

Research at a Glance

# Technical Brief

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## Understanding How Marginalized Genders Travel Using NJ TRANSIT

It is well known in the field of transportation planning that many factors influence travel, including gender, age, race/ethnicity, household size and income, number of children present in the household, number of personal vehicles available and the type and frequency of activities in which individuals participate. Through this project, NJ TRANSIT sought to understand how women and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus community, sometimes referred to as sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) travel on NJ TRANSIT, so the agency can provide better accommodations for all customers, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

### Research Problem Statement

While marginalized genders may face common socio-economic and structural barriers regarding travel needs, each gender demographic may face their own unique challenges and ultimate solutions may be different. Transportation research and planning seldom collect data on people's sexual orientation and have incomplete data about gender identity and expression. A full understanding of how people of all genders travel cannot be achieved without studying the LGBTQ+ communities travel patterns and experiences.

### Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to gather and analyze identity-specific data that reflects how women and SGMs travel that can be incorporated into future planning and decision-making. The objectives of this research are to: (1) identify and understand the mobility needs, barriers, challenges, and concerns that women and SGMs face when using NJ TRANSIT, (2) develop recommendations for what can be done to address the concerns, challenges, and needs of women and SGM riders so changes can be incorporated into the design of public transportation infrastructure and services, and (3) identify ways to improve safety for women and SGMs that use NJ TRANSIT and customer-facing employee training regarding how to serve these populations without bias or discrimination.



Getty Image

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### Methodology

To achieve the research objectives for this study, the research team implemented a mixed methods research approach that included both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The team completed a comprehensive literature review, conducted structured interviews with peer agencies, convened six focus groups, analyzed a range of secondary data, and conducted a statewide travel behavior survey. Once the research tasks were complete, the team presented findings to an internal NJ TRANSIT stakeholder committee and collaborated with the committee to identify and prioritize recommendations. More detailed research methods and findings are presented in the sections that follow.

### Results

This research provides a deeper understanding and appreciation of the barriers and challenges faced by women and SGMs that use public transit. This can lead to solutions that improve the travel experiences and safety of woman and SGMs and, ultimately, for all customers that use NJ TRANSIT. More specifically, the research shows that women travel more days per week for all trip purposes than men, are more likely to make trips that are household-serving, and more frequently travel with children while using NJ TRANSIT than men. The most common trip purpose was to go to work. This was true for women, men and SGMs. Men reported work trips at a slightly higher rate than women and SGMs. The second most common trip was for recreation/entertainment purposes. Further, the research shows that women and SGMs have different travel experiences while using NJ TRANSIT, feel less safe using NJ TRANSIT, and are likely more vulnerable to harassment than people who identify as cisgender and straight. These findings align with research conducted in other locations.

A number of transportation agencies throughout the world have investigated and taken action to address the unique needs of women that use public transport systems. Examples, include: LA Metro, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Transport for London, and Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The most advanced U.S. example is LA Metro. some keys to their success include disaggregating gender data whenever feasible, having a dedicated staff person to advance the action agenda and facilitate internal coordination, deploying a “gender analysis tool” which provide LA Metro staff with a gender lens checklist to inform decisions across the agency, and establishing performance metrics for each recommended strategy, which can be monitored over time to assess progress.

Women and SGMs make up more than half of NJ TRANSIT’s customer base. These groups are an important component of NJ TRANSIT’s business and addressing their travel needs and challenges is important to achieving the goals outlined in NJT 2030, NJ TRANSIT’s 10-year strategic plan. Further, meeting the needs of women and SGMs will improve travel experiences for all NJ TRANSIT customers.

