

# Street-Level Charity: Beggars, Donors, and Welfare Policies

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## Abstract

Begging is a phenomenon that has largely been ignored by scholars of the welfare state. This is surprising because the presence of beggars in a society tends to be interpreted as the welfare state's failure to adequately provide for its citizens. This paper examines the conditions under which we expect donors to actually give money to beggars at the street level. In particular, it offers a systematic theoretical framework for analyzing interactions between beggars and potential donors. We develop a game theoretic model where potential donors and beggars interact with one another in the context of a broader political environment. The contribution of our approach is twofold. First, it offers equilibria results on the strategic considerations that motivate begging practices. Second, it explains how social welfare policies at the macro-level can indirectly shape the parameters that structure these street-level equilibria.