

Gender-Sensitive Transportation

Affordable modes of transportation are the key to participation in the community and in commerce and business because they facilitate the ability to get to workplaces, schools and institutions of higher learning, and recreational and cultural events. Women and men have different travel patterns and separate experiences when using the various modes of transportation, which stem, among other things, from the greater responsibility that women have for caring for the household and children and from different senses of security and safety that are shaped in a reality of gender inequality (for example, a woman will avoid traveling alone at certain times of the day and in certain areas for fear of sexual violence). When the transportation systems do not address this social reality, they are liable to limit the access that women, and also other social groups (such as persons with disabilities), have to public resources and services.

In recent years, a growing number of international organizations, countries and cities worldwide have acknowledged the importance of gender mainstreaming in transportation planning and design, which take into consideration the effect of gender on mobility and movement in the public space.

This chapter, led by the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Authority and the Resilience and Social Equality Authority, deals with the mainstreaming of the gender lens in the transportation vision of the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, and places special emphasis on the use women make of public transportation and bicycles. It reviews the existing situation in the city, provides examples of initiatives from other places in the world, adopts action items that support gender equality in transportation planning, and advances sustainable transportation for all.

The Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality's Transportation Vision

Against the backdrop of increasing traffic volumes in the city, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality adopted a municipal vision for the development of mass transit systems and sustainable modes of transportation that will offer residents and visitors a variety of transportation options for safe, rapid, convenient, inexpensive and healthy mobility, similar to the situation in other leading cities in the world.

To achieve its vision, the Municipality seeks to "reverse the pyramid": from this time forth, pedestrians are at the top of the priority list, followed by people who get around using personal mobility devices (bikes and scooters) and public and shared transportation, motorcyclists, commercial delivery trucks, and lastly – private cars.

Accordingly, the Municipality has set numerical targets for increasing the use of bikes and public transportation in the city and, in cooperation with the Ministry of Transportation and different transportation companies, it is working, among other things, to improve transportation infrastructure and services by: adding more bus lines and increasing their frequency, establishing a light rail, creating an ecosystem for safe and convenient bike riding, and more.

To advance the city transportation vision and its objectives, it is necessary to understand how the travel patterns of women and men differ: the data indicate that in Tel Aviv-Yafo, like in other large cities in the West, women are the main users of public transportation, and for that reason it is important to be familiar with their use experience. At the same time, because women ride bikes less than men, they are a group with high potential for advancing the municipal target pertaining to bike riding.

Public Transportation

Women make up a clear majority - 60% - of the users of intracity lines of public transportation in Israel (Ministry of Transportation data, 2013).

Their travel patterns are different from those of men, which, among other things, is the result of the gender division of labor at home and in the labor market: compared to men, women travel more during off-peak hours; they make more trips during the day, but for shorter distances; when traveling, they are accompanied by their children or elderly parents; and their trips are characterized by more stops on the way, for instance at health or shopping centers and at educational institutions.

Additionally, there is a significant difference between the sense of security and safety that women and men have in the public space, which has also implications for travel patterns. Research studies from around the world suggest that women are less inclined to use public transportation when it is dark outside. The location of the stations, how far away they are, and if they are situated in abandoned, isolated and poorly lit areas – all these factors affect their decisions about whether, how and when to use public transportation.

Up-to-date and precise data about the extent of sexual harassment on public transportation are not available, but the Ministry of Transportation data for 2013 indicate that when it is dark outside, one-third of the women in Israel do not feel safe when walking to or from their stop, and one-quarter do not feel safe while waiting and riding.

In Tel Aviv-Yafo, **36% OF WOMEN TAKE A BUS TO WORK**, as opposed to 25% of men

(2019 data, The Center for Economic and Social Research, Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, 2021).



According to the findings of a survey conducted in 2011 by the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality in cooperation with the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, **ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR WOMEN HAS EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR AN OBSCENE ACT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**, and one out of every five women has witnessed them

(Office of the State Comptroller and Ombudsman, Annual Audit Report 70b, 2020).

Physical barriers to modes of transportation and stations also make it hard for parents, and primarily mothers of young children (who are usually the ones traveling with children) to get around conveniently. Among other things, it is difficult to take on and store baggage and baby carriages on public transportation in a convenient and accessible manner. And oftentimes, there are obstacles on the platforms and at the stops that make it hard to get on the bus or train – ranging from multiple stairs to types of platforms that are not suited to baby carriages.

Bike Riding

Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality data from recent years indicate that significant disparities exist between women and men in all that concerns bike and scooter riding.

AROUND 25% OF THE WOMEN IN TEL AVIV-YAFO RIDE BIKES, as opposed to around 33% of the men

(Women in Numbers, 2020).

There is a clear preference among women cyclists for riding regular bikes: **73% OF WOMEN CYCLISTS RIDE REGULAR BIKES** and 22% ride electric bikes. That preference increases with age (Municipal Modal Split Survey, 2020).

9% OF THE WOMEN in Tel Aviv-Yafo ride scooters, as opposed to 22% of the men

(Women in Numbers, 2020).



In 2019, **ONLY 7% OF WOMEN** used Tel-O-Fun rental bikes, as opposed to 15% of men.

(Municipal Budget Proposal for 2019).

84% of the women who do not ride bikes never rode them in the past, and about 9% of them **STOPPED RIDING DUE TO SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

(Municipal Modal Split Survey, 2020).

The disparities that were identified in the bike riding data led the Municipality to invest efforts to gain a deeper understanding of riding patterns from a gender perspective: to examine why women seldom ride bikes, and accordingly find solutions that can increase the percentage of women who ride bikes. Two special research studies conducted by the Municipality on the subject produced the following findings:

→ Just like the use of public transportation is affected by the gender division of labor at home and at work, its impact is also evident in bike riding: women ride bikes more during off-peak hours and less in the evening and at night; quite often they are accompanied by children or ride with them in child bike seats; and their trips are not long and linear like those of men, but rather are characterized by multiple stops for different purposes. Because those characteristics make bike riding more of a challenge, the percentage of women who ride bikes is declining, especially among women from a low socioeconomic background.

→ As bike riders, women feel more threatened on the road and report that they have difficulty finding their place on it. They tend to be more fearful of being harmed, either due to an accident or a theft crime. Consequently, they express a clear preference for bike paths that are separated from the traffic – removing that barrier has high potential for increasing the number of women bike riders.

→ Social and cultural perceptions affect the desire and sense of self-efficacy of women with regard to bike riding. Thus, for example, the image of the female bike rider as a young and athletic woman from downtown Tel Aviv creates a perception that bike riding is not suitable for most women.





What did we learn from other parts of the world?

On International Women's Day in 2020, **Transport for London** launched a campaign designed to encourage women to ride bikes, after a survey found that women are underrepresented among bike riders. As part of that campaign, free bike riding trainings for all levels of experience and ability were offered, either through online courses or lessons with instructors.

In 2015, in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, **Transport for London** launched the "Report it to Stop it" campaign, which encourages reporting of sexual harassment on public transportation, after a survey found that 90% of the women who experienced harassment did not report it. Videos produced by the campaign were circulated in the different media and encouraged women who were harassed to send messages in real time to a special hotline. In the first year of the campaign, the reported number of incidents of sexual harassment on public transportation increased by 33% compared to the previous year, and the number of arrests for harassment increased by 36%.



In **Quito, Ecuador**, there is a similar program in place called "Stop Harassment" on public and private bus lines in the city. The campaign encourages women who are experiencing harassment to send a text message to a special hotline. After the message is received, the call center immediately contacts the driver, the loudspeakers on the bus alert passengers and ask them to remain vigilant and respect those around them, and a psychologist calls the woman (or man) who sent the message and extends support. At the same time, the police and transportation staff wait at the next stop.



In **Montreal and Toronto in Canada** and in **Kalmar, Sweden**, when it is dark outside, a service is activated between stations that enables women passengers to ask the driver to alight in a location convenient for them and not necessarily at a regular stop. That way they have a shorter walk to their destination.





Many cities in **Sweden** are working to increase personal safety on public transportation, with a focus on the area surrounding the stations. For example: by removing hazards and shrubs, installing better lighting, avoiding the location of stations in abandoned areas, and more.



Action Items for Mainstreaming a Gender Lens in Transportation Planning in Tel Aviv-Yafo

For Implementation Within Five Years





Long-term gender mainstreaming in the planning and development of the municipal transportation system

- Creating, broadening and increasing the availability of the knowledge about transportation and gender (surveys and other research tools) 
- Holding trainings for municipal stakeholders and preparing a gender-sensitive transportation manual for planned transportation projects
- Establishing a municipal forum dealing with transportation and gender 




Applying a gender lens when planning public transportation infrastructure

- Applying a gender lens when planning bus terminals and light rail stations
- Improving connectivity and optimizing routes and the location of the stations 
- Increasing the personal safety of women in municipal parking lots 
- Increasing personal safety on public transportation, while collaborating with the Ministry of Transportation and different transportation companies (for example, through trainings for drivers dealing with violence prevention, a public campaign, examining an "in between stations" service, ensuring the implementation of a "see and be seen" principle at stations by means of adequate lighting and good visibility, a reporting mechanism in real time, etc.

Raising the percentage of women who ride bikes and scooters

- Continued improvement of infrastructure by paving bike paths that are as separate as possible from vehicular traffic, with an emphasis on connectivity with educational institutions, community centers, health and employment centers 
- Riding and bike repairing trainings and campaigns for girls and women 
- Forming riding groups for women from different social groups and neighborhoods in the city, and encouraging networking and mentoring between women bike riders 
- Adapting the municipal Tel-O-Fun rental bikes to the average height of women 

Increasing the representation and presence of women in the transportation space

- Guaranteeing representation for women in decision-making processes relating to transportation in the city 
- Increasing the visibility of diverse female images in the public space by installing signage that includes female images 
- Including women from diverse groups in municipal promotional materials 



*Already in progress

[Click here to read the introduction and the other chapters of the plan >>](#)

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***Research and academic guidance:** Dr. Yael Hasson and Dr. Valeria Seigelshifer, Adva Center