The Belfast Mobility Project

Attitudes and Experiences of Residents of North Belfast to the 'Other' Community, Safety, Visual Displays, Peace Walls and Belfast City Centre: Survey Report

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The significant to degree to which the Northern Ireland conflict has been defined by territory, sovereignty and identity (Gaffikin et al, 2016) has left a complicated legacy of division throughout the region. High levels of residential segregation define the physical landscape of its capital city, Belfast. The physical separation of the two main community identity groups, Catholics and Protestants[1], is particularly marked in the North end of the city – where there are considerable levels of both social and religious residential segregation. Moreover, North Belfast still experiences a challenging mix of 'leftover' paramilitary activity (Sterrett et al, 2019) and constant reminders of the past, including: murals that celebrate the past actions of local paramilitary organisations, sites designed to commemorate different wars, painted kerbstones intended to designate community ownership of a particular street and the confrontational display of different flags and symbols that further point to the partisanship that marks the area (Gaffikin et al, 2016).

In light of the on-going tension that exists in North Belfast and the significant degree to which this continues to define the area's physical landscape, the Belfast Mobility Project aimed to analyse to what extent such division had an impact on the lives of its residents. For instance, the research team sought to identify if the segregation that underpins the residential division of the two communities is replicated in the way in which people choose to navigate their local area and organise their daily routines. Whilst previous studies have produced a varied and valuable interpretation of the way in which division can be connected to residence, employment and education (see Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006), the Belfast Mobility Project considered patterns of segregation as the dynamic outcome of individual movements as they travelled the city, using its streets, amenities and activity spaces in different ways (see Hocking et al, 2018 and Huck et al, 2018).

The research project involved a mixed-methods approach, which included (see Hocking et al, 2018 for more details):

- *Survey (consisting of 51 questions)*
  - 520 questionnaires were completed.
  - Community background of participants: 238 Catholics, 247 Protestants and 35 individuals who designated themselves as 'other'.
  - Gender breakdown of participants: 306 women, 213 men and 1 individual who designated as 'other'.

- *Tracking residents' movements using the Belfast Pathways app*
  - 233 local residents downloaded the app for a two-week period.
  - The app ran 'in the background' on each device and gathered GPS data on participants' movement: recording the pathways they took, the time they spent in different areas, and the locations of their destinations.

- *Walking interviews*
  - 33 residents of North Belfast participated in this strand of the study.

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1   We use the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' to describe the broad identities of ethno-political groups, not as a specific reference to religion.

Prior to the walk, Interviewees completed a Participatory GIS mapping exercise using Spraycan software (see below) and were then given the following set of instructions: 'Imagine you are a tour guide and we are visiting your community. We want to get an idea of how you use and experience the local environment on a typical day. We are particularly interested in how living in a divided part of the city affects your everyday life.'

- Walking interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours and were recorded and transcribed, while the routes were tracked by the smartphone app. A schedule of the core questions can be found on the project's website, see http://belfastmobilityproject.org/index.html.

- *Spraycan software*
  - The Spraycan software allowed participants to identify and mark specific categories of place, such as shared spaces, mixed areas or spaces to avoid, on a computerised map of their area before embarking on the walking interview.
  - The individual marked maps were then aggregated to generate a collective view of public spaces in both North Belfast and Belfast City Centre (see Huck et al., 2018 for more details).

Focus of this report

This report focuses specifically on the data obtained from the project's survey, for more information on the other strands of the study see Sturgeon et al, 2019.

Further Information

The Belfast Mobility Project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council – funding began in September 2015 and lasted to the end of January 2018. The research team conducted a scoping study in 2015, before completing the majority of the project's fieldwork throughout 2016. Most of the study's participants were recruited via door-to-door canvassing, with a smaller number being obtained via engagement with community groups based in North Belfast.

Throughout 2017 the research team analysed the data and presented initial findings to its project advisory group, other relevant statutory bodies and local community organisations active in North Belfast. This process culminated in a policy workshop in December 2017 at the Open University in Belfast, where the research team and key stakeholders discussed how the findings could inform policy development.

A number of papers have also been prepared for presentation and publication. These include:

Davies, G., Whaytt, D., Huck, J., Dixon, J., Hocking, B.T., Jarman, N., Sturgeon, B. & Bryan, D. (2019) "Networks of (Dis)connection: Mobility practices, tertiary streets and sectarian divisions in North Belfast." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2019.1593817

Dixon, J., Tredoux, C., Davies, G., Huck, J., Hocking, B.T., Sturgeon, B., Whyatt, D., Jarman, N. & Bryan, D. (In press) "Parallel lives: Intergroup contact, threat and the segregation of everyday activity spaces." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000191

Hocking, B.T., Sturgeon, B., Dixon, J., Jarman, N., Bryan D., Huck, J., Whyatt, D., & Davies G. (2019) "Place-Identity and Urban Policy: Sharing Leisure Spaces in the 'Post-Conflict' city." In Piazza, R. *Discourses of Identity in Liminal Places and Spaces*. London: Routledge Press.

Hocking, B.T., Sturgeon, B., Whyatt, D., Davies, G., Huck, J., Dixon, J., Jarman, N. & Bryan, D. (2018) "Negotiating the ground: 'mobilizing' a divided field site in the 'post-conflict' city." *Mobilities*, 13(6): 876-893.
https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2018.1504664

Huck, J., Whyatt, D., Dixon, J., Sturgeon, B., Hocking, B.T., Davies, G., Jarman, N. & Bryan, D. (2018) "Exploring Segregation and Sharing in Belfast: A PGIS Approach." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(1): 223-241.
https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1480930

Sturgeon, B., Jarman, N., Bryan, B., Whyatt, D., Hocking, B. T., Huck, J., Davies, G. & Tredoux, C. (2019) *Attitudes and Experiences of Residents of North Belfast to the 'Other' Community, Safety, Visual Displays, Peace Walls and Belfast City Centre*. Belfast: Institute for Conflict Research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Selection of the field site

After completing an initial scoping study in late 2015, researchers involved in the Belfast Mobility Project identified five paired sub-sites within which the primary research would take place:

1. Ardoyne and Glenbryn
2. Glandore and Skegoneill
3. Greater Whitewell area
4. New Lodge and Tigers Bay
5. Ballysillan and Ligoneil

Each of the sites selected featured distinct pockets of Catholic and Protestant housing, which could be generally easily identified by the associated symbolic landscape (that regularly featured flags, painted kerbstones and murals).

2.2 Demographics of the area

Sterrett et al (2019) explain that in comparison with the total population trends for the rest of the city (which lost around one third of its residential population between 1971 and 2011), North Belfast's population has been relatively stable. It has, however, experienced a key subtle shift – with those of a Catholic community background becoming the majority in the area (52.6%), over half (51%) of whom are aged 40 or under. As a consequence, Sterrett et al observe that the small number of areas in North Belfast that are currently being classified as 'mixed', may be more accurately classified as 'Catholic' in the near future – they note that this transformation is not just happening at a 'working-class' level, as affluent parts of Oldpark, Cliftonville, Cavehill and the Antrim Road have witnessed significant 'Protestant middle class departure'.

Despite these notable recent adjustments to the area's population profile, traditional problems related to deprivation, crime and poor health and education outcomes remain. Poor educational attainment is a long-term issue in North Belfast and continues to be one of the area's main problems – in 2014-15, there was no area in Northern Ireland that contained fewer school leavers who had obtained five GCSEs at grades A* to C. Where positive educational outcomes have been achieved, this has occurred almost exclusively in the area's grammar schools, often by Catholic students and extremely rarely by any child receiving free school meal vouchers. There is also currently no electoral constituency in Northern Ireland that has fewer constituents enrolled in higher education (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2016).

Poor health outcomes have been another long-term issue for residents in North Belfast. For instance, in comparison with other electoral constituencies, North Belfast has the second lowest life expectancy rate for both males and females – only males and females from West Belfast have poorer anticipated outcomes (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2016).

Deprivation is also a key problem evident in the area. In comparison with the rest of the city, North Belfast has a small economically active population – in July 2017, the economic inactivity rate was 28.1%. In February 2015, 10,040 people were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (which equates to 13.6% of the population aged 16-64). In 2013, it was found that only one area in Northern Ireland (West Belfast) had more children living in low income families – 35.5% of all children in the area (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2016).

2.3 Ethics

The Belfast Mobility Project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Open University. The project also conformed to ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society, following, for example, the Society's guidelines on informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality of data, and avoidance of harm to participants.

To address any potential ethical concerns during the fieldwork, a study information sheet and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' overview were created and distributed to potential participants.

2.4 Survey Content

The questionnaire explored respondent's attitudes to the divisions in the area through the following themes:

- Community identity
- Inter-community sentiment
- Community expression
- Accessing facilities and using public space
- Belfast city centre

- Contact between communities
- Attitudes to community interaction
- Community safety
- Peace walls

2.5 Survey implementation

Though some participants were recruited via engagement with community groups throughout North Belfast, the primary line of data collection proved to be door-to-door canvassing. Researchers spent around twelve months (from February 2016 to December 2016) recruiting volunteers for the study and knocked on approximately 14,000 doors across the five field sites in North Belfast (see Hocking et al, 2018 for more details).

2.6 Format of Questions

The questions asked respondents to identify their views either in terms of levels of agreement or disagreement, or against a seven-point numerical ranking. In this analysis we have taken the response levels 1 & 2 to be broadly negative responses; response levels 6 & 7 to be broadly positive responses and response levels 3, 4 & 5 to refer to more neutral responses.

2.7 Profile of the sample

Overall survey numbers: 520.
Background: 238 Catholics, 247 Protestants, 35 Other.
Gender: 306 Women, 213 Men, 1 Other.

This report is based on the responses only by those who identified as Catholic or Protestant and is limited to a presentation of responses by community background alone.

The majority of the sample were from lower socioeconomic brackets in terms of annual household income. About 40% of participants reported earning less than £20,000.

Chapter 3: Survey results

The following section sets out the survey results using a series of themed headings:

- 3.1 Community identity
- 3.2 Contact between communities
- 3.3 Inter-community sentiment
- 3.4 Attitudes to community interaction
- 3.5 Community expression
- 3.6 Community safety
- 3.7 Accessing facilities and using public space
- 3.8 Peace walls
- 3.9 Belfast city centre

3.1 Community identity

The first section of the survey probed how respondents felt about being associated with either the Protestant, or Catholic community. In this regard, participants were provided with three statements related to the matter and five options to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

The first statement in this section asked participants to consider if belonging to their community was an important part of who they were as a person.

3.1.1 Belonging to my community is an important part of who I am as a person.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	34%	25%	30%
Agree	31%	24%	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%	34%	29%
Disagree	5%	10%	7%
Strongly Disagree	5%	7%	6%

Over half of the total number of respondents (57%) stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that belonging to their community was an important part of who they were as a person. While a relatively small number of participants (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. These responses indicated that community membership appears to be important to those who took part in this survey, though nearly a third of the total number of respondents (29%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

On closer inspection, there was also a substantial difference between how the two communities responded: 65% of Catholic respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, in comparison with 49% of Protestants respondents. A large number of Protestant participants took a more neutral position with 34% of Protestant respondents noting they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that their community identity was an important part of who they are, in contrast, 25% of Catholic respondents held this view.

Just 10% of Catholics either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, compared to 16% of Protestants.

Participants were then asked to consider if they see themselves as part of their community.

3.1.2 I see myself as a member of my community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	28%	26%	27%
Agree	47%	37%	42%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%	27%	23%
Disagree	3%	7%	5%
Strongly Disagree	4%	4%	4%

A large number of all those who participated (69%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they saw themselves as a member of their community. A considerable number of participants (23%) did not agree or disagree with the statement. Again, more Catholics (75%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion (63% of Protestants responded in this way). Only a small number of participants (8%) indicated that they did not see themselves as a member of their community – more Protestants than Catholics responded in this way (11% compared to 6%).

The final question in this section asked respondents to indicate if they had strong ties to fellow members of their community.

3.1.3 I have strong ties to fellow members of my community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	25%	22%	23%
Agree	37%	26%	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%	35%	32%
Disagree	6%	12%	9%
Strongly Disagree	4%	5%	4%

Over half of the total number of respondents (55%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that they had strong ties to fellow members of their community. Around a third of the total number of respondents (32%) felt that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Again, there was a difference between how Catholics and Protestants responded – 61% of Catholics agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that they had strong ties to fellow members of their community, as opposed to 48% of Protestants. In contrast just 13% of respondents indicated that they did not have strong ties to 'other' within their community, and again this sentiment was stronger among Protestant respondents, 17% compared to 10% of Catholics.

Summary of Section 3.1

In response to each of the statements about community identity, over half of the total number of participants agreed, or strongly agreed that community is important, that they feel a member of their community and that they have strong ties to their community (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents by community background who indicated strong sense of community attachment.

Overall, community identity seemed more important to respondents from a Catholic background – they agreed, or strongly agreed at a rate at least 10% higher than Protestants in response to two of the statements and 5%+ higher in relation to the other one.

3.2 Contact between communities

In the next section of the survey, participants were asked to reflect on their past experiences with the 'other' community. The survey sought to probe the quality of these interactions and aimed to explore the feelings that these engagements provoked. Four of the questions explored forms of potentially positive contact and engagement, while four explored potentially negative contact and engagement. In these questions, participants were provided with statements related to inter-community contact and a sliding scale from 1-7 to indicate their associated responses.

Participants were first asked how often they interacted with members of the 'other' community in a friendly way.

3.2.1 How often have you interacted in a friendly way with members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	47%	53%	50%
6	12%	13%	13%
5	12%	10%	11%
4	10%	7%	9%
3	9%	5%	7%
2	4%	5%	5%
1	5%	6%	6%
Never			

A large number of the total number of participants (63%) noted that they interacted with members of the 'other' community in a generally friendly manner very often, while only 10% of respondents rarely had such interactions. Protestant respondents were more likely to have friendly interactions (66% responded in this way compared to 60% of Catholics).

Participants were also asked how often they had been made to feel welcome by the 'other' community.

3.2.2 How often have you been made to feel welcome by the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	35%	42%	38%
6	18%	16%	17%
5	12%	14%	13%
4	12%	8%	10%
3	10%	8%	9%
2	3%	4%	4%
1	10%	9%	10%
Never			

Over half of the total number of participants (55%) indicated that they had broadly been made to feel welcome by the 'other' community very often. In contrast around one in eight respondents (13%) stated that they had generally never been made to feel welcome by the 'other' community. Again, Protestants were more likely to state that they had been made to feel welcome by the 'other' community very often (58% compared to 53% of Catholics).

Participants were then asked how often they had positive conversations with members of the 'other' community.

3.2.3 How often have you had positive conversations with members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	38%	50%	44%
6	18%	11%	14%
5	15%	13%	14%
4	10%	12%	11%
3	7%	5%	6%
2	3%	5%	4%
1	9%	5%	7%
Never			

Over half of the total number of participants (58%) indicated that they generally had positive conversations with the 'other' community very often. In contrast, just about one in nine of the participants (11%) noted that never had such interactions. Again, Protestant respondents were slightly more likely to indicate that they had experienced this type of interaction more regularly (60% compared to 57% of Catholics).

Finally, participants were also requested to consider how often they cooperated with members of the 'other' community.

3.2.4 How often have you cooperated well with members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	38%	48%	43.2%
6	16%	13%	15%
5	12%	11%	11%
4	11%	12%	11%
3	6%	5%	6%
2	6%	3%	5%
1	11%	8%	10%
Never			

Over half of the total number of respondents (58%) indicated that they generally cooperated with members of the 'other' community very often. Members of the Protestant community (61% compared to 55% of Catholics) experienced these interactions more often. Just over one in seven (14%) of the total number of respondents stated they generally never cooperated with members of the 'other' community. Catholics were generally more likely to state that they had never cooperated with the 'other' community (17% compared to 12% of Protestants).

Having moved through the first four questions in this section, that focused on positive contact, participants were then asked to consider if they had experienced negative interactions with the 'other' community in the past. The survey asked respondents how often they had experienced any form of unfriendly contact with members of the 'other' community.

3.2.5 How often have you experienced unfriendly contact with members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	7%	4%	5%
6	5%	7%	6%
5	8%	5%	7%
4	10%	5%	7%
3	15%	13%	14%
2	20%	21%	21%
1	36%	45%	40%
Never			

A large number of the total range of respondents (61%) stated that they rarely had any form of unfriendly contact with members of the 'other' community. The issue of unfriendly contact was less of a problem for Protestant participants – 66% said they rarely had any unfriendly contact, compared to 56% of Catholics. Around a tenth of participants (11%) indicated that they only had this type of experience very often.

Participants were then asked to consider how often they had negative experiences with members of the 'other' community.

3.2.6 How often have you had negative experiences with members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	5%	5%	5%
6	5%	5%	5%
5	8%	5%	6%
4	10%	11%	11%
3	13%	10%	12%
2	25%	24%	24%
1	34%	40%	37%
Never			

A large number of respondents (62%) stated that they generally never had negative experiences with the 'other' community – Protestants were more likely to have never had such interactions (65% compared to 59% of Catholics), while just around 10% of each community had experienced negative interactions very often (10% of Catholics and 9% of Protestants).

Participants were then asked to rate the degree to which they had been verbally abused by members of the 'other' community.

3.2.7 How often have you been verbally abused by members of the 'other' community?

Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	7%	6%	6%
6	3%	2%	3%
5	7%	6%	6%
4	9%	4%	6%
3	9%	10%	10%
2	18%	21%	20%
1	48%	51%	49%
Never			

Over two-thirds of the total number of participants (69%) stated that they had never experienced verbal abuse by members of the 'other' community – Protestants experienced the issue less than Catholics (72% compared to 66%). In contrast, Catholics were slightly more likely to indicate that they had been verbally abused very often (10% compared to 8% of Protestants).

Finally, participants were asked to consider how often they felt been disrespected when interacting with members of the 'other' community.

3.2.8 How often have you felt disrespected when interacting with members of the 'other' community?

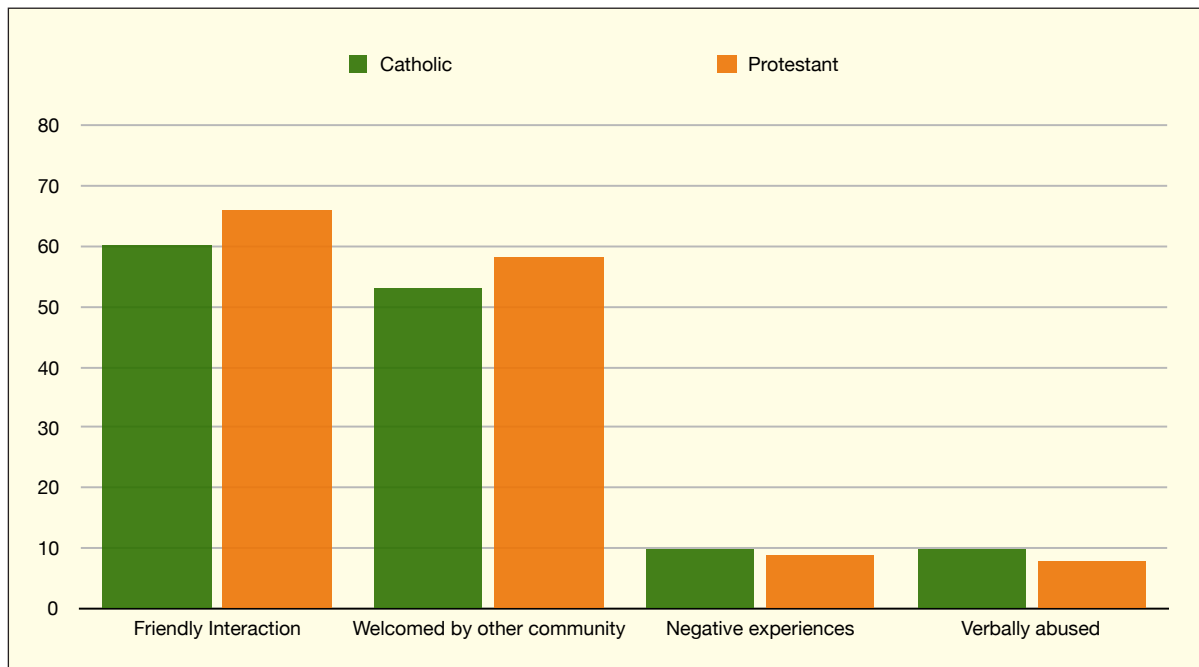| Very often	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	6%	6%	6%
6	4%	4%	4%
5	7%	7%	7%
4	8%	7%	7%
3	10%	8%	9%
2	22%	20%	21%
1	43%	49%	46%
Never			

Two-thirds of the total number of participants (67%) noted that they generally never felt disrespected by members of the 'other' community – Protestants were a little more likely to have never had such an interaction (69% compared to 65%), whereas under one in ten of the sample, 10% felt disrespected very often.

Summary of Section 3.2

Figure 2 (below) compares the responses of Catholics and Protestants who had positive interactions (level 6 & 7) with members of the 'other' community and those who had experienced negative experiences such as verbal abuse or being disrespected.

Overall, a reasonably high percentage of participants indicated that they had had positive forms of interaction to each of the statements related to community engagement – between 55% and 65% of all respondents agreed with the positive statements and disagreed with the negative statements they were provided with. Protestant participants were slightly more positive in how they responded – they were generally 5%-10% more likely to react positively to the statements they were provided with.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents by community background who had positive interactions with the 'other' community and those who had experienced negative experiences.

At the same time, a small percentage of respondents reported that they had had negative experiences when engaging with members of the 'other' community. Just around one in ten of all those surveyed stated that they always had negative interactions with the 'other' community – Catholics were a little more likely than Protestants to respond in this manner.

3.3 Inter-Community Sentiment

Moving on from asking how participants felt about their community identity in the first section of the survey and how they generally experienced interactions with the 'other' community in the second section, participants were asked how they felt about members of the 'other' community in the third section of the survey.

Participants were provided with three statements related to inter-community sentiment and a sliding scale from 1-7 to indicate their responses.

In the first part of this section, participants were asked to indicate whether their feelings towards the 'other' community would be best described as positive, or negative.

3.3.1 My feelings towards the 'other' community can be described as:

Positive	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	52%	51%	52%
6	15%	18%	16%
5	17%	10%	14%
4	10%	11%	11%
3	3%	5%	4%
2	2%	2%	2%
1	1%	2%	2%
Negative			

A little over two-thirds of the total number of participants (68%) stated that their feelings towards the 'other' community would be best described as 'positive' – a slighter higher number of Protestants responded in this manner (69% vs. 67%). A little under a third of respondents (28%) did not respond clearly at either end of the scale – this occurred amongst both Protestant and Catholic respondents (26% and 30% respectively). Only a small number of the total number of participants felt that their attitude to the 'other' community would be best described as negative (4%) – slightly more Protestants responded in this way, 5% compared to 3% of Catholics.

Participants were then asked if they would describe their feelings towards the 'other' community as trusting, or suspicious.

3.3.2 My feelings towards the 'other' community can be described as:

Trusting	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	35%	38%	36%
6	13%	12%	13%
5	16%	14%	15%
4	18%	19%	18%
3	7%	7%	7%
2	4%	4%	4%
1	7%	7%	7%
Suspicious			

Around a half of the total number of respondents (49%) indicated that their feelings towards the 'other' community would generally be described as trusting – there was no real distinction between how Catholic and Protestant participants responded (48% and 50% respectively). Again, there was some indifference to how all participants reacted – 40% of the total number of participants marked one of the three middle options on the sliding scale (again, this finding came from a combination of both communities responding in this way – 41% of Catholics and 40% of Protestants). More participants responded negatively to this question than the first question in this section, 11% of all respondents suggested that they generally felt more suspicious than trusting of the 'other' community – 11% of Catholics and 11% of Protestants responded in this manner.

In the final part of this section, participants were asked whether their feelings towards the 'other' community would be best described as ones of respect, or disrespect.

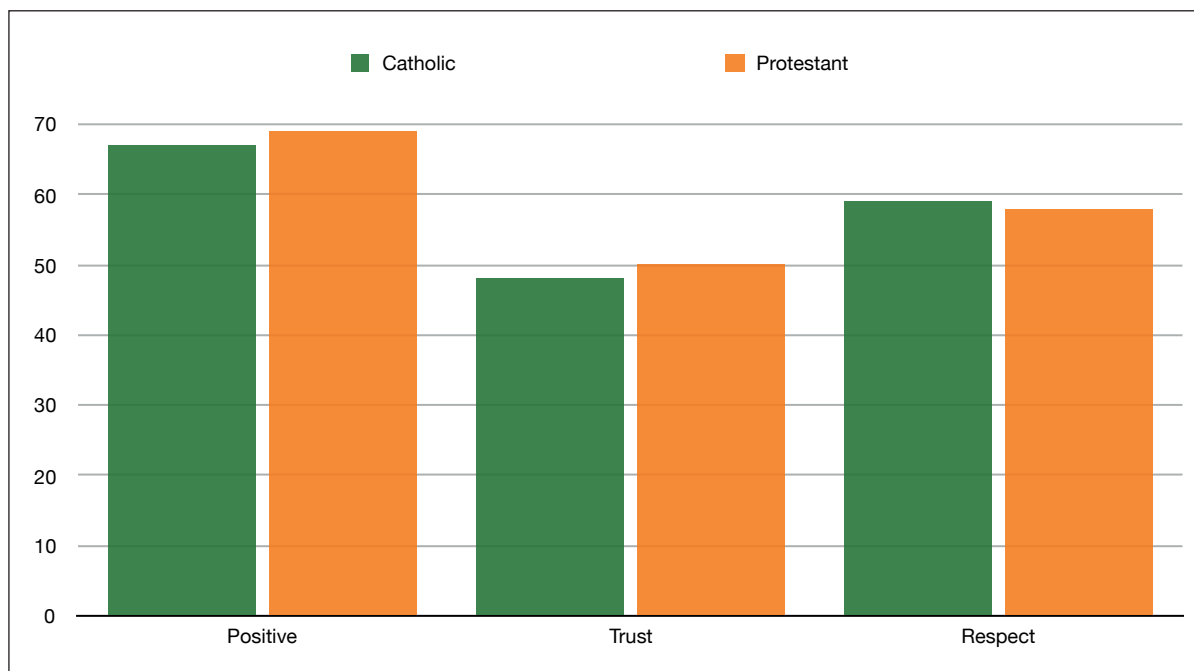### 3.3.3 My feelings towards the 'other' community can be described as:

Respect	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	45%	47%	46%
6	13%	12%	13%
5	12%	12%	12%
4	15%	16%	16%
3	7%	5%	6%
2	3%	2%	2%
1	5%	7%	6%
Disrespect			

A large number of the total number of participants (59%) indicated that they generally felt respect towards the 'other' community – 58% of Protestants and 59% of Catholics responded in this manner. Again, there was some uncertainty of how best to answer a question in this section, with 33% of all respondents indicating a response in the middle of the scale – 34% of Protestants vs. 34% of Catholics responded in this way. In contrast only a small percentage of respondents 9% of Protestants and 8% of Catholics indicated that they considered that they viewed the 'other' community with disrespect.

Summary of Section 3.3

Overall, a large number of respondents reacted positively to each of the three statements they were provided with in this section, more than two thirds of participants indicated that they would classify their feelings to the 'other' community as being of positive while close to six out of ten said they had feeling of respect for the 'other' community. However, respondents were less likely to report feelings of trust towards members of the 'other' community, with fewer than half of respondents reacting positively (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents by community background who reported a high degree (levels 6 & 7) of positive feelings, trust and respect for the 'other' community.

In this section of the survey, there was also some degree of indifference in relation to how respondents generally felt – in each section, between 28% and 40% of respondents indicated mixed feelings toward the 'other' community by marking the middle options (levels 3, 4 & 5) on the scale provided for responses.

3.4 Attitudes to community interaction

In this section, participants were asked to imagine that they were the only member of their community present when interacting with people from the 'other' community (i.e. talking to them, or working with them). They were then asked how they would feel.

Participants were provided with four ranges of emotions to consider: comfortable, safe, nervous and awkward and a sliding scale on which to mark their response.

A significant portion of respondents (41%) felt they would generally feel comfortable in a situation where they were the only member of their community present in a moment when they were engaging with members of the 'other' community. With Protestants (48%) generally reporting feeling more comfortable in such a situation than Catholics (33%).

3.4.1 Comfortable

Extremely	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	23%	30%	27%
6	10%	18%	14%
5	18%	12%	15%
4	15%	14%	15%
3	18%	9%	13%
2	7%	6%	6%
1	10%	12%	11%
Not at all			

When respondents were asked to consider if they would feel safe if they were interacting with members of the 'other' community, a significant number of all those surveyed (41%) stated that they would generally feel extremely safe – more Protestants (45%) than Catholics (36%) responded in this way, and a similar proportion (44%) were unsure how they should best respond to this question – more Catholics reacted in this way than Protestants (48% vs. 40%).

3.4.2 Safe

Extremely	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	23%	33%	28%
6	13%	12%	13%
5	14%	13%	14%
4	20%	19%	20%
3	13%	7%	10%
2	8%	6%	7%
1	8%	10%	9%
Not at all			

Over half of the total number of participants (53%) generally felt that they would not be nervous at all if they were interacting with the 'other' community – more Protestants than Catholics responded in this way, 56% vs. 50%. But over a third of respondents (37%) were unclear whether they would be nervous, or not, with more Catholics than Protestants responding in this way (40% vs. 33%).

3.4.3 Nervous

Extremely	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	5%	7%	6%
6	5%	4%	4%
5	14%	7%	11%
4	15%	15%	15%
3	11%	11%	11%
2	11%	11%	11%
1	40%	45%	42%
Not at all			

Finally, respondents were asked to consider if they would feel awkward when engaging with the 'other' community. Around a half of all participants (49%) stated that they would generally not feel awkward at all if they were in a situation where they needed to engage with the 'other' community – more Protestants responded in this way than Catholics (53% vs. 45% of Protestants). Around one in eight people said they would be nervous in such a situation, while just over a third of all participants (39%) were unsure how to respond.

3.4.4 Awkward
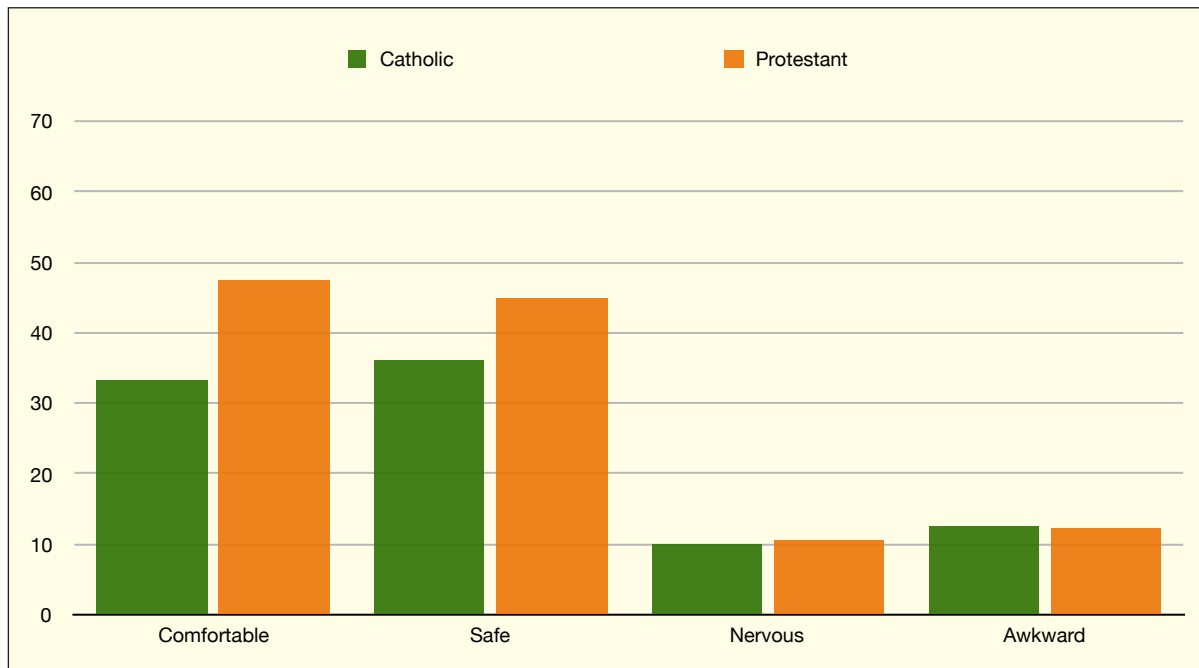
Extremely	Catholic	Protestant	Total
7	6%	8%	7%
6	6%	4%	5%
5	9%	8%	9%
4	15%	14%	15%
3	18%	12%	15%
2	12%	14%	13%
1	33%	39%	36%
Not at all			

Summary of Section 3.4

Overall, responses relating to community interaction were quite mixed. When asked if they would feel comfortable or safe, a large percentage of participants said they would feel comfortable and safe, while a similar percentage provided responses in the middle of the scale, and only 15-16% said they would not feel comfortable or safe. Similarly, respondents gave positive responses to the questions about whether they would feel nervous or awkward in such situation, and just 10-12% indicated that they would be nervous or awkward of they were interacting with the 'other' community.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents by community background who would feel comfortable, safe, nervous or awkward in presence of 'other' community.

In general, Protestant participants were somewhat more positive than Catholic respondents in relation to their feelings toward community interaction with the 'other' community and stated that they would feel more comfortable and safe, but there was no real difference in the percentage of those who said they would feel nervous or awkward.

3.5 Community expression

The fifth section asked participants how they feel when members of the 'other' community express their identity. Participants were provided with four statements related to this issue and five options for how they could choose to respond.

Respondents were first asked if they felt threatened when members of the 'other' community celebrated their cultural traditions.

3.5.1 I feel threatened when members of the 'other' community celebrate their cultural traditions.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	8%	1%	4%
Agree	21%	12%	17%
Neither agree nor disagree	31%	29%	30%
Disagree	26%	37%	32%
Strongly Disagree	13%	21%	17%

Around half of the total number of respondents (49%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that they felt threatened when the 'other' community celebrated their cultural traditions – more Protestants responded in this way (58% compared to 40% of Catholics). A little under a third of all participants (30%) felt they did not agree or disagree with the statement. Around one in five respondents (21%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt threatened when the 'other' community celebrate their cultural traditions – a much larger proportion of Catholics (29%) than Protestants responded in this way (13%).

Respondents were also asked whether flags associated with the 'other' community made them feel like their identity was under threat.

3.5.2 When I see flags flown that express the identity of the 'other' community, I feel as though my own identity is under threat.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	12%	5%	9%
Agree	23%	14%	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	36%	33%
Disagree	24%	30%	27%
Strongly Disagree	11%	15%	13%

A large number of all respondents (40%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that seeing the flags of the 'other' community would make them feel like their identity was under threat – more Protestants (45%) than Catholics (34%) responded in this manner. A third of the total number of participants (33%) felt that they did not agree or disagree with the statement. Around a quarter of all respondents (27%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion – a higher number of Catholics responded in this way (35% compared to 19% of Protestants).

The survey also asked participants whether they considered wall murals associated with 'other' communities to be a threat to their communities' identity.

3.5.3 The wall murals of 'other' communities are a threat to my group's identity.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	3%	1%	2%
Agree	17%	9%	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	34%	36%	35%
Disagree	33%	36%	34%
Strongly Disagree	13%	18%	16%

Again, around a half of the total number of respondents (50%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that wall murals associated with 'other' communities provoked a sense of threat toward their community's identity – more Protestants responded in this way (54% compared to 45% of Catholics). A little over a third of all participants (35%) indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, just about twice as many Catholics (20%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whereas just 10% of Protestants responded in this way.

Finally, participants were asked if kerbstones painted in the colours of the 'other' community made members of their community feel that they were not welcome or respected in the associated areas.

3.5.4 When I see kerbstones painted in the colours of the 'other' community, I feel members of my community are not welcome or respected in those areas.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	22%	7%	14%
Agree	38%	25%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%	34%	27%
Disagree	15%	22%	18%
Strongly Disagree	6%	13%	10%

Close to half of the total number of participants (46%) agreed or strongly agreed that kerbstones painted in the respective colours of the 'other' community would make members of their community feel that they would not be welcome, or respected in those areas. This was a particularly significant issue for Catholics – 60% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (32% of Protestant participants responded in this way). While 35% of Protestants disagreed that painted kerbstones made them feel unwelcome, just 21% of Catholics felt this way.
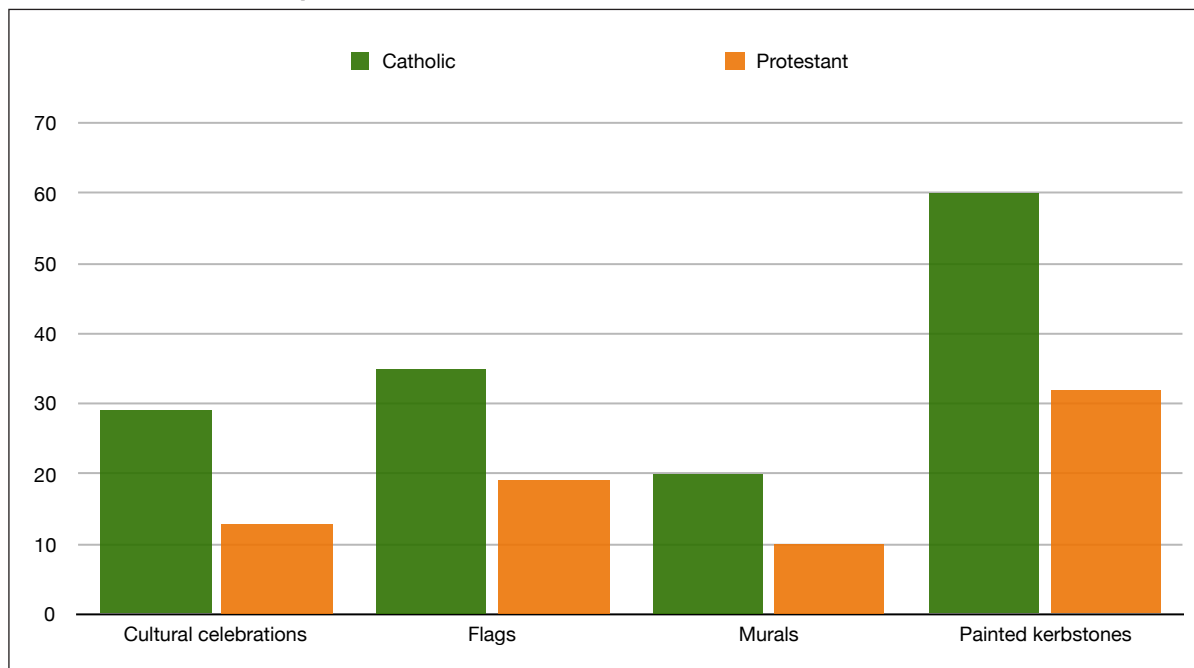
Summary of Section 3.5

Overall, just around one in four respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the suggestion that various types of community expression made them feel threatened, with the reaction to flags (27%) being more negative than to cultural celebrations (21%) and to murals (15%).

Figure 5 (opposite) compares the responses of Catholics and Protestants who reacted negatively to various forms of cultural expression by members of the 'other' community, or to the presence of different types of visual displays in public spaces. In each case, Catholics were more negative in their attitudes towards such displays than Protestants.

The findings also indicate a more negative reaction to the presence of painted kerbstones, than other forms of visual displays, with 46% of respondents stating that they would make members of their community feel that they would not be welcome or respected in the areas with painted kerbstones. Once again this was a particular concern for Catholics, 60% felt this way, compared to 32% of Protestants.
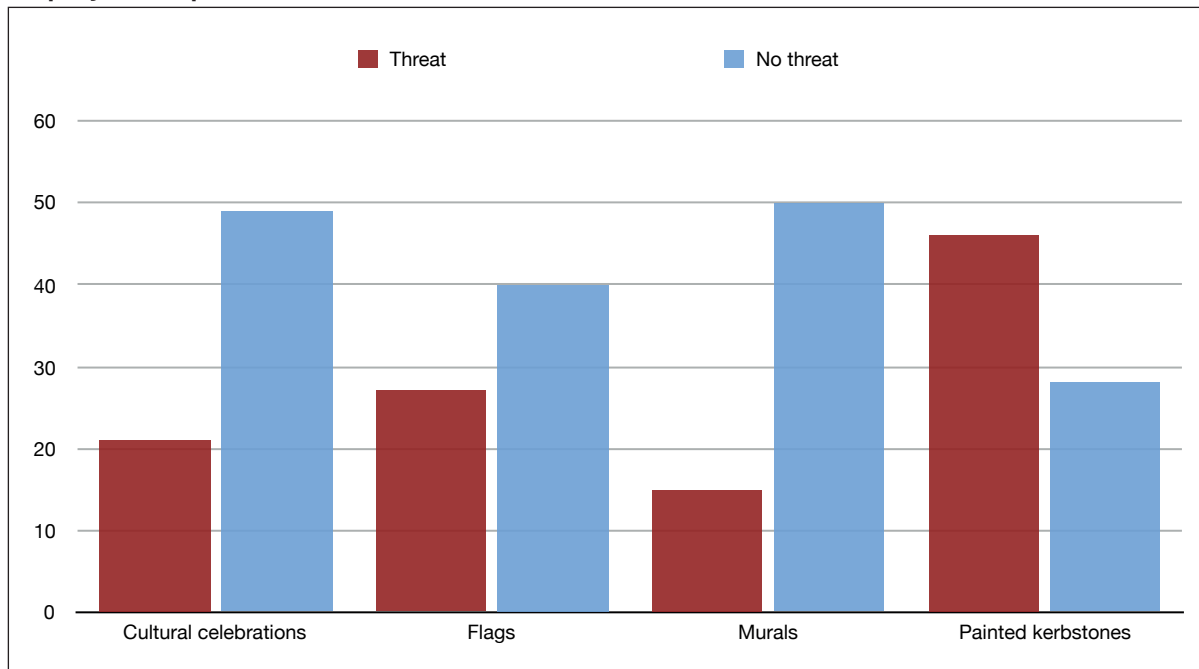
Figure 5: Percentage of respondents by community background who felt threatened by cultural and visual displays.

Catholic respondents were generally more likely to have an issue with how the 'other' community expressed itself across the responses to all four statements – in each case, a significantly higher percentage of Catholics felt threatened by visual displays than Protestants.

It is also worth noting that it was a minority of each community that had negative reactions to each of the four forms of displays (apart from Catholic response to painted kerbstones). In most cases respondents report a degree of indifference (neither agreed nor disagreed), or indicated that the cultural activities and visual displays of the 'other' community did not make them feel threatened. Figure 6 compares the responses of those who indicated that they felt the various visual displays were a threat to their identity with those who said they did not pose any threat.

Figure 6: Percentage of all respondents who felt threatened by cultural and visual displays, compared with those who did not.

3.6 Community safety

This section explored participants' feelings about their sense of safety and perceived threat in their local area, as a result of belonging to either the Protestant, or Catholic community. Participants were provided with three statements related to community safety and five possible options for how they could choose to respond.

Participants were firstly asked if they would sometimes be afraid of being identified as being a member of their community as they moved around Belfast.

3.6.1 Sometimes in Belfast I am afraid of being identified as a member of my community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	9%	7%	8%
Agree	35%	24%	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%	28%	26%
Disagree	22%	24%	23%
Strongly Disagree	10%	18%	14%

The overall response to this statement was mixed – over a third of all participants (37%) agreed or strongly agreed, but over a third (37%) also disagreed or strongly disagreed. Catholics were most likely to agree or strongly agree (44%) with the suggestion that they would sometimes be afraid of being as a member of their community in Belfast, in contrast 30% of Protestants responded in this way. Protestants were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the suggestion – 37% reacted in this way, as opposed to 33% of Catholics.

In the second part of this section, participants were asked if they worry about being physically attacked by members of the 'other' community.

3.6.2 I worry about being physically attacked by members of the 'other' community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	7%	7%	7%
Agree	26%	14%	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%	28%	26%
Disagree	27%	30%	29%
Strongly Disagree	15%	21%	18%

While a large number of all participants (47%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that they worry about being physically attacked by members of the 'other' community more Protestants (51%) than Catholics responded in this manner (42%), a significant number of participants (27%) agreed or strongly agreed that they worried about being attacked by members of the 'other' community – this was considered to be a more likely concern by Catholics (33% vs. 21% of Protestants). Around a quarter of all respondents (26%) felt that they did not agree or disagree.

In the third part of this section, participants were asked whether they worry about their personal property being damaged by members of the 'other' community.

3.6.3 I worry about my personal property being damaged by members of the 'other' community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	9%	5%	7%
Agree	15%	14%	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	24%	25%
Disagree	35%	35%	35%
Strongly Disagree	15%	21%	18%

Over half of all participants (53%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that they worry about their personal property being damaged by members of the 'other' community – more Protestants (56%) than Catholics (50%) reacted in this way. However, just over one in five people (22%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (this was a slightly more pronounced fear among Catholic respondents, 24% of which reacted in this way vs. 20% of Protestant participants).

In the final part of this section, participants were asked to consider whether Belfast was dangerous for their community, due to the risk of sectarian violence. This statement provoked a mix of responses – a little over a third of all respondents (35%) agreed or strongly agreed, that their community was at risk of sectarian violence in Belfast, another third (34%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and slightly less than a third (31%) felt that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

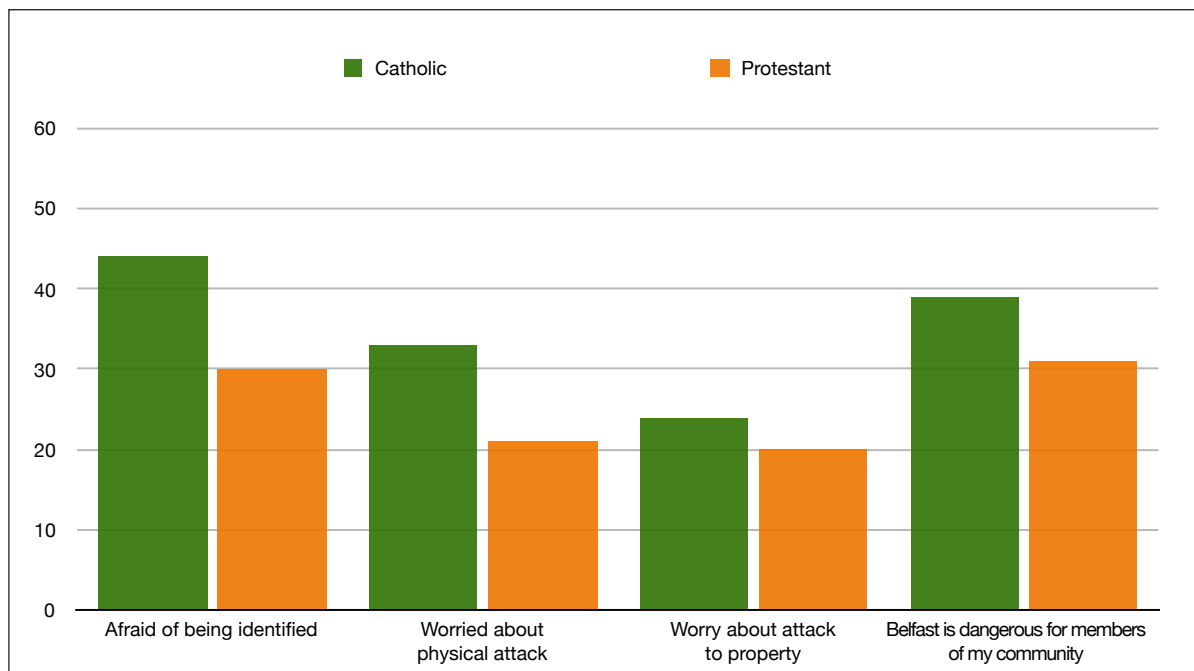### 3.6.4 Living in Belfast is dangerous for members of my community because of sectarian violence.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	7%	7%	7%
Agree	31%	24%	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	36%	27%	31%
Disagree	18%	29%	23%
Strongly Disagree	7%	14%	11%

Catholics were again more likely that Protestants to believe their community was at risk of sectarian violence, with 39% of Catholics agreeing with the statement, compared to 31% of Protestants.

Summary of Section 3.6

Overall, there was no clear response to how participants felt about community safety – in reaction to each of the four statements provided in this section, at least a quarter of all respondents indicated that they did not agree, or disagree. Also, in reaction to the statements about fear of being identified and whether Belfast was considered to be dangerous to their community, as many participants agreed, or strongly agreed as they did disagree, or strongly disagree.

Figure 7: Percentage of respondents by community background who expressed fear of being identified, physically attacked, having property damaged or who think Belfast is dangerous.

However, it is concerning that more than one in three people said they were sometimes worried about being identified as a member of their community, and more than one in four said they worried about being physically attacked by someone from the 'other' community, one in five said they worried about their property being damaged by members of the 'other' community, and more than one in three believed that Belfast was a dangerous place to live due to sectarian violence.

Furthermore, in all instances Catholics stated that they felt significantly more afraid of risks to personal safety than members of the Protestant community.

3.7 Accessing facilities and using public space

The survey explored the extent to which participants felt comfortable using facilities, travel routes or public spaces located in distinctly Protestant, or Catholic areas. Participants were provided with four questions related to this issue and five potential options for how they could respond.

This section was particularly central to our research aims. It directly tapped the theme of self-reported segregation of pathways, spaces and facilities.

In the first part of this section, participants were asked if they preferred using facilities mainly located in areas of Belfast dominated by members of their own community.

3.7.1 I generally prefer to use facilities located mainly in areas of Belfast dominated by members of my own community?

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	9%	9%	9%
Agree	27%	22%	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	26%	26%
Disagree	22%	28%	25%
Strongly Disagree	15%	15%	15%

Around a third of all participants (33%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that they preferred to use facilities in areas dominated by members of their own community – 37% of Catholics and 31% of Protestants responded in this manner. But, a large number of respondents (40%) indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this suggestion – 43% of Protestants and 37% of Catholics reacted in this way.

Respondents were then asked if, when travelling around Belfast, they would generally choose routes that were associated with their community, even if they were not the quickest way to their desired destination.

3.7.2 When travelling in Belfast, I choose routes that are within or close to my own community's areas, even if they are not the quickest way to get to my destination.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	6%	5%	6%
Agree	22%	14%	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	22%	24%
Disagree	26%	39%	32%
Strongly Disagree	21%	20%	20%

Over half of all respondents (53%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement – more Protestants than Catholics responded in this manner (58% compared to. 46%) and a further a quarter of the respondents (24%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the suggestion.

However, more than one in five of those surveyed (23%) indicated that they did agree or strongly agree and they would prioritise routes through their own community rather than the quickest route to their destination.

Furthermore, more Catholics than Protestants indicated that they would choose routes that were closer to areas that were associated with their community, even if they are not the quickest way to get their desired location (27% compared to 19%).

Participants were also asked to indicate whether they try to keep clear of public spaces where they are likely to encounter members of the 'other' community.

3.7.3 I prefer to keep clear of public spaces where I am likely to encounter members of the 'other' community.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	3%	4%	4%
Agree	15%	11%	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	24%	27%
Disagree	30%	39%	34%
Strongly Disagree	22%	21%	21%

Almost one in five respondents (19%) agreed or strongly agreed that they tried to avoid spaces where they might meet members of the 'other' community, and Catholics were slightly more likely to react in this way (18%) compared to 15% of than Protestants.

However, more than half of all respondents (56%) indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that they avoided public spaces where they were likely to encounter members of the 'other' community – more Protestants than Catholics reacted in this manner (60% compared to 51%). Around a quarter (27%) of all participants stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Finally, participants were asked if they tend to stay clear of streets that have visual makers that are associated with the 'other' community.

3.7.4 I tend to stay well away from streets that have clear symbols of the 'other' community's identity, such as murals, flags or kerb painting.

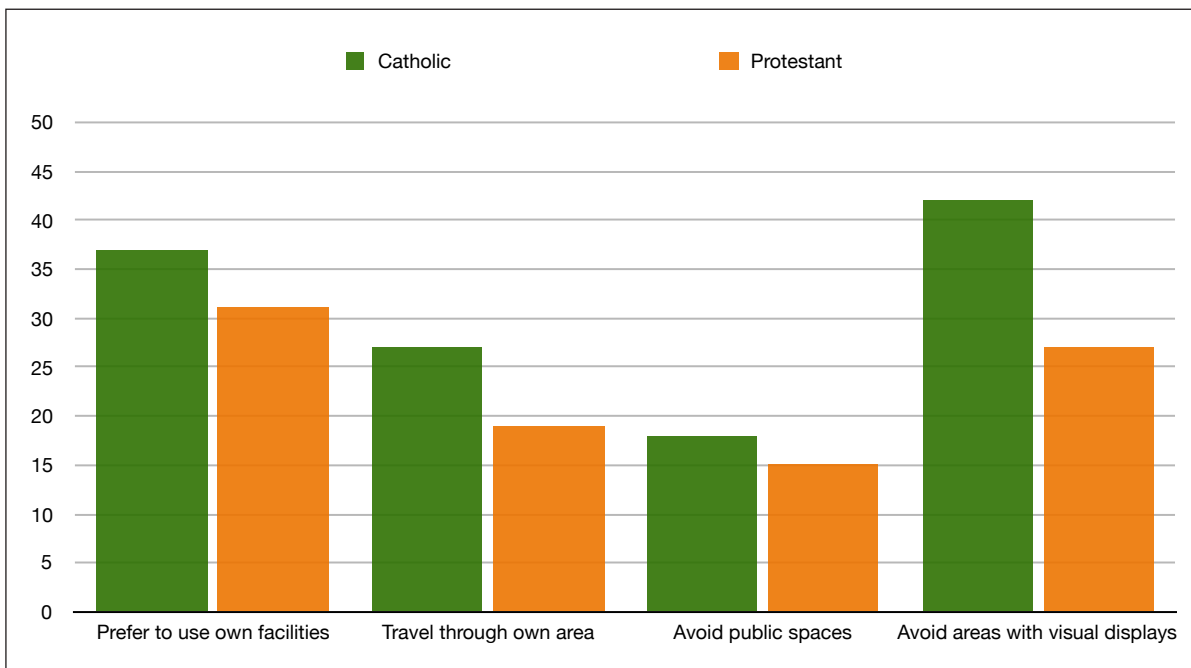|	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	11%	9%	10%
Agree	31%	18%	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%	25%	23%
Disagree	22%	31%	27%
Strongly Disagree	14%	17%	15%

Although a large number of the total number of all participants (42%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, a significant portion of respondents (35%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that they would avoid streets that have visible symbols that are associated with the 'other' community.

There were also significant differences in response according to community background, Catholics were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they would avoid areas with visible markers of community identity (42%) than Protestants (27%).

Summary of Section 3.7

A large percentage of participants rejected the suggestion that they would remain clear of areas that were associated with the 'other' community, with between 40% and 55% disagreeing with suggestions that they would prefer to use single identity facilities, travel through or close to areas dominated by their own community and avoid some public spaces, particularly if marked by visual symbols. Figure 8 illustrates that Protestants were generally around 10% more likely to be willing to use spaces where they may encounter the 'other' community, whereas Catholics were more likely than Protestants to avoid places that had clear visual markers of community identity.

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents by community background who adapt their mobility because of the community identity.

3.8: Peace walls

The survey also explored attitudes to the government's plan to remove all interface barriers between Catholic and Protestant communities by 2023.

In the first part of the section, participants were asked to indicate if they supported the government proposal to remove interface barriers in general terms.

3.8.1 I support government proposals to remove interface barriers.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	24%	21%	22%
Agree	33%	29%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	24%	25%	25%
Disagree	11%	16%	14%
Strongly Disagree	8%	10%	9%

A large number of the total number of participants agreed or strongly agreed (53%) that they supported the government proposals to remove interface barriers – Catholics were more likely than Protestants to respond in this way (57% compared to 49%). Around a quarter of all participants (25%) neither agreed nor agreed with the statement. Protestants were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (26%) compared to Catholics (19%).

Respondents were then asked to consider if they felt it was too soon to remove interface barriers.

3.8.2 It is too soon to remove interface barriers in North Belfast.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	11%	15%	13%
Agree	22%	19%	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	29%	28%
Disagree	26%	24%	25%
Strongly Disagree	15%	13%	14%

A third of participants (33%) stated they felt it was too soon remove interface barriers and a little over a quarter (28%) did not agree or disagree with the statement. There was little difference between how the two communities responded.

However, a slightly larger percentage of respondents (39%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that it is too soon to remove interface barriers in North Belfast (Catholics were a little more likely than Protestants to respond in this way – 41% compared to 37%).
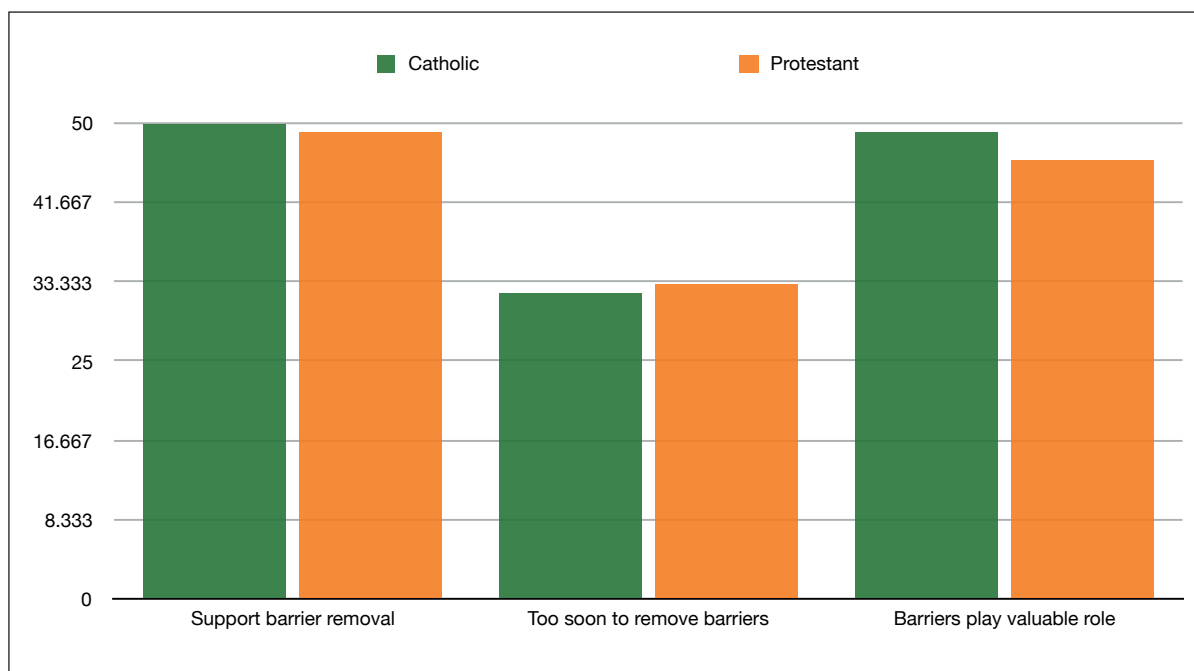
Participants were then questioned if they felt that were some interface barriers served a valuable role and should remain, even if others should be removed.

3.8.3 Some interface barriers could be removed, but many of them serve a valuable role and should remain.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	10%	12%	11%
Agree	39%	33%	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%	27%	25%
Disagree	17%	19%	18%
Strongly Disagree	11%	9%	10%

Nearly half of the total number of respondents (47%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that some interface barriers served a valuable role and should remain – Catholics were a little more likely to respond in this manner (49% compared to 46% of Protestants).

Figure 9: Attitudes of respondents by community background to interface barriers.

Finally, in this section, participants were asked to consider what the current function of interface barriers were in Belfast and they were provided with four statements and five options for how they could respond.

3.8.4 What is the current function of interface barriers in Belfast? To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these reasons. Please tick your answer in each row.

a) To protect against Loyalist violence.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	10%	7%	9%
Agree	37%	29%	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	38%	43%	41%
Disagree	11%	16%	14%
Strongly Disagree	4%	5%	5%

A large number of all participants (41%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that interface barriers exist to protect against Loyalist violence (Catholics were more likely to respond in this way than Protestants – 47% compared to 36%). A significant number of participants (41%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

b) To protect against Republican violence.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	8%	9%	8%
Agree	32%	33%	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	41%	43%	42%
Disagree	15%	12%	13%
Strongly Disagree	4%	4%	4%

A considerable number of participants (42%) felt that they did not agree or disagree with the suggestion that interfaces exist to protect against Republican violence – there was little difference between how Protestants and Catholics responded in this way (43% vs. 41% respectively). A large number of participants (41%) also agreed or strongly agreed.

c) To keep the communities apart.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	11%	15%	13%
Agree	40%	39%	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%	27%	28%
Disagree	15%	16%	16%
Strongly Disagree	5%	3%	4%

Over half of the total number of participants (53%) agreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that the primary function of existing peace walls is to keep the two main communities apart. A large number (28%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the suggestion. Again, there was little difference between how the two communities reacted.
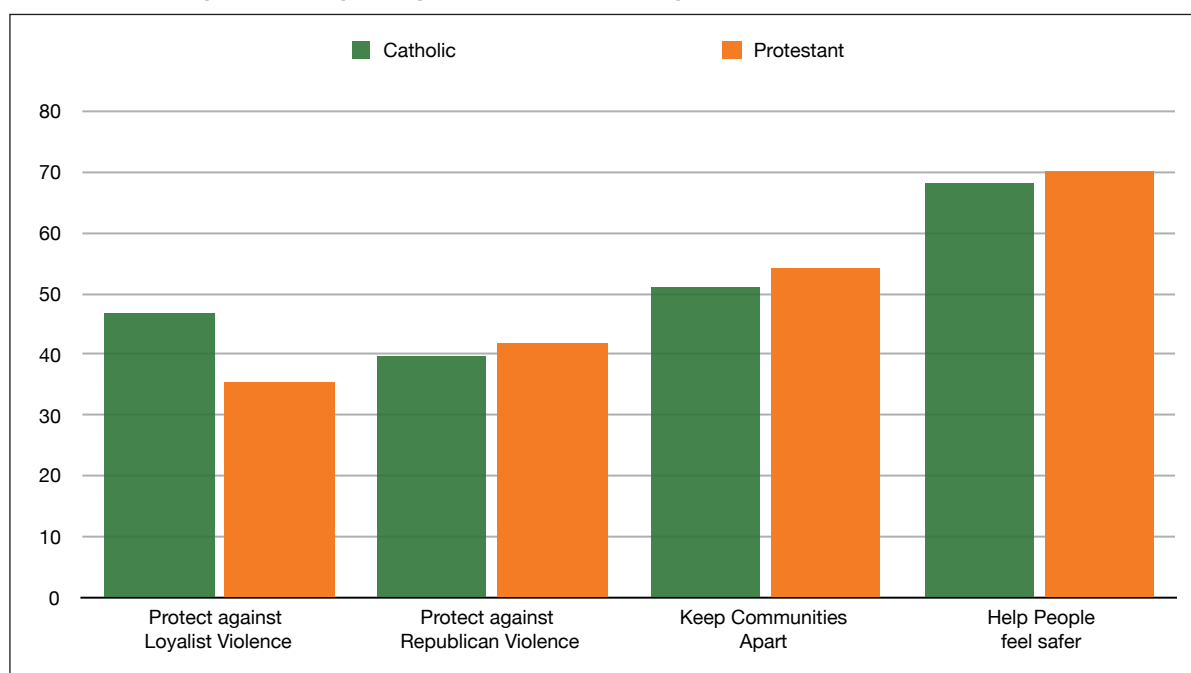
d) To help people feel safer.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	18%	20%	19%
Agree	50%	50%	50%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	21%	21%
Disagree	7%	7%	7%
Strongly Disagree	4%	2%	3%

A large number of all participants (69%) agreed, or strongly agreed that the main function of interface barriers is to help people feel safer – Catholics and Protestants responded in a similar manner (68% compared to 70% respectively).

Figure 10, illustrates the percentages of Catholics and Protestants who agree or strongly agree that interface barriers serve to protect people from loyalist violence; republican violence; to divide communities and to keep people safe.

Figure 10: Respondents perceptions on the roles played by interface barriers.

Summary of Section 3.8

Overall, there was significant support for the government's proposals for the removal of interface barriers (53% of participants agreed or strongly agreed), but nearly half of all respondents (47%) also felt that some barriers continued to provide a valuable role in their community and should remain (Catholics and Protestants responded in a largely similar way to these points).

When asked about the function that interface barriers played at this time, around 40% of respondents thought they served to protect communities against violence by paramilitary groups, more than half thought they served to keep the communities apart, while nearly 70% thought they were there to make people feel safer.

3.9: Belfast city centre

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked about their use and views of Belfast city centre. Participants were provided with five statements about the city centre and five options for how they could respond.

Participants were first asked if they felt Belfast city centre could be considered a shared space.

3.9.1 Belfast city centre is now a shared space where members of both communities feel equally welcome.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	31%	28%	29%
Agree	53%	53%	53%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	14%	13%
Disagree	4%	5%	4%
Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	1%

The vast majority of all respondents (82%) agreed or strongly agreed that Belfast city centre is now a shared space where members of both communities feel equally welcome, with 81% of Protestants and 83% of Catholics responding in this way.

Participants were then asked to indicate if they felt Belfast city centre was a location where their community would feel like they belonged.

3.9.2 Members of my community can visit Belfast city centre and feel like they belong there.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	35%	30%	32%
Agree	51%	52%	52%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	13%	13%
Disagree	2%	3%	3%
Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	1%

A larger number of all respondents (84%) agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion that Belfast city centre is a location where their community could visit and feel like they belong, with 86% of Catholics and 83% of Protestants responding in this way.

Respondents were also asked if they felt Belfast was a more open and inclusive space than it was in the past.

3.9.3 Nowadays, Belfast city centre is a far more open and inclusive space for members of my community than it was in the past.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	41%	27%	34%
Agree	48%	43%	46%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	25%	17%
Disagree	1%	5%	3%
Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	1%

The majority of all participants (79%) agreed or strongly agreed that Belfast city centre is now a far more open and inclusive space than it was in the past. Catholics in particular were more likely to agree with this statement than Protestants (88% compared to 70%). There was one notable difference between how Catholics and Protestants responded to this statement – around a quarter of Protestant participants (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed, whereas only 9% of Catholics responded in this way.

The survey also explored any fears or concerns that people might have in the city centre. Participants were asked if they felt members of their community avoided certain areas of Belfast city centre because they might not be welcome.

3.9.4 Members of my community tend to avoid certain areas of Belfast city centre because they worry that they might not be welcome.

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	8%	8%	8%
Agree	34%	31%	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	24%	23%
Disagree	25%	26%	25%
Strongly Disagree	13%	12%	12%

In response to the suggestion that people avoid certain areas of Belfast city centre because they may not be welcome, there was a mixed reaction – 40% of all participants agreed or strongly agreed, but 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed (while a further 23% did not feel they agreed, or disagreed). Despite the range in responses, there was no significant difference between how Catholics and Protestants responded.

Participants were then asked to consider if members of their community worry about having a negative experience with members of the 'other' community when visiting Belfast city centre.

3.9.5 Members of my community worry about having a negative experience with members of the 'other' community when visiting Belfast city centre.

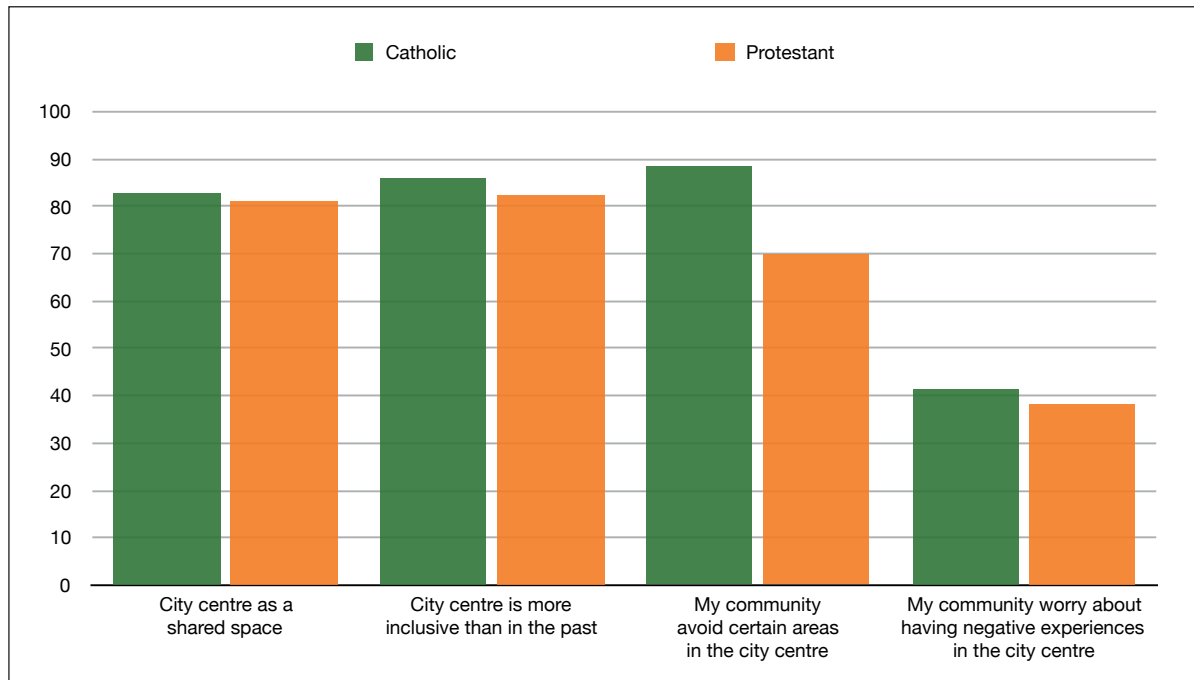|	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Strongly agree	5%	4%	5%
Agree	25%	21%	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%	31%	30%
Disagree	31%	33%	32%
Strongly Disagree	11%	12%	11%

As per the previous question, there was a mixed range of responses to the suggestion that people worry about having negative experiences with members of the 'other' community when they visit Belfast city centre. Although a large number of participants (43%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, more than one in four (27%) agreed or strongly agreed. As before, there was little variation between how Catholics and Protestants responded, but Catholics remained more concerned about a negative experience that Protestants (30% compared to 26%).

Summary of Section 3.9

Overall, participants offered a very positive view of Belfast city centre – large numbers of all participants felt the city centre was a space which both communities could feel welcome (82%), that it was a space where both communities could feel like they belonged there (84%) and that Belfast was a far more open and inclusive space that it had been in the past (79%).

While people from both Catholic and Protestant background expressed similar views, Catholics were more strongly in support of the view that Belfast city centre is more inclusive that it was in the past.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents by community background who agree or strongly agree that Belfast city centre is a shared space; a space that their community belong; is more inclusive than in the past, but also has areas that their community might avoid.

Chapter 4: Key Findings

The survey sought to explore the attitudes and opinions of people living in five interface areas in North Belfast on key issues of identity, their views and experiences in engaging with members of the 'other' community and on issues related to safety and security. The findings indicated that:

Community Belonging: A majority of respondents stated that belonging to their community was important and they felt that they were a member of the community, with Catholics reporting a slightly stronger sense of community affiliation that Protestants (Section 3.1).

Interacting with the 'Other': But at the same time a majority also stated that they often had a range of friendly interactions with members of the 'other' community, while only around one in ten reported regular negative interactions or had been subject to verbal abuse by someone from the 'other' community (Section 3.2).

Feelings towards the 'Other': Perhaps as a result people generally reported positive feelings towards the 'other' community, with more the half reporting they felt respected and around half saying they trusted members of the 'other' community (Section 3.3).

Comfort and Safety: A slightly smaller percentage reported that they would feel comfortable and safe in a setting where they were the only member of their community, with Protestants indicating they would be more comfortable and feel safer than Catholics (Section 3.4).

Cultural Displays: When questioned about their attitudes towards cultural activities and visual displays, a larger number of people said they did not feel threatened by the 'other' communities activities, than those that reported feeling threatened. However, Catholics report a stronger sense of threat when confronted by flags, murals and cultural celebrations, than Protestants, with painted kerbstone being cited most unwelcome of visual displays (Section 3.5).

Community Safety: A significant minority of people reported feeling worried about the risk of being identified by the community background and at threat of physical attack and of damage to their property by members of the 'other' community, with one person in three stating that they considered Belfast to be dangerous to their community because of sectarian violence. Again, Catholics reported higher levels of concern on issues of community safety than Protestants (Section 3.6).

Mobility: A large minority of people reported avoiding certain types of public spaces or routes to social facilities, with an increase in concerns about areas where there were visual displays of the 'other' community. Once again Catholics indicated greater concerns about using public space than Protestants (Section 3.7).

Peace Walls: A majority of respondents were supportive of government initiatives to remove the interface barriers, but some felt it was too soon to remove them and that they still played a valuable role, in particular in making people safer and reducing the risks of violence from paramilitary groups (Section 3.8).

City Centre: A very large majority felt that Belfast city centre was a shared space, was more inclusive than in the past, and that their community felt they belonged in the city centre, but a large minority also stated that members of their community avoided certain areas within the city centre and worry about possible negative experiences (Section 3.9).

Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks

The survey sought the views of a significant sample of people living in North Belfast and found some evidence both for a sense of confidence in their community identity and of experiences of positive interaction with and attitudes towards members of the 'other' community.

However, such attitudes and experiences were balanced by areas of concern, particularly in relation to a sense of safety and a threat of violence from the 'other' community, as well as, for a large minority feeling of threat by the cultural and visual displays from the 'other' community. This underlying sense of threat is in turn likely to influence some of the concerns about moving around in public spaces and in particular in areas dominated by the 'other' community. And while people welcomed the initiative to remove the interface barriers, they also recognised they played a role in providing a sense of safety.

There were also some differences based on community background, with Protestants generally more positive of experiences of community interaction and having greater sense of comfort in inter-communal settings, while Catholics expressed greater concerns about issues of community safety, considered visual displays as more of a threat and were more likely to limit their mobility in public spaces and accessing resources.

Although people expressed concerns and fears of the social geography of North Belfast, they were generally positive about the commercial core of the city, which was overwhelmingly considered to be a shared space and which had become more inclusive that it had been in the past. However, some nervousness remains about the risks that remained in some parts of the city centre.

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