



The Panhandlers

by
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You see them in cities large and small. You see them around bus and train stations, and around public buildings. But most often they are on street corners and major intersections. In today's vernacular, they are called panhandlers. Panhandlers are also referred to as "beggars," "vagrants," "vagabonds," "mendicants," or "cadgers."

Panhandling is **a form of solicitation or begging**. Panhandlers often carry signs stating that they are homeless, trying to get home, a veteran in need of assistance, or that they will work for food.

There are two general classifications of panhandlers. There are those who have no choice but to beg and are forced to do it, and those who have mastered the art of begging and make a substantial amount of money from it. Panhandlers are also classified as homeless or fake homeless. According to many studies, the percentage of **FAKE** homeless panhandlers, depending on location, ranges from 5% to 97%.

While many of the studies on panhandling are anecdotal, there are relatively few scientific studies. Sage Publications however conducted a scientific review of 38 studies on the income that panhandlers make. Problematic however is that the review included 23 studies from countries other than the US. When adjusted for US dollars, on average panhandlers worldwide make between \$20 and \$60 per day. However, panhandling can be rewarding.

According to Ganesh Official, the richest panhandler is Barkat Ali who has an estimated net worth of over \$1million. Gary Thompson from Texas claims that he makes up to \$100 thousand per year panhandling (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2285423/Meet-man-makes-100K-year-begging-pretending-mentally-handicapped.html>). Will Anderson, NYC says that he easily makes \$400 in two hours (<https://money.com/panhandler-dog-cat-pets/>).

Even with these studies it is difficult to evaluate the "true" income earned as like other types of "shadow work" (prostitution, drugs, etc.), many panhandlers form communal groups or become "members" of a stable, much like most street prostitutes.

Should you give money to a panhandler?

Panhandlers rely on your emotions to give them money. While there are panhandlers who truly need money, the fake ones are only out to scam you.

Most homeless organizations discourage panhandling or giving money to panhandlers. The organizations recognize that signs expressing homelessness tug at your heart strings and that many of those displaying such signs are not homeless at all. Other reasons for not giving money to panhandlers are:

- You are reinforcing panhandling behavior
- Your money may be feeding a substance abuser's addiction
- You are putting panhandlers at risk of physical attacks
- Panhandling is keeping them from seeing needed treatment
- Panhandling encourages a negative mindset of valuing only what gets them through another day

A modern approach to panhandling

Between 2006 and 2016 panhandling in major cities shot up 27%. To curb this increase, cities across attempted to ban the practice, only to have their rules and regulations declared illegal in a series of court rulings. Supreme Court rulings affirmed the constitutional right to panhandle.

In the past decade, panhandling has evolved and, like many other scams, panhandlers are using technology in their begging for money.

One approach to integrating technology into "street panhandling" took place in 2015 when a design student redesigned handwritten cardboard signs using computer graphics. Although the financial impact of these redesigned signs is not known, they have garnered attention and "donations" from passersby.

While digitally made signs may help panhandlers, the question is how will they fair in an ever increasing cashless society? One answer to this question dates back to 2016 when a Detroit panhandler used his cell phone and a credit card reader to ask for donations (<https://money.howstuffworks.com/cashless-economy-affect-panhandlers.htm>).

Today, panhandlers around the world are using their cell phones and other technological devices to ask for money. In the Philippines it is common for panhandlers to use Gcash and QR apps on their phones (<https://adobochronicles.com/2023/05/27/from-shanghai-to-manila-panhandlers-go->

[high-tech/](#)). Similarly, in cashless Sweden, panhandlers use mobile apps and accept credit card payments.

In cities across the nation, software developers are designing phone apps that allow people to donate via the apps which are connected to charitable organizations. While most of these organizations vet the panhandlers who meet their criteria, there is another technology format that is growing in numbers.

In the early days of the Internet, internet begging, cyber-begging, e-begging or Internet panhandling appeared as personal ads asking for help. Today these ads are incorporated into personal websites or “cause websites.” Cause websites are often labeled as funding, crowd funding, or mega funding sites such as the popular GoFundMe.com website.

Problematic with these cause websites is that vetting the “beggar” is not necessarily done. Since many of these sites often take a percentage of the “donated” amount we should be asking ourselves “Why would the website vet the panhandler?”

The utilization of data gathered by big tech and the application of artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to create “begging” messages. They can also be “customized” according to data collected from your IP address by big tech. Your IP address is like a street address for your computer or network that is used when connecting to the Internet. The following could be a possible scam as it has appeared on Facebook, a community sharing website, and GoFundMe.

Hi! I'm _____'s mommy, _____. Some of you may know, our precious 1 year old little girl is having brain surgery Wednesday. She has a Cyst inside her brain right where all of the brain fluid is suppose to drain. The cyst is very close to blocking that completely which would cause her to get very, very sick and go into a coma that she will not come out of. With that being said it is very, very urgent that we have this surgery and get this taken care of Immediately!!!! Because of all of her doctor appointments, her and her brother _____ getting sick, plus us moving I have been out of work for the past month. Their dad, _____ is the only one working right now, we have been fine being able to pay the bills plus cover our needs with his paycheck each week. Unfortunately with the surgery being at _____ Children's Hospital we are having to be there the night before surgery due to it being scheduled so early the next morning. They are telling us we will have to stay a day or two afterwards as well. If you can find it in your hearts to help us with Gas, hotel and eating expenses we would be so grateful. Please know anything helps even if that's just you sharing this information with someone else to get the word out. We truly appreciate everyone's prayers, kind words and support during this scary time for our family.

God bless you all.

Is this a scam or is it true? Look at all the statements pulling at your heart strings.

1. I'm _____'s **mommy**, _____.
2. precious **1 year old** little **girl** is having brain **surgery**
3. has a Cyst **inside her brain** right where all of the **brain fluid is suppose to drain**.
4. cause her to get **very, very sick** and **go into a coma that she will not come** out of.
5. **very, very urgent** that we have this surgery
6. **all** of her doctor appointments,
7. us **moving**
8. been **out of work** for the past month
9. dad, is the **only one working** right now,
10. we have been fine being able to pay the bills plus cover our
11. surgery being at _____ **Children's** Hospital
12. having to be there the **night before** surgery
13. They are telling us we will **have to stay** a day or two afterwards as well.
14. find it in **your hearts** to help us with Gas, hotel and eating expenses we would be so grateful.
15. **appreciate everyone's prayers**, kind words and support during this **scary time** for our family.
16. **God bless you** all.

There is one other thing that may help decide if the above is true or fake. Remember that the message appeared on both Facebook and GoFundMe? The person's first name was the same on both sites but the last names were different. Also both Facebook and GoFundMe had the same picture of the girl. But Facebook also had not only baby pictures but also ones as the girl was growing older, the latest being about 4 years old.

So now that you know the trigger emotional word and phrases, the different last names, and progressive photos as the girl grew older. . .

Is this GoFundMe posting real or fake?

This GoFundMe posting was made June 7, 2023 set a goal of \$8,000. To date, 20 days later, the fund has received \$3,897.