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Gendered movement

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Highlights

Why a gender/income inclusive approach is critical for future of public transport and mobility in Bengaluru, examines IISc study
'Women more likely to use public transport than men'

By Melvin Mathew

According to a study conducted by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science on gender-inclusive mobility, women were more likely to make a shift to public transport.

Women preferred to travel by metro over their male counterparts, the study showed. Researchers found that developing policies encompassing all gender-income groups could help accommodate gender-specific transport habits.

The research was conducted using a preference survey conducted in 2020, and 7,190 data points on 19 variables — age, gender, income, alternative mode of transport, travel time, walking time, interchange time, travel costs using different modes of transport and so on.

Furthermore, the researchers calculated the impact on the variables across 13 policy bundles. Some bundles had individual governing tools and some had two or more governing tools.

For example, increasing network coverage of public transport could lead to a 10% reduction in walking time toward boarding a bus and inter-time between two successive buses along a route. Encouraging park and ride could lead to a reduction in the overall cost of travel and a 10% reduction in travel costs of buses and metro rail.

The comparative analysis was done for four income groups (low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high) comprising males and females. For research, seven modes of transport were studied in four groups —private

(car and two-wheeler), auto, non-motorised transport (NMT walking and cycling), and public transport (PT - bus and metro).

For instance, the modal share of cars among low-income men and women is already low — policymakers need to focus on developing other modes. It was observed that low and lower-middle income women preferred public transport over males. However, cars are preferred by females belonging to upper-middle and high-income groups.

The study further revealed women were likely to walk as compared to their male counterparts who preferred cycling, in the NMT category. Taking into consideration equal cost subsidies in public transport, females were more likely to use the metro over males. Two-wheelers were a preferred mode of choice in males across most income groups except the high-income group.

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— Dr Ashish Verma, IISc's Sustainable Transportation Lab

While several efforts are on to push citizens toward public transport as the sustainable choice, there hasn't been a major shift yet. The model developed by IISc researchers could be used to develop transport policies optimised across gender-income groups.

The research was conducted by Dr Ubaid Illahi, Dr Gayathri Harihara Subramanian, and Dr Ashish Verma of the IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab, funded by DULT.

Dr Verma told Bangalore Mirror that the purpose of the study was to understand the inclusivity of transport policies. "We wanted to look at how transport policies affect female users and how they can make a larger shift to public transport. For example, If the purpose of flyovers is to move private vehicles faster, certain income groups may not benefit from this transport intervention. More and more women are joining the workforce, and there is a need to increase mobility for them. Without taking women into account, you are ignoring 50 per cent of the transport users. Gendered evaluations can lead to increased ridership in public transport across both genders," Dr Verma explained.