



# FEMALE LABOR INCLUSION IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

Case study: *The Mujeres Conductoras Program in Jalisco, Mexico.*

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## TUMI E-Bus Mission – Mexico

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***Public transport woman driver in Jalisco***

Graduates of the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program in 2021 are driving the new electric buses on Mexico's first 100% electric route.

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# 1. Introduction

Around the world, transportation is a traditionally male-dominated sector. In Latin America, an average of only 15% of the labor force in the transportation sector is made up of women. (Granada, I., et.al, 2016 in IDB, 2021).

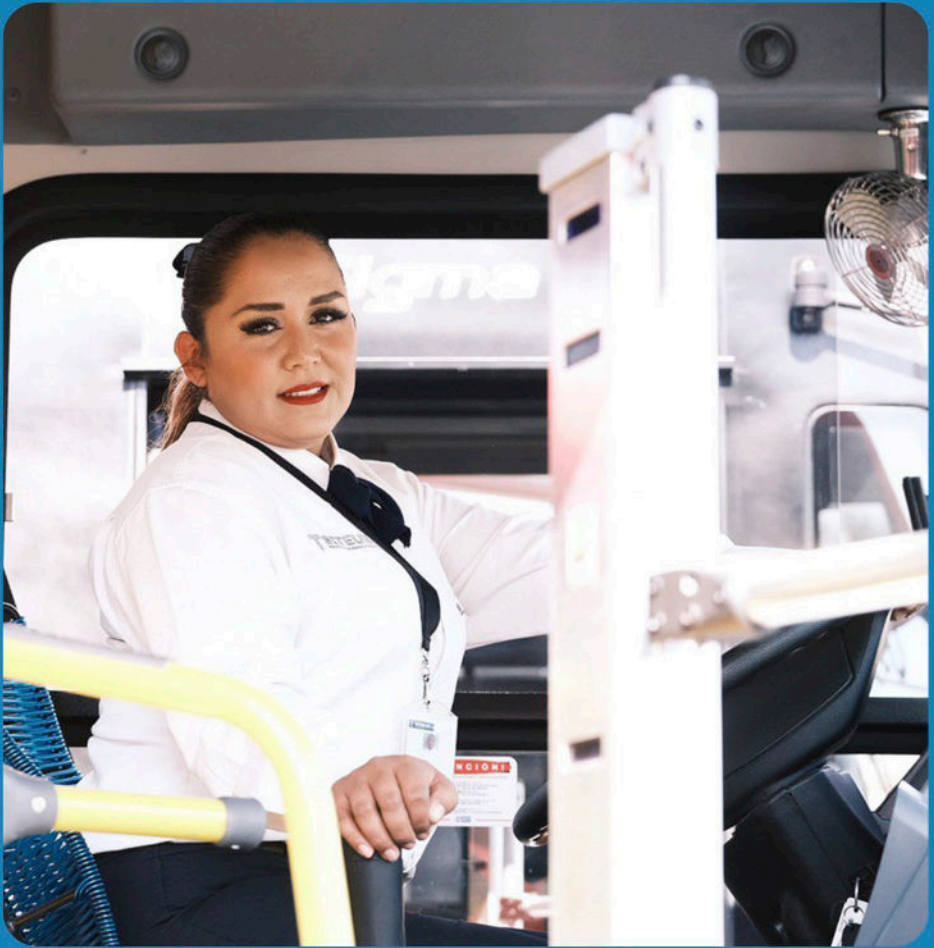
Gender segregation in the workforce not only undermines women's rights to decent work but also limits economic growth by integrating fewer people into the labor market and in conditions of economic inequality (Vaca-Trigo, 2019).

Concurrently, there is a shortage of drivers in Latin America. This represents one of the greatest operational challenges in public transportation. In response to the shortage, public policies promoting the inclusion of women in driver roles have been implemented in the region. On the one hand, these initiatives constitute affirmative actions to enable women to access job opportunities under equal conditions. On the other hand, they aim to address several issues facing public transportation, including driver shortages, persistently low levels of professionalism in driving roles, and poor service quality.

In Latin America, three cities—Bogotá, Colombia; Santiago, Chile; and Jalisco, Mexico—have implemented training and onboarding programs to incorporate female drivers in public transport operations.

Using a qualitative methodology, this paper documents and analyzes the Mujeres Conductoras Program in the State of Jalisco.

The first part of this document analyzes the design and implementation process from a public policy approach, as well as the program's strengths and risks. Subsequently, the paper presents the effects that incorporating female drivers has within their families and work lives, the perception of fellow male drivers, and other benefits to the public transport companies that have employed them. In the last section, the authors address the main challenges faced by women in accessing and remaining in the labor market, particularly as drivers.



*Public transport driver in Jalisco*

Today, more than 180,000 people work as fixed-route mass, urban, suburban, or long-distance transit drivers in Mexico. Only 6% are women (INEGI, 2019).

## 2. Background: Gender bias in the labor market

In traditionally male-dominated sectors such as transportation or construction, structural factors tied to gender inequalities persist, creating barriers to access and participation among women in the labor market (INEGI, 2021; Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020; Jaimurzina, A., et, al, 2017).

The **high concentration of women in jobs related to care, trade, or domestic services** in sectors such as education and health reflects the **ongoing occupational segregation of men and women in the labor force** (UN Mexico, 2020; ILO, 2016).

Gender biases and stereotypes held by companies or employers—reflected in labor regulations, hiring processes, and working conditions—constitute one of the main barriers to access that affect the demand for women’s participation in the labor force (Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020; World Bank, 2020; Granada, I., et.al, 2016 in IDB, 2021; Lupica, 2015; Jaimurzina, A., et, al, 2017). There are other barriers **that affect female participation in the labor force**, such as the demands of caregiving work limiting their participation. Specific aspects related to social norms and gender roles influence women’s self-perception about their professional lives (World Bank, 2020; UN Mexico, 2020).

Gender bias not only persists in terms of access, but also impacts female continuity in the labor market, the type of jobs they can hold, and wages. (Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020). **The division of labor based on gender<sup>1</sup> that historically assigns time-consuming and unpaid caregiving responsibilities and tasks to women creates obstacles for them** to engage in full-time work, contributing to a widening wage gap and reducing female access to benefits and social protection such as health insurance, pensions, and other forms of compensation (IDB, 2021; Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020; Lupica, 2015).

This section analyzes the principal gender gaps in access and continuity for women in the labor force of the transportation sector in Latin America, as well as the key to their participation and sustained employment. The analysis is based on several case studies of labor inclusion policies in the public transport systems of Santiago, Chile and Bogotá, Colombia.

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<sup>1</sup>Also known as the sexual division of labor, it “refers to the way in which each society organizes the distribution of work between men and women, based on established gender roles that are considered appropriate for each sex.” Available at: <https://campusgenero.inmujeres.gob.mx/glosario/terminos/division-sexual-del-trabajo>

## 2.1. Labor inclusion of women in the transportation sector in Latin America

In Latin America, the transportation sector employs 8.1% of the male labor force and only 1% of the female population (Vaca-Trigo, 2019). The gender segmentation of the labor force within this sector results in mainly men holding decision-making, managerial, or technical positions, as well as the driving, maintenance, and operational tasks (Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020; Jaimurzina, A., et, al, 2017); while the small number of women employed in this sector work in administrative roles, such as service or cleaning tasks (Granada, I., et.al., 2016 in IDB, 2021; Jaimurzina, A., et, al, 2017).

The low representation of women in the transportation sector creates gender biases and a culture of discrimination in the workplace. Practices that foster an unsafe and hostile work environment for women predominate, additionally limiting their access to different positions and occupations within transportation companies (Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020).

One of the challenges faced by women in the transportation sector is a lack of policies and conditions that enable them to balance their professional and personal lives, like flexible working hours and schedules, supportive working environments, limited access to professionalization courses and specialized training, and inadequate infrastructure and facilities that cater to their needs (Wright, T., 2019; Jaimurzina, A., Muñoz, C & Pérez, G., 2017).

To reduce inequalities and address the gender biases that persist in male-dominated sectors such as transportation, a series of affirmative actions have been implemented in various cities in the region. These initiatives focus on addressing barriers for women to access and remain in the labor force.

Similarly, a series of gender mainstreaming public policies, programs, initiatives, and tools have been implemented, not only in labor policies but also in mobility and transportation policies<sup>2</sup>. Among the most relevant policies are those that have led to the creation of programs or initiatives that support female driver training programs.

These types of programs represent a starting point to address the social, political, and economic inequalities faced by women, in efforts to move toward gender equality in the transportation sector. They are also opportunities to transform the organizational culture of transportation companies; offer a higher quality of service and attention to transit riders; improve working

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<sup>2</sup>The Gender and Transport Laboratory of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has documented cases in the Latin American region, as well as accompanied several cities in their processes to mainstream a gender approach in their transport policies. To consult on the various actions in the region, go to: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/OO03772>.

conditions for drivers; and above all, address the driver deficit that persists in Latin America (Ng, WS and A. Acker, 2020; Jaimurzina, A., et, al, 2017).

For a better understanding of the origin and basis of the incorporation of female drivers in the transportation systems of Bogotá (Transmilenio), Santiago (Transantiago) and the State of Jalisco (Mi Transporte Eléctrico), it is important to trace the inception of certain public policies and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective. Each case study involved the respective transportation companies in the process, identifying the keys for the organizational transformation of a predominantly masculinized sector.



## Keys to the inclusion of women in the transportation sector labor market

- Adoption of work-life balance policies by the transportation companies.
- Affirmative actions for equal access to employment opportunities along the entire transportation value chain, through professionalization and development of specialized skills in traditionally male-dominated trades (e.g., drivers, mechanics, managers, construction, etc.).
- Changes in the organizational culture of transportation companies to ensure women's continuity in the labor market, through a series of adjustments in infrastructure (bathrooms), human resources management (creation of safe spaces free of violence), wages (equal pay, social benefits, and job security) and time management (flexible working hours).
- Awareness and intervention strategies for the prevention of workplace harassment and eradication of violence against women, with emphasis on re-education for men in the transportation sector.
- Alliances and multi-stakeholder coalitions between the public and private sectors are key to joint collaboration and to enhance the actions required for the transportation sector to become more equal and diverse.

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Source: BID (2021); Montague-Nelson, G. (2021); Ng, WS and A. Acker (2020); Wright, T. (2019); Jaimurzina, A., Muñoz, C & Pérez, G. (2017).

## 2.2. Santiago (Chile): Women’s Labor Inclusion in Transantiago

In Santiago, Chile, the public policy for the inclusion of women in driving tasks in the Public Transport System (Transantiago), led by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications (MTT), is a pioneering policy in the region. From its inception, the policy’s main objective has been to address the deficit of drivers in the transportation sector, in addition to being a policy for gender equality in this sector.

As part of MTT’s actions to implement this policy, a series of modifications were made to the type of licensing and course requirements to obtain the certification and accreditation for a professional public transport driver’s license (IDB, 2021; 2019). By making these criteria more flexible, one of the main barriers for women to work for Transantiago (including other transportation services) was eliminated.

Another action taken by the MTT was the “Premiación Anual a los Mejores Conductores y Conductoras” [Annual Award to the Best Drivers], an initiative carried out by the Directorio de Transporte Público Metropolitano (DTPM) [Metropolitan Public Transport Board] with the Transantiago operating companies (BID, 2019; MTT, 2018). This initiative created an ecosystem encouraging operating companies and training institutions to build alliances that promote the creation of specialized driver professionalization courses, for men and women alike (IDB, 2019; MTT, 2018).

Under this initiative, the MTT launched an inter-ministerial project for the design of a more comprehensive public policy in collaboration with the Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social [Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare], the Ministerio de la Mujer [Ministry of Women’s Affairs], the DTPM, the Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo (SENCE) [National Training and Employment Service], and the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género (SernamEG) [National Service for Women and Gender Equity]. This alliance sought to address several challenges, but its main objective was to address the deficit of Transantiago drivers (IDB, 2021; 2019; MTT, 2018).

These two strategic actions resulted from free professional driving courses for women and young people offered under a public labor and productive inclusion program called *Más Capaz* [More Capable], implemented by SENCE. The program intended to incorporate more women into Transantiago in a progressive manner (IDB, 2019; 2019a; MTT, 2018).

In 2018, actions were implemented to promote and raise awareness about this type of course for women beneficiaries of the *Jefas de Hogar* Program [Women Heads of Households] during an informative event attended by the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, the Ministries of Labor, Transportation and Women’s Affairs, the Chilean Chamber of Construction, and managers of seven Transantiago concessionaire companies (IDB, 2019; MTT, 2018).

This interministerial and intersectoral effort represents a milestone for the training and incorporation of women in driving-related tasks. Not only did the program coordinate different public programs to maximize its impact, but it also created incentives for transportation companies to invest in the professional training of women and the formalization of their participation in the transportation sector.

Additionally, the program helped further define the processes for mainstreaming a gender approach in transportation policies. The formation of a Public-Private roundtable between the Ministry and the private sector in 2017 and the *Mujeres en Ruta* [Women on the Road] award for companies and educational centers committed to the incorporation of women in the sector represent another important milestone for the labor inclusion of women in the entire transportation sector, not only as drivers (IDB, 2019a; MTT, 2018).<sup>3</sup>

The *Política de Equidad de Género en Transportes* [Gender Equity Policy in Transportation] (2018) institutionalized the gender perspective in public management and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in transportation policies. The annual award called *Premiación Anual a los Mejores Conductores y Conductoras*, held by DTPM and its operating companies, had a category for the inclusion of women in the labor force, specifically as drivers. (IDB, 2019; 2019a).

Free training and professionalization courses for more female drivers continues to be a central axis of the gender-focused transportation policy of the MTT, DTPM, and SENCE in Santiago, Chile. Results from these opportunities in Transantiago show an increase in female driver participation, from 1.53% in 2014 to 5.67% in 2021 (DTPM, 2021; 2017 in MTT, 2018). This data shows that this type of affirmative action is necessary for the inclusion of women in the labor market of the transportation sector.

The case of Transantiago shows that these types of policies improve the economic situations of women by placing them in a formal labor market and giving them greater economic autonomy<sup>4</sup> that directly impacts their personal growth and self-esteem. Policies such as these also bring a positive change in men's behavior and to the work environment of transportation companies. Lastly, it is found that transit riders and users receive better treatment, the overall route service improves, and rates of road accidents decrease (IDB, 2021; 2019).

Currently, the MTT, the Ministry of Labor, and SENCE continue to offer free courses for professional drivers in response to the high demand within the transportation sector, representing an opportunity to continue training and bringing more women into the formal labor market.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of Santiago (Chile), there is also a focus on the technical and professional training of women throughout the value chain of the transportation sector, as well as a series of actions aimed at the organizational culture of the sector (MTT, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Defined by the OIG (March 9, 2023) as the ability of women to generate and dispose of their own income and resources through access to paid work on equal terms with men.

## 2.3. Bogotá (Colombia): Women’s drivers for Transmilenio

Since 2017, Bogotá has been working to incorporate a gender perspective into its transportation sector. One of the city’s initial actions was the creation and adoption of the *Política de Mujer y Género* [Women and Gender Policy] for its integrated public transport system. (TransMilenio).<sup>5</sup> The policy sought to address challenges related to violence against women using public transportation, address accessibility, address safety criteria, and address the inclusion of women in the transportation sector labor force (Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad [District Mobility Secretariat], 2019).<sup>6</sup>

This was the framework for the *Estrategia Integral para la capacitación y formación de mujeres en oficios no convencionales para el transporte urbano de Bogotá* [Comprehensive Strategy for the training and education of women in non-conventional trades for urban transportation in Bogotá], which seeks to train and develop women’s skills and thereby effectively advance their inclusion, economic autonomy, and employability. Moreover, the strategy aims to eliminate gender roles and stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated activities.<sup>7</sup>

As part of the public policy instruments to execute the Strategy, the *Eco-Conducción* [Eco-Driving] Program for women was created. This is one of the most relevant milestones not only in terms of gender equality but also as part of a larger set of policies for the decarbonization of public transportation. This has been a joint work between the Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad (SDM) [District Mobility Secretariat] and the Secretaría Distrital de la Mujer (SDMujer) [District Secretariat for Women’s Affairs], Transmilenio, and the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje y Empleo (SENA) [National Learning and Employment Service].

In its first stage in 2021, the *Eco-Conducción* Program sought to train and incorporate approximately 450 women as drivers of an electric bus fleet under the Integrated Public Transport System of Bogotá (Distrito Joven, 2021). Initially, the requirement of having an active C1 driving license to enter the C2 recategorization process was a barrier to women (required for

<sup>5</sup>“Management Report 2017: Transmilenio”: <https://www.transmilenio.gov.co/loader.php?Servicio=Tools2&ITipo=descargas&IFuncion=descargar&id=14535>

<sup>6</sup> The *Política Pública de Mujeres y Equidad de Género* (PPMyEG) [Public Policy on Women and Gender Equity] and its action plan was updated in 2021. The new version ensured the gender mainstreaming within mobility and transportation policies with sectoral actions to guarantee the rights of women in Bogota as part of the work of the SDMujer. The PPMYEG is also aligned with the actions established in the *Plan de Desarrollo Económico, Social, Ambiental y de Obras Públicas del Distrito Capital 2020–2024: Un nuevo contrato social y ambiental para la Bogotá del siglo XXI* [Economic, Social, Environmental and Public Works Development Plan for the Capital District 2020–2024: A new social and environmental contract for the Bogota of the 21st century] (a roadmap for the Mayor’s Office of Bogotá). This instrument reinforces the process of institutionalization of a public management with a gender and differential approach, with emphasis on addressing the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty and all forms of violence affecting women in Bogotá (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación [District Planning Secretariat], 2021).

<sup>7</sup> The District Plan’s fifth clause calls for “a new social contract with equal opportunities for social, productive and political inclusion,” through the implementation of two programs to reduce the multidimensional poverty faced by women, such as the *Programas de igualdad de oportunidades y desarrollo de capacidades para las mujeres* [Equal Opportunities and Capacity Building for Women Programs], and the Programa de Promoción de la igualdad, el desarrollo de capacidades y el reconocimiento de las mujeres [Promotion of Equality, Capacity Building and Recognition of Women Program] (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2020).

all public transport drivers), limiting the access of many women in accessing the training program as many did not meet the requirement.<sup>8</sup>

For the second edition of the program, “¡Más mujeres en el sector transporte!” [More women in the transportation sector], SDMujer, SDM, and Transmilenio aimed to strengthen the training processes and reach more than 300 women as employees in the Integrated Public Transport System of Bogota (Mayor’s Office of Bogota, 2022).

A major requirement to enter the *Eco-Conducción* Program is to have an active B3 or C1 license in order to start a re-categorization process to obtain a C2 license. With the appropriate license, women can enter the training process through courses offered by Transmilenio-certified institutes. Whatever the training avenue, women receive a stipend to complete the training process as public transport drivers. Additionally, the program will cover all administrative costs needed to obtain a new license.

Once a woman has obtained a C2 license, they are hired by the transit company and continue with the training process. The average training period before a female trainee begins driving on the road can vary from two to four months. As of March 2022, 2,605 women were working at the concessionaires of the Transmilenio System, of which 328 were bus drivers (Transmilenio, 2022).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See [Mujeres al volante en el transporte público de Bogotá, Periódico EL ESPECTADOR](#), March 5, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Official sources have not published updated data as to the number of female drivers that have joined the Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público (SITP) [Integrated Public Transport System] through the *Eco-Conducción* Program.



### ***Integrated Public Transport System of Jalisco***

The *Mi Transporte* policy in Jalisco has been instrumental in the modernization of public transportation, opening up opportunities for the formalization of driver employment and creating conditions for the inclusion of women in the transportation sector.

## 3. Methodology

This study on the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program in Jalisco is descriptive, with the purpose to learn about the process of implementing the program, using a public policy approach. The research demonstrates the perceptions of different actors involved in the program and the effects of the program on participants' daily lives.

**A mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques was used to address all dimensions of the study's objectives.** Table 1 shows schematically the activities carried out for the collection of information, the objective of each one, the type of actor, the dates of the survey, and the analysis tools used.

The purpose of the selection of the participating actors—also called informants for methodological purposes—was to capture the different perspectives regarding the impact of the Program and the challenges for the incorporation of women in a traditionally male-dominated sector. The informants are grouped into men and female drivers, who are directly affected by the Program; the different transportation companies that employ them (public and private); as well as the public officials who redesigned and implemented the Program.

The information was collected between August and December 2022, so only the effects of the first edition of the program and the course design for the second edition are documented.

# Table 1. Study methodology

Activity	Target	Participating actors (informant)	Survey description and date	Processing and analysis
Analysis of documentary information	<p>Design the conceptual framework and contextualization of the situation of women in the labor market, particularly in the transportation sector.</p> <p>Analyze the context in which the Mujeres Conductoras Program was created, designed, and implemented.</p>	<p>Studies and technical reports on the insertion of women into the labor market</p> <p>Various official sources of statistical information.</p> <p>Official documentation on the <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program</p>	<p>Transversal throughout the research process.</p>	<p>Descriptive analysis</p>
Self-administered survey	<p>Determine the sociodemographic characteristics of female drivers in the state of Jalisco.</p>	<p>Female drivers who graduated from the Program and who will be working as public transport bus drivers.</p>	<p>Through Jalisco's state planning department <i>Coordinación del Territorio del Estado de Jalisco</i>, the 67 women graduates of the Program, who at that time were active in the labor market as drivers, were contacted and sent the link.</p> <p>Between September 20 and 26, 2022, 66 responses were received, resulting in a 99% response rate.</p>	<p>Descriptive statistical analysis</p>
Focus groups	<p>Learn about the benefits and challenges of the Program in the lives of women who have been integrated into driving tasks.</p> <p>Understand the effects and perceptions of their fellow drivers.</p> <p>Identify differences and similarities between men and women when performing driving tasks.</p>	<p>Drivers graduated from the <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program, who will be working as public transport bus drivers in Jalisco.</p> <p>Public transport bus drivers, male colleagues of the female drivers who will be working in the same companies.</p>	<p>Between September 20 and 24, 2022, six focus groups were conducted, distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 focus groups of female drivers employed in public companies.</li> <li>1 group of female drivers employed in private companies.</li> <li>2 groups of male drivers employed in public companies</li> <li>1 group of male drivers employed in private companies</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sessions were recorded.</li> <li>The audio recordings were classified in folios to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants.</li> <li>Transcriptions were made to facilitate the analysis</li> <li>Based on the interview guides and the focus groups, the analytical categories were defined and a catalog of codes was made in order to identify the relevant topics for the study in the discourse of the participants.</li> <li>The data were analyzed using the "coding" technique. In this technique, each of the sources is reviewed and relevant units of meaning –text fragments or quotations– are located. This analysis was carried out using Deddo software.</li> </ol>
Semi-structured interviews with human resources and operations areas	<p>Identify challenges and benefits for public transport companies in the incorporation of female drivers.</p> <p>In addition to possible effects on the service and operation of public transportation.</p>	<p>Responsible for the human resources and operation areas of three public transport companies: two of them private and one public.</p>	<p>On September 20–24, 2022, three interviews were conducted with human resources managers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 public company.</li> <li>2 private companies.</li> </ul> <p>And three interviews with the people in charge of the operation area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 public company.</li> <li>2 private companies.</li> </ul>	
Semi-structured interviews with governmental stakeholders	<p>Understand the lessons learned, challenges and benefits identified by public stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the Program.</p>	<p>Heads of the governmental agencies of the State of Jalisco that participate in the design and implementation of the <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program:</p> <p>State planning department: <i>Coordinación General Estratégica de Gestión del Territorio</i></p> <p>Transportation secretariat: <i>Secretaría de Transporte (SETRAN)</i></p> <p>Gender equality secretariat: <i>Secretaría de Igualdad Sustantiva entre Mujeres y Hombres (SISEMH)</i></p>	<p>Between September 19 and December 1, 2022, four interviews were conducted with high-level heads of the government agencies involved in the design and implementation of the <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program, as well as with the Program Coordinator.</p>	



### ***Public transport driver in Jalisco***

The program provides women with a monthly stipend during training to help them overcome access barriers to professional development. This is particularly important as over 50% of them are heads of the household.

## 4. The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program in Jalisco

### 4.1. Background

The first initiative to promote a program to train female drivers in Jalisco was launched in 2015, during the 2012–2018 state administration. The Program *Mujeres conductoras, movilidad con igualdad* emerged as part of the transportation policy for the transition from the informal public transport model—i.e., individual drivers owning and operating their own vehicles—to a more formal, regulated model with companies operating large bus fleets along specific routes, within the framework of the Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público (SITRAN) [Integrated Public Transport System]. The program aimed to train, certify, and hire 600 female drivers to incorporate them into SITRAN (*Revista Transportes y Turismo*, 2017; IDB, 2018; IDB, 2021). The overarching objectives were to achieve labor parity in a highly male-dominated sector; influence the perception of users by improving public transport service; address and eradicate gender violence in public transportation (Granada, I. et al. 2018 in IDB, 2021).

In addition, this program was aligned with the state’s labor policy to meet the objectives of the *Programa estatal de fortalecimiento al empleo en apoyo a desempleados y subempleados* [State Program to Strengthen Employment in Support of the Unemployed and Underemployed], implemented by the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS) [Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare].

Due to the administrative reforms and modification in the attributions of the different agencies implemented in Jalisco at the beginning of the 2018–2024 state administration, the Program *Mujeres conductoras, movilidad con igualdad* was discontinued. However, in 2021, the Coordinación General Estratégica de Gestión del Territorio (CGEGT) took up the initiative and, under a context of inter-institutional collaboration and political will, the Program was redesigned to take advantage of the installed capacities of the various state entities. Based on the 2018 state public administration reform, the Program was inserted into the framework of a cross-cutting gender equality policy in the State Development and Governance Plan, and its name was changed to *Mujeres Conductoras*.

### 4.2. Program design

The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program was created to address various problems related to violence and gender inequalities in social and economic matters faced by women, as well as to face the challenges of the public transport sector in Jalisco. It is a public **transport policy with a gender**

**focus**, whose general objective is to expand the labor pool of drivers and improve the quality of public transport service, through a training process designed for women.

To achieve its overall objective, the Program has specific objectives that reflect its integrated approach and the interaction of the various agencies involved:

- **Reduce the deficit of drivers and expand the labor pool of trained and professionalized personnel**, since it is estimated that 10% of public transport units in the state cannot provide the service, often due to a lack of drivers (Gobierno de Jalisco, 2021).
- **Lower the high rate of gender disparities in the transportation sector**, particularly the occupational and salary gaps that exist among public transport drivers. Through the training and professionalization of women, it seeks to guarantee their insertion and continuity in the formal labor market in order to guarantee their economic autonomy.
- **Break gender stereotypes**, by fostering the development of new skills so women can occupy spaces in jobs that have traditionally been occupied by men, thereby transforming the relationships and dynamics between men and women in the organizational culture of the transportation sector.
- **Prevent and eradicate violence against women**, guaranteeing safe conditions for women users of public transportation, since eight out of ten women have reported feeling fear and unsafe when using the public transport system in Jalisco (SISEMH, 2019).

#### 4.2.1. Training course

The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program is implemented through a training course. The inter-institutional design of the program has gone through different stages. During the 2012–2018 state administration, the *Mujeres conductoras, movilidad con igualdad* Program was coordinated through the Servicio Nacional del Empleo Jalisco (SNEJ) [National Employment Service of Jalisco], where the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS) put up the economic resources for the payment of stipends to the program’s beneficiaries. Secretaría de Movilidad (SEMOV) [Secretariat of Mobility] coordinated the selection process of the applicants and the Secretaría de Educación de Jalisco (SEJ) [Jalisco’s Education Secretariat] oversaw the curriculum design. The Instituto Jalisciense de las Mujeres (IJM) [Jalisco Women’s Institute] was responsible for training the female drivers in gender perspectives and safety concerns for women users of public transportation. Finally, the Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica [National College of Professional Technical Education] (CONALEP) and the Instituto para la Formación del Trabajo (IDEFT) [Institute for Job Training] were in charge of providing the theoretical and practical courses (see Figure 1).

Under the current state administration (2018–2024), the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program was redesigned and a first edition of the course was held (July–October 2021), where the state planning department was responsible for coordinating the design and implementation of the program, also

involving top-level decision-makers, in this case, from the transportation and gender equality secretariats; as well as various areas of the education sector and technical and vocational training. Under this new collaboration scheme, the Secretariat of Transportation (SETRAN) is the entity where the Program is assigned and financed, therefore, it oversees the operating rules.

In this new edition, the Secretaría de Igualdad Sustantiva entre Mujeres y Hombres (SISEMH) provided guidance to frame the program as an affirmative action that seeks to close gaps in labor and wage inequality within the cross-cutting axis of “Gender Equality” in the Plan Estatal de Gobernanza y Desarrollo [State Plan for Governance and Development] 2018–2024.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, SISEMH proposed adding a segment to the course to train female drivers in detecting and preventing violence in transportation situations. The secretariat also designed the theoretical coursework and taught the training sessions on gender perspective-related topics.

Finally, the Universidad Tecnológica de Jalisco (UTJ) [Technological University of Jalisco] taught the course and the Health Secretariat of Jalisco (SSJ) provided in-kind support for the medical exams that the women needed to be certified as public transport drivers (see Figure 1).

For the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program’s second course (August–December 2022), changes were made to the inter-institutional design. The UTJ was no longer responsible for conducting the course; the IDEFT was assigned this task. Administrative changes were also made during this period, affecting the personnel in charge of the agencies involved in the program. The responsibility for designing the course curriculum and disseminating the program still fell to the state planning department, while the SETRAN was in charge of coordinating its implementation (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Inter-institutional cooperation under different Program stages**

	2015 <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program, mobility with equality (admin 2012–2018)	2021 <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program, 1 <sup>st</sup> edition (admin 2018–2024)	2022 <i>Mujeres Conductoras</i> Program, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition (admin 2018–2024)
Operating rules	STPS	SETRAN	SETRAN
Budget/Funding	SNEJ	SETRAN	SETRAN
Oversight of training course coordination and implementation	SEMOV	SETRAN	Secretariat of Transportation (SETRAN) and the Coordination of Territorial Management
Advisory services to position the program as an affirmative action focused on closing labor inequality gaps	————	SISEMH	SISEMH
Advisory services for curriculum design	SEJ	SISEMH	SISEMH
Provides training in gender-equality related topics	IJM	SISEMH	SISEMH
Course delivery	CONALEP / IDEFT	UTJ	IDEFT
Management of administrative formalities (C2 license and driver’s badge)	SEMOV	SETRAN	SETRAN
Support for the medical examinations that female drivers need	————	Health Secretariat	Health Secretariat

Source: Authors

<sup>10</sup> This axis is outlined in the sectoral plan called *Programa Estatal para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres del Estado de Jalisco 2020–2024* (PROIGUALDAD) [State Program for Equality between Women and Men of the State of Jalisco]. See: [https://plan.jalisco.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/23092020\\_proigualdad\\_2020-2024\\_ventregable.pdf](https://plan.jalisco.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/23092020_proigualdad_2020-2024_ventregable.pdf)

## Budget

Revenues obtained by the State of Jalisco from photo-infringement fines are deposited in a road safety improvement fund. The resources are used to finance the State's renewal transportation policy, known as *Mi Transporte* [My Transportation]. The policy aims to expand public transportation and improve the quality of service, among other objectives. The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program is financed with this fund.

In the first edition, the Program operated with a budget of \$1 million Mexican pesos,<sup>11</sup> which was distributed as follows:

- Theoretical and practical course, which costs around \$7,000 Mexican pesos, for each of the women who take the course.
- Monthly stipend paid to each of the women enrolled in the program, equivalent to one minimum monthly salary<sup>12</sup> which is paid in week 4 and week 8; in other words, each woman receives economic support of \$10,516.20 Mexican pesos (\$565 USD) for the duration of the course.
- C2-type license fee, \$1,120 Mexican pesos.
- Driver's badge, \$600 Mexican pesos.
- Any additional fees that may be required

The program operates with a small budget and has a quota of 55 women per cohort. Of the total budget, 50% is used to pay the stipends that the women receive during the entire course. This is one of the priority components of the program's design since guaranteeing a minimum payment allows women to devote time to their training, which, under other circumstances, they would not be able to do because many are heads of family.

Another 30% of the budget is used to pay for theoretical and practical courses because most of the women who participate in the program do not have the resources to pay for diplomas or training courses that would enable them to access better working conditions and opportunities. Another 10% is used to pay for the C2 driver's license, among other administrative expenses. These aspects are important to eliminate the access barriers (mainly economic) that women may face in order to complete their training and labor insertion process, two key moments to ensure their job placement as drivers.

*"As soon as women decide to join the program and are accepted, they are supported from the very first day until they leave with their diploma, their driver's badge and their driver's license. All their exams are also paid for by the Program" (Government stakeholder).*

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<sup>11</sup> Approximately USD 50 thousand

<sup>12</sup> Equivalent to \$5,258.1 according to the minimum wage in effect in Mexico during 2022.

## Legal adjustments

In addition to the allocation of financial resources, two processes were also carried out to modify the Regulations of the Mobility and Transportation Law of the State of Jalisco, with the purpose of making the requirements for obtaining a driver's license for public, collective and mass transportation services (type C2) more flexible. Prior to the first generation of the Program, a driver's license of at least four years was required at the time of applying for the C2, which was practically impossible to comply with in the case of women entering the Program, since many did not have a driver's license in the "driver" category, or some had no previous driving experience.

In the **first edition**, the requirement changed from four years with a driver's license to four years with any type of license. In the **second edition** (currently applicable), a driver's license of any type, with at least two years of seniority, is required in order to apply for the C2. These changes have not only made it possible for women to access driving jobs but have also allowed more men to apply for this type of license and thus reduce the deficit of public transport drivers.

## Employment relationship

The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program has been designed to accompany women throughout the training process until they enter the labor market; although job offers are beyond the scope of the program, the linkage with transportation companies has made it possible to generate a labor pool that practically guarantees the hiring of women who complete the course.

*"The program components take into account [...] everything so that the woman who completes the course is ready to report to work the next day." (Government stakeholder)*

## Curriculum design

In the first edition, the course had a total duration of 120 hours (40 theoretical/80 practical) over six weeks. For the second edition, the duration of the course was increased to 200 hours (40 theoretical/60 practical) distributed over ten weeks. The first 40 theoretical hours can be taken in person or online, while the 160 practical hours can be taken in the morning or afternoon shift. In both cases, topics related to service quality, health, driving skills, as well as the teaching of the Protocols for the Prevention of Community Sexual Violence in the Jalisco Public Transportation System, developed by SISEMH (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Course design**

	Number of hours of theory	Number of hours of practice	Course duration in weeks	Institution delivering the course
2021 Mujeres Conductoras Program 1 <sup>st</sup> COURSE (Admin 2018–2024)	40	80	6	Technological University of Jalisco (UTJ)
2022 Mujeres Conductoras Program 2 <sup>nd</sup> COURSE (Admin 2018–2024)	40	160	10	Institute for Job Training (IDEFT)

Source: Authors

## 4.2.2. Lessons learned for the redesign of the program (second edition)

For the design of the second edition of the program (August–December 2022), transportation companies and female drivers who graduated from previous editions were consulted in order to detect points that needed to be improved, not only in the design phase but also in the implementation. **Most of them are focused on strengthening women’s confidence and implementing measures to help reduce the dropout rate** with small actions that for women can represent important access barriers.

For example, **the online modality and flexible scheduling were changes made for the second edition of the program**, which allowed women to continue with their jobs during the training process, and also to reconcile the work of caring for their families.

Another adjustment was made in the theoretical part of the course, since it not only covers the essential topics to accredit the certification course requested by SETRAN when applying for the C2 type driver’s license, but the different contents and means to comply with **the course modules were rethought and had to be adapted according to the needs of the women, seeking to reconcile their work and family life**. In addition, the number of hours of the practical part of the course was increased at the suggestion of female drivers who graduated from previous editions.

In order to reduce travel expenses that could have an impact on their family economy, it was decided that, for the practical phase of the course, the women would meet at a point of easy access and connectivity with the public transport system, and from there they would be transferred to the facilities where the driving practices would take place.

Regarding the requirements for admission to the course, it was requested that they know how to drive standard vehicles because, in the first edition, it was identified that women who only knew how to drive automatic vehicles had a high dropout rate since it was very difficult for them to switch from automatic driving to bus driving. In addition, informative sessions were implemented to clarify doubts and explain the course processes in detail.

As part of the design of the first edition of the Program, insights regarding what had been effective in the Chilean and Colombian cases were weighed and taken into account. For instance, they had established income requirements—at least one year of experience in a previous job was suggested, which could be demonstrated with a letter of recommendation, however, the problem was that many women had not had a formal job or had no way of contacting their previous employers. For Jalisco, this requirement represented a barrier to entry, so it was eliminated for the second edition of the course. This example shows that even when experiences or success stories are valuable, it is always important to adjust public policies according to the local context.

In the **first edition, 33 women graduated and were hired by the Urban Electric Train System (SITEUR) operator (to drive the electric buses along the first 100% electric route in Jalisco)**, some transportation companies (Route–Fleet mode), and the BRT System (on the Periférico corridor).

In the **second edition, 55 women enrolled and 41 graduated;**<sup>13</sup> participants continued to receive financial support, including the stipend to attend the training program, and the costs of the C2 license, certification, and driving license were also covered.

When comparing the first and the second editions of the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program, the first generation had a graduation rate of 60%, while in the second generation, it rose to 75%. This allows us to infer that the changes made in the design were effective.

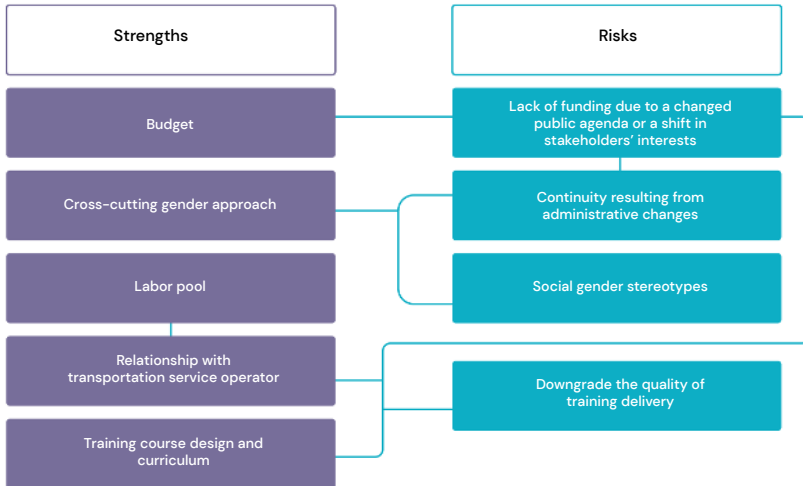
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<sup>13</sup> At the time that the information was collected, there was no information available on the employment of the women who graduated from the second edition of the course.

### 4.3. Program strengths and risks

The strengths and risks identified by government stakeholders in the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program are interrelated and can be grouped into five categories:

**Figure 2. Strengths and risks flow chart**



Source: Authors

#### 1) The allocated budget

The fact that the Program has a small budget implies certain limitations, such as only being able to train one generation of female drivers per year, but it has also allowed strengthening inter-institutional alliances and is paradoxically seen by different stakeholders as its main advantage.

*“The Program is actually quite manageable, given its small budget. It tends to fly under the radar amidst all the other programs, which I believe is one of its biggest benefits.”*  
(Government stakeholder).

Due to the amount with which the Program operates, it is relatively easy to find funding mechanisms; however, there is a latent risk that with the change of administration, it may be left without resources due to a lack of interest or changes in the public agenda.

*“A program with a budget of one million pesos may be more difficult to detect and cancel. This highlights the importance of weighing the potential impact of canceling versus maintaining a program that challenges occupational stereotypes, creates opportunities, and provides benefits for companies.”* (Government stakeholder).

## 2) Gender mainstreaming in the Program

Government stakeholders consider that the Program's cross-cutting nature is its greatest strength due to its inter-institutional nature, which makes it possible for several agencies to combine efforts and coordinate the operation of the program.

*"If at some point the Program ceases to be a priority for the Coordination, for example, it may continue to be a priority for the Secretariat for Substantive Equality, and this may give it continuity, there's a safety net. This is a great advantage and one of its great virtues"*  
(Government stakeholder).

Likewise, the Program's comprehensive and cross-cutting nature allows the gender perspective to be incorporated with concrete and coordinated actions among different agencies to achieve the same objective.

*"The Program's cross-cutting approach is a highlight reflected not only in the role or the use of language, but also in the gender perspective implemented through specific actions across government agencies that might seem to have nothing in common, but that have a lot in common... it is a reality-based public policy driven by an analysis and a previous assessment that triggered an action map"* (Government stakeholder).

Nevertheless, administrative changes are seen as the greatest risk for the continuity of public policies in general; however, one of the governmental actors interviewed considers that their administrative significance is feasible.

*"When you succeed in making a third party and the government take ownership of the program, if transportation companies see the benefits and the advantage of implementing the program collaboratively with the government, they will ask for it. What I have also seen is that, to the extent that you create a well-organized program, with very clear and transparent rules, supported by specialists, you shield it from electoral issues"* (Government stakeholder).

## 3) The job opportunities for female drivers

The graduation of the first program coincided with the opening of the 100% electric bus route in Jalisco and the deficit of drivers in public transportation; therefore, most of the women graduates were hired by SITEUR, the public company that operates the electric route.

*"One hundred percent of the female graduates from the first program were hired, that was what women were most interested in when the new call for applications was issued"*  
(Government stakeholder).

*“The government ensured that women could also be hired for these jobs, so transportation service operators said, ‘I am here to offer you a job.’ Then, you can choose which transportation company you will work for” (Female driver).*

The testimonies of the female drivers reflect the level of confidence that they will receive job offers once they complete the course.

*“You’re just about to complete the course and you already have a lot of job offers”*

*“You can find a job anywhere” (Female drivers)*

Coverage of the program in local media also reflects the level of confidence in the program. Although the call for applications is published in the Official Gazette of the State of Jalisco and various mass media outlets, most of the applicants find out about the program through *WhatsApp* groups and social media posts made by public transport drivers, who have already graduated from the program. Although this is a good mechanism for dissemination, there is a risk that erroneous information about the course may be circulated or false expectations may be generated among the applicants.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, public transport companies have expectations that they will be able to hire more drivers by implementing these programs. Government stakeholders suggested that the next generation of female drivers was practically guaranteed a job.

*“We have a very good relationship with the transportation service operators, which ensures that women participants are hired as soon as they complete the program. [...] some of them are asking, ‘When will the next generations be ready for us to hire them?’” (Government stakeholder)*

*“Through the General Director of Public Transportation, transport service operators said that they wanted more female drivers and asked whether a new program would be launched.” (Government stakeholder)*

*“Women who completed the program last year were hired the week after they graduated. This edition was open to 55 women and 41 of them will be completing the course in the next few days. They will also be hired immediately, that is, transportation service operators compete among themselves to hire them” (Government stakeholder).*

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<sup>14</sup> Since most of the female drivers who graduated from the first *Mujeres Conductoras* training course were hired by SITEUR, applicants may have the false perception that all the graduates of the course will be hired by this company.

#### 4) The relationship with transportation service operators

The relationship with the transportation service operators has not only helped create a labor pool, but has also opened the door to expanding the Program through a plan where the State would provide all the institutional structure required to operate the program, in addition to paying for the driver's badge, the license and the administrative procedures, and transportation service operators finance the stipend and training course fee for the women participants.

*"They say 'It's much better to pay for the training than for the days when the others are absent from work, and I am losing because bus units are idle.' And they have bus units idle, and this means money for them. 'It is better to pay the 11,000 pesos for the scholarship, and in nine weeks, have a highly trained woman driver.'" (Government stakeholder).*

This is a strength because, given the shortage of drivers and the high turnover of personnel in the sector, this type of program represents an opportunity to increase the number of operators who can be trained.

#### 5) The curricular design of the course

The course reflects the cross-cutting approach of the program by including in the theoretical part of the course various topics related to gender equality, service quality, regulations, and road safety aspects, which is one of its main strengths.

*"In addition to discussing gender perspective, quality of service, and regulatory issues, road safety aspects are also reviewed, which helps both men and women. Other topics include the protocol for the prevention of community sexual violence and inclusive mobility and the right techniques to handle and operate these types of units. It is [...] a very complete theoretical and practical program" (Government stakeholder).*

If a mixed financing scheme with the carriers were to be implemented, two potential risks were identified, the first associated with the quality and content of the course, and the second that the State would stop financing the Program when the costs associated with it are absorbed by the carriers, which would change the focus of the training and the institutional design that has been created would be lost. In order to shield the Program against these risks, a budget must be guaranteed to allow it to operate as a public program and the collaboration agreement with the carriers must be explicit in aligning itself with the program's criteria.

*"It is important that the training adheres to the model designed by the state government so that it cannot be made more flexible or less comprehensive." (Government stakeholder)*



### *Electric-bus driver*

Over 80% of female drivers are mothers, and 45% of them have school-aged children. Access to formal employment in the transportation sector has provided them with stable jobs and higher incomes for the economic security of their families.

## 5. Effects of the inclusion of female drivers in Jalisco

The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program seeks to have an impact in different areas: improve the quality of public transport service, reduce the deficit of drivers in this sector, prevent and eradicate violence against women, and reduce the occupational and salary gap faced by women. Although qualitative analysis is not able to measure the effects of an intervention, it does allow us to know the different perspectives that the actors have of the same reality, which helps to understand its complexity and generates information to improve or adapt a policy.

This section presents a description of the effects that the Program has had, from the perspective of the different stakeholders involved, including female drivers and their families, male drivers, and public transport service operators.

### 5.1. Infographics of female public transport drivers in Jalisco

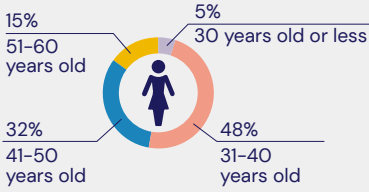
Understanding the demographics of female drivers provides context and facilitates the interpretation of the program's effects on this population segment. It also helps identify possible conditions of vulnerability or barriers that may hinder their ability to integrate and remain in the labor market.

As of September 2022, 84% of the women who had graduated from the course and continued to work in driving jobs were employed in a public company; only 16% worked for private companies.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This composition may have changed because in December 2022, 41 women graduated from the second edition of the course of the current administration of the State of Jalisco.

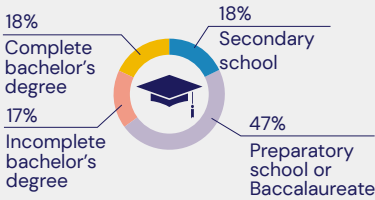
# Female drivers in Jalisco

## How old are they?

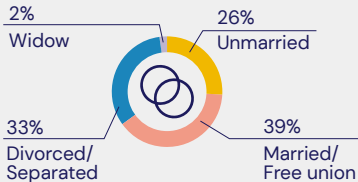


**8/10** female drivers are between **31 and 50 years old**.

## What is their level of schooling?

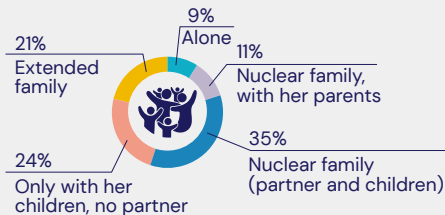


## What is their marital status?



Just **3.9/10** female drivers are in a type of union (**married/free union**).

## Who do they live with?



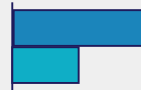
## Women and female-headed households



**58%** of female drivers are heads of household.



**20%** of female drivers earn an additional income.



**50%** of them have a complementary job.  
**25%** earn an additional income from sales.

## Driving and maternity





**83%** of female drivers have children.



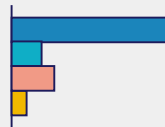
**45%** of them have school-aged children (**12 years older or under**)  
**31%** of them have **teenage children** (minors).

## How many women had previous driving experience?



**44%**   
**56%** 

Of the women who had previous driving experience:



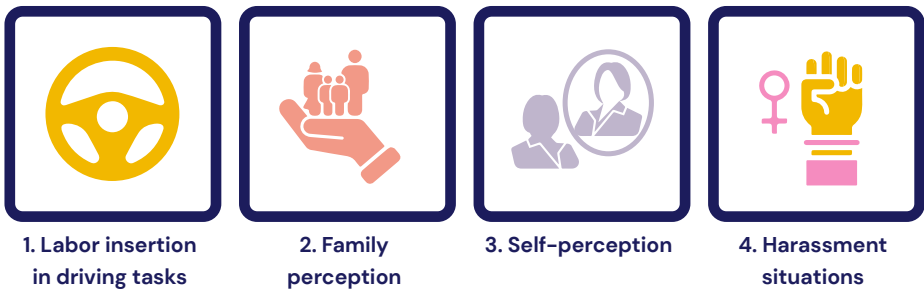
**68%** Taxi/ Uber /Didi /others  
**11%** Motorcycle messenger services  
**16%** Freight transportation  
**5%** Public transport buses

## 5.2. Differences and similarities between female and male drivers

In traditionally male-dominated sectors such as transportation, there is occupational segregation of the labor market associated with gender roles, where there is a high concentration of women in activities related to care (cleaning or administrative), while men hold positions related to decision making, planning, or operation of transportation.

Therefore, the insertion of women in a sector such as transportation has implications for their life histories. Knowing the differences and similarities in the perception of men and women who perform the same activity will help to create comprehensive public policies that contribute to breaking social stereotypes, anticipate risks and access barriers, and thus reduce occupational segregation between genders.

The differences and similarities identified in the focus groups with female and male drivers fall into four categories:



### Insertion in driving tasks

The testimonies **of the male drivers reflect a strong intergenerational occupational persistence. Most of them work in the transportation sector because they followed in the occupational footsteps of family members.** In many cases, their father or brothers were bus drivers under the informal public transport model—i.e., they owned the vehicle that they drove—and from a very young age they helped with tasks such as fare collection; eventually, they began to drive and became full-time drivers. Many others began driving freight and from there transitioned to public transportation.

*“My dad used to have buses, so I started in 1993 along Route 27. I also did Route 380, but I have worked my whole life in public transportation. I am 46 years old and have already been working for 30 years” (Male driver).*

*“For example, my dad is a driver and I’ve liked buses since I was a kid” (Male driver).*

*“Before working in public transportation, I used to drive 4+ ton units for other companies [...] Then, I lost my job, and I have a brother who was already working in public transportation, and from time to time he would say, ‘Hey, give me a hand here.’ I accepted and that’s how I got into public transportation” (Male driver).*

**Gender stereotypes have also contributed to the masculinization of some labor sectors.** An analysis of the discourse of male drivers shows that entering the transportation sector is relatively easy for them because they are socially associated with innate driving skills, while women are associated with caring skills and they themselves see it as a challenge to work as drivers.

*“Before I was here, I was an Uber driver, so the person who told me about the course thought it was a good idea, that if I was already an Uber driver, I could also be a bus driver. I did some research about the course and found it interesting, but I was not 100% sure if I would be able to handle it or not” (Female driver).*

*“When my baby stage and everything was over, I joined Uber. So, when my mom told me that they were calling for applications, she said, ‘Come on, I see you will do well.’ At the time, you would not see as many women Uber drivers as you see today, but I said to myself, ‘Well, I have nothing to lose,’ and the pay was good” (Female driver).*

**Some of the women’s motivations are associated with access to better salaries and job stability;** some consider that their current job [as drivers] **is more compatible with caregiving tasks** than others they have held.

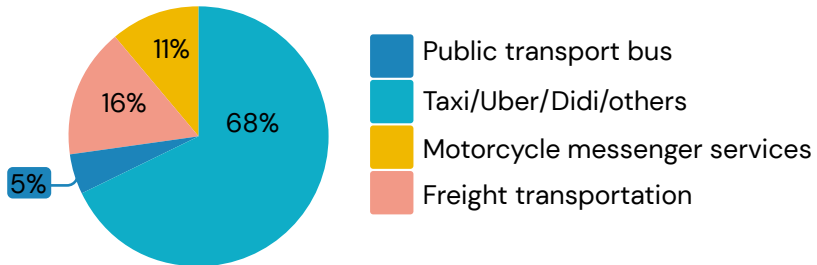
*“I chose it to earn more money and have a stable job. When I worked, I was paid by the hour and, if there were no classes, I wasn’t paid. Here I would earn a fixed pay, so it was an economic decision.” (Female driver).*

*“And I decided to do it because I have three small kids and when I was on the road for a long stretch I couldn’t look after them. This is what attracted me most about the project, that I can be with them every day” (Female driver)*

*“I had been running my own Uber business and was also a driver for a platform, but there was insecurity, I had no benefits, I had nothing, I mean, that also led me to decide to send an application when the call was issued. And it is true, as my colleague said, that this job has brought about a small economic change and is stable” (Female driver).*

Prior to taking the course and engaging in public transport driving, **56% of the women had no driving experience and 44% had experience**, of which 68% had worked in private transportation services such as *Uber* and *Didi*, and yet they mention that the transition to driving a bus was one of the biggest challenges, due to the size of the vehicle (see Graph 1).

**Graph 1. What type of vehicles did they drive?**



Source: Authors

### Family perception

Gender stereotypes also mark differences in how families perceive the same work activity if it is performed by a man or a woman. **Some women report that initially, their families did not agree with their training to become bus drivers because they saw it as a job for men;** however, practically all of them report that now their families admire them or say they are proud of them—their daughters, mothers, or sisters—and the work they do.

*“[My son] used to tell me, ‘Mom, why are you going there? No, Mom, that’s for men, let daddy go.’ And now, especially with the social media where they share everything [...] his status reads: My mom drives the bus” (Female driver).*

*“Once my father asked me, why are you going to work there? That’s not an environment for a woman. But then, when he began to see that the job was stable and everything, he seemed to accept it. A few days ago, my uncle —my dad’s brother who lives in Switzerland—came to visit us. I’d never met him because the last time he was here was about 30 years ago [...], and I felt really good [about myself] because my dad felt proud when he talked to him about me and told him, ‘She can drive an articulated bus’” (Female driver).*

*“Well, [my children] are happy. Once they told me, ‘Mommy, take me with you, I want to see you drive.’ And I said, ‘No, I can’t.’ But they are very proud. They’re always bragging that their mom is a bus driver, just like my mom, who’s always telling everyone about my job.” (Female driver).*

Other testimonies show that **the integration of women in these traditionally male-dominated spaces has had an impact on the perception that the other women in the female drivers’ family environment** have of themselves and their opportunities to engage in any type of activity that previously seemed unattainable because “it was a man’s job.”

*“My girl is like me, she likes jobs that are a little bit rough sometimes, and it is very important to her that I have achieved my goals because she is encouraged to pursue hers. And it gives her more confidence, more security to know that a woman can do the same things as a man, so for her, it has been important because she says, ‘I will also be able to achieve what I want. I mean, if I want to get a job, if I want to study something that maybe is only for men, I mean, I will also be able to do it because you were able to do it” (Female driver).*

**In the case of male drivers, the perception is very different; they point out that their families see it as a normal job** and in some cases acknowledge the effort involved in driving, due to the schedules or the insecurity they face, **but they do not consider that it entails a different kind of effort than any other type of employment, as is the case for women.**

*“They see it as something normal because I’ve always been a driver, I’ve been driving for many years, but no, they don’t see it as something different or extraordinary” (Driver).*

*“My children see it as a regular job. As long as you put food on the table, they are happy [...] For them, it is an ordinary, not an extraordinary job, nothing out of the ordinary” (Female driver).*

### Self-perception

It is evident that **female drivers have a self-perception of personal growth; they recognize that they are capable of facing challenges and overcoming them. They are also proud to be pioneers and even brave for daring to venture into a male-dominated sector.**

*“We’ve succeeded in a field that was exclusively for men. We made it. That is, we managed to do it, even on a highway along our route, they said that we were very tough and no, we wouldn’t give in. On that highway, they drove up too close to our vehicles and broke the side mirrors. [The male drivers] felt that, if they scared us, we would give in [...] So we feel proud that we earned our place in a field that was just for men, and we did it, and we’re still here, and we’re staying” (Female driver).*

They also express a feeling of solidarity toward other women, saying that **the work they are doing will allow more women to get jobs as drivers** and may also serve as a benchmark for women to enter other highly masculinized sectors because they “made it.”

*“Yes, I think the fact that we are women and that we managed to enter this world of male drivers and make a difference, apart from being women, apart from all that, we want to give a better service, we want to change the way people see drivers. We are women. We made it, but it is still a work in progress. Little by little we are succeeding in areas where they never imagined they would see a woman, and I think that is even more commendable. And we know that not every woman will dare do what we’re doing. [We’re] also paving the way for other women who come later, not only here in public transportation, but also encouraging them in other areas, everywhere, not just in public transportation, but in other areas, everywhere” (Female driver).*

**Several female drivers who were interviewed also stated that they feel morally obligated to provide high-quality service** because they are aware of being watched and feel committed to the opportunity they were given.

*“We are making sure that they continue to trust us. We are trying to do the right thing so that they see that trusting us was worthwhile” (Female driver).*

**Both men and women feel proud of providing a public service**, they value their work as drivers and recognize the importance of public transportation for people to be able to carry out their daily activities. In this regard, one driver said:

*“We are an important part of society because we get you to your job, to an appointment, to your family, we are the ones who move this great city, Guadalajara. We are an important part of this society because we make a big effort to get up early and take you to school, to your job. So, for all of us—I think that all of us sitting here feel the passion to help citizens through our work because I, I feel proud” (Male driver).*

### Harassment situations

In the course, female drivers receive training on how to handle situations of harassment on the buses, but most of them state that they have not had to face such a scenario. However, **it is striking that they describe situations where, as drivers, they seem to have faced harassment from users, but do not recognize it as such.**

*“Well, yes, it has happened... ‘give me your phone number’ or ‘hey, what beautiful eyes you have,’ or ‘you’re looking good today’ but they leave it at that. I mean, we get compliments, but it’s just that” (Female driver).*

**For male drivers, this is not an issue;** they said they have not witnessed harassment either among users or toward their female colleagues. The human resources areas of the three operating companies interviewed reported having protocols for dealing with cases of sexual and labor harassment.

### 5.3. Working conditions in the transportation sector and benefits for female and male drivers

One of the government actors interviewed stated that **the insertion of women in driving tasks has been possible because transportation service operators have adequate conditions for hiring them**, such as infrastructure and administrative structures to offer formal and dignified jobs, whereas **these conditions do not exist under an informal public transport model**.

An unexpected effect observed in the focus groups is that **the working conditions of male drivers have also improved thanks to the transition from the informal public transport model to that of transportation service operators combined with the insertion of women in driving tasks**. Table 2 shows the benefits and working conditions offered by the transportation companies that were consulted.

### Table 3. Working conditions by company

	Schedule	Days off per week	Annual leave	Monthly salary <sup>16</sup>	Annual/ semi-annual bonus	Services
Public company	Daytime: 8 hours Night shift: 7 hours Mixed: 7.5 hours	2	20 days  (Divided into periods of 10 days every 6 months)	\$16,000 MXN	50 days per year	Social security and medical service. They work under a service delivery model: Contracts renewed periodically  They do not contribute to the public (Infonavit) or private retirement system (Aore).
Private company 1	Each route operates according to a specific schedule. Shifts of between 6 and 12 hours are required. The company rotates the shifts so that the working hours are covered every fourteen days in accordance with the law.	1	Pursuant to federal labor law	Between \$15,000 MXN and \$17,000 MXN  According to the category, which is assigned by the type of vehicle they drive.	Pursuant to federal labor law (15 days)	Pursuant to the Federal Labor Law, plus: Medical service Overtime pay
Private company 2	8 hours	1 (rotates every week to take Saturday or Sunday)	Pursuant to federal labor law	\$16,000 MXN	Pursuant to federal labor law (15 days)	Pursuant to the Federal Labor Law, plus: Supplemental insurance Food vouchers Savings fund Attendance and punctuality bonuses Compensation based on type of workday (overtime)

Source: Authors with information provided by the transportation service operators

<sup>16</sup> Net monthly salary, effective 2022.

## Schedule

The **male drivers mentioned that under the informal public transport system their working hours were very tiring.** They often covered 24-hour shifts or the entire vehicle operating day, which was around 14–16 hours a day.<sup>17</sup> Most of them had to take the vehicle home and were responsible for repairing it, which also meant extending their working day.

*“Here, you work eight hours, and before we used to work 24 hours. In other words, we would take the bus home, and the next day we would continue to work the whole morning. My schedule went from 4 am to 10 pm, every day. And now it’s only seven hours, it is a more accessible job” (Male driver).*

**Under the company contracting scheme, male drivers notice that their quality of life has improved because they rest more,** do not spend so much time driving, and spend more time with their families, **they can schedule their personal activities according to the schedule,** either fixed or through the schedule rotation scheme, and there is certainty in the time they spend on work activities.

*“Right now I complete two full shifts, which is six hours and the double is 12 hours. I start at 4:20 am and leave at 5:20 pm, so I still have time to get home, eat with my family and the next day I go back to work and I only do one shift. So, in my personal opinion, we do have more time to spend with our family. No, the other was 24 hours on and 24 hours off, but the 24 hours off, you basically slept all the time” (Male driver).*

Although working in public transportation implies certain challenges pertaining to scheduling and juggling shifts—especially for women who must reconcile their paid job with care work—**most of the female drivers interviewed consider that their current job is more compatible with care work than other activities they have performed, such as working in retail or a factory,** where the workdays are uncertain, very long or at times that leave them little time to spend with their families.

*“The schedule, above all, because, for example, now when I leave from work, I can go pick up my son at school, and then I have the whole afternoon free to stay with him or run some errands” (Female driver).*

**Both men and women prefer fixed schedules, i.e., where there is no rotation because they find it easier to schedule their personal activities around their work.** Only the public company hires and operates under a fixed schedule scheme for drivers. However, “private company 2” implemented a system in which it assigned a vehicle to a pair of drivers to cover

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<sup>17</sup> Some public transport routes begin operating around 4:30 am and end around 11:00 pm.

the operation of the route, and although they have rotating schedules, they have been given the option of reaching agreements between colleagues in case they have to deal with personal matters.

*“Now we have the whole day to go out with our family, to go to the movies. It’s not like before when we were all tired and hadn’t slept. Now, we just take a nap, and then, [it’s] dinner time!”  
(Male driver).*

Although women associate the benefits of the schedules with their compatibility with carrying out caregiving tasks, **men associated them with more rest**. The men’s testimonies do **indicate that they have also allowed them to have a better relationship with their families and to become more involved in caregiving tasks**. This finding shows that this type of strategy not only allows women to enter the labor market in conditions of equity but also generates scenarios of co-responsibility that favor the social reorganization of care.

*“This way, we can go our children’s school meetings, while before that was not possible” (Male driver).*

### Salary and job stability

For most women, integration into the labor market as female public transport drivers has represented an opportunity to access formal employment, increase their income, and provide economic stability for their families.

*“...having economic stability, now money does matter, because you get many benefits from that, less stress, you have food for your children, you don’t spoil them, but you can give them what they need, and this gives you peace of mind” (Female driver).*

Women who are **heads of household consider that with their current job, the quality of life of their children has improved** and has allowed them to cover school expenses.

*“Fortunately, I am proud to say that my girls could complete their higher education studies thanks to the opportunity we were given as public transport drivers”  
(Female driver).*

It was also observed that the **three transportation companies interviewed have wage equalization**, which translates into one of the most tangible benefits for women because they consider it one of the few jobs where they are paid the same as men.

*“I came here because I saw that [the male bus drivers] owned cars and houses, they were taking care of their families, and I thought to myself, ‘Just because I’m a woman, why can’t I do that too?’”(Female driver)*

## 5.4. Benefits for transportation operating companies

As a program financed by the Secretariat of Transportation (SETRAN), the **Mujeres Conductoras Program** not only seeks to close wage inequality gaps and generate labor equity conditions for women, but **also to improve the quality of service in public transportation, increase road safety through the professionalization of female drivers, and reduce the deficit of drivers.**

Among the effects observed by the public transport companies that were interviewed are the **low turnover of women, reduction in the rate of absenteeism, greater care of the buses, and quality of service** (reduction of complaints, better relationship with users, etc.).

**Private companies indicated that they currently have a monthly turnover of between 10% and 20% among drivers.** In view of the deficit that the sector faces and the high turnover, companies have opted to make some requirements more flexible, such as the level of schooling, and then provide them with opportunities so that once hired they can finish them, or train internally the candidates that do not meet the profile to be a driver; these strategies are costly for the companies and do not guarantee the continuity of the personnel.

*“If a company offers them a raise, even if it’s just \$500 pesos, they leave but we invested in the whole training process” (Human resources staff member)*

The three companies report that **turnover among their female drivers is practically non-existent.** In general, these women are very committed to their jobs and tend to stay with the company for a long time. The majority of them are heads of households and value their jobs as a unique opportunity to provide for their families.

*“As far as female drivers are concerned, they don’t move from company to company, they choose one and remain there, unlike men, who do move from here to there, bouncing from one company to another.” (Human resources staff member)*

**Absenteeism is another challenge faced by public transport companies.** One of the companies interviewed pointed out that on key days such as Mondays, up to 25% of the buses remain idle because drivers do not show up.

*“If they’ve just been paid and they decide to party, there’s no guarantee that the men will show up for work the next day, but the women always do.” (Human resources staff member)*

In sharing their **perceptions, human resources and operations managers** said that **female drivers are generally punctual, rarely absent from work**, report even minor incidents with the vehicles, and **show a strong commitment to their jobs, especially when they are heads of household.**

In addition to reducing the rate of absenteeism, personnel responsible for operations point out that **women tend to follow driving protocols more than male drivers, which helps to improve the performance of the buses.** Moreover, even though they do not keep records regarding the number of accidents per driver, their sense was that **female drivers have fewer accidents than their male counterparts**, and when they are involved in an accident, they are usually not at fault. Accidents involving female drivers are typically caused by other drivers who may have violated traffic rules, such as driving in a designated lane for public transportation.

*“Women drive more cautiously, what does this mean? They drive at a moderate speed, slowly, they don’t want to drive too fast, and that’s fine because that’s what the company is looking for. We do not want reckless drivers who do whatever they want and don’t follow traffic rules and signals. So women drive cautiously, which means they do not have traffic accidents.” (Operations staff member)*

**Another benefit from the perspective of the operations personnel is the care that women take in performing daily vehicle inspections** before starting their routes. This helps to maintain the buses in better condition.

*“[Male drivers] have to go and check [for damage] and take note of everything they inspect and really, I think women tend to be more thorough in their approach, they pay more attention to details, and identify issues [with the vehicle] with greater precision. Even if they need to report a problem, they seem to be more thoughtful and knowledgeable in their assessment.” (Operations staff member)*

### Quality of service

Companies, government stakeholders, and some male drivers believe that **the presence of female drivers has helped to improve the image of public transport services and change the perception that users had of drivers under the informal public transport system.**

Some male drivers consider that the female presence erases the bad image that some drivers have given to public transportation. **The human resources areas indicate that they do not receive complaints from users regarding the behavior of female drivers** and that they receive compliments because they feel they are treated more warmly.

*Users tell us: “Oh, it’s a good thing that women are becoming drivers because they are more cautious, less reckless when driving. Moms who send their daughters to school alone, they feel more confident [ ...] the girl feels more protected, women, girls of all ages.”*  
*(Human resources staff member)*

Women drivers say that at first they found it difficult to do their jobs because some passengers were weary of their capacity to drive the bus but now they are often praised for the good service they offer. Male drivers also mentioned that they feel motivated to provide good service because of the positive feedback on social media.

## 5.5. Work environment and perception of male drivers

**The entry of women into a previously male-dominated work environment has undeniably modified organizational dynamics.** In the break areas, less aggressive treatment has been observed, and the men themselves admit that they use “less vulgar language, out of respect for the women.”

**The women first hired as drivers perceived hostile attitudes from their male colleagues,** which they attributed to feeling threatened that they thought they were going to take their jobs away. **However, as they got to know them through daily interactions, their colleagues gradually accepted them, and today they even feel supported and protected by most of them.**

They also acknowledge that some colleagues have been empathetic from the start, helping them improve their driving skills and giving them advice about how to react to everyday transportation conflicts. They perceive their bosses as empathetic individuals who provide them with the necessary resources and support when issues arose regarding their children or family setbacks, for which they feel very grateful.

Although the majority of male drivers support having female drivers, **a minority in focus groups showed reluctance and used arguments related to gender stereotypes** to claim that women performed poorly on the job.

*“They are not used to hard work, while men are” (Male driver).*

*“They arrive without any driving experience, and we’re the ones who actually train them”  
 (Male driver).*

*“They have little experience; we already have a long career. For example, my father is a driver and I’ve been familiar with buses ever since I was a kid” (Male driver).*

Whereas the operations personnel indicated that the women are more thorough when inspecting their vehicles, **the drivers who seemed more resistant to the presence of the female drivers claimed they were lazy and not careful with the buses.**

*“Taking care of a unit is not the same for a woman as it is for a male driver. If you observe the women here, you’ll notice that some don’t even bother to check the tires” (Male driver).*

That group of male drivers believes that there is nothing they can learn from their female counterparts, but rather, “it is women who should learn from their driving style and years of experience.” On the other hand, women emphasize that learning has been mutual: while men have helped them improve their driving skills, they have influenced men to have a better service attitude and friendly approach toward passengers.

During the focus groups, it was found that **more experienced male drivers were more empathetic toward the inclusion of female drivers** and expressed that they would like to see more women driving public transport buses. They did not attribute any mistakes made by female drivers to their gender, but rather to lack of experience.

*“For us who have been driving for years, it’s a different story compared to those who are just starting out. We could say we’ve been behind the wheel our whole lives. The courses only last for two or three months, so it’s tough for them to gain experience in such a short time. They’re just starting out, but they’re doing a good job so far. They just need more confidence. It’s our responsibility to assist our new colleagues, regardless of their gender.” (Male driver).*

*“There are very capable women out there, who may even be smarter than you. Instead of criticizing them or putting them down, we should help them and share our knowledge about inspecting a unit, driving, and other tips. They are just as human as we are, so there’s no reason why we can’t share our knowledge and tips with our female colleagues as we do with our male colleagues. I don’t see any issue with that. I’m actually happy to see women in public transportation, especially when they’re on par with you or even outshine you.” (Male driver).*

More experienced male drivers were of the opinion that “times are changing” and if women now want to work as drivers, they should be given the opportunity because many of them support their households and their families have the right to have these economic benefits.

*“One of the benefits I see is that if a man can do it, a woman can do it too. There shouldn’t be any distinction like “No, this job is only for men...”. I see the benefit of promoting equality and not continuing to perpetuate the idea that men should always be above women.”(Male driver).*

Regarding the operational dynamics, some men opposed to the inclusion of women in driving roles claim they drive too slow, and [male] drivers have to pass them to avoid crowding and delays in the service and frequency. On the other hand, men in favor of their inclusion stated that women are more cautious drivers. Moreover, they recognize that there is a process of adaptation, which in the beginning may cause service delays but once they gain confidence, the service becomes more regular and they even do a better job than [male drivers] do.

## 5.6. Social perception

The testimonies of the informants interviewed show that **the incorporation of women has also transformed the relationship with public transport users**. At first, there was a perception of mistrust regarding women's ability to drive buses and it was strange to see them behind the wheel. However, gradually people have become accustomed to it. Even some male drivers mention that passengers ask for female drivers and in Jalisco, it is starting to become "normal" for women to drive large vehicles.

*"I once had a situation with a male passenger who refused to ride with a female driver and said that he would not get on the bus if I were driving. I said, 'Well, then wait for another one because I am the driver.' And he said, 'But how are you going to handle it?' But people started to get used to it. Now, we get users from all walks of life who tell us how proud they are to see women driving. I had this one lady who got on at the airport who told me, 'If you only knew how proud I am to see so many women drivers'" (Female driver).*

Governmental stakeholders consider that the program's visibility has had an impact on other areas related to transportation. Delivery and distribution companies have started to request drivers of any gender, whereas previously they specified male drivers only.



***A driver practicing during one of the program's practical sessions***

One of the main challenges and fears that women face is driving buses, however, by overcoming that barrier, women feel capable of tackling any challenge. They feel like pioneers for entering a sector traditionally occupied by men.

## 6. Challenges for the participation and continuity of women in driving tasks

Ensuring equitable access and the retention of women in driving roles presents a range of challenges, stemming from both the structural gender inequality present in the workplace (Vaca-Trigo, 2019) and the specific circumstances of public transportation. Understanding these challenges can inform the design of public policies that anticipate access barriers and work to narrow the gender employment gap.

### 6.1. Social perception of the transportation sector

**Gender stereotypes in the transportation sector are one of the biggest challenges.** Driving has traditionally been perceived as an activity for men, where women do not have the character or the necessary skills to perform it; it is also perceived as an activity with a high risk of traffic accidents.

One of the biggest concerns for government actors is that traffic accidents are common occupational hazards in driving jobs. However, the idea that women have less ability to drive than men has socially permeated, which can generate the perception that accidents involving female drivers are more severe or frequent, simply due to the media coverage they may receive.

### 6.2. Gender roles and conditions for the operation of public transportation

**One of the main challenges is the reconciliation of work and family life.** This is related to gender roles and the sexual division of labor, including unpaid care work. In Mexico, the distribution of unpaid work is extremely unequal, while **women spend, on average, 43 hours a week on household chores and care work, men spend 17 hours, on average** (INEGI, 2019).

Fifty-eight percent of the female drivers are heads of household and although 39% live with a partner, the distribution of household tasks is not equal. Moreover, **83% of the female drivers have children**, 45% of whom are of school age, i.e., 12 years old or younger (Graph 5), which is why most of them try to reconcile their work schedule with their children's care and schedules.

**These conditions that hinder the successful labor insertion of women, in general, are even more complicated in the case of public transportation**, where drivers' schedules are created based on demand curves and they tend to be incompatible with caregiving tasks.

The three companies interviewed hold different positions regarding the issue of schedules and work–family balance:

- **Public company:** Seeks to reconcile work schedules with caregiving tasks, as far as possible taking into account the particular needs and preferences of drivers. It is assumed that the operation is immovable, but there are work strategies that allow for adaptation.
- **Private company 1:** Considers that the operation of public transport conditions work schedules and it is very difficult for them to be compatible with family needs; therefore, women should be aware of the implications of driving.

*“We should stop drawing lines between the sexes; rules, norms, and guidelines should be the same for males and females alike so that there is no friction between them.”*  
(Operations staff member)

*“We use a software program that takes care of the planning and timetable organization for us, and we adhere to the resulting plan. Sometimes we start our work in the morning, sometimes in the middle of the day, and sometimes in the afternoon, that’s why it’s important for us to be informed in advance of our planned timetable.”*  
(Human resources staff member)

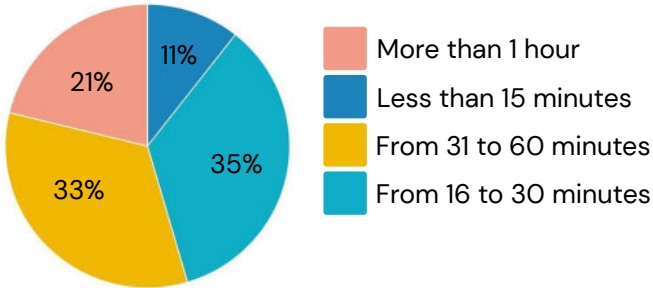
- **Private company 2:** Initially, the company granted special concessions to women so that they could attend to family matters, but this situation began to generate discontent among male drivers, and they decided to standardize benefits. This led them to design a strategy where bus operation is assigned to a pair of drivers, and even though the schedules rotate, they have the option to reach agreements with each other to adjust their schedules in such a way that allows them to attend to personal matters.

*“We try to find a replacement or a partner who can help them out when needed. In this way, you know that this day you can come to help me with this extra shift, and then when I have some free time, I can cover for you. We try to support our female drivers as much as possible.”* (Human resources staff member)

*“We try to pair [the female drivers] with someone who fits their needs. Let’s say a female driver says, ‘Well, I feel comfortable working with X. I work every morning and he works in the afternoons. And I’ve worked out a schedule with him or her where we switch shifts every 15 days so that he works in the mornings and I work in the afternoons.’”*  
(Operations staff member)

The hours of operation also add some complexity to the commute to and from work for the female drivers. Some shifts begin at 4:30 am and others end at midnight. For more than 50% of the female drivers, it takes them at least 30 minutes to get from home from work (see Graph 2). Moreover, most of them do not own a car and tend to use public transportation for their daily commute.

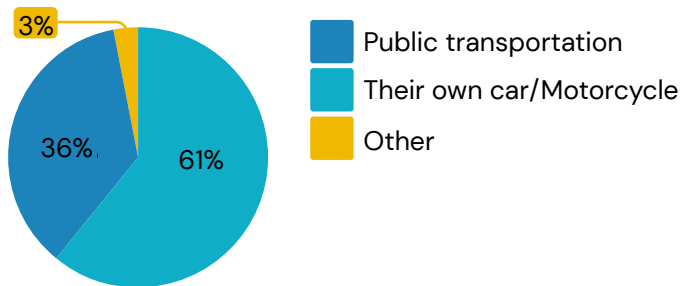
**Graph 2. How long does it take you to commute to/from home and work?**



Source: Authors

About 60% (see Graph 3) of the female drivers travel by car when commuting to and from work because they have implemented strategies that allow them to make their daily trips safely, for example: “Three or four drivers arrange to leave at around the same time and travel together, taking turns driving every eight days, weekly, daily, or every 15 days.” (Operations staff member)

**Graph 3. What modes of transport do female drivers use?**



Source: Authors

## 6.3. Infrastructure

**The lack of appropriate infrastructure has been a persistent problem faced by public transport drivers.** With the transition from the informal public transport model to transportation companies, service yard facilities have been improved, most have rest areas, restrooms with showers, and a cafeteria.

With the hiring of female drivers, some companies have made accommodations to provide them with break and restroom facilities. However, **the lack of restrooms in the terminals or along the routes is the main problem faced by public transport drivers—male and female alike**—in order to carry out their activities properly. However, this affects women even more, due to the specific menstrual hygiene needs they require.

*“When will we have good restroom facilities available? Because it is true when we have our period, we need facilities where we can take care of our needs” (Female driver).*

**Drivers report that they spend between six and eight hours without access to restrooms;** at times they have had to use restrooms at gas stations with passengers on board, and this has led to their being reported for poor service. When the conditions of the route allow it, they have made agreements with neighboring businesses to let them use the restrooms, which is not a solution and only solves one period of the operation, while the transportation shifts begin at 4:30 am, the businesses open around 9:00 am, and close long before the end of the final shift for drivers.

*“All I’m asking for is a decent restroom that I can use after a three-hour trip, which can even be a four-hour trip if there is too much traffic. All I want is to have a quick restroom break to freshen up before hitting the road again without any hassle” (Female driver).*

The companies recognize that this is a problem that they have not been able to resolve and that with the incorporation of women, it is urgent to find solutions together with the governmental entities that regulate transportation.



*Mi Transporte Eléctrico operation along the Periférico-Aeropuerto corridor*

The incorporation of female drivers has been positive for the quality of life of women and their families, the employment conditions of male drivers, and the public transport service.

## 7. General findings

### 7.1. Public policy

- As a public transport policy with a gender focus, the *Mujeres Conductoras* Program's **main objective** is to expand the labor pool of drivers and improve the quality of public transport service, through a training process aimed at women.
- A large part of the program's budget is used to pay **the monthly stipend that women receive during the training program**, with the purpose of **eliminating the access barriers to education and job training faced by women**.
- As a cross-cutting program with a gender approach, its design and implementation require inter-institutional coordination of various government entities to take advantage of the installed capacities that each of them can contribute during the various phases that make up the training and development course for female drivers.
- The lessons learned and implemented in the second edition of the course focused on strengthening women's confidence and designing strategies to help reduce the dropout rate.

### 7.2. Benefits for women

- By being able to insert themselves in a traditionally masculine space, **women are able to access better salaries and also have greater job stability** because companies have implemented salary standardization practices to ensure that men and women receive equal pay for performing the same job.
- **Most of the female drivers come from informal labor sectors like retail, so their working conditions are better as drivers**; they now have social security, vacations, punctuality or attendance bonuses, and have established schedules that allow them to have greater compatibility with caregiving tasks.
- **For most of the women, integration into the labor market as public transport drivers has represented the opportunity to access formal employment, increase their income and provide economic stability for their families**. Those who are heads of household consider that with their current job, the quality of life of their children has improved and has allowed them to cover school expenses.

- **There is a self-perception of recognition and self-esteem since they feel capable of overcoming challenges;** driving a large vehicle makes them feel strong enough to overcome other types of challenges.
- Although it is not one of the objectives, **many of them express a feeling of solidarity with other women.** They believe that the work they are doing allows a greater number of women to be incorporated not only into the public transport sector but also into other sectors traditionally considered masculine.
- **Women drivers feel they are pioneers in performing an activity that was traditionally considered “only for men,”** breaking gender stereotypes. They feel a sense of commitment to do their job well because they are not only representing themselves, but women in general.
- **Families express admiration and pride for female drivers,** and this has also had an influence on women in the immediate social circle of female drivers. By seeing their mothers, sisters, cousins, daughters, or neighbors in driving jobs, these women now recognize their own potential to enter sectors that they previously thought were not accessible to them.

### 7.3. Benefits for transport companies

- The monthly turnover rate for male drivers reported by public transport companies ranges from 10% to 20%, while for women, it is practically non-existent. **Women are more invested in their jobs because a majority of them are heads of households (around 58%).** When women do leave, it’s usually for career advancement reasons.
- Companies report that absenteeism on Mondays or holidays is up to 25% for male drivers, which creates logistical problems and economic losses. In contrast, **absenteeism among female drivers is practically nil.** Even when they face family emergencies due to their caregiving responsibilities, they usually notify the company and seek to reconcile or make up their lost work hours.
- **There is a perception that public transport buses driven by women provide greater security, especially for girls and women.** The service is also perceived as warmer, and male drivers are motivated to offer better service.

- The areas in charge of the operation believe that **women are more attentive when conducting vehicle inspections**, more cautious drivers, and adhere better to safety protocols.
- The **transition from an informal public transport model** to that of transportation companies and the **insertion of women in driving tasks** have contributed to **improving the working conditions of male drivers**.

## 7.4. Challenges for the incorporation and continuity of women in driving jobs

- **Reconciliation of work and family life.** Reconciling the schedules required for the operation of public transportation with those required for care work continues to be a challenge for most female drivers. Likewise, some companies are still reluctant to make adjustments in the distribution and assignment of schedules for the operation and provision of the service. Companies that have made their schedules more flexible not only allow women **to enter the labor market under equitable conditions** but also generate **scenarios of co-responsibility** that favor the social reorganization of care, where men assume greater responsibility for caregiving tasks.
- **Social perception.** Gender stereotypes persist, which consider that men have innate driving skills, while women do not have the character or skills to perform this activity.
- **Infrastructure.** Some companies have made adjustments to provide exclusive break areas and restroom facilities for women. However, **the lack of restrooms in the terminals or along the routes is the main problem faced by all drivers regardless of gender**, some of whom have presented health problems because they can spend between 6 and 8 hours without access to restrooms. This situation also affects the quality of service because drivers have had to use gas station restrooms with passengers on board.



*"Many of us are the heads of our households. We need to earn as much as the men do and carry out tasks that they used to do. I see this as a major triumph. I think that the job we're doing will also be beneficial for many male drivers" (Mi Transporte Eléctrico driver).*

## 8. Final thoughts

The *Mujeres Conductoras* Program in Jalisco is a public policy with a gender-mainstreaming approach that has made it possible to close inequality gaps in the transportation sector, particularly in the area of public transportation.

**Access to jobs with wage parity and labor benefits has allowed female drivers to gain economic autonomy and therefore access to goods and services on equal terms.** These economic achievements, associated with the fact of having overcome the challenge of driving large vehicles, are reflected in greater self-esteem; women recognize themselves as strong and proud of being pioneers and breaking access barriers in a sector dominated by men.

**The visibility of women in jobs that have been socially considered masculine has modified the perception that girls and women of different generations** have about the labor options they can access since they now see it feasible to perform activities that they thought could only be performed by men.

Although it is an indirect effect, **the formalization and professionalization of driving tasks have highlighted the need to improve the management of drivers' work schedules** in order to reconcile work and caregiving tasks and to create scenarios that encourage men's co-responsibility in these activities.

In addition to the positive effects, the study identified some aspects that could be improved. In order to consolidate female inclusion in the public transport labor force, the training and professionalization programs implemented by the State represent only the first step, but **it is essential that companies make adjustments that allow the creation of scenarios for reconciliation with care work.** These adjustments would not only have an impact on women, who constitute a population that has been systematically excluded from job opportunities but would also have benefits in the working conditions offered to male public transport drivers, who have historically worked in highly precarious conditions.

Regarding the Program's design, it is necessary to complete the consolidation of the institutional framework through which the Program operates, so that political-administrative changes do not make its continuity impossible within the same state administration, but also so that it can transcend changes of government.

This study represents a first effort to understand and provide information to address the needs of public transportation, not only from a technical approach to supply and demand or the quality of service, evaluated from performance indicators, but also from the perspective of the people who provide the service.

Public transportation is a sector that needs to be transformed, but it is necessary to do so from a fair transition approach and to achieve this it is important to develop studies that delve into the following topics:

- Identify the impacts on drivers in the transition from the informal public transport model— i.e., individual drivers owning and operating their own vehicles—to a more formal and regulated model with companies that operate large bus fleets along specific routes.
- Learn about the benefits of electric buses and their impact on the health of drivers.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of male and female drivers and road accident rates. Determine whether electric vehicles have an impact on these figures.
- Understand from a qualitative approach users' perception of the service provided.

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