**Discussion plans – Focus groups**

**Disorder and incivility**

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).** |

**Disorder and incivility**

| **Topics discussed** | | **Aspects that might be considered** |
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| **Perception of problems related to disorder** | | |
| Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by acts of vandalism?  If so, what kind of vandalism? | | Manifestations of vandalism:   * broken or damaged public property (e.g. buildings, parks, play equipment, arenas)   + benches, tables, trees, landscaping, telephone booths, bus shelters, streetlights, mailboxes   + other public equipment   + tags[[1]](#footnote-1) and graffiti * broken or damaged commercial property (e.g. shopping centres)   + store windows, benches, tables, trees, landscaping, signs, streetlights   + other commercial equipment   + tags and graffiti * broken or damaged private property   + homes, flowerbeds, trees, cars, bicycles   + other private property   + tags and graffiti |
|  | |  |
| Is any particular group involved? | | Groups:   * people with nothing to do * reactive or aggressive people * people with mental health problems * young people * criminal gangs * people who are drunk or under the influence of drugs |
|  | |  |
| Why do you consider this to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * it entails substantial material costs * it reduces the feeling of safety * it changes the area's image * it has an impact on people's habits or behaviour * other reasons (specify) |
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| Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by itinerancy or squatting problems? | |  |
| If so, which areas are most affected? | | Areas:   * + public spaces   + commercial spaces   + private spaces (e.g. vacant lots) |
|  | |  |
| Is any particular group involved? | | Groups:   * people with nothing to do * reactive or aggressive people * people with mental health problems * young people * people who are drunk or under the influence of drugs |
|  | |  |
| Why is this considered to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * these people annoy, intimidate or insult others * they reduce the feeling of safety * they bother people (e.g. noise) * they have an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * they cause cleanliness and hygiene problems * they increase the risk of violence or fire * they affect the area’s image * other reasons (specify) |
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| Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems of loitering or of groups of people gathering there on a regular basis? | |  |
| If so, which areas are most affected? | | Areas:   * + public spaces   + commercial spaces   + private spaces (e.g. vacant lots) |
|  | |  |
| Is any particular group involved? | | Groups:   * people with nothing to do * reactive or aggressive people * noisy adolescents * people with mental health problems * young people * people who are drunk |
|  | |  |
| Why is this considered to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * these people annoy, intimidate or insult others * they reduce the feeling of safety * they bother people (e.g. noise) * they have an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * they cause cleanliness and hygiene problems * they increase the risk of violence or fire * they change the area’s image * other reasons (specify) |
|  | |  |
| Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems related to motor vehicle races or speeding? | |  |
| If so, which areas are most affected? | | Areas:   * + public spaces   + commercial spaces   + private spaces |
|  | |  |
| Is any particular group involved? | | Groups:   * people with nothing to do * reactive or aggressive people * noisy adolescents * criminal gangs * people who are drunk |
|  | |  |
| Why is this considered to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * it makes people fear for their safety or for that of family and friends * it reduces the feeling of safety * it has an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * it bothers people (e.g. noise) * it affects people’s real safety * it gives the area a more negative image * other reasons (specify) |
|  | |  |
| Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems related to drug dealing or prostitution?[[2]](#footnote-2) | |  |
| If so, which areas are most affected? | | Areas:   * + public spaces   + commercial spaces   + private spaces |
|  | |  |
| Is any particular group involved? | | Groups:   * people with nothing to do * criminal gangs * reactive or aggressive people * people engaging in the sale or use of drugs or alcohol * people who are drunk |
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| Why is this considered to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * these people annoy, intimidate or insult others * they reduce the feeling of safety * they bother people (e.g. noise) * they have an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * they increase the risk of violence * they change the area’s image * other reasons (specify) |
| **Perception of problems related to the physical deterioration of buildings and sites** | | |
| Have you noticed places in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood where the cleanliness or maintenance of buildings and sites seems to be very lacking? | |  |
|  | |  |
| If so, which areas are most affected? | | * Unsafe, abandoned buildings * Buildings in need of numerous repairs (e.g. with broken windows or lights, damaged stairs, damaged or worn exteriors) |
|  | |  |
| Can you tell me more precisely what you have seen? | | Observations:   * presence of a large amount of litter (e.g. used syringes and condoms, pieces of glass, bottles) * abandoned cars and broken windshields * run-down, not-very-safe play equipment |
|  | |  |
| Why is this considered to be a problem? | | Reasons given:   * it reduces the feeling of safety * it bothers people (e.g. noise) * it has an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * it causes cleanliness and hygiene problems * it increases the risk of violence or fire * it changes the area’s image * other reasons (specify) |
| **Perception of other sources of nuisance** | | |
| Are there other sorts of problems in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood that adversely affect your quality of life? | Other nuisances:   * noisy neighbours * unpleasant odours * loose or bothersome animals | |
|  |  | |
| If so, which areas are most affected? |  | |
|  |  | |
| Can you tell me more precisely why this bothers you? | Reasons given:   * it reduces the feeling of safety * it bothers people (e.g. noise) * it has an impact on people’s habits or behaviour * it makes people spend more time indoors * it causes cleanliness and hygiene problems * other reasons (specify) | |
| **Importance of problems** | | |
| Based on everything that was discussed during the focus group, what do you think are the three main causes of disorder and incivility in your life setting? | Can the participants agree on the order of importance of these causes? | |
| **Possible solutions** | | |
| What could the municipality or citizens do to reduce disorder and incivility in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood? | * Municipal action * Citizen action | |

1. 1. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, a tag is a graffito in the form of an identifying name or symbol (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tag). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2. We could have classified drug and prostitution problems with those related to crime (see *Guide to Analyzing Crime Using Official Statistics – 2nd edition*). However, we decided to group them with disorder problems because the various nuisances caused by these commercial activities have a greater impact on people's perceptions than their illegality does. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)