



## **Effective Communication of Air Pollution: Researching the Role of Gender**

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Understanding how different publics within society perceive and experience air pollution is key in designing communication efforts able to catalyse positive behavioural changes at the individual level. The literature suggests that place, age, educational level and income all shape, to some extent, how citizens perceive air pollution. The role of gender, however, has been less explored. The few studies that investigate it, found that women perceive air quality to be worse when compared to men. A complementary growing body of work explores how women and men have different socially constructed behaviours in areas that are key to air pollution (e.g. transport and public spaces in cities), suggesting that differences in perception do need to be looked at more closely. Based on this, we conducted a survey study (n=365) in Greater Manchester (UK) and found that women perceived air pollution to be more threatening and were more aware of the damage it causes. Based on these findings, we conducted a series of interviews with women (n=30) to explore their experiences of air pollution and imaginings of clean urban environments. When asked about how they pictured a transformation towards a clean urban environment, they reflected on the need for cycling infrastructure or a larger presence of green and blue spaces in the city. But they adopted a holistic approach and went beyond that to discuss how clean air comes hand-in-hand with an improved life in the city, where homelessness, inequality, and littering are tackled and communities made stronger, so that spending time outdoors and walking become pleasant activities. Health was at the forefront of these discourses and an important motivator of clean transport choices such as walking or cycling. One clear implication of this study is that in order to design communication strategies that are effective, attention has to be brought to the experiential knowledge of different people in society, such as those of women. Furthermore, the "health frame" that appears to be tightly linked to sustainable transportation behaviours, could be a powerful tool for communication, over other frames such as the "environmental frame" or the "economic frame".