

Policing of Prostitution and Human Trafficking in Los Angeles

We are researchers with the Critical Trafficking and Sex Work Studies Research Cluster at York University's Centre for Feminist Research. Our analysis of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) arrest data from 2010 to March 2025 reveals persistent and troubling racial disparities, raising serious concerns about potential violations of the 2020 California Racial Justice Act. These disparities also underscore the potential harms of proposed state legislation—namely, AB 379, AB 549, AB 63, and AB 813—which would further criminalize communities already subjected to intensive policing and surveillance.

This report presents our preliminary findings, including spatial mapping, relevant to recent legislative proposals. We identify particularly troubling enforcement patterns in the Figueroa Corridor. Testimonies collected by The Sidewalk Project—from its executive team, members, and broader community—describe a sharp increase in surveillance, harassment, and arrests. The organization has long warned of the harmful effects of federalized policing, especially since Los Angeles was designated a National Special Security Event (NSSE) in anticipation of several major international sporting events. Soma Snakeoil, Co-Founder and Executive Director, reports a significant rise in police activity across South Los Angeles.

Consistent with these accounts, the Figueroa Corridor registers the city's highest rate of prostitution-related charges. Prior studies examining LAPD citation data and case outcomes from the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office (LACA) have documented a clear pattern of concentrated enforcement in this area (Lens, Stoll & Kuai, 2019; Gaffney, Sherred, Zhang, & Zur, 2020).¹ Black, Hispanic, and Asian women are disproportionately affected. While City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto has justified these arrests as necessary to combat sex trafficking, our research challenges this narrative by comparing LAPD data on prostitution-related misdemeanors with felony-level human trafficking charges. The results reveal a sharp disconnect between the stated goals of anti-trafficking efforts and their carceral consequences.

Despite official claims of protecting sex workers, survivors, unhoused youth, and migrants, our findings suggest that anti-trafficking measures overwhelmingly serve as tools of surveillance and control—targeting and harming racialized and migrant communities, while advancing gentrification efforts through police harassment, arrest, detention, deportation, and direct violence.²

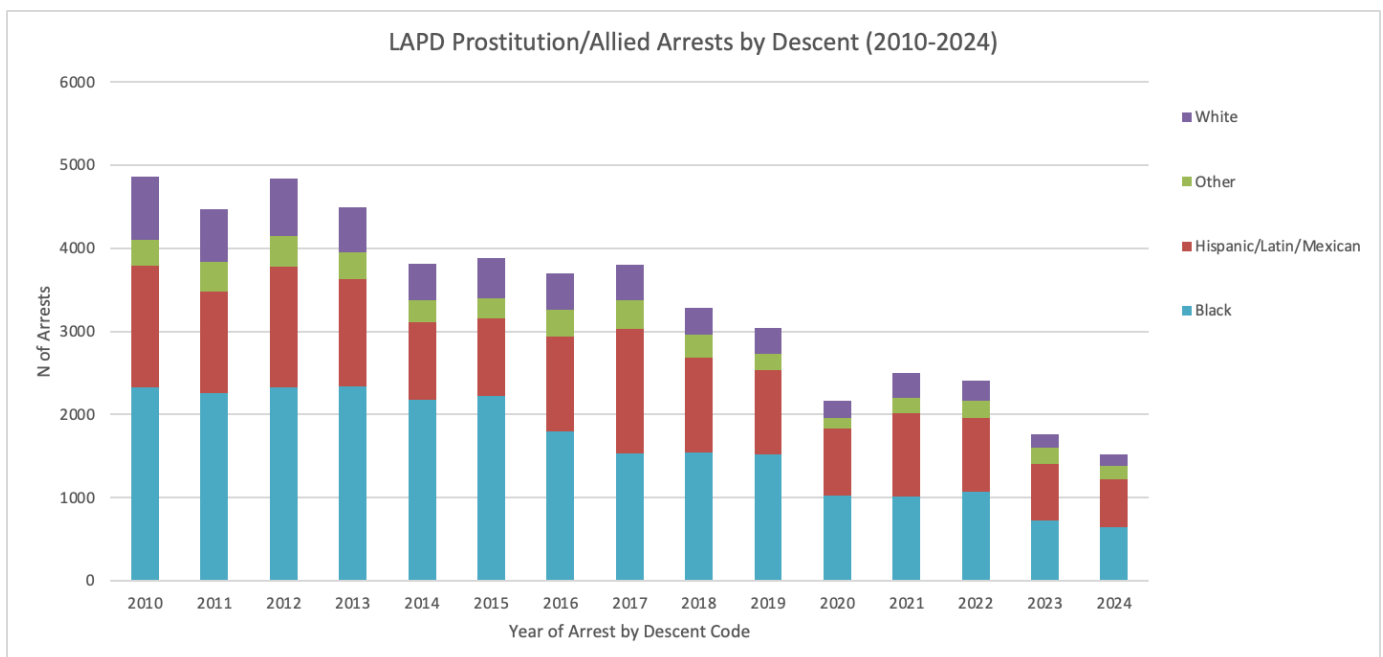
¹ Lens, M., Stoll, M., & Kuai, Y. (2019). *Trends in Misdemeanor Arrests in Los Angeles: 2001–2017*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA. Available [online](#). Gaffney, M., Sherred, S., Zhang, M., Zur, I. (2020). *Tracing Criminalization: Policing and Prosecution in LA, 2017–19*. Report produced for ESPLERP: the Erotic Service Provider Legal, Educational, and Research Project. Available [online](#).

² Officers from the LAPD (Foothill Division) murdered a trans sex worker in February 2025; read the [news report](#) published in the LA Times by Libor Jany (9 March 2025). See, also, the article written by Sidewalk outreach worker, Kimberly Soriano, published in the LA Public Press, and available [online](#) (3 April 2025).

LAPD Arrests: Prostitution/Allied³ 1 January 2010—6 March 2025⁴

As per negative binomial regression models⁵

- Black individuals faced nearly 4 times the likelihood of arrest compared to white individuals ($B = 1.347$, $IRR = 3.845$, $p < .001$)
- Hispanic/Latin/Mexican individuals were more than 3.5 times as likely to be arrested compared to white individuals ($B = 1.264$, $IRR = 3.538$, $p < .001$)
- Black women were found to be nearly twice as likely to be arrested compared to Black men ($B = 0.651$, $IRR = 1.917$, $p < .001$)
- White women had a significantly higher likelihood of arrest—almost three times that of white men ($B = 1.047$, $IRR = 2.85$, $p < .001$)
- Hispanic/Latin/Mexican women were significantly less likely to be arrested than Hispanic/Latin/Mexican men ($B = -1.900$, $IRR = 0.150$, $p < .001$)⁶
- Accounting for only 8.5% of the Los Angeles (city) population, Black individuals make up 47.8% of Prostitution/Allied arrests by LAPD⁷



³ Data sources obtained from the LAPD arrest data from 2020 to Present (Available [online](#)); LAPD arrest data from 2010 to 2019 (Available [online](#)), and filtered for prostitution/allied arrests, e.g., **Engage/Solicit** (Misdemeanor): 647(B)PC, 647(B)(1)PC, 647(B)(2)PC; **Loitering/Supervising** (Misdemeanor): 653.22(A)PC (Loitering/Intent), 653.23(A)1PC (“Supervisor of Prostitute”); **Bawdy House** (Misdemeanor): 316PC (“Keep Disorderly House”); **Pimping** (Felony): 266I(A)PC (“Pandering by procuring”), 266H(A)PC (“Pimping”). See Appendix 1.

⁴ March 2025 represents a partial month, as data was accessed on 6 March 2025. Year removed from chart.

⁵ Descent codes representing less than 1% of the total in a given year have been excluded from the visualization. The “Other” category refers to the LAPD descent code “O,” not a combination of low-count descent codes.

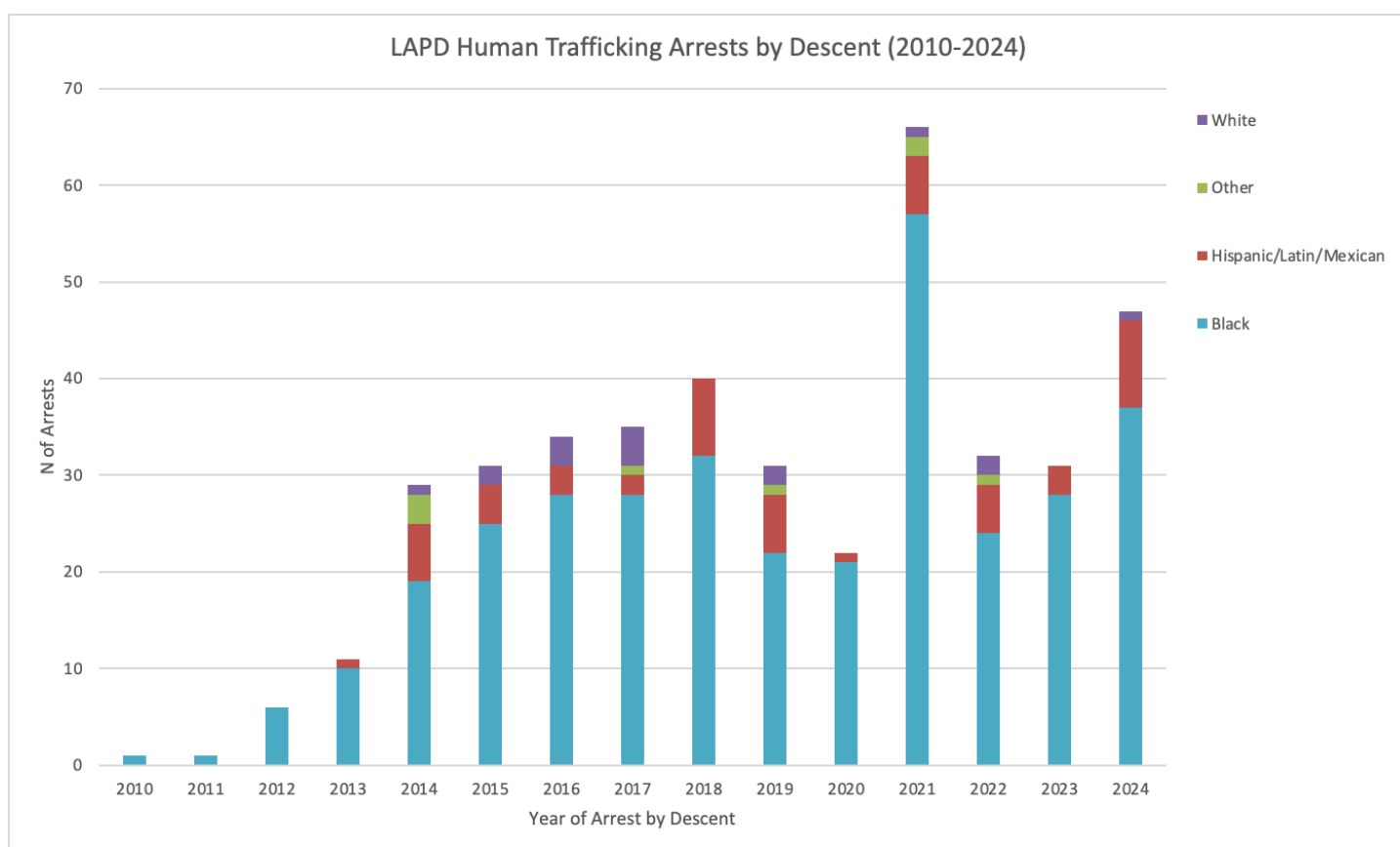
⁶ We interpret data, particularly sex-related statistics, with caution. LAPD records sex only within a binary framework (male or female), excluding recognition of gender diversity and thereby erasing the identities and experiences of trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming individuals.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Los Angeles city, California*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia/RHI125223>

LAPD Arrests: Human Trafficking⁸ 1 January 2010—6 March 2025⁹

As per descriptive statistics

- While misdemeanor arrests related to prostitution and allied offenses have declined over the past 15 years—totalling approx. 40,771 between 2010 and 2019, and 10,694 from 2020 to early March 2025—felony arrests for Human Trafficking (HT) have sharply increased
- From 2010 to 2019, the LAPD recorded 219 HT arrests; however, in just over four years (2020-March 2025), the department has already registered 210 HT arrests
- Felony charges carry the potential for significantly harsher penalties, raising urgent concerns about the growing reliance on severe criminal charges and the troubling conflation of these charges with adult, consensual sex work and communities dependent on networked informality for survival
- Notably, Black individuals—who again make up only 8.5% of the Los Angeles (City) population—account for a staggering 81.5% of HT arrests by the LAPD¹⁰



⁸ Data sources obtained from the LAPD arrest data from 2020 to Present (Available [online](#)); LAPD arrest data from 2010 to 2019 (Available [online](#)), and filtered for **Human Trafficking** (Felony): 236.1(A)PC (human trafficking), 236.1(B)PC (human trafficking, sex/etc.), 236.1(C)PC (human trafficking, U18). See Appendix 2.

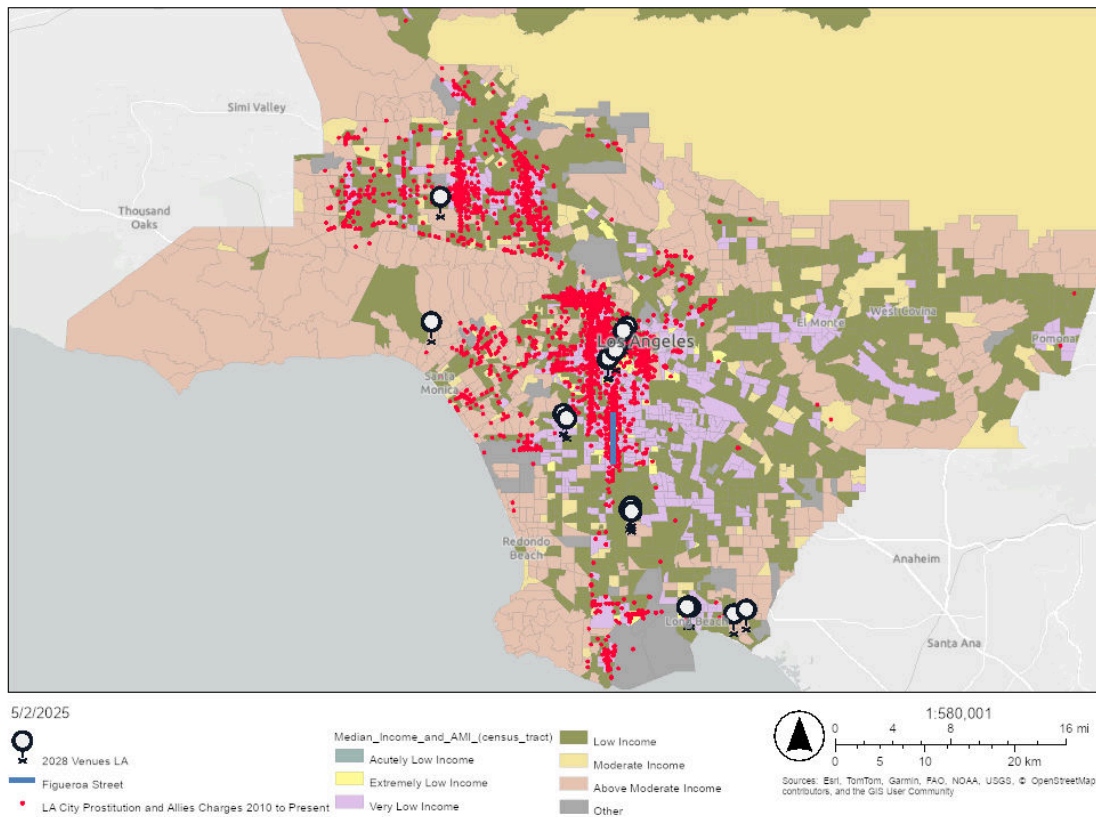
⁹ March 2025 represents a partial month, as data was accessed on 6 March 2025. Year removed from chart.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Los Angeles city, California*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescalitycalifornia/RHI125223>

Mapping LAPD Arrests: Prostitution/Allied¹¹ 1 January 2010—31 December 2024

- The map displays geocoded LAPD arrest locations (2010-2024) related to the prostitution/allied charge group
- It includes only arrests with available geographic coordinates—approx. 20,000 out of the 51,465 total prostitution/allied arrests analyzed from 1 January 2010 and 6 March 2025
- Arrests without spatial data were excluded
- Arrests are heavily concentrated in census tracts with very low or extremely low median household incomes¹²
- Higher arrest densities are observed near sites tentatively selected by the LA Host Committee for the 2028 Summer Olympics¹³

LA City Prostitution and Allied Arrests



For an interactive version of map, please visit this [link](#) or use the QR code.

¹¹ Data sources obtained from the LAPD arrest data from 2020 to Present (Available [online](#)); LAPD arrest data from 2010 to 2019 (Available [online](#)), and filtered for prostitution/allied arrests, e.g., **Engage/Solicit** (Misdemeanor): 647(B)PC, 647(B)(1)PC, 647(B)(2)PC; **Loitering/Supervising** (Misdemeanor): 653.22(A)PC (Loitering/Intent), 653.23(A)1PC (“Supervisor of Prostitute”); **Bawdy House** (Misdemeanor): 316PC (“Keep Disorderly House”); **Pimping** (Felony): 266I(A)PC (“Pandering by procuring”), 266H(A)PC (“Pimping”). See Appendix 1.

¹² Data source obtained from the LA City Geohub (Available [online](#)).

¹³ Data source obtained from LA28 (Available [online](#)).

Trends in LAPD Prostitution/Allied & Human Trafficking Arrests

Our preliminary analysis offers critical context for four proposed California bills—AB 379, AB 549, AB 63, and AB 813—particularly the attempt to re-criminalize loitering with intent to engage in prostitution by reinstating Section 653.22 of the California Penal Code. This statute was repealed in 2022 via Senate Bill 357 in response to extensive evidence that it disproportionately targeted Black and transgender women, resulting in discriminatory policing, unjust arrests, and likely violations of the California Racial Justice Act of 2020.

Our analysis of LAPD arrest data from January 2010 to March 2025 confirms the racially disproportionate enforcement of prostitution and allied statutes, specifically under Sections 653.22 and 653.22(A). Black individuals, who represent only 8.5% of the city's population, accounted for 65.2% of all loitering arrests (8,365 out of 12,838). Latino/a individuals, who make up 47.2% of the city's population, comprised 20.9% of arrests (2,686), while white individuals, 37.3% of the population, accounted for just 10.4%. These figures lay bare the racialized nature of loitering enforcement in Los Angeles.

In addition, our findings directly challenge the central justification put forward for these bills: the protection of minors. Of the 51,465 prostitution-related arrests recorded by the LAPD, fewer than 0.01% involved individuals under the age of 18 (just 85 arrests). By contrast, among the 422 LAPD arrests filed under California's human trafficking statute, 59.5% (251 cases) were charged under Penal Code 236.1(c), which specifically addresses the exploitation of minors in commercial sex. Strikingly, 74.9% of those arrested under this provision (188 individuals) were Black men.

While protecting youth is an essential and shared goal, our analysis shows that current laws already provide targeted tools for addressing this harm—tools that merit greater scrutiny and interrogation. The proposed legislation does not address a legal gap; rather, it expands the criminalization of already-vulnerable communities under the guise of child protection.

Spatial analysis further amplifies these concerns. Mapping prostitution-related arrests reveals a sharp concentration in census tracts with extremely low and very low median incomes—particularly near sites identified by the LA28 Host Committee for the 2028 Summer Olympic Games. This geographic overlap raises serious questions about how Olympic-related development may accelerate the surveillance and policing of marginalized neighborhoods. The myth of increased human trafficking during large-scale sporting events has been repeatedly debunked, yet it continues to be used to justify expanded law enforcement authority and punitive policies.¹⁴

Re-criminalizing loitering based on vague and subjective standards will only intensify the over-policing of Black, Latino/a, and LGBTQ+ residents—practices that directly violate the California Racial Justice Act, which prohibits racially discriminatory policing.

We urge legislators to reject regressive and harmful proposals. Instead, California must prioritize evidence-based strategies grounded in lived experience, harm reduction, community care, and the autonomy of impacted groups—including sex workers, survivors, unhoused people, and migrants.¹⁵ Future policy must resist sensationalized “rescue” narratives, which too often lead to arrest, coercion, and further trauma. Real protection lies not in expanding already extensive carceral responses, but in addressing the structural conditions that create vulnerability in the first place.

¹⁴ See also, Oliver, B. J., & De Lisio, A. (2023). Rights, not rescue: trafficking (in) securities at the sport mega-event. *Frontiers in sports and active living*, 5, 1207595. Available [online](#). Ham, J. (2011). *What's the cost of a rumour? A guide to sorting out the myths and the facts about sporting events and trafficking*. Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW). Available [online](#). Mitchell, G. (2022). *Panics without borders: how global sporting events drive myths about sex trafficking* (Vol. 1). University of California Press.

¹⁵ See also, Kempadoo, K., & Shih, E. (Eds.). (2022). *White supremacy, racism and the coloniality of anti-trafficking*. Taylor & Francis. Gallant, C., & Lam, E. (2024). *Not your rescue project: Migrant sex workers fighting for justice*. Haymarket Books.

Appendix 1

California Penal Code (CPC) Statutes Cited in Dataset LAPD-listed Prostitution/Allied Charges

*Listed in dataset; not as cited in California Penal Code

266	Enticing a minor into prostitution or illicit acts.
266a	Taking a person for prostitution by force or fraud.
266e	Buying someone for prostitution or immoral acts.
266f	Selling a person for immoral custody or gain.
266h	Pimping; profiting from another's prostitution.
266h(A)	Living off or aiding a minor's prostitution.
266h(B)	Pimping involving a minor; felony offense.
266h(B)1	Pimping a minor aged 16+; 3–6 years prison.
266h(B)2	Pimping a minor under 16; 3–8 years prison.
266HBPCUND	LAPD charge description: "Pimping:Prostitute-16"
266HPCPIM	LAPD charge description: "Pimping"
266i	Pandering; procuring others for prostitution.
266i(A)	General pandering; felony with prison term.
266i(A)1	Procuring a person to engage in prostitution.
266i(A)2	Coercing someone into prostitution.
266i(A)3	Providing housing for prostitution.
266i(A)6	Paying or being paid to procure for prostitution.
266i(B)	Pandering involving a minor; felony.
266i(B)1	Pandering minor aged 16-18; 3–6 years prison.
266i(B)2	Pandering minor under 16; 3–8 years prison.
266IAPCPAN	LAPD charge description: "Pandering"
266IBPCOVR	LAPD charge description: "Pandering Othr Person 16+"
266IPCPAN	LAPD charge description: "Pandering"
266j	Supplying or persuading a minor under 16 for lewd acts.
315	Keeping or residing in a house of prostitution.

316	Keeping a disorderly or prostitution house.
647(B)	Soliciting or engaging in prostitution.
647(B)(1)	Engaging in prostitution for payment.
647(B)(2)	Prostitution by paying an adult participant.
647(B)(3)	Prostitution involving payment to a minor.
647(F)	Public intoxication that poses a safety risk.
653.22	Loitering with intent to commit prostitution; removed from the CPC.
653.22(A)	Loitering in public with intent to commit prostitution.
653.23(A)1	Aiding or supervising acts of prostitution.
674(B)(1)	Soliciting prostitution with compensation intent.
A266I(A)2	LAPD charge description: “Attempted pandering by encouraging”

Appendix 2

California Penal Code (CPC) Statutes Cited in Dataset LAPD-listed Human Trafficking Charges

236	Unlawfully depriving someone of their personal liberty; felony.
236.1(A)	Human trafficking for forced labor or services; felony.
236.1(B)	Human trafficking tied to sex or extortion crimes; felony.
236.1(C)	Trafficking a minor for sex; felony, harsher if force used.