

# Fairness and Inclusion for Users of Surface Transport

Subjects: **Womens Studies**

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When looking into the concept of fairness in transport, inclusivity relating to users plays an important role. For a system to be both fair and inclusive, there is a need for valuable practices, implementation, and outcomes within the system that provide equitable access to transport resources for all abilities/disabilities. For public transport (PT), these resources are not limited to, but include the capability of the system to be accessible, safe, and meet the needs of its users without exclusions. To understand the perspectives of the factors affecting women's use of public transport, it is important to acknowledge the existence of mobility disparities between men and women. Likewise, it is paramount to understand that genders vary in accordance to strata in society. With PT usage, there are more female than male users. Caring responsibilities, family duties, motherhood, lower income, age, and abilities/disabilities are more prevalent societal factors for women. For public transport to be inclusive and fair for all, there is need for it to embrace the needs of women and comprehend the factors that affect or discriminate against use.

fairness

justice

gender

public transport (PT)

## 1. Introduction

There has been a significant increase in research on the issues relating to fairness and inclusion in the transport sector. While past decades looked to economic development and environmentalism for successful implementation of public transport projects, research shows <sup>[1]</sup> equitable user engagement as a prominent issue. There is an ever present need to understand the consistently created patterns of social inequality <sup>[2]</sup>. User acceptance and engagement with the service conforms to integrated network attributes <sup>[3][4][5][6]</sup>, which are mostly experienced inequitably <sup>[4][5][6]</sup>. A public transport system geared towards equitable access encompasses safe mobility and access to equal opportunity. The measure of such sustainable and effective transport systems and policies lies in their suitability for improving quality of life and standards of living that are equitable for all <sup>[1]</sup>. In acquiring fairness, the user's acceptance of the service provided is essential. While transit opportunity may not be experienced equally, focus avoids favouring one group over the other, which in turn limits social and economic opportunities <sup>[7][8]</sup>. Fairness plausibility is credited to its tenacity for justice <sup>[9]</sup> and its probity in implementation <sup>[1][8]</sup>. A lack of understanding of disparity in gendered mobility practices are detrimental to sustaining user engagement <sup>[10][11]</sup>. Comprehending women's mobility needs are focal to addressing such matters of fairness and inclusion <sup>[12][13]</sup>. While disparities do exist in the distribution of fairness, its conception leans towards impartiality <sup>[8]</sup>. A fair and just

public transport allows societal interactions <sup>[14]</sup>, promoting the user ability to thrive in society in the presence of inclusive user-centric policies <sup>[10][8]</sup>.

## **2. Barriers and Opportunities**

The prevailing barriers to equitable opportunities in public transport are viewed as being influenced by safety and security, accessibility and infrastructural integration. Women's daily interactions with PT are majorly affected by safety <sup>[15]</sup>, with imbalances of gender needs linked to homogeneous approaches <sup>[16]</sup> in transport policies. Investigations highlight disparities in the challenges faced by women, especially their personal safety while accessing the service, particularly at dark hours <sup>[17][18][19][20]</sup>. Women's apprehension to use public transport and/or transit space, stem from physical, phycological and conditional limitations <sup>[15][21][22][23]</sup>. To encourage women's access and engagement with public transport, gender equity should be the focal point. An understanding of gendered roles is key to improving users' accessibility. Women's travel patterns and behaviours are influenced by their household duties and care-giving responsibilities, often necessitating multi-modal travel use <sup>[24][25]</sup>. Nevertheless, planning and design focused primarily on radial, single-mode, one-directional, commuter-centered working trips neglect the shorter multi-destination journeys, which may include trips to locations such as schools, grocery stores, or (health) care facilities <sup>[26]</sup>. When gender disparity and the complex nature of women's transit patterns are not considered in transport planning, it leads to limitations in safe and reliable modes. In catering to a gender-inclusive transport system, the provided infrastructural element of the service must be considered <sup>[27]</sup>. Safe access to public transport incorporates every journey and aspect of travel, from first mile to last mile. In addressing fair and equitable mobility for women, transit spaces are required to be safe and welcoming. Infrastructures and active travel provisions need to be universally integrated to allow for the complexity of women's travel need, social activities and other modal choice <sup>[27][28]</sup>, plus, that of their dependant <sup>[26]</sup>. Women's mobility needs are often not accounted for in the onset of transport planning and design <sup>[30]</sup>. Yet, paramount to a sustained public transport system is the inclusion of women's mobility needs. The failure to observe these needs at the planning and decision-making stage deters multimodal, sustainable transit decisions while simultaneously adding risk to those with already limited mobility choices <sup>[29]</sup>.

Research on Fairness and Inclusion for Users of Surface Transport, informs on gender disparities among user experiences. User opinions of the service were investigated with respect to limitations and facilitators to accessibility, interaction with infrastructure as well as safety and security. Women's apprehension to engage with the service result from markedly deficient provisions of safety and security, specifically in relation to concerns of personal safety and transit space. These were disproportionately attributed to users with caring responsibilities and multimodal travellers. Public transport characteristics such as station location, crowding, reliability and modal integration amongst others, were found to influence women's travel behaviours and a resultant apprehension to engage with the service. Similarly, these transport characteristics impede upon women's sense of belonging, limiting their inclusion to society. Public transport service tends to be focused on transit from point A to point B, which lacks agile holistic interaction between modes, transit environments and destinations of choice. Women desire a transit system that provides safe and equitable functionality to their aggregated multimodal engagement.

Their interaction with public transport is approached strategically to navigate arrays of attributes including security, interconnectivity, reliability, dynamic real-time information, service infrastructure amongst others, all of which are critical to their engagement yet ill-informed by service provider. For women, interactions with the transport service requires planning and aggregated service elements that allows sufficient logistical access to transit spaces accommodating their dependants and personal belongings; to modal connectivity and active travel i.e., walking and cycling. Environmental and interpersonal factors are crucial to women's mobility choice, as well as a gauge to psychological and behavioural impacts. Women in comparison to men interrogate the aptness of the service offering and it's fit for purpose.

An inclusive and equitable transport system entails planning and designs that accommodate the nuances of mobility and transit practices, providing operations that cater to safe and integrated access. A fair transport system errs to just outcomes that promote user independence, wellbeing, and their ability to thrive within society. Transport links people to society and for many a necessity that provides access to opportunities. Thus, a sustainable transport system requires provisions that limits passenger segregation, accommodating the multiplicities of mobility needs and user differentiated experience. There is no one size fits all approach to achieving gender inclusion, rather adapting user-centric solutions that accounts for the nuances of mobility needs. Public transport policy and planning, designed from the user perspective caters not just to gender inclusion but social, economic and environmental growth.

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