

Transparency in the Andalusian elections of 2022. Analysis and evaluation of the websites of political parties in electoral campaigns

La transparencia en las elecciones andaluzas de 2022. Análisis y valoración de las páginas web de los partidos políticos en campaña electoral



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Abstract:

The websites of political parties become a particularly active tool during electoral campaigns. The main objective of this work is to evaluate the transparency of the websites of the six main Andalusian parties –PSOE, Partido Popular, Ciudadanos, Adelante Andalucía, VOX and Unidas Podemos– during the 2022 electoral precampaign. The methodology of this research was divided into two phases: (1) descriptive analysis of the official websites using SimilarWeb; (2) content analysis to determine these platforms’ transparency index. The obtained results reveal that there is no relationship between the web transparency of Andalusian political parties and the vote. The left-wing parties are the most transparent on their web portals; however, during the elections of 2022 and 2018, they decreased their representation in the Andalusian Parliament. In addition, it is paradoxical that no party has thus far adapted its website to people with disabilities even though social inclusion –within the framework of the 2030 Agenda– remains one of their electoral promises.

Keywords:

Electoral campaign; political communication; Andalusian elections; political parties; transparency.

Resumen:

Las páginas web de los partidos políticos se convierten en una herramienta especialmente activa en los comicios electorales. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es evaluar la transparencia de las páginas web de las seis principales formaciones andaluzas –PSOE, Partido Popular, Ciudadanos, Adelante Andalucía, VOX y Unidas Podemos– en la precampaña electoral de 2022. La metodología de esta investigación se dividió en dos fases: un análisis descriptivo de las páginas web, con SimilarWeb, y un análisis de contenido para evaluar el índice de transparencia. Los resultados obtenidos revelan que no existe relación entre la transparencia web de los partidos políticos andaluces y el voto. Los partidos de izquierdas son los más transparentes en sus portales web; pero en las elecciones de 2022 y de 2018, disminuyeron su representación en el Parlamento Andaluz. Además, resulta paradójico que ningún partido tenga adaptada su página web a personas con discapacidad, a pesar de que la inclusión social –en el marco de la Agenda 2030– es una de sus promesas electorales.

Palabras clave:

Campaña electoral; comunicación política; elecciones andaluzas; partidos políticos; transparencia.

1. Introduction

Transparency is an essential factor in today’s democratic processes. However, despite the approval of transparency and good governance laws, public opinion continues to reflect a lack of commitment from institutions and political actors in matters of transparency, honesty and integrity (Cabezuelo-Lorenzo and Manfredi Sánchez, 2016; Gutiérrez Brito et al., 2022; Pérez-Escolar and Noguera-Vivo, 2022). This citizen impetus is especially evident on social networks (Justel-Vázquez et al., 2018; Pérez-Gabaldó and Nicasio-Varea, 2022). Profiles such as @JaimeObregon on Twitter, for example, demonstrate this. Taking advantage of his programming knowledge, Jaime Obregón denounces the lack of transparency on the websites of autonomous governments –his battle with the Cantabrian government website has been especially popular on the internet– creating tutorials to explain how to download and use databases and raises proposals for improvement to make all administrative processes on the internet more accessible and transparent.

Cases of political corruption (Gavara de Cara, 2022) do not contribute to a better image of leaders or political groups (Fernández, 2022a). In its latest study from June 2022, the Sociological Research Center (CIS) reveals that although the economic crisis continues to be the main problem that worries Spaniards (45%), there are other issues that also alarm them, such as “the problems with politicians in general” (20.2%), “the bad behaviour of politicians” (12.3%), “the government and specific political parties” (11.9%) and “corruption and fraud” (6.6%).

Figure 1. Results of the CIS barometer on the main problems that exist in Spain
What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? And the second one? And the third?
(SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE) (MULTIRESPONSE)

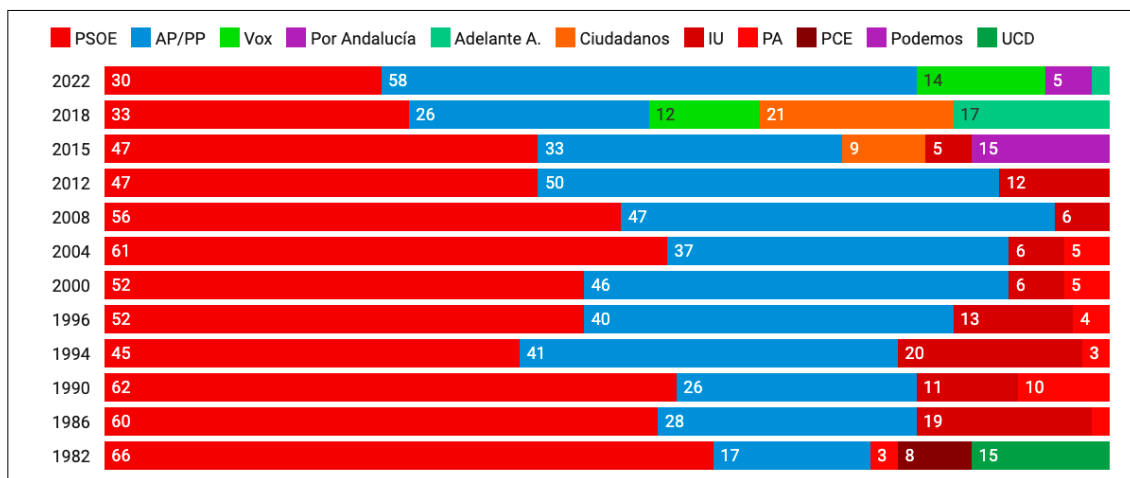
	Principal problem	Second problem	Third problem	TOTAL
The economic crisis, economic problems	22,5	15,9	6,6	45,0
Unemployment	16,6	12,9	6,2	35,8
Health care	2,5	9,4	9,1	20,9
Problems with politicians in general	11,3	5,2	3,7	20,2
The bad behaviour of politicians	6,7	3,2	2,4	12,3
The government and specific parties or politicians	8,8	2,1	1,0	11,9
Education	1,4	2,7	4,9	9,0
Problems related to the quality of employment	2,7	3,7	2,5	8,9
Corruption and fraud	2,8	2,3	1,5	6,6
Social problems	0,8	2,4	2,3	5,5

Source: Sociological Research Center (2022)

These citizen concerns take on special relevance in times of electoral campaigns (Herrero-Gutiérrez et al. 2017; Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021). The Andalusian elections of 2018 have been the subject in numerous studies due to their predictive nature for the political trends that may arise in the next national elections in Spain (Trujillo and Montabes-Pereira, 2019). An example of this is the emergence of VOX on the electoral scene and the consequent political alliances created to articulate a coalition government among the PP, Ciudadanos and VOX. This triangulation has been repeated, in fact, in other autonomous communities.

Similarly, the Andalusian elections of 2018 already reflected a significant loss in hegemony of the PSOE: with Susana Díaz at the head of the party in Andalusia, the Socialists won 33 seats –the worst result for them to that moment, as the party had obtained 14 seats less than in previous elections– and, although theirs was the political party with the most seats, they did not achieve the absolute majority needed to govern. For the first time in 40 years, the Socialists were not at the head of the Andalusian Government. In their place, a coalition government was forged among the right-wing parties including the PP and Ciudadanos with the support of VOX. Although the same did not happen in the 2019 national elections, the recent Andalusian elections of 2022 continued the trend established in the 2018 elections.

Figure 2. Composition of the Andalusian Parliament from the 1982 elections to 2022



Source: RTVE data¹

The PSOE Andalucía party –with Juan Espadas as candidate– has worsened its electoral results compared to 2018. With just 30 seats –losing 3 seats compared to the previous elections– the Socialists obtained the worst results in the history of Andalusia. On the other hand, for the first time, PP Andalucía not only obtained better results than PSOE Andalucía but also achieved an absolute majority with 58 seats. This has positioned, for the second consecutive year, Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla at the head of the autonomous government of Andalusia.

On the other hand, the complete disappearance of the Andalusian Ciudadanos party is especially striking. After it entered the Andalusian Parliament in 2015 with 9 seats, this party improved its results in 2018 –it obtained 21 seats– but, as shown in the 2019 national elections, the Ciudadanos party has been losing strength; in the Andalusian case, it currently has no parliamentary representation. This fact caused the immediate resignation of Juan Marín, leader of the party at the regional level. Although in a less dramatic way, but equally worrying, the Adelante Andalucía party –with Teresa Rodríguez as the leader at the regional level– also lost parliamentary representation in the 2022 elections: regarding the 17 it had in 2018, it now has only 2 seats, that is, it has lost a total of 15 seats.

On the other hand, the VOX Parlamento de Andalucía, which obtained, for the first time, parliamentary representation in the 2018 elections –with a total of 12 seats– won 2 more seats in the elections of 2022 and currently has a total of 14 seats. Finally,

¹ <https://cutt.ly/MLt2V5T>

although the Podemos party obtained 15 seats in the 2015 elections, it disappeared from the Andalusian Parliament following the 2018 elections; now, under the new brand of United Podemos for Andalusia, it has achieved a representation of 5 seats.

The present investigation is framed by this fluctuating political panorama. Following studies such as Cabezuelo-Lorenzo et al. (2016), Larrondo-Ureta (2016) and Díez-Garrido et al. (2019), the websites of political parties have become an especially active tool during electoral campaigns. For this reason, the main objective of this work is to evaluate the transparency of the websites of Andalusian parties at the time of an electoral campaign. These results could serve as indicators of the level of trust that they provide to public opinion, as well as the degree of information or misinformation they convey to voters. In addition, although there is no causal relationship, this study also aims to show to what extent its results could be associated with the electoral results of the 2022 elections.

2. Transparency and good governance on the websites of political parties

Transparency helps overcome the asymmetry of information that exists between the government and the population. According to Matheus and Janssen (2020), in a generalized way, people who belong to political parties or work in government processes tend to have more information about political activities than the general public. In the words of Etzioni (2018), “transparency has traditionally been considered absolutely and indisputably a ‘good’ by public intellectuals and academics in liberal democratic societies” (p. 180). In this sense, in a democratic system, where it is assumed that the government must be accessible and open, transparency is considered essential for citizens to be continuously informed and thus favours democratic participation (Matheus and Janssen, 2020; Díez-Garrido, 2020). However, transparency is also a subjective concept, and on occasion, as Etzioni (2018) argues, it can collide with some individual rights, such as privacy, national security, or the internal deliberations of citizens.

The international economic crisis of 2008 delegitimized governments and public administrations and introduced the need to consolidate the channels or procedures for ensuring and guaranteeing transparency between government agencies and citizens. Hence, a consequence of this was Spain’s adherence to the Open Government Alliance –*Open Government*– and the Alliance for the Council of Europe, Law 19/2013 on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Government (LTBG). This law seeks to promote the discourse on good governance, democratic regeneration, the fight against administrative corruption and for the accessibility of public information (Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021; Borge, Brugué and Dueñas-Cid, 2022) and even the creation of civil organizations that ensure noncorruption through proposals and their own follow-up and monitoring systems.

The constant renewal of information technologies improves the flow of communication between the government and its main stakeholders, which, in this case, are citizens and companies. In this way, it is possible to favour good governance practices in society, enabling more effective communication flows and better access, interactivity and exchange of information among the different publics involved. Moreover, various democratic governments are already betting on the ability of the media and social networks to increase transparency and citizen participation (King and Youngblood, 2016; Justel-Vázquez et al., 2018) because in these spaces the population becomes a producer and transmitter of content or messages thanks to their conversations and digital discussion forums (Castillo-Díaz and Castillo-Esparcia, 2021). Given their role in informed decision-making, social

media platforms are transformed into tools that help mitigate the loss of credibility in politics –mainly caused by corruption– and restore trust in the government (Etzioni, 2018; Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021).

Consequently, it is essential to guarantee transparency on government or political party web portals because these platforms serve as an information outlet for citizens. Akin to looking or leaning out a window –referring to the metaphor of window theory– citizens access the contents of these web portals to learn about dynamics and political processes. However, continuing with the allegory of the window, citizens can only see a part of the reality that surrounds them: websites only show a part of reality, in the same way that a window only allows a view of a miniscule portion of what happens in the outside world. In this context, it is essential that political actors ensure that their parties' web portals offer relevant and fully transparent information, even if partially, to comply with the fundamental principles of good governance (Matheus and Janssen, 2020, p. 523).

Therefore, authors such as King and Youngblood (2016) argue that to verify that the criteria of good governance and transparency are effectively respected on a digital platform, it is essential to analyse the “usability” and “accessibility” thereof. Specifically, “usability” can be measured with three techniques: (1) attracting users to interact with a website; (2), looking for the presence of specific types of content; and (3) using design heuristics. On the other hand, “accessibility” is a metric that evaluates the facilities that a website offers to users with disabilities –e.g., cognitive, vision, hearing, speech or mobility problems. From an integrated perspective, technological development should favour accessibility and usability, generate greater opportunities for access and citizen participation in the political process, and provide more detailed, transparent and quality information on democratic processes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives and main research questions

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the transparency of the websites of the main political parties involved in the elections to the Parlamento de Andalucía on June 19, 2022. As previous research has shown (Cabezuelo-Lorenzo and Manfredi Sánchez, 2016; Cabezuelo-Lorenzo et al., 2016; Larrondo-Ureta, 2016; Díez-Garrido et al., 2019), the websites of political parties have become an especially active tool during electoral campaigns. For this reason, it is useful to examine the transparency of the websites of the Andalusian parties during the above electoral campaign because these results could serve as indicators of the level of trust that they provide to public opinion as well as the degree of information or misinformation (Martínez-Martínez, 2019) that they transmit to the voters.

To fulfil the main objective of this study, this work is articulated according to the following research questions:

- PI1. Which Andalusian political party shows the best levels of activity and engagement on its website?
- PI2. What Andalusian political party offers the best channels for contact with public opinion on its website?
- PI3. Which Andalusian political party best shows corporate and organizational information on its website?
- PI4. Which Andalusian political party best presents information on the electoral campaign on its website?
- PI5. What Andalusian political party maintains the best dialogue with citizens through its website?

PI6. Which Andalusian political party best meets transparency requirements on its website?

PI7. What Andalusian political party obtains, in global terms, the worst results in terms of transparency on its website?

3.2. *Sample*

The sample in this study is made up of a total of n = 6 web portals, which correspond to the following six Andalusian political parties:

- PSOE Andalucía².
- Partido Popular andaluz³.
- Ciudadanos Andalucía⁴.
- Adelante Andalucía⁵.
- VOX Parlamento de Andalucía⁶.
- Unidas Podemos por Andalucía⁷.

The adopted selection and inclusion criteria for determining the characteristics of the sample address two specific questions. On the one hand, PSOE Andalucía, Partido Popular andaluz, Ciudadanos Andalucía, Adelante Andalucía and VOX Parlamento de Andalucía are the only five political parties that had obtained parliamentary representation –seats– in the previous elections of 2018. On the other hand, Unidos Podemos por Andalucía was also selected because, as revealed by polls and vote estimation barometers –as seen in Figure 3– this party had a chance of winning a seat in the regional elections in 2022.

2 <https://www.psoeandalucia.com/>

3 <https://ppandalucia.es/>

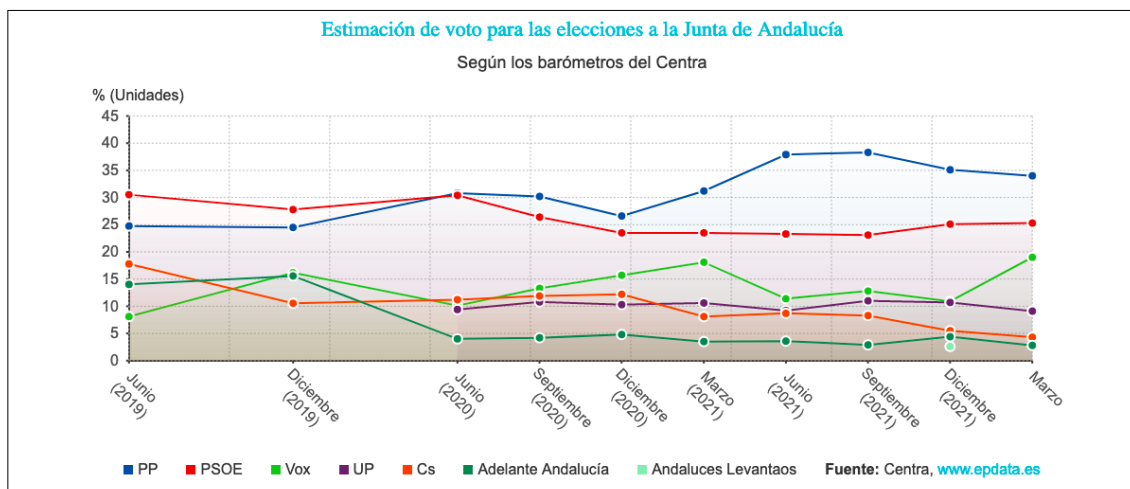
4 <http://parlamento-andalucia.ciudadanos-cs.org/>

5 <https://adelanteandalucia.org/>

6 <https://cutt.ly/iH06bTJ>

7 <https://andalucia.podemos.info/>

Figure 3. Vote estimate for the elections to the Junta de Andalucía



Source: Epdata⁸

3.3. Method

The research methodology consisted of two phases: (1) descriptive analysis of the focal websites and (2) content analysis to determine the transparency index of these platforms. The data collection was carried out on June 1, 2022, because this coincided with the fifteen days of the electoral campaign in Andalusia.

In the first stage, the SimilarWeb tool was used for descriptive analysis of the selected websites. In line with previous studies, such as Codina (2019) or Hernández-Conde and Fernández García (2019), the adopted metrics in SimilarWeb allowed, on the one hand, analysis of the performance of the websites of the six parties of the Andalusian politicians who make up the study sample and, on the other hand, monitoring the behaviour and traffic of users on these pages.

In the second phase, we performed quantitative content analysis of the websites of the 6 Andalusian political parties selected in the sample. For this, the tool proposed by Dader et al. (2011) and subsequently used in recent studies, such as those of Díez-Garrido et al. (2019), was used to determine, with precision, the transparency index of the websites of these political parties. This tool, which captures the different facets of transparency on the websites of the selected political parties, consists of a total of 5 dimensions, evaluated via 49 specific items, namely:

⁸ <https://cutt.ly/3HKNLtV>

- *Dimension 1: Basic organizational identification and contact channels.* This level assesses whether political parties publish enough information about their contact channels for citizens to communicate with the party or politicians. In addition, it evaluates whether basic data are displayed, such as the organization chart of the party, or essential elements are included, such as a search engine to help a user navigate the site more comfortably. Therefore, this dimension is composed of the following 10 items:
 - 1.1. Existence of a general directory of electronic and telephone contacts of agencies and secretariats.
 - 1.2. Mention of the postal and telephone data of the regional main physical headquarters.
 - 1.3. Organizational chart of the positions in the executive or autonomous directorate and governing bodies with competencies.
 - 1.4. Electronic contact addresses of each member of the main regional executive group.
 - 1.5. Electronic contact addresses of other senior officials –party politicians with high responsibilities as campaign managers or relevant sections.
 - 1.6. General contact email address.
 - 1.7. Address and telephone number of the communication office.
 - 1.8. Other contact email addresses for specialized sections of the website.
 - 1.9. Presence of a hit counter.
 - 1.10. Internal search engine for identifying the leaders in sections of the organization chart, their addresses or their biographies.
- *Dimension 2: Organizational identification of responsibility and procedures.* This dimension assesses the quality, precision, depth and level of detail of the information published on the websites of the political parties relevant to public opinion, such as “the history of the party, the codes of good practices, the information on affiliates” (Díez-Garrido et al., 2019, p. 95). Therefore, this dimension is composed of the following 19 items:
 - 2.11. History of the party.
 - 2.12. Synthetic declaration of ideological values of the party.
 - 2.13. Party statutes.
 - 2.14. Code of good practices, good governance and resolution of internal conflicts.
 - 2.15. History of internal conflict resolution.
 - 2.16. Number of members/members of the party.
 - 2.17. Biographical-professional profiles of the members of the autonomous executive group of the party, with photographs.
 - 2.18. Identification of the main territorial leaders of the party –provincial and local delegations.
 - 2.19. Specific managers in thematic areas on the website –second level below the organization chart of the general directorate.

2.20. Names and profiles of the elected national and regional deputies and senators.

2.21. Salaries of the members of the regional executive of the party.

2.22. Assets declaration of the leaders of the group.

2.23. Declaration of interests and professional activities of the group leaders.

2.24. Financial balance of the previous year: report of expenses and income.

2.25. Management report for the last year.

2.26. Breakdown of current loans granted or forgiven.

2.27. Final report of the Court of Auditors on any audited accounts concerning general activity.

2.28. Synthesis of the main parliamentary activity of the previous legislature—a list of the proposals/bills put forwards by the parliamentary group.

2.29. Identification of the web content management team.

- *Dimension 3: Transparency about campaign activity.* This dimension measures whether “the political parties have shared with the users enough information related to the electoral campaign” (Díez-Garrido et al., 2019, p. 96), e.g., electoral lists, the total budget of the campaign or the campaign agenda. Therefore, this dimension is composed of the following 7 items:

3.30. Complete electoral lists, by constituency.

3.31. Biographical identification details of at least the heads of the electoral list, by constituency.

3.32. Campaign budget.

3.33. Collections obtained through campaign donations.

3.34. Identification of the members of the campaign management team.

3.35. Identification of the main agencies and external consultants hired for the campaign.

3.36. Latest report from the Court of Auditors on audited accounts for the previous campaign.

- *Dimension 4: Transparency of dialogue with citizens.* This dimension assesses whether there are facilities for citizens to interact with either the website itself –when the option is offered, for example, to download the electoral program– or the other users thereof –e.g., the possibility of posting on a board or engaging with a discussion forum. Therefore, this dimension is composed of the following 9 items:

4.37. Board of expression for questions or opinions of citizens.

4.38. Other section(s) for debate among citizens on the website itself –apart from associated blogs.

4.39. Downloadable general electoral program.

4.40. Number of downloads of the electoral program.

4.41. Synthetic electoral program –document of main proposals.

4.42. Electoral program accessible via hyperlinks and analytical entries.

- 4.43. Mention of the internal process of elaboration of the program.
- 4.44. Mention and detail of the internal processes of other means of participation for supporters in the development of slogans, campaign videos or other forms of prioritizing topics in discussions of the campaign.
- *Dimension 5: Openness of computer instruments.* This dimension determines the level of accessibility and usability of the websites of the political parties, following King and Youngblood (2016). Therefore, this dimension is composed of the following 4 items:
 - 5.45. Accessibility of documents through free/open-source software.
 - 5.46. Downloadable files without the need for specific commercial plugins.
 - 5.47. Statistical files presented in reusable formats.
 - 5.48. Accessibility for people with disabilities.
 - 5.49. Accessibility via mobile devices.

To carry out this measurement, a coding scale was designed with a range from 1 to 4 (Figure 4), inspired by the weighting in Dader et al. (2011), to determine each of the items and dimensions with this tool.

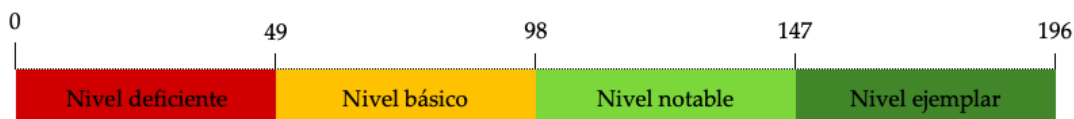
Figure 4. Coding correction key

RANK	CORRECTION KEY
1	No appearance
2	Incomplete and insufficient appearance
3	Incomplete but sufficient appearance
4	Full, clear, sharp and deep appearance

Source: prepared by the authors

Thus, according to this coding process, the final maximum transparency index that can be obtained is 196 points. Since the tool consists of 49 items and the maximum score that each item can register is 4, simple calculation shows that the maximum value of the transparency index is 196 points. Based on these data, the levels of transparency of the websites of the political parties were categorized as follows:

Figure 5. The different levels of transparency



Source: Inspired by Dader et al. (2011)

To check the reliability of the tool, three independent coders classified and evaluated the focal dimensions and items. In the first test, the *alpha* of Krippendorff (2018) was applied, obtaining 100% reliability. As defined by Bardin (1991), for such analysis to be valid, two different coders must arrive at the same results. In this case, three experts coded the elements of analysis in the same way.

4. Results

This section has been structured according to the results obtained in each of the phases that comprise the methodology of this work. In addition, a final section has been added, which provides a holistic reflection on and final assessment of the interpreted data.

4.1. Results of the descriptive analysis of the websites of the Andalusian political parties

The obtained results, via analysis of the six focal websites of the Andalusian political parties using the SimilarWeb application, are very different. In relation to the number of visits, PSOE Andalucía and Unidas Podemos por Andalucía are the portals that have received the most visits compared to PP Andalucía, Ciudadanos Andalucía and Adelante Andalucía. In this case, however, the VOX España data cannot be considered valid because the number of visits refers to the party's website at the national level.

Regarding the duration of visits, users have invested more time in the portals of, above all, VOX España -1 minute and 48 seconds and PSOE Andalucía- 44 seconds. On the other hand, the website of PP Andalucía is the one with the worst results, as the average time of the users on this portal is 8 seconds. In the case of Adelante Andalucía, the average residence time is 14 seconds, followed by Ciudadanos Andalucía, with 19 seconds.

Concerning the number of page views per visit, Adelante Andalucía, VOX España and PSOE Andalucía are the ones with the best results. On the other hand, PP Andalucía, Ciudadanos Andalucía and Unidas Podemos por Andalucía show the worst data, which may reflect a low level of citizen engagement.

Bounce rate refers to users who leave a web portal without interacting with it. In this case, the highest drop-out rate is represented by Adelante Andalucía -76.12%, followed by PSOE Andalucía -57.47% and VOX España-53.87%.

Finally, it is also important to note how users access the websites of these parties. In all cases except Unidos Podemos por Andalucía, there a relatively high percentage of users access these parties' web portal using a computer. Unidos Podemos por Andalucía is the exception because 100% of its online users access its web portal through their mobile devices. Although in smaller but still significant numbers, 68.02% of users access VOX España's website through their mobile phones -with 31.98% using a computer, followed by Adelante Andalucía- 55.7% of its online users access using a mobile phone and 44.23% a computer and PSOE Andalucía -46.92% of such users access its website with their mobile phone and 53.08% with their computer. Regarding PP Andalucía and Ciudadanos Andalucía, their users access their web portals exclusively through a computer.

Figure 6. Results for the monitoring of the behaviour and traffic of the users on the websites of the political parties

POLITICAL PARTY	NO. MONTHLY VISITS	DURATION	NUMBER OF PAGES VIEWED EACH VISIT	% REBOUND	ORIGIN OF VISIT
PSOE Andalucía	11.646	44 s.	2,35	57,47%	Mobile: 46,92% PC: 53,08%
PP Andalucía	<5000	8 s.	2	N/A	PC: 100%
Ciudadanos Andalucía	<5000	19 s.	2	N/A	PC: 100%
Adelante Andalucía	<5000	14 s.	3,01	76,12%	Mobile: 55,7% PC 44,23%
VOX España ⁹	241.883	1 min. 48 s.	2,38	53,87%	Mobile: 68,02% PC: 31,98%
Unidas Podemos por Andalucía	7.313	N/A	1,25	N/A	Mobile: 100%

Source: prepared by the authors

Additional analysis via SimilarWeb also yielded data on the activity and performance of the websites of each Andalusian political party. Thus, the number of searches is especially high on the websites of Unidos Podemos por Andalucía (8,450 searches in total), PSOE Andalucía (3,550 searches), Adelante Andalucía (6,350 searches in total) and VOX España (3,080 searches). The worst results are those of PP Andalucía –980 searches– and Ciudadanos Andalucía –50 searches.

Similarly, when analysing the number of clicks during searches, the best results are for Unidos Podemos por Andalucía –74,292 clicks, Adelante Andalucía– 25,165 click and, although somewhat less, that of PSOE Andalucía –7,921 clicks. In the cases of VOX España and PP Andalucía, both have a search count of less than 5,000 clicks. For Ciudadanos Andalucía, no clicks were collected.

Figure 7. Results for the website performance and activity of the political parties

POLITICAL PARTY	NUMBER OF SEARCHES	NUMBER OF CLICKS IN SEARCHES	NUMBER OF SEARCHES WITH 0 CLICKS	CPC (\$) IN GOOGLE	WEB CATEGORY WHERE IT APPEARS MOST
PSOE Andalucía	3.550	7.921	44	N/A	Government
PP Andalucía	980	<5.000	81	0,31\$	-

⁹ VOX Parlamento de Andalucía does not have a specific web portal for Andalusia; rather, this is integrated into the party's website at the national level.

Ciudadanos Andalucía	50	-	-	-	-
Forwards Andalusia	6.350	25.165	23	0,02\$	News & Media
VOX España	3.080	<5.000	51	0,05\$	News & Media
Unidas Podemos por Andalucía	8.450	74.292	12	N/A	Social Networks

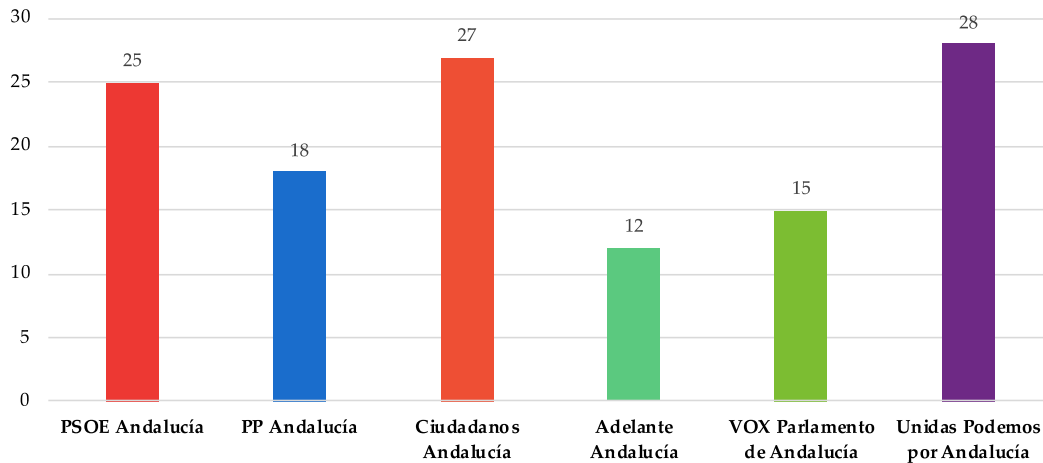
Source: prepared by the authors

These data, therefore, in response to PI1, demonstrate that the websites of the parties that traditionally are labelled within the ideological spectrum of the left have a greater claim among the users of their platform because they obtain better results than the parties considered part of the right in relation to traffic and the level of engagement –that is, by the number of searches and the number of clicks during searches. Moreover, the data seem to indicate that the political parties with the best results in terms of their activity on the internet are those that are located at the extremes of the ideological spectrum, on both the conservative and progressive sides, that is, VOX España, Unidas Podemos por Andalucía and Adelante Andalucía. However, the metrics clearly show that there is greater activity in the bloc of left-wing ideology parties.

4.2. Results of content analysis of the websites of the Andalusian political parties

To address PI2, which seeks to determine which Andalusian political party offers the best channels or most contacts with public opinion on its website, dimension 1 of the Dader et al. tool has been adopted (2011). The obtained results reveal that Unidos Podemos por Andalucía is the political party that publishes the most basic information, offers more channels for information exchange and enables more channels or contacts with users. Specifically, Unidos Podemos por Andalucía obtained a score of 28 out of a maximum of 40. It is closely followed by Ciudadanos Andalucía (27 points) and PSOE Andalucía (25 points). In these three cases, these political parties have a high level of transparency when presenting the organization chart of their provincial and regional executive and offer different channels for contact beyond the institutional mail of the party through Telegram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

The two parties that publish the least amount of basic information about their internal organization and offer the fewest contact channels are Adelante Andalucía –12 points out of 40– and VOX Parlamento de Andalucía –15 points out of 40. In both cases, the information they offer on their party’s organization chart is very limited, and they hardly provide any means of contact other than institutional email.

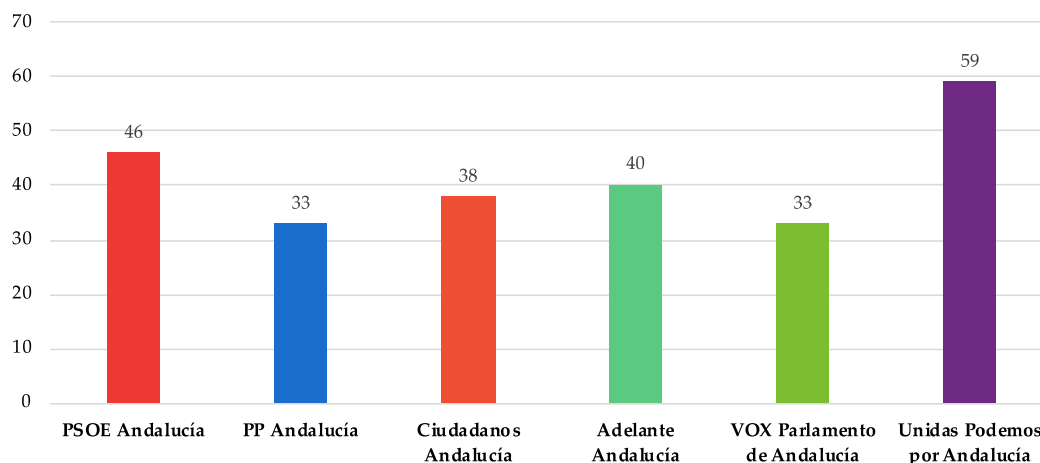
Figure 8. Basic organizational identification and contact channels of the Andalusian parties

Source: prepared by the authors

In relation to the PI3, which aims to identify among the Andalusian political parties whose corporate and organizational information is better displayed on their website, dimension 2 of the methodology tool has been applied. In this case, Unidos Podemos por Andalucía stands out again –with a score of 59 out of a maximum of 76– for the diversity and depth –that is, the greater detail and level of development of the content– in the corporate and organizational information it publishes on its portal. Unidos Podemos por Andalucía shows extensive information and allows downloading documents on the party’s history and its ideological statements in different areas –feminism, climate change, immigration, etc. It also has a code of good governance, as well as a registry of prior decision-making and a declaration of various economic activities. In addition, on its portal, a user can find detailed data on the biographical profiles of its party members in Andalusia and different territories.

PSOE Andalucía also stands out, although not as prominently –46 points– with certain qualifications. Here, the information provided by this socialist party on various politicians is not as detailed and appears in less depth –that is, it does not have such a level of detail and the contents are not extensively developed: it only provides a brief biography in the profiles of the most prominent politicians at the regional level, but little is expressed about the territorial political representatives. However, the parties that clearly show the most deficiencies in publishing corporate and organizational information are PP Andalucía and VOX Parlamento de Andalucía –both with a total of 33 points. In these cases, only basic information is shown in a very concise, succinct, laconic and almost telegraphic way about the main representatives at the regional level, and special mention is made of the national leaders of their party. There is no more specific information in this regard.

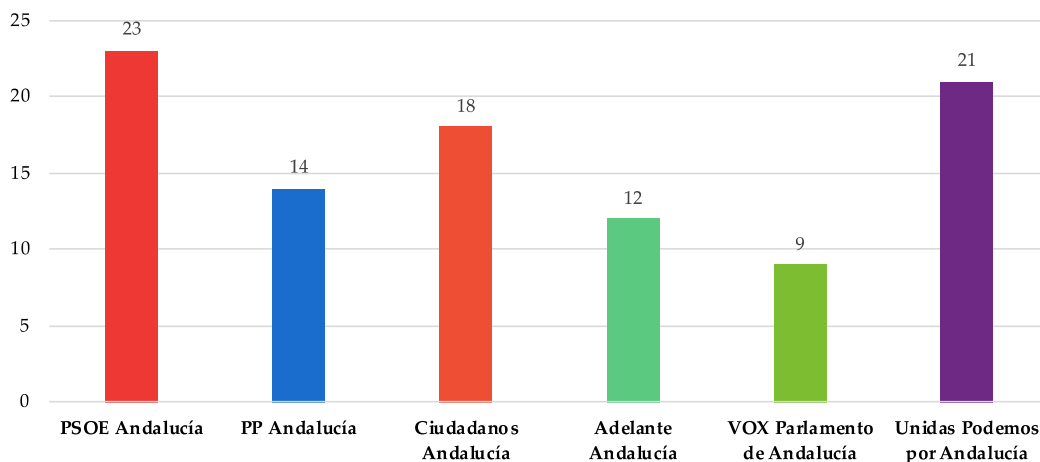
Figure 9. Organizational identification of responsibilities and procedures of the Andalusian parties



Source: own elaboration

To address PI4, which aims to determine the level of transparency in electoral campaign activity, the different items that make up dimension 3 of the adopted methodological tool have been evaluated. The obtained results indicate that PSOE Andalucía is the party that provides the most content on its electoral campaign –with a total of 23 points out of a maximum of 28. Specifically, this political party provides accurate and complete information on its electoral lists by constituency, its campaign budget and the collection thereof, as well as details on the biography of Juan Espadas –head of the electoral list– and on the rest of the members of the campaign team.. The only aspects on which there is no information in this regard, as with the rest of the parties, are those related to the Court of Accounts, the donations it has received for the campaign and the external consultants or agencies that have been hired.

Similarly, Unidos Podemos por Andalucía –with a total of 21 points– and Ciudadanos Andalucía –18 points– have shown optimal levels of transparency in their campaign, although the information they provide is not as detailed as that published by PSOE Andalucía on its web page. In contrast, VOX Parlamento de Andalucía is the political party that has shown the least transparency in its electoral campaign –9 points– followed by Adelante Andalucía –12 points– and PP Andalucía –14 points. In the case of VOX Parlamento de Andalucía, special emphasis is placed on national leaders– with a particular relevance for Santiago Abascal –and there is hardly any information on the regional representatives.

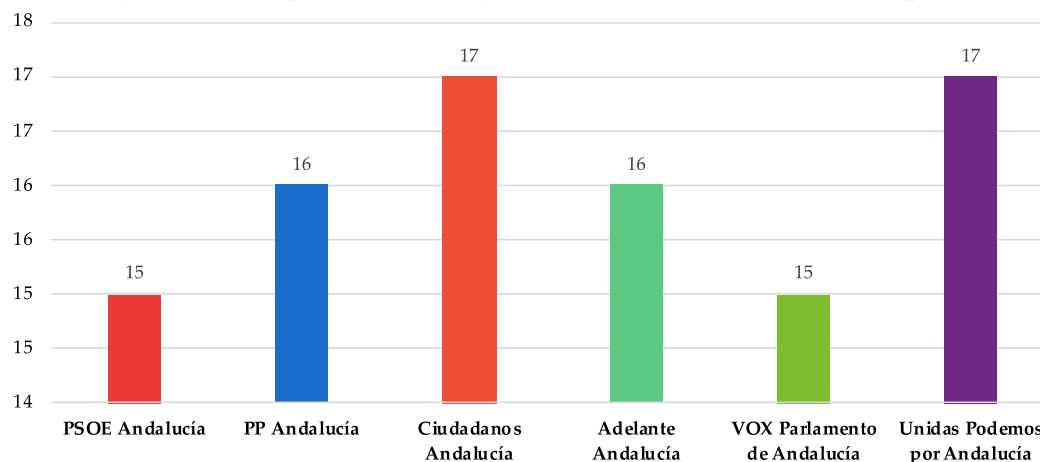
Figure 10. Transparency on the campaign activity of the Andalusian parties

Source: prepared by the authors

Finally, to address PI5, which seeks to determine which political party maintains better dialogue with citizens through its website, dimension 4 of the methodological tool has been evaluated. The obtained results reveal that Ciudadanos Andalucía and Unidas Podemos por Andalucía are the two political groups –both with a score of 17 points out of 32– that care most about dialogue with citizens. However, the practices of these political groups and the levels of transparency on their websites, in this regard, are not at all remarkable and do not differ much from those of PP Andalucía and Adelante Andalucía –both with 16 points, nor from those of PSOE Andalucía or VOX Parlamento de Andalucía– both with 15 points.

Although all the political parties offer a downloadable electoral program showing the main proposals of their campaign, only Ciudadanos Andalucía and Unidas Podemos por Andalucía have a board where the questions and opinions of citizens can be posted or offer other means of participation for their supporters. In general, no website offers a download counter for its electoral program, an electoral program with hyperlinks or diverse ways to express questions. For this reason, this is perhaps the least effective dimension and the lowest level of innovation and transparency presented on the websites of the main Andalusian parties.

Figure 11. Transparency of dialogue with citizens by the Andalusian parties

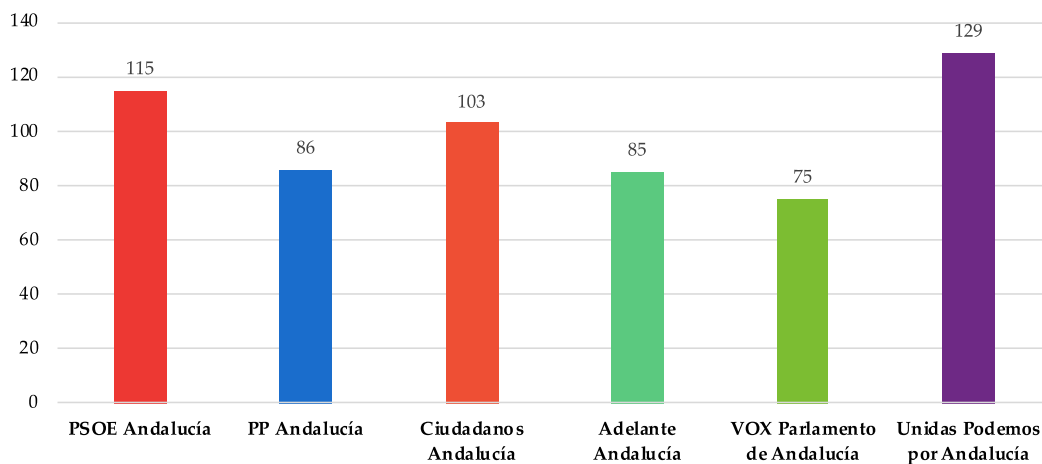


Source: own elaboration

Finally, to correctly contextualize the results, dimension 5 of Dader et al. (2011) was evaluated to reveal the different possibilities offered by each website in regard to updating its information, the simplicity of its navigation and whether it has integrated other IT tools to facilitate user access. In general, all the parties have important shortcomings in this dimension; although all the political parties except VOX Parlamento de Andalucía offer easily accessible documents, which can be downloaded without the need for specific commercial programs, none of these files are presented in a reusable format. Another particularly striking aspect is that no political party has adapted its website for people with disabilities, although all of them mention, to a lesser or greater extent in their electoral programs, the need to help people with disabilities integrate into society.

4.3. Discussion of the final results

Regarding PI6 and PI7, which seek to identify how effectively each Andalusian political party meets transparency requirements on its website in general, Unidos Podemos por Andalucía receives the best evaluation, with 129 points; VOX Parlamento de Andalucía receives the worst evaluation, with 75 points.

Figure 12. Global assessment of the transparency of the Andalusian parties' websites

Source: own elaboration

Regarding the global score of Unidos Podemos por Andalucía, following the classification system proposed in Figure 12, the transparency index of its website is classified at a “remarkable level”. Unidos Podemos por Andalucía’s web portal has also obtained outstanding results for its activity on the internet and in terms of its user engagement. In the same vein, it is one of the web platforms that offers the best channels for exchange or contact channels, providing more depth and diversity of corporate and organizational information, offering more opportunities to start conversations with the electorate and showing more transparency when displaying data and information about its electoral campaign –only PSOE Andalucía surpasses it in this last point.

Second, also possessing a “remarkable level” of transparency on its web portal, PSOE Andalucía is positioned as another notable political party in this analysis, with an overall rating of 115 points. The website of this party has effectively identified the basic organization and contact channels and has published detailed and quality information about its electoral campaign. However, this web portal shows some deficiencies in terms of the depth and diversity of corporate and organizational information it offers, as well as with regard to dialogue and opportunities for dialogue with its electorate.

Third, Ciudadanos Andalucía shows a “remarkable level” of transparency on its web portal, although with a lower rating—103 points. Although this political party does not stand out either for user traffic or the performance of its website –nevertheless, it has obtained a total of 50 searches on the internet– it does stand out for offering various means of exchange or communication channels to contact users, as well as its levels of transparency in dialogue with citizens. In general, the web portal of Ciudadanos Andalucía provides detailed, deep and diverse corporate information and organization, as well as data on its electoral campaign, but these are not the dimensions in which it especially stands out.

Fourth, the websites of PP Andalucía and Adelante Andalucía have very similar results. In global terms, both web platforms are classified as portals with a “remarkable level” of transparency, with a rating of 86 points for PP Andalucía and 85 for Adelante Andalucía. Along the same lines, both offer basic organizational information and contact channels; publish correct, although shallow, detailed and diverse corporate information; and have an acceptable level of transparency when reporting their campaign activity and during dialogue with the electorate. The only aspect where these two websites differ is in their activity on the internet and level of *engagement*. In the case of PP Andalucía, these data are somewhat worrying, since, for example, its users remain, on average, for 8 seconds on its website. However, Andalucía Adelante’s web portal provides more promising data on web activity and user traffic.

Finally, VOX Parlamento de Andalucía is, as mentioned above, the political party that has obtained the worst levels of transparency in general terms: with an evaluation of 75 points, the transparency on the website of this party represents a “basic level”. On its web portal, it hardly provides basic organizational information at the regional level, although depth and diversity are evident in the corporate information it publishes. Regarding any transparency about the activity in its electoral campaign and dialogue with citizens, VOX Parlamento de Andalucía has provided some information –nothing remarkable, but still useful– although it needs to develop the conversations with its constituency through its website. In addition, the fact that the VOX Parlamento de Andalucía’s website is integrated, as an annexed page, into the party’s portal at the national level is one more indication of VOX’s commitment to linking the image and policies of its territorial demarcations with the perspective of the party at the national level.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Studies such as Fernández (2021) or those of Vaquero García and Cadaval Sampedro (2022) show that there is a general lack of trust of citizens in the political elite. One of the issues that most fuels public opinion and scepticism is the lack of transparency of institutions and political actors in government processes (Gavara De Cara, 2022; Fernández, 2022b). Despite the advances in this field, such as the approval of Law 19/2013 on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance, the population is mobilized by the creation of groups of citizens that fight against political corruption and the lack of accessibility to public information, among other problems. These groups raise their voices, mainly on social networks, where citizens continue to put impetus in their communications and express their discomfort with political parties (Castellanos Claramunt, 2022). Thus, one of the first conclusions in this study is to recommend to autonomous and provincial parties that they shape their practices to integrate, within their advisory team, expert users not only of communication and digital political marketing but also of transparency, because the internet is one of the most obvious means to express the real commitment and responsibility of institutions and political groups to public opinion.

Second, comparing the transparency indices of the Andalusian political parties’ websites reveals a null relationship between transparency and voting. The left-wing parties are outlined as the most transparent on their web portals; however, in the last elections of 2022 and 2018, these parties decreased their representation in the Andalusian Parliament. Especially dramatic is the loss of hegemony by PSOE Andalucía, which, after 40 years at the helm of the Andalusian government, obtained the worst results in its history amid the centre-right government coalition in 2018 and the subsequent victory—with an absolute

majority—of PP Andalucía in 2022. Thus, as a future line of research, analysis of the pre-electoral campaigns of the Andalusian parties is proposed to understand how these political parties interact and communicate their good governance practices to their electorate, how they exercise accountability and how they convey their commitment to transparency. In this way, a causal relationship could be established between the vote and the effective communication of these political parties.

Concerning good governance, the obtained results also imply that Andalusian political parties should concentrate their efforts on investing resources in two key aspects for transparency: the usability and accessibility of their website (King and Youngblood, 2016). Both factors offer opportunities for citizens' participation in the political process because they facilitate users' access to quality political information (King and Youngblood, 2016; Rivas-de-Roca et al., 2021). Hence, after analysing the computerized instrumental opening of the Andalusian parties' websites, we have detected usability and accessibility difficulties for people with disabilities. These practices do not correspond to the political discourses that the electoral candidates uttered during the 2022 precampaign, where they promised more sustainable and inclusive social policies in terms of equal opportunities.

Therefore, it is paradoxical that such campaign promises focus on ensuring that all citizens have the same possibilities for usability and accessibility but that these values are not reflected on these websites, which are not accessible to people with any disability. Thus, following the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, we can conclude that administrations and government institutions should also focus efforts on promoting web accessibility, mainly in relation to point 10.3 of SDG 10: Reduction of Inequalities, where it is postulated that it is necessary to “guarantee equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of results, including eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting legislation, policies and appropriate measures in this regard”, and point 16.10 of SDG 16: Just, peaceful and inclusive societies, which states the importance of “guaranteeing public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national laws and international agreements”.

Finally, this study has demonstrated that to effectively focus their transparency practices, Andalusian parties should pay attention, in the same way, to the supports used by their electorate to access their websites. Strikingly, the websites of the most emergent parties such as Unidos Podemos por Andalucía –100%, VOX Parlamento de Andalucía –68.02% and Adelante Andalucía –55.7%– receive user visits through mobile phones. This situation should be a clear indication of the need to design a web interface more adapted to mobile devices. In addition, the fact that web visitors use mobile phones more than computers could also show that their future voters belong, for the most part, to a younger generation (Fernández, 2022). On the other hand, the web portals of PP Andalucía –100%, Ciudadanos Andalucía– 100% and PSOE Andalucía –53.08%– receive their visits through a computer, which could also offer clues about the routines and habits of its possible voters –perhaps more pigeonholed in an older generation. In any case, hopefully, these conclusions can be used in future research that seeks to identify, for example, the most prominent characteristics of the voters in each party based on their consumption patterns of political information.

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Data collection and analysis	Alejandro Tapia-Frade and Purificación Alcaide-Pulido
Discussion and conclusions	Marta Pérez-Escolar
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Marta Pérez-Escolar and Purificación Alcaide-Pulido

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