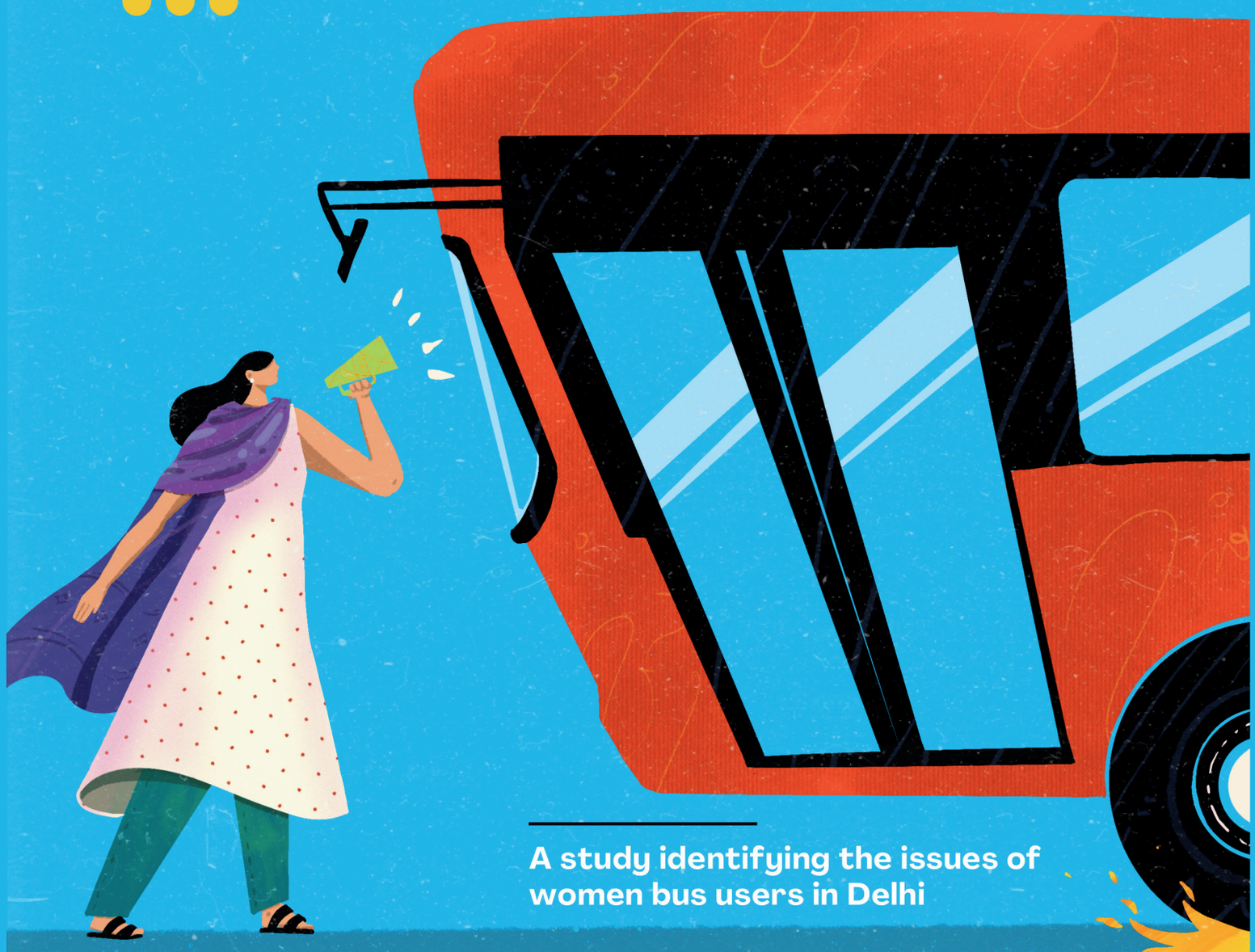
Halt for women bus users in Delhi



A study identifying the issues of women bus users in Delhi

PUBLIC TRANSPORT FORUM DELHI

GREENPEACE
ग्रीनपीस

AUTHORS: Aakiz Farooq and Avni Goyal

CONTRIBUTION: Avinash Chanchal, Amruta and Shalaka

RESEARCH SUPPORT: Abhishek Kumar Chanchal

RESEARCH TEAM: Shipra Rani, Amit Gautam, Arjun PH, Dhruv Raghunath, Meghshree Mathpal, Prateek, Nitu thakur, Dayawati, Kamlesh, Kamni Devi, Kusum Lata, Savita Verman, Saroj Devi and Green Pencil Foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: This study would not have been possible without the survey team who collected responses during the hot summers of Delhi.

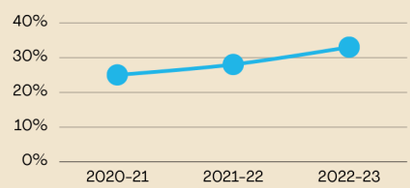
DESIGN & COVER ILLUSTRATION : Kokila Bhattacharya



Contents

INTRODUCTION	04
ABOUT THE SURVEY	06
METHODOLOGY, SCOPE AND LIMITATION	07
FINDINGS	08
INSIGHTS	13
RECOMMENDATIONS	14
REFERENCES	18
ANNEXURE: SURVEY FORM	19

Highlights



Since the launch of women free bus scheme in Delhi in 2019, there has been a steady **increase in the share of women riders**: from 25 percent in 2020-21 and 28 percent in 2021-22 to nearly 33 percent in 2022-23 (Indian Express, 2023). But on the other hand, women continue to face discrimination and sexism while using public buses in Delhi.

80.2%

According to the study, about 80.2 percent of surveyed women bus users reported that there have been instances of buses not halting for them at bus stops.

29% **50.2%**

29 percent of respondents reported having faced incidents of buses **not halting for them** 'frequently' and 50.2 percent reported facing such incidents 'sometimes'.

54.2%

54.2 percent respondents reported that they have **received comments** and faced **discrimination** from bus drivers, conductors and male bus users regarding the free bus scheme introduced in 2019.

84.8%

About 84.8 percent respondents **supported inducting more women bus drivers** and conductors as it would solve the issue of buses not halting for women and make buses more safer for women commuters.

91.6%

91.6 percent women bus users supported the idea of having dedicated **women-only buses** in Delhi.

There is an urgent need for conducting **gender sensitisation training** for bus workers as well as educating the public about the need and benefits of the free bus scheme for women.

The recommendations include various **safety measures** for Delhi's public bus infrastructure that support women bus users such as panic buttons, proper lighting facility at bus stops etc.

Introduction

As the participation of women in the formal and informal workforce increases, access to public transportation and the need for a gender responsive public transport system has become crucial. The active inclusion of women within an efficient and safe public transport infrastructure helps fulfil their mobility needs and enables them to access economic opportunities and essential public services.

In 2019, the Delhi government introduced the free bus ride scheme for women to promote better access to public transport and increase women ridership in public buses. Delhi's free bus scheme for women has seen some success since its launch in 2019, as there has been a steady increase in the share of women riders: from 25 percent in 2020-21 and 28 percent in 2021-22 to nearly 33 percent in 2022-23 (Indian Express, 2023). The scheme has further helped women to access better employment opportunities, earn better wages, travel longer distances etc. Although there has been an increase in the ridership of women using buses in Delhi, there are several issues that women commuters still face while using public bus transportation.

Incidents are often reported where bus drivers do not halt the bus for women commuters at bus stops, labelling them as 'free travellers', which has created problems for women who rely on buses for their daily commute (The Citizen, 2022). Recently, Delhi's Chief Minister acknowledged that some drivers do not halt the bus upon seeing women due to the free bus ride scheme for women (Hindustan Times, 2023). The scheme was introduced by the Delhi government to make buses safer and comfortable for women, with an aim to increase women's ridership in buses, thereby enabling more women to have access to public spaces which were earlier dominated by men (Feminism In India, 2020). As the scheme completes four years in operation on 29th October 2023, there is a need to analyse whether buses are safer and more accessible for women due to the scheme. Furthermore, there is a need for interventions and additional services to make bus transport more efficient, safer, and comfortable for women.

Accessibility and safety are primary concerns for women bus users in Delhi. Delhi's current bus transport system doesn't address the problems faced by women in public transport while also being exclusionary and inaccessible. Personal safety also emerges as one the prime concerns for women travelling in public buses in Delhi with episodes of harassment and discrimination being a common occurrence.



In Indian cities, public transport is critical for women for accessing economic opportunities, caregiving work and for using various public services.

According to a report by the World Bank titled 'Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces,' women are among the biggest users of public transport in India, with 84 percent of women's trips estimated to be reliant upon public transport. According to the same report, about 40 percent of women choose public transport due to its affordability. As more women enter the labour market in India, the need for an efficient, affordable and safe public transport system becomes crucial to meet women's mobility needs and help them access more economic opportunities. In Indian cities, there is a significant presence of informal women workers, such as domestic workers and waste pickers who depend on cheap and faster modes of city transportation for their daily work commute. However, the lack of affordable and efficient public transport forces them to seek work at shorter distances from their homes, limiting their choices and opportunities (Arora, Anvita & Tiwari, Geetam, 2006). A safe, affordable and efficient public transport in Indian cities can be crucial for women to access public spaces for leisure as well as for economic opportunities, especially for women belonging to lower income groups.

About The Survey

The aim of this study is to understand and identify various impediments women bus users face in Delhi, especially after the introduction of the free bus scheme in 2019. It aims to map issues encountered by women while accessing public bus transport in Delhi such as buses not halting for women at bus stops, facing discrimination and harassment etc. Further, the study also identifies specific demands and services to make buses inclusive, efficient, and safe for women in Delhi.



Methodology, Scope and Limitation

A total of 500 women bus users belonging from different age groups, occupations and class were surveyed for this analysis. The respondents included in the survey are formal and informal working women, college students and senior citizens. The survey team collected responses at multiple bus stops and neighbourhoods in Delhi between June and July 2023, while a number of responses were also collected online. Out of 500 respondents, 410 are offline responses collected by the survey team while 90 responses were received online. The offline survey was conducted by randomly selecting women bus users at various bus stops and neighbourhoods in Delhi. The offline data was collected from the following locations: Kashmere Gate, Saket, GTB Nagar, AIIMS bus stop, INA bus stop, Connaught Place and Seemapuri.

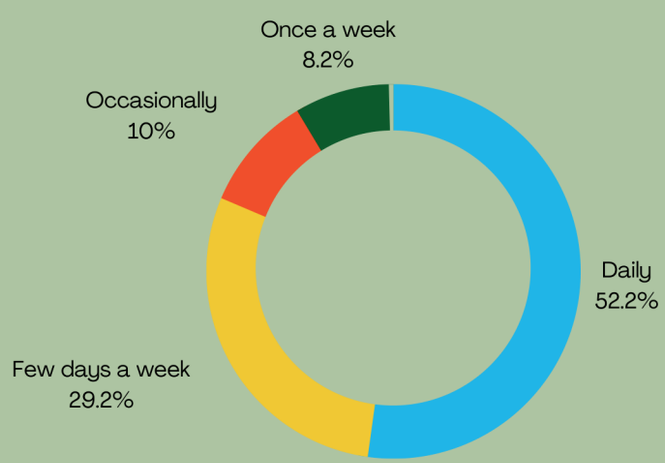


This survey only represents the story of 500 women bus users in Delhi and focuses on the nature, type and intensity of discrimination faced by women bus users and need for gender sensitive interventions for the benefit of women bus users. The survey doesn't include the occupation, income levels and bus routes used by the respondents. Moreover, the offline survey data was collected at selected few bus stops and neighbourhoods (which are mentioned above) and doesn't cover every area/cluster or bus stop in Delhi.

Findings

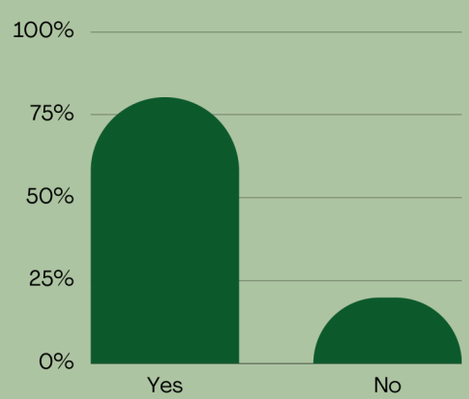
1. Frequency

52.2 percent respondents surveyed reported that they use bus transport as their daily mode of transportation. 29.2 percent respondents reported using bus transportation few days in a week, 10 percent reported using bus transport occasionally and 8.2 percent used buses once in a week. 0.4 percent of the respondents reported that they had never used the bus before.

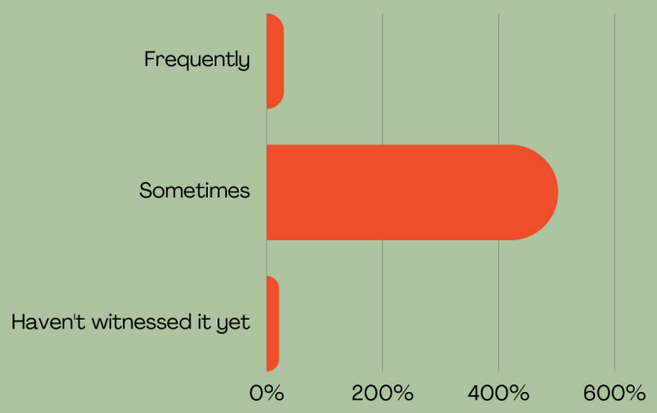


2. Buses not halting for women at bus stops

About 80.2 percent of the women respondents reported that there have been instances where buses have not halted for them while they were waiting at the bus stop.



Further, about 29 percent of surveyed women users answered that they have faced such incidents of buses not halting for them ‘frequently’, 50.2 percent reported to have faced such incidents ‘sometimes’ and 20.8 percent users surveyed argued that they haven't witnessed such episodes yet.



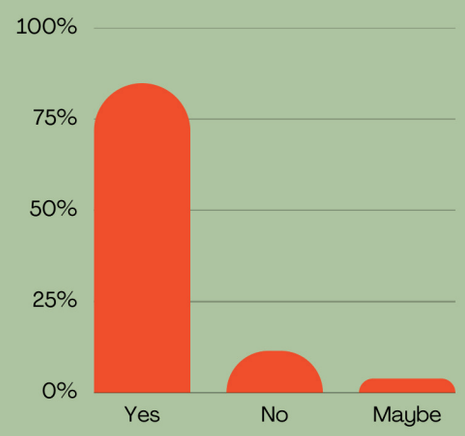
3. Discrimination

54.2 percent respondents reported that they have received comments and faced discrimination from bus drivers, conductors and male bus users regarding the free bus scheme. On the other hand, 45.6 percent of surveyed bus users mentioned that they have never faced any such discrimination or comments while using the bus. 0.2 percent of surveyed women chose not to answer this question.



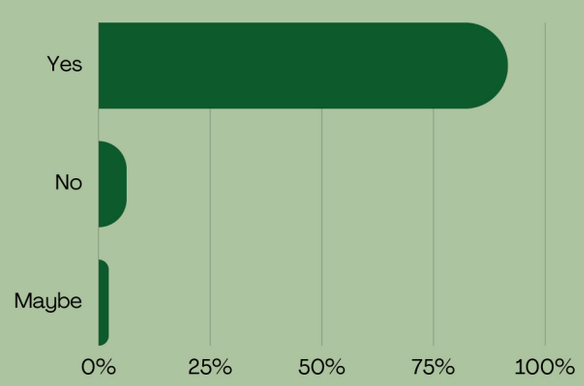
4. Women bus drivers and conductors

When asked whether employing women bus drivers and conductors would solve the issue of buses not halting for women and make buses more safer for women commuters, about 84.8 percent responded positively while 11.4 percent were of the opinion that such an intervention will not be beneficial. 3.8 percent of surveyed women were not sure whether such an intervention will have any effect.



5. 'Women-Only Buses' in Delhi

There have been discussions around the need for women-only buses for safe and efficient commute as well as fulfilling the first and last mile connectivity of women commuters. Among the women surveyed, 91.6 percent supported the proposal of women-only buses in Delhi.



Insights

The survey highlights various problems faced by women bus commuters in Delhi, even after the introduction of the free bus scheme in 2019. In fact, new forms of discrimination against women bus users in Delhi have arisen after the introduction of the scheme, including incidents of buses not halting for women at the bus stop. In fact, among the 500 women bus users surveyed, 80.2 percent reported facing incidents where buses did not halt for them while waiting at the bus stop, especially when the majority of those waiting were women. The frequency of incidents of buses not halting for women users at designated bus stops also varied according to the bus route and location of the bus stop. Moreover, during the survey, instances of buses not halting for women were reported to be more frequent on routes also populated by lower income groups like badarpur, burari, jahangirpuri etc.

While the free bus scheme has proven to be important for women in Delhi, it has also produced challenges and instances of discrimination for women bus users. In this survey, about 54.2 percent women bus users reported to have faced discrimination and comments related to the free bus scheme from bus users and workers while commuting in the bus. Such incidents of discrimination against women bus users, particularly as a response to the free bus scheme, stem from the underlying narrative around 'freebies', and as a result, women face attacks for 'burdening the state exchequer'. It is imperative for the Delhi government to initiate sensitization programmes for bus workers and the general public to counter these narratives and explain the structure, reasoning and benefits of the free bus scheme for women in Delhi.

The survey also points at the increasing demand from women bus users for inducting more women bus drivers and conductors in public buses in Delhi. About 84.8 percent women bus users were in favour of inducting women bus drivers and conductors to improve safety and minimise various problems women bus commuters face in public buses. Furthermore, all women mini-buses can be critical for fulfilling the safety and commuting needs of women, especially for first and last mile connectivity. Women-only buses can also help women commuters in making late night bus journeys without any safety issues. There is a large-scale support for women-only buses in Delhi with about 91.6 percent of surveyed respondents supporting the idea of all women buses, especially working women who are dependent on public buses in Delhi for their daily commute.

The survey findings are alarming as they point towards gender based discrimination in accessing bus transport even after the introduction of the free bus scheme for women. The findings also point towards the lack of intervention from the Delhi government in ensuring comfortable and efficient public bus service for women. There is a need to intervene and introduce measures that will help in making bus transport safe, efficient and comfortable for women in Delhi.

Recommendations

1. ENSURE BUSES HALT AT DESIGNATED BUS STOPS FOR WOMEN

The Delhi government should introduce measures to ensure that buses halt for women users at the designated bus stops. Buses should halt at every bus stop for a specific period of time and there should be a monitoring system in place to avoid any violation by bus drivers. Crucially, bus drivers and conductors need to be sensitised about the issue. Further, a complaint redressal system should be set up for women bus users in Delhi to report such issues. A helpline number meant for such complaints should also be made available at every bus stop.

2. SAFE BUS STOPS AND BETTER BUS QUEUE SHELTERS

Bus stops in Delhi need to have safety measures for women bus users as well as for other gender and sexual minorities. Bus stations should be conveniently situated within a short walking distance from key destinations and residential areas. Further, bus stop locations should be in well exposed areas with high visibility.

There are various bus stops in Delhi where bus queue shelters are either in a depleted condition with little to no facilities or not available at all. There is a need to build more bus queue shelters based on the needs of the citizens and make key facilities available at these bus shelters. The Delhi government should ensure that bus queue shelters and buses must have proper caregiving facilities to accommodate women passengers with children. Pedestrian pathways surrounding bus stops must have better street lighting facilities to make it safer for women bus users at night. To make buses safer, it is essential to make bus stops safer.

3. INDUCT MORE WOMEN BUS CONDUCTORS AND DRIVERS

There is a need to induct more women bus drivers and conductors in public buses in Delhi to ensure equal employment opportunities to women and to make bus journeys more comfortable and safer for women. The Delhi government should make provisions to employ members of the trans community in Delhi as bus drivers and conductors. Moreover, services and facilities such as resting rooms for women bus workers inside bus depots, public toilets and drinking water facilities at designated bus stops should be provided to women bus conductors and drivers.

SENSITISATION PROGRAMME FOR BUS CONDUCTORS AND DRIVERS 4.

There should be frequent gender sensitisation workshops and training for bus drivers and conductors of Delhi's public buses. Such training will ensure smooth and comfortable journeys for women and trans community bus commuters and also minimise incidents of discrimination. The Delhi government should also sensitise bus drivers and conductors about the significance, rationale and structure of the free bus for women scheme.

5. ENSURE WOMEN BUS USERS ARE NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

The Delhi Transport Department should introduce a simple and quick complaint redressal system for women bus users in Delhi. A designated person in the transport department should be assigned to address such complaints and ensure quick and adequate responses. A responsive helpline number and Whatsapp complaint system should also be introduced by the transport department for women bus users.

ENSURE WOMEN'S SAFETY IN DELHI BUSES 6.

The safety of women bus users should be the top-most priority of the Delhi government. A safe bus journey is critical for women as it not only encourages them to use public transport but also helps them to reclaim public spaces. The Delhi government should ensure that safety measures such as 'request stop button', dedicated women helpline, complaint system etc. should be set up immediately.

7. INTRODUCE WOMEN-ONLY MINI-BUSES

Women-only mini-buses should be launched to connect women users to the nearest major bus stops, metro stations, markets, factories etc. This can be critical for informal women workers who live in neighbourhoods at, and around, the periphery of Delhi. A night bus service should be provided on all routes for women bus users as such an initiative can provide safe and comfortable connectivity to women working night shifts. Women-only mini buses and night service buses will encourage more women to shift to public buses for their daily commute.

8. BUDGET ALLOCATION

In the upcoming state budget for 2024-2025, a dedicated budget should be allocated for making Delhi's bus transportation system safe for women. A significant portion of the upcoming state budget should be allocated to provide facilities for women bus users in Delhi.

9. ENSURE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS

It is imperative to encourage the active participation of women in the transportation sector's workforce and decision-making processes. This can be achieved by creating opportunities for women to contribute their expertise and perspectives in the designing and planning of transportation systems. Empowering women in the decision-making process will lead to more effective solutions that cater to the needs of all individuals and make public spaces more inclusive. For this, there should be dedicated departments for gender-targeted initiatives focused on making public transport safer, more accessible, and convenient for women.

10. DIGITAL INTERVENTION IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Digital technologies present numerous opportunities for both transport operators and users. The availability of multimodal route planning tools and real-time travel information along with integrated payment systems across zones and public transport modes can enhance the efficiency and user experience of public transport systems. Innovative digital intervention such as panic buttons and real-time tracking systems can play a crucial role to ensure the safety of women in public transport. Mobile applications and online platforms provide women with the means to report incidents, seek assistance and access relevant information. These interventions create a sense of security and act as a deterrent against harassment.

References

Aishwarya Raj. (2023). Delhi's 100 crore question: What does a free bus ride mean for a woman?
https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhis-100-crore-question-what-does-a-free-bus-ride-mean-woman-8519082/#

Arora, Anvita & Tiwari, Geetam. (2006). A Gendered Perspective of the Shelter–Transport–Livelihood Link: The Case of Poor Women in Delhi. Transport Reviews - TRANSP REV. 26. 63-80. 10.1080/01441640500175615.

HEMANI BHANDARI, SHINJINI GHOSH (2019). Most welcome free bus rides, but some men are critical
https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/most-welcome-free-bus-rides-but-some-men-are-critical/article29827324.ece

India - Toolkit for Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/128bcb06-0fc4-5c1d-9a2b-fc6e9ce47b03

Remya Muralidharan (2020). Delhi: Not For A Free Bus Ride, But For The Freedom To Travel Safely
https://feminisminindia.com/2020/01/08/delhifree-bus-ride-freedom-travel-safely/

Sanskriti Falor (2023). Bus drivers do not stop for women passengers': Delhi CM Kejriwal lists free bus ride as reason
https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/bus-drivers-do-not-stop-for-women-passengers-delhi-cm-kejriwal-lists-free-bus-ride-as-reason-101684392131668.html

Tasneem Zahra (2020). 'A Lot of Times, They Close the Doors while People are Getting on' https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/7/21464/A-Lot-of-Times-They-Close-the-Doors-while-People-are-Getting-on

ANNEXURE: SURVEY FORM

1.	Name	
2.	Email	
3.	Contact No.	
4.	Age	
5.	Source of Data collection	
6.	**Location** (for offline data collection)	

7. Do you use public buses in Delhi?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO

8. How frequently do you use public bus transport in Delhi?

- ○ DAILY
- ○ FEW DAYS IN A WEEK
- ○ ONCE A WEEK
- ○ OCCASIONALLY
- ○ NEVER

9. As a woman, has it ever happened with you that while waiting at the bus stop, the bus didn't halt for you or for the group of women standing there?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO

10. **As a bus user how often have you witnessed the phenomenon of buses not halting for women users at bus stops?**

- ○ **FREQUENTLY**
- ○ **SOMETIMES**
- ○ **HAVEN'T WITNESSED YET**

11. **After the inception of the free bus scheme for women in Delhi in 2019, have you ever received any comments from bus users or workers while commuting in the bus?**

- ○ **YES**
- ○ **NO**

12. **Do you think having women bus drivers and conductors would solve the issue of buses not halting for women or make buses more safer?**

- ○ **YES**
- ○ **NO**

13. **Do you think women-only buses would solve the problem of buses not halting for women or make buses safer for women?**

- ○ **YES**
- ○ **NO**

14. **Would you support a women-only bus service in Delhi?**
(This will be also treated as a public petition)

- ○ **YES**
- ○ **NO**

GREENPEACE
ग्रीनपीस

Greenpeace India is an independent campaigning organization that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace.

Greenpeace India society
#1327, Ground Floor, 13" Cross,
2nd Stage Indiranagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-580038

Supporter Services:
supporter services.ln@greenpeace.org

www.greenpeace.org/india