SAFETY DIAGNOSIS TOOL KIT
FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Guide to Organizing Focus Groups

2nd EDITION

[charting a course › to safe › living]

vol. 10

Québec

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Institut national
de santé publique
Québec

In cooperation with:

- Ministère de la Sécurité publique

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was published as part of the project "Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for RCMs and Municipalities". This project is funded in part by the National Crime Prevention Strategy of the Government of Canada. Its funding and implementation were recommended by the ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec.

Canada Québec

This document is available in its entirety in electronic format (PDF) 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) at www.crpspc.qc.ca, as well as on the Web site of the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) at www.inspq.qc.ca.

Ce document est aussi disponible en version française sous le titre de Trousse diagnostique de sécurité à l'intention des collectivités locales – Guide d'organisation d'un forum de discussion — 2e édition. *Il est accessible dans chacun des sites Internet mentionnés ci-dessus.*

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Legal Deposit – 2nd quarter 2012
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
Library and Archives Canada
ISSN: 1917-8492 (Printed version)
ISSN: 1917-8506 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-2-550-62678-7 (French printed version)
ISBN: 978-2-550-62679-4 (French PDF)
ISBN: 978-2-550-64790-4 (Printed version)
ISBN: 978-2-550-64791-1 (PDF)

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The [charting a course › to safe living] collection

This document is part of a collection prepared to foster and support safety promotion in life settings. Volumes 6 to 12 are the main components of a safety diagnosis tool kit developed for local communities. To date, the following volumes have been compiled for this collection:

> *Please note that the following list of volumes in the [charting a course to safe living] collection is different from the one provided in volumes 6, 10, 11 12 and 13, which were published prior to 2011.*

VOLUME 1

Renée Levaque, Laurence Le Hénaff and Pierre Maurice. *Formation pour l'amélioration de la sécurité et la prévention de la criminalité à l'intention des collectivités locales*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2006.

VOLUME 2

Josephina Alvarez. *Réalisation d'un diagnostic de sécurité. Trousse à l'intention des collectivités locales – Les diagnostics locaux de sécurité : une étude comparée pour mieux comprendre et mieux agir*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2006.

VOLUME 3

Julie Laforest. *Indicateurs de vulnérabilité associés à la sécurité d'un territoire*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2007.

VOLUME 4 (forthcoming)

VOLUME 5

Louise Marie Bouchard, Monique Rainville, Pierre Maurice and Mélanie Tessier. *Survey on Personal Safety and Victimization in Life Settings – Questionnaires and Instructions for Using a Computerized Data Capture, Processing and Analysis Tool*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec (forthcoming in 2012).

VOLUME 6

Louise Marie Bouchard, Pierre Maurice and Monique Rainville. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Safety Diagnosis Handbook*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 7

Louise Marie Bouchard, Pierre Maurice, Daniel Rochette and Robert Lavertue. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Developing a General Portrait of Life Settings*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 8

Louise Motard. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Analyzing Crime Using Official Statistics - 2nd edition*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 9

Catherine Goulet-Cloutier, Louise Marie Bouchard and Pierre Maurice. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Conducting Surveys on Personal Safety in Life Settings*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 10

Monique Rainville, Louise Marie Bouchard and Pierre Maurice. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Organizing Focus Groups - 2nd edition*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 11

Julie Laforest, Louise Marie Bouchard and Pierre Maurice. Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Organizing Semi-Structured Interviews With Key Informants - 2nd edition, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

VOLUME 12

Louise Marie Bouchard, Pierre Maurice and Monique Rainville. *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities – Guide to Direct Observation of Community Safety - 2nd edition*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2012.

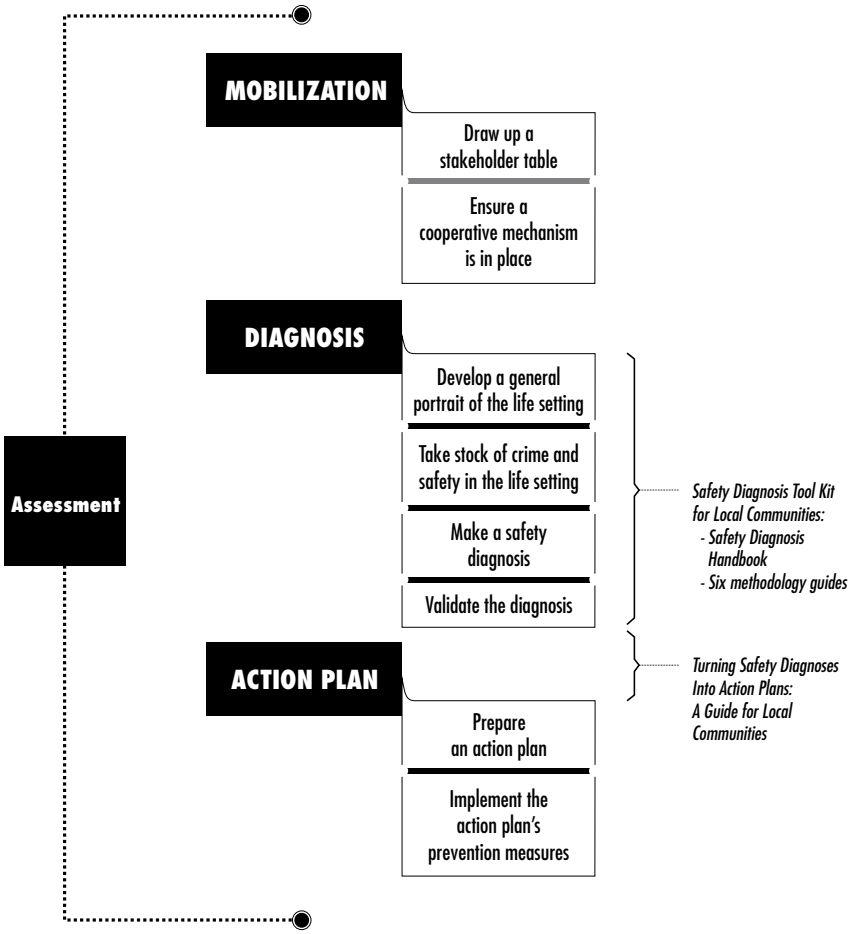
VOLUME 13

Julie Laforest, Louise Marie Bouchard and Pierre Maurice. *Turning Safety Diagnoses Into Action Plans: A Guide for Local Communities*, Québec, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2010.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE[1]...

Promoting safety and preventing crime through a setting-oriented approach requires a structured procedure for planning the various activities to be carried out. The procedure involves mobilizing the population and intersectoral partners, making safety diagnoses and drawing up action plans. The *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities* was prepared to assist with this procedure. It comprises several tools, including the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook* and six methodology guides. The document *Turning Safety Diagnoses Into Action Plans: A Guide for Local Communities* was prepared in addition to the tool kit, to facilitate the process of translating diagnoses into effective action plans.

Structured activity-planning procedure



1. The content of this guide is based on electronic documents on focus groups put out by the Walloon Region of Belgium. Since these documents were housed on a site that has not been accessible since 2008, readers who wish to obtain copies are invited to contact the authors of the guide (see the "Contact Us" page on the CRPSPC Web site: www.crpspc.qc.ca).
The content of the section "Organizing focus groups – Checklist" is adapted from information on focus groups drawn from the following Web site: http://www.tgci.com/magazine/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group.pdf.

The present document, *Guide to Organizing Focus Groups – 2nd edition*, is one of the methodology guides included in the *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities*. It is designed to assist with the process of identifying crime and safety problems as they are perceived by the population or their representatives. Participants are selected on the basis of criteria that ensure the life setting under study is well represented. Focus groups differ from telephone surveys in that they can be used to gather essentially qualitative data from a fairly small number of people. Note, however, that focus group sessions generally involve more people than do interviews with key informants.

Although this guide was prepared with a view to making safety diagnoses, the procedure it describes may also be used for other purposes provided an appropriate discussion plan is designed.

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Focus groups – A general overview

A focus group is a group discussion led by a facilitator. Participants are asked to share their thoughts on a particular topic, based on their personal opinions and experience. They are also encouraged to react to the views expressed by other participants and to say where they stand in relation to those views.

In the model proposed in this guide, focus group participants are selected on the basis of criteria that ensure the life setting under study is well represented. This approach guarantees that the groups provide a wide range of viewpoints and perceptions, and can thus help to shed light on the different opinions and degree of consensus that exist on a given topic, such as the feeling of safety in a regional county municipality (RCM) or a municipality. In safety diagnoses, focus groups are used primarily to gather the opinions and perceptions of a population about the following safety-related topics: the safety of a particular life setting, the feeling of safety, and problems that cause concern, be they disorder, incivility, crime or victimization. Safety diagnosis focus groups can also be used to discuss the quality of public services. Several focus group sessions may be needed to enable all potential participants to take part in the discussions. It may be a good idea to get in touch with them through local organizations.

Main characteristics of focus groups held within the context of safety diagnoses

Objectives	• Help identify crime and safety problems as they are perceived by the population or their representatives. • Highlight viewpoints that are more explicit or more deeply rooted in a specific context than information gathered through closed questionnaires. • Elicit the opinions of several stakeholders or groups so as to gain a better grasp of the similarities and differences between their opinions.
Advantages	• May provide a better understanding of the reasons behind the situations observed. • Involve different stakeholders who might be mobilized for future action. • Shed light, through participant interaction, on the dynamics between different groups in the study area. • Offer flexibility in gathering data from different groups. • Can be organized at little cost.
Disadvantages	• Can deal with only a limited number of topics at a time (no more than three or four per session). • Do not constitute the most appropriate forum for discussing certain topics (e.g. violent victimization). • Do not necessarily provide a representative portrait of the life setting concerned.

Comments	• Require specific expertise for analyzing qualitative data. • Require skilled facilitators to ensure that all participants have a chance to express themselves openly. • Entail variable costs depending on the number of focus groups organized and the expertise available for analyzing the qualitative data collected during the sessions.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Prior to setting up a focus group, your project team must give some thought to the kind of information they would like to obtain. They must try to answer the question: "What do we want to learn?" Team members must then clearly establish the goals of the focus group and the topics that will be discussed. They must also think about which groups will be invited to take part. Once again, your team must try to answer the following questions: "Which groups are more likely to provide us with information on the questions that are of interest to us?" "Which groups cannot be contacted with other data collection methods?" In short, setting up a focus group involves careful planning and organization.

Organization of the guide

THIS GUIDE IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS.

The first part discusses the steps involved in planning focus groups.

1 PLANNING

The second part explains how to carry out the planned activities in order to obtain the desired information.

2 IMPLEMENTATION

The third part explains how to process and analyze the data gathered in order to identify key findings.

3 ANALYSIS

The guide concludes with suggestions for additional reading, an activity planning checklist, discussion plans with sample questions, a consent form, and a list of topics to consider in making safety diagnoses.

APPENDICES

Planning focus groups

OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The direction of a focus group depends on the goals your project team wants to achieve. Therefore, time must be set aside to reflect on your objectives and put them in writing. Once your objectives are defined, you have to prepare a list of the questions that will be put to focus group participants.

As mentioned earlier, focus groups can be used in safety diagnoses to document, for example, 1) people's perception of disorder and incivility in their life setting, 2) their feeling of safety and 3) their assessment of the services available to them. Sample lists of questions on different aspects of these topics are given at the end of this guide. The questions may be changed, however, to suit your needs. If a focus group is being set up to document a topic other than the ones mentioned in this guide, an additional activity must be planned to draw up the list of questions that will be asked during the focus group.

The projected length of a focus group session has an impact on the number of topics that can be discussed. Based on your objectives, you have to reflect on how the session should proceed. For example, you may decide to limit the amount of time devoted to each topic so as to cover more issues, or you may opt to define the priority of topics beforehand and discuss the main ones first, leaving those of lesser priority to be dealt with if time permits. Generally speaking, five or six questions can be discussed in one session.

STAKEHOLDERS

Who should take part in focus groups?

A focus group requires:

- one or more facilitators, who, ideally, should be involved in the work leading up to and following each session;
- participants representing the different groups of stakeholders who have an interest in the life setting's safety diagnosis (citizens, community groups, experts, local authorities, etc.). It is up to the project team to determine the most effective distribution of stakeholders among the different sessions (e.g. according to geographic sector, target clientele (young people, seniors), etc.).

The role of the facilitator is to:

- help define the objectives of the focus group;
- adopt a plan for the focus group session and set the priority of topics to be discussed (see discussion plans);
- add to the information made available to the project team as the session progresses, by encouraging participants to expand on certain points, by drawing attention to new ideas, by refocusing the discussion if necessary, etc.;
- remain neutral throughout the discussion;
- foster constructive debate without preventing the spontaneous expression of opinions (adopting a warm tone of voice encourages participation);

- encourage all participants to express their views and ensure that everyone's right to speak is respected;
- summarize the discussion.

How do you determine the composition of focus groups?

Depending on the topic to be discussed, the needs of the project team and the aptitudes of the facilitator, focus groups should be made up of 8 to 15 people representing the different groups of stakeholders concerned by that topic. A stakeholder table[2] may be useful for identifying these stakeholder groups. Different methods can be used to decide on the make-up of focus groups. The method selected will primarily take into account the number of people who have been asked to participate, as well as community dynamics (e.g. previous cooperation or conflict among representatives of the different stakeholder groups).

It is very important to adapt the composition of focus groups to the geographic sectors defined when the area under study was divided into meaningful zones (if necessary, reread the section on this procedure in the *Guide to Developing a General Portrait of Life Settings*). The larger the area, the more important this process is for analysis purposes. Indeed, the information captured during focus groups can be expected to be much more consistent when all participants are well acquainted with the sector concerned. You must also consider the fact that some people are not necessarily prepared to travel long distances in order to take part in a focus group session. Therefore, depending on your objectives, you have to envisage holding sessions in several different locations and recruiting participants by municipality or sector.

The composition of groups may be heterogeneous or homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic profile or affiliation (e.g. members of youth centres, golden age clubs). Note, however, that heterogeneous groups can curtail the spontaneity of discussions. For example, some participants run into language and communication problems or are simply afraid of expressing their opinions openly when they have to interact with people from a wide range of groups, backgrounds or professions. They thus hold back and facilitators have to deploy a number of techniques to overcome the problem. Homogeneous groups, on the other hand, can generate findings that are more or less monolithic or even biased. In short, each option has its advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, it is worth trying to draw together a group of people with different profiles, for the results are often richer and more nuanced.

WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NEED TO CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS?

If you decide to organize one or more focus group sessions yourself, you have to determine the time, material resources and money required. Therefore, you must:

- estimate how much time is needed to prepare and hold the sessions and to analyze the data afterwards;
- determine how much time is needed to identify, recruit, assemble and host participants;
- make the necessary arrangements: in particular, reserve space for holding the sessions, hire a facilitator, send out invitations and obtain the materials and equipment needed to take notes, tape discussions, etc.;
- provide for refreshments (beverages and perhaps snacks);
- look into the possibility of compensating participants, by refunding their travelling expenses, for example.

2. For more information on the concept of stakeholder table, see the section "A clearly defined group" in the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook* of the *Safety Diagnosis Tool Kit for Local Communities*.

HOW DO YOU RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS?

Recruiting participants is an essential part of the process of organizing focus groups. There are no infallible methods for identifying people that have an interest in a safety diagnosis for a given life setting, but here are a few tips that may prove useful:

- if possible, use the stakeholder table prepared at the beginning of the diagnosis; or
- ask local partner organizations to recruit participants from their clientele;
- take already targeted geographic sectors into account when making up the groups;
- if you decide to hire a subcontractor familiar with the area under study to organize the groups, remember that he or she might be very helpful for identifying people who should be asked to participate;
- be sure to take advantage of your own experience, word of mouth and networking to complete the list of participants.

Some funding might be dedicated to providing participants with a small amount of financial compensation, particularly for their travel costs. Such compensation lets participants know their help is important and appreciated, and can only make them more conscientious about their contribution to the focus group process.

It is also important to bear in mind that some topics may not attract interest among certain groups of stakeholders (especially highly solicited groups). Therefore, you must make an effort when contacting potential participants to present the focus group topic in an appealing and clear manner.

Lastly, when you are trying to decide where to conduct a focus group, it is important to choose a "neutral" location, or a place not associated with the topic to be discussed, particular political options, personal convictions, and so forth. This will reduce anxiety among the people who have been invited to the session and will encourage them to actively participate.

HOW DO YOU INVITE PEOPLE TO TAKE PART?

Your project team or its partner organizations must identify the people they think might be willing to attend the focus group. They then have to contact these people in order to explain the process under way and determine if they would be interested in participating. Those who agree to take part are sent an invitation containing all the necessary information:

- the date, time and location of the focus group;
- the approximate length of the meeting;
- the context in which the focus group is being organized;
- the capacity in which the person is being invited (as a private citizen or as a representative of an organization);
- the topic to be discussed (presented in an appealing and clear manner);
- the anticipated results;
- the use to which the information obtained will be put;
- a statement to the effect that participants' prior agreement will be requested if audio- or video-taping is planned.

Providing all of this information is very positive for the people contacted and makes them feel valued. Moreover, it probably encourages them to reflect beforehand on the topics to be discussed during the focus group, to talk about them with family and friends and to think about how they will express their ideas, and so forth.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOCUS GROUPS?

Discussion plans on the topics of disorder and incivility, safety and the feeling of safety and the assessment of public services are found in Appendix 3. In cooperation with the project team or committee, the facilitator must adopt an appropriate discussion plan based on the objectives defined. Such plans are designed to keep the discussion going and to provide the facilitator with guidelines that he or she must try to follow throughout the session. The facilitator must also decide which topics will be given precedence.

For example, you might use the following plan for a focus group on disorder and incivility in a particular life setting:

- start by asking participants to describe the current situation, their real-life experiences, actual and perceived problems, expectations, etc.;
- encourage them to try and understand the problems identified;
- lastly, review the ideas expressed and attempt to group them based on common features. The facilitator usually asks each participant to identify the "x" key findings that were highlighted by the discussion or that the participant feels are most important (e.g. the three main problems raised).

If you plan to tape the discussions, you have to prepare a consent form and have the participants sign it. The form must explain the focus group rules and include a commitment from the focus group organizers regarding the confidentiality of sources. It may be sent out to participants prior to the sessions. A sample consent form is provided in Appendix 4.

Holding focus groups

It can sometimes be a good idea to have an observer assist the facilitator. However, the roles of each person have to be clearly defined. The facilitator and the observer must agree beforehand on their respective duties during the focus group. Usually, a pragmatic approach is adopted, with the facilitator leading the discussion and the observer looking after the logistics (taping the discussion, taking notes, etc.).

It is highly recommended that focus groups be taped (with a digital or other type of tape recorder), even if they will not be transcribed in full. Note that taping can only be done with the prior approval of participants and that such consent may be given verbally or in writing (see the consent form in Appendix 4). If participants opt to provide verbal consent, it has to be recorded during the focus group session. Should any participants object to the taping of a session, notes will have to be taken instead.

At the start of the focus group session, the facilitator must strive to create a group atmosphere, by requesting, for instance, that participants arrange the tables in a circle or that they introduce themselves. The facilitator must also gain the trust of participants by explaining the goal of the focus group and why their participation is important, and by stressing the constructive and informal nature of the discussion. The facilitator must also remind participants that the confidentiality of sources will be respected when the gathered data are used. It is also at this stage that the facilitator should obtain participants' written consent for taping or using what is said.

To encourage participants to express their views, it is useful to remind them of how important it is for the project team to gather everyone's opinions. It is also essential to remind them that the goal is not to judge or rank people's opinions.

Ideally, once the discussion is launched, the facilitator should structure it. At the same time, however, he or she must try to ensure that participants feel the discussion is natural and informal. In fact, most of the facilitator's comments must not be perceived as questions, but as prompts. In addition, the facilitator must make sure that everyone has a chance to speak (but without forcing them to so) and must avoid expressing his or her opinions.

> Sometimes, participants raise a problem by talking about ways to resolve it. In such cases, the facilitator must reformulate the participants' comments so that everyone understands the underlying problem.

The facilitator must also keep the discussion on track, while allowing participants to express themselves freely. On the other hand, he or she must check the tendency of some people to systematically, although not necessarily consciously, support the opinions of more influential or more talkative participants.

FORMULATING QUESTIONS

The person who leads the focus group must be seen as a facilitator rather than as a kind of authority. He or she must absolutely avoid asking leading or loaded questions. In addition, the facilitator must refrain from using gestures or words that show or even suggest approval or disapproval. For example, if the facilitator says "yes, that's interesting" to some participants but not to others, it might look as though he or she favours those participants' opinions and finds the other participants' comments "uninteresting".

The facilitator must strive to keep the discussion open. From the outset, he or she must ask open-ended questions in order to get participants to interact. The facilitator must also choose words carefully throughout the discussion so as to tailor his or her responses to people's reactions and encourage participation. For example, to elicit fairly specific answers, the facilitator must try to ask fairly specific questions such as "Do you think this place is safe?" However, he or she must be careful not to ask questions that are formulated in such a way as to elicit silence.

The facilitator must also avoid asking questions that are too obvious or too direct. For instance, people often want to know the reasons behind a particular opinion, attitude or need. However, it is not really ideal to ask this type of question directly for it tends to put the interlocutor on the defensive and often gives rise to answers that are not very satisfactory. This is because the answers are:

- of no use – It is hard to get people to say exactly why they act, behave or think in a certain way: their reasons are often unconscious, complex and multi-faceted and vary over time. Moreover, it is not easy for people to verbalize something they may never have even thought about or to objectively analyze all the reasons why they think or do one thing rather than another, etc.
- too rationalized and too banal, and do not reveal the reasons you are really looking for – For example, if you ask a doctor why he or she prescribes a certain medication, you can expect the doctor to say "Because it's the one that works the best", even though his or her real motivation is tied, at least in part, to conservatism, greater familiarity with the medication in question, etc.
- made-up – People have all sorts of reasons for not revealing or even not being honest with themselves about why they act, think or behave in a particular way.

However, certain techniques can encourage participants to open up. One approach is to tell the group something that a previous group said on the topic under discussion. This can further analysis of aspects for which more data are needed or make it possible to validate specific pieces of information. However, facilitators who use this technique must be careful not to introduce a social desirability response bias among participants, i.e. a tendency for the latter to alter their personal opinions in an effort to please the facilitator or the other participants.

In short, the facilitator must create a climate conducive to exchanging views, ensure that discussions are in keeping with the objectives set, encourage all participants to take part and, if necessary, keep the debate from getting too heated. At the same time, he or she must show respect for participants and try to maintain an attitude of benevolent neutrality.

HOW LONG SHOULD SESSIONS LAST?

Sessions can run for up to two or two and a half hours. If they are any longer, the attention and concentration of participants and facilitators starts to wane. So as not to interrupt the flow of discussions with breaks, it is recommended that sessions last no longer than an hour and a half, without a break. The other possibility is to allow participants to take a break at an appropriate time, such as between two topics.

HOW SHOULD YOU CONCLUDE SESSIONS?

It is useful to take some time at the end of each session for debriefing and analysis. To conclude the proceedings, the team that conducted the focus group should provide a summary of the opinions gathered and the discussions that took place. It is a good idea to inform participants of the preliminary results so that they can comment on them. Their comments should be written down and included in the data gathered.

Before ending a session, it is important to thank participants by stressing that their participation will be of help in preparing the safety diagnosis and to inform them of the next stages planned for the project.

HOW MANY SESSIONS SHOULD YOU PLAN TO HOLD?

It is not always possible to determine beforehand how many sessions will be necessary. The number varies according to the characteristics of the life setting concerned: the number of stakeholders to be met, the size of the area and its specific features. Furthermore, additional sessions may be needed because of the nature of the information being gathered. It may also be desirable to achieve a degree of information saturation, that is, to obtain the same information several times from different stakeholders. The repetition and redundancy of data provide a means of validating the importance of opinions expressed and confirm that all viewpoints have been heard.

SHOULD YOU HIRE SUBCONTRACTORS TO CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS?

Organizing, running, facilitating and analyzing focus groups requires special skills and, above all, time. One or two weeks are needed to prepare the sessions and up to several weeks to hold them, depending on how easy it is to recruit participants, set up and assemble groups, and so forth. Also, the time required to summarize and analyze the results is proportional to the number of sessions organized.

Therefore, it is often a good idea for committees or teams that want to conduct focus groups to hire a subcontractor to carry out the actual work. However, the committees or teams can still take part in activities before and after the sessions (e.g. by helping to recruit participants or by taking part in analyzing the data collected). This approach will enable them to benefit from the expertise of professionals for managing certain technical aspects and give them the latitude they need to supervise the operations.

Processing and analyzing the information gathered

Notes and recordings made during focus groups provide information in the form of words and phrases. To be useable, this information has to be summarized with an appropriate method, namely, qualitative analysis. The method involves examining all of the data collected in order to determine which information is meaningful.

Generally speaking, it consists of three steps:

- assembling and codifying the information gathered;
- identifying and classifying the meaningful information;
- analyzing the statements in order to identify key findings.

ASSEMBLING AND CODIFYING THE INFORMATION GATHERED

If you have held several focus groups, we recommend that you classify them by assigning a code to each one. The code may consist of a number, a letter or both. For example, the code F1 might be assigned to the first focus group, the code F2 to the second and so on; the same codes should also be assigned to the pieces of meaningful information drawn from each group. These codes must be used throughout the processing and analysis phase so that you can associate each piece of information with the appropriate source. This is important as it will enable you to return to the raw data gathered during the focus group sessions should you need more information.

IDENTIFYING AND CLASSIFYING MEANINGFUL INFORMATION

During this step, the information gathered during the focus groups must be classified by safety topic.[3] To that end, you must carefully listen to or read what was said during the sessions in order to identify all of the statements containing an idea linked to safety. You may choose either of the following options for this purpose:

Option 1
You can decide which topics[4] will be used to group the data before you start to examine it.

Option 2
You can decide which topics will be used to group the data as you examine it, based on the statements that contain an idea linked to safety.

Both methods produce satisfactory results. The first one is perhaps easier to apply if you are not familiar with qualitative analyses. Indeed, it is easier to identify information likely to shed light on the safety of the study area as you consult the focus group recordings or notes if you have already defined the topics that interest you. However, defining topics beforehand does not mean that you have to group the information

3. If the focus groups were held as part of a safety diagnosis, it is highly likely that the topics that will be used to group the data were already discussed during the planning of the diagnosis as a whole. In that case, those topics must be taken into account in processing the information gathered.

4. Sample topics are presented in Appendix 5.

Transcription of recordings

It can be expensive to transcribe focus group recordings in full. A less costly and equally effective approach is to listen to the tapes and take notes on statements of interest.

according to only those topics. If necessary, you can add other topics as you examine the data. The second method, for its part, involves writing down all of the information you find interesting, deciding which safety topics emerge from the data and then going over the information again in order to group it according to those topics. The method thus requires reviewing the collected information at least twice.

Regardless of the method you choose, you have to process the information gathered. For this purpose, you must decide **which information is meaningful** in the context of the safety diagnosis. This information must then be grouped according to the different safety topics you have selected. You can do this in various ways: for example, you can transcribe and classify the meaningful information by hand as you listen to the focus group tapes or you can underline the information on the handwritten notes taken during the focus group sessions or on the full transcriptions of the tapes. Several tools can help you with this task, including text analysis software, electronic spreadsheets and word processing programs. Example 1a on the next page illustrates the use of an electronic spreadsheet for processing the meaningful information drawn from three focus groups.

In Example 1a, we have indicated not only the safety topic associated with each piece of meaningful information but also the place and the clientele. In this case, the clientele consists of the people who are affected by the problem rather than those who cause it. The meaningful information contained on the spreadsheet can easily be grouped by topic, clientele or place using the appropriate filters. If you do not have access to software for grouping information *a posteriori*, it is a good idea to group the information by topic as it is being transcribed. The number of pieces of meaningful information provided in Example 1a has been limited for practical reasons. In a real focus group situation, there would no doubt be more.

Even though focus groups are not designed for this, some participants use them to point out the cause(s) of certain problems and the factors that might exacerbate the problems. This information should be compiled separately as it can be used for making the safety diagnosis (see the section “Make a diagnosis” in the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook*). Certain focus group participants might also use the sessions to suggest possible solutions to problems. Once again, we suggest that you compile this information separately as it will be useful for turning the safety diagnosis into an action plan (see *Turning Safety Diagnoses Into Action Plans: A Guide for Local Communities*).

Example 1a Meaningful information derived from three focus groups[5]

Meaningful information	Topic	Clientele	Place
(Regarding theft), "There are a lot of thefts at the lake: four-wheelers, motor boats, things like that." [F1]	Theft	Seasonal residents	Lake sector
"I had all my property marked, I changed my padlocks and my locks, I pay a fortune for my security system, and I had my four-wheeler and chain saw stolen last month!" [F1]	Theft	Seasonal residents	Lake sector
"I don't dare send my 8-year-old to school on foot. People drive so fast…I'm afraid he'll be run over." [F1]	Road safety	Young people	South District
"Now that cars can turn right on the red light, children don't know when to cross the street." [F1]	Road safety	General population	Municipality
"I don't know what's going on at school, but my son told me that he was afraid to go there. He said he was afraid of the older kids." [F2]	Violence	Young people	School
"Now that the boulevard has been extended further east, the intersections are so dangerous that I don't dare send my children to school on foot." [F2]	Road safety	Young people	South District
"I'm embarrassed to take my grandchildren to play in the park because of all the graffiti there." [F2]	Disorder	General population	Park
"And they cause damage, they cause lots of damage. You don't have to look very far. Over there, right here, they [young people] leave their beer bottles in the park. They make so much noise, people can't sleep." [F2]	Disorder	General population	Park
"Young people hang around on their bikes in the park in the evening. You never know when one of them will come up to you when you're walking down the street." [F3]	Feeling of safety	Seniors	Park
"They want to organize homework help sessions for young people, but the problem is that it's dark at 3:30 in the afternoon in winter and I'm afraid to go out when it's dark." [F3]	Feeling of safety	Seniors	Municipality

5. These excerpts are from three fictitious focus groups, the first of which involved residents from the South District, the second, residents from the lake sector and the third, members of the city's golden age club. The codes at the end of each except – F1, F2 and F3 – indicate which focus group the statements are from.

ANALYZING STATEMENTS IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY KEY FINDINGS

Key findings reflect important realities that should be singled out. The importance of these realities derives from their frequency (the number of times they occur, their repetitive nature or the fact that they are mentioned by many people), the perceived seriousness of their consequences, the fact that they represent a trend (e.g. an ever-growing problem), their unusual nature and so forth. When several pieces of meaningful information are linked to the same topic, segment of the population and place, it is often a good idea to summarize them in one key findings statement. Such statements can be formulated in different ways, referring to the When? What? Where? Who? or How? For instance, Example 1b on the next page organizes by topic the meaningful information shown in Example 1a and presents key findings statements reflecting one or more pieces of meaningful information tied to a particular topic, population segment and place. Note that some of these statements are based on a single piece of meaningful information (nos. ❸, ❹ and ❺) while others are based on several (nos. ❶, ❷ and ❻). Still others need to be validated with data collected through other methods (nos. ❺ et ❻).

Formulating key findings statements requires the ability to synthesize information, as well as good judgment and in-depth knowledge of the life setting concerned. Therefore, it can be useful to enlist the participation of several people. Ultimately, the key findings that emerge from focus groups must be added to those identified with other techniques, if applicable, during the safety diagnosis. Transversal analysis of all the key findings will enable you to highlight the main problems that should be singled out in the diagnosis (see the section "Take stock of crime and safety in the life setting" in the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook*).

▼ ▼ ▼

In short…

Focus groups make it possible to obtain important information from people who have a good knowledge of the main safety issues in a particular life setting. Moreover, they can be organized within a fairly short time and at relatively little cost. However, focus groups must be carefully planned and systematic if the information they gather is to be summarized objectively. In addition, it is strongly recommended that several people take part in analyzing the data because of the type of information involved and the method used for this purpose.

Example 1b Key findings derived from the three focus groups

Meaningful information	Topic	Clientele	Place	Key findings
"I'm embarrassed to take my grandchildren to play in the park because of all the graffiti there." [F2]	Disorder	General population	Park	❶ Disorder caused by young people in the park. [F]
"And they cause damage, they cause lots of damage. You don't have to look very far. Over there, right here, they [young people] leave their beer bottles in the park. They make so much noise, people can't sleep." [F2]	Disorder	General population	Park	
"I don't dare send my 8-year-old to school on foot. People drive so fast…I'm afraid he'll be run over." [F1]	Road safety	Young people	South District	❷ Concerns expressed by pedestrians and cyclists about their safety on the district's streets because people drive too fast and can now turn right on the red light. [F]
"Now that the boulevard has been extended further east, the intersections are so dangerous that I don't dare send my children to school on foot." [F2]	Road safety	Young people	South District	
"Now that cars can turn right on the red light, children don't know when to cross the street." [F1]	Road safety	General population	South District	
"Young people hang around on their bikes in the park in the evening. You never know when one of them will come up to you when you're walking down the street." [F3]	Feeling of safety	Seniors	Park	❸ Feeling of insecurity among seniors because of activities engaged in by young people in the park. Probable link with key finding 1. [F]
"They want to organize homework help sessions for young people, but the problem is that it's dark at 3:30 in the afternoon in winter and I'm afraid to go out when it's dark." [F3]	Feeling of safety	Seniors	Municipality	❹ Feeling of insecurity among seniors when they go out after dark. [F]
"I don't know what's going on at school, but my son told me that he was afraid to go there. He said he was afraid of the older kids." [F2]	Violence	Young people	School/South District	❺ Potential violence problem at school: check to see if the problem emerges from data collected using other methods. [F]
(Regarding theft), "There are a lot of thefts at the lake: four-wheelers, motor boats, things like that." [F1]	Theft	Seasonal residents	Lake sector	❻ Breaking and enterings reported in secondary residences: check to see if the problem emerges from data collected using other methods. [F]
"I had all my property marked, I changed my padlocks and my locks, I pay a fortune for my security system, and I had my four-wheeler and chain saw stolen last month!" [F1]	Theft	Seasonal residents	Lake sector	

Appendix 1

Suggested additional reading

Suggested additional reading

Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), *Focus Groups in Health Services Research at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences*, 1999, at: http://www.ices.on.ca/file/Focus%20groups%20in%20health%20services%20research%20at%20the%20Institue%20for%20Clinical%20Evaluative%20Sciences.pdf

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, *Evaluating Crime Prevention through Social Development Projects. Handbook for Community Groups*, 2006, Module 4, p. 77-79, at: http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/_fl/Evaluation_handbook-E.pdf

Appendix 2

Checklist for organizing focus groups

Checklist for organizing focus groups

ACTIVITY	Content	Time frame
Learn about the situation in the target life setting.	Consult available data on the life setting's characteristics (key findings derived from the general portrait, information on reported crime, etc.).	6 weeks before the focus group
Define the focus group's objectives.	Identify the safety-related topics and subtopics to be explored.	5 weeks beforehand
Decide on the composition of the focus group.	Identify organizations and people in the area that have an interest in the topics under investigation and target those mostly likely to bring a range of views to the focus group.	5 weeks beforehand
Recruit participants.	Recruit 8 to 15 participants for each session.	5 weeks beforehand
Choose a facilitator and an observer or hire a subcontractor.	Facilitators are responsible for guiding the group discussion without taking sides. Their role is to keep the discussion going, ask questions and ensure each participant has a chance to take the floor. Observers do not take part in the discussion. Their role is to report what is said (by taking notes, audio-taping the session, etc.).	4 weeks beforehand
Choose a discussion plan based on topics proposed in this guide or build your own plan if the focus group deals with other topics.	The plan should cover 3 to 4 main questions at the most.	4 weeks beforehand
Reserve a place for holding the focus group.	Choose a central, comfortable and neutral location.	4 weeks beforehand
Send invitations to participants.		4 weeks beforehand

ACTIVITY	Content	Time frame
Prepare a plan for how the focus group will proceed.	This will ensure that sessions are consistent when several of them have to be held.	2 weeks beforehand
Check (by phone or e-mail) if participants plan to attend.		2 weeks beforehand
Send the consent form to participants.		2 weeks beforehand
Organize the logistics (equipment for the room, refreshments, etc.).	Flipchart, felt pens, list of participants, reservations, beverages, snacks, notebook, tape recorder, etc.	1 week beforehand
Remind participants.		2 days beforehand
CONDUCT THE FOCUS GROUP.	Suggested length: 2 hours and 15 minutes Suggested plan: 1. Word of welcome and introduction: 15 mins. (remind participants of the context, objectives and organization of the session). 2. Ask the questions and facilitate the discussion: an hour and a half 3. Summarize what was said: 15 mins. 4. Conclude the session: 15 mins. (thank participants and explain how the data gathered will be used).	
Prepare a summary report on the session.	Write down the main characteristics of the session (observations on how it went, the atmosphere, etc.).	1 day afterwards
Send a letter of thanks to participants.		2 days afterwards
Transcribe, if necessary, tapes and notes made during the session.		3 days afterwards
Analyze the data collected and prepare keys findings statements.	If necessary, reread the section on how to process and analyze the data in this guide and consult the *Safety Diagnosis Handbook*.	2 weeks afterwards

Appendix 3

Discussion plans – Focus groups

Discussion plans – Focus groups

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*.

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

PERCEPTION OF PROBLEMS RELATED TO DISORDER

1. Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by acts of vandalism?

   a) 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[6] 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

   b) 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

APPENDIX 3

6. 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).

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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)
2. Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by itinerancy or squatting problems?	
a) If so, which areas are most affected?	Areas: • public spaces • commercial spaces • private spaces (e.g. vacant lots)
b) 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

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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)
3. Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems of loitering or of groups of people gathering there on a regular basis?	
a) If so, which areas are most affected?	Areas: • public spaces • commercial spaces • private spaces (e.g. vacant lots)
b) 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

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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)
4. Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems related to motor vehicle races or speeding?	
a) If so, which areas are most affected?	Areas: • public spaces • commercial spaces • private spaces
b) Is any particular group involved?	Groups: • people with nothing to do • reactive or aggressive people • noisy adolescents • criminal gangs • people who are drunk

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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)
5. Is your sector/municipality/neighbourhood affected by problems related to drug dealing or prostitution[7]?	
a) If so, which areas are most affected?	Areas: • public spaces • commercial spaces • private spaces
b) 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

7. 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.

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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

6. Have you noticed places in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood where the cleanliness or maintenance of buildings and sites seems to be very lacking?

a) 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)
b) 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

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**
c) 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	
7. 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
a) If so, which areas are most affected?	
b) 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)

TOPICS DISCUSSED DISORDER AND INCIVILITY	**Aspects that might be considered**

IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEMS

8. 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

9. What could the municipality or citizens do to reduce disorder and incivility in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood?

- Municipal action
- Citizen action

SAFETY AND THE FEELING OF SAFETY

TOPICS DISCUSSED	Aspects that might be considered

PERCEPTION OF ACTUAL SAFETY

1. I would like you to describe your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood to me from a safety standpoint. Do you find it safe?

   a) If so, what are the main reasons you find it safe?

   b) If not, what are the main reasons you find it unsafe?

   c) 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

2. 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)

TOPICS DISCUSSED
SAFETY AND THE FEELING OF SAFETY

Aspects that might be considered

FEELING OF SAFETY

3. Do you feel safe in your sector/municipality/neighbourhood?

   a) If so, what are the main reasons you feel safe?

   b) If not, what are the main reasons you feel unsafe?

   c) 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

4. 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

TOPICS DISCUSSED SAFETY AND THE FEELING OF SAFETY	**Aspects that might be considered**
PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR AND ADOPTION OF PROTECTIVE MEASURES 5. 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 6. 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 7. 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 8. 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

TOPICS DISCUSSED SAFETY AND THE FEELING OF SAFETY	**Aspects that might be considered**
IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEMS 9. 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 10. 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

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Introduction

Services delivered to a population can have an impact on people's safety and their feeling of safety. Therefore, the following questions deal with your perception of various public services.

TOPICS DISCUSSED	Aspects that might be considered

POLICE SERVICES

1. In general, are you satisfied with the work done by the police in your sector/ municipality/ neighbourhood?

   - Confidence in police services
   - Assessment of services offered
   - Use of services

   a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with these services?

   b) Do you have any reasons for being **dissatisfied** with these services?

   Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied:
   - presence
   - efficiency and effectiveness
   - visibility
   - prevention work (e.g. in schools)

2. Have you ever called on the police services in your area? If so, in what circumstances?

   a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with the services received?

   b) Do you have any reasons for being **dissatisfied** with the services received?

   Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with the services received:
   - quality of the reception you received in filing a request or complaint
   - quality of the response or follow-up you received regarding a request or complaint

TOPICS DISCUSSED ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES…	**Aspects that might be considered**

RECREATION SERVICES

3. In general, are you satisfied with the recreation services in your sector /municipality/ neighbourhood?

- Assessment of services offered
- Use of services
- Safety of installations

   a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with these services?

   b) Do you have any reasons for being **dissatisfied** with these services?

Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with the services offered:

- presence
- availability
- maintenance
- supervision

LAYOUT AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS, STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

4. In general, how would you assess the layout of roads, streets and sidewalks in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood?

General assessment of their layout

   a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with their layout?

   b) What are the main reasons you are **dissatisfied** with their layout?

Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with their layout:

- safety of intersections
- presence or absence of road signs and traffic lights
- adequate lighting

TOPICS DISCUSSED ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES…	**Aspects that might be considered**
5. In general, how would you assess the maintenance of roads, streets and sidewalks in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood? a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with their maintenance? b) What are the main reasons you are **dissatisfied** with snow and ice removal from streets and sidewalks?	Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with their maintenance: • cleanliness of streets and sidewalks: cleaning time and quality • state of roadways and sidewalks: repair time and quality • frequency and quality of snow removal • replacement of streetlights

LAYOUT AND MAINTENANCE OF PARKS, FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SPACES

6. In general, how would you assess the layout of parks, facilities and public spaces in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood?	General assessment of their layout
a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with the layout of parks? b) What are the main reasons you are **dissatisfied** with the layout of public spaces?	Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with their layout: • safety of parks • safety of play equipment • safety of other equipment • safety of public spaces • adequate lighting

TOPICS DISCUSSED ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES…	**Aspects that might be considered**
7. In general, how would you assess the maintenance of parks and public spaces in your sector/ municipality/neighbourhood? a) What are the main reasons you are **satisfied** with the maintenance of parks? b) What are the main reasons you are **dissatisfied** with the maintenance of public spaces?	Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied with their maintenance: • cleanliness of parks • cleanliness of facilities • cleanliness of public spaces

OTHER SERVICES

8. The previous questions may be used as models for formulating other questions aimed at measuring how satisfied the population is with other services linked to personal safety:
   - other municipal services;
   - front-line health network services (CSLCs, ambulance services, etc.);
   - community or non-governmental organizations;
   - etc.

IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEMS

9. 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

10. What could be done to improve the services offered in your sector/municipality/ neighbourhood?

- Municipal action
- Action by non-governmental organizations
- Citizen action

Appendix 4

Consent form

Consent form

PROJECT **"ENTER THE NAME"**

Project context

Define the context of the project

I agree to participate in this project, whose conditions are as follows:

- The aim of this project is to make a safety diagnosis. For this purpose, focus groups will be held with key informants [**from the municipality, neighbourhood, etc.**].
- Each focus group will last for about [**number of minutes**] and questions will deal with the safety problems encountered in the study area and with the assessment of available public services [**in the neighbourhood, municipality**].
- My statements will be used solely for the purposes defined by the project.
- At any time, I can refuse to answer certain questions, discuss certain topics or cease to participate in the focus group without prejudice to myself.
- The focus group will be recorded to make the facilitator's job easier. However, the recording will be destroyed as soon as it has been transcribed.
- All focus group data will be handled so as to protect the confidentiality of sources. Therefore, no names will be mentioned and the information will be coded.
- All data will be kept under lock and key and will be destroyed at the end of the project.
- For information on the project, I can contact
  [**enter the name and contact information of the person in charge**].

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Facilitator's signature: _____

Date: _____

Person to contact if you have any questions:

_____ _____

Name of the person Telephone number

This consent form is 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).

Appendix 5

Sample safety topics

Sample safety topics

❑ **Crime and victimization**

According to the terms used in the *Criminal Code*:

❑ **Offences against the person**
- ❑ Homicide
- ❑ Criminal negligence and other offences
- ❑ Attempted murder or conspiracy to commit murder
- ❑ Assault (except sexual assault)
- ❑ Other sexual offences
- ❑ Kidnapping or forcible confinement
- ❑ Robbery or extortion
- ❑ Criminal harassment
- ❑ Threats
- ❑ Other

❑ **Offences against property**
- ❑ Arson
- ❑ Breaking and entering
- ❑ Motor vehicle theft
- ❑ Theft over $5 000
- ❑ Theft $5 000 and under
- ❑ Possession of stolen property
- ❑ Fraud
- ❑ Mischief

❑ **Other *Criminal Code* offences**
- ❑ Prostitution
- ❑ Firearms
- ❑ Justice
- ❑ Acts contrary to public morals or disorderly conduct
- ❑ Harassing or indecent telephone calls
- ❑ Other

❑ **Offences related to the operation of a motor vehicle**
- ❑ Impaired driving
- ❑ Failure to stop or remain
- ❑ Other

❑ **Drugs and narcotics offences**

In lay terms:

- ❏ **Discrimination**
  - ❏ On religious grounds
  - ❏ On ethnic grounds
  - ❏ On linguistic grounds
  - ❏ On grounds of sexual orientation
  - ❏ On grounds of disability (physical or intellectual)
  - ❏ On grounds of physical appearance
  - ❏ On grounds of poverty
  - ❏ On grounds of age
  - ❏ On other grounds
- ❏ **Intimidation/harassment**
  - ❏ Bothering people on the street
  - ❏ Intimidation by groups or individuals
  - ❏ Intimidation by gang members
- ❏ **Fraud**
- ❏ **Violence (excluding sexual assault)**
  - ❏ Conjugal violence
  - ❏ Suffering an assault in one's life setting
  - ❏ Street fighting among gang members
  - ❏ Violence by or against young people
  - ❏ Violence in youth dating relationships
  - ❏ Violence at school
  - ❏ Taxing at school
  - ❏ Violence and intimidation on school buses
  - ❏ Violence against seniors
- ❏ **Sexual assault**
- ❏ **Theft**
  - ❏ Break-ins
  - ❏ Automobile theft
  - ❏ Theft of automobile parts or accessories
  - ❏ Theft of objects
  - ❏ Theft of bicycles
  - ❏ Attempted theft
- ❏ **Vandalism**

❏ **Disorder and incivility**

- ❏ **Physical disorder**
  - ❏ Lack of cleanliness in public places (presence of litter, syringes, pieces of glass, etc.)
  - ❏ Abandoned or dilapidated buildings
  - ❏ Graffiti on buildings or equipment
  - ❏ Vandalism on private or public buildings or equipment
  - ❏ Sound nuisance caused by traffic or by people driving at speeds not adapted to traffic

- ❏ **Incivility (social disorder)**
  - ❏ Nuisances related to alcohol consumption in public places
  - ❏ Nuisances related to drug dealing or use
  - ❏ Nuisances related to prostitution activities
  - ❏ Aggressive or annoying behaviour by itinerant or homeless people
  - ❏ Inappropriate behaviour by people who are intoxicated or whose mental health is impaired
  - ❏ Conflicts between groups of individuals or residents (ethnic, religious, etc.)
  - ❏ Other nuisances related to noise
  - ❏ Disruptive gatherings of people in public places
  - ❏ Bothersome, loose animals
  - ❏ Nuisances caused by motor vehicle "races" or speeding

- ❏ **Perception of safety and feeling of safety**
  - ❏ **Perceived safety**
    - ❏ Perception of the safety of one's life setting
    - ❏ Perception of one's own safety
  - ❏ **Perception of safety risks in one's life setting**
    - ❏ For oneself
    - ❏ For one's family or children
    - ❏ For other specific clienteles: women, seniors, young people, etc.
  - ❏ **Perception of safety risks in a particular place**
    - ❏ For oneself
    - ❏ For one's family or children
    - ❏ For other specific clienteles: women, seniors, young people, etc.
  - ❏ **Perception of risks related to the built environment**
    - ❏ Boarded-up buildings
    - ❏ Isolated spots
  - ❏ **Perception of risks associated with crime problems in one's life setting**
  - ❏ **Perception of risks related to unsettling behaviour by certain individuals**
  - ❏ **Avoidance behaviour**
  - ❏ **Protective behaviour**
    - ❏ Taking an object along for protection when going out
    - ❏ Making sure that no intruders are in one's car before getting into it
    - ❏ Not opening the door to strangers for safety reasons
    - ❏ Keeping the doors to one's house locked
    - ❏ Having a dog for protection
    - ❏ Having an alarm system that one activates regularly for protection
    - ❏ Taking self-defence courses for protection
    - ❏ Keeping a firearm in the house for protection
    - ❏ Having a functional smoke detector on every floor
  - ❏ **Perception of physical health risks**
    - ❏ Perception of one's own health compared to that of other people the same age

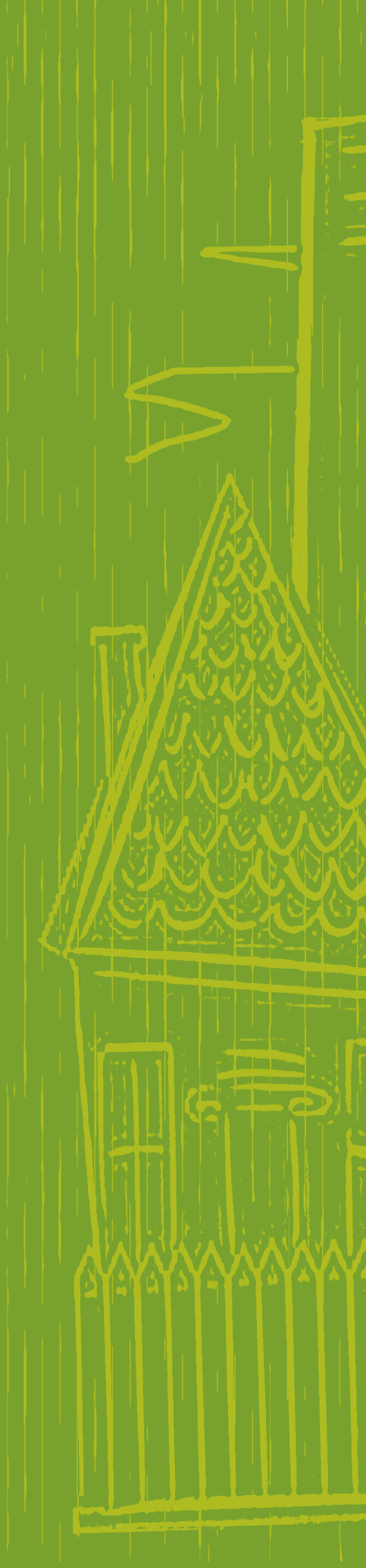
- ❏ **Social cohesion (protective factor)**
  - ❏ Housing stability
  - ❏ Level of confidence among the residents of a life setting
  - ❏ Climate of mutual aid among neighbours
  - ❏ Surveillance of houses by neighbours
  - ❏ Involvement in an organization or committee concerned with the safety of a life setting
  - ❏ Involvement in municipal council meetings
  - ❏ Involvement in a neighbourhood or borough council
  - ❏ Involvement in a citizens' committee
  - ❏ Involvement in community, mutual aid or volunteer activities
  - ❏ Involvement in local social, cultural or sports activities

- ❏ **Accidents**
  - ❏ **Road accidents**
    - ❏ Speeding
    - ❏ High number of road accidents
    - ❏ Traffic conflicts
  - ❏ **Risk of injury in public places**

- ❏ **Public services**
  - ❏ **Police services**
    - ❏ Police presence (visibility)
    - ❏ Satisfaction with/effectiveness of police work in a particular life setting
    - ❏ Satisfaction with police work targeting young people
    - ❏ Satisfaction with police work in road safety
    - ❏ Satisfaction with police work to resolve delinquency/disorder problems
    - ❏ Confidence in police services
    - ❏ Quality of police work in prevention
    - ❏ Quality of police response to complaints
  - ❏ **Fire service**
    - ❏ Quality of fire service response to calls
  - ❏ **Layout and maintenance of roads, streets and sidewalks**
    - ❏ Safety of certain intersections
    - ❏ Appropriate road signs and traffic signals
    - ❏ Satisfaction with the maintenance and repair of roads and streets
    - ❏ Satisfaction with the maintenance and repair of sidewalks
    - ❏ Snow removal from streets
    - ❏ Snow and ice removal from sidewalks
    - ❏ Lighting in public places (streets, sidewalks, parks, etc.)
    - ❏ Cleanliness of streets and sidewalks
    - ❏ Complaints filed

- ❏ **Maintenance of parks and public spaces**
  - ❏ Cleanliness of parks and public spaces
  - ❏ Cleanliness of facilities
  - ❏ Cleanliness of public spaces
  - ❏ Night-time lighting in parks and public spaces
  - ❏ Safety of public spaces
  - ❏ Safety of play equipment in parks
  - ❏ Safety of facilities in parks
- ❏ **Maintenance of public buildings, equipment and parking lots**
  - ❏ Maintenance of public buildings and equipment
  - ❏ Night-time lighting around public buildings, equipment and parking lots
- ❏ **Recreation services**
  - ❏ Existence/availability of services
  - ❏ Assessment of services offered
  - ❏ Maintenance of premises
  - ❏ Surveillance of premises
  - ❏ Safety of facilities
- ❏ **Other services**
  - ❏ Quality of pre-hospital emergency services
  - ❏ Quality of the environment or drinking water
  - ❏ Presence of community services
  - ❏ Public knowledge of services
  - ❏ Other

Publication N°: 1452



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