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Social services for seniors living in Popowice

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Abstract

The aim of the paper was to investigate the issue of social services for seniors living in the Popowice estate of Wrocław, Poland. In the paper, the concept of co-creation was used. Hence, the research object was residents (mostly seniors) of the Popowice district. The research subject was the quality of life of seniors. To achieve the goal, the following research tasks were implemented: 1) to identify the needs of seniors, 2) to identify which of those needs are satisfied locally and which are not, and 3) to identify the attitude towards cooperation. In the paper, the following research methods were used: the analysis of scientific literature and normative documents, co-creation methodology, PAPI and CAWI surveys, comparative analysis, and statistical analysis. Thanks to the research, it has been revealed that the demand for social services is greater than its supply. Moreover, although the majority of seniors believe that they have little or no influence on the shape and quality of social services available in the housing estate, they are not interested in active participation in designing and adapting social services to their needs.

1. Introduction

The paper presents findings from the study survey titled “Diagnosis of the Needs and Expectations of Seniors in the Field of Social Services in Popowice” that took place from April 2019 to May 2019. “Diagnosis of the needs and expectations of seniors in the field of social services in Popowice” in Wrocław, Poland, was organized as one of the first of the planned series of meetings and workshops with

the inhabitants of Popowice district as part of the Popowice Laboratory, ProPoLab in short. Figure 1 presents a detailed roadmap of ProPolab as well as the info on project milestones (on the right).

ProPolab is part of a pilot called Co-housing of Seniors. The pilot goal is to implement the concept of senior co-housing using the co-creation model. The experiment takes place in Popowice (district of Wrocław, Poland), where involving local stakeholders, project implementers want to develop the space to implement joint plans and meet the diagnosed needs (ProPoLab, 2018a, 6).

As presented in Figure 1, this joint public services creation consists of: co-ideas, co-creation, co-governance and co-implementation, co-evolution, co-communication, and co-dissemination. The study survey titled “Diagnosis of the Needs and Expectations of Seniors in the Field of Social Services in Popowice” is an action made in the co-ideas part as number #4 — survey on the needs of residents.

Co-housing of Seniors, along with eight other individual but interlinked pilots, formed the EU CoSIE project, which is an acronym for Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe. CoSIE is a consortium of 24 partners from 10 countries. During the implementation of CoSIE, the collaborative partners will test and develop diverse methods of co-creation in the field of public services (Sakellariou, 2018, 8).

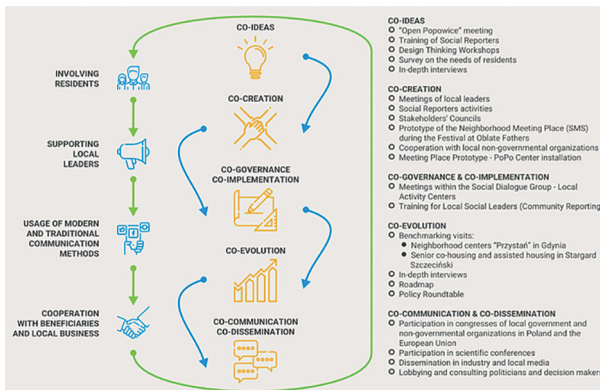


Figure 1. The roadmap of ProPoLab

Source: Wiktorska-Świąćka, Dybał, Janus, Miśniakiewicz, Timler 2021, 186.

To sum up, the research object was the seniors of the Popowice district. The research subject was the quality of life of seniors. The research aim was to investigate the issue of social services for seniors living in the Popowice estate of Wrocław, Poland. To achieve the goal, the following research tasks were implemented: 1) to identify the needs of seniors, 2) to identify which of those needs are satisfied locally and which are not, and 3) to identify the attitude towards cooperation. The research years cover mainly 2018–2019. In the paper, the following research methods were used: the analysis of scientific literature and normative documents,

co-creation methodology, PAPI and CAWI surveys, comparative analysis, and statistical analysis.

2. Theoretical framework of the research

In the world literature, the idea of co-creation of public services has its origin in the concept of co-production of public safety contributed by Elinor Ostrom in the 1960s and 1970s (Gawłowski, 2018a, 172). The result of research conducted by Elinor Ostrom was the formulation of the concept of co-production of public safety as a necessary condition for the efficient functioning of the police (Bovaird, Loeffler, 2016). The renaissance of the concept of co-creation public services took place as a result of the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Economics to Elinor Ostrom in 2009 for her work on the analysis of public goods and the role of users and their associations in the production of goods (Ostrom, 1996). Furthermore, the crisis related to the decline of the common belief in the market as a regulator of social behavior and, in connection with this, New Public Management (NPM) led to a renewed reflection on the prevailing management paradigm. Apart from the economic crisis, the return to the concept of co-creation of public services in the world literature was also prompted by the problem of the growing deficit of public finances (Bovaird, 2012; Meijer, 2016), the issue of the so-called wicked problems (Ciasullo, Palumbo, Troisi, 2017), matters that cannot be effectively managed only by the public sector (climate problems, public sector limitations, security), as well as the new nature of the relationship between public administration and citizens, which defined the latter not as clients but as stakeholders (Bovaird, 2012; Meijer, 2016). The need to rebuild trust in the public sector, which had reached low levels after the period of the economic crisis, was also significant (Fledderus, 2015, 551).

It is worth mentioning that some researchers do not see significant differences in “co-creation” and “co-production”, treating both concepts as having similar connotations or as complementary (Voorberg et al., 2014). In their studies, they use them as synonyms or together. Others, however, see significant differences between them and draw strictly defined demarcation lines in their considerations (Osborne et al., 2013).

In Poland, the role and significance of public and social services have increased with the transition from a centrally controlled economy to a market economy. Their rank gained additional significance with the accession to the European Union in 2004. This step has considerably influenced the scientific discourse on new standards in the provision of public services. It should be mentioned, however, that while public services have taken their rightful place in it, the concept of their co-creation is still in its early stages. Although its role will probably grow with the development of civil society and social awareness, it has not been a priority in

current considerations so far. Perhaps the reasons for this state of affairs should be sought — apart from the broad context of current public management standards — in the very essence and complexity of the approach itself, among other things, manifested in the terminology. The concept of co-creation rarely appears in Polish research, not to mention the related term “co-production”. Other terms related to the concept of co-creation (co-design, co-management, co-governance) are also not very common. What is more, they are usually used interchangeably and rarely pay attention to the nuances and qualitative context.

It should be noted that the concept of co-creation/co-production in academic research is more or less undertaken by a narrow group of scientists (e.g. Ciepiewska-Kowalik, 2013; Kaźmierczak, 2014; IPiSS, 2015; Sześciło, 2015a, 2015b; Ciepiewska-Kowalik, 2016; Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, 2016; Austen, 2016; Heffner, Klemens, 2017; Gawłowski, 2018a; 2018b; Kobylńska, 2018; Wiktorska-Święcka, 2018; Dybał, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2022, 2023). It is important to note (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2020) that at the current stage of development of the Polish public debate on the co-management of public services, the most attention is attributed to citizens cast in the role of co-executor in the co-creation process. This is probably the point of view of the administration, which sees this as an opportunity to reduce the cost of public services. However, we know that due to the role of the final recipients in the co-creation process, we can distinguish not one, but three types of their involvement: 1) citizens as co-executors, 2) citizens as co-designers, 3) citizens as co-initiators of public policy (Voorberg et al., 2014). Moreover, by definition, co-creation should be understood as the voluntary involvement of users (also called final recipients/beneficiaries/citizens) of public services in the processes of designing, managing, delivering, and evaluating public services (Osborne et al., 2016). This element has not been identified in the domestic discourse so far. Since the co-creation of public/social services in Poland is not sufficiently widespread in the literature, we trust that this paper could be a valuable addition to it.

3. Research methodology

The sociological study “Diagnosis of Needs and Expectations in the Field of Social Services among Seniors Living in Popowice” was conducted with the support of the European Fund for Research and Development — Horizon 2020 as part of a comprehensive project under the English title “Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe” (CoSIE). The aim of the international project is to test new solutions in the field of designing social services that are better adapted to the needs of recipients. The Polish edition of the project is carried out by a consortium consisting

of representatives of the Aktywny Senior Foundation (FAS) and a team of scientists from the University of Wrocław led by prof. Aldona Wiktorska-Święcka. The specific purpose of the Polish edition of CoSIE was to develop a new, better way of creating social services for seniors, including primarily those related to various aspects of meeting housing needs.

The survey covered the diagnosis of needs, knowledge, expectations, and possible improvements in the scope of social services aimed at seniors. The research subjects were seniors living in Popowice. For the purposes of the study, the group of seniors was defined relatively broadly, specifying that they are all people over 50 years of age. The study was conducted in the “dual mode” using both a classic paper survey completed by the respondent (PAPI) and a survey conducted via a website (CAWI). The study used the snowball sampling method, using both the fact that Popowice seniors maintain mutual good-neighborly contacts and the fact that FAS issued “Senior Cards” during the period of the study (Timler, 2019). Recruitment for the CAWI study was conducted via the project website and social media. The field implementation of the study was ensured by the Aktywny Senior Foundation through its members and volunteers, while the study concept, research tools (survey questionnaire), and statistical analyses were ensured by the research team at the University of Wrocław with the head role of Paweł Timler.

4. Main findings

4.1. Characteristics of the study population

In 2019, the city of Wrocław was inhabited by 243,981 people aged 50 or more (BDL, 2024). The study involved seniors living in the Popowice housing estate in Wrocław. Fulfillment of the above-mentioned conditions, i.e.:

- living in the Popowice housing estate,
- age 50 or more (this is how the concept of “senior” was operationalized in the project),

were the conditions for participation in the study checked at the recruitment stage. In the first wave of the study, 137 completed surveys were collected, but during the check, 14 surveys were rejected, mainly due to missing data reaching 50% or failure to meet the age criteria. In the 123 surveys qualified for further analysis, there were 88 surveys completed by women and 35 by men. In relation to the general population, there was an overrepresentation of women in the study by 13.9%. According to BDL data, among people aged 50 and over living in Wrocław, women constitute 58.1% and men 41.9% (Figure 2).

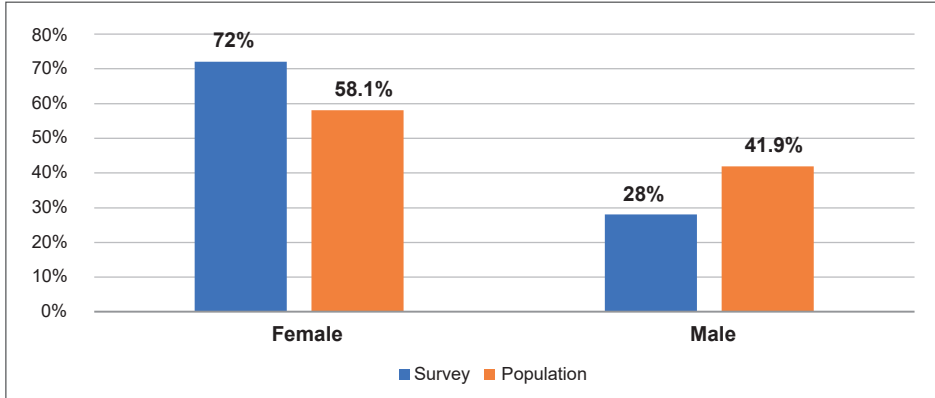


Figure 2. Respondents' sex

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019; BDL, 2024.

The age distribution of the seniors living in the Popowice estate differs from the age distribution in the Wrocław population. Among respondents, we see relatively fewer “young” seniors aged 50–64 and relatively more people aged 70–79. The reason for the observed differences may be the fact that the surveys were conducted during the distribution of the Wrocław Senior Card for people over 60 years of age. A comparison of the age distribution among the respondents and the Wrocław population is presented in Figure 3.

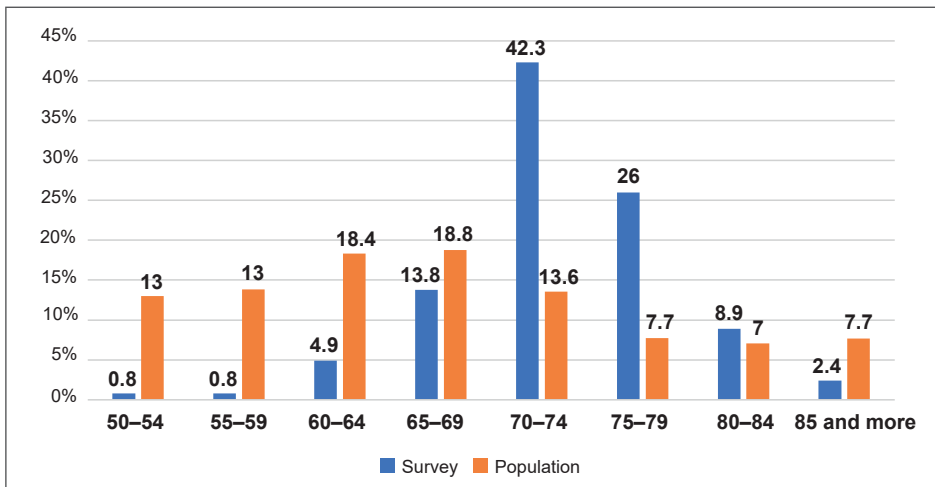


Figure 3. Respondents' age

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019; BDL, 2024.

Figure 4 presents the data on respondents' education. The most common level of education among the survey respondents was secondary vocational and general education (33.3%). The second most popular level of education was higher education with a master's degree, declared by 27.6% of the survey participants. The third largest group among the respondents (17.9%) were people with higher education with a bachelor's degree and/or engineering degree (without a master's degree). It is worth noting the low percentage of refusals to answer the question about the level of education, amounting to only 4.1%.

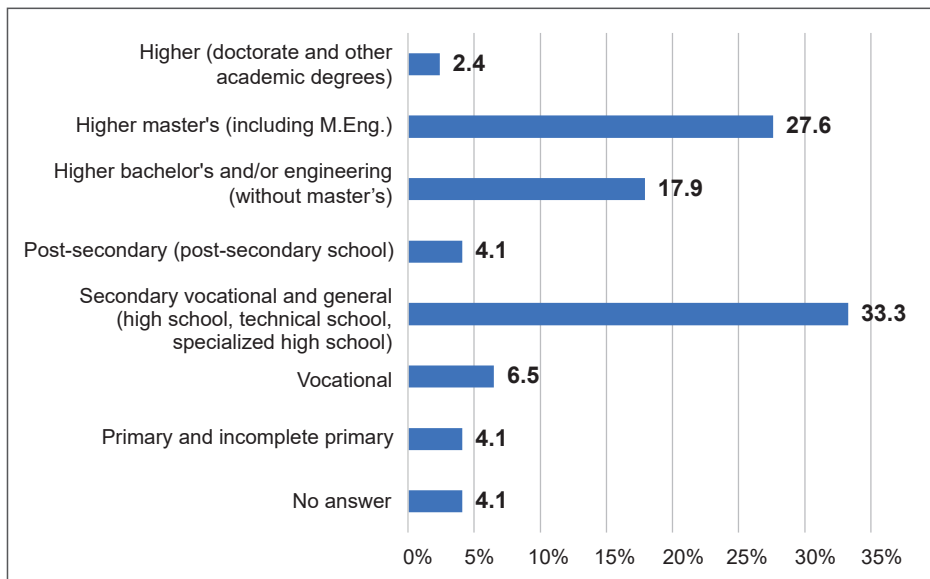


Figure 4. Respondents' education

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

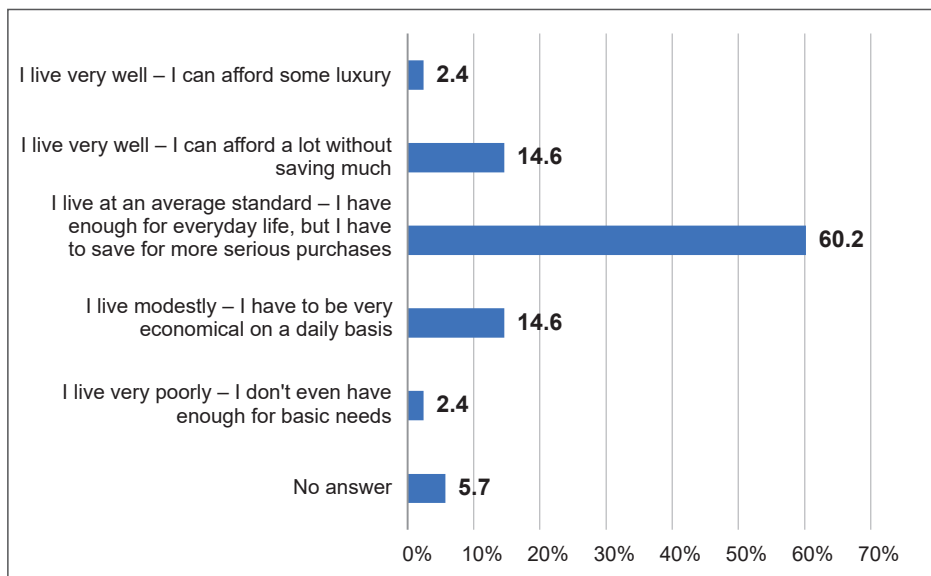
Table 1 presents the data regarding the respondents' professional situation. As one can see, the vast majority of the survey respondents (82.9%) were retired and did not undertake any other types of professional activity. The next group, amounting to 6.5% of the survey participants, combined retirement with part-time work, while 0.8% of respondents combined retirement with full-time work; 3.3% of respondents declared that they were on a "permanent benefit"; 1.6% were working professionally while 0.8% were on a disability pension, and another 0.8% were on a disability pension and additionally worked part-time; 3.3% of the survey participants refused to answer the question about their professional situation.

Table 1. Respondents' professional situation

I am retired	82.9%
I am retired and additionally work part-time	6.5%
I am retired and additionally work full-time	0.8%
I am on a disability pension	0.8%
I am on a disability pension and additionally work part-time	0,8%
I am on a permanent allowance	3.3%
I work professionally	1.6%
No answer	3.3%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

Figure 5 presents data regarding the respondents' financial situation. Seniors generally assess their financial situation in a positive manner. Among them, 60.2% live at average standard. Living modestly declared 14.6% of them as well as living well. Of the respondents, 2.4% said that they lived very well. Exactly the same percentage was confirmed by those who said that they lived very poorly. Only 5.7% of respondents refused to share their financial situation.

**Figure 5.** Respondents' financial situation

Source: Own research; Timler 2019.

During the survey, respondents were also asked about their housing situation. Table 2 presents data on this issue. Most of the respondents (41.5%) live with a wife/husband or partner. The second most frequent answer (32.5%) was living

alone. Living with other members of the family was declared by 16.3% of respondents. Altogether, it combines 90.3% who are apartment owners. Only 0.8% of respondents rent a flat, and 8.9% refused to make an answer.

Table 2. Respondents' housing situation

I live alone	32.5%
I live with my husband/wife or partner	41.5%
I live with my family (siblings/children/son-in-law/daughter-in-law etc.)	16.3%
I rent a flat/room	0.8%
No answer	8.9%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

4.2. Availability in the field of social services

In order to determine the availability of social services for seniors in the Popowice district, the respondents were asked to indicate the social services they knew about. The catalog of assessed social services contained 16 predefined proposals, giving the possibility of indicating additional, not predefined answers. Hence, Table 3 presents data regarding the so-called supply of social services in Popowice. The most accessible social services were rated by respondents as access to spiritual life (74.8%), access to culture (53.7%), integration of seniors with the local community (48%), and sports and recreational facilities accessible to seniors (47.2%). The least accessible services were indicated as: training and advice on legal, insurance, and financial issues (8.9%); the possibility of gainful employment (9.8%); care and nursing services; and activities promoting medical knowledge and prevention (both 12.2% each).

Table 3. Supply of social service

Access to spiritual life (e.g. church)	74.8%
Access to culture (cinema, library, theatre, etc.)	53.7%
Integration of seniors with the local community (e.g. during festivals, cultural events, meetings, etc.)	48.0%
Sports and recreational facilities available for seniors	47.2%
Easy access to healthcare	34.1%
Recreational and sports activities	31.7%
Hobby-related classes and training (e.g. artistic, computer, culinary)	31.7%
Possibilities for seniors to engage in social activity	22.0%
Meeting places for seniors available all day long	20.3%
Educational activities related to threats and dangers	16.3%

Training to familiarize seniors with new technologies encountered in everyday life (payment cards, bank accounts, mobile phones, etc.)	13.8%
Involving older people in the process of raising children in kindergartens and educating children and young people in schools (visits, sharing stories as witnesses, etc.)	13.0%
Care and nursing services (day care home, assistantship, nursing services)	12.2%
Activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention (e.g. dietetics, diseases typical of older people, memory improvement techniques, etc.)	12.2%
Possibility of gainful employment (silver economy)	9.8%
Training and advice on legal, insurance, and financial issues (e.g., loans, mortgages, inheritance law, etc.)	8.9%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

4.3. Needs in the field of social services

In the next part of the survey, respondents were asked which social services they considered to be the most necessary. Hence, Table 4 presents data regarding the so-called demand for social services in the Popowice district. The most necessary services were indicated by respondents as follows: easy access to healthcare (82.9%), access to culture (77.2%), activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention, and recreational and sports activities (76.4% each); care and nursing services (75.6%). Among the social services considered necessary by the smallest percentage of respondents, the following should be indicated: the possibility of gainful employment (36.6%), involving older people in the process of raising children in kindergartens and educating children and youth in schools (43.9%), and possibilities for seniors to undertake social activities (48.8%).

Table 4. Demand for social service

Easy access to healthcare	82.9%
Access to culture (cinema, library, theatre, etc.)	77.2%
Activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention (e.g. dietetics, diseases typical of older people, memory improvement techniques, etc.)	76.4%
Recreational and sports activities	76.4%
Care and nursing services (day care home, assistantship, nursing services)	75.6%
Integration of seniors with the local community (e.g. during festivals, cultural events, meetings, etc.)	74.0%
Meeting places for seniors available all day long	71.5%
Sports and recreational facilities available for seniors	71.5%
Hobby-related classes and training (e.g. artistic, computer, culinary)	70.7%
Access to spiritual life (e.g. church)	69.1%

Training to familiarize seniors with new technologies encountered in everyday life (payment cards, bank accounts, mobile phones, etc.)	69.1%
Educational activities related to threats and dangers	69.1%
Training and advice on legal, insurance, and financial issues (e.g., loans, mortgages, inheritance law, etc.)	67.5%
Possibilities for seniors to engage in social activity	48.8%
Involving older people in the process of raising children in kindergartens and educating children and young people in schools (visits, sharing stories as witnesses, etc.)	43.9%
Possibility of gainful employment (silver economy)	36.6%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

4.4. Net of social services

In order to deepen the analysis of the availability and demand for social services, an additional procedure was carried out, which consisted in comparing the percentage of respondents declaring supply and demand for a given social service. The calculations made it possible to prepare a list of social services for which one can speak of a deficit or surplus. The result of the procedure is shown in Table 5. Among the social services for which there is the greatest demand and the least supply were: activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention (-64.2%); care and nursing services (-63.4%); training and advice on legal, insurance and financial issues (-58.5%); training familiarizing seniors with new technologies encountered in everyday life (-55.3%); educational activities related to threats and dangers (-52.8%); meeting places for seniors available all day long (-51.2%). Among the social services satisfied to the greatest extent and with the surplus, the first and only one was access to spiritual life (+5.7%).

Table 5. Supply-demand for social service

Activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention (e.g. dietetics, diseases typical of older people, memory improvement techniques, etc.)	-64.2%
Care and nursing services (day care home, assistantship, nursing services)	-63.4%
Training and advice on legal, insurance, and financial issues (e.g., loans, mortgages, inheritance law, etc.)	-58.5%
Training to familiarize seniors with new technologies encountered in everyday life (payment cards, bank accounts, mobile phones, etc.)	-55.3%
Educational activities related to threats and dangers	-52.8%
Meeting places for seniors available all day long	-51.2%
Easy access to healthcare	-48.8%
Recreational and sports activities	-44.7%

Hobby-related classes and training (e.g. artistic, computer, culinary)	-39.0%
Involving older people in the process of raising children in kindergartens and educating children and young people in schools (visits, sharing stories as witnesses, etc.)	-30.9%
Possibilities for seniors to engage in social activity	-26.8%
Possibility of gainful employment (silver economy)	-26.8%
Integration of seniors with the local community (e.g. during festivals, cultural events, meetings, etc.)	-26.0%
Sports and recreational facilities available for seniors	-24.4%
Access to culture (cinema, library, theatre, etc.)	-23.6%
Access to spiritual life (e.g. church)	+5.7%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

4.5. Co-creation of social services

During the research in the area of co-creation, Popowice estate seniors were asked about their influence on the shape and quality of social services in their housing estate. Figure 6 presents data in this area: 39.8% of respondents answered that they would rather not be influenced, while 18.7% of respondents answered that they definitely were not influenced. Hence, the majority of seniors (58.5%) believe that they have little or no influence on the shape and quality of social services available in the housing estate. Only 18.7% of respondents believe that they have little influence, but it is worth emphasizing that none of the study participants considered that they had a large influence on the shape of available social services. The share of answers “I do not know” was 23%.

In the next part of the survey, participants were asked to answer the question of whether they would like to actively participate in designing and adapting social services to the needs of seniors. The response contained 4 predefined forms of involvement, and Table 6 presents respondents’ preferred forms of engagement. Among the proposed forms of involvement in the co-creation of social services, respondents would most like to take part in meetings and working meetings. The percentage of those willing to participate in meetings and working meetings was 44.7%, and this was the only form of involvement with more supporters than opponents; 40.7% of respondents were willing to take part in consultations, while 43.9% were reluctant; 30.9% of the survey participants declared their readiness to test services, while 44.7% of respondents were not interested in this activity. Only 15.5% of respondents would be willing to get involved as social reporters, while 54.5% of survey participants did not want to partake in this type of activity.

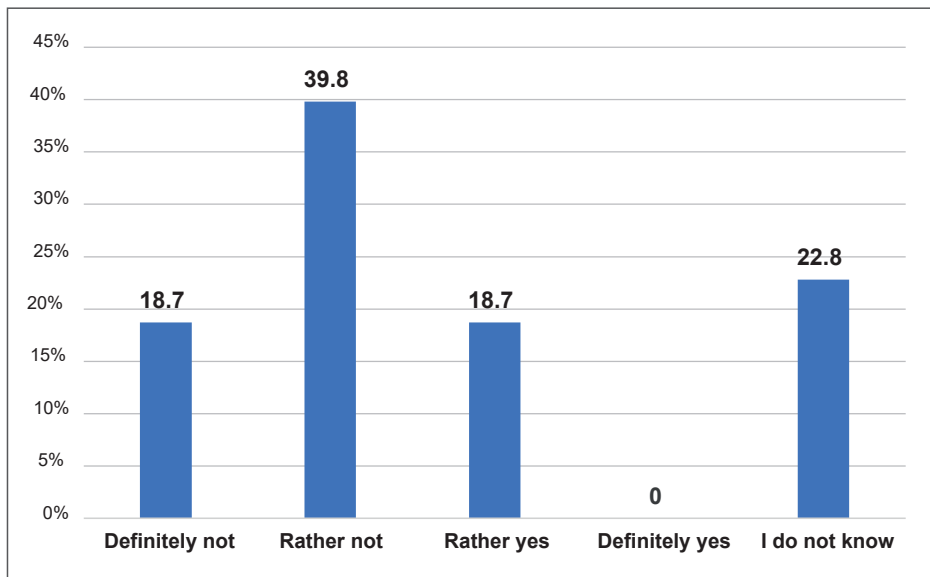


Figure 6. Impact on the availability and shape of social services

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

Table 6. Preferred forms of engagement

	Defini- tely not	Rather not	Rather yes	Defini- tely yes	I do not know
Consultations	13.8%	30.1%	30.9%	9.8%	15.4%
Meetings and working meetings	9.8%	26.8%	33.3%	11.4%	18.7%
Service testing	15.4%	29.3%	24.4%	6.5%	24.4%
In the role of a social reporter pointing out the problems of seniors	22.8%	31.7%	12.2%	3.3%	30.1%
In a different form	13.0%	17.1%	1.6%	0.0%	68.3%

Source: Own research; Timler, 2019.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to investigate the issue of social services for seniors living in the Popowice estate of Wroclaw, Poland. It has been revealed that the most common level of education among the survey respondents was secondary vocational and general education (33.3%). The vast majority of the survey respondents

(82.9%) were retired and did not undertake any other types of professional activity. Seniors generally assess their financial situation in a positive manner. Among them, 60.2% live at average standard. Most of the respondents (41.5%) live with a wife/husband or partner. The second most frequent answer (32.5%) was living alone. Living with other members of the family was declared by 16.3% of respondents. Altogether, it combines 90.3% who are apartment owners. Demand for social services is greater than supply of social services. Unfortunately, there was only one surplus of social services — access to spiritual life (+5.7%) while the list of deficits was much longer: activities popularizing medical knowledge and prevention (-64.2%); care and nursing services (-63.4%); training and advice on legal, insurance and financial issues (-58.5%); training familiarizing seniors with new technologies encountered in everyday life (-55.3%); educational activities related to threats and dangers (-52.8%); meeting places for seniors available all day long (-51.2%). The majority of seniors (58.5%) believe that they have little or no influence on the shape and quality of social services available in the housing estate. All indications are that this negative situation will probably not change since most seniors are unwilling to participate in any type of designing and adapting social services to their needs.

6. Acknowledgment

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