

RESEARCH PAPER

THE GENDER DIVIDE IN TRANSPORT:

UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS
AND IMPACTS FOR WOMEN'S
EXCLUSION FROM DECENT JOBS
IN GHANA AND SENEGAL



This report was prepared for the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) by Georgia Montague-Nelson from the Global Labour Institute, Manchester.

The research was possible thanks to the active participation of union representatives from Ghana (MDU, GTPCWU) and Senegal (UDTS, URS), the coordination by Assita Ouedraogo (ITF Africa) and guidance and assistance from Claire Clarke, Neha Prakash (ITF Women).

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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic, affiliate-led federation recognised as the world's leading transport authority. We fight passionately to improve workers' lives, connecting more than 730 affiliated trade unions from over 150 countries to secure rights, equality and justice for workers globally. We are the voice for more than 16.5 million transport workers across the world.



The Global Labour Institute (GLI Network Ltd) in the UK, is part of an international network of not-for-profit organisations with the stated aim of promoting international solidarity among trade union organisations and affiliated groups in order to achieve a democratic and sustainable world society. The major activities of the GLI organisations are developing education, capacity-building and research on international labour movement development, gender policy and organising strategies.

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**ALMOST 80%
OF RESPONDENTS
IN THIS STUDY
THOUGHT THAT
WOMEN FACED
GREATER BARRIERS
TO GETTING WORK
OR ADVANCING IN
THEIR WORKPLACE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women are an important part of the transport workforce globally. But evidence suggest that there is major inequality in access to jobs and decent working opportunities in the transport sector. Growing visibility of women's exclusion from transport has resulted in the ITF transforming a demand from *'ending gender-based occupational segregation in transport'* to *'ending the systemic exclusion of women from decent jobs in transport.'*

The systemic exclusion of women can be defined as the interrelated and mutually reinforcing barriers and processes that exclude and marginalise women. Systemic exclusion takes place when policies, systems, attitudes or norms – intentionally or unintentionally – create barriers that prevent women from accessing opportunities or resources that would enable them to work in the transport sector.

Relying on data collected through a questionnaire survey, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, this study draw together research with ITF UTU C190 project unions in Ghana and Senegal and is based on the active engagement of these unions in planning the research and capturing the data. This study set out to better understand the risk factors, causes and impacts of the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector and to identify existing and potential action to end the systemic exclusion of women.

By exploring women's experiences in the transport sector, this study identified persistent gender-based occupational segregation in the transport sector. Women's representation in the sector remains low and women tend to be concentrated in more insecure, precarious and lower paid jobs – often defined by expectations and stereotypes about the type of work typical or appropriate for women. Gendered barriers also mean women face challenges in accessing training and education and progressing at work. **Almost 80% of respondents in this study thought that women faced greater barriers to getting work or advancing in their workplace.**

Direct and indirect forms of discrimination also affect women's experience when working in the transport sector: the way that work is organised, working environment and available facilities, measures and policies to support women's unequal burden of caring and domestic responsibilities; exposure to violence and harassment. **71.2% of study respondents thought that women experienced violence and harassment in the workplace disproportionately, and 60.4% reported that women did not have gender-responsive facilities in the workplace.**

Unequal, gendered attitudes, norms and power relations have shaped a transport workplace that is at best, unresponsive to the needs of women and at worst, directly discriminatory towards women. Inaction and ineffective implementation of workplace measures by employers has limited opportunities for progress. These challenges are cyclical, intersecting and exacerbating one another.

Based on the findings, general principles emerged to address these drivers of exclusion including:

- addressing the full employment cycle for women in the sector
- recognising and responding to the link between violence and harassment and systemic exclusion and other risk factors faced by women transport workers
- ensuring the workplace is responsive to the caring burden women face
- integrating gender concerns into formalisation processes
- organising women workers into the union movement





GLOSSARY

C190	ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
Discrimination	<p>ILO Convention 111 (C111) on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation states that discrimination is: “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment.”</p> <p>Discrimination can either be direct (laws, rules, policies, practices excluding or giving preference based on certain grounds/characteristics), or indirect (situations, rules, policies, practices that may appear neutral or not intended to discriminate but which disadvantage/exclude particular groups).</p>
Gender	The range of characteristics that a society defines as being masculine and feminine which determines roles, behaviours, constraints and opportunities associated with being male or female. It describes what is acceptable and expected of men and women in a particular culture, at a given point in time.
Gender pay gap	Women being paid less than men.
Gender stereotypes	Generalised views about the characteristics and roles that men and women should have.
Gender-based occupational segregation	Inequality in the allocation of women and men across different job categories. Occupational segregation can be vertical or horizontal.
Gender-based violence and harassment	Violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately. It includes sexual harassment.
GLI	Global Labour Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization

ITF	International Transportworkers Federation
Macho working culture	A workplace environment in which being tough, assertive and prioritizing work over personal well-being is valued, often at the expense of inclusivity, safety and well-being of employees.
Multiple / intersectional multiple discrimination	Multiple discrimination takes place on the basis of two or more personal characteristics and/or identities (e.g. sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, age). The combination or interaction of these different characteristics and/or identities creates intersectional discrimination. The ILO generally refers to 'multiple discrimination'.
Psychosocial hazard/risk	Anything in the design, management or organisation of work that could result in negative psychological, physical, and social outcomes such as work-related stress, violence, and harassment.
R204	ILO Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy
Sexual coercion / quid pro quo sexual harassment	When someone abuses their power to sexually exploit someone in return for a service from his/her authority.
Systemic exclusion	Interrelated and mutually reinforcing barriers and processes that exclude and marginalise women from fully participating in society or accessing resources, opportunities and jobs, including structural discrimination (policies, practices, laws) and broader behaviour barriers, attitudes and negative stereotypes faced by women.
UTU	Union To Union
Violence and Harassment	A range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm, including gender-based violence and harassment.

INTRODUCTION

Women are an important part of the transport workforce globally – playing a vital role in keeping transport systems moving. **But evidence suggests that there is major inequality in access to jobs and decent working opportunities for women in the transport sector.**¹ Women tend to be **underrepresented in the transport industry and overrepresented in the most precarious and insecure forms of work.** Work environment and organisation often fail to reflect women's concerns and needs. Women also face a disproportionate exposure to violence and harassment, and heightened impacts from social and economic crises.

An initial enquiry in 2022 by the International Transport workers' Federation (ITF) into the impact of violence and harassment on women's choices about work highlighted several factors linking with women's systemic discrimination at work - unpaid care work, maternity rights, unsafe working environment and the commute to and from work. Discussion on systemic exclusion and violence against women transport workers in West and Central Africa as part of the ITF Union to Union (UTU) C190 project also highlighted the link between violence and women's occupational segregation in the transport industry. These initial enquiries provided the framing for this study.

Growing visibility of women's exclusion from transport has resulted in the ITF transforming a demand from – **'ending gender-based occupational segregation in transport'** to – **'ending the systemic exclusion of women from decent jobs in transport.'**

The **'system exclusion of women'** can be defined as the **interrelated and mutually reinforcing barriers and processes that exclude and marginalise women.**

This includes:

- Structural discrimination - policies, practices, laws that discriminate against women.
- Broader behavioural barriers, attitudes and negative stereotypes that men simply do not face.

Women's exclusion from transport work perpetuates existing unequal systems and work patterns that are unfavourable to women, further reinforcing gendering of transport work as 'men's work.'

All of these factors interact and create barriers to women entering, remaining, and progressing in the transport sector.

**ENDING
THE SYSTEMIC
EXCLUSION
OF WOMEN
FROM DECENT WORK
IN THE TRANSPORT
AND LOGISTICS
SECTOR IS NOW
A KEY PRIORITY
FOR ITF WOMEN.**

ITF Women has agreed a statement pledging action to:

- Strengthen support for ending the systemic exclusion of women throughout transport
- Eliminate the barriers that women's activism and leadership face throughout the industry, including within union space – locally, nationally and globally
- Recognise that ***'silence on discrimination is a very powerful barrier to achieving gender equity'*** and that ***'collective awareness, decision-making and meaningful change at all levels'*** will be informed by experiences of women transport worker activists and leaders

This study in Ghana and Senegal aims to contribute to broader literature on the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector in Africa to:

- Gather information and evidence to better understand the risk factors, causes and impacts of the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector.
- Understand the link between the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in transport and violence and harassment faced by women, and risk factors for violence and harassment
- Identify existing and potential action to end the systemic exclusion of women



METHODOLOGY

This study draws together research undertaken in collaboration with unions that were part of the UTU ITF C190 project (2023-2024) in Ghana and Senegal including:

- General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana
- Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana
- UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal
- Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

The methodology was based on the active engagement of trade unions in planning the research and in capturing the data.

Development of Interview Tools

In advance of data collection, draft research tools were developed, discussed, amended and agreed upon with the ITF Women's Department and representatives from the project unions. The interview tools included a questionnaire survey (*see Appendix A*), focus group discussion guidelines (*see Appendix B*) and in-depth interview guidelines.

Inception Meeting & Workshop

A follow-up meeting was then held to discuss and review research tools with the project unions from Ghana and Senegal. Subsequently, a training workshop was held to train women representatives on the collection of data and to formally launch the study. The workshop was combined with ITF C190 project activities and undertaken by the ITF Women and Africa Regional Team.

Data Collection

The study relied on a mixed-method approach to capture quantitative and qualitative data:

- *Questionnaire Survey:* Data collection took place by women transport workers and activists in person and online using digital tool 'Type form' between June-September 2024.
- *Focus Group Discussions:* Four focus group discussions were held virtually via Zoom. The discussions were used to build a more detailed understanding of the major issues facing women transport workers and existing action in the workplace and union. The four focus group discussions included representatives and activists from:
 01. GTPCWU
 02. MDU
 03. UDTs
 04. URS
- *In-Depth Interviews:* 9 one-to-one in-depth interviews were also undertaken to gather more insight on issues raised during focus group discussions. The interviews were undertaken virtually via Zoom, WhatsApp and email.

Data Analysis

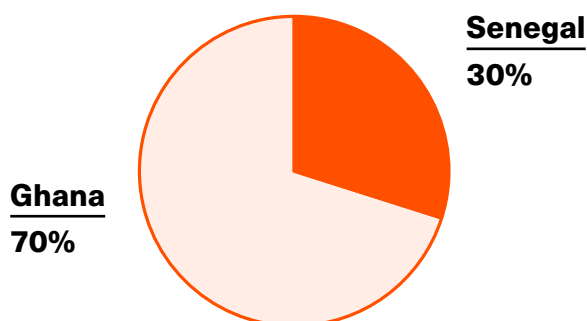
Questionnaire survey data was captured and input into online tool Type Form. Quantitative data was analysed to generate descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was organised and categorised to identify emerging patterns and themes.

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Survey results provide an overall picture of the characteristics of the survey respondents. All of the 107 respondents to the questionnaire survey were women workers, activists and union representatives.

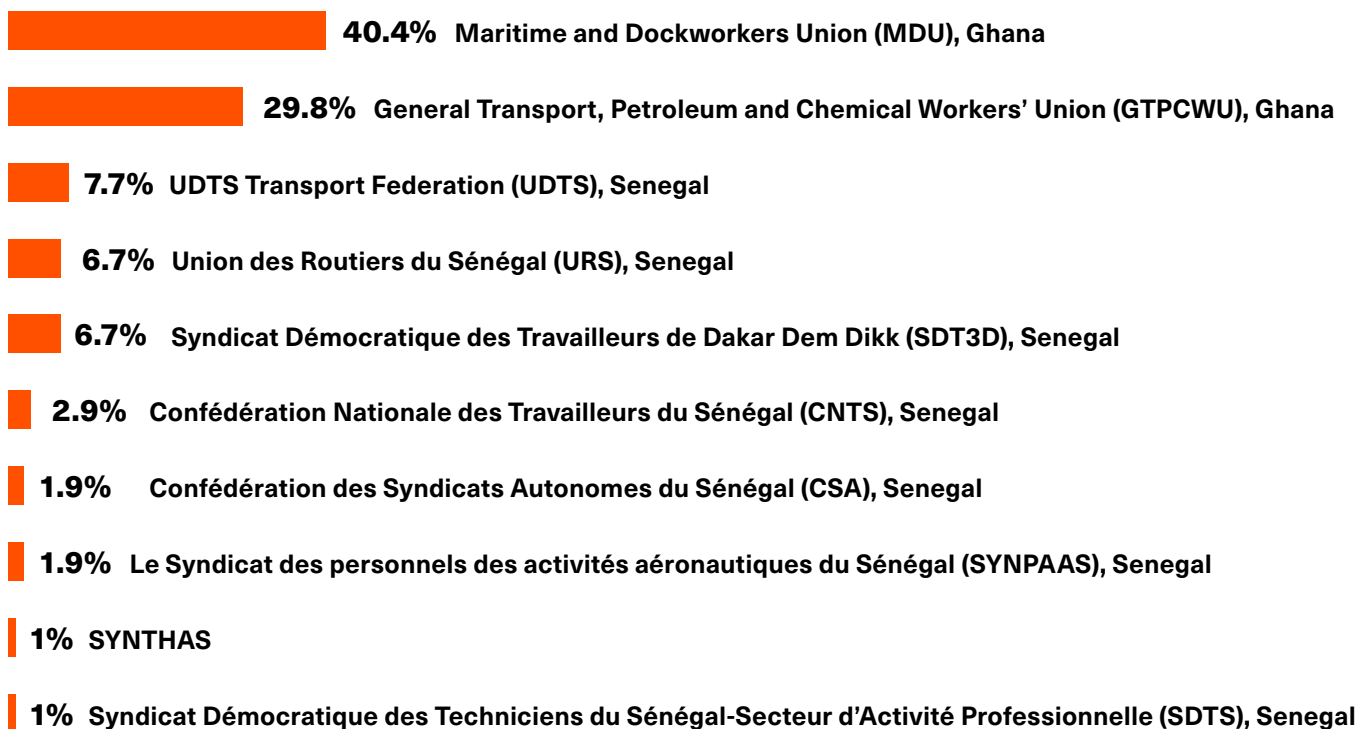
COUNTRY:

70% of respondents came from Ghana (75 individuals) and 30% of respondents (32 individuals) came from Senegal. Total: 107 respondents.



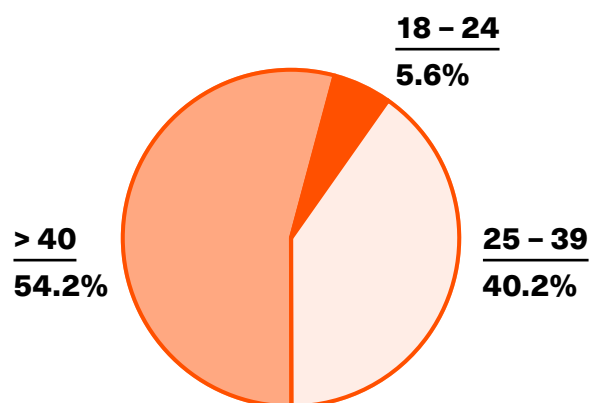
UNION:

Survey respondents were members or staff of several different unions in Ghana and Senegal. 40.4% of respondents were from the MDU in Ghana, and 29.8% were from the GTPCWU in Ghana. Total: 104 respondents.



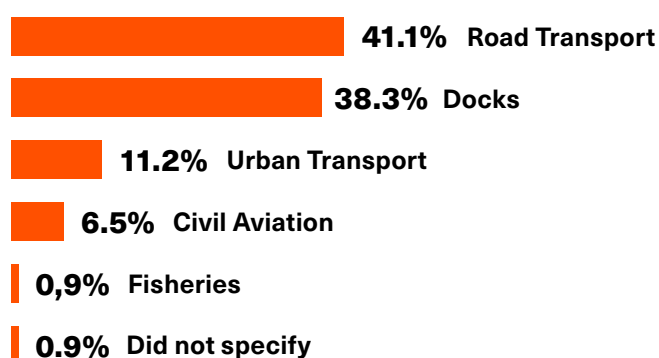
AGE:

The majority of respondents were over the age of 24. 40.2% were aged between 25-39, and 54.2% were over the age of 40. Very few were under 24 (5.6%).
Total: 107 respondents.



SECTOR:

The majority of survey respondents came from road transport (41.4%) or maritime (38.3%), while there were a smaller number of respondents from urban transport (11.2%) and civil aviation (6.5%).
Total: 107 respondents.



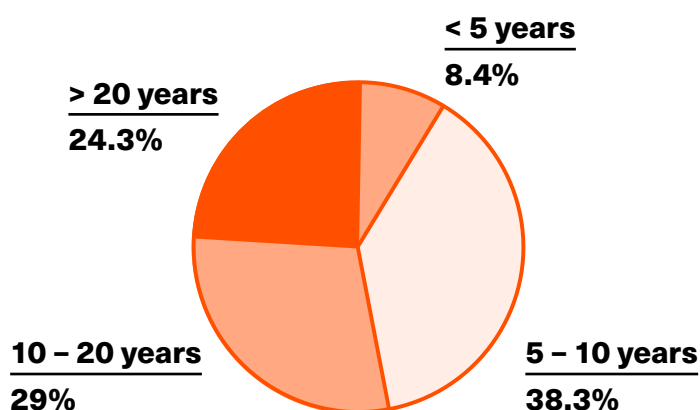
OCCUPATION:

There were a wide range of occupations, including a mixture of union officers/staff and transport-related occupations, including administrative and office-based positions and operational roles.²
Total: 98 respondents.

31.6%	Ticketing (receiver, conductor, cashier)
13.3%	Administrative (HR, secretary, archives)
8.2%	Cargo/customs/logistics
7.1%	Accounting
7.1%	Operations management
6.1%	Union roles (industrial relations, gender, chairperson, legal)
6.1%	Nursing
5.1%	Supervisory/Senior roles
5.1%	Traffic Officer
3.1%	Customer Service
2.0%	IT / Data Management
2.0%	Sales
1.0%	Driver
1.0%	Cleaner
1.0%	Technician

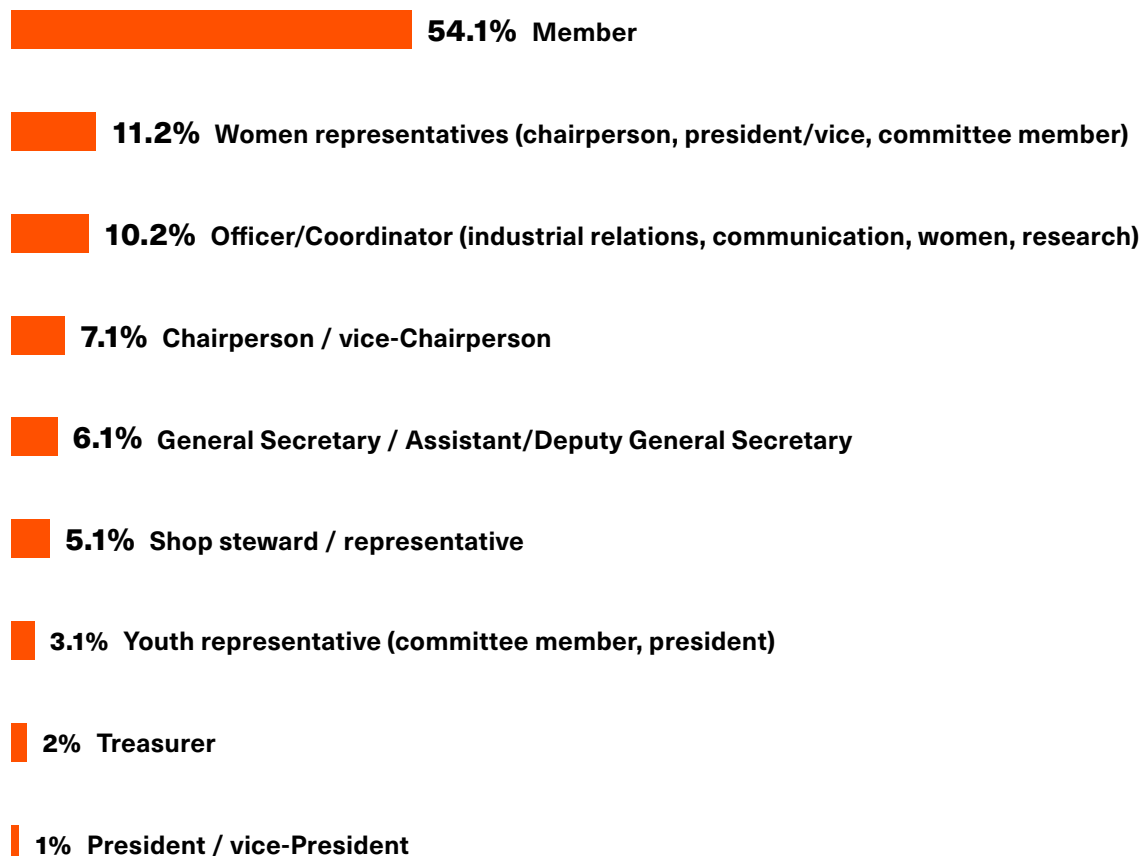
TIME IN INDUSTRY:

Just over one-third (38.3%) of respondents had been in the industry between 5-10 years. Over half of respondents (53.3%) had been in the transport sector for over 10 years, indicating high levels of experience amongst survey respondents. Total: 107 respondents.



UNION POSITION:

54.1% of those who responded described themselves as a union member, while others held various union positions, including women representatives and union officers/staff members. Total: 98 respondents.



STUDY FINDINGS

SYSTEMIC BIAS IN WORK ALLOCATION

Occupational Segregation: ‘Women’s Work & Men’s Work’

Globally, studies suggest that women are under-represented in the transport sector.³

- 42.1% of survey respondents thought that women were not equally represented in the transport workplace.
- Focus group discussions revealed underrepresentation in the sector and women appeared to constitute a minority across many workplaces. In the maritime sector, anecdotal evidence suggested that women make up only between 10-17% of the workforce.

“We have about close to 2,000 employees and there are only about 250 women... and only a few of us are part of decision-making.”

Woman Maritime Worker and Woman Chairperson,
Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Just under half of survey respondents thought that women were not equally represented in the transport workplace. Vast differences also became evident when respondents were asked to identify the ‘typical’ occupations of women and men in the transport sector.

Findings suggest that women tend to be over-represented in non-operational administrative roles – particularly in maritime, civil aviation and road transport – **and in**

customer / public-facing roles – particularly in urban transport. Clerical or administrative jobs (cashier, customer-service, receiver, conductor, ticket-seller, hostess) tend to be seen as ‘typical’ for women: *“administrative tasks are reserved for women.”* Only a small number of survey respondents identified women typically working in operational roles (driver, inspector) or senior roles (manager, supervisor). Most of the women respondents also worked in ticketing/conducting (31.6%) or administrative (13.3%) occupations.

On the other hand, **men appear to typically be found in a wider range of roles, with particular concentration in operational roles requiring more technical skills:** drivers, inspectors, mechanics, technicians, engineers, stevedores/dockers, pilots, machinists.

“Men are very diverse in the transport sector... working in bus stations, they are the driver, they are the receiver in the buses. 80% of the jobs are occupied by men... women are specifically occupying roles as bus conductors or receiving people and ticketing with the bus.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

“Women are relegated to the offices and to the secretarial and administrative work. The main operational work is done by men... the culture and nature of the work really means that women are not involved.”

Industrial Relations Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Men tend to be **more likely to hold more senior roles** – as managers and supervisors.

“In public transport at the management level – all men in leadership positions.

These are the top decision-makers... We are not well represented.”

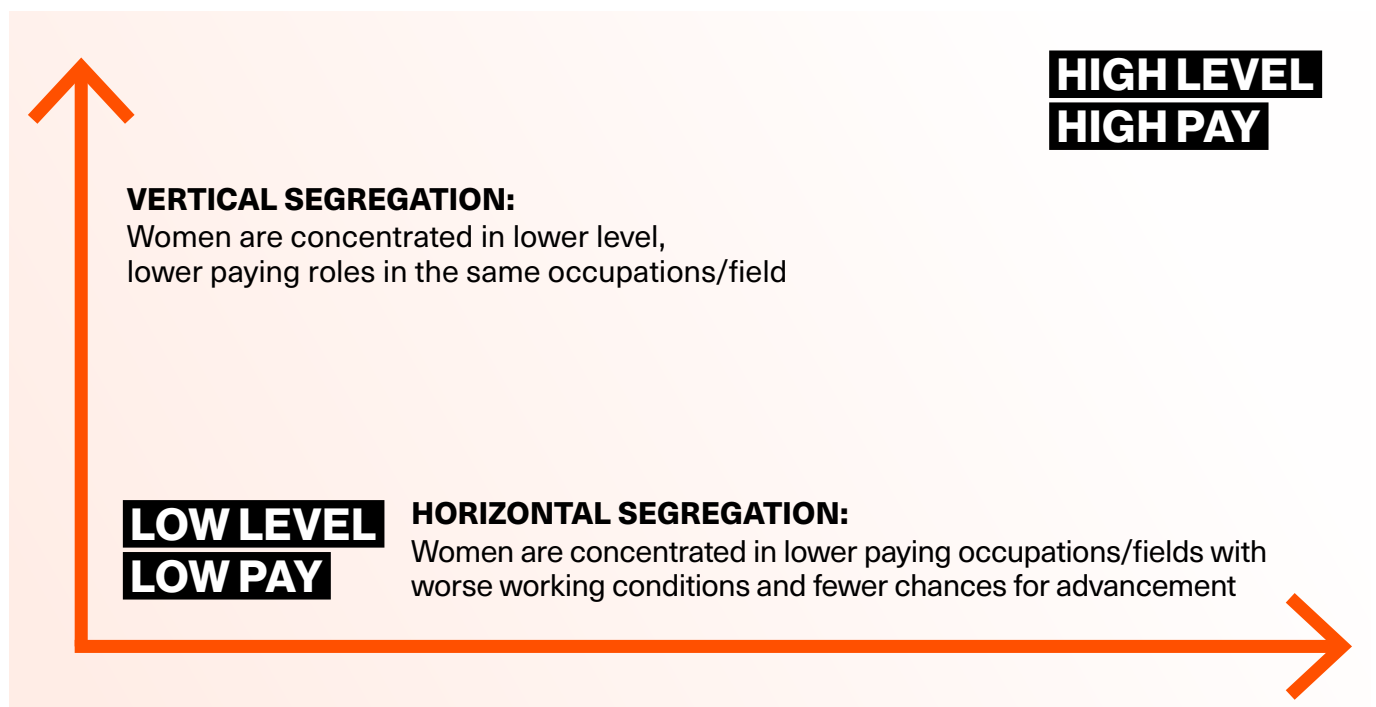
Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“It is difficult to have women employed in authority positions at the moment.”

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTs), Senegal

The roles identified as 'typical' for women tend to be perceived as less-skilled and are generally more precarious. Women's work tends to be of lower quality, and women also tend to feel more insecure in their jobs and are paid less, while men tend to work in more senior roles which require greater technical skills, have greater security and are typically better paid, **contributing to a gender pay gap.**

Women appear to be underrepresented in particular occupations (*horizontal occupational segregation*) and overrepresented in lower status and lower paid roles (*vertical occupational segregation*).



Access to Work

Persistent gender-based occupational segregation in the transport sector is caused by and has a knock-on impact on women's experiences when working in the transport sector. This is partly driven by the exclusionary barriers and inequality that women face in accessing transport work.

- Almost 80% (79.2%) of survey respondents thought that women faced greater barriers to getting work or advancing in their workplace.

Many barriers that women face in accessing work are driven by discriminatory structural inequalities. Evidence from this study suggests that **gendered expectations, inequalities and stereotypes lay the ground for women's systematic marginalisation and exclusion from work.**

For many women, gendered and social norms contribute to their decision-making about whether to access work in the sector: *"women are meant to be in the kitchen, men are working with machines."* In both Ghana and Senegal, this is often shaped by cultural and religious norms.

"Religious differences and Islamic culture mean that women are not encouraged to come to work."

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

These expectations and norms become internalised by women and conditioned by local community and family systems, contributing to women believing that transport is *"no place for women"* and is *"men's work."* Women's work instead, is to remain in the home and look after the children. **This can discourage women from applying for operational roles or roles seen as 'male,' or even from applying for work in the sector altogether.**

"Here the culture and tradition still don't make us equal... for a woman – your work is just to get married, make babies and take care of the home. Yours is not to be seen outside. Otherwise you begin to look like not an African woman any longer... our African culture also intimidates women"

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

"Female roles – family pressure affects them and stops them from accessing certain types of work. Traditional roles play an important job in getting new drivers."

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Evidence suggests that these harmful norms also contribute to **negative attitudes about women's abilities or capabilities to work in transport**, and influence how employers make decisions about work, as one woman transport worker highlighted: *"Employers like to hire men for more complicated jobs because they think women are fragile and weak."*

"Women, when we apply for jobs. Men are given preference. Women are ostracised."

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTs), Senegal

Women report discrimination from both employers and co-workers when they do attempt to access work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employers have an implied preference for hiring men rather than women: women are labelled as 'too difficult' or 'unreliable'; employers are discouraged from hiring women due to the potential financial consequences of maternity leave; and perceptions about women's physical strength mean that they might be considered as 'too weak' to undertake more physical operational roles.

“Employers do not want to encourage women into the industry because the costs are high – for example for maternity.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“Here in Senegal, women have to be submissive by culture... the sector is male-dominated. When women are driving there is some bad regard for women. This is a male-dominated sector and women do not have their place there in this country.”

The roles that women are able to access are more likely to follow traditional gendered stereotypes. Women are perceived as more accustomed to customer service or administrative tasks tied to their traditional domestic roles, whereas men are seen as more skilled and able to undertake heavy lifting and operate machines. Skilled transport work is therefore not seen as ‘women’s work.’

“When you look at the administrative aspect women are well represented, but the technical aspect, no... because in Ghanaian society technical work is meant for men.”

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“In the transport industry, women are confined to administrative work. They are not given other options such as driving. Women have few options. There need to be given the option to undertake some other duties. There needs to be a mental shift. These duties are dictated upon a woman.”

This can be a particular challenge in transport sectors with high levels of casualisation and subcontracting, with many women reporting that men have greater opportunities for renewal of contracts compared to women. In the Ghanaian maritime sector, although women are being encouraged to move into operational work, it was reported that the labour agency in charge of managing the casual workforce mainly hires men who are seen as more capable to undertake the manual work required in the role.

“Women are in a precarious condition and there is lots of contracting. Now, as we are working 60-70% are contract staff – renewable every year. This is where we have challenges. Women are first not to get their contracts renewed. They want to kick us out. We need to ensure permanent contracts so that we are able to have all the benefits.”

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Evidence also suggest that the skills and responsibilities associated with ‘women’s work’ are unrecognised and undervalued and considered as ‘simpler’ or ‘easier’ – a finding also identified in an 2024 ITF study into women’s work and automation in public transport.⁴ This further contributes to a gender bias in how women’s jobs are evaluated – contributing to a gender pay gap.

Ongoing male-dominance in transport workplaces has resulted in organisational cultures that further exclude women from accessing work. A macho working culture – often exacerbated by male management – appears to discourage women from applying for jobs, or leaves them feeling unwelcome when they do. Women also report facing discrimination from male colleagues who do not want to give women space and visibility in the workplace.

“... men here think the women should stay in the house for them to work. That is our duty... to stay in the house and not to work. When we find ourselves in the maritime industry, our own colleagues who are men – the way they treat us, it is bad. I remember there was a time I wanted to move from where I was to go to the maritime sector... even our male counterparts who are with us even push women aside”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“Some parts of our religion tell us that we are not supposed to work. There are others in our culture

who also tell us that we should not work... Women are restricted in many things... men intimidate women when they see them working in fork lifting or as a waste packer. They say: ‘your place is supposed to be in the office, not here on the floor. There is a need for education.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“the obstacles confronting women in the transport sector in Senegal are linked to men’s bias towards women, as men barely accept women as coworkers or having the same rights as them.”

Woman Transport Worker, UDTs, Senegal



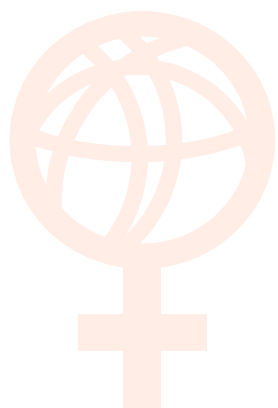
Work in the Informal Economy

Exclusionary barriers faced by women in accessing formal working opportunities are increasingly pushing women into work in the informal economy. The informal economy provides women wanting to access work with ease of entry and flexible working opportunities.

Although few respondents reported that they worked in the informal economy, **interviews revealed that women tend to have higher levels of precarious work in the informal economy.** Women frequently face major challenges when working informally including insecurity, unpredictability, long working hours, poor working conditions and a lack of social protection. Women working in the informal economy are also more vulnerable to violence and harassment.

“For the informal sector, there is no existing condition of service. Immediately the woman gets pregnant and she quits the job because there are no light duties for her to do. These non-existent policies do not attract other women into the job.”

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana



“Women in the informal sector are exposed to more risks... You are not going to have regular pay. They are sometimes paying you in cash, and there is no evidence to show that they are paying you in cash because they cannot pay if they want. They use you as they want. That is very difficult because there are no payments, there is no contract, there is no social security.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

Evidence from this study, and from other research undertaken by the ITF,⁵ suggests that women also face barriers in accessing some forms of work in the informal economy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in urban transport, for example, women can face high financial barriers to accessing loans to purchase vehicles for work.

Women working informally also face barriers to improving their conditions of work. Measures to address discrimination, access to finance, or to improve working conditions tend to be negotiated informally. However, unequal structures and power resources mean that men tend to have greater access to opportunities for education to improve negotiation and bargaining skills. Women tend to lack mentorship, support to access progression opportunities, or confidence and skills to negotiate to improve their working conditions.

“In the informal sector, women can spend 15 years in transport and still be in the same position. Women tend to mostly be conductors. Women drivers try and stay but often get finally discouraged. These difficulties... affect our access and progress in the transport sector.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

Progression & Promotion

Women also lack opportunities for progressing and advancing at work. Several women shared anecdotal evidence of women being pushed aside for promotions, not given opportunities for career development, or promotions for women being delayed to allow men the opportunity: “men are chosen for promotion easily.”

“If they become a driver, women think I will be a driver all my life... there is no career progression.”

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“Women are considered as a weak link and she is put aside or in second position for the promotion”

Woman Urban Transport Worker and Youth Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

Women tend not to be considered, accepted or ‘allowed’ into decision-making positions or bodies. This further reinforces a masculine culture and unfavourable working environment for women, with further discourages women from applying for jobs, creating a vicious cycle.

“there is this kind of harassment... if you are a woman... you’re not supposed to be seen outside. The few of us who come outside to also try and then add our voice to decision-making, they see us and start tagging us, giving us names.”

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Access to Education & Training

Barriers to work opportunities and progression are connected to disparities in access to education and training opportunities for women.

“Why are women not interested in the maritime industries? We are not privy to education... the man is given the opportunity to go and you stay at home. The port is mainly based on engineers, but we do not have that opportunity for school. If you find yourself in this industry, you are lost because every area has its own specialization. To become a docker you need to have technical know how to get there. We need training to move into the operational areas of the industry.”

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Evidence suggests that women face barriers in accessing skills, education and qualifications to reach a wider range of transport opportunities, including:

- Cultural and financial barriers, often having to balance accessing training with managing childcare responsibilities.
- Limited opportunities for training that is accessible or responsive to women’s needs.

These barriers have knock-on impacts on women’s confidence levels and limit their opportunities to progress into better paid and more secure work: *“to become a driver, you first need to have a driving license; to become a mechanic, you need to be trained as a mechanic.”* Anecdotal evidence suggests that higher qualification levels (e.g. degrees) are associated with higher salaries.

“As women, we lack opportunities for education. The industry of maritime is masculine, and most of us do not go through any kind of education programme that leads us into the maritime sector.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“Salaries are too small... if you are a degree holder, then you will get more salary but because we are not... the salary is less than 1000... in order to have more money we need to go to school, to upgrade ourselves. But we have to manage that on top of taking care of our children too.”

Research and Industrial Relations Officer, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana



ISSUES AT WORK

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) *“jobs in the transport sector are highly gendered and unequal, as is access to transport services. As a result, women’s voices are all too often neglected when it comes to transport planning and the pursuit of decent work.”*⁶

In some areas of the transport industry, women’s presence is growing. In the civil aviation and maritime sectors, evidence suggest that men and women are increasingly undertaking similar work tasks and activities: *“employment is defined according to the level of study... there is no segregation between men and women.”*

“there are some women who are starting to work in different industries such as logistics, containers. We now have women who drive fork-lifts.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

However, evidence from this research suggests that once women do access transport work, discriminatory challenges negatively affect their experience of the industry. These challenges are both driven by and further exacerbate women’s exclusion from work. Because women are underrepresented in transport workplaces and decision-making positions, most workplaces are only designed for men’s needs.

When asked to identify major problems in the workplace, over half (59.4%) of respondents thought that problems at work were not experienced equally by men and women. **In the transport workplace, there appears to be an overall lack of consideration and inclusion of women’s needs and experiences.**

“The maritime industry is male and was built mainly for men. This is why we have those challenges. But what I see is that women are moving fast – we have women engineers, pilots and other things. So now we need unity among ourselves as women so that we can push some of these things up to improve the environment.”

Industrial Relations Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“We know that if we are not part of the table to take decisions, our issues will not be heard. But because we are in a male-dominated industry, the men say – stay away and concentrate on your marriage. You have children.”

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Work Organisation

A major workplace challenge identified to be affecting women was the organisation of work. Although over 90% of respondents reported that they were working full time hours, interviews revealed that women are more likely than men to work in insecure, casual or seasonal work with greater part-time and irregular working hours.

Many women reported challenges with excessive workloads, long working hours and insufficient rest time, particularly affecting women working in more insecure employment arrangements and in administrative roles where there the difficulty of work is under-estimated and so under-staffed: *“sometimes one person will be used to do work that is meant for 3 people; sometimes we work more than the 12 hours we are supposed to work; we do work meant for two*

or more people.” Chronic understaffing creates a strain on women trying to balance exhaustion and stress during working hours, and unpaid, unequal caring responsibilities in the home.

This study also found inequality in the allocation of working time amongst men and women. Men tend to be able to access better working hours – better shift schedules, or longer working hours which result in higher rates of pay. In urban transport in Ghana, for example, access to shifts on longer trips give workers the opportunity to access overtime pay and daily allowances, however men tend to be given preference for longer trips and women are mainly assigned shorter trips.

“Men are still given more hours than women. Sometimes when it is a long distance trip. They still prefer that the men do the long distance trips, whereas the women do the short distance trip... you do more hours and so you get overtime rate which is normally higher than regular hours.”

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson,
General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical
Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Scheduling of work – with long, irregular and unsociable working hours – **also tends to ignore women's unequal and disproportionate share of domestic and caring responsibilities.** Women have to balance responsibilities in the home with paid work. Some women also report that families might not accept the long working hours required in the transport industry.

“Sometimes the husband complains, or the mother in law – saying the long working hours are also affecting the children...You have little family life.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's
President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS),
Senegal

“Some people have kids and they don't have anyone to look after kids on longer journeys – they might not have family relations to take care of kids... however on long distance driving, there is more opportunity to be paid more and earn more over time and allowances.”

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General
Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union
(GTPCWU), Ghana

A lack of safety measures from the employer to address women's exposure to risks when working late at night or early in the morning can also discourage women from taking on shifts late at night or early in the morning. Reports suggest that long journeys to and from work, particularly in high-risk areas, expose women to violence and harassment during the commute.

“The working hours are very long, it starts from sometimes 4:30am until 10pm... That is the reason why sometimes many of them are only ticketing on the bus station... There is no safety at work. We wake up at 4am and have to go alone to work – have equipment and money with us. We often face hooligans or bandits and violence at and on our way to work.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

“... I wake up at 4am to get started to go to work at 5. This exposes women to violence and harassment on the way to work – we can be assaulted on the way to work...”

Woman Urban Transport Worker and Youth Committee Member, UDS Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

“Commute to work is hard. Many women live in far places. How they get to the workplace is a challenge. They sometimes meet armed robbers on the way, which is also affecting them.”

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“Sometimes the time you leave home and go to work and in terms of your commute, you are exposed to a number of risk factors, you can be sexually harassed... quite a number of our female employees report of this because of the early morning schedule that they have.”

Research and Industrial Relations Officer, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“Ticket officials, for example, they normally come to work very early in the morning, as early as 4am. Sometimes they have to be in the office... they do not have any buses that are scheduled to carry them from their various homes to the office. So, they have to do an arrangement by their own to come to the office, and most of the times they are being attacked on their way.”

Woman Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Excessive workload and inadequate safety measures can lead to women feeling like they have little choice but to leave the industry. The way that work is organised can also mean that women only feel able to access work with hours that allow them to attend to caring responsibilities or limit their exposure to violence and harassment.

Working Environment

The working environment also has major impacts on women's choices about work.

60.4% of survey respondents reported that women did not have gender-responsive facilities in the workplace.

In many transport workplaces, sanitation, washroom and changing/locker room facilities are either non-existent, inadequate or not separated by gender. Reports suggest that although facilities for women tend to be available in offices for those in administrative roles, in operational or more 'male' spaces (e.g. loading/container terminals) separate facilities are often non-existent. Sanitation facilities are rarely responsive to women's intersectional identities, such as those with disabilities.

"we don't have enough, men and women are using the same washrooms. We are trying to get separate washroom for women. Some places now have this, but others do not have. It really stops people from wanting to access these types of work..."

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

"In Dakar, we can say that it is only 10% facilities for women. In the station... There are no restrooms, nothing. There are 10 stations, but only 1 station is well equipped... unfortunately we are women and we cannot act like men"

Woman Urban Transport Worker and Youth Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

"At the terminal there should be washrooms, but the washrooms... there is no access for physically challenged people... they can face harassment as well..."

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

This means that men and women often have to use the same washrooms or locker rooms. Women report feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, and in fear of being harassed, threatened or even raped when using non-gendered toilets.

"we have the washroom and then we have the restroom or the changing room...these facilities are not enough for the women... Washrooms are not separated...it is being used for both men and women and it always causes harassment... you feel like you have to wait for the men to leave the washroom before you can come in... women – the way we change ourselves is different to men. So the men need to leave the place for the women, and at times they do not want to leave and so it become an argument."

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Insufficient numbers of facilities or lack of gender-separated facilities also contributes to an unhealthy working environment.

Women report hygiene concerns and exposure to infection and disease, exacerbated by a lack of cleaning products (soap, gel) and lack of regular cleaning of washrooms. When women are left without a safe or clean place to deal with menstruation, they might feel more resistant to come to work or embarrassed due to stigma surrounding menstruation. This also contributes to greater risk of infection.

“In Senegal we are using the same toilets as men. It is not divided. Sometimes there are some transmissible infections when using the toilet because it is not separate... Sometimes there are gynaecological problems and infections... In most of the bus stations where we work, there are not enough toilets. Sometimes if we want to use some toilets, because men occupy them every time... sometimes we are obliged to use neighbours toilets and sometimes this is difficult too because of the insecurity in the country.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

“In some stations we don't have sanitation with new buses... as women we have specific needs... Facilities are not there for women... The fact that a woman can come to work and she is in her menstruation period in the day and... normally she should go somewhere in a specific room to protect herself and change but lack of toilets is difficult for her...”

Woman Urban Transport Worker and Youth Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

“Washrooms not being separated in terms of male and female... sometimes your monthly flow will come at a time when you don't even expect it. It's not just for us as staff, but even our members... in terms of hygiene and the fact that washrooms are not separated, we are not able to

put these facilities together... The best alternative will be to advise the person to manage and use tissue or toilet roll, which is not very hygienic.”

Research and Industrial Relations Officer, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“Sometimes when a woman bus conductor has their monthly period and they have to use a sanitation pad... they leave home at 3 of 4am in the morning, if they don't have toilets to change your sanitation pad sometimes they are obliged to wait until 6pm to change it. That creates a risk of infection.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women's President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

This can also mean that women have to travel far to access facilities, which can affect productivity, and delay or disrupt work. Those working in customer-facing roles, report that passengers can become angry or insult workers for the delay.

“Where I work I have to walk a mile to get to the washroom.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

These challenges are evidence of a broader failure to address women's occupational health and safety needs and provide women with a decent working space. Women working in administrative office-based roles also report challenges with broken air conditioning units and a dusty working environment - leading to sickness, or allergies. Women working in operational roles report a lack of access to adequate protection or safety equipment and uniforms – most of which are designed to cater for men's needs.

“these companies do not provide PPE – there are not appropriate or designated rest structures to use. Women also complain of fatigue because the commissions they get are low so they cause themselves to work very long hours. There are health challenges arising from overworking.”

Woman Worker, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Many respondents identified an unsafe and ill-adapted working environment as a key factor affecting decisions about work. Overall there is a perception of a lack of consideration for women and their needs. Failure of employers (or public authorities) to provide facilities also signals to women that they are not welcome in the workplace: *“the boss does not care about protecting women.”*

This also affects retention in the sector and can push women out of the sector: *“They have nothing in male-dominated workplaces, so are forced to make sacrifices in order to be able to continue. Given this, they are not motivated to stay in this sector.”* This also signals to women considering accessing work in the sector, that the transport workplace is not for them: *“they see that women are not considered and so do not enter the sector.”*

“Some of them are passengers expressing interest in coming to the sector. Seeing the conditions as a passenger affects their interests in coming into the sector. It also means they are pushed out of the job and makes them leave.”

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Where workplaces do have separate facilities or measures to address women's health and safety needs – women tend to feel more welcome, and where women are involved in design and decision-making, facilities are more likely to be responsive to women's needs: *“where there are separate facilities for male and female, it makes us feel comfortable and there is privacy between genders. There are good women and men toilets and this is also helped by us having female directors and heads of departments.”* Although there were some reports of positive union-employer collaboration to improve the working environment, policies and measures are rarely effectively implemented, often due to financial barriers.



Caring Responsibilities: 'We Divide Ourselves in Two'

Women workers also report facing a 'double burden' – carrying out most unpaid caring and responsibilities in the home, alongside paid employment.

- Unpaid care burden was identified as a major factor affecting choices about work, contributing to a poor work-life balance and increasing pressure on women.

"We divide ourselves into two. We leave part at work and part at home."

Woman Civil Aviation Worker and Women's vice-President Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

Women are often primary carers for children and relatives, but much of the transport industry lacks a flexible working structure that allows workers to fulfil their caring responsibilities.

"Combining family responsibilities with work is also really hard for women. Husbands feel insecure already – especially if women are working in the port, and working late at night. It might mean that marriages are suffering."

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Interviews revealed that **women's responsibilities as care-givers puts constraints on their time and capacity to participate at work.** Women tend to work less paid hours than men, or take more time away from work – to look after children or elderly relatives - which can in turn limit opportunities for progression.

"Before leaving, women have to attend to housekeeping duties such as cleaning, taking care of babies and other family members. Women cannot afford a housemaid or babysitters to run and maintain the home by themselves."

Woman Transport Worker, UDTs, Senegal

"In the morning you have to take care of your children. You have to prepare your meals... prepare food... then by the time you leave work around 6pm, you are confronted with traffic jam..."

Woman Road Transport Worker, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

"Women's duties in the home can impact on work... How do we cope with stress between the household work and the paperwork – it is very difficult... I have to leave home by 6:30am and report early at work. It can take me up to one hour from my home to the workplace. By the time I get home around 6:30pm or 7pm... I don't have time... you really don't have time to take care of the house....and then you have to attend to household duties."

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

As more women become the bread-winners, it is becoming more evident that the transport sector is failing to provide the necessary income to fulfil livelihood needs.

"People want to raise families but are not willing to join the transport sector... the salaries are not so much that you cannot rely on it."

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

The perceived duties of women as the 'care-givers' in the family and women as child bearers also mean that employers might not want to hire women: *"Because they (bosses) think that women will get married and eventually get pregnant."*

"Maternity leave is a major factor – this is hindering women from being in management positions. we can feel it in the sector, not encouraging employers to hire women."

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDS Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

Unpaid domestic responsibilities also impacts women's workplace productivity, hindering their ability to progress and access better paid and more senior roles. Women might lack time for training to progress or flexible schedules to advance to higher positions.

"At times your child will be sick and you have to take your child to the hospital. Your boss does not understand because of where you are... instead of them phasing you out, they use that as an excuse. They will say – she will get pregnant and will say I am going on maternity leave because of those things. Where there are opportunities for the women to be moved up, they sideline them and they give it to men."

Industrial Relations Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Many employers fail to provide conditions to enable women to reconcile family and work life. Only 62.5% of survey respondents reported there to be caring measures in the workplace – such as maternity leave, career break policies, flexible working arrangements, or childcare facilities. In some cases, annual leave policies are tied with maternity leave policies.

"When annual leave is added to maternity leave – it is not encouraging women to take time off – sometimes you can work until 5 months. If you are in a management position, if your work it is difficult, sometimes they do not give you maternity."

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDS Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

"unfortunately most organisations... don't have the facility of you bringing the baby to work and breastfeeding the baby – most of us don't have the facility so you have to leave the baby home and then come to work."

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

"I think the challenge is also maternity and other care-related benefits and services at the workplace... some women when they give birth, the number of months which they are supposed to get to enable them to cater for their children is very limited... in some organisations, they give birth immediately after one month, two months, you have to go back to work... if your salary is not enough to employ a nanny to take care of your child or if you don't have a trusted family member to assist you at home... It prevents a lot of women to come on board as drivers..."

Woman Worker, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

This barrier tends to be exacerbated by a lack of paternity leave, or uptake of paternity leave amongst men, further reinforcing employers' preference to hire men over women.

“Harassment and victimization especially with women when you give birth... men are also given paternity leave, but they don’t make use of the paternity leave or stay at home to help the women. We were suggesting that they should give the women more than the three months in Ghana.”

Industrial Relations Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

It is also reported that women are often victimised at work for pregnancy. Women returning to work can face exclusionary measures after maternity leave, including degraded working conditions, alternative job duties (without consultation) or even job loss: *“If they are pregnant – a bus conductor or receiver – sometimes the employer can sack them...because they cannot come into the workplace as it should be done.”* Some women reported feeling forced to return to work early due to fear of losing their job.

“I was in the department for a long time. Then I gave birth... I was transferred from where I was to another department. When I got there, there was no chair for me, nothing, no seats... It took me 6 months before they were able to get an office for me... I’ve now been transferred again. I don’t have the ability to say no... is it because I am a woman? Nobody discusses anything with me. They just ask me to move – say you are being transferred. It’s also because it is a male-dominated area.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“When women are pregnant or sick they gets fired too easily. There have been instances of this happening. When I was pregnant and came back they did not give me my position – until now this is a challenge.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women’s President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

“I went on maternity leave... when I returned, there was a replacement... they wanted to assign me to another position when I returned from maternity leave... I was forced to take that new position but I wasn’t trained properly for that position... I didn’t have the skillset and that’s not the position I applied for... there is a mismatch between that position and my training.”

Woman Maritime Worker and Women’s Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

“[one woman] was taken from her job place when she had just had her baby... she was taken to a place where she didn’t even have a desk to work on.”

Acting Administrator and Youth Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

Direct discrimination can also be accompanied by indirect forms of discrimination. Some workplaces lack measures to support prospective or new mothers (e.g. alternative light duties), or women might experience behaviour or attitudes that make them feel unwelcome upon returning to work.

Inadequate or lacking caring measures contribute to greater insecurity and lacking self-confidence amongst women. Women report feelings of stigmatisation and marginalisation, contributing to low motivation for them to enter and stay in the transport sector: *“it has really made me feel not*

belonging to and not accepted and cared for."
Anecdotal evidence also suggests that in some cases this can even discourage women from having children.

Where policies do exist women tend to have greater opportunities for career progression.
Of the 37.5% of respondents who reported that

caring measures did exist in the workplace, effective measures that were identified included caring responsibilities (e.g. maternity leave) being integrated into collective agreements, measures for light duties during and after pregnancy, and childcare facilities and facilities for nursing mothers.



Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

According to the ILO, violence against transport workers is *“one of the most important factors limiting the attraction of transport jobs for women and breaking the retention of those who are employed in the transport sector.”*⁷

Violence and harassment was the most frequently reported challenge faced by women.

71.2% of survey respondents thought that women experienced violence and harassment in the workplace disproportionately.

76.9% of respondents reported that they or a colleague had experienced violence and harassment at work.

Evidence suggests that women face many different types of violence and harassment in the transport sector. This can include verbal and physical threats and abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, inappropriate touching and psychological violence, which tends to be perpetrated by customers, passengers, male work colleagues and those in more senior positions – managers, supervisors and employers. In the informal economy, women also experience violence and harassment perpetrated by police or authorities. Many women also face domestic violence at home.

“In one instance, one of the staff boarded a taxi cab, and as soon as she alighted immediately... an armed worker attacked, smacked her back and all her belongings were gone.”

Woman Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“Harassment is a major risk and women are exposed to verbal assault. There is sometimes physical harassment – women can be victims of blackmailing or people provoking them.”

Woman Maritime Worker and Women's Committee Member, UDTs Transport Federation (UDTS), Senegal

“The sector is male-dominated and the language that comes from men is sometimes very bad and it deters women. The common washroom causes harassment. The men just enter there. Violence and harassment comes from third parties, that is the customers that come to the terminals... The men they take the opportunity... pounce on the women... they touch them and come out with certain comments.”

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Structural gendered inequalities mean that women tend to work in more insecure and casualised work and lack bargaining power and agency – frequently facing poor working conditions, limited protection and economic vulnerability.

Exposure to violence and harassment is exacerbated by psychosocial hazards and risk factors experienced by women in the transport sector including:

- Inadequate numbers of safe, separated, gender-responsive facilities.
- Poor work organisation/scheduling – exposing women to violence during the commute to and from work, particular when working late at night and travelling to remote locations.

- Hierarchical organisation of work – increasing the risk of abusive work practices and violence from senior (male) supervisors or managers.
- Occupational segregation in the transport sector – In male-dominated workplaces, women face increased exposure to violence and harassment. Men might use violence and harassment to punish or discourage women from entering traditionally male jobs because they see them as a threat to traditional power structures.

“Harassment is a major issue when I go to the port. There was a lady who was using mobile cranes and she was the only woman and she faced a lot of harassment... Women face a lot of harassment in different ports. Safety is a major problem because it is a male-dominated industry.”

Industrial Relations Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“In male dominated areas – sometimes you see – when men see you as a female driver they try to lay you off the road. They think that you don’t belong there and don’t want to obey the traffic rules.”

Woman Transport Worker and Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Women are also more likely to be in customer-facing roles and positions dealing with money, and so are more exposed to theft and robbery and third-party violence and harassment. Women might also face abuse from customers for working in typically ‘male’ roles: *“as a driver customers insult me, threaten me and often refuse to be driven by a woman.”* This challenge is exacerbated by the notion that the *“customer is always right.”*

“In Senegal women are facing a lot of issues with no safety at work. Women have to wake up at 4am and are alone to go to work. We have equipment or money with us and often face hooligans or bandits and violence at work... As a receiver, a ticketing officer – I am working in this sector and some customers will be very dirty with you. They will speak wicked words. There is also even physical violence.”

Woman Road Transport Worker and Women’s President, Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS), Senegal

“the employer protects the customer more than the worker.”

Gender Coordinator, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“we are in a customer-service based department...the customer is always right... but sometimes you face very difficult customers... they react in such a way that is harmful.”

Woman Chairperson, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

Reports also suggest that ‘quid pro quo’ sexual harassment and ‘sexual coercion’ are major problems across the industry, affecting access to work and promotion opportunities. Women’s economic insecurity may leave them feeling forced into “sofa promotion” out of desperation. They might be denied promotions if they turn down advances from employers or supervisors: “if you don’t give in sexually you are not promoted” and “Men want to sleep with you before they can give you a job.”

“I refused to have sex with my boss, so I still remain at my position.”

“Women are being denied at our workplace for a position due to refusing to have sex with the boss or superior.”

“Sometimes you have to accept the managers favour before getting a job.”

“they make advances and sexually blackmail women in order to give them jobs”

“With threats and harassment, women are forced to have intimate relationships with employers in order to gain positions despite their qualifications.”

“Women are often raped or harassed in order to obtain jobs or promotions.”

The prevalence of violence and harassment has led to its ‘normalisation’ and left many women afraid to report incidents. For many women, if they do report they are at risk of not receiving a promotion, salary increase, overtime allowances, being transferred to another department or even losing their job.

“In our part of the world, it has become normal... The society takes that it is okay for a man to touch a woman even without consent... One of the major challenges that women face is harassment... which is made worse by the fact that the maritime industry is male-dominated. It is quite difficult for women to move up. We’ve had issues where women have been victims, you know, for speaking up, for being confrontational, even for being in the union.”

Acting Administrator and Youth Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

“Sometimes women do not want to voice it out or bring it up when they experience it. They also worry that it will spread. They feel like they just have to accept it. Those who are bold enough bring it up – we say they should come and report it to us in the union so that we can take it up with management.”

Woman Transport Worker, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

A lack of effective measures to address the issue (visible policies, reporting channels, safety measures) **or a lack of action when incidents are reported can leave women feeling insecure, in fear and like they have no choice to but leave the sector.** Although just over half (51.9%) of survey respondents reported that their workplace did have measures to address violence and harassment, a lack of enforcement or measures not being accompanied by education initiatives to change workplace culture has limited progress and left women feeling unsafe and uncomfortable in the workplace.

“Women are suffering from sexual harassment and sometimes a woman will be harassed and a co-worker or woman leader will not be there to support. Policies in collective agreements need to be implemented.”

Woman Worker, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

“When I go and report it to the committee, the committee is made up of my own colleagues, of managers who worked with the perpetrators... When a woman is harassed, it is like squeezing water out of a rock. Even most of the perpetrators are in top management, how do you go and report a perpetrator when sometimes he is an overall boss.”

Acting Administrator and Youth Officer, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana



GLOBAL CRISES

Times of global crisis highlight how drivers of exclusion of women from transport work interact and exacerbate one another, contributing to even greater exclusion of women from decent work in the sector.

A 2022 ITF study of transport workers across seven countries in Africa identified that during the COVID-19 pandemic, women workers suffered a disproportionate loss of livelihoods, had to bear additional caring responsibilities and faced exposure to violence and harassment.⁸ Evidence from this study showed similar findings – 72.4% of survey respondents thought that the pandemic had disproportionately affected women in the transport sector:

- **Staffing cuts hit women particularly hard:** less senior and more insecure roles (where women tend to be the majority) were first to be dismissed, or have salaries or working hours cut. Administrative roles (which tend to be female-dominated) were considered to be 'less essential.' More women were pushed into even more precarious and insecure work in the informal economy.
- **Women faced an increased unequal burden for undertaking domestic responsibilities** – creating additional pressure and leaving them with limited time to access opportunities for work, or progression at work.

“Pandemic created a double burden with needing to take care of the house financially and physically. It created too much of a load on one person... Schools were closed. A lot of people were not working... so we have our husbands at home, our children at home, and we still have our jobs also to take care of...

In the African culture, it is the woman that takes care of the house... you are doubling the two and it becomes more stressful.”

Woman Transport Worker and Woman Chairperson, Maritime and Dockworkers Union (MDU), Ghana

- Lockdown measures meant many women were locked in their home with their abuser with no escape, **increasing exposure to domestic violence.**
- **Women’s concentration in passenger-facing roles exposed them to violence and harassment from the public.** Public transport workers faced increased violence and abuse due to frustration from passengers, particularly when passengers were asked to comply with health and safety measures.

“regulation that you have to wear your masks, you have to wash your hands before you board the bus. Sometimes when the passengers... are boarding the bus and they are being directed by mostly our female employees who are mostly the ticketing staff or the conductors on the bus to wash their hands or wear their masks. They tend to face this verbal violence insults from these passengers and sometimes some of them even experience physical violence from passengers.”

Research and Industrial Relations Officer, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers’ Union (GTPCWU), Ghana

- **A shift to hybrid or remote working also exposed women to new forms of harassment** – female ticket sellers, for example, reported increased verbal abuse from customers on the phone.

“a male will call the communication centre to book a ticket... he will tell you... have a sweet voice and I would like you to give me what they call phone sex. And they threaten

you that if you refuse, I will report you to the authority that you were rude to me on the call... the call is not recorded in any way. So it is your employment against the clients' way and we always say that the client is right.”

Research and Industrial Relations Officer, General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU), Ghana



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION

Over half (53.9%) of survey respondents reported that their employer was undertaking work to address women's exclusion from decent work in the transport sector. Effective implementation of measures, with proper follow-up and monitoring, provides strong opportunities for progress.

However, most respondents also highlighted a major failure in effective implementation of measures – often driven by a lack of financial resources to implement such measures. Despite some positive union action, significant gaps in both employer and union action to address women's exclusion from work remain

– highlighting an ongoing need for both parties to work together collaboratively to develop innovative strategies. In particular, this requires urgent work to overcome the continued under-estimation of women's abilities and discriminatory biases and attitudes informing both direct and indirect discriminatory measures and practices.

Despite limited progress, several respondents reported positive internal action being taken by and within the union to address some of the barriers contributing to women's exclusion. Some of the most notable measures include:

Education & Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's leadership and rights-based training • Building public awareness and advertising campaigns to challenge harmful norms • Engaging men as allies
Women's Issues as Core Union Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for gender affirmative employment policies • Negotiating to address women's health and wellbeing in the workplace • Encouraging union leaders to speak out about women's priorities
Violence and Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for female/male members and leaders on ILO C190 • Encouraging women to share experiences • Integrating ILO C190 into collective bargaining • Lobbying government to ratify/implement ILO C190
Women as Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising targeted organising of women • Including women in decision-making bodies • Leadership training for women

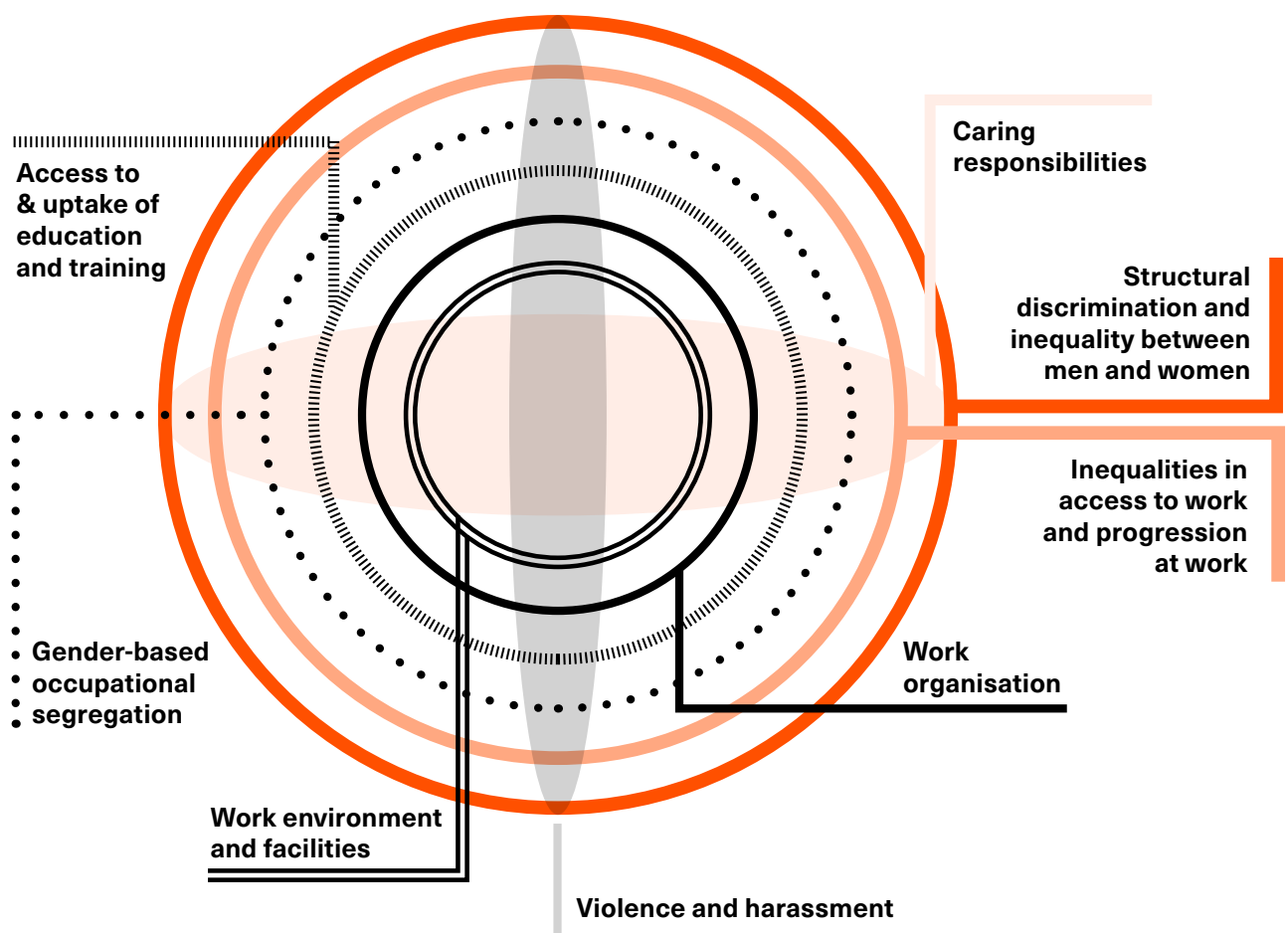
KEY FINDINGS & GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Systemic exclusion takes place when policies, systems, attitudes or norms – either intentionally or unintentionally – create barriers that prevent women from accessing opportunities or resources that would enable them to work in the transport sector.

Evidence from this study has highlighted the multitude of different factors that can affect women's 'choices' and experiences of work in the transport sector. These factors – which are underpinned by inequality between women and men in society – are connected and interdependent and drive the exclusion of women from decent work in transport:



THE OVERLAPPING NATURE OF FACTORS FOR WOMEN'S EXCLUSION FROM DECENT WORK



Women's representation in the transport sector remains low, and women are largely concentrated into particular types of jobs which have less security and opportunity for progression.

Social and gendered inequalities also inform women's experience of work.

A predominantly male workforce and unequal gendered hierarchy has shaped a transport workplace that is not responsive to the needs of women. Working environment and organisation fail to be reflective or responsive to women's needs. Women also face greater exposure to violence and harassment – a factor which both impacts, and is impacted by women's exclusion from decent work in transport. Women tend to lack equal power resources to overcome challenges in the workplace. All of these factors impede women from entering and remaining in the sector. Women are made to feel unwelcome, unwanted or undervalued. These issues are cyclical, intersecting and exacerbating one another:

**THE FEWER WOMEN IN
TRANSPORT WORKPLACES AND
DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS**



**THE LESS INCENTIVE FOR
EMPLOYERS TO INITIATE GENDER-
TRANSFORMATIVE REFORM OR
RECOGNISE THE VALUE OF
A DIVERSE WORKFORCE**



**THE MORE THAT WOMEN'S
ISSUES ARE IGNORED AND THE
LESS RESPONSIVE TO WOMEN'S
NEEDS THE WORKPLACE IS**



**THE GREATER WOMEN'S
EXCLUSION GROWS**



Although there are some attempts being made to address women's exclusion, ineffective implementation of measures and widespread inaction have slowed progress.

This study has identified the importance of addressing drivers of exclusion in a holistic and integrated manner and highlighted some general principles for addressing some of these exclusionary drivers:

- **ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION:**

Evidence-based measures to ensure all aspects of women's employment are addressed - including attraction, recruitment and selection, training and opportunities, retention, career interruption, re-entry, and realisation of decent work, in line with the ilo framework 'women's career cycle in the transport sector.'⁹

- **RECOGNISING THE LINK BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AND SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION:**

Ensuring the framework for addressing violence and harassment in the world of work as set out in ILO C190 is included in collective bargaining and national lobbying including recognising and addressing:

- The link between violence and harassment and systemic exclusion of women from decent work.
- The importance of an 'inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach' focused on the empowerment of women, removing barriers for women's employment and addressing systemic exclusion of women from decent jobs.

- **ADDRESSING OTHER RISK FACTORS DRIVING EXCLUSION:**

Recognising and addressing key risk hazards faced by women transport workers, including:

- the male-dominated and unequal nature of the sector
- hazards faced during the commute, travel and sanitation as part of the world of work, and providing access to gender-responsive facilities in the workplace
- exposure to third-party violence from customers, passengers, authorities, vehicle owners
- ensuring gender-responsive occupational safety and health policies

- **RESPONDING TO WOMEN'S NEEDS BEYOND THE WORKPLACE:**

Providing maternity-related provisions and other caring rights, policies and measures for women returning to work after pregnancy, and enabling work scheduling to be responsive to women's needs as carers.

- **FORMALISATION:**

Integrating gender concerns into worker-led formalisation processes in line with R204.

- **ORGANISING:**

Organising women workers into the union and developing structures and proactive measures to enable their active participation and representation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this survey questionnaire is:

- to build a more detailed understanding of key issues, risk factors, causes and impacts of systemic exclusion of women from decent work in transport.
- to gather evidence about the link between the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in transport and violence and harassment faced by women.

Date of interview	
Name of Interviewer	
Location	

"We are doing research into the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport industry. 'System exclusion' is the interrelated and mutually reinforcing barriers and processes that exclude and marginalise women from work in transport. It includes structural discrimination, as well as all the behavioural barriers and negative stereotypes that men simply do not face. The results of this research will be used to help to identify the risk factors, causes and impacts of women's exclusion, including the risks of violence and harassment. I would like to ask you a few questions. Everything you say will be treated in confidence."

Name of Interviewee (if appropriate)	
Country	
Name of Union	
Union Position (if applicable)	

Age	<18	18-24	25-39	> 40

1. How long have you been working in the transport industry?	< 5 years	
	5-10 years	
	10-20 years	
	> 20 years	

2. What transport sector do you work in?			
Urban Transport		Fisheries	
Civil Aviation		Docks	

Inland Navigation		Seafaring	
Road Transport		Railways	
Tourism			

3. What is your job title?	
-----------------------------------	--

4. What is the nature of your employment? Informal work is “all economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements.” It can be described using four indicators: lack of a written employment contract, no job security, poor or non-existent social protection, denial of fundamental rights.	Formal	
	Informal	

5. What are your typical working hours?	Full time	
	Part time	
	Irregular/unpredictable hours	
If you work part-time or irregular hours, please can you explain the reasons for this.		

6. Are women equally represented in your workplace?	Yes	
	No	
If no, what do you think are the reasons for this?		

7. What jobs do men / women typically work in the transport sector?	
What do you think the reasons are for this?	

8. What are the main problems that you / other women you know face at work?		
Do you think that these problems are experienced equally by men and women?	Yes	
	No	

9. Do you think that women face greater barriers to getting work / advancing in work at your workplace?	Yes	
	No	
If yes, please explain and provide specific examples.		

10. Do women have sufficient gender-responsive facilities at your workplace? (e.g., toilets, locker rooms etc.) 'Gender-responsive' facilities are facilities that identify and address the issues and impacts emerging from the lack of adequate and appropriate facilities for women transport workers.	Yes	
	No	
Please explain your response. If no, how does this impact your working life/choices at work?		

11. Does your workplace have measures and policies to address the caring needs of women? (e.g., caring responsibilities, maternity rights/leave)	Yes	
	No	
Please explain your response. If no, how does this impact your working life/choices at work?		

12. Are there any other factors that impact your working life/choices about work? (e.g., night working/commute, unpaid care work, unsafe working environment etc.)		
13. Do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic affected women disproportionately in the transport sector?	Yes	
	No	
If yes, please explain and give specific examples.		

14. Do women workers face violence and harassment disproportionately at your workplace?	Yes	
	No	
If so, why do you think this is?		

15. Have you / your colleagues ever experienced violence and harassment at work?	Yes	
	No	
If yes, please explain what types of violence and how this affected working life/choices at work? (e.g., career choices, promotions, pay etc.)		

16. Does your workplace have measures to address violence and harassment?	Yes	
	No	
If yes, please indicate. (e.g., health and safety measures, zero tolerance policies, reporting procedures, measures to address impact of domestic violence etc.)		

17. Is your employer addressing the causes of women's exclusion from the transport sector?	Yes	
	No	
Please explain your response. If no, do you have suggestions of further work that could be done?		

18. Is your union undertaking work to address the underrepresentation of women in the transport sector?	Yes	
	No	
Please explain your response. If no, do you have any suggestions of further work that could be done?		

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

- To build a more detailed understanding of key issues, risk factors, causes and impacts of systemic exclusion of women from decent work in transport.
- To gather evidence about the link between the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in transport and violence and harassment faced by women.

“We are doing research into the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport industry. ‘System exclusion’ is the interrelated and mutually reinforcing barriers and processes that exclude and marginalise women from work in transport. It includes structural discrimination, as well as all the behavioural barriers and negative stereotypes that men simply do not face. The results of this research will be used to help to identify the risk factors, causes and impacts of women’s exclusion, including the risks of violence and harassment. I would like to ask you a few questions. Everything you say will be treated in confidence.”

This study aims to explore the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport industry by gathering information about the risk factors, causes, and impacts of the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector, including the link with violence and harassment faced by women. This documents contains an overview of key issues and terminology.

At the Start of the Interview

Interviewers should ensure that they create a safe space and non-judgemental environment during the interview to enable participants to share their experiences and opinions openly. Interviewers should listen without judgement, accept and respect the views and experiences of participants, and empathise with the experiences of interviewees. Interviewers must also be aware of their own unconscious biases based on gender, ethnicity, age, or other factors. Interviewers should also reassure interviewees that everything they share will be treated in confidence as set out in the questionnaire consent form.

Guidelines

Introductions – name, position in union, sector, job,

1. What are the major problems that you face in your job / at your workplace?
2. Are these problems experienced disproportionately by women? If **yes**, please explain.
3. Do you think that these problems prevent women from entering and / or remaining in the transport sector? If **yes**, please explain.
4. What other barriers do you think women face when trying to access work in the transport sector?
5. Do you think that these barriers were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic? If **yes**, please explain.
6. What do you think are the causes of these barriers?
7. If issue has not already been raised: Is violence and harassment a problem frequently faced by women in the transport sector?
8. Have you (or other work colleagues) experienced violence and harassment at work? If **yes** (and comfortable to share) please explain.
9. Does violence and harassment (or the risk of violence and harassment) affect your working life and/or choices about work? If **yes**, please explain.
10. Do you think that there is a link between violence and harassment faced by women and the exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector?
11. If issue has not already been raised: Did the COVID-19 pandemic increase the risk of violence and harassment? If **yes**, please explain.
12. What impact did this have on their inclusion or exclusion from decent work in the transport sector?
13. What other factors do you think affect women's choices about work in the transport sector?
(If issues not raised, suggest unpaid care work, maternity, domestic violence, precarious and informal work, night working, unsafe commute, inadequate sanitary conditions etc.)
14. Does your workplace have sufficient measures to address and prevent violence and harassment? If **yes**, please explain. If **no**, what measures/policies/structures do you think are needed?
15. Does your workplace have measures to support/encourage the inclusion of women in the transport sector? If **yes**, please explain. If **no**, what measures do you think are needed?
16. Is your union undertaking work to address the exclusion of women from transport (including risks posed by violence and harassment)? If **yes**, please explain. If **no**, what measures do you think are needed?
17. What do you think could be done to better address the systemic exclusion of women from decent work in the transport sector:
 - a) In the union
 - b) At the workplace
 - c) At the national level/with governments

Close

ENDNOTES

- 1 ITF (2024), Equality in Reverse: Women's Work and Automation in Public Transport. Available at: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/resources/equality-in-reverse-womens-work-and-automation-in-public-transport>

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- 2 In addition there were also several that were unable to be determined including PPS 1, SD (GDLC) 1.
- 3 Ng, WS & A. Acker, "The Gender Dimension of the Transport Workforce" -International Transport Forum Discussion Papers, No. 2020/11, OECD Publishing, 2020: <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/gender-dimension-transport-workforce.pdf>

Heintz (2005), 'Employment, Poverty and Gender in Ghana', Working Paper Series No. 92, Amherst: University of Massachusetts, Political Economy Research Institute
- 4 ITF (2024), Equality in Reverse: Women's Work and Automation in Public Transport. Available at: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/resources/equality-in-reverse-womens-work-and-automation-in-public-transport>
- 5 Dakar Bus Rapid Transit: Labour Impact Assessment Research Report 2020
- 6 ILO, Transport Policy Brief 2013 - Women in the Transport Sector, ILO, 2013: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_234882.pdf
- 7 ILO, Transport Policy Brief 2013 - Women in the Transport Sector, ILO, 2013: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_234882.pdf
- 8 ITF (2022), Impact of COVID-19 on Women Transport Workers in West and Central Africa. Available at: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/resources/impact-covid-19-women-transport-workers-in-west-and-central-africa>
- 9 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_234882.pdf

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