



# Gender Equality Initiatives in Transportation Policy

A R E V I E W O F T H E L I T E R A T U R E

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reviews current trends and initiatives in transportation policy from a gender perspective. The patterns of travel by women and the use they make of transportation are different than those of men. This difference stems from gender inequality within the home and the labor market, the urban structure, and other factors.

In all European countries, fewer women than men travel by private car, while the majority of those who use public transportation are women.

In comparison with men, women take *more trips* per day, but travel for *shorter distances*. This is because women work closer to home, are more likely to be employed part-time, and more likely to work in low-paying jobs. *Women's travel is characterized by "trip chaining."* Trip chaining is the result of women's caregiver tasks and may include stops at health facilities, escorting children to school, visits to parents, etc. Furthermore, *women are more likely to travel during off-peak hours and less likely to travel after dark.*



### What has been done in other countries to promote gender equality in transportation planning?

1. Removing barriers to mobility and transportation:
2. Removing physical barriers: providing wider doors and low-floor buses; storage space for packages and strollers.
3. Increasing personal security: "Request Stop" service between stations enabling women to get off as close as possible to their destination; security cameras; enhanced lighting; more staff and training for staff.
4. Providing subsidies: discounts for part-time workers, low-income persons, children, and the elderly.
5. Increasing accessibility to information.

### Planning and developing equitable transportation:

1. Setting gender equality as one of the major goals of transportation policy.
2. Engaging in research and statistical data collection with analysis by gender.
3. Integrating women into the decision-making bodies that deal with planning, research, and consulting about transportation.
4. Undertaking actions designed to increase the employment of women in the transportation sector professions.

### Our Recommendations:

1. Integrate women into the policymaking, decision-making, and planning of public transportation.
2. Take actions designed to increase the proportion of female employees in the transportation sector.
3. Undertake statistical research with analysis by gender.
4. Incorporate gender equality into transportation planning and policy making, as part of the Ministry's program to promote public transportation.

To that end, budgetary allocations and special staff will be required.

# Gender Equality Initiatives in Transportation Policy:

## A Review of the Literature

Yael Hasson and Marianna Polevoy, July 2011

**W**hile gender equality is part of the political discourse in many countries, transportation planning that takes into account the different needs of women and men is relatively new even in western Europe and the United States. The purpose of this paper is to survey current initiatives in planning and implementing transportation policy from a gender perspective in countries such as Sweden, Great Britain, France, Canada, and the United States. The ministries of transportation in these countries, as well as those engaged in research, planning, and operating public transportation, have begun to promote initiatives that take into consideration the differential needs of men and women for public transportation. Because this is a relatively new field and most of the initiatives have taken place in the past decade, few studies exist that examine results.

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION: WHO TRAVELS HOW?

The travel patterns of women differ from those of men. These differences are linked to gender inequality within the home and the labor market, urban structures, and the processes of socialization and education. Women and men make different use of a shared system of transportation<sup>1</sup>.

In every European country, fewer women than men have the use of a private car; in contrast, women constitute the majority of public transportation passengers<sup>2</sup>. In Sweden, 70% of the cars on the road are owned by men, and in

France 60% of the men living outside the Paris region travel only by car<sup>3</sup>. In the Netherlands, a man is 1.5 times more likely to own a car than a woman<sup>4</sup>. In Sweden, 82% of men aged 18-84 have a driver's license and access to a vehicle, compared with 69% of women the same age<sup>5</sup>. In France, two-thirds of public transit passengers are women<sup>6</sup>. In the United States in 2007, 55% of public transit passengers were women<sup>7</sup>.

No data exist in Israel about the proportion of women who own a vehicle, nor are there official, up-to-date numbers of the proportion of women and men who use public transportation.

*In an analysis of the use of various modes of transportation, age should also be taken into account.* In previous generations, women had less access to a private vehicle than contemporary women. Most depended upon their husbands to be the driver. In Britain, 69% of women older than 65 have never had a driver's license. In Israel, only 20% of women older than 65 have a driver's license, compared with 60% of men<sup>8</sup>. When a husband is no longer present, mobility declines and isolation increases, especially among women living in the suburbs or periphery<sup>9</sup>.

Indeed, research in Canada found that among senior citizens in Montreal, 88% of those who cited problems with public transportation were women, elderly persons, low income people, and persons in poor health<sup>10</sup>.

### MALE AND FEMALE PATTERNS OF TRAVEL

A review of the literature indicates similar travel patterns for women, whether they live in developed or developing countries, in large cities, suburbs, or rural areas. Everywhere, women's activities are more complex than men's because of their "double duties." Women are more involved in housekeeping and more likely to be caretakers of dependents – children, the ill, and the elderly. As a result, women's travel more often takes place at off-peak hours and leads to a greater variety of destinations than men's, often between two outlying areas, as opposed to trips to and from the city centers.

### Travel patterns as derived from employment patterns

Many studies attribute the differences in travel patterns between women and men to the division of roles in the labor market and the family. Despite the increased participation of women in the labor force in recent decades, the employment patterns of women and men remain different. Women are more likely to have part-time employment; the workforce is highly segregated occupationally – women and men concentrate in different occupations, with women over-represented in care-giving professions and services, having lower salaries and inferior working conditions, and under-represented in executive and management positions. Gender wage gaps have persisted over the past three decades. And even today, more women than men are engaged in non-paid work – housework and family care.

Compared with men, women take *more trips* per day, but travel *shorter distances*<sup>11</sup>. In Britain, for example, it was found that the distance traveled by men each day exceeded that of women by an average of 45%<sup>12</sup>.

One key explanation for the above findings is that women work closer to home. Occupations in which women predominate – teaching, services, and various forms of care giving, for example – are closer to home and require shorter journeys. In the Netherlands, for example, women work approximately 8 kilometers closer to their homes than men<sup>13</sup>.

Furthermore, because a larger proportion of women are employed in low-wage professions (care giving, secretarial work, service work), it does not make economic sense for them to travel great distances to work<sup>14</sup>. Research on behalf of the Scottish Ministry of Transportation reinforces this finding: Low-income women with little professional training or none at all tend to work closer to home and travel shorter distances<sup>15</sup>.

In Israel, Blumen found in Haifa that some 45% of the jobs held by working women are located in residential areas. Indeed, she found that women comprise about 80% of persons employed in these areas. Conversely, most jobs done by men are located in the metropolitan center or in several clearly distinct employment zones in the periphery<sup>16</sup>.

*The distance traveled is also influenced by having a part- or full-time job.* German research into gender and travel patterns showed that those working in part-time jobs (93% of whom were women) and those not employed outside their home (98% of whom were women), make more trips a day, but travel shorter distances, compared with those employed full-time<sup>17</sup>. In the Netherlands, which has the highest proportion of part-time workers in Europe, persons with part-time jobs were found to be taking more trips daily (3.7 trips) than those working full time (2.4 trips), but traveling shorter distances (17.5 km on average compared with 32.3 km on average, respectively), regardless of the purpose of the travel. Because they work closer to home, part-time employees tend to make less use of private cars<sup>18</sup>.

*Women's travel is characterized by trip chaining.* Trip chaining is a series of travel segments that follow one another and are anchored by the home and place of work. Trip chains are generally characterized in the literature as travel having stops of less than 30 minutes<sup>19</sup>. Trip-chaining of women in North America and Europe is more complex than that of men, primarily because more of their travel is unrelated to employment. Women's daily trips are a product of their responsibility for multiple tasks connected to caring for their family, as they incorporate stops at health facilities, shopping areas, educational institutions (to escort children), visits to parents, and the like. In London, for example, 61% of the shopping trips and 71% of the trips made to drop off children were made by women. At the same time, work-related travel by women is shorter, as women live in closer proximity to their jobs due to their time constraints and reduced access to a private car<sup>20</sup>.

*Women travel more during off-peak hours and travel less after dark*<sup>21</sup>. Because some 40% of Israeli women have part-time jobs, they usually return home before peak hours. The journey home is a stressful time for women, especially those with young children. The most problematic issue is synchronizing home and work – how women get home and how fast are critical because of concerns about the security of their children, as well as the fact of holding down two jobs – one at home and the other in the labor market<sup>22</sup>.

## Barriers and Overcoming Them

One of the main barriers to transportation planning and development that addresses the needs of diverse social groups is *the lack of statistical data*. Reports based on surveys and systematic data collection have been produced in various countries<sup>23</sup> and also by the OECD and European Union. These reports enable a better understanding of the differences in travel patterns between women and men: the purpose of the trips, frequency, distance, mobility and accessibility problems vis-à-vis workplaces and social services such as health clinics<sup>24</sup>. The World Bank identified four fields in which statistics on the interaction between gender and transportation would be useful to planners<sup>25</sup>:

1. Access to different modes of transportation;
2. The cost of transportation;
3. Trip characteristics (modes, frequency, distance, reasons for the trip); and
4. Transportation quality.

The travel patterns of women are influenced not just by the roles of women in modern society as mothers and primary caregivers, but also by barriers – physical, environmental, or technological – that impede access to public transportation. Studies in other countries have examined some of these barriers:

1. **Physical barriers** – These prevent women from having easy and convenient mobility via public transportation while carrying small children, children’s strollers, and packages. Part of the problem is the lack of storage space for strollers and the difficulty of bringing packages into the vehicle and storing them conveniently.

Obstacles at the stations and platforms, such as stairs or some types of flooring at bus stops or train platforms that impede mobility for persons with strollers and children reduce accessibility to the bus or train<sup>26</sup>.

The London transit authority researched the experience of women with strollers who travel by bus. The aim was to provide information and training to companies that operate the bus lines, and to incorporate what was learned into planning the buses themselves. As part of the project, a documentary was

produced showing how women negotiate the stations with strollers, clearly showing that public transportation is inaccessible to them<sup>27</sup>.

Some cities and countries have begun to grapple with these physical barriers. In London, for example, low-floor buses have come into use to enable access to those in wheel chairs or with strollers<sup>28</sup>.

2. **Personal security** – Studies from outside Israel indicate that women are less willing to use public transportation after dark. Bus stops that are outside residential areas, in bad or remote neighborhoods, or in empty parking lots<sup>29</sup> all affect a woman’s decision about how and when to use public transportation<sup>30</sup>.

Since the 1980s, transport planners in some countries have taken into consideration the importance of the personal security of passengers, especially women. In Toronto, a “Request Stop” service was launched in 1980 for the hours after dark, allowing a woman to ask the bus driver to stop along the route where it is more convenient for her to get off, not necessarily at the bus stop. This was done to shorten her walk between bus and destination. This service was also adopted in Montreal in 1996<sup>31</sup> and later in British cities<sup>32</sup>.

A Women’s Urban Security Committee was formed in Montreal in 1992 to seek ways to increase access and security for women in the city, as women are the primary users of public transit, and the goal was to provide safe transportation<sup>33</sup>.

Security cameras have come into use in the United States, Canada, and also London to enhance the sense of personal security at stations, and to reduce crime and fear of crime<sup>34</sup>.

Other measures taken: the installation of more lighting, increasing the presence of security personnel in stations, adding more services -- especially at night, and raising awareness among station employees, drivers, and passengers<sup>35</sup>.

3. **Affordability of travel** – Fare costs and the fare structure must be affordable for women who make frequent trips. Weekly or monthly tickets are gener-

ally more worthwhile for people who work full-time, but many women have part-time jobs<sup>36</sup>. High fares or a fare structure based on individual trips can be financially burdensome and prevent women from returning to the labor market once they leave it<sup>37</sup>.

To grapple with the issue of fares, for example, London gives discounts to people with part-time jobs or low income (50%). This is in addition to free transportation for everyone over the age of 60<sup>38</sup>. In Sweden, too, a third of those using public transportation are eligible for various discount tickets, and more women than men enjoy discounted fares<sup>39</sup>.

4. **Available, clear, and reliable information** is needed in various formats and languages about the schedule, frequency, fares, routes, connections, and safety. Since women are a majority of the passengers, and women's journeys are more complex, often involving several lines or even changing to a different mode of transportation, the availability of information like this is particularly important<sup>40</sup>.

### **The Absence of Women in Decision-Making and the Transportation Professions**

Transportation is a male-dominated sector. In the European Union, political committees in the transportation sector as well as transport research and advisory boards are populated primarily by men. Most boards have less than 15% female membership and none have equal representation. This is also true of transport-related committees at national levels<sup>41</sup>. In France, the women's movement pressed transportation operators to hire more women so that women's needs could be better addressed, and today some 25% of the decision makers in these companies are women<sup>42</sup>. Sweden is the only country with equal representation of women, a 50-50 balance in the National Transport Committee<sup>43</sup>.

**With regard to employment in the transportation sector, women constitute 9% of the entire transportation workforce in Israel, according to data we found<sup>44</sup>. In Europe, only 10% of the bus drivers are women<sup>45</sup>. Furthermore, women employed in the transportation sector earn 20% less than men<sup>46</sup>. To**

raise awareness among women about the option of working in transport-related jobs, activists in the French women's movement produced a video, which has been used by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Employment<sup>47</sup>.

### **Sweden: A Policy Goal to Promote Gender Equality in Transportation**

Gender equality has been a declared goal of public transportation policies in Sweden since the late 1990s, upon establishment of the Gender Equality Council for Transport and IT. In 2002, the Swedish Ministry of Transportation stated that gender equality was one of the major goals of its transportation policy. Together with goals such as providing accessible, safe, and high-quality public transportation, regional development, and safeguarding environmental resources, official policy is that the transportation system needs to be planned in accordance with the values and needs of both men and women. It also states that women and men need to be given equal opportunity to influence the transportation system's design, structure, and administration.

Setting these goals raises awareness of three matters – the differences between men and women in their needs for and uses of transportation, the importance of integrating a gender perspective in policymaking, and the importance of sharing power and influence between women and men in the field of transportation<sup>48</sup>.

## Summing Up: Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Transportation:

### Initiatives to eliminate barriers to mobility and the use of public transportation

1. **Eliminating physical barriers:** Wider doors and low-floor buses and trains; storage space for packages and strollers.
2. **Personal security:** “Request Stop” service between stations enabling women to get off as close as possible to their destination; security cameras; enhanced lighting; more staff and training for staff.
3. **Subsidies:** Discounts for part-time workers, low-income persons, children, and senior citizens.
4. **Increased accessibility to information.**

### Initiatives related to planning and development of equitable transportation policy:

1. **Setting gender equality as one of the major goals of public policy in all aspects of planning and developing transportation.**
2. **Research and statistical data collection with analysis by gender.**
3. **Integrating women into the decision-making bodies** of planning, research, and consulting in the transportation sector.
4. **Actions to promote the employment of women in the transportation professions.**

## O u r R e c o m m e n d a t i o n s

1. **Integrating women into the policymaking, decision-making, and planning of public transportation.** We recommend that the proportion of women be gradually increased to 40% within five years.
2. **Actions to increase the number of women working in transportation.** We recommend outreach to women for job retraining programs in public transport, setting the proportion of women employed in tenders for transport operators, and affirmative action for women in transportation jobs.
3. **Statistical research with analysis by gender.** To better understand the effects of gender on public transportation, broad-based, statistical research is needed on which to base the development of a public transportation system that promotes gender equality. Thus, we call on the Central Bureau of Statistics to conduct a *national needs assessment*, in consultation with experts in gender equality, urban planning and transportation planning. We recommend conducting interviews with women from diverse backgrounds (periphery-center, part-time workers, single parents, blue and white collar, Arab, ultra-Orthodox, suburbanites, etc.).
4. **Incorporating gender equality into transportation policy making and planning, as part of the Ministry’s program to promote public transportation.** To that end, budgetary allocations and special staff will be required.

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## NOTES

- 1 TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 2 The Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000; TRANSGEN, 2007; Golden, 2008.
- 3 Duchène, 2011.
- 4 Olde-Kalder et al., 2009.
- 5 SIKA, 2007.
- 6 Duchène, 2011.
- 7 American Public Transportation Association, 2007.
- 8 Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010.
- 9 Duchène, 2011.
- 10 Dupuis et al., 2007.
- 11 Sarmiento, 1998; Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000; McGuckin and Nakamoto, 2004; Olde-Kalder et al., 2009.
- 12 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 13 Olde-Kalder et al., 2009.
- 14 Wachs, 1998.
- 15 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 16 Blumen, 2007.
- 17 Nobis and Lenz, 2005.
- 18 Boumans and Harms, 2004.
- 19 McGuckin and Nakamoto, 2004; Hamilton et al., 2000.
- 20 Duchène, 2011; Hamilton et al, 2000; Golden, 2008.
- 21 Hamilton et al., 2000; Golden, 2008; Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 22 Blumen, 2007.
- 23 See, for example, Golden, 2008; SIKA, 2007; Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 24 The data from various countries were collected in different methods, from local and national surveys to in-depth interviews, focus groups, movies, etc., which show the daily experience of travel for various groups of women and men.
- 25 Duchène, 2011.
- 26 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 27 "How People Do It: taking young children on public transport in London", <http://www.vimeo.com/9159657>.
- 28 Golden, 2008.
- 29 It was found that few British women use "park and ride" services because they do not feel safe in parking lots after dark.
- 30 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000; TRANSGEN, 2007; Golden, 2008; Todes et al, 2009.
- 31 Todes et al., 2009.
- 32 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 33 Todes et al., 2009.
- 34 TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 35 Golden, 2008; TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 36 Duchène, 2011.
- 37 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 38 Golden, 2008.
- 39 SIKA, 2007.
- 40 Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000.
- 41 TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 42 Duchène, 2011.
- 43 TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 44 Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, 2009, Table 2.1 refers to those employed in the subsector "Land Transport", which includes buses, trains, taxis, chartered transport, and haulage services.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 TRANSGEN, 2007.
- 47 Duchène, 2011.
- 48 Polk, 2005.



