

2021 Barcelona Global

International Talent Monitor[®]

A project by



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Forewords



Enric Rovira Masachs

Assistant General Manager of Banco Sabadell
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The resilience of a model for an international city

In the two years since the last edition of the International Talent Monitor, Barcelona has been put to the test. The COVID-19 crisis has shaken social and economic structures in all corners of the world, something that has particularly affected mobility and contact between people and, by extension, the planet's big urban agglomerations. Our city, which is the main core of the fifth-largest metropolitan area in the European Union and whose international projection is one of its greatest assets, has had to face the greatest test of resilience in recent decades.

Fortunately, the Catalan capital has fundamentals that are hard to match: economic strength, modernity, entrepreneurial spirit, strategic location, quality of life, history, culture, etc. Qualities that will surely help us to overcome this situation and emerge stronger, provided we work with determination and a forward-looking approach. Although the pandemic is not over yet, it is clear that the success of the mass vaccination campaigns is allowing us to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and we can now say, albeit half-heartedly, that we are on the road to recovery. And now is precisely the right time to re-analyse our city model and learn more about our strengths and weaknesses, in order to take the appropriate measures that will enable us to continue growing and improving. The fifth edition of the Barcelona Global International Talent Monitor is here and we, at Banco Sabadell, support it once again because we believe it is an essential tool.

In March, Barcelona Global and Banco Sabadell renewed once again our agreement, with which the Bank undertook to continue supporting the International Talent Monitor and also the Hola Barcelona! Cocktail, a meeting to welcome international professionals who have recently arrived in Barcelona, which has become a classic event in our city. We are very pleased to be by the side of Barcelona Global once again in these initiatives, and we hope that in two years' time we can be proud of our contribution to the economic revival of Barcelona and the progress towards excellence of our global city model.

Banco Sabadell is fully committed to mobility and international talent: we can proudly say that we have more than 800.000 foreign customers and that we have a Welcome Service, a service designed to support expats and residential tourists to provide them with all the financial and administrative services they need. This initiative has enabled us to increase our international users by 9%, many of them in Barcelona. It is for this reason that at the end of the year we will open a new branch in the city centre specialising in international customers.

The city that is admired all over the world and is one of Europe's major centres of attraction for talent is still here in spite of everything. And our mission will continue to be to open its doors and support those who want to experience Barcelona with us, because it benefits every aspect: opportunities, investment, growth and well-being. And Banco Sabadell will undoubtedly do so hand in hand with an organization with the purpose and foresight of Barcelona Global.



Aurora Catà
President of
Barcelona Global

The moment is now

The opportunity is here, and the moment is now: Barcelona has to really become the city for talented people we have always ambitioned at Barcelona Global. COVID-19 has shown that remote working is a reality and that talent is the key asset for global competitiveness. Due to its quality of life, location, quality of infrastructure, cosmopolitan appeal, creativity, openness and entrepreneurial and industrial DNA, Barcelona is ready to be among the top cities for attracting, creating and retaining talent.

This Monitor is Barcelona Global's classic way of doing: asking key people to understand and identify what is needed and then acting to make it happen. The International Talent Monitor is a unique piece of work that directly asks the international community in Barcelona for their input. After 5 editions, we are able to compare the evolution and identify patterns and trends.

This 5th edition is a call to action to really develop what is needed for the city to become a talent hub. At Barcelona Global we know what is needed and the moment is now. The COVID-19 crisis has activated, more than ever, an enormous quantity of European Union resources to transform our economic environment into a greener and more digital system. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we have to dramatically improve certain key issues in our city and country. Taxation to attract, and retain, talent and entrepreneurs, friendlier administrative procedures, affordable international schools and affordable housing, and an effort to open our institutions, and even our houses to those who choose to make Barcelona their home.

This monitor wouldn't be possible without the support of our sponsor Banco Sabadell and the valuable contributions of our scientific advisor, professor Sebastian Reiche, and Mercer.

**The opportunity is here, and the moment is now.
So, let's make it happen!**

Introduction

Barcelona Global is an independent and non-profit organization founded in 2012

The organization boasts more than 210 of the city's leading companies, entrepreneurs, as well as cultural institutions and universities as its members. With more than 850 individual members Barcelona Global has a powerful voice to fulfil its mission – **making Barcelona one of the best cities in the world for 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 15% 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 if we are able to merge their initiative with the Barcelonians by birth initiative, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

The Barcelona Global International Talent Monitor has been going since 2013 bi-annually and aims to provide a comprehensive view on working conditions, entrepreneurial environment, Integration and overall sentiment towards Barcelona amongst talented internationals who live in Barcelona by choice. This 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.

Methodology

The 2021 edition of the International Talent Monitor is the 5th of its kind. As in previous years the project employs a robust methodology, overseen by an advisory panel of 12 experts and the support of Sebastian Reiche, professor at IESE.

Quantitative

In essence, as shown below, the survey offers respondents the option to rate questions on a sliding scale from 1 to 7, indicating a corresponding numerical value.

Questions also included the option to indicate “I don’t know/I don’t have an opinion” or “This question does not apply to my personal circumstances”.

In total 1042 respondents participated in the 2021 survey, spending an average of 41 minutes on the completion of the survey – indicating a high level of engagement.

The quantitative survey was widely distributed within the international community through a network of influential ‘multipliers’ among businesses, universities, trade organizations, international schools, etc.

Qualitative

8 focus group were conducted, focusing on qualitative input.

The focus groups were divided into the following themes: Education, Pharma & Research, Tourism, Culture & Sports, City Services, Business, Health, Startup & Tech.

The total number of professionals involved was 64.

A thorough and deep analysis of the quantitative results was conducted, which was enriched by feedback and ideas from the qualitative focus group insights.

Emerging themes and ideas were discussed and vetted by the Advisory Board under the guidance of the scientific director Professor Sebastian Reiche, Head of the Managing People in Organizations department at IESE Business School.

We are grateful to Banco Sabadell for the active collaboration and sponsorship in making this survey another important tool to make life better for internationals in Barcelona.

We also want to express our gratitude to Mercer, who supported us in structuring the focus groups and focus group questions this time.

Below is the scale of rating:

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

This year's International Talent Monitor – in the context of the COVID pandemic – offers fresh insights into the strengths and opportunities of a city that continues to be highly attractive to international talent due to its natural assets, international connectivity (to other world cities) and great quality of life.

A defining moment

The quantitative data (1042 respondents) and insights gathered from 8 cross-sector focus groups suggest that the post-pandemic phase could be a defining moment for Barcelona. There is an opportunity to reassess what the city stands for and specifically which international talent it wants to attract to help shape its future.

Healthcare resilience

One of the notable strengths to come out of this year's research is the stability in satisfaction rates with both public and private healthcare sectors (5,10 and 5,54/7), as well as with the way the city has dealt with the pandemic (4,70/7). The resilience and quality of the healthcare sector in the face of a crisis when compared to other European cities, has emerged as one of Barcelona's strengths.

Business optimism

Remarkably, there has been a marked increase in general positivism towards investing in business in Barcelona (4,28 in 2021 and 3,9 in 2019) – which points to future opportunities for the city. However, satisfaction with setting up a business has shown a slight decrease (3,95 in 2021 and 4,1 in 2019), borne out by focus group insights citing startup challenges with bureaucracy and regulations.

Remote-working hub

Another potential post-pandemic opportunity identified in the survey, is Barcelona's attractiveness for remote workers (5,44/7). The city appears well positioned to capitalize on shifting global working patterns to attract investment and more senior talent from abroad.

Challenges to address

However, the ITM also identified a number of challenges, some old and some new, which, if left unaddressed, could lead to opportunities being missed and impact the city's global competitiveness.

Dissatisfaction with tax given as a reason for leaving the city among respondents has increased by 5%, the biggest increase in reasons for leaving. Wealth tax is perceived as an increasingly important barrier preventing talented professionals with global assets to come, stay and invest in Barcelona.

Opportunities for career growth and children's educational opportunities also increased respectively to 24% and 7% of the total reasons for leaving.

The cost of living in the city is increasing rapidly, especially housing, and as taxation remains high, Barcelona is losing its competitiveness because of lower-than-average salaries, according to focus group respondents and survey data.

Education & research

Although global excellence in education is seen as a strength across various sectors (4,88/7), including healthcare and IT, the city struggles to maintain young talent and to attract senior talent as a result of low salaries. In line with previous years net income remains an issue, compounded by high costs of housing (3,18/7) and international schools for senior talent. A lack of visibility and recognition for research accomplishments, is also seen as hampering international investment and opportunities in this sector.

Taxation levels

One of the main barriers to attracting international talent and investment remains the level of taxation: wealth, income and corporate tax are seen as not competitive in a global context. (3,42, 3,66 and 3,59/7)

Of note, high taxation on stock options emerged as a particular hurdle to make Barcelona an even more attractive startup hub.

Bureaucracy

The administrative burden – both for individuals and startups – remains a major concern for individuals and investors (2,89/7) – compounded by low satisfaction with the digitization of administration processes this year (3,68/7).

Legal system

Dissatisfaction with the legal system – particularly when setting up a business – has shown a notable increase (3,33 in 2021 and 3,7 in 2019) and is seen to be hampering innovation across sectors, including sustainable tourism and mobility.

Political situation

Concerns about the political situation, though stable since 2019, remains a bottom indicator (2,65/7). This leads to a lack of clarity and security among business owners, startups and international investors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Barcelona is entering the post-COVID phase with many strengths and a lot of positivity among internationals who choose the city as their home.

The city has a chance to build on these strengths and to capitalize on new opportunities to solidify its global competitiveness and attractiveness for international talent.

However, Barcelona needs a clear vision for the future with buy-in from the private sector to signal openness to innovation and to facilitate the attraction and retention of international talent and investment.

Profile

When looking at the profile of respondents, Barcelona has accelerated its profile as a tech and entrepreneurial city, with a great capacity to attract young technological talent and highly skilled individuals. Most of the respondents have lived in the city for more than 10 years (32%) working in the tech sector (20%), and are Europeans (72%) with a master's degree or PhD (73%).

Executive Summary - In depth review

1. Still a powerful brand to attract international talent – post-COVID

Respondents of the survey perceived that Barcelona could be considered a cosmopolitan global city (5,7/7) and that the ease of attracting international talent remains quite satisfactory (5/7). The presence of an international community is seen as positive (5,8/7), followed by an increase in satisfaction with the infrastructure for international connectivity (6,1 in 2021 and 5,9 in 2019).

The overall levels of satisfaction with investing in business has shown an increase to above neutral (4,2 in 2021 and 3,9 in 2019).

However, data shows that the satisfaction of respondents with starting a business has dropped to just below neutral (3,9/7).

Respondents' satisfaction with taxation has decreased across the board: for wealth tax (3,4 in 2021 and 3,5 in 2019), income tax (3,5 in 2021 and 3,8 in 2019) and corporate tax (3,6 in 2021 and 3,8 in 2019).

Satisfaction with working conditions is slightly lower (4,65/7) and satisfaction with living/lifestyle conditions remains stable at 5,6/7.

Satisfaction with the competitiveness of salaries remains low (3,1/7), compounded by low levels of satisfaction with the housing market (3,2/7).

Insights gained from the focus groups confirm high positivity in the business environment post-Covid, however taxation, the administrative burden and increasing dissatisfaction with the legal system in line with the quantitative results were identified as significant challenges.

2. A networking and open city

The survey results show internationals are slightly less satisfied with their social integration (4,9 in 2021 and 5,2 in 2019), feel somewhat part of the local Barcelona community (4,3/7) and are willing to integrate into the local community (5,8/7). The satisfaction level of

local openness towards international professionals is above neutral (4,6/7).

Preoccupation over the political situation remains stable with a 2,6 satisfaction rating but notably it remains the lowest on the list of bottom indicators.

Focus group insights confirmed concerns about politics and a perceived lack of collaboration between the public and private sector. There is some concern that a perceived anti-international mindset could hamper innovation and the attraction of investment and talent when compared to other Spanish and global cities.

3. Excellent quality of life and healthcare, but administrative burden increases

The overall satisfaction in lifestyle/living conditions in Barcelona is positive, above (5,6/7) with internationals being somewhat satisfied. In addition, accessibility to sports and exercise (5,9/7) and cultural offerings of the city (5,8/7) remain important features.

Both the public (5,1/7) and private (5,5/7) healthcare systems remain at a remarkably positive level, despite the COVID crisis. Specifically, an above neutral level of satisfaction (4,7/7) was indicated for the healthcare system's response to the pandemic.

The satisfaction of the sustainability of the environment remains neutral (4,4 in 2021 and 4,1 in 2019) with a perceived neglect of public spaces seen as an issue in focus groups. Concerns about safety and the level of security have remained stable at (4,3/7) with petty crime and a perceived lack of action in this regard being singled out in focus groups.

Administrative processes have become an even bigger issue when landing in Barcelona and has dropped to (2,8 in 2021 and 3,3 in 2019) with respondents also being somewhat dissatisfied with the digitization of administrative processes this time round (3,6/7).

Satisfaction with the legal environment has dropped significantly (3,3 in 2021 and 3,7 in 2019).

NOTE: All ratings are out of 7: 1 being the lowest, 7 the highest and 4 neutral.

The city's attractiveness for remote workers has risen to "somewhat attractive" (5,4/7).

Barcelona still offers an exceptional quality of life and appears particularly attractive as a remote working destination, however increasing difficulties to complete administrative processes and an unstable legal environment are seen as blockage points for attracting international investment and talent.

4. Salaries low and dissatisfaction with taxation rises

Satisfaction with the competitiveness of salaries relative to other countries (3,1/7) remains low. Satisfaction with the housing market (3,1/7) is also rated low amongst internationals residing in Barcelona.

As indicated in number 1 above, the data shows that levels of dissatisfaction with taxation – income, corporate and wealth tax – are on the rise and the tax burden has become one of the main reasons for leaving the city, up by 5% from the last edition, the biggest increase given by respondents as a reason for leaving Barcelona.

Opportunities for career growth (24%) and children's educational opportunities (7%) also showed an increase as reasons for leaving.

Participants of the focus groups said as the cost of living in the city is increasing rapidly, especially housing, and as taxation remains high, Barcelona is losing its competitiveness because of lower-than-average salaries. Those aspects are a real "turn off" when it comes to attracting and retaining senior talent where lifestyle is not the only criteria and net income is a barrier. Wealth tax is also perceived as an increasingly important barrier preventing talented professionals with global assets to come, stay and invest in Barcelona.

5. Need for accessible, affordable international education

The overall level of general satisfaction with the school system in Barcelona has remained stable (4,7/7).

The majority of international children attend international schools but this has dropped significantly from 46% in 2019 to 39% in 2012.

Although the numbers in private and local public schools are also slightly down, the drop in international school numbers is by far the biggest.

Within the focus groups, international parents and education professionals identified the location and cost of the private international schools in Barcelona as a significant issue. All schools are located in one area, providing a challenge for families who work in other parts of the city. Respondents are not overly affected by the use of Catalan, but they see it as somewhat of a challenge when settling into the city (53%). When selecting a school for their children, they lament the lack of international languages taught in public and concertada schools.

Calls to Action 2021

1. Push for taxation improvements for international talent and companies

While Barcelona scores very high in terms of attractiveness for international professionals and as a location for entrepreneurship, its tax system, and more generally Spain's, has become uncompetitive in the face of the new mobility trends of international talent, while neighboring countries have adapted their tax systems.

This represents a big loss of opportunity in terms of productivity and job creation. It is therefore critical to bring our taxation up to speed in areas such as exit tax or the regime for non-residents and align it with those of other European countries in order to maintain our competitiveness among stakeholders that play an energizing, fundamental role in our local economy. Barcelona Global has been lobbying parliament and government in order to improve conditions to attract talent by introducing some reforms on the impatriates system of taxation: (1) enlarge to 10 years the impatriates tax system, (2) extend to the family the possibility to benefit from the impatriates system; (3) cut down to 5 years the demanded time living outside of Spain to benefit from this regime; (4) expand the impatriate tax system to professionals, investors and entrepreneurs.

2. Push for fast-track digitized procedures and online info portal

Following conversations with Barcelona Global, the city council launched the online portal – Barcelona International Welcome – which gathers information about all the arrival procedures and provides additional relevant information to newcomers, including healthcare, schools, transportation, etc. The city council has also announced the imminent opening of Barcelona's International Welcome Desk, a one-stop shop for all municipal administrative tasks. It should incorporate, as soon as possible, the arrival procedures with any public department that may require a face-to-face interaction.

On the other hand, this process should also be digitized as much as possible and an end-to-end, fast-track route for international talent should be implemented.

3. Launch a remote working publicity campaign

If taxation and administrative issues are resolved, Barcelona should plan a global campaign to highlight its attractiveness as a place from where to work, invest, research and create. Such a campaign would have the ambition to attract talented people who love Barcelona but who, until now, didn't consider our city as a place to live and work.

4. Push for affordable international education to welcome children of international families

Barcelona is a very attractive location for young professionals, but the city has difficulties attracting senior researchers and middle managers with families, which has a strong impact on the competitiveness of the city's research centres and corporates.

One of the main reasons these professionals give for declining offers in Barcelona, is the lack of an affordable, accessible international school for their children. Barcelona Global is working on a project to launch a school to meet the criteria of welcoming the children of international professionals. We are in the process of identifying potential partners.

5. Push for a metropolitan housing policy

Barcelona Global has worked with more than 50 experts, including architects, urban planners, tax consultants, developers, builders, investors, financial institutions, foundations and technology companies to compile a report entitled: "The challenge of housing in Barcelona: proposals for a necessary solution." The document appeals for the metropolitan management of the housing policy and an increase in stock for affordable housing, with public impulse and private investment. The report has been submitted to local public authorities for collaboration and discussion.

6. Internationalization of higher education

Although Barcelona is home to several top and truly global business schools, the percentage of international students in the city's higher education institutions is less than 4%, compared to, for example, 12% in cities such as Amsterdam or Copenhagen. Forecasts show that 10.2 million students will graduate in countries different to their own in 2030. This not only represents a direct economic opportunity but can bring even greater future benefits in terms of international knowledge and influence, talent attraction, business connections and joint opportunities driven by students that may relocate to their own or other world cities upon completion of their studies.

Barcelona Global is pushing for the internationalization of higher education in the city, working with government departments and institutions.

Results

1. Barcelona as a Global City – 10 Global Strategic Indicators

We selected 10 main indicators reflecting the main trends. We identify and follow the perception of these 10 key topics to measure Barcelona's global competitiveness.

2. Top 10 and Bottom 10 Indicators

We asked for the perceptions regarding 20 key topics. The highest rated indicators (Top 10) are those in which respondents expressed the most satisfaction. The lowest rated indicators (Bottom 10) are those in which respondents expressed the least amount of satisfaction. They exclude the 10 global indicators.

3. Future Opportunities

We asked respondents to identify which sectors the city should prioritize in the future.

4. Integration

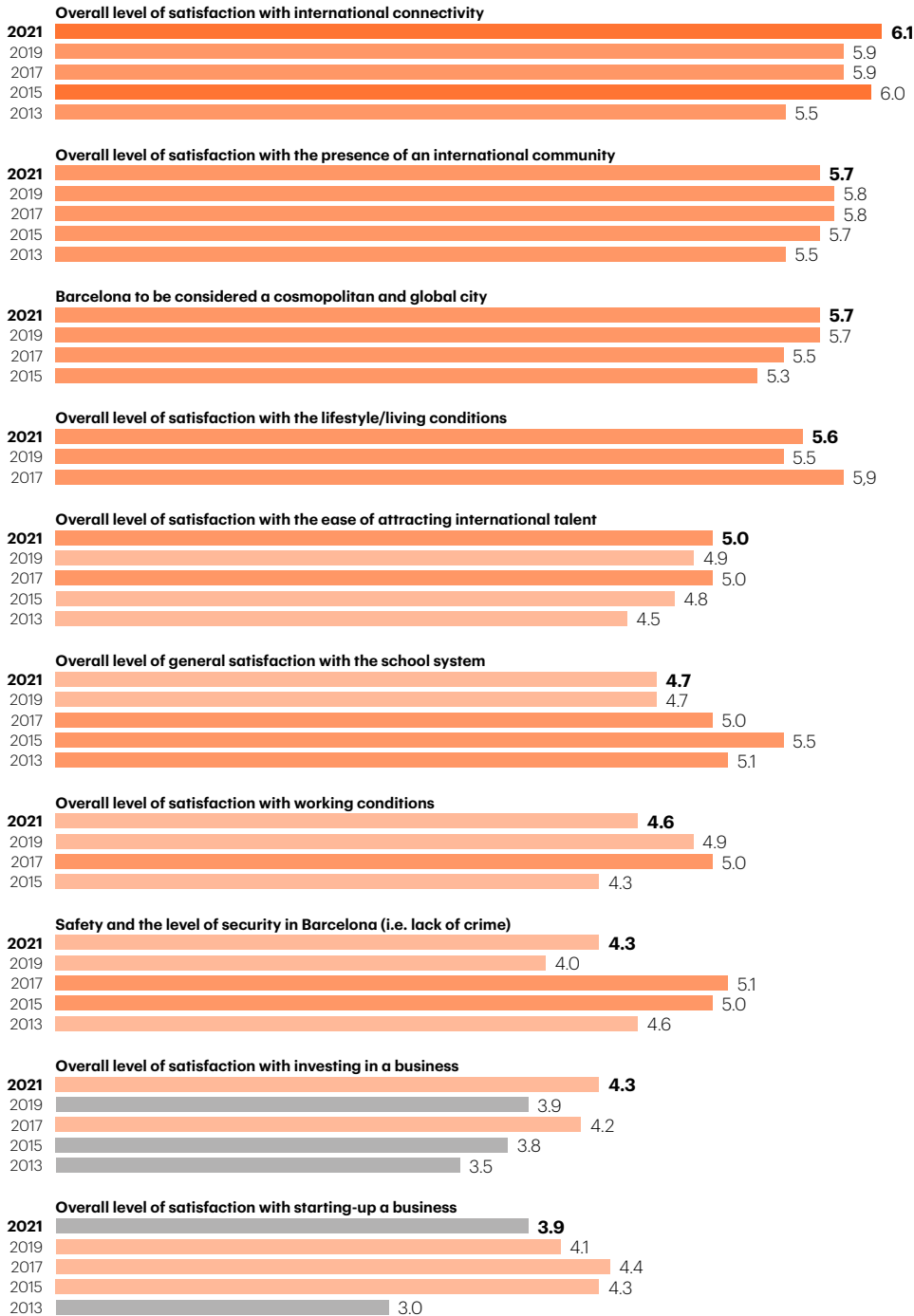
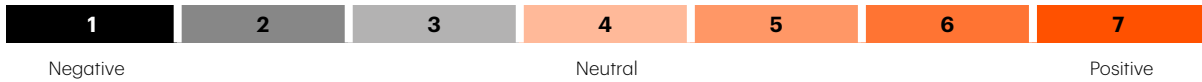
We asked questions about how respondents perceive their integration in Barcelona.

5. Education

We asked respondents with children for their opinion about education.

We enriched the quantitative analysis results with the feedback of the focus groups to draft the conclusions.

10 Global Strategic Indicators



STABILITY DESPITE PANDEMIC

Levels of satisfaction among internationals with the 10 global indicators remain stable compared to previous surveys – which is remarkable, considering we’ve just been through a global pandemic, which included periods of severe lockdown in Barcelona.

Moreover, 9/10 global indicators are above the ‘neutral’ line of 4, which seem to show an overall satisfaction among internationals with living conditions in the city – despite COVID challenges.

BUSINESS OPTIMISM IN FUTURE

Interestingly, the biggest increases are the overall level of satisfaction with **investing in a business**.

This, again, is remarkable in the light of the impact lockdown has had on businesses in the city and indicates optimism and positivity towards investing and doing business in Barcelona in the future.

MORE DIFFICULT TO START A BUSINESS

The only global indicator to fall below ‘neutral’ is the level of satisfaction with starting a business – which is confirmed by our qualitative research focus groups – where respondents indicated frustration with the regulatory framework and administrative procedures required when starting a new business.

Upon segmentation of audiences, this level of dissatisfaction is higher in the tech sector compared to other sectors.

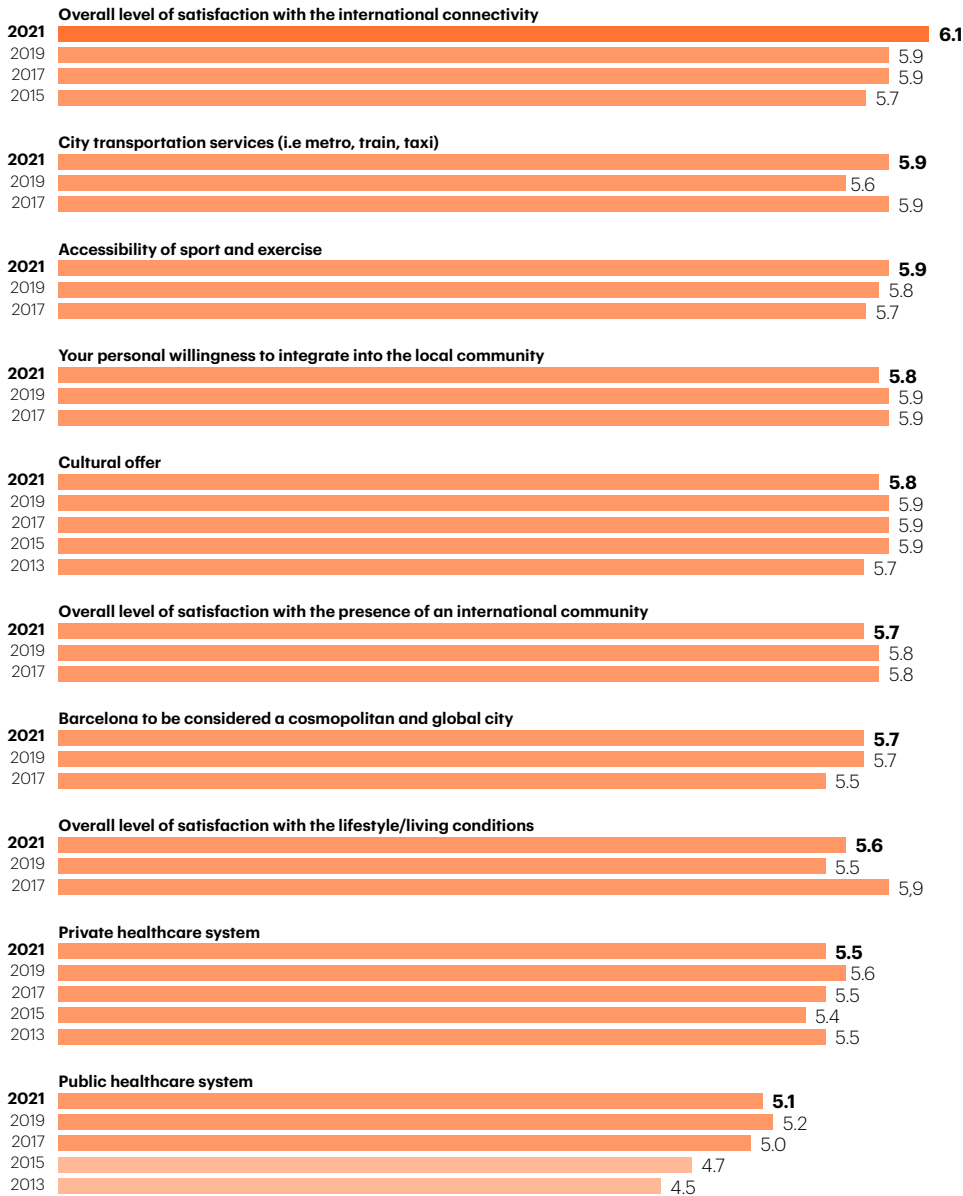
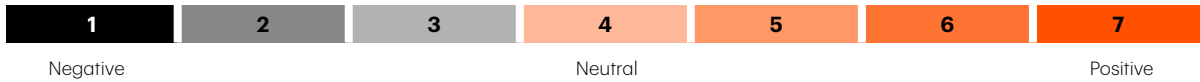
Easing the administrative burden consistently featured as an area for improvement – needed to attract new international talent and businesses and allow the city to capitalize on the positive overall sentiment to investment and business post-COVID.

QUALITY OF LIFE STILL POSITIVE

Overall, respondents’ satisfaction with international connectivity and living conditions indicate Barcelona is still considered as an attractive place to live, although satisfaction with working conditions have dropped – possibly as a result of enforced working-from-home during lockdowns.

Although security – particularly petty crime in the city center - remains a concern among internationals, the level of satisfaction with safety in the city is still above neutral (4.3/7).

Top 10 Indicators



INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY, TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The top 10 indicators in Barcelona remained more or less stable, with increases in the level of satisfaction **with international connectivity** (connection to other cities) and **public transport** (transport within the city). Satisfaction with the city's efforts towards **environmental sustainability** has shown an increase, although focus groups identified "neglected and dirty" public open spaces in the city as a deterrent for attracting internationals.

HEALTHCARE RESILIENCE

The most remarkable result here is that both public and private healthcare systems remain among the top 10 indicators – with only marginal decreases in satisfaction among internationals.

The level of satisfaction with the public healthcare system's handling of the COVID crisis was above neutral at 4.7.

Viewed in the context of the pandemic and the fact that the healthcare systems in many European cities came under severe criticism for perceived inadequacies in dealing with the pandemic – these results are indicative of a resilience and robustness in Barcelona's healthcare systems.

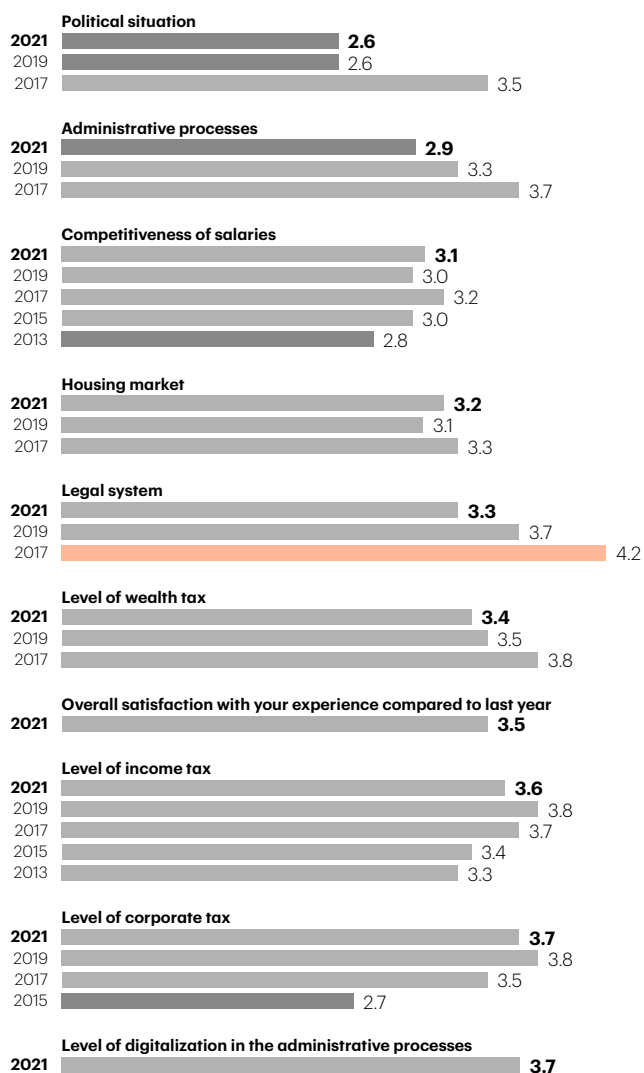
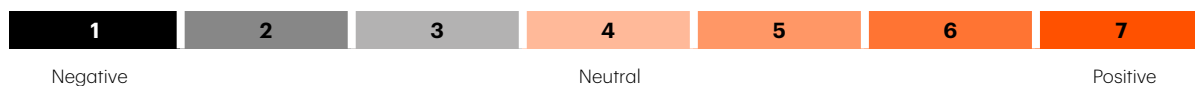
This is a big plus for Barcelona – particularly when it comes to attracting and retaining senior talent – which is considered as a big challenge.

The survey's profile data shows that healthcare is more important to senior talent and this strength could be used as an incentive for them – particularly in the light of comparatively lower net incomes – (salaries minus the cost of housing and cost of international schools).

FOCUS GROUPS

From the focus groups we learned that respondents are satisfied with healthcare, as well as the digitization within the public healthcare system – with the exception of the use of English. In particular, frustration was expressed around the availability of information about access to COVID vaccines in English. Respondents had to resort to Whatsapp groups and home country embassies to find information about vaccines.

Bottom 10 Indicators



ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR INDIVIDUALS

One of the biggest sources of frustration for internationals – indicated in the quantitative (significant decrease in satisfaction levels) and borne out by the qualitative research – is the **administrative burden when settling in the country**.

This is also a factor affecting the attractiveness of the city for international students, who face problems when applying for student visas and NIEs, upon completion of their studies.

The length of time and bureaucracy involved in obtaining a NIE and a driver's licence for individuals, in particular, remain a major headache – with focus groups lamenting the existence of a parallel network to guide internationals through the official system.

Senior business executives describe waiting up to 8 months for a NIE and having to retake their driver's licence in some cases as a reason to leave the country or to discourage other internationals from coming.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR STARTUPS

A significant drop in satisfaction with the legal system – is confirmed by qualitative research – with entrepreneurs lamenting a lack of **transparency and uncertainty in the regulatory system pertaining to investors and startups and bureaucracy in administrative processes** as factors hampering innovation across sectors, notably tourism, technology and sustainable mobility, as well as investment.

Low levels of satisfaction with the digitization in administrative processes is indicated as an issue in the survey and mentioned by both individuals and entrepreneurs in focus groups – who lamented the need to show up in person for NIE and other administrative appointments. This confirms a greater need for digitization, particularly in a city renowned as a startup and technology hub.

DISSATISFACTION WITH TAX

There has been **a significant drop in satisfaction levels in wealth, income and corporate tax compared to 2019**. This was confirmed by focus groups as a major deterrent for drawing international investment.

Tax is seen as a significant reason **for losing senior talent** – as many respondents indicated that beyond the Beckham Law period – it becomes difficult to retain senior international talent because of personal tax implications.

Tax has also **grown in significance as a reason for leaving Barcelona** in the survey – up from 4 to 9% compared to 2019 – the biggest increase of all factors influencing internationals to leave.

For startups – where allocation of stock options is a key to attracting international talent – **tax on stock options was highlighted as making it challenging to offer stock options as incentive** and therefore making the city less competitive compared to other startup destinations.

POLITICAL SITUATION

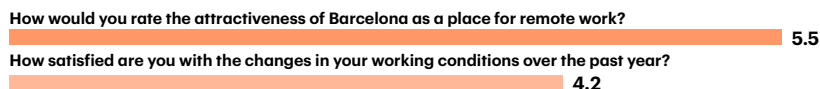
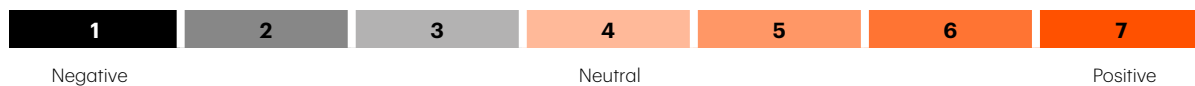
The political situation – although relatively stable – is still the lowest on the scale of bottom indicators in the survey with every focus group identifying **uncertainty about politics** as major factors affecting the global competitiveness of Barcelona and the Barcelona “brand”.

NET INCOME

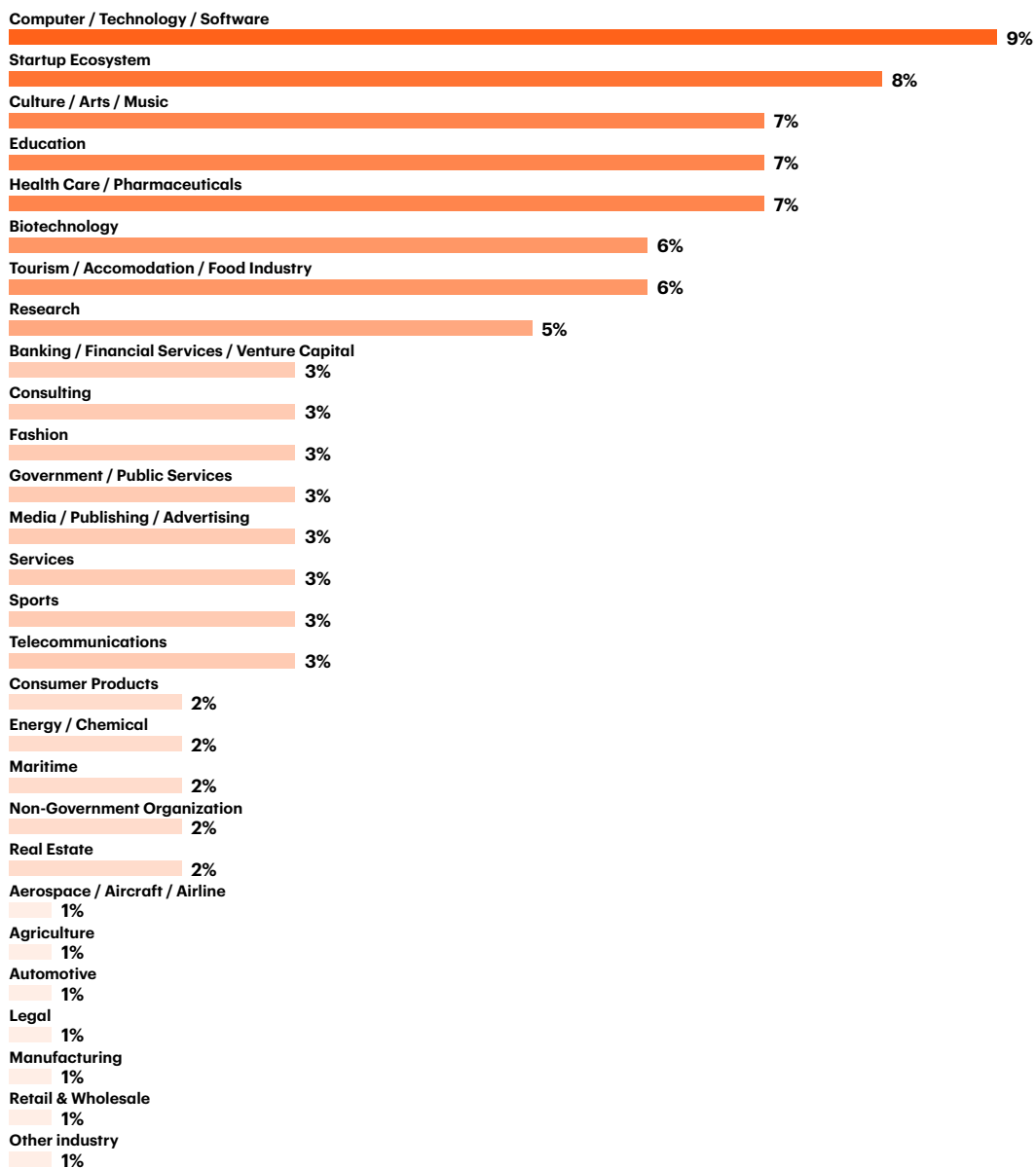
Net income – when taking into account lower than average salaries than other world cities (not increasing in line with the cost of living), the cost vs. quality of housing and the cost of international schools – remain a big concern, making it difficult to attract particularly senior talent with families. It is also given as a reason for students leaving the city upon completion of their studies.

Future Opportunities

Remote work & working conditions



Which sectors should Barcelona focus on after the crisis?



REMOTE WORKING

One of the opportunities identified in the quantitative research as indicated by **nearly 80% who see Barcelona as 'somewhat attractive', 'quite attractive' or 'very attractive' as a place for remote work.**

It was confirmed across focus groups that the quality of life offered by Barcelona and international connectivity – make the city attractive for foreigners who work for international companies elsewhere but choose to live in the city – in line with a shift in global workplace trends following the pandemic.

This could be an opportunity to promote the city to international talent going forward – particularly as the issue of net income would not be as important to this group as they would be earning in other currencies.

FUTURE SECTORS

Health and Research, Scale-ups, Education, Tourism

Best future sectors of focus for Barcelona were identified in the survey, including:

The startup eco system, computer technology and software, healthcare, research, biotech education, and culture and sustainable tourism.

This sentiment was confirmed by focus groups who specifically mentioned **the city's strength in global excellence when it came to healthcare and research** – which is not perceived to be sufficiently valued and receiving enough visibility and therefore not translating into sufficient investment and opportunities for international talent.

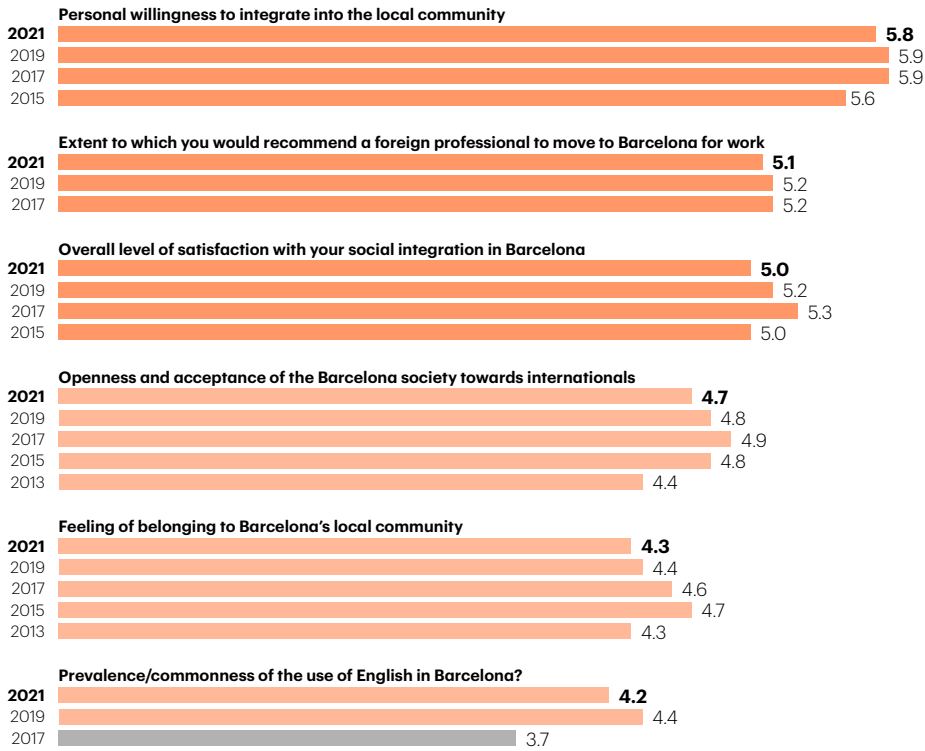
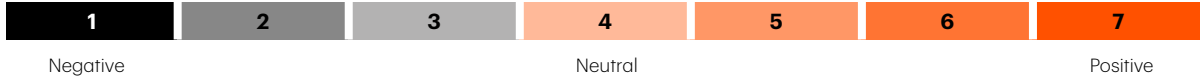
Building on excellence in education across sectors – is seen as a priority – particularly by making it easier for students to settle here and earn competitive salaries upon completion of their studies.

Building upon the city's successes in establishing itself as a startup city of note, was also identified as a priority – particularly when it comes to offering support for startups to grow and to assist them during **the scale-up stage** with easier administration procedures and less cumbersome taxes. The start-up focus group identified the need for the government to 'get out of the way' by introducing more flexible regulation to allow innovation and startup to become part of the future – also to facilitate the digitization of more traditional companies.

Sustainable and 'quality' tourism is still seen as a big opportunity for Barcelona, although the need for an engaging vision was pointed out repeatedly.

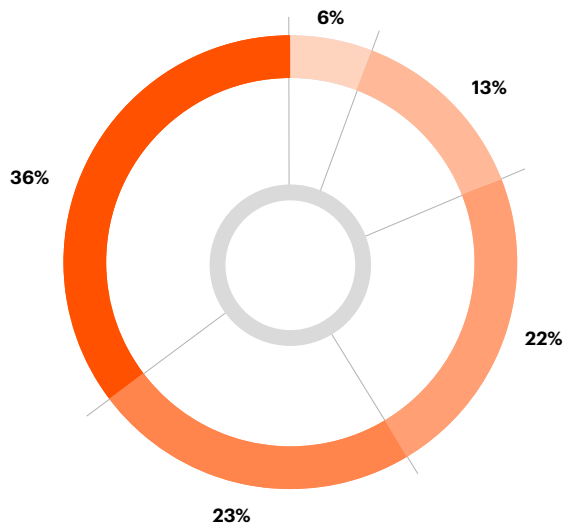
This is seen as **a defining moment for Barcelona** to decide **what it wants to stand for and who it wants to attract.**

Integration



Prevalence/commonness of the Catalan language

- Poses a higher adaptation challenge for me but I can cope with it
- Not affecting my experience in any relevant way
- Enriching my personal experience
- Making my experience rather unsatisfactory
- Affecting me to the extent that I am considering leaving the city mainly because of this reason



Data indicates the willingness of internationals to integrate and to recommend the city to other internationals as a place to live – remains more or less stable – despite the impact of COVID.

They are still quite satisfied with their social integration, as well as the openness and acceptance of the Barcelona society towards internationals.

However, there is room for improvement when asked if they feel part of Barcelona’s local society, international rate satisfaction levels just above neutral and the levels show a downward trend over the past 3 International Talent Monitor surveys.

For 80% of respondents the use of Catalan is not considered a major barrier to adaptation. As in 2019, most internationals felt that although the language posed a challenge, they could still cope with this.

REASONS FOR LEAVING BARCELONA

When it comes to reasons for leaving the city we see **the biggest increase – 5% – in tax issues indicated as a reason to leave.**

Other factors have remained stable – with children’s education also showing a 3% increase as a reason for leaving and leaving for better opportunities elsewhere showing a 2% increase.

FOCUS GROUPS – ENGLISH

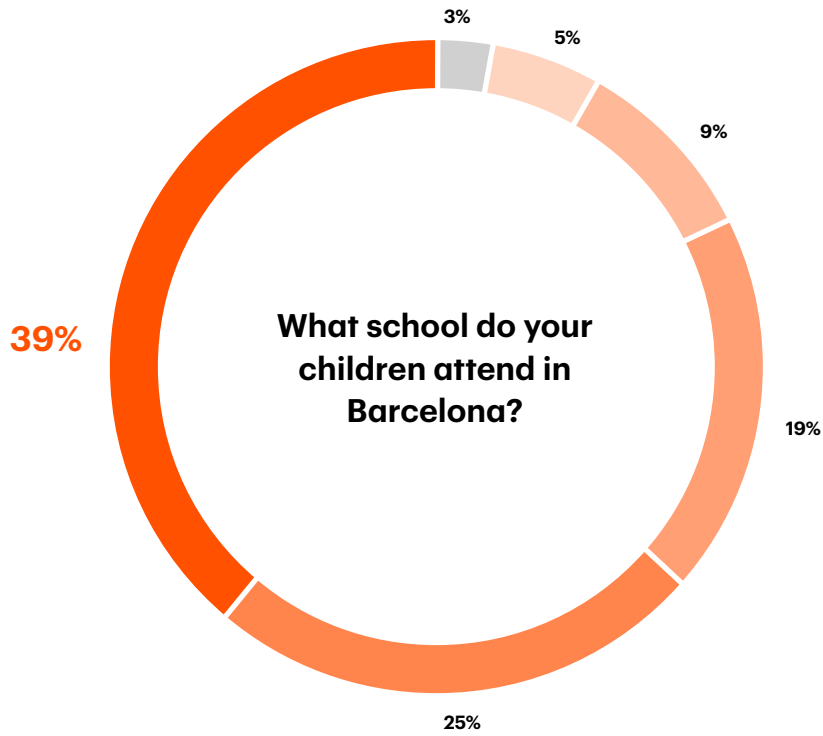
From the focus groups we know Barcelonians are perceived as ‘closed’ and that it is not easy to integrate particularly for international families, which means that many internationals remain in an expat bubble.

English is still seen as an important ‘marker’ identifying Barcelonians-by-choice as ‘tourists’ rather than internationals who are part of a cosmopolitan society.

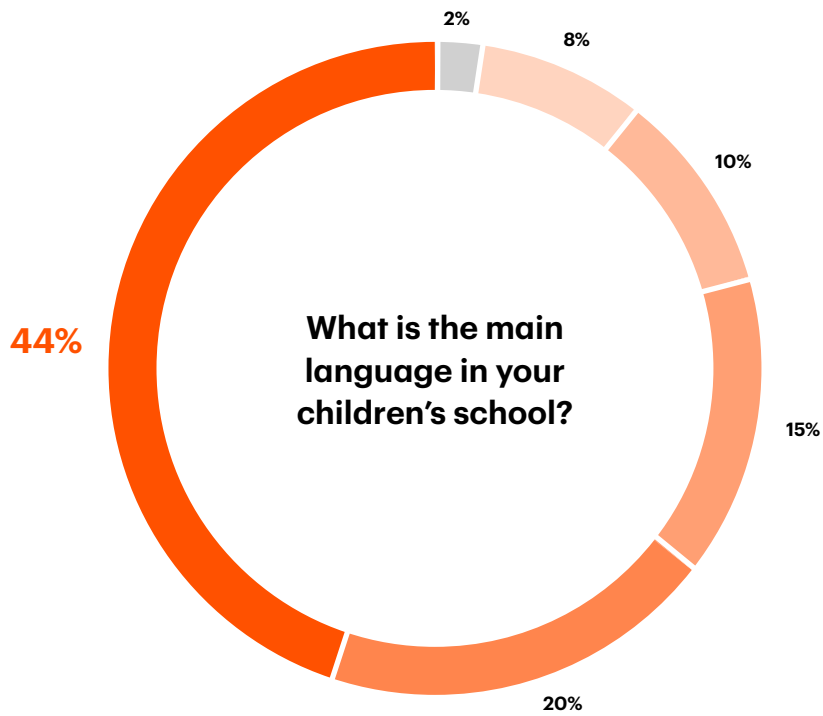
The commonness of the use of English has dropped slightly compared to the last report but remains above neutral. It has, however, been identified as a barrier in public service and particularly in the public health service during COVID.

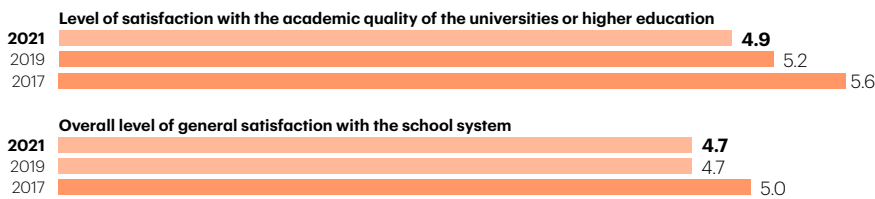
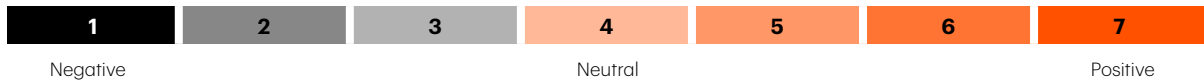
Education

- International school
- Concertada
- Public local school
- Private local school
- Other
- A different school overseas



- Catalan
- English
- German
- French
- Spanish
- Italian





Data shows a decrease of 7% in the number of respondents who send their children to international schools in Barcelona.

From the focus groups we learned that schooling – one of the reasons why internationals leave the city – and particularly the cost of international schools and lack of international languages in public schools – remains a significant issue – particularly affecting international senior talent.

The location of schools in one area of Barcelona – not in close proximity to many parents’ workplaces – is adding to cost and complications for international families.

Overall, the cost of international schools when considered in conjunction with lower salaries on average and the high cost of housing – make the net income comparatively low for internationals – particularly senior talent, who look beyond lifestyle and attractiveness when considering a place to settle.

Respondents' Profile

Demographics, localization and professional status of the respondents are detailed in this section. The profile is very much in line with profiles in previous surveys.

We see a similar group, with nearly 100 nationalities represented amongst the respondents.

The group features mainly Europeans, who are highly educated (60% have a master's degree), working (31% working for a local company), with an equal gender balance.

71% of respondents are married or living with a partner.

76% of respondents live in Barcelona city centre.

By far the biggest group – 20% work in the computer, technology or software sector, followed by 8% in research and 7% in consumer products and the finance sector.

In the light of the high levels of education, it is interesting to note that **48% of respondents earned 50.000 or less per year in euros before taxes.**

SEGMENTATION OF RESPONDENTS

Because of the predominance of the tech sector in the survey – we have segmented tech profiles and measured their responses vs. the rest of respondents for further insights into the sentiments among this sector.

Here it is interesting to note – consistent with earlier findings – bureaucratic administrative processes and a lack of digitization in administrative processes – are of particular concern to this group.

They are also more positive about salaries – possibly because of higher prevalence of remote working – earning salaries in other currencies.

TECH PROFILES VS. THE REST

- **Criteria:** Work sector, Computer / Technology / Software
- **More negative about:** Difficulties to start a business, administration process and the digitalization of administration, integration.
- **More positive:** Commonness of English and presence of international community, business environment, salaries competitiveness.
- **Difference in profile:** Male, young (25-29), educated (master), employee for a foreign institution or firm, higher salaries.

We have also segmented Barcelonians-by-Choice who have lived in the city for less than two years vs. the rest.

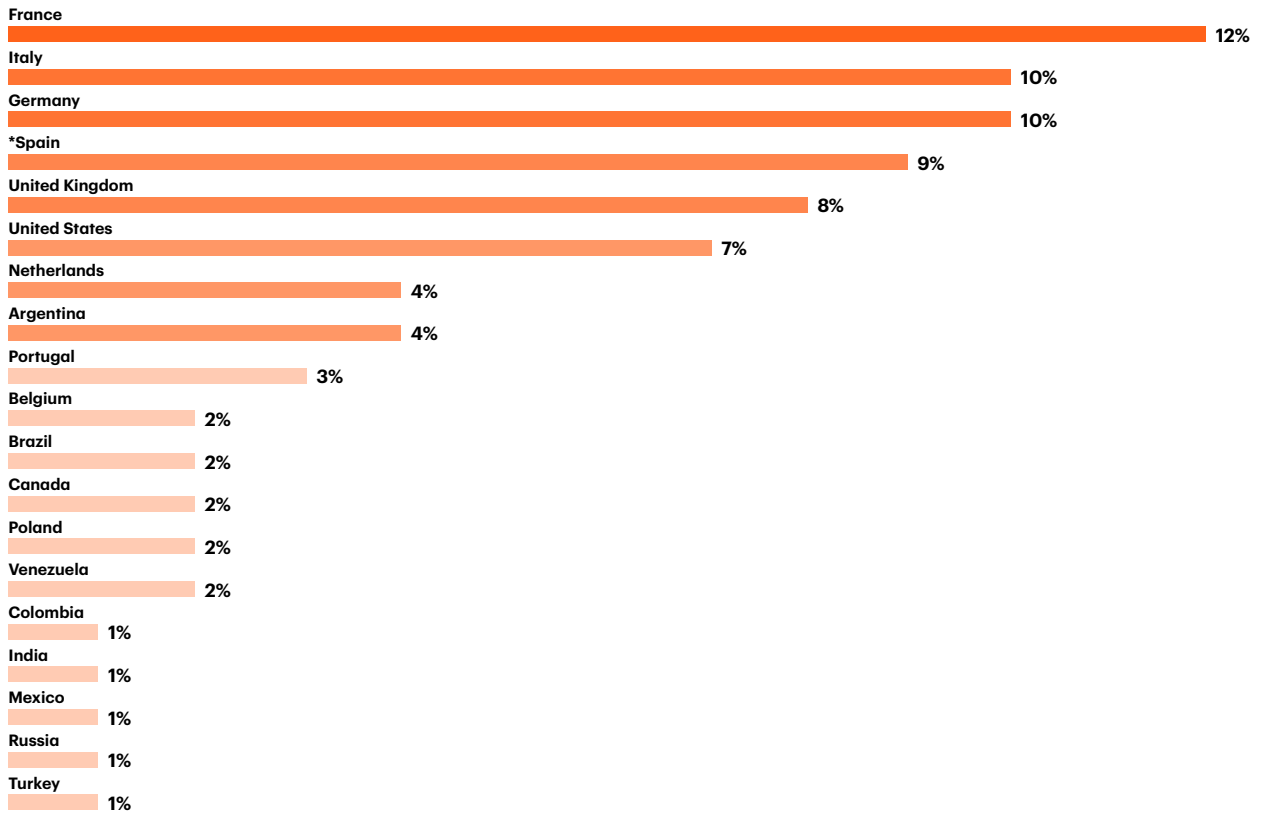
Here it is interesting to note – higher levels of difficulties with integration – possibly with COVID and lockdowns as a contributing factor.

LESS THAN TWO YEARS IN BARCELONA VS. THE REST

- **Criteria:** Living in Barcelona <1 year, 1 year and 2 years
- **More negative:** Difficult to integrate, they don't feel part of the community, frustration with and digitalization of administration.
- **More positive:** More positive in general, security, sustainability, university quality, work and business.
- **Difference in profile:** Young people (18-34 mostly), low positions, mostly living in the city.

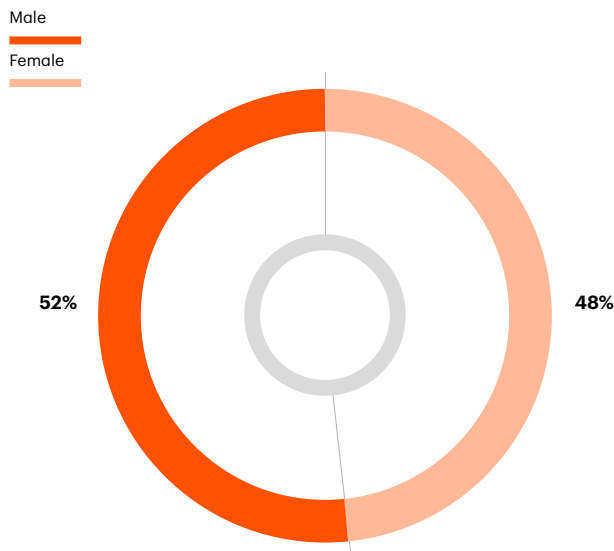
Demographics

Nationality by country

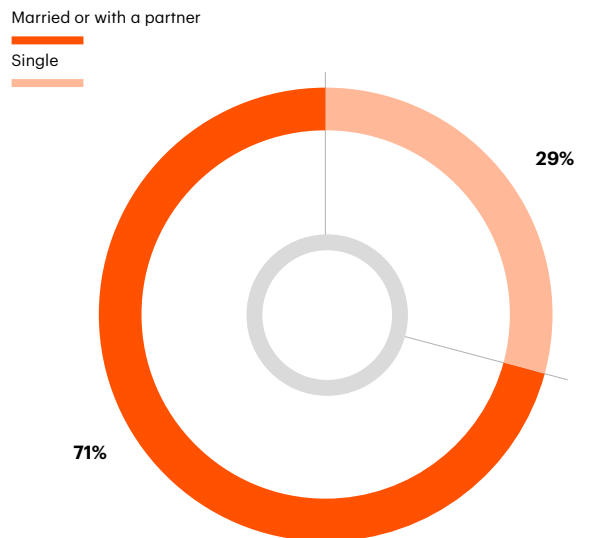


* multiple nationalities possible

Gender

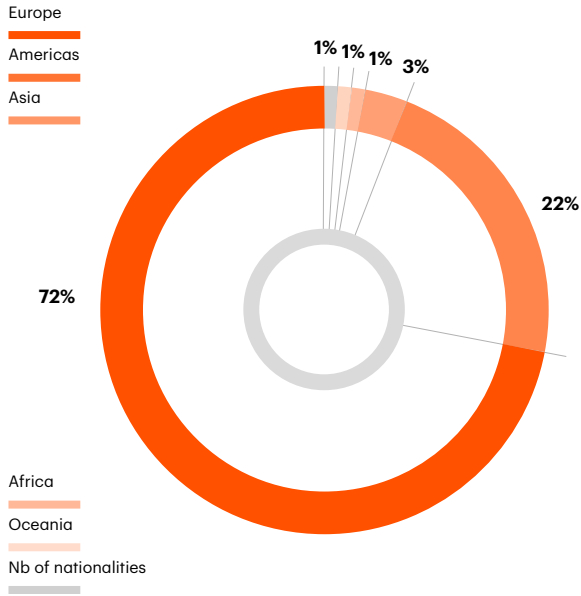


Marital status

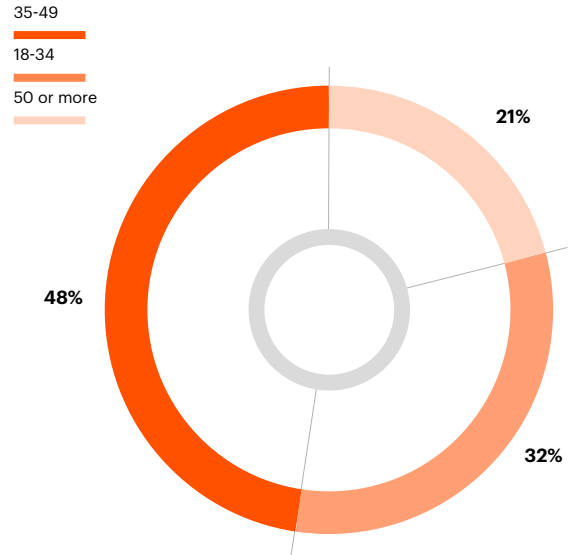


Demographics

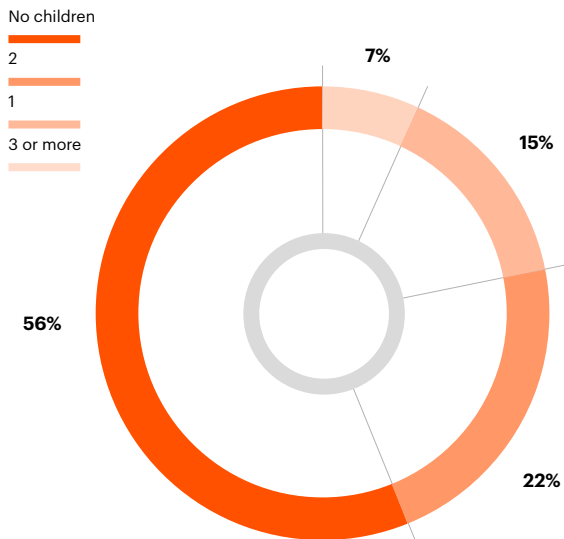
Nationality by continent



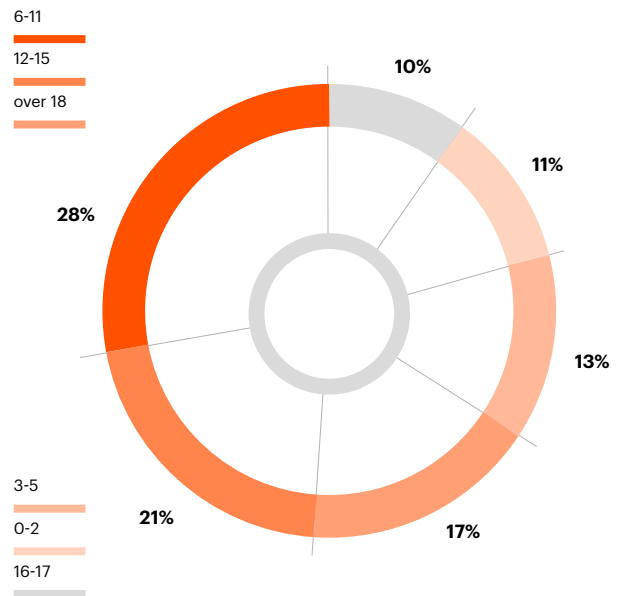
Age group



Children

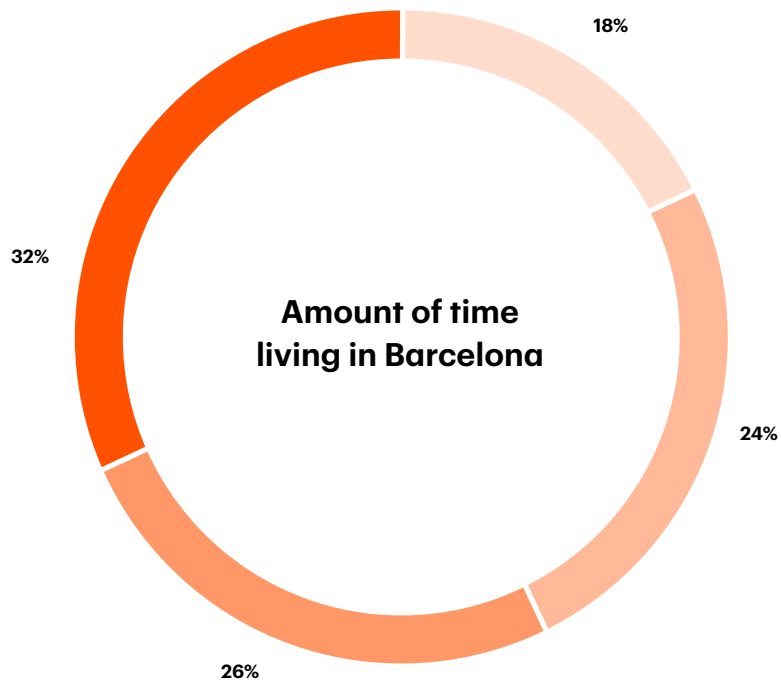


Children's ages

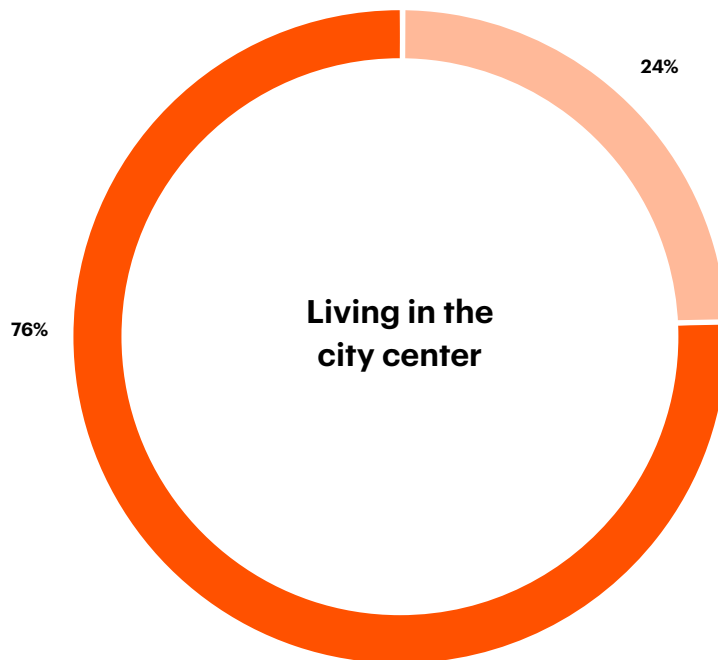


Localization

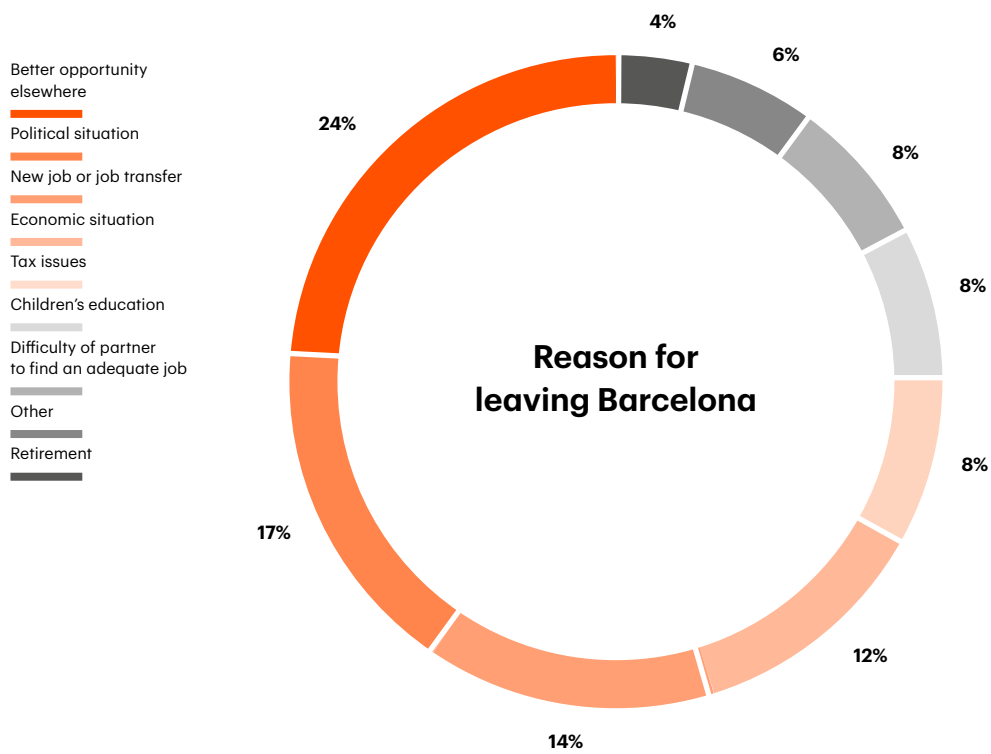
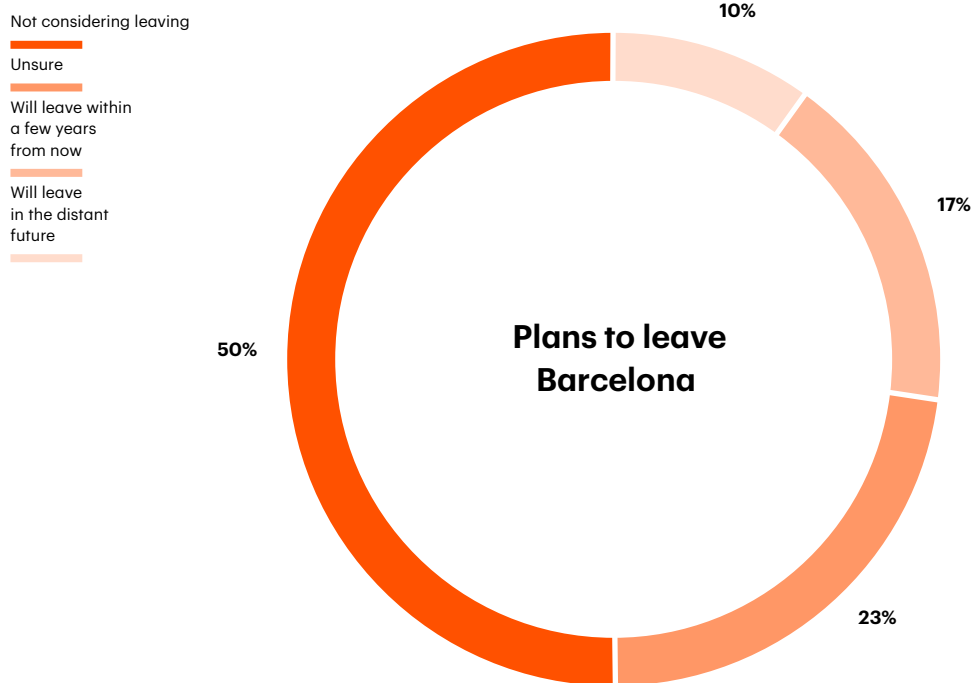
- More than 10 years
- 3-5 years
- Less than 2 years
- 6-10 years



- Barcelona City
- Barcelona Metropolitan Area

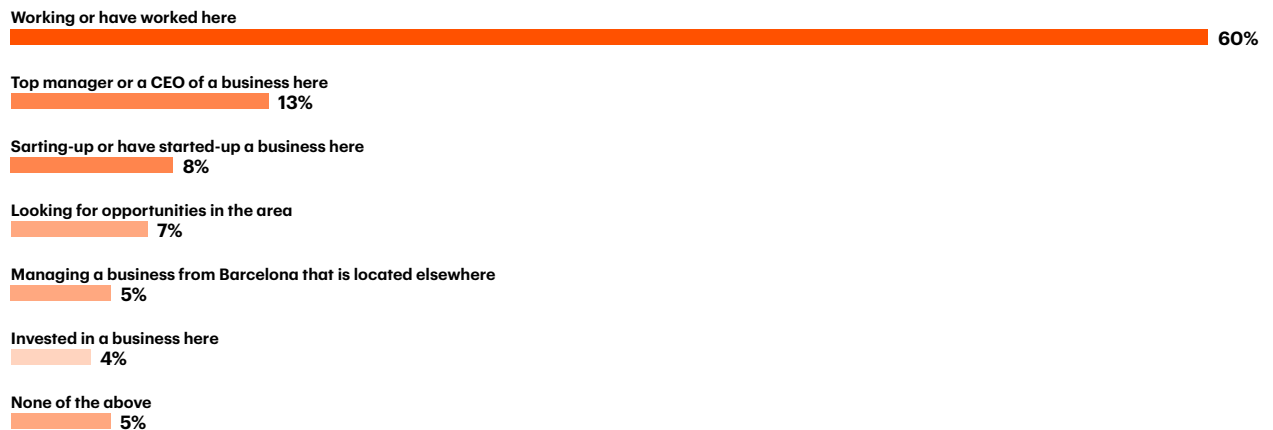


Localization

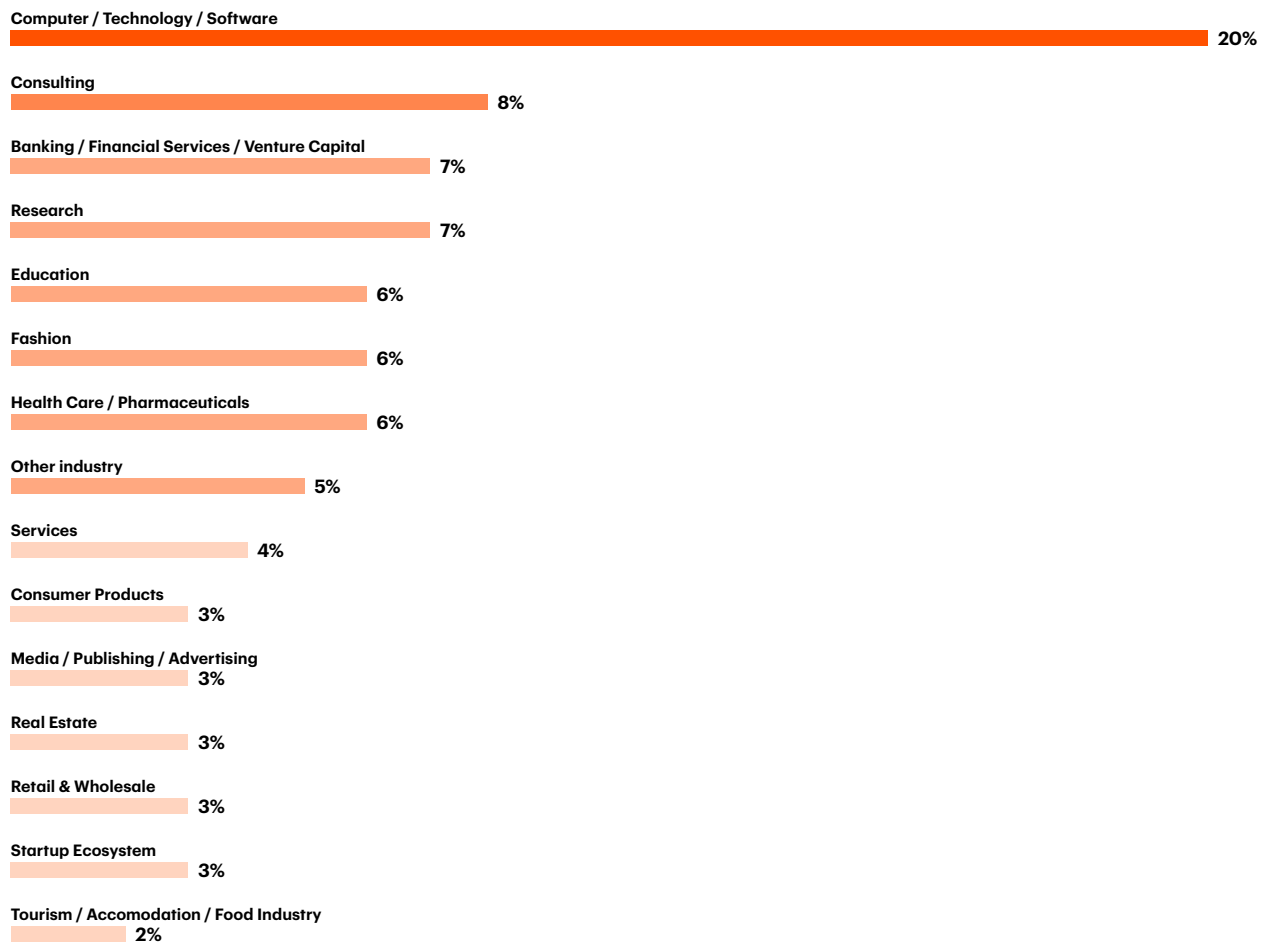


Professional Status

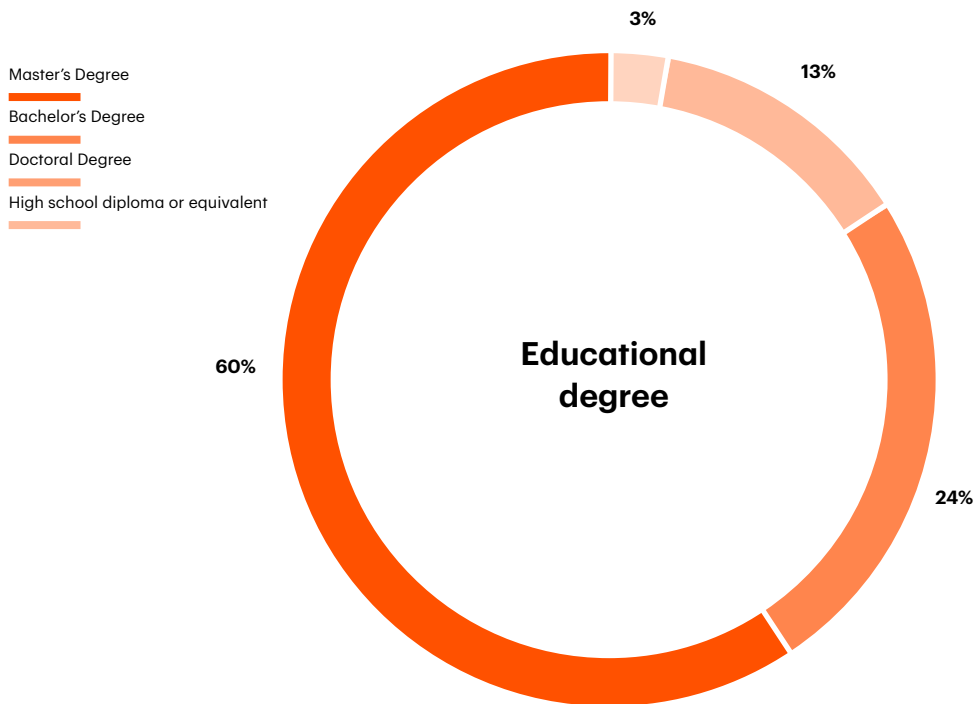
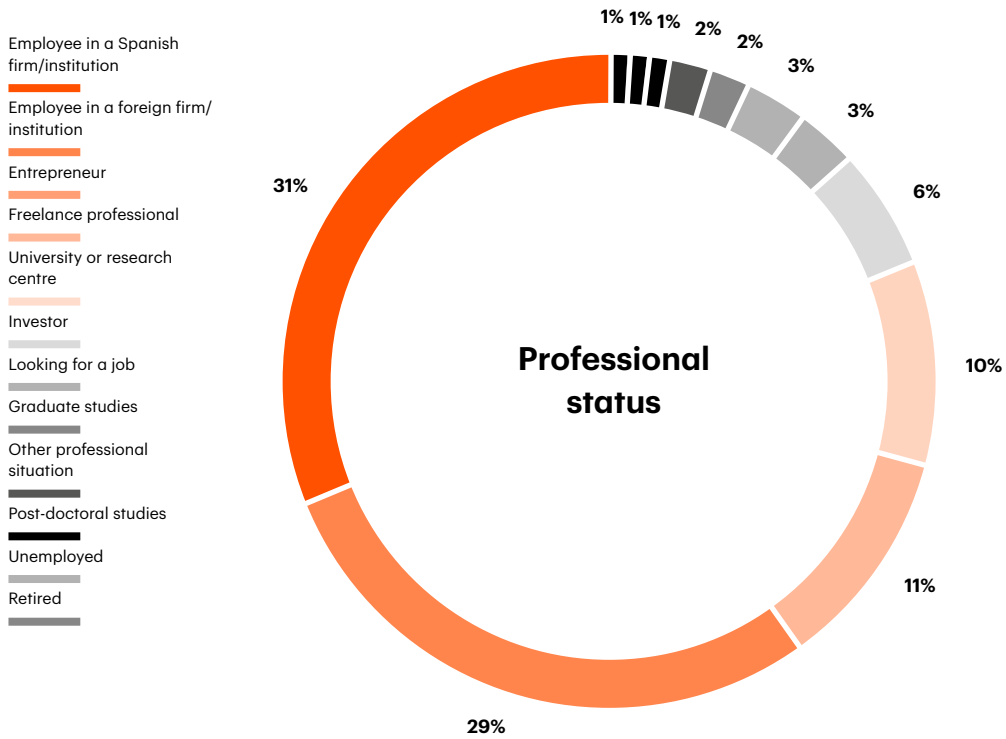
Are you currently working or have been involved in a business in Barcelona over the last 3 years?

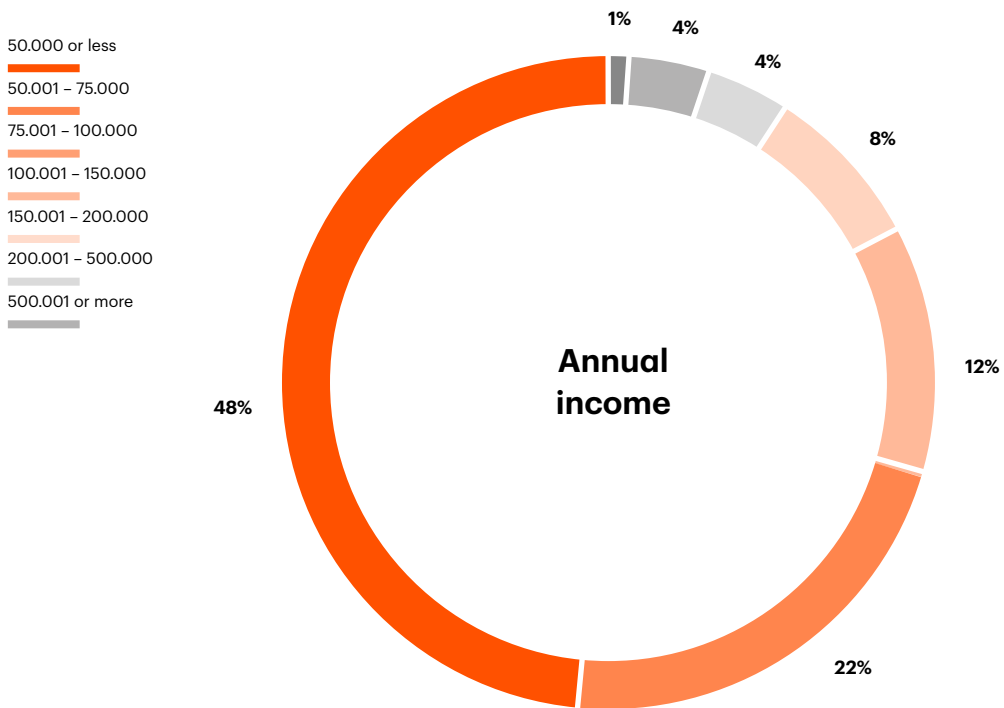
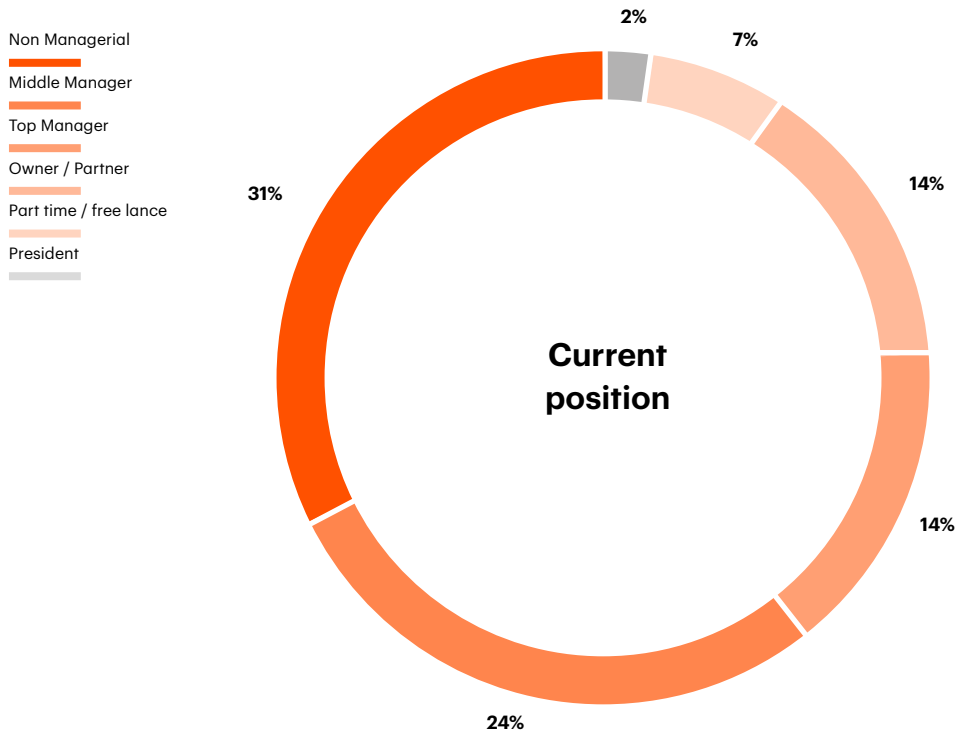


Main industry



Professional status





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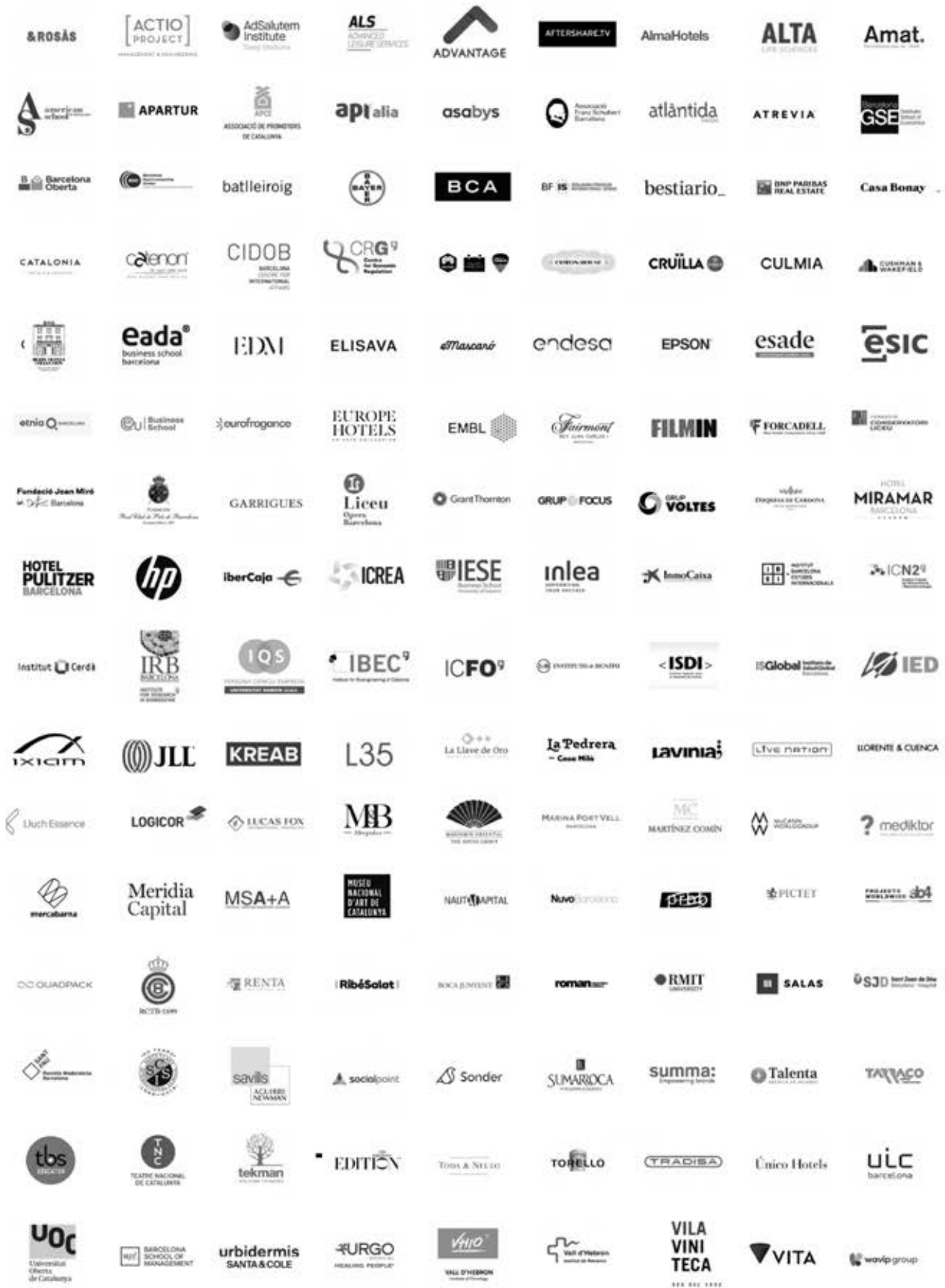
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Catherine Halford, KKV Investment Management
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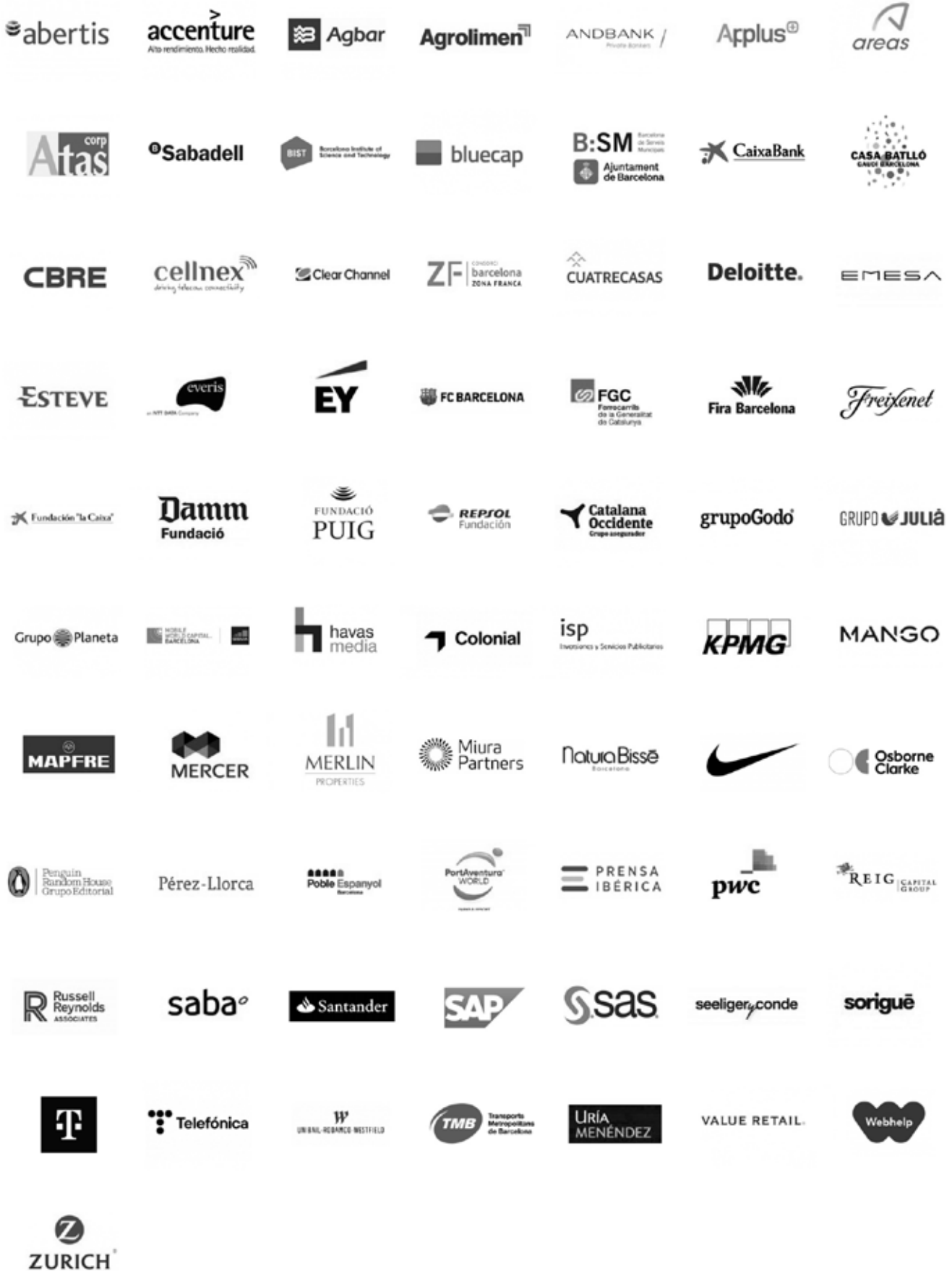
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