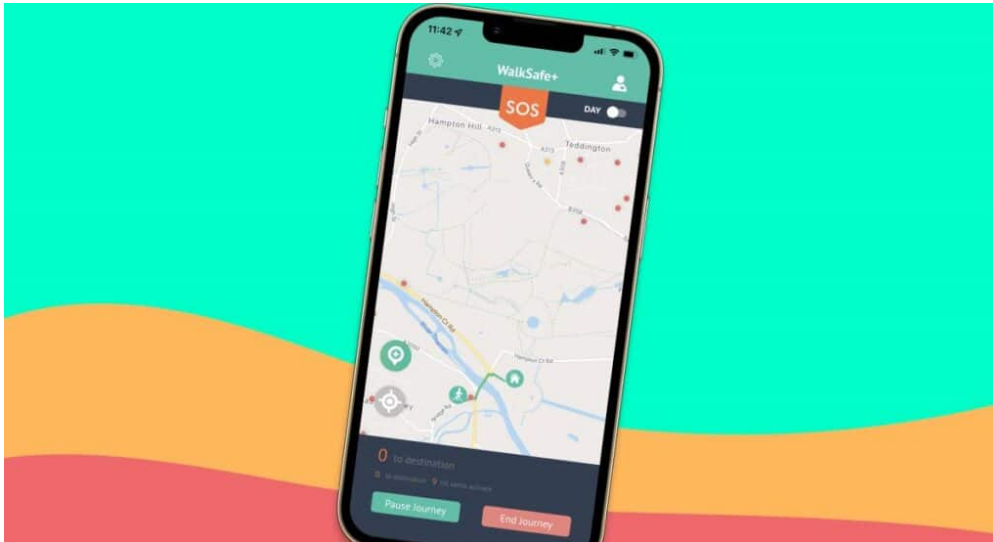


Almost half of women feel unsafe on our streets, as use of personal safety app surges by 81%

1 year ago



New research from [Mitie](#), the UK's leading security provider, and Walksafe, the UK's leading personal safety app, shows that almost half of women (44%) and a fifth of men (21%) feel unsafe when walking in the dark, even when making every day journeys, including commuting to work. These findings come as Mitie and WalkSafe announce a new partnership designed to support safer communities, particularly for people travelling alone.

The National Police Chief's Council¹ declared an 'epidemic scale' of violence against women and girls (VAWG) due to an increase of VAWG related crimes of 37% in five years. Many people say they experience an increased sense of danger when walking in the dark, as further shown by the 81% surge in use of the WalkSafe app since October² as people seek support in finding the safest route home.

The gender danger divide

The threat awareness when walking in the dark differs between men and women. Over half of women (51%) cite being followed by a stranger at the top of their list of fears, with awareness of the threat of sexual assault also running high for over a third (34%). In contrast, just under a fifth (17%) of men fear being followed by a stranger and less than one in twenty (4%) list sexual assault as a concern. Meanwhile, being mugged or becoming a victim of knife crime concern two fifths (40%) and over a quarter (28%) of men respectively.

Darker nights come with a cost

Two thirds (65%) of people say they don't change the timings of their routine, leaving the house and

returning home at the same time all year round. However, for many people, when the clocks go back this means leaving the house or returning home in the dark, so, almost three quarters (69%) of people say they have made changes to feel safer or avoid walking in the dark. The most common changes made are walking a different route (34%), taking a taxi or public transport (28%), and driving a short distance to avoid walking (24%), with people spending on average an extra £100 extra a month. More than double the number of women (15%) are prepared to go even further and miss social events to avoid walking in the dark compared to their male counterparts (7%).

Duty of care

Seven in ten (71%) people are calling for more to be done to improve safety on the streets. Two thirds (65%) believe that the government and local authorities can do more to protect people or better publicise their existing street safety initiatives. A further fifth (19%) think employers could do more to improve safety for their colleagues and this figure rises to over a third (36%) for people who leave the house or return home in darkness. With the Workers' Protection Act introduced in October, organisations are looking for additional ways to prevent harassment and create environments where people feel safe.

Protecting people through a new partnership

In a commitment to create safer communities, Mitie and Walksafe have entered into a partnership, designed to enhance personal safety. WalkSafe's award-winning technology combines journey-sharing features and a national Safe Space map providing information based on both police data and data from other app users to help people plan their route and seek support at designated safe havens in their local area should they need it.

The partnership will see Mitie develop enhanced services for the WalkSafe Pro version of the app which organisations can provide to their colleagues. This is designed to provide additional support to app users through Mitie's 24/7 specialist security control centre. Colleagues will have the option to speak with trained operatives who can provide reassurance, give immediate advice and, where appropriate, call the emergency services.

Emma Kay, Founder of WalkSafe said: "I started WalkSafe to empower people to take precautionary measures to protect their own safety, something I feel strongly about after experiencing harassment in the street. With Mitie, we will take WalkSafe one step further with the support of their connected control centre."

"With app users surging since the clocks changed, we want to do everything we can to ensure people can get home safely in the dark. Mitie is bringing its security intelligence services so together, we can add a layer of protection that has not been available before. With this new partnership, we hope to revolutionise the way that employers can take care of their colleagues, ultimately making them safer."

Jason Towse, Managing Director, Business Services, Mitie, said: "Our friends, families and colleagues should all be able to travel safely, whether on transport networks or simply walking home, yet violence against women and girls and minority groups is increasingly prevalent across the UK.

"A fifth of the UK's workforce expect their employer to help get them to and from work safely and we want to help organisations protect their people. In developing this support in partnership with WalkSafe, we want to help tackle this epidemic and enable safer communities where we can all live and work."