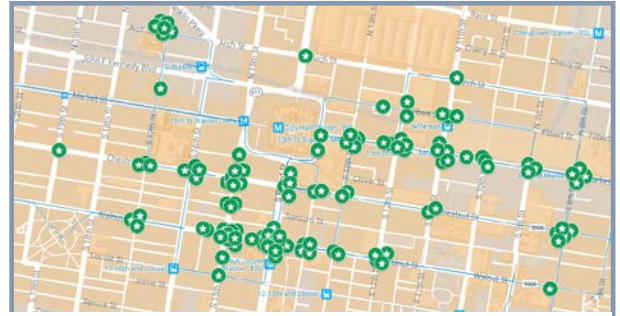


**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**2016 – 2017 PANHANDLING SURVEY
Executive Summary**

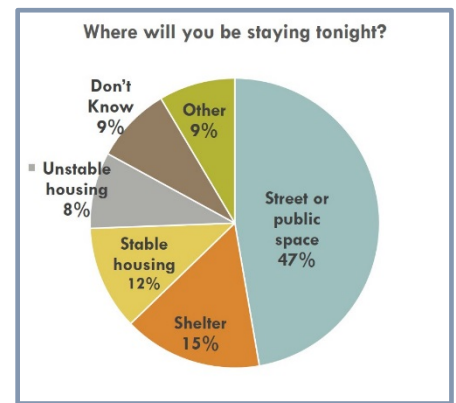
Panhandling, or asking passerby by for money or food, has become a growing issue in Philadelphia. Changes in the social and geographic landscape—such as the opioid epidemic and the closure and privatization of public spaces that had previously functioned as popular community spaces for vulnerable individuals—seem to be spurring this phenomenon. To better understand the drivers of panhandling behavior and the needs of the panhandling population, the Office of the Deputy Managing Director for Health and Human Services interviewed 129 persons found panhandling from November 2016 to January 2017. Interviewees responded to questions on panhandling behavior, income and benefits, housing, and health.



Interview Locations and Route Map

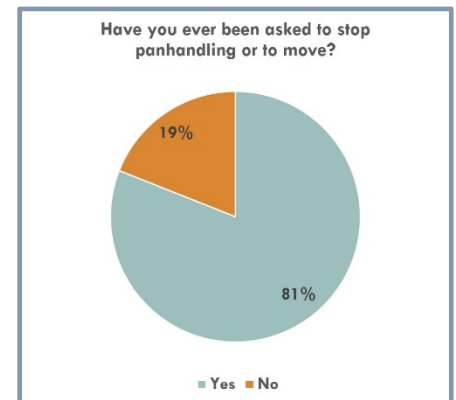
The key findings are:

- People who panhandle in Center City Philadelphia also live in Philadelphia.
- They treat their activity like a full-time job.
- They earn a meager wage, which they use for essentials.
- People who panhandle would like to be employed, but face significant barriers to employment.
- The panhandling population experiences housing instability.
- The opioid epidemic has had an apparent effect on panhandling in Philadelphia.
- Panhandling is an individual activity and is routinely censured by authorities.



Overall, the data suggests that greater access to housing and low demand employment would serve to reduce the number of individuals engaging in panhandling in Center City. More details on these findings are below.

People who panhandle in Center City Philadelphia also live in Philadelphia. 94% of respondents indicated that they live in Philadelphia. When asked where they would be sleeping that night, 66% selected Center City and 23% selected other Philadelphia neighborhoods.



People who panhandle treat their activity like a full-time job. Panhandling consumed much of the interviewees' waking hours. The median responses to how many hours spent panhandling each day and the number of days spent panhandling in the last month were six hours and 30 days, respectively.

Question	Median	N
How long have you been panhandling?	1 year	126
Thinking about the last 30 days, how many days did you panhandle?	30 days	126
How many hours do you spend panhandling each day?	6 hours	122
How much do you make panhandling each day?	\$20	127

People who panhandle earn a meager wage, which they use for essentials. Despite panhandling for extended periods of time, people who panhandle accrue modest daily sums. Respondents to the survey typically earned \$20 each day. When asked why they panhandle, nearly half of those interviewed

noted that they needed the money for food, and 56% said they needed it for essentials such as food, housing, toiletries, and others.

People who panhandle would like to be employed, but face significant barriers to employment. Interviewees expressed interest in participating in an employment program that would hire them to do yard maintenance and street cleaning. 84% of survey participants said they would join such a program, if offered. Nevertheless, 16% indicated that they would not participate due to physical or mental health conditions. Further 58% reported having both mental health and substance abuse conditions, suggesting that any successful employment program for this population must be coupled with social services and supports.

The panhandling population experiences housing instability. While panhandling and homelessness are not always co-occurring, housing instability is common among individuals who panhandle in Center City. When asked which accommodations they would be sleeping in on the evening that their survey was conducted, only 21% shared that they would be staying in their own room or couch surfing with family or friends. 52% reported that they would be staying outdoors or in a public space.

The opioid epidemic has had a considerable impact on panhandling in Philadelphia. 35% of interviewees had used opioids, such as fentanyl or heroin, in the past twelve months. 55% of the respondents were Caucasian; of this demographic, 56% were opioid users. Nearly half of respondents were age 45 or older (61), but the most commonly selected age duo-decile was 30-34 (28). Of those ages 30-34, 64% were opioid users. This differs notably from other populations served by the City. For example, older African American men predominate at Philadelphia’s free meal sites, where 69% of guests are ages 40-55 and 70% of guests are African American.

Panhandling is an individual activity and is routinely censured by authorities. People asking for money on the streets of Philadelphia appear to be operating independently. When asked “Will you be required to give any of the funds you earn panhandling to someone else?” only 20% of respondents indicated that they would. This question is intended to create a proxy for estimating levels of coerced or even organized panhandling activity in Center City. People who panhandle in Center City receive regular reprimands from both informal and formal authority figures. 81% of survey participants had been asked to move or stop panhandling while engaging in this behavior over the course of the past year, with 78% identifying the police as the group that engaged them. These data indicate that panhandling is not merely a public safety issue.

