

COVID-19 Crisis and Street Vendors in New York City, USA: Lasting Impacts and an Agenda for Recovery



Key Findings

Ability to work: Findings from 2021 show a sharp drop-off in the ability of vendors to work and earn in their profession, with some withdrawing totally from the workforce for reasons of physical or mental health, and others switching to low-earning wage work. Respondents cited a poor business climate, lack of customers, rising price of inputs, and ongoing health concerns or illness as barriers to work and recovering their earnings.

Earnings: Among those who have not moved into a new sector, average earnings have improved since mid-2020, but still remain at roughly half of pre-COVID (February 2020) earnings, and 75% of respondents were still making less than \$10 per day. Findings suggest that the gap between men and women vendors' earnings that existed before the pandemic has widened, underlining the enduring systemic obstacles facing women vendors.

Food security: 52% of respondents reported that they had reduced their food consumption over the last 12 months. 46% said that they or other household members had skipped a meal in the last month, or eaten a smaller variety of foods than they would have liked.

Mental and physical health: Respondents described crippling depression and anxiety related to COVID-19 fears and losses, isolation, other health problems, and the pandemic's economic fallout. 30% of respondents said someone in their household had a positive COVID test in the last year, with an equal number reporting that COVID-19 infections forced them to miss work.

Relief: Federal relief is not reaching vendors and their communities. Only 41% of respondents reported that they received a government cash grant in the last 12 months¹ – lower than the 74% who received one during the first three months of the pandemic – and only 39% accessed government food support. Only one respondent had their rent cancelled or forgiven, and only three received business loans.

Ongoing punitive enforcement: While some vendors expressed appreciation for the NYPD's less punitive enforcement approach during the pandemic, others continued to experience fines, confiscations and harassment from city officials. Many voiced concern about the city's announcement that it would resume regular enforcement and ticketing, at a moment of incipient and precarious economic recovery.

¹ The study's survey portion was completed before the rollout of the Excluded Workers Fund in New York State, and therefore does not provide findings on its coverage among survey respondents.

Recommendations

1. **Pass S1175A/A5081A to fully decriminalize and formalize vendors.**
2. **Fully fund the New York State Excluded Worker Fund.**
3. **Remove NYPD from all vending enforcement**, in line with official city policy since January 2021.
4. **Reduce the barriers to successful application for grants and loans to vendors.**
5. Ensure timely implementation of Intro 1116, including distribution of new permits by July 2021.
6. **Remove antiquated restrictions on vendors' ability to work and earn a living, and arbitrary regulations that hinder their work.**
7. **Treat vendors the same as other small businesses**, by terminating rules and severe punishments that apply only to vendors.
8. **Clarify ambiguous vending rules that are frequently misinterpreted to the detriment of vendors.**
9. **Support creating new commissary space** through incentives, tax breaks and streamlining of the permitting process.

Background

COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy is a WIEGO-led longitudinal study that assesses the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on specific groups of informal workers and their households.² Using a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews, Round 1 assessed the impact of the crisis in April 2020 and mid-year 2020 compared to February 2020 (the pre-COVID-19 period).³ Round 2 was conducted in mid-year 2021 to assess how workers were experiencing COVID-19 resurgences and ongoing economic strains, and to what extent (if any) they had recovered. This report presents the summary findings of Round 2 of the study in New York City with members of the Street Vendor Project (SVP).⁴ In June 2021, researchers surveyed 50 of the original respondents to assess how their situation had changed roughly a year after the initial survey. Four additional respondents were surveyed to replace previous Round 1 respondents who could not be contacted. Researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with the Director of SVP and two SVP members – a halal cart vendor and a former fruit vendor – to capture detailed stories of how workers are coping in New York's "post-COVID-19" context.

All findings that compare Round 2 to Round 1 findings consist of unbalanced panels, meaning that they include all participants from Round 2 and all participants from Round 1. For this reason, they are not perfect representations of changes experienced by individual respondents.

² Study cities are Accra (Ghana), Ahmedabad (India), Bangkok (Thailand), Dakar (Senegal), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Delhi (India), Durban (South Africa), Lima (Peru), Mexico City (Mexico), New York City (USA), Pleven (Bulgaria), Tiruppur (India).

³ Results from Round 1 in New York City are available at www.wiego.org/publications/covid-19-crisis-and-informal-economy-street-vendors-new-york-city-usa

⁴ In 2022, SVP will be releasing results of a member survey conducted in 2021. Because of a larger sample size, results will be different.

Street Vendors in New York City: 2020 to 2021

Between 10,000 and 20,000 New Yorkers make their living selling food or merchandise on the city's streets. Vendors are overwhelmingly immigrants of colour. Though food vendors were among New York State's "essential workers" allowed to work at the peak of New York's COVID-19 restrictions, 2020 WIEGO-SVP survey results show that the start of the pandemic brought respondents' earnings to zero, and that few had recovered by mid-2020.⁵

Even during normal times, New York's complex vending regulatory system puts all vendors at risk of fines, confiscation and harassment from the City of New York Police Department (NYPD) and other regulatory agencies. These risks are heightened for the majority who cannot access permits, due to the low cap on the number available. In January 2021, street vendors won an important [victory](#) to address this challenge, with the passage of a new law that will create 4,000 new food vending permits. The change will drastically increase the number of current vendors in New York City who can work in full, legal compliance. However, the roll-out of new permits will not start until 2022, will occur incrementally over a decade, and will not affect vendors who sell merchandise.

The COVID-19 period brought another important policy change to street vending. In June 2020, the Mayor of New York announced he would remove NYPD from vending enforcement, as part of his administration's "deescalation agenda". In January 2021, the administration formally reassigned the role of vending enforcement to the Department of Consumer and Worker Protections (DCWP). While DCWP restarted regular enforcement in June 2021 after a period of leniency,⁶ NYPD forces have continually resurfaced to confiscate merchandise, remove vendors from their places of work, and issue fines as high as \$1,000 per violation. The consequences of these enforcement practices were starkly displayed in September 2021, by a viral video of city workers discarding a vendor's fresh food produce in the Bronx.⁷

To alleviate these challenges for vendors, state-level elected officials have proposed legislation (S1175A/A5081A) that would more fully decriminalize and formalize all vending.⁸

⁵ WIEGO and SVP 2020 (see footnote 2).

⁶ <https://citylimits.org/2021/09/08/nyc-enforcement-against-street-vendors-picks-up-again-after-pandemic-lull/>

⁷ Wong, Ashley. [A Street Vendor Had No Permit. Her Produce Was Tossed in the Trash](#). New York Times, September 28, 2021

⁸ See <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s6817>

COVID-19 in New York City: Key Dates

March 22, 2020: “NYS On Pause” begins, requiring all non-essential workers to stay home. Food vendors are considered essential workers and permitted to operate.

April 12, 2020: Daily COVID-19 deaths for New York City residents peak at 572.

June 7, 2020: Mayor Bill de Blasio announces that NYPD will no longer enforce vending regulations.

September 2020: Street Vendor Project receives reports of vendor ticketing by NYPD officers, despite June 7 announcement.

January 15, 2021: The Department of Consumer and Worker Protections becomes agency charged with enforcing vending, formally removing this role from NYPD.⁹

January 28, 2021: New York City Council passes Intro 1116, which raises the cap on food vending permits, creates an Office of Street Vendor Enforcement, and establishes a multi-stakeholder Vending Advisory Committee.

April 6, 2021: All New York residents over 16 become eligible for COVID-19 vaccine.

June 1, 2021: City announces it will start issuing fines to unpermitted food vendors and unlicensed merchandise vendors, after an unofficial relaxation on enforcement.

July 2021: Mayor de Blasio defends NYPD enforcement sweeps in the Bronx.

September 23, 2021: NYPD, DCWP and Department of Sanitation officers are captured discarding \$10,000 worth of vendor Diana Hernandez Cruz’s fresh produce in the Bronx.

Study Dates and Sample

Dates of study in New York City

- Round 1: June 2020
- Round 2: June 2021

Sample

	n	%
Women	28	52
Men	26	48
Total	54	100

⁹ NYPD Operations Order January 21, 2021, Number 6.

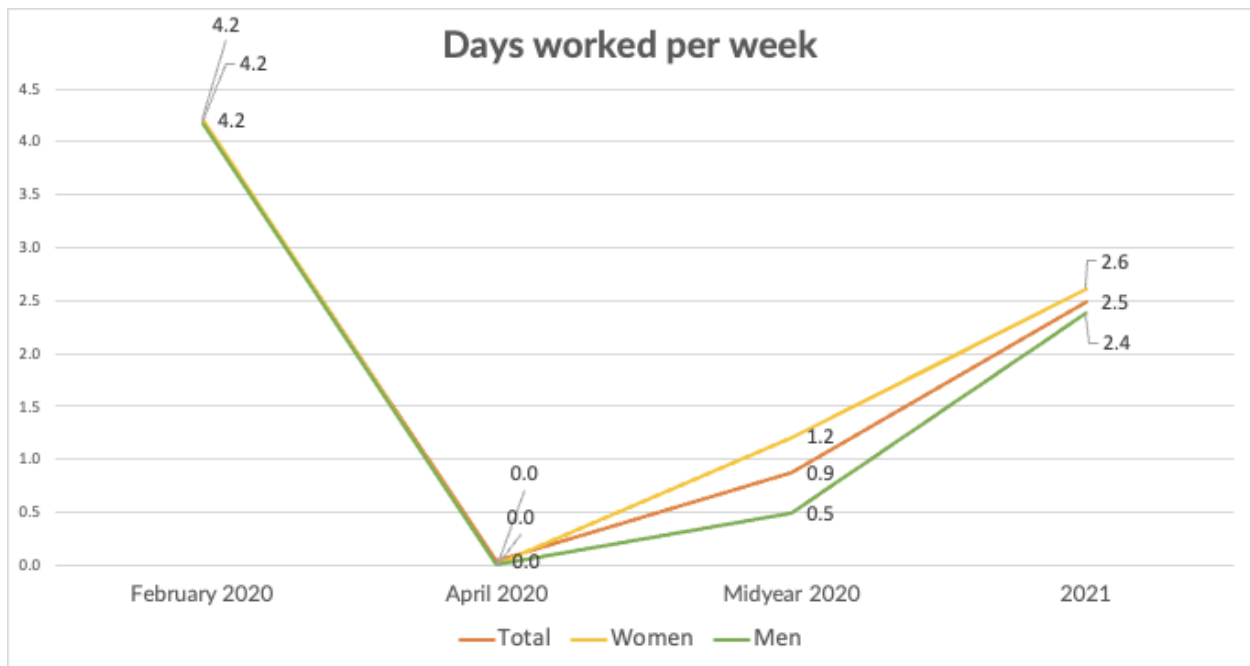
Findings

Work, Earnings and Food

Work

Survey results from 2021 show a sharp drop in the ability of vendors to work and earn in their profession. Nine respondents reported that they no longer had a primary occupation of work, indicating that they do not have a regular job of any kind or have left the workforce. Five respondents switched to bike delivery work, construction, online sales or other food services.

Though 73% of respondents surveyed in 2020 still considered street vending as their primary occupation, only 58% of all respondents were working actively as vendors at the time of survey. This is a low rate particularly for the warm weather months, when street vendors typically work and earn the most. Among all respondents, the average number of days worked was only 2.5 per week, compared to 4.2 pre-COVID-19 in February 2020.

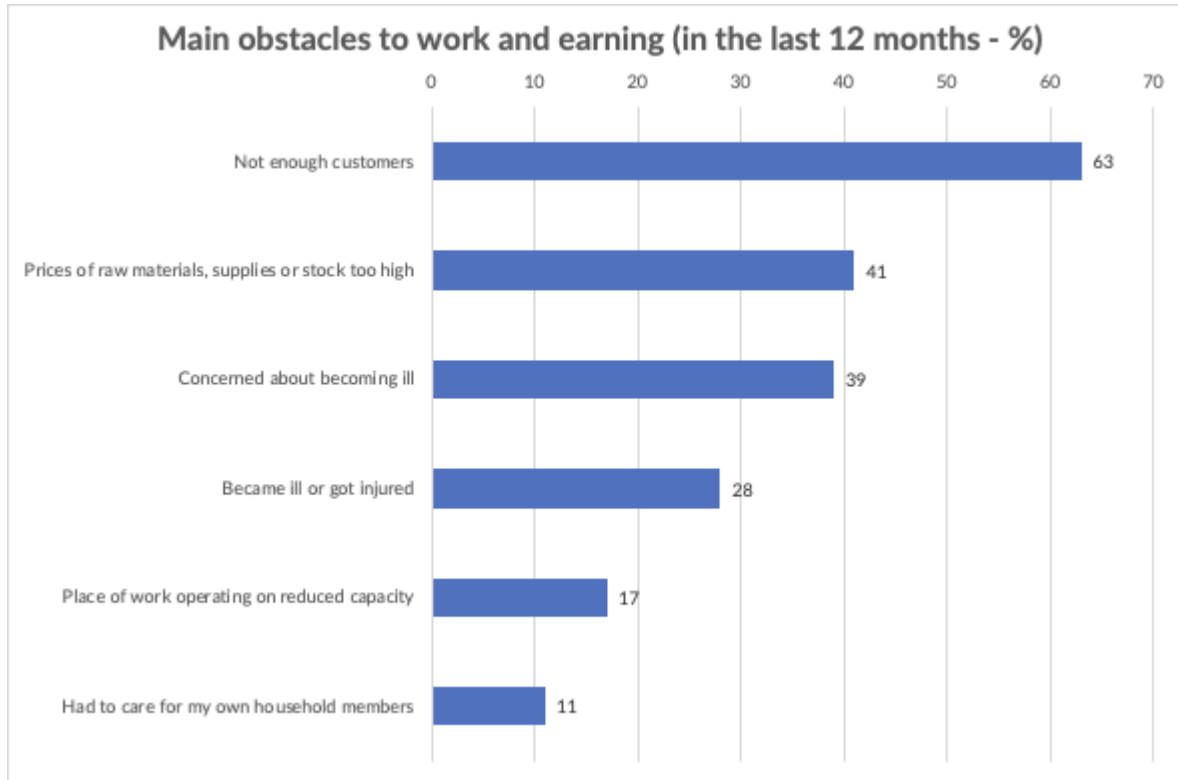


Note: Respondents were asked to report work days in the last seven days, including days they worked part-time.

Respondents who stopped working temporarily or permanently did so mainly because of the poor business environment, concerns about COVID-19 infection, and health problems (including mental health). A 55-year-old woman described suffering from crippling depression and anxiety about the virus and its impacts in her home country, which has prevented her from working since the beginning of the crisis. Several others have stopped working due to other health problems, including chronic pain, cancer treatment, and injuries.

For those who have returned to work, the situation has improved since the first three months of the pandemic, though it remains precarious. Respondents cited the main obstacles to work and

earnings as lack of customers (63%), an increase in the price of raw materials or stock (41%), health concerns (39%), and actual illness or injury (28%).



* Respondents could select more than one response

The reduction in customers remains the biggest challenge for vendors. According to a halal cart operator working in downtown Manhattan, foot traffic had still not resumed as of August, especially among the construction workers and day workers who were his main clients. A former fruit vendor based in Queens had stopped vending and turned to construction work, because business was too slow and she faced harassment from city authorities. She also identified increasing competition from other vendors, as many people who lost their jobs during the pandemic turned to vending as a lifeline.

The rising price of stock and inputs exacerbates these problems. The halal cart operator said that the price of hot dogs put him in a bind: “If I sell the hotdog to the construction workers for 3 dollars for example, he’s not gonna take it...And if I keep selling the hotdog at the same price, I’ll be losing.” A 73-year-old respondent who had recently returned to vending while recovering from a stroke, said that the rising price of rice, oil and other ingredients forced her to increase prices, which made her patrons less likely to buy.

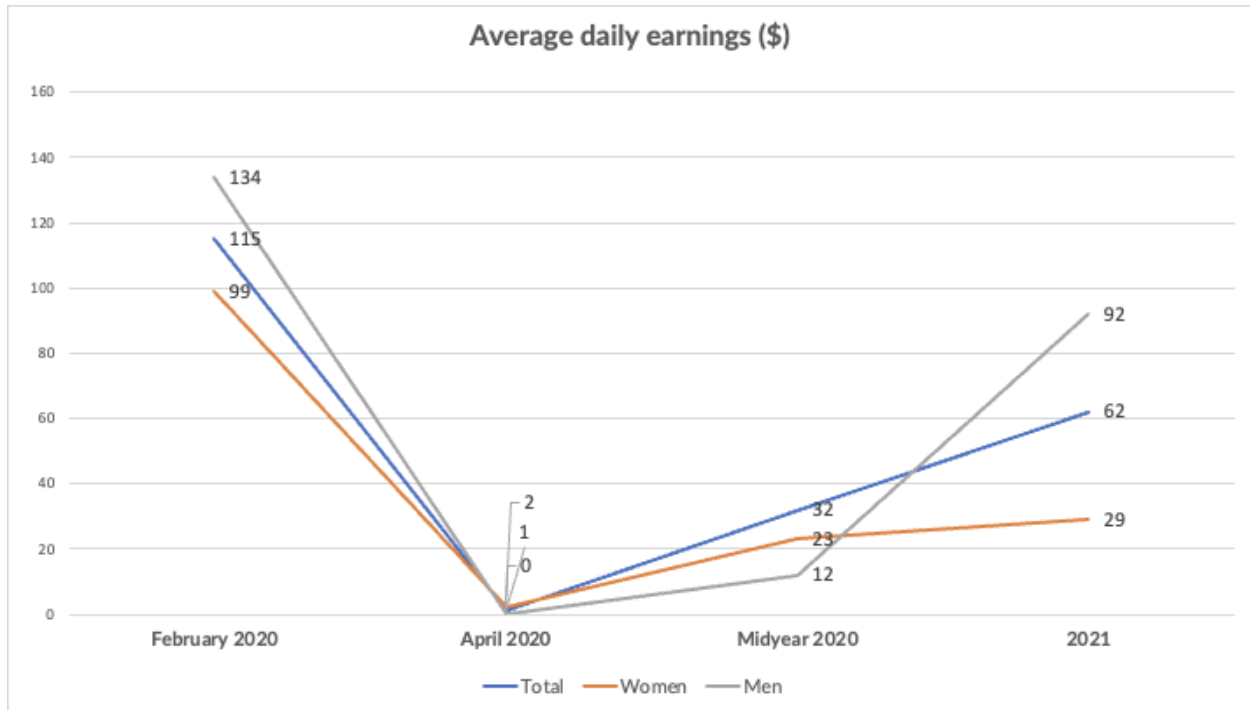
Earnings

When asked to identify the most significant impact of the pandemic, respondents most frequently cited their income and earnings. Over the last year, earnings have recovered to a limited degree, when only 26% had returned to work and average daily earnings were only \$32. Average daily earnings (before costs in 2021) had risen to \$62, roughly half of average pre-COVID-19 daily average earnings (\$115).

Average values, however, obscures that more than half of the sample was not working at the time of survey, and many of those who were working had low earnings. An analysis of earning

distributions shows that 75% of respondents were making less than \$10 per day in 2021 at the time of survey. Only six respondents were earning \$160 or more.

Findings also show a deepening gap in recovery between men and women respondents. Whereas men's daily average earnings had reached \$92, women's reached only \$29. Since women were equally likely as men to have been working at the time of survey, this likely reflects enduring, systemic barriers facing women vendors, including lower access to permits and capital.¹⁰



Note: All earnings data includes Round 1 respondents who have stopped working entirely and/or respondents who were not working in the previous month, whose days of work and earnings are set to 0. All earnings data is reported as gross earnings and do not account for costs of purchasing stocks or other inputs.

Some respondents reported spending more on inputs than they were earning. The woman vendor who had suffered a stroke reported that she earns between \$100 and \$200 weekly –but her monthly costs of up to \$1,000 often outstrip this. Aside from inputs, rent paid to commissaries to store carts every night (as required by the Department of Health for owners of food carts) represented another considerable large expense, particularly for non-working vendors.

¹⁰ See SVP (2020) Vulnerable in Itself: Women Street Vendors in New York City. Available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/432317126/Vulnerable-in-Itself>

Some respondents expressed optimism that conditions were improving: “We’re reassured that we’re seeing more people in the streets and that things are gonna get better again,” said one respondent. Yet others expressed fear that a return to normality would mean a return to normal levels of punitive enforcement.

Recovery impeded by police harassment

The survey was conducted just after the city announced its resumption of vending enforcement, after an unofficial relaxation. Some respondents said that law enforcement had relaxed during this period, and that they could recover some income without fear. The halal cart vendor described that during this time, “[police] talk to us in a nice way; if I parked in a wrong way, they would tell us nicely to remove the cart and they warn us of the laws around vending...It feels good to know that the police are not there to harass us.”

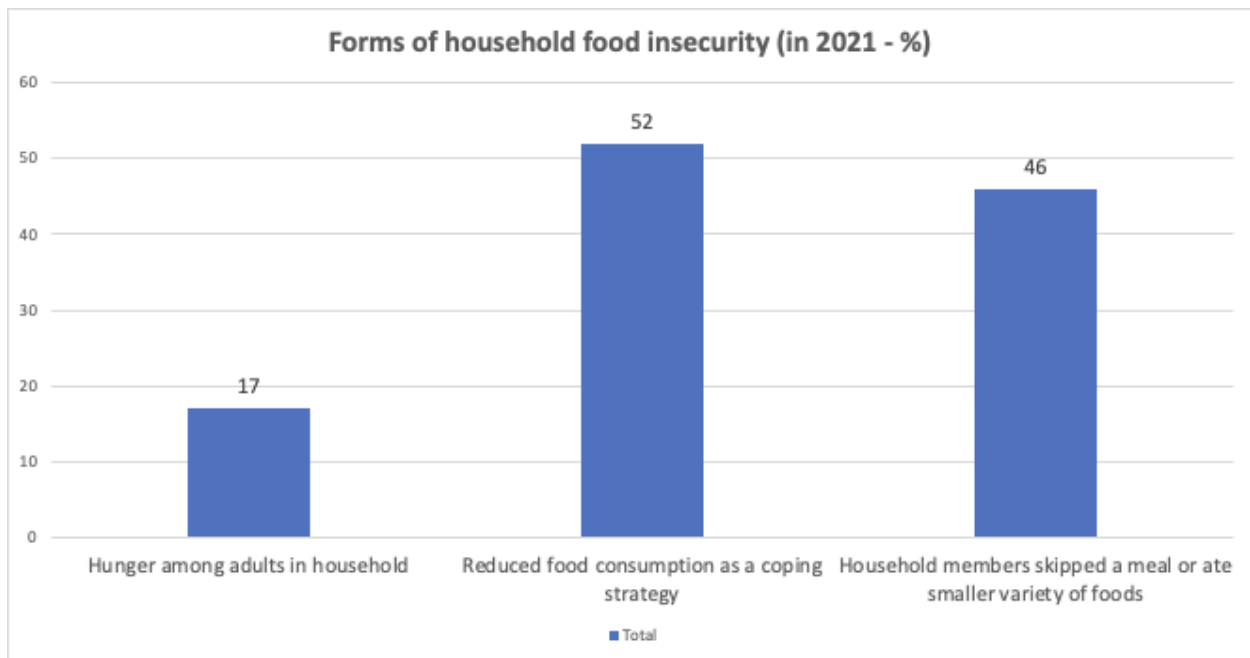
This was not the experience for all vendors, or with all enforcement agencies, however. Among respondents actively working, 25% reported harassment by law enforcement, 13% had received fines or fees, and 8% had been removed from their place of work within the last year. A 51-year-old vendor had resumed work at his long-time selling location only since March, but was limiting his working days to the weekends, because during the weekdays police threatened to confiscate his goods and arrest him. In Times Square, art vendors and artists complained that police were allowing them to sell only after 11 pm, when there was little traffic and no customers.

Vendors who attempted to sell in parks faced serious consequences. The halal vendor described above noted that, while his relationship with the police had improved, he had received a fine of \$380 from the Parks Department while selling in Central Park. The former fruit vendor said that on two occasions, officials confiscated her goods and began disbursing them to passers-by, “like they were Santa Claus.” She stopped working as a vendor after this happened twice and was threatened with a ticket.

Food Security

17% of respondents reported hunger¹¹ among adults in their household. Other findings suggest that respondents are struggling with other forms of food insecurity, with 52% reporting that they had reduced their food consumption over the last 12 months. 46% said that they or other household members had skipped a meal in the last month, or eaten a smaller variety of foods than they would have liked. The vendor who stopped working due to her anxiety reported accessing donations from a food bank, but that she sometimes had too little.

¹¹ Respondents were asked whether in the last calendar month any adults or children in their households had “gone hungry because there wasn’t enough food.”



Scraping by with enough to eat

A 73-year-old respondent was not working at the time of survey, after suffering from COVID-19 symptoms for over three months and struggling with enduring lung problems. She lives by herself and is fighting her landlord in housing court because of back-rent owed. She suffers from depression and anxiety. She is carefully managing a cash grant from SVP, each day purchasing slices of bread, a piece of fruit, and/or one vegetable, such that the grant can last for months. She no longer eats meat, due to the expense.

Health and Safety

Respondents highlighted physical and mental health tolls as among COVID-19's most important impacts for them. As a 51-year-old woman vendor explained, "When you are financially insecure because of the pandemic, it affects mental health, because I was so afraid." As noted above, several reported struggling to work or stopping work due to mental health issues stemming from the pandemic.

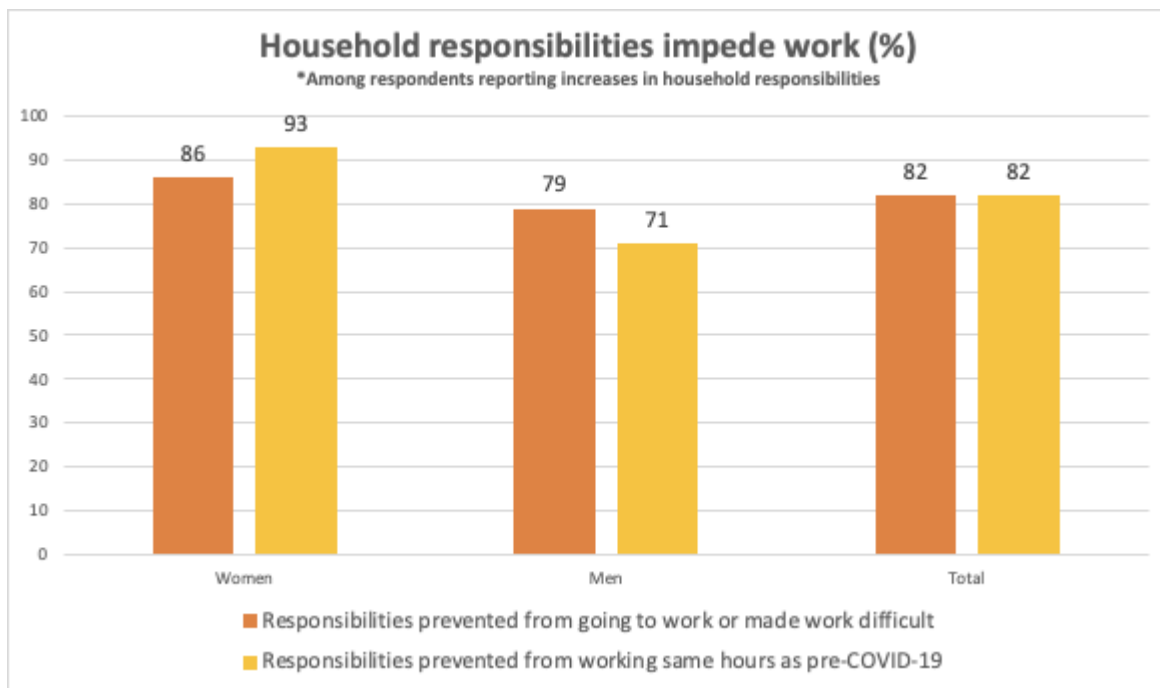
Anxieties about COVID-19 reflected real experiences of illness and death within their households and communities. 30% of respondents said that they or a household member had received positive COVID test results in the last 12 months. As mainly self-employed workers, these illnesses bring financial consequences. 30% of respondents said they needed to take days off work to care for themselves or a family member due to COVID-19.

Among respondents working actively as street vendors at the time of survey, 100% reported using personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks (100%) and gloves (83%). 96% purchased these materials themselves, despite the added expense in a difficult period. One respondent described how vendors innovated new approaches to protecting themselves and their clients by adapting their worksites, like using plastic coverings, or arranging yellow caution tape to encourage social distancing among customers.

87% of all respondents had been vaccinated or were scheduled to be vaccinated. The small number of unvaccinated respondents said they had concerns about safety and effectiveness, suggesting that a degree of vaccine hesitancy remains in the vending community.

Household Stress

79% of respondents reported that their household incomes are still lower than they were in the pre-COVID period. The pandemic also brought an increase in unpaid work; 46% of respondents reported an increase in cooking responsibilities and 44% an increase in cleaning in the previous month compared to February 2020. 82% of these respondents said that one or more household responsibilities had prevented them from working or made working more difficult compared to before the pandemic, and had caused them to work fewer hours compared to before the pandemic. A 35-year-old respondent recommended that the government open summer programmes for children, so that she could return to vending.



Back to work, with help from family and community

A 47-year-old woman vendor who has cancer recounted that she could not work or leave her home during most of the pandemic. Only her husband would go to procure food. “The virus was very scary that we would not have enough food and scared to go out,” she said. Today, her treatments leave her with little energy and make it hard even to get up in the morning. But with a cash grant from SVP, she was able to purchase goods to restart her street vending business. It is still too risky for her to leave home because of her condition, so she cooks at home, while her sister goes to sell the food outside.

Relief Measures

By Government

Rates of relief receipt by survey respondents show considerable gaps in access and outreach to vendors' communities, and a neglect of vendors as small businesses.

As reported in Round 1 of the study, by the first three months of the pandemic, 74% of respondents had received some type of cash relief, such as the first federal Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks) or from the Pandemic Employment Assistance programme. Over one-quarter of respondents qualified for no cash support, due to their migration status.

This same level of support did not resurface in 2021. In spite of a second federal stimulus check in early 2021, and the creation of a Restaurant Revitalization Fund for which vendors were eligible to apply,¹² only 41% of respondents reported receiving any cash relief in the last 12 months.¹³ 53% of those who did not receive it said they "had not applied," and 34% reported they were unaware of it. Roughly the same proportion as in 2020 were ineligible because of their migration status.

How did respondents use cash relief – and was it enough?

Among those who received government cash relief such as a stimulus check in 2020 or 2021, most reported using it for food, rent, bills and other essentials – though several mentioned the limitations of this support:

The stimulus has helped me cover a small portion of my food and rent, however not being able to work and not having an income has left me without anything again. I have to cover my medical expenses in my pocket. The money did help me, but now I am back to zero - Inactive Woman Street Vendor, age 78

The government stimulus help me with food and help me a little to pay the credit cards debts, but I am still in debt right now - Woman Street Vendor, age 61

The survey was conducted prior to the rollout of New York State's Excluded Worker Fund, a \$2.1 billion fund aimed at New Yorkers who were not reached by the federal support. While it is likely that some respondents have since received cash transfers from this fund, the former fruit vendor interviewed in October 2021 said she had not received any support, nor confirmation that she would. She worried that since that the funds were already depleted,¹⁴ her application would be unsuccessful.

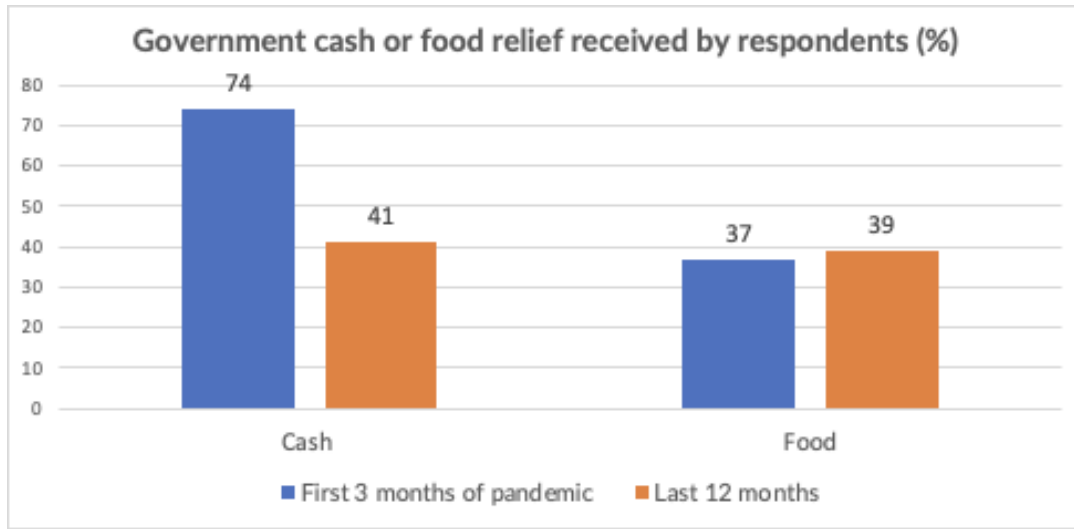
Only 39% of respondents reported receiving government food relief. Of those who did not receive food relief, 24% were unaware such support was available, and several believed that their migration status made them ineligible for food aid. For those who did access the food

¹² <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/entry/this-federal-program-to-aid-restaurants-and-street-vendors-is-working>

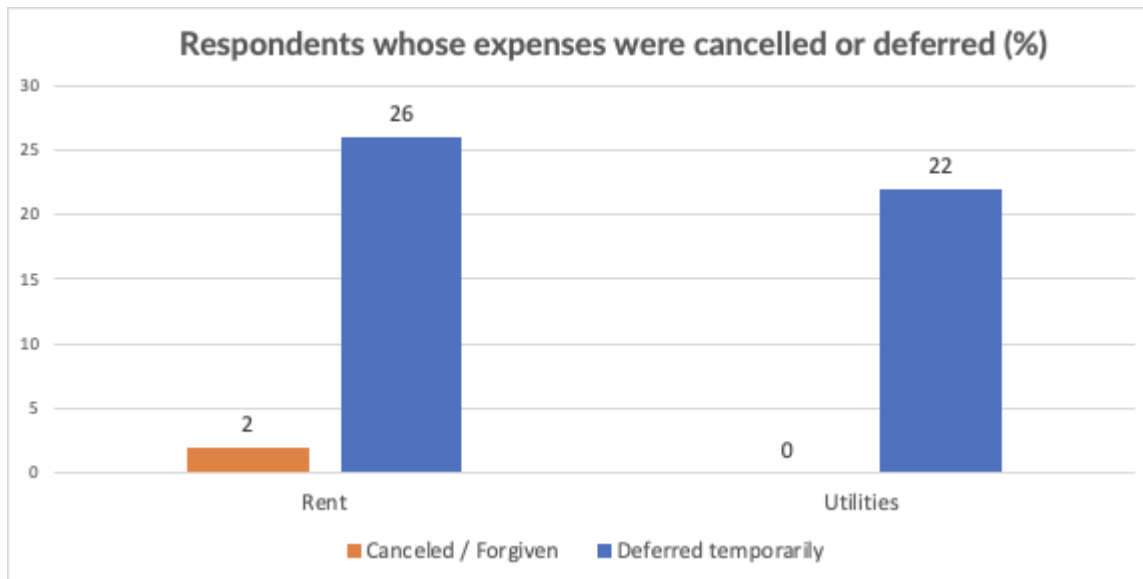
¹³ The survey was conducted before the launch of New York State's Excluded Worker Fund, which means it does not capture whether respondents received support from this program.

¹⁴ See New York Times, "New York Set Aside \$2.1 Billion for Undocumented Workers. It Isn't Enough" 19 October, 2021. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/19/nyregion/new-york-excluded-workers-fund.html>

support, it served as a lifeline. The former fruit vendor said that when she visited food banks in Corona, “I saw people’s poverty, and the majority of us were street vendors, most of whom I knew...they were the ones standing first in line.” She said that food relief made it possible for her to use her small savings on rent and utilities.



Rental assistance has also failed to reach the vending community. In spite of widespread problems with rental payments as described above, 26% reported that their rental payments were temporarily deferred, though only 1 respondent had their payments cancelled or forgiven. A 57-year-old man said his family had applied for assistance and was rejected twice. He was awaiting a response to their third application while facing eviction hearings. 22% of respondents reported receiving utility payment deferments only.



Only 3 respondents had received a government loan, in spite of SVP’s support to any vendor who wished to apply for PPP or small business loan programmes. The lack of support for business capital is notable given that, among respondents who returned to work, 76% reported needing capital to do so. In the absence of government support, 54% used their own savings and 36% borrowed money to restart their businesses.

By the Street Vendor Project

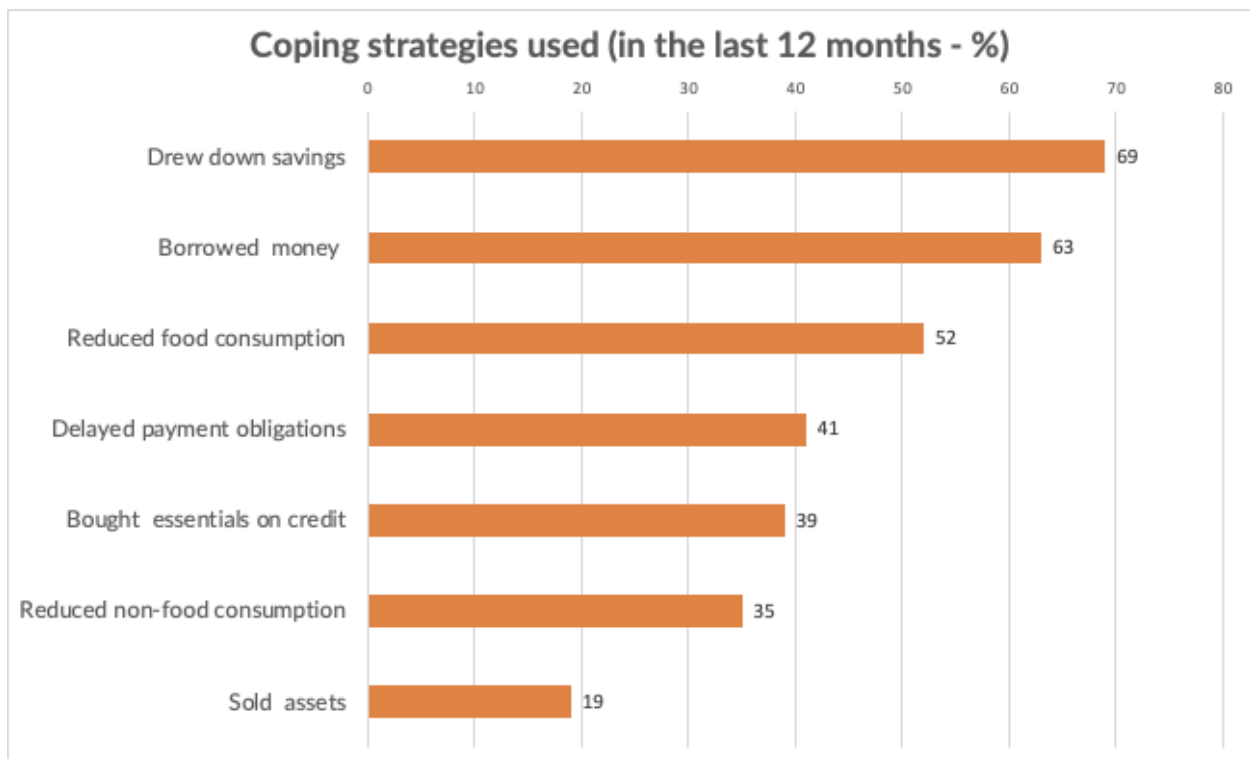
COVID-19 thrust SVP, a membership-based worker organization, into a new role coordinating mutual aid and helping meet the basic needs of its members. In 2020, SVP was able to support its members with a cash gift card of \$300 each, thanks to a crowdfunding campaign. In 2021, a grant from the Robin Hood Foundation allowed SVP to provide grants of \$1,000 to each of its members. Respondents who had already received the support from SVP reported using it for a variety of purposes: primarily immediate needs (including food and rent), but also to purchase inputs for their businesses. Respondents also mentioned having received food and/or PPE from SVP.

Other forms of direct support provided by SVP included:

- Partnering with elected officials and 80 vendor members to provide 35,000 meals to community members.
- Partnering with the New York Committee for Occupational Health and Safety (NYCOSH) to provide health and safety information and design vending best practices for COVID-19 prevention.
- Support and referrals to members to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and small business support loans, the Excluded Workers Fund and/or rental assistance.

Adaptation and Coping Strategies

89% of respondents used one or more coping strategies over the last year to help their households survive the crisis. These included drawing down savings (69%), borrowing money (63%), reducing food consumption (52%), delaying payments (41%), buying essentials on credit (39%), reducing non-food consumption (35%) and selling assets (19%).



* Respondents could select more than one response

Many of these strategies deplete existing assets or put households into debt. Among those respondents who had drawn down their savings since the start of the pandemic, 91% said they had not replaced any of those savings. A 46-year-old woman vendor said, “All my savings were lost due to the pandemic and I’m still not able to recover all my savings. The savings that were had will never come back.” As described above, some vendors adapted by taking on new types of jobs or side jobs. The former fruit vendor who began working in construction said that many former vendors she knew had done the same, finding cleaning jobs here and there to supplement income, because the risk of having merchandise seized had become too great.

Managing rent

Nearly half of respondents specifically referenced problems with meeting rental payments, or exhausting limited cash relief to pay rent. Several reported facing eviction threats or being in housing court. One respondent, who stopped working while receiving treatment for a chronic illness and caring for her husband who has cancer, said she owed more than \$10,000 in rent. Another had relied on relatives in Egypt to pay his family’s rent in New York, for the entire year.

The pressure to pay rent meant prioritizing this need over others, taking on debt or depleting assets. According to a 55-year-old respondent:

The government should have cancelled the rent in the beginning so that we didn't have to worry about paying the rent during the pandemic and finding ways to get the money, all because the landlord wanted his money. He didn't care where we got the money. We had to reduce our food all for the rent. All the savings we had are gone, and now we owe money to our family.

Recommendations

When asked what support was needed from the government, respondents were equally likely to mention two demands:

- the need for immediate support, to cover expenses and help manage debt
- easing of enforcement policies and provision of permits, which would allow them to work without fear

Many respondents also mentioned the need for business capital, and to simplify processes by which they could apply for loans and grants.

This report concludes with the following recommendations for New York State and New York City policy makers:

Federal, national and city level

Reduce the barriers to successful application for grants and loans to vendors, and for programmes that vendors are eligible to apply for, by relaxing documentation requirements.

(Documents that vendors struggle to provide include business bank statements, payroll records, rent leases, sales records, corporation documents and EIN numbers.)

New York State

Pass S1175A/A5081A to fully decriminalize and formalize vendors, allowing them to work in compliance with the law.

Fully fund the New York State Excluded Worker Fund to ensure that all needs are met among vendors and other workers who were not eligible for federal assistance.

New York City

Remove NYPD from all vending enforcement, in line with official city policy since January 2021.

Ensure timely implementation of Intro 1116, including distribution of new permits by July 2021.

Remove needless restrictions on vendors' ability to work and earn a living, including the cap on general merchandise licenses¹⁵; the practice of banning vendors from entire streets without any objective criteria; the unlawful practice of requiring adjacent business owners' permission for vendors to operate; and the prohibition on food trucks to park in metered spaces.

Treat vendors the same as other small businesses by terminating antiquated rules and punishments that apply only to vendors. End overly punitive measures like confiscation of vendors' goods or equipment (civil forfeiture) and license suspension for minor violations. End burdensome requirements like proof of sales tax clearance, supplier records and storage details, book-keeping, and the requirement for vendors to notify the City when receiving a summons. Set maximum vending fines at \$250 rather than \$1,000.¹⁶ Allow food carts to operate with only one licensed person, rather than requiring all present to have a license.¹⁷

Remove unreasonable regulations, which hinder vendors' work arbitrarily. Allow merchandise vendors to sell from mobile vehicles (similarly to food vendors), and use battery-powered lighting in the evenings. Allow vendors to display their licenses on their vehicles rather than wear them.¹⁸ Reduce the distance requirement between vendors and entrance ways from 20 feet to 10 feet, since entrance ways are frequently added and changed.

Clarify ambiguous vending rules that are frequently misinterpreted to the detriment of vendors. Define the boundaries of bus stops as from the bus sign. Define parks as *within* NYC Parks (not several blocks around them).

Support creating new commissary space,¹⁹ especially nearby viable neighborhoods that have active vending activities. Offer incentives, tax breaks and streamlining of the permitting process.

¹⁵ Currently capped at 853 for the entire city.

¹⁶ For contrast, not stopping at a red traffic light holds a fine of \$100 to \$300.

¹⁷ At restaurants, only one person who has passed the Food Safety course must be present.

¹⁸ Wearable licences can interfere with cooking and/or get caught in outerwear.

¹⁹ Commissaries are garages where vendors keep and clean their carts, and where they are able to purchase supplies.

COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy is a collaboration between the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and local partner organizations representing informal workers in 12 cities: Accra, Ghana; Ahmedabad, India; Bangkok, Thailand; Dakar, Senegal; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Delhi, India; Durban, South Africa; Lima, Peru; Mexico City, Mexico; New York City, USA; Pleven, Bulgaria; and Tiruppur, India; with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC/CRDI), Canada. The mixed-methods longitudinal study includes survey questionnaires of informal workers and semi-structured interviews with informal worker leaders and other key informants, all conducted by phone. For more information, visit

wiego.org/COVID-19-Global-Impact-Study.

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies.

Visit www.wiego.org.

The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a grassroots, membership organization of New York City street vendors. SVP's mission is to defend and expand vendors' rights and improve their working conditions. It provides legal services when vendors face harassment, helps vendors sustain and grow their businesses, and advocates for policies that allow vendors to operate securely, safely and lawfully. The SVP Women's Committee aims to provide a dedicated space and support to women vendors to address their unique challenges.

Research team: Talia Salas, Stefany Cielos, Ling Ren, Rafi Islam, Zulfa Kaid, Dr Sari Kisilevsky, and Mohamed Attia. Brief prepared by Sarah Orleans Reed.

Cover photo: Street vendors and allies rally for vendors' rights in Corona Plaza, Queens
(Photo credit: Street Vendor Project)