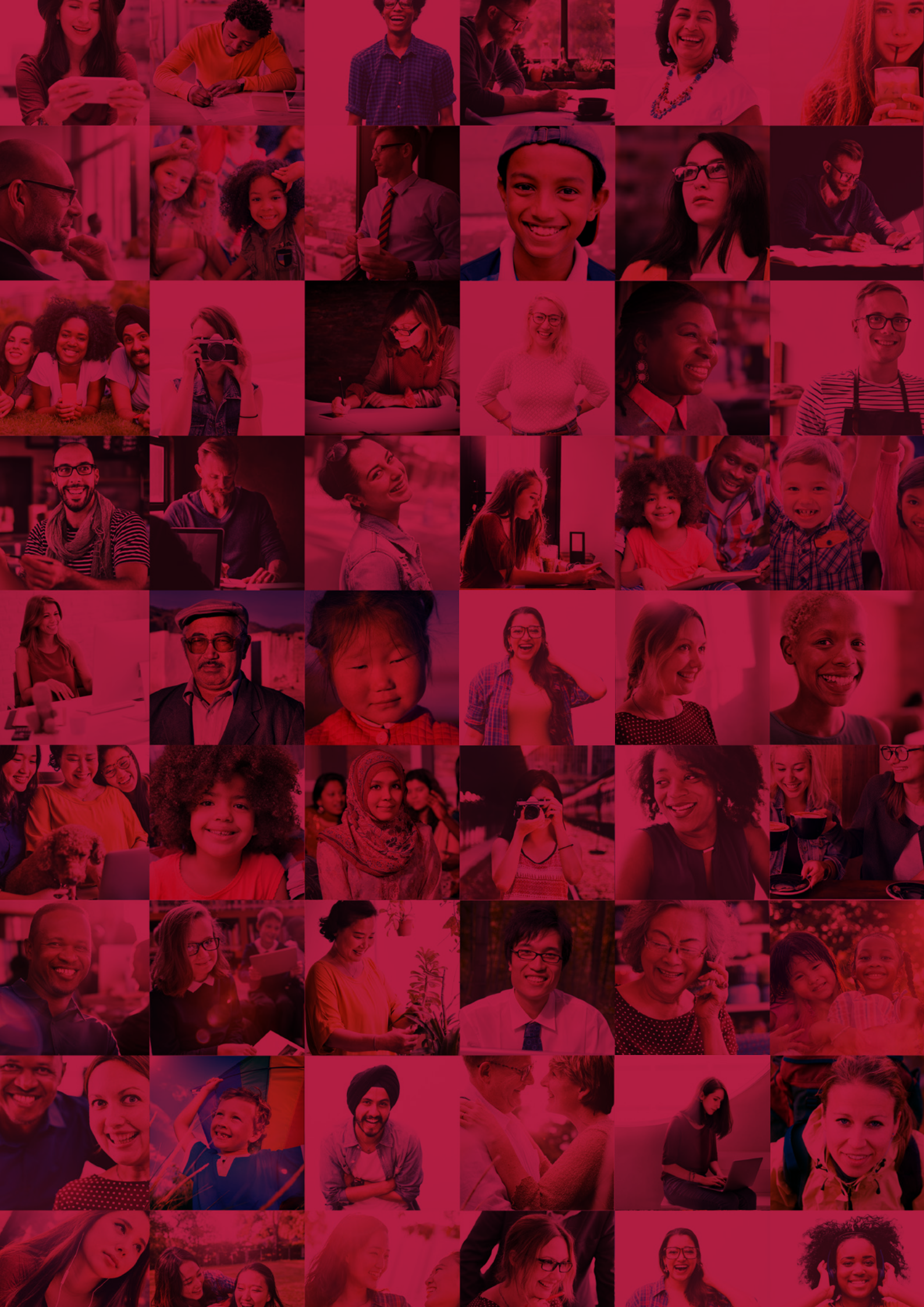




# New Communities Tenant Survey 2015







# Introduction

Circle VHA undertook a survey of our new community's tenants in 2015 for a variety of reasons. We were aware that some 21% of our tenant population comprised families and individuals who were born outside of Ireland. This group of non-Irish born tenants came from over 35 different countries across the world. Some came here as refugees, some on work visas and some were EU citizens Ireland has experienced a phenomenal in-migration of non-Irish nationals in the past 20 years. In 2011 there were 544,357 non-Irish born residents living here which was 12% of our total population. The 2016 Census returns are not currently available. In 2008 the Government published a policy - Migration Nation Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management with some key principles of State policy with regard to integration<sup>(1)</sup>.

Some of the key principles were:

- ▶ A partnership approach between Government and Non-Government organisations as well as civil society bodies to deepen and enhance the opportunities for integration.
- ▶ A strong link between integration policy and wider state social inclusion measures, strategies and initiatives.
- ▶ A clear public policy focus that avoids the creation of parallel societies, communities, and urban ghettos i.e. a mainstream approach to service delivery to migrants.
- ▶ A commitment to effective local delivery mechanisms that align services to migrants with those for indigenous communities.
- ▶ The new integration policy focuses on the role of local authorities, sporting bodies, faith based groups and political parties in building integrated communities and the plans to target funding in these areas.

The provision of social housing to eligible new communities' households is a key intervention by the State to deliver some of the policies of integration as per the 2008 policy statement. Circle VHA as an AHB is enabling the above policy principles. We were aware that in some schemes tenants had experienced racial harassment. Our perception was that its occurrence was under reported. Thus we commissioned Ms Mary Quinlan of Taemúr Consulting to undertake the survey analysis. The surveys purpose was to establish how integrated the new communities tenants felt they were and whether they had experienced racial harassment within the scheme and neighbourhood in which they lived.

The undertaking of this report was a first step by Circle VHA in gaining some evaluation of how integrated our new community tenants are across our different schemes. The scale of self-assessed integration at 56% is a foundation alongside 76% stating that they feel safe in their homes. Some 16% of the respondents stated that they have experienced racism in the scheme where they live which is unacceptable. This finding confirms our original perception that such incidents are not always reported to us. There are varied experiences across schemes and between different ethnic groups within schemes. Circle VHA needs to reflect more on how we can be more responsive to the survey findings. Such responses will include internal training to be more intercultural aware. We need to review our policies and practices in relation to community building, interagency working and encourage the reporting of incidents of racism. We need to further enhance the rich cultural diversity that we have within our schemes and find new ways to embrace this diversity.

There is also a shared requirement for all social housing providers to understand more how Ireland's new communities social housing tenants are being housed and integrated within social housing provision. This survey is attempting to enhance this understanding. The findings indicate some of the difficulties that new communities tenants experience in being integrated in society and in the delivery of the key principles and policy objectives of the 2008 Migrant Nation Statement.

Justin O'Brien, Chief Executive, Circle Voluntary Housing Association

<sup>(1)</sup> Migration Nation - statement on integration strategy and diversity management. Office of the Minister for Integration May 2008



Summary Findings of Circle Voluntary Housing Association  
New Communities Survey 2015  
by Mary Quinlan Taemúr Consulting

The purpose of this survey was to establish how integrated the new communities tenants felt they were in their Circle VHA housing scheme and in their local neighbourhood and whether they had experienced racial harassment. The questionnaire had six different sections that were thematically defined. The first section was a self- rating of English language skill. We viewed this as being critically important skill for enabling the integration of new community tenants in our society. The second section related to the social demographic profile of the new community tenants. The third section sought information about what it is like living in a Circle VHA scheme and in the local neighbourhood. The fourth section sought information on the social networks and social life of the tenant. The fifth section related to their access to local services, transport and shops. The final section was seeking information and ideas from tenants about how they might become more integrated.

Response Rates

Totals:

The survey was sent to 204 tenants identified by Circle VHA as being from the New Communities group of tenants; this is 21% of the total 956 Circle VHA tenants. There were **93 respondents** which is a satisfactory **46% response rate**.

Scheme Locations:

Respondents were asked to write their Scheme location at the top of the survey and 45<sup>(1)</sup> of the 93 did so, an **overall response rate of 48%**.

The locations listed were Tallaght (7), Thornton Heights and Beacon South Quarter (6 each), Ashtown (5), SDSL (Clondalkin) (4). Holywell, Swords (3), Beechpark Leixlip, Heuston South Quarter, Landsdowne Gate, Stocking Well Wood and The Rectory (2 each) and 1 respondent each from Balbriggan, Thomas Davis Street, Sean Tracey, South Dublin Social Leasing and RAS. (Full analysis - Table 1, Chapter 3).

<sup>1</sup> Many just gave their location in Dublin and not their specific Circle VHA scheme

Section 1: English language skills

Some 86% respondents rated speaking English as either very good or good with 14% rating it as either fair or poor. 80% of respondents rated their ability to read and write English as very good or good with 20% indicating it was either fair or poor.



The researcher's evaluation of the writing ability of respondents was that it was less than the evaluation provided by the tenants.

Section 2: Social Demographic Profile

Gender



The survey was completed by 66% females and 31% males with 2% indicating male/female e.g. couple and no response from 1%.

Age Range

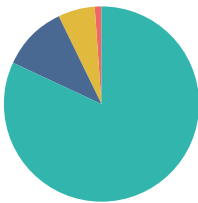
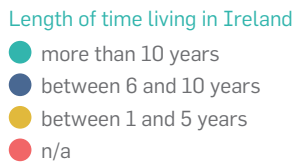
The majority of respondents, 47%, were in the 36-45 age category with 31% in the 46-55 age category. Only 14% were younger and 5% older. 2% did not answer.

Why the tenant came to Ireland

34% respondents came to Ireland to claim refugee status with 37% coming here to work and a further 11% coming to study. A further 10% came to join a spouse with 6% ticking the box 'other' and 2% did not answer.

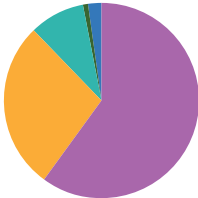
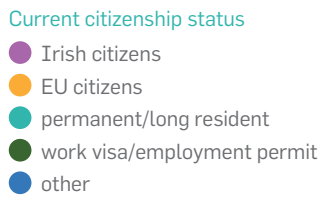
Length of time living in Ireland

The majority (82%) are in Ireland more than 10 years with 11% respondents here between 6 and 10 years. Only 6% are here between 1 and 5 years and 1% did not answer. It is of note that the vast majority of the tenants have living in Ireland for more than 10 years. This clearly signifies that Ireland is their new home. It also confirms their eligibility for social housing as per their period of residence in Ireland.



Current Citizenship Status

Irish Citizens 60% and EU Citizens 28% make up the vast majority of the respondents with 9% respondents ticking the permanent/long resident box with only 1% on a work visa/ employment permit and 2% ticked 'other'.



Marital Status

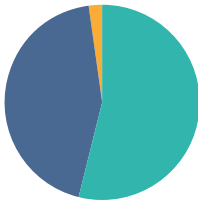
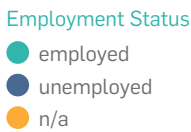
42% of the respondents are married and 3% live with their spouse. Single parents account for 29% of the respondents with 23% single and 3% ticking the 'other' box.

Number of Children, if any

84% respondents have 168 children between them. 36% have 1 child each; another 39% respondents have 2 children; 10% have 3 children; 8% have 4 children; 4% have 5 children, and 3% each have 6 and 7 children.

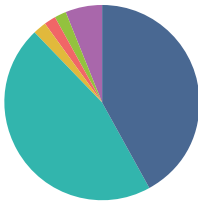
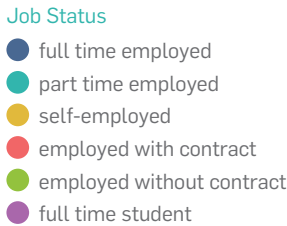
Employment Status

54% respondents are currently in employment with 44% unemployed and 2% did not answer. This is a higher rate of employment than that in the overall tenant survey which has a 41% employment rate.



Job Status

Of the 50 employed; 42% are full-time and 46% are part-time and 2% is self-employed. 2% is employed with a contract and 2% without a contract – it is unclear if these respondents are full-time or part-time. 6% are full-time students. The job types range from carers, catering, bus drivers, cleaners and other varied work types.



Unemployment Status

31 respondents answered this question. 77% indicated they were unemployed and looking for work; 13% are dependent spouses; 7% are on disability allowance and 3% carers to a spouse.

### Section 3: Information about living in your neighbourhood and Circle VHA property

#### Feeling safe and secure in the neighbourhood you live

76% feel safe and secure living in their neighbourhood and these are Ashtown 4/4, Balbriggan 1/1, Beacon South Quarter 6/6, Beech Park, Leixlip and the Rectory Stepside 2/2, Thomas Davis Street, RAS, Sean Tracey House, South Dublin Social Leasing 1/ each; Tallaght 3/7, Thornton Heights 3/6 and Holywell Swords 2/3.

17% of the respondents indicated sometimes with 7% saying they were not safe and secure. The level of feeling safe at 76% is below that in the general Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2015 finding of 84%. There was a higher level of sometimes or not feeling safe of 23% which is a worrying finding. The evidence is that these findings are greatest in socially disadvantaged areas where we have some of our social housing schemes.

Some of the tenant's comments about feeling **secure** in their neighbourhood were as follows:

“Feeling comfortable and I am good in my neighbourhood”

“Very good neighbours”

“Totally safe”

The tenants who felt **unsafe** their comments were:

“There is lots of ASB, bonfires and vandalism”

“Sometimes I feel unsafe, some people from the local area are intimidating”

“We feel uncomfortable as there is too much racism going on towards us”

#### Feeling welcome in the neighbourhood you live

70 (75%) respondents feel welcome in their neighbourhood while another 17 (18%) ticked the “sometimes” box. 5 (6%) said no while 1 respondent commented “neither”.

Some of the comments were:

“I get on well with people and have made two friends already” “Neighbours are very caring”

For the tenants who felt unwelcome their comments were:

“There has been some racial abuse from local children”

“Everybody keeps to themselves they don’t even say hello”

“People have shouted at me and thrown eggs at my property”

#### Things you like about your neighbourhood

There are over 80 responses to this question and the vast majority stated their good neighbours and liking their area. A few said “everything” and 4 said their home. Some of the comments were

“Very welcoming”

“Helpful and caring neighbours”

“Very clean and perfect finish”

“Safe, peaceful, well connected”

#### Things you dislike about your neighbourhood

There were 67 responses to this question and the majority give Anti-Social Behaviour as their main reason why they don't like the neighbourhood, the second biggest complaint was lack of children's facilities, 2 complained of racism and many of the others are very specific to their location. About 8 said there was nothing they didn't like. Some of the comments were

“Antisocial behaviour, bad stuff”

“No play area for children”

“Noisy people at night time”

“Neighbours you cannot solve a problem with”

#### Things you would like to change in your neighbourhood. (A list of 6 areas was given)

32 would like a cleaner environment; 29 indicated a safer neighbourhood; 25 would like better local facilities; 24 better community policing while 14 indicated better street lighting. The views expressed here are very similar to views expressed by tenants in our overall Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2015.

#### Do you know people from own ethnic background/people they you know living in the area

49% respondents know people from their own ethnic group who live in their area; while 41% answered “no” and 10% did not know.

#### In touch with local migrants' community groups/networks

16% respondents are in touch with local migrant's community groups while 79% indicated they were not in touch, and 3 said they were unsure. The findings here are surprisingly low. This may reflect the dispersed nature of the housing of our new communities' tenants of varied nationalities across our different schemes. There is no large scale provision of housing in a defined area to a particular new communities ethnic group..

#### Feeling integrated in your local community

56% respondents felt integrated into their local community while 38% did not and 2% said they didn't know 4% did not know. Of the 52 who answered yes to feeling integrated 84% are here for 10 years plus, 8% are here between 6 to 10 years. The level of integration in their local community is broadly similar to the rate of 54% finding in the Tenant Satisfaction Survey Findings 2015.

#### A help to integration

There are 36 comments in answer to the question as to “What might help you integrate into your local community?” Various possibilities are given such as: organising events or gatherings; making friends with neighbours; more time; better English; common interests including children; many are happy as they are; some have no ideas, and other comments are very specific and difficult to summarise. The majority call was for more gatherings with an intercultural element. Some 26 respondents made no suggestions.

#### Suggestions as to how Circle VHA might help integration.

There are 20 comments in relation to what Circle VHA might do to help tenants integrate more. These include organising intercultural events or gatherings; education about differences; anti-racism policy; house more from New Communities, have support workers, better communication; setting up groups and other once off suggestions.

Experience of racism/hostility by you/your children in your current Circle VHA scheme

**Self:** 16% indicated they had experienced racism from people in their Circle VHA housing scheme while 72% indicated they had not. 12% did not answer.

**Children:** a slightly higher figure percentage wise of 18% said their children had experienced racism from people in their Circle VHA housing scheme, while 69% indicated “no”; 13% respondents did not answer this question. The findings here are worrying.

Experience of racism/hostility by you/your children in local community

**Self:** 20% of respondents indicated they had experienced racism from people in their local community while 71% indicated they had not with 9% giving no answer.

**Children:** Again there is a slightly higher figure for children at 22% who indicated their children had experienced racism from their local community with 62% indicating no and 15% did not answer. One respondent did not know.

Were incidences reported to Circle VHA

15 respondents reported the (racism) incidents to Circle VHA; 15 indicated they did not and 63 gave no answer. Out of the 15 who reported to Circle VHA 13 made comments: 3 said it was very good or helpful; others wrote Circle VHA was trying to fix it/working on it and will talk to them. One said they were helpful but it is not working well; 3 said Circle VHA would look at it; one installed their own CCTV outside their apartment. The findings here confirmed our perception that tenants do not always report racist incidents to us.

Section 4: Information about social networks and social life

Socialising in local community (a list of 11 examples was given)

There was no ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ box for this answer. Therefore, all those who ticked any one or more of the ‘local’ listed boxes is deemed to socialise in their local community and this accounted for 70% of respondents.

The numbers of respondents who ticked the boxes are, in descending order, as follows: local library 35; local cinema 32; local church 30; local restaurants 28; local sports 20; local pub 11; local theatre 4. One respondent ticked ‘other’ but did not specify

27 respondents ticked one of the following: socialising at home; socialising outside of the area; or socialise at work. 20 socialise through work; 38 at home; and 35 outside their area. 12 respondents ticked the ‘other’ box 4.

With whom do you/your children socialise?

**Self:** 69 respondents ticked the ‘mixture of both’ box; with 6 ticking own ethnic community and another 6 writing Irish/mixture; 3 said “other” and 5 did not answer.

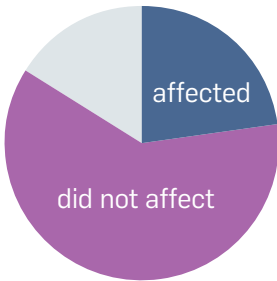
**Children:** 62 ticked the ‘mixture of both’ box; 7 ticked Irish only box; 3 said Irish and other countries; 2 with ‘other’; and 19 did not answer. The box for ‘own ethnic community’ was not ticked.



**Ease of socialising with Circle VHA neighbours**  
71% indicated it was easy to socialise with their Circle VHA neighbours; while a further 22% indicated it was not easy.



**Ease of socialising with people in local community**  
A slightly lower number of respondents (65%) indicated they find it easy to socialise with neighbours in their local community, while a further 20% indicated it was not easy; 15% respondents did not answer this question.



**English language affecting ability to socialise**  
A total of 23% respondents indicated their English language skills affected their ability to socialise with 61% indicating it did not and 16% did not answer this question.

Section 5: Information about your access to local services, transport and shops

What were your access to all local services (a list of 9 examples were given)

95% respondents accessed either one or more of their local services, transport and shops; while 5 respondents did not answer the question. There is a high rate of access by the respondents with shops, schools, health services and transport services accessed by 62, 61, 59 and 58 respondents respectively. Education/training for self was accessed by 45 respondents, sports facilities by 37; information services by 30 and local community groups by 21 respondents. Childcare services are accessed by 13 respondents. These findings would indicate that the new communities’ tenants avail of a range of community based services in their local area.

Comments on good/bad experiences

Respondents were asked to comment on either good or bad experiences in accessing the services and the vast majority indicated that services were either ok, good, very good or excellent. There were about 3 or 4 who indicated they were poor.

Reasons why services not accessed

Respondents were asked to comment on the reasons why they did not access services or any problems they had. Two respondents commented on lack of recreational facilities for children; some have no time as they work a lot and don’t engage; one complained about the cost of childcare and one said they had nothing to do with the services.



### What has helped most in becoming integrated?

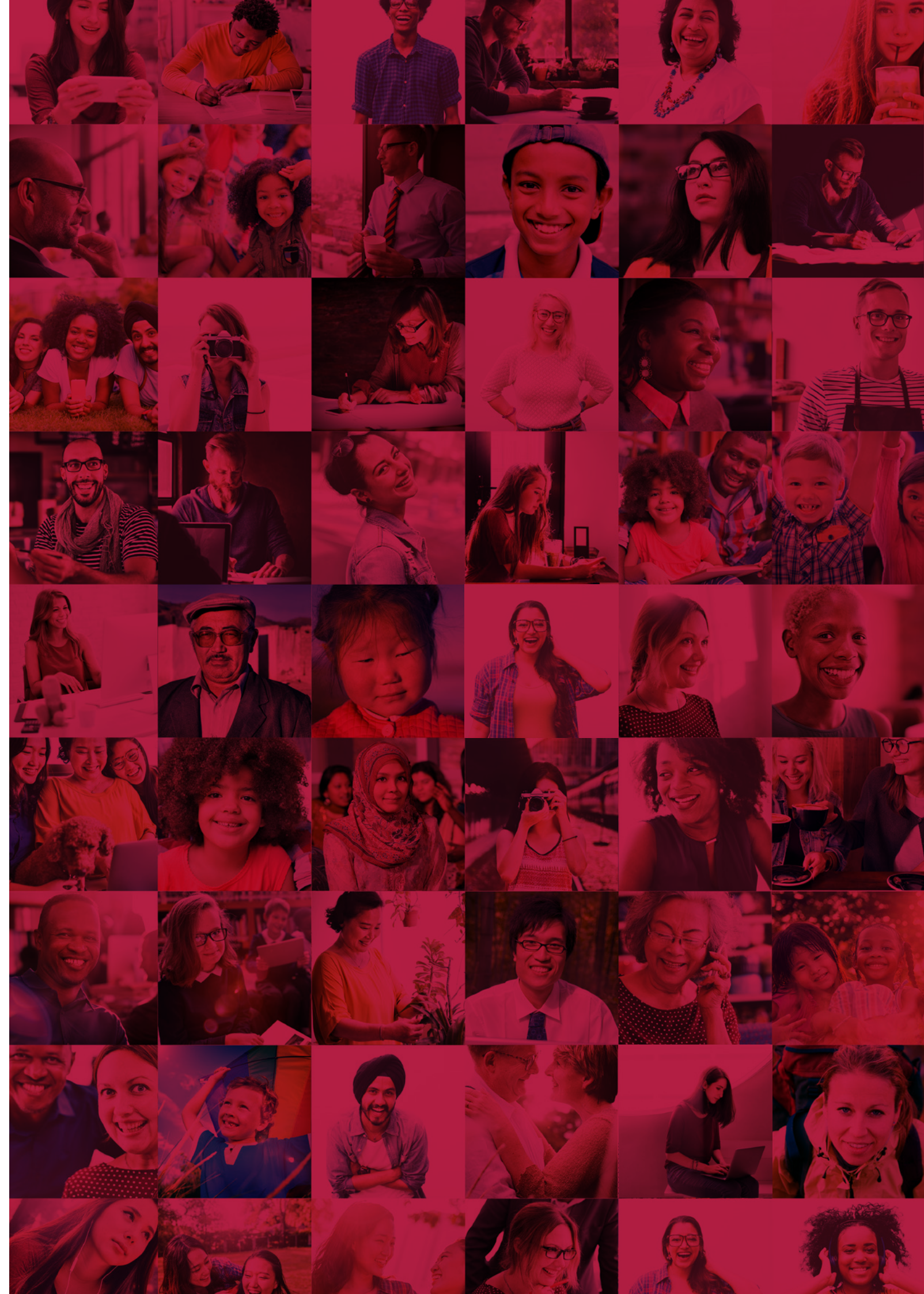
There were over 66 comments to this question and a succinct summary follows: finding things easy; welcome from neighbours; own ethnic group; the local services; work; Circle VHA staff; the schools and children making friends; summer and cultural events; their home and good neighbourhood; ability to speak English; themselves and their own attitude; by talking to people and making friends; and being proactive.

### What has prevented you from becoming integrated?

Approximately 14 respondents explained that nothing has really prevented them from integrating. A few cite their neighbours as not being friendly, others their lack of good English, some have antisocial behaviour problems and a few cite racism and cultural behaviour.

## Conclusion

This survey was a very positive action taken by Circle VHA to ascertain information and feedback from their new community tenants. In general, these tenants are relatively happy in their new homes and feel relatively integrated. The majority of the surveyed tenants aspired to having cleaner and safer areas and communities in which to live which is common for all Circle VHA tenants. The finding that 16% of those surveyed had experienced racism is very worrying. It is good to acknowledge that our society is now multi-cultural and these cultural differences challenge us to do things differently if we are to create positive outcomes for all. There is a potential for increased racism in our society and Circle VHA can take further steps to prevent realisation of the potential. There is a challenge for Circle VHA to enable intercultural events in its schemes to make stronger the connection and sense of community between all its tenants.



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