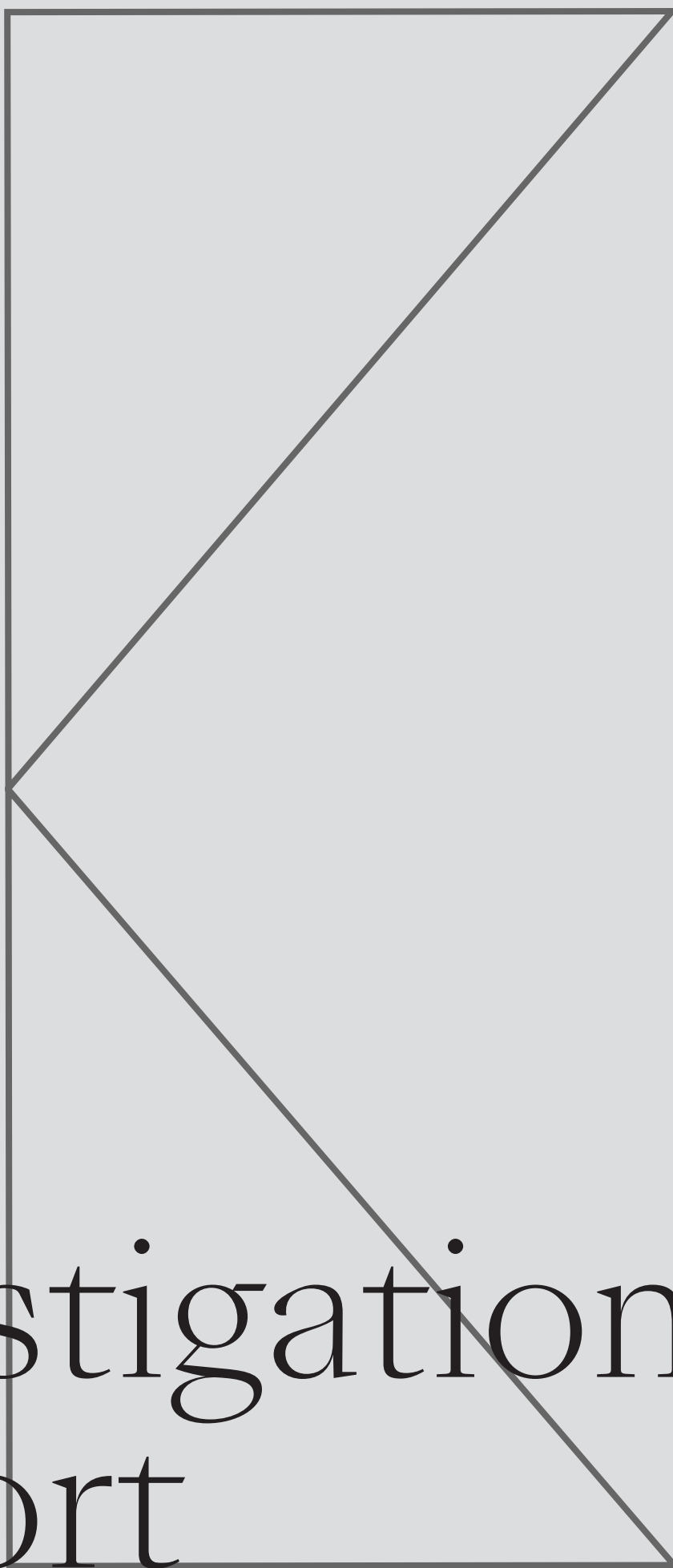


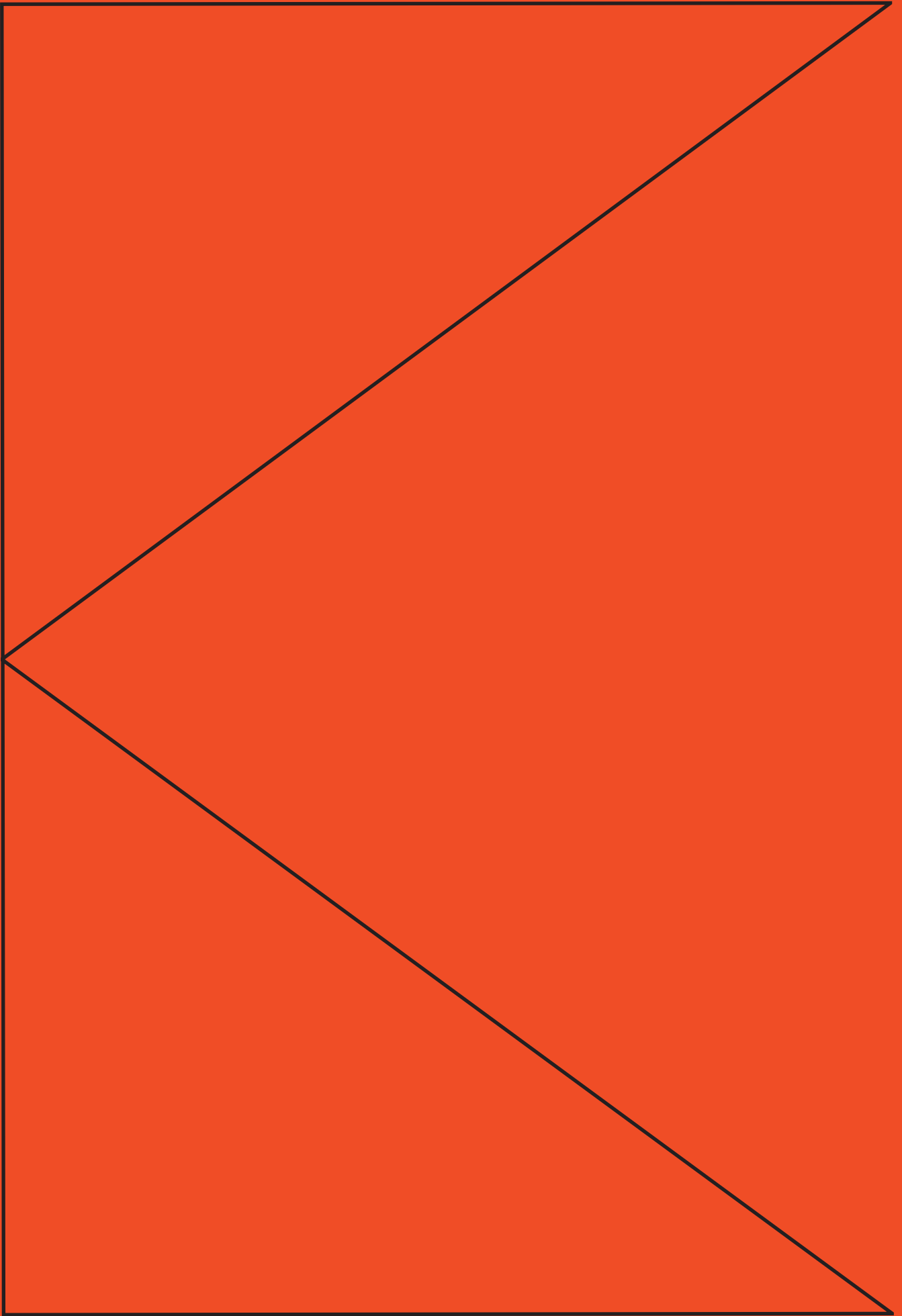
Kaunas –  
European Capital  
of Culture  
2022



# Investigation Report

From Temporary  
to Contemporary







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FROM  
TEMPO-  
RARY TO  
CONTEM-  
PORARY

or

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*What We Were Seeking to  
Achieve with Our European  
Capital of Culture Project  
from the Initiative's Inception*

The entire journey of our growing team, between 2014 and 2023, has been geared towards change. This has involved attitudes, mindsets, ways of acting, attentiveness to the details in one's local area and personal stories, empathy, personal commitment and a determination to choose happiness. Back in 2014, in a local restaurant, with an informal group of people from the Kaunas culture circle, we were reflecting on what our city is, what it could be but is not, and why. Then we discussed, quite emotionally and somewhat bitterly, the city's obvious malaises, such as its close-mindedness, its critical attitude towards the different and even the same, and its general amnesia and insensitivity to history. The city seemed uninteresting for young people, lacked understanding of the value of its unique heritage and did not care to preserve it. It had not found its contemporary identity and place within Lithuania's urban fabric, and was not visited by local tourists, let alone foreign ones. It was a city with a nostalgic mentality, harking back to the Temporary Capital's 'golden' and 'irretrievable' glory.

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# The Temporary Capital is a historical phenomenon,

which in 1919–1940 gave Kaunas the status of Lithuania’s capital and European recognition, with all the diplomatic, intellectual, scientific, and urban breakthroughs that came with it. More than 6,000 public, cultural, religious and residential modernist architectural buildings were built in Kaunas, all the most important state institutions and diplomatic representations were relocated here, theatres and cinemas were established, social centres were founded, as was the University of Lithuania which hosted professors from all over Europe. The period of the Temporary Capital was the only memory, albeit selectively sifted, that gave dignity to Kaunesians of our generation. It was followed by the brutal crimes of the early Soviet period (the city being cleansed of its educated and disloyal citizens, the closure of the university, imprisonments, deportations, massacres), the Nazi crimes against humanity, the extermination of a third of Kaunas’s Jewish population (among other things, the Soviets were careful to conceal this part of their gruesome history). The regime’s planned transformation of the city from an intellectual centre to an industrial suburb of the Soviet Union, in the 1950s and 1970s, relegated Kaunas not only to the margins of Europe, but also to those of Lithuania. When the country regained its independence in 1990, the capital Vilnius received the greatest share of attention and financial injections necessary for changes in infrastructure, not to mention in

*But was that enough for the project’s initiators? Was a European city that has been contributing to Western culture since the times of the medieval Hanseatic City worth only that much?*

As you may know from the history of Kaunas City and Kaunas District over the past eight years, we have put together a different plan for the city. We wanted to feel fully fledged Europeans in our city. We saw the title of European Capital of Culture as an opportunity to come together and discover a contemporary identity for the city and its citizens. In preparing our bid-book for the competition, we decided to conceal not a single shortcoming, challenge, or insufficiency. We not only exposed each and every challenge, but also set goals for overcoming them, and listed the methods and specific targeted cultural projects for achieving them. The Kaunas 2022 programme curators, whose team was evolving in the atmosphere of those informal discussions, took up the task of changing the city’s consciousness from the nostalgic ‘temporary’ to the creative ‘contemporary’ as a personal

and professional challenge, which has turned into a seven-year dedicated effort. Inspired by one of our colleagues, we embarked on a journey of creating a new narrative for our city, a new Kaunas myth in which the city heals and comes to love itself.

We had a vision of what change can be brought into effect by soft power (cultural action). It is a good thing we had spelled it all out on paper, because in 2022, we were delighted to have achieved many of our goals.

Note: Kaunas 2022 and the creative team of 77 Lithuanian cultural organisations were only responsible for cultural action and change. The infrastructural changes in the long-term planning of Kaunas City Municipality and Kaunas District Municipality (improvement of public spaces, including pedestrian streets

self-esteem, followed by financial injections from European infrastructure funds to small Lithuanian towns. And Lithuania’s second city, once the capital of Lithuania, has remained stagnant, constantly patching up the mouldering corners, suffering from resentful teenager syndrome, ‘second-city-itis’, as we jokingly named it in the text of our European Capital of Culture bid-book. Granted, at the beginning of the 21st century, Kaunas drew universal inspiration from the newly built Žalgiris Arena and the frequent victories of the Kaunas Žalgiris basketball players.

and parks, and renovation of some cultural institutions’ buildings) were not part of the creative team’s tasks, but the successes of these changes have contributed to strengthening the overall image of Kaunas City and Kaunas District.

Below, I present a table from our second bid-book in 2017, showing why we were seeking the title of European Capital of Culture and what we intended to use it for. In the right-hand column, we give a brief overview of the achieved results.



Our final bid-book:



# CONFUSION

CHALLENGES	OBJECTIVES	METHODS	OUTCOMES SHAPING KAUNAS 2022 LEGACY
<p>Besides being characterised by retrospection, which makes them seek nostalgic glory in the past, Kaunesians are also prone to collective amnesia and remember only certain historical moments.</p>	<p>To initiate international research and to establish a research centre that would focus on our most important architectural heritage, namely modernist architecture, and thereby to promote interest in this heritage and to put Kaunas modernism back on the European and global maps.</p>	<p><b>MODERNISM FOR THE FUTURE</b></p> <p>A major new international centre for modernism will be established, which will deal with issues around the use of modernist buildings; collect information; organise <i>in situ</i> art and culture projects; collect narratives, create digital archive applications; organise virtual reality and augmented reality guided tours; and organise international publications and conferences.</p>	<p>A community of several hundred Kaunesians, modernism enthusiasts (<a href="http://www.modernizmasateiciai.lt/eng/">www.modernizmasateiciai.lt/eng/</a>), has been formed, whose members have gone on to become heritage experts, guides and animators.</p> <p>Over 500 activities and events have been implemented in modernist buildings throughout Kaunas and Kaunas District. These included 'Modernism for the Future 365/360', an international residency and exhibition project, numerous concerts, guided tours, and creative writing workshops.</p> <p>Three international scientific conferences have been organised on the topics of architecture and heritage.</p> <p>Three publications have been published.</p> <p>The Government of the Republic of Lithuania acquired the Kaunas Central Post Office building in 2022 and approved the regulations of the bylaws of the newly established centre, the National Institute of Architecture, which states that this institution is the legacy of 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022'.</p>
	<p>To revive Kaunesians' complicated memory and to promote openness to European values and multi-ethnicity. To reconcile the past with the present for the future.</p>	<p><b>MEMORY OFFICE</b></p> <p>The programme will seek to revive and re-contextualise the painful topic of the loss of Jewish citizens in 1940-1945. Its projects will open up Kaunas' multi-layered and multi-ethnic history and will create spaces for discussion and co-creation, focusing on the cultures of Russian, Polish, German and other Kaunesians – both old-timers and newcomers.</p>	<p>A long-term international interdisciplinary CITYTELLING FESTIVAL has been launched to give voice to Kaunas's Jewish and other ethnic communities, where personal stories can be told and heard. Numerous exhibitions have been organised on various historical aspects and on the topic of multiethnic Kaunas. A number of music and theatre works have been created on the topics of memory.</p> <p>A global Litvak Culture Forum has been organised.</p> <p>Five publications were published, including the book <i>The Jews of Kaunas</i> – for the first time in the city's history (!); <i>That Which We Do Not Remember</i>, the William Kentridge exhibition catalogue; <i>1972: Breaking Through the Wall</i>, the exhibition publication which exposes Soviet repressions and restrictions on cultural behaviour; and two others.</p>

# CONFLUENCE

CHALLENGES	OBJECTIVES	METHODS	OUTCOMES SHAPING KAUNAS 2022 LEGACY
<p>We lack the collaborative spirit and practices (and the narrative) that would bind us together, as well as a sense of happiness. So we have to face up to the challenges of limited cooperation and weak links between the cultural, scientific, business and social sectors.</p> <p>As a result, young people are leaving the city, so we must find new instruments to improve the situation and encourage them to stay.</p>	<p>To choose happiness as a state of mind and to shape the city in such a way that it could maximise happiness.</p> <p>To stimulate cross-sectoral cooperation.</p> <p>To transform the city into a powerhouse of modern art and design.</p> <p>To create a unifying narrative for the city that would help the city and its inhabitants to find their way back to a European context.</p>	<p><b>DESIGNING HAPPINESS</b></p> <p>This programme will promote a sense of happiness by shaping the environment, and fostering an appreciation of environmental design and design culture in daily life.</p> <p>After the implementation of the public art and design programme, Kaunas will become a public art and design gallery, an experimental space for creative thinking and the promotion of cultural attitudes.</p>	<p>We have developed an Accessibility Guide which includes a proposed labelling system for institutions and events and practical tips for organising inclusive events.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">  <p data-bbox="1203 539 1403 595">Kaunas 2022 Accessibility Guide</p> </div> <p>The Forum of International Design Networks and the Design Festival have been launched.</p> <p>110 public artworks in Kaunas City and Kaunas District have been implemented.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">  <p data-bbox="1203 891 1341 947">Kaunas 2022 Legacy Map</p> </div> <p>The MAGENTA Landscape Design Festival has been established.</p> <p>After 2022, the two festivals merged into one: the KAUNAS URBAN DESIGN FESTIVAL.</p> <p>The celebration of the International Day of Happiness (20 March), which has become a tradition and involves people with fewer opportunities, has spread from Kaunas across Lithuania.</p>
	<p>To empower the younger generation and develop a platform that would make Kaunas attractive to both local and European youth.</p>	<p><b>EMERGING KAUNAS</b></p> <p>A skills-building programme is offered, called 'Kaunas Challenge', which includes entrepreneurship labs, internships in local and European cultural institutions and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) agencies, and international youth summer camps, as well as cultural programming and production (parts of the programme will be designed and developed by the youth representatives themselves).</p>	<p>Seven 'Kaunas Challenge' practical training programmes have been implemented, with alumni organising over 150 events in Kaunas City, Kaunas District and Lithuania. From 2022, the practical training programme will continue to be delivered by alumni who have set up their own public institution.</p> <p>'Audra', the annual international Contemporary City Festival, has been launched, which is popular with young people and breaks attendance records.</p> <p>A methodology guide on Kaunas 2022 youth empowerment practices has been published.</p>



# CONSCIOUSNESS/CONTRACT

CHALLENGES	OBJECTIVES	METHODS	OUTCOMES SHAPING KAUNAS 2022 LEGACY
<p>Kaunas lacks community activism and the belief that all individuals are equally important and that everyone can have an impact.</p> <p>Low tolerance levels make alternative communities and groups feel marginalised. Weak civic engagement and participation in culture are the result of cultural institutions and services being centralised.</p> <p>Before the Kaunas 2022 programme was initiated, inter-institutional communication and joint marketing strategies between cultural organisations had been almost non-existent.</p>	<p>To empower different communities to foster their culture through collaboration, co-creation and mutual respect.</p>	<p><b>FLUXUS LABS</b></p> <p>This programme will expand the range of cultural offerings across the city and the district, guaranteeing the cultural rights of every citizen and significantly strengthening community culture. Both alternative cultural expression and the diversity of subcultures will be stimulated.</p>	<p>The 'Tempo Academy of Culture' programme has trained over 70 community facilitators, who have been activating community activities in remote areas and courtyards of Kaunas and Kaunas District.</p> <p>Hundreds of events have been implemented, centred on the stories and the present lives of local people, often themselves becoming an integral part of the artistic process.</p> <p>Two long-term international initiatives have been launched: Fluxus Festival and the Courtyard Festival.</p> <p>A methodology guide on Kaunas 2022 community art and engagement practices has been published.</p>
	<p>To create a platform for cooperation between cultural organisations and individuals in Kaunas, Lithuania, the Baltic region and Europe.</p> <p>To steer cultural institutions towards contemporary audiences, in particular by encouraging continuous renewal in line with the needs of young people and incoming visitors to the city.</p>	<p><b>CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS</b></p> <p>To ensure the capacity building of cultural operators through training provided by the 'Tempo Academy of Culture'. This will be achieved through inter-institutional cooperation, joint marketing and promotional projects and cross-sectoral partnerships.</p>	<p>In 2016, during the second phase of the ECOC application, we worked with our cultural partners to develop the Kaunas City Cultural Strategy, integrating the vision proposed by the creators of the European Capital of Culture into the city's strategic operation.</p> <p>The audience development training sessions for the cultural sector organised by the 'Tempo Academy of Culture' have been attended by nearly 400 representatives of Kaunas, Kaunas District, and Lithuanian organisations. The sessions led by international experts have become a platform for professional networking.</p> <p>As many as 77 Lithuanian cultural organisations, alongside more than 500 European partners and dozens of organisations from around the world, have implemented Kaunas's European Capital of Culture programme (including around 1500 events in 2022 alone).</p> <p>Even after the European Capital of Culture title-holding year, cultural organisations continue to develop networking events such as the Culture Breakfast and the Kaunas Culture Fair, and contribute to the programmes of newly established festivals.</p> <p>International long-term festivals established by partners include the ConTempo Performing Arts Festival, Kaunas Literature Week, 'Japanese Days in Kaunas WA', the Kaunas Urban Design Festival, the 'Audra' Contemporary City Festival and others.</p>

The 'Tempo Academy of Culture', mentioned in the methods and outcomes sections of this matrix is a horizontal and informal yet highly effective learning-by-doing programme that started even before the ECoC title was awarded to Kaunas. It has helped us to acquire much-needed knowledge and competences in four areas:

- Youth empowerment;
- Community engagement in the production of culture;
- Audience development for culture professionals; and
- Volunteering.

Based on the experiences of all these training programmes and the practices they stimulated, the team curators have compiled methodological publications available on the Kaunas 2022 website and in libraries.

Seven years ago, some would claim that Kaunas neither had the creative potential nor the capacity to implement the European Capital of Culture. We were not surprised by such assessments, but we had confidence, and we can reassure others preparing for their own European Capital of Culture title-holding years that competences are developed by acting strategically in service of a very clear vision. And by actively sharing experience and expertise in the informal network of the European Capitals of Culture.

In planning a general transformation in citizens' self-perception, we not only set out our goals and methods, but also the stages we would go through in order to achieve this change:

- IGNITION (2017–2018)
- AGITATION (2019–2020)
- EXPLOSION (2021–2022)
- LEGACY (2023 onwards)

At each stage, we set milestones and evaluation checkpoints. However, we did not foresee either a pandemic or a war. But acting in the face of these global crises has become for us a re-mobilising incentive for cultural action, reassessing the necessity and the value of being in a community, of co-creating and unconditionally helping those in distress.

In analysing the outcomes and changes that have taken place in Kaunas and Kaunas District since the title of European Capital of Culture was awarded, I would like to draw attention to a very important factor:

In Kaunas, the initiative started in the **non-governmental cultural sector**, not in the municipality's offices or at the request of politicians. Curators, cultural managers, researchers, philosophers, and writers: Ana Kočegarova-Maj, Daiva Price, Rytis Zemkauskas, Gediminas Banaitis, Vaida Venckutė-Nagė, Vaidas Petrulis, Viltė Migonytė-Petrulienė, Gintarė Masteikaitė, Viktoras Bachmetjevas, Jūratė Tutlytė and the ever-growing team, who decided that this was a call worthy of their personal and professional commitment. They all contributed to developing the vision, the concept and the strategy. Together, we prepared not only the bid-book, but also the Kaunas City Culture Strategy, and carried out the (self)monitoring of its implementation in the interim monitoring reports to the European Jury.

**All Kaunas 2022 reports to Lithuanian and European institutions can be accessed at:**



The seven-year programme was financed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the two municipalities in whose territory the planned programme was going to be carried out. In 2015-2016, we convinced the Kaunas City and Kaunas District municipal councils of the benefits of a programme offering cultural, social and economic change through culture. They subsequently approved an investment of €12 million and €4 million respectively for the creation of the anticipated breakthrough. For these two municipalities, which compete for their taxpayers' place of residence registrations, working on such a strategic project was and has remained a challenge for the whole seven years, and the Kaunas 2022 team has often found itself caught up in all kinds of miscommunication. However, as an exceptional experience in the context of the European Capitals of Culture, we must commend the fact that **both municipalities met their financial commitments by more than 95%**. The minor budget cuts were only related to the restrictions on mobility due to the realities of Covid-19 in 2020, and the lower costs of project completion in 2023, following the title-holding year.

The financial commitment of 10 million for the entire project period (2017–2022) to the ideas brought by non-government actors was approved and 100% consistently adhered to by the Government, whose expectations (which were not very high) were fulfilled and exceeded: through this project's experimental practices, we were able to draw up new cultural policy guidelines in Lithuania, which the European Commission had been encouraging for quite some time, involving practices of an inclusive, accessible, community-based, decentralised culture and those of intercultural dialogue. The project had another unintended outcome: the European Capital of Culture became a diplomatic tool for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Parliament, the Presidency and local governments. In 2022 alone, Kaunas and Kaunas District hosted about 60 delegations (of diplomatic entourages, cultural partners and journalists), including the Dutch Royal Family, six European Presidents, Prime Ministers and Speakers of Parliaments of the Nordic Eight, the European Commissioner, the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, over ten mayors of European cities, the guests of the European Culture Parliament session, journalists from various European cultural networks and the most prominent European TV broadcasters. Without exception, they were all inspired by the artistic and cultural offerings, the programme's strong international component and the relevance of the themes, hailing Kaunas 2022 as an undisputed success.

Without disputing it either, I would also highlight the **key success factors of the Kaunas 2022 project, which can be applied to the success of any other city:**

- a clear strategy based on the pursuit of change, which proposes to begin with capacity-building, learning to work together in the cultural sector, and involving local people;
- an informal, sincere, personal dedication to changemaking by the professionals who strategised and designed the project, and the stability of the curatorial team and the project's leader;
- being given time to work on the project – including two years for developing the strategy and the programme, and another four years for preparation, with the fifth year dedicated to implementing the European Capital of Culture – is a rare opportunity and a privilege that provides the necessary conditions for testing out hypotheses;

- an opportunity to experiment, improve, make mistakes and correct them, and at the end of the process, to be amazed at the resulting change;

- stable project funding.

**At the time of writing, the only thing missing from the complete success of Kaunas 2022 is:**

- an appreciation by the decision-makers of Kaunas City Municipality, the main stakeholder, of the significant change that this unique strategy of putting Kaunas back on the European mental map has created, and the motivation to ensure the project's legacy.

The good news for those who are reading this is that the municipalities of any other European city can avoid this shortcoming. This can be achieved by relying on cultural professionals who work for the benefit of their communities, not for political careers.

We created the Kaunas 2022 project not only to promote tourism, but mainly for the people of Kaunas City, Kaunas District and Lithuania, considering the international component as a prerequisite for every programme or festival, which – as we believed and became convinced – increases openness, trust, curiosity, hospitality and civic spirit.

As the initiator and leader of the 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022' project, I hope that this introduction to the final impact evaluation report will not be a full stop, but rather an ellipsis... I leave the task of securing the project's legacy and monitoring its long-term results to those who ought to be in charge of this. In gratitude to fate and to all those who have worked with me, I bid farewell to a project that has been part of my daily life for ten years. I am both proud of all those who have joined and been catalysts of change and saddened by the uncertainty of whether such great experience and the cultural sector's strengthened competences will not be prematurely wasted. I do hope that this does not come to pass.

In March 2023, the municipalities of Kaunas City and Kaunas District decided that, on 30 September 2023, Kaunas 2022 (the institution that implemented the European Capital of Culture programme) would be

dissolved. According to the decision-makers, nine months should be enough time to prepare the reports, dismiss the staff and distribute the acquired tangible assets. A practice little heard of in the history of European Capitals of Culture. However, on reflection, a coherent conclusion, remembering that the Kaunas 2022 project was gifted to the municipalities by independent creators and did not require any major efforts from their officials and decision-makers. The vision of change through culture was 'alien', both in its emergence from a civil society initiative, and in its independence and the uncompromising nature of its content, often causing discomfort due to divergent values. As a means of interfacing with the ECoC project, the irrefutable method of 'effectiveness control' was adopted. In the case of Kaunas City Municipality, this translated into excessive control based on a preconceived mistrust of the value created by the cultural sector. Every year, endless explanations were demanded from the programme's implementers as to why this or that project would cost this or that amount. We were condemned to argue endlessly that culture costs money and contributes to citizens' social well-being and to the city's reputation in Europe. Thus, the incredible legacy of the European Capital of Culture largely remains the cultural sector's accumulated asset. What started as a flood in the non-governmental sector is now experiencing an ebb tide – returning back to this vibrant but also vulnerable medium. Vulnerable because it has no guarantee of funding for its day-to-day activities.

The cultural institutions supported by Kaunas City Municipality have taken three of the dozen or so major festivals under their wing. Kaunas District Municipality ensured continuity for most of the initiatives conceived during the Kaunas 2022 project (the breakthrough of contemporary arts in suburban cultural dynamics was much more highly appreciated by Kaunas District Municipality). Twelve newly established long-term international festivals, six new cultural institutions, the developed appreciation of working together and strategic vision of value in the sector, and the competences of cultural action at a European level are currently in a reboot phase, and the extent to which this accumulated capital can be used (hopefully not only at a regional but also at a European level) will become more apparent in the coming decade.

This report is intended for the general public, for the inhabitants of Kaunas City and Kaunas District, for cultural partners, and for European cities that are looking to renew their city narrative to make room for everyone.

The report is available in a set of five publications in Lithuanian and English. Three methodology guides presenting Kaunas 2022's community engagement, youth empowerment and volunteering practices. And a diptych of reports: the subjective book of memories, entitled **Body of Evidence**, written by over 100 contributors to the programme (just like the Myth of Kaunas 🧐), and this **Investigation Report**, a concrete summary of outcomes based on the statistics included in our activity reports and carefully collected by Kaunas 2022

and the partners of 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022' throughout the project's duration, as well as on the research and regression analysis conducted by an external, independent researcher, MENE public institution, on the basis of data from population surveys and national statistics.

I am grateful to all the people who have been, are, and continue to be flag bearers and ambassadors for this incredible journey of change. I would like to wish for my city – which today has found its place on the maps of Lithuania and Europe, has healed many complexes, and is proudly hospitable – many more unifying goals and achievements. My wish is that the new myth of Kaunas, created by all of us together, will become a centuries-old legend of people who believed in the vital energy of their city, fuelled by cultural action together.

Virginija Vitkienė

Kaunas, July 2023









KAUNAS  
2022  
STATIS-  
TICS





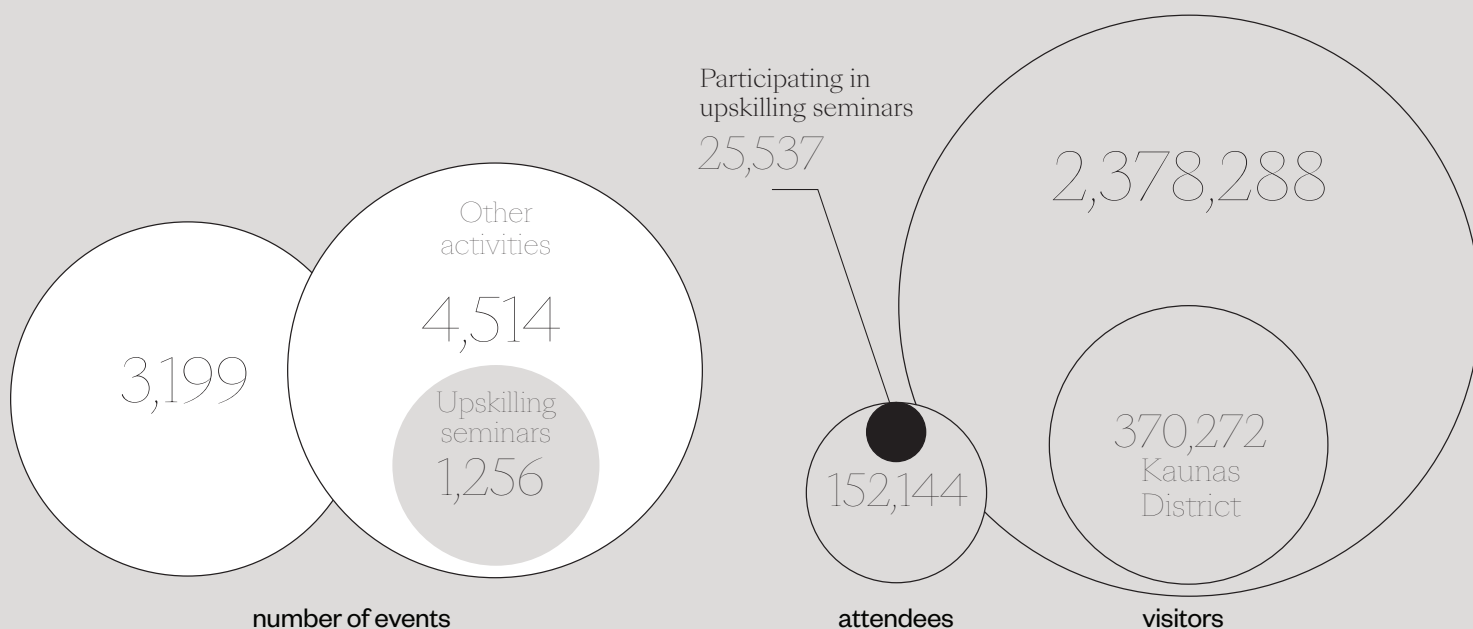
(Population size in 2022)



Kaunas District  
95,491

Kaunas  
297,906

# Kaunas 2022 Statistics (2017–2022)



112

projects and special events for children

158

projects initiated and implemented by young people

78

projects, workshops, seminar series on improving the accessibility of culture

80%

share of new productions in the cultural programme

85

production presentations abroad

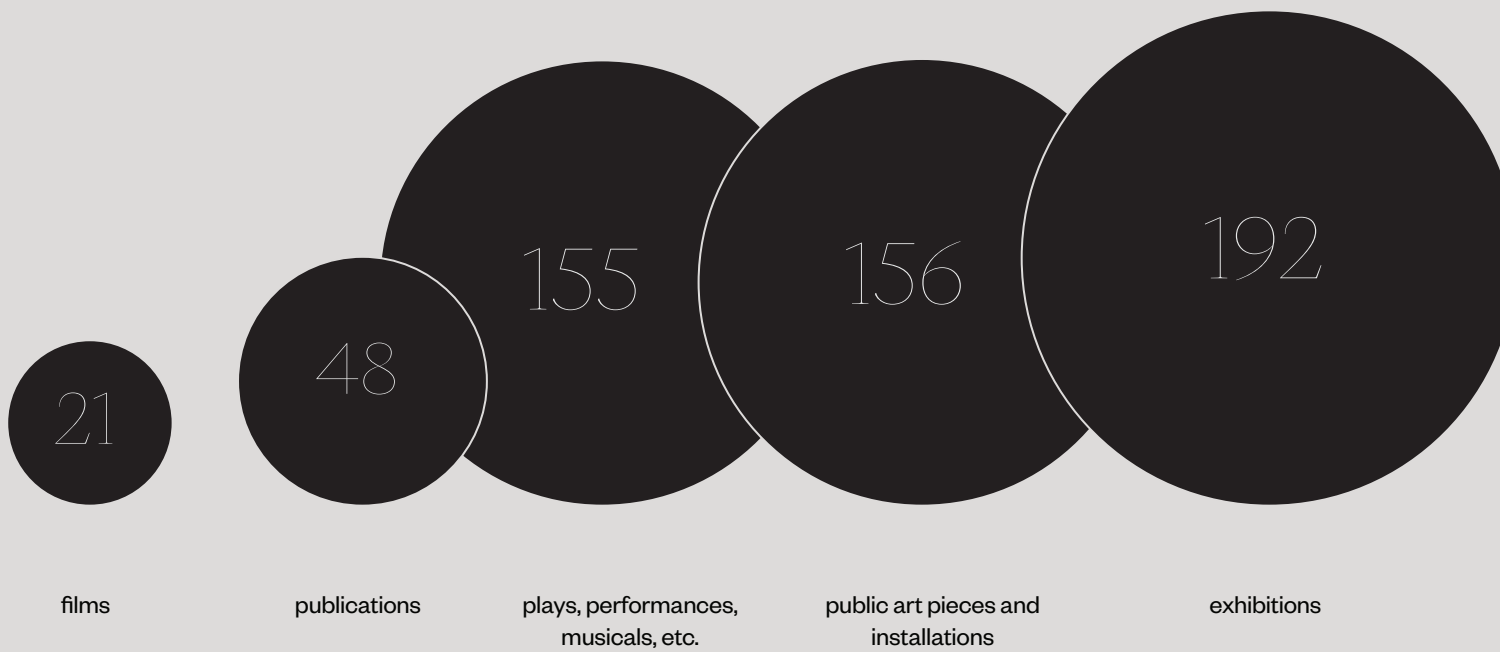
In the ‘Contemporary Neighbourhoods’ project, 15 localities, including Akademija, Babtai, Domeikava, Ežerėlis, Garliava, Kačerginė, Karmėlava, Kulautuva, Lapės, Linksmakalnis, Raudondvaris, Ringaudai, Rokai, Samylai, Vilkija, joined the search for features characterising the local community’s identity.



Within the ‘Contemporary Neighbourhoods’ framework, 15 urban identity creation projects have been initiated in Kaunas District, in addition to the following initiatives:

1	1	3	8	73
community store	community open air gallery	new festivals	long-term public art objects	publications, urban games, street art pieces and other lasting cultural products

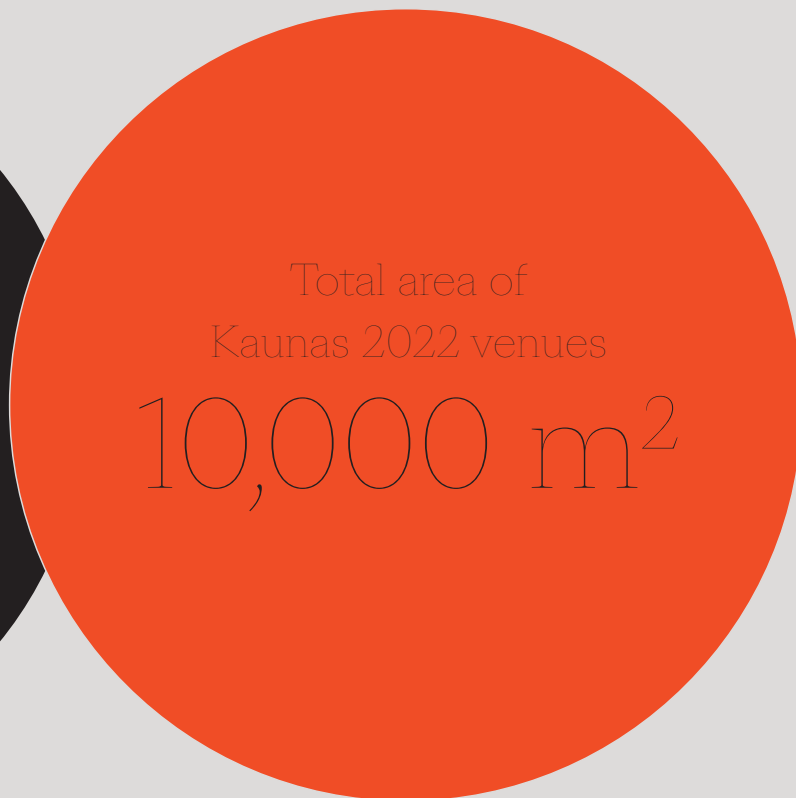
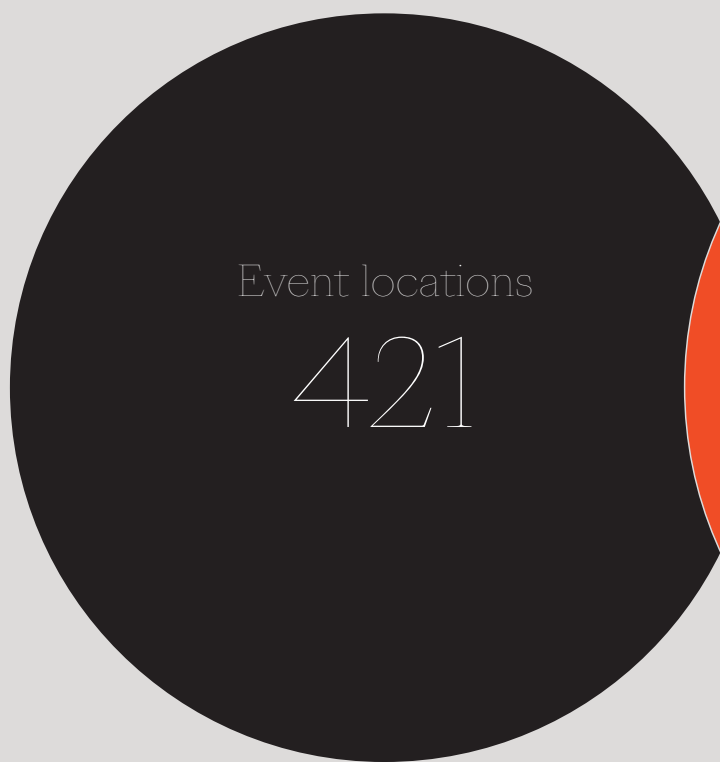
## Cultural output in Kaunas City and Kaunas District in 2017–2022





# Kaunas 2022

## Venues



Types of programme locations:

9	35	6	3	3
<b>galleries</b>	<b>museums</b>	<b>theatres</b>	<b>film theatres</b>	<b>concert halls</b>

500+

modernist architecture  
objects integrated into  
the programme

1

arena

43

unusual spaces

59

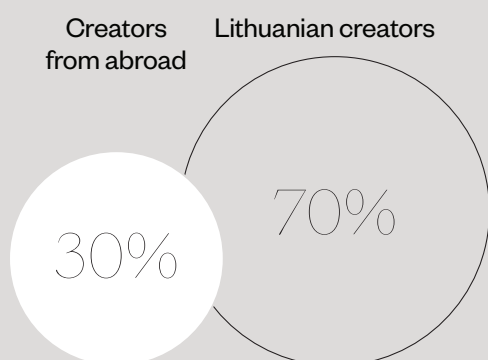
public spaces

262

other

# Kaunas 2022 Creators

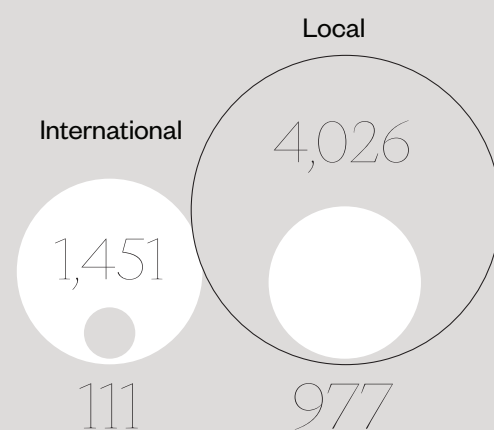
Activities were carried out by:



Partner institutions  
contributing to the  
programme's implementation:

71

Number of partnerships in  
project's implementation:



of which featured within the framework of the  
Kaunas District programme

71

number of community leaders and facilitators  
who helped in carrying out the '*Fluxus Labs*'  
programme's activities

180

number of participants of the 'Kaunas Challenge'  
youth empowering training who helped to create and  
implement the Kaunas 2022 youth programme

286

number of communities involved

1,047

volunteers



Number of professionals  
contributing to the project:

19,089

*ACROBATS / ACTORS / ANIMATORS / ARCHITECTS / ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERS / ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN / ARCHITECTURAL MODEL MAKERS / ART DIRECTORS / ART EDUCATION SPECIALISTS / ART HISTORIAN / ART INSTALLATION ARTISTS / ART MANAGERS / ART, FILM, DANCE AND THEATRE CRITICS / ART RESEARCHERS / ASSISTANTS / AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS / BOARD GAME CREATORS / BOOK EDITORS / BROADCAST DIRECTORS / CAMERAMEN / CERAMICISTS / CHOREOGRAPHERS / CINEMATOGRAPHERS / CIRCUS PERFORMERS AND DIRECTORS / CLOWNS / COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING SPECIALISTS / COMMUNITY ARTISTS / COMMUNITY FACILITATORS / COMPOSERS / COMPUTER GAME MAKERS / CONDUCTORS / CONFECTIONERS / COSTUME AND FASHION DESIGNERS / CRAFTSMEN / CREATIVE WRITING MENTORS / CULTURE ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANTS / CULTURE IMPACT RESEARCHERS / CULTURE POLICY PLANNERS AND EXPERTS / DANCERS / DISCUSSION MODERATORS / DJs / EDITORS / ETHNOGRAPHERS / EVENT DIRECTORS AND HOSTS / EXHIBITION ARCHITECTS / EXHIBITION CURATORS / FASHION MODELS / FILM ARTISTS / FILM DIRECTORS / FINE ARTISTS / FIRE PERFORMERS / FOLK MULTIPART SONG SINGERS / GLASS ARTISTS / GRAPHIC DESIGNERS / HISTORIAN / ILLUSTRATORS / JEWELLERS / JOURNALISTS / JUGGLERS / LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS / LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS / LAYOUT DESIGNERS / LIBRARIANS / LIGHT AND VIDEO PROJECTION PROMPTER / LIGHT ARTISTS / LIGHT DIRECTORS / LITERARY SCHOLARS / MAKE-UP ARTISTS / MIMES / MONTAGE DIRECTORS / MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS / MUSICIANS / MUSICOLOGISTS / ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS / PAINTERS / PERFORMANCE ARTISTS / PERFUMER / PHILOSOPHERS / PHOTOGRAPHERS / PHOTOGRAPHY ARTISTS / PLAYWRIGHTS / POETS / PRODUCT DESIGNERS / PROGRAMMERS / PUBLISHERS / PUPPET THEATRE DIRECTORS / PUPPETEERS / RADIO AND TV PRESENTERS / RESTORATION SPECIALISTS / SCRIPTWRITERS / SCULPTORS / SET DESIGNERS / SOCIAL BUSINESS MENTORS / SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATORS / SOCIOLOGISTS / SOLOISTS / SOUND ARTISTS / SOUND DIRECTORS / SOUND EFFECTS DESIGNERS / STORYTELLERS / STREET ARTISTS / STYLISTS / TAILORS AND DRESSMAKERS / TECHNICAL DIRECTOR / TECHNICAL PRODUCERS / TEXTILE ARTISTS / THEATRE DIRECTORS / THEATROLOGISTS / TOUR GUIDES / TRANSLATORS / VOICE-OVER ARTISTS / URBAN GAME DEVELOPERS / VOLUNTEERS / WORKSHOP LEADERS / WRITERS*

# Communication and Marketing

2,209,610,880

total audience reached  
by means of the media in  
2017-2022

49,837,413

audience reached  
through social media

1,118,127

number of  
visitors to the  
[www.kaunas2022.eu](http://www.kaunas2022.eu)  
website

14,693

Kaunas 2022  
mentions in  
international media

974

press release  
issued

22

websites  
created

32,000

number of visitors to  
Kaunas 2022 and Kaunas In  
information centre  
(Laisvės Av. 36) in 2022

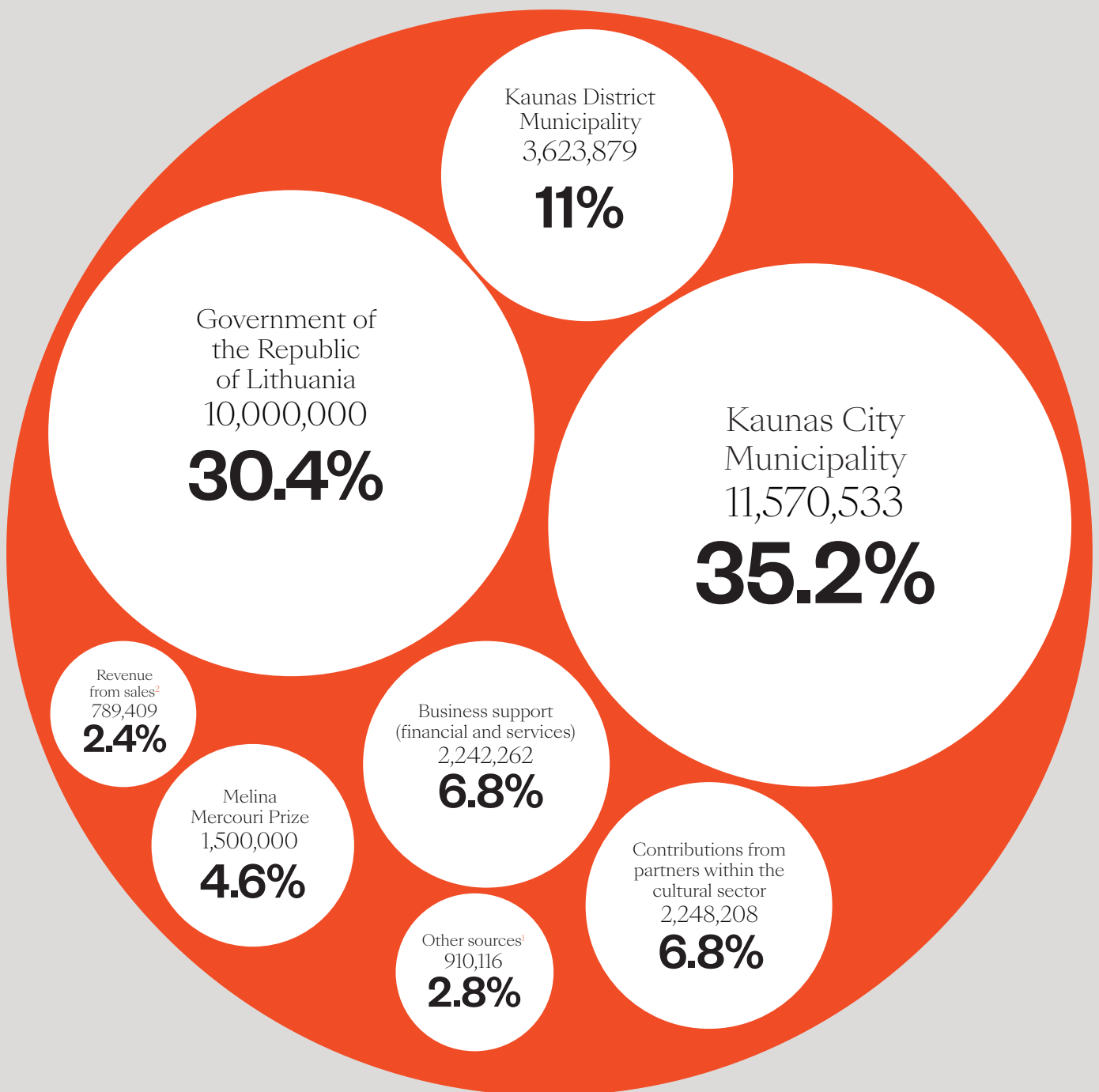
15,300  
instagram

number of Kaunas 2022  
followers on social media

37,000  
facebook

# Budget and Project Administration

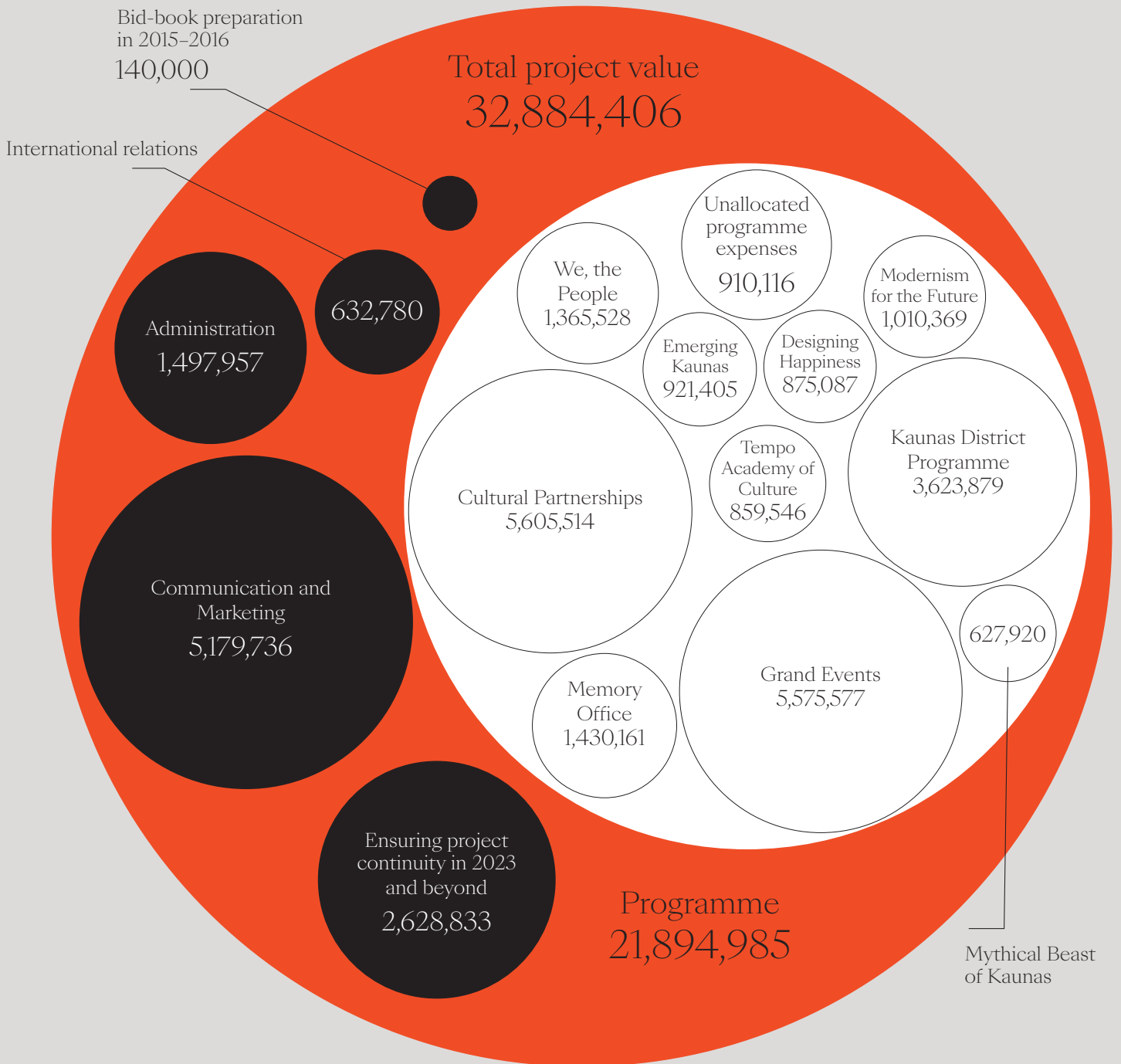
Total project value (€)  
32,884,406



<sup>1</sup> EU investment programme and funds: Interreg, Creative Europe; EU-Japan Fest, Lithuanian Council for Culture co-funding for Creative Europe projects, embassies, institutes.

<sup>2</sup> Tickets, souvenirs, etc.

## Budget allocation in 2015–2023 (€)



€61

per capita expenditure of Lithuanian public funding sources in Kaunas City and Kaunas District for the period of 2017–2022

48

additional funding and support agreements

93

maximum number of 'Kaunas 2022' public institution employees at any one time

24

in administration

16

in the communication and marketing department

53

in artistic programme department

## Public procurement for the period of 2017–2022



**Project lead:** Dr Tadas Šarūnas

**Researchers:** Dr Raimundas Vaitkevičius (statistical analysis)  
Jorūnė Chrapavičiūtė (field work coordinator)

**For their assistance and consultations, we are grateful to:**

Laurai Jurkuvėnienė, Dr Maryja Šupa, Dr Gintaras Šumskas,  
Dr Liutauras Kraniauskas, Greta Pukenytė  
and all those who helped us in collecting the data

This research report has been prepared in accordance with the contract (No. SR-2020/10/08-01) signed on 8 October 2020, between the public institution MENE and the public institution Kaunas 2022. This contract concerns research into the cultural, social, and economic impact of the 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022' project in Kaunas City and Kaunas District. The interpretations offered by the researchers in the report are grounded in the empirical data gathered during the research.

**Public institution MENE / 31st April 2023**

Final impact  
evaluation report for the  
'Kaunas – European Capital  
of Culture 2022' project



# Evaluating the Invaluable

# Let's Begin

Over the four decades of European Capitals of Culture, a rather stable conception of what this title represents has established itself in the minds of both culture sector professionals and the broader public who take an active interest in culture. And although there are certain fashion trends in the way impact evaluations of this cultural initiative are typically carried out, evaluations of it can still take shape in many different genres.<sup>1</sup> This offers us a degree of freedom which, nevertheless, does not absolve us from the responsibility of saying *something* that will be of importance to our reader. The most general objective that we were set was the following:

## *To evaluate the cultural, social, and economic impact of 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022'.*

Confronted with such an objective, any evaluator is faced with the classic problem of genre. An evaluation is, in essence, a political act, the outcome of which often depends on the evaluator's predispositions. It is also influenced by their social status, which determines whether the evaluator is able speak 'in the name of truth' and whose version of truth they can voice. This poses many moral dilemmas. In cases where subject of the evaluation is particularly simple, these can potentially be overcome by resorting to straightforward quantitative measurement procedures. However, when it comes to culture, this is neither wise nor possible.

Discussing culture, we will inevitably deal with the primary ways of making meaning, the values of which do not entirely comply to quantitative, and especially not monetary, logic. Therefore, in order not to get entangled in evaluating the invaluable – a process which would inevitably be based on the evaluators' own value oppositions – we set ourselves some simpler tasks:

- To summarise facts about the Kaunas 2022 programme's resources and outcomes;
- To offer insights into the cultural behaviours and social attitudes of residents in Kaunas City and its surrounding district;
- To suggest possible ways of articulating the impact of this and other cultural initiatives.

At the time of writing, discussions about the impact of Kaunas 2022 are well underway, and by the time you read this, they may have even cooled down considerably. Still, we hope that this fact-based narrative will help the reader to go back to that discussion and will provide a clearer understanding of what transpired in Kaunas in 2022. This should facilitate further discussion about which aspects of these experiences we wish to see persist in the city's and the district's life. Therefore, our self-imposed research objective revolves around enabling an evidence-based public discussion about the impact of Kaunas 2022. Our role is distinctive in that we seek to amplify muted or unheard voices, and to draw attention to social facts that are often overlooked or simply substituted by rhetorical expressions in such debates.

If you are willing to fully open yourself up to the surprises that these facts might unveil, now is an opportune moment to

pause and reflect on your own personal experiences and inherent biases that may shape your own evaluation of the impact of Kaunas 2022. The pause for reflection hereby proposed to the reader is, of course, very individual. It may last but a moment, but if taken seriously, could span several hours or even days. What fills this pause for reflection will largely depend on your association – professional or day-to-day – with the cultural field. Your position in the social sphere, including your economic, cultural, and social capital, is no less important, and the same is true of your personal history. Your pre-existing attitudes towards the Capital of Culture are an extension of your attitudes towards the European project itself. Our imagination of the world, Europe, Lithuania and Kaunas, attitudes towards their centres or peripheries, and experiences of living and working in them constitute yet another layer among many others that shape our personal evaluations of the Kaunas 2022 project. Inviting you to reconsider all these layers would unduly burden you, our dear reader. Demanding this from every reader is neither necessary nor possible. However, this process is mandatory for us as researchers seeking to manage our personal biases. Meanwhile, for you, we only request a simple commitment to remaining vigilant with respect to your own subjectivity. In return, we propose a handful of simple questions, the answers to which will help you to grasp your perspective on the European Capital of Culture better, and perhaps even to seek a fresh one.

<sup>1</sup> The Liverpool 2008 impact evaluation document has long been seen as a model to be followed: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/impacts08/>. Other cities' examples differ from that of Kaunas 2022 not only in their methodology but also in their resource allocation. From a sociological perspective, the Wrocław 2016 impact evaluation is more akin to the approach we adopted in Kaunas and Kaunas District: <https://repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/dlibra/metadatasearch?action=AdvancedSearchAction&type=-3&val1=Subject:%22European+Capital+of+Culture%22>.



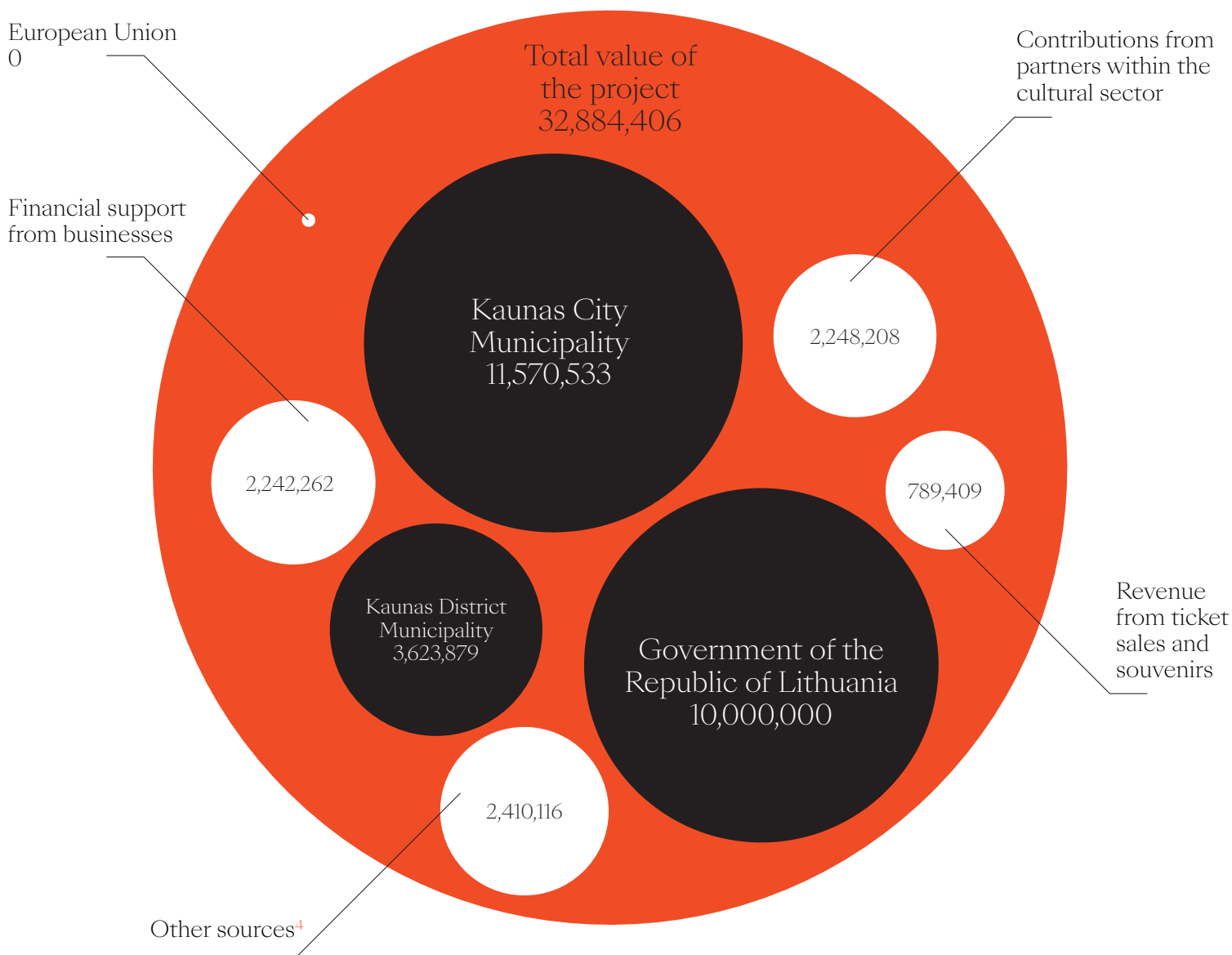
# Capital of Culture: So What Is It All About?

The title of European Capital of Culture carries substantial symbolic weight. As we have sought to demonstrate in this study, in many ways, it is this event's primary essence. Yet, the weight of the ECoC's symbolic significance often obstructs our better understanding of it. The best way to dispel this mystifying fog surrounding the Capitals of Culture

is to employ the language of economic capital, typically used by their initiating political power. The European Capital of Culture scheme is, first and foremost, a political intervention initiated by European Union institutions.<sup>2</sup> As such, no matter what imaginings it may conjure for the reader, it is primarily the product of political imaginings and the

ensuing exercise of power. Its practical form is delivered by European, national, and regional institutions, formalising the agreement across these distinct fields of political power to 'establish a Capital of Culture'. This is ultimately expressed financially. The budget of Kaunas 2022 is one among many instances of this financial expression.

## Kaunas 2022 budget and other funding sources, 2015–2023 (€)<sup>3</sup>

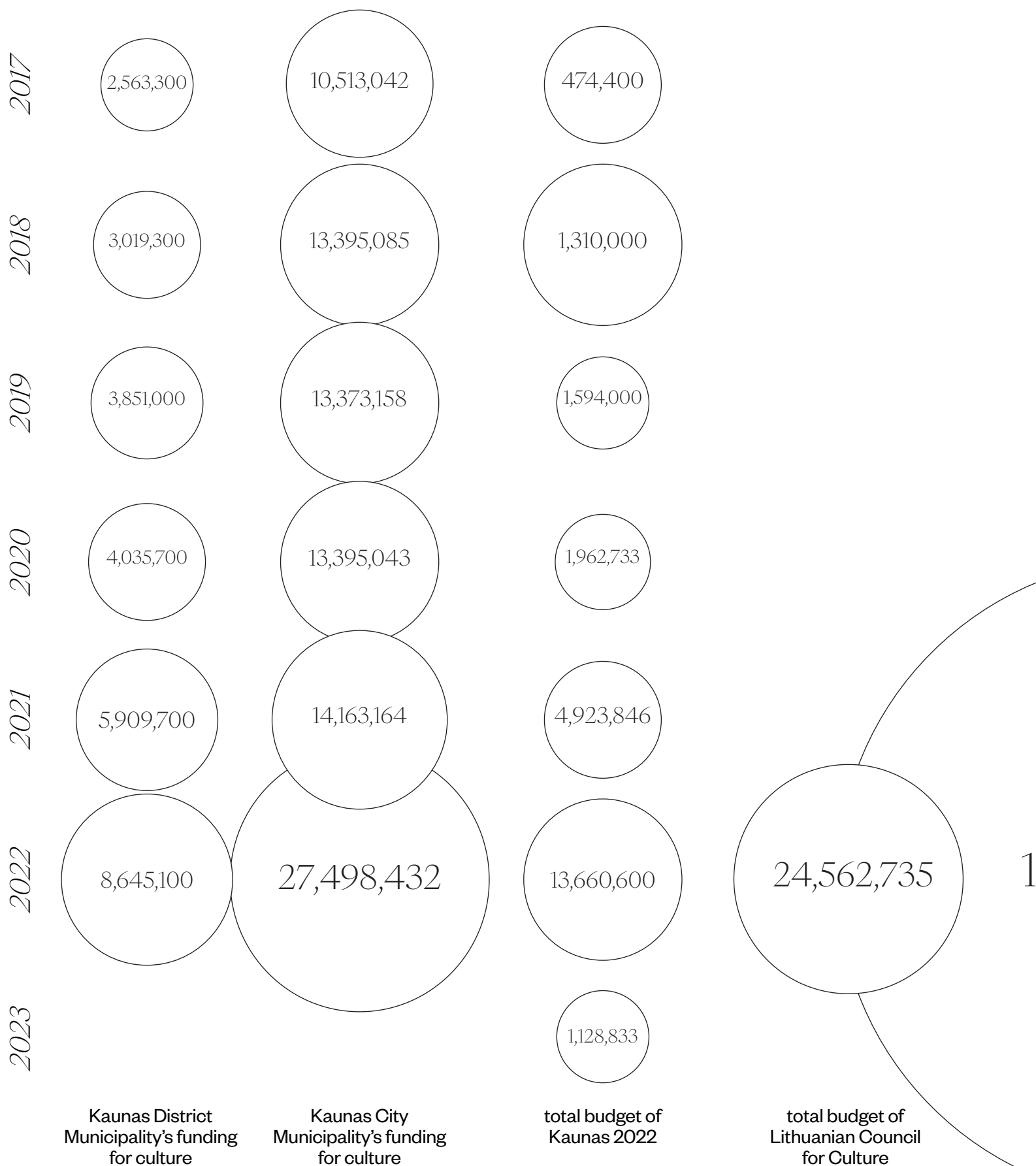


<sup>2</sup> For more information on this EU initiative's current objectives and principles of implementation, see: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/european-capital-of-culture>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. Public and private funding received between 2015 and 2023.

<sup>4</sup> EU funds (Interreg, Creative Europe; Lithuanian Council for Culture co-funding for Creative Europe projects, embassies, institutes) + EU-Japan Fest support for programme's partners (€200,000) + Merlin Mercuri Prize, allocated for legacy work (€1,500,000).

# Budget for culture in Lithuania, Kaunas City, and Kaunas District (€)<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Sources: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data, Lithuanian Council for Culture, Open Lithuanian Finance (lietuvosfinansai.lt), Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017-2023.

79,188,504

state budget funding  
for culture

1,979,920,080

state budget funding  
for education

Public fund allocation and key objectives of Kaunas 2022 programmes, 2017–2022 (€)<sup>6</sup>



To establish an educational centre for the interpretation of 20<sup>th</sup> century heritage, acting as an intermediary between heritage and other societal groups, and developing city-wide as well as general strategy for the interpretation and dissemination of modernist heritage.

To stimulate and revive the diverse culture of Kaunas City and Kaunas District, highlighting the city's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic heritage.

To reinforce the identity of Kaunas as a UNESCO City of Design by actualising accessibility, sustainability, and the notion of a comfortable city.

To equip young people with the knowledge and tools which they can use to build a city they would want to stay and live in.

To unleash the creativity of the city's localities, to unite Kaunas citizens, to create new public spaces where none had previously existed, to excite Kaunas citizens to take responsibility for their own neighbourhood.

To transform the city's existing cultural field by initiating new projects and experimental partnership models.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017–2022.

<sup>7</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Modernism for the Future' architecture and heritage programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/modernism-for-the-future/>; <https://modernizmasateiciai.lt/en/>.

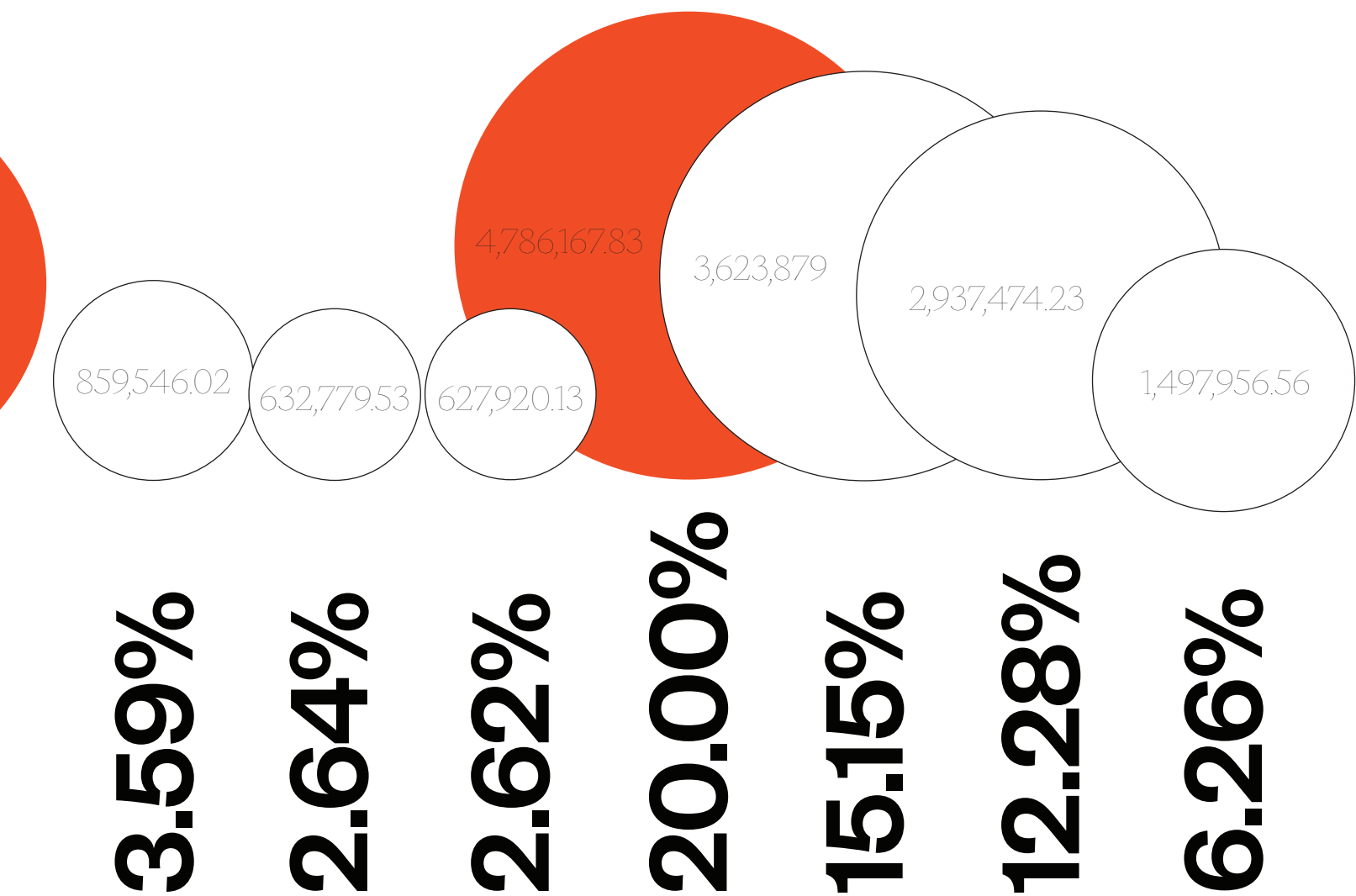
<sup>8</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Memory Office' programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/memory-office/>; <https://www.atmintiesvietos.lt/en/kaunas-2/kaunas-2022-memory-office/>.

<sup>9</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Designing Happiness' programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/designing-happiness/>.

<sup>10</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Emerging Kaunas' youth programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/emerging-kaunas/>; <https://www.kylantiskaunas.com>.

<sup>11</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'We, the People' communities programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/we-the-people/>; <https://www.visikaipvienas.eu/en/home-2020-en/>.

<sup>12</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Cultural Partnerships' programme: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/cultural-partnerships/>.



Tempo  
Academy of  
Culture

International  
Relations

Mythical  
Beast of  
Kaunas<sup>13</sup>

Grand Events<sup>14</sup>

Kaunas  
District  
Programme<sup>15</sup>

Communication  
and Marketing

Administration

To enhance skills and renewal within the cultural sector. To bring the cultural sector together to reflect on its relationship with contemporary audiences and visions for the future.

To raise the international profile of Kaunas 2022, to strengthen the programme's international image and Kaunas City's and Kaunas District's long-term international cultural links.

To bring the community together and engage it in the cultural activity of creating and activating the contemporary Kaunas myth.

Delivering a trilogy of grand events by involving European creators and ensuring mass participation of the city's residents and visitors alike.

Cultivating and developing projects based on knowledge of local traditions and cooperation through contemporary means as part of implementing the Kaunas 2022 programme in Kaunas District.

Raising public awareness of Kaunas 2022 within Lithuania. Raising public awareness of Kaunas 2022 abroad, as well as obtaining and integrating sponsors into the programme.

<sup>13</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Mythical Beast of Kaunas' programme: <https://kaunolegenda.lt/en/>; <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/the-mythical-beast/>.

<sup>14</sup> The trilogy of Kaunas ECoC grand events: 'The Confusion' (19–23 January 2022), 'The Confluence' (20–22 May 2022), 'The Contract' (24–27 November 2022). Programme available at: <https://kaunas2022.eu/en/programme/>.

<sup>15</sup> The Kaunas ECoC 'Contemporary Neighbourhoods' programme in Kaunas District: <https://www.visikaipvienas.eu/en/contemporary-neighborhoods/>.

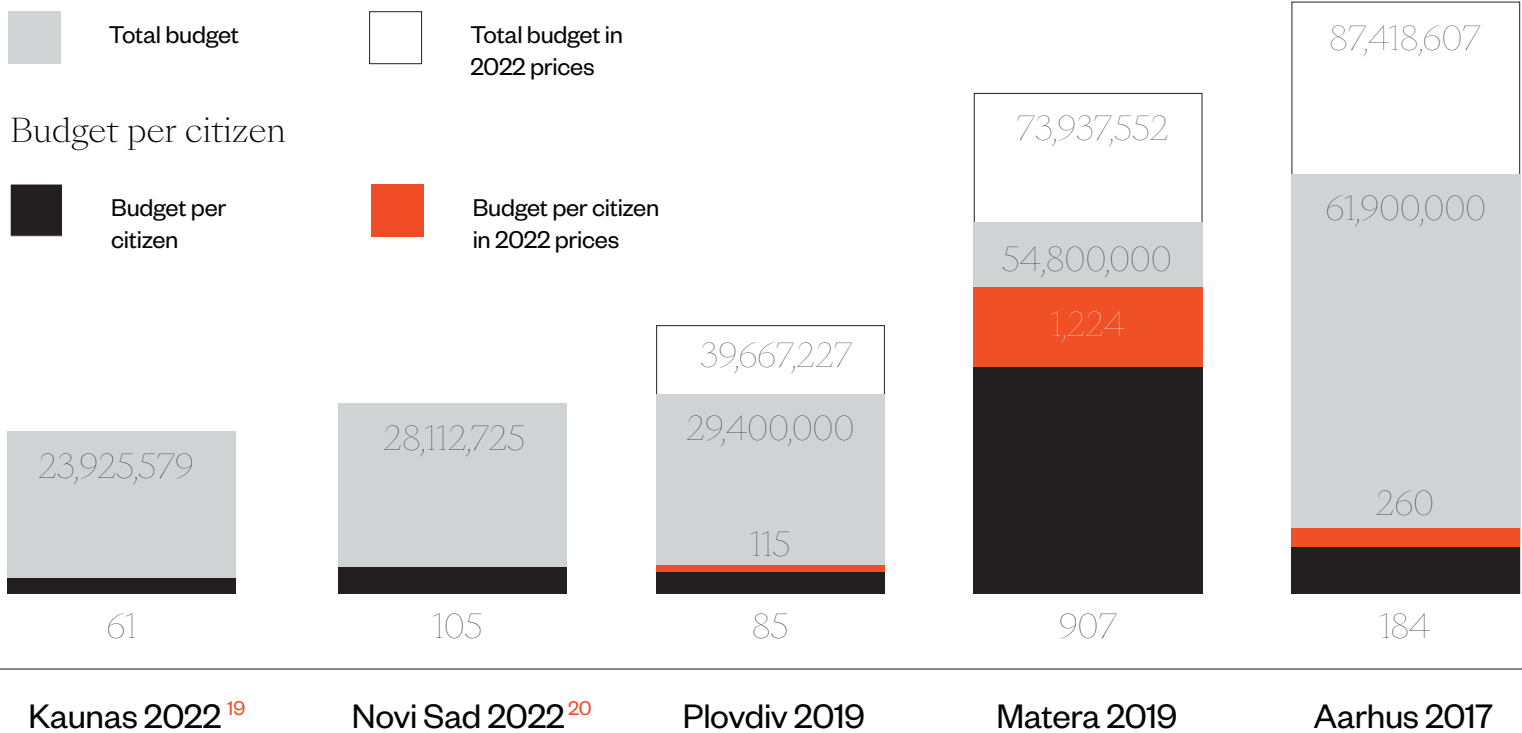
A quick overview of the budget allows us to dispel several common assumptions about European Capitals of Culture. Although the Capital of Culture is referred to as European, it is primarily funded by local and national funds. While the nomination is designated for a specific year, the financial intervention spans a lengthy period of seven years. And although the European Commission is this initiative's flag-bearer, it tends to assume the role of a backseat passenger during the implementation.<sup>16</sup> The European Capital of Culture initiative is unique in the cultural sphere, but it is based on very general policy principles. Here, the EU's institutions operate in an area where they cannot fully exert their political power. It is no coincidence that there is considerable engagement with economic, social, or urban development themes, that are on the margins of cultural policy, i.e., domains over which the EU may have more influence and which the cities receiving nominations

begin to echo in their proposed programmes.

The times when true capitals of European nation-states frequently claimed the title, which we may recollect happening in the previous century's last few decades, seem to have been consigned to history. However, memories of second-tier cities, including Porto (Portugal), Graz (Austria), and Liverpool (UK), stepping into the role of European Capitals of Culture, are not so distant and still remain vivid.<sup>17</sup> These or similar recollections simmering in the minds of many readers feed preliminary imaginings of what was supposed to happen and what eventually happened in Kaunas in 2022. These imaginings, however, are likely to be as diverse as European cities themselves are. In a way, the nomination alone does not fully explain the subject of our evaluation. It is indeed a bureaucratic construct, indicating a particular European city or region's intention to provide enhanced

funding for cultural activities over an extended period. It is also a political construct signalling that more echoes of European cultural policy can be expected in the cultural policy discourse of that city or region. Yet, the European Capital of Culture is practically non-existent until it is embodied in a specific programme. And its objectives can vary significantly. They will manifest differently in national capitals, in dynamic second-tier cities, in declining post-industrial centres, or in small towns striving to attract and retain residents and tourists. These differences between nominated cities are mirrored in the budgets of the European Capitals of Culture.

## European Capitals of Culture



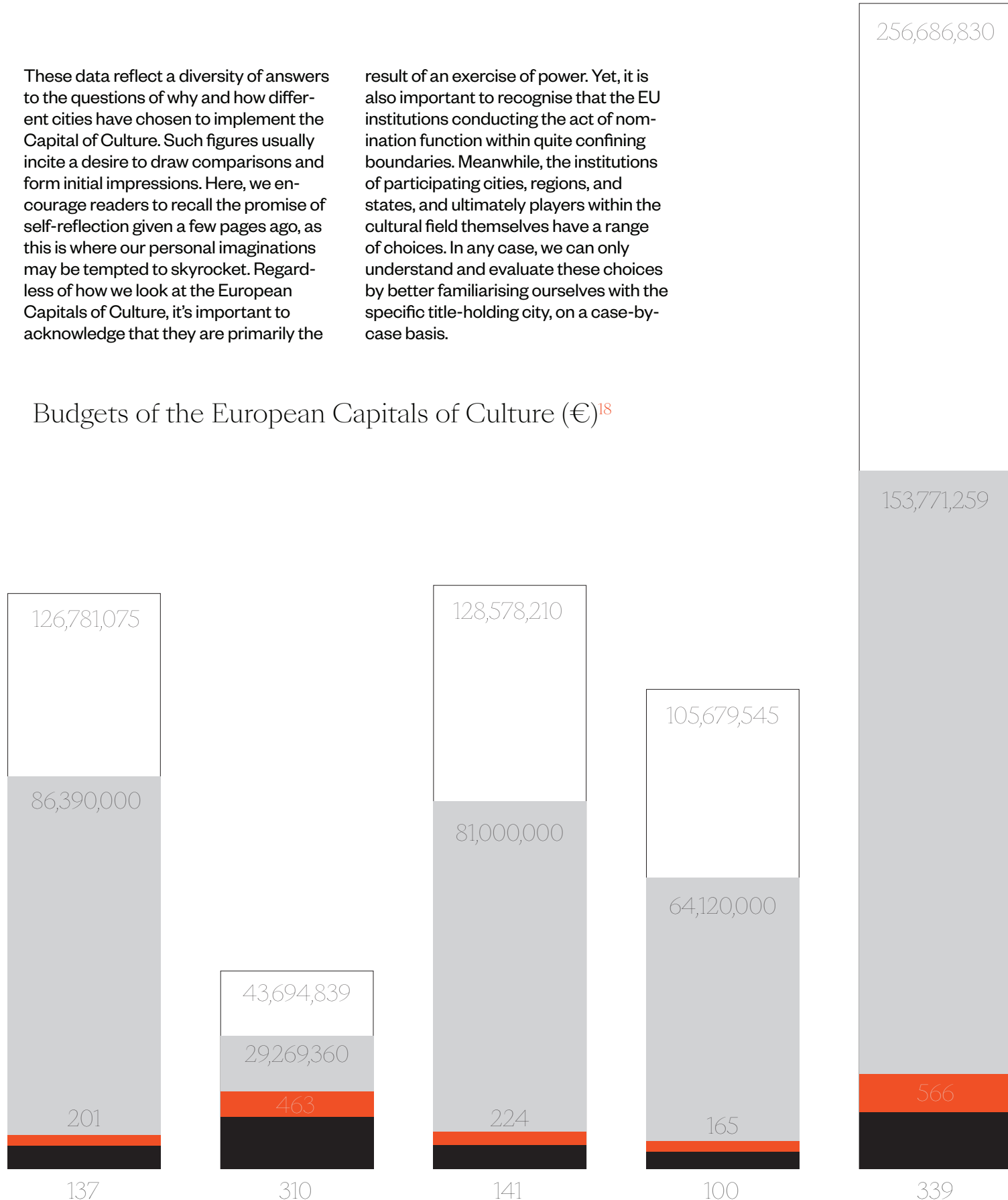
<sup>16</sup> The basis for this scenography is the dramaturgical boundaries outlined in the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, which determine the role that EU institutions can play on the European cultural politics stage. See more: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A11997E151>.

<sup>17</sup> Readers who are not yet familiar with the evolution of the European Capital of Culture initiative are invited to read an excellent Wikipedia entry, written in an accessible and concise way: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Capital\\_of\\_Culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Capital_of_Culture).

These data reflect a diversity of answers to the questions of why and how different cities have chosen to implement the Capital of Culture. Such figures usually incite a desire to draw comparisons and form initial impressions. Here, we encourage readers to recall the promise of self-reflection given a few pages ago, as this is where our personal imaginations may be tempted to skyrocket. Regardless of how we look at the European Capitals of Culture, it's important to acknowledge that they are primarily the

result of an exercise of power. Yet, it is also important to recognise that the EU institutions conducting the act of nomination function within quite confining boundaries. Meanwhile, the institutions of participating cities, regions, and states, and ultimately players within the cultural field themselves have a range of choices. In any case, we can only understand and evaluate these choices by better familiarising ourselves with the specific title-holding city, on a case-by-case basis.

## Budgets of the European Capitals of Culture (€)<sup>18</sup>



Wrocław 2016

Maribor 2012

Ruhr 2010

Vilnius 2009

Liverpool 2008

<sup>18</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017–2022. Other sources include data from ex-post evaluation documents: Matera 2019 and Plovdiv 2019 (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01ae1db0-3a98-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1>); Aarhus 2018 ([https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ecoc\\_2017\\_ex\\_post\\_evaluation\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ecoc_2017_ex_post_evaluation_final_report.pdf)); Wrocław 2016 (<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/library/ecoc-2016-evaluation-en.pdf>); Maribor 2012 ([https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/ecoc-2012-first-evaluation\\_en.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/ecoc-2012-first-evaluation_en.pdf)); Ruhr-Essen 2010 ([https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2010-report\\_en.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2010-report_en.pdf)); Vilnius 2009 ([https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2009-evaluation\\_en.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2009-evaluation_en.pdf)); Liverpool 2008 ([https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2007-08-evaluation\\_en.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/capitals-culture-2007-08-evaluation_en.pdf)); and internal Novi Sad 2022 data.

<sup>19</sup> The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017–2022.

<sup>20</sup> The Novi Sad 2022 budget figures exclude expenditure on infrastructure.

# So What Is Kaunas? And Its Surrounding District?

It could be tempting to assume that the facts we will be presenting are geared only towards those unfamiliar with this city and region, in order to help them follow the narrative thread of our story. However, this question is even more relevant for those who know Kaunas well, perhaps even very well. For those who hold in their heads a carefully crafted mental image of this city and district and a range of warm and less than warm feelings about it in their hearts. The reality is that any responses to the question 'What is a city?' must be subjective. Science can offer little help here. To date, historians still lack a definitive answer as to why people began to settle in cities

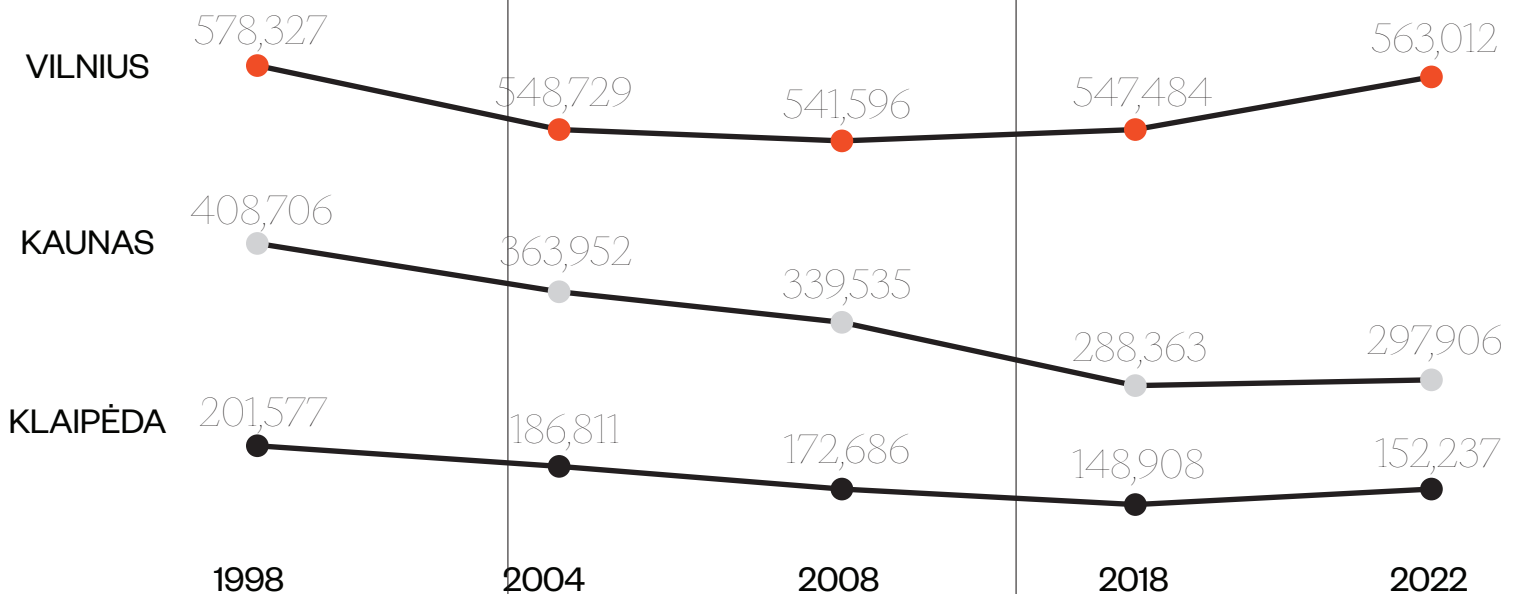
thousands of years ago. Sociologists who have studied modern cities for over a hundred years have ceased looking for a single definition of a city. Thus, a city is primarily a product of history, full of random coincidences, and is all the more charming for it, being the creation of generations of citizens who have built it over the centuries.

Thus, no matter how hard we try, our personal histories and subjectivities will inevitably have a significant impact on our attempt to understand Kaunas and Kaunas District. A few steps will help us to somewhat tame this subjectivity of ours, so that instead of hindering us, it helps us understand what the year

2022 meant for this city. These steps are the same for all readers, regardless of whether you have ever lived in this or another Lithuanian city, town, or village. Or perhaps you are building your history in another part of Europe or the world, whether it be in the centre or on the periphery. We could begin with a handful of facts that show what the past three decades have meant to the inhabitants of this city and its district, living in a country that has only relatively recently regained its independence; these facts also show what this one tenth of Lithuania's total social space is like now, and how it differs from other Lithuanian cities.

## Social development in Lithuania's major cities<sup>21</sup>

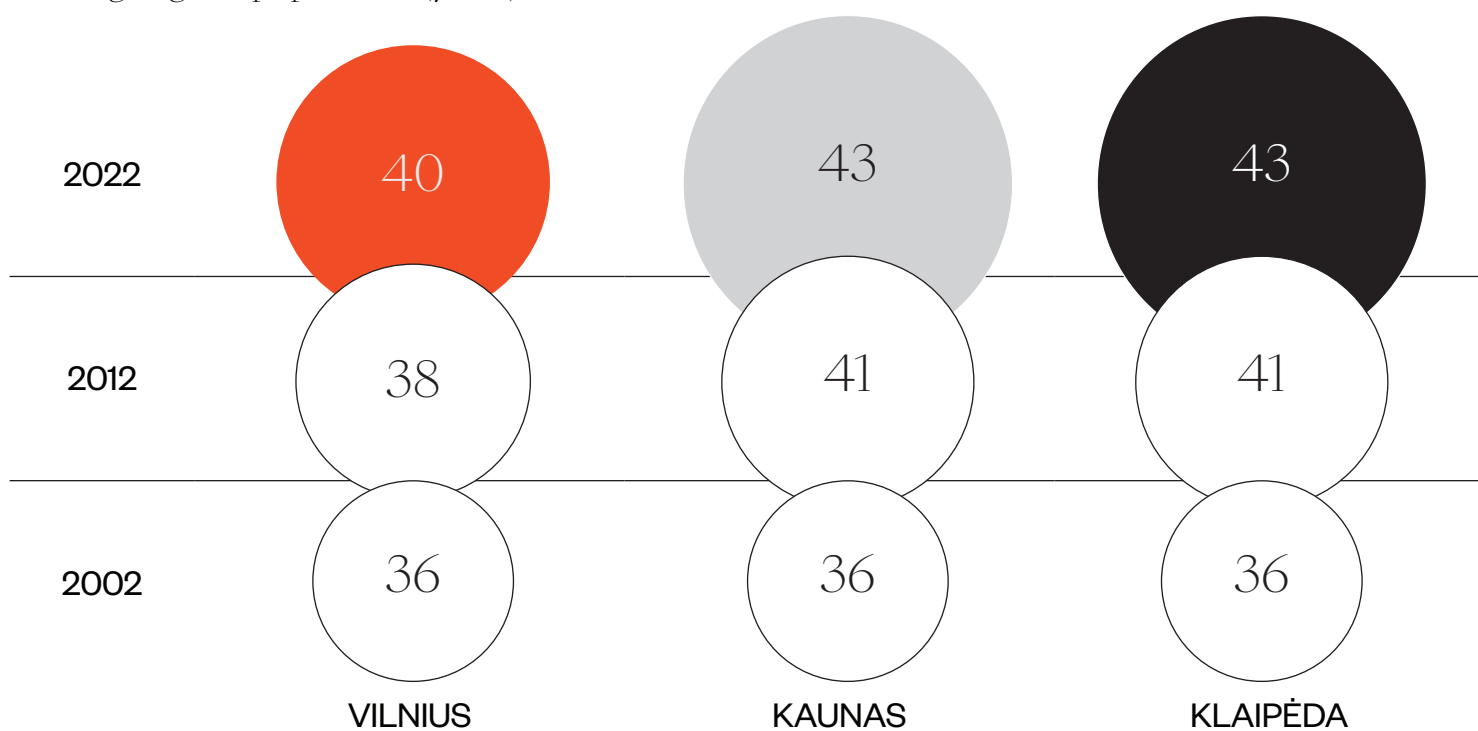
Population change (residents)



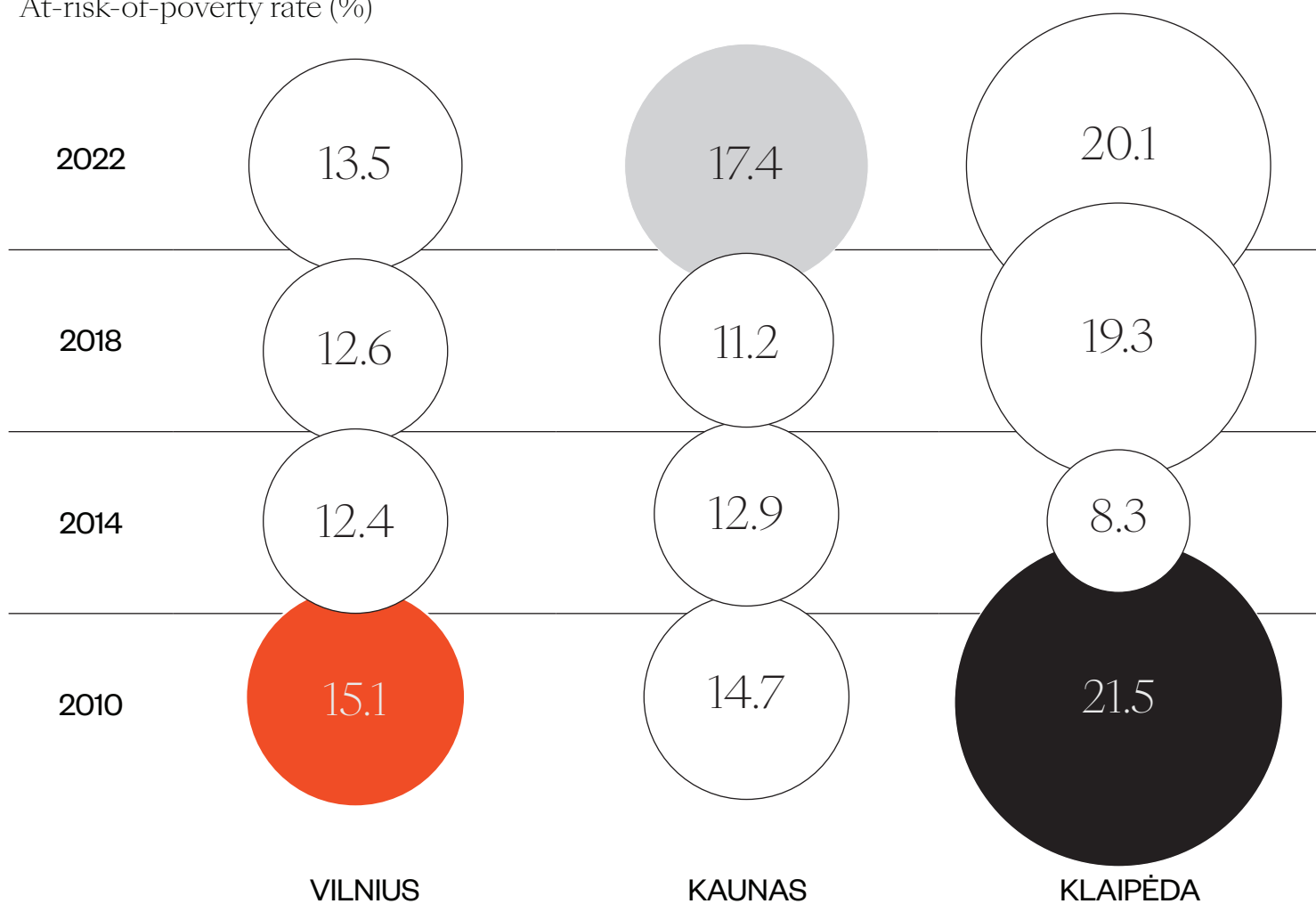
<sup>21</sup> Source: State Data Agency (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/gyventojai>).



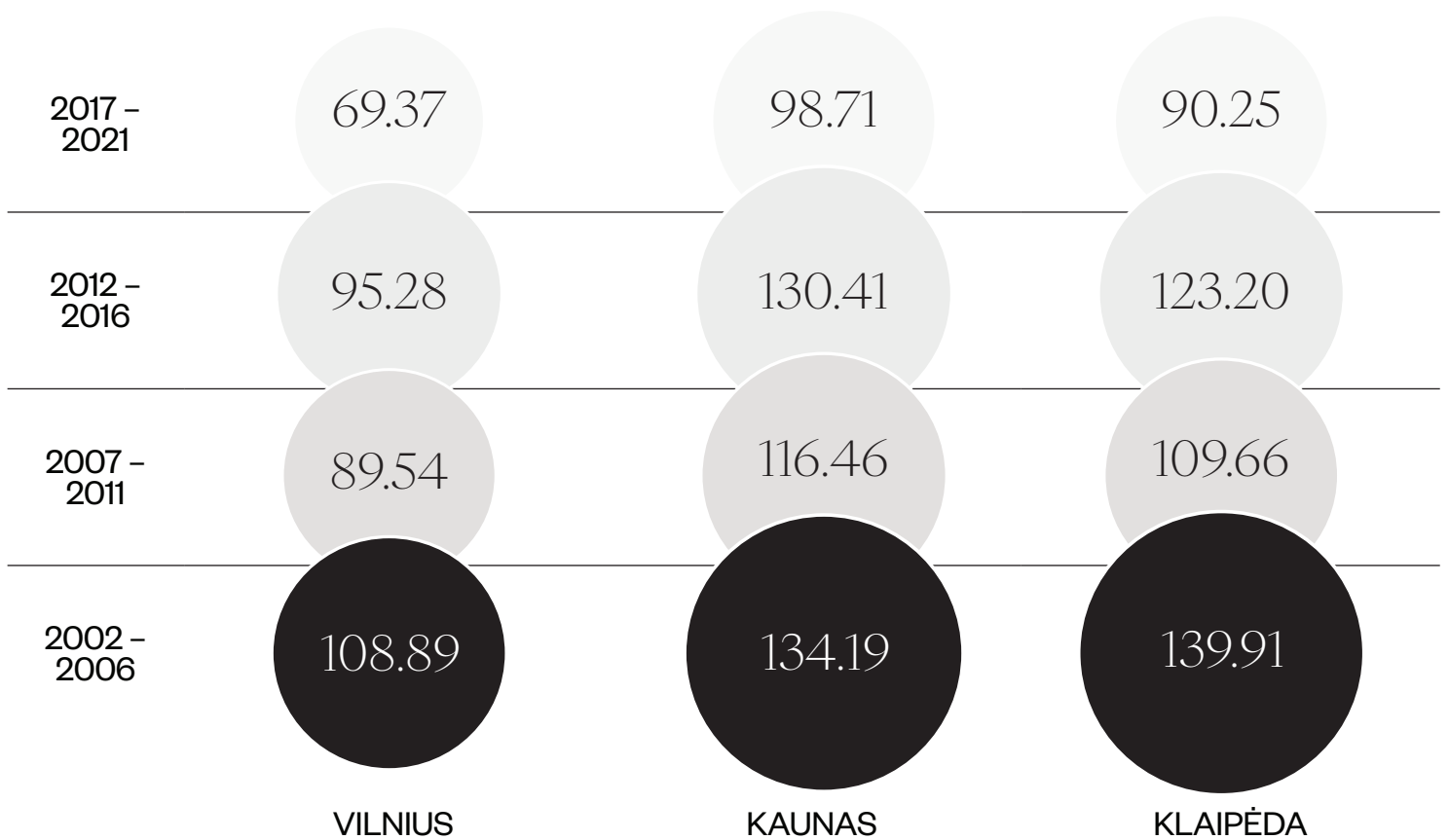
Average age of population (years)



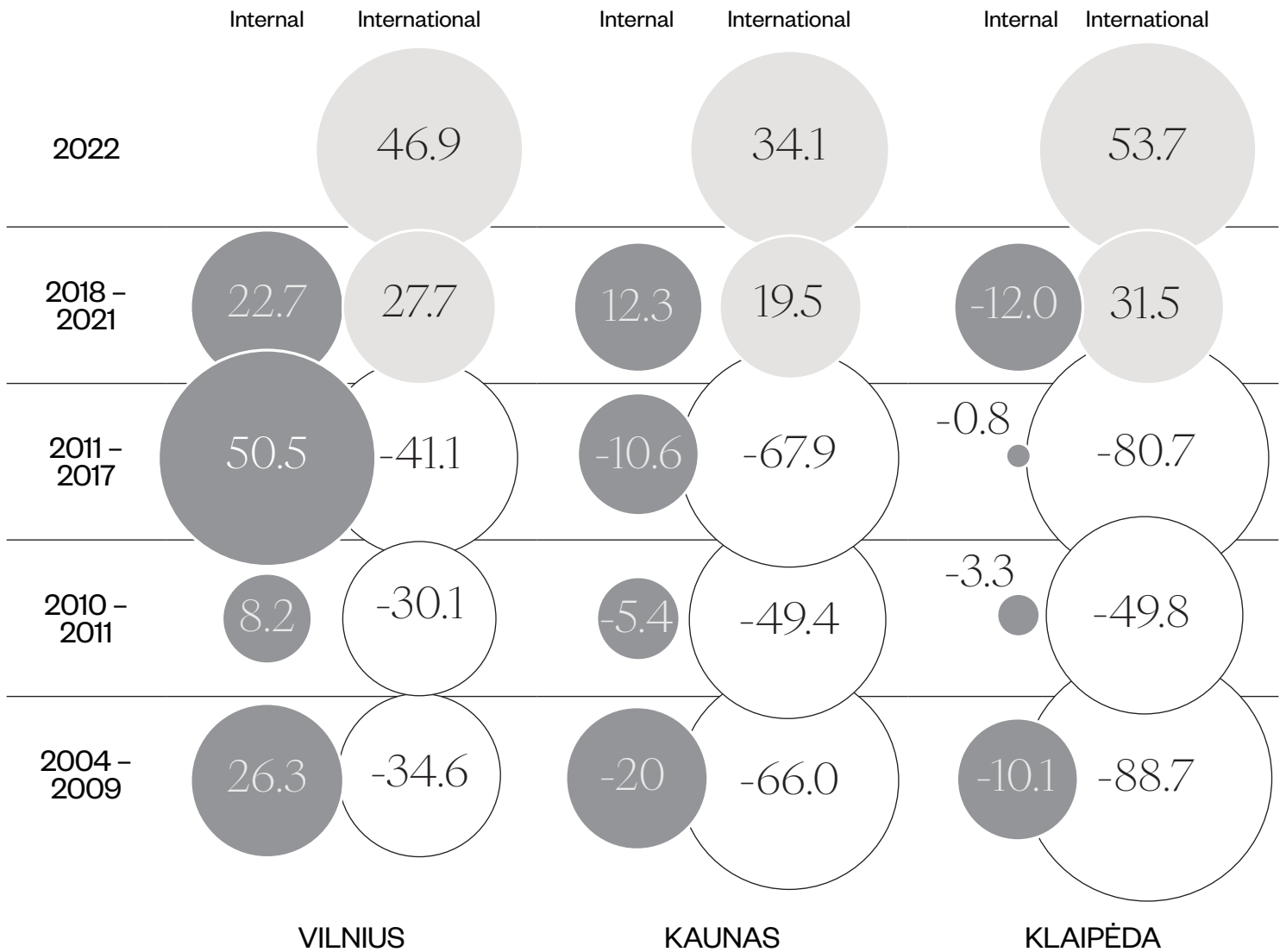
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)



Suicide rate per 100,000 population



Migration (migrant ratio per 1,000 population)<sup>22</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Source: data provided by the State Data Agency (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/gyventoju-migracija>) and the Lithuanian Hygiene Institute (<https://www.hi.lt/sveikatos-statistika.html>).

In these data you can recognise a city recovering from post-industrial trauma. As one of the major industrial hubs in Soviet Lithuania, the wounds caused by economic restructuring were felt particularly deep in Kaunas. The city's population shrank by a third. At the start of the millennium, its streets were emptied by a wave of emigration, and gripped by a profound anomie, as people departed not only from their homes but from life itself. This image of Kaunas represents the nationwide trauma Lithuania underwent during the period of economic transformation. Yet, it is also important to consider Kaunas District. The same economic transition that inflicted such wounds also brought hope for a different life. With our independence, we regained not only freedom of speech but also freedom of economic self-expression. And growing

suburbs is one of the many forms of such self-expression. Many readers from outside Kaunas will notice that cities with similar experiences can be found in other Eastern and Western European countries, and indeed worldwide. Like many other countries, Lithuania too is experiencing an aging society, as well as economic centralisation, whereby the strongest cities continue to grow even stronger, while others face the challenges of modern society more acutely.

Places such as Kaunas City and Kaunas District are typical targets for cultural interventions such as the European Capital of Culture scheme. When assessing these initiatives, the subjective experiences of those living in such places often play an understated yet critical role. Therefore, recognising

one's relationship with the experience (or lack thereof) of life in such a city will help better follow our narrative's thread. Identifying and managing any inherent subjective influences was a key methodological task for us. We are very pleased that the Kaunas 2022 team adopted a similar narrative approach, offering their personal subjective stories about the years of work they dedicated to implementing the programme. Meanwhile, our attempt to give meaning to the impact of these efforts relies on our interpretation of gathered facts, which are based on data collected by public institutions and our own research:

- We base most of our statements on Kaunas and Kaunas District Population Survey data. Using random selection methods, we managed to gather over 2,500 data entries from two rounds of surveys conducted in 2021–2023;
- We gathered even more opinions from the Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Surveys, conducted over the course of 2022. We shared the data from these surveys with the cultural staff involved in the events and used them to illustrate our statements about the programme's results;
- We also used statistics provided by national and local government institutions into our evaluation. You will find references to these sources listed underneath each dataset;

- As you read the report, you will come across quotations from focus group discussions with cultural sector workers and community leaders. These quotes serve to bridge our ideas with the myriad experiences encountered during the implementation of Kaunas 2022.
- Visitors to Kaunas 2022 programme events also had a wide range of experiences. Quotes illustrating these experiences are distinguished from focus group quotes by brief factual information about the individual providing the feedback.

Unusually for works of this nature, we will conclude our methodology outline here. We are well aware that these matters are of primary interest to individuals like us, namely researchers investigating cultural behaviours and assessing their impact. However, this research report is not written for our benefit alone. It is intended for a broad, educated readership primarily interested in the core findings rather than the pathways we used to arrive at them. For specialists willing to learn more about the research process, which lasted from October 2020 to May 2023, and the methods applied, we include an appendix to this report intended for a narrower, more specialised readership.<sup>23</sup> As for our remaining readers, we invite you to delve into our narrative with open minds.

<sup>23</sup> Appendix (in Lithuanian) available at: <https://kaunas2022.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Tyrimo-ivada-priedas.pdf>.

# Impressions From the Kaunas 2022 Opening Event 'The Confusion'

*Perfect.*

42-year-old male from Eiguliai

*An exceptional event, an unconventional approach. Clearly, a lot of work and preparation went into this. Well-organised.<sup>24</sup>*

46-year-old female businesswoman  
from Vilijampolė

*I was expecting something more grandiose – after all, THE BEAST was awakening. Perhaps more sound, lights, special effects – a bolder outbreak from the underworld.*

38-year-old female from Šilainiai

*I felt that I am part of culture, that I am important and needed. Also, that I am proud of my city.*

23-year-old female from Šilainiai

*I feel pride that such a high-quality event can be organised outdoors in Kaunas.*

32-year-old male residing in Panemunė

*Given the amount of advertising, I was expecting more. I am disappointed.*

49-year-old male Kaunas resident

*The coming together of the music, the sound, the lighting and the projections stirred up deep emotions within me, about how precious my native city, Kaunas, is to me.*

30-year-old male worker from  
Žaliakalnis

*Everything would have been fine if they had thought not only about VIPs but also about townspeople. It was very cold to be watching and listening to 30 minutes of speeches/greetings. The VIP zone, equipped with heaters, didn't experience this. This segregation is saddening.*

49-year-old female from Dainava

*What a mockery, an utter mess, they couldn't even get the sound right. My only thoughts: 'we've been duped', 'why the hell did we come here' and 'I wish it would finish soon so we could get out of here'. It just spoiled my mood.*

Male from Dainava

<sup>24</sup> Respondents' impressions presented here and henceforth throughout this book were translated from Lithuanian to English, unless stated otherwise. Impressions originally submitted in English are marked with \* and presented here in their authentic form.

*The city of Kaunas is great!*

54-year-old female worker from Šančiai

*It was cold but definitely made me think.*

16-year-old female pupil

*My love for Kaunas grew even stronger.*

29-year-old male from Dainava

*It's cool that we have such 'different' events that draw attention to Kaunas and give people good experiences.*

22-year-old female resident from Žaliakalnis

*It's a pity but, in terms of the format, 'The Confusion' was not an event fit for 2022 but rather a school-graduation-level performance from the 90s. The event was advertised as an extraordinary 'show' but instead we got a dose of standard boring speeches, self-praise, and some dramatically eclectic pathos.*

44-year-old male from Eiguliai

*The event felt too long as there were many congratulatory speeches, and the weather – not exactly summer 😞 At times, the view (we were standing on the bridge) was blocked by journalists. The demolition of the mock-up building went unexpectedly, as it was not highlighted in any way 😞*

58-year-old female from Vilnius

*Everything was well-organised. I was pleasantly surprised.*

50-year-old female from Tauragė District

*Stop wasting public state budget money under the guise of culture.*

Male from Dainava

*Majestic, something new and impressive.*

21-year-old female student residing in Panemunė

# Summary for Those Who Will Read This Narrative, and Those Who Won't

The purpose of this evaluation is to facilitate public discussion about the impact of 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022'. This summary gives a short overview of our findings and links to the parts of the evaluation where our arguments are developed. The introduction of this evaluation gives an outline of the methodology we used when choosing how to evaluate 'the invaluable'. The symbolic benefits of cultural interventions, which are focused on subjectively received meanings, maximises the standard challenge of evaluation, which is to provide objective facts about public interventions. Our approach was to outline the demarcation line where facts meet subjective interpretations (and evaluations) leaving the latter open to public debate. The direction of the ensuing narrative is partly reflected in the headings that make up its contents:

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# We continue with this summary by taking account of each word of the title ‘Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022’.

Perhaps the most important word, in terms of how the title is perceived, is ‘culture’, because first and foremost we are dealing with a cultural intervention. This is where we would like to start this summary. Kaunas’s European Capital of Culture title-holding year saw some fairly predictable impacts on the region’s cultural life. It is precisely because they are predictable that we talk about them in the fourth chapter of this report. With a significant increase in the quantity and quality of cultural events, levels of attendance have also increased. Even residents who did not attend the events are exceptionally positive about the initiative. This was also influenced by successful communication activities, which also achieved visibility in Lithuania and abroad.

Such an impact would have been limited if events had not delivered meaningful and high-quality experiences. This is exactly how they are pictured by residents and visitors to the city who attended the events. Although the programme most easily attracted consumers of ‘high’ culture, it also catered to a rather extensive palette of cultural tastes. Those Kaunas residents who were especially concerned with entertainment also found a suitable cultural offering. More conservative consumers of culture and seekers of innovative expression alike have found content to suit their needs. During the preparatory years, cultural institutions and organisations increased their efforts to reach out to people with special needs. Thus, the programme provided opportunities for very diverse social groups to participate in cultural life. It should also be mentioned that people who did not participate in the programme’s events after 2022 feel a little more distant from cultural life, which in the title-holding year was blooming most intensely.

The distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ impacts is probably the most artificial of distinctions that was singled out for us in the task of this study. After all, almost everything that is not ‘nature’ is ‘culture’ – which means it’s all social. Without underestimating the social connections created by other living beings, it must be recognised that our species still stands out, because it uses language to create these connections. We have dedicated the first chapter of this report to discussing ‘Kaunas’ and the district that surrounds it – in other words, to reflecting on local identity. Opening the book in this way is not accidental, because the Kaunas 2022 intervention itself began with initiatives appealing to local identity. We will see that the people brought together by the programme are distinguished by their relationship with the place where they live. These are people who feel safer in their living environment, as well as more empowered to act on it. Kaunas 2022 offered them higher quality local activities and cultural experiences in their neighbourhoods. New ways

of working with local communities mobilised local cultural resources and social capital. All this, in its own way, has contributed to the overall picture of Kaunas 2022’s audience, in which we count people who have accumulated more social and cultural capital. For the city that is recognised as home to the Žalgiris basketball fans, all this gives it a new way of being imagined. Kaunas 2022 helped the city’s culturally and socially receptive residents to discover the district’s villages and towns, and – in return – the residents of these places showed us what they city meant to them. These programme efforts strengthened the population’s regional identity.

Regional identity has a strong connection to the ‘European’ promise which also shines through in the project’s title. It is between the ‘regional’ and the ‘European’ that we will find the ‘national’ identity, along with the associated wounds marking the history of the 20th century. In a city whose national diversity was almost completely

eradicated by the Second World War, these wounds are especially deep. The Kaunas 2022 programme offered new ways of speaking about and making sense of the history of both the city and the country. The storytelling strategies adopted have helped to attract new audiences to complex and difficult cultural content, inviting residents back from oblivion and indifference. Against the backdrop of the present war, these activities have taken on yet further meanings. They have expanded the city's own imagination towards multi-ethnicity and Europeanism. Overall, the programme has strengthened the population's identification with Europe. This identity is also associated with a broader openness to social diversity. This openness is highly characteristic of the Kaunas 2022 programme's audience, in general, especially its youngest members. The programme also attracted people who would like to see their city open up not only to other nationalities, but also to other religions, to other sexual orientations, to other identities, and in general more open to any as-yet-unknown people. It was these social features of Kaunas 2022's audiences that created the unique experience of the programme's events. While speaking about openness to diversity in the third chapter, we also speak for the first time about the economic benefits of such attitudes for the city. The growing influx of tourists is a testament to this, although – in the face of the pandemic and war – their numbers are not growing as quickly as anticipated.

Juxtaposing hospitality and its economic benefits can be reasonably exasperating from an existential perspective. After all, the meaning of openness to social diversity cannot be measured in monetary terms. For many people working in the cultural sector, attempts to evaluate the activities they implement in monetary terms can be similarly exasperating. While we identify with these feelings and have similar values ourselves, separating and reconnecting 'cultural' and 'social' and also 'economic' values was another controversial part of the task facing us in this evaluation. Although we have addressed these controversies throughout this evaluation, in the third chapter we have focused on the economic impact of Kaunas 2022. This impact most closely related to the word 'Capital' in the project's name. This word connotes for us the city with the greatest social diversity, but also the ambition to dominate. Unlike the preceding chapters, this one raises many questions. They are not just a rhetorical tool. They are raised because we believe that, in discussions about culture's economic value, such questions are too rarely brought to light or else they are passed over and marginalised. Kaunas 2022 was a relatively small-budget project, which did not have an objective to directly stimulate the city's cultural economy. Therefore, its economic impact can be seen against the backdrop of other economic changes: regional, national, European and global. And we can see these changes all the more vividly when discussing specific

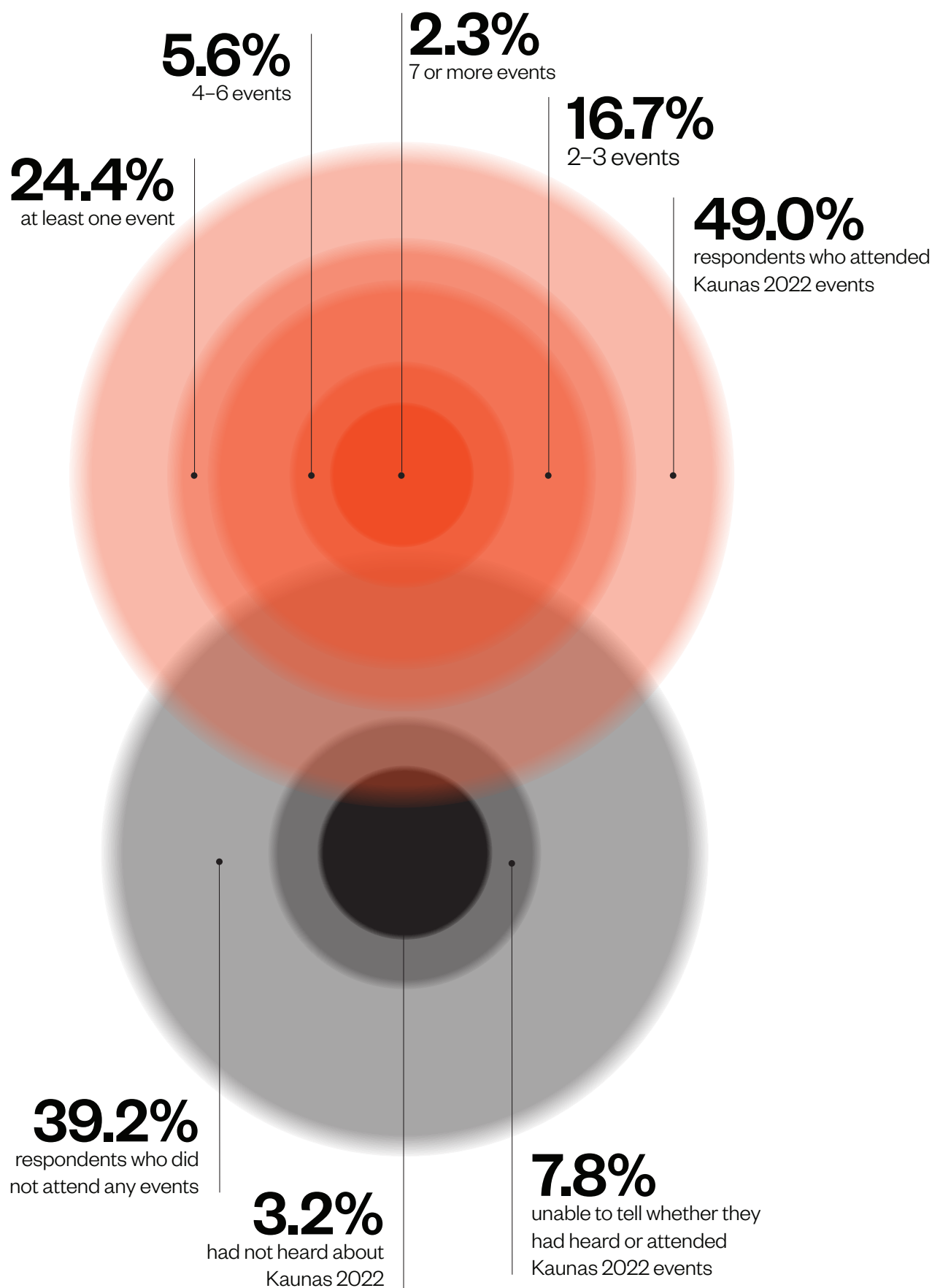
outcomes. One of the European Capital of Culture's recurring outcomes has been the mobilisation of human resources within the cultural sector, but also its overexploitation during the title-holding year. There are also other outcomes echoing throughout successful Capitals of Culture which have a positive economic value. Such is the impact on the image of both the city and the country, which we have already analysed in the introduction and also in the first chapter. We have touched on the impact on tourism in the second chapter. We conclude this chain of interpretation of outcomes and their economic impact by naming, in the third chapter, the impact of Kaunas 2022 on the increased economic value of housing built in the modernist architecture period. However, like many other economic outcomes, this one is also accompanied by its own controversies. We weigh up and summarise such benefits and controversies in the final section of this book's conclusions. There, we will invite you to draw your own conclusions about what impact the Kaunas 2022 programme has had on Lithuania, Kaunas and its surrounding district, as well as on other major Lithuanian cities. The conclusions also cover the impact on people working in the cultural field and on people evaluating the fruits of their labour.

# The Message That Spread Across Lithuania, Europe, and the Rest of the World

As 2022 began, there were hardly any residents in Kaunas and its district who were not aware that their city and the district had become that year's European Capital of Culture. During the final years of preparation, a third of residents had already attended at least one Capital of Culture event, and this number rose to over half during the title-holding year itself. A quarter of residents visited Kaunas 2022 events more than once. Delving further into the interpretation of plain abstract attendance figures would risk turning a blind eye to the shimmering colours of the social fabric. Peering into these social hues, we would notice a slightly higher representation of women and slightly smaller presence of elderly people. The more educated, those who experienced a greater degree of cultural exposure in their childhood, or individuals professionally affiliated with

the cultural sector, were more active visitors at Kaunas 2022 events. These are predictable characteristics of keen cultural consumers, but focusing on them alone might lead us to overlook the keenest efforts made by culture sector workers to reach the hardest-to-reach. One of the evident triumphs of these efforts is the fact that personal income had no bearing on one's attendance at Kaunas 2022 events. However, these efforts do not end with engaging audiences that are easier or harder to reach – much more important is the quality of the relationship established, which in the end shapes the broadest evaluations.

Awareness of and attendance at 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022'<sup>25</sup>



<sup>25</sup> Source: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, conducted in 2021-2023 ('Over the past 12 months, have you attended any "Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022" events?'; 'Have you heard about "Kaunas – European Capital of Culture"?'). In order to obtain a more accurate estimate, the data have been weighted by taking into account the proportion of respondents who participated in the events and those who did not.

The fruits of cultural workers' efforts are best reflected in the visitors' evaluations of Kaunas 2022. As the year progressed, attendees left Kaunas 2022 events feeling deeply satisfied with their cultural experiences: 60% of participants gave the event a perfect score of '10/10' as they left, with 90% rating it '7/10' or higher. This positive sentiment remained even when participants were asked to reflect more deeply on their experiences, after their initial impressions and emotions had faded. According to attendees' ratings, Kaunas 2022 not only held its own but also surpassed other successful European Capital of Culture programmes, such as Liverpool 2008. These favourable evaluations were consistent across a diverse range of social groups. It is noteworthy, however, that women's ratings more often tended to lean on the positive side, and that the more educated Kaunesians provided

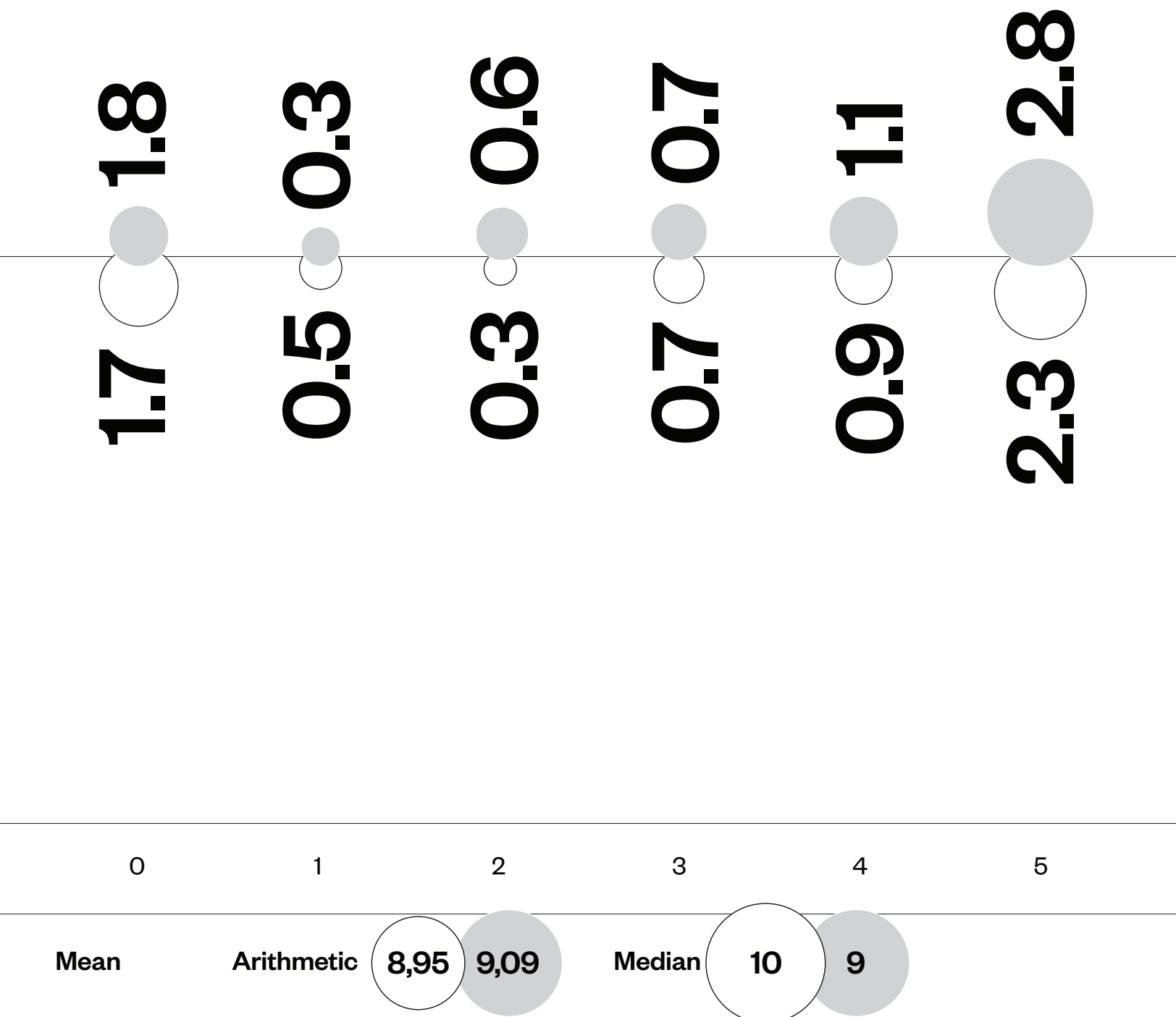
more moderate ratings with a slightly greater frequency. So how should we transition from appreciating these subjective ratings to assessing Kaunas 2022? And what does all this mean in the grand scheme of things? A simplified marketing answer would be that over the course of the title-holding year, Kaunas 2022 created a brand comparable, in terms of recognition and positive emotions created by cultural workers, to Kaunas' famous Žalgiris basketball club, renowned well beyond Kaunas City and Kaunas District. 76% of Vilnius residents have heard of Kaunas 2022, and 14.6% have attended Capital of Culture events.<sup>26</sup> A quarter of participants of the Kaunas 2022 events survey were not from Kaunas City or Kaunas District, and another quarter were not even from Lithuania. Thus, Kaunas 2022 was an event for more than just the city, its district, or the country. In foreign media,

the stream of culture-related news about Lithuania tripled in 2022. This is particularly important news for builders of the national brand, as such news typically stand out for their positive tone. Kaunas 2022 had a significant impact on this surge: in 2022, 3% of significant news coverage about Lithuania in the global media were related to Kaunas 2022. This programme helped Lithuania capture the attention of the hardest-to-reach international media outlets. Considering these facts, communications experts would easily be convinced that Kaunas 2022 provided the country with a wealth of otherwise costly positive global media attention, and that the Kaunas 2022 brand itself also holds local value. So, what more is there to assess?

<sup>26</sup> From a survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology and Social Work at Vilnius University.

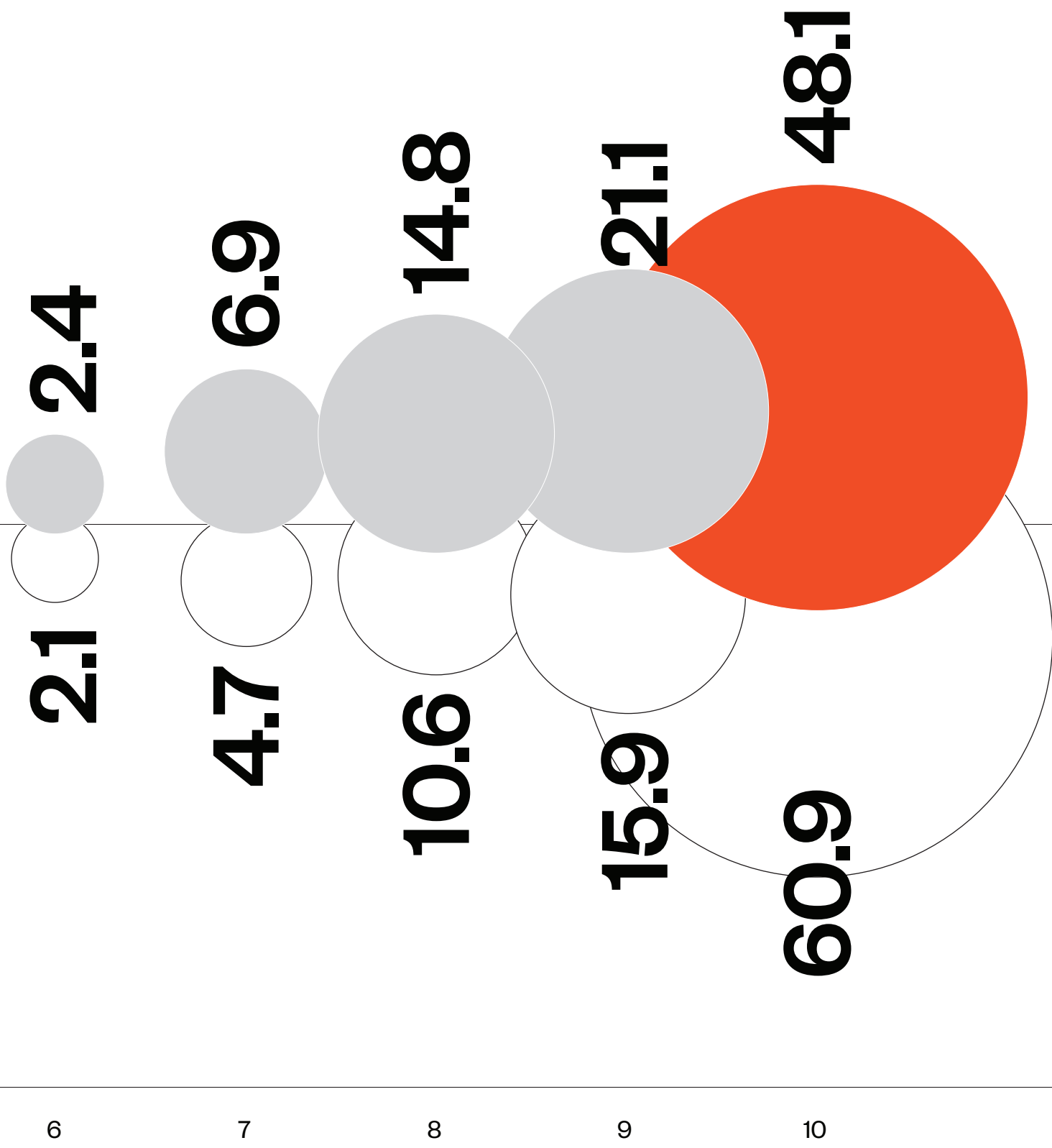
Kaunas 2022 visitor ratings and visibility in international media<sup>27</sup>

How would you rate today's event? (% of all responses)



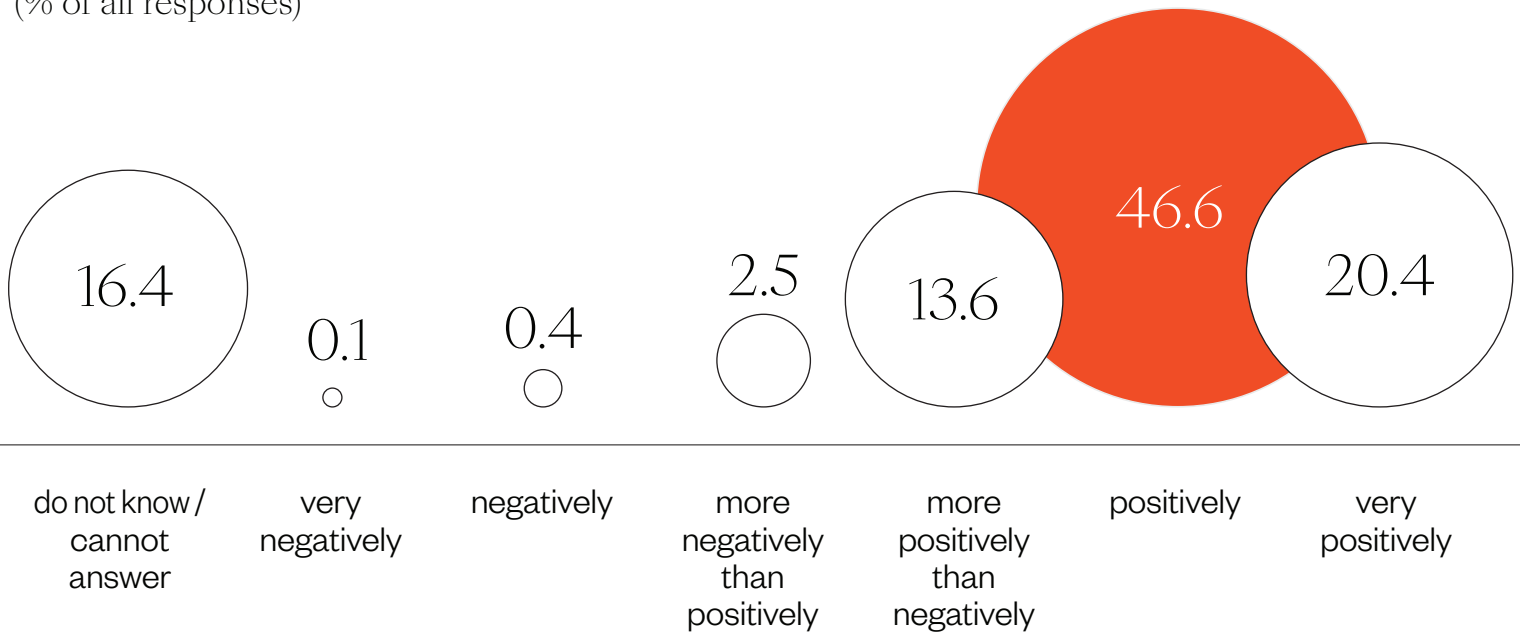
<sup>27</sup> Sources: Kaunas and City District Population Survey; Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('How would you rate today's event?', 'How would you rate "Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022" overall?'), conducted over the course of 2022; and monitoring data provided by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on major news reports about Lithuania in foreign media.



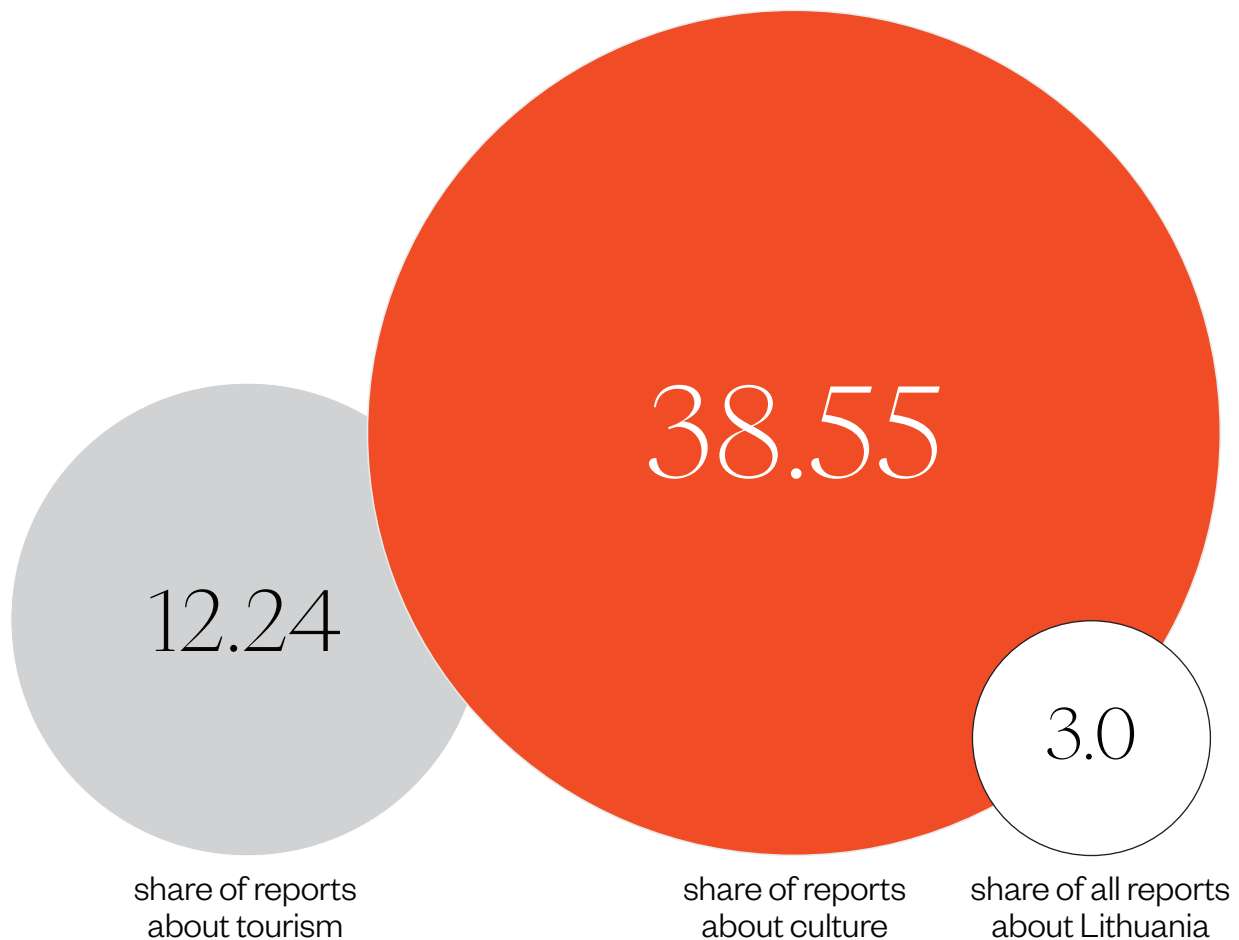


Right after an event
  Later

In general, how would you evaluate 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022'?  
 (% of all responses)



Share of notable reports in international media mentioning Kaunas 2022 (%)



The positive results presented here may lead the reader to question whether they should continue reading this evaluative study. However, we wish to dispel such doubts by drawing attention to a simple fact that illustrates the deeper significance of doing an impact evaluation. Kaunas 2022 is rated positively by a larger proportion of citizens than have actually attended the programme's events. This reminds us once again about the subjective nature of evaluations – after all, even those with limited knowledge or experience of the subject under evaluation can provide their own evaluation. The impact of cultural interventions extends beyond brand image, which is usefully sought using the means of communications. The way in which outcomes have positive effects on the city's image and that of the country only serves to

illustrate the power of symbolic capital created by cultural activities. However, different impact-related questions are possible: 'Do the general evaluations of Kaunas 2022 presented here suggest the existence of an audience of active cultural participants and Kaunesians who cherish local culture, rivalling Žalgiris fans in their passion?' A simple answer to this question could be inferred by observing the crowds attending Kaunas 2022's grand events. Nevertheless, understanding the role culture plays in the lives of these people demands a far more nuanced look at Kaunesians' everyday lives. Thus, we encourage our most patient readers to delve into the story about what this cultural programme could and could not achieve, and to consider how a fact-based discussion of what really happened in 2022 could unfold.

# Impressions from 'We, the People' Events

*For some residents, the event that took place in the courtyards of dormitory neighbourhoods was the first cultural event they had ever seen in their lives. I rate it very positively, thank you for existing.*

35-year-old businessman from Šančiai

*I don't remember when I last saw so many happy children as I did during this event. I'm very happy that we had a chance to participate and, in general, that such an event took place.*

33-year-old female from Vilijampolė, currently unemployed

*It was fun gathering with my family in a slightly unusual setting. But overall, it was very fun, the mood was great. Thank you to the organisers.*

37-year-old female from Centras

*I often catch myself wondering where the chats have gone. I don't miss them.*

39-year-old male from Dainava

*I have changed my opinion about folklore, turns out it's quite interesting.*

31-year-old male worker from Dainava

*I liked the show. I'm from another country and I what I saw, was beautiful. I like Kaunas, like if was Portugal. My home. I'm feeling in home, and all the days I'm feeling better and better here. Continue making that events because I always go see.\**

25-year-old male from Portugal

*I was so happy and i couldn't keep a smile off my face, it was such a fun thing to walk through in Laisvės Alėja and Kauno pilis, i had an amazing time and, also, seeing other people happy and doing these things made me very happy too. I'm so pleased and I felt welcomed there.\**

19-year-old female student

*It lacked a concert with famous artists. Performances by local communities were rather boring, and the hour-long wait was too much. I think it would be much more interesting if you could come up with some tasks or a sticker collection activity, as it was done during the 'Confluence' event, from which one could earn at least a symbolic prize. That would make the event more engaging. Anyway, I intend to participate again next year, and I hope that Fluxus will become the most anticipated fest in Kaunas 😊*

27-year-old male employee from Žaliakalnis

*It made me think that there is more to life than just work/study. Life is also about relaxing.*

29-year-old student from Vilijampolė

*I'd like to see more involvement from professional performers; too much time was devoted to communities' dilettantish performances.*

41-year-old businesswoman based in Türkiye

*Very interesting international actors. (Most of all, I liked the extras shouting from balconies that they had gotten bored).*

42-year-old male from Dainava

*It was wonderful to see a performance given by representatives of different countries; I'm also glad that an untraditional location was chosen (not the city centre).*

38-year-old businesswoman from Dainava

*Continue this tradition because there isn't another day in the year when Kaunesians could be seen being so creative, so out-there, happy and smiling. It couldn't be better!*

25-year-old female resident of Žaliakalnis

*Turns out there are people in Kaunas who are interested in culture.*

19-year-old female student from Aleksotas

*The poems, most of them, seemed very sad, somewhat strange...*

30-year-old female from Dainava, unemployed

*It was interesting to listen to an unfamiliar artist. It was also interesting to see what kind of people live in my neighbourhood.*

36-year-old female farmer from Gričiupis

*It didn't evoke many feelings in me as it was boring, I understand that the budget was limited but I didn't like it.*

17-year-old female from Centras

*It was really nice that it rained outside, and the event moved to the stairwell! Words can't describe this experience, new, engaging, attention-grabbing, and creating a completely different aura to how it would have been outside...*

*Under a tree... 😊*

46-year-old male from Šančiai

*A very pleasant family-friendly environment with a variety of engaging activities. You leave having interacted, feeling uplifted, having learnt something new... I'm really happy that I had a chance to participate. I wish the community success in its daily life and celebrations.*

52-year-old female based in Denmark

*Seeing the children dance and their reactions to today's event, I remembered my own childhood when I would sing at the top of my lungs and my feet would dance as if on clouds. And I didn't care what others would think or if they were watching me. I remembered what joy it was to be a child, but at the same time, I thought that this event encouraged adults to remember what it meant to rejoice and have fun sincerely, as they used to during childhood. After this event, I left with a smile on my face! Thank you!*

22-year-old female student from Žaliakalnis











I.

EXPERI-  
ENCING  
UNITY



In drawing a parallel between Kaunas 2022 and the Žalgiris basketball club, we aimed to invoke the image of a crowd of basketball fans, cheering or leaving the arena. Much like many other European Capitals of Culture, Kaunas 2022 also aimed to achieve something similar: to create a space where a sense of unity is experienced. This was pursued not through the spectacle of a sports competition echoing mythical fights, but through other means of cultural expression. The initiative entered 2022 with a crowd of followers and admirers, about a third of whom were Kaunesians. The title-holding year saw concerted efforts to further expand this crowd through organised mass events. The previously presented Kaunas residents' impressions from mass events, which we begin to review starting from the opening event, 'The Confusion', serve to illustrate how strikingly diverse opinions about a single cultural experience can be. In mass events, through our bodies, we try and test out togetherness and seek a sense of unity. And unity is experienced very individually. Mass events, especially on the occasions of opening and closing ceremonies, have already become staples of European Capitals of Culture. Although they present unique challenges, notably accentuated by the pandemic, it would be almost inconceivable to picture a European Capital of Culture without such events. The Kaunas 2022 crowd was gradually built up over several years of preparation (since 2017) from many different experiences of an intimate scale. We proceed by inviting our reader to listen to the voices of those who shared these experiences.

# Being in the Right Place

In terms of size, the Kaunas 2022 crowd matches the vast sea of sports fans. However, it stands out in terms of its social content, offering a different experience of unity. What did Kaunesians who participated in Kaunas 2022 experience besides occasions of mass unity? How did these experiences change their lives? These questions are not simple to answer because much effort during the 2017–2021 preparation period and throughout 2022 was directed towards cultivating smaller-scale experiences of unity at the level of a courtyard, a local community, a neighbourhood, or a locality. Yet, comparing these programmatic elements with the mass events can provide better insight into how these two very different components of the programme are interconnected. All successful mass

events share (at least) one thing in common – broadly speaking, they are accessible to large audiences on a mass scale. The ‘Confusion’ event, organised amidst pandemic restrictions and under harsh cold weather conditions, received a wide range of feedback from people who were only just beginning to engage with the Kaunas 2022 experience. However, over time, the mass events became the part of the programme where visitors least often felt the sensation of being ‘out of place’. The ‘Confluence’ celebration and the ‘Contract’ performance were rated as the programme’s most professionally executed events.

Attendance at mass celebrations of unity was fostered through first providing events offering smaller-scale experiences. Pivotal to this was the

community labs programme ‘We, the People’ (also known as ‘Fluxus Labs’) in Kaunas City and the ‘Contemporary Neighbourhoods’ programme in Kaunas District. They were used as a vehicle for reaching people who may not typically have been interested in culture and who may not have attended the programme’s main events. The events of the ‘Mythical Beast of Kaunas’ programme were addressed to the youngest generation of Kaunesians. This strategy of approaching a wide range of audiences despite all the ‘can’ts and won’ts’ and ‘it’s not for me’ (and similar attitudes) is reflected in the voices of events’ participants. The participants of ‘We, the People’ events experienced the feeling of being ‘out of

*“Communities have been gripped well and right from the start. I would say that, well, it’s like culture the other way around... Not like culture imposed from the top and shoved down one’s throat... But allowing people to rise to it. I think this was one of Kaunas 2022’s pluses: looking the other way around.”<sup>28</sup>*

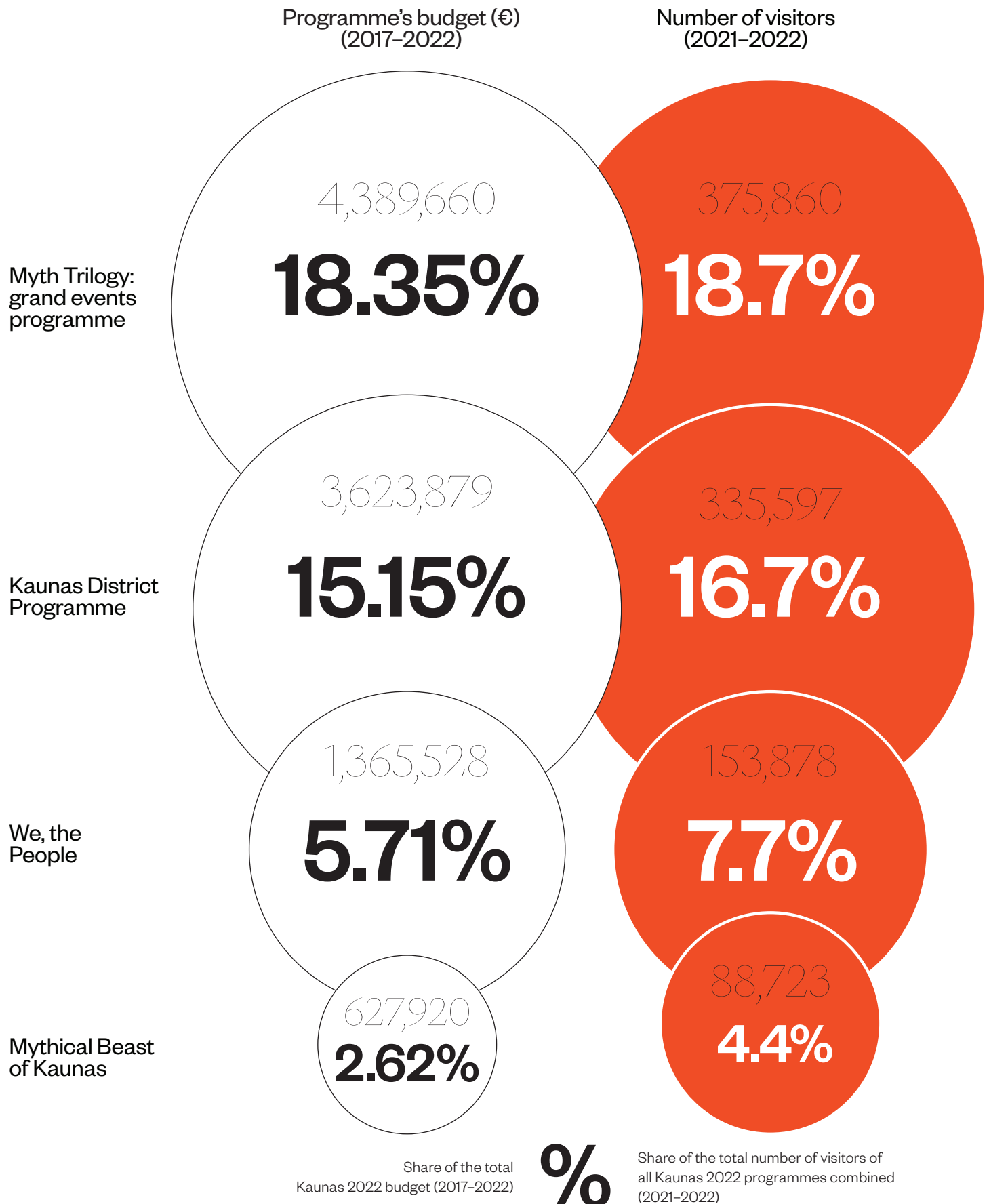
place’ somewhat more often than those of other programmes. This indicates that these programmes achieved their objective of offering a cultural experience which, for some residents, for various social or personal reasons, may have seemed like something that was ‘not meant for people like me’. The overwhelmingly positive

overall ratings attributed to these experiences suggests that these micro-confrontations were successful. In the grand scheme of the entire Kaunas 2022 programme, the ‘Contemporary Neighbourhoods’ events, which brought culture to the most remote settlements of Kaunas District, were among the most warmly received ones. Community-

focused activities, initiated during the preparatory years, laid the groundwork for what later became the ‘crowd’ of the mass events. This crowd stands out from among all Kaunesians for its connection with its home area and engagement in community activities.

<sup>28</sup> This quote and other quotes presented henceforth in the main text are taken from focus group discussions with cultural sector workers and community leaders, unless indicated otherwise.

An overview of several strands of the Kaunas 2022 programme<sup>29</sup>



<sup>29</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017-2022.

# Ready to Help

People who participated in the programme's events were also more inclined to engage in volunteering activities and were more likely to attend gatherings with neighbours and neighbourhood events. In 2022, the contribution of volunteers to implementing the programme was particularly noteworthy. They constitute a special part of the Kaunas 2022 'crowd' who actively contributed to this experience of unity. All these behaviours are more characteristic of Kaunas 2022 events visitors, underlining key social attributes of the Kaunas

2022 'crowd'. Considering Kaunesians more broadly, the year 2022 did not significantly alter the extent of these behaviours. The crowd mobilised in 2022 was exceptional, standing as the best evidence that the local community-focused, small-scale action that was gathering these people together occurred at the right time and in the right place. Therefore, the programme's primary success lies in having mobilised Kaunesians with a certain degree of social capital while simultaneously offering them a communal experience.

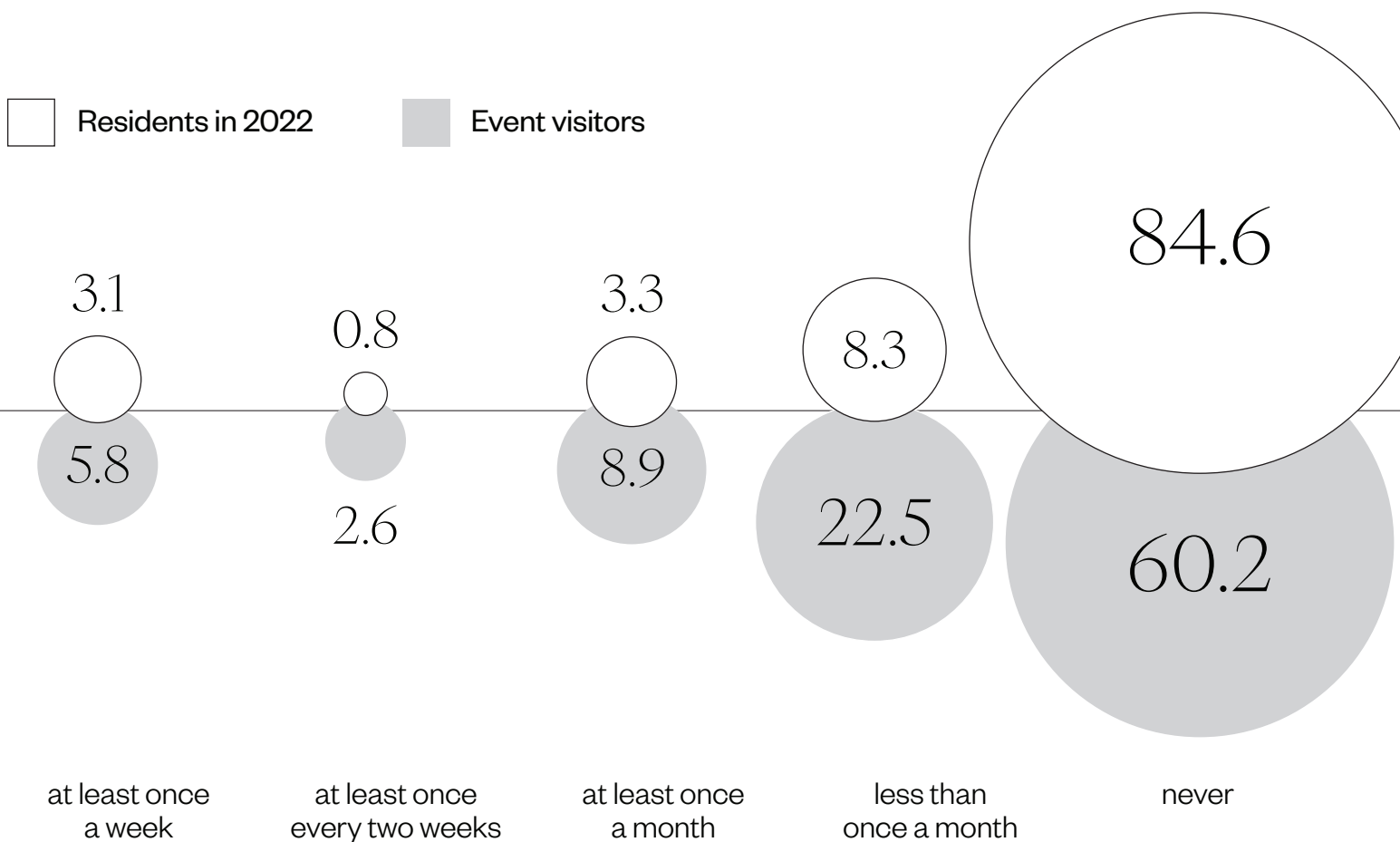
*“Activities continue. And most importantly, we don't feel as if it were some kind of imposed burden. People are doing all this voluntarily. I spoke with the community chair. She told me: ‘I know what I can do, so I will do it. And what I can't do, I know that someone else will.’”*

However, volunteering resources are very limited. They also manifest differently in the small settlements such as Kaunas District's rural communities, where establishing direct personal relationships is easier, compared to larger urban areas characterised by a greater sense of anonymity.

Those participating in the Kaunas 2022 programme's community activities were encouraged to contribute to place-making initiatives, developing public goods accessible to all by lending their imagination, dreams, and free time to their home area. Facilitators of such activities encounter typical ethical

and practical dilemmas. Will the value created justify the efforts invested? Will the goodwill of people committed to the programme's objectives be overused or even exploited? These questions don't have a one-size-fits-all answer; they depend heavily on individual perspectives and can vary greatly. Kaunas 2022 followed a strategy where these ethical dilemmas were deeply pronounced. The community resources, which they attempted to leverage, are intrinsically limited. Participation in such activities is also limited by life-stage challenges such as family commitments or health. The cultural potential present in a particular locale

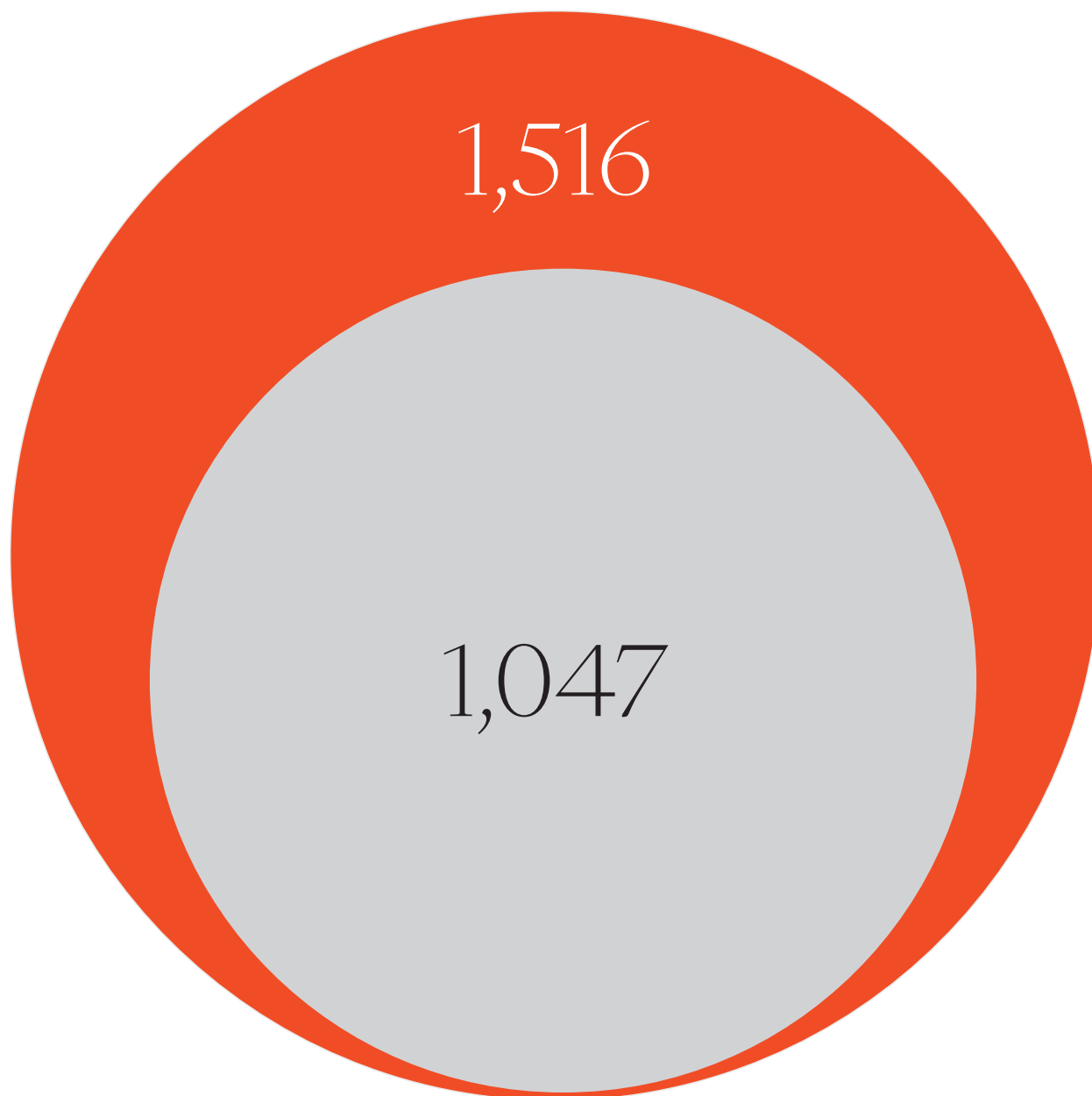
How often did you volunteer during the past 6 months? (% of all responses)<sup>30</sup>



<sup>30</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District population monitoring data, Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('How often did you take part in the following leisure activities during the past 6 months?').

## Number of volunteers recruited by Kaunas 2022

Total number of volunteers  
participating under volunteering  
contracts at events in 2022



number of unique  
volunteers

also plays a significant role, and the programme offered an opportunity to bolster links between creators residing in the same area. And last but not least, it is vital for volunteers to retain a sense of ownership over their initiatives. Under these circumstances, it was not just important for the intervention's implementers to identify and harness local social capital, but also to ensure that this capital was further multiplied. Feedback about the Kaunas 2022

programme from community initiative participants shows that the programme succeeded in maintaining a sustainable and considerate relationship with volunteers and community activists alike. By taking part in these initiatives, communities were able to view their local cultural resources from a different perspective and attain a degree of quality that would have been impossible without this programme.

*“When Kaunas 2022 began involving us in these activities... we were like, ‘well, yeah, they’re going to treat us like meat now. We’ve got everything ready, and they’re just going to flip it over and put “Kaunas 2022” on the other side.’ But it changed us... It changed us in the sense that we were, as they say, digging our heels in, like, ‘what a load of rubbish’... And then we felt very good afterwards. The agents who were assigned to each neighbourhood had a lot to do with that. And we became very good friends with them. We started to find it quite interesting.”*

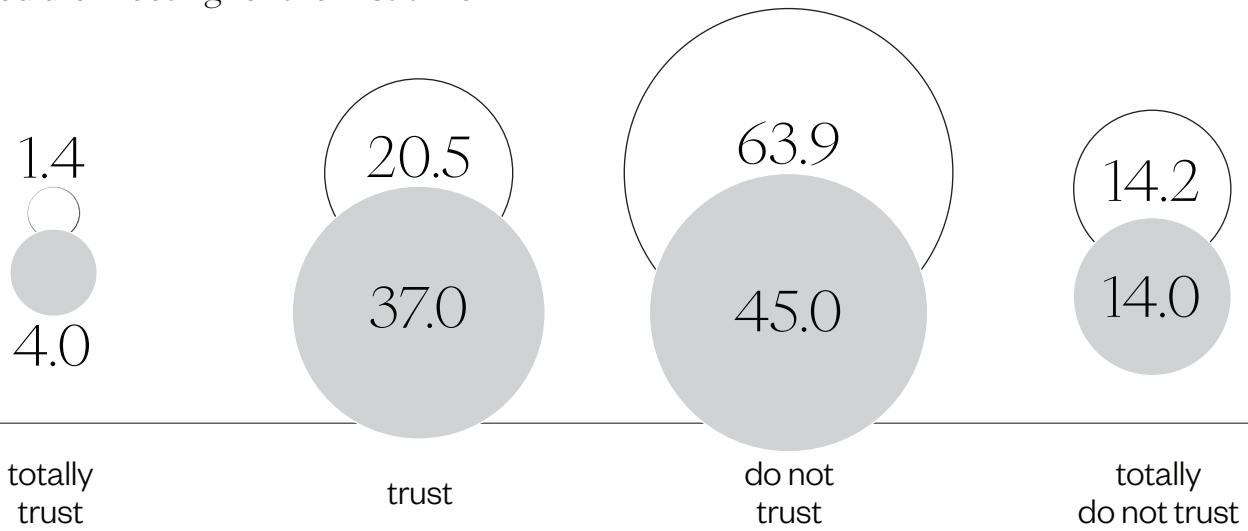
We have several observations regarding the value that engagement in community activities has brought to the participants themselves. The truth is that the Kaunas 2022 'crowd' stands out from all other Kaunesians not only on account of their social potential. They are also individuals who have a greater sense of being safe in their neighbourhood. They also feel greater responsibility for their immediate environment and feel confident in their

ability to bring about change within it. At the same time, they have higher expectations of those around them; they are less likely to report feeling a willingness among their neighbours to extend help. These attitudes, rather than the shared residential location, were what connected the participants of community activities. Cultivating such solidarity across an entire locality is too great a challenge. Smaller-scale activities at an immediate

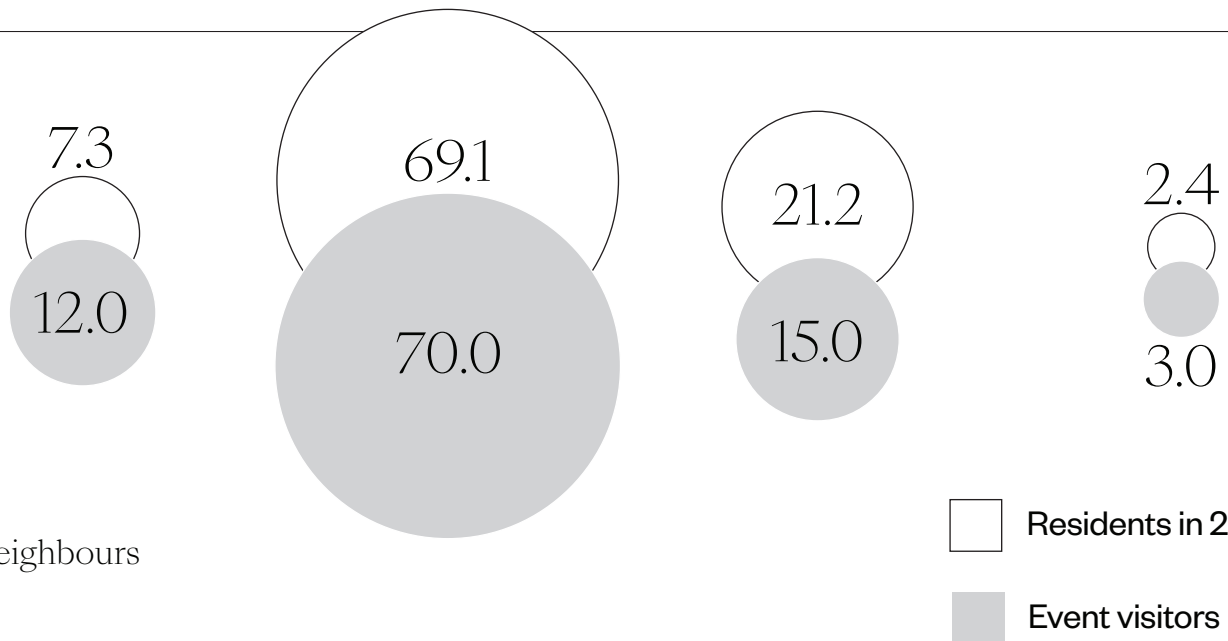
neighbourhood level have proven to be more effective, especially when facilitated by artists or activists specifically prepared for this task. These attitudes represent an expression of social capital possessed by individuals. One cannot accumulate such capital over a single year. Rather, it is the result of long-term efforts made towards building interpersonal relationships.

To what extent do you trust the following: (% of all responses)<sup>31</sup>

People you are meeting for the first time



Your neighbours



□ Residents in 2022  
 ■ Event visitors

<sup>31</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey (I am going to name several groups of people. Please tell whether you totally trust, trust, do not trust, or totally do not trust people from these groups).



The social impact of Kaunas 2022 on its own 'crowd', as discussed here, is indicative of the pleasures of social life typical of small-town living. The shared sense of security and trust in neighbours and other people are attitudes more commonly observed in smaller settlements. It is no coincidence, therefore, that they are more pronounced among Kaunas District residents. But the Kaunas 2022 programme's activities gave neighbourhoods located inside the city a chance to enjoy these small-town delights, too. Much of these neighbourhoods' architecture and urban fabric were planned and built according to the principles of socialist modernism and have been significantly worn down over time. The contemporary reality of living in these areas often involves

deteriorating buildings, public spaces that have been neglected or turned into parking lots, and unresolved domestic household issues that disrupt residents' solidarity with one another. Cultural interventions in these areas suggested seeking solidarity not in shared domestic concerns but in experiences of unity that cultivate social capital in different ways. The social capital that the programme has accumulated could, with thoughtful city planning, potentially be used to spark new visions of life in these areas. Whether this will happen remains to be seen in the future. However, it is already evident that, besides its peculiar worries and challenges, city-living will continue to serve up its unique pleasures. These pleasures are primarily linked with the opportunities of experiencing social diversity and encountering the 'Other' more frequently, thereby contributing to self-learning and improvement. The probability of experiencing such encounters in Kaunas City differs greatly from the probability in Kaunas District's settlements or villages. But before delving deeper into further attempts to understand urban identity, it is worth taking a closer look at the city's changing geography.

*“For me, what made it stand out was playfulness, that fluxus-like quality.”*

*“Yes, it was a lot of fun explaining to people what we wanted from them. That Fluxus means art everywhere!*

*Whatever you do, it will be OK.”*

*“Life is art?”*

*“Maybe it is indeed!”  
Everyone laughs.*

# Impressions from 'Contemporary Neighbourhoods' Events

*Deep, beautiful, high quality. I am happy and grateful that Kaunas is what it is today. Once upon a time, visiting the big cities of Western Europe, I could only dream that my hometown would one day be like this.*

37-year-old male resident of Centras

*Was touched to tears ..... Moved my soul. Impressive two days – just popped into town by chance – with plenty of unplanned impressions with people and events. We did not plan anything and experienced an overwhelming time in the city the atmosphere and con tempo. Thank you.\**

65-year-old businesswoman from Ethiopia

*Cool, really 😊 There is plenty to catch your eye and ear.*

31-year-old male from Vilnius

*I am God.*

school pupil from Žaliakalnis

*Было интересно побывать в таком месте<sup>32</sup>*

16-year-old male school pupil

*There was no cultural experience whatsoever, except for the exhibition in the chapel. All the rest was just for kids.*

45-year-old female from Dainava

*This was unreal. A few days have already passed since this event but our family still can't get over all the positive emotions. We're telling everyone what an unreal experience it was. It's just a pity that the event was so short. I wanted to book tickets for my friends and parents, but the event lasted for just four days, if I remember it correctly. I would like to see more events like this. It was fantastic. Thank you to the whole team.*

39-year-old female from Šilainiai

*I REACHED AN  
EXISTENTIAL  
STATE THROUGH A  
PHILOSOPHICAL PRISM.*

38-year-old female from Garliava

*We are used to acrobats being part of the circus. And circus stands for bears, sad clowns and a generally gloomy atmosphere trying to appear joyful. After this event, the art of acrobatics revealed itself to me from a different angle, showing that human possibilities are limitless. I realised how much work, talent and effort goes into putting on a show like this. I am very glad that both Kaunas 2022 and Contempo are giving us an opportunity to expand our understanding of art and discover its various forms.*

38-year-old female employee from Viliampolė

*I celebrated St. John's Day in Jonava. But this event is incomparably better. Thank you for such a great event. Kaunas is wonderful. I have lived 15 years abroad, and I can definitely say that the city and its surrounding neighbourhoods have changed a lot for the better. I am happy to be living in Kaunas. Thank you.*

70-year-old male retiree from Samylai

<sup>32</sup> This impression was originally submitted in Russian and is presented here in its authentic form. Translated into English, it means: 'It was interesting to visit such a place.'

*It brought up many feelings and thoughts for further reflection, it was great to go back home and hug my loved ones, thank you!*

49-year-old female from Aleksotas

*I was impressed by the creativity, the setting, and the Italian director's ingenuity. I watched both performances and didn't want to go home...*

61-year-old employee from Garliava

*The event I saw in Linksmakalnis made me think about the importance of cultural activities in our lives. Watching previews of a similar kind or theatre plays broadens our horizons and gives us a different perspective on everyday life.*

23-year-old male from Viliampolė

*The main event of 2022 kaunas was nothing about. nothing new, nothing to think about. the idea really empty. though music and lights were amazing. today's event was joyful and full of activities.\**

16-year-old female school pupil from Žaliakalnis

*The event was very good. But it could be even better.*

15-year-old female from Kulautuva

*My husband and I enjoyed it very much. People need such events, you can tell just by seeing how many people turn up, and of all ages. This event is dear to me because both my parents came from flooded villages. The sadly destroyed past.*

61-year-old female worker from Rokai

*It allowed me to experience and get to know contemporary art even more deeply. I admired the artists' inventiveness and skill. Even though I'm not an artist, a little particle of 'something special' stayed in me. Everything just looks different, unusual, but very interesting.*

45-year-old female from Jurbarkas District

*I didn't fully understand the idea behind it, but I often got impressed by the setting and artists' performance.*

28-year-old male from Raudondvaris

*Every day we try to return to the frivolous days of yesteryear, get engulfed by ever greater difficulties, and only death can save us from chilling loneliness.*

35-year-old male from Vilnius

*It was a great experience for both me and my daughter. We were engaged in the performance. We have had an amazing time together.\**

36-year-old female visiting Kaunas

*It was fun to be among like-minded people. I didn't know that there were more steamers in Lithuania.*

38-year-old female employee from Šančiai

*I didn't like the music very much, where do you dig such musicians out from? It was terrible, just noise, nothing more.*

17-year-old male from Gričiupis

*Nowadays a lot of different events take place in Lithuania, even in small towns and villages, one just mustn't be too lazy to attend.*

62-year-old female from Samylai

*Fun time with the family, besides the main show – additional experiences for children. Good entertainment, an unseen, peculiar performance.*

37-year-old female from Lapės

*Mačernis rediscovered.*

26-year-old female from Vilnius

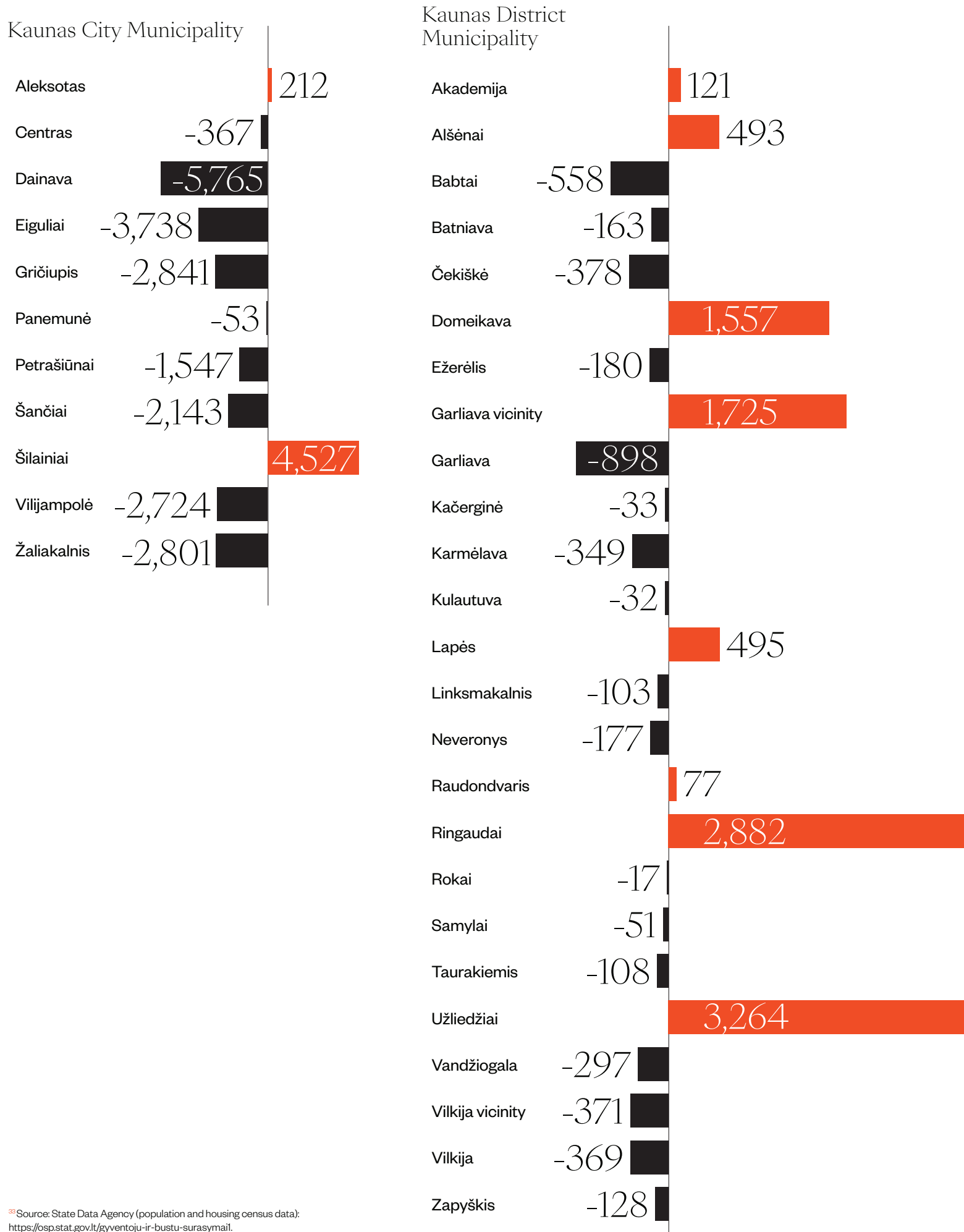
# Meaning on the Periphery

Much like other major Lithuanian cities, Kaunas is experiencing a substantial wave of suburbanisation. The tsunami of emigration that swept across the city and the country at the dawn of the millennium has been gradually easing. Indeed, the last decade has even seen instances of positive annual migration figures, which gives rise to cautious optimism. However, there is an observable shift away from the urban areas taking place once again, with people gravitating towards suburbia. The reasons for this outward movement should be sought in national urban development policies and a lack of affordable, quality housing. All of this manifests itself in the array of issues and concerns faced by residents in Lithuanian cities and their surrounding municipalities, spanning from daily practicalities to more existential concerns. The surge

in urbanisation inadvertently pushes newcomers further away from social and cultural services. It also presents challenges related to establishing one's sense of identity within a new place of living. The Kaunas 2022 programme proposed solutions to both practical and existential issues. Meanwhile, the 'Fluxus Labs' programme employed creative interventions to interact with residents from different neighbourhoods across the city. 'Contemporary Neighbourhoods' was an integral part of the ECoC programme that grappled with the challenges of ensuring accessible cultural services and fostering a sense of local identity. The fact that Kaunas District Municipality joined the Kaunas 2022 initiative means that this programme can be viewed as one of the key arenas for competition over newcomers whose income taxes contribute to the municipal budgets.

*“We drove to a night-time performance in the Batniava forest. It was truly one of the most memorable experiences of 2022. So I think that Kaunas District has really felt at least some sort of change. In terms of the event quality, it must have felt it a lot. Definitely.”*

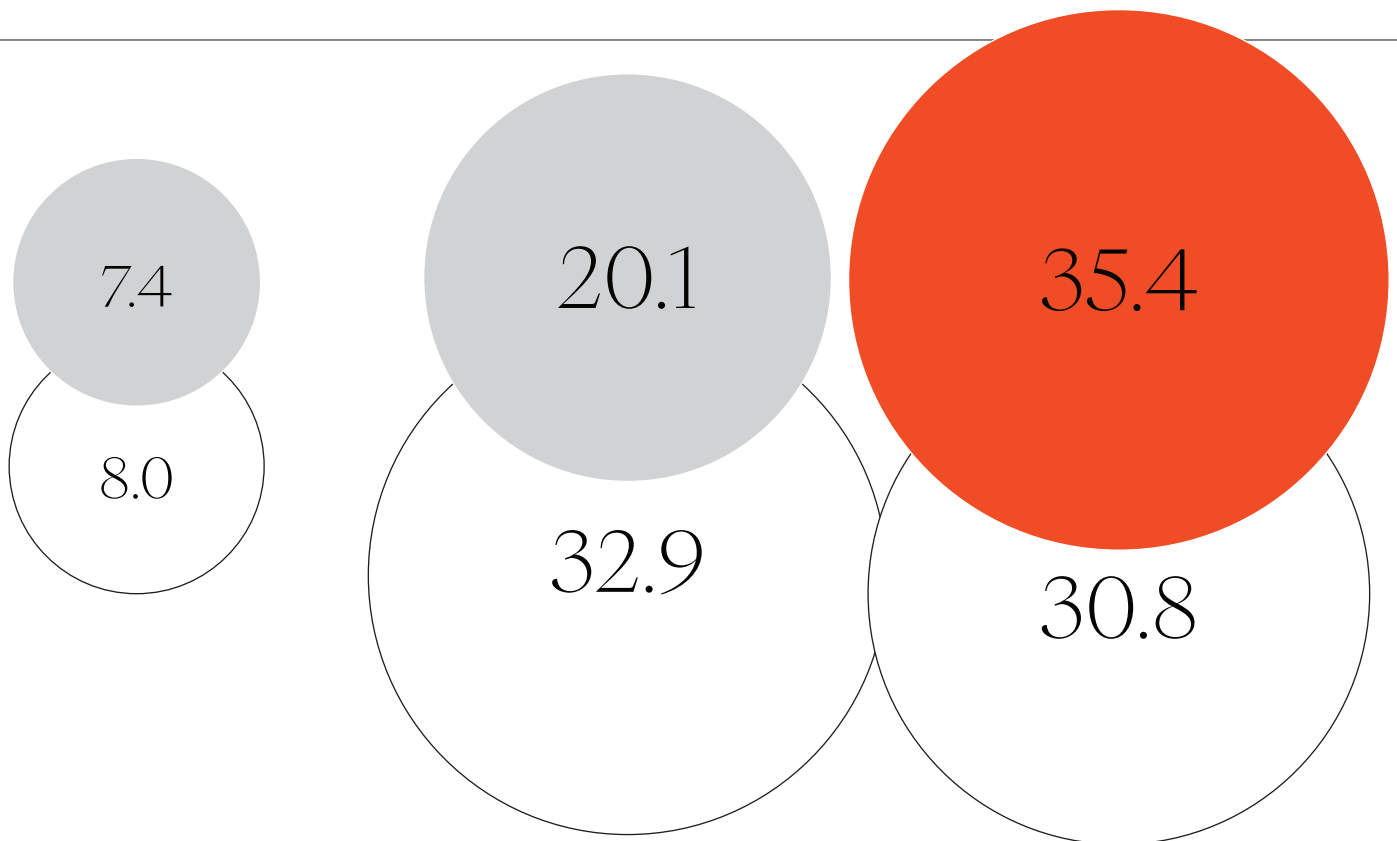
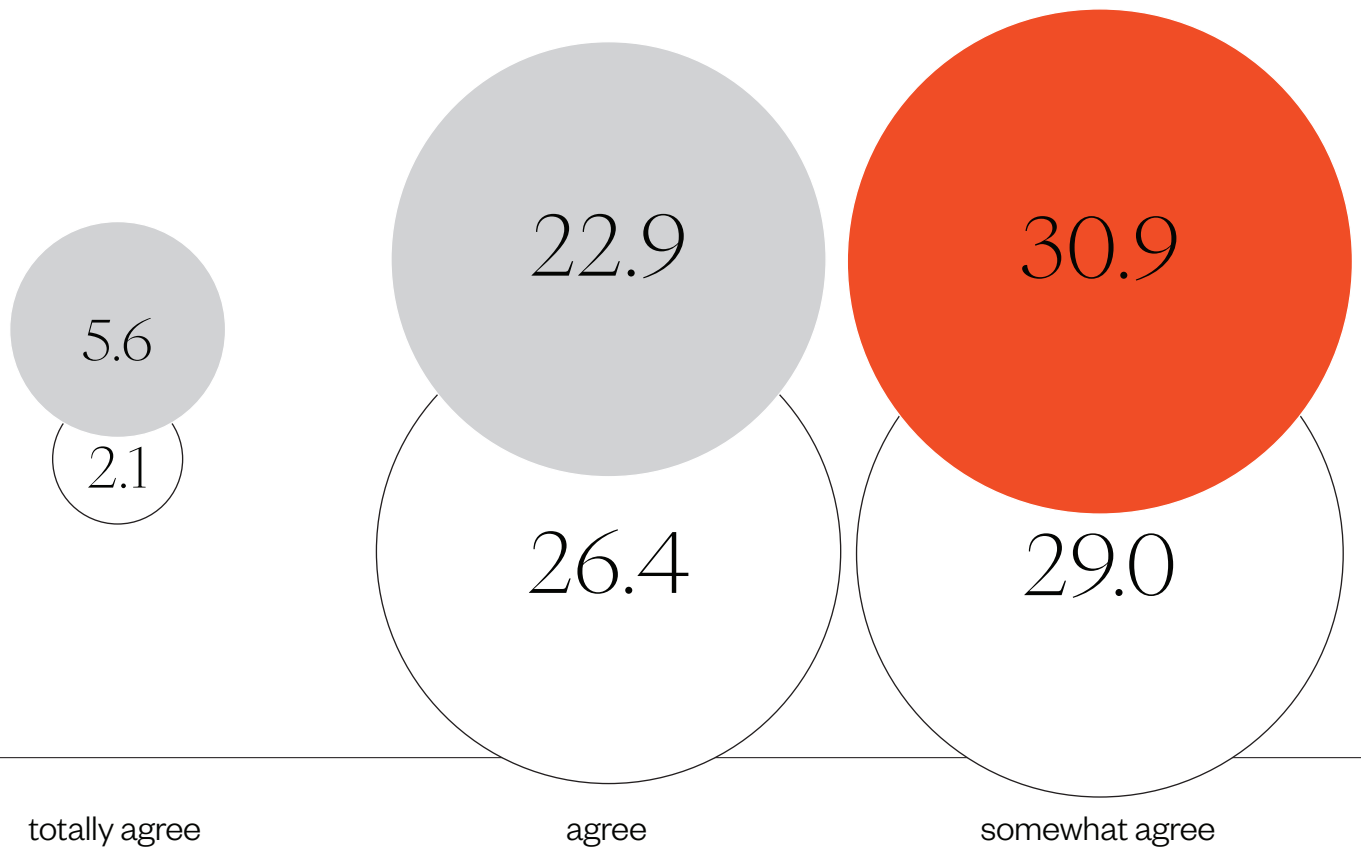
Population change within the city and the district localities between 2011 and 2021 (residents)<sup>33</sup>



<sup>33</sup>Source: State Data Agency (population and housing census data): <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/gyventoju-ir-bustu-surasymai>.

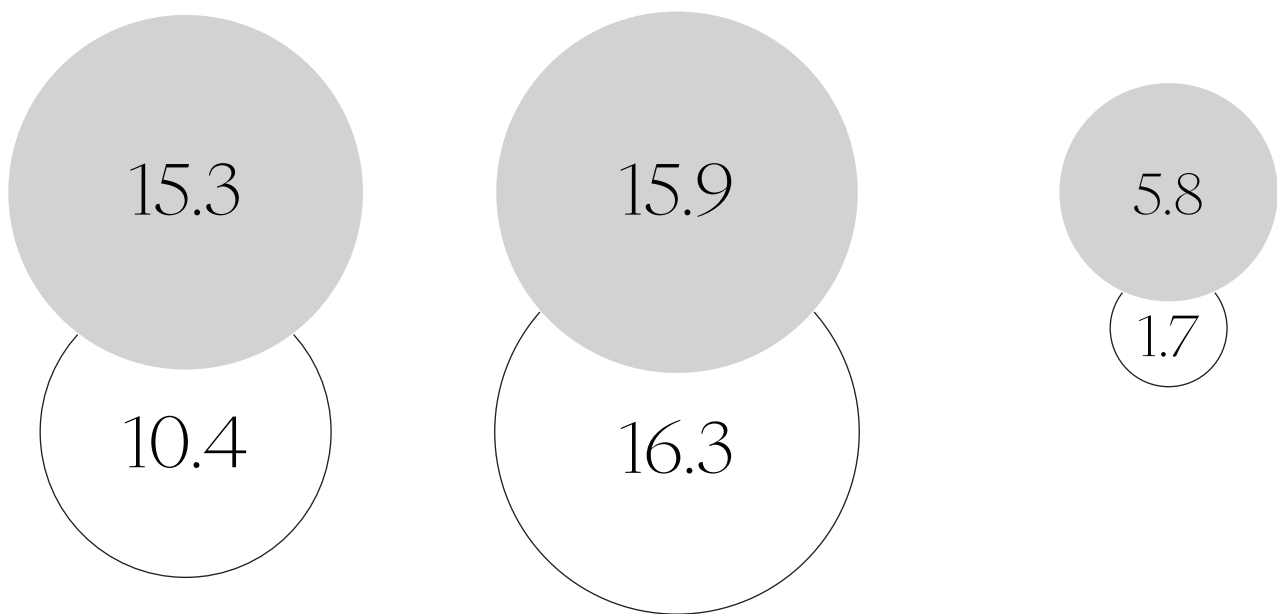
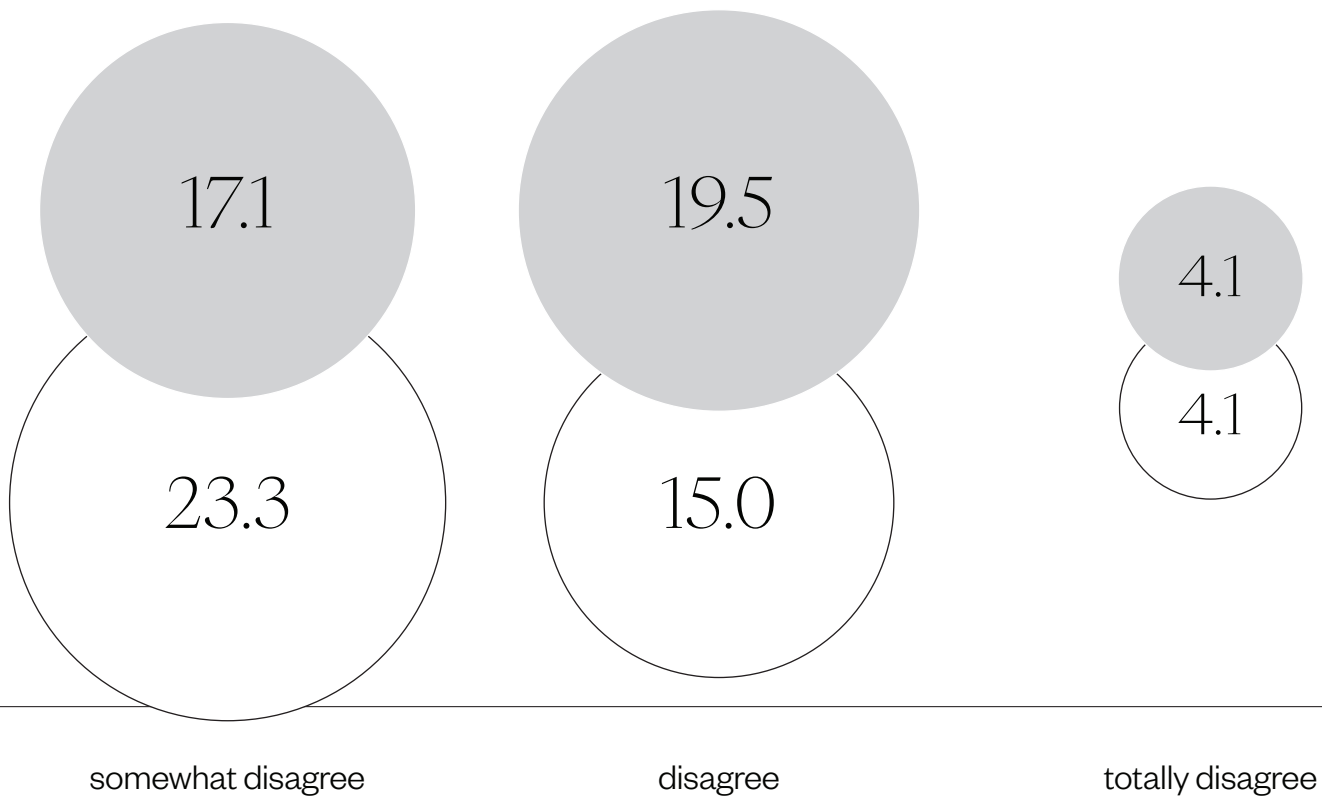
Assessment of cultural life (% of all responses)<sup>34</sup>

There are interesting cultural activities in my area (2022)



I can only find cultural events and activities that interest me in the centre of Kaunas (2022)

<sup>34</sup> Source: Kaunas City and District Population Survey.



Kaunas City residents  
 Kaunas District residents



In the year when Kaunas city centre was certainly not lacking unique and meaningful cultural activities, the Kaunas 2022 communities programme extended cultural provision to those residing further afield – inhabitants of the city’s outlying dormitory neighbourhoods and small towns and villages of the surrounding district. Against the backdrop of suburbanisation, the key accomplishment of this move has been the increased number of Kaunesians who believe that interesting cultural activities are not confined just to the city centre but can also be found in their immediate surroundings. This shift is reflective of the objective fact that the programme provided cultural offerings that previously had not existed or created opportunities for elevating already existing activities to another level. However, the subjective thread of these assessments is also important here: Kaunesians who engage in such activities rank them positively and derive meaning from them. How has

this changed the way residents identify with their place? Has the city bolstered its appeal? Or perhaps Kaunas District has managed to seize the opportunity to strengthen the image of its towns and villages as comfortable places to live? Before diving into these considerations, we should first take a closer look at the attitudes of the city’s inhabitants and those of the wider district towards Kaunas.

The truth is that city dwellers tend to view Kaunas as a contemporary and smart city filled with diversity and opportunities more often than district residents do. Similar statements could be turned inside out: district residents tend to attribute adjectives such as ‘stylish’ or ‘welcoming’ to their nearby city less often than city dwellers do. Perhaps it is rather predictable that those not living in the city itself are also less likely to recognise or express attributes typical of urban life. Regardless of the perspective we decide to take on statements of



this nature, it must be understood that they describe the evaluators themselves, better than they do the city or the district. Yet this does not prevent us from further discussing the real opportunities for changing Kaunesians' attitudes towards the city and the district that were (or were not) offered to them by the Kaunas 2022 programme. In order to do so, we need to delve deeper into the attitudes of the programme's crowd, which was made up of residents from the city and the district. Having done this, we shall see the programme's event participants from the district tend to totally disagree that Kaunas is a boring city slightly less often than participants from the city. Similarly, in the district's residents' imagination, Kaunas is less often viewed as an eco-friendly place. These are just a handful of imagination channels that could be leveraged in the quest for attracting newcomers. Whether this will be done, and whether it will have a greater impact, only time will tell.

*“I remember like it was yesterday... Because when I drive to the city, I go downhill and see the confluence, and I take this road every day. And when I drive past there, I always get brilliant ideas. And one of these ideas was, I was thinking that ‘well, this is where the Capital of Culture started, I wish I could be part of it too.’ And it came true.”*

# Local Identity Knows No Boundaries

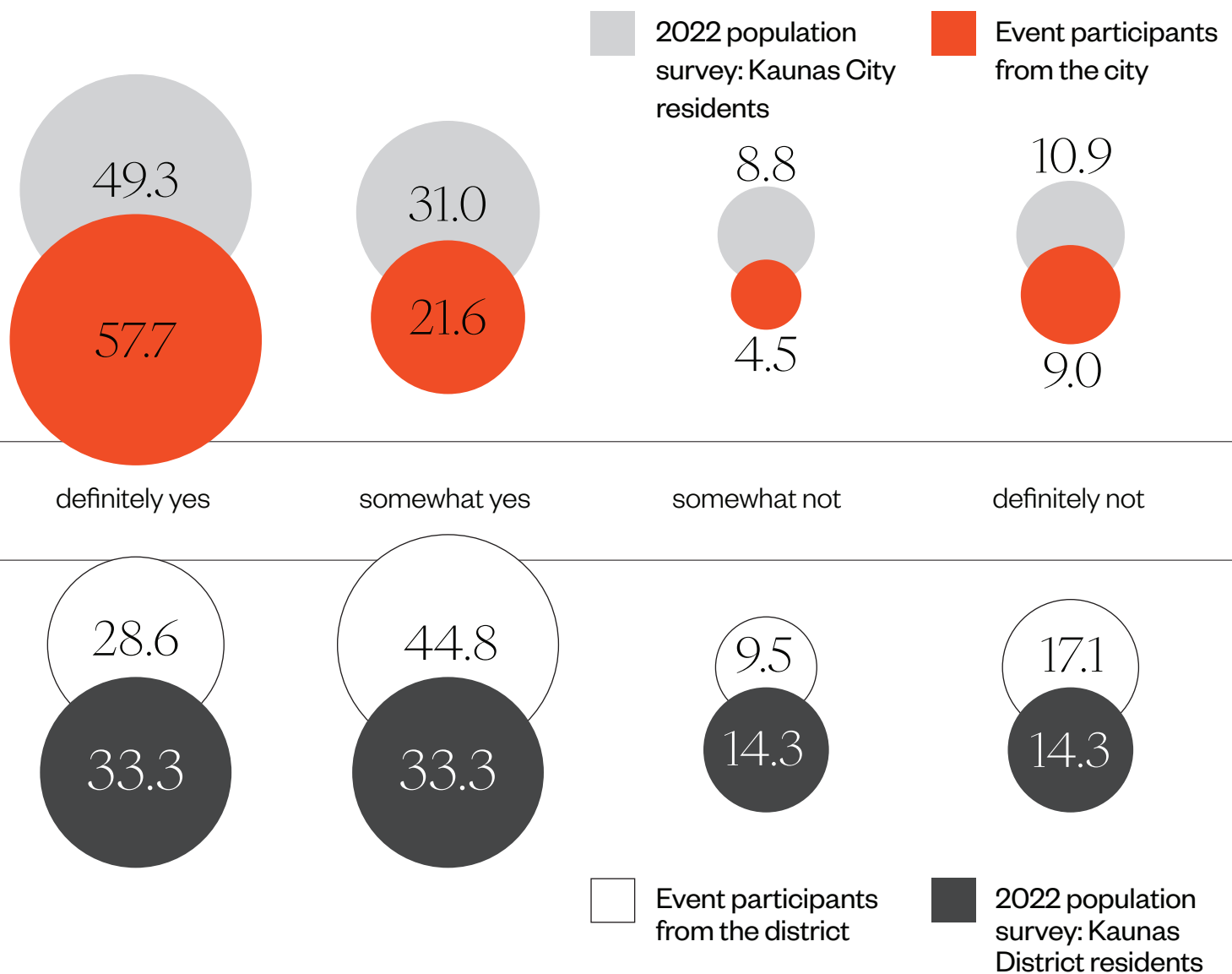
Kaunas 2022 had no mercantile incentives for reshaping the city's or the district's image. The aim was simpler: to mobilise Kaunesians, who love their area, through efforts orientated towards place-making, and to spread this love further. And these efforts proved effective. The Kaunas 2022 crowd, especially the participants of place-making initiatives, stand out distinctively from among all other Kaunesians. Unsurprisingly, Kaunesians who attended Kaunas 2022 events identify more strongly with their place of residence and it is not by chance that this sentiment grew stronger over the course of the year. Event attendees also identify more intensely with the district, the city, and Lithuania more broadly. Kaunas 2022 could not significantly alter the already strong sense among Kaunesians of identifying with their city and their country. Rather, the programme poured new content into this identity, something we will discuss in greater detail later on, especially as we explore the 'Memory Office' and the 'Modernism for the Future' programmes.

However, one simple truth, often overlooked in administrative considerations, is worth mentioning here: the beauty of local identity lies in the fact that it defies geographical and

administrative boundaries. Individuals who do not reside in the city (any longer) can feel Kaunesian. Conversely, those residing in it can feel alienated or out of place. This is well understood among the activists who worked with Kaunas District communities and were often faced with the artificiality of administrative territorial boundaries and the assumed unity within them. Social ties and cultural practices ignore these boundaries, and place-making initiatives only strengthen these ties. The truth is that over a quarter of all Kaunas District inhabitants identify themselves as Kaunesians, with almost half at least partially associating themselves with the city. Half of the city's residents feel a strong sense of identification with their city, with an additional third feeling at least some affiliation with it. Another simple revelation regarding one's identity is its plurality. We each possess multiple identities. We are mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, partners or single people, belong to various professional and political groups or identify ourselves with smaller subcultures. Similarly, we can feel a sense of belonging to a place – perhaps one we no longer live in or may even never have lived in. And there can even be several such places.

*“Relationships will remain. Community facilitators have also spread across cultural institutions. The network of connections has remained, and these connections help in developing new projects.”*

Do you consider yourself Kaunesian? (% of all responses)<sup>35</sup>



The year of 2022 marks a more interesting accomplishment than merely a competition for attracting newcomers. Over the course of the year, a stronger affinity developed among Kaunas District inhabitants towards the city and, reciprocally, among the city’s inhabitants towards Kaunas District. However, such identity-based exchange does not imply that different areas within the region would necessarily experience a shift in their cultural role. District communities discovered and developed their local assets; new spaces, hitherto unutilised for cultural events, were found; new annual events were launched. However, the city will continue to cater to the more diverse range of cultural needs of the region’s population. Cities can have different meanings, as evidenced

in the abstract qualities that, in the eyes of Kaunesians who attended the programme’s events, differentiate the city from its surrounding areas. Regardless of what this might mean for each of us, Kaunas city dwellers view their city as more determined and more European than Kaunesians living in the district. Such abstract connotations indicate that Kaunas, like any regional hub, will remain a vital source of urban sensibilities. Transformations initiated by Kaunas 2022 point towards an increasingly stronger regional identity. Meanwhile, the reasons behind the population’s departure from cities and the recipes for encouraging their return perhaps should rather be sought in mundane daily aspects of urban living.

*“It is very significant that something is happening in different places and spaces across Kaunas, in different neighbourhoods, that was usually not happening... Somehow, the association is mainly that some sort of decentralisation has taken place.”*

<sup>35</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees’ Survey (‘Do you consider yourself Kaunesian?’).

# Impressions from 'Memory Office' Events

*An unreal experience. For the first time in my life, I saw a live performance. The location was also exceptional. The only thing you could complain about would be organisational details: the late start, adjustments of the video projector. But, apart from these minor issues, I would give it a 10/10.*

20-year-old male student from Vilnius

*I was disappointed because the event was 30 mins late on arrival, it was very cold. B. Clarke's work is majestic, but its execution is inadequate to say the least.*

22-year-old female student

*It was very scary.*

15-year-old school pupil from Vilnius

*I have visited Kaunas 5 times this year due to exhibitions and events taking place. I hope that Kaunas will continue wearing the crown of Capital of Culture into 2023.*

20-year-old male student from Vilnius

*Just go to sleep.*

15-year-old male school pupil from Kačerginè

*I rate it very poorly. Even if it was interesting to listen at times, it was impossible to hear anything because the actors seemed as though they were paralysed. It was causing mental laughter, I rate it very very very poorly. That exaggerated effort to reach some kind of depth didn't succeed at all.*

41-year-old female from Aleksotas

*I haven't seen such a moving event in a long time. I was moved by the symbiosis: the exhibition, the imagery, the dance, and the location where everything took place. Even the time of day chosen for the event. Had it been held in a different location, I doubt it would have conveyed the emotion that now remains after the event. My sincere thanks to the artists and the event's organisers for these indelible emotions.*

51-year-old female from Panevėžys

*It invoked sadness.*

45-year-old female from Dainava

*Dope.*

16-year-old female school pupil from Šilainiai

*Bravo, bravissimo !\**

56-year-old male from Bulgaria

*Interesting format, excellent execution, very depressing content. I understand that the subject matter is important and needs to be addressed. But the event was presented (or at least that's how I understood the message) as one about Kaunas history. I was expecting many different stories. Not only about Holocaust. I wasn't prepared for this psychologically. Or perhaps I was also annoyed by the fact that, having paid almost €70 for the tickets, we had to pay €4 extra at the cloakroom. It was rather distasteful 😞*

45-year-old female from Vilijampolė

*Too much nudity.*

15-year-old male from Vilnius

*How dreadful our history is, and how well, by comparison, we live now, perhaps not even appreciating what we have. It must be difficult for those who have to live carrying memories of their own behaviour in these days. Respect to everyone involved in directing and executing a spectacle of such magnitude, in such a different format. I visited twice. On my second visit I heard and saw even more than on my first one. Thank you.*

52-year-old female from Šilainiai

*A very peculiar phenomenon and difference between the behaviour of people in Kaunas and Vilnius at events is that Kaunians do not go close to the stage, leaving some undefined empty space around it, and watch the event as though from the sidelines. It feels very strange when you come here. I first noticed this during Kaunas Jazz. In Vilnius, people go all the way up to the barrier fence and there's no strange unwritten spatial rule 😊 The Kaunas Cantata event seems to have proposed breaking that cold boundary 😊*

35-year-old female from Vilnius

*A very much needed encounter with oneself. Relevant in the context of the ongoing war. A morally engaged piece.*

47-year-old female from Panemunė

*The concept is interactive and professionally executed, but I didn't like the theme because it's not relevant, it's already been covered in art extensively, and you don't want to see only sadness in art, especially in today's context.*

34-year-old female from Gričiupis

*Jews are a large and inseparable part of Lithuania. Their suffering is the suffering and tragedy of us all.*

37-year-old female from Aleksotas, currently unemployed

*Please don't think I'm dumb, I had too little time to attend more more cultural stuff 😊 And thanks for your support for Ukraine ❤️\**

28-year-old female from Ukraine

*Walking into the former Lithuanian Post Office building and having read the exhibition's title, 'Breaking Through the Wall', a thought went through my mind: 'careful with these walls, the Post Office is already crumbling.' The exhibition itself seemed to be well-arranged <...> it is always interesting to dig deeper into the Soviet era from the angle of rebellious opportunism. In fact, I felt an itch to break through the white walls of the exhibition (jokingly) and examine the Post Office itself. Although in some places, sadly, the plaster is peeling off so badly.*

23-year-old female worker from Vilnius

*Очень понравилось, было очень увлекательно и интересно. Спасибо за поддержку граждан Украины, с любовью.<sup>36</sup>*

18-year-old male student from Ukraine

*I grew up in Kaunas and I know a lot about my city, but this experience opened up a new chapter of the city's history and experiences that are sort of hidden. An exhibition like this not only brings back the memory but also enriches our citizens' collective history in a big way. Presenting it through a personal and very empathetic experience is a great way of starting a conversation about the dark times, of finding a form for it in our consciousness. After this exhibition, I kept thinking about historical figures for a long while. Being able to appreciate that these events took place right here made me feel a stronger connection to my city.*

31-year-old male currently based in Switzerland

*It made me cry, a very sensitively and professionally set up exhibition.*

36-year-old employee from Žaliakalnis

*I was truly amazed by this interactive exhibition, I have never seen/experienced anything like this before. The creators told the people's story in a very inventive and engaging way.*

25-year-old female from Eiguliai

<sup>36</sup> This impression was originally submitted in Russian and is presented here in its authentic form. Translated into English, it means: 'I really enjoyed it, it was very engaging and interesting. Thank you for supporting the citizens of Ukraine, with love.'











II.

REMEM-  
BERING  
DIVERSITY



Delving into identity, we have probably turned to the most complex page of our narrative. Who are we? Where are we headed? What will remain after we're gone? These and similar questions of meaning have been raised for as long as humanity has commanded language. They are questions which, along with the temporary or enduring answers to them, form part of every living culture. In a city with numerous entangled knots of identity, the programme's creators could not possibly circumvent these questions. Neither can we, even though these questions, much like others posed in our narrative, hardly succumb to 'objective' conversations. However, precisely for this reason, any attempt to use facts as a basis for facilitating such conversations becomes all the more valuable. This provides an opportunity for discussing other social values engendered by the Kaunas 2022 programme. In the first part of our narrative, we have talked about the sense(s) of unity achieved through the recognition of similarities. They mobilise crowds. But social identity also works in the opposite direction. It holds no meaning if it does not equally delineate diversity-revealing dividing lines. Finding meaning in them is part of each of our individual journeys, the twists and turns of which will heavily depend on our personal history, as well as our cultural and social capabilities. And the narratives spun in the cultural field are our most significant aide in solving or remembering our personal riddles of identity.

# Back from Obliviousness and Indifference

Looking at the cultural field in light of this principle, we shall see that not a single element of the Kaunas 2022 programme neglects to attempt addressing our identities. These efforts are evident both in the events that sought to remember and recount the city's history and in the youth culture festivals that accompanied explorations of self-identity. Here we would like to employ the oppositions between

old vs. new and past vs. future, offered by the programme, and probe into the impact of the 'Emerging Kaunas' and 'Memory Office' programmes. The latter was perhaps Kaunas 2002's most remarkably visible strand explicitly inviting us to reconsider the city's identities by revisiting its memory, or rather its obliviousness. The attendees of this programme's events consider them the most provoking experiences

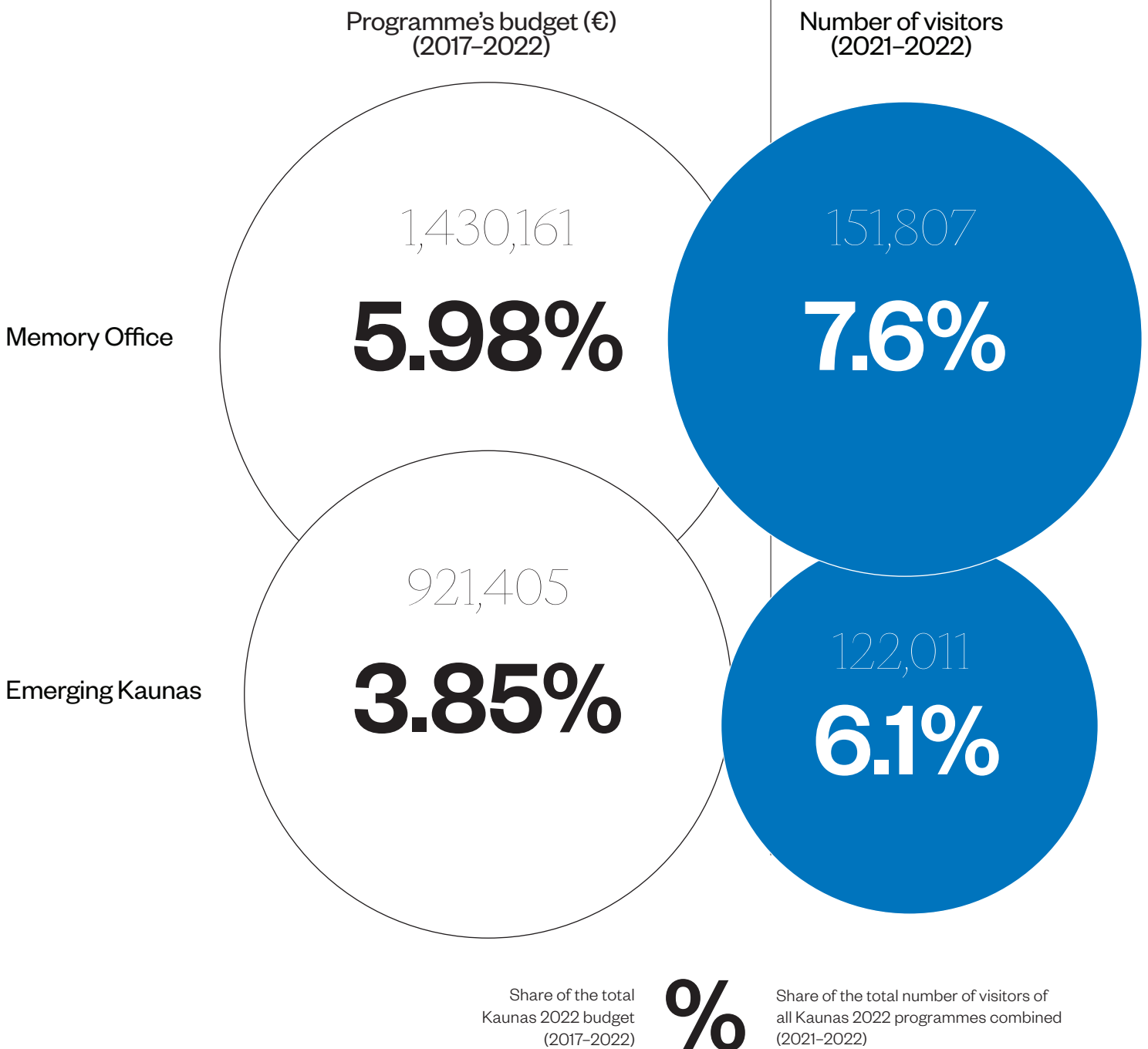
of the entire Kaunas 2022 programme. Despite this, they were rated just as highly and positively as the 'Emerging Kaunas' programme's events, which stood out for their inclusivity and the feeling of 'being in the right place'. The not-so-obvious but powerful links between the objectives of the 'Emerging Kaunas' and 'Memory Office' programmes are reflected in the following review:

*"We celebrated Father's Day at '1972: Breaking Through the Wall'. The exhibition highly exceeded our expectations. Firstly, it was vast in its scope. It was detailed, i.e., showcasing various minutiae. It was 'deep', i.e., provoking thought, reflection, an attempt to understand what the authors had in mind. It was very value-laden: freedom, the desire to lead a Western lifestyle, the ability to resist between the lines (circumventing Soviet censorship). It was particularly enjoyable to visit it with my parents because they remembered things from their own experience and could complement the exhibition. The exhibition included both political highlights (e.g., court rulings from Kalanta's trial) and those relating to matters of everyday life (e.g., rock music). I am very glad that Kaunas has a programme such as ECoC. The city is beloved by us all, but it can sometimes be too 'chazy', so this kind of education is as vital as air. Thank you to the exhibition's organisers, because the work they've done is huge and of high quality, and I felt that, as often happens with culture, it won't be as highly appreciated and praised as it should be. Therefore, we are contributing to this with our positive reviews :) Well done, and good luck in your future projects."*<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> 35-year-old male from Mastaičiai.

It would seem that the contents of these programmes encourage us to think about very different objectives, different cultural content and target audiences. But a more accurate description would be that these programmes, while taking very different paths, have ultimately arrived at the same questions of self-making that are so important at different stages of life.

An overview of several strands of the Kaunas 2022 programme<sup>38</sup>



<sup>38</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017-2022.

*“As a city dweller, I notice that the city, its history, is, in my view, explored in much greater depth. What happened here? What happened in this building, and what in another? It’s very interesting and very related to culture. The fact that the interest in one’s own city has become not based on some cliches, but there is an attempt to really go deeper... And that Kaunas wasn’t homogenous, but was made up of all kinds of small groups and larger ethnic groups... It was made up of a lot of things and it was much more city-like than we might have imagined.”*

When comparing different strands of the Kaunas 2022 programme, the thematic nature of the ‘Memory Office’ programme stood out significantly. The programme’s affective goal of rewriting the historical memory of citizens attending its events can be demonstrated by a simple comparison of the relationship this programme’s participants had with historical memory compared to those of other programmes. The people who worked with this programme drew citizens out of their state of obliviousness and sheer indifference. For the events’ attendees, the memory of more recent events, such as the restoration of independence, but also more distant ones, such as the Holocaust, provided material for reflecting upon their own identity.

Reflecting on one’s own relationship with the history of the Second World War and its consequences may be seen as an unavoidable part of becoming

a European. In Kaunas, and indeed throughout the whole of Lithuania, this inevitably means confronting the consequences of two major pulling forces, the Holocaust and the Soviet occupation. Through initiatives such as events aimed at reflecting upon history, the Kaunas 2022 programme was transforming visitors’ introspection, both towards themselves and towards the internal and personal traces of these traumas. This impact extends beyond the experiences of ‘Memory Office’ attendees. Those who were more active participants in the Kaunas 2022 programme exhibit a stronger identification with Europe. Participation in the programme’s events not only affected Kaunesians’ self-perception but also how they viewed their city. Attendees of these events are more inclined to see Kaunas as a European city. Nearly a fifth of Kaunesians firmly perceive Kaunas as such a city, and more than half at least partially agree

with this statement. The idea of Europe carries vastly different meanings to different people. Yet, regardless of which version of Europe we consider, it is hardly conceivable without openness towards other people. In 2022, there were no shifts in self-perception of such a great magnitude that it would become possible for us to speak of a generalised shift in Kaunesians’ trust in other people. It is doubtful whether shifts of this nature can be expected when dealing with such fundamental questions of self-identity, since decades might be required for change to take place. Nevertheless, here too, the Kaunas 2022 crowd distinctly stands out from other Kaunesians.

# Beyond National Identity

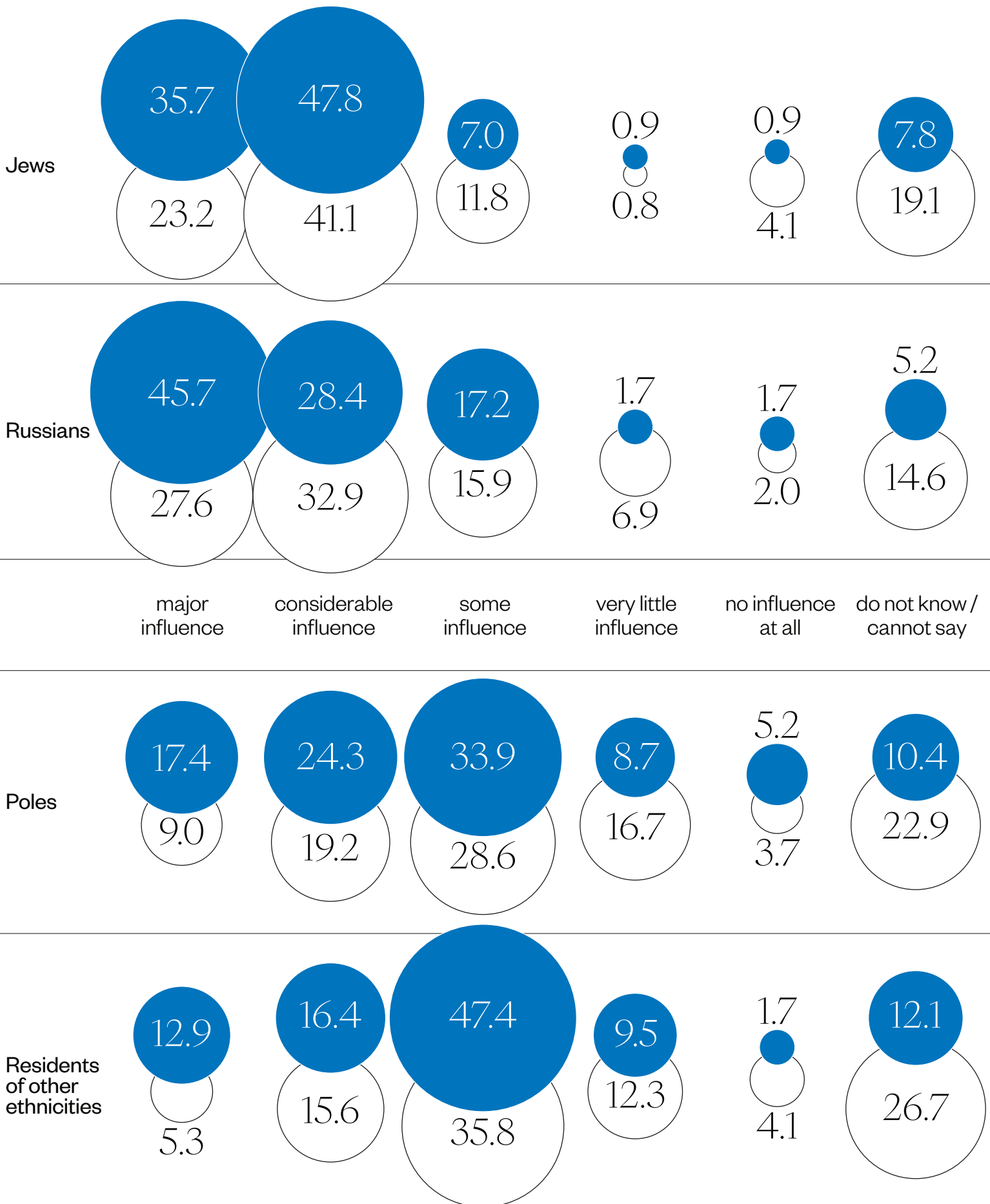
The programme's activities aimed at reflecting on the city's ethnic identity can be viewed as an exercise in revisiting one's own ethnic identity. In other words, the programme's activities dedicated to remembering the past were not merely a gratuitous scratching at historical scars just for the sake of it. They served as the first step towards addressing Kaunesians' imagining of their ethnic past in search of a place within it for people of other ethnic backgrounds

or identities. The reinstatement of Jewish memory in the city's history was particularly important in these efforts. In Kaunas, which played such a pivotal role in building the first nation state, this is not a simple endeavour. The cultural institutions involved had to rethink their activities and collaborate with Jewish and other communities within the city. Such themes are not exactly crowd magnets. They called for a revision of how to approach different audiences.

The events' ratings indicate that the 'Memory Office' events succeeded in helping Kaunesians to discover and appreciate the contributions made by people from other ethnicities in building their beloved city. Precisely because of this, a blend of the sense of meaning and satisfaction emerged and prevailed among event attendees, regardless of how painful the memory unearthed during these events might have been.

*“Ours is a complex museum, with a complex theme. This is not entertainment. You come here to wail, to cry, to pay respects, to lament... <...> That's why we have benefitted a lot from this inter-institutional cooperation on audience development. Other audiences come to us and they can also get what we have to offer. That alone is a great act of sharing and a gift from colleagues, that we share our audiences.”*

In your personal opinion, what influence did people of the following ethnicities have on Kaunas's history? (% of all responses)<sup>39</sup>



<sup>39</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('In your personal opinion, what influence did people of the following ethnicities have on Kaunas's history?').

■ 'Memory Office' programme

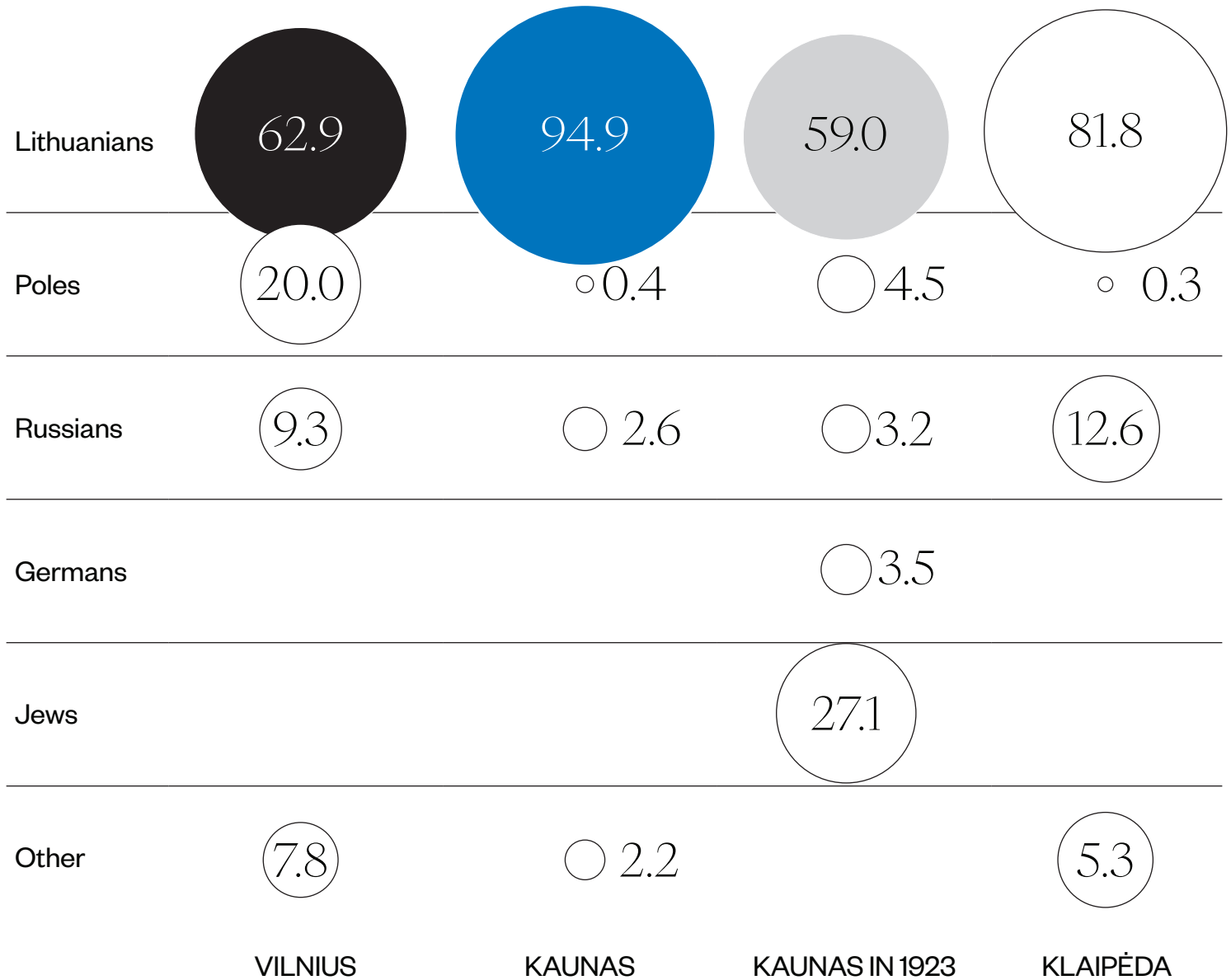
□ Other programmes

Speaking about the past is not merely a matter of the past, since it shapes our understanding of both the present and the future. Within this understanding, Kaunas's ethnic identity can be thought of as a child's spiral toy, swinging between 'Lithuanianness' on the one hand and 'multiethnicity' on the other. In evaluating their city, attendees of Kaunas 2022 events reported perceiving more of its multiethnicity.

Still, 'Lithuanian' remains among the most frequently used terms to describe Kaunas. About a fifth of Kaunesians who were surveyed consider it to be purely Lithuanian, with a further third viewing it as more Lithuanian than multiethnic. Therefore, the programme's goal of fostering the image of Kaunas as a multiethnic city is wild. We are calling it wild only metaphorically, merely due to the fact it resists the reality that was

imposed on the city by the Second World War. This goal also opposes the reality experienced within the city. Precisely because the city's ethnic makeup is one of the distinguishing features that sets Kaunas apart from other major Lithuanian cities, any progress towards a more 'multiethnic' understanding is evidence of a remarkable achievement in a complex task.

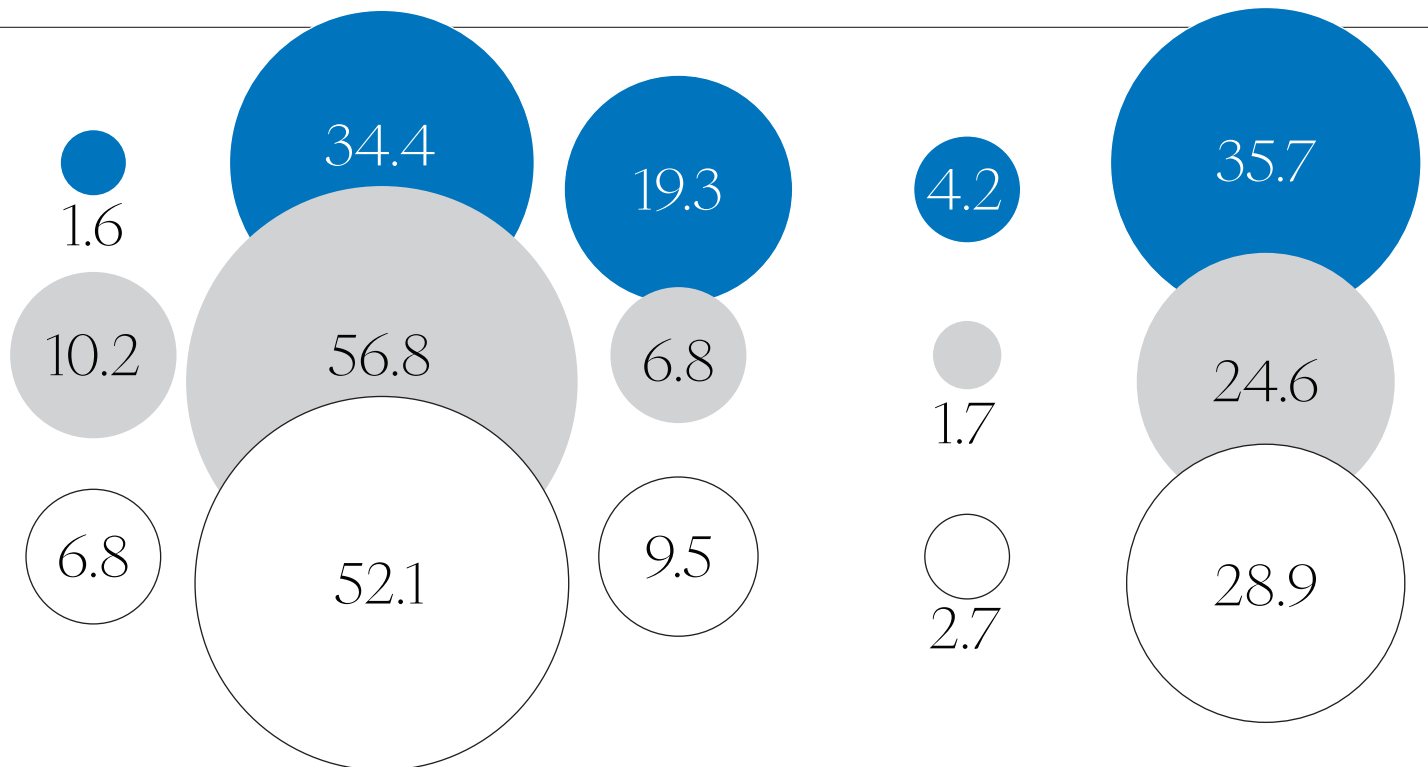
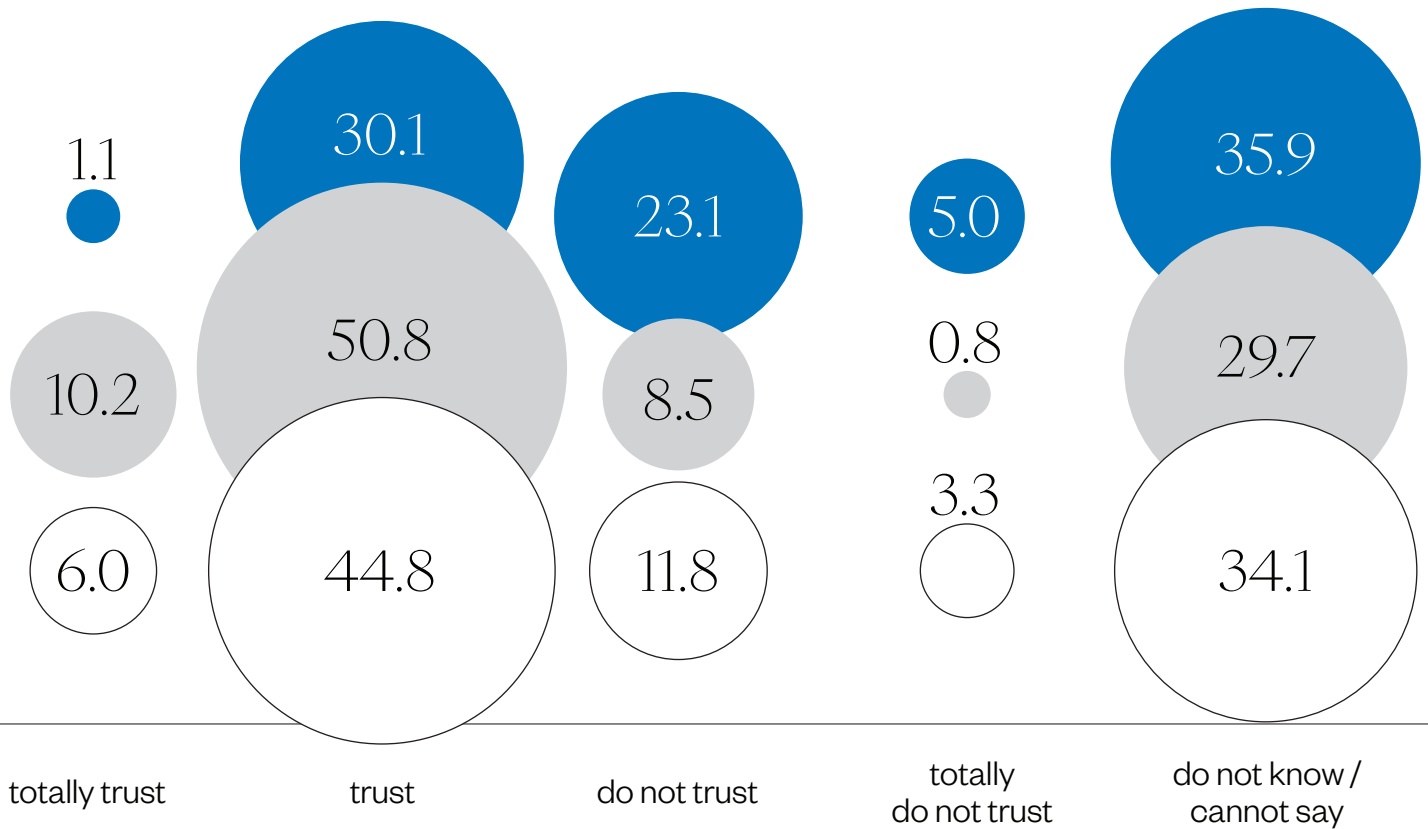
### Ethnic composition of Lithuania's major cities (%)<sup>40</sup>



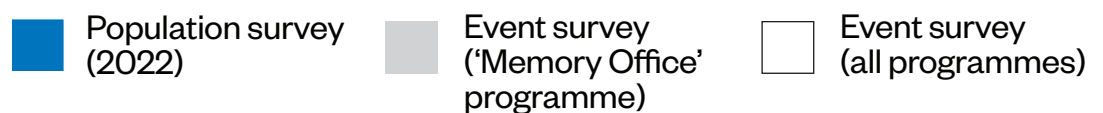
<sup>40</sup> Sources: State Data Agency: <https://ospstat.gov.lt/gyventojai/>; Lithuanian Population Census data; Ministry of Finances: [https://ospstat.gov.lt/services-portlet/pub-edition-file?id=16374&fbolid=IwAR3hVxWM-QC1cBWmQPogOY0ddrO9MnKCw8H\\_vxLdaV\\_F-eM2oGTr\\_yoVsfmM, 1923](https://ospstat.gov.lt/services-portlet/pub-edition-file?id=16374&fbolid=IwAR3hVxWM-QC1cBWmQPogOY0ddrO9MnKCw8H_vxLdaV_F-eM2oGTr_yoVsfmM, 1923).

# Do you trust people from these groups? (% of all responses)<sup>41</sup>

## I trust people who belong to other religions



## I trust people who come from other ethnicities



<sup>41</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('I am going to name several groups of people. Please state whether you totally trust, do not trust, or totally do not trust people from these groups').



Although the Second World War claimed many lives, it could not strip us of our resolve to remember them. The implementers of the Kaunas 2022 programme undertook the arduous task of bolstering this resolve and guiding citizens' perception towards 'multiethnicity'. But, as we have acknowledged previously, memory is not merely a matter of the past. It serves as a social cornerstone in envisioning the city's present and future. Amid wars and climate change, when migration becomes an inevitable part of human experience, the readiness to accept people from different cultures is an important feature of a society prepared for these changes. The Kaunas 2022 programme upheld this attitude of openness to diversity, which requires

constant attention. Participants of the programme's events show a stronger propensity to place their trust in individuals who belong to different nationalities and religions. Gathering together the Kaunesians who cultivate such attitudes is this programme's important contribution to reinforcing the city's European identity. However, openness to religious diversity is but one of many steps in transcending the boundaries of ethnic identity. Delving deeper into the themes of openness to diversity and human identity, more vivid social colours emerge. Openness to them is also part of that different – broader – European identity. It is the expectation of such openness that Kaunesians entering their twenties, or who are even younger, have for their city.

*“And that, on a practical level, also showed us that the storytelling... what does it give to the audience? Something to bond over. We have theoretically – in marketing – previously heard a lot of, like, ‘story, story, tell a story’ [says in a higher pitch] and ‘what kind of story should I tell you now?’ [says in a lower pitch]. But now we’ve tested how it works in practice.”*

# Impressions from 'Emerging Kaunas' Youth Programme Events

*I really enjoyed it, an exceptional event, in fact I have never been to such a city festival in Lithuania before. Everything was super organised, very interesting locations, quality, performers, great people. A very positive experience.*

32-year-old female from Vilnius

*...the music was cosmic... relaxing... energising, stimulating... in the open air, easy... just lighting effects were missing.*

50-year-old female worker from Dainava

*Pure joy! Was a great experience. Easy, flowing, welcoming.\**

41-year-old female from Türkiye

*Fun.*

16-year-old female school pupil from  
Garliava

*Palanga vibe.*

17-year-old female school pupil from  
Šilainiai

*Coma.*

17-year-old male school pupil from  
Petrašiūnai

*Wow!\**

25-year-old female worker from Vilnius

*All good, except that the performers were kind of for teens.*

29-year-old female worker from Eiguliai

*Beautiful and cultured people, great environment, amazing decorations, and wonderful staff and volunteers.*

28-year-old female from Žaliakalnis,  
unemployed

*I came to the festival alone but that wasn't a problem since the festival's overall energy didn't allow me to be sad and alone.*

20-year-old female student from Zarasai

*That Kaunas is cool!*

25-year-old female worker from Dainava

*I've almost learnt to juggle.*

27-year-old employee from Dainava

*Unreal, blew my mind.*

16-year-old female school pupil from  
Domeikava

*Better use of unused items or clothes, sustainability...*

57-year-old female from Žaliakalnis

*It's nice that such an event attracts people of all ages and views.*

34-year-old businesswoman from Aleksotas

*The event made me move in a way I didn't even know I could.*

27-year-old mother from Neveronys

*I saw how many beautiful and positive people there are in the city. Even though the vast majority were young people, I didn't feel an outsider or unwelcome.*

46-year-old female businesswoman from Vilijampolė

*Make the venues more accessible for disabled people, these aren't Soviet times anymore. How does one, let's say, in a wheelchair reach an event that can only be accessed by stairs?*

30-year-old student from Vilijampolė

*Such a light, laid-back yet professional, sustainable.\**

41-year-old female from Türkiye

*I understood that tangerines are cheaper in Heaven. Ah, just.*

Resident of Gričiupis

*It knocked me sideways and made me think about how life events can affect mental health.*

22-year-old male student from Petrašiūnai

*We lack theatre 'by women': with a feminist angle and at the same time cleverly performed and subtly differentiating, not falling into clichés and pop-simplifications. This work absolutely has its rightful place in the theatre landscape. I hope it will remain as part of the repertoire.*

38-year-old female from Vilnius

*An amazing experience, it very much resembles a real festival rather than a city celebration (unlike the previous event in Santaka which looked like just a tuned-up city celebration).*

33-year-old visitor

*There is a great lack exhibitions/events of this type in Kaunas, it's very cool that it's possible to use such city spaces that haven't been used in a while on a daily basis.*

26-year-old female worker from Šilainiai

# Open to the World

The social exercise in being open to diversity does not merely stop at embracing people who belong to other ethnicities or religions. Young Kaunesians, who tend only to be moderately convinced about Kaunas being 'European', would attest that. After all, what distinguishes cities, European and global, is that they offer encounters with wide social diversity. The ability

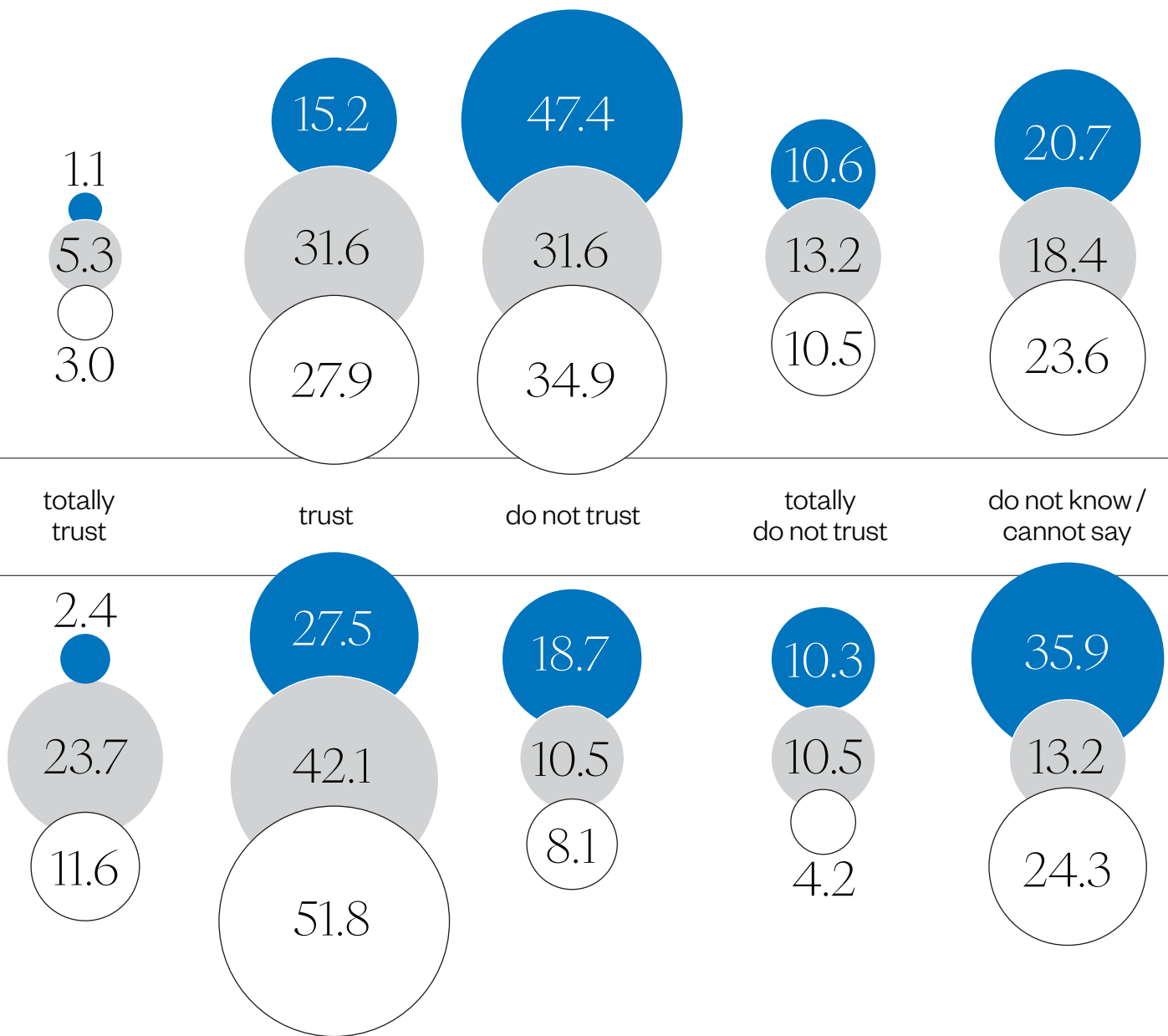
to accept, or even enjoy, diversity is an unavoidable part of leading a fulfilling urban life. These are long-established truths about social life in cities. They are further reinforced by the fact that it is specifically city dwellers, and not those from the surrounding district, who see the most value in living among people with diverse cultural backgrounds for society at large. Young Kaunesians

*“My fiancé and I go to almost every event that we can find, it’s amazing that the events retain a certain mystique and surprise the visitor, they are varied, non-judgemental and liberating, the most amazing events I have ever attended.”*

experience and discover these truths in their own way. Younger Kaunas City and Kaunas District residents are more open to the other in the broadest sense. They are more trusting of people who have a different ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. But these attitudinal differences between age groups swing moderately the other way when it comes to their approach towards strangers in the most abstract sense.

# Do you trust people from these groups? (% of all responses)<sup>42</sup>

## Strangers



## People of other sexual orientation

- 2022 population survey
- Event survey ('Emerging Kaunas')
- Event survey (other programmes)

The Kaunas 2022 crowd here, once again, stands out from other Kaunesians. Its younger ranks are more open to their own social diversity, as well as to the stranger (in the abstract sense), than all other Kaunesians. In general, young city and district inhabitants share a stronger sense of identification with Europe. Kaunas 2022 was a programme for young Kaunesians in terms of being open to social diversity and embracing Europe and the world. Involvement in these activities should have a lasting impact. This forward-

looking expectation can be supported by facts about cultural participation and its relationship with national identity. We know that national identity is more pronounced in individuals who were engaged in cultural activities during their childhood. Kaunesians who have had such experiences also feel more strongly that they are part of their city, Europe, and the world. If such is the effect of early exposure to culture, Kaunas will maintain its growing European identity.

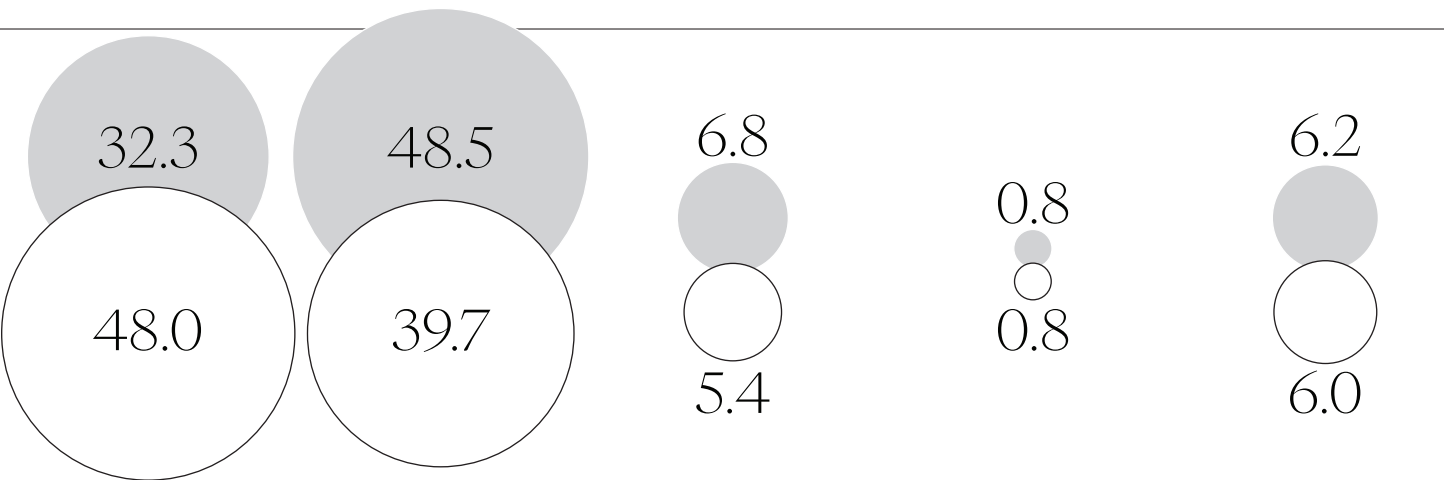
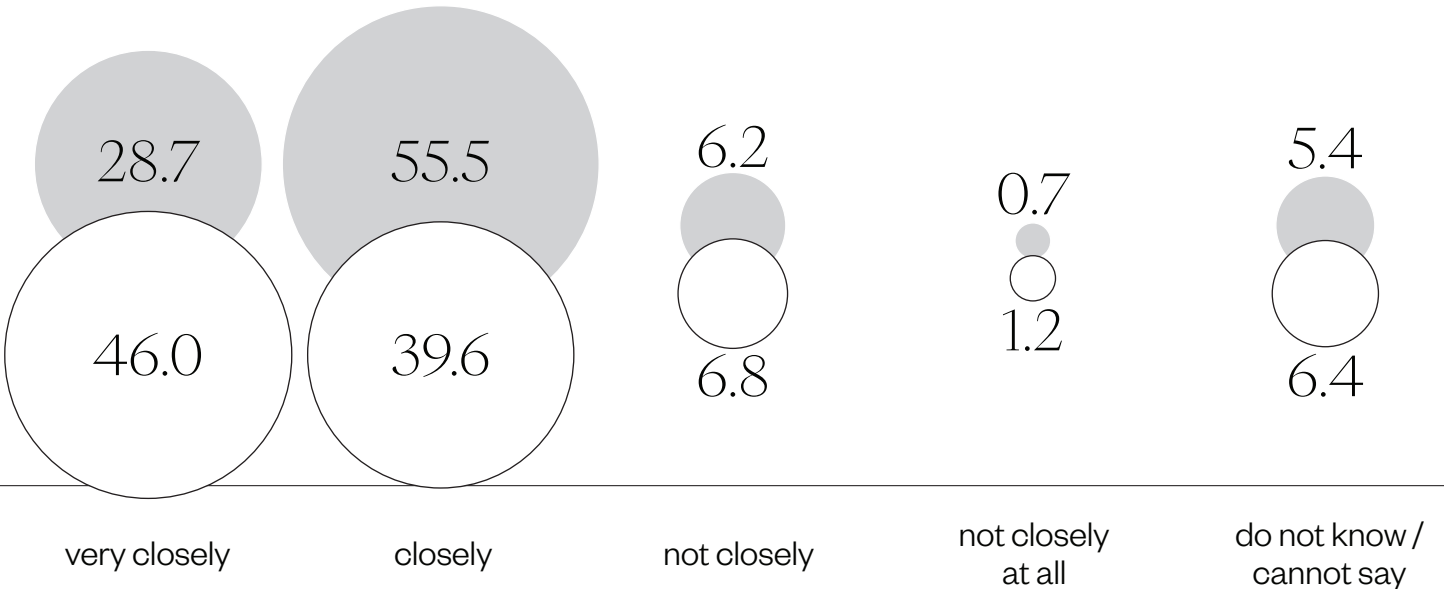
<sup>42</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('I am going to name several groups of people. Please state whether you totally trust, do not trust, or totally do not trust people from these groups').

How closely connected do you feel to the following places:  
 (% of all responses)<sup>43</sup>

Kaunas

■ 2022 population survey

□ Event survey



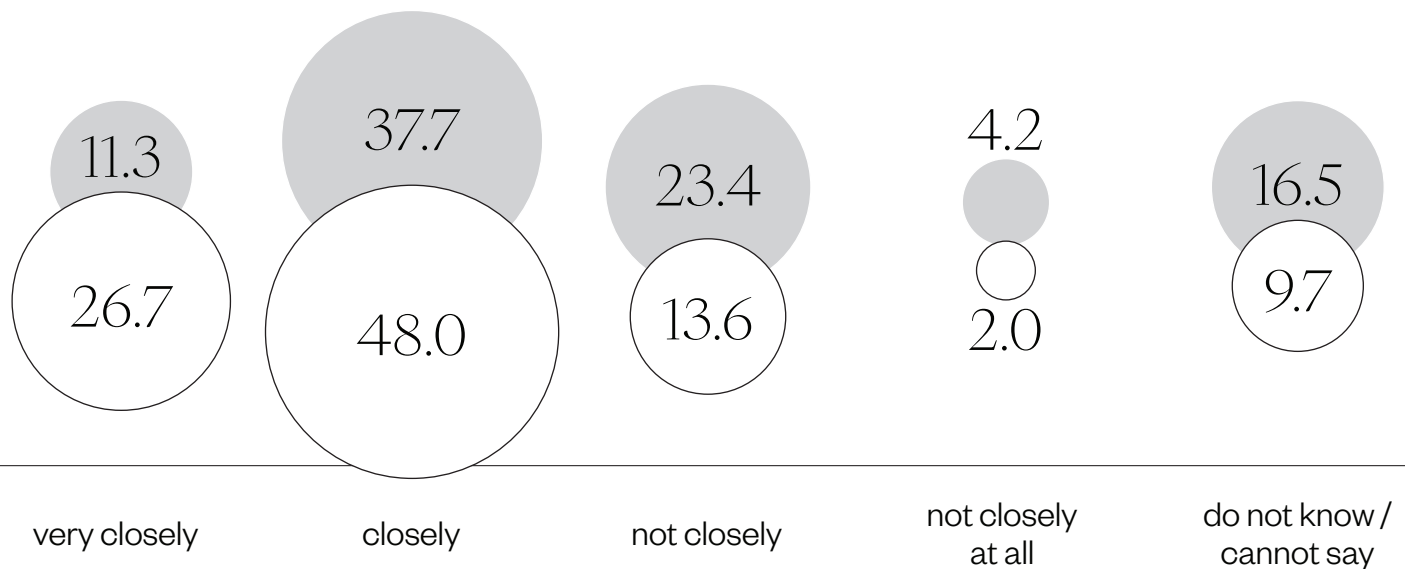
Lithuania

*“Kaunas has become more European culturally – that’s a fact. The city has become filled with more great culture, this can’t be denied.”*

Considering Kaunesians as a whole, the year 2022 has not further strengthened their already robust sense of identification with Kaunas or with Lithuania. However, the Kaunas 2022 programme addressed entirely different identities – it invited Kaunesians to feel part of Europe and the whole world. And

<sup>43</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees’ Survey (‘How closely connected do you feel to the following places...?’).

## Europe



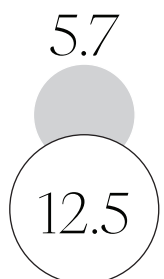
very closely

closely

not closely

not closely  
at all

do not know /  
cannot say



5.7

22.5

31.3

8.3

25.1

12.5

38.0

27.5

5.1

17.0

## Entire world

these attempts proved successful. The message of opening up to Europe and the world also carries a somewhat bitter flavour that merits mentioning. People with different social statuses respond to this message with varying degrees of enthusiasm. These ideas primarily resonate with the middle class, including

professionals and civil servants. Manual labourers and those working in the service sector find it harder to embrace this cosmopolitan message. Kaunesians in managerial positions are also less accepting of this idea. Hence, this message can both unite as well as divide. This was the environment in

which the Kaunas 2022 programme guided Kaunesians' attitudes in the direction of openness towards diversity.



# Pragmatic Benefits of Diversity

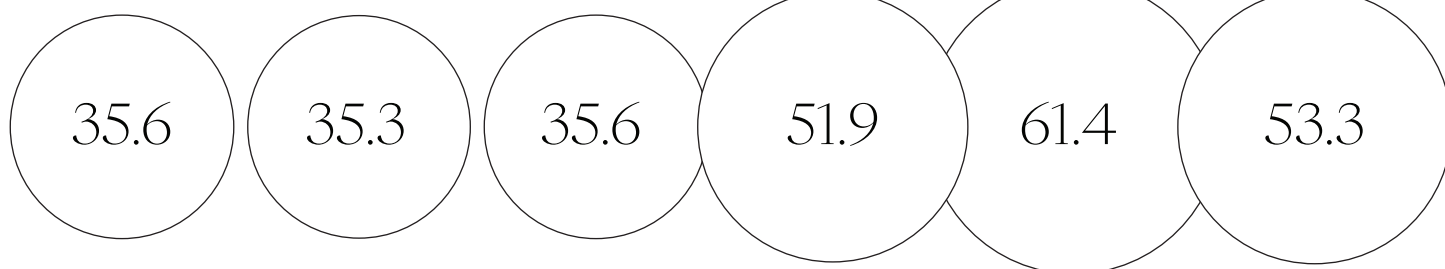
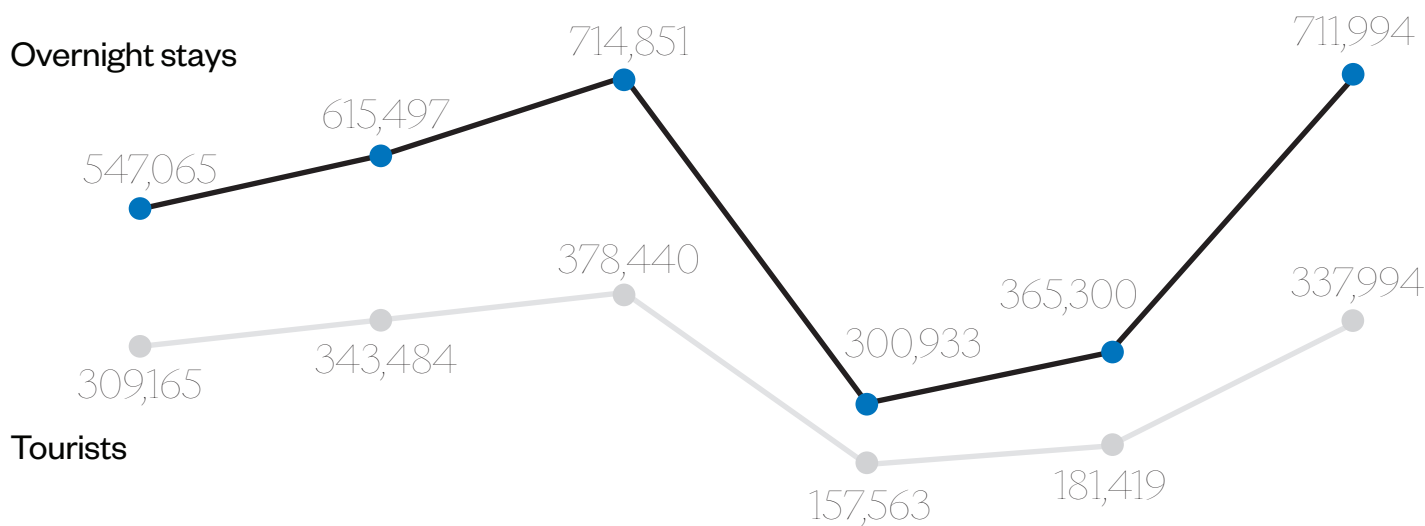
The truth is that Kaunas 2022's accomplishments in promoting cosmopolitanism among Kaunesians can be viewed from a very pragmatic perspective. In humanistic discussions about identities, such a turn towards utility might be considered inappropriate. Still, we should wish to take a risk and address this issue of pragmatic benefit, as it appears that such a benefit truly exists. A city that embraces cultural diversity, whose inhabitants perceive

themselves as part of not only their local area, their city or their nation state, but also of Europe or the world, is more hospitable to its visitors. This hospitality is even more pronounced if the city is open to people with a different sexual orientation or who belong to one of a great many subcultures. These ideas of 'creative cities' have served as a universal recipe for urban development for several decades, enhancing the cities' cultural appeal, especially for

the upper and middle classes, and thus attracting additional economic resources. These ideas have found their place in numerous European Capital of Culture programmes, in which increased capacity to attract tourists is seen as one of the most tangible economic impacts. The Kaunas 2022 programme did not bypass expectations of such an impact. Its fulfilment is noticeable in the growing tourist flow statistics.

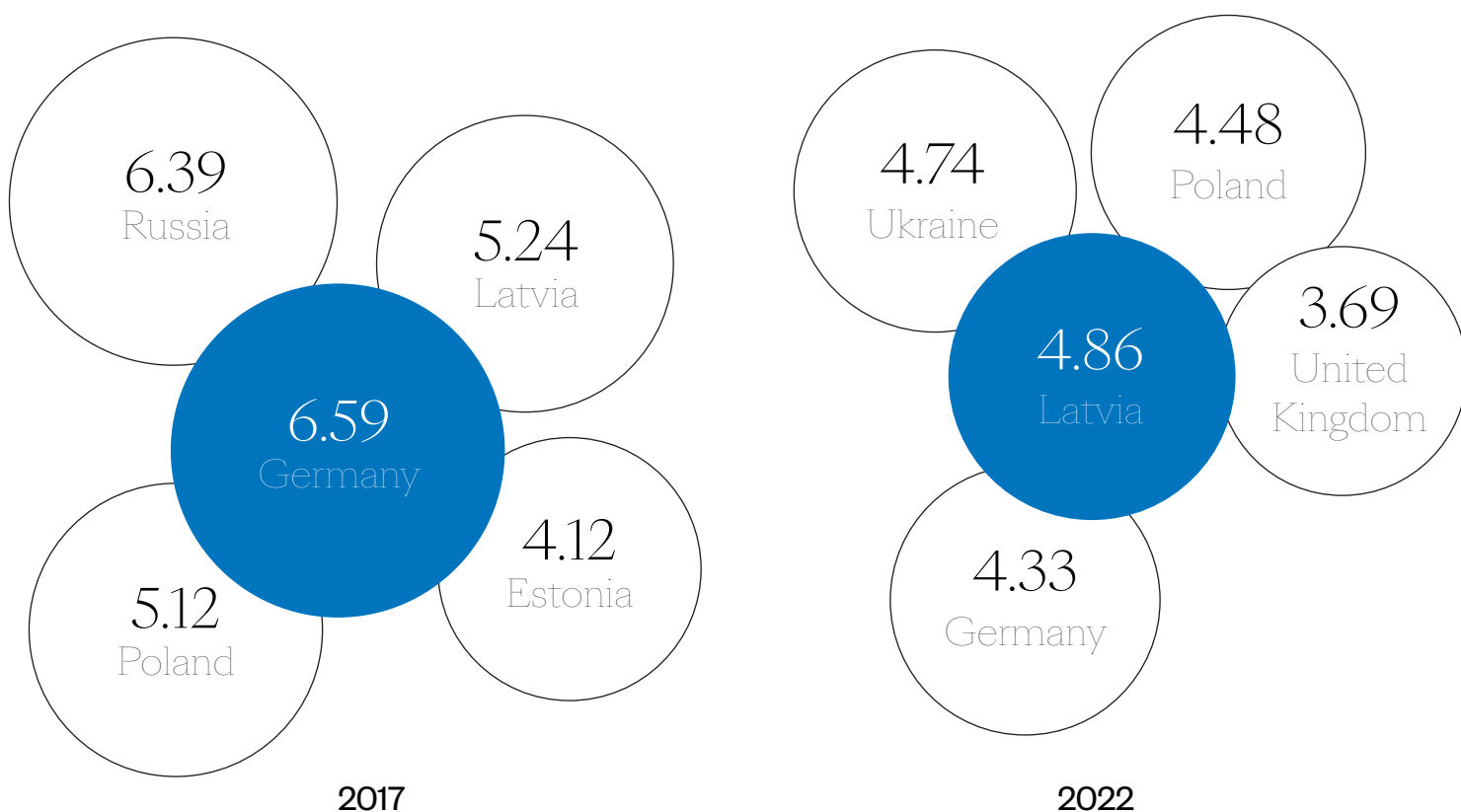
*“Considering the overall picture, I'd say opportunities have arisen in Kaunas. We couldn't see Kentridge or Abramović – we had to travel elsewhere. And suddenly – they come to us... it broadens horizons and perhaps that feeling that Kaunas is also a European city, not inferior to any other city.”*

Tourists and overnight stays (in Kaunas City and Kaunas District), 2017–2022<sup>44</sup>

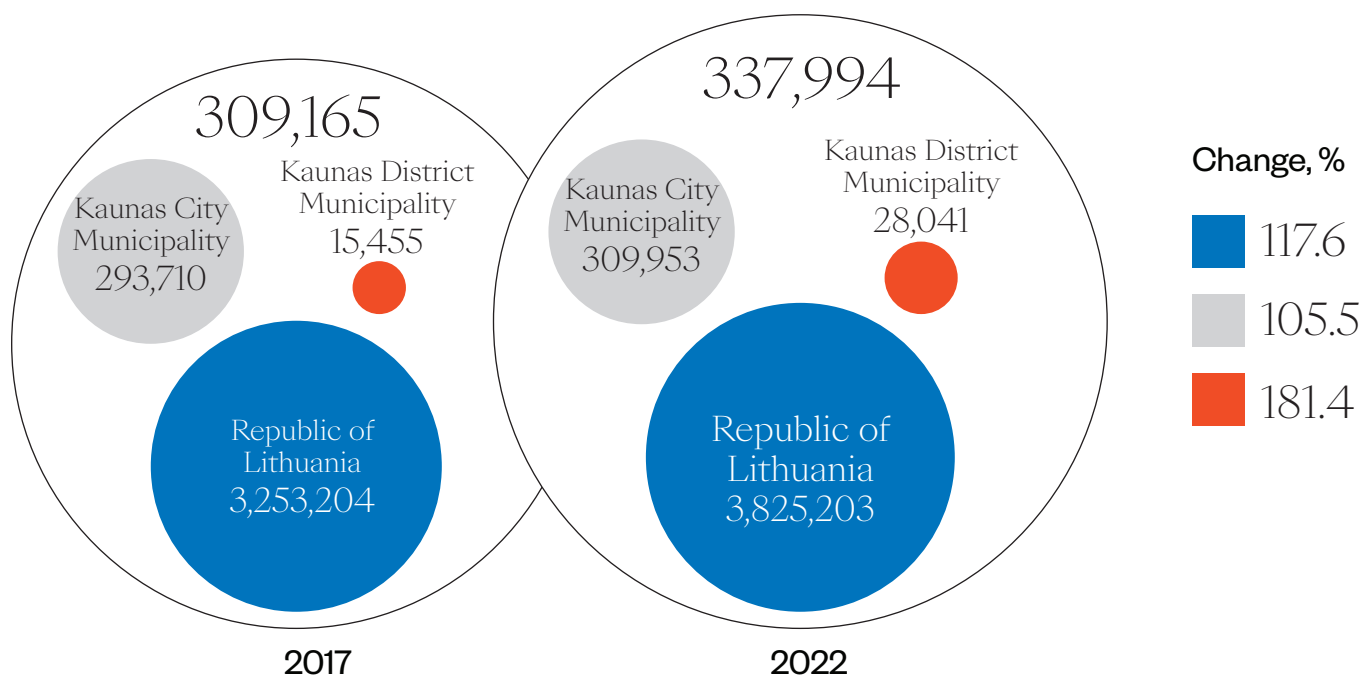


Of these, vacationing Lithuanians (%)

Top five countries in terms of the highest number of visitors coming from them (%)



Number of tourists in hospitality establishments



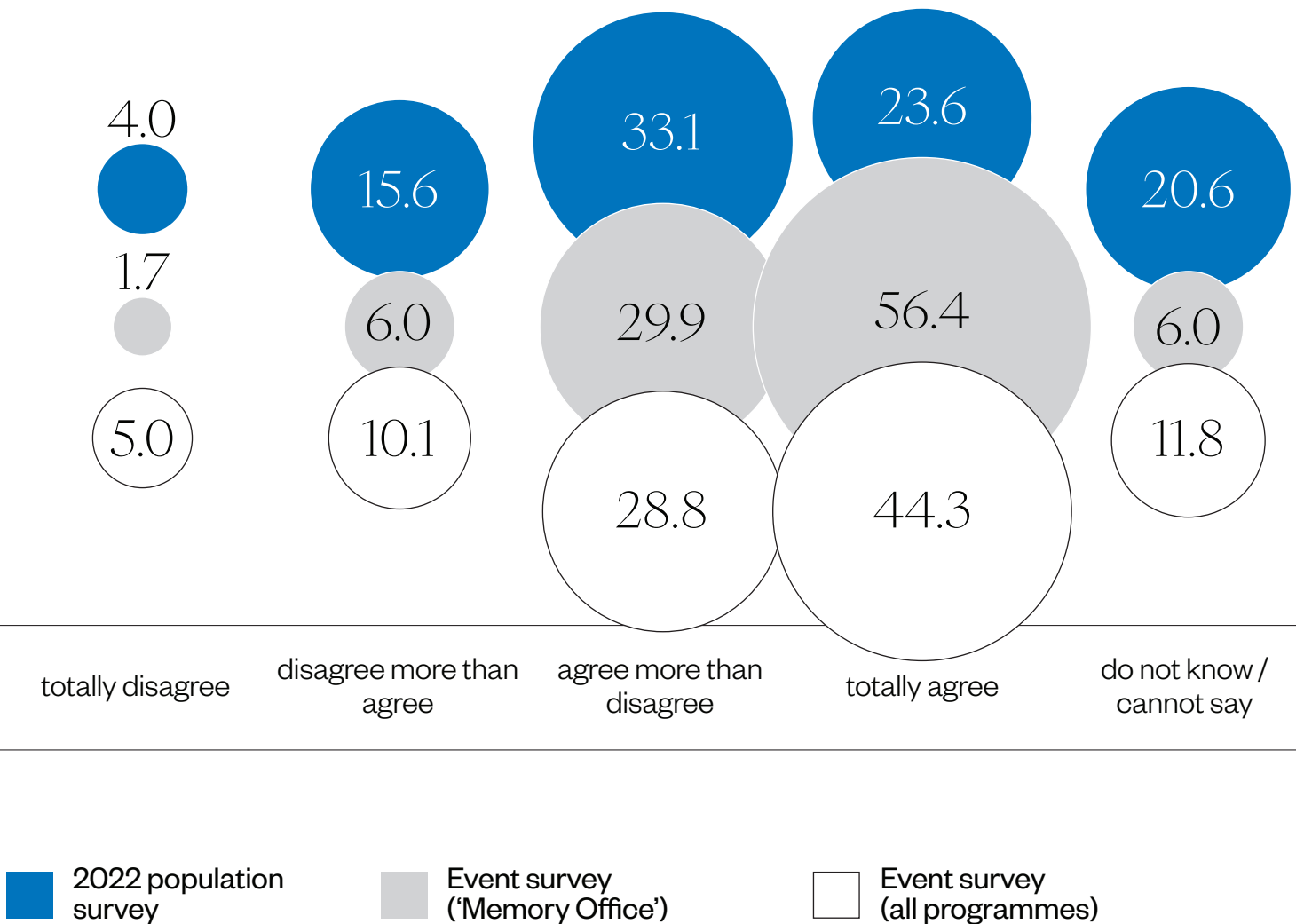
<sup>44</sup>Source: State Data Agency (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/turizmas>).

Compared to the year when Kaunas won the nomination, the flow of tourists in Kaunas and Kaunas District has increased by a tenth. This may not seem like a staggering change. We know that in 2017, expectations for 2022 were understandably higher. We can only speculate what the achievements could have been, had Europe not been gripped by the horrors of war and the world plagued by the hardships of the pandemic. These circumstances have had a greater impact on cultural tourists, both coming from the East and the West,

than the ECoC title itself. Nonetheless, the Kaunas 2022 programme played a unique role in restoring the visitor flow to the city. It is evident that the programme has helped residents from other parts of Lithuania to discover Kaunas and its surrounding areas. The diversity of countries from which visitors come has also increased. The most noticeable change, compared to 2017, is that tourists who previously were just passing through the city now stay for longer. The increase in the number of overnight stays by a third indicates that

visitors are finding things to do in the city, which can also be credited to the Kaunas 2022 programme. The interest in the city in 2022 has not only brought more revenue in 'pillow tax' but also more income to the city's economy, particularly in the service sector. However, the impact of day-trippers on Kaunas in 2022 was even greater. At the peak of the summer programme, up to 90,000 of them were welcomed per month. All these figures demonstrate the economic benefits to the post-industrial city's economy.

Does society benefit when it is made up of people from different cultures?  
 (% of all responses)<sup>45</sup>



<sup>45</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('Does society benefit when it is made up of people from different cultures?').

The Kaunas 2022 programme and its partners created exceptional attractions in the city in 2022, especially in the newer parts of central Kaunas, but also in other parts of the city and Kaunas District. The title-year of the Capital of Culture has ended. With it, some culture-loving nomads, who usually flood title-holding cities, will withdraw. The extent to which their interest can be sustained will also depend on the unique cultural content that the city's cultural field can offer. The sector's capacity to offer interesting cultural content remains. The extent to which it continues to be exploited will also determine whether the Lithuanian tourism map retains these new points of attraction. However, it is not only

the diversity of cultural services that is important for people coming to the city. Also crucial is the general attitude of openness which, for people returning to the city, forms the very basis of hospitality. This attitude is something that clearly distinguishes attendees of Kaunas 2022 events, as well as the city's and the district's youth, from other Kaunesians. Now, much more so than in 2017, it is clear that the benefit of cultivating such hospitality is broader than just the additional pillow tax collected. Openness to cultural diversity is also a strength that Kaunesians need when welcoming the war-affected people of Ukraine. Kaunas 2022 expressed their solidarity with them from the first days of the war.

*“I began to love myself in a way I never thought I could. I realised that friends are even more beautiful on the inside than on the outside. And Kaunas is my best friend this weekend.”<sup>46</sup>*

<sup>46</sup> 31-year-old male from Aleksotas.





Opening of the *MoFu 360/365* exhibition.  
Kaunas Central Post Office. 2022







III.

TAMING  
MODER-  
NITY

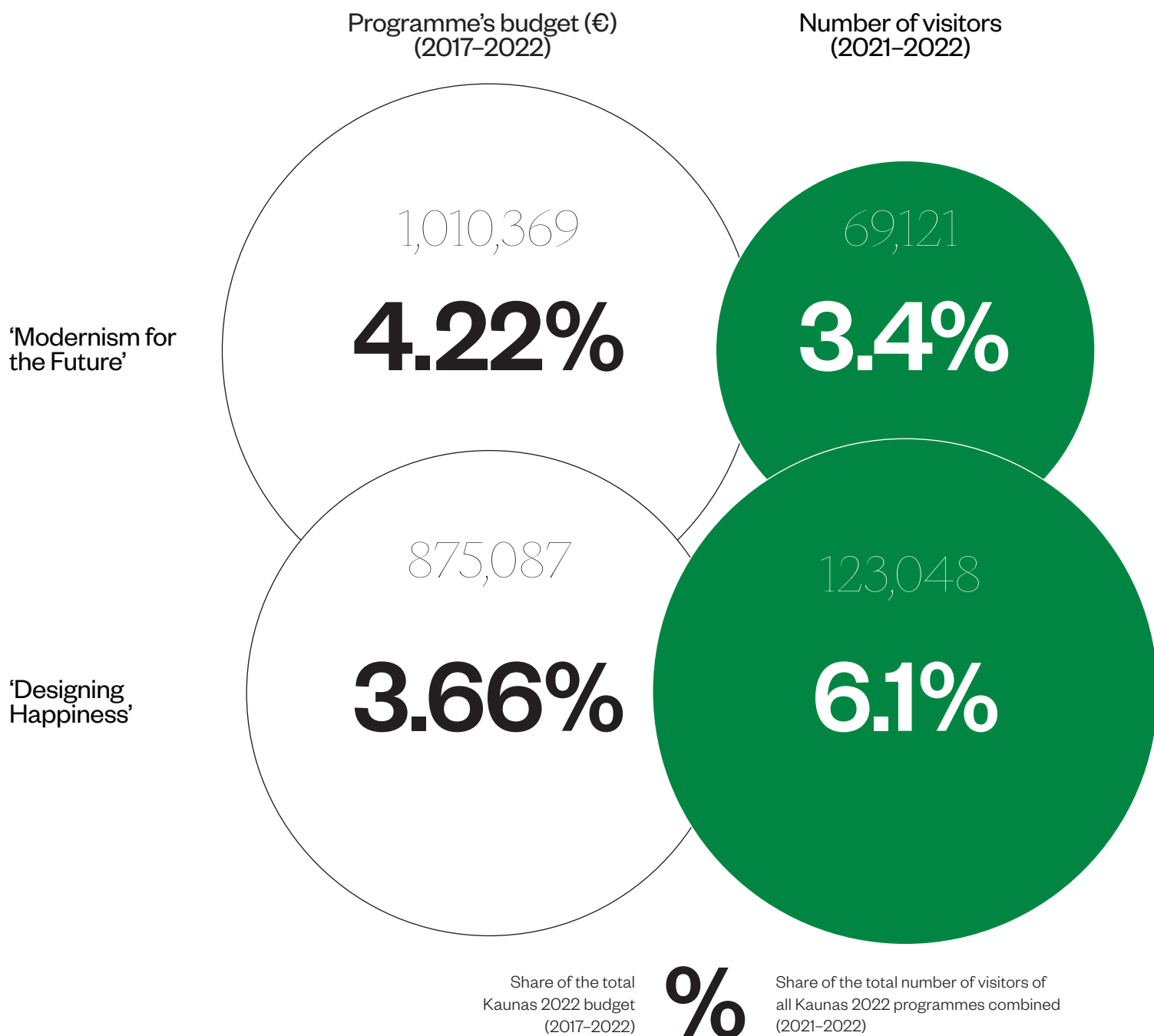
Today's cultural policy conventions compel us to engage in a broader discussion about the economic value of cultural interventions. In the introduction to this narrative, we have already revealed our scepticism towards assessing symbolic value, generated by the cultural sector, through an economic lens. In such an inside-out sweater, there are usually many holes and seams, and discussions about them almost always become louder than those about obvious benefits. Nevertheless, this topic provides an opportunity to observe how bureaucracies – those of both market and state – respond to culture in our contemporary modernity. In this context, the drama of the cultural sector unfolds. When creating invaluable benefits, their value can only be discerned by clearly discussing each fruit of labour separately, which drives bureaucratic thinking, primarily designed to manage and audit, mad. So far, we have identified at least a few of Kaunas 2022's outcomes which had very clear economic value and which should therefore have somewhat pacified bureaucratic thinking. These outcomes include tourist flows stimulates by Kaunas 2022, the city's bolstered long-term capacity to organise hospitality activities, and the project's communications which generated otherwise pricy visibility for Kaunas and Lithuania in the international media. We will further discuss several similar but, from a bird's eye view, even less visible facts. At the same time, we will invite our reader to reconsider how, when talking about the values created by the cultural field, we can hope to tame the beast of modern bureaucracy to some extent.

# A City for Europe and the World

The cultural field is, first and foremost, a field for the production of symbolic capital, and only subsequently where social and economic capital are produced. Virtually every successful cultural project has its unique logic of value, and only through this uniqueness can it become useful. Here, we will choose one single strand of Kaunas 2022 in which we will examine the thread connecting symbolic value with economic value more closely. That thread is related to the 'Modernism for the Future' programme, which from the very conception of the Kaunas 2022 initiative developed one of the initiative's most prominent thematic lines, i.e., modernity. The 'Modernism for the Future' programme also attracted one of the most loyal audiences – people for whom architectural heritage is a topic of particular interest. They were among the most warmly appreciative

event attendees. It would be wrong to attribute the programme's success solely to the very narrow and therefore more easily satisfied interests of the target groups because the programme's events also stood out for their quality. The 'Modernism for the Future' events were among the most professional ones in the entire Kaunas 2022 programme, and this evaluation has been provided by perhaps one of the most professional audiences. We would like to compare these results with the results of the 'Designing Happiness' programme. And although these are hardly comparable programmes, the act of comparing them is nonetheless meaningful because 'Designing Happiness', in particular, was the programme that addressed the potential economic benefits of cultural intervention in a somewhat more straightforward way.

An overview of several strands of the Kaunas 2022 programme<sup>47</sup>



Moving on to an overview of how the markets identifying economic values responded to the symbolic capital generated by Kaunas 2022, we must first understand a common social premise of such value production. Cultural interventions' economic value arises when people recognise the symbolic oppositions created by them. Take the fundamental nature-city opposition as an example.

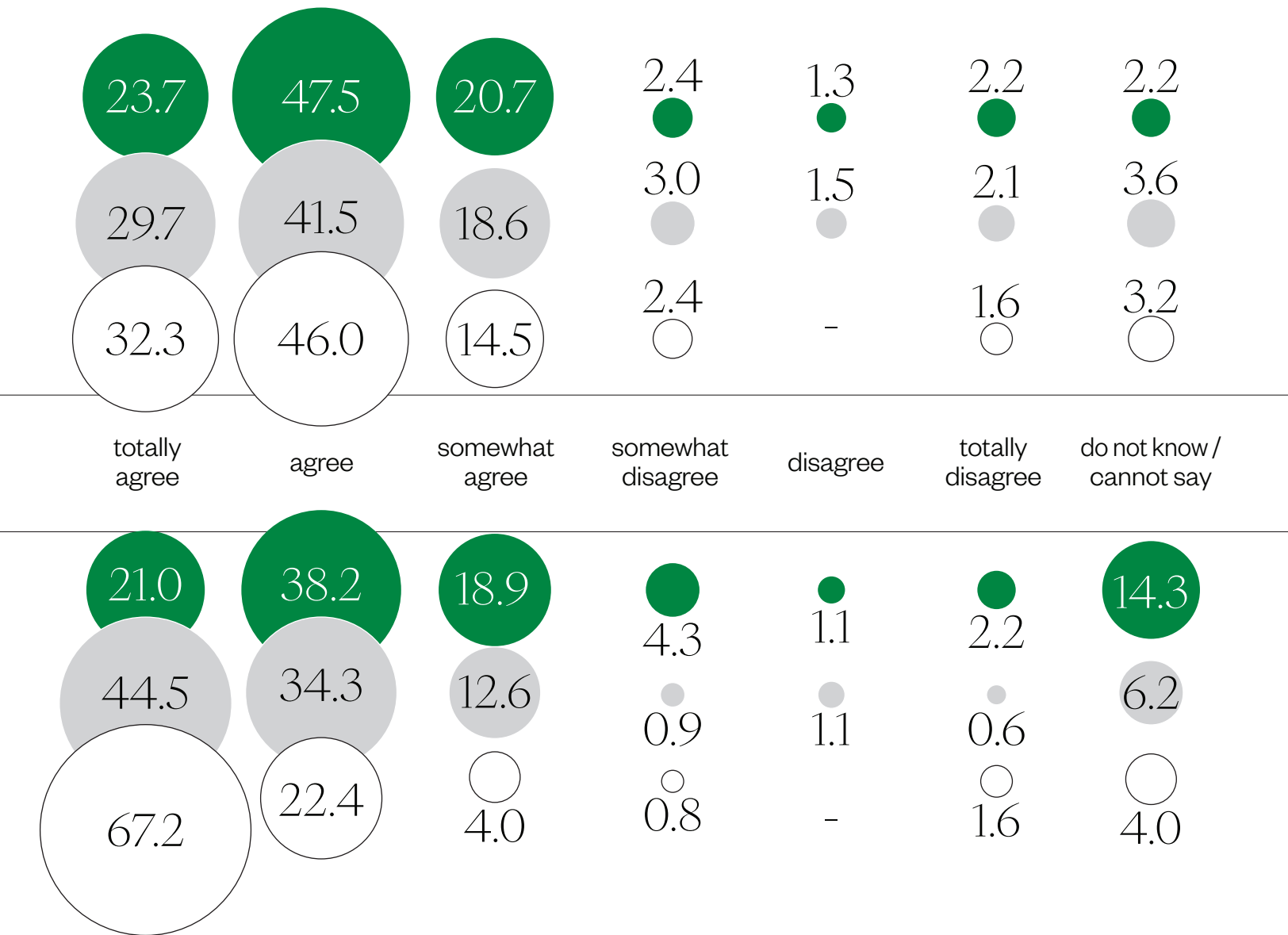
Kaunesians enthusiastically appreciate the distinctive nature of the Ice Age-formed Kaunas landscape – this is a social fact for which we have evidence. The reasons for social fact are hard to pinpoint. Often, the arguments invoked when discussing similar social facts involve the real or imagined pantheistic features of our culture. However, it would probably be most reasonable to generalise that the symbolic value

of this landscape is the result of tens of thousands of years of nature's work and more than a dozen thousand years of culture nurtured by the people living in it. Be that as it may, the fact that, in the cultural context, the uniqueness of Kaunas's century-old modernist architecture was not as evident as that of the natural framework in which this architecture was established is another no less obvious social fact.

<sup>47</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('I am going to name several groups of people. Please state whether you totally trust, do not trust, or totally do not trust people from these groups').

## Do you agree with these statements about Kaunas City's environment and heritage buildings? (% of all responses)<sup>48</sup>

Kaunas stands out from other cities for its landscape (the river confluence, the slopes of Naujamiestis, etc.)



Kaunas stands out from other Lithuanian cities for its interwar modernist architecture

■ Residents in 2022

■ Attendees of other programmes

'Modernism for the Future' attendees

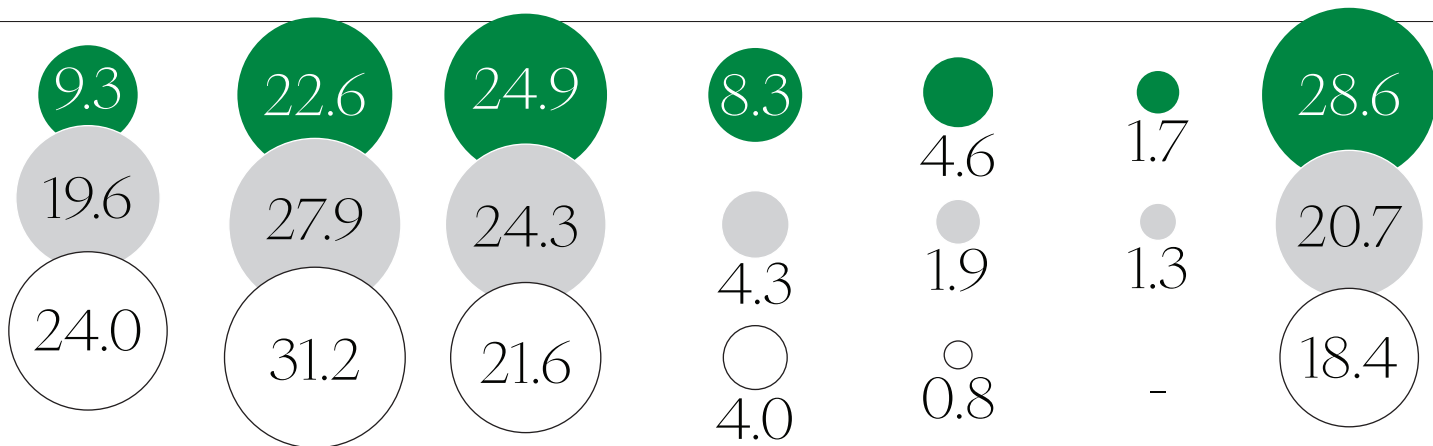
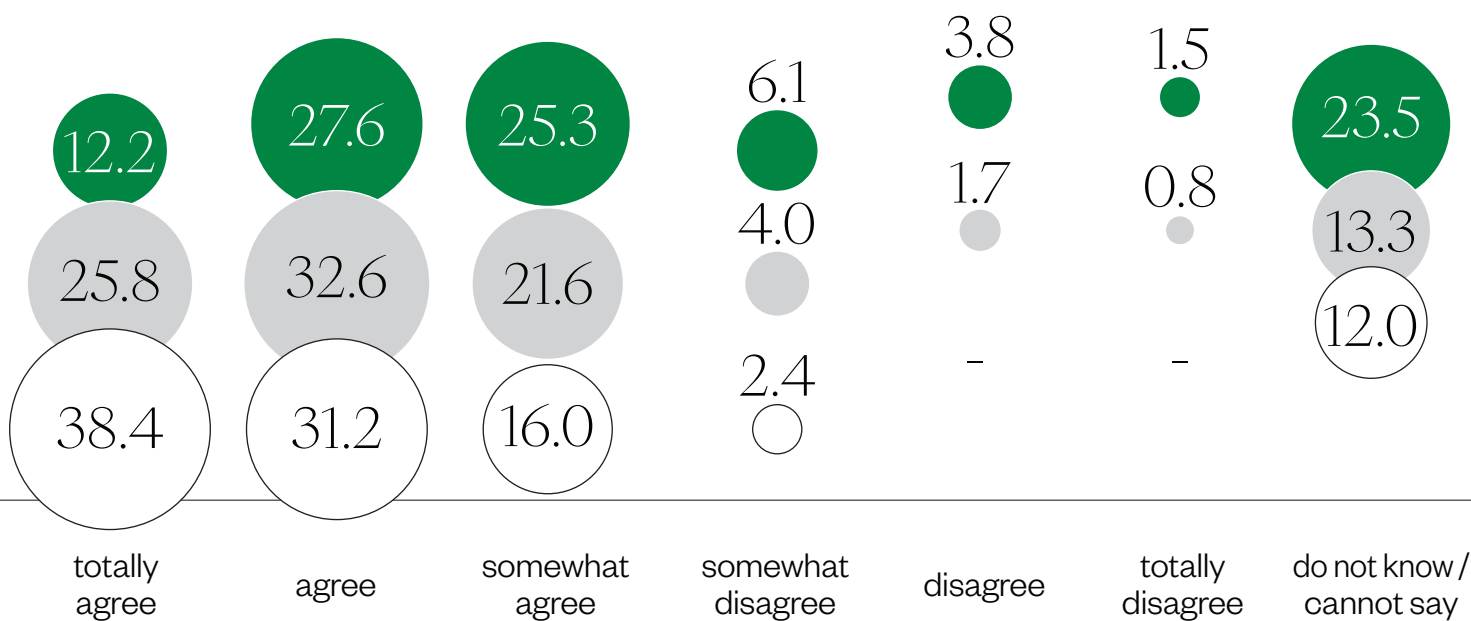
Today, a large proportion of Kaunesians, both those who attended Kaunas 2022 events and those who did not, appreciate that Kaunas stands out from other Lithuanian cities for its modernist architecture. Nevertheless, the unique contribution made by Kaunas 2022 activities resulted in Kaunesians starting to recognise that this architecture has

value not only in the national context but also in the European one. The impact of the Kaunas 2022 programme is felt particularly strongly here: attending the programme's events doubles the probability of such attitudes. This effect ripples beyond simply taking pride in one's identity or its supplements with a European dimension. Some Kaunesians

would not be surprised if Kaunas modernist architecture were to receive a UNESCO World Heritage nomination. Such achievements alone would be enough to warrant celebrating a success, but 'Modernism for the Future' delivered even more.

<sup>48</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('I am going to list a few statements about Kaunas environment and heritage buildings. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?').

Kaunas stands out from other European cities for its interwar modernist architecture



Kaunas stands out from other European cities for its interwar modernist architecture

*“And even for me, as a cultural worker, you know, it was like ‘wow, see how special this modernist architecture is...’ There were things that maybe you weren’t consciously aware of: ‘Yeah. This is art deco. So what?’ And now it’s [lowers their voice, melodiously] ‘Art Decooo.’”*



# Impressions from 'Modernism for the Future' Events

*I love Kaunas! Thank you!\**

59-year-old male from Žaliakalnis

*It inspired pride in our country, its culture and history.*

49-year-old female from Vilnius

*Very warm and nice\**

60-year-old male from Vilnius

*An interesting event, it was the first time I was in such an event, I liked the environment, it is obvious that a lot of work went into it.*

67-year-old male pensioner from Eiguliai

*The staff was very genuine and open to share as much as possible. Very warm and welcoming experience\**

35-year-old businessman from Vilnius

*Everything seems very fragile today.*

50-year-old male from Aleksotas

*crazy crazy...\**

42-year-old female

*Unbelievable.*

50-year-old female resident of Petrašiūnai

*Everything went on smoothly. Perhaps cosiness was a little lacking, but where would you get it from...*

27-year-old male worker from Aleksotas

*After leaving the exhibition, I started to notice what I had seen in the photographs, the details: the gutters, the old doors, the paving.*

34-year-old female from Užliedžiai

*The most unusual but rewarding experience\**

45-year-old female

*I felt like I was pleasantly wandering between historical facts and a magical fairy tale, like Alice in Wonderland. I'm enchanted!*

44-year-old female from Garliava

*I really like the Post Office building; I always marvel at its façade. And now it was a great opportunity to see it from the inside, to remember how I used to visit the main hall when the Post Office was still open.*

33-year-old female from Šilainiai

*The exhibition was interesting. It was great to visit different Post Office spaces and get to explore the work of artists from other countries.*

31-year-old female from Eiguliai

*Pet friendly and inclusive atmosphere, it was truly exceptional!\**

24-year-old student

*Not adapted for wheelchair users. Neither mothers with children nor a disabled person can get to the exhibition's 1st floor, where according to my husband, the interesting part was.*

32-year-old mother from Aleksotas

*I was impressed! And I would like many more people to watch this film, especially Kaunesians, so that we can reflect once again on how beautiful our city is and so that it makes us proud!*

37-year-old female resident of Ringaudai

*Highly positive; it is a fantastically surreal, modernist and at the same time very contemporary audiovisual love letter to Kaunas modernist architecture.*

25-year-old female from Vilnius

*A great way to celebrate, preserve and represent the city's heritage and history. Thank you.*

26-year-old female from Vilijampolė

*It made me feel admiration, once again, for Kaunas, Kaunas architecture, and think about how magnificent and beautiful Kaunas is, and admire Funkas. I felt very uplifted, started wanting to walk around Kaunas more and find the buildings I had seen in the exhibition. I want to continue cultivating an interest in modernist architecture and interiors, interwar cultural history.*

19-year-old student from Šilainiai

*The guided tour about the puddles made me look where I don't usually pay much attention, that is, under my feet. It was interesting to see the city streets from a different angle. <...> I liked the fact that the foreign artist explored Kaunas and presented it to the locals in a unique way – through puddles. And we can learn from foreigners' view of Kaunas too, not just they from ours.*

28-year-old female visiting Kaunas

*It's very interesting: cosy environment, nice people. A chance to see and hear something new. But still, even though it's an international event, we live in Lithuania and not everybody's English is perfect. They could have thought about providing interpretation during the story. Just saying: 'Come after the event, if you didn't understand, I will recount it in Lithuanian...,' does not look very respectful to your own people.*

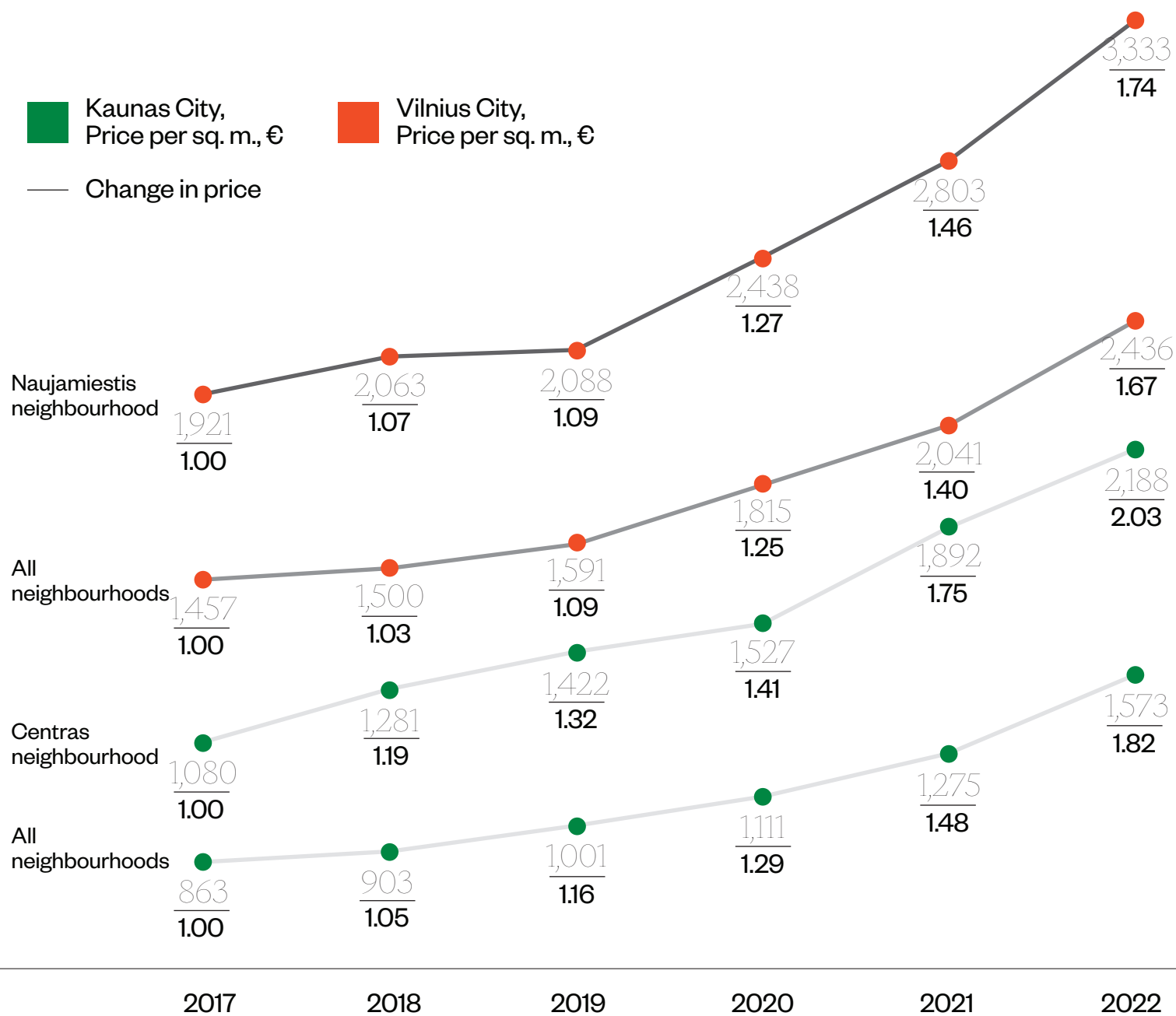
51-year-old female resident from Centras

# The Hidden Cost of the Frenzied Growth Machine

It would be wrong to attribute the noticeable recognition of Kaunas modernism's symbolic values solely to the Kaunas 2022 programme. Thanks to the efforts of cultural professionals, Kaunas's modernist architecture received the European Heritage Label in 2015. The recognition of symbolic values cultivated by the programme was accompanied by one of the most generous support programmes in Lithuania for the management of heritage buildings in the municipality. This combination of management and education has produced results. The symbolic meanings of heritage are now also recognised in the housing market. Observing the rise of housing prices in the Kaunas Centras locality, which boasts the largest concentration of interwar modernist buildings, we can say that we are also celebrating the economic achievements of Kaunas 2022. Excluding inflation, the economic value of housing here has doubled during the title-holding year, and this growth has been faster than

in other Kaunas localities, as well as in Vilnius or its Naujamiestis area. Heritage promotion could be one of the tools for attracting people back to the city, and the 'Modernism for the Future' programme has undoubtedly strengthened the city's ability to use this tool. In a city with a depopulating core that is struggling to retain young people, who create economic potential, as they move out to the suburbs, such a rise in house prices is not an unequivocally positive sign. Kaunas's modernist renaissance makes such housing less affordable for young people. As with all economic feasts, not everyone is invited to this one. The city's growth machine ignores the social consequences of its own frenzy. Whether the renaissance of Naujamiestis and other central localities will be used to attract more residents and greater social diversity to the urban core will be determined by the future, which the title of the 'Modernism for the Future' programme so metaphorically appealed to.

## Median price of apartments per square metre in completed property transactions<sup>49</sup>



<sup>49</sup>Source: State Enterprise Centre of Registers monitoring data.

Celebrating the economic recognition of the value of heritage does not mean turning a blind eye to the dark side of the growth machine's frenzy in heritage areas. The truth is that the symbolic and economic valuations of Kaunas modernism have been followed by a series of highly controversial cases of negligent disregard for heritage or its reckless destruction. The perpetrators of these actions have included both private individuals and public authorities. Activists trying to preserve heritage could be heard making symbolic attacks on Kaunas, the city that had been awarded the European Capital of Culture title. How could it be that in Kaunas, the upcoming European Capital of Culture, such important buildings had been left to perish? Thus, in such a social context and with the

overall cocktail of interventions aimed at raising the value of heritage, the Kaunas 2022 title had a specific impact that went beyond promotional activities: it was a symbolic argument to strive to reach a higher bar. The fact that Kaunas 2022 activities were housed in the abandoned Central Post Office building was also an important symbolic act marking a temporary victory in the fight for this building's survival. The building was bought by the government in 2022 and plans were underway to establish a cultural institution dedicated to promoting architecture there. However, this building's history has painfully demonstrated, once more, how wide the gap between symbolic nominations and economic decisions, required in order to take advantage of this symbolic value, can be.

When stories of heritage neglect become public, an impulsive question usually arises: 'Who is to blame?' Kaunesians are not the ones to be blamed for this. In the city, in very broad social strata, heritage management, with all its associated higher costs, is seen as a necessity. In general, Kaunesians deliver a moderately positive assessment of the condition of

the city's heritage buildings. However, the 'Modernism for the Future' audience has higher expectations for heritage management. This programme has mobilised Kaunas inhabitants who care more about the city's heritage. In our modernity, where market and state bureaucracy can not only fail to protect, but also actively start destroying particularly valuable heritage sites,

*“For the first time on a guided tour, I felt such sadness about an abandoned building...”<sup>50</sup>*

mobilising experts is very important. However, it is also important to note the hidden cost of the never-ending struggle against the growth machine. The cost of recognising the symbolic value of heritage – when it is not recognised by the market or by state bureaucracy – falls on the shoulders of activists and professionals, taking up a lot of time and causing emotional burnout or ending up in courts. 'Modernism for the Future' has temporarily bolstered efforts in this struggle, but the real solutions seem to lie elsewhere. More generally, how heritage values that generate significant economic benefits can, at the same time, be indiscriminately destroyed is one of the most striking controversies

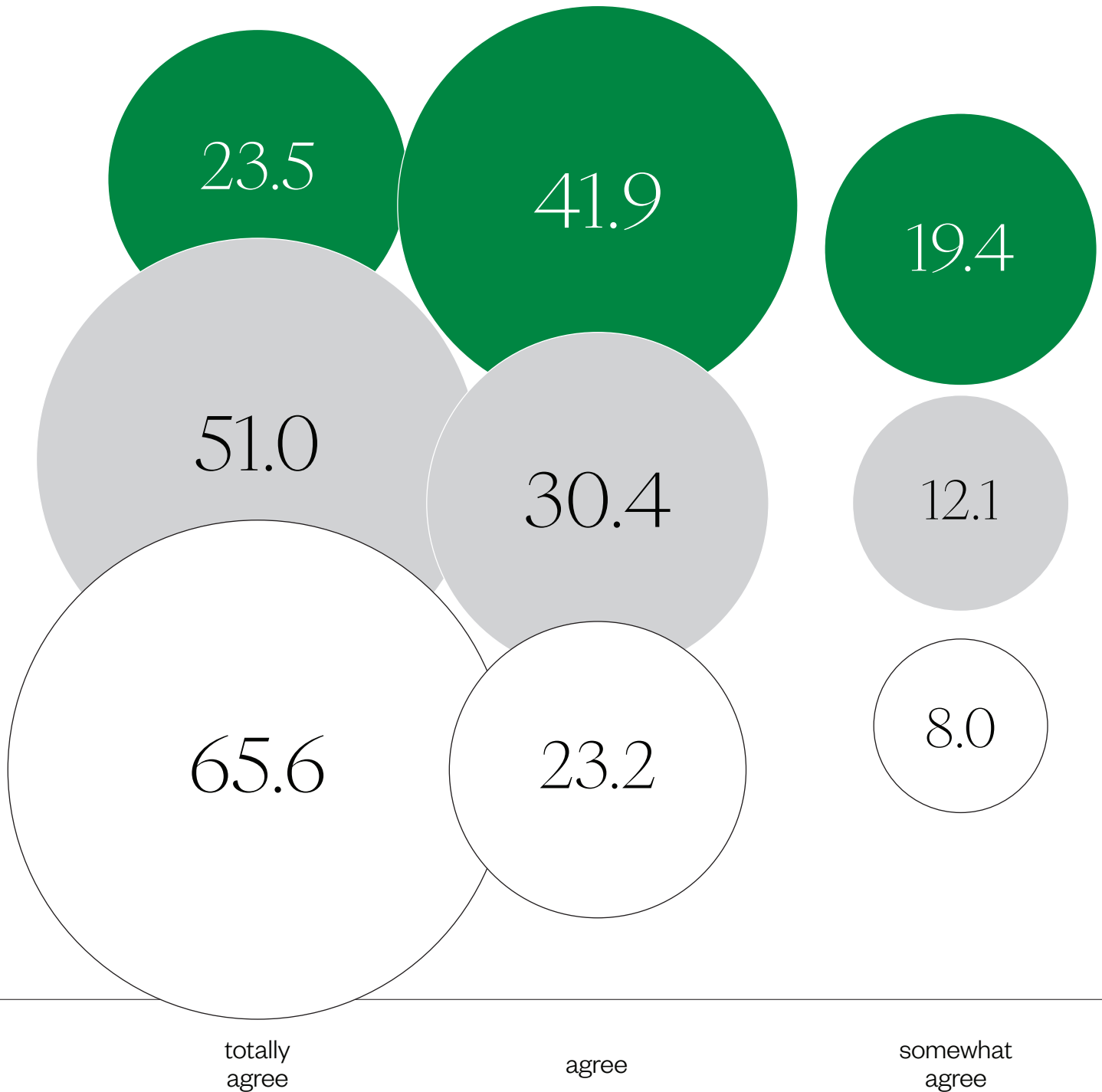
of modernity. As one delves deeper, one begins to see just how destructive the power of modernity can be. In modern everyday life, controversies can also indiscriminately create health care, convenient transport, or other public goods and horrors. It is our moral duty to restrain the beast of modernity. By drawing attention to their 'own' version of modernity – the optimistic version of inter-war modernity – the 'Modernism for the Future' programme invited us to tame modernity by finding ways to contain its controversies today. And these are apparently inevitable, especially when it comes to creating life in today's cities.

<sup>50</sup> 59-year-old female resident of Prienai District.



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements / how would you assess the current state of Kaunas's historic buildings? (% of all responses)<sup>51</sup>

Kaunas heritage buildings must be preserved, even if it means spending more

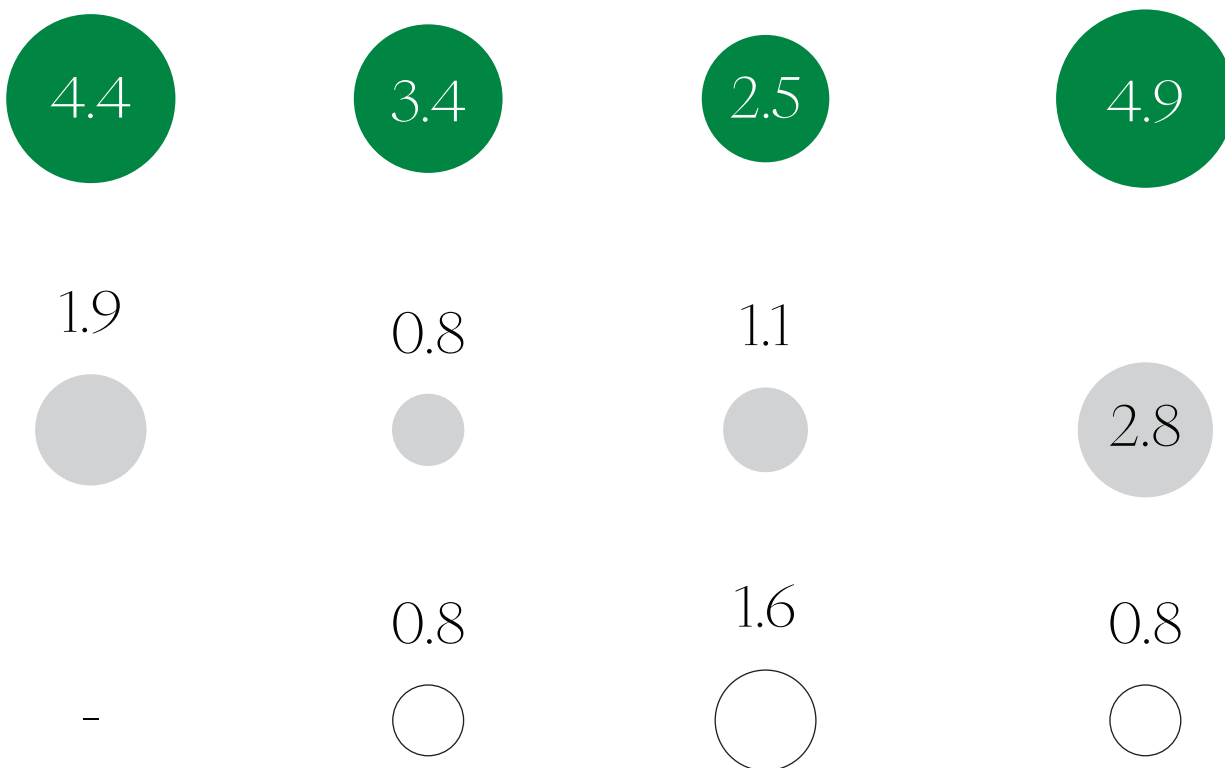


<sup>51</sup> Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('I am going to list a few statements about Kaunas environment and heritage buildings. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements/How would you assess the current state of Kaunas's historic buildings?').

Residents in 2022

Attendees of other programmes

'Modernism for the Future' attendees



somewhat disagree

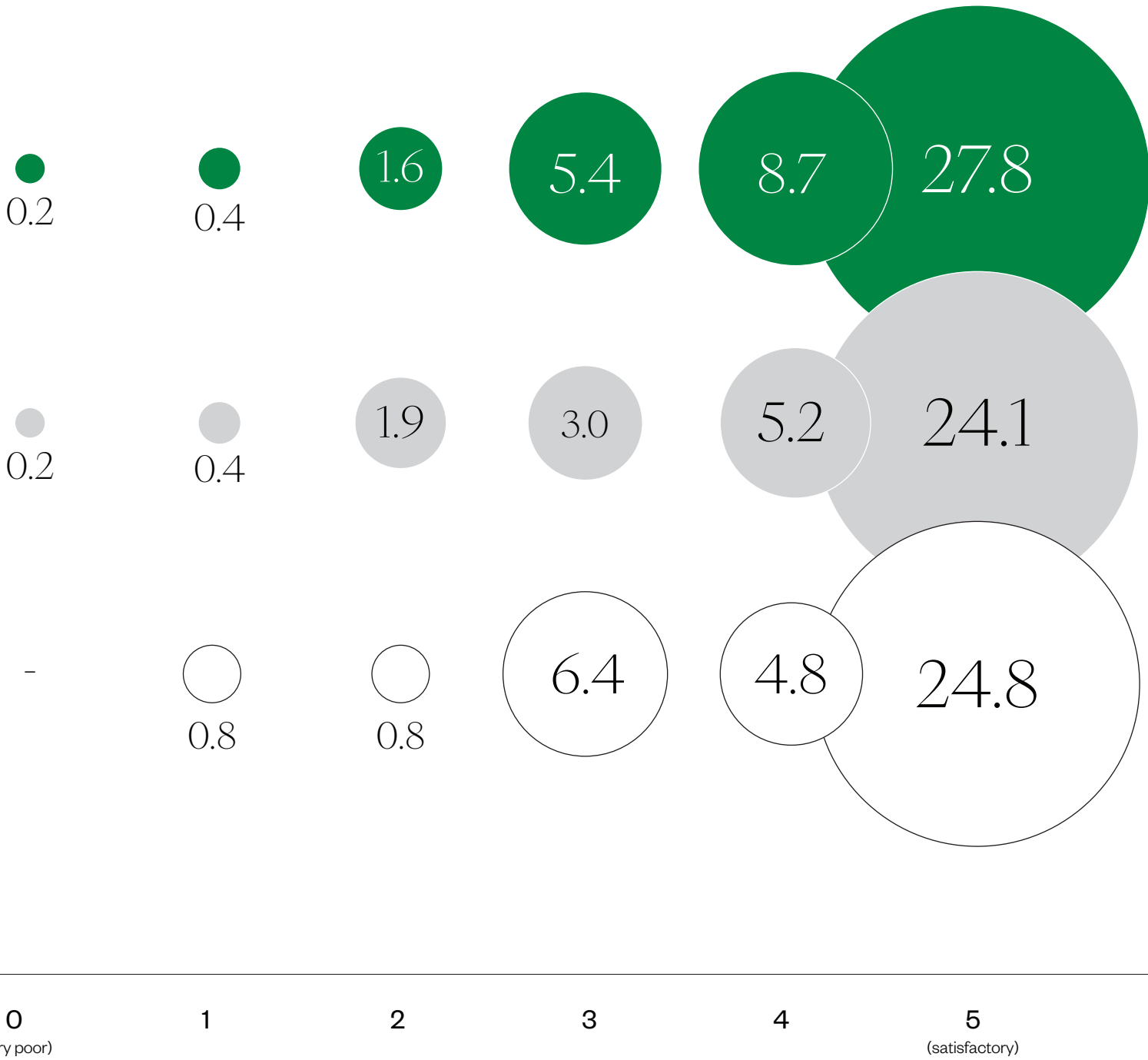
disagree

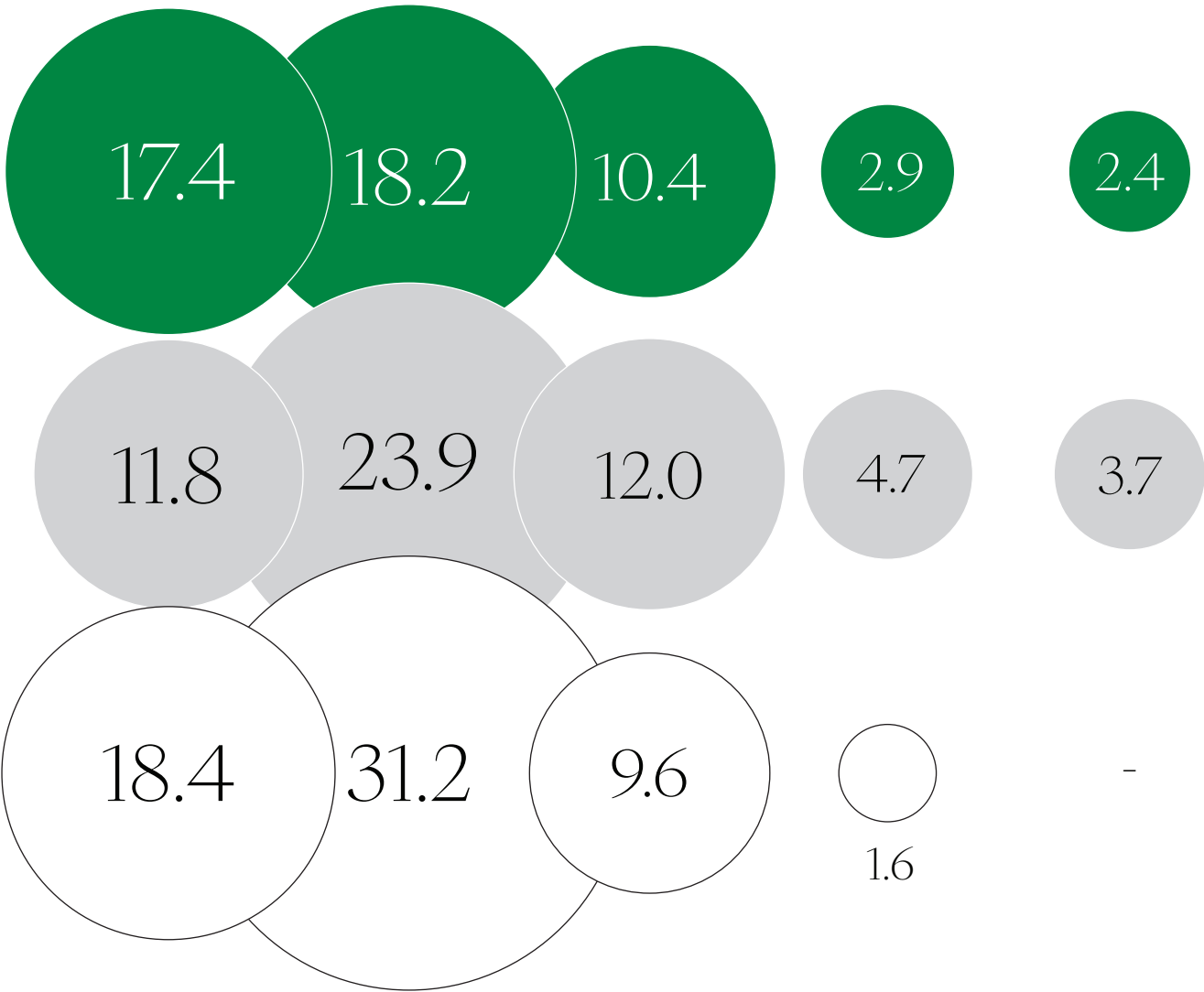
totally disagree

do not know / cannot say

# Assessments of the condition of heritage buildings

■ Residents in 2022    
 ■ Attendees of other programmes    
 □ 'Modernism for the Future' attendees





6

7

8

9

10  
(very good)

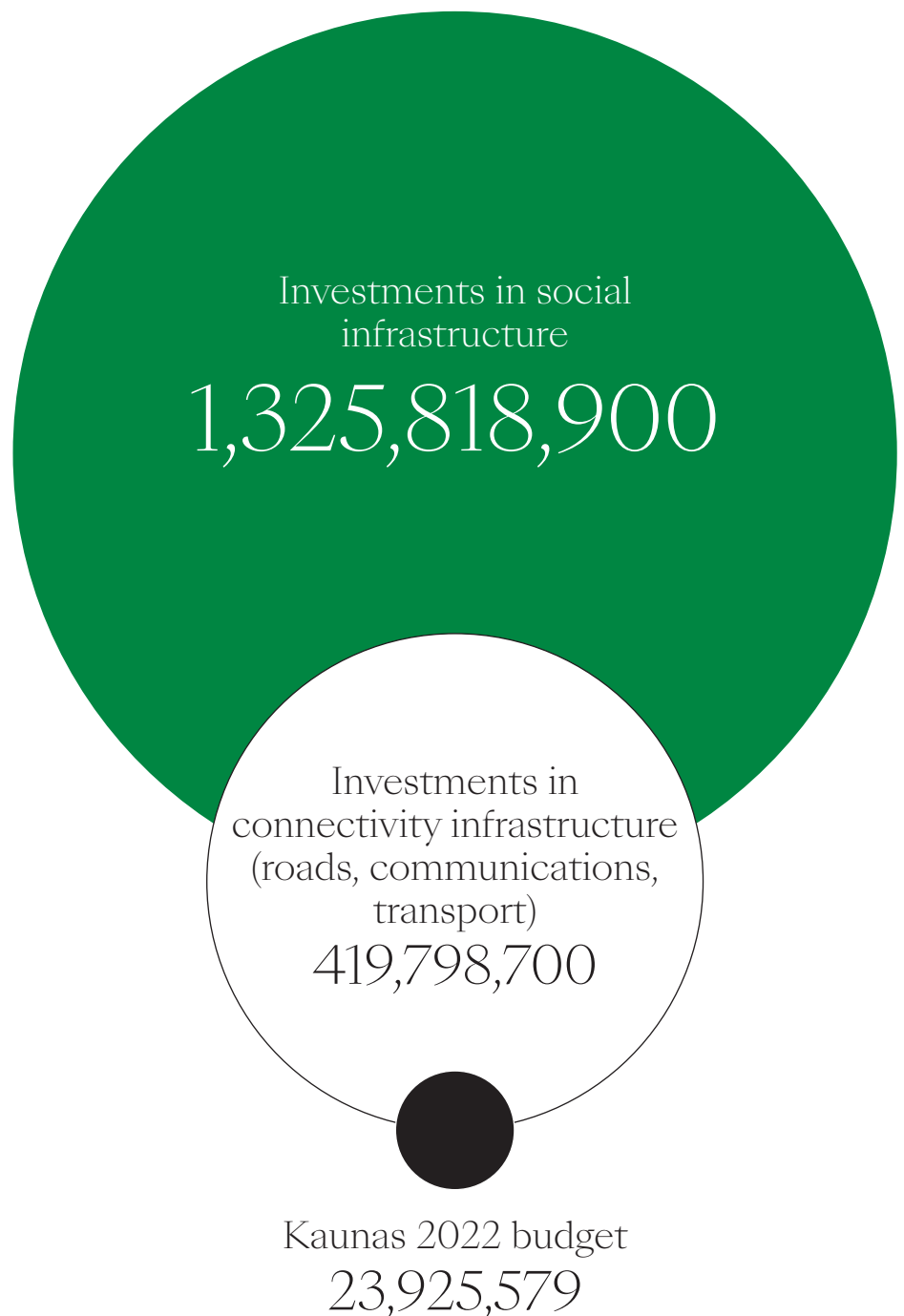
# Value or Price?

Let us take a step back from considering the benefits of one of Kaunas 2022's programmes to undertaking a more general economic evaluation of this cultural intervention. One of the ways in which the issue of assessing the economic impact of such mega-

*“In a way, infrastructure is part of culture, too.”*

events is often addressed, or rather circumvented, is through the application of the so-called 'multiplier effect'. In primitive terms, the reasoning behind it is very simple: the value of highly expensive mega-events is the cost of the goods and services acquired in organising them, only multiplied by several times. The intervention will have the effect of injecting a large amount of money into the local economy, which will multiply therein, generating higher levels of prosperity. This leads to the self-serving assertions that the intervention will have an impact no matter what, and that its value will be directly linked to its cost. Such arguments may be seductive or even make practical sense in cases where the budget costs of such events are high. However, Kaunas 2022 was a European Capital of Culture with a relatively modest budget and without major infrastructure costs. Viewing the cultural field from an economic perspective, this was big money, which is likely to have also activated some of the most dormant niches of the creative economy. However, comparing this budget to the infrastructure investments made by the city and the district in the same period, we can see that the direct economic impact of this intervention is no less niche.

Infrastructure investment and economic stimulus in Kaunas City and Kaunas District, 2017–2022 (€)<sup>52</sup>



<sup>52</sup> Sources: Open Lithuanian Finance data; 'Kaunas 2022' public institution monitoring data.



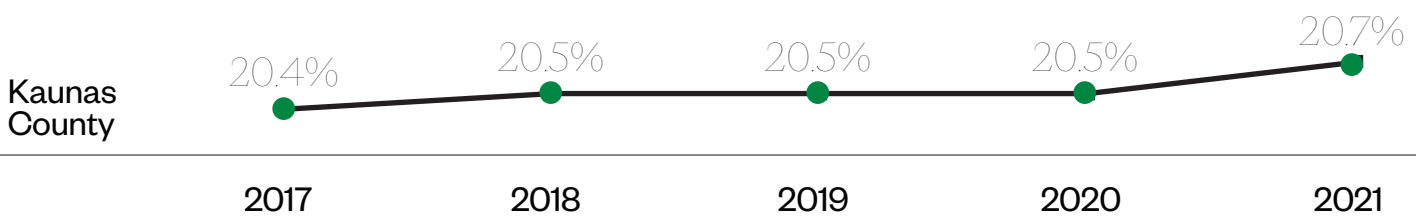
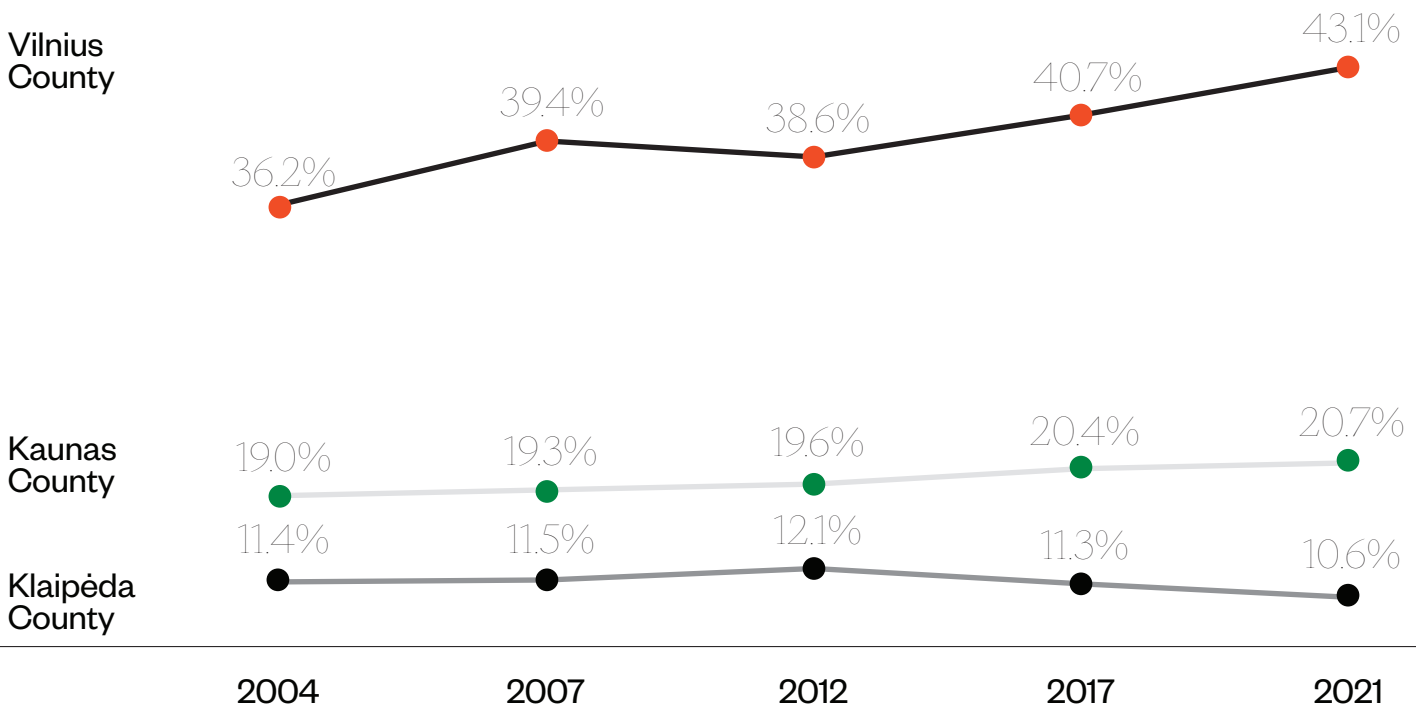
Does this mean that Kaunas 2022 had no impact on the region's economy? When considering such questions, it is useful to see whether there is anything to discuss at all. The region's economic indicators show that there have been no major new developments in the competition between Lithuania's three largest cities since 2017. The

capital region has maintained and further strengthened its economic dominance, dangerously increasing the concentration of the country's economic power within it. In the lead-up period to the ECoC title-holding year in 2022, Kaunas County has maintained a stable share in the national economy. The fact that nothing has changed can

also be seen as good news. For example, Klaipėda, which lost out to Kaunas in the last round of the European Capital of Culture nomination, has not been able to maintain a similar share of the national economy due to its weaker economic growth rates.

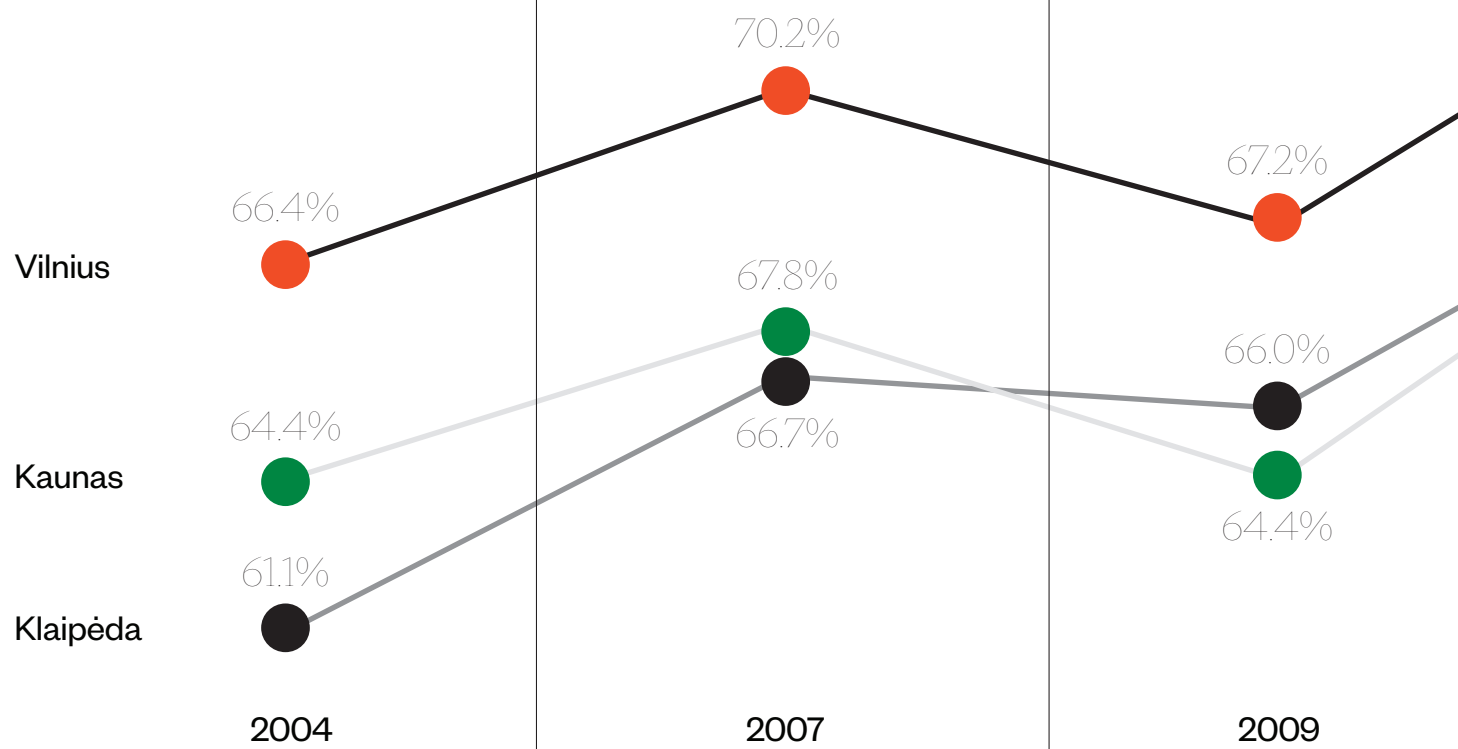
## Economy of Lithuania's major cities<sup>53</sup>

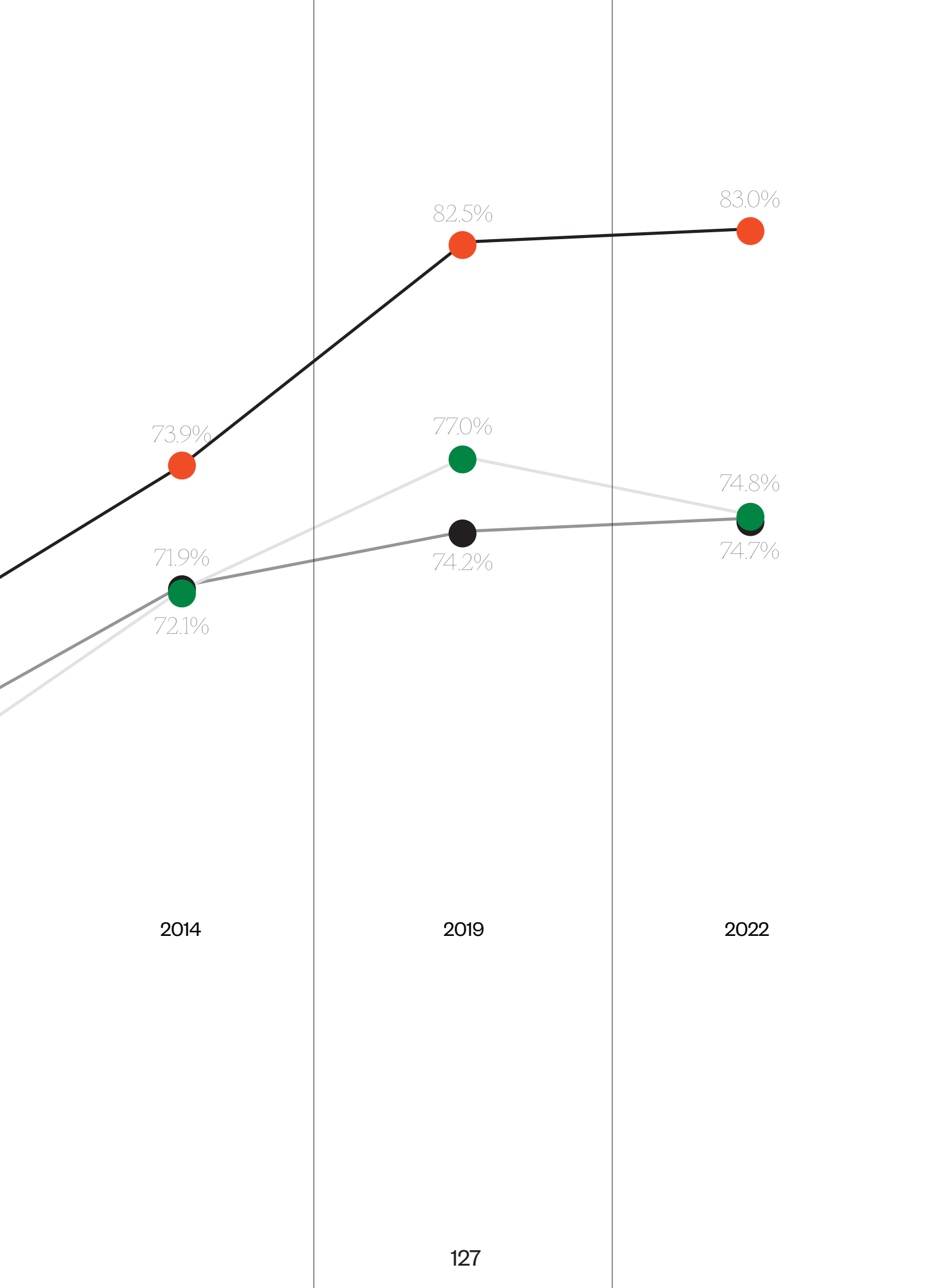
Share of the country's GDP



<sup>53</sup> Source: State Data Agency data.

# Employment



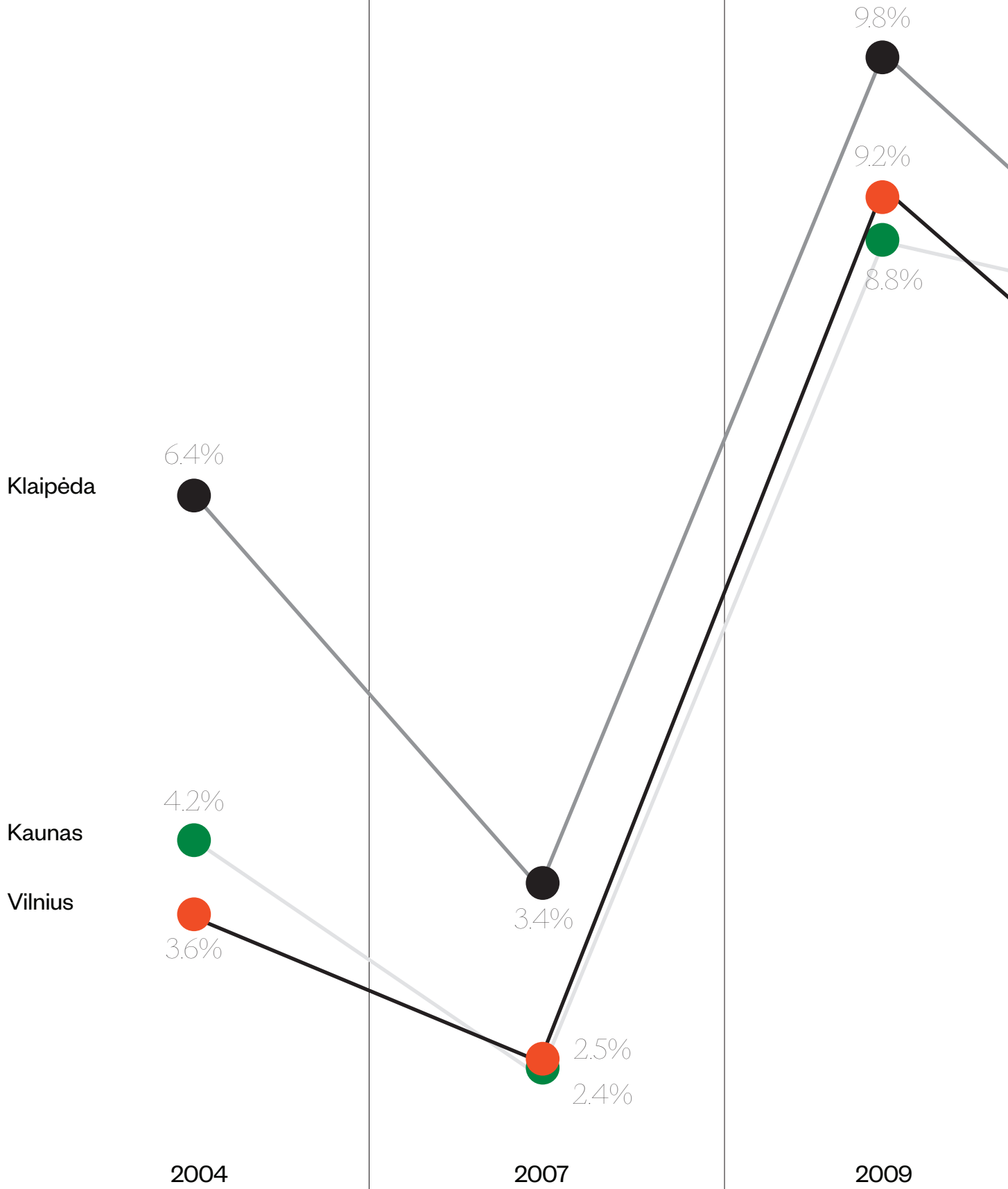


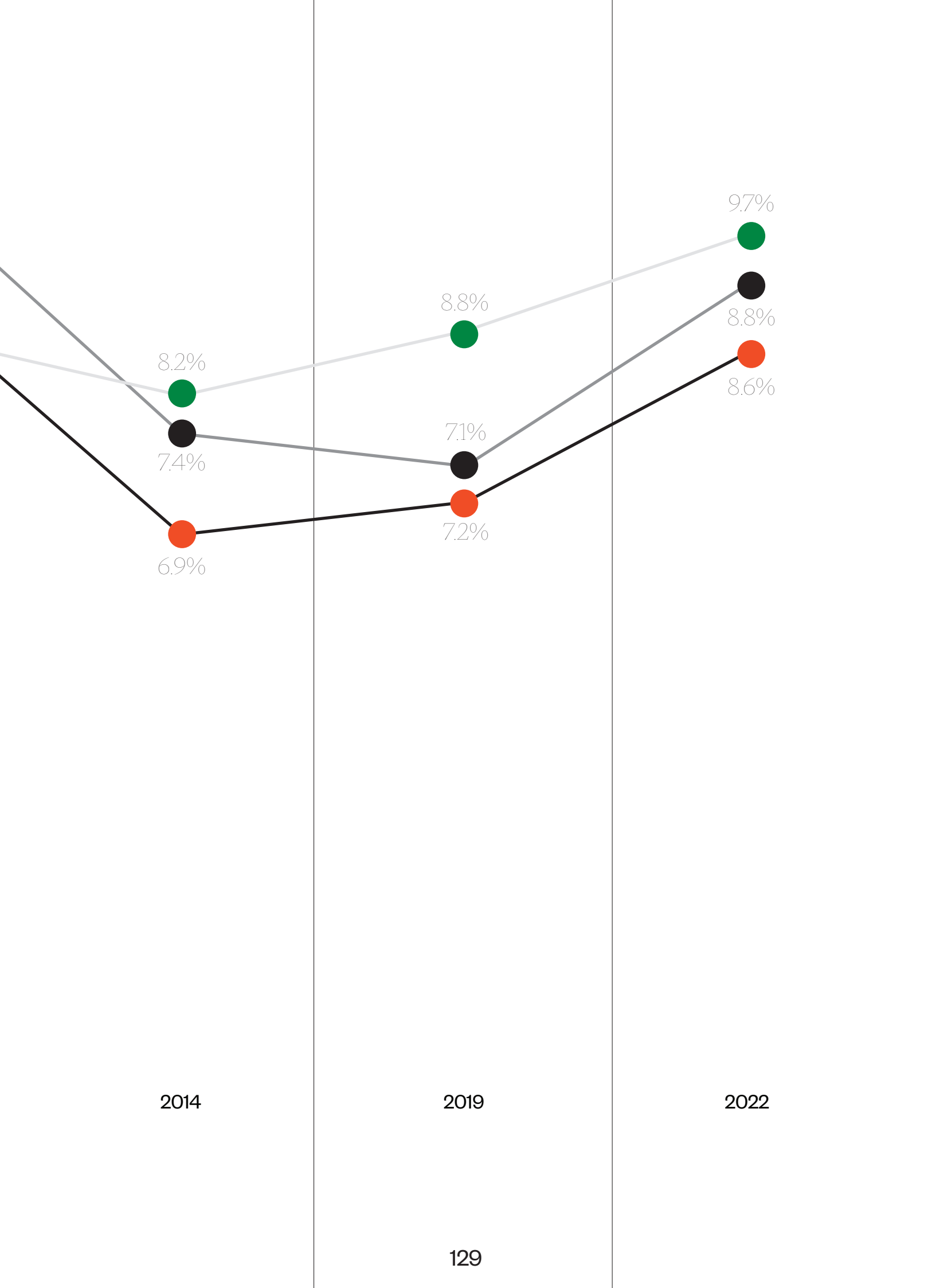
2014

2019

2022

Unemployment





2014

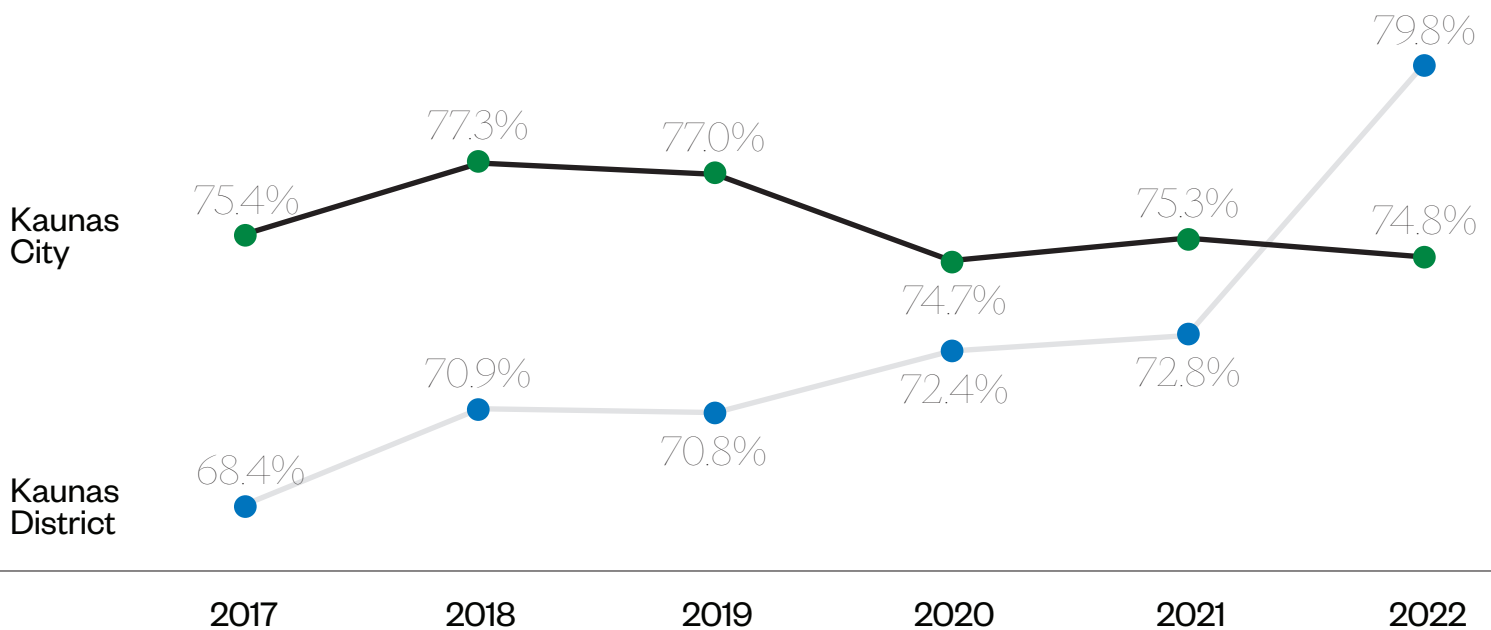
2019

2022





## Employment rate in Kaunas City and Kaunas District



Looking deeper and seeing how economic growth has affected Kaunesians' lives, the rising employment rate will catch your eye. It is true that it has remained stable in the city, while the growth rate has been driven by Kaunas District. There have certainly been economic changes in Kaunas County, but admittedly these have been driven primarily by wider economic forces. It should also be remembered that the programme itself did not

have an ambitious budget to stimulate the applied parts of the creative economy. 'Designing Happiness' had such objectives, but it was one of the project's smallest parts, with a budget much smaller than originally planned. The fashionable move here would be to cover up the lack of arguments with either the political rhetoric prevalent in Lithuania about the inevitable economic value of cultural interventions, or even sophisticated mathematical models for

assessing such interventions. However, we live in a post-crisis (or perhaps pre-crisis) economy, stirred up by stimulus measures, where models are resting and waiting for more predictable times. It is not very clear what is happening even in very straightforward sectors, let alone in a niche cultural sector in one of the country's regions. All of this makes us look for a more nuanced narrative about the economic impact of Kaunas 2022.

*“You know it takes nine minutes max for me to get to Kaunas. So, for me, there it is no boundary, I take pleasure in it – I pass Marvelė, descend the hill, and I'm in Kaunas. And we consume Kaunas's culture... The culture flourishing in Kaunas as much as that of Kaunas District.”*

# Happiness or Work?

In shaping the overall vision of the Kaunas 2022 impact, the programme's creators used the rhetoric of the economy of happiness, which has become popular since the global financial crisis. In the period of 2017–2019 (during the ECoC's preparatory years), Lithuania climbed from 52nd to 25th place in the global happiness index.<sup>54</sup> Such a significant change must have also been felt in the country's second largest city. Having weathered the pandemic, Kaunas residents entered 2022 cautious but positive about their lives and future. However,

in the face of the anxiety caused by the war, this confidence has since shrunk. Still, tempered optimism is holding more firmly than the declining rates of marriage and fertility, both of which are usually associated with security and happiness. Such assessments of subjective happiness by Kaunesians thus force us to rethink both how we talk about well-being and what modern societies have so far considered to be its unit of measurement. In the face of war, it is hard to rejoice at Lithuania's happiness rating doubling since 2017. The struggle for freedom and life in the face of war

*“Everyone was terribly exhausted. We were saying let's get through 2022 with drips, and we'll knit socks afterwards in 2023. [laughs] But even though I joked about it, there was a huge fatigue, a drop in motivation. Financially it was not possible... Well, there was a search for a financial incentive for the increased workload. Obviously inadequate for the amount of work they were doing...”*

and pandemic makes us reflect on Happiness as an expression of absolute aspiration. The 'Designing Happiness' programme has opened up a discussion on these issues, and Kaunas 2022 has made its contribution to Kaunesians' well-being.

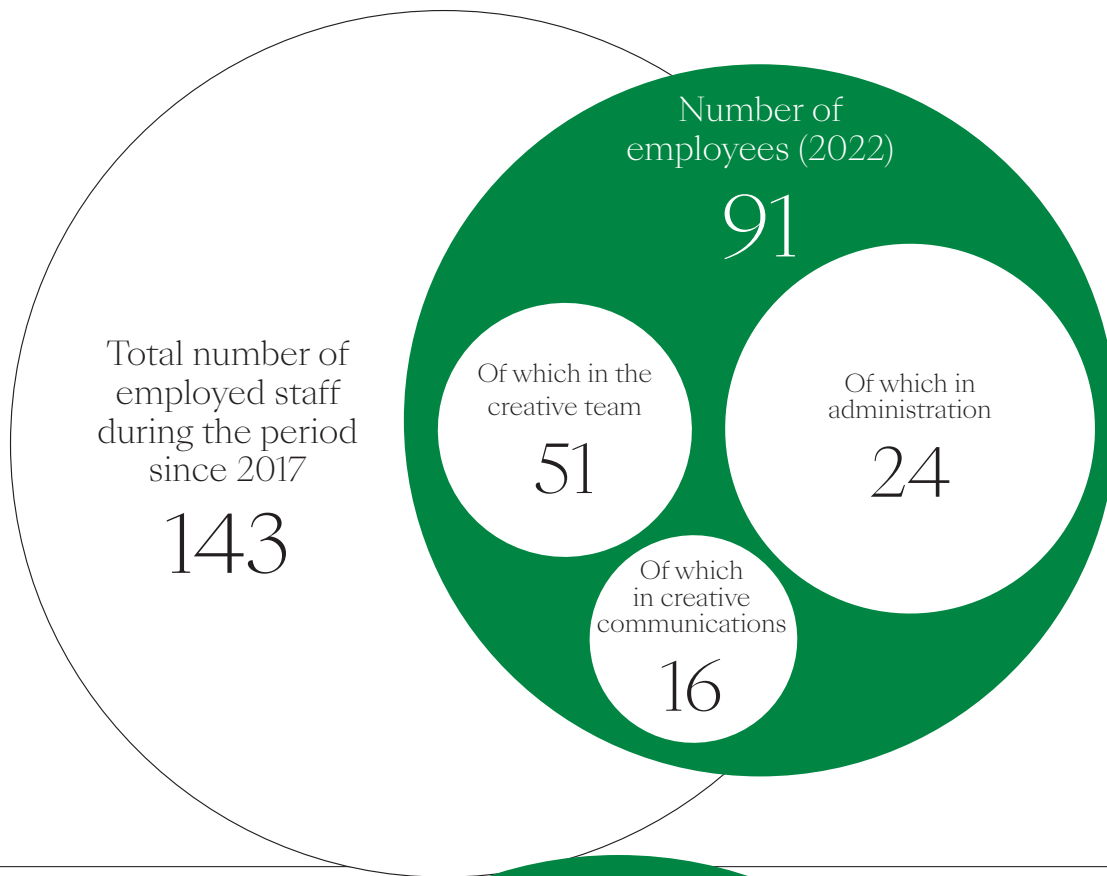
An age-old adage says that money does not bring happiness. Like age or occupational status, money provides stability and security. Our glance at Kaunas 2022 event attendees and non-

attendees confirms this. The attitudinal differences expressed in the survey confirm that as the clouds of war and other disasters rolled in, attendees of Kaunas 2022 events felt safer and happier than other Kaunas residents. However, it must also be acknowledged that happiness is a delicate bird, the flapping of whose wings depends not only on cultural experiences. So, while we learn to solve the mysteries of happiness, we need to keep in mind the slightly more conservative

discussion of value from a labour economy perspective. Kaunas 2022 was an inexpensive European Capital of Culture that delivered a wide spectrum of cultural, social and economic outcomes. What was Happiness for some was also Work for others. It is no coincidence that in conversations with employees of this sector, their voices resonate with burnout and exhaustion. In some cases, these themes are echoed almost word-for-word in the reports of other European Capitals of Culture. It would seem the fatigue of cultural workers is becoming one of the predictable 'outcomes' of the European Capitals of Culture. However, it would be more accurate to call this one of the intervention's recurring mistakes. Trying to meet the symbolic bar of the 'European' dimension without providing adequate or sufficient financial incentives for the sector's workers is not socially just and therefore has a negative impact on the sector's human resources. Implementing ambitious projects should not leave room for burnout as a 'natural' outcome. At least, this is the expectation being voiced by Kaunas's cultural sector workers.

<sup>54</sup> "World Happiness, Trust and Social Connections in Times of Crisis": <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2023/world-happiness-trust-and-social-connections-in-times-of-crisis/#ranking-of-happiness-2020-2022>, 2023.

## Human resources of the 'Kaunas 2022' public institution<sup>55</sup>



### Salary (2022)



<sup>55</sup>Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data.

Preparations for the European Capital of Culture have brought not only fatigue, but also new opportunities. Throughout the preparation and implementation period, the 'Kaunas 2022' public institution directly employed 143 people, with an average salary equal to the national average. In the cultural sector, which boasts some of the most highly educated employees but in which average salaries range below the national average, Kaunas 2022 was an exceptional employer. The organisation also offered exceptional professional experiences. Now that

the Kaunas 2022 project has come to close, the employees who managed this complex project are now pursuing their professional paths in other cultural institutions or organisations, as well as starting their own businesses. In this way, they continue to apply their accumulated experience in the wider cultural sector. The sector's workers themselves ended these years with increased pride and self-confidence. This was also due to institutional and professional networking initiatives, fostered within the city and the district during the preparatory years, and to the



established sustainable relations with highly prestigious Lithuanian and foreign partners in the cultural field. Involvement with the Kaunas 2022 programme has strengthened people's pride in themselves and their profession. This professional solidarity, with which the title-holding year came to a close, does not fade away easily and has great value.

*“What we take away above all else is the sense of unity within the sector. Often with state [institutions] you would be spinning in a circle of ‘filling in the ministry’s tables’ asking one another what to do and so on, so there was still some contact. And with the city we had very little contact at all. So we came out of our boxes. It was a very big breakthrough, which we are very happy about.”*

# Impressions of Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees

*When the event started 40 minutes late, I began to think that we were involved in some kind of a performance 😊*

42-year-old female from Šilainiai

*I cried (in a positive way, I guess?). I picked up some ideas and meanings.*

17-year-old female school pupil from Vilnius

*I was delighted to see and hear an artist I have admired for many years.*

30-year-old male from Vilnius

*The idea is good, but not fully developed.*

38-year-old businessman from Šančiai

*A very strong event, a strong woman. There were many tears.*

32-year-old female from Klaipėda District

*It was boring.*

53-year-old male from Eiguliai

*I still don't fully understand performance, especially those in which body is mutilated.*

*But an artist is also a human being, and M. Abramović is an exceptional person.*

*Her way of speaking, her openness, her storytelling has given me a lot of enjoyable moments and, at the same time, broadened my horizons.*

45-year-old female from Eiguliai

*It inspired hope.*

20-year-old female student from Akademija

*It made me realise that there are people around me who have very different views and can even be very categorical. It touched me and made me think and start discussing many of the issues that were raised during the performance. It also made me want to get to know and talk to people who have a different opinion to mine, to hear their way of thinking and arguments.*

23-year-old female worker from Aleksotas

*I had been hearing from friends and acquaintances about Marina Abramović's work for some time, and I am very happy to have had this unique opportunity to experience it. I really liked the chosen way of installing the exhibition and the mood created – the dark environment, the screens and the unusual sounds surrounding from all sides made me 100% immersed in the artist's thoughts, experiences and work.*

18-year-old female school pupil from Panemunė

*Kitsch.*

49-year-old female resident of  
Žaliakalnis

*Anarcho-communism is bad.*

23-year-old private business owner from  
Žaliakalnis

*A great evening.*

62-year-old female from Šilainiai

*It's very enjoyable.\**

24-year-old male student from Spain

*It made me think a lot about  
miscommunication between  
different people.*

23-year-old female from Dainava

*It was amazing, chills ran  
through my body. The event  
was unique in that it brought  
together two, sometimes  
seemingly incompatible,  
musical dimensions. I have  
never danced to orchestral  
music before, and this  
experience surprised me.*

27-year-old female worker from  
Mastaičiai

*I don't understand what  
our audience needs. It was  
a good, free event, and  
there were only maybe 100  
spectators.*

61-year-old female from Žaliakalnis

*AAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!*

21-year-old male student from Albania

*An exceptional performance,  
because I've seen a lot of bad  
ones in drama theatre lately.  
I would like to find more  
quality serious plays in the  
repertoire so that I could visit  
Kaunas Drama Theatre more  
often. It is not surprising that  
it was difficult to get tickets  
for this event.*

35-year-old female resident from  
Centras

*Absolutely the strongest  
impression created by the  
synthesis of reality, relevance  
and culture. In my opinion,  
this is the true function  
of culture – to intervene  
in reality and to help the  
audience reflect on it.*

54-year-old female from Klaipėda

*Not gay enough [says in  
English]. Well, it could have  
been more gay. But visually it  
was a very good 'event'.*

16-year-old school pupil from Žaliakalnis

*Mind blowing\**

20-year-old female student residing of  
Eiguliai

*A wonderful event, a long-  
awaited concept on the  
Lithuanian scene. A great  
link between the youth and  
older people. Also a great  
way to involve young people  
in the cultural life of music,  
not only in the club scene. In  
total, 100! Points! Repeat!  
Repeat! Repeat!*

29-year-old businesswoman from  
Vilnius





Kite Workshop. Zapyškis, Kaunas District. 2022







IV.

CELE-  
BRATING  
EVERY-  
DAY LIFE



By this point in the book, we have become familiar with at least a few important attitudes, accompanying Kaunians in their daily lives, that were influenced by the Kaunas 2022 programme. The programme encouraged people to discover the uniqueness of their local area, to open up to and embrace cultural diversity. This is very important, as attending cultural events is only one of the factors that influence social attitudes or cultural behaviour. The social forces that are hard to notice in everyday life, which have been influencing Kaunians' lives even before 2017 and will continue to do so after 2022, are no less significant than mere attendance of the programme's events. They are manifested in the lives of people belonging to different genders or age groups or experiencing their economic or cultural capacity at different levels. These social forces recur not only in the daily lives of Kaunians or Lithuanians, but also in those of other Europeans. It is a reminder of the weight of the structural forces affecting our lives, social attitudes and behaviours. The cultural workers and creators who have put a lot of effort into the programme's implementation have eased this burden, at least for 2022. These are extraordinary achievements, accompanied by the abundance of cultural activities and their qualitative changes that are typical of the European Capitals of Culture. There are not many such extraordinary moments in cities' lives. That is why we wanted to start this research narrative with these moments, and we would like to end it by talking about Kaunas 2022's most visible achievements: their impact on Kaunians' everyday cultural life.

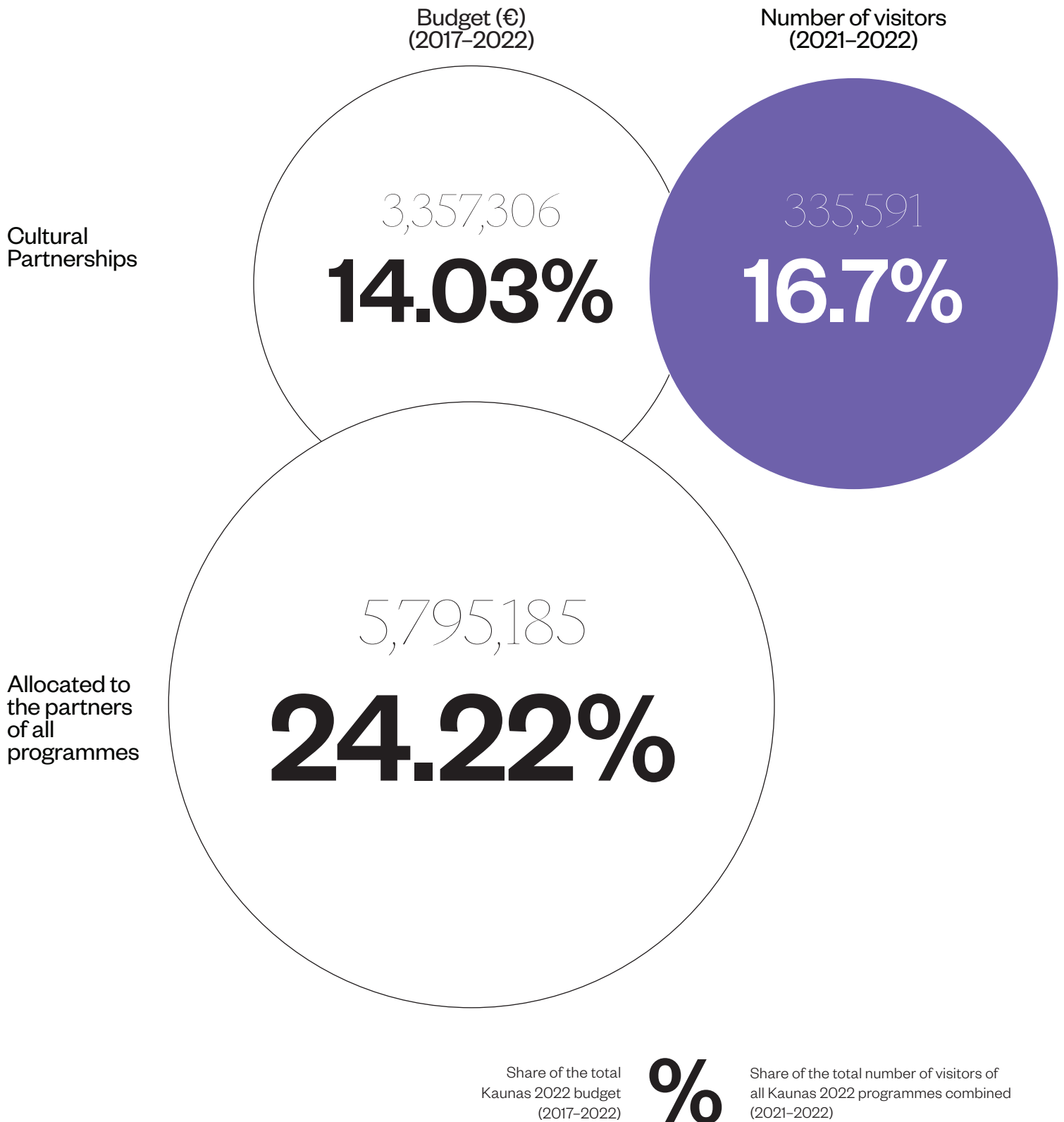
# Ordinary Achievements of an Extraordinary Year

The title-holding year ought to be seen as a kind of social experiment. What if a city's life were saturated with culture? What if cultural activities simply could not be avoided in everyday life, even for those not interested in them at all: if they happened on the way to the grocery store or in the courtyard of one's apartment block? What if the usual barriers to participation in high culture were no longer there, and instead a range of cultural activities were supplied, tailored to a wide range of tastes and accessible to first-timers and people on lower incomes? Most title-holding cities

*“We had this inside joke: ‘to survive the year of 2022’ <...> At some point at the beginning of the year, when all the timetables came together, we realised the scope of what was ahead. When we were still planning, everything didn't look like that, but when we started, it was brutal.”*

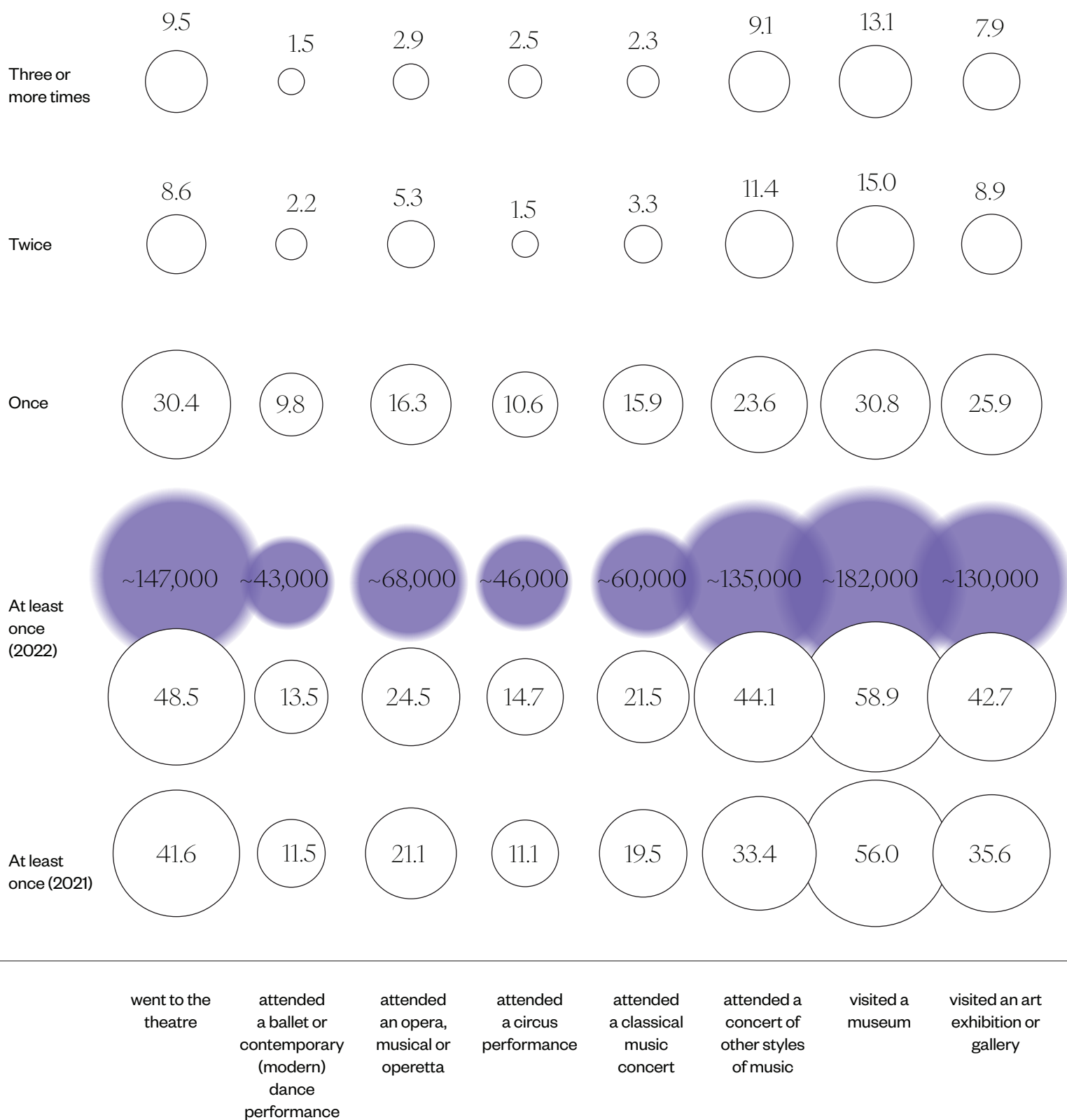
have these or similar aspirations, and Kaunas 2022 was no exception. Such an experiment also helps us to see the possible limitations of involvement in cultural institutions: what would happen if, metaphorically speaking, anything were possible. In Kaunas 2022's case, this experiment was funded by the 'Cultural Partnerships' programme, which was aimed at increasing the supply and diversity of conventional high culture events. The programme's partners – local and national cultural institutions and organisations – have also been actively involved in other strands of the main programme.

An overview of several strands of the Kaunas 2022 programme<sup>56</sup>



<sup>56</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data. The Kaunas 2022 budget figures provided here include public funds from Kaunas City Municipality, Kaunas District Municipality and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the period of 2017-2022.

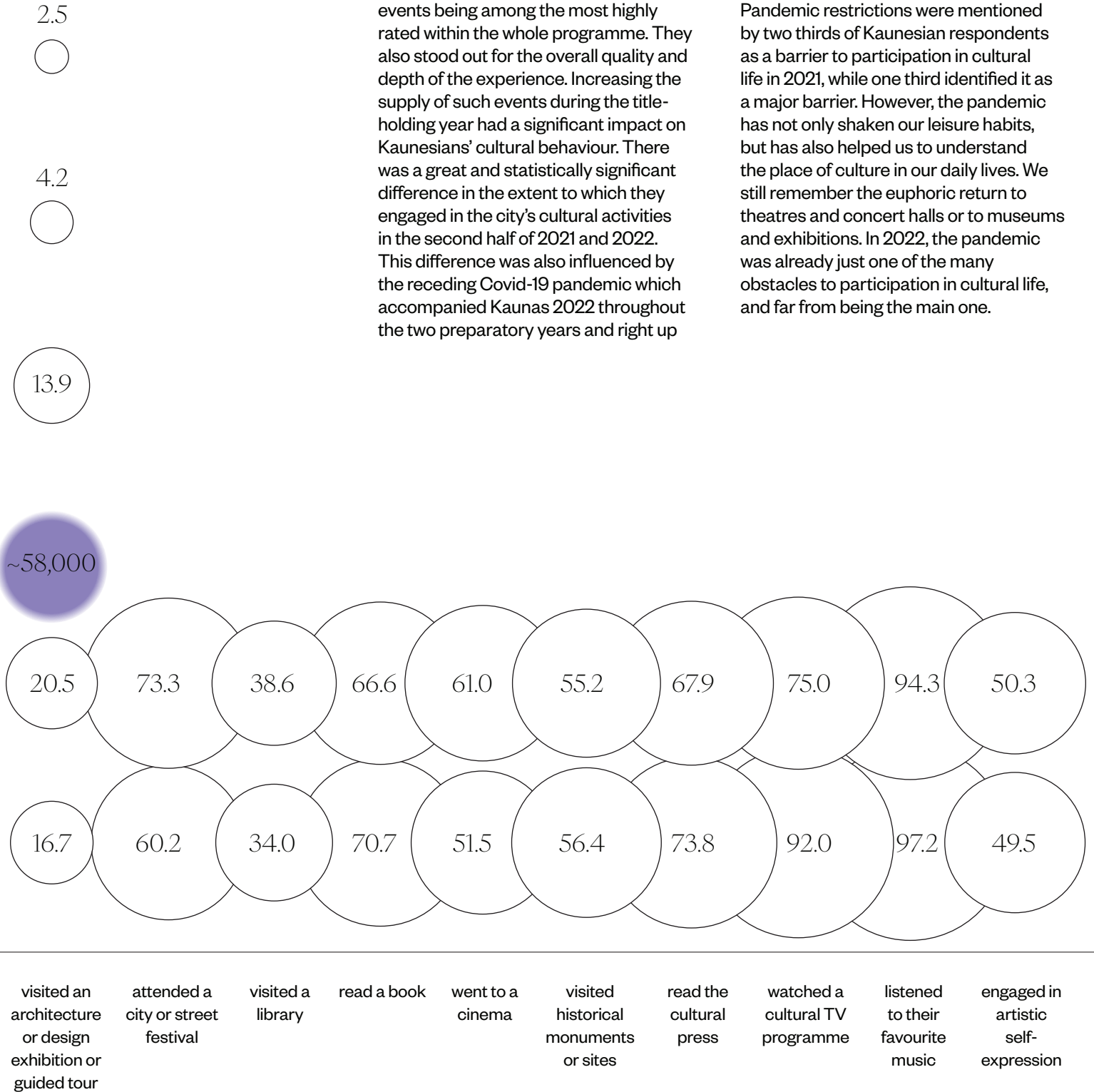
## Changes in Kaunesians' participation in cultural life in 2021–2022 (% of all responses)<sup>57</sup>



<sup>57</sup> Source: Kaunas City and District Population Survey ('I am going to list a few cultural activities. How often have you engaged in these cultural activities in the last six months?'), 2022.

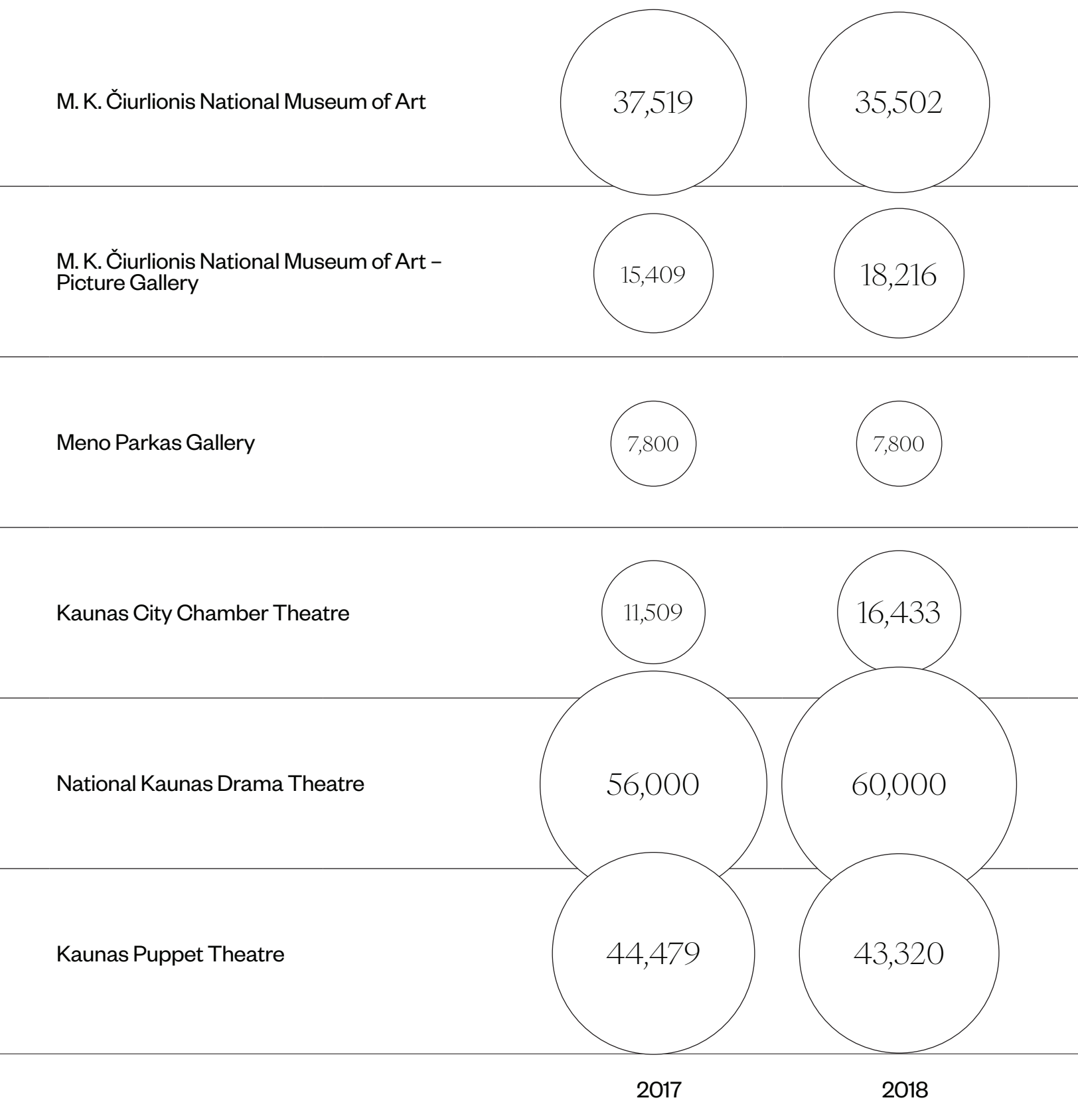
The increased resources made available to the cultural sector in the title-holding year allowed cultural organisations to offer a wealth of exceptional cultural experiences. The partners' role has been exceptional in this respect, with their events being among the most highly rated within the whole programme. They also stood out for the overall quality and depth of the experience. Increasing the supply of such events during the title-holding year had a significant impact on Kaunesians' cultural behaviour. There was a great and statistically significant difference in the extent to which they engaged in the city's cultural activities in the second half of 2021 and 2022. This difference was also influenced by the receding Covid-19 pandemic which accompanied Kaunas 2022 throughout the two preparatory years and right up

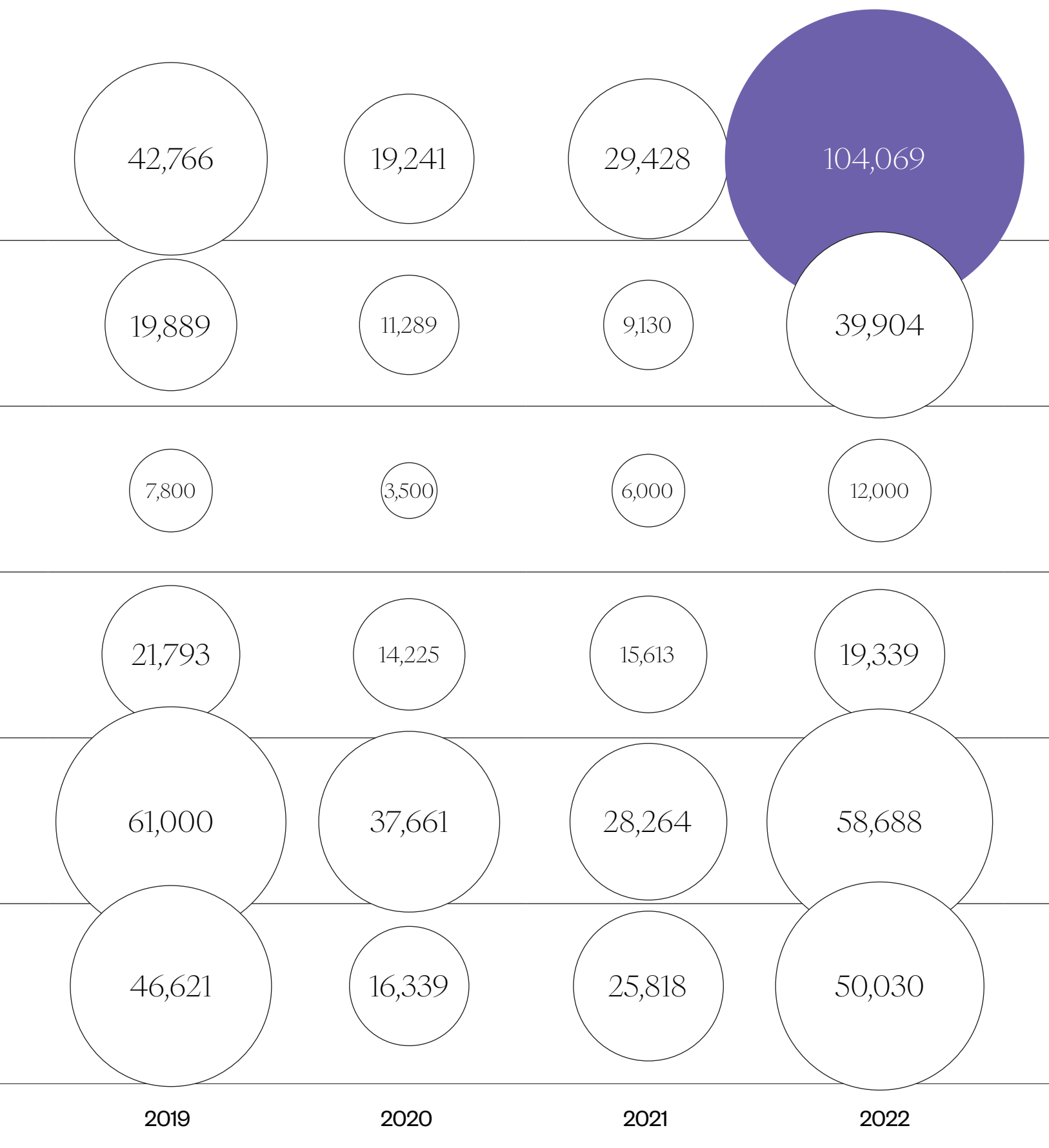
to the start of the title-holding year. In Lithuania, the very strict restrictions on public life had a particularly severe impact on the cultural sector. Restrictions have become a major and very objective barrier to engaging in cultural activities. Pandemic restrictions were mentioned by two thirds of Kaunesian respondents as a barrier to participation in cultural life in 2021, while one third identified it as a major barrier. However, the pandemic has not only shaken our leisure habits, but has also helped us to understand the place of culture in our daily lives. We still remember the euphoric return to theatres and concert halls or to museums and exhibitions. In 2022, the pandemic was already just one of the many obstacles to participation in cultural life, and far from being the main one.





Examples of changes in the number of visitors to partner events (2017–2022)





Living without culture, or with culture experienced remotely, has highlighted the silent significance of cultural practices for our well-being. In 2022, Kaunesians flooded cultural spaces. In areas where infrastructural constraints existed – theatre, classical music concerts or exhibitions – the odds of residents attending or visiting events more frequently in the title-holding year increased by 1.2 times. In comparison, attendance at city festivals, where there were no such restrictions, increased by 1.3 times, and at music concerts, many of which were organised in open spaces, by almost 1.4 times. Reflecting on these figures, it should be borne in mind that 2022 was not the only year

worthy of note. This also applies to the second half of 2021, when the country was still under partial restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the changes in the likelihood of participation in cultural activities reported here are illustrated by mathematically estimating the impact of the barriers imposed by the pandemic. If we exclude this impact, the changes are even greater. Observing these figures, it should also be understood that Kaunesians' attention to cultural activities, like that of any other audience, is a limited resource. Not all actors in the cultural field have been equally successful in competing for the time spent by Kaunesians on these activities. Kaunas 2022 partners,

especially those implementing the major activities, reinforced by the whole programme's communications output, had an advantage in this battle. This snapshot of Kaunas residents' participation in cultural activities also illustrates the experiment's final finding, i.e., the number of adults in Kaunas who can access the cultural sector if opportunities are created. Or at least if the opportunities that were made available in 2022 became commonplace. How to take advantage of such situations or similar ones, and how far one ought to pursue quantity or quality of cultural opportunities or more intensively remunerate the cultural sector's workers, is a matter for further and probably continuing discussion between the cultural sector and its donors.

*“And it was a brutal year, not least because we lost a lot of audience. There were so many events, and free events... And then there was the war, Covid, the competition between events. When we started, everything was brutal.”*

# Culture for Me, Culture for You, Culture for Everyone

We concluded our narrative's introductory chapter by noting the overwhelmingly positive evaluations of the Kaunas 2022 programme. The most general feedback regarding people's experience of events, especially that given immediately after an event, was indeed positive. However, this tells us little about the reasons for such evaluations. Some of these evaluations should be attributed to the successful communication efforts during the preparation years, which consistently built up a brand which many Kaunesians associated with positive emotions. There are limits to the effectiveness of such communication measures. Usually, the

positions they build are sooner or later met with greater or lesser opposition. Therefore, a solid basis for satisfaction with Kaunas 2022 could only be created by positive direct experiences of the programme itself. The programme sought to meet Kaunesians' expectations not only by providing them with a wealth of cultural experiences, but also with uniqueness. The programme's activities sought to infuse local cultural life with contemporary and international cultural phenomena that had previously been less accessible to Kaunesians. In order to offer such cultural diversity, artists from other parts of Lithuania, as well as from abroad, were brought in.

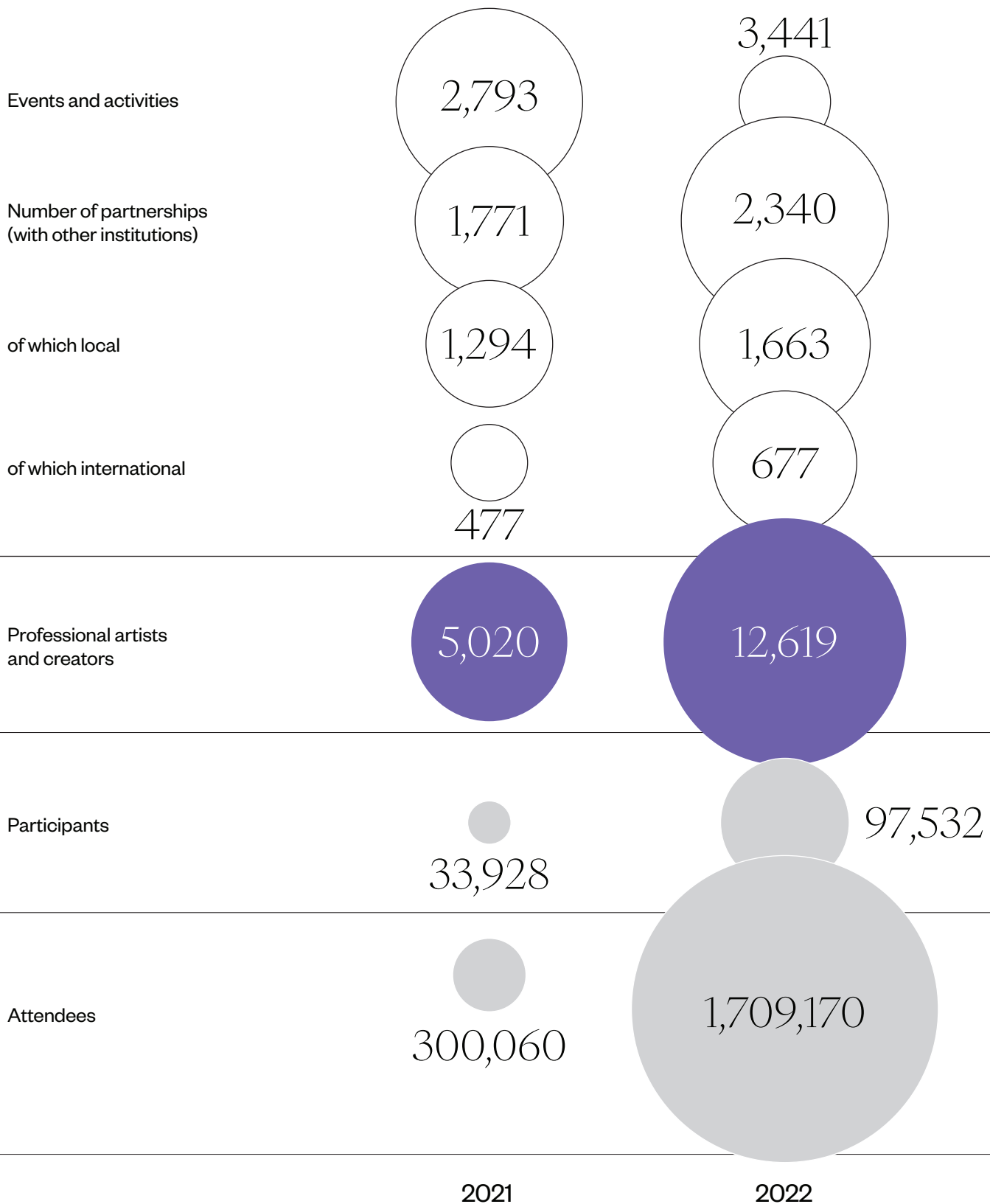
*“Still, Kaunas 2022 had a certain stamp, not that of arrogance but of it being a project.”*

*“Yes, and some artists, in principle, refused to participate just because of that.”*

*“Yes, there were some... Even some of the stronger artists. But when there is such a multitude of visions and perceptions of what it is... It's probably even normal...”*



# Kaunas 2022 programme figures<sup>58</sup>



## Continuous events and cultural initiatives

International Day of Happiness / Nemuno7 cultural boat (Zapyškis, Kaunas District) / 'Japan Days in Kaunas WA!' Festival / Kaunas Literature Week / Courtyard Festival / 'Let's Celebrate the River' / 'Contemporary Neighbourhoods' / 'Audra' Contemporary City Festival / ConTempo International Performing Arts Festival/ Fluxus Festival / 'The Road of Emeralds', the route of public art objects in Kaunas District / European Capital of Culture Forum

<sup>58</sup>Source: Kaunas 2022 monitoring data.

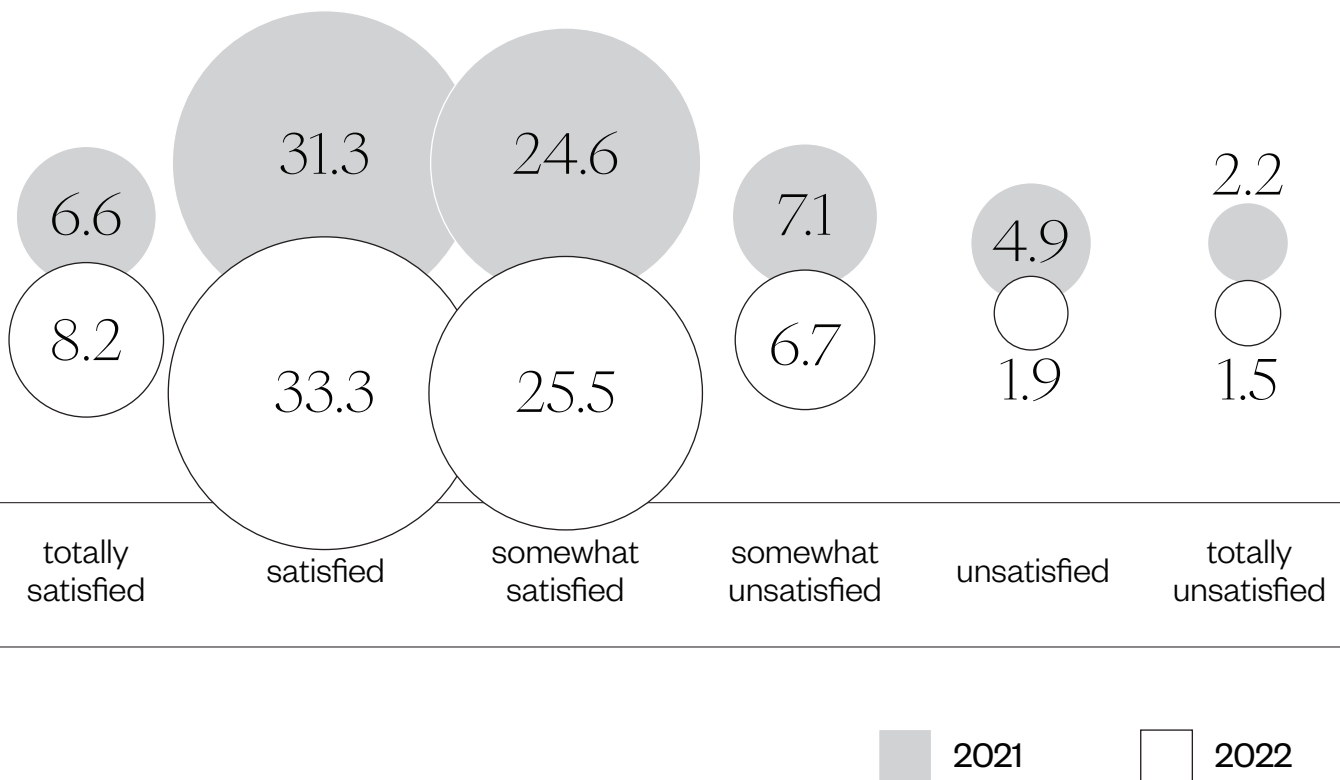
The cultural diversity strategy has not gone unnoticed: both when looking back at the final three years of preparations and when looking at 2022 itself, Kaunesians have seen an improvement in the quality of their cultural life. These attitudes are strongly and directly linked to the Kaunas 2022

programme. In particular, Kaunesians attending the programme's events are much more likely to have a positive view of the changes in cultural life. In the title-holding year, the positive assessment of the changes in cultural life has increased even more. Except for the fact that Kaunesians who have

been accumulating cultural capital since their early years were slightly more enthusiastic, there were no significant differences between social groups in these assessments of the city's and the district's cultural life.

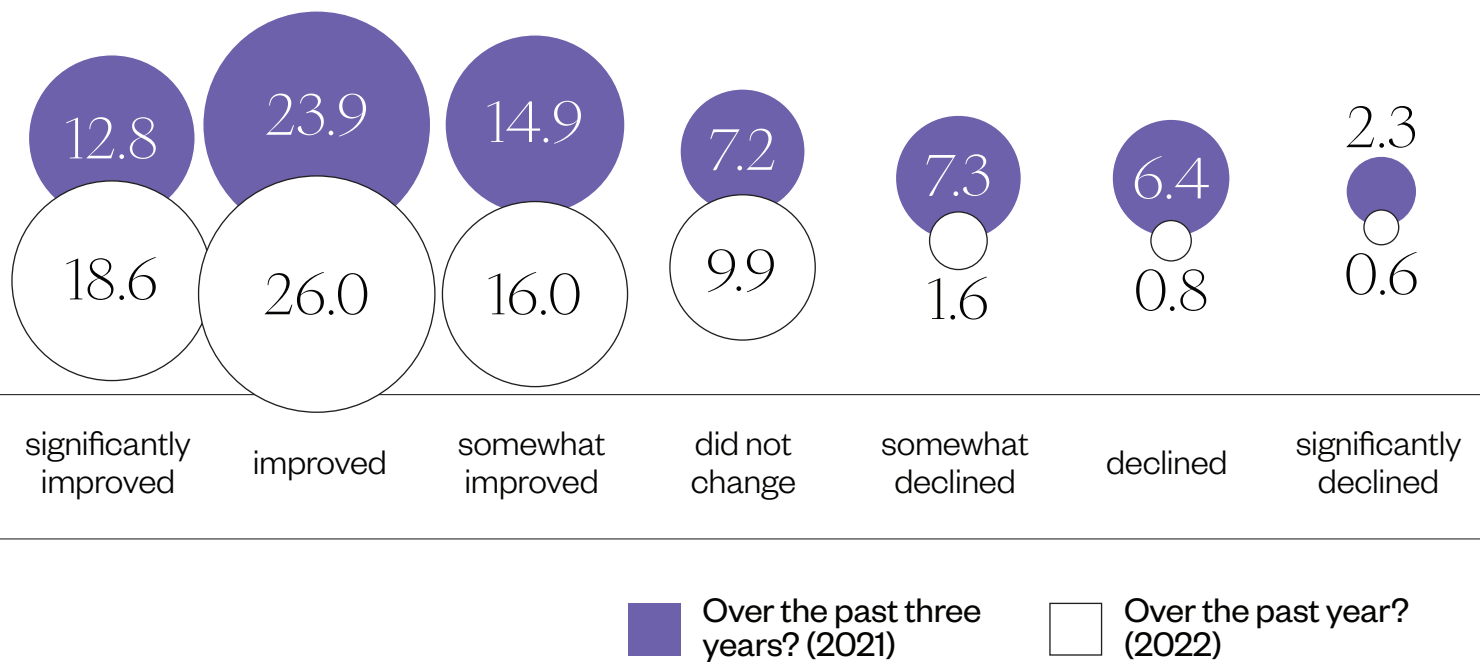
## Changes in Kaunas's and Kaunas District's cultural life<sup>59</sup>

Are your cultural needs satisfied by the cultural life in Kaunas / Kaunas District?  
(% of all responses)



<sup>59</sup> Source: Kaunas City and District Population Survey ('Thinking about these years, how has the cultural life in Kaunas and Kaunas District changed? Does the cultural life in Kaunas and Kaunas District satisfy your needs?'), 2022.

How has cultural life in Kaunas / Kaunas District changed? (%)



Kaunesians are fairly unanimous in their agreement that cultural life in the city and the district has improved. Kaunas 2022 has left behind a rich variety of cultural initiatives and cultural products. And the fruits of this work will be available beyond the title-holding year. This opportunity to replicate the

success of cultural initiatives has a very clear economic value. However, it was not only the events creating Kaunas 2022's long-term impact that expanded the audience. The 'Designing Happiness' programme's efforts to make the content produced by cultural institutions more accessible to people with individual

needs and specific social groups have also had an impact. Cultural institutions' skills in working with these groups will have a lasting impact. It is important to keep this in mind when discussing whether Kaunas 2022 has delivered on its promise of social inclusion.

*“Our perception of accessibility has changed dramatically. We used to think of it in some heavy terms... That you must replace this heritage door and so on. But in reality, there are other simple things that you can do in a very basic way. And that's what we did.”*

# Impressions of Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees

*I want more and more.*

41-year-old male employee from Vilnius

*Art unites.*

53-year-old female Vilnian

*Very bad and the music was too loud.*

42-year-old female visiting Kaunas

*It was so powerful to see the performers perform in the rain. I loved how engaging the performance was and how people followed the itinerant almost religiously. Such a beautiful experience!\**

22-year-old female

*Too sophisticated, difficult to understand, modern but not adapted enough for the general audience.*

56-year-old female from Karmélava

*I had lots of question marks spinning around in my head, and everything became clearer in the second part, but it still seemed disjointed.*

*I think people with different expectations turned up, but it was trying to please everyone at once.*

23-year-old female student from Vilnius

*There were no chairs for sitting down on to watch the event, and people swarmed like bees after the performer. Everyone followed the performer, blocking the view of the rest of the space.*

63-year-old female worker from Dainava

*I was extremely surprised by the team's positivity! It's not a Hollywood film, but that doesn't mean it's worthless. Awesome, 10 points!*

34-year-old female from Vilijampolė

*An unreal concept, I would really like to see more events like this (and in Vilnius!!!). The first part of the event was amazing, but the second part was a bit disappointing (more in terms of the choice of vocalists). But overall – very good.*

25-year-old female from Vilnius

*I went into the play with the least expectations I could have had and it blew my mind to see a production of this level.*

21-year-old female

*I found it very interesting, and the person who came along with me doesn't really understand modern dance, but still found something to admire.*

21-year-old female student from Eiguliai

*How rarely do we stop and notice the little things that make up our lives.*

58-year-old female from Kaišiadorys District

*I kept thinking how amazing the human body is, what its possibilities are.*

45-year-old female

*Something different or unusual to try was very useful. "Why I don't read poetry anymore?"\**

34-year-old female

*I should go to events more often because I enjoyed it 😊*

41-year-old female from Ringaudai

*A very powerful performance, I hadn't thought about how in the space of a car you can go through so many sensations, joy, pain, and how in that car the feelings are intensified. For me, it will be a difficult experience to forget, and I will always remember the drivers' names.*

26-year-old male from Druskininkai

*A thought-provoking performance, also playful. It took place on Laisvės Alėja, under the open sky. You can bring your whole family and your puppy. Perfect for all ages. Thank you!*

56-year-old female from Vilijampolė

*I felt I was having a useful and enjoyable time. What I liked even more was that one of the authors was previously unknown to me. It seems amazing how Kaunas, a comparatively small land, has so many talented creators.*

20-year-old female student from Žaliakalnis



# Tapering Pyramids of Cultural Nutrition

To achieve such a broad involvement of Kaunesians, the programme had to cover as wide a variety of cultural tastes as possible. Thinking of the much-used notion of 'high culture' and its questionable high-low logic, let us call this diversity the 'cultural food pyramid'. The aim of simultaneously increasing cultural diversity by showcasing contemporary forms of 'high' cultural expression ('Where's our dessert? And our lamb steak, please?') and engaging

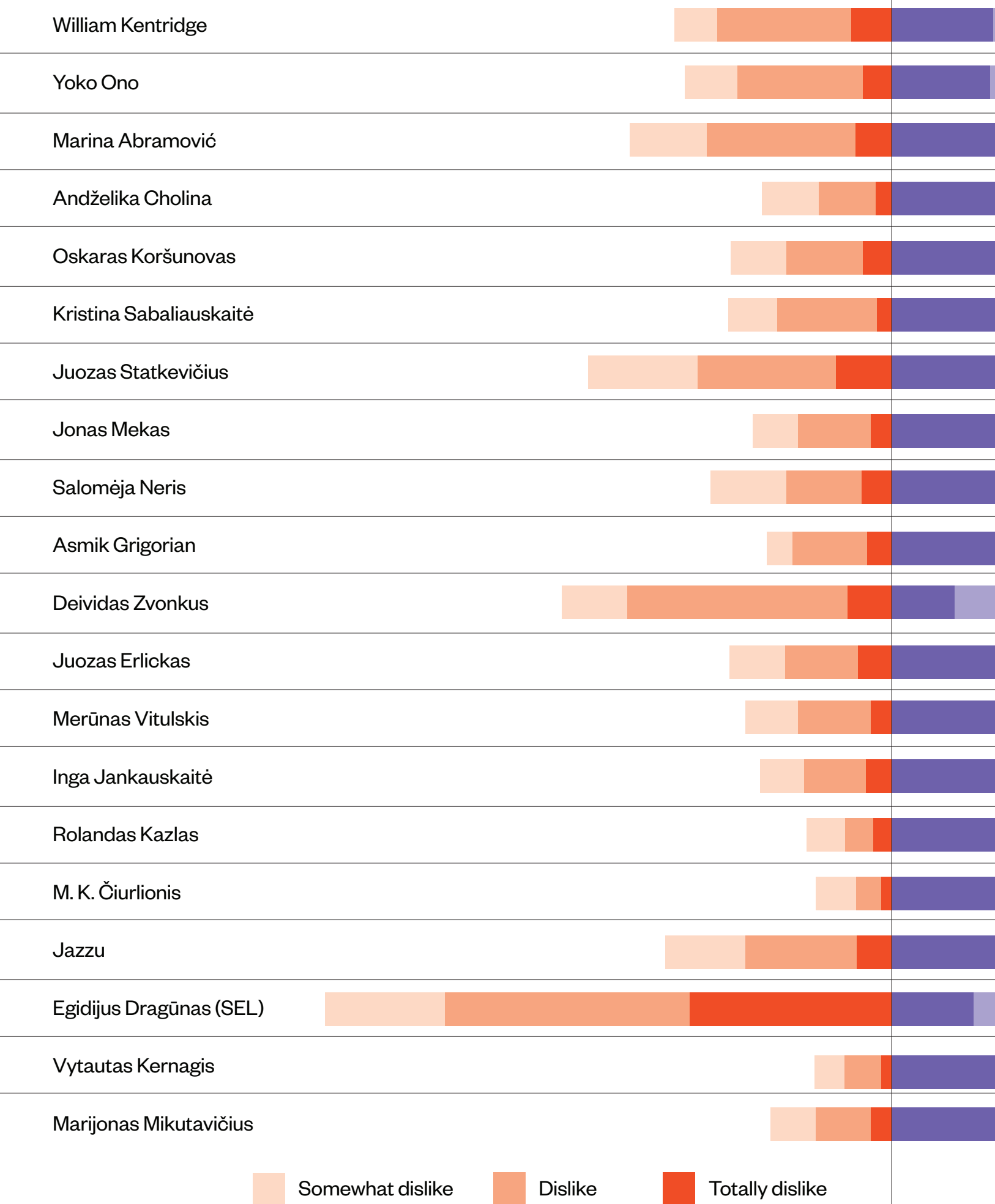
people from the widest possible range of social backgrounds ('Vegetables and carbs every day!') is complex and even controversial in a way. They are not mutually reinforcing goals; there is some inherent contradiction between them. Despite its socio-economic ambitions, Kaunas 2022 is first and foremost a cultural intervention. The cultural offerings it produced were most easily accessed by Kaunas residents who had accumulated the

*"I can feel a general air that the opening up, the openness to different works, different phenomena, has really taken off in Kaunas. People are more open, there is more enthusiasm towards culture. I think a sort of massaging has taken place..."*

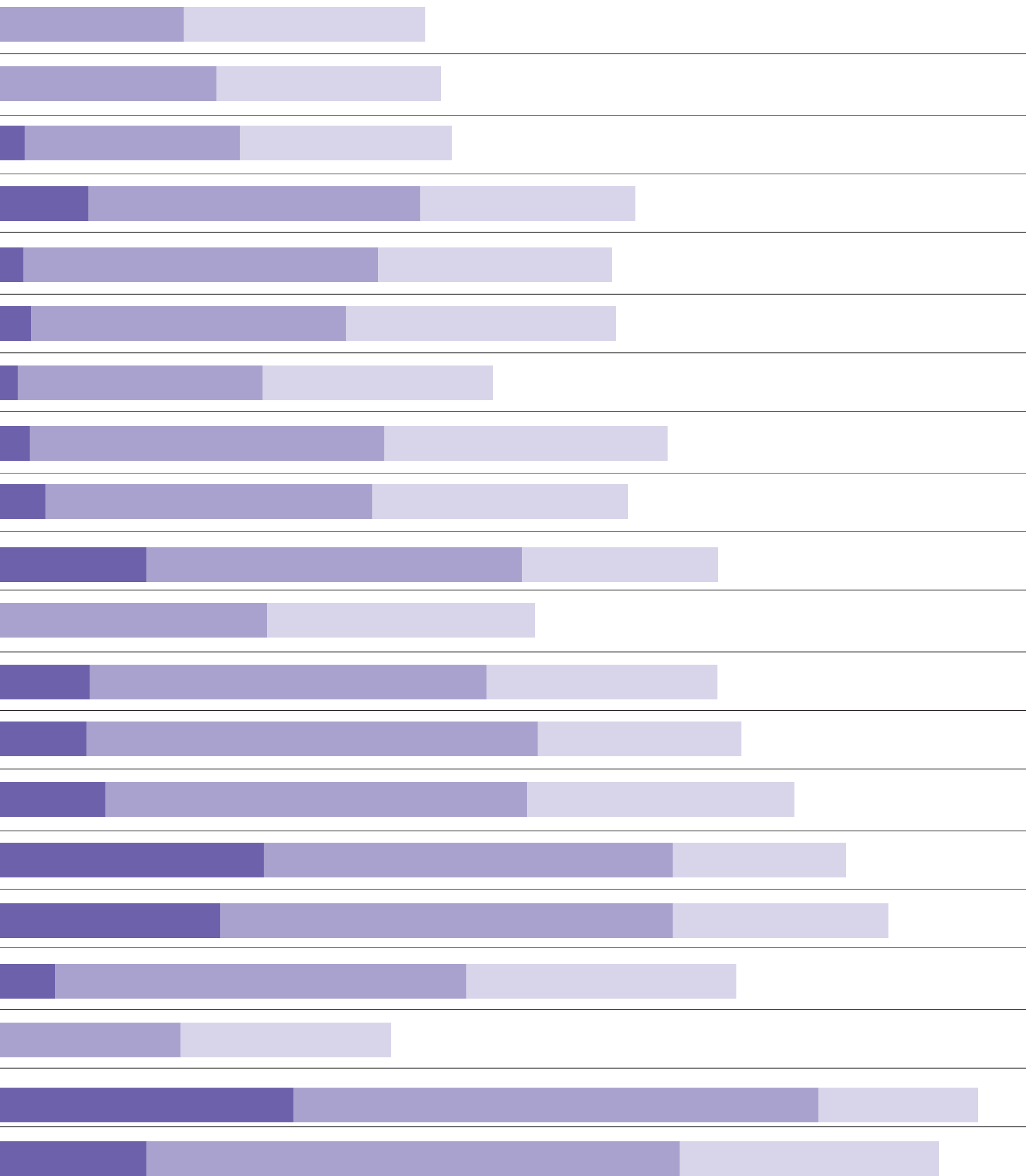
most cultural capital, who were already good at combining a variety of cultural diets, but who could also recognise the 'desserts' of high culture. To give these people a slightly more distinctive face, let's call them lovers of Jonas Mekas or Oskaras Koršunovas. Kaunas 2022 has tapered the personal pyramids of cultural nutrition of such high-culture lovers by supplementing them with the work of William Kentridge and Marina Abramović. In their nutritional pyramids,

there is also room for Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Anželika Cholina and Yoko Ono. Kaunesians who most actively attended Kaunas 2022 events mark their place in the boundless space of tastes by recognising and appreciating these artists' work in particular.

# Pyramid of Kaunesians' artistic taste<sup>60</sup>



<sup>60</sup>Source: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, 2022.



Totally like    Like    Somewhat like

The palette of Kaunas 2022 attendees' tastes is quite wide and includes Vytautas Kernagis, Asmik Grigorian and Kristina Sabaliauskaitė. A handful of other popular figures such as Juozas Statkevičius, Rolandas Kazlas and Marijonas Mikutavičius are also significant, albeit slightly muted, markers of Kaunas 2022 audience's taste. Such a wide range of creators demonstrates the repertoire of tastes that Kaunas 2022 programme events were successfully able to cater to. However, just as with

taste in food, cultural taste is only meaningful when it delineates certain boundaries. Sweet vs. bitter; sour vs. salty. Both cannot be meaningfully experienced at the same time. The name of the poet Juozas Erlickas marks the boundary of the programme attendees' taste palate. Beyond this boundary lie other names that are important for understanding the cultural tastes of Kaunesians and of Lithuania as a whole: the poet Salomėja Neris, the singers Deividas Zvonkus, Merūnas Vitulskis,

*“The news that Kaunas would already be the Capital of Culture took my breath away. I thought ‘Really? We are the European... Capital of Culture? We can afford it...’ And then, little by little, that genie of creativity came out from all the nooks and crannies... And we thought about audiences: ‘will anyone help us bring them in?’”*



Inga Jankauskaitė, Jazzu and Egidijus Dragūnas, better known by some only under his alias 'SEL'. The Kaunas 2022 event crowd were not distinguishable by inclination towards these singers' work.

One could get into a heated discussion: should and could the programme have included people with tastes falling within the boundaries of 'low culture'? Is it possible to 'save face' by covering all the lengths and breadths of cultural expression? However, we would not want to get involved in such discussions, because the only stable starting ground for them is our own attitudes regarding culture, value and taste. The Kaunas 2022 crowd also stood out for its attitudes. Although the programme had a more pronounced 'serious culture' consumer profile, Kaunesians primarily interested in entertainment also found something on offer at the programme's events. When it comes to fundamental perceptual differences about art, such as the questions 'Does art have to be beautiful?', and 'Is it necessary to know more about it to experience it?',

the Kaunas 2022 crowd is no different from other Kaunesians. In other words, the programme has found something to suit both the more conservative consumers of culture and those looking for innovative expression. However, in general, the thirst for innovation and the general importance of self-expression in life set Kaunas 2022 programme attendees apart from other Kaunesians. Perhaps predictably, these people are more likely than others to feel 'in the right place' in Kaunas's cultural institutions and their events. However, in the face of improving assessments of cultural life, a somewhat less predictable change is the slightly increased proportion of Kaunesians, in the title-holding year, who say that the art and events of cultural institutions in Kaunas are not for 'people like me'. For cultural institutions and organisations, Kaunas 2022 has created an opportunity to learn a lot more about the Kaunesian audience and to test new ways of developing a relationship with them. Yet, the work of gaining the attention of the most culturally marginalised people continues.

# Solid Foundation for Self-Confidence

The insights presented here make us think about the deeper meaning of subjective assessments of cultural life, both when participating in it and observing it from the sidelines. Sociologists who study human behaviour have long observed that people are primarily inclined towards what is available to them. Each of us has a sense of our place in the social world written into our personal histories. Thus, attitudes about what is 'one's own' and 'foreign' in cultural life are influenced not only by the efforts of the cultural sector, but also by the most abstract

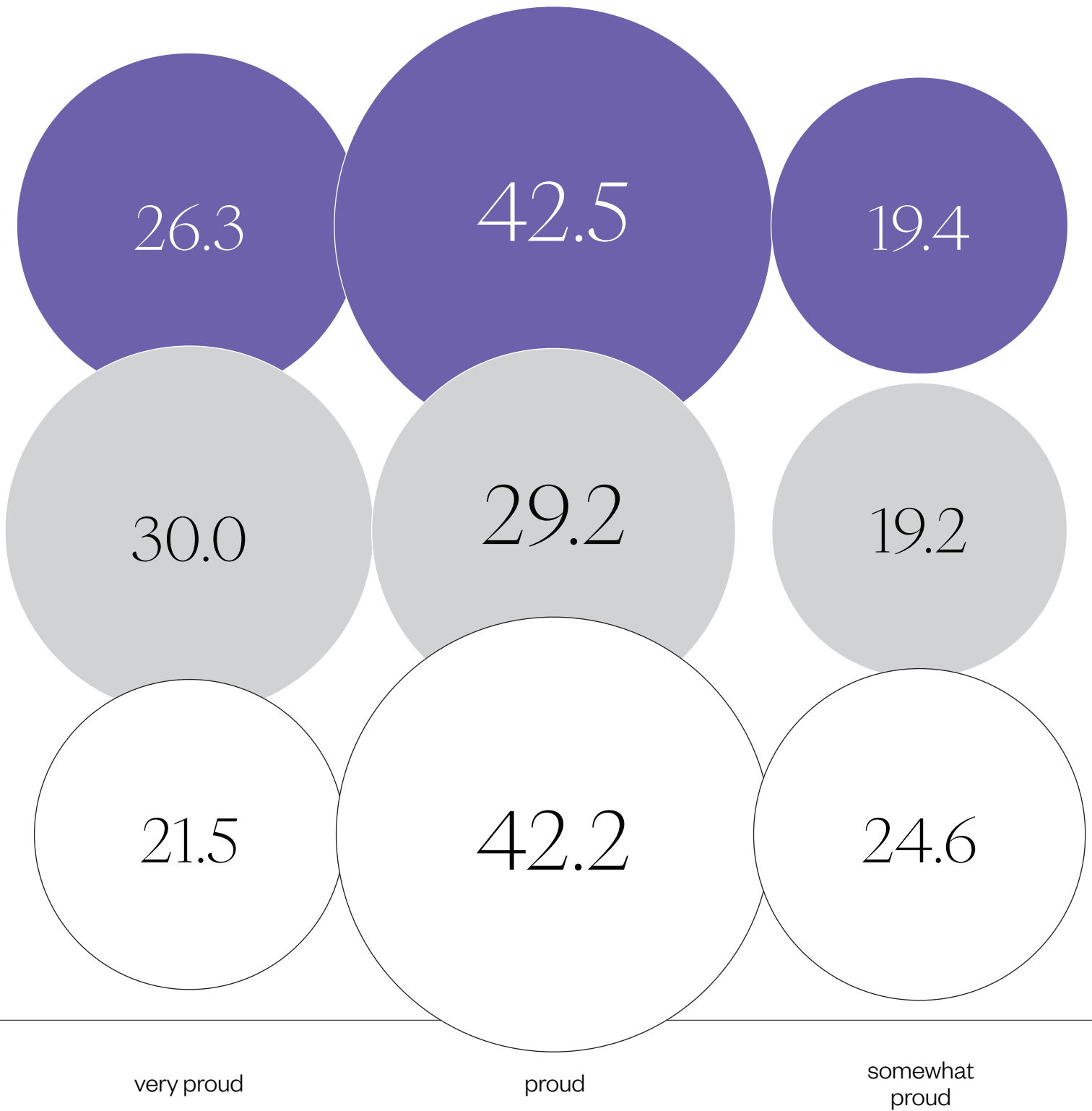
structural forces that affect all our lives. The assessment of cultural life made by an evaluator is not only a reflection of their objective experiences, but also of their social status. Kaunas 2022 has succeeded in reaching people who spend their leisure time in very different ways, and the circle of Kaunesians attending cultural events has expanded considerably as a result. However, the enrichment of Kaunesians' cultural life is not the only achievement that should be considered when assessing who benefits from this diversity of cultural experiences and how.

*“It’s really like everybody says, that pride has definitely remained. And it’s good that the project actually succeeded. You can still say ‘Oh, we did it better than Vilnius.’ [everyone laughs] That’s the most important thing.”*

Differences in cultural capital and in the opportunities for realising it exist not only within cities but also between cities. They are particularly evident in Lithuania, where the concentration of cultural content is particularly high. People with more cultural resources particularly value the opportunity to meet their cultural needs in the city where they live, which has implications for both quality of life and identification with the city. Ultimately, it changes the way city inhabitants see themselves and their own city, and also how outsiders see it. In the fierce struggle to win over the middle class, which brings in the highest tax revenues to municipal budgets, such shifts in image also have

economic implications. Kaunesians and city's visitors who attended Kaunas 2022 events see Kaunas as an up-and-coming, community-orientated and welcoming city. However, visitors to the city who have a more reserved view of Kaunas' hospitality than Kaunesian event attendees. However, in this dimension, as in many others, the assessments of the visitors attracted by Kaunas 2022 are more favourable than those of the average Kaunesian. This shows that cultural activities that attract visitors to the city and the district enhance the city's image. These activities provide a solid foundation for having confidence in one's own city.

Are you proud to be a Kaunesian? (% of all responses)<sup>61</sup>

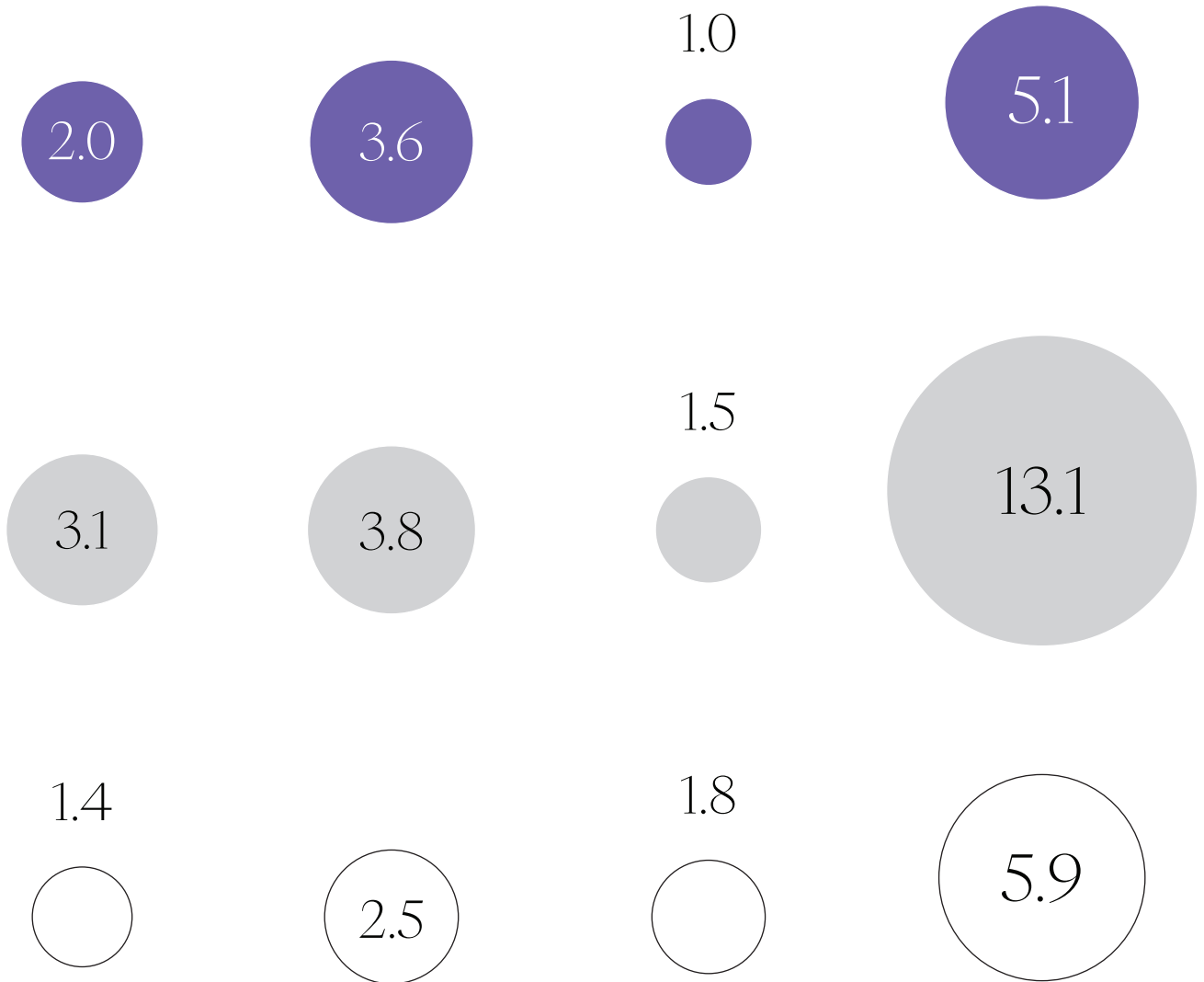


<sup>61</sup>Sources: Kaunas City and District Population Survey, and Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey ('Are you proud to be a Kaunesian?'), 2022.

2021 population Survey

Event attendees' survey

2022 population survey



somewhat not proud

not proud

not at all proud

do not know / cannot answer



Talking about confidence, it should be noted that Kaunas is not a city whose inhabitants lack self-pride. Kaunesians' love for their city is best reflected in the language they use when asked to describe Kaunas. This confidence is also supported by the county's economy, which has been strengthening over the last decade. This growth gives a sense of change which may be leading

somewhere unknown but is met with optimism. 'Kaunas is changing. And for the better.' The city's inhabitants often use such modernist motifs to talk about the future and express pride in their city. 2022 was a challenging year for Kaunas, with other events taking place in addition to the European Capital of Culture, such as the political campaign for the municipal elections, which also reflected

citizens' attitudes towards their city. This year, Kaunesians' pride in their city has somewhat wavered. Nevertheless, Kaunas 2022 eventgoers maintained their pride. Kaunas 2022 has injected this pride with a new content, which is something that cultural sector workers, who have worked hard all these years, can rightly be proud of.

*“It has really strengthened our pride as cultural professionals. We have our partners and we feel our own power – we know what we can do.”*

How would you describe Kaunas in one word? How would you describe it in a few words?<sup>62</sup>



<sup>62</sup> Source: Kaunas and City District Population Survey, 2022. Some of the wordcloud's most prominent keywords (translated into English) include: Kaunas, city, beautiful, green, cosy, is, mine, amazing, modern, Lithuanian.

uoselejantis, neiškirto, perspektyvus, iškastas, nacionalistinis, reikia, kamščiai, turtingas, besikeičiantis, kasdien, uviškias, lenkia, atžvilgiu, krepšinio, saugi, fantastiškas, rūpinasi, tylus, šaunus, informatyvus, susisiekimai, margas, konservatyvus, senosios, mūsų, išlaikantis, namai, lėtas, skatinantis, užsiimti, šaligatviai, primena, sveikatos, orientuotusi, tvirtas, greitai, nieko, atnaujėja, anūku, rotušė, pažangus, verslo, augau, bėk, smagu, ažuolynas, stilingas, tikras, modernėjantis, neidomus, super, nuolat, laikinoji, saugoti, objektyvūs, nepatenkinti, mokytis, klausimais, patrauklus, brangstantis, amžius, dar, net, nes, esu, aplink, tarpukario, visom, tuštybės, kas, vyksta, tremtyje, mentalitetas, brangus, aplankyti, besitvarkantis, jaunėjantis, duobėtas, išsaugojęs, kompaktiškas, išpūdingas, išpuoselėtas, infrastruktūra, baigiau, atgimstantis, pragyvenimo, nerūpi..., plika, ryžingi, verslus, didingas, nutiko, sauktukas, paslaugų, ura, kažkiek, kelis, įkuriant, studijoms, bambos, nešvarus, žodyje, kalbantys, praleidau, karmas, sječiausias, pilkas, itin, senaji, virš, daktaro, pensininkas, jog, mokhikanais, kūnas, viešosios, negali, jau, leidžiantis, prisitaikantis, tikslų, nepasakė, karto, meile! praktiški, juokio, lipantys, nenorėčiau, disciplinuotas, gerbūvio, pasaulyje, senamiestis, atbundantis, sportiškas, dabarties, šventemis, nuomone, sirdis, idomus, aptverti, atsinaujinantis, kietas! automobiliais, paskutiniu, išgražėjęs, igūdžių, nors, besiplečiantis, komentary, juokų, pėsčiųjų, baltas, būklė, beveik, kaunastic, nesustabojęs, studentų, nežinau, paveldą, nuo, parkų, vietų, chaotiškas, visas, gyvenimui, šaip, korumpuotas, sutrikęs, nesutarantis, tamptantis, sugėdintas, klaidėdos, stokojantis, neturintis, nerąšytas, siekiantis, pasturiniai, centras, šviesus, pasakyti, eismas, siela, per, daugiausiai, veiklus, antras, paprastas, pats, kitam, jame, kitur, negaliems, jėga, visais, kurti, kalta, sporto, skirtas, linijoms, prasmėmis, pastuosius, zoosodas, emocijas, lengvai, šiuolaikiškas, ramus, sporto, kalnuota, inertiškas, išlikusi, pažinusi, karjeros, nueiti, siūlantys, kartais, nauji, bibliotekos, vieningas, išvaizdas, žydintis, tobulėjantis, didesniųjų, laisvas, brangiausias, institucijos, aukščiau, renginių, saugantis, daugiau, vertybes, stiprėjantis, visi, kur, gerai, viskas, darbuotojų, amžiaus, pagerejo, bruožų, atgijęs, aikštelių, komplekso, kuo, lopšys, Matijošaitis, marozų, tačiau, pakilo, sutvarkytas, atskirpinto, liūdnas, inkorporuojama, sodas, axujenas, daryti, potencialo, senovės, alėja, derinys, neįtikėtina, atsikraučius, parduotuvių, proveržis, stengiamasi, noriai, reikalingi, tuščias, taisykles, klubų, pašokti,









First Fluxus climb up Parodos Hill. 2018



DRAWING  
CONCLU-  
SIONS

Kaunas 2022 is a cultural intervention, so its impact is first and foremost visible in Kauneseans' transformed cultural life. However, the abundance of cultural offerings has also influenced the way citizens see and talk about their city. It also attracted guests from other parts of Lithuania and Europe, as well as the world. Kaunas 2022 built bridges, but only in the metaphorical sense of the word. Although cultural interventions are economically much more modest compared to the actual construction of bridges and streets, their impact on the value of material and human assets is also visible. But has this impact lived up to ambitions and expectations? Are they sustainable? These are political issues and a matter of speculating about the future, the only grounds for which are value-based. In keeping with the promise made in the introduction to stop at the point where the facts end and only interpretations remain, we will refrain from being tempted to offer our own value judgements. We all have our own versions of how we see Europe, Lithuania, Kaunas City or Kaunas District. More narrowly, we also have our own versions of cultural policy. And, even more specifically, our own ideas of what institutions in positions of power should and should not do in the field of culture. These attitudes are important. Perhaps they are even the most important thing in any political debate on issues such as 'What was the impact of Kaunas 2022?' Rather than giving our own version of the answer to this straightforward question, we will conclude with ten statements that summarise the facts presented here so far. We will do this by posing four questions that we hope will help you to discuss Kaunas 2022 and draw deeper conclusions about the impact of this or other cultural initiatives.

# Has Kaunas 2022 Changed Lithuania?

This question may sound a bit silly, arrogant or unreasonably provocative. But this change in scale helps us to turn thinking on its head and activate the imagination. Considering that 14.4% of the population of Lithuania lives in Kaunas City and Kaunas District, and that Kaunas 2022 events were well-attended by people from all over Lithuania, the question may not appear so arrogant. But the main idea behind it is different. In assessing this cultural initiative, one should distinguish its impact, or lack thereof, from the overall impact of the country's cultural policy on the sector's capacity. The truth is that, during these years, there have

been no significant structural changes in regional cultural policy in Lithuania. The most tangible manifestation of centralised cultural policy is a state cultural infrastructure that does not meet the needs of contemporary cultural activities. The essential projects for adapting cultural infrastructure to the programme, which are quite typical of European Capital of Culture interventions, have not been implemented in Kaunas. And even though the symbolic burden of the European Capital of Culture has not been used to test or activate structural reforms,

*I: the Kaunas 2022 programme discursively influenced Lithuanian cultural policy.*

The experiences generated by the programme are reflected in policymakers' statements about the programme's successful elements. This impact is only intensified when considering the fact that some of the people who oversaw the initiative at its inception were later invited to form the cabinet of the Ministry of Culture. These links between Kaunas 2022 and cultural policymakers make raising the question of its impact on Lithuania

entirely appropriate. How long the political imagination activated by the Kaunas 2022 programme will remain in place is anyone's guess. But it is an undeniable fact that this programme has discursively influenced the country's cultural policy. Another undeniable fact is that, during the preparatory years, not a single project for renovating public cultural infrastructure was completed in Kaunas. On the contrary, the renovation of the M. Žilinskas Art

Gallery of the National M. K. Čiurlionis Museum of Art started precisely during the title-holding year, when there was a great shortage of event venues. Thus, in terms of possibilities for changing the way the country's cultural policy is generally perceived, efforts have been limited to activating the imagination and creating new experiences, which have 'sedimented' in the political discourse on culture.

Kaunas 2022 operated against the backdrop of the rather unchanging realities of Lithuanian cultural policy, but this did not prevent it from making

an impact that was not only local but also national in its significance. The programme's main success factor lies in the city's abundant cultural resources, which had previously been unnoticed, undervalued and underused at a national level. The programme creators have wisely directed their limited resources towards activating these cultural resources. As the First Republic's capital, the city has a rich heritage of national importance.

At least two other programme impacts of national importance can be identified:

*II: Kaunas modernist architecture is recognised as a heritage of European value;*

*III: the memory of the Jewish people has been brought back into the city's memory.*

Kaunas's historical status as the capital of the First Republic of Lithuania gave the programme the opportunity to influence not only the city's but also the national self-image through cultural and creative interventions. The city's symbolic power has been strengthened by rethinking its history in the light of today's values. This encourages a shift in the overall national self-image, which still lacks room for a multidimensional

understanding of citizenship. In acknowledging these impacts, it is also important to understand how fragile their continuity may be. Not only should they be further sustained by the continuation of similar activities, but also by the state's cultural heritage protection and historical memory policies.

# Has Kaunas 2022 Changed Kaunas and Its Surrounding District? And What About Vilnius or Klaipėda?

Let us change the scale of our generalisations by one unit, moving from the national to the regional level, where the best proof of the Kaunas 2022 programme's success is 'Vilnius 700', organised by Vilnius in response. Their programme directly responds to the Kaunas 2022 narrative, positioning the capital as 'old but young'. The programme is therefore not just a simple celebration of the city's founding

anniversary. It creates an opposition to Kaunas' contemporary statement of 'modernism'. Vilnius reacts. This means that the city's strategists and marketers see the success of Kaunas, and thus the need to update and mobilise the city's symbolic resources in the race for the city's economic and cultural dominance in the country. And there is plenty to fight for. In this race, the Kaunas 2022 programme

## *IV: strengthened Kaunesians' identification with Europe.*

Such identity transformations have, above all, national and regional significance. The population of the city and district municipalities that have received large financial injections from Europe is growing slowly but surely. This attracts the most economically active taxpayers. However, as in other major Lithuanian cities, Kaunas is experiencing a rapid movement towards Kaunas District, the latter

being the biggest economic winner of these transformations. Since the announcement of the nomination winner, there has been not only a faster growth in population but also in employment. As we celebrate the region's economic success, we need to understand that where there are clear winners, there are also losers. In this game, this includes the country's other regions, as well as the seaside region that missed out on



the European Capital of Culture title. So here we are talking not only about the creation of well-being, but also about its redistribution within the country.

In the race for economic dominance, the nomination of Kaunas as European Capital of Culture provided an opportunity to activate the imagination of urban cultural policy. In a country where local governments, especially in the big cities, invest very little in culture, this was a unique opportunity. These realities also have a European dimension. In Lithuania, the financial

autonomy of local governments, which enjoy great political independence, is extremely limited. Therefore, any external financial instrument that can bring about tangible changes in people's lives, and thus score political points, attracts local governments' attention. European Union structural funding, without which the economic and social recovery that Lithuania has seen in recent decades would be unthinkable, is one of the forces that draw resources away from the cultural sector. Therefore, the outstanding achievements of the ECoC programme include the notable

*V: role of the cultural sector in regional development policy;*

*VI: creation of large-scale examples of localised cultural interventions.*

In discussing Kaunas 2022's successes and failures, we should also continue to consider the structural circumstances that affect the city's and the district's cultural sector opportunities. In recent decades, the local cultural sector has suffered greatly in the fight for resources. This battle is being won by sectors that are more intensively covered by the EU's support, which requires co-financing. Kaunas 2022's achievements are therefore exceptional and can serve as a reference point for cultural policy

imagination. The truth is that some of the sustainability of the impact observed today can only be achieved by rethinking Lithuania's cultural policy more broadly. When discussing issues such as citizens' self-perception, their identification with the place in which they live, their social and cultural capital, and their capacity to mobilise for collective action, we need to acknowledge that this is not just a matter of abstractly perceived 'historically shaped' culture, but also a possible outcome of cultural policy.

# Has Kaunas 2022 Changed the Cultural Sector?

One of the smallest budgets of the Capitals of Culture is also a sign of the low political interest in this initiative. The decision to implement the programme was not driven by the ambition of achieving systemic change. Therefore, the programme was not burdened with the political agendas of local or central government. This allowed for a free approach, with the cultural professionals who shaped the programme being focused on implementing their vision. No attention at all is sometimes better than overbearing attention. This principle is widely applied in the cultural sector, which produces its best creative results when content is shielded from political influence. Our evaluation presented here shows that, to make use of sporting terminology, the local cultural sector has demonstrated 'top form', and that Kaunas 2022 can be described as a successful programme. The lack of political interest was apparently one of the recipes for Kaunas 2022's success. For the local intellectuals who designed the programme, this gave them the freedom to interpret and reshape their city's narrative, and mobilised the cultural sector, thereby resulting in

## *VII: stronger solidarity and ties within the local cultural sector.*

As the excitement of the ECoC events fades, one can perceive a sense of uncertainty about the future of cultural life in Kaunas in the words of cultural sector workers as well as in the event attendees' feedback. Will the sector maintain its momentum? And the quality? After the Covid-19 pandemic that rocked everyone's lives and the unexpected outbreak of war, we are probably all more critical of any attempt to predict the future. However, this does not absolve us of the responsibility to imagine that future. In a sense, Kaunas 2022 has made it possible not only to envision that future, but also to see it today. The initiative acted as a kind of time machine, showing what the

outcomes of more intensively funded regional cultural interventions could look like. Whether they will continue to be enjoyed by the inhabitants of Kaunas and other regions will depend on political decisions. The surplus of events in the title-holding year showed that the city's cultural capacity would be sufficient to meet the cultural needs of the regions that lack it. And if this momentum is not wasted, cultural capacity can continue to be harnessed for a wide range of purposes, including social and economic ones.

Knowing that the intervention has had a successful impact does not mean that its meaning cannot be debated. The need

for such debate will remain. Perhaps a professional committed to working in the cultural sector has missed the focus on high culture in the programme, while a community activist has been pleased by the recognition of the social value he or she is creating. Perhaps a cautious Eurosceptic is concerned about the programme's impact on local identity, while a committed Euro-enthusiast sees in it the promise of a new, peace-building, European identity. One could list countless similar or diametrically opposite value positions and oppositions. They are worth discussing and need to be discussed further. However, in this debate, it is useful to recall the facts about what

new or hitherto little-used practices the programme has brought to the cultural sector, and how these practices have changed people's attitudes and behaviour. The wealth and quality of events created by Kaunas 2022 has not gone unnoticed in the city, the district and beyond. The programme has drawn on the cultural capacities, tastes and needs of local communities in the city and the district. It brought to the cultural sector methods of working with local communities and creative practices of place-making that had hardly been used in Lithuania before. Among the stream of experiences created by Kaunas 2022, the following stand out:

*VIII: new knowledge of creative practices that mobilise the social capital of local communities;*

*IX: increased satisfaction with cultural life in the city and the district.*

The initiatives implemented during the programme provide opportunities for discussing the practical advantages or disadvantages of such initiatives. This debate will, of course, always be accompanied by value judgements about what culture should be and for whom. It is worth staying sober and recognising that there are some issues that are not affected by these or any cultural interventions in general. By themselves, these interventions do not eradicate poverty and social injustice, prevent incurable diseases or stop war. But they do have an impact on the mobilisation of the population, on local identity and quality of life. Kaunas 2022 mobilised not only the city's and district's audiences, but also audiences in Lithuania and abroad. During the title-holding year, Kaunas has become a cultural tourism destination and the

cultural sector is well-placed to maintain this role.

We could end our conclusions with these fine words, but there is a personal cost to all these achievements. The fact that the achievements are so clearly visible despite the European Capital of Culture's record low budget means that someone else has had to bear the cost. This toll resounds in the voices of cultural workers, in which one can find traces of burnout and fatigue, but also of pride in one's work. The initiative's budget is indicative not only of the low political interest expressed at the beginning of the nomination negotiations, but also of the lack of trust in the cultural sector. This mistrust also had an administrative component, which further burdened the implementation of the programme's activities. So, as we celebrate the

impact of Kaunas 2022 and continue debating the lessons of the programme, it is also worth asking metaphorically who remains indebted to whom for the programme's achievements? A few ideas emerge from looking at the budget structures and sizes for the nominated cities that have celebrated comparable achievements. Perhaps Lithuania owes at least one piece of infrastructure renovated to modern standards to a city that has promoted the country's name in Europe and the world? Perhaps the municipal and central governments owe better conditions for cultural sector workers? It seems that this sector, that was so distrusted at the beginning of the nomination, has ended up owing nothing to anyone. We could go on and on, but the answers to these and similar questions indeed verge on the beginning of a political debate.

# Has the Evaluation Study Changed the Researchers?

We would like to conclude with what we started with: a reflective look at ourselves. And although the concluding remarks here will not be as important as those made earlier, we think it is worth summarising them with at least one statement. We often think of researchers' work as a practice strictly limited by professional conventions. However, any research is also a creative process. It is true that the choices here are much more limited than in artistic practices, but the creative self-reflection

required in this work is no less. However, the final outcome of such work depends heavily on the collective experience, the interpretive and communicative acumen of the researcher, and the quantity and quality of the data available to them. Each new research experience unleashes new possibilities for talking not only about people's experiences, but also about the social forces that influence them. Reflecting again on more than two years of our work, we see that

*X: Kaunas 2022 monitoring and evaluation activities have generated valuable practical knowledge.*

In auspicious circumstances, this knowledge could be further used to deepen the sector's reflexivity. The truth is that in applied research funded by people working on very practical problems, there are rarely opportunities for looking deeper beyond the practical reality of the research donor. In this respect, we are very fortunate. From the very beginning of the research, we have been given quite a lot of freedom to suggest ways of finding out as much as we can about Kaunesians' everyday life within the given constraints. We also had the confidence that we would find a way to talk about the impact of Kaunas 2022 in the most interesting way. This helped us overcome the practical difficulties

inherent in such research. We are very grateful for this freedom and confidence, because this is what allowed us to arrive at our research's most interesting claims. This research has become a unique experience that has profoundly changed us as professionals. Experts with specific professional interests can read more about our research methodology in the annex to this study. Some of the research strategies were applied for the first time in Lithuania and some of them are also novel in European capitals' evaluation studies. We hope that they will influence research practices in this field. And finally, we would like to conclude this narrative by sharing a few of the most general tips.

# Three Tips: What to Do and What Not to Do in European Capitals of Culture Evaluation Studies?

Assessing Capitals of Culture is a professional challenge. In solidarity with our colleagues who will face this challenge in the future, we would like to offer a few tips on what to do and what not to do in conducting this type of evaluation. In applied evaluation studies, it is difficult to come up with statistically valid but qualitatively nuanced narratives about people's experiences. One of the most common reasons for this is the evolving cultural policy expectations, which translate into a technical imperative to include

an ever-greater variety of topics in the narrative and to talk about the impact of the cultural sector using data that are ever-greater in quantity, more diverse, and increasingly quantitative. As a result, such research increasingly chases after what is immeasurable or difficult to measure. Just as at the beginning of this research, so too upon its completion, we remain sceptical about this fetishisation of quantitative data. We therefore encourage our colleagues who will be evaluating other European Capitals of Culture in the future:

*I: Do not be consumed by data – focus more on analysis.*

We would suggest that planners of future Capitals of Culture weigh carefully the relationship between data collection and analysis or evaluation, buying only those data that are essential for managing the initiative or that can be successfully used for evaluating specific events, and allocate at least a third of the monitoring and evaluation budget to data analysis. The picture painted by quantitative data should be complemented by qualitative narratives inspired by this data. Our research budget did not allow us to apply more qualitative research methods. However, they are essential for an in-depth understanding of the impact of cultural

interventions. It must be understood that the growing external expectation to saturate narratives with quantitative data also influences which narratives become possible or impossible. This, in turn, affects how culture is talked about, and how the efforts of people working in the sector are valued or not valued. As expectations rise, research budgets tend to remain stable, often to the detriment of the depth and quality of the storytelling.

Each European Capital of Culture is unique, but no evaluation of a single one of them would be complete without a deeper understanding of

cultural behaviour, as it is only through changes in cultural behaviour that other social and economic impacts can be substantiated. We have focused the limited resources of our own evaluation research on this topic, and we suggest that future researchers or commissioners of their work do the same. In Lithuania, quantitative research of this kind has so far primarily served bureaucratic needs. It is no coincidence that the main focus of such studies is the performance of cultural institutions. Seen in this way, people who do not visit cultural institutions remain voiceless and faceless. We designed our research



instruments so that our narrative would reflect people's broader leisure time, where culture as practised in a narrowly institutionalised way occupies only a small portion of time. How (and for what reason) people spend their leisure time, how much of it they have, whether exposure to the programme influences people's attitudes – this is the context in which we propose, to the evaluators of the future Capitals of Culture, to interpret what we call 'cultural' behaviours. No matter what the political fashions would suggest, we advise that you should:

## *II: Focus on the diversity of cultural behaviours – everything else can wait, if push comes to shove.*

Applied research of this kind is heavily influenced by ever-evolving expectations of cultural policy outcomes. Mutterings about the social and economic value of cultural behaviour are the orthodox and widely practised mantra of these policies. Many applied researchers will have to deal with its soporific content in one way or another. For researchers who need to measure social impacts, we suggest using social identity, social distance or other well-tested instruments. Their application in our evaluation study has proved to be more successful than attempts to develop new instruments directly tailored to Kaunas 2022's objectives. When evaluating economic impacts, we suggest being extra cautious and keeping an eye on how these evaluations are influenced by the prevailing policy discourse, as well as by available and unavailable quantitative data.

It must be acknowledged that cultural behaviour and its relationship to socio-economic structures is a very niche topic in the academic world and in the consultancy market. In a country the size of a major European city, such as Lithuania, there is little such niche knowledge. The cities participating in this initiative often pursue a wide variety of objectives, which adds to the challenges of mobilising the knowledge needed for evaluating them. This is something that planners of future Capitals of Culture should think about. It should be weighed up whether the monitoring and evaluation budget allows for a high-quality evaluation of the level of achievement of all objectives. A prudent use of the evaluation budget should stipulate only proceeding to a new research topic after having completed a sufficiently in-depth examination of a more important one.

Appreciating the value of our own discipline in dealing with such research challenges, we encourage prospective commissioners of future research to

*III: discover urban and cultural sociology instead of relying on shamans.*

However passionate we may be about the value created by the cultural sector, its social impact is not easily observed. As for the impact of cultural interventions, it must be acknowledged that cultural behaviour also depends on social and economic structures. One of the aims of this research was to link the experience of Kaunas 2022 events to the reflections on them observable in Kaunesians of all different economic, social and cultural capacities. We hope that these data analysis practices – still novel within the Lithuanian cultural sector – will help to improve monitoring habits, better understand current and future audiences, and improve the culture of relationships with these audiences. To obtain such value requires trust in qualified and reflective researchers and an openness to the unexpected turns in the narrative they offer. The truth is that in the European

consultancy and academic market one can encounter shamans offering to meet almost any expectation of an impact evaluation narrative. Such narratives often become mere reflections of the institutions that wield power. We therefore wish researchers of future Capitals of Culture, and their donors, professional interactions based on reflexivity and freedom of expression, in which there is always room for doubt. Only in such a relationship can the truth about the European Capitals of Culture be born and be of value to the public debate on this and other cultural interventions. And it is only in such a relationship that the efforts of cultural workers, who have put in a lot of hard work during the title-holding years, can be properly recognised. As a token of appreciation for their hard work, we end this story with the warmest words of gratitude from the people of Kaunas.

What message would you like to leave for the event organisers?<sup>63</sup>



<sup>63</sup> Source: Kaunas 2022 Event Attendees' Survey, 2022. Some of the wordcloud's most prominent keywords (translated into English) include: thank you, more, Kaunas, very, homey, culture, events, many, more beautiful, Lithuanian, great.

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# Kaunas 2022 Team

*Indrė Aleksandravičiūtė*

*Klaudija Aleksandravičiūtė*

*Ugnė Aleksiejūnaitė*

*Lukas Alsys*

*Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė*

*Dalia Arlauskienė*

*Laura Auksutyte*

*Lukas Baltrušis Baltrušaitis*

*Irmantas Baltūsis*

*Gediminas Banaitis*

*Renata Bartusevičiūtė*

*Giedrė Bartusevičiūtė-Rimkienė*

*Rūta Basnevičiūtė*

*Miglė Blažauskienė*

*Tomas Brazys*

*Vaiša Marija Bružaitė*

*Tadas Bujanauskas*

*Agnė Buroviciene*

*Dovilė Butnoriūtė*

*Lina Chmieliauskienė*

*Justina Čebatavičiūtė*

*Asta Čičinė*

*Lina Daugėlaitė*

*Guoda Deksnytė*

*Dalius Drežinskas*

*Kęstutis Dulinskas*

*Gertrūda Eimutyte*

*Dominyka Ginelevičiūtė*

*Nojus Gipas*

*Brigita Glinskienė*

*Skirmantė Grigienė*

*Danė Grundienė*

*Vytis Gruzdis*

*Yuliia Hubina*

*Liubov Hubina*

*Saulė Igarytė*

*Monika Inčerytė*

*Daiša Jeremičienė*

*Austėja Jociūtė*

*Donata Jutkienė*

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*Goda Karbonskytė*

*Sandra Karnilavičiūtė*

*Evelina Kazėckienė*

*Egidija Kazickaitė*

*Linas Kazlauskas*

*Aurelija Kazlauskienė*

*Kęstutis Kazulis*

*Ieva Klimaitė*

*Greta Klimavičiūtė-Minkštimienė*

*Monika Klišytė*

*Ana Kočegarova-Maj*

*Lina Končiuvėinė*

*Greta Kontromavičiūtė*

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*Živilė Stankevičienė*  
*Alius Stankevičius*  
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*Sara Vitkutė*  
*Tadas Vižinis*  
*Lukas Zaveckas*  
*Rytis Zemkauskas*  
*Deimante Zutelienė*  
*Martynas Žabas*  
*Eglė Žemaitienė*  
*Patris Židelevičius*

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**Team:**  
Ana Kačegarova-Maj  
Kristina Laskauskaitė  
Viltė Migonytė-Petrulienė  
Povilas Mintautas  
Miglė Morkūnaitė-Vervečkienė  
Živilė Stankevičienė  
Ugnė Ugenskaitė-Joskaudė  
Vaida Venckutė-Nagė  
Virginija Vitkienė

**Researchers:**  
Tadas Šarūnas  
Raimundas Vaitkevičius  
Jorūnė Chraptavičiūtė

**Translator:**  
Skaistė Aleksandravičiūtė

**English language editors:**  
Andrzej Stuart-Thompson  
Skaistė Aleksandravičiūtė

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Eglė Simonavičiūtė  
Karolis Rūkas

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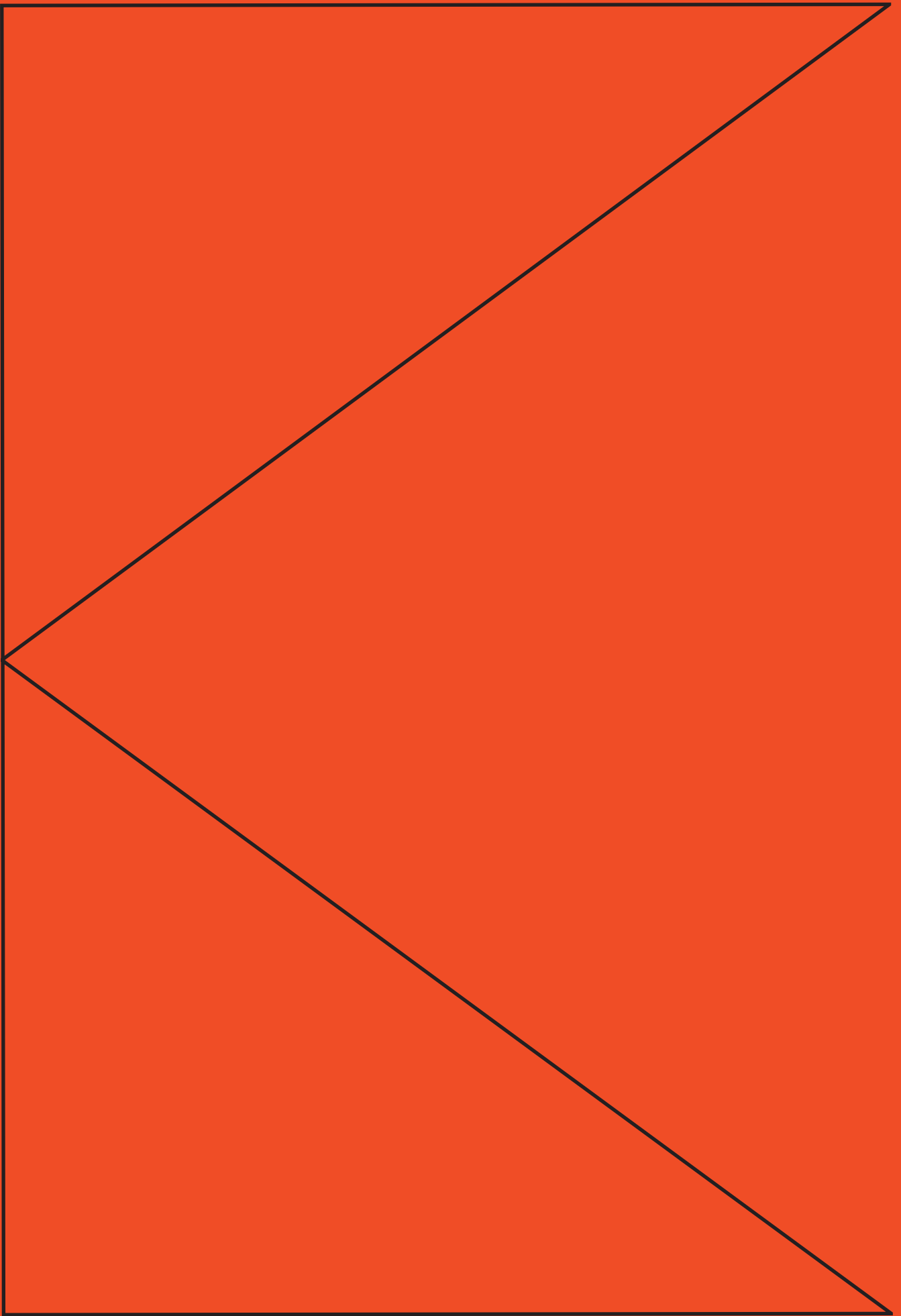
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From  
Contemporary to...



# Kaunas 2022: Investigation Report

presents a summary of the results of research and surveys carried out by the Kaunas 2022 public institution and 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022' project partners, based on activity report statistics carefully collected throughout the project. These data are complemented by research and regression analysis, based on national statistics data and population surveys, conducted by Mene, an external independent research institution. This publication, together with three methodology books presenting community engagement, youth empowerment and volunteering practices, forms part of a report series and complements the subjective compilation of memories, *Kaunas 2022: Body of Evidence*.