

WOMEN, MOBILITY AND MODE CHOICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Gender influences the travel behaviour of individuals. The travel behaviour differences between men and women in African countries have been researched in the past few decades. These differences have still been observed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the changes in travel patterns are different between men and women. Many researchers have noted that in households where a car is available, men usually use the vehicle more than women, and this is true for South Africa. Travel surveys conducted in Gauteng province, South Africa, to measure changes in travel patterns during the pandemic were used to analyse the gender influence on travel patterns. The results from the analysis conducted showed that more women were negatively impacted by Covid-19 than men, with seven percent decrease in the number of employed women compared to a two percent decrease for men. Before Covid-19, a higher percentage of men worked from home and both men and women increased in percentage to working from home due to the pandemic, with a ten percent increase for women, and eight percent increase for men. This led to an even distribution of the number of people who worked from home during the pandemic for men and women. The results shows that though public transport use declined for both men and women, the proportional change was lower for women. Some women shifted to car use, which is explained by the increase in car driver mode for women, and a decrease in this mode for men. However, when comparing public transport use, more women still use public transport more than men. This might be one of the reasons why women are more concerned about hygiene on public transport (59.3%) more than men (49.8%). More women highlighted that they decreased their number of trips when Covid-19 started compared to men and were planning to increase the number of their trips after the regulations were eased. Overall, the results highlights that the impact of Covid-19 on women differs from that of men. Women have less flexibility to adapt their travel patterns when faced with restrictions due to disasters or pandemics.