

A STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF FEMALE CAB DRIVER IN INDIA
(A CASE STUDY OF FEMIRIDES IN VIZAG DISTRICT)

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ABSTRACT:

A study on the socio-economic conditions of female cab drivers in Vizag, likely focusing on a group like Femirides, would analyse challenges such as safety concerns, financial inclusion, mobility barriers, and social stigma, alongside the economic opportunities and empowerment that ride-hailing can provide. Research would likely use qualitative methods to understand how factors like transportation access, household responsibilities, and gendered social norms affect their livelihoods.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Financial Inclusion, Female Cab Drivers.

INTRODUCTION

India's transportation landscape is rapidly evolving. Transportation is a service-oriented sector and perspective of the customer, in present case of the commuter has a significant importance, as it can influence the acceptance and success of women in this industry. The transport sector is a critical component of economic and social infrastructure, offering a wide range of employment opportunities and services essential for societal functioning. While the past decade has seen a tech-led boom in app-based mobility, the latest and perhaps most important shift is the growing participation of women in mobility, not just as passengers, but as professionals shaping the future of the industry. In recent years, women have increasingly entered the transport industry, taking on various roles, including cab drivers. A socio-economic conditions of female cab drivers are shaped by a combination of economic, social and cultural factors that uniquely impact their work and lives. Despite the safer and more comfortable transport, women represent a minority in this male dominated industry. Policies and initiatives aiming to support female cab drivers must address these multifaceted challenges by promoting financial inclusion, offering targeted training to create gender inclusive opportunities in the transport sector. From pink autos and women-only cabs to state-sponsored driver training programs, a quiet revolution is underway. One that's breaking stereotypes, creating employment, and bringing safety, dignity, and choice to women across India.

MEANING AND DEFINITION:

In general terms, a cab driver is defined as a person whose job is to drive a taxi, providing hired transportation services for passengers. A female cab driver is a woman whose profession involves driving a cab or taxi, offering transportation services to passengers typically in urban or suburban areas. Female cab drivers are often preferred by certain groups, such as women travelling alone due to perception of safety and comfort.

Violence against women is a significant concern in India, with a 2013 travel survey showing that 94% of women worry about their safety when travelling alone in the country. Government data also reveals a disturbing statistic, with a rape occurring every 15 minutes in India. Many women cab drivers carry things like pepper spray, wrenches and have even taken up self-defence skills like karate to protect themselves during rides. Many women-only cabs have gained popularity to provide a secure environment for women. These cab businesses aim to instill a sense of safety, particularly during nighttime travel. Equipped with dashcams, emergency SOS facilities, and other essentials, these vehicles claim to prioritise the well-being of passengers.

WOMEN-ONLY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:

SheSafe (India): SheSafe is an example of a women-only cab service in India. It aims to provide a safer option for female passengers by ensuring that both the drivers and the passengers are women. This service has become popular in cities where women feel uncomfortable or unsafe using conventional ride-hailing services.

Pink Cabs (Australia): Similar to SheSafe, Pink Cabs is an Australian service that offers female passengers the choice of being driven by female drivers in a comfortable and secure environment.

Chauffeur-Driven Women-Only Services (Middle East): In countries such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, there are chauffeur-driven services specifically for women. These services provide a safe and comfortable space where women can travel without concern for harassment.

FEMIRIDES:

Femi Cabs is a pioneering women-centric cab driver program launched in Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Andhra Pradesh. Initiated through the collaboration of Fluentgrid and the nodal agency help@11th, Femi Cabs aims to empower women by providing them with training, employment, and safe transportation options focused on women's safety and economic independence. Around 10 women enrolled in the inaugural batch, including sole breadwinners and widows, and they receive a 30-day driving training program followed by licensing support. The initiative plans to expand by tying up with companies to create more employment opportunities for women drivers. Alongside Femi Cabs,

a related startup called FemiRides provides women-only transportation services in Vizag, operated entirely by women drivers for women passengers. FemiRides offers rides with cabs, bikes, and auto rickshaws and runs a women-focused driving school to enhance skills and foster independence among female learners. This initiative addresses safety and social stigma concerns by creating a comfortable and secure environment for women commuters and drivers alike. FemiRides is expanding its fleet and training batches, with plans to launch a dedicated app for ride bookings and increase electric vehicle use for sustainability.

**FOUNDER:**

Radhika Behara is the visionary founder of FEMIRIDES, a groundbreaking initiative dedicated to revolutionizing transportation services for women. With a passion for empowering women and a commitment to safety and inclusivity, Radhika has spearheaded FEMIRIDES' mission to provide women with reliable, convenient, and empowering transportation options.

KEY ASPECTS:

- **Comfort Wheels:**

Say goodbye to cramped public transport and uncomfortable rideshare experiences. With Femirides, you'll enjoy a smooth and comfortable journey every time you hop into one of our well-maintained vehicles. From spacious cars to cozy auto-rickshaws and nimble bikes, we prioritize your comfort and convenience from start to finish.

- **Fast Pickup:**

We know that time is of the essence, which is why Femirides offers lightning-fast pickup times to get you where you need to go with minimal waiting. Our efficient dispatch system and dedicated drivers ensure that you'll never be left stranded, allowing you to reach your destination quickly and efficiently.

- **She Safe:**

Safety is our top priority at Femirides, especially for our female passengers. That's why we've implemented our "She Safe" initiative, which includes stringent safety protocols, GPS tracking, and real-time monitoring to ensure a secure and reliable ride experience for all women riders.

- **Expert Women Drivers:**

At Femirides, we're proud to empower women through employment opportunities as skilled drivers. Our team of expert female drivers undergoes rigorous training and certification to provide you with the highest level of service and professionalism on the road. When you ride with Femirides, you're not just supporting a transportation service – you're supporting women's empowerment and economic independence.

- **Women Employment:**

Femirides is committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable workforce by providing meaningful employment opportunities for women. By prioritizing women drivers, we're breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes, and paving the way for greater gender diversity and representation in the transportation industry.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

The socio-economic conditions of women cab drivers working with Femirides in Visakhapatnam reflect the empowering environment tailored to address women's safety, independence and livelihood challenges.

Economic empowerment: FemiRides employs about 15 women drivers, instructors, and bike riders, with new batches of women aspirants undergoing training to join the service. Many of these women come from backgrounds where formal employment opportunities are limited, including single mothers or sole breadwinners seeking stable salaried positions.

Safety and Social Inclusion: FemiRides emphasizes the safety and security of both drivers and passengers through women-only transport services, rigorous vetting, and training of drivers. Safety features include real-time ride tracking and panic buttons in their app.

Skill Development and Training: The initiative runs a women-instructor-led driving school, promoting skill development and confidence behind the wheel. This fosters independence and professional growth among women drivers.

Family and Community Impact: Women drivers report positive social reception and family support as their roles as earners increase, shifting traditional gender norms and empowering them within households and communities.

LIVELIHOOD STATUS:

FemiRides offers competitive, stable salaries to women cab drivers, with monthly earnings reported around ₹20,000. Additional incentives are available based on performance, boosting overall income. Women drivers have the flexibility to work on their own terms, providing opportunities for them to balance family and work commitments while earning a respectable livelihood. Drivers are salaried employees rather than contractors, which provides greater job security and reliability of income compared to gig-based models common in mainstream taxi services. The organization also provides comprehensive training programs and ongoing support, enhancing professional skills and employability. The women-only driver and passenger model improves safety and social acceptance, reducing the risks and stigma often faced by women drivers in traditional taxi markets.

PROBLEMS OF FEMIRIDES WOMEN DRIVERS:

Initial challenges in securing consistent ride bookings and building a customer base, especially at the start of the service due to market unfamiliarity with women-only transport. Societal biases and stereotypes that view cab driving as a male profession, leading to occasional discrimination or underestimation of women's driving abilities. Safety concerns persist despite women-only services; drivers still face road-related risks and occasional harassment, which requires constant vigilance and operational support. Need for robust infrastructure including more driving schools, better app technology for smooth operations, and improved charging infrastructure for electric vehicles being introduced by FemiRides. Balancing family responsibilities alongside irregular work hours remains a challenge for many women drivers, impacting their ability to maximize earning potential. Financial constraints concerning vehicle procurement and maintenance costs require ongoing support from the organization or external partners.

SIGNIFICANCE:**Family aspect:**

Family plays a dual role: as a source of support and as a site of challenge. Many female cab drivers are primary breadwinners, often single mothers or widows, empowering their families financially while reshaping traditional gender roles within the household. Their work brings pride and changes family dynamics, enhancing women's decision-making power and sometimes inspiring younger generations to challenge gender norms. However, resistance from family members is common, rooted in concerns over safety, social stigma, and conventional expectations about women's roles. For many women, venturing into cab driving requires challenging entrenched gender roles within families. Women report initial resistance from relatives who perceive driving as unsafe, unfeminine, or socially undesirable. Some female drivers recount being discouraged or even ostracized by extended family, as driving a taxi disrupts conventional expectations of domesticity and respectability. However, a number of cases—especially among younger or lower-middle-class women—illustrate emerging acceptance when economic necessity or exposure to NGO-led empowerment initiatives is involved.

Explicit gender:

Explicit gender plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of female cab drivers, primarily through pervasive gender stereotypes, societal biases, and structural barriers. Women are often questioned and doubted based on traditional gender norms that assume men are more competent drivers, particularly in professional and technical roles like cab driving. Common stereotypes include doubts about women's driving skills, caution in handling the vehicle, and ability to manage emergencies. These biases are expressed through patronizing remarks, and colleagues, and social ridicule—including from family members and community. Gender stereotypes also affect safety perceptions. Even women internalize these gender roles, leading to fewer female role models and entrants into this field.

Safety:

Safety is paramount not only for female drivers themselves but also for their families, who frequently worry about harassment, violence, and accidents during long or night shifts. This concern influences women's work schedules and mobility choices, often limiting their income potential. Innovations such as women-only cab services with integrated safety features—including GPS tracking, panic buttons, real-time ride monitoring, and parental notification systems—help alleviate family anxieties by providing transparency and quick emergency response options. These measures enhance both the

driver's and their family's sense of security, promoting confidence and independence in women cab drivers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- **Candida March, Ines Smyth and Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, 1999:**

The review of literature is done with reference to studies that are related to women empowerment and gender analysis framework. It is worthy to note that using gender analysis frame work can contribute highly towards gender equality and women empowerment.

- **Elson 1995 and Kabeer, 1994:**

The women in development projects aims at making women more efficient by providing them the necessary skills while the gender and development approaches talks about the social inequality in gender roles of men and women with respect to development.

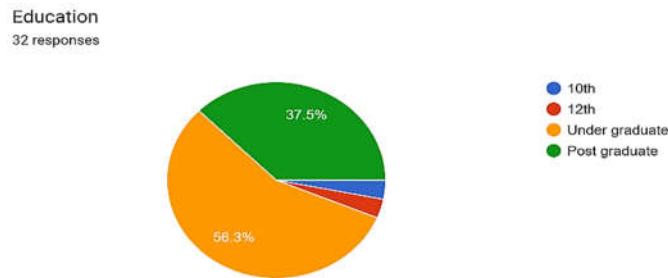
OBJECTIVES:

- To analyze the socio-economic background of selected women cab driver in Femirides India.
- To identify the motivational factor that drive to join this professional.
- To examine the challenges and problems faced by women cab drivers.
- To suggest policy measures to improve working conditions and participation of women in transportation sector.

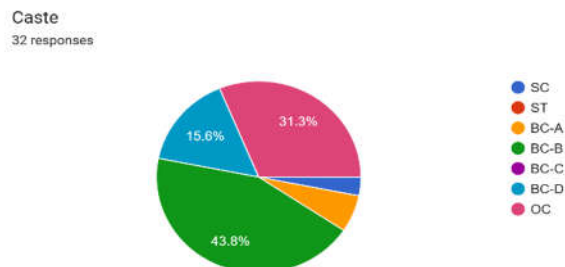
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present study employs a descriptive analytical model. Descriptive and analytical research are two key approaches in research methodology. Descriptive research presents facts, characteristics, and trends without analysing relationships, while analytical research examines causes, patterns, and correlations to derive deeper insights. The study area of the present study involves Femirides, Vizag. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. A purposive technique is research deliberately select participants based on knowledge, relevance and expertise concerning the research topic. The sample size of the research is 30 women cab drivers.

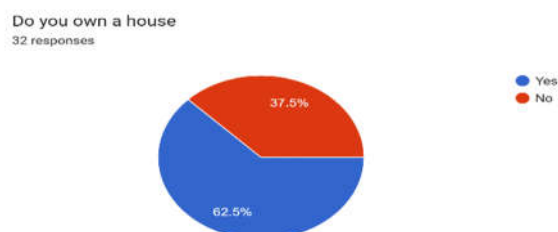
ANALYSIS:



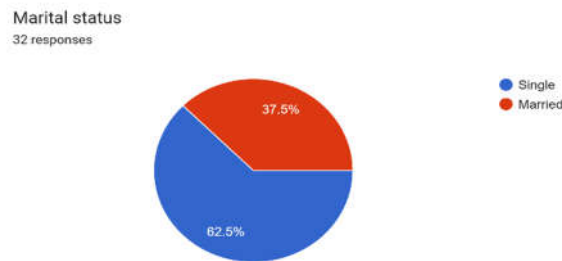
High educational levels suggest that many female cab drivers may be underemployed or face barriers to entering jobs aligned with their qualifications, possibly due to discrimination, work-family balance needs, or limited opportunities. This trend represents both a resource and a challenge for the sector—while it benefits from well-educated participants, it also highlights systemic issues within the broader job market for educated women.



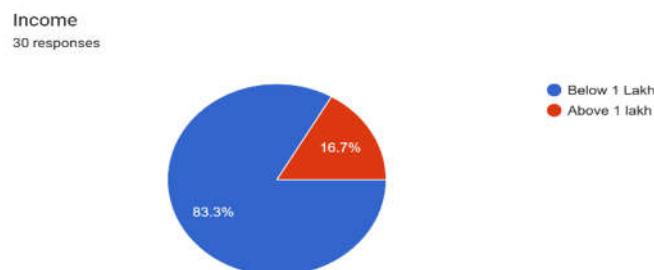
The strong presence of BC and OC categories may reflect broader socio-economic trends, such as increased workforce participation from these groups. Lower participation from SC and ST categories could indicate ongoing systemic barriers to entry or fewer opportunities for women from these backgrounds in cab driving. Caste distribution is a key factor in understanding socio-economic mobility, highlighting both diversity and disparity within this sector.



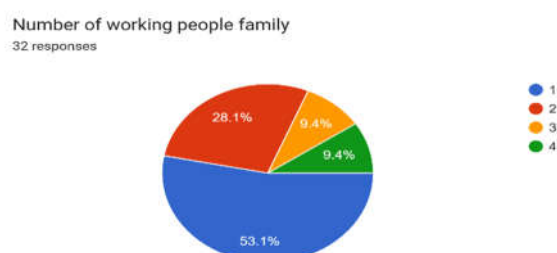
Homeownership can be a key indicator of overall financial security and social mobility, providing women with a safety net and the ability to build generational wealth. However, the significant percentage lacking this asset points to economic vulnerabilities and potential needs for supportive housing or rent assistance programs targeted at working women in transportation.



Marital status can influence economic pressures, decision-making autonomy, and access to social support, which are critical factors in shaping the work experiences and well-being of female cab drivers. This distribution points to diversity in life circumstances among female cab drivers, affecting their socio-economic conditions and possibly informing targeted policy or organizational support.



The predominance of low income suggests that most female cab drivers face economic challenges, with possible difficulties in covering basic expenses, supporting dependents, or saving for future needs. Limited income can impact their access to healthcare, education for children, and opportunities for economic mobility. The small percentage in higher income brackets may reflect the barriers to advancement, such as fewer work hours, lack of resources, or systemic issues affecting female cab drivers.



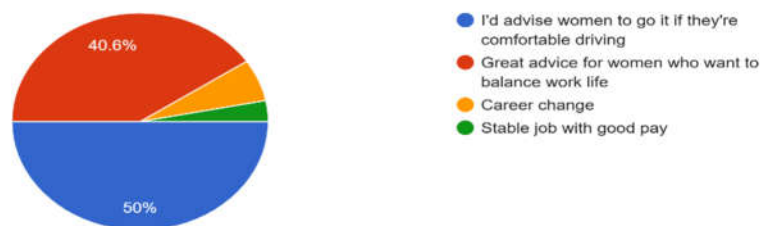
A high proportion of single-earner families may indicate substantial economic pressure on female cab drivers, as they often shoulder the entire financial burden. Families with more working members can distribute financial responsibilities but are in the minority in this survey. This dynamic suggests limited safety nets and emphasizes the need for robust support—financial, social, and policy—to empower female cab drivers who often work to sustain their entire families.

How has driving a cab empowered you financially?
30 responses



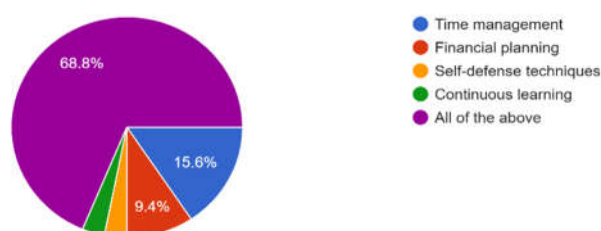
These findings show that while financial hardships may persist (as seen in previous income data), female cab drivers experience meaningful empowerment and increased control over their economic circumstances. The positive impact on confidence and autonomy points to broader social benefits, as these women emerge as role models and primary breadwinners in their communities. Empowerment in these forms contributes not only to the financial but also to the psychological and social upliftment of female cab drivers, suggesting that economic participation drives holistic socio-economic advancement.

What advice would you give to other women looking for employment opportunities in this field?
32 responses



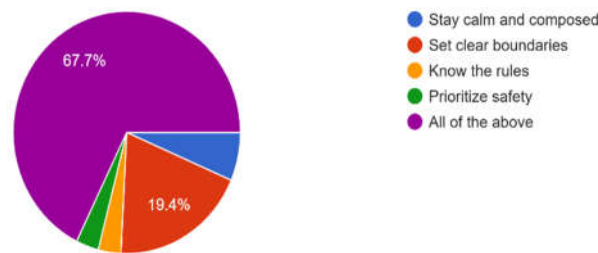
The emphasis on comfort with driving and work-life balance underscores the job's role in providing autonomy and adaptability, key components for socio-economic development among women. Limited responses citing stable pay or advocating the role as a career shift reflect persistent barriers, such as income insecurity and societal perceptions, that may affect the field's long-term attractiveness. These insights highlight both the empowerment potential and the ongoing limitations faced by female cab drivers, rooted in broader economic and social dynamics.

What strategies do you use to maintain your independence?
32 responses



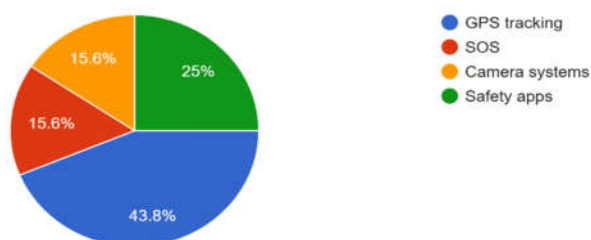
Effective independence for female cab drivers is rooted in a blend of skills and adaptability, rather than reliance on a single strength. The high rate of “all of the above” responses reflects both the complexity of their challenges and their proactive efforts to overcome them through integrated strategies. This multidimensional approach signals resilience and resourcefulness, which are critical to navigating the socio-economic landscape of cab driving, including financial vulnerability, personal safety, and career sustainability.

How do you handle situations where passengers try to take advantages of you or disrespect you?
31 responses



The high rate of using multiple tactics indicates that female cab drivers face complex situations that require emotional savvy, legal awareness, assertiveness, and continuous vigilance for safety. This multidimensional response not only helps maintain their independence and agency but also enhances their overall resilience in a profession that exposes them to risk and social adversity. Such findings reinforce the necessity of skill-building programs and legal protection measures for female cab drivers, addressing both immediate workplace safety and longer-term socio-economic stability.

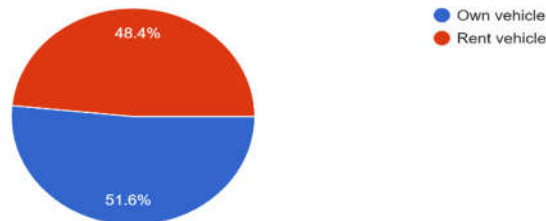
What features or tools do you find most helpful in maintaining your safety while driving?
32 responses



The clear emphasis on GPS and digital safety tools demonstrates both technological access and awareness among female cab drivers, reflecting efforts to mitigate occupational risks through innovation. Reliance on a mix of traditional and smart solutions speaks to the adaptability and resourcefulness required in the profession, shaped by the need for real-time risk management. This indicates a socio-economic environment where personal safety is not just a priority but a foundational

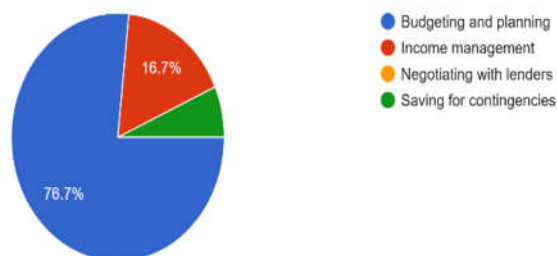
requirement for continued participation in the workforce, and it suggests areas where employers, policymakers, and technology providers can offer further support.

Do you own or rent your cab?
31 responses



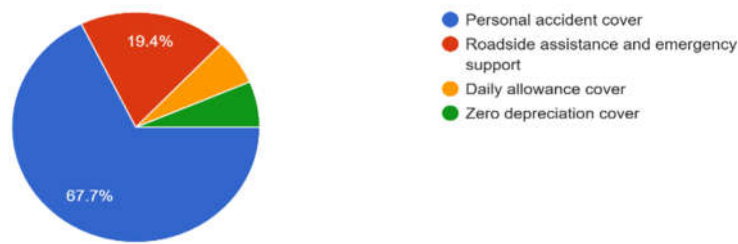
Ownership provides long-term financial benefits, such as asset growth and reduced operational costs, but requires significant upfront investment and sustained income. Renting offers flexibility and lower financial barriers, but often leads to higher recurring costs and less overall economic security. This balance points to a diverse socio-economic profile, where some female cab drivers manage to improve their conditions through ownership, while others remain in more precarious or transitional states due to ongoing financial challenges.

How do you manage your EMI payments for your vehicle?
30 responses



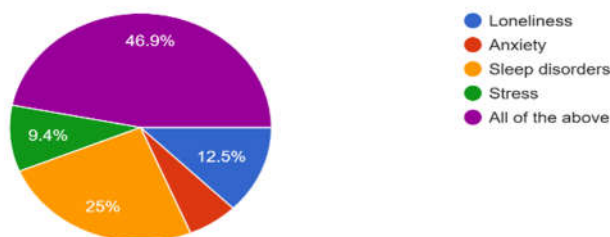
The strong focus on budgeting reflects both necessity and proactive financial literacy, especially given earlier evidence of low income and significant family responsibility among many respondents. The minority using negotiation or saving strategies may face additional vulnerabilities due to fluctuating income or limited access to credit support. These responses indicate both resilience and ongoing challenges, with effective financial planning emerging as a key strategy for navigating the economic pressures of vehicle ownership in cab driving.

What type of insurance coverage do you have for your vehicle and how did you choose it?
31 responses



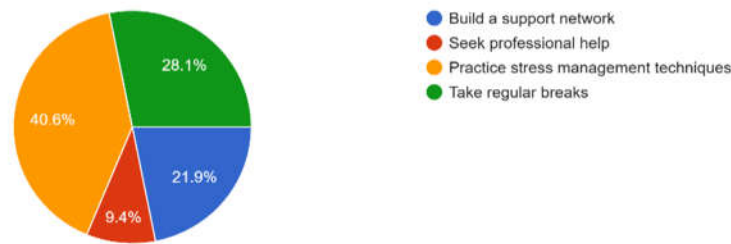
The strong preference for accident insurance highlights the hazardous nature of cab driving and proactive steps to mitigate personal and financial risk. Lower uptake for broader coverage like zero depreciation and daily allowance suggests affordability issues or gaps in financial literacy, limiting the ability to secure comprehensive risk protection. Insurance behaviour, together with previous evidence of financial vulnerability, underscores both practical risk management and persistent challenges regarding access to robust financial products among female cab drivers

What common mental health issues do you face as a cab driver?
32 responses



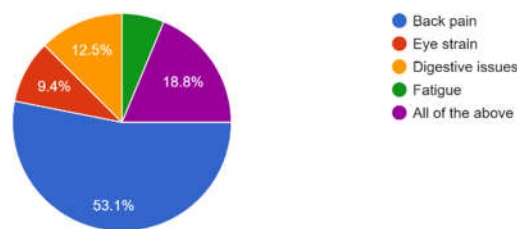
The widespread experience of cumulative mental health issues speaks to the demanding socio-economic environment in which female cab drivers operate, amplified by income insecurity, safety challenges, and limited social support. These findings highlight a critical need for mental health services, peer support networks, and targeted interventions to improve psychological well-being among women in this sector. Addressing mental health is directly linked to socio-economic advancement, as improved well-being empowers female cab drivers to maintain productivity, independence, and resilience within a difficult profession.

How do you manage your mental health issues?
32 responses



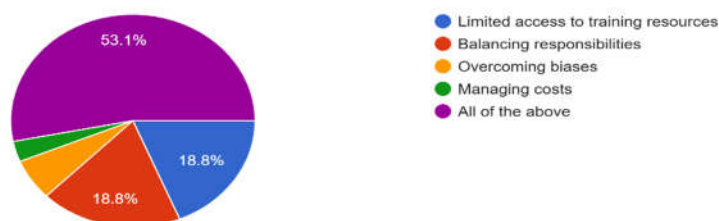
The prevalence of self-care and informal support methods reflects limited institutional access and highlights the resourcefulness of female cab drivers. The reliance on breaks and networks, over professional intervention, suggests socio-economic constraints or gaps in formal support systems for mental health. Emphasizing stress management and breaks underscores the ongoing psychological burden faced by female cab drivers, directly impacting their well-being and productivity.

What common health issues do you face?
32 responses



These health concerns demonstrate a clear link between working conditions and physical well-being among female cab drivers, often exacerbated by limited access to healthcare and wellness resources. Addressing these occupational risks is vital for improving overall quality of life and economic sustainability within this sector. Workplace interventions, ergonomic training, and health support systems can help reduce these risks and enhance the productivity and resilience of female cab drivers.

How do you obtain your commercial driver's license and challenges you face while getting your license?
32 responses



The high rate of compounded challenges reflects broader socio-economic obstacles in the path to workforce participation for female cab drivers. These findings emphasize the need for integrated policy responses, such as subsidized training, flexible learning schedules, and anti-discrimination initiatives, to make entry into this field more accessible for women. Reducing these barriers is directly linked to strengthening financial independence and long-term economic stability within this profession.

How do you overcome these challenges?
32 responses



The varied strategies reflect both individual resilience and the importance of community, training access, and practical experience in overcoming institutional and social barriers. Together, these findings suggest a blend of personal, social, and educational support is most effective for enabling female cab drivers to navigate entry into the profession and achieve economic independence. These approaches play a critical role in defining the broader socio-economic landscape for women in cab driving, fostering both empowerment and collective advancement within the sector.

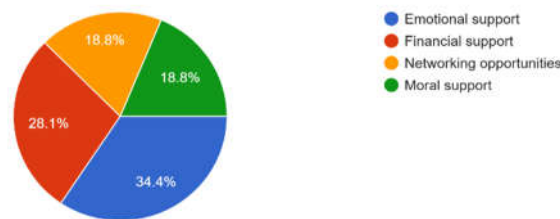
What kind of support have you received from government programs and how has it helped you?
27 responses



The reliance on government programs demonstrates the need for institutional support in the sector, underscoring existing financial and operational vulnerabilities. These programs play a vital role in enhancing economic stability, providing grants, subsidies, or other resources that help female cab drivers sustain their work and manage costs. The spread of support across schemes highlights both diversity in government offerings and the importance of continued expansion and accessibility for broader socio-economic advancement in the profession.

What kind of support do you receive from your family and friends as a cab driver?

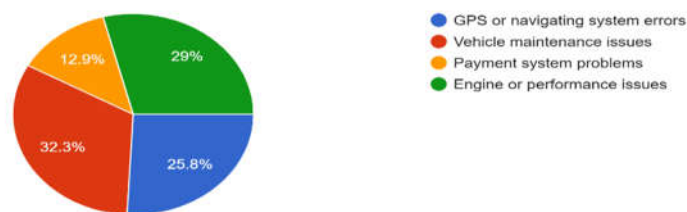
32 responses



The high prevalence of emotional and financial support highlights gaps in formal safety nets, pushing reliance on personal networks for resilience and career progress. Networking and moral support point to the broader social empowerment that extended networks provide, contributing to both practical success and self-worth. Together, these trends underscore the essential role of family and community in reinforcing the socio-economic foundation for female cab drivers, addressing both emotional and financial vulnerabilities.

What kind of technical issues do you commonly face with your vehicle?

31 responses



The variety and frequency of technical problems underscore the economic pressures and operational challenges faced by female cab drivers. Access to affordable maintenance, reliable technology, and efficient payment solutions are crucial for their financial stability and quality of service. Addressing these persistent issues with institutional support and technical training can directly impact the livelihoods and daily resilience of female cab drivers.

How do you troubleshoot them?

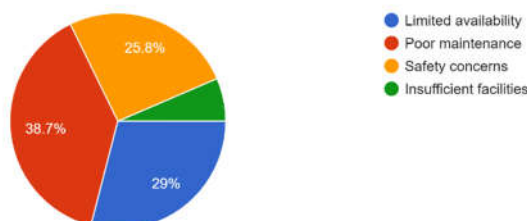
32 responses



The prevalent use of maintenance highlights the financial necessity of maximizing vehicle uptime and reliability for income security. Engagement with technology and support services underscores

increasing digital literacy and resourcefulness among female cab drivers, shaping their professional independence. These approaches to troubleshooting directly impact earnings and job continuity, demonstrating how technical self-sufficiency supports the broader socio-economic resilience of female cab drivers.

Are there any specific challenges you face in accessing clean and safe restrooms, especially in remote areas
31 responses



These restroom challenges reinforce broader workplace safety, health, and infrastructure gaps for female cab drivers. Addressing availability, cleanliness, and safety is essential for supporting their well-being and dignity on the job, directly affecting work efficiency and retention. Such findings highlight the urgent need for targeted infrastructure investment and policy reform to create a safer and healthier work environment for women in transportation.

CONCLUSIONS

Automobile industry is one of the indicators of modernization and urbanization of a country. Cab is one of the major segments of automobile industry. Its new to Women earning segment. The Female Cab drivers earn a very meager income. They are in the hands of private money lenders. The rate of interest of loans is very high and the price of spare parts has also increased. Major part of their income is spent on consumption and maintenance of the vehicle. An increase in petrol price increases the occupational expenditure leading to indebtedness. Saving is low among cab drivers. Thus, it is felt that Government must come forward to provide welfare measures to the drivers and their families when things are beyond their control.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestion are made to improve the socio-economic condition of the Women Cab drivers.

1. The government should provide medical facilities at the time of sickness.
2. The Women Cab drivers may be encouraged to save money which may be important to improve their standard of living.

3. A group insurance system may be introduced for the benefit of the Women Cab driver.
4. Due consideration must be given to the Women Cab drivers by the police officials in taking legal action against them.
5. The Regional Transport Office work needs to be fast and quick. The agents should be driver out.
6. Loan should be given to the Women Cab drivers with less rate of interest and with subsidies.
7. The provident fund has to implement for Women Cab drivers.
8. After the death of the Women Cab driver the family suffers a lot. So the government should take necessary steps to protect these families by providing financial assistance to their family.
9. Use Technology support for Women Cab Drivers.

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