



Active
Travel
England

Designing better active travel for women and girls: an introduction



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Foreword

How we design our streets shapes how people live their lives. If a route doesn't feel safe, accessible or practical, people won't use it. For too many women and girls that's still the reality. In our recent polling, a startling 9 in 10 women told us that they've felt unsafe walking alone after dark and 70% had changed their route in the last year to avoid walking in darkness.¹ These are appalling findings.

This isn't only about personal [safety](#). Women often make journeys combining work, school, healthcare and caring for others. Despite this, too often we still design around the idea of an 'average' journey that doesn't reflect how many people actually live their lives.

Good [active travel](#) provision should give people the freedom and independence to travel under their own steam if they choose. For that to happen we must truly understand who will use that infrastructure, listen to their experiences, and design around the journeys they actually need to make. Getting this right for [women and girls](#) will make places work better for everyone.

This document is a practical starting point on that journey: understand the barriers, listen to the people who experience them and build that knowledge into decisions from the outset. Walking, wheeling and cycling should be a realistic and attractive choice for everyone.



Chris Boardman,
National Active Travel Commissioner

This document has been developed by Active Travel England with research and development by **In Her Place**.



1. YouGov polling commissioned by Active Travel England, 2026, [Walking Women Safety Study](#)

1. Overview and purpose

This document is an introduction to considering active travel through the lens of gender, and how doing this can help create safer, more inclusive streets and places.

Gender affects how people experience and use the built environment.

Understanding this and embedding insights into masterplanning, design, guidance and local policy can help create more equitable places and enable more people to actively choose to walk, wheel or cycle.

The document covers how and why women and girls experience active travel differently and where this needs to be considered in the design of both places and processes. Case studies of good practice are included, along with links to further resources.

The information in this document is intended to support everyone who influences the design and operation of streets and places, including transport planners and designers, architects, landscape architects, developers, spatial planners and councillors. It provides a starting point for considering the needs and experiences of women and girls. Technical guidance will follow as part of Active Travel England's Women and Girls' Safety Programme, [announced in March 2026](#), to be hosted on ATE's digital hub.

Women and girls' safety is shaped by a range of social, behavioural and structural factors, and design alone cannot eliminate violence, harassment or fear. However, the built environment remains a powerful influence: factors such as street layout, lighting, visibility, activity levels, and connectivity can influence the perception of safety and confidence when travelling. Design and planning should therefore be seen as an important part of a broader, multi-agency approach to preventing harm and enabling freedom of movement.



1.1 How to use this document

Chapters 1 and 2 provide a starting point for understanding why gender matters in active travel, with chapter 3 intended to be used to support decision-making throughout the active travel system.

This introductory guidance covers:

- why gender matters in active travel
- key principles for applying a gender-informed approach across the active travel system
- good practice case studies
- links to further resources

It does not cover:

- a comprehensive response to violence against women and girls - this guidance focuses on streets and places and active travel, and should be considered alongside the government's [Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy](#) and [Freedom from violence and abuse volume 2: action plan](#)
- good practice recommendations or specifications for design
- behaviour change programmes or communications campaigns aimed at shifting attitudes and cultural norms, although these are an essential complement to design improvements

More resources will follow as part of Active Travel England's Women and Girls' Safety Programme.



1.2 Why gender matters in active travel

Gender matters in active travel because women and girls can experience streets, routes and places differently to men and boys and that affects their transport choices.

Active travel choices have the potential to affect the lives of women and girls in many ways. Walking, wheeling and cycling have been found to positively impact general mental health and wellbeing, with research showing it is significantly associated with higher wellbeing among adolescent girls,² as well as economic benefits which include job creation and economic growth.³

Research indicates that:

- women on average make more walking trips and walk a greater distance than men⁴
- women of all ages cycle less on average and over shorter distances than men⁴
- girls are less likely than boys to travel actively to school, with this gender gap most pronounced among older children where they travel unaccompanied, and parents tend to perceive much higher safety risks for girls than for boys⁵

It is important to recognise women and girls are not a single homogeneous group, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Experiences of active travel are varied and will also be affected by [intersectionality](#), including factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, location and disability status. Identifying and understanding these intersectional factors is essential to making active travel interventions effective.

Considering these factors from the outset can help create streets, routes and places that are safer and more inclusive.

Designing with gender in mind doesn't just make places work for women and girls, it can help create places which are more welcoming, better utilised and function better for everyone travelling actively.

The travel choices of women and girls can be shaped by **safety concerns, caring responsibilities, social expectations and physical factors** such as access to public toilets. These factors are explained in more detail overleaf.



2. Active Travel England, 2026, [Evidence assessment: The Health and Wellbeing Impacts of Active Travel](#)

3. Active Travel England, 2026, [Evidence assessment: The Economic Impacts of Active Travel](#)

4. Department for Transport, 2026, [National Travel Survey 2025: Active travel](#)

5. Active Travel England, 2026, [Evidence assessment: The impacts of Active School Travel](#)

Safety and the perception of safety

Safety, and the perception of safety, is often cited as the single biggest barrier to active travel for women and girls. It is important to understand that perception of safety or feeling safe influences decisions beyond simple statistics.

The government has called [violence against women and girls \(VAWG\)](#) 'a national emergency'⁶ with a target to halve VAWG in a decade.⁷ The Freedom from violence and abuse: A cross-government strategy (Home Office, 2025) states:

"Women and girls must both feel safe and be safe in every aspect of public life, including shared and open spaces such as streets, parks, transport hubs, and public buildings. Safety is not just about reducing risk, it is about creating environments that foster confidence, dignity, and freedom of movement. Design and planning are critical tools in achieving this. Well-lit streets, accessible transport, and thoughtful urban design can deter violence, reduce opportunities for harm, and send a clear message that public spaces belong to everyone."

Police recorded crime does not provide a reliable measure of the scale of, or trends in, incidents affecting women and girls' safety on transport. It is affected by a range of factors including reporting levels and changes to crime recording standards; while risks to women and girls' safety on transport include a wider range of harmful behaviours and incidents beyond those meeting a criminal threshold.

This means that the perception of safety should be considered. It affects how women and girls use public space and influences whether, when and where they choose to walk, wheel or cycle. Evidence of how these concerns and experiences affect everyday behaviour is shown as:

- women are more likely than men to take precautions in order to feel safe when walking, such as letting people know their plans (63% of women compared to 33% of men)⁸
- personal safety concerns are a barrier to women walking more (16% of women compared to 7% of men)⁴
- 54% of women only walk or cycle at certain times, compared to 35% of men⁸

Perception of safety may be shaped not only by direct experience, but by what women and girls hear from others and by wider awareness of violence and harassment, even where they have not personally experienced an incident in a particular place, societal attitudes, and the physical environment itself. This means that feeling unsafe is not an overreaction or a misreading of risk, but the result of legitimate influences on how women and girls choose to move through public space.

Perceived safety should be understood as existing on a spectrum, ranging from intense fear to a low-level but persistent sense of unease or discomfort, and cannot be assessed through crime data alone.

6. Home Office, 2025, [VAWG strategy to better protect children from misogyny and abuse](#)

7. Home Office, 2025, [Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls](#)

8. Department for Transport, 2023. [National Travel Attitudes Study wave 8](#)

Road safety

Concerns about road safety also affect active travel participation, particularly among women cycling. Women report that road safety concerns are a barrier to cycling (30% of women compared to 25% of men)⁴. Research has shown that women tend to be more critical regarding safety and sharing space with motorised traffic in relation to cycling.⁹

Caring responsibilities

Unpaid [care work](#) can also shape active travel. Women undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid caring and domestic responsibilities compared with men, affecting how they use and experience transport networks, which can impact women's journey patterns.¹⁰ For example, for women aged 30 to 39, escorting children to education (nursery and school) is the second most common reason for travel.¹¹ Women's travel involves more of what is called 'trip-chaining,' multi-stop journeys between home, schools, shops, healthcare and other everyday destinations.¹² These types of journeys are less likely to follow traditional 'periphery to centre' commuting routes and are not always considered in transport planning and local policy.

Time constraints are found to be a key barrier to active travel. Different population groups experience these impacts in different ways, with trip chains involving taking children to childcare or education settings or leisure activities, and food shopping disproportionately being undertaken by women, which impacts on mode choice and journey times.¹³

Women's mobility can change over the course of their lives. Barriers on streets and pavements, such as a lack of dropped kerbs or narrow crossing refuges, for example, can disadvantage women using pushchairs.

Social expectations

Social expectations and constructs also impact how women and girls choose to travel. This can range from teenage girls feeling that cycling 'is not for them' or attracts too much judgement, to varying barriers to active travel among different ethnic groups,¹⁴ as well as social expectations about when it is appropriate for women or girls to be walking alone.

Physical factors

Physical factors can also influence women's and girls' travel choices. Lack of provision and access to public toilets and changing facilities can be a barrier, for example for those who are menstruating, pregnant or at menopause, who may need to use the toilet more often¹⁵ as well as disabled women, and those travelling with children.

Some infrastructure can also create difficulties where it requires significant physical strength to operate, such as two-tier double decker or non-pneumatic cycle parking which operate without compressed air. This can create barriers for a range of users, including many women, older people, disabled people, and those using larger or adapted cycles.

9. Rérat, P. and Schmassmann, A, 2024, [Build it and they will come? The effects of a new infrastructure on cycling practices and experiences](#). *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 25, p.101121 as referenced in [Active Travel England's Evidence Review. Safety, journey quality and urban real impacts in active travel appraisal](#)

10. Office for National Statistics, [2023. Time use data](#)

11. Department for Transport, 2025, [NTS 2024: NTS0611 Average number of trips and distance travelled by sex, age, mode and purpose or main mode, 2002 onwards](#)

12. Department for Transport, 2024, [Trip chaining: 2024](#)

13. Active Travel England: [Evidence assessment: The impact of active travel on journey times, congestion and resilience](#)

14. Department for Transport, 2021, [Switching to sustainable transport: a rapid evidence assessment](#)

15. Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2024, [Toilet provision in buildings other than dwellings](#)

1.3 Gender and place

A comprehensive approach to creating more inclusive places for women and girls has emerged in the last thirty years. This process, which puts gender at the heart of every planning, design and policy decision has become known as gender mainstreaming.¹⁶

The concept was pioneered in Vienna in the 1990s. The city began with research into how gender impacted housing, parks, pedestrian access and public transport, and the results were used to inform planning and design. This approach has since been taken up by a range of other places, including [Umeå](#) in Sweden and [Amsterdam](#) in The Netherlands.

In the UK, there have been a range of initiatives, such as by the London Borough of [Tower Hamlets](#), who produced a report on the needs and experiences of women and girls to inform the evidence base for their emerging Local Plan; and the London Legacy Development Corporation, who created the handbook [creating places that work for women and girls](#). More recently, [Glasgow City Council](#) adopted gender mainstreaming as a policy and has seen changes such as co-design of equipment for young girls and teens, and installation of a mural of a breastfeeding woman in the city and The City of Edinburgh Council created a [Women's Safety Audit Proforma](#). Case studies of these initiatives can be found on ATE's digital hub.

A gender mainstreaming approach to active travel involves understanding all the factors that impact on women's and girls' experiences of a place, route or facility, with the intention of creating places that work better for everyone.



16. It is also sometimes known as gender-informed design or feminist urbanism

Gender mainstreaming case studies

Vienna, Austria

Vienna was the first city to develop a programme of gender mainstreaming. At its heart was the idea that the planning process should benefit all its residents, and that doing this meant paying particular attention to what women needed.

Over almost thirty years, the project has included the design of parks and housing estates and the creation of safer public transport and parking, with better consideration given to lighting and access for prams and wheelchairs across the city. It has even influenced the design of graveyards – when the city realised that most of the visitors were elderly women, they installed more benches to allow for rest and ensured that good quality public toilets were provided.

The success of gender mainstreaming in Vienna is based on more than planning and design. Other key factors include the creation of a department within the city administration with responsibility for [gender equality](#) and the collection of gender-disaggregated data, enabling them to understand both where the problems lie and which interventions were most effective.

Vienna also pioneered the use of [gender budgeting](#). This analyses spending to understand who benefits and the approach is now recommended by many organisations, including the UN¹⁷ as a means of addressing gender inequality.

As part of the project, the city has produced a practical English language manual for their gender mainstreaming programme.¹⁸

Figure 1: Wide footways, Vienna, Lucy Smith.



17. UN Women, 2024, [What is Gender Responsive Budgeting](#)

18. City of Vienna, 2021, [Gender Mainstreaming Made Easy](#)

Umeå, Sweden

For more than thirty years, the city of Umeå in the north of Sweden has put gender at the heart of its decision-making, with the goal of creating a city that works equally well for men and women.

Large parts of the city's infrastructure have been redesigned with the safety of women and girls in mind:

- in the city centre, the Lev underpass was reconfigured with a wide, curving entrance to give good sightlines, additional exits and an illuminated artwork, which celebrates the work of a local woman artist
- the city's biggest multi-storey car park now has a glass-sided lift and stairwells with good visibility to and from the street
- lighting in parks was improved, and facilities co-designed with teenage girls to give them spaces of their own
- in addition to a new bus station with clear sightlines and a welcoming feel, a prototype bus stop was developed which provided shelter from the weather and privacy while also allowing women to see whether someone else was waiting

Figure 2: Frizon park co-designed facilities and lighting improvements, Andreas Nilsson.



Changes to masterplanning priorities in the city centre resulted in residential buildings and leisure facilities being added to commercial sites, along with communal public spaces. This activates the area outside working hours, and the natural surveillance and light from the apartments adds to the sense of safety. New neighbourhoods are created on the same principles, and the city has found that these schemes work better for older people as well as women.

Figure 3: Lev underpass, Wikimedia Commons, Mickeno.



The policies also have a visible aspect. A series of art pieces have been commissioned across the city as a reminder that public spaces belong to everyone, including a red feline cat, which honours those who broke their silence and acts as a monument to the #MeToo movement, affirming the city's opposition to sexual harassment. Communication is also part of the project, and the city runs a guided bus tour around the gendered landscape of Umeå.

The emphasis on gender extends beyond infrastructure and representation:

- in winter, the bus routes, cycle tracks and footways are cleared of ice and snow first
- regular safety walks ensure that all residents have a chance to talk about issues in their local area, and what changes would help them feel safer
- at night, bus drivers respond to request stops so that women can be dropped off closer to their homes

In a survey undertaken in Umeå, 99% of all residents reported feeling safe on the streets during the day while almost nine out of ten women reported to be comfortable walking on their own at night. The city has become a case study for inclusive planning within Europe and beyond.

The focus on safety has also provided further benefits for the city as a whole.

Unusually for the area, its population is growing with people choosing to relocate to Umeå and in 2024 it was named the city in Sweden which offered the best quality of life.

Figure 4: Vasplan, Wikimedia Commons Luhed.



"Listen" statue, Philip-Avesand_Visit Umeå

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

In 2025, Amsterdam Council adopted a motion that to create more welcoming public spaces, the needs of young women should be centred in every planning decision. This was intended not only as a response to discrimination, but a means of making places better for everyone.

The full proposal¹⁹ sets out a range of ways this could be done, including improving public toilets for women, slowing down traffic, more friendly public seating, evaluating spaces at dusk and in darkness, engagement with women and girls, and learning from existing initiatives in cities such as Vienna.

19. The full proposal can be found [here](#)

2. National context

Women and girls' safety in public space and during everyday journeys has been established as a national priority.

The Freedom from violence and abuse: A cross-government strategy (Home Office, 2025), places emphasis on the role of the built environment, transport systems and public realm in enabling freedom of movement.

“By embedding considerations of VAWG into planning and transport guidance, we can ensure that safety is built into the fabric of our communities, making public spaces welcoming and secure for all.”

The publication of the Angiolini Inquiry Part 2 First Report (2025) underlined the need for systemic and preventative action to address sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces, including through design of spaces where women are safe and feel safe.

Within recent transport and planning policy and guidance relevant to active travel, women and girls' safety is recognised as a core consideration and further information is provided in [Appendix B](#). Together, these policies provide a strong requirement for addressing women and girls' safety through the design, planning and investment of streets and places.

2.1 Legal duties and equality considerations

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of [protected characteristics](#), including sex, age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

These protections are relevant to active travel because decisions around local policy, investment, design, delivery and day to day management of streets can affect who is able to use streets, routes and public spaces safely and confidently. Public bodies including local authorities must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This means having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations between different groups. In active travel, this includes considering how schemes and local policies may affect women and girls, including those whose experiences are shaped by other protected characteristics.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) can help authorities apply these duties in practice. They provide a structured, evidence-based way to consider who may benefit from, be disadvantaged by, or face barriers as a result of a policy, project or design decision. They can support better engagement, strengthen decision-making and help ensure active travel schemes are inclusive from the outset.

Links to detailed information on the PSED and preparing EqIAs in planning are contained in [Appendix C](#).

2.2 Local policy levers

The National Planning Policy Framework explicitly references the safety of women and girls, including in the context of well-designed public spaces and the arrangement of streets and other routes to help create places that are safe, inclusive and attractive.

Embedding a gender-informed perspective into local policies has an important part to play in creating equity. The benefits of more equitable active travel, including improvements in mental and physical health, economic impacts and increased equality should be considered when local policies are being developed or updated. Consideration could be given to:

- **policy** – ensuring that the needs of women and girls in walking, wheeling and cycling and reducing VAWG is foregrounded in the review or production of key local policies on spatial planning, health, transport, active travel, environmental and economic policies
- **investment** – consider how funding decisions on route and mode investments take account of the differing travel patterns of women and girls, using gender budgeting as a way of assessing who benefits from spending decisions
- **evaluation** – setting measurable targets for improved equity considering the use of gender-disaggregated data, research and EqlAs
- **engagement** – ensuring that women and girls, including those who do not currently travel actively, are meaningfully involved in the development and review of local policies

Publishing and sharing work undertaken, such as research, data collection, policy wording, design codes or guidance, is important for disseminating good practice and increasing awareness of how gender impacts active travel.



3. Applying a gender-informed approach

The following section outlines how taking a gender-informed approach to planning, designing, delivering and managing streets and places can help identify barriers, improve understanding of local needs, strengthen decision-making and support the creation of safer and more accessible and inclusive streets and places.

3.1 Understanding the problem

Before priorities are set and policies or schemes are developed, it is important to find out how women and girls are currently experiencing streets and places, and whether barriers related to safety, accessibility, caring responsibilities or wider inequalities may affect their travel choices. Collecting and using engagement, evidence and data consistently throughout the design, planning and management of active travel can help embed gender considerations.

At present, most of the research and guidance in this area is based on urban spaces, and the factors that influence the perception of safety for women and girls in rural areas may differ. Active Travel England's [Rural Design Guide](#) begins to consider the needs of women and girls in rural contexts. Further research is needed to provide evidence regarding the impact of specific planning policies in England within a range of different geographic contexts (especially outside large cities) and relating to impacts on active travel in relation to different groups, including gender.²⁰ Research gaps are explored in ATE's forthcoming Areas of Research Interest document.

Engagement and lived experience

Creating more equal spaces to enable and encourage active travel can be achieved by talking to women and girls in the local area, as the experts in the places where they live. Safety should be considered as part of active travel planning and delivery and meaningful engagement with women and girls is essential to understanding it.

Good engagement for active travel starts without assumptions, giving women and girls the opportunity to identify the opportunities, issues and barriers they feel are most important. Doing this at an early stage helps to ensure that key issues are identified before any solutions are designed or implemented. Engagement should be clearly linked to practical, deliverable outcomes from the outset so that women and girls feel their voices have been heard and their recommendations acted upon.

Understanding of safety has been shown to differ between women and girls who use active travel routes, and professionals who design and develop these routes. For example, the University of Leeds Safer Parks Project research report found 89% of professionals considered parks safe for women and girls, compared to only 37% of women and 22% of girls.²¹ This gap illustrates why meaningful engagement with women and girls matters.

20. Active Travel England, 2026, [Evidence assessment: The Impacts of Early Consideration of Active Travel via Planning and Design Programme](#)

21. University of Leeds, 2022, [What Makes a Park Feel Safe or Unsafe? The views of women, girls and professionals in West Yorkshire](#)

Good engagement should actively reach a wide range of women and girls. This includes people who do not currently walk, wheel or cycle, and those whose experiences are shaped by other aspects of their identity, such as disability, ethnicity, age or sexuality. It should also reflect demographics of the area and ensure that under-represented or seldom heard groups are involved.

Engagement approaches such as a women and girls' safety audit or 'dusk walk' should be considered. This is where a group of women and girls are accompanied around a particular location or route to understand their experiences of a place and can be used to highlight specific barriers and areas for action. It can be particularly effective at dusk. Several safety audit tools have been created, and these can help ensure that a full safety evaluation is part of engagement work.

Done well, engagement can provide detailed information at a range of scales, from network travel patterns to identifying specific barriers in the local environment. An example is given in the [Holloway Park case study](#) in Appendix A.

More detail on how, why and when to create meaningful engagement for active travel is included in ATE's [A best practice guide to community consultation and engagement](#).

Research

Research can be used to inform local policies, investment decisions and schemes, helping to understand the issue before any project is developed. This may include reviewing existing evidence on how women and girls use, avoid or adapt active travel routes, and whether available evidence reflects the geographic context of the scheme, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. It could also identify where local knowledge is missing, so that engagement, data collection and option development across the next stages are shaped around the issues women and girls experience in practice.

Data

Sex-disaggregated data (required for EqlAs) and gender-disaggregated data is important for understanding how gender influences active travel, evaluating the gendered impact of specific interventions and informing local policy development.

Some national datasets are available on gendered differences in uptake of walking, wheeling and cycling, but there is a lack of more detailed disaggregated data at a local level. Gathering this data is often resource intensive but can be used to assess whether an intervention has been effective for women and girls.

Figure 5: Engagement activity, In Her Place.



3.2 Planning routes, networks and places

Planning and investing in routes, networks and places should reflect how women and girls travel and experience the built environment.

Because many women make trip-chain journeys, travel with children or others they care for, a gender-informed approach to network planning means creating connected, legible and well-overlooked routes that link homes with everyday destinations such as schools, shops, healthcare, public transport and leisure, as well as providing direct commuter routes. To reflect women and girls' safety concerns, it is important that these routes avoid isolated, poorly lit or difficult-to-navigate environments.

Masterplanning also has a role to play. An appropriate provision of well-located, on-site amenities to support the quantum of development proposed has the potential to make active travel more accessible. Schools, for example, should ideally be at the centre of the neighbourhoods they serve, close to public transport, playgrounds, and local centres.



3.3 Designing streets and places: key principles

Considering gender in active travel means understanding how women and girls may experience streets and places differently, including in relation to safety, visibility, comfort, journey purpose, caring responsibilities and time of day. The following sections introduce key principles to inform planning, design, management and investment decisions.

ATE's [scheme review tools](#) support authorities to consider personal safety when designing routes, with metrics on lighting coverage, surveillance and activity, forward visibility and escape routes, and the visibility of others.

There are key principles for designing streets and places that can feel safe for women and girls:

- comfort and movement
- visibility and activity
- route choice and legibility
- waiting and facilities

The following section is an introduction to these principles. Further information on design can be found in the [Resources section](#) and future technical guidance will be developed as part of Active Travel England's Women and Girls' Safety Programme.

Comfort and movement

Permeability

The permeability of a street or place can contribute to how safe somewhere feels. A network that provides connections and choice between routes, such as by signing an alternative night-time route, gives women and girls alternative options. It is important to consider the location and frequency of exit points ensuring they are wide, clearly visible, overlooked and well-lit. Fencing or hedges should be low and easy to see through and get over if needed.

Canal towpaths and motor traffic-free routes, (including those commonly termed greenways) that are unlit and have infrequent access points, can impact on the perception of safety. The lack of opportunities to escape from a route, a lack of passive surveillance and overlooking, may reduce the attractiveness of these routes, particularly to children, women and girls.



Crossing provision

The provision and type of crossings are also key. Street level crossings are generally perceived as being safest, and their frequency, minimised wait time and location on desire lines can help with perception of safety.

The lack of escape routes and poor sightlines is one reason why some bridges and underpasses can feel unsafe²² and people may prefer to cross at street level as it provides a more direct route.²³ Their design should take account of the key principles in this introductory guidance, and be as short, wide and direct as possible²⁴ with alternative routes signposted where possible.



22. Ogilvie, D., Mitchell, R., Mutrie, N., Petticrew, M. and Platt, S, 2010, [Shoe leather epidemiology: active travel and transport infrastructure in the urban landscape](#). *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 7(1), p.43, as referenced in Active Travel England

23. Department for Transport, 2019, [Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6](#)

24. The Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, 2010, [Manual for Streets 2](#)

Separation

There is a major difference between the cycling rates of men and women and there are differences in perceptions, barriers and motivations, with safety concerns being a more prevalent barrier for women.²⁵ The separation from motorised traffic is shown in both research and engagement as one of the main factors that women feel would help them to cycle more. This is perceived as particularly important by women and those cycling with children.²⁶ Women make more journeys escorting children to education,¹¹ and this can inform route choice. The design of cycle infrastructure that is separated from motorised traffic should therefore be considered as a key measure to support a greater uptake of cycling for women and girls.



Visibility and activity

Lighting

The presence and quality of lighting is often one of the top answers when women and girls are asked about what would make a place feel safer. Lighting is not just an issue at night: in the winter, darkness will impact a wide range of travellers, including young people coming home from school and commuters returning from work. Many women and girls will change their routes or use a different mode of transport in the shorter winter months due to safety concerns.

Figure 6: Feature lighting, Chesterfield.



25. Active Travel England, 2026. [Evidence Assessment: The impacts of Interventions to Enable Adult Cycling](#)

26. Aldred, R, 2019, [Built Environment Interventions to Increase Active Travel: a Critical Review and Discussion](#). *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 6(4), pp.309–315 as referenced in Active Travel England's [Evidence Review: Safety, journey quality and urban realm impacts in active travel appraisal](#)

Lighting that improves safety and the perception of safety, such as through enabling people to see the faces of others coming towards them and perceive natural colours, can depend on a range of design factors. The following should be considered:

- **balanced levels of light:** avoiding sharp contrasts and over-bright lights so surrounding areas do not appear darker or less safe
- **glare control:** positioning lighting so people can see their wider surroundings clearly
- **pedestrian-scale lighting:** using light sources at an appropriate height, and at a combination of levels to help spread light
- **good colour rendering:** enabling people to perceive natural colours
- **warmth, tone and colour temperature:** creating a comfortable and welcoming environment, including when using LED fittings
- **direction and distribution of light:** using more than one light source, and reflective surfaces where appropriate, so lighting does not come from only one direction
- **atmosphere and friendliness:** considering how lighting affects the feel of a place, for example through festoon lighting

The provision of lighting is often balanced against factors including cost and carbon savings, dark sky policies and biodiversity, particularly bats. Lighting decisions should explicitly consider the needs of all users. Where lighting cannot be provided, the creation of alternate after-dark routes with good wayfinding should be considered instead.

Newer technologies, including motion detection and timed changes in lighting levels, which can act as a cost-saving or environmental measure should also consider all users of the route or space, including women and girls.

Figure 7: Dark spaces between lights.



Figure 8: Cycle track low level lighting, Doncaster.



Visibility

Forward visibility is achieved through design of clear sightlines, including around entrance and escape routes, as well as avoiding blind corners and hiding places that might conceal potential danger, such as opaque street furniture or end panels on bus stops.

Maintaining good levels of visibility applies to the design of new facilities and managing existing, such as through vegetation maintenance.



Natural surveillance

Natural surveillance²⁷ is another way to help make places feel busier and safer. This can be considered through the design of individual schemes and wider planning decisions affecting how streets and places are used and managed.

This can be achieved through designing buildings to face on to routes and public spaces, avoiding blank frontages on to the public realm and tall boundary walls and fences. A mix of uses bringing activity to an area outside office hours, also supports natural surveillance.

Natural surveillance is also important during the construction phase of developments and routes, where hoardings and covered walkway design should consider these principles.²⁸



27. Designing spaces so people can see in and out of them clearly, see Active Travel England, [Planning for Active Places](#)

28. London Legacy Development Corporation, 2024, [Creating places that work for women and girls](#)

Activation

Activating spaces by encouraging a diverse range of people to use them can help create busier places that feel safer. Jane Jacobs described this as the positive effects of ‘eyes on the street’ in the early 1960s.²⁹ While there are caveats, a diverse range of people can help places feel more inclusive and support a sense of safety.

Activation can be supported by designing in more diverse uses for a space, and providing opportunities to dwell. This can be achieved through planning and management decisions that encourage a mix of activities throughout the day and beyond. Features that attract people to streets and places could include play areas, different seating options, community activities or hard standing for food vans.

Figure 9: Bradford festival, Simon Dewhurst Photography.



Figure 10: Seating Bradford, Simon Dewhurst Photography.

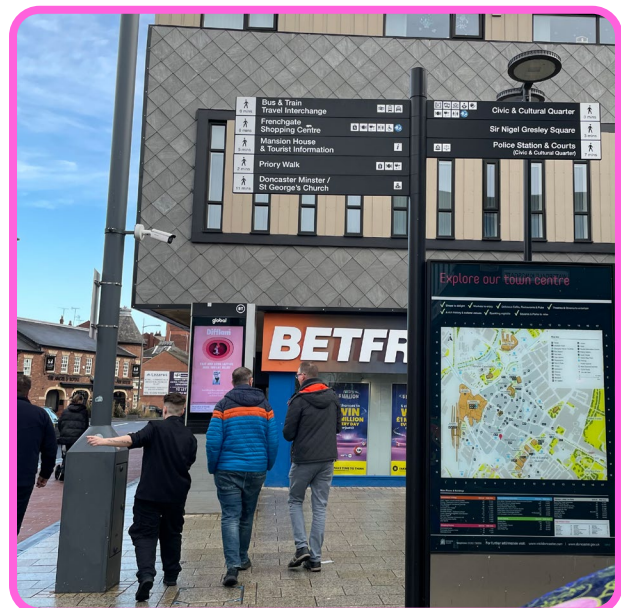


Route choice and legibility

Wayfinding

The presence of wayfinding can be important for women and girls and the perception of safety. It can let people know where they are, where they are going and that their route is both maintained and well-used. In addition to direction and distance, signage can also give walking times³⁰ and indicate which routes are lit. The design of wayfinding signage can also impact on safety; large monolith or slab signs can create hiding places.

Using lighting and facilities as ‘landmarks’ along a route can help with intuitive wayfinding, ensuring that women and girls feel they are heading from one busy and populated space to another.



Route choice

At times when places are less busy, managing how people use routes and places could be considered. For example, clearly indicating primary routes through design, lighting or wayfinding can concentrate pedestrian and cycle traffic, which has the potential to improve feelings of safety.

29. Jacobs, J, 1961, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

30. Active Travel England [Rural Design Guide 2026](#)

Waiting and facilities

Active travel can be a stage of a longer journey using public transport including the first and last part of a journey. The design of bus stops³¹ through to major interchange hubs should consider the safety of women and girls, including potential impacts of the wait between modes.

Facility design

The design of ancillary facilities can also impact the perception of safety. For example, the design of cycle parking and storage can make facilities feel unsafe when they are designed without windows or visibility into and out of them, or where sightlines are obscured by the arrangements of the racks. Heavy doors or a series of doors that open manually may be a barrier for disabled people, those with children or non-standard cycles.

Cycle parking in The Netherlands

Scheveningen in The Netherlands is a popular seafront resort. To cater for the large number of people on bikes already visiting the beach, the municipality built two new cycle parking stores, providing spaces for over 700 cycles.

To create spaces which feel safe and are accessible for everyone, the parking stores have been designed with large windows and clear sightlines, as well as parking and access for non-standard bikes including larger cargo bikes, trikes and electric cycles.

Figure 11: Scheveningen cycle parking, Dutch Cycling Embassy.



Barriers

Street level barriers such as chicanes or bollards can affect disabled people, those pushing a wheelchair or pushchair, and those with cargo bikes – groups where women are disproportionately represented.

Technology to support safety

Additional safety interventions that make use of technology can support women and girls across the full range of times, seasons and journey contexts in which active travel takes place.

The Department for Transport has produced an overview of interventions for the safety of women and girls that includes a range of solutions.³²

CCTV and help points

CCTV may form part of a wider approach to supporting safety. Where provision is being considered, local engagement may help determine whether it would be valued by those using the street or place and could support the perception of safety. This can also apply to the provision of “help points”, physical stations that often include CCTV or buttons to contact emergency services.

Mobile apps

A wide range of apps and websites have been designed to support women and girls to travel more safely at night. Many of these are designed to be used personally and tend to focus on prevention and reporting, but some are designed to be used by councils and other bodies to highlight safe spaces and other local initiatives, such as WalkSafe.

31. Department for Transport, 2026, [The government's vision for buses and approach to delivery](#)

32. Department for Transport, 2024, [Interventions to improve transport safety for women and girls](#)

3.4 Delivery and implementation

Delivery and implementation are important points at which gender-informed design and planning can either be strengthened or undermined. During construction, temporary routes, diversions and site arrangements should remain safe, accessible, direct and clearly communicated, including for women and girls travelling with children, after dark or to everyday destinations.

First impressions of using a street or place can inform future behaviours. If feelings of perceived unsafety are experienced during construction, this impression can impact future use.

Once a scheme, route or place is operational, site visits, user feedback and early monitoring can ensure that issues such as ineffective lighting, unclear wayfinding, isolated sections or maintenance problems can be identified and addressed quickly. Lessons from implementation should be fed back into future planning, design processes, maintenance programmes and investment decisions.



3.5 Operation, maintenance and management

Maintenance

The operation and maintenance of routes and places can contribute to a sense of safety, and provide an important opportunity to embed gender considerations into the long-term management of active travel networks. Well-maintained spaces generally feel safer; a lack of maintenance, whether this is a patched footway, damaged signage or vandalised bins, can result in women and girls feeling less safe and potentially avoiding a street or place.

Responding to maintenance issues quickly can help ensure active travel behaviours are not adapted or switched, for example a missing light bulb experienced on one journey may result in someone continuing to avoid that route. Regular safety and condition inspections and maintenance works present an opportunity to introduce enhancements and improvements that may not be related to a new capital scheme.

Maintenance for lighting and forward visibility of streets and places includes cutting back vegetation so that it does not cause obstructions and ensuring that replacement fittings match the existing lighting in both colour and brightness, which can enhance how safe a place feels.

The prioritisation of maintenance and operational resource, including winter maintenance could consider the everyday routes women and girls rely on most, including links to schools, shops, healthcare, public transport, employment and care-related destinations. These routes may not be the highest-volume commuter corridors but are essential to daily life.

Staffing

In staffed spaces, such as transport interchanges, parks or semi-privatised developments with security, the presence of staff can be important in creating a sense of safety. This contribution could be maximised by strategies such as recruiting for a gender balance, prioritising staff presence at less busy times and training staff on safety issues.

3.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation can be used to understand whether local policies, networks and schemes are working for women and girls in practice, and if they are achieving intended outcomes.

This starts with gathering baseline data on how women and girls currently use, avoid or adapt routes, including the perception of safety, time of travel, trip purpose, linked journeys and access to everyday destinations. Authorities could combine gender-disaggregated data where possible with lived experience evidence such as safety audits or map-based feedback to understand how different policies and interventions are performing. Recorded crime and incident data can form part of this picture.

Findings can be fed back into design, maintenance and future investment decisions, so that issues can be addressed quickly and good practice embedded more widely.

Consistent data (via common metrics) that can enable direct comparisons across and within modes (including understanding the nuances linked to different demographic factors such as gender or age) would help to strengthen the evidence base to enhance both public and political support.⁶

3.7 Organisational and culture change

Long-term change is more likely to be achieved where gender considerations are embedded within organisational governance, policies, investment decisions and everyday practice. Considering how gender equality can be embedded both internally and in external relationships can further support streets and places that consider women and girls' safety. It may require partnership working with a range of stakeholders outside the organisation.

A range of approaches are possible, including:

- encouraging a gender balance on project teams
- creating a lead person within the organisation as a gender champion, while recognising that responsibility for change should be shared across the whole organisation and not placed solely on women or those with lived experience
- in larger organisations, creating a specific team with this responsibility
- making reporting and data collection around gender a requirement in projects

Organisations such as Women in Planning and Women in Transport can help support changes with detail in the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) guide to Gender Mainstreaming: [Creating places that work for women and girls handbook](#). Examples from cities such as Vienna demonstrate how organisational structures, leadership and data collection can support long-term change.

Partnership approaches

In towns, city centres or local communities, local safety partnerships and programmes such as safety charters and night-time strategies can allow a range of stakeholders to contribute to the safety of public spaces.

These schemes can include:

- partnership between public authorities and local businesses
- active bystander training for relevant staff and security workers
- media campaigns aimed at reducing harassment and misogynistic behaviour

These campaigns can have benefits for both places and businesses in terms of improved footfall and spend as well as improved safety.

An example is given in the [Basildon case study](#) in Appendix A.

4. Conclusion

The principles in this document can be used alongside relevant and emerging technical guidance and local evidence. The key takeaway is to embed a gender-informed approach throughout active travel decision-making: understanding women's and girls' different travel patterns and experiences of safety, using local evidence and meaningful engagement, applying inclusive design principles, managing and maintaining routes and facilities effectively, and monitoring outcomes to inform future decisions.

Awareness of how gender can shape people's experiences of active travel is an important first step. Taking action to consider gender throughout the planning, design, delivery and operation of active travel schemes can help create streets and places that are safer and perceived as safer, more accessible and more inclusive.

There is no single intervention or standard approach that will meet the needs of all women and girls.

Following these principles consistently will help make walking, wheeling and cycling safer and more viable choices for women and girls, while helping to create better active travel environments for everyone.



5. Appendix A – Case Studies

This section includes a range of examples across location and scale. The case studies are designed to illustrate some of the ways in which gender-informed approaches can be applied to active travel and are illustrative rather than directly transferable.



5.1 LLDC Olympic Park – Engagement on women's safety

Considering the needs of women, girls and gender diverse people has been central to the London Legacy Development Corporation's work since the 2012 London Olympics, in both the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the surrounding area. This involves planning for both safety and inclusion, and balancing these needs with other requirements such as biodiversity.

The work has included engagement with women across the area on safety, and a consequent lighting audit and strategy. From this work, the underpass at Marshgate Lane was identified as a priority. This was a key link connecting the park with Pudding Mill Station, but was long with poor sightlines which made it feel unsafe.

The decision was to create artwork for the underpass which would improve both wayfinding and the overall sense of safety. The artist Sahra Hersi worked with a group of women and girls who were recruited as co-creators. Over ten half-day workshops, they created a set of designs called 'Fragments of Our Land' which will be installed in the underpass and the area close by.

Because intersecting aspects of identity such as race, disability, religion and sexual or gender identity also impact on feelings of safety, the LLDC conducted early engagement with LGBTQIA+ young people for the Greenway Links project, which aimed to increase safety on active travel routes which connected to Pudding Mill and Marshgate Lane. Working with the project [Perfect Flower](#), they investigated feelings of both safety and connectedness to nature, with the final result being both a set of proposals for the area and a photoshoot after dark which represented their desire for inclusion.

Further information about LLDC's gender mainstreaming guidance is [available](#), and Marshgate Lane Greenway can be found [here](#).

Figure 12: *Perfect Flower*, LLDC.



5.2 Holloway Park, London – Identifying barriers to walking and cycling

Peabody's Holloway Park development in north London is creating over 900 homes on the site of the former women's prison. As part of the engagement process, Social Place and In Her Place worked with a diverse group of women and non-binary people who were recruited (and paid the London Living Wage) as community researchers. In a series of workshops over eight weeks, the group explored a range of issues through the lens of gender, working directly with the architects to incorporate their insights into the design process. All the researchers used active travel, and this formed a key part of the project:

- the design of cycle storage deterred some women from cycling, because the storage areas, often tucked away in the basement with no windows and dark corners, did not feel safe and were sometimes not suitable for storing cargo bikes. The group recommended creating a range of different storage facilities across the site, and ensuring that these had windows or grilles to see out of and in to
- good maintenance of these facilities and others including bin storage was crucial not just to ensuring they would be used, but in creating a more general sense of safety
- new cycle lanes had recently been created in the area. The researchers who cycled welcomed the development but noted that:
 - the new lanes were regularly blocked with cars and waste awaiting collection, with little enforcement
 - they were happy to use some new routes along smaller back roads in the daytime but after dark felt safer on main roads, even if this meant cycling on the busy Holloway Road
 - rental bikes were often too heavy for the researchers to use comfortably
- darkness also affected walking choices, with one researcher using different bus stops, and choosing to walk further after dark to access safer feeling routes
- active frontages on residential buildings could enhance the sense of safety, and particular usages such as supermarkets
 - with glass frontages and extended open hours – offered more benefits

Many of their findings fell outside the remit of the development, but provided important insights about active travel in the local area:

- the group identified a wide range of barriers where they lived including:
 - poorly maintained footways
 - insufficient or bad lighting and poor sightlines
 - barriers intended to deter motorbikes making green spaces difficult to access, in particular for one researcher with young children who used a double pushchair
- as part of the work, the researchers analysed their regular journeys in terms of trip chaining, which demonstrated a clear link between caring responsibilities and more complex journey patterns

The long-form approach of the workshops gave time for learning and discussion on both sides. This meant that the researchers were able to give detailed feedback to the architectural team, and to be very specific in the barriers they identified in the wider area. For example, they identified one narrow alleyway, where a lighting intervention designed to make it feel safer had actually had the opposite effect by creating areas of contrast.

The full report is available on the In Her Place [website](#).

5.3 Walk Wheel Cycle Trust – Lighting on the Spen Valley Greenway, West Yorkshire

The Spen Valley Greenway is a 7.3 mile long route in West Yorkshire that connects several towns to Low Moor railway station in Bradford.

As such it is well-used for both leisure and commuting, but the route was unlit. Engagement revealed that only 19% of users felt that it was safe after dark, and this was a particular issue for women and girls.

Working with Kirklees and Bradford Council, the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust has both widened the path and installed lighting along one particularly busy section to improve safety.

“The greenway path feels very unsafe in the dark winter months because there's no path lighting. It cuts off huge usage in the winter because of that reason.”



5.4 Basildon, Essex – Safety Charter

Basildon Council has taken a wide-ranging approach to improving the safety of women and girls in the town centre. A Safer Basildon Partnership has been created, whose work includes a safety audit of the main shopping centre, along with detailed engagement work with women and girls to identify tangible improvements to the public realm that would improve safety, and a co-design project with teenage girls to create facilities for them.

An important part of this is the Basildon Safety Charter. Local businesses and organisations sign up to the charter to be a 'Safe Space' which prioritises the safety of women and girls. This requires them to:

- have a member of staff specifically responsible for safety
- train staff in creating a safe space for women and an inclusive culture
- display media which sets expectations of behaviour, both in person and online
- make changes to physical spaces to enhance safety where possible
- implement equality policies
- signpost people to help where appropriate

They are provided with a wide range of resources to help them do this, from displays and leaflets for the public to training and information on signposting and auditing spaces.

The aim is to make the safety of women and girls the responsibility of the whole community, and a wide range of businesses and organisations have joined the scheme. Similar charters are also in place in a wide range of other towns and cities.

Further information is available on the [council website](#), and [YouTube](#) channel.

Figure 16: Karen Whybro, karenwhybro@gmail.com.



5.5 Tower Hamlets, London – Local Plan

As part of the development of its local plan, London Borough of Tower Hamlets produced an evidence base on gender and inclusion in the borough. The project was called 'This is for the Majority', on the basis that designing for women and girls creates places that work better for all residents.

The process of creating the evidence base began with street interviews across the borough, to identify primary themes. This was followed by more structured workshops, digital walks and surveys, with input from a total of 440 women, girls and non-binary people from diverse backgrounds. The result was an evidence base that aimed to go beyond ideas of safety and unsafety, aiming for a built environment that is equitable and welcoming to all.

The report contains a wide range of recommendations around safety, activation and community building, with a number of insights relevant to active travel:

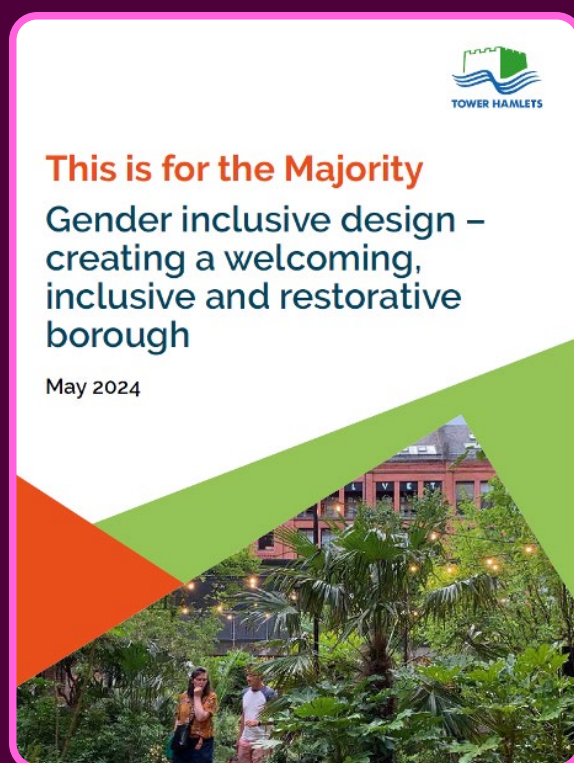
- connected walking routes were seen as important
- wider footways benefit respondents with children and wheelchair users
- a preference for separated cycle tracks
- respondents were supportive of existing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods as adding to their overall sense of safety
- during the day, the majority of respondents actively chose greener walking routes if possible, including parks, streets with front gardens and open spaces
- respondents often took different routes after dark, prioritising well-lit and busy areas with active frontages

- canal towpaths were seen as less safe than other green spaces, particularly at night
- shared pedestrian and cycle routes were perceived as being difficult to use with young children
- the voices of women, girls, and non-binary people need to be heard at an early stage in the design process
- the attitude of some male cyclists was a significant barrier preventing respondents from cycling themselves

The impact of the evidence base is not just in its specific insights and recommendations, however. It also ensures that the needs of women and girls are foregrounded in the local plan, and so embedded in every relevant policy.

Link to [This is for the Majority](#) report and [local plan](#).

Figure 17: Tower Hamlets.



5.6 Redbridge, London – Co-designing a pedestrian bridge

A small parcel of land was identified by Redbridge Council as the site for both a pocket park and the landing point for a new bridge for walking, wheeling and cycling that would cross under the North Circular and over the river Roding. This new connection would open up access from central Ilford via existing paths to the nearby greenspace of Wanstead Flats, creating better connections to green and blue infrastructure in an area currently short of both.

Recognising that women and girls are often under-represented in shaping the public realm, the project adopted a co-clienting process, facilitated by the consultancy Diverse Dialogues.

Co-clienting is a method for enabling community involvement from the outset of a project, with local stakeholders co-creating the brief rather than responding to proposals. In this case, a group of young women aged 16-25 who live, work, or regularly visit Ilford, co-produced design briefs for the bridge and the pocket park and a lighting strategy.

The project also engaged teenage girls from The Ursuline Academy Ilford, who learned about bridge design, while the co-clients learned relevant technical guidance and how to balance their desires for safety and aesthetics for the project with the council's agreed budget. This process supported skills-building and confidence and ensured that their voice was heard from the outset.

The co-client group had regular meetings with the design team, led by Periscope, to provide iterative feedback on evolving ideas. They also conducted site visits to existing bridges at Canada Water and the Olympic Park.

The co-clienting process revealed how some regulations around bridge design did not take the needs of young women into account. For example, the height of the potential barrier was an issue. The standard requirement is for a minimum of 1.4m if people cycled across the bridge, but for many of the group, this was eye level, making them feel potentially enclosed and disconnected from the river.

A range of design solutions were explored, including asking cyclists to dismount and including cut outs in the barrier. The end result was a transparent design that included a flared top section to improve visibility out onto the river.

Building on the success of this stage, the co-clienting approach will be continued in the delivery of this project.

The project was co-funded by L B Redbridge and the Mayor of London through the Civic Partnership programme.

View the [report](#) on the first stage of the project.



Credit: David Mirzoeff.



Credit: Periscope.

6. Appendix B – Transport and planning policy

- **Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026)** states that development proposals should include spaces that are safe, secure, inclusive, and accessible for all ages and abilities, including for groups such as women and girls; and should ensure that the arrangement of streets and other routes help to create places that are safe, inclusive and attractive for all users, particularly for women and girls, for other groups who may be vulnerable to crime or the fear of crime, and for those with limited mobility
- **Department for Transport's third cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS3) (2026)** sets out the government's vision and objectives for active travel. This highlights that safety remains the main barrier preventing more people from walking, wheeling and cycling, especially for women and children, and aims to decrease the percentage of people citing personal safety concerns when travelling actively
- **Department for Transport's Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport (2026)** sets out the government's ambition for transport systems that are accessible, safe and designed around people's everyday lives. It reinforces that everyone should feel and be safe while travelling, and that the street environment plays a critical role, forming the first and last part of most journeys. It sets a clear expectation that inclusive, safe and accessible environments must be prioritised across the whole network
- **Department for Transport's Local Transport Plan (LTP) guidance (2026)** explains how local transport authorities (LTAs) should prepare statutory local transport plans. The guidance encourages local authorities to consider what policies can be introduced to improve personal safety on transport and women and girls' safety when developing transport strategies and investment programmes. It also includes "representative of women's groups" in the suggested list of stakeholders for local transport authorities to consult
- **Department for Transport's Road Safety Strategy (2026)** sets out plans to improve road safety. It highlights the role of safer roads, speeds and vehicles in protecting people walking, wheeling and cycling, helping to address road danger and safety concerns that can disproportionately affect women's travel choices

7. Appendix C – Resources

These resources cover a wide range of issues and approaches, from manuals on gender mainstreaming to design guidance on infrastructure and introductions to gender budgeting.

- The London Legacy Development Corporation – [Creating Places That Work for Women and Girls handbook](#)
- The Safer Parks Consortium (UK) – [Safer Parks Guidance](#)
- Atkins – [Getting Home Safely](#)
- The City of Edinburgh Council – [Street Design – Women’s Safety](#)
- Active Travel England – [A best practice guide to community consultation and engagement](#)
- Active Travel England – [Planning for active places](#)
- Active Travel England – [Scheme design and review tools](#)
- Mayor of London – [Safety in Public Space for Women](#)
- Leah Gerber – [Toolkit for Gender Inclusive Mobility Planning](#)
- Greater Manchester Moving – [Right to the Streets Toolkit](#)
- City of Vienna – [Gender Mainstreaming handbook](#)
- Safety Audit Tools:
 - We Made That – [Women’s Safety Audits](#)
 - UN Habitat – [Women’s Safety Audits: What Works and Where](#)
 - The City of Edinburgh Council – [Women’s Safety Audit Proforma](#)
- [Guidance on Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- Town and Country Planning Association – [Guidance on EqlAs and planning](#)
- Women’s Budget Group – [Gender Budgeting Resources](#)
- [Women in Transport](#)
- [Women in Planning](#)
- Arup/University of Liverpool – [Cities Alive: Designing Cities that Work for Women](#)
- UN Women – [Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results](#)

8. Definitions

Active travel

This means travel using walking, wheeling and cycling, including when these form part of a longer journey using public transport, often at the start and end of that journey (often called first and last mile journeys).

Care work

Includes both direct care activities such as feeding a baby or nursing a family member, as well as indirect care like cooking and cleaning, and is often unpaid.

Gender budgeting

This analyses budgets through a gender lens to ensure resources are allocated equitably. It helps assess the equity impacts of financial decisions, identifying whether investments reduce or exacerbate inequalities.

Gender equality

A human rights issue that refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all genders.

Intersectionality

The way in which race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination 'intersect' to create specific effects, that often amplify discrimination.

Protected characteristics

Under the Equality Act (2010) it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are referred to as protected characteristics.

Safety

In this document, safety is used to mean women and girls' freedom from violence, harassment, intimidation and abuse, and their ability to travel and use public spaces confidently and without fear. Women and girls' intersectional lived experiences and perception of safety are treated as the primary measure of whether a place feels safe, recognising that these experiences directly influence how they access active travel.

VAWG

Violence against women and girls covers a wide range of crime types and behaviours that are disproportionately experienced by women and perpetrated by men. VAWG crimes and behaviours include but are not limited to: domestic abuse; stalking; sexual violence, including rape and other sexual offences; sexual harassment; 'honour'-based abuse (HBA), including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM); online and technology-facilitated abuse, including 'cyberflashing' and non-consensual intimate image abuse; fatal VAWG, including domestic homicides, femicides, and suicides and sudden or unexplained deaths that occur in the context of abuse; sexual exploitation, including in relation to prostitution and human trafficking; spiking.⁸

As noted in the Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy, while anyone can be subjected to these crimes and behaviours, data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected. For example, in the year ending March 2025, the proportion of women who were victims of:

- sexual assault was four times higher than the proportion of men (3.0% vs 0.7%)
- domestic abuse, was higher than the proportion of men (9.1% vs 6.5%)
- stalking was over double the proportion of men (4.0% vs 1.8%)
- sexual harassment was two and a half times higher than for men (6.2% vs 2.5%)³³

Women and girls

Used inclusively in this document to include trans women. Many of the recommendations made in this introduction apply also to those with non-binary or gender diverse identities.



33. Office for National Statistics, 2025, Homicide in England and Wales, as stated in [Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls](#)



Active
Travel
England