

VICTIMS' AND SURVIVORS' FORUM MEMBERS VIEWS

A SURVEY

As the Interim Chair of the Consultative Forum for Victims and Survivors, I have been asked to appear before the Committee for the Executive Office on 17th September 2025 where I expect to be asked to summarise the views of Forum members.

There is a wide diversity of views amongst Forum members, and so, daunted by the task, I proposed that a survey of Forum members would provide me with an evidence base for doing this.

I consulted victims and survivors about their willingness to complete such a survey and with the Chair and several members of the Committee for the Executive Office about whether they would find such a survey useful. They all replied in the affirmative.

I am pleased to present this report summarising the findings of the survey to the Committee. I hope the Committee finds it useful.

Professor Marie Breen-Smyth
Interim Chair
Victims' and Survivors' Consultative Forum
Truth Recovery Programme
5th September, 2025

1. METHODOLOGY

The design of the survey is based on engagement with victims and survivors in the following ways:

- the range of questions from Forum members for a legal panel in the Europa Hotel;
- emails and individual zoom meetings with victims and survivors with Dr Danny Taggart and the Interim Chair;
- some themes arising at TEO ‘clinic’ sessions and in both face to face and online meetings.

Based on these interactions a survey was drafted and finalised. Survey Monkey was chosen as the platform to launch the online version due to the ease of use and the detail in their output files. The survey was also available in a Microsoft Word version and an option was available to complete by phone or Zoom for those Forum members who did not wish to use either method.

On 7th August 2025 the survey was issued by email to all 226 victims, survivors and people affected who have registered as Forum members. Initially, a PDF version of the questionnaire was attached, but this was replaced in later emails by a Word version into which people could edit their responses.

In all, 4 reminder emails were issued at intervals in order to maximise the response rate. The survey closed on 1st September, 54 responses were received.

Responses were anonymous if completed online, whereas the Interim Chair and a small number of TEO’s engagement team were aware of the identities of those who completed the Word version, but these identities were not recorded and their responses were entered into the Survey Monkey platform on their behalf.

2. RESPONSE RATES: HOW REPRESENTATIVE ARE THE RESULTS?

The QUB / UU research report estimated that over 10,500 women and girls passed through the researched Mother and Baby Institutions and over 3,000 women and girls in Magdalene Laundries. It is difficult to estimate how many people in today’s population may be affected including the many children, now adults affected. But the estimate which accompanies the bill is that over 6,000 people may be affected in today’s population.

Currently, there is a register of 238 people who have responded to the various calls for people affected to receive regular updates. Of those, 117 have registered as members of the Forum. Many of those affected do not wish to participate in the Inquiry process and do not wish to be identified. Therefore their views, which form an overwhelming majority of the views of people affected, are unknown.

Dynamics within the Forum have always meant that some members are more vocal, whereas others are reticent or silent in meetings. Much of the interactions take place online, so those not comfortable with those platforms or those without internet or electronic devices are not included in those interactions.

The greater the number of people who respond, the more the survey results can speak with authority about the views of the registered victims and survivors. Of the 226 people surveyed, 54 responses were received, giving a margin of error of 13.3% at the 95% confidence level.

The results of the survey provide an indication of the climate of opinion amongst registered victims and survivors, which may or may not be representative of the wider climate of opinion amongst victims, survivors and people affected. Nonetheless, given the caveats set out above, the results will hopefully make a useful contribution to the work of the Committee.

3. RESULTS

For the purposes of this report to the committee, survey questions are ranked in descending order according to the percentage of agreement or disagreement on each question. Thus, the preponderance of opinion amongst respondents becomes clear. The issues are divided into two groups:

- issues where there is a majority (>50%) and
- others where opinion is divided.

3.1 QUESTIONS ON WHICH THERE ARE MORE DEFINITIVE VIEWS

On 14 of the 20 questions, these are the views of over 50% of respondents

- 83% of respondents agree that the Bill should outline who should be eligible for payments on behalf of deceased relatives, with one comment on the need to exclude abusive relatives. (Q15: Section 31 & Schedule 3)
- 68% of respondents thought that the Bill should include those mothers and babies who underwent forced separation outside of the mother and baby institution, Magdalene Laundry or Workhouse systems, for example in the adoption or foster care system. (Q6)
- 67% of respondents were content with how the Bill provides for payment of legal expenses (Clause 21 (2)) with several saying Core Participant status was required for victims and survivors giving evidence. (Q11)
- 67% thought that the Bill should provide for additional non-financial redress measures such as family reunion, counselling and DNA testing. (Q17)
- 66% of respondents thought that there should be legal powers in the Bill or elsewhere strong enough to compel the institutions contribute financially to the cost of redress. (Q18)
- 65% of respondents thought that the Bill provided for sufficient powers for the Inquiry to compel people to give or provide evidence to them. (Q10, Clause 16)

- 65% were content with the Bill's provisions for an advisory panel of victims, survivors, and relatives for the Inquiry. (Q9, Clause 10)
- An overall 62% of respondents disagreed with the posthumous date of 29th September 2011 for which family members can claim. (Q13)
- 62% of respondents thought that Schedule 2 list of Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries for which the standardised payment would be provided should be broader (Q14)
- 62% of respondents thought it unfair to ask them to accept a lower standard payment so that a higher number of people could receive a small payment. (Q20)
- 58% of respondents thought that the eligibility criteria for entitlement to payment on behalf of deceased relatives were appropriate. (Section 31 and Schedule 3: Q16)
- 53% of respondents thought that the Bill was sufficiently guided by Human Rights principles, including the rights to truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. (Q7)
- 53% of respondents agreed that their experience was included in the Bill's framework for an independent investigation. (Clauses 1–4: Q1)
- 52% are content that Clause 2 outlines the main things the inquiry should investigate and how other things are added for investigation, but some think the focus is too much on institutions. (Q3)

3.2 QUESTIONS ON WHICH THERE ARE MIXED VIEWS

There were 6 questions of the 20 questions in the survey, on which the views of respondents were less convergent i.e. there was no majority view.

On the question of whether the Bill contains sufficient mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations:

- 47% thought the provisions were sufficient, whereas
- 45% they were not, with one respondent commenting that a Victims' Advocate was required for this purpose. (Q8)

On the size of the standardised redress payment of £10,000:

- 40% were dissatisfied with suggested amounts between £12,500 and £50,000
- 28% were satisfied with the £10,000 payment, and
- 19% said that they were not interested in money. (Q12, Clause 31)

A significant minority

- 40% of respondents thought that the Bill was inclusive of their relative's experience, whereas
- 29% thought that the experience of relatives was not included and a further
- 30% didn't know, neither disagreed or agreed or said that this did not apply to them. (Q2)

On the £80m of public funds that are set aside for the Inquiry:

- 40% of respondents said it was not enough;
- a further 34% were unsure; and
- 24% thought that £80m was enough. (Q19)

Clause 4 of the Bill defines who are the 'relevant persons' to be included in the Bill. The Bill's definition was:

- acceptable to 38% of respondents;
- 21% thought it should be broader and include other people;
- 27% argued, for example that all victims of forced adoption should be included, judges, social workers, clergy, doctors, birth mothers and children who died in care, non-residents of Northern Ireland and the whole foster care system. (Q5)

Clause 2 and 3 of the Bill sets out the institutions and the pathways and practices that are included. (Q4)

- 38% of respondents agreed with the Bill's scope;
- 4% thought it should have a narrower focus;
- 11% thought it should have a broader focus and look at entire adoption system from 1922-1995;
- 21% thought it should look at the entire adoption and care system from 1922-1995;
- 8% said they didn't know;
- 19% wrote comments the majority of which called for a broader scope.

I can provide a redacted version of the survey output which includes more detail and some additional comments by respondents which I think would be helpful for Committee members, but I would like assurances that it would be treated as confidential by the Committee, not shared more widely, not published, or utilised in the Committee Stage report. I will mark as CONFIDENTIAL and submit if this is agreeable.

3.3 SUMMARY TABLE BY PERCENTAGE RANK

QUESTION NUMBER	TEXT OF QUESTION/ OR RESPONSE TITLE	% AGREEING (A) OR DISAGREEING (D) ¹
DEFINITIVE VIEWS		
15	Agree that bill should outline the degree of relationship that qualifies a person to claim	A 83%
6	The Bill should include forced separation outside of MBI,ML,WH	A 68%
11	Clause 21(2) provisions - payment of legal expenses	A 67%
17	Addition of non-financial redress	A 67%
18	Legal powers are strong enough to ensure contributions from institutions	D 66%
10	Clause 16 - powers to compel to give or provide evidence	A 65%
9	Clause 10 - Advisory panels provisions	A 65%
13	Proposed posthumous date	D 62%
14	List of institutions for standardised payment	D 62%
20	Happy to take a lower standardised payment to increase the amount of people who would be applicable	D 62%
16	Spouse & surviving children - eligible to receive payment on behalf of a deceased relative	A 58%
7	The Bill is guided by international human rights principles	A 53%
1	My experience is part of the Inquiry	A 53%
3	Clause 2 - outlines main areas for investigation and how other areas could be added	A 52%
MIXED VIEWS		
8	The Bill has sufficient provision to monitor the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations	A 47%
12	Proposed standardised payment amount	D 40%
2	My relative's experience is part of the Inquiry	A 40%
19	Is £80m an appropriate level of funding	D 40%
5	Clause 4 includes the "relevant persons"	A 38%
4	Scope of the Inquiry - inclusion of institutions and their pathways and practices	A 38%

Marie Breen-Smyth

10th September 2025.

¹ Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number