

# THE NEED FOR SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE PANEVĖŽYS CITY – ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

*Reda Jonušauskienė, Dalia Urbonienė*  
*Panevėžys University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*

**Abstract.** The survey of the residents of the Panevėžys City Municipality aimed at evaluating the need for social services in Panevėžys has been presented in the article. The respondents have evaluated the awareness of social services and the availability of information, the need for social services as well as the factors determining the necessity and the adequacy of the services. Therefore, the respondents' views on the problems faced by the users of social services have been summarised in the article.

**The key words:** social services, provision of social services, organisation of social services.

## INTRODUCTION

Social services are some part of the social assistance system, covering the services provided by residential and non-residential social service institutions to persons or groups of persons, as well as general social services provided in the community or in the client's home. The main task of the social service system is to provide social assistance in various non-monetary forms and support with money for those people who can't take care of themselves. For a long time, social services have been the area of the social assistance that has been neglected. However, its importance is steadily growing as the ageing of the population is progressing, the number of poor families is increasing, and the number of families at social risk, their growing number of children and people with disabilities is also increasing. Various groups of people are in need for social services: lonely old people, families with social problems, children deprived of parental care, orphans, people returning from prison, or those who abuse alcohol, drugs, etc.

The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania provides that the municipality is responsible for ensuring the provision of social services to the residents of its territory by planning, organizing and controlling the quality of general social services and social care. Social services are administered by the division of the Social Needs of the city. In Panevėžys, the system of social services consists of the institutions financed from the city budget (social service institutions established by the municipality) and non-governmental organisations whose projects are partly financed from the municipal budget. Although adequate attention is paid to the provision of social services, various projects in the field of social services are being developed and implemented, the infrastructure of social services is also being developed, therefore it is very essential to analyse the need for social services in Panevėžys.

Žalimienė talked about social services and their types (2003). The concept of social services was of interest to Guogis and Gudelis (2005). The quality of social services was discussed by Kazlauskienė and Ostrauskienė (2010), the historical development of social services was also discussed by Dunayev (2011), Aidukaitė, Bogdanova and Guogis (2012). The differentiation of regional indicators in the context of demographic changes was taken into consideration by Pocius and Okunevičiūtė - Neverauskienė (2017).

## ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN PANEVĖŽYS

**Evaluation of the socio-economic and demographic situation of the Municipality:** Panevėžys - the city in the northern part of Lithuania, in the lowland of Central Lithuania, on both sides of the river Nevėžis, 136 km northwest of Vilnius. Panevėžys is one of the major cities of Lithuania (the fifth largest). The city is the centre of both: the Panevėžys County and Panevėžys District Municipality. It is in a convenient geographic location, where the most important Lithuanian motorways intersect, the international Via Baltica highway runs, and the city is crossed by the railway and the narrow railway which is used for tourism purposes. The location has grown into a fairly large industrial centre. Although Panevėžys is dominated by small and medium-sized businesses, large companies are also successful. The public limited company "Panevėžio Statybos Trestas" is one of the largest construction companies in the country, while the public limited company "Panevėžio Keliai" is one of the largest companies in the region. However, Panevėžys is a rapidly shrinking city. According to the data from the department of official statistics, the number of permanent residents in Panevėžys City tends to decrease: in 2017 – 91 054, in 2018 – 88 678, in 2019 – 87 139 and in 2020 – 85 878 inhabitants. This is due to high emigration and low birth rates. As the

population declines, there is a trend towards an ageing population. In Panevėžys, the number of children and the working age population is decreasing and the retirement age population is increasing (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Number of permanent residents in the municipality of Panevėžys by age group**

| Year | Total by age | Population from 0 to 15 years old | Residents of working age | Residents of retirement age |
|------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2017 | 91 054       | 13 471                            | 58 333                   | 19 250                      |
| 2018 | 88 678       | 13 170                            | 56 181                   | 19 327                      |
| 2019 | 87 139       | 12 873                            | 52 383                   | 21 883                      |
| 2020 | 85 878       | 12 714                            | 53 585                   | 19 579                      |

### **Factors determining the needs of social services of the population:**

**Relative poverty rate:** The relative poverty threshold is calculated as a benchmark for the average income of the population of the country, below which the lower income population is considered to be poor. Indicators of the relative poverty are referred to as poverty risk indicators. 22.9% of the country's population receive lower disposable income than the poverty risk threshold. The poverty risk threshold was €345 per resident per month in 2018 and €724 per the family consisting of two adults and two children under the age of 14. If compared to 2017, due to the increase in disposable income of the population, the risk of poverty threshold increased by 12.4 per cent (*income and living conditions of Lithuanian residents, 2019*). The overall risk of the poverty rate has not changed compared to 2017. In the city it has increased by 1.5 percent and in the countryside – decreased by 3.1 percent. According to the data provided by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, the percentage of the residents at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Panevėžys region decreased by one point: from 26.1 (per cent) to 25.3 (per cent) in 2018 compared to 2017, however, compared to 2014-2016, the number of the residents living at risk of poverty or social exclusion is increasing.

**Employment of the population:** It should be noted that at the level of social policy, considerable attention has been paid to the employment of the population during this decade, but in the average regions of the country – Šiauliai and Panevėžys counties, changes in job demand haven't been conducive to an increase in employment opportunities: changes in the demand for jobs haven't conducted to an increase in employment opportunities: there is a discrepancy (in terms of qualification) between labour supply and demand, population decline (including the working-age population), the population is ageing, new businesses are not coming to the districts, existing employers are only maintaining or even reducing existing jobs, sluggish creation of new jobs, the quality of jobs registered (salary/wages, working conditions, working time) that does not meet the expectations of job seekers and does not increase motivation to work. More vacancies and job prospects are available to skilled employees. According to the data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 38.4% of the population (16.8% of men and 21.6% of women) were employed in the labour market in Panevėžys in 2019. Compared to 2018, the employment has increased marginally (0.4%), but compared to 2016, when the employment was 44.7%, there has been a significant decrease. The indicators of the Employment Service demonstrate that despite the declining number of occupied residents, the number of the registered unemployed in Panevėžys city has also fallen from 5034 unemployed in 2015 to 3846 the registered unemployed in 2019.

There are more registrations of unskilled people in the city, as few young, qualified people having attained higher education return to the city. Employers are looking for managers, technologists, foremen, and without finding qualified specialists they do not see many opportunities for business development. According to the payment, leading to observable differences in the qualifications of labour resources, Panevėžys occupies an intermediate position between the group of large regions and the small territories of the country, where salaries/wages are the lowest. The noticeable differences in qualifications in the territories are due to regional salary/wages inequality: in larger districts and major cities of the country, the specialist has a completely different job, career and payment prospects. The main reasons for the lack of staff are the quality of jobs, insufficient motivation for jobseekers, qualifications, lack of practical skills, inadequate vocational training. For example, in Panevėžys County, only the market for highly educated professionals is better balanced, but in the county as many even half (about 50%) of unskilled unemployed people could only claim to fill about a quarter of jobs (i.e. there is a significant shortage of labour demand).

**Migration:** One possible reason for this decline may be urban emigration (both internal and international), although the numbers here are also decreasing (see Table 2).

**Migration of Panevėžys City residents**

| Year | Emigrants | Immigrants | Net migration |
|------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| 2015 | 3084      | 1770       | -1314         |
| 2016 | 3707      | 1597       | -2110         |
| 2017 | 3451      | 1476       | -1975         |
| 2018 | 3068      | 1968       | -1100         |
| 2019 | 2848      | 2004       | -844          |

Having reviewed the demographic, economic and social situation in Panevėžys, the following threats and the main problems arising therein could be identified: declining labour supply: rising social costs due to the low salary/wages growth and high unemployment rate, growth in healthcare needs and costs due to ageing population and low physical activity, health needs and expenditure growth due to ageing populations and low physical activity, insufficient attention to healthy lifestyles, non-reduction of exclusion within the city and in Lithuania, due to undeveloped and not expandable public services, worn-out infrastructure, low average gross monthly earnings and high costs which are allocated to social benefits.

## OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

**The aim of the study** – to evaluate the need for social services in the Panevėžys City Municipality determining the adequacy of the social services provided to individual groups of the population in Panevėžys city.

The objective of the investigation presupposed the two criteria of the study:

- 1) analysis of the current situation regarding the provision/receiving (availability) of social services;
- 2) prevision of the perspective for social services;

In order to analyse **the current situation** with regard to the provision and receiving of social services, i.e. in the context of the first survey criterion, it is important to identify the experience of *receiving* social services while interviewing the residents of Panevėžys city. The following indicators have been formulated for the survey of the experience of obtaining social services (survey of Panevėžys residents):

- a) awareness of the social services provided;
- b) the need for social services (factors determining this need, adequacy of services);
- c) the problems encountered by users of social services (quality assessment of social services, identification of problems);

To foresee for **the perspective** of the providing and receiving of social services, by identifying the directions for the improvement of their quality, i.e. in the course of the study according to the second survey criterion, it is important to determine what directions for improvement of the provision of social services have been seen by the residents of Panevėžys.

The quantitative (questionnaire survey method) survey has been carried out to achieve the objective of the survey. The questionnaire survey was conducted between the February and March of the year 2020. 802 Panevėžys residents between the age of 18 and 71, and over 71 participated in the study. More than two thirds of the study participants (73.3%) were from the age groups of 30–70. Slightly fewer than a fifth belonged to the group of age 18–29 (15.3%) and those aged 71 and older (11.3%), (see Figure 1). Taking into account the age distribution of the population of the Panevėžys municipality in 2020, (62.4% of the city's population is of working age and 22.8% of the retirement age), the respondents fulfil the condition of representativeness by age.

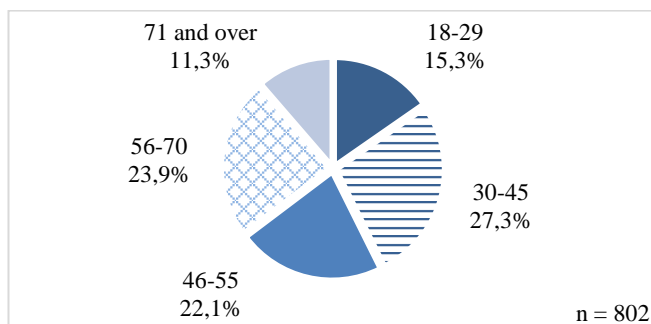


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by age

Four fifths of the respondents (80.5%) were women and one fifth (19.5%) of those surveyed were men. This distribution of respondents by gender reflects the fact, that one thousand men in Panevėžys have a thousand two hundred and eighty-one women. What is more, it is common practice in Lithuania that women tend to take care of their family's social needs, and they also participate in surveys more actively.

Almost half of the respondents to the survey (43.4%) are hired employees and just under a fifth (16.2%) of the respondents is retired people and 15% - civil servants. The unemployed accounted for only 5.2%, and the number of entrepreneurs – 4.6 %. The respondents studying accounted for 10.3%. Another 5.2% of the respondents indicated other choices: 28 respondents have some disability or care for a disabled person, and 14 respondents are on maternity/paternity leave (see Figure 2).

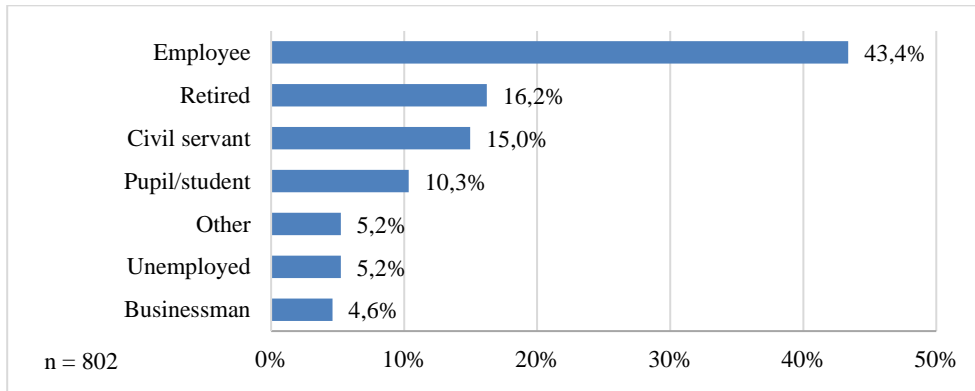


Figure 2. **Distribution of respondents by type of activity**

More than half of the respondents in the study (55.6%) are married. The study also included 15% of single persons, 11.5% of those living in partnership, 10.5% of divorced, 5.1% of widows/widowers and 2.4% of those with children alone (see Figure 3).

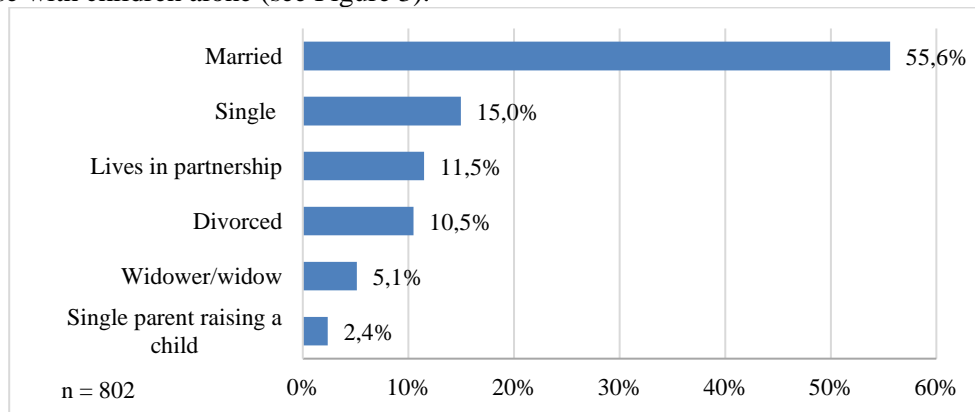


Figure 3. **Distribution of respondents by marital status**

The aim of the study has been to clarify *the awareness of the social services provided*. Answering to the question: “Where have you heard about the social services provided in Panevėžys?” the respondents were able to select multiple responses from the answers provided. More than half (55.1%) of the respondents reported learning about the social services in the city while browsing the Internet (see Figure 4). This response was most often having been chosen by both respondents: those who use/used social services themselves or their relatives (hereinafter referred to as users), and those who do not use/did not use (hereinafter referred to as 'non-users') (56.3% and 54.5% respectively). A significant number of the respondents learn about social services from the press or TV (29.2%) and from neighbours or friends (26.1%). There were some differences of opinion between users and non-users: the users were more likely to mention learning about the services provided in the city from neighbours or friends (30.4%), and the non-users from the press or television (32.6%). No substantial differences were observed when comparing the responses received by age group: in all age groups, the most popular selections were “surfing the Internet”, “from the press and TV” or “from neighbours and friends”. The respondents learn the least about the services provided from professionals of the Panevėžys State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service department (4.1%) or religious community (1.2%). Only respondents aged 71 and over reported the latter reply.

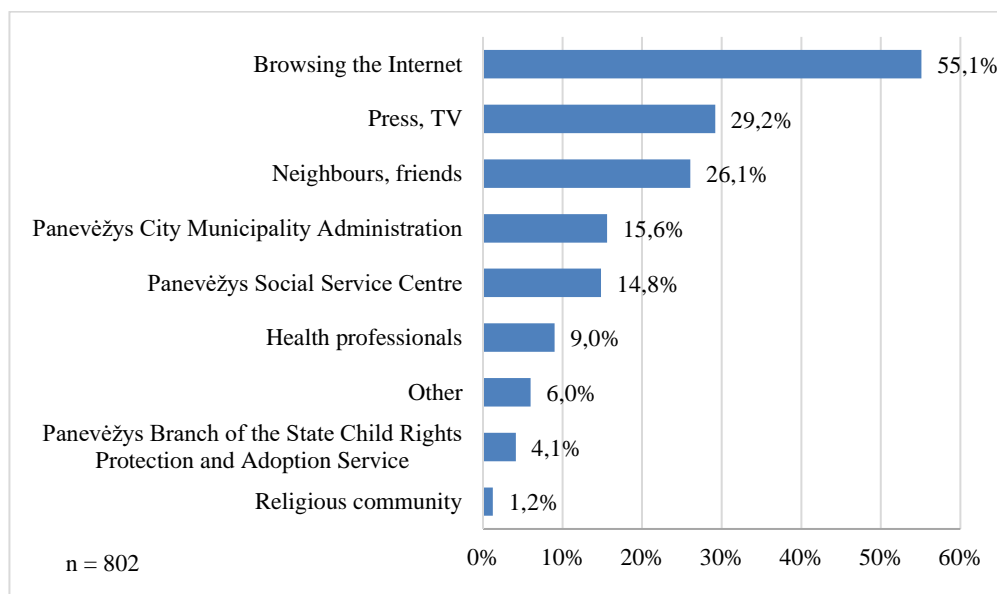


Figure 4. Sources of information on social services provided in Panevėžys

Information about the services provided is one of the key prerequisites for success and it is therefore important to make them known to as many potential users as possible. When analysing whether respondents are sufficiently informed about the social services provided in the city, it became clear that only a quarter (25.6%) of the respondents believe that information was sufficient for them. However, more than two thirds (67.7%) of the respondents miss such information. The lack of information was particularly emphasized by older respondents. 71.4% of the respondents aged 56–70 and as many as 83.5% of the respondents aged 71 and over reported that there was little information about social services.

Respondents would most like to find new information on social services on the website of the City Municipality, as two thirds of the respondents say so (see Figure 5). Another popular choice is the press. This method of obtaining information was reported by more than half of the respondents (55.2%). The City Municipality website was the most popular choice in all age groups except the oldest ones. The respondents aged 71 and over were more likely to use the press (61.5%). Almost a quarter of the respondents (22.3%) would like to receive information during the employee's visit. This way of receiving information was more frequently used by the respondents who are currently using or have used social services (31.8%).

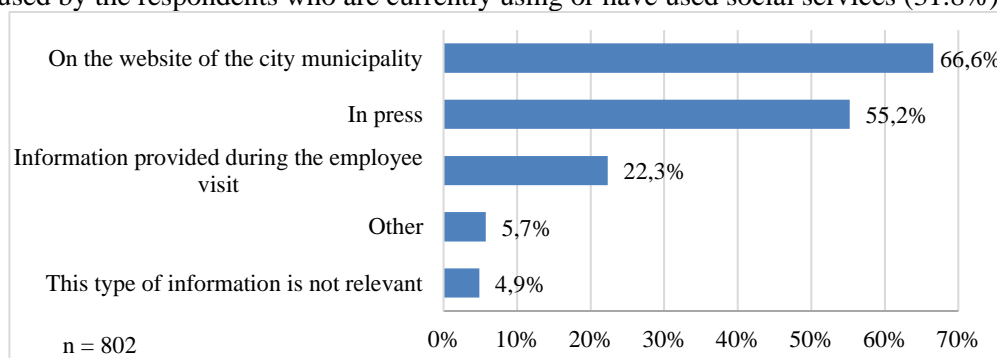


Figure 5. Preferred ways of receiving new information about social services

Respondents have also been asked what they consider to determine the need for social services in Panevėžys. The outcomes of the study showed that the respondents identified ageing population (68.7%) and health problems (52.7%) as the most important factors leading to the growing demand for social services in the City. Disability was also cited by 49.9% of those surveyed as a separate reason for the growth in demand for such services. Unemployment was identified by 40% of the respondents as an incentive to seek help in the social service market, as well as material problems (lack of food, clothing and funds). Psychological problems (35.5%), alcohol abuse (28.6%), consequences of migration (24.4%), domestic violence (21.8%) and homelessness (20.8%), (see Figure 6) were among the factors driving demand for social services. There was no difference of the opinion between users and non-users. When comparing the responses received by the age group, it was observed that while the most popular choices maintained the trends in Figure 6, the



respondents aged 18–29 placed particular emphasis on unemployment as a key factor in the growth of the demand of social services. This response was chosen by 62.6% of those who participated in the study.

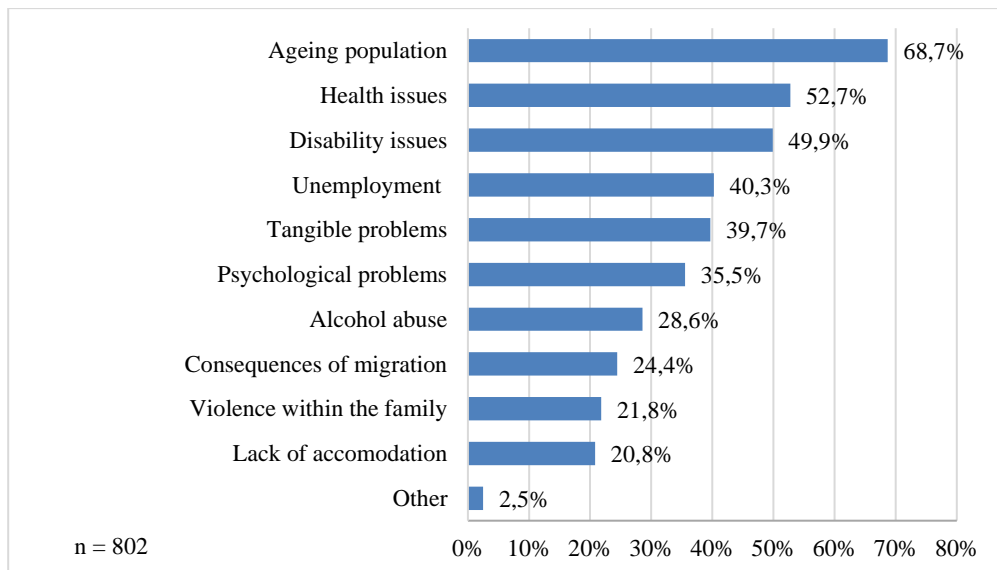


Figure 6. Factors determining the need for social services

402 respondents answered to the open question: “What social services are lacking in Panevėžys?”. **The summarized and most frequent observations of the residents about the lack of social services in Panevėžys City:** *it must be noted: there is a serious lack of services for old parents whose children have gone abroad; the emphasis has also been placed on missing information about existing services offered to the ordinary citizen; there is a need for more catering and clothing services; lack of support for business in recruiting people; few initiatives to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market; lack of medical services (i.e. specialists who can provide medical assistance at home); lack of free services of psychologists, special education classes, groups for children with special needs; there is a lack of personal assistant services not only for children and young people with intellectual and mental disabilities, but also for lonely elderly or disabled people; in addition, the identified need for different profiles of workshops for young people with disabilities outside a closed institution, but open where they can choose when and how much they can participate (accompanied by a personal assistant); the lack of employment assistants for disabled people (such as the SOPA looking for and assisting in finding a job for at least a few hours a day); more self-help/speaking groups for educators working with disabled children and young people, moderated by a professional psychologist, as well as temporary respite services; communal small living houses; events, excursions (self-paid, not all driving), day centres for children; assistance at home, to and overcome crises and transport to medical institutions.*

Having asked which social group lacks the most social services in Panevėžys city, the outcomes of the processed answers to the questionnaire submitted demonstrated that the greatest lack of services were for the elderly persons and their families (62.2%). 47% of the respondents saw a shortage of the services for adults with disabilities. A shortage of services for adults with disabilities was seen by 47% of respondents. The needs of families with disabled children (36.8%), families in crisis (29.9%), children at social risk and their families (22.4%) those left without care (22.3%) are not far behind either. The summarized need for the services for families and adults at social risk, families caring for children is shown in Figure 7.

There was no difference of the opinion between users and non-users of the services. Analysing the responses received by the age group, it was observed that 30–45 year olds emphasized the need for social services for the elderly and their families; however, the second selection was marked by the segment of children with disabilities and their families (47.9% of respondents).

It should be noted that some respondents did not have their opinion on this issue, as well as other segments needed for social services were also identified in the questionnaire (the number of respondents is provided in brackets): after returning from prison (3), single young mothers (3), leaving childcare homes (2), returning from emigration (1), surviving loss (1), young people (1), women experiencing violence (1), “normal” families (1), dependent people (1), lonely individuals (1).

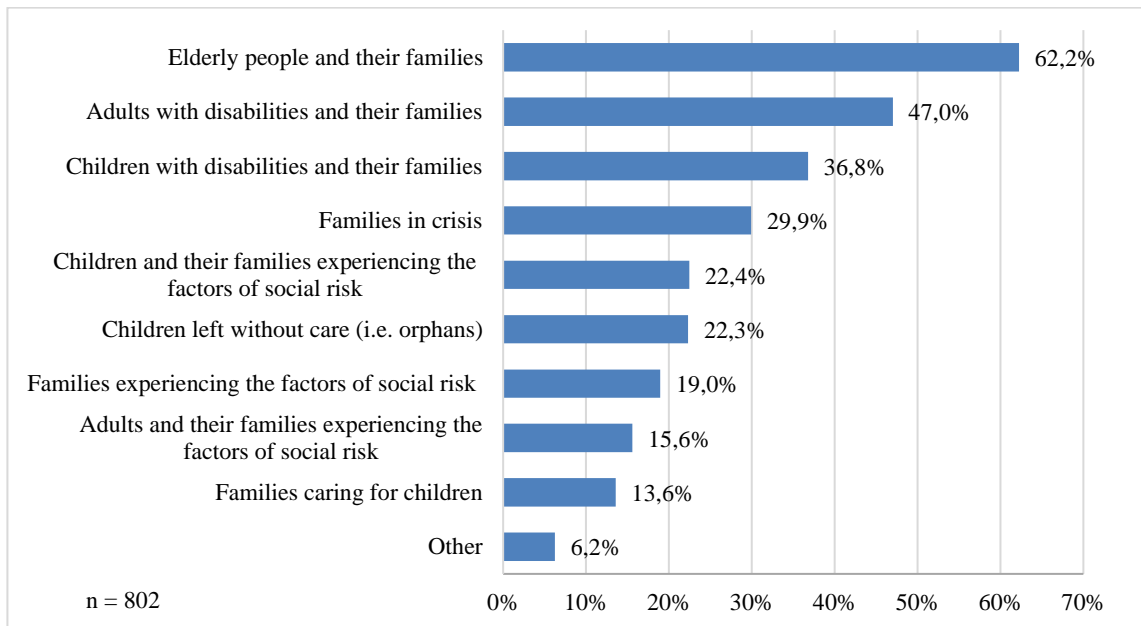


Figure 7. **Social groups with the greatest shortage of social services in the city**

**Problems and quality of the provision of services:** The aim was to find out whether the respondents or their relatives were/had been provided with social services in Panevėžys City. It turned out that 286 (35.7%) respondents had used some form of services. The majority of the residents of Panevėžys City used information services (86.7%), counselling services (83.6%), mediation and representation services (70.6%). The least is the provision of essential clothing and footwear (21.76%) of respondents and long-term social care (27.6%), (see Figure 8).

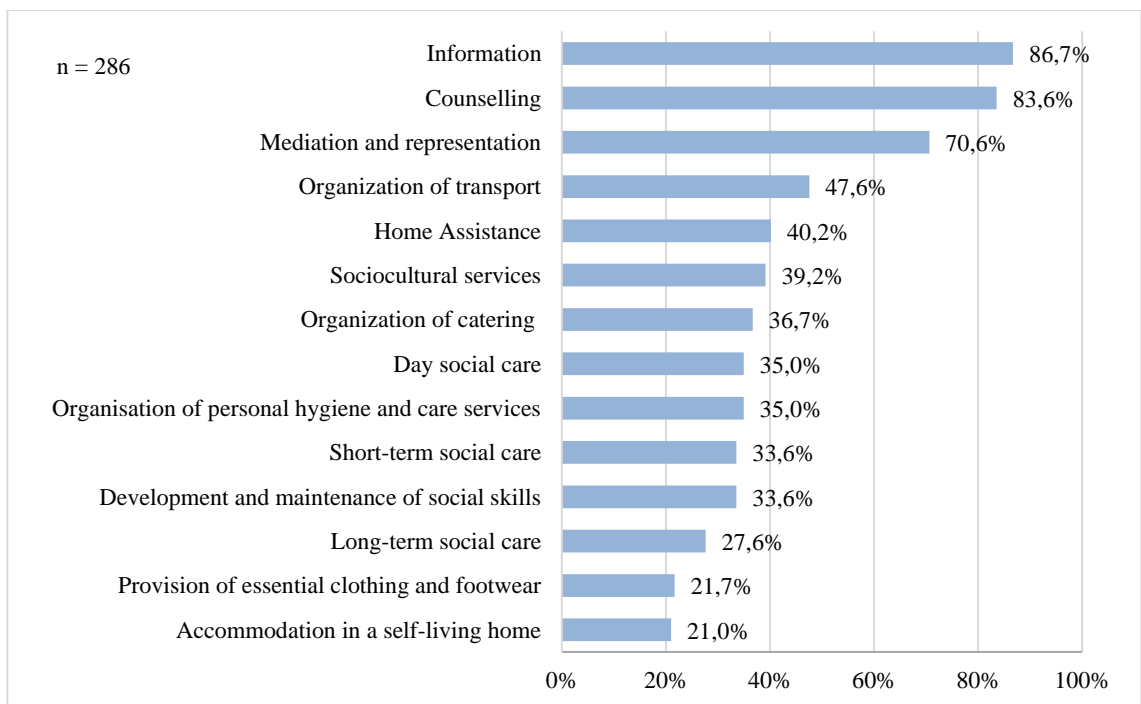


Figure 8. **Services used/had been used by residents**

To reveal the problems and quality of the provision of social services, respondents (hereinafter referred to as service recipients) were asked to evaluate the social services provided to them or their relatives. The processed outcomes of the responses to the submitted questions demonstrated that the users had a positive view of the social services provided, such as day social care (49%), catering organisation (48.6%), transport organisation (47.8%), counselling (47.7%) and social skills development and support (46%), (see Table 3).

Table 3

**Percentage evaluation of social services provided**

|  | Excellent | Well | Satisfactorily | Bad  | Very bad | n   |
|--|-----------|------|----------------|------|----------|-----|
| Counselling  | 8.4       | 39.3 | 39.3           | 9.6  | 3.4      | 239 |
| Information  | 5.2       | 33.9 | 40.3           | 14.1 | 6.5      | 248 |
| Mediation and representation                       | 4         | 30.7 | 48             | 14,3 | 3        | 202 |
| Organization of catering                           | 8.6       | 40   | 35.2           | 5.7  | 10.5     | 105 |
| Provision of essential clothing and footwear       | 0         | 32.3 | 37.1           | 16.1 | 14.5     | 62  |
| Organization of transport                          | 16.9      | 30.9 | 29.4           | 12.5 | 10.3     | 136 |
| Sociocultural services                             | 5.3       | 39.3 | 34.8           | 16.1 | 4.5      | 112 |
| Organisation of personal hygiene and care services | 1         | 38   | 39             | 14   | 8        | 100 |
| Home Assistance                                    | 9.5       | 34.8 | 23.5           | 20   | 12.2     | 115 |
| Development and maintenance of social skills       | 7.3       | 39.6 | 32.3           | 13.5 | 7.3      | 96  |
| Social care of the day                             | 15        | 34   | 33             | 13   | 5        | 100 |
| Short-term social care                             | 13.5      | 21.9 | 49             | 5.2  | 10.4     | 96  |
| Long-term social care                              | 5.1       | 26.6 | 35.4           | 11.4 | 21.5     | 79  |

However, the survey data demonstrated that the respondents tend to rate the quality of the services provided *satisfactorily*. The following services have been evaluated most satisfactorily: short-term social care (49 %), mediation and representation (48 %), information (40.3 %). It should be noted that some services are rated *bad and very bad* by one third of users. The majority (32.9%) of the respondents have a negative view of the services such as: long-term social care (it should be noted that 35.4% of the service recipients appreciate the service satisfactorily, 32.9% appreciate it well and very well). Although 44.3% of the service recipients are positive about the home assistance, 32.2% are negative about this service. 30.6% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of the provision of essential clothing and footwear, (37.1% of the respondents rated this service satisfactorily).

Upon the request to identify the problems observed and having analysed the answers received, it became clear that almost 40% of the social service recipients consider that too little time is devoted to solving problems, and that employees lack attention, sincerity and respect (see Figure 9).

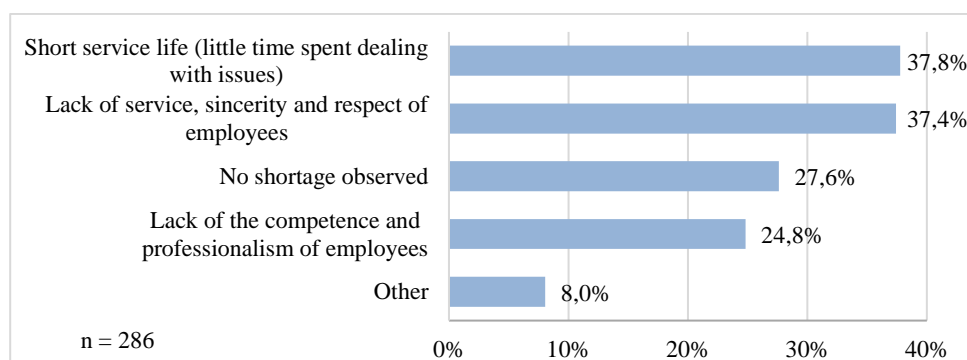


Figure 9. **Problems observed**

It should be noted that the users also mentioned the issues such as: (the number of respondents in brackets)

1) Staff shortages: *high workloads, low salaries* (2), *infrastructure, overcrowded wards and insufficient staff* (1);

2) Low competence of the employees: *I sometimes doubt the flexibility of the people providing services to help solve problems* (1); *the suitability of services for the customer. In the meantime, the provision of services is focused on the interests of the employee and the institution and not on the needs of the customer (not only in our city)* (2);

3) Lack of information: *when a social worker who visits me regularly is ill or on holiday, I do not receive prior information* (2); *there is no certainty about continuity of services* (1);

4) The gaps in the organisation of the provision of services: *too long a decision-making time, lengthy procedures, the day's social procedure for determining the need for care – attendance at home – is completely void when there are medical extracts about the disability you have. Therefore, keep procedures*



*under review and make them more effective (1); absence of real assistance according to the needs (1); services offered regardless of whether a person needs them (1); long service waiting (1); it's hard to get in (1); insufficient services, services are not differentiated according to the type and severity of the disability. A mentally ill girl walks in the City. Since that walk, she has given birth to a child and has given it up for adoption, but she continues walking all day again. Nobody cares... (1); everything is fine in the Youth Day Care Centre. However we don't get any more services! (2).*

The survey demonstrated that two thirds of the respondents (63.3%) confide in social service providers and institutions (see Figure 10).

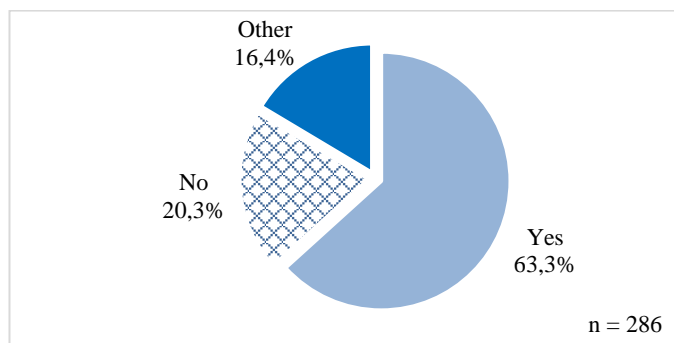


Figure 10. Confidence in persons and institutions providing social services

**The summarized, most frequent observations by the users of their confidence in service providers and institutions:** *In part, not everything, sometimes, depends on the specialist. Trust people not institutions. Trust only the Youth Day Care Centre. Trust has nothing to do with the service. We are forced to use services without other options. Sometimes I doubt that those providing services want to help solve problems.*

To find out the lack of social service institutions, the respondents were asked to name them. Most of the surveyed reported *the greatest shortage* of the following *social service institutions*: people with disabilities in independent living homes where elderly people live independently with the help of a social worker (46.6%), occupation organised in day care centres, where disabled people and the elderly are cared for during the day (41%), social care homes where the elderly and people with severe disabilities are permanent residents (34%). Temporary living homes that help restore autonomy, lost social ties and help integrate into society, group houses – care institutions, where non-independent adults with disabilities live in the home environment with the permanent help of specialists, missed 27% of those who participated in the study. The data obtained suggest a lack of crisis centres providing assistance to individuals and families who have experienced violence, abuse, loss of housing and other critical situations, which is what 24.3% of the respondents think. In this respect (compared to representatives of other age groups), respondents aged 18–29 had a particularly strong position – as many as 41.5% of the respondents saw a shortage of crisis centres in the City. 23.1% of those surveyed see the need for treatment and rehabilitation facility/centres for addiction diseases, respectively, but as many as 36.6% of the respondents in the 18–29 age group miss such institutions. It has also been mentioned, that there is a lack of day care centres for children, which provide social services during the day and organise their occupation, where children with disabilities are cared for during the day – 21.7% and 19.1% of the respondents respectively.

Sheltered housing where disabled people live voluntarily with the help of a social worker or persons leaving care homes have been missed by 17.2% of the surveyed, and the families, where children who have lost their parental care live – by 13.8% of the respondents (see Figure 11). There was no difference of the opinion between users and non-users of the services.

However, 6.4% of the respondents noted that *social institutions* in the City were *sufficient*, although there were also those unable to answer the question, as well as other groups of social institutions missing in Panevėžys, which in individual cases were only implied: the respondents were unable to specify the type of the institution and therefore expressed the need for the latter in the context of services (the number of respondents in brackets): *Day centres for other target groups (2); Specialist psychological support and professional education for parents with disabled children (2); Assistance from lawyers and social workers on how to deal/tackle situations (2); Temporary respite services (2); The sobering station (1); People returning from abroad and their families could be assigned one specialist to provide information on social services to him and his family. (1); Integral assistance at home (3); Houses of community life for young people (1); Crisis centre families with children where 24/7 assistance is provided (1); Where children*

with behavioural and emotional problems would receive assistance (1); Independent living homes where a full family (mother, father and children) could live permanently with the help of a social worker (1); Nursing beds (1); Social workers coming into the house (1); There is a lack of flexibility, complexity and innovative services (1).

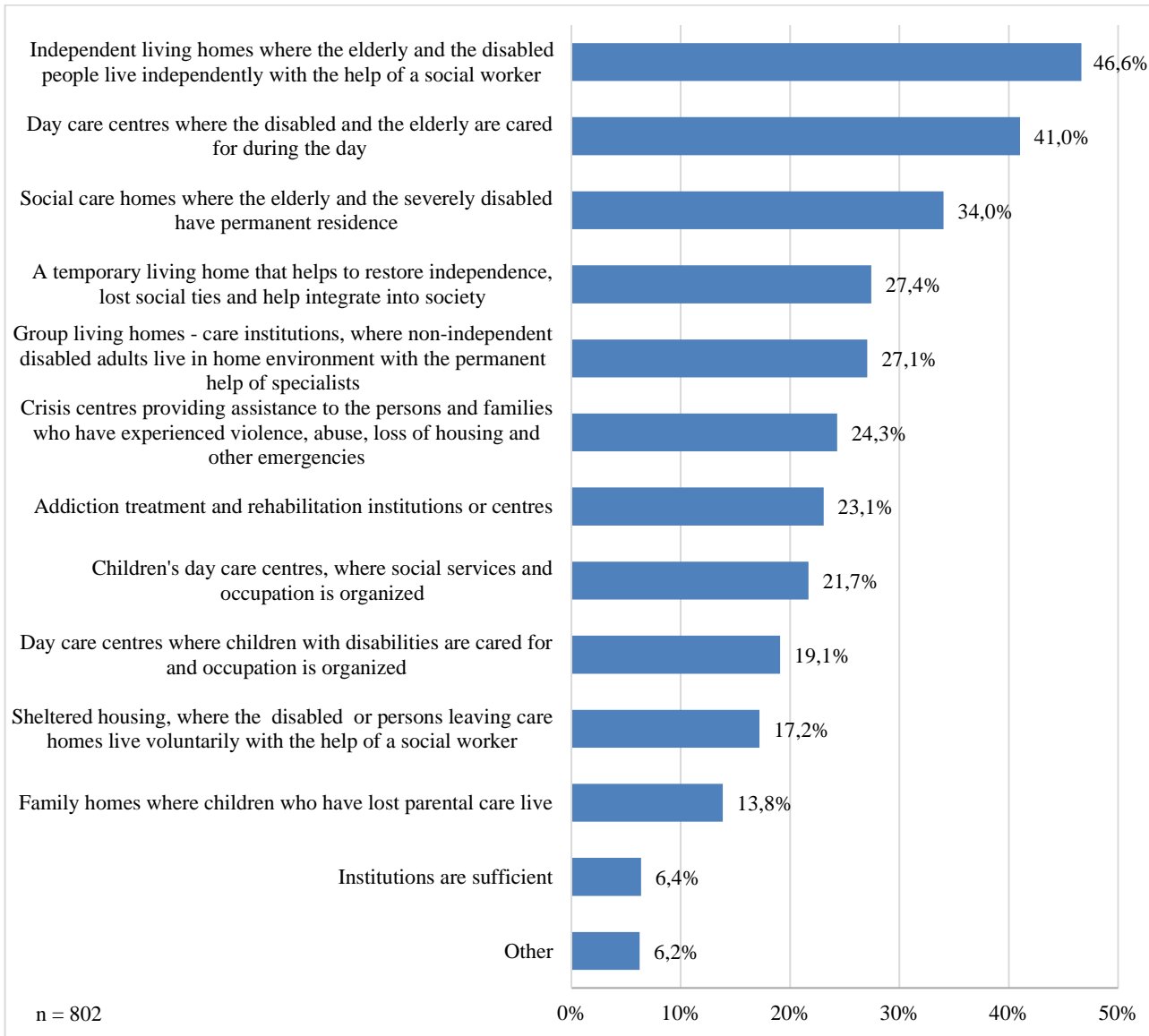


Figure 11. Lack of social service institutions in Panevėžys City

The respondents were asked to express their *opinions, comments and suggestions* regarding the quality and the need of social services provided by the City Municipality of Panevėžys. 524 (65.3%) respondents expressed their views on the issue. 117 (14.6%) respondents did not submit any comments and suggestions. Other 161 (20.1%) respondents expressed no opinion on the issue (29 of whom had not encountered the issue in question).

When analysing the respondents' replies, the model of quality commonly understood by Grönroos (1984) can be used, which makes it possible to distinguish between the two methods of measuring quality: technical and functional. *Technical* quality – when the recipient assesses the service at the time of its provision, *functional* – the responsiveness of the recipient as to how the service was provided. In other words, not only the service itself is valued, but also the process of providing it. This model also includes the expected quality, where the recipient's expectations are measured before receiving the service, which reflects the recipient's needs. The model is one of the most appropriate to study the quality of social services to obtain the views of users. All the responses of the surveyed can be divided into the following groups: the expected quality (unrealized expectations, unfulfilled expectations, exceeded expectations) and the quality experienced (how the service is provided).

**The summarized, most frequent observations of the users about unfulfilled expectations:** *the quality of the services is poor, the services provided are only beautifully described and, in reality, completely inconsistent, a lot of socially vulnerable groups that do not receive help at all, some social services are very slow and they are not solved at all. Failed expectations: regarding the rudeness, arrogance and incompetence of the staff. Rather many respondents noted a lack of information (e.g. video information for the deaf), a complicated “path” to find information, a lack of publicity. Applicants are not provided with the full package of services, and there is no explanation of what services belong to the person.*

**The summarized most frequent observations of the users about fulfilled expectations:** *the services provided are of high quality, however, there is a need to increase their scope and to enhance the cooperation between the institutions concerned. It is on the right track to the extent of the limits of the available financial resources. The services provided are more or less of sufficient quality, there should be more kind treatment on the part of those providing. At present, social services are provided as a priority to children in all cases of risk. That's good. But people who do not belong to risk groups (who do not drink, do not beat children, have worked all their lives and have not received any benefits or social services) have been forgotten, but who are no longer able to take care of themselves in old age. They are theoretically supposed to receive social services, but they are ignored, and in most cases they are not even informed, that they can get help.*

**The summarized, most frequent observations of the users about exceeded expectations:** *The quality of the social services provided by the Municipality of Panevėžys City is good and there are a lot of people who love their job. The need for services is increasing as the population ages, and therefore the number of the employees providing social services should increase proportionately. Attention is paid to the low salary of people providing social services, appreciate them and wish them good luck. Existing social services are of high quality, more such institutions as the Youth Day Centre. People with intellectual disabilities need independent living homes, but that the Youth Day Centre would take care of that home. The exceptional thanks: “I want to be very pleased with the sincere communication, cooperation, promptness of all the employees of the Panevėžys City Municipality, the Social Service Department, and the Commission, which is concerned and dealing with the adaptation of the disabled housing to our son with severe disabilities. Very sincere THANK YOU!!!”.*

**The summarized, most frequent observations of the users on the provision of services:** *Professionals or workers often do their jobs in a reluctant way, i.e. they do not care about the child, being integrated and socialised, or are harsh in claiming that the work is difficult and underpaid. The attitude of working people towards the job they do becomes distorted and it shouldn't be the motivation of the job to be just a monetary reward. Do less paperwork and more particular work. The system does not work at all, there is little information and people are driven there and back in case of an oncological disease. Duplicate services in institutions, differently funded institutions, creating exceptional conditions for some. Money is wasted on inefficient projects. It's not what's most needed, but it's what's easiest to get the funds for.*

**The summarized, most frequent observations of the suggestions of the users:** *The quality of social services needs to be improved by looking into and solving the case of a particular person, creating centres and volunteer societies to help people deal the issues of social nature they face. Assistance is needed to help people with disabilities get a job. It would be great for structured information to be made available publicly and in one place – on social needs, services, etc. It would be great for structured information to be made publicly available and in one place – on social needs, services, etc. It would also be welcome if the Municipality supported and transferred more powers to the non-governmental sector rather than trying to keep everything in its own hands. It is proposed to concentrate on services that are lacking. The state is offered the investment in growth and jobs. For the staff – if there is a possibility, to improve upskilling in a large and abundant way. Participate in EU programmes, go to international conferences, cooperate with non-governmental organisations and broaden their horizons. Do not close between procedures and papers, make active use of the funds received and invite non-governmental actors, businessmen, Rotarians. Simplify the order which is in your own hands. Actively participate in the preparation of arrangements and procedures in the Ministry. Properly represent our City! There is a shortage of staff to provide information to returnees from abroad. When they come back from abroad, it's hard to find out what services they belong to, which specialist to contact, etc. It would also be possible to provide services to families with 2, 3 or more children (twins, triplets, etc.) at the same time – this could be the service of an assistant who would travel to such a family once, twice a week and help the parents cope with juveniles, as extra hands are always useful. Analyse everyone's needs to find the best solution. Ensure the safety of children with disabilities in schools*

and centres. *Organize assistance for parents of disabled children. More frequent surveys for the residents of the City.*

## CONCLUSIONS

**Level of the service supply, the need:** The outcomes of the study demonstrate that the most important factors leading to the growing demand for social services in the city are the following: ageing of the population and health problems, disability, unemployment, material and psychological problems, alcohol abuse, migration consequences, domestic violence and lack of housing.

The shortage of services: for old parents whose children have gone abroad, lack of catering, clothing, business assistance in recruiting people, integration of people with disabilities in the labour market, lack of medical, free psychologists, education in special classes, groups for children with special needs, personal assistants, multi-profile workshops for young people with disabilities outside the closed establishment, employment assistants for disabled people, self-help/talk group educators, working with disabled children and young people, temporary respite, community-based small living homes, events for sheltered children, day care centres for children, home assistance and overcoming crises, transport services.

The shortage of institutions: independent living homes, day centres for the disabled and elderly people, social care homes for the elderly and disabled, temporary living homes, group-living homes, crisis centres, treatment and rehabilitation facilities for addiction diseases, day care centres for children, sheltered housing and family homes.

**Problems and quality of the provision of services:** The outcomes of the study demonstrate that the majority of the respondents use information, advice/counselling, mediation and representation services. The least use is made of essential clothing, footwear and long-term care services.

The evaluation of the user views on the quality of services demonstrate, the services received tend to be viewed satisfactorily and poorly. In the opinion of the participants of the study, the worst provision is long-term social care, provision of essential clothing and footwear, mediation and representation, and short-term social care services. This evaluation is also linked to the lack of competence and information of employees, employees and problems in organising the provision of services as listed by the respondents. In addition, the participants also note that too little time is devoted to solving issues and that the employees lack service, sincerity and respect.

Almost half of the recipients of the service appreciate the day's social care, catering and transport organisation, counselling, development of social skills and support services well and very well.

**Awareness of the social services provided:** Information on the services provided is one of the key preconditions for success, and it is therefore important that as many potential users as possible could be aware of them. The study has demonstrated that only a quarter of the respondents think the information is sufficient for them. However, more than two-thirds of the respondents lack such information. The lack of information has been particularly emphasized by older respondents.

The respondents would most like to find current information about social services on the website of the City Municipality, as two thirds of the respondents say, and it was the most popular choice for all age groups, except the oldest. Another popular choice is the press. This method of obtaining information was indicated by more than half of the respondents.

**Comments and suggestions:** The expectations of the residents of Panevėžys city in terms of part of the services provided are higher than satisfaction. A greater discrepancy between expectations and satisfaction is observed at the evaluation of service quality, information provision, competence and behaviour of employees. Some services meet the expectations of the residents. The respondents recognise that the services provided are of more or less high quality, but the scope of them needs to be increased and cooperation between the institutions concerned should be also enhanced. What is more, some respondents say that the services provided by the Panevėžys City Municipality are good since there are a lot of people who love their work. Attention is paid to the low salary of employees providing social services, gratitude to them and wishes of good luck. The essential proposal is to analyse everyone's needs in search of the most appropriate solution.

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