

Impact assessment study of

PINK BUS

in Patna, Muzaffarpur,
and Gaya



From accessibility to livelihoods:
Understanding the impact of
gender-responsive mobility

August 2026





Table of contents

Foreword	4
Message from the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar	5
Preface	6
Special message from the BSRTC administration	7
Executive summary	9
Background:	11
Bihar's Pink Bus initiative	
Demand-side insights	17
Women commuters: Profile, impact, and challenges	
Supply-side insights	25
Bihar's first-ever cohort of women drivers and conductors: Profile, impact and challenges	
Recommendation to strengthen and scale the Pink Bus initiative	35

Foreword

Public transport is not merely about moving people from one place to another. It is an essential public service that connects citizens to education, employment, healthcare, and opportunity. For women, safe and reliable mobility is a prerequisite for greater participation in economic and social life. The Government of Bihar is committed to creating a public transport system that is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the aspirations of every citizen.

The Pink Bus initiative embodies this commitment. By combining enhanced safety features with opportunities for women to serve as conductors and drivers, the initiative has shown that public transport can be a powerful instrument for advancing both mobility and empowerment. As Bihar continues to modernize its transport network, the state will build on these efforts. Among the 400 PM e-buses being inducted into the BSRTC fleet, 50 will be deployed as “Pink Buses,” reaffirming our commitment that the transition to clean mobility remains inclusive and gender-responsive.

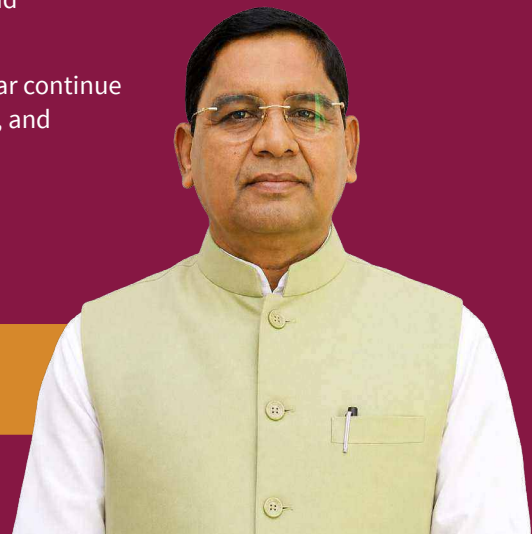
The findings of this impact assessment are encouraging. The fact that 93% of women surveyed identified safety as the primary reason for choosing pink buses reflects the trust the initiative built and reinforces the importance of placing women’s needs at the center of transport planning. The report also provides insights that can strengthen service delivery and guide the future expansion of gender-responsive public transport across the state.

I congratulate the Transport Department, Bihar State Road Transport Corporation, and MSC (MicroSave Consulting) for undertaking this important assessment. My sincere appreciation goes to the women passengers, drivers, conductors, and other stakeholders whose experiences and commitment have informed this report.

I am confident that the lessons from this assessment will help Bihar continue its journey toward a public transport system that is safe, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of present and future generations.

Shri Damodar Rawat

Hon’ble Transport Minister, Government of Bihar



Message from the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar

A responsive public transport system must recognise the diverse mobility needs of its citizens. For women, this means designing services that enable safe and reliable access to education, employment and essential services, while creating an enabling environment for their participation in the transport workforce.

The Impact Assessment Study of Pink Bus in Patna, Muzaffarpur and Gaya offers important insights into how gender-responsive approaches can be integrated into public transport planning and delivery. A key finding is that education and work account for 78% of why women take the Pink Bus journeys, highlighting the role of mobility in enabling women's participation in social and economic life.

The assessment also identifies practical priorities for the next phase, including stronger service reliability, passenger information, data-driven planning and workforce systems. These learnings can help move gender responsiveness from a dedicated initiative towards a more systematic approach to transport planning and operations.

As Bihar expands and modernizes its public transport network, including through the transition to electric mobility, there is an opportunity to build on the Pink Bus experience and ensure that inclusion is embedded in the future of public transport.

I commend BSRTC, the Transport Department and MicroSave Consulting for this assessment and hope its findings contribute to continued improvement and stronger, more inclusive public transport services across Bihar.

Shri Pratyaya Amrit, IAS
Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar



Preface

The transition toward a gender-responsive public transport system requires strong policy commitment and continuous learning from implementation. This assessment of the Pink Bus initiative represents an important milestone in understanding how targeted public transport interventions can improve women's mobility and create new opportunities for their participation in the transport workforce.

Drawing on evidence from Patna, Muzaffarpur, and Gaya, the report examines the experiences of commuters, women conductors, women drivers, and the institutions responsible for implementing the initiative. The findings demonstrate that the initiative has strengthened women's confidence in using public transport and has expanded their access to education, employment, and other essential services. At the same time, the assessment identifies practical areas for improvement, including service reliability, route planning, workforce support systems, and digital passenger information.

One finding is particularly significant: more than half of the women surveyed reported greater confidence in traveling independently after the introduction of the Pink Bus. This finding reinforces the view that investments in safer and more inclusive mobility can contribute to broader social and economic outcomes.

The Transport Department remains committed to strengthening evidence-based planning and institutional systems that improve the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of public transport services. I hope the recommendations presented in this report will inform future policy decisions and support the continued evolution of an inclusive public transport ecosystem in Bihar.



Shri Raj Kumar, IAS
Secretary, Transport Department, Bihar

Special message from the BSRTC administration

The Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC) remains committed to providing safe, affordable, and accessible public transport services across Bihar. As the state's transport system continues to evolve, our vision extends beyond improving mobility. We seek to build an inclusive public transport network that is responsive to the needs of all citizens.

The launch of the **Pink Bus initiative** in 2025 marked an important milestone in this journey. The initiative combines women-centric safety features with opportunities for women to enter the public transport workforce. It has strengthened accessibility and livelihoods. Currently, the Pink Bus offers women a safer travel option and symbolizes confidence, opportunity, and changing perceptions. Women passengers have awarded the Pink Bus an average safety rating of **4.6 out of 5**, which reflects the trust it has earned.

This publication, ***From Accessibility to Livelihoods: Understanding the Impact of Gender-Responsive Mobility***, presents the initiative's early outcomes across Patna, Muzaffarpur, and Gaya. It highlights improvements in women's mobility and documents the experiences of Bihar's first cohort of women conductors and drivers. The findings also identify opportunities to further strengthen service delivery, workforce systems, and commuter experience as public transport continues to modernize.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Bihar, the Transport Department, our knowledge partner, MSC (MicroSave Consulting), and the BSRTC team for their continued support. My special thanks go to the women passengers, conductors, and drivers whose experiences and commitment have shaped the Pink Bus initiative and this assessment.

The journey toward gender-responsive public transport continues. We hope the insights in this report contribute to informed policy dialogue and support the continued development of safer, more accessible, and inclusive mobility systems across Bihar.

Shri Atul Kumar Verma, IAS
Administrator, BSRTC





Executive summary

The **Pink Bus initiative** marks an important step toward building a safer, more inclusive, and gender-responsive public transport system in Bihar. Public transport can advance both social inclusion and economic empowerment by combining women-centric mobility with employment opportunities for women.

The assessment highlights encouraging outcomes for women commuters. **Safety emerged as the primary driver of ridership, with 93% of surveyed women citing it as the main reason for choosing the Pink Bus.** The service received an average satisfaction rating of **4.6 out of 5**, which reflects high user confidence. The pink bus primarily serves students and salaried women, at 47% and 35%, respectively. This pattern reinforces its role in enabling access to education and employment. Women also use the service for healthcare, caregiving, and market-related travel, highlighting its importance for everyday mobility. **60% of commuters reported reduced travel costs**, while **56% reported greater confidence in traveling independently**. In addition, **27% of families reported greater willingness to allow women to travel independently through the pink bus**, suggesting that improved affordability and perceptions of safety are beginning to influence broader social norms around women's mobility.

In 2025, the Government of Bihar demonstrated its commitment to increasing women's participation in the transport sector by introducing a 33% reservation for women in transport-related roles. The Pink Bus initiative represents an early step toward translating this commitment into practice by deploying Bihar's first cohort of women bus conductors and drivers. For many women, these roles provide economic security, greater confidence, social recognition, and a stronger sense of dignity. Women conductors also reported increased respect from passengers and their communities, which demonstrates the transformative potential of women's visible participation in public transport.

The assessment also identifies operational and institutional challenges that must be addressed to sustain and scale these gains. On the demand side, irregular bus timings and limited route coverage remain the principal barriers to higher utilization, at 39% and 21%, respectively. Nearly 48% of commuters reported being unaware of bus schedules, with many relying on informal channels such as WhatsApp groups or bus-spotting in the absence of real-time passenger information. Awareness of onboard safety features and passenger amenities also remains limited.

From the workforce perspective, women employees continue to face operational challenges, including inconsistent duty allocation, inadequate depot infrastructure, and limited practical training. The assessment also highlights broader institutional gaps, including low acceptance of women conductors and drivers within sections of the transport workforce, the need for sustained gender sensitization, and the absence of structured grievance resolution mechanisms.

Overall, the findings indicate that the **Pink Bus initiative has laid a strong foundation for advancing gender-responsive public transport in Bihar**. While improvements in service reliability, workforce support, and institutional systems are needed to sustain and scale its impact, the initiative offers a promising model for strengthening women's mobility, expanding economic opportunities, and embedding gender responsiveness within Bihar's public transport system.



Background: Bihar's Pink Bus initiative

Bihar's efforts to provide safe and accessible mobility to the state's female commuters



In Bihar, gaps in transport availability, affordability, and safety lead 27% of women to forego opportunities, nearly double that of men (14%)



This is an AI generated image



Safety and time constraints result in **women spending ₹18,800** more per year on commuting compared to men.



Safety concerns restrict travel, nearly **1 in 4 report harassment** during commuting, and the highest reported in Muzaffarpur.



Women travel **37% fewer trips** than men, and **82%** of women's trips are for non-work purposes.



Female students, particularly from rural areas, often **discontinue higher education**.



There is a **lack of reliable and accessible public transport** in addition to long waiting times and overcrowding.

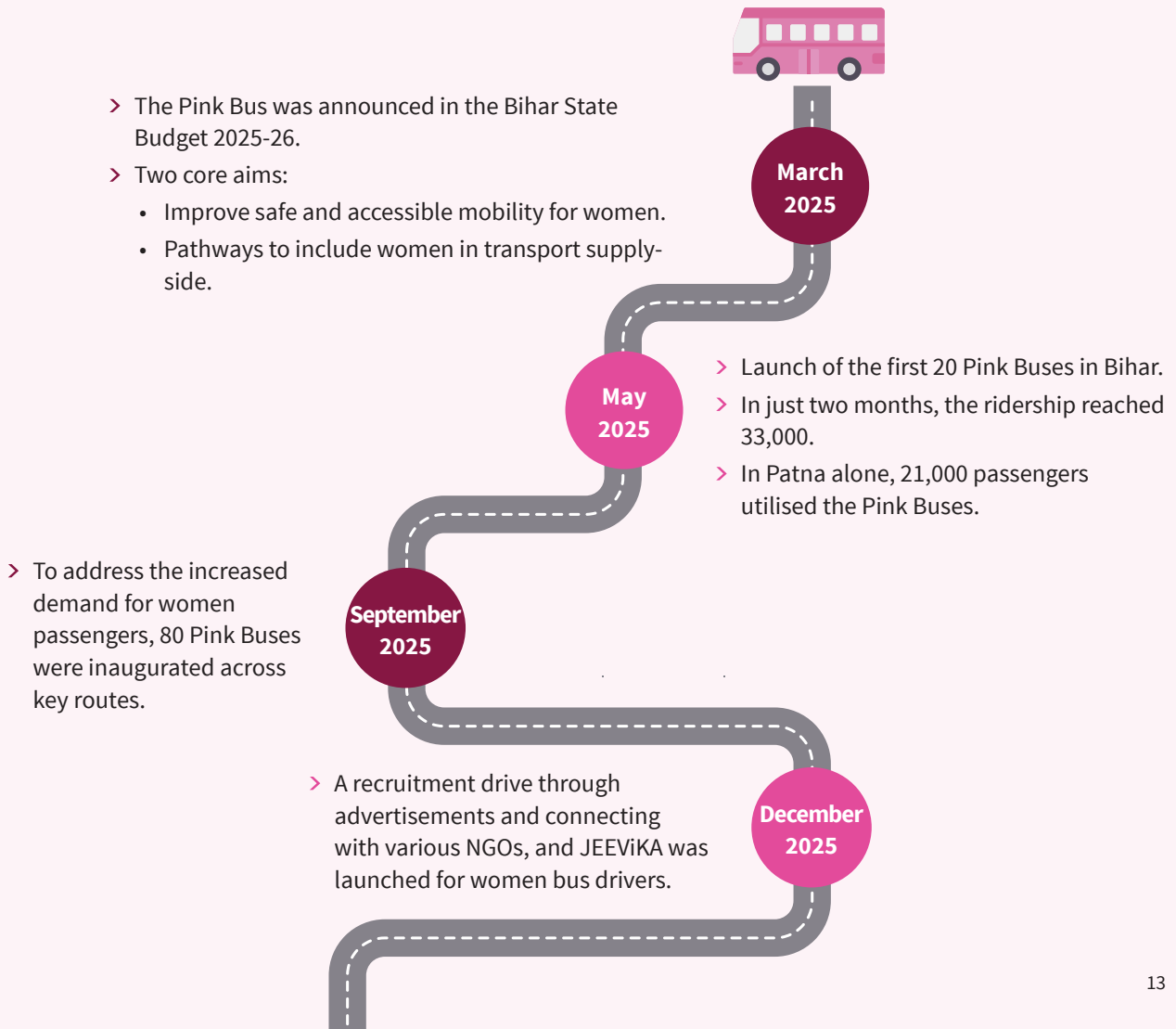


Transport is a **non-traditional livelihood for women**, especially in Bihar, due to social norms.

*Source: [Women's Safety and Mobility in Urban Bihar](#)

Bihar's phased transition toward gender-responsive public transport

Through the Pink Bus ecosystem, the state is addressing women's mobility challenges while also creating pathways for their participation in the transport workforce.



**January
2026**

- > Pink Bus showcased in the Republic Day Parade, and awarded the first position.

**February
2026**

- > The first cohort of women bus drivers was established. 21 applicants were selected.
- > 6 women bus drivers are operating the Pink Bus, while the rest are in training in IDTR or awaiting their license.

**May
2026**

- > Pink Bus recognition and awarded at the 108th SKOCH Summit in New Delhi.
- > BSRTC received the SKOCH Award 2026 for the Pink Bus Initiative, recognizing excellence in governance, innovation, and public service, and celebrating efforts that create meaningful social impact.



The study evaluates the interconnected demand, supply, and institutional dimensions of the Pink Bus ecosystem across Patna, Muzaffarpur, and Gaya



1. Women's safety and comfort features

Panic buttons; CCTV surveillance; GPS tracking; Sanitary napkins; Contraceptive pills; Mobile charging points; Music systems



2. Institutional anchoring and planning

- > Gender responsive planning of trips
- > Deployments of Pink Bus across key activity hubs
- > Operational rollout across divisions



3. Women's workforce inclusion

- > Employment opportunities in the non-traditional sector
- > Bihar's first cohort of women bus drivers and women conductors

Objectives of the study



Assess women's mobility outcomes, safety, and accessibility through Pink Bus services

Evaluate how Pink Buses improve women's travel experience, safety, comfort, affordability, and independent mobility.

Examine operational effectiveness and institutional implementation of the Pink Bus initiative

Assess service reliability, route coverage, deployment, operational challenges, and division-level implementation practices.

Understand workforce experiences and opportunities created for women in public transport

Examine the experiences, working conditions, challenges, and opportunities of women conductors and drivers.



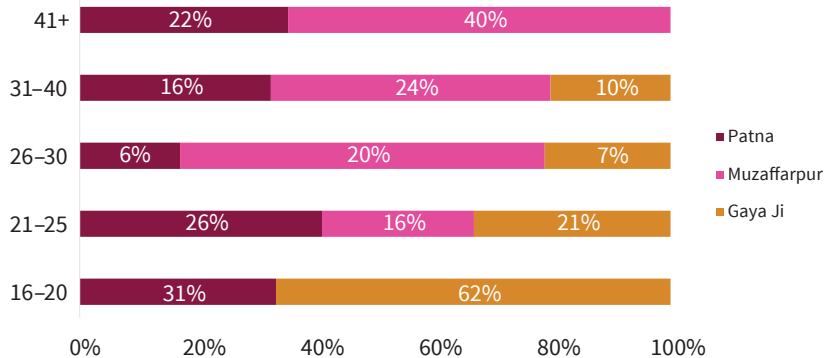
Demand-side insights Women commuters: Profile, impact, and challenges

What do women passengers say about the Pink Bus?

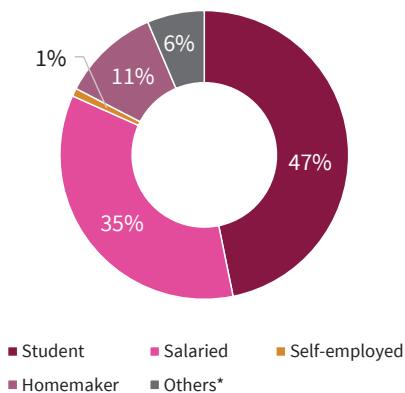


Young female students and working women are key users of Pink Buses

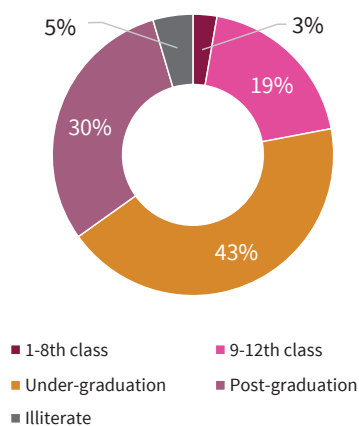
Age-wise distribution of women passengers across divisions (n=109)



Occupation (n=109)



Education (n=109)



*Others: Daily wage earners

Division-based mobility insights

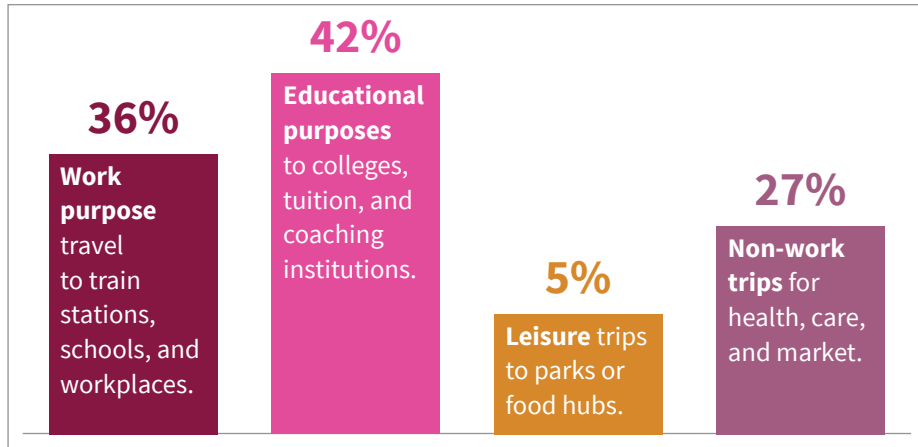
Young students are key users of Pink Buses (47%)

- > **Students aged 16–25**, travelling to colleges, coaching centres and schools.
- > In **Gaya**, routes are connected to **educational hubs**, supported by dedicated university bus stops.

Working women are the second largest segment (35%) of users, followed by others

- > **Postgraduate salaried women aged 31–40**, especially professionals, teachers and government employees, form a major commuter segment.
- > **Muzaffarpur records higher teacher ridership** due to routes aligned with school corridors.
- > Homemakers, self-employed and daily wage workers remain the **lowest user base**.

Nearly 8 in 10 Pink Bus trips support education and economic participation



Purpose of travel by women passengers

> **Education (42%) and work travel (36%)** together account for the majority of women's trips, indicating that Pink Buses are **closely linked to women's access to opportunities.**

Women passengers mobility patterns



1. Women's travel patterns are multi-purpose and reflect trip-chaining behaviour.

Women travel for market access (13%), caregiving (8%), and healthcare (6%), reflecting interconnected and multi-purpose mobility needs.



2. Women's mobility is highly time-sensitive and structured around institutional schedules.

Peak daytime (71%) and evening (69%) travel patterns are strongly influenced by school, college, coaching, and office timings.



3. Seasonal academic schedules influence travel demand patterns.

During the survey period, the 9–11 AM peak was influenced by teachers travelling for examination correction duties, highlighting seasonal shifts in women's travel demand.



4. Pink Buses are improving the quality and safety of existing public transport journeys.

79% women shifted from other BSRTC buses and para-transit modes, suggesting Pink Buses are improving travel quality

Pink Buses deliver quality transport services, but gaps in awareness and digital adoption limit commuter experience

Bus facilities exist, but awareness and usability remain uneven



70% women are aware of sanitary napkin and contraceptive pill facilities, while 30% remain unaware.



CCTV cameras are present but are often **perceived as non-functional**.



Awareness of panic buttons remain low among passengers.

Digital adoption remains low despite digitally ready users



89% women receive tickets consistently, while 11% receive them only occasionally.



96% women continue to rely on cash payments despite the majority being students and salaried users.



63% women are aware of online ticketing, highlighting the scope to improve digital awareness and adoption.

The sanitary napkin facility on the bus is helpful, but simultaneously, need clean public washrooms along the route. Without that, it is difficult to fully use these services during travel.

- A passenger, route Gandhi Maidan- Danapur, Patna

Safety of Pink Buses has increased “family permission” for independent mobility

Women choose the Pink Bus because it creates a trusted public space where they can travel with confidence, dignity and reduced fear.

Why women trust the Pink Buses?

- > **93%** of the women chose Pink Buses for safety.
- > Pink Bus achieved a **4.6/5** safety rating.
- > **95%** of women passengers prefer the Pink Bus over other alternatives for travel.

A gender-responsive environment builds trust

- > Women passengers are the strongest source of perceived safety (**91%**).
- > Women conductors improve comfort and trust during travel (**76%**).
- > **97%** women have never felt unsafe due to driver behaviour, and none reported witnessing harassment.

The impact of safer transport is improving women's confidence and independent mobility.



56%

Women reported feeling more **confident and comfortable travelling independently** after the introduction of the Pink Bus service.

31%

Families are now **more willing to allow women**, especially students and young women, to travel alone using public transport.



Earlier, I often avoided crowded buses and waited for one with space. With Pink Bus, I travel more safely and confidently because even when the bus is crowded, I no longer feel the need to keep my 'peter tingle' on! (Spiderman reference)

- **Student passenger, Patna**

Financial and social impact of the Pink Bus

Pink Bus is creating economic relief and improving women's access to opportunities and everyday mobility

Financial impact



60%

Women reported reduced daily travel expenses after shifting from autos and e-rickshaws to Pink Bus services.

67%

Women consider the Pink Bus an affordable mode of transport for regular commuting.

Affordability: Overall, women reported roughly a **28–35% reduction** in daily travel costs after shifting from paratransit modes such as autos and e-rickshaws to Pink Buses.

Social impact



27%

Women show increased frequency of travel, with more families permitting independent mobility.

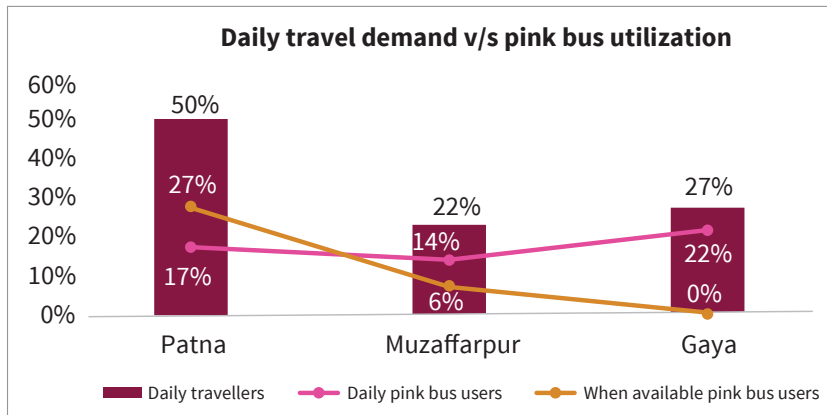
69%

Women said improved access to education, workplaces and healthcare facilities due to safer and more accessible mobility.



This is an AI generated image

Improving service reliability could convert an additional 10%–15% of commuters into regular Pink Bus users



“I cannot find the Pink Bus in the morning until around 9 AM, when I need to reach the station. Some days I don’t see any buses, while on other days there are 5–6 buses coming one after another in a line.”

- A salaried user, Patna



High commuter demand, but low regular usage

While **50% of women commute daily** in Patna, only **17% use Pink Buses regularly**.



Unreliable schedules limit routine dependence

Only **42% of women are confident** about Pink Bus routes and timings, suggesting unreliable routines.



Bus schedules poorly align with women’s travel needs

Only **22% of women** report that Pink Bus timings **fully match their travel requirements**.



Lack of real-time tracking reduces commuter confidence

48% do not know bus timings, while 24% rely on informal waiting methods such as WhatsApp groups or bus spotting.



Irregular timings and route gaps reduce full utilization

Irregular timings (39%) and limited route coverage (21%) are the biggest barriers, while **crowding (17%)** is emerging as a concern in Patna.



Supply-side insights Bihar's first-ever cohort of women drivers and conductors: Profile, impact and challenges

Realizing the BSRTC motto "For women, by women and with women."



Who are the women powering the Pink Buses?

For all women conductors, the Pink Bus initiative marked their first job experience working in a male-dominated public transport sector.



Entering a non-traditional workforce

28% of women conductors reported this as their first job, while others transitioned from informal and service-sector roles such as Anganwadi work, hospitality, retail, and parlor services.



Balancing work and household responsibilities

Across divisions, the workforce is largely made up of married women, all of them balancing transport work alongside caregiving and household responsibilities.



Digitally ready workforce

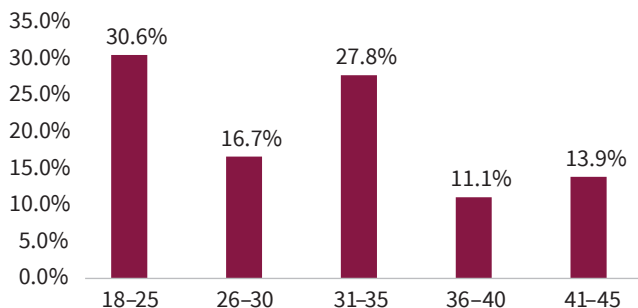
Nearly all women conductors use smartphones, with feature phone usage observed only in Patna, indicating strong digital readiness across the workforce.



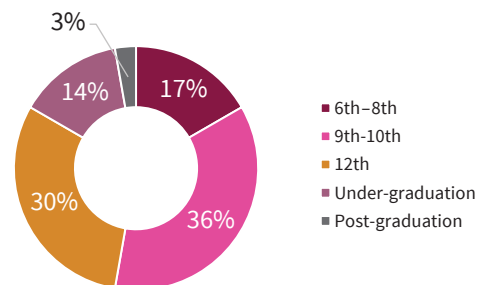
Community-led pathways into employment

Most women conductors became aware of the opportunity through snowballing and word-of-mouth networks. Peer and community connections remain critical in women's workforce participation.

Age-wise distribution of women conductors (n=36)



Educational distribution of women conductors (n=36)



Women made personal and financial trade-offs, including relocation and long commutes, while navigating varying levels of family support to continue working



Relocation for work

- > Many women conductors rent rooms in the cities where they are currently posted and are relocated from other divisions.
- > Many women received information about vacancies only in Patna, not in other divisions or places.



Commute distance and cost

- > Despite relocation, two-thirds of conductors reported long distances between their residence and workplace.
- > Daily commute costs ranged from ₹30 to ₹100 one way.



Family support

- > Women in Patna largely reported strong family support due to association with the government.
- > Women in Muzaffarpur and Gaya stated mixed family support, including resistance from husbands and in-laws.

My husband left me when I started this job. On my first day, when I told him I was on duty, he said we had no relationship anymore. But later, when he saw that I was earning well, he returned and is now living with us again.

- Pink Bus conductor

Stable income, safety and social respect of working for a “government job” are key motivators to join as Pink Bus conductors.

Respect and social recognition encouraged women to apply and continue in the role.



This is an AI generated image

I went to a clinic for treatment. The clinician asked me about my profession. When I said I am a Pink Bus conductor, he was very happy and said it is good work for society and even gave me a discount on the clinic fees.

- Women conductor



Economic security and financial independence

- > The job provided predictable earnings linked to duty days.
- > Women reported contributing to household expenses and children's education.
- > Many viewed the role as an opportunity for long-term financial stability.



Pink Bus being a government initiative increased social acceptance

- > Working primarily with women passengers increased family approval and comfort.
- > The government-linked nature of the initiative increased trust among families.
- > Women felt safer compared to other non-traditional public-facing occupations.



Pride, identity and public visibility

- > Women expressed pride in contributing to safer mobility for other women.
- > The role brought visibility, confidence, and a sense of identity in public spaces.
- > Many women took personal responsibility for maintaining bus cleanliness and passenger comfort.

A day in the life of a Pink Bus conductor

Every pink bus trip reflects a long workday with operational responsibilities, irregular schedules, and unpaid household work.



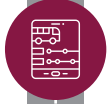
3:00/4:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m.

Women conductors wake early to cook, complete household responsibilities, and care for their children when needed before they leave for duty.



6:00 a.m. onward

These conductors report to their depots, collect log sheets, coordinate with drivers, and prepare for the first trips of the day.



7:30 a.m. to 5:00/5:30 p.m.

- > Some conductors bring their children on bus trips because they lack childcare support.
- > They manage heavy passenger volumes during school, college, and office peak hours, as they issue tickets, coordinate crowds, and answer passenger queries.
- > Irregular schedules, route changes, fueling delays, and fluctuating passenger demand often determine the pace of work.
- > These conductors also compete with private bus operators on roads and at bus stops, including pressure to attract passengers and meet daily sales targets.



Evening return

- > Most conductors complete final sales submissions between 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Settlement processes often take an additional one to two hours, which depends on sales against targets.
- > Many conductors also reported 12 to 13-hour shifts before they returned home to continue household and caregiving responsibilities.

Women conductors are navigating and reshaping public transport services

Conductors described gradually building confidence and visibility while navigating difficult public interactions.



Workplace discomfort

- > Some women experienced discomfort arising from comments and stares within depot environments.
- > Awareness and use of emergency response systems such as panic buttons remained limited.



Route-level interactions

- > Conductors reported occasional confrontations during passenger boarding and competition with private buses.
- > Pink Bus conductors reported gender-stereotypical remarks: “Women should be in their houses. Why are they out? Are you trying to become a man?”
- > They have to put up with mocking behavior when they attempt to attract passengers, including imitation and ridicule.



This is an AI generated image

- > Women conductors have **emerged as the face of the Pink Bus ecosystem**, breaking barriers in a non-traditional sector.
- > They **actively shape passenger** experience through service ownership, trust-building, and safer travel facilitation.
- > Their presence gradually challenges gender norms and increases the **visibility of women in public transport**.

Operational coordination, passenger demand and limited infrastructure shape women conductors' work experience



Patna case:

CNG fueling delays in Patna disrupted schedules and reduced service availability during peak hours.

- > Buses first travelled to Gola Road for fueling, and long queues delayed trip starts until late morning, often between 11 am and 1 pm, reducing availability during peak hours.
- > To meet trip targets, conductors ran back-to-back trips later in the day, resulting in irregular service frequency and limited availability of Pink Buses after 5:30 pm.

1. Operational uncertainty

- > Fueling delays, changing routes, and irregular schedules often affect trip timing and frequency.
- > Conductors regularly coordinate with different drivers and shifting duty allocations throughout the day.

2. Pressure to maintain ridership

- > Passenger demand fluctuates across school, college, and office peak hours.
- > Daily sales targets create pressure to attract and retain passengers across routes.

3. Limited infrastructure for crew

- > Access to clean washrooms, drinking water, and resting areas remains inconsistent across depots and route endpoints.
- > Some women reported minimizing water intake during long shifts due to limited facilities

Workforce systems, safety preparedness and long-term retention

The initiative has created new opportunities for women, but workforce systems are still evolving as operations scale across divisions.

Training remains largely informal



- › Most conductors learned through observation and on-bus experience.
- › Training focused mainly on ticketing and route operations.
- › Limited exposure was provided on conflict management, emergency response, or passenger handling.

Safety preparedness remains limited



- › Awareness and understanding of panic button mechanisms remain low.
- › Women often depend on drivers or passengers during difficult route-level situations.
- › Concerns emerged around ‘women being weak of heart’ and can’t handle emergency braking situations and long-distance routes.

Employment systems require strengthening



- › Frequent route changes and irregular duty allocation affect stability.
- › Delayed salaries, limited benefits, and lack of employment clarity affect morale and retention
- › Lack of crèche and childcare support remains a key gap in creating women-friendly transport workplaces.

On 1st January, our trip ended late, and only the driver and I were on the bus. On an empty road, 10–12 men blocked the road with ill intentions. The driver had to decide whether to risk the roadside ditch or drive straight. We drove straight to escape.

- Pink Bus conductor

What does success look like for the Pink Bus?

It is a seamless connection, confidence and satisfaction across the stakeholders involved in the Pink Bus ecosystem.



The long-term success of Pink Buses lies in expanding connectivity from villages to blocks, subdivisions, and districts. Enabling women, especially Jeevika members, to access markets, move their products directly, and build a more inclusive and prosperous local economy.

- Administrator, BSRTC



Pink Bus will be successful when more women confidently travel independently, and the service becomes financially sustainable for long-term operations.

- Pink Bus nodal officer

Success for us means steady duty, job security, timely payments, and a system that hears and addresses our grievances.

- Women conductor, Pink Bus

The Pink Bus will be successful when I can rely on fixed timetables, track buses in real time, and easily connect across routes to plan my travel with confidence.

- Pink Bus passenger

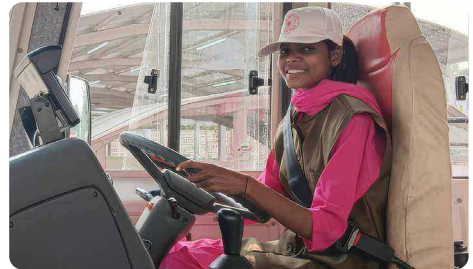
Bihar's first Pink Bus driver Ragini's route: From Punpun to Patna

The Pink Bus initiative is not just improving mobility. It is breaking gender and caste barriers, creating livelihoods, and reshaping aspirations for women in Bihar.

Breaking barriers



- Grew up in Punpun, Bihar, in a low-caste community where girls were expected to prioritise marriage and household roles.
- Exposure through Nari Gunjan encouraged her to explore opportunities beyond traditional roles.
- Applied through Bihar Mahadalit Vikas Mission (BMVM) - her first step toward a non-traditional career.



So, what if I am thin and short, I am capable to drive a bus and carry my passengers with confidence. I want people to say *"Hum Ragini ki bus mai jayenge"*.

Challenging norms and building skills



- Received training and built confidence at the Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR).
- Overcame social resistance, self-doubt, motion sickness and fear with support.

Recognition and acceptance



- Selected as a Pink Bus driver, Republic Day representation and received the joining letter from the Transport Minister, GoB.
- Community perception shifted from skepticism to pride and became a visible example in a male-dominated role.

Recommendation to strengthen and scale the Pink Bus initiative



Strengthening the Pink Bus ecosystem to better cater to increased demand

Addresses: Low awareness, partial usage, dependence on other modes, and information gaps



Strengthen passenger awareness

Launch structured awareness campaigns on Pink Bus routes, fares, timings, and safety features, with targeted outreach to students, working women, and frequent commuters.

1



Improve schedule visibility

Display scheduled timings and routes at major stops and depots and strengthen communication through digital and offline channels.

2



Strengthen passenger feedback mechanisms

Establish structured passenger feedback systems to continuously improve service delivery and identify demand gaps.

3



Improve commuter-friendly payment and pass systems

Restart the issuance of bus passes for daily commuters and persons with disabilities, and introduce NCMC-enabled pink bus cards to enable seamless payments and reduce fare disputes

4

Data-driven planning and route optimization



Addresses: Irregular timing, route gaps, low ridership, and operational inefficiencies

- > Use findings from this study as a baseline to expand and conduct gender-responsive mobility assessments across seasons, time bands, routes, and other BSRTC buses;
- > Undertake route rationalisation exercises in collaboration with the District Magistrate to identify underserved corridors;
- > Develop dynamic route planning mechanisms allowing periodic route adjustments based on demand and performance;
- > Introduce gender-disaggregated data collection through electronic ticketing issuing (ETIM) machines.

Operational planning and service reliability



Addresses: Irregular timing, fuel delays, frequency gaps, and bunching

- > Develop structured timetables that cover peak hours and align CNG fueling schedules accordingly;
- > Introduce structured duty allocation systems to ensure predictable working schedules;
- > Maintain standard operating procedures for workforce management to ensure efficient work according to roles and responsibilities.

Strengthening workforce systems



Addresses: Job insecurity, payment delays, route shifts, and work pressure

- > Ensure timely salary payments and transparency in compensation structures;
- > Establish formal grievance redressal mechanisms at depot and division levels;
- > Strengthen the women driver pipeline through LMV-to-HMV transition support, training, while expediting licensing for candidates who have completed HMV training;
- > Provide clean washrooms, drinking water facilities, and resting areas at depots and route endpoints.

Addresses: POSH training, lack of training, and panic button awareness



- Introduce structured training programs and guidelines for conductors and drivers that cover passenger handling, trust building of drivers and conductors, conflict management, and emergency response;
- Conduct gender-sensitization workshops and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) training for depot staff, drivers, and operational personnel, and periodic refresher trainings to improve service quality;
- Strengthen panic button awareness and emergency response protocols.



Safety, training, and gender-responsive service delivery

Addresses: Lack of tracking, sales pressure, and poor monitoring



- Implement live bus tracking systems at depot and division levels;
- Strengthen panic button connectivity with the nearest police stations and control rooms;
- Conduct regular CCTV monitoring to enhance safety and service quality;
- Introduce digital dashboards for operational monitoring and decision-making;
- Explore AI-based passenger counting systems in the long term to validate ETIM data.



Digital system and monitoring infrastructure



Methodology

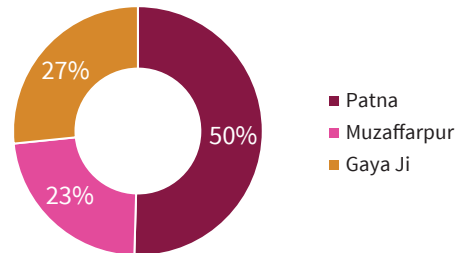
Study approach: This research used a mixed-methods approach to assess the impact of the Pink Bus Initiative

Demand side - passengers



1. Commuter survey

- > On-board passenger surveys conducted across 3 divisions – Patna, Muzaffarpur and Gaya
- > Total respondents: 109 women commuters



Demand side - passengers

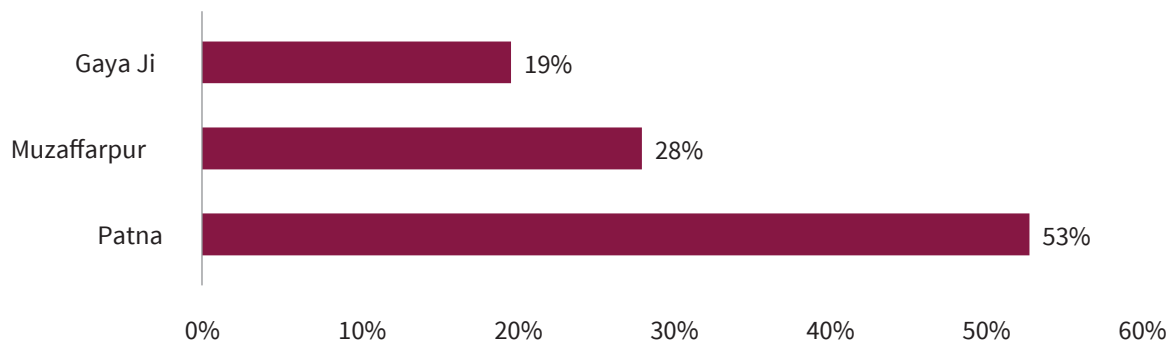


2. Focus group discussions

- > Total FGDs conducted: 5
- > Total women conductors: 36

3. Key informant interview

- > Nodal officers – 3 divisions
- > BSRTC Administrator
- > Operational and planning insights



Limitations of the study



Findings reflect a rapid assessment across selected divisions: The study was conducted within a limited assessment period and may not fully capture seasonal variations, festival-related travel, school schedules, or long-term shifts in ridership and operational patterns.



Passenger responses are based on currently active users and accessible commuters: The findings primarily reflect the experiences of women currently accessing Pink Bus services. The study could not comprehensively capture the perspectives of women who do not travel independently, have discontinued usage, or remain excluded from public transport systems.



Operational observations were influenced by route and timing availability: Operational observations and commuter interactions were dependent on bus availability during field visits. Given irregular schedules and varying service frequency, conditions may differ across routes, timings, and days not covered during the assessment.



Conductors' experiences primarily reflect the current phase of implementation: The assessment captures the current stage of the Pink Bus initiative, where institutional systems, route operations, staffing arrangements, and technological integrations are still evolving.



The study focuses on gendered mobility and workforce experiences: The study focused primarily on gendered mobility, passenger experiences, and women's workforce participation. It does not include detailed financial viability analysis, environmental impact assessment, or long-term ridership and route optimization modelling.



Authors and contributors

Lead authors



Sonal Jaitly,
MSC

Co-authors



Poulomi Ghosh,
MSC



Nancy P Biju,
MSC

Designed by



Kamiya Satija,
MSC



Hem Upadhyay,
MSC

Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC), established in 1953 and reconstituted in 1959 under the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950, is the state-owned public transport undertaking responsible for providing safe, reliable, and affordable inter-state and intra-state bus services across Bihar. Serving nearly 100,000 passengers daily, BSRTC is committed to modernizing public transport through service innovation, digital transformation, and sustainable mobility solutions.

BSRTC strives to enhance connectivity, foster regional growth, and lead the shift toward green public transport in Bihar and is committed to becoming the lifeline of Public Transport System across its districts and cities.

With more than **27 years of global consulting experience**, MSC brings together cross-functional expertise, technical excellence, and implementation capability. We support more than **600 clients** in strengthening public systems.

We partner with governments, transport authorities, development partners, and the private sector to design and implement solutions that improve mobility, strengthen institutions, accelerate digital transformation, and advance inclusive and climate-resilient infrastructure.

As a trusted implementation partner, MSC helps clients navigate complex challenges, translate policy into action, and build efficient, citizen-centric systems that deliver long-term social and economic impact.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



The Pink Bus is more than a fleet of buses—it is a commitment to building a Bihar where every woman can travel safely, participate equally, and thrive with dignity. As Bihar’s public transport network continues to evolve, this initiative marks the beginning of a larger journey toward a transport system that is inclusive by design, responsive in practice, and empowering for generations of women to come.