

BIG BENEFITS FOR WOMEN FROM RIDE-HAILING APPS: Evidence from Uber's entry in Chile

The availability of ride-hailing services like Uber may have created an opportunity to make it safer and easier for women to get around cities, especially in developing countries. That is the central message of research by **Vicente Lagos**, **Ángela Muñoz** and **Christine Zulehner**, to be presented at the annual congress of the European Economic Association in Manchester in August 2019.

Their study shows that the entry of Uber X in the Metropolitan region of Chile in June 2015 reduced the incidence of drunk-driving fatal traffic accidents and fatalities by approximately 33% and 42% respectively. For these types of accidents, the entry of Uber X significantly reduced the number of female passengers' fatalities by 71% and the number of male drivers' fatalities during the night-time by 43%.

According to surveys and the conclusions of transport policy roundtables, security issues have a particular effect on women in both public and private transport. For example, a [recent study](#) by the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) and the FIA foundation on public transport in Chile, Peru and Argentina finds that in Santiago 73% of women feel unsafe using public transport (59% of men), 48% have witnessed or known of a case of sexual harassment and 51% have experienced it themselves.

There are several reasons why ride-hailing apps like Uber can represent relevant alternatives to traditional services like taxicabs. These apps allow the tracking of location and the possibility to share it with others in real time. They use rating systems intended to ensure safety and high-quality service. They also provide the possibility to wait somewhere safe until the vehicle arrives and payments are automatic in most of the cases.

In the [specific case of Chile](#), these features are even more relevant as women express safety concerns in transport and they drive considerably less than men do.

The aim of this study is to evaluate whether the arrival of Uber to Chile translated into higher benefits for women compared with men. The researchers focus on the incidence of drunk-driving fatal accidents and related fatalities, as this is a direct quantifiable measure of a potential benefit associated with the presence of Uber. Ride-hailing may allow a fraction of intoxicated – or potentially intoxicated – drivers to ride instead of driving themselves, as well as provide passengers with a relevant alternative to avoid the dangers of drunk-driving situations.

By comparing regions where Uber entered with similar regions where it did not, the researchers analyse the effect of Uber's entry on drunk-driving fatal traffic accidents and fatalities in Chile. They investigate potential differences in the effects of ride-hailing apps on females and males and their roles as drivers and passengers. While there is empirical evidence for the United States, evidence on Uber's entry into countries with severe mobility biases against women is scarce.

Using detailed data on accidents recorded by Chilean authorities between 2008 and 2016 and socio-demographic characteristics of Chilean municipalities, the study shows that the entry of Uber X in the Metropolitan region of Chile in June 2015 reduced the incidence of drunk-driving fatal traffic accidents and fatalities by approximately 33% and

42% respectively. For these types of accidents, the entry of Uber X significantly reduced the number of female passengers' fatalities by 71% and the number of male drivers' fatalities during the night-time by 43%.

Similar studies analysing the effects of ride-hailing apps on overall and drunk-driving traffic accidents and fatalities in the US show mixed evidence. Some studies find evidence of a significant drop in the rate of traffic fatalities after the entry of Uber in some US cities. Others find no impact or even an increase of overall fatal traffic accidents after the arrival of ridesharing services in some US metropolitan counties ([Brazil & Kirk 2016](#), [Barrios et al. 2018](#), [Dills & Mulholland 2018](#), [Greenwood & Wattal 2017](#), [Morrison et al. 2017](#) and [Peck 2017](#)).

This study supports the claim that ride-hailing apps may help to reduce fatal outcomes caused by drunk driving. Furthermore, it provides novel evidence about a distinct effect of ride-hailing on drunk-driving related fatalities of females and males, explaining existing disparities in transport choices across individuals and a mobility bias against women in the traditional transport sector.

Thus, this study suggests that current policies regulating or seeking to regulate ride-hailing apps should take into account the different sources of benefits they may bring to individuals, especially to women.

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