

TInnGO

Transport
Innovation
Gender
Observatory

Comparative research into female
employment in the Smart Mobility
(SM) ecosystem. The taxi sector

ITENE

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DISCLAIMER:

This study has been conducted within the framework of Task 9.1 Identification of current and future issues in the employment of women in Smart Mobility (SM.) This task was led by UCPH and the partners working on it were SC, VTM, LEVER and ITENE. The case study assigned to ITENE was the taxi sector while the other partners analysed other sectors.

Acknowledgements

The assistance provided by taxi drivers was greatly appreciated. Thank you very much for your contributions in the interviews.

ABSTRACT

It is well - known that women are generally under-represented in some technical fields, as it is the specific case of the transport sector. This lack of balance gender-wise is even more visible in the taxi industry, leading to a gender gap that should be filled in the next years.

Flexibility, loyal customer network and friendly environment are some of the opportunities highlighted in the study. Besides, entry barriers are also outlined, like the initial investment, misunderstandings between colleagues at the beginning and shortage of communication skills.

All the findings derive from real women who have been working in the industry for more than ten years, so that the evolution of the taxi sector from a gender point of view has been also considered and explained through real lived experiences.

In the present study, an exhaustive analysis of the situation of the Spanish taxi sector is presented and analyzed. Based on real interviews to female taxi drivers, the main opportunities, and entry barriers and obstacles of working in the taxi sector are collected and used to assess how the transport sector fits the key needs of the interviewees and favor the work-life balance.

All data regarding the city and participants to the case study are kept anonymous.

This analysis is done in the framework of the European project TIInnGO which main objective is to create a framework and mechanisms for a sustainable game change in European transport through a transformative strategy of gender and diversity sensitive smart mobility.

1. Description of the national context in the transport sector and interviewer presentation

1.1. Description of the national context in the transport sector

The transport sector in Spain is made up of many small companies. Following the data provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) based on the national classification of economic activities (CNAE), 5.2% of working people are employed in the transport sector. 19.35% are female and 80.65% are men. The following graph¹ shows the evolution of the number of people working in the industry over the last 10 years and the differences between male and female employees.



The evolution of the transport sector has only undergone minor fluctuations over the last decade. 2019 was the year with the highest volume of workers, with 829,200 male employees and 198,900 female employees, whilst 2013 was the year with the smallest number of workers, with 690,300 male workers and 147,400 female workers.

The following table² shows a breakdown by different transport areas, with women accounting for between 11% - 44% of the jobs depending on the sector:

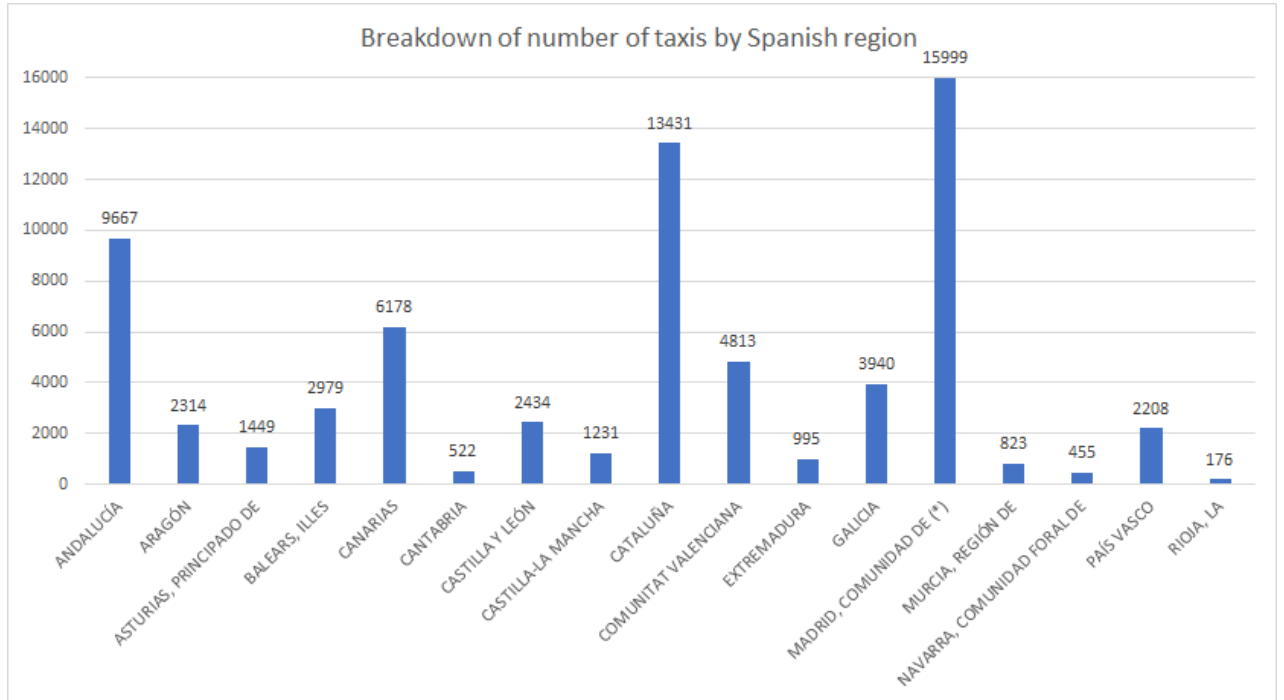
2019	Both	Men	Women
Road and pipeline transport	599,700	531,300	68,400
Maritime and inland waterway transport	25,600	18,400	7,200
Air transport	56,500	31,600	24,900
Storage and related transport activities	227,800	168,500	59,300
Postal and courier activities	118,500	79,300	39,100
Total	1,028,100	829,200	198,900

¹ National Statistics Institute (INE)

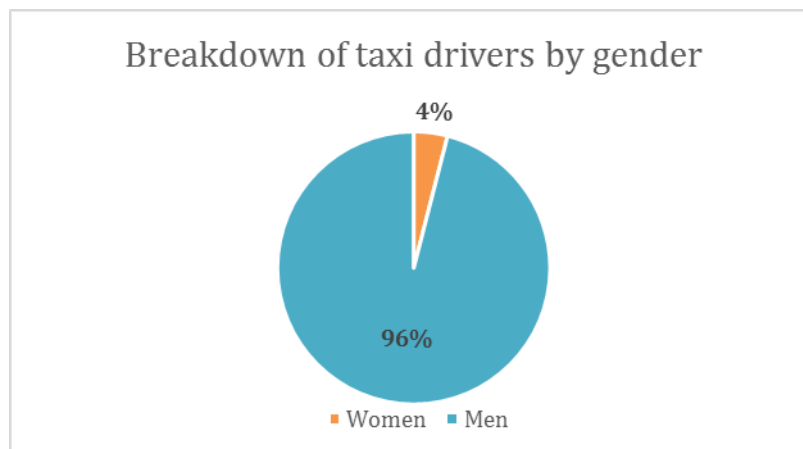
² National Statistics Institute (INE)

1.2. Description of the taxi sector

The case study performed in Spain has been included in the road transport sector and has concentrated specifically on the taxi sector. There are a total of 69,792 taxis in Spain. The graph below shows how many taxis there are in the different regions of Spain, with Madrid having the largest taxi fleet and La Rioja the smallest.



Only 4%³ of taxi drivers in Spain are women. The taxi industry is a traditional, male-dominated profession. Nevertheless, the number of women working in this sector has increased in a small but significant way over the years. From a cultural point of view, around 50% of taxi drivers are Spanish and the other 50% are foreigners, implying that multiculturality in the sector is very high.



³ Infotaxi.net

In the city where the interviews took place there are approximately 3,000 taxi licences. Less than 10% of these licences belong to female taxi drivers. There are around 5,000 taxi drivers in total, because around 2,000 licences have two drivers.



The majority of taxi drivers in Spain are self-employed people who work using their own vehicles. However, some taxi drivers are salaried employees and work for other self-employed taxi drivers using their employer's taxis. In these cases, the salaried employee gives their boss a fixed percentage of the money earned during their working day based on the number of rides they pick up.

Taxis are a public service that is regulated by local councils. Therefore, each region has a different way of working, with a different regulatory framework, days of rest and hours worked. In this sense, the conditions for both male and female taxi drivers are the same.

Taxi drivers are usually members of taxi associations which support them in administrative tasks. In order to book a taxi, the clients (taxi users) can contact a taxi booking company which will look for the closest taxi driver available to assign the requested ride. Taxi drivers have to register with these booking companies first before they can be assigned rides and customers.

1.3. Interviewer presentation

The interviewers were Javier Moya, Margherita Colleoni and Mireia Calvo, all of whom are ITENE consultants. ITENE is the company in charge of the Spanish hub in the TInnGO project. The case study was written by the interviewers.

2. Case study analysis

2.1. Description of interviewees

A total of seven female taxi drivers were interviewed. In the document, they are identified with the numbers Interviewee 1 to Interviewee 7. All of them are self-employed workers in Spain, owning their taxi licences and vehicles. Six of the interviewees were Spanish and one was from another European country. Most of them have been working in the taxi sector for more than 10 years. They are experienced taxi drivers mainly working in the city centre and they have seen how the sector has changed over the years.

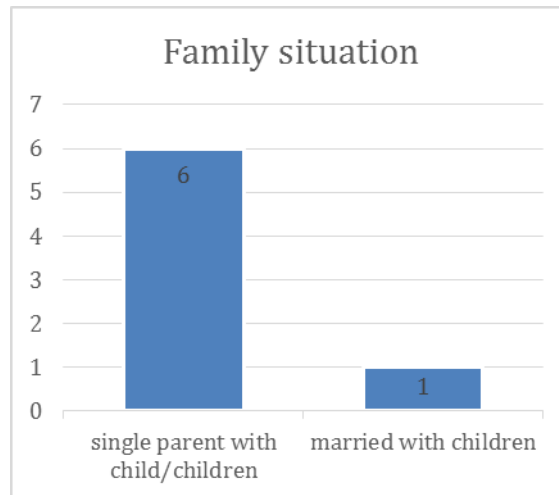


Fig. 1: Family situation

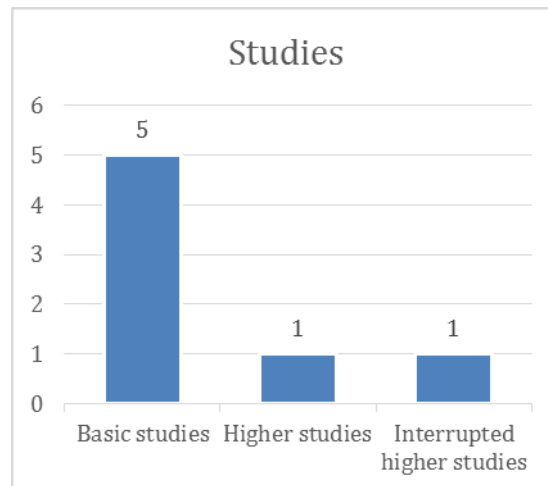


Fig. 2: Study qualifications of the female taxi drivers

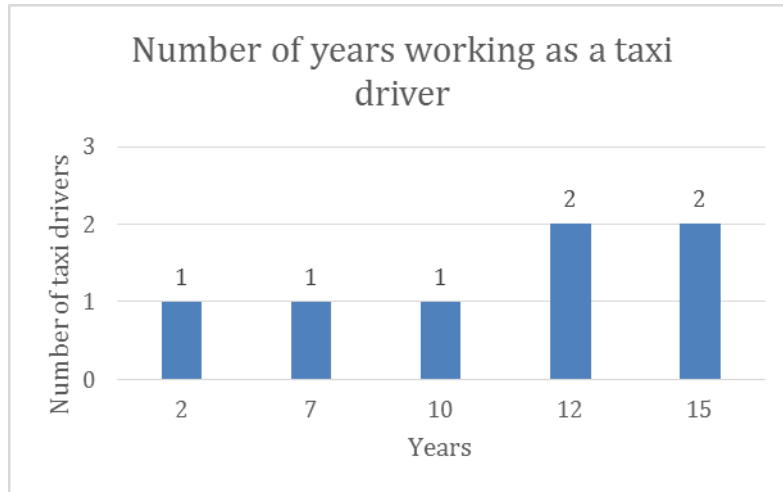


Fig. 3: Years working as a taxi driver

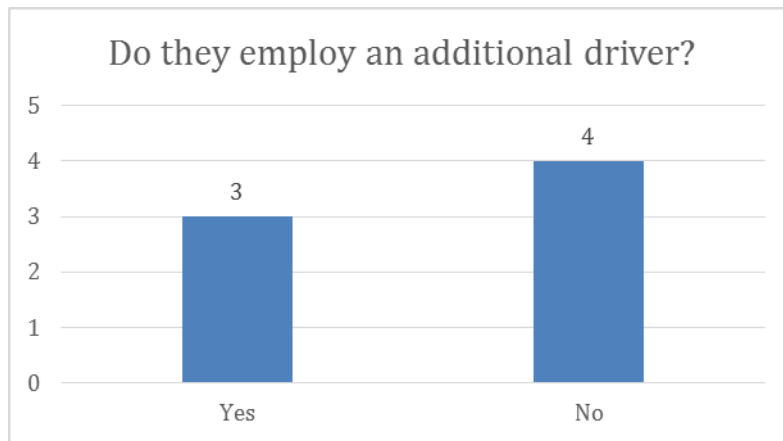


Fig. 4: Review of the taxi employer situation.

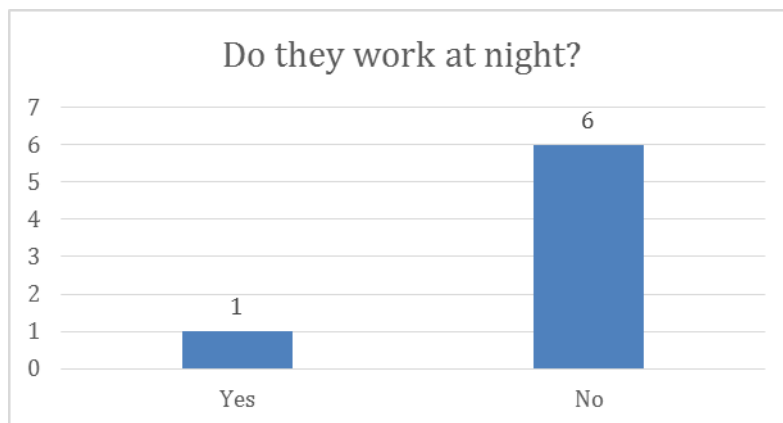


Fig. 5: Female taxi driver night shifts

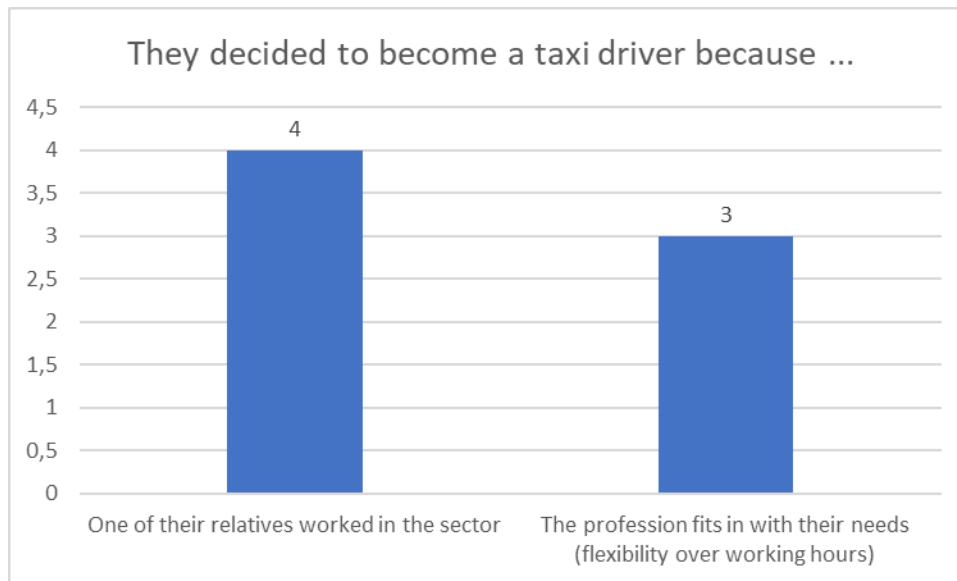


Fig. 6: Main reasons for choosing to work in the taxi industry

2.2. Findings about opportunities in the company

Most of our interviewees chose to work in the taxi industry because of family commitments so they could organise their own working timetable. This is easy for them in the sense that if they cannot work on a specific day, they simply do not work and make up the lost time on another day. Interviewee 7 remarked that there is more work at the weekend, and less from Monday to Friday, which means she can take care of her children easily. All the interviewees agreed that being a taxi driver and owner of the taxi licence is a very flexible job that enables them to combine work and family commitments. They have all been working mothers, so they know how important it is to be free of *“getting out of the office because my kid has the flu”*. The work-life balance is crucial for all of them. In addition, Interviewee 3 pointed out that driving a taxi allows you to recover quickly from a problem at work because it is usually related to damage on the car and it is quickly solvable.

Four of the interviewees had relatives working as taxi drivers so they were already familiar with the sector. For example, Interviewee 3 shares her licence with her husband, so two people operate under one licence, doubling income. In addition, Interviewee 7 has encouraged her children to get their taxi driver licence so they have extra options to earn money if they need it and can get some extra income whilst they are studying. In fact, Interviewee 4's son already works as a taxi driver.

All the interviewees had previous experience of working in other sectors. Three of the interviewees were very happy working as a taxi driver and one of them admitted that *being a taxi driver was her dream job*. The other four interviewees still dreamed of their ideal job but due to their age or due to the money they needed to make their dream come true, it was not feasible, so they have decided to keep working as a taxi driver until they retire. An easy solution is to hire another driver, so they have more time for themselves. In fact, four of them already have one.

All of them value the daily contact they have with the people they meet in their job. Most of the experiences whilst driving have been enjoyable and most users are glad to see a woman as a taxi driver. In fact, they remarked that *foreigners are more surprised than Spaniards when they see a female taxi driver*. For example, Interviewee 3 says that *in her country she would have not worked as a taxi driver because of the lack of safety. On the other hand, many women there usually drive buses*.

Customer-wise, all of them had had different kinds of experiences, including users who preferred to use their taxi because they felt that taxis belonging to women are cleaner. Customers also remarked that female taxi drivers are safer drivers and they feel more comfortable and more secure in these situations. In our respondents' opinions, the fact of being a woman makes other users more confident when they take a taxi.

All the respondents affirmed that female taxi drivers gain customer loyalty. Interviewee 7 explained that she had loyal customers that called her once or twice a year for different trips. In addition, one of these loyal customers hired her to take their children alone to school in her taxi.

Other users admire their driving style because they are calmer at the wheel than their male colleagues and pay more attention to traffic on the roads. One of the users confessed to one of the respondents: *"My husband gets hysterical in the car and we get there later than when we go with you, as you always keep calm."*

Our interviewees explained that some taxis (all of the respondents included here) have a purple ribbon on their taxi aerial: this is an initiative promoted by some taxi drivers which means that if a woman feels unsafe or she has been a victim of gender violence and needs to go somewhere, she can take any taxi with this ribbon and the taxi service will be free to ensure she reaches her new location. These kinds of initiatives are common in the taxi industry: they also have stickers against gender violence. Only one of our interviewees has had to provide this type of service. The other interviewees have never come across this kind of situation although they have the ribbon on their taxis.

2.3. Findings about barriers in the industry

The general impression is that the taxi sector is a male-dominated environment. At the beginning, many of the respondents had to put up with a range of comments about being female. Interviewee 3 admitted that when she started this job, she had several run-ins with colleagues. For example, during her first year, a colleague told her that she should not be a taxi driver because she was a woman. Our interviewee defended herself by replying *"I am just doing the job that your son doesn't want."* Ever since, she has never had a problem with this colleague again. Interviewee 6 had an argument with another colleague, who claimed that *driving a taxi was not a job for women*. Currently, the relationship with their male colleagues is very good, because they have accepted that women can work as taxi drivers. All of them agreed that they work in an international environment, in terms of customers and

colleagues. The taxi sector comprises a range of different cultures and people, all of whom share the same difficulties and opportunities.

The basic condition for acceptance is to abide by the rules of work: do not overtake a colleague on the inside, do not work on your rest days, respect the queue. Respect is gained by working according to the rules.

Surprisingly, some of them have experienced rejection by female customers. Interviewee 7 described one specific case that happened to her: she was the first taxi in the queue and two women went directly to the taxi directly behind that of our respondent, because it was driven by a male taxi driver. The male colleague explained that they needed to take the first taxi in the queue (our respondent's taxi), but astonishingly the users refused to go with a female taxi driver. The male taxi driver calmly answered: *"If you don't want her as a taxi driver, I am not going to provide you with the service either"*. Our respondent only discovered this fact some time later, when her colleague told her what he had said. She really appreciated his support. Interviewee 6 also had a small misunderstanding with a customer that she had to pick up at a railway station. The customer had requested a taxi service, and when he saw that a female taxi driver was waiting for him, he claimed that the booking service should have notified him that the taxi driver was going to be a woman instead of a man.

One of the barriers identified is that as a self-employed person if you do not work for any reason, you do not earn any money. On the other hand, one of the requirements highlighted to improve and be more comfortable with foreigners is that taxi drivers would like to receive English-speaking courses to improve their communication skills, better than the general basic courses they have received so far.

One of the obstacles of this profession is the fact that you need to like driving. Interviewee 7 confessed that when she was younger, she hated driving because it made her nervous, but that she had been able to overcome her fears and now she enjoys driving on a daily basis. Not being a confident driver could be a barrier, but in this case, it made this driver face and tackle her fears.

In spite of all these specific anecdotes, these female drivers do not have issues on a daily basis and most are very happy and glad to be taxi drivers.

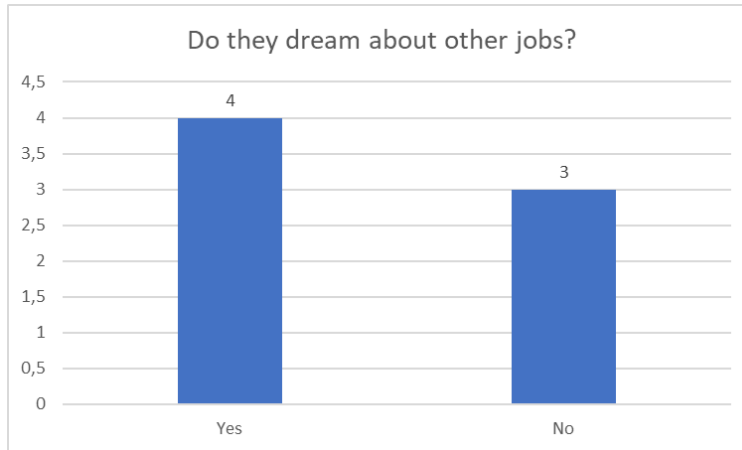


Fig. 7: Review of the dreamed jobs.

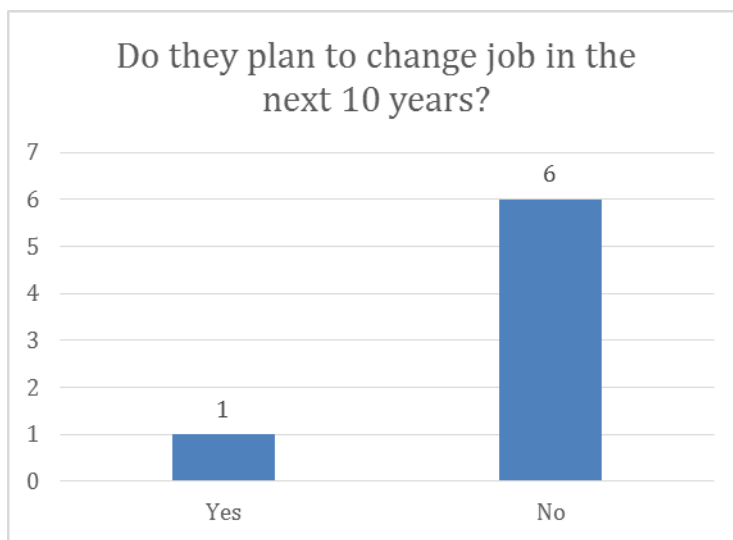


Fig. 8: Future intentions

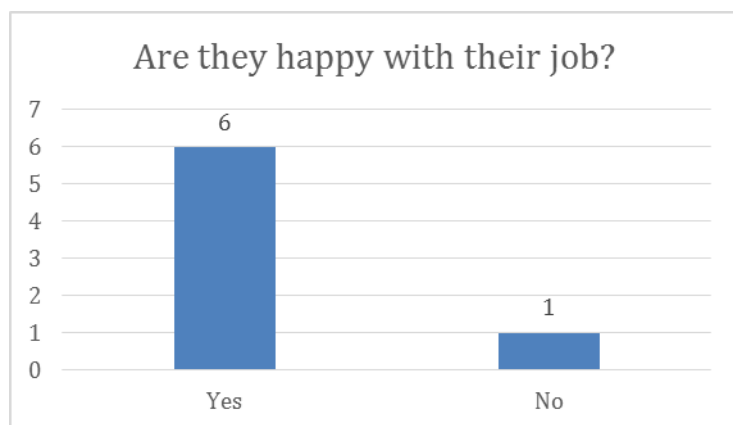


Fig. 9: Satisfaction with their current job (taxi driver)

CONCLUSIONS

The Spanish taxi industry has been traditionally a masculinised transport sector and still only the 4% of the taxi drivers are women. Despite the high entry investment to purchase both taxi license and vehicle, the growing opportunities offered by this field make this job more and more appealing for women, mostly because it favours the work life balance and allows the employees to coordinate properly their daily duties. The family support, one of the key reasons to start working in this industry, also allows to take an advantage of one taxi license, increasing the family income. The friendly work environment makes female drivers feel supported, gender independent. The multicultural environment helps them to know and respect other cultures, adopting many different points of views of the situations they live on the road. Thanks to their patience and calm driving the interviewees have been able to build a loyal customers network that trust them and their way of driving. Moreover, the sector offers the opportunity to support gender initiatives in order to help citizens in difficult situations.

In conclusion, the interviewees are pleased to work as a taxi driver since this job gives them the chance to have regular incomes and run a family at the same time. Although the sector is still highly male - dominated, more women are expected to join the taxi industry in the next years, reducing the gender gap that is currently affecting the transport sector.

ANNEX 1: Interview questions

Seven female taxi drivers were interviewed. The questions posed are listed below.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Overview	Number of employees, gender balance, the year of founding, the location (city, country)
Affiliation	
Background information	Name Location Family status Education Job position Length of employment in current company
Career path – from education to current job	Can you describe the steps taken from your education to the position you are in now, including why you chose to work in the transport sector?
Current opportunities in employment. These might include areas such as opportunities for promotion, use of skills, salary increases, further education or training, family-friendly workplace, etc.	Please describe your opportunities for promotion or changing positions in your current place of employment. Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time? (workwise). Is this your dream job? If you could choose your ideal job (not taking money into account) what would you like to do? (The answer can include not working)
Current barriers for employment. These might include areas such as opportunities for promotion, use of skills, salary increases, further education or training, family-friendly workplace, etc.	Is there anything holding you back from your ideal job (related to the question above)? How realistic it is that you will be working in your dream job (answer above) in 10 years' time? What would work against this?

<p>Work-life balance</p>	<p>How do you manage the balance between family/private life and work? Do you find it tricky or is it easy for you? Would another position, such as your dream job in 10 years' time, make the balance easier or more difficult?</p>
<p>Closing the interview</p>	<p>Thank you very much for your input. I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything else you would like to add?</p>
<p>Further questions to be asked to people working in managerial roles</p>	<p>How do you see your organisation in terms of diversity? Do you see a so-called glass ceiling for any types of people (gender, age, ethnicity, disability) in your field of work?</p>

TinnGO is funded by the European Horizon 2020 programme. Its objective, led by **Coventry University**, is to promote the participation of women in the transport sector in the European Union. The project began in December 2018 and is set to run for three years.



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