

**Upwardly Mobile: Street Vending and the American Dream**  
**Institute for Justice**  
**2012 Survey**

Data for the 2012 survey of street vendors in America’s 50 largest cities were gathered using the following questions. Descriptive statistics for each question represent top-line results, using the full sample and sampling weights, except for New York City results, which represent only New York City vendors.

***ALL VENDORS***

**Do you work as a vendor only during certain SEASONS, or do you vend YEAR-ROUND?**

	Percent
Seasonal	40
Year-Round	60

***SEASONAL VENDORS ONLY***

**During the seasons you work as a vendor, is vending your FULL-TIME JOB?**

	Percent
Yes	50
No	50

***YEAR-ROUND VENDORS***

**Is vending your FULL-TIME JOB?**

	Percent
Yes	79
No	21

***ALL VENDORS***

**Did you have a job BEFORE you started vending?**

	Percent
Yes	73
No	27

**How long have you worked as a vendor?**

Mean Years	SD
8	8

**Did you complete any SPECIALIZED TRAINING on how to work as a vendor?**

	Percent
Yes	37
No	63

**Looking ahead, how many YEARS do you plan to CONTINUE VENDING?**

Mean Years	SD
10	8

**About how long did it take you to get all the necessary approvals from the city or other government before you could begin vending? (In the city you currently vend in)**

Mean Months	SD
5	14

### ***BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS***

**What is it that you MOSTLY sell or provide as part of your vending business? Would you say food, a product, a service, or something else?**

	Percent
Food	77.9
Product	21.2
Service	0.4
Something else	0.4

**How would you describe the type of structure you TYPICALLY vend from? Is it a truck, a cart, a temporary stand or table, a permanent stand or table, or something else?**

	Percent
Truck	37
Cart	25
Temporary Stand	21
Permanent Stand	7
other	10

**How many (TRUCKS/CARTS/STANDS/OTHER) do you OWN?**

Mean	SD
1	3

**NON-OWNERS**

**Which of the following best describes your work status?**

	Percent
Run own business but rent structure from someone else	50
Work as an employee in someone else's business	38
Other	12

**ALL NON-PERMANENT STANDS**

**At which of the following types of locations do you vend the MOST? Would you say...**

	Percent
Business district	43
Sporting or event venues	8
Restaurant and bar districts	3
Street fairs and events	22
Subway entrances	2
Other	24

**PERMANENT STANDS**

**At what type of location do you vend? Is it a market, a business district, a sporting or event venue, a restaurant and bar district, a subway entrance, or something else?**

	Percent
Market	21
Business district	30
Sporting or event venue	4
Restaurant and bar district	3
Other	41

**ALL NON-PERMANENT STANDS**

**On a typical WEEKDAY, how many DIFFERENT LOCATIONS do you vend at?**

Mean	SD
3	6

**And about how much time PER DAY on a typical WEEKDAY do you normally spend at the location you vend at THE MOST?**

Mean Hours	SD
6	3

**In addition to your TYPICAL WEEKDAY LOCATIONS, how many OTHER locations do you vend on WEEKENDS or at SPECIAL EVENTS in a TYPICAL WEEK?**

Mean	SD
2	4

***PERMANENT STANDS***

**In addition to your TYPICAL WEEKDAY LOCATIONS, how many OTHER locations do you vend on WEEKENDS or at SPECIAL EVENTS in a TYPICAL WEEK?**

Mean	SD
0.32	0.60

***ALL VENDORS***

**Approximately how many DAYS PER WEEK do you normally work as a vendor, including weekends and any days you might spend doing bookkeeping, purchasing, preparations, etc. for your vending business?**

Mean	SD
5	2

**And about how many HOURS PER DAY do you INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS?**

Mean	SD
7	3

**And about how many HOURS PER DAY do you spend PREPARING to serve customers, including any clean-up and drive time?**

Mean	SD
3	3

***OWN OR RUN A BUSINESS***

**About how many HOURS PER WEEK do you spend ORGANIZING your vending business, such as bookkeeping, purchasing, and the like?**

Mean	SD
8	10

**How many people do you employ FULL TIME, NOT INCLUDING yourself?**

Mean	SD
1	4

**And how many people do you employ PART-TIME, including those who work regularly and those who only work sometimes?**

Mean	SD
1	4

**Thinking about last year, that is 2012, about how many DOLLARS did your VENDING BUSINESS generate in ANNUAL SALES?**

Mean	SD
105,364	613,689

**Again thinking about last year, about how many DOLLARS did your vending business generate in PROFIT, that is, AFTER EXPENSES?**

Mean	SD
25,911	150,942

**Do you plan to expand your business in the near future?**

	Percent
Yes	34
No	51

***IF WORK AS AN EMPLOYEE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BUSINESS***

**Do you plan to OWN your own vending business sometime in the future?**

	Percent
Yes	47
No	27

***DEMOGRAPHICS***

**What is your current age?**

Mean Years	SD
50	15

**What was your approximate TOTAL INCOME in 2012 from your vending business as well as any other income you may have earned? Please include only your personal income, not your household income.**

Mean	SD
14,855	62,576

**And which of the following categories best describes you? Would you say**

	Percent
White	38
Black	15
Asian	9
Something else	4
Hispanic	35

**And what is the highest level of education you've COMPLETED?**

	Percent
Less than high school	14.36
Some high school	13.11
High school graduate	17.96
Some college	24.31
College graduate	22.64
Some graduate courses	2.40
Graduate/professional degree	4.87
Other	0.34

**What is your current marital status?**

	Percent
Married	65
Single	23
Divorced/Separated	9
Widowed	3

**How many children under the age of 18 do you have living at home?**

Mean	SD
1	1

**Are you a veteran of the United States military?**

	Percent
Yes	10
No	90

**Are you considered a DISABLED VETERAN?**

	Percentage of Veterans
Yes	32
No	68

**And were you BORN in the U.S.?**

	Percent
Yes	49
No	51

**How many YEARS have you been in the U.S.?**

Mean	SD
22	12

**And what is your gender?**

	Percent
Female	32
Male	68

**New York City Only**

***NEW YORK VENDORS WHO OWN OR RUN A VENDING BUSINESS***

**Next I have some questions about EXPENSES related to your business. Okay, first, do you PAY FOR OFFICE SPACE for your business, or do you manage business tasks FROM HOME?**

	Percent
Pay for office space	20
Manage from home	80

***PAY FOR OFFICE SPACE***

**Do you RENT that space, or do you OWN it?**

	Percent
Rent	96
Own	4

**About how much do you pay EACH MONTH for your office space?**

Mean	SD
403	663

**Do you pay to STORE THINGS for your business at a warehouse, storage space, commissary, etc., or do you ONLY store things AT HOME?**

	Percent
Pay for storage	49
Home only	51

#### *PAY FOR STORAGE*

**Do you RENT that space, or do you OWN it?**

	Percent
Rent	89
Own	11

**About how much do you pay EACH MONTH for your storage space?**

Mean	SD
298	391

#### *FOOD VENDORS*

**Do you rent commercial kitchen space to prepare your food?**

	Percent
Yes	17
No	83

**About how much do you pay EACH MONTH for kitchen space?**

Mean	SD
544	923

#### *OWN TRUCK/CART/STAND*

**You said earlier that you owned a (TRUCK/CART/STAND/OTHER). About how much did you pay for it, including any improvements needed to start your own business?**

Mean	SD
9054	20,440



**How many years ago did you buy that (TRUCK/CART/STAND/OTHER)?**

Mean	SD
6	6

**Was it purchased in the city where you currently vend, or did you buy it somewhere else?**

	Percent
My city	74
Somewhere else	26

**And was it purchased from a dealer, or did you buy it from another vendor?**

	Percent
Dealer	42
Another vendor	58

***RENT TRUCK/CART/STAND***

**You said earlier that you rent a (TRUCK/CART/STAND/OTHER). About how much do you pay EACH MONTH in rent for it?**

Mean	SD
362	372

***ALL NY VENDORS***

**Thinking about last year, that is 2012, about how much did you pay for the MAINTENANCE of your (TRUCK/CART/STAND/OTHER)?**

Mean	SD
571	1177

**Again thinking about 2012, how much did you pay in SALES TAX to the city, county, or other governments?**

Mean	SD
422	1170

***TRUCK OR CART VENDORS ONLY***

**How much do you pay EACH WEEK for gasoline or diesel for transportation purposes of your (TRUCK/CART)?**

Mean	SD
96	100

**And how much do you pay EACH WEEK for propane, kerosene, or other fuels for your business?**

Mean	SD
54	65

***VENDORS WITH EMPLOYEES***

**How much do you pay EACH WEEK for employee wages, NOT INCLUDING YOURSELF?**

Mean	SD
213	351

**How much do you pay EACH MONTH for employee benefits, NOT INCLUDING YOURSELF?**

Mean	SD
36	68

***ALL NY VENDORS***

**For this year, that is 2013, how much will you pay for INSURANCE for your VENDING BUSINESS?**

Mean	SD
777	2662

**And for this year (2013), how much will you pay for PERMITS AND OTHER FEES to the government in order to operate as a vendor?**

Mean	SD
314	1028

***FOOD VENDORS ONLY***

**About how much do you pay EACH WEEK for FOOD to prepare and sell in your vending business?**

Mean	SD
317	386

**And about how much do you pay EACH WEEK for NON-FOOD supplies, such as paper towels, food cartons, utensils, and the like?**

Mean	SD
124	155

***ALL VENDORS***

**From which of the following do you normally buy food and non-food products for your vending business? How about...**

	Percent
Wholesaler	66
Grocery	10
Retailer	3
Some other place	10
Commissary or deport	23

**For this year, that is 2013, will you PAY for ADVERTISING your vending business?**

	Percent
Yes	8
No	83

**And about how much will you PAY for ADVERTISING your vending business this year?**

Mean	SD
1096	2141

**And for this year (2013), about how much will you pay for ACCOUNTING OR BOOKKEEPING SERVICES?**

Mean	SD
101	165

**And how about for LEGAL SERVICES?**

Mean	SD
109	481

**Okay, and about how much do you pay EACH MONTH for COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY for your vending business, such as cell phones, Internet, and the like?**

Mean	SD
483	6405