



**Neighbourhood
security survey**
thoughts along the way

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Put your foot down for a secure, equal and more democratic society

You have opened this publication because you plan to go on a neighbourhood security survey. That means that you will go together with others to look around and consider which places are known as insecure in the area where you live and/or see how they could be improved. It also means that you will be looking at places that are secure and trying to understand what it is that makes them seem that way.

Security is essential. How secure we feel dictates where and how we move around. It affects which activities we can take part in, how we feel and what opportunities we have for meeting and spending time together with other people. Great differences in how secure we feel when we are out and about – mainly between men and women, but also between other groups in society – mean that the conditions we have for living our lives are completely different. To feel secure enough to want to go out at different times of the day and year and in different places is fundamental to democracy and justice.

By taking part in a neighbourhood security survey, you get to create secure and enjoyable surroundings and opportunities to meet other people in your area. There are several success stories around Sweden that show how neighbourhood security surveys have led to concrete actions and a more secure environment.

During the survey, people come together, have fun and talk about what can be improved in their area. This publication explains what a neighbourhood security survey is like and also points out some important things to think about.

Have fun!



Your know-how is needed!

Many different people are responsible for the outdoor environment in a given area. They can include landlords, local authorities, public transport administrators, associations, people that live there and so on. These people rarely meet together, and those who live or are otherwise active in the area often find it difficult to know who to turn to with their observations.

Having a neighbourhood security survey is a way to get all of these parties – everyone living and working in the area – to meet together with a knowledgeable organiser and discuss how the area can be improved and made more secure.

You will meet other people who live and work in your area, including those who are responsible for the outdoor environment. Together, you will consider what improvements can be made, what is already good and what needs to be addressed.

People perceive areas in different ways because of personal experience, gender, age and other factors. It is therefore important that, as a participant of the survey, you think about your own experiences in the area and also listen to others when they talk about theirs. As a resident or worker, you also have an important role to play in making the area a pleasant, secure and inviting one to be in.

It could be a matter of improving the lighting or repairing potholes, or collecting together a group of residents who would like to cultivate an unused patch of ground. Remember that you are the one who knows your area best through day-to-day living; take the chance to put across and talk about your own experience of the area and make suggestions for improvement to those responsible firsthand!

Pre-meeting

At the first meeting, you will receive an introduction on how the word "security" can be considered and what it means for different people and groups of people. As an example, many women choose to take a detour so as to avoid certain places after nightfall, whilst men usually walk the quickest route. This effects how men and women get to control their time and movement patterns in various ways. Another example is that young people and the elderly may perceive the security of some places differently.

Following the introduction, the participants are usually divided up into small groups to discuss and identify places in the area that feel secure or insecure at various times of the day or night.

Second meeting – the survey

During the second meeting, you will go along with the survey. First, everyone is collected together and divided into smaller groups as necessary. Then, the groups set out on foot on their pre-determined routes to look around and discuss the area. The survey takes between one and two hours and is personally adapted so that everyone can join in. After the survey, impressions and experiences are summarised.



Concluding meeting

During the third meeting, you and the others who took part in the survey meet up again and discuss your observations. Those who are responsible for the area report on what they can address in the short and long terms. This is your chance to talk about what you can do together in order to make the area a nicer place for everyone. Perhaps there is an interest in arranging sports fields, playgrounds, areas for cultivation, or dog exercise areas? Are more benches or litter bins needed? Are there enough recycling centres?

Be sure to get the contact details for those who organised the survey and the responsible people in the area so that you can get in touch with them if you think of anything else or have any questions. Also leave your address or e-mail address, so that the records from the meeting can be sent to you.

Sometimes, follow-up surveys are arranged to see whether the actions promised by the various responsible persons have been carried out and to discuss whether there is anything new that needs attention. Feel free to request such a survey if you are interested.

Some things to think about during the survey

People are most important

Buildings, streets, parks and greenery are all frameworks surrounding people's lives. It is important that they work so that people can live their lives in the best possible way, meet others, do things together and also be able to move about on their own. Otherwise, people could become limited in their daily lives and prevented from enjoying certain activities.

Go with your feelings

When you join in on a neighbourhood security survey, it is important that you really feel and try to remember how it feels to be alone at the various places at different times of the day. Give yourself time to think. Talk about your feelings with the others who are with you on the survey. Consider why and how feelings of security and insecurity arise.

Consider whether there are any kinds of people who make use of a place more than others and how, in that case, it affects how people view the locality. Discuss, too, whether there is anybody who is missing, such as people of a certain gender, the elderly or children, and what the reason can be.

Many perspectives

Men and women experience places differently – how could the place you are in be viewed through the eyes of men or women? Also try to understand the area from the perspective of a child, a young person, someone older, people with disabilities or those from different cultures and social groups.

Human presence

Most matters relating to security have to do with human presence. It is important that there should be a variety of other people nearby.



Alternative routes

A walkway that is beautiful and attractive in the light of day may be insecure at night. It is good if there are alternative routes to choose from when walking to school, the bus stop or the town square and that the alternative routes are easily accessible for everyone, whether they have disabilities or not.

Some things to think about when it comes to lighting

There is no guarantee that bright lights at short and regular intervals on a walkway will make people feel secure. It might feel like being on a lighted stage and the result can be an increased feeling of trepidation.

Therefore, it is good if streetlights also light up some of the surroundings along the route and do not dazzle. The ground should be sufficiently lit-up so that people walking can properly judge any uneven surfaces and see if it is slippery.

Remember that, at the point between light and darkness, lighting that is too bright makes the darkness feel even darker!

Take care of pleasant things

Remember that it is also important to note things that are pretty, pleasant, secure and worth preserving. Protect these things in your area. Look out for what works so that you can make use of that knowledge when considering places that do not work so well. Talk about what it is that makes you enjoy the pleasant places and whether there are differences amongst the group.

Join in creating a more secure and democratic society

We want our public places to be inviting and attract activity, encounters and experiences. That is when we can meet in the square or at the park, walk home during the summer nights and cycle to friends' homes in another part of town.

A welcoming community has room for everyone and allows for differences and similarities. It is when we meet differences that we are impelled to think about who we personally are and we are reminded that there are values that outweigh our individual differences and unite us. It is about a common desire to have a good life, space to move about in, rewarding relationships, being able to express oneself and feel noticed and respected. It reminds us simply of the importance of democracy and equality.

We hope you feel that, by taking part in a neighbourhood security survey, you can contribute to such a society. Neighbourhood security surveys are not a cure-all solution and will not take us all the way, but they can be an important part of something larger, with different ways of carrying out dialogue, seeing possibilities for change and creating a more secure, humane and enjoyable society.

Questions on the way...

There is a lot to look at and talk about during a survey. The following are a number of important questions to consider. It is only possible to concentrate on a few of them during a single survey, but read all of them so that important issues are not overlooked. There are probably also other issues that are worth talking about in your area.

Let others know your viewpoints and thoughts during the survey. If you have thought about anything specific, there are likely others who have also done so. Take the opportunity to think freely, discuss and try new ideas.

Ask the organiser how you can submit your comments and who you can contact if you come up with any questions or viewpoints later. Think also about what you and others can do to solve problems or make the area more pleasant.

Looking at the whole area

Keep your eyes open for things that show up on the way. See the uniqueness of your own area!

- What is the area like as a whole?
- Where are the prettiest and ugliest places?
- Where is better care needed?
- Has anything been vandalised? Where?
- In what condition are the trees, bushes and other greenery found in the area?
- Is clearing or thinning out needed to improve visibility?
- Where is more greenery needed to make the place more pleasant? What kind of plants?
- Is it easy to find your way in the area? Are maps and signs needed? Are there any information boards?
- Is the lighting in the right place and is it working?
- Is it bright where needed? Is more needed?
- Where is it ok for there to be darkness?
- What condition are paving, stairs and railings in? Does anything need to be done about them?
- Could the area cause problems for people with various disabilities (visual, hearing or physical impairment, allergies or orientation problems)?
- Are there enough – or too many – park benches and litter bins? What condition are they in?
- Are there any traffic routes or anything else that form barriers in the area?
- What is human life like in the area? Are there meeting places for all?
- Who uses the meeting places?
- What can residents and workers personally contribute to the area?
- Is there a need for more homes, shops, day nurseries, cultural environments, allotments, places of work or other important features?

The structure of the area

The physical structure is very important for how an area works. Traffic routes can separate and create barriers between adjacent areas. Beautiful parks can feel insecure in the dark.

- What is it like in your area?
- Does anything need changing? What is missing?
- What can be improved in the short and long terms?



Pedestrian and cycle paths

Pedestrian and cycle paths are the "bloodstream" of the area. They need to feel secure and enjoyable to use, otherwise people do not want to be outside, which can lead to more insecurity.

- Which pedestrian and cycle routes are the most important? Do different kinds of people use different stretches? Look for unplanned walkways, too – how do they work, and what needs to be improved?
- Are the pedestrian and cycle paths situated near residential houses, businesses and vehicle roads or in parks? What feels most secure?
- Are there any alternative routes to choose from in the daylight and darkness?
- Are there any windows from residential buildings or populated places of work nearby the pedestrian and cycle paths?
- Are there any activities open in the evening in connection with the pedestrian and cycle paths?
- Where is it possible to drive a moped without causing disturbance?
- What is it like in the winter?



Streets with road traffic

Many women, and also men, choose to walk along roads because it feels more secure after dark.

- Are there any pavements and safe and useable pedestrian crossings?
- What is the sound like – is there too much noise?
- Are there any sections between buildings that are deserted and where visibility is obscured? What can be done about it?
- Are the streetlights sufficient and evenly-spaced or do they dazzle?
- Is it easy to see oncoming people?
- Should vehicle traffic be altered or redirected in the area?
- Is the road speed alright? If not, how could it be changed?



Bus stops etc.

We want to feel secure both on the way to and at the actual stop, otherwise we may prefer to stay at home or choose another method of travel.

- Do different kinds of people use public transport to the same extent?
- Where are the stops in comparison to other features in the area?
- How are they designed and taken care of?
- How does it feel to stand there and wait? Are there any adverts that feel offensive? Is the needed information there?
- Are there any seats?
- Is there any protection from the rain, wind, sun and snow?
- Are there any windows from residential buildings or any passing vehicles that have a view of the stops?
- How do people get to the stops – are the pathways there secure, pleasant and accessible? Do different kinds of people choose different ways of getting there?
- Are there any alternative routes to the stops to choose from, and are they accessible for all?

Public squares

At the square, we want to be able to run errands, meet other people and feel secure.

- Is the square attractive and well maintained so that people in the area can feel proud about it?
- Is there any housing adjacent to the square?
- Are there safe and pleasant places in the square?
- Are there any obvious meeting places?
- Do vehicles drive through or near the square, and are there functioning parking places?
- Are there any hidden or insecure places in or around the square?
- Are there any people who mean a lot for the square?
- Are there any unused premises in the square? How could they be used?
- What times of the day is the square used by different kinds of people?
- How can the square be made more alive? How can people become involved in issues relating to the square? – Talk about it.



Parking places

Crime is sometimes committed at parking places or multi-storey car-parks, and it is not unusual for people to feel unsafe at these places.

- How are the car-parks designed?
- Do men and women feel differently about the place?
- Are there any windows from residential buildings or places of work that have a view over the car parks, or are they out of sight?
- Are there walls, bushes or buildings that obscure visibility?
- Are the car-parks divided into smaller sections?
- Are cars parked inappropriately?
- Who uses garages and what time of day are they used? Do different kinds of people experience it differently?
- Are car-parks and garages well-lit?
- Do multi-story car-parks have lifts? If so, how are they designed? Are they used? Could they be done differently, for example by having transparent sides etc.?
- What is the road to and from the car-park like?

Pedestrian underpasses

Pedestrian underpasses are built for the sake of road safety but are viewed by many as insecure. Some, especially women, prefer to cross a busy road rather than go through a dark tunnel.

- Is the view through the tunnel free from obstacles or does it feel long, dark and cramped?
- Are there bushes, walls or vegetation that obscure visibility near the tunnel entrance?
- Are there any alternative routes?
- Are there any safe places to cross the road at street level?
- How does the tunnel smell?
- Do men and women feel differently about the place?
- What can be done to make the tunnel more pleasant?
- Can the tunnel be taken away? What would be needed instead?



Courtyards and entrances

We share our courtyards and entrances with our neighbours. We want to be able to feel at home there.

- How can residents feel secure and enjoy being in their courtyard or entryway?
- What are the bottom levels like?
- Do windows and entrances improve security?
- Where is the laundry room? Who uses it? Is it safe to go there?
- Is there the possibility of and an interest in developing the laundry room into a meeting point?
- Do courtyards and entrances work for everyone: children, youths, the elderly and people with various kinds of disability?
- Are the entrances to residential buildings or places of work illuminated and easy to find?
- Can locks, door phones and nameplates be seen properly? Does everyone have access to them? Are they placed at a comfortable height?
- Are the entrances different from each other so that it is easy to recognise your own?
- Where are the waste disposal and recycling centres? Does that work well?
- It is possible for residents to be active and creative in their courtyard?
- It is possible for residents to put their personal touch in their courtyard and entryways? Is there an interest in this?

Schools and preschools

Schools and preschools are children's place of work. They need to feel secure at school and be able to thrive.

- Is the school a source of pride for the neighbourhood?
- Is there a possibility for children to participate in how the school and its surroundings take shape?
- Is there a difference in how boys and girls feel about and use the area around their school? Are there any differences between other groups?
- How is the school located and designed? What does it look like around the school?
- Is the school yard inviting? Does it encourage various activities?
- Are there any quiet and cosy places to go to, just to be there?
- What is it like walking to school from different directions?
- Can children feel secure when they walk to and from school?
- What is it like in and around the school in the evening?
- Are the premises used for other purposes, such as evening courses, sports, meetings, youth centres or activities for senior citizens?



Playgrounds

Play is important for all ages. At the playground, we can meet and get to know other people.

- Is the playground well designed?
- Is there a difference between how different groups of children use the playground? Does it feel accessible for all children?
- What adults are found here?
- Is there any useable and imaginative equipment?
- Is there any exercise equipment for adults with varying abilities?
- How useable is the playground in the snow?
- Is there enough seating?
- Are there places in the sun and shade?

Industry, office and hospital areas

We also want to feel secure where we work and receive care.

- How are buildings and surroundings designed?
- Are the surroundings perceived as attractive and secure?
- Is the area deserted and empty at certain times of the day or night?
- What could be improved? Think about it and use your imagination.

Further information:

A More Secure and More Humane Gothenburg

www.tryggaremanskligare.goteborg.se/Engelska/TMG_engelska.html

Boverket-Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning

www.boverket.se

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå)

www.bra.se

This publication was compiled by Mia Andersson-Ek at A More Secure and More Humane Gothenburg. It elaborates on a method developed by architect Gerd Cruse Sondén at A More Secure and More Humane Gothenburg in the early 2000s. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and the county administrative boards have supported the work by means of the government's campaign to improve security in urban and city environments from the perspective of equal opportunities.

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention have contributed their expertise to the publication.

This publication is a co-production between A More Secure and More Humane Gothenburg and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

Printed by Edita Norstedts Västerås 2010

Edition: 1

Number of copies: 1 500

Illustrations: Helena Bergendahl

ISBN (printed): 978-91-86559-47-2

ISBN (pdf): 978-91-86559-48-9

This publication can be downloaded from www.bra.se,
www.goteborg.se/tryggaremanskligare and www.boverket.se

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This is a publication for supporting those partaking in a neighbourhood security survey. By participating in the survey, you can help create enjoyable surroundings and opportunities to meet people, as well as improve security in your area.

These are some examples of what you might need to think about during a survey in your area so as to include various aspects of security and well-being.

Enjoy your walk!



GÖTEBORGS CENTRALA BROTTSFÖREBYGGANDE RÅD

