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Civic and Community Engagement Research Series

Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change

November 2014

Panhandling Survey: Pre and Post-test Comparison Report

Conducted for the Lancaster City Alliance and the Lancaster Downtown
Investment District

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PANHANDLING SURVEY – PRE AND POST-TEST COMPARISON REPORT
NOVEMBER 2014
CONDUCTED FOR THE LANCASTER CITY ALLIANCE AND LANCASTER DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT DISTRICT
MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Procedures

Pretest: In spring 2014, Millersville University students conducted short surveys (Appendix A) of persons walking on public streets in downtown Lancaster. The surveys were conducted twice during lunch time (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.) to target Lancaster residents and persons employed in downtown Lancaster. The third time, students surveyed from 4 – 6 pm during First Friday to target visitors to the city. Each time, two pairs of students walked through the downtown area and asked pedestrians if they would be willing to answer a brief survey. One student asked questions and the other student wrote down the answers.

Questions 1-5 on the pre-test asked participants about how many times they have been stopped by someone asking them for money, the frequency, location, and reaction to panhandlers. Questions 6-7 asked participants to provide feedback about the proposed poster (Appendix B).

The findings of the pretest are found in the June 2014 report included as Appendix E.

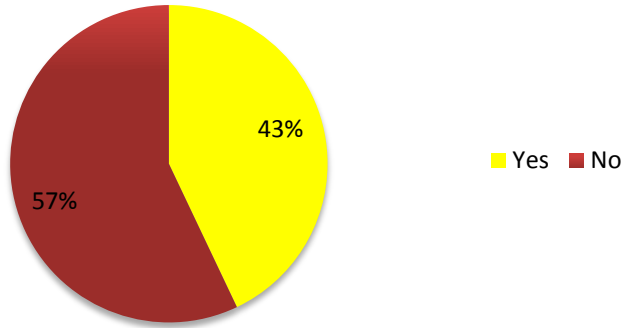
Post-test: Based on the data from the pre-test, the Lancaster City Alliance distributed modified posters (Appendix C) to local business, the bus station, and Central Market. In late September, Millersville University again surveyed persons in downtown Lancaster twice during lunch time and once during First Friday.

The post-test (Appendix D) consisted of a survey similar to the pre-test. The first five questions repeated from the pre-test. Questions 6-10 asked participants about the visibility of the posters and for feedback about the posters.

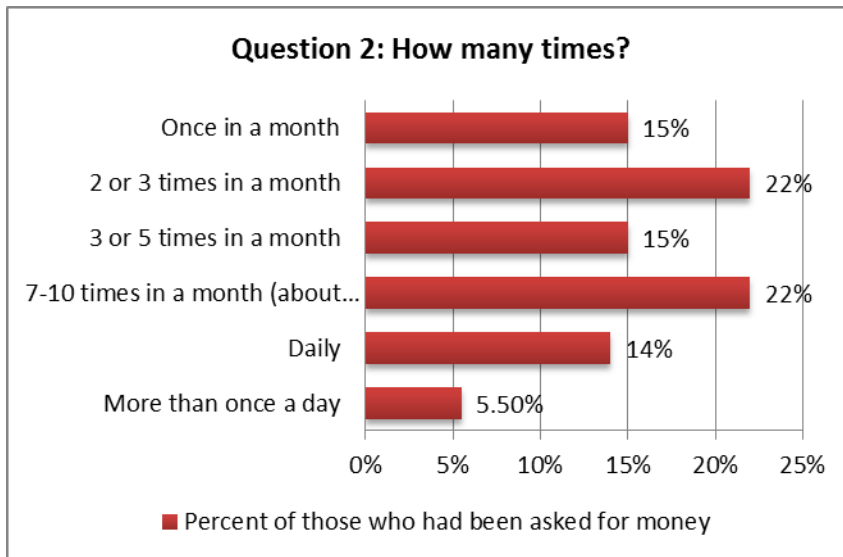
Post-Test Results

Students approached over 200 people, and 163 people agreed to be surveyed. Of the 163 surveyed, 70 said they have been asked for money and 93 said they have not been approached for money.

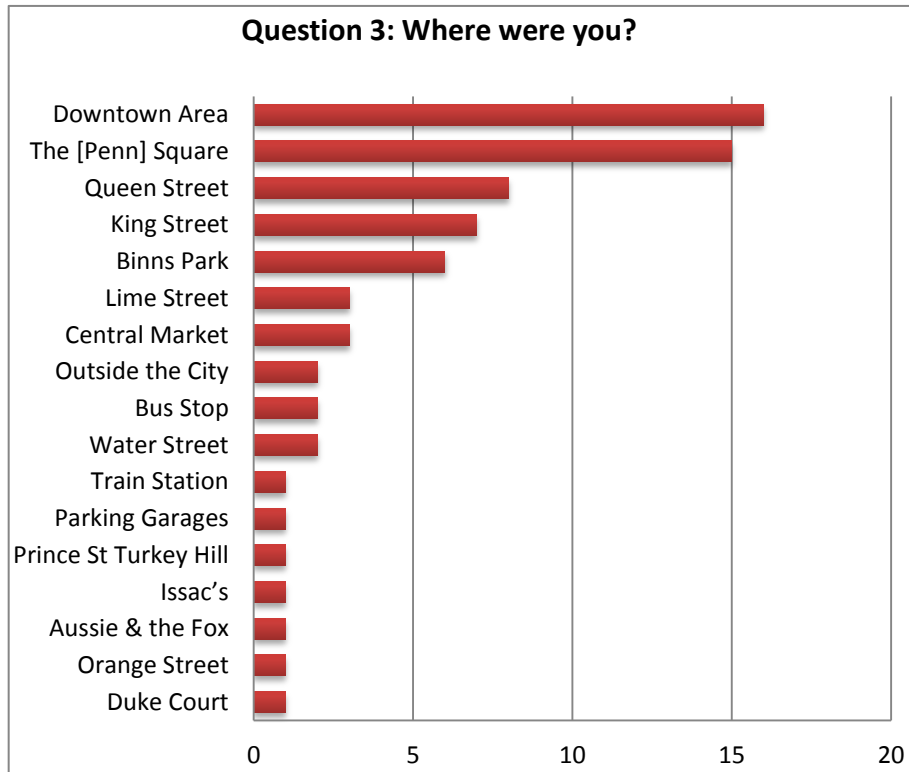
Question 1: Have you been asked for money?



Of those who have been stopped for money, eleven (11) experience it once a month, sixteen (16) two to three times a month, eleven (11) three or five times a month, sixteen (16) said they were asked several times a week which equates to about 7-10 times a month, ten (10) people said they were asked daily, and four (4) people said more than once a day.



For location, most people 23 just said the general “downtown area”. The second most frequent place mentioned was Central Market (7). One mentioned something outside of the city a location outside of the city.



The answers given to questions four and five frequently overlapped, as they did in the pretest. For those that did describe an emotional reaction, two people said they felt bad, one person said they felt it was annoying, another person had mixed feelings, and two people thought the person asking might have an addition.

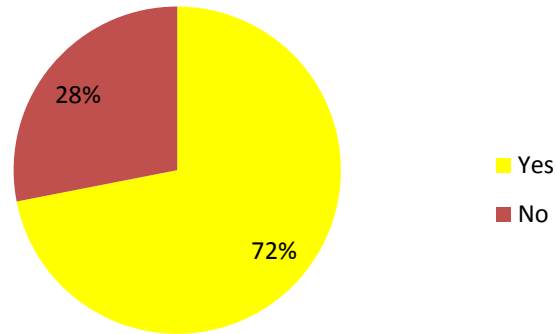
The responses to question five, “What did you do?” fell into similar categories as the pretest, with the addition of referring them to a social services or gave food.

- always say no (35)
- it depends but usually say no (9)
- it depends but usually say yes (12)
- give money consistently (6)
- Refer to 2-1-1 or Water Street Ministries (7)

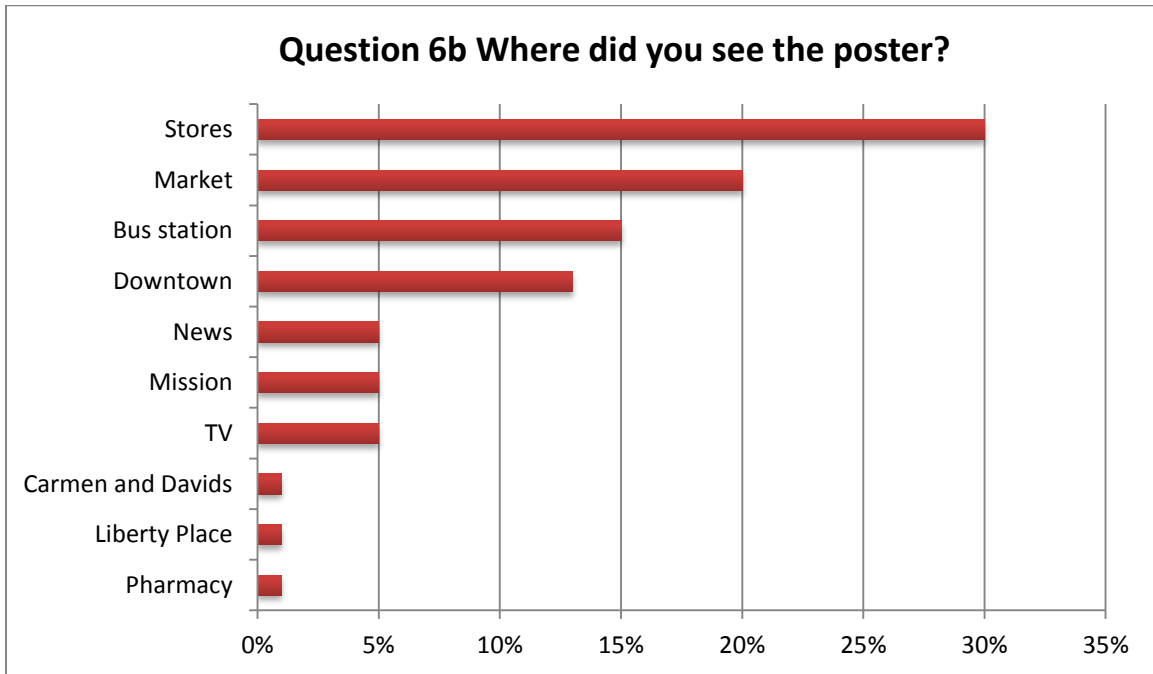
Post-test Responses to the Poster

After asking the participants about being stopped by panhandlers, students then asked them if they saw the poster (Appendix C). Of the response, 90 said yes and 70 said no.

Question 6: Did you see this poster?



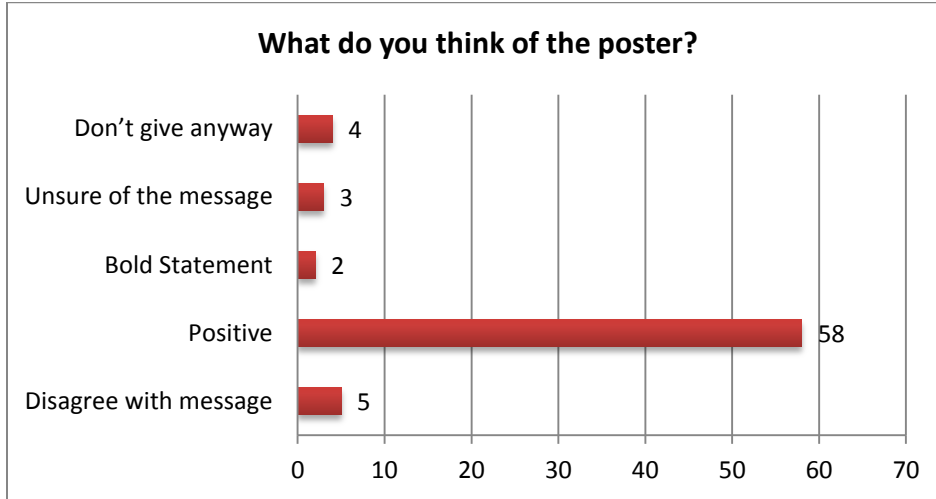
If they answered yes, students then asked where they remember seeing it and what they thought of the message.



For location, most people (12) said stores. The second most frequent place mentioned was market (8). Others said bus station (6), downtown (5), in the news (2), mission (2), TV (2). Three people mentioned specific Liberty Place, Carmen and David’s Creamery, and the pharmacy.

They were then asked what they thought of the poster and the message it portrayed.

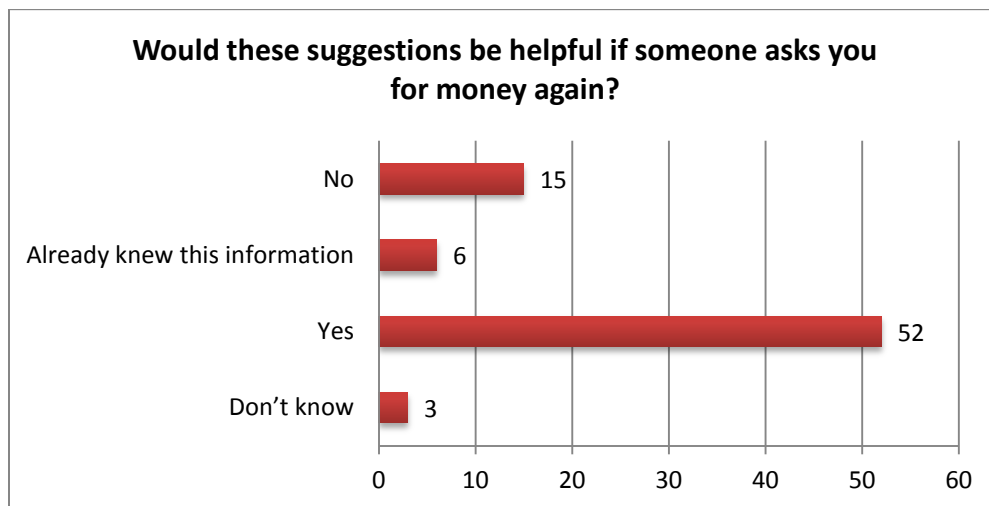
Report on Panhandling Survey – November 2014



The majority (58) of the respondents thought the message portrayed was positive through responses such as “good”, “it is a good idea,” “it is helpful”. Five respondents “disagree with the message” the poster portrayed. Four respondents thought the message was unnecessary because they “don’t give anyway. Three respondents were “unsure” of the message and what the poster was trying to portray. Some (8) gave specific feedback about the poster:

- Too wordy
- Don’t think people will read it
- It is not clear

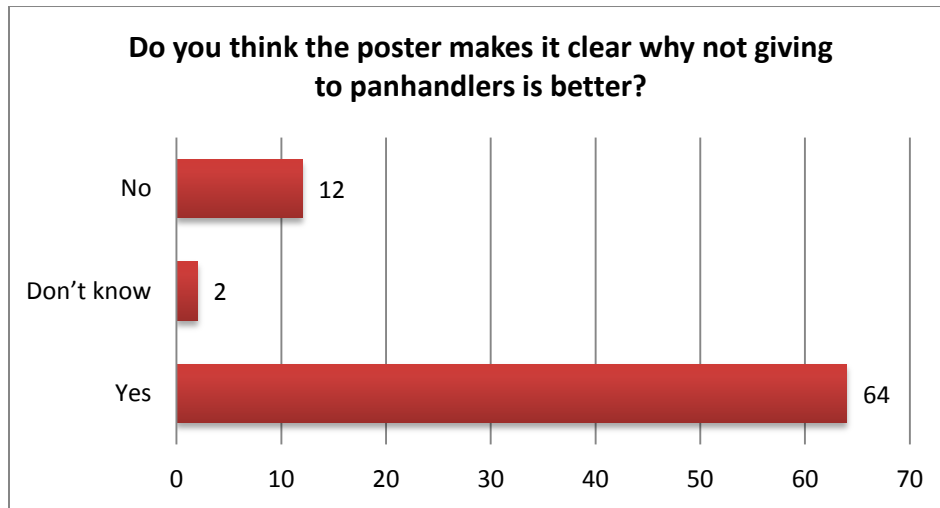
Those surveyed were asked if the poster recommendations would be helpful to them in the future if confronted by a panhandler.



Report on Panhandling Survey – November 2014

The majority (52) of those surveyed said “yes” the poster suggestions would be helpful. Fifteen said “no” the poster suggestions would not be helpful. Six stated they “already knew this information.” Three people said, “don’t know.” One person thought it would be “helpful, but wouldn’t use.”

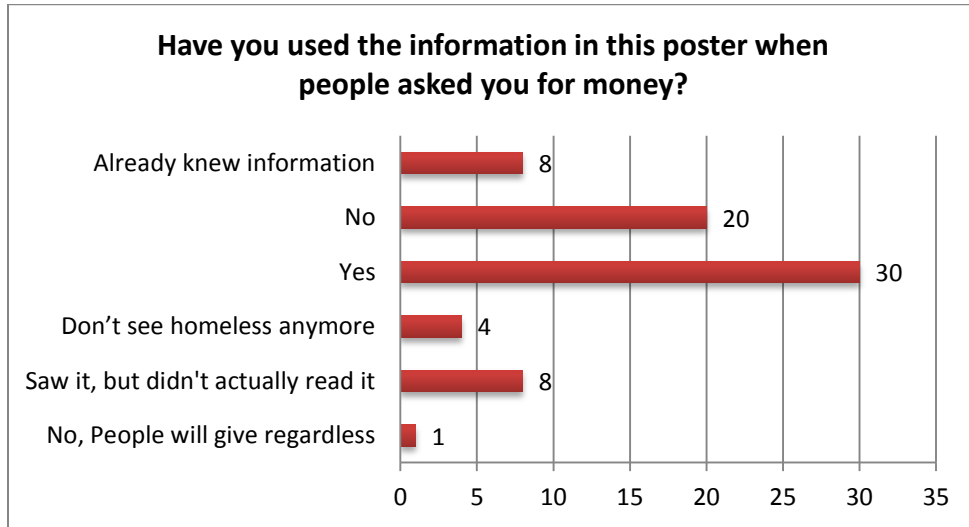
Those surveyed were then asked if the poster makes it clear why not giving to panhandlers is a better alternative than giving to panhandlers. For those that said no, they either already did not give to panhandlers so it did not alter their behavior, or they disagreed with the message.



The majority (64) of those surveyed said “yes” the poster makes it clear why not giving to panhandlers is better. Twelve people said “no” the poster does not make it clear why not giving to panhandlers is better. Two people said they “don’t know” if the poster makes it clear. Individual responses were:

- “too dark
- “say ‘it’s a scam’ instead,”
- “too harsh,”
- “like the back side better”
- Seven people thought the poster needed “bolder/bigger letters” of the facts that went along with message.

Those surveyed were asked if they have used the information in the poster when they were asked for money by a panhandler.



Thirty of those surveyed said “yes” they have used the information in the poster when confronted by a panhandler and asked for money. Twenty said “no” they have not used the information in the poster. Some of the responses of those who said yes were: “yes, helpful” when approached for money, four people noted that they don’t see homeless any more, others noted that “glad they put charity options,” and that they don’t feel bad saying no to anymore. Eight people said they saw the poster, but “didn’t actually read it.” Of those who said the poster was not helpful, many said “people will give regardless” or they disagreed with the message of the poster. Eight people said they already knew the information, so the poster did not impact what they do.

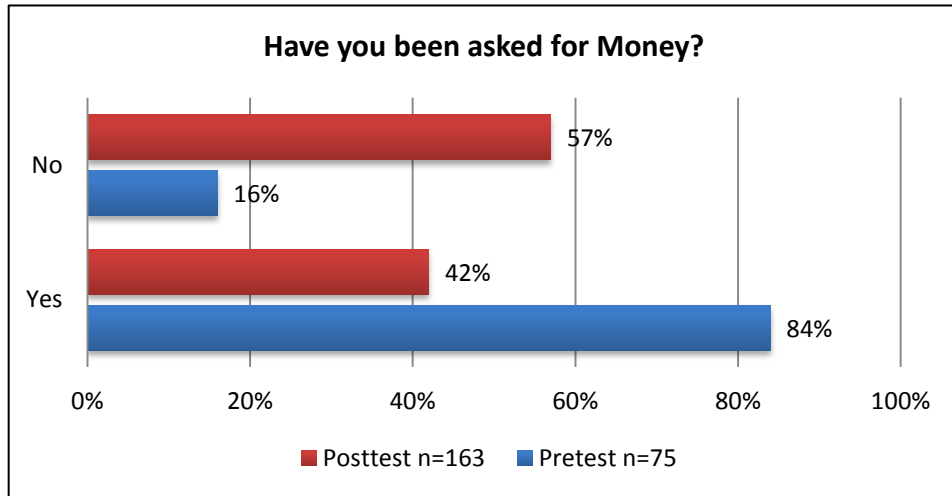
Post-test Summary

The majority (57%) of those surveyed had not been asked for money in the past month in the downtown area. The majority (72%) of those surveyed have seen the poster around town. Of those who have seen the poster, most feel the poster sends a positive message and most think the poster suggestions are helpful to them if someone asks them for money in the future. Most of the respondents think the poster makes it clear why not giving to panhandlers is better. Approximately half of those surveyed have used the information from the poster.

Comparison of Pretest and Post-test

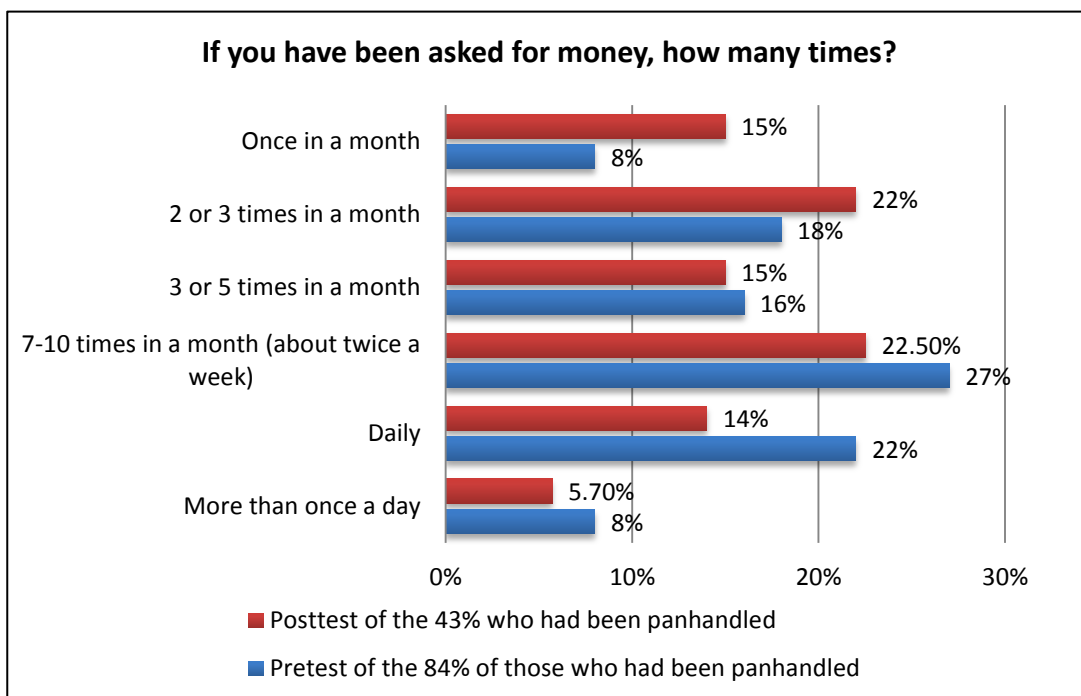
Frequency of Panhandling

Fewer people have been asked for money after implementation of the panhandling posters with the city. Before the panhandling posters were implemented, 84% of those surveyed had been asked for money within the



last month. The posters were up four months before the post-test survey was administered. Results show the number of people who had been asked for money within the last month decreased by 50%. Only 42% of the people surveyed were asked for money within the last month.

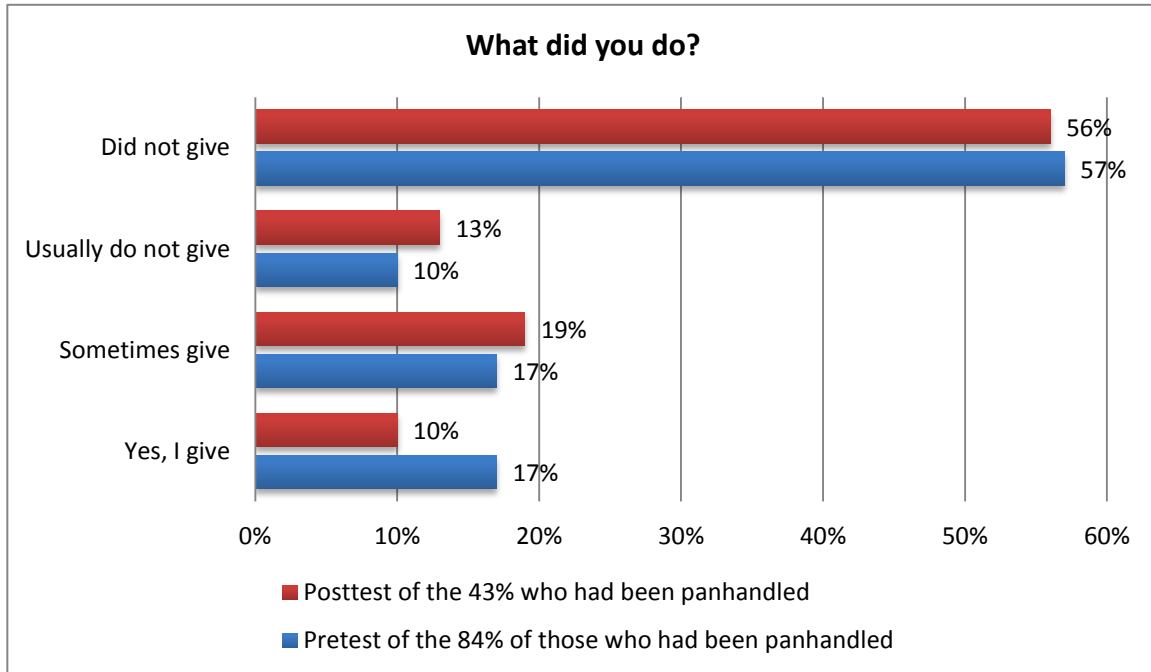
The frequency of panhandlers asking for money within the last month decreased after implementation of the poster.



Report on Panhandling Survey – November 2014

People were asked less often for money within the last month. There was a decrease in the number of people who were asked for money “more than once a day,” “daily,” “7-10 times in a month,” and “3-5 times in a month.” There were more people asked just “2 or 3 times a month,” or “once a month.”

Those who were asked for money responded in very similar ways both before and after the introduction of the posters. A majority (56% of those asked in the post-test and 57% of those asked in the pretest) did not give.



Effectiveness of the Poster:

Most people who were surveyed thought the poster was helpful and gave a clear message on how to deal with panhandlers by referring them to local resources within the community. People thought the poster made it clear why it is better not to give to panhandlers and used the information from the poster when asked for money. Comparing the feedback on the poster from the pretest to the post-test, there were fewer suggestions about things to change. Fewer people were confused by the message of the poster put up around the city (Appendix C) than the proposed poster used in the pretest (Appendix B). As in the pretest, a few people said that panhandling would happen no matter what. Both before and after the poster was put up, a few disagreed with the message of the poster and said they would give to people who asked regardless.

Conclusion

The poster campaign is associated with a reduction in the number of people who had been stopped and asked for money. It is not possible to conclude that this is attributable to the presence of the poster. It is possible that people who panhandle were less likely to do so when made aware of a campaign to discourage giving. Or, it is possible that people who panhandle themselves read the poster and contacted agencies or others to obtain assistance. However, it is also possible that there are fewer people panhandling in the summer months than in the months preceding the pretest (late May).

It is notable that those who were asked for money responded in a similar ways both before and after the poster campaign. The message of the poster utilized during the campaign communicated clearly the message about saying no to panhandlers. Most people surveyed thought the poster clearly conveyed the message that there are good alternatives to giving to panhandlers and that the poster's message would be helpful to them in the future. However, there are a number of people who disagree with that message and who give to panhandlers even though they are aware that some would argue they should refuse.

Finally, further improvements could be made on the poster for future campaigns. The most common suggestion is to use larger and bolder fonts to make the alternative to giving to panhandlers more readable.

Report on Panhandling Survey – November 2014

Appendix A Panhandling Survey

1. In the past month, have you been asked for money by someone you don't know? If they answer no, thank them and move on to someone else. Keep track of the number of people who answer no.
2. How many times?
3. Where were you?
4. What was your reaction?
5. What did you do?

(Then, show them the sign and ask them the following questions)

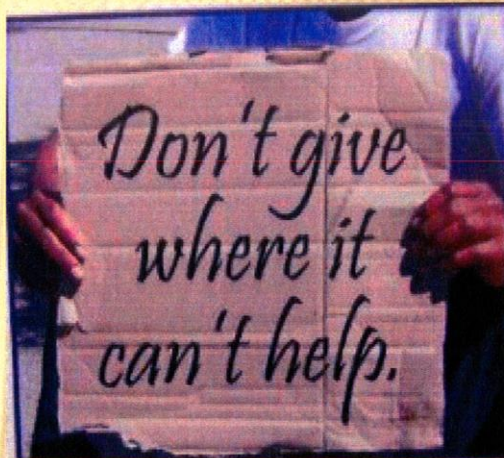
6. What do you think of this poster?
7. Will these suggestions be helpful if someone asks you for money again?

Appendix B

**LANCASTER CITY ALLIANCE
&
LANCASTER DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT DISTRICT**

**Want you to know
IT'S OKAY TO SAY "NO"
TO PANHANDLERS**

**Anyone can
Call
2-1-1
to find out
how to get
counseling,
food, clothing
and shelter.**



Contribute or volunteer through these social service agencies, non-profits and faith based organizations that provide a helping hand to the homeless and others in need.

The United Way of Lancaster County
630 Janet Avenue
Lancaster, PA 17601
www.uwlanc.org

Tabor Community Services
308 East King Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
www.tabornet.org

Water Street Ministries
210 South Prince Street
Lancaster, PA 17603
www.wsm.org

Spanish American Civic Association
453 South Lime Street, Suite B
Lancaster, PA 17602
www.sacapa.org

Lancaster County Council of Churches
344 North Marshall Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
www.lccouncilofchurches.org



www.lancastercityalliance.org



Appendix C

LANCASTER CITY ALLIANCE & LANCASTER DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT DISTRICT
want you to know...

IT'S OKAY TO SAY "NO" TO PANHANDLING.

Statistics show that most panhandlers are not homeless and most homeless do not panhandle. For some, panhandling is a career, and a lucrative one.
Source: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Community Policing Services

A better way to help is by contributing to or volunteering for charities and organizations with outreach programs that truly help those in need with long-term solutions.

Lancaster County Council of Churches
344 North Marshall Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
www.lccouncilofchurches.org

Spanish American Civic Association
453 South Lime Street, Suite B
Lancaster, PA 17602
www.sacapa.org

Tabor Community Services
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The United Way of Lancaster County
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www.uwlanc.org

Water Street Ministries
210 South Prince Street
Lancaster, PA 17603
www.wsm.org



GIVING TO PANHANDLERS IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO HELP.

Consider this:

- For some, panhandling is a profitable business, not an immediate need.
- Panhandlers are likely not looking for a meal, gas money or shelter.
- Your dollars may go to support and enable destructive habits and dependencies.

What you can do:

- Donate your money to organizations dedicated to helping the homeless and others in need.
- Volunteer your time to organizations and service agencies providing aid.
- Anyone can call 2-1-1 to find out how to access counseling, food, clothing and shelter

2-1-1

Lancaster Downtown Investment District and Lancaster City Alliance Clean & Safe Ambassadors are committed to keeping Lancaster a clean and safe place to live, work and play.

Our Safety Ambassadors play an important role in monitoring panhandling in the Downtown area. They will make an effort to engage with the panhandlers, educate them on services available as an alternative to panhandling, and encourage them to move on. They also seek to educate the public on better ways to help those that are in need.

Safety Ambassadors patrol the streets and alleys of the Downtown seven days a week deterring crime and unwanted behaviors, providing escorts, visiting businesses and assisting pedestrians and motorists. Ambassadors can be reached at: (717) 917-4696

Safety Ambassador Hours:
Monday - Saturday: 7 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday: 10:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Clean Ambassador Hours:
Monday - Saturday: 6 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Friday & Saturday: 11:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday: 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

354 N. Prince St., Suite 110,
Lancaster, PA 17603
717-394-0763 • FAX 717-394-0784



Promoting and building a vibrant city

LANCASTER CITY ALLIANCE & LANCASTER DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT DISTRICT
www.lancastercityalliance.org



Appendix D

Panhandling Post Test Survey

- 1. In the past month, have you been stopped and asked for money by someone you don't know?**
 - a. _____**NO** (If they answer no, skip to questions 6, 8, 9 and 10)
 - b. _____**YES**

- 2. How many times?**

- 3. Where were you?**

- 4. What was your reaction?**

- 5. What did you do?**

- 6. Have you seen any of these panhandling posters around?**
 - a. _____**NO** (If no, skip to question 8, 9 and 10)
 - b. _____**YES** if yes, where?

- 7. Have you used the information from this poster when people asked you for money?**

- 8. (If NO to question 6): What do you think about this poster?**

- 9. (If NO to question 6): Do you think the poster makes it clear why not giving to panhandlers is better?**

- 10. (If NO to question 6): Would these suggestions be helpful if someone asks you for money in the future?**

Appendix E

Report on Panhandling Survey – June 17, 2014
Conducted for the Lancaster City Alliance and Lancaster Downtown Investment District
Millersville University Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change

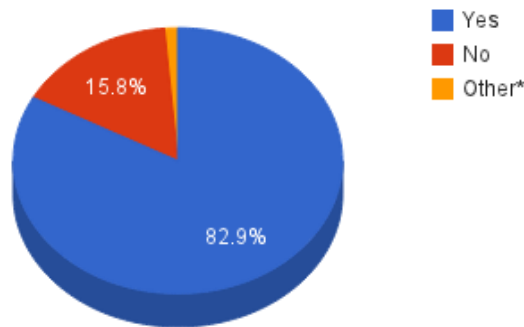
Procedures

On Friday May 30th, Wednesday June 4th, and Friday June 6th, Millersville students conducted short surveys of persons walking on public streets in downtown Lancaster. The surveys were conducted twice during lunch time (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.) to target Lancaster residents and persons employed in downtown Lancaster. The third time, students surveyed from 4 – 6 pm during First Friday to target visitors to the city. Each time, two pairs of students walked through the downtown area and asked pedestrians if they would be willing to answer a brief survey. One student asked questions and the other student wrote down the answers.

Results

Student approached over 130 people, and 75 people agreed to be surveyed. Of the 75 surveyed, 63 said they have been asked for money and 12 said they have not been approached for money. One

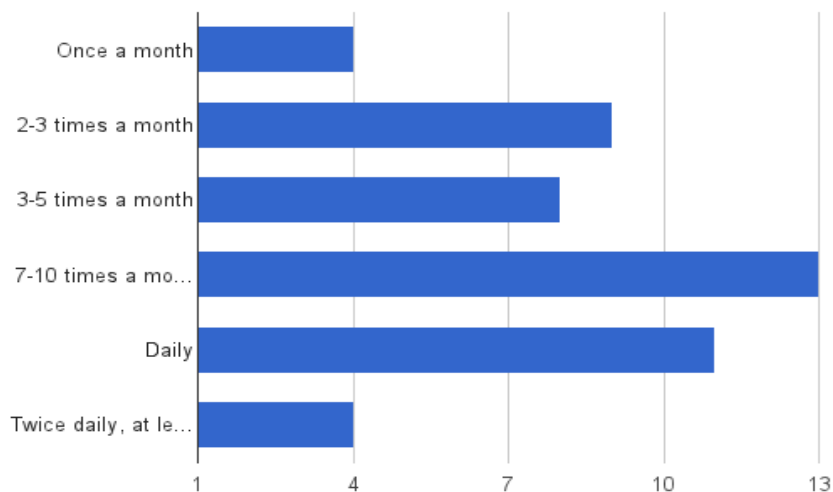
Question 1: Have you been asked for money?



person said that they are not stopped for money, but people ask for cigarettes instead (*other).

Of those who have been stopped for money, four (4) experience it once a month, nine (9) two to

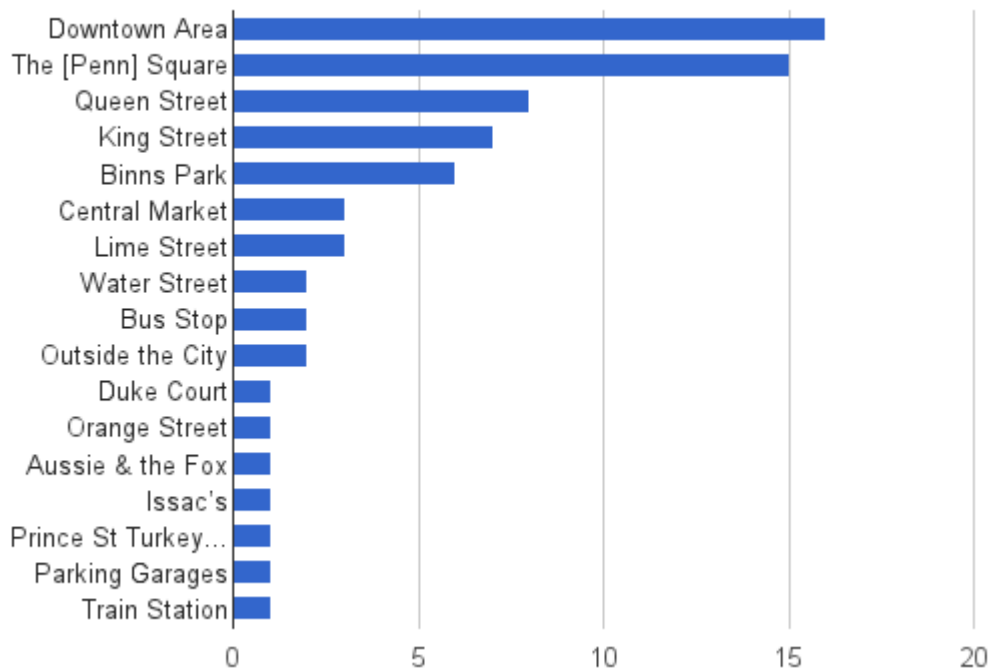
Question 2: How many times?



three times a month, eight (8) three or five times a month, thirteen (13) twice or three times a week, eleven (11) people said they were asked daily, and four (4) people said more than once a day.

For location, most people (16) just said the general “downtown area”. The second most frequent place mentioned was Penn Square (15). Others said streets such as Queen Street (8), King Street (7), Lime Street (3), Orange Street (1), and Water Street (2). A few people mentioned the bus stops (2) and train station (1). Several mentioned areas such as Central Market (3), Duke Court (1), Binns Park (6), and the parking garages (1). Two people mentioned specific locations, Isaacs (1), the Turkey Hill on

Question 3: Where were you?



Prince Street (1) and Aussie & The Fox (1). One (1) person mentioned two locations outside the city, the stop lights on Harrisburg Pike and the Starbucks on Columbia Avenue.

The answers given to questions four and five frequently overlapped. In response to question four, “What was your reaction?” most people told us what they did in response to being asked. For those that did tell us about an emotional reaction, three (3) people said they feel empathetic or sorry for those asking. Four people said they feel like they have to lie and tell the person they don’t have money to give. Most people said that they just keep walking.

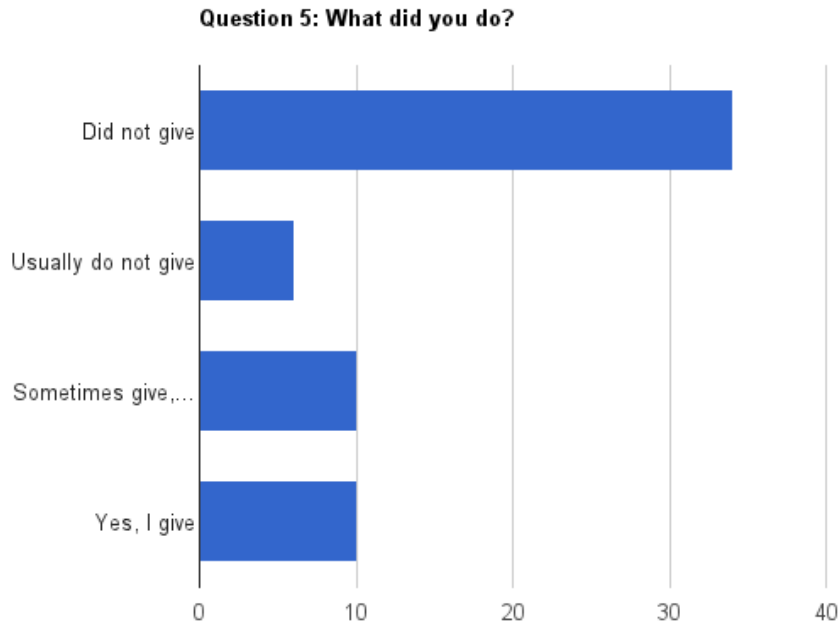
The responses to question five, “What did you do?” fell into four general categories:

- always say no (34)
- it depends but usually say no (6)
- it depends but usually say yes (10)
- give money consistently (10)

Thirty four people reported that they say no by just walking away without speaking, giving responses such as “I don’t have any cash on me” or just politely saying, “no, sorry”. Six people said that they usually do not give money; however, sometimes they will make a judgment call based on appearance

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and some will buy food if specifically asked for food and not money. Ten people said it depends on the person asking, but are more likely to give money than not. They make a judgment call based on how much the person asks for, how they are dressed, and if it is someone who has asked them before. Ten



people said that they usually do give. Of these ten people, seven (7) give money when they have it and three (3) said they give other things such as food.

Responses to the Poster

Most people said that they thought having a poster was a good idea. They supported offering suggestions for alternatives to giving money to panhandlers. The majority thought the poster will help cut down on the panhandling. Some responded that they like the colors and thought it was very visible. However, there was confusion over the wording and message of the poster. A few said it is not very clear what the suggestions are and who should be calling 2-1-1: the panhandler or the person being asked. Some think that people will not take time to read the sign, that it is too wordy. The student researcher often had to explain the poster to the respondent. Another person said to put it in simpler words and noted that not everyone knows what “panhandler” means. To summarize, those surveyed about the poster offered the following suggestions:

- Clarify the 2-1-1 message about who should call
- Change the font of the non-profits section, make it clearer that you should donate to these places
- Simplify it, too much for people to read walking by
- “Say no to panhandling” may confuse people who don’t know what panhandling is
- Two people said to remove the heading, “Lancaster City Alliance and Lancaster Downtown Investment District Want You to Know” at the top of the page
- Make a Spanish version

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- Put it up with the tear-off cards directly on the poster
- Put the poster in the parking garages, public places, and all the businesses, (Employees from the Fulton Bank and the 99cent store particularly asked for these posters and 2-1-1 cards to give out to panhandlers).

Most people (45) said the poster is helpful and provides useful information. People were very pleased to learn about 2-1-1 as an alternative and said it will impact how they respond to panhandlers in the future. Respondents who were informed about 2-1-1 information cards to give to panhandlers agreed that was a good idea.

A few people were skeptical about the message of the poster, saying that panhandling is going to happen no matter what, but the poster is worth the try. Other said that referring people to 2-1-1 will help those who really need it, but it will not stop panhandlers just asking for drug money. A few people surveyed said that they would rather give directly to the panhandler rather than an organization because some of the organizations are not very good and another said that they would rather it not be paying overhead and salary costs.

Summary

Most of those surveyed had been asked for money in the past month in the downtown area and the majority of respondents said they do not give when asked. Most respondents thought that the poster was a great idea, although many people had suggestions to improve the poster. Respondents said that knowing about 2-1-1 as a referral option will provide them with another tool when saying no to panhandlers. Many people thought that having a card describing 2-1-1 to give to panhandlers instead of money was a good idea.