

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport & Communications: Travelling in a Woman's Shoes

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Thank you to the Chair and to the members of the committee for inviting TU Dublin to contribute here today. I am joined by my colleague, Dr. Sarah Rock, Lecturer in Urban Design & Transport Planning.

I'd like to use these 5 minutes to present some findings from our research in the area of inclusion and transport including a recent EU funded research project 'Diamond' aimed at **uncovering factors effecting women as users of public transport, and as employees in the transport sector**. This research project complements many of the findings of the 'Travelling in a Women's Shoes' report. As part of the Diamond Project, we surveyed and interviewed rail and light rail users, and just as also interviewed non-users to find out why they aren't using public transport, in three cities: Dublin, Barcelona and Warsaw.

The research project is rooted in the **principle of equity of opportunity for all** – and transport's role in facilitating equality of access of key life chances and daily needs. Inequity of access traditionally impacts disproportionately on women, particularly in the areas of safety and time poverty, which is a term used to indicate how individuals with caring responsibilities perceive their time constraints resulting from paid and unpaid work. Our research focussed on three key areas that impact on women's engagement with public transport: capacity to address basic mobility needs, accessibility in terms of physical access but also monetary access, and safety & security.

A key finding of the study is that people who experience any form of discrimination are very likely to experience lower satisfaction across all aspects related to fairness of service provision, while for female users "feeling safe at any time of the day" is a key variable for user satisfaction alongside "value for money" and timely information provision. Put simply, the more welcome a female feels within the transport system, the more satisfied she feels with the service, and the more likely it is that she will continue to use public transport. Equally, the converse is true. If she does not feel welcome, safe and secure, she will change to another form of transport if she has the means to do so.

We found that **safety and security** is a particular issue for women in low income groupings and those belonging to an ethnic minority. These are the groups that also rely most on public transport. We also found that travelling with dependents often pushes females to select a different mode of transport, mainly that of the private car.

Women's **mobility needs and patterns are diverse and complex**, depending on their age, socio-economic status and caregiving roles and this heterogeneity is not often looked at with clarity in our national surveys. Furthermore most of the women interviewed confirmed that their sense of safety and security is often enhanced by:

- clarity on norms regarding harassment and not admitted behaviours and their sanctions
 - the presence of someone that can be considered a "go to person" for help and assistance and have the authority to intervene if needed.
- clean, well-lit CCTV supervised areas around stations and stops, that provide a secure "sense of place". This 'sense of place' means that the urban design of the area should ensure that the environment around stations are not lonely places, but welcoming places with 'eyes on the street' and the presence of enough other people to increase the perception of safety and security.

This is true for users of public transport but also for workers as the risks of violence and sexual harassment for female drivers (and passengers) working is also still a very significant factor, with the result that women tend to avoid working in certain front-line jobs and at night. Not only does it mean that women lose out on some job opportunities, it also limits the recruitment pool for transport agencies.

Returning again to the fundamental role of having access to basic mobility services – the collection and further disaggregation of data to include different socio demographic characteristics for users and non-users is relevant in highlighting sub-groups experiencing specific barriers or in needs of different types of facilitators. In a report of the International Transport Forum (2019), it is highlighted that nearly 40% of public transport journeys throughout the world are mobility of care journeys. These include visits to health centres, escorting dependents, for shopping and to carry out other errands. **Women make up 80% of people in charge of mobility of care** and most of these women use sustainable modes either walking or using public transport. Despite this currently public transport networks and levels of service are typically focused on commuting to and from work – but these routes are often not the easiest routes for mobility of care. Mobility of care usually consists of more frequent, local and shorter trips and is irregular in time (no peak/ off-peak) and space (not only from residential to the city centre). Therefore, future transport planning needs to take into account mobility of care journeys. The proposed Bus Connects Orbital bus routes and removal of fare penalties for transfers are welcome in this regards, and we would recommend the greater prioritisation of delivery of these Orbital route delivery with high levels of bus priority, in addition to the current rolling-out of the Spine routes.

It is equally important to include more women in decision-making jobs, planning and transport service delivery, including front-line services and maintenance services. EU and UK research has shown that transport has the lowest representation of women within the public sector at 6.25% and that women account for just 15% in most decision-making bodies and advisory boards (Sustrans, 2018).

To conclude, men and women's transport needs are different. Understanding these differences will be fundamental to provide more equitable and sustainable mobility services. Women rely on public transport more than men, but many will also reject it, like we have seen more recently in Ireland, if the system does not understand and meet their needs.

Thank you.

Additional Notes:

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What we know:

Women walk more, and rely on public transport more. Safety is a key concern with females when it comes to transport mode choice, alongside serving mobility of care journeys in what women often experience to be a time poverty context (where many demands and constraints on their limited time are key variables in their choices).

Women are more likely to use public transport if they feel safe and comfortable on it, and on the walk to and from the train station/bus stop. This means bus stops/train stations that are in locations where there are likely to be other people around, other 'eyes on the street'. From a planning and design perspective, this includes having buildings and mixed-land-uses fronting with windows and doors onto the road or train station - and not hidden behind high walls.

Walking is important to women. Even in areas when there are limited amenities and facilities within walking distance, the connecting walk to other forms of transport are important. We can

improve walking accessibility and effectiveness in linking with public transport immediately and simply by undertaking a few key measures including:

- undertaking pedestrian accessibility audits on the approaches and key routes to public transport stations and stops.
- increasing the crossing time for pedestrians at junctions, and removing two-stage crossings where pedestrians are left in the middle of busy roads, particularly in urban areas.
- widening footpaths to levels that are comfortable for mobility of care journeys, and provides a greater buffer zone with passing vehicular traffic.

Women will cycle just as much (or more) than men if cycling infrastructure is safe, comfortable and with a good sense of place/urban design quality. This goes for women across all age groups and income levels. This can be seen in Copenhagen, and in the Netherlands for example. However in our study, we found that bike sharing schemes have limitations in terms of their viability for mobility of care journeys and in terms of travelling with dependents.

Women need to be part of the workforce in charge of planning and delivering mobility services. The International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Association of Public Transport – signed a joint agreement in March 2019 to strengthen women's employment in public transport. The practical recommendations cover nine core areas: working culture and gender stereotypes; recruitment; work environment and design; facilities (including sanitation); health and safety at work; work/life balance; training; pay equality, and corporate policy. Yet in our own city the job advertisements that we have seen more recently for Dublin bus do not seem to move away from the classic stereotype in the image chosen as the faces of likely applicants and it is a pity considering that in other areas such as a rail many efforts have been made to ensure recruitment and support of a more diversified workforce.

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