Gender and Transport in Developed Countries

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Introduction

We do not believe or assume that all women are the same, or that they feel the same about public transport. This is manifestly not so. However, there are sufficiently significant differences between women's transport demands and experiences, as opposed to those of men—differences in access to private transport, in patterns of commuting and employment, in child-care and elder-care responsibilities, in basic attitudes to private and public transport—to justify treating women separately. Within that group 'women' there are highly important distinctions which depend—for example—upon income, age, household, elder- and child-care responsibilities, ethnicity, employment status, degree of disability, location, class and education The particular balance among these will vary from country to country and area to area, and it is therefore essential for policy makers and transport operators to gather information locally in line with best gender balancing practice in order to understand the characteristics of women.

This paper draws on data from Sweden, UK and the USA to demonstrate the widespread nature of inequality of access for women in the developed world and highlight the importance of the role played by transport in women's lives and its potential for ameliorating or exacerbating some of the structural disadvantages associated with women's roles.

Demographic profile

The world's fifth richest economy, the UK, has a population of 29.9 million women compared with 28.8 million men. Women make up 51% of the population. However, men outnumber women until they reach their mid-forties, when the numbers become more or less equal. For those aged 85 and over, there are 3 women to every man. 56% of women in Britain are married; 5% are cohabiting; 18% are single; 14% are widowed; 6% are divorced and 2% are separated. Over two fifths (43%) of women of working age in the UK have dependent children. One in five (21%) of these women is a lone parent.¹

In Sweden, 46% of a total population of over 8 million are women. Figures for 1994, show that 28% of the population were living in single adult households and the majority of the population, some 72%, were cohabiting. Within this group, 39% of the population lived in cohabiting households with children and 33% lived in cohabiting households without children. Of single person households, 6% had children and the majority of these were headed by women.²

In the US the fastest growing households is amongst single parent families. Between 1974-94 the total number of US families increased over 17% and the number of families headed by a cohabiting married couple fell by more than 10%. Families headed by a lone female parent now account for almost a quarter of all American families. Over the three decades since 1960 the percentage of children living with just one parent tripled. In 1990 around 22% of all children lived in single women households.

Women and employment

The dramatic increase in women in paid employment, especially women with young children, has been one of the most important changes in the labour market in the post-war era. In the UK, there were 11.7 million women of working age in employment in 1998/9, yielding an employment rate of 69% (compared with 78% for working age men)³. Six out of ten women who were married or cohabiting and who had pre-school children were economically active. In 1997, 44 % of all those of working age in employment were women. Of these, some 44% worked part-time, compared with 8% of men. Women represented 33% of all those working full-time and 88% of all those working part-time.

In the US, women make up 46% of the total workforce. Since 1970 the number of American women in paid employment increased by over 14% - male employment over the same period dropped by 4%. In the decade 1980 to 1990, almost 14 million women joined the workforce, compared to just under 10 million men. By 1992 over three quarters of women in the age group 35-44 were in paid employment. As a result, almost 60% of all women are wage earners. These US figures mask the marked increase in the workforce by women with children. As Sandra Rosenbloom points out,

"In 1986 over 61% of married women with children under 18 worked outside the home - compared to only 27% in 1960. Just as important is the substantial growth of employed married women with very

young children. In 1960 only 18% of married women with children under 6 were in the paid labour force; the comparable number was 30% in 1970 and 33% in 1976. Today almost 60% of married women with young children have salaried employment while almost 75% of married women with children from six to seventeen are in the paid workforce.⁴

In Sweden, women's participation in the workforce has also increased greatly since the 1970's and the largest increase has been in part-time employment. In 1995 80% of women between 20-64 were in the workforce, 45% worked full time and 29% were employed part time⁵.

Distribution of Men and Women by Employment Categories in Sweden in 1994, ages 6-84. **Private Business** Work, full-time **Employment Status** Work, part-time ■Women Men Home work Retired Student Unemployed 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 50 45 Percentage

Table 1

Source: The 1994 Swedish Travel Pattern Survey quoted in M Polk.

The sexual division of labour

Despite the movement of women into the paid employment market, the sexual division of labour within the household persists. The result has been an expansion of women's rôles rather than the achievement of gender rôle equality: any one woman can combine the rôles of, for example, paid employee, student, unpaid domestic labourer, and carer of children, sick or elderly people. Women continue to be primarily responsible for domestic work, including shopping and child rearing. In 1995 in the UK, a comparison of all those aged 16 or over showed that males spent on average 0.42 hours per day on domestic work compared with the average of 2.24 hours spent by women. As a result, women have less free time than men, especially at weekends: recent figures indicate that men enjoy an average of 17 hours free time per weekend compared with 12 hours for women.

Women's primary responsibility for child-care and the lack of adequate day care facilities substantially limits women's employment opportunities. When day-care is available it is often not for sufficient hours to enable a woman to work full-time, should she want to. This situation particularly impacts on women bringing up children alone. In the UK, the percentage of lone mothers increased from 12% of all mothers in 1979-83 to 21% in the period 1992-95. On all measures of socio-economic status including income, housing tenure, and working status, lone mothers are disadvantaged compared with mothers in couples: 70% of lone mothers had incomes which were less than 50 % of the median.⁷

Families headed by a lone mother in the US have considerably higher poverty rates then any other type of households. In 1994, 44% of single women households were living below the poverty level. And these families constituted a substantial portion of all poor families in the US almost 60% in 1994.

In addition, because of changes in the age-structure there are now more older people in need of home-based care. The carers of these sick and elderly adults are nearly always unpaid, and are almost exclusively women.

Considerations such as these mean that part-time work opportunities are important to women, particularly local opportunities. This further means that women tend to be concentrated into lower-level jobs where there is a high proportion of part-time staff; and they are more likely to be precluded from higher-level jobs e.g. managerial and professional work which are predominantly full-time.⁹

The persistent economic inferiority of women

Even after many years of Equal Pay legislation, women's pay lags behind that of men. In 1998 in the UK, the average male full-time hourly rate was £9.22 (part-time £6.71), while for women, the full-time rate was £7.48 (part-time £5.68)¹⁰. The EOC notes that throughout their working lives women generally earn less than men, regardless of whether they are managers or in lower-level jobs. This is because of women's weaker attachment to the labour market, which is, in turn, linked to their customary caring roles within families. It is also linked to the different jobs carried out by women and men which has its roots in the traditional gender split in subject choice at school.¹¹

In Sweden where sexual equality is considered to be one of the highest in the world, equality between men and women is still not evident in employment status and wages. In 1994 women working full time were earning 78% of men's salary within the private sector, and 83% within the public sector. Typically female employment, such as teaching, nursing and service jobs command lower levels of pay than typical male employment. Even women with higher education do not earn as much as their male counterparts. Within the public sector in Sweden, college educated women earn between 85-89% of men's salary.

In many parts of the developed world the largest increase in women's employment since 1970 has been in part time work. Women's earnings as part-time workers tend to be low, not only because of the pro-rata reduction, but also because part-time workers generally are in a vulnerable position in the labour market. Available figures may represent an underestimate of the scale of the problem, since they are based on official statistics, while much of women's part-time labour is casual and therefore not recorded.

In addition, the jobs that men do tend to be the more highly paid ones and men are more often employed at higher grades. Two thirds of managers and administrators and three out of five professionals in the UK are men. ¹³ Furthermore, women are concentrated in the service sector of the economy where wages have traditionally been lower— In the UK in 1997 around 86 % of women worked in the service industries compared with 59 % of men. ¹⁴

In the US the total number of service sector jobs grew to over 70% from 1970-90. This resulted in around 85 million service sector jobs or 72% of total employment. In 1990 women held 52% of these jobs but 68% of these were part time. 15

"Moonlighting" or multiple-job holding by women has increased in the US in line with the increase in households headed by females. According to Sandra Rosenbloom:

"These remarkable changes in the economic patterns of the country affect not only where women work but when; most of the changes involve a variety of work schedules. Census data show that almost 40% of all women workers do not have a day shift job 23% of all fulltime working mothers and almost 69% of those working part-time not only don't work the classic nine till five day, they don't even work most of their hours during that traditional period". ¹⁶

This is not to deny that there are indications of an increasing polarisation among women's incomes, which needs to be seen in the context of widening social and economic inequalities over the past two decades.¹⁷ Despite this, however, the differences between men and women remain more marked.

Why are women so badly paid and why do they work part-time when the financial rewards are so low? The economic inferiority of women has much to do with women's labour being less highly valued than men's.¹⁸ Additionally, women have fewer employment options than men: domestic and childcare re-

sponsibilities impose heavy restrictions, and the availability (or not) of good quality surrogate childcare is a key factor in enabling women to take up employment. Transport options can further impact on the ability to take up a job. Where women live is often determined by the workplace of the male partner. It is not uncommon for a woman returning to work after childcare to take a less skilled and more poorly paid job than she originally had. Homeworking, mainly done by women and the lowest paid of all types of employment, is perhaps the clearest and most extreme example of the way in which women's bargaining position in the labour market is reduced by childcare and transport constraints. ¹⁹

Physical differences, power and vulnerability

Gender differences in physical size, strength and mobility are relevant to women's greater vulnerability to attack and harassment, and thus to their greater concern with personal security and male violence. However, the roots of male violence against women have much to do with the relative powerlessness of women and cannot be understood solely in terms of physical difference. As Kelly (1999) notes: 'The prevalence and cumulative nature of violence against women makes it a citizenship issue. The fear and threat of violence limits not only women's sense of security and safety, but also their behaviour'.²⁰

In the US, 78 rapes occur each hour which add up to 683,280 each year²¹. In the UK, a recent briefing on women reports that 'over the 11 years from 1985 to 1996, the number of rapes recorded by the police increased threefold, from 1,842 in 1985 to 5,759 in 1996'.²² While much of the increase in recorded rapes is thought to be attributable to an increase in reporting and improvements in police procedures, the perception that we live in a climate of increasing crimes against the person, to which women are especially vulnerable, is a salient factor impacting on women's behaviour.

Transport Statistics

In recent years there has been a very welcome and increasing trend towards gender disaggregation of travel statistics, but there is still room for improvement, and our knowledge of gender differences in travel behaviour remains incomplete because in many cases there are no readily available statistics and there are also problems in tracing some historical trends—for example in the UK it is only recently that shopping trips have been disaggregated from personal business trips, and escort trips from 'other' trips. The previous lumping together of these categories is just one example of how androcentric assumptions can distort perceptions of women's travel. We should also be alert to the fact that many tabulations exclude journeys under one mile—most of which are made by women and children.

Gender differences in travel patterns

Available information indicates a fairly even split between men and women in respect of total number of journeys made. In the UK in 1995/97 men made on average 1,074 journeys per person per year compared with 1,032 for women (i.e. 4% more). When the travel indicator is distance covered rather than journeys made, however, a very different pattern emerges. In Sweden men travelled approximately 71 billion kilometers in 1994 or 61% of the total kilometers travelled, women travelled 45 billion kilometers or 39%. Women travel approximately 19 kilometers less a day than men, and women are making more walking and public transport trips than men. 24

In the UK in 1995/97, adult men (aged 16+) travelled on average nine thousand miles per year, compared with an average of fewer than six thousand miles travelled by women. Over all ages and all modes, the average trip length for men was 7.4 miles and 5.3 miles for women (i.e. 40 % more for men). This 'gender gap' in mileage has been closing over recent years—from a 65% difference in 1985/86 to 54% in 1995/97—and it should also be seen in the context of overall increases in mileage by everyone—an increase of almost 50 % since the early seventies. Journeys on foot are underrecorded, which seriously distorts any account of women's travel experience in particular.

Journey length varies markedly by journey purpose, and here gender is an important explanation. For example, shopping trips and escort education trips tend to be shorter than journeys to the place of paid employment. Journeys to work tend to account for a higher proportion of men's journeys, while shopping and escort education trips account for a higher proportion of women's.

Type of transport used

The great majority of journeys, for both men and women, are made by car—typically with men driving and women as passengers, although increasingly women are also drivers. Women tend to be in the majority on buses and on foot.

In the UK, in 1995/97, over 80% of the total distance travelled by adults was by car. Bus travel, including coach travel, accounted for 5 % of miles travelled, while Underground and surface rail accounted for 1 % and 5 % respectively; taxis/minicabs, bicycles, and motorcycles accounted for 1 % each, and walking a further 3 %.

Analysis of journeys per person per year in the UK showed that women made 30 % of their journeys on foot (compared with 25 % of men's journeys), 30 % as a car driver (men, 47 %), and 28 % as a car passenger (men, 17 %). In addition, 7 % of women's journeys were by bus and coach (men, 5 %), 2 % by rail (men also 2 %) and 1 % by taxi and minicab (again the same figure as for men). Only 1 % of women's journeys and 2 % of men's were by bicycle.

Women in the UK made about 10 % of their journeys by public transport (men, 7 %). In the US less than 3% of journeys were made by public transport.

Journey purpose

As the tables below show, there are notable differences between men and women in their reasons for travelling.

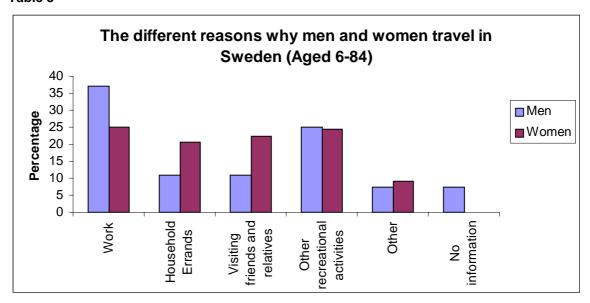
Table 2

The different reasons why men and women travel in the UK (percentages of total journeys made by men and women 1995-97).

Source: DETR, Focus on Personal Travel, 1998.

	Women	Men
To and from work	13	18
Travelling on business	2	5
Shopping	24	18
Education	7	7
Escort education	7	3
Other escort	8	8
Personal business	11	10
Leisure	24	24

Table 3



Source: The 1994 Swedish Travel Pattern Survey quoted in M Polk.

In Table 2, women's greater proportion of shopping and of escort education trips (i.e. taking children to or from school) are noteworthy. Overall, women made some 25 % more shopping trips than men in 1995/97 (243 on average per year compared with 199 for men). If we look at these figures broken down by age, the differences are even greater: for example, in the 30-39 age group, 16 % of women's journeys were to make escort education trips, compared with only 3 % for men of the same age.

The category 'leisure trips' hides important gender differences: 62 % of women's leisure trips were to visit friends at a private home (52 % for men) while men were more likely to go out to eat or drink with friends (accounting for 13 % of men's leisure trips and 9% of women's) and to participate in sport (12% versus 6%).

The phenomenon of 'trip-chaining' (i.e. making journeys with more than one purpose) appears as much amongst men as women but, as one might expect, the purposes for which the 'chains' are constructed differ widely. 'Shopping is more likely to be done by women on the way home... Men are more likely to chain two escort education journeys, and women are more likely to go on to the shops after taking children to school'.²⁵

Table 3 uses Swedish data which demonstrates sharp gender differences in travel purpose. Women do almost twice as much travel as men in the "household errands" category and "visiting friends and relatives".

Times of travelling

Another important area of gender difference is in the times when men and women travel: peak and off-peak travel, and day- and night-time travel. Because women are far more likely to be in part-time employment, and to be making social visits to families and friends, they travel more often off-peak than men; women's fear of violence and aggression means that they are far less willing than men to travel after dark. As Kelly (1999) notes:

A number of studies demonstrate that women restrict the places they go to and the times they travel; a 1988 survey found that women's travel patterns were strongly influenced by the need to avoid danger (Crime Concern 1993) and the 1992 British Crime Survey confirmed that women restrict their movements far more than men do.²⁶

Car availability

There has been particularly strong growth in licence-holding among women in the last ten years; the 1995/97 statistics indicate that 57 % of women in the UK compared with 81 % of men hold a full driving licence. However, only about two-thirds of female licence holders are the main driver of a household car compared with four-fifths of male licence holders. As with other parts of the industrialised world, women have increasingly taken to the car for their journeys.

While it is very common in very many countries to find that men use the car disproportionately more than women, in the US this is not the case. Between 1969 and 1990 the number of driving licence holders went up by 60% resulting in 96% of men and 90% of women between 30 and 49 being licensed to drive.

Table 4Car and Public Transport use in the USA

	1983		1990		83-90	% Difference
	% Car	% Public Transport	% Car	% Public Transport	% Car	% Public Transport
Men 16-64	87.5	2.6	89.1	2.3	+1.3	-0.3
Women 16-64	87.2	2.9	89.5	3.0	+2.3	+0.1
Men 65+	87.3	2.7	90.3	2.2	+3.0	-0.5
Women 65+	84.3	2.6	88.1	2.9	+3.8	+0.3

Source: Trends in Women's Travel Patterns. S. Rosenbloom

In Sweden the majority of people are licensed to drive, 80% of those aged between 18-84 have a driving licence. However, three quarters of those without a licence are women and only a quarter are men.

Table 5Driving license rates of Swedish men and women, aged 18 and over in 1994.
Calculated from the 1994 Swedish Travel Survey, quoted in M. Polk.

	License Number (millions)	% (men and women	% of total	No license Number (millions)	% (men and women)	% of total
Men	2.9	55	89%	0.3	26	9%
Women	2.4	45	71%	0.9	74	27%
Total Pop		(100)			(100)	
Over 18	5.3		80%	1.2		19%

In Sweden in the early 1990's, 19% of men and 38% of women between 18-84 did not have access to both a car and a driver's license. Car use had grown from 74% of households having access to a car in 1978 and by 1994 that percentage was up to 80%. But there are striking differences in who drives the car in Sweden. In one study, men were shown to be travelling 56% of their kilometers as the driver of a car and 14% as a passenger. However, women were travelling 30% of their kilometers as a driver and 40% as a passenger.

We should note that statistics based on 'the household' as a unit of analysis have done much to hide the full extent of gender inequality in car access. The availability of a car for personal use has major effects on travel patterns, and it is clear that where there is only one car and there is a male driver in the household it is overwhelmingly the male driver who has first call on it. The more cars that are available within a household, the more people travel by car than by any other means of transport: for instance in the UK, members of households in which there are no vehicles make an average of 14.4 journeys per week, compared with an average of 23.8 by households with three or more cars.²⁷

Effects of transport availability on women's lives

There are many examples of the role that transport plays in women's efforts to manage the multiple roles they play. Juggling paid and unpaid work as well as the demands of child care, and perhaps also care of adults, places particular time-constraints on women. This can cause great difficulties where public transport services are infrequent and/or unreliable. Getting to appointments and to work on time can be especially difficult.

Transport plays a significant role in either exacerbating or ameliorating the relative disadvantage of women. Transport poverty is very evident in many parts of the developed world and this compounds the many other difficulties associated with living on a low income. Poor transport options limit access to employment and social support networks, and to health, recreational and sports facilities, restricting both quality of life and 'life chances'.

Transport or the lack of it can impact directly on women's physical and emotional well-being. There are obvious health risks associated with waiting for long periods in inclement weather, particularly for older women, and respiratory problems triggered by traffic pollution and poor air quality. Some of the problems of travelling by public transport affect women's wellbeing by producing strong, negative emotions. Long waits after a tiring day produce frustration and anger. Overcrowding on public transport involves invasion of personal space which many find distressing, and which renders women vulnerable to sexual abuse. Fear of harassment and attack produces high levels of anxiety. All of these, particularly the last, can act as a strong deterrent to women travelling at all.

Thanks to recent advances in, for example, psycho-neuroimmunology, it is now widely recognised that emotions can impact on physical as well as mental health. The stresses of travelling can be considerable and serious consideration needs to be given to ways of minimising these. Conversely, when women are dissuaded from travelling by factors such as these and by poor transport availability, there can also be consequences for health and well-being. The ability to 'get out and about' is important for the maintenance of a positive outlook on life. Social relationships are kept healthy through regular social contact. They are a crucial factor for both the mental health of the individual and the 'social capital' of the community.

Choice and options

In practice women have few travel options or choices open to them. As a general rule, if car transport is available this will be used, whether as a driver or a passenger, in preference to using public transport. There are very few examples in the available literature of genuine choice over mode of personal travel, and even fewer examples where public transport is used in preference to the car because it is cheaper, quicker or more pleasant.

As part of a recent UK study, women were questioned about their attitudes and experience of transport, in particular about what stopped them from using public transport. Their responses revealed that their predominantly negative experiences of public transport do not appear in most cases to prevent

them from using it. There does however appear to be a significant reduction in actual as opposed to desired journeys for social and recreational purposes, particularly in the evening and more so among women with caring responsibilities and those in older age groups. Examples of what may be termed 'imperatives to car use', were evident and these were of two kinds: first, strong concerns about personal security, for example; and second, the need to ensure safe travel to school for one's children.²⁸ Costs and inconvenience associated with children's journeys to school were also major concerns, but safety was paramount:

Although car ownership and use are on the increase among women, there is still an important market for public transport among women. There are many pressures to get and use a car, but research among women indicates that cars are also perceived to have a range of disadvantages and limitations that other competing modes have either low availability, high costs or low attractiveness for women, and that for the great majority cycling and motorbike cycle use are hardly seen as options at all. For many women, walking is still probably the most viable option for shorter journeys. However, rising rates of crimes against the person does nothing to allay women's concerns about personal security. Additionally, often hazardous pedestrian environments and the encumbered nature of many of women's journeys lessen the attractiveness of walking. There remains a strong need for some form of motorised non-private transport in keeping with transport and sustainability criteria to meet women's travel needs.²⁹

In conclusion, the failure to produce transport policies and provision that meet women's needs has exacerbated social exclusion and environmental pollution. Much more research needs to be undertaken to provide a clearer picture of women's lives, their domestic and family responsibilities and their preferred work and leisure patterns, particularly at the local level.

This data could then be employed to promote greater awareness among those responsible for transport provision of the extent of gender inequality and more importantly as material to construct a tool to audit ³⁰ all transport plans. A better transport future for women could then be attained if all policy and plans were audited for gender sensitivity.

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Unit

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