



## Article

# Women Mayors in Spain: An Analysis of Gender Differences in the Management and Quality of Information on Municipal Websites

Francisco-Javier Herrero-Gutiérrez <sup>1,\*</sup>, Núria Simelio <sup>2</sup> and Lara Carrascosa Puertas <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology and Communication, Faculty of Social Science, University of Salamanca, 37008 Salamanca, Spain

<sup>2</sup> Department of Journalism and Communication Studies, Autonomous University of Barcelona, 08193 Bellaterra, Spain; nuria.simelio.sola@uab.cat

<sup>3</sup> Department of Communication Sciences, University of La Laguna, 38200 San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Spain; lcarrasc@ull.edu.es

\* Correspondence: javiherrero82@usal.es

**Abstract:** This article analyses the differences in the level of transparency and quality of information on the institutional websites of Spanish councils depending on whether the mayor's office is held by a woman or a man. We focus on 605 Spanish municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants in which women mayors represent 26.3% (n = 159) of the total. The method is based on 52 quantitative indicators divided into two thematic blocks related to municipal transparency and to information for participation. The principal results reveal that municipalities led by women yield better results in terms of compliance with the indicators evaluated, with 50.68%, compared to the municipalities in which the mayor is a man, with 38.13%. In addition, a more detailed analysis reveals how women mayors obtain better results in all groups of indicators: transparency, quality of the information published on municipal websites and tools provided for citizen participation. The study reveals how the increase in elected women has a positive influence on the implementation of policies that allow for more transparent information and communication and that promote greater inclusion of citizens in the public debate.

**Keywords:** women politicians; public communication; web 2.0; citizen participation; local governments



**Citation:** Herrero-Gutiérrez, Francisco-Javier, Núria Simelio, and Lara Carrascosa Puertas. 2021. Women Mayors in Spain: An Analysis of Gender Differences in the Management and Quality of Information on Municipal Websites. *Social Sciences* 10: 128. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10040128>

Academic Editor: Nigel Parton

Received: 16 March 2021

Accepted: 21 March 2021

Published: 1 April 2021

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The first women to become mayors in Spain did so in 1924 during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Berenguer Government, when a number of women connected to the regime were appointed mayors of seven small municipalities of no more than 3300 inhabitants. These were the first steps of political women in municipalities in Spain, where those who were close to the regime also became councillors. The step had been taken in which a municipality was viewed as a “big house” in which the tasks of organization and administration were similar to those of the home, although on a larger scale. The undisputed work of women as managers of domestic issues found an appropriate extension to the municipal sphere (Del Moral 2015).

Once the primitive ideological resistance, which considered that women were not eligible to participate in municipal councils, had been broken and in a context of important social changes, the number of politically active women grew between the first and second Spanish Republics and, moreover, during the Civil War, when men were called up to participate in the armed struggle. Indeed, between 1936 and 1939, there were 64 women mayors in Spain (Gómez-Ferrer 2015). This rise was brought to a halt by the start of the Franco dictatorship, when women were again confined to the role of mother and wife, and they suffered discrimination based on gender, which was reflected in the inability to open

a bank account on their own or to work without the permission of their father or husband (Pérez-Serrano and Rubio 1999).

By 1967, in the late-Franco era, an attempt was made to create an image of openness, and a number of women mayors reappeared but with characteristics similar to those of the Primo de Rivera and Berenguer era: close to the regime and belonging to the Women's Section of the Spanish fascist movement. However, the breaking of more than 30 years without female representation and the institutional sexism in Spanish society of that time meant that the quantitative recovery of women democratically elected as mayors was delayed much longer than desirable. The Law on Effective Equality of Men and Women enacted in 2007 helped increase parity by establishing that at least 40% of the people who appeared on the list of electoral candidates of a political party must be of another gender. Establishing this quota was intended to break the inertia that prevented an equal representation of women in public life and added Spain to the list of the 44 countries that at that time had similar measures to guarantee the representation of women in institutions (Verge 2008). However, in the last local elections, which took place in 2015, only 19.09% of the Spanish municipalities chose a list with a woman as mayor (The Institute of Women), although women were elected mayor in large cities such as Madrid or Barcelona.

### 1.1. Women Politicians and Female Leadership

According to Milda Hedblom (1988), the resistance to the presence of women in political positions exists due mainly to three factors: political socialization, circumstantial and/or structural factors and significant discrimination against women.

In addition, there is no unanimous position vis-à-vis the characteristics of female leadership, which also avoids the error of falling into essentialist positions that identify all political women as one. On this issue in particular, Amelia Valcárcel (2012) laments that women who reach power in any field represent their entire gender, while men enjoy individuality with respect to their successes or failures. Therefore, some researchers speak of acculturation of the first female leaders, who had to copy the male model in the absence of their own models (García De León 1994). Others emphasize that women behave differently from male leaders: "The general idea is that women politicians are more compassionate, ethical and cooperative than men, have a participatory style and give great value to interpersonal communication and teamwork" (Ruiloba 2013, p. 148). Additionally, there are even those who consider that beliefs about gender status in meaningful contexts of power, such as politics, create implicit expectations about women's behaviour, which affects their actions as leaders (Ridgeway 2001). Indeed, a study on Spanish women mayors revealed that they are more willing to apply policies with greater gender sensitivity in aspects such as "long-term care support for families, pre-schooling, or work and family life balancing services" (Carozzi and Gago 2017). At the same time, the municipal political sphere seems to be one of the spaces in which it is more possible to discuss genuine aspects of feminist discourse (Lachover 2012).

It is clear, however, that more variables than gender should be taken into account in order to analyse the effect of sociodemographic aspects on political decisions favourable to the gender perspective. Thus, a study on women politicians in India revealed that while women legislators from lower castes applied policies with more gender sensitivity, this did not happen with high-caste women legislators, who did not differ from men in terms of "women-friendly" policies (Clots-Figueras 2011). The political party and aspects such as gender sensitivity are variables that should also be taken into account.

In Spain, there are 1550 women mayors, and only one in five of the top local political leaders are women, which confirms the strong resistance to incorporating women into positions of power (Navarro and Sanz 2018). This resistance is termed the glass ceiling and refers to the invisible barrier that many women find themselves fighting against in order to reach the highest positions of power in various organizations (Chisholm-Burns et al. 2017; Matus-López and Gallego-Morón 2015). The presence of women leaders in politics who make decisions is relevant, since it shapes the perception of women as

people competent to exercise power, contrary to what happens when they are underrepresented (Karpowitz et al. 2012). In fact, some researchers argue that the perpetual scarcity of women at elite levels suppresses ambition, because potential women candidates lack role models (Sweet-Cushman 2016; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2009; Mansbridge 1999).

Regarding the EU mayoresses, the average is just 15.4%. Iceland is the country with the biggest numbers of mayoresses (36.1%); meanwhile, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Czech Republic have the lowest figures (4.2%, both of them) (EIGE 2019).

### 1.2. Transparency, Quality of Information and Accountability

In 2015, 1550 Spanish women mayors took office in a historic period in which the effects were still evident of the economic crisis that began in August 2007 as a consequence of the collapse of subprime mortgages in the United States and which affected many countries, including Spain (Carrascosa 2014). The fulfilment of public deficit objectives may have affected the investment and spending policies of municipalities, including those of transparency and accountability through municipal websites.

However, the subsequent disaffection towards the Spanish political class caused by the multiple cases of corruption, which were broadcast in the media, resulted in access to information being considered a fundamental element in the prevention of fraud and control of public administrations (Montesinos 2017). Indeed, the concept of accountability is defined as “the permanent obligation of governors to inform their representatives of the acts they carry out on citizens’ behalf”, meaning responsibility, not only in the moral sense “but in the social-legal sense of being responsible to someone for something” (Ojeda and López 2016).

Regarding transparency, Andrés Betancor (2017, p. 141) considers that it alludes to the fact that an authority must be transparent in the eyes of citizens. This means that everything it does is information accessible by any interested person. Transparency is the route or channel for citizen control of the exercise by the authorities of the functions legally attributed to them.

Michael Johnson specifies that transparency “is widely seen as integral to a variety of political goals, including corruption control, fair financing of election campaigns, enhancing democracy in existing institutions such as the European Union, consolidating democracy in transitional societies and limiting international conflict”. Hence, Hollyver et al. (2011, p. 194) consider that “a transparent political regimen is ones that provides accurate information about itself, its operation, and the country as a whole [ . . . ]”. In this regard, Manuel Rodríguez (2017, p. 286) points out that transparency, due to the greater degree of public exposure that it entails, encourages the observance of greater diligence in the destination and application of public resources by those responsible and by authorities, with the consequent translation in terms of medium- and long-term savings.

Along this line, Law 19/2013 on Transparency and Good Governance of Spain imposes the obligation for public administrations to publish, on their websites, periodically and updated, the information whose knowledge is important to guarantee the transparency of their activity related to the operation and control of public action. Moreover, Section 4 of Article 5 requires that the publication of said information must be carried out in a clear, structured and understandable manner for interested parties (Alonso 2014, p. 71).

Frederick Schauer (2014, p. 87) emphasizes this last aspect, considering that “a positive concept of transparency could support the efforts intended to also make information easily usable and not simply available”.

All the relevant data that must be published are included in the 52 indicators used in this study, in which the variable “gender” is also considered in the holder of the mayor’s office and that referring to the political party. The degree of compliance with these indicators reflects the degree of transparency and accountability of municipal websites—in other words, the attention and resources used to ensure that information is available to citizens as a first step in achieving citizen participation. In addition, this study focuses on municipals, since “the city is the natural environment of the idea of good governance. The exercise

of this collective activity that we understand as ‘political’ has, in the municipality, the social space in which to test the true functioning of our political-administrative framework” (Cuenca 2017, p. 413).

It is evident that “although citizens cannot be forced to take an interest in or participate in the processes of educating the will, information can be offered and in this way the communication threshold can be lowered” (Sommermann 2010, p. 24). Indeed, some authors believe that through institutional transparency, citizens are no longer mere recipients of public action but rather have become authentic protagonists “through the co-generation of information and redesign, and through these, of public policies”. Citizens “demand ‘real transparency’, not simply ‘official transparency’, which, when translated into the public sphere, means making appearances disappear, i.e., not ‘to appear transparent’ but ‘to be transparent’, as a core ‘virtue’ of the holders and managers of public power” (Mellado 2017, p. 23), through the publication of information that must also be complete and intelligible (Moreno Sardà et al. 2013; Simelio et al. 2019). Additionally, and perhaps even more so, when referring to the local setting, where citizens may show more interest at specific moments.

Opacity in politics no longer has a place. In recent years and increasingly often, citizens want to know what happens in their city regarding the management of resources. Citizens look for information and, among many other questions, they want to know what elected politicians do (Herrero-Gutiérrez et al. 2017, p. 422), which is the result of the weakening that many governments have suffered in terms of transparency in recent years (Villoria and Jiménez 2012).

Regarding the effects of women politicians and transparency, despite the fact that there are few empirical studies on this issue, it is worth mentioning another study on women politicians in Spanish councils, which reveals that they have a positive influence on the level of transparent information (Ferraz and Tejedo-Romero 2016). In this article, we aim to determine whether there are differences in the levels of transparency and quality of information on the websites of Spanish municipalities depending on whether the mayor’s office is held by a woman or a man.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this article, we present the results of a study in which we start with two basic questions:

- (1) What information do the institutional websites of Spanish city councils provide regarding transparency, citizen participation and good information?
- (2) What difference is there in the quality and transparency of this information in relation to whether the mayor’s office is held by a woman or a man?

To answer these questions, 52 indicators were formulated and organised into two large groups that focused on the information provided by the city council websites regarding the council and citizen participation: transparency for the council and information for participation. Table 1 shows the 52 indicators used.

**Table 1.** Indicators.

1	Is basic information about the mayor or mayoress provided: name and surname, photo and political party?
2	Is basic information provided about the mayor or mayoress: biography and/or cv?
3	Is basic information provided about the representatives that form part of the government: name and surname, photo and political party?
4	Is basic information provided about the representatives that are part of the government: biography and/or cv?

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

5	Is basic information provided about the representatives who do not form part of the government: name and surnames, photo and political party?
6	Is basic information provided about the representatives who do not form part of the government: biography and/or cv?
7	Are the salaries (monthly and/or annual) of the political representatives published?
8	Are statements of activities and assets of elected officials published?
9	Is the mayor's institutional agenda published?
10	Are the contact details of government members published on the website (email and/or Twitter account and/or Facebook and/or website and/or phone number, etc.)?
11	Are the contact details of members of the opposition published on the website (email and/or Twitter account and/or Facebook and/or website and/or phone number, etc.)?
12	Is information provided on the composition of the governing bodies: plenary session, government board and/or informative commissions?
13	Is information provided on the competences and work schedule of these governing bodies?
14	Is the complete organisation chart published with the names and surnames of the persons responsible and their functions?
15	Are the announcements of the municipal plenary sessions published with the day's orders prior to the assembly?
16	Are the minutes of the municipal plenary sessions published?
17	Are the full agreements of the governing board and/or the full minutes published when the governing board acts in full delegation?
18	Is information provided about accountability?
19	Is information provided on the Municipal Urban Development Plan (MUDP), General Plan (GP) or other urban planning regulations as well as their specific modifications?
20	Are municipal ordinances published?
21	Is the budget published by the municipality for the current year and of the autonomous bodies and dependent entities, if any?
22	Is information published on the quarterly execution of the current year's budget?
23	Are the budgetary modifications carried out published?
24	Is information published in compliance with the objectives of budgetary stability and financial sustainability and/or level of indebtedness?
25	Is the settlement of the budgets of previous years and/or the general account published?
26	Is the list of jobs of the municipal and the salaries of the city council workforce and officials published according to the categories?
27	Is the list and the salaries of the directors and the positions of trust published, their functions and their cv?
28	Are municipal job vacancies and the development and results of public tenders published?
29	Is the general inventory of the municipal's assets published?
30	Are all formalised contracts, major and minor, published?
31	Are the bids in progress and the composition of the contract awarding committees published?
32	Are the minutes of the contract awarding committees published?
33	Are the amendments to the formalised contracts and their extensions, cancelled bids and advanced resolutions published?
34	Is the complete list of suppliers, bidders and/or contractors and the financial amount published?

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

35	Is the average payment period to suppliers published?
36	Are the subsidies granted, the respective tenders and resolutions published?
37	Are the signed agreements published, specifying the parties, their purpose and the economic obligations that may arise, if any?
38	Are the costs and characteristics of institutional advertising campaigns published in the media?
39	Is news, information and/or opinions published on the actions of the members of the government related to the management of the government?
40	Is news, information and/or opinions published on the actions of members of the opposition and/or political groups related to the control of government management?
41	Is news published on the development of the plenary sessions, the motions presented by the different political groups, debates and agreements?
42	Is historical information published about the municipality?
43	Is information provided on the status of the municipality: data on the municipal area, the registered population and social diversity and economic and cultural activities?
44	Is an agenda of municipality and citizen activities provided on the website?
45	Are the contact details of the person responsible for the press, information and/or communication of the municipality published?
46	Is information provided on the website about the regulation of citizen participation or other regulations in this regard?
47	Is information provided on the website about other mechanisms or entities of participation: territorial councils, city councils, sectoral councils, etc.?
48	Are the minutes of the meetings of the other mechanisms or entities of participation mentioned in indicator 47 published?
49	Is the directory of entities and associations of the municipal and/or the register of stakeholders, if any, available on the website?
50	Are consultation and/or participation tools on current topics of local interest provided on the website?
51	Is the list of services provided (Service Charter) and commitments to the public offered on the website?
52	Are tools provided on the website to evaluate services and to present complaints or suggestions regarding their operation?

The indicators have only two possible answers: yes and no. An indicator is positively scored if the web page contains information about which we are enquiring or when it refers to participation tools if they correspond to the usefulness established. The information or tools should be easily accessible to non-experts, if possible, within a maximum of 3 clicks; if this limit is exceeded, the information is considered to be difficult to access or not sufficiently visible.

The evaluation of the websites described in this article was carried out between February and November 2018 based on a manual coding guide; for an indicator to be positively valued, the three following criteria were considered: that the information was up-to-date, that it could be accessed in no more than three clicks and its location on the website. A person from the research team was responsible for quality control to confirm that all the indicators were analysed following the same criteria.

Once the analysis was completed, the results were sent to the technical and political managers of the municipalities analysed so that they could compare the data. Based on their feedback, the results were reviewed again if necessary. This guarantees the validity and reliability of the methodology.

In addition, to perform a multivariate analysis, the number of inhabitants of the municipality, the gender of the mayor, the autonomous community and the political party that governs the municipality were also collected from each web page analysed. The results presented in this article were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 program. These are presented in the form of tables showing the number of references and percentages to optimize the space of this article.

The sample consists of a total of 605 municipalities of more than 10,000 inhabitants. Of these, 73.7% have a mayor (446 mayors), while 26.3% are governed by mayoresses (159 women in total). Among the different autonomous communities that form part of the sample, the Region of Murcia has the largest number of women mayors (38.7%), while Aragón has the least, with 15.4% (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Mayors/mayoresses by autonomous community.

		Autonomous Communities									Total
		Andalusia	Aragon	Canary Islands	Catalonia	Community of Valencia	Galicia	Madrid, Community of	Murcia	Basque Country	
Male	Count	117	11	34	82	71	44	38	19	30	446
	% of Autonomous Communities	76.0%	84.6%	81.0%	67.8%	73.2%	81.5%	74.5%	61.3%	71.4%	73.7%
Female	Count	37	2	8	39	26	10	13	12	12	159
	% of Autonomous Communities	24.0%	15.4%	19.0%	32.2%	26.8%	18.5%	25.5%	38.7%	28.6%	26.3%
Total	Count	154	13	42	121	97	54	51	31	42	605
	% of Autonomous Communities	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

### 3. Results

In the analysis of the compliance of indicators in relation to the gender of the mayor, the first global result is that the municipalities led by women exhibit better results, with 50.68% compliance, compared to the municipalities in which the mayor is a man, which showed only 38.13% compliance. As can be seen, this difference is very significant.

In a more detailed analysis of the indicators divided into subgroups (Table 3), women mayors also obtain better results in all groups of indicators, whether in relation to transparency, good information or the tools they provide for citizen participation. It should be noted that aspects related to the management of economic resources show the greatest percentage difference in favour of women mayors.

**Table 3.** Degree of compliance of indicators by sub-group cross-referenced with the gender of the mayor variable.

Gender	Value Percentage	Who Are the Political Representatives? (11 Items)	How Are Collective Resources Managed? (9 Items)	How Are Economic Resources Managed: Budgets, Salaries, Hiring, Subsidies, etc.? (18 Items)	What Information Is Provided about the Municipality and the Management of Collective Resources? (7 Items)	What Tools Are Provided for Citizen Participation? (7 Items)	Total
Male	Absolute mean value	5.35	4.87	6.27	3.69	2.52	4.54
	Percentage	48.64%	54.11%	34.84%	52.72%	36%	38.13%
Female	Absolute mean value	6.01	5.26	7.72	3.93	2.89	5.16
	Percentage	54.63%	58.44%	42.89%	56.14%	41.29%	50.68

Considering all the indicators at the four levels of compliance (from 0 to 25%, from 26 to 50%, from 51 to 75% and from 76 to 100%), city councils headed by a woman achieve greater transparency (Table 4). Moreover, the number of city councils governed by women and showing greater than 75% of total compliance in terms of transparency are double those of councils headed by a man.

**Table 4.** Degree of compliance of global indicators cross-referenced with the gender variable.

Grouped percentages			Gender of Mayor		Total
			Male	Female	Hombre
From 0 to 25%	Count		93	34	127
	%		20.9%	21.4%	21.0%
From 26 to 50%	Count		220	63	283
	%		49.3%	39.6%	46.8%
From 51 to 75%	Count		92	31	123
	%		20.6%	19.5%	20.3%
From 76 to 100%	Count		41	31	72
	%		9.2%	19.5%	11.9%
Total	Total count		446	159	605
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

If we also take into account the number of inhabitants of the municipalities (Table 5) in the two ranges, namely 10,001 to 50,000 inhabitants and more than 50,000, we can see that the municipalities with more inhabitants and headed by a mayoress obtain better results. In addition, in city councils of populations of more than 50,000 inhabitants and referring to the highest degree of compliance (between 76 and 100%), the group of municipalities run by women mayors exceeds the group governed by men by more than 14 percentage points.

**Table 5.** Degree of compliance of indicators by municipality.

Grouped Inhabitants			Gender		Total	
			Male	Female		
From 10,001 to 50,000 inhabitants	Degree of compliance	From 0 to 25%	Count	91	34	125
		%		25.1%	26.8%	25.6%
		From 26 to 50%	Count	193	54	247
		%		53.3%	42.5%	50.5%
		From 51 to 75%	Count	53	19	72
		%		14.6%	15.0%	14.7%
		From 76 to 100%	Count	25	20	45
		%		6.9%	15.7%	9.2%
		Total	Total count	362	127	489
		% total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
More than 50,000 inhabitants	Degree of compliance	From 0 to 25%	Count	2	0	2
		%		2.4%	0.0%	1.7%
		From 26 to 50%	Count	27	9	36
		%		32.1%	28.1%	31.0%
		From 51 to 75%	Count	39	12	51
		%		46.4%	37.5%	44.0%
		From 76 to 100%	Count	16	11	27
		%		19.0%	34.4%	23.3%
		Total	Total count	84	32	116
		% total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Finally, in the following Table 6, we can see the 10 indicators of the 52 used in which women mayors obtain better results compared to the men who hold the mayor's office.

**Table 6.** Indicators with a greater percentage difference of compliance of indicators by women mayors compared to male mayors.

Indicator	Percentage Compliance Male Mayor	Percentage Compliance Female Mayor	Percentage Difference
Is the complete organisation chart published with the names and surnames of the persons responsible and their functions?	19.30%	35.80%	16.50%
Is the mayor's institutional agenda published?	30.30%	46.50%	16.20%
Is the complete list of suppliers, bidders and/or contractors and the financial amount published?	11.20%	25.80%	14.60%
Are the salaries (monthly and/or annual) of the political representatives published?	30.00%	42.10%	12.10%
Is information published on compliance with the objectives of budgetary stability and financial sustainability and/or level of indebtedness?	21.50%	33.30%	11.80%
Are consultation and/or participation tools on current topics of local interest provided on the website?	35.40%	47.20%	11.80%
Is the list and the salaries of the directors and the positions of trust published, their functions and their cv?	15.20%	27%	11.80%
Is the list of jobs of the municipality and the salaries of the city council workforce and officials published according to the categories?	13.20%	24.50%	11.30%
Is information published on the quarterly execution of the current year's budget?	20.20%	31.40%	11.20%
Are the costs and characteristics of institutional advertising campaigns published in the media?	11.20%	21.40%	10.20%

On analysing these results, we can see that the indicators showing a greater percentage difference between women and men are indicators with a low level of total compliance, and therefore, some of those that politicians are more reluctant to publish on their municipal websites. We can see that women attempt to demonstrate a higher level of transparency in aspects relating to their elected, trusted and technical positions and their functions, agendas and salaries. Moreover, budgetary and supplier-related aspects also stand out, as well as whether they provide tools for citizen participation.

Another very important aspect is that in just six of the 52 indicators, male mayors obtain better results than women, i.e., in only 11.53% of the total. In addition, the percentage differences in these cases are very insignificant, with all below 1% except for the indicator on whether news and information about the actions of the members of the government are published on the website, in which male mayors achieve a compliance of 88.80% and women mayors, 86.80%. It is notable that the indicator most related to the publication of more positive and propagandistic aspects of the mayor's office is the only one in which men slightly outscore women mayors.

#### 4. Conclusions

The main contribution of this article is the finding that from the analysis of the extracted data, we can conclude that women mayors observe the Law of Transparency

and Good Government more rigorously and carry out actions aimed at the observance of this law and at including citizens in the public debate and in accountability, even in those indicators that generally achieve a lower compliance percentage. In those cases, in which women are the highest representatives of the most populated municipalities and, therefore, with the greatest economic resources, the difference is double those headed by men. In this sense, we confirm [Ruiloba \(2013\)](#) and [Carozzi and Gago \(2017\)](#)'s results that state that women act differently in leadership and have a greater sensitivity in relation to aspects of citizen participation. It should be noted that the person who holds the mayor's office is the one that makes the decisions relating to policies on transparency and information about government management and is also the person that chooses the technicians and policymakers who work in this area in the city council. The findings showing that women exhibit greater efficiency in promoting and safeguarding the laws of transparency expands and confirms the results of the research carried out by [Ferraz and Tejedó-Romero \(2016\)](#) on political women and transparency in Spain and can be attributed to the different socialization of women and men, which leaves the latter free but encourages the former to comply with the laws established at each moment.

At the same time, the municipal political sphere seems to be one of the spaces in which it is more possible to discuss genuine aspects of feminist discourse ([Lachover 2012](#)). This is related to what [Cuenca \(2017\)](#) defines as the "natural environment of the idea of good governance" (p. 413).

It is also important to note that other studies, which our study corroborates, show that an increase in elected women has a positive influence on both the direction and priority of social policies ([Ruiloba 2013](#)). Thus, women politicians are perceived as more hard-working and more dedicated to citizens, in contrast to male politicians, who are usually more concerned with internal aspects related to the party ([Norris 1996](#)). This hypothesis is reinforced by our study, especially when we take into account the indicators in which women mayors show a greater positive percentage difference with respect to men. Thus, the women mayors of the Spanish municipalities analysed demonstrate much more responsibility than men when publishing aspects such as their institutional agenda (16.20% difference) and greater transparency, especially in the economic and budgetary aspects of municipal management. We also highlight the fact that women mayors provide, in 11.80% more cases, tools for citizen participation on their institutional websites. This confirms other studies such as that of [Ross et al. \(2015\)](#), who demonstrated that New Zealand women parliamentarians used social media more than their male counterparts. In the same vein, other studies show that women politicians also exhibit a greater ability and availability than men to interact and engage with citizens on social networks ([Yarchi and Samuel-Azran 2018](#)).

However, although data such as Transparency International's 2017 report did not indicate a great difference in relation to the degree of transparency among the municipalities led by women (90.3%) and men (80.4%) ([García-Santamaría and Matallana 2017](#)), our study provides new data that concur with that of [Ferraz and Tejedó-Romero \(2016\)](#) in that it does show an important difference in the level of transparency and good information of women mayors with respect to men. Therefore, this is an aspect that should be further studied in order to analyse its causes and repercussions. Taking into account that the results must be put into context with aspects such as those announced in our theoretical framework that indicate that we cannot take women as a homogeneous whole as a reference ([Valcárcel 2012](#)).

On the other hand, and although the difference is not significantly large, the fact that men show greater compliance in the indicators on positive aspects of the mayor also says a lot about socialization and what [Valcárcel \(2012\)](#) ironically refers to as "the vote of humility" that women with political responsibilities have to fulfil. This is related to the lack of political ambition of women suppressed by the scarcity of role models as is stated by several authors ([Sweet-Cushman 2016](#); [Campbell and Wolbrecht 2009](#); [Mansbridge 1999](#)). Additionally, these same women are focused on in the media, where they are commonly more invisible

than men (O'Neill et al. 2016), while at the same time being much more severely judged on issues such as the physical image that politically successful women should have and how they should behave and talk (García-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012).

In this regard, we believe that studies such as the one presented here are needed in order to help break the perception that political men are more effective in their political management. It is also necessary to resolve the fact that women, despite being more transformative and efficient, have less self-confidence and are less satisfied with their leadership compared to men (Tucker et al. 1999). However, although the public perception of women politicians is ambivalent (Park and Baek 2019), other studies have shown that women politicians are considered and perceived by the public as being less corrupt than men (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019). This perception is confirmed by reality, as shown by the study by Amy Alexander and Bågenholm (2018), who demonstrated that women politicians show greater concern about corruption, despite rarely being in positions of sufficient power to influence these policies directly. For this reason and as our study demonstrates, the local area can be a space where women politicians can lead these efforts aimed at achieving greater levels of transparency and where citizens can report back more easily, something that could lead to a reduction in corruption.

In general terms, the data show us that there is a greater awareness of the concept of “transparency” and good information in municipalities governed by women than in those run by men, with considerably high percentage differences in some cases. However, in both cases, city councils still have room to manoeuvre in terms of improving their level of information available to citizens. Finally, this study shows that new research is needed that takes into account the various sociodemographic variables that influence the application of transparency and the quality of information on institutional websites by policymakers from an intersectional perspective.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; methodology, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; software, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; validation, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; formal analysis, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; investigation, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; resources, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; data curation, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; writing—original draft preparation, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; writing—review and editing, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; visualization, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; supervision, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; project administration, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P.; funding acquisition, F.-J.H.-G., N.S. and L.C.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This work was supported by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain and the European Regional Development Fund under Grant CSO2015-64568-R MINECO/FEDER.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Alexander, Amy, and Andreas Bågenholm. 2018. Does Gender Matter? Female Politicians' Engagement in Anti-corruption Efforts. In *Gender and Corruption. Political Corruption and Governance*. Edited by Helena Stensöta and Lena Wängnerud. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 171–89.
- Alonso, Jesús. 2014. El principio de transparencia como elemento vertebrador del Estado Social y Democrático de Derecho. In *Por el derecho y la libertad*. Edited by José Eugenio Soriano. Libro Homenaje al Profesor Juan Alfonso Santamaría Pastor. Madrid: Iustel, pp. 47–82.
- Barnes, Tiffany D., and Emily Beaulieu. 2019. Women Politicians, Institutions, and Perceptions of Corruption. *Comparative Political Studies* 52: 134–67. [CrossRef]
- Betancor, Andrés. 2017. Transparencia y buen gobierno. In *Las Reformas Administrativas de la Crisis*. Edited by Mariano López-Benítez, Jesús Ángel Fuentetaja and Sonia Rodríguez-Campos. Navarra: Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, pp. 135–74.
- Campbell, David E., and Christina Wolbrecht. 2009. See Jane run: Women politicians as role models for adolescents. *Journal of Politics* 68: 233–47. [CrossRef]

- Carozzi, Felipe, and Andrés Gago. 2017. *Female Mayors and Gender Policies in a Developed Country*. Madrid: MIMEO.
- Carrascosa, Lara. 2014. *Cómo la prensa nos cuenta la crisis*. Islas Canarias: Ediciones Densura.
- Chisholm-Burns, Marie A., Christina A. Spivey, Tracy Hagemann, and Michelle A. Josephon. 2017. Women in leadership and the bewildering glass ceiling. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy* 74: 312–24. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Clots-Figueras, Irma. 2011. Women in politics: Evidence from the Indian States. *Journal of Public Economics* 95: 664–90. [CrossRef]
- Cuenca, José Javier. 2017. La transparencia activa y su proyección sobre el empleo público local: Especial referencia a la comunitat valenciana. In *Constitución, política y administración*. Edited by Joaquín Martín-Cubas. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, pp. 413–28.
- Del Moral, Marta. 2015. Debates en torno a la inclusión de mujeres en la gestión local. In *Mujeres en los Gobiernos locales. Alcaldesas y concejalas en la España contemporánea*. Edited by Gloria Nielfa. Madrid: Biblioteca nueva, pp. 23–40.
- EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality). 2019. Gender Statistic Database. Available online: <https://eige.europa.eu/> (accessed on 26 January 2020).
- Ferraz, Joaquín, and Francisca Tejedo-Romero. 2016. Women's Political Representation and Transparency in Local Governance. *Local Government Studies* 42: 885–906.
- García De León, María Antonia. 1994. *Élites discriminadas (sobre el poder las mujeres)*, 1st ed. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- García-Blanco, Iñaki, and Karen Wahl-Jorgensen. 2012. The Discursive Construction of Women Politicians in the European Press. *Feminist Media Studies* 12: 422–41. [CrossRef]
- García-Santamaría, José Vicente, and Jesús Marín Matallana. 2017. Municipal transparency in Spain: Analysis of the most influential factors. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 72: 1148–64.
- Gómez-Ferrer, Guadalupe. 2015. Las pioneras en la gestión local: Concejalas y alcaldesas designadas durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera y el Gobierno de Beranguer (1924–1930). In *Mujeres en los Gobiernos Locales*. Edited by Gloria Nielfa. Alcaldesas y concejalas en la España contemporánea. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, pp. 41–71.
- Hedblom, Milda K. 1988. *Women and Power in American Politics*. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- Herrero-Gutiérrez, Francisco-Javier, Fernando Martínez-Vallvey, Alejandro Tapia-Frade, Pablo Rey-García, and Francisco Cabezuolo-Lorenzo. 2017. Transparencia en el sector público a través de salas de prensa online. Gestión de recursos colectivos y su información en webs municipales. *El profesional de la información* 26: 421–29. [CrossRef]
- Hollyver, Jamens, Peter Rosendorff, and Raymond Vreeland. 2011. Democracy and transparency. *The Journal of Politics* 73: 1191–205. [CrossRef]
- Karpowitz, Christopher F., Tali Mendelberg, and Lee Shaker. 2012. Gender Inequality in Deliberative Participation. *American Political Science Review* 106: 533–47. [CrossRef]
- Lachover, Einat. 2012. Just Being a Woman Isn't Enough Any More. *Feminist Media Studies* 12: 442–58. [CrossRef]
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. 'Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'. *Journal of Politics* 61: 628–57. [CrossRef]
- Matus-López, Mauricio, and Nazareth Gallego-Morón. 2015. Techo de cristal en la Universidad. Si no lo veo no lo creo. *Revista complutense de educación* 26: 611–26. [CrossRef]
- Mellado, Lorenzo. 2017. *El principio de la transparencia integral en la contratación del sector público*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.
- Montesinos, Carmen. 2017. Corrupción y transparencia en España: Diagnóstico a la luz de las directrices del Consejo de Europa y la Unión Europea. In *Corrupción pública y privada en el Estado de Derecho*. Edited by Joan Queralt and Dulce María Santana. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, pp. 79–98.
- Moreno Sardà, Amparo, Pedro Molina Rodríguez-Navas, and Marta Corcoy Rius. 2013. La información de las administraciones públicas locales. Las webs de los ayuntamientos de Cataluña. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 68: 502–28.
- Navarro, Carmen, and Alberto Sanz. 2018. The social base and career development of Spanish mayors. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* 46: 21–48. [CrossRef]
- Norris, Pippa. 1996. Women politicians: Transforming Westminster? *Parliamentary Affairs* 49: 89–102. [CrossRef]
- O'Neill, Deirdre, Heather Savigny, and Victoria Cann. 2016. Women politicians in the UK press: Not seen and not heard? *Feminist Media Studies* 16: 293–307. [CrossRef]
- Ojeda, José, and Tamara López. 2016. La institucionalización democrática de los partidos políticos: La transparencia un camino. In *El camino de la Transparencia*. Edited by José Ojeda and José Antonio Meyer. Democracia y ciudadanía. Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, pp. 245–60.
- Park, Sun Young, and Young Min Baek. 2019. Citizens' Ambivalence toward Female Politicians: Why Ambivalence Matters for Gender Equality in a Democracy. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 40: 309–29.
- Pérez-Serrano, Mar, and Teresa Rubio. 1999. Cambios legislativos. In *Españolas en la Transición*. Edited by Asociación Mujeres en la transición. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, pp. 127–62.
- Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2001. Gender, Status, and Leadership. *Journal of Social Issues* 57: 637–55. [CrossRef]
- Rodríguez, Manuel. 2017. Derechos fundamentales y organización de la transparencia. In *Las Reformas Administrativas de la Crisis*. Edited by Mariano López-Benítez, Jesús Ángel Fuentetaja and Sonia Rodríguez-Campos. Navarra: Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, pp. 285–96.
- Ross, Karen, Susan Fountaine, and Margie Comrie. 2015. Facing up to Facebook: Politicians, publics and the social media(ted) turn in New Zealand. *Media, Culture & Society* 37: 251–69.
- Ruiloba, Juana María. 2013. Liderazgo político y género en el siglo XXI. *Entramado* 9: 142–55.

- Schauer, Frederick. 2014. Transparencia en tres dimensiones. *Revista de Derecho* 27: 81–103. [CrossRef]
- Simelio, Núria, Xavier Ginesta, Jordi de San Eugenio Vela, and Marta Corcoy. 2019. Journalism, transparency and citizen participation: A methodological tool to evaluate information published on municipal websites. *Information, Communication & Society* 22: 369–85.
- Sommermann, Karl P. 2010. La exigencia de una administración transparente en la perspectiva de los principios de democracia y del Estado de derecho. In *Derecho administrativo de la información y administración transparente*. Edited by Ricardo García-Macho. Madrid: Marcial Pons, pp. 11–25.
- Sweet-Cushman, Jennie. 2016. Gender, risk assessment, and political ambition. *Politics and the Life Sciences* 35. [CrossRef]
- The Institute of Women. 2015. Available online: <https://www.inmujer.gob.es/MujerCifras/PoderDecisiones/PoderTomaDecisiones.htm> (accessed on 16 March 2021).
- Tucker, Mary, Anne M. McCarthy, and M. Colleen Jones. 1999. Women and men politicians: Are some of the best leaders dissatisfied? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 20: 285–90.
- Valcárcel, Amelia. 2012. *La política de las mujeres*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.
- Verge, Tània. 2008. Cuotas voluntarias y legales en España. La paridad a examen. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Reis)* 123: 123–50.
- Villoria, Manuel, and Fernando Jiménez. 2012. La corrupción en España (2004–2010): Datos, percepción y efectos. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Reis)* 138: 109–34. [CrossRef]
- Yarchi, Moran, and Tal Samuel-Azran. 2018. Women politicians are more engaging: Male versus female politicians' ability to generate users' engagement on social media during an election campaign. *Information, Communication & Society* 21: 978–95.