

Summer 2014 Downtown Panhandling Survey

In July of 2014, St. Stephen's Outreach in partnership with the Minneapolis/Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness conducted surveys on panhandling in downtown Minneapolis. Panhandlers, those who gave to panhandlers, and a sample of downtown employees were all surveyed over the course of a week. The survey responses shine light on the reasons behind panhandling, the perceptions of others towards panhandlers, and the characteristics of both panhandlers and those that give to panhandlers.

The surveys will be of particular use for a high-profile effort in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Downtown Council's Downtown 2025 plan calls for Minneapolis to become the first city in the United States to end street homelessness. Information from the surveys will help to plan an effective response to street homelessness while addressing the perception of homelessness that panhandling engenders.

Of the 29 panhandlers surveyed...

- 62% are homeless
- 93% make \$40 a day or less; 32% make less than \$20
- 97% are unemployed; 79% have been unemployed for over a year
- 97% have health issues and/or are disabled
- 51% have a mental illness
- 45% are chemically dependent
- 48% have been victims of violence
- 76% have been panhandling for a year or more
- 83% panhandle at least a few times a week; 48% panhandle every day
- 71% feel neutral or less than satisfied after panhandling
- 86% are connected to services
- 69% have been ticketed for panhandling
- 61% have a high school diploma

Of 114 downtown employees surveyed....

- 23% give to panhandlers
- 11% give to panhandlers more than "rarely"
- 73% are aware of social services to help the homeless in their community
- 67% said knowing more about social services would not change their giving

Of the 114 downtown employees and 28 pedestrians surveyed...

- 57% of those who gave feel neutral or less than satisfied after giving
- 63% see panhandlers 4 or more times a week
- those who give are significantly more likely to know someone who has experienced homelessness or poverty