A Safe City for Women and Girls is a Safe City for Everyone

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“The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights” Gloria Steinem

The "right of free movement" is linked to the "right to safe mobility" as part of the concept of basic human rights. Everyone should be able to travel without fear of physical or verbal attack, regardless of gender. But reality and documented research reveals that more than 80% of women and girls experienced harassment in public. 80% of women are afraid of being harassed in public transportation, which has a significant impact on their access to opportunities and their quality of life. More than 90% of sexual harassment on public transport goes unreported. Fear of reporting, of being further embarrassed or targeted again, often compounded by a lack of trust in the police and judicial systems, contributes to this. In the absence of representative data due to the underreporting, this becomes to an “invisible” problem, an open secret that everyone knows but does not recognise as an issue significant enough to merit any particular intervention.

A lack of safe and secure transport reduces economic opportunities, reinforces poverty and increases inequality. Considering this, decision makers and planners must rethink on how their interventions are contributing to the idea of women as equal citizens and their right to free and safe mobility in the city. It is essential to include gender awareness in the infrastructure projects, seeing the individual embedded in household, neighbourhood, region and broader society, as a part of the whole ecosystem. The mobility patterns of men and women are different. All over the world, women are frequent and regular users of public transport, they make more daily trips but travel shorter distances. This is because the majority of women often work closer to home and are more likely to be employed part-time, or to work in low-paying jobs. In many countries, they are less likely to have a driver’s license. As women continue to be the primary caregivers, they are more likely to link or chain trips together, as a result of escorting children to school or going to health care visits with them or other relatives.

At PTV Group, we have been involved in road safety projects for many years and are committed to the European Road Safety Charter led by the European Commission. Together with more than 2,300 signatories from public and private entities, we have joined the road safety community to implement measures that help reduce road fatalities all around the globe. Our software solutions can model, simulate, analyse and optimise mobility ecosystems. With our tools, networks can be designed more efficiently, and traffic planners and engineers can pay specific attention to safety and security issues to identify and eliminate weak points. That is our core business; we are working on for nearly 40 years. We ensure, for example, that evacuation and disaster management centres are equipped with the right technologies that help save lives in case of an emergency, focus on public transport services that address the needs of every community member, and develop pedestrian profiles that reflect the diversity of people living in a neighbourhood.
In developing new software solutions that transform the way we think about transportation, one of our starting points is to empower women and girls through safe and secure mobility services without perpetuating gender roles. For us, equitable transportation is not only a question of rights and inclusion, but it is also imperative for sustainable urban growth.

There are two steps that can help reduce and prevent the extent of violence and harassment women experience when using mobility services. The first step is to fill the informational void to create more awareness for this urgent topic and to push it as a necessary part of a broader movement to combat gender inequality at all echelons of society. The second step is to always include the gender perspective in every urban planning project and the best way to ensure this is integrating women into the policymaking, decision-making, and planning of urban transport systems, also increasing the number of women working in transportation because a safe city for women and girls is a safe city for everyone.

**Useful links**