

# GENDER AND URBAN TRANSPORT: WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFER SPACES

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## 1. Introduction

Urbanization and mobility are interconnected concepts, bringing both obstacles and opportunities, in contemporary civilizations. Accelerated urban growth strains transportation infrastructure, leading to congestion, longer travel times, and increased pollution. Effective mobility promotes economic activities, whereas inefficient mobility undermines the economy and quality of life. This research establishes a framework for the complex interplay between gender inequalities and everyday mobility in urban areas, to understand how public transport planning, the design of cities, and the physical environment of transport spaces may exacerbate or reduce such gaps.

People tend to move around in cities in their social and physical arena, leading to the fact that cities are not gender-neutral. Social inequity in urban design can act as a magnifying glass to aggravate the differences among social groups. Social equity and community interaction are key drivers of a sustainable urban development model. Public transport is integral in upholding both social equity, as well as community engagement. Gender differences often remain hidden while designing and implementing mobility planning for cities, mainly disempowering women from enjoying equal freedom of access to transport. These differences are hardly ever addressed in the urban development plans, particularly for developing nations [9].

This study attempts to respond to enduring difficulties in this area while contributing to an improved comprehension of how public transport space could be designed to answer the safety needs of women, who comprise most users. Even though the implications for urban planning are not fully understood, women's travel behaviors differ significantly from men's [5]. European urbanization has the effect of reinforcing gender inequalities through spatial and social segregation [12].

Women would have little hope of finding relatively cheap accommodation in city center neighborhoods that offer maximum job opportunities, thus resulting in long distances to travel to work and not much choice in the career they wish to pursue [10].

Public transport transitory spaces should not be designed gender-neutral since the mobility demands and realities of men and women are very different in this respect. Traditional urban planning prioritizes linear traffic patterns that fit well while meeting the demands of commuting males who need undisturbed commutes. Women have generally complex travel patterns, which are short trip chains, connected to obligations in work and family domains [4]. Women also travel less distance than men within their local areas, owing to major part to their increased duties as mothers [8]. Women's safety issues in public transportation is a critical subject. The space of the public sphere influences the psychological dimension of comfort, security, or even serenity, as it serves as a conduit for social connection [1]. Several studies have made gender specific analytical

findings regarding, perceptions of risk while using transportation services, including crime and harassment [2]. Lack of effective safety measures in public transit networks, inadequate illumination in public spaces, poorly designed public spaces, and disorganized infrastructure, may cause anxiety among women, especially in the evenings [3].

In post socialist regions like Prague, urbanization processes and socioeconomic transformations have specific consequences on gendered mobility. The women in these regions face enormous impediments to mobility due to economic inequality, poor public transport systems, and security concerns [11]. The city center is arguably one of the most disjointed parts of Prague, with a blend of tourism and commercial service activity, but seems to be a space where social evils manifested and gained momentum. The city center has also the highest per capita crime rate of all parts of Prague [6].

To better understand and solve the special mobility demands for safety reasons and obstacles experienced by females, this research attempts to incorporate the female viewpoint in the public transportation transit area and policy-making processes. It aims to advance the methods of data collection and analysis toward an enhanced understanding of gender disparities in public transport with evidence based decision making and safety for females in daily mobility.

### 1.1 Objectives and question

- Female perspective incorporation to public transport transits area and policy making processes in the understanding of particular mobility needs and challenges facing females, at their disposal, including safe and convenient alternatives for transportation.
- Undertake online quantitative research to examine women's everyday mobility patterns, physical surroundings, practices in public transportation, mode selections, motivations for a trip, and spatial behaviors. A range of techniques including questionnaire-based quantitative research, observation studies, comprehensive interviews, and travel diaries to understand issues related to environmental factors, gender dynamics, and relevant context-specific factors that determine women's mobility experiences in public transport transit spaces. Based on these qualitative and quantitative data, targeted interventions and policy recommendations aimed at, strengthening the security of public transport systems for women shall then be derived.
- Improving data collection and analysis methodologies will be instrumental in furthering their understanding while improving the provision of evidence based decisions and increased security for women in their daily mobility, especially in public transport.

In this research, I address these questions:

- What are the perceptions of women about different transport spaces in Prague regarding their feelings of safety? It will utilize online research to identify which spaces of transportation are perceived as unsafe by women and what features evoke feelings of unsafety among them. Diversity of experience among women will be in the foreground.
- What characteristics of the transport spaces of Prague make them insecure for women? The on line survey will partially answer this question, while observations made in selected locations identified and validated by women, will mainly provide answers. I will focus on identifying the specific social and physical aspects that create feelings of insecurity in chosen locations, based on literature.
- Using literature, I will uncover social and physical elements of selected areas that may contribute to feelings of insecurity.
- How safe is Prague's urban transportation for women right now, and the scope for betterment? In-depth interviews with professionals in Prague planning would be conducted to get information for the answer to the query.

## 2. Methodology

The mixed-method approach will be the research methodology employed, which combines the gathering and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The study will have three phases mainly:

### i. Online Questionnaire Survey:

This online survey will be designed and administered to the women living in Prague. The perception of safety at various chosen public transportation places and their surroundings will be measured. It will utilize Likert scales and multiple choice questions to gather extensive qualitative data about perceptions of safety, travel habits, and experiences. For designing the survey, Qualtrics will be used and distributed through social media avenues and local community groups.'

### ii. Observational Studies:

Systematic observation will be executed at specific public transport hubs, stops, and adjacent areas. Researchers will rely on standardized observation protocol to document the underlying aspects affecting women's safety such as lighting, visibility, crowd density, and security deployment. Data will be recorded from mobile devices, equipped with a custom made observation application.

### Expert Interviews:

Urban planners, geographers, and architects will be interviewed using a semi-structured format. Professional attitudes towards the connection between the urban design, public transportation, and women's safety would be involved in the topics of interviews. The interviews will be taped and transcribed using Atlas.ti software for qualitative analysis.

### Data Analysis:

- SPSS Software will be used to analyze the quantitative data from this survey.
- The software ArcGIS will be used for processing and visualizing spatial data to devise perception maps of safety.
- Responses from the open ended survey and the qualitative interview will be coded with the support of Atlas.ti for key themes.
- The integration of the above methodologies would give an overall understanding of women's safety in the public means of transport in Prague, hence evidence based recommendations for improvement.

## 3. Conclusion

This study hopes to get an in depth understanding of women's safety issues in the public transport system, in Prague, by using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The results will inform policy recommendations and measures to increase female safety and accessibility in urban public transportation. The study aims to support the broader interests of gender studies and urban geography by inquiring into how a specific, socially politicized, and individualized experience of safety can be promoted in Prague as a city that has taken on such radical changes since the fall of socialism [7].

The research will focus on improving women's safety in public transportation in Prague due to multiple experiences living in and studying different metropolitan areas. In doing so, one can build an even more just urban environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. The experience of this research will be applicable to drive systemic change and make intelligent policy decisions toward achieving gender parity in urban planning and public transport.

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