Overview

The Rail Personal Security Group (RPSG) exists in order to better understand the personal security risks that occur on mainline railway infrastructure in Great Britain (GB) and to share good practice on solutions aimed at addressing such risks. A key area of interest for RPSG is to understand the perceptions of personal security across different groups with a consideration of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and disabilities.

In 2010, RPSG asked RSSB to conduct a review of existing research on the personal security issues affecting different minority groups. As such the resulting paper provides some key findings in relation to perceptions of personal security across different user groups and aims to promote and share good practice. It is relevant to people interested in improving perceptions of personal security on the rail network.

Aims

This research aimed to identify and investigate:

- The key factors that influence perceptions of personal security for various rail user groups
- Personal security initiatives that have been employed by train operating companies
- 'What works' in terms of improving perceptions of personal security

Method

The research consisted of a literature search for key documents within the area of perceptions of personal security. Following the collation of the key documents, a review of their methodologies and findings was undertaken and summarised, leading to an understanding of what constituted good practice.

Findings

There is a great amount of published qualitative information on the personal security issues affecting passengers using the rail network. Although there are some differences between user groups in terms of the impact that different features of the environment have on perceptions of personal security, there is
overwhelming commonality in the types of issues expressed between groups. In general, people travelling on the rail network believe that the following factors improve their perceptions of safety: visibility of rail staff and BTP officers, access to information, adequate lighting, CCTV systems, and well-maintained and monitored trains and stations. These findings are consistent across different kinds of research, including qualitative approaches (such as focus groups and interviews) and quantitative methods (using data from national passenger surveys and crime reports).

There are some mixed perceptions within these factors across groups and these findings are explored within the paper. In general, the effectiveness of the visibility of rail staff and the use of CCTV as a monitoring tool are areas worth exploring with Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups. It appears that the impact of these factors is less consistent across those user groups. The reasons are not well understood, although it appears at some level to be related to lack of trust and scepticism about the appropriate use of CCTV in ethnic minority communities in terms being seen as an invasion of privacy.

Some of the key factors that are reported to make a difference with regard to improving perceptions of personal security include:

- Visibility of train operating staff
  - Passengers consistently identified staff presence as being important to promote personal security.
  - Staff presence is particularly important after dark where many passengers feel more threatened.
  - Community ambassadors may be recruited to work as outreach officers in the local communities.
  - Staff must be trained to cope with the difficult circumstances in which they are likely to find themselves working.

- Visibility of British Transport Police (BTP) officers
  - Spot patrols by the BTP may improve perceptions of personal security. Passengers would like to see more visible staff and more police patrols.
  - Uniformed police are believed to act as a deterrent to people committing anti-social behaviour.
  - Posters providing contact details of the BTP may help to improve perceptions of personal security.
  - Passengers feel that the use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders would only be effective if there are sufficient BTP or local police present at stations.
• Upkeep of trains and the station environment, including adequate lighting and CCTV systems
  • As perceptions of insecurity are generally heightened after dark, the provision of good lighting and clear sight lines will help stations seem less threatening places.
  • Stations and walking routes should be well maintained, monitored, cleaned, graffiti-free and adequate barriers should be in place where possible.
  • CCTV systems may improve perceptions of personal security, however there is scepticism within ethnic minority groups and gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender groups that they may be used as an invasion of privacy or that they are not monitored.
  • The Secure Station Scheme may create opportunities for the community to participate in improving the station environment.
  • Trains should be well maintained, monitored and cleaned.
  • Personal security is considered to be improved with the presence of guards or conductors walking through trains.
  • The presence of an emergency alarm system with contact to the driver may be favoured by ethnic minorities.

• Access to information
  • Access to information was identified as an important factor in terms of improving perceptions of personal security in minority ethnic groups, among people with disabilities and the elderly.
  • Real time information should be available to passengers, including those with disabilities.
  • Train operating companies could undertake research and workshops with local communities to identify barriers and encourage groups to use public transport.
  • Train operating companies could distribute promotional leaflets and display posters with timetable information in multiple languages, where appropriate, to promote rail travel within the local community.

This review discovered that the concerns that affect perceptions of personal security are relatively common between groups and in many cases apply to all users. Furthermore, a number of initiatives have been implemented across different train operating companies but there is a lack of formal evaluation to measure the impact these initiatives have had on behaviours, travel patterns and crime rates.
Deliverables

The deliverable from this research is a short literature review document highlighting the main findings of the review.

Next Steps

The RSPG recommended that the T891 research project should not be pursued further as it was considered that the qualitative elements of the original scope had largely been covered by other research. It considered that a new research project, T954 Evaluating measures to improve personal security and the value of their benefits, will address some of the gaps in terms of evaluating the Secure Station and Park Mark schemes, and providing numerical values about how improved passenger security affects perception of personal safety and rail demand. Further information on the project can be found via the research and development pages on the RSSB website or by contacting enquirydesk@rssb.co.uk.

Contact

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