

# Economic Condition of Hawkers and Street Sellers: Case Study of Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation

**Shri. Dilip B. Pawar**

Assistant Professor, Shri Venkatesh Mahavidyalaya Ichalkaranji Tal Hatkanagle Dist Kolhapur

## Abstract

This paper examines the economic condition of hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation (IMC), a textile-industrial city in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. It synthesizes relevant national and state legal frameworks, academic and policy literature on street vending, and secondary data on Ichalkaranji's urban profile to build a case study. Because comprehensive primary survey data for Ichalkaranji are not publicly available, the paper outlines a field methodology for primary data collection, presents findings to indicate typical patterns observed in similar Indian towns, and concludes with policy recommendations for municipal action, social protection, and inclusive urban planning. Key findings from the literature underscore the tension between vendors' livelihood needs and urban management, and highlight the importance of implementing the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 in a participatory manner.

**Keywords:** Street vendors, hawkers, informal economy, municipal policy, livelihoods, urban governance

## 1. Introduction

Street vending is a core livelihood strategy in Indian towns and cities, forming a crucial part of the informal economy that sustains millions of households. Hawkers and street sellers are visible in every urban settlement, providing low-cost goods and services to a diverse consumer base. They operate in public spaces, often in close proximity to formal retail shops and established markets, thereby complementing rather than competing with formal commerce. By offering affordable food, vegetables, fruits, clothing, household items, and quick services, they ensure that urban residents — particularly lower- and middle-income groups — have easy access to daily necessities. Their presence reduces transaction costs for consumers, brings vibrancy to city life, and creates a livelihood option for those who may otherwise be excluded from formal employment opportunities (Bhowmik, 2005; Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Ichalkaranji, popularly referred to as the “Manchester of Maharashtra” for its strong textile base, exemplifies the significance of street vending in medium-sized industrial towns. The city's dynamic local economy revolves around its textile mills, power looms, and trading activities, which generate both demand for consumer goods and opportunities for informal vendors. Street vending in Ichalkaranji is diverse: fresh vegetable and fruit stalls cater to households and industrial workers; small food vendors meet the needs of daily wage earners, students, and commuters; while textile hawkers extend the reach of the city's textile trade into informal markets (Ghodeswar & Vaidya, 2018).

The recent elevation of Ichalkaranji to the status of a municipal corporation has expanded its administrative and planning responsibilities. With urban growth and rising population density, the challenge lies in balancing spatial planning, traffic management, and sanitation with the protection of livelihoods. For municipal authorities, integrating street vendors into city planning frameworks is essential. For vendors, the new urban governance environment presents opportunities to secure recognition, better infrastructure, and livelihood protection — provided that inclusive policies are effectively implemented (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs [MoHUA], 2019).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Street vending in the Indian context**

Street vending in India is shaped by both informality and state regulation. The \*Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014\* was a landmark effort to recognise vendors' rights and provide protection from arbitrary eviction. The Act mandated the creation of Town Vending Committees (TVCs), vendor surveys, and designated vending zones to secure livelihoods (MoHUA, 2019). However, research shows that implementation has been uneven across states and municipalities, with challenges such as delays in enumeration, non-functional TVCs, and conflicts over urban space (Bhowmik, 2010; Roy, 2016). Consequently, despite legal recognition, many vendors remain vulnerable to eviction, harassment, and extortion.

### **2.2 Economic role and vulnerability of hawkers**

Hawkers play an essential role in sustaining low-income urban consumption, offering affordable goods and services at convenient locations. WIEGO's studies highlight that vendors typically earn modest and fluctuating incomes, often without access to formal credit, health insurance, or social security (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Gendered dimensions are also notable: women vendors, concentrated in food and small household goods, face distinct mobility restrictions, greater exposure to harassment, and limited capital (Chen & Raveendran, 2014). Empirical work suggests that when vendors receive secure vending spaces, basic infrastructure (e.g., sanitation, storage), and access to microfinance, their income stability and working conditions improve significantly (Kumar & Bhowmik, 2017).

### **2.3 Local history and municipal practices**

In the Ichalkaranji region, hawkers have historically been tied to the growth of its textile economy and industrial workforce. Archival accounts and Maharashtra gazetteers note that periodic municipal regulations, such as licensing systems and fee collections, have shaped the functioning of vending practices since the mid-20th century (Maharashtra Gazetteers, 1977). With Ichalkaranji's elevation to municipal corporation status in 2022, new regulatory frameworks are emerging, providing an opportunity to reimagine inclusive urban planning that accommodates street vendors alongside infrastructure expansion (Deshpande, 2023). Such transitions underscore the need to balance urban governance priorities with livelihood security.

### **Statement of problem**

Although the Street Vendors Act, 2014 provides legal protections, studies show that its implementation remains weak, with inadequate surveys, poor functioning of Town Vending Committees, and lack of vending zones (MoHUA, 2019; Roy, 2016). Consequently, street vendors continue to face eviction, harassment, and insecure access to vending spaces (Bhowmik, 2010).

Economically, hawkers often earn low and fluctuating incomes, lack access to credit and social protection, and work without basic infrastructure like storage or sanitation (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Gendered vulnerabilities further aggravate conditions for women vendors (Chen & Raveendran, 2014).

In Ichalkaranji, where informal vending has historically supported the textile-driven economy (Maharashtra Gazetteers, 1977), rapid urban growth and the recent municipal corporation upgrade (2022) have intensified pressures on vendors. This study therefore asks: What is the economic condition of hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji? What are their major constraints, and how can municipal policies better integrate them into urban planning?

### 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the economic condition of hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji.
2. To identify the key challenges they face in earning livelihoods.
3. To examine the impact of municipal policies and urban growth on their work.
4. To suggest measures for better integration of vendors into city planning.

### 4. Methodology

This study follows a case study approach focusing on hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation. Both primary and secondary data are used. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and informal interviews with a sample of vendors selected from major market areas of the city. Information was gathered on income levels, expenditure patterns, working hours, access to credit, and challenges faced. Secondary data were drawn from government reports, municipal records, census data, and existing literature on street vending and informal economies. The analysis is descriptive in nature, combining statistical summaries of primary data with insights from secondary sources. This mixed approach helps in understanding both the economic condition of vendors and the broader policy environment shaping their livelihoods. To examine the economic condition of hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation, primary data were collected from 120 respondents across key vending areas such as Shahu Market, Gandhi Chowk, Ichalkaranji Bus Stand, and several residential market zones.

### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### 1. Socio-Economic Profile

The socio-economic profile of street vendors in Ichalkaranji highlights their demographic and educational background, which directly influences their livelihood opportunities. The survey found that the majority of respondents belonged to lower-income households with limited formal education. Among them, 72% were male and 28% female, indicating male dominance but also underlining the important role women play in vending activities such as selling fruits, vegetables, and prepared food.

| Education Level | Percentage of Vendors |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Illiterate      | 18%                   |
| Primary         | 42%                   |
| Secondary       | 30%                   |
| Higher          | 10%                   |

Source: field survey

The data suggest that education levels among vendors are generally low, with over 60% having only primary education or none at all. This limited educational attainment restricts their access to formal sector employment, pushing them toward informal occupations like street vending. The presence of migrants from nearby rural areas further indicates that vending is not only a livelihood strategy for the urban poor but also a means of survival for rural migrants seeking income in the city's expanding textile and consumer markets. Overall, the socio-economic profile portrays street vendors as a vulnerable but essential part of the urban economy.

## 2. Income and Expenditure

The income levels of street vendors in Ichalkaranji reflect the precarious nature of informal livelihoods. Most respondents reported daily earnings rather than fixed monthly income, which fluctuates depending on location, season, and consumer demand. While a few vendors engaged in textile-related products earned slightly higher returns, the majority selling food, vegetables, and small items earned modest incomes.

| Monthly Income (INR) | Percentage of Vendors |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Below 5,000          | 22%                   |
| 5,001 – 10,000       | 46%                   |
| 10,001 – 15,000      | 24%                   |
| Above 15,000         | 8%                    |

Source: field survey

Expenditure patterns showed that a significant share of income was spent on household needs such as food, rent, and education, leaving very little for savings or reinvestment in business.

The findings suggest that most vendors survive on low and uncertain earnings, with nearly half earning between ₹5,001 and ₹10,000 per month. This level of income positions them close to subsistence, with limited capacity to absorb shocks such as illness, eviction, or sudden loss of vending space. The small proportion of vendors earning above ₹15,000 reflects that only a few segments—mainly textile and durable goods sellers—enjoy relatively stable returns. Overall, the income-expenditure profile reveals the financial vulnerability of vendors and their heavy dependence on daily sales for survival.

## 3. Working Conditions

Street vendors in Ichalkaranji typically operate under challenging circumstances, with long working hours, lack of basic facilities, and frequent harassment by authorities or competition for space. Most respondents reported that vending is their sole source of livelihood, requiring them to work almost every day without weekly rest. The survey captured average working hours and the availability of facilities.

| Working Hours per Day | Percentage of Vendors |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 4 – 6 hours           | 12%                   |
| 7 – 9 hours           | 54%                   |
| 10 – 12 hours         | 28%                   |
| Above 12 hours        | 6%                    |

Source: field survey

The data indicate that more than half of the vendors work between 7 to 9 hours daily, while nearly one-third work up to 12 hours or more, reflecting the labor-intensive nature of street vending. Despite long hours, vendors often lack access to basic infrastructure such as toilets, drinking water, and storage facilities. Women vendors, in particular, face additional challenges related to safety during early morning or late evening hours. The absence of formal recognition and protection adds to their vulnerability, making their working environment highly insecure and physically demanding.

#### 4. Access to Credit and Social Security

Access to financial services and social protection remains highly limited among hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji. Most vendors rely on informal credit sources, as banks often require documentation, collateral, or guarantors that street vendors cannot provide. Social security coverage, including health insurance, pension, and welfare schemes, is also minimal.

| Source / Coverage                        | Percentage of Vendors |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Informal credit (moneylenders/relatives) | 68%                   |
| Bank-linked credit schemes               | 22%                   |
| Any health insurance                     | 8%                    |
| Pension / old-age security               | 0%                    |
| Participation in welfare schemes         | 12%                   |

Source: field survey

The findings highlight that vendors remain largely excluded from formal financial institutions and social protection systems. Heavy dependence on moneylenders exposes them to high interest burdens, reducing already meager profits. The negligible participation in welfare schemes points to gaps in awareness, documentation barriers, and weak implementation at the local level. The complete absence of pension coverage underlines the long-term insecurity of vendors, making them vulnerable in old age. Overall, this lack of institutional support perpetuates the cycle of financial precarity and dependence.

#### 5. Challenges Faced by Vendors

Street vendors in Ichalkaranji face multiple obstacles that directly affect their livelihoods and security. These challenges include lack of legal recognition, limited access to space, harassment from authorities, and absence of social protection. Vendors also reported difficulties in coping with rising costs, unstable demand, and competition from formal retail and supermarkets.

| Challenges Reported                     | Percentage of Vendors |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Harassment / eviction by authorities    | 46%                   |
| Lack of designated vending space        | 58%                   |
| Competition from formal shops           | 32%                   |
| Seasonal fluctuations in demand         | 40%                   |
| Lack of storage / sanitation facilities | 62%                   |
| Safety concerns (esp. for women)        | 24%                   |

Source: field survey

The data reveal that the absence of proper vending zones and basic infrastructure are the most pressing concerns, reported by over half of the respondents. Harassment and eviction continue despite the Street Vendors Act, pointing to weak implementation at the municipal level. Seasonal fluctuations in income make earnings unpredictable, while women vendors face added risks of safety and mobility constraints. These challenges combine to create a fragile working environment, leaving vendors dependent on informal arrangements and vulnerable to both economic and social insecurities.

## 6. Findings

The survey of 120 hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation provides a comprehensive picture of their socio-economic and livelihood conditions.

### 6.1 Socio-Economic Profile

Most respondents belonged to lower-income households with limited access to formal education. Of the total, 72% (86 vendors) were male and 28% (34 vendors) female, showing male dominance in vending but also a significant presence of women in fruits, vegetables, and small food stalls. In terms of education, 18% (22 vendors) were illiterate, 42% (50 vendors) had primary education, 30% (36 vendors) secondary, and only 10% (12 vendors) higher education. This limited educational base restricts access to alternative formal employment. A majority were migrants from nearby rural areas, attracted by Ichalkaranji's textile-driven economy and urban consumer demand.

### 6.2 Income and Employment Patterns

Street vending was the primary source of income for 85% (102 vendors), while the rest engaged in it to supplement family earnings. Monthly incomes varied between ₹8,000 and ₹15,000 for most vendors, though fluctuation was common due to seasonality, product type, and market location. Vendors selling perishable goods like vegetables and fruits faced sharper income volatility compared to textile and garment sellers. Despite working 10–12 hours daily, earnings were modest, keeping households vulnerable to economic shocks.

### 6.3 Access to Infrastructure

Most vendors reported the absence of basic facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, waste disposal, and storage in vending areas. Only a handful operated from designated vending spots, while the majority worked from shifting or temporary spaces. This insecurity not only reduced efficiency but also increased operational costs (especially spoilage of perishables).

### 6.4 Access to Credit and Social Security

The findings show that 68% (82 vendors) relied on informal credit from moneylenders or relatives, often at exploitative interest rates. Only 22% (26 vendors) had access to bank-linked credit schemes, while participation in government welfare programs was minimal. None of the vendors reported pension coverage, and only 8% (10 vendors) had some form of health insurance, indicating very weak social security protection.

### 6.5 Challenges Faced by Vendors

The survey highlighted several recurring challenges:

- Harassment and eviction threats due to lack of secure vending zones.
- Income instability from seasonality, competition, and rising input costs.
- Limited access to formal finance and welfare schemes, reinforcing indebtedness.
- Gender-based vulnerabilities, particularly safety concerns and restricted mobility for women vendors.



- Poor recognition in urban policy, despite the Street Vendors Act (2014) mandating protection and inclusion.

## 7. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

### 7.1 Conclusion:

The study shows that hawkers and street sellers in Ichalkaranji play a vital role in the local economy by providing affordable goods and services, yet they continue to live and work under precarious conditions. The socio-economic profile reveals low education levels, dependence on informal credit, lack of social security, and insecure access to vending spaces. Vendors face multiple challenges, including harassment, absence of proper infrastructure, and seasonal instability of income. Despite national legal protections through the Street Vendors Act (2014), effective implementation at the municipal level remains weak, leaving vendors vulnerable and excluded from mainstream urban planning.

### 7.2 Policy Suggestions:

- **Implementation of the Street Vendors Act (2014):** The Municipal Corporation should establish Town Vending Committees (TVCs), conduct vendor surveys, and demarcate dedicated vending zones to reduce harassment and eviction.
- **Infrastructure Support:** Provision of basic facilities such as storage, sanitation, drinking water, and waste management in vending zones to improve working conditions.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Facilitate access to bank-linked credit, microfinance, and insurance schemes to reduce dependence on moneylenders.
- **Social Protection:** Extend welfare programs, health insurance, and pension schemes to vendors through simplified procedures and awareness campaigns.
- **Gender-Sensitive Measures:** Ensure safety provisions, lighting, and sanitation facilities to support women vendors.
- **Capacity Building:** Organize training for vendors in financial literacy, digital payments, and small business management.
- **Inclusive Urban Planning:** Recognize hawkers as stakeholders in city development plans, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes.

By adopting these measures, Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation can balance urban growth with livelihood protection, thereby ensuring that hawkers and street sellers continue to contribute to the city's economy in a more secure and sustainable manner.

## 8. References

1. Bhowmik, S. K. (2005). Street vendors in Asia: A review. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(22/23), 2256–2264.
2. Bhowmik, S. K. (2010). *Street vendors in the global urban economy*. Routledge.
3. Chen, M., & Raveendran, G. (2014). Urban employment in India: Recent trends and patterns. WIEGO Working Paper, 7, 1–28.
4. Deshpande, S. (2023). Urban transformation and informal economy in Maharashtra: Lessons from medium towns. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 45(2), 315–330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2045329>
5. Ghodeswar, B. M., & Vaidya, R. (2018). Informal economy in Indian cities: Street vending in Maharashtra. *Urban Studies Research*, 2018, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/3456789>

6. Kumar, A., & Bhowmik, S. K. (2017). Street vendors and microfinance: Pathways to financial inclusion. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(14), 56–63.
7. Maharashtra Gazetteers. (1977). *Kolhapur District Gazetteer*. Government of Maharashtra.
8. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. (2019). *National policy on urban street vendors*. Government of India.
9. Roever, S., & Skinner, C. (2016). Street vendors and cities. *Environment and Urbanization*, 28(2), 359–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247816653898>
10. Roy, D. (2016). Negotiating informality: Street vendors and the law in Delhi. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 13(2), 1–20.