

2025 Barcelona Global

# International Talent Monitor<sup>®</sup>

A project by



Barcelona  
Global

With the support of

<sup>®</sup>Sabadell

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### **International Talent Monitor Team**

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## Forewords



**Xavier Comerma Carbonell**  
Deputy General Manager of Banc Sabadell  
Regional Manager of Catalonia

### **Barcelona, a City Ready to Lead the Future**

In previous editions of this report, we were pleased to note that Barcelona, thanks to the good work done by a number of institutions and organizations like Barcelona Global, had established itself as the best city in southern Europe to live and work. After two years of our last reunion, we have an excuse to celebrate the success once again. Our city has not only managed to maintain this privileged position as a hub for attracting international talent, but it has also improved it. Its economic dynamism, innovative ecosystem, and openness to international talent have turned the city into a benchmark for professionals from highly diverse backgrounds who have found here a fertile environment in which to develop both personally and professionally.

In this context, the International Talent Monitor, promoted by Barcelona Global and supported by Banc Sabadell since its first edition, has become an indispensable tool for understanding the real experience of those who choose Barcelona as the place to build their life project, Barcelonian by choice. Its biennial nature makes it possible to closely track the evolving perceptions of international talent and to rigorously identify both the city's strengths and its challenges. For Banc Sabadell, contributing to this study is a demonstration of our commitment to Barcelona and its global projection. We firmly believe that the ability to attract, retain, and integrate international talent is a decisive factor in economic and social progress. Listening to the community, understanding its needs, and supporting its integration are essential to further strengthening the city's competitiveness.

This commitment is fully reflected in our Barcelona Welcome Hub, a pioneering office within the Spanish banking system where, for the past four years, a team of specialized professionals has supported expatriates, investors, and international professionals by offering financial, tax, and legal advice to facilitate their arrival and integration into the city. It is also reflected in the more recent inauguration, also in Barcelona, of the BStartup Hub, a multifunctional space where we have brought together all the bank's talent in the service of start-ups. It aims to become a meeting point for the different spheres of innovation, entrepreneurship, and business, fostering collaboration, interaction, and exchange of knowledge and experiences. Ultimately, it is a new hub for generating value for our clients that will help make things happen and happen well.

The seventh edition of the International Talent Monitor offers us once again a direct and valuable perspective on how Barcelona is perceived by those who experience the city day by day. Its conclusions invite us to continue collaborating across institutions, businesses, and civil society to build an open, innovative Barcelona that is better prepared to compete in a global world. At Banc Sabadell, we reaffirm our commitment to continuing along this path. We believe in Barcelona, in its transformative potential, and in the richness brought by the international talent that chooses it. This study helps us moving forward and making better-informed decisions so that the city continues to be a place where opportunities flourish and where people can fully develop their potential



**Ramon Agenjo Bosch**  
President of  
Barcelona Global

## **Barcelona is a hub for global talent**

Barcelona is a city that inspires people to come, stay, and build. It is open and cosmopolitan by nature, with a distinctive mix of creativity, entrepreneurship and research that makes everyday life feel connected to something bigger. The International Talent Monitor 2025 confirms what many international professionals express in their own words: Barcelona is a place where people feel at home, where they can thrive personally and professionally, and where they are proud to recommend the city to others.

What makes Barcelona stand out is not one single feature, it's the balance of several strengths: a globally connected city with a strong quality of life, a vibrant cultural scene, and an energy that comes from a committed civil society and an entrepreneurial ecosystem that knows how to collaborate. This is the kind of environment where talent can grow, and where talent can create impact.

At the same time, if Barcelona wants to lead, it must be ambitious about the next chapter. International professionals are asking for a city that is not only attractive, but also easier to navigate and more affordable, especially in housing, and more competitive in salaries and overall conditions. They also want Barcelona to strengthen its global positioning beyond tourism, and to move faster on sustainability, cleaner air and a greener urban model.

Barcelona has everything it needs to be one of the best cities in the world for impactful talent: people who innovate, create, research, and contribute to a more prosperous, sustainable and inclusive society. Now is the moment to turn that potential into progress, by aligning the city's narrative and priorities with what talent needs to stay, grow, and help Barcelona lead.

I would like to thank Banc Sabadell for its support in making the 2025 International Talent Monitor possible, and GAPS, Understanding People, for their contribution to the study.

## Introduction

# Barcelona Global is an independent and non-profit organization founded in 2010

The organization boasts more than 285 of the city's leading companies, entrepreneurs, as well as cultural institutions and universities as its members. With more than 1000 professionals Barcelona Global has a powerful voice to fulfil its mission – **making Barcelona one of the best cities in the world for impactful talent and economic activity.**

We believe Barcelona has all the ingredients to become a global reference for public-private collaboration, creating a unique ecosystem to nurture responsible and sustainable economic activity.

We are advocates for a city that integrates entrepreneurship and innovation, academic excellence, culture and responsible, sustainable tourism.

More than 150 of our individual members belong to the International Council, the network of barcelonians living and working abroad, and 16% of the members are talented people who have chosen Barcelona as their “home”.

We believe that global talent – Barcelonians-by-Choice – will make the city a richer, economically vibrant place strengthening its innovation ecosystem and enhancing its global competitiveness.

The Barcelona Global International Talent Monitor, conducted biannually since 2013, provides a comprehensive overview on working conditions, entrepreneurial environment, integration and overall sentiment towards Barcelona amongst talented internationals who live in Barcelona by choice. This group includes professionals, entrepreneurs, academic researchers, investors, athletes and artists.

Since its inception, the International Talent Monitor has been a crucial instrument to “feel the pulse” of internationals living and working in the city, allowing us to identify areas which can make Barcelona even more attractive as a global business hub. To this end, Barcelona Global will continue to be the voice of internationals and based on the survey results will continue to lobby for change and evolution – to make Barcelona one of the best cities in the world to work and live.

2025 Barcelona Global

# International Talent Monitor<sup>®</sup>

The **2025 edition of the 7th International Talent Monitor (ITM)** continues the legacy of previous editions, offering a comprehensive and updated overview of how international professionals perceive Barcelona as a place to live and work. As in earlier years, the project combines robust quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

This year's edition assesses **Barcelona's attractiveness for international talent**, its evolution compared to previous years, and its positioning as a global hub for innovation, openness, and sustainability. It also identifies key strengths and challenges shaping the experience of living and working in the city, offering recommendations for both public and private stakeholders to improve competitiveness and quality of life.

The quantitative component of the study consisted of an **extensive survey** including both closed and open-ended questions, conducted between May 27 and July 31, 2025. The survey gathered 794 responses from international professionals residing in Barcelona, covering 89 questions on living conditions, business environment, social integration, education, and overall quality of life.

The qualitative component complemented this analysis through **three in-depth discussion groups with key stakeholders** representing sectors relevant to international talent in Barcelona. These sessions provided valuable contextual insights and expert perspectives that enriched the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

This document is an **Executive Summary**.

## Objectives

**Measuring** Barcelona's international **talent allure**

**Positioning** Barcelona as a purpose-driven talent hub

**Tracking** the city's evolution and **emerging trends**

**Revealing** strengths and **opportunities** for improvement

**Driving action** to enhance talent and competitiveness

## Methodology

Almost **800 online surveys** with internationals

**28 experts** in 3 thematic focus groups

**2 months** of intensive data collection

## Methodology

This study is an initiative of Barcelona Global, developed with the support of Banc Sabadell and with the technical and analytical support of GAPS.

### Quantitative

The quantitative analysis of the **7th International Talent Monitor 2025** is based on a structured survey designed to assess the perceptions and experiences of international professionals living and working in Barcelona. The fieldwork was conducted between May 27 and July 31, 2025, and gathered a total of **794 valid responses**.

The survey included questions **closed and open-ended**, covering a wide range of topics such as living conditions, cost of living, professional environment, social integration, education, and overall quality of life. Most closed questions followed a **1-to-7 satisfaction scale**, where 1 represented the most negative and 7 the most positive perception.

For a better interpretation and analysis of data, in the graphical representation of results, **items rated from 1 to 3 were grouped as “Not Satisfied”, and items rated from 5 to 7 as “Satisfied.”** Neutral responses (4) were shown separately, while “Don’t know / No answer” and “Not applicable” options were combined into a single category.

For the **evolutionary comparison**, only the questions that were consistent with previous editions were analyzed through average scores on the 1-to-7 scale, maintaining methodological coherence with earlier years. This approach enables a clear and comparable view of how perceptions have evolved over time across key dimensions.

The dataset was also segmented according to **key variables of interest**-such as demographic characteristics, length of residence, income level, and professional background-to identify differences in perception among distinct respondent groups.

### Qualitative

The qualitative component of the **7th International Talent Monitor 2025** complemented the survey results by **providing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities shaping Barcelona’s attractiveness for international talent**.

Three focus groups were conducted in July 2025, each bringing together experts and stakeholders from key sectors linked to talent attraction and retention in the city. Each session brought together **approximately 8 to 10 participants, representatives from education and research institutions, entrepreneurship and business ecosystems, and internationalization, culture, and creativity**, including executives, academics, entrepreneurs, and policy and institutional leaders.

The main objective of these sessions was **to contextualize the survey results and to explore, from an expert perspective, how structural, social, and economic dynamics influence Barcelona’s attractiveness**. The discussions also aimed to assess the alignment between the city’s perceived image and the actual experience of international professionals, and to gather **insights that could guide future policies and initiatives** to reinforce Barcelona’s global positioning.

This qualitative approach enriched the study by adding interpretative depth to the quantitative data, ensuring that the analysis reflects both measurable trends and the strategic understanding of the key actors shaping Barcelona’s competitiveness on the global stage.

Below is the scale of rating:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very unsatisfied unimportant unhelpful	Quite unsatisfied unimportant unhelpful	Somewhat unsatisfied unimportant unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied important helpful	Quite satisfied important helpful	Very satisfied important helpful

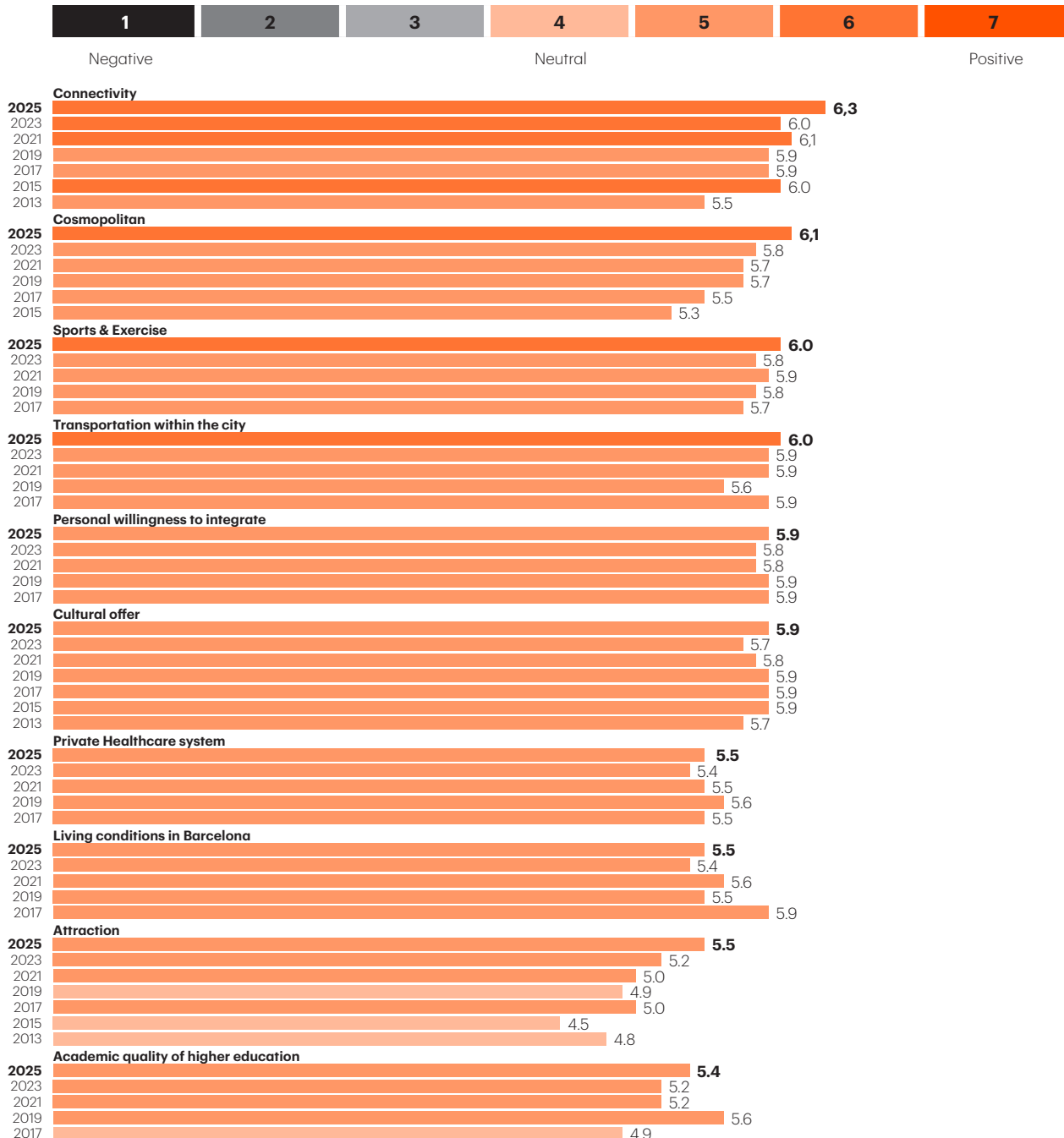
## Top 10 Indicators

The highest-rated indicators in the ITM 2025 report confirm Barcelona's strong positioning in key aspects of urban life and international competitiveness. **Connectivity** stands out at the top, showing a consistent upward trend that reinforces the city's solid global interconnection.

**Cosmopolitan atmosphere, sports and exercise,** and **urban transportation** also maintain very positive

evaluations, reflecting a dynamic and accessible lifestyle. Meanwhile, **personal willingness to integrate** and **cultural offer** remain stable over time, confirming Barcelona's reputation as an open and vibrant city.

Dimensions such as **private healthcare, living conditions,** and **academic quality** show moderate but steady improvement, pointing to sustained progress in the city's quality of life indicators.



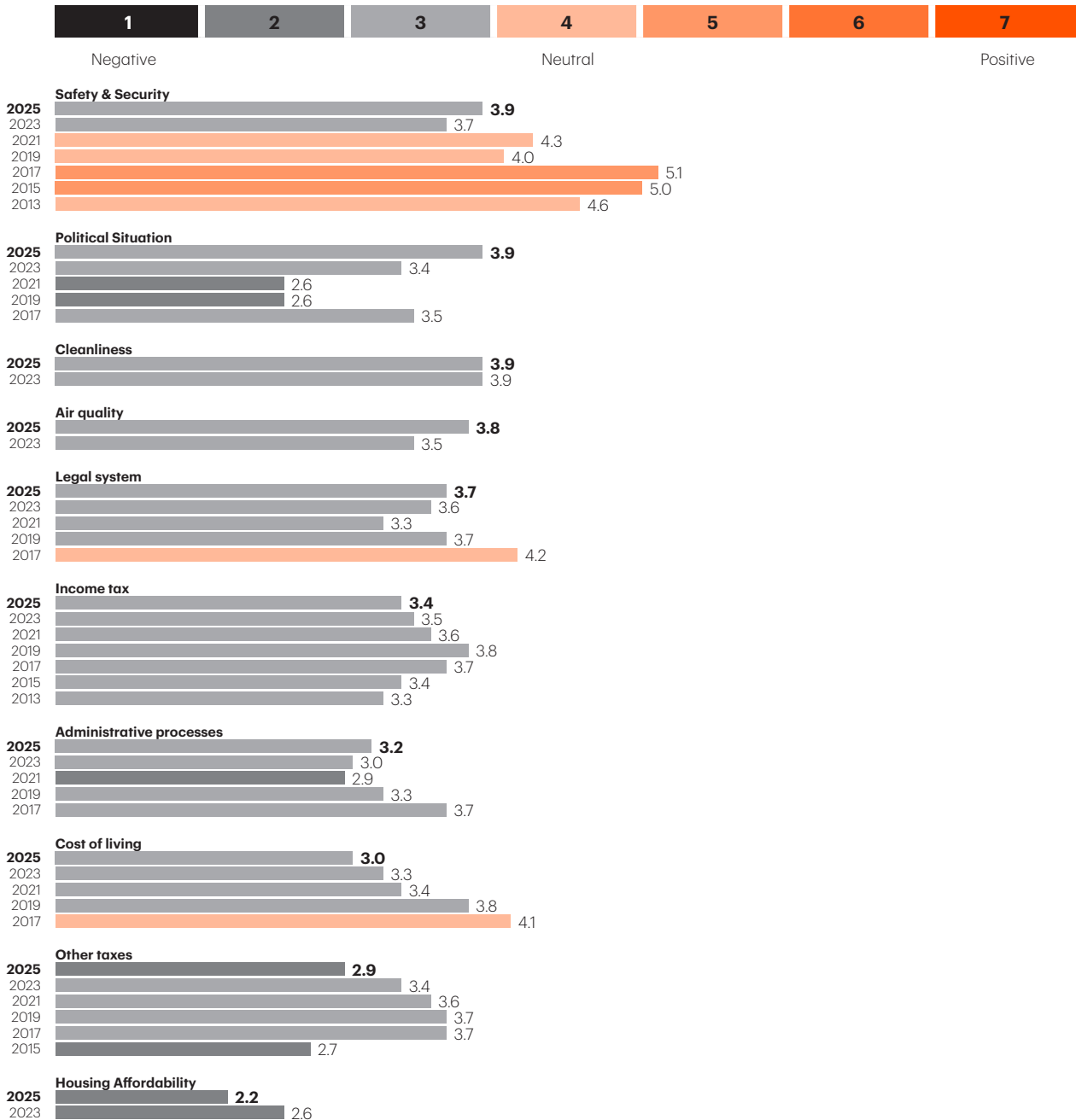
## Bottom 10 indicators

The lowest-rated indicators in the ITM 2025 report reveal Barcelona’s main challenges in competitiveness and quality of life. **Housing affordability** remains the weakest point, with persistently low satisfaction despite minor fluctuations.

**Cost of living, taxation, and administrative processes** also register low scores, reflecting structural difficulties that continue to affect residents and pro-

fessionals. Likewise, **income tax** and **legal system** evaluations remain modest, showing little progress over the years.

Although **safety and cleanliness** have slightly improved since previous editions, these areas -along with **air quality** and **political situation**- still contribute to a cautious overall perception of the city’s governance and everyday living conditions.



# What makes Barcelona shine and where it can go further

## City's strengths

- Barcelona stands out for its exceptional **quality of life**, combining a pleasant Mediterranean climate, cultural vibrancy, and a urban environment.
- Barcelona is a vibrant, **cosmopolitan city** with a strong international outlook.
- The **transport within the city** is efficient and well connected.
- **Living conditions** are comfortable and attractive for most residents
- **Culture, sports and outdoor activities** are easily accessible throughout the city.
- The **healthcare system** is high-quality.
- **Social integration processes** for international residents are well established and effective
- Excellent **international connectivity** through airport and sea.

## Areas for improvement

- The **housing crisis** continues to be a major concern.
- **Safety and security** perceptions have slightly improved.
- The **cost of living** has risen significantly.
- **Low salary competitiveness.**
- The city is often perceived mainly as a **tourist destination** rather than a professional hub.
- **Air quality and cleanliness** remain below desirable standards.
- **Administrative** procedures are often slow and complex.
- **High taxation** (income, corporate, and wealth) discourages some international talent.

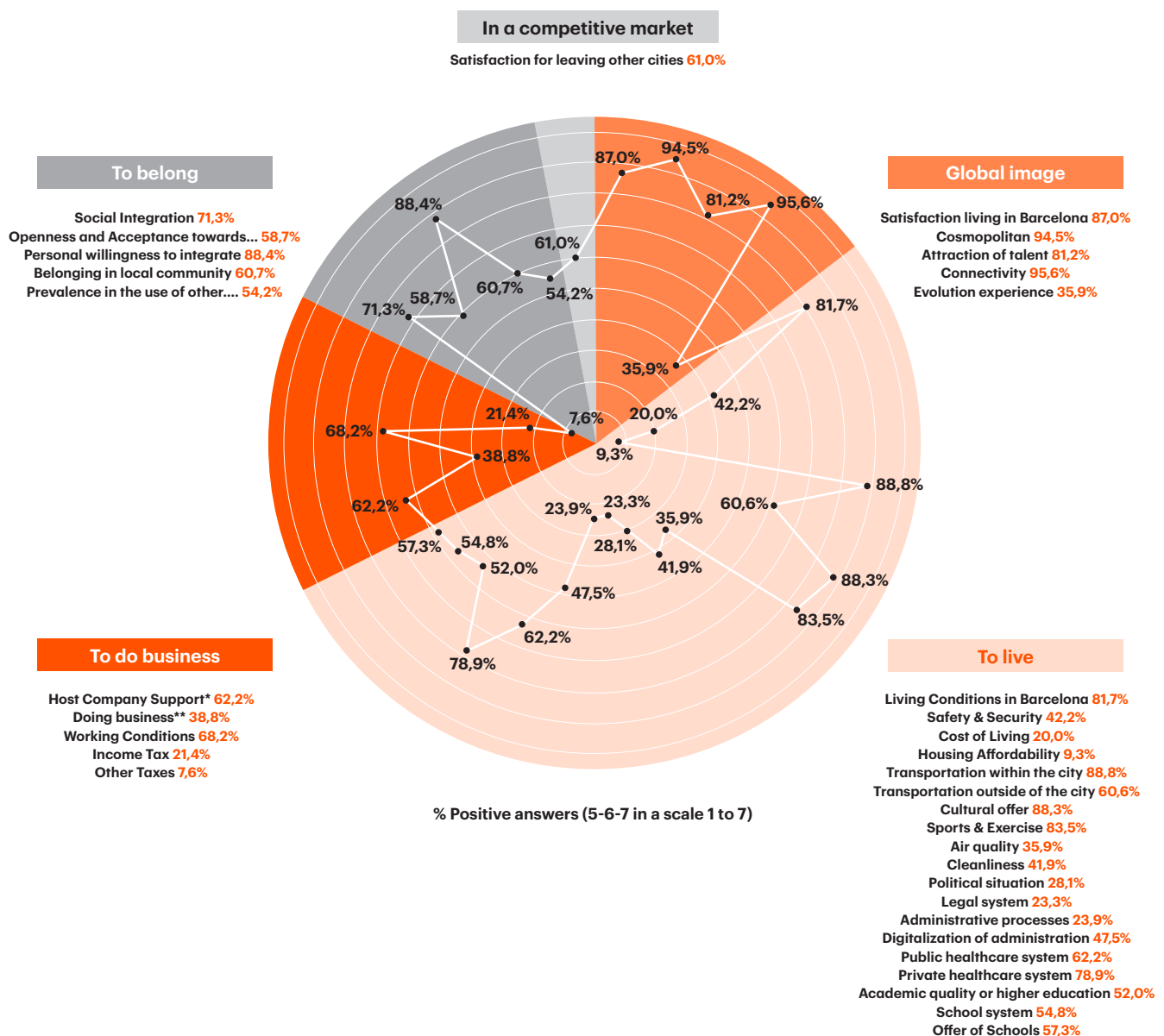


## **Calls to Action**

- 01. Increase the affordable housing stock**
- 02. Strengthen international education**
- 03. Enhance tax incentives for talent**
- 04. Simplify bureaucracy and accelerate the digital transformation**
- 05. Accelerate the green transition and urban sustainability a pillar of competitiveness**
- 06. Strengthen the business ecosystem to enable more competitive salaries**
- 07. Reinforce Barcelona as the knowledge and innovation capital of Southern Europe**

# Barcelona's International Talent Attractiveness

Barcelona stands out as a vibrant, connected and purpose-driven city for global talent- combining great quality of life with challenges in competitive salaries and bureaucracy/taxation



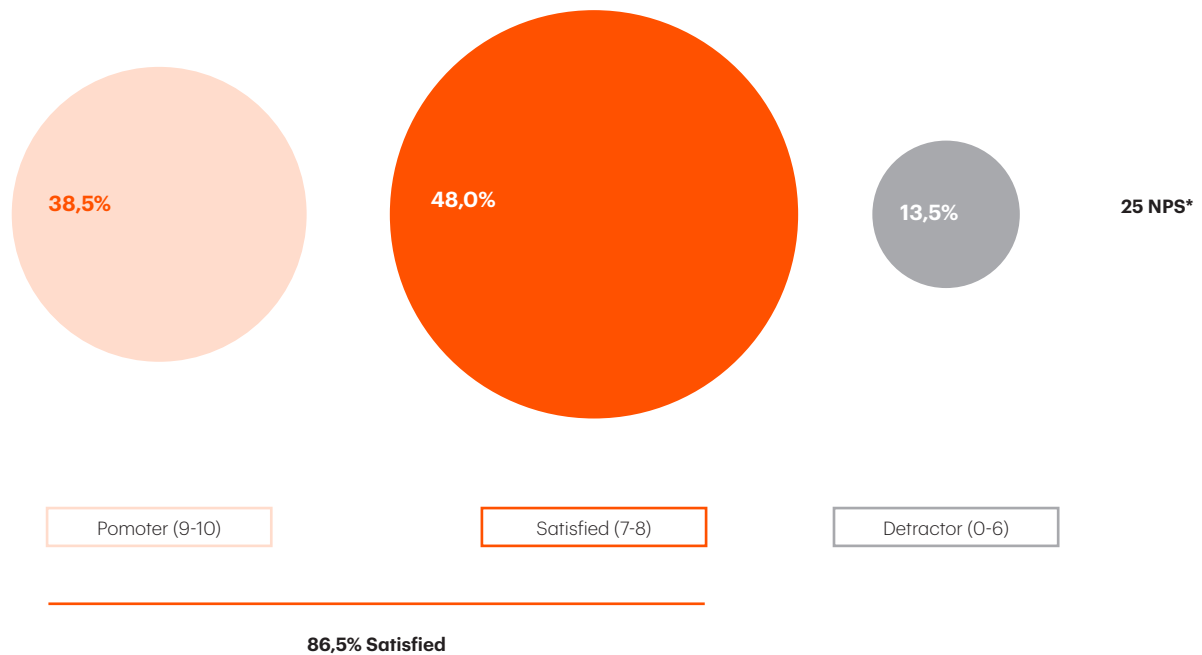
\*The base includes all profiles except Founder and Unemployed. Percentages are recalculated after excluding the response option "This question does not apply to my personal circumstances."

\*\*Percentages are recalculated after excluding the response option "This question does not apply to my personal circumstances."

# Global Image

## Barcelona is a city where living is highly satisfying; 8 out of 10 are satisfied with living in Barcelona

Barcelona shines for its exceptional quality of life, unique combination of pleasant climate, proximity to the sea and mountains, vibrant cultural and gastronomic scene, international community, and strong work-life balance. However, housing, safety, and cost of living (related to low salaries) are key challenges.



\*(Net Promoter Score)= Promoter (9-10) - Detractor (0-6)

What people most value about living in Barcelona

**Community & Social  
Life Culture Diversity &  
Inclusivity Climate  
Geographical Position International  
Environment for Work Work Life  
Balance Quality of Life Connectivity &  
Transport Walkability Local Cuisine Nature Infrastructure Safety &  
Security Cost of Living (compared to other cities) Innovation & Opportunities  
Connectivity & Location Public Services Architecture Education**

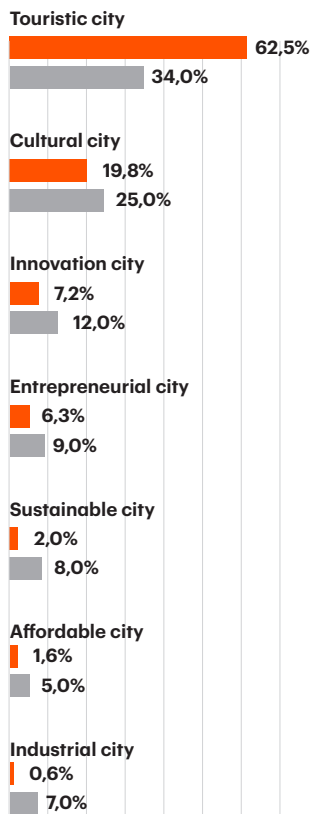
Aspects of Living in Barcelona Identified for Improvement

**Housing Crisis**  
**Safety & Security**  
**Transport & Traffic**  
**Low Salaries**  
**Cost of Living**  
**Bureaucracy**  
**Excessive Tourism Influx**  
**Language Barrier/Local Culture**  
**City Dirtiness**  
**Public Services Quality**  
**Lack of Green Spaces**  
**Homelessness & Social Issues**  
**Employment Opportunities**  
**Taxation & Bussines**  
**Enviornent**  
**Political Climate**  
**General Dislike for Living**  
**Education Quality**  
**Workplace Culture Differences**  
**Construction & Urban Development**

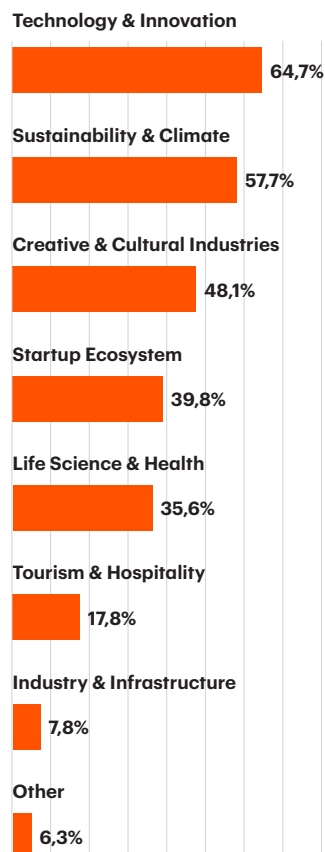
## Global Image

### Barcelona should focus less on tourism and more on innovation, sustainability, creativity and life sciences ecosystems

Barcelona is perceived as...  
(one choice)



Barcelona should focus on...  
(multiple choice)

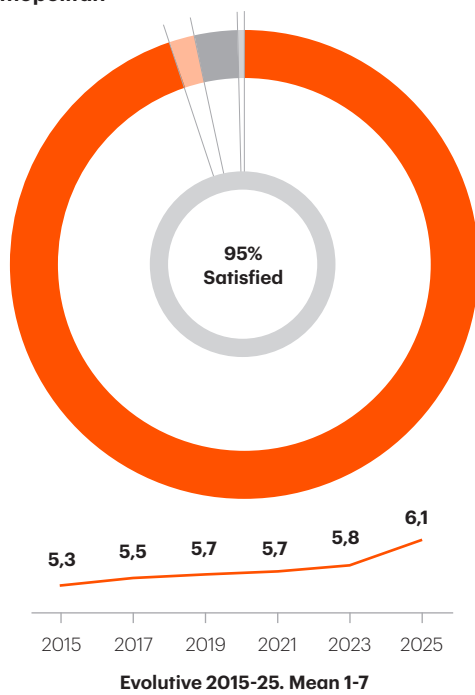


2025  
2023

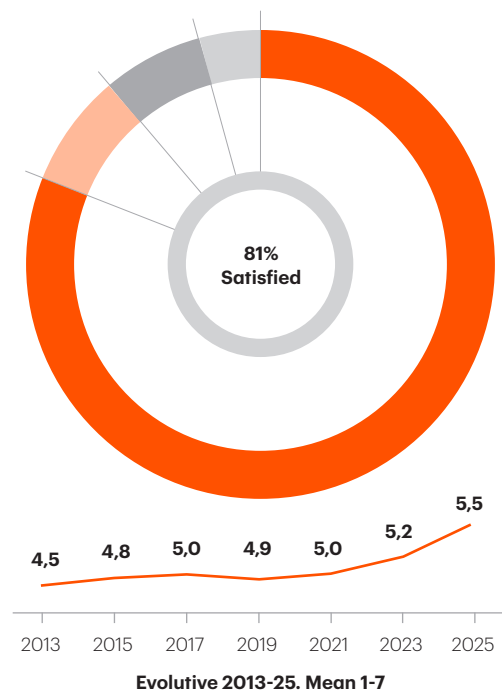
## Global Image

The cosmopolitan character of Barcelona and its international connectivity remain the city's main strengths

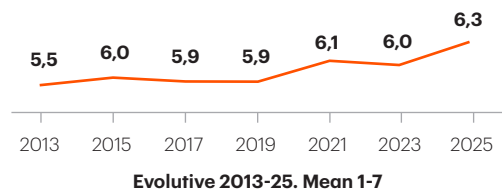
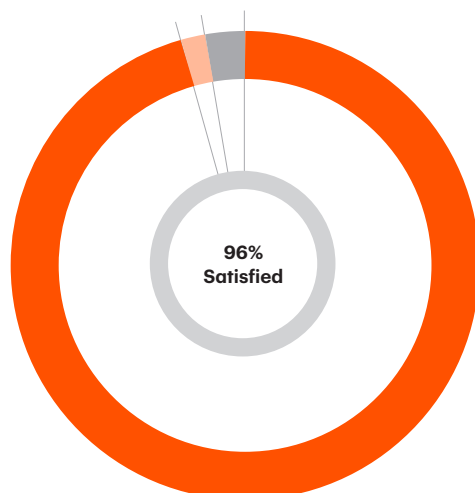
Cosmopolitan



Attraction of International Talent



International Connectivity

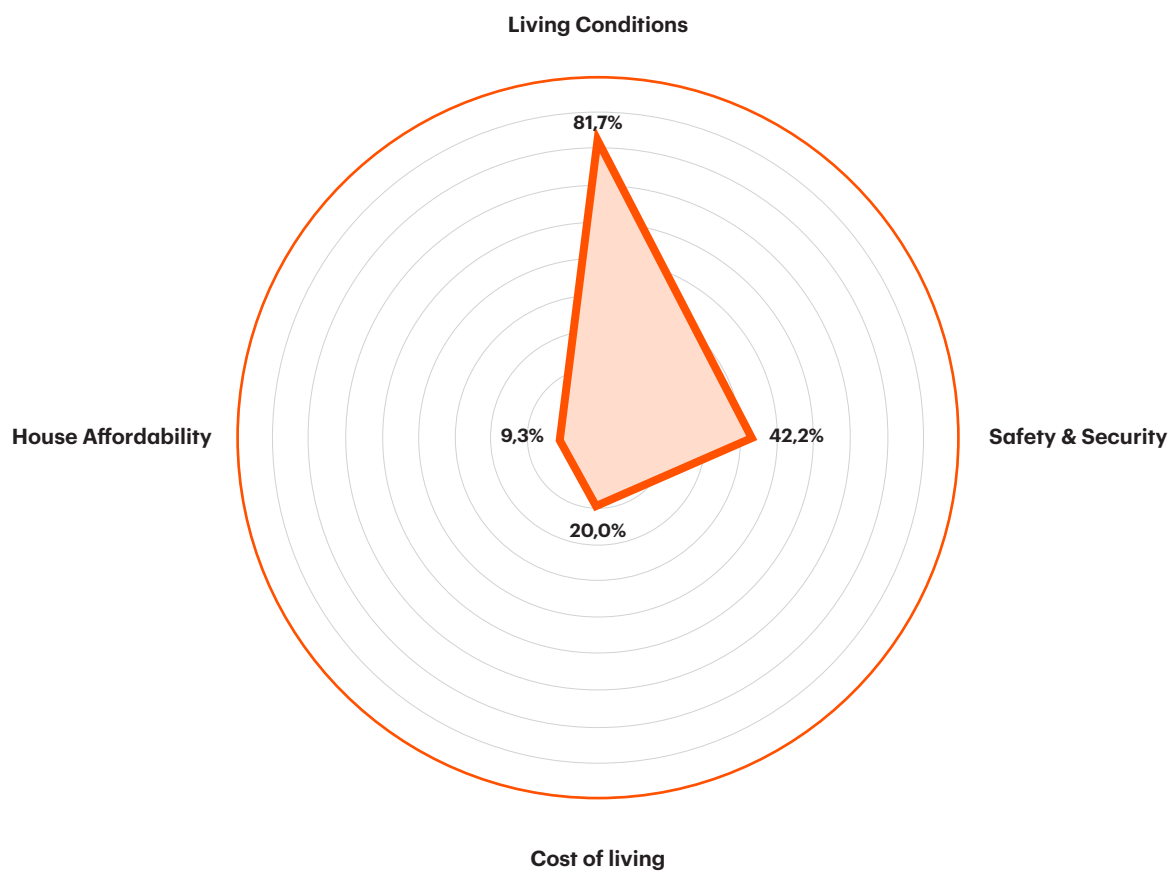


Satisfied Neutral Not Satisfied DK/DA & Not apply

# To Live

**Barcelona's quality of life is often described as welcoming, diverse, and vibrant, marked by a pleasant climate, strong international connections, and a sense of well-being**

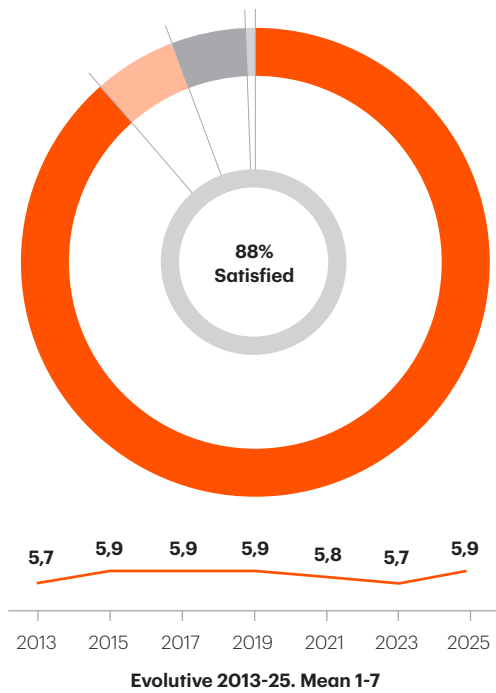
However, perceptions of safety remain one of the city's key areas for improvement, on the other hand, the housing crisis stands out as a major source of dissatisfaction among international residents, along with the rising cost of living.



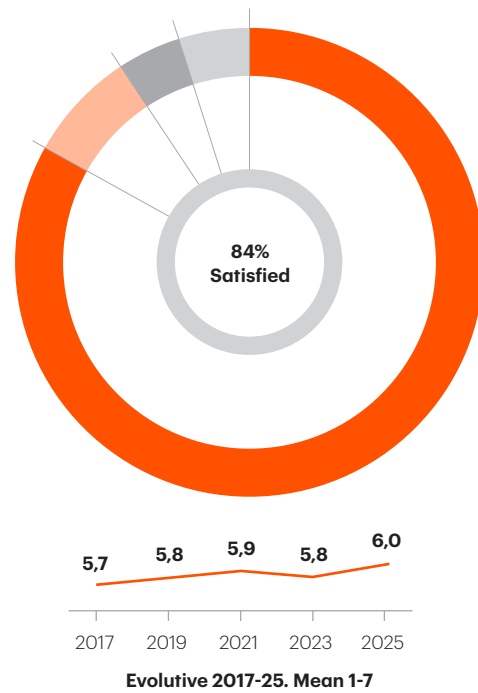
## Culture and sports continue to rank among the main sources of satisfaction

They reinforce the city's image as vibrant, healthy, and engaging — key dimensions that sustain its global appeal and everyday well-being.

**Cultural Offer**



**Sports & Exercise\***



█ Satisfied    
 █ Neutral    
 █ Not Satisfied    
 █ DK/DA & Not apply

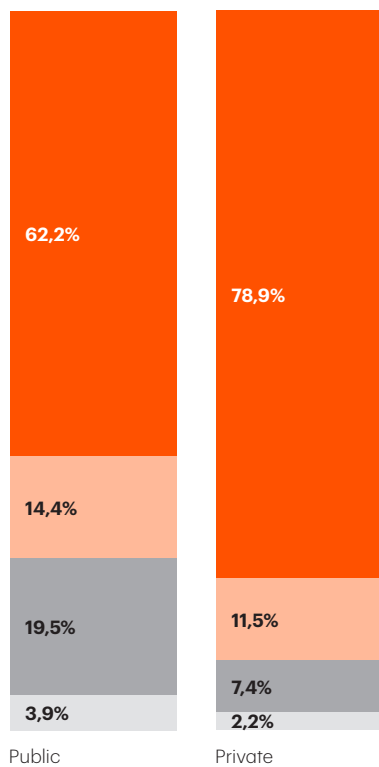
\*\*Between 2017 and 2023, the question referred to accessibility to sports activities

## To Live

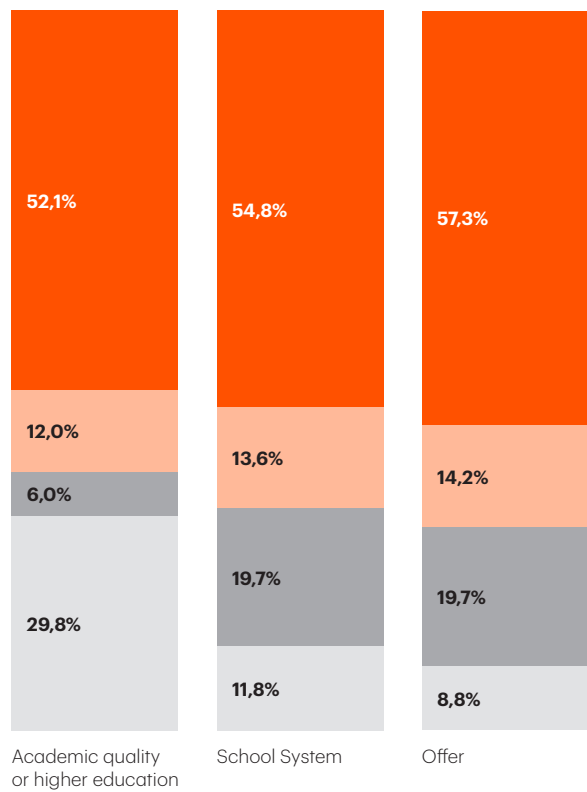
### Health and education are key contributors to Barcelona's quality of life

Private healthcare is the preferred and best-rated option, partly due to the perception of greater speed in service. Barcelona's education system, one of the key factors in attracting talent, must continue to improve in order to achieve excellence.

Satisfaction with Healthcare System



Satisfaction with School & Academic System



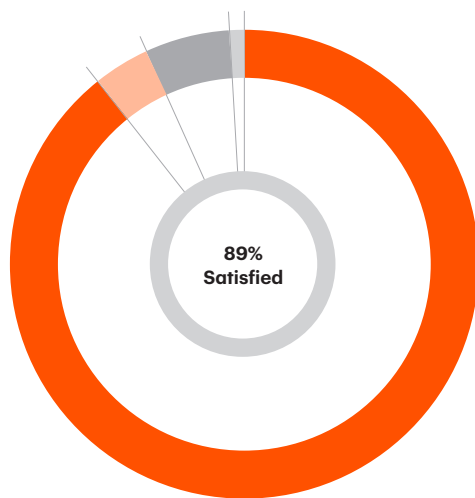
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## To Live

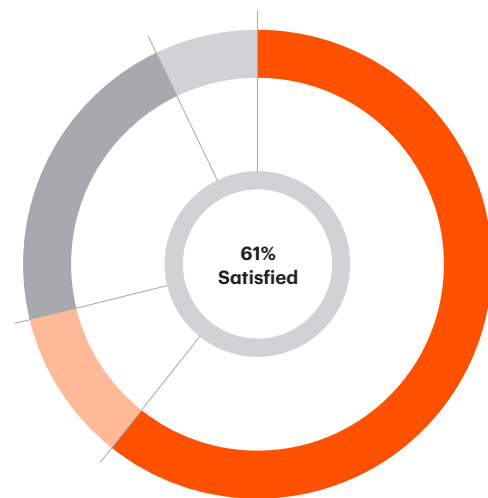
### Barcelona's public transport network stands out as one of the city's greatest strengths: it is used daily by the vast majority

However, connections beyond the city are a key challenge for a city that aspires to strengthen its connectivity.

Within the city

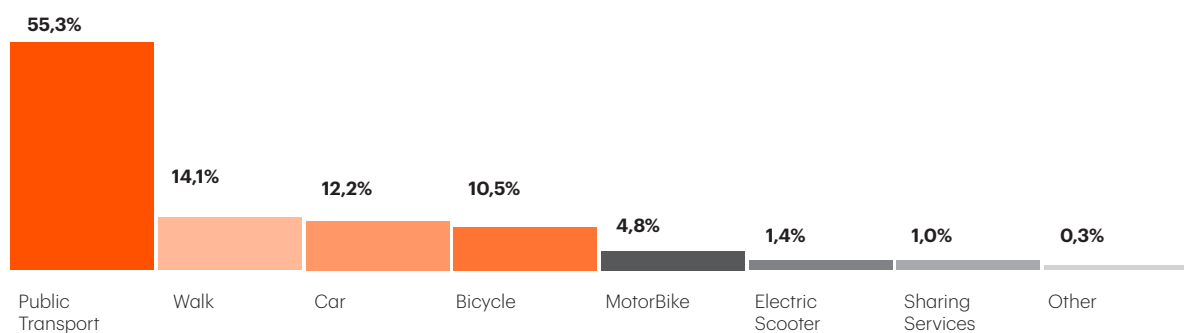


Outside the city



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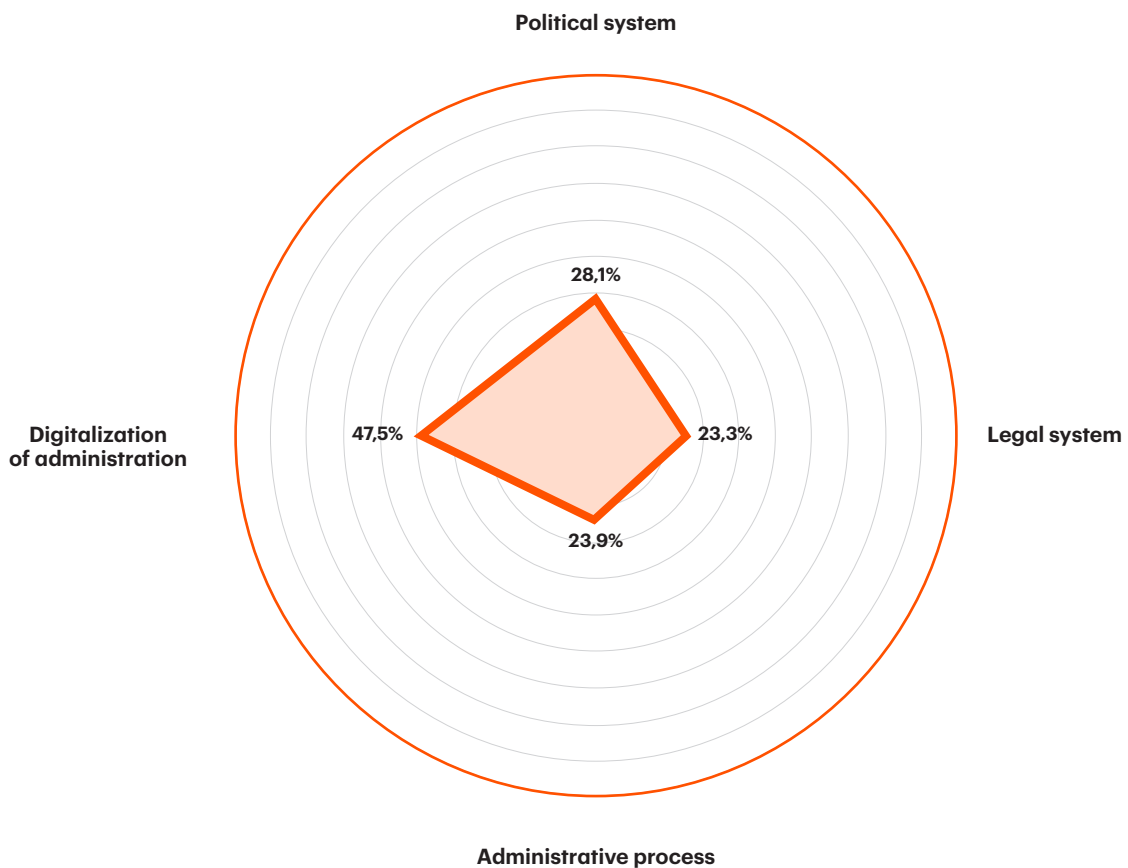
Transportation most use



## To Live

### Institutional aspects remain among Barcelona's weakest areas, reflecting distance or low engagement from international residents.

Administrative processes are widely criticized for their complexity and lack of agility, though the digitalization of public services shows moderate progress, with uneven satisfaction across age groups.

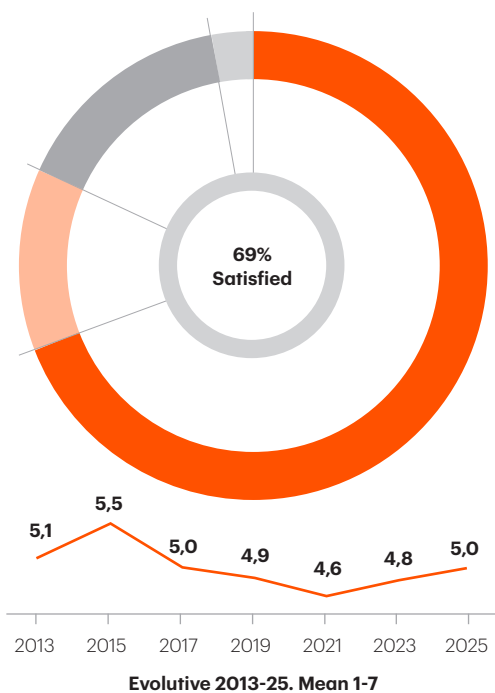


# To do Business

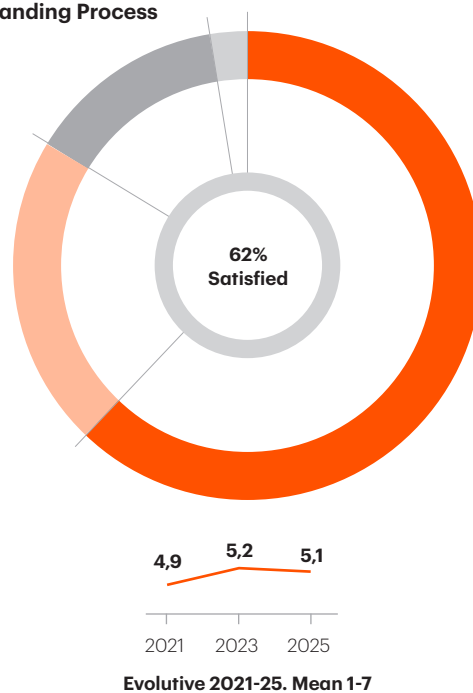
## Barcelona offers good working conditions and strong company support for newcomers

Uncompetitive salaries remain a major obstacle to attracting and retaining international talent.

Working Conditions



Host Company in Landing Process



█ Satisfied    
 █ Neutral    
 █ Not Satisfied    
 █ DK/DA & Not apply

Competitiveness of salaries

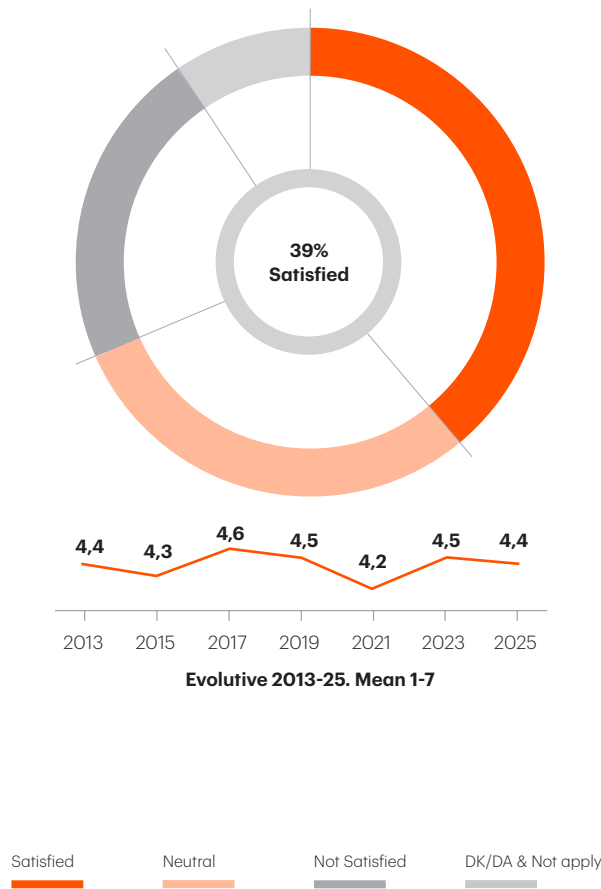


## To do Business

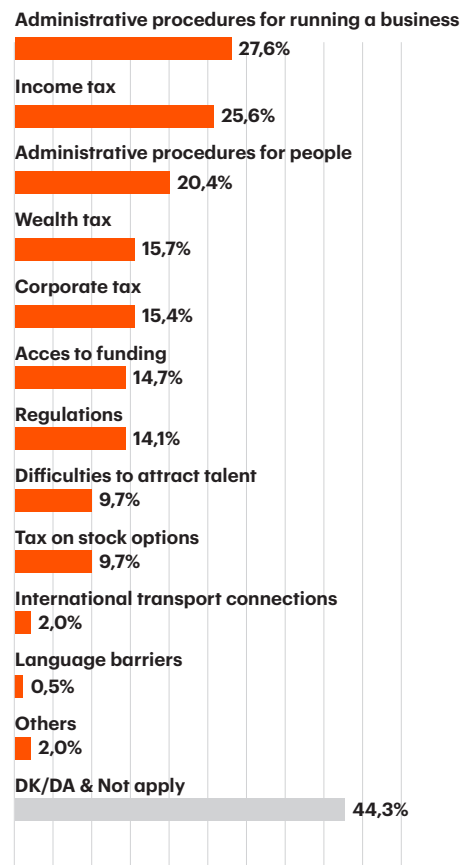
### Barcelona's business environment is perceived as stable but cautious

Administrative complexity and taxation remain the main barriers to entrepreneurship, overshadowing other challenges such as funding or talent attraction.

#### Doing business



#### Barriers for starting a business

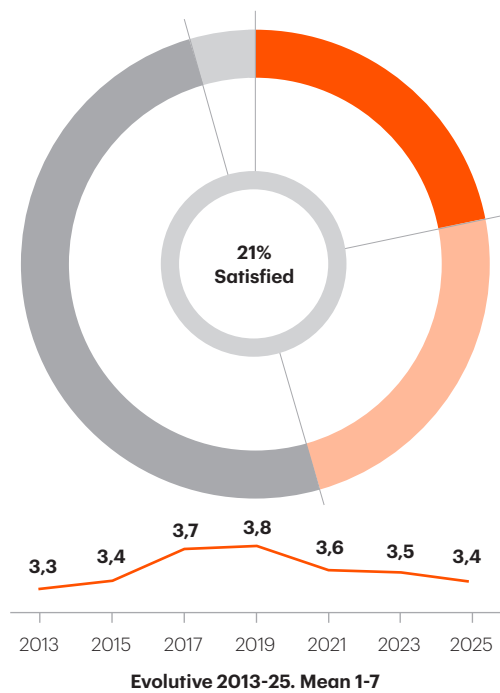


## To do Business

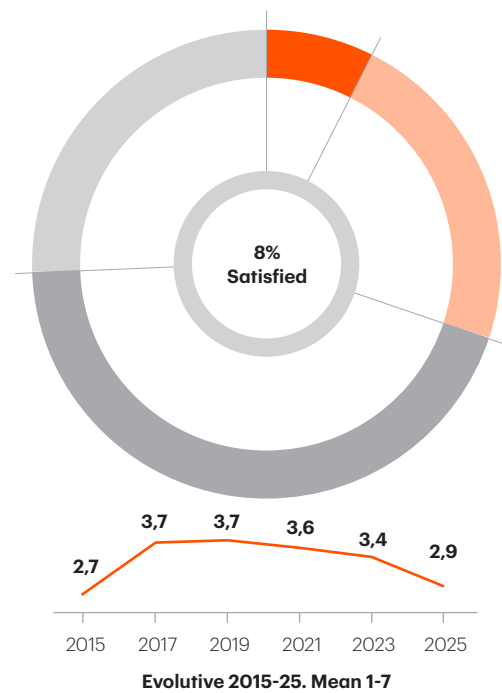
### Taxation remains one of Barcelona's weakest points in international competitiveness

Despite stable perceptions over time, the consistently low satisfaction confirms taxation as a structural challenge that limits the city's appeal to global professionals.

#### Income Tax



#### Other Taxes

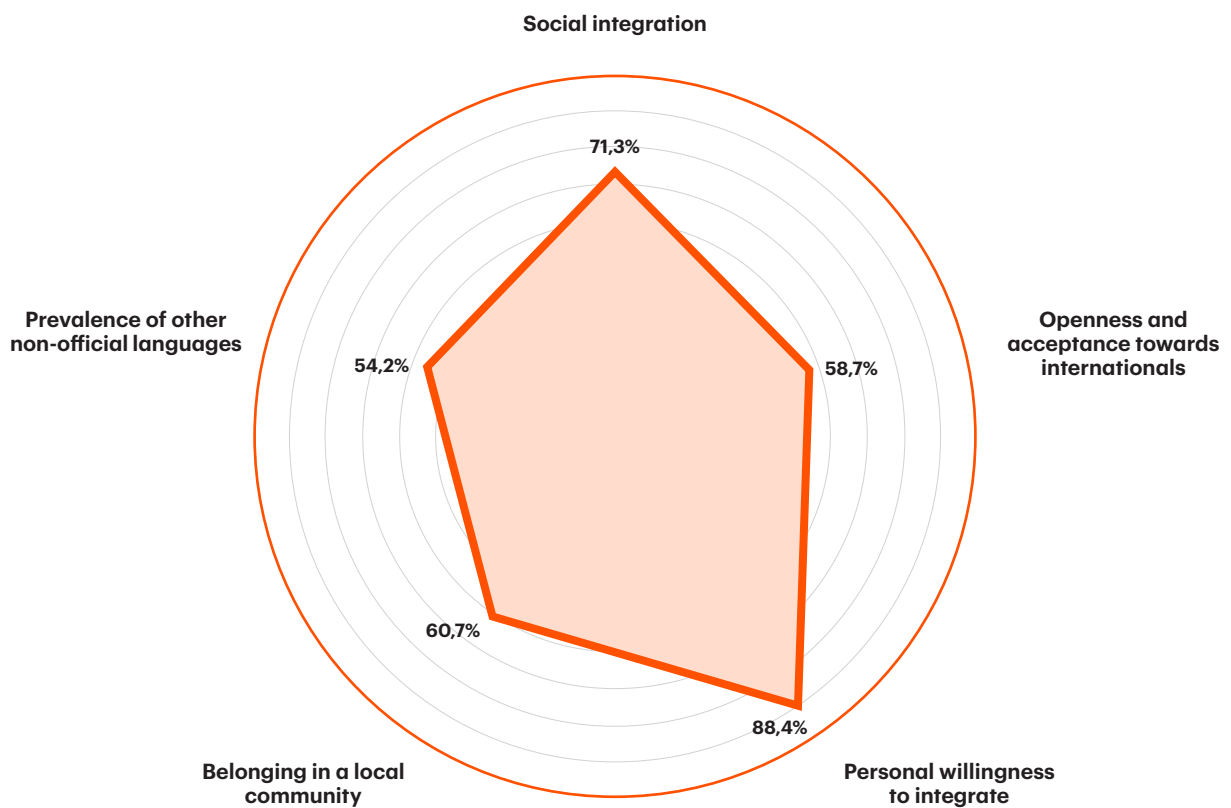


Satisfied Neutral Not Satisfied DK/DA & Not apply

# To Belong

## Barcelona inspires a strong willingness to integrate and a solid sense of belonging, reflecting the city's favorable environment for connection and inclusion

However, perceptions of local openness, community belonging, and linguistic diversity remain weaker areas, suggesting that full social integration is still a work in progress.



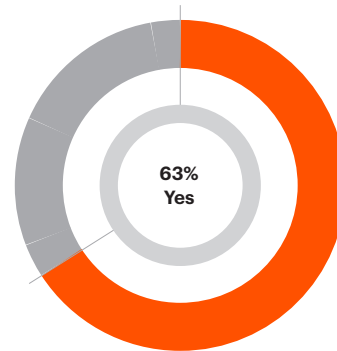
# In a Competitive Market

## Barcelona attracts experienced international professionals

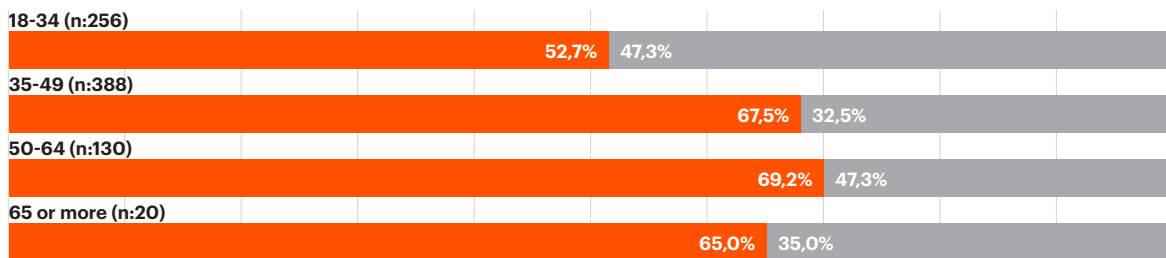
A majority of international residents in Barcelona have previously lived and worked abroad: overall, 63% of international residents in Barcelona have previously lived in another city for professional reasons.

This experience is more common among middle-aged professionals (35–64 years), with around 68% having worked abroad, and among those with higher incomes, reaching 74% in the top income bracket. Similarly, residents with children (68%) are more likely to have international professional experience than those without (60%). These patterns highlight Barcelona's role as a destination for skilled, internationally experienced professionals

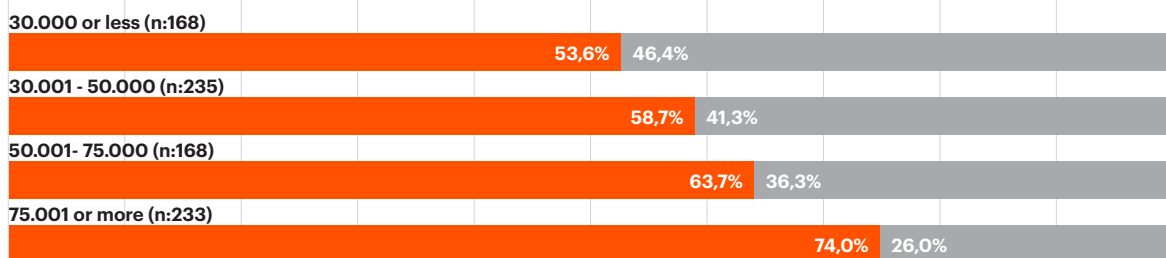
Lived abroad for professional reasons



### By age



### By individual income



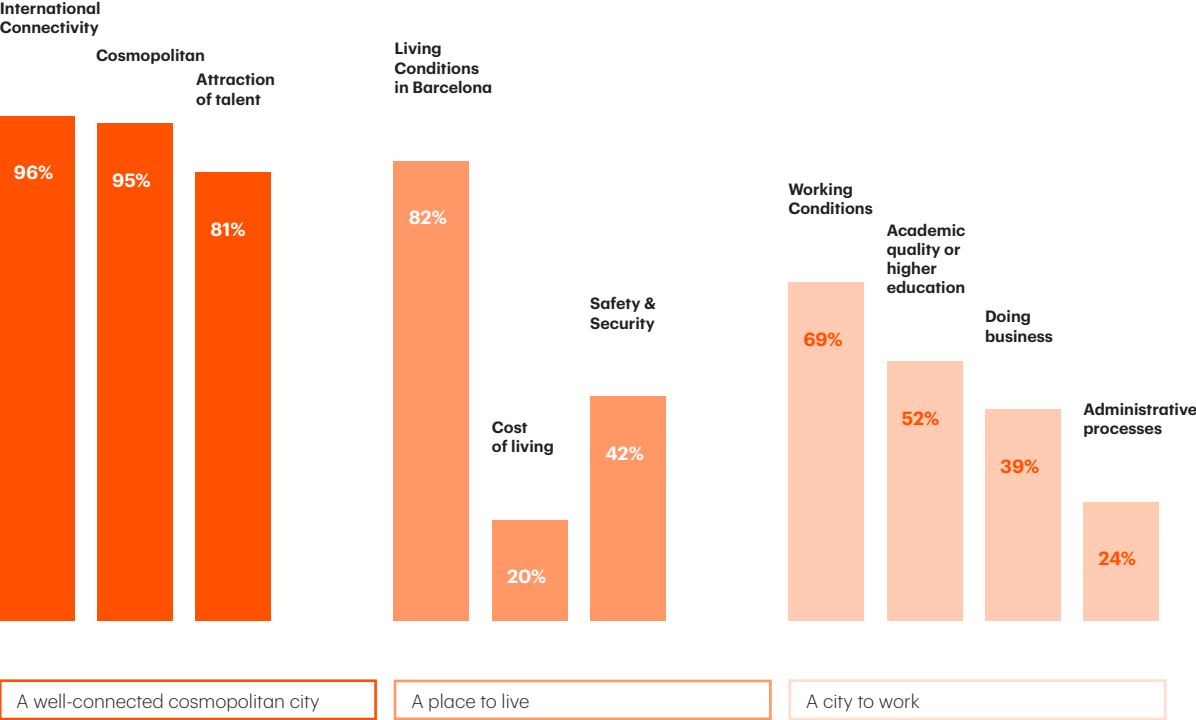
### By having children



# Main Takeaways

From the survey and the focus groups

Strategically, in the coming years, Barcelona must strengthen its international image as a cosmopolitan and attractive city - leveraging quality of life as a key asset while addressing the perception of high costs. It should continue to lead in academic and research excellence, while enhancing its capacity to attract and grow business.



A well-connected cosmopolitan city

### International connectivity

/ One of Barcelona's most **consolidated and consistent** strengths in global competitiveness.

/ Accompanied by a **solid internal transport system**, it ensures efficient mobility and satisfaction in daily life, used by more than half of internationals.

/ A **mismatch** persists between **excellent urban connections** and **weaker links** beyond the metropolitan area.

/ The **expansion of El Prat Airport** stands out as a strategic need to sustain international competitiveness.

### Cosmopolitan

/ Barcelona is widely recognized for its **inclusivity, diversity, and international connection**.

/ The **growing perception** of the city as a **touristic destination risks** diluting its professional and innovative image.

/ There is a detected need to **rebalance the narrative beyond leisure and lifestyle**, strongly linked to an image of quality.

### Ease attracting talent

/ Barcelona **attracts** diverse **international profiles** — from young professionals to consolidated families.

/ **Integration** remains the **key challenge**: initial adaptation is easy, but deep inclusion depends on local openness, which is harder to perceive among those who have lived in Barcelona for a short time

/ The need to strengthen bridges between international and local communities is reaffirmed. **Education** must be a gateway, **not a barrier**, to full integration and long-term retention.

## Main Takeaways

A place to live

### Living Conditions

/ **Living conditions** remain one of Barcelona's **greatest** competitive advantages.

/ The city combines **cultural vitality, accessibility, and active lifestyles** highly valued by international residents. Culture, sports, and outdoor life strengthen its global appeal and its human-scale urban identity.

/ **Persistent concerns** about **cleanliness, air quality**, and sustainability.

### Cost of living

/ **The cost of living** has become one of the **most critical** challenges for international residents.

/ **Housing prices are at the center** of this tension, especially for young professionals and families.

/ **Local salaries** are recognized non-competitive, which hinders long-term retention.

/ This accessibility gap threatens the city's global competitiveness.

### Safety & Security

/ The **perception of safety remains one of Barcelona's points to improve**, almost half of internationals consider no significant improvement compared to previous years.

/ **Concerns about street safety, cleanliness, and maintenance affect residents' sense of trust.**

## Main Takeaways

A city to work

### Working conditions

/ Overall satisfaction with **working conditions is positive**, but **salary competitiveness** and taxation are major **weaknesses**.

/ The **gap** between income, cost of living, and tax burden **reduces Barcelona's professional attractiveness**.

/ **Beyond the housing issue, there is a call for fairer salaries**, better career opportunities, and fiscal incentives.

### Administrative processes

/ **Administrative complexity** is a structural **weakness** that hampers competitiveness.

/ **Procedures for residence, taxation, and company registration are slow, opaque, and inconsistent**. Bureaucracy is perceived as frustrating and emotionally exhausting, damaging the city's reputation.

/ **Partial progress in digitalization** has been detected since 2021, but implementation remains fragmented and incomplete.

### Academic Quality

/ **Barcelona's academic and research ecosystem is a key strategic strength**, with a majority of internationals satisfied with both the quality of university and with the offer and quality of schools, which still have room for improvement to reach excellence.

/ **Universities and research centers enjoy international recognition** and scientific excellence, within an innovation and startup environment that reinforces the city's position as a knowledge hub.

/ However, **structural limitations persist**, low global visibility of undergraduate programs and bureaucratic obstacles for foreign students.

### Doing business

/ The entrepreneurial ecosystem is dynamic but still faces major operational barriers.

/ **Bureaucracy and complex taxation are the main challenges for investors and entrepreneurs**, especially when starting a business, with a problem with administrative barriers to launching or hiring.

/ **Administrative procedures** for creating and managing companies are **perceived as slow and unpredictable**. For many startups, limited local financing means dependence on foreign capital.

/ **Banking services (in general) are perceived as rigid, in need of digitalization**, and more personalized assistance adapted to the international public and their specific needs.

# Recommended Actions

By the participants of the focus groups

## Governance & Vision

### 1. Promote a shared vision of Barcelona as a talent hub, where alluring professional and life projects are developed

It is recommended to prioritize a long-term metropolitan vision. The Barcelona brand plays a fundamental role in the city's attractiveness, and today it needs to be rethought and strengthened, highlighting key dimensions of the city such as its scientific and entrepreneurial ecosystem-elements that are often overshadowed by its strong association with tourism.

Maintaining current standards of competitiveness and quality of life largely depends on a joint strategy that addresses today's challenges in areas such as housing, mobility, and sustainability. Strong institutional leadership that connects Barcelona with its metropolitan area is essential for the city's future, fostering a balanced and inclusive development model. Barcelona must become the knowledge and innovation capital of Southern Europe.

### 2. Simplify bureaucracy and accelerate the digital transformation of public administration

Administrative procedures are slow and lack transparency, and they remain one of the main barriers to Barcelona's international competitiveness. To make progress, a structural reform is needed to further streamline and digitalize procedures related to visas, NIE, certifications, and company formation - making them faster, more predictable, and more accessible.

Strengthening the International Welcome Desk is recommended to enhance its profile among European companies and international talent.

## Talent & Inclusion

### **3. Ensuring a balance between competitive wages and the cost of living**

Housing is, without a doubt, one of the most serious problems currently facing the city of Barcelona and also one of the main obstacles to talent retention, as international talent is not immune to this issue-especially considering the low salary competitiveness, which impacts the perception of the rising cost of living in the city. Housing is, therefore, a key challenge for the future of Barcelona as a city capable of attracting and retaining international talent.

Barcelona must lead and promote a metropolitan affordable housing strategy with innovative solutions: public-private developments, residences for researchers and professionals, and tax incentives for affordable rentals.

### **4. Strengthen international education and family integration**

Barcelona is becoming an attractive hub for research at the international level, with education identified as a key factor in international talent's decision to settle in the city. To improve work-life balance and attract more families, one of the main needs identified is the development of an affordable and high-quality network of international schools, as the current offer leaves room for improvement.

## Recommended Actions

### Business & Competitiveness

#### 5. Reform fiscal incentives to attract and retain talent and companies

The current tax framework is not competitive enough for either qualified professionals or innovative companies. With a complex tax system operating at multiple institutional levels, international professionals often face resistance and confusion, which undermines the city's ability to attract talent.

One possible approach would be to push for the design of new incentives for companies that generate local employment or high value-added activity. Focus group participants have described this as an extension of the Beckham Law—originally designed for individuals—so that it could also be applied to companies, helping Barcelona remain competitive at the international level.

#### 6. Foster an entrepreneurial culture open to risk and growth

Barcelona has a very active entrepreneurial ecosystem, but it struggles to consolidate startups and retain companies as they reach maturity. In many cases, startups are created in Barcelona—strengthening the value of the city's brand—but when it comes to securing funding, they must turn to international capital due to the limited permeability and adaptability of the Catalan and Spanish systems.

The business culture needs to evolve toward greater risk tolerance and, above all, easier access to financing. Simplifying administrative procedures and revising tax pressure would help, as would promoting internationalization and executive training to position Barcelona among Europe's leading technology and creative hubs.

## Recommended Actions

### Culture & Sustainability

#### **7. Redefine Barcelona's global narrative and strengthen cohesion between culture, talent, and citizenship**

Barcelona is a diverse and complex city. It is essential that its international narrative reflects this inclusiveness and fosters better coexistence between local and international talent, creating enriching synergies between the two.

To achieve this, the city must move beyond its image as being excessively tied to tourism and counter the myth of the high-level foreign professional who supposedly harms locals through higher income and purchasing power. A new narrative should showcase the city as a plural ecosystem, with people who work, study, and contribute in many different fields.

This new storytelling should place talent, culture, and sustainability at the core of the Barcelona model, highlighting creativity and research as drivers of progress. At the same time, communication should promote civic pride and citizen engagement, better integrating culture, tourism, and neighborhood life. Only a city that connects its global narrative with its social fabric can remain open, cohesive, and competitive on an international scale.

#### **8. Accelerate the green transition and urban sustainability as a pillar of competitiveness**

Sustainability must become a central pillar of Barcelona's development model. The city should prioritize active policies on air quality, waste management, and sustainable mobility, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. A greener, healthier city not only improves residents' well-being but also strengthens Barcelona's international reputation as a responsible and attractive destination for conscious talent and investment.

# Annex

## Archetypes

### Young Professional

Professionals who have **recently arrived in Barcelona** (less than two years), enthusiastic about the city's cosmopolitan character and quality of life, but with social ties still in the making

Global professionals with their eyes set on the future. They enjoy the city's vibrancy, diversity, and lifestyle, yet still observe Barcelona "from the outside," trying to find their place within the local fabric. Nevertheless, their willingness to integrate suggests a strong potential for consolidation if the city manages to retain them.

**54% are European**  
**68% hold a Master's or Postgraduate degree**  
**45% have a non-manager position**

### Family Settlers

Couples **aged 35–54, often with children**, focused on stability and key services such as education and quality of life, with a strong desire to integrate and put down roots

Families, with or without children, who have made Barcelona their home base. They seek safety, stability, and environments where they can grow. They value the city's cultural offer, its connectivity, and diversity, while actively engaging in local life. They represent a loyal and consolidated segment: internationals who already think long-term.

**72% are European**  
**71% hold a Master's or Postgraduate degree**  
**38% have a middle manager position**

## Executives

**Professionals with high incomes** (≥€75k), highly satisfied with their life in Barcelona and demanding in terms of public services and management quality

Highly qualified profiles with international networks and a cosmopolitan mindset. They seek excellence and efficiency but also embrace the Mediterranean lifestyle. Their presence helps position Barcelona as a competitive and attractive city for executive talent

**74% are European**  
**76% hold a Master's or Postgraduate degree**  
**35% have a middle manager position**

## Interested in Lifestyle

**International residents with medium or modest incomes**, settled in Barcelona for its lifestyle and climate. They show a high degree of social integration but face clear economic constraints

They have chosen Barcelona to live better, not necessarily to earn more. They are part of neighborhood life, use local services, and contribute to the city's cultural fabric. However, the cost of living and housing access remain key challenges that may limit their long-term stay.

**75% are European**  
**66% hold a Master's or Postgraduate degree**  
**45% have a non-manager position**

## Long-Term Residents

International residents who have **lived in Barcelona for more than ten years**. Highly integrated and rooted, with a critical yet committed view of the city

They have evolved from residents to active citizens, with local networks and community engagement. While they tend to have a more demanding view of urban management, they maintain a high level of satisfaction and can be considered natural ambassadors for the city.

**83% are European**  
**68% hold a Master's or Postgraduate degree**  
**30% have a non-manager position & 31% a middle manager position**

## Partners

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UIC  
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Vall d'Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO)

## Focus Group Attendees

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Nuria Caralps, Palau de la Música  
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Olivia Michaud Martorell, Filmin  
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Marta Pallarès Olivares, Primavera Sound  
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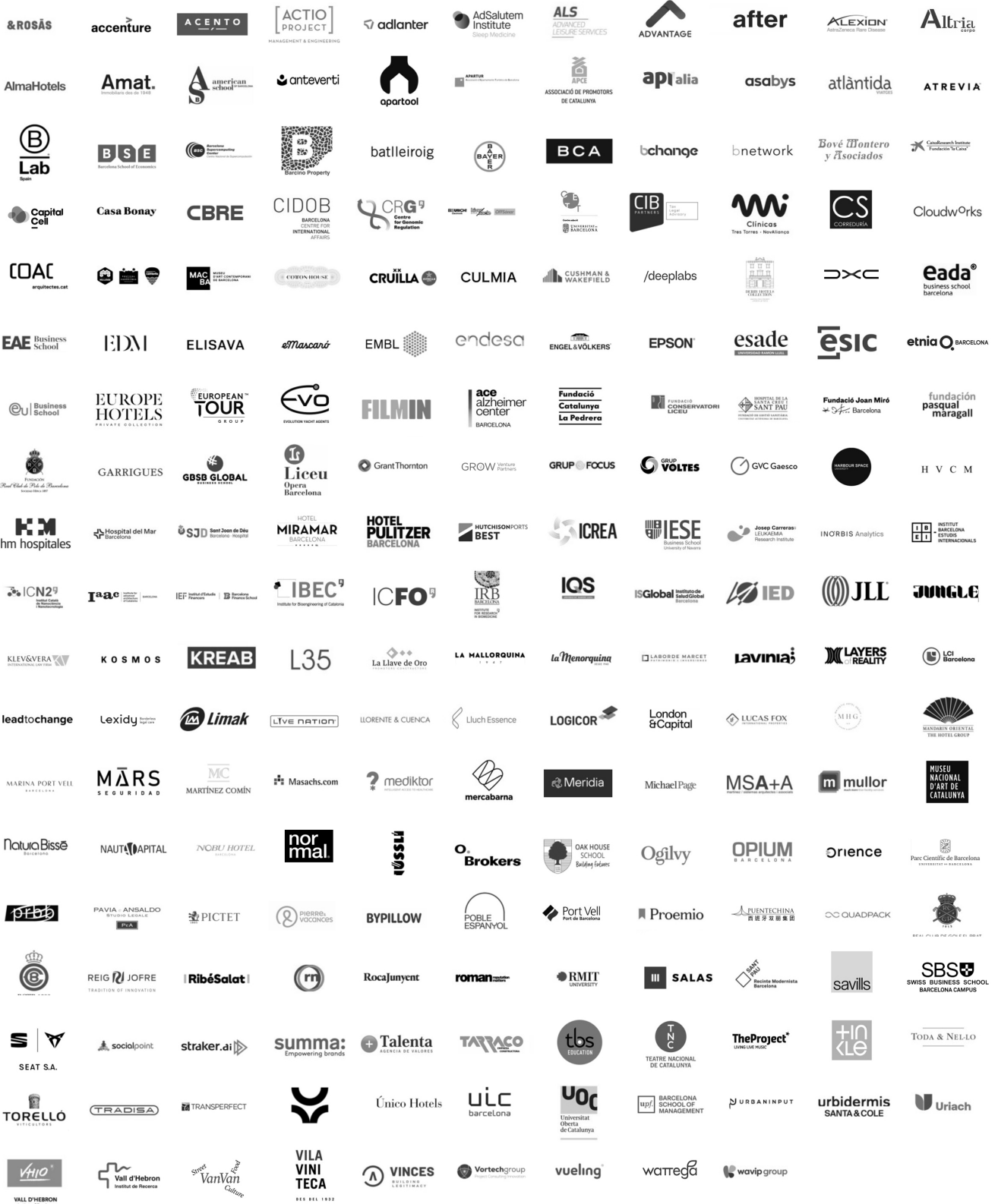
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