



4 THE ROLE OF GENDER IN RISKY BEHAVIOUR

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Do you really think that a woman driver is more dangerous? Researchers highlight behaviour differences in road users according to their sex. The scientific issue is now one of knowing if we reproduce social practices that are linked to a group of individuals of the same sex.

Gender differences in crashes and road traffic violations

At the global level, three times more men than women die in road traffic crashes. This is the greatest difference between the two sexes in mortality rates resulting from non-intentional injuries^a.

In Europe, men account for 75% of the individuals killed on the roads. In France, this difference is particularly apparent among young drivers: a third of the drivers who were killed in France in 2015 were between 18 and 24 years of age, and 86% of them were male.

In addition, in 2015 82,5% of the individuals presumed of being responsible for a road traffic crash were male, as were 92% of the crash-involved drink-drivers and 91% of the drivers who tested positive for drugs^b.

Describing and understanding gender differences in behaviours...

For a number of years work at IFSTTAR has been exploring the role of psychological and social characteristics in the risky behaviour of French road users³.

Use of a variety of methodologies (questionnaire-based surveys, observations in real

situations and experiments) has enabled this research to clarify gender differences in individuals' relationship to risk and the rules of the road. In particular, it is revealed the impacts of social expectations on the behaviours of transport users, from a very early age.

Observations of pedestrian behaviours have shown that, among both children and adults, females display attitudes more compliant with the rules than those of males and take the behaviours of other pedestrians more into account. However, while boys and men comply less with the rules of the road, they explore and attempt to control the physical environment to a greater extent^{c, d}.

... then explaining them

Additional psychosocial surveys have been conducted in order to study the psychological factors that are responsible for these differences between the two sexes. The findings show that, to a large extent, the differences depend on the extent to which individuals comply with the social expectations linked to the sexual group to which they belong, i.e. their gender^e.

Thus, the risky behaviours reported by boys and men are more the outcome of the desire to

comply with masculine social roles than of their biological sex. These findings are apparent among preschool children^f, adolescents^{g, h} and among adults, whether they are pedestrians, car drivers or motorcyclists^{i, j}.

Furthermore, this research has shown that the more women comply with the social expectations associated with femininity, the less attractive they find risky behaviours on the road. Their greater concern for the well-being of others thus inhibits road traffic violations.

“ Thus, sex differences in road traffic crash involvement are less the outcome of biological sex than the display, among both men and women, of the behaviours which our society expects of them. Deconstructing these social expectations is therefore an important issue for road safety education. ”

1. TS2: Transport, Health, Safety Department

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

3. A number of research activities were conducted, in particular projects financed by the state transport research programme PREDIT (GENRES, 2005-2008), the French Road Safety Foundation (SICAP, 2007-2010 and PAAM, 2012-2015 projects) and PhDs at Aix-Marseille University (two of which were jointly funded by IFSTTAR and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region).



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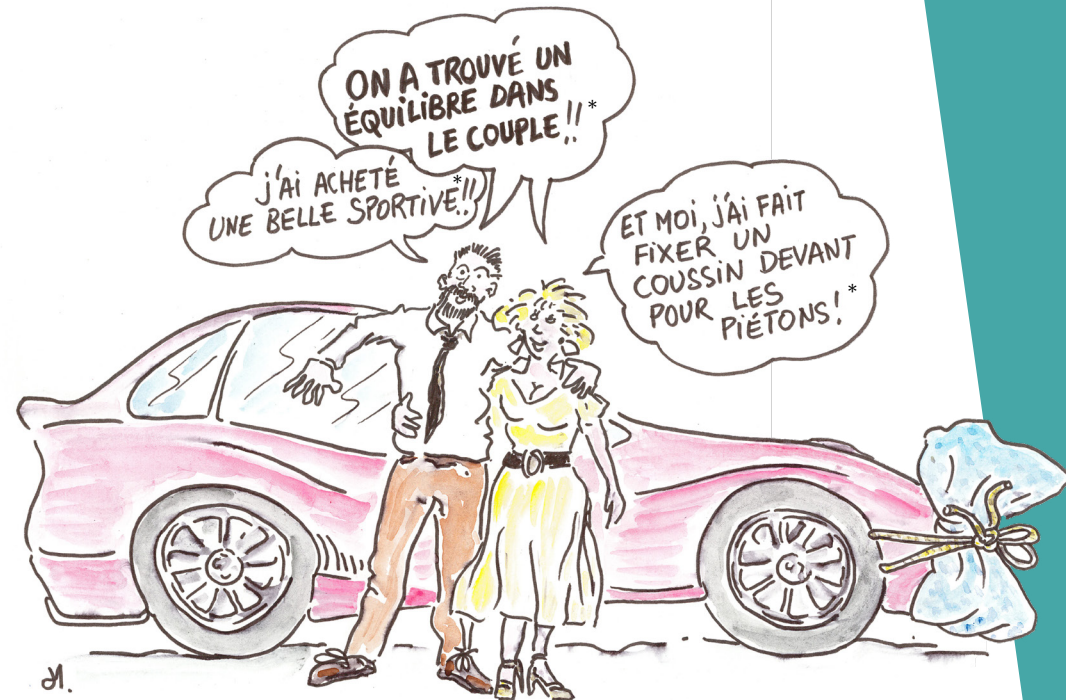
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* I've bought a great sports car
We're working well together as a couple
I've had a cushion to protect pedestrians fixed to the front



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