



**BERGEN SUMMER
RESEARCH SCHOOL**
GLOBAL CHALLENGES



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Safe and sustainable transport systems for gender equality



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

▶ ▶ ▶ The Policy Brief is developed as part of the Interdisciplinary Problem Solving exercise, which was the central theme for the Bergen Summer School, 2021. Team members are doctoral students in economics, education, marine management, systems dynamics, music, and law.

The Sustainable Development Goal target 5.1 aims to ‘end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.’ One of the systems that remarkably influences women and girls is the public transportation system. It needs fundamental changes in order to foster equal participation in education and equal economic opportunities for women and girls.

3 key points

- Women use public transport more and in different ways than men.
- Women are prevented from full participation in the workforce, promotions, and power because of under-investment and ill-fitted public transport infrastructure.
- Lack of women in the decision-making process directly influences the design of the transport system and it remains adapted to the needs of those travelling to work rather than women who travel for many different purposes.

Introduction

There is increasing recognition that men and women have different transit patterns and there is an urgent need for these realities to be addressed and incorporated into the design of transport projects particularly in cities.

Women use public transport more and in different ways than men. Women spend more time traveling with public transport with the purpose of caring for children or elderly relatives. The differences in why they travel with public transport also shows up in how many stops they make on their commutes. Women have markedly more stops per commute (trip chaining, see figure 1), especially if they are mothers to small children (Global Mobility Report, 2017).

Yet, women are faced with four common challenges regarding their use of public transportation: lack of safety, lack of access (and economic opportunity), costly or inefficient ways of transportation, and lack of diverse data. According to UN, lack of a safe path to school is one of the main reasons for girls missing school (UNESCO, 2015). When girls and women have access to safe and affordable public transportation, the benefits are shared by families and entire communities, thus accessible and inclusive transportation is key to making cities resilient. As the gender issues surrounding transportation receive more academic and industry attention, there are increased opportunities for developing policies aimed at women and girls as marginalized users of public transportation.

Analysis

SDG Target 11.2 aims to “... provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons”

by 2030. Another critical dimension of transport systems is associated with SDG goal 5, which according to Target 5.1 aims to “end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.” Target 5.C further commits states to “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.” Safe and affordable transportation also helps to further SDG target 4.5, which aims to (among other things) ‘eliminate gender disparities in education’.

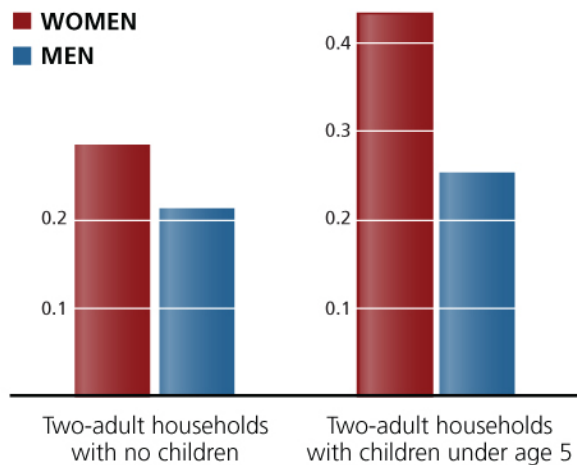
Although the world has made progress on gender equality in the last decades, women are still held back by societal structures. These structures obstruct the participation of women in the workplace, in public life, in schools and universities and in many other areas. One of these structures is how cities and other urban areas around the world are planned, built and driven. Extensive research has shown how zoning, urban development and infrastructure, and transport choices affect the lives of men and women differently. At the core of the challenge is the fact that ‘planning of the built environment and the transport system has historically been a man’s world.’ (Clara Greed, 2019) For instance, studies show that women spend more time on picking up and dropping off school-age children at schools, but the transport system is less attentive to such needs. (Gendered Innovations, 2015)

Since the differences between how men and women travel around cities are mainly attributed to gendered power hierarchies, solutions should be geared toward addressing this. Women’s participation in these hierarchies is one method that more countries are adopting to aid in gender mainstreaming. However, recent research reveals that more inclusive strategies are needed. For example, in recent years, the proportion of women in management and government agencies in the transport sector in Sweden has increased to 40–50%, however, it is still not enough to contribute to gender mainstreaming. It is necessary to also ensure that local women’s and men’s experiences are considered in all transport sector decision-making. Hence diverse data collection should be considered by transportation agencies e.g. registering safety complaints or recommendations from women, gendered gaps in transportation use or barriers to accessing transportation. This data can ensure that transportation systems are designed for all people.

More countries are working to make transport more gender equitable via information technology. An instance is the Technology Innovation Portal that enhances women’s safety in London; and committee formations e.g. Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) for empowering women in the community by developing research and policy recommendations based on specific safety audits. Further, a trickle-down effect often emerges once women have increased access to transportation including increase educational opportunities for their children especially girls in certain countries.

Trip Chaining by Women and Men During Commutes

Average number of stops per commute, United States, 2001



Source: Gender Innovations (2015)

Case study: Mother of three, lives and works in London UK.

Transport for London runs an extensive public network providing 27 million passenger trips daily, representing 63.2 % of total commuter journeys. Still, the public transport system does not serve all needs efficiently, with marked differences depending on the way people use it. Take our subject. She lives near the suburbs and works part time in central London. Her home is near a tube station, where frequent trains take 12 minutes to the city centre. Her work commute takes 17 minutes regardless of time of day.

She also accompanies her children to school/childcare each day, in common with 88% of parents. The entire trip, covering two schools and a nursery, takes between 73 and 101 minutes, depending on traffic. The exaggerated duration of the trip is driven by the number of destinations, the distance from stops to destinations and the lack of available connections. For parents accompanying their children to school, walking is the primary mode followed by car, and then bus. Reasons not to use public transport cited are inconvenience, unaffordability, and personal safety concerns. With regards to personal safety, according to a YouGov survey in 2020, more than half of women say they have suffered sexual harassment on public transport in London.

Conclusions

Even though women use public transport much more extensively than men (both when it comes to time and the number of stops within commute journey), they still have little power over transport design, planning, and decision-making in urban settlements. As a result, poorly addressed women's needs materialise themselves as transportation challenges, i.e., lack of safety, lack of access, costly or inefficient transportation methods, and lack of diverse data. These, on the other hand, too often lack sufficient interest, investments, and action from authorities and decision-makers.

Tackling a man-dominated transportation industry and urban planning practices with active engagement and participation of women will increase opportunities for themselves and girls, as marginalised users of public transportation. Moreover, addressing the gender gap in transportation planning and policymaking will result in direct outcomes such as inclusive, integrated, and tailor-made public transportation systems, as well as indirect implications e.g., improvement in women's well-being, decrease in gender disparities in education, and further development of communities.

Thus, equally representing women in city planning will recognise and address the needs of women and girls while catering that of all city agents.

Recommendations

Design and invest in public transport infrastructure that is accustomed to the lives of women everywhere

Have a special focus on public transport that enables women and girls to fully participate in the workplace and in school. This may be:

- General investment in public transport to enhance capacity, frequency, and reach.
- Cutting prices and design transit pass schemes accustomed to women.
- Involving and employing women in the planning of public transport projects and in urban planning.
- Creating safer public transport environments, through measures like lighting and reserved coaches.

Ensure that the gender data collected, and analysis informs transport system infrastructure design, construction, and implementation to maximize women's equal access and benefits.

Further relevant SDGs:



IMPRINT

SDG Bergen Science Advice in collaboration with Bergen Summer Research School's 2021 PhD course holders professor Birgit Kopainsky, Dr. Hiwa Målen and Dr. Ingunn Johanne Ness.

Relevance to the 2030 Agenda

SDG 4.5 is one of the ten targets under SDG 4: Quality Education, SDGs 5.1 and 5c. are two of the nine targets under SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 11.2 is one of the ten targets under SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, all building towards the 2030 Agenda.

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