

Gender and Travel: A summary of research

ITS Review

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Home to work and work to home travel patterns have changed to a great extent in the past 25 years, and a major factor in the transformation has been the entry of more women into the work force. Using data from two metropolitan Washington travel surveys, the first conducted in 1968, the second in 1988, we analyzed these changes in regard to gender and work status. Our data showed that women differ from men in their commuting habits and also that the increase of women in the labor forces has led to a rise in the number of work and non-work trips.

With women joining men as commuters, more workers are on the road each day. And as women have increasingly entered the work force, per capital income has risen while the time available for household chores has declined. In these circumstances, workers are buying more outside services, such as child care and meals, and this adds to the number of nonwork trips. In all, we found that these two major factors account for a 25 percent increase in trips per person over the study period. But we expect that the growth rate of work and nonwork trips will decline now that women and men occupy a nearly equal share of the work force.

Given the growing trend to buy household services, more commuters are trip chaining - performing nonwork activities on the way journey between home and work. Our analysis of this behavior showed that women make more chained trips than men, primarily to drop off passengers in the morning and shop in the afternoon.

Although women on the average make more shopping trips than men, we found that gender roles are converging in this area for persons who work at home. Women in this category spent an average of 48 minutes per day shopping compared to 45 minutes in 1968 but 43 minutes in 1988. This convergence was also apparent in a miscellaneous category of trips that included eating out, transporting passengers, visiting friends, and attending school. Men spend more time in these activities than women, but the difference has been declining over the years.

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