



IN-HABIT – INclusive Health And wellBeing In small and medium size ciTies

D2.4 Monitoring and evaluation of VIS for IHW in Riga. Final report.

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Authors and affiliations (2)	Missing authors and affiliations added.
Version log & History of changes (3-4)	VERSION LOG and HISTORY OF CHANGES updated.
List of figures and tables (10-12)	Newly added figures included.



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Executive summary (13-14)	Executive summary updated to reflect changes in content.
Methodology (51-55)	Section revised and methodological limitations clarified.
Results (57-96)	Section revised to improve readability and precision. Additional information on data sources (e.g. sample sizes) provided and limitations highlighted. Additional graphs and before-after comparisons included where appropriate and possible. Sections summarising qualitative findings condensed to improve readability.
Analysis (96-105)	Section revised to improve readability and precision, clarify evaluation logic and links to specific data sources, and reflect on limitations. Summary tables included to clarify assessment of achieved impacts.
Conclusions (106-107)	Conclusions updated.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CA	Consortium Agreement
DECO	Dissemination, Exploitation, Communication & Outreach
DC	Dissemination & Communication
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
GDEI	Gender, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
H2020	Horizon 2020 projects
IHW	Inclusive Health and Wellbeing
PPPPs	People-public-private-partnerships
VIS	Visionary and integrated solutions
WP	Work Package



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PARTNERS' SHORT NAMES

AVUE	Neighbourhood Association of Las Palmeras
BOT	Book on a Tree
BSC	Baltic Studies Centre
B4B	Bridge for Billions
CORD	Ayuntamiento de Córdoba
DFC	Design for Change Spain
HIDE	Hidepark Civic Association Triptych
KQ	Kalniciema Quarter
LABORELEC	Engie Laborelec
LCREA	Lucca Crea
LUCCA	Comune di Lucca
NITRA	Mesto Nitra



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PUJ	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
RIGA	Riga Planning Region
SUA	Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra
TSR	Tesseræ
UCO	University of Cordoba
UNIFI	Università di Pisa
UREAD	University of Reading



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Executive summary

This report summarises the main results of the monitoring and evaluation exercise that the IN-HABIT team in Riga carried out to determine the effect that VIS implemented at Āgenskalns Market have had since their introduction. Building on the 2021 baseline study and the 2024 mid-term review, the final report combines surveys, focus group conversations, media scans, observation reports, event monitoring and foot-traffic counts. Throughout the project, the indicators were revisited and revisited together with other stakeholders, keeping the process participatory and adaptable. The approach taken focused on how the market is used and experienced.

Because visitors experience the market as a single, integrated place, attributing outcomes to individual VIS components proved difficult. However, our flexible, co-design evaluation approach captured emergent effects that pre-defined metrics would have missed. This underscores the need for adaptive methods when studying complex, evolving urban projects. While this limits the precision with which predefined effects can be tracked and measured, it allows researchers to capture emergent insights and abandon faulty assumptions, though care must be taken not to overstate effects as a result.

The results suggest that the strongest effects are visible in the context of social wellbeing. People of different backgrounds note that the market is an important place of social interaction that nurtures a strong sense of place belonging. The market's events are tailored to different groups, and a variety of topics are addressed, leading to greater opportunities for social and cultural life in the neighbourhood.

The results further indicate that visitors now describe the market as a “public living room” – a clean, well-lit, aesthetically pleasant place where people like to linger. It has increased the reputation of the neighbourhood, and the space feels safer, though noise, temperature spikes on hot days and occasional air-quality concerns still bother some users, pointing to room for further improvement that the market team is currently addressing.



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Survey answers and qualitative data suggest modest but steady lifts in overall quality of life among those who frequent the market. While the effect is not significant enough to claim definite neighbourhood-wide IHW impacts, the consistent positive tone suggests the market adds an “emotional colour” to daily life. Furthermore, the market has made locally sourced produce more readily available. Light walking, standing at stalls and informal chats contribute to incidental physical activity and social interactions. Sustainability-focused workshops (zero-waste, cooking classes) draw visitors to the market, nudging residents toward healthier, more sustainable consumption patterns.

Take-away messages

- **Positive trajectory:** IN-HABIT’s contributions has delivered noticeable gains in social inclusion, cultural participation and spatial revitalisation.
- **Key strengths:** Neighbourhood reputation, community bonding and cultural vibrancy are clear outcomes of the interventions.
- **Areas to address:** Price concerns and sensory comfort (noise, temperature) to broaden economic and spatial benefits.
- **Future monitoring:** Keep the evaluation process participatory and flexible, while paying more attention to how interventions at the market lead to economic, emotional and health impacts.

In short, the report concludes that Āgenskalns Market has achieved its goal of becoming a multifunctional hub that intertwines commerce, culture, recreation and community support, delivering tangible wellbeing benefits, though there are areas where further refinements can deepen its impact.



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Introduction

This final monitoring and evaluation report of VIS for IHW in Riga provides an overview of the key impacts and contributions that project-funded and project-driven activities have made. It also describes the extent to which these correspond to the goals of the project and address city-specific challenges. The report builds upon the findings of the baseline study conducted in 2021 and the mid-term report from 2024 and makes use of various data sources collected between 2021 and 2025.

In line with the approach taken in IN-HABIT, this report reflects a collaborative effort with researchers continuously interacting with practitioners, public officials and a community of stakeholders in a participatory manner. The VIS, key indicators and foci for monitoring and evaluation activities were not predetermined by the project team alone. The project's framework for thinking about IHW was combined with the insights and contributions of various stakeholders (incl. vulnerable groups) invested in the wellbeing of Āgenskalns and the future of Āgenskalns Market. Through these discussions, we collectively identified priority areas for the project's interventions via the market and collaboratively developed a framework to capture and assess their impact.

In line with IN-HABIT's conceptual and analytical framework, the co-design process was not a one-time event. We employed an iterative approach, revisiting the chosen indicators and areas of focus and significantly revising them throughout the project. This allowed us to refine our approach based on the emerging evidence. By co-designing the monitoring and evaluation framework and iteratively adapting it, we aimed to ensure that the report identifies avenues of impact that can be plausibly associated with the activities at the market, though strong claims as to the causal connection should be made with caution. This allows us to demonstrate the project's contribution to improving health and wellbeing in Āgenskalns, while also acknowledging the role of contextual factors in shaping the impact of localised interventions.

The report draws on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies that aim to capture the impact of project-funded interventions in Āgenskalns Market on the health and wellbeing of residents of



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Āgenskalns and beyond. The qualitative data provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of participants. These narratives complement the quantitative findings from surveys, offering a deeper understanding of the project's impact on individual lives and perceptions of health and wellbeing in an evolving urban landscape. By combining these methodologies, the report aims to deliver a comprehensive picture of the project's effectiveness in achieving health and wellbeing impacts.

Finally, much like the mid-term report, **the final report aims to illustrate a multitude of impact forms, many of which are indirect.** While this presented several methodological challenges, we suggest that thinking about the impact of a mutable entity like a neighbourhood market requires an iterative approach to accommodate unexpected developments. This is why the final report builds on the monitoring results of the mid-term report but looks at different aspects of the market's impact and employs different data sources.

Structure of the report

The structure follows the mid-term report (D2.3). We start the report by introducing the project's conceptual and analytical framework. We continue by outlining the objectives of the pilot and the activities in Riga and provide an overview of VIS implemented in Riga. We subsequently outline our methodological approach and data sources that have been used in the final report. We then present the results of our study, discuss the observed project impacts on IHW in the city (Āgenskalns community and Riga at large) and discuss our finding in relation to the project's understanding of IHW and the specific impacts in Riga. We conclude by sharing our insights on the monitoring process and their implications for monitoring interventions in urban areas.



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IN-HABIT Conceptual an analytical framework

The urban dimension of health has strongly emerged in research in recent years. The rise in urbanisation has brought about positive economic and social benefits. Still, it has also significantly impacted health and wellbeing, exacerbating segregation and disparities and raising awareness of the need to ensure inclusiveness in urban settings (Badland and Pearce, 2019). With more than 80% of the European population expected to live in urban areas by 2030, health and wellbeing are increasing areas of attention in the urban political agendas. Furthermore, in Europe, the most significant proportion of the urban population (65%) lives in cities with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants (UN, 2014), prompting the need to pay attention to the context-specific and specific research and innovation needs of peripheral small and medium-sized cities (SMSCs).

IN-HABIT is giving answers to the challenges specified in SC5-14-2019: Visionary and integrated solutions to improve wellbeing and health in cities: delivering visionary and integrated solutions at the intersection of social, cultural, digital and nature-based innovation to increase citizens' health and wellbeing in cities; demonstrating how the integration of these solutions into innovative land use management, urban design and planning could reduce health-related environmental burdens in socially deprived neighbourhoods, foster equitable access for all to public spaces, enhance their quality and use and promote sustainable urban mobility patterns; and testing new transition management approaches, governance models, legal frameworks and financing mechanisms to re-design public spaces and urban commons and assess their contribution to improving health and wellbeing. They should promote multistakeholder initiatives, citizens' engagement and co-creation and co-ownership of public spaces.

The project is developed in four European peripheral SMSCs - Cordoba (Spain), Riga (Latvia), Lucca (Italy) and Nitra (Slovakia) and is focused on the testing of visionary and integrated solutions (VIS) to foster Inclusive Health and Wellbeing (IHW) with a focus on gender, equity, diversity and inclusion (GDEI). Our conceptual approach combines the concepts of inclusivity, health, and wellbeing in urban areas and is based on the recognition that IHW is a collectively generated resource that surpasses the



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mere aggregation of individuals' personal wellbeing. IN-HABIT considers IHW as co-created common pool resources (CCPR), understood as resources that are owned, managed, and used by the community but have characteristics of both, a private good that is rival in consumption (community wellbeing depletes if citizens do not invest in it and are not concerned with the wellbeing of others) and a public good that is non-excludable (living in places of high wellbeing is beneficial to anyone who moves there). In this scenario, the most vulnerable and fragile groups have underserved needs.

Each of the 4 IN-HABIT pilot cities is different in size, demography, position in the settlement hierarchy of their respective countries and prevailing and emerging challenges in terms of health and wellbeing. Also, each pilot targets a different urban scale in the area of intervention and works with different vulnerable collectives:

- In Cordoba, the target area Las Palmeras is an entire deprived neighbourhood, affected by segregation, concentration of socio-economic-environmental problems and territorial stigma. Spatial isolation influences the reproduction of disadvantages and prevents social mobility.
- In Riga, conversely, the spatial extension is very contained, with the project entirely concentrated on the regeneration and management of a single building, although considering the district as the spatial dimension directly impacted by the building regeneration.
- In Lucca, the project works transversally in the city aiming at introducing the opportunity to promote non-human-animals for IHW for citizens. In this perspective the project works both structuring the idea and the evidence of A-NBS and to physically reorganise part of the existing urban space to create an infrastructural green urban system connecting the historical centre with peripheral areas.
- In Nitra, the spatial dimension is fundamental, with the focus on the development of an open and flexible green design principle for a peripheral area of the city and on its territorial integration within the urban system.



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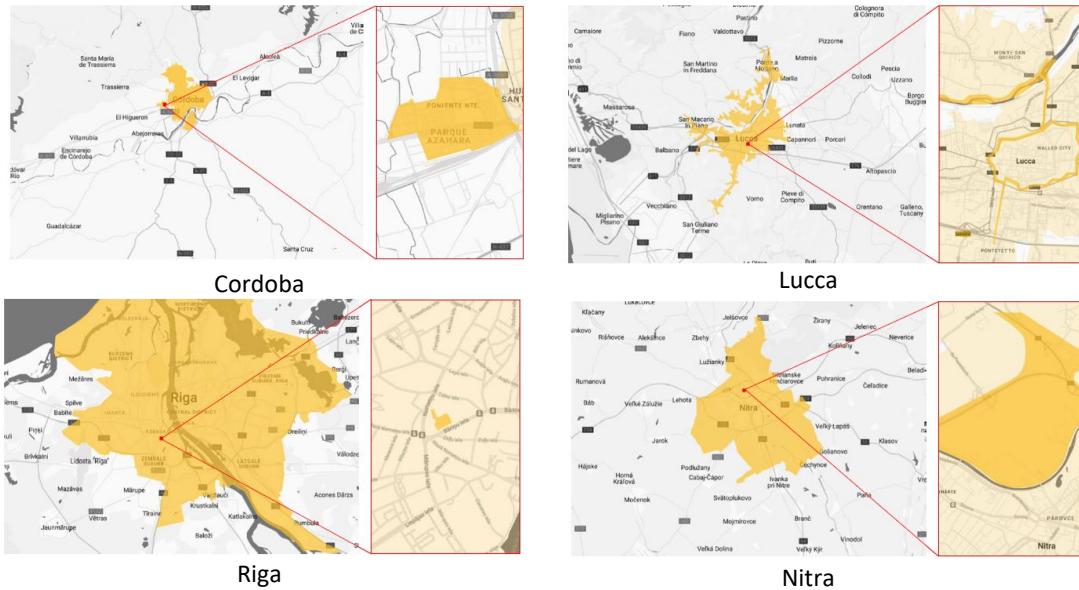


Figure 1. Urban scale of 4 IN-HABIT pilots

IN-HABIT pilots are developed through the so-called VIS for IHW. Visionary because putting vulnerable collectives at the centre of the innovative solutions, we are mobilising existing undervalued resources, such as culture, food, human-animal bonds, environment and art, to boost IHW, overcoming the limited health and wellbeing provision for these collectives. Integrated because we combine ‘soft’ solutions based on social and cultural actions with ‘hard’ solutions based on NBS solutions, infrastructures and digital tools. Inclusive because the project is developed with a gender, diversity, equity and inclusion approach. Soft and hard VIS are articulated around heritage and culture in Córdoba (as a nexus for inclusive societies), food in Riga (nurturing daily healthier lifestyles), animals in Lucca (human-animal bonds as new relational urban goods) and art and environment in Nitra (to connect places and people).

IN-HABIT is testing innovative methods of working with vulnerable collectives (elderly, excluded citizens, ethnic minorities, migrants, homeless, women, children and youngsters, LGTBQ+, people with



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mental disorders, refugees and others) to make cities more liveable and inclusive and looking ahead to the threats they face, such as climate change, increasing disparities and exclusion, ageing and isolation, decreasing mental wellbeing or the increasing presence of animals in people's lives.

Our four cities are very different, and so are the VIS deployed, and the collectives targeted, but in all of them, we work using the same conceptual framework for inclusive urban change and the same working methods. We never aimed at direct comparability but at complementarity, offering a broad catalogue of solutions, experimenting in different contexts and working with different collectives to deliver evidence of the results of our VIS and methods to other SMSCs in Europe and beyond.

Our **COMMON WORKING METHODS** are based on the following:

IN-HUBs: The IN-HUBs are inclusive innovation labs that mobilise human resources by activating people-public-private partnerships (PPPPs) and nurture VIS co-design, co-deploy, co-manage, and co-monitor processes (CO-CO-CO-CO). They are based on a science-society-policy interface where these different actors meet to do real practical work, share and transfer knowledge, deliver evidence, assess the impact, and craft the future legacy of the project. This collaborative approach enables civic, public, and private sector actors to work together, ensuring that everyone feels included and part of the solution. Together, we work to find the best solutions to improve IHW. IN-HABIT is not only building capacities in vulnerable collectives but also building communities and boosting the willingness to work together.

Different spatial scopes of the 4 pilot cities, as well as different target groups, also guided the engagement process. With the aim to test innovative and inclusive governance models, co-design methodologies and co-management schemes, the 4 IN-HUBs were launched. Building on the 4-P (Public-Private-People Partnership) as an emerging concept that broadens the scope of traditional public-private partnerships by including a wider range of actors, particularly NGOs, civil society, and informal groups, in planning and execution processes. This approach aims to address limitations of conventional public-private partnerships by incorporating the public ("people") as active participants



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alongside public and private entities, fostering more inclusive and community-centred development initiatives (Maraña, 2020).

Vulnerable contexts and collectives as target groups and VIS based on addressing their perceived IHW needs. IN-HABIT has been based on multistakeholder engagement (listening to our target groups in our IN-HUBs), including their views through our CO-CO-CO-CO method, thinking differently and catalysing changes (small actions can make great differences), creating processes rather than actions (putting in place soft VIS before co-deploying hard VIS), listening and amplifying the voices of these collectives (making Europe accessible to them for the first time thanks to the cross-case visits and the attention paid by a H2020 project to them). We aim to leverage the opportunities offered by the VIS to foster human-centred cities, where citizens become city-makers and shapers, taking an active role, but also the responsibility, in the co-creation of IN-HABIT public spaces and urban development.

The CO-CO-CO-CO working methods are inspired by the Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a qualitative methodology commonly used in community psychology that actively involves community members in the research process to effect social change (Macdonald, 2012; Miller, 1994). It is characterized by democratic, equitable, and liberating principles, distinguishing it from other qualitative approaches (Macdonald, 2012). In an iterative process, it links participation, social action, knowledge generation and organisational learning in various diverse stakeholder ecosystems (Greenwood, 1993). It's a particularly suitable concept when introducing marginalized populations as co-researchers, developing new roles and strategies of engagement (Frisby, 2005) and in recent years the approach is emerging as a flexible way to address participation of vulnerable groups in identifying linkages between public space use and wellbeing in an urban setting (Cheung, et al., 2022; Corburn, 2005) and foster environmental learning and civic literacy (Ballard & Belsky, 2010).

Common Impact Assessment Framework, based on 5 dimensions of IHW: subjective wellbeing, spatial and environmental wellbeing, social wellbeing, economic wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Different subdimensions have been identified for each dimension. The general framework has been adapted to the context and target groups of each city, and a battery of final indicators has been proposed (see Mac Fadden et al. 2024 for Cordoba's case study). Our innovative impact assessment framework goes



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beyond monetary and biophysical aspects to recognise the complex interrelationships among the economic, environmental, psychological, social and relational dimensions of IHW.

IN-HABIT has co-created an Impact Assessment Framework grounded in an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach that integrates top-down and bottom-up approaches to measure Health and Wellbeing. We first did a comprehensive search for existing frameworks from reputable entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the OECD and the European Commission. This allows us to work with well-accepted and common dimensions and subdimensions to assess IHW and several pertinent health and wellbeing indicators. Concurrently, we put in place a bottom-up approach involving interviews and questionnaires with various stakeholders in each city to adapt the indicators to the local context and their perceptions of health and wellbeing. This dual approach culminated in creating an inclusive health and wellbeing assessment framework specifically tailored to the needs of each pilot.

Central to the framework is the understanding that health and wellbeing are influenced by a combination of individual, social, and environmental determinants, a concept strongly supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The WHO's Social Determinants of Health (SDH) framework emphasises that health outcomes are shaped by the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, as well as by the broader systems and policies that influence these conditions (WHO, 2010). The framework also aligns with the Diderichsen's model of health inequality, which highlights how social stratification leads to different health outcomes based on socioeconomic status (Diderichsen, Andersen, & Manuel, 2012).

Our framework also incorporates the subjective experience of wellbeing, drawing on both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. Hedonic wellbeing is associated with constructs such as happiness, positive affect, and life satisfaction, while eudaimonic wellbeing focuses on positive psychological functioning and human development (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). Subjective wellbeing is thus a multifaceted construct that includes general psychological wellbeing, life satisfaction, and the absence of mental distress (Bech, 2004; Topp et al., 2015; Kessler et al., 2003).



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This approach is consistent with definitions from the Eurofound, which emphasise the individual's assessment of their quality of life (Eurofound, 2017).

The following 5 dimensions form the cornerstone of the IN-HABIT assessment of IHW. The framework guides both PAR methodologies and the development of hard and soft VIS, ensuring that interventions are grounded in the lived experiences and needs of the community. By aligning assessment and intervention strategies with local conditions, the VIS can significantly enhance the effectiveness of health and wellbeing initiatives, ultimately leading to more resilient and thriving communities.

- **Subjective Wellbeing:** This dimension considers personal perceptions of happiness and life satisfaction.
- **Spatial and Environmental Wellbeing:** This includes the quality of physical surroundings, green spaces, and environmental health.
- **Social Wellbeing:** This addresses social cohesion, community engagement, and social support networks.
- **Healthy Lifestyles:** This dimension focuses on behaviours such as physical activity, diet, and substance use.
- **Economic Wellbeing:** This encompasses income levels, employment status, and economic security.



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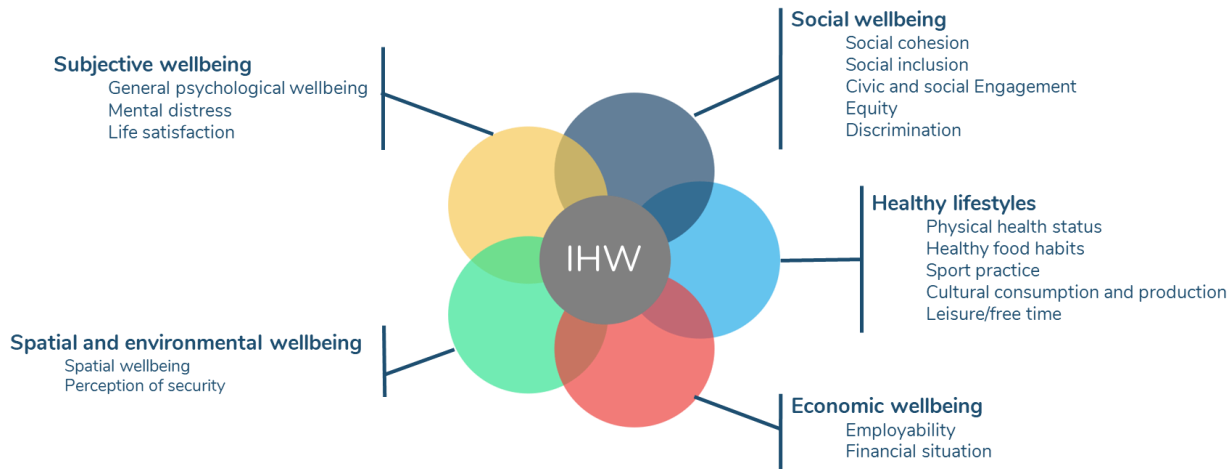


Figure 2. The IN-HABIT impact evaluation framework

The significance of this methodology lies in the recognition of health and wellbeing as co-created common pool resources influenced by the collectivity and the environment in which individuals reside and not exclusively linked to the individuals. Consequently, the metrics for assessing health and wellbeing must be adaptable to the distinct characteristics of different urban settings. This hypothesis is particularly important when considering small and medium-sized cities, which often face unique challenges and circumstances that larger metropolitan frameworks may not properly address. IN-HABIT framework has common indicators for the 4 cities, and some are more specific for each city's needs and context.

GDEI as a cross-cutting perspective that emphasises the relationship between wellbeing and discrimination. Discrimination, often stemming from prejudiced attitudes, disempowers individuals, hinders their active participation, restricts skill development, and often obstructs access to essential opportunities such as work, health services, education, or housing.

The Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (GDEI) perspective as another critical component of the framework is informed by theories such as the minority stress model, which describes how social stressors impact the mental health of marginalised groups, particularly the LGBT community (Meyer,



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2003). The WHO also recognises that inequalities and discrimination significantly affect health and lifestyles, influencing individual wellbeing (WHO, 2012). Research further supports that discrimination, whether structural or individual, has profound negative effects on both mental and physical health outcomes (Alvarez-Galvez & Salvador-Carulla, 2013).

Testing mindset and behavioural change approaches in the 4 cities to investigate the effects on mental health, wellbeing and healthier lifestyles of the VIS and the importance of adopting behavioural science to promote sustainable and inclusive mindset and behaviour changes in urban environments targeting vulnerable contexts and collectives. Prospective options are discussed to inform IHW policies.

To boost IHW in urban design and planning for small and medium-sized cities, a systemic urban planning framework is being developed based on the DOs and DONTs identified by the project. This framework will represent a unique reference for SMSCs.

Moreover, IN-HABIT is fully aligned with the current EU policy priorities: the EU Green Deal making Europe a climate-smart continent; the One Health approach and its links to human and nature health; the Nature Based Solution approach and the need for green-blue, but also animal spaces; the Biodiversity-Climate nexus; the restoration of urban ecosystems, aligned with the Nature Restoration Law, and last but not least, the New European Bauhaus. The project will deliver evidence to make these policies operational for the most vulnerable groups and places.

In short, the IN-HABIT project addresses emerging, pressing and urgent problems: The need for the inclusion of vulnerable and excluded collectives in the health and wellbeing agenda, the specificities of SMSCs, the existence of unused or undervalued resources that can boost health and wellbeing at the city level and the impact of the integration of soft and hard solutions to boost social urban transformation and healthier cities.



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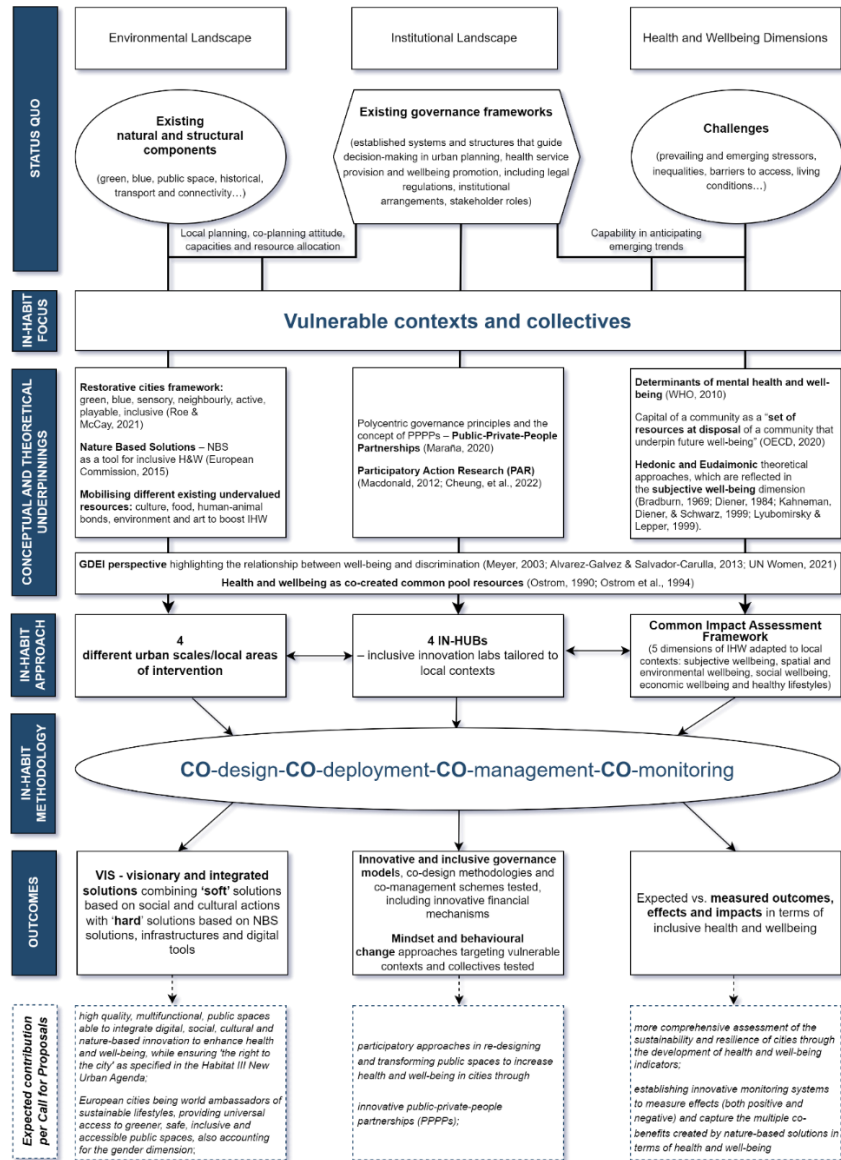


Figure 3. IN-HABIT Conceptual and Analytical Framework



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The connection between mobilising undervalued resources to co-create visionary and integrated solutions for inclusive urban transformation and boosting the health and wellbeing of vulnerable collectives is grounded in the principles of **urban psychology** and the concept of **restorative cities**. In an urbanising society, building cities able to co-design, co-deploy and co-manage positive and livable environments in the everyday life of the people really matters. The organisation of urban spaces has a clear impact on spatial and environmental wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, and social wellbeing, as well as in the organisation of everyday healthy lifestyles.

Among the specific challenges of a healthy city, psychological wellbeing is **gaining increasing attention** (Peen et al., 2010). Since the beginning of the last century, urban psychologists have focused scientific attention on the relationships between city living and the health and wellbeing of their citizens. City living offers access to shared resources and opportunities (Gifford & Sussmann, 2012). While cities might be enjoyable, exciting, and potentially sustainable, they can also generate stress, health concerns, anxiety, insecurity and distrust, as well as frustration and isolation. Enhancing positive outcomes and reducing negative ones is essential in urban development. Studies have investigated diverse aspects like satisfaction with physical condition, social relations, political climate and convenience (Fried, 1984), as well as feeling of attachment to neighbourhoods, including place identity, dependence, and nature friends and family bonding (Raymond et al., 2010, Brown et al. 2003).

Following such perspective, people are generally more satisfied when they feel at home in their living environment and have greater satisfaction when have positive relationships with their neighbours (Gifford R. Sussmann R 2011). It is worth considering that in evolutionary contexts, stability and instability are always in a dynamic interplay. This can apply to urban infrastructures, social dynamics and geographical organization (i.e., different urban spaces within the same city can have diverse arrangements that may affect residents' satisfaction differently, depending on their specific evolutionary needs and community composition).



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Subjectivity also plays a critical role (personal levels of anxiety, personal perspectives and attitudes to live in urban or rural settings). These subjective factors might influence and shape the behaviour and choices of specific groups of people (i.e., the counter-urbanization movement of the 70's from urban to rural settings of groups of young people protesting the modernisation process and the individualisation of the way of living in the urban areas).

The extensive body of scientific literature produced by urban psychologists over the past century reflects this complexity (Takooshian H. 2005). From Simmel's (1905) exploration of "The Metropolis and Mental Life" to Milgram's (1970) study "The Experience of Living in Cities," and more recent reflections on restorative cities (Roe & McCay, 2021; Hartig, 2004 ; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, Ulrich, 1993; Ulrich et al., 1991, Weber & Trojan, 2018), there has been a continuous evolution in understanding urban living. The debate on restorative cities focuses on seven dimensions aiming to create an environment ready to better fit human needs at the city level (Roe and McCay, 2021):

- **Green:** the availability of green spaces and access to nature to reduce depression and stress, improve brain functions, and reduce anxiety, ADHD and dementia;
- **Blue:** about water availability, access, and cleanness that can reduce depression and stress;
- **Sensory:** regarding the level of noise, smell and pollution or, on the contrary, positive soundscapes, sonic refugees and visual complexity that might exert positive human outcomes;
- **Neighbourly:** the impact of city organisation and the presence of public spaces in the definition of social networks and social dialogue among ages, ethnicities, income, social classes and groups of individuals;
- **Active cities:** the possibility of having access to physical activities and different mobility ways – walking, running, biking, using transportation for diverse groups of people – women, elders, males, families, youngsters, children;
- **Playable:** regarding the availability of spaces where it is possible to play and to foster mental, social, cognitive, and emotional development;
- **Inclusive:** regarding spaces, activities, and services, able to reduce as much as possible diverse types of exclusion - linked to ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation, physical and mental diversities and capabilities.



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The seven dimensions of a restorative city should be read and adapted to each specific context, starting from the existing structural and social conditions and relating them to the existing evolutionary dynamics.

The seven dimensions match with the opportunity to co-design, co-deploy, co-manage and co-assess spaces, activities, services, and resources that enhance the 5 IN-HABIT dimensions and subdimensions of IHW:

- **Spatial and environmental wellbeing** (Sense of security, Satisfaction with urban green areas, Perception of noise and air pollution, Perception of the neighbourhood and sense of belonging)
- **Subjective wellbeing** (Mental distress, Psychological wellbeing, Life satisfaction)
- **Social wellbeing** (Social cohesion, Social inclusion and cohesion, Civic and social engagement, discrimination, and equity)
- **Healthy lifestyles** (Perceived physical health, Eating habits, Sports practice, Social and cultural habits, Human-animal interaction, Leisure and free time)
- **Economic wellbeing** (Employment, Job and skills satisfaction, Financial situation, Housing and living conditions).

Building on the existing literature, a specific conceptual and analytical framework can be organised to read the IN-HABIT approach (Figure 2.). It looks to the analysis of state of the art in the 4 cities regarding the key health and wellbeing indicators of the common assessment framework, context-specific emerging trends and stressors at the starting point. The 7 regenerative dimensions are linked to specific intersections between “soft” and “hard” solutions combining social, cultural, NBS, technological and digital innovations co-created within the CO-CO-CO-CO methodology. The participatory approach takes existing local institutional context into account, building on existing and creating new collaborative actions, boosting the capacities and empowering vulnerable groups.



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IN-HABIT Pilot in Riga¹

Project activities in Riga were focused on Āgenskalns, a district located on the left bank of the river Daugava. The neighbourhood is undergoing a significant socio-economic transformation and an influx of residents from various economic and ethnic backgrounds. **The specific challenges related to IHW included a diverse range of issues affecting the quality of life in Āgenskalns.**

- Limited opportunities for cultural life and social life in Āgenskalns itself, particularly for families and young professionals.
- The presence of several liquor shops and gambling establishments has historically contributed to the perception that Āgenskalns is insufficiently safe and, consequently, limited its social desirability.
- While the local community has been described as cohesive and the neighbourhood association is believed to be among the most active in Riga, the influx of new residents and students from abroad due to the proximity of Āgenskalns to several university campuses, may be seen as disrupting the social equilibrium.
- Lack of spaces that allow individuals from various different backgrounds to interact.

These challenges were addressed via a new investment project, which served as the primary anchor point of the Riga IN-HUB - the transformation of Āgenskalns market into a multifunctional food hub in collaboration with the Riga Planning Region (RPR) and Baltic Studies Centre (BSC).

IN-HABIT activities in Riga operate in lockstep with the overall vision of KQ, which has undertaken the renovation and reconstruction of Āgenskalns Market and is actively investing in the market². **IN-HABIT interventions are designed with the aim of creating synergies and complementarities between the**

¹ This section is based on longer descriptions available in D2.1 and D2.3.

² The building is owned by Riga City Council. In 2018 the Riga City Council selected KQ as the next lessee of the market for a period of 30 years.



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project's methodology and conceptual approach and KQ's development plans and actions. This synergy is consistent with the business model of KQ (a social enterprise) where many activities are simultaneously economically oriented, socially focused on the inclusion of different groups, and environmentally motivated towards sustainability objectives.

In the case of Āgenskalns market, the link between health and wellbeing is integrated into the very concept of a multifunctional urban food hub, and this synergy between the market and IN-HABIT was built upon. IN-HABIT brought international expertise and methodologies for developing particular activities in the framework of IHW, whereas the market itself provided the physical space and infrastructure to embed the VIS and a team that is respected and trusted by local stakeholders.

Objectives in Riga

The overarching goal of the Riga team in IN-HABIT was to promote healthy and inclusive communities in Āgenskalns neighbourhood, by turning Āgenskalns Market³ into a multifunctional and creative urban food hub - a kind of community or cultural centre in the neighbourhood, contributing to different aspects of health and wellbeing. The choice to focus on food is predicated on the idea that it is a powerful force that shapes both individual health and social dynamics within urban environments. The market on the other hand allows to embed food in a multifunctional context that serves different needs that communities have. Food is, therefore, a point of departure for addressing broader issues associated with IHW and sustainability.

The Riga IN-HUB focuses on the transformation of a traditional urban market into a multifunctional urban food hub. Multifunctionality is a keyword meaning various functions that the food hub plays in contemporary urban settings. The people – market visitors, participants of events, Āgenskalns community are seen as the main connectors of multiple food hub functions and as the end beneficiaries upon the condition that they are being involved in co-creation, co-deployment, and co-management of

³ More information about the market can be found here: <https://www.agenskalnatirgus.lv/en>



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the Āgenskalns Market project. The multifunctionality of Āgenskalns market project is inherently linked to **diversity and inclusion**. Enrichment and diversification of food hub functions opens new opportunities for people to engage and participate, and the enhanced inclusivity of socialising and cultural events may compensate for certain exclusion effects of other developments enabled by the market. Thus, **diversity and inclusion are dynamic processes** that are being continuously reproduced and modified.

The **specific objectives** of the activities in Riga formulated at the outset of the project were:

- to increase healthy food consumption habits among local people by reducing sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets (subjective wellbeing, healthy lifestyles);
- to improve accessibility for all while encouraging sustainable mobility (walking and cycling) from and to Āgenskalns Market (spatial and environmental wellbeing);
- to use food as a means to improve intercultural and intergenerational social relations, sense of belonging and ownership of the place (subjective wellbeing, social wellbeing);
- to shorten food supply chains and decrease food waste in the market (spatial and environmental wellbeing, economic wellbeing).

The distinctiveness of Riga in IN-HABIT lies in its focus on sustainable food as the basis for healthy and inclusive urban wellbeing.

In particular, work in Riga is concentrating on: (i) improvements to physical public infrastructure in and around the territory of Āgenskalns market in Riga, and (ii) the promotion of food related educational and consumption practices. This approach initially coalesced into four main directions of work. All four are examples of incremental innovation: (i) transformation of the outdoor marketplace, (ii) community kitchen, (iii) minimisation of waste at the market, and (iv) an online food purchasing system. Over time, however, the fourth direction (online market) lost its relevance⁴, and a decision was made to focus on

⁴ The online facility was useful during the pandemic, but the market team noted a gradual loss of interest after the pandemic.



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a variety of social and cultural events (described in more detail below). Nonetheless, activities related to online food purchasing did result in the establishment of the first (in Latvia) parcel shipping/collection point for fresh food on the premises of the market⁵.



Figure 4. Āgenskalns Market: a cultural centre in the neighbourhood contributing to different aspects of health and wellbeing

The initial plans for Āgenskalns Market involved both hard (infrastructural) and soft (practices, events) solutions. While some key components of the solutions (spaces to be renovated, main infrastructural innovations and functions) had been clearly defined at the outset (e.g. equipment for the community kitchen), it was believed that many elements would be co-designed with local

⁵ See: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/ekonomika/darbu-sak-latvija-pirmais-partikas-pakomats.a492248/>



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stakeholders to ensure that a variety of perspectives and needs would have a chance to shape the development of Āgenskalns Market. This was done continuously, and the feedback received itself functioned as a form of monitoring and evaluation, albeit episodic.

The GDEI (Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) approach has been an important part in all phases and tasks of the project, from the co-definition of impact and IHW indicators to the implementation of solutions in Āgenskalns Market. It allowed us to attend to lived experiences (understanding the extent to which the cities are lived differently by different social groups, and design an effective urban space), health and wellbeing inequality (capturing the extent of inequality in health and wellbeing in the cities to understand how urban design affects health and wellbeing). The Riga team tried to ensure that specific (vulnerable and less represented) groups of the population are involved in market activities and the elaboration of the visionary and integrated solutions. However, we note that this has not always been successful, and groups without institutions or organisations that represent their needs have been challenging to involve.

Furthermore, an additional aim was to transfer and popularise the Riga IN-HUB experience in other cities in Latvia. This was done via several replication events that discussed the challenges and achievements of IN-HABIT with other markets in the Riga planning region and has laid the groundwork for future upscaling activities (see D2.5).

Co-design in Riga

It is important to note that a general vision for Āgenskalns Market pre-existed the IN-HABIT project. Nonetheless, the project provided an opportunity to increase the presence of IHW aspects and further refine the plans, and the baseline study was among the first engagement activities in the framework of IN-HABIT to involve different target groups.

The organisation and governance of the Riga IN-HUB, and IN-HABIT activities in Riga more generally, were organised as a set of three concentric circles of actors. While there is interaction and networking between different stakeholders, IN-HABIT activities are primarily driven by the vision



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of the core team. This approach allows for structure and continuity, while simultaneously designing in regular feedback from stakeholders. This decision derives from the specific nature of the IN-HABIT interventions in Riga, which take place in a neighbourhood market currently managed by a social enterprise.

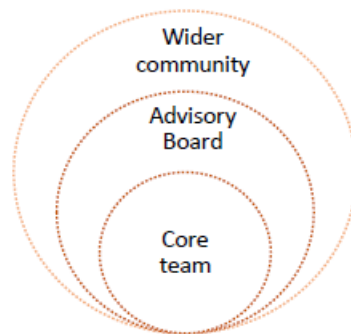


Figure 5. Riga IN-HUB

At the end of the baseline assessment process in 2021, the Riga IN-HUB had already defined the four directions of work that they will follow in the next few years. These were taken from the pool of ideas of the project proposal, directly deriving from the consultation with citizens done between 2018 and 2021. Crucially, **the co-design phase was primarily exploratory.** While the four directions of work were agreed upon, the details of their implementation were not spelled out. Consequently, the specific form they took was defined during the subsequent phases.

Co-deployment and Co-management in Riga

Co-deployment and co-management of VIS broadly follows nine steps.

1. Community Needs Assessment: A needs assessment to understand the specific needs, interests, and preferences of the community is carried out. This involves surveys, interviews, focus groups, or community forums.



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2. *Community Consultation*: Based on the needs assessment, a series of community consultation sessions (both in person and online) to gather input and feedback on potential activities are organised.
3. *Activity Proposal Development*: Using the insights gathered, KQ develops proposals that outline the objectives, target audience, format, resources required, and expected outcomes of each activity.
4. *Community Feedback and Refinement*: Community members are encouraged to provide suggestions and refine the activity proposals accordingly.
5. *Co-creation Workshops*: KQ hosts a co-creation workshop where community members where participants brainstorm ideas, prioritise activities, develop action plans, and assign responsibilities.
6. *Implementation Planning*: Following the co-creation workshop, KQ works closely with community members to finalise the implementation plans for the selected activities.
7. *Activity Implementation*: The planned activities are implemented according to the agreed-upon timelines and action plans.
8. *Monitoring and Evaluation*: Throughout the implementation phase, the Riga team monitors the progress of the activities and collects data on their impact and effectiveness. Community feedback is continuously sought, though structured data gathering activities have only started recently.
9. *Reflection and Learning*: After the activities have been completed, KQ facilitates reflection sessions with community members to review what worked well, what could be improved, and key learnings for future initiatives.

However, we should note that in the case of soft VIS, this process is usually streamlined.

The co-governance was based in a combination of formal and informal elements⁶. The formal side is represented by agreements between KQ and the city council, with vendors, different stakeholders and the user advisory board. The informal side is represented by the network of relationships that

⁶ For more details see D2.2



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allow the market to attract interest and continuously adapt to changing circumstances. Overall, the implementation and management of VIS was mainly coordinated by the core partner (KQ). Nonetheless, some coordination functions were self-assumed by community groups and local activists who initiated their own activities at the market. This contributed to shared governance and greater ownership of the market event programme by the community.

Visionary and integrated solutions in Riga

Several integrated solutions were initially proposed to be co-developed with the direct involvement of local residents, businesses, NGOs, farmers and educational institutions. The initial plans were ambitious and not all of them could be put into practice, although we note that many of the elements were successfully realised, albeit in a different way than initially envisaged. The subsequent sections provide an overview of the main soft and hard VIS in Riga. While they are divided into soft and hard solutions for narrative purposes, in practice they have taken shape together. Furthermore, there is an inherent relationship between hard and soft solutions as the implementation of hard VIS has enabled many soft activities, while soft VIS allow for the identification of needs and directions of further hard VIS.

Soft VIS

Soft VIS of the Riga IN-HUB took the form of events. Since the beginning of IN-HABIT project, Āgenskalns Market team together with other IN-HUB partners and (community groups and stakeholders) organise a series of events or soft intervention activities aimed at achieving the IN-HABIT objectives of inclusion, wellbeing and sustainability and targeted at the general public as well as specific groups.

In terms of thematic focus, the events can be classified as economic (trade), social, cultural, environmental and educational events.



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Figure 6. Āgenskalns Market – a venue for cultural, educational, and interdisciplinary events

To monitor the IN-HABIT events at Āgenskalns Market and track their impact, the Riga team has designed and continuously fills in a living event database (an Excel sheet) where all the activities organised as part of IN-HABIT or thematically relevant to IN-HABIT are being recorded in a structured way. During the 2nd reporting period 196 events were organised (from 01.05. 2022 till 30.11.2023) while in the 3rd reporting period 191 events have taken place at Āgenskalns Market (from 01.12.2023 till 31.07.2025).

Economic / trade events are the most frequent at the market. These can take the form of weekly flea and monthly vintage markets which bring together antiquity traders and customers interested in second-hand goods, reuse and repair practices. Trade events relate to *minimisation of waste* direction of the Riga INHUB. They promote the ideas of sustainable lifestyles and circular resource use and potentially contribute to economic wellbeing.



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Figure 7. Weekly flea market and monthly vintage market

Social events organised at the market take different forms: festivities, celebrations, competitions, creative workshops, sport activities, community sharing and gifting events, reading sessions, meal preparation, ethnic days and other. They are oriented towards the general public and the participants include various groups from Āgenskalns neighbourhood as well as visitors, tourists and residents of other neighbourhoods. A common characteristic of social events is their interactive nature, thereby facilitating community engagement and skill development. They also act against discrimination and foster inclusion. Thematically speaking, social events may be related to different topics from calendar festivities to food, ethnic cultures, crafts and sports.



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Figure 8. Social events in Āgenskalns Market

Social events are usually organised in collaboration between the Āgenskalns Market team and food traders, caterers, shopkeepers, involving also media, cultural institutions, researchers and artistic groups. Social events entail a strong component of performative action and engagement of participants. Doing and experiencing together / DIY is essential to social events.

In terms of relation to hard VIS, social events are largely made possible due to the renovated outdoor marketplace, the equipped community stage, community greenhouse and community kitchen. Social events may happen on multiple locations at the market. Box 1. presents some examples of social events.

Box 1. Examples of social events

Event “Cook with actors”: Professional actors prepare with participants their favourite meal and read poetry from their musical shows.

Event “Celebration of National Independence Day”: The market tables are decorated with white tablecloths, the Latvian music is played, in the cafes and market stands on the 1st floor special gifts from local farmers and craftswomen are provided.

Event “Read your favourite book”: Participants bring their favourite book and read aloud the page 79th.



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Cultural events have professional and amateur arts in their background. They include concerts, artistic performances, theatrical shows, dances, musical performances and more. Folk, jazz and choir music concerts frequent at the market. Similarly to social events, cultural events are offered free of charge and are aimed at the general public. Most of them take place in the transformed outdoor marketplace (community stage, community greenhouse). Cultural events are co-organised by Āgenskalns Market team together with artistic collectives, such as musical groups, literary associations and cultural education establishments. Box 2 gives a flavour of some cultural events.

Box 2. Examples of cultural events

Event “Summer evening”: Folk group GRODI plays music and invites everyone to dance - old and young. Less known and more well-known Latgalian dances, songs and games are being played.

Event “Improvised theatre about conspiracy theories”: In interaction with the audience, actors create etudes in which they imagine what would happen if conspiracy theories were true. The audience is invited to make suggestions for possible scenarios and play them out together.

Event “Read your favourite book”: In a joint reading event participants bring their favourite book and read aloud the page 79th.



Figure 9. Cultural events taking place in the transformed outdoor marketplace



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Educational events include activities like cooking masterclasses, meal preparations, food recipe demonstrations, craftsmanship training, bicycle repair sessions, gardening classes and more. These events usually take place at the community kitchen and transformed outdoor marketplace. Many educational events are food related as they address various aspects of sustainable consumption, such as meal preparation, food saving, food planning, food waste avoidance, cooking, menu diversification, healthy nutrition, culinary heritage, ethnic cuisines, local and seasonal products. Teaching, demonstrating, learning and sharing knowledge about healthy nutrition and sustainable food consumption is essential to these events. Other topics of educational events may involve language training for migrant population, entrepreneurship start up courses for Ukrainian war refugees, craftsmanship classes, and physical health related workshops.



Figure 10. An example of expanding the functions of the market: educational events about sustainability organised in Ågenskalns Market

Educational events, compared to social and cultural events, are more targeted towards specific groups, such as young people, families with children, senior citizens, work collectives, gardeners, ethnic minorities, refugees. Most educational events are offered free of charge. The exception is cooking, and degustation events and masterclasses demanded by organisational clients.

Educational events require special knowledge, therefore they are organised with the involvement experts, such as food producers, cooks, nutritionists, caterers, waste managers, agronomists,



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physicians, who act as trainers. Entrepreneurship coaches and advisers have been invited to deliver learning events on business start-up and critical thinking. Box 3 presents some examples of educational events.

Box 3. Examples of educational events

Event “Speed-dating about health”: Meeting and speed dating with the members of Riga Stradiņš University scientific groups about heart health, physical health and healthy nutrition, while throughout the day traders offer fresh and local produce.

Event “Cook with celebrity”: The famous film director shares his cooking experience and various recipes by demonstrating meal preparation at community kitchen.

Event “Basic Latvian”: With the support of the Social Integration Program of the Riga City Council, the Latvian language teachers train the basics of the Latvian language to people who do not know the language at all.

Environmental events are devoted to gardening (using the premises of the community garden), waste sorting and minimisation of waste at the market, improvement of energy-efficiency of buildings, repair and recycling activities and broader environmental topics. These events are primarily related to the transformation of outdoor marketplace and minimisation of waste.



Figure 11. *Repair Cafe* workshops represent some of repair and recycling activities organised in the market



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Hard VIS

Several hard and infrastructural solutions were developed as part of the project. These address various dimensions of IHW and the decision to go ahead with the relevant procurement procedures was based on the input of the user advisory board and market visitors.



Figure 12. Improvements in the territory and accessibility

Transformation of the outdoor marketplace

Short description: Restoration of the area outside the market pavilion into a dynamic and inclusive multifunctional space for social gatherings that combines food provision with cultural and educational opportunities. This involved renovating the market square and a community greenhouse, creating a community stage and community garden and installing an accessibility ramp.

IHW dimensions: transversal

Users: Local residents, people from other parts of Riga and Latvia, vendors, NGOs, research and educational organisations, tourists



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Stakeholders consulted in co-design stage: Local residents, NGOs, small businesses, Riga City Council, neighbourhood associations, architects

Co-deployment: Alignment and integration of (i) competing visions of the marketplace expressed by stakeholders and (ii) conflicting needs and interests of car drivers and other road users in and around the market.

Co-management: The primary actor is KQ, but the outdoor marketplace (both in form and in function) is envisaged as dynamically changing in response to demand.

Community (co-creation) kitchen

Short description: A dedicated area on the first floor of the market pavilion equipped with the necessary appliances to host community cooking and co-creation events targeted at different audiences. Most events are organised for free or at cost.

IHW dimensions: Healthy lifestyles, subjective wellbeing

Users: Local residents, tourists, students, children, educators (e.g. nutrition specialists), professional cooks, NGOs

Stakeholders consulted in co-design phase: Local residents, NGOs, small businesses, Riga City Council, neighbourhood associations, architects, nutrition specialists

Co-deployment: (i) Clarification of the purpose of the community kitchen to potential users, (ii) ensuring health and safety standards for cooking in public spaces. Installation of the necessary equipment was done by a private company hired by KQ following a procurement procedure.

Co-management: The primary actor is KQ. Events are planned in cooperation with local NGOs, scientific organisations and public institutions to ensure that a wide range of people (including those at risk of discrimination) are involved in events organised in the community kitchen.



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Figure 13. A community cooking workshop in the community kitchen

Lift to first floor

Short description: The installation of a lift in the historic neighbourhood market such Āgenskalns Market is a crucial step towards ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. This addition will allow individuals with mobility impairments, including elderly residents, people with disabilities, and parents with young children, to fully enjoy all the market has to offer. By removing the physical barrier of stairs, the market can cater to a wider range of customers, promoting community engagement and supporting the needs of a diverse population.

IHW dimension: Spatial and environmental wellbeing, social wellbeing

Users: Market visitors

Stakeholders consulted in co-design phase: No specific co-design activities were needed as various members of the community continually voiced their concerns about the lack of a lift.

Co-deployment: Organisation of a procurement procedure

Co-management: The market team



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Eco-island



Figure 14. Eco-island in the courtyard area of Āgenskalns Market

Short description: In the spring of 2024, an eco-island was established in the courtyard area of Āgenskalns Market with the aim of improving waste sorting practices and reducing the volume of waste. An internal audit of waste management at the market revealed that the biggest issue with waste sorting was among the vendors. As a result, a dedicated area for waste sorting was created, along with the appointment of a person responsible for educational outreach and assistance. Within just a few months, a reduction in waste management costs by an average of 600 euros per month was observed. Additionally, the environment and safety were improved, and access to the containers by local residents was restricted.

IHW dimension: Spatial and environmental wellbeing

Users: vendors and market visitors

Stakeholders consulted in co-design phase: No specific co-design activities were organised, but the UAB, environmental NGOs and waste management companies were consulted.

Co-deployment: n/a



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Co-management: n/a

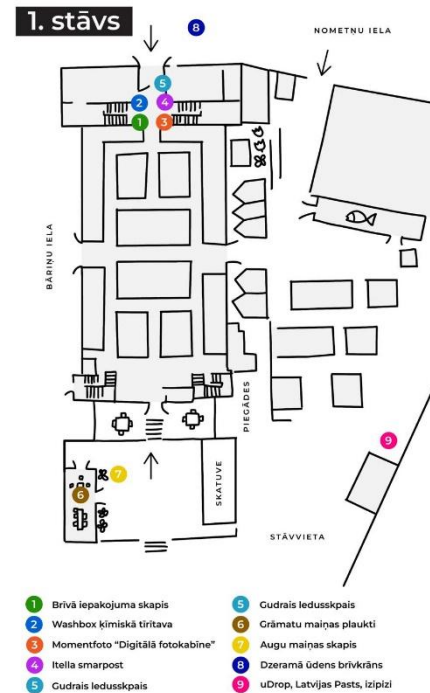


Figure 15. Waste reduction efforts in the market territory: Packaging exchange point, Book exchange cabinet; Plant exchange point; Textile drop-off point; Drinking water fountain; Zero-waste store; Last-minute food product offers at the market.

We noted above that there is an inherent relationship between hard and soft solutions. For example, improvement of the outdoor marketplace – erecting a community stage, installing a community garden, building a community greenhouse, constructing an accessibility ramp have created premises for various social, cultural and educational events. Investing in the community kitchen, buying the



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necessary equipment, installing a lift to access the kitchen has made it possible to launch a programme of culinary, educational and community events. Our experience, therefore, suggests that the integration of hard and soft solutions is a precondition to generate the desired impacts and community wellbeing pathways.

Dimensions of IHW in Riga

The initial articulation of key IHW sub-dimensions to focus upon in Riga was determined by the core team, but the list was further refined via a participative and co-creative approach, which relied on the perspective of local residents (see D2.3 for a more detailed description of this process). The initial conceptualisation of IHW in Riga involved a comprehensive assessment of a wide range of health and wellbeing indicators that could be monitored to assess the impact of the activities in Āgenskalns Market. However, several factors necessitated a refinement of this initial framework over the course of the project across all five dimensions of wellbeing.

Firstly, the dynamic nature of health and wellbeing, coupled with significant political (e.g. Russian invasion in Ukraine) and economic (e.g. high inflation) changes in recent years, necessitated a reassessment of the initial set of indicators and sub-dimensions of IHW to be monitored in Riga. To ensure the relevance and impact of our research, it was crucial to align our focus with contemporary challenges and opportunities. Secondly, practical considerations, such as research fatigue and data collection feasibility, played a pivotal role in shaping the final selection of indicators and sub-dimensions. Given the general population's declining willingness to engage with lengthy questionnaires and the feedback we received while carrying out the baseline study (e.g. some respondents noting that some of the questions adversely affected their mental wellbeing), we recognised the importance of minimising respondent fatigue. Finally, we prioritised those sub-dimensions of IHW where we could most plausibly attribute changes to the interventions implemented as part of our project.

Initially, the monitoring and evaluation framework also considered various sub-dimensions of economic wellbeing and questions about them were included in the baseline survey. However, upon



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closer examination, it became apparent that many of these sub-dimensions were not meaningfully linked to project activities in the sense that any changes we observe could just as easily be attributed to contextual factors, rather than the activities of the market. In other instances, the project's support was highly specific and targeted (e.g. legal support for Ukrainian refugees), making it challenging to integrate questions about economic wellbeing into the monitoring and evaluation exercise without compromising the integrity of the analysis. A notable exception was the business incubator established in collaboration project partner Bridge for Billions.

For the final round of research activities commenced in 2024, we revised the initial list of assumptions about impact. We subsequently also used this list in the final round of monitoring and evaluation activities.

- The VIS will increase the perception of security in the neighbourhood.
- The VIS will strengthen social inclusion in the neighbourhood.
- The VIS will improve the reputation of the neighbourhood.
- The VIS will increase a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.
- The VIS will increase satisfaction with the cultural offer in the neighbourhood.
- The VIS will contribute to the formation of healthy and sustainable habits.
- The VIS will enhance cultural participation and engagement.
- The VIS will improve the quality of free time and leisure.
- The VIS will enhance mental wellbeing.
- The VIS will enhance learning, skill development and agency for IHW.



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Methodology: thinking about and capturing the impact of IN-HABIT in Riga

Evaluating the influence of Āgenskalns Market on a neighbourhood's level of inclusion, health and wellbeing is an endeavour fraught with methodological challenges. Central to these is establishing a compelling link between the project's activities in the market and specific IHW outcomes. There is a constant interplay of various determinants of health and wellbeing in a medium-sized city, making it difficult to isolate the contribution of localised interventions. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, while IN-HABIT has made a clear contribution to the vision of the market, the scope of market activities extends beyond those that were driven by the project.

The task of assessing the impact of Āgenskalns Market is rendered even more challenging by the turbulent political and economic climate of the period in which it was renovated, completed and opened to the public (e.g. pandemic, Russian invasion in Ukraine). These major contextual factors create significant societal changes, economic fluctuations and policy shifts, all of which can significantly influence residents' health and wellbeing, regardless of the activities at the market. These external factors make it tricky to disentangle the effects of Āgenskalns Market (and IN-HABIT) from broader societal trends. Consequently, any observed changes in IHW outcomes must be interpreted with caution.

These remarks notwithstanding, the effects of IN-HABIT activities in Riga are conceptualised and evaluated according to the project's overarching impact framework in a multifaceted and evolving way.

In Riga, the initial articulation of key IHW sub-dimensions to focus upon was determined in part by the core team, but the list was further refined via a participative and co-creative approach, which relied on the perspective of local stakeholders. Subsequently, our approach to monitoring and evaluating impact proceeded in an iterative and participatory manner. Indeed, as was noted in D2.3, our understanding of how the interventions in Riga should be conceptualised and what should be measured has changed



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over time in response to both external factors and the feedback of stakeholders. Consequently, our approach does not fully align with a straightforward comparison between ex ante and ex post results to demonstrate the impact of IN-HABIT interventions, though we do rely on a comparison between the survey data gathered in 2021 and 2024. On the whole, we have approached impact processually, trying to reassess and revise the instruments that best allow us to trace the effect of the activities in the Riga pilot via triangulation. This also means that our approach is more descriptive and less reliant on statistical analysis.

The sections below detail the monitoring and evaluation activities designed to assess the impact of the interventions aimed at improving health and wellbeing in Āgenskalns for the baseline, mid-term and final studies.

Data from 2021 and early 2022 served as the baseline and point of departure for the analysis. The baseline study was carried out in 2021. The data were collected following a co-design process with stakeholders. Subsequently, researchers carried out a survey, focus group and conducted interviews with residents of Āgenskalns. The methodology for the baseline study is described in more detail in D7.3. In addition, during the preparation of the initial version of the inclusive transformation plan (D2.1), the team organised two community surveys. These contained open questions about the initial vision for the four main directions of work, and illustrated conflicting visions for the market before it was re-opened in May 2022.

Data collected between 2022 and 2024 were used to assess the mid-term impact of both hard and soft VIS implemented at Āgenskalns Market (the first two years since the market was reopened). Initially, the local team took a qualitative approach and generally relied on the expert judgement of valued partners and active stakeholders. Systematic data collection for formal monitoring and evaluation activities at the local level began in year three of the project. The gap is justified by the fact that the activities in the intervening period focused on establishing foundational elements and piloting interventions. **The comparison between 2021 and 2024 allows us to get a general sense of how market interventions have contributed to the wellbeing of market users.**



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The final report is based on a synthesis of various data sources.

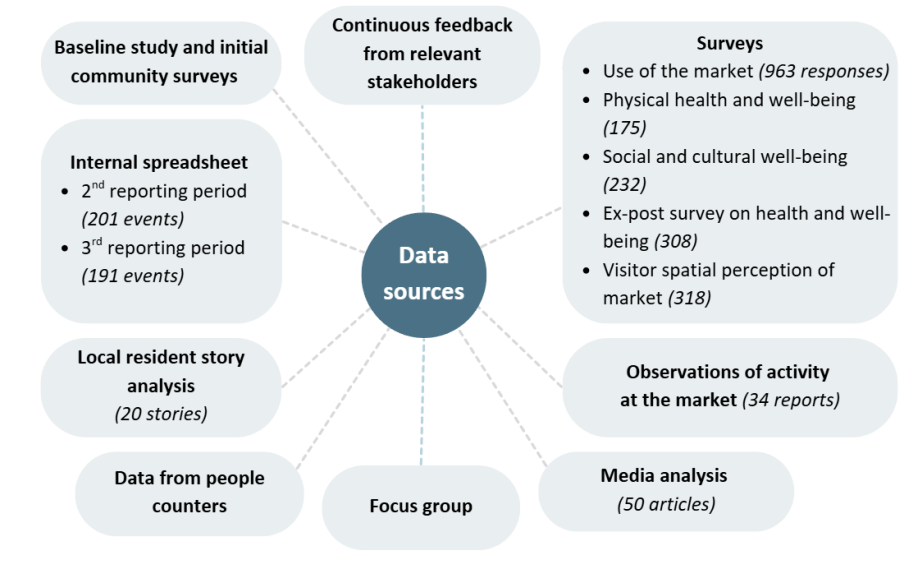


Figure 16. Data sources

An **internal spreadsheet** (event database) to monitor and keep track of various social, cultural, market, and educational events organised on market premises in the framework of the IN-HABIT project. Each entry about an event contains the date of the event, a short description of the event, the target group, associated direction of work and primary areas of (intended) impact. This has been done since the beginning of RP2 and has allowed us to identify emerging trends and gaps that need to be addressed. Specifically, topics that are underrepresented or audiences that have been underserved. **196 events were organised in the second reporting period and 191 events in the third reporting period.**

Since 2022 researchers from BSC made regular site visits to conduct **observations of activity at the market**. Systematic observations based on an observation protocol have been carried out since the spring of 2024. The final observation was made in July 2025. A total of **34 observation reports** were used for this report.



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To understand the effect of activities at the market in relation to the history of the neighbourhood and the market that operated in the same building between 1914 and 2018, **20 local residents' stories were analysed**. The interviews were recorded in 2023. The stories were told by residents who had been living in the neighbourhood for a long time and had experienced the transformation of the neighbourhood and the market.

A total of five online surveys were conducted between the spring of 2024 and the summer of 2025.

- **An online survey to understand how people make use of the market was launched in April 2024.** It was advertised at the market (QR codes) and on the social media profiles of the market and neighbourhood. A total of 963 responses were collected in this survey.
- **Two online surveys explicitly designed to cover different aspects of health and wellbeing that formed the core of the baseline study in 2021.** Building on the previous experience of the researchers, it was decided that the questionnaires must be shorter than the baseline questionnaire to ensure a high number of responses. Consequently, the questionnaire was split into two parts – the first was primarily dedicated to physical and mental wellbeing, while the second focused on social and cultural wellbeing. The survey on physical and mental wellbeing was conducted in **June 2024**. We received a total of 175 responses. The survey on social and cultural wellbeing was launched in **July 2024** (232 responses). Both were online surveys, advertised at the market (QR codes) and on the social media profiles of the market and the neighbourhood.
- **The ex-post survey on health and wellbeing was carried out online in March-April 2025** as part of the project-level monitoring and evaluation exercise. We received 308 responses. For a detailed analysis, see D7.5.
- **A survey to understand the spatial perception of Āgenskalns market by visitors was carried out between May and July 2025.** The survey was advertised at the market (QR codes) and on the social media profiles of the market and neighbourhood. A total of 318 responses were collected.



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A **focus group discussion** was organised on 18 July 2024. The aim of the focus group was to discuss (i) the initial findings of the monitoring and evaluation exercise and (ii) the impact of the market with representatives of groups whose perspectives had hitherto been underrepresented in the data. The discussion was held at Āgenskalns Market with 10 participants (five men, five women – four participants over the age of 50). The results were used primarily in the mid-term report.

A simple media analysis was conducted. The articles were selected from the Latvian public news portal LSM.lv, focusing on the period between September 2020 and July 2025. The keywords used were “Āgenskalna tirgus” and “IN-HABIT”, filtering news stories where these terms appeared either directly or in context. In total, 50 articles were reviewed, covering cultural events, architectural achievements, community initiatives, and urban development activities related to the market.

Finally, **data from people counters installed during the project was collected.** The data is available from April 2024 onwards. The purpose of this activity was to measure attendance and track differences between different days and types of events.

Limitations

While we used various methods, there are several limitations that preclude us from making definitive statements as to the impact of the interventions.

- In the case of surveys, the report’s **reliance on a non-random sampling strategy**, primarily relying on market visitors and users of social media, limits the pool of respondents and introduces the potential for self-selection bias.
- While the choice to focus on market users was intentional (to establish a more definite connection with market activities), individuals who frequent the market do not accurately represent the broader neighbourhood community.
- **Most survey respondents in most surveys were female**, limiting our ability to do meaningful comparisons across different demographic groups. Furthermore, fragmentation of data, varied sample sizes, a mix of sampling strategies and varieties of data limits our ability to confidently



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detect statistically significant differences in outcomes for smaller sub-groups and make definitive statements about them.

- **Our monitoring approach has focused on how the market is used and experienced**, meaning that we have limited evidence to make claims about specific impacts on the behaviours and personal lives of neighbourhood residents.
- **Respondents' partial understanding** of the full scope of project interventions made it challenging to accurately attribute observed changes to project activities.
- Ultimately, **the key issue is attributing the changes in health wellbeing to IN-HABIT activities**. Specifically, the pandemic, high inflation and Russian invasion in Ukraine and the actions of the municipal government have likely had a more considerable impact on the health and wellbeing in the city.

These remarks notwithstanding, we believe that certain patterns can be discerned that suggest positive impacts and areas where additional attention is required.



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Results

This section describes the main results of the overall monitoring and evaluation exercise. We begin by presenting short summary of the most relevant mid-term results. After that we focus on the results from data gathered in 2024 and 2025.

Summary of mid-term results

Survey data

Our mid-term report showed that the market is generally believed to be a success in terms of creating a space that promotes healthy and sustainable food habits, social and cultural integration, and cohesion, while making the neighbourhood a more desirable place to live and visit.

Social wellbeing

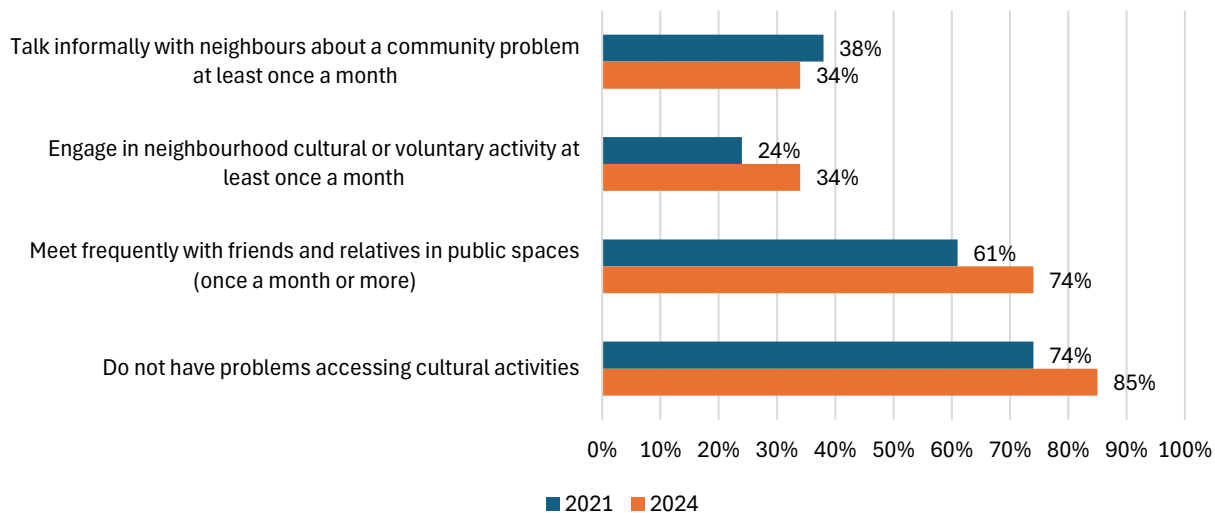


Figure 17. Comparison of results for social wellbeing proxies in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=232)



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The chosen proxies for changes in social wellbeing (Figure 17)) indicated moderate increases throughout. This suggests that the overall level of social engagement and cultural opportunities had increased, compared to 2021.

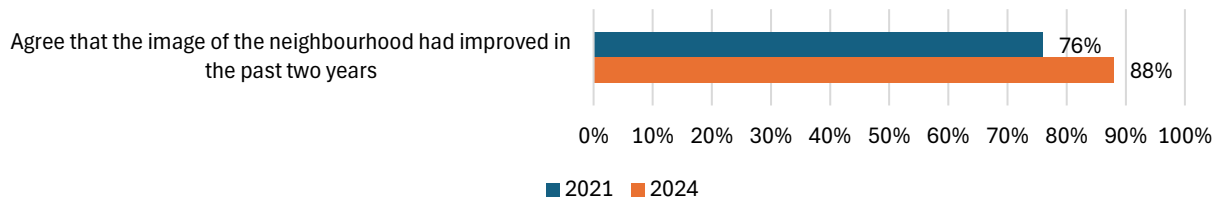


Figure 18. Comparison of results for neighbourhood image in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=232)

In the baseline study, the majority (76%) agreed that the image of the neighbourhood had improved in the past two years. This number had increased in 2024 (88%). The market has been suggested as a key contributing factor, so it appears that the activities of the project have **contributed to an improved reputation**. An indicator of its growing appeal is that 19 survey respondents and several focus group participants reported observing that the market has become more socially active and lively, with the number of visitors growing, including people coming from other parts of the city and beyond.

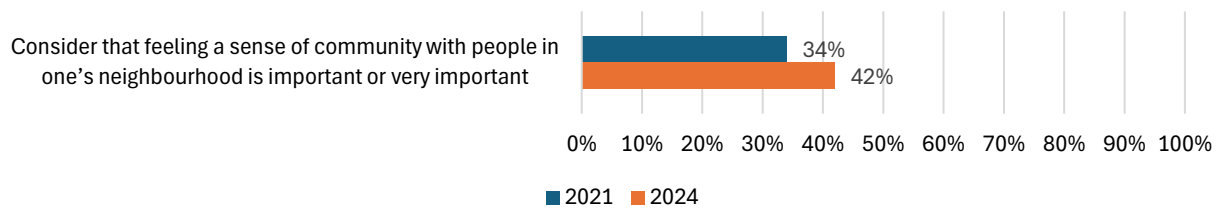


Figure 19. Comparison of results for sense of community in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=232)



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In 2021, 34% thought that feeling a sense of community with people in one’s neighbourhood is important or very important. In 2024, this number had grown to 42%. Furthermore, **31% noted that this sense of community had become stronger over the last two years.**

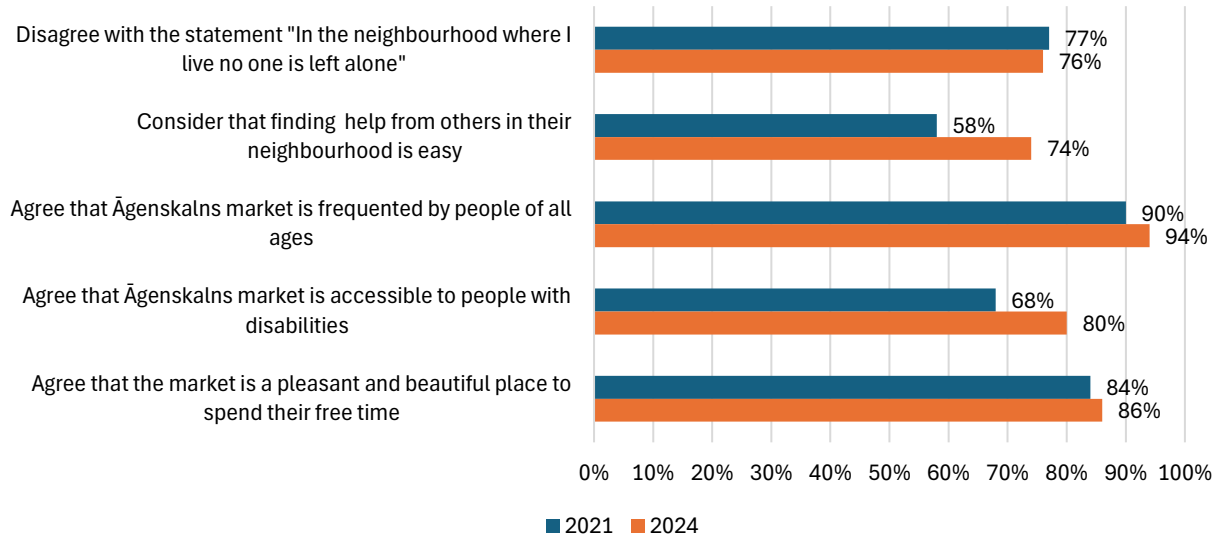


Figure 20. Comparison of survey results for social inclusion in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=232)

As regards social inclusion, the picture is somewhat more complicated. In 2021, the majority (77%) of the respondents from Āgenskalns disagreed with the statement “In the neighbourhood where I live no one is left alone”. In 2024, the number is roughly the same – 76%, indicating that no obvious changes have taken place. Nonetheless, in 2021 only 58% of respondents from Āgenskalns reported that finding help from others in their neighbourhood is easy. In 2024, this number has grown to 74%. Furthermore, the market itself appears to be viewed as an inclusive place. The survey carried out in 2024 indicates:

- 94% agree that Āgenskalns market is frequented by people of all ages.
- 80% agree that Āgenskalns market is accessible to people with disabilities



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- 86% agree that the market is a pleasant and beautiful place to spend their free time

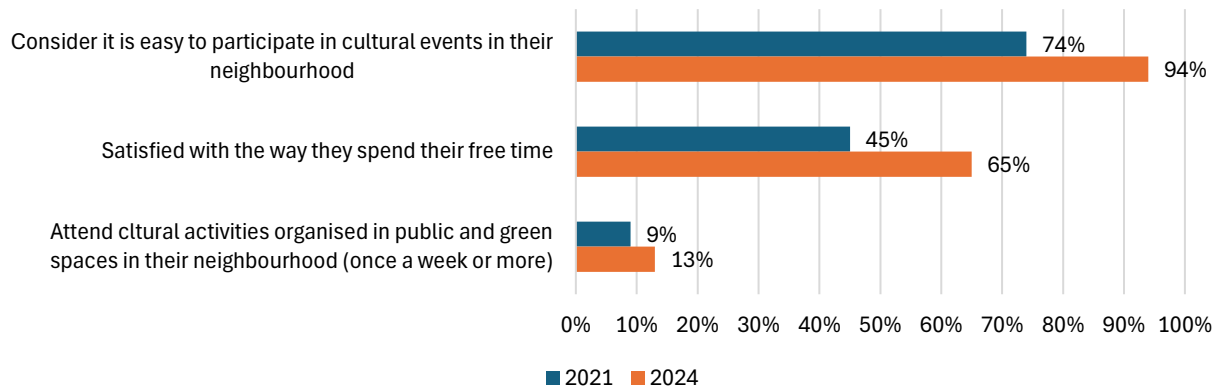


Figure 21. Comparison of survey results for cultural and leisure offer in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=175)

As regards the cultural offer and recreational opportunities in Āgenskalns, the situation appears to be positive. Crucially, 81% of respondents noted that the market is at least partially responsible for improvements in how free time can be spent, with 37% noting that the impact has been significant. Overall, it appears that the market has made a positive contribution to cultural offer in the neighbourhood and improve the quality of free time and leisure.

Subjective wellbeing

As regards subjective wellbeing, the results paint an uneven picture. Some survey respondents expressed concern that increased activity in the market, and its surrounding territory has led to more traffic, noise pollution, and a decrease of available parking spaces (especially on weekends and event days). Regarding the latter, one respondent indicated that it has become more difficult for people with disabilities to park closer to the market building, posing an accessibility issue. Lastly, a few respondents also suggested there was room for improvement regarding activities and spatial arrangements for individuals with specific needs. For example, a mother indicated in the survey she would prefer earlier events that could be worked around her baby’s sleep schedule.



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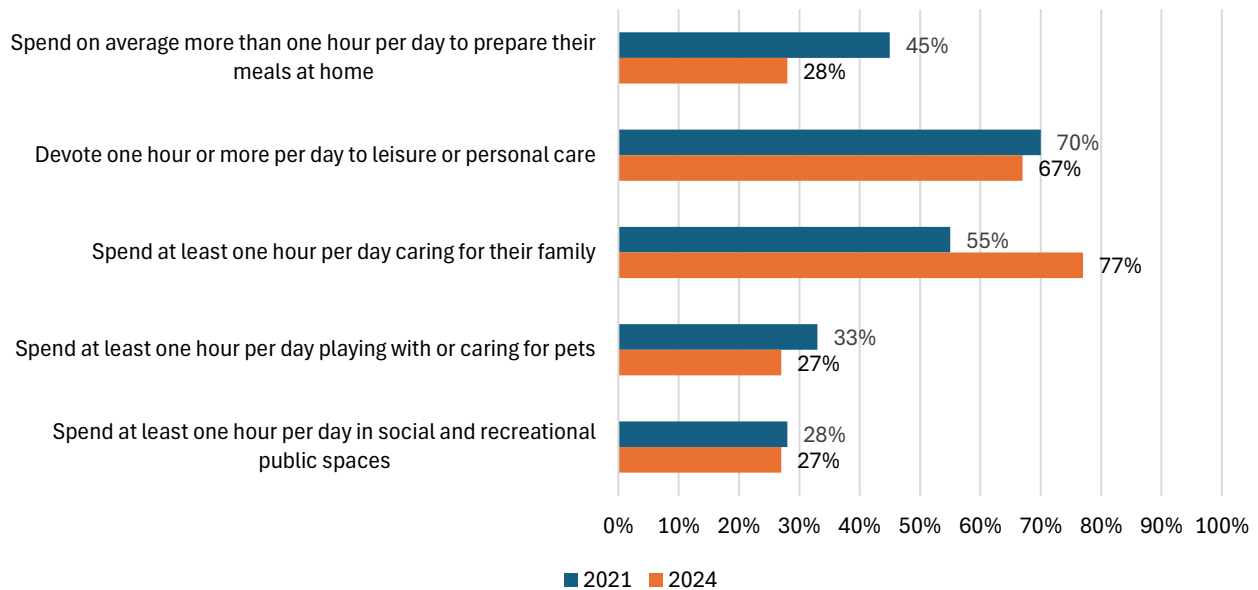


Figure 22. Comparison of survey results for subjective wellbeing proxies in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=175)

68% of respondents in the survey on mental and physical wellbeing noted that activities at the market have improved their mental wellbeing. However, some of the questions that were meant to serve as proxies for subjective wellbeing indicate that the situation is more complicated (see Figure 22.)



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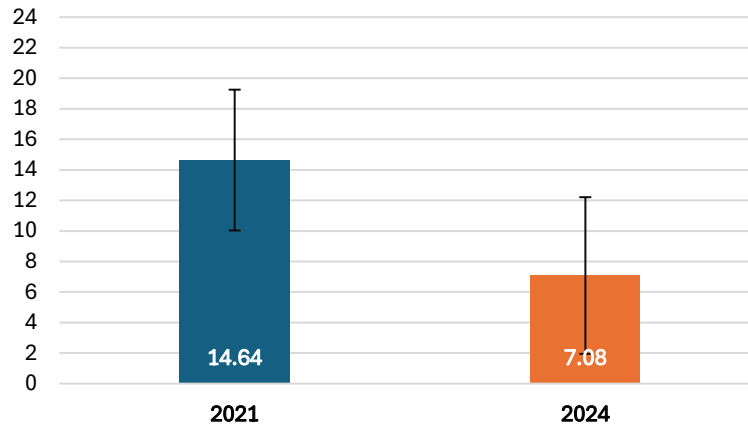


Figure 23. Comparison of K6 survey mean scores for mental distress in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=175)

The K6 mean score for mental distress decreased by 9.56, from 14.64 (SD = 4.61) in 2021 to 7.08 (SD = 5.13) in 2024 (compared to 2021) indicates a substantial reduction from high levels of distress (scores above the K6 cut-point of 13) to low-to-moderate distress. However, the elevated 2021 baseline score likely reflects anxiety over the COVID-19 pandemic rather than typical stress levels. This complicates the interpretation and limits its value for assessing intervention effects on mental wellbeing.



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Physical wellbeing

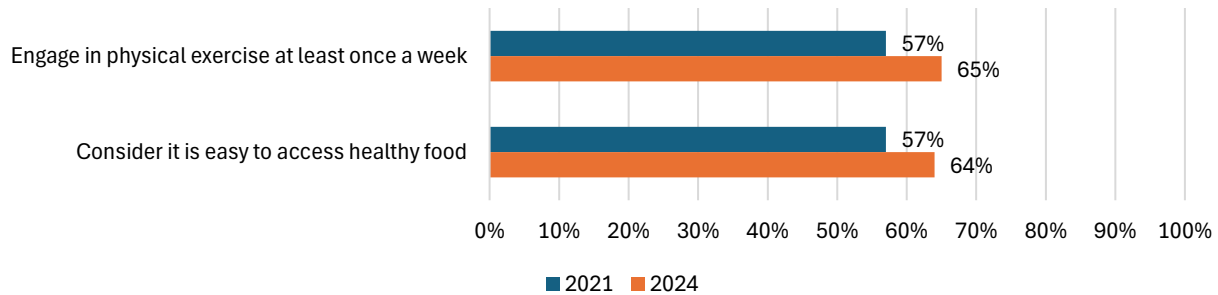


Figure 24. Comparison of survey results for physical wellbeing in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=175)

Survey responses to questions pertaining to health seem to paint a moderate picture. In 2024, the number of respondents who reported engaging in physical exercise at least once a week had grown. A higher percentage of respondents said that it is easy to access healthy food. Crucially, 41% of respondents noted that Āgenskalns market has positively affected accessibility of healthy food.

In the open-ended survey question about aspects that contribute to their wellbeing, 25 respondents listed food products and services. Of these, 17 respondents mentioned dining services, of whom 9 specified leisure foods such as coffee, ice cream, and confectionery. By contrast, 10 respondents referred to staple food items, and one of the respondents stated they do not buy them at the market due to the price.



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Spatial and environmental wellbeing

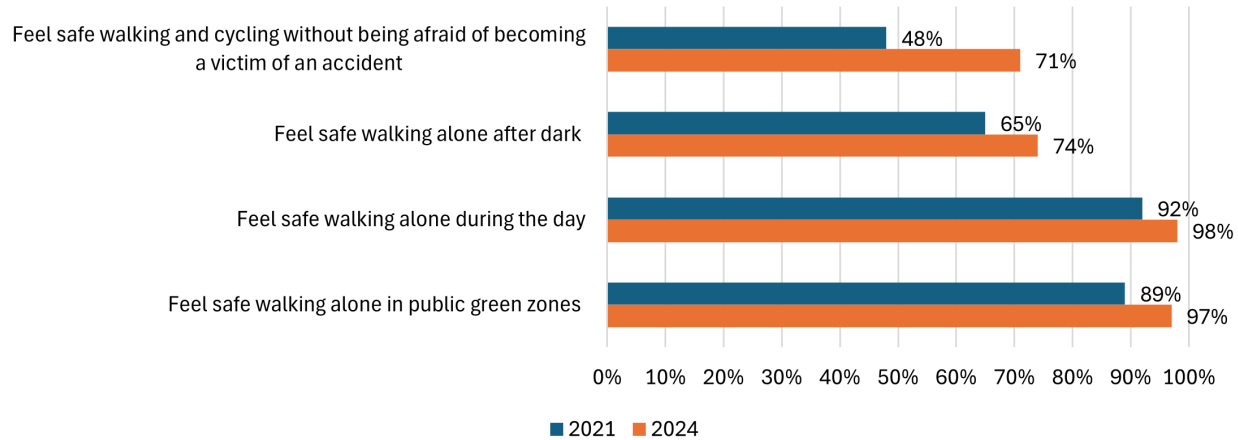


Figure 25. Comparison of survey results for safety in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=232)

The survey indicates that a higher percentage of people feel safe walking and cycling without being afraid of becoming a victim of an accident. Similarly, a higher percentage of people feel safer walking alone after dark. The percentage of people who feel safe walking alone during the day has remained comparatively high, as has the percentage of people who feel safe walking alone in public green zones. **We can conclude, therefore, that the perception of security has moderately increased.**



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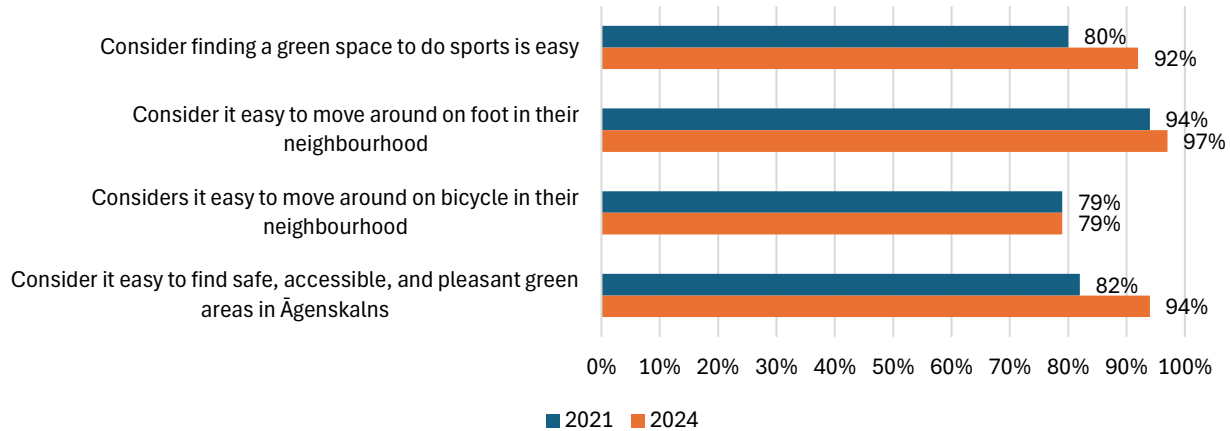


Figure 26. Comparison of survey results for spatial wellbeing in 2021 (see D7.3) and 2024 (n=175)

There are other indications that the level of spatial wellbeing has somewhat improved. A higher percentage of respondents answered that it is easy finding a green space to do sports, move around on foot in their neighbourhood and find safe, accessible, and pleasant green areas in Āgenskalns. I

Environmental aspects contributing to mental wellbeing were noted by 45 survey respondents, with 28 reporting positive emotional responses such as joy, an uplifted mood, and a sense of comfort. Specific aspects highlighted include a positive atmosphere (20 respondents), a well-maintained environment (15), aesthetic appeal (9), and convenience (4). While most did not specify what creates a positive atmosphere, those who did mentioned sensory experiences such as live music, the smells and tastes of products, and interactions with other people at the market. Notably, other visitors were described as happy and smiling, and staff members were characterised as polite. Some respondents also mentioned that seeing many people frequenting the market fosters a sense of belonging.



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Economic wellbeing

Regarding career and capacity-building opportunities, only one survey respondent specifically mentioned that the market's development had a beneficial impact on business growth. There was no direct quantitative data pertaining to economic wellbeing.

Summary: The results indicated impacts on social and spatial wellbeing, with less evidence regarding mental and physical health and economic wellbeing.

Results from surveys about impacts of VIS

In the surveys aimed at understanding the impact of Āgenskalns Market on various dimensions of health and wellbeing, we asked respondents to share their opinion on one of the directions of work using a six-point scale (0-5) in relation to statements prepared by WP7 coordinators. It is of note that the minimisation of waste and the community kitchen consistently attracted fewer responses in the surveys (only 8% and 4% combined). There are several possible reasons for this. In the case of waste minimisation, the impact is not clearly visible and pronounced from the perspective of the visitors and clients. Indeed, specific actions associated with waste management started only recently and many activities associated with minimising waste fall under the umbrella of cultural and educational activities. The situation is less clear in the case of the community kitchen, as it has been open to the public for longer than a year, but we note from conversations with stakeholders (Autumn 2023) that not everyone understood how the community kitchen operates. Likewise, it is possible that visitors do not see it as a separate part of the market as it is easily accessible and not fenced off.

Overall, therefore, we can only comment on two directions of work. The results are summarised below.



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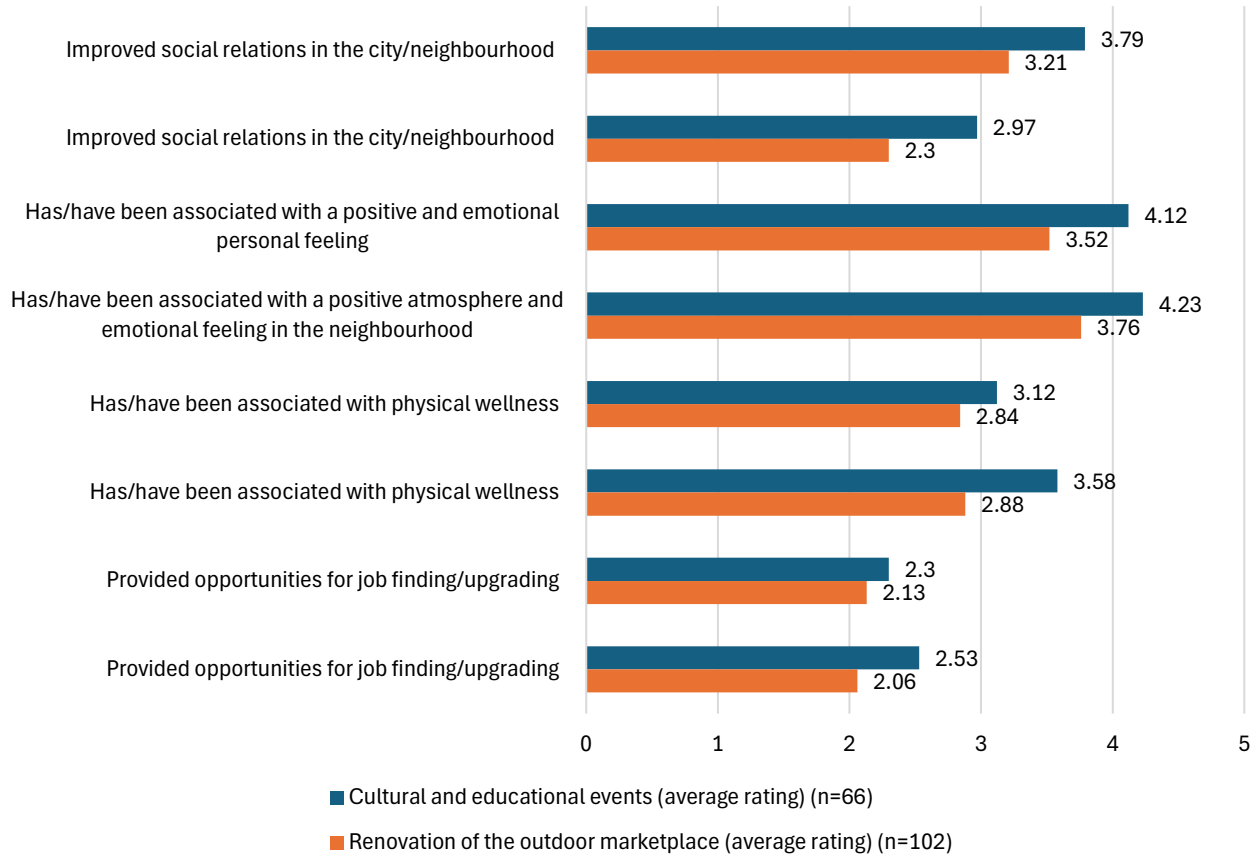


Figure 27. Ratings for directions of work (six-point scale (0-5)) – survey on mental and physical wellbeing (n=175)

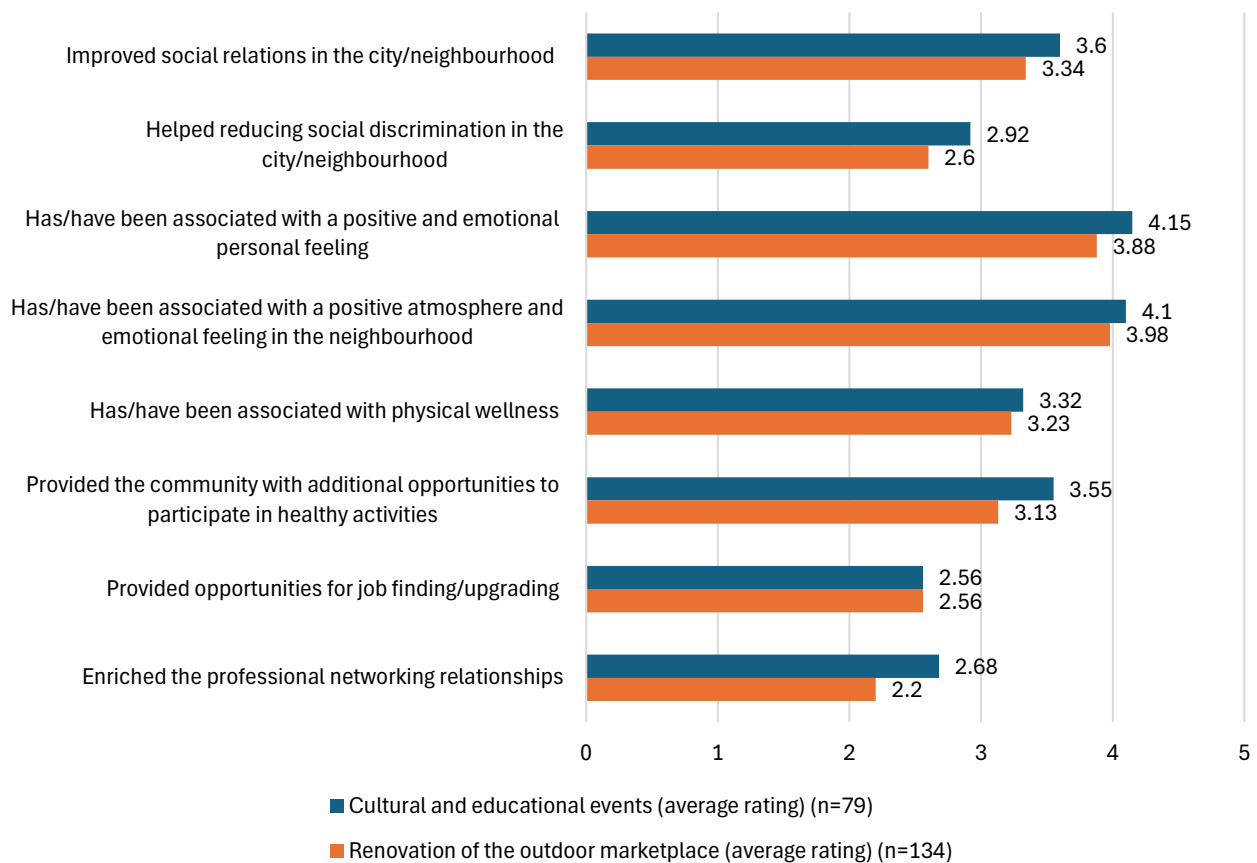
The two chosen directions of work are believed to have contributed to emotional (subjective) wellbeing both in the neighbourhood and on an individual level, while also having a positive impact (3 or higher) on the social relations in the neighbourhood, though to different extents. A positive impact (3 or higher) can also be observed regarding the provision of additional opportunities to participate in healthy



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activities, with the cultural and educational events having a notably higher perceived impact. Another area with a different perceived positive impact is physical wellness. Of note is that the reduction of social discrimination is perhaps lower than was initially anticipated. The last two statements covering professional and economic wellbeing received relatively low scores, suggesting a lower perceived impact.



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Figure 28. Ratings for directions of work (six-point scale (0-5)) – survey on social and cultural wellbeing (n=232)

The results from the second survey are broadly similar in the sense that the same statements have received a score above 3, with cultural and educational events scoring higher across the board.

Summary: These surveys indicated that the VIS in question scored well in terms of their impact on social, subjective and, to some extent, physical wellbeing, with economic wellbeing scoring lower. Environmental and spatial wellbeing were not explicitly addressed.

Focus group and storytelling data

Social wellbeing

Focus group participants agreed that the revitalised market fosters social wellbeing and shared several observations as indications. They saw that the broader range of activities on offer has attracted more diverse visitors and made the market livelier. The most notable demographic shift was the increased presence of young people, families with children, as well as visitors from neighbouring districts, other cities, and abroad. One participant highlighted the market's "village-like" quality, noting that visiting the venue and interacting with regulars have become part of her routine. This suggests the market functions as a meeting ground for fostering relationships outside of work and domestic life. Additionally, two participants valued that the market provides a platform for community members to host their own events, which they saw as crucial for ensuring that programming remains aligned with local interests.

Regarding inclusivity, older participants expressed enjoyment of the market's new format but cited barriers that limit engagement: affordability and insufficient activities tailored for elderly patrons. These issues notwithstanding, all participants agreed that the market's new format and management have a greater capacity to address discrimination, whereas in the past there was no such potential.



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Stories indicate that the market has served as a platform for informal social interactions throughout the decades of the 20th century. However, in the past, these interactions predominantly depended on chance encounters rather than being encouraged by the space and specific events. **Storytellers indicated that the addition of events has created more avenues for socialising beyond customer-vendor relations.**

Subjective wellbeing

Focus group participants highlighted the market's multifunctionality as a positive development that enhances subjective wellbeing by catering to several needs in a single location. Additional opportunities and reasons for social interaction were seen as key contributors to psychological wellness. Participants particularly appreciated the variety of regular cultural events and workshops, noting these activities were engaging and a source of novelty and positive emotions. Several dining services, particularly ones that sell comfort food, and niche products were also mentioned as bringing joy. Taken together, participants valued how these different elements can be combined to relax.

When reminiscing about positive experiences of the market in the past, **storytellers** most often described memorable foods and specific vendors with whom they had established close relationships. The old market was valued for being an unconventional place, with exotic products and practices, and distinctive and interesting characters. However, storytellers welcomed the transition to the new format and its expanding role as the neighbourhood's cultural centre. In particular, they appreciated the growing focus on the market as a meeting place and event venue.

Crucially, both in the present and the past, the market was embedded in the daily routines of its visitors. This regularity of visits underlines the potential of the market to contribute to local inhabitants' subjective and social wellbeing.

Spatial wellbeing

Three contributing aspects to spatial wellbeing were foregrounded in the focus group. First, the lift and ramp were seen as important additions that have made the venue more accessible for parents



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with strollers, elderly visitors, and people who use mobility aids. Second, the aesthetic appeal and overall atmosphere were highlighted as factors that create a sense of comfort and pleasure. One participant emphasised she is happy to have such a beautiful venue in the neighbourhood where she can bring visiting guests from other cities.

Third, focus group participants perceived that the number of people experiencing homelessness and substance abuse issues has decreased in the area, which has improved the sense of security.

This was attributed to the changing character of the market and its surrounding territory, as well as better overall maintenance. One participant added that she observed that people from these vulnerable groups also derive benefits from the market. Specifically, they have access to free drinking water and seating with shade in the front square.

Storytellers comparing the market's current appearance and upkeep to that of previous decades highlight a marked improvement. In its earlier forms, sanitary conditions and maintenance of premises were inconsistent, heating was insufficient during winter, and neglect over the years had deteriorated the market's former visual attractiveness, especially in interior spaces.

Some accounts also describe experiences that undermined feelings of comfort and safety. In the past, the market used to be more barter-based and informal, with more varied norms of conduct. Storytellers recalled loud interactions between vendors and customers, the presence of intoxicated patrons, as well as occasional incidents of theft. In contrast, the present market is seen as a more organised and regulated environment.

Healthy lifestyle

Focus group participants noted two main ways the market contributes to health and physical wellbeing. First, participants valued the availability of fresh, organic food, opportunities to purchase from trusted vendors, and access to information about product origins. As for promoting physical wellness, participants shared that renewed activity at the market has provided additional reasons to



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visit the venue more often. Consequently, this had led to an increase in light forms of physical activity - walking and cycling.

Stories indicate that while local produce was available to some extent during previous decades, there were extended periods when the market was relatively empty, and the offer was limited. In contrast, under the market's new management and with the implementation of VIS, the availability of local goods has become more consistent and predictable.

Economic wellbeing

The focus group discussion revealed that participants were uncertain how skills and knowledge acquired at the market's organised workshops and educational events could be converted into professional capital. A more nuanced view was provided by a focus group participant who suggested the market could indirectly enhance the neighbourhood's economic wellbeing by attracting more people and fostering local commercial development. He posited that making the area more attractive to businesses has the potential to create additional work opportunities for residents in the long term.

Stories did not contain much content about this dimension. However, they did describe how the market provided, on the one hand, an affordable alternative to other shopping venues, yet at the same time, it often lacked products.

Summary: Qualitative data indicate impacts on social, subjective, physical and spatial wellbeing, but impacts on economic wellbeing continued to be unclear.

Ex-post survey on health and wellbeing in Riga

The survey carried out in the spring of 2025 was distributed online and targeted two different groups of people – (i) people who live in Riga but do not frequent Āgenskalns Market and (ii) people who frequent Āgenskalns or Torņakalns (a neighbourhood next to Āgenskalns)⁷. Crucially, the

⁷ For a more detailed description of the results, see D7.5



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questionnaire was not distributed via the social media profiles of the market team. The results are described in more detail in D7.5. In this report, we mainly focus on questions that pertained directly to Āgenskalns market and its perceived impact on wellbeing.

Have the activities at Āgenskalns market affected your mental wellbeing?

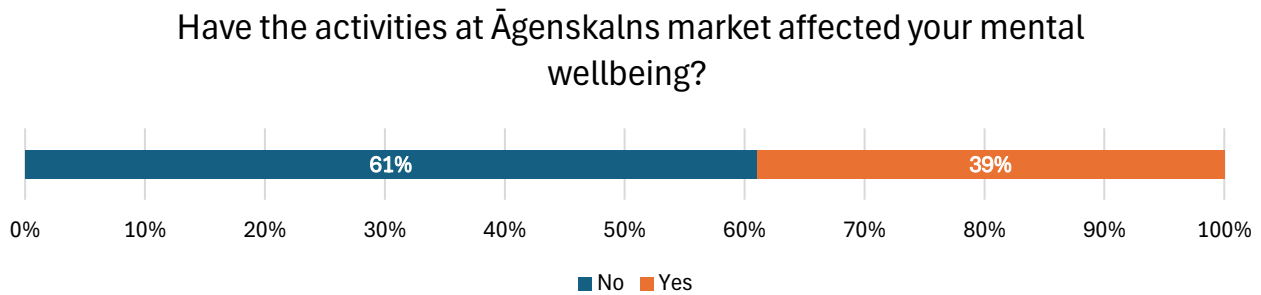


Figure 29. Survey results on perceived impact of market activities on mental wellbeing (n=158)

The question was only posed to respondents who live in Āgenskalns or Tornakalns or visit Āgenskalns often (158 respondents). 39% answered “Yes” (they feel the activities have affected their mental wellbeing), while 61% answered “No” (they do not feel affected). Those who answered “Yes” were asked to elaborate.

The comments are dominated by the view that the impact is due to the market no longer being only a place for purchasing goods. It is also an important space for social interaction and cultural events, which enrich daily life and provide emotional satisfaction. For example, many respondents emphasised a positive emotional experience, mentioning a “positive atmosphere,” a “nice bustle”, “joy about an orderly environment,” and a “pleasant environment”. These feelings were associated with the aesthetic improvements and tidiness of the market, as well as the diversity of events organised there, including cultural and entertainment activities.



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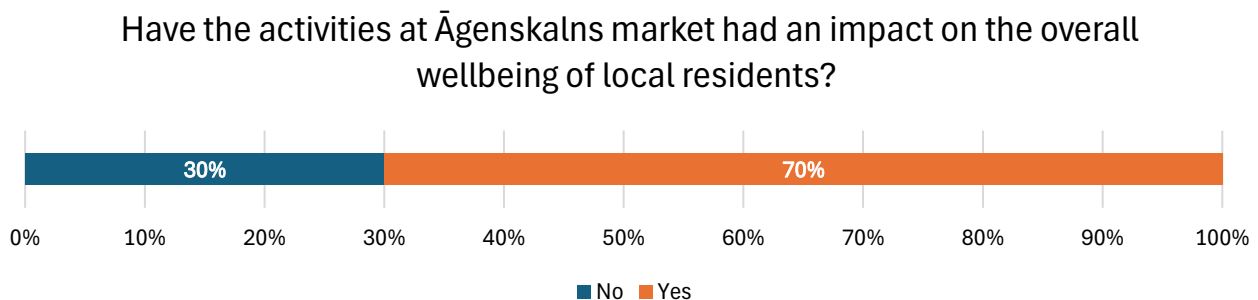
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Respondents also mention “attending cultural events”, “markets, coffee tastings”, which enable them to purchase food or other goods and provide opportunities to strengthen social contacts. Respondents further note that the market gives them the chance to meet friends and spend time with family or people who are close to them - “there is an opportunity to go and enjoy time with loved ones,” “meeting with friends,” “dinners, leisure activities”. **This social connection plays an important role, as it creates a sense of belonging and emotional support, which are essential for mental wellbeing.**

The significance of culinary experiences also stands out, for example, “tasty lunches,” “delicious food,” and “enjoying the diversity of national cuisines”. These experiences provide both physical and emotional satisfaction. The market, as a place for eating and socialising, is perceived as a space where one can both relax and enjoy different foods, which additionally contributes to both physical and emotional wellbeing.

Overall, it appears that the activities at Āgenskalns Market over the last three years have contributed to people’s mental and emotional wellbeing in various ways, providing not only a **pleasant and orderly environment but also dynamic opportunities to socialise, be entertained, enjoy culture, and experience quality food.** In some comments, minor critical or cautious nuances also appear, such as “too many people”, which may reflect the individual needs or experiences of certain visitors. However, these do not indicate a significant negative overall trend.

Have the activities at Āgenskalns market had an impact on the overall wellbeing of local residents?



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Figure 30. Survey results on perceived impact of market activities on overall wellbeing of local residents (n=158)

A majority (70%) of respondents with ties to Āgenskalns answered that they believed the activities have had an impact on local residents' overall wellbeing, while 30% said that there has not been an impact. Once again, respondents were asked to elaborate.

A positive trend once again emerges, confirmed by numerous quotes. For example, many point out that the market has become “a new place to go” and “a place to meet and spend time together”. This **social function allows people to feel a sense of belonging and promotes community activity** – illustrated by such expressions as “the community is more active”, “it has become a community centre where one can meet not only neighbourhood residents” and “a cool gathering place for local (and not only local) residents”. The market is not only a place for shopping, but also “a good meeting point” fostering a more active lifestyle and socialisation. Respondents positively evaluate the diversity and accessibility of activities. It is also emphasised that the market actively functions as a cultural and entertainment centre.

A great deal of value is also placed on the environment and its improvement. Comments emphasise that a well-kept and organised surrounding improves mood and overall wellbeing: “an orderly environment always improves one’s wellbeing”, “the environment has become more pleasant”, “cosiness has increased”. The development of the area is also characterised as favourable, which further contributes to quality of life.

The market’s role in the overall rhythm of life and daily life is also viewed positively. It is indicated that activities not only provide emotional satisfaction but also promote “socialisation and a more active lifestyle”, “without unnecessary gloom, bright, positive novelties”. Respondents also express appreciation for the market’s impact on the development and atmosphere of the surrounding community and area: “the neighbourhood is making more effort to keep itself tidy, to entertain, to look at things more hopefully”. A particularly important aspect is the opportunity to spend time with loved



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ones (“joy in spending time together with family and friends in a pleasant environment,” “visiting together with friends or family”) which strongly contributes to emotional and social wellbeing.

Overall, **respondents’ statements clearly indicate that the activities at Āgenskalns Market have promoted local residents’ emotional wellbeing, activity, and socialisation, and created a new, orderly, and inspiring environment**, as well as helped to establish a strong community centre and improve the quality of life in the surrounding area. The market’s achievements as “one of the central points”, “the local community’s centre,” and “where local life is buzzing” go hand in hand with “many events,” “novelties,” and “cool places”, which in a convenient, well-maintained, and lively environment enhance residents’ quality of life and overall wellbeing.

Survey on use of space

As part of research into how the market has gradually transformed into a significant place and contributed to spatial wellbeing, we wanted to understand how the different parts of the market were used.



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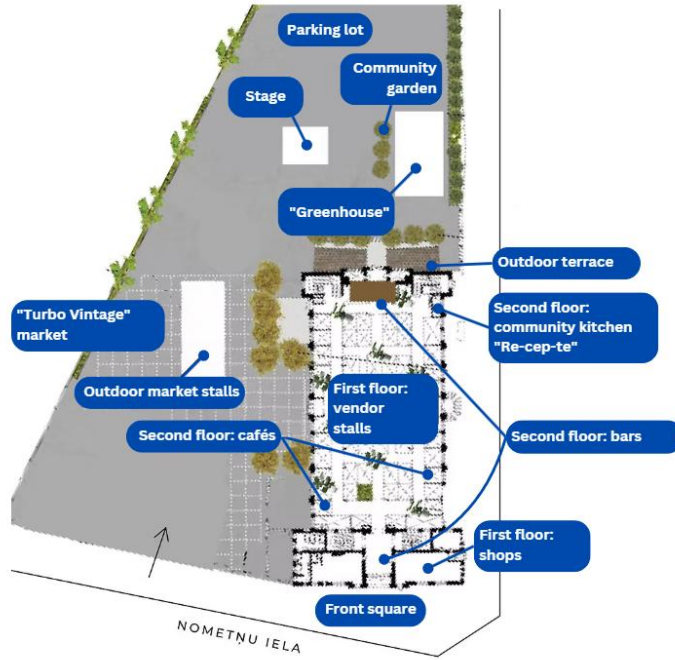


Figure 21. Map of the market



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What places did you spend time at during your visit?

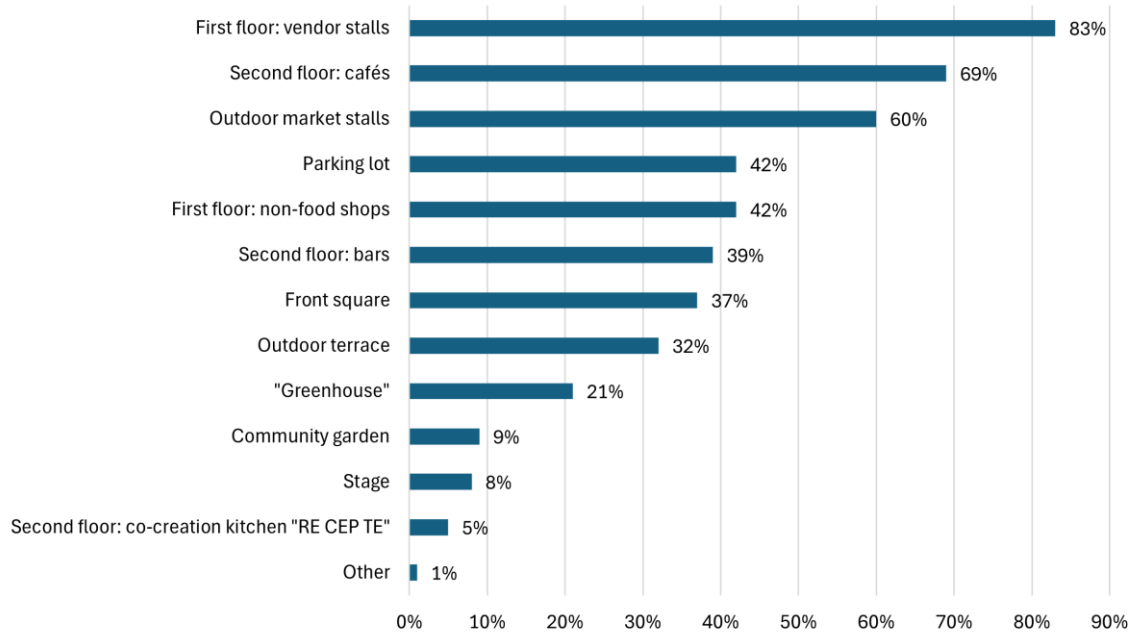


Figure 32. Market locations visited by respondents (% of total) (n=318)

The results confirm the assumption that socialisation plays a key role in visits as a significant number of respondents chose places that have the requisite facilities for socialisation to take place. Indeed, while browsing or purchasing goods on the ground floor was the most popular option, it was seldom the only option chosen by the respondents.



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With did you do at the market?

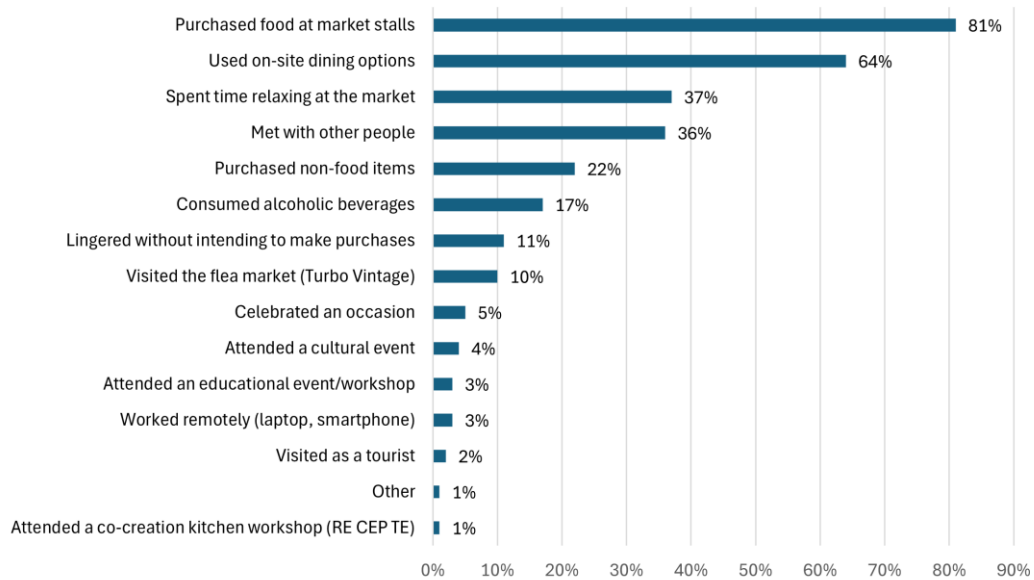


Figure 33. Market activities engaged by respondents (% of total) (n=318)

When asked to specify what they did, respondents could choose from a predefined list of potential activities. Again, we see that socialisation and purchasing goods dominated. Somewhat unexpectedly, only a small number of respondents indicated that they attended cultural events.



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With whom did you visit or interact with at the market?

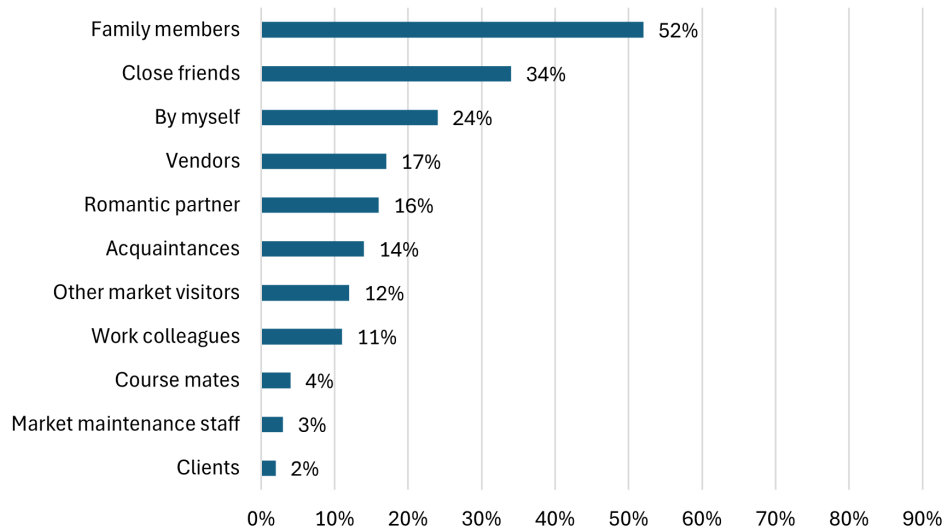


Figure 34. People respondents interacted with at the market (% of total) (n=318)

When asked to specify with whom they visited the market, most respondents mentioned friends and family members. Only roughly a quarter of all respondents visited the market alone. This, again, underlines the key roles that socialisation plays in the overall use of the market. Visits to the market are not purely functional but frequently have a recreational element to them. This is further corroborated by the fact that the vast majority (70%) spent between 30 minutes and two hours at the market, indicating that short visits are the exception, rather than the norm.

Respondents were also asked to reflect on a memorable visit to the marketplace and rate their experience, as well as provide a freely written brief account of what made the visit significant. 85% rated their experience (during the visit) as being positive or very positive. **In the open-ended reply section, comments about positive social interactions were the most frequent (20%).** Communication with market vendors was cited in almost half of these responses. The remainder highlighted



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interactions with family and friends, with some also noting they appreciate the increased social activity in the market overall.

Regarding vendors, several respondents highlighted politeness and a personal approach as significant. A few mention having established close ties with individual vendors.

I bought apples from Mr. E. – he told me everything with such kindness and enthusiasm! And despite it being early spring, you could buy crisp apples from him!

(Survey response)

The saleswomen are part of our family, we know each other, we chat...

(Survey response)

For families, respondents described the market as a gathering place where they can enjoy quality time through dining and shopping experiences. A few respondents highlighted that joint activities help family members reconnect and create opportunities for grandparents, parents, and children to bond:

It was a lovely opportunity to meet with my grown-up children!

(Survey response)

I showed the market to my father. The location was dear to him in his youth. He was happy about the improvements and that positive features of the old market had been preserved. He told his grandsons stories from his youth.

(Survey response)

The overall feel and atmosphere of the market was the second most prevalent theme (17%).

Respondents who elaborated on this aspect characterised the market's environment as cosy, peaceful, relaxed, pleasant, and friendly. Contributing factors mentioned include market visitor and vendor behaviour, events, as well as aesthetics and cleanliness. One respondent vividly described a visit that



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captures how several elements – overall comfort, meaningful interactions, food, and music – work in tandem in creating a welcoming sense of place:

I went to the Skandināvs store with my mum. Later, we both bought ice cream at Molbert's and went upstairs to sit in the soft chairs by the bookcase. I remember that the music was really good, and I even added one of the songs to my Spotify playlist. Later, my boyfriend arrived, and we had dinner together. It was a winter evening, and I remember it because the market was so cosy, full of people, with good music and a great atmosphere. It was the kind of evening that warms your heart in cold weather.

(Survey response)

Diversity of services and products (13%), as well as events (8%), were also common in responses.

Regarding events, several respondents listed specific ones they had attended, demonstrating that the market's varied programme appeals to different interests – concerts, educational workshops, dance nights, car shows, themed market days dedicated to food products. Notably, two respondents reported positive experiences of arriving at the market to find events taking place that they were not aware of.

The perceived benefits of the market's multi-functional format are best reflected in detailed visit accounts and respondents' broader observations, which demonstrate how multiple activities and services complement one another and help cater to a variety of visitor needs:

I went to the Balfolk night – there was live music and a really warm party. I also like the people who come to these evenings; some are my friends. The place is very cosy; you can grab a bite beforehand or buy flowers. I genuinely like Āgenskalns Market – it's people-friendly and has lots of cultural activities. [Also] tasty coffee and ice cream.

(Survey response)

I really like the concept of Āgenskalns Market: there are a few of my favourite vendors where I shop regularly; there is the opportunity to eat a delicious meal when I don't feel like cooking



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myself; you can spend festive evenings on the second floor of the VEST bar – the large window, chandelier, sunset = woowooow! It's easy to get there by car – if you're in a hurry to visit someone, you can buy flowers, a gift card, an interesting treat, or delicious Kalve coffee. A market for all your needs!

(Survey response)

A lovely event at the “Greenhouse”, delicious ice cream at Molbert’s, and a yummy kebab. Summer shopping at the outdoor stalls is always a pleasure, and the meals are delightful year-round. I simply love the new vibe and atmosphere of Āgenskalns Market, even though I've been visiting it for years. The inclusive events foster a sense of community and offer opportunities to connect with local artisans and fellow enthusiasts.

(Survey response)



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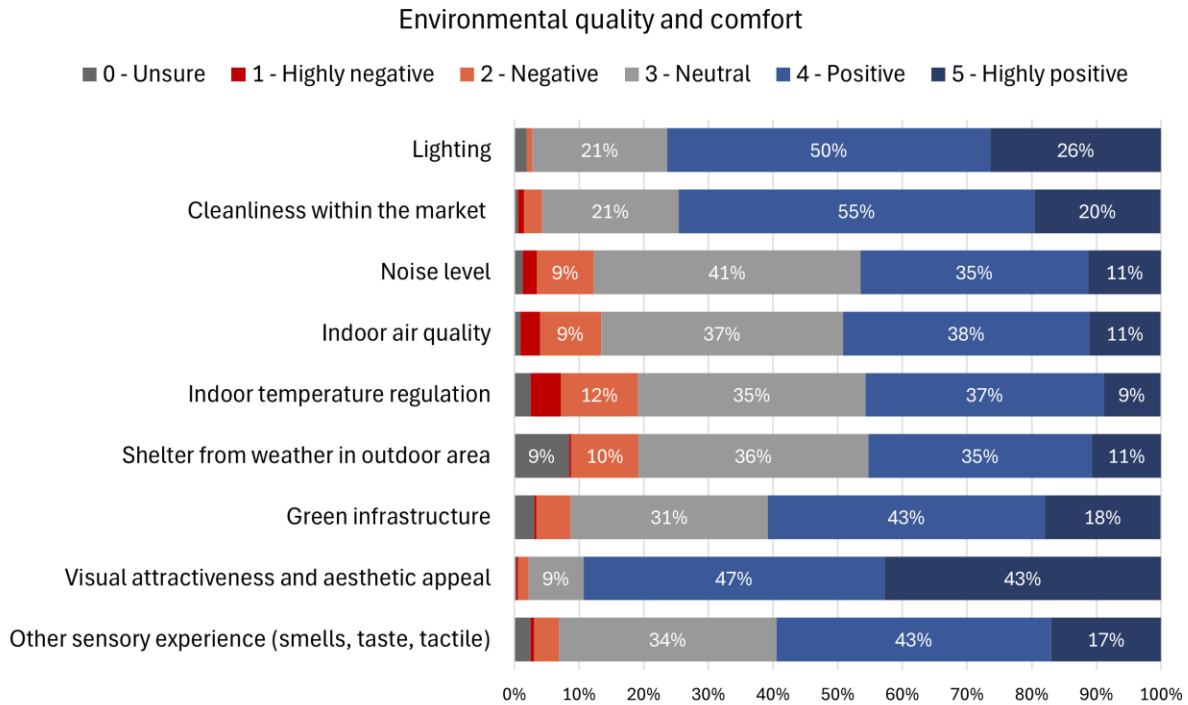


Figure 35. Distribution of respondent ratings for environmental quality and comfort factors (n=318)

The assessment of the quality of facilities was positive overall, with lighting, cleanliness and aesthetic appeal scoring particularly high. However, the results do suggest some room for improvement vis-à-vis noise levels, temperature control and air quality. Likewise, several respondents note the (in)ability to feel comfortable outdoors in different weather conditions. However, the perception of market facilities seems to be positive, with overall sensory experience being rated positively.



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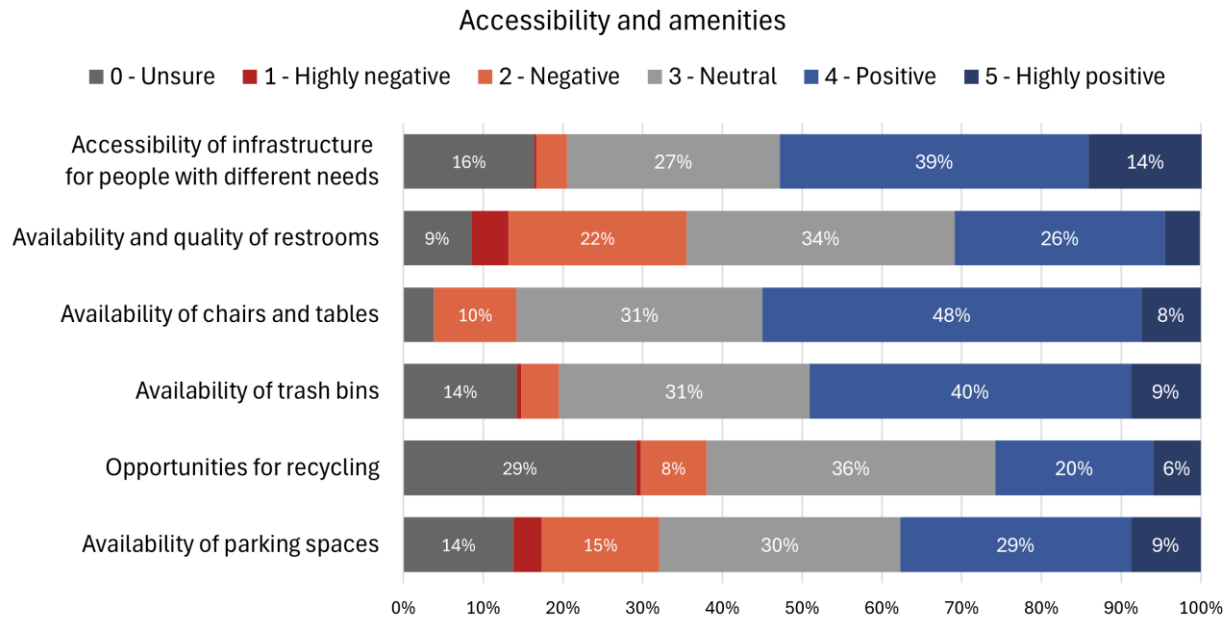


Figure 36. Distribution of respondent ratings for accessibility and amenities (n=318)

Assessments of accessibility and amenities appear to be more measured, with a higher percentage of respondents giving a negative assessment or indicating that they do not have an opinion. Considerable effort has gone into making the market building more accessible, and the market scores well in this regard. However, there appears to be some room for improvement regarding toilet facilities and parking. Interestingly, a fair number of respondents indicated that they do not have an opinion on the recycling facilities at the market, which indicates that the available facilities at the market have not been properly advertised.

The market has become a well-kept environment, with various events taking place, which increases the overall attractiveness of the neighbourhood.

(Survey response)



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A pleasant environment has a ripple effect; for example, the renovated square, clean pavements in a central location such as this contribute to a positive experience, regardless of whether people visit the market.

(Survey response)

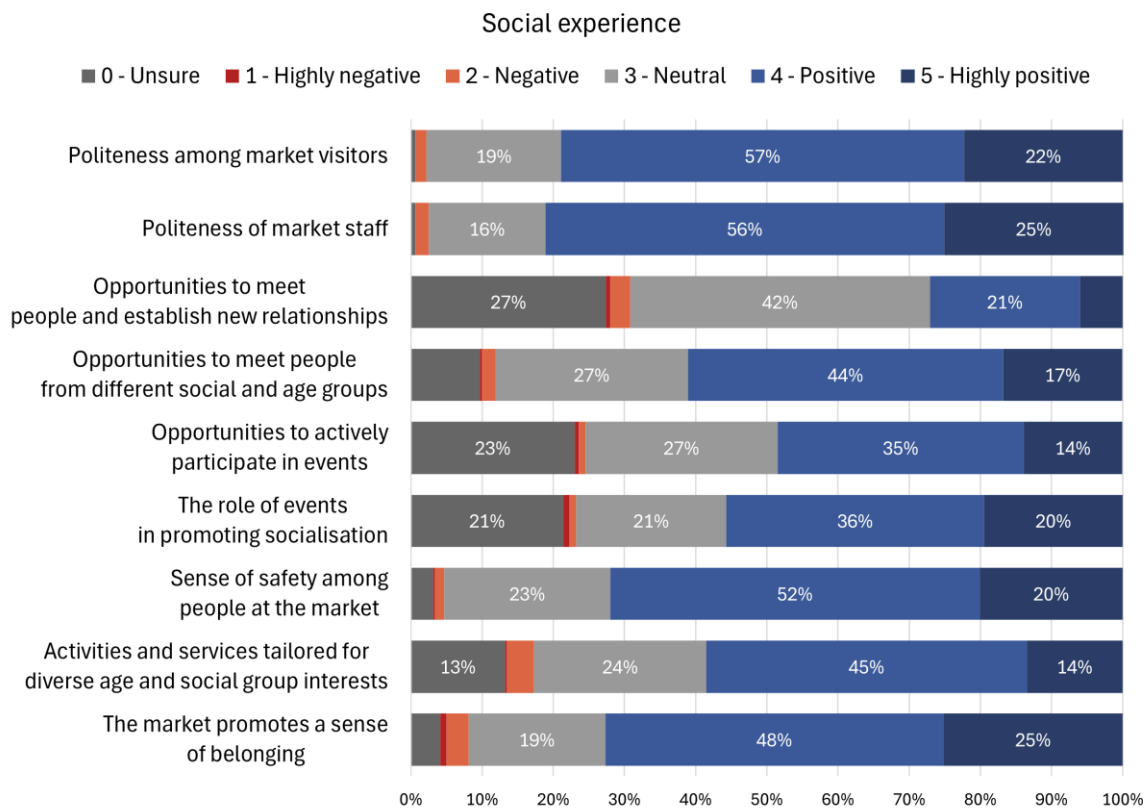


Figure 37. Distribution of respondent ratings for social experience (n=318)

Regarding the social experience, a few things stand out. Generally, **all aspects of the social experience are assessed positively**. However, we note that a fair number of people chose “I do not know” in the case of several aspects of the social experience at the market that encourage socialisation and active



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participation. Specifically, these concern the role of the market and events at the market in fostering socialisation and interactions between strangers. Crucially, however, this was not a negative assessment.

Regular events bring people together and my foreign friends don't feel left out, as most of the vendors and visitors switch easily to English.

(Survey response)

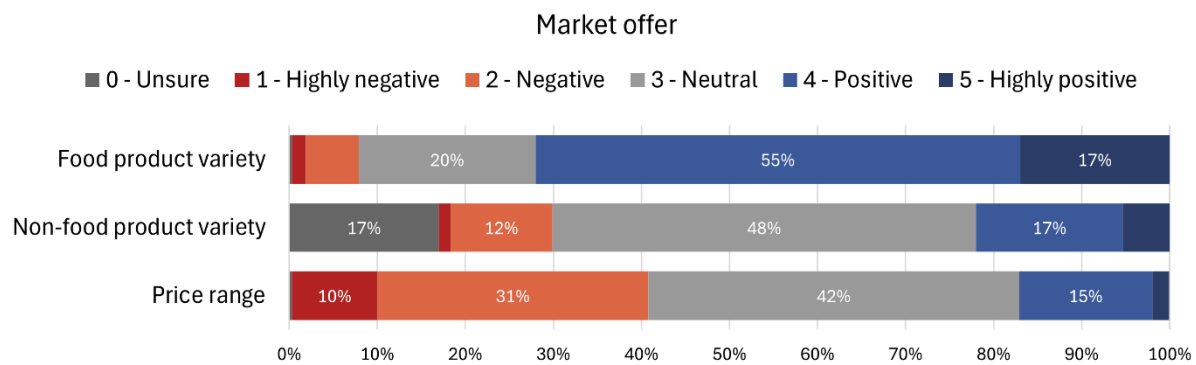


Figure 38. Distribution of respondent ratings for market offer (n=318)

As in the case of the mid-term report, **we note that price continues to be a sore spot.** We see that approximately 40% of respondents indicate that the price range is not satisfactory. Given our previous observations, it is likely that there are more products at the higher end of the price range.

I think Āgenskalns residents with middle or higher incomes benefit the most from the market.

(Survey response)

Overall, we continue to note that the multifunctionality features prominently in the way the market is used by visitors. Importantly, we note that the market appears to have a positive impact on social and spatial wellbeing, though there are some areas where improvements can be made.



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Observation reports

The 34 observation reports collected in 2024 and 2025 provide unique insights into how people use the market's infrastructure, how relationships develop, and how this environment shapes visitors' sense of belonging to a community.

Demographic profile of visitors

The profiles of market visitors reflect the diversity of Riga. Visitors include pensioners, students, young families with children, foreign tourists, migrants, traders, and people working in creative industries. This profile changes depending on the day of the week, the time of day, and the type of event. Nonetheless, **adults are frequently mentioned as the core group.** Parents with children are most visible on weekends, when the marketplace takes on the character of a “playground”. Reports note that visitors are generally evenly split between women and men, though among the elderly women are more common.

The presence of young people and students varies. They are less visible on weekday mornings but much more numerous during events. Outdoor dining areas are particularly popular among younger visitors, where they meet to eat, spend time together, and take photos. The 2025 spring reports highlight that young people are increasingly active in sustainability and healthy eating events.

In summer, the market becomes more international, with English, German, Russian, and other languages often heard. The presence of tourists and reshapes the cultural atmosphere. This sometimes creates practical challenges, such as communication with vendors, which makes the interactions more pragmatic. Nonetheless, international visitors constitute a significant group of visitors.

Traders and vendors are also part of the demographic landscape. Many have developed close ties with long-term customers. One vendor, for instance, gave a client fresh dill for free because “she knows



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he always buys it and had forgotten today”. Such gestures illustrate the informal ties between people inhabiting the market.

In 2024, observers emphasised community belonging, particularly among seniors and residents. In 2025, there was a clear increase in younger visitors and foreign guests, highlighting the market’s growing international appeal. **Overall**, the demographic profile shows both a stable core (seniors and local residents) and a changing group of visitors (youth, families, tourists, migrants).

Interactions

Many reports note that customers approach certain vendors not only for products but also for dialogue. Phrases such as “Good morning, how is your health today?” appear often, and sometimes the response lasts longer than the purchase itself. These interactions foster trust and create the sense that the market functions as a space of social interactions, rather than pure commercial transactions.

The reports also note that the market provides conditions where strangers are likely to talk to each other. One report describes two women in line at a meat stall who spontaneously exchanged recipe ideas. A similar openness was noted at flower stalls, where customers commented together on the beauty of the blooms.

Although the market is generally associated with a positive atmosphere, protocols also document occasional disputes – arguments about prices, the order of queues, or misunderstandings due to language barriers. One observer recorded a case where a buyer insisted potatoes were weighed incorrectly, while the vendor maintained it was done properly; the conflict ended in a compromise.

Large events such as cooking workshops, concerts, or sustainability festivals highlight the market as a place of community bonding. Reports note that people clap, laugh, taste food, and take photos together. A 2025 spring report describes how children from different families spontaneously began a ball game, soon joined by adults. These episodes show the market’s ability to become a space for improvised and temporary social ties between strangers.



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Sometimes the market becomes a place where people show support for each other. Reports recount cases such as a customer helping an elderly woman carry a heavy bag to a bus stop, or a vendor bringing water to a visitor who felt unwell. Repeated references to such small gestures suggest that they are an important part of the market’s atmosphere.

Use of space

Pensioners often include the market in their daily route – buying fresh produce, resting on benches, talking with acquaintances. One report describes a man who “simply sat down and observed the surroundings, as if the market were his living room”. In one 2024 report, an elderly couple was noted visiting not to shop, but to play chess at an outdoor table. During events, the infrastructure is reconfigured – stalls become workshops, stages, or tasting areas, disrupting everyday routines. People adapt to these changes with interest, though sometimes with frustration. As one report states, “a regular customer couldn’t find their usual vendor because the stall had been turned into an art workshop”.

Children appear to use the space freely – running between stalls, playing in open areas. For them, the market appears to be a safe environment where parents watch over them without constant interference. The 2025 reports repeatedly emphasise that the square has become a place where children can experience “urban freedom” in a controlled but relaxed setting.

Outdoor areas and benches play a central role, especially in the warmer months. People eat, talk, or even work on laptops. Reports note that young people use benches to listen to music or take photos for social media. Outdoor cafés and stalls attract many young people and tourists. Reports describe how people sit their socialising for long periods, even after finishing their meals. This shows the market’s growing role as a kind of “public living room”.

Observers note challenges for people with mobility difficulties. Although renovations improved the market visually and a lift and accessibility ramp were installed, some passages remain narrow and surfaces are uneven. Still, reports also recount instances where vendors or other visitors helped people with disabilities move around and navigate the environment.



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Overall, the use of space corroborates the idea that multifunctionality of the market corresponds to the way it is experienced by visitors. It is simultaneously a shopping centre, leisure area, playground, cultural venue, and community hub. In 2024, space was more associated with stability and routine, while in 2025, its flexibility and ability to host new initiatives, especially sustainability-related events, was emphasised.

Health, wellbeing, and inclusion

Several reports highlight the market's importance for those seeking fresh, local produce. Pensioners often value price (and purchase goods in the outdoor stalls), while younger generations prioritise organic products. A 2025 summer reports cites a young man saying, "I come here for vegetables because they taste real, unlike in supermarkets".

Despite its relatively compact size, the market serves as a walking space. Older adults often use it for light physical activity – slow walks, resting on benches, and returning daily as part of a routine. For many, the environment provides an emotional lift. One visitor said, "I always feel alive here because there are people around".

The reports note that market appears to be open to a wide range of groups – migrants, tourists, people with disabilities. While some infrastructural challenges remain, reports frequently mention supportive attitudes from others. For example, a vendor used gestures to help a foreign visitor select the right product despite a language barrier.

Crucially, improvements to their wellbeing are also associated with the market and the activities enabled by the project.

The festival and holidays bring a massive influx of people. There's a real sense of movement and bustle in the market—a sharp contrast to the day it rained (previous fieldwork outing). But there still aren't many elderly people. That seems to be a constant."

(Observation report)



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Media analysis

The identified articles highlight the transformation of Āgenskalns Market. Core themes include the revitalisation of historical infrastructure, support for local entrepreneurship, and the hosting of events ranging from art exhibitions and music festivals to science fairs and gastronomy projects. The IN-HABIT project explicitly mentioned in connection with the RE CEP TE co-creation kitchen initiative, which promotes culinary heritage and local engagement.

The topic of wellbeing is addressed in various ways – through accessible cultural programming, healthy food initiatives, physical activity encouragement and inclusive public design (drinking water stations, green spaces). Inclusion is reflected in events aimed at youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and minority groups (such as Ukrainians), while mental and physical health are discussed in both direct and creative formats, such as somatic theatre experiences and food-based community actions.

In summary, Āgenskalns Market emerges as an example of how urban spaces can become multifunctional platforms for social innovation. Across the articles, it is repeatedly recognised not only for its architectural revival but also for fostering community resilience, cultural participation, and inclusive dialogue.

People counters

Data from indoor people counters has been collected since May 2024. Unsurprisingly, the summer months are when the market is busiest. When it comes to days of the week, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays are consistently the busiest at the market. Furthermore, we see attendance growth when we compare data from 2024 and 2025 (May-July).



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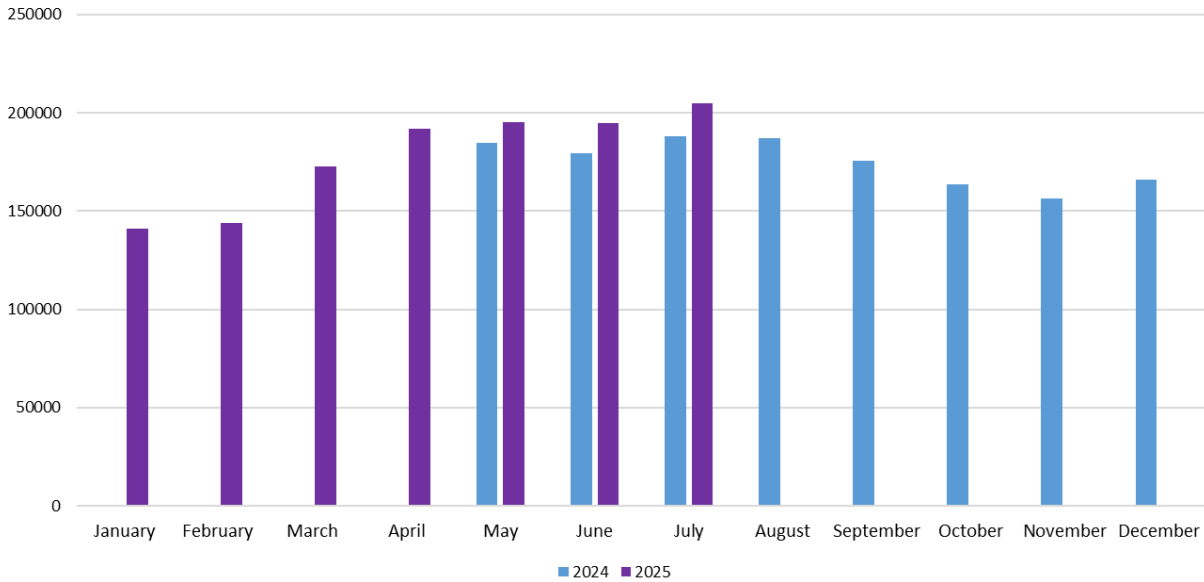


Figure 39. Number of visitors per month

However, the market team, after consultation with vendors, noted an interesting trend, which is relevant in the context of this report. Specifically, while the summer months are the busiest in terms of the number of visitors, data from 2024 suggest that they are not actually the best performing for vendors and cafes. Indeed, November and December were the most profitable, raising the possibility that people come to the market during the summer months for other reasons (such as socialising with friends or relatives).

Event monitoring

In the mid-term report, we tried to formulate the relevance of event by monitoring by adopting an activity-based approach to impact assessment. Below is a condensed version of how each of the event types relates to the five dimensions of IHW.



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- Economic/trade events primarily influence the economic wellbeing and spatial and environmental wellbeing of participants. To a lesser degree, trade events contribute to subjective wellbeing, healthy lifestyles and social wellbeing, although they undoubtedly provide socialisation opportunities for interest groups and contribute to diversification of leisure and free time opportunities in Ågenskalns.
- Social events are geared primarily towards social wellbeing. However, substantial contribution is observed also with regards to promotion of healthy lifestyles and subjective wellbeing (sense of belonging, psychological wellbeing, experiencing togetherness with others). To a certain extent, social events encourage people to do things together and engage in joint action, thus also enhancing people's skills, thereby potentially contributing to economic wellbeing.
- Cultural events are aimed primarily at social wellbeing and subjective wellbeing. They can contribute to healthy lifestyles (in terms of cultural consumption and production, leisure and free time).
- Educational events due to their thematic diversity and workshop style have a relatively balanced impact on all IHW dimensions.
- Environmental events mainly affect the spatial and environmental wellbeing of participants, though environmental events also relate to economic wellbeing as activities usually involve DIY style workshops and practical learning of environmental solutions.



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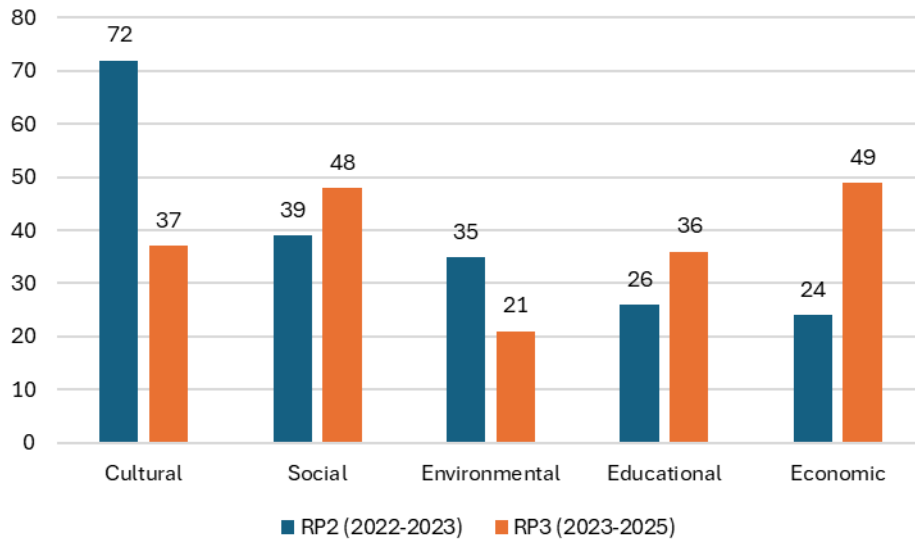


Figure 40. Event types at Āgenskalns Market in RP2 and RP3

If we compare the results of the two reporting periods, we see that the number of purely cultural events has decreased both in relative and in absolute terms. The categorisation of these events is based on expert judgement, and we acknowledge that many events also have a secondary or tertiary dimension (e.g. cultural events are also educational). However, the results in RP3 are consistent with the idea that the multifunctionality of the market is becoming more pronounced. In other words, events are becoming increasingly diverse.



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Analysis

As noted above, for research activities from 2024 onwards, we used a revised list of assumptions about how the VIS implemented at the market could impact IHW, and how it performs across different dimensions of IHW. The results allow us to assess whether the desired impacts have been achieved and where additional effort and attention are required.

Analysis claim-by-claim

The VIS will increase the perception of security in the neighbourhood.

Survey responses from 2024 indicate a moderate rise in perceived safety after the market reopened, and in 2025 respondents repeatedly note that the market feels “well-lit” and “clean”. Observation reports echo this sentiment: visitors comment that the market feels safer at night because there are people around and good lighting. Together, the results of the surveys and the observations suggest the market has bolstered neighbourhood security perceptions.

The VIS will strengthen social inclusion in the neighbourhood.

Surveys from 2024 highlight greater social engagement and a sense of belonging, while qualitative data from 2024 and 2025 data emphasise interactions among diverse groups - pensioners, families, migrants, tourists, and students. The observation reports describe spontaneous conversations (e.g. two women swapping recipes at a meat stall) and supportive gestures (a vendor giving free dill to a regular customer). Moreover, the market’s programming deliberately targets under-represented groups, and participants note that previously unheard voices now have a platform. This convergence of findings suggests that the market is acting as an inclusive social hub, strengthening social inclusion in the neighbourhood.

The VIS will improve the reputation of the neighbourhood.

Survey data from 2024 indicated that the perceived reputation of the market has improved. Media analysis repeatedly frames Āgenskalns Market as a vibrant cultural and social hub and a leading



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example of urban revitalisation. Furthermore, claims as to the aesthetic appeal and coherence of the market are particularly pronounced. This suggests that the market has contributed to the improved reputation of the neighbourhood.

The VIS will increase a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.

Survey responses from 2024 report higher levels of perceived community belonging after the market's reopening, and this supports the claim that the market is now viewed as "the place to go" for both everyday errands and special events. Observation reports capture moments of emotional attachment - e.g., an elderly woman standing at the tomato stall to talk with the vendor she has known for years. These anecdotes, together with the quantitative results, suggest that the market is strengthening residents' identification with their neighbourhood.

The VIS will increase satisfaction with the cultural offer in the neighbourhood.

The results show improved satisfaction with recreational opportunities in the neighbourhood. Participants note a positive contribution to the cultural offer and cite specific events such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and cooking workshops. Survey data show that respondents perceive the market as a cultural venue. The media analysis also underscores the market's role in delivering a rich cultural programme, confirming heightened cultural satisfaction.

The VIS will contribute to the formation of healthy and sustainable habits.

In 2024, survey respondents noted that Āgenskalns market has positively affected the accessibility of healthy food, and the results suggested that the frequency of physical exercise had increased. Observation reports reveal that shoppers - especially younger visitors - use it as a source for organic products and "healthy eating". The market encourages light walking and incidental physical activity, while sustainability-focused events (e.g., zero-waste workshops) are attracting increasing participation. All this points toward the market nudging residents towards healthier, more sustainable behaviours, though the absence of direct behavioural data limits our ability to make definitive statements.



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The VIS will enhance cultural participation and engagement.

Beyond satisfaction, the data show higher rates of actual participation: the number of cultural events hosted at the market has grown, survey data from 2024 and 2025 indicate that the market is actively used for socialisation, and observation reports show good attendance at art workshops, concerts, and gastronomy projects. Survey responses from 2024 also suggest that the market is not merely improving perception - it is raising participation levels and opportunities in the neighbourhood.

The VIS will improve the quality of free time and leisure.

Qualitative data repeatedly describe the market as being akin to a “public living room” where people spend leisure time - eating at outdoor cafés, playing with children, or simply sitting on benches. Survey data from 2024 show an uplift in terms of opportunities to spend free time in the neighbourhood, and the focus group notes that the market offers a pleasant way to spend free time compared with previous alternatives. The combination of structured events and informal hang-outs demonstrates an enhanced leisure environment.

The VIS will enhance mental wellbeing.

Survey data from 2024 indicate uplift from 2021. Open-ended comments mention emotional lift, a positive atmosphere, and “feeling alive”. Observation notes also capture moments of social support (e.g., a vendor bringing water to an unwell visitor) that can alleviate stress. While the effect size is modest, the converging evidence supports the claim that the market contributes positively to mental wellbeing.

The VIS will enhance learning, skill development and agency for inclusive health and wellbeing.

The market regularly organises skill-building activities - cooking workshops, sustainability seminars, and health-focused talks - that are explicitly designed for “inclusive health”. However, survey data from 2024 do indicate that this part does not feature prominently in people’s perceptions of the market.



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Goal	Achieved	Brief explanation
Increase perception of security	Yes	Surveys (2024-25) show a moderate rise in perceived safety; observations note better lighting and presence of people.
Strengthen social inclusion	Yes	Survey and qualitative data (2024-25) report more interaction among diverse groups, spontaneous conversations, and targeted programming for underrepresented residents.
Improve neighbourhood reputation	Yes	2024 survey data indicate a better reputation; media analysis repeatedly frames the market as a vibrant cultural hub.
Increase sense of belonging	Yes	Survey responses (2024) show higher community belonging scores; anecdotes of long-term vendor-customer relationships reinforce emotional attachment.
Increase satisfaction with cultural offer	Yes	Respondents report higher satisfaction with cultural activities; specific events (art exhibitions, music festivals, workshops) are cited as positives.
Contribute to healthy & sustainable habits	Partially achieved	Survey respondents note easier access to healthy food and more walking; observations of organic purchases and zero waste workshops support the claim, though direct behavioural data are lacking.
Enhance cultural participation & engagement	Yes	Number of cultural events grew; surveys and observation reports show good attendance at workshops, concerts, and gastronomy projects.
Improve quality of free time & leisure	Yes	Qualitative comments describe the market as a “public living room”; surveys (2024) record more opportunities for leisure activities.
Enhance mental wellbeing	Partially achieved	Open ended comments mention emotional lift and reduced stress; effect size is modest but convergent evidence points to a positive influence.
Enhance learning, skill development & agency for inclusive health	Not clearly achieved	Skill building activities exist (cooking, sustainability seminars) and are popular, yet 2024 survey data show this aspect is not prominent in residents’ perceptions.

Table 1. Overall assessment of impact claim-by-claim



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Overall, across nine of the ten claims, the data from the monitoring and evaluation exercise generally provide at least partial confirmation. The most direct empirical support appears for social inclusion, cultural participation, and the perception of safety, while the evidence for economic wellbeing and the magnitude of health impacts is indirect and would benefit from additional, more quantitative measurement in future monitoring cycles. Learning, skill development & agency for inclusive health proved to be more challenging to capture, as, even though numerous events were organised with this topic in mind, the effect has not been quantified.

The five dimensions

Subjective wellbeing

Taken together, the data suggest that the market is modestly enhancing subjective wellbeing for a segment of the neighbourhood. The effect is not dramatic enough to claim a causal, neighbourhood-wide mental-health boost, but the recurring sentiment that the market adds “emotional colour” and comfort to daily life is indicated by survey responses from 2024 and 2025, and qualitative data (focus groups, stories). While (compared to the 2021 baseline) survey data from 2024 indicate a pronounced uplift, this should be interpreted with caution.

Spatial wellbeing

Survey respondents from 2024 report moderate gains in perceived safety and a slight rise in spatial wellbeing after the market’s reopening. In 2025, ratings for lighting, cleanliness, and aesthetic appeal are consistently high, while noise, temperature control, and air quality receive lower scores. Observation reports paint a vivid picture, with the market being described as a “public living room”. The outdoor areas become informal workspaces, lunch spots, and meeting points. Visitors often sit, and chat, turning a once commercial space (the market) into a socially rich, spatially inviting arena. Some participants raise price concerns and lack of senior-focused events as obstacles that can diminish the sense of belonging to the space. Moreover, a portion of survey respondents note noise and temperature discomfort, especially on hot summer days, suggesting that while the market’s visual



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transformation is appreciated, sensory comfort could be improved. It is important to note, however, that the market team is aware of these issues and is actively searching for financially viable solutions.

Overall, the data suggests that the market enhances spatial wellbeing by delivering a clean, well-lit, and aesthetically appealing environment that encourages extended stays. The identified gaps (noise, temperature, air quality) are concrete targets for incremental improvements that could improve the spatial experience.

Social wellbeing

Perhaps the most striking story emerging from the data is the market's role as a social catalyst. In 2025, survey respondents consistently rate their social experience at the market as "positive or very positive" and previously reported more frequent participation in cultural activities after the market's revival. The focus group in 2024 emphasised that the market has become a venue where previously under-represented groups now have a voice. Observation reports reference spontaneous conversations, supportive gestures and swift resolution of conflicts, underscoring a culture of negotiation. Visitors span pensioners, families, students, migrants, tourists, and creative professionals. However, two pain points remain, as indicated by both survey and qualitative data - high product prices and limited senior-targeted programming. While the market is socially vibrant, affordability can act as a barrier to full inclusion, especially for low-income seniors, though they do benefit from a communal gathering place (as evidenced by the observation reports). Overall, however, the market consistently appears as a social hub that nurtures belonging, dialogue, and a sense of collective identity, contributing to social wellbeing.

Economic wellbeing

Economic wellbeing is the dimension with the least evidence in the data we have and no specific quantitative data, yet several strands hint at indirect impacts. Price dissatisfaction is a prominent theme and comments about the comparatively high cost of products appear repeatedly in surveys. Nonetheless, focus group and observational data also hint at the market's role in revitalising local



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entrepreneurship and supporting small traders. Vendors develop personal ties with regular customers, sometimes offering small gifts (e.g. free dill) that signal trust-based micro-economics. Likewise, the IN-HABIT business incubator has contributed to entrepreneurial education. Thus, while the market appears to stimulate local commerce and provides a platform for small businesses to sell their goods, the perception of high prices suggests that the economic benefits may not be evenly distributed. Residents who are price-sensitive may feel excluded, potentially dampening the overall economic well-being impact. Overall, there is insufficient data to make definitive claims about impact.

Healthy lifestyles

Health is woven throughout the narrative, both in the direct provision of fresh food and the incidental physical activity that the market encourages via different events and as a space. Older adults use the market for light exercise, stopping at benches and chatting - an activity that adds gentle exercise to daily routines. The market supports healthier lifestyles by providing nutritious food options, encouraging light physical activity, and fostering social environments that reduce stress, while also organising different events that tackle health issues and encourage healthier and more sustainable consumption practices. However, survey data on changes in self-reported health are lacking, meaning that, while the market encourages healthy lifestyles, there is no direct evidence to support claims on actual changes in health-related practices.

Dimension	Desired impact achieved	Short explanation
Subjective wellbeing	Partially achieved	Survey & focus group comments (2024 and 2025) provide some evidence, but the effect is modest and not strong enough to claim a neighbourhood wide boost.
Spatial wellbeing	Mostly achieved	Respondents report moderate gains in perceived safety, lighting, cleanliness, and aesthetics. Observations describe the market as a “public living room” where people linger for extended periods. Remaining gaps: noise, temperature discomfort, and air quality concerns, plus price worries for some users.



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Dimension	Desired impact achieved	Short explanation
Social wellbeing	Achieved	Respondents rate the social experience as “positive or very positive”. The market serves as a social catalyst, fostering spontaneous conversations, supportive gestures, and inclusion of underrepresented groups. Two notable pain points: high product prices and limited senior-focused programming.
Economic wellbeing	Limited data	No quantitative data, but qualitative hints suggest the market stimulates local entrepreneurship (vendor customer ties, incubator activities). Conversely, repeated complaints about high prices indicate that economic benefits are uneven and may exclude price sensitive residents, especially seniors.
Healthy lifestyles	Partially achieved	The market promotes healthier eating (fresh food) and incidental physical activity (walking). Health-focused events and social ambience can reduce stress. However, there is no direct survey evidence of measurable changes in health behaviours or outcomes.

Table 2. Overall assessment of impact across five dimensions

Overall, we note that more focused data on the economic, emotional and health impacts of the interventions would be necessary to make more definite claims. This also reflects a weakness of our approach that focused on how the market was used and experienced, with less focus on the private lives of individuals.

Synthesis and reflections

Overall, the results indicate that the issues outlined in the first part of the report have been addressed and there are positive impacts across all dimensions of IHW, albeit sometimes partial. Āgenskalns Market has turned into a social, health-promoting, and inclusive space where generations, nationalities, and social groups meet. There is increased activity in the market and neighbourhood overall (indicated by growing visitor numbers and frequency of events). The profile of visitors is changing and has become more diversified, leading to representation of different age and interest



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groups. However, more data would be necessary to quantify the impacts on economic, subjective and physical wellbeing. Nonetheless, we contend that it is important to recognise that improvements in one dimension often ripple into another. For example, spatial enhancements (cleaner and aesthetically pleasing spaces) boost subjective mood, while social interactions at the market reinforce mental well-being and healthy lifestyles (stress reduction, motivation to stay active). The converse is also true, however. The price issue cuts across economic, social, and healthy lifestyle dimensions, limiting accessibility for lower income residents and seniors.

While we did focus on the perception of individual activities in the mid-term report, we have subsequently refrained from trying to isolate the impact and perception of each individual solution.

On the whole, our research has revealed that the public tends to experience the market as a single entity rather than as a collection of discrete interventions that are associated with the project (despite the fact that they are clearly marked). Consequently, attempting to attribute outcomes to singular VIS components would produce fragmented and potentially misleading conclusions - both positive and negative. A case in point would be the community kitchen, which was not frequently selected for assessment in the surveys in 2024. However, the workshops that are organised there are frequently mentioned in positive comments about the market. Unfortunately, this does mean that our claims must be more general.

Our monitoring approach has focused on how the market is used and experienced, meaning that we have limited evidence to make claims about specific impacts of specific VIS on the personal lives of neighbourhood residents. Furthermore, we acknowledge that this holistic perception complicates precise attribution of impact and effects to specific interventions. Nevertheless, it also underscores the very nature of the market as an integrated, multifunctional innovation. By delivering a blend of food, cultural programming, social spaces and health-promoting activities, the market exemplifies how VIS can generate synergistic benefits that exceed the sum of their parts. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that more focused attention on how interventions at the market affected the lives of individuals would have provided greater clarity on economic, emotional and health impacts.



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Our continuous revision of our approach to monitoring and evaluating different processes at the market is also significant in the context of broader discussions about understanding impact in project-based research. Indeed, the need to demonstrate measurable impact has become commonplace in contemporary project-based research that foresees project-funded interventions. The emphasis on evidence-based outcomes is understandable both from the perspective of efficient resource use and scientific research. However, it is important to continuously reflect and compare how different methods articulate or overlook specific IHW impact dimensions. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to consider whether the groups that are engaged and targeted provide a comprehensive understanding of the overall situation. The experience of seniors is a telling example. Focusing on a single method would have likely provided an overly positive or negative account of the situation, but the integration of different data sources allows us to understand the interplay between inclusion (e.g. pleasant and welcoming environment) and exclusion (e.g. price). This specific example also underscores the importance of simultaneously considering how various forms of inclusion and exclusion intersect.

From a research perspective, this tension between predetermined metrics and emergent impacts reflects a broader epistemological challenge: *how can researchers and evaluators balance the need for structured evaluation with the inherently processual nature of social change?* For a researcher, the answer may lie in developing more adaptive approaches to impact assessment that can accommodate both anticipated and unexpected outcomes while maintaining methodological integrity. However, the gap between pre-defined metrics and the variety of observed outcomes has clear and practical implications in terms of how we conceptualise and validate impact in the context of participatory and community-based research, especially research that has been publicly funded based on a project proposal and a grant agreement outlining what results are expected.

Our experience of attempting to capture the impact of the market via various monitoring and evaluation tools reflects this. Both the intervention settings and impact avenues changed over time. We subsequently tried to adapt our methodological approach to explore different forms of impact and tried to continuously involve different stakeholders in thinking about impact.



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Conclusions

The final monitoring and evaluation exercise for assessing the impact of IN-HABIT interventions in Āgenskalns Market brings together a variety of data sources and insights gathered between 2021 and 2025. Overall, we see different impacts across the five dimensions of inclusive health and wellbeing, but the evidence points to a generally positive trajectory.

- Subjective and mental wellbeing show modest improvements, with respondents reporting positive wellbeing impacts when interacting with the market or as a result of socialisation opportunities provided by the market, but evidence remains limited.
- Spatial wellbeing benefits from a cleaner, well-lit, and aesthetically appealing environment, although noise and temperature comfort remain areas for refinement.
- Social wellbeing emerges as the strongest impact strand: the market functions as a “public living room,” fostering spontaneous interaction, a sense of belonging, and inclusion of diverse groups - including our target groups (seniors, migrants, families and young people).
- Economic wellbeing presents a mixed picture and there is insufficient data overall. While the market appears to be stimulating local entrepreneurship and offers a platform for small traders, perceived high product prices limit accessibility for price-sensitive residents, especially older adults.
- Healthy lifestyles are supported through easier access to fresh, local produce, and health-related workshops and activities that nudge residents toward more sustainable consumption habits, though clear health impacts were not captured by monitoring activities.

The triangulation of survey results, focus group reflections, media analysis, observation reports, and people-counter data reinforces the conclusion that Āgenskalns Market has evolved into a multifunctional hub that intertwines commerce, culture, recreation and community. The market’s role as a catalyst for social inclusion, cultural participation and spatial revitalisation is well supported by the data. Evidence for direct economic effects and health outcomes remains tentative, though there are indications that self-reported health and wellbeing have experienced positive effects, and there is a



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common perception that the market has contributed to increased economic activity in the surrounding area.

Beyond these substantive findings, the monitoring and evaluation process itself yields an important meta-insight: the tension between pre-defined assessment frameworks and the realities of measuring impact in complex and evolving urban settings. The original impact framework, while co-created, provided tools that were necessary for comparability. However, in our case it struggled to capture emergent, unanticipated effects such as the market’s “public living room” character, the nuanced ways in which informal social support materialised, and the subtle trade-offs and synergies between price perception, multifunctionality and inclusivity. Adapting the methodology by continuously incorporating participatory co-design proved essential for capturing these more subtle impacts.

In summary, the results of the monitoring and evaluation exercise support the claim the IN-HABIT interventions have generated meaningful benefits for the Āgenskalns neighbourhood. However, they also illustrate how impact can be imagined and measured when evaluators remain flexible, reflexive, and open to emergent evidence. In line with the methodological approach of IN-HABIT, it underlines that stakeholder-driven lenses can facilitate the recognition of the interconnected nature of urban transformation for IHW.



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