



ANALYTICAL REPORT

# MEDIA LITERACY FOR OLDER ADULTS (60+)

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# INTRODUCTION

For quite a while, most projects addressing media and media literacy and supported by the international organizations in Ukraine targeted the young audiences. This and other factors have led to significant information inequality between different age groups. However, today is the time when ignoring such a significant group of people may be a threat to the security of the country. There are two very good reasons why we would better focus now our attention and efforts to help older adults adapt to the realities of the digital, media-based world.

The first reason is that this group is a little more than a quarter of the Ukraine's population: early 2023, the State Statistics Committee recorded 10.68 million of retired people (and this figure, according to the forecasts of demographers, will only grow). This age group is still the most active when it comes to voting, and can have a significant impact on society and politics. Ukraine is a part of the European population aging trend. Therefore, fostering media literacy among older adults should be addressed at the same time, ensuring active aging, expanding personal and social opportunities for people 60+ in the information society.

The second reason is the Russia's war against Ukraine and the information threats that this war poses to every Ukrainian citizen when having up-to-date and true information often matters for the physical survival of people. Older adults may be disoriented in the information space dominated by the online media and may experience a loss of control and helplessness facing an unlimited field of information.

Today, we can speak with confidence, and this is confirmed by our findings, that people of this age group (60+) are significantly limited in exercising their rights to information access and freedom of speech due to low levels of digital and media literacy. Ukraine does not have comprehensive governmental media literacy programs with older adults as a target audience. However, the state should be an active contributor to the creation and support of such projects, as this is about education for vulnerable population. Meanwhile, the role of the state is limited to the involvement of Ukrainian state institutions in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and various media education projects.

Donor funding traditionally covers short-term projects only, this leading to the unsystematic nature of the initiatives themselves, no flexibility in responding to the more pressing challenges of the time and the need to diversify sources of funding. The business is hardly present in funding media literacy initiatives, although for private companies including this audience in online is important because it expands their customer pool and, thus, gives profit growth prospects.

Even though the civil society sector in Ukraine is quite productive in the field of media literacy, only a few of organizations have experience working with the audience 60+. The available media literacy courses for people 60+ offered by NGOs are episodic not systematic and cover a specific topic, for example, online banking, information search, communication on social media, paying utilities bills, etc. Such courses are often delivered in an intensive workshop format. Their content often depends on the knowledge and experience of a trainer. No strategic planning, coordination between different organi-

zations and no general open archive of training courses and materials hinder making the NGOs' efforts in this area more efficient. There are also problems with collecting data on the efficiency of existing projects and no research to understand the needs of the audience of this age group.

In view of this, we are very grateful to our partner Deutsche Welle Akademie, who ventured to deal with this hard field of work and commissioned our organization to implement the media literacy project for older adults (60+). The ultimate goal of the project is to develop and trial the media literacy training courses for people 60+. Our task is to develop efficient educational models that may be a framework for working with this audience both in Ukraine and in other countries. The three-year duration of the project gives us higher maneuvering capacity. That is why we begin with a comprehensive study of the audience 60+. The next step is to develop several educational models together with experts and trial them in Ukraine. We also hope that we will be able to launch efforts in establishing a bank/archive of training programs and materials; it will be open for use to all stakeholders who plan to work with older adults. We understand these tasks are challenging. But we know a journey of thousand miles begins with a single step.

**Diana Dutsyk,**

Executive Director

Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute NGO



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute has conducted a study of the needs of older adults (60+) in the field of media literacy and identified the following trends.

1

Although the television is still the main source of information for the older age category, more than half of respondents use a smartphone. At the same time, for most of them a smartphone is the only device they use to access the Internet. It is also necessary to take into account the significant age, regional, and gender differences in the use of gadgets and information sources. Women are more likely to go online on their smartphones, and men are much more likely to use a computer or a tablet for this. There is a large gap between 60-69 and 70+ audiences in terms of the use of the Internet and online sources. Urban audiences and audiences in the South and East of the country use online sources more than rural audiences and audiences in the West of the country.

2

The news consumption on a smartphone is episodic, it is more about prompt and concise nature of messages and monitoring of current events. Whereas the consumption of news on other devices, such as a widescreen TV, tablet, laptop, is rather associated with watching analytical broadcasts, with more in-depth consumption of media content. Also, using exclusively a smartphone may limit respondents, especially the older age groups, who have problems with eye-sight, fine motor skills, etc. Hence, it is also important to continue with the computer literacy programs as these skills expand the possibilities of consuming and creating media content.

3

The media practices and information consumption by a group of respondents who do not use (hardly use) the Internet are often not autonomous. Their online agency and media consumption and, therefore, awareness of current events are significantly limited by the technical infrastructure (gadgets, information channels, or recommendations of online aggregators and algorithms) and their social circle (the capabilities and willingness of their children and relatives to help them with the gadgets and to inform them).

4

The majority of respondents, who use the Internet, combine traditional (mostly television) and online sources (mainly Telegram and YouTube) in the consumption of news. The widespread practice of continuous news consumption may affect the mental health of respondents.

ents, causing depression, helplessness, anxiety. This is associated with such feelings as “overload with news” and the need to “take a break from the news”. These findings show how important media literacy skills are not only for the conscious consumption of news but also for developing the psychological resilience during the war.

5

Two-thirds of the audience 60+, according to the national poll findings, use search engines. However, the focus groups show that many respondents search information on YouTube, some also use Facebook and messengers to search for information. Only a small number of respondents have certain criteria for information search. As a rule, the respondents view sources from the first one and down the list, reading the content of the websites until they find the information that makes sense for them. Based on the results of focus group discussions, we can conclude that the audience 60+ is generally hardly aware about the algorithms of search platforms and the features of the search engine interface, and needs additional training and skills in searching for information online. Further research is needed (for example, using ethnographic methods, experiments) to understand the procedures and criteria that respondents apply to so-called “intuitive” search for information on Google.

6

Most older respondents are confident in their information selection and verification skills. Meanwhile, the gender and regional differences in the assessment of skills are noticeable. Men are more likely to give higher rates to their skills than women. The respondents in the West are more confident in their ability to distinguish true news from the false ones than in the South and East. The respondents have a prevailing skeptical attitude towards news, and common practices among them are: comparing media sources, consuming news from different channels and sources of information, and limiting sources only to the official channels. Among people who give low rates to their information selection and verification skills, there is a widespread general distrust of sources of information (“no one will tell the truth anyway”). There is also a widespread belief that the news consumption is a practice that should take a lot of time as well as an idea of oneself as an “ordinary person” with limited resources who is not able to get and correctly understand information. Such beliefs deepen the sense of helplessness against a large flow of information.

7

Compared to fairly high rates of their information selection and verification skills, we can see that the respondents are much less confident about their technical skills in gadgets and platforms use. The poll shows that less than a half of respondents have basic skills in the gadgets and Internet use. Such findings suggest a generally low level of algorithms operation skills, which potentially reduces the agency of older adults, and their ability to regulate their information space independently.

8

We also see a fairly low involvement of the senior people in forming discourses on the social media and creating online content. Almost a third of respondents using the Internet did not take any active actions online and used the Internet only to receive information. The poll results also show significant regional differences in the numbers of respondents who express their opinion online: the respondents in the West comment and share posts on social media, and comment on materials on news websites almost 10% more than the ones in the East. Further research is needed to understand the reasons for this regional difference. Money donation is one of the important exceptions to the overall picture of the respondents’ low activity online, which can be explained by the widespread nature of online fund-raisers for the army and other volunteer initiatives in the wartime. A fairly high number of respondents who share the news with their relatives, friends is another important exception. It is quite possible that older adults are the main suppliers of news in the family group chats. Thus, their information selection and verification skills are extremely important for an informed society.

9

Online banking services reach half of the older population. Almost 60% of older adults pay for utilities online, and almost a half use their bank account online. The citizens in the East of the country on average are more likely to use online banking than in the West. Men use online banking more often than women on average. The respondents say that the main reasons why they are reluctant to use online services are that they do not understand how to use these services and they prefer the real-life communication. At the same time, a significantly higher number of respondents in the East say that they do not know how to use online services than in the West. Further research should investigate the causes of these differences.

10

Except for the banking apps and the DIIA app (governmental services), most respondents do not care about setting passwords online and on their gadgets. Instead, they say they have “nothing to hide” unless it is directly related to their financial security. The widespread belief that passwords are not efficient is one of the reasons for this attitude. Firstly, hackers can hack any page if they want and, secondly, all private and public correspondence is supervised by both internal security agencies and foreign spies. Therefore, the best way to maintain security online is self-censoring. Further research should identify factors that influence the online security attitudes, e.g., education, gender, previous work experience, etc.

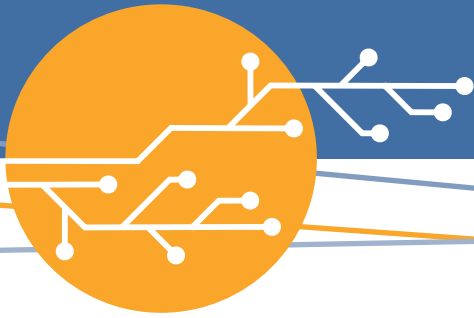
11

Over a half of respondents would like to learn media literacy skills or improve their knowledge. The respondents were most interested in: knowing to pay for utilities online, knowing to use the DIIA app and knowing to use a smartphone and/or computer. During the focus group discussions, the participants said that as their relatives and friends often do not have time or opportunity to help them, they need a more comprehensive solution to the problem. And the vast majority of the focus group participants have never heard about an opportunity to attend media literacy courses.

12

When building courses for an audience 60+, it is crucial to involve psychologists, gerontologists and other experts. Long-term courses are more efficient for this audience, since people 60+ learn more slowly, and getting to know their trainer and peer participants in this case is an integral part of the educational process. People 60+ need additional adaptation to switch psychologically from the “authoritative adult” position to the “student” position. A media literacy program should also include a digital literacy training. Such courses often require additional equipment (smartphones, laptops, tablets). With no adequate long-term funding, organizations cannot build courses that address these aspects.





# METHODOLOGY

## The study has two aims:

- to map existing organizations that work in the sphere of media literacy for older people (60+) in Ukraine and to assess existing media literacy projects for this audience;
- to understand media practices and specific needs of older media audiences (60+) in Ukraine during the full-scale Russian invasion.

## The study implements a mix-methods design and consists of two parts:

- in the first part, we conducted an online survey of organizations (N=14) and in-depth interviews with media literacy experts (N=16) to map the current field of media-literacy programs for older adults in Ukraine.
- in the second part, we conducted a nationally representative public opinion poll (n=1186) and focus groups (N=8, n=65) to understand media practices and needs of older adults.

Since this report focuses on medialiteracy skills among older adults that can be improved via medialiteracy interventions, the definition of media literacy adopted in this study is broad and practice-oriented:

**MEDIA LITERACY is an ability to use, understand, and create media content in the context of war.**

Thus, in the first part of our study we sought to answer the following questions:

- a) What types of actors are involved in media literacy training of older adults in Ukraine?
- b) What kinds of pedagogical approaches and media literacy interventions were employed to foster media literacy skills of older adults?

In the second part of our study we sought to answer the questions:

- c) How older adults in Ukraine deal with the abundance of information and propagandistic distortions during the full-scale Russian invasion?
- d) How older adults in Ukraine adapt their media practices to new media channels and formats (such as Telegram news channels)?
- e) What kind of gaps do older people experience when it comes to the use of, understanding and creating media content in the context of war?

## This study includes the following components:

### Desk research includes:

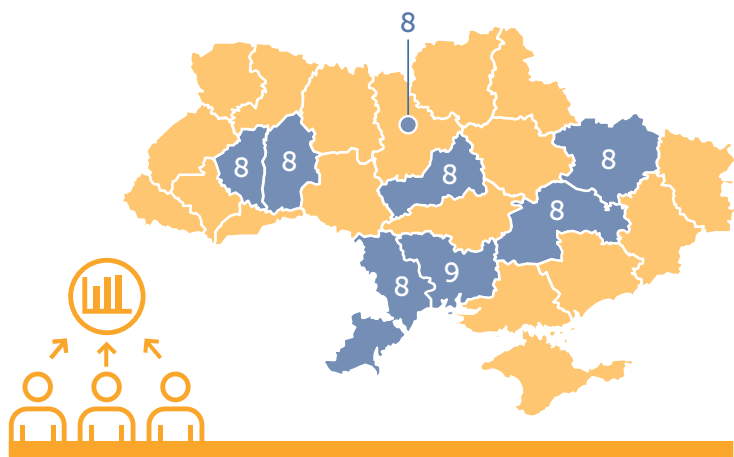
- 1) an overview of media practices and media use by older adults in Ukraine, including the historical context that was shaping their media practices in their young years;
- 2) an overview of Ukrainian media landscape in wartime, as well as an overview of Ukrainian media literacy field including actors, stakeholders, and implemented projects for promoting media literacy among older adults;
- 3) an overview of the research literature in media literacy over the last 10 years.

**Online survey of organizations** in the field of media literacy included 14 organizations from different regions in Ukraine: NGOs supporting wellbeing of older adults (4), educational NGOs “University of the Third Age” (4), human rights and civil society NGOs (3), a media outlet (1), a press-club (1), and a pedagogical college of a municipality (1).

**In-depth interviews** with 16 media literacy experts were conducted online during June-August 2023. The sample included media literacy consultants (3) and consultants in media literacy training for displaced older adults (3), NGO representatives (5), donors (4), and a representative of a private telecom company that implemented a media literacy project (1).

The **public opinion poll** was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology within a period from 11 May to 04 July 2023. 1186 respondents aged 60 and older, residing in all regions of Ukraine (except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the occupied territories of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts; and the poll did not include citizens who fled abroad after 24 February 2022), were polled. These were computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) based on a random sample of mobile phone numbers. The statistical sampling error does not exceed: 3.2% for indicators close to 50%, 2.8% for indicators close to 25%, 1.9% for indicators close to 10%.

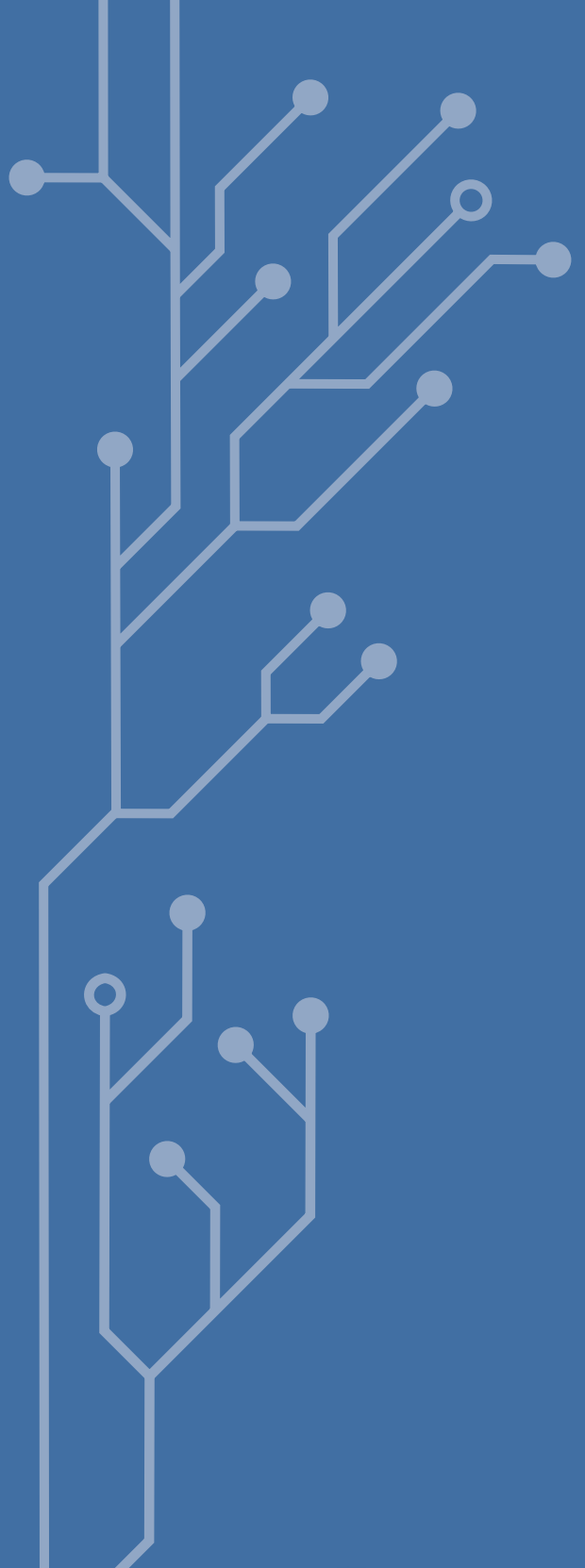
**Focus group discussions:** 6 online and 2 offline focus groups were conducted in 8 Ukrainian oblasts, involving total of 65 people (31 men and 34 women) aged 60 to 77. The respondents represented Kyiv (8), the Ternopil (8), Mykolayiv (9), Dnipro (8), Kharkiv (8), Odesa (8), Khmelnytskyi (8), and Cherkasy (8) oblasts in Ukraine. The focus group discussions were conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS).



# 1

section

CONTEXT



# 1.1

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION 60+

According to the Ministry of Social Policy<sup>1</sup>, early 2023, 10.68 million of retired people were registered in Ukraine, whereas there were 10.84 million in the previous year. According to the State Statistics Service, as of 1 January 2022, the total population of Ukraine was 40 997 699, that is, the share of retired people is approximately 26% of the total population of Ukraine.

The main reasons for reduction in the number of retired people are:

- high mortality. According to Reuters<sup>2</sup>, about a third of victims in the first year of the war in Ukraine (1346 of 4187 documented victims) are 60+ people who died, among other things, due to no access to medication or no possibility to reach a safe place. The real number of victims, as the UN admits, is much higher;
- retirement-age increase;
- the migration caused by the war in Ukraine (as of 25 May 2022, the total number of people over 60 y.o. who arrived to foreign countries after 24 February 2022, is 502 980<sup>3</sup>). They continue receiving retirement payments under the international bilateral agreements.

### Details of retirement pension support

According to the Pension Fund<sup>4</sup>, the average retirement payment as of 01.04.2023 was UAH 5 238. The largest group is made of



**10.68**  
million  
of retired  
people in  
Ukraine in  
early 2023



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/news\\_kom/235672.html](https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/news_kom/235672.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/older-people-account-third-ukraines-war-victims-un-2023-05-24/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/224006.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pfu.gov.ua/2157227-serednij-rozmir-pryznachenoyi-pensijnoyi-vyplaty-ta-pytoma-vaga-pensioneriv-za-roz-miramy-pryznachenyh-misyachnyh-pensij-u-zagalnij-yih-chyselnosti-stanom-na-01-04-2023/>

the retired people (39% of the total) with pension benefits not exceeding 3 thousand UAH per month. 93% of retired people (9.89 million) receive retirement payments without special preferences. Ukraine has special retirement categories, e.g.:

- **for retired military and law-enforcement officers.** As of 01 January 2023, there were 550 thousand military pensioners (5.1% of the total). The average pension in this category is 9 463.1 UAH.
- **for those affected by the Chernobyl accident.** As of 01 January 2023, such pensions are paid to 94.1 thousand people (0.9% of the total). Their average pension is 11 422.53 UAH.
- **for retired civil servants.** As of 01 January 2023, there were 22.8 thousand retired civil servants (0.2% of the total). Their average pension is 7 498.94 UAH.
- **for retired prosecutors.** As of 01 January 2023, the average retirement pension of prosecutors was 21 571.87 UAH. There are 5 979 registered retired people in this category.
- **for retired judges.** The average payment is 96 195.61 UAH per month. As of 01 January 2023, 3 594 retired judges have the life-long support from the government.

## Other details about the group 60+

The average life-span in Ukraine is 68 years for men and 78 years for women. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the average age of retirement in 2021 was 53.8 years. According to the calculations of the State Statistics Service for 2020, the average expected life-span is 75 years for men and 80 years for women. Ac-

ording to the State Statistics Service's data for 2017<sup>5</sup>, the diseases of the blood system, endocrine system, eyes, genitourinary system, locomotion system are among the most common health problems of retired people. There is neither information on the average life-span for 2022-2023 nor statistics of morbidity among elder people.

## Details about displaced people 60+

According to Help Age International<sup>6</sup>, the Russia's war against Ukraine has affected proportionally more elderly people than in any other conflict that is currently ongoing. 34%<sup>7</sup> of the civilian toll are older adults. As of March 2023<sup>8</sup>, over 5 million internally displaced persons were registered where 25% are retired people. According to Amnesty International, as a result of the war, the 60+ IDPs face the following problems:

- Having lost their homes, elderly people are forced to live in **shelters and nursing homes** where neglecting the needs of people 60+, isolation and segregation are frequent.
- Losing the support support from family, social workers or neighbors.
- In the course of combat actions, some elderly people were injured or lost access to medication and medical care, were forced to live in poor living conditions of unheated apartments or basements. These factors contributed to their health issues. The most common problems are: urinary tract infections, contusions or weakened hearing caused by blast waves and exploding shells; reduced mobility as a result of isolation at home and severe bronchitis and pneumonia after staying in unheated apartments.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2018/zb/07/zb\\_szn\\_2017.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1690878328225589&usg=AOvVaw2gk6JAJ0sDm91x2k\\_QTbuw](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2018/zb/07/zb_szn_2017.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1690878328225589&usg=AOvVaw2gk6JAJ0sDm91x2k_QTbuw)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.helpage.org/news/older-people-on-the-edge-of-survival-in-eastern-ukraine/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org.ua/chez-vijnu-rosiyi-ukrayinczi-pohylogo-viku-poterpayut-vid-uskladnyh-hvorob-i-braku-dostupno-go-zhytla-nova-dopovid-amnesty-international/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unian.ua/society/vereshchuk-utochnila-skilki-vpo-zareyestrovano-v-ukrajini-v-berezni-12167304.html>

- Problems with receiving financial support. Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, the mechanism of pension payments has been revised by the Ukrainian Government several times. Despite several legislative initiatives, retired IDPs are facing certain problems with financial support. For example, retired people who had been registered as IDPs before 24 February 2022 have to do the identification with a bank every six months, otherwise the retirement pension payment will be suspended. While retired people who had to displace after 24 February 2022 do not face such restrictions, thus, causing resentment among certain groups of citizens.

Since the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 162<sup>9</sup> declares the JSC “Oshchadbank” to be a priority bank for retirement pension payments, the retired people have to use its services only, not being able to opt for a bank that is more convenient for them in terms location or servicing. Oshchadbank also has online services. However, according to the survey by Liga.net and Visa (non-representative sample), even during the coronavirus and quarantine re-

strictions the vast majority of retired people did not use online banking<sup>10</sup>.

Some retired people face the retirement application problems as they had evacuated and have no chance to obtain documents to confirm their work experience. A certain category of displaced retired people cannot receive the due and delayed retirement payments, or full benefits of deceased retired person, because they do not have a full package of papers.

As for the retired people who have temporarily left abroad, their benefits are transferred to personal accounts but may affect the social assistance in the host country. For retired people who do not have a current account, the Government Resolution No. 328<sup>11</sup> provides for another option to receive retirement payments: via the international transfer at JSC “Ukrposhta”, if or when it is technically possible, and this is a challenge for the national postal service under constant Russian missile attacks.

To receive financial assistance, one needs to use the DIIA application or visit government agencies in person, being a challenge for some older adults who do not use smart phones or have disability. ■

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<sup>9</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/162-2022-%D0%BF#Text>

<sup>10</sup> [https://project.liga.net/projects/grandmother\\_online\\_ua/](https://project.liga.net/projects/grandmother_online_ua/)

<sup>11</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/328-2023-%D0%BF#Text>

# 1.2

## OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN THE UKRAINE'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND MEDIA PRACTICES BEFORE AND DURING THE WAR



### The Soviet period

The media habits of 60+ people started developing in the 70-80s of the last century against the stock-out of goods, Russification of education, faked political life. Media content consumption was an integral and quite significant part of everyday life. **Journalism as a part of the propaganda system** was incorporated in the Soviet project of the state. According to the philosophical background of Marxist materialism, the vision of "truth" was unambiguous. The Soviet thinking defined the binary world where the political position could be either "Soviet" or "anti-Soviet". The ideological role of Soviet journalism was to constantly demonstrate that the Soviet state is honest and fair, and the Soviet person is a model of "moral purity and physical perfection"<sup>12</sup>.

**Censorship** was suppressing the discussion of many politically sensitive topics, such as information about disease outbreaks or injuries at work, mass food poisoning, environmental and human-made disasters, workplace accidents, in general, any dissidence effort. Comparing information "from the press" with reality was a threat to rearing the Soviet person, so the practice of covering by journalists of the outstanding successes of the Soviet regime prevailed.

The journalists in such a society performed a **dual function**: they were both a part of the state machine and representatives of the society that communicated with the state through letters to journalists. It is the journalists, oddly enough, who were the main recipients of Soviet citizen complaints about the Soviet bureaucracy. As long as they did not criticize the party and the socialist project, the journalists were allowed to broadcast complaints of their audience. The readers knew that if they sent a reasoned complaint to the newspaper, a response was guaranteed (unlike other branches of the Soviet bureaucracy). There was also an expectation that if the problem was published in the newspaper, measures will be taken to correct it. This inevitable response (the journalists are obliged to respond to readers, the officials are obliged to respond to criticism in the newspapers) was a form of a **moral and political commitment** supported throughout the Soviet period<sup>13</sup>.

The characteristic features of the coverage following the Soviet canons were:

- standard phrasing and repetitions, constant reproducing of standard forms of bureaucratic language<sup>14</sup>;

<sup>12</sup> Kahanov Yu.O. *Konstruyuvannya «radyans'koyilyudyny» (1953-1991): ukrayins'kaversiya (KahanovYu.O. Constructing the "Soviet Person" (1953-1991): Ukrainian Version)*. Zaporizhzhia: Inter-M, 2019. 432 pages

<sup>13</sup> Roudakova, N. (2017). *Losing Pravda: Ethics and the press in post-truth Russia*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Yurchak, A. (2016). *It Was Forever Until It Was Over: The Last Soviet Generation*. New Literary Review.

- hyper enthusiasm about figures, statistics that were supposed, on the one hand, to offer a picture of the scale of achievements and, on the other, to demonstrate the clarity and accuracy of all planned targets. This discourse had to shape the image of a continuous movement toward a bright future;
- almost the complete absence of news as a genre, while, it was widespread to present journalistic materials in the form of elaborate journalistic essays and moral stories based on real events<sup>15</sup>.

The Soviet mass media perceived the Ukrainian viewer as a “patient” of the system, “injecting” standardized messages in people of all age groups and statuses<sup>16</sup>. This is to say, the Soviet press, adjusting and directing the information flow as it deemed right, was rearing people unable to stand independently and resist, prone to conformism, authority, paternalism by the state. The journalists in the Soviet Union acted as accomplices in the government process, organizers and spokesmen of the Soviet society. Except for the clearly defined list of topics “allowed” to be criticized, most negative news about events in the Union were subjected to censorship. This type of journalism is in sharp contrast to the Western model of commercial journalism focused on reporting on crimes, conflicts and political scandals.

With the partial and eventually complete abolition of censorship in the late 1980s and the transformation of the Soviet system, the media turned into a powerful “shock”<sup>17</sup> tool to change the value system of the “Soviet person”. The rapid transformation of the journalism paradigm itself – from chanting to open criticism of the authorities, from assuring the stability to demonstrating the critical condition of the economy, from

the stories of the “rotting capitalist system” to demonstrating the Western consumer abundance – has led to a feeling that all previous pillars on which the Soviet identity had been built were false.

### Transformation of media space after declaration of the Independence

The reformatting of Ukrainian journalism in the economic and political instability in the 1990s led to the establishment of politically dependent and commercialized media. The media transformation of the 1990s was mainly characterized by the media sector privatization, the use of politically motivated capital as the main investor in the media (oligarchization), political battles using paid publications (“jeansa”)<sup>18</sup>, and the regulation vacuum caused by the behind-hand adoption of media legislation<sup>19</sup>. While the Soviet journalism was constantly “rearing” the Soviet citizen, the Ukrainian commercial journalism of the 1990s did not endeavor to introduce any ideological guidance.

In addition to political and ideological changes in the media space, it is also worth considering the significant diversification and increase in the number of sources of information. The Ukrainian media audience faced the same challenges as the audiences of other countries – with the rapidly developing new media. However, the weakness of state institutions and the economic recession defined that the majority of the population used their resources for daily survival rather than for learning new technologies, training and self-developing.

**To sum up, media practices of the 60+ age group were fostered under the total control of**

<sup>15</sup> Roudakova, N. (2017). *Losing Pravda: Ethics and the press in post-truth Russia*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Back in the 1970s, nonconformists called the Ostankino TV Tower in Moscow a “needle” for injecting propaganda into the pliable veins of the Soviet masses (K. Roth-Ey, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> KahanovYu.O. *Konstruyuvannya «radyans'koyilyudyny» (1953-1991): ukrayins'kaversiya (KahanovYu.O. Constructing the "Soviet Person" (1953-1991): Ukrainian Version)*. Zaporizhzhia: Inter-M, 2019. 432 pages

<sup>18</sup> Splichal, S. (2001). *Media beyond Socialism: Theory and practice in East-Central Europe*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

<sup>19</sup> Voltmer, K. (2013). *The media in transitional democracies*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.

**available media (television, radio, newspapers) and the USSR isolation from the international media space.** Thus, the access to information of the majority of the USSR population was limited by products of the official propaganda sources. In addition to purely news information, the Soviet propaganda groomed a certain narrow mindset with the only “right” Soviet way of life, as opposed to the Western one. **The Soviet journalism took a paternalistic position to the audience, its main task was the ideological “grooming” of citizens. The oligarchization and commercialization of the Ukrainian media system in the 1990s contributed to cynicism growing among the audience, and a significant expansion of media space caused feelings of loss of control and helplessness against an unlimited field of information.** This may give a partial explanation why people 60+ are more prone either to be overly skeptical about journalistic and official material, or to trust sources “authoritative” for them. Therefore, working on trainings for people 60+ requires that one has to address special way of thinking of this target audience that had developed in the Soviet era.

## Media consumption and media practices of older adults (60+) after the full-scale invasion

The Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022 reformatted the Ukrainian media space.

**Transition of media to online platforms.** With the economic recession in 2022 and a subsequent over 70% reduction<sup>20</sup> in the advertising market in the media space, survival has become a critical issue for many media players. Some of

the media teams had to take radical steps<sup>21</sup>: 30% of the media outlets forced their employees to take unpaid leave; 32% reduced their staff; 40% reduced wages and increased workload. The problem of access to their premises and making use of their equipment has also become remarkable due to destructions/forced relocations. Thus, some newspapers and magazines, having lost the printing and delivering means, focused on the content distribution via social media and websites.

**Low level of pluralism.** At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the largest media groups in Ukraine (ICTV, Inter, 1+1, My-Ukraine, UA:PBC, and Rada) joined their efforts in the United News marathon, a united information platform for the Ukrainian audience. This knocked off the level of pluralism in the Ukrainian media market, according to media experts. Ordinary users also say that they have to search for other sources for more detailed and diverse information<sup>22</sup>.

**Mass media audiences migrate to social media and messengers.** According to the poll by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS)<sup>23</sup> in May 2022, 76.6% of Ukrainians used social media (including the messengers) to receive news, while 66.7% used television, the third place is for the Internet (not including social media) – 61.2% of users. About 28.4% of Ukrainians listen to the radio, and only 15.7% of respondents read print media. The USAID-Internews survey<sup>24</sup>, in November 2022, showed an even larger gap between social media including the messengers and television. According to the survey, 74% of respondents use social media, while only 36% use television to receive news. Telegram is the most popular in Ukraine: about 66% of respondents read news on Telegram. 61.2% of respond-

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2022/07/16/689241/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://nsju.org/novini/skorochennya-pracivnykiv-vtrata-dostupu-do-prymishhen-brak-koshtiv-klyuchovi-vyklyky-pered-ukrayin-skymy-media-v-umovah-vijny/>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://detector.media/doc/images/news/58855/ua\\_report\\_medialiterasy\\_index-dm\\_20-21-22\\_fina.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1690878328264945&usg=AOvVaw2byOgW3r\\_oEDnrJijuyfJA](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://detector.media/doc/images/news/58855/ua_report_medialiterasy_index-dm_20-21-22_fina.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1690878328264945&usg=AOvVaw2byOgW3r_oEDnrJijuyfJA)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.oporua.org/report/polit\\_ad/24068-mediaspzhivannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori](https://www.oporua.org/report/polit_ad/24068-mediaspzhivannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Y\\_F5VPDxKdI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Y_F5VPDxKdI)

ents use YouTube for this, and 57.8% use Facebook<sup>25</sup>. A significant share of the audience, 42% of respondents, use websites to read news. The audience of other traditional mass media has dropped to a minimum: only 3% read the print media, and 11% listen to the radio.

**Growing audience of the social and political content.** Compared with 2020, 2022 has the number of consumers of social and political content in messengers 2.5 times bigger (from 19% to 49%). The social media audience grew from 50% to 61%. The share of Ukrainians using the information online resources also increased from 24%

to 32%. It is quite remarkable that radio is also in this trend. If only a third (31%) listened to the socio-political programs on radio for more than 1 hour in 2020, then in 2022 this is already 44%<sup>26</sup>.

These factors influenced the media consumption in people 60+. The reduced number of print media, the need to be always in touch with the close ones as well as power outages, forced the elderly to look for alternative sources of news.

For the trends in media consumption among people 60+ please see Section 3 of this Analytical Report. ■

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<sup>25</sup> [https://www.oporua.org/report/polit\\_ad/24068-mediaspozhyvannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori](https://www.oporua.org/report/polit_ad/24068-mediaspozhyvannia-ukrayintsiv-v-umovakh-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-opituvannia-opori)

<sup>26</sup> <https://detector.media/infospace/article/210209/2023-04-18-indeks-mediagramotnosti-ukrayintsiv-2020-2022-kоротka-prezentatsiya/>

# 1.3

## MEDIA LITERACY OF OLDER ADULTS (60+). ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW



As a matter of fact, media literacy research for older adults is not mainstream. However, this topic has recently become of interest due to the aging of the global society. Several studies refer to the statistics of international organizations (UN) or think tanks (Pew) who state that the number of people 60+ worldwide will reach about 2.1 billion by 2050. Thus, senior people will be one of the most numerous social groups in the world.

Most publications on the topic of media literacy of older adults focus on fostering digital gadgets use skills as well as the gadget helpfulness to overcome the feeling of loneliness and isolation<sup>27</sup>, maintaining communication with the close ones, self-education, receiving a certain type of administrative services.

For example, older adults often use (1) applications of health support since this method is considered convenient, fast and flexible; (2) utilities (payment for electricity, gas, telephone, etc.) and (3) online banking. Some of the mentioned negative aspects of e-governance procedures are: limited session time; lack of trust as there is no paper

document so that one could be able to confirm any error made by the service provider (for example, power supply or telecommunications companies); use of various passwords that are hard to remember; difficulty in navigating the websites of tax and social services<sup>28</sup>.

Most studies treat older people as a homogeneous group engaged in the same activities, so a diversity of practices how people in this age category interact differently with the Internet needs additional research. For example, some of the cited studies confirm the differences between “younger” and “older” retired people in terms of the e-mail, news sites, information search, online

<sup>27</sup> Yesorlan Kim, Mina Lee. (2023). Does Social Media Use Mitigate or Exacerbate Loneliness among Korean Older Adults? Focusing on the Moderating Role of Media Literacy. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20563051231177959>

<sup>28</sup> Maria Sourbati. (2009). ‘It could be useful, but not for me at the moment’: older people, internet access and e-public service provision. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444809340786>

banking and social media use. For instance, in Sweden, there are 2-4 times more weekly Internet users in the group of 65-69 year-olds than in 80+. Social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, attract four out of ten people aged 60-74, about three out of ten in the group 75-79. Some of the studies also show certain inequality in the use of the Internet between younger and older retired people depending on their education.

Older adults with higher **education level** tend to exhibit higher digital literacy and have more resources to cope with the difficult situation<sup>29</sup>.

**Therefore, media literacy efforts for older adults require a comprehensive plan, with an assessment of different upbringing background of this age group and each individual.**

Some studies focus on the **humanizing role of** social media and the information and communications technology (ICT) in general for older adults. For example, technology has played an important role in the so-called "escape from loneliness" during the pandemic: video conferencing has become a part of lives of people in

this age group, helping them overcome a difficult emotional situation during the social isolation. WhatsApp and other messengers have become the most popular tool to maintain daily contact between the close ones; specifically, the group chats for friends was the most important feature for the elderly. ICT has allowed the older people to maintain social activity online while reducing their risk of infection. This topic was especially important for the respondents with higher levels of digital literacy. Many respondents said that ICT served as a source of entertainment and self-education during the pandemic. Despite the positive outcome, the authors underline that an adequate educational component is necessary: it will help the older audience be able to fully enjoy all benefits of online space.

Most articles state that in recent years (2017-2022) there is a dynamics in change and proactive use of online tools among older adults. However, the capacity of older adults **to create their own media content** is beyond the focus of research. Older adults are perceived mainly as users of services with limited functionality.



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<sup>29</sup> Tarja Heponiemi, Lotta Virtanen. (2022). Use and changes in the use of the Internet for obtaining services among older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal population-based survey study. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14614448221097000>

# MEDIA LITERACY OF THE AUDIENCE 60+ IN UKRAINE AS ASSESSED BY STAKEHOLDERS

# 2

section



## Media literacy is one of the core **civic competencies** at the intersection of the interests of the government, media, and civil society.

Stakeholders and experts agree that media literacy is necessary for the formation of a democratic, open society. In particular, media literacy has an impact on the formation of the foundations of a democratic society:

- awareness of citizens about the political situation and developments in the country, their critical thinking, independence in making choice;
- participation of citizens in the political process, including elections;
- formation of an active civil society, including interaction of citizens with journalists, civic engagement, protection of their rights.

« How do we perceive the situation and our task? As for older people, in Vinnytsia we had over 30% of these people before the war. This is an important figure. One cannot ignore it in the context of the city, the community. In addition, these are people who vote actively. So, we do not look at them as at people who need baby-sitting or entertainment, assistance or food. We look at them as at people capable to influence decision-making processes in the community, including electing authorities and influencing the development of the city in general. Therefore, our task is to do everything so that older people in our city, in our community, were involved in all decision-making processes, had influence, voice, and understood how to do this. So that they would master modern tools of influence: petitions, contests, public budgeting, public initiatives.”

(an expert, ML trainer, NGO)

In addition to the democratization of society, media literacy is also of particular importance for the **national security** in Ukraine, especially in the wartime. Media literacy is one of the core elements in the propaganda and disinformation countering strategy.

From the experience of other countries, especially in Scandinavia, we see that media literacy is also important for **self-realization and personal development of older** adults, to prolong their active life in a digital society.

In this section, we will outline the interests of main stakeholders working in the sphere of media literacy for people 60+. Below, we will overview existing media literacy programs for older audiences, their content and funding, as well as the needs of older adults as perceived by the stakeholders and experts. This section is based on the online survey of 14 organizations from different regions of Ukraine working in the sphere of media literacy and 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews with experts, trainers and stakeholders.

# 2.1.

## PUBLIC SECTOR



According to the previous study of the media literacy sector by the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute in 2021, the Ukrainian government began to play a more active part in media literacy than in previous years of the Ukraine's independence<sup>30</sup>.

After the full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022, this part increased even more. Now three ministries are dealing with media literacy, in one form or another: the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Education and Science

Ukraine has got a range of important prerequisites at the government level for the development of media education of older adults:

- The Information Security Doctrine of Ukraine mentions the need to reach older adults;
- the state institutions are actually engaged in cooperation with NGOs and various projects related to the media education. Such engagement usually does not involve direct funding; rather the state institutions are to provide information or logistical support to media literacy projects.
- currently, the state policy on de-occupation of territories during the Russia-Ukraine war is being developed, and media education is one of its principal subjects:

«... solutions for de-occupation of the Ukraine's territories that suffered occupation for a while is among the tasks we are dealing with. [...] We are now working on a strategy for cognitive de-occupation of these territories. Media education is in our focus, too.

(an ML expert, NGO head)

«Our project was for both locals and representatives of public and local authorities. Thus, we cooperated with local village councils. There was a topic proposed, there was a discussion.»

(a teacher and curator of ML courses)

As an effort to narrow the age gap in digitization, the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine in 2023 presented the educational series Basic Digital Skills for People of Elegant Age<sup>31</sup> on the

<sup>30</sup> Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute. (2021). Media Literacy Sector Mapping in Georgia, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine. Analytical Report/ Ukraine. Retrieved from: <https://www.jta.com.ua/news-and-reports/uimk-predstavliaie-rezultaty-doslidzhennia-z-kartuvannia-mediahramotnosti/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://thedigital.gov.ua/news/mintsifra-predstavlyae-na-diyaosvita-osvitniy-serial-dlya-lyudey-elegantnogo-viku>

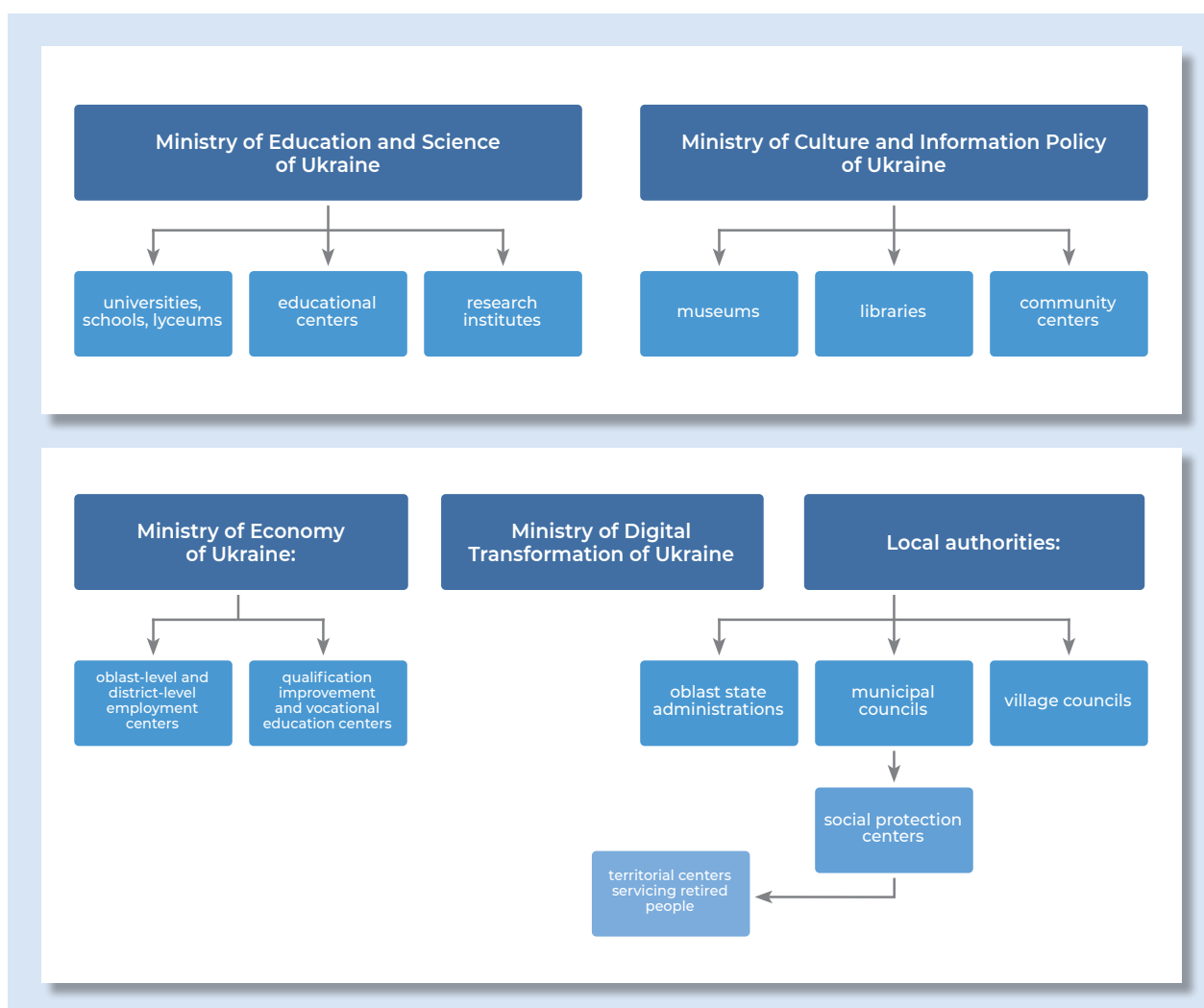
DIIA.OSVITA platform. It has 10 episodes where "grandchildren" tell how to install messengers on a smartphone, use search engines, make an appointment with a doctor, prepay a mobile phone account and use digital education hubs of DIIA.OSVITA. Also, on the basis of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, a network of consultation hubs for digital tools use with over 500 libraries in it has been established.

One may also notice communications about information security trainings for retired people at the local level through online registration, or enrollment to a course at the University of the Third Age, for example, in Dnipro.<sup>32</sup>

Most organizations that participated in our survey say that public institutions were involved in implementation of their projects.

See below the examples of public institutions that cooperate or are a base for media literacy projects where the interviewed experts and stakeholders were involved.

Libraries can be identified as one of key actors in the media literacy fostering among people 60+ because they are the main audience that goes to the library hubs of digital education. Requests are very different: from using a smartphone to advising on digital public services in the DIIA



<sup>32</sup> <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/news/u-dnipri-pensioneriv-navchatimut-mediagramotnosti-ta-informacijij-bezpeci>

app. Such trainings are free of charge and are often delivered within the activities of the University of the Third Age, to name a few: Accessibility of Public Services for Seniors (22/05/2023, the Odesa National Scientific Library<sup>33</sup>), the Media Literacy School (Khmelnyskyi Municipal Library<sup>34</sup>), a specialized course Mobile Literacy Fundamentals (Konotop Central Municipal Library), etc.

**Ukraine does not have comprehensive governmental media literacy programs with older adults as the target audience. In fact, they are still overlooked by the dedicated state policy.**

In addition to the understandable crisis in education caused by the war, the experts listed several reasons making the cooperation with public institutions more difficult and hindering the development of the area of media literacy:

- no academic programs at universities and no certification of media literacy professionals specialized in working with the audience 60+;
- often changes in the political course:

« [the interaction with the state – author's comment] is based on private contacts. But the government changes so often, you've just established cooperation –and they change, and others dont see this as a priority. And it starts all over again. Today, the new managers of the Ministry of Education and Science do not see a priority in education for adults, they reduce everything to vocational training so that to make it possible to have training on the basis of those establishments that are already there. "Let's invest, reform the system of vocational education. And everything that is about civic education in general – this should

be done by NGOs based on their enthusiasm or with funding of international donors," this is their position now.

(an expert, representative of a donor organization)

- public institutions are not always ready to cooperate with NGOs, activists;
- the lack of budget funds, due to the war among other things:

« ...unfortunately, there is no money in Ukraine to work with older adults. So, the first recommendation to donors is not to repeat the mistake made back in 1991. One has to understand that these people are voters, and it literally depends on them what will become of Ukraine: a democratic or totalitarian state."

(an expert, NGO representative)

In this context, the experience of Scandinavian countries, in particular Sweden and Finland, would be useful. Sweden has an online portal Mediekompass<sup>35</sup> with educational materials for the elderly and methodological recommendations for media literacy specialists who seek to work with older adults. In Finland, there is a special educational project Netikas<sup>36</sup>, organized by the Finnish Pensioners' Federation; it also contains materials on media literacy.

At the same time, one has also to take into account the extraordinary situation in Ukraine, and the need to adapt training programs to the realities of war. Since there is practically no research on media literacy fostering in the active phase of the military conflict, we need to have specific research for Ukraine and develop own programs for the media literacy fostering in older adults. ■

<sup>33</sup> [http://odnb.odessa.ua/view\\_post.php?id=4161](http://odnb.odessa.ua/view_post.php?id=4161)

<sup>34</sup> [https://cbs.km.ua/?dep=review&w=show\\_review&dep\\_up=0&dep\\_cur=82&review\\_id=49](https://cbs.km.ua/?dep=review&w=show_review&dep_up=0&dep_cur=82&review_id=49)

<sup>35</sup> <https://mediekompass.se/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.elakeliitto.fi/netikas-mediasivistysmateriaali>

# 2.2.

## DONORS



The major donors funding the media literacy projects (including for the audience 60+) in Ukraine are IREX, USAID (Internews-Network, U-Media Program), DVV International, UNESCO and UN (UNDP). Also, the EU Delegation to Ukraine, the German Embassy in Ukraine, the OSCE and Forum ZFD funded some initiatives. Speaking of the Ukrainian foundations, the media literacy projects were supported by the Renaissance Foundation and the Zagorij Foundation.

Donor priorities are focused on **the needs of time** (for example, the efforts against vaccination fakes during the pandemic, the projects informing international audiences about the war and the projects against Russian propaganda and disinformation during the full-scale invasion). Thus, with the outburst of the full-scale invasion, media literacy projects funding has decreased significantly:

« After the start of the full-scale war, we have limited resources that we are trying to redirect to some more fundamental things. Therefore, now we practically do not work with this audience in terms of media literacy.”

(a donor organization representative)

« Of course, a certain share of our funding is still there, but it is unlikely to be increased. I mean, it will remain at 10-15% for this target group. We have done a lot to ensure that the education for adults is not associated with the education of older people and with universities of the older age.”

(an expert, a donor organization representative)

In the meantime, the donors have an understanding that media literacy is an **important aspect of the national security and the development of a democratic society** in the future. However, the perspective vision in theory does not go along with the practice: donors do not distribute resources for the long term.

« We understand that we exist in a specific information environment, where in addition to the standard problems for the democracy of the West (fakes, conspiracy, etc.), we have been constantly under the hostile propaganda machine that helped to spread this. Thus, it was necessary to invest money, look for some points and make efforts to change the situation.”

(a representative of a donor organization)

Donors have **no strategic planning** either for the audience 60+ or for the sphere of media literacy and media education in general (for example, media literacy is a component of other projects as an information component). The audience 60+ can also be included in the general category of education for adults.

Some donors believe that **the government should take over the lion's share of** efforts for this audience:

«*In recent years, we have limited ourselves and partners in funding projects for older adults. Because there are certain governmental agencies and communal institutions that should take care of this age category. This is the task of the State. We are trying to direct more our partners' efforts to those categories that are in no way covered by any government programs and training.*»

*(an expert, representative of a donor organization)*

**Donor funding covers short-term projects only, this leading to the unsystematic nature of the initiatives themselves, no flexibility in responding to more pressing challenges of the time and the need to diversify sources of funding.**

Business is hardly represented in funding media literacy initiatives, although our study shows that cooperation with business can be promising. For example, **including this audience in online is important for private companies** because it expands their customer pool and, thus, gives profit growth prospects.

Some companies offer certain initiatives. For example, Kyivstar mobile operator launched an online school Smartphone for Parents («Смартфон для батьків» in Ukrainian)<sup>37</sup>, where they introduce useful services and applications to older adults. Liga.net and Visa have a joint project Make It Easier («Зроби простіше» in Ukrainian)<sup>38</sup> training older adults to pay online.

Today, online applications cover virtually all areas, from stores to pharmacies, but applications have a universal format, without any special focus on elder consumers. People 60+ can download them but only if they have basic skills to use a smartphone. In fact, mastering a smartphone is still personal responsibility of people 60+ or their closest relatives.

Media literacy projects can not be perceived purely as a business investment as it is about education for vulnerable groups being one of the pillars of the national security. ■

<sup>37</sup> <https://batky.kyivstar.ua/>

<sup>38</sup> [https://project.liga.net/projects/grandmother\\_online\\_ua/](https://project.liga.net/projects/grandmother_online_ua/)

# 2.3.

## MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY



Although the media would also win from involving the audience 60+ in the digital technologies use and high-quality journalistic content consume, so far we **do not see any active involvement of media companies** in creation, promotion and financing of media literacy projects. The survey shows that some online media and TV channels have partnered in the media literacy initiatives but this is not common.

As an exception, we may cite a project implemented in 2023 by 1+1 Media and the Smart Angel Charitable Foundation in cooperation with leading media NGOs. Within this project, they are creating a vast range of different media products for an awareness-raising campaign to counter disinformation for a wide audience that includes different age groups. At the time of writing the report, the project was at the implementation stage, so we cannot talk about its results within this report. However, it has a potential to reach a large audience as 1+1, one of the most popular Ukrainian TV channels, is involved.

The leadership in educational activities for people aged 60+ is held by the NGO Educational Center "University of the Third Age", its regional branches regularly hold trainings and courses on various aspects of media literacy, for example, "How to counter the media manipulations" (Mykolaiv, Poltava, Vinnytsia, etc.). However, the Universities of the Third Age are also established by other NGOs in different regions (for example, the Uzhhorod University of the Third Age was ini-

tiated by the Kolping Ukraine NGO), and they can function under the aegis of classical universities.

In Ukraine, there are several non-governmental organizations, including at the regional and local levels, dealing with the problems of education for people 60+. For example, there are: the Academy of the Ukrainian Press, the Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy, the Ukrainian Educational Platform "Diy", NGO "Center Podillya Sotsium", NGO "Vik Shchastia", Center "Ya-Mariupol IF", SILab Ukraine, and others. And given the importance of media aspects in the wartime, the volunteer and veteran organizations get gradually involved in this topic. **However, most courses offered by NGOs are episodic, not systematic and address a specific topic, e.g., online banking, information search, social networking, Google maps, paying utility bills online, buying tickets online, etc.**

**No strategic planning, coordination between different organizations and general open archive of training courses and materials** hinders efficiency of NGOs' efforts in media literacy for older adults (60+). ■

# 2.4.

## OVERVIEW OF EXISTING MEDIA LITERACY PROJECTS FOR AUDIENCE 60+



### 2.4.1. Types of programs, outreach, audiences



The existing media literacy projects (according to the survey of stakeholders who had experience in implementing projects with older adults) are mainly focused on children and school institutions. And many projects do not consider the age at all, defining their audiences as "wide" or "general".

According to findings of the online survey of stakeholders, we were able to identify following types of media literacy programs targeted specifically at older adults:

- The Universities of the Third Age (in different regions) deliver media literacy courses varying in duration, usually several sessions over several weeks;
- courses on the basis of classical universities with an academic year duration (for example, such a course is available at the Poltava University of Economics and Trade<sup>39</sup>);

- qualification improvement courses (e.g., for education staff);
- video courses, series, radio courses developed by various stakeholders.

According to findings of the survey and interviews with representatives of organizations, short-term trainings, from several hours to 1-3-day sessions, are the most common.

The audience of these programs is diverse, from older locals of a village or city to teachers or civil servants. There are very few programs specifically for people 60+. There were projects for mixed audiences: 18+, 18-65, 20-70 y.o.; as well as the projects for adults 45-65, 50+, 55+.

The media literacy projects for older adults are delivered in most oblasts of Ukraine<sup>40</sup>. The organizations also underline that they are trying to direct their efforts to rural communities.

<sup>39</sup> <https://puet.edu.ua/relation/http-site-puet-edu-ua-fakulteti-universytet-tretogo-viku/>

<sup>40</sup> The organizations from the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Poltava, Zakarpattia, Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Kirovohrad, Khmelnytskyi, Sumy, and Mykolaiv oblasts took part in our survey.



## 2.4.2. Content of Media Literacy Training Programs for Older Adults

Existing trainings and other educational programs on media literacy are very different, their content often **depends on the knowledge and experience of a certain trainer**. Moreover, trainers said that they adjusted and changed their courses depending on the needs of the audience: starting with more theoretical lectures and the "school course of computer basics" they gradually included more specific skills and a lot of practical work in the program.

We can put these programs into five conditional categories:

■ **Technical skills** of using electronic devices, applications and the Internet:

- how to set up a smartphone;
- how to use applications;
- how to create a social media account and register in DIIA app;
- how to do online banking;
- how to communicate with close ones in Zoom;
- how to make a search request online;
- how to use health care applications.

« The next topic is health care applications. This is a search for medications and making an appointment with doctor online. Here, in principle, two applications are addressed: Tabletki.ua and Medcard24. I've got feedback from my family therapist: my students started making appointments online. It looks like it works and they are interested.»

(an ML trainer for older adults)

■ **Countering disinformation** and critical thinking:

- promoting vaccination and debunking myths;

- media literacy in the wartime, debunking Russian propaganda and fakes, Psy-Ops;
- financial security online;
- information hygiene on social media.

■ **Understanding the media sphere and analysis of mass media:**

- what media literacy is;
- what fact-checking is;
- what media are and how they function;
- what kind of sources can be considered true or quality;
- how to read media texts.

« 5 years ago, these were rather common things: what the media space is, what media literacy is, why it is necessary, why we should be careful. [...] After the beginning of the large-scale invasion and with huge numbers of internally displaced persons in our region, [...] the requests were simple and practical: "It's great that you are telling us about all these global challenges and threats. But I want to know how to use the Internet, how to protect my smartphone from external invasion, which channels to trust and which better not." I mean these are simple things that are very important for everyone, especially for older people.»

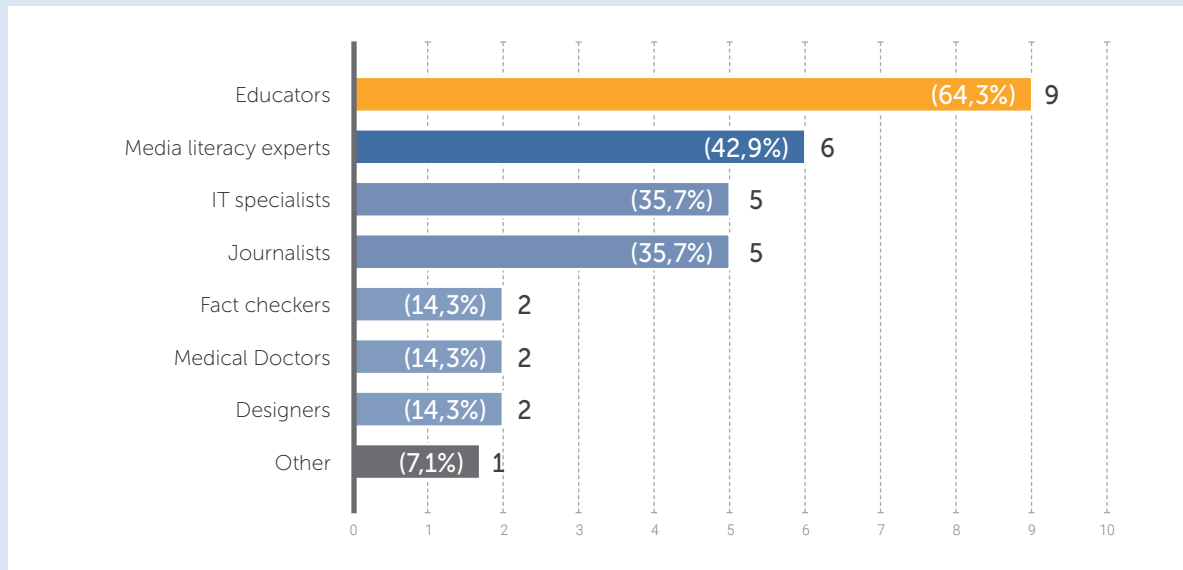
(a curator of ML course for adults)

Figure 1.

### What kind of professionals and experts were involved in the project implementation?\*



\*14 respondents replied



#### ■ Civic competences:

- how to communicate with journalists;
- how to make records with a phone;
- how to interview;
- how to behave when you give comment on something,
- interaction with public administrations and electronic services providers.

#### ■ Creating media content:

- creating posts and commenting on social media;
- shooting photos and videos;
- establishing a YouTube channel.

« They were afraid even to press the buttons. When we were studying Facebook live with them, they were in shock. Just understanding that they are now pressing this button and will be seen by anybody, and there will be a record which later will be posted on Facebook – was a stress for them and something beyond. At first, they had to make a Facebook page, and it was a challenge for them because they had to publish a photo not a random picture. And we had

lessons to learn to pose for photos, so that they would understand how to be photographed. They were afraid to show themselves, not to mention their perception of their age.”

(an ML trainer for older adults)

Based on the experience of trainers, **the technical skills courses should come before the courses on critical thinking, understanding the media sphere and content creation. Gaining these skills without prior technical competencies is impossible.**

The survey of NGOs shows that the most involved in the implementation of media literacy programs were:

- educators,
- media literacy experts,
- IT specialists,
- journalists.

Representatives of the organizations also say that they invited trainers specializing in working with the audience 60+, lawyers, bank employees, expert methodologists, university journalism professors and foreign experts.



### 2.4.3. Assessment of programs

Most of the surveyed organizations **take the long-term efforts**: 70% had their media literacy projects assessed and the same number continues to work with their audience after the project is completed.

Most often it was assessed by means of a questionnaire, survey or test (7), demonstration of skills (4) and follow-up meeting with participants.

« We assess the knowledge before and after, do testing. If there is a progress in some percentage, we follow it. Then we follow the feedback, after a while we have an online sur-

vey: what kind of technology they use, etc. If the percentage of use is significant, we believe that the training was successful. We do some kind of monitoring and assessment after a while.”

(an ML expert for adults)

« Here, too, from classic questionnaires to the deeper ones, if we need this to develop next projects. We also practice having in-

Figure 2.

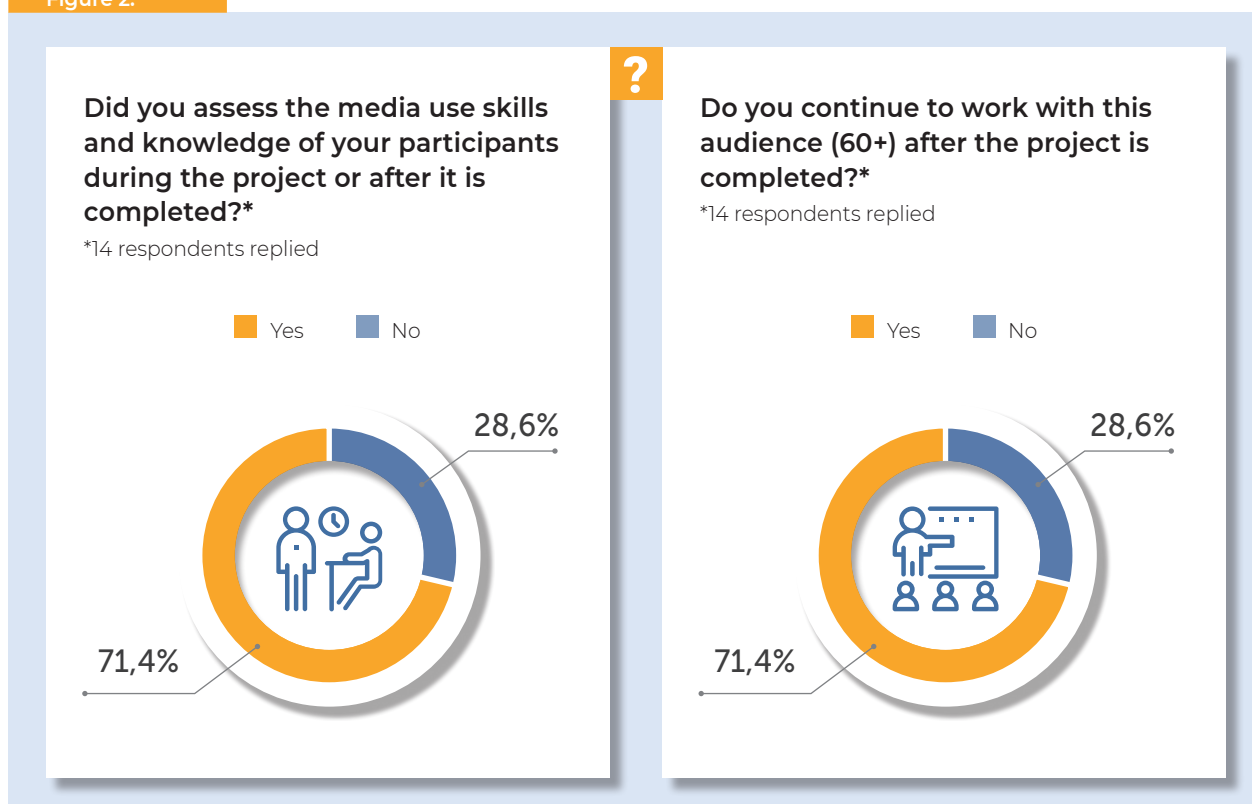


Figure 3.

**When the assessment was performed?\***

\*14 respondents replied

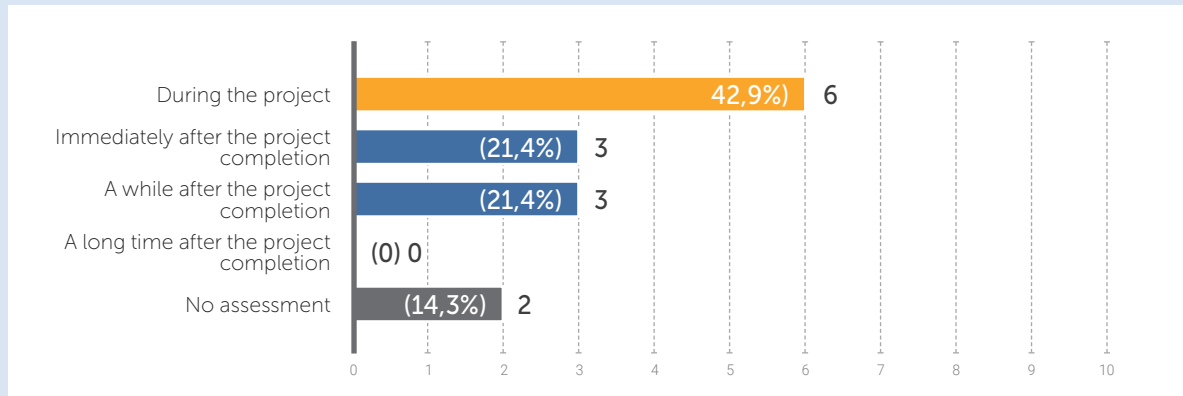
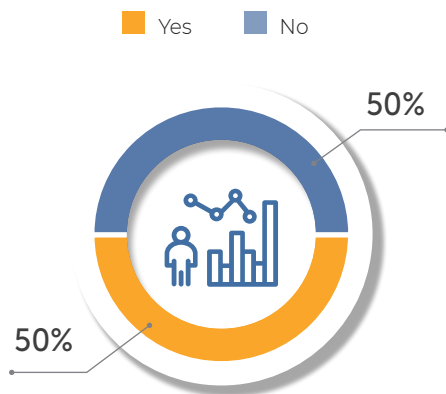


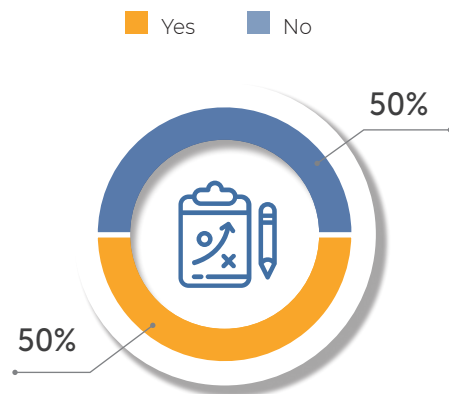
Figure 4.

**Have you analyzed the assessment results?\***

\*14 respondents replied

**Have you revised your project program based on the assessment results?\***

\*14 respondents replied



depth interviews some time after the training. We also like the focus group format, we often use it, especially when planning a project or when making changes to it.”

(an ML trainer)

At the same time, only half of organizations ana-

lyzed the project assessment results and revised their programs based on the results. From the open answers, we see that even those who revised their programs cannot describe in detail what the changes were and what shortcomings of their programs were identified during the assessment.

If the **program assessment is not always a priority** for NGOs, it is very important for the donors. The donors often also have detailed criteria and a well-established system of project assessment:

« Today I can say that we have a more or less established system assessing the educational services quality. This is both the assessment of the teacher and the assessment of the program, there are certain criteria, the assessment of the impact on people. There are certain crite-

ria, there are questionnaires that are launched two-three months after the training. [...] If this is about the civic education, then there are other criteria: whether the participants of the training became active at the community level, whether they participated in voting, or signed petitions. If this is related to hobbies or self-development, we or partners interview participants, ask how the life of a person has changed, what has changed in life, whether their well-being, health, etc. has improved.”

(a representative of a donor organization)

#### 2.4.4. Organizational Limitations, Problems in the Sphere of Media Literacy for People 60+



Globally speaking, based on the survey findings, we see that among the organizations working in the sphere of media education and media literacy in Ukraine **only a small number have experience working with the audience 60+**. In-depth interviews confirm that the sphere of media literacy for older adults in Ukraine has begun to develop quite recently and does not have an extensive pool of organizations and experts. In many programs for older adults, the media literacy itself is not organized as a separate major course but only as an information component of other projects.

One of the key problems of this domain, especially after the full-scale invasion, is a **lack of funding**. Under such conditions, it is difficult to plan long-term projects and strategic development of the domain. Lack of funding also affects the quality of courses, as **for this audience it is crucial to involve professionals and build courses involving psychologists, gerontologists and other specialists**. Also, such courses often need additional equipment (smartphones, laptops, tablets), especially if they are delivered to an audience that does not have access to their own

**gadgets**. Without adequate long-term funding, organizations cannot afford to hire employees that would be dedicated specifically to such projects and, therefore, have relevant specialization and experience.

#### Weaknesses of existing learning formats

Currently, the **short-term projects** is the most common format. This may affect the training

efficiency, as participants do not have enough time to get to know each other and to establish a trusting relationship with the trainer. **Considering that communication beyond home is of great importance for this audience, a poor social component of classes in this case is crucial.**

« I see quite short-term projects. [...] I feel we need a longer component because we do not get to see the change. I see a group the moment they meet and the moment the course is complete – this is a period of 1-3 days. I have a subjective feeling about what happened in this group. And I would like to see some facts to confirm the results of the training.”

(an ML trainer, journalist)

« [...] we do not see any efficiency in having one-time on-site training sessions somewhere in the region once in six months. There have been numerous data confirming that people after a training, delivered by an expert let's say from Kyiv, do not use this knowledge much in the future. [...] For example, the experience of Finnish experts showed us that only when normal human relations are established, when they know the leader, only then it works.”

(a director of ML project, expert)

Time constraints lead to the **intensive training** format, though this may ignore the specifics of the audience, like the pace of learning and the time needed to switch psychologically from the “authoritative adult” position to the “student” position.

« This is an age-related aspect when people are afraid to be incompetent, look ridiculous. This fear has a vise grip on them. Young people are not afraid that much, they are much less self-conscious about mistakes. For older people, this is a very traumatic experience. In the past, they used to be managers, chiefs, respected at work. [...] people have a feeling that they should be respected and listened to, that they are always right and cannot be mistaken. And we had to address that too.”

(an ML trainer)

Most of the experts also agreed that **the online format is not suitable** for working with this audience: not all participants can equip the workplace, it is harder for them to keep concentrated, there is no energy and interaction. In the online format it is harder to have an individual approach and it is impossible to check the progress of each participant in practice. Since older adults are more used to the real-life communication, they feel more comfortable interacting with the trainer offline, thus, the training will be more successful.

### Not enough specialists and learning materials

Not enough materials on interaction with the older age group, and few specific Ukrainian research, is one of the common problems. Many specialists work with **their own deliverables** using “intuitive empirical material”:

« But having some serious sources – no, we don't. I took the rest from my own experience. I have got almost 30 years of practical experience: this is a kind of intuitive empirical material. [...] To be honest, in our city, I am probably the only person who can create such a course. I'm kidding, but I didn't have anyone to ask. Of course, I contacted the media community, our journalists [...]. But in terms of the scientific approach, there was simply no one to ask. This is an unexplored field here.”

(an ML trainer)

No specialists who are qualified to work with the audience 60+ may affect the quality of the courses. Specialists who are not familiar with the specifics of the audience can build their programs **using common stereotypes** about this audience (this is especially true for young trainers).

### Projects and audience's needs assessment problems

The experts also point out **problems with data collection** regarding the efficiency of existing projects and overall understanding of the audience's needs.

« We didn't target the elderly specifically because we always have a problem with data collection. To launch something for them, one needs to understand what they need, how they need it.”  
(a director of ML project, expert)

And there is **no coordination** between different organizations nor strategic planning..

« ...this need comes from our partners, the organizations with whom we have worked, – a coordination support. Thus, due to the lack of resources, funding and the overall situation in the country, it is obvious that it is not appropriate to ask for the information policy budget now. Therefore, we consider it necessary to keep such organizations in touch, to help them with resources, contacts, materials, technically, with any capacity that we have.”

(a director of ML project, expert)

**Summing up the overview of the sphere of media literacy in Ukraine for the audience 60+, we can draw the following conclusions:**

- this sphere in Ukraine is not institutionalized and is hardly supported by the government;
- donors have a general understanding of the importance of media literacy among older adults, however, they fund short-term projects mostly and do not make strategic planning for the development of this sphere in Ukraine;
- there are few organizations engaged in this issue on a regular basis, they have certain methodological developments and a pool of trainers with whom they work regularly. However, there is hardly any coordination between these organizations as well as any assessment of their performance at the national level;
- meanwhile, experts underline that the demand for media literacy courses exists (starting with digital literacy and ending with communication and self-expression online). But there were no polls that would allow assessing the demand and needs of the audience at the national level before this study.



# 3

section

## NEEDS OF THE AUDIENCE 60+ IN THE SPHERE OF MEDIA LITERACY



In this section, we will focus on the audience's prospects and try to outline the challenges and problems faced by media consumers 60+ in Ukraine. **Media literacy** is an ability to use, understand, and create media content. Thus, media literacy combines technical and material aspects, including the access to electronic devices and the ability to use them, and psychological and cognitive aspects, such as stereotypes, knowledge and skills necessary for conscious consuming and creating media content.

# 3.1.

## OPINION OF TRAINERS AND EXPERTS



Based on the experience of trainers and experts, we can outline a certain understanding of the audience's needs; it will be complemented with our own research in the next paragraph.

We can group the needs of this audience into four categories:

### 1. Operating a smartphone and messaging apps, practical skills.

« There is an obvious point: working with sources that are available via a mobile phone. That is, how to work with different Telegram channels, where to look for information, how to work in groups. People also want to learn how to work with different chatbots, want to be able to protect themselves against scammers.”  
(an ML trainer, journalist)

« They come for free assistance with their mobile. Because something comes up, something they don't understand, something doesn't work. In our city, in such cases, older

people usually go either to ALLO or to Kyivstar or other chain stores where sales assistants will set everything up at a charge. And they have to deal with these little nothings almost every day. I mean there are senior ladies who come to classes and they already have a list of their questions and last week's mishaps.”

(an ML trainer for older adults)

### 2. Social interaction.

« ...we see experience of other countries, how they involve people of the third age in learning. They establish clubs, it is never a rigorous training. This is a very comfortable environment, perhaps in a library, a location for com-

*munication. This training needs to be wrapped in this environment. Because if you invite people to come to learn to tell the difference between information, no one will come."*

*(a head of NGO, ML expert)*

« *First of all, it was an occasion to get together and see each other because there is practically no such occasion in the villages."*

*(an ML expert, trainer)*

« *We see that the interpersonal communication with people and chatting has been an absolute leader, for many years. No matter what kind of information content we deliver. Of course, after an event, we hear feedback about some insights about various topics. But the importance of leaving home, having another place, in addition to work and home, if someone still works, is still a leader. This is a place for yourself, a space for meeting new people, for communication."*

*(an expert, ML trainer)*

### 3. Self-expression, self-fulfillment.

« *They want something new. They fell behind, but they want to be active. What they need, I think, is to be realized in life. They want to be, not to feel that their life passes by."*

*(an ML expert for adults)*

« *The less obvious request is that both adults and young want to learn how to work in front of the camera. Everyone wants to be a TV star but for themselves. They want to learn how to work in front of the camera, to deliver a speech, to work with the language."*

*(an ML trainer, journalist)*

### 4. Autonomy, awareness.

« *A family has grandchildren, children with smartphones that are completely digitized. They can't do it, they need to ask somebody. And it is so humiliating for many of them that they feel completely helpless. And they do not like it, these people want to be self-sufficient and not depend on somebody who would show a button or an application. This forces them to look for such learning platforms."*

*(an expert, ML trainer)*

« *If somebody uses Viber, at some point they start sharing some information in a group chat, and others would respond: "Why are you spamming, sharing fakes here" and so on. And this is in the human nature that no one wants to look stupid because they are convinced that this information that a friend sent can not be a fake."*

*(ML trainer for older adults) ■*

# 3.2.

## FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY (60+) AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS



This section is based on the public opinion survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) commissioned by the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute within this study from 26 May 11 till 28 June 2023 (N=1186 respondents). After a general overview of the poll results and key findings on demographic differences that influence media literacy development, we will move further to a more in-depth analysis of stereotypes, knowledge and skills of the audience based on the results of focus group discussions held in June-July 2023.

### 3.2.1. General Overview of the Survey Results



The survey results show that the majority of older respondents have **access to a smartphone** with Internet connection (60.6%). Significantly fewer respondents have access to a computer or a tablet (39.2%). Meanwhile, we can see a significant difference in terms of age: if 72.7% of the audience of 60-69 years old have access to a smartphone, the same is true only for 47% of the audience 70+. We also see a significant **regional** difference in access to a smartphone: 50% in the West, 64.8% in the Center, 61.5% in the South, and 67% in the East of the country. The TV-set is the most common electronic device (66.7%).

Access to a smartphone is a key factor in accessing the Internet: 43.1% of respondents use a smartphone to **access the Internet**, and only 17.8% use a computer for this. At the same time, we see a noticeable **gender** difference in the use of electronic devices to access the Internet: if women are more likely to go online from a smartphone (47.1% of women and 36.1% of men), men are more likely to use a computer or a tablet (12.5% of women and 27.3% of men). **34.4% of men and 37.8% of women do not use the Internet at all.** We can see a large gap between the **urban and the rural population** in the number

of people who do not use the Internet (29.6% in the city and 50.1% in the village). **And among the audience 70+, a half (50.1%) of the respondents do not use the Internet.**

**consumption audience** by the audience 60+. The survey shows that the most popular media among older adults is **TV** (66.8%). Far behind, YouTube (27.6%) is in second place and the radio is in the third place (24%). 21.8% of respondents learn news from family and friends, 20.8% check Telegram channels.

We also wanted to understand what kind of devices and platforms are essential for **news**

Figure 5.

**What kind of devices do you have available? Please select everything that is true for you.**



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS

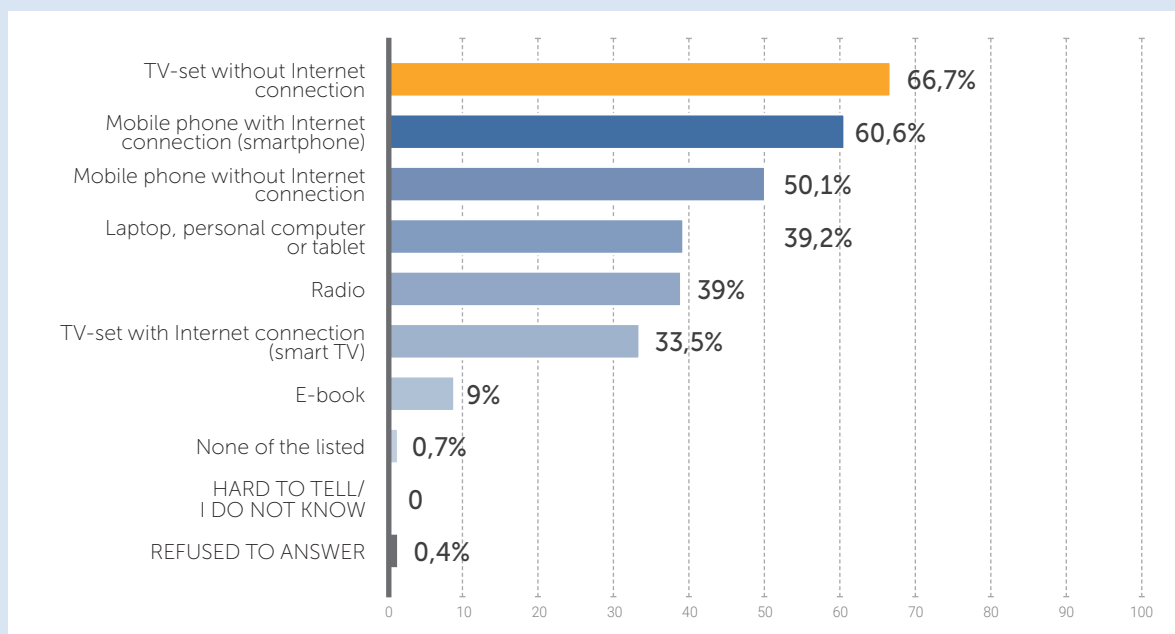


Figure 6.

**What kind of devices do you have available? (in terms of different categories: gender, age, city/village, macro region), %**



|  | Gender |       | Age (2 categories) |      | City / village |         | Macro region (4 categories) |        |       |      |
|--|--------|-------|--------------------|------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|------|
|  | Man    | Woman | 60-69              | 70+  | City           | Village | West                        | Center | South | East |
| Mobile phone with Internet connection (smartphone) | 59,3   | 61,3  | 72,7               | 47,0 | 67,4           | 47,2    | 50,0                        | 64,8   | 61,5  | 67,0 |
| Mobile phone without Internet connection           | 50,3   | 50,0  | 39,3               | 62,2 | 44,3           | 61,5    | 59,1                        | 48,2   | 46,8  | 45,0 |
| Laptop, personal computer or tablet                | 45,3   | 35,8  | 47,2               | 30,3 | 44,7           | 28,5    | 34,4                        | 40,4   | 43,0  | 38,0 |



We see a significant **age** difference in the use of news sources. 72.1% of the audience 70+ use television, 13.7% use Telegram, and 22% use YouTube. The audience 60-69 uses online sources much more: 27.1% use Telegram and 32.6% use YouTube; 62.1% use TV.

There is also a **regional diversity**: if in the West 74.7% use TV, in the East the number of TV-viewers is only 59.7%; in the Center and in the South

this is 65.1% and 65.5% of users, respectively. At the same time, in the South and East, the use of **online sources** is more common: 24.1% in the South and 27.2% in the East use Telegram, and only 16.5% in the West; 29.4% in the South and 32.7% in the East use YouTube, and 22.3% in the West. The much higher **numbers** of newspaper readers are in villages (19.2% vs. 7.9% in the city) and in the West of the country (19.7% vs. 13.5% in the Center, 5.1% in the South and 5.5% in the East).

Figure 7.

### How do you go online most often?

ONLY ONE OPTION

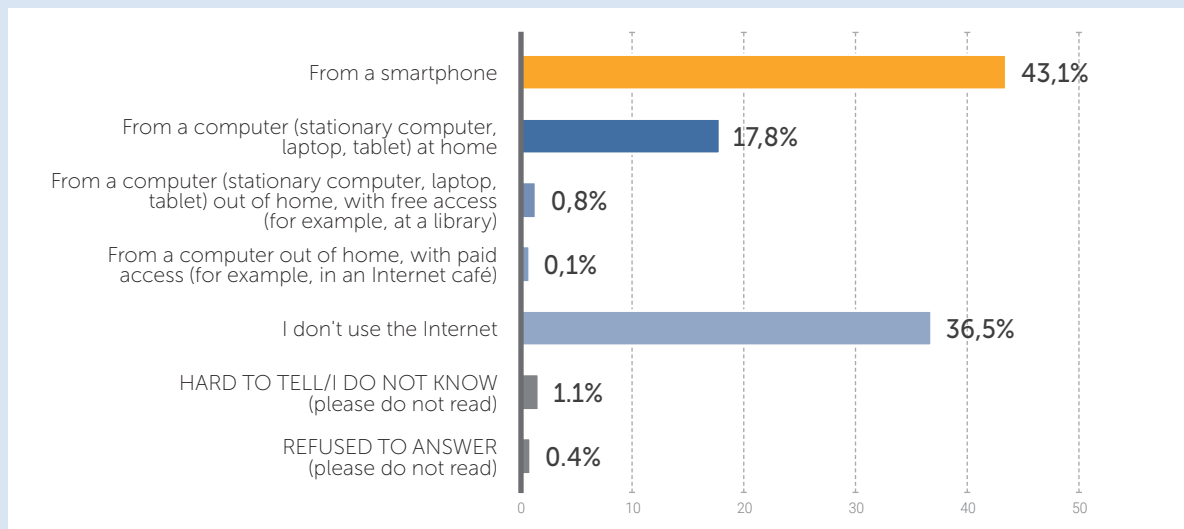


Figure 8.

### Go online via smartphone, %

ONLY ONE OPTION



|                             | Gender |       | Age (2 categories) |      | City / village |         | Macro region (4 categories) |        |       |      |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|------|
|                             | Man    | Woman | 60-69              | 70+  | City           | Village | West                        | Center | South | East |
| Go online via smartphone, % | 36,1   | 47,1  | 54,5               | 30,4 | 48,7           | 32,3    | 36,3                        | 45,2   | 43,0  | 50,0 |
| Go online via computer, %   | 27,3   | 12,5  | 18,1               | 17,5 | 19,8           | 14,0    | 14,2                        | 18,9   | 20,4  | 17,2 |
| Do not use the Internet, %  | 34,2   | 37,8  | 24,4               | 50,1 | 29,6           | 50,1    | 44,4                        | 33,3   | 35,3  | 32,8 |

Figure 9.

**How do you usually learn news? Please list up to 3 sources that you use most often.**



3 OPTIONS MAXIMUM.

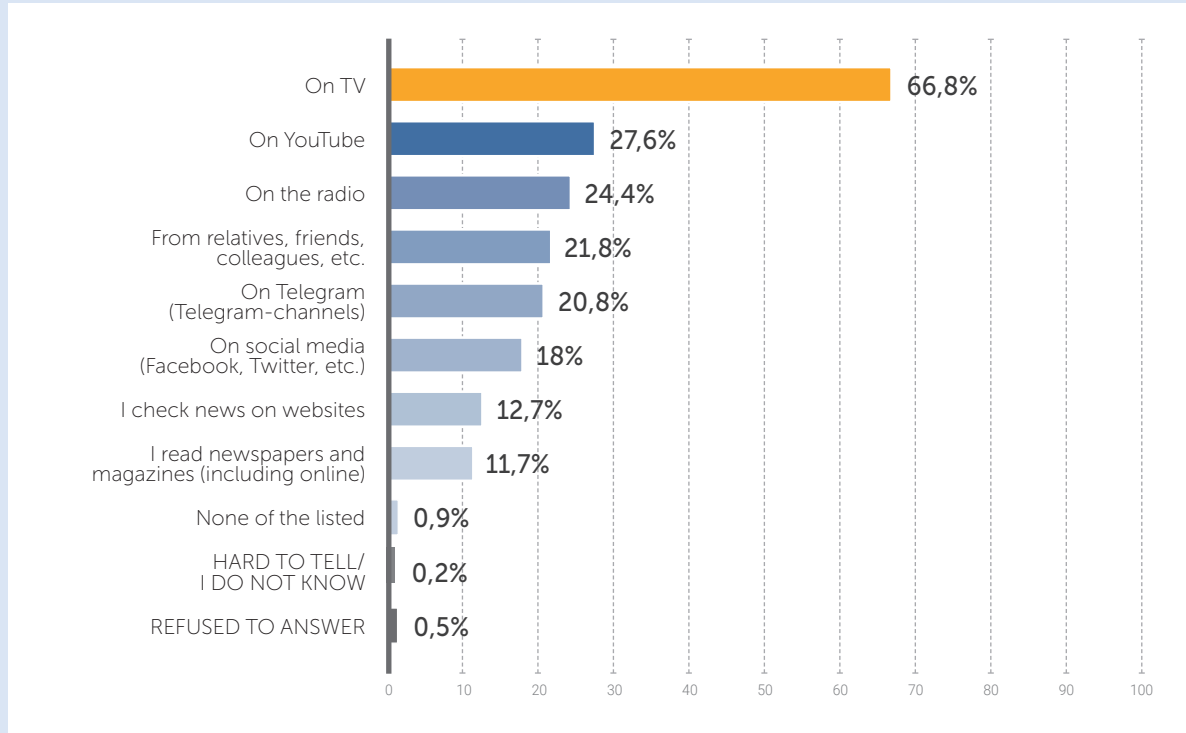


Figure 10.

**How do you usually learn news? Please list up to 3 sources that you use most often.**



3 OPTIONS MAXIMUM.

|                                   | Gender |       | Age (2 categories) |      | City / village |         | Macro region (4 categories) |        |       |      |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|------|
|                                   | Man    | Woman | 60-69              | 70+  | City           | Village | West                        | Center | South | East |
| Consuming news on television, %   | 67,7   | 66,3  | 62,1               | 72,1 | 65,9           | 68,6    | 74,7                        | 65,1   | 65,5  | 59,7 |
| Consuming news on Telegram, %     | 17,4   | 22,7  | 27,1               | 13,7 | 23,7           | 15,2    | 16,3                        | 19,0   | 24,1  | 27,2 |
| Consuming news on YouTube, %      | 33,2   | 24,5  | 32,6               | 22,0 | 31,3           | 20,5    | 22,5                        | 27,8   | 29,4  | 32,7 |
| Consuming news from newspapers, % | 9,5    | 13,0  | 8,0                | 15,9 | 7,9            | 19,2    | 19,7                        | 13,5   | 5,1   | 5,5  |



In sum, although the television is still the main source of information for the older age category, more than a half of respondents use a smartphone, including for going online. It is also necessary to take into account significant age, regional, and gender differences in the use of gadgets and information sources. Women are more likely to go online on their smartphone, and men are more likely to use a computer or a tablet for this. There is a large gap between 60-69 and 70+ audiences in terms of the use of the Internet and online sources. The audiences in cities in the South and East of the country use online sources more than the audiences in villages and in the West of the country.

### 3.2.2. Understanding the Online Media Space, Media Usage Habits and Skills of People Who DO NOT Use (Barely Use) the Internet



In this section, we rely on the results of 2 focus groups (16 respondents) from the Kyiv and Ternopil oblasts of Ukraine, **all** participants of which do not use (barely use) the Internet. We also quote here the answers of certain respondents that do not use (barely use) the Internet from the general focus groups held in other oblasts. Most of the respondents who do not use the Internet have a “dumbphone”. However, some of them use the smartphone with the assistance of family members, friends, or neighbors. A quarter of respondents go online from a computer at home. The respondents receive news on television and radio several times a day or daily, and are less likely to read newspapers.

#### A Using the Internet

Focus group participants named following **reasons** why they do not use the Internet:

- no **access** to the Internet due to technical (for example, connection problems) or financial issues;

« **Female respondent:** *There is no Internet, I have to cut down my expenses. [...]*

**Moderator:** *Ok, what do you mean to cut down?*

**Female respondent:** *How? The retirement pension is not a thing. I can't afford the Internet. How can I afford one?*

*(a woman, Ternopil oblast)*

- no **skills** necessary to use of the Internet;

« *You take a card, switch from a button-phone to a smartphone, and you will start having problems. Because you will have to go some-*

where all the time, to push something. You go to the bank, there's always this code, well, you're not... problems.

(a man, Kyiv oblast)

- a strong reluctance to use the Internet.

« I think there should always be an alternative. According to the Constitution, the person has the right to decide, so to say. And if there are people who do not want to use it, then there must be mechanisms to live comfortably in this country, that's all. I mean if you want, you are free to use it.”

(a man, Kyiv oblast)

But even when respondents had access to devices and the Internet, they often could not use them in such a way as to fulfill their needs. Almost all respondents in both focus groups needed **assistance of their close ones in using the Internet**.

**Distributed access** to devices is a rather common option within a family. That is, older family members use a device belonging to their children or grandchildren, or ask their children or grandchildren to find information, to make a banking transaction, to call someone:

« My son has got a laptop, so he also does something that I need, to print the receipts, he can do this electronically.”

(a woman, Kyiv oblast)

However, the respondents comment that their close ones often **do not have time or patience to help** or to explain them how to use gadgets and the Internet:

« **Female respondent 1:** Things they explain seem simple to them, and I understand nothing. And it is so fast...

**Male respondent 2:** And they get angry.

**Female respondent 1:** And get angry, yes. And I get frustrated because I think I'm not stupider than you (laughing).”

(a woman and a man, Ternopil oblast)

If the respondents cannot get help from their relatives or friends, they may also turn to institu-

tionalized forms of support, including **courses**. However, existing courses may not always satisfy the demand either:

« It was difficult for me that I didn't understand anything at all. I've got a laptop, so I need to use it. [...] a friend of mine, he showed me the basics once but he was busy. We can't do this anytime, he is not near, he lives far away, on the other side of the town. My son was not here either. So there was no one. And then I had a course, [...] but I can't work on it.”

(a man, Ternopil oblast)

It should be mentioned, however, that the majority of our respondents have never heard about the existence of media literacy courses.

## B Understanding the Internet, Theories and Stereotypes

Besides the absence of access, skills and willingness, various **folk media theories and stereotypes** prevent participants from learning to use the Internet. To name a few:

- **fear of scammers:**

« **Moderator:** The Internet, why don't you use it? Is there anything you might be afraid of?

**Female respondent:** That you may get to the wrong place. I once got there, and it charged me a fortune (smiling).”

(a woman, Kyiv oblast)

- **fear of dependency:**

« I'm scared, for example, very much when my son comes, and he does not chat with us, even if we have a family party, and he sits there all the time in his phone. And I know, I've got a friend of my age, she is totally dependent on the Internet. I mean, well, she is there from morning till night, she has no time to do many things, for example. [...] And somehow I am so afraid of such things, because I believe that this is some kind of unhealthy dependence.”

(a woman, Kyiv oblast)

### ■ sexist and ageist stereotypes:

« Well, we're the girls, let's put it that way. We don't want to go deep into it. Though, it is necessary, you have to. This is the time we live in. This is the first time I have heard that there are courses. I would love to take these courses.”

(a woman, Kyiv oblast)

### ■ fear that someone can watch their activities and communication online, especially in the wartime:

« I never chat online. I do not share anything online, nothing, nowhere. So I have nothing to be afraid of.”

(a man, Odesa oblast)

### ■ belief that the Internet is an “information junkyard”:

« ...I analyze and support the words [of another participant] that it is necessary [to filter] – a lot of junk. As the Bible says, “one has to distinguish between the junk and the fuel.” I do my best to distinguish and to watch less sociologists, those experts online.”

(a man, Ternopil oblast)

## C News Consumption and Information Search Practices

It is foreign to many respondents, who barely or practically do not use the Internet, to practice actively a “media diet” and to check the news by comparing different sources. Often they are likely to practice the **episodic, incidental news exposure**, the consumption by habit and the consumption as a result of the technical presence of certain sources:

« Well, if there is a TV-set, then I watch what they show on TV. I do not choose what to watch, but I follow what is already on.

(a woman, Khmelnytskyi oblast)

Some of the respondents delegate following

the news to their close ones who “keep them up to date”:

« A daughter comes from work and tells what is going on in Ukraine.”

(a woman, Odesa oblast)

Respondents who do not use (barely use) the Internet often rely **on their close ones in the information search**:

« As for me, I say that I am very far from the Internet and from all this. If I need anything, my son will find.”

(a woman, Cherkasy oblast)

Meanwhile, it is important to note that regular use of the Internet is not a guarantee of developing the skills of conscious use of Internet sources. The respondents who use the Internet regularly but are facing **financial difficulties, lack of resources** (like the education, free time, household help) also demonstrate a low level of media literacy and dependence on technical infrastructure (for example, algorithms of YouTube recommendations). However, the respondents with a high education level, better financial and social situation can compensate for the lack of Internet resources, by means of consuming information from print sources, public institutions, etc.:

« ...I subscribed to the newspaper “Holos-Ukrainy” (Voice of Ukraine) and “Uryadovy-Kurier” (Government Courier). I need the facts. I am a scientist, a candidate of sciences, and I believe that the main source of information is my brain [...]. I mean I am trying to get facts from the official publications.”

(a man, Kyiv oblast)

However, with the war and the economic recession, such consumers may find themselves in information isolation if print media cease or shift to online.

**Consequently, media practices and information consumption of this group of respondents are often not autonomous, their agency and their own choice in the media use and, therefore, keeping up-to-date about current developments are significantly limited by the technical infrastructure and social circle.**



### 3.2.3. Understanding the Online Media Space, Media Usage Habits and Skills of the Internet Users

The public opinion poll shows that **the Internet performs three main functions for the respondents: they watch news (88.5%), communicate with the close ones (85.1%), and search for information (83.2%) online.** More than a half of respondents also pay bills and utilities online (64.8%). More than a third of respondents use the government services on the DIIA application (37.6%) and shop online (35.8%).

#### Access

The surveys and focus group data show that most users 60+ go online from a smartphone and, thus, assess their smartphone skills higher than their computer skills. In addition, one of our inter-

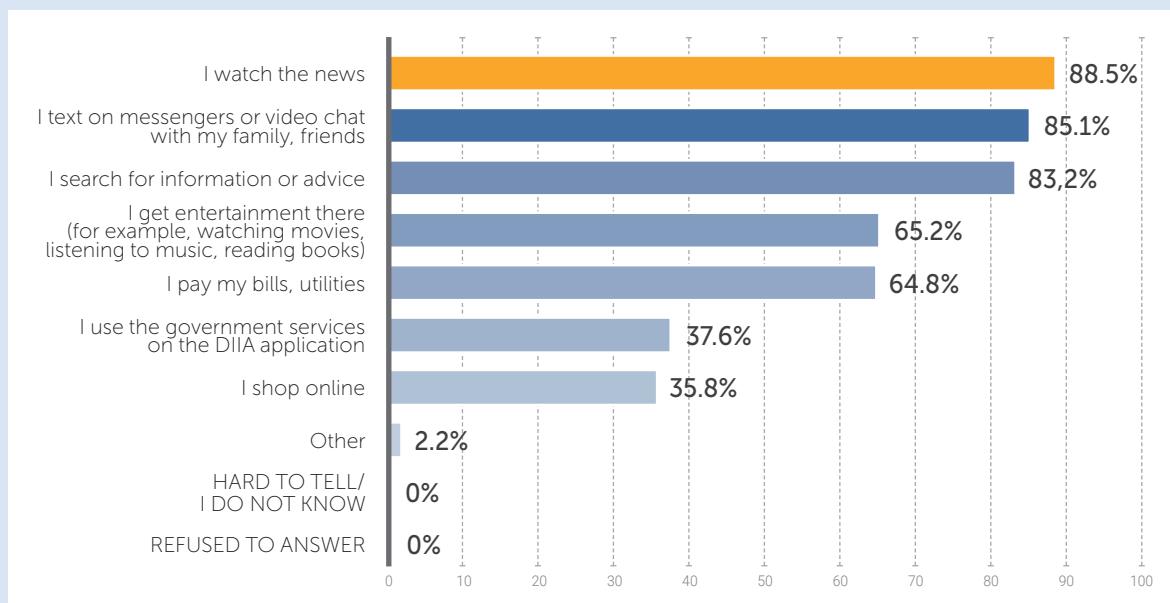
viewed media literacy trainers said that the demand for his mobile skills course quickly outran the demand for a computer course:

« And at some point, at the 5th [round of] course it happens that a senior lady comes

Таблица 11.

**What do you use the Internet for? Please select everything that is true for you.**

YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.



and says: I'm not interested in working on computers but I've got a phone, I need to work with a phone. There were another two senior men who also expressed interest in learning a tablet. [...] so we made two separate groups: a computer and a mobile one. The mobile group has grown fast. Their word of mouth got spread, additional people started signing-up. So the next time we recruited two new groups, it turned out that there was one person for the computer group, and over 20 for the mobile one. We understood that it is over for the PC."

(an ML trainer for older adults)

Moreover, a **smartphone is the only device** most of respondents use to access the Internet. This technical solution is a result of the smartphone's convenience and mobility (at the focus groups, the respondents repeated that it is convenient for them to check the phone any free minute during a day, or at night, during air raid alerts). However, this solution may limit respondents, especially the older age groups, who have problems with eye-sight, fine motor skills, etc. It is worth noting that the respondents are more prone to associate the consumption of news on other devices, such as a widescreen TV, tablet, laptop, with watching analytical broadcasts, with more **in-depth consumption of media content**. While viewing news on a smartphone is episodic, more about **prompt and concise messages** and monitoring of current events.

**This is to say, it is also important to maintain the computer literacy programs as these skills expand the possibilities of consuming and creating media content.**

### News consumption practices

The majority of Internet user respondents **combine traditional and digital media** in their news consumption. These different devices and channels of information are deep-seated in the daily routines, and their functions correspond to different types of consumption (taking a sneak peek of news during a working day, watching/listening in the background while working in the garden or in the kitchen, focused watching in the evening on the couch).

The common combining of **Telegram and TV** as two main sources of information is an interesting practice. These two sources complement each other, covering the prompt information needs on the one hand, and verified information from official sources (for example, the United News Marathon). Another common combination is Telegram and YouTube, where YouTube is a source of military analytics and expert analysis (the channels of Svitan, Shvets, Portnikov, Feygin, Zhdanov, Piontkovskiy, etc. are the most mentioned). Typically, the respondents watching expert bloggers on YouTube watch 3-4 (or more) different channels.

Almost all focus groups participants are interested in receiving **local news**. They want to know what is going on in their city, village, region. As local media are often unable to meet this demand (especially in the wartime when print media do not or hardly work), Telegram-channels and Viber-groups become major sources of local news:

« We used to receive the newspaper called *VisnykCherkaskohoInstytutuMista* (Herald of the Cherkasy Institute of the City) in our mail box. Well, there was something about shortcomings in the city, let's say it this way. A pit hole here, something there. Well, like just local news. [...] I think it's very good because we always want to know a little bit more so that the city would be prettier, cleaner."

(a woman, Cherkasy oblast)

« And during the day on the Telegram "Nikolayevskie Novosti" (@news\_nikolaev). And "NikVesti" (@nikvesti). And I read Kim all the time. Sienkevych, on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram. This is how I keep uptodate. Well, there's also the "NikolayevskyVaniok" (@vanek\_nikolaev) on Telegram, and I read it occasionally. Plus, other local Mykolaiv chats: "Nikolayev 24/7" (@nikolaev\_24), and just "Nikolaev chat" (@NikolaevskiyChat). That's where I get the whole information from.

(a woman, Mykolayiv oblast)

The respondents underline that it is important for them to view the news related to military developments, the news from the front, the military analytics. Watching entertainment content, including feature films, TV series, etc., became

much less significant for the respondents with the full-scale invasion. The perpetual news consumption may affect the **mental health** of the respondents, causing feelings of depression, helplessness, anxiety:

« I mean we can't grasp all the information, not all of it. Because the head will burst because no one can. I understood that at the beginning of the war [...] I was watching almost all day long, and I did not sleep at night, then my heart hurts, then everything goes wrong. And now, as they say, I introduced filters.»

(a woman, Cherkasy oblast)

This is associated with such feelings as “**news and information overload**” and the need to “take a break from the news”. To prevent “overload”, the respondents implement the practices of “filtering sources” and controlling their information space. In more radical cases of the “overload”, the

respondents begin to avoid the news intentionally, and sometimes develop a cynical attitude toward the news.

These findings show how important media literacy skills are not only for the conscious consumption of news but also for developing the psychological resilience during the war.

## Information search

About 67.9% of the audience 60+, according to the national poll findings, use search engines. However, focus groups show that many of the respondents **are searching for information on YouTube** (using the YouTube search feed the same way as they use the Google search box):

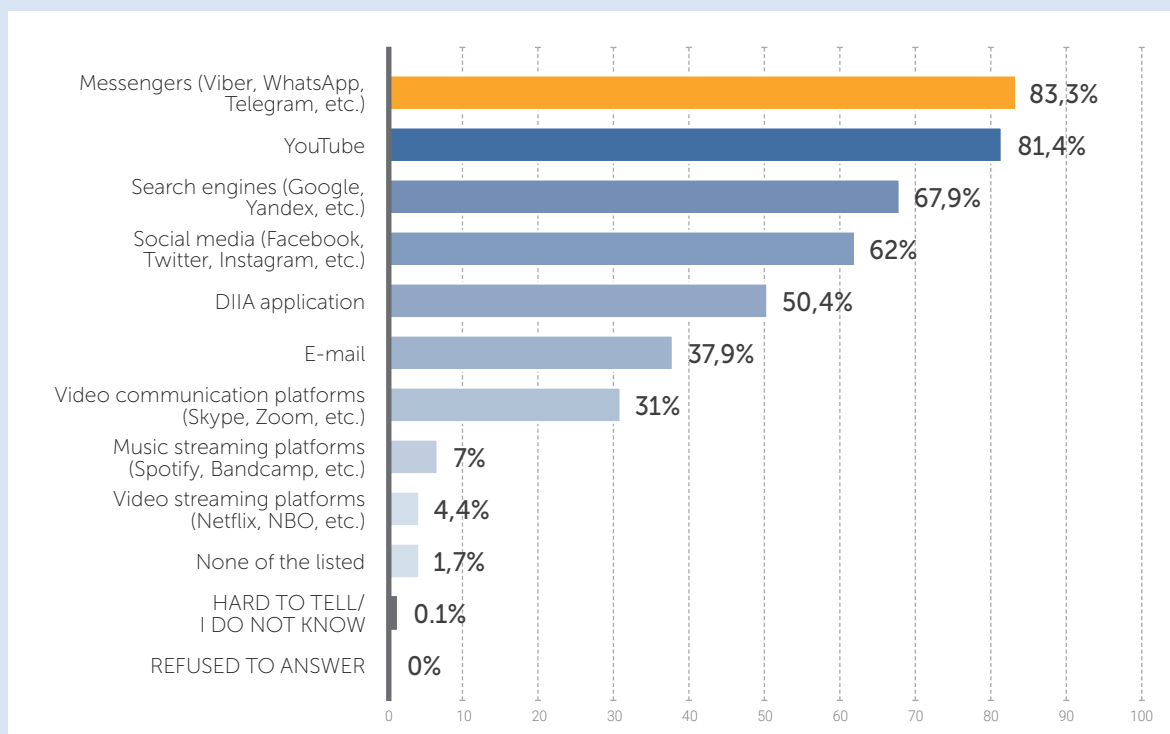
« Well, I also... write, I request. I phrase a question and search. I search on YouTube, in

Figure 12.

### What kind of software or applications from this list do you use? Please select everything that is true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.



*Google. [...] I launch YouTube, ask a question. It gives results and I select what I want."*

*(a woman, Mykolayiv oblast)*

Some also mention Facebook and messaging apps as platforms for information search. This is because YouTube and messengers are the most popular platforms among this audience: 83.3% use messengers, and 81.4% use YouTube. The government's DIIA application is currently used by 50.4% of respondents.

Only a **small number of respondents have certain criteria for information search**. For example, some respondents distinguish Ukrainian sources from the Russian ones (or are aware that Russian sources are blocked by Google), distinguish between different website domains (.com, .gov) or have specific sources that they trust when searching for information in Google (for example, Wikipedia). The vast majority of respondents cannot specify any criteria they use when selecting information sources in Google. As a rule, the respondents view sources from the first one and down the list, reading the content of the websites until they find the information that works for them:

«**M:** Anyway, there should be a mechanism how you choose where to click. [Name of a woman], you?

**R4:** That's my case, too. For example, I start with the first one. No, I don't like it. I leave the page and check the other.

**M:** So you check them one after another, right?

**R4:** Yes.

**M:** [Name of a man], what about you?

**R3:** Same thing, the same. Is there any other way? This is the easiest one: you check the first one, then the second one.

**M:** [Name of a man], what about you?

**R7:** It's the same. I check what it suggests and what is interesting to me. If nothing suits me, I start all over again."

*(Ternopil oblast)*

Based on the results of focus group discussions, we can conclude that the audience 60+ is generally hardly aware of the search platforms algorithms and of the search engine interface features and needs additional training and in-

formation searching skills for online. Further research is needed (for example, using ethnographic methods, experiments) to understand the procedures and criteria that respondents apply to so-called "intuitive" search for information on Google.

## Information selection and verification practices

The majority of the poll respondents **rate high their information selection and verification skills**. 70.2% of respondents say they are confident in distinguishing the true news from the fake ones on traditional media. It is quite interesting that the difference between traditional and digital sources here is less than 5%. There is a similar picture with evaluation of the information quality on traditional media and online – 71.3% and 62.7% respectively are confident in evaluating the information quality in these sources.

And there is a noticeable **gender gap**. The vast majority of men rate high their skills in assessing the news truthfulness (78% on traditional media and 73% on the Internet) and the information quality (80% on traditional media and 68% on the Internet). The number of women who rate high their skills is significantly less: 65% are confident in distinguishing the true news on traditional media and 61% on the Internet; 66% are confident in assessing the information quality on traditional media and only 59% on the Internet.

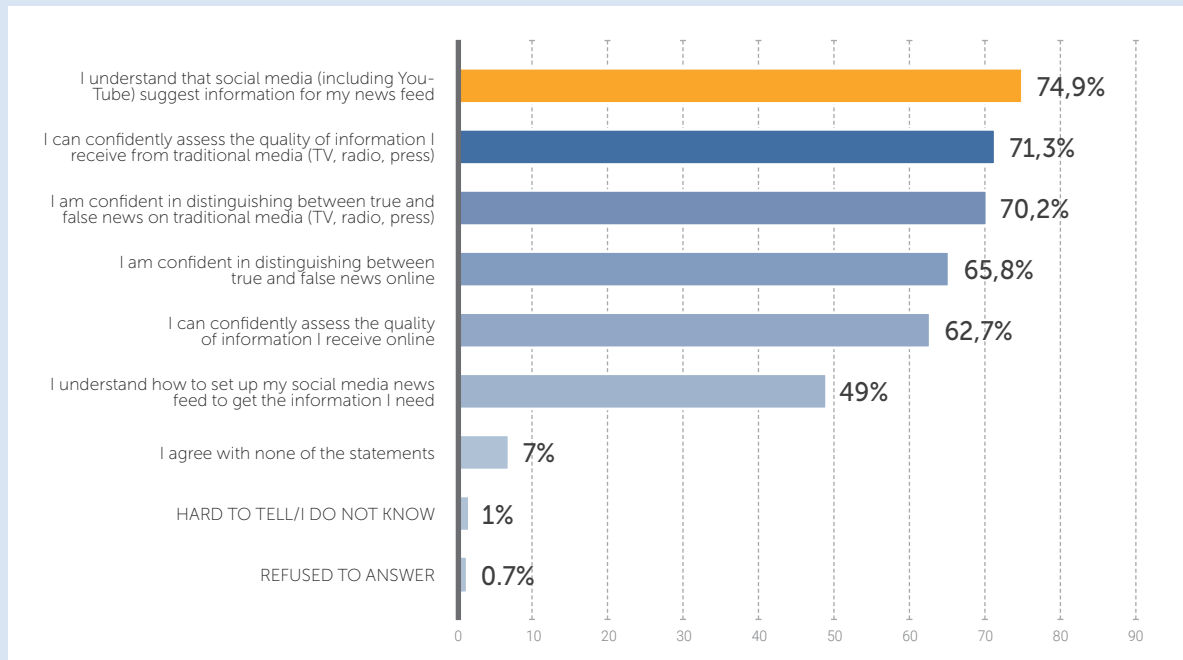
We can also see interesting **regional features** in assessing their skills; this may be explained by a much higher susceptibility of the East and South of Ukraine to the Russian propaganda penetration in the Ukrainian information space. If in the West almost 78% are confident in distinguishing true news on the traditional media and 68% on the Internet, in the East this share is significantly less – 63% and 57%, respectively. A similar picture with the information quality assessment: in the West 76% are confident in assessing the quality of information on traditional media and 67% on the Internet, while in the East this percentage is almost 10% less.

Figure 13.

Please select the statements that you agree with. Please select all the options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.



Focus groups give several possible reasons for such high ratings of their own skills, despite the complex and “polluted” information space. First, **skepticism about news** and belief that following certain procedures they can make a quite reliable picture of what is happening are common among the respondents:

«*But I have a rule never trust 100% anyone. Always do your best to get information from different sources, to compare it, to analyze it and make your own conclusions.*»  
(a man, Odesa oblast)

Among such procedures, the respondents listed **comparing multiple sources**, using different sources to check news (for example, it is common to check the news received during the day on Telegram with the evening news on TV), or **to limit sources** to official channels and communications only.

«*YouTube, briefs from the front, and calls to people who are still there [in the occupied*

*territories], whom I still believe [...] Then I compare and a kind of outline the situation.*»  
(a man, Cherkasy oblast)

It is also important that almost all respondents recognize that the **ensorship by the government** is necessary in the wartime, and believe that them being unaware is one of the components of the information warfare against the invader.

«*Female respondent 1: I think that we are definitely not aware, because even official channels will never give us the whole true picture, and this is logical. We don't need to know everything...*

*Female respondent 2: The less you know, the better you sleep, right?*  
(women, Kyiv oblast)

At the same time, a significant part of the focus groups participants underlined the feeling of helplessness, inability to cope with a huge flow of news and understand what is really happen-

Figure 14.

Please select the statements that you agree with. Please select all the options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.

men women

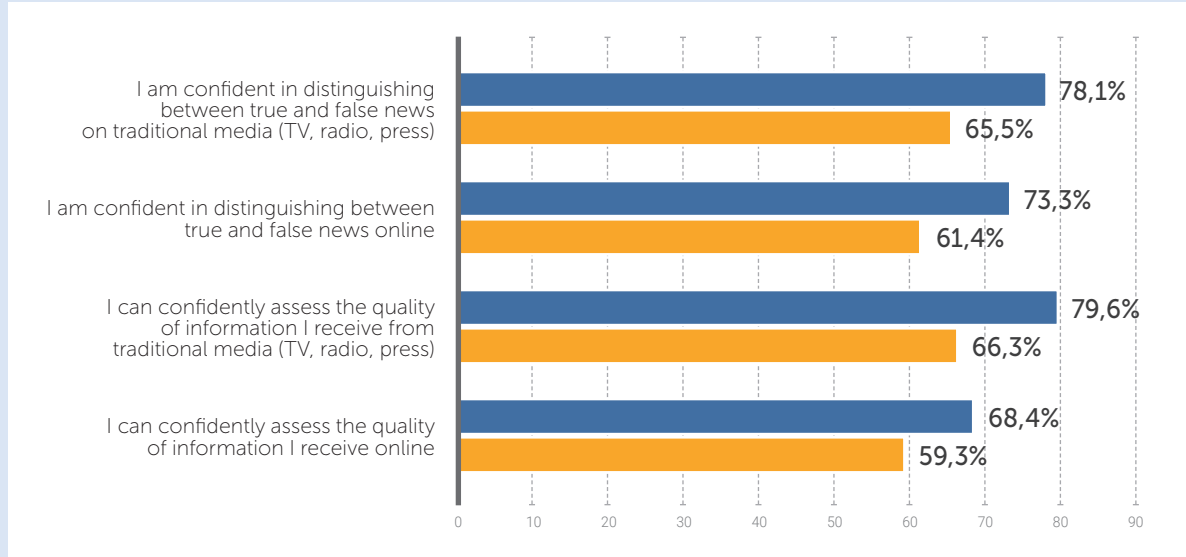


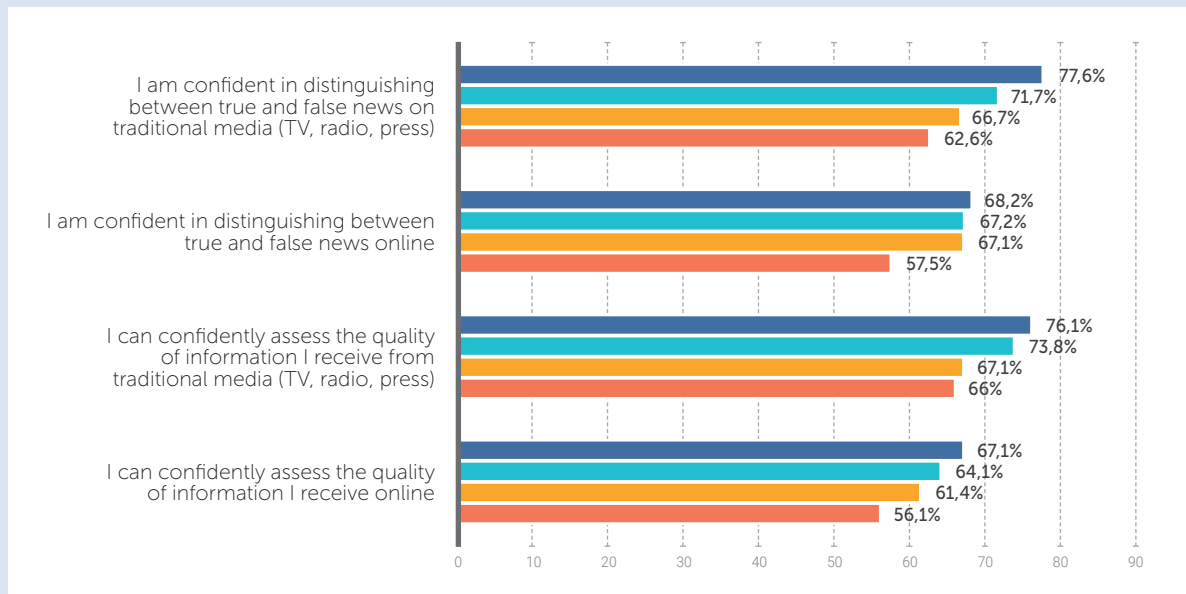
Figure 15.

Please select the statements that you agree with. Please select all the options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.

West Center South East



ing. We can also single out several **beliefs, folk media theories and stereotypes** that prevent respondents from consciously selecting and verifying information.

### 1 “I don’t have enough time to watch the news 24/7.”

« I'm not as informed as some other people. Those who think they are “informed”, right? Er... they must be, day and night, sitting, watching, listening to, analyzing and digesting.”  
(a woman, Dnipropetrovsk oblast)

### 2 “I don’t trust anyone.”

« Well, you know, I think, I don't trust anyone now [laughing]. You come across with it, and all this information is full of lies. I don't know. Then you check it or you hear something new and it comes out to be to the contrary.”  
(a woman, Kharkiv oblast)

### 3 “I am an ordinary person.”

« There's a lot of information, too much. We can't in our heads... how people say, filter it, right? I mean there is a lot of information, a lot. Whether it is true or not – I am not an analyst, I can't tell. I am an ordinary person, an ordinary retired person.”  
(a man, Mykolayiv oblast)

Thus, we can see most older respondents are confident in their information selection and verification skills. Meanwhile the gender and regional difference in the assessment of skills is noticeable. Men are more likely to give higher rates to their skills than women. The respondents in the west are more confident in their ability to distinguish true news from the false ones than in the south and east. The respondents have a prevailing skeptical attitude towards news, and common practices among them are: comparing media sources, consuming news from different channels and sources of information, and limiting to the official channels. **A common mistrust of channels and sources of information, a belief that the news consumption is a time-consum-**

**ing practice as well as a perception of oneself as an “ordinary person” with limited resources who is not able to get and correctly understand information – all these factors deepen the feeling of helplessness against a huge information flow.**

## Activity, agency and self-expression on the Internet

Compared to fairly high rates of their information selection and verification skills, it can be seen that the respondents are much less confident about their technical skills of gadgets and platforms use.

The poll shows that **less than a half of respondents have basic skills** in the gadgets and Internet use. Except for making photo or video with a smartphone (74.3%), most respondents have not mastered such important skills as downloading a file from the Internet (only 45.2% can do this), or sending their location on messenger (only 28.1% can do this). We also see a noticeable **age gap**: if only 11.1% of respondents aged 60-69 cannot take any of these actions, the number of such respondents 70+ is much higher – 26.3%.

We also see that almost a half of respondents cannot set up their electronic devices and platforms they use to receive necessary information (49% answered that they can). Even fewer respondents can change their privacy settings in their social media (25.8%). Such findings suggest a generally **low level of algorithms operation skills**, this potentially reduces the agency of older adults, their ability to regulate their information space independently.

In line with previous studies in different countries, this study also shows a fairly **low involvement of the senior people in forming discourses on social media and creating online content**. 30.2% of respondents using the Internet did not take any active actions online and used the Internet only to receive information. Only 18.6% commented on materials on the news websites, almost twice as many respondents shared their opinion on social media (31.2%), about 14.8% signed online petitions. Money do-

Figure 16.

Please select the statements that you agree with. Please select all options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.

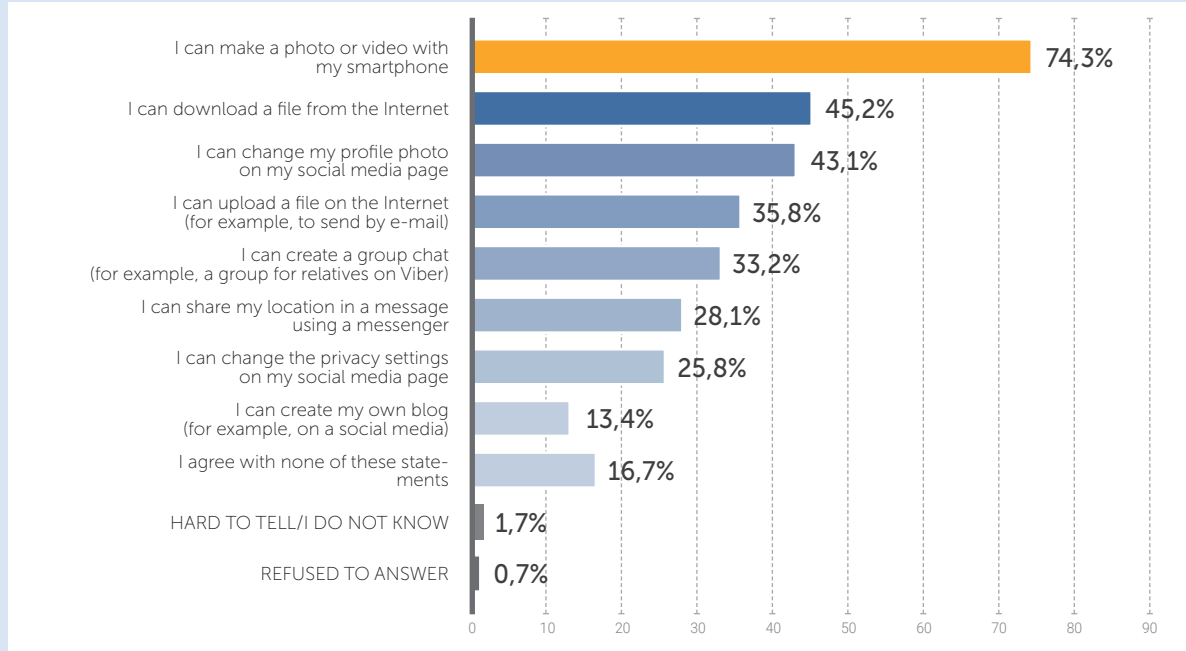


Figure 17.

Please select the statements that you agree with. Please select all options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.

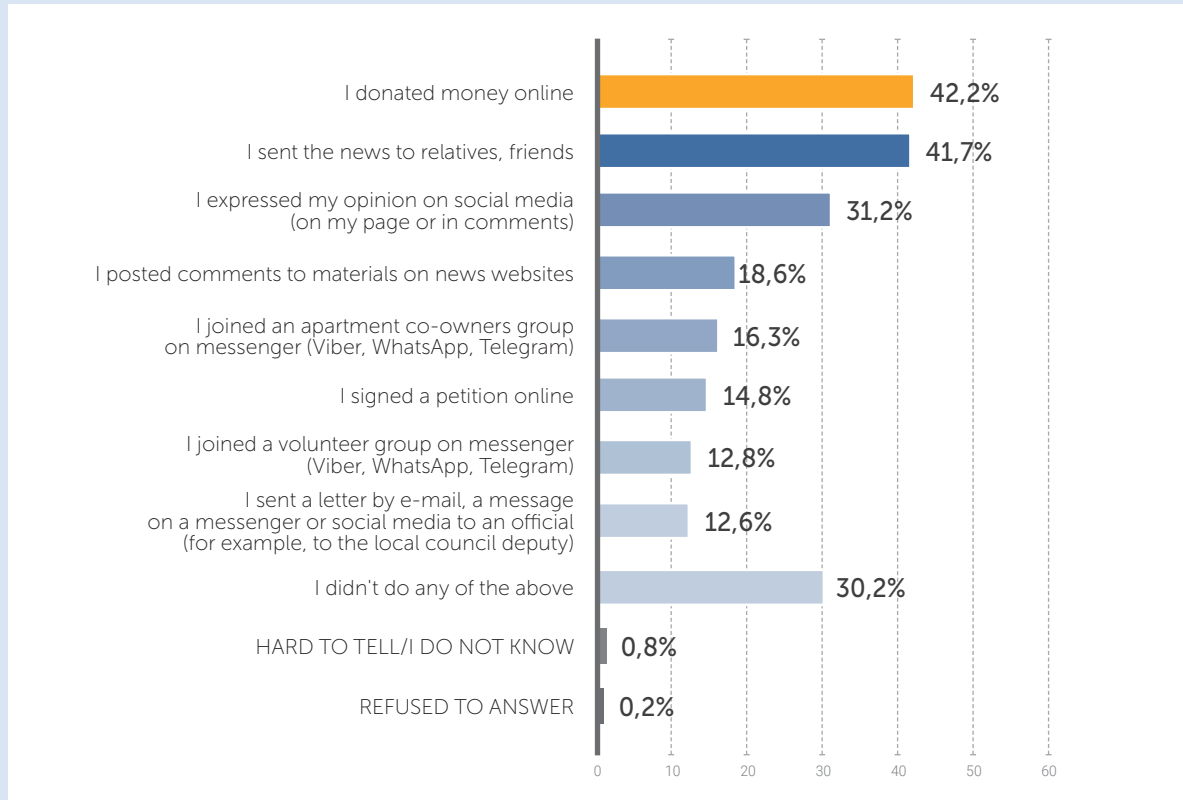
|   | Gender |       | Age (2 categories) |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|   | Man    | Woman | 60-69              | 70+   |
| I can make a photo or video with my smartphone                          | 73.8%  | 74.6% | 80.3%              | 64%   |
| I can download a file from the Internet                                 | 53.6%  | 40.2% | 48.5%              | 39.5% |
| I can upload a file on the Internet (for example, to send by e-mail)    | 42.7%  | 31.7% | 40%                | 28.6% |
| I can create my own blog (for example, on a social media)               | 18.1%  | 10.5% | 16.1%              | 8.7%  |
| I can create a group chat (for example, a group for relatives on Viber) | 29.7%  | 35.2% | 38.4%              | 24.3% |
| I can change my profile photo on my social media page                   | 41.7%  | 43.9% | 46.9%              | 36.5% |
| I can change the privacy settings on my social media page               | 30.5%  | 22.9% | 30.3%              | 18%   |
| I can share my location in a message using a messenger                  | 31.7%  | 26%   | 33%                | 19.7% |
| I agree with none of these statements                                   | 15.7%  | 17.3% | 11.1%              | 26.3% |

Figure 18.

Which of the following actions did you take on the Internet at least once over the last year? Please select everything that is true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.



nates (42.2%) is one of the important exceptions to the overall picture of the respondent's low activity online, this is explained by the widespread nature of online fund-raisers for the army and other volunteer initiatives in the wartime. A fairly high number of respondents (41.7%) who shared the news to their relatives, friends is another important exception. It is quite possible that older adults are the **main suppliers of news in the family group chats**. Thus, their information selection and verification skills are extremely important for an informed society.

The poll results also show a significant **regional difference in the numbers of respondents who express their opinion online**. E.g., 35% of respondents in the West shared their opinion on social media, and only 24% in the East. 24% posted comments to materials on the news websites

in the West, and only 16% in the East. Further research is needed to understand the reasons for this regional difference.

The results of focus group discussions show a similar picture. Most respondents **do not raise the topic of expressing themselves online**, this indicates no experience or interest in self-expressing online. Those who mentioned their experience in commenting on media materials or expressing themselves on social media were divided into two groups. One group of respondents (much larger) does not consider it relevant to express their own opinion online:

«...I don't limit my willingness to write something. I just don't have that kind of negative thoughts, so I have nothing to write anything like that. It's hard to avoid discussing political

Figure 19.

Which of the following actions did you take on the Internet at least once over the last year? Please select everything that is true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS.

|  | Gender |        | Age (2 categories) |       |
|--|--------|--------|--------------------|-------|
|  | West   | Center | South              | East  |
| I expressed my opinion on social media (on my page or in comments) | 35,5%  | 34,9%  | 27%                | 23,7% |
| I posted comments to materials on news websites                    | 23,9%  | 20,4%  | 13,3%              | 16,1% |
| I signed a petition online   | 17%    | 16,4%  | 12,8%              | 11,4% |

*matters as they are open now, absolutely all of them. I haven't got any insider political information, I haven't got any intelligence one. I have nothing to sell, I don't care about it. So, it's just my routine [information]. Or my own thoughts. Who would care about them? So, no."*  
(a woman, Kharkiv oblast)

Another group of respondents believes expressing their opinion is an important part of demonstrating their political and civic position:

«...I comment a lot on Facebook, on other channels. I express my opinion openly, I am not afraid of it."  
(a man, Cherkasy oblast)

### Privacy and security online

As with other aspects of the Internet use, like news consumption and information search, the respondents often **rely on their younger relatives in online security** matters. Since younger relatives often register them on social media, create accounts for them, set up electronic devices, etc., these younger family members often keep passwords to these accounts and devices.

Except for the banking and the DIIA app, most respondents **donotcare about setting pass-**

**words.** Instead, they say they have "nothing to hide" unless it is directly related to their financial security:

« Especially the banking information, it has to be closed. For the rest, well, I don't have much to hide. Well, who would want, it doesn't make any sense, to be hacked."  
(a man, Kharkiv oblast)

One of the reasons for such a carefree attitude about online security, as shown by focus groups, is the belief that such security measures as **passwords are not efficient.** Firstly, hackers can hack any page if they want to and, secondly, all private and public communication is supervised by both internal security agencies and foreign spies. Therefore, the best way to maintain security online is **self-censoring.** The majority of respondents underlined they do not trust messengers and phone communications, and therefore do not talk on topics related to the war developments. **There are concerns that the enemy's intelligence wiretaps messengers and phones; this is particularly the case of the private communication with relatives and friends in the occupied territories and at the front line.**

« Female respondent 1: The Internet is not protected. And I think the military can't talk and write about everything.

**Male respondent 2:** *What they say, please do not take photos of bombed locations, please do not take photos with the phone. This means, you cannot share that, because that can make a mark for a second strike. This means it is checked somewhere."*

*(a woman and a man, Ternopil oblast)*

It is important to mention that some of the respondents were extremely painstaking and responsible about online security. They used complex multi-component passwords, different passwords for each device and page, used a secure messenger Signal, etc. Further research should identify factors that affect online security attitudes, e.g., education, gender, experience in electronics operation, etc.

The poll also shows that the **online banking reaches almost a half of the older population.** 59.1% of older adults pay for utilities online, and 48.3% use their bank account online. Men use online banking more often than women (53.3% and 45.3%, respectively). Online banking reached

more people 60+ in the East than in the West (54.3% and 40.1% respectively).

Almost 45% of respondents say that the main reason why they are reluctant to use online services is that they do not understand **how to use these services and they prefer real-life communication.** Almost 23.9% are afraid of fraud. There is also a significant gender and regional gap. Men are much more afraid of online fraud than women (31.4% and 20.3% respectively). Fears of fraud are almost four times higher in the West than in the East of Ukraine (27.3% vs. 7.4%). 59.7% of respondents in the East said that they do not use these services online because they do not know how to, while there is almost half as many such respondents in the West (30.8%). Further research should investigate the causes of these differences.

Only 5% of respondents said they do not have devices that would allow using such services. This brings us to the conclusion that through sharing devices within a family even those older

Figure 20.

**Have you used these online services over the last month? Please select all options that are true for you.**

YOU MAY SELECT SEVERAL OPTIONS

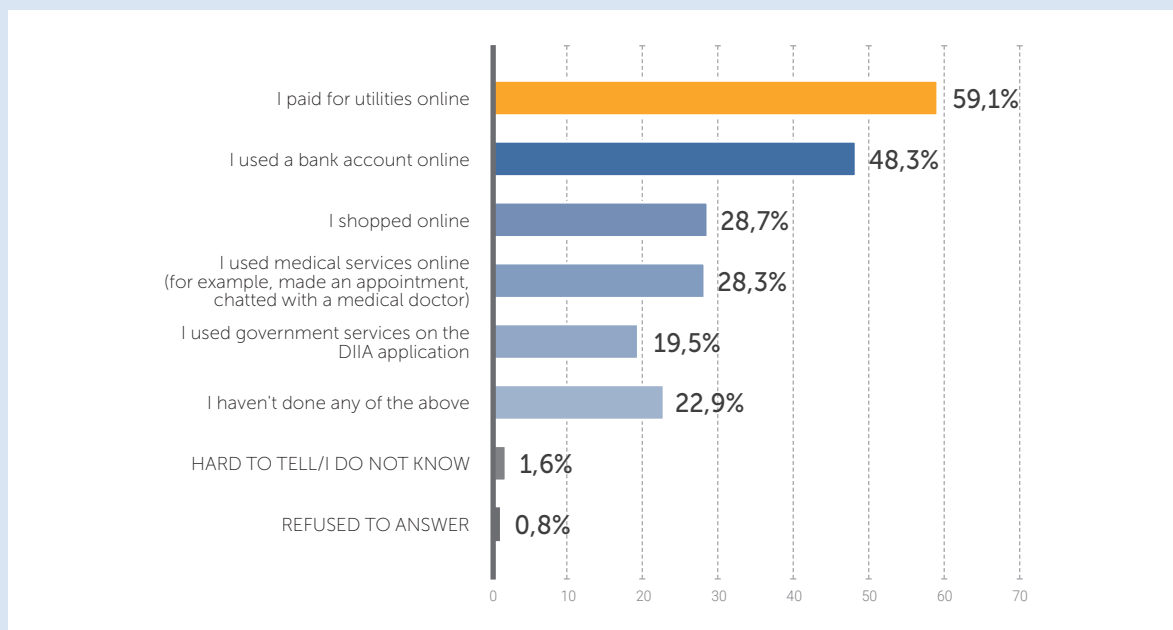


Figure 21.

Have you used these online services over the last month? Please select all options that are true for you.



YOU MAY SELECT SEVERAL OPTIONS

|                              | Gender |       | Age (2 categories) |       | City / village |         | Macro region (4 categories) |        |       |       |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|-------|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                              | Man    | Woman | 60-69              | 70+   | City           | Village | West                        | Center | South | East  |
| I used a bank account online | 53,3%  | 45,3% | 52,1%              | 41,7% | 51,7%          | 38,5%   | 40,1%                       | 49,2%  | 49,8% | 54,3% |

adults who do not have their own devices can have access to online resources.

### Desire and motivation to study media literacy

The poll shows that 44.6% of respondents **are not willing** to master media literacy skills or im-

prove their knowledge. Given that the majority of respondents are confident in their information selection and verification skills, 9.4% would like to learn to search or verify information online. The most popular requests were: the skills to pay for utilities online (15%), the skills to use the DIIA app (11.2%) and the smartphone and/or computer operation skills (10.5%).

Figure 22.

If you do not use the listed services, why don't you? Please choose up to 3 of the most important reasons for you.



3 OPTIONS MAXIMUM.

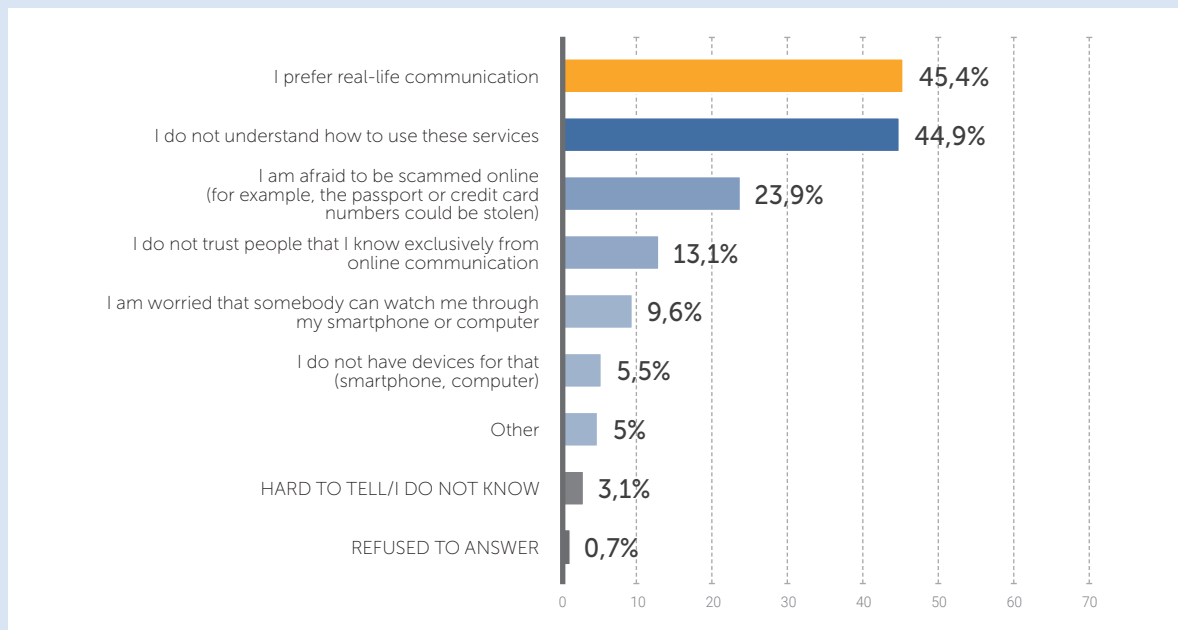


Figure 23.

**If you do not use the listed services, why don't you? Please choose up to 3 of the most important reasons for you.**



3 OPTIONS MAXIMUM.

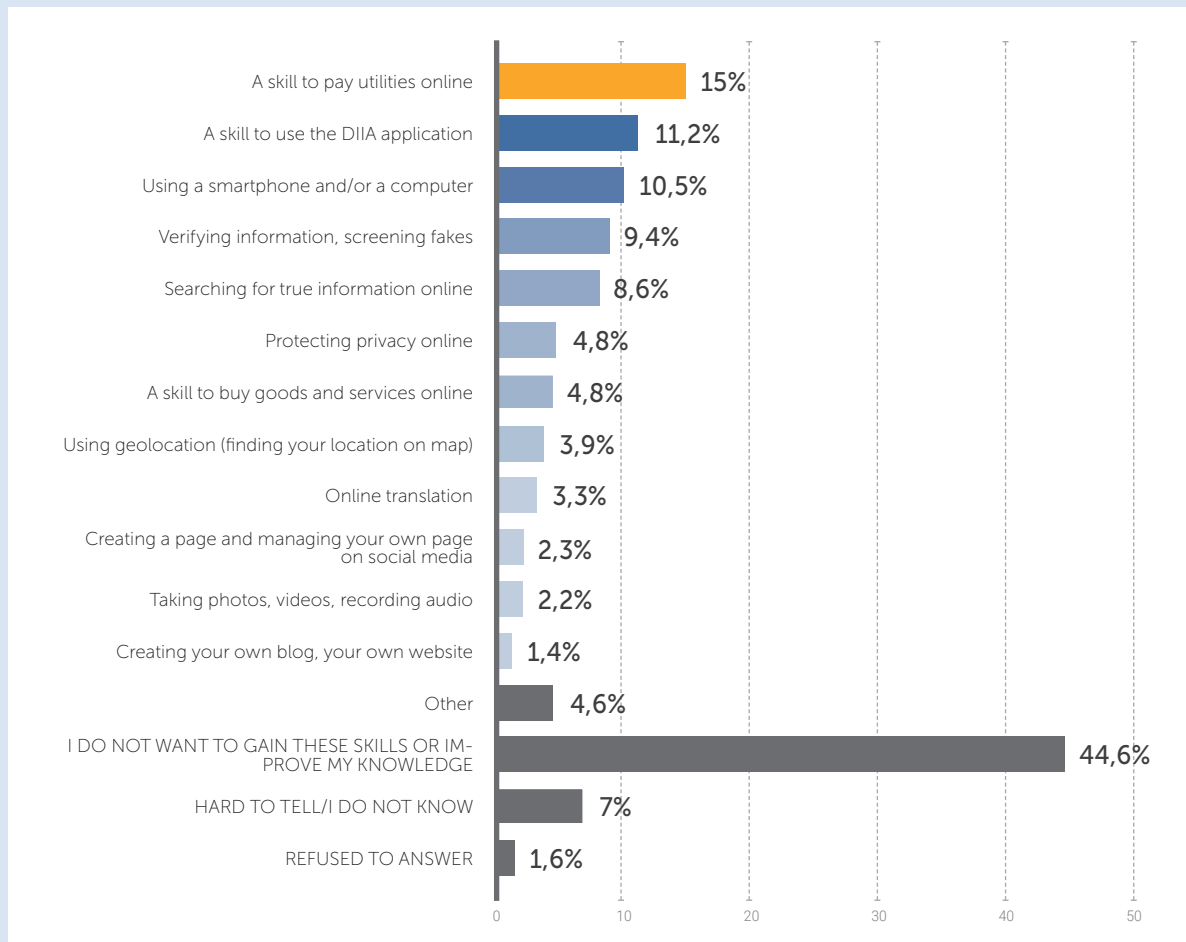
|   | Gender |       | Macro region (4 categories) |        |       |       |
|---|--------|-------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|   | Man    | Woman | West                        | Center | South | East  |
| I am afraid to be scammed online (for example, the passport or credit card numbers could be stolen) | 31,4%  | 20,3% | 27,3%                       | 29,3%  | 22,1% | 7,4%  |
| I do not understand how to use these services   | 37,1%  | 48,8% | 30,8%                       | 49,8%  | 44,8% | 59,7% |

Figure 24.

**Would you like to gain these skills or improve your knowledge, or not? IF YES, Please choose up to 3 of the most important skills for you.**



3 OPTIONS MAXIMUM.



At the same time, during the focus group discussions, the participants said that as their relatives and friends often do not have time or opportunity to help them, they **need a more comprehensive solution to the problem:**

« **R1:** *That would be great. Not to bother him, because my son is always busy. "Give me a break."*

**M:** *By the way, do your close ones, the ones that you would be ok to ask, do they have time and opportunity to teach you, how do you think?*

**R2:** *No, they don't have time.*

**R1:** *Nor willingness, they don't. They live their own life.*

**R3:** *Yeah.*

**R1:** *At their own pace.*

**R3:** *They show too fast. Here, one-two-three. Everything is clear, all is clear.*

**R4:** *If it's your son or grandson to explain, they may be impatient sometimes.*

**R5:** *If you live together, it is doable. I don't have anyone, my niece is far away, and she's always... Vilnius, Brussels, there. How can I?*

**R6:** *And then he shows, here-there, do this, do that...*

**R1:** *Only courses can help.*

**R4:** *Only courses."*

*(Kyiv oblast)*



# 4

section

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON PREPARING MEDIA LITERACY COURSE FOR AUDIENCE 60+



# 4.1.

## RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH LITERATURE



Among the aspects to be addressed when developing media programs for older adults, it is worth mentioning:

- physical limitations (impaired vision or hearing, neurological disorders, etc.);
- deteriorated cognitive functions (incomprehension of the multitasking media landscape);
- a state of technological anxiety (fear or doubts experienced by older adults when they have to operate or learn to use a computer);
- perceived usefulness (media literacy may be improved by convincing that this kind of skills will be useful in everyday life).
- there should be the cause-effect relation between the objectives proposed and the results achieved;
- encouraging doing homework that will allow improving digital skills independently, beyond the classroom.

**Recommendations** of researchers regarding media literacy initiatives for the older adults are as follows:

- the size of the audience (groups of learners) should be small and organized according to the level of skills and experience of the participants;
- the initial stage of training should be associated with a positive and successful experience to promote audience's commitment and avoid disappointment;
- trainer's empathy as a tool to encourage, create a friendly family atmosphere;
- training materials should be clearly structured, from simple to complex, information to be delivered in batches;
- materials should be adapted to each age group to compensate for the percentage of motor and cognitive skills deterioration;

Also, several articles refer to the **project experience** in the context of media literacy among the older adults. In particular, there are mentions of a positive impact of online communities such as SeniorNet or Third Age Online, where older Internet users can improve their skills and share knowledge and experience with other users. **There is a promising peer to peer learning when older adults teach other older people the digital skills.** According to the user feedback, this kind of learning format is perceived more positively than other ones, because peer mentors know how it is to be an older adult. This format of learning creates a balance between tutors and students, encouraging the older students to use digital technologies. For example, the German national project Senior-Technik-Botschafter, following this arrangement, has trained 300 technically experienced older adults as so-called mediators of knowledge. These mediators of knowledge trained 1500 older adults, who had not been familiar with the online space, to make meaningful use of the Internet. ■

# 4.2.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF UKRAINIAN SPECIALISTS BASED ON THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS FINDINGS



According to the experts interviewed within this study, the older audience has a certain specific perception of training material, this should be taken into account when preparing media literacy courses.

- “Back to School”: for older adults, it may be **psychologically difficult to switch psychologically from the “authoritative adult” position to the “student” position**. Being individuals with their life experiences, habits, and often formed opinions about many social and political issues, older adults are more reluctant to perceive new information and need more thorough explanations than younger audiences. Older adults are also less likely to accept criticism, more afraid of mistakes.

« One needs also to understand that people at this age already have got their own habits, their behavior, which is very difficult to transform. So, telling them: “We’re going to tell you how to live,” is a completely inefficient strategy.”

(an expert, leader of one of ML projects)

- The older audience consumes the mass media more and has more **trust** in them than young people.
- Older adults have a **slower progress** of perception and assimilation of the material.

- Each **age group** within the “retired people” group has its own characteristics, which should be considered as well.

### Teaching approaches

Experts recommend paying attention to the following aspects of the learning process.

- **Learning motivation.** People need to understand why they need this knowledge. Programs should be focused on practical tasks, as close as possible to the daily use of digital technologies and media.

« A young person knows that s/he needs to learn, s/he has only one goal. A 30-year-old person would ask: “Why would I need this?”, and a person 60+ will ask themselves three times.”

(an expert, course curator and ML trainer)

- The importance of **communication and personal interaction**. One should bear in mind that for this audience the media literacy course may be the only place of socialization

out of home (and work – for working pensioners). Experts emphasize that real-life communication between the course participants has to be an integral part of the program.

« ...speaking about this category of people, a communicative environment is very important for them, because this category of people does not have communication. They practically don't go to any spaces, except their home and their yard. Therefore, when planning such projects, it is important to allocate some funds and resources for communication and relaxation possibilities of these people.”

(an ML expert, media trainer)

- Trainings and tasks should cover **local media** consumed by the target audience. One has to address regional peculiarities (for example, typical media consumption, choice of media outlets, influence of Russian propaganda and traumatic experience of war, urbanization of the environment, religiosity of the audience, etc.)

« Why did we pick the local media? Because older people know everything about the local news. They know who the editor is, who the contributor writer is, how much was stolen from the curbs budget, what and when was built. Therefore, practicing with this material that is familiar to them, we, first of all, destroy their idea that they are experts. Because we've just arrived, we can't know the local news. And they are experts, they start with not quite comfortable role for them of a learner, that we become – the trainers.”

(an expert, head of NGO that holds BL training)

« ...I also delivered trainings in various oblasts: Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and a few more. The audiences there digest the same topics in completely different ways. Thus, I think, there should be a synergy with local experts, with people who, like their potential audiences, have had traumatic experiences and understand the roots of all of this.”

(an expert, leader of one of ML projects)

- A media literacy program should also include an introductory **digital literacy training**.

« ...these courses must be. But at first, there has to be a course that will teach to use a computer and a smartphone, then followed by media education.”

(an expert, ML trainer)

## Mixed formats: pros and cons

Although most experts agree that the audience 60+ has special needs in media literacy learning, they have different opinions whether there should be separate trainings for older adults only. The main arguments for the **mixed audience**:

- 1) this format allows the exchange of experience, the younger can help the older;
- 2) older people feel less isolated, have access to a wider circle of communication.

« ...first of all, it's about treating them like everyone else. They want to feel that they are young, that they are a part of the society. It is very important for them that they are not isolated, that they have some connection with other age groups. So, we mix them and try to have horizontal links with age groups. This is our strategy to make them feel they are still needed.”

(an ML trainer)

The main arguments for the homogeneous audience are: older people need a different pace and format of work (for example, less digital, innovative tools and more practical tasks and games in groups).

« This is about teaching media literacy to older people, not just media literacy. Addressing their preferences, emotional nuances.”

(an expert, ML trainer)

## Tips for working with IDPs (60+) in the context of media literacy

When preparing media literacy courses, that will involve internally displaced persons 60+, experts advise to pay attention to a few additional aspects:

- **Do not disclose personal information** (the displaced status, location they displaced from, etc.), so that the person feels protected during the work in groups.
- To arrange a possibility of **additional work with a psychologist**, but not to impose psychological support.

« Sessions with psychologists are work well, in fact. This is a good combination when we work with both information and conditions. The only thing, I'd rather not call it a session with a psychologist. A "recovery workshop" is better. Because sometimes people react negatively to the word "psychologist".

(a journalist, ML trainer)

- Be **careful with examples and cases**, take into account the emotional vulnerability of this audience.
- To mix the audience, **not to separate the IDPs** and not to emphasize that they differ from the residents of local communities.

« I had a mixed audience: IDPs and residents of local communities. The main task was to integrate those relocated in the community. But be careful with the choice of cases, because the reaction may be different. For example, you mention Kherson, and a person from there reacts in a different way. Their hands may be shaking, it can be difficult for them just to remember their hometown. So, you need to be very careful and monitor the reaction of the audience.

(an expert, course curator  
and ML trainer)

« The differences are only in the psychological aspects, because most people have got an emotional trauma. It is important to understand that nobody needs this separation. Because everyone understands, and it hurts so much. So, our approaches were based on this equality, so as not to separate, not to distinguish who is from where. That is, our therapeutic effect was to treat them the same equal way starting from the first minute."

(an expert, ML trainer)

