

Women Driving Women

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TL;DR

- We have a challenge with Safety Sentiment among female riders and drivers, resulting in difficulty in attracting women drivers to the platform, and reduced usage by women riders especially at certain hours of the day.
- The idea of a product where we match women riders with women drivers has been discussed at Uber for a long time, and has also received positive feedback from women drivers and riders, though we have not conducted detailed market research or user research studies.
- The product would entail a 'women rider preferred only' toggle on the Driver side. The product would require gender identification for both riders and drivers
- In Western markets, there are significant legal and policy risks. These may be lower in developing countries (e.g., MX, SA, EG). In addition, there are significant concerns about gender identity discrimination, high risk of bad actors causing safety incidents, segregation issues, and undermining current/future safety products - these challenges span across all global markets.
- Women-only services have been tried in other transportation contexts and have met with varying degrees of success, including challenges around unintended consequences.
- There are also severe marketplace challenges due to lack of enough women drivers in most countries outside the US, leading to low C/R rates and high ETAs, making it an unsustainable product in most places.
- Recommendations:
 - US
 - **REDACTED - PRIVILEGED**
 - Analyse and propose an 'Elite Driver' product which matches any requesting rider with elite drivers (ratings, # of trips, no safety incidents). The Elite Driver product would have no gender based component or feature.
 - Developing nations (subset TBD)
 - Do NOT roll out a rider facing women-only product until we have enough female driver supply (>10%)

- Analyse and propose an 'Elite Driver' product which matches any requesting rider with Elite Drivers (ratings, # of trips, no safety incidents). The Elite Driver product would have no gender based component or feature.
- Investigate further and experiment with a driver-facing option of "Women riders preferred"
- Consider Saudi Arabia as a potential special case given upcoming un-banning of women drivers
- Market Research: We recommend extensive market and UX research prior to any public launch. There are a lot of unknowns in how any of these options would be viewed by users, and whether assumed benefits (increased participation by woman drivers/riders, improved safety perception, etc) are likely to result.

Introduction and Context

Context

Ride sharing services like Uber have enabled safer transportation for all populations - including for women who would previously be hesitant to travel by taxis for safety reasons. Uber has provided a much safer and a more convenient option to female riders in several parts of the world.

That said, several high profile assaults have occurred on the Uber platform targeting women riders and drivers, which have garnered a lot of attention and caused safety fears among female users. Also, in several cases, female riders have expressed a sense of anxiety and 'creepiness' with male drivers especially when traveling after dark, even though safety incidents have only occurred in a small minority of such situations.

While women riders form 40-50% of Uber's riding population, it has been difficult to attract significant number of women drivers to the platform (varied success in different countries). Safety has ranked as one of the top reasons for prospective female drivers to not join Uber, and for current female drivers to not drive during certain hours of the day. Uber can help overcome some of those concerns because of the safety improvements we offer.

During qualitative user research over the last few years, and other anecdotal feedback, both riders and drivers have proactively brought up the idea of a service which lets women riders request women drivers, and vice versa, as a way to make them feel safer. When prompted with this idea, women users have been positive about such a service expressing that it would make them much more comfortable riding and driving after dark. Note that we have not conducted a large scale quantitative or user research study on this topic.

Goal of this document

Within Uber, we have had several disparate conversations, analyses and experiments on this topic. However, we have not taken a well-coordinated and systematic approach to drive this topic forward. This document is an attempt to do that.

The goal of this document is to capture in one place:

- Product Description for a potential Women only product on Uber
- Legal, policy and marketplace implications
- Global viewpoint: not just being US focused
- Provide a set of recommendations for broad alignment within the company
- Record and track next steps for further investigation and experimentation

Legal and Policy Challenges

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Policy (US)

Please see a [detailed policy analysis](#) conducted by [Jena Wu](#). Here are the highlights:

Though a female-only product has been requested by riders and drivers during our user research, we have heard strong opposition to the product from women's advocates across the globe, which poses significant policy risks outlined below.

- Discrimination and Slippery Slope: Allowing gender discrimination may open up the floodgates to requests about additional discriminatory preferences for the sake of ‘feeling safe.’ For example, riders may tell us that they feel safer with drivers who are native-born or who speak the local language fluently; drivers who have zero criminal history; and/or drivers who aren’t senior citizens.
- Segregation not a solution for safety: Creating a separate but (un)equal product supports a simplistic and outdated view that women must take extra steps to ensure their safety -- as opposed to addressing actual bad actors. Furthermore, with Uber’s publicly documented ‘bro culture’ and perceived tolerance of workplace sexual harassment, we will be ripe for criticism from opinion elites and press who already oppose us. They would likely use this product to argue that Uber believes it should remove women from the mainstream in order to ‘protect’ them.
- Undermining our existing and future Safety practices: Uber takes numerous, substantive measures to protect safety for riders and drivers, and it continues to invest heavily in new safety innovations. However, for women’s safety advocates who were unfamiliar with our existing safety measures, it seemed like we need a women-only option because we’re not taking the steps needed to protect riders in general.
- Alienation of transgender community and their allies: By forcing a binary definition of gender identity, Uber would go against public efforts to be more inclusive for gender-neutral individuals on transit. We would also risk harming our already-tenuous relationship with the LGBTQ community and likely would face opposition from internal groups as well (e.g., UberPRIDE, the company’s LGBTQ employee resource group).
- Inequitable system for women drivers: We have a much stronger way of identifying driver gender than rider gender, and also we will not be able to ensure that the female rider is not accompanied by men. This creates an imbalanced system that makes it easier for bad actors to target women drivers, which poses significant safety and policy risks.

We will have a difficult time getting third party support or validation for this product due to the reasons mentioned above. This will also harm our efforts to rebuild relationships with anti sexual assault advocates.

We note also that launching a women’s only product, even if confined to small parts of the world, could generate criticism in Western countries like the US. Past examples include the [Saudi investment](#) and [local marketing campaigns](#). Uber is viewed as a global brand, and a high-profile launch in a market that is considered lower risk could nonetheless invite criticism by Western media, policy makers, and 3rd party groups.

See the [internal policy brief](#) for details.

3rd party literature review

Generally, women are opposed to segregated services. Women prefer policies and design considerations to existing transportation schemes to make their journeys safer, providing them full access to the existing network. Some women have reported feeling safer in segregated buses (often - though not always - in developing countries), generally as a temporary/short term measure. Women find segregated services patronizing, limiting to their mobility, and failing to address the root problems. It may also leave the women on non-segregated services feeling like “free game” by men. “The onus should be on men to stop harassing women, not on women to escape them.” ([Urban Affairs Review](#), [Asian Development Bank](#), [USDOT](#), [Universiti Teknologi Malaysia](#), [World Bank](#), [IFSTTAR](#))

Here is a detailed [External literature review](#) prepared by [Heather Rothenberg](#) on this topic.

Feedback from International markets (Mexico, Egypt, Saudi Arabia)

See details in the legal analysis doc [here](#).

Mexico

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

From a policy perspective, while the issues are not as serious as the US, we could face opposition from several women’s group in Mexico around this feature. The policy team recommends getting additional feedback from the local women’s safety groups to understand the risks better.

Also, before launching this service in Mexico, the following issues should be studied further and addressed:

1) Gender self-identification: Allowing gender self-identification could backfire if the gender is deemed not true by the other party (as mentioned above in US analysis). Self-identification is not a common practice in Mexico. Local legal team recommends using the gender as established in an official document (birth certificate or passport), at least for drivers. Note however that reliance on official documentation will likely be viewed as discriminatory for individuals who have a different gender identity or are transitioning, and by LGBTQ groups.

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Saudi Arabia

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Women will be allowed to start driving in Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2018. For now, the announcement did not mention public transportation so it is not clear if women will be allowed to serve as taxi drivers or work using Uber as Driver-Partners. It is expected that eventually they will be allowed to do so, and when it happens it is **almost certain that women drivers will only be allowed to pick up women riders** (or a family that consists of women and men) both legally and culturally. Therefore, most likely, a women-driving-women product will be the only solution plausible for women drivers in Saudi.

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Egypt

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Comparison of issues by Country

To summarize this section, here is a comparison of legal and policy risks across the 4 countries we analysed:

H = high risk; M = medium risk; L = low risk

Issue	US	Mexico	Saudi Arabia	Egypt
REDACTED - PRIVILEGED				
Marketplace Issues (C/R, ETA, price)	M	H	H	H

Product Modifications to combat challenges

Given the significant number of [legal, policy, social and marketplace challenges](#) with such a product, we may need to entertain certain modifications to the baseline product described [above](#). In some cases, these product modifications may be at odds with each other and we will need to make trade-off decisions.

Challenge	Product Modification	Feasibility (L, M, H)
REDACTED - PRIVILEGED		

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Various Efforts at Uber

There have been a few experiments or analyses conducted in this product space within Uber:

Mexico City Employee test [\(details here\)](#)

Summary of the test:

- A ride option called “UberWOMEN” was created for admin/employees only
- This option allowed employees to hail women drivers only
- 89 employees participated in the test conducted during a week in Dec 2017

- The goal of the test was to mainly assess the impact on the marketplace and rider experience
- The employees also surveyed the women drivers to get their general feedback

Findings:

- Market reality in Mexico City is that only 2-3% of the driver hours are contributed by female drivers (only 1.6% during weekend nights)
- During the test, the 89 employees made 501 ride requests and these were received by 201 unique women drivers
- Overall, the **marketplace results even with a small rider population were really poor:**
 - Even with just less than half rider to driver ratio, **the C/R rate was only 45.11%.**
 - For completed rides, the mean ETA on the UberWoman product was 9.13 minutes while that on UberX was 4.21 minutes. Also, the mean ATA on completed trips was 21% higher than the ETA.
- Some of the female employees surveyed really liked the peace of mind of being able to get a female driver, especially when late at night.
- That said, the lack of reliability and longer ETAs was frustrating for them
- Some other findings from focus groups in Mexico:
 - Some women riders did NOT feel safer with a woman driver due a perception (may not be reality) that the women driver was not as skillful as a male driver, which made them feel unsafe
 - Some women riders also felt that it's more dangerous to have two women (rider and driver) in a car as they may have a higher chance of being targeted by a third party

Conclusion:

- Mexico team has so-far concluded that the woman-only product is not viable due to the marketplace impact, mainly driven by the low number of female drivers

Global S&P team analysis [\(Details here\)](#)

The Global S&P team led by Nick Abrahams has recently conducted analysis around the feasibility of a women-only rider/driver product. The overall goal is to increase the number of women drivers globally, given research that safety concerns are a key contributor to women drivers staying away from the platform.

Key Findings from the analysis:

- United States is the only country where we have a large enough female driver population (20% active drivers, 12% driver hours contribution) to make a women-only product viable

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

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- Outside the US, female driver population is too low to make such a product viable from a marketplace and user experience perspective
 - Rider demand is expected to outstrip the available female supply (low C/R rates and large ETA)
 - Eligible supply needs to be at least 5% of the overall supply AND higher than the % of of requests (analysis [here](#) based on other ride options)

Recommendation from S&P team:

The team has recommended a **'Women Riders Preferred'** option for female drivers in developing countries, with the goal of attracting more female drivers outside the US. This is how it would work:

- No ride option on the Rider side
- Women drivers would have a 'mostly women rider' option i.e. not guaranteeing a woman rider but trying our best to match one
- We would determine the gender of the rider using first name matching - which would have 80-90% accuracy (may vary with name's origin)
- We would also use a 'minimum # of trips' as a way to filter riders to send to female drivers who choose this option
- Given the high % of female riders and the low % of female drivers, women drivers would mostly be matched with a female rider (matching rule details TBD)
- Pros
 - Low marketplace impact since female riders are not selecting a female driver
 - We are not 'overpromising' to the female drivers i.e. not guaranteeing a female rider
 - As more female drivers get female riders, this may encourage more drivers to join and lead to a much better marketplace to eventually launch a female driver view for female riders
- Cons
 - Female drivers can still be matched with male riders thus not give them complete peace of mind for safety
 - No solution for female riders
 - Potential difficulty in how to position such a product
 - Potential risk of women drivers with bad intentions targeting and attacking women riders

Workation project ([Deck here](#))

In January 2016, one of the Workation teams worked on the 'UberWOMAN' [project](#).

The team recommended a 'Prefer female rider' product which is similar to the recommendation above. The team did a deep dive on an ML algorithm to determine the gender of a rider based on first name.

Competitors offering women-only service

We have seen following competitors offer similar services:

<To be filled out further>

Company	Location	Active?	Notes
Safr	Boston	Yes	SafeHer, formerly Chariot for Women) changed its business model to allow male drivers and riders in response to legal concerns (and, as we understand it, pressure from Massachusetts state lawmakers). It is banking on its female focus to provide a very high probability that women are paired with women - but it is not guaranteed.
Ride Austin			
Laudrive			
FemiTaxi			
Lady Driver			
Pink Cabs			
Pink Taxi	Dubai	Yes	
Womendrive			
SeeJaneGo	Southern California	No (as of 1/8/2018)	See Jane Go would redirect requests from male riders to a competing TNC (it is not clear which one) so that they do not refuse service to men.
SheRides / SheTaxi			

Conclusion from competition

<To be filled out further>

Final Recommendations and next steps

Decision Criteria

Before we recommend a go-forward plan, we need to consider the following criteria:

- Safety: Are we increasing the safety of female riders and drivers?
- Reputation: Are we improving or hurting our reputation?
- Growth: Does it lead to new female rider and driver acquisition, increased trips/female rider and increased supply hours/female driver?
- Marketplace Impact: User experience including wait time + completion rate
- Legal Risk: **REDACTED - PRIVILEGED**

Recommendations

Considering all the criteria mentioned above, and the analyses covered in the rest of the document, here are current recommendations for the women-only product.

	Recommendations	Rationale
1	United States: Do NOT roll out women-only (rider or driver facing) product	REDACTED - PRIVILEGED
2	Global: Analyse and propose a 'Elite Driver' or 'Top Driver' product which matches any requesting rider with elite drivers (ratings, # of trips, no safety incidents). Price higher than regular UberX by \$x. May be similar to UberVIP but	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Female riders want safe drivers rather than just female drivers ● Female drivers can be unsafe as well ● No to low burden of positioning as a safety product ● Ratings and number of trips create a perception of safety, and users will pay a premium

	available to all users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More research needed
3	Outside US: Do NOT roll out rider-facing option until we have enough female driver supply (~10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketplace performance will be terrible and ride option will not see sustained use
4	Outside US: Investigate further and experiment with a driver-facing option of 'Women Riders Preferred' (as described above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low marketplace impact • Female drivers will feel motivated to drive and join • But - gender mismatch possible, need to investigate exposure
5	Saudi Arabia: Consider Saudi Arabia as a potential special case given upcoming un-banning of women drivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver facing women-only product may be a requirement there

Next Steps

1. Analyse and propose an experimentation/rollout plan for an 'Elite driver' or 'Top driver' option (including positioning of this option i.e. 'Safe' or 'high quality')
2. Investigate and propose a go/no go for driver-facing option of 'Mostly female riders' (outside US)
3. Saudi Arabia: Have conversations with local team there regarding plans for when women driver ban is lifted
4. Market research: conduct market research and UX research to support the recommendations

Reference Material

There are several resources that helped put this together. Here is a list:

- **REDACTED - PRIVILEGED**
- Internal Policy Brief: Women-only rideshare ([link](#))
- UberWOMEN Mexico experiment ([link](#))
- Women focused products - Global S&P Nov 17 ([link](#))
- Workation: UberWoman v3 ([link](#))
- Market research study around impact of women's engagement due to Safety reasons ([link](#))

- External Literature review on 'Women's safety in Transportation' by Heather Rothenberg ([link](#))

Any questions, please reach out to [Sachin Kansal](#)

Product Description

A 'women only' product can be architected in multiple ways. However, it is important to establish a common baseline for the product definition, and then explore any changes from the baseline as needed for legal, policy, marketplace, cultural context, or geographic reasons.

These are the required components of a women-rider preferred product:

Female-preferred riders option for Female Drivers

Validated female drivers would be able to select a "Female-riders-preferred" option when they go online. If the driver selects this option, we would make our best effort to match them with a female rider.

Opt-in from Female Drivers

Validated female drivers will be able to select if they prefer to receive requests from women riders. They would have the ability to turn the toggle on/off at will. We can potentially further let

them customize settings such as “Women riders only” between a certain window of time such as 8pm-6am. We would warn the drivers that selecting this option may reduce their earnings as they will have a smaller pool of riders (i.e. validated female riders) available to them.

Gender Validation for Female drivers

Currently, we capture Driver gender through a gender tag in our driver records or on official forms of identification uploaded as part of the onboarding process (Drivers License, etc.).

Gender Validation for Female riders

In order to match female drivers with female riders, we need to establish the gender of our riders. Options are being explored as to how we can evaluate gender, but in general there is a trade-off between accuracy and friction for the rider.

-
- Require Facebook login and assess gender through Facebook login API
- Require official document such as Drivers License (very high friction)
- First name check (low friction, high error rate esp with non-Western names)
- Rider self-identification
- Integration with a national database

As evident, there are several pros/cons with each of these methods, which will require additional technical investigation and preparation for bad actors to take advantage of the chosen system.

Multiple people in rider party

For women riders requesting a female driver, we will need to establish a policy around whether we allow male co-riders. If we allow male co-riders, we run the risk of negating the perceived safety advantage of this product for female drivers. However, female drivers may also be OK with male riders as long as there is a woman in the group. This needs to be researched further.

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Pricing

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

REDACTED - PRIVILEGED

Safety Features

Such a product may require us to even further highlight our safety features on both the rider and driver side in the event of bad actors (male riders getting access to the women-only option). The good news is we already have efforts underway to improve the safety perception of both the rider and driver apps with features such as SOS, enhanced Share my Location functionality, Anomaly Detection, etc.

Marketplace & Dispatch

We will establish dispatch rules which aim to make a female driver with a female rider most of the time, however without impacting marketplace dynamics.

- The earnings capability of male drivers remains the same
- The earnings capability of female drivers remains the same
- Wait times remain the same for female riders
- Wait times remain the same for male riders
- Costs for female riders remain the same
- Cost for male riders remain the same

Data

- % of female vs. male drivers in a market
- % of ride requests, male vs. female
- Incident rates between males and females, males / males, females / females
- Sexual assault rates by region