

FACT SHEET: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is often thought to be gender neutral; but men and women travel with different frequencies, at different times of day, and with different priorities. In general, existing transport systems and schedules worldwide have not been designed to meet the needs of women and men equally. In addition, many public transport options are not safe or culturally appropriate for women and girls, including routes that are poorly lit or not well monitored and buses or trains that are dominated by male passengers. Improving the mobility of women and girls requires taking their specific needs and concerns into account when designing transportation policies.



GENDER PATTERNS OF TRANSPORTATION USE

In both developed and developing countries, women tend to make shorter and more frequent trips during the day than men (who more commonly travel to and from one job) and to travel outside of standard workday hours¹. Fare structures are often not designed to support the kind of “trip-chaining,” or combining of multiple trips, that women favour². Women are also often accompanied by children or elderly relatives, and use public transportation to carry goods and household items to and from the market in connection with their domestic responsibilities. Therefore, they are more likely to place greater priority on flexibility

and proximity to their final destination in choice of transport, whereas men tend to place more importance on speed and punctuality¹. Women are also more likely to be deterred from using overcrowded public transport as it is more difficult for them to board with children or heavy items.

GENDER IN TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Safety and security are greater concerns in transportation for women than men. Women may not like to travel at night due to the risk of violence, and they may avoid crowded buses and train cars where they might be groped or harassed. They are more likely to be perceived as easy targets for thieves, particularly when traveling with children or packages. Providing adequate lighting or security cameras on transit routes and in stations, offering flexible drop-off points during off-peak hours, and designating women-only transit lines or separate carriages are all potential ways to mitigate these risks.

Safety is also a concern for men, who are the victims of more motor vehicle accidents, and also suffer more health problems associated with the inhalation of exhaust fumes¹.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS

In many rural areas, women spend up to five hours a day collecting water and firewood, and travel an average of 6 km to do so⁴.

In rural areas that lack adequate transportation infrastructure and, in particular, reliable public transport options, both men and particularly women spend large amounts of time and energy traveling by foot. Women and girls are also typically responsible for the collection of firewood and water, and for bringing food and other products to and from the market³. Because men own and control most vehicles and some other modes of travel such as bicycles or motorbikes are often not socially acceptable for women, these activities are largely done by foot. This takes away from girls' school and study time and the time that women could spend on income-generating activities.

64% of women in the 20-40 age range have been groped on public transit in Tokyo in one recent study⁵.

Many cities have begun to experiment with introducing women's only bus or train lines or separate cars, including Tokyo, Mumbai, Mexico City, Jakarta and Kathmandu.

