

Spain's digital gender gap is larger than European average

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Spain's digital gender gap is larger than European average. Credit: SINC

Researchers at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) have compared internet use and frequency in Spain with the rest of the 31 European countries. Their results suggest that Spanish women use the internet less frequently and the usage gap in Spain between men and women is higher than average.

Juan Martín Fernandez, researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid and co-author of the study that was published in the *Reis* journal, states that "Spanish men and [women](#) score lower than the European average on CIT use. For women, [internet use](#) frequency is lower than that of men and the gender gap is wider than the European average."

The study presents data showing that Spain is below average in Europe

for the use of communications and information technology (CIT): Spanish women came in at 19th place out of a total of 31 and Spanish men came in at 17th place. As for the level of e-equality between men and women in the Information Society, Spain comes in even worse at 20th place.

The smallest [gender gap](#) and the highest levels of CIT use can be found in Northern Europe (Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden), France and Slovenia and, to a lesser extent, in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Luxemburg, Germany and the United Kingdom reveal that information technology forms a big part of their citizens' lives but these countries score low in gender equality.

In the middle of the table were countries like Hungary, Malta, Portugal and Slovakia whereas Romania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, Poland and Belgium show high levels of equality in internet use between men and women but they do not apply to society at large. Spain comes in at the back of the line along with Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, Croatia, Italy and Ireland, where equality and internet use levels are low.

Spanish women are only above average in internet use when it is associated with public administrations (16th place), leisure (10th place) and mostly social well-being which, in other words, involves employment, health and education (8th place).

As Martín explains, "women in [Spain](#) come in lower than average in terms of internet use and frequency on far more occasions, so much so that this far outweighs the few occasions in which they come in higher than the European average."

According to the researcher, equality, frequency and integration of CIT uses all come hand in hand. He concludes that "sometimes it is thought

that with the extension of infrastructures and the passing of time, the gap will be bridged. Our results show that this is not the case. Active and encouraging policy is required in order to overcome this equality."

As a starting point for their study, the scientists took the data provided by the Eurostat survey of 31 countries on CIT use.

More information: Cecilia Castaño, Juan Martín y José Luis Martínez. "La brecha digital de género en España y Europa: medición con indicadores compuestos", Reis 136:127-140, octubre-diciembre 2011.

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