Gender Budget Watchdog Network

for a gender equal region

Towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions in Transportation Sector in Western Balkans and Moldova

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REGIONAL SYNTHESIS ANALYSIS OF GBWN RESEARCH STUDY
ON TRANSPORT, CLIMATE AND GENDER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Regional Report synthesizes findings from national gender and climate analyses of the transport sectors in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Moldova conducted by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network. It explores how transport systems across these countries shape—and are shaped by—gender inequality and climate vulnerability. Using mixed methods—quantitative surveys (with 1,000–1,100 respondents per country), focus group discussions, policy reviews, and expert interviews—the study identifies how mobility patterns, infrastructure gaps, governance practices, and budget frameworks influence both gender equity and environmental sustainability.

Across the region, transport systems remain heavily car-dependent, underfunded, and largely gender-blind. Women have significantly lower access to private vehicles, driving licenses, and bicycles, while being more reliant on public transport and walking. Over 70% of those without any transport means are women. In rural areas, inadequate service coverage, high costs, and safety concerns severely constrain women's access to jobs, education, and healthcare. These patterns reinforce "transport poverty"—a gendered condition where limited, unsafe, or unaffordable mobility excludes women and vulnerable groups from social and economic participation.

Climate and environmental impacts compound these inequities. The transport sector is among the fastest-growing contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Western Balkans and Moldova, with road transport accounting for up to 30% of national GHG emissions in some countries. Air pollution from aging fleets and unregulated urban traffic leads to thousands of premature deaths annually. Yet, most national and local transport policies still lack gender and climate indicators, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), or emission targets. Only Serbia (via the GETS Study) and Moldova have partially integrated gender objectives in transport strategies. Most countries lack sex-disaggregated data and GRB in transport budgets. Women, meanwhile, demonstrate stronger climate awareness and openness to sustainable modes—walking, public transport, and electric vehicles—but remain constrained by infrastructure and safety deficits.

Focus group discussions across all seven countries revealed common themes:

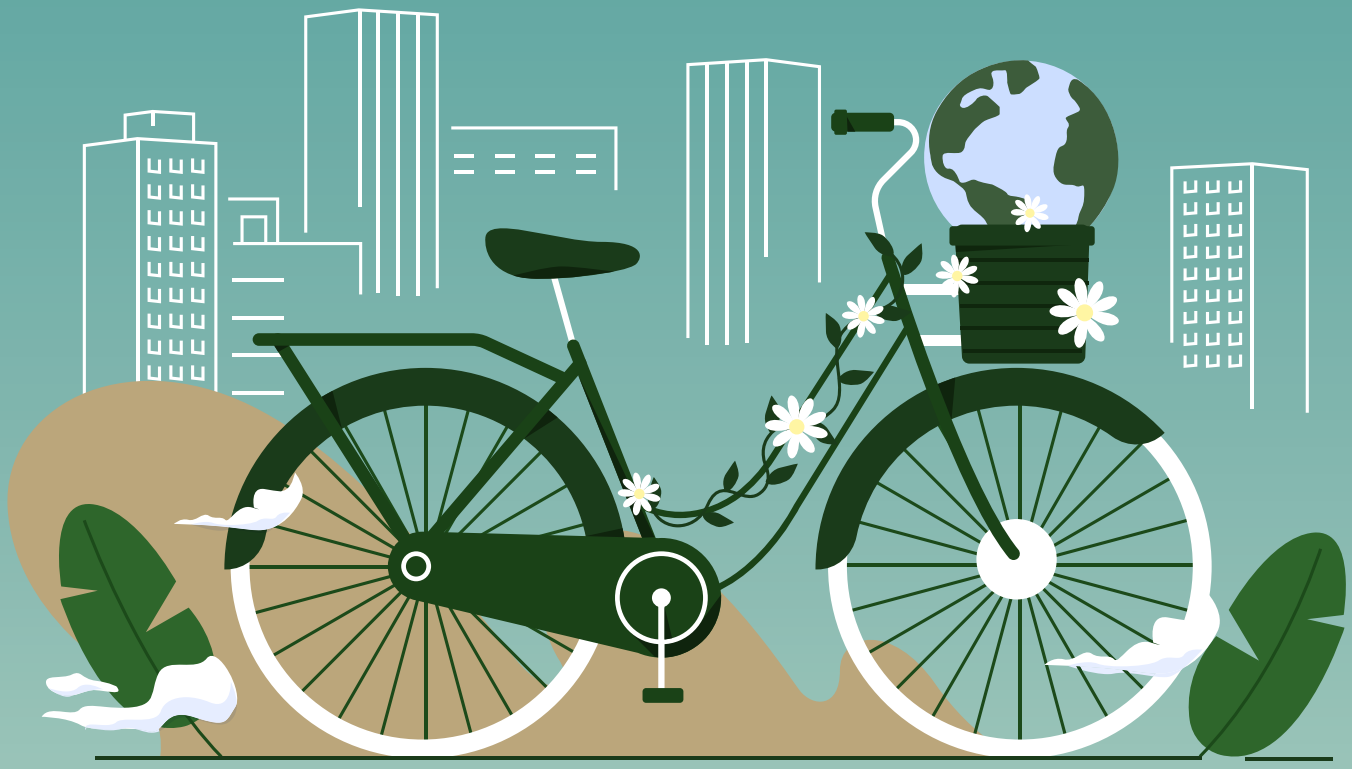
- Affordability and Access: Public transport is often the only affordable option, yet routes are limited and unreliable, especially in rural areas.
- Responsiveness to Care Responsibilities: Women's unpaid care work necessitates complex, multi-stop journeys poorly served by current transport systems.
- Safety and Security: Women consistently report feeling unsafe walking or using public transport at night due to harassment, poor lighting, and unstaffed stations.

Despite these challenges, local innovations demonstrate that inclusive and green mobility is achievable. Examples include low-emission bus fleets in Sarajevo, cycling subsidies in Podgorica, and community proposals such as subsidized electric tricycles for elderly inclusion in Ohrid. These bottom-up initiatives highlight that gender equality and environmental sustainability are mutually reinforcing goals.

The study underscores that aligning national transport reforms with the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and SDG targets—especially SDGs 5, 9, 10, 11, and 13—can yield transformative benefits. Gender-responsive transport planning reduces emissions, strengthens social inclusion, and enhances resilience to climate shocks. To this end, the report recommends:

1. Mainstream gender and climate indicators into all transport and climate strategies.
2. Adopt gender-responsive budgeting and track expenditures addressing both gender and environmental outcomes.
3. Invest in rural connectivity through subsidized public transport and inclusive infrastructure.
4. Prioritize safety and accessibility—lighting, CCTV, and accessible sidewalks—especially for women, elderly, and persons with disabilities.
5. Promote sustainable mobility through e-bikes, shared mobility, and low-emission vehicles.
6. Enhance data systems with sex-disaggregated and climate-relevant transport statistics.

By advancing these measures, governments can simultaneously address gender inequality, transport poverty, and climate imperatives—laying the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable transport future in the Western Balkans and Moldova



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND REGIONAL OVERVIEW

1.1. Background, Purpose, Methodology and Regional Trends

Sustainable and inclusive transportation systems are critical to addressing both climate change and gender inequality. Transportation contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollution, but it also shapes everyday access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other essential services. The way transport is planned, financed, and delivered has profound implications for environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development.

Transport is simultaneously an enabler of opportunity and a major driver of environmental and public-health harm across the Western Balkans and Moldova. The region's rapid motorisation, ageing vehicle fleets, and under-invested public and active mobility infrastructure have increased greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, worsened urban air quality and amplified transport poverty for women, rural residents, older adults and persons with disabilities. At the same time, women's mobility needs, patterns and constraints differ from men's in consistent ways: women are less likely to own and drive private vehicles, more likely to rely on public transport and walking, and more likely to report safety concerns — especially at night. These gendered differences interact with climate vulnerability and with gaps in services to produce distinct and often compounding disadvantages.

This regional report synthesizes key findings from national-level gender and climate analyses of the transport sectors in Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Moldova. Each national study applied a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, focus group discussions, legal and policy reviews, and expert interviews to assess how gender dynamics and climate concerns intersect with mobility patterns, infrastructure, governance, and policy frameworks. The aim of this research is to identify climate- and gender-responsive policy options for improving diverse women and men's access to public transport. The research seeks to propose gender-responsive and sustainable solutions for improving state financing of an inclusive, safe and environmentally responsible transportation sector based on identification of current needs, interests and commuting practices of women and men. The aim of this regional synthesis is to identify common trends, challenges, and opportunities that can inform gender- and climate-responsive transport reforms at regional level.

The report synthesizes common patterns and cross-cutting issues, and provides comparable statistics to support regional analysis and policy design. Across the region the same structural pattern repeats: lower female private-vehicle access, greater female reliance on public transport and walking, stronger female concern about air pollution and climate change, and higher female vulnerability to unsafe or inaccessible infrastructure. These gendered mobility patterns interact with geography (rural vs urban), income, caregiving responsibilities and disability to create layered transport poverty. Insufficient sex-disaggregated administrative data and lack of gender-respon-

sive budgeting undermine the ability to design targeted solutions. Conversely, local best practices (e.g., tram modernization, low-emission bus procurement, cycling subsidies) show that technical and policy interventions can be both climate- and gender-beneficial, if designed with explicit gender analysis.

1.2. Methodological Approach

The regional synthesis draws from seven country reports that analyzed gender-specific mobility patterns, transport accessibility, affordability, safety, climate awareness, and governance frameworks. For the purpose of producing the country reports the Gender Budget Watchdog Network conducted national-level qualitative and quantitative research, including online surveys (ranging from 1,000 to 1,100 respondents per country), desk research, focus groups, interviews, and policy reviews. The research methodology used was CAWI online survey managed by local PANEL data. The questionnaire had a duration of 30 minutes, with data collection taking place in June- September 2024. Quantitative survey data, disaggregated by gender, location, and in some cases age or ethnicity was analyzed. To ensure the accuracy and comparability of responses, the surveys were programmed in all the local languages. In order to ensure the highest quality of the data, we also collected qualitative data, which included focus groups discussions, interviews with the public transport users, stakeholders, institutions and CSOs working with people with disabilities, urban mobility groups etc.

While methodologies differed slightly across countries, all country reports focused on assessing gender patterns in transport behavior, access to infrastructure, affordability, perceptions of safety, and awareness of climate impacts. This report organizes the regional findings thematically rather than country-by-country, enabling a cross-cutting comparison of key issues and a deeper understanding of structural patterns. The report looks at transport from gender and intersectional lens, focusing on disparities between men and women and the unique challenges faced by rural populations, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

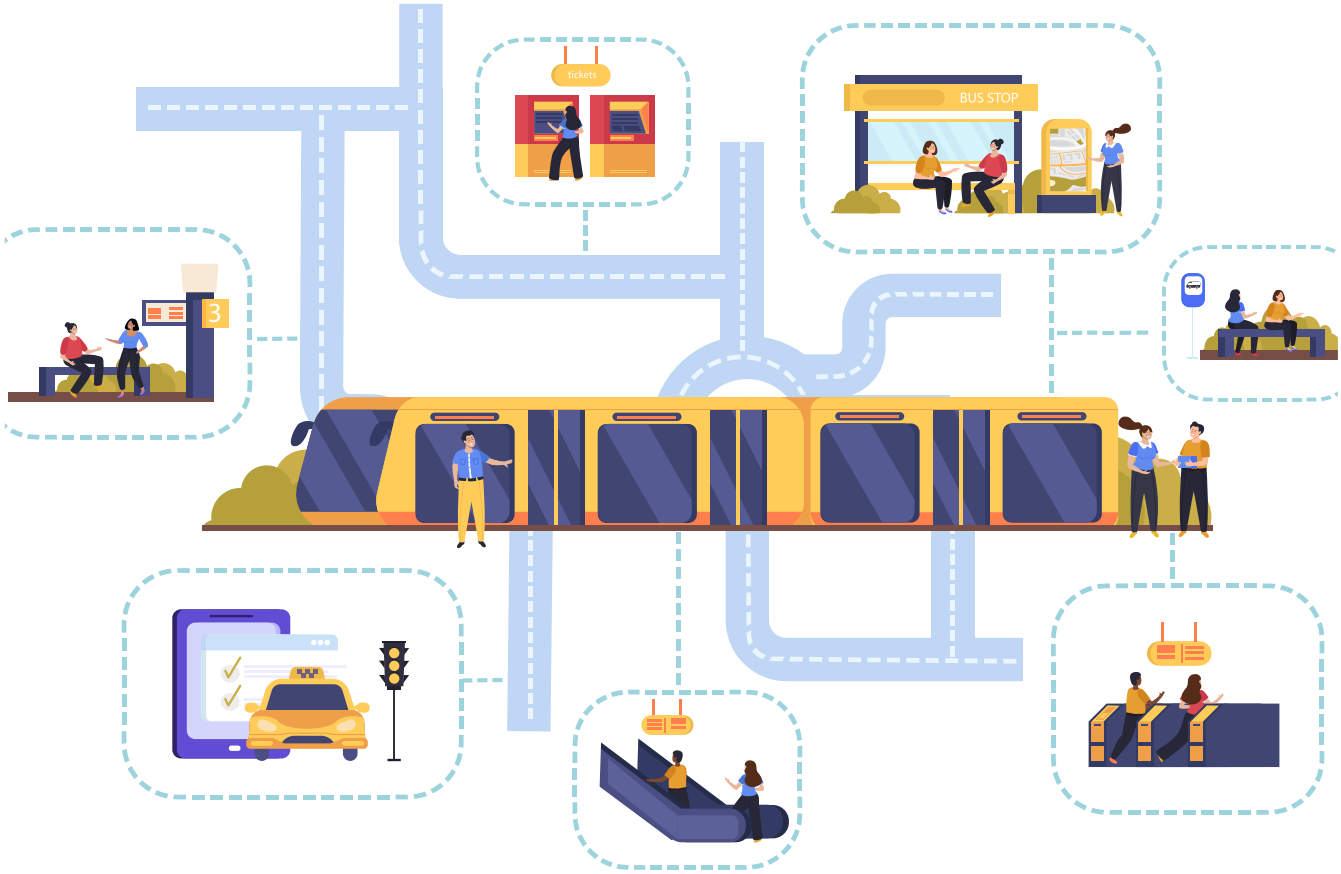
To complement quantitative survey data and capture the lived realities behind mobility statistics, the study employed focus group discussions (FGDs) as a qualitative research tool across the Western Balkans and Moldova. FGDs were conducted in Albania (Tirana and Elbasan), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (Pristina and North Mitrovica), Montenegro (Berane and Podgorica), North Macedonia (Skopje and Ohrid), and Moldova (Corlăteni, Pelivan, and Cișmea). These discussions brought together diverse groups of women—urban and rural residents, employed and unemployed, caregivers, persons with disabilities, and representatives of civil society—to explore how transport accessibility, affordability, and safety shape women's mobility, access to employment,

and care responsibilities. As a qualitative method, FGDs enabled in-depth understanding of how gender roles, household responsibilities, and infrastructural constraints intersect to influence everyday travel choices. They also provided space for women to articulate practical solutions—from subsidized bus services to e-bicycles for elderly inclusion—revealing not only barriers but also locally grounded innovations. Thematic analysis of the transcripts allowed identification of shared patterns across countries and contextual nuances, positioning the FGDs as a crucial instrument for linking transport policy to gender equality and social inclusion objectives in the region.

1.3. Key Regional Trends

- Transport access and infrastructure across the region shows a gender gap, as women have consistently lower access to private transport modes such as cars and bicycles. In many countries, over 70% of those without any transport means are women. Women rely more heavily on public transport, walking, and occasionally taxis. Rural women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities face the most significant accessibility barriers due to inadequate infrastructure, infrequent service, and unsafe or physically inaccessible transport facilities.
- Affordability and usage patterns show that women are more dependent on affordable transport options like buses and walking. Men, on the other hand, more frequently use cars and consider more expensive modes (cars, taxis) affordable. Transport affordability limits women's access to employment, education, and healthcare, especially in rural areas. Complex trip chains associated with caregiving responsibilities make multi-modal and reliable transport particularly essential for women.
- **Safety concerns** disproportionately affect women's mobility choices. Walking, biking, and public transport, especially at night. are often perceived as unsafe by women. Cars are perceived as the safest form of transport by women in all countries. Lack of lighting, poor infrastructure, and experiences or fears of harassment deter women from using sustainable transport modes.
- Legal and policy transport frameworks **lack comprehensive gender - and climate-responsive lenses.** Gender impact assessments are rare, and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is absent, climate tagging of budget is also present but the gender-climate nexus is not applied. Public finance systems and policies continue working in silos instead of providing comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable development goals. Local mobility planning often fails to consider the needs of women, persons with disabilities, or climate priorities. There is minimal participation of women in decision-making processes related to transport planning.

- **Women show greater concern for climate change and are more open to using low-emission modes such as walking, buses, or electric cars,** although climate change awareness and behaviors vary. However, widespread adoption of sustainable transport modes is hindered by safety concerns, poor infrastructure, affordability, and cultural norms. Bicycles and e-scooters remain underused due to high perceived risk and insufficient infrastructure.
- **Transport inequalities contribute to broader gender gaps in employment, education, and health**. Limited mobility options reduce women's ability to work full-time, attend school, access healthcare, or participate in political life. Disabled individuals and older adults particularly in Moldova and rural areas of the Western Balkans face systemic exclusion from public life due to inaccessible transport.

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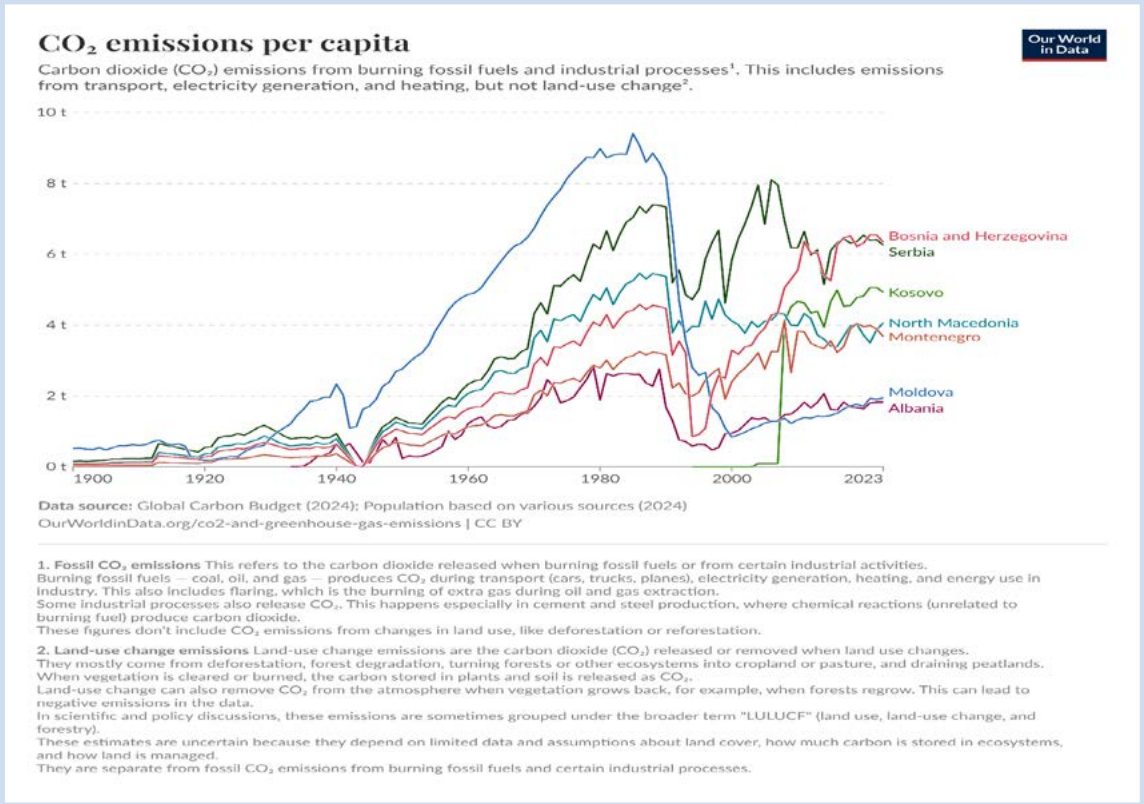
CHAPTER II

GENDER, CLIMATE CHANGE AND TRANSPORT POVERTY – A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

The global climate is undergoing rapid and profound change, driven by rising atmospheric temperatures and environmental degradation. To date, international policy has largely concentrated on mitigation, aiming to curb human-generated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Within Europe, the European Commission (EC) has taken decisive steps, adopting in 2021 the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change. This strategy outlines how the EU can respond to unavoidable climate impacts while progressing toward climate neutrality by 2050. Complementing it, the European Green Deal (2019) serves as a central pillar for implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its vision is to create a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy that achieves net-zero GHG emissions by mid-century, decoupling growth from resource consumption, safeguarding natural capital, and protecting public health from environmental risks. These ambitions are supported by the 8th Environmental Action Programme, which strengthens monitoring and ensures Europe stays on course to meet its environmental targets. The EU has also encouraged member states to develop national adaptation strategies, integrate climate considerations into sectoral policies, and improve infrastructure resilience in energy, transport, and construction. Recognizing that climate change transcends national borders, the EC promotes cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange, and engagement with neighboring countries to halt ecosystem degradation and foster sustainable development.

For the Western Balkans and Moldova the climate change presents a significant challenge. These countries are navigating the dual pressures of environmental threats and limited resources, compounded by insufficient regulatory enforcement, low public participation, and political tensions. As EU candidates or potential candidates, the Western Balkans and Moldova are motivated to align with the Paris Agreement and meet EU2020 and EU2030 targets on energy efficiency, GHG reduction, and renewable energy generation. The accession process is expected to drive substantial reforms in climate and environmental policy over the coming decades. This process is navigated through the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (2020), endorsed by the European Commission and all six Western Balkan partners, yet implementation lags. Nevertheless, opportunities are emerging through IPA III, Green Agenda investment platforms, and national recovery programs. Projects that combine low-carbon transitions with accessibility improvements—such as dedicated bus corridors, subsidised e-bike programs, or smart fare systems—have high potential to address transport poverty while contributing to climate mitigation. This is expected to improve social equity goals of the commitments that already exist to increase the share of clean and active transport, improve urban planning, and expand electric vehicle infrastructure. Eventually this will have an impact on climate change and environment protection as Co2 emissions are tightly linked with transport. Road transport is the dominant mode of mobility in these regions, with a growing number of private vehicles and aging fleets that often lack modern emission control technologies. This results in elevated emissions of harmful pollutants. Urban centers like Belgrade, Skopje, Sarajevo, and Chisinau regularly experience air pollution levels that exceed World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. The graph bellow shows the region's contribution to CO2 emissions.



Graph 1: CO2 emissions per capita

Source: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita?time=1900..latest&country=MKD~ALB~OWID_KOS~MNE~MDA~SRB~BIH

Exposure to transport-related air pollution is linked to a range of adverse health effects. Short-term exposure can cause respiratory irritation, asthma exacerbations, and cardiovascular strain. Long-term exposure increases the risk of chronic respiratory diseases, heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and can negatively affect fetal development. Vulnerable groups—children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing health conditions—are particularly at risk.

Table 1: Transport & Air-pollution health impacts

Country	Transport share of emissions	Air-pollution health impacts
Albania	Transport ≈ **26%** of total GHG (2019, World Resources Institute)	Air pollution causes thousands of premature deaths; Tirana air quality frequently exceeds limits.
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Transport contributes ≈ **20%** of cumulative air pollution	High PM2.5; ~3,300 premature deaths (2016 estimate) attributed to PM2.5 exposure.
Kosovo	Transport a growing contributor; negative urban air quality (Pristina highly polluted)	2016 ambient air pollution caused 760 deaths (countrywide report).
Moldova	Transport is the country's biggest polluter in urban areas	>3,000 deaths annually from polluted air; lung cancer a leading cause.
Montenegro	Transport ≈ 20% of GHG; predicted to reach 30% by 2030	680 premature deaths attributable to PM2.5/ NO_2/O_3 (EEA / national reporting).
North Macedonia	Transportation participates in pollution in the city with 19 % of the total % of PM particles	Cities often exceed PM thresholds; transport ~19% of sources in Skopje.
Serbia	14% of national GHG emissions, rising from about 4.5 MtCO2e in 1990 to 6.9 MtCO2e in 2019	Road transport produces roughly a quarter of national NOx emissions, contributing to smog and health risks in cities

Hence, national transport strategies rarely embed climate resilience or emissions targets in a meaningful way. The lack of disaggregated data on transport use, emissions, or investment outcomes further hampers accountability and limits possibilities to making transport gender responsive. Transport intersects with numerous Sustainable Development Goals, particularly: SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Failure to provide inclusive and sustainable transport systems undermines access to education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8), and healthcare (SDG 3), disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. By contrast, targeted investments in affordable and resilient mobility can catalyze progress across the Agenda 2030 framework. The Green Agenda will contribute to reaching the SDG indicators. The following table shows the directly and indirectly linked transport targets indicators of SDGs.

Table 2: SDGs vs Direct and Indirect Indicators

Sustainable Development Goal	Direct Transport Targets Indicator	Indirect Transport Targets Indicator
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture		2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment Goal 2
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all		6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency	
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all	
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons	11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	12.c Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities	12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts		13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

In the Western Balkans, however, transport access remains highly unequal, with women, rural populations, persons with disabilities, and low-income households facing layered disadvantages. These intersecting barriers have profound implications for climate action, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Our research and analyses through a gendered and climate-aware lens shows that there is transport poverty in the region. Transport poverty is broadly defined as the inability to access essential services and opportunities due to lack of affordable, available, or safe transportation. Across the Western Balkans, this condition is strongly gendered. Women are less likely to own or operate vehicles, more dependent on public transport, and disproportionately responsible for unpaid care tasks that demand complex, multi-stop trips. Rural women face further marginalisation due to the absence of reliable services and poor infrastructure. Climate change compounds these inequities. Disruptions caused by extreme weather events, flooding, and heatwaves often render poorly maintained roads impassable—especially for pedestrians and public transport users. At the same time, the transport sector is one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the region. Male-dominated patterns of private car use and urban sprawl intensify emissions and pollution, while women, children, and low-income communities suffer the most from deteriorating air quality and unsafe walking environments. The European Commission's Recommendation on Transport Poverty (COM(2025)245) urges Member States and candidate countries to integrate transport justice into all mobility frameworks and sets out key actions including:

- Developing transport poverty indicators disaggregated by gender, income, and geography;
- Prioritizing investments in underserved areas, including public transport corridors and first-/last-mile infrastructure;
- Subsidizing public transport for vulnerable groups through targeted fare reductions or free access schemes;
- Ensuring gender-sensitive design of transport services and facilities, including improved lighting, surveillance, and seating at stops;
- Mainstreaming accessibility for persons with disabilities across all modes;
- Integrating just transition principles to ensure that the shift to green transport systems does not exclude vulnerable populations.

As part of the EU accession process, Western Balkans and Moldova are expected to reflect these priorities in national transport strategies and in the design of EU-funded infrastructure investments.

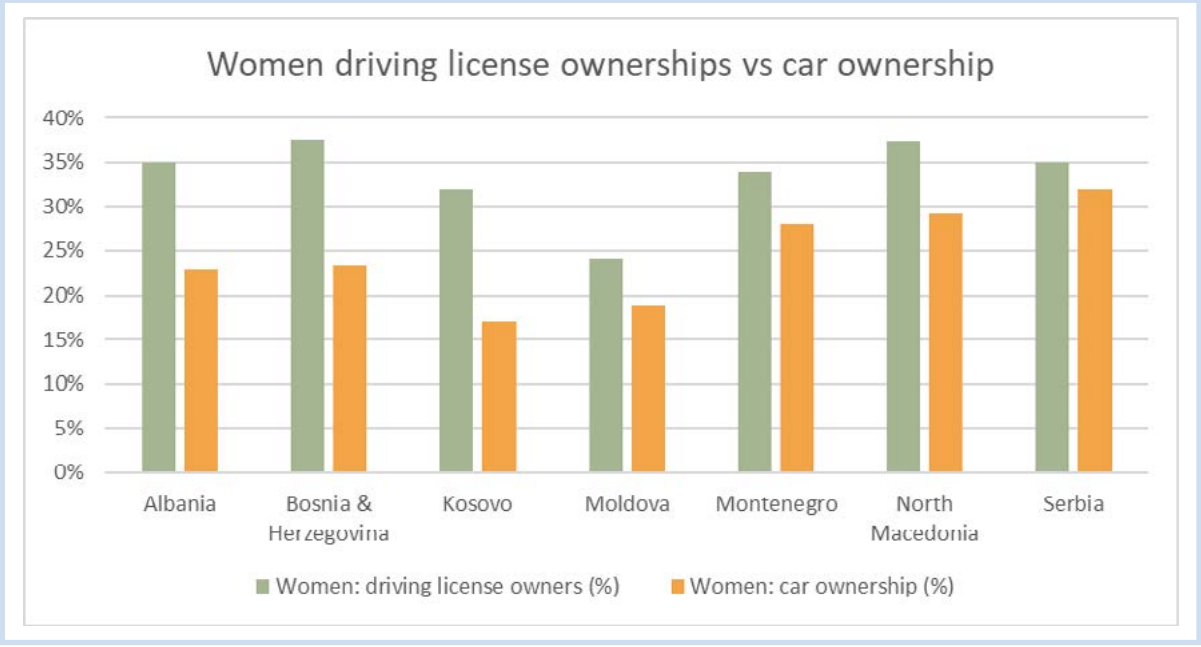
CHAPTER III

GENDER DISPARITIES IN TRANSPORT ACROSS WESTERN BALKANS AND MOLDOVA

Gender-disaggregated transport data from the Western Balkans and Moldova reveal persistent inequalities in mobility access, safety, and environmental impact. Across the region, women are less likely to hold driving licenses or own vehicles, resulting in greater reliance on public and informal transport. These disparities shape daily travel patterns, limit access to education and employment, and influence the uptake of green mobility options. While interest in sustainable modes such as cycling, e-mobility, and low-emission public transport is high, barriers such as affordability, infrastructure gaps, and safety concerns remain. The following country snapshots highlight the specific gender patterns, challenges, and opportunities for integrating gender-responsive approaches into transport and climate action. The findings mirror earlier evidence from the World Bank (2021), which highlights structural gender gaps in economic opportunities linked to transport availability in the region.

Overall, the data reveal that women in the region face gender asymmetry in vehicle ownership and limited driving opportunities, making them more dependent on public transport, particularly in rural areas where service coverage is often inadequate. Vehicle ownership remains strongly gendered. In Albania, only 23% of women own vehicles compared to more than 60% of men, while in North Macedonia just 29% of registered vehicles are in women's names. Similarly, in Moldova, only 24.1% of licensed drivers are women, with just 18.7% of cars registered to them. These figures align with EBRD's Transition Report (2022), which found that women across South-East Europe consistently report reduced access to productive assets, including vehicles. The pattern diverges markedly from EU averages where nearly half of women of working age hold licenses (Eurostat, 2022).

Across all seven countries, women's access to driving licences ownership is consistently lower than men's: Albania (35% women licensed), Moldova (24% licensed), Serbia (35% licensed), Montenegro (34% licensed). This trend aligns with wider South-East Europe patterns where women remain underrepresented in private vehicle use due to structural inequalities in income, property ownership, and access to finance (World Bank, 2021; UNECE, 2019). However, when we intersect age and sex, the GBWN research reveals that younger women in Kosovo increasingly acquiring licences suggests a generational shift, which may gradually narrow the gap if accompanied by supportive infrastructure and affordability measures.



Graph 2: Car and driving license ownership

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

Across the region, women report greater reliance on public transport, particularly in urban areas such as Tirana, Sarajevo and Belgrade, where they make up the majority of bus and tram passengers. This is consistent with RCC's *Balkan Barometer* (2023), which shows women prioritizing affordability and accessibility in their mobility decisions. However, qualitative research (Stojanovski & Stamenkovska, 2020) has shown that limited and unreliable rural services disproportionately exclude women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, from full participation in the labour market.

Transport and women's employment – evidence from focus group discussions

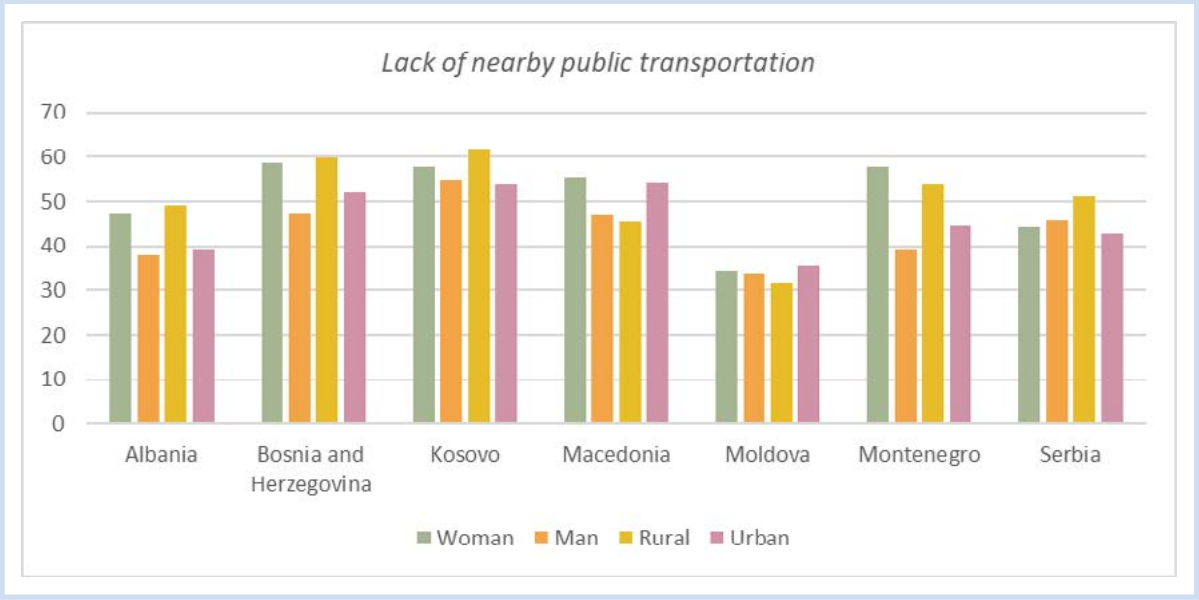
The poor transport accessibility consistently emerges as a determinant of women's limited labour-market participation. In Elbasan, Bratunac, and Râșcani, infrequent or nonexistent bus lines mean women cannot commute to work or training opportunities. In Moldova almost all participants in focus group discussions reported that once they had to refuse jobs or training because they couldn't rely on transport to get there or back home in time to care for children. Dependence on husbands' or neighbors' cars reduces their autonomy and flexibility

Voices from Western Balkans and Moldova

"Bus lines are rare — sometimes only once per day — and lack flexibility. These limitations hinder women's participation in the labor market, education, and community life, contributing to isolation." – Elbasan focus group discussion participant

"The absence of early morning routes (5–6 a.m.) limits access to jobs with early start times." - Pelivan & Cișmea Focus Group (Orhei district, Moldova) Discussion participant

Further the data shows notable differences in the reported general lack of nearby public transport between men and women, as well as between rural and urban areas across the seven countries. In most cases, women are more likely than men to experience a lack of nearby public transport. The gender gap is especially pronounced in Montenegro (57.7% women vs. 39% men), Kosovo (57.7% vs. 54.8%), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (58.7% vs. 47.5%).



Graph 3: Lack of nearby public transport

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

The rural–urban divide is also evident, with rural residents consistently reporting higher rates of lacking nearby public transport compared to urban dwellers. The largest rural–urban gap is observed in Kosovo (61.7% rural vs. 53.7% urban) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (59.7% vs. 52%). Even in countries with relatively smaller differences, such as Moldova (31.4% rural vs. 35.5% urban), rural residents still face limited accessibility, indicating persistent infrastructure gaps.

In the region, Podgorica is an urban centre that depends heavily on cars —~70% of trips are by car — while suburban and rural connectivity is weak. Furthermore, Dimitrov and Petreski (2019), link transport accessibility to labour-market participation gaps in the Western Balkans. In Macedonia, the survey data show women (50.7% of the sample) are less likely to own cars or bicycles, and rely more on buses and walking for multi-stop trips and caregiving needs. Women's mobility is often shaped by unpaid care work, requiring "trip chaining"—multi-stop journeys combining childcare, shopping, and health visits. This contrasts with men's more linear commuting patterns and is echoed in UNDP (2020) findings on gender and climate resilience in the Balkans. However, the transport services in the region are rarely designed for complex multi-purpose trips. The unreliable, unsafe, and inaccessible transport systems and the lack of childcare and eldercare in rural areas result with care work being feminized and undervalued, while women's mobility autonomy restricted as they continue to depend on male relatives or taxis for unpaid care.

This gap in resources also influences on environmental outcomes, as women are more likely to rely on public transport or shared mobility solutions, while men disproportionately contribute to higher emissions from private vehicle use. Transport contributes roughly 20% to national air pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Montenegro the situation is similar, with forecasts transport to account up to 30% of national GHG by 2030. This has a high health toll with thousands of premature deaths linked to PM2.5. Local initiatives (Sarajevo Canton) demonstrate what targeted investments (trams, low-emission vehicles, cycling infrastructure) can achieve, but national policy and budgets remain largely gender-blind.

Transport and women's care responsibilities – evidence from focus group discussions

The FGDs reveal a clear causal chain between the inadequate transport that influences women to have restricted mobility and not being able to put their children and elderly in care facilities which in turn intensifies their care burden. Thus women's caregiving (childcare, eldercare, errands) forces them to live near schools, clinics, or kindergartens (Tirana, Pristina, Skopje). This is also eventually impacting on internal migrations and depopulation of municipalities that do not offer the care services or ensure appropriate transport means to access such care service.

Voices from Western Balkans and Moldova

""I stop at the kindergarten, the school, and work. For that reason the car allows me to arrive a bit faster — maybe up to half an hour for the whole process."– Prishtina, Kosovo Focus Group Discussion participant

""Driving or transportation takes up at least 1 hour and 30 minutes a day, and these are routine routes: school, kindergarten, work, shopping, visiting parents or elderly family members, children's training." – Berane, Montenegro Focus Group Discussion participant

Albania aligns transport with the EU Green Agenda and SDGs, prioritizing rail rehab, EV uptake, and smarter roads, but the national transport strategy 2021–2025 is still pending adoption and implementation capacity remains limited (GADC, 2025). Municipalities regulate and fund urban transport, yet gender-specific measures and GRB are weak or underfunded (Ibid.) In Bosnia and

Herzegovina, complex multi-level governance fragments both climate and transport; there is no state environmental framework law, with entities/cantons holding core powers (CPCD, 2025). Republika Srpska and Federation of BiH strategies reference gender equality principles, but mainstreaming into transport is partial and uneven (Ibid.) Kosovo cannot accede to UN climate treaties but has domestic climate strategies (2014–24; 2019–28) acknowledging transport as a rising emitter from an old, diesel-heavy fleet. However, the policies lack gender perspective, as does the budget; the MTEF lacks gender/climate objectives—blunting implementation (KWN, 2025). The Mobility Strategy 2030 and the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" set GHG targets (e.g., −52% vs. 1990 by 2030) and explicitly reference gender-responsive, safe, accessible public transport and participation of women in decision-making (Keystone, 2025). Hence, 2024 budgets fund roads and mobility, but lack sex-disaggregated indicators or performance metrics—hindering equity tracking (Ibid). Transport policy and institutional set up for implementation does not have gender perspective integrated. The policy and capital budgets prioritize corridors and highways, rather then public transport. Analysis of two local case studies shows piecemeal climate-linked measures (traffic light optimization; bus fleet upgrades) and small cycling subsidies with poor social targeting (CRPM, 2025). National strategies recognize transport's emission burden and offer Eco-Fund subsidies for e-/hybrid vehicles, yet charging and implementation lag, making the policies and budgets on transport and climate change completely gender blind (Women action, 2025). In Serbia the climate and transport policy has matured: a 2021 Climate Law; updated NDC (−33.3% vs. 1990 by 2030); and a new National Transport Strategy 2022–2030 were developed with a Gender in Transport Study (GKH, 2025). Regional programs (SSTP) and Transport Community processes reinforce greening with social/gender forums, but sex-disaggregated monitoring in urban fleets and equity-weighted benefits transport action plan are still lacking (Ibid).

The policy review in the region shows that most transport strategies lack gender mainstreaming, except Serbia (through the GETS study integration has been enabled) and Moldova (where we observe policy-level recognition but without tracking indicators). To this end the role of the EU through the Transport Community processes may reinforce greening of transport and making it socially responsible and gender equal if social/gender forums continue to inform policy making in Western Balkans as well. Climate strategies in turn show stronger environmental alignment than social inclusiveness. The policy analysis showed that gender is largely absent from mitigation and adaptation measures, although the renewed NDC monitoring frameworks now include gender indicators. Considering that the region largely has a good policy and legal framework for GRB and financial systems designed to track gender relevant expenditure, it is surprising to see that the GRB application remains weak. In N. Macedonia climate expenditures are also tracked so it is a missed opportunity not to be able to link the both. The *Green Agenda for the Western Balkans* also offers leverage for embedding gender-responsive, climate-smart transport reforms.

Table 3 : Countries' policy frameworks and their gender integration status

Country	Main Transport Policy Frameworks	Main Climate / Environmental Policy Frameworks	Gender Integration Status	Key Gaps
Albania	• Draft National Transport Strategy 2021–2025 (pending approval) • National Urban Transport Plan (under MoIE) • Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030	• National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP, 2021–2030) • Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, updated 2022) • National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2021–2030)	✗ Gender not mainstreamed in transport or climate frameworks ✗ No gender indicators or GRB in sectoral budgets	• Lack of sex-disaggregated data • Weak implementation capacity • No explicit safety or accessibility standards for women
Bosnia & Herzegovina	• No unified national transport strategy (entity level only: FBiH and RS) • Sarajevo Canton Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)	• Framework Energy Strategy 2035 • Entity-level climate policies • Environmental Protection Strategies (FBiH, RS)	△ Gender mentioned in entity laws but no transport mainstreaming ✗ No GRB ✗ No national gender indicators in transport or climate policies	• Fragmented institutional responsibilities • Weak coordination between ministries • Gender equality laws not operationalized in transport
Kosovo	• National Transport Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2030) • Road Safety Strategy 2020–2030	• Climate Change Strategy 2019–2028 • National Energy and Climate Plan (draft)	✗ Gender not integrated into transport strategy ✗ No GRB tagging △ Some reference to women's access to mobility in social policy documents	• No systematic gender indicators • No integration of unpaid care mobility needs • Weak municipal transport governance
Moldova	• National Transport and Mobility Strategy 2030 • Road Transport Modernisation Program • Accessibility Plan for Persons with Disabilities (under MIDR)	• National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" • Low-Emission Development Strategy 2030 • Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2022–2030	✓ Gender explicitly mentioned in strategic objectives ("safe, accessible, gender-sensitive mobility") △ Implementation not monitored	• No GRB in transport budget • Lack of gender-disaggregated transport indicators • Rural accessibility gap
Montenegro	• National Transport Strategy 2019–2035 • Road Transport Development Plan 2021–2025	• National Climate Change Strategy 2030 • Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS, 2020) • National Energy and Climate Plan (2021–2030)	✗ No gender references in transport strategy ✗ Climate strategy gender-blind △ National Gender Equality Strategy (2021–2027) not linked to transport	• Gender data missing in sector statistics • Urban–rural disparities in accessibility • Safety not mainstreamed
North Macedonia	• National Transport Strategy 2018–2030 • SUMP Skopje (2022) • Public Transport Development Plan	• National Energy and Climate Plan (2021–2030) • Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (2019–2030)	△ Mentions equality, not operationalized ✗ GRB weakly implemented in transport projects △ GRB and climate tagging of budget	• No indicators or budget tagging • Limited rural inclusion • Weak local safety frameworks
Serbia	• National Transport Strategy 2022–2030 • Gender in Transport Study (GETS, 2021) • Road Safety Strategy 2020–2030	• Law on Climate Change (2021) • Updated NDC 2023 (−33.3% GHG target) • National Energy and Climate Plan (2021–2030)	✓ Gender integrated into sectoral strategy via GETS ✓ Pilot monitoring indicators (safety, accessibility, participation)	• Limited rollout beyond pilot projects • Gender not yet mainstreamed in local transport budgets

CHAPTER IV

GENDER PATTERNS AND GENDER DIMENSION OF TRANSPORT BEHAVIOURS

Across all seven countries, women rely more on public transport and walking, while men rely more on private cars and bicycles. These findings are consistent across Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, where walking and bus use dominate women's daily mobility (GADC, 2025; CRPM,2025; GKH,2025).

Table 4: Mode of transport, gender and use purpose

Mode	Female reliance (%)	Male reliance (%)	Regional Patterns
Public transport	High – 60–80% of daily female users	45–60%	Central for women's mobility; critical for access to jobs and care trips
Walking	Higher among women (50–55%)	40–45%	Women walk more for caregiving and errands
Cars	25–35%	60–70%	Male-dominated mode, especially for commuting
Cycling / e-scooters	<10% in most countries	20–30%	Women cite safety, cost, infrastructure as barriers

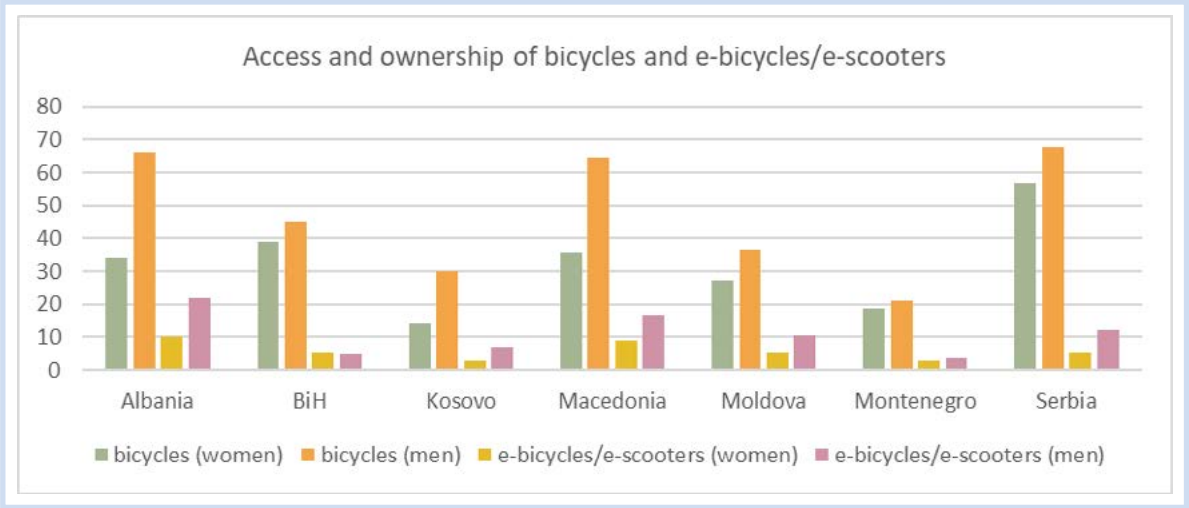
Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

The GBWN survey reveals that public transport is a primary mode for both; but women depend on it more, especially for accessing health and providing care services to family. Walking is also widespread, among women slightly higher especially when linked to unpaid care and errands. Cycling seems male dominated everywhere except limited female commuting in N. Macedonia; as well as use of cars which are used by women mainly as passengers or for health/leisure.

4.1. Ownership and Accessibility of Transport Means

The dependence on public transport is preconditioned by ownership of cars, bicycles, and e-mobility devices (e-scooters, e-bikes). In this regard gender differences are evident across all countries. Men are consistently more likely to own personal vehicles, while women are overrepresented among those with no transport means at all—up to 50% in Kosovo and 38% in Montenegro. This aligns with UNECE (2019), which highlights transport ownership gaps as a major factor in women's social exclusion in Eastern Europe. In North Macedonia, 79.5% of households without access to cars or bicycles are female-headed, illustrating structural barriers in resource allocation.

Ownership of more sustainable transport means has an gendered impact on the carbon footprint in the region as well. The GBWN study found that among all listed transport modes, electric scooters are the most male-dominated: 74.3% of male respondents use them, compared to only 25.7% of female respondents. In Bosnia and Herzegovina E-scooters and e-bicycles are the least common forms of transport, owned by 4.2% male and 1.4% female of respondents, respectively; while e-scooters are owned by 4.5% women and 3.8% men. In Kosovo as well very few men (3%) and women (1%) owned e-bicycles and e-scooters (4%, 1%). In Montenegro 1.3% of men own an e-bike compared to just 0.9% of women; and 2.2% of men have an e-scooter versus 1.7% of women. In Moldova electric and hybrid cars are growing: about 6.8% of cars in 2024 were EV/hybrid, above the global average. However, many people cannot afford to buy an EV, and Moldova's energy is still largely fossil-fueled, so the promise of "clean" driving is limited. The difference between women and men becomes more significant with modern and alternative modes of transport in Serbia, such as e-bikes and e-scooters. E-bikes are used by 7% of men and only 3.3% of women, while e-scooters are used by 5.1% of men and just 2.3% of women. These figures may indicate lower interest or fewer opportunities for women to use these means of transport, as well as potential barriers such as availability or safety concerns.



Graph 4: Access and ownership of bicycles and e-bicycles/ e-scooter

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

4.2. Affordability and Reasons of Use of Different Transport Modes

E-transport means and inclusion of elderly – evidence from focus group discussions

Women participants in Ohrid proposed electric tricycles (e-bikes) as a *community-level innovation* to overcome gaps in public transport for elderly residents and people with disabilities. They argued that small-scale, personal mobility solutions could promote *active aging, reduce social isolation,* and ease *care burdens on women* who currently accompany immobile relatives everywhere.

Voices from Ohrid, N. Macedonia

"For example, if special vehicles were introduced to increase the mobility of elderly people. Lightweight aluminum tricycles with electric motors from China are not a big investment, but they could mean active aging and inclusion of elderly and people with disabilities. This would improve their independence and reduce the care burden that women often carry."– Ohrid, Macedonia Focus Group Discussion participant

"A subsidized program could be considered — parts can be imported and assembled in factories in North Macedonia, which would also create jobs." - Ibid

Transport affordability and therefore usage of different modes of transports exhibit clear gendered patterns across the Western Balkans and Moldova, reflecting differences in economic resources, caregiving responsibilities, and mobility needs. Women generally face greater financial and structural barriers to transport, limiting access to work, education, health services, and social activities, while men tend to have broader mobility options and higher use of costlier modes like cars and e-scooters.

To this end, affordability of transport modes emerges as a key determinant of usage. Women are more reliant on buses and walking, while men more often use bicycles, cars, and taxis, as they have lower transport budgets and face higher cost sensitivity—especially in rural areas. In Montenegro, 42.9% of women said cars are "somewhat expensive"; in Bosnia & Herzegovina, 32% of women found taxis unaffordable vs. 26% of men. Public transport is generally seen as the only affordable mode, yet in rural BiH, Montenegro, and Macedonia, services are sparse. In Serbia, more than half of women find cars unaffordable, compared with a lower share of men. These patterns reflect both income disparities and differentiated mobility needs, consistent with RCC (2023) and World Bank (2021) findings on gendered affordability gaps.

Across all focus groups, in the GBWN qualitative research on transport, gender and climate change affordability emerged as a hidden determinant of gendered mobility. Even when public transport exists, unpredictable time schedules, fares that can be more affordable, infrequent routes, make the women sometimes to meet work and care responsibilities choose taxis which are expensive — especially for unemployed women, caregivers, and rural residents. To this end making the transport more affordable, by providing transport subsidies was emphasized as pertinent factor to *equal opportunities*, essential for accessing jobs, care facilities, and social participation. Unfortunately, most of the countries of the region subsidize air travel and the connection of the countries with EU, rather than subsidize rural citizens travel to services offered in urban centers making them even more isolated. "Nowadays is cheaper to go from Skopje to Rome, then to go from Skopje to Ohrid or vice versa", says one young participant from the focus group discussion in Ohrid.

Urban areas consistently provide better infrastructure and access, supporting higher usage of public transport, walking, and micro-mobility, while rural residents face affordability and accessibility challenges. The rural–urban divide compounds inequalities. Rural women, in particular, face higher costs and longer travel times due to limited services and infrastructure gaps. Evidence from Montenegro and Macedonia shows rural residents consistently rating transport less affordable and accessible than urban dwellers, echoing EBRD (2022) conclusions about rural infrastructure deficits in the Western Balkans.

It is not just availability – it is also cost – evidence from focus group discussions

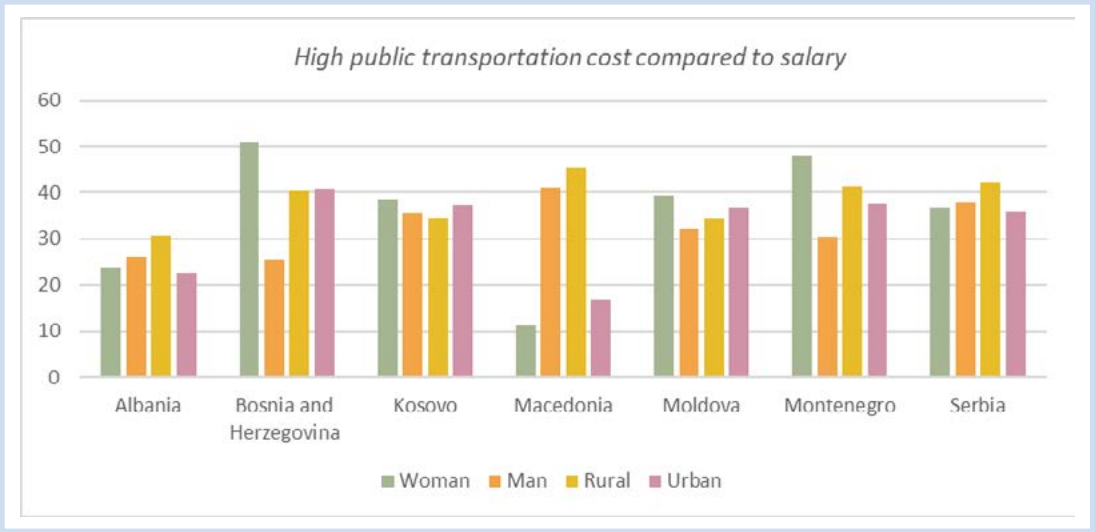
"Taxi transport prices are quite high." *(Woman, Berane, Montenegro)*

"Travel costs fluctuate unpredictably… making it harder for people to manage daily obligations." *(Participant, North Mitrovica, Kosovo)*

"Transport would be accessible if a ticket cost 20–30 MKD; if the schedule was predictable." *(Participant, Ohrid, North Macedonia)*

"Subsidize transport — introduce reduced fares or subsidies for women, youth, and vulnerable groups." *(Focus group, Tirana, Albania)*

Overall, the findings point to a dual challenge: women, particularly in certain countries, are more vulnerable to high transport costs, and rural residents face a systematically greater burden than urban dwellers. This combination suggests that affordability measures—such as targeted subsidies or reduced fares—would most benefit rural women, who are likely the most disadvantaged in terms of both cost and accessibility.

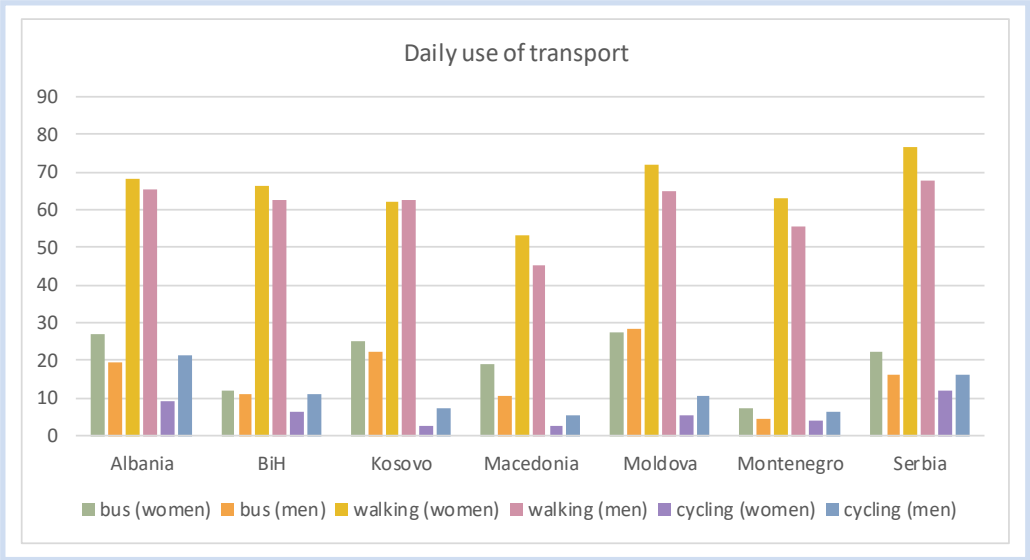


Graph 5: Costs of transportation

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

The GBWN survey shows that rural women in Moldova, Montenegro, and Kosovo face longer commutes, weaker transport coverage, and higher costs. In N. Macedonia, 44% of rural women report lacking nearby public transport. Persons with disabilities, elderly women, and single mothers are especially excluded due to inaccessible sidewalks, lack of ramps, and unreliable rural services (Keystone, 2025 and CPCD, 2025). These intersectional disadvantages (determined by gender, geography, income, and disability) can be addressed following EC (2025) Recommendation on Transport Poverty and SDG 11.2.

Therefore, the most frequent choice of transport in the Western Balkan region and Moldova for both women and men is walking, followed by taking the bus and cycling. These patterns highlight how transport choices are shaped not only by economic constraints. Understanding these disparities is essential for designing inclusive and sustainable mobility policies. But looking at choices of transport and gender roles allow for better understanding of both financial and caregiving realities, ensuring equitable access to transport for all.



Graph 6: Transport choices, WB and Moldova

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

To this end, improving availability of transport modes is not sufficient. Improvement of overall road infrastructure including one for walking would contribute to enhancing gender equality. Multiple focus group discussions organized in the framework of the production of this study explicitly confirm that women walk considerably more than men, and that road and pedestrian infrastructure quality directly shapes their safety, time use, and access to services. Poor road conditions, lack of sidewalks, and inadequate lighting make these daily walks unsafe and exhausting.

Women walk more- Roads matter more – evidence from focus group discussions

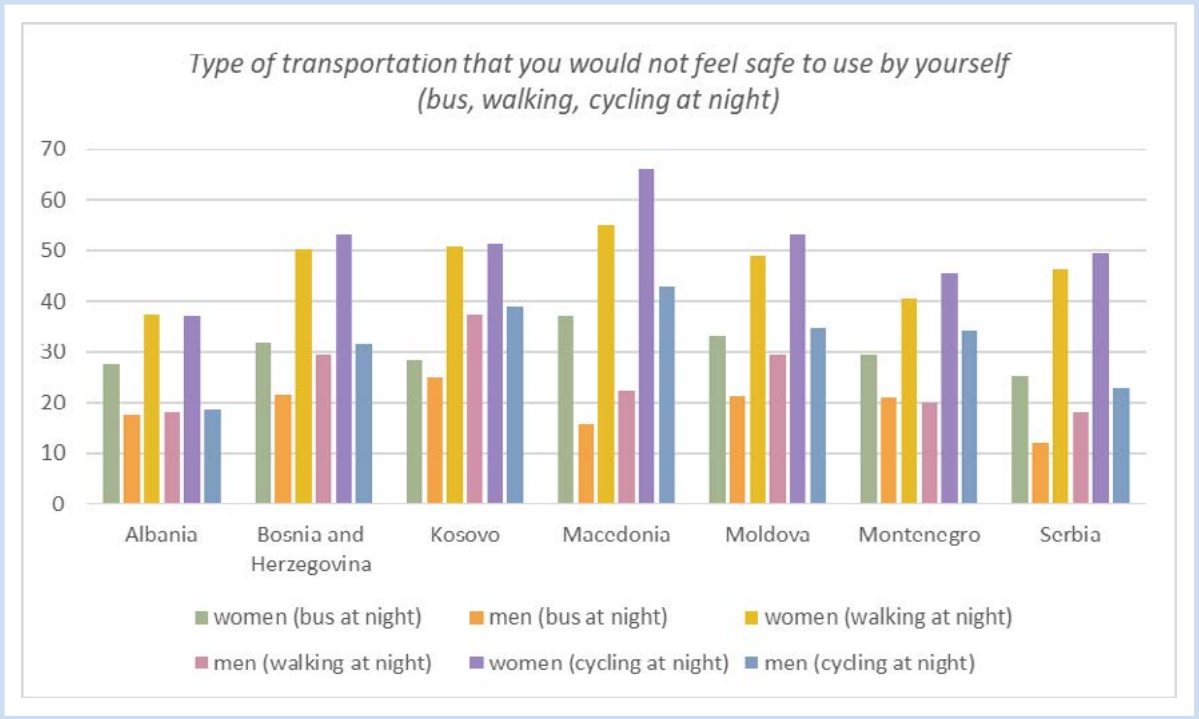
"You're walking on a sidewalk and suddenly the sidewalk disappears — you have to walk in the street, watching for speeding cars while maneuvering the stroller." *(Woman, Prishtina, Kosovo)*

"There's no sidewalk to walk safely to the center or the lake, so a car is the only option." *(Woman, Ohrid, Macedonia)*

4.3. Security and Safety Perceptions

Safety and security are critical factors shaping mobility and transportation choices across the Western Balkans and Moldova. Women consistently report higher levels of insecurity compared to men, particularly when traveling at night or using public and non-motorized forms of transport. Concerns range from harassment and sexual violence to traffic-related risks and poorly maintained infrastructure, highlighting the gendered nature of transport insecurity. Overall, the regional evidence underscores the intersection of gender, infrastructure, and security in shaping transport experiences. While urban-rural and regional differences exist, the prevailing pattern is clear: women face disproportionate safety risks in their mobility.

Safety concerns pose a major barrier to women's mobility and labor market participation. Women frequently report feeling unsafe while walking, cycling, or using public transport, particularly after dark, with inadequate lighting, poor surveillance, and limited mechanisms for reporting incidents exacerbating these challenges. In general, women perceive all transport modes as less safe than men do, with night-time travel particularly intimidating. Urban-rural disparities exist, but gender differences remain significant, reflecting a widespread need for improvements in lighting, pedestrian infrastructure, and secure access to transport. Overcrowded buses, reckless driving, and lack of support for vulnerable passengers are most frequent safety concerns. Harassment though mostly shapes women's transport choices.



Graph 7: Unsafe mode of transport - perceptions

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

Even where transport services exist, unsafe conditions deter mobility and limit access to employment, education, and social activities. Women's perceived safety collapses after dark across modes; walking and cycling become the least safe, taxis are distrusted, and private cars are perceived as safest. Reactor's Skopje studies (2012; replication in 2020) document persistent fear and harassment in public spaces despite urban changes. Night-time buses are also not a safe choice as they bring fear from harassment, concerns for safety are also linked to poor lighting and unstaffed stops. UN Women's Safe Cities results show sexual harassment in and around transport as a ubiquitous barrier; global findings note extremely high shares of women experiencing harassment in transit settings—consistent with your respondents' mode choices skewing to cars at night. This is echoed in CEE Bankwatch's 2024 regional study on GBV in public transport which reports: more than 75% of women not feeling safe on public transport, and over 60% reporting some form of sexual violence while using public transport. This is fully consistent with your qualitative research of GBWN which accounts overcrowding, driver conduct, unstaffed stops as factors which predetermine perception of security public transport at night in the region. Women report higher insecurity when walking at night in Albania (37% of women feel unsafe walking at night vs 18% men); in Bosnia & Herzegovina (50% of women feel unsafe walking alone at night vs 29% men); in Serbia (46% of women feel unsafe walking at night vs 18% men) and in Moldova (44.5% of rural women feel unsafe walking at night vs 28% men).

Possible solutions for addressing these concerns were also detected with the regional study to inform a gender-sensitive transport planning is essential to support safe, inclusive, and equitable access to mobility for all. In Albania, participants prioritized *basic safety and accessibility*—well-lighted, staffed bus stops; mechanisms to report and respond to harassment; and sidewalks and crossings usable for parents with strollers and persons with disabilities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women emphasized a *rural night-safety package* (lighting, limited night-bus or vetted taxi options) and stronger *urban protection for pedestrians and cyclists*. Kosovo's priorities focused on *formalizing and*

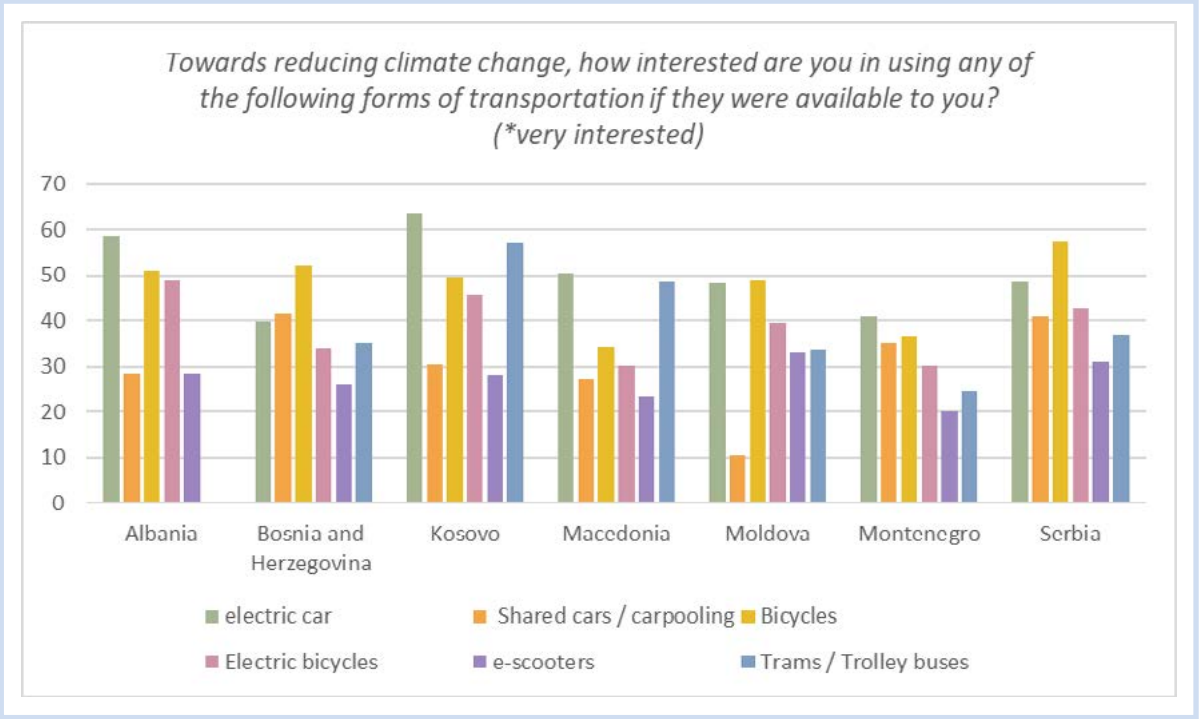
regulating transport services—licensing, on-board conduct standards, and boarding assistance—together with protected, well-lit walking and cycling links. In North Macedonia, participants stressed *night-time safety* through lighting, sightlines, and CCTV on public transport, as well as *safe rural-to-town corridors* and *women-friendly cycling infrastructure*. Moldova highlighted *rural lighting clusters* at stops and paths, *safe, vetted taxi and ride-hail services*, and *rehabilitation of sidewalks* with accessibility specifications. In Montenegro, women called for *minimum accessibility standards in all street works*, a *taxi-safety and accountability program*, and *protected micromobility corridors*. Finally, in Serbia, proposed fixes centered on *night-time pedestrian safety*, *women-centered cycling networks*, and *transparent, regulated taxi services*. Together, these priorities point to a shared regional agenda: gender-responsive safety, accessibility, and regulation—the foundational elements of inclusive and sustainable mobility.

CHAPTER V

INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY-LESSONS LEARNT FROM LOCAL PRACTICES

The GBWN research data shows varying levels of interest across countries in adopting more sustainable forms of transport to reduce climate change impact. Electric cars (particularly in Kosovo and Albania) and bicycles (particularly in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are consistently among the most desired sustainable transport options, suggesting that both technological and low-tech climate-friendly solutions resonate with people. Shared mobility models (carpooling, e-scooters) face more uneven acceptance, likely tied to cultural norms, safety perceptions, and current infrastructure. Interest levels reflect both environmental awareness and practical considerations—availability, affordability, and local conditions strongly shape preferences.

Specifically, the GBWN survey results show that from the different sustainable forms of transport bicycles receive strongest interest in most countries, particularly in Serbia (57.5%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (52.1%), and in Albania (51%). Although there are no incentives for electric cars as electricity is not produced from clean energy, but the interest to own an electric car is generally high across the region, with the highest in Kosovo (63.4%) and Albania (58.6%), followed closely by Macedonia (50.5%), Moldova (48.3%), and Serbia (48.5%). Bosnia and Herzegovina (39.8%) and Montenegro (41%) show relatively lower interest, possibly due to affordability concerns, or infrastructure limitations. Lower gas emissions can be achieved with use of shared cars / carpooling, but the GBWN survey detected moderate interest in this options, ranging from very low in Moldova (10.4%) to higher in Bosnia and Herzegovina (41.5%) and Serbia (40.8%). This variation reflects cultural attitudes towards shared travel, not developed technological solutions to organize such travel, or less awareness about the advantages of such options especially in bigger towns. Interest in electric bicycles, is also fairly consistent (around 30–48%), with Kosovo (45.8%) and Albania (48.8%) at the top. E-scooters are less popular overall, with Moldova (32.9%) and Serbia (31.1%) reporting the highest interest, while Montenegro (20%) and Macedonia (23.5%) the lowest. This could be due to safety concerns, lack of infrastructure, or perception of e-scooters as less practical.



Graph 8: Sustainable transport choices

Source: Gender, climate and transport survey, Western Balkans and Moldova GBWN, 2024

Transport can improve inclusivity and sustainability in community development. Gender perspective in designing the transport improves urban mobility of not just women, but also elderly, people with disability, children and etc. This is mainly because of the gender roles women play in the family and in the community taking care of the vulnerable family/community members. Providing transport that takes in consideration their specific needs releases women from care responsibilities, but also provides independence and better quality of life for everyone. The GBWN qualitative research, the FGDs, helped detect some inclusive and sustainable mobility solutions that can be applied on local level across the region. Participants in focus group discussions proposed participatory planning of public urban transport as a way to make future urban mobility both inclusive and sustainable. One solution making the public transport more inclusive is equipping current busses with manual ramps. "This is a low-cost technological fix that improves accessibility while extending the life cycle of existing vehicles"[1]. It addresses the needs of parents with child care responsibilities, people with disability and elderly with needs of mobility assistance. Disability, in combination with place of living being distant from the urban center, are factors that directly precondition isolation and exclusion. To improve inclusion of people with disability that live in rural areas FGDs suggested to "provide accessible minibuses or adapted vehicles for people with disabilities."[2] Connecting rural areas with urban centers is very much emphasized as a need across the region. Municipal initiatives that include subsidized schemes to organize affordable transport for remote areas should to this end be prioritized. In Ohrid, Macedonia where there is positive internal migration trend of people not leaving this municipality and migrating towards the capital, but moving in; the focus group discussion determined that the number of elderly and citizens that need assistance to be mobile is increasing. Women proposed affordable e-tricycles for these older adults as an alternative to inaccessible buses, combining environmental sustainability with social inclusion. "Lightweight aluminum tricycles with electric motors... could mean active aging and inclusion of elderly and people with disabilities."[3] Subsidies have been identified as a local good practice to build upon for gender-responsive mobility policies. In Montenegro and Macedonia, the capital cities already offer limited subsidies for bicycles, but lack gendered criteria in redistribution of public finances allocated for this purpose. An integrated approach connecting transport and care infrastructure is also needed to "integrate gender and climate perspectives into all municipal transport and infrastructure policies."[4] On this path to green transition that improves inclusivity the participants in the focus group discussions recognize the role of the EU as crucial active agent of change. Namely in Moldova participants see electrification as both desirable and desirable if through European neighborhood program investment in roads infrastructure is made. "Electric buses and trolleybuses are positive models for improving sustainability and inclusivity of public infrastructure but would require significant investments in charging infrastructure."[5]

Across the Western Balkans and Moldova, women's focus groups revealed an emerging culture of practical and local innovation that show that inclusivity and sustainability are not competing goals. When transport planning incorporates care needs, accessibility, and low-carbon mobility together, it delivers social justice and environmental resilience at once.

1 Focus group discussion Skopje, Macedonia

2 Focus group discussion North Mitrovica, Kosovo

3 Focus group discussion Ohrid, Macedonia

4 Focus group discussion Elbasan, Albania

5 Focus group discussion Corlateni, Moldova

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The regional evidence is unequivocal: transportation in the Western Balkans and Moldova is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality and environmental degradation. Without addressing gendered mobility gaps, sustainable transport transitions will remain incomplete and socially unjust. Conversely, integrating gender-responsive and climate-smart principles into transport policy offers a unique opportunity to accelerate progress toward the EU Green Deal and the UN 2030 Agenda.

The report concludes that:

- **Gender inequalities in mobility** are systemic, linked to economic disparities, care burdens, and underrepresentation in decision-making.
- **Transport poverty** disproportionately affects women, rural residents, and persons with disabilities, perpetuating economic exclusion and social isolation.
- **Climate vulnerabilities**—from air pollution to inadequate resilience of transport infrastructure—exacerbate gendered risks.
- **Governance reforms** must move beyond fragmented, siloed approaches toward integrated frameworks connecting gender equality, transport justice, and climate mitigation.

Achieving gender- and climate-responsive mobility requires political will, intersectoral coordination, and investment in people-centered infrastructure. The region's existing GRB frameworks, EU accession processes, and the Green Agenda provide a strategic entry point. However, implementation remains the key challenge.

The next decade will determine whether transport systems in the Western Balkans and Moldova perpetuate inequality or become drivers of inclusion, sustainability, and resilience. Centering women's mobility, safety, and climate awareness in future planning is not only a matter of justice—it is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and the green transition the region aspires to lead.

Based on the analysis, the Gender Budget Watchdog Network is providing these recommendations. Achieving fair and inclusive mobility across the Western Balkans and Moldova will not be possible without stronger legal foundations. While current regulations provide general direction, they rarely address the specific mobility needs shaped by gender roles, caregiving responsibilities, and unequal access to resources.

Recommendation 1 – Sex disaggregated data collection:

Effective policy-making depends on solid evidence. Yet, across the region, data on transport use and needs often overlooks gender, caregiving responsibilities, or the lived realities of vulnerable groups. This leaves critical blind spots in designing systems that work for all. To close these gaps, systematic and sex-disaggregated data collection is essential, enabling governments to track inequalities, monitor safety, and align transport and climate policies with the needs of diverse populations. Finally, sex-disaggregated data must underpin all transport and climate policies. The countries should:

- **Conduct regular mobility surveys** disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and region.
- Include women, especially those from **underrepresented groups, in policy consultations and monitor perceptions** about safety, affordability, mobility patterns particularly at night and in rural areas.

Recommendation 2 – Develop inclusive transport policies:

Based on the evidence gathered countries of the region should develop transport policies. In this way they will integrate gender and inclusivity into national and local transport strategies, ensuring women's needs, caregiving patterns, and climate priorities are addressed. In this way, by combining climate policies with gender equality measures, governments will also recognize women's higher willingness to adopt sustainable transport. Some tools to be applied in the process of inclusive transport policy development are the following:

- Institutionalize gender impact assessments and GRB in transport planning and investment decisions.
- Ensure women, particularly from marginalized groups, are included in transport planning processes and consultative bodies.
- Strengthen collaboration between governments, CSOs, and women's organizations to identify needs and co-create solutions.

Recommendation 3 – Align with EU standards:

Aligning with the EU standards and integrating gender-responsive and climate-smart principles into transport policy will inevitably accelerate progress toward the EU Green Deal and the UN 2030 Agenda. It will unlock funding and promotional opportunities. To align with EU standards and ensure equitable mobility for all, the legal framework requires:

- **Revision of legislation through the lens of gender mainstreaming**, with clear guidelines, updated assessments, and inclusive planning at every stage of transport development and policy-making.

Recommendation 4 – Provide affordable transport:

Transport affordability and access show clear gender and regional disparities. Women face greater economic and caregiving-related constraints, making them more reliant on affordable modes such as buses and walking. Men, in contrast, use costlier modes such as cars, bicycles, and e-scooters more frequently, reflecting both higher disposable incomes and fewer caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, the rural–urban divide compounds these inequalities: rural women, in particular, encounter higher costs, longer travel distances, and fewer affordable and reliable options, limiting their access to employment, education, healthcare, and social participation. While buses remain the backbone of affordable mobility, women still experience structural and safety barriers, and their mobility of care (child escorting, errands, health-related trips) is largely invisible in transport planning. Affordability gaps shows that women's independence and opportunities are more constrained by transport affordability and accessibility challenges, with climate-friendly modes like walking, cycling, and e-scooters remaining underutilized due to safety, cost, and infrastructure barriers.

Without financial support, essential opportunities for work, education, healthcare, and social life remain out of reach for many. To this end the GBWN recommends:

- **Introducing targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups** (women, students, older adults, and persons with disabilities) would help ensure that essential services such as employment, education, and healthcare remain within reach. Beyond reducing costs, subsidies would also recognize the disproportionate unpaid care work that women shoulder, which often requires complex trip chains and frequent travel.
- governments can **promote equal participation in public life while fostering greater reliance on public and shared transport systems**. In example, setting up a reword system that is

based on salary increase or tax relief for those using public transport daily, and or less transport costs for those contributing to community beneficial initiatives are some of the solutions governments in the region can explore.

- Support increased use of **sustainable transport solutions** for women, elderly, people with disabilities by providing better access to bicycles, tricycles and electric cycles (bicycles, scooters and etc.) and improving infrastructure and safety for use of sustainable transport solutions of vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 5 – Provide safe transport:

Across the Western Balkans and Moldova, women consistently report feeling less safe and facing greater mobility challenges than men across all modes of transport, with risks intensifying at night and in poorly lit or inadequately monitored areas. In all the GBWN study target countries the concerns about harassment, violence, and inaccessible infrastructure restrict women's freedom of movement, shaping their transport choices and limiting their participation in public life and economic opportunities. While cars are generally seen as the safest option, reliance on public and non-motorized transport, especially among women, highlights systemic gaps in safety, accessibility, and infrastructure design.

This can be achieved through:

- **improved lighting, surveillance, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure**, reliable reporting mechanisms, and stronger accountability in public and private transport services.
- establishing **effective mechanisms for reporting harassment and violence**, paired with accountability systems for transport operators.
- providing driver and staff **training on gender sensitivity**, accessibility, and anti-harassment protocols.

This transformation can be achieved through **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)** as a central policy and public-finance planning tool. By embedding GRB across the transport policy cycle—planning, allocation, execution, and monitoring—governments can ensure that public resources address both gender and climate disparities in mobility. GRB enables ministries of transport and finance to identify how spending priorities and subsidies affect women and men differently, assess whether investments in roads, buses, or electric fleets benefit vulnerable groups, and reorient funds toward equitable and low-carbon outcomes. In practice, this means reallocating public financing toward accessible rural transport, safe pedestrian infrastructure, inclusive e-mobility schemes, and gender-sensitive urban planning. Through this dual-lens budgeting, the Western Balkans and Moldova can operationalize their commitments under the EU Green Agenda and SDG 5, turning gender equality from a policy aspiration into a measurable driver of sustainable and inclusive transport transformation.

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