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# **SUSTAIN- ABLE AND INCLUSIVE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS**

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*Tim Gore, Thorfinn Stainforth and Antoine Lucic, we are White, heterosexual, Northern feminist men, committed to addressing inequality in all its forms in our work to accelerate Europe's low carbon transition.*

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## SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Transforming transport is one of the most urgent priorities of the European Green Deal. Transport represents around a quarter of EU greenhouse gas emissions, and while emissions from the power sector are in structural decline, emissions from transport are still higher today than in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

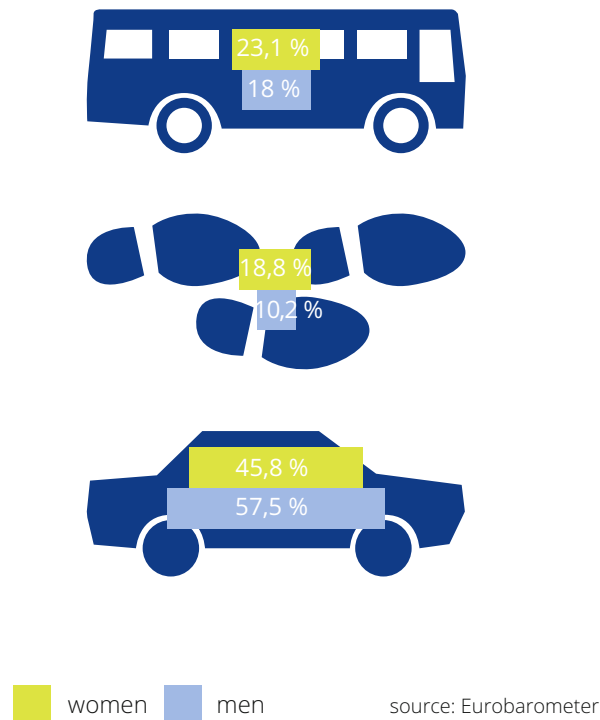
But the sector is also a site of major inequalities. Transport is the most unequal form of carbon consumption by income,<sup>2</sup> with the majority of the sector's emissions driven by a small minority of the highest emitting EU citizens.<sup>3</sup> It is the biggest driver of air pollution in cities, to which people with low incomes and from Black and minority ethnic communities are often disproportionately exposed.<sup>4</sup> And critically for this gender analysis, transport systems in the EU are largely designed by and for abled men, reproducing forms of discrimination such as sexism, racism or ableism.

In this chapter we present evidence of gender inequality in the use of different types of transport, in the types of trips people make, in the experience of using transport and of employment in the transport sector. We then present an overview of the relevant legislative landscape under the Green Deal and recommendations to help build inclusive, gender-just and sustainable mobility systems in the EU.

### Gendered analysis of transport systems in the EU

The International Transport Forum has concluded that “gender is one of the most defining determinants of transport choice”.<sup>5</sup> Different mobility patterns between women and men explored in this chapter can be seen to reflect patriarchal structures which place greater responsibility for care work on women, while abled men generally have more cultural, and economic independence, as well as power over the design of mobility systems.

## Europeans preferred mode of transport by gender



### Transport modes

Research shows that women walk and use public transport (especially buses) more than men.<sup>6</sup> Men on the other hand tend to fly, drive individual cars, cycle and use new mobility services like carsharing, ridesharing, bike sharing and e-scooters more than women, although there is evidence that when cycling infrastructure is safe, women and men cycle equally as often. Men are more likely to have a driver's license and access to a car than women, while women are more likely to be a passenger than to drive themselves.<sup>7</sup>

*"If everyone travelled in the way women do today, the energy use and emissions from passenger transport in Sweden would decrease with almost 20 per cent. Furthermore, the use of the car as a mode of transport would already be on the level estimated to be sustainable for the year 2050,"* Lena Smidfelt Rosqvist, Head of Research at Trivector.

### Trips

Trip patterns are gendered, in part due to women's lower participation in the labour market and higher involvement in unpaid care work. Women are more likely to make several, shorter trips while carrying groceries and/or accompanying children or older family members, while men are more likely to undertake individual trips commuting to and from a workplace. One estimate suggests more than 2/3 of trips made by men are for work, compared to only half of trips made by women, while almost 1/3 of trips made by women relate to household responsibilities compared to just 1/8 of trips by men.<sup>8</sup>

These male trip patterns have to a large extent shaped transport policies and systems in the EU to date, which fail to address the needs for multiple, shorter trips in off-peak hours, accessible to people of all ages. For example, transport pricing structures do not always take trip-chaining into account, and public transport hubs and stations are not always designed for people traveling with children, prams and groceries or accompanying people with reduced mobility.<sup>9</sup>

## Experiences

Women and men experience and use transport modes differently. Men tend to be more dangerous drivers, causing a large majority of accidents to which women are disproportionately vulnerable.<sup>10</sup> Safety considerations, notably in the use of public transportation, are often cited as limiting women's mobility, which in turn may impact women's access to opportunities (including education and jobs) and have repercussions for long-term well-being. Fear of harassment and assaults mean that women worry more than men about which routes to take and which time they travel.

For example, a survey by the French National Federation of Transport Users showed that 90% of women respondents had experienced sexual harassment while taking public transport.<sup>11</sup> One study in the UK found that the number of public transport users would increase by 10 per cent if passengers, especially women, felt safer.<sup>12</sup> The LGBTQI+ community is also vulnerable to violence and harassment worldwide<sup>13</sup> but its particular security needs are largely ignored in transport policy and data collection.<sup>14</sup>

## Employment

Women make up 22% of the EU transport sector labour force. While this is the highest rate of female employees in the transport sector in the world, women are also impeded from rising to senior positions, so there are disproportionately few women in decision making roles, reinforcing gender bias in transport policy. Women predominantly work in customer-facing or administrative roles, often under more flexible work arrangements and in part-time jobs, and thus have less decision-making power or opportunities for promotion than male workers.

A 2019 survey by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETWF) of women transport workers across Europe found that a quarter thought that being a woman has a negative impact on their wages and nearly half said that their workplace does not prioritise a safe and adequate work environment for women, demonstrating that gender-based violence affects women transport workers as well as users.<sup>15</sup> In a separate survey, a quarter of respondents said that violence against women is regular and considered it to be "part of the job."<sup>16</sup>

As a consequence of men's dominance among senior positions in the transport sector, many of the assumptions in planning and design may be male oriented. This may mean, for example, a greater emphasis on commuter traffic and transport systems designed for simple home to work trips, or car design using males as the "default" value, leading to increased chances of death for women in crashes.<sup>17</sup> Attracting, retaining and increasing the representation of women at all levels in the transport workforce is therefore vital to building more gender-just and inclusive transport systems.<sup>18</sup>

## Gender and sustainable mobility in the European Green Deal

Addressing sustainability challenges in the transport sector is a key pillar of the European Green Deal. In this section we assess the extent to which gender is explicitly considered in current and upcoming EU mobility and related policy measures and make recommendations for a more gender-just and inclusive approach.

### 2.1 Gender, mobility and the European Green Deal

The European Commission (EC) presented the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in December 2020 as a European Green Deal flagship initiative,<sup>19</sup> including the vital requirement that any future transport policy proposal should comply with the EC's Gender Equality and Disability Strategies. But the Strategy is otherwise gender blind.

It aims *inter alia* to protect health and wellbeing while ensuring that the transition "should leave nobody behind," but its commitment to the principle "that mobility is available and affordable for all" refers explicitly only to "rural and remote regions" and to "persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities," making no reference to gender. With regard to safety issues, the Strategy fails to recognise women's disproportionate representation among road traffic victims, and even more concerning, makes no reference to the grave safety issues reported extensively by women with regard to primarily male violence and harassment as users of and workers in transport systems.

The only other explicit reference to gender in the Strategy relates to employment in the transport sector, in relation to continued support to stakeholder cooperation and exchange of good practices on the “More Women in Transport – Platform for Change,”<sup>20</sup> established in 2017 to increase the number of women in transport professions. This initiative has led to 19 “actions” so far, ranging from conferences, seminars, and training to the implementation of new action plans and advisory bodies in some participating organisations.

Furthermore, the EU’s most important legislative initiatives in the area of sustainable mobility, including the CO<sub>2</sub> Standards for Cars Regulation, Fuel Quality Directive, Eurovignette Directive and the Trans-European Transport Network, have no explicit recognition of gender whatsoever.

The one area in which gender dimensions of mobility have been explicitly addressed by the EC is the 2020 Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) topic guide - “Addressing gender equity and vulnerable groups in SUMP”<sup>21</sup> – designed to reflect the EC’s commitment to integrating gender issues across its policy initiatives. SUMP is the central element of the EC’s 2013 Urban Mobility Package, and likely to continue as a critical element in sustainable urban transport policy at the EU level following a positive evaluation in 2021.<sup>22</sup>

### **Towards gender justice in EU mobility policy**

Here we present four priority areas to strengthen the integration of a gendered analysis into the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, alongside efforts to address the root causes of patriarchy and gender inequality explored in other chapters of this report.

- **Investing in gender disaggregated data collection and intersectional analysis**

Both the EC<sup>23</sup> and the Court of Auditors<sup>24</sup> have noted that there is a lack of systematically collected, gender-disaggregated and comparable data at city level in the EU, and currently there is no legal requirement for Member States to report data on urban mobility to the EC.

The EC should insist on Member State collection of intersectional gender-disaggregated data on urban mobility as a first priority, as a precondition for more gender-just policy-making and fund research that makes use of this new data.

- **From private cars to safe and accessible public and non-motorised travel**

EU policy continues to prioritise the transition towards zero and low-emission vehicles over other sustainable transport options, which, given the disproportionate use of cars by men, represents a continued bias towards male mobility priorities.

The EU and Member States should shift tax incentives and public investment from the promotion of private transport towards flexible, affordable, secure public transport. Building off-peak capacity, reliability and flexibility of service and ticketing should be a central goal to better accommodate the needs of women and those with mobility challenges. Investment should also be scaled-up for building safe and accessible cycle and walking infrastructure.

- **Addressing gender bias in the design of autonomous cars**

Serious concerns have been raised that autonomous cars are being coded with sexist or racist driving patterns as a baseline.<sup>25</sup> Such questions require transparency around the algorithms guiding a car (and other transport systems and technologies) and should be addressed under the relevant Directives governing intelligent transport systems.<sup>26</sup>

- **Prioritising safe and accessible rail over aviation**

In terms of inter-city travel, the aviation industry benefits from a large number of tax breaks compared to rail and bus sectors, despite the fact that this overwhelmingly benefits male, affluent consumers.

The EU and Member States should drop tax breaks for aviation fuels, the VAT exemption for flights, and stop public investment in airports for inter-city travel. Safe, reliable, accessible, and flexible inter-city options by rail and bus should be promoted, with the safety and comfort of women given priority attention to ensure that women feel safe to choose this option.

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