

represented between four to eleven per cent of the total workforce in eight out of twelve European countries surveyed: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, and Netherlands. In the remaining four countries, the share of home-based workers in the total workforce was as follows: Greece (one per cent), Portugal (four per cent), Spain (one per cent), and the U.K. (three per cent). For the twelve European countries taken as a whole, the share of home-based workers represented between four and five per cent of the total workforce.⁸

In the United States, home-based work grew between 1980 and 1990, after falling significantly between 1960 and 1980. Factors in this growth include advances in information and communication technology and the need to balance work and family by the growing numbers of two-career families. Based on 1991 national survey results one per cent of all non-farm workers worked entirely at home. Two-thirds of these workers were women. In contrast to on-site workers, home-based workers were more likely to be self-employed, to work non-standard hours, and to live in rural areas. Analysis showed that workers who need or prefer flexible work hours or to work at home – the disabled; women, especially those with young children; and those living in rural areas with long commutes to on-site jobs – had greater representation among home-based workers. However, the associated flexibility came at a cost. The average hourly wages of home-based workers of either sex were below those of on-site workers, even when one controls for employment status, hours worked, or urban/rural residence.⁹ However, comparing earnings is complex because there are additional work-related costs on the part of both on-site workers (travel, costs of family care, etc.) and home-based workers (overhead for work place, utilities and equipment).

Street vendors

Street vending is a global phenomenon. In cities, towns, and villages throughout the world, millions of people earn their living wholly or partly by selling a wide range of goods on the streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces. With the advance of modern retailing – fixed retail operations, department stores, and malls – many expected that street vending would go away. Yet today, in most countries of the world, street vending persists – and probably has expanded – even where local regulations seek to ban or restrict it. It represents a feature

of traditional societies that has survived, adapted, or re-emerged in modern ones.

Who are Street Vendors ?

Around the world, a large and, perhaps, growing share of the informal workforce operates on streets, sidewalks, and public parks, outside any enclosed premise or covered workspace. This includes not only those street vendors who sell goods but also a broader range of street workers who sell services and produce or repair goods, such as: hairdressers or barbers; shoe shiners and shoe repairers; car window cleaners; tailors specializing in mending; bicycle, motorcycle, van, and truck mechanics; furniture makers; metal workers; garbage pickers and waste recyclers; headloaders and cart pullers; wandering minstrels, magicians, acrobats, and jugglers; beggars and mendicants. In Kenya, the Swahili term «Jua Kali» – which means «under the burning sun» – is the traditional name for the informal economy. This is because so many informal activities, not just street trade, take place in the open-air under the burning sun.

Even when used in the more narrow and precise sense of informal traders who sell goods from the street or in the open air, street vending is a large and diverse activity: from high-income vendors who sell luxury goods at flea markets to low-income vendors who sell fruits and vegetables alongside city streets. Those who sell a single product or range of products as street vendors also often do so under quite different economic arrangements: some are truly self-employed and independent, others are semi-dependent (e.g., agents who sell products for firms against a commission), while still others are paid employees and fully dependent (see **box presenting a typology of street vendors**).

Common Problems of Street Vendors

Street vendors are often viewed as a nuisance or obstruction to other commerce and the free flow of traffic. Since they typically lack legal status and recognition, they often experience frequent harassment and evictions from their selling place by local authorities or competing shopkeepers. Their goods may be confiscated and arrests are not uncommon. The places where they work are often dirty and hazardous. Nevertheless, street vending may be the only option for many poor people. Therefore, the right to vend – within reasonable limits or constraints – should be considered a basic economic right (see **box with summary of the Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors**).

Typology of Street Vendors

Street vendors are not a homogeneous group. They can be categorized or grouped according to e.g. what types of goods they sell, where they trade, and from what type of premise as well as by their employment status, as indicated below. Also, for some street vending is full-time primary work; for others it is a part-time secondary job.

Types of Goods: What do They Sell?

Foodstuffs: fruit and vegetables
Cooked food
Snacks and soft drinks
Candies and sweets
Ice cream and popsicles

Cigarettes and matches
Newspapers and magazines
Manufactured goods
Second-hand goods

Location of Work: Where Do They Trade?

System of open-air markets in designated areas on designated days
Concentrations of vendors in particular areas: central business district or residential neighbourhoods
Street corners or sidewalks

Railway stations, subway stations, bus stops/lorry stations
Construction sites
Sports complexes
Home

Type of Premise: From What Do They Vend?

Baskets or bowls placed on the ground or carried on the head or body
Mats or cloths spread on the ground
Stool or table
Pole over shoulder

Bicycle
Wheeled push-carts
Wheeled stalls with display cases
Porch-front or window display
Fixed shed, stall, or kiosk

Employment Status: Are They Independent or Dependent?

Independent self-employed: with and without employees
Dependent employees: paid workers for other street vendors or for wholesale/retail traders

Semi-dependent workers:
e.g. commission agents

Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors

In 1995, representatives from street vendor associations and activists, lawyers, and researchers working with street vendors from 11 cities around the world met in Bellagio, Italy to form an international alliance (now called StreetNet) of street vendor associations and of organizations working with street vendors. The founders of the network drafted the Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors.

The Bellagio Declaration identifies the following common problems of street vendors around the world:

- No Legal Status, No Right to Vend
- Lack of Space or Poor Location
- Restrictions on Licensing, Costs of Regulation
- Harassment, Bribes, Confiscation, and Evictions
- Lack of Services and Infrastructure
- Lack of Representation or Voice

The Declaration urges national governments to incorporate street vendors in economic policies relating to trade, financial policies relating to micro-entrepreneurs, and social policies relating to the working poor. The Declaration also urges city governments to incorporate street vendors in urban planning processes and urban policies and to promote institutional mechanisms for street vendor associations to voice grievances, make demands, and resolve disputes with other urban stakeholders.

Source: *Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors* drafted by founding members from 11 countries of the international alliance of street vendors, StreetNet, at a meeting in Bellagio, Italy, 1995.

Street Vendors in Mexico City, Mexico

Until recently, officials in Mexico City had data only on those forms of street vending that they recognized, notably vending in public markets, various rotating markets, and recognized concentrations of vendors in residential areas. In the 1990s, attempts were made to collect figures on a city-wide basis of registered ambulatory vendors with stalls of various kinds. But there have been no efforts to collect official data on “non-tolerated” vendors, those without stalls and without registration. In the mid-1990s, a study of the political economy of street vending in Mexico City attempted a conservative estimate of the different forms of street vending based upon reported figures and estimates. The study estimated that the core street vendors in the city operated from the following types of locations and numbers of stalls:

Concentrations: 1,500 stalls on the street or sidewalks (not counting 10,500 stalls in empty lots)
 Rotating Markets: 38,000 stalls
 Ambulatory: 67,248 stalls
 Metro stations: 5,000 stalls
 Street corners/neighbourhoods: 10,000

These estimates suggest that there were a total of 121,738 stalls in the city. In terms of the number of street vendors, the study generated a conservative estimate of 185,600 individuals permanently included in full-time street vending in Mexico City. This figure represents only the basic core of regular vendors in the city. It does not include vendors who occasionally sell in the street or who add to the numbers during peak commercial seasons. The inclusion of such temporary vendors would probably add, the study estimates, at least 50 per cent to the figure above.

Source: John C. Cross. *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998)

Except in societies where gender norms restrict women’s mobility, women account for a major share of street vendors. However, with a few notable exceptions in mainly African countries, women traders are more likely than men traders to have the more risky work situations, by: operating from an open rather than a covered space; operating from the street rather than a cart or a stall; operating from an insecure or illegal space; trading in perishable goods; generating a lower volume of trade; working as commission agents or employees of other vendors; and not employing others to work for them.¹⁰ Consequently, women vendors also tend to earn less than men vendors.¹¹

Size and Contribution of Street Trade

Despite their numbers and visibility, there are few good estimates of the number of street vendors. Many population censuses and labour force surveys do not contain a question on “place of work” with relevant response alternatives. Or, if they do, the results are not routinely tabulated or disseminated. The international standard classification of occupations (ISCO-88) includes three sub-groups: ‘stall and market salespersons’, ‘street vendors and related workers’; and ‘shoe cleaning and other street services elementary occupations’. However, these categories are rarely presented, either separately or combined, in official statistics.

Some of the special surveys that have proved effective at enumerating street vendors have highlighted an important feature of street trade that makes it difficult to measure: namely, there is a great variance in the number of street vendors counted depending on the time of day or the season of the year. The number of vendors can fluctuate from one season to the next, one day to the next, and even during a single day. This is because some vendors only sell in the morning, afternoon, or evening; some sell only on weekends; and others sell only during certain seasons. Some may move from one location to another during the day, appearing settled at each; while others may change what they sell from one season, month, or day to another. Further, the same vendor family or unit may have several different stalls at the same market or in different markets, confusing the question of what is a vendor unit or business.¹² One special study attempted an estimation of the number of the basic core of regular street vendors in Mexico City in the mid-1990s. The study estimated that there were roughly 185,000 regular street vendors and an additional 90,000 occasional street vendors in Mexico City (see **box on street vendors in Mexico City**).

In principle, establishment censuses and surveys have the potential for capturing or measuring street vendors. The best approach would be to use coordinated – or mixed – household and

Table 3.6 Street Vendors in Ten Developing Countries: Estimated Number, Share of Non-agricultural Employment, Proportion of Women

	Number of street vendors	Per cent of non-agricultural labour force	Per cent Women
Tunisia (1997)	125,619	6	2
Benin (1992)	45,591	5	81
Kenya (1999)	416,294	8	33
India (1999-2000)	3,881,700	3	14
Turkey (2000) urban	255,000	2	3
Brazil (1991)	1,445,806	3	30
Costa Rica (1997)	13,085	1	18
Guatemala (2000)	259,203	9	55
Mexico (2000)	1,286,287	4	44
Venezuela (1997)	318,598	4	32

Source: Jacques Charmes, 2002 (personal compilation of the author on the basis of official labour force statistics and national accounts). A subset of these data was published in ILO, *On Measuring Place of Work* (Geneva, 2002).

establishment surveys (as is recommended for capturing the informal economy in general). It is noteworthy that when national data collection activities give priority to the measurement of street vendors, as in the 2000 Labour Force Survey in South Africa, significant numbers of these workers are identified. The 2000 Labour Force Survey estimated that there were 323,000 food vendors and 122,000 non-food vendors in the country, while the 1995 household survey estimated only 2,038 vendors nationwide. While there has been some “real” increase in the number of street vendors in South Africa due both to the relaxation of apartheid laws and to decreasing formal work opportunities, much of the increase between 1995 and 2000 is “statistical”: that is, due to improved methods for prompting respondents and training fieldworkers and coders.¹³

In 10 developing countries, the estimated share of street vendors in total non-agricultural employ-

ment ranges from less than 2 per cent (in Costa Rica in 1997) to 9 per cent (in Guatemala in 2000) and is 4 per cent or more in six of the countries (Tunisia, Benin, Kenya, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela) (**table 3.6**).

In many cities or towns in the developing world, especially in Africa, street vendors constitute a significant share of total employment in the informal economy and street vending units constitute a significant share of total informal enterprises. For example, street vendors represented around 30 per cent of those employed in the informal economy in one town of Niger in 1982¹⁴ and 38 per cent of those employed the informal economy in the five main towns of Guinea in 1987.¹⁵ In one city in India, a recent survey found that street vendors represent about 7 per cent of the estimated informal workforce (**see box on street vending in Ahmedabad city, India**). That study also found that, due to social norms that restrict women’s

Street Vendors in Ahmedabad, India

The city of Ahmedabad in Western India was once known as the “Manchester of India” because of its large textile industry. Over the past four decades, however, most of the 75 large textile mills closed. Many of the 100,000 or more retrenched mill workers have turned to vending and hawking. As a result, the number of street vendors has been going up steadily. However, until recently, there was no reliable estimate of the number of street vendors. In 1999, in collaboration with the trade union SEWA (the Self-Employed Women’s Association), the Gujarat Institute for Development Research carried out a survey of the informal economy in Ahmedabad which was specifically designed to capture home-based and street-based work. The SEWA-GIDR survey suggests that there were about 80,000 street vendors in the city, representing nearly 7 per cent of the estimated informal workforce. Street vendors were mainly men (90 per cent).

Source: Jeemol Unni. *Urban Informal Sector: Size and Income Generation Processes in Gujarat: Parts I and II* (National Council of Applied Economic Research, Reports # 2 and 3 Delhi: April and May 2000).

Table 3.7 Size and Contribution of Informal Sector in Trade and Women Traders in Informal Trade

	Informal Sector as a Share of:		Female Informal Traders as a Share of:	
	Total Trade Employment	Total Trade value added	Total Informal Trade Employment	Total Informal Trade value added
Africa				
Benin	99	70	92	64
Burkina Faso	95	46	66	30
Chad	99	67	62	41
Kenya	85	62	50	27
Mali	98	57	81	46
Tunisia	88	56	8	4
Asia				
India	96	90	12	11
Indonesia	93	77	49	38
Philippines	73	52	72	22

Source: Prepared by Jacques Charmes, based on official labour force statistics and national accounts.

mobility, many women traders sell from their homes (see box in earlier section of this chapter on working at home in India).

In countries where statistics were available – six in Africa, three in Asia – informal traders, mainly street vendors, represent a very high proportion (73 to 99 per cent) of employment in trade and a significant share (50 to 90 per cent) of gross domestic product (GDP) from trade (table 3.7). In South Africa, at current prices for 1999, the informal economy contributed an estimated 26 per cent of the value added in trade: the highest for any sector, followed by 18 per cent of

value added in both construction and community services.¹⁶

In most of the countries where statistics were available, women accounted for between 50 and 90 per cent of informal traders and between 20 and 65 per cent of the value added in informal trade. The notable exceptions were two countries – India and Tunisia – where social norms restrict women's mobility outside the home: the share of women among informal traders in these countries were 12 and 8 per cent, respectively (table 3.7). These figures reflect the predominance of women in trade in Africa and Southeast Asia and the restrictions on

Street Vendors in Durban, South Africa

A 1997 census of street vendors in Durban, South Africa, counted 19,000 street traders: 57 per cent of these were in the central business district (CBD) and 30 per cent were in high-density but non-central areas (such as Umlazi township). Sixty-one per cent of the street traders were women; 39 per cent were men. This survey counted both street traders who sold goods (78 per cent of the total) and street workers who provided services (21 per cent of the total). Of those who sold goods, seven out of ten sold food stuffs (fruits, vegetables, meat, and poultry); some sold new and used clothing; and less than 1 per cent sold traditional medicines. Those who sold fresh produce were mainly self-employed, while those who sold clothes were most often employed by someone else. Nearly half sold only one type of product, one quarter sold two types of products, and one quarter sold three or more types of products. Only a few (3 per cent) sold goods or foods produced by themselves.

The Durban study found some important gender differences in street trading. Although few vendors overall hired other people, slightly more men (13 per cent) than women (10 per cent) did. Among those hired, there were nearly twice as many women as men. Nearly all of the women, but only two-thirds of the men, were vendors only. More men (61 per cent) than women (54 per cent) purchase from a large wholesale dealer, rather than from a small retail shop. About six out of ten of the transborder or immigrant street traders were men.

Source: Francie Lund, *Women Street Traders in Urban South Africa: A Synthesis of Selected Research Findings*, Centre for Social and Development Studies Research Report No. 15 (September 1998).

Table 3.8 Street Food Enterprises by Women's Involvement (per cent of all units)

City	Owner or operator			Enterprise with female assistants	
	Woman	Man	Couple	Paid	Unpaid
Bogor, Indonesia	16	60	24	5	33
Chonburi, Thailand	78	22	–	13	31
Ile-Ife, Nigeria	94	6	–	19	15
Iloilo, Philippines	63	10	27	4	11
Kingston, Jamaica	44	46	10	–	–
Manikganj, Bangladesh		99	–	10	25
Minia, Egypt	17	83	–	1	34
Pune, India	13	87	–	33	51
Ziguinchor, Senegal	77	23	–	–	25

Source: Irene Tinker. *Street Foods: Urban Food and Employment in Developing Countries*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997)

women's mobility in North Africa, Middle East, and South Asia.

Consider the case of Benin. A 1992 survey of ten major cities in that country found that street trade constituted 81 per cent of all economic units, 64 per cent of total employment, and 69 per cent of urban informal sector employment. This survey found that women represented 75 per cent of street vendors in these cities; and that women street vendors accounted for 26 per cent of those in the urban informal sector and 24 per cent of the total urban workforce.¹⁷ In Durban, South Africa women also represent a greater share of street vendors than

men, and there are important differences between women's and men's work in street vending (see **box on street vending in Durban, South Africa**).

Traditionally, the preparation and sale of food has been an important source of income for women. A study on street food vendors in the mid-1980s showed that in many countries women owned and operated street food enterprises and that women were major contributors to many male-run businesses (see **table 3.8**). This is because men who run street food enterprises generally depend on the labour of women working at home for many of the products sold.¹⁸

NOTES

¹ Planning Commission, Report of the Task Force on Employment Opportunities (Government of India, New Delhi, 2001).

² Alan Felstead and Nick Jewson, *In Work, At Home*. (New York, Routledge, 1999).

³ Martha Chen, Jennefer Sebstad and Lesley O'Connell, "Counting the Invisible Workforce", *World Development*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 603-610 (1999); Alan Felstead, Nick Jewson, Annie Phizacklea and Sally Walters, *A Statistical Portrait of Working at Home in the UK: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey*, Economic and Social Research Council Research Programme on the Future of Work, Working Paper No. 2, (March 2000).

⁴ Jacques Charmes, *Informal Sector, Poverty and Gender: A Review of Empirical Evidence*. (Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 1998); S.V. Sethuraman, *Gender, Informality and Poverty*, (Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 1998); Felstead, et al., *op. cit.*; Martha Chen and Donald Snodgrass, "Managing Resources, Activities, and Risk in Urban India: The Impact of SEWA Bank", (Washington, D.C. USAID, 2001).

⁵ ILO, "Decent Work and the Informal Economy", Report VI, International Labour Conference, 90th Session, (Geneva, 2002).

⁶ Felstead, et al., *op. cit.*

⁷ Jane Tate, "Every Pair Tells a Story", *Report on a survey of Homeworking and Subcontracting Chains in Six Countries of the European Union*, (March 1996).

⁸ Jacques Charmes, "Is asking for 'place of work' a pertinent and efficient way to better measure and understand the category of homeworkers, and more generally, outworkers in the labour force?" in ILO, *On Measuring Place of Work*, (Geneva: 2002).

⁹ Linda N. Edwards and Elizabeth Field-Hendrey, "Home-based workers: data from the 1990 Census of Population", *Monthly Labor Review*, (November 1996).

¹⁰ Monique Cohen, with Mihir Bhatt and Pat Horn, "Women Street Vendors: The Road to Recognition", *Seeds*, No. 20, pp. 1-23, (New York, Population Council, 2000).

¹¹ *Ibid.* and Martha Chen and Donald Snodgrass, "Managing Resources, Activities, and Risk in Urban India: The Impact of SEWA Bank", (Washington, D.C., Management Systems International, 2001).

¹² T.G. McGee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong*, Center for Asian Studies Monographs and Occasional Papers, no. 17, (Hong Kong, University of Hong Kong, 1973); John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City*, (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹³ Debbie Budlender, Peter Buwembo, and Nozipho Shabala, "Country Case Study: South Africa". *The Informal Economy: Statistical Data and Research Findings*, (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2001).

¹⁴ Jacques Charmes, *Le secteur non structuré à Niamey. Rapport d'une enquête*. (Addis Abeba, Bureau international du Travail, Programme des Emplois et des Compétences, 1982)

¹⁵ DGS/PAGEN, *Recensement des établissements dans les villes de Conakry, Kindia, Mamou, Labé, Kankan (Guinée)*. (Conakry, Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération Internationale, Direction Générale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique, 1987).

¹⁶ Debbie Budlender, et al. op.cit..

¹⁷ C. Maldonado, *Recensement des établissements en milieu urbain au Bénin*. (Genève, PEESI/PNUD/BIT/INSAE, 1994); and Jacques Charmes, *Situation et perspectives de la population active et de l'emploi au Bénin*. (Cotonou, Ministère du Plan, de la Restructuration Economique et de la Promotion de l'Emploi, PNUD, 1996).

¹⁸ Monique Cohen et. al., op.cit.