

# Urban mobility

## Gender-sensitive infrastructure <sup>(1)</sup>

Public services such as transport, health centres and care facilities play an essential part in the well-being of Europeans. We use public service infrastructure every day; it underpins our lives, and is essential for the func-

tioning of society. Infrastructure is meant to deliver services that address the diverse needs of women and men and contribute to equal opportunities for all.

### Urban mobility infrastructure makes everyday life easier

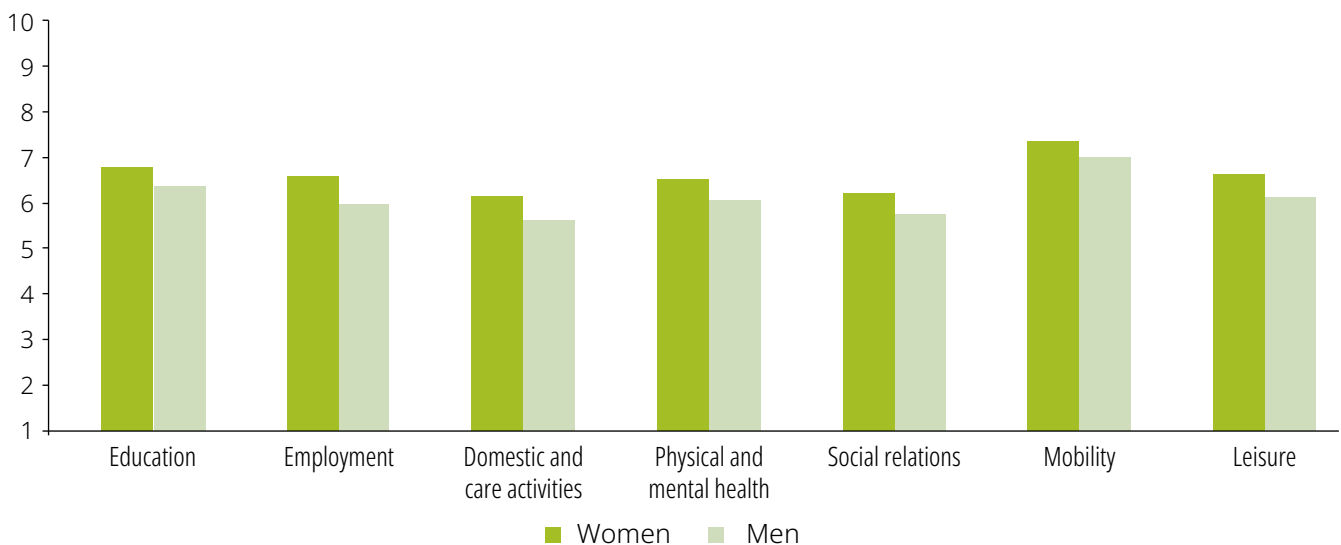
In a survey on the benefits of gender-sensitive infrastructure carried out by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), respondents were asked to rank these four types of infrastructure in relation to urban mobility:

- public transport,
- pavements and footpaths,

- street lights,
- parks.

The results show that women perceived all four infrastructure as more important in enabling their everyday life than men.

Figure 1. The importance of urban mobility services in enabling participation in different life activities (on an ascending scale from 1 to 10)



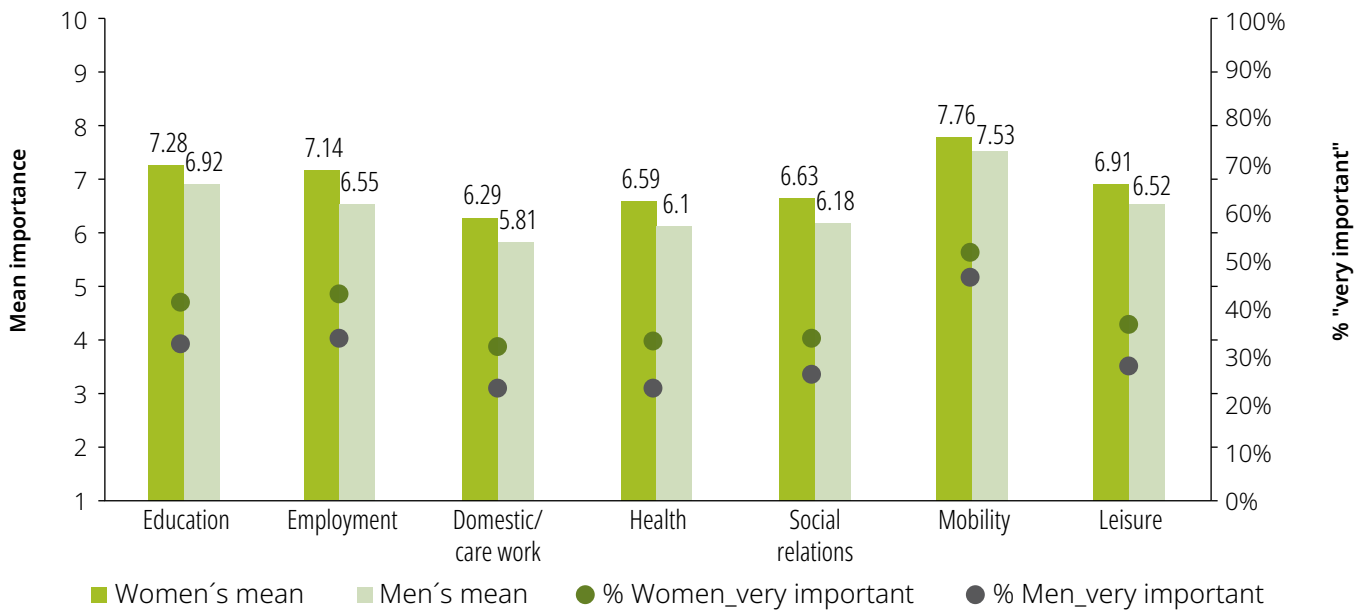
### Women value public transport more than men

Public transport emerged as the second most important infrastructure service in enabling the everyday lives of people, after healthcare services and medical centres. Public transport had a positive impact on participation in education and employment, both for women and men. The results show that women perceive public transport infrastructure services to be more helpful for their everyday life:

- 40 % of women said that public transport had been 'very important' in enabling them to participate in education, compared to 32 % of men;
- 42 % of women regarded transport as 'very important' in enabling their participation in employment, compared to 33 % of men.

(<sup>1</sup>) EIGE's work in this field is based on the conceptual framework and methodology to assess the benefits of gender equality through the provision of public infrastructure, developed by Dr Gloria Alarcón García and Dr José Colino Sueiras (University of Murcia, Spain). EIGE conducted a restricted survey in the 28 EU Member States (EU-28) on the benefits of gender-sensitive infrastructure. Dr Gloria Alarcón García lead the survey design, and the EIGENET framework of contractors was engaged in the survey implementation, involving 23 organisations and consortiums. The later analysis of the survey results was carried out by a research group led by the University of Murcia, Spain. Authors include Dr Gloria Alarcón García (principal researcher and research group leader), Dr Tindara Addabbo, Dr Edgardo Ayala Gaytan, Dr Estela Fernandez Sabiote, Dr María Rubio Aparicio, Dr Andreu Castellet, Dr Angela O'Hagan, Dr José Manuel Mayor. EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming team coordinated the work. Dr Vaida Obelene, Dr Paula Franklin and Dr Irene Riobóo Lestón provided quality assurance and carried out further analysis of the data.

Figure 2. The importance of public transport in enabling participation in different life activities (on an ascending scale from 1 to 10)

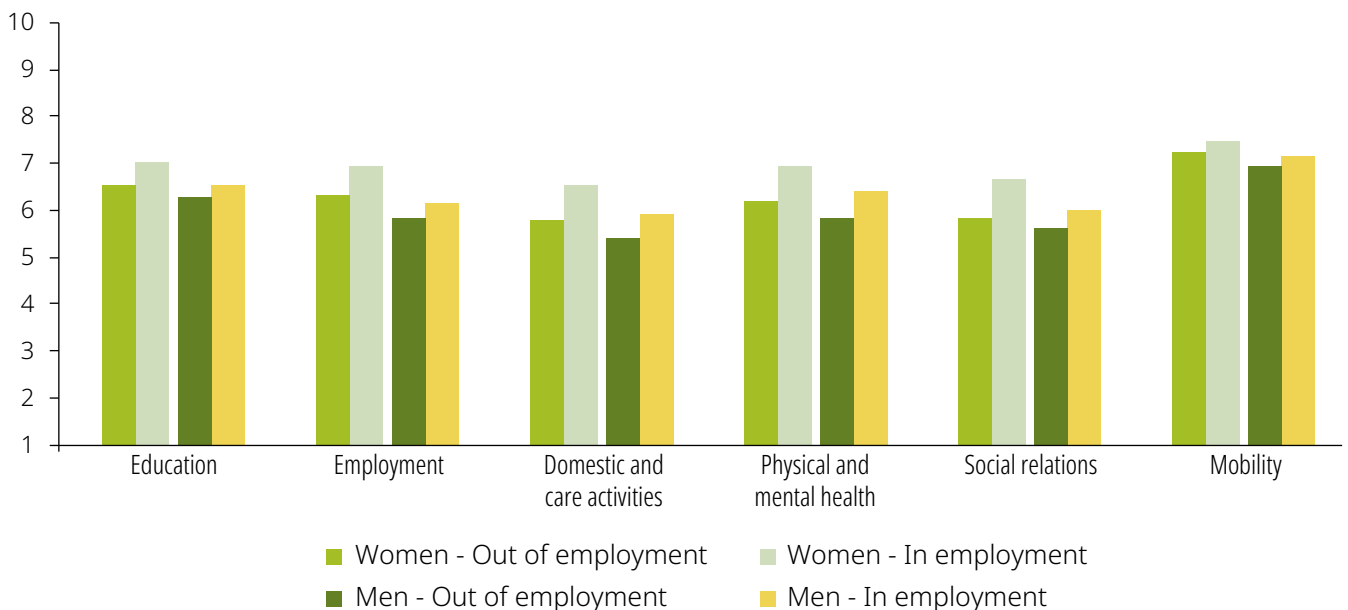


NB: The left axis of the graph shows the mean importance, which was calculated separately for women and men based on the responses using the 10-point scale. 'Very important' merges the answer choices 9 and 10 of the 10-point scale. The right axis of the graph shows the percentage of women and the percentage of men who answered options 9 or 10 of the 10-point scale.

In addition to enabling participation in education and employment, women perceived public transport as more important than men in allowing them to participate in lei-

sure time activities, carry out domestic chores and take care of children and/or infirm adults, as well as to take care of their physical and mental health.

Figure 3. The importance of urban mobility services in enabling participation in different life activities, by employment status (on an ascending scale from 1 to 10)



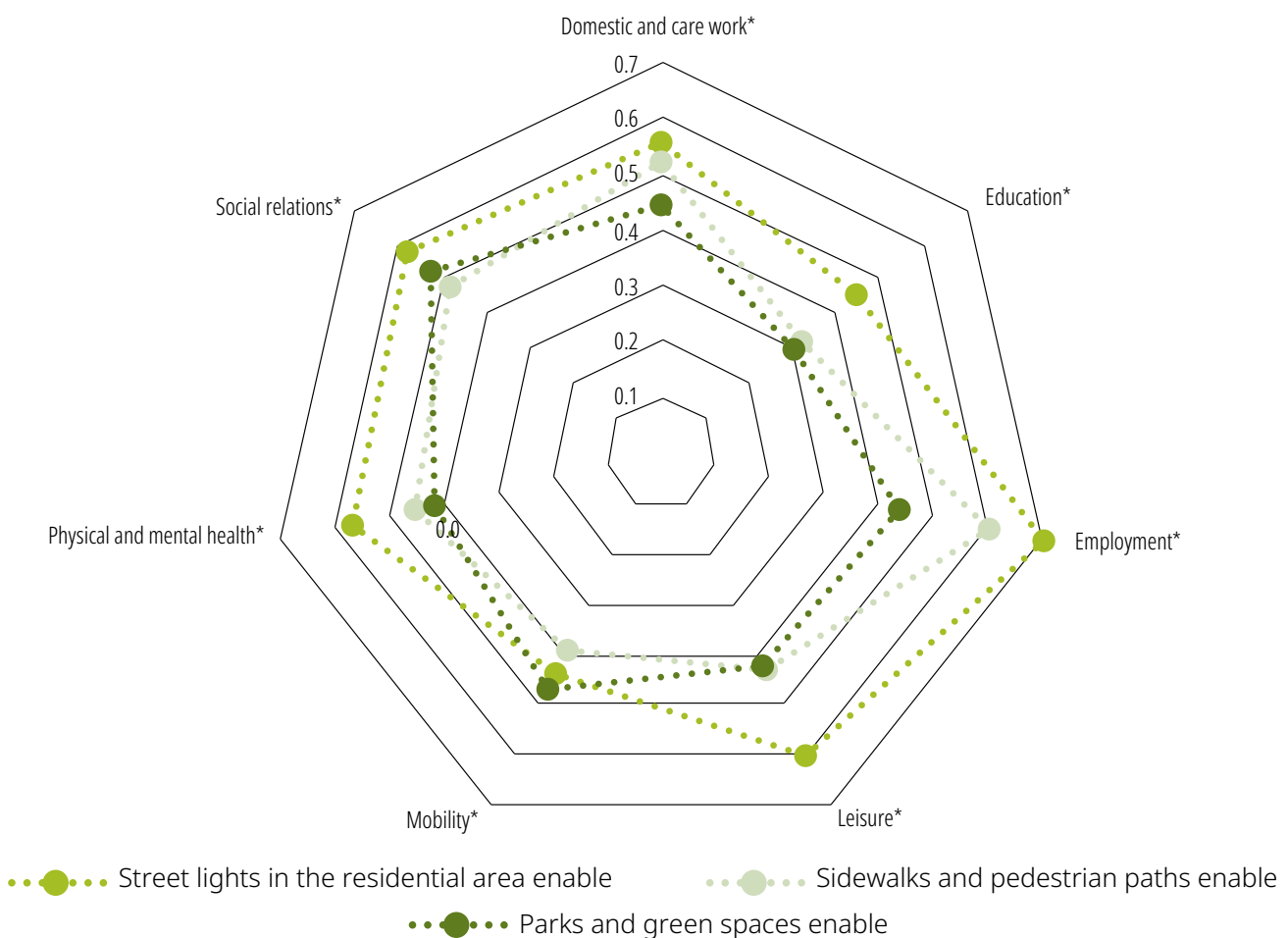
## Urban planning impacts safety, income and quality of life

EIGE's survey results show that public space infrastructure – pedestrian areas, street lights and green infrastructure – has a greater impact on women's urban mobility than on men's. Pedestrian infrastructure were more important to women as an enabler of employment and for their social relations in the community. Women also ranked street lighting infrastructure as more important to their urban mobility, their participation in employment

and social relations outside the family, as well as an enabler of domestic and care work.

Public space infrastructure was also perceived differently by women and men. The data lead to the conclusion that urban planning impacts on women's safety, movement and even income, contributing directly to livelihoods and quality of life.

Figure 4. Difference in importance of public spaces to enable various life activities for women and men (\*)



(\*) The difference between women and men reached statistical significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) in all cases. In the figure, the gap between mean scores shows the difference: the men's mean score is subtracted from that of the women's. No difference would mark zero (0); the positive result signals that women perceive the infrastructure service to be more important.

The European Parliament resolution on the role of women in the green economy (2012), states that it is necessary to introduce more walking and cycling routes and shorter distances to services to improve women's transport opportunities <sup>(2)</sup>. Relevant public space infrastructure enables women's urban mobility, while poorly developed infrastructure creates barriers. For example, an essential prerequisite for the usability of public transport is that it is within walking distance <sup>(3)</sup>. Perceived threats due to poorly-lit areas may result in women's reluctance to move around in the evening. Narrow or too high pavements pose difficulties for pram and wheelchair users or people who need walking aids.

The unequal amount of time spent on domestic tasks has an impact on the ways in which women and men use and need public transport and public space infrastructure. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport report *She Moves – Women's issues in transportation* (2014) stresses that while many of the challenges in gender mobility and travel patterns have been extensively researched, they have received limited attention in developing gender-specific policies and programmes. The report calls for regular gender impact assessments of transport policies to monitor their contribution to a gender-neutral transport system <sup>(4)</sup>.

## People on lower incomes value access to urban mobility more

Women and men perceived the importance of urban mobility differently, depending on their income levels. The European Parliament study on *Social Inclusion in EU Public Transport* (2015) states that, in general, people with lower incomes have less access to private modes of transport and are more likely to use public transport. They also travel shorter distances and are more sensitive to public transport fares. The study emphasises that access to public transport is particularly important for the many people who do not own or cannot use a car, such as persons with a disability, older people, children and young people, women and people on low incomes. For these user groups, the availability, accessibility and affordability of public transport has a major role to play in improving their quality of life and social inclusion <sup>(5)</sup>.

The results show that the lower the income, the more important urban mobility infrastructure was in helping the everyday lives of women and men. In the two lowest income groups, urban mobility infrastructure was more important to women than men. Women on low incomes saw these infrastructure services as an enabler for education, employment, domestic and care work, social relations and taking care of physical and mental health.

In the older age groups (50 + years), women perceived public infrastructure services as more important in enabling mobility than men. In the European context of the ageing population, gender and age specific mobility require urgent attention by policymakers.



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<sup>(2)</sup> European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2012 on the role of women in the green economy. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0321+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

<sup>(3)</sup> Center Nahverkehr Berlin, target group-oriented transportation planning. Available at: [http://www.civitas-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/mobilitaet\\_nv\\_1\\_baggerunge\\_b\\_0.pdf](http://www.civitas-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/mobilitaet_nv_1_baggerunge_b_0.pdf)

<sup>(4)</sup> European Commission, *She Moves – Women's issues in transportation*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014. Available at: [https://wiit-paris2014.sciencesconf.org/conference/wiit-paris2014/pages/shemoves\\_wiit\\_web\\_2.pdf](https://wiit-paris2014.sciencesconf.org/conference/wiit-paris2014/pages/shemoves_wiit_web_2.pdf)

<sup>(5)</sup> European Parliament, *Social Inclusion in EU Public Transport – Study*, 2015. Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540351/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)540351\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540351/IPOL_STU(2015)540351_EN.pdf)

Figure 5. The importance of urban mobility services in enabling participation in different life activities, by income group (on an ascending scale from 1 to 10)

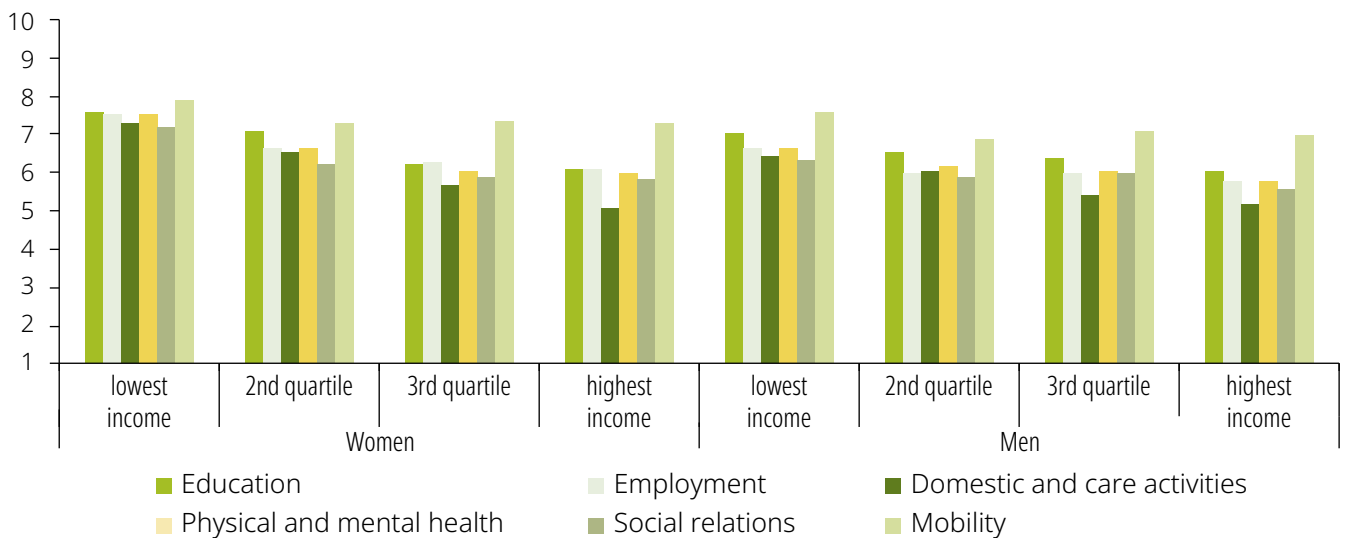
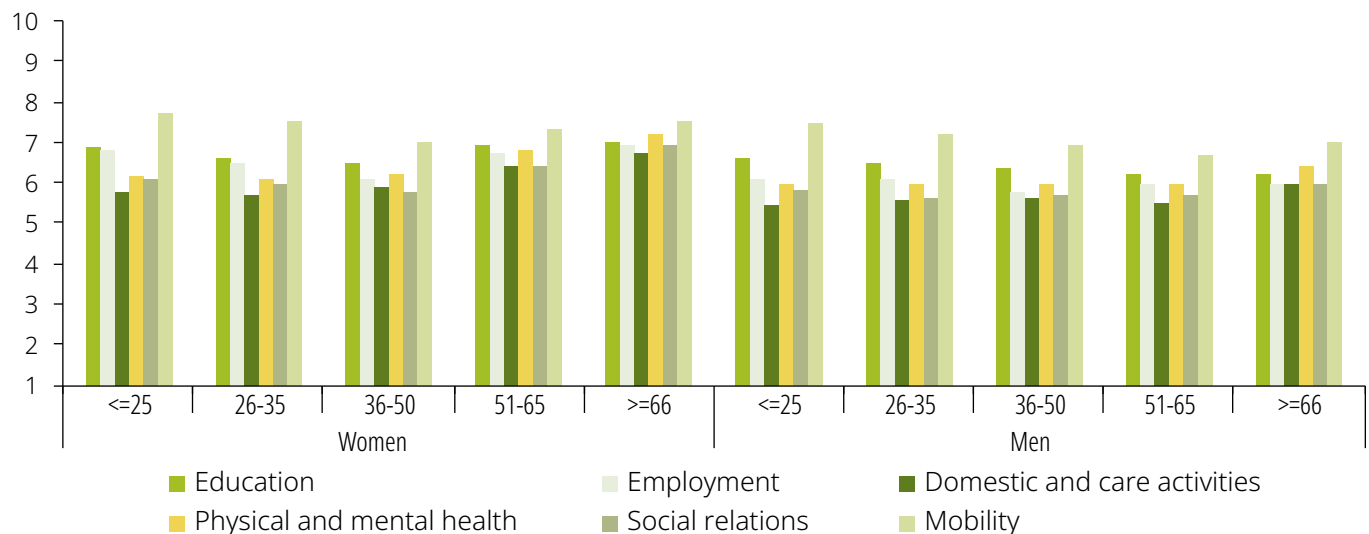


Figure 6. The importance of urban mobility services in enabling participation in different life activities, by age (on an ascending scale from 1 to 10)



## Conclusions

EIGE's survey highlighted gender differences in the perceived importance of public transport, pavements and footpaths, street lights and parks for everyday life. Women respondents, regardless of their employment status, thought that public transport was important in enabling everyday life activities. This shows that gender differences in use of transport are due to the division of roles in the labour market and in the family. In turn, this affects women's employment conditions, income levels and mobility needs<sup>(6)</sup>. Therefore, mainstreaming gender into ur-

ban mobility infrastructure and service planning can help tackle gender inequalities.

Women and men would benefit more from public transport systems that are organised to suit their needs. For example, women, who are the main users of public transport, experience problems related to long waiting times, safety and long distances from facilities, such as schools, health centres and shops<sup>(7)</sup>. Close attention needs to be paid to: the availability of public transport outside rush hours; the safety and security conditions

<sup>(6)</sup> Civitas policy note, *Smart Choices for Cities – Gender equality and mobility: mind the gap*, 2014. Available at: <http://www.civitas.eu/content/civitas-policy-note-gender-equality-and-mobility-mind-gap>

<sup>(7)</sup> EIGE 'Gender mainstreaming – Transport'. Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/sectoral-areas/transport#1type>

on vehicles and at transport stations; and the physical and financial accessibility of transport facilities for wom-

en with small children, older people and persons with a disability <sup>(8)</sup>.

## Benefits of mainstreaming gender into urban mobility infrastructure

Women's mobility patterns are closely related to physical and economic independence. As such, the adoption of a gender perspective in urban mobility policies is particularly relevant for reducing economic and social inequalities <sup>(9)</sup>. Gender appropriate mobility infrastructure can support sustainable economic growth and employment, while also helping to build social integration <sup>(10)</sup>.

Part of the European Commission's Urban Mobility Package (2013) <sup>(11)</sup> is a Civitas initiative, which is a network of cities dedicated to cleaner, better transport in Europe and beyond <sup>(12)</sup>. The Civitas policy note: *Gender equality and mobility: mind the gap!* (2014) <sup>(13)</sup> focuses on the topic of gender-sensitive mobility planning. The note stresses that greater efforts are needed to better understand the rationale and the effects of gender differences in mobility patterns. The usage and

the impacts of the design, delivery and investment in public infrastructure must be analysed from a gender perspective to ensure that women and men benefit in appropriate and equal ways from public resources.

Gender mainstreaming can support the planning of services that are delivered through the built environment to meet the different needs of women and men, and thereby enable the full potential of all people. In practice, what is required is adequate, gender-sensitive statistical data and research on the multiple factors affecting urban mobility at the local, national and EU levels <sup>(14)</sup>. Traffic planners and policymakers also need to consider gender from a user perspective, by integrating women's needs and interests in transport policy and incorporating the voices of women users in planning <sup>(15)</sup>.

## About EIGE's survey

EIGE conducted a restricted survey on the benefits of gender-sensitive infrastructure. The survey asked 5 378 women and men in the EU about nine infrastructure services, and covered seven activities of daily life.

All the respondents, regardless of whether they used the infrastructure services or not, were asked to assess the importance of the existing infrastructure services for

everyday activities on a scale from 1 to 10.

This factsheet is part of a series on gender equality and infrastructure. You can find our other factsheets on care infrastructure and health service infrastructure, as well as the methodological report on EIGE's website: <https://eige.europa.eu/>

<sup>(8)</sup> European Parliament, 2015.

<sup>(9)</sup> Civitas, 2014.

<sup>(10)</sup> European Parliament Think Tank, urban mobility. Available at: <https://epthinktank.eu/2014/02/15/urban-mobility/>

<sup>(11)</sup> European Commission, Urban Mobility Package. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/urban/urban\\_mobility\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/urban/urban_mobility_en)

<sup>(12)</sup> Available at: <http://www.civitas-initiative.eu/about-us-page>

<sup>(13)</sup> Civitas, 2014.

<sup>(14)</sup> Civitas, 2014.

<sup>(15)</sup> European Commission, 'Final report summary – Transgen (Gender mainstreaming European transport research and policies; building the knowledge basis and mapping good practices)', 2007. Available at: [http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/47480\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/47480_en.html)

### European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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