REPORT

Youth-Focused Vibrant Information Barometer (Y-VIBE)

Media literacy and media consumption of Ukrainian youth

Fieldwork done by Ipsos

2022

CONTENT

ABOUT 3
- CONTEXT 3
- OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY 4
- RESEARCH DESIGN 5

Y-VIBE RESULTS 5
- INDICATOR 1 9
- INDICATOR 2 13
- INDICATOR 3 17
- INDICATOR 4 21
- INDICATOR 5 22
- INDICATOR 6 25
- INDICATOR 7 27
- INDICATOR 8 29
- INDICATOR 9 30

PROSPECTS 31

METHODOLOGY 33
- QUALITATIVE 33
- QUANTITATIVE 34
- ADULT COMPONENT CALCULATION 35
- YOUTH COMPONENT CALCULATION 37
- Y-VIBE INDEX CALCULATION 39
- LIMITATIONS OF Y-VIBE INDEX 39

ANNEXES 40

ABOUT

CONTEXT

USAID/UNITY conducted the Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) study in 2021-2022 to examine how information is produced, spread, consumed, and used in Ukraine. Its findings reveal a Ukrainian media environment that is vibrant and diverse, yet full of barriers and challenges. At the same time, VIBE leaves us with gaps in understanding how Ukrainian youth engage with the modern information environment, inform their decisions, and act. The Youth-Focused Vibrant Information Barometer (Y-VIBE) focuses on young people's media consumption. This report is the first exploratory study to identify common media practices among Ukrainian youth (aged 10–17), their perception of media in general, and other aspects of the informational environment with which young people engage.

Most studies on media consumption in Ukraine present information about young people as a part of the general population. In 2020, the UReport survey provided a snapshot of youth media preferences. Due to the limitations of the UReport methodology[1], however, it is difficult to understand to what extent those results represent all young people in Ukraine and characterize the qualitative side of youth engagement. Therefore, the Y-VIBE is a unique and complex study that focuses solely on the media practices and needs of young Ukrainians. There are many efforts to enhance media literacy and critical thinking among young people, as its media skills are essential on the national level. For example, after the reform of Ukrainian education, the New Ukrainian School curriculum identified media literacy as a part of critical thinking for young Ukrainians. Media literacy is also mentioned in the new law on the National Youth Strategy until 2030 (adopted in 2021) as an important skill to resist Russian propaganda and develop civil competencies.

Besides Russian propaganda, there is a lot of disinformation in the Ukrainian information ecosystem, especially online. The global UNICEF study in 2020 showed that 76% of young people (14–24 years old) encountered misinformation on the Internet at least once a week, and three out of four young children cannot assess the accuracy of the information they encounter on the Internet. Moreover, a youth poll conducted by IRI in 2021 shows that most young Ukrainians use Instagram and Viber messenger, online environments rife with manipulation and disinformation.

[1] The survey is not representative of the whole country.

There are many media literacy programs in Ukraine, but there is no systemic information about how effective they are. Many fact-checking projects debunk false stories and conspiracy theories and share tips on healthy media consumption. Still, there is no information about the extent to which their activities are convincing for young people. There is even a national media literacy program, Filter, created by the Ministry of Culture and Informational Policy in 2021. Without relevant data on impact and gaps in previous programs, however, it is difficult to apply an integral approach for future actions to make them successful on local and national levels and appeal to different populations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Youth-Focused Vibrant Information Barometer (Y-VIBE) is a youth-focused study aiming to reveal a more nuanced understanding of information consumption, media literacy skills, and information-driven actions of children and youth aged 10–17.

The objective of the study is to examine youth motivations, triggers, and barriers; learn more about the overall structure of thinking regarding information consumption; and identify different media consumption practices among young people. Y-VIBE uncovers Ukrainian youth's personal experiences of information consumption and adults' perceptions of the youth media environment, access to information, and internet security.

This study is part of the UNITY (Mriemo ta diemo) program. USAID UNITY is a five-year program aimed at developing and supporting Ukrainian youth, fostering a friendly environment in which they can realize their dreams, ideas, and visions of their country's development. By adopting a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach centered around the young generation, UNITY promotes youth innovation and entrepreneurship, more active participation in decision-making processes, and youth involvement in resolving issues at the national and local levels. UNITY aims to enhance the potential of Ukrainian youth and become a driving force for pluralism and respect for diversity. UNITY engages youth in developing and implementing projects and initiatives and conducts research to inform youth policy and bring about effective and sustainable changes.

UNITY (Mriemo ta diemo) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IREX in partnership with Building Ukraine Together (BUR), the Center for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR Ukraine), Making Cents International (MCI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and Zinc Network.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on IREX's Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE), Y-VIBE includes nine indicators and 27 sub-indicators related to how youth in Ukraine consume and engage with information, as well as how this information drives youth behavior (See detailed list of indicators and sub-indicators in Annex 1). These indicators and sub-indicators are informed by the perceptions, experiences, and expertise of four groups of stakeholders: 1) media and information experts; 2) homeroom teachers; 3) parents of youth; and 4) youth themselves (ages 10–17, divided into groups 10–12, 13–15, 16–17, qualitative component of the barometer), as well as a country-wide online poll for youth aged 10–17 (quantitative part). The focus of this research is primarily the personal experiences of youth themselves, although information from experts, homeroom teachers, and parents is used to supplement youth's views.

The study consists of two stages:

1. Qualitative (24 focus group discussions (FGDs) with all four groups of stakeholders)—December to January 2021.
2. Quantitative (representative poll for youth)—February 2022[2].

The emphasis for the FGDs with children, youth and parents was to attain additional insights about their motivations, triggers, barriers, overall structure of thinking regarding information consumption, media-related skills, and practices among young people. The FGDs with teachers and experts aimed to assess their opinion and expert evaluations and gather more information on how the current media space (both online and traditional) is youth-oriented considering existing policies and stakeholder engagement.

Drawing on the findings of the quantitative and qualitative stages, this study developed a multi-tier index system to capture youth media consumption and information engagement. The Y-VIBE Index consists of two separate components, one based on each stage. The Adult Component is primarily based on the results of the FGDs with adults and the questionnaire completed by participants at the end of each discussion. The Youth Component quantifies youth response to the country-wide online poll, which is representative of the Ukrainian youth population aged 10–17. The Y-VIBE Index summarizes the data from both indexes into one (a detailed description of the methodology and index building approach is provided in Methodology section of this report).

[2] Fieldwork for this study was completed immediately before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine; the representative online youth poll ended on February 23.

Y-VIBE RESULTS

The Y-VIBE index score for youth media consumption is 37, which constitutes a **"somewhat weak"** youth media environment based on access to information, security, youth engagement, information-driven actions, and behavior.

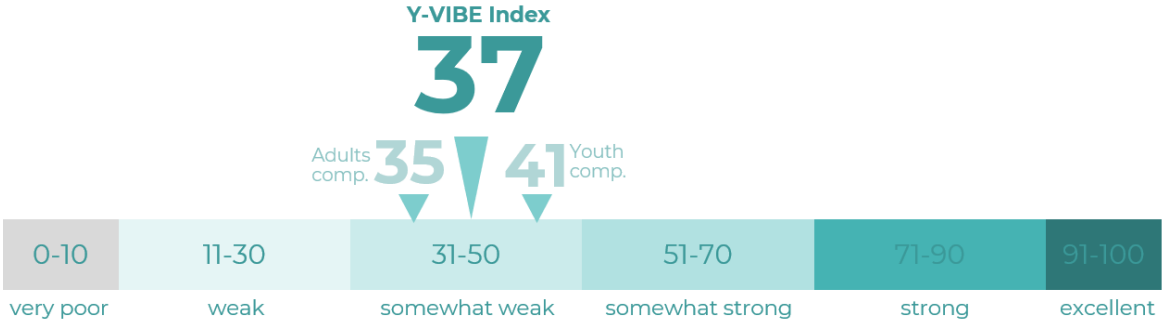

Figure 1. Y-VIBE Index total score and total scores of its Adult and Youth Components

This score summarizes the qualitative and quantitative components of the research and encompasses youth experience and adult perceptions of youth engagement with information. Overall, this score reflects the status of Ukrainian youth media consumption patterns along nine different dimension-indicators.

The Y-VIBE scores of each component and the overall index are given below:

Indicator	Youth Comp.	Adult Comp.	Y-VIBE Index
General score	**41**	**35**	**37**
Ind 1: Youth and children can safely use the internet due to child protection laws, content restrictions, privacy protection, and security tools.	55	35	43
Ind 2: Youth and children have the necessary skills and knowledge to be media literate.	51	37	41

Ind 3: Youth and children engage productively with the information that is available to them.	45	37	40
Ind 4: Media and information producers engage with youth and children audience's needs.	*[3]	35	35
Ind 5: Information producers and distribution channels enable or encourage youth to share information across regions, genders, ethnic groups, and mindsets/political perspectives.	28	33	31
Ind 6: Youth and children use quality information to inform their actions.	30	36	34
Ind 7: Youth-serving civil society organizations (CSOs) integrate quality news and information when explaining their mission or objectives.	*	36	36
Ind 8: Youth-serving arms of government use quality information to make public policy decisions.	*	34	34
Ind 9: Information supports adequate services for youth and children and helps uphold their rights.	*	35	35

Table 1.0 Y-VIBE 2022 score

The youth result for Indicator 1 (43) shows that youth and children can safely use the internet due to child protection laws, content restrictions, privacy protections, and security tools, but there is still room for expanding the concept of protecting privacy and security online. It is also important to note that the rating for the Youth Component is higher than the Adult Component, which may signal that youth themselves are more confident in their ability to protect data privacy than adults may perceive.

In addition, positive contributions to the result of the Index were made by Indicators 2 and 3. Youth engage somewhat productively with the information that is available to them and have the necessary skills and knowledge to be media literate. As for Indicator 1, the results in both Indicators in Youth Component are higher than in the Adult Component.

The poorest performance was for Indicators 5 and 6. The result for Indicator 5 (31) shows evidence that youth and children do not read or view multiple types of media with varied regional, gender, and ethnic perspectives and do not participate actively in the exchange of information with others they disagree with, either in-person and through digital forums. Indicator 6 (34) shows a similar result, revealing that youth and children's views on political

[3] Indicators 4, 7, 8 and 9 were asked only in the adult groups

or social issues are shaped neither by quality information nor completely by misinformation. Furthermore, they are not entirely willing to directly confront the spread of misinformation, such as divisive narratives, that violates social norms.

INDICATOR 1

Ind 1. Youth and children can safely use the internet due to child protection laws, content restrictions, privacy protections, and security tools.

43 somewhat weak

55/35
youth adults

Youth Component:

In general, more than half of respondents (68%) stated that they protect their security and privacy online. There is also a positive correlation with age; older youth are more inclined to protect themselves online.

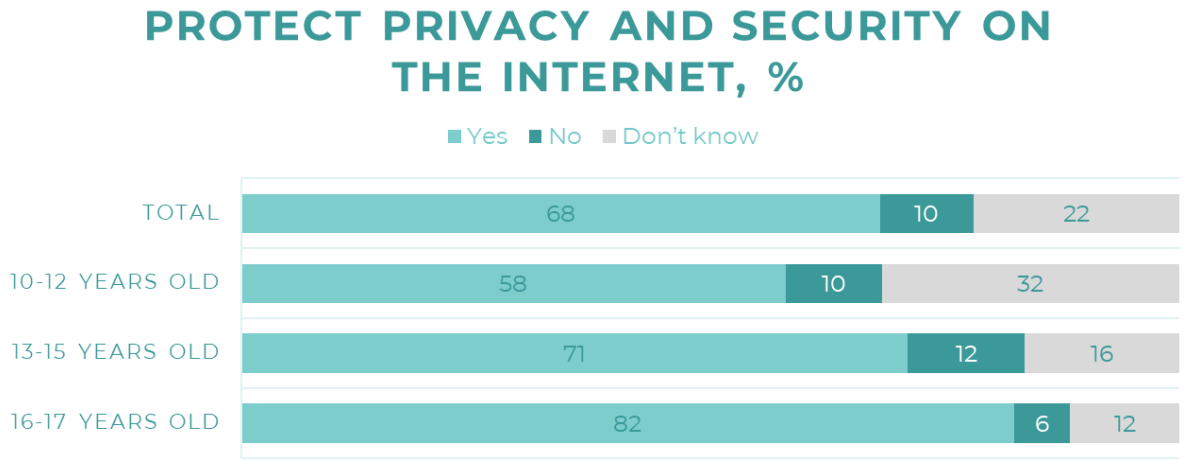

Figure 2. % of youth who use digital protection measures on the internet, N=600

The most common means respondents of all ages use for protecting themselves online is restricting access to their devices; 83% choose this option. Other methods, such as avoiding suspicious emails/messages (63%), avoiding unverified web sites (54%), and using security software (47%) are less popular but also common among the children.

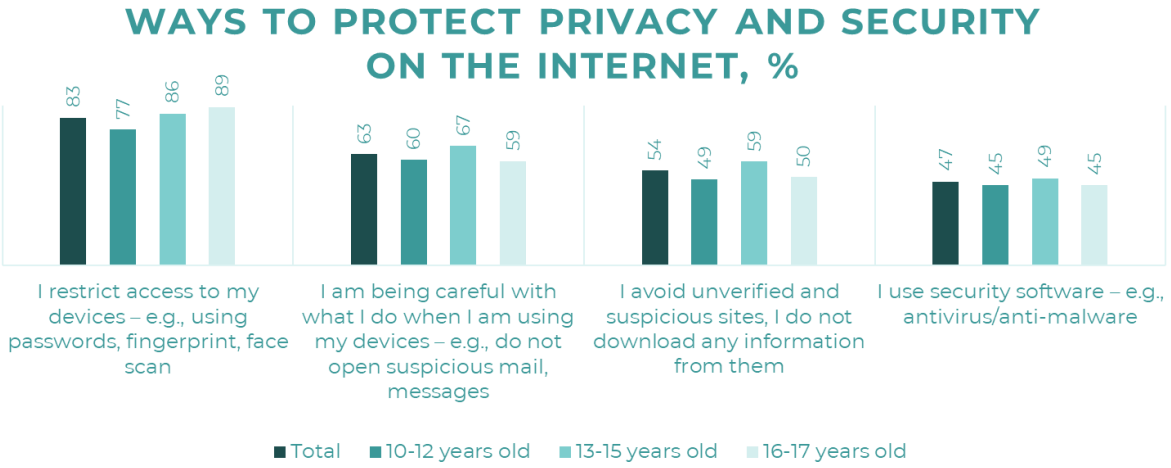

Figure 3. Top responses for methods of protecting privacy and security on the internet, N=409

The results of the qualitative research also confirm that young people have free access to technological tools that protect their privacy and security, which is confirmed by parents and teachers.

According to the post-FGD survey, almost all children and young people (97%) try to protect their data and personal information: 71% use authentication tools (complex passwords, finger/face scans), 68% are attentive to their actions when using devices (for example, do not open suspicious mail and messages), and 46% use antivirus programs.

In the online survey, many children reported they are aware of the algorithms driving social media, mechanics of targeting advertisements, and other ways in which personal information is utilized to target digital users. 76% of respondents aged 13–17 stated that they agree that information about them is collected on the Internet through social media preferences and Internet search history. 57% agreed that information about users is used on the internet to target them with advertising or messages that can be interesting for them, and 64% agreed that information and posts on social media platforms appear depending on likes of these posts, frequency of posting by account/page, time of viewing content, and similar factors.

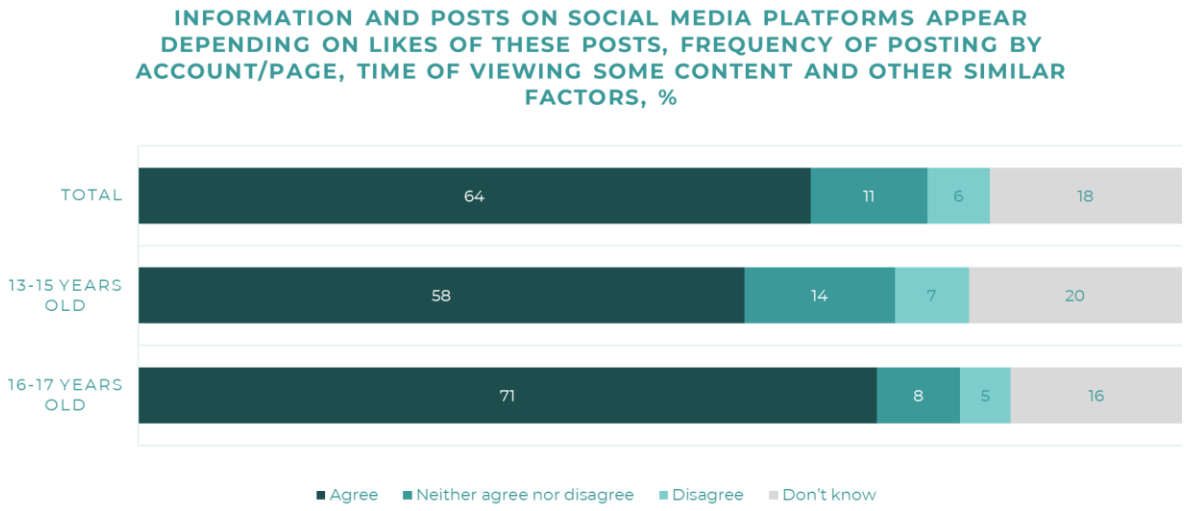

Figure 4. % of youth who self-report knowing how internet algorithms work, N=400

While youth in general report being more aware of algorithms, parents demonstrated little knowledge of how social media algorithms work and what are they in general.

Adult Component:

Youth and children (regardless of age, region, and gender) have free access to technological tools for protecting their private information. Most parents and teachers believe that children have access to and use all these tools and are often even more knowledgeable than their parents.

Knowledge of means for digital security is quite fragmentary, unstructured, and not combined into a holistic knowledge system, however. Parents and teachers stated that youth use tools to protect their data depending on children's physical, emotional, and cognitive levels of development determined by their age. According to the parents, children aged 10–12 feel less technically confident than those aged 13–17 and, if a problem occurs, turn to their parents for help. Children aged 13–15 years do not have enough knowledge and skills to protect their data and use the internet safely, while at 16–17 years old, they are aware of and use all security tools.

At the same time, parents have a lower awareness of the algorithms used by social media, advertising targeting mechanisms, and ways in which user data is employed. Among teachers, only a few were familiar with the mechanisms of social media algorithms. Neither parents nor teachers talk to their children or students about how content is created on social networks, and how algorithms work. Parents believe that the state and school are primarily responsible for informing children about the mechanisms of social media; parents do not consider their role to be important in this matter.

Most parents do not have a clear understanding, or knowledge of the legal protections of children's personal data, confidentiality in the information space, and digital security. Teachers also are not sufficiently aware of these legal instruments; they believe that such guarantees exist but cannot name the relevant laws. During the FGDs, experts noted that there are legal norms in Ukraine that regulate the protection of information, but in fact, they do not work. These laws do not work for several reasons, including the inconsistency of the legal framework with modern realities of cybercrime, insufficient protection provided by powerful media platforms such as Google and Facebook, and failure by parents to use legal mechanisms because they do not understand the consequences of leaking the private data of their children.

According to experts, although children, their parents, and teachers have access to technological tools that would allow them to increase the level of data protection, violation of the confidentiality of children's personal data remains one of the key problems of modern media culture.

INDICATOR 2

Ind 2. Youth and children have the necessary skills and knowledge to be media literate.

41 somewhat weak

51/37
youth adults

In this study, we define media literacy as, "a skill set that promotes critical engagement with messages produced by the media." [4]

Youth Component:

According to the results of the online survey conducted within the Y-VIBE study, Media literacy classes in Ukraine are not common—only 30% of respondents noted that they are present in the curriculum. Similar findings were also reported during the qualitative stage of this research, as 58% of respondents stated that they do not have such lessons at school, nor have they taken a media literacy course. Some aspects of media literacy are covered by computer science courses, but the coverage is irregular and unsystematic.

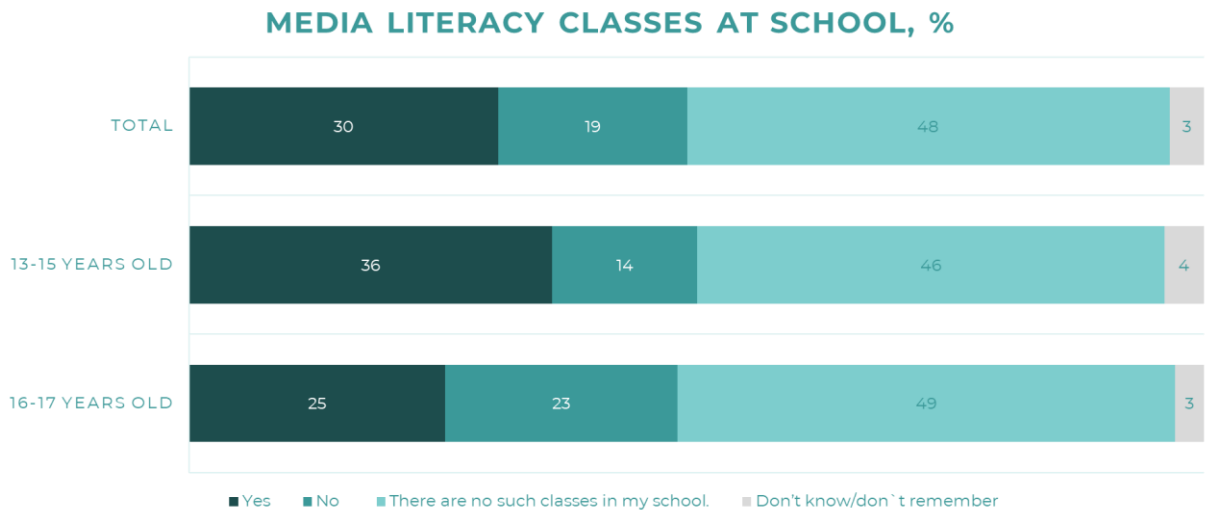

Figure 5. % of youth who report having media literacy classes at school, N=400

[4] *Bulger, M., & Davison, P. 2018*

In terms of hate speech based on religion, disability, sexuality, or gender identity, 23% of respondents stated that they often observed this phenomenon in the media (the Internet, TV, etc.) and 58% have faced it.

One of the key findings of the qualitative study was that abilities to identify narratives that divide society and to resist manipulation differs significantly between different age groups:

- 10–12-year-olds trust almost everyone and have difficulty resisting manipulation.
- By the ages of 13–15, most children have digital and computer literacy skills and understand how digital technologies work, but do not know how to analyze messages or content.
- By the ages of 16–17, most youth can already identify manipulation and misinformation, but only a few can defend their point of view.

More than half (60%) of the respondents that faced hate speech on the Internet stated that they simply ignored it. Among youth, actions to counteract hate speech, such as blocking the person that shared such content, disliking, reporting to a website, or other methods, are significantly less popular than ignoring the hate speech.

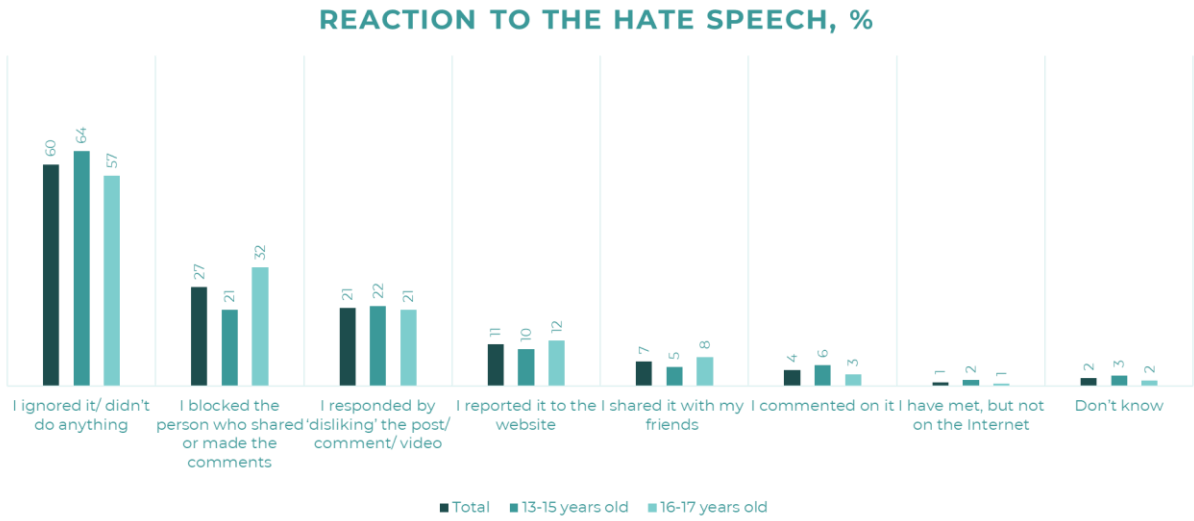

Figure 6. Ways in which youth react to hate speech on the Internet, N=307

Among approaches to protecting privacy online, blocking messages on social media from unknown users (88%), restricting access to social media profiles (72%), deleting browsing history (65%), and using secret mode on a web browser (51%) were most frequently selected by respondents.

Similar results were observed during the qualitative stage. The study revealed that young people aged 13–15 and 16–17 have basic digital literacy skills, such as the ability to find information, choose the necessary information, store it, and share information using digital media.

Children aged 10–12 do not have the same level of the above-mentioned skills and face problems in storing and transmitting information. Children aged 10–12 years had problems with the task "Search and send a picture," in which children were asked to find a picture of a certain object on the internet and send it to the group moderator through any available messenger.

According to a post-FGD survey, 13–17-year-olds have necessary security skills such as blocking messages (89%), deleting browser history (85%), using VPN (72%), restricting access to social media profiles (78%), using incognito mode in browser (78%), blocking people when they play online games (61%), and bypassing restrictions that prevent them from visiting certain sites or applications (57%).

Adult Component:

Few teachers have taken media literacy courses; some of them searched for information and learned about media literacy by themselves. As part of their work, computer science teachers include some media literacy topics in their lessons, while homeroom teachers discuss media literacy issues with their students during extracurricular activities.

Expert opinion is unanimous: in secondary schools, there is no separate discipline on media literacy. Related topics are taught within public education classes in the tenth grade, which is only one hour per week. Experts state that the volume of teaching media literacy disciplines in secondary schools is insufficient in the context of quality and quantity. Although the curricula of almost all subjects are aimed at shaping critical thinking skills, this is insufficient when it comes to the modern media space. In addition, starting to teach media literacy in high school is too late; learning should begin no later than fifth grade (10–11 years of age).

Parents often do not know whether their children have acquired knowledge of media literacy at school. Most of them are not familiar with the term and often confuse it with computer literacy or the general ability to use technology. The concept of media literacy is associated with digital literacy in the minds of children and their teachers and parents, rather than with information literacy (the ability to distinguish true information from false, checking information, etc.).

Parents and teachers believe that children have and use basic digital and information security skills. Experts stated that youth and children also know the basics of working with digital technologies, which helps them to create content. At the same time, however, they are certain that children do not use these skills to protect their data and keep themselves digitally secure.

Teachers and parents believe that the mass media manipulates youth and sometimes imposes on them views that divide society and/or discredit a

person or group of people due to race, nationality, political views, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. In general, in their opinion, youth are easily manipulated regardless of age. This slightly contradicts the findings of the youth component, where youth's ability to withstand manipulation does differ by age.

INDICATOR 3

Ind 3. Youth and children engage productively with the information that is available to them.

40 somewhat weak

45/37
youth adults

Youth Component:

The quantitative stage revealed that most children do not read the news at all: 50% of respondents supported this statement.

The most popular sources of interesting information for youth are general websites (39% as the first choice), YouTube (22%), Instagram (13%), and TikTok (12%). These options are also dominant as the second choice in total and in each age category.

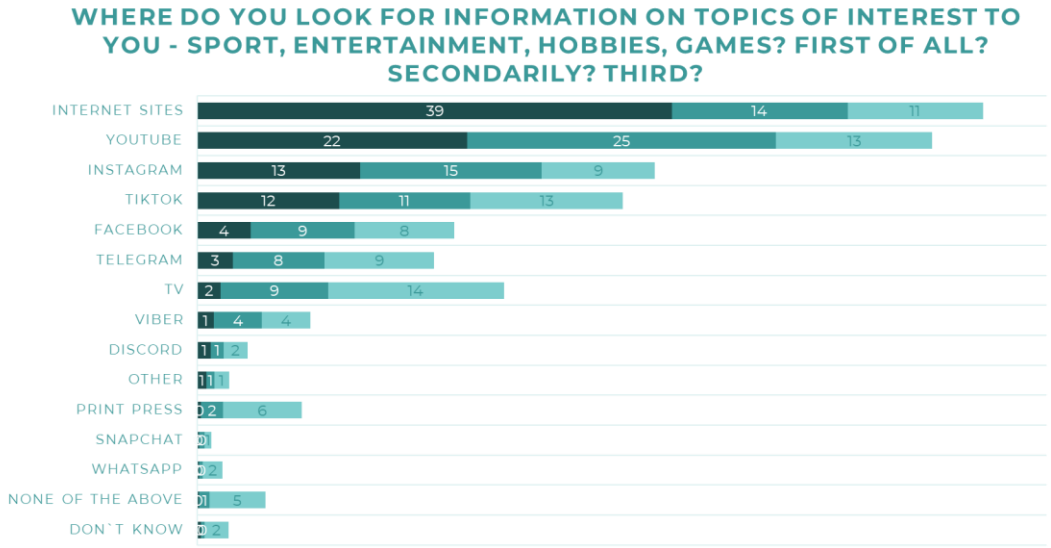

Figure 7. Most common sources of information for youth. All age groups responded. The darker color corresponds to the primary source of information; lighter colors are for second and third choices. N=600

These findings coincide with results obtained from the FGDs. According to a post-FGD survey, children, and youth news interests (sports, entertainment, hobbies, games) are primarily searched on Instagram (76%) and Internet sites that are not social media (72%). This is followed by

YouTube (49%), Telegram (35%), TikTok (31%), Viber (21%), television (11%), Facebook (7%) and WhatsApp (2%).

At the same time, 30% of respondents said they did not watch the news. The choice of information source depends on age; TikTok is the most popular for children aged 10–12, while people aged 16–17 are more likely to use information from Google, YouTube, or educational sites.

At the same time, respondents were not inclined to fully trust information in the media. Among all news sources, the highest level of trust was in Internet sites (6% said that all information there is true and 47% said most information is true), YouTube (7% and 41% respectfully), and Viber (15% and 30%). TikTok has lowest level of trust (4% and 19%).

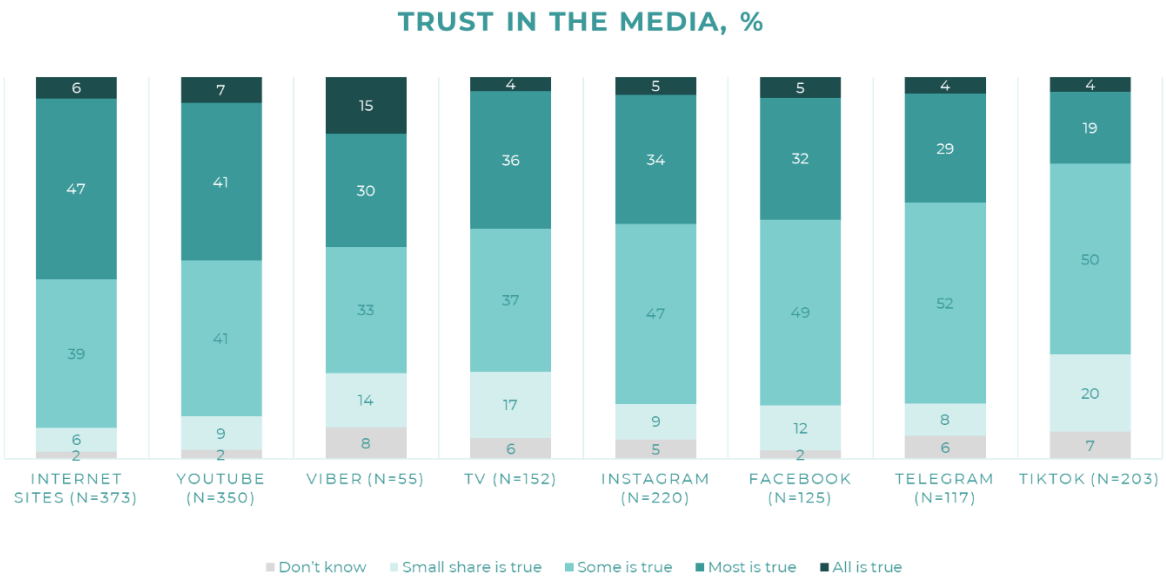

Figure 8. Level of trust in different information sources. All age groups responded. N=593

The results of the qualitative study showed that children trust different sources of information depending on age.

- Children aged 10–12 trust TikTok, Instagram, and Telegram the most.
- Children aged 13–15 trust Instagram and YouTube.
- Young people aged 16–17 are beginning to focus more on educational resources, such as Wikipedia and looking for educational sites on Google, along with Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube.

Most respondents do not check information for accuracy.

FAKE OR TRUTH

During the FGs, youth were given a small game, "Fake or Truth." The goal was to identify how each of the age groups act when faced with fake news. Do they distinguish fakes easily? What logic do they apply when dealing with information?

Each age group was given a certain news message and asked to identify whether or not it is fake.

Below is a summary of results disaggregated by age:

10–12 years old	13–15 years old	16–17 years old
Could not distinguish fakes. In most cases, they focus on the comments under the post/video and the number of articles in Google. Faced with ambiguity in opinions, however, they are easily disoriented. Also, this group **relies on the opinions of their parents.**	**Could distinguish fakes**. To check information, they tried to debunk it with other resources, including Wikipedia, used key words (scientific terminology, various figures, dates, facts), applied logic, and common sense.	**Could distinguish fakes**. The group cross-checked the information on official and other sources including anti-fake sites, applied common sense, and used economic reasoning.

According to the online survey, more than half of respondents aged 13–17 said that the information they found in the media about news and world events was, in their opinion, partly true or mostly true.

The ability to verify the accuracy of information depends on age.

- Children aged 10–12 largely cannot distinguish between reliable and unreliable information and usually ask their parents questions.
- Some children aged 13–15 are already beginning to distinguish between true and false information.

Most 16–17-year-olds know that they need to compare information to several sources from different types of media.

Adult Component:

According to parents and teachers, media producers do not target children. Similarly, children and young people do not look for information in the

traditional mass media, as they find everything they are interested in on social networks.

Overall, instead of passive information consumption provided by traditional media (reading or watching), children are actively creating media content, such as videos for TikTok, blogging, and posting photos. In this way, they become authors and co-authors of media content, communicate with others, find supporters, and increase their popularity, which is very important to them at this age and the driver for staying on social networks. By creating content and exchanging messages with peers, they create their own media environment as an alternative to traditional media.

Experts note the lack of quality children and youth content in the Ukrainian media, especially in the Ukrainian language. This refers to different types of content, including entertainment, educational, musical, etc. Experts remarked on the growth of the Ukrainian-language segment of YouTube, but its quality is questionable. The main source of information for youth and children is video content on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. These social networks attract many users to share their content with large numbers of subscribers, which, in experts' opinion, can often lead to manipulative messages transmitted to wide audiences.

Parents' results showed that they are not aware of news channels aimed at youth and children, but they believe that there is news on social networks (Telegram, Instagram, etc.). In general, parents are unfamiliar with the content of social networks and cannot say exactly what their children are consuming. The FGDs with parents also found that news sources used by parents and children differ significantly. If parents mainly learn about the news from television and the Internet, children find information on the Internet, social media, and in messengers.

Unlike parents, teachers know of news channels for children and young people, educational Telegram channels, which have separate subjects, such as literature, school chats, Instagram, and YouTube channels.

Youth and children are sensitive to the opinion of the bloggers (in their areas of interest) rather than other sources of information. Children trust bloggers who have more followers, although popularity does not mean they spread higher quality information. In this context, children consume information uncritically, regardless of manipulation, misinformation, or contentious narratives. Therefore, parents and teachers noted that a blogger's influence can be harmful. At the same time, some parents and teachers also mentioned "positive" bloggers who talk about travel, teach foreign languages, cooking, and educational other topics.

INDICATOR 4

Ind 4. Media and information producers engage with the youth and children audience's needs.

* This indicator was only assessed among adults

35 somewhat weak

35 adults

Adult Component:

Parents and teachers do not know of media research studying the interests of children and young people. In addition, none of the interviewed experts heard about any research on the preferences of children and youth audiences by relevant media.

When speaking about popular satellite TV channels targeting children and young people (PLUSPLUS, Malyatko), participants also expressed doubts about the media producers' study of media preferences and expectations of their audience.

Most parents do not know whether their children are familiar with information about marginalized communities. Among marginalized groups, parents were only familiar with LGBTQ+ and Roma people, but still displayed negative attitudes towards both groups during the FGDs.

According to teachers, the mass media covers LGBTQ+ people more than other marginalized groups, attracting the attention of children and young people. Most teachers believe that it is undesirable to focus children's and young people's attention on gender issues, as this may negatively affect the formation of traditional gender identity.

Experts identify a lack of products aimed at marginal or vulnerable categories of young people (LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, national minorities, etc.) in Ukrainian media.

INDICATOR 5

Ind 5. Information producers and distribution channels enable or encourage youth to share information across regions, genders, ethnic groups, and mindsets/political perspectives.

31

28/33

youth adults

Youth Component:

Half of the respondents stated that they like to read or view information from different regions of Ukraine, and a third stated that they like to read or view information representing the point of view of different ethnic groups and different genders.

The study found a positive trend between the level of tolerance/acceptance of existing stereotypes in Ukrainian society and age; older youth are more tolerant. At the same time, youth do not perceive jokes aimed at some of the groups as offensive and discriminatory, e.g., jokes about their black peers.

REACTION TO VIDEO

During the FGs, youth aged 13–15 and 16–17 watched a short video about Roma people from a Ukrainian news channel. Afterwards, participants were asked to express their opinion on societal stereotypes about and prejudices towards ethnic groups.

Overall, boys tended to generalize their perception of the Roma people depicted in the video as pertaining to the entire group. One stated, "Roma people are inferior members of society." 16–17-year-olds and girls were somewhat more tolerant and did not jump into the same generalizations, with one remarking, "I believe that several people cannot show the behavior of the whole nation, all people are different."

When asked about how often youth agree or disagree with the information that they hear from the peers and friends, 19% of respondents stated that they often disagree and 75% that they sometimes disagree. At the same time, as the qualitative stage confirmed, youth rarely interact with the

information with which they disagree, even among their peers. They may comment on photos or videos posted by their friends and acquaintances on social networks, but this feedback is predominantly positive, such as compliments, praise, and support. Moreover, children ages 10–12 comment less actively than youth aged 13–17.

Children of different ages also showed that only a few (2%) never disagreed with the information that they encounter on social media; 20% often disagree and 61% rarely disagree.

The most common reaction to disagreement was ignoring this information; more than half of respondents stated that they did nothing. Active reactions, such as commenting, blocking the person, and disliking, were chosen less frequently.

This is confirmed by youth in post-FGD questionnaires, who (regardless of age, gender, and region) do not actively participate in open discussions. Most children comment only on content from friends and acquaintances. On open platforms, they will not engage in discussion, especially with strangers, and rarely speak on topics unrelated to school life.

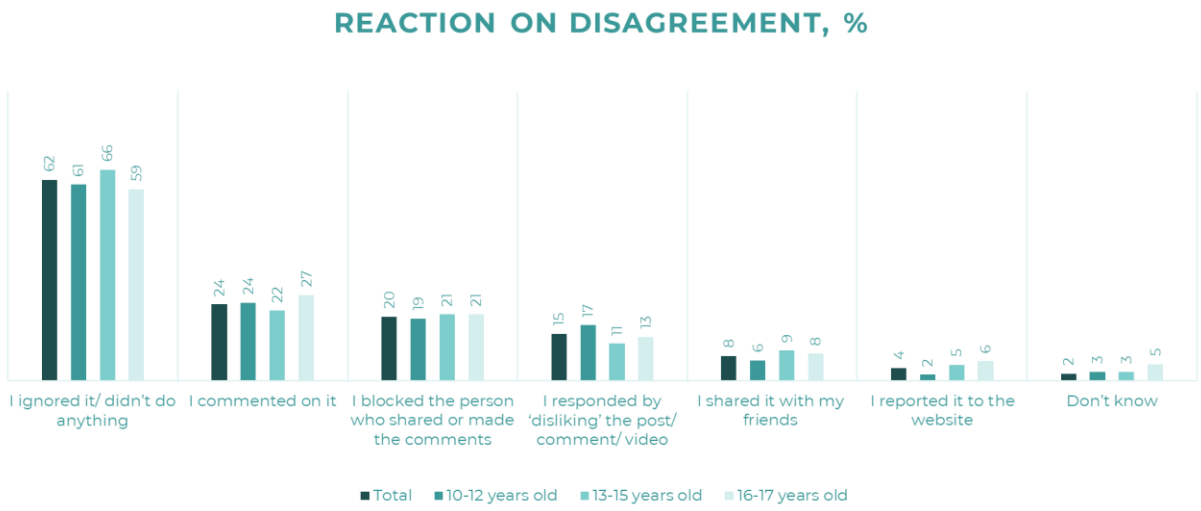

Figure 9. Ways in which youth react to information on the Internet with which they disagree, N=591

Adult Component:

According to parents and teachers, youth and children are not interested in regional, gender, and ethnic issues, nor in sources that provide information from these perspectives.

Instead, they are more attracted to:

- online or computer games (mostly boys, regardless of age), including online casinos, stock exchanges (mostly boys 16–17)
- video, music (all ages regardless of gender)

- beauty industry (mostly girls regardless of age)
- online shopping (mostly 16–17-year-olds)
- collective social media challenges (10–15-year-olds)
- bloggers (all age groups, regardless of gender)

Teachers expressed concern about the impact of bloggers and social media challenges on children, as blogs frequently use unverified information, and "humorous" challenges sometimes turn dangerous.

Parents and teachers noted that while all children comment on messages or photos from their acquaintances, the nature of their comments depends on age. Children aged 10–12 mostly add likes, smiles, and memes. Children aged 13–15 also comment mostly using likes/dislikes. At the age of 16–17, young people sometimes give more meaningful comments, but this is not common for everyone.

According to parents, when children do not agree with what is written in a post on a social network, they will typically not comment and express their views. Children communicate mostly in private chats. Parents believe that there is room for discussion but cannot say exactly how it happens.

Teachers confirm that children engage in discussions with their classmates and friends in private chats, but rarely on open platforms and social networks.

INDICATOR 6

Ind 6. Youth and children use quality information to inform their actions.

34 somewhat weak

30/36
youth adults

Youth Component:

Only about a third of respondents (30%) are confident that they can differentiate real news from false news. Youth aged 16–17 are more confident in this than younger respondents.

The level of trust in information for homework and schoolwork is somewhat higher; 5% of all respondents think that all information is true and 38% think that most of the information is true. Children aged 13–15 are more inclined to trust this information than 16–17-year-olds.

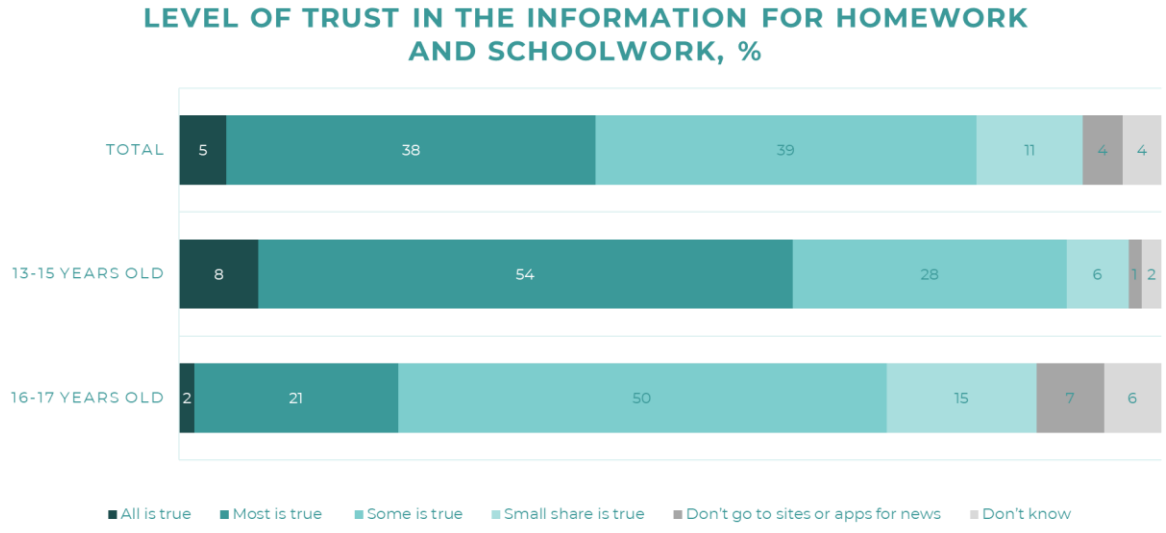

Figure 10. Level of trust among youth in information for homework available online, N=400

Information about the pro-social activities in which youth are interested is not necessarily found on social networks. Youth's level of social involvement overall is relatively high; 61% stated that they were involved in socially useful things. The predominant source of involvement was activities at school (63%). Young people aged 16–17 want to be socially valuable and are ready to join charitable initiatives but do not have information on how to do so.

Social networks (mainly TikTok and Instagram) rarely initiate socially useful activities, but only inform about certain volunteering activities (primarily carried out by prominent figures) or highlight pro-social trends (mainly animal protection initiatives). On TV, young people did not see any informative messages that would encourage them to participate in pro-social activities.

Adult Component:

Parents and teachers believe that the views of youth and children on political and social issues are shaped by the information they encounter, which may come from both higher quality and untrusted sources.

Per parents, schools, and churches (the latter applied to Lviv Oblast) rather than the media are the main initiators of young people's pro-social activities (charitable or volunteer activities to help anti-terrorist operation (ATO)[5] participants, orphans, homeless animals). Teachers, unlike parents, believe that students take part in socially significant actions and projects after receiving information about it in the media more often than from the Internet.

[5] The War in Eastern Ukraine (2014–present) is commonly known in Ukraine as the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), its official name until 2018, when it became the Joint Forces Operation.

INDICATOR 7

Ind 7. Youth-serving civil society organizations (CSOs) integrate quality news and information when explaining their mission or objectives.

* This indicator was only assessed among adults.

36 somewhat weak

36 adults

Adult Component:

According to experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to increase the critical thinking and media literacy skills of children and youth have their own media online, including websites and social media accounts where they post information about their activities, research, and products.

The main task of such organizations is to increase the sensitivity of young people to disinformation and manipulation in the media. Among the key strategies to achieve these goals are:

- implementing media literacy courses and training in schools and universities
- developing educational materials, literature, and games for teachers and children
- monitoring the quality of media content and media competencies of youth and children
- cooperating with journalists to improve their professionalism and approach to fact-checking and media literacy
- involving children in media creativity to teach safe and conscious media consumption.

According to parents, children and adolescents are not very interested in participating in organizations and initiatives that do not require constant involvement. Among the reasons for this situation are a different way modern youth are spending their free time, the more autonomous nature of leisure time, popularization of gadgets (smartphones, computers) that are always at hand, and the need to coordinate the child's participation with their parents.

The general opinion of experts is that there is a need for direct communication with children and adolescents to identify their needs, interests, and preferences, both in the field of education and leisure activities. This will promote better social projects across different areas:

educational (reforming secondary schools, developing media competencies, etc.), creative, and sports.

Experts noted that most NGOs aimed at developing a culture of youth media consumption periodically interact with the media, in addition to maintaining channels of communication with society (websites, social media pages, channels and groups in messenger apps, etc.). This news does not engage many consumers, however, is not as rated as other popular media materials, and does not add commercial media value.

INDICATOR 8

Ind 8. Youth-serving arms of government use quality information to make public policy decisions.

* This indicator was only assessed among adults.

34 somewhat weak

34 adults

Adult Component:

Experts disagreed with the statement that, "youth-focused government entities refer to quality news media or information from civil society when explaining their decisions related to youth."

Most experts believe that government agencies lack sufficient funding to thoroughly study the various aspects of young people's lives and, above all, their needs. Representatives of public organizations noted that successful projects in the media sphere are implemented in partnership with foreign donor organizations and executive authorities, but funding tends to come from foreign sources.

According to experts, most decisions are made without sufficient study and understanding. Most projects involving young people are based on personal preferences and intuitive decisions, leading to a lower rate of success.

INDICATOR 9

Ind 9. Information supports adequate services for youth and children and helps uphold their rights.

* This indicator was only assessed among adults.

35 somewhat weak

35 adults

Adult Component:

Experts stated that in some cases, the media plays an important social role in informing the public about violations of child and youth rights, which helps to draw public and government attention to the problem and possible solutions. At the same time, the media has become one of the violators of these rights, when reporting violates the privacy and confidentiality of those involved.

Experts stressed that violations of the rights of children and adolescents online are becoming a major threat. In addition, the repertoire of crimes against young people on the Internet is becoming wider, and forms of such abuse are becoming more sophisticated. They increasingly combine different forms of influence and contain more subtle techniques of manipulation.

Experts noted that due to low media literacy, parents themselves often violate the confidentiality rights of their children in the media space.

In Ukraine, most media monitoring is performed by media NGOs. These organizations engage in media analysis and, thanks to their monitoring, highlight violations of the rights of children and youth in the information space. They can put pressure on relevant government agencies, through which they attempt to influence the nature of media coverage involving children and adolescents.

PROSPECTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, there is clear evidence that young people do have media skills. The results from Indicator 2 (youth and children have the necessary skills and knowledge to be media literate) show the highest rating from young people among all indicators, confirming a high level of skill-building that falls into the PYD[6] domains of assets and agency. On the other hand, the overall score for this indicator is somewhat weak, which leaves room for skills development, such as media and digital literacy curricula in schools.

Media skills include wide range of skills and knowledge, including critical thinking, ability to verify information and also an understanding how social media platforms work and how to engage with them safely. Aside from the media skills tested during the FGDs, this research shows that there is a knowledge gap in how social media platforms work. While older groups of young people have a general understanding, the youngest participants (aged 10–12) and adults in most cases lack knowledge about how algorithms and advertisements shape their media environment and information consumption. This gap should be addressed to enhance the assets and agency domains in the PYD framework.

The study also assessed how young people create media content. In most cases, young people rarely engage with unfamiliar users on social media and prefer talking with friends about news or other online events in private chats. This trend shows that young people are passive consumers, who do not greatly contribute to media environment. There is a group 10–15-year-olds who are attracted to challenges (e.g., dance challenges, challenges with specific tasks) on social networks, however, it is not clear how actively they participate in these activities. As a result, there are not many options for how young people can contribute to the media space, which leads to gaps in the PYD contribution domain (see Indicators 4 and 8). In order to address this gap, young people should be engaged in content creation and be a part of global discussions and decision-making processes. By creating content and exchanging messages with peers, youth can shape their own media environment as an alternative to traditional media.

[6] The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework is a keystone of UNITY programming. Using and understanding activities through the PYD lenses, this analysis helps to identify and address existing gaps in youth participation and perceptions in the Ukrainian media realm.

For information on topics in which they are interested, children and young people rely on unofficial sources of information, such as bloggers, whose perceived reliability is not measured by the quality of information but by the number of subscribers. In this context, children often consume information without critically examining it, regardless of whether it contains manipulation, disinformation, or divisive narratives. Therefore, the potential influence of bloggers can be dangerous, which was also highlighted by teachers.

Experts emphasized a need for legislative updates and education on digital rights, proper content policies, confidentiality protection. Adults stated that there is a lack of youth-friendly content and media channels. The research also identifies a lack of information in the media about vulnerable groups. This might pose a challenge to young people, who may have different views and are willing to express themselves but cannot find safe spaces or communities to talk to online, discuss and share different positive norms and expectations, which may also include topics such as gender equality and social inclusion. The PYD Enabling Environment domain should be developed to provide a safe media environment for young people in Ukraine.

Youth media consumption overall has changed dramatically in recent years; online resources and social media have pushed traditional media to the periphery. The Internet poses a new set of challenges for inexperienced users who have not yet developed the necessary media, digital, and information literacy skills. While leaving the legislative and institutional framework underdeveloped, it also presents new threats to the basic rights of children and youth.

METHODOLOGY

QUALITATIVE

The qualitative part of this research was conducted in the form of focus group discussions according to the following methodology:

Target Audience:

- Children of three age groups: 10–12, 13–15, 16–17
- Parents of children in the three age groups, divided based on the level of control they exert over their children's information consumption: loyal (do not impose any restriction on using the Internet and social networks by a child), weak control (follows the activity of a child on the Internet and social media and discusses the content), strict control (imposes parental controls, the child's gadget is tied to the parent's ID/account so there are restrictions on downloading programs, games because a password is needed).
- Teachers of children in the three age groups, including class teachers, computer science teachers, and teachers of subjects that use online resources.
- Experts, who represent government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media (regardless of region).
- All participants of FGDs are users of the Internet, social networks, and messengers.

Geography:

FGDs were held in three regions: Kyiv, Lviv, and Kharkiv Oblasts. They were held separately for urban and rural residents.

Data Collection Method:

- FGDs were conducted online, except for two groups with children aged 10–12.
- FGDs with children and youth included tasks on the ability to use information, distinguish true information from false, and analyze video messages.
- After the FGD, participants filled out an online questionnaire[7] to supplement the discussion with quantitative data.

[7] The questionnaire template can be shared upon request.

Fieldwork:

Target Audience	Age of children	Gender	Region	Format of FGD	Date
Youth	10-12	mixed	Kyiv	offline	15.12.2021
	10-12	mixed	Lviv Oblast	offline	21.12.2021
	10-12	mixed	Kharkiv	online	17.12.2021
	13-15	female	Kyiv Oblast	online	14.12.2021
	13-15	female	Kharkiv	online	20.12.2021
	13-15	male	Kyiv	offline	16.12.2021
	13-15	male	Lviv Oblast	offline	22.12.2021
	16-17	male	Kharkiv	online	17.12.2021
	16-17	female	Kharkiv Oblast	online	21.12.2021
	16-17	female	Kyiv	offline	15.12.2021
	16-17	male	Lviv	offline	20.12.2021
	16-17	female	Lviv	offline	20.12.2021
Parents	10-12	mixed	Lviv Oblast	online	16.12.2021
	10-12	mixed	Kyiv	online	13.12.2021
	13-15	mixed	Kyiv	online	14.12.2021
	16-17	mixed	Kyiv Oblast	online	15.12.2021
	16-17	mixed	Kharkiv	online	17.12.2021
Teachers	10-12	mixed	Kyiv	online	18.12.2021
	13-15	mixed	Kyiv Oblast	online	20.12.2021
	13-15	female	Kharkiv	online	22.12.2021
	16-17	mixed	Kyiv	online	18.12.2021
	16-17	female	Lviv	online	21.12.2021
Experts	-	mixed	-	online	10.01.2022
	-	mixed	-	online	20.12.2021

QUANTITATIVE

The representative online poll[8] was conducted to quantify the findings of the qualitative stage and check the hypothesis formulated in the qualitative stage.

Target audience:

- Children aged 10–17 years old, users of social networks

Geography:

- Cities of Ukraine
- The entire territory of Ukraine except temporarily occupied Crimea and territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

Sample:

Representative by sex, age, region, and size of the settlement. The sample is representative at the general level and at the level of each age group: 10–12 years old, 13–15 years old, 16–17 years old.

[8] The questionnaire template can be shared by request.

Invitations to take part in the survey were sent to online panelists based on a quota for region and type of settlement. Further selection was random.

Sample size:

- Total – 600 interviews
- 10–12 years old – 200 interviews
- 13–15 years old – 200 interviews
- 16–17 years old – 200 interviews

Data collection method:

- Online interviews (computer-assisted web interviewing) – self-completion (13–17 years old) or with the assistance of parents (10–12 years old).

Fieldwork:

- February 11 to February 23, 2022.

ADULT COMPONENT CALCULATION

In a qualitative study of the post-FGD survey for teachers, parents, and experts, some statements reflect the PYD dimensions of importance and perception for all nine indicators (see below) of adult assessments of youth media literacy and habits. Within the Adult Component, all nine indicators were analyzed and calculated.

The Adult Component was constructed according to the following methodology[9]:

Step 1. Normalization of estimates of nine media literacy indicators.

Each of the nine media literacy indicators must be comparable with each other.

As such, we summarize all the answers to questions related to each indicator (SUM) and divide it by the number of questions.

Step 2. Calculation of the importance of the indicators.

All answers to questions for determining importance were asked on a scale of 1 to 10.

[9] Files with detailed calculation algorithms for the Index and its components may be requested separately.

"How important is each of the following characteristics for safe and productive information consumption by children and youth aged 10–17 years old? Please use a 10-point scale, where 1 means that it has the lowest importance and 10 means that it has the highest importance."

This block of importance evaluation includes 32 questions. They are grouped into nine sub-blocks, forming nine indices. The first sub-block includes five questions, the second four questions, the third four questions, the fourth three questions, the fifth four questions, the sixth three questions, the seventh three questions, the eighth three questions, and the ninth three questions.

The maximum value of the sum obtained in step 1 by each sub-block is 10.

To obtain a percentage characterizing the importance of each indicator, it should be a sum, obtained in Step 1, multiplied by 10. This value shows the percentage of the calculated value from the maximum possible.

Step 3. Calculation of the perception of the indicators.

The calculations were performed similarly to the Importance dimension, but the measurement used a scale from 1 to 5:

"How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please use a 5-point scale, where 1 means that you totally agree and 5 mean you totally disagree."

Therefore, to obtain an indicator, we multiplied the average value by 20, in order to make Importance and Perception comparable.

Step 4. Calculation of the Adult Component.

Calculation of the overall Adult Component:

Index = (Importance + Perception)/2

Example. Calculation of Indicator 1.

The principle of indicator construction is:

- Each indicator for the Adult Component consists of a different number of questions. For the first component (Indicator 1), there are five questions.

One can first calculate the Importance of Indicator 1. The respondent answers each question on a scale from 1 to 10. The maximum score for this component will be 10*5=50. Respondent answers for this block:

- Question 1. "2"
- Question 2. "5"
- Question 3. "7"
- Question 4. "8"
- Question 5. "7"

Therefore, for Indicator 1, the Importance is IMP1= 29/50*100= 58.

The next step is the Perception calculation for Indicator 1. The respondent answers each question on a scale from 1 to 5. The maximum score for this component is 5*5=25.

Respondent answers for this block:

- Question 1. "2"
- Question 2. "3"
- Question 3. "4"
- Question 4. "4"
- Question 5. "4"

Therefore, for Indicator 1 the Perception is – PER1= 17/25*100= 68.

The total value of the Indicator for this respondent will be: Ind1_total = (IMP1+ PER1)/2=63.

Thus, we calculated the indicators of Importance, (IMP1), Perception, (PER1), and Total Indicator (Ind1_total) at the individual level for each respondent.

The following procedure is the same for all nine indicators. In order to make Adult and Youth Component comparable, additional weights are applied to the Adult Component scores.

How to calculate the final Adult Component score?

For each target audience, the Component score for each indicator is calculated as the mean value.

To determine the general Adult Component score, the average of all nine indicators is taken.

Adult Component=mean(Ind1_total, Ind2_total ,Ind3_total, Ind4_total, Ind5_total, Ind6_total, Ind7_total, Ind8_total, Ind9_total).

YOUTH COMPONENT CALCULATION

In a quantitative study for the youth component, some statements assess the level (indicators) of media literacy and media habits of youth aged 10 to

17. Within the Youth Component, five indicators (1, 2, 3, 5 and 6) were analyzed and calculated.

Questions (activities) that characterize a certain indicator were selected from the online poll questionnaire. For each respondent, all positive responses and negative responses were aggregated. There are five positive answers in total.

Youth Component was constructed according to the following methodology:

1. At the individual level, all the positive and negative responses are summarized.
2. Then, they are normalized by the number of all positive answers and multiplied by 100.

Since the negative answers were taken into account as well, the possible range for an individual respondent is -40 to 100. At the same time, no negative scores are observed on the aggregate level of the group, so the range is simplified to 0 – 100.

Example. Calculation of Indicator 1.

	Do you protect your privacy and security on the Internet?
1	Yes **(1)**
2	No **(-1)**
	If yes, what do you generally do to protect your privacy and security on the internet? Select all that apply
1	I am careful when I am using my devices – e.g., do not open suspicious mail or messages **(1)**
2	I restrict access to my devices – e.g., using passwords, fingerprints, face scans **(1)**
3	I use security software – e.g., anti-virus/anti-malware **(1)**
4	Other **(1)**
99	None of the above **(-1)**
98	Don't know **(-1)**

At the individual level, all positive and negative responses are summarized then normalized by the maximum number of all positive answers (for this indicator it is divided by 5) and multiplied by 100.

As a result, we get a value for Indicator 1, characterizing each respondent from -40 to 100. For this block of questions, -40 means that in the block of two questions there were no more than two negative answers.

How to calculate the final Youth Component score?

The calculations were performed in the following way:

- For each target audience, the value of the indicator calculated the average to assign the equivalent impact on the result of the Youth Component.
- To determine the final score, the average Index for all five indicators was taken.

Y-VIBE INDEX CALCULATION

Y-VIBE Index is a compilation of two components, the Adult Component, and the Youth Component, which are based on nine indicator scores.

The Index was constructed according to the following methodology:

1. For indicators that were assessed both in Adult and Youth Components, weights have been assigned in the following manner: relative weight of youth assessment in the Youth Component is 40%; relative weight of each adult group (parents', experts', teachers' assessment) in the Adult Component is 20%.
2. For indicators that were assessed solely in the Adult Component, the Index results were taken from Adult Component scores.

LIMITATIONS OF Y-VIBE INDEX

Y-VIBE Index is made of two different components, Adult and Youth. Among the disadvantages of this approach are:

- As youth are not always able to answer difficult questions posed by adults, the questionnaire was initially simplified according to their age. Hence, questionnaires for children are different from the questionnaires of adults.
- The Adult Component is an assessment of various statements related to youth media literacy and media environment.
- The youth poll is based on their experience on the Internet and media activity.

To more accurately compare the components of the two data sets, the questionnaires should be completely identical.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. List of Y-VIBE indicators and sub-indicators

Principle	Indicator	Sub-indicators
A) Information Consumption and Engagement	Ind 1: Youth and children can safely use the internet due to child protection laws, content restrictions, privacy protections, and security tools.	1. Legal protections for youth and children's data privacy and digital security exist.
		2. Youth and children can freely access technology-based tools that help protect their privacy and security.
		3. There is evidence that youth and children are aware of the algorithms driving social media, mechanics of advertisement targeting, and other ways in which personal information is utilized to target digital users.
	Ind 2: Youth and children have the necessary skills and knowledge to be media literate.	1. School systems include media and information literacy in curricula.
		2. To the degree that divisive narratives. exist, youth can identify them and not be manipulated.
		3. There is evidence that youth and children have basic digital and data literacy skills, including the basics of how digital technology works, and use them to keep themselves digitally secure.
	Ind 3: Youth and children engage productively with the information that is available to them.	1. Non-partisan news sources focused on youth and on children exist and are relevant to their audiences. These could include sections of adult newspapers or materials specifically targeting youth.
		2. Other information sources for youth and children exist and provide quality information on topics of interest (e.g., entertainment, sports, social media, messaging, games)
		3. Youth consume information from a range of reliable sources and highly accessed channels do not allow the free flow of divisive narratives.
	Ind 4: Media and information producers engage with the youth and children audience's needs.	1. Media and content producers seek to understand their potential youth and children audience's needs and interests through qualitative research.
		2. Media and content producers use quantitative data to understand the size, access, habits, and scope of the youth/children audience or market.
		3. Media and content producers actively seek to include marginalized youth audiences.
B) Transformative Action: How Information Drives Behavior	Ind 5: Information producers and distribution channels enable or encourage youth to share information across regions, genders, ethnic groups, and	1. There is evidence youth and children read or view multiple types of media with varied regional, gender, and ethnic perspectives.
		2. Youth and children participate in the exchange of information with others they disagree with through in-person forums (such as town hall meetings or call-in shows) and through digital forums (such as social media platforms, or comment sections of web-based media).

	mindsets/political perspectives.	3. There is evidence youth and children engage in open and constructive discussions informed by quality news and information.
	Ind 6: Youth and children use quality information to inform their actions.	1. There is evidence that youth and children's views on political or social issues are shaped primarily by quality information and not by misinformation.
		2. Youth and children use good quality information to take prosocial actions (such as following fact-based health and safety recommendations).
		3. Youth and children are willing to confront the spread misinformation that violates prosocial norms (such as divisive narratives).
	Ind 7: Youth-serving civil society organizations (CSOs) integrate quality news and information when explaining their mission or objectives.	1. Youth-serving CSOs gather, use, and share quality information on an inclusive range of youth with the public as part of their mission.
		2. Youth-serving CSOs do not disseminate misinformation or mal-information and actively work to reduce the spread of misinformation or mal-information.
		3. Media outlets and other information producers actively engage with youth-serving civil society to cover socially important issues.
	Ind 8: Youth-serving arms of government use quality information to make public policy decisions.	1. Youth-focused government entity-led political discourse or debate about youth policy includes references to evidence and facts.
		2. Youth-focused government entity-led political discourse or debate related to youth.
		3. Youth-focused government entities refer to quality news media or information from civil society when explaining their decisions related to youth.
	Ind 9: Information supports adequate services for youth and children and helps uphold their rights.	1. When information sources reveal human rights violations of children and youth, the government responds in an appropriate manner.
		2. There is evidence that quality information prevents or reduces the occurrence of youth and children's rights violations by national or local governments.
		3. When information sources reveal civil liberty violations of youth and children, there is pressure on the government to remedy the violations.

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