

Attitudes to Peace Walls

Research Report to
Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister



Acknowledgements

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This report, the full datasets, technical report, questionnaires and lay friendly tables will be available on the ARK website from September 2012

www.ark.ac.uk/peacewalls2012/

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1. Introduction

Since the first paramilitary ceasefires in 1994, the Northern Ireland peace and political processes have addressed a series of sensitive and contentious issues relating to the conflict such as policing, prisoner releases, decommissioning, and power sharing. While the peace process has also, in part, begun to address issues of segregation and division within Northern Ireland, it has not yet sufficiently addressed the most obvious and physical manifestation of this division – the peace walls.

While first constructed by the British Army in 1969 as a temporary, military response to sectarian violence and disorder, these walls still remain in 2012. In sum, over eighty barriers (Jarman, 2012) and peace lines have been constructed in predominantly urban, working class, loyalist and republican communities. The responsibility of the construction and maintenance of these structures resided with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) until the devolution of policing and justice powers in 2010. After this point, the Northern Ireland Executive, through the Department of Justice (DoJ) became responsible for all policy-making decisions around peace walls. This development was important because it has been argued that the issue of peace walls existed in a local policy vacuum for over forty years (Byrne, 2011). With the responsibility for peace walls now devolved to the local administration, the opportunity to redress this policy vacuum currently exists. The change in responsibility for these walls, alongside the increasing significance of these walls, suggests that there is a new window of opportunity for policy makers and practitioners to come together to drive the issue of peace walls further onto the policy agenda.

The growing significance of the walls can be framed in five distinct ways. From a security perspective, the peace walls continue to focus negative attention on the devolved administration's response to communal violence and disorder. Financially, the peace walls impact on the delivery of services and reduce the potential for communities that have been severely affected by the violence and disorder to attract inward investment. From a good relations perspective, the peace walls continue to emphasise the cultural, political, and religious differences, which exist across our community. In the context of health and social well-being, each of the neighbourhoods with peace walls in Belfast, are in the top 10% of the most socially and economically deprived electoral wards in Northern Ireland. Finally, from an international perspective, events such as the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (2009), along with comments from the Mayor Bloomberg of New York (2008) linking potential economic investment to the removal of peace walls continues to keep Northern Ireland in the international spotlight but for reasons that are at odds with the accepted narrative which promotes the success of the Northern Ireland peace process.

The devolved administration and local government have recently recognized this significance and have incorporated addressing physical division into some of their broader strategies and action plans that are designed to deal with segregation, community safety and urban regeneration. The Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (2011) document published through the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMdFM); the Department of Justice's Building Safer, Shared, and Confident Communities (2011) document; and the Belfast City Council's Investment Programme: 2012-2015 consultation document each place an emphasis on the issue of peace walls.

A renewed focus on the policy making process in relation to peace walls is critical not least because of the most recent decisions that have been taken by the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to the regeneration of the Girdwood barracks site in North Belfast (Devenport, 2012). This led to criticism that the decision was one of 'policymaking on the hoof' whereby decisions were taken in reaction to a situation without adequate time given to think about the implications of this decision carefully. While the contestation over Girdwood was ostensibly about housing and territory in North Belfast, it immediately raised the wider problem of housing shortages and issues of territory in proximity to peace walls across Belfast.

In order for the devolved administration and local government to begin to respond to these wider problems, access to the public's attitudes and opinions on peace walls is crucial. Until now, there has been a minimal amount of quantitative research which has attempted to understand perceptions within local communities in closest proximity to peace walls and the wider public. Therefore, to address this knowledge gap and to inform any future policy making process, we have conducted an attitudinal survey on this matter. The primary research took the form of two distinct postal surveys. The first survey was administered to residents situated on, or within a short distance from, a peace wall in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry. The second survey was administered to people that resided across Northern Ireland. Previous qualitative research (Byrne, 2011), which considered the views of community representatives and policy-makers specifically, suggested a difference of opinion in relation to their general perceptions and interpretations of how and why peace walls existed in certain areas; a difference

in levels of understanding and knowledge of various peace wall initiatives; a divergence of opinion relating to the impact of the peace walls on day to day life; and a wide range of attitudes relating to the possible transformation, removal and regeneration of peace walls. These themes, therefore, guided the development and structure of the questions to be asked in the postal surveys. The following report sets out the results of the postal surveys under these themes and captures the public's attitudes and perceptions towards peace walls in 2012.

2. Methodology

This research sought to explore public awareness of and attitudes towards peace walls. The project received ethical approval from the Ethics Filter Committee in the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy at the University of Ulster in March 2012. The project was funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Perceptive Insight was appointed to undertake the fieldwork following a competitive tendering exercise.

DEFINITION: For the purposes of this report we use the term Peace Walls as this is the term used in every day conversation. However in the actual surveys and cover letters we use the term Peace Line to ensure that respondents are clear what we are asking about and we define what we mean as follows ‘We are using the term Peace Line to cover all kinds of interface barriers that keep communities apart including walls, gates and security barriers’.

The methodology employed was quantitative and it was decided to conduct two surveys. The first survey focussed on a cross section of the population in Northern Ireland and the second survey focussed specifically on the population resident adjacent to peace walls in the Greater Belfast and Derry~Londonderry areas. The surveys were conducted by post, with a reminder sent to non-responders. An incentive was provided to encourage response. A total of 840 peace wall residents and 611 residents in the rest of Northern Ireland completed and returned questionnaires. This represents response rates of 32% and 26% respectively. Fieldwork was conducted in March and April 2012. This section summarises the methodology employed, fuller detail is available in the Technical Report which will be available on the ARK website from September 2012 (www.ark.ac.uk/peacewalls2012).

2.1 Survey Content

Two separate but similar questionnaires were designed for the project and included questions on the following themes:

- Proximity to a Peace Line and opinions on the area as a place to live;
- Perceptions of why Peace Lines were established;
- Perceptions of the impact of Peace Lines;
- Awareness of policy initiatives;
- Roles and Responsibilities in relation to Peace Lines;
- Views on methods of transforming and/or removing Peace Lines.

Both questionnaires and accompanying cover letters will be available on the ARK website from September 2012 (www.ark.ac.uk/peacewalls2012)

2.2 Sampling Design

There were two defined populations for the study; those who live adjacent to peace walls in Belfast and in Derry~Londonderry, and those who reside elsewhere in Northern Ireland. The peace walls areas were sub-divided into four specific locations: North Belfast, West Belfast, East Belfast and Derry~Londonderry. The sampling took place in a number of stages as summarised below. Full detail is available in the Technical Report.

Table 1: Peace Lines location and sub areas.

Location	Sub Area
North Belfast	Hazelwood Whitewell Ligoneill Ardoyne Glenbryn Old Park Cliftonville Tigers Bay New Lodge
West Belfast	Upper Springfield Falls Shankill Suffolk Lenadoon
East Belfast	Short Strand Inner East
Derry~Londonderry	Fountain Bishop Street Tullyalley Curmerian Top of the Hill Irish Street

1. Defining peace walls areas: Reviewing ordnance survey maps to define areas, then identifying peace lines and finally to select streets located in close proximity to each peace line. In total 13 peace line areas were identified as shown in Table 1:

2. Identifying the population of addresses: This involved assigning a postcode to each identified peace line area street. The postcodes were then matched to each residential address within the Pointer database that had the same post code. This provided the population of houses from which to draw the sample. A random sample of these addresses, stratified by peace wall location, was selected to take part in the survey of peace wall residents. A second random sample was drawn from the remaining residential addresses within the Pointer database to take part in the survey of those who reside elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

2.3 Response rate

Response rate varied across the peace line residents sub areas from 19% in Tullyalley Currnerian (Derry~Londonderry) to 45% in Whitewell (North Belfast). The overall response for the peace walls residents was 26%. Response was even higher for those resident elsewhere in Northern Ireland at 32%. The incentive £10 voucher was taken up by 48% of all respondents (695) and 52% (756) chose to donate their incentive to charity (13% to PIPS, suicide awareness and support, and 39% to the Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children). The generosity of the Northern Ireland public in the current economic crisis was remarkable. The cheques were presented to the two charities by the project team on 15 May 2012.

2.4 Datasets and weighting

The datasets (in SPSS format) and summary tables will be available from the ARK website from September (www.ark.ac.uk/peacewalls2012). Two weights have been included in the data to take account of sample design effects.

- Weight1 should be applied to both datasets to take account of disproportionate household size.
- Weight2 should be applied to the Peace Lines residents dataset to take account of the fact that that we sampled within Peace line location to try to ensure sufficient numbers to allow analysis by location. Weight2 weights back to the Peace Lines location population. It should be applied to all analysis involving the full Peace Line residents dataset. It is not required for analysis by location or sub-area.

2.5 Demographics of the sample

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the two samples. (Based on unweighted data).

		General Population (n=611) %	Peace Wall residents (n=840) %
Sex	Male		
	Female		
Age category	18-24		
	25-34		
	35-44		
	45-54		
	55-64		
	65 or older		
Religion	Protestant		
	Catholic		
	None/Other		
	Missing		

2.6 Tables in this report

This report provides a first descriptive analysis of the data comparing the attitudes of the general population with those who are resident adjacent to peace walls. It also provides a breakdown by religion for both groups. All tables presenting findings from the general population have been calculated with Weight1 applied. All tables presenting findings from the Peace Lines residents have been calculated with the combined Weight1 and Weight2 applied.

3. Survey Findings

The following section sets out the survey findings using a series of themed headings which refer to the respondents' community; their understanding of the context around the establishment of the peace walls; the perceived impact of the peace walls on people's lives; the roles and responsibilities of those engaged in historical and current initiatives around what could/should happen to these walls; the extent of knowledge surrounding such initiatives; their attitudes towards any future attempts to transform and/or remove peace walls and finally their views on what might actually happen if the peace walls were to be removed. The data is presented using a series of tables and, where appropriate, has highlighted the similarities and difference between the views of those from the general population with those that reside closest to the peace walls and between respondents based upon their religion.

3.1 Peace Walls in the Community

Initially respondents were asked to provide details of where they resided in relation to the nearest peace walls in their community. Table 3a shows that the majority of respondents from the general population (54%) lived further than 10 miles from a peace wall. A further (24%) of the general population indicated that they lived more than a few streets away from a peace wall, but less than 10 miles away.

Table 3a: How far do you currently live from the nearest Peace Line (such as a wall, gate or security barrier) used to segregate two communities?

	General population (Q5)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Within a few streets of the nearest Peace Line	3	2	4
More than a few streets away but less than 10 miles	24	25	23
10 miles or more	54	55	51
Don't know	19	18	22

In relation to the sample of respondents drawn from peace wall areas, Table 3b shows that 23% of respondents live on a peace wall and a further 54% of respondents live within a few streets of their nearest peace wall.

Table 3b: How far do you live from the nearest Peace Line?

	Peace lines residents (Q5)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
I live on the peace line	23	23	23
I live within a few streets of the nearest Peace Line	54	57	53
I live more than a few streets away from the Peace Line	15	13	17
I'm not sure how far away the nearest one is	6	5	6
Don't know	2	3	1

The results indicate an informed sample of respondents across both surveys as the vast majority of both sets of respondents are aware of where the nearest peace wall is in relation to their residence.

3.2 Understanding the Past: why were the peace walls established?

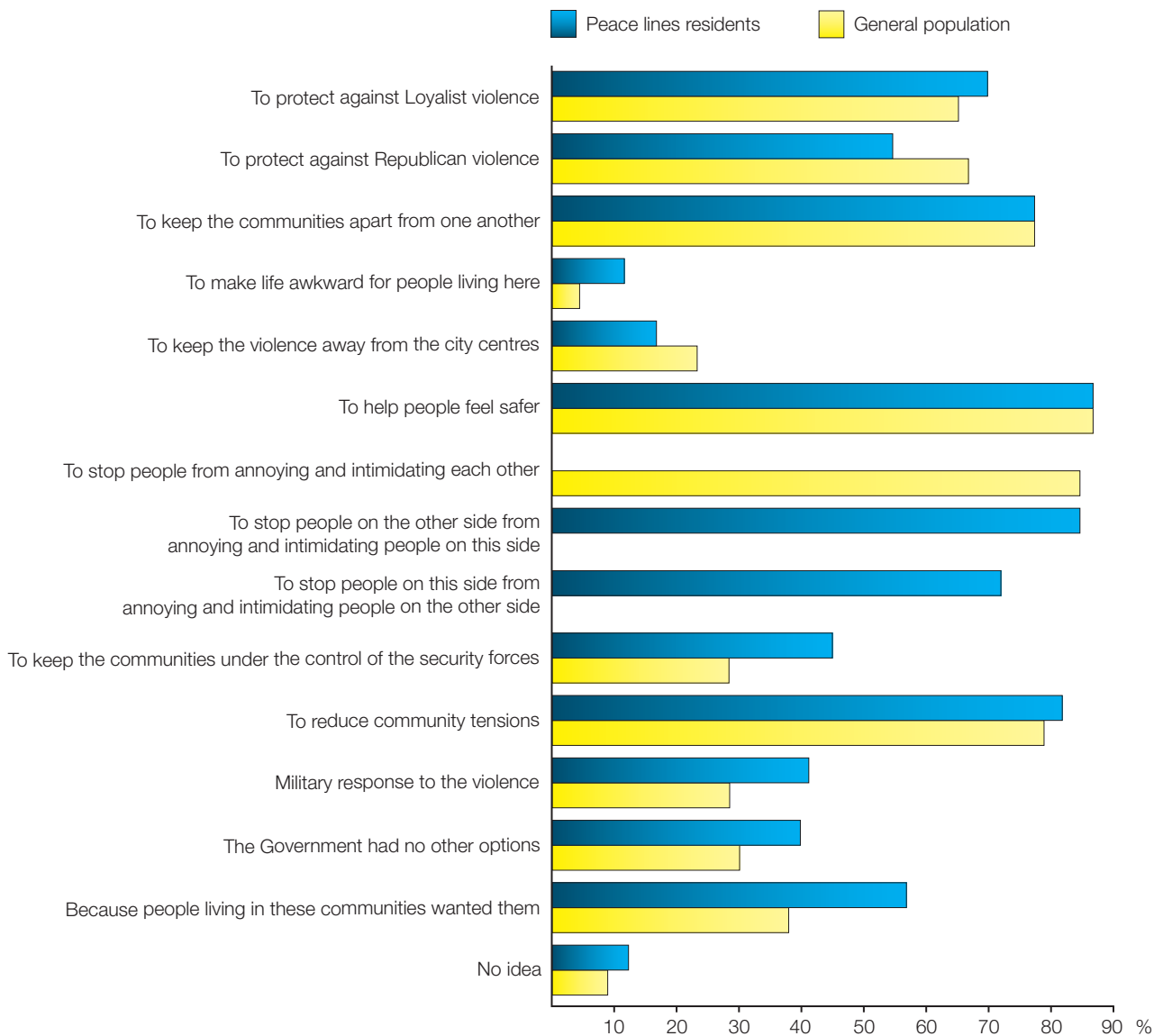
The British Army constructed the first peace wall in West Belfast in September 1969 as a response to communal violence and disorder at that time. From 1972, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) became responsible for the construction and maintenance of subsequent peace walls until 2010. Following the decision to devolve policing and justice powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the responsibility fell to local Ministers through the DOJ. From the outset, the policy rationale for construction of peace walls has been framed within a security context. In so far as peace walls were seen to provide safety and security and reduce opportunities for communal violence and disorder. The survey sought to ascertain whether respondent's views were in accord with this longstanding policy narrative (see Table 4).

Table 4: Why do you think Peace Lines were created in the first place? (Strongly agree/agree)

	General population (Q7)			Peace lines residents (Q6)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
To protect against Loyalist violence	66	60	72	70	32	88
To protect against Republican violence	67	68	66	54	76	41
To keep the communities apart from one another	78	81	74	78	80	77
To make life awkward for people living here	5	5	5	11	14	10
To keep the violence away from the city centres	23	22	23	17	20	16
To help people feel safer	87	88	85	87	89	85
To stop people from annoying and intimidating each other	84	88	80	Na	Na	Na
To stop people on the other side from annoying and intimidating people on this side	Na	Na	Na	84	83	85
To stop people on this side from annoying and intimidating people on the other side	Na	Na	Na	72	68	74
To keep the communities under the control of the security forces	28	23	32	44	35	51
To reduce community tensions	79	78	81	82	84	82
Military response to the violence	29	25	33	41	36	45
The Government had no other options	30	34	28	40	52	34
Because people living in these communities wanted them	38	41	36	57	64	54
No idea	9	10	10	12	10	14

The results from the general population indicate that only 29% believed that these peace walls were established as a military response to the violence. In contrast, the overall majority (87%) felt that they were created to 'help communities feel safer'; to stop people from engaging in acts of intimidation with each other (84%); and to reduce community tensions more broadly (79%). There was little belief that the purpose was to make life awkward for people living there (5%) even though previous research has noted that in real terms the walls did add to the pressures of community life in terms of access to services and the health and social well being of local residents (Murtagh, 2002).

Figure 1: Bar chart showing why respondents think peace lines were created in the first place



While there was broad similarity in the results for the general population and those living in close proximity to the walls, two results stand out for further comment. Firstly, 41% of those living beside the walls believed that peace walls were established as a military response to the violence in comparison to the 29% of the general public. Secondly, 44% of peace wall residents believed that the walls were created to keep communities under the control of the security forces, in comparison to just 28% of the general population. This indicates that local residents are more inclined than the general population to view the issues through a lens shaped by the security and military apparatus which dominated their physical landscape. In terms of religious differences, Catholic peace wall residents were more likely to believe that the walls were created to keep communities under the control of the security forces (51%) than were Protestant peace wall residents (35%). Furthermore, Catholics (34%) living close to peace walls were much less likely than Protestants (52%) to agree that peace walls were established because the 'government had no other options'. The inference that can be drawn from this is that Catholic respondents believed that other options were available at the time and not sufficiently considered. This is important in relation to the level of community consultation that needs to take place in the future so that all stakeholders are aware of the various options, both real and hypothetical, relating to what could/should/might happen to the peace walls.

3.3 Acknowledging the Present: the impact of peace walls

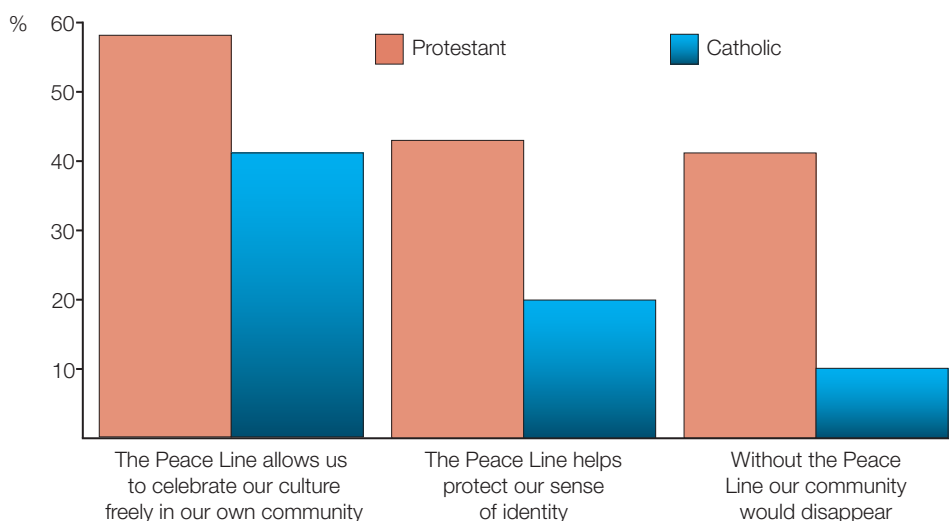
Academics and practitioners have consistently focused attention on the relationship between the location of the peace walls and the high numbers of people both injured and murdered during the conflict (Fay et al, 1999; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). A correlation between the peace walls and the local communities ability to access services, low levels of educational attainment, and unemployment has also been documented (Hall, 2010). Most recently, Leonard and McKnight (2011) have noted that young people are inclined to view the peace walls as a method of exclusion, and consider them ineffective at reducing violence and disorder. In contrast, the peace walls have also been viewed by some through a more positive lens, as noted by McDowell (2008) in her exploration of the commodification of physical conflict heritage such as peace walls through various tourism initiatives in Belfast. The survey sought to determine whether these positive and negative interpretations above were consistent with the views of respondents. Table 5 illustrates both the general population's and peace wall residents' views on the impact of the peace walls.

Table 5: Please say how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the positive and negative impact of Peace Lines (Strongly agree/agree)

	General population (Q8)			Peace lines residents (Q8)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
The Peace Line allows people (us)to celebrate their (our)culture freely in their (our) own community	44	45	46	47	59	42
The Peace Line serves to highlight the tension and division between the communities	67	67	66	67	63	70
The Peace Line(s) make(s) people feel safer	63	66	60	76	78	74
The Peace Line(s) is (are) ugly	82	80	81	75	62	81
The Peace Line(s) is (are) still necessary because of the potential for violence	38	43	34	69	76	67
The Peace Line(s) stop(s) (our) communities(y) expanding	46	45	50	40	37	43
The Peace line(s) help(s) protect the (our) sense of identity in communities	29	33	28	27	43	20
The Peace Line(s) sends out a bad image of Northern Ireland to people abroad	81	79	80	67	60	69
Without the Peace Line(s) (our) community(ies) would disappear	9	9	10	21	41	10
The Peace Line(s) makes it harder (for people) to access some services like health education or leisure	44	40	48	41	37	42
The Peace Line(s) is (are) a tourist attraction	38	37	37	53	65	47
The Peace Line(s) make(s) people feel trapped	45	46	47	41	36	43

The results indicate that the general population believe strongly that peace walls send out a bad image of Northern Ireland to people abroad (81%). Those living beside peace walls are less strong in these beliefs (67%). However, the general population (38%) were less likely to consider peace walls as a viable tourist attraction in comparison to those living closest (53%). Arguably, one could contend that this is because those living closest see tour buses and walking tours on a regular basis in their neighbourhoods.

Figure 2: Peace line residents views on the impact of peace lines by religion (strongly agree/agree)



Among those living in areas where there are peace walls there are some differences to note. Firstly, Protestant responses reflect clearly their concerns about issues of their identity, culture and tradition. When asked, 59% of Protestants compared to 42% of Catholics felt that the peace walls allowed them to celebrate their culture freely within their own community. Similarly, 43% of Protestants, compared to 20% Catholics felt that the peace walls protected their sense of identity and 41% of Protestants compared to 10% Catholics felt that without the peace walls their communities would disappear. These findings raise an important question. How might the government ensure that any expansion of the Catholic community is not perceived as a catalyst for the dilution or denigration of the existing Protestant community?

3.4 Addressing Impact: roles and responsibilities in relation to peace walls

Although there are no locally based specific policies that relate to peace walls and could begin to address the question raised above, there have been attempts by local council and the Northern Ireland Executive to incorporate the issue within their ‘good relations’, ‘community safety’, and ‘economic regeneration’ programmes and strategies. Local residents were asked whether they were aware of these recent developments (Table 6).

Table 6: Have you heard of any of these initiatives? (Yes)

	Peace lines residents (Q12)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
The Programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration document	7	7	7
The Department of Justice Community Safety Strategy	16	14	17
Belfast City Council Investment Strategy document 2012-2015	14	9	16
Derry City Council’s Good Relations Strategy	9	7	10
OFMDFM Social Investment Fund	14	8	16

The results indicate that only a very small number were aware of any of these developments. Only 16% were aware of the Department of Justice Community Safety Strategy, followed by the Belfast City Council Investment Strategy document -2012-2015- (14%). This lack of awareness about existing developments further validates the argument that greater community consultation needs to take place so that all stakeholders are aware of the various options, both real and hypothetical, relating to what could/should/might happen to the peace walls.

Community consultation is only successful when a community truly believes that it has something of value to offer the consultation process. Because of this, it was important to ask respondents to consider how important they thought the issue was to a series of stakeholders including themselves (Table 7).

Table 7. How important do you think the issue of Peace Lines is to ... (Very important/Fairly important)

	General population (Q11)			Peace lines residents (Q13)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Local politicians?						
The local council?						
The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister?						
The general public in Northern Ireland?						
Investors/Businesses?						
You personally?						

The results show that the issue of peace walls is not regarded as important for members of the general public on a personal basis (28%). This contrasts with almost two thirds of respondents living beside peace walls (64%). This group believe that the issue was more important to them than to any other stakeholder group. The significance of this actual importance for local residents should make any community consultation process on peace walls easier to action and solicit engagement. Moreover, the majority of residents living beside the peace walls believe that the issue should be important to others as well as themselves. More than half of all residents' felt that it was an important issue for investors/businesses (63%), the general public in Northern Ireland (61%), local politicians (59%) and the local council (52%). Since peace walls are regarded as important for a cross section of society, this would suggest that any such consultation process needs to be framed with a broad brushstroke as opposed to a narrow departmental single issue matter. In short, there is a need for a joined up, multi faceted approach to an issue, which is regarded, as important for everyone (except those that don't live near them).

This is important because prior to 2010 the NIO had sole policy responsibility for the peace lines in Northern Ireland and under new legislation the Department of Justice (DOJ) became solely responsible for setting the agenda and formulating decisions and implementing policy on the peace walls. As the Programme for Government 2011-15 states under priority four, a key commitment is to 'actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of peace walls' (DOJ). One output associated with this has been that the DOJ, in conjunction with the Community Relations Council, have established an interface-working group, which has brought together representatives from statutory bodies and the community and voluntary sector to explore possible initiatives and strategies. A further output by 2014-15 will be the on-going monitoring of community tensions and residents concerns in response to the projected reduction in the number of interface structures from 2013-14 onwards. Given the commitments, milestones and outputs proposed within priority four of the programme for Government, the survey aimed to capture peace walls residents' awareness around who they believed had overall responsibility for making such decisions (Table 8).

Table 8: Who do you think has overall responsibility for making decisions about Peace Lines in your area?

	Peace lines residents (Q7)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
The local community	31	33	31
NI Housing Executive	2	2	2
The City Council	7	6	8
Department of Justice	4	2	5
Department of Regional Development	2	2	2
Department of Social Development	4	2	4
PSNI	19	18	20
The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	15	18	14
Don't know	15	17	13

The largest number of residents believed that the local community (31%) had overall responsibility for making decisions about peace walls. A further 19% believed that the PSNI had responsibility, while another 15% thought that it fell within the remit of OFMDFM, and a further (15%) simply did not know. It is interesting to note that although the DOJ do have overall responsibility for peace walls, as defined by the Programme for Government, this was recognised by only 4% of respondents. This raises questions about the existing arrangements for engagement with communities although it is acknowledged that a review process in relation to this is currently underway.

3.5 Knowledge and Awareness of Policy Initiatives

Part of the review (mentioned above) may consider the community's knowledge and awareness of current initiatives and on-going discussions about peace walls. For example, in addition to the aforementioned PfG, local and devolved government strategies such as the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration consultation and Belfast City Council's investment plans include specific references to creating shared space and removing peace walls. The International Fund for Ireland (2012) recently released details of their new fund to support communities in creating the conditions to allow for the removal of peace walls and barriers. In addition, there has been extensive media coverage of the opening of the peace wall in Alexander Park in North Belfast in September 2011 (O'Hagan, 2012). Table 9 illustrates the respondents' levels of awareness on such initiatives.

Table 9. At the moment there are some initiatives and discussions underway about all of the Peace Lines. How much do you know about these?

	General population (Q9)			Peace lines residents (Q9)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
A lot	1	1	1	6	6	6
A little	29	27	29	28	25	30
Hardly anything	32	34	31	33	35	32
Nothing at all	39	39	39	33	34	33

The results show that 71% of the general population know hardly anything/nothing at all about these initiatives. This may be explained insofar as the initiatives are more localised to those areas containing peace walls. However, two thirds of the peace walls residents (66%) also knew hardly anything/nothing at all about these initiatives. This is more difficult to explain but local and devolved government should consider the findings, because despite the efforts of stakeholders, the communities do not seem to be aware of what is actually going on. This would suggest that, if the government agencies want greater buy in from the communities in relation to the various policy initiatives currently on the table, then alternative methods of engagement might need to be considered.

Following on from this question, peace walls respondents were then asked who they thought would be the most appropriate person or organisation to keep them informed about initiatives that related to the peace walls (Table 10).

Table 10: Who do you think should be keeping people informed of these initiatives?

	Peace lines residents (Q11)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Local community representatives	28	29	29
Local politicians representative of this community	29	28	30
The City Council	17	14	17
The Northern Ireland Executive	7	7	6
The Department of Justice	1	1	<1
The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	6	6	6
PSNI	3	6	2
Other (please say who)	2	1	1
Don't know	7	6	7
I don't care about the initiatives	2	3	1

The results indicate that the peace wall residents would like to see a very localised level of engagement in relation to policy initiatives. Their preference for this engagement is with their local politicians and councillors (29%), followed by local community representatives (28%) and their local council (17%). Interestingly, the Department for Justice (DOJ), the agency responsible for the peace walls was the least popular response provided by participants (1%). It is interesting to note that only 2% of respondents claim that they 'don't care' about the initiatives. This indicates a politicised and engaged response. Building upon this question, the survey also examined the respondents level of interest in finding out more about current and new initiatives about the peace walls. Table 11 includes the responses from both the general population and peace line residents.

Table 11: Would you be interested in finding out more?

	General population (Q10)			Peace lines residents (Q10)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Yes, very interested	7	4	10	20	16	21
Yes, interested	30	26	32	43	41	44
No, not very interested	44	48	40	30	32	28
No, not interested at all	20	22	19	8	11	7

3.6 Envisioning Change: what should happen to the peace walls?

If such an exercise were to take place, what might people, in general, say about the future of peace walls? Recently there have been a series of developments, which have taken place at the peace walls in Northumberland Street in West Belfast (DOJ, 2011) and Alexandra Park in North Belfast (DOJ, 2011a), which have transformed the peace walls. In both of these developments, the opening of gates at specific times of the day facilitated access and this information was widely disseminated through the media to alert the public to the progress that had been made at some sensitive interfaces. Interfaces have not always been 'opened' in such a transparent and obvious way. Indeed, planners and policy makers have historically used offices, car parks, and shopping centres as buffer zones and sanitised space between residential areas (Mitchell and Kelly, 2011). In light of these developments, the survey asked a series of questions to try to understand respondents' attitudes to any possible changes to the peace walls in their own communities. Initially, peace wall respondents were asked about who they thought would like to see the peace walls removed or kept in their area (Table 12).

Table 12: Who do you think would like to see the peace line in your area removed and who do you think wants it kept as is?

	Peace Line Residents (Q14) Want it removed			Peace lines residents (Q14) Want it kept		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
You personally	38	26	43	37	46	32
Most local people from this community	20	11	25	54	64	49
Most local people from the neighbouring community	18	17	19	53	56	51
Belfast City Council	35	39	33	24	18	27
The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	34	39	31	18	15	19
The Department of Justice	28	31	26	22	20	24
The PSNI	13	12	13	53	51	54

The results revealed that in terms of wanting the peace walls removed, respondents reported that they themselves wanted this more than any other group. However Catholic respondents (43%) were much more likely to say this than were Protestant respondents (26%). In relation to those whom respondents thought would want the peace lines kept, the most frequent response was 'most people from this community' (54%) which was dominated by those from the Protestant community (64%) compared to those from the Catholic (49%) community. This implies that respondents see themselves as more socially liberal than their neighbours and indicates something of a perception gap between how residents perceive themselves and their neighbours.

The survey then moved on to consider in more detail perceptions of whether peace walls should be removed or remain as they are. A previous study (Vargo, 2008) noted that 60% of respondents that resided close to and/or on peace lines wanted to see the removal of peace lines when the time was right. Table 13 asked a similar question to see if attitudes had changed since 2008.

Table 13: Which one of these statements comes closest to your own view about the Peace Line in this area being removed ?

	General population (Q12)			Peace lines residents (Q15)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
I would like things left the way they are now	3	4	2	22	26	21
I would like the Peace Line to come down now	27	21	33	14	11	16
I would like the Peace Line to come down some time in the future	49	53	45	44	40	45
I would like to keep the Peace Line but have it opened up for some accessibility	10	9	9	9	11	8
I would like to keep the Peace Line but change how it looks to make it more appealing	2	3	2	8	9	7
Don't know	10	11	10	3	3	2

The results show that the largest response from both the general public (76%) and peace line residents (58%) is a view that the peace walls will come down at some stage either now or in the future. When disaggregated to compare with the Vargo 2008 question, the number of those in peace wall areas who would like to see the wall come down at some point in the future dropped from 60% (Vargo, 2008) to 44%. It will be important for policy makers to consider why the evidence suggests that fewer people would like to see the wall come down now or at some point in the future than was the case four years ago. It is also important to note that over a fifth (22%) of peace line residents state that they would like things left the way they are now.

While the previous table considers the view of what respondents want to happen in relation to peace walls, it is also important to consider what they think might happen in the future, irrespective of their own preferences (Table 14).

Table 14: Can you envisage a time when we will have no Peace Lines in Northern Ireland (this city)?

	General population (Q15)			Peace lines residents (Q22)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Yes	60	53	64	38	23	45
No	24	31	17	45	56	41
Don't know	17	16	19	18	22	14

According to the results, 60% of the general population believed that there would be no peace walls at some point in the future. This differed significantly from those living closest to the peace walls where only 38% believed that there would be no peace walls in the future. Further analysis of the localised sample revealed greater Catholic optimism in relation to this question where 45% believed that they would not exist in the future in comparison to 23% of those from a Protestant background.

Perhaps the decline in overall support for removing the peace walls, and a less than optimistic vision of the future is conditioned by assumptions made around what would actually happen under such circumstances. The next question aimed to examine the respondents views on what they thought would happen within their communities if the peace walls were removed (Table 15).

Table 15: If the Peace line(s) was (ere) removed, which one of these would be most likely to happen?

	General population (Q13)			Peace lines residents (Q16)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Nothing, everything would stay the same as at present	5	4	8	5	4	6
Minor incidents	26	23	30	18	15	21
Some significant incidents	8	9	7	12	9	13
Some significant incidents but only during particular dates/anniversaries or marches	43	45	41	37	35	37
Constant problems	8	11	5	23	31	20
Don't know	10	9	9	5	7	4

The largest proportion of survey respondents, from both the general population (43%) and peace wall residents (37%), thought that there would be some significant incidents but only during particular dates/anniversaries or marches. Just under one quarter (23%) of peace wall residents believed that the removal of the walls would lead to 'constant problems'. Overall more than 70% of peace wall residents have acknowledged that there would be issues of significance occurring should the wall be removed. The findings suggest that any discussions around the removal of peace walls cannot be had in isolation but rather should be considered in the context of how communities celebrate and commemorate their past. The findings also have implications for the management and policing of such events. This is because respondents seem to believe that there is a direct correlation between the removal of walls, the celebration of culture and the potential for violence. Following on from this, respondents were asked to indicate how confident or worried they would be about the ability of the police to preserve peace and maintain order if the peace walls were removed (Table 16). Throughout the conflict, the police have been the most visible presence at interfaces during episodes of sectarian violence and have been responsible for maintaining public order. Therefore, how the public perceives policing in general, within their community, may influence their responses to this question. Previous research has shown that in urban working class loyalist and republican communities,

Table 16: If the Peace line(s) was(ere) removed, how confident or worried would you be about the ability of the police to preserve peace and maintain order?

	General population (Q14)			Peace lines residents (Q17)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Very confident	6	6	6	4	7	3
Fairly confident	36	34	40	20	18	21
Neither confident nor worried	17	17	17	14	14	14
Fairly worried	24	26	23	29	27	30
Very worried	7	10	4	29	31	28
Don't know	9	8	11	5	4	5

attitudes towards the police and their ability to deal with order in their respective communities have been mixed (Byrne and Monaghan, 2008).

The results indicate that 42% of the general population believe that the police will be able to maintain law and order in the event of peace walls being removed. However, this drops to only 24% for residents living beside peace walls. Furthermore, while 31% of the general public would be worried about the police’s ability to maintain order, this rises to 58% for peace wall residents. In short, the general population have more confidence in the abilities of the police than those living in peace wall areas.

A further question probed concerns about safety and security, in the context of the police’s ability to preserve peace and maintain order and asked whether respondents would stay or leave their area of residence should the peace walls be taken down (Table 17).

Table 17: If the Peace Line was removed would you try to move house?

	Peace lines residents (Q18)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Yes	17	22	15
No	62	58	65
Don't know	21	21	20

A majority 62% say they would not try to move but the results indicate that 17% of peace wall residents (22% Protestant and 15% Catholic) would try to move house if the peace wall was removed. Interestingly, when a similar question was asked in the Vargo (2008) survey, that figure was 10%. While a direct comparison cannot be made between the results because of the difference in methodological approach and the specific areas surveyed, the fact that almost one in five families would try to leave their area could have implications for a broad range of statutory bodies including the Housing Executive and the PSNI.

3.7 Imagining the Future: what would happen if...?

Although the issues around peace walls are very sensitive, the survey tried to explore attitudes towards the ‘what if’ type questions. While respondents have acknowledged the importance of community safety and security, the hypothetical questions were raised to ascertain what other factors would be important if a long-term decision was to be taken to remove the peace lines within their area (Table 18).

Table 18: Suppose a long-term decision was taken to remove the Peace Line in this area, what are the most important things that would need to be done now in preparation for that to happen?

	Peace lines residents (Q19)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
CCTV cameras to be installed in the area	56	65	52
New leisure centres	17	9	21
More youth programmes	43	39	44
More policing	46	57	42
Local politicians working together across the political divide	34	32	35
New housing where it is needed	26	27	26
Local community leaders working together across the political divide	41	32	45
Physical improvement in the area	20	21	19
Investment and jobs	39	39	40
Opportunities for the two communities to come together	38	30	40
Something else (please say what)	2	2	1
I don't think the Peace Line should come down no matter what preparations are made now	15	22	12

The most popular response from peace wall respondents was for ‘CCTV cameras to be installed in the area’ (56%), and ‘more policing’ (46%). However, a closer examination found distinctions between Catholic and Protestant respondents in relation to each of these choices. With regards to more policing, Protestants (57%) were more supportive than Catholics (42%), and in relation to CCTV, Protestants (65%) again considered it more important than Catholics (52%). Further analysis revealed distinctive differences in attitudes towards engagement, evidenced by the attitude that Catholics seemed more willing to suggest ‘Local community leaders working together across the physical divide’ (45%) compared to 32% of Protestants. It was also noted that opportunities for the two communities to come together were more valued by the Catholic community (40%) compared to the Protestant community (30%).

The results suggest that the issue of addressing peace walls has been framed as one of security for Protestants and one of engagement for Catholics. This runs the risk of becoming something of a zero sum game. Increasing security, de facto, limits opportunities for engagement. Limited opportunities for engagement lead to a perpetuation of suspicion and fear of ‘the other’ or ‘the unknown’. Therefore, any policy overtures towards dealing with both communities concerns and preferences may lead to, at best, the continued status quo or, at worst, continued polarisation.

Would the continued ‘status quo’ be that bad? Respondents were asked to think about the future impact of this status quo on their community.

Table 19: Suppose things just stay the same as they are today with the Peace Line, in ten years time what effect if any do you think this will have had on .. (things will be worse)

	Peace lines residents (Q20)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Jobs in this area?	19	20	17
Relations between the two communities?	16	12	18
Business investment in this area?	25	23	26
Community safety?	12	11	13
Government investment in this area?	21	19	23
Tourism to this area?	16	11	19
Access to services like health education and leisure?	15	9	19
The image of Northern Ireland abroad?	26	17	30
People’s health?	15	13	16

The majority of peace wall residents thought that there would be ‘no effect, things will be just the same’ for all of the items lists above ranging between 51% and 67%. However just looking at those who thought ‘things would be worse’ (Table 19) revealed some interesting findings. Over a quarter of respondents (26%) felt that the image of Northern Ireland abroad would be adversely affected, with Catholics more inclined to see this negative image as a problem (30%) compared to Protestants (17%). One quarter (25%) thought that business in the areas would suffer and one fifth (20%) felt that government investment in the area would decrease. Catholic respondents (19%) were also more likely to think than Protestant respondents (9%) that services such as health, education and leisure would be adversely affected should the current status quo remain.

Forecasting what might happen in the future is always difficult, however, the fact that most respondents believed that things would generally stay the same gives a degree of concern because there then exists no drive or catalyst for change. The irony is that this finding contradicts, to a certain degree, earlier responses, which indicated that respondents wanted to learn more about potential initiatives and activities around the future of peace walls.

3.8 Is This Important or Is It Not?

The concluding questions of the survey looked at both the general population and peace wall residents' views on the overall importance of this issue (Table 20).

Table 20: Do you think that what happens to the Peace Lines is only important to those living closest to them or is it important for everyone in our society?

	General population (Q16)			Peace lines residents (Q23)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Those living closest to them	46	46	47	54	60	52
Everyone in society	51	52	49	44	37	47
Don't know	3	2	5	2	4	1

While there have been many public consultations and initiatives that have asked the general public for their views in relation to specific issues during the conflict and peace process, none have directly related to the physical architecture and structures that have remained post conflict. This survey shows that more than half of the general population (51%) and just under half of local residents (44%) believe that what happens to the peace walls is important for everyone in our society. This suggests the need for greater engagement with the broader public on the here and now, and what might happen in the future, as opposed to a localised, bespoke, area specific policy response to the walls. This has implications for MLAs and elected representatives across Northern Ireland if their constituents believe that the issue of walls is one of wide importance.

Finally, the concluding table (Table 21) highlights the general population's views on the overall relevance and importance of peace lines.

Table 21: How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about Peace lines? (Strongly agree/agree)

	General population (Q17)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Peace Lines only impact on those who live closest to them	63	65	62
Segregation of communities is common in Northern Ireland even where there aren't any Peace Lines	78	77	76
The views of the wider public will be important in deciding what happens about Peace Lines	54	50	59
The future of Peace Lines should be a big priority for the government in Northern Ireland	64	58	73

The majority of respondents (78%) believe that the segregation of communities is common in Northern Ireland even where there aren't any peace walls. Furthermore, 64% of respondents indicated that the future of peace lines should be a big priority for the government in Northern Ireland.

The most important finding may be that the general population still see segregation as common regardless of the presence of peace walls. While the most dominant discussions of segregation, in public policy terms, relate to areas divided by physical barriers and walls in working class communities, there have been some recent references to the extent of segregation across all social classes (Devenport, 2012a). The framing of peace walls as issue of segregation is only one way of looking at the issue. There are others. These will be considered in the concluding remarks.

4. Key Findings

Until now, there has been a minimal amount of quantitative research, which has looked at public awareness and attitudes towards peace walls in Northern Ireland. Aside from the US-Ireland Alliance commissioned survey of six interface communities in 2008 (Vargo, 2008), there existed an absence in knowledge, data and information around this issue. Therefore, to address this knowledge gap and to help inform policy we undertook these surveys to determine the public's awareness of and attitudes towards peace walls with a view to contributing to any future policy making process on this issue.

The following section draws together the key findings of the surveys under three distinct headings: the views and attitudes of the general population; the views and attitudes of those residents living near peace walls; and view and attitudes broken down by religion of those living near peace walls.

General population

82% believe peace walls are ugly

78% believe that segregation of communities is common even where there are no peace walls

76% would like to see peace walls come down now or in the near future

64% believe that peace walls should be a big priority for the Northern Ireland Government

60% can envisage a time when there are no peace walls

38% believe that peace walls are necessary because of the potential for violence

38% believe that peace walls are a tourist attraction

Most striking is the view that more than three quarters of the general population (78%) in Northern Ireland believes that segregation is common in the absence of peace walls. In a sense, this suggests that respondents see segregation and division as something much bigger than simply the physicality of the walls and the problems that the walls themselves continue to perpetuate. For the general public then, focusing on the problem of peace walls might not be enough to address the broader issue of segregation in our society. Nevertheless, 64% of the general population still maintain that solving this part of a bigger problem should be a key priority for the Northern Ireland devolved government.

Peace Wall Residents

69% maintain that the peace walls are still necessary because of the potential for violence

63% would like to know more about initiatives and discussions on the peace walls

58% would like to see the peace walls come down now or sometime in the future

58% were very/fairly worried about the police ability to preserve peace and maintain order if the peace wall was removed

38% can envisage a time when there will be no peace walls

37% believe that if the peace wall was removed there would be some significant incidents but only during particular dates/anniversaries or marches; but 23% believe there will be constant problems

34% know a little and/or a lot about initiatives and discussions on the peace walls

31% believe that the community has overall responsibility for making decisions about peace walls

Generally, residents frame the issue of peace walls in relation to violence as opposed to one of segregation. Despite the progress in the political and peace processes, only 38% of residents can ever see a time without peace walls. However 58% would like to see the walls come down now or at some point in the future. This gap of 20% suggests that while residents want to see these changes made, they do not believe/expect that it will happen. This pessimism may be as a consequence of a lack of knowledge and awareness (only 34% report knowing a little or a lot) of the various initiatives currently underway

in developing a peace walls 'policy' through the Programme for Government. That said, there remains a strong desire for information on such initiatives and discussions (63%).

In short, it seems that a majority of residents would like to see the peace walls come down at some point (58%). They accept that while there may be some significant incidents, the majority (67%) do not see the potential for constant problems. However the majority remain concerned about the ability of the police to deal with issues that could arise should the walls be removed (58%). The policy agenda is not usually determined by either local politicians or the police. Because of this, the policy framework within the Programme for Government around peace walls needs to be clearer about those various stakeholders who should be included in the agenda setting and decision making part of the policy process. To reduce their roles to that of 'street level bureaucrats' tasked with the implementation of policy decisions taken at a more macro level runs the potential risks of undermining any implementation process.

Issues of Identity for Peace Wall Residents By Religion

59% of Protestants compared to 42% of Catholics think that the peace wall allows them to celebrate their culture freely

43% of Protestants compared to 20% of Catholics think the peace walls protect their sense of identity

41% of Protestants compared to 10% of Catholics believe that without the peace wall their community would disappear

Previous research (Byrne, 2011) has shown that the issue of peace walls has been framed, to some extent, in terms of a community's sense of identity and a feeling that the walls protect that identity, community and territory. These survey findings reinforce this notion, particularly for those from a Protestant background that the walls act as a protection for their community amidst the changing demographics within the cities.

Issues of Engagement for Peace Wall Residents By Religion

Catholics (45%) are more inclined than Protestants (32%) to think that community leaders need to be working across the political divide to create the necessary conditions for the removal of peace walls.

Catholics (40%) are also more likely than Protestants (30%) to think that there should be more opportunities for both communities to come together to create the necessary conditions for the removal of peace walls.

Previous research (Byrne, 2011) has shown that there is a perception and fear within the Protestant community that by engaging in discussions around the removal of peace walls, they are, de facto, endorsing a 'predetermined' agenda that the walls will actually be removed.

Issues of Security for Peace Wall Residents By Religion

Protestants (65%) are more likely than Catholics (52%) to think that more CCTV cameras are a necessary condition for the removal of peace walls.

Protestants (57%) are also more inclined than Catholics (42%) to think that more policing will be necessary to facilitate the removal of peace walls.

Previous research (Byrne, 2011) has shown that safety remains an underlying concern for both communities. That said, Protestants have continually placed a greater emphasis on security, which can, in part, be explained by the primacy of their expressed need to protect their territory as an extension of the protection of their identity.

5. Concluding Remarks

The survey results presented here are mixed. Some of the findings, at an initial glance, seem generally positive about the future in relation to peace walls. Others less so. While a proportion believe that things will get better in the coming years, there remains a sizeable degree of pessimism about what the future physical landscape might look like. Questions around levels of optimism, pessimism and/or ambivalence need to be considered in relation to further discussions of how Northern Ireland might 'be' in 10 years time. Predicting Northern Ireland has always been difficult. Such predictions have always been set in the context of different anniversaries or commemorative periods. For example, there were many predictions about where Northern Ireland would 'be' in 2016 (100 years after the Easter Rising) and in 2021 (100 years after the creation of the state). 2019 will be the 50th anniversary of the construction of the first, and arguably still the most prominent, peace wall in Northern Ireland - Cupar Way - which divides the Falls and the Shankill in West Belfast. The Army major, overseeing the construction of the wall said at the time: "This is a temporary measure, we do not want another Berlin Wall situation in western Europe.... It will be gone by Christmas". The seeming acceptance and the 'normality of the abnormality' of an almost 50 year old 'temporary' structure means that policy makers have a considerable undertaking in actioning the key priorities around peace walls in the current Programme for Government.

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Attitudes to Peace Walls