

## Confronting Biases to Attract and Retain Women

Globally, women account for half of the working age population. In the transit industry, they are underrepresented at every level of employment. The shortage is not due to a lack of ambition or educational attainment, but to persistent barriers that hold women back.

The challenge goes beyond representation in numbers. It is also the insidious marginalization and associated behaviors that drive away current and potential female employees. Women are more likely to be questioned, doubted, and scrutinized, despite their expertise or experience. They are excluded from mentoring relationships that evolve from men sharing common interests with other men. Women are also expected to justify their roles and prove themselves to levels not expected of their male colleagues.

As industry leaders, we have an obligation to examine our individual and organizational biases, identify marginalization when it is happening, and put a stop to it. We can start by giving voice to women at the table, listening to what they share, and amplifying their ideas. We can insist that women have equal opportunities for development and promotion within our organizations. We can also pause to consider whether our expectations of women are applied in the same manner for men in the same position. Collectively, we can finally begin to change the experience of women in our industry and capitalize on the abundance of perspectives they bring.

Workforce development and retention continues to be one of UITP's focus areas in North America and worldwide. With agencies facing attrition and a lack of qualified candidates willing to work in public transportation, why would we throw away the opportunity to work with 50% of our potential workforce?



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