



# Health Risks and Governance Challenges of Street Vendors in Odisha

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**Abstract:** Street vendors in India are vital to the urban informal economy, supporting millions of livelihoods, particularly in Odisha's Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Vendors face precarious working conditions and severe health risks despite their economic significance. Empirical studies highlight respiratory ailments from air pollution, heat-related illnesses due to extreme temperatures, and foodborne diseases among vendors. Moreover, musculoskeletal disorders and mental health stressors, exacerbated by economic instability and harassment, pose serious challenges. Effective governance, including streamlined registration through Town Vending Committees (TVCs), vending zone allocations, and enforcement of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, is essential. Enhancing financial inclusion via PM SVANidhi, leveraging technology for vendor mapping, and improving grievance redressal mechanisms can strengthen vendor protection. Policy reforms will ensure sustainable livelihoods while integrating street vendors into urban planning frameworks by mitigating health, sanitation, and legal challenges.

**Keywords:** Urban informal economy, street vendors, health risks, governance

## Introduction

Street vending serves as a crucial source of livelihood for nearly 2.5% of India's population, with a significant concentration in urban areas. This sector employs millions who rely solely on selling goods and services on the streets, making them micro-entrepreneurs. However, despite its economic significance, street vending remains one of India's most unorganized and unregulated professions. While the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors was introduced in 2004 and revised in

2009, its implementation has been slow, leaving vendors vulnerable to arbitrary regulations and exploitation.

Vendors contribute to local economies but face legal uncertainties, occupational hazards, and health risks due to prolonged exposure to pollution, extreme weather, and inadequate sanitation. Despite regulatory frameworks like the Street Vendors Act of 2014, governance gaps persist. Strengthening policy implementation, financial support, and the integration of urban planning is essential to safeguard vendors' rights while ensuring sustainable urban management.

Street vendors often face precarious working conditions characterized by low and uncertain incomes. In many cities, they are perceived as encroachers rather than contributors to the urban economy, leading to frequent evictions under the pretext of traffic congestion, health concerns, and public inconvenience. The regulation of street vending typically follows a “conflict model,” where municipal authorities issue eviction orders without offering viable alternatives. This instability, coupled with the risk of losing vending spaces and frequent confiscating goods, further exacerbates their financial vulnerability. For sustainable livelihoods, street vendors require a supportive policy framework that ensures security, legal recognition, and an enabling environment for their entrepreneurial pursuits.

## Objectives

1. To analyze analyze the socio-economic conditions, health risks, and challenges street vendors to face in Odisha's urban areas.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and governance mechanisms, including the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and PM SVANidhi, in improving vendors' livelihoods.

## Methodology

This study primarily relies on secondary data sources to analyze the status and challenges faced by street vendors in Odisha. Key sources include government reports from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Odisha Housing & Urban Development Department, NSSO surveys, and policy documents such as the Street Vendors Act, 2014, and reports on the PM SVANidhi scheme. Moreover, research papers, case studies, and reports from advocacy groups like NASVI has been reviewed to assess governance frameworks, vendor protection mechanisms, and the socio-economic impact of existing policies.

## Magnitude of Street Vendors in Odisha

Street vending is a vital part of Odisha's urban informal economy, supporting the livelihoods of many urban poor individuals across its urban local bodies (ULBs). While exact current figures are elusive, estimates highlight their significance. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Odisha identified 87,657 street vendors across urban areas for livelihood support, according to X posts. In 2020, 65,000 vendors received financial aid, including 2,577 in 14 urban local bodies (ULBs). These figures align with the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors (2004), which estimates that vendors comprise 2.5% of India's urban population. With Odisha's urban growth and the addition of 39 new Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) by February 2024, bringing the total to 114, the vendor count is likely to exceed 100,000 today.

Street vendors form a substantial workforce in urban local bodies (ULBs) in India. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2009) estimates their number at around 10 million, based on 2.5% of the urban population, which was 377 million in 2011 and is now estimated to be 430–450 million, reflecting rising urbanization (up from 31% in 2011). The NSSO's 68th Round (2011–12) recorded 1.61 million urban vendors as a primary occupation, which may underrepresent the informal sector. Activist groups, such as the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), support the estimate of 10 million. Major cities exemplify this scale: Mumbai has approximately 250,000 vendors, Kolkata ranges between 150,000 and 300,000, and Delhi hosts between 200,000 and 300,000, according to Sharit K. Bhowmik's emphasized local surveys. This highlights the street vendors' crucial role in urban economies despite challenges in accurately enumerating them due to the sector's informality and rapid urban expansion.

## Studies on Street Vendors in Urban Local Bodies in India

Street vending is a cornerstone of India's urban informal economy, providing livelihoods to millions while facing persistent challenges. Over decades, national-level studies have documented its scale, socio-economic contributions, and struggles within urban local bodies (ULBs). Below is an overview of key research efforts.

### 1. *Hawkers and the Urban Informal Sector*

A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities (2001) Conducted by Sharit K. Bhowmik with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), this study explored street vending across seven major cities: Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Patna, and Bhubaneswar. These cities represented diverse

urban local bodies (ULBs) with varying economic and demographic profiles. The research estimated that 2–2.5% of urban populations engaged in vending, consistent with the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2004). Mumbai topped the list with approximately 250,000 vendors, followed by Delhi with 200,000 and Kolkata with 150,000. Vendors typically worked 10–12 hours daily in harsh conditions, inhaling dust and emissions near roadsides. They faced frequent harassment from municipal authorities and police, with goods often seized during eviction drives. Despite their economic significance, affordable goods and the reinforcement of small-scale industries lacked legal recognition in most urban local bodies (ULBs), except in Kolkata, which had rudimentary licensing systems. This study highlighted their dual identity as both vital and marginalized, yet socially marginalized groups, which influenced advocacy for the Street Vendors Act of 2014. However, over a decade old, its data lacks updates on post-legislation impacts.

## ***2. Street Vending in Ten Cities in India (2012)***

Building on the 2001 research, Sharit K. Bhowmik and Debdulal Saha from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), in collaboration with NASVI, expanded the scope to ten cities by including Chennai, Hyderabad, and Indore. This study estimated a national total of 10 million street vendors, with women forming a notable yet undercounted segment—around 30% in Mumbai, for instance. Daily-earnings averaged Rs. 40–60, placing over half of the population below the World Bank's \$1/day poverty line (2012-adjusted), highlighting acute financial distress. Legal insecurity remained rampant, with only 20–30% of vendors holding licenses across the surveyed cities. ULBs often favoured urban beautification projects over vendor inclusion, perpetuating a colonial view of vendors as public nuisances under the Bombay Police Act. This research reinforced the need for vending zones and legal protections, directly informing the 2014 Act. Its pre-implementation focus, however, limits insights into subsequent policy outcomes.

## ***3. National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) Rounds (1983–2011–12)***

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's NSSO conducted periodic surveys tracking employment, classifying street vending under specific occupation codes (431 in 1983–2004, 911 in 2011–12). Urban vendor numbers rose from 1.03 million in 1983 to 1.61 million by 2011–12, a conservative estimate compared to the 10 million cited in policy and activist circles. The 2011–12 round

identified 200,000 women and 21,500 children among vendors, with 1.18 million households relying on vending as their primary income. Concentrated in ULBs, vending's informal nature often escaped complete documentation, as NSSO lacked detailed formal/informal sector distinctions. While methodologically robust, these figures likely underrepresent the sector due to sampling limitations, contrasting with NASVI's broader estimates. The NSSO provides a statistical foundation but overlooks qualitative dimensions, such as harassment or spatial conflicts, in ULBs.

#### ***4. National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2004) and Subsequent Reviews (2009)***

Developed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) through nationwide consultations, this policy framework estimated that vendors comprise 2.5% of urban populations, or approximately 10 million nationally, based on the 2011 Census urban figure of 377 million, which has now increased to around 430 million by 2023. It proposed vending zones, registration, and Town Vending Committees (TVCs) to integrate vendors into ULB planning, calculating a need for 100 square kilometres of urban space (with one emphasized vendor). The policy emphasized the roles of vendors in providing affordable goods, generating employment, and supporting 40 million people—approximately 10% of the urban population. However, it reviewed the standardized 2.5% metric but overestimated feasible space allocation as ULBs resisted relinquishing land. More a synthesis than a field study, it set an ambitious tone that later clashed with implementation hurdles following the 2014 Act.

#### ***5. Street Vendors Act Implementation Reviews (Post-2014)***

Multiple stakeholders, including WIEGO, IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute, and NASVI (as noted in IMPRI's 2024 report), have evaluated the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, a decade after its enactment. Using surveys and case studies across urban local bodies (ULBs), these reviews found that only one-third of India's 7,263 ULBs had established TVCs by 2023, with 42% lacking mandated vendor representation, including 40% (33% of which were women). Urbanization, with a 2011 urban rate of 31%, continued, notably in Smart Cities like Bhubaneswar and Gurugram, where infrastructure took precedence over livelihoods. The PM SVANidhi scheme provided loans to over 50 lakh vendors by 2023; however, challenges such as climate change, e-commerce

competition, and insufficient vending zones persisted. Discrepancies between NSSO's 1.61 million and NASVI/MoHUPA's 10 million reflect methodological tensions, with the figure likely higher, adjusted for urban growth. Vendors remain essential; 30% of Mumbai's workforce relies on them for their livelihood. ULBs' "world-class" aesthetic priorities, rooted in colonial biases, sideline their contributions. Implementation lags, with low TVC formation rates signalling a gap between the Act's participatory vision and the resource-strapped realities of ULBs. These studies affirm the economic and social significance of street vendors in India's urban local bodies (ULBs), exposing persistent policy and practical shortcomings.

Recent analyses highlight new pressures, such as climate disruptions, digital commerce, and an increase in vendor numbers not foreseen in earlier studies, which demand adaptive policies.

National-level studies on street vendors in India's urban local bodies (ULBs) have evolved from quantifying their presence (2001, 2012) and framing policies (2004–09) to critiquing the legal implementation (post-2014). They reveal a workforce of 1.6–10 million, vital yet vulnerable, with earnings below subsistence and rights undermined by inconsistent action from ULB. While foundational for the 2014 Act, these studies reveal a persistent gap between research insights and urban governance, urging a reconsideration of how cities value their informal priorities, prioritize future data, and incorporate vendor voices to bridge this divide.

Odisha presents a compelling case due to its socio-economic profile and environmental vulnerabilities. With a significant informal urban workforce and a history of natural disasters, the state exacerbates the challenges of street vending. The literature's call for comparative and context-specific research (Cross & Morales, 2007) supports this focus. Odisha's blend of tribal, rural, and urban dynamics presents a unique intersectionality that is absent in metropolitan-centric studies (e.g., Delhi or Mumbai). This regional emphasis also responds to the gap in longitudinal and comparative analyses, providing a baseline for future studies in similar mid-tier Indian states.

Viewed from the above-cited considerations, the proposed study, titled "Health Risks and Governance Challenges of Street Vendors in Odisha," is both timely and necessary, building on the extensive body of literature reviewed above while addressing specific contextual gaps and emerging issues pertinent to street vendors in Odisha, India. As a critical informal livelihood, street vending has been widely studied for its economic, legal, and socio-spatial dimensions. This study

advances academic understanding and provides practical pathways to improve the livelihoods of marginalized individuals. However, the intersection of health risks and governance, particularly in a regional context like Odisha, remains underexplored despite its significance for vendor well-being and urban policy.

### **Socio-Economic Problems Faced by Street Vendors**

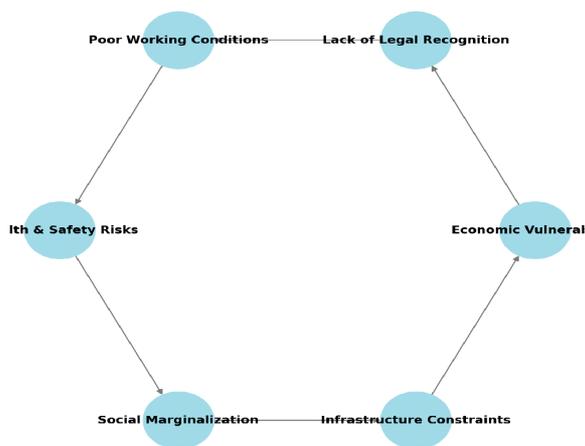
Street vendors in Odisha's ULBs face a range of socio-economic challenges that hinder their livelihoods and well-being:

1. **Economic Vulnerability and Low Income:** Street vendors typically earn meagre incomes due to the informal nature of their work, their reliance on daily sales, and intense competition. Many individuals lack access to formal credit, forcing them to rely on personal savings or high-interest loans from informal sources, which exacerbates financial instability. The lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this vulnerability, prompting government interventions, such as the Rs. 26.29 crore aid package in 2021.
2. **Lack of Legal Recognition and Security:** Despite the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, many street vendors in Odisha remain unregistered and operate without licenses. This exposes them to harassment, eviction, and confiscation of goods by municipal authorities, as seen in other Indian cities, such as Chandigarh and Delhi. The absence of designated vending zones in many ULBs compounds this issue.
3. **Poor Working Conditions:** Vendors often work long hours in harsh weather conditions without access to basic amenities such as sanitation, clean water, or shelter. This is particularly acute in Odisha, where frequent climatic events, such as cyclones and heat waves, disrupt vending activities and impact earnings.
4. **Social Marginalization:** A significant proportion of street vendors are migrants from rural Odisha or neighbouring districts, often from marginalized communities with low literacy and skill levels. This limits their ability to negotiate with authorities or access government schemes, perpetuating poverty and exclusion.
5. **Health and Safety Risks:** The lack of hygiene infrastructure and exposure to pollution in urban settings pose significant health risks. Food vendors,

in particular, face challenges in maintaining safety standards, which can lead to public health concerns and further stigmatization.

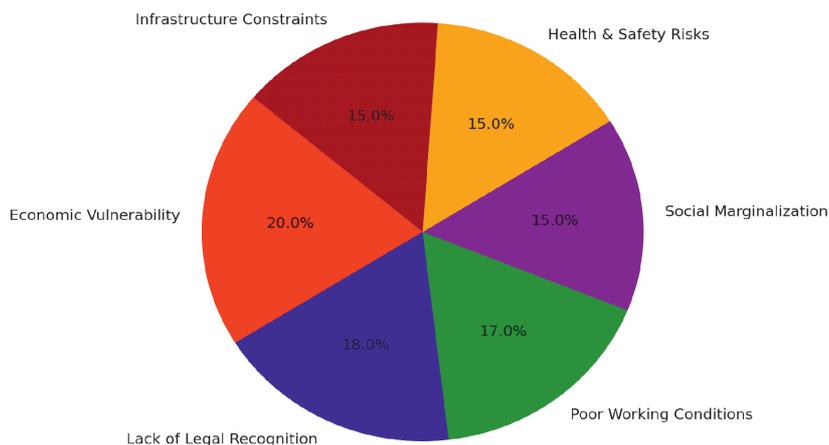
6. Infrastructure and Space Constraints: Rapid urbanization in Odisha's urban local bodies (ULBs) has led to congestion, resulting in a reduced availability of vending spaces. Conflicts with formal businesses and residents over public space usage often result in vendors being displaced, as urban planning prioritizes elite interests over informal livelihoods.

Vicious Circle of Socio-Economic Problems Faced by Street Vendors in Odisha



The vicious circle diagram illustrating the interlinkages between the socio-economic problems faced by street vendors in Odisha.

Socio-Economic Problems Faced by Street Vendors in Odisha



The pie chart visualizing the socio-economic problems faced by street vendors in Odisha.

### Health Hazards Faced by Street Vendors

Street vendors in India are exposed to a range of occupational and environmental health risks, substantiated by empirical data:

Street vendors in India face significant health challenges due to their working conditions. Respiratory issues are prevalent among vendors who work long hours—typically 10 to 12 hours daily, according to Bhowmik’s 2001 study across seven cities in open-air environments near roadsides. They inhale vehicular emissions and dust, worsened by poor air quality. A 2023 Earth Exponential study in Delhi revealed that 65% of vendors reported breathing difficulties. Meanwhile, 70% experienced eye irritation, which was intensified by urban heat island effects and an Air Quality Index (AQI) that often exceeded 200 in cities like Delhi.

Heat-related illnesses are another growing concern as climate change drives extreme temperatures. A 2024 study by Greenpeace India and the National Hawkers Federation surveyed 721 Delhi vendors, finding they work an average of 11.84 hours daily without breaks. During the May 2024 heatwave, when Delhi reached 50°C, 50% reported significant income loss. Dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat strokes were familiar, yet 71% couldn’t afford medical care, and only 10% knew of heat action plans. Similarly, foodborne and hygiene-related diseases plague vendors, particularly the estimated 2 million food vendors nationwide. A 2012 Delhi study by Thakur et al. showed that only 3% of 200 vendors used gloves, 2% washed their hands regularly, and 45% worked near flies or mosquitoes, thereby heightening the risks of gastroenteritis, *E. coli* infections, and cholera. A 2022 study in South Delhi found pathogens, such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, in 87% of vendors’ unkempt nails.

Musculoskeletal problems also affect vendors due to prolonged periods of standing and the handling of heavy loads, such as carts or baskets. Bhowmik’s 2012 study across ten cities highlighted chronic back pain and joint issues, with anecdotal evidence from NASVI suggesting 30–40% are impacted. Further, a lack of sanitation and access to water exacerbates health risks. A 2013 study in Raipur found that 74.5% of 200 vendors worked near open drains, with only 54% having dustbins, leading to infections such as diarrhoea from contaminated water, as seen in Pune studies, where 29.6% of samples exceeded the WHO faecal coliform standards.

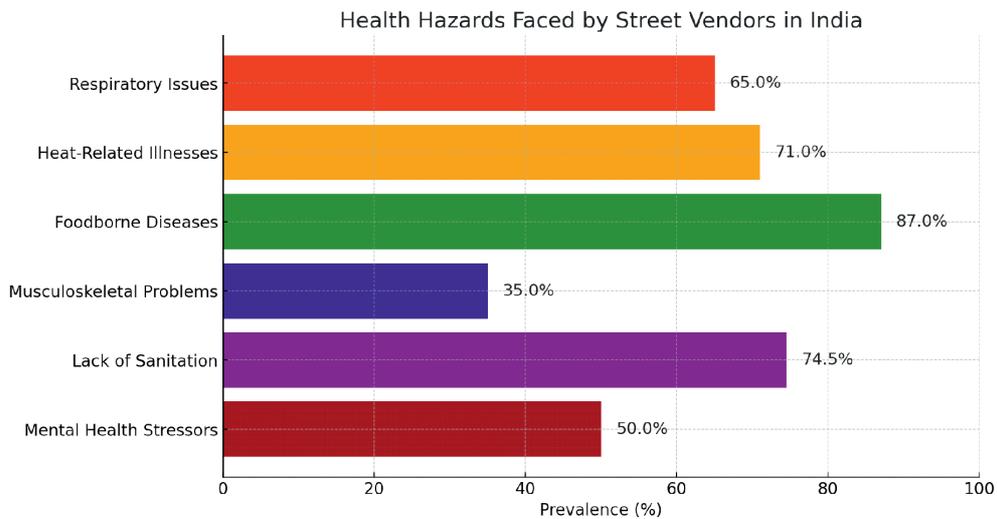
Mental health stressors further compound these physical ailments. Economic insecurity, harassment by authorities, and evictions fuel anxiety and depression. A 2021 study on the 2021 Maharashtra lockdown by Meher et al. noted that vendors switched professions under financial strain, thereby amplifying psychological distress. Vulnerable groups, including 200,000 women and 21,500 children among the 1.61 million vendors (NSSO 2011–12), face heightened risks due to limited resources, emphasizing the urgent need for intervention.

### Health Challenges Faced by Street Vendors in India

<i>Health Issue</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Key Statistics</i>	<i>Source/Study</i>
Respiratory Issues from Air Pollution	Vendors work 10–12 hours daily in open-air environments near roadsides, inhaling vehicular emissions and dust. Urban heat island effects and poor air quality (AQI often >200 in cities like Delhi) worsen conditions.	65% reported breathing difficulties, 70% experienced eye irritation	Bhowmik (2001, 7 cities); Earth Exponential (2023, Delhi)
Heat-Related Illnesses	Exposure to extreme heat is rising with climate change. Vendors work 11.84 hours daily without breaks, facing dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat strokes. Financial constraints limit medical access, and awareness of heat action plans is low.	50% reported income loss during heatwaves (e.g., May 2024, Delhi 50°C), 71% couldn't access medical care, 10% aware of heat action plans	Greenpeace India & National Hawkers Federation (2024, 721 Delhi vendors)
Foodborne and Hygiene-Related Diseases	Food vendors (est. 2 million nationwide) face risks from poor hygiene. Limited glove use, handwashing, and proximity to flies/mosquitoes increase gastroenteritis, E. coli, and cholera risks. Nail scrapings showed pathogens in vendors with unkempt nails.	3% used gloves, 2% washed hands regularly, 45% operated near flies/mosquitoes; 87% of nail scrapings had pathogens (e.g., Klebsiella pneumoniae, E. coli)	Thakur et al. (2012, Delhi, 200 vendors); South Delhi study (2022)
Musculoskeletal Problems	Prolonged standing and carrying heavy loads (carts/baskets) cause chronic back pain and joint issues. Physical strain is widely reported but lacks specific prevalence data.	Anecdotal evidence suggests 30–40% suffer from such ailments	Bhowmik (2012, 10 cities); NASVI reports
Lack of Sanitation and Water Access	Most vendors lack clean water, sanitation, and waste disposal at vending sites, increasing infection risks (e.g., diarrhea from fecal coliforms in contaminated water).	74.5% operated near open drains, 54% had dustbins; 29.6% of water samples exceeded WHO fecal coliform standards	NASVI studies; Raipur study (2013, 200 vendors); Pune studies

Health Issue	Description	Key Statistics	Source/Study
Mental Health Stressors	Economic insecurity, harassment by authorities, and evictions contribute to anxiety and depression. Lockdowns forced many to switch professions under financial duress.	No specific prevalence data: qualitative impacts noted	Meher et al. (2021, Maharashtra lockdown study)
Additional Insights	Delhi Heatwave Study (2024): Customer decline and lack of coping guidance during extreme heat. - NSSO (2011–12): Women and children’s vendors are more vulnerable. - BIS Compliance (2016): Poor cart conditions and hygiene practices noted in Pune pilot study.	- 80% saw customer decline, 68% aware of heatwaves, 82% lacked coping guidance - 200,000 women, 21,500 children among 1.61 million vendors - No vendor scored “excellent” (max 104/156) on BIS food safety tool	- Greenpeace India (2024) - NSSO (2011–12) - BIS Compliance pilot study (2016, Pune)

The bar chart visualizing the health hazards faced by street vendors in India



### Livelihood and Social Security Challenges of Street Vendors in Odisha

Street vendors are the lifeblood of India’s informal economy, providing affordable goods and services while sustaining millions of livelihoods. With an estimated 10 million vendors nationwide (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009), they make a significant contribution to urban economic activity. In Odisha, approximately

87,657 vendors operate across 114 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), including 5 Municipal Corporations, 52 Municipalities, and 57 Notified Area Councils (Times of India, 2021), forming a critical part of the state's urban fabric. Despite their significant economic role, street vendors face persistent livelihood insecurities and inadequate social security, which are exacerbated by systemic neglect, regulatory gaps, and socio-economic vulnerabilities. This discussion examines these livelihood and social security challenges, spotlighting Odisha's urban ecosystem.

### Livelihood Challenges

- 1. Lack of Legal Recognition and Licensing:** A fundamental livelihood issue for street vendors across India, including Odisha, is the absence of legal recognition. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, mandates registration and licensing to formalize vending, yet implementation lags. In Odisha, many vendors remain unregistered due to complex bureaucratic processes, limited awareness, or insufficient outreach by ULBs. Without licenses, vendors operate in a precarious legal grey zone, vulnerable to harassment by police and municipal officials. This insecurity directly threatens their daily earnings—often Rs. 200-500—barely enough to sustain families in urban settings with rising living costs.
- 2. Arbitrary Evictions and Displacement:** Evictions are a pervasive threat to vendor livelihoods, particularly during urban beautification or infrastructure projects. In Odisha, initiatives like Bhubaneswar's Smart City program have displaced vendors from prime locations without providing adequate relocation plans, thereby disrupting their income streams. Nationally, evictions often violate the 2014 Act's provisions, such as 30-day notices and alternative site allocations, leaving vendors without recourse. For Odisha's vendors, many of whom are migrants from rural areas or neighbouring states, this loss of vending space can push families into debt or force them to migrate back to their villages, undoing years of urban adaptation.
- 3. Competition and Market Pressures:** Street vendors face intense competition from e-commerce, organised retail, and other informal sellers, which squeezes their profit margins. In Odisha's urban centres, such as Cuttack and Rourkela, vendors selling perishables (e.g., vegetables, fish) or low-cost goods struggle to compete with online platforms that offer discounts and doorstep delivery. This market pressure, combined with fluctuating raw material costs exacerbated by

climate-related disruptions like cyclones in Odisha, reduces income stability, making it harder to save or invest in business growth.

4. **Lack of Access to Credit and Capital:** Access to formal credit remains a significant barrier to livelihood. Most vendors rely on informal moneylenders charging exorbitant interest rates (20-50% annually), trapping them in debt cycles. The PM SVANidhi scheme, launched in 2020, offers collateral-free microloans of Rs. 10,000-50,000, disbursing Rs. 26.29 crore to vendors in Odisha in 2021. However, its reach is limited by low awareness, documentation hurdles (e.g., lack of bank accounts), and reluctance to engage with formal systems. Without capital, vendors cannot scale operations, diversify products, or weather economic shocks like the COVID-19 lockdown, which decimated incomes overnight.
5. **Inadequate Infrastructure Support:** Poor infrastructure, such as a lack of designated vending zones, water, sanitation, and storage, undermines livelihoods. In Odisha's urban local bodies (ULBs), vendors often operate on roadsides or makeshift stalls, exposed to weather extremes such as monsoons and heatwaves, which damage goods and deter customers. The absence of waste disposal systems leads to fines or confiscation by authorities, further eroding earnings. For food vendors, unhygienic conditions increase health risks, which in turn reduce customer trust and sales. These infrastructural deficits perpetuate a hand-to-mouth existence, limiting long-term economic security.

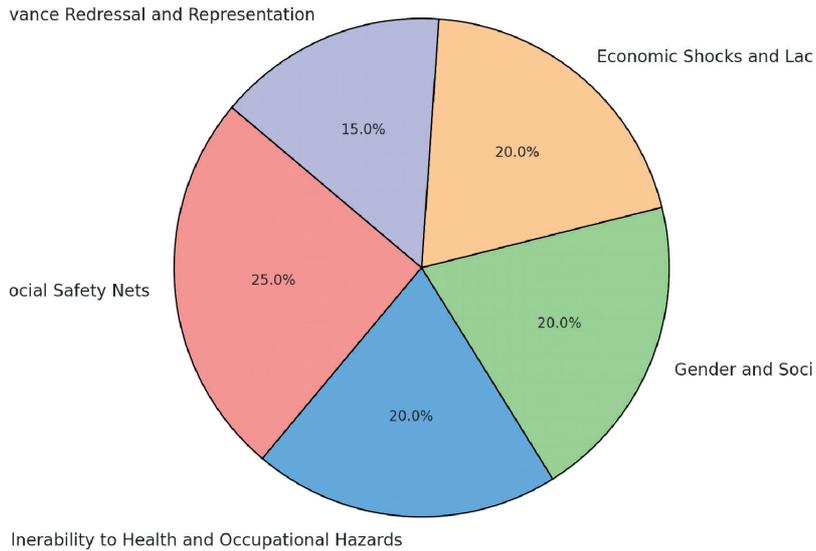
### **Social Security Challenges:**

1. **Exclusion from Formal Social Safety Nets:** As informal workers, street vendors are largely excluded from India's social security frameworks, such as the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) or Provident Fund (PF). In Odisha, where 90% of vendors operate informally, access to health insurance, pensions, or maternity benefits is negligible. National schemes like Ayushman Bharat offer some coverage, but enrollment is low due to a lack of awareness and inadequate documentation of identity. During illnesses or old age, vendors often rely on family support or charity, with no safety net to cushion their income, starkly contrasting with formal sector workers.
2. **Vulnerability to Health and Occupational Hazards:** The physical toll of vending compromises social security. Extended hours (10-12 daily) in polluted,

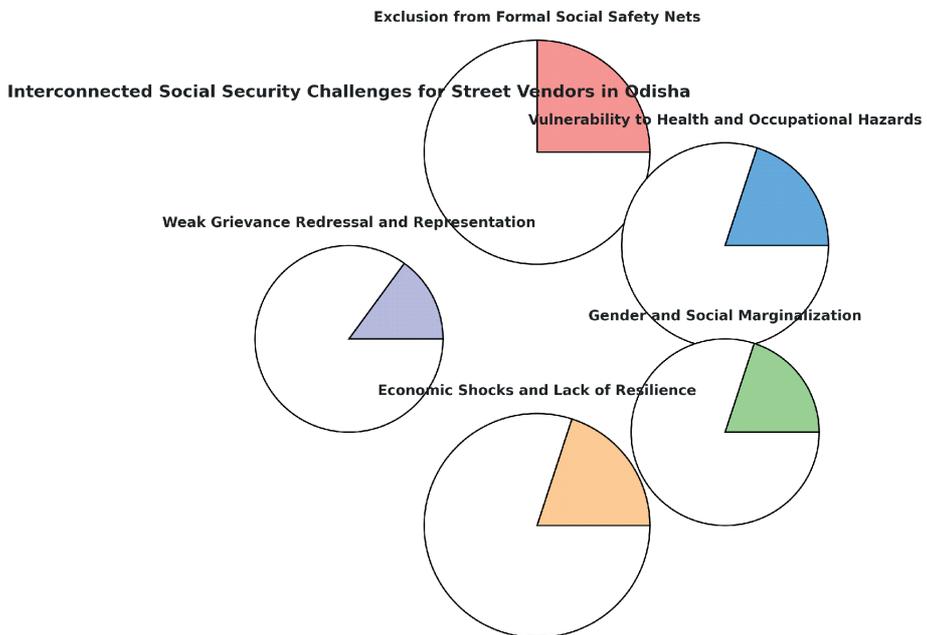
crowded urban spaces expose vendors to respiratory issues, heat stress, and accidents. In Odisha, coastal urban local bodies (ULBs) like Puri see vendors working under harsh sunlight or in monsoon flooding, which increases health risks. Women vendors, who constitute a significant portion (e.g., 30-40% in Bhubaneswar's markets), face additional burdens like harassment and lack of sanitation facilities, affecting their well-being and ability to work. Without affordable healthcare, minor ailments escalate, draining savings and deepening poverty.

3. **Gender and Social Marginalization:** Social security is further undermined by gender and caste dynamics. In Odisha, women vendors—often widows or single mothers—and those from Scheduled Castes or Tribes face discrimination in accessing prime vending spots or loans. Male-dominated Town Vending Committees (TVCs) may overlook the needs of women, perpetuating exclusion. Nationally, studies (e.g., SEWA reports) show women vendors earn 20-30% less than men due to caregiving responsibilities and restricted mobility, amplifying their insecurity. In Odisha's urban ecosystem, this marginalization restricts access to schemes like PM SVANidhi, which are designed to uplift the most impoverished.
4. **Economic Shocks and Lack of Resilience:** Unpredictable crises—such as natural disasters, pandemics, or policy shifts—expose vendors' fragile social security and contribute to the vulnerability of street vendors. Odisha's cyclone-prone geography (e.g., Cyclone Fani, 2019) disrupts vending for weeks without compensation mechanisms. The COVID-19 lockdown highlighted this vulnerability: vendors lost 80-90% of their income, with relief (e.g., free rations) reaching only a fraction of them. Unlike salaried workers with furlough options, vendors have no fallback, underscoring the need for targeted shock-responsive social protection.
5. **Weak Grievance Redressal and Representation:** The absence of effective grievance mechanisms leaves vendors defenceless against exploitation. In Odisha, reports of bribe demands by police or ULB officials are standard, yet TVCs are meant to resolve such issues of authority or vendor representation. Nationally, the 2014 Act mandates participatory governance; however, weak enforcement means vendors' voices are often sidelined. This powerlessness erodes trust in institutions, hindering collective action for better social security.

### Social Security Challenges for Street Vendors in Odisha



The circular pie chart visualizing the social security challenges faced by street vendors in Odisha.

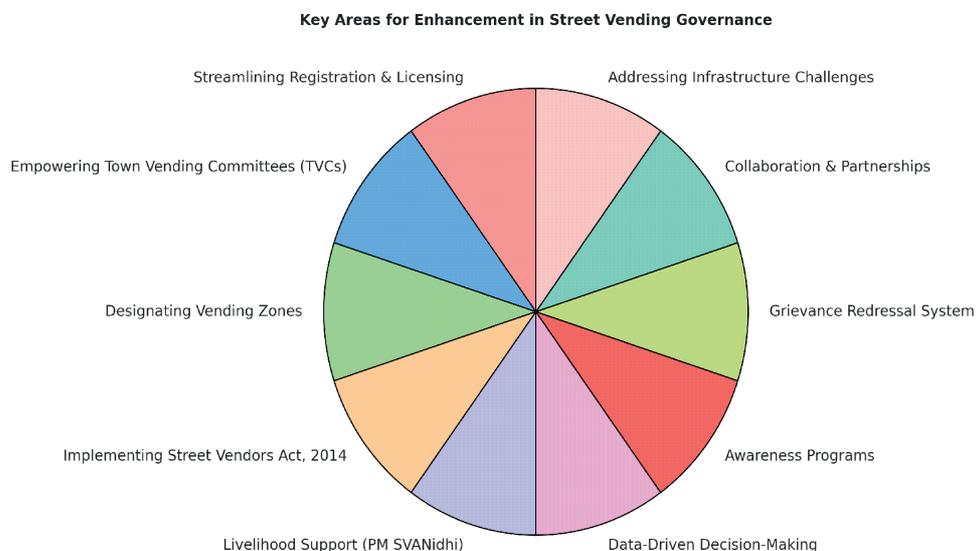


The interconnected pie chart visualization representing the social security challenges faced by street vendors in Odisha

### Enhancing Street Vendor Governance and Regulation in Odisha's Urban Local Bodies

Street vending is a vital component of Odisha's urban informal economy, supporting livelihoods for an estimated 87,657 vendors across 114 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)-comprising 5 Municipal Corporations, 47 Municipalities, and 62 Notified Area Councils (NACs) as of 2023 (Odisha Housing & Urban Development Department). Governed by the National Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, along with schemes such as PM SVANidhi and the Odisha Urban Street Vendors Policy, 2020, the regulatory framework aims to formalize, protect, and provide a legal foundation for vendor protection in this sector.

### Enhancing Street Vendor Governance and Regulation in Odisha's Urban Local Bodies



The circular diagram visualizing the key areas for enhancement in street vending governance.

The circular diagram visualizing the key areas for enhancement in street vending governance Improving the governance and regulation of street vendors

in Odisha's 114 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), comprising Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, and Notified Area Councils, is essential for protecting livelihoods and ensuring orderly urban spaces. However, implementation gaps persist, necessitating a study to enhance governance mechanisms within Odisha's urban local bodies (ULBs).

A streamlined registration and licensing process is essential for granting vendors legal recognition and trade licenses, thereby fostering a formal vending ecosystem. Town Vending Committees (TVCs) must be empowered to play a proactive role in vendor identification, registration, and regulation. These committees should include mandatory representation from vendor organizations to ensure that grassroots needs are adequately resolved. Moreover, vending zones should be designated within master plans, development plans, and zoning frameworks to provide legal and accessible spaces for vendors, thereby reducing conflicts with urban infrastructure.

The full implementation of the Street Vendors Act of 2014 across Odisha's Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) is imperative and requires coordinated efforts between state and municipal authorities. Ensuring compliance with key provisions of the Act, such as eviction safeguards and livelihood protection, is crucial. Complementary livelihood support through schemes like PM SVANidhi, which provides micro-credit to street vendors, must be expanded to enhance financial resilience. The scheme's success during the COVID-19 crisis, when Rs. 26.29 crore in aid was disbursed in 2021, underscores its importance in mitigating economic shocks.

Data-driven decision-making can revolutionize governance by leveraging GIS and drones to map vendor locations and assess their needs, thereby enhancing transparency and planning accuracy. Awareness programs at the grassroots level are crucial for educating vendors, officials, and the public about the Act, their rights, and responsibilities, thereby bridging knowledge gaps. Establishing an effective grievance redressal system is equally essential, as well as providing vendors with a formal platform to resolve issues such as harassment, evictions, or licensing disputes in a fair and transparent manner.

Collaboration and partnerships among urban local bodies (ULBs), vendor associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can foster inclusive governance by drawing on successful models, such as vendor unions in Kolkata. Moreover, resolving critical challenges— including inadequate sanitation, water supply, and waste disposal —while ensuring protection against eviction during urban development projects requires integrating vendor needs into ULB planning.

Strengthening institutional mechanisms and ensuring the sustained implementation of policies will be essential to safeguarding street vendors' livelihoods while promoting well-managed urban spaces.

## Conclusion

Across India, nearly 10 million street vendors support an estimated 40 million people. However, their working conditions expose them to numerous health risks, including respiratory diseases from pollution, heat stress, and foodborne illnesses. Low compliance with food safety regulations, such as FSSAI registration, exacerbates these challenges. To safeguard vendors and consumers, Odisha must integrate health-focused interventions, including regular check-ups, training, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Street vendors play a crucial role in Odisha's urban economy; however, they face persistent socio-economic challenges, including legal insecurity, a lack of social protection, and health hazards. Resolving these requires the effective implementation of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, proper zoning policies, and improved access to financial and social security schemes. While temporary relief measures, such as financial aid during crises, provide short-term support, long-term structural reforms are needed to ensure sustainable livelihoods for this workforce.

Enhancing the governance of street vendors in Odisha's urban local bodies (ULBs) presents a transformative opportunity to balance urban order with the livelihoods of a vital yet vulnerable workforce. Through integrating the 5T framework, leveraging technology, and fostering stakeholder collaboration, Odisha can develop a replicable model for sustainable street vending. Effective enforcement, capacity-building, and empathy-driven policies will ensure a harmonious coexistence between vendors and urban management. With sustained commitment, Odisha can lead the way in inclusive urban governance, turning street vendors into active contributors to economic growth rather than mere obstacles to urban development.

A dual approach is essential: formalizing street vending through robust policy enforcement and expanding social protection mechanisms. Odisha can pioneer vendor-inclusive urban development by aligning policies with local realities, including climate resilience, migrant support, and community-driven initiatives. Street vendors can transition from economic uncertainty to secure and dignified livelihoods in an urbanizing state through these measures.

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