

Biometric Passes Passenger Tests

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Over the past few months, some air travelers at London's Heathrow Airport have been participating in studies to gauge the effectiveness of biometric security.

The miSense project involved passengers travelling on selected Cathay Pacific and Emirates flights being invited to take part in the trial at check-in by scanning their passport and right index fingerprint into a specially designed miSense self-service kiosk. This information then becomes a passenger's secure "virtual key" which allows swift access to security control and aircraft boarding using their fingerprint.

The results of the study is a comprehensive report that evaluates the feedback of 3166 passengers who took part in the voluntary trials in Heathrow's Terminal 3 during a 16-week period. The study is generally considered the most comprehensive trial of biometrically-enabled access control conducted in an operational transport environment.

The study revealed that passengers not only accept the need for biometric technology as a means of providing increased levels of security, but also believe that it can significantly improve their journey through the airport. The quantitative and qualitative research found that passengers thought that the miSense biometric technology was easy to use and reduced waiting times at security screening and passport control.

Highlights of the report include:

- 87 percent found the process easy to enroll in.
- 66 percent found that it took only 15 seconds to participate at the gate.
- 72 percent reported faster journey times.

"People want better airport security, but also want to avoid the long delays that might result from increased scrutiny of passengers," says Alex van Someren, chief executive officer of nCipher, a security company that participated in the trial. "The miSense trials have shown that an effective and well implemented biometric solution can increase protection and also improve the passenger experience."