

Gender & Active Transportation

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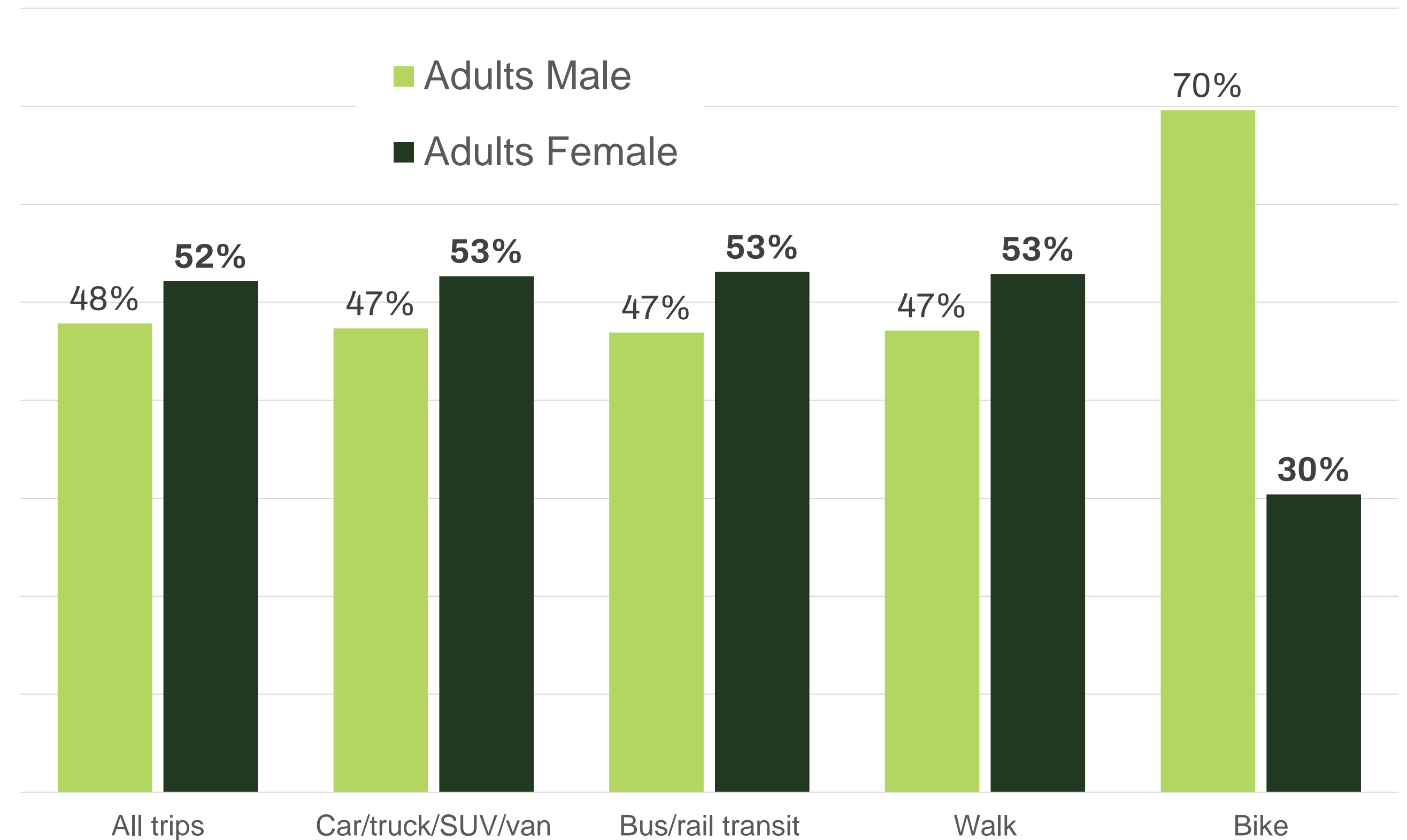


There is a gender gap in travel modes...

But only for bicycling

Data are from the 2017 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS).

- Of all the trips made by adults by any mode, 52% are made by women.
- Of all the bicycle trips made by adults, 30% are made by women.
- Pattern is similar across races and Hispanic/Latino origin
- Pattern is similar by age, though bicycling and walking drops for age 65+ for both genders

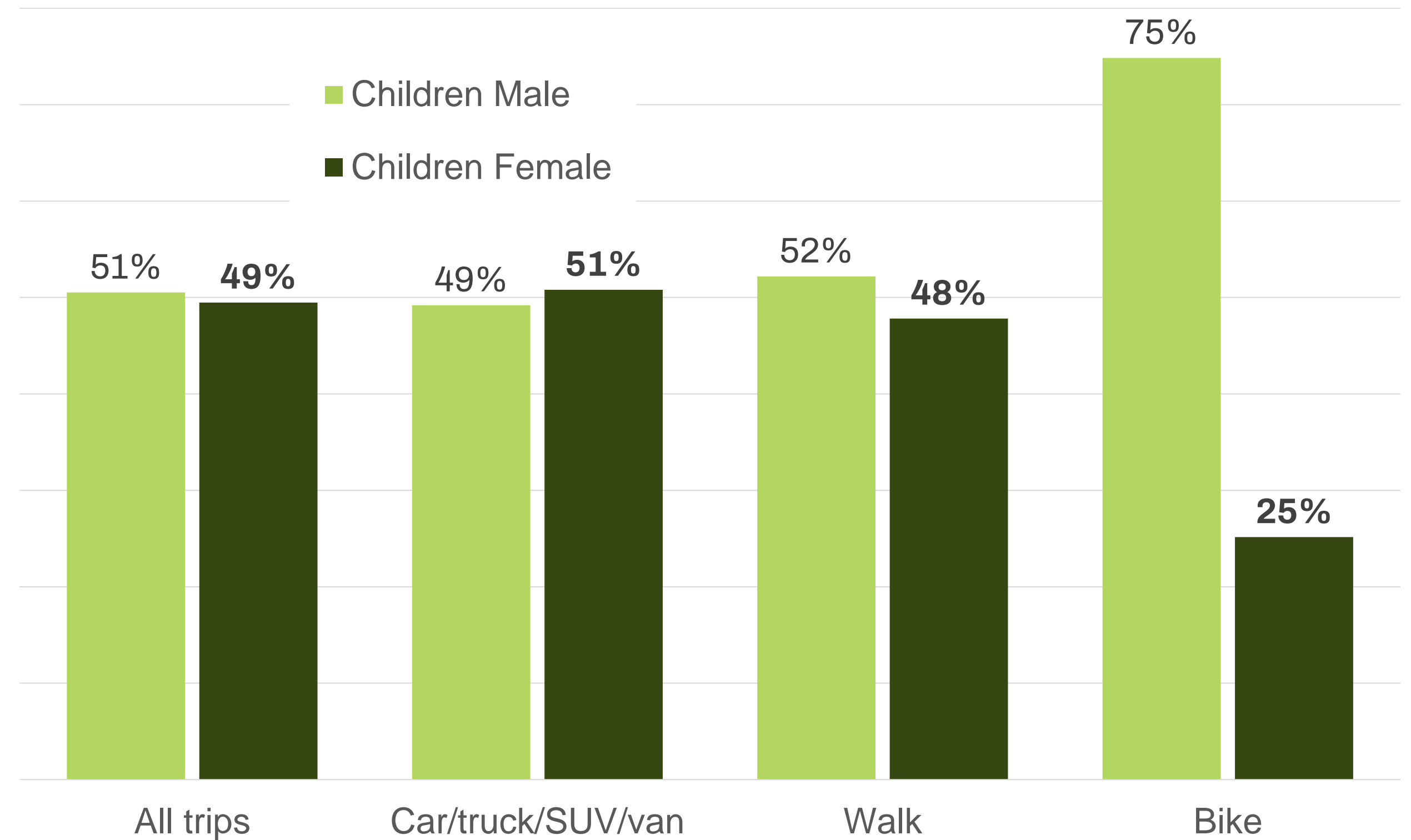
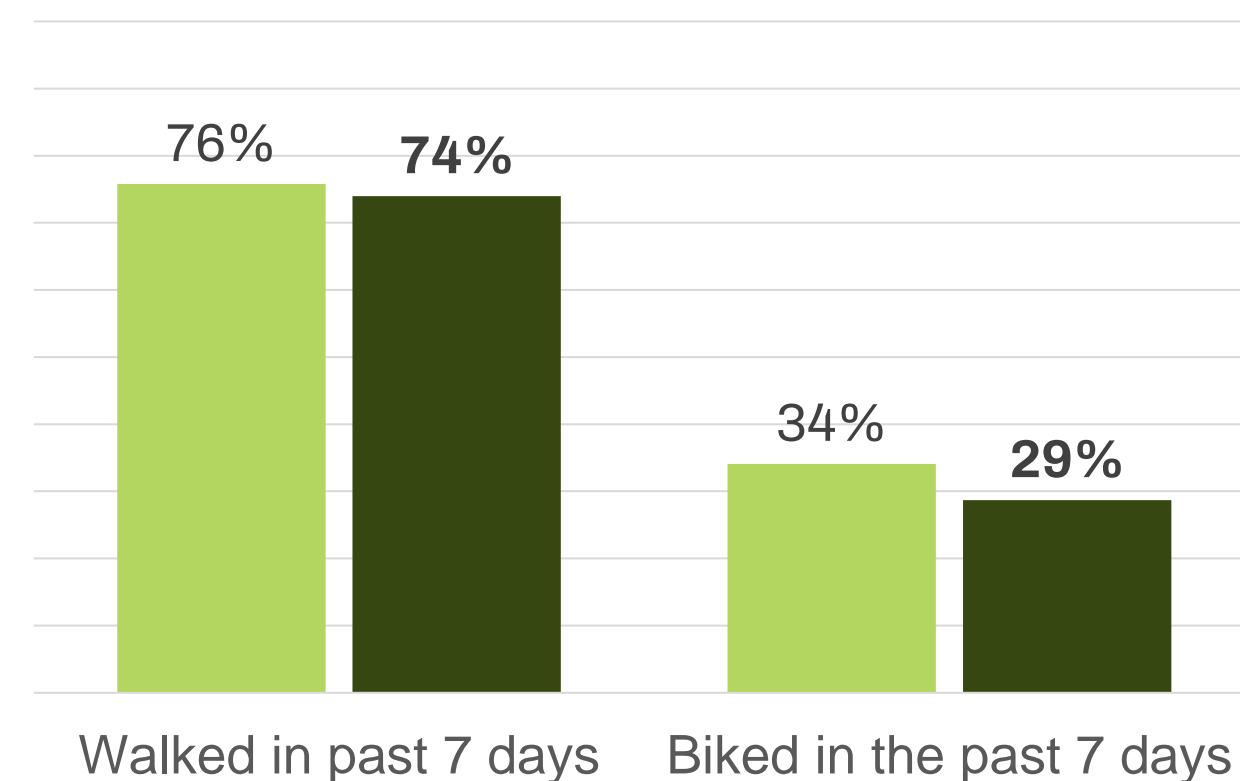


Similar for children (<18)

But also, a small gap in walking trips

Data are from the 2017 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS).

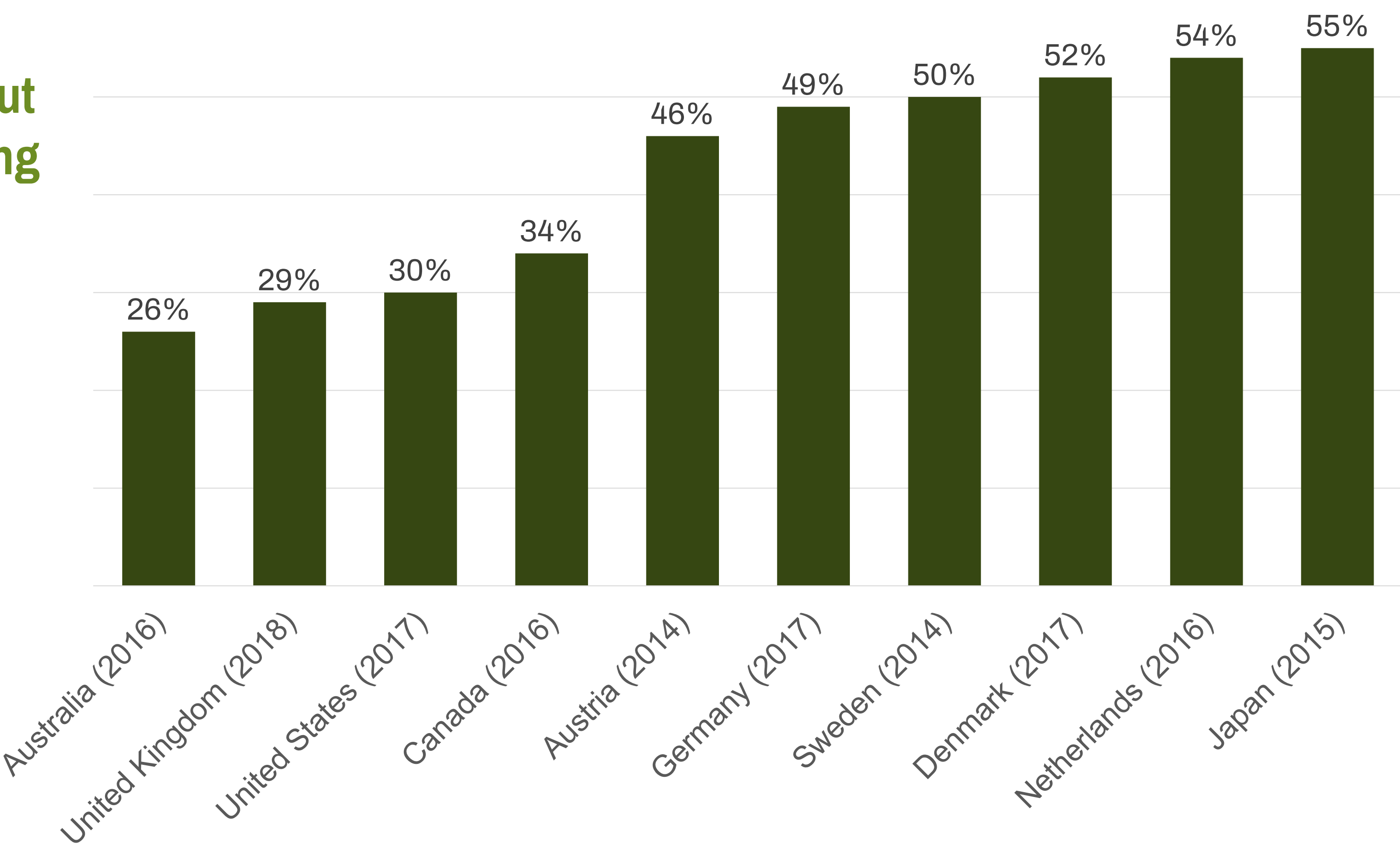
- Difference is not quite as stark when looking at the share of girls v. boys who bicycled in the past 7 days – 29% of girls and 34% of boys.



Not similar in other countries

% of bicycle trips made by women is about even in countries with high rates of cycling overall.

Data are from figure 1.1 in Buehler & Pucher (eds), *Cycling for Sustainable Cities*, 2020



Why do women bike less?

(and why don't they walk more?)

1

Safety



2

Other travel constraints



Traffic safety

Reasons for not bicycling

	Women	Men
I do not feel safe because of traffic	48%	34%
Too few bike lanes or trails	43%	35%

Reasons for not walking

	Women	Men
I do not feel safe because of traffic	26%	18%
Too few sidewalks or trails	30%	26%

Source: NAR®-PSU Transportation & Community Priorities Survey, 2015.
Sample from the 50 largest metro areas.

Personal safety

Reasons for not bicycling

	Women	Men
I do not feel safe because of crime	21%	13%

Reasons for not walking

	Women	Men
I do not feel safe because of crime	27%	15%

Personal safety

Nationally, 65% of women reported experiencing at least one type of street harassment in their lifetimes, compared to 25% of men. For women, anger experienced from harassers is often sexualized (Stop Street Harassment, 2014). Transgender persons are also disproportionately affected by street harassment.

There is evidence that women in poor neighborhoods and women of color often experience higher levels of fear than white women (C. T. Brown & Sinclair, 2017; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014).

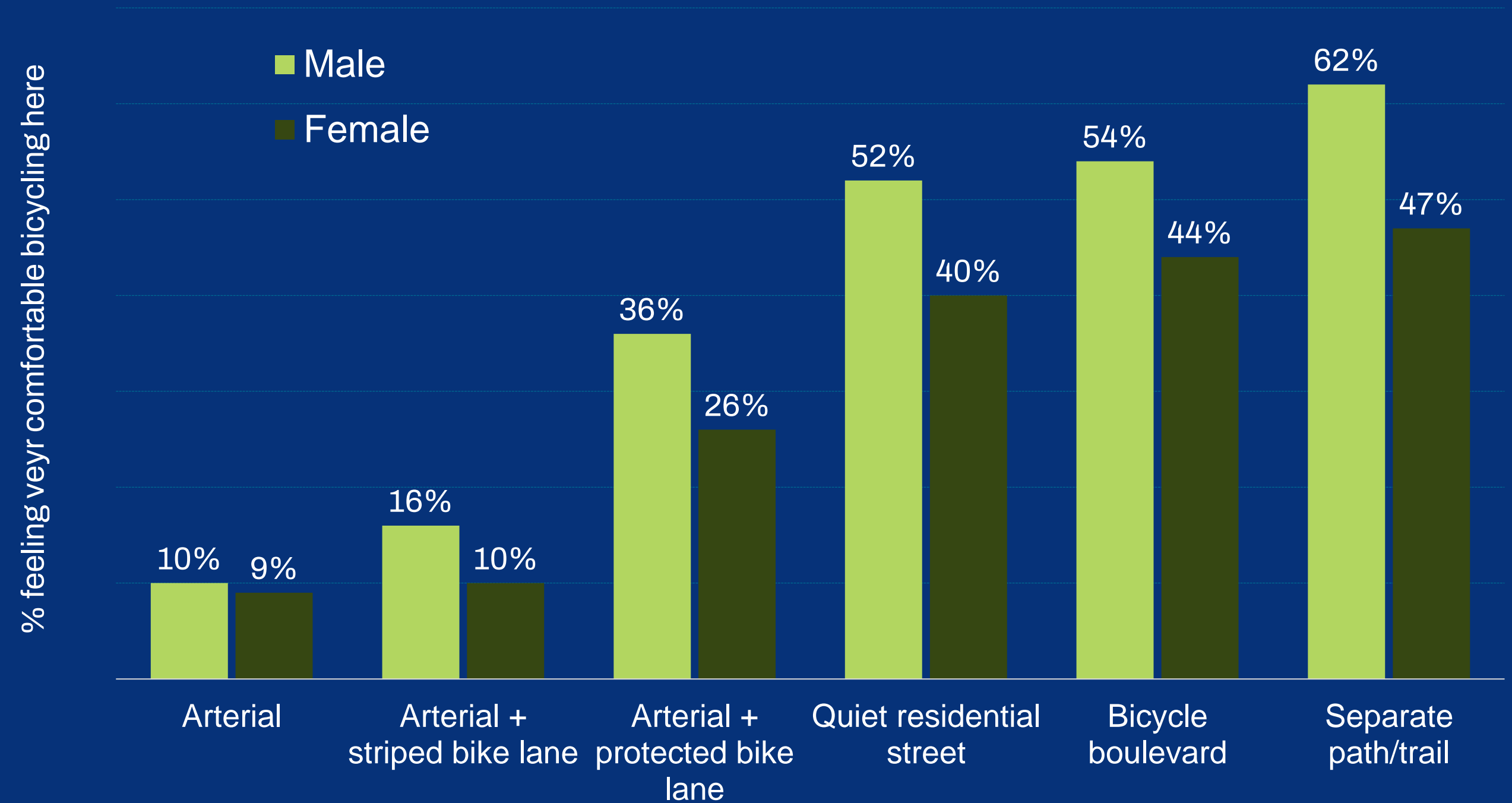
As a result of these fears, women often adjust their behavior, such as by choosing specific routes, changing travel modes, not walking or cycling alone, avoiding certain settings, avoiding travel in the evening, or not wearing certain types of clothing or jewelry (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; Lubitow, 2017; Stop Street Harassment, 2014). Some women cyclists have also reported breaking laws to try to evade harassers when otherwise they would not have (Stop Street Harassment, 2014).

Traffic safety

Women are less comfortable bicycling, generally, and particularly in places with more exposure to motor vehicle traffic.

Research in Portland OR found that **bicycle boulevards** closed the gender gap.

Evidence from several US cities indicates that **protected bike lanes** may also help close the gap.



Sources:

NAR®-PSU Transportation & Community Priorities Survey, 2015. Sample from the 50 largest metro areas.

Broach, J., & Dill, J. (2016). Using Predicted Bicyclist and Pedestrian Route Choice to Enhance Mode Choice Models. Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board (2564), 52-59.

Dill et al, AASHTO Council on Active Transportation Research Roadmap Research Review, NCHRP 20-123(02), 2021.

Why do women bike less?

(and why don't they walk more?)

1

Safety



2

Other travel constraints



Distances (land use)

Reasons for not bicycling

	Women	Men
The places I need to go are too far to bike	52%	46%

Reasons for not walking

	Women	Men
The places I need to go are too far to walk	74%	66%

Household responsibilities

Women are making more trips that are less conducive for walking/bicycling.

(NHTS 2017, not including trips to home)

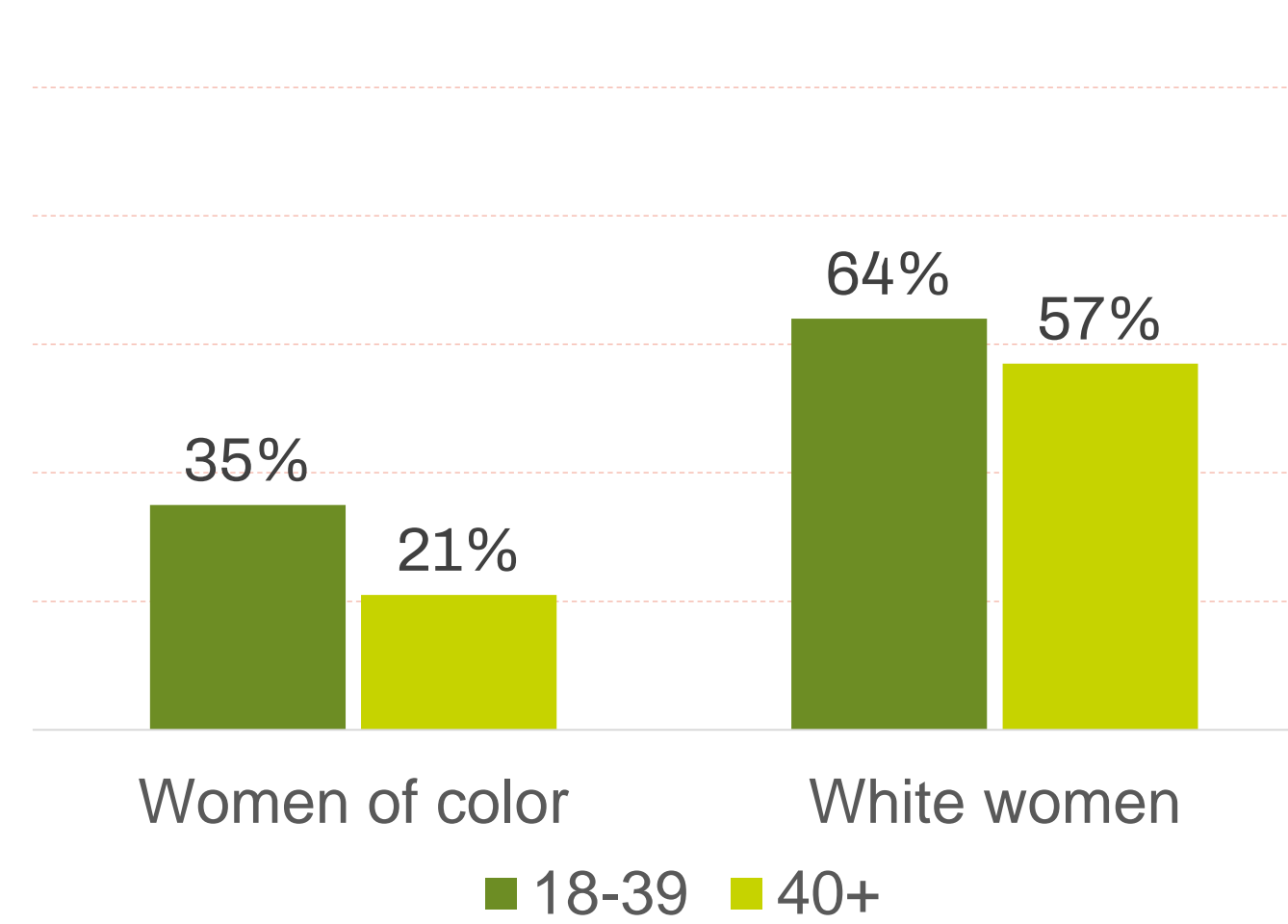
	Women	Men
Transport someone	12%	9%
Shopping/Errands	29%	25%

A U.S. survey of women cyclists found that 19% of women cited the inability to carry children or other passengers as a factor that discouraged them from cycling for transportation, compared to only 7% of men (Scheider, 2010).

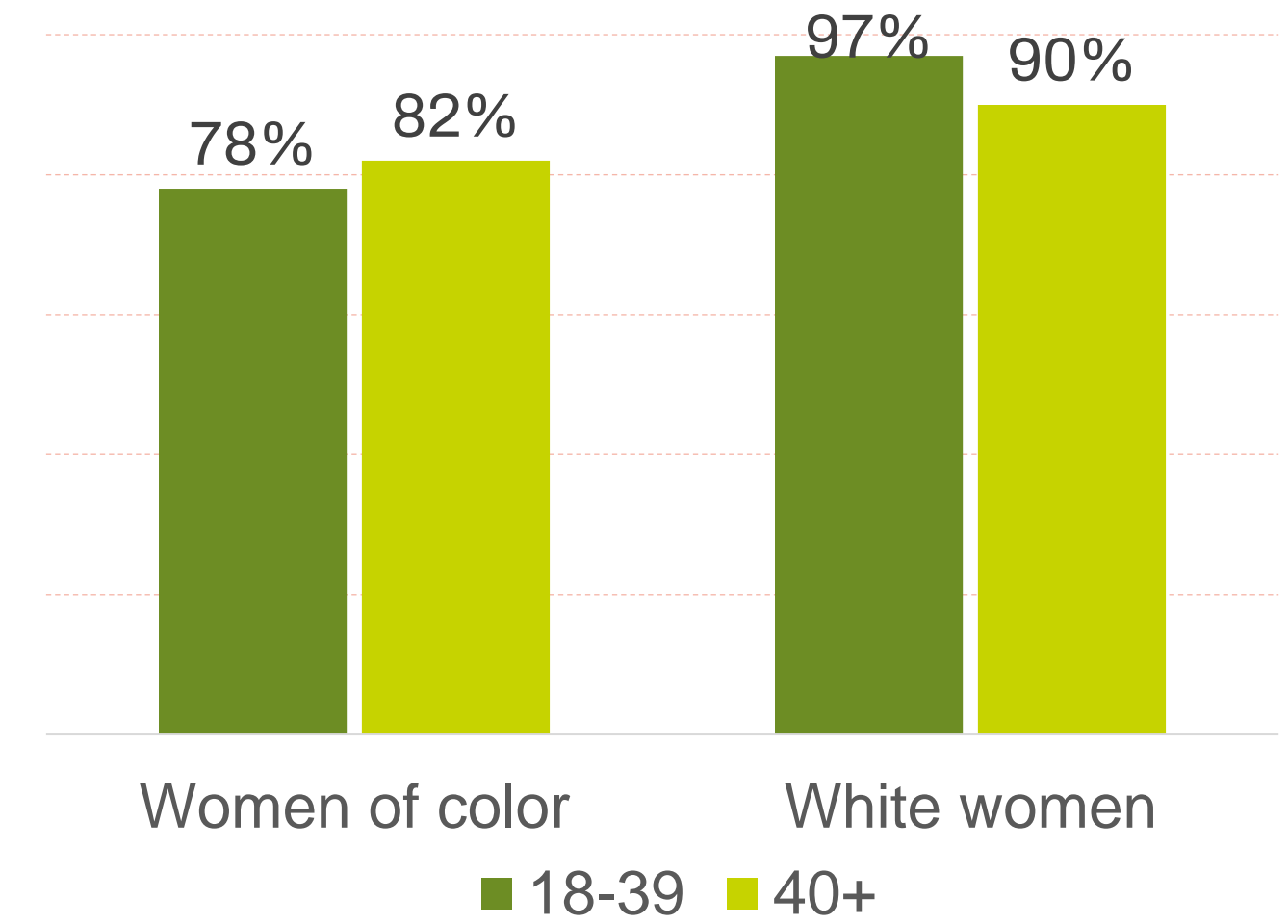
Race and Gender

Data from residents in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Chicago reveal that **women of color bicycle less than white women and are less likely to know how to ride a bike well.**

Data from Breaking Barriers to Bike Share research by Portland State University.



Rode a bike in the past 12 months



Knows how to ride a bike well

Race and Gender

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Focus groups of Black and Hispanic women in New Jersey identified several barriers:

- **Perceptions of the ‘typical’ cyclist being male and young, athletic**
- **Concerns over not fitting in**
- **Personal safety and security**
- **Time, convenience and comfort**
- **Transporting family members**
- **Traffic safety**

Blickstein & Brown, *Bicycling Among Black and Latino Women. Focus Group Summary Report*, Rutgers University

“*Why is that girl on a bike?*”

“*If you’re poor, you can’t afford a bike.*”

“*No offense, this is a White person’s sport. They would call me the White girl because I was riding my bike.*”

“*You stand out in a way.*”

Some solutions that address these barriers

1

Build more infrastructure that separates active transportation users from motor vehicles. Reduce motor vehicle speeds.

- MUTCD, other guidance
- Who is the “design user”?
- Funding
- Professional training
- Vision Zero

2

Promote electric-assist bikes and cargo bikes

- Subsidies
- Tax incentives
- Try-a-bike programs
- Bike parking design and regulation

3

Female-focused events, classes, clubs

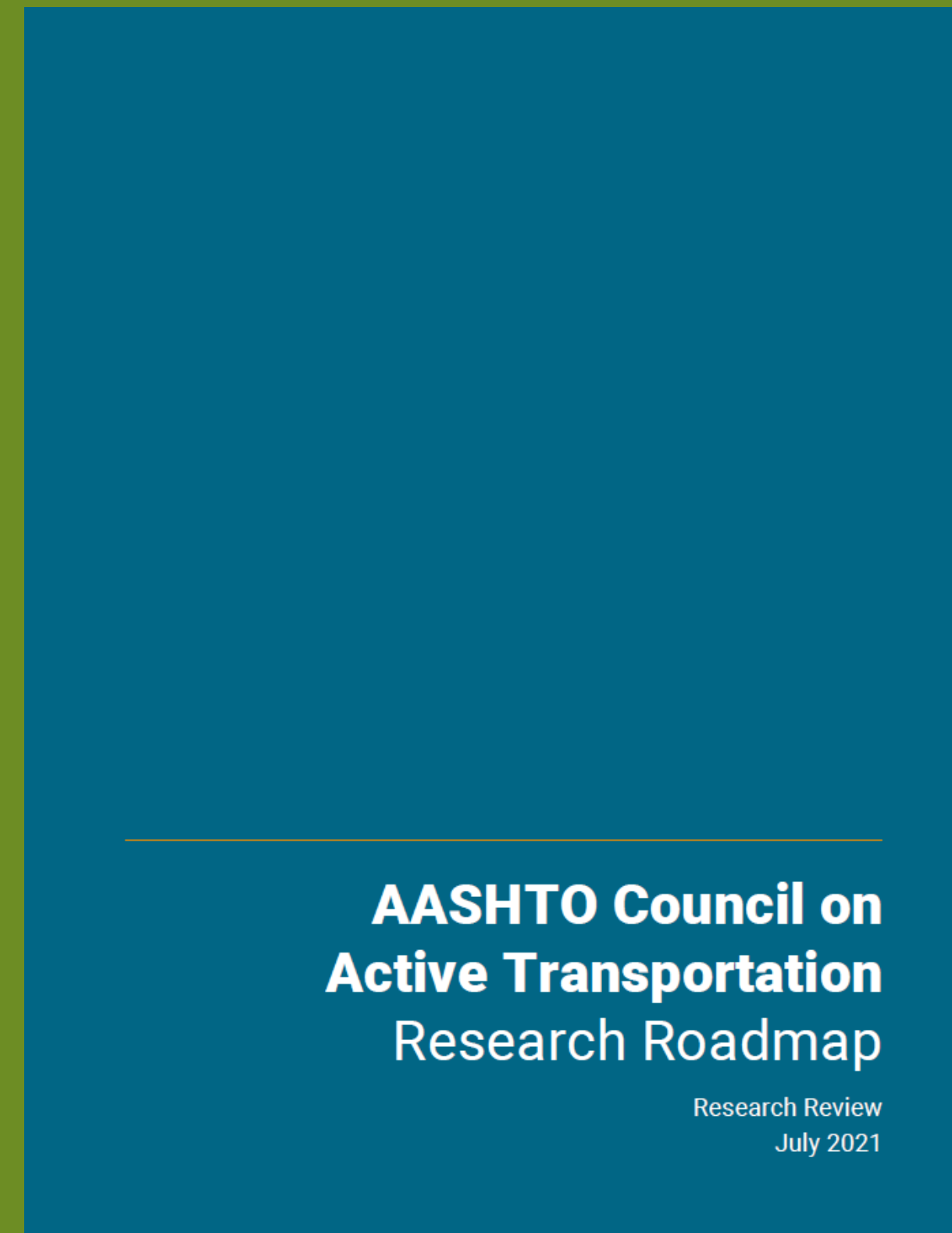
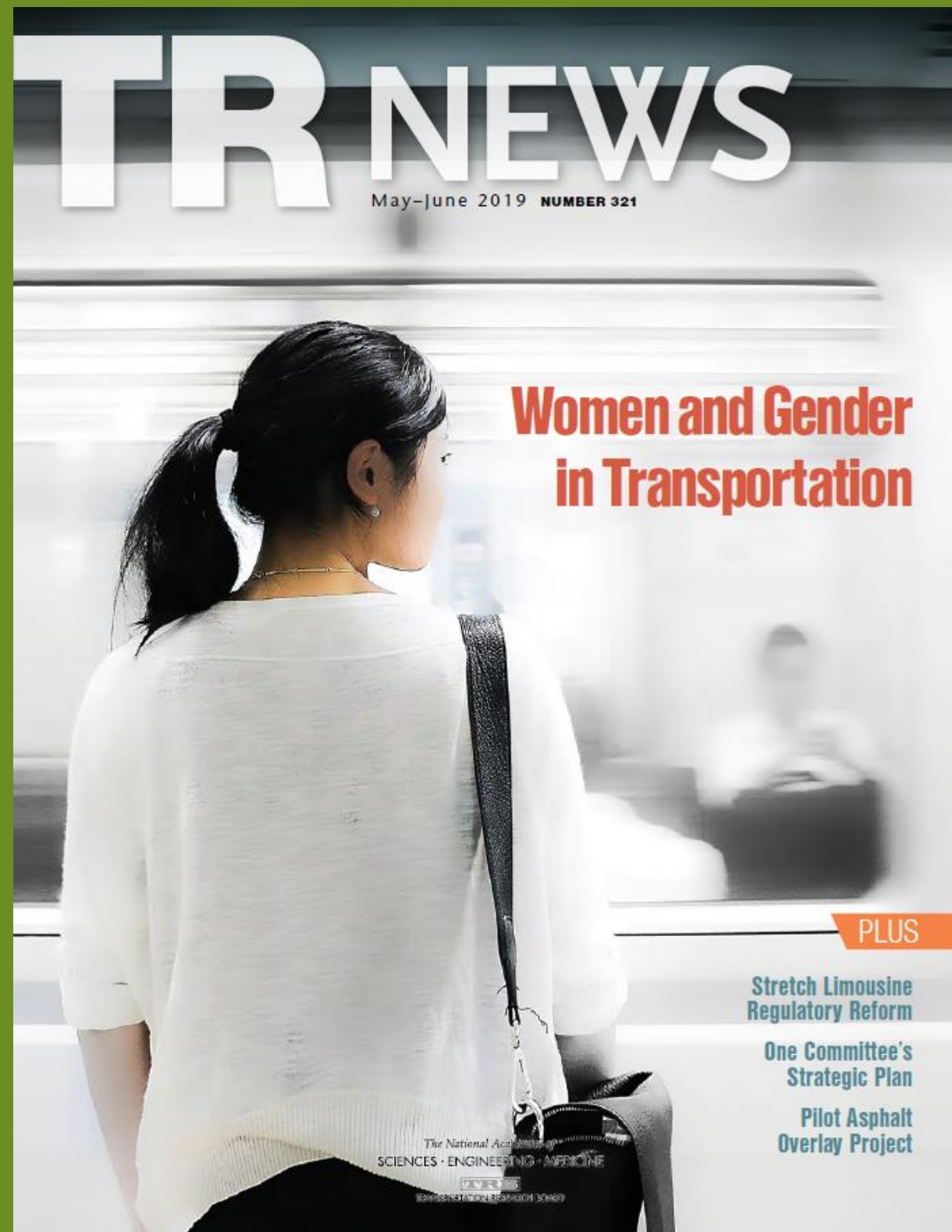
- Funding
- Build more evidence
- Start young

4

Supportive policies

- Tie transportation funding to land use policy
- Gender equity policies
- More women in the transportation workforce

Some useful resources



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