Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy

PAPER 7

Public Transport in a Gender Equal Economy

Rebecca Gill, November 2019

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Executive Summary

Public transport is a key driver in economic inequality in the United Kingdom (UK). Affordable and reliable public transport allows people to undertake activities and access services. The evidence shows that across the UK most public transport is neither affordable nor reliable, treated as a luxury rather than a necessity in people's lives.

The UK has a complex public transport system, overseen by central and local government as well as devolved administrations. Following a major programme of renationalisation in the post-war era, public transport was slowly deregulated from the mid-1980s onwards. Since then, fares have risen and many services have been cut – this is particularly true of buses.

Most journeys on public transport in Great Britain (GB) are made by bus although bus use is on the decline and fares continue to rise. Women and people on low incomes are the biggest users of buses. Rail remains a popular way to travel long distances on public transport in the UK but fare costs and station location are barriers to access for many people.

The UK is unique in Europe in having a deregulated system for its buses. Bus services are primarily delivered by private companies across the UK. These operate in a free market: each company can operate timetables and introduce new services solely on individual operators' views on the demand and commercial viability. There are currently five major commercial bus operators in the UK: in 2019 four of these companies made pre-tax profits totalling almost £800m. The role of central and local government is to subsidise elements of local transport including concessionary fares and 'socially necessary' services. Recent cuts imposed on local government by central Government has had a significant impact on transport subsidy which has resulted in significant cuts to bus services in many areas of the country.

Public transport is critical in tackling climate change. The UK Government is currently working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Encouraging people to switch from private car to public bus could be transformative: overall, buses emit less air pollution than the equivalent number of car journeys they replace and a fully loaded double decker bus can take up to seventy-five cars off the road. Reregulation of buses in particular would allow local authorities to govern, plan and manage local public transport.

Introduction

Public transport is a key driver in economic inequality in the UK.[1] Affordable and reliable public transport allows people to undertake day to day activities and access essential services. Conversely, limited access to quality, affordable, reliable public transport exacerbates social disadvantage and inequality.[2] Such inequality will have a bigger impact on women than on men because women are more likely than men to live in poverty and to experience 'persistent poverty'.[3]

Public transport of any mode needs to be reliable and affordable for it to meet the needs of the public it serves, but all the evidence shows that across the UK most public transport is neither, treated as a luxury rather than a necessity in people's lives.

This briefing provides an overview of how public transport in the UK is currently delivered and offers some recommendations for how this could be altered to deliver a comprehensive transport system in a gender equal economy. Data about public transport is inconsistent: some data covers the UK, some to Great Britain (GB) and some covers the four nations individually. These distinctions are referenced as clearly as possible throughout this report.

Key Facts about gender and public transport in the UK

- In 2017/18, **UK Government spending on public transport** totalled £32.5bn.[4]
  - This included £18bn on railways, £10.5bn on roads and £2.5bn on 'local public transport' including buses.[5] Of this, £26.4bn was spent in England, £3.6bn in Scotland, £1,3bn in Wales and £555m in Northern Ireland.
- **Across the UK, women and men use public transport differently:**
  - In 2018 men in **England** made slightly more journeys by rail than women, but women made over a third more journeys by bus than men.[6] Across the year:
    - **Men** on average made 13 journeys by bus in London, 28 journeys by local buses outside of London, 24 journeys by rail and 12 journeys by London Underground.
    - **Women:** On average made 17 journeys by bus in London, 38 journeys by local buses outside of London, 21 journeys by rail and 10 journeys by London Underground.
  - In **Scotland and Wales** these trends are replicated: women were more likely to use the bus than men, whilst men were more likely to use rail than women.
  - In **Northern Ireland** there was little difference in how frequently men and women used public transport, but like the rest of the UK, men tended to travel further distances than women on all forms of transport.[7]
- **The use of public transport is closely linked to income across Great Britain.** Poorer people use the bus and wealthier people use trains.
  - In **Scotland,** people earning up to £15k per year are twice as likely to use the bus every day than those earning £30k-£40k and three times as likely as those earning £50k+; conversely,

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[1] https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/Taken%20for%20a%20Ride.pdf p.6

[2] For a comprehensive analysis of the links between poverty and transport, see https://www.ucl.ac.uk/transport-institute/pdfs/transport-poverty

[3] The Office for National Statistics define persistent poverty "as experiencing relative low income in the current year, as well as at least 2 out of the 3 preceding years" https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/articles/persistentpovertyintheukandeu/2015

[4] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762027/tsgb1303.ods

[5] https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8130#fullreport

[6] www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts03-modal-comparisons#mode-by-age-and-gender NTS0702

[7] https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/infrastructure/tsni-in-depth-report-2015-2017.pdf p.21

those earning up to £15k per year are five times less likely than those earning over £50k to use the train.[8]

- o In **England**, people in bottom income quintile are a third more likely than any other earners to use buses in London and three times more likely to use buses outside London than those in the highest income quintile. By contrast, people in the highest income quintile are three times more likely to use rail – and almost three times more likely to use London Underground - than those in the lowest income quintile.[9]

- In many parts of the UK the lack of affordable, reliable public transport makes people dependent on **cars**. There is a correlation between gender and car use as well as income and car use.
  - o In **Great Britain**, 53% of full driving license holders are men and 47% are women[10];
  - o In **England**:
    - ▪ 81% of men and 70% of women hold driving licenses. Men are more likely than women to take trips by car (although this does change depending on age) and to travel further distances.
    - ▪ women travel on foot more than men[11], and make fewer journeys by car than men[12]
    - ▪ 46% of households in the lowest income quintile have no access to a car, compared to 13% of those in the highest income quintile.[13]
  - o In **Scotland**:
    - ▪ 76% of men and 64% of women have a driving license (the numbers of women holding licences has increased more rapidly amongst women than amongst men).[14]
    - ▪ 50% of people earning £15k per year had a full driving license, compared to 90% of those earning £50k and over.[15]

Public transport – implications for women

There is clear statistical evidence that women and men use transport differently and is replicated all over the world, reflecting the significant differences in women's and men's lives. In many instances, women's dependence on public transport makes them "captive customers" – without any alternative means of transport at their disposal.[16]

Expensive and unreliable public transport can substantially reduce women's access to paid employment, education, retail options, social activities as well as essential services such as welfare services, hospitals and GP surgeries. Women are more likely than men to have caring responsibilities that may require them to make multiple short journeys during a day (for example to drop children off at school, visit an elderly parent and shop for food) and to travel with dependents. Women are far more likely than men to be in paid part time work for significant periods of their working lives, to work 'atypical' hours or to be out of paid work but classed as 'economically inactive'.

There is also a 'gender commuting gap'[17]: on average, men spend longer commuting to work than women with a big shift starting when women have their first child. The commuting gap then widens

[8] https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-results-from-the-scottish-household-survey-1/table-28-bus-and-train-use-adults-use-of-local-bus-and-train-services-in-the-past-month-2018/
[9] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821435/nts0705.ods
[10] http://data.dft.gov.uk/driving-licence-data/Driving-Licence-data-%20August%202019.xlsx
[11] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821431/nts0601.ods
[12] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821431/nts0601.ods
[13] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821522/nts0703.ods
[14] https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-results-from-the-scottish-household-survey-1/5-motor-vehicles-traffic-and-driving/ Fig. 19
[15] https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/transport-and-travel-in-scotland-results-from-the-scottish-household-survey-1/table-19-driving-licence-people-aged-17plus-that-hold-a-full-driving-licence-2018/
[16] https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/womens/chap34.pdf p.651
[17] https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13673

over the next decade, mirroring the pattern of the gender pay gap. Women's reduction in commuting time is often linked to them leaving the paid labour market altogether to perform a role as full time carer, or to find paid work closer to home life. Both of these decisions can have a significant impact on women's earning capacity in the immediate and longer term.

Public Transport – implications for climate change

Public transport is critical in tackling climate change. According to Friends of the Earth, transport is the UK's biggest contributor to climate change.[18] Thirty years ago, transport accounted for 19% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, today it accounts for more than a third with carbon emissions starting to rise. Cars are a big source of the problem and the pressure is on central and local governments to encourage 'modal shift': moving people away from private car use towards travel by foot, bicycle and public transport.

The UK Government is currently working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050; some, such as the Labour Party, feel this target is not ambitious enough and argue for it to be achieved by 2030, others, such as the pressure group Extinction Rebellion, believe this target needs to be met by 2025.

The Government's recently published strategy for achieving its target identifies buses as critical to its objectives.[19] The evidence shows that the switch from private car to public bus can be transformative: overall, buses emit less air pollution than the equivalent number of car journeys they replace and a fully loaded double decker bus can take up to seventy five cars off the road.[20] Alongside this is a drive to ensure public buses are zero emission vehicles – the technology for buses in this arena is far ahead of that for cars.[21] Transport for London aims to only purchase zero emission bus vehicles from 2020[22] and it has put buses at the heart of its ambitious sustainability targets.[23]

However there are also calls for more wide reaching solutions to tackle transport's contribution to climate change. In a recent report on creating a world class local public transport system[24] Friends of the Earth argued for increased investment in public transport and crucially, for the bus service across the UK to be be re-regulated, allowing local authorities to govern, plan and manage local public transport. FoE argue that the main features of a world-class public transport system experienced by passengers would include a comprehensive network; frequent, reliable and affordable services; a single ticketing system, valid across all modes; new low-emission vehicles; and high-quality waiting facilities. Using several examples from around the world, including a recent decision by the Luxembourg government[25], FoE stated that public transport should be free at the point of use.

An Overview of Public Transport in the UK

A brief history

After WW2, a major programme of renationalisation of key utilities and industries including rail was undertaken. This remained in place until the late 1970s when political consensus about public ownership broke down. Rail was privatised in 1993 when British Rail was divided into two main parts and sold to private companies: one part was the national rail infrastructure (track, signalling, bridges, tunnels, stations and depots) and the other the operating companies whose trains run on that network. Infrastructure was brought back into the public sector in 2002 after the privatised

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[18] https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/radical-transport-response-climate-emergency
[19] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf p.112
[20] https://greenerjourneys.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Improving-Air-Quality-in-Towns-and-Cities-PROF-DAVID-BEGG-Final.pdf p.2
[21] https://greenerjourneys.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Improving-Air-Quality-in-Towns-and-Cities-PROF-DAVID-BEGG-Final.pdf p.7
[22] http://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-business-plan-2019-24.pdf p.15
[23] http://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-business-plan-2019-24.pdf p.78
[24] https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2019-02/free-buses-under-30s.pdf
[25] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/05/luxembourg-to-become-first-country-to-make-all-public-transport-free

infrastructure company, Railtrack, went into administration and is now owned, maintained and operated by Network Rail, a public company. Rail services are run by privately-owned train operating companies (TOCs) and freight operating companies (FOCs).[26]

Between 1930 and the early 1980s, bus services across the country were mainly owned and run by the public sector. However, increasing popularity of the private car started to impact passenger numbers, seeing them halve between the 1960s and 1980s.[27] The 1985 Transport Act[28] fundamentally changed the provision of bus services in the UK, introducing a private market to the sector and significantly reducing the role of the state. Today, the provisions of the 1985 Transport Act remain largely unchanged across the UK. The only exceptions to this are in London and Northern Ireland (see below).

The current picture

The UK Government in Westminster is responsible for public transport policy across the UK and in England. It retains reserved powers for 'national' transport, such as aviation and maritime policy, and major roads and national rail as well as the bulk of the funding for local transport in England, including buses and trains. [29]

Devolution, and specifically The Scotland Act 1998, The Government of Wales Act 1998 and The Northern Ireland Act 1998, means that public transport (including roads, buses – including bus subsidy and regulation, local railway, cycling, and concessionary travel schemes) is delivered by devolved Governments – although the extent that transport is devolved is determined by legislation being ratified in Parliament. For example, Wales is currently waiting for the Wales Act 2017 to be ratified by the UK Parliament. This introduces a 'reserved powers' model to transport, effectively reversing the current model in that it will specify the matters reserved to the UK and make everything else devolved. This will give the Assembly complete powers over the bus and rail network including whether to legislate on re-regulation.

In Northern Ireland, the vast majority of public transport services are provided by the subsidiary companies of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) - a statutory body established by the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to oversee the provision of public transport in country. The three subsidiary companies, Citybus, NI Railways and Ulsterbus, have operated under the overall brand-name of Translink since 1996, although the companies are separate legal entities.[30] The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has overall responsibility for transport policy and planning in Northern Ireland. Since the fall of the power sharing executive in 2017, the DfI has continued to deliver on transport policy which had been agreed by Ministers before the shut down, but no further decisions have or can be made until power sharing resumes.

In London buses were not deregulated in the 1980s, and under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 responsibility for London's bus services transferred from London Transport to Transport for London (TfL). TfL decides which local services are required for the purpose of providing "safe, integrated, efficient and economic" transport services in Greater London and plans the detailed pattern of bus services, known as the London Bus Network. Only TfL, its subsidiary or someone with an agreement with TfL, may provide a service on the network. London Buses, as part of TfL, plans the bus network and controls fares. The bus network is kept under continuous review with up to 20 per

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[26] For a comprehensive guide to the history of rail ownership models, see http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8325/CBP-8325.pdf
[27] See http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7545/CBP-7545.pdf
[28] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/contents/enacted
[29] http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03156/SN03156.pdf
[30] http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03156/SN03156.pdf .p.16

cent of the total 700 route contracts re-let each year. This system also allows TfL to, for example, specify accessibility and environmental standards.[31] The majority of TfL's funding comes from passenger fares, some from sources such as the congestion charge and some from government grants (national government and Greater London Authority support).

Buses

Most journeys on public transport in Great Britain are made by bus. In 2017/18, three out of five journeys were made by bus, one in five by national rail, less than one in five by underground (London and Glasgow) and 3% by light rail/tram.[32]

People on low incomes are significantly more likely to use buses than people on higher incomes. People in England in the lowest income quintile were three times more likely to use local buses than those in the highest income quintile and a third more likely than any other income group to travel by bus in London.[33] Women are more likely to use the bus than men: for example, in 2018, women in England made a third more journeys by bus than men.[34]

However, the number of bus passenger journeys in GB continue to decline. In March 2019, local bus passenger journeys had declined by 1% across GB compared to the previous year. This included a decline of 1% in England, 2.8% in Scotland and 3.2% in Wales.

In the most recent attitudes survey on buses in England (2013), 44% of respondents had never used a local bus compared to 27% of people who used one weekly.[35] Of those respondents who didn't use a local bus service, 18% of women and 15% of men said it was because the buses were infrequent or didn't run when needed. In addition, 35% of respondents said they would use buses more often if the buses were more frequent: 41% of these respondents describe themselves as bus users[36].

A Joseph Rowntree Foundation project in Hartlepool found that poor transport links were consistently mentioned as a barrier to finding and maintaining paid employment.[37] A BBC report highlighted the case of a mother in Chard, Somerset, whose 10-mile journey to take her autistic son to their nearest community hospital by bus can take three hours, the same time it would take to walk.[38]

Bus fares are also a barrier to access. In the attitudes survey on buses cited above, 38% of adults said they would us buses more often if fares were cheaper. 14% of women and 12% of men said they did not use buses because fares were too high.[39] In March 2019, bus fares in Great Britain had increased 3.1% compared to the previous year. This includes an increase of 3.3% in England, 2.1% in Scotland and 3.2% in Wales. Between March 2005 and March 2018 local bus fares in England increased by 71%: over the same period, the 'all items' Consumer Prices Index rose by 35%. In Scotland bus fares increased by 13.5% above inflation during this time between 2005 and 2015.[40]

[31] http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7545/CBP-7545.pdf p.11
[32] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787488/tsgb-2018-report-summaries.pdf p.14
[33] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821524/nts0705.ods
[34] www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts03-modal-comparisons#mode-by-age-and-gender NTS0702
[35] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/att03-attitudes-and-behaviour-towards-roads-and-road-travel Table ATT0303 *Frequency of travel by local bus*
[36] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/public-attitudes-towards-buses-march-2013 Table ATT0109 Statements by user/non-user status
[37] https://www.hartlepoolactionlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Making-Life-Affordable.pdf p.15
[38] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42749973
[39] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/att01-attitudes-towards-buses Table ATT0109
[40] http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S5/SB_16-55_Transport_in_Scotland.pdf

Local authorities

The UK is unique in Europe in having a deregulated system for its buses.[41] The role of central and local government is to subsidise elements of local transport including concessionary fares (e.g. for elderly people and people with disabilities) and 'socially necessary' services, which are not provided by the commercial market (on the condition that they are provided by private contractors). In 2017/18, estimated total net support paid in England was £2.18 billion, of which £1bn or 46% was for concessionary travel.[42]

The impact of central Government cuts to local authority budgets has had a significant impact on transport subsidy. Research found funding for buses across England and Wales were cut by 33% between 2010 and 2017, and by nearly £30 million in 2016/17 alone.[43] Analysis conducted by the BBC[44] showed that, between 2008 and 2018, there was a loss of 134 million miles of bus coverage across the UK. The North East of England was hardest hit, losing nearly a quarter (23%) of miles from its network in that time.

Commercial operators

Although a range of regulatory bodies oversees different elements of bus services in the UK, they are primarily delivered by commercial bus operators across the UK. These operate in a free market: each company can operate timetables and introduce new services solely on individual operators' views on the demand and commercial viability. They are not required to consult before making changes to, for example, timetables or the position of bus stops; nor do they have to consider either public demand or the availability of existing services.

There are currently five major commercial bus operators in the UK: Stagecoach; FirstGroup; Arriva; National Express; and Go-Ahead (each of the four nations also have smaller companies providing services on specific routes or in particular localities). In 2011 the Competition Commission calculated that these five companies accounted for 70% of the market.[45]

In 2019 four[46] of these companies made pre-tax profits totalling almost £800m:

- Stagecoach made a pre-tax profit of £101.2m
- FirstGroup made a pre-tax profit of £488m (this includes substantial operations in the US market)
- National Express made a pre-tax profit of £88.4 million
- Go Ahead made a pre-tax profit of £96m

Rail

In comparison to other European countries, rail use across Great Britain was the second highest after Germany in 2017. In England, rail trips accounted for 2% of total travel (by all modes) in 2017.

Two key issues with rail in the UK are the cost of fares and location of stations.

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[41] https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/files/policy/documents/2019-02/free-buses-under-30s.pdf p.4

[42] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774565/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-mar-2018.pdf p.12

[43] https://www.bettertransport.org.uk/buses-crisis-2017

[44] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42749973

[45] House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number CBP07545, Bus Services Act 2017 By Louise Butcher Tom Rutherford, 12 June 2017 http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7545/CBP-7545.pdf p.10

[46] It seems impossible to clarify Arriva profits as it is owned by a German transport company Deutsche Bahn which has the German Government as its sole shareholder

When asked their reasons for not travelling long distances by train, 36% of respondents stated that train fares were too high.[47] For those who travelled 'short journeys' (50 miles or less) by train, 45% stated that fare costs as the issue which needed most improvement.[48]

In 2018, rail fares in the UK increased on average by 3.4%[49] - the largest increase in five years. Between January 1995 and 2018 fares across all operators rose by 20%. Fares increased fastest amongst long distance operators, with average annual real terms increases of 1.4% between January 1995 and January 2018 compared to an average annual increase of 0.5% (London & South East operators) and 0.6% (regional operators) over the same period[50]

Season tickets have traditionally been a way rail operators and Government kept rail fares in check for regular users. However, for many years, there has been concern about the impact on women of fare systems which rewarded those working typical 'full time' hours whilst penalising everyone else. The latest figures showed a 7.5% fall in the use of season tickets, compared with a 5.2% and 11.8% rise in the use of peak and off-peak tickets respectively.[51] This is being linked to the rise in the number of people working outside of the typical 'full time' hours.[52].

Access to a railway station is a problem for many people in the UK, particularly those living outside of major towns and cities. The latest data shows that to get to their nearest railway station, 37% of rail users had to walk 30 minutes, 14% had a bus journey of over 30 minutes and 19% had no bus service to their nearest station.[53]

A further issue with rail concerns ownership models. Although the rail industry in Great Britain was privatised in 1993, financial support from government to rail has increased in line with passenger journeys since the mid-1990s: in 2017/18, UK public spending on transport included £17.7bn on rail (compared to £2.5bn on local buses). As people in the highest income quintile are three times more likely to use rail than people in the lowest income quintile, the Equality Trust has argued that the net effect of the combined subsidy for bus and rail is that households with the lowest incomes benefit far less than high-income households. Using national data from 2015, the Equality Trust showed that per household, the richest ten per cent received nearly double the subsidy of the poorest ten per cent.[54]

Since privatisation, a political debate has continued about the most effective ownership models. Renationalisation of the railways has become the subject of public debate in recent years since the Labour Party made it a central plank of its transport strategy. 64% of people polled support renationalisation of the railways.[55] However, the pros and cons of rail renationalisation are extremely complicated with most arguments ultimately driven by an ideological position on public versus private ownership.[56]

[47] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782225/att0422.ods
[48] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782214/att0412.ods
[49] http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/ticket_types/83871.aspx
[50] http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06384/SN06384.pdf
[51] https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/media/1482/passenger-rail-usage-2019-20-q1.pdf
[52] https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/rail-statistics-prove-need-for-flexible-season-tickets/
[53] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/att04-attitudes-and-behaviour-relating-to-train-travel Table ATT0402
[54] https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/Taken%20for%20a%20Ride.pdf p.3
[55] https://fullfact.org/economy/do-public-want-railways-renationalised/
[56] See for example: https://www.ft.com/content/90c0f8e8-17fd-11e8-9e9c-25c814761640 and https://www.regulation.org.uk/specifics-railways.html

Cars

Cars remain the most popular way of travelling in the UK, accounting for 62% of all trips made in 2018.[57] Car ownership across the UK is closely associated with wealth. Wealthier families are more likely to own at least one car compared to families on low incomes. This means that people living in poor or low income households that are badly served by transport are also trapped by a lack of a car.

Reliance on a car is also greater in rural areas. For example, in Northern Ireland, 75% of people living in urban areas travel to work by car compared to 91% of those living in rural areas.[58] In England, people living in rural areas take 31% more trips by car each year than those living in urban areas.

What is also notable in England, is the way that taxis are used. Households in the lowest income quintile make more trips by taxi than any other income group, and make almost twice as many as those in the second and third income quintile.[59] This spend could be considered part of the 'poverty premium', a cost faced by the poorest when paying for essential goods and services.[60]

Recommendations

1. Re-regulation of public transport, particularly buses

Public transport is clearly a driver of inequality in the UK: expensive and unreliable services have a huge impact on people on the lowest incomes, many of whom are women. Most public spending and political attention on public transport is directed towards rail at the expense of buses. A radical approach in creating a more gender equal economy would be to rebalance this attention away from trains and towards buses.

The first step in doing this would be to re-regulate the bus network across GB: establishing an overarching authority overseeing delivery of the transport network across large areas of the country. Private companies might still deliver the bus services, as they do under the TfL model but it would move sharply away from the current system of which effectively puts the profits of private companies before the needs of passengers and the environment. It could be modelled on TfL, funded by national Government, with strategic oversight of passenger and environmental need. It would be accountable to the public.

It would mean that protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act were central to the delivery of public transport, including buses. It would allow for comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken – as they have been in Scotland and Wales in recent years – and the outcomes of these used to deliver bus services which met the needs of the diversity of passengers using the service.

It would mean effective oversight of travel costs, including fares and ticketing systems. It could mean free travel in the longer term - there are economic arguments for and against this - but a re-regulated bus service would certainly allow for much greater control over the cost of travel. In addition, it could mean ticketing systems were introduced which addressed the specific needs of different passengers, for example those working part time and atypical hours – many of whom are women.

Re-regulation would allow for ambitious environmental targets to be set and met, meaning that issues such as air quality were central to the delivery of services. Local authorities could have more

[57] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821431/nts0601.ods
[58] https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/infrastructure/TSNI-urban-rural-report-2014-2016-tables.xlsx
[59] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821524/nts0705.ods
[60] https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/Taken%20for%20a%20Ride.pdf p.7

control over modal shift - moving people from private car use onto public buses and other forms of transport. In terms of vehicle stock, zero emission buses could be bought at scale, which would be a huge saving to the public purse.

2. Gender disaggregated data across all four nations should be regularly updated and widely available

Comprehensive gender disaggregated data allows for greater accountability of public service providers: we can see where and on whom public money is being spent. It allows for deeper analysis of men's and women's travel patterns.

Whilst the Office for National Statistics gathers a wealth of data about travel in England, the data on the UK, on Great Britain and on the other three devolved nations is patchy. It is particularly hard to find data disaggregated by gender alongside income level, age and disability.

Re-regulation would help to increase the way that data on passenger travel habits were captured: TfL's Oyster Card system, replicated by some cities in the UK and around the world, allows for huge data capture which in turn can see a more responsive travel system developed.

Appendix 1

Evidence and Good Practice

Reports

There have been some efforts to highlight the clear links between gender inequality and transport around the world. However, most of these reports highlight the problems – which replicate many of those seen in the UK – but very few identify successful solutions to the problem.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

In 2009 the UNECE's Executive considered a paper on gender issues in transport[61] which argued that transport can make a big difference in increasing women's productivity and promoting gender equality. It highlighted the role transport plays in broadening access to health, education, employment, in enhancing social capital and social cohesion. It made particular reference to the challenges women face when their access to transport is limited or constrained. In the *Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Supporting the SDGs implementation in the UNECE region (2016-2020)* report, specific reference is made to gender and transport, with recommendations for more extensive gathering and analysis of gender disaggregated data.[62]

***Transport and Poverty – a Review of the Evidence* H. Titheridge et al, University College London, 2014**

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/transport/sites/transport/files/transport-poverty.pdf

This report's primary focus was on efforts to use transport funding and policy to address poverty and inequality. It highlighted efforts to alleviate poverty and identified 'vulnerable groups' within its scope including women. It cited evidence from the United States showing how women's choices were constrained by a lack of transport.

World Bank

The World Bank has produced a number of reports on gender and transport.[63] Many of these reports highlighted women's safety concerns as a key driver in how and when they accessed transport. *Making Transport Work for Women and Men: Challenges and Opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region -Lessons from Case Studies* (2012), focussed on transport issues women face in a number of relevant countries and the 'solutions' that had been found including providing women-only carriages or women travelling in groups with other women. One section focused on the results of transport user surveys in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan which found highly gender-differentiated use of transport modes. It suggested that the privatisation of transport had resulted in increased fares and reduced access to transport services for the poor, particularly women, who responded by shifting to lower paid work within walking distance of their homes.[64] A recent short report highlighted some examples of good practice around the world and made with recommendations for addressing women's safety concerns, consulting women about how transport infrastructure was designed, and ensuring women were involved in every level of decision making regarding transport.[65]

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[61] https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2009/itc/ECE-TRANS-2009-07e.pdf
[62] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publications_and_papers/UNECE_Policy_on_GEEW_Final.pdf p.15
[63] https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/transport/publication/gender-and-transport
[64] http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/220381468278678436/pdf/841710WP0Gende0Box0382094B00PUBLIC0.pdf p.17
[65] https://newcities.org/the-big-picture-transport-is-not-gender-neutral-womens-mobility-and-accessibility-for-better-economic-opportunities/

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) International Transport Forum 'Gender and Transport' report 2011

https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/dp201111.pdf

This report highlighted many of the similarities in women's transport use across different countries as well as the differences between those in developed and developing nations. It made a number of recommendations including the need for better data gathering, to involve women in all levels of decision making regarding transport and to improve transport infrastructure to reflect women's experiences.

Where Do Women Feature in Public Transport? **Sharon Hanlon TransAdelaide, Australia (date unknown)**

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/womens/chap34.pdf

Using evidence from the Australian transport workforce, women's and men's working patterns more widely and women's travel patterns, Sharon Hanlon charts the often subtle but consistent ways that women are failed by public transport systems.

*Taken for a Ride***, Tim Stacey and Lucy Shaddock**, **Equality Trust**

https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/Taken%20for%20a%20Ride.pdf

A well evidenced and comprehensive analysis of the ways that current transport policy contributes to rising inequality in the UK. Whilst it makes no specific reference to gender or women, it's important for highlighting the myriad ways that transport spending and delivery supports wealthier households at the expense of poorer ones.

Good Practice

Free travel introduced in Luxembourg

Luxembourg is set to become the first country in the world to make all its public transport free.[66] Although all public transport travel is heavily subsidised and the Government has recently offered free travel to children and students, from the start of 2020 all tickets on trains, trams and buses will be abolished, saving on the collection of fares and the policing of ticket purchases. Luxembourg City currently suffers from serious traffic congestion. It has the highest number of cars per person in the EU[67] and a study in 2016 suggested that drivers in the capital spent an average of 33 hours in traffic jams. There is currently no gender analysis of this policy. There are some critiques of the policy, which suggest increasing the price of petrol (Luxembourg has relatively low priced petrol) is as important a driver of change as making public transport free.[68]

Free bus travel for women in Delhi, India

In October 2019, the Government of New Delhi rolled out free bus travel for women in order to address women's safety concerns and increase female employment. Female participation in the Indian workforce is among the lowest in the world, while violence against women in public and private is widespread. This policy change is so new there is no analysis of its impact.

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[66] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/05/luxembourg-to-become-first-country-to-make-all-public-transport-free
[67] https://www.citymetric.com/transport/luxembourg-s-free-public-transport-sounds-great-it-isn-t-4458
[68] http://theconversation.com/free-public-transport-is-great-news-for-the-environment-but-its-no-silver-bullet-109685

Evidence from around the UK

There is limited research specifically on women and public transport in the UK, and much of it was published over a decade ago.[69]

In her report *How to eliminate the gender pay gap? Local actions,*[70] Jackie Longworth at the University of the West of England argues that poorly designed public transport provision is a cause of the gender pay gap in the West of England.[71] The combination of unequal car access and the prevalence of a 'hub and spoke model' of public transport systems (which only carry people into/out of town centres or cities) means that people – mainly women - who need to take different types of journeys multiple times a day or week may opt for more local, lower paid work or to leave paid employment all together.

In July 2015 the Welsh Government published a National Transport Finance Plan, setting out how it would deliver the outcomes set out in the Wales Transport Strategy. This was informed by a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment which referenced the different ways men and women use public transport.[72] In March 2016, the Welsh Government published its Equality Impact Assessment into its 'Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard'. This included reference to two reports on women and transport written by Chwarae Teg, which detailed the ways that women are impacted by poor public transport provision.[73] The 'Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard' aims to help bus operators and Local Authorities improve the quality of bus services. 'Core' requirements for this standard include drivers undertaking disability and equalities awareness training, refreshed every five years. The Standard also has an enhanced element which comes with further funding attached for bus operators. To meet this, providers have to include a ticketing scheme aimed at people employed on part time or irregular hours.[74]

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on its National Transport Strategy and equalities is one of the four priorities underpinning this.[75]. It has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment and the draft consultation document accompanying the Strategy highlights women's 'complex travel behaviour', the clear links between gender and poverty and women's safety fears on public transport. The Scottish Government's Gender Evidence Review[76] provided comprehensive data on women's and men's travel patterns, and the challenges women face in accessing quality, affordable, reliable public transport. Scotland's Poverty and Inequality Commission highlighted the links between poverty, women and transport. It recommended Transport Scotland use the levers at its disposal to involve women in the design and implementation of travel in the nation.[77]

The Northern Ireland Rural Women's Association has highlighted the challenges that rural women face in accessing reliable and affordable public transport and has recommended that these issues are addressed by the Northern Ireland Power Sharing Government.[78]

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[69] See https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100408115036/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/public-transport-and-women/checklist.pdf from DfT 2000; and https://www.ssatp.org/sites/ssatp/files/publications/HTML/Gender-RG/Source%20documents/Technical%20Reports/Gender%20and%20Transport/TEGT2%20Promoting%20gender%20equality%20in%20transport%20UK%202005.pdf from EOC, 2005

[70] http://www2.uwe.ac.uk/faculties/BBS/BUS/Research/CESR/March_2016_Longworth.pdf p.7

[71] For example, http://www.poverty.org.uk/75/index.shtml

[72] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-09/wales-transport-strategy-equality-impact-assessment.pdf

[73] https://www.cteg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/working-womens-journeys-full-report-en.pdf

[74] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-01/voluntary-welsh-bus-quality-standard.pdf

[75] https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/national-transport-strategy/national-transport-strategy-promotes-equality/

[76] https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00421042.pdf

[77] https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Transport-and-Poverty-in-Scotland-Report-of-the-Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission.pdf

[78] https://www.nirwn.org/our-work-nirwn/rural-transport/