

Safe Travels:

Soroptimists are Investigating How Far Safety Standards Have Improved for Women Travelling on Britain and Ireland's Railways

Nearly thirty years ago, a member of leading women's organisation Soroptimists of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) was attacked while travelling on a train in the London area. This incident sparked fellow Soroptimists into action and led to a long-running campaign investigating personal safety standards for women travelling by train.

"Back then we visited railway stations largely in the South East of England," says Soroptimist Programme Director Lindsay Green. "It resulted in a series of reports aimed at improving personal security, station facilities, and passenger accessibility across all Britain and Ireland's rail network. We even lobbied the Government to do more to protect women on public transport and gave evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee (2006)."

Revisiting the Investigation in 2025

Now, in 2025, Soroptimists are revisiting the original research to see how far personal safety standards have improved in almost three decades. The updated project involves grass roots research into real-life experiences of women passengers by visiting over 500 over-ground stations across Britain and Ireland and looking at:

- Prominence and visibility of railway staff, ensuring passengers feel safer knowing help is nearby
- Emergency help points; improved placement, accessibility, and signage
- Station signage and information quality, making navigation clearer and safer for all travellers



Soroptimists' Original Findings:

- Poor lighting, unclear signage, and a lack of visible staff left many passengers feeling unsafe.
- Confusion about responsibility for passenger safety (TOCs, Network Rail, or BTP), make it difficult to report problems.
- The Secure Stations Scheme, intended to improve safety, was found to be overcomplicated, mainly applicable to larger stations, neglecting smaller but widely used stations.
- Inconsistent information displays, ticket machines, and signage made navigation difficult for vulnerable passengers.
- Hygiene standards in station toilets were inconsistent, raising health and dignity concerns.

"Since our first review, there have been some improvements and digital development specifically have helped make information more available and streamlined across stations and train operators. This helps passengers be better informed to make decisions about their travel arrangements and their safety' confirms Lindsday. "However, as with the first report, we are committed to holding the railway industry to account to ensure women's safety remains a top priority for train operators, Network Rail, and policy makers," We'll be building on previous findings so that we can see how far things have improved for women travelling in 2025, and continue to bring recommendations and solutions on areas of continuing challenge."



The original recommendations suggested the introduction of tiered safety standards (Gold, Silver, Bronze) for all stations to help passengers know what to expect.

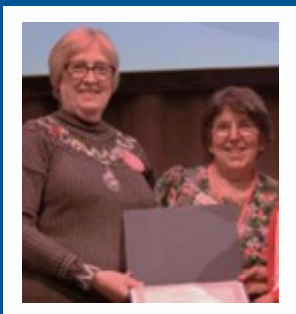
Soroptimists had also called for standardised signage, information boards and help systems across all train operating companies, and to promote more partnerships with local authorities and communities to maintain stations and improve facilities, where many rail user groups are willing to be involved.

Over the intervening period, there has been investment to improve infrastructure, and review maintenance failures. The 2025 Railway Safety project aims to ensure there is improved co-ordination between companies and provide practical, low-cost recommendations that, if adopted, could significantly enhance safety and comfort for all rail users, particularly women, families, and those with mobility challenges.

More information

For more information check our website here: <https://sigbi.org/what-we-do/our-work/womens-safety/soroptimist-railway-project/>

For more on Soroptimists and our work, see here: <https://sigbi.org/what-we-do/our-work/>



The 2025 Railway Project was officially launched by SIGBI's Federation President 2024/25 and Programme Director during the SIGBI Federation Conference in Edinburgh in October 2024. Read our press coverage here: [Scottish Business News – Women's charity SIGBI relaunches railway safety project on 90th anniversary.](#)

Lindsay Green (right) pictured with President Ruth Healey launching the 2025 Railway Project at Soroptimist UK and Ireland Annual Conference.