2016-2017 PANHANDLING SURVEY RESULTS

City of Philadelphia
Office of the Deputy Managing Director for Health & Human Services
METHODOLOGY

• Asked questions related to:
  • Panhandling
  • Income and benefits
  • Housing status
  • Health
  • Demographics

• Approached persons found asking for money or food or “flying a sign,” but excluded street performers and those selling items like “loose” cigarettes.

• Completed 129 surveys total.
PEAK SURVEY TIMES

• Surveys were conducted in 1.5 hour shifts with 1-2 surveyors per shift.
  • Morning: 9:00a – 11:30a
  • Midday: 11:31a – 3:30p
  • Afternoon/Evening: 3:31p – 6:00p

• The surveyors identified slightly more panhandlers during the Afternoon/Evening shift.

• N = 129
84 (66%) respondents said they would be sleeping in Center City and 15 (12%) said they would be sleeping in North Philadelphia.

11 (9%) did not know where they would be sleeping.

5 (4%) reported that they would be sleeping outside of Philadelphia [(Camden (2), New Jersey (2), Exton (1)].

N=128
HOUSING STATUS

• 67 respondents (52%) would be staying in a public space (e.g., on the sidewalk or in a park, abandoned building, or subway or bus station).

• 27 (21%) would be staying in their own room (e.g., apartment, house, hotel) or with a family or friend.

• 23 (18%) would be staying at publicly provided space, such as a shelter, drop-in center or café.

• 41% (52) had experienced homelessness for a year or longer.

• 10% (13) had been homeless for less than a month (1-3 weeks).

• 9% (12) had not experienced homelessness in the past year.
# Panhandling Frequency & Funds Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been panhandling?</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the last 30 days, how many days did you panhandle?</td>
<td>30 days</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours do you spend panhandling each day?</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you make panhandling each day?</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most amount of money that you earned in a single day of panhandling in the past 30 days?</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the least amount of money that you earned in a single day of panhandling in the past 30 days?</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PANHANDLING MOTIVATION**

**Why do you panhandle?**

- Hungry/need food: 60 responses
- Other: 46 responses
- No family support: 13 responses
- Poor health: 8 responses
- Homeless: 43 responses
- Government assistance not...: 9 responses
- Easy way to make money...: 5 responses
- Too difficult to use City services: 5 responses
- Unemployed: 39 responses
- To buy cigarettes: 11 responses
- To buy alcohol/drugs: 15 responses
- Unable to work: 18 responses
- Need the money: 72 responses

**Do you earn as much as possible, or earn a certain amount and then stop?**

- As much as possible: 52% of responses
- Certain amount: 40% of responses
- Mixture of both: 8% of responses

* N = 128, Total Responses = 404
INTEREST IN DAY LABOR PROGRAM

- **Panhandling.** Of the 21 respondents who would prefer panhandling, 9 cited a disability or poor health status as their primary rationale.

- **Day Labor.** Many who would participate in the program expressed a desire to “return to work” or be “productive” (15).

- N = 128
ENFORCEMENT

• 104 respondents reported being censured for their behavior.
• Typically, police ask respondents to move (81).
• 27 respondents were discouraged by “store owners,” “building managers,” or “people who work there.”
• Security (15), other panhandlers (4), and Homeless Outreach (3) were common responses as well.
• N = 128

Have you ever been asked to stop panhandling or to move?

- Yes
- No

- 81%
- 19%
ORGANIZED PANHANDLING

- Only 25 respondents reported that they are coerced into sharing their funds.
- Of the survey’s 22 female respondents, 7 (32%) reported that they are required to give their earnings to someone in their life.
- Of the survey’s 105 male respondents, 17 (16%) reported that they are required to give their earnings to someone in their life.
- N = 128

Will you be required to give/share any of the funds you earn panhandling with someone else?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%
INCOME & BENEFITS

- 23 (18%) of those that responded received income from TANF or Welfare, 22 (17%) from government checks or benefits not specified in the survey, and 21 (16%) from family or friends.

- 29 (23%) respondents reported receiving income from more than one source.

- 58 (45%) respondents reported only receiving income from panhandling.

- N = 128
SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

- 96 (77%) respondents said they would like to access Housing Assistance, 53 (43%) said Employment Services, and 32 (26%) said ID and Birth Certificate services.

- When asked to identify the social services agencies they use, 33% (40) of interviewees indicated that they do not use any.

- 64% (82) of survey respondents indicate that they use social services agencies.

- N= 124
HEALTH STATUS

Have you ever had a mental health issue, or been told that you do?

Yes: 48%  
No: 52%

Have you ever abused drugs or alcohol, or been told that you do?

Yes: 37%  
No: 63%

Have you used any opiates during the past 12 months?

Yes: 65%  
No: 35%
DEMOGRAPHICS: RACE/ETHNICITY

Opioid Use by Race/Ethnicity

- **African American**: 34% of respondents, 43 Total Number of Respondents, 4 Total Number of Opioid Users
- **Caucasian**: 55% of respondents, 55% Total Number of Respondents, 71 Total Number of Opioid Users
- **Hispanic/Latino**: 8.6% of respondents, 11 Total Number of Respondents, 2 Total Number of Opioid Users
- **Mixed/Multiple**: 5.5% of respondents, 7 Total Number of Respondents, 1 Total Number of Opioid Users
- **Native American**: 1.6% of respondents, 2 Total Number of Respondents, 0 Total Number of Opioid Users
- **Other**: 2.3% of respondents, 3 Total Number of Respondents, 0 Total Number of Opioid Users
DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER, AGE, & EDUCATION

- **Age.** Nearly half of respondents (61) were 45 or older, though the most common age range was 30-34 (27).

- **Gender.** 81% of respondents identified as male, 17% as female, and 2% as gender variant/transgender.

- **Education.** The largest group of respondents (38%) completed High School or the equivalent. (4 respondents completed a GED)
  - 12% were college graduates.
  - 10% stopped at some point in elementary school.
QUESTIONS?

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