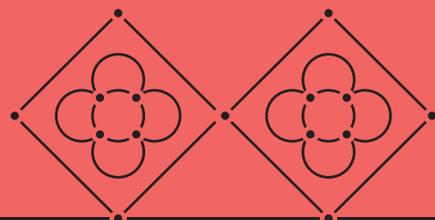
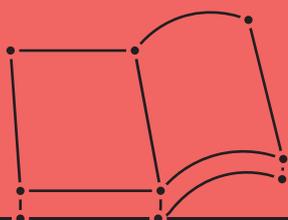
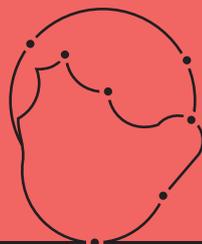
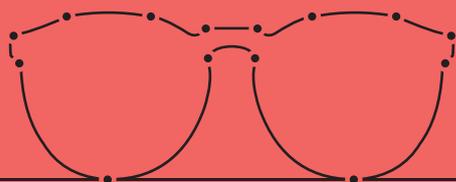
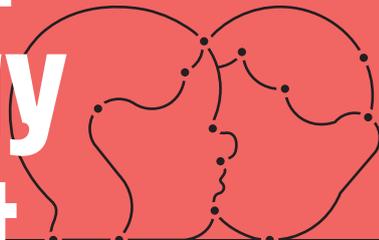
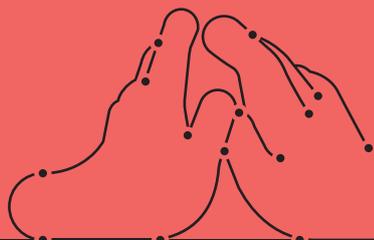
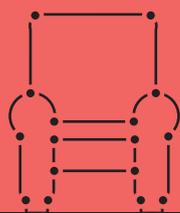


**BARCELONA
AGAINST
LONELINESS**



**Municipal
Strategy
Against
Loneliness
2020-2030**





**Ajuntament
de Barcelona**

Coordination and Drafting

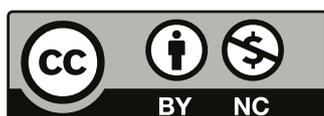
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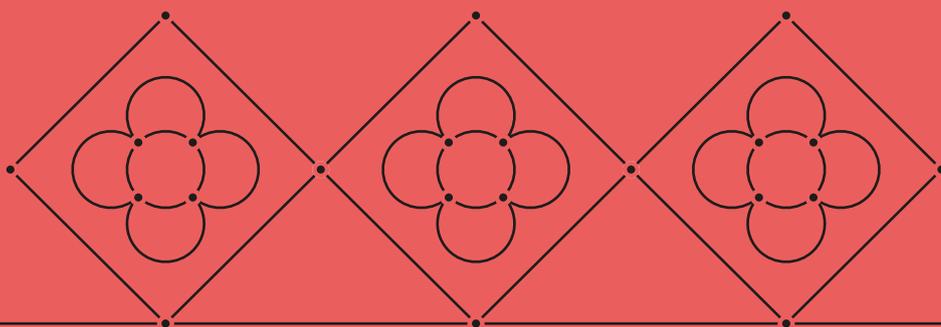
Barcelona, July 2021



Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030

#BCNcontraSoledat

#Reconnectem



**“Humans need other humans
in order to be human.”**

DAVID PASTOR VICO, philosopher



Solitude is perceived in different ways. For some people, solitude is a chosen state, but for the vast majority it means loneliness, a feeling that has negative emotional consequences.

Loneliness is not an individual problem, but a social problem that concerns us all and, as such, one for which we need to find answers and solutions. Thus, we need to understand promotion policies as policies for the prevention of loneliness at all stages of life – from childhood to old age – since loneliness knows no age.

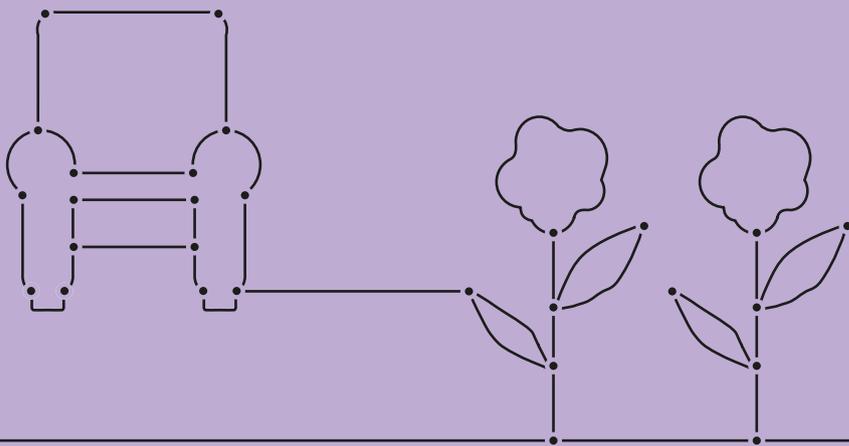
Barcelona City Council is implementing a series of measures to alleviate loneliness in the city, as part of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. The aim is to bring about a cultural change in the way we relate to each other, by fostering trust and solid, lasting relationships, and ensuring the well-being of all, leaving no one behind.

To achieve this goal we are putting in place the necessary tools and resources to mitigate the different forms of loneliness in the city, as well as raising social awareness and destigmatising the phenomenon.

This Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness is the result of a long process of collaborative work which involved the participation of various collectives and contributions of knowledge, know-how and experiences from different areas. Acting against loneliness is everyone's responsibility, and together we will succeed in alleviating it.

Joan R. Riera Alemany

Councillor for Childhood, Youth, the Elderly
and People with Disabilities





In Luis Cernuda's beautiful poem *Soliloquio del farero* (Soliloquy of the Lighthouse Keeper), he describes the extreme experience of a man who chose solitude as a way of life. A solitude that filled his soul with love, with no company other than the sea and sky. However, when solitude is not chosen, the effects are very different.

The terms loneliness and solitude are often used as synonyms, but they are not the same. Some people – like the lighthouse keeper – live alone, in solitude, but do not suffer from loneliness. Whereas others, although they may be surrounded by people, can feel extremely lonely.

In a world with innumerable contacts on social networks, in Barcelona, one in four children aged 10 to 12 feel that they do not have enough friends; and one in four people aged 65 and over have felt a lack of companionship in the past twelve months. So what is happening to us?

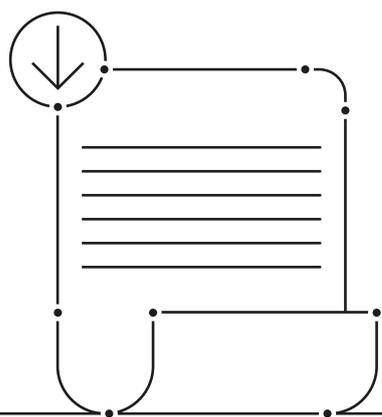
Over the past 150 years, the primacy of the individual over the collective has meant less community interaction and greater isolation. We no longer have the support of extended families, but instead create small nuclear families. In the work sphere, independent office jobs have replaced the cooperative tasks of the countryside and industry.

To tackle the problem of loneliness, Barcelona City Council has developed the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030. In order to prevent loneliness from becoming an epidemic in our society we need to deepen the ties of friendship, family and community and to build a truly cooperative and supportive culture. So that the only solitude we experience is the desired solitude of Cernuda's lighthouse keeper.

Dr. Sara Berbel Sánchez

First Vice-President of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness
Chief Executive of Barcelona City Council

CONTENTS





PRESENTATION

The phenomenon of loneliness is as old as “walking upright”, an emotion characteristic of the variability of human interactions. It is certain that, during the course of our lives in relation to our environment, we have all felt lonely at some point, whether in company or not. In fact, this document refers to how we can alleviate this feeling of loneliness, not only to the empirical fact of being alone.

In *The Odyssey*, in the canto about Calypso and Ulysses, Homer makes a lyrical approach to unchosen solitude.

Ulysses lives with the nymph Calypso and enjoys all the earthly pleasures and the gift of immortality. But he feels deeply lonely and longs for the intensity of sharing life with his fellow men: the intensity that mortal life implies, the fact of being in a hurry to do things, and to do them with other mortal beings, who are also in a hurry and seek the intensity of life.

Ulysses flees from Calypso, opting for that which was theorised by the philosopher Erich Fromm 2,500 years later. Ulysses abandons the world of “having”, a world in which he has everything, but which also creates a deep and permanent dissatisfaction, because the mere accumulation of things does not satisfy the emotional needs of the human being. Ulysses and Fromm chose the world of “being”, a world of action, among equals – or equally mortal – where, as well as the possibility of “having”, one also has the ability to become, to “be” (to be a parent, a doctor, a farmer, etc.), to change one’s condition and to have rights and duties in relation to others. A path to fulfilment, which Fromm summarised as follows: the life goal that we aspire to as human beings is to love and to be loved. From this approach, we should also mention another contemporary philosopher, David Pastor Vico, who proposes “trust” as a tool for overcoming loneliness; i.e. it is by trusting others that we can build deep relationships. Consequently, the focus of this Strategy should be to raise awareness of the phenomenon of loneliness and, from there, based on mutual trust, to create the appropriate frameworks and spaces for socialisation and the creation of fruitful human interactions.

It should also be emphasised that a strategy on loneliness is also a policy of deepening citizenship rights and democracy. What use are citizenship rights to us if we feel like Robinson Crusoe? It is understood that rights are exercised and have meaning when we interact and socialise with others; i.e. we exercise rights in relation to someone: an administration, a court, a community, etc. The concept of citizenship is etymologically derived from the Latin word *civitas*: a community of people with citizenship rights. And it is in this framework, the *civitas*, that rights acquire meaning. If an individual is not fully integrated into the community, it is difficult for them to fully exercise their rights, their citizenship status. This results in what was, during the Antiquity, etymologically known as an *idiot*, i.e. a person who does not exercise their citizenship rights due to a lack of socialisation.

What is the sense then of being free if we cannot confront our freedom? Democracy will be more solid and mature to the extent that the members of the community are more empowered with their rights and are socialised in the framework of rights and obligations which, ultimately, are democracies and the rules of law.

“The only vaccine against loneliness is that which allows us to realise that only through acting together can we truly be ourselves. Moreover, loneliness does not only affect the soul, it also harms the body. We need to involve ourselves, body and soul.”

La soledad se llama y se vive de muchas maneras

FRANCESC NÚÑEZ MOSTEO

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is not a new problem in Barcelona. For many years, specific municipal programmes have been carried out to alleviate the feeling of loneliness, mainly among the elderly. However, the increase in recent years in the number of people of all ages who feel lonely has highlighted the need for a joint strategy to alleviate loneliness in Barcelona.

The drafting of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 began in October 2019, with the intention of presenting it publicly in mid-2020. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forced a change of timetable and prioritisation of several policies and programmes, including the Strategy Against Loneliness. The pandemic did not result in the Strategy being suspended or cancelled; instead it became another factor to be taken into account when addressing the problem of loneliness. It was likely that COVID-19, and the consequent restrictions, had increased the feeling of loneliness among people who already suffered it before the pandemic, and the feeling may also have manifested itself in people who had never experienced it previously. This new scenario emphasised even further the need for a policy to address loneliness – a structural policy that is now urgent because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Intense work has been carried out in different areas during these months to find out more about the situation of loneliness in Barcelona, to identify needs, and to implement measures and actions to address the problem. The different municipal departments and areas have worked together throughout the process, and knowledge and contributions from the academic, civic and associative spheres have been incorporated.

The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness presented below includes, firstly, a definition of loneliness and why it has become a social problem and, secondly, a diagnosis of loneliness in Barcelona, showing the most recent data on the population profiles that suffer it the most. Thirdly, we set out the reasons that prompted the creation of a municipal strategy to alleviate loneliness, and how the city can be an appropriate space for this task in terms of its structure and previous experience. Fourthly, we describe the work process carried out to create the Strategy, the methodology used and the stakeholders involved, which leads us to the most important stage: the development of the four strategic lines and the 25 objectives that form the basis of this Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. We then explain how the Strategy will be developed during its life, together with details of its timetable, governance, monitoring, evaluation and budget. The document concludes with a decalogue of lessons learned during the drafting process, and acknowledgements and thanks to the more than 200 people who participated in this process.

The document includes citations authored by members of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS), a body created to share knowledge from academia about loneliness at different life stages. The citations are from articles for public use written specifically by these experts to provide scientific knowledge for the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.¹

This is a 10-year strategy (up to 2030) and it includes a flexible monitoring system to allow measures and actions to be adapted to the reality of each moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to adapt to unforeseen and unexpected situations. For this reason, the Action Plan 2020-2024 – which includes specific measures and actions to be developed over these five years – is presented alongside the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

“Our neural, hormonal, genetic and molecular mechanisms allow us to create social structures that help us to survive and reproduce. These same biological mechanisms also make us suffer when, unwillingly, we find ourselves alone.”

Pon a la abuela online

JOAN GENÉ BADIA

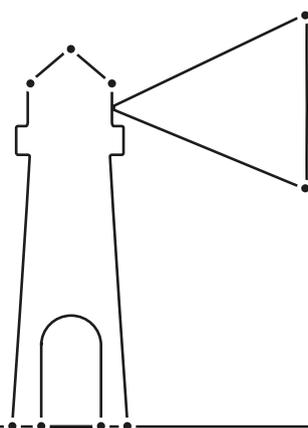
1. The articles can be viewed on the “Barcelona contra la soledat” website (address at the end of this document).

In 2024, based on the analysis of the evolution of the figures on loneliness and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy, the Action Plan 2025-2030 will be developed. This will allow actions to be maintained or adapted or new ones created depending on the extent of loneliness at that date. The action plans will be dynamic and flexible during the life of the Strategy, so that they can be adapted whenever necessary. Keeping the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness separate to the Action Plan also highlights the Strategy's drafting process, allowing the experience and lessons learned to be shared with other territories interested in tackling loneliness.²

Finally, we would like to clarify that this is a first step in alleviating loneliness.³ Tackling the problem at the municipal level is essential for giving it visibility and making it a priority for the municipal government. However, reducing loneliness requires the awareness and involvement of all citizens. For this reason, our aim is to make the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness the basis for the development of the *Citizens Pact Against Loneliness* in the coming years.

2. These are two separate documents. The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness presents the diagnosis and highlights the drafting process and functioning of the Strategy. The Action Plan is an operational document that includes the specific actions to be carried out during the established periods (2020-2024 and 2025-2030).

3. In this document, the term "loneliness" is used to refer to the negative feeling caused by undesired solitude. In no case will the Strategy be concerned with situations where solitude is enjoyed and therefore a positive experience.



**“We feel lonely when we believe
that we are not as important as those
who are important to us.”**

Soledad, aislamiento y abandono.

Tres conceptos y tres paradojas

MANUEL CRUZ

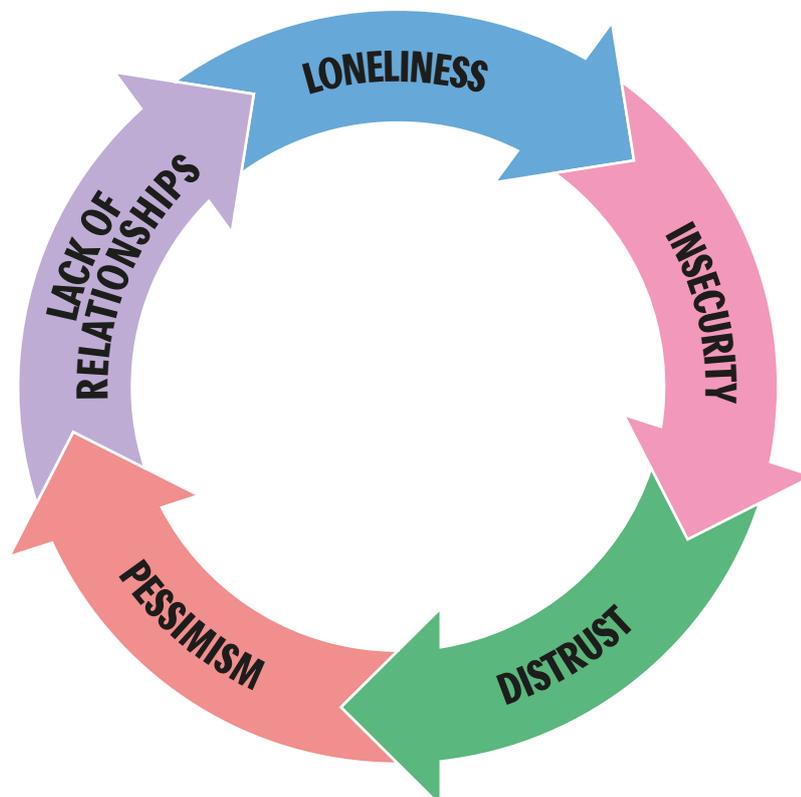


Loneliness as a social problem

Undesired solitude is a **global problem** in today's societies and is linked to the process of modernity, urban development and increasing individualism. In a short period of time, loneliness has received considerable media attention, heightened by the COVID-19⁴ pandemic. The United States considers loneliness as a national epidemic, and the United Kingdom (2018) and Japan (2021) have prioritised the problem, creating new departments to address it.

The stereotype that loneliness only affects the elderly has persisted since the first studies on loneliness (circa 1950)⁵. Often, the stigmatisation of loneliness is negatively associated with social isolation, which means that it is only the most extreme cases that come to light – such as elderly people dying alone.⁶ However, **loneliness** is a **subjective, unwelcome feeling** of loss or lack of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of our social relationships and those that we would like to have⁷, which means that it can affect people of any age, sex, gender and background.

It is inevitable that all of us will feel lonely at some point in our lives, but our ability to cope with and overcome loneliness depends on the environment and the social and supportive relationships available to us. When the feeling of loneliness becomes acute and persists over time, **it can have a major impact on the individual**, but also on society as a whole. A recent study equates the mortality risk of loneliness to that of obesity or smoking.⁸ Loneliness has a negative effect on well-being⁹, it is associated with unhealthy behaviours and poor cognitive performance¹⁰. It also has a negative impact on the economy: if feelings of loneliness become chronic, it can lead to health problems that affect working people.¹¹ People who feel lonely tend to have a more pessimistic view of the world and a greater perception of insecurity in their environment, which affects relationships. This has an impact on the individual – who suffers from the stigma of loneliness – but also has implications for social cohesion.



4. Marí-Klose, M. and S. Escapa. "La soledad de les persones joves". In: La joventut l'any de la pandèmia: 10 anàlisis de l'Enquesta a la Joventut de Barcelona 2020. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021. pp. 152-167.
5. Fromm Reichmann, Frieda. "Loneliness". In: *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, New York: W.A.W. Institute, 1990. Vol 26, No. 2
6. The figures for 2019 were made public at the meeting of the Local Security Board of Barcelona City Council on 30 January 2020 – 141 interventions carried out by the Fire Service to recover the body of someone who had died at home alone.
7. Perlman, D. and Peplau, L. A. "Toward a Social Psychology of Loneliness". In: *Personal Relationships: Personal Relationships in Disorder*. London: Academic Press, 1981, pp. 31-56.
8. "Loneliness – an unequally shared burden in Europe". Brussels: European Commission, 2018. <https://cutt.ly/omATbjA>
9. Hawkley, L. C. and Cacioppo, J. T. "Loneliness Matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanisms." In: *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2010. No. 40(2):218-227.
10. *Combatting loneliness one conversation at a time: A call to action*. London: Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, 2017. <https://cutt.ly/PmATAN8>
11. Jeffrey, K., S. Abdallah, J. Michaelson *The cost of loneliness to UK employers*. London: New Economics Foundation, 2017. <https://cutt.ly/AmAYera>

For decades, some authors have argued that individualistic values of self-fulfilment are taking precedence over social integration.¹² The erosion of civility and social capital has negative consequences for both the quality of life of individuals and the quality of life of democracies based on solidarity and social and institutional trust.¹³

“Loneliness is defined as a subjective state experienced as a result of a lack of social contact; when a person feels isolated or feels a lack of belonging. It is, in short, a perceived discrepancy between a person’s social needs and the availability of resources to meet those needs.”

La soledad y la salud mental

VÍCTOR PÉREZ, ADRIÁN PÉREZ ARANDA AND JORDI ALONSO

What do we mean by loneliness?

Loneliness is not the same as social isolation. Social isolation refers to the objective fact of the absence of relationships with other people. To measure this type of isolation we need to identify the objective characteristics of the functioning of communities, such as mutual support among neighbours, and the size, composition and functioning of someone’s network of personal relationships. People with a very small number of meaningful relationships are, by definition, socially isolated. However, this isolation is not necessarily always an unsatisfactory experience. It can be seen as a personal search, an enriching and inspiring situation.

The feeling of loneliness, however, is a subjective experience, the result of a personal evaluation of the correspondence or discrepancy between the quantity and quality of one’s social relationships, and one’s own conceived standard of social relationships; that is, what one actually has and what one would consider optimal, the ideal. Loneliness refers to a negative emotion that can manifest itself in people of any age.¹⁴

Socially isolated people do not necessarily feel lonely and, objectively, not all people who feel lonely are socially isolated. A person with active social participation may feel lonely. It depends on the standard of relationships that one considers oneself to have. Some people with a small circle of social contacts may feel lonely, while others may feel sufficiently integrated and included. Loneliness can be further differentiated into two components: **emotional loneliness**, defined as the absence of an intimate relationship (partner, or best friend), and **social loneliness**, which refers to the absence of a wide, interesting or engaging social network (siblings, cousins, friends, neighbours, etc.). Emotional loneliness, for example, can occur following the separation from a partner or the death of a partner, and is characterised by strong feelings of emptiness, abandonment and lack of love. It can therefore only be resolved by establishing new relationships with strong ties. People who have moved to a new place (migratory process, change of residence, etc.) often experience social loneliness. This social loneliness can be resolved by establishing relationships with people who share the same kind of interests.¹⁵

12. Putnam R.D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

13. Id. 4.

14. De Jong Gierveld, J., Van Tilburg, T. G., and P.A. Dykstra, P.A. “Loneliness and social isolation”. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006. pp. 485–500.

15. Weiss, R. S. *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1973.

Causes of loneliness

16. Martínez, R. and Celdrán, M. *La soledat no té edat. Explorant vivències multigeneracionals*. Barcelona: Fundació Privada Amics de la Gent Gran, 2018.

17. *A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness*. London: British Government, 2018.

People may feel lonely at different times during their lives, and loneliness is often linked to life transitions. A change of place of residence, the unexpected loss of a loved one, non-acceptance by one's peer group, and violence and discrimination are some of the causes that can trigger feelings of loneliness.

The causal factors of loneliness change throughout one's life, although some are common to all age groups.^{16 17}

These are **the main causes**:

Childhood



- Lack of playmates
- Bullying or harassment at school
- Rejection by peer group
- Little time spent with parents
- Change of residence
- Disability discrimination
- Living in an abusive environment
- Loss and bereavement
- COVID-19

Youth



- Change of residence
- Lack of close friendships
- Non-acceptance by peer group
- Bullying or harassment at school
- Lack of romantic relationships
- Adolescent pressures
- Migratory processes
- Living in an abusive environment
- Gender-based violence
- Disability discrimination
- Worsening health
- Loss and bereavement
- COVID-19

“Some of the factors associated with the feeling of loneliness are disability, dissatisfaction with life circumstances, chronic work and/or social stress, being unable to cope with life events such as family and/or marital conflicts, divorce, mental health problems, [...], and belonging to minority groups such as immigrants or people of different sexual orientation (homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals), who tend to experience more loneliness than their heterosexual and non-migrant peers.”

¿Qué es la soledad?

Laura Alejandra Rico Uribe

Adulthood

- Change of residence
- Change or loss of job
- Lack of close friendships, intimate or romantic relationships
- Migratory processes
- Chronic unemployment
- Caring for a dependent person
- Being a victim of fraud
- Being a parent
- Having a disability
- No longer receiving help from a carer
- Becoming homeless
- Being a victim of gender-based violence
- Worsening health
- Children leaving home
- Being dependent, a care recipient
- Loss and bereavement
- COVID-19

Old age

- Change of residence
- Loss of a partner and close social relations
- Mental illness or physical limitations
- Worsening health
- Fewer social activities
- Having a disability
- No longer receiving help from a carer
- Becoming homeless
- Children leaving home
- Gender-based violence
- Retirement
- Being dependent, a care recipient
- Loss and bereavement
- COVID-19

“The prevalence of loneliness among people aged 60 and over is similar to that of the general population and increases from the age of 75 upwards.

This increase appears to be more linked to the occurrence of negative life events – with a high incidence in terms of the loss of loved ones, especially a partner, and a higher probability of experiencing health-related problems – than to the age variable itself.”

La soledad y sus matices

SARA MARSILLAS, DANIEL PRIETO,
ELENA DEL BARRIO, MAYTE SANCHO



Loneliness in Barcelona

An approach to loneliness

The *European Social Survey* (2014) reveals **substantial differences between European countries** in terms of the number of people aged 15+ who say they feel lonely often or very often. Surprisingly, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway) – where the frequency of social contact is relatively low – report the lowest percentage of people who feel lonely often (around 3%). In Spain, despite being characterised as a country that has a strong culture of social contact, 8.7% of the population aged 15 and over feel lonely often, which is above the European average (7.1%). These results show that being alone and feeling alone are different experiences, although they can sometimes overlap.

In **2015, the European Commission** alerted that around 30 million adults in Europe felt lonely often, and **urged the need to understand the different factors of loneliness** at all stages of life in order to be able to mitigate it effectively.¹⁸ On this basis, **Barcelona City Council** began to analyse the existing surveys and databases in order to identify indicators on the feeling of loneliness in the city. In **2019, when the drafting work on the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness began**, there were no specific surveys that measured the subjective feeling of loneliness, nor specific questions in other surveys that included all age groups. There were, however, some indicators to approximate the phenomenon, which we present below.

In 2020, there were 205,394 **single-person households** in Barcelona, which is 13% more than in 2004 (Figure 1). This means that almost one in three households in the city (30.9%) is a single-person household: in 19% of cases it is a woman living alone, and in 11.9% of cases it is a man. Women aged 65+ make up the largest group, accounting for 10.3% of single-person households (Figure 2). In 2020, 90,436 people aged 65 or over were living alone in Barcelona: 68,717 women and 21,719 men.

18. Loneliness—an unequally shared burden in Europe. Brussels: European Commission, 2018.

FIGURE 1
Evolution of household type by number of persons (%).
Barcelona, 2004-2020

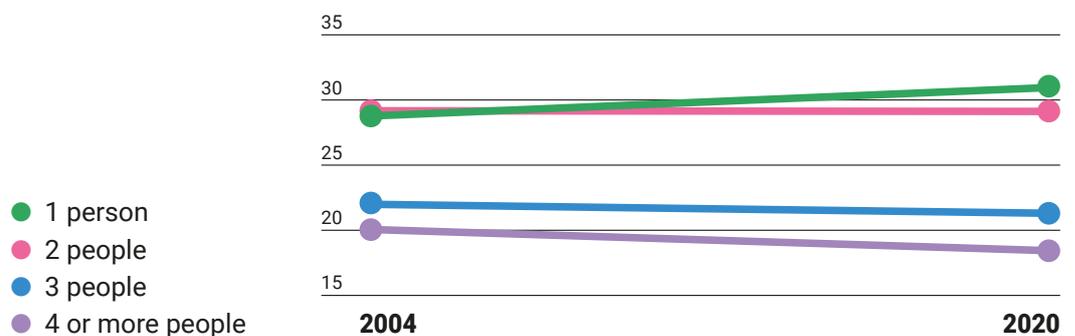
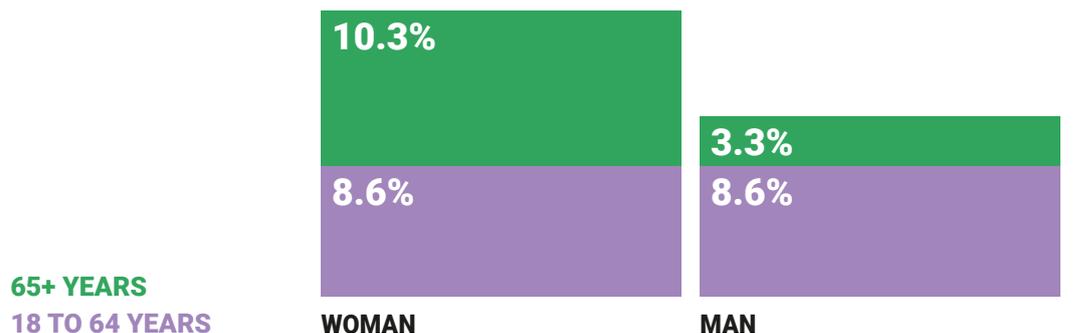


FIGURE 2
Profile of single-person households (% of total households in the city).
Barcelona, 2020.



Source: Municipal Register of Residents. Barcelona City Council.

With regard to children, the survey *Parlen els nens i nenes: el benestar subjectiu de la infància a Barcelona* (The children have their say: the subjective well-being of children in Barcelona)(2016-2017) revealed that 13.2% of children aged between 10 and 12 do not fully feel that there is someone in their family who cares for them. 22% of children do not feel that, if they had a problem, their family would help them. 26.5% feel that they do not have enough friends (Figure 3).

Among the **adolescent** population aged 13 to 19, 27% of secondary school students said that they felt lonely often in the six months prior to the 2016 survey *Factors de Risc a l'Escola de Secundària* (Risk Factors in Secondary School Students) (FRESC) (Figure 3). In addition, 6% stated that they didn't have any close friends, and 12.3% felt excluded or rejected by their classmates at some point over the previous year.

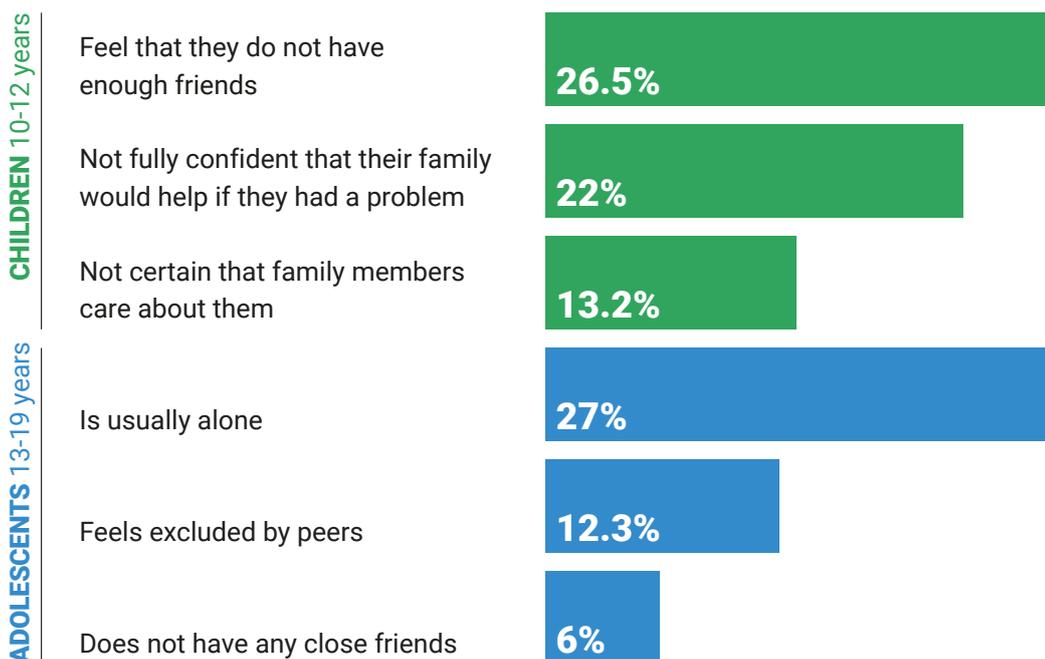


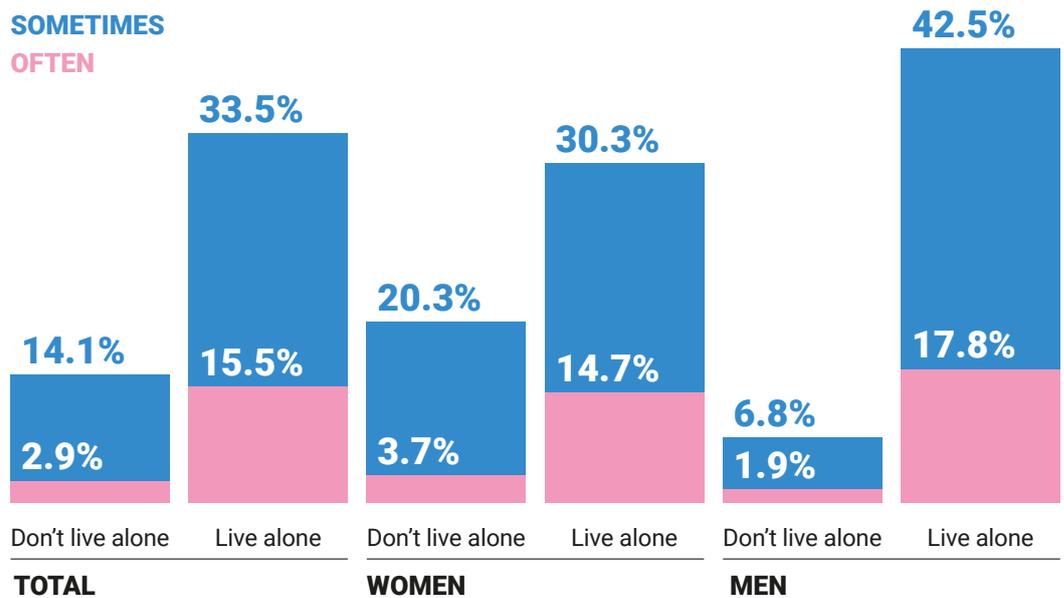
FIGURE 3
Prevalence of incidence of indicators associated with loneliness in children and adolescents in Barcelona

Source: Relative data from the surveys *El benestar subjectiu de la infància a Barcelona* (2016-2017) of the Institute of Childhood and Adolescence of Barcelona City Council, and *Factors de Risc a l'Escola de Secundària* (FRESC), 2016, of the Barcelona Public Health Agency.



With regard to **older adults**, according to the most recent edition of the *Barcelona Health Survey* (2016), 25% of people aged 65+ reported a lack of companionship in the past 12 months, and 15.1% had sometimes felt excluded from what was going on in their environment (Figure 4).¹⁹ It should be noted that there are significant differences between people who live alone and those who do not, as well as a clear gender bias. The feeling of a lack of companionship among women who live alone is four times greater than among women who do not live alone (14.7% and 3.7% respectively). With men, this difference is nine times greater; 17.8% among those who live alone, compared to 1.9% of those who do not live alone. In fact, men over 65 who live alone feel a greater lack of companionship than women of the same age who live alone.

FIGURE 4
People aged 65+ who have felt a lack of companionship in the last 12 months
 Barcelona, 2016



Source:
 Barcelona Health Survey 2016.
 Barcelona Public Health Agency.

19. The *Barcelona Health Survey* (the most recent edition, in 2016, was consulted for this document) is conducted with people aged 16 and over, and includes questions regarding lack of companionship and feelings of exclusion. These are indicators that are used for measuring loneliness indirectly. Unfortunately, these particular questions were only asked to people aged 65+, which does not allow the analysis to be applied to younger people. In future editions the questions will be asked to all age groups.





One of the groups likely to suffer a greater feeling of loneliness is that of **people with disabilities**. In the 2018 *Survey of People with Functional Dependency (EPSD)* almost two thirds of respondents (62.6%) said they felt excluded or a lack companionship in the previous twelve months (Figure 5).

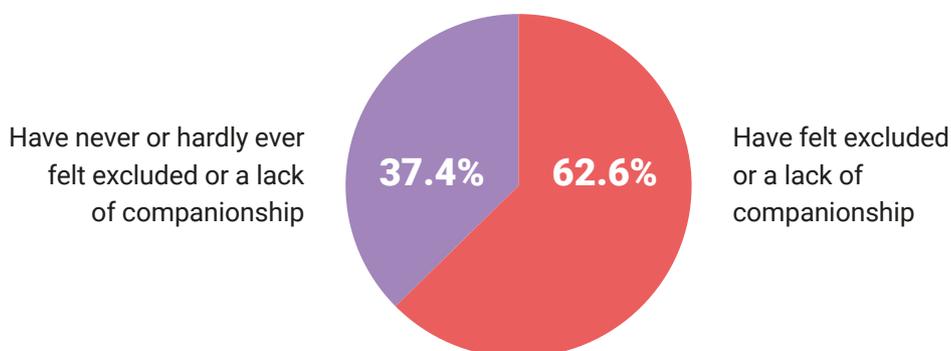


FIGURE 5
Percentage of people with disabilities (aged 55+) who felt excluded or a lack of companionship in the previous 12 months

Barcelona, 2018

Source: Survey of People with Functional Dependency in Barcelona (2018). Barcelona City Council.

Measuring loneliness

The implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness has made it possible to define indicators to measure the feeling of loneliness among different age groups in the city, and thus incorporate them into municipal surveys.

How we define the feeling of loneliness and social isolation is important because it affects how we measure these two phenomena.²⁰ The word used – and even the language used – may have certain nuances that need to be taken into account when measuring loneliness.²¹

For example, information for detecting social isolation can be collected through indicators such as number of social relationships, frequency of participation in social activities, marital status, type of living situation and social support.

For measuring loneliness there are at least two ways to collect information. The first is by asking a direct question about how often the person feels lonely (the question includes the word “loneliness”), which allows the person to think about what loneliness means to them. The second is to ask indirect questions about aspects of loneliness, which allow us to identify with greater certainty those people who feel lonely but, because of the stigma attached to loneliness, do not express it directly.²² To avoid non-response bias, there are methodologies for approaching the feeling of loneliness without asking direct questions. One of the most widely used and validated methodology is the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale, which incorporates questions that measure self-perceived isolation, social connectedness and relational connectedness.²³

To measure loneliness in the city of Barcelona, we used both direct and indirect questions, using as a reference the experience in the United Kingdom, which launched its loneliness strategy in 2018.²⁴ The direct way of measuring loneliness was by asking: “How often do you feel lonely?” For the indirect way of measuring loneliness we used the reduced version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale, which consists of the following three questions:

- How often do you feel that you lack companionship?
- How often do you feel left out?
- How often do you feel isolated from others?

These methodological tools have been incorporated into different periodic surveys conducted by Barcelona City Council and will allow us to understand loneliness among different groups at different life stages. We also have other indicators that may be useful for approaching loneliness and social isolation.



20. Id. 4.

21. In English, for example, different terms are used to differentiate between the pain caused by undesired solitude and the enjoyment of desired solitude. The writer and philosopher Paul Tillich explained: “Our language has wisely sensed these two sides of man’s being alone. It has created the word ‘loneliness’ to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word ‘solitude’ to express the glory of being alone.” (1959, *The Eternal Now*).

22. Jong Gierveld, J., van Tilburg, T. G., and Dykstra, P. A. “Loneliness and Social Isolation”. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* (pp.485-500) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

23. Id. 4.

24. *A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness*. London: The British Government, 2018.

<https://cutt.ly/4mAYPbr>

The first data on loneliness in Barcelona

The first results from the indicators selected to measure loneliness (the reduced UCLA Loneliness Scale) come from the first edition of the **Omnibus Survey**, conducted in **June 2020**. The survey allowed us to know about, for the first time, the feeling of loneliness among different age groups. The results reveal that 3.5% of Barcelona's population aged 16 and over feel lonely often (direct indicator). This figure rises to 7.3% when we analyse the indirect indicators of loneliness.²⁵ It is important to remember that measuring loneliness indirectly allows us to identify with greater precision those groups who feel lonely, but who, either because of the stigma attached to loneliness or having insufficient knowledge to be able to identify the feeling themselves, do not express it directly.

Figure 6 shows that **more men than women express feeling lonely through direct responses**. On the contrary, more women than men experience loneliness when it is measured indirectly.

25. To obtain the indicators of loneliness, three questions were asked: How often do you feel that you lack companionship? How often do you feel left out? How often do you feel isolated from others? Each question was scored according to three response options: (1) hardly ever or never; (2) sometimes; (3) often or almost always. Using this scale we constructed a dichotomous indicator (lonely/not lonely), the result of the three indicators, assigning score values to a response scale, ranging from 3 (respond with "hardly ever or never" to the three questions) to 9 (respond with "often or almost always" to the three questions). Scores equal to or higher than six indicate a situation of loneliness, following the criteria of previous research: Steptoe, A. et al. (2013). Social isolation, loneliness, and all-cause mortality in older men and women. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(15): 5797-5801.

MAN / WOMAN

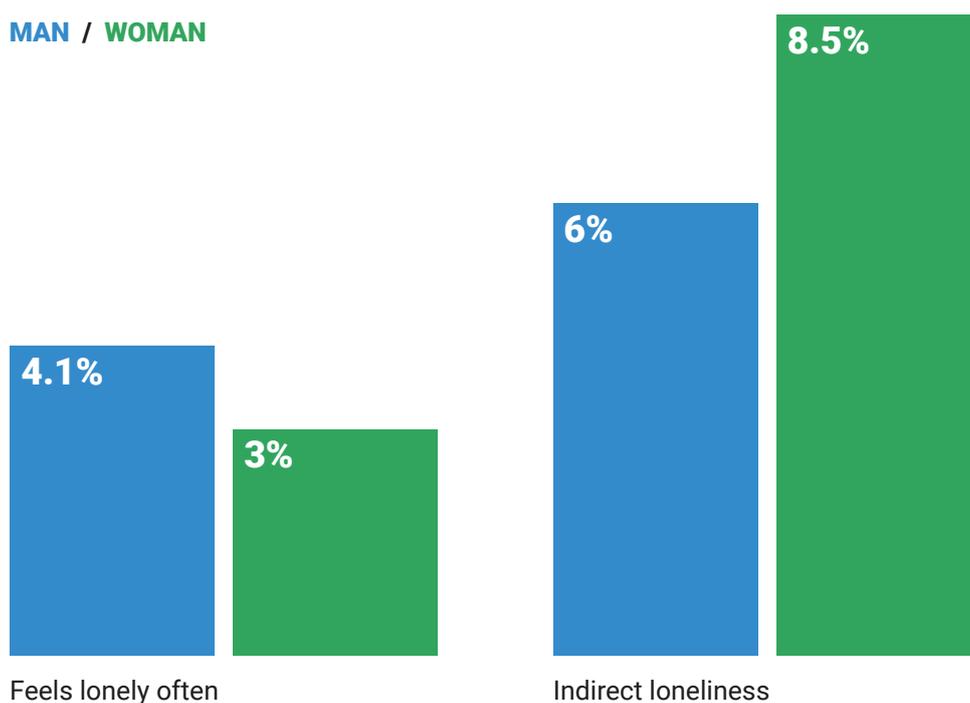
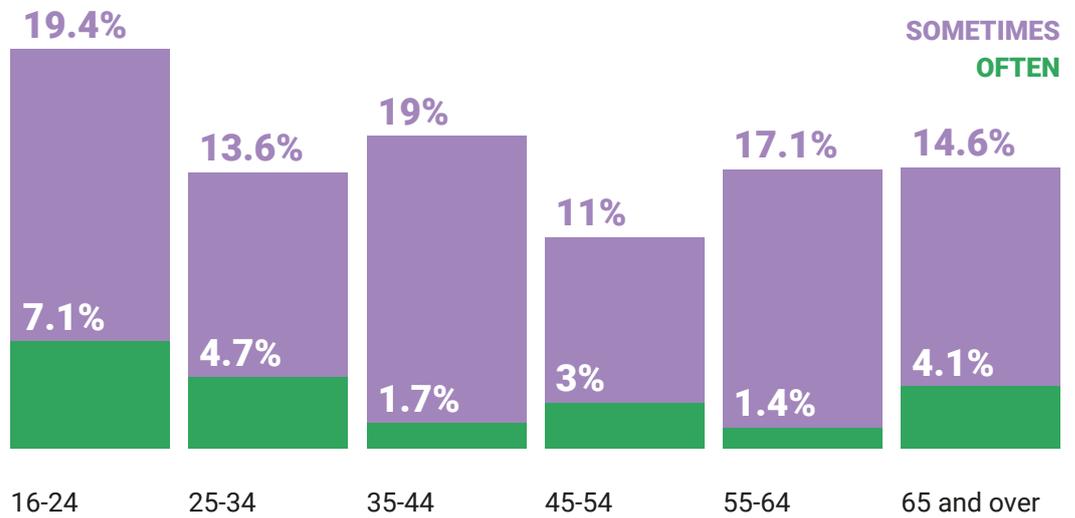


FIGURE 6
Percentage of people who express feeling lonely (direct response) and who experience loneliness (indirect response), by gender 2020

Source:
First edition of the Omnibus Survey, 2020. Barcelona City Council.

In terms of age, the data show that **young people feel lonely the most often**. 26.5% of young people say that they feel lonely; 19.4% of them 'sometimes' and 7.1% 'often'. This figure is higher than that for people aged 65+ (18.7%); 14.6% of whom say 'sometimes' and 4.1% 'often' (Figure 7). These results are similar to those obtained in other countries, e.g. the UK.

FIGURE 7
People who feel lonely sometimes or often, by age group 2020



Source:
 First edition of the Omnibus Survey. Barcelona City Council.

These data confirm that loneliness is not only an epidemic suffered by older people, but one that also affects young people to a large extent. The results of the **Barcelona Youth Survey 2020** (EJOB2020) give a greater insight into loneliness among young people. It was conducted among young people aged 15 to 34 and also included questions in relation to feeling lonely.²⁶ The first results indicate that, during youth, some people feel more vulnerable to loneliness, and this seems to be linked to frustration and non-fulfilment of events related to adult life. Living independently, economic and job security and having a stable partner are elements that protect against feelings of loneliness. Independent young people are less likely to feel lonely than those who still live with a parent. Also, young people who are working or studying are significantly less likely to feel lonely compared to young people who are unemployed (Figure 8).²⁷

26. *Barcelona Youth Survey, 2020.*
<https://cutt.ly/omAUegB>
 27. Id. 4.

“Analysing young people from the perspective of loneliness could, in fact, be an enormously useful strategy for identifying actions to improve what we do with them.

Because, as well as understanding what makes them lonely or feel lonely, we want to know how we can help them to strengthen their capacity to cope with loneliness and other difficulties in this ‘liquid time’.”

Amar y sentirse amados en tiempos líquidos.

Una mirada socioeducativa a las soledades juveniles

PACO LÓPEZ

LIKELIHOOD



FIGURE 8
Likelihood of the young person to feel lonely, according to work and affective status

Note 1. Indirect loneliness (reduced UCLA Loneliness Scale).

Note 2. Likelihood calculated by controlling the effects of the variables sex, age, nationality, personal income, average neighbourhood income, living independently and affective status.

Source: Barcelona Youth Survey, 2020. Barcelona City Council. (See Note 4)

Intimate relationships too are an important factor in both the processes of transition to adulthood and in the feeling of loneliness. The EJOB2020 data indicate that the **likelihood of feeling lonely increases considerably** (more than double) among young people who do not have a partner, or who are in a non-stable relationship, compared to those who have a stable partner.

LIKELIHOOD

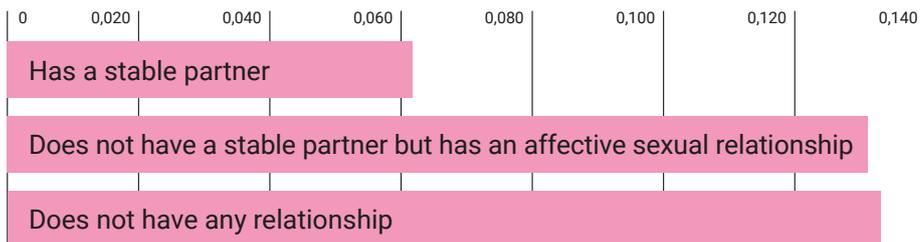
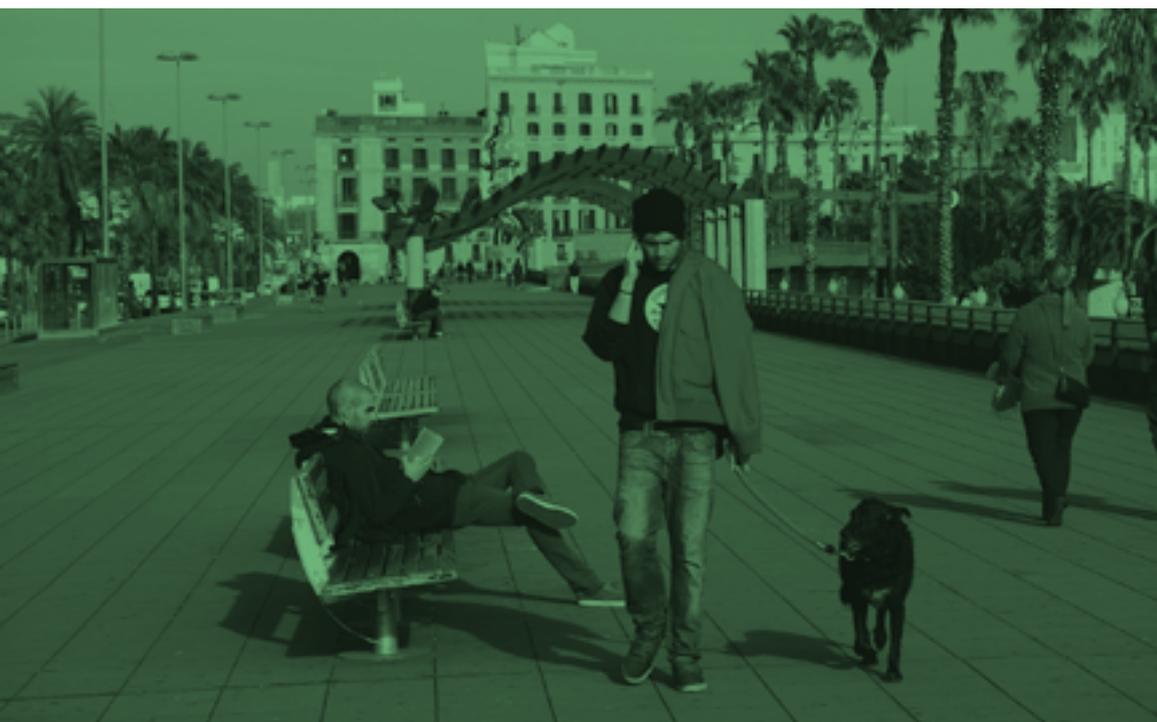


FIGURE 9
Likelihood of the young person to feel lonely, according to affective and sexual status

Note 1. Indirect loneliness (reduced UCLA Loneliness Scale).

Note 2. Likelihood calculated by controlling the effects of the variables sex, age, nationality, minimum neighbourhood income, education/work situation, personal income and living independently.

Source: Barcelona Youth Survey, 2020. Barcelona City Council.

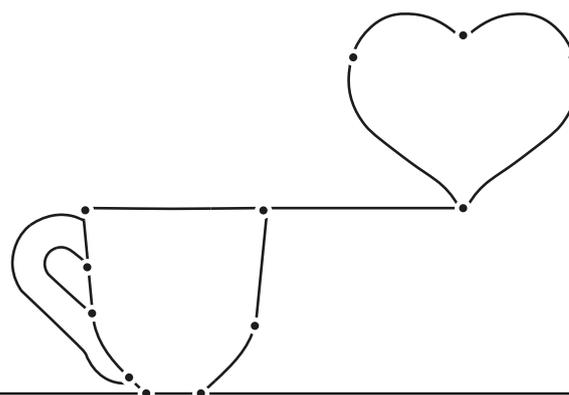
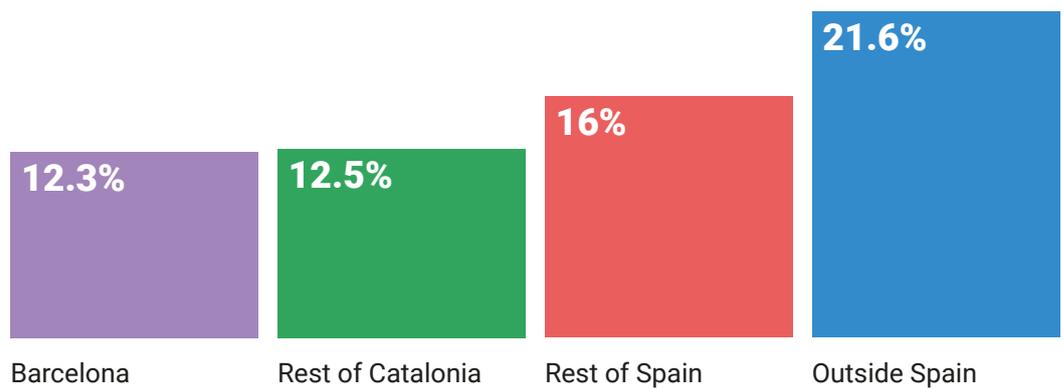


The *Barcelona Metropolitan Area Coexistence and Neighbourhood Relations Survey* (ECAMB) 2020 includes a specific indicator of relational loneliness, differentiated from the loneliness indicator of the UCLA scale. The ECAMB **Relational Loneliness Index** is based on three questions: 1) Do you usually have someone to talk to about personal or day-to-day problems? 2) Can you count on your friends or family when you need them? 3) Do you usually talk to or meet with your family, friends and neighbours? If one or more of these questions are answered negatively, a situation of loneliness or relational isolation is considered to exist. This is a different methodology for measuring loneliness, linked more to the lack of relationships (objective response) than to self-perception of the feeling (subjective response, focused more on by the UCLA scale).

For the 2020 ECAMB survey, 5,327 people aged 16 and over were interviewed in the 36 municipalities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, of which 4,043 were from Barcelona city. 10.8% of Barcelona’s population said that they do not usually talk to or meet with family, friends or neighbours; 5.5% have no one to talk to about personal problems in their daily lives; and 3.2% cannot count on friends or family when they need them. Based on these results, it is estimated that **relational loneliness affects 15.4% of the people** interviewed, with no significant difference between men and women, although it does show a greater impact among people born abroad: one in five people born outside Spain suffer from loneliness. Thus, as we can see in Figure 10, while relational loneliness affects 12.3% of people born in Barcelona, this figure rises to 21.6% among people born in another country.

FIGURE 10
Index of relational loneliness according to place of birth 2020

Source:
Barcelona Metropolitan Area Coexistence and Neighbourhood Relations Survey (ECAMB) 2020, Barcelona Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies (IERMB)



With regard to age, and in contrast to the UCLA's loneliness indicator (which measures the subjective feeling of loneliness, and whose data show that young people suffer the most from loneliness), **relational loneliness is more prevalent among older people** (Figure 11). These data show that the nature of loneliness differs according to life stage. Loneliness among young people is linked to experiences of frustration and uncertainty in the transition to adulthood. However, among older people, loneliness is more closely linked to the lack of reliable social relationships..

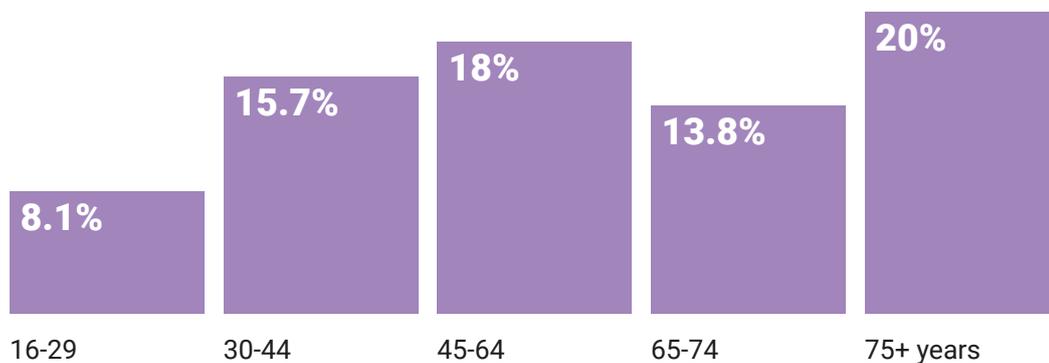


FIGURE 11
Relational loneliness index by age group 2020

Source:
The Barcelona Metropolitan Area Coexistence and Neighbourhood Relations Survey (ECAMB) 2020 Barcelona Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies (IERMB)

These results highlight the need to address loneliness in a multidimensional way, identifying the causes of loneliness among different groups and adopting the most effective measures according to the specific circumstances. **Loneliness cannot be addressed using a single approach. We must take into account the different forms of loneliness** and create a global strategy adapted to the particularities of each situation.



The impact of COVID-19 on loneliness

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has changed the way it works. In addition to its impact on the health and economic system, it has also had a profound impact on the social structure that guides the behaviour of individuals and their relationships with each other.

The **lockdown period** as a result of COVID-19 **gave rise to new forms of loneliness** in addition to those that already existed before the pandemic. Evidence shows that, in general, the most vulnerable people are those who may experience a more pronounced sense of loneliness, putting them at a greater risk of social exclusion than they were previously. Thus, people in poor health, the unemployed and people on low incomes are more likely to experience loneliness. The health crisis generated by the pandemic is having both economic consequences (redundancies, business closures, increased unemployment) and social consequences (isolation, mourning the loss of loved ones, closure of spaces and facilities that allowed contact and social relations). Overall, it has led to an **increased sense of loneliness among the population.**

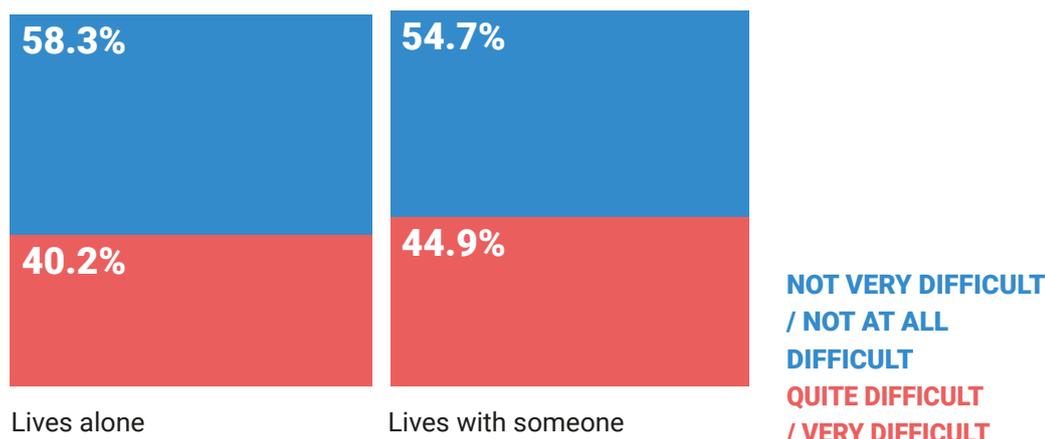
“The pandemic has perhaps showed us how vulnerable and interdependent we can become, the importance of caring and looking after ourselves, and the unjust inequalities that pervade society.”

**Las relaciones sociales:
¿fuente de salud o de contagio?**
LAURA COLL-PLANAS

After restrictions were lifted, some people no longer felt lonely and will gradually re-establish their affective and social networks. Others, however, will experience this feeling for a longer time. COVID-19 and its associated consequences became another cause of loneliness, in addition to those identified in different research studies: being a victim of bullying, going through a separation or divorce, changing school or place of residence, becoming a parent, going



FIGURE 12
Assessment of how people experienced lockdown, according to their living situation

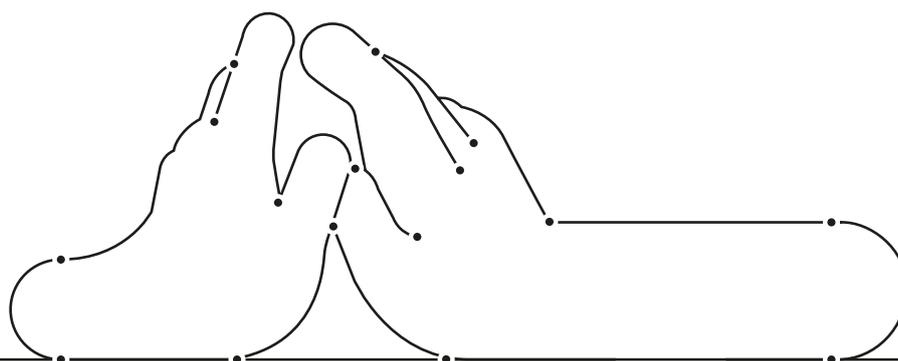


Source:
 Barcelona COVID-19 Survey,
 2020. Barcelona City Council.

through a migration process, suffering from an illness or cognitive impairment, grieving the loss of a loved one, etc.

According to the **Barcelona COVID-19 Survey 2020**, conducted between 6 and 16 April 2020, 34% of people interviewed spent the lockdown period with a partner, 29% with four or more people, and 15% alone. With regard to the experience of lockdown, 40.2% of those who lived alone and 44.9% of those who lived with someone else considered the lockdown quite difficult or very difficult (Figure 12), i.e. **living in a single-person household did not necessarily mean that people living alone suffered more than those living with someone else**: it was difficult in both cases.

We will have to wait for a full recovery from the health and social crisis caused by the pandemic before we can assess the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the population – and not only in relation to their health, economic and work situation, but also their emotional and social well-being.



“The gender perspective highlights the multiple faces of loneliness caused by work. Delving into the social causes of this phenomenon is essential in order to advance in the design and implementation of public policies that avoid generalisations and understand the complexity of a paradox that shakes the globalised world, while showing the inequalities that pervade it.”

Cuando los trabajos causan soledad

SARA MORENO COLOM

A black and white photograph of two elderly women walking away from the camera on a city street. They are walking across a zebra crossing. The woman on the left is wearing a checkered jacket and a dark skirt. The woman on the right is wearing a dark vest over a light-colored top and dark trousers. The background shows trees, a street lamp, and a motorcycle parked on the side. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

**Why a
municipal
strategy
against
loneliness in
Barcelona?**

Urban life brings with it many positive things, such as progress, valuable social relationships, and the reinforcement and empowerment of the individual. However, it can also generate negative aspects, such as a lack of solid, meaningful relationships and a lack of trust in others. **Social relationships are fundamental to the free exercise of citizenship rights**, and trust is the foundation for creating a life plan in society and the basis for achieving happiness. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), English philosopher and political

reformer, argued that the best society is one in which its citizens are happiest. Therefore, **the best policy will be one that generates the greatest happiness** – as Thomas Jefferson, third president of the USA, wrote in 1776 in Article 1 of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which established the right to happiness as a political objective of the community.

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman coined the term “liquid modernity” to define the current moment in history, in which the solid realities of previous generations (such as work, marriage and relationships for life) have given way to a more uncertain, precarious and provisional world. In short, a liquid, unstable and volatile world.²⁸ The “liquid” concept

also applies to interpersonal relationships – with postmodernity we have gone from having solid, lasting relationships²⁹ to ephemeral, superficial and ethereal relationships, with a lesser degree of commitment.

Liquid relationships, together with the urban design of large cities, society’s tendency towards individualism, new technologies, and economic, cultural and social inequalities have led to the emergence of different urban solitudes. For many years, the model of social organisation has tended to address loneliness from a medical and individual perspective, despite the fact that the problem is one of society as a whole. It is necessary to study the pathologisation and medicalisation of the phenomenon of loneliness. To what extent is it a pathology that entails treating the sufferer? To what extent is it a social consequence of the world we live in?³⁰ It is therefore **necessary to depathologise loneliness and solve the problem through social relations** and the functioning of society itself. It is society that has the problem and that which creates lonely people; it is not lonely people who have the problem.

Taking on the challenge posed by loneliness, the city of Barcelona launches the **Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030** to promote solid, lasting relationships and to ensure the well-being of all citizens, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The focus is not on people who desire solitude and enjoy being alone, but on those for whom the feeling of loneliness causes discomfort. **It is therefore about offering resources** to those who experience chronic loneliness. **And, most importantly, the situation calls for the strengthening of social ties in the city to prevent loneliness** among people of all ages, sexes, genders and backgrounds. The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness seeks to empower people, by addressing deficits in their network of social and family relationships, and to further develop the pact for social cohesion.

“When a problem is considered ‘social’, the community agrees that it is necessary to develop actions so that certain people do not suffer, and to support new public policies to improve their situation.

And, of course, we need to know where they are; they need to be made visible.”

La soledad en los niños y niñas

FERRAN CASAS

28. Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. 2000. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

29. It should be noted that “solid, lasting relationships” is not synonymous with satisfactory relationships. Only some elements of the nature of relationships are mentioned here, without making judgements on degrees of satisfaction.

30. This approach is a clear attempt to identify the underlying causes of the negative feeling of loneliness. Policies are often formulated to address the effects of loneliness rather than its causes. In this case, while much attention is paid to the effects of loneliness, the ultimate goal is to address its causes.

Strategy mission

The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 has three main objectives:

1.

To have a cross-cutting policy that calls on all public services in relation to loneliness.

Some research indicates that loneliness does not discriminate by age, sex, gender or origin, so solutions need to be mainstream and aimed at promoting relationships, health, community work, participation, and include the design of the city's space. This requires the involvement of all municipal areas, significant participatory work and internal coordination.

2.

To have a long-term policy that can address the problem of loneliness for the next ten years at least. Thus, a strategy is proposed for the period 2020-2030, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as is being done with other municipal strategies and plans (Adolescence and Youth Plan, Children's Plan, etc.).

3.

To reflect on and encourage public, intellectual and academic debate on loneliness. Much has been written about the individual causes of loneliness, but we have yet to understand it as a social phenomenon in order to raise public awareness and destigmatise those suffering from it.

Barcelona City Council's Strategy Against Loneliness has, however, a clear mission: to reduce loneliness at the different stages in the lives of citizens. The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness is defined by two main features:

Its condition as a **municipal** strategy. This means that it addresses what we can do as a local administration to tackle the problem of loneliness in the city. During the period of its implementation, the "city perspective" will be incorporated so that organisations, citizens and academia can also assume responsibility, allowing us to consolidate a **Citizens Pact Against Loneliness** to address all aspects of people's lives, and not only those that affect the municipal institution.

A ten-year timetable for implementation, updating and activities may seem incongruous considering the rapid social, economic and health changes we are experiencing (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic that has paralysed the world). For this reason, the Strategy is presented as a **flexible** roadmap that will set out the main strategic lines and actions for alleviating loneliness in the city, and which **can be adapted to social changes and new realities that may arise.**

Challenges

At the beginning of the Strategy drafting process we presented various challenges that we wanted to address. These challenges are internal (what we need to do as an Administration) and external (what needs to be done in our city and in our neighbourhoods to reduce loneliness):

<p>Clarify what we mean when we talk about the feeling of loneliness, and distinguish it from the concept of social isolation.</p>	<p>Dispel the myth that loneliness only affects the elderly.</p>	<p>Implement a policy to prevent, detect and tackle loneliness from the earliest stages of life.</p>
<p>Obtain data and indicators that allow a good diagnosis of loneliness at all stages of life.</p>	<p>Work in a cross-cutting way – involving the entire organisation – to raise awareness of the problem of loneliness, and identify all stakeholders involved in the Strategy.</p>	<p>Understand that a strategy against loneliness may mean implementing new services and reformulating existing ones.</p>
<p>Create a flexible Strategy that takes into account the individual and their social environment when proposing and implementing actions to alleviate loneliness.</p>	<p>Ensure that people suffering from loneliness feel called upon, and are given access to high-value programmes or services for promoting socialisation, whether they already exist, are new or have been reformulated.</p>	<p>Encourage other entities and institutions to become involved in the challenge to reduce loneliness in the city.</p>

The city as an opportunity

The city of Barcelona is well positioned to deal with loneliness, owing to two factors. The first is its **territorial distribution**. Our neighbourhood structure is designed to foster community interaction and social relations. In 2017, Barcelona launched the Neighbourhood Plan (Pla de Barris), aimed at developing comprehensive improvement plans and reducing inequalities between territories. The main objective of the Plan is to empower neighbours to organise themselves and to establish objectives and actions to improve collective life in the neighbourhood, fostering social innovation practices and citizen action, with the clear aim of improving and strengthening the social capital of the neighbourhoods. The second factor is the **potential of its municipal facilities** to foster socialisation, particularly the senior citizens' centres. Both these factors offer an excellent tool for socialisation and an opportunity to alleviate loneliness.

Background: we're not starting from scratch

When it comes to tackling loneliness, Barcelona City Council is not starting from scratch. In this respect we should mention programmes such as Radars and VinclesBCN.

In 2014, the **VinclesBCN** platform was created to alleviate loneliness among the elderly. By mid-2021, the platform had more than three thousand users, and is a clear example of effectiveness in combating loneliness. The evolution and growth of this service towards the new Vincles+ platform is part of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, and will mean the creation of a hub of online services for the elderly and people of all ages, which will be even more effective in alleviating loneliness in Barcelona and will also help reduce the digital divide among older people.

Radars is a community action service launched in 2008 in the Gràcia district. Today, it is offered in all ten districts of the city. It too is aimed at alleviating the effects of loneliness and preventing situations of risk among the elderly, through collaboration with neighbours, businesses, pharmacies, volunteers, organisations and facilities. The project's goal is to transform neighbourhoods into more humane, safe, participatory and supportive communities.

Before starting work on the Municipal Strategy we already knew that, in addition to VinclesBCN and Radars, Barcelona City Council had other initiatives focused on alleviating loneliness, but we didn't know how many. Thus, one of the first tasks when drafting the Strategy was to carry out an **exhaustive mapping of the municipal services, programmes and projects** aimed at alleviating loneliness among Barcelona's citizens, either directly or indirectly, which are already underway at the city level and in the various districts and neighbourhoods.

“Understanding the potential harmful effect of loneliness on cognitive impairment and dementia can contribute to the development of interventions to delay, or perhaps prevent, the onset of cognitive impairment and dementia.”

Soledad no deseada y deterioro cognitivo

ELVIRA LARA PÉREZ

The initial mapping of programmes, services, projects and actions to combat loneliness was carried out using the following methodology:

- **Search and selection of publicly accessible documents:** government measures, service catalogues, action plans, strategies and other documents accessible on municipal websites. The initial list included actions aimed at citizens – excluding facilities, but including services or programmes offered by the facilities to combat loneliness.
- **Review of the websites** of the district manager’s offices, institutes and municipal companies, as well as the Barcelona City Council consortiums.

After the search and selection of documents and websites, technical staff assigned by each manager’s office reviewed the initial mapping and updated it with all the contributions. From this, a summary of the data was generated in a file format, showing the data on loneliness for each district compared to the data for the city as a whole. The resulting mapping shows that Barcelona City Council has **268 current projects, services and programmes** that are directly or indirectly aimed at alleviating loneliness. This is undoubtedly a solid foundation for the implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

This mapping is a snapshot of a specific period (July 2020), which allows us to know what Barcelona City Council was doing up to that time to prevent or alleviate loneliness. Aware of the need to periodically update this mapping, we have accounted for changes that may be made to existing programmes and the termination or creation of other programmes. This mapping is, undoubtedly, a sound basis for knowing what we are doing as a city.

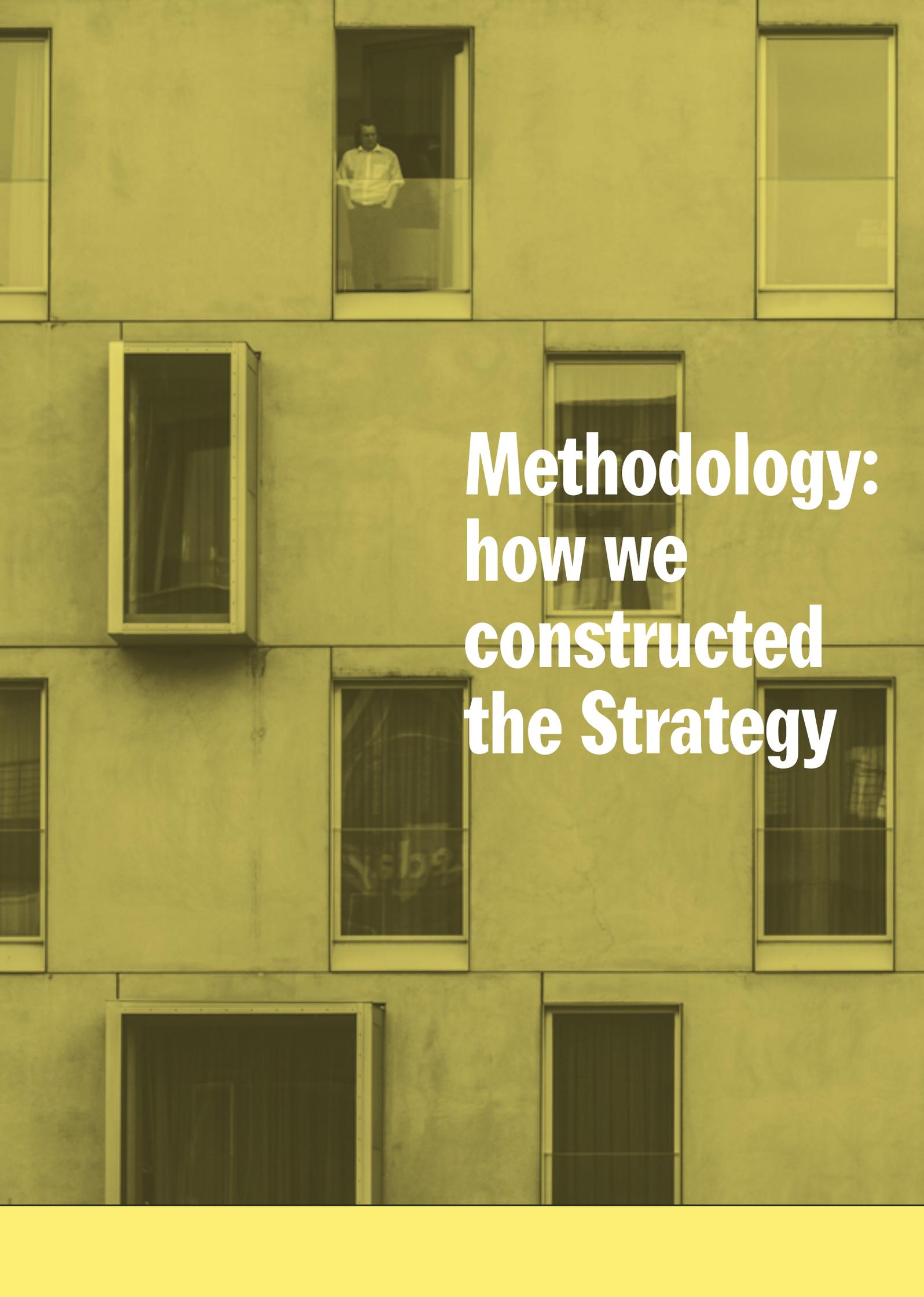
This stage prior to the implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness has allowed us **to see everything we are already doing** (which is quite a lot) and has **obliged us to include the perspective of loneliness in what we do** and to make changes where necessary, so as not to repeat ourselves or invest unnecessary resources in starting projects that may already exist, instead of strengthening or changing our approach. To tackle the problem of loneliness, we also have the involvement of a considerable number of social organisations, who have also been working for many years to detect, prevent and reduce loneliness among our citizens, especially the elderly. It is evident that their participation is essential and that we need to work together so that the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness develops into a **Citizens Pact Against Loneliness** in the coming years.

“Loneliness can be linked to life transitions that shake our lives and make us rethink who we are and how we relate to our environment.

In social and psychological intervention actions, we must incorporate the experience of loneliness as an accompanying feature of the life transitions, both positive and negative, that we all make along the way.”

¿La soledad es buena compañera de viaje en mi vida?

MONTSERRAT CELDRÁN



**Methodology:
how we
constructed
the Strategy**

Aims of the methodology

The **methodological process** of constructing and implementing the Strategy to alleviate loneliness is flexible. This means that, both in the initial drafting and in its development over ten years, formulas will be introduced to include new visions, new realities and new approaches that adapt to the changing characteristics of the uncertain world we live in and, above all, to the needs of people according to the diagnosis and evaluation of the social reality of the city.

With this in mind, we have established the following **methodological objectives**:

-
- 1.** Take into account the different **sources** or causes of loneliness at different stages of people's lives.
 - 2.** Have an impact on the **person** as an individual, and also on their **social environment**, understood as the circumstances around them.³¹
 - 3.** Involve the entire municipal organisation in a **cross-cutting manner**.
-
- 4.** **Innovate** in relation to what is already being done.
 - 5.** Involve other **entities** or institutions, to create a better understanding of the problem and to be part of the solution.
 - 6.** **Incorporate prevention, detection, promotion and care approaches.**
-

31. The philosopher Ortega y Gasset coined the following famous phrase: "I am I and my circumstance; and, if I do not save it, I do not save myself.", understanding circumstance as the environment around us, the space and atmosphere of each moment (Ortega y Gasset, J., *Meditaciones del Quijote*, Alianza Editorial, 2014 [1914]).

"If we agree that preventing, alleviating or reversing unwanted solitude is a major social objective, of the calibre of those related to the great needs or goods we have mentioned, we will have to agree that the evil of undesired solitude (and the good of interaction) is suffered (or enjoyed) individually and subjectively but that, necessarily, it will have to be analysed in its collective and structural dimension."

Enfoque y abordaje de la soledad no deseada

FERNANDO FANTOVA

Map of spheres and lines of work

To achieve these objectives, work has been carried out from different spheres that make up the so-called “**map of the Strategy Against Loneliness**”.

The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness was **worked on at different levels** (technical, management, political, scientific, territorial, civic and associative) and drafted with **contributions from different spheres**.



INTERNAL SPHERE

This sphere was the first to be established, and involved the work and contributions of representatives of the different municipal departments and areas, in order to reflect, contribute to and design the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. The tasks carried out were as follows:

- a.** Design of the methodology for developing the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, with the necessary rethinking to incorporate the COVID-19 perspective.
- b.** Presentation of the Strategy design and drafting process to Barcelona City Council's Executive Management Committee (March 2020), and to areas and departments considered key for creating synergies that favour the cross-cutting nature of the project.
- c.** Work sessions and comparison meetings held with municipal technicians and City Council technicians from different areas and departments.
- d.** Territorialisation of the Strategy at the time of planning.
- e.** Establishment of the strategic lines of action.
- f.** Inclusion of gender mainstreaming throughout the entire process.

DIAGNOSIS AND ANALYSIS SPHERE

In parallel to the internal sphere, work started on diagnosing loneliness in Barcelona. Indicators on loneliness will be collected periodically in order to measure the extent of the phenomenon during the life of the Strategy. The actions already developed or initiated are:

- a.** Detection of sources of loneliness.
- b.** A mapping of current municipal services, programmes and resources aimed at alleviating loneliness.
- c.** Incorporation of indicators in municipal surveys to directly and indirectly measure loneliness.
- d.** Diagnosis of loneliness in Barcelona using available indicators.
- e.** Drawing up of a map of social organisations working to alleviate loneliness in the city of Barcelona (latter half of 2021).

ACADEMIC/SCIENTIFIC SPHERE

To reflect on and generate knowledge about loneliness, we sought synergies with universities and research centres. The aim is to develop the Strategy based on scientific evidence, to generate knowledge in order to adequately implement policies, and to raise awareness of the social problem of loneliness. From this sphere, the following have been carried out:

- a.** Creation of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS).
- b.** Assignment of intellectual and academic production to the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness and to other experts in various social fields.
- c.** Stable collaborations with universities and other research centres.

CIVIC SPHERE

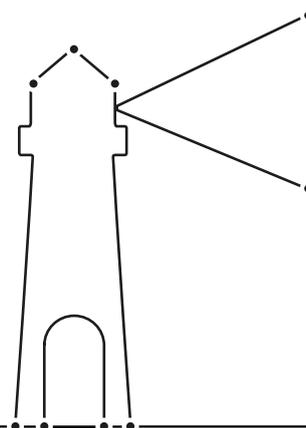
In addition to gathering academic and municipal knowledge (through technical staff), we held various meetings and opened channels of communication to allow organisations and citizens to contribute their experience to the drafting of the Strategy. Similarly, it is essential to communicate the entire strategy drafting and updating process, as a first step in raising awareness about loneliness. For this reason, creating the website was one of the key tasks.

- a. Comparing the contributions collected with all stakeholders (citizens, organisations, technicians and academics).
- b. Preparation of the communication and awareness-raising campaign on loneliness, calling on all citizens.
- c. Establishing partnerships with social entities and organisations, to combine efforts to combat loneliness and to move towards a Citizens Pact Against Loneliness.
- d. Design and launch of the website “Barcelona contra la soledat”.
- e. Design and launch of the periodic newsletter “Barcelona contra la soledat”, linked to the website of the same name.
- f. Design and launch of the Barcelona Loneliness Observatory.

INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

Loneliness is a global phenomenon and, as such, we cannot initiate a loneliness strategy without knowing what is already being done around the world to tackle it. We therefore need to compile international best practices being developed elsewhere, and be able to share our own experiences and the experiences of others so that we can join forces to address loneliness.

- a. Compilation of international best practices to combat loneliness.
- b. Design of the 1st International Conference on Loneliness.



INTERNAL SPHERE

a. Design of the methodology for developing the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, including in its approach the new reality caused by COVID-19

Given the fact that the design and implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness is a **cross-cutting**, large scale and long term municipal action, the methodology used is based on a work session, co-creation, and comparison with municipal technicians and technicians from different areas and departments. The objectives of the work were as follows:

- To review what is being done, and to seek innovation.
- To involve the entire municipal organisation.
- To involve other institutions and entities to raise awareness of the situation, help destigmatise loneliness, and be part of the solution.

b. Presentation of the Strategy design and drafting process to Barcelona City Council's Executive Management Committee and to other areas and departments considered key for creating synergies that favour the cross-cutting nature of the project

Since the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness was presented to Barcelona City Council's Executive Management Committee on 4 March 2020, the Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens, responsible for coordinating the Strategy, has held meetings with the areas and departments of all manager's offices in order to coordinate synergies and establish cross-cutting and complementary collaborations.

Since March 2020 – and up to the time of presenting the Strategy – the Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens held meetings with numerous key departments and areas, with whom it has established synergies and proposals for collaboration, always seeking maximum transversality (see Annexes).

These meetings resulted in the definition of **more than 50 collaborative projects and actions, which form part of the Action Plan 2020-2024**. Some of these have already been set in motion, in parallel to the Strategy drafting process.

c. Work sessions and comparison meetings held with municipal technicians and technicians from different City Council areas and departments

This **internal work has been modified** – both the timelines and the starting methodology – due to the COVID-19 crisis.

It was initially planned to start these meetings in person in April 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to a rethinking of the content and format of the meetings. The lockdown during the first months of the pandemic was likely to have aggravated the feeling of loneliness and for this reason a special online work session, called "Loneliness Meeting - COVID-19", was convened.

Three work sessions and one comparison meeting were held, during which different areas proposed ideas on how to mitigate loneliness, and measures and actions were formulated, prioritised and compared. The advances and results of these technical sessions were also compared in the academic, civic, professional and associative spheres.

- 1st work session: special monograph “Loneliness and COVID-19” (May 2020).
- 2nd work session: formulation and prioritisation of proposals and lines of action (September 2020).
- 3rd work session: definition (October 2020).
- 4th work session: final comparison (January 2021).

In these sessions, proposals arising from different initiatives, meetings and municipal bodies were also incorporated:

- Internal meeting on loneliness, Municipal Action Plan 2020-2023 (November 2019).
- Meeting on loneliness, Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens (January 2020).
- Citizen proposals for the Municipal Action Plan (MAP) and the District Action Plan (DAP) (spring 2020).
- Constitutive session of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS) (17/07/2020).
- Proposals from the Advisory Council for the Elderly (CAGG) (November 2020).
- Proposals arising from bilateral meetings with the Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens and other directorates, manager’s offices, areas and departments considered key (March 2020 - June 2021).

d. Territorialisation of the Strategy during planning

At the beginning of the drafting process, the **Strategy was communicated to the territory in order to reach a consensus**: firstly by creating a dedicated working group to systematise the introduction of the Strategy in the various districts and neighbourhoods; and, secondly, by organising presentations by the Councillor’s Office for Childhood, Youth, the Elderly and People with Disabilities in all 10 districts.

Meetings were held in all districts in different spaces (councils for the elderly, neighbourhood councils, specific sessions to present the Strategy, etc.), with the presence of municipal technicians and representatives of different entities. In total, **more than 250 people attended, and made contributions that they considered appropriate for implementing the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.**

e. Establishing and reviewing the strategic lines of action

The main lines of action of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness are the result of intensive research and analysis of reports and other documents, a bibliographical review, and knowledge of similar strategies previously implemented in Europe. In this research and documentation work, we had the collaboration and bibliographic contributions of Barcelona City Council's Digital Documentation and Knowledge-Access Service (SEDAC). As with the rest of the Strategy, the initial strategic lines of action are subject to constant revision and updating according to circumstances and needs.

f. Inclusion of gender mainstreaming throughout the entire process

The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness was reviewed by the Directorate of Gender Services and Time Policies in order to incorporate the gender perspective into the document.

DIAGNOSIS AND ANALYSIS SPHERE

This sphere includes the actions that have allowed us to know the reality of loneliness in the city, and to have a first accurate diagnosis. The analysis presented two lines of work. The first was to **map the existing municipal programmes** and services that have a direct or indirect impact on alleviating loneliness. The second is to incorporate indicators of loneliness validated in different municipal **surveys**.

a. Detecting sources of loneliness

The review of national and international scientific research has enabled us to **identify the sources of loneliness**, and to affirm that loneliness can affect any individual during the course of their life, whatever their sex, gender, age or origin. Although the triggers may vary depending on whether the individuals are children, adolescents, young people, or older people – and even depending on their experiences and life paths – we found some common contributing factors to loneliness in all age groups, such as migratory processes and grief due to the loss of loved ones.

b. Mapping existing services, programmes and resources aimed at alleviating loneliness

In its efforts to alleviate loneliness, Barcelona City Council is not starting from scratch. For many years it has been offering a wide range of municipal programmes and services directly or indirectly aimed at mitigating loneliness in order to improve people's well-being.

In this respect, an intense, comprehensive mapping exercise was carried out, giving us a reliable picture of municipal programmes and services related to loneliness, and which strengthen the cross-cutting nature of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

c. Incorporation of indicators in municipal surveys to measure loneliness directly and indirectly

After searching for existing indicators to measure feelings of loneliness, **a set of internationally validated indicators were incorporated into different municipal surveys** in order to obtain rigorous comparable data on loneliness in the city of Barcelona.³²

The aim is to **obtain comparable data** for different population groups over time, which would provide us with a broad and rigorous diagnosis of loneliness in Barcelona. The indicators for measuring the feeling of loneliness are being incorporated into the various municipal surveys: *Barcelona COVID-19 Survey*, *Youth Survey*, *Health Survey*, *Omnibus Survey*, *Socio-Demographic Survey*, *FRESC*, *Children Have Their Say 2020-2025*. It was decided to make use of existing surveys instead of designing a new and exclusive survey on loneliness, in order to optimise economic and human resources and to take advantage of the rigour and design of these surveys.

d. Diagnosing loneliness in Barcelona using available indicators

An initial document has been drawn up which, based on the indicators available at the beginning of the Strategy design process, provides some preliminary data on loneliness in Barcelona. This **first diagnosis, presented at the end of October 2020**, can be consulted on the Barcelona Against Loneliness website. One of the objectives of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness is to obtain further data on loneliness in the city and keep it constantly updated.

e. Drawing up a map of social organisations working to alleviate loneliness in the city

One of the first steps towards making the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness also a city strategy is to **find out which social organisations in Barcelona are working to alleviate loneliness**. We discovered that there are many, and that they have substantial experience. So Barcelona City Council needs to work closely with these organisations in order to combat loneliness as effectively as possible.

³². The indicators are described in the "Measuring loneliness" section.

ACADEMIC/SCIENTIFIC SPHERE

a. Creation of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS)

In order to give the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness scientific and academic rigour, a **Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS)** was created, made up of people from different disciplines in the academic and scientific spheres. The CACS³³ aims to be a space for debate, reflection, advice and monitoring of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness that guarantees efficiency and rigour.

The Board is made up of **experts from different disciplines** – including psychology, sociology, medicine, social work and urban planning – in **academic and scientific spheres, thus allowing the issue of loneliness to be addressed from different perspectives and at all stages of life.**

The main functions of the CACS are to offer expert advice to Barcelona City Council on issues related to loneliness; to propose innovative actions, policies and projects; to monitor the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness and guide its implementation; and to collaborate in the scientific dissemination of information on loneliness in the municipal sphere.

The first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS) took place on 17 July 2020, at the constitution ceremony of the Board, with a combination of face-to-face and virtual attendance in accordance with COVID-19 health regulations. The second CACS meeting was held on 26 November 2020 and included a session to compare the strategic lines and objectives of the Strategy.

b. Assignment of intellectual and academic production to the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness and other experts in different social fields

Intellectual and academic production is carried out by the members of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS), as well as other Humanities and Social Sciences experts, who produce knowledge on loneliness from their professional and knowledge fields. We also have the collaboration of the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities (IMPD), which investigates how loneliness affects people with disabilities.

c. Stable collaborations with universities and other research centres

The fluid and ongoing collaboration with the university and research world makes it possible to generate knowledge and address social and technological challenges in relation to loneliness. From the outset, **contact was established with universities and research centres to promote the submission of projects** to public and private funding calls related to research into loneliness.

33. The CACS was established by Resolution S1/D/2020-00721.

Main contributions to date:

Contribution 1st Rector Gabriel Ferraté Prize UOC-UPC

How can technology help people who feel lonely?

1st semester 2021

IDEC Internship Agreement (UPF-BSM)

Postgraduate course in Active and Healthy Ageing Project Management.

February-March 2021

Participation in Clínic Barcelona Summer School 2021 (Aula Clínic – Hospital Clínic)

Presentation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness at the round table: "Impact of the pandemic beyond the hospital."

July 2021

Promotion of research work

UdG (Grupo Liberi)

Guide for the prevention, detection and support of adolescents and young people suffering loneliness.

September 2020-March 2021

UAB (Foundation for Health and Ageing)

Foundation for the commitment of municipal centres and spaces for the elderly in the fight against loneliness.

December 2020

UOC (Chair for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Digital Health UOC-COCE-MEFE)

The guide "Dealing with loneliness with a disability", and academic and informative articles on loneliness and isolation linked to disability.

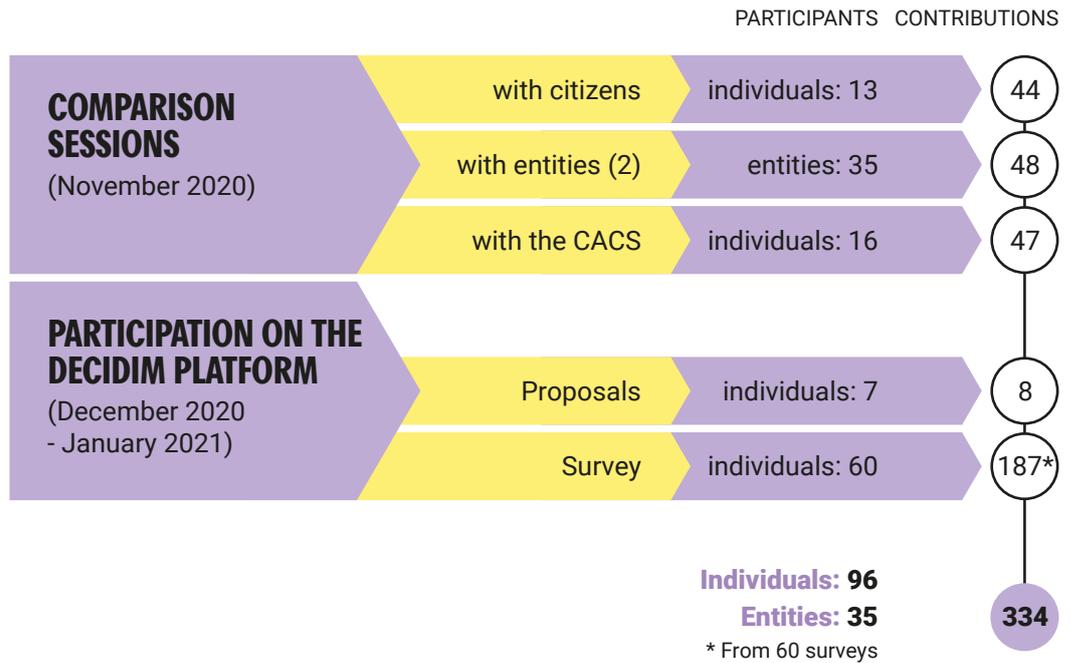
2020-2021

CIVIC SPHERE

a. Comparing the contributions from all stakeholders involved (civic, associative, technical and academic spheres)

The result of the contributions collected during the work sessions with technical staff, in the first CACS meeting and other internal work sessions, was compared and validated with stakeholders from different areas: the academic sphere, through the validation of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS); the associative sphere, with contributions from organisations linked to the Advisory Council for the Elderly (CAGG), the Municipal Council for Social Welfare (CMBS), Children's Rights Network and the Barcelona Youth Council (CJB); and the civic sphere, based on comparison with the city's inhabitants, both users and non-users of municipal services. **The comparison meetings made it possible to validate the strategic lines and objectives that guide the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.**

Summary of the comparison and participation meetings



The comparison and analysis with citizens was carried out via the [DECIDIM BARCELONA platform](#), in operation during the months of December 2020 and January 2021.

Below is a summary of the contributions made on the DECIDIM platform:

- **195 proposals: 187, via 60 responses in the survey, and 8 via the “Proposals” section.**
- **35 endorsements of the published proposals, distributed among 17 proposals.**
- **14 endorsements of the published proposals, distributed among 8 proposals.**
- **12 comments from citizens in relation to the proposals.**

A total of 154 **proposals** were accepted, representing **89% of the total**. When analysing the justifications of the total number of positive responses, 53.9% stated that the proposed action is already being carried out; 23.4% that it will be considered as a proposal within the actions set forth in the Strategy; and the remaining 22.7% that it will be considered as a reflection within the approach, lines and/or objectives of the Strategy.

Rejected proposals represent 11% of the total. 42.1% of the negative responses were in relation to proposals that were not sufficiently clear or understandable. 31.6% stated that the proposal is not within the remit of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. 10.5% of the negative responses stated that the proposals imply modifications of the regulations, or are contrary to programmes, plans, or the regulations themselves. The other reasons given were as follows: they are not the competence of the municipality (5.3%), they are not aligned with the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness (5.3%) and, finally, they are technically or financially unfeasible (5.3%).

b. Preparing a communication and awareness raising campaign on loneliness calling on all citizens.

In collaboration with the Communications Department, a communication **campaign is being developed to destigmatise and raise awareness of loneliness** among citizens. The aim is, firstly, to dispel the current myth that only the elderly suffer loneliness (anyone can feel lonely) and, secondly, to encourage the involvement of all citizens in tackling loneliness in the city.

c. Establishing partnerships with social entities and organisations in order to join forces against loneliness and move towards a Citizens Pact Against Loneliness.

In addition to meetings with representatives from different areas, directorates and departments of the City Council, meetings were also held with some of the third sector entities that form the backbone of the city's associative life, with the aim of seeking complicity and alliances in the fight against loneliness. Meetings and collaboration with entities will continue and intensify during the implementation period of the Strategy, **with the aim of transforming it into a Citizens Pact against loneliness.**

Collaboration with other Administrations must also become an important pillar throughout the life of the Strategy, in order to achieve maximum unity of action against loneliness at local, national and international level.

d. Design and launch of the “Barcelona Against Loneliness” website.

Since October 2020, the microsite [“Barcelona Against Loneliness”](#) has been up and running on the Social Rights website. This website includes information on municipal services and programmes to reduce loneliness, as well as the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. It also links to the Barcelona Loneliness Observatory, which contains up-to-date information on loneliness in Barcelona, local and international research, and other materials of interest to professionals and the general public.

e. Design and launch of the periodic newsletter “Barcelona Against Loneliness”, linked to the website of the same name.

Launched in March 2021, the Barcelona Against Loneliness newsletter is a vehicle for disseminating and communicating the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. Through concise and varied content, linked to the website [barcelona.cat/loneliness](#), the newsletter aims to promote knowledge and encourage participation. Its contents include information, dissemination, and services related to preventing and dealing with loneliness.

f. Design and implementation of the Barcelona Loneliness Observatory

The Barcelona Loneliness Observatory gathers updated data on loneliness in Barcelona, local and international research, and other materials of interest for professionals and citizens.

INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

a. Compilation of international best practices to combat loneliness

Aware of the importance of what is being done beyond the city, and based on knowledge and learning from other experiences, a **document of national and international best practices** has been drawn up to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of loneliness. This compilation is updated regularly and is available on the Barcelona Against Loneliness website.

b. Design of the 1st International Conference on Loneliness

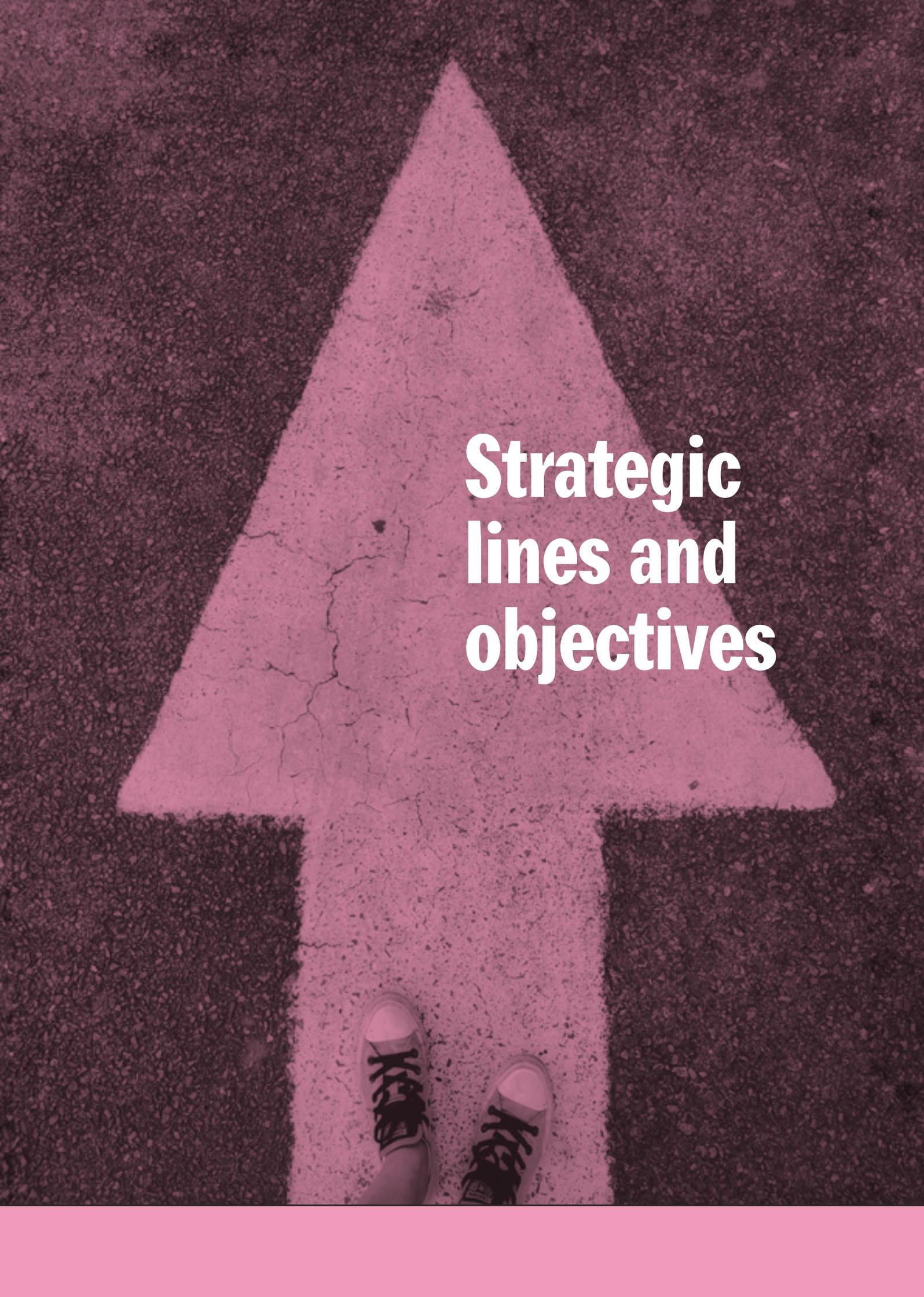
Work is currently underway to hold the 1st International Conference on Loneliness in Barcelona. It is one of the main internationalisation actions included in the Action Plan 2020-2024 of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

“There is a certain loneliness and emptiness associated with an intensive use of social networks, but these can also be spaces for giving and receiving mutual support. Apps and other digital initiatives are emerging to detect situations of online loneliness in young people.

These can be useful complementary tools, especially considering the amount of personal information people tend to publish. However, as in any other area of growth and upbringing, having an environment of trust and adults to guide them is key.”

Soledad juvenil en tiempos hiperconectados

LILIANA ARROYO MOLINER

A large white arrow pointing upwards on a dark asphalt surface. At the bottom of the frame, the tips of a person's feet wearing white sneakers with black laces are visible. The text "Strategic lines and objectives" is overlaid in white on the right side of the arrow.

Strategic lines and objectives

The networking process has resulted in 4 strategic lines and 25 objectives, which make up the structure of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030.

STRATEGIC LINES

The four main strategic lines of action that form the backbone of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 are:

1. Raise awareness and generate knowledge about the impact of loneliness on the city and on the well-being of its inhabitants.

2. Provide resources and services to prevent, detect and address loneliness.

3. Restructure the city and its areas into community spaces to address loneliness.

4. Adapt the functioning of the municipal organisation to the new challenges.

OBJECTIVES

The 25 objectives derived from the strategic lines of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 are:

1 Raise awareness and generate knowledge about the impact of loneliness on the city and on the well-being of its inhabitants.

1.1 Promote social communication campaigns and actions to prevent, destigmatise and raise awareness of the problem of loneliness.

1.2 Dissemination of the services offered by the City Council and social entities in relation to the provision of emotional care and actions to prevent and address loneliness, to ensure that the information reaches all citizens.

1.3 Deploy mechanisms to contribute to local policy decision-making on the phenomenon of loneliness.

2. Deploy resources and services to prevent, detect and address loneliness.

Objectives related to preventive services that foster the creation of social ties and satisfactory relationships.

2.1 Promote measures to facilitate access to educational, cultural and leisure activities.

2.2 Improve resources and access to knowledge and skills to reduce the digital divide, aimed mainly at older people and vulnerable groups.

2.3 Facilitate face-to-face relations between people and different generations.

2.4 Develop a range of personal tools to address the emotional distress that loneliness can cause, with a particular focus on times of life transition.

Objectives related to tools for detecting people who are suffering loneliness.

2.5 Provide tools to professionals who are in contact with people, for the detection, prevention and intervention in cases of loneliness, especially in relation to life transition events that entail a greater risk.

2.6 Strengthen networks between professional and community referents for the prevention and detection of loneliness.

Objectives related to support and monitoring services for people suffering loneliness.

2.7 Strengthen the range of existing services and programmes aimed at mitigating loneliness at all life stages.

2.8 Promote new actions and services for alleviating loneliness, with an emphasis on the times of life transition and on the groups that suffer most from loneliness.

2.9 Promote measures to care for carers.

2.10 Develop a technological offer (robotics, apps, etc.) to help address loneliness at all stages of life.

2.11 Launch a programme involving pets as a resource for alleviating loneliness at all ages.

The Action Plan 2020-2024 was drawn up in accordance with the strategic lines and objectives, based on the needs detected and the first operational collaborations with key areas, departments and services. This work was reflected in different projects during the last months of 2020 and the first months of 2021.

3. Restructure the city and its areas into community spaces to address loneliness.

3.1 Transform and naturalise the public space to recover areas where citizens can meet and socialise, thus helping to reduce loneliness.

3.2 Make the city accessible from a physical and communicative perspective, to facilitate connection and social cohesion.

3.3 Strengthen the work of care networks in detecting and reducing loneliness, which helps enhance the deployment of territories of care.

3.4 Promote new forms of home-sharing as alternatives to current forms, as a means of combating loneliness.

3.5 Strengthen the role of local facilities as relational, inclusive spaces for emotional support and care, incorporating the perspective on loneliness.

3.6 Strengthen group support and mutual aid services, as well as actions to promote social interaction and exchange within the community.

4. Adapt the functioning of the municipal organisation to the new challenges posed by loneliness.

Objectives related to the care of municipal staff.

4.1 Detect and promote measures to combat loneliness among municipal workers.

4.2 Establish mechanisms of organisational resilience to deal with unforeseen situations that could cause loneliness among municipal staff.

Objectives related to the work of municipal staff in contact with the public.

4.3 Review existing services and programmes for combating loneliness.

4.4 Provide municipal professionals with methodological tools and knowledge to integrate the perspective on loneliness into their areas of responsibility.

4.5 Establish mechanisms for coordination and cross-cutting work between municipal areas and professionals in order to jointly address the complexity of loneliness.



**How will we
do it?**

Timetable

The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 is conceived as a cross-cutting, comprehensive and long-term action, with a **10-year horizon**. This allows us not only to design policies to alleviate loneliness, but also to apply them, evaluate them, and change them if necessary. It therefore represents a clear commitment to tackling loneliness effectively – considered one of the so-called epidemics of the 21st century – in line with the strategies and policies of other governments and local administrations around the world.

The last quarter of 2019, 2020 and the first half of 2021 were dedicated to building the Strategy, internally and externally and in a cross-cutting and participatory manner, with the involvement of the organisations and citizens of Barcelona. Simultaneously – and this was an innovative contribution – work began on creating synergies and implementing specific projects, which already form part of the Action Plan 2020-2024 of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

During the strategy-building phase, in October 2020 the **Government measure for the drafting of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness** was presented, which laid out the foundation of the drafting process and described the lines of work in progress, with the aim of presenting the Strategy in 2021.

Following political approval of the document in July 2021, two lines of work began: the first involved drafting the Strategy in the form of **action plans**, resulting from the strategic lines and objectives; the second focuses on extending the Municipal Strategy to transform it into a **Citizens Pact against loneliness**, based on collaborations with citizens and social organisations that have been working for some time to alleviate loneliness in Barcelona.

The following are key dates in the 2020-2030 timetable:

Drafting and presentation of the action plans

- Action Plan 2020-2024 (2021)
- Action Plan 2025-2030 (2025)

Monitoring and evaluation

- Monitoring Action Plan 2020-2024 (2023)
- Evaluation Action Plan 2020-2024 (2025)
- Monitoring Action Plan 2025-2030 (2028)
- Evaluation Action Plan 2025-2030 (2030)
- Final evaluation (2030)

- Territorialisation
- Governance model
- Development of evaluation system
- Internal validation of Strategy
- Project promotion

JANUARY-MAY

- Political approval of Strategy
- Public presentation

JUNE-JULY

2021 TIMETABLE

MAY-JUNE

- Executive Committee presentation

JULY

- Proposal of Action Plan 2020-2024

SEPTEMBER

- Towards a Citizens Pact

- Government measure
- Strategy drafting process

2020

- Strategy monitoring

2023

- Strategy monitoring

2028

**2020
2030**

2021

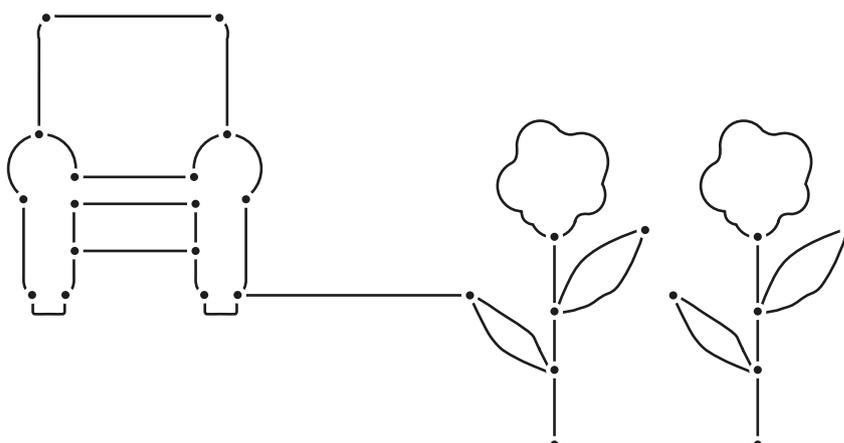
- Strategy presentation 2020-2030
- Action Plan 2020-2024

2025

- Monitoring Action Plan 2020-2024
- Mid-term evaluation
- Action Plan 2025-2030

2030

- Monitoring Action Plan 2025-2030
- Final evaluation Strategy



Governance

The cross-cutting approach to the construction of the Strategy, together with the challenge of transforming it into a Citizens Pact, necessarily entails a **system of governance** that must involve – in an efficient and balanced manner – the different spheres who, collaboratively, must implement it: the **political, technical, academic, associative and civic** spheres. Each sphere has a representative in the planned governance bodies, all of whom sit on the Loneliness Board.

With regard to the technical sphere, the governance functions must at all times incorporate the **cross-cutting perspective**, in relation to the different municipal areas; and the **territorial perspective**, focused on the districts and neighbourhoods.

Thus, it is proposed that the governance of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness be the responsibility of two main bodies which will act in a complementary manner, in accordance with the Strategy's 2020-2030 timetable. These are the **Loneliness Board** and the **Loneliness Commission**, which will have different functions.

1. LONELINESS BOARD

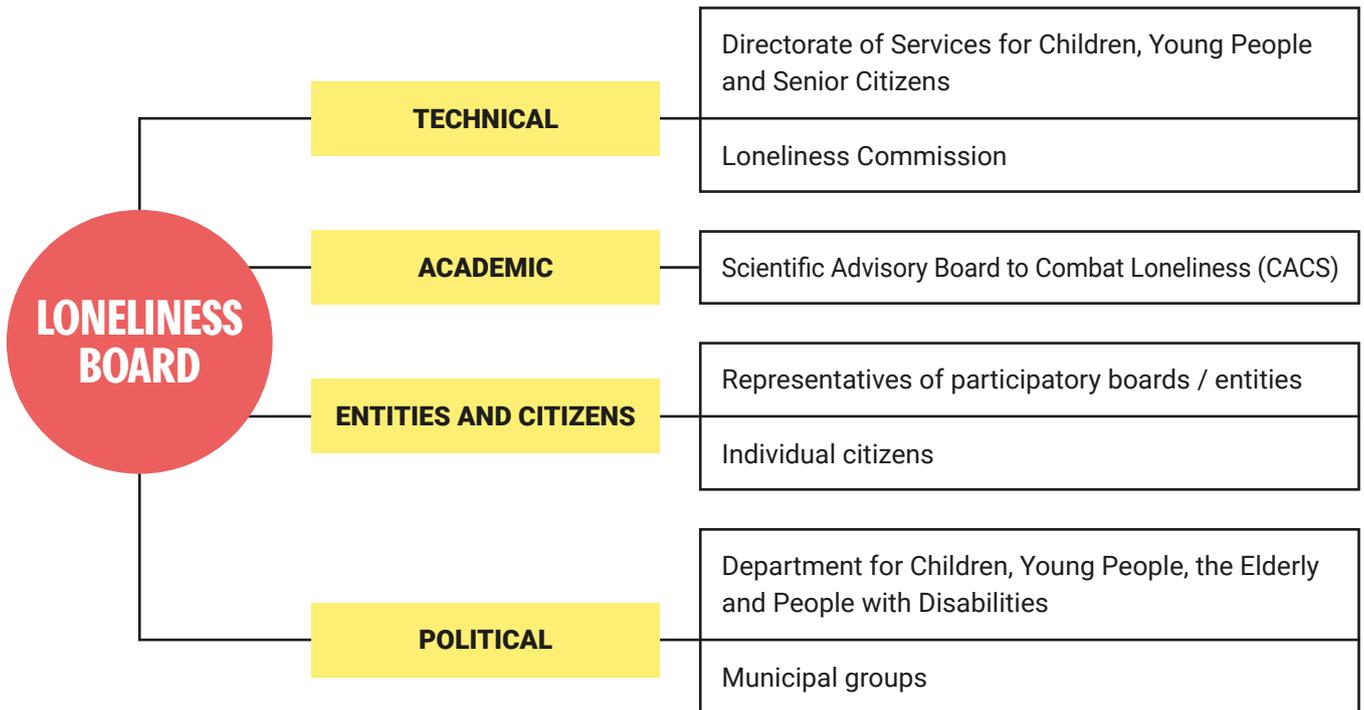
- Plenary meeting
- With political participation
- Monitoring and reporting function
- Biannual (2021, 2023, 2025, 2028, 2030)

2. LONELINESS COMMISSION

- With representatives from the working groups
- Working function
- Annual
- Changes according to project

The Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACS) will play an important role in the Strategy's governance. In addition to participation on the Loneliness Board, it is also a key body for providing guidance and advice during the development and implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

In parallel, the working groups will be maintained as a vehicle for continuing to implement and develop projects within the framework of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.



Territorialisation

One of the fundamental aspects for preventing loneliness is the promotion of social relationships, which increase a person's sense of belonging and identity. To increase social relationships in the city, it is **essential to focus on the neighbourhoods**, which is where social connections are usually made. The Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness therefore includes a territory-based perspective of the city, based on the different profiles and needs of each district and even each neighbourhood.

To this end a **working group** has been set up, with the direct involvement of the Manager's Office for Territorial and Proximity Coordination, and is formed of managers and coordinators from districts with whom we have worked from the outset on implementing and adapting the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness in the different areas of the city. The aim is to have the perspective of the various districts so that we can incorporate it into the Strategy. Once it has been established that the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness is broad and flexible enough to be adapted to the territory, the next stage/action is to specify the objectives based on the characteristics and needs of the neighbourhoods.

The territorialisation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness has been carried out based on three main lines of action:

1.

Preparation of quantitative and qualitative reports for each territory, based on the mapping of municipal programmes and services to combat loneliness and data from the Omnibus 2020 survey. This made it possible to review the services and programmes already in place in the various districts, aimed at either directly or indirectly alleviating loneliness. An infographic was created for each district, providing data and considerations in order to review what is already being done, as well as to implement and develop, if necessary, new action plans against loneliness in the territory.

2.

Creation of a working group with representatives of the districts and the Neighbourhood Plan, to review the strategic lines and objectives of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness before submitting it for approval. Thus, the indispensable participation of the districts has been considered from the beginning of the Strategy planning phase. Comparison work was carried out with the territory to identify shortcomings and to collect content and applicability considerations that should be incorporated into the Strategy before its final approval.

3.

Territorial presentations of the Strategy to different district bodies. Prior to the public presentation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, presentations were made to different representative bodies (neighbourhood councils, councils for the elderly, councils for people with disabilities, active ageing working groups, manager's offices and directorates, neighbourhood representation groups, etc.) in all districts of the city, with the participation of more than 250 people.

Evaluation: indicator system

Another key task is defining the evaluation indicators for the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness, which must be carried out during the drafting process – prior to implementing the Strategy – and during the life of the Strategy.

Based on the Theory of Change matrix, the **evaluation indicator system** will enable us to identify, establish and evaluate the Strategy as a whole, either globally or in relation to specific objectives.

Process indicators

To assess the extent to which the Strategy is progressing adequately towards achieving the objectives.

- **Unique experience indicators**
- **Identification of critical success processes**
- **Identification of priority areas for action**

Output indicators

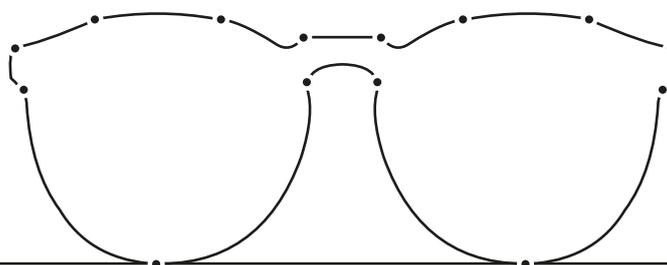
Achievements of the Strategy within the Administration, and the possibility of segmenting data by type of service and area of intervention.

- **Identification of the Strategy's achievements**

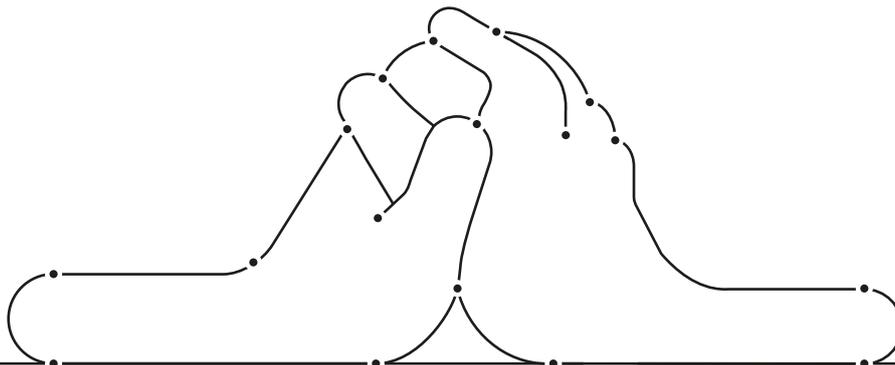
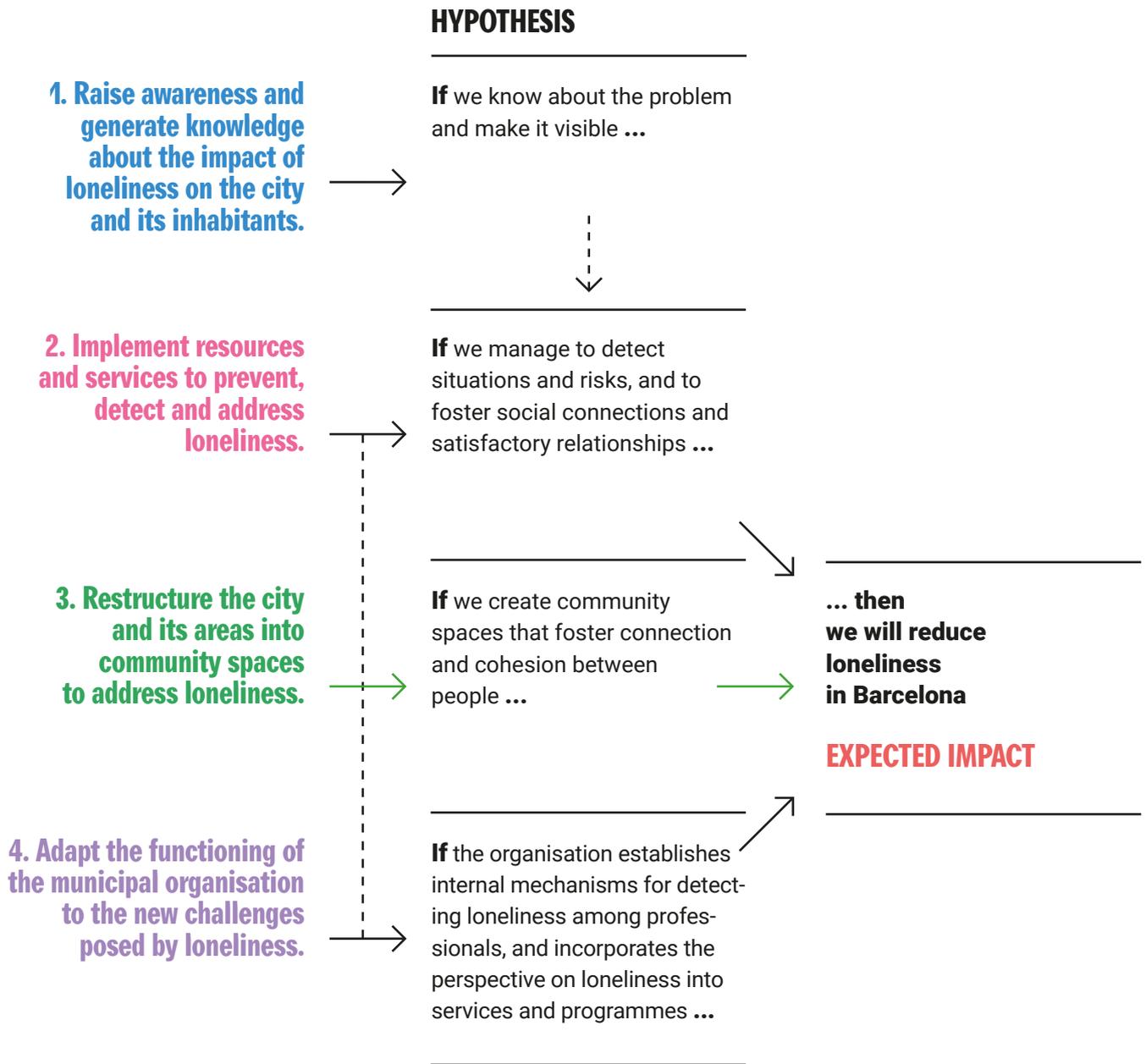
Impact indicators

To identify the Strategy's impact on the problem for which it was created.

- **Identification of the impact of the Strategy: alleviation of loneliness in Barcelona.**



Simplified logic model of the Theory of Change of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030



Budget

Barcelona City Council has approximately 268 programmes, services and activities that are either directly or indirectly aimed at reducing loneliness. This figure is the result of the mapping based on the analysis of the catalogue of municipal services, with a cross-cutting approach (see section “Background: we’re not starting from scratch”).

Determining the total budget allocated by Barcelona for the services and programmes aimed at reducing loneliness is an almost impossible task, given that some of these are or have been of a temporary nature. This section therefore presents the **budget allocated to the promotion of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness**, which does not include the budget for all the existing services, programmes and actions aimed at reducing loneliness, nor those in which other manager’s offices, areas and departments are involved.

The **budget for the new services or main programmes that are already underway in Barcelona**, and which have a direct impact in the fight against loneliness, is also shown.

Budget for promoting the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness

The budget for promoting the Loneliness Strategy in 2020 and 2021, prepared by Barcelona City Council’s Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens, amounts to **€425,000**, and includes:

- Drafting process
- Communication and dissemination
- First actions and operational projects

The breakdown of the budget by year and item is as follows:

ITEM	2020	ITEM	2021
Technical secretariat, Strategy drafting process	€30,000	Technical secretariat	€23,000
Mapping, analysis of loneliness programmes, best practices radar	€30,000	Strategy drafting process	€57,000
Conferences and presentations	€30,000		
Communication and dissemination	€10,000	Communication and dissemination	€39,000
Academic knowledge production	€20,000	Academic knowledge production	€31,000
New projects to alleviate loneliness	€45,000	Projects to alleviate loneliness	€110,000
TOTAL	€165,000	TOTAL	€260,000

Budget for the main services and projects aimed at alleviating loneliness already in operation

Barcelona currently allocates **more than 19 million euros** to alleviate loneliness. The following breakdown lists the 9 main projects already in operation, showing the amount budgeted for 2021.

PROJECT	AIMED AT	2021
Telecare	Older people	€12,203,846.75
VinclesBCN	Older people	€2,163,768.63
Àpats en companyia	Older people	€1,600,000.00
Radars	Older people	€410,756.26
Espai Cures (information and support programme for carers in the Barcelona Cuida centre)	Entire population	€322,776.32
Vila Veïna	Entire population	€1,847,473.26
SAIF (Service for Adolescents and Families)	Adolescents and young people	€831,000.00
En bici sense edat	Young people and older people	€20,000.00
Viure i Conviure	Young people and older people	€30,000.00
TOTAL		€19,429,621.00



Lessons learned during the drafting process

Lessons learned during the drafting process

During the drafting and implementation of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness we learned the importance of some factors that we want to share publicly, since they may be common to other similar initiatives. Below is the decalogue of lessons learned.

1. OBTAIN DATA

Having data on the issue we want to work on is essential, especially when data are still very scarce, as is the case for loneliness. Thanks to the involvement of the Innovation and Research Department and the Municipal Data Office (OMD), since the beginning of 2019 we have been able to obtain a first diagnosis from basic data on solitude (objective state of being or living alone) and on loneliness (the feeling of being lonely). Since then, we have been working to obtain more data, by incorporating indicators into the main municipal surveys, collaborating with universities and other research centres, and having the support of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACs).

2. TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED

The first data on loneliness in Barcelona – and throughout the world – allowed us to undo an initial assumption: older people do not suffer from loneliness just because they are older, nor do they suffer from it to a greater extent than other people. Contrary to what we would expect, the 16-24 age group (young people) and the 34-44 age groups (adults) rank first and second respectively in terms of the incidence of loneliness.

3. KNOW THE STARTING POINT

We knew from the outset that Barcelona City Council was not starting from scratch in terms of its efforts to tackle loneliness, but rather had a consolidated background and expertise in designing and implementing programmes, services and projects to directly or indirectly alleviate loneliness in the city, districts and neighbourhoods. Therefore, one of the first tasks to carry out was to map all these municipal services and programmes aimed at alleviating loneliness.

4. LOOK OUTWARDS

Also of great use when developing the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 was learning about experiences in the area of loneliness in other cities and countries around the world. The United Kingdom led the way in 2018 when it created the first Ministry of Loneliness in the Western world, and other countries, such as Japan, launched similar initiatives in 2021. During this period, Barcelona has been building its own strategy to alleviate loneliness, adapted to the city and its inhabitants. We have also kept an eye on what is being done elsewhere, and have compiled a list of national and international experiences of best practices and initiatives to alleviate loneliness, which is regularly updated by the Barcelona Loneliness Observatory.

5. LOOK INWARDS

Looking inwards is as important as looking outwards in order to build a solid and coherent Strategy, which also involves and helps those who form part of Barcelona City Council. Municipal workers can also suffer from loneliness at some point in their life and career. Thus, strategic line number 4 includes objectives and actions aimed at alleviating loneliness in the internal sphere, and to changes practices when necessary, in order to adapt the functioning of the City Council to any needs that may arise during the ten years of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness.

7. ONGOING COMPARISON

It can be said that the Strategy has been constructed collegially, thanks to the team of more than 30 technicians who, assigned by the corresponding manager's offices and areas, participated in the work and co-creation sessions and the comparison meetings in 2020 and 2021. Comparison has been a constant during the drafting process, not only internally, but also with the participation of municipal councils, citizens' organisations, the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness, and individual citizens, through the DECIDIM BARCELONA platform.

9. COLLABORATE WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Strategy, which was born as a municipal project, begins its journey with the primary intention of becoming a Citizens Pact Against Loneliness. From here, it aims to involve other external and/or city stakeholders, such as social entities working to alleviate loneliness (directly or indirectly), universities and other research centres. The first meetings and collaborations took place during the drafting period, and it is hoped to increase the quantity and quality of these over the ten years of implementation of the Strategy, also seeking the commitment of other local administrations.

6. CREATE CROSS-CUTTING SYNERGIES

Loneliness must be addressed jointly and in a cross-cutting manner. Therefore, from the outset, the Strategy has had the political impetus of the Councillor's Office for Childhood, Youth, the Elderly and People with Disabilities, and the technical impetus of the Municipal Management. It was important, also from the beginning, to have the complicity, collaboration and synergies with the greatest possible number of manager's offices, directorates and departments. During the drafting process, more than 30 bilateral meetings were held between the Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens and various municipal areas and services to explain the Strategy and seek ways of collaboration. All the professionals involved showed excellent willingness, and we hope to maintain communication while the Strategy is being implemented.

8. SEEK EXPERT ADVICE

The Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACs), made up of 17 experts in different social fields, has collaborated actively in the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness since it was founded in July 2020. In addition to making proposals and participating in the comparison process, it is also responsible for academic and knowledge production in relation to loneliness, through scientific articles, produced specifically within the framework of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness. Throughout the life of the Strategy, its knowledge will continue to be key to anticipating any new needs and approaches to loneliness that may arise in Barcelona.

10. WORK AT THE STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL, TAKING TERRITORY INTO CONSIDERATION

The internal drafting process took place at the same time, to construct the Strategy (strategic work), and to launch the first actions or projects (operational work), based on bilateral meetings with manager's offices, areas, directorates and departments. Thanks to this dual task, the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness came into being with more than 50 actions or projects, some of which are already under way and form part of the Action Plan 2020-2024.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people participated in the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 at different stages of the drafting process. Some contributed their knowledge and technical experience; others their opinions during the comparison meetings and in the form of proposals; others dedicated time to reviewing, correcting and contributing different points of view, which was always enriching.

To all of you, thank you very much, and congratulations for your part.

Coordination, drafting and development of the Strategy

Magda Orozco, Carme Pollina, Sandra Escapa, Joan R. Riera.

Participation and collaboration in the technical work sessions and comparison meetings. Review of the mapping of municipal programmes and services to combat loneliness.

Sergi Amposta, Susana Andrés, Berta Arnáiz, Imma Barbal, Marisa Basco, Jordi Bautista, Joana Bonaterra, Carme Borreguero, Núria Borrut, Adriana Carbi, Susana Closa, Carmen Fernández, Sonia Frías, Inés Garcia, Marisol García, Blanca Gómez, M. Carmen Gómez, Sandra Gutiérrez, Nuria Hernández, Eva Hernando, Mercè Jofra, Albert Julià, Maria Liébana, Rosa López, Glòria Martínez, Carme Maté, Pilar Moros, Mireia Morte, Patricia Nubiola, Marina Oteo, Pilar Pascual, Just Pérez, Felip Pérez, Lidia Pérez, M. José Pérez Oliva, Josefina Pidelaserra, Pilar Ramos, Natàlia Rosetti, Rosa Rubio, Imma Sampé, Àngela Santos, Irina Espriu, Helena Sarasa, Núria Serra, Esther Sesma, Assumpta Soler, Anna Terra, Laura Trujillo, José Ramón Ubieto, Maribel Ujeda, Nuria Valero, Dolores Varela, Núria Ventura, M. Àngels Vila and Ramon Vilà.

Working group for the territorialisation of the Strategy

Virgínia Aira, Pilar Causapié, Blanca Gómez, Pepa Pérez Oliva, Josefina Pidelaserra, Carme Turégano.

Participation and collaboration in the participation and comparison meetings

MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACs)

Advisory Council for the Elderly (CAGG)

Municipal Council for Social Welfare (CMBS)

LGTBI Municipal Council

Barcelona Municipal Immigration Council (CMIB)

District councils for people with disabilities

Barcelona Women's Council

Barcelona Youth Council

Councils and committees for the elderly in the 10 districts

Children's Rights Network

ENTITIES LINKED TO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Community Action for the Protection of the Elderly (FOCAGG-FACPE)
Association of Lifelong Learning Centres for Senior Citizens of Catalonia (AFOPA)
Association of Retired Doctors of Catalonia (AJMC)
Friends of the Elderly
CATNOVA Association
Coordinating Association for Activities for the Elderly (ACA)
Association of Relatives of Alzheimer's Patients of Barcelona (AFAB)
Women's Dialogue Association
Non-Standard Women's Association
Association for the Right to Die with Dignity
Can 70
Cáritas
Bolivian-Catalan Centre
College of Architects of Catalonia (Barcelona)
Official College of Psychology of Catalonia (Women's section)
Official College of Social Work of Catalonia
Association of Political Scientists and Sociologists
Red Cross
Espíritu de Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Spain
Federation of Social Economy Business Associations (DINCAT)
Federation of Senior Citizens Associations of Catalonia (FATEC)
Federation of Catalan Senior Citizens', Women's and Family Organisations (FOCAGG)
ECOM Federation
Mental Health Federation of Catalonia
"La Caixa" Foundation
Enllaç Foundation
FiraGran Foundation
ONCE Foundation
Pere Tarrés Foundation
Private Family and Social Welfare Foundation
Fundesplai
Working Group on Ageing
CMBS Group
Libélulas
Childhood and Adolescence Institute of Barcelona
Observatory Against Homophobia - Volunteering and relationships with the elderly.
PDA Anti-Bullying platform
Union of Retirees and Pensioners of the UGT of Catalonia

Citizens

Olga Aceña, Alek Carr, Paquita Castillo, Mary Luz Eixarch, Pere Grau, Andrej Javornik, Mercè Mas, Belén Masola, Santi Merino, Marifé Molano, Thais Morales, Marta Perich and Eva Zamora

ANNEX 1

Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness (CACs)

Functions of the Scientific Advisory Board to Combat Loneliness

- Provide expert advice to Barcelona City Council on all issues related to loneliness.
- Advise Barcelona City Council on the deployment of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030, in order to achieve the objectives.
- Monitor the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness 2020-2030 on an annual basis.
- Advise Barcelona City Council on elements of diagnosis, research and knowledge on loneliness, through the preparation of reports, opinions and petitions, which will be in the form of recommendations for the municipal government bodies.
- Propose innovative actions, policies and projects to Barcelona City Council, aimed at reducing and preventing loneliness in the city.
- Collaborate, insofar as possible, in the scientific dissemination of information on loneliness at municipal level.

CACS members:

President:

Joan Ramon Riera Alemany

Councillor for Childhood, Youth, the Elderly and People with Disabilities

First Vice-President:

Sara Berbel Sánchez

Municipal Manager

Second Vice-President:

Magda Orozco

Directorate of Services for Children, Young People and Senior Citizens

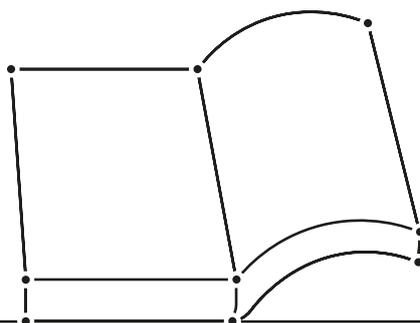
Secretariat:

Sandra Escapa

PhD in Sociology and advisor to the Councillor's Office for Childhood, Youth, the Elderly and People with Disabilities

Carne Pollina

Technician in charge of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness in Barcelona 2020-2030



CACS members:

Jordi Alonso. Professor of Preventive Medicine and Public Health, Pompeu Fabra University (UPF). Director of the Epidemiology and Public Health Programme at the Hospital de Mar Medical Research Institute (IMIM). Expert in mental health epidemiology.

Liliana Arroyo. PhD in Sociology. Lecturer and researcher at the ESADE Institute for Social Innovation. Expert in adolescents, young people and ICTs.

Rocío Calvo. PhD in Social Work. Professor at Boston College (School of Social Work) Director of the Latin Leadership Initiative. Expert in social and cultural factors in the subjective well-being of immigrants.

Ferran Casas. Professor of Social Psychology and Emeritus Professor at the University of Girona (UdG). Expert in children's subjective well-being.

Montserrat Celdrán. PhD in Psychology. Adjunct professor in the Department of Cognition, Development and Educational Psychology at the University of Barcelona (UB). Expert in developmental psychology and loneliness.

Laura Coll-Planas. PhD in Public Health. Head of the Research Area of the Health and Ageing Foundation of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Expert in ageing and loneliness.

Fernando Fantova. PhD in Sociology. Psychologist and social educator. Social consultant expert in the design of public policies and social innovation.

Joan Gené Badia. Doctor of Medicine, practising doctor and specialist in family medicine in the Primary Care Team (EAP) of Barcelona. Associate lecturer at the UB. Expert in detecting loneliness in the elderly and the role of Primary Care.

Eulàlia Hernández. PhD in Psychology. Research lecturer at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). Expert in developmental psychology and ICT.

Elvira Lara. PhD in Psychology. Postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Psychiatry at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). Expert in loneliness and cognitive impairment in the elderly.

Paco López. PhD in Psychology. Lecturer at the Pere Tarrés Faculty of Social Education and Social Work, Ramon Llull University (URL). Expert in community work, resilience and social support.

Francesc Núñez. PhD in Sociology. Lecturer at the UOC and the URL. Expert in the sociology of emotions and online sociability.

Sara Marsillas. PhD in Psychology and postdoctoral researcher in ageing at the Matia Gerontological Institute (San Sebastian). Expert in social relationships of the elderly and loneliness.

Daniel Mòdol. Architect. Lecturer in the Department of Urbanism and Regional Planning at the Barcelona School of Architecture (ETSAB - UPC).

Sara Moreno Colom. PhD in Sociology. Adjunct professor in the Department of Sociology at the UAB. Expert in gender, uses of time, well-being and the labour market.

Víctor Pérez. Doctor of Medicine. Doctor specialising in Psychiatry. Director of the Institute of Neuropsychiatry and Addictions at Hospital del Mar. He leads the CIB-ERSAM (UAB) programme on depression and prevention of suicidal behaviour.

Laura Rico. PhD in Psychology and postdoctoral researcher in Clinical and Health Psychology at the UAM. Expert in ageing, dependency and loneliness.

ANNEX 2

Participating municipal areas

List of district offices, departments and areas with whom bilateral meetings were held during the drafting of the Municipal Strategy Against Loneliness:

Municipal Management

- Executive Committee
- Manager's Office for Territorial and Proximity Coordination
- Municipal Data Office
- Foment de Ciutat, SA
- Directorate of Gender Services and Time Policies

Area of Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminism and LGTBI Affairs

- Directorate for Social Innovation
- Directorate for Health Services
- Directorate for Ageing and Care Services
- Department of Social Participation
- Department of Women's and LGTBI Equality
- Research and Knowledge Department
- Communications Department
- Planning and Processes Department
- Department of Immigration and Refugee Services

Municipal Institute of Social Services (IMSS)

- Manager's Office
- Department of Social Intervention Services
- Department of Social Care for Children and Families
- Department of Urgent and Emergency Social and Intervention Services in Public Spaces

Municipal Institute for Persons with Disabilities (IMPD)

- Manager's Office
- Department for Strategy and Coordination

Safety and Prevention Area

- Management and Executive Team

Area for Ecology and Urban Planning

- Manager's Office
- Steering Committee
- Urban Planning Management
- Directorate of Services for Office of Climate Change and Sustainability

Area for Culture, Education, Science and Community

- Department Community Action Services
- Department of Interculturality and Religious Pluralism

Area for Economics, Resources and Economic Promotion

- Directorate for Internal Communications, Development and Staff Services of the People Management and Organisational Development Department

Area for 2030 Agenda, Digital Transition and Sports

- Department of Animal Welfare Services
- Department of International Relations Services

Barcelona Library Consortium

Barcelona Activa

- Training and Innovation
- Programmes to reduce the digital divide

Barcelona Education Consortium

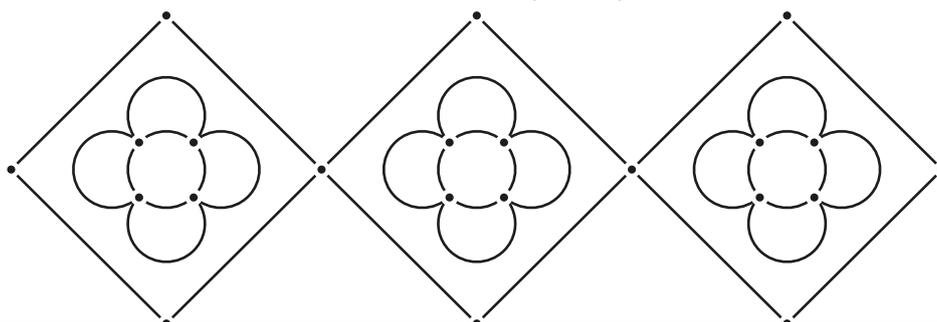
- Data and Research Unit

Councillor's Office for Citizen Rights, Participation and Transparency

- Directorate of Active Democracy and Decentralisation Services

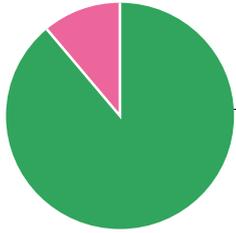
General Services Directorate

- Documentation and Knowledge-Access Service (SEDAC)



ANNEX 3

Main results of the participatory process and the DECIDIM Report

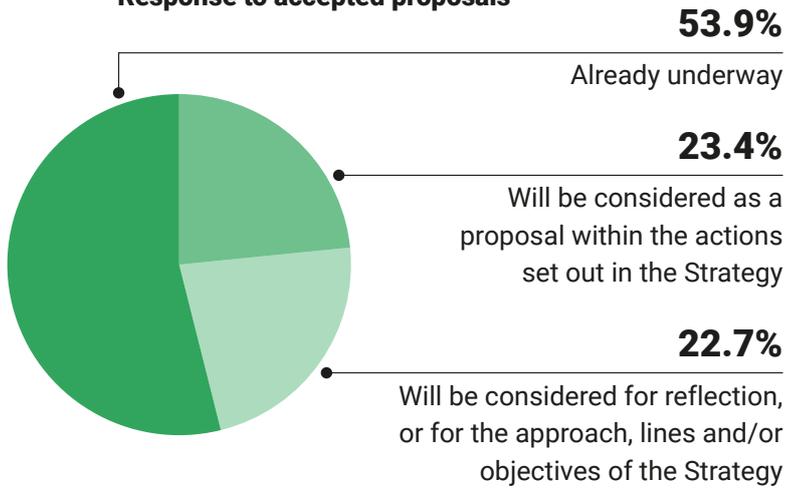


Return

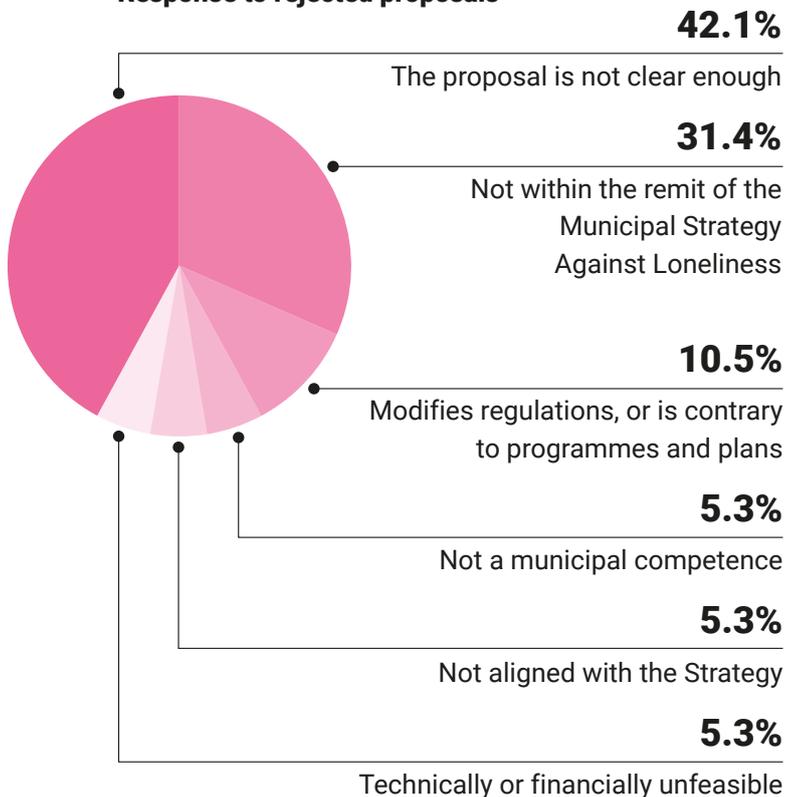
89% Proposals accepted

11% Proposals rejected

Response to accepted proposals



Response to rejected proposals



ANNEX 4

Mapping of municipal programmes and services aimed at alleviating loneliness in Barcelona. 2020

WHAT IS IT?

Mapping is a tool for updating and systematising, for compiling the actions already carried out by Barcelona City Council in the area of loneliness.

WHY WAS THE MAPPING CARRIED OUT?

The main aim of the mapping exercise was to identify all the programmes and services initiated by Barcelona City Council – both at city and district level – as a preliminary step to designing a new Loneliness Strategy. This tool facilitates decision making.

WHEN WAS IT CARRIED OUT?

The mapping was carried out during the first half of 2020, which meant difficulties and a bias in its implementation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first lockdown made face-to-face meetings impossible. The emergency situation made it difficult to convey the objectives and needs of the project as efficiently as possible and to communicate with the relevant people in order to reach a consensus on criteria and indicators, especially in relation to programmes indirectly linked to loneliness.

HOW WAS IT CARRIED OUT?

1. Search, analysis and first selection of the programmes and services of Barcelona City Council whose direct or indirect objective was to alleviate loneliness and social isolation. This was done by analysing documents and municipal websites.
2. Creation of a database with all the information collected and organised on the basis of the following indicators: name of the programme or service, description, organisational unit and other departments involved, scope of action, target population and group.
3. Consultation, analysis, validation, contrast and complementation of the information collected with all municipal departments.
4. Results obtained were presented in the form of a dashboard, an interactive tool that shows the different programmes organised by each of the management units in the territorial area, as well as groups and target population.

WHAT INFORMATION WAS DRAWN FROM EACH PROJECT?

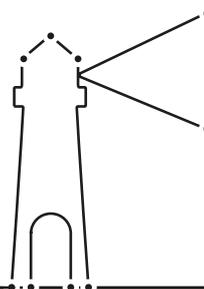
The mapping included programmes and services working directly or indirectly to alleviate loneliness. Most of the projects have indirect objectives, i.e. they were not specifically designed to address loneliness and isolation.

The database includes the name of the programme, service or activity together with a brief description, the organisational unit and/or manager's offices, the scope of action, the target population and the specific target group. Some indicators are listed below:

1. Manager's office in charge: the municipal manager's office in charge of the project.
2. Other manager's offices: other manager's offices involved.
3. Scope of action: the district where the programme takes place; up to a maximum of three districts. If there are more than three districts, it is considered a city-wide action plan.
4. Target population by age: children, adolescents, young people, adults and senior citizens, and the general public. If the project is aimed at more than two groups, it is considered the "general public".
5. Target group by profiles and specific social groups: men or women, LGBTI groups, people with disabilities, migrants, people living on the street, carers, unemployed people, people with mental disorders, people with low levels of education, low income or lack of technological knowledge. The same programme can target a large number of groups or collectives.

HOW MANY PROGRAMMES WERE INCLUDED?

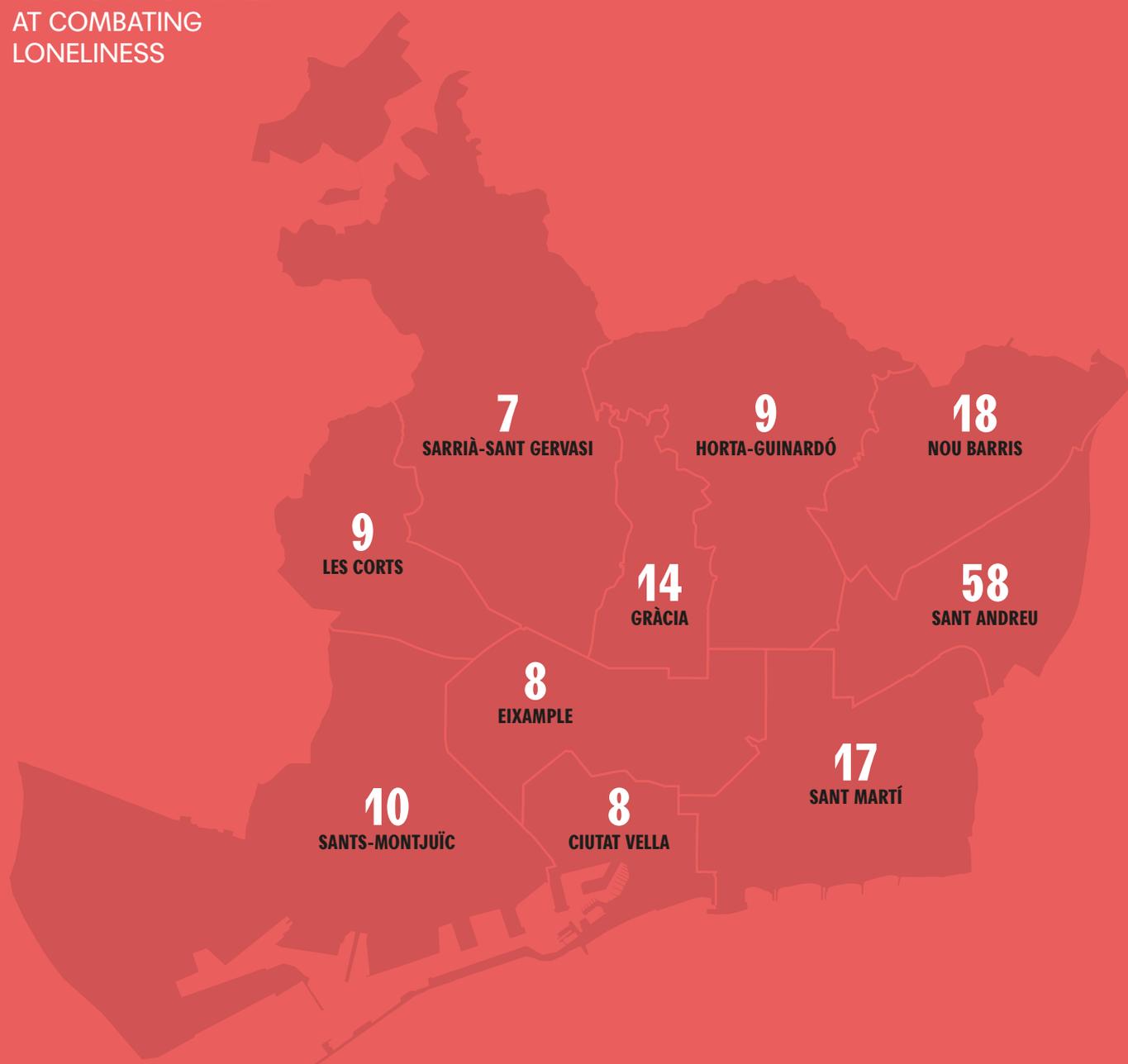
The inventory included a total of 268 programmes. If we added all the actions by district, audience and target groups, the figure would be considerably higher, given that the same programme may be aimed at more than one specific audience or group, or be carried out in more than one district.



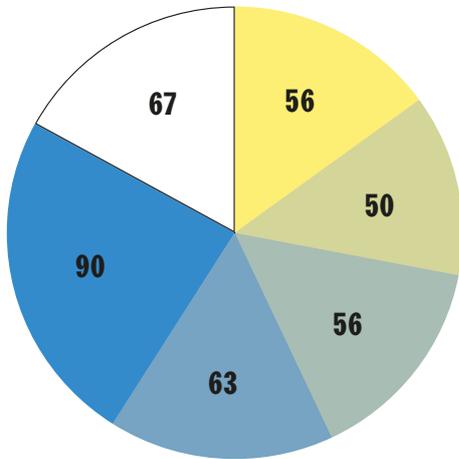
BARCELONA

268

CURRENT MUNICIPAL
PROGRAMMES
AND SERVICES AIMED
AT COMBATING
LONELINESS



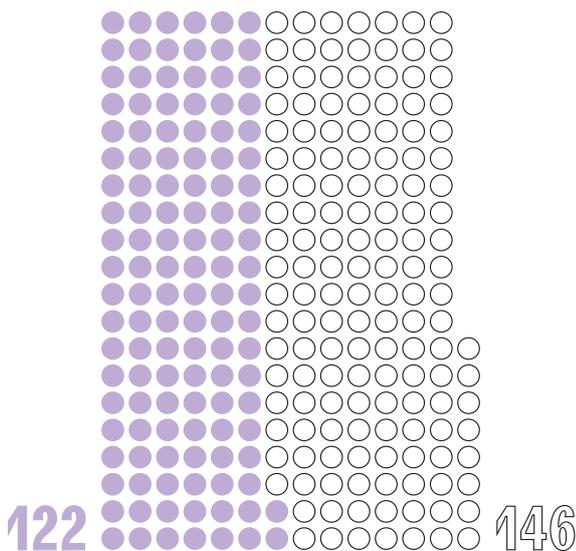
TARGET POPULATION BY AGE



Projects aimed at:

- Children 56 (14.66%)
- Adolescents 50 (13.09%)
- Young people 56 (14.66%)
- Adults 63 (16.49%)
- The elderly (23.56%)
- General public 67 (17.54%)

SPECIFIC TARGET POPULATION



- Projects aimed at specific groups 122 (45.52%)
- Projects not aimed at any specific group 146 (54.48%)

PROJECTS AIMED AT GROUPS IN THE CITY

WOMEN (16.99%)	♀	26
MEN (1.96%)	♂	3
UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE (12.42%)	⚙️	19
PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOME (9.80%)	€↓	15
HOMELESS PEOPLE (0.65%)	🏠	1
PEOPLE WITH A MENTAL DISORDER (5.23%)	🧠+	8
PEOPLE WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY (21.57%)	♿	33
CARERS (7.19%)	👤+	11
STUDENTS (1.31%)	🎓	2
PEOPLE WITH A LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION (1.31%)	📖↓	2
PEOPLE WITH NO TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (3.92%)	📱	6
IMMIGRANTS (15.03%)	🏠➔	23
LGTBI COLLECTIVE (1.96%)	🌈	3

Further information on the Strategy Against Loneliness:

"Barcelona contra la soledat" website

[Barcelona.cat/soledat](https://barcelona.cat/soledat)

- ["Barcelona contra la soledat" newsletter](#)
- [Consell Assessor Científic contra la Soledat \(CACs\)](#)
- [La soledat a Barcelona diagnosis](#)
- [Mesura de govern del procés elaboració de l'Estratègia municipal contra la soledat](#)
- [Observatori de la soledat de Barcelona](#)
- [Serveis, programes i projectes municipals relacionats amb la soledat](#)





**Ajuntament
de Barcelona**