

MEDIA AND
INFORMATION
LITERACY



MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY INDEX

Country Report Ghana

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Content

Executive summary	5
Factsheet	6
1. The MIL Index Approach	8
2. Access	9
Diversity of weekly media use	9
Diversity of weekly media used for news	11
3. Analysis	12
Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet	12
Knowledge of the definition of journalism	13
Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression	13
Evaluation of Kenya's news media landscape	13
4. Reflection	14
Condemnation of hate speech	15
Condemnation of disinformation	15
Awareness of news bias	16
Awareness of censorship	17
5. Creation	18
Diversity of media production skills	18
Diversity of online skills	19
6. Action	20
Media activism	20
Putting MIL skills into practice	22
7. Conclusions	26
8. Recommendations	25
Literature	27

Executive summary

Ghana's youth is embracing digital. According to the representative survey conducted for DW Akademie's MIL INDEX study, three quarters of 15-25-year-olds own a smartphone. Over 70% report going online with a mobile phone as well as using Facebook and WhatsApp on a weekly basis. Use of several different social networks and messengers is widespread and frequent. More data intensive networks like Snapchat (34.7%), YouTube (29%) and Instagram (26%) are used by a fairly large proportion of survey respondents every week. "We virtually live our lives on the Internet," as one girl put it during a focus group conducted in Accra. "[I]f it's about politics, if it's about entertainment, if it's about education, you can find enough information on the Internet using your smartphone."

The country report presented here is based on the findings of the MIL INDEX study, for which a representative survey, eight focus groups and seven expert interviews were conducted in Ghana between November 2018 and April 2019. The study focused on five Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skill sets: access, analysis, reflection, creation, and action. For each of these dimensions, survey respondents received a score ranging between 0 (= no skills whatsoever) and 20 (= highest level of skills) points, adding up to a maximum of 100 points. The scoring system measures how often certain skills are actually put into practice (access, creation, action) or tests the skills directly (analysis, reflection). Since citizens cannot permanently use media and information sources, unless they are journalists or media workers, a perfect score of 100 for any country appears unrealistic—it is more about the relative performance across time and in comparison to other countries, as well as being a tool for identifying deficits to be addressed in media development.

The 15-25-year-old Ghanaians on average displayed good skills in terms of action (13.9) and analysis (13.1), and intermediate skills when it came to creation (11.4). Deficits were mainly found in terms of reflection (10.2) and access (10.8). The total score amounted to 59.5 out of a possible 100.

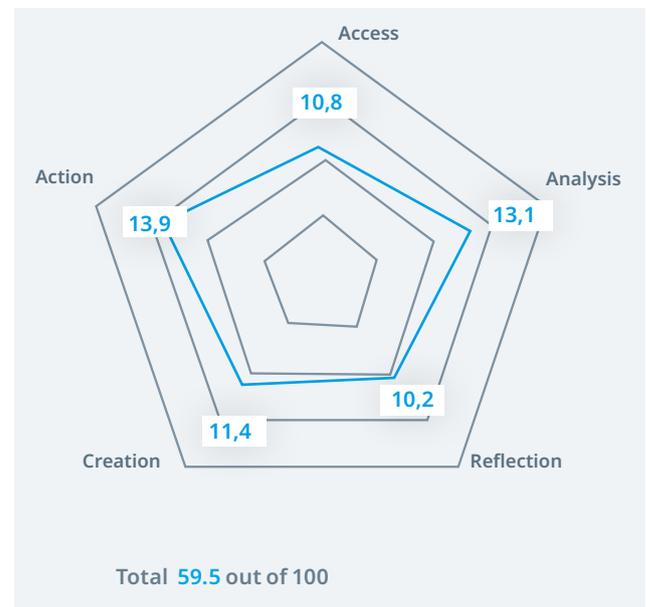


Image 1 MIL INDEX scores (maximum: 20, minimum: 0) for each dimension and total score. The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

Access



- Radio | n = 1298
- TV | n = 1297
- Newspaper | n = 1279
- Online | n = 1291

Use of media on a weekly basis: According to MIL Index survey data, television is the preferred medium used by young people in Ghana on a weekly basis (85.0%), followed by radio (69.3%), and the Internet (68.6%). Newspapers or magazines are only read by a minority (17.9%).



- Radio | n = 1299
- TV | n = 1299
- Newspaper | n = 1299
- Online | n = 1299

Use of media for news: Television is also the prime source of news, used by almost 80% of respondents, followed by online at a proportion of almost two thirds, radio at slightly below 60%, and the printed press with less than 10%.

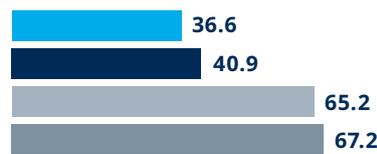
Analysis



- Knowing difference between Facebook and the Internet | n = 1299
- Defining journalism | n = 1299
- Knowing constitutional right to freedom of expression | n = 1299

Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication: Over 70% of the respondents knew that there is a constitutional right to freedom of expression and that it applies to everyone and more than 60% knew the difference between Facebook and the Internet and could define journalism. These knowledge items were asked in a multiple-choice format.

Reflection

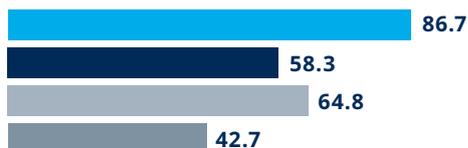


- Hate speech | n = 1274
- Disinformation | n = 1270
- News bias | n = 1258
- Censorship | n = 1262

Condemnation (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”) of adverse forms of communication: Roughly two thirds of respondents recognized cases of biased reporting and censorship, while only around 40% condemned examples of hate speech and disinformation.

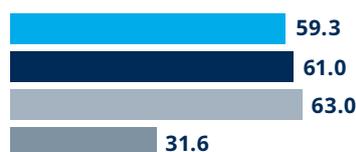
Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Creation



- Taking Photos | n = 1297
- Audio recording | n = 1277
- Taking Video | n = 1290
- Writing and publishing reports | n = 1252

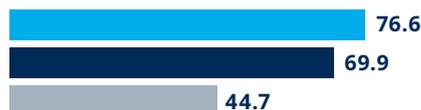
Use of production skills at least “sometimes”: Over 80% at least sometimes took photos with their camera or smartphone, almost two thirds recorded videos and slightly less than 60% recorded audio that often. Over 40% indicated that they wrote and published reports at least sometimes.



- Uploading files | n = 1262
- Updating social media accounts | n = 1269
- Creating messenger groups | n = 1258
- Creating blogs/websites | n = 1233

Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website): Around 60% of respondents reported uploading files and updating their social media profiles at least sometimes, while the same proportion indicated having created a WhatsApp group before. Less than a third had created a website or blog.

Action



- Sharing information with others | n = 1294
- Commenting on social issues in public | n = 1289
- Joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns | n = 1271

Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others) or at least “rarely” (joining campaigns on freedom of speech or access to information): Over three quarters of respondents share information they get from the media with others, almost 70% comment social issues online or in public at least sometimes and almost half of the respondents said they had joined a campaign on freedom of speech or access to information.



- Using media responsibly | n = 1295
- Analyzing media critically | n = 1292
- Creating/publishing own content | n = 1266
- Reflecting own use of media | n = 1278

Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills into practice (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”): Around 80% of respondents are convinced they are good at reflecting their own media use and at critical media analysis, three quarters feel they are good at using media responsibly and still more than 70% evaluate their own media creation skills positively.

Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

1. The MIL Index Approach

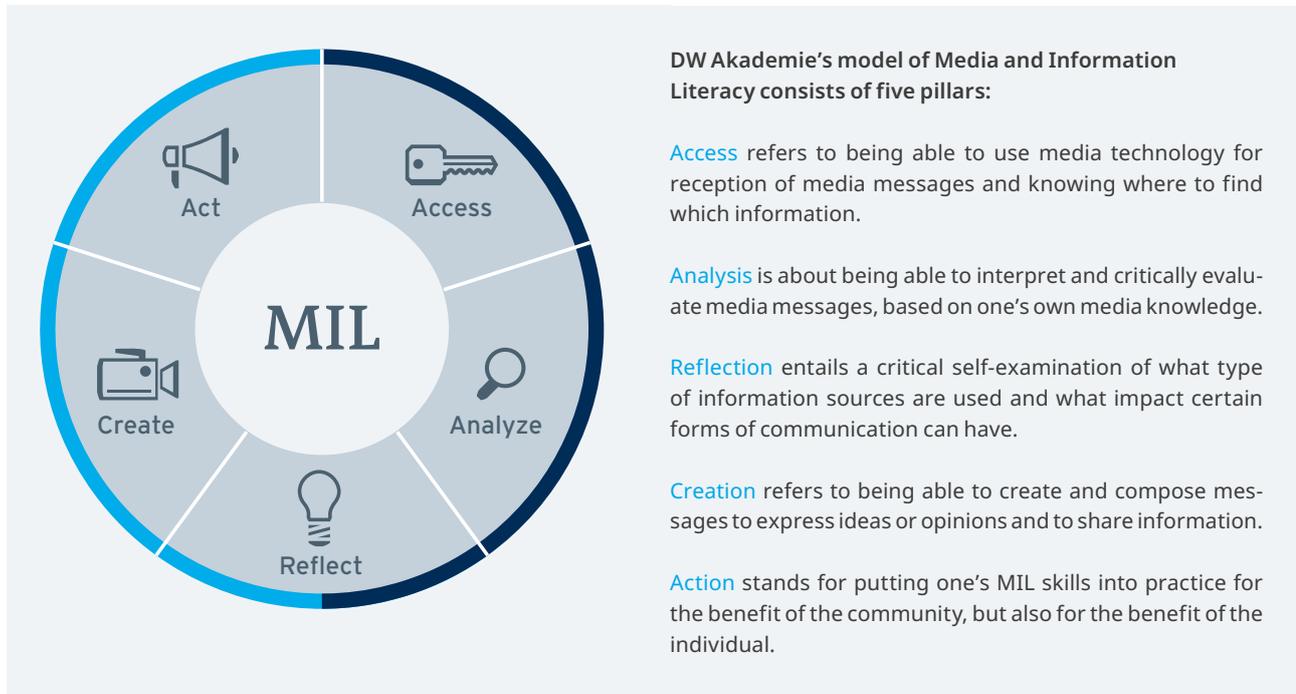


Image 2 DW Akademie's Media and Information Literacy Model

The purpose of the MIL INDEX study, based on data collected between November 2018 and April 2019 in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, and Uganda was to ascertain the levels of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) amongst 15-25-year-old citizens in all six African countries.

MIL is regarded by DW Akademie as an important prerequisite for putting one's rights of access to information and freedom of expression into practice. It involves both using one's skills at the individual level for one's own benefit, but also being an active part in society and contributing to and shaping an informed community.

For Ghana, a representative survey (n = 1.299) was conducted, accompanied by eight focus groups with 62 adolescents and young adults in Accra and Ejisu, and seven in-depth interviews with experts.

The representative study was based on a multi-stage random sample, backed up by a quota plan for gender and rural vs. urban distribution to ensure that the data were not skewed towards certain types of respondents. The focus groups were differentiated by age (15 to 18 and 19 to 25) and rural vs. urban setting. The expert interviews included two key informants each for the following areas of expertise: media, youth, education, and MIL.

The participants answered questions that were drawn from the five key MIL skill sets of the model: access, analysis, reflection, creation and action. Each sub-dimension is defined at the beginning of the corresponding sub-chapter and includes a short description of how the scores were calculated. Each sub-dimension has a maximum score of 20, meaning the overall maximum score is 100. The overall MIL INDEX score is calculated adding the scores for the sub-dimensions to arrive at the total score. It goes without saying that a scoring system reduces the complexity of the subject matter, which is why it is advisable to take into account the findings from the interviews and focus groups as well, as presented below.

Since citizens cannot permanently use media and information sources unless they are journalists or media workers, a perfect score of 100 for any country appears unrealistic—it is more about the relative performance across time and in comparison to other countries. Additionally, no one dimension is enough to gauge levels of MIL. For instance, frequency and diversity of media used (access) should be looked at alongside issues such as trustworthiness (analysis) and impact of different forms of mediated communication (reflection) to obtain a more thorough picture of the situation on the ground.

The summary of results presented in the following is structured according to the model above.

2. Access

Access refers to being able to use media technology for reception of media messages and knowing where to find and use information.

Scoring

- 1. Diversity of weekly media use** was measured according to the number of media types (television, radio, printed press, online) survey respondents used on a weekly basis.
- 2. Diversity of media used for news** was measured according to the number of media types (television, radio, printed press, online) survey respondents used for news.

- 1. Diversity of weekly media use | 5.5 out of 10**
- 2. Diversity of media used for news | 5.3 out of 10**

Access Sum Index Score

10.8 out of 20



Access to information presupposes being able to utilize media technologies, i.e., radio or television sets, computers, mobile phones, etc., and being adept at finding the information one needs. It enables citizens to make informed decisions and to participate in democratic society. The focus is on reception and comprehension of media messages. It should be borne in mind that access presupposes the necessary infrastructure and media landscape, meaning that levels of access are not always a matter of competency, but also of availability and affordability. Access skills are always media specific.

The experts interviewed for the study emphasize the importance of access to information in Ghana. “[I]nformation is like air that we breathe”, Kweku Asante of Media Foundation of West Africa is convinced. “[W]e need to know what is happening at every point in our lives.” Despite this important role of information, he believes that there is a “disparity with regard to rural-urban, North-South, [...] gender [and] with regard to class” amongst media users in Ghana. This assumption was tested using the data that came out of the representative survey.

The MIL INDEX study measures access by looking at (1) the diversity of types of media used on a weekly basis and (2) the diversity of types of media used for news and information. Actual usage is taken as an indicator for technical access and consumption abilities, while diversity of media and news

sources is interpreted as a proxy for the diversity of information and opinions that potentially reach young persons in Ghana.

Diversity of weekly media use

As mentioned in the introduction, the 15-25-year-old Ghanaians are at the forefront of digital transformation in their country. Around 70% go online at least once a week, which is on a par with weekly radio use and only second to television. 85% of respondents watch TV on a weekly basis. The printed press, i.e., newspapers and magazines, is read by less than one fifth of the 15-25-year-olds every week, though despite the item emphasizing printed products, some might have interpreted this in terms of newspaper websites online or on social media as well. The average diversity of media types used leads to a MIL INDEX score of 5.5 out of 10.

Television sets (88.4%) are more prevalent in the households that 15-25-year-olds live in than radio sets (70.9%) and this correlates with frequency of use. The focus groups reemphasized the fact that the young generation has gone through an “iconic turn” in their patterns of media use. Television is valued for its visual appeal, but also for its high availability and low costs.

The focus group participants used television both for entertainment—movies, sports, cartoons and telenovelas were men-

Female, 19-25, rural

“TV you can watch for free, but on phone you have to download it for 10 Cedis credit before you can watch it.”

Female, 19-25, urban

“I won’t get time to use the desktop if I sell in the market, but I can get to know what is going on around the world if I have radio.”

tioned—and for news. It was indicated that different channels are watched, depending on the gratifications sought. Some criticized the linear format of programming for not allowing on-demand access as opposed to Internet-based services.

Though television is also medium number one amongst respondents from rural parts of Ghana radio has retained its important role there and is used by as many respondents on a daily basis as the Internet. The focus groups revealed that radio is valued for reasons of affordability, ease of access, and the diversity of programs. They listen to music

and local information. Youths also appreciate that radio can be listened to while performing other activities or when they are going somewhere using public transport.

Print media were seen as superfluous in the face of online news content by the focus groups. Some participants also criticized the high cost of print news media and thought them to be outdated by the time they were published. “It’s not our culture” (female, 19-25, urban), one participant insisted.

The Internet is accessed primarily via smartphones. 56% of respondents accessed the Internet via their mobile phones on a daily basis, as compared to 26.9% daily online users using personal computers, laptops, or tablet PC’s. The focus groups showed that the Internet is used for a great diversity of purposes, from chatting via social media or messengers, across downloading videos and songs, to doing school research using popular search engines. Smartphones are treasured for the high mobility and the multiplicity of functions they offer. For instance, when asked to name the most frequently used apps on their smartphones, a rural focus group of 15-18-year olds mentioned the social networks Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the messengers WhatsApp, IMO, Viber, and Telegram, the video platform YouTube, the search engine Google, the web browser Chrome, the e-mail provider Gmail, and the download application TDownloader.

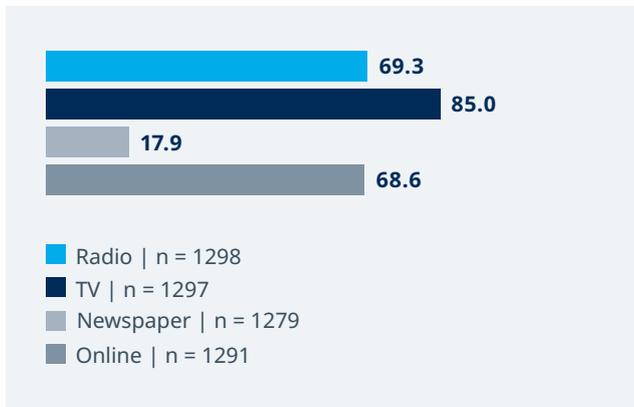


Image 3 Use of media on a weekly basis (radio, television, newspapers/magazines, online). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

In some urban focus groups, the participants mentioned using their smartphones for television, radio, newspaper, and even book content.

Female, 19-25, rural

“The smartphone can do everything.”



As mentioned in the introduction, smartphone ownership is very high at 74.6%, with only 19.3% owning a feature phone or “yam,” as it is called in Ghana. Interestingly, there were no significant gender, rural-urban, or age differences when it comes to smartphone ownership and social media use, but clear differences in terms of gender (49.3% male vs. 36.4% female) and locality (48.7% urban vs. 37.0% rural) for daily use of the Internet.

Notice should also be taken of the fact that there were no age differences, meaning that adoption of devices and use of the Internet take place in Ghana comparatively early. 12.7% of respondents reported never having accessed the Internet.

Social media and Internet-based messengers are widespread and frequently used in Ghana. Focusing on the proportion of daily users amongst the respondents, WhatsApp (61.2%) is the most popular application, closely followed by Facebook (57.1%). The proportion of daily Snapchat users is still comparatively high, at 23.2%, followed by Instagram (14.9%), and YouTube (11.0%). More than half of the respondents indicated using Facebook and WhatsApp for receiving news.

Diversity of weekly media used for news

Television is the most used source of news, more than three quarters of respondents reporting that they watch it for getting information. Internet (64.8%) has overtaken radio (59.4%) as the second most important news source. Less than 10% of 15-25-year-olds read newspapers or magazines for news and

information. Broken down to the individual level, this distribution amounts to a MIL INDEX score of 5.3 out of 10.

In line with the idiom “seeing is believing,” several focus group participants reported trusting television more than radio news. “Through the TV you can see the people giving the information,” (male, 19-25, rural) one participant argued, something not possible with radio. GTV, Ghana’s national public broadcaster, was considered throughout as one of the most trustworthy television channels.

The smartphone was regarded as a powerful tool for obtaining and cross-checking information, but the survey data revealed a significant gender gap (71.1% male vs. 58.4% female) and a locational divide (urban 70.5% vs. rural 58.9%) when it comes to using online for news. Views regarding the information disseminated on social media were divided. Some saw them as a useful source for information while others regarded them primarily as a source for disinformation. The website Ghanaweb sparked particular controversy in one group. The online portal allows for user-generated content which some saw as a benefit, offering news not found elsewhere, while others argued contributors would “just write anything” and “it’s not all true” (female, 19-25, urban).

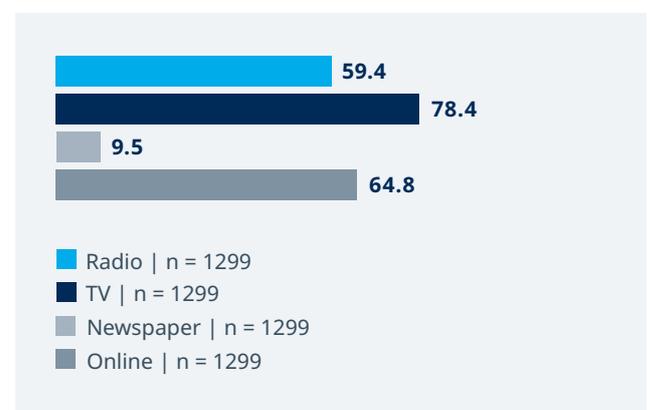


Image 4 Use of media for news and information (radio, television, newspapers/magazines, online). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

3. Analysis

Analysis is about being able to interpret and critically evaluate media messages, based on one's own media knowledge.

Scoring

1. **Knowing the difference between Facebook and the Internet** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.
2. **Knowing how journalism is defined** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.
3. **Knowing one's constitutional right to freedom of expression** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.

1. **Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet** | 4.0 out of 6.67

2. **Knowledge of the definition of journalism** | 4.3 out of 6.67

3. **Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression** | 4.7 out of 6.67

Analysis Sum Index Score

13.1 out of 20¹



¹ The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

Analysis of media entails having background knowledge on how media messages are created and structured, in order to be able to aptly interpret and evaluate them. It is the prerequisite for being able to make one's critical attitude count in practice.

The relevance of knowing how the media function was underscored by the experts interviewed for the MIL INDEX study. "It's very important to know about the media because they are important stakeholders in the national life," Etse Sikanku of Ghana Institute of Journalism is convinced, and yet Obaa Yaa Konadu from NGO Youth Empowerment Synergy does not believe that Ghana has done well in this respect "because of the level of education of many people." She perceives an excessive readiness on the part of 15-25-year-olds to accept anything reported in the media as "the truth."

Analysis was operationalized for the MIL INDEX study by using multiple-choice items that tested for knowledge in respect to (1) knowing the difference between Facebook and the Internet, (2) knowing how to define journalism, and (3) knowing that one's right to freedom of expression is guaranteed by the national constitution.

Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet

Following Facebook's initiative giving citizens of countries in the Global South access to a limited bouquet of websites for free ("Free

Basics"), there has been concern that citizens increasingly will not know the difference between the social network and the Internet technology it runs on. Out of the respondents from Ghana, every eighth believed that Facebook was indeed the Internet. On the other hand, over 60% of the respondents knew that Facebook is an Internet-based social network. The remaining 39.4% either opted for the other two wrong answers (Facebook is a search engine or an affiliate network based on Internet Explorer technology) or did not know. The MIL INDEX score result was 4.0 out of 6.67.

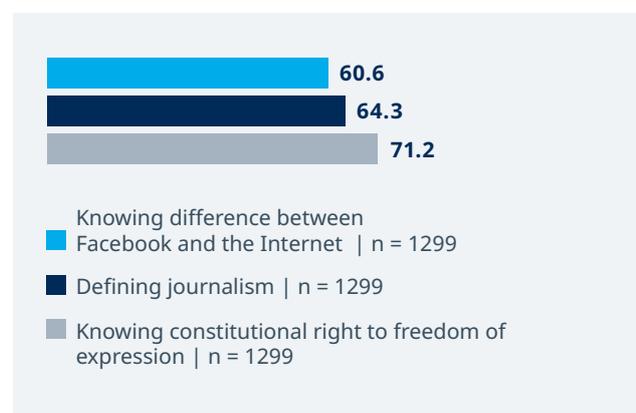


Image 5 Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Knowledge of the definition of journalism

While journalists are supposed to be independent, public relations officers promote the interests of their company or organization. Knowing the difference is an important principle in media analysis. Almost two thirds of the respondents accurately opted for the correct definition of journalism, a fifth thought that journalism is the same as public relations and the remaining 6.4% opted for another wrong answer or did not know. This result amounts to 4.3 out of 6.67 on the MIL INDEX score.

Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, as laid down in article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Over two thirds of the respondents knew that this right applies to every citizen in Ghana and is guaranteed by the national constitution. The remaining third of respondents either thought that there is no such right (15.9%) or thought that it is reserved for men or for women only (10.3%), or did not know. The MIL INDEX score was at 4.7 out of 6.67 points.

Evaluation of Ghana's news media landscape

When evaluating the Ghanaian news media landscape as a whole, the survey respondents allocated quite good marks. More than three quarters found the media to be diverse and neutral, more than 80% felt they were relevant to themselves, reported in a timely fashion, and were easy to understand. Merely in the trustworthiness department, respondents were a bit more skeptical, but still more than two thirds of the 15-25-year-olds agreed that Ghana's media are trustworthy on the whole.

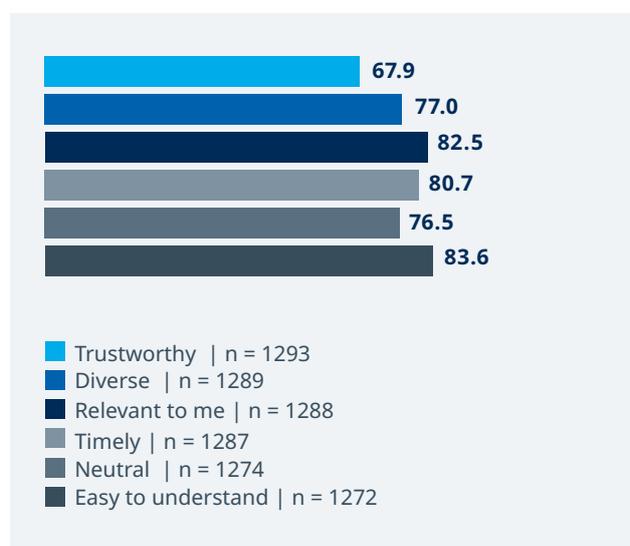


Image 6 Evaluation of news media in Ghana. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

4. Reflection

Reflection entails a critical self-examination of one’s own media consumption and reflecting what impact certain forms of communication can have on oneself.

Scoring

- 1. **Condemnation of hate speech** was measured by showing respondents an example of hate speech and asking them whether they considered it to be “funny.”
- 2. **Condemnation of disinformation** was measured by showing respondents an example of disinformation and asking them whether they considered it to be “trustworthy.”
- 3. **Awareness of news bias** was measured by showing respondents an example of biased news and asking them whether it was “one-sided” or not.

4. **Awareness of censorship** was measured by showing respondents an example of censorship and asking them whether the media outlet in the example was being “censored” or not.

- 1. **Condemnation of hate speech** | 1.8 out of 5
- 2. **Condemnation of disinformation** | 2.0 out of 5
- 3. **Awareness of news bias** | 3.2 out of 5
- 4. **Awareness of censorship** | 3.2 out of 5

Reflection Sum Index Score

10.2 out of 20



The extensive use of digital media means that the 15-25-year-old Ghanaians can reap the benefits the online world offers, but it also means they encounter such adverse phenomena as disinformation and hate speech. This calls for a critical perspective on their own media behavior, reflecting the sources and impact of media messages they encounter in social media and the news media from day to day.

From the experience of Awo Aidam Amenya, director of Child Online Africa, however, “the majority of the youth [...] do not reflect.” She points to young Ghanaians’ frequent posting of compromising photographs and videos on social media as symptoms of this inability. Digital security issues are another major reason young Ghanaians should learn to reflect what they post on social media. As Dr. Abena Yeboah-Banin of the University of Ghana emphasizes, “people are putting things about themselves online that they don’t know the security implications of.” Jerry Sam of Pen Plus Bytes draws attention to the need for reflection when it comes to information sources. “The youth are concerned with how to get the information and they just take it,” without, he adds, reflecting on the source of that information. Improvement of reflective skills will “improve the level of media literacy and [...] influence [...] media consumption habits amongst young media users,” hopes Dr. Sikanku of GIJ.

For the purpose of ascertaining young people’s reflective skills, respondents were asked to study examples of (1) hate

speech, (2) disinformation, (3) biased reporting, and (4) censorship and indicate whether they rejected them or approved of them. The level of (dis)agreement was measured on a five-point scale. Being able to judge these forms of communication was taken as a proxy for skills in terms of reflection.

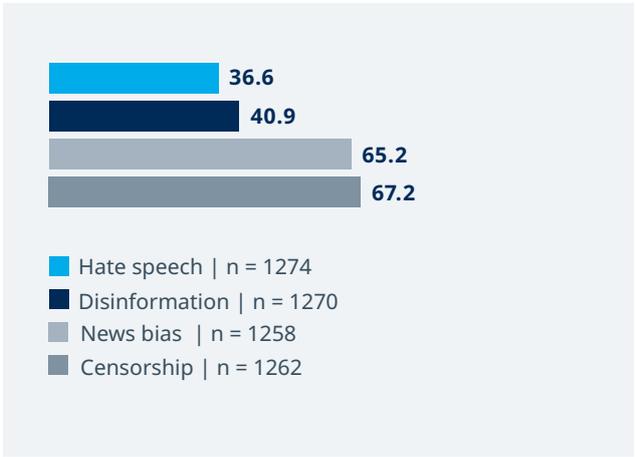


Image 7 *Condemnation of adverse forms of communication, “strongly” or “somewhat” (hate speech, disinformation, news bias, and censorship). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.*

Male, 19-25, urban

“Someone on Facebook sent him a friend request and he accepted. Then the person started threatening him that he has seen pictures of him, that he’s gay or something.”



Male 15-18, urban

“Fake news is common in Ghana. Especially on Facebook and social media.”



Condemnation of hate speech

The young Ghanaians in the representative survey showed little awareness of the implications of hate speech. Only slightly more than a third of respondents thought the example given in the questionnaire, which described a listener threatening a journalist with violence, was “not funny”. The absolute majority (54.2%) deemed the example “funny” and another 9.2% were indifferent towards it. Urban respondents were significantly more likely to condemn hate speech than their rural counterparts. The lack of reflection on the part of the respondents is troublesome and leads to a low score of 1.8 out of 5.

Experts agreed that hate speech is not at the forefront of concerns in Ghana. According to Jerry Sam of Pen Plus Bytes, political parties would sometimes revert to “insulting instead of educating.” Cyberbullying, on the other hand, was regarded by several experts as a major problem.² “[I]t is an infringement on human rights,” Kweku Krobea Asante of Media Foundation for West Africa underlined. Dr. Abena Yeboah-Banin blamed “trolling” for curtailing people’s right to freedom of expression. “Next time when you are posting something, you are afraid because you don’t know the response people will come up with.” Several experts ren-

dered examples of body shaming, gender-based insults and stalking on social media they knew of.

This impression is reinforced by the focus group discussions, where hate speech was not mentioned once. However, the participants could readily give examples of gender-based and LGBTQ-related insults, exposing peers to ridicule.

The deficits when it comes to hate speech and cyberbullying were further substantiated by a survey item asking whether there could be situations that “make it okay” to employ cyberbullying and hate speech. Over half of respondents (55.7%) agreed (at least somewhat) that cyberbullying can be legitimate, while over two thirds (67.8%) believed there can be a justification for hate speech.

Condemnation of disinformation

The survey respondents also revealed a lack of awareness of disinformative content. Almost half (48.8%) said they would trust a dubious statement by a company on Facebook that claimed to have a cure for HIV/AIDS. 41% believed the message was not to

² In an extra item displaying an example on cyberbullying, more survey respondents thought the behavior of the bullying friends was “okay” than respondents that deemed it “not okay”, which emphasizes that there is a lack of reflective skills.

Male, 19-25, rural

“ Sometimes they fake the headlines to get you to read. I was on social media and they said 'all is gone' and I saw Wiz-kid's picture on it and I was wondering if he was dead. So, I read and realized it was false.



Female, 19-25, urban

“ Politicians own some media houses. Mostly they broadcast based on their political parties.



be trusted and every tenth respondent said they would neither trust nor distrust the company. Again, the lack of reflection is worrisome. The MIL INDEX score amounts to 2.0 out of 5.

According to Awo Aidam Amenya, executive director of Child Online Africa, the challenge for young media users is finding out “how genuine and authentic the news are they receive. Because most of the youth find it difficult verifying the news they have.” This was in line with what most experts reported. Digital literacy trainer Fiifi Awoma Aubbins pointed out that the problem is not restricted to unverified news on social media and recounted two examples of disinformation involving the Vice-President of Ghana and actor Majid Michel which were circulated widely in the Ghanaian media. According to him, blogs are another source of disinformation: “[Fake news] has become more or less the order of the day [for] [...] bloggers because they need people on their websites. [They] create some sensational thing just to get people to follow them.”

Both urban and rural focus groups were aware of cases of disinformation in their immediate environment. In the urban context, examples mentioned were more diverse, while rural youths almost exclusively mentioned rumors related to false deaths which might indicate difficulties in recognizing other types of disinformation. The examples included political rumors that the minister of education had announced reducing tertiary

education to three years and a former president reported dead before this was actually the case. Bloggers were seen as common sources of disinformation and one participant described misleading headlines being used for clickbaiting.

Several groups felt that there should be some sort of regulation of disinformative communication, though they thought that this would be easier to enforce in the case of regular media houses. Some participants suggested journalists could help in exposing “fake news”.

The lack of critical reflection when it comes to disinformation was further documented by a survey item asking respondents whether there can be situations that “make it okay” to spread false information. 62.7% of respondents agreed (at least somewhat) that this can be legitimate.

Awareness of news bias

Surprisingly, the young respondents fared much better in identifying adverse forms of journalistic reporting. Almost two thirds of respondents could identify a journalistic report that featured only the opinions of a politician, his friends and family as biased, compared to a fourth believing the report was well-balanced. Every tenth respondent could

Female, 19-25, urban

“There should be rules for publishing online that if you do it you have an obligation to show whether what you are writing is true.



Male, 19-25, rural

“One TV station, if there is an issue against a certain political party they don't really go into details.



once again not make up his mind. The results amounted to a MIL INDEX score of 3.2.

“A lot of our media content by way of news and public affairs is very, very partisan,” said Dr. Abena Yeboah-Banin of Ghana University. “You can see where a certain station or a certain presenter stands,” which “raises questions of trust.” Kweku Krobea Asante of Media Foundation for West Africa reported that media are indeed losing trust in Ghana. He felt this has to do with the fact “that the media are not living up to the standards of what the media audience are expecting of them”, with implications for the quality of public knowledge and debate. Consequently, Jerry Sam of Pen Plus Bytes suggested “there should be education on bias.”

Focus group participants were aware of the fact, that there are affiliations between media outlets and political parties. They could name examples of television and radio stations that would not report it if a certain political party ran into problems and would tend to shed a positive light on everything the party undertook. And yet, when survey respondents were asked whether there could be situations that justified biased reporting, 69.4% agreed.

Awareness of censorship

Most respondents also had no difficulties spotting censorship at a newspaper. More than two thirds were able to identify censorship appropriately, less than a quarter was not, and less than 10% did not know. This, again, suggests that the respondents have good reflective skills when it comes to news media, as opposed to social media. Older respondents (19-25 yrs) were significantly more likely to identify both biased reporting and recognize censorship than younger ones (15-18 yrs). The MIL INDEX score for spotting censorship was comparably high at 3.3 out of 5.

Neither the experts nor the focus groups identified censorship as a big threat in Ghana. According to Jerry Sam of Pen Plus Bytes, there is rather a feeling that people are “abusing their freedom [of expression]” and several experts proposed stepping up regulation. Mr. Asante of MFWA however warned that Internet shutdowns, as considered by government ahead of the 2016 elections, represented an “infringement on people’s digital rights”. This reminder appears all the more pertinent when considering the fact that 74.8% of survey respondents felt that there could be situations that justified media censorship.

5. Creation

Creation refers to being able to create and compose messages to express ideas or opinions and to share information.

Scoring

1. Diversity of media production skills was measured according to the number of production skills (making photos, videos, audio recordings and writing reports) survey respondents employed at least sometimes.

2. Diversity of online skills was measured according to the number of specific online skills (uploading files, updating social media profiles, creating WhatsApp groups as well as blogs or websites) survey respondents employed at least sometimes.

- 1. Diversity of media production skills | 6.2 out of 10
- 2. Diversity of online skills | 5.2 out of 10

Creation Sum Index Score

11.4 out of 20



Being able to use media responsibly and critically is just one side of MIL. In today's digital age, media users have increasingly grown to be producers in their own right, uploading their photos and videos on the Internet and publicly sharing their opinions with others. This enables them to make their voices heard.

According to digital literacy trainer Fifi Fawoma Aubbini, the young generation in Ghana is good at "editing pictures and putting it on Facebook or Instagram, but when it comes to actual productivity skills [...] there is a huge gap." Dr. Abena Yeboah-Banin of Ghana University emphasizes that creative skills are a prerequisite for young citizens to be able to put their right to freedom of expression into practice: "[I]f young people are able to exercise their voice because they can create and share content, it means they show us their [...] point of view [...] and they become part of the discussion, rather than adults and other parts of the society deciding what is good for them." Several experts saw YouTube as an important source for obtaining skills in terms of media creation and believed schools are not doing enough to nurture the creative skills of adolescents.

Focusing on creative skills for the MIL INDEX, measurement was conducted by analyzing (1) the diversity of media production skills performed at least "sometimes" by the respondents (taking photos, recording audio, recording video, writing reports) and (2) the diversity of online skills either performed at least "sometimes" (file upload, social media account update) or at least "rarely" (create WhatsApp group, create blog or website).

Diversity of media production skills

Almost 87% of respondents reported taking photos at least sometimes, 58.3% made audio recordings "often" or "sometimes" – as opposed to "rarely" or "never". Almost two thirds recorded videos and 42.7% wrote reports on topics they are interested at least sometimes. Writing reports would have included assignments from schools or other educational institutions, not just for (social) media. All in all, the Ghanaian respondents achieved 6.2 out of 10 for diversity of media production skills.

Young people in Ghana are accustomed to taking their own pictures and posting them on social media. Especially in the urban groups, Snapchat was mentioned several times as the network for taking "very nice pictures" of oneself (female, 15-18, urban), while Instagram was used, for instance, for viewing celebrities' photos. Not being able to post photos was mentioned several times as a drawback of feature phones in contrast to smartphones.

Listening to, watching and downloading music and videos is a favorite pastime of 15-25-year olds, judging by the focus group discussions. Though one expert mentioned podcasts as relevant for young media users in Ghana, audio recording was never mentioned in the focus groups. It may be assumed that the frequent audio recordings referred to by the survey respondents were mainly audio messages on WhatsApp or Snapchat. Producing video seems very important to the young generation in Ghana, reaffirming the tendency towards more visual forms of media and communication. Posting videos of

Female, 15-18, rural

“I can just make a video, and I will say that she never did that and post it.”



themselves, comparing their locations by exchanging videos, using video for self-promotion or awareness raising were examples mentioned in the focus groups. One participant felt that opinion videos are more convincing than writing comments. Asked what she would do if she found rumors being spread about someone she knew on social media, she answered she would post a video setting things straight. Writing reports was not mentioned in any focus group as something important to the young generation.

More advanced skills were seldom found during the discussions. One participant reported having an app for “graphic design” on his smartphone, enabling her to embed pictures into a “good template for design” (female, 19-25, urban). Another participant explained how to post on Instagram and tag the content to generate “a lot of interaction.”

Diversity of online skills

Taking a closer look at online skills, around 60% reported at least sometimes uploading files and updating their social media profiles, while roughly the same proportion had created a WhatsApp group in their lifetime. Creating one’s own website or blog was also surprisingly high, at almost a third of all respondents – perhaps the respondents included certain types of social media profiles in their definition of “blogs.” The score for diversity of online skills was 5.2 out of 10.

Judging by the focus groups, uploading files was restricted to the functions offered by social media: e.g. posting photos and videos. Status updates were mentioned only in connection with WhatsApp, where they were seen as a means for sharing jokes with friends and used for purposes of self-promotion. Membership of WhatsApp groups was a frequent topic in the focus group discussions, creating such groups, blogs, or websites was never mentioned. Accordingly, Jerry Sam of Pen Plus Bytes felt 15-25-year-olds in Ghana should advance their skills in “production of content.”

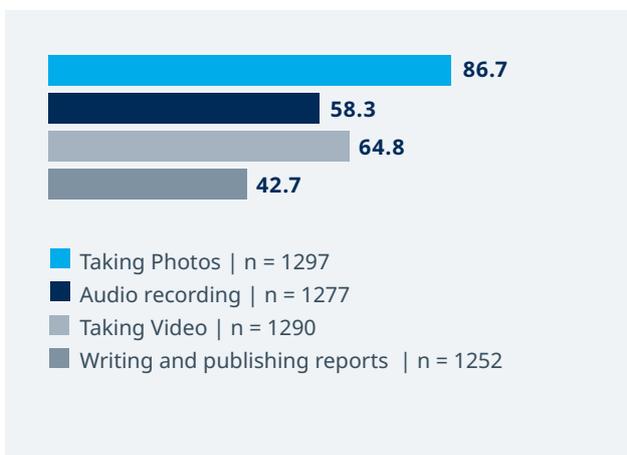


Image 8 Use of production skills (photo, video, audio, editorial) at least “sometimes”. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

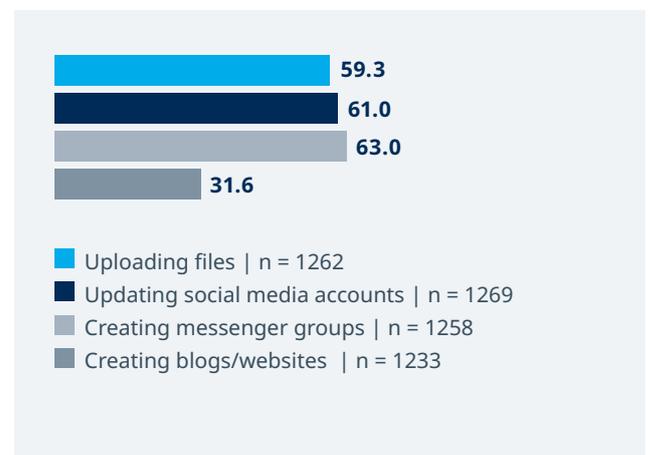


Image 9 Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

6. Action

Action stands for putting one’s MIL skills into practice for the benefit of the community, but also for the benefit of the individual.

Scoring

1. **Activism** was measured according to whether survey respondents shared information with others and whether they commented on social issues online or in public at least sometimes and whether they had ever joined a campaign for freedom of expression or access to information.

2. **Putting skills into practice** was measured via self-assessment, by finding out which survey respondents agreed at least somewhat that they were good at using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, creating their own media and information, as well as reflecting on their own use of media.

- 1. Media activism | 6.3 out of 10
- 2. Putting MIL skills into practice | 7.6 out of 10

Action Sum Index Score

13.9 out of 20



The action dimension can be understood both at the societal level, using one’s MIL skills for participating in public discourse, and at the individual level, putting one’s MIL skills to good use for one’s own benefit.

According to Dr. Abena Yeboah-Banin of the University of Ghana, teenagers in Ghana will voice their concerns on social media rather than using established media such as call-in shows on radio. Obaa Yaa Konadu (Youth Power Synergy) cited a successful campaign that mobilized young people to call for a review of the National Youth Policy. Similarly, digital literacy trainer Fiifi Fawoma Aubbin spoke of a campaign that succeeded in changing the duration of validity of Ghanaian passports by advocating it via social and legacy media to effect change. Ms. Konadu emphasized that these types of action are important to “integrate our citizens into the general development of our country.”

For the purposes of the MIL INDEX, the survey data were analyzed according to (1) whether the respondents shared information they obtained from media with others, commented on social issues online or elsewhere in public at least “sometimes” and whether they had ever taken part in a campaign for freedom of speech or access to information, and according to (2) how well they could put MIL skills (access, reflection, analysis, creation) into practice, based on self-assessment items.

Media activism

Taking a look at action from an activist perspective, the level of participation in public discourse is quite high. More than three quarters of the participants at least “sometimes” shared information they got from the media with others, although only 27.8% reported doing this “often,” and more than two thirds had commented on social issues. 44.7% reported having taken



Image 10 Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others, commenting on social issues) or at least “rarely” (joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

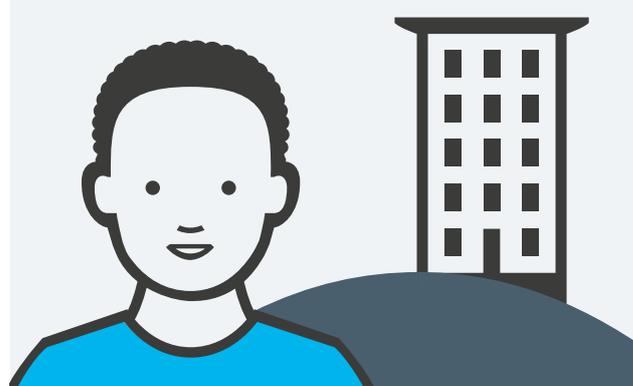
Female, 15-18, rural

“ I think the social media can really help with changing lives of individuals like street children because of the exposure.



Male 15-18, urban

“ Anything that happens, people take a video of it or capture it with their smartphones. Immediately as the thing happens, people post it before even any media house does.



part in campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information, but again only 8.4% did so “often.” This might have included any campaigns the respondents had taken part in, not just media related. Since the bar is placed at “sometimes” rather than “often” for this dimension, the young Ghanaians achieved 6.3 out of 10 for activism.

The focus group participants recounted several examples of how social media were used to raise awareness for certain causes. A recurring theme was helping the needy by drawing attention to their plight or taking photos to increase awareness and get people to donate money for a good cause.

This was echoed in several rural and urban groups, one participant (female, 19-25, urban) even recounted a campaign she had undertaken along with a health practitioner to warn against abuse of the opioid tramadol. The participants also mentioned a campaign against galamseying (illegal mining of gold) and emphasized the role that media could play in problematizing water pollution, sub-standard infrastructure such as untarred roads, and drawing attention to general problems in the economy.

Another important topic for the participants was corruption. One participant reported: “Everything is about corruption. If you are going to school, maybe you have passed your exams

but [...] because you don't have money to pay [the] bribe, you will not be able to go [to university]” (female, 15-18, rural). Others mentioned corruption amongst sports functionaries and in the waste management/sanitation sector. They felt that the media could expose these cases to prevent them happening again.

Cases like these lead to a disenchantment with “official politics” amongst some, as reflected by the little interest the survey respondents showed for politics as a media topic: Less than a third of respondents reported to be “very interested” in politics at the town (31.8%) level, while only around a quarter was “very interested” in politics at the national (27.2%) and international (23.1%) level. As one focus group participant put it: “[T]hey are not listening to the people” (male, 19-25, urban). Other participants, however, emphasized the important role politicians play in democracy and said they “want to follow [...] politicians [...] and [...] see [...] how they are trying to bring development to the doorstep of citizens” (male, 19-25, urban).

Because of the widespread availability of social media, citizens increasingly take on the role of reporters by taking videos of unfolding events and posting them on sites like YouTube, as one participant reported.

Putting MIL skills into practice

At the individual level, the 15-25-year-olds are confident that they have what it takes to put their skills into action for their own benefit. 76.6% of respondents were convinced that they use media responsibly and 82.1% thought they were good at reflecting their own media use. They also judge their creative skills quite highly, with 70.8% indicating they were good at creating and publishing their own content—which is more optimistic than the data above suggest. Notably, 79.1% also gave themselves good marks when it comes to “thinking about media critically”, which does not correspond with their reflections on the Ghanaian media landscape (see diagram 1). Furthermore, the male respondents judged themselves significantly better than their female counterparts in every category, calling for additional caution when interpreting the data. All in all, the results of the self-appraisal lead to a MIL INDEX score of 7.6 out of 10.

The Internet is the premiere site for young people in pursuit of their own aims in life: “On social media, we post our worries and people comment on it” (female, 19-25, urban). When asked to name their hopes and worries in the focus groups, education and employment were recurrent themes, as well as dreams of fame and fortune.

Education is closely linked to dreams of a career that will enable the next generation to fend for their families. It was also the topic that received the highest approval by the survey respondents, where over two thirds indicated being “very interested”

in it as a media topic. As one focus group participant put it, “education is the key to success” (female, 19-25, urban).

Because smartphones are also used as a substitute for books and newspapers, they are an important tool when it comes to working on school or higher education assignments. The media can also help by “advertising scholarship programs via video or television” (male, 15-18, rural).

The 15-25-year-old focus group participants reported multiple ways by which the (digital) media can be of assistance when it comes to employment, from general discussions on Facebook about unemployment, across listening for job vacancies on radio or searching for offers in social media, to self-promotional videos.

Being the young generation, many mentioned dreams of becoming a famous actress, a singer, or a footballer. By watching biographical documentaries in the legacy media and following their heroes on social media, the youngsters draw inspiration for their future: “Each and everyone has a role model. So, through the media you can learn about them, their biographies.”

Several young, urban participants also recounted using the Internet to gain knowledge on improving their skills, be it finding out “more about fashion design” (female, 15-18, urban), learning “what and what not to do” as an actress (female, 15-18, urban), or getting to know “how to use the keyboard” (male, 15-18, urban). In this way, the Internet provides creative inspiration for young people, perhaps not catered for in schools.

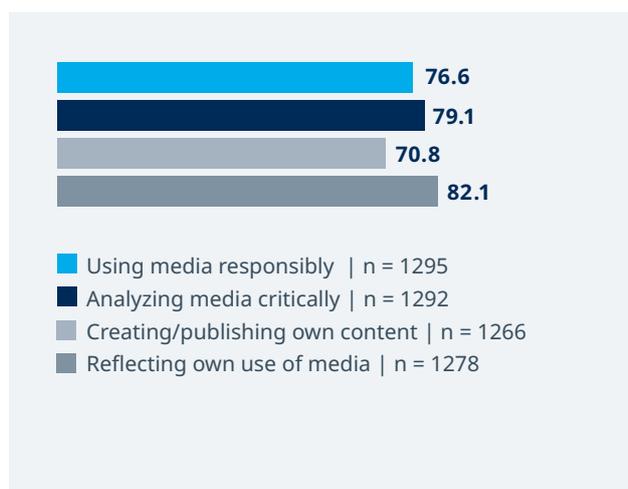
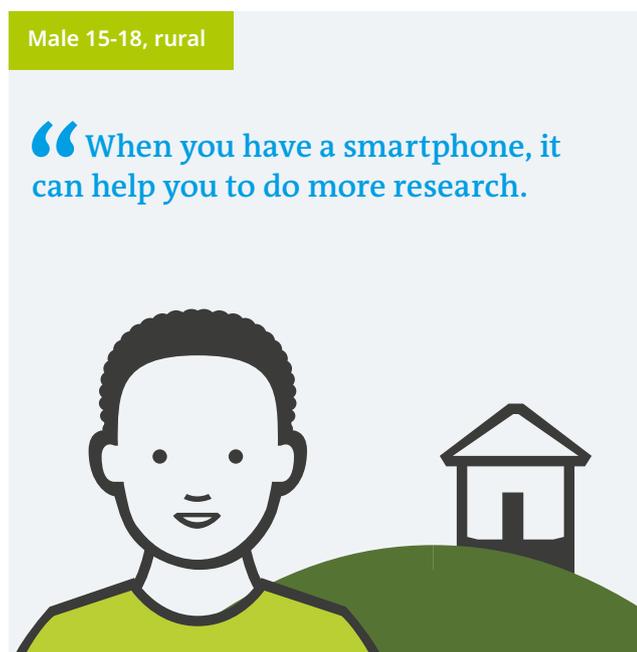


Image 11 Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills (using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, creating and publishing own content, reflecting own use of media) into practice (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

7. Conclusions

The focus of the MIL INDEX study was on the Media and Information Literacy skills of 15-25-year-old Ghanaians. Based on the quantitative results, on average this age group has good skills when it comes to action and analysis, and moderate to good skills in terms of access and creation. The weakest result was obtained in the reflection department. The MIL INDEX score was 59.5 out of a possible 100, putting young Ghanaians in the upper mid-range category for Media and Information Literacy. In the following, the key results will be highlighted by the five sub-dimensions.

Access

15-25-year-old Ghanaians are on the digital fast track. Smartphone ownership is at almost 80% and over 70% access the Internet every week. Over two thirds use Facebook or WhatsApp, roughly one third uses Snapchat and YouTube and more than a quarter uses Instagram on a weekly basis, according to the MIL INDEX representative survey data. There are significant differences based on gender and locality when it comes to daily use of the Internet: Women and rural dwellers access the Internet considerably less often than their male, urban counterparts. Nevertheless, the Internet has surpassed radio as the second most used medium on a weekly basis. Only television is still more relevant, with 85% of respondents watching TV programs weekly. Newspapers and magazines are read by less than one fifth of the 15-25-year-olds every week. Based on the diversity of weekly media use and the diversity of media used for news and information, the MIL INDEX score for access was moderate to good (10.8 out of 20).

Afrobarometer data from 2014 and 2017 suggest that the rise in online media use is associated with a decline in the diversity of news sources used overall. From this perspective, the Ghanaian advances in the digital realm might be masking the fact that the average level of reliable information citizens obtain is decreasing. This would be an interesting field for further study.

It should also be mentioned that Afrobarometer data sees radio as the number one source of news amongst 18-35-year-olds (51%), followed by television (43%) and the Internet (21%). This is at odds with the MIL INDEX findings, though the data for this study is based on a broader sample of the age group. The high proportion of weekly Internet users found in this study is also in line with data gathered for the Global Kids Online study (2017) in Ghana, in which 76% of 15-17-year-olds reported going online at least once a week.

Analysis

Knowledge about the Internet, journalism, and freedom of expression is quite common among the 15-25-year-old Ghanaians. Over two thirds knew that the right to freedom of expression is part of the Ghanaian constitution, close to 60% could tell the difference between the Internet as well as Facebook and almost the same proportion could define journalism. The young generation thus achieves a good MIL INDEX score for analytical skills (13.1 out of 20).

On the downside, respondents were found to be quite uncritical when it comes to the independence of the Ghanaian media landscape, considering the levels of political ownership documented in the Media Ownership Monitor for West Africa (Reporters Without Borders/Media Foundation for West Africa 2019). Neutrality of media was judged as highly as diversity of media, which is documented to be very high in Ghana (see African Media Barometer 2017). Otherwise, the positive appraisal of the media landscape in Ghana is in line with the Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (2019), where Ghana received the second highest rating in Africa.

Reflection

Ghana's youths show a lack of reflection concerning adverse forms of communication like hate speech, cyberbullying, and disinformation. Though the focus groups documented many such experiences, the survey results showed that there was not enough awareness of harmful effects and far too much tolerance of these forms of malcommunication. The findings confirmed expert Awo Aidam Amenyaa's view that "the majority of the youth [...] do not reflect". Only slightly more than one third of the respondents condemned an example of hate speech and the relative majority of respondents were willing to trust a fictitious Facebook posting which claimed a company had found a cure for HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, the respondents were quite adept at identifying news bias and censorship, which explains why the young Ghanaians still achieved a moderate score for reflective skills (10.2 out of 20).

Additionally, high percentages of survey respondents said there could be situations that justified biased reporting and censorship. This sentiment, that Ghana's authorities are too lenient, and that freedom of expression is too far-reaching, was also echoed by some expert statements in the MIL INDEX interviews and is in line with findings from the last African Media Barometer (2017) for Ghana.

Creation

With young Ghanaians embracing the digital transformation, it is not surprising that they generate their own content quite actively. Considerably more than 80% of respondents take photos and around 60% produce their own audio and video recordings at least sometimes. Over 40% of respondents write and publish their own reports on things they are interested in at least sometimes. Uploading files and updating social media profiles is done by roughly 60% of respondents at least sometimes, over 60% have created a WhatsApp group before and almost a third report having created a blog or website. Altogether, young Ghanaians achieved a moderate to good MIL INDEX score (11.4 out of 20).

Action

MIL skills are nothing but a potential for change, before they are put into practice. Sharing information and opinions, and supporting campaigns is one way of using these skills for the betterment of society. This is done by young Ghanaians on a regular basis, more than three quarters share information they obtained from the media and almost 70% comment on social issues in public (online or offline) at least sometimes. Almost half of respondents also reported having joined campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information.

Self-assessment of MIL skills is also quite high. Over 70% feel they can use media responsibly, critically analyze media, create and publish their own media, and over 80% say they are good at reflecting what they do with media. Especially the latter finding contrasts with the fairly low levels of reflection documented above when it comes to hate speech, cyberbullying, and disinformation and the significant difference in self-appraisal between male and female respondents also calls for caution in interpreting the findings. The focus groups showed that young Ghanaians use the Internet in a variety of ways to further their educational and economic opportunities. The MIL INDEX score for the action category is the best amongst all sub-dimensions (13.9 out of 20).

Positive results

Critical results

Access

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Widespread access to and regular use of radio and television + Widespread access to and regular use of the Internet + High levels of smartphone ownership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internet access less frequent amongst rural and female respondents - Internet access is accompanied by a decline in diversity of (news) media used - Limited access to and use of printed media |
|---|---|

Analysis

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Fairly widespread knowledge of constitutional right to freedom of expression + Fairly widespread knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet + Fairly widespread knowledge of the definition of journalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media landscape judged more favorably than independent studies would suggest |
|--|--|

Reflection

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Awareness of news bias and censorship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tolerance of hate speech, cyberbullying and disinformation - Acceptance of certain forms of news bias and censorship |
|---|---|

Creation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Photo taking very widespread and quite frequent + Audio and video recordings widespread + Uploading files, updating social media profiles and creating messenger groups widespread + Comparatively frequent creation of blogs/websites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing / publishing reports less frequent |
|---|--|

Action

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Sharing of information with others and commenting on social issues is widespread + Self-assessment of skills in using media responsibly, analyzing them critically and reflecting one's own media use is confident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-assessment of skills seems to overestimate abilities especially in the reflective category and amongst male respondents |
|---|--|

8. Recommendations

Drawing on the above findings for Ghana, these are the resulting recommendations:

Access

Improve financial access and usage skills of rural, female youths: While there are no significant gender or locality differences for smartphone ownership, these are found for Internet usage. This might be because of financial or skill-related differences between male/female and urban/rural respondents. The disadvantaged segments of the young population should be targeted especially in terms of financial access and online skills.

Encourage diversity of media and news consumption: There are signs that the increase of social media use is accompanied by a decrease in diversity of news consumption among young Ghanaians. Young people should be encouraged to embrace the opportunities the diverse media ecology in Ghana offers them and to use online access not only as a means of personal communication but also as an effective tool for keeping up to date on things that are relevant.

Analysis

Convey the value of media freedom and independence: There is a sense, not just among the young generation in Ghana, that media freedom is too great, and that media need to be reined in. This is a balancing act and young citizens should develop an awareness of how privileged they are to be living in a country that values freedom of expression and the independence of media so highly.

Reflection

Promote critical reflection of disinformation, cyberbullying and hate speech: One of the most striking findings is the apparent tolerance for adverse forms of communication. In the case of hate speech this might be explained by how rarely it occurs in Ghana, but considering the many cases of cyberbullying and disinformation recounted in the focus groups, there is a strong need for the young generation in Ghana to be sensitized for how they treat each other online, for dangers that lurk in the digital sphere and for strategies of coping with these dangers.

Help reflect their own strengths and weaknesses: The survey results showed that the young generation does not always have a good self-assessment of their own skills. They may be overconfident, underestimating their own vulnerabilities in the digital sphere. It would be good to demonstrate where the problems lie and help young people come to terms with them.

Creation

Help voice concerns of the young generation: The skills for voicing their concerns are there, but young Ghanaians need support in getting their voices into the public in a way that will let them be heard. This should not only involve visualization skills, but also basic training in writing more than just a short comment—as is usual on social media—on issues that are important to them.

Action

Integrate MIL into the national curriculum: Rather than settle for the fragmented state of Media and Information Literacy in Ghana today (see a corresponding article here: [LINK](#)), a systematic approach that integrates the topic into national curricula at every level of education should be considered. The momentum for these issues is building and integrating MIL into the educational system can ensure that every young Ghanaian has the opportunity to take manifest steps in improving their MIL, not being left alone with the challenges mentioned above.

Develop a MIL campaign focused on young people: Seeing as curriculum development can take a while, a national MIL campaign might be a first step in getting young people engaged with the subject and could sensitize them for the aspects mentioned above.

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