

CREDIT OPINION

2 October 2025

Update



RATINGS

Barcelona, City of

Domicile	Spain
Long Term Rating	A3
Туре	LT Issuer Rating - Fgn Curr
Outlook	Stable

Please see the <u>ratings section</u> at the end of this report for more information. The ratings and outlook shown reflect information as of the publication date.

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City of Barcelona (Spain)

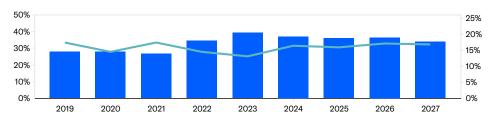
Update following rating upgrade

Summary

The credit quality of the <u>City of Barcelona</u> (A3 stable) reflects the city's robust budgetary management and solid financial fundamentals, supported by a large and diversified economy. These strengths have ensured high self-financing capacity and limited reliance on debt. Due to its self-imposed financial rules, we expect Barcelona to maintain its track record of high operating surpluses — averaging 15% of operating revenue between 2019 and 2024 — and to maintain a low debt burden, projected to be around 34% by year-end 2027. These strengths are balanced by the city's limited fiscal flexibility, a common trait among Spanish local governments.

Exhibit 1
Barcelona's low debt burden and strong operating performance will continue through 2025-27





Note: Debt burden refers to net direct and indirect debt as a percentage of operating revenue. Operating margin refers to the primary operating balance as a percentage of operating revenue.

Sources: City of Barcelona and Moody's Ratings

Credit strengths

- » Robust governance and financial management
- » Strong operating performance
- » Low debt and a very good liquidity profile
- » Large and diversified economy

Credit challenges

» Limited fiscal flexibility

Rating outlook

The stable outlook for Barcelona reflects its capacity to continue strengthening its fiscal positions, posting stronger primary operating balances, better financial results, and lower debt burdens. The outlook also considers Barcelona's operational, economic, and financial linkages to the central government.

Factors that could lead to an upgrade

An upgrade on Barcelona's rating, which is rated on par with the sovereign, would require a similar improvement in the Government of Spain's rating.

Factors that could lead to a downgrade

A downgrade of Spain's rating would likely have similar implications for Barcelona's rating. Factors such as fiscal slippage, rapidly rising debt levels, or the emergence of significant liquidity risks would also put downward pressure on the ratings of Barcelona.

Key indicators

Exhibit 2
City of Barcelona
Year ending 31 December

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025E	2026E	2027E
17.3	14.4	17.3	14.4	13.0	16.3	15.8	17.0	16.7
3.3	3.7	1.2	-1.5	-0.6	1.2	-4.9	-1.8	-1.7
27.7	27.8	26.6	34.3	39.2	36.9	35.9	36.3	33.7
0.7	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.0
16.0	12.1	17.4	18.1	18.8	18.6	21.1	19.2	19.1
20.6	22.9	22.2	21.9	24.9	23.1	23.8	22.2	21.7
	17.3 3.3 27.7 0.7 16.0	17.3 14.4 3.3 3.7 27.7 27.8 0.7 0.5 16.0 12.1	17.3 14.4 17.3 3.3 3.7 1.2 27.7 27.8 26.6 0.7 0.5 0.4 16.0 12.1 17.4	17.3 14.4 17.3 14.4 3.3 3.7 1.2 -1.5 27.7 27.8 26.6 34.3 0.7 0.5 0.4 0.5 16.0 12.1 17.4 18.1	17.3 14.4 17.3 14.4 13.0 3.3 3.7 1.2 -1.5 -0.6 27.7 27.8 26.6 34.3 39.2 0.7 0.5 0.4 0.5 0.9 16.0 12.1 17.4 18.1 18.8	17.3 14.4 17.3 14.4 13.0 16.3 3.3 3.7 1.2 -1.5 -0.6 1.2 27.7 27.8 26.6 34.3 39.2 36.9 0.7 0.5 0.4 0.5 0.9 1.1 16.0 12.1 17.4 18.1 18.8 18.6	17.3 14.4 17.3 14.4 13.0 16.3 15.8 3.3 3.7 1.2 -1.5 -0.6 1.2 -4.9 27.7 27.8 26.6 34.3 39.2 36.9 35.9 0.7 0.5 0.4 0.5 0.9 1.1 1.2 16.0 12.1 17.4 18.1 18.8 18.6 21.1	17.3 14.4 17.3 14.4 13.0 16.3 15.8 17.0 3.3 3.7 1.2 -1.5 -0.6 1.2 -4.9 -1.8 27.7 27.8 26.6 34.3 39.2 36.9 35.9 36.3 0.7 0.5 0.4 0.5 0.9 1.1 1.2 1.2 16.0 12.1 17.4 18.1 18.8 18.6 21.1 19.2

Sources: City of Barcelona and Moody's Ratings

Detailed credit considerations

On 30 September 2025, we upgraded Barcelona's rating to A3 from Baa1 and changed its outlook to stable from positive. The entity's Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) was also upgraded by one notch to a3 from baa1.

The upgrade follows our decision to upgrade the Government of Spain's sovereign ratings to A3 from Baa1 and change its outlook to stable from positive on 26 September 2025. The rating action reflects the strong correlation between the credit profile of Barcelona and the Government of Spain, stemming from their institutional, operational and financial links. The upgrade of Spain's rating translates into reduced systemic risk for Barcelona. Spain's improved economic and fiscal health, indicated by its rating upgrade, suggests increased predictability of state transfers to Barcelona, supporting our expectation that the entity will maintain strong financial fundamentals. Additionally, the upgrade also reflects the entity's intrinsic strengths, such as a very good liquidity profile, with recent positive trends likely to continue over the coming years.

The credit profile of the City of Barcelona, as expressed in its A3 rating, combines its Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) of a3 and a strong likelihood of extraordinary support from the central government if the city faces acute liquidity stress.

Profile

Barcelona is the capital of the region of <u>Catalunya</u> (Ba1 positive) and the second most populous city in Spain, with 1.7 million residents, accounting for around 3.5% of the country's population and nearly 21% of the region's. The city has a diversified, service-oriented economy with strong tourism, commerce, transportation and professional services sectors. Barcelona is responsible for key local functions including urban planning, public transport, housing and social services. It operates within a framework defined by national legislation, with limited fiscal autonomy and significant reliance on intergovernmental transfers.

This publication does not announce a credit rating action. For any credit ratings referenced in this publication, please see the issuer/deal page on https://ratings.moodys.com for the most updated credit rating action information and rating history.

Baseline Credit Assessment

Robust governance and financial management

Barcelona's strong governance and effective management are clearly demonstrated through its prudent budgetary practices, illustrated by the city's commitment to sound financial outcomes, as set out in its Plan de Actuación Municipal. The plan targets operating surpluses exceeding 15% of operating revenue and debt levels below 60% of operating revenue, and ensures prompt payments to suppliers, with an average payment period of 21.7 days in 2024. These fiscal objectives have been pursued despite the Spanish government's suspension of fiscal rules for the entire public sector from 2020 to 2023, a measure intended to alleviate pressure on regional and local economies.

The city's internal controls and financial planning are of high quality, supporting a disciplined and forward-looking fiscal framework. Barcelona also adopts to a conservative approach to managing debt and investments, which helps limit its exposure to market risks. This is complemented by comprehensive financial reporting, which enhances transparency, and supports effective fiscal and debt management.

In addition, Barcelona has been one of the first European cities to integrate climate budgeting. We view climate budgets as a governance and important disclosure tool, providing transparency and accountability in tracking the progress of cities towards their transition goals. This includes developing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventories, planning transition projects and allocating spending on long-term initiatives.

Strong operating performance

Barcelona has a consistent track record of strong financial performance, which was reaffirmed in 2024, when the city's POB reached 16% of operating revenue, up from 13% in 2023. This improvement was supported by a 7% increase in tax revenue and robust year-on-year growth in intergovernmental transfers of 18%, which was slightly above the five-year average. This significant increase in transfers from the central government was mainly due to an exceptionally favourable settlement of the regional funding system for 2022, which was received in 2024 and was around double the amount in a normal year. We expect these resources to normalise in 2025.

Operating expenditure grew more slowly than revenue, increasing by 6.6% in 2024, excluding interest payments. This was mainly due to an 8% rise in spending on goods and services, along with a 6% increase in transfers to the city's public sector. Personnel costs, largely influenced by central government decisions on pay, grew by 5% due to salary increases and the addition of around 182 civil servants in 2024, primarily police officers and firefighters.

Capital spending increased slightly in 2024, reaching €727 million and representing 18% of total expenditure, in line with previous years. This level of investment was fully financed through the city's strong operating performance and capital revenue, resulting in a financing surplus of €44 million, equivalent to 1.2% of operating revenue. This marks a notable improvement from the €20 million deficit recorded in 2023, which represented -0.6% of operating revenue.

Low debt and a very good liquidity profile

Barcelona had a debt burden of 37% as of year-end 2024 (39% in 2023), significantly below the median of 48% for the European cities we rate. We expect this figure to continue to decline and to remain well below the city's self-imposed ceiling of 60% throughout 2025-27. By 2025, we project the debt burden will fall to 36%, and further to 34% by 2027. This decrease is mainly based on expected higher revenue and no recourse to new debt in 2025.

While the city's debt service will remain low, it is projected to increase over the next two years due to higher debt repayments scheduled for 2025 and 2026. We estimate it will average 4% of operating revenue during 2025-27, which is slightly above the 2.8% recorded in 2024.

Barcelona's direct debt increased by around 2% in 2024, while its total indirect debt increased by around 9%. This was mainly due to the increase in debt incurred by the Instituto Municipal de la Vivienda y Rehabillitación de Barcelona (IMHAB), totalling €350 million (€318 million in 2023). The IMHAB is the city's public housing company, which aims to build around 2,500 houses by 2025, of which around 2,000 will be for social renting. Since 2022, the IMHAB has been reclassified by the state's audit agency (IGAE) as a non-self-supporting entity. This reclassification led to an increase in the city's net direct and indirect debt (NDID) ratio in that year. Additionally, the city's debt includes €16 million (equivalent to 1% of operating revenue) from Mercabarna, the local wholesale food market. However, we do not include this in the NDID, as Mercabarna is considered a self-supporting entity.

Barcelona's debt structure is straightforward and entirely euro-denominated. Bank loans account for 93% of the total, with the remainder comprising loans from private lenders, including a sustainable bond. Nearly 58% of the NDID is at variable interest rates. The average maturity decreased slightly to 7.8 years in 2024 from 7.9 in 2023. The city does not have any outstanding guarantees.

The city's liquidity position is very strong, with cash holdings of €869 million as of year-end 2024. This accounts for around 23% of its operating revenue, compared with €847 million, or 25% of operating revenue, a year earlier. The available cash is more than sufficient to cover the €79 million in debt repayments due in 2025. Furthermore, this high level of liquidity covers around 84% of Barcelona's outstanding direct debt, serving as a strong buffer against any unexpected treasury need, which is credit positive. We expect the city's liquidity to remain at a similar level by year-end 2025.

Large and diversified economy

Barcelona is one of the wealthiest cities in Spain. It is the second most populous city in the country, following the city of Madrid (A3 stable). Over the past three years, Barcelona's population has grown at a faster pace than the national average, driven by inward migration. The city hosts a significant foreign population, with 25% of residents being foreign nationals, reflecting Barcelona's strong international appeal and sustained attractiveness.

Barcelona's economy is primarily concentrated in the services sector, with key areas including commerce, transportation, hospitality and professional activities. The city demonstrates specialisation in certain industries, such as information and communication, financial services and advertising. Tourism is a particularly important sector, accounting for around 12% of the city's GDP. It has shown buoyant growth since the pandemic, with the number of nights spent by tourists in the city exceeding pre-pandemic levels by 4.4%. In 2024, Barcelona's airport reached a record 55 million passengers, 10% more than in 2023.

Barcelona's economic growth continued to outpace national growth, with GDP expanding by 3.8% in 2024, compared with 3.2% for Spain, according to the city's Municipal Data Office. The most dynamic sectors were real estate, professional activities and hospitality. The labour market also continued to strengthen, as the registered unemployment rate fell to 7.1% in the first quarter of 2025, well below the national average of 11.5%. At the same time, both the activity rate (83.3%) and the employment rate (77.4%) remained above national levels (75.7% and 67%, respectively).

Limited fiscal flexibility

The City of Barcelona relies primarily on transfers from the central government for its revenue, which accounted for around 49% of its operating revenue in 2024. Additionally, the city has limited flexibility in setting tax rates, as the central government determines the minimum and maximum thresholds. However, the city retains some capacity to increase revenue within the limits set by the central government. It could generate nearly €1.5 billion in additional revenue by applying the maximum allowable rate for property tax (around €2 billion when including all direct taxes) — Barcelona's main local tax, which accounts for about 20% of its operating revenue and around 57% of its total tax revenue. Furthermore, eliminating current fiscal benefits and subsidies could increase the city's tax collection by an estimated €103 million.

On the expenditure side, Barcelona faces significant payroll costs, similar to other Spanish local governments. While municipalities control staffing levels, wage increases are largely determined by decisions made at the national level, leaving municipalities with limited flexibility.

Extraordinary support considerations

Barcelona has a strong likelihood of receiving extraordinary support from the central government, reflecting our assessment of risk to the government's reputation if the city defaults. The central government promotes greater accountability for Spanish municipalities. Barcelona's strategic role in Spain provides the government with an incentive to support the city in the event of need.

ESG considerations

Barcelona, City of's ESG credit impact score is CIS-2

Exhibit 3

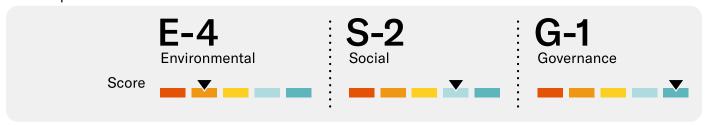
ESG credit impact score



Source: Moody's Ratings

Barcelona's ESG considerations do not have a material impact on the current rating (CIS-2).

Exhibit 4
ESG issuer profile scores



Source: Moody's Ratings

Environmental

Barcelona is highly exposed to environmental risks (**E-4**), mainly concentrated on heat stress, water stress, sea level rise and droughts. While there are some mitigants related to E risks they have limited effect on these risks. As a mitigating factor, the EU Next Generation funds will provide a significant portion of the city's resources for climate change reforms, including investments. Furthermore, the city's environmental responsibilities are limited, as the region of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Government of Spain manage environmental policies within its territory.

Social

Barcelona's exposure to social issues are not material in differentiating credit quality (**S-2**), reflecting high quality health & safety standards and access to basic services. The only category that entails moderate exposure is the housing where the city of Barcelona faces issues mainly related to housing affordability.

Governance

Barcelona's governance profile is captured by a positive G issuer profile score (**G-1**). The city scores well on accountability, regulatory quality and government effectiveness. Barcelona has very robust governance and management, demonstrated by its self-imposed fiscal and financial rules, which are more restrictive than rules under current legislation for local governments in Spain. The city also provides transparent and timely financial reports.

ESG Issuer Profile Scores and Credit Impact Scores for the rated entity/transaction are available on Moodys.com. In order to view the latest scores, please click here to go to the landing page for the entity/transaction on MDC and view the ESG Scores section.

Sub-Sovereign Moody's Ratings

Rating methodology and scorecard factors

The assigned BCA of a3 is in line with the suggested BCA scorecard-indicated outcome of a3.

For details on our rating approach, please refer to Regional and Local Governments rating methodology.

Exhibit 5 Barcelona, City of Regional & Local Governments

Baseline Credit Assessment – Scorecard	Score	Value	Sub-factor Weighting	Sub-factor Score	Factor Weighting	Total
Factor 1: Economy					25%	0.68
Regional Income [1]	0.50	106157.03	15%	0.07	-	
Economic Growth	9.00	baa	5%	0.45		
Economic Diversification	3.00	aa	5%	0.15		
Factor 2: Institutional Framework and						
Governance					30%	1.80
Institutional Framework	9.00	baa	15%	1.35		
Governance	3.00	aa	15%	0.45		
Factor 3: Financial Performance					20%	0.95
Operating Margin [2]	5.14	16.30%	10%	0.51		
Liquidity Ratio [3]	2.66	23.07%	5%	0.13		
Ease of Access to Funding	6.00	a	5%	0.30	-	
Factor 4: Leverage					25%	0.74
Debt Burden [4]	2.77	36.89%	15%	0.42		
Interest Burden [5]	3.29	1.10%	10%	0.33		
Preliminary BCA Scorecard-Indicated						
Outcome (SIO)						(4.17) aa3
Idiosyncratic Notching						0.0
Preliminary BCA SIO After Idiosyncratic						
Notching						(4.17) aa3
Sovereign Rating Threshold						A3
Operating Environment Notching				-		0.0
BCA Scorecard-Indicated Outcome						(7.00) a3
Assigned BCA						a3

^[1] Regional GDP per capita in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, in international dollars

Ratings

Exhibit 6

Category	Moody's Rating
BARCELONA, CITY OF	
Outlook	Stable
Baseline Credit Assessment	a3
Issuer Rating	A3
Source: Moody's Ratings	

^[2] Primary Operating Balance / Operating Revenue

^[3] Cash and Cash Equivalents / Operating Revenue

^[4] Net Direct and Indirect Debt / Operating Revenue

^[5] Interest Payments/ Operating Revenue Source: Moody's Ratings; Fiscal 2024.

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