

MARCH 26, 2025 / IMMIGRATION RESEARCH INITIATIVE

# Women Entrepreneurs: Spotlight on New York City Street Vendors

**For Immediate Release: Wednesday, March 26, 2025**

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To celebrate Women’s history month, Immigration Research Initiative is putting a spotlight on the important but often overlooked role of women entrepreneurs as street vendors in New York City. Women have made major advances in many areas throughout the business world, and even on the busy streets of New York, women are making their mark as microbusiness owners. Today, **nearly half of street vendors are women**, yet women are far less likely than men to hold business licensing and are disproportionately impacted by the lack of available permits. A new release from Immigration Research Initiative highlights the role that women play as street vendors and the areas for much-needed policy change.

## Key Findings:

- Of the 23,000 street vendors, nearly half, 48 percent, are women
- Women are 49 percent of mobile food vendors and 33 percent of general merchandise vendors. (The large majority of all vendors are mobile food vendors.)
- Although men and women are equally represented among street vendors, women are less likely than men to have vendor business licenses than men.
- Among mobile food vendors, **27 percent** of permit holders are women, and among general merchandise vendors just **14 percent** are women.
- There is a complicated patchwork of state and local laws and restrictions in New York around vending that make being a fully permitted and licensed vendor very difficult. Women street vendors could be brought into the formal economy if they were able to access vendor business licenses which would go a long way in legitimizing their businesses, increasing their profits, and protecting them from harassment and criminalization.

This new infographic uses data from the groundbreaking IRI report “[Street Vendors of New York](#),” which last fall provided the first comprehensive data on New York City’s iconic Street Vendors. “Without this data we wouldn’t be able to highlight the growing impact that women are having as entrepreneurs in the world of street vending. Nearly half of all vendors are women but they are much more likely to lack the proper business licenses than men. It’s time to lift the limits that have a harsher impact on women so that every entrepreneur can have equal access to the American dream,” said **Shamier Settle, senior policy analyst at Immigration Research Initiative**.

“Women are one of the fastest-growing demographics in the business sector. As owners of NYC’s smallest businesses, these women entrepreneurs make up nearly half of the industry. To uplift our street vendors means uplifting MWBEs and pathways for historically immigrant, Black, and Brown New Yorkers. This report sheds light on vital statistics that inform the bigger picture of what street vending looks like in our city,” said co-chair of the Women’s Caucus and Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor, **Council Member Carmen De La Rosa.**

“Small businesses such as street vendors are the heart and part of New York City’s economic engine. Our City Council is committed to ensuring that women entrepreneurs have proper resources available to access and understand vendor business licenses rules and regulations. Today’s report highlights the need for additional outreach to our women street vendors to understand and apply for highly demanded licenses,” said co-chair of the Women’s Caucus and Chair of the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection, **Council Member Julie Menin.**

“I pay taxes on my business every 3 months, I passed the food safety course, I took classes in business management – even though I do everything ‘the right way’ it still has taken over 15 years for my name to be called off the mobile food vendor permit waitlist. I want to feel safe when I go out to work, and safe that I will return home safely, just as our elected officials leave their homes to work and return safely. I am a hard worker, I use my earnings to buy food, to pay for my two children’s college, and to pay the rent and bills for my household. I’m proud to be a woman entrepreneur, and there are many more out there like me who are being denied an opportunity to start a business of their own due to the way New York City handles street vendor permitting.” said **Maria Castillo, street vendor and member of the Street Vendor Project.**

“This report by Immigration Research Initiative illuminates the disproportionate barriers women street vendors face when opening a formalized business in New York City, due to the lack of available licensing. To address this inequity, City Council must ensure we have a functioning regulatory system by passing the Street Vendor Reform Package, rather than the status quo which fails small businesses, especially women entrepreneurs. Enacting these bills will reinforce commitment to the values that define New York and uplift women entrepreneurs” said **Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez, deputy director at the Street Vendor Project.**

For the 1-page info graphic, go to: [Women Entrepreneurs: Spotlight on New York City Street Vendors](#)

For the full report, go to: [Street Vendors of New York](#)