**Discussion plans – Focus groups**

**Safety and the feeling of safety**

Three discussion plans have been developed to help facilitators lead focus groups on the safety of specific life settings. Each plan contains a detailed, but non-exhaustive list of topics that can be discussed in order to explore the issues of disorder and incivility, safety and the feeling of safety, and the perceived quality of public services. Sample questions are presented for each topic.

The plan selected will depend on the focus group's objectives. Note that each plan contains more questions than necessary. It is suggested that you give priority to three questions and reserve a fourth one for discussion if time permits.

Each discussion plan comprises two columns. The left-hand column contains the different questions. The right-hand column is not part of the plan per se, but is a checklist of aspects that might be talked about during the discussion and that will help to familiarize the facilitator with the various concepts. These aspects might also serve as categories for analyzing the data gathered during the focus group. To learn more about disorder, incivility, safety, the feeling of safety, and public services, see Appendix 1 of the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook* of the *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities*.

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| **These three discussion plans are available in MS Word format on the Web site of the Québec Safety Promotion and Crime Prevention Resource Centre/Centre québécois de ressources en promotion de la sécurité et en prévention de la criminalité (crpspc.qc.ca).** |

**Safety and the feeling of safety**

| **Topics discussed** | **Aspects that might be considered** |
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| **Perception of actual safety** | |
| I would like you to describe your sector/municipality/neighbourhood to me from a safety standpoint. Do you find it safe?  If so, what are the main reasons you find it safe?  If not, what are the main reasons you find it unsafe?  In your opinion, what are the main safety problems in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood? | Safety is linked to the characteristics of:   * the physical environment   + private spaces   + public spaces * the social environment   + social disparities (itinerancy, prostitution, etc.)   + incivility and disorder   + informal control, strength of networks * victimization   + break-ins and property thefts   + assaults   + road injuries * public services   + maintenance   + police services * other types of services (e.g. rapidity of ambulance and fire service response) |
| **Meaning given to the feeling of safety** | |
| What do you mean when you say you feel safe in your sector/municipality/ neighbourhood? | The feeling of safety is linked to a person's characteristics:   * physical or psychological make-up (e.g. sex, age, state of health, temperament, handicaps) * experience (e.g. education, victimization) * beliefs, perceptions and values (e.g. feels unsafe in public places, has racist attitudes) * lifestyle (e.g. lives in the city, lives alone, goes to certain places, uses certain modes of transport) * economic power (e.g. income) |
| **Feeling of safety** | |
| Do you feel safe in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood?   1. If so, what are the main reasons you feel safe? 2. If not, what are the main reasons you feel unsafe? 3. Are there places you avoid because you do not feel safe there? | In addition to personal characteristics, the feeling of safety is linked to:   * protective measures and behaviour that a person adopts * his or her perception of the quality of public services, particularly:   + maintenance and lighting of parks and public spaces   + maintenance and lighting of shopping centres * victimization   + break-ins and property thefts   + assaults   + road injuries * the physical environment   + run-down, poorly lit neighbourhoods * the social environment   + social disparities * incivility and disorder |
| **Problems reported** | |
| Can you give me any examples of situations in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood over the past year that have changed how safe you feel there?   * For example, were there any thefts in your neighbourhood? Did this reduce your feeling of safety? * Was there any vandalism? Did this reduce your feeling of safety? * Did any people or groups of people occupy certain places at night, make noise or frighten you? * Were there any ethnic or religious tensions? | * Break-ins and property thefts * Vandalism and other disorder and incivility * Assaults * Ethnic or religious tensions * Intimidation or taxing * Road injuries * Deterioration of certain areas |
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| **Personal behaviour and adoption of protective measures** | |
| Over the past year, have you adopted special behaviour in your everyday life in order to protect yourself? | Protective behaviour (e.g. locking doors, avoiding certain areas, not going out at night) |
| **Protective factors: informal social control** | |
| Do neighbours affect your feeling of safety in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood? In what way? | Unofficial social control:   * surveillance by neighbours * confidence in neighbours and a climate of mutual aid * strength of contact networks |
| **Police services** | |
| Does the current organization of police services in your area affect your feeling of safety in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood? In what way? | Perception of available police services |
| **Other municipal and community services** | |
| Do the other services offered in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affect your feeling of safety? | * Other services offered:   + maintenance   + fire service   + ambulance service   + other municipal and community services * Presence or absence * Perception of services offered |
| **Importance of problems** | |
| Based on everything that was discussed during the focus group, what three factors do you think most affect your feeling of safety? | * Can the participants agree on the order of importance of these factors? |
| **Possible solutions** | |
| What could the municipality or citizens do to enhance your safety or your feeling of safety in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood? | * Municipal action * Citizen action |