

TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY AND SECURITY: A MATTER OF GENDER?

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The difference between the sexes has long been ignored in the fields of both planning and transport. In the past, transport planners made no distinction between individuals on the grounds of their sex. Nevertheless, decisions were primarily taken by men, based on their interests and experience^a. This failure accentuated and perpetuated inequalities between men and women with regard to mobility^b. In this context, social beliefs that disparage women drivers appeared at the same time as the motor car, with the implicit aim of keeping women at home^c. Are the current challenges that face us in the areas of transport, mobility and safety a matter of gender?

Sex, gender: Whazat?^d

Why do we talk about differences between the “sexes”?

In scientific studies, the word “sex” is used to define the biological and physiological differences between men and women. “Men” and “women” correspond to two sexual categories.

What about “gender” then?

“Gender” refers to the beliefs and stereotypes that relate to each sex. It also refers to the activities, roles and personality traits a society deems to be more appropriate for men or women and which it values as “masculine” or “feminine”.

The concepts of “masculine” and “feminine” therefore relate to “gender”.

Does the question of “gender” provide us with a new way of seeing things?

“Gender” is a social construct that creates a hierarchy between men and women. While the biological differences between the sexes are relatively stable, the social expectations that are linked to gender vary from one time or place to another. If we wish to investigate gender, we therefore need to consider both men and women and the similarities and differences between them.

This thematic file presents IFSTTAR's research on gender in transport, mobility and safety, a topic to which the public authorities are attaching ever greater importance^e.

This research confirms that men and women do not use the same transport modes, and do not share the same frequencies or purposes of trip-making. Such differentiation appears very early in life and continues throughout it: elderly women stop driving sooner than men.

These differences may be partly due to a higher perception of risk. Women feel greater unease in public spaces and when using public transport. This perception of risk may explain some of their travel choices, such as their low level of interest in motorised two-wheelers. It may also explain their behaviours as drivers, motorcyclists and pedestrians, and their lower pass rate in the practical driving test^f. Taking account of women in transport research suggests new ways answering old questions. It requires us to redefine our current areas of concern and give women a role not only as subjects for research but also as active participants in the framing of policies for urban areas and transport.

1. TS2: Transport, Health, Safety Department

2. LESCOT: Laboratory Ergonomics and Cognitive Sciences applied to Transport

Further readings

World Health Organization. (2002). *Gender and road traffic injuries*. Retrieved from Geneva, Switzerland: <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/gender/2002/a85576.pdf?ua=1>

a. Fainstein, S. S., & Servon, L. J. (2005). *Gender and Planning, A reader*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press.

b. Tillous, M., & Lahmani-Saada, S. (2015). *Boîte à outils Genre. Transports et mobilité*. Paris: Agence Française de Développement.

c. Berger, M., L. (1986). *Women drivers!: the emergence of folklore and stereotypic opinions concerning feminine automotive behavior*. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 9(3), 257-263.

d. World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/fr/>

e. Some of the results presented in this file were presented in 2016 as part of the work of the French Senate's Commission for Women's Rights see “Les femmes et l'automobile” <https://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2015/r15-835-notice.html>

f. The project entitled “Permis_HF. Différence de sexe dans la réussite au permis de conduire : des paradoxes constatés vers les explications” got under way in 2017. It is the outcome of collaboration between IFSTTAR (TS2-LMA and TS2-LESCOT), Aix-Marseille Université and Université Lyon 2, and is financed by the Road Safety Directorate at the Ministry of the Interior



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