

60 SECOND

Briefing

Behavioural Crime Prevention: Using Nudges, Tugs & Teachable Moments In Crime Prevention Communications

This study developed new evidence and insights about what works in crime prevention communications to persuade people to adopt new security behaviours to better protect themselves from crime risks. Current crime prevention communications typically use a 'fear frame' – trying to scare people into changing behaviour. This research identified effective techniques to change public behaviours without increasing levels of fear of crime.

The approach tested three models of behaviour change:

- **'Nudges'** use established social psychological influence mechanisms to induce behavioural modifications;
- **'Tugs'** involve compulsion or direction to alter conduct;
- **'Teachable moments'** work by delivering a communication at a particular moment in time, often when the recipient is especially receptive to new information.

The research was organised around two principle phases:

PHASE 1

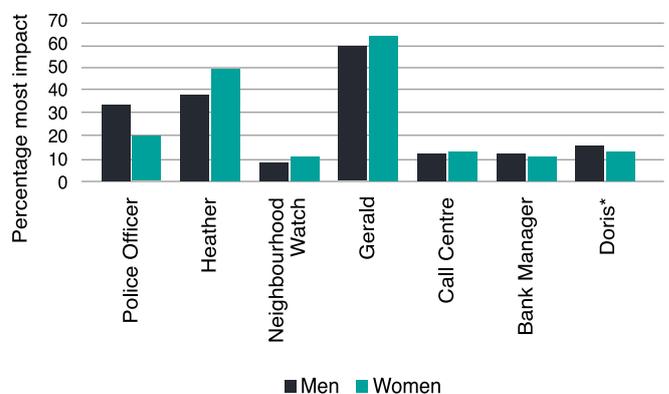
The Messenger, Mechanism & Message Experiment

The first aim was to establish robust evidence about what features of crime prevention advice make it especially salient to the public and what they are most receptive to.

Eight films were made focused upon different crime victimisation scenarios, based upon real-life events. Each film varied: who was providing the advice (the messenger); what behaviour change trigger was being invoked (the mechanism); and, the contents of the information conveyed (the message).

For example, one film featured a police officer issuing a stern warning to local residents about a burglary problem and the need for them to lock their doors and windows. Whereas another film, had a middle-aged man describing how he had been tricked out of life-savings by an online fraud and the emotional impact upon him.

The films were played to 1064 members of the public, with different groups seeing different combinations of the films. The audience members were then asked a series of questions about their cognitive, affective and potential behavioural responses to the films. By analysing their responses, it was possible to draw inferences about which messenger, mechanism and message combinations are especially influential and persuasive for getting members of the public to engage with crime prevention issues.



Key Findings from Phase 1 of the Research Included:

01

The two most impactful films were based upon victims recounting their experiences of how the crime had happened to them, whilst emphasising the emotional impacts.

02

Two fairly traditional models of giving crime prevention advice did work for a sizeable proportion of the audience, but they also made a fair proportion of people feel scared and vulnerable, and others angry. Avoiding these negative 'side effects' is an important objective for effective crime prevention communication.

03

People who were angered by situations they saw in the films were less inclined to change their own behaviours to protect themselves from crime.

04

An unexpected finding from the films was the importance of 'showing not telling' people what you want them to do. Lots of crime prevention advice issues instructions, but when the behaviour was actually 'modelled', viewers were far more likely to take it on board.

05

Effective crime prevention films make people feel both responsible and competent in respect of a given issue.



PHASE 2

The #Copcat Field Trial

Findings from the film experiments were used to develop an innovative crime prevention campaign, based upon a cartoon cat giving key practical messages in a humorous and non-threatening way. Focused upon a problem in London with bike enabled mobile phone theft, the idea was to test the performance of the "CopCat" campaign when compared with a far more traditional set of messages prepared by the Metropolitan Police. Across two delivery sites both campaigns had posters placed in tube stations and short films delivered by social media.

Comparing the two campaigns we found

- The CopCat campaign performed about the same as the Metropolitan Police's one in terms of people noticing it, but it did not make viewers scared or angry.
- The more innovative communications used by each campaign – stencilling on stairs for CopCat and street graffiti for the Met – were particularly successful in raising public awareness and were a social media talking point.

Behavioural Crime Prevention: Why Does It Matter?

Lots of crime prevention communication is targeted at influencing potential offenders behaviours. The findings from this study look at how to modify the behaviours of people at risk of being a victim of crime. This is particularly important for some new types of crime. Prevention of these kinds of problems can be leveraged by blending nudges, tugs and teachable moments.