



Attracting and Retaining a Diverse Transportation Industry Workforce

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Attracting and Retaining Women in the Transportation Industry

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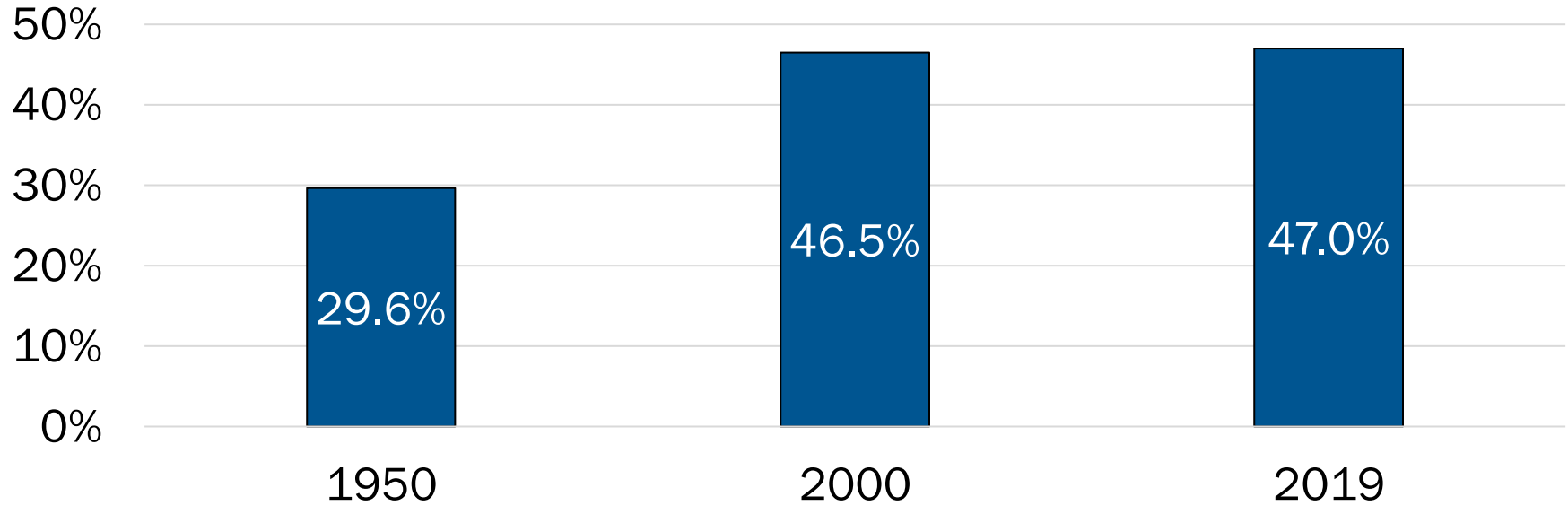
Outline

- Introduction
- Objective
- Findings
 - State of the practice
 - Attracting women to the transportation industry
 - Promote and retain women
- Conclusions and recommendations



Introduction

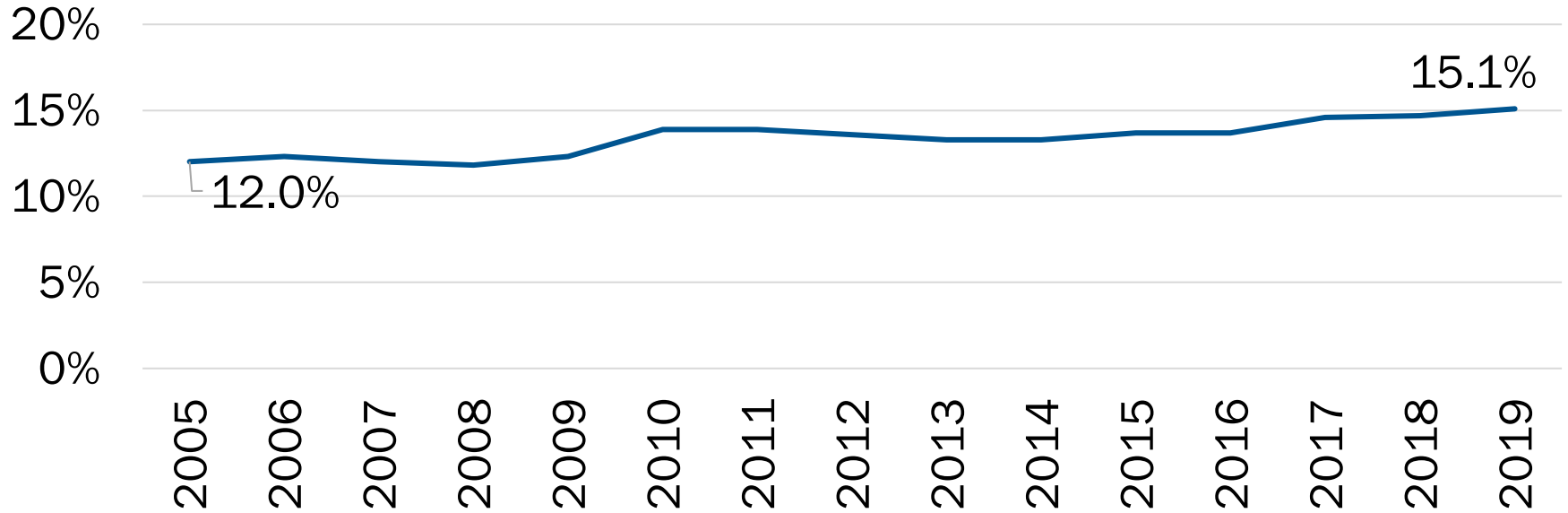
Proportion of Women in the Workforce



Introduction (cont'd)



Proportion of Women in Transportation Occupations



Objectives

- Summarize previously conducted research
- Highlight communal goal congruity
- Identify additional research needed to attract, promote, and retain women in the transportation industry
- Detail major findings and subsequent recommendations



State of the Practice



Women's participation in the workforce is increasing, disproportionately

- Possibly due to
 - Lack of equity between sexes at the individual level
 - Gaps in education
 - A lack of role models
- At the industry level this contributes to
 - Unnecessary limitations on the talent pool
 - Deprives the transportation field of a vital source of talent

State of the Practice (cont'd)



Difficulty in attracting women to the transportation industry is not just a national phenomenon

- Women account for only 17.5% of the workforce in the European Union's urban public transport, and women hold less than 10% of the technical and operational jobs in the EU
- Focusing education and training on the necessary skillsets required to be successful in the transportation industry will ensure the best-qualified candidates are prepared to enter the transportation sector

State of the Practice (cont'd)

- Many occupations such as lawyers, physicians, and mail carriers, which have traditionally been male-dominated, have improved at attracting women, transforming their perception from nontraditional for women



Photo credit:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Women_bus_drivers_help_expedite_America%27s_transportation_problems_8b08383v.jpg

Why Is Women Involvement Important?



- “Women possess unique perspectives to the issues that are being faced by the modern global transportation system” according to Susan Kurland, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs
- Diversity is an important aspect of collaborative work, as it provides a wide array of perspectives, allowing for a holistic view of approaches to problem solving

Why Is Women Involvement Important? (cont'd)

- Women think of safety and security differently than men
- A diverse team of planners tend to produce various perspectives
 - Stroller access
 - Lighting
 - Comfort
 - Ease of use
 - Feeling of security



Why Is Women Involvement Important?

(cont'd)



- Gender equality and, more specifically, gender diversity in the workforce are **key to the economic growth** required for companies to win the talent war
- While the current workforce is combating challenges associated with an **aging population** and delayed or **imbalanced succession planning**, it is more important than ever to ensure that the talent pool encompasses all qualified candidates, and **women are the largest pools of untapped labor globally**

Attracting Women to our Industry



- Some tips to connect with young people
 - Sponsor field trips
 - Educate school counselors about opportunities for women in engineering
 - Sponsor summer internships/semester-long apprenticeships for high school/college students
 - Connect with local universities to encourage students to get hands-on experience while working towards their degree
 - Form mutually beneficial exposure to the transportation workforce

More tips to connect with young people



- Take advantage of social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram)
- Work with existing programs that encourage students, especially women, to consider engineering,
 - Such as the FHWA Summer Transportation Internship Program for Diverse Groups
 - The National Summer Transportation Institute Program
 - The Garrett A. Morgan Transportation Technology Education Program
 - National Academy of Science's Engineer Girl Program

Attracting Women to our Industry (cont'd)



- Networking and participating in professional organizations
 - Participation in professional organizations includes activities such as **attending meetings** and **socializing with peer professionals**
 - Volunteer
 - Run for a board/officer position
 - Increase the effectiveness of networking efforts while also increasing the visibility of women as leaders
- Simple visibility is inviting to young women who may be deterred or intimidated by the lack of diversity typically presented in the transportation sector

Communal Goal Congruity



- Many times, it is **perception** that drives women away from the transportation industry, as communal goals are not emphasized in transportation.
 - Men tend to be attracted to agentic goals
 - Focus on prestige and personal status
 - Women tend to be more attracted to communal goals
 - Focus on helping people and solving problems that cause challenges that hinder others

Communal Goal Congruity (cont'd)



- When personal motivations are understood, it is then possible to focus the type of tasks that fulfill those motives, resulting in a more satisfied team of highly motivated individuals
 - Don't assume an understanding of motives...ask
 - Not everyone knows what actually motivates them
 - Provide a range of tasks to determine true motivations
 - Motives change over time

Communal Goal Congruity (cont'd)



- While anyone in the transportation industry understands the undeniable connection with communal goals, it is necessary to alter the perception of the industry to match the reality
 - Sustainability
 - Food availability
 - Medical innovations
 - Mobility options to improve quality of life of underserved populations
- In one experiment, women who learn that a scientist spends the day working with others (as opposed to working alone) exhibited particularly strong increases in their attitudes toward science careers

Communal Goal Congruity (cont'd)



- Highlight the goal congruity processes that contribute to transportation engineering decisions, thus attracting the most talented individuals, regardless of gender
- Complementing lessons about STEM concepts and skills with specific ways that these knowledge sets can improve the quality of lives or save lives can have great benefits for students
- After lessons that show STEM's communal possibilities, classroom activities that encourage students to make connections between STEM course material and their lives can further increase motivation and learning

Promoting and Retaining Women



- A summit on U.S. workforce found turnover problems were related to:
 - The absence of adequate mentorship
 - Ambiguity of the promotion process
 - Clear paths to promotion are necessary as a fundamental cornerstone to ensure talent is retained
 - Other minority neglecting decision making



Promoting and Retaining Women (cont'd)



- Adhere to the goals set to attract a diverse workforce
 - Goals set to attract the most talented workforce cannot just be stated or detailed in a policy that is not effectively implemented in the organization
 - Assurance of adherence to the plan, and accountability if the plan and goals are not adhered to, are imperative components to successfully attracting and retaining women in the transportation industry

Role Models and Mentors



- The presence of role models and mentors have been found to be especially important for women and cultural minorities who chose non-traditional careers
- Witnessing successes of other women in STEM helps prevent the threatening effects of stereotypes that shed doubt on women's competencies in these fields
- Any mentor, no matter the gender, can effectively attract women to the engineering field
 - Female role models are more effective in improving the retention rates of women in the field
 - Especially in the first year, when self-doubt is greater

Retention of Mothers

- Parenthood effects motivations
 - About 24% of mothers of preschoolers are opting out of the production, transportation, and material moving labor force (as of 2009)
 - At least partly attributable to cultures that are not family friendly
 - How to improve retention rates of professional parents
 - Flexible schedules
 - Generous maternity/paternity leave policies
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Help with childcare



Post-Pandemic Considerations



- Employment lapses
 - Many companies laid off valuable employees due to the pandemic
 - Some families were forced to work less with children in school at home
- Wage gap factors
 - Prior to the pandemic in 2019, women wages had improved to about 82% of an equivalent male wage in the U.S.
- Long term consequences on the labor market
 - Be cognizant to not discredit women with lapses in their employment

Future Research Considerations



- Specific focus on successful balancing practices both for women and organizations
 - Include actual examples of policies that can be implemented to encourage healthy work-life balance
- Develop training related to cultural change as beneficial guidance for all employment levels to ensure diversity inclusion is prevalent organization wide

Conclusions



- Effective change in organizational culture is dependent upon the holistic development, implementation, and enforcement of diversity promoting policies
- The culture and the perception of the culture of an organization is the most important consideration when focusing on attracting a diverse talented workforce
- The promotion and retention of women in the transportation industry is multifaceted and requires holistic approaches and dedication from all levels of employment

Recommendation 1

- Connect with young people to promote the industry as a desirable career option
- Mentor
 - Provide opportunities for others in the industry to mentor as well
- The benefits of sharing success stories and providing advice, guidance, and prompt answers to mentees cannot be overstated



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Recommendation 2



- Encourage participation in professional organizations, especially leadership participation and networking event attendance
- Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities provides opportunities to improve confidence and increase visibility in the industry
- That visibility and representation is mutually beneficial and necessary for advancement opportunities

Recommendation 3



- Promote educational and career opportunities, focusing especially on minority recruitment efforts
- Encourage the support of minority-focused scholarships, internships, and awards to increase the recruiting talent pool so that minorities are afforded opportunities that are not otherwise possible
- Educational promotion may require changes in educational tools or traditional information delivery methods in order to ensure that there is a focus on the skills that are needed in the industry
 - Specifically soft skills, such as public speaking, could be incorporated into curricula without jeopardizing accreditation requirements

Recommendation 4

- Promote the communal goal congruity of public transit
- Many bus operators, safety supervisors, engineers, planners, policy makers, researchers, and scientists are fulfilling personal communal goals throughout their careers



Recommendation 5



- Intentionally promote desired perceptions
- Deliberately advertise your agency's support of diversity through as many outreach opportunities as possible
 - Professional organizations and associations meetings
 - Social media
 - Newsletters and magazine articles
- Promote the perception that is desired rather than allowing outsiders to define your public perception

Recommendation 6



- Create a gender-balanced panel for all final decisions pertaining to hiring
- Presenting a gender-balanced hiring panel is one way to show immediate dedication to diversity, while also ensuring that the hiring decisions are not biased



Recommendation 7



- Develop and adhere to a defined succession plan to ensure there is no bias in promotion decisions
- With clear promotion guidance that is inclusive of specific requirements for advancement, there is no room for unintentional bias in the promotion process within your agency
 - Not seeing a path to advancement is a common reason provided by women who left the transportation industry

Recommendation 8



- Ensure policies allow employees to take earned time off, without fear of retribution or loss of work availability upon return
- Policies that are family friendly and allow for time off after childbirth and other dependent care considerate policies will all contribute to retention rates of qualified talent

Recommendation 9

- Invest in best practices syntheses that collect and compare public transportation agency's policies and implementation successes to develop and promote a toolbox of applicable guidance



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Recommendation 10

- Conduct, or participate in recurring surveys to understand the effectiveness of the cultural diversity efforts in place
- Sharing practices that were ineffective is just as important as sharing practices that were effective



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Recommendation 11

- Do not discredit women with lapses in their employment history unfairly, especially as women transition back into the workforce post-pandemic
- Do not undervalue the female workforce as they return to work, so that we are not contributing to increased future wage gaps



Photo credit: MTA - NY



Thank you

For more information, contact jodis@cutr.usf.edu

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