

**TINNGO: TRANSPORT INNOVATIVE GENDER
OBSERVATORY.
SPANISH HUB. TAXI CASE STUDY.**

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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 TInnGO 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. INTRODUCTION

According to the Women in Transport ETP Platform for change, only the 22% of the employees in the European transport sector are women. Moreover, the principal users of the public transport for their daily movements are women too. In fact, usually the women's daily mobility is characterized by fragmented short travels, with several stops during the day, whereas men usually make direct travels from work to home mainly by private vehicle.

Considering these facts, the European project TInnGO proposes to investigate the reasons behind this situation. The TInnGO project: Transport Innovative Gender Observatory is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement no. 824349)

The objective of TInnGO is to promote gender equality in all areas of transport at European level, applying strategic mechanisms to facilitate access and participation of the population both as users and workers and through the adaptation of infrastructures and services to the population and gender needs.

The main result of this initiative will be the development of a Gender Innovation Observatory in European Transport. To feed this platform, ten hubs across Europe are collecting data and address locally important issues in intelligent mobility with a gender perspective and mainstreaming analysis.

The main activity of these hubs is the analysis of the current situation at local level, the global understanding of problems and analysis of solutions, the generation of new knowledge and its exchange between the different hubs. As a result, gender equality guides will be developed to evaluate the activities developed in their environment.

All the information collected, and the smart mobility concepts developed are uploaded to a transport gender observatory and open innovation platform developed by TInnGO. (<https://transportgenderobservatory.eu/>)

Among the ten hubs, the Spanish hub focused onto two areas: one related to the transport safety and security from the perspective of users and vehicles; and the other one centered in the gender equality in employment, considering both passenger and freight transport.

The Spanish hub is involving companies in the sector to analyze the current situation in Spain and providing their point of view.

The aim of this hub and TinnGO project is to take a step forward in gender equality in transport by introducing new strategies in gender equality in an integrated way for the whole society. In this sense, focusing on the employment perspective, the Spanish hub developed an analysis on the taxi sector employment, highlighting the main challenges and needs of the women taxi drivers.

2. OVERVIEW: THE TAXI INDUSTRY

The transport sector is not gender – balance, according to Women in Transport EU platform for change only the 22% of transport workers are women. If we focused on the land transport the percentage is even smaller up to 14% according to the transport.

Focusing on the taxi sector the percentage in the greater cities is lower. For example, in London the percentage of female taxi drivers registered are around the 2% as defined in (<http://femaletaxidrivers.co.uk/>, s.f.)

2.1. 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 graph elaborated by data from the National Statistics Institute, Employed by gender and branch of activity from 2009 to 2019, 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 (INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadística - , n.d.).



Fig. 1: Evolution of transport workers over the last 10 years by gender

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 ones, whilst 2013 was the year with the smallest number of workers, with 690,300 male workers and 147,400 female ones.

The following table, elaborated by data from the National Statistics Institute and called Employed by gender and branch of activity, shows a breakdown by different transport areas, with women accounting for between 11% - 44% of the jobs, depending on the sector (INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadística - , n.d.):

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

Table 1: Employed by gender and branch of activity in transport and storage.

2.2. Description of the taxi sector in Spain

The case study performed in Spain has been focused on 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 (see Fig. 2) shows how many taxis there are in the different regions of Spain, with Madrid having the largest taxi fleet and La Rioja the smallest, the number of total number of taxi vehicles in each region is shown. The data is obtained from the National Statistics institute called public service cars by region, autonomous cities and provinces, territorial scope and availability of taximeter in 2018 (INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018).

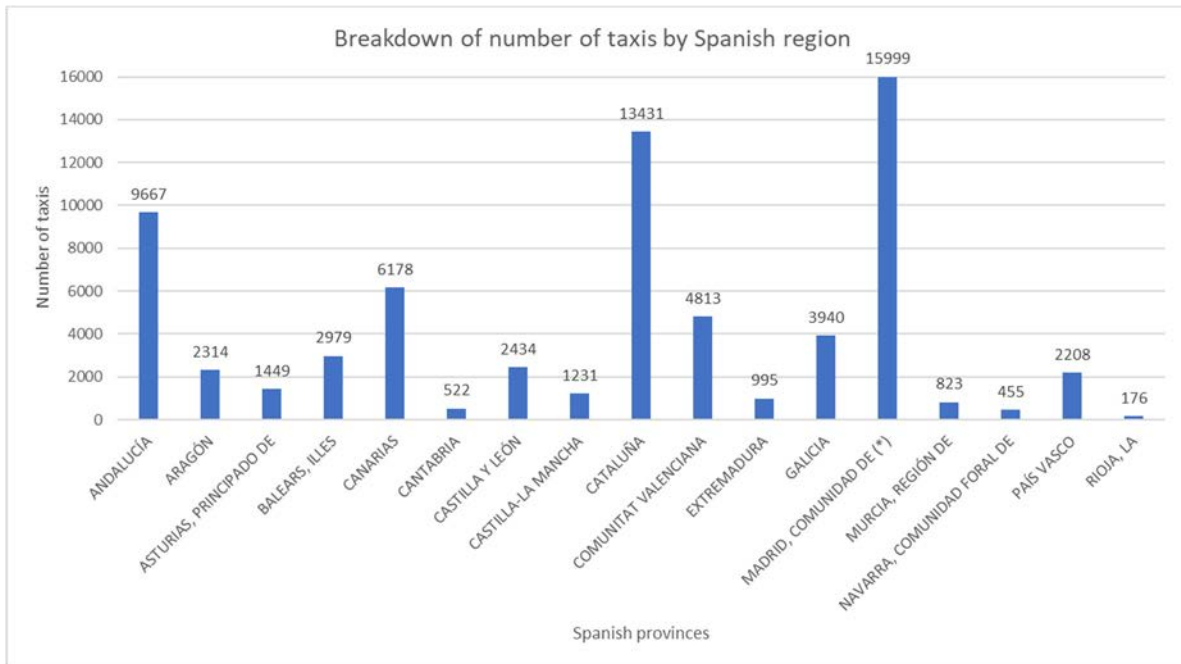


Fig. 2: Breakdown of number of taxis by Spanish region

Following infotaxi.net, only 4% of taxi drivers in Spain are women (Haro, 2019). The taxi industry traditionally a male-dominated profession. Nevertheless, the number of women working in this sector has increased in a small but significant way over the years.

Nationality-wise, around 50% of taxi drivers are Spanish and the other 50% are foreigners, implying that multiculturality in the sector is very high (see Fig. 3).

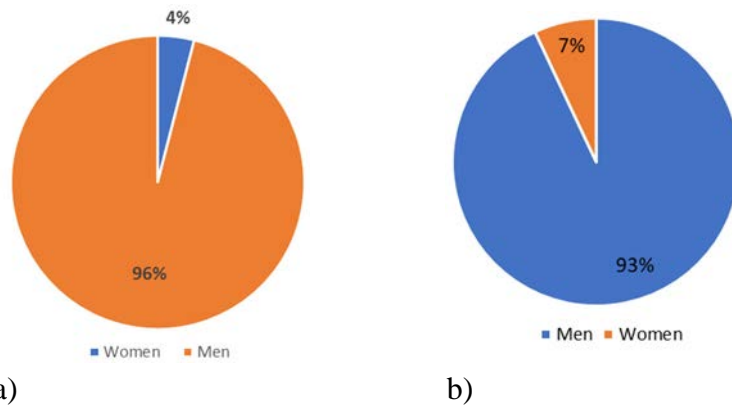


Fig. 3: a) Breakdown of taxi drivers by gender, most of the taxi drivers are men; b) Taxi licenses. Almost all of the taxi licenses belong to men in the Spanish city under analysis.

In the city where the interviews took place there are approximately 3,000 taxi licences, where less than 10% belongs to female taxi drivers. There are around 5,000 taxi drivers in total, because around 2,000 licences have two drivers (see Fig. 3b).

Most of taxi drivers in Spain are self-employed people who work using their own vehicles.

However, there are also taxi drivers that are salaried employees and work for other self-employed taxi drivers sharing their employer's taxis. In these cases, both chauffeurs have a legal agreement in which 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 considered as a public service that is regulated by local councils. Therefore, each region has a different way of working, with a different regulatory framework, that regulates days of rest and working hours. No gender bias is explicitly applied and conditions for both male and female taxi drivers are the same.

Generally, Taxi drivers are members of taxi associations which support them in administrative tasks and by providing and managing platforms to optimize booking performances. 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 must register with these booking companies first before they can be assigned rides and customers.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present case study has been carried out by ITENE consultants in 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 University of Copenhagen (UCPH) (UCPH, 2019).

The interviews were based on a common questionnaire provided by the leader of the task with the aim of investigating career path of the interviewees, opportunities, and barriers for employment in the sector and work life balance activities. As the sector is masculinized, it is difficult to get the contact of the female taxi drivers. In this case, the contact with potential female taxi drivers was achieved by contacting a dedicated association known beforehand.

The first interviewee and the association encouraged the other taxi drivers to participate. Seven interviews were performed by ITENE both face to face and by phone. In each case the questionnaire was filled with the required information and any additional detail was also considered. It is fairly to highlight that the on-site interviews provided more information than the interviewee made by phone. The face-to-face meeting and the direct contact made the interviewees feel more comfortable and share their own experiences and feelings with more details.

Before the interview, the interviewees read the participation sheet which informed about the purpose of the study, the main benefits and risks of participating, the participation was voluntary, what would happen with the results.

The participation sheet also informed about the data protection and confidentiality following the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Finally, they signed a consent form before starting their participation in the study.

4. CASE STUDY

4.1 Overview of the family and working background of the participants

A total of seven female taxi drivers were interviewed. In the following, 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 (see figures Fig.4 to Fig.6).

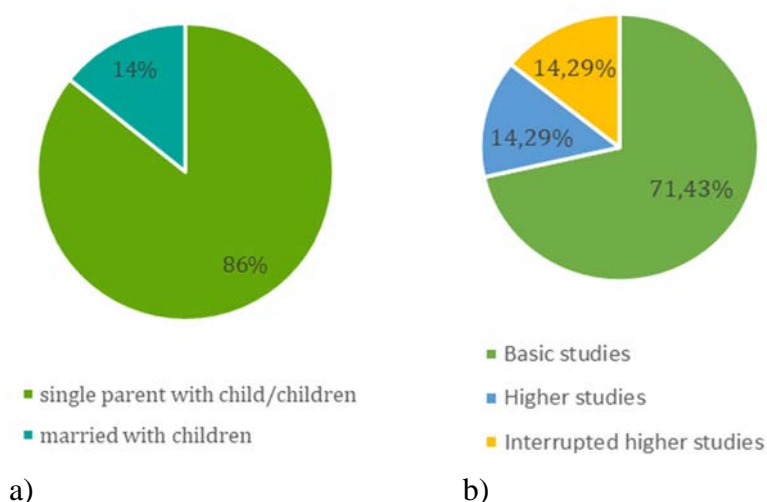
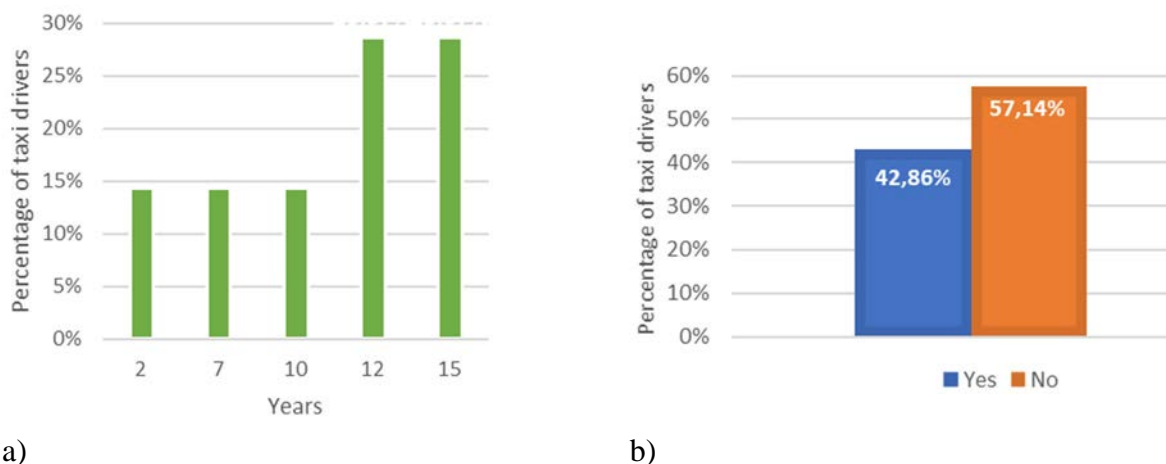
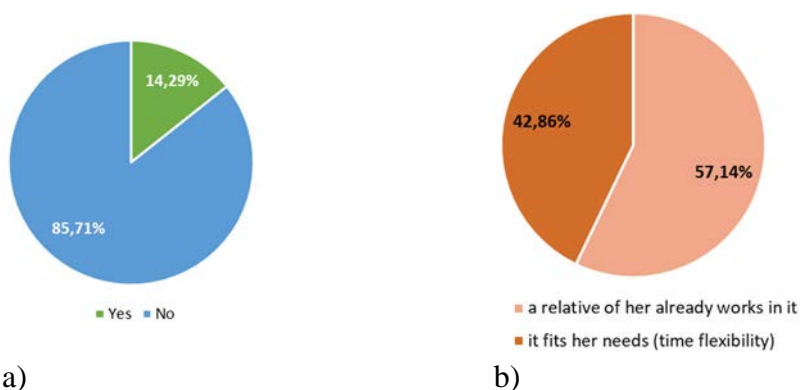


Fig. 4: a) Family situation: most of the interviewed are currently single parents with child/children; b) Study qualifications of the female taxi drivers: most of the interviewed had accomplished basic studies, mostly related to administration fields.



a) b)
Fig. 5: a) Years working as a taxi driver. Most of the interviewees have been working as taxi drivers for more than 10 years. b) Do they employ an additional driver? Around the 40% of the interviewees employed a chauffeur.



a) b)
Fig. 6: a) Do they work at night? Most of the female taxi driver do not work at night shifts; b) They decided to become a taxi driver because... Main reasons for choosing to work in the taxi industry is a relative of the interviewee already works in the sector and the time flexibility.

4.2 Findings about opportunities in the sector

- Flexibility

Most of the interviewees chose to work in the taxi industry to accomplish with family commitments so they could organise their own working timetable (see **Fig. 6b**). Being self employed gives them flexibility and working as a taxi driver let them the chance to define its working schedule. Actually, Intesparviewee 7 remarked that she is able to take care of her children since during the week, from Monday to Friday, she is less busy than on weekends... All of them have been working mothers and keeping the work-life balance is crucial for all of them. As an example, one interviewee claimed that is key for her to be able to “*get out of the office because my kid has the flu*”. In addition, another advantage of being a taxi driver for Interviewee 3 is the ability to quickly recover from a work accident because it is usually related to car damages that have a straight and easy solution.

- Family support

Four out of seven interviewees declared that have relatives working as taxi drivers, that is generally how they came in contact with the taxi sector (see **Fig. 6b**). For example, Interviewee 3 shares her licence with her husband, so two people operate under one licence, doubling income. In addition, Interviewee 7 thinks that sharing licenses in family is a good way to earn extra income in university terms. Interviewee 4's son already works as a taxi driver.

All the interviewees had previous experience in working in other sectors. Three out of seven interviewees like being a taxi driver and one of them admitted that "*being a taxi driver was her dream job*". The other four interviewees still dreamed about their ideal job but due to their age and money needs, they decided to keep working as a taxi driver until retirement. Most of them plan to hire another chauffeur because it would allow them to have more time for themselves (four out of seven taxi drivers have one already).

- Friendly environment and support

The working environment in the taxi sector is pleasant, for women, men and multicultural drivers. They support themselves and endorse the taxi drivers that follow the rules, including in situations that the customers do not respect another colleague. Interviewee 7 described one specific case that happened to her: she was the first taxi in the queue and two women went straight forward 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 happened. She really appreciated his support.

In addition, all the interviewees belong to common groups in chat platforms in order to share between colleagues new potential races. Within this groups our interviewees feel more comfortable and supported in the sector. They can share their own experiences and make networking with the colleagues.

- Multiculturality

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, sharing the same difficulties and opportunities. Arabic cultural has a different approach to women, and sometimes it generates ambiguous situations due to different perception of the female role in society. Nevertheless, good work relationships have been built thanks to dialogue and understanding.

- Customer loyalty

All of them positively valued the daily contact clients and colleagues. Customer-wise, 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 stated that in *her country she would have not worked as a taxi driver because of the lack of safety on the road. On the other hand, many women there usually drive buses*”.

Taxis belonging to women are considered cleaner and tidier than the men ones. Moreover, the interviewees stated that customers highly appreciate them as drivers, since they are considered to be safer and more cautious drivers than male drivers. As a consequence, they feel more comfortable, confident and secure when depending on women on the road. One of the respondents shared a customer sentence: “*My husband gets hysterical in the car and we get there later than when we go with you, as you always keep calm.*”

All these features make female taxi drivers more appealing for the customers of all genders. In fact, one distinctive characteristic is that they usually have loyal customers. Interviewee 7 explained that she had faithful clients that called her monthly, and others once or twice a year for trips of different lengths. In addition, one of these loyal customers hired her to take their children alone to school in her taxi.”

- Support gender initiatives

Being a taxi driver gives the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of the society. The interviewees joined a national initiative that aims at supporting women that are victims of gender crimes. Our interviewees explained that some taxis (all of the respondents included here) have a purple ribbon on their taxi aerial which means that if a woman feels unsafe or she has been victim of gender violence will make use of a free ride to get to a safer place.

Fortunately, only one of the interviewed taxi drivers has had to provide this type of service.

4.3 Findings about entry barriers in the industry

- Investment

The initial investment to entry in the taxi sector is very high. The first step is to obtain the taxi driver title. Once the title is obtained, there are two big investment. On the one side the acquisition of a taxi license and the purchase of a taxi vehicle. These two acquisitions are expensive and not everyone can afford them. Therefore, one of the main reasons to enter in the sector is because a relative already work on it (see **Fig.6**). The active taxi drivers know who will leave the sector, who will retire, and they get advantage of getting new licenses.

In addition, some of the taxi drivers share the licenses with their familiars.

- Initial Colleagues' mistrust

As the taxi sector is strongly male-dominated, at the beginning of working in the sector, more than ten years ago (see **Fig. 5**) many of the respondents had to put up with a range of comments about being a woman, defending her right and ability to work as men do.

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 have been a taxi driver because she was a woman. She defended herself by replying "*I am just doing the job that your son doesn't want to.*" She has never had a problem with this colleague ever since. Interviewee 6 argued with another colleague, who claimed that *driving a taxi was not a job for women*. Despite of initial rushes, relationships among colleagues improved and currently, the respondents are well-considered and accepted in the taxi community.

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.

- Communication

The taxi sector daily deals with many different customers from different countries. Foreign languages usually represent an issue for the respondents, that would appreciate to receive English-speaking courses to improve their communication skills, better than the general basic courses they have received so far.

- Customer rejection

Although it is not common, surprisingly, some of the interviewees have experienced rejection by female customers. Interviewee 6 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.

- Hustle and bustle of the road

Enjoying driving is a mandatory requirement to join this profession together with the ability of keep calm in the traffic and the ability to manage tense situations. Interviewee 7 confessed that when she was younger, she hated driving because she got nervous, but that she had been able to overcome her fears and now she enjoys driving on a daily basis.

All the respondents have generally anecdotes along they careers but these female drivers do not have issues on a daily basis and most are very happy and glad to be taxi drivers (see Fig.7)

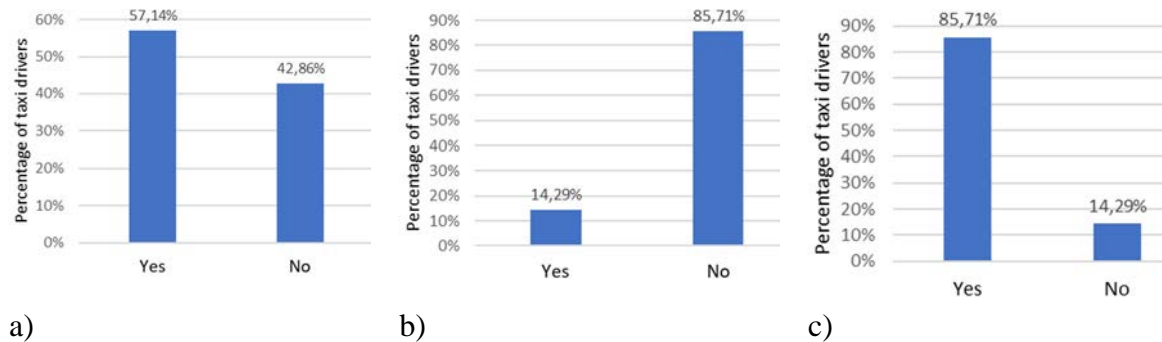


Fig. 7: a) Do they dreamed about other jobs? Reviewing the dreamed jobs around the 57% dreamed with another job although the majority will keep as taxi driver. b) Do they plan to change job in the next 10 years? Only one respondent will change the job, all the other respondents will keep as taxi driver. c) Are they happy with their job? All of the interviewees, except one, are satisfied with their current job (taxi driver).

5. CONCLUSION

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.

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Identification of current and future issues in employment of women in SM lead by University of Copenhagen

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