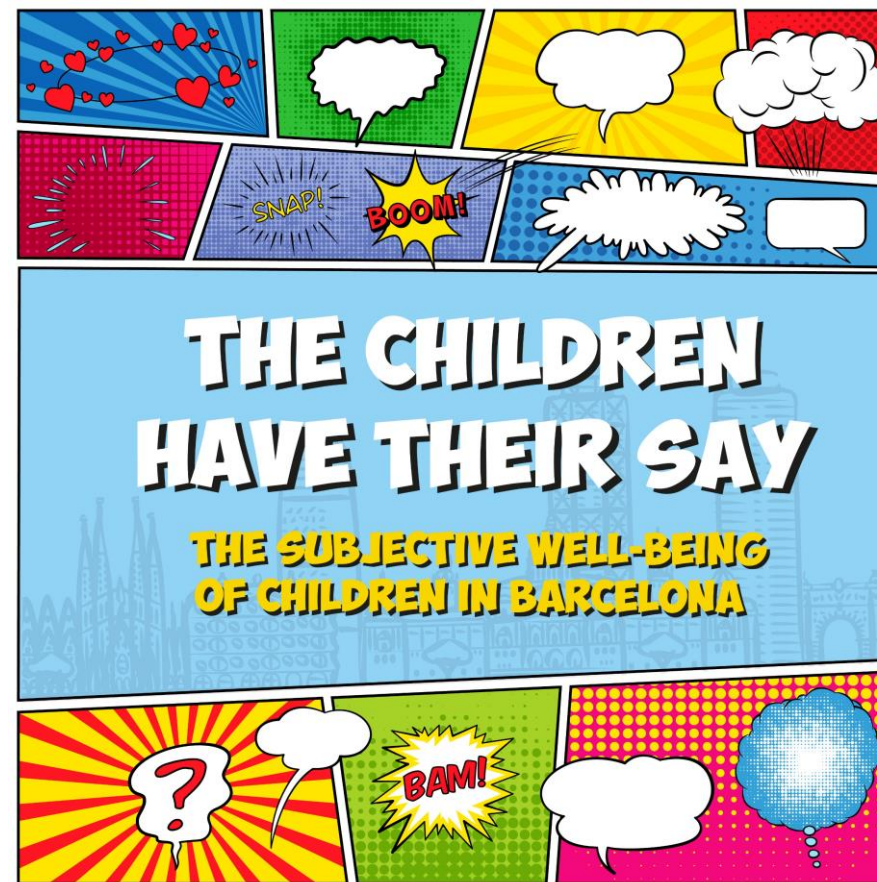


# The Children Have Their Say

The Well-Being of Children in Barcelona

EXPERIENCE SHEET

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**Educating Cities**  
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# Basic data

## The Children Have Their Say. The Well-Being of Children in Barcelona

City: Barcelona

Topics: associationism and participation, citizen participation, youth participation, civics, children's rights, welfare, childhood

Age group: 8-12 years old

Starting year: 2016

Promoted by:



Executed by:



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# Motivation and Summary



As part of the commitments made to build a city that guarantees Children's Rights, in 2016, Barcelona City Council launched the first edition of the programme '**The Children Have Their Say: The well-being of children in Barcelona**'. It is an intervention with a threefold objective: to obtain a deep understanding of the well-being of children; to put children at the centre through participatory methodologies; and to contribute to the improvement of local public policies aimed at children and adolescents. The programme is carried out in three phases. In the first phase, a representative sample of 4,000 children aged 10 to 12 answer an online survey about their subjective well-being. They then participate in workshops to interpret the results and put together their proposals for improvements. The information obtained through these two phases is synthesised into a document entitled 'The Children's Agenda', which gathers the children's demands addressed to the city, schools, families and themselves, in a bid to improve their well-being. Finally, and in order to strengthen the transformative impact of the programme, a city Spokeskids Group is set up, composed of children

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# Motivation and Summary

who have participated in both the survey and the workshops, with the mission of communicating the content of the Agenda to the education community, and initiating informed dialogues with political and social representatives to transmit their demands for improvement and bring about changes in the local policies that affect them.

In terms of governance, the programme has a steering committee made up of representatives from the Council's Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminisms and LGBTI Department; the Departments of Culture, Citizen Rights, Participation; the Municipal Institute of Education; and the Barcelona Education Consortium. Since the programme's inception, close collaboration has been maintained with the University of Girona.

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# Objectives

1. To generate a broad understanding of children's well-being with a global vision, investigating a wide range of variables that affect the lives of children and adolescents.
2. To guarantee children's right to effective participation in the issues that affect them, ensuring their prominence in all phases of the programme (both to make visible their role as active citizens of the present moment, and to strengthen their competences in the areas of social and civic values, critical thinking and social research).
3. To contribute to the improvement of local public policies aimed at children and adolescents, based on all the evidence generated and their demands.





# Methodology



The programme consists of three distinct phases, each of which takes place over approximately one academic year:

**Phase 1: Survey on subjective well-being.** The survey is based on a questionnaire adapted from [the international project](#) 'Children's Worlds', on different thematic areas including: personal characteristics; their family and the people they live with; their home and belongings; friendships and relationships with classmates; their school; their neighbourhood; how they spend their free time; extracurricular activities; and their level of satisfaction with life, among others.

The sample of schools participating in the survey is randomly selected to ensure statistical representativeness, both in terms of the type of school (public and state-subsidised private schools), location (across the city's 10 districts) and specific characteristics (size, level of social complexity, etc.). The children answer the survey completely freely and voluntarily, in a one-hour face-to-face session held at their school. There is also an adapted version of the questionnaire to ensure that children with any kind of difficulties or specific circumstances can participate and complete it too.

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**Phase 2: Participatory workshops and qualitative research.** Once the first results of the survey have been systematised, the research team returns to some of the schools (also selected to ensure a representative sample) to provide feedback on the general results and discuss some of the 15 themes within the framework of a participatory workshop. Children are encouraged to contribute their interpretation of the results and to elaborate on the causes of discomfort and/or the keys to well-being on the selected topic. In the second part, their proposals for improvement in the specific topic that has been discussed are gathered.

At the same time, a [teaching guide](#) is published to allow all schools that wish to carry out any of these workshops autonomously to do so, and a channel is set up to receive the children's contributions generated through this exercise.



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# Methodology

**Phase 3: Knowledge dissemination and advocacy.** The knowledge generated through the survey and participatory workshops is disseminated through specific reports, in addition to the 'Children's Agenda'. The latter is a document that gathers the key demands and proposals for improvement made by the children in an attractive format and language, which is sent to all schools in the city, whether they have participated in the programme or not. Further, around 30 children from the participating schools representing the different districts of the city are invited join a Spokeskids Group. This group, accompanied and facilitated by a professional team, communicates the Agenda and opens up debates with the city's political and social representatives.



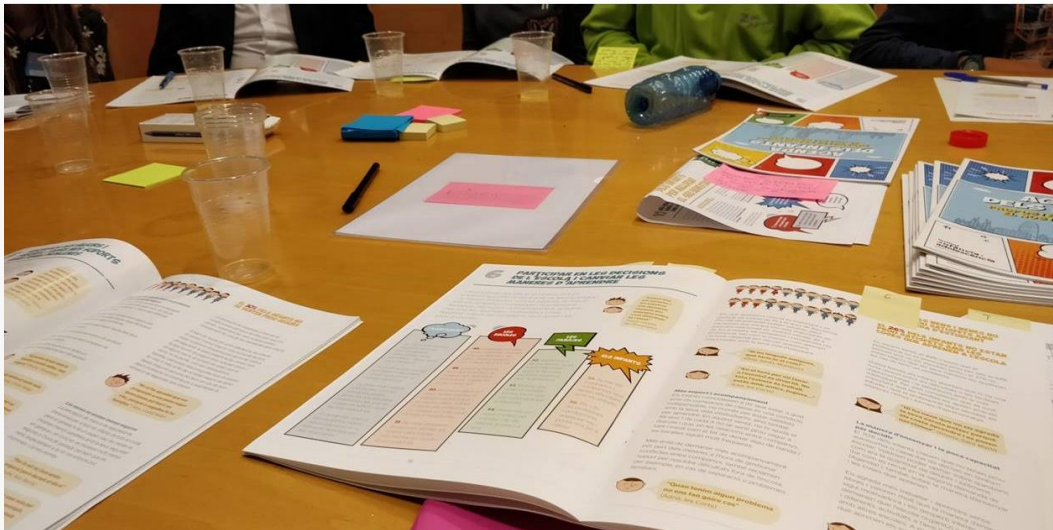


# Assessment

During the first edition of the programme (2016-2020), a total of 4,000 children aged 10 to 12 years from 52 schools responded to the survey and, among them, 2,000 also participated in one of the 86 participatory workshops. All the knowledge generated was synthesised into 11 priority demands and 115 proposals for action to improve their well-being within the framework of the 'Children's Agenda', to be implemented by public administrations, schools, families and the children themselves.

The city's Spokeskids Group presented the Agenda to the Mayor, members of her governance team, representatives of all municipal groups and members of citizen representation platforms, such as the Municipal Council for Social Welfare and the Council of the City, through eight dialogue sessions.

The 11 demands set out in the Agenda are: to have more time to spend with family; more time to play and be with friends; to feel safer and receive more support when they have problems; to be listened to by adults and feel that their opinions are taken seriously by them; to have more freedom and that adults show more confidence in their abilities; to participate in school decisions and to change



# Assessment

the learning methods; to prevent and take strong action against bullying; to promote healthy habits and self-appreciation; to ensure that everyone has what they need; to have greater interaction with neighbours, places to meet with other boys and girls and more outdoor activities in a greener city.

The results obtained have been taken into account in the development of government measures such as the Strategy for Inclusion and Reducing Social Inequality in Barcelona (2017), the Plan for Play in Barcelona's Public Spaces (2019) and the [Municipal Plan for Childhood 2021-2030](#); which identifies 18 challenges for improvement and 70 key actions to address them. For the second edition (2021-2025), it was decided to expand the sample of participating children (from 4,000 to 5,000) as well as the target group (to include 8 and 9 year-olds). Questions relating to the impact of the pandemic, the perception of their hopes and expectations for the future, peer violence at school, and the use they make of their free-time have also been added to the survey. Likewise, the capacity for impact of the Spokeskids Group will be also expanded, proposing that



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each school set up its own group to communicate the Agenda more widely across its education community. In addition, schools will be encouraged to choose a proposal for improvement included in the Agenda in order to promote a concrete and tangible change in their immediate environment.

Another new feature is that besides the invited schools up to 20 additional schools will be able to participate in the programme autonomously . The programme will guarantee training for the technical team and access to materials (online survey, workshop dynamics, and key tips for the creation and facilitation of the school Spokeskids Group) so that teachers can provide support and guidance to the children in the implementation of the three phases of intervention. The results obtained by these schools may be incorporated into the study.





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# Specific social and urban context



According to 2020 data, Barcelona has a population of 1,666,530, and a metropolitan area comprising over 3.2 million inhabitants, making it one of the most densely-populated cities in Europe. There are 246,453 children and adolescents living in the city; and taking into account the number of households, one out of every four are home to people between 0 and 17 years of age. More than 18% of these children are of foreign nationality, and 34.4% are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. 69% of 10 to 12 year-olds say they are satisfied with their life in general; 23% say they are quite satisfied; and 8% say they are not very or not at all satisfied. One in four children between the ages of 3 and 14 do not play in the park or on the street at all, and half of 10 to 12 year-olds say they do not feel safe enough in the neighbourhood they live in.



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# Specific social and urban context

In 2007, the city of Barcelona was recognised by UNICEF as a [Child Friendly City](#), which implies, among other things, guaranteeing channels of participation for children and adolescents, and having in place an up-to-date overview of the city in terms of children. The city has a large number of local regulations and policies that aim to promote Children's Rights at the local level. In 2021, a new governance tool for children's policies was introduced: The Plan for Childhood 2021-2030.

*The context data is extracted from the annual report of the Institut Infància i Adolescència [“Dades clau d’infància i adolescència a Barcelona 2020”](#) (in catalan)*

*The population data is compiled by the IIAB from the municipal register of inhabitants as of January 1, 2020. Department of Statistics and Data Dissemination. Barcelona City Council.*

# More info

The children have their say program: <https://institutinfancia.cat/en/programes/the-children-have-their-say/>

First edition (2016-2020): <https://institutinfancia.cat/en/projectes/benestar/>

Second edition (2021-2025): <https://institutinfancia.cat/en/projectes/parlen-els-nens-i-nenes-2021-2025/>

Selection of publications:

- Children's Agenda (in catalan): <https://institutinfancia.cat/mediateca/agenda-dels-infants-propostes-millorar-nostre-benestar/>
- Children's Agenda Vídeo (in Catalan with English subtitles): <https://institutinfancia.cat/mediateca/video-11-demandes-lagenda-dels-infants/>
- Presentation of the main results of the 1st edition (ENG): <https://institutinfancia.cat/en/media/presentation-the-children-have-their-say/>

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