

METHODOLOGY REPORT FOR SPOKESPERSON SURVEY (NORWAY)

Last updated: May 26, 2026

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About the survey

This survey has been conducted by the Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism (DIPA), Department of Government, University of Bergen (UiB). The survey is part of the research project “[Children’s right to participation](#)” (PARTICIPATION), funded by the Norwegian Research Council (grant number 320149).

The survey has been aimed at spokespersons in the Norwegian child protection system, who are tasked with speaking to and conveying children’s views to judicial decision-makers in the Child Welfare Tribunal. The survey examines spokespersons’ experiences and attitudes regarding their roles and children’s rights.

The data will be used by the DIPA team in a doctoral thesis and scientific publications communicated to national authorities, professionals and educational institutions. The aim is that the results will help ensure good arrangements for spokespersons, children, and other parties.

Data collection

Technical solution

SurveyXact was used to design and conduct the survey. UiB has a license for SurveyXact, and the web-based platform allows for valuable features such as survey experiments and randomization of the order of response alternatives. Invitations to the survey were distributed by email through an integrated system in SurveyXact.

Recruitment

The Child Welfare Tribunal is a partner organization to the PARTICIPATION project and has provided us with lists from each of the twelve Child Welfare Tribunals with contact information to spokespersons. The lists included information about spokespersons’ full names, email addresses, postal code/place, status (active/inactive), total number of cases, and whether a police certificate of conduct has been presented to the Child Welfare Tribunal (yes/no). Some lacked information about their email address, meaning they were not eligible for an invitation to the survey.

The spokesperson lists were sent to us in two rounds. First, on November 26, 2025, the Child Welfare Tribunal provided us with lists of active spokespersons for 2025 (hereinafter, the “first round” of respondents). All the spokespersons on this list have the status “Active”, which means they are currently appointed to the Child Welfare Tribunal’s selection of spokespersons and could be appointed in specific cases. Second, on December 2 and 4, 2025, the Child Welfare Tribunal also provided us with a list of active/inactive spokespersons for the period 2021-2024 (referred to here as the “second round” of respondents), which means they are former spokespersons.

The survey was sent to a total of 691 individuals who were registered on the list with an email address; this applied to 241 individuals from the first round (=35%) and 450 individuals from the second round (=65%), meaning that former spokespersons make up the majority of this total of 691. Because individuals are qualified as spokespersons through work experience, many were registered on the spokesperson list with their work emails. Due to job changes, several email addresses were invalid (approximately 20%), especially those of former spokespersons, which means that they did not receive the survey invitations.

196 completed or partially completed the survey, giving an overall response rate of 28%. 98 respondents were from the first round (giving a response rate of 41% for active/current spokespersons) and 98 from the second round (giving a response rate of 22% for inactive/former spokespersons).

Timing of the survey

Data was collected from November 2025 to January 2026. Data collection began when the survey was sent to respondents on November 28, 2025 (first round) and December 4, 2025 (second round). Four reminders were sent to respondents who had not completed or only partially completed the survey. In the second and subsequent reminders, an unsubscribe link was included at the end of the email to allow invitees to signal their disinterest in participating and to avoid spam. The online questionnaire was closed for responses on January 22, 2026. See Table 1 for an overview of the timing of the survey and reminders.

Table 1 Overview of survey timing

Activity	First round	Second round
Survey sent	November 28, 2025	December 4, 2025
First reminder sent	December 4, 2025	December 10, 2025
Second reminder sent	December 10, 2025	December 17, 2025
Third reminder sent	December 17, 2025	January 7, 2026
Fourth reminder sent	January 7, 2026	January 15, 2026
Survey closed	January 22, 2026	

Questions and question formulation

The survey questions were developed by a group of researchers affiliated with the PARTICIPATION project. The group consisted primarily of Professor Marit Skivenes (principal investigator), PhD candidate Frøydis Lønberg Haarberg (survey coordinator), and Dr Audun Løvlie, with additional input from Dr Hege Helland and Dr Mathea Loen.

All four partner organizations of the PARTICIPATION project (i.e., Bergen municipality, the Child Welfare Tribunal, the District Courts, and the Change Factory) were, per email in April 2024, asked to suggest topics or questions to include in the survey.

The formulation and development of questions and response alternatives took place from Spring 2024 to Fall 2025. All questions were developed in Norwegian, which comprises the master document and forms the basis for translations into English for papers/dissemination.

Experiments

The study included two survey experiments with random assignment of respondents to treatments. Table 2 below shows the survey questions and their experimental design.

Table 2 Overview of experiments in survey

Question number	n treatments	Control	Distribution
Q22	Two: –foster child –child	No	Approx. 50% for each treatment: –foster child: 49.1% (n=84) –child: 50.9% (n=87)
Q23	Two: –5 years old –11 years old	No	Approx. 50% for each treatment: –5 years old: 45.6% (n=77) –11 years old: 54.4% (n=92)

Note. See the full survey question/response alternatives in Table 4.

Replicated questions

Some of the survey questions are replications or based on previous surveys conducted by the DIPA team, for comparative reasons. Table 3 below gives an overview of these questions and their sources.

Table 3 Overview of replicated questions

Question number	Source
Q20	Four country survey (Q23)
Q21	Nordic survey (Q4)
Q23	Nordic survey (Q24-Q25)

Gift cards

Among those who completed the survey, 10 winners were selected, each receiving a 500 NOK gift card for their participation. This was informed about in the email invitations and on the first and last page of the survey, to serve as an incentive to complete the survey. Using a random number generator, 5 winners were selected from the first round of respondents, and 5 from the second round.

Glede was chosen as the provider of the gift cards because their cards can be used nationwide in all parts of Norway and can be sent via email, so we did not need to collect personal data about the winners' home addresses.

Ethical considerations

This survey project has been registered in RETTE, the University of Bergen's system for processing sensitive data, with registration number F4625.

In the survey invitation, respondents were informed about the study: its topic and purpose, and it being part of the PARTICIPATION project, with information about the partner organizations and some links to previous publications on the project. Participants also were given information that participation is voluntary, and that consent to participate is given by answering the questionnaire.

They were further informed that their responses are anonymous and treated strictly confidentially, and that no participants will be identified in publications or dissemination of survey results. The responses are de-identified when data is extracted from the questionnaire for analysis and dissemination. The information collected is archived in secure systems at UiB and DIPA.

Gift cards

An ethical assessment of the gift cards and their amounts concluded that 500 NOK was an acceptable amount to serve as an incentive without putting pressure on respondents to participate.

Survey questions and response alternatives

Table 4 Overview of survey questions and response alternatives in chronological order

Survey question / case scenario (treatments underlined>	Items / statements	Response alternatives
We want to start by asking you some background questions.		
[Q1] How old are you? <i>Drop-down menu with numbers from 18 years to 100 years.</i>		
[Q2] What is your gender?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female -Male -Non-binary -Prefer not to say
[Q3] ^b What education and other types of qualifications do you have? <i>You can select multiple options.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social studies -Child protection -Learning disability nurse -Nurse -Primary school teacher -Middle/secondary school teacher -Kindergarten teacher -Legal studies -Other, please specify
[Q4] How long have you been a spokesperson? <i>Drop-down menu with numbers from 0 years to 15+ years.</i>		
[Q5] Have you received training to take on the role of a spokesperson?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Yes -No
[Q6] Have you had any cases/assignments since you started as a spokesperson?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Yes -No
[Q7] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Approximately how many assignments have you had in total? <i>State the number of assignments. You can only state numbers.</i>		
[Q8] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] How many assignments have you had in the past 12 months? <i>State the number of assignments. You can only state numbers.</i>		
[Q9] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] How many meetings do you usually have with a child you are appointed to? <i>State the number of meetings. You can only state numbers.</i>		

<p>[Q10] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Approximately how much time do you spend per meeting with a child you are appointed to? <i>Drop-down menu.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Under 30 minutes -30 minutes to 1 hour -1 to 1,5 hours -1,5 to 2 hours -2 to 2,5 hours -2,5 to 3 hours -Over 3 hours
<p>[Q11] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Approximately how many pages are the reports you usually write? <i>State the number of pages. You can only state numbers.</i></p>		
<p>[Q12] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] On the whole, do you feel like you are given enough time to complete your assignment in a good/justifiable way?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Too little time -Adequate time -Too much time -Don't know/will not answer
<p>[Q13] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] On the whole, do you feel like you are given enough information to complete your assignment in a good/justifiable way?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Too little information -Adequate information -Too much information -Don't know/will not answer
<p>[Q14] [If not had cases the last 12 months/if 0 on Q8:] Have you had any assignments in the past two years (during 2024–2025)?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Yes -No -Don't remember/will not answer
<p>On the next two pages, we want to ask you questions about a couple of specific situations.</p>		
<p>[Q15]^c In care order cases, children aged 11 can participate in different ways: they can speak with a spokesperson, their own lawyer, an expert, or directly with the decision-makers in the Tribunal. If you can choose only one statement, which statement do you most agree with about giving a child of this age information about different ways of participation?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information about different ways of participation can be withheld from the child -Information about different ways of participation is important to avoid the child making choices that harm them -Information about different ways of participation will support the child in making well-considered choices -Information about different ways of participation does not need to be reviewed with the child, because children can make independent choices
<p>[Q16]^a Please elaborate on why you chose this response option (optional).</p>		
<p>[Q17]^c Imagine the following scenario: The Tribunal is handling a care order case for an 11-year-old child. A spokesperson with extensive experience has been appointed and is speaking with the child. In the conversation, the child</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The spokesperson should deny the child to speak with the decision-makers -The spokesperson should discourage the child from speaking with the decision-makers

<p>expresses a clear wish to speak directly with the decision-makers in the Tribunal. The experienced spokesperson thinks that this could expose the child to additional stress. Although it may be difficult, we here ask you to consider and choose what you most agree should be done in this situation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The spokesperson should explore whether the child has made an informed choice to speak with the decision-makers -The spokesperson should not interfere with the child's choice to speak with the decision-makers
<p>[Q18]^a Please elaborate on why you chose this response option (optional).</p>		
<p>In this section, we want to pose to you some questions where we ask you to disregard your role as a spokesperson and take as a basis your personal assessments.</p>		
<p>[Q19] Rank the following four statements according to how much you personally agree with them, with the statement you agree with the most as number 1. <i>You can hold and drag the boxes up and down.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adults should limit children's decisions about their own lives if it ensures their welfare -Adults should influence children's decisions about their own lives if it ensures their welfare -Adults should inform about which choices children have to support children's decisions about their own lives -Adults should not intervene in children's decisions about their own lives, even if it ensures their welfare
<p>[Q20] The law requires the child protection services to intervene in a family when children are maltreated, but maltreatment can be very difficult to prove and sometimes mistakes are made. Which mistake do you personally think is worse?</p>		<p><i>Couple 1^c</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To mistakenly remove a child from the parents -To mistakenly not remove a child from parents <p><i>Couple 2^c</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To mistakenly implement inhome services -To mistakenly not implement inhome services
<p>[Q21] As you see it, what is the most important reason why children must be heard in cases that concern them?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It helps the adult to make better decisions -It is their life -It is in the best interest of the child to be heard -It is a legally established right -It is important learning for children to be heard -Don't know/will not answer -Other, please specify
<p>[Q22] Based on your personal opinion, how much do you agree</p>	<p>A <u>[foster child/child]</u> of 11 years is usually in poor condition to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strongly disagree

or disagree with the following statements?	distinguish between facts and feelings	-Disagree -Agree
	A [foster child/child] of 11 years is usually in poor condition to understand the consequences of their own actions	-Strongly agree -Don't know/will not answer
	A [foster child/child] of 11 years usually needs to be shielded from risky social relationships	
	A [foster child/child] of 11 years usually tolerates little physical and mental stress	
[Q23] To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about children that are [5 years old/11 years old]?	Children this age usually do not know enough to make important decisions on their own	-Strongly disagree -Disagree -Agree -Strongly agree -Don't know/will not answer
	Children this age usually do not have a good understanding of what their well-being requires	
	Children this age usually know what is important and right for them	
	Children this age usually are able to make their own decisions in important matters concerning themselves	
[Q24] ^c Which of the following four statements do you personally agree with the most? Please select one option.		-The state should prevent people from making choices that make their lives worse -The state should warn people from making choices that make their lives worse -The state should support people's ability to choose for themselves by informing them about how their choices can affect their lives -The state should let people choose for themselves, even if it makes their lives worse
[Q25] Based on your personal opinion, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Adults will usually be guided by reason, not emotion, when making decisions	-Strongly disagree -Disagree -Agree -Strongly agree -Don't know/will not answer
	Adults will usually make well-considered decisions	
Now we want to ask you some questions about spokespersons' meeting with children and the Tribunal.		
[Q26] ^b Considering your tasks as a spokesperson, which age group are you least comfortable with meeting for a conversation? <i>You can choose up to two options.</i>		-Children 0-3 years -Children 4-6 years -Children 7-10 years -Children 11-14 years -None/equally uncomfortable with meeting all the age groups -Don't know/will not answer

<p>[Q27]^b Considering your tasks as a spokesperson, which age group are you most comfortable with meeting for a conversation? <i>You can choose up to two options.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Children 0-3 years -Children 4-6 years -Children 7-10 years -Children 11-14 years -None/equally comfortable with meeting all the age groups -Don't know/will not answer 								
<p>[Q28] In your opinion or experience, how important or unimportant are the following qualities in the work as a spokesperson?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Written presentation skills</td></tr> <tr><td>Oral presentation skills</td></tr> <tr><td>Patience</td></tr> <tr><td>Empathy/personal warmth</td></tr> <tr><td>Skills in communicating with children</td></tr> <tr><td>Knowledge of child development</td></tr> <tr><td>Knowledge of the law and legal processes</td></tr> <tr><td>To convey the child's wishes to the Tribunal as accurately as possible</td></tr> </table>	Written presentation skills	Oral presentation skills	Patience	Empathy/personal warmth	Skills in communicating with children	Knowledge of child development	Knowledge of the law and legal processes	To convey the child's wishes to the Tribunal as accurately as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very unimportant -Unimportant -Important -Very important -Don't know/will not answer
Written presentation skills										
Oral presentation skills										
Patience										
Empathy/personal warmth										
Skills in communicating with children										
Knowledge of child development										
Knowledge of the law and legal processes										
To convey the child's wishes to the Tribunal as accurately as possible										
<p>[Q29]^a Please elaborate if there are any other qualities you believe are important in working as a spokesperson (optional).</p>										
<p>[Q30] How appropriate do you think it is if you, as a spokesperson, fulfill the child's wish in the following scenarios?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>A child wishes to withhold information you deem as relevant to the case</td></tr> <tr><td>A child wishes to withhold information you deem as not relevant to the case</td></tr> <tr><td>A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as relevant to the case</td></tr> <tr><td>A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as not relevant to the case</td></tr> </table>	A child wishes to withhold information you deem as relevant to the case	A child wishes to withhold information you deem as not relevant to the case	A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as relevant to the case	A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as not relevant to the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Never appropriate -Rarely appropriate -Often appropriate -Always appropriate -Don't know/will not answer 				
A child wishes to withhold information you deem as relevant to the case										
A child wishes to withhold information you deem as not relevant to the case										
A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as relevant to the case										
A child wishes to revise something they told you which you deem as not relevant to the case										
<p>[Q31] In your opinion or experience, how well does an 11-year-old child typically understand the following when meeting with a spokesperson?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>A spokesperson's role</td></tr> <tr><td>Who the information will be shared with</td></tr> <tr><td>That the meeting is not confidential</td></tr> <tr><td>That the spokesperson will write a report</td></tr> <tr><td>That the spokesperson has tasks the child does not observe (e.g., to meet in the Tribunal)</td></tr> </table>	A spokesperson's role	Who the information will be shared with	That the meeting is not confidential	That the spokesperson will write a report	That the spokesperson has tasks the child does not observe (e.g., to meet in the Tribunal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very poor -Poor -Good -Very good -Don't know/will not answer 			
A spokesperson's role										
Who the information will be shared with										
That the meeting is not confidential										
That the spokesperson will write a report										
That the spokesperson has tasks the child does not observe (e.g., to meet in the Tribunal)										
<p>[Q32] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Generally speaking, how much do</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>I know what is expected of me</td></tr> <tr><td>I feel prepared to testify</td></tr> </table>	I know what is expected of me	I feel prepared to testify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strongly disagree -Disagree 						
I know what is expected of me										
I feel prepared to testify										

you agree or disagree with the following statements about meeting in the Tribunal?	I get the impression that decision-makers understand my role	-Agree -Strongly agree -Don't know/will not answer
	I get the impression that legal representatives understand my role	-Have never met in the Tribunal
[Q33] ^a [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] If there is anything you would like to elaborate on about the meeting in the Tribunal, you can do so below (optional).		
[Q34] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Have you been in situations where you felt it was necessary to give your own assessment of what was in the child's best interest? If yes, what did you do?		-This has not happened -Wrote it in my report -Mentioned it during my testimony in the Tribunal -Wrote it in my report and mentioned it during my testimony in the Tribunal -Did nothing -Do not remember/will not answer -Other, please specify
[Q35] [If had cases/if yes on Q6:] Do you usually add descriptions of the child in your report – for example about their language capabilities, body language or behavior during the conversation?		-Never -Rarely -Often -Always -Don't know/will not answer
[Q36] How much do you agree or disagree in the following statements about a spokesperson adding descriptions of the child in their reports – for example about their language capabilities, body language or behavior during the conversation?	This is in the child's best interest	-Strongly disagree -Disagree
	This lets the child express themselves more fully	-Agree -Strongly agree
	This gives decision-makers a better picture of the child	-Don't know/will not answer
	This should be avoided as a spokesperson may have misunderstood the child	
	This can be done without informing the child about it	
We will now conclude with a few questions about proposed changes.		
[Q37] ^b If you would like (more) training, which topics would be most useful for you? <i>You can select multiple options.</i>		-Do not want this -How to write reports -How to communicate with children -How to make children feel safe -How to represent specific groups of children (for example younger children, children from ethnic minority backgrounds, children with special needs/diagnoses)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How to assess children's best interests -Legislation/legal processes -Don't know/will not answer -Other, please specify
[Q38] ^b If a system for feedback on written reports were implemented, who would you like to receive feedback from? <i>You can select multiple options.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Do not want this -Decision-makers in the Tribunal -Child protection workers -Children -Children's parents/foster parents -Don't know/will not answer -Others, please specify
<p><i>Note.</i> ^a Optional to answer. ^b Multiple choice. ^c Randomized order of response alternatives.</p>		