



## Article

# Lobbyists in Spain: Professional and Academic Profiles

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**Abstract:** Public relations are fundamental in organisations to establish an adequate relationship between the company and its public, and in the field of relations with public authorities, lobbying has become a very important activity. Two types of action can be distinguished: direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying. The aim of this research is to determine the professional and academic profiles of Spanish lobbyists to determine which type of activity is most common. To achieve this, the professional profiles of 370 Spanish lobbyists were analysed on LinkedIn, and a questionnaire was sent to them to find out about their experience, academic background, and typical activities. The results indicate that Spanish lobbyists are organised around companies and consultancies specialising in political communication and communication advice. The need to formalise lobbying activity, explain its tasks, recognise the exercise of influence, and establish an official register is highlighted. Regarding academic training, new Spanish lobbyists have studied Communication with postgraduate degrees in Political Science and Sociology rather than legal studies, as previously thought. There is also a growing presence of women in this field. In addition, it was determined that 88% of Spanish lobbyists focus on direct lobbying, and only 12% focus on grassroots lobbying.

**Keywords:** lobbyists; public affairs; communication; academic profile; professional profile



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## 1. Introduction

Participatory democracy is one of the essential elements in democratic systems, as it enshrines that those citizens can participate in the public policy process. This participation is linked, in particular, to citizen representation through political parties. However, other political and social actors are increasingly and more frequently emerging as representatives of the citizenry. In this sense, greater social organisation and structuring are conducive to an increase in the political representation of interests because the sectors involved want to participate in the public policy process that affects them (Bressanelli et al. 2020; Tyllström and Murray 2021; Stevens and Bruycker 2020).

In this sense, numerous studies have pointed out that the increased role of the state leads to an increase in social initiatives towards institutions, with the aim of participating in institutional decisions. For the institutions themselves, it is necessary to be able to have adequate information so that their actions are adjusted to social needs (Chalmers and Macedo 2020; Chalmers 2020; De Bruycker and Beyers 2019; Almansa-Martínez and Fernández-Souto 2020).

On the concept of lobbying, the Venice Commission defines it as “the oral or written communication by private individuals or groups, each with varying and specific interests, with a public official to influence legislation, policy or administrative decisions (Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 94th Plenary Session, Venice, 8–9 March 2013). For its part, the European Union, in its Transparency Register, defines lobbying as “any activity with the aim of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policies and decision-making processes”.

For interest groups, it is essential to participate in public policy processes, although not all of them have the same capacity to access and act due to various factors (Gallagher-Cunningham et al. 2017; Klüver 2013; Wilts 2006):

1. The capacity to mobilise lobby supporters or members as a sign of social support in the context of public opinion has a relevant value in the democratic system. Thus, there are interest groups that mobilise their members through public demonstrations, support in the form of messages in various formats, explaining the number of followers or valuing the economic volume generated in the sector, among others (Branton et al. 2015; Rasmussen et al. 2018; Mergeai and Gilain 2020).
2. The lobby's financial capacity allows it to deploy a set of activities that cannot be carried out by lobbies with scarce economic resources. Hence, business or employers' lobbies have greater resources than those that generate resources through the volume of their membership, such as NGOs, consumer associations, professional associations or trade unions. These resources, in turn, can be projected onto other capacities available to lobbies (Schnakenberg 2017; Dür 2008; Carty 2010; Galbraith 1956; Dempsey 2009; Sadi and Meneghetti 2019).
3. Access to public authorities is essential to be able to engage in dialogue with decision-makers, as it is difficult to gain support for a proposal simply by handing over documentation or through grassroots campaigns. This capacity is part of the revolving door concept because those who have been part of the public authorities maintain a network of contacts that allows them to interact more easily. Likewise, having knowledge of the gatekeepers in the administration or the legislature is essential to know whom to act on, a responsibility that does not necessarily fall on the person with the highest hierarchical rank (Dür et al. 2015; McGrath et al. 2010).
4. Advocacy helps when there is a fit with social values because it is easier for rulers to make decisions with social demands that are in line with what is acceptable to the population as a whole (Rasmussen et al. 2018; Biliouri 1999).
5. Having a good social image facilitates the lobby's work, as its proposals seem to have a higher level of legitimacy (Klüver et al. 2015; Marshall 2015; Rasmussen 2015; Lowery 2013).
6. Occupying a strategic space in society or the economy also confers greater weight on dialogue processes. This would be the case of the role of the financial system in the economic system, which is concretised in an expression widely used in European institutions, such as that they are "systemic elements", i.e., that they underpin the system.

In essence, lobbying is linked to the political culture of each society and reflects, to a certain extent, its capacity to structure and manage social demands towards the political system.

On the other hand, the studies that have been carried out on the personal characteristics of individuals who act as lobbyists focus on previous experience and age. However, there are very few studies on the age of lobbyists, and one has to go back to studies from the 1960s and 1970s. Regarding the age of the personnel dedicated to lobbying, Berry (1977, p. 85) places the vast majority as people under 40 years of age:

- 26% are between 20–29 years old;
- 36% are between 30–39 years old;
- 19% are between 40–49 years old;
- 12% are between 50–59 years old;
- 7% more than 60 years old.

This picture contrasts with a study carried out by Milbraith (1963, p. 68), where the majority of lobbyists are over 40 years of age:

- 1% are between 20–29 years old;
- 8% are between 30–39 years old;
- 37% are between 40–49 years old;
- 34% are between 50–59 years old;
- 20% more than 60 years old.

From a perspective that meets the requirements that a good lobbyist must have (extensive knowledge, interdisciplinary theory and extensive experience . . . ), a study carried out by Milbraith is shown with greater credibility and credibility, which places the average age above 40 years.

The years of experience in lobbying is quite low, as Berry (1977, p. 87) states that 65% have less than 2 years of experience, 25% have between 3 and 10, 9% have between 11 and 20 years and only 1% have more than 21 years. This contrasts with the work of Zeigler and Baer (1969, pp. 60–62), who put the experience of less than 2 years at 21% of lobbyists, 41% have between 3 and 10 and 38% have more than 11 years.

Typically, lobbyists come from other professions, which can vary as follows (see Table 1):

**Table 1.** Distribution of previous professional activity of lobbyists.

Professional Activity	Original Job	Most Recent Job	Most Recent Job (Milbraith 1963, p. 68)
Law (private practice)	16	11	8
Business	9	11	17
Government	26	26	57
Journalism	10	2	1
Teaching	6	4	-
Religion	5	4	-
Lobbying	7	14	2
Arts	9	14	-
Other	11	12	15

Source: (Berry 1977, p. 37).

From these two studies, we can see that both Berry (1977) and Milbraith (1963) indicate that lobbyists come from government positions, followed by the business world and the legal profession. These profiles are focused on direct strategies in which interpersonal relations with encounters between lobbyists and political actors prevail. Hence, these profiles are closer to the centres of political and economic power. It would be an activity focused on what has been called the old lobby, which is distinct from the new lobby that has seen its activity enhanced. This change in the ways of accessing public powers coexists between ease of access to power and communicative actions to mobilise citizens in favour of the interests defended by the lobby.

One of the aspects that have generated controversy is the need for lobbyists to have intellectual and academic training to develop their activity (McGrath 2005; Bertrand et al. 2014; Tworzydło et al. 2019; Timmermans 2020; Năstase 2020). In this sense, the complexity of public affairs has been increasing both due to the incorporation of new actors and the themes, which is why it is necessary to propose interdisciplinary training processes (Fleisher and McGrath 2020) and a deepening of the ethical requirements in professional activity (Barron and Skountridaki 2022; Antonucci and Scocchi 2018; Anastasiadis et al. 2018; Korkea-aho 2022).

Studies of gender in the lobby have been scarce and have focused on descriptive aspects of the ratio between men and women (Bath et al. 2005). So, a study by LaPira et al. (2020, p. 820) notes that “Using data from more than 25,000 individuals registered to lobby the federal government from 2008 to 2015, we show that women account for 37% of the lobbyist population in Washington, that female lobbyists are more likely to work as in-house employees than for contract lobbying firms, and that the largest Washington lobbying firms are strongly biased towards employing men”. This administrative activity carried out by women in the field of lobbying represents a challenge for the future of the profession and an emerging line of research on the effects of incorporating women as lobbyists (Strickland and Stauffer 2022; Junk et al. 2021; Lucas and Hyde 2012).

### 1.1. Initiatives

There have been numerous attempts to bring clarity to the actions of lobbyists and recurrent initiatives by the European institutions themselves or by independent bodies (Greenwood and Dreger 2013), such as Transparency International (2015), which has carried out studies on the role of lobbyists, as in the case of its 2015 report, entitled *Lobbying in Europe: Hidden Influence, Privileged Access*, international, in which it calls for a series of initiatives:

1. Require public institutions and representatives to proactively record and publish information on their interactions with lobbyists, including summaries of meetings, calendars, agendas and documentation received.
2. Ensure that a “legislative footprint” is created for each proposal in order to ensure full transparency of decision-making processes.
3. Ensure that records apply to both direct and indirect lobbying efforts, targeting all institutions and individuals who play a role in public decisions.
4. Introduce a legal obligation for public authorities to strive for a balanced composition of advisory and expert bodies, representing a diversity of interests and views.
5. Make open calls for the constitution of advisory/expert groups and ensure that common selection criteria are used to balance different interests.
6. Publish legislative footprints to track, in a uniform manner, contacts and input received on draft policies, laws and amendments.
7. Ensure greater transparency on the composition and activities of expert groups by publishing information on the selection process of members, as well as the publication of detailed minutes of meetings.

There have been initiatives to improve the transparency of the work carried out by lobbies, which are based on two main principles (Chari et al. 2007; Davidson and Rowe 2016). On the one hand, the legislative footprint as a mechanism that focuses on the traceability of legislation and consists of a mechanism in which it is possible to observe how regulation has been modified throughout the process and who has made these contributions. This mechanism provides clarity on the actors involved, how participation has taken place and the degree of co-creation in the policy decision.

On the other hand, the publication of public agendas makes it possible to know with whom official meetings are set up by the members of the commission, an element that is already in place today. In addition, some recommendations extend the mere listing of meetings to include information on the topics discussed, the documentation provided and possible agreements adopted through a summary of the meetings. For example, in the case of the European Commission, it has established that its members must make public information on the meetings they and members of their cabinets hold with lobbyists, providing information on the date of the meeting, the place where it is held, the name of the member of the commission and/or cabinet member, the name of the organisation or freelancer and the purpose of the meeting (decision of 25 November 2014 on meetings held between members of the commission and interest groups).

### 1.2. Lobbying and Communication

Communication is one of the most important areas of lobbying activity, as relations with different institutional (MPs, ministers and civil servants) or social (media and other groups) audiences are central focuses in its communication strategy (Taminiau and Wilts 2006; Woll 2012). For a lobby, the communication strategy could focus on two different perspectives:

- Proactive strategy, in which the lobby takes the initiative in the definition, elaboration and approval of public policies, allowing it to raise situations and anticipate issues that may affect the interest group. Having the ability to be able to raise issues that may affect the lobby’s interests facilitates the structuring of the issue, delimits the conceptual boundaries of the discussion and influences the approach to the solution to the problem (Schnakenberg 2017; Carty 2010; De Bruycker 2016).

- Reactive strategy, which is delimited by a passive action of the lobby, which is only put into action when a decision affecting the lobby's interests is being raised, discussed or approved. This action does not allow solutions to be put forward but starts from a defensive activity, which greatly reduces the scope for action (Chari and O'Donovan 2011; Rasmussen et al. 2018; Benítez 2018).

From this perspective, two forms of lobbies' action in formulating their strategy are established:

- Direct lobbying: organised as direct relations with the members of the institutions on which the lobbies act. These actions can be dialogic (conversations, interviews and reviews) with members of the legislature to the executive; delivery of specific or general documentation; and participation in advisory or expert commissions (Castillo-Esparcia et al. 2020; Castillo-Esparcia 2011).
- Grassroots lobbying: such as communication campaigns in support of the lobby's demands through the media, campaigns on social networks or mobilisation of people (Arceneaux 2018; Dempsey 2009).

In this sense, indirect lobbying or grassroots lobbying is one of the current trends in public affairs, in which a set of communication actions are produced on the political leader or civil servants, through the presence in the media, through direct petitions from citizens or by generating spaces in social networks. In its most benign form, this type of citizen participation can be enriching for citizens. However, this technique can also be more reprehensible when it becomes astroturfing, the controversial practice of lobbyists hiding behind front organisations to give the appearance of popular support for a cause that is, in reality, funded by private interests. According to Labarca et al. (2020, p. 4), "It is this social capital, conferred on the organisation by positive public sentiment, that an organisation can use to leverage influence on politicians, political parties, and governmental institutions to advance the private policy-centred interests of the organisation." The activities associated with these off and online campaigns are:

8. Direct online citizens' petitions;
9. Letters to government or parliamentarians;
10. Public debates;
11. Leaflets and posters;
12. Demonstrations, among other activities, in order to put pressure on politicians to listen to them;
13. The use of related organisations such as advocacy associations;
14. The use of other entities such as think tanks;
15. Blogging;
16. Cyber activists writing on social media.

### 1.3. Media Appearances Functions

We can establish a series of functionalities to systematise the objectives of advocacy in the editorial content of the media.

- They show and present themselves as determined subjects with the publicity (making public) of the interpellations of their members, because the existence of the express requests of a group is the prerequisite for social sustenance and legitimacy.
- In certain situations, they can advocate the mobilisation of the public in general, and of their members, in particular, in order to propose community support for a better implementation of the demands made to the public authorities.
- They present a psychic cohesion activity on the part of all their members, which makes them participate in a common grouping. This feeling of belonging is significant in societies with a high degree of individualism.
- One of the premises when carrying out certain actions in the media is the intention to educate the recipients about the association's issues and its problems. This is a

medium- and long-term function that aims to predispose collective behaviour to an acceptance, understanding and internalisation of the group's objectives.

- Social conflict is also reflected in the struggles between information sources to influence the communicative system. Of all the events that have taken place, only a limited number are shown, which is why each organisation tries to ensure that its proposals are echoed in the media. In addition, by socially radiating its own objectives, it manages to restrict the access (qualitative and quantitative) of other groups that may appear to be rivals.
- As soon as one manages to penetrate the editorial content of the media, one should try to ensure that the image reflected is favourable. It is not so much important to have a high success rate, but rather that the appearances are qualitatively positive.
- Presenting and promoting itself as an organisation dedicated to a specific issue allows the interlocutors (individuals and the media) to frame the association within the aforementioned issue, which subsequently helps to obtain a certain monopolisation of the competing activity. Thus, we can observe the clear examples of Greenpeace (environment) and Amnesty International (human rights), which have achieved the identification between association and defended matter.
- The previous steps have the scatology of achieving the acquiescence of the media, individuals and public authorities that legitimise the actions implemented by the group. In this way, the lobby group becomes a subject to be consulted and listened to in its field of application.
- With regard to the political system, they convey an image of public opinion that offers support to the associative demands, thus achieving a much broader force than the real one. It should be noted that appearing in the media gives the possibility of offering a public image of the group's representativeness, but it is also a key factor in assessing the degree of social support for the group's demands.

In these two areas of action, lobbyists must have certain educational, academic and professional profiles that allow them to carry out their work.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study seeks to analyse the professional and academic profiles of Spanish lobbyists and to find out what type of activities they carry out in their professional activities. To achieve this, a series of specific objectives (SO) were formulated:

- SO1: to understand the demographic profile of lobbyists in Spain.
- SO2: to analyse the qualifications of lobbying professionals.
- SO3: to determine the job title of lobbyist and their years of experience in the field.
- SO4: to identify the techniques that are most commonly used in direct lobbying or grassroots lobbying.

In order to achieve these proposed objectives, exploratory research was carried out with the aim of addressing a topic on which there are no previous studies in order to provide a greater understanding of the field of lobbying in Spain. The descriptive study is carried out by means of a quantitative methodology divided into several phases using two tools: content analysis and a questionnaire.

Studying the activities of lobbyists is difficult due to the caution of professionals and companies when it comes to explaining their campaigns. In the case of Spain, there is also the problem that it is not a profession that has a positive image in society. In this sense, one of the main difficulties is the identification of the lobbyists to be analysed, for which a list of professionals was compiled, based on a review of the interest groups registered in the Transparency Register of the European Union, the consultation of information in the media and professional journals, the review of meetings and events in which lobbyists participate and the analysis of professionals registered in the Association of Professionals in Institutional Relations (APRI).

In order to respond to the objectives on the demographic, academic and professional profiles, a content analysis of the profiles of 370 lobbyists was carried out. The list that made

up these lobbyists was selected from various professional lists such as APRI or the regularly updated list of the Guide to Public Affairs and Institutional Relations Professionals in Spain, which includes many of the leading names in the sector, among others. In this way, the information we wanted to know was extracted from their data in professional networks such as LinkedIn, information in specialised publications in the sector and their profiles on websites and professional pages.

To this end, an analysis sheet was drawn up containing the categories sought. In this sense, we inquired about their age, sex, academic training, professional career and job title. These data provided us with biographical, educational and professional indicators.

In the second stage of this study, a questionnaire was sent to the lobbyists to address the fourth objective, which focused on analysing the type of techniques most commonly used, depending on whether direct lobbying or grassroots lobbying is being carried out. Thus, the different techniques were extracted from studies on lobbying activity such as Dempsey (2009), Carty (2010) and Chalmers (2013). Direct lobbying techniques include the provision of documentation and interviews with officials, parliamentarians, members of the executive and/or political parties, and participation in governmental or legislative committees. While media techniques such as press conferences, press releases, media reports and the use of social networks, as well as mobilisation through participation in demonstrations and social networks and the sending of letters to political parties, governments and officials, among others, belong to the set of grassroots mobilisation techniques.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Socio-Demographic and Academic Data

With regard to the gender of the lobbyists analysed, we found that 52% ( $n = 191$ ) are men compared to 48% ( $n = 1799$ ) who are women. This is becoming increasingly apparent as the profession acquires a greater number of female professionals. If gender is cross-referenced with the age of the lobbyists, we find that men predominate in the older age groups and women in the younger age groups. These data indicate that young lobbyists are women, which implies a future feminisation of the professional activity in the coming years.

In relation to the data concerning the age of each lobbyist, it can be concluded that the average age is 46 years, while the trend is 51 years, with seventeen lobbyists currently at this age. However, the youngest lobbyist investigated is 22 years old, which varies greatly from the profile of the oldest lobbyist at 69 years old.

It can also be seen in Table 2 that the majority of professionals are older than 40 years, especially lobbyists in the 40–49 age range. It should also be noted that the lowest number of lobbyists is in the 20–29 age group, probably due to the lack of experience acquired until then.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the age of lobbyists by age group.

Age Group	N. ° of Lobbyists
20–29	12
30–39	72
40–49	152
50–59	106
+60	28

Source: own elaboration.

A breakdown of the data into the different degrees shows that the majority of lobbyists have undoubtedly studied Law ( $n = 87$ ). In second place, the degree in Journalism stands out (52 cases). Far from the majority, and with similar figures between them, are Political Science ( $n = 29$ ), Business Administration and Management ( $n = 28$ ), Engineering ( $n = 28$ , including Mechanical Engineering and Telecommunications, among others) and Economics ( $n = 27$ ). On the other hand, there are Advertising and Public Relations ( $n = 15$ ) and

Information Sciences ( $n = 12$ ). Other academic backgrounds specified in Figure 1, which are more closely related to the lobbies they work for, such as Pharmacy ( $n = 12$ ) and Psychology ( $n = 11$ ), among many others, also stand out.

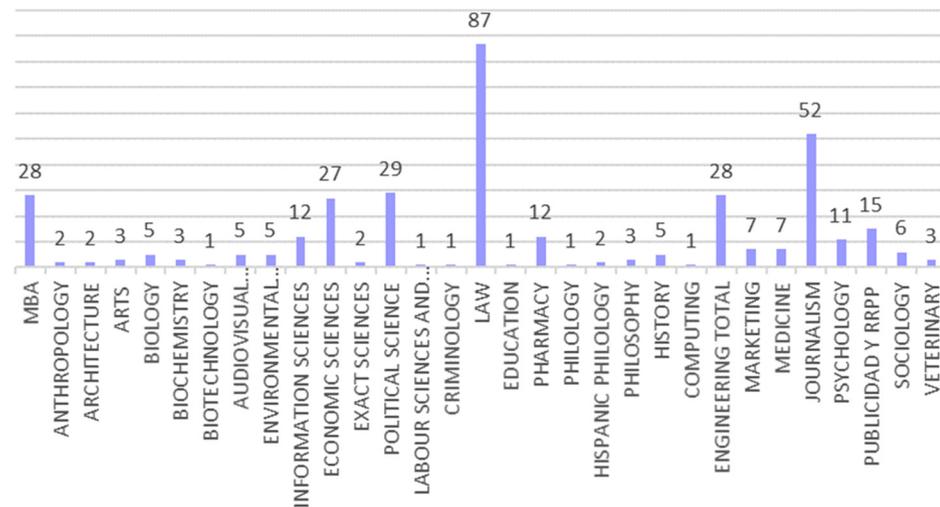


Figure 1. Distribution of lobbyists' undergraduate degrees held. Source: own elaboration.

As far as postgraduate studies are concerned (see Figure 2), 31.62% of lobbyists ( $n = 117$ ) were very keen to study a Master's degree in Business Management and everything related to this area, in terms of leadership and business management. In second and third place were the postgraduate courses in Communication (17.57%,  $n = 65$ ) and Public Affairs (14.86%,  $n = 55$ ), respectively. In fourth position, the most studied options are Marketing and International Relations (12.97%,  $n = 48$ ). To a lesser extent, lobbyists tend to have postgraduate degrees in Law (5.40%,  $n = 20$ ), Science (1.89%,  $n = 7$ ), Human Resources and Industrial Relations (1.62%,  $n = 6$ ) and Arts and Humanities (1.35%,  $n = 4$ ).

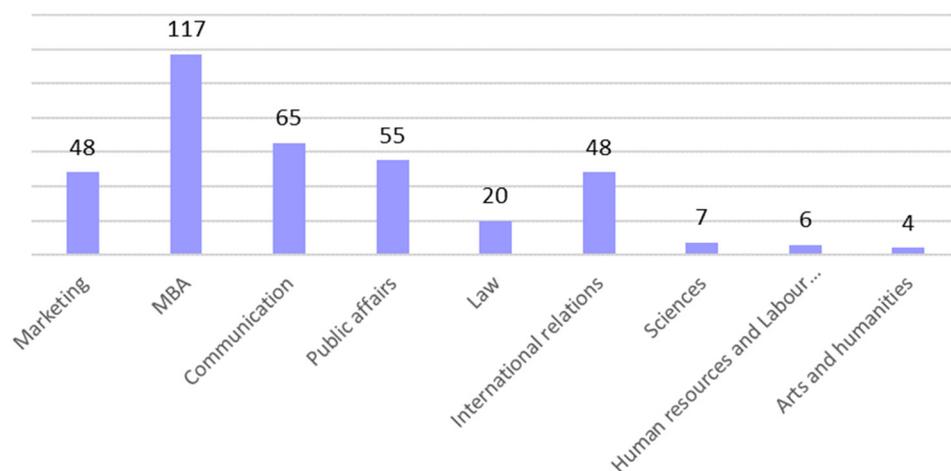
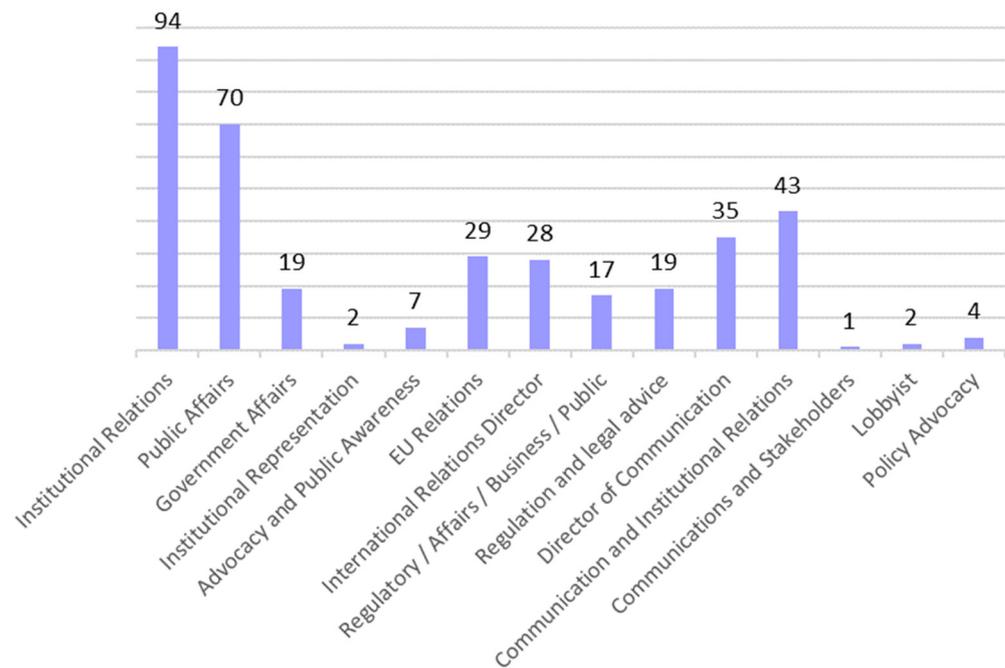


Figure 2. Distribution of postgraduate degrees held by lobbyists. Source: own elaboration.

Finally, Figure 3 shows the type of designations given to the lobbyist profession. Among the results, it can be seen that the most common designation is Institutional Relations for 25.41% ( $n = 94$ ) of the lobbyists surveyed, followed by Public Affairs (18.92%,  $n = 23$ ), Communication and Institutional Relations (11.62%,  $n = 43$ ) and Communication Director (9.46%,  $n = 35$ ), which together account for two-thirds of the designations preferred by lobbyists. There is a strong similarity between two of the designations chosen by the professionals: Institutional Relations and, on the other hand, Communication and Institutional Relations.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of lobbyists' denominations. Source: own elaboration.

If we explore the designations least chosen by the profiles analysed, we found only two people (0.54%) named Lobbyist (lobista in Spanish). Fewer still chose to call themselves Communications and Stakeholders Relations (0.27%,  $n = 1$ ).

Likewise, the propensity for appointments in Spanish stands out (87.57%,  $n = 324$ ), compared to appointments in English (12.43%,  $n = 46$ ).

### 3.2. Profiles of Experience and Professional Activity

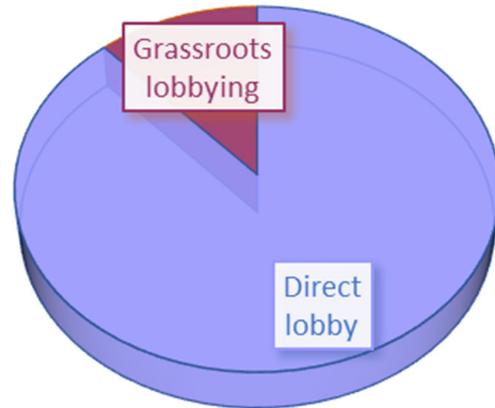
The years of experience within the sector is a revealing fact, which correlates with the data on the age of the lobbyists. In this sense, most people have between 11 and 20 years of lobbying experience (32.5%,  $n = 25$ ). Remarkably close to this percentage are the professionals with between 5 and 10 years of experience (29.9%,  $n = 23$ ). Given the number of people counted above the age of 50, it is noticeable that many of them have more than 20 years of experience (23.4%,  $n = 18$ ). Finally, it is worth noting that a fairly significant percentage only have 5 or less years of experience (14.3%,  $n = 11$ ) in lobbying, which is curious, with only two people indicating that they had less than 30 years of experience, probably because they were involved in another type of activity before working in this sector.

With regard to the type of lobbying carried out by the lobbyists who completed the questionnaire, Figure 4 shows that 88.3% ( $n = 68$ ) of the professionals surveyed are clearly involved in direct lobbying, compared to 11.7% ( $n = 9$ ) who carry out grassroots lobbying.

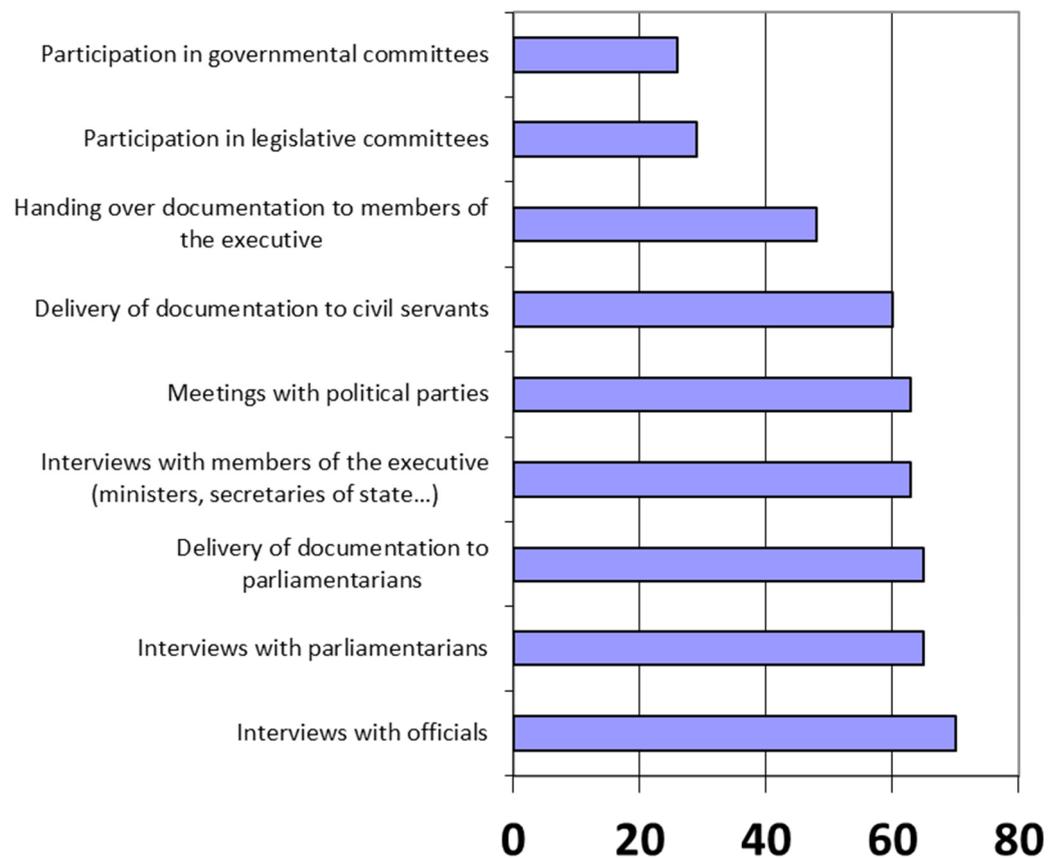
In the survey sent out, a question was asked about the type of actions, both direct and indirect lobbying, carried out by these professionals. The most popular direct lobbying activities (see Figure 5), in order, are interviews with officials used by 90.9% ( $n = 70$ ), interviews with parliamentarians and the provision of documentation to parliamentarians, with 84.4% of respondents making use of them. On the other hand, by far the least popular among lobbyists are participation in legislative and governmental committees, used by 37.7% ( $n = 29$ ) and 33.8% ( $n = 26$ ), respectively.

In relation to the actions developed by indirect lobbying or grassroots lobbying (see Figure 6), the use of social networks (70.1%,  $n = 54$ ) is carried out by the vast majority of lobbyists. In second and third place are press releases and media reports, with 54.9% ( $n = 50$ ) and 51.9% ( $n = 40$ ), respectively. Organisational media interviews (44.2%,  $n = 34$ ) and organising press conferences (48.1%,  $n = 37$ ) are two other actions implemented by

practitioners to a considerable extent. Mobilisation of supporters in terms of sending letters to both civil servants (14.3%,  $n = 11$ ) and the media (18.2%,  $n = 14$ ) and participating in strikes, demonstrations or other forms of direct action (15.6%,  $n = 12$ ) are the activities least developed by the lobbyists surveyed.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of the types of lobbying carried out by the lobbyists surveyed. Source: own elaboration.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of the use of direct lobbying actions. Source: own elaboration.

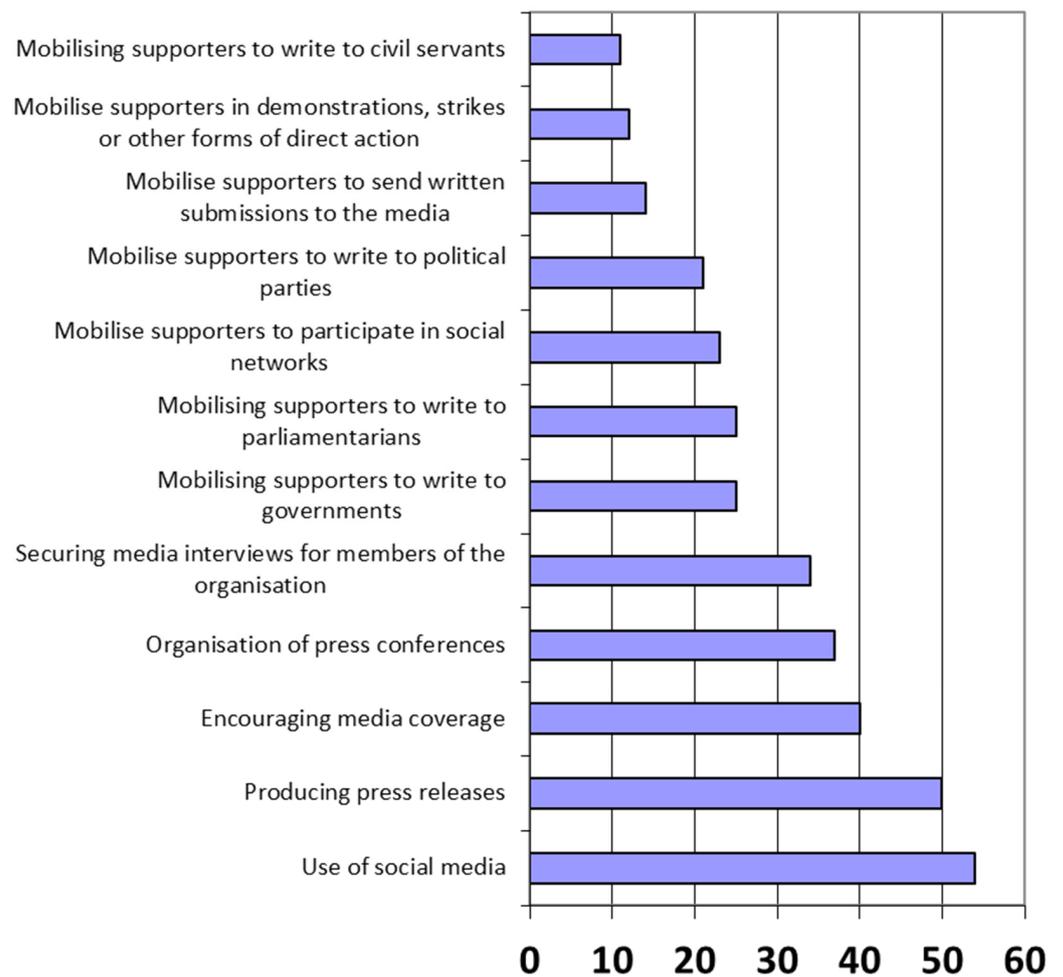


Figure 6. Distribution of the use of Grassroots lobbying actions. Source: own elaboration.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The profile of lobbyists in Spain shows that there is an almost equal distribution between men and women, with an average age of 46 years, an average professional experience in the sector of 15 years, with studies in Law, a postgraduate degree in Business Management (MBA) and a professional degree in Institutional Relations.

As found in other studies by (Bath et al. 2005; LaPira et al. 2020; Junk et al. 2021), there is an under-representation of women lobbyists in Spain. However, this research has found, as relevant data on the gender of lobbyists, that, in absolute terms, there is a balance between men and women. Additionally, if the data are analysed by age groups, it can be observed that women are the majority in the younger age groups, which means that in the future, the profession will be more feminised.

An analysis of the age of lobbyists shows that the most frequent age group is between 40 and 49, which implies a learning and experience curve in line with research by (Boucher and Cooper 2019; Crepaz 2020; De Bruycker 2016; Berry 1977; Milbraith 1963). If we cross this data with lobbyists' professional experience of 15 years, it is relevant to note that Spanish lobbyists spend around 9 years of professional activity not directly related to lobbying. The data on the age of lobbyists are a contribution of this research, as this is an aspect that has been little studied.

In terms of studies, it is worth noting that lobbyists have mainly studied Law, followed by Communication (Advertising, Public Relations and Journalism), Political Science, Engineering and Economics. These data are in line with the professional activity of lobbyists, which is more focused on direct lobbying and dialogic relations with civil servants and parliamentarians. If we look at postgraduate studies, the main specialisation is Business Management (MBA—

Master of Business Administration), followed by postgraduate studies in Communication and Public Affairs. The academic profile of lobbyists focuses on legal and communication training, in line with other research (Chalmers 2013; Castillo-Esparcia 2020).

When analysing the professional designations, the term Institutional Relations stands out, followed by Public Affairs, Communication and Institutional Relations and Communication Management. These designations allow us to infer that there are two main areas of designation, namely, Institutional Relations and Communication.

With regard to the functions of the lobbyist, the main influencing strategy is direct lobbying, carried out by 88% of lobbyists, compared to a very low percentage (12%) who carry out grassroots lobbying actions. This implies relevant information on the main activities related to contacts with government staff, parliamentarians and the delivery of documentation prepared for both groups. This activity is related to training in law.

The main grassroots actions include the use of social media to provide and disseminate information, the presence in the media through press releases, reports and interviews, and the mobilisation of supporters in defence of the lobby's interests.

This study has shed light on what lobbies are like in Spain and fills a gap in this area, as there is practically no research on the professional and personal profile of lobbyists. It also contributes to a deeper understanding of what lobbyists' activity consists of and what training and skills are required for lobbying.

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