

**Women in Transport in Wales**

**October 2022**

*Prepared on behalf of the Women in Transport Hub Wales*

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# Introduction

## Research background

Women in Transport has a growing profile across the UK, providing support and network for women working in the industry and aiming to increase gender equality in the sector. Recently, Transport for Wales and Welsh Government have proposed to bring a regional hub of Women in Transport to Wales to provide a central point of support and professional development for women already working in the sector or considering a career in transport in Wales.

To achieve these aims, the initiative needs to map out women’s place in the transport industry in Wales. Recent figures show that *Transport and Storage Information, and Communication[[1]](#footnote-2)* sectors’ workers make up 6.9% of the whole workforce in Wales (9.6% in the UK). Hugely critical to Welsh and the UK economy, the sector, however, is subjected to a significant gender gap; women make up only 20% of the workforce of the Transport and Communications industry in Wales (26.2% in the UK).[[2]](#footnote-3) The gap widens as it goes down to subsectors: women only make up 6.7% of the workforce of *Transport and Mobile Machine Drivers/Operators* in Wales (6.6% in the UK).[[3]](#footnote-4)

The transport sector covers many diverse areas of work and networks of businesses, and this complex structure makes it harder to thoroughly map out the workforce within the sector. This research aims to understand the sector, where women are working in the rail, bus/coach and active travel subsectors in the transport sector in Wales and their experiences at work and in the sector.

## Women working in men-dominated sectors

The transport sector workforce has traditionally been dominated by men, affecting the experiences of women working in the sector and their ability to develop a career in the sector.

Research shows that women face particular challenges working in men-dominated workplaces. Some of the challenges include:[[4]](#footnote-5)

* Societal expectations and beliefs about women’s leadership abilities.
* Pervasive stereotypes, such as that of the “caring mother” or office housekeeper.
* Higher stress and anxiety compared to women working in other fields.
* Lack of mentoring and career development opportunities.
* Sexual harassment.

Women in men-dominated workplaces report higher rates of gender discrimination. A survey conducted in 2017 in the US found out that while only 13% of those who say they work mainly with other women say their gender has made it harder for them to succeed at work, the ratio increases to 34% for those working mainly with men.[[5]](#footnote-6) Women who work in men-dominated workplaces are also much more likely than those who work mainly with women to say they have experienced repeated small slights at work because of their gender (27% vs. 15%) or received less support from senior leaders than a man (24% vs. 12%).[[6]](#footnote-7) In addition, 25% of the women who work in men-dominated workplace say they feel they have to prove themselves at work in order to be respected by their co-workers, compared with 13% of women who work in majority-women workplaces.[[7]](#footnote-8)

The same research also found out that 28% of women working in men-dominated industries stated they had personally experienced sexual harassment, compared to 20% of women in women-dominated industries.[[8]](#footnote-9)

Women develop various mechanisms to cope with the pressure and challenges of working in men-dominated workplace environments, such as:[[9]](#footnote-10)

* Distancing themselves from colleagues, especially other women.
* Accepting masculine cultural norms and acting like “one of the boys,” which exacerbates the problem by contributing to the normalization of this culture.
* Leaving the industry.

Research also shows that women sexually harassed at work are 6.5 times as likely to change jobs, often to one with lower pay.[[10]](#footnote-11)

## Women’s experience in the transport sector

A recent report published by Women in Transport and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Women in Transport shows that 93% of women who participated in the research think that transport is typically viewed as a male-dominated industry.[[11]](#footnote-12) Almost 70% of women taking part in the research agreed or strongly agreed that the transport sector is seen to have a macho culture, as well as an image problem. 71% of women also agreed/strongly agreed that there is a particular stereotype of someone working in the transport sector.

Worryingly, 70% of women said that they have experienced discriminatory behaviour or language (derogatory or sexist remarks, jokes or statements) targeted at them. To progress and cope with the men-dominated working environment, women accept and adapt the norms of the workplace culture they are in. The research shows that more than half of women (58%) agreed or strongly agreed that women had to adapt their personality to get by in the transport industry.

The perceptions and working environment in the transport sector also affect women’s career progression. 82% of women agreed that unconscious bias against women is an issue in the transport sector. The research also found that three quarters of women (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is easier for men than women to progress in their transport careers. In addition, 53% of the women taking part in the research also pointed out that it is even more difficult for women from ethnic minority backgrounds to progress in their careers. Despite this, nearly half (45%) of women did not feel that it was difficult for them to progress in their transport career.

Even though the majority of the women mentioned negative perceptions or experience in the sector, an overwhelming majority of women (83%) felt proud to work in the transport industry. 70% of women also agreed/strongly agreed that there are a wide range of opportunities in the transport sector, and 92% of women agreed/strongly agreed that women and men are equally competent working within the transport sector.

The findings of the research by Women in Transport and the APPG for Women in Transport highly resonate with the findings of our research exploring the experiences of women working in the transport sector in Wales, as the quotes in Chapter 4 demonstrate.

## Gender pay gap in the transport sector

As a consequence of a lack of women in the workforce, in professional, managerial and senior levels, the gender pay gap is high or fluctuates to a great extend in different areas of the transport sector, which is a sign of existing gender inequalities in the sector.

The ONS 2021 gender pay pap figures shows that the median gender pay gap in the transportation and storage industry (SIC 2007) in the UK is only 0.4% for full-time workers.[[12]](#footnote-13) The gender pay gap increases to 19.4% in the *Rail and Interurban Passenger Transport* subsector. By contrast, figures for t*he Other Passenger and Land Transport* subsector is estimated -13.1%. These contrasting figures between the rail and bus sector could be the result of a number of factors, including whether the small number of women who do work in the sector are clustered in lower paid or more senior positions. Where women are clustered in more senior roles, the gender pay gap will likely be lower, despite women being largely under-represented in the workforce overall.

To understand the gender pay gap in the transport sector in Wales, we have looked at the three main transport providers’ pay gap figures and workforce demographic and pay scale data - Transport for Wales, Transport for Wales Rail Ltd., and Cardiff Bus.

#### Transport for Wales[[13]](#footnote-14)

* As of 31 March 2021, the Transport for Wales Group (TfW) employed 471 people; of these, 36.7% were women and 63.2% were men.
* The **median** gender pay gap is **33.2%.** Median hourly pay for men was £16.88. For women, it was £11.28.
* The **mean** gender pay gap is **21.1%.** Mean hourly pay for men was £20.52 and for women, it was £16.19.

|  |
| --- |
| Proportion of men and women by pay grade (March 2021)  |
|  | **Women**  | **Men**  |
| Exec 1 and 2  | 23% | 77% |
| Grade 1 | 32% | 68% |
| Grade 2  | 20% | 80% |
| Grade 3 | 39% | 61% |
| Grade 4 | 22% | 78% |
| Grade 5 | 48% | 52% |
| Grade 6 | 44% | 56% |

#### Transport for Wales Rail Ltd.[[14]](#footnote-15)

* As of the 5th April 2021, Transport for Wales Rail employed 2,633 people; of these, 19.5% were women and 80.5% were men.
* The **median** gender pay gap is **25.4%.** Median hourly pay for men was £25.63. For women, it was £19.12.
* The **mean** gender pay gap is **21.9%.** Mean hourly pay for men was £26.48 and for women, it was £20.69.

|  |
| --- |
| Proportion of men and women by pay quartiles (April 2021)  |
|  | **Women**  | **Men**  |
| Top Quartile  | 6% | 94% |
| Upper middle quartile | 10% | 90% |
| Lower middle quartile | 24% | 76% |
| Bottom quartile | 36% | 64% |

#### Cardiff City Transport Services Ltd trading as Cardiff Bus[[15]](#footnote-16)

* As of April 2021, Cardiff Bus, wholly owned by Cardiff Council, employed approximately 550 employees; of these 8% women, 92% men.
* The **median** gender pay gap is **-17.6%.**
* The **mean** gender pay gap is **-7.9%.**

|  |
| --- |
| Proportion of men and women by pay quartiles (April 2021)  |
|  | **Women**  | **Men**  |
| Upper Quartile  | 18.1% | 81.9% |
| Upper middle quartile | 4.2% | 95.8% |
| Lower middle quartile | 5.5% | 94.5% |
| Lower quartile | 8.3% | 91.7% |

## Conclusion

As a traditionally men-dominated sector, transport has a negative, masculine image, which affects women’s participation in the workforce and their career progression. The structural gender inequalities in the sector creates stereotypes and can create a hostile work environment for women. Yet, women working in the sector are confident that they can achieve in the transport sector and many are proud to be working in the sector.

# Research Aims and Methods

The aim of this research is to map out women’s place in the rail, bus and coach and active travel subsectors of the transport industry in Wales, explore women’s experiences at work and understand what barriers exist in the sector. By determining baseline figures on where women are working and detailing the experiences of women working in different branches and professions in the sector, the research aims to assist Women in Transport Wales Hub to establish targets and areas of action.

To achieve these aims, the research performed both quantitative and qualitative methods targeting different actors. The data collection of the research was carried out in July-August 2022.

For the quantitative part of the research, a questionnaire was prepared asking HR departments of rail, bus, coach and active travel companies, organisations and institutions to provide their equality and diversity staff data, disaggregated by gender.[[16]](#footnote-17) Eight companies responded, the profile of which can be seen in Section 3.

For the qualitative part of the research, we held six focus groups and four interviews. Each lasted an average of an hour, with 28 participants in total. 18 were managers or senior managers, and 10 of them were partners and officers. The analysis of the qualitative data can be seen in Section 4.

# Women in the transport sector in Wales

## Respondents profile

Eight companies provided equality, diversity and inclusion data to us. The table below shows the profiles and operation areas of the enterprises.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Bus/Coach  | Rail  | Active Travel  | Enterprise Size  | Operation area |
| Response 1  | X | X | X | Large (250+) | All Wales &Borders |
| Response 2  |  | X |  | Large (250+) | All Wales & Borders  |
| Response 3  | X |  |  | Large (250+) | South Wales  |
| Response 4  | X |  |  | Large (250+) | South Wales  |
| Response 5  | X |  |  | Medium (50-249) | South Wales  |
| Response 6  |  |  | X | Small (10-49) | All Wales &Borders  |
| Response 7  | X |  |  | Small(10-49) | All Wales &Borders |
| Response 8  | X |  |  | Micro (1-9) | All Wales &Borders |

## Gender Split in the workforce by protected characteristics

The table below shows the gender split in the workforce of the operators and organisations who responded. As the figures shows, women are acutely underrepresented in the transport operators (Response 2-5), whereas there is more gender balance in the institutions and third sector organisations in the sector. Across our whole sample, women account for 21% of the workforce.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender split of the workforce |  |  |  |
|  | **Men**  | **Women**  | **Total**  | **% of men**  | **% of women**  |
| Response 1  | 445 | 292 | 737 | 60% | 40% |
| Response 2  | 2289 | 596 | 2885 | 79% | 21% |
| Response 3  | 478 | 42 | 520 | 92% | 8% |
| Response 4  | 534 | 42 | 576 | 93% | 7% |
| Response 5  | 167 | 22 | 189 | 88% | 12% |
| Response 6  | 21 | 23 | 44 | 48% | 52% |
| Response 7  | 5 | 12 | 17 | 29% | 71% |
| Response 8  | 4 | 3 | 7 | 57% | 43% |
| Total | **3943** | **1032** | **4975** | **79%** | **21%** |

We asked the transport operators and organisations if they regularly collect equality and diversity data about their workforce, as this data allows employers to understand how diverse their workforce is, identify areas for action and inform policy and practice. While five of the respondents said that they collect E&D data, two of them said they do not collect the data regularly, and one of them mentioned that they do not know.

|  |
| --- |
| Collecting Equality and Diversity Data Regularly  |
| Response 1  | Yes |
| Response 2  | Yes |
| Response 3  | No |
| Response 4  | Yes |
| Response 5  | No |
| Response 6  | Yes |
| Response 7  | Yes |
| Response 8  | Don't Know  |

**Diversity of workforce by age and gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | 16-24 | 24-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65+ | Total  |
|   | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W |
| Response 1  | 8% | 8% | 31% | 35% | 33% | 34% | 25% | 23% | 3% | 1% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 2  | 2% | 3% | 17% | 26% | 42% | 38% | 37% | 31% | 3% | 2% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 3  | 2% | 5% | 12% | 21% | 31% | 31% | 52% | 44% | 3% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 4  | 2% | 0% | 13% | 21% | 24% | 38% | 55% | 36% | 7% | 5% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 5  | 4% | 4% | 16% | 21% | 23% | 21% | 52% | 54% | 5% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 6  | 5% | 21% | 48% | 33% | 19% | 42% | 29% | 4% | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| Response 8  | 0% | 0% | 25% | 33% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 33% | 25% | 33% | 100% | 100% |
| Total % | 3% | 5% | 18% | 28% | 36% | 36% | 40% | 29% | 3% | 2% | 100% | 100% |

Among our respondents, we see that the majority of men are aged between 50-64, while the majority of women are aged 35-49; a pattern that is more pronounced among the bus companies that participated in the research. The majority of the workforce working in rail are aged 35-49 for both genders.

**Diversity of workforce by disability and gender**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Men | Women |
|   | **Total no of disabled** | **% of Disabled** | **Total no of disabled** | **% of Disabled Men** |
| Response 1  | 18 | 4.0% | 13 | 4.5% |
| Response 2  | 16 | 0.7% | 9 | 1.5% |
| Response 4  | 5 | 0.9% | 3 | 7.4% |
| Response 6  | 1 | 4.8% | 4 | 17.4% |
| Total % | 40 | 1.2% | 29 | 3.0% |

The table above shows the diversity of the workforce by disability and gender in the four operators and organisations who provided data on disability. Disabled men make up 1.2% of the workforce compared to 3% of their women counterparts.

**Diversity of workforce by ethnicity and gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | White (British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, any other white background) | Asian or Asian British | Black, Black British, Caribbean or African | Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | Other ethnic group (Arab or any other ethnic group)  | Total  |
|   | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** |
| Response 1  | 209 | 141 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 223 | 148 |
| Response 2  | 1283 | 335 |  9 | 2 |  12 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1293 | 348 |
| Response 3  | 440 | 38 | 23 | 0 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 480 | 40 |
| Response 4  | 262 | 28 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 272 | 28 |
| Response 6  | 18 | 22 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 19 | 24 |
| Total  | 2212 | 564 | 31 | 5 | 22 | 9 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 1 | 2287 | 588 |
| Total % | 96.7% | 95.9% | 1.4% | 0.9% | 1.0% | 1.5% | 0.6% | 1.5% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

The table above shows the diversity of the workforce by ethnicity and gender in the five operators and organisations who provided ethnicity data. As the numbers shows, the data provided by the operators does not reflect the total workforce, hence it is difficult to achieve a robust conclusion from this data. Still, the numbers show that the workforce is not ethnically diverse. Men from ethnic minority backgrounds make up 3.3% of the workforce in the sample group, and women from ethnic minority backgrounds make up 4.1% of the workforce in the sample group. Overall, in Wales, men aged 16+ from an ethnic minority background make up 4.5% of the population and women aged 16+ from and ethnic background make up 3.7% of the population.[[17]](#footnote-18) Even though the ethnic diversity figures in the sample group are close to proportions in Wales, the figures do not reflect the population dynamics of the areas that the respondents operate within. 2021 population estimates shows that the ethnic minority population in Cardiff is 15.8%, Newport is 12.5%, Swansea is 7.8%, Vale of Glamorgan is 4.6%, Merthyr Tydfil is 2.2% and Bridgend is 1.9%.[[18]](#footnote-19)

## Working patterns

Across the labour market women are more likely to work part-time, a factor that contributes to the gender pay gap as a result of the lower rates of pay on offer for part-time work. Part-time work can also impact opportunities for progression. We can see from our data that women in the transport sector are more likely to be working part-time. Across our sample group, the proportion of women working part-time (both fix-term and permanent) accounts for 12% , while it is only 4% for men.

**Working patterns by gender**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   | Men  | Women |
|   | **Permanent full-time** | **Permanent part-time**  | **Fix-term contract full-time**  | **Fix-term contract part-time**  | **Permanent full-time** | **Permanent part-time**  | **Fix-term contract full-time**  | **Fix-term contract part-time**  |
| Response 1  | 75% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 68% | 14% | 2% | 1% |
| Response 2  | 85% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 74% | 9% | 3% | 0% |
| Response 3  | 97% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 83% | 12% | 2% | 0% |
| Response 4  | 87% | 8% | 0% | 0% | 89% | 5% | 0% | 2% |
| Response 5  | 77% | 8% | 0% | 0% | 77% | 18% | 0% | 0% |
| Response 6  | 81% | 0% | 14% | 0% | 22% | 26% | 13% | 26% |
| Response 7  | 71% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 83% | 8% | 8% | 0% |
| Response 8  | 50% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 67% | 33% | 0% | 0% |
| Total | **85%** | **4%** | **2%** | **0%** | **72%** | **11%** | **3%** | **1%** |

## Occupations by gender

We asked respondents to indicate the gender split of the workforce against a list of occupations. The list was prepared on the basis of SOC2020, yet, it was still not compatible with different organisations operating in different areas of the transport sector. In the analysis of this section, instead of a comparative analysis of the roles in the organisation responded, we will present the main occupational groupings in the rail company and the three bus companies that responded to the questionnaire. We can see that women are notably under-represented in the occupational groups traditionally associated with men, particularly among engineer, vehicle maintenance and drivers.

**Occupations by gender in rail and bus companies**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Engineering/Construction | Vehicle Maintenance  | Drivers  | Conductors  | Finance/HR/Legal | IT | Marketing/Comms | Admin  |
|   | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** |
| Response 2  | 27 | 1 | 240 | 22 | 816 | 64 | 456 | 141 | 12 | 41 | 12 | 2 | 14 | 17 | 43 | 48 |
| Response 3  |   |   | 28 | 0 | 385 | 16 |   |   | 5 | 9 | 2 | 0 |   | 1 | 33 | 11 |
| Response 4  | 47 | 1 | 21 | 1 | 454 | 28 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 1 |   | 25 | 13 |
| Response 5  |   |   | 21 | 1 | 118 | 8 |   |   | 3 | 3 | 1 |   | 1 |   | 10 | 3 |
| Total % | **97%** | **3%** | **93%** | **7%** | **94%** | **6%** | **76%** | **24%** | **27%** | **73%** | **88%** | **12%** | **47%** | **53%** | **60%** | **40%** |

## Seniority by gender

We also asked for the gender split in the organisational hierarchy. Unfortunately, as the grading system of the rail company was incompatible to the list we built up, they couldn’t provide us with the data of the hierarchical structure. What we see from the data we do have, is that while women are under-represented at all levels, the gap is largest among intermediate and entry level roles, which will create challenges for improving representation at more senior levels in a way that is sustainable.

**Organisational hierarchy by gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Directors and Executives | Senior Management | Middle Management | First level management/ supervisory | Intermediate/ Experiences/ Senior Staff | Entry Level  |
|   | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** | **M** | **W** |
| Response 1  | 8 | 3 | 33 | 16 | 161 | 71 | 46 | 36 | 27 | 32 | 167 | 134 |
| Response 3  | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 15 | 3 | 412 | 24 | 45 | 2 |
| Response 4  | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 22 | 6 | 12 | 0 | 513 | 34 |
| Response 5  | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 32 | 4 | 126 | 13 |
| Response 6  | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| Response 7  | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Response 8  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 17 | 10 | 45 | 19 | 176 | 83 | 97 | 52 | 492 | 75 | 852 | 186 |
| Total (%) | **63%** | **37%** | **70%** | **30%** | **68%** | **32%** | **65%** | **35%** | **87%** | **13%** | **82%** | **18%** |

## Conclusion

From the data we’ve been provided with it’s clear that women are under-represented across the transport sector in Wales. Women are notably under-represented at most levels of seniority and in many occupational groups, particularly among frontline, delivery-focused roles.

The data aligns with existing figures and demonstrates the scale of the challenge that still remains to achieve greater diversity and gender-balance in the transport sector in Wales. Improving the representation of women in roles more traditionally associated with men is a clear priority, but there is also a need to address the large gender gap evident among more junior roles. Without action to build this pipeline, it will remain challenging to achieve gender balance in decision.

# Experiences of women in the transport sector

Through focus groups and interviews, we discussed the experiences of women working in the transport sector, exploring the barriers they face to career development and progression.

From these discussions four themes emerge:

* The reputation of the sector among the general public and women’s perception of the sector
* The transport sector as a men-dominated sector
* Structural gendered problems in the sector
* Ways to attract and retain women in the sector.

The transport sector is a large industry composed of various sub-sectors and departments. In the focus groups, we had participants from different sub-industries of the transport sector – bus/coach operators, rail, active travel, transport charities/organisations, and transport departments of the government – and from different occupations and levels of seniority from across the transport industry. There were eight different organisations represented in the group discussions. The table below shows the number of participants from different occupations and seniority levels.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Seniority |
|  | **Senior/Manager** | **Partner/Officer** |
| Human Resources  | 3 | 5 |
| Sustainability  | 2 | 1 |
| Media, communication, public affairs  | 3 |  |
| Legal, policy and business affairs | 3 | 1 |
| Engineering, construction, development, technical occupations  | 2 | 1 |
| Drivers, operations (inc. area administrator, scheduling etc.) | 3 | 1 |
| Project management (e.g. behavioural change, active travel) | 2 | 1 |
| Total | **28** |

In all the focus groups and interviews, participants underlined that the transport sector is a large industry and the experiences of women in the sector depend on which department and profession they are working in. There was a clear distinction between the workplace experiences of women working in charity organisations and those working in transport businesses, even though some of them were (semi)governmental. Women who were working in transport sector charities were happy with the organisational structures and working environment, whereas women working in the transport companies were exposed to more gendered issues in their workplaces. However, all of the participants agreed that the transport sector does not have a good reputation in terms of gender relations, it is a men-dominated industry and work has been organised around a stereotypical male ‘norm’.

## The reputation of the sector and women’s perception

The participants underlined that the transport sector is not seen as an attractive sector to women due to the sector’s historical reputation as a men-dominated industry. The majority of the participants have joined the sector because of their professional background and they were happy to be in the sector. However, the majority again mentioned that the sector is not known very well, and has an unattractive reputation among many women, which discourages women from working in the sector, particularly in the operational and delivery areas of the sector.

Reflecting on what they had heard from the bus sector, one participant explained:

We’ve been working on bus driver recruitment over the last few months, it’s been a real problem for us, and we’ve been looking outside the box at what kinds of people we could attract to these jobs, and we found it really difficult to find any women bus drivers to go and do case studies with.  They were far and few between.   The conversations with partners were quite interesting out in the bus industry, where women aren’t attracted to it because it’s a male-dominated world, you’ve got calendars on the wall still with page three girls, sometimes there’s one toilet which is really just for men only, so there’s lots of stuff that still exists, even basic facilities for women, which is quite shocking.  That’s probably why they don’t go into this type of industry; it’s not very attractive, they don’t have their own facilities. You’ve got to be a resilient person to do it.  So, I think some of them don’t help themselves, either. (Comms/Senior)

### History builds up the reputation

Some participants highlighted how perceptions of the transport sector are still rooted in the historical image of the sector as being heavily dominated by men, and physical, difficult and dirty work. Yet, the nature of the work in the transport sector has changed. As one of the participants mentioned, the workforce was historically working with steam trains, which were physically demanding and a dirty job:

My dad was working on steam trains; it is not a far-removed history. And obviously, this was a man’s job. You couldn’t… I mean physically not able to be done by a woman. Women stayed in the home. They looked after the children, they did the shopping and the housework, and men did the dirty work. And I think that's where it stands from and gradually it changed. Obviously, the work is not as physical, you do have to have a bit of physical ability to be able to, like, do certain things is not, but obviously nowhere near as physical as I'm shovelling coal and pulling... I'm sure some women would have wanted to do it, but then you had also you had the attitude back in those days was women stay in the home, they don't get dirty, they don't do dirty work; men provide for their families and all that kind of thing, so that's where it all stems from. And I think it's just never been seen as a as a role for women. (Driver/Senior).

The sector, historically, has a very masculine and ‘dirty’ image, which persists and affects women’s interest in the sector.

Transport isn’t a sexy department to be in, if I’m honest, it wouldn’t be a department I would choose if I had my choice, it’s known to be a hard slog, it’s a department they call a bit dirty, there’s a lot going on, it’s very stressful. It’s hard work and people shy away from it, but I do think there’s still a male-dominated feel about it. (Comms/Senior)

I feel like even the branding of transport companies is very masculine, so when I think about bus companies, train companies, I feel like the whole branding is very… I can see why women don’t naturally think, ‘Oh, I’m going to look for jobs in transport’. (HR/Senior)

The branding and the reputation of the sector can be also a barrier to reaching younger generations:

If we’re going out to schools and saying, ‘Hey, girls come and work with us’, that’s a massive barrier. If they could change the branding to be more inclusive, that would make it so much better when you’re going and doing that outreach as well because it’s like we’re saying, ‘Come in, we’re welcoming’ except for the fact everything’s been designed for a male audience, but we are welcoming, promise. It needs to come top down, doesn’t it, that whole culture shift around branding and the feel of an organisation. (Project Management/Manager).

Language used in the sector is also a proof of the historical build-up of the sector’s reputation.

There’s lot of male language for some of the jobs. So, people will talk about a chargeman or a signalman. Well, there's no reason why those jobs. Could it be done by women? But I'm sure the number of women doing those jobs is very low. And so people still use quite, I would say now quite outdated terms. We maybe should be saying charge person or signal person, but it's just what those it's just what those job roles are called and they're still called that. And you sometimes hear of people say, oh, he's a railway man to say somebody who's worked in the railway a really long time. And it's that sense of real camaraderie. (Comms/Senior)

…you automatically assume that everyone is male. and but the thing is I do the same thing. For example, when I'm talking to a trainee you always say him. I just automatically call people on him all the time. So, it would be like ohh “when he comes around the corner when does this, when he does that or check with him check”, you know, always him not her. Everything’s men; signal men, charged men and then in the cab in the driving cab we've got the driver seat and then we've got the 2nd Man seat. (Driver/Senior)

Yet, diversity in the workforce varies in different parts of the sector. While admin, HR and accounting jobs are dominated by women, on the operational and delivery side of the business and in technical roles, there are only a few women.

When I did the first proper full-time transport job in XXXX, because I was doing travel plans, my manager was female, her manager was female, and there were two others that were female. They had a XXXX project, and a lot were male, but I’ve not seen buses and driving, mine’s more behaviour change, so different, I suppose (Project management/Senior)

Oddly, in the part of transport that I work in, the entire policy team is women, there’s not one man in the branch I’m in. It’s interesting that a lot of the work we do there, the policy development work and a lot of the delivery work, none of it is particularly technical, it’s not the technical engineering side of transport. And if I look across at the other teams in XXXX, the roads team or the rail team, they tend to be more male-dominated, so that’s quite interesting in itself. (Policy/Senior).

### Women’s perception of the sector

Participants widely agreed that women’s perception of the transport sector affects whether they are likely to take up roles in the sector, particularly operational or delivery roles.

There are also the barriers in our heads as to our perception of our abilities, but the perception might be, ‘Oh, that job is more of a man’s job, therefore not for me’. But the reality of it, you only really get to know it when you join an organisation, so unless there’s a reputation that that organisation isn’t a nice place for women to work, the barrier is perhaps more perception, and if it is about, then they know they’re not going to recruit women and they need to do some more work on that, so that’s the organisation’s barrier more than our barrier. (Project/Partner).

Gender stereotypes and the perceptions of roles affiliated with men affect recruitment of women in certain roles.

What we are finding is, from a recruitment perspective, it’s incredibly difficult to recruit people into these positions, into train driver positions, engineering positions, those male-dominated positions. It’s very challenging. But there’s very little you can do about attracting women to those roles because you can’t be discriminatory either way, so it’s very difficult to get those people through the doors, so, there’s some of the barriers we are facing. (HR/Partner).

However, many people, as the participants underlined, are also not aware of what the transport sector can offer them. A number of participants said that women and men have similar opportunities in the sector, but women do not want to apply for the jobs as they do not have the knowledge about many roles, there is a perception that the roles in the transport sector are for men, and women do not have the confidence to go to take up the roles.

Looking at how many traffic officers we had that were female, which was zero when I started [*four years ago*]. There’s four, I believe, now on the whole network that covers the A55. (…) It does seem to be there’s chances for everyone. But I don’t think many females went for the chance of it. ( Technical/Manager)

In all of the focus groups, participants mentioned that if women are not hundred per cent sure that they qualified for the job, they would not apply for the jobs.[[19]](#footnote-20) In the case of the transport sector, it is not only the qualifications affecting women in going for roles in the sector, but also the perception of gendered roles in the sector.

I don’t think women have the confidence that the men have behind them to gear them on. It comes under the same as truck drivers, that sort of genre of people, so I think they think they can’t do the job, but I can tell you, they can [laughs]. They’re probably our best drivers. (Operations/Manager)

There’s no magic secret that only men know about working in this sector, it’s not that difficult, really. I’ve heard a generalisation that men are more likely to look at a job description and think, ‘I can do half of that, so I’m going to apply for it’ where a woman would look at it and go, ‘I can’t do half that job, so I’m not going to apply for it’. So it’s the barriers in our own heads. (Construction/Manager).

Something I notice with the XXXX programme is we’ve done the men (…), now the women’s pilot, the difference in their approach is crazy. When we put jobs in front of the men, they’re like, ‘Yeah, I can do that’, whereas the women are like, ‘Oh, I’ve done that, but not at a level you’re looking for, I couldn’t do that job’. We almost have to approach it in a different way. You almost have to get an idea of their background and then tell them they can do this job, rather than asking what on there they can do. (HR/Partner)

One of the participants underlined that if a woman does not have a specialised profession in the transport industry, she would not particularly search for jobs in the industry, and available jobs would seem unachievable:

if you’re not a specialist, for example, if you’re not an engineer or trained technically in something, then it’s a bit like, ‘Oh, well I wouldn’t be able to do that’, but actually, we’ve got a whole host of [jobs]… look at the community engagement, the stakeholder, people don’t necessarily think about the huge comms, marketing, finance, HR, safety, sustainability, we do loads but there’s this tunnel vision approach to it. I think that’s a huge barrier. (HR/Manager)

Contrary to the discussion held around the negative reputation and the perception of the sector, two drivers (a train driver and a bus driver) told us how it was ‘normal’ for them to become a driver as they had had familiarity with the sector from a young age, which for them, made the transport sector feel like home.

My father worked on the railway. (…) When I was little little, we did a lot of railway stuff. (…) So, I was just used to trains. (…) I think it was fit that got me the job. And I I've always obviously been around trains and the railway my whole life it wasn't ever a weird job for me to do. It was just like a normal everyday job the people did. (Driver/Senior)

My father is a lorry driver. And he's always said to me since I was younger, he thinks it's great if more women join the sector. He thinks that's great what I'm doing. (Driver/Junior)

Once women have familiarity with the sector and it becomes normal to work in the sector, they can quite quickly adapt to the conditions in the sector, even though critical issues still exist.

It's sometimes seen as a lonely job, it can be. When I say lonely, I mean you can be in the depot in the middle of the night on your own. It maybe not feel safe for some people, but I've never felt unsafe. But I can. And I can understand from another standpoint, you might feel as though ‘*I don't want to do that job’*. (…) *[But]* women deserve that role, still. There's a bit of stigma around it being a man's job. (Driver/Senior)

## Working in a men-dominated industry

Working in a traditionally men-dominated sector is a big challenge for various reasons. Despite progress in the transport sector - with more women working in the sector and in traditionally men-dominated roles, and men more likely to encounter women at work as a result - it is not easy to dismantle the historical gendered workplace culture and infrastructure in the sector. Participants underlined that gender is still an issue and discrimination is still happening, albeit in more subtle forms than before.

I’ve had experience working in the local authority, but I’ve worked with bus operators and taxis, so I spent a lot of time with licencing and going on site visits to these places, and there’s a reason why I didn’t want to become a transport operator to manage a bus or taxi company, because when I started, I was told I could not go on these site visits alone, although my male colleagues were going alone; it was like a boys’ club and they’d all have fun, and they’d get on, so when I started my job, I went on site visits with male colleagues, and I thought, ‘Right, I’m going to do this on my own now because I can’ and I did go on some site visits and continued to, although there were comments about what I was wearing, whether I was capable of doing the job, all sorts of comments; it was unbelievable! So that was a barrier to me as to why I didn’t want to go ahead and work in that specific area because it’s not a great culture, it’s just so male-dominated. (Project/Partner)

Participants underlined that discriminatory or derogatory behaviours come from certain age groups, particularly from older men in the workforce who have more traditional views on gender issues, and this sort of behaviour is not common among the younger generation.

I certainly think that older men in the organisation, that’s where I see that behaviour a bit more, and I would imagine train drivers in mess rooms of frontline operations, a lot of that demographic is older men, and when you are one of the only females, I would imagine that goes on a lot more in that environment. So, in terms of being treated differently, they probably wouldn’t single out a man like they would single out a woman. (HR/Manager)

…an environment where there’s a lot of older men who have been used to working in a certain way, and are reluctant to change that, or be challenged. (Sustainability/Manager)

I think the younger generation, in my experience, they don’t have the same views as those who were around when I was a teenager; not that everyone was sexist back then, but it was more commonplace, males did this job, females did this job and now it doesn’t seem to be like that speaking to the people I have. (HR/Manager)

When I started as well, you know, like uh, *‘make us a cup of tea love’* and stuff like that, which just doesn't happen now. And it's much fairer now. I think again the same thing with the younger generation; because there's a lot of new younger male staff there now who have been brought up in a different way. (Driver/Senior)

A young engineer working alongside both young and older generations of men told us that men’s behaviour towards her changes according to their age:

I think in my office job now, (…) there’s quite a lot of younger engineers, many of who have worked in an office environment their whole career. I don’t have to work as hard as I did on site to get the same level… It’s very similar, once you get the same colleagues and you get used to them, they don’t see you any different based on your sex, but back on site, it’s a massive thing that you have to work harder than your male colleagues, especially with the generational gap. If you’ve got some older men on site, when they were my age, it was all males, and their wives would do the admin work and they’d give them money at the end of the week. I think it is a very bit generational divide. Now I’m working with younger people and new engineers, I don’t find this a problem, but if you ever go in a workplace where the people don’t know you and they’ve got more traditional ways of working, it can alter how much they respect your progress and recognise it. (Engineer/Trainee)

In fact, with the younger generations coming along, and more women joining the workforce, things have been changing at a pace.

The experience I had when I started was that it was a bit of a boys’ club and you came in and had to fit into the laddish, macho culture, or you burnt out, really. It’s changed a lot since then, but you’re kind of waiting for certain characters that hold that old-school mentality to fall off the other side of the conveyer belt, really. So, it’s developed, but it was definitely a perception that was reality for me at the start, but it has changed. Not completely, but strides have been made to change. (Business/Manager)

### Gendered relations among colleagues and with clients

Gender stereotyping and associating some roles with gender is still observed in the sector.

I have seen, and certainly had feedback from some of our female apprentices to our engineers, that they have encountered comments and judgement, where one was mistaken for – she was at the depot, where there’s only one toilet, there’s no female toilet there, and she was going to use the toilet, and someone approached her and said*, ‘Oh no love, hold on a minute, don’t clean that, I’m about to use it’* and she was like, *‘Well, firstly, I’m not the cleaner, how can you just expect that all women are cleaners? And also, I’m an engineer’* and it was like you wouldn’t expect to see a female engineer either at the depot, so I know (…) those types of comments, but you do see those frontline roles, particularly in rail operations, train drivers, conductors, those sorts of things, they are very male-dominated and you do associate them with more men working in that area and you see less women. (HR/Partner).

An engineer told us that things are getting better and she is supported and treated equally by her colleagues in general, but, there are always some people using sexist and discriminatory language and stereotyping.

It’s a lot better than it used to be, females in engineering, but even when I was on site, I was the only female on site out of a group of forty of us. I think that did create a barrier for myself – although ninety-nine percent of them were very supportive – you’d always get one or two people who would come on site and they’d come to me and say, ‘*I’m here to see the engineer’* and I’d say, ‘*That’s me, pleased to meet you’* and you’d see the thought in their head going, *‘Oh, I thought you were an admin worker or a cleaner’*, or they even just talk over my head, and if there were two engineers on site, they would talk to the male and not even ask me the questions because they would just assume that I didn’t know as much. It can make you feel very little even though you’ve got the same capabilities as other people. (Engineer/Trainee)

Some men still have condescending attitudes towards their women colleagues regardless of their positions. These behaviours can be in the forms of ignoring, patronising and excluding women colleagues.

We went on a site visit the other day and the man wouldn’t speak to us, he was speaking to his colleague who then spoke to us. It was like we weren’t there, and he was relaying the information to his friend to pass on. He wouldn’t even make eye contact. That was really weird, I haven’t experienced that before. (Sustainability/Senior).

Some of the participants also mentioned that even though they have good relations with their immediate men colleagues and at their workplace, they are exposed to gender stereotyping behaviours, or gender discrimination from other businesses in the sector which have more traditional, men-dominated work culture. The examples they gave highlights how different men’s attitudes towards women colleagues if they don’t work alongside them.

The biggest one [*barrier*] that comes to mind, for me, is actually dealing with XXXX. We’ve had quite a few problems. We have a lot of women on our team, and we’ve had to work with XXXX quite a bit over the past year. So… to try and get permission to introduce some green features at stations, and they’ve been very difficult to work with, and a female colleague of mine has gotten the impression that it’s been because she’s a woman that they are reluctant to speak with her because they feel like she doesn’t have the experience that they have. I think particularly because it’s sustainability that we work in, that it’s not seen as a… it’s not taken very seriously. (…) so, there’s kind of the two sides to the sustainability versus, you know, a woman trying to tell them what they should be doing, and sort of an environment where there’s a lot of older men who have been used to working in a certain way, and are reluctant to change that, or be challenged. (Sustainability/Manager)

We have had quite a few of shocks from XXXX that there is women working in transport. And they’re just awkward. They’re really, really awkward. They don’t see the bigger picture of safety aspects, and what work needs to be done. And then, they kind of throw their dummy out the pram, I suppose, when it doesn’t go their way. And then, they send men in to discuss, on emails, more than the women that we’ve been dealing with previously. But actually, me and my boss are pretty adamant that this is the way. (Technical/Manager)

I think there’s pockets of behaviour that comes from XXXX, quite old-fashioned and it feels like they’ve never worked with women before. I’ve attended meetings where they’ve said things like*, ‘Women shouldn’t be in charge of big numbers*’ or, *‘Oh, are you from HR?’* coming into a directorate team meeting where you’re a ‘Head of XXXX’ it’s so awful because you sit in a corner then and feel ashamed of yourself for being there. (Sustainability/Senior)

Participants were also in agreement that many of the gender related problems they have been experiencing were not caused of individuals, but because of the culture. The gendered workplace culture is historically embedded in the sector and the subtlety of some the gendered behaviours and the lack of awareness of some men of how their behaviour affects women can make it difficult to challenge the status quo:

Sometimes they almost don’t realise they’re saying it, and some of the comments I’ve had, I’ve bitten my tongue when probably I shouldn’t sometimes. It’s almost like they say it and they don’t realise how that’s being received sometimes, and that’s difficult because when someone doesn’t realise… if you’re going out of your way to be blatantly nasty or malicious, you can confront it, but if someone doesn’t realise, then it’s a little bit difficult. (HR/Partner).

To be fair to men, they don’t always realise the impact they have on women in those situations because they haven’t been educated to think, ‘*This is affecting other people in the workplace’* (HR/Partner).

A participant who is working in the operational side also said that it is not only about the workplace culture but also the deep-rooted gendered structures and stereotypes in our societies. She told us about her experience with some customers which is derived from gender stereotypes.

I had people who refused to get on the train if I'm driving, *‘I'm not getting on the train with the women's driving!’* I mean, not often. Don't get me wrong, but it has happened and all you get the comments of like *‘ohh women driver. Oh, I bet we're going to be late now!’* (…) I've I'd like comments of like, when young boy said to his mother he got off the train, they walked past the window and he said there was a lady driving. And she said, ‘*don't be so stupid!’* and kicked him right like round the ear. And I was like that ‘*really? just you automatically assume that everyone is male.’* (Driver/Senior)

The majority of the participants said that they haven’t been directly exposed to discriminatory or abusive behaviours, but they acknowledged that gender discrimination and derogatory or abusive behaviour is a problem in the sector especially in the men-dominated departments.

I've been there for nearly 20 years now. Things have been improved massively with regards to sexism [and so on…]. There's been all sorts of things that happens, like when I was a young girl, they were like*, ‘ohh, new meat coming into the to the railway’*. So there was a lot of attention when I started and it was obviously, being like you might have been the only woman in a maximum of like 30 men, quite intimidating to start off with. It's not as bad as that now. And plus there was a lot of old attitudes. (Driver/Senior)

My line manager is female, and I know that she’s received some discrimination here and there, some comments that have been made towards her. I know of like instances of it happening to other women that I work with. (…) But personally, I think I’ve been quite lucky in that I haven’t really experienced that. Especially, since my last position *[in another sector]* was so terrible. (Sustainability/Manager)

Participants underlined that banter, masculine language, bro-culture are part of the work culture which affect women and their relations with men colleagues. Women, who are working alongside men in traditionally men-dominated roles told that the conversations men have are often not appropriate.

Some areas of the business are heavily male-dominated, and it’s office banter that goes on, and whilst there’s nothing wrong with having a laugh, some of the language is that traditional male language, jokes at the expense of the women that can be seen as discrimination and certainly can be offensive. (HR/Manager)

I think sometimes it just goes too far. I'm not afraid to say, oh, I think you should stop there now because that's not, I don't feel as though that's what you're seeing is good, whether it's about me or somebody else, I'll always step in and defend people. (Driver/Senior)

Masculine, gendered work environment and culture make women feel excluded. Women might feel left out in the work environment, particularly if they are onsite, working alongside men.

I always said they kind of treated me like a little sister, in a way. They had daughters the same age as me and they treated me like that, so sometimes I did feel I’d walk into a room, and they’d be having a conversation like typical male onsite banter, and they would stop it when I walked in. It depends which way you look at it, you could think they’re being respectful, but at the same time, I’m being left out of conversations a little bit. They were accepting of it, but I felt like I was a little bit in the way in the fact that I’m young, female. It felt like are they being nice to me because they want to be, or out of fear that if they treat me like anyone else, HR will be on their back saying it’s discrimination based on the fact I’m female. (Engineer/Trainee)

What I do find quite annoying is when there's any, any kind of sport on the telly. So, it could be and obviously, there's always something going on… There'll be the golf season, there'll be the football season, there’ll be the rugby season, there'll be the boxing or whatever's on. There's always some sports… Well, I don't like sports. I don't watch both. I don't follow sports. (…) And that's always annoyed me because I think actually, I'd quite like to watch something that I want to watch, not Rugby Football, golf, darts, whatever… (…) If you're in the situation when you're in the master room, you have to join in with the conversation that's going on, so you don't necessarily want to talk about football or you want don't necessarily want to talk about what the TV programme they were watching last night. They don't want to talk to you about the latest sale or any women's subjects you know. So, you have to you do find the way to talk about men's stuff. (Driver/Senior)

Because banter, the masculine language and *‘boys-club’* are part of the culture, or the ‘normal’ of the men employees, when women encounter these behaviours, they are expected to accept it. And, as one of the participants mentioned, *“because they are more casual stuff, it’s not enough for you to complain about”* (Construction/Manager). This normalisation of the gendered working place also affects men’s confidence to stand up for women and tackle with the sexist, derogatory behaviours, as one participants puts it:

It’s also about the confidence of certain men to challenge it because men in that room may think, ‘Oh, that’s out of order’ but they might still not say anything because they might think that’s the norm. (Project/Partner).

### The impact of gendered relations on women

Some of the participants stated that women often feel they have to work harder to prove themselves in men-dominated workplaces. This is even more so with younger women in the workforce.

I deal with all the hiring managers across (…) and my first interactions with a couple of them – and I can see it – they take one look at me and go, *‘We can walk all over her’* because they think young girl, I can assert myself. And then I open my mouth [laughs] and they go, *‘Oh, no we can’t walk over her’*, so they’re quickly put in their place with me, let’s put it that way, and it changes the dynamic. (HR/Partner).

You’ve almost got to work extra hard because you’ve got to prove yourself that much more, when if it was another guy or an older lady, they would think, *‘Okay, I’ve got to listen, I’ll take it on the chin’*. (…) Everyone seems expert in my area! I don’t go into engineering and tell the team how to run their projects, how dare you come into my world and tell me how to run my area?’ (HR/Partner).

She's done quite a few different roles within XXXX and she used to work in a warehouse and she used to drive like forklift trucks and stuff. And she said she would use that, her background, as a way to sort of gain trust with some of the guys find her OK. It is almost like they accepted her OK, she used to work in a warehouse, she can drive a forklift truck, she's like one of us. This is almost like winning trust by showing some air of masculinity, masculinity, or trying to find common ground. (Comms/Senior)

Men-dominated work environments and teams can be intimidating and ‘a shock to the system’ – as the participants put it:

It’s a very male-dominated environment. I was shocked because I’d never worked anywhere like that and sustainability is generally very female-heavy, so you’re surrounded by women all of the time, so coming into that environment where I was in an all-male team– so it was me, loads of engineers, and loads of safety men, and for a while, I was one of two women in my directorate, so it’s quite a shock to the system and for anybody new coming in it could be a scary environment in a way. It’s definitely different when you go into a meeting and it’s thirteen men and you, or nine men and you, and it’s an environment that I wasn’t at all used to. (Sustainability/Senior)

Even though it is not directly discriminatory or derogatory, women find places where they are in the minority and have less of a voice ‘intimidating’. Some of the participants told us that they find going into meeting rooms full of (white) men as an intimidating experience.

I’ve had a meeting quite recently actually with some senior stakeholders from the engineering area, and it felt very much like gang up on me, and I really had to hold my own when I was being challenged, and it almost felt like they were siding with each other and throwing in questions that were a bit unfair, really, so I really had to hold my own in that sense, prove myself that I was right in that position, went away and emailed them back saying I was correct in that instance; didn’t get an apology or anything like that back in return to say, *‘Oh, yeah, I was wrong, my error’*. So, I felt like if it was a man who was challenging, it probably wouldn’t have happened, but because it was me, it was let’s try our luck and see how we can push it. (HR/Partner)

…women have gone into master rooms and felt a little bit sort of intimidated in that space because the way it is, you know, it feels very masculine. And the things that the men are talking about and sort of looking like a women's coming and sort of looking at her like, like, what are you doing in here? (Comms/Senior)

Fortunately, the team I worked with were okay, they behaved themselves quite well, but it can be intimidating, especially in meetings when you speak up, everyone turns around and looks at you like, *‘Oh God, what’s she going to say now?’*. (…) You’re just thrown to the wolves! (Construction/ Manager)

I’m quite opinionated as well and sometimes I feel like I can’t say my opinion because sometimes women, in saying what they think, you can be labelled a certain way, like sassy, opinionated, difficult, and I’ve definitely found that. I would start saying something and it would be, *‘Oh God, here she goes’* whereas if it came from a male counterpart, it would be received and respected. I haven’t had a massive problem at … but there have been particular men I’ve struggled with a little bit. (HR/Partner).

Gendered workplaces affect women’s confidence and wellbeing at work, their work-life balance and their career.

I didn’t find it an easy environment to be in and I went from being quite a confident person to not saying anything in meetings, I put myself in a box, I felt I had to behave because I’m quite outspoken usually and quite loud, and I was like the problem woman, *‘Oh, she’s speaking up again’*, and I didn’t deal with it very well and my mental health took a bit of a hit, and I had coaching from one of the ladies in HR, and if it hadn’t have been for that between my three-month and six-month probationary period, I probably would have left. ( Sustainability/Senior)

However, some participants also commented that women should not be put off by a room full of men. They stressed that even though it is understandable that some women might feel intimidated, it’s important that these situations do not create another stereotype that is applied to women.

Someone once said to me, going into a meeting with the leadership and I work with them quite often, someone said to me, *‘I know it can be intimidating to go into a room with all them’* and I was like, *‘Why, are you intimidated because I’m not’* and there’s that perception that I will be intimidated and I’m thinking, *‘Please, don’t think that’* and I think that some people are, but I’ve had to state to others that it’s quite patronising that you feel I would be intimidated.  So, there may be some issues that face women, so it’s almost like being too careful at times and it’s not fair, it’s not needed. (Business/Partner)

Perceptions make you feel a certain way as well, unless you’re strong enough to say no. The more we go around in a circle and say things like, *‘Are you intimidated to go in there?’* it drives that mentality. (HR/Partner)

Participants also highlighted that gendered relations and gender inequality at work also affect men. Men experience gender stereotyping which affects and shapes their experiences at work. As one of the participants said, men actually do care about their responsibilities in their households.

They do worry about childcare, they do worry about working late because they’ve got family issues, they do worry about how they look and how they are perceived in the workplace; so, I suppose it’s us being educated to realise that this is a bit of a worldwide issue. (HR/Partner).

### Women’s coping mechanisms

The majority of the participants underlined that women working in the transport sector are aware of the conditions and they develop resilience once they find their feet in their role and work environment. The focus here is an individual-based approach, giving individual women the responsibility to develop their resilience and find their ways to cope with the challenges of working in a man-dominated environment.

I think that’s down to the individual though, isn’t it? (FG1, HR/Senior)

The thing with the railway, there's always going to be banter. There's always banter. And banter is just as accepted. And it just happens in any workplace. (…) if there is banter, so, you have to be a certain kind of person as a woman to be able to either join in with the banter. (Driver/Senior)

Adapting to the work environment and accepting the dominant culture is one of the coping mechanisms that women use to remain in the sector.

there aren’t many women in the organisation at all, so if a woman didn’t want to work in an organisation that was totally dominated by men, they probably wouldn’t want to stay. (Sustainability/Partner).

…if you're working that environment… I've always taken it as it is. If I work in that environment, my choice to work in that environment, there's no point in alienating yourself from getting on with your colleagues, so just take that on board and accept that as part of my job. It's just part of like what I do when work is. I talk about football or I watch it. (I don't talk about football, but that kinds of things.) So, just one of those things you have to accept. (…) You do have to adjust. It's the same with any job. You always you take on a different persona when you're in work, don't you? With any job, too. It's a similar thing you just take on your work persona. (Driver/Senior)

*“Putting your guard up”, “Gear yourself up”, “putting up with it”* were some of the phrases that participants used to describe how they cope with the challenges in the man-dominated working environment.

You shouldn’t have to go into a meeting and feel you have to gear yourself up for a battle or prepare yourself for a battle before you go for a meeting, and you can see that some people will dig their heels in, won’t reason, won’t come around, they’re just stubborn for the sake of being stubborn. (HR partner)

I think when women’s confidence increases to be in those kind of environments, that’s going to be a critical part, and I’ve learned that that first interaction I have is probably the most vital because if I stand my ground in that one, then all of the interactions that come after that, I’ve gained respect, they appreciate what I’m saying, and they are more likely to be influenced and take your opinions and thoughts onboard… (HR partner).

If there is banter, so, you have to be a certain kind of person as a woman to be able to either join in with the banter. You have to have like a few good comebacks and then and once you've got that, once you can give as good as you get kinds of thing, then they accept you or don't bother with you cause you will join in and give it back. (…) It is like sexist sometimes but you have to be able to accept a certain level, but then you just your back to them. I think I've learned how to deal with it over the years, but it's nowhere near as bad as it used to be. (Driver/Senior)

One of the things that women do to cope with the men-dominated work environment and workplace culture, is to avoid conflicts and be stoic about the situation.

For my team, if they’re ever put in that circumstance *[a derogatory and gendered attitude],* I always say step away from it, you don’t have to engage with it, and please share it so we can potentially raise it with those individuals, or at least be aware of it. (Comms/Manager)

On the other side, some of the participants said they are trying to be direct and trust their knowledge and experience when faced with a conflict:

You’ve just got to be direct if they’re direct with you, which is a bit uncomfortable at first, but I just think I’m not putting up with it, I know my stuff, and so be it. You shouldn’t have to be like that, you shouldn’t feel you have to fight for your position. (HR/Partner)

Another participant also underlined the importance of communication and reporting discriminatory behaviours.

I think communication is key. I think getting that information out there to the women; again, you've got like the older women who are more like myself, they just carry on, carry on… That's an old-fashioned mentality just to get on and do with it. Deal with it. Don't report it, I think. That's probably how I am a little bit. I just don't worry about it. Just keep going. Just keep going. But now they, like I said with the more, more and more younger women coming into the sector, they probably will start reporting things more, not taking things on. (Driver/Senior)

Some women find working in a men-dominated environment as an opportunity to actively challenge the gender stereotypes and try to change the workplace culture.

For me, personally, I think that’s what I want to do, I want to prove them wrong. (…) Not trying to do more, but prove that you can do it just as well. Once you get to that level, you earn their respect. You’re always going to be on the backfoot with some men, especially with generational gaps or whatnot, but once you’ve got to that level, you’ve gone over the wall, so to speak, and you’ve reached a level where you do earn their respect. (Operations/Manager)

Some participants underlined that having some support and advice helped them to remain in the sector. One of the participants, for example, utilised coaching services when she was on probation as she found it difficult to adapt to the working environment.

I didn’t deal with it very well and my mental health took a bit of a hit, and I had coaching from one of these ladies in HR, and if it hadn’t have been for that between my three-month and six-month probationary period, I probably would have left (Sustainability/Senior)

Support from unions and staff networks were also mentioned as important mechanisms for women. However, even though many subsectors of the transport sector are highly unionised, there is a lack of union representation in some institutions and organisations, particularly in the charity and semi-governmental organisations. In addition, the lack of diversity in unions can be a barrier for women to seek support from them, particularly on gender issues.

We don’t have that social partnership *[union recognition]* yet, but what I can say, there was a time when I was in a meeting doing quite a senior consultation process, and I was treated really badly by somebody who was in that meeting who was a male, and he treated me really badly in front of everyone, and what I will say is that there were trade union officials there, and they absolutely defended me, publicly, within that meeting for the way that he treated me and I’m not a member of the union, so in terms of actual lived experience, no, we’re not members, but I’ve got really good experience of the way unions have responded. (HR/Senior)

I've never brought to report anybody or I would say the, yeah, the Union, they would probably help you, but again, all the unions representatives, they're all male. They don't see things from our point of view. They don't realize how emotionally affected you can be by something. (Driver/Senior)

The role of managers and dedicated officers were also highlighted as agents to deal with the problems in gendered work environment.

We also have line managers who constantly speak to staff as well as things like health champions, diversity champions, so we will locate a person who will be approachable for the staff so they can speak to them confidentially. If they’re not comfortable talking to a manager, they can talk to one of their peers and they can pass it up the chain, so we’re pretty good at offering support networks in that sense. (Operations/Manager).

We’ve always had welfare officers on site and even in the office as well that are the same level to you, so if you do experience anything like that you can go to them, and if you want to take it further, you can. (Engineer/Trainee)

Participants also underlined that having staff forums, platforms or approachable managers are not enough unless they are safe spaces for women, where women’s voices are heard and women are supported. The attitudes of colleagues in these platforms are critical. Yet, participants told that, especially in men-dominated departments, voicing gender related issues, disputes discrimination or harassment is difficult as many of them are still taboo subjects.

I think a massive part of it is it’s quite a taboo subject still and if it happens to you, you almost feel ashamed, like have you done something wrong to deserve that? So even though that support is there, you might not always take it because you don’t know if you deserve to take that support. Some women do and that’s really good, but I think it needs to be a safer space sometimes. When you go to the gym, you see *‘Harassment is not okay and it’s never your fault’*, so something like that, and if they keep going in that direction, a support system can evolve into something even more useful. It being there isn’t enough, it has to be accessible and comfortable at the same time.( Engineer/Trainee)

We have Women in XXXX group, there’s a mentoring programme, that’s been really useful. I’ve had mentoring to deal with misogyny, though you’d think it was better to make sure the misogyny didn’t happen [laughs]. But finding a safe space to talk in, which I don’t think we have in the organisation. (Sustainability/Senior)

…second thing then would be go and see your manager now. The problem with that is, most of the train managers are male. We've got one female, and she's only been in the position about a month or so. So, any female issue I've had – this is another problem - any female issue I've ever had, I've had to go and talk to a male about it, which is difficult, isn't it? Again, it's one of those things you just have to do it. They don't want to hear about, like, fertility problems, periods or anything like that. But I think, *‘do you know what? You have to listen to me! I'm just gonna tell you these things. If you don't wanna hear it, then, too bad!’* So, that’s a problem. (Driver/Senior)

Furthermore, participants claimed that there is a culture of not reporting in many areas of the transport sector.

…I approached colleagues first and addressed things, and sometimes the culture of go straight to your manager is wrong, but in some instances, even my colleagues would say, *‘Don’t kick up a fuss, you’re not going to get anywhere, you’re crying wolf’* and this is from female colleagues also, not just from males, then sometimes it would be bad, so you would go to your manager, and they would say, *‘Are you sure you really want this written down? What will people think of you?’* and you’re like, *‘Okay’*, so it was also manipulated not to speak out and to keep under the rug, so it’s a culture not just in transport ( Project/Partner)

One of the problems with the railway is there's a culture of don't report any of your colleagues. If you all seem to have reported one of your colleagues and you'll be ostracized by the rest of your colleagues, so there's that kind of culture of you just don't report anything. You don't report your colleagues because then none of your other colleagues are going to like you look at that again. This culture is gradually dying down, though. (Driver/Senior)

## Structural gendered issues at work

In sectors where the majority of employees are men, work is often organised according to the conventional and traditional working patterns, and preferences and conveniences of men. A gender-blind perspective in the organisation of work and workplace generates structural gendered issues and inequalities. These issues can be observed in recruitment processes, retention and career development of women and people with other protected characteristics, working patterns and infrastructure. Structural gendered issues create gender inequalities and prevent women from pursuing and progressing in their career.

In the focus groups and interviews, these structural gender inequalities were discussed in depth.

### Recruitment

Participants agree that in principal, recruitment processes are fair and equal in their workplaces. However, there are structural gendered barriers, such as unconscious bias, affinity bias and gender stereotypes that affect women’s experiences.

Recruitment is a fair process, so it is open to everybody who meets the criteria for that role, so from the outset, it is open to all, everyone should have the same opportunity.  The hiring managers should be scoring those fairly, based on a far scoring matrix.  So, in theory, yes, they should have the same opportunities.  Sometimes they can be a little bit biased maybe in their process, but if they are following it as they should, then it should be fair to all. (HR Manager)

Even though the processes are in place and the opportunities are in place, biases are still there.  We’ve ran unconscious bias training and it’s been really well-accepted and really well used, but it still exists.  So even though it’s there, you can’t eliminate unconscious bias, it’s impossible, but what you can do is reduce the risk of it affecting decision-making. (Business/Partner)

Women are not only under-represented in the transport sector, but also across the education and training pathways that traditionally provide a route into the sector. As a result men are potentially in a more advantageous position than women to be recruited into the sector. Conventional recruitment systems unfortunately perpetuate the gendered structure of the sector, despite some measures being taken to address bias.

In terms of recruitment, I feel that we need some radical change, really, because where I’ve worked before, they thought they were doing the best thing, and they went to blind recruitment, but actually, they still ended up hiring the middle-aged white men because you take off the name and date of birth and they’ve still had all the best opportunities and the least marginalisation, so they’re still the best for the job, so we need to be hiring people who aren’t the best for the job, deliberately, and then training them up, particularly in higher positions in the organisation. (Project/Senior)

Even though considerable effort has been given to attract more young women into the sector, there are still not many women taking up career opportunities. Furthermore, participants also stated that the few women who might be interested in a career might not be selected due to gendered structures and bias.

I definitely see we’ve had a lot of success with the young women we’re bringing through in the different programmes. The challenge is we don’t have enough of them and there’s certainly not a fair split in some of the STEM areas, so I guess there’s two sides to it really, we’re seeing success for the women who do come through the programme, we just don’t have enough of them coming through (…) Certainly, within engineering, train drivers, it does feel like we have the token couple, so more needs to be done and I think a lot of it comes from management; maybe the bias is there if we’ve got two fantastic candidates and they go for the male over the female, and challenging that. (HR/Partner)

In a sector dominated by men, a lack of diversity on recruitment panels was highlighted as an issue. One of the participants exemplified how men can be biased and gender stereotypes can play a role in the perception of the work environment:

We had a situation launching this women’s XXXX programme, and there was a potential she could go and work in one of the (…) construction-type role, and one of the men who works in that team turned around and said, *‘Oh, do you think she could handle it?’* and said, *‘What do you mean? She’s got the right experience and qualifications’*, so I was going completely from merit, and he was like, *‘Oh yeah but you know what it's like’* and I was like, I know where he’s going with this, and I said, *‘What do you mean how it’s like?’* and he said, *‘Well, there’s a lot of banter flowing, it can be a bit inappropriate’* and I said, *‘Well, that’s a reflection on the team, it’s not for us to turn around to a woman and say, ‘Sorry, you can’t go into that team because you won’t be able to handle the banter’’*, so I said, *‘You’ve got to be careful there because that’s discrimination’* and he was like, *‘No, I didn’t mean it like that’* and it’s like, *‘Well, yeah you did’*. (HR/Partner).

### Retention and career progression

The majority of the participants agreed that there are equal opportunities provided for women to progress in their roles in the sector once they are appointed. Participants underlined that there are policies in place for fair treatment of women in recruitment processes and promotion. However, structural barriers, such as less experience, the impact of unpaid labour on women’s work and organisation of the work according to the needs of men all affect women’s retention and career progression in the sector.

Just because the opportunities are there, doesn’t mean women are going to take them, for whatever reason.  And there might be systemic, sexist barriers such as not being able to do a job share or less hours.  So, it seems fair, but there’s things in the system that are causing barriers. (Business/Partner)

If my husband was offered a promotion, the caring stuff wouldn’t even come into it.  He wouldn’t think, *‘How am I going to manage this, or extra hours?’*  So for me, personally, that’s a factor. I personally haven’t seen anything that’s biased towards women or men where I work either, it is equal opportunities, but it’s whether those women can take them up. (HR/Partner).

Existing gender inequalities and gender stereotypes and are still barriers to women progressing their careers in the transport sector.

Women are definitely more stagnant in their roles, and they were in lower paid roles, whilst male colleagues were elevated faster into leadership roles, even though the working hours and the level of effort is equally the same, it seemed that women and men would join at the same time and men would have two promotions by the time… and, you know, some ladies would be having babies and they wouldn’t be working part-time, it would just be… it wasn’t a brilliant culture in local authority, and also in the private sector as well. (Project Management/Partner)

Undoubtedly, in work training, upskilling and reskilling are critical for career progression. Participants underlined that these opportunities are available for everyone but they are not taken up by women as much as by men. Participants observed that, in some cases, women are more reluctant to take up these opportunities.

I think men are more likely to go after additional qualifications and training, whereas women wait to be asked; they’re not jumping at the bit as much as men. So, the general answer is yes, it’s available for everyone, I don’t think there’s a difference, but due to the nature of men and women, the amount of people who do extra training is probably different. (HR/Manager)

One of the reasons highlighted for not taking up career progression opportunities is the caring responsibilities that many women have outside of work. Caring responsibilities remain a barrier for many women, affecting whether they are able to take up a new role, take on more responsibilities or access training, due to time poverty and the sheer burden of caring responsibilities.

If it’s on top of your day job, a lot of women are the primary carers for their children, they don’t have as much extra time, perhaps, as men do, or they prioritise their children and don’t make as much time for themselves like men would. (HR/Manager)

Your time is so focused on your children you haven't got time to focus on extra work at home. (…) People who've got young children haven't got the time. They haven't got the time to spend doing things *[like training]*. I don't necessarily think it's the railway. I think women who haven't got children and career-minded; they progress and but for women who've got families definitely set back. (Driver/Senior)

Men get to progress because they’ve got a woman at home doing all the unpaid work. Whereas if we had someone at home doing that, we’d be chomping at the bit for opportunities. (Project Management/Senior.)

As the mum, you think, *‘Oh, they’re going to be impacted in terms of reduced working hours’* because they have to balance most of the childcare, whereas if you’ve got a dad, in most cases, they’re not really impacted, in most cases his life just carries on as normal, they carry on progressing through their careers, and those wider stereotypes definitely play a part. It’s probably not just transport-specific but, again, if you’ve got a very male-dominated area, it’s bound to have an impact if you’ve got women who go off on maternity leave or whatever, their job and career opportunities may be impacted then if there’s a lack of support or understanding from managers, and if they’re male managers, again, that could also impact it even further. (HR/Partner).

Many participants made a distinction between the career progression opportunities for women with children, and women without children and men who are not under the same caring pressures. Women without childcare responsibilities acknowledged that they could take up more opportunities and not experience gender discrimination, whereas, women who had childcare responsibilities need to make difficult decisions and sacrifices in their career progression.

I have been very lucky that I’ve never experienced *[discrimination in career progression]* (…) But, I probably come in with this from a different angle because I haven’t got kids. (Technical/Manager)

For me personally, having my children has putting me back. I don't think it's necessarily the company. Because you have still got the same opportunities to progress and, (…) I think I would have progress by now further, if I hadn't had my children. (…) I still think that women who haven't got children progress faster and a reach a higher levels than women with children because I think you spend, even though I went back to work full time after having my children, that period of your time being a mum, don't you? And not focusing on your career. (Driver/Senior)

### Working patterns

Participants had varied views on the working patterns in the industry. As in other areas that we discussed, participants’ view on this matter were dependent on where and in what role they were working. While, for example, office roles in the big transport companies and organisations working on behalf of government and charities generally support flexible and part-time working, this is not the case in many of the operational and delivery departments in the sector. An HR partner participant mentioned that she has a good work-life balance but she is not sure if it is similar in the other branches of the transport sector.

I don’t know if that’s across the board, potentially, how female friendly our policies are when you think about people coming into the industry and they want to work part-time, for instance, I don’t know if we even do such things as part-time opportunities, so maybe there’s a bit of concern there that if you were working part-time consistently, would you get the same opportunities across the whole board? In my area, yes, that flexi-working, work-life balance, and if you’re a mum, it’s very encouraged to get that balance and pursue your dreams, but I don’t know if that’s the case across the board. (HR/partner).

It was underlined by the participants that even though flexible working or part-time working is available in the sector, particularly in men-dominated departments and in senior levels, flexible and/or part-time working is not widely taken up. As one of the participants mentioned, this is mostly related to how work has been organized around the *availabilities and abilities of stereotypical men*:

…because traditionally, in the transport sector, quite a lot of the senior leaders are male, there isn’t necessarily the appetite to attract and encourage anything other than you have to work full-time. (HR/Senior).

Even though covid has transformed the way many of us we work, the participants explained that men still do not go for part-time or flexible working as much as women.

Working patterns can also be a barrier for women’s progression. Part-time work is not seen as acceptable for career progression which is a significant barrier for some women in particular jobs. The majority of women joining in the conversation about working patterns agreed that part-time working is a barrier for career progression.

I think there is availability so you can go up the ladder in terms of management. (…) I just don't think for me there would be because I work part-time. So I don't think you'd consider it. I really struggled to get where I am now permanently part time. So, I think they're not quite ready for that? (Operations/Manager)

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| **Part-time work is a barrier for career progression…***I applied two years ago for a permanent full-time position. I got offered the job but having two young children at the time, one still in pre-school, I felt I wasn’t ready to commit to full time work but asked if they would consider any type of part-time working. They said no. The manager rang me back within a few days and said, “actually we've got a six months placement that we need to fill and the manager in this department has said that he'd be happy to take you on part-time” so I took the job. For the next two years, I was effectively on a rolling six-month contract as the role I had filled was covering a secondment and the secondee kept on being extended. During that time, I applied for permanent positions and on one occasion I got offered an interview, having clearly put down in the application that I would need to work part-time I said, “can I take it then as per my application that you will be considering my part-time working request?” the HR member of staff didn’t have the answer so on calling me back she said “No. We’ll, only accept you full-time or nothing. Do you want to remove your application?” I was taken aback at this and resigned myself to the fact that I can’t apply for jobs that do not state part-time working (which is incredibly rare!) I felt I had to respond “well, yes then. I think you will have to remove my application as I am unable to work full-time.” A few months later the same role came up and I applied again for the job and got an interview. I pursued the interview because I wanted a refusal on record. I did the interview and I got offered the job I was told I was the best person for the job by far, but the manager said, “I've been told from on high; I can't give you a part-time position in this department, it has to be full time.” Again I said I can't take full-time, I am however willing to be flexible on the amount of hours/days I do, but I said I can't take full-time. The manager alluded to some sort of funding for a different role that they could turn into part-time through means of a job share. It very much felt like I was being told “Don't worry, we want you. We want to keep you, but just not here we’ll have to put you somewhere else.” In the end, I did get a part-time permanent position within XXXX department. Despite it not being the exact role or department I directly applied for, I am in a permanent position and feel lucky for that. The way in which it all played out was very stressful and frustrating and truthfully rather unpleasant. It felt like a battle, a fight to even be considered part time. I really do enjoy my job but it has put a taint on it, and by taking part in this research I hope that we can improve the working environment for women.**(Operations/Manager*) |

The stigmatisation of part-time work creates fear, anxiety and an uncomfortable work environment for women. Participants mentioned that due to the stigmatisation of it, there is a fear about asking for a part-time role. One of the participants made a connection between the impact of presenteeism and part-time work like this:

My concern is when I apply for a job, and I want to work anything but full-time, five days a week, will that work against me if someone is willing to do more, though it’s not more, it just sounds more on paper. It’s like if you’re offered an interview in person or on Teams and you think, ‘*I’ll go in person, because if I don’t get it, it’ll eat me up inside that because I wasn’t there in person, that’s why I didn’t get it’* and I think it’s the same *with ‘Can I ask for a four-day week? Can I work part-time? Are you going to give it to someone else because they’re not asking this?’* So it’s inward paranoia, I suppose. (Engagement/Senior)

Participants from HR departments underlined that they try to challenge the traditional mentality of full-time work and presenteeism with the seniors, but their success depends on the attitudes of other managers and seniors:

We do it in our daily work at the moment, quite often turn around and say, *‘Why does that have to be one full-time role?  Why can’t that be two part-time roles?’* I do think there are barriers just because of the way the organisations are potentially run, and I know that I can speak for (…), but I would imagine colleagues from our bus sector would agree and say the same thing, as would our train operating companies, just because it’s kind of ingrained, isn’t it? ( HR/Senior)

Focus group participants highlighted that in many cases, thanks to the support of their managers, their demand for part-time/flexible working was accepted. It is not easy to make generalisations from the experiences of a small group of participants, but women managers played some roles in the approval of the part-time, flexible working demands.

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| ***Non-family-friendly shift work…****…They used to be called family friendly hours which or they call it accommodated working now. They give the option to go on with the special sort of time taking a special roster if you like to try and accommodate your childcare. It doesn’t really help that much. (…) We work on a roster basis, so, my shift pattern is four days a week, two days off. So, [Sunday is not part of the working week] it would be Monday and Tuesday off first week, Wednesday and Thursday off Friday next week and Saturday off... It rolls like that… And then obviously my shift patterns are all over the place. But you have a block week of 1 type of shift. Do it a week of mornings, maybe with an amended Tuesday next week. So, you want to book childminder for specific days, but with the childminders, you have to have the same days, you can't swap and change as to when you need it. For example, if I was on early mornings, when a particular week, I can pick my children up from school because I will have finished by 3:30 that week. And that, but the following week I might be on afternoons and I need the childminder for the afternoons. But the childminders don't swap and change like that, which is fine, because you can understand from their point of view that they need set times. But that means you would be paying for childminders when you were off work. So, even though I only work four days a week, and sometimes only three days in week, we still have to end up paying for five days. It's very awkward and it's the same thing applies to nurseries when they're babies. And any kind of childcare after school clubs, it's the same thing applies to all childcare and that's not taken into consideration. So, in the end we ended up not by not paying for childcare. My husband is on less salary than me so when I went back to it after having my twins because we had to pay them for three lots of child care because my first daughter was two and a half as well. When I went back to work, there was three of them. We had to pay for and it was £50 a day, that was £150 a day, so obviously that's impossible. Impossible! So, I went back to work because I earned more than my husband and my husband ended up going part-time just working on the days when I was off. Luckily, he's self-employed, so he could swap and change depending on my shifts. I did go on to a what they called accommodated hours shift pattern, which were basically meant that I had the same two days off every week. So, it was three days. I think I had Wednesday and Thursday off, so it would be Monday and Tuesday and work Wednesday and Thursday off work Friday and Saturday in work and then on the third week I deprived Saturday off. But I was still on the rolling. I was still on there like mornings, afternoons… So, that didn't really help the childcare because it was still the same issue whereby sometimes you'd be paying for it when you didn't need it. So, my husband ended up just working two days a week. We were very lucky that we were able to do that. If I would have been a single member, I couldn't have done it.* *(Driver/Senior)*The experience of our participant, who has almost 20 years of experience tells a lot about why women cannot accommodate some of the working patterns in the industry. Even though she was told that they have flexible working patterns, as her experience tells, this is not flexible and compatible to the needs of many working parents as childcare services have not been designed flexibly to accommodate their needs.  |

Another participant mentioned that she hears from other departments that a lack of flexible working policies for women results in women leaving the transport workforce:

I do hear across the board from different departments as well that a lot of women leave the industry because they've had children and they can't come back in. They'll end up losing all of the women that are already there if they're not going to be more open to it [part-time/flexible working]. (Operations/Manager)

### Lack of diversity at managerial levels

The role of managers and senior management has been underlined by the participants in all groups and interviews. Participants agreed that there is a lack of diversity at management levels, especially in senior managerial levels, which is more visible in certain departments of transport companies.

In bus operators, your secretary might be female, and the rest, all your taxi drivers almost, all the people who own the companies, they’re all male, all the bus services that I’ve worked for, all the drivers are male, all of the owners are male. (Project management/partner).

The big operators, it really is a male-oriented world. There’s more and more female bus drivers but at management level, no. It could be a different experience in different parts of the country and the UK, but management level is not well represented by women at all. (Business Management)

It's very male, heavy and all the management and I think there's one female. And like lower level manager. So but yeah, all like the management of white males. (Operations/Manager).

Diversity among management is an important aspect of support for women in the transport sector. Better representation of women and greater diversity among leaders and managers means that those making decisions have a better understanding of the gender issues on the frontline. One of the participants mentioned that leadership team members are not aware of the gendered and discriminatory problems happening in the frontline, which makes it harder to cope with problems.

It’s probably that our leadership team doesn’t realise it’s happening because they’re removed from it. I’ve spoken to our director about it, and he was quite surprised at the behaviours, even from people in his own team. (HR partner).

The management team are all middle-aged, white men, all from the same sort of background, and when looking at development opportunities for the future of the Agency, it’s almost like they don’t see. They are seeing it, and taking things on board, like, *‘Oh yeah, she knows things’*, so awareness of issues for women in the workplace, it’s almost like they take it and bring it on, but they don’t really understand it, so they depend on people like me and other advisors to say this is needed. (Business Affairs/Partner)

Participants highlighted that to become a senior in the industry, it is necessary to have the experience and the time spent in the industry. Given the under-representation of women and the retention issues in the sector, this has implications for improving diversity in senior roles.

### Gendered infrastructure

Women can have difficulties finding suitable facilities and equipment to meet their needs. There are several issues – difficulties in finding facilities, unsuitable uniforms, lack of consideration of women’s health issues – raised by the participants.

Even though participants working in the delivery side were generally stoic about the working conditions and tend to accept things as “just part of the job”, participants did emphasise that the gendered way in which things are designed across the transport sector does create barriers for women. They complained that management do not take women’s needs into consideration, that often management do not understand the issues women face and therefore the problems are not spoken about:

I would say as a driver, you are not a female, you are not a male, you are a driver and you put up with those conditions that is your *[condition]*. It's like a unisex thing really. Now, I think where it falls down is that they don't take the fact that you are a woman into consideration and women do need slightly different things to their male counterparts like uniform differences. We got different, like physicality. (Driver/Senior)

Lack of facilities was one of the most pronounced gendered infrastructure issues that was discussed in the focus groups.

For example, when you got your periods, they don't take that into consideration. You need more facilities with regards to, like toilets. I've always had a problem with the toilets and our workplace because there's not enough of them and especially as more, more and more women came into the to the railway, do things like factor and then like You might be on the train for three hours and you might be on your period, you have to deal with that. (Driver/Senior)

We are seeing more women now, but I think it’s historically very male-dominated in those kinds of areas, so that’s a big, big barrier in terms of working, and I think there’s old-school ways of thinking, and it’s a massive behaviour shift in terms of more women entering those types of areas. Basic things like not having female toilets, you’d expect that, but even that’s not in some of the depots, so how inviting must that be for women coming in? (HR/Partner)

One participant was once told off when she left the train to go to the toilet:

if I need to leave the train to go to the toilet, there are actually certain points where I can actually get off *[the train]* and use the toilet on the station. And I got comments before*, ‘what the hell are you doing getting off the train?’* It is not about my manager; my managers have always been great about if I need to get off the train to go to the loo. But after the platform staff (…) I need to go to the toilet. Why? Well, why do you think? Why do you need even need to know? I just need to go. (…) I think things like that need to be more widely accepted and just talked about generally. You know, people don't mention the period where they are such a male environment (Driver/Senior)

However, in some areas, with changing policies and tender requirements, women and men have access to the same number of facilities. An engineer told us her experience as such:

A lot of sites nowadays, it’s a requirement when they have their tender process, they have to have equal facilities for male and female, so when I was on site there was two sets of toilets: four for male and four for female. So you’d have forty men on site and just one lady, and I would have the same amount of facilities as those forty men would, but I know that hasn’t always been the case and I have heard some offices… I’ve actually worked in one for a short while where there was about ten male toilets and only one female toilet, but it is a legal requirement now that they have to have equal facilities no matter what site or job you’re on. (Engineer/Trainee)

Uniforms were also highlighted in the discussion. Especially in the delivery side of the business, women still wear uniforms designed for men, which are uncomfortable for women.

The uniform is dreadful. I mean, we've at one point we were wearing men's uniform. Because that was what it was. Men's ties… Men's coats… We still wear men's coats now. (…) I go to work. I talk about football. I do a man's job and I am a man, basically. That's how I used to feel. That’s how I treated it, go to work and I'm a man. (Driver/Senior)

I know we've done a lot of work recently around our uniform, and there are things like the shirts, they had been just sort of men's shapeless shirts. And the women were saying, well, *‘it's not very flattering, I don't feel comfortable. The materials are very synthetic or thick. And I'm a woman and I'm going through menopause. And this material is actually like really making me fee ill because it just doesn't suit me.*’ And having some different options like having skirts as well as trousers, not just trousers. And, so, I know that we're doing quite a lot of work at our uniform just to look at some of those practical things that might make women who are in those uniforms for most of their work most of their week, just more comfortable, which maybe has an hasn't been considered before. (Comms/Senior)

Finding suitable PPE (personal protection equipment) during the pandemic was also a big problem for many women.

Getting PPE that fit and didn’t drown me. It’s so hard to find shoes, jackets because it was never catered for, so you can go into that role, fine, great, you’re in the door, but just being safe doing the job and having what you need to be safe is so difficult, really, really difficult.  It’s changing, but even now, I’m drowning when I go out in the PPE that I’ve got and it doesn't put you on the best foot forward to have that air of authority when you walk onto the site and you look like a child drowning in clothes. (Business/Manager).

Returning to work as a breastfeeding mother was also mentioned by a driver participant. She was not able to pump breastmilk as there were no facilities and breaks when she was driving the train.

…from six months, you're constantly thinking that I need to wean myself off breastfeeding. I probably would have breastfed them longer, but because of going back to work… (…) You can't just suddenly stop and pump. Can you? That's another thing I felt like is if that wasn't even. That wasn't even considered by anyone (…) that wasn't even mentioned by anybody in my job, so, I just had to make sure that, by the time I go back to work, I was completely free of breastmilk. (Driver/Senior)

Lack of conversation about women’s physical needs and health creates problems for women, even though some of the problems can easily be solved by small adjustments. These changes can only be achieved if only they are spoken about in the workplace and once women’s needs and circumstances are recognised.

Getting sort of access to sanitary products and things like that because we know women who work night shift, it can affect your menstrual pattern and trying to think of what that means. So maybe in some of those depots and things where people do work shift and you don't want to be caught off guard and you haven't bought your sanitary products with you or you don't want to carry your sanitary in your handbag and so it's so obvious you're going to the loo to maybe make those sort of facilities available for women that. Those sorts of things and we are looking at those things, but those sorts of things and would really make a difference, I think to women because it would, particularly if someone who's got a regular periods or heavy periods to know that, OK, I could be in the bathroom and everything I needed there would make you feel so much more comfortable. And so I think those are important considerations as well. (Comms/Senior)

## Attracting and retaining women in the sector

Participants, in general, would recommend the transport sector to women. Once they find their feet in the sector, they enjoy being in the sector and their chosen professions. However, the experiences of participants did vary depending on the teams they work in, and for some it took longer to adapt to the sector. This left some participants cautious about recommending the sector to other women.

(…) it would be only within specific teams. (…) certain men, within them that might not make it a… a welcoming environment for… for women. I didn’t work too closely with the engineering team but my experience, when I first joined, was that that was a boy’s club. And I know other women have had that experience as… with them. I haven’t personally but I have seen that, and I can imagine it would be difficult to be a woman in that team. (…) there is another team where a female friend of mine, she left because it was… I don’t even remember the team but I know it was a more technical role that she… she couldn’t stay in. She worked in a group of men, and they kind of ignored her all the time, and would only address the men. And I… I wouldn’t really recommend that role to any other women. My department, definitely. But yeah, others, I’m not so sure. (Sustainability/Manager)

It’s harder than other professions to go into and transport is hard to go into, especially on a site level. Offices are more comfortable and I’m quite happy where I am now, so I would encourage it, but I would also advise that you do have to have that will to be strong and if you do come across any negative comments, they’ve got the problem, not you. So I would recommend it. (Engineer/Trainee).

The women we talked to are aware of the importance of the transport sector, the opportunities the sector provides and how critical it is for the sector to have more women in the workforce. Yet, they are also aware that it is not easy to bring more women into the sector unless some structural changes happen.

I would most certainly recommend it but how to get more women into it, I just don’t know. It’s education, it’s confidence. It’s thinking that you can do it. A cultural shift I suppose, really, and I think it would be fantastic for the sector because women have got so much to offer and sometimes, we do have different perspectives and we might have different ideas. They’re all really valuable things at a time when global climate change, that kind of thing, it would be great to have lots of different people, more diversity, all working together, because I’m sure we could achieve more. (Sustainability/Partner)

The majority of the participants said that women should absolutely apply for roles in the sector if they have the relevant credentials and experience.

I agree with some roles are probably more male orientated. But I think if you’ve got the credentials, and you can go for it, then go for it. (…) There is certain departments within our agency that are male; that there’s only men in the roles. But they’d always be open for anyone to work there. Probably it would be a bit of a culture shock. But I can’t see it ever being a problem because senior management are quite good at addressing if there is an issue. (Technical/Manager).

### Representation matters

Women’s representation in the sector was underlined as an important factor in attracting more women into the sector. It was felt that better representation of women in the delivery and operational side will not only attract more women into the sector but also drive behavioural change in the wider transport sector.

if I saw more women bus drivers, for example, I would feel more comfortable about travelling on buses. Going into public transport spaces often feels very masculine, and any kind of increased representation will make you feel like you belong there, won’t it? (Project/Management)

### Challenging perceptions of the sector

Participants agreed that employers in the sector should take action to build up a better reputation.

I think a really big barrier is people’s perception of the transport sector. (…) it’s down to organisations to bring that to the table to really demonstrate and showcase that we do have attractive roles without the need to do the frontline work that people think is the only option for them. (HR/manager)

Showing the variety of roles in the sector, promoting different roles to women are also suggested as a way of attracting women.

The other thing is spotlighting the variety of careers available, it’s not just in one particular area, and we do get tarred with that brush, that we only recruit drivers or this or that, and it’s about showcasing the variety of careers within the sector. (HR/Partner).

investing in marketing surrounding jobs is a really important thing, because for a bus driver or engineer, it’s a profession, so it should be highly sought after rather than seen as a rubbish job. Professionalising the industry would be a big help. Some of our workers do get a good wage, especially for the North Wales area where most of my depots are based; it is a good profession and it does offer a lot of benefits like sick pay and help towards family and counselling, things that I don’t think we shout about enough. When you’re looking for a job when you’re sixteen, the first thing you look at are the pound signs, and the fact that it is a professional job, they have to pass a really difficult exam to be a bus driver; you have to pass levels in college to become an engineer, it doesn’t just take anybody, so I think we could market it a bit better. (Operations/Manager)

### Reaching out to younger women

In all discussion groups and interviews, participants agree that the sector should reach out to women from a young age.

I think it starts with a peak around education because there’s not enough being taught in schools and any college courses that women can go into those types of professions, so if there’s a peak around education, they then go into these disciplines. (HR/Partner)

I also feel quite strongly that it should start at the education level as well. I went to school a million years ago and I didn’t know anything about many industries. I don’t know what youngsters are told these days to help them make a decision to go into what education they need or is right for them to join the transport industry. So it’s all very well the employer making changes, but it really has to start at the education level, at a very young level, as well. (HR/Partner)

if there were more opportunities when I was back in school, I may have taken a different path. Maybe I didn’t look hard enough, but I do feel that these opportunities weren’t there, and nobody said, *‘How about a career in transport? You can do an apprenticeship in this or that’*, so it wasn’t known. As I said, the younger generation coming through, I think they are a lot more open-minded and ambitious, some of the girls, because there’s a big push at the moment of STEM careers, women in STEM, so I hope that will filter through in time. (HR/Manager)

Gender stereotypes have long been influencing whether women go into the transport sector. Some participants commented that when they were in school, they had never been informed or advised about STEM careers and pathways; many young girls do not know the career pathways in the transport sector, especially in the technical and operational side, and they are still thought of as men’s jobs.

Because a lot of the roles are very engineer-based, it’s civil engineering, really, I don’t know if it’s just an area that women don’t think to go into. When I was in school, no one ever mentioned that to me. Women now have only just started being recognised for playing football, and I think engineering is seen as a male profession, which is a real shame because I see what they do and it’s so interesting and perhaps we’re not as encouraged as the chaps. ( Sustainability/Partner).

Maybe it is a generation thing like XXXX just touched on, especially for myself, you didn’t grow up with parents or grandparents who were in the industries that we are currently in, so I think that is a barrier that will change as the generations go on over the years. (…) it’s hopefully coming to the forefront for women to see people like us in jobs that were otherwise male-oriented. ( Operations/Manager)

Reaching out to the next generation is not only important to promote the sector among young women but to invite them to gain experience in specialised roles from a young age. To gain experience in the sector, especially in specialised roles, people need to start early in the sector.

A wider point with recruitment because a lot of the roles, especially the specialist roles in the transport sector, we need to be attracting people when they’re fifteen, sixteen years of age, so they’re going to university and studying in these subjects to enable them to do the role, so I think there’s definitely more that we can do with the skill from an early age. (HR/Manager)

It is also important to demonstrate the variety of jobs available in the transport sector to young women and girls, including signposting pathways such as graduate schemes and apprenticeships. One of the participants, who is a trainee civil engineer student, and has been working in the sector for four years, mentioned that she went into the sector through the apprenticeship route; however, she thinks herself lucky as the routes into the transport sector are not promoted properly. She benefitted the advice of Careers Wales when she was making her career choice.

I started doing two years as an apprentice engineer and now I’m doing my degree, so it’s the same sort of framework as an apprenticeship, and I think I was very lucky to find an apprenticeship in engineering because, it’s not widely promoted for young women as it is as much for the boys. I only left school about four years ago, so we’ve had DT lessons, Design and Technology, and engineering came under that, and they would literally separate the boys and the girls and the girls would do food tech and textiles, and the boys would go and do electrics and engineering systems, stuff like that. So, in school, I had absolutely no idea about engineering; it was perfectly suited to me, but I didn’t even consider it as a career. It was only when I went – and I wasn’t enjoying my A-Levels – and I went to Careers Wales and they actually said, ‘*What about engineering because you like maths, you like physics, you like drawing?’* (Engineer/Trainee)

Apprenticeship opportunities and graduate roles are important to attract more young women into the sector. However, even though it has been highlighted as critical, a lack of resources limits outreach activities.

Unless you’re a private company, our public sector organisations don’t have an awful lot of budget to give to be able to do that. So you’ve got an expectation that you’re linked with the wellbeing of future generations and that you need to hire X amount of apprentices and give internships, but that takes quite a lot of resources. So I’ve got one early talent partner and she’s got an administrator, and they can’t keep up with demand, and we’re nowhere near getting the amount of attraction from young girls because we can’t do the outreach work we want to do because of budgets, so that’s a real barrier as well, being able to afford that, because it’s absolutely our priority and intention, but it’s really difficult. (HR/Senior)

### Reviewing recruitment processes

Changing the language used in job applications is also suggested as a way to attract more women. Participants criticised the language used in job adverts as it is more masculine and not inviting for women.

when we talk about more technical jobs, and the way that we recruit people, I think that we can maybe look at the language that we’re using. And also, even just adding like a caveat statement that like we welcome applications that aren’t 100%... that don’t meet all of the qualifications just to like have a discussion. Or even, you know, saying, “If you’re interested, you know, there are other like…” Like have an informal discussion with someone like… particularly women, or something (…) Or then saying “We’ll welcome…” Just like maybe have some sort of program to help women who may not have all of those skills upfront to help them develop a little bit more in the role to try and level out that gender balance a little bit more. I think that would be important to try and attract more women to specific departments that do tend to be very male-heavy (Sustainability/Manager)

it took a man to tell me, *‘Why won’t you go for that job? You’d be good as a manager. It doesn’t matter if you don’t know fully the job role.’* But it did take a man to tell me that. It’s a bit of an eye-opener when you think about it. It boosts confidence and it’s liberating. I agree with that 50% and 100% thing. It’s detrimental to women possibly progressing but, ironically, it did take a man to tell me that. (Technical/Manager)

Our organisation offers apprenticeships and that seems to be a really good way to get women in from the start, but they seem to always go to men, so I don’t know if there’s some kind of recruitment drive. (…) maybe more support from careers officers, maybe we could change our recruitment so that those apprenticeships are marketed differently. (Sustainability/Partner)

### Retaining women in the sector

Leadership, improving policies and workplace culture were highlighted as critical issues to help retain more women in the sector, alongside clearer progression pathways and targeted support for women.

#### The role of leadership

Leadership is underlined as a key factor in supporting women in the sector. Managers and seniors have a role to play in the industry to equip women with opportunities to develop careers within the industry, and tackle gender discrimination, inequality and gender stereotypes.

if there is a diverse, not just women, but if there’s more diversity and inclusivity throughout the whole team, from the top to the bottom, then that will improve things. (HR/Partner)

I do have senior managers that are very supportive, and my current employer is very good. They’ve done a lot of training on unconscious bias and there has been a little shift, people are more aware, so it is a select few, but it’s on the right track. We just need more of us there so we can have a group [laughs]. (Construction/Manager)

Women who are appreciated and understood by their managers about their work and family life and responsibilities feel safer and supported in their work life, and they are more inclined to take up opportunities.

She *A Senior]*called me to say welcome to the organisation, and the first thing she said is*, ‘XX [line manager] has told me that you have a little girl’,* I said, *‘Yeah, that’s right*’, she said, *‘Your school runs, pop them in your diary, protect that time’*. It was the first thing she said to me, which really put all of my worries and concerns to bed because I was thinking, *‘They care that I have commitments outside of work that I need to rush off or do the school run’*, and she was quite vocal in saying to protect that time. When you’ve got that coming from senior members of staff and that culture, that really makes an impact across the business. (HR/Partner)

I’ve got the backing of an amazing manager and she’s really… I’ve probably had a lot more progression in the last seven months than I probably did in the previous few years of my previous company, I actually feel very empowered and backed since I’ve joined the organisation in a very short space of time. I’ve been able to go into a leadership position, I’m on a leadership programme, I’m talking about career pathways, and I can see that long-term, I’m going to be in the organisation. (HR/Partner).

#### Improving policies

Participants underlined that the policies targeting equality and diversity improved the working conditions in the sector. However, in some cases these workplace policies are not resulting in change in practice.

Flexible working and part-time working is one of the policies that the participants highlighted strongly. The men-dominated culture in the transport sector presents limited opportunity to work part-time or flexibly even though the Covid-19 pandemic has proven that flexible working is possible. However, as discussed above, part-time working and career progression opportunities for part-time workers are still limited in the sector. Participants stated that in order to retain women in the workforce, flexible working policies should be implemented properly and the stigmas around part-time working must be eliminated.

It’s about coaching leaders in organisations to understand that it’s not about presence, it’s about output, and you can be there for as long as you want to be there, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you’re making a fundamental difference, or you can work compressed hours and absolutely be the best version of yourself and make a huge contribution to the business. (HR/Senior)

…retaining them and giving them wellbeing support, facilities, reduced hours. If women hear from others that it’s a great place to work, then they will join. (Project/Partner).

Networks and forums within organisations can help to improve and monitor Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) policies but as one participant underlines, these groups are mostly for immediate issues rather than a direct cultural change:

We’ve got really good *[ED&I]* policies and things in place, we don’t have union representation in our part of the business, but the focus of our ED&I group is more on recognition and awards, like the disability accreditation and the campaigns and things, not actually getting into the deep cultural issues. (HR/Partner).

#### Transforming workplace culture

A critical issue raised in the group discussions and the interviews is the lack of understanding of women’s issues and needs. Businesses should recognise women’s issues such as menopause, periods, pre/post pregnancy, childcare, which affect women’s health and work life.

It’s another thing as a woman, especially when you leave the workplace temporarily to have a baby, it’s something as a woman that you have to work extra hard to cope with: a baby or symptoms of the menopause, and try to put a brave face on it. I remember if I could feel a hot flush coming on, I’d go to the toilet. It was almost like showing a sign of weakness and I know it shouldn’t be like that, I didn’t want any allowances to be made for me. As women, we have to work harder, no matter how good your husband is. We don’t want allowances made for us because we’re women, and this is maybe an attitude that has to change, but it won’t overnight. ( Business/Manager).

One of the participants suggested that managers should *“walk in women’s shoes”* to understand the daily life and obstacles that women encounter at work.

We used to do this thing called walk in my shoes… This was where managers and higher managers come and spend the day with the train crew just to see exactly what was involved how it involves. And I'm going to suggest that this happens again, something sooner. I'd be happy for someone to come up with me and just see how long we’re on the trains, what facilities we've got because, I honestly don't think people realise what it's like to do my job. I'm happy to do my job. I like my job. I wouldn't do it otherwise and I wouldn't have been doing it for 19 years. But things can, I think, things on the ground level could be improved to make it easier, not just for women over for men as well what with the things that their facilities we've got around the job to make it easier for women. (Driver/Senior)

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| **Impact of Covid-19 and the possibility of change** The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on participants was mixed. While some discussed the negative impact of the pandemic on their day-to-day jobs and on their mental health, almost all participants highlighted the positive impact on perceptions about working patterns and the role of flexible working. Personally, I found it really difficult, I live alone, and my motivation and productivity went through the floor, I’ve never had such a terrible time work-wise, but looking back on it now, the positivity in terms of flexibility in the workplace is really great, I don’t think employers can go back to saying, *‘No, you can’t work from home’*. It’s completely changed everything, and it’s become more inclusive as a result. (Project/Manager) For me, flexible working has been a massive positive I terms of getting the work-life balance and being more productive, but I know a lot of women have suffered off the back of Covid-19 with the home-schooling situation, but for me personally, the opportunities have been really positive. (HR/Partner). The Covid-19 pandemic also helped tackle some stereotypical ideas around unpaid work and caring responsibilities, showing that when given the time away from paid work men are readily involved in household work. One thing that pandemic has done, when it came to caring responsibilities, one thing the pandemic did do for men was highlight how important the caring responsibilities were.  I know a lot of men have favoured more hybrid working instead of office working because they now do collecting from school and helping with clubs, things like that, where before, it would have been the unpaid caring responsibilities of a woman. (Comms/Partner). Furthermore, Covid-19 has had an impact on management style and managerial roles. Management teams needed to adapt quickly to protect the workforce as well as the business, which was a difficult process but a learning curve as well for many. The pandemic has proven that management can be flexible and respond to the needs of the workforce in pace. Because it was such a new thing for everybody, as a manager, people think you have the answer, but we didn’t always, so when you’ve got up to nine hundred staff in Wales, they all craved your attention and answers, so that was a struggle. But people soon learned that it was new to us and to give us some time to find the answers.  (Operations/Manager)Another significant impact of the pandemic was the decline of harassment of women on sites and gendered perceptions. An engineer summarised this as such: I’ve noticed a massive drop in harassment as well on site.  Now you’re online, people don’t see you as you are, you’re just a name on a computer, so they don’t see me as a female in construction.  You are just dealing with work now. You feel safer, less judged. (…) They know I’m female, but they see engineering achievements rather than a young female. I feel the same level as everyone else now.   (Engineer/Trainee) |

#### Building up clear career progression and improvement pathways

The majority of the participants were happy to be working in the transport sector and mentioned that they see career progression opportunities for themselves in the sector. The participants also celebrated the positive and progressive changes happening in the sector.

We’re seeing a lot of internal promotions at the minute, which is opening up progression opportunities, but we are seeing women being promoted into those senior-level roles, which is really refreshing to see, but it’s just on the other side of it in bringing in new talent. We’re still struggling to bring in new talent, but that’s an advertising thing (HR/Partner)

I do *[see future in the sector],* I’m really enjoying it, I think the positives outweigh the negatives, I see a lot of opportunity, just for women in general, the tides are turning, I think people feel more empowered to call out bad behaviour, and I do feel there’s a shift happening. Some areas are probably shifting faster than others, and I do think others are slow to catch up, especially where you’ve got men who may have worked in that role for forty years, that culture is very engrained in their values, so that’s the tricky part, but me personally, where is see a challenge, I think that’s an opportunity to change things, and the day I stop challenging, is probably the day I’m ready to go [laughs]. (HR/Partner).

Participants generally agreed that there are opportunities for women to progress in their career in the transport sector but these opportunities and outcomes might vary according to the department that the women are working in and their working patterns. Whilst participants working in the more office-based, women dominated departments in the sector talked more positively about carer progression, women who are working in more men-dominated departments, the operational and delivery strands of the businesses were wary about the career progression for women in the sector.

One of the young engineer participants said that she can see career progression opportunities for herself in the sector, but currently there are not many women in the sector particularly on the technical and operational sides of the business, and it is hard to make a comparison between the progression opportunities between men and women.

There’s quite a few female engineers that have worked their way up, but in proportion, it’s not as many as men, but I think it is that generation divide, that age gap. When they were in my position, it was a lot less encouraged for women to go down that route, so I think it needs some time. It would be better to look at the younger generation to see how they feel. People my age will work their way up into those higher levels and I don’t see any reason why you wouldn’t progress with time. (Engineer/Trainee)

Training, upskilling and reskilling are critical for women to progress in their career. In the transport sector, especially in specialised roles, women are more in need of in-work training, to develop the specialised skills knowledge.

I think once you're in the transport sector it's hard to get out because it becomes so specialized in what you do. And which is why I've stayed in it for so long. You just become so specialized in your job and your role, there's nowhere else for you really can transfer those other than within different sectors of the transport industry. (Operations/Manager).

As discussed earlier, however, women cannot easily take up these opportunities due to the constraints on their time, often due to caring responsibilities. Under these circumstances, it is critical for businesses to develop bespoke programmes that will help women to utilise the opportunities.

We need to have leadership development programmes within organisations that home in on being an inclusive employer of choice. (…) but when you were talking there about giving training opportunities to colleagues (…) they are all begin given the opportunity, men and women, to go and do a training programme which we will pay for, but we’ll also support them with time. (HR/Senior)

…and recognising that everyone’s an individual and it’s not one size fits all. (HR/Manager)

I think is that if we had leadership development programmes which were really closely aligned with equality and diversity, then that would potentially change people’s mindset and realise that actually, by investing in people, it’s going to pay back into your organisation. (HR/Senior)

Participants acknowledge that a bespoke approach is needed in some areas to attract more women to take up the opportunities.

We have done a leadership programme and a development programme within the Agency, and I think it’s thirty-five, forty percent women, because I was intentional, I was putting the women in the places to be able to develop because maybe they weren’t selling themselves enough, and I knew that they could do it. (Business-Comms/Partner)

## Conclusion

Perceptions of the transport sector and the image of the sector as a masculine, men-dominated industry affects women’s participation and career progression in the sector. Even though some of the perceptions do not reflect the reality, the sector has a negative reputation that prevents women from joining the workforce.

While women working in the transport sector generally enjoy their jobs, they are aware of the masculine work culture that is common across the sector. This culture affects women’s relations with their colleagues, their careers and work patterns.

Where the workforce is diverse, gender balanced and women are represented at leadership levels, women have more positive experiences, feel supported and can see themselves progressing in their careers in the sector. However, if we flip these preconditions, structural and deep-rooted gender inequalities quickly come to the surface, not only creating barriers for women’s progression, but also an uncomfortable working environment for women, which can lead to women leaving the sector.

To cope with the challenges in these men-dominated workplaces women develop individual coping mechanisms - acceptance of some of the conditions, adapting to the workplace culture, being resilient and stoic about the working conditions. Throughout the group discussions and interviews, it was noticeable that women who hadn’t come across any discrimination or negative experience, or women who have overcome the problems that they had encountered called themselves “lucky”. But should it be down to luck for women to achieve and prosper in the transport sector?

Reporting abusive and derogatory behaviours and language is not always possible for women. In workplace cultures where reporting this behaviour is not the ‘norm’ women can often feel put off from reporting, or in some cases are encouraged to let things go. Collective support mechanisms, such as staff networks and unions are important sources of support for women, but in some organisations, there is a lack of union representation and the male-dominated nature of some unions can make it more difficult for women to feel comfortable in talking about their experiences.

Working patterns and the organisation of work in the sector can create additional barriers for women. It can be particularly difficult for women who work in the more men-dominated areas of the sector to demand flexible or part-time working. Part-time working is seen as a career sacrifice as the culture of presenteeism remains dominant. Furthermore, working patterns in some departments of the sector do not fit with the childcare arrangements of many families.

For many women, the support of their managers is critical. Women first go to their managers for any problem they encounter or for their demands. Given this, diversity in managerial levels is crucial for women to progress in the sector.

As the participants underlined, even though opportunities are available for women in the sector, due to structural inequalities, women are often unable to take these up. If we want to drive lasting, positive change in the transport sector, this suggests the focus may need to move from merely providing equality of opportunity and instead consider how we can secure equitable outcomes.

# Conclusion and areas of action

The transport sector is crucial to many aspects of our lives and is essential to keeping our economy functioning. It’s a sector that offers a wide range of jobs and careers, is going through transformative change as we respond to the climate crisis and is likely to grow in Wales. However, it’s well documented that women remain under-represented in this sector, leaving them at risk of missing out on opportunities for well-paid roles, that offer good opportunities for progression.

This pattern of under-representation was reflected in the data we gathered from eight transport companies in Wales, with women accounting for just 21% of the combined workforce. While women are under-represented across all occupations and levels of seniority, we see a particular issue among engineers, vehicle maintenance roles and drivers, and also among the most junior roles. This raises questions about how to ensure progression of women, but also about how to ensure sustainable changes are made.

There is no single reason for this under-representation of women. Based on our discussions with those working in the sector we can identify a number of factors that may be contributing to the relatively lower numbers of women entering and progressing in the transport sector.

The reputation and perception of the sector continue to create barriers. Rooted in historical images of the sector, the idea of it being largely dirty, physical and difficult work persists. Linked to this, is the ongoing influence that gender stereotypes exert on people’s educational and career choices.

Working in a men-dominated sector also creates challenges. While overt discrimination is rare, there remain more subtle, complex factors that are perpetuating gendered structures and attitudes that in turn lead to inequality. Some women feel they are judged differently or have to prove themselves, especially in roles traditionally seen as ‘male’. Culture is identified as the issue here, as much as individual attitudes. It’s also important to note that given the interrelated nature of the transport sector, good practice in one or two companies is not enough, we need to see change across the sector as a whole.

To cope with this work environment and workplace culture, women adapt and change their own behaviour, or develop the resilience they need to deal with it. We need to see a shift away from individualised coping mechanisms to sector-wide, institutional and organisational change.

Structural gendered issues also remain a problem. Recruitment can favour traditional education and training pathways and risk reinforcing stereotypes. Progression pathways can be unclear, and while it’s seen that opportunities are open to all, in reality women are often encountering barriers to taking up these opportunities. There may be a need to shift in perspective from merely providing equality of opportunity to focusing on equitable outcomes.

There can also be a lack of support around childcare, flexible working and part-time work, a lack of diversity among decision-makers and in some cases very physical barriers related to a lack of facilities for women and poorly fitting PPE.

All of these factors are impacting the recruitment and retention of women in the transport sector. They also help identify a number of action areas that we recommend focusing on.

**Action Areas**

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| **Improving the perception of the sector** Making the sector an attractive place for people from all backgrounds is key. Challenging traditional images of the sector, targeted campaigns towards under-represented groups and showcasing relatable role models can all be useful in shifting perceptions  | **Pathways into the sector** Clear, inclusive and accessible pathways into the sector are crucial. Looking at current pathways through an equalities lens, identifying where women are or are not engaging and taking action are all important steps.Reaching out to younger women is integral to the future diversity of the sector |
| **Pathways within the sector** Progression pathways need to be visible, accessible and inclusive. Progression shouldn’t be negatively affected by career breaks or part-time work and targeted schemes for women and others who are currently not progressing easily in the sector may be needed.  | **The organisation of work**Work in the transport sector cannot continue to be organised around an outdated male norm. Greater provision of part-time and flexible working are needed, along with greater support with childcare and around pregnancy and maternity.  |
| **Stamping out discrimination and banter and changing attitudes**Gender stereotypes still shape behaviour in places, with outdated attitudes and banter affecting women’s experiences. Work is needed to educate the existing workforce as part of building an inclusive culture. This has to happen across the sector a, particularly areas where women remain significantly under-represented. | **Diversity in Leadership** Stepping up efforts to diversify the leadership in the sector is important. It can help ensure that gendered issues are recognised and tackled. This may require targeted leadership development schemes, reviewing leadership recruitment practice and looking at ways of bringing in people from outside the sector who have transferable skills.  |

# Annex

The list below provides the definitions of some terms we used In the questionnaire sent out to the HR departments of transport companies:

**Gender:** This research is based on gender, not sex. By gender, we mean both identity and the way in which gender shapes society and day-to-day life. While it encompasses sex, it also includes gender identity, which can be expressed in a variety of ways. In this definition, transwomen are categorised as women and transmen are categorised as men.

**Non-binary:** Non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn’t sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.1

**Trans:** Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Disability and Health Conditions:** This research is based on the social model of disability. In the social model of disability, disabled means that individuals living with impairments and/or health conditions are disabled by barriers within society and not by their impairments or differences. These barriers can be physical, like inaccessible buildings, or they can be caused by people's negative attitudes towards disabled people.

**Active travel**: Modes of travel that involve a level of activity. The term is often used interchangeably with walking and cycling, but active travel can also include trips made by wheelchairs, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters, as well as cycle sharing schemes.2

**Travel support infrastructure:** By travel support infrastructure, we mean those involved in industries and occupations that are directly linked to the smooth operation of modes of transport; such as road building, vehicle maintenance, vehicle providers etc.

1. Annual Population Survey Apr 2021-Mar 2022. Transport and Communications (SIC 2007 H,J codes). Retrieved via Nomis. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Annual Population Survey (APS), Jan-Dec 2021 Transport and Communications (SIC 2007 H,J codes). Retrieved via NOMIS. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Annual Population Survey (APS), Apr 2021-Mar 2022. Industry by gender: 82: Transport & mobile machine drivers/operatives (SOC2020). Retrieved via Nomis. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Women in Male-Dominated Industries and Occupations (Quick Take), (2021). <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations/> (Access: July 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Women in majority-male workplaces report higher rates of gender discrimination (2018). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/07/women-in-majority-male-workplaces-report-higher-rates-of-gender-discrimination/> (Access: July 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Women in Male-Dominated Industries and Occupations (Quick Take), (2021). <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations/> (Access: July 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Filed J., Haddad H. (2021) Gender Perceptions and Experiences Working in Transport. APPG for Women in Transport and Women in Transport. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59773e3edb29d6ba1e61186d/t/60de31d509a3c07993b4c263/1625174489655/WIT_APPG_REPORT_07.pdf> (Access: June 2022)

The survey conducted in the scope of the research was responded by 567 transport professionals, 289 women and 272 men, across the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Gender pay gap, 2021 updated provisional edition of this dataset. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables>

Table: Sic07 Industry (4) SIC2007 Table 16.12.

Transport and Storage Sector GPG for Wales is calculated as 0% for 2021, but estimates are marked as unreliable by the ONS. (Table: Sic07 Work Region Industry (2) Table SIC2007 5.12) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Transport for Wales, Gender Pay Gap Annual Update, March 2021. <https://tfw.wales/sites/default/files/2022-04/ENG_Gender%20pay%20gap%20annual%20report%202021-22.pdf> (Access: September 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Transport for Wales Rail Ltd., Gender Pay Gap Annual Update, April 2021. <https://tfw.wales/sites/default/files/2022-04/ENG_Gender%20pay%20gap%202021%20TfW%20ltd.pdf> (Access: September 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Cardiff City Transport Services Ltd trading as Cardiff Bus, Gender Pay Gap Report – 2021/22.

<https://images.cardiffbus.com/downloads/Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report%20-%202021-22.pdf> (Access: September 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Please see the definitions of some terms used in the questionnaire in the [Annex](#_Annex). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Annual Population Survey, Apr 2021-Mar 2022. Retrieved via NOMIS. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Ethnicity by area and ethnic group, Year ending 31 December 2021. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Ethnicity/ethnicity-by-area-ethnicgroup> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The original research carried out in 2013 by Hewlett Packard’s internal report shows that women apply only if they meet 100% of the qualifications address in the job application whereas men apply when they meet only 60% of the qualifications. (Why Women Don’t Apply for Jobs Unless They’re 100% Qualified, 25.08.2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified> ) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)