure in the year as identified in Figure 1, as well as 2020 general census subpopulation data as a comparison. This table allows you to see what an "expected" level of a community's PEH would be if homelessness affected each subpopulation equally.[8] Given that the census does not track substance use or domestic abuse victims, the graphic for these groups only highlights the representation of them in each county at the time stated in Figure 1—no census statistic is represented. This graphic highlights variability across each county and further visualizes the equation to determine the overrepresentation statistic. To create Figure 3, Black, Indigenous, and

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[8] An expected level of homelessness should align with the per capita measure of the county census. This theory is rooted in the assumption that if the experience of homelessness affected different communities equally, each subpopulation would have a similar likelihood of experiencing homelessness, and I would not observe any overrepresentation for any group.

Veteran subpopulations were turned into the overrepresentation statistic as mentioned above. The substance use and domestic violence statistic is the number of PEH in each county, as provided in Figure 2. The dependent variable is represented in Figure 4, and the data used to compile this graphic is represented in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. These appendices track the score of every county index score as well as the examples behind how scores were generated. Figure 5 shows if a county mentioned one of the subpopulations in its plans, specific data from Question 1.
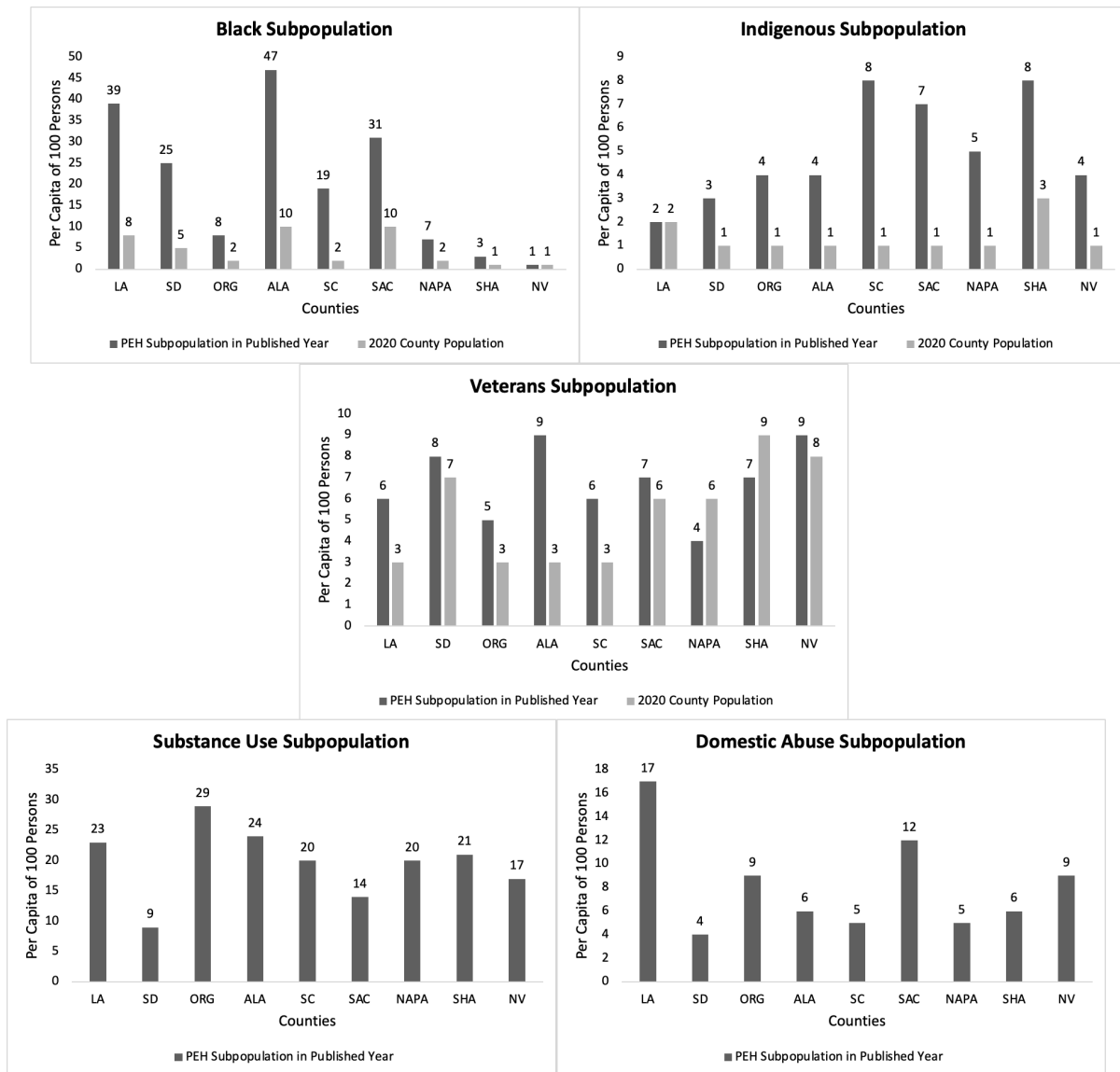

Figure 2: County-by-County Subpopulation PEH and Census Comparison Charts
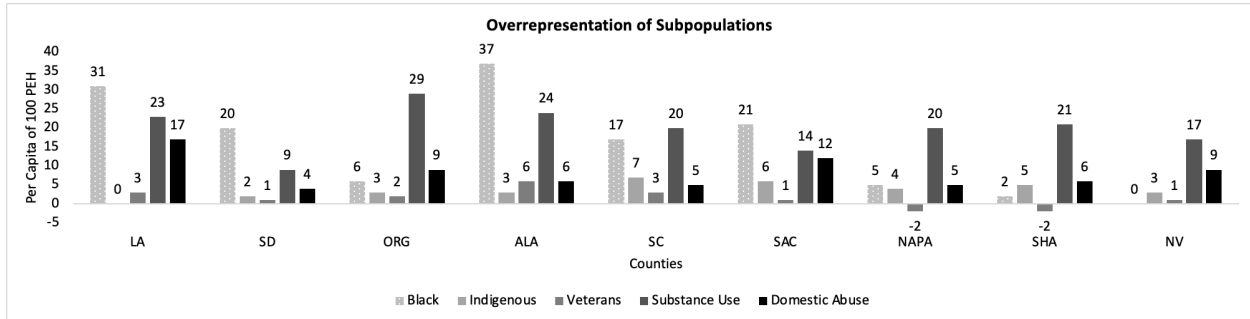Data Source: Multiple Years of Point-In-Time Surveys and 2020 Census

Figure 3: County-by-County Overrepresentation for All Subpopulations
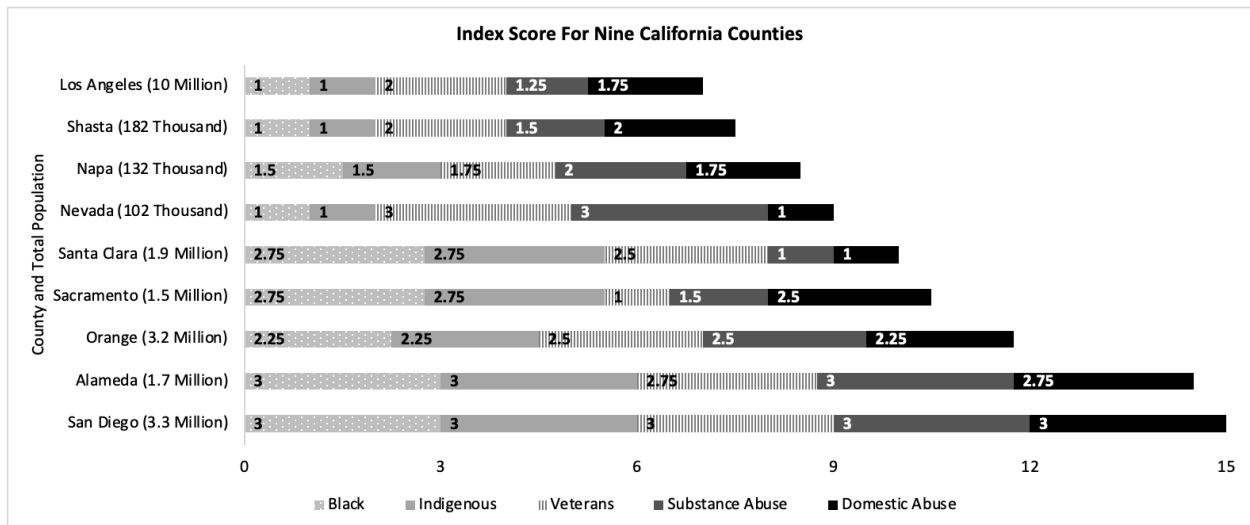Data Source: Multiple Years of Point-In-Time Surveys and 2020 Census

Figure 4: Index Scores by County—Organized by Index Score Values
Data Source: Index Scores Developed from Content Analysis of County Strategic Plans
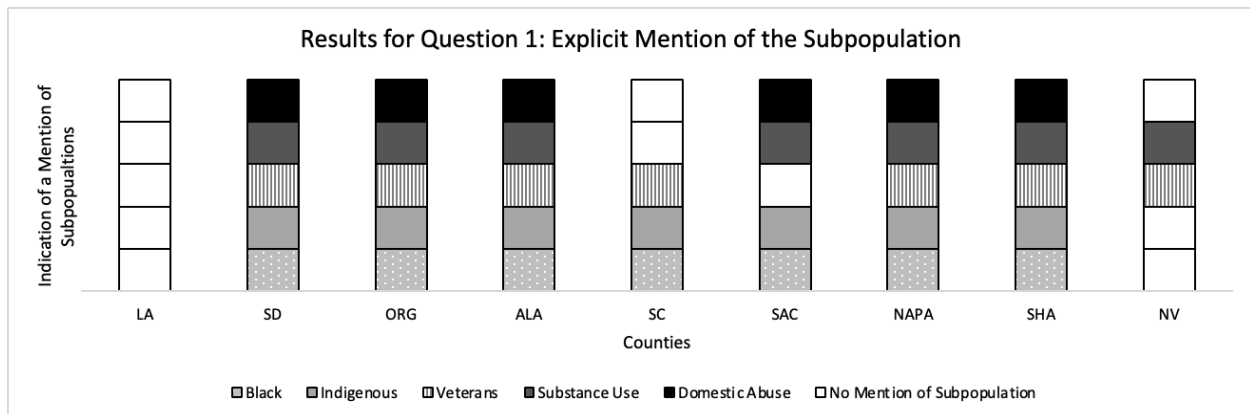

Figure 5: Question 1 Results - Explicit Mention of a Subpopulation
Data Source: Index Scores Developed from Content Analysis of County Strategic Plans

Analysis and Further Research

Overview of Subpopulation Overrepresentation by County:

For analysis of the data, this paper breaks down each subpopulation and examines each one at a time. The first under analysis is the Black subpopulation marker. Alameda and Los Angeles have the highest overrepresentation of Black PEH compared to other counties—37 and 31, respectively. San Diego, Sacramento, and Santa Clara all had similar overrepresentation, while Nevada had a 0 overrepresentation stat for Black PEH. This finding for Nevada indicates the number of Black PEH equals the county average number of people who are Black. Referring back to H_1, I should expect to see all counties with overrepresentation have a moderately high score for the Black racial marker. For example, I should reasonably predict that Alameda and Los Angeles will have near-perfect scores of 3 and Nevada will have low or even a 0 index score. Findings indicate some support for this to some degree. Alameda and Santa Clara scored a perfect 3 on the index measure, followed closely by Santa Clara and Sacramento—both lost .25 points for not mentioning the specific subpopulation in the metrics to track progress and set goals (question 3). Despite its significant statistic, Los Angeles scored a 1 with no explicit mention of the subpopulation, as reflected in Figure 5. Nevada, as predicted, scored extremely low on the index, given the county's 0 overrepresentation statistic.

For the Indigenous subpopulation, across the board, there is a lower overrepresentation of this community compared to others. This could be because the Indigenous community in California is much smaller than other groups—as seen in Figure 2. Regardless, I do see an overrepresentation in 8 out of 9 counties. With Santa Clara at 7 and Sacramento at 6, these two counties have the highest overrepresentation—Los Angeles had a 0. Following the same theory stated previously and H_1, one should see counties with overrepresentation address this issue.

Once again, there is some support for H_1 as Santa Clara and Sacramento scored 2.75, near-perfect, in addressing this subpopulation. With a very low overrepresentation statistic, Alameda and San Diego scored the highest with a perfect 3. Los Angeles did score a 1 despite no overrepresentation, but this point was given for general planning with no explicit mention of the indigenous subpopulation. Another interesting finding is that Shasta scored a 1 yet has the third-highest overrepresentation statistic in this study—this does not support H_1.

Veteran findings compared to the other subpopulations are very different. In this group, two of the counties had negative statistics, indicating that there were fewer veterans experiencing homelessness compared to the expected population given county estimates. Furthermore, all the other counties had an extremely low overrepresentation score except Alameda, which scored 6. This could imply that targeted measures work, as substantial resources exist for this community. I will explore this further in this paper's Policy Implications and Recommendations section. Referring back to the data, it would be understandable if there were lower index scores for each of these counties. I did not observe this. Scores were, on average, very high for all counties under observation. Sacramento was the lowest, scoring 1, as the county failed to mention this subpopulation in its strategic planning. The two counties with negative overrepresentation, Napa and Shasta, scored 2 and 1.75, respectively. Despite not having an overrepresentation of this subpopulation, they both explicitly mentioned this group in strategic plans. This is a fascinating finding as it goes against the proposed hypothesis.

The next subpopulation under observation is PEH facing substance use disorder. The first conclusion I can draw from this subpopulation is that it has a higher average overrepresentation than any other group—an average of 20 PEH compared to the nearest group, Black, at 15 PEH. Orange, Alameda, and Los Angeles have the highest rates of substance use disorder, followed

closely by Santa Clara, Shasta, and Napa. San Diego had an extremely low statistic for this population, which was an interesting outlier compared to other counties. Upon reviewing the index scores, Orange scored a 2.5, Alameda scored a 3, and Napa scored a 2. These counties all have high rates of overrepresentation and correspondingly a high index score—further supporting H_1. Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and Shasta scored low, with Los Angeles and Santa Clara not mentioning overrepresentation within its plan—this does not support H_1 fully because, despite high scores, the plans lack any mention of the subpopulation should be noted. Lastly, San Diego scored a 3 yet has the lowest statistic of all the counties.

The last subpopulation is PEH, who are victims of domestic abuse. This subpopulation was the least addressed group compared to all other subpopulations. Only six out of nine counties under observation explicitly mention this group in their plans, as seen in Figure 5. The three counties that did not address this subpopulation—Los Angeles, Santa Clara, and Nevada—all have significant rates of this group and low index scores. This finding does not support H_1. More interestingly, San Diego and Alameda had some of the lowest overrepresentation yet the highest scores—San Diego scored a 3, and Alameda scored a 2.75. Lastly, counties with moderate overrepresentation had moderate to low scores.

Correlations between Overrepresentation and Strategic Plan Indices:

Summarizing these initial findings, I can see that it does depend on the county if a subpopulation is addressed to the fullest extent. To confirm these findings, I plotted subpopulation overrepresentation against that population's strategic plan index score in each county in Figure 6. This figure shows us the racial and identity markers all have a positive trend line, while the experiential markers have a negative trend line. On the validity of this measure, an

R^2 value could be generated for these charts, but given this is a small-n case study, it lacks

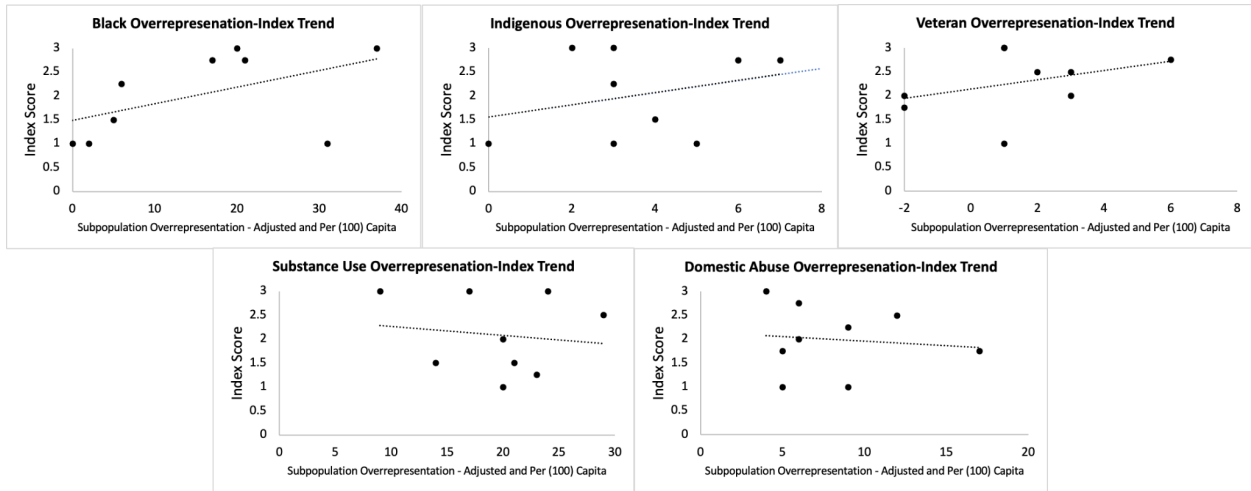enough data points to have an accurate predictive value. More data would increase validity.

Figure 6: Question 1 Results - Explicit Mention of a Subpopulation
Data Source: Index Scores Developed from Content Analysis of County Strategic Plans

Subpopulation	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient
Black	0.51
Indigenous	0.30
Veterans	0.37
Substance Use	-0.13
Domestic Violence	-0.12

Figure 7: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of each Overrepresentation Statistic and Index Score
Data Source: Generated R-Values between Index Scores and Overrepresentation Statistics

A Pearson's correlation coefficient was generated and the score as reflected in Figure 7.

These r-values mirror the trendlines represented in Figure 6. The Black r-value is 0.51, which

indicates a moderate positive relationship. The Indigenous and veterans' R-values are 0.3 and

0.37, respectively, indicating a weak positive relationship. Lastly, substance use and domestic

violence have R-values of -0.13 and -0.12, indicating a very weak negative relationship.

To connect the findings from Figure 6 and Figure 7, there is only some support for H_1. The results from the Black, Indigenous, and veteran subpopulations support H_1 to some degree. This is because a positive trendline appears between these variables within this small-n study. H_0 is supported by substance use and domestic violence, as there is no indicated connection between these variables. One note is that, as seen in Figure 5, subpopulations were mentioned within strategic plans at very high rates, but lost points were in pathways to target these communities and methods to measure such progress.

The Relationship between County Size and Targeted Strategic Planning:

H_2 predicted that the county's size would matter regarding index scores. This prediction is supported, as the three smallest counties scored worse than all other counties (except Los Angeles). This could be explained for multiple reasons. First, smaller counties have less access to resources, staff, and funding to create such complex strategic plans. An additional explanation could be that homelessness is much smaller in these counties, with fewer people experiencing homelessness. One last explanation is that given these counties lean more conservative, political ideology may impact which subpopulations are addressed within strategic plans. Regardless, my findings could implicate that a county's size matters in addressing PEH subpopulations.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

As past research in this field has noted, this study does not seek to criticize agencies but aims to identify the gaps in progress and provide policy recommendations (Franco). This research highlights the need for counties to be responsible for planning and implementing strategic plans that address specific subpopulations, while state and federal governments should provide the necessary funding and grant programming. This research further indicates varying

relationships between a county with a high overrepresentation statistic and the subpopulation being addressed within strategic planning. This research did find that racial and identity markers under observation—Black, Indigenous, and veterans—were addressed at higher rates compared to the two experiential marks. Further research should be conducted to determine causal mechanisms for this—predictions could be made, including high levels of stigmatization aimed towards these communities (Rapier et al.) ("An Attempt to Conceptualize"). Additionally, findings show that subpopulations were often addressed within strategic plans, but where the scores were low, they were within pathways, measurements, and goal setting. This data implies that while counties may be addressing these subpopulations most of the time, they are not doing so at very consistent rates, nor are county plans consistent in setting goals and methods to measure such progress. This implies that counties are not maximizing the current funding the state and federal governments make available. Counties are investing in strategies and initiatives that will benefit people experiencing homelessness, but these initiatives are not targeting the populations most in need. This research shows that subpopulations are experiencing homelessness at disproportionate rates compared to others—counties need to target these communities and invest in them. No standardized program guides counties in creating long-term strategic plans that address PEH subpopulations—one needs to be implemented to end this crisis. The initiative started in 2000/2005 to support veterans PEH, which seems to improve this subpopulation being addressed to a higher degree. More research should seek to determine if this is broadly applicable. To resolve this issue, the California Department of Business, Consumer Services, Housing Agency, and the State Legislature should establish guidelines for creating long-term strategic plans to address homelessness SPs. Counties should be required to adopt these recommendations or receive reduced funding to address the homelessness crisis.

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Appendix 1 – Evaluation Scorecard with Questions and Criteria Used to Generate the Index

Evaluation Scorecard	
Question	**Score Breakdown**
Does the plan reference the subpopulation in the strategic plan?	0 - No Mention of a Disparity 1 - Explicit mention of a Disparity
Does the plan suggest a pathway to address this subpopulation?	0 - No Plan that would impact this community .25 - The Plan is unlikely to affect the community .5 - The Plan may help the community, but there is no mention of the community. .75 - The Plan will help this community, but the community is not mentioned. 1 - The Plan will help this community and explicitly mention the community.
Does the plan establish a way to measure the progress? Is there an established goal?	0 - No Metric of Measure and no goal .25 - A goal is stated, but there is no method to track it. .5 - A goal that will help the community is stated, but no metric is mentioned to track it, OR a metric is mentioned, but there is no goal stated .75 - A metric related to the community is being measured, but there is no explicit mention of a community. 1 - The metric is related to the community and will effectively measure progress.

Appendix 2 – Breakdown of Counties and Scores for Each Subpopulation

County and Plans	Scores
Los Angeles County *Homeless Initiative Measure H Strategy Implementation Plans* (Published 2017) *LA County's Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness* *(Published 2016)* *(A new plan is under development)*	Black - 1 Indig. - 1 Substance - 1.25 Veteran - 2 Domestic - 1.75
San Diego County *Homelessness Solutions and Prevention Action Plan* *(Published 2023)* - *This Plan is currently under review by County officials.*	Black - 3 Indig. - 3 Substance - 3 Veteran - 3 Domestic - 3
Orange County *Housing Funding Strategy* *(Published 2022)* *Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness* *(Published 2012)*	Black - 2.25 Indig. - 2.25 Substance - 2.5 Veteran - 2.5 Domestic - 2.25
Alameda County *Home Together 2026 Community Plan* *(Published 2021)* *Home Together 2026 DRAFT Implementation Plan* *(Published 2021)*	Black - 3 Indig. - 3 Substance - 3 Veteran - 2.75 Domestic - 2.75
Santa Clara County *2020-2025 Community Plan to End Homelessness* *(Publish 2020)*	Black - 2.75 Indig. - 2.75 Substance - 1 Veteran - 2.5 Domestic - 1
Sacramento County *Local Homeless Action Plan* *(Published 2022)*	Black - 2.75 Indig. - 2.75 Substance - 1.5 Veteran - 1 Domestic - 2.5
Napa County Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness *(Published 2022)*	Black - 1.5 Indig. - 1.5 Substance - 2 Veteran - 1.75 Domestic - 1.75
Shasta County No Place Like Home Plan to Combat Homelessness *(Published 2019)*	Black - 1 Indig. - 1 Substance - 1.5 Veteran - 2 Domestic - 2
Nevada County *Nevada County's Plan to Address Homelessness* *(Published 2020)*	Black - 1 Indig. - 1 Substance - 3 Veteran - 3 Domestic - 1

Appendix 3 – Index Scoring Examples

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="3" align="center">Example of a Perfect Score
(Alameda County - <i><u>Home Together 2026 Community Plan</u></i>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td align="center">Do they reference the disparity in the strategic plan?</td>
<td align="center">Do they have a suggested plan to address it?</td>
<td align="center">Do they establish a way to measure the goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>"Vulnerable unsheltered people in the county are also more likely to be African American than any other race or ethnic group. The groups most disproportionately affected are people identifying as Black or African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native. Black people account for 47% of the homeless population, compared to 11% of the general population in Alameda County. "</td>
<td>"Improve data quality and regularly review system and program outcome data disaggregated by race. Support will be needed to help these partners recruit and retain staff. In particular, resources must be targeted to strengthen providers and partners and to expand contracts for organizations that serve, employ and are led by historically marginalized communities and Black, Indigenous and People of Color."</td>
<td>"Home Together proposes to reduce the rates of return to homelessness by half, from 21% in 2022, to 9% in 2026."
36."
". . . the county's providers and administrators will target and track these disparities.
Progress on this goal area will be tracked using the above measures related to new and returning homelessness, and these two measures of reductions in unsheltered homelessness"</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td align="center"><i><u>1 Point Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>1 Point Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>1 Point Awarded</u></i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3" align="center">Example of an Intermediate Score
(Orange County - <i><u>Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness</u></i> & <i><u>Housing Funding Strategy</u></i>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>"National data has shown that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) experience homelessness at a higher rate than their white counterparts; 8 this is also apparent in Orange County."</td>
<td>". Provide a rapid re-housing program for emergency shelter clients, including but not limited to, move-in expenses, housing subsidies, and case management support. "</td>
<td>"Develop the systems and organizational structures to provide oversight and accountability."</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td align="center"><i><u>1 Point Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>.75 Points Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>.5 Points Awarded</u></i></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="3" align="center">Example of a Poor Score
(Nevada County - <i><u>Nevada County's Plan to Address Homelessness</u></i>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*No Mention of Race*</td>
<td>"B1 – Expand shelter options Significant investments have been made to expand capacity and low barrier access to Hospitality House, but additional steps are needed to ensure access to suitable shelter on a low barrier basis to highly vulnerable homeless residents."</td>
<td>"Increase in shelter beds utilized each night open - Reduction in unsheltered population"</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td align="center"><i><u>0 Points Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>.5 Points Awarded</u></i></td>
<td align="center"><i><u>.5 Points Awarded</u></i></td>
</tr>
</table>