



International  
Growth Centre

# Mobility Barriers

To Women's Work and Education:  
Perspectives from a Pre- and Post-Pandemic India

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May 2021

# Access

- Relatively recent
- At best, conditional and coupled with a need to demonstrate purpose – going to school, commuting to work
- Thomas Reuters' survey ranked India as “the world's most dangerous country for women” in 2018
- India ranked 140 among 156 countries in 2021's Global Gender Gap index, dropping 28 places since 2020

# Education

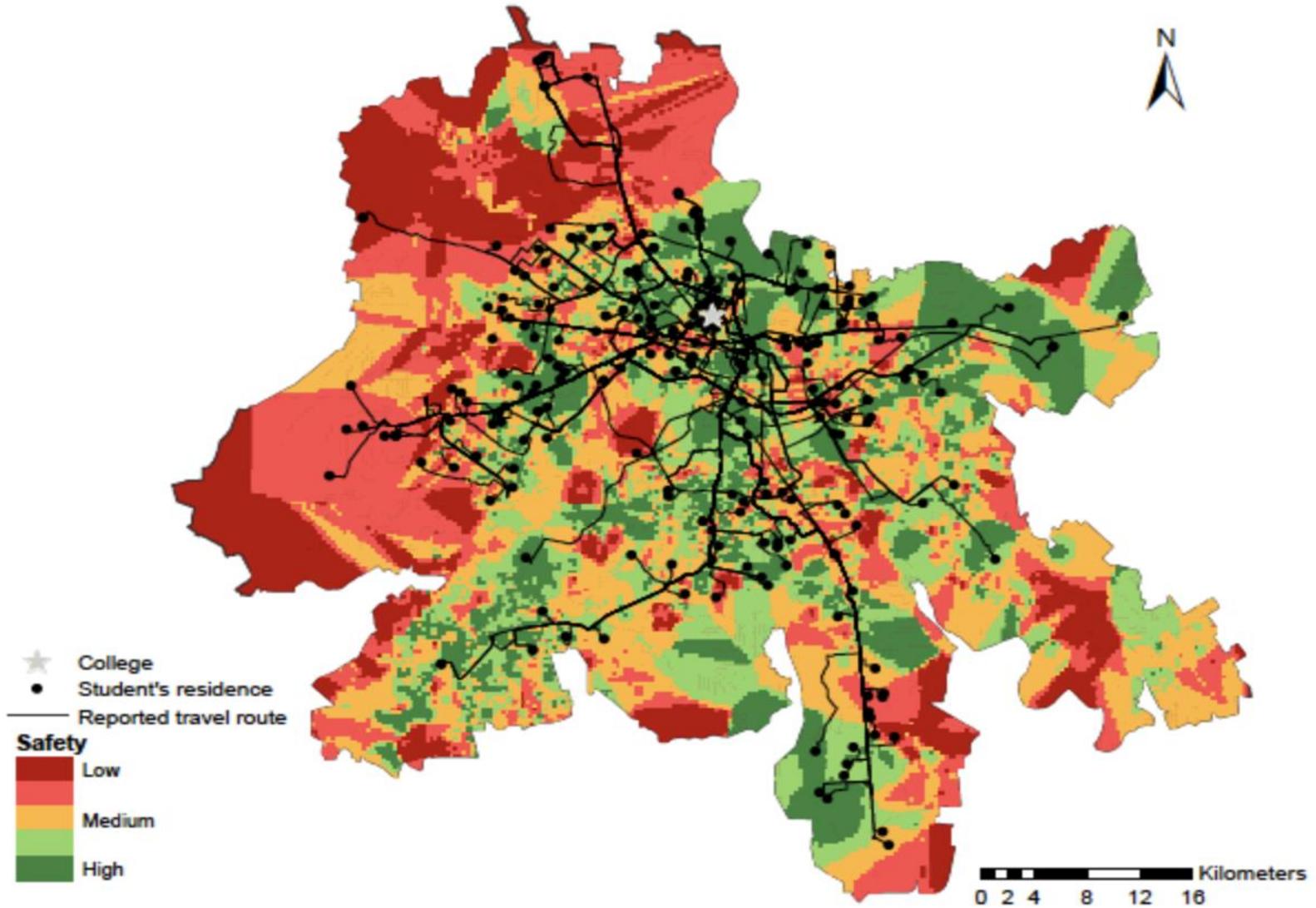
- 39.4% adolescent girls (15-18 years) are not attending school (NCPCR, 2018)
- Drop in enrolment among girls is especially pronounced at puberty
- As distance from school increases, the perceived risk of being harassed on the way increases
- Cycling to school! (Muralidharan and Prakash, 2017)
  - 32% increase in enrolment
  - 40% reduction in gender gap in schools

Muralidharan, Karthik, and Nishith Prakash. 2017. "Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9 (3): 321-50.

# Education

- 95% of women aged 16-49 years feel unsafe in the public spaces of Delhi
- Women incur additional costs to avoid the psychological burden of being harassed and stay safe
- These costs can translate into college choice
  - Female students in Delhi University are willing to attend a lower ranking college if it lies on a route they consider safer (Borker, 2020)
  - They are also willing to pay Rs. 18,800 (almost double the yearly tuition) more per year and travel an additional 40 minutes

# Perceived safety and students' reported travel routes to a college in Delhi University



Borker (2020)

# Employment

- The female labour force participation has been declining and was 18.6% in 2019, the lowest in South Asia
- Women are seen as secondary earners in families
- Women face familial and social constraints that deter from working outside – early marriage, expectation to prioritise domestic chores, and care work
- Women are 6 times more likely to exit the labour market than enter it. The birth of a child can be associated with 3 percent point increase in the probability of exiting (Sarkar, Sahoo, and Klasen, 2019)

Sarkar, Sudipa , Soham Sahoo, and Stephan Klasen. 2019 “Employment Transitions of Women in India: A Panel Analysis”. *World Development* , Vol. 115(C), pages 291-309

# Employment

- Personal and families fear of violence on the way to and at work
- Women not only less likely to work in areas that seem less safe, but also have to deal with the trade-off between opportunity cost of working (wage) and the social stigma and psychological cost of harassment (Chakraborty et al., 2018)
- Media reporting of violence and assault against women can reduce probability of women outside her home by as much as 5.5% (Siddique, 2020)

Chakraborty, Tanika, Anirban Mukherjee, Swapnika Reddy Rachapalli, and Sarani Saha. 2018. "Stigma of sexual violence and women's decision to work". *World Development*, Vol 103, 2018, Pages 226-238

Siddique, Zahra. 2020. Media reported violence and female labour supply. Working Paper

# Private spaces

- In 2019, 122,590 women reported having faced “cruelty by husband or his relatives” (NCRB, 2019)
- Lockdown heightened the vulnerability of domestic violence victims and fear of the creation of new victims
- Preliminary findings by Shah and Ravindran (2020)
  - cybercrime and domestic violence increased by 131%
  - rape and sexual assault decreased by 119%
  - effects were stronger in regions with stricter lockdowns and more people with attitudes who thought domestic violence was justified

Crime in India. 2019. Vol 1. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, India

Shah, Manisha and S Ravindran. 2020. “Unintended consequences of lockdowns: Covid-19 and the shadow pandemic”. Working Paper

# Way ahead...

- Making public and private spaces secure and better connected
- Influencing planning and city designs
- Getting employers to help shift gender norms and encourage more women to work
- Services to strengthen women's attachment to labour market
- Fostering women's social networks
- Changing mindsets

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