

MEDIA AND  
INFORMATION  
LITERACY



MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY INDEX

# Country Report Kenya

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MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY INDEX

# Country Report Kenya



## Content

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Factsheet</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. The MIL Index Approach</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. Access</b>	<b>9</b>
Diversity of weekly media use	9
Diversity of weekly media used for news	11
<b>3. Analysis</b>	<b>12</b>
Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet	12
Knowledge of the definition of journalism	13
Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression	13
Evaluation of Kenya's news media landscape	13
<b>4. Reflection</b>	<b>14</b>
Condemnation of hate speech	14
Condemnation of disinformation	14
Awareness of news bias	16
Awareness of censorship	17
<b>5. Creation</b>	<b>18</b>
Diversity of media production skills	18
Diversity of online skills	19
<b>6. Action</b>	<b>20</b>
Media activism	20
Putting MIL skills into practice	21
<b>7. Conclusions</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>8. Recommendations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Literature</b>	<b>26</b>



## Executive summary

The young generation in Kenya rejects disinformative and hateful communication. When asked for their opinion on these matters in a representative survey, a majority of 15-25-year-olds evaluated them as “not to be trusted” and “not funny”. This is one of the most important results of DW Akademie’s MIL INDEX study in Kenya. The finding is all the more relevant considering the fact that in the East African country, “propaganda and fake news is a big problem—it is everywhere, in the social media especially,” as Wallace Gichunge of the Kenyan Center for Media and Information Literacy pointed out in an interview conducted for the Study.

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

The 15-25-year-old Kenyans displayed good skills when it came to analysis (13.1) and action (12.9) and moderate to good skills in terms of reflection (11.4) as well as access (11.9). Deficits were found mainly in the creation dimension (9.9). The total score amounted to 59,2 out of a possible 100.

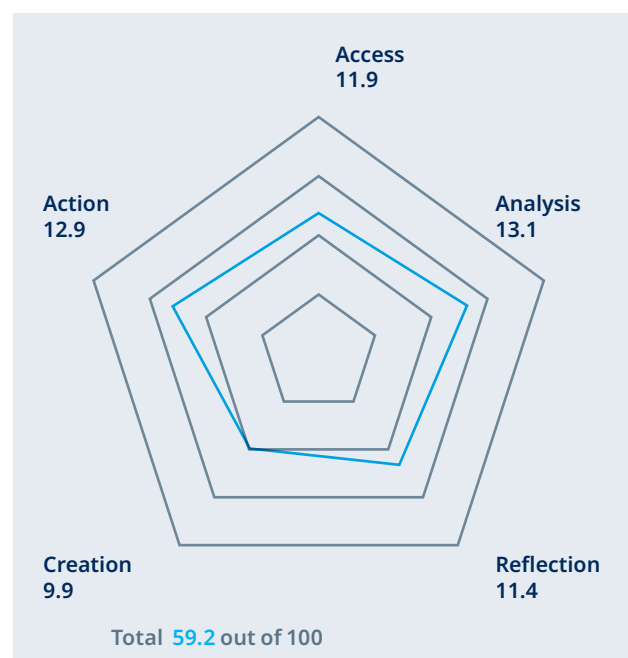


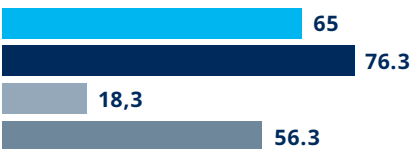
Image 1 MIL INDEX scores (maximum: 20, minimum: 0) for each dimension and total score

## Access



- Radio | n = 1250
- TV | n = 1250
- Newspaper | n = 1249
- Online | n = 1247

**Use of media on a weekly basis:** A large proportion of Kenya’s young generation accesses and uses television and radio every week. Online access is also gaining in reach, while only a third of 15-25-year-olds report reading printed publications on a weekly basis.



- Radio | n = 1250
- TV | n = 1250
- Newspaper | n = 1250
- Online | n = 1250

**Use of media for news:** Around three quarters of survey respondents say they view television for news, while roughly two thirds listen to the radio for news. More than half of respondents use online for news, but less than a fifth of respondents read newspapers or magazines for news.

## Analysis



- Knowing difference between Facebook and the Internet | n = 1250
- Defining journalism | n = 1250
- Knowing constitutional right to freedom of expression | n = 1250

**Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication:** More than 80% of respondents knew that every Kenyan has a constitutional right to freedom of expression, while a little less than 60% chose the correct multiple-choice answer when asked to specify what Facebook is and to define journalism.

## Reflection



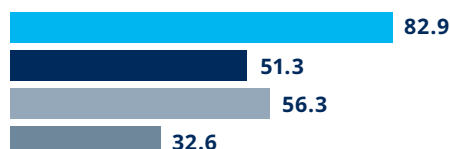
- Hate speech | n = 1235
- Disinformation | n = 1239
- News bias | n = 1224
- Censorship | n = 1230

**Condemnation (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”) of adverse forms of communication:** More than 60% of respondents said they would not trust a disinformation example and were able to identify biased reporting and censorship. Roughly half of them thought a hate speech example was “not funny”.

*Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.*



## Creation



- Taking Photos | n = 1249
- Audio recording | n = 1243
- Taking Video | n = 1246
- Writing and publishing reports | n = 1238

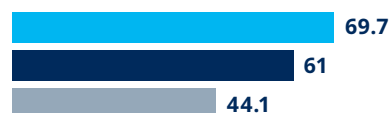
**Use of production skills at least “sometimes”:** More than 80% of the 15-25-year-old respondents reported taking photos with a camera or mobile phone at least sometimes, over half recorded audio or video that often, and almost a third indicated writing reports every once in a while.



- Uploading files | n = 1241
- Updating social media profiles | n = 1241
- Creating messenger groups | n = 1239
- Creating blogs or websites | n = 1207

**Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website):** Around half of the respondents reported having created a WhatsApp group before, uploading files, and updating their social media profiles at least sometimes. Almost every fifth respondent reported having started a blog or website.

## Action



- Sharing information with others | n = 1243
- Commenting on social issues in public | n = 1241
- joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns | n = 1228

**Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others commenting on social issues) or at least “rarely” (joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns):** Sharing information with others, be it online or in public, is done by more than two thirds of respondents at least sometimes. Over 60% comment on social issues online or in public, while over 40% have taken part in campaigns for freedom of expression or access to information.



- Using media responsibly | n = 1239
- Analyzing media critically | n = 1221
- Creating/publishing own content | n = 1209
- Reflecting own use of media | n = 1216

**Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills into practice (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”):** Roughly three quarters of respondents feel they have the skills when it comes to using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, and reflecting one’s own use of media. Slightly more than 60% think they are good at creating and publishing their own content.

*Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.*

## 1. The MIL Index Approach

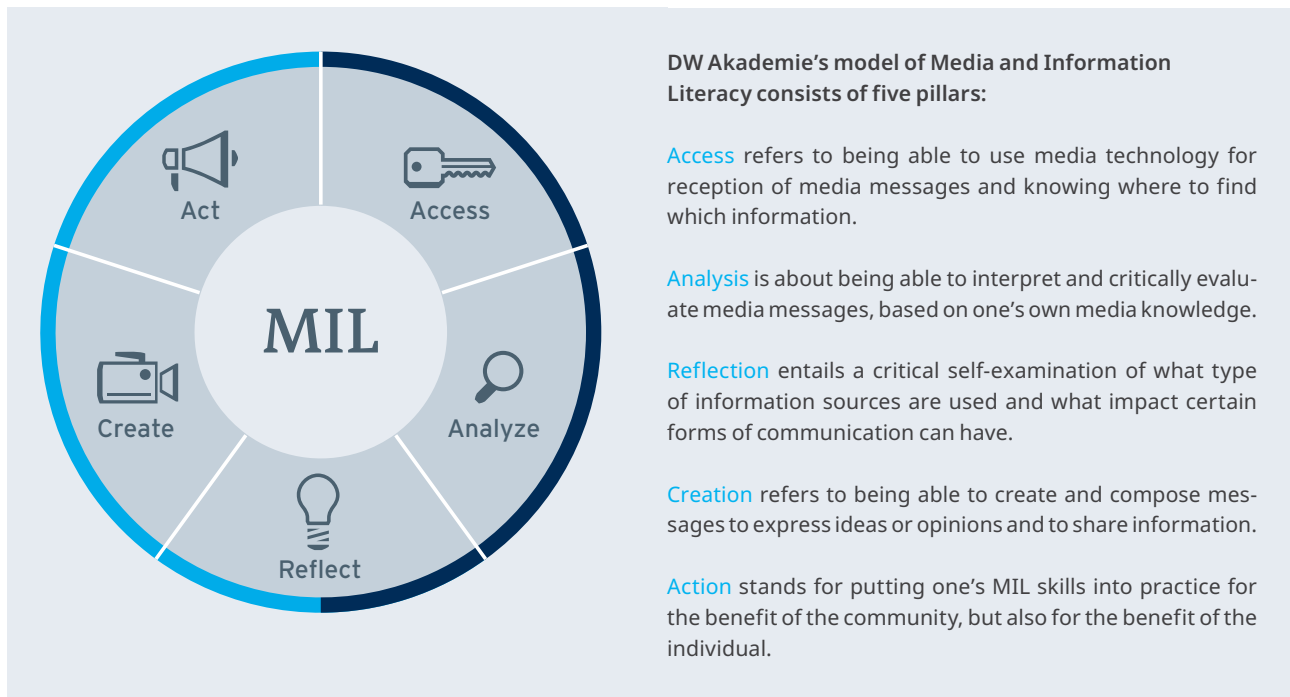


Image 2 DW Akademie's Media and Information Literacy Model

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

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

For Kenya, a representative survey (n = 1.250) was conducted, accompanied by eight focus groups with 86 adolescents and young adults in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Bungoma—the latter with participants from rural Western Kenya, and eight in-depth interviews with experts.

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

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

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

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

## 2. Access

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

### Scoring

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

- 1. Diversity of weekly media use | 6.5 out of 10**
- 2. Diversity of media used for news | 5.4 out of 10**

### Access Sum Index Score

# 11.9 out of 20



From voting to deciding what everyday products to buy, access to information is a precondition for making informed decisions. In order for young people to be able to use news and information to make beneficial decisions, they need to be able to access the media and the Internet. As recipients of media messages, technological skills and knowing where to find which types of news and information are prerequisites for access.

The experts interviewed for the study confirmed the importance of media and Internet access, though it was not seen as a major problem for young people in Kenya. According to Anthony Ngare of UNESCO, “the youth have all the avenues and the opportunities to access media.” Prof. Levi Obonyo from Daystar University points out, however, that there is a mismatch between coverage in terms of population and geographical coverage. For instance, he estimates that almost all of the population are reached by television, but only up to three quarters of the country is covered, leaving sparsely settled regions without reception. The same type of disparity applies to online access as well.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of the MIL INDEX, access was measured in terms of (1) diversity of types of media used on a weekly basis and (2) diversity of types of media used for news and informa-

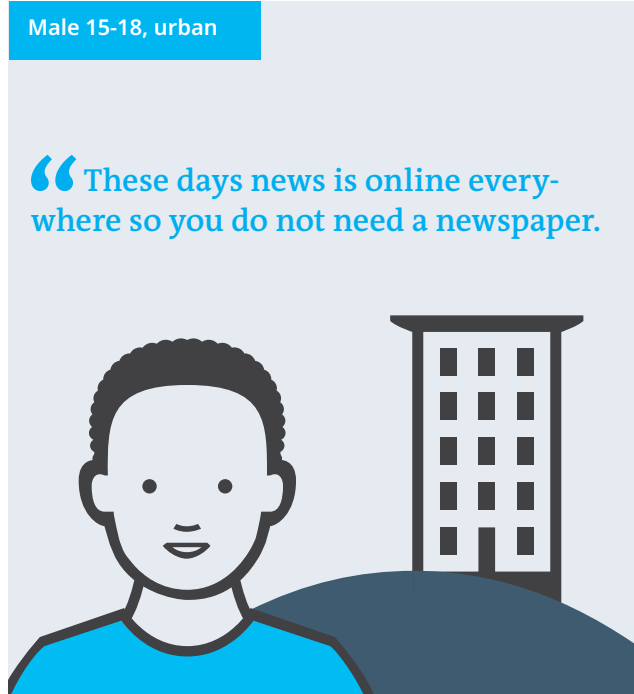
tion. This is based on the assumptions that access skills are documented by actual usage and that the diversity of information young people obtain depends on the number of different media sources they utilize.

### Diversity of weekly media use

More than two thirds of survey respondents reported going online weekly, which is less than radio and television with weekly usage rates of around 80%. In contrast, only about every third respondent read a newspaper or a magazine every week, although some might have included use of print brands online in their interpretation of the question. The average number of media types used per respondent was 2.6. This corresponds to a MIL INDEX score of 6.5 out of 10 for diversity of weekly media use.

Each medium was associated with different assets and drawbacks in the focus groups conducted. While television was criticized for high subscription costs and limits in terms of portability and flexibility, the most pervasive argument for TV voiced by the young participants was the diversity of programs.

<sup>1</sup> Thus, access is not only a question of individual competencies, but also of infrastructure (e.g. Internet connectivity), as well as of affordability (e.g. mobile phone air time). Technical skills in accessing media and online can be presupposed amongst those who use them regularly, but absence of use is not necessarily the result of a lack of skills.



Radio sets are still more prevalent in households 15-25-year-olds live in than television sets (79.8% vs. 68.6%) and a higher proportion of rural respondents listens to the radio on a daily basis as compared to urban respondents (53.5% vs. 47.0%). Especially in the city, smartphones are often used for listening to the radio. Besides practical arguments such as low requirements in terms of electric power, as well as portability and affordability, radio is appreciated first and foremost for music and, to a lesser extent, information.

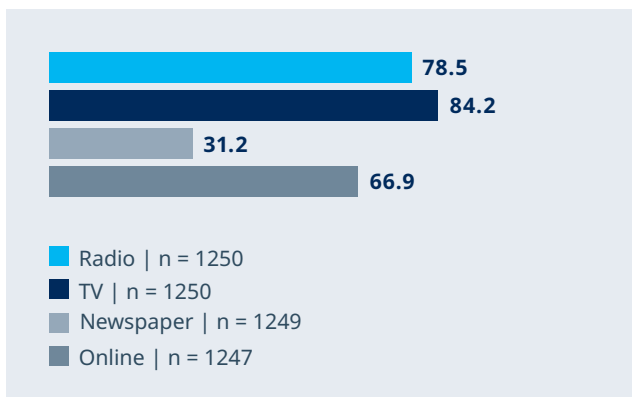
Printed media were regarded by the focus group participants as expensive and they criticized the typical time lag between events

and print publication. There was limited readiness to read long texts and the content of newspapers was found to be “no entertainment—it’s only politics” (male, 15-18-year-old, urban). This was contrasted by the young generation with online.

Online information is seen as ubiquitous by the focus group participants and especially the urban groups argued that their smartphone replaces newspapers, television, and radio sets. According to the survey data, almost three quarters of 15-25-year-olds own a smartphone, with marked differences between urban and rural (74.4% vs. 64.0%), male and female (72.2% vs. 64.7%), as well as young adults and teenagers (78.8% vs. 55.8%). Smartphones are an important prerequisite for going online in a nation where fixed line Internet access is very limited.

A little less than half of respondents reported accessing the Internet via their mobile phones on a daily basis, with female teenagers from rural regions again having least access. 22% of respondents reported never having gone online. Smartphones’ popularity is based on a combination of portability and the multiplicity of applications it offers. The rural focus groups reported that smartphones circulate amongst friends and family members, meaning ownership is not always necessary for access.

Social media and messengers are popular in Kenya. The two most popular applications amongst the 15-25-year-old respondents are WhatsApp (55% daily users) and Facebook (44.6%). Perhaps because of bandwidth problems and expenses, video and photo apps like YouTube (14.9%) and Instagram



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

Female, 19-25, rural

“Radio or television programs teach us how to prevent getting diseases.



Male 19-25, urban

“On TV and radio fake news are very rare. Mostly they appear on Facebook and blogs.



(11.6%) are less commonly used every day. Over half of respondents reported using social media for news and information, but communication with friends was indicated as being the primary function of social media in the focus groups.

### Diversity of weekly media used for news

Television is news source number one, with more than three quarters of respondents drawing on this medium for news and information. TV has overtaken radio for that purpose in this age segment, with online trailing not far behind. A little less than two thirds use radio for news, compared to more than half utilizing the Internet as a source for news and information. Less than one fifth reported reading newspapers or magazines to keep up to date with current events. The individual average number of types of media used for news was 2.2, resulting in a MIL INDEX score of 5.4 out of 10.

While radio is considered a local medium and is used more for news at the municipal or regional level, the focus groups showed that television is used for finding out about national or international news. At the same time, the survey revealed that entertainment was the prime reason for using media, while information about politics was amongst the least interesting topics for 15-25-year-old Kenyans. This does not mean that the young generation is not interested in more substantial topics in the media. Education and health issues were amongst the subjects the survey respondents were most interested in, as echoed by the focus group discussions (see quote above).

Television and radio were regarded as the most trustworthy sources for information by the focus group participants. This is confirmed by the survey data which found that almost two thirds of respondents trusted the news media.

In urban parts of Kenya, online has overtaken radio as the second most important source of information (63.2% vs. 59.8%), behind television—although technical convergence between radio and mobile phones means it is increasingly less easy for media users to draw a clear line between online and traditional media. As will become apparent in the REFLECTION subchapter, online communication is associated with diverse forms of malevolent communication.

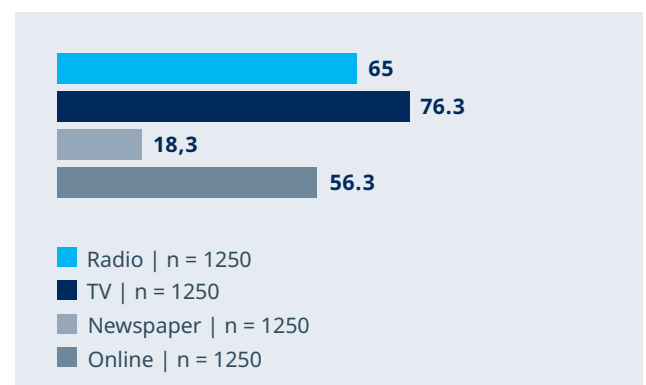


Image 4 Use of media for news and information (radio, television, newspapers/magazines, online). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

## 3. Analysis

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

### Scoring

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

1. **Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet** | 3.9 out of 6.67

2. **Knowledge of the definition of journalism** | 3.8 out of 6.67

3. **Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression** | 5.4 out of 6.67

Analysis Sum Index Score

**13.1 out of 20**



Analysis involves a critical perspective on traditional and digital media, with a focus on knowledge that enables citizens to analyze the prerequisites of media communication, how media messages are constructed on the production side, and how best to interpret and evaluate them.

According to youth expert Chris Mukasa, the most important questions young Kenyans should know the answer to are: "How do they get information? Who's the editor? Is he credible? What stories has he done before? Has he been in any scandals?" When it comes to these kinds of analytical skills, Prof. Obonyo of Daystar University "would not put the statistics of those who know very highly," an opinion shared by Prof. Omanga from Moi University: "I would say very few youths know [...] what I would call media logic. They don't imagine that there is an organization, complex institution working with very many complex entities to produce content."

For the MIL INDEX, multiple choice questions included in the questionnaire to test the knowledge of respondents focused on (1) knowing the difference between Facebook and the Internet, (2) knowing how to define journalism, and (3) knowing that one's right to freedom of expression is entrenched in the national constitution.

### Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet

Facebook's Free Basics program, granting free, limited Internet services to people in developing markets, has led people to

believe that Facebook is the Internet (see Mirani 2015). The first multiple choice question was designed to find out whether respondents are capable of identifying Facebook as an Internet-based social network. Every ninth respondent (11.8%) believed that Facebook indeed was the Internet. The correct answer was given by 58% of respondents. This results in a MIL INDEX score of 3.9 out of 6.67.

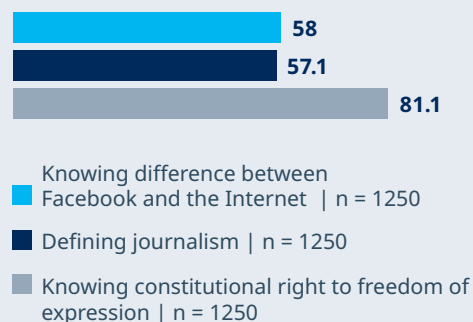


Image 5 Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Female, 19-25, rural

“I cannot trust either Facebook or WhatsApp because there needs to be a follow up in order to confirm if that information is right or fake.



### Knowledge of the definition of journalism

One of the most important distinctions in media and communication is the one between independent journalists and public relations officers focused on certain interests. The second multiple choice question containing different variations of this difference showed that about a quarter of respondents believed journalists’ mission is to engage in public relations. 57.1 % chose the correct answer: “Journalists are people who research, produce, and publish fresh information”. The MIL INDEX score was 3.8 out of 6.67.

### Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression

Knowledge of one’s constitutional right to freedom of expression is an important prerequisite for putting that right into practice and defending media freedom. The third multiple choice question was designed to measure awareness of that right. An overwhelming majority of 81.1% of respondents knew that freedom of expression is entrenched in the constitution, the remaining 16.1% either believing there is no right, it is reserved for certain citizens, or they did not know. 5.4 out of 6.67 was the MIL INDEX score result.

### Evaluation of Kenya's news media landscape

To supplement the knowledge questions, respondents were asked to evaluate the news media landscape in Kenya. The results were quite positive for media in the East African nation, though both trustworthiness (65.2% agreement) and neutrality (68.0%) were the attributes judged least favorably.

Though the young generation has quite a good awareness of disinformation, cyberbullying, and other negative practices, as may be seen in the REFLECTION sub-chapter below, the respondents seem less critical when it comes to judging the media landscape as a whole. The news media are generally regarded as good quality information. Nonetheless, the focus groups revealed that some participants do differentiate between more and less trustworthy radio and television stations: “some channels” hide some information from government but there are some stations which would rather risk everything they have to get that information displayed.” (male, 15-18, rural)

At the top end of the trustworthiness scale, the focus group participants placed media they considered reliable and informative, at the bottom end media brands were to be found that “only deal with rumors” (male, 15-18, urban), that “do not even air something concerning us” (male, 19-25, rural), that “like exaggerating things” (male, 19-25, rural), or “have images that are photoshopped” (female, 15-18, urban)—but also media brands that do not communicate in a language they can readily understand. There was a specific focus on the untrustworthy nature of social media communication.

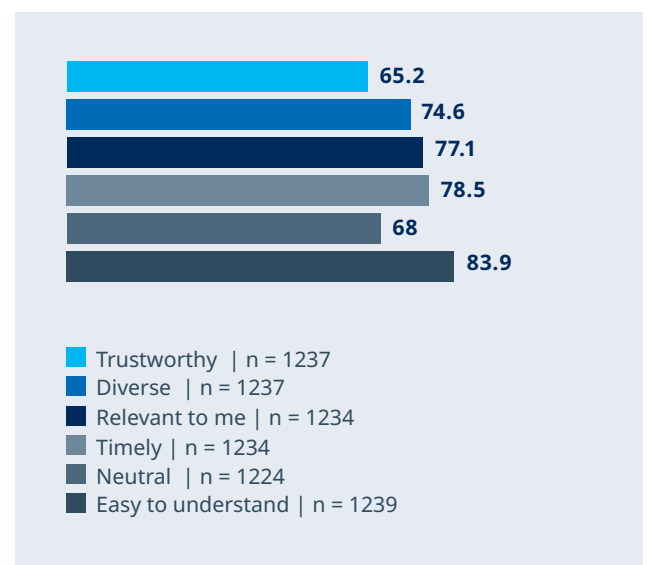


Image 6 Evaluation of the media landscape in Kenya, agreement “strong” and “somewhat”. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

## 4. Reflection

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

### Scoring

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

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

- 1. **Condemnation of hate speech** | 2.5 out of 5
- 2. **Condemnation of disinformation** | 3.0 out of 5
- 3. **Awareness of news bias** | 3.0 out of 5
- 4. **Awareness of censorship** | 3.0 out of 5

### Reflection Sum Index Score

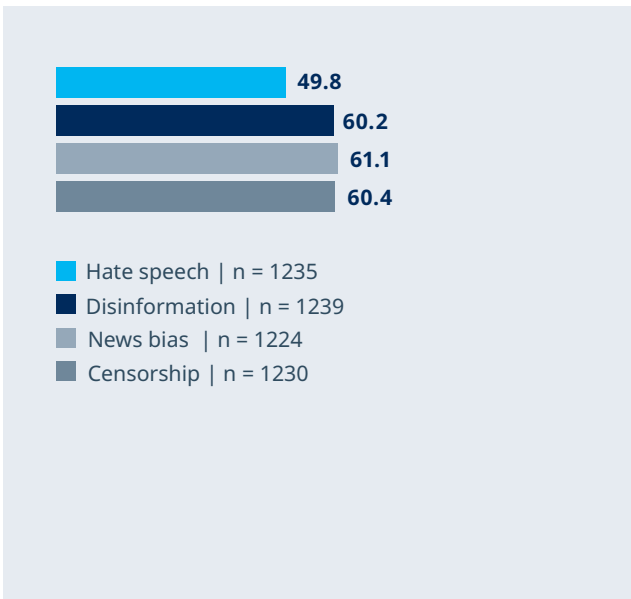
**11.4 out of 20<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

“[T]he problem in Kenya is not access, it’s credibility”, says Chris Mukasa, founder of the youth NGO Fatuma’s Voice. “Is this information helpful? Is it adding value to my life? Is it propaganda?” The reflective skills highlighted by Mukasa go beyond mere access. They involve critical reflection of the sources and impact of media messages and technologies, on the individual and upon society as a whole. As mentioned in the introduction, reflective skills are all the more relevant in a context characterized by disinformation and conflict. Here, “the idea of differentiating [...] what is accurate [and] what is not accurate is important,” as emphasized by John Kimotho of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development.

For the MIL INDEX, survey respondents were presented with examples of forms of malevolent communication and were asked to judge them on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant acceptance and 5 meant rejection of the example. The score for rejection was drawn from the degree of rejection of (1) an example of hate speech, (2) an example of disinformation, (3) an example of biased reporting and (4) an example of censorship. It was assumed that an awareness of the individual and societal impact of these forms of malcommunication (and censorship) would be a good approximation of reflective skills.



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



Female, 15-18, urban

“Commenting can get really bad because there are really ruthless people who can say anything.”



Male 15-18, rural

“Every day, fake news is there. I think controlling it is a difficult challenge and requires many things.”



### Condemnation of hate speech

Almost half of respondents rejected the hate speech example, which calls for a journalist to be beaten up, “strongly” (34.4%) or “somewhat” (15.4%), expressing that they did not feel it was “funny.” Every tenth participant could not make up his or her mind and almost 40% were prepared to accept the violent threat as “somewhat” or “very funny.” The mean level of agreement by respondents resulted in a MIL INDEX score of 2.5 out of 5.

According to Wallace Gichunge of the Center for MIL, hate speech and cyberbullying is “a very, very big problem” in Kenya, with hate messages focusing on “politics, ethnicity, and body shaming, about you are white, you are black and all these kinds of things.” “[T]ribal divides” are also mentioned by Caren Namalenya, researcher at the NGO Well Told Story, as a strong factor in hate communication. Mediated hate speech is especially prevalent in closed WhatsApp groups that are political, Prof. Duncan Omanga of Moi University reports. He assumes that these are the scene of “hate speech almost on a daily basis.” He believes it is less prevalent on Facebook because it “has an element of being open.”

The discussion groups focused more on cyberbullying than on hate speech. Examples of demeaning behavior on social media or messengers were mentioned in every group.

The preferred way of dealing with such cases was ignoring them. Only few focus group participants suggested reporting them to Facebook or confronting the perpetrator. In combination, the findings suggest that cyberbullying has reached a troublesome level of normalcy amongst young Kenyans, while hate speech associated with ethnic backgrounds is spread more subtly via closed channels or covert messages. Considering the latter fact, the survey results point to a need for more awareness in this regard.

### Condemnation of disinformation

More than 60 % of respondents rejected an example of disinformation, agreeing strongly (43.3%) or somewhat (16.9%) that the Facebook post about a cure for HIV/AIDS was not to be trusted. Around 10 % could not make up their minds (10.6%), while the remaining about 30% were inclined to believe the message. This resulted in a MIL INDEX score of 3.0 out of 5.

Female, 19-25, urban

“Bloggers say things to earn cash but it is not what is going on in the country.



Female, 15-18, rural

“Maybe a certain station favors a political party so they can't air out any news that is contradicting the party.



The reason given by youth NGO founder Chris Mukasa for the susceptibility of parts of the population for disinformation is low levels of education. Anthony Ngare of Unesco seconds this, specifying that young people need to be able to authenticate sources, “establish some system of fact checking” and know where to get reliable information. A major motivation for production of misleading content is financial, according to Caren Namalenya of the NGO Well Told Story. “[P]eople end up shooting fake videos [...] just to make money.”

The focus group participants could readily recount cases of disinformation, from alleged sightings of angels distributed via YouTube to rumors about Kenyan politicians in the media. The fact that they were able to identify the news or rumors as false shows that there was a considerable awareness of the phenomenon and a readiness to process not just the original message but also subsequent messages rectifying the disinformation.

There is a feeling amongst the focus group participants that there is little one can do against disinformation. They agree that those responsible should be held to account, though this is only seen as realistic in the case of established media, because they have a reputation to lose. Online sources are

made responsible for most cases of disinformation. Several participants were aware of the fact that disinformation is often produced for pecuniary reasons.

Cybercrime and scamming were mentioned quite often by the focus group participants. They reported of supposed lottery wins, fake job advertisements and investment schemes, hacking of accounts, phishing of passwords, and redirecting of traffic onto fake websites.

### Awareness of news bias

Over 60% of survey respondents were able to spot news bias, agreeing strongly (40.8%) or somewhat (20.3%) that a report featuring only the opinion of a politician, his wife, and a friend of his was one-sided. One in eleven respondents could not make up their mind, while less than 30% of respondents did not spot the bias. The MIL INDEX score was consequently fixed at 3.0 out of 5.

News bias is especially prevalent during election times, says Anthony Ngare of UNESCO: “Media houses root for this candidate or the other candidate.” The bias can be quite subtle, as Purity Jebor from youth NGO Youth Alive points

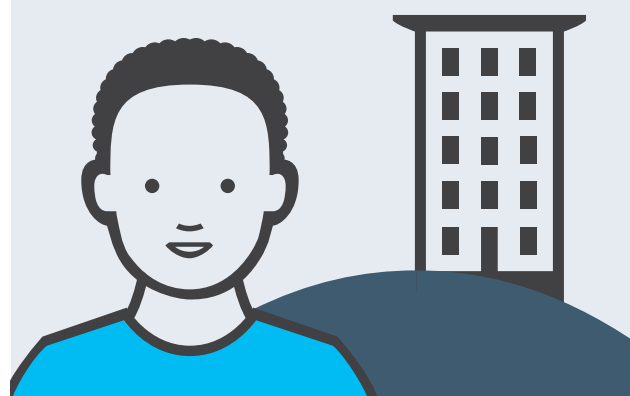
Male, 19-25, rural

“If there is a local government officer who is corrupt, there is no way you can just air it out because of security issues.



Male 15-18, urban

“Some television channels always report to the advantage of the government.



out: “Media houses always deal with the experts. And then the experts are [...] aligned with a certain political party.”

There were several cases of focus group participants picking up on partisanship in reporting. They had different opinions, for instance, on the state broadcaster KBC, some trusting it more because they felt privately-owned media had their own political agenda, while others were of the opinion that government dictates what is broadcast there.

The awareness of different factions in the media landscape was high. Focus group participants had quite an extensive knowledge of which outlet was affiliated to which party or owned by which politician. On the other hand, when asked whether there could be situations that justified one-sided reporting, the proportion of respondents agreeing (45.1%) was almost as large as the proportion disagreeing (46.3%).

### Awareness of censorship

Again, the proportion of respondents able to identify censorship at a local newspaper was over 60%. Roughly one tenth was uncertain, while around 30% did not identify the case provided as censorship. The MIL INDEX score was 3.0 out of 5.

Prof. Obonyo of Daystar University believes government censorship is less of a problem in comparison to commercial interests. While he sees constitutional checks and balances in place limiting government interference, the bigger issue according to him is, “pressure groups that don’t want their people to be covering in specific ways.” Wallace Gichunge of the Center for Media and Information Literacy specifically named political factions as the main cause for censorship, including reporters and cartoonists being dismissed from media outlets for expressing the “wrong” political opinion. Diversity of opinions and freedom of speech are important values to Chris Mukasa of Fatuma’s Voice, which he too sees jeopardized by subtle forms of censorship as practiced, in his opinion, in Kenya today.

While factionalism was a recurrent theme in the focus group discussions, censorship was not described very often. In one specific instance, a young participant mentioned a case of all Kenyan television channels being blocked except for KBC and K24, which he argued was the case because these would always report “to the advantage of the government” (male, 15-18, urban). Surprisingly, a clear majority of survey respondents felt that there could be situations that justify censorship (64.8%).

## 5. Creation

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

### Scoring

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

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

- 1. Diversity of media production skills | 5.6 out of 10
- 2. Diversity of online skills | 4.4 out of 10

Creation Sum Index Score

9.9 out of 20<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

MIL creation skills are all about being able to voice one’s opinions and express ideas using the tools that one has, whether it be writing texts, composing music, recording videos, radio shows, or podcasts. The aim is not for everyone to become a journalist, but in the digital age, forms of “produsage” and content production, from commenting on Facebook to posting one’s own videos on YouTube, are within the reach of what used to be labelled the media audience.

Young Kenyans “are becoming more and more creative in what they do with digital devices,” John Kimotho of the Kenyan Institute for Curriculum Development is convinced. “[T]hey communicate and they can create,” agrees Wallace Gichure of the Center for Media and Information Literacy, “but they need guidance.” As Prof. Omanga points out, creation is not just about media production, but also about forwarding content already available: “[W]e live in a culture of sharing.”

For the purposes of the MIL INDEX, creation was operationalized as (1) the diversity of media production skills performed at least “sometimes” by the respondents (taking photos, recording audio, recording video, writing reports) and (2) the diversity of online skills either performed at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (create WhatsApp group, create blog or website).

### Diversity of media production skills

The vast majority of respondents reported taking photos “often” (45.6%) or “sometimes” (37.4%), around half of respondents also engaged in recording audio and video at least “sometimes,” while a report was written by roughly a third of the respondents at least “sometimes.” Writing reports probably included assignments from schools or other educational institutions. The mean number of skills performed by every respondent was 2.2, resulting in a MIL INDEX score of 5.6.

Amongst the focus group participants, “selfies” were mentioned quite often when they were asked to tell what they do with their smartphones. Female participants reported posting pictures from photo shoots that made them feel “pretty,” while others recounted cases of body shaming after posting photos. Beyond personal photos on social media, photoshopping was mentioned several times in different focus groups as a common practice used to fake photos.

Audio did not feature very prominently in the focus groups. One participant mentioned editing such files on his smartphone. Making videos, on the other hand, was reported regularly as a favorite pastime. There were also some critical mentions of explicit videos being shared via social media. Very few focus group participants were fond of writing more extensively than the short comments commonly found on social media.



### Diversity of online skills

Online skills were a little less common than the general skills mentioned above. About half of the survey respondents uploaded a file and updated their social media profile at least sometimes and the same amount had ever created a WhatsApp group. Almost one fifth reported having created their own website or blog, though some might have included microblogging sites and social media profiles under this definition. Creative skills linked to online were unevenly distributed, with rural, young, and female respondents making less use of them. The mean number of online skills was 1.8, leading to a MIL INDEX score of 4.4 out of 10 for online skills.

Uploading activities documented in the focus groups were restricted to posting photos and videos via messengers and social media, a common practice as mentioned above. There was frequent talk of updating one’s status and engaging in WhatsApp groups. According to Prof. Omanga, WhatsApp groups are common in Kenya not only for bringing people together but also for “making them do something.”

More advanced creation skills were seldom documented during the focus groups, though there were individual reports of uploading self-made rap videos, using their skills for self-promotion in looking for employment and in marketing products to be sold via social media.

Generally, however, youths produce and participate in media within the scope of their possibilities. They mostly remain within the confines of what social media offers them and only rarely create their own blogs or websites, the latter being mentioned excessively rarely during the focus groups.

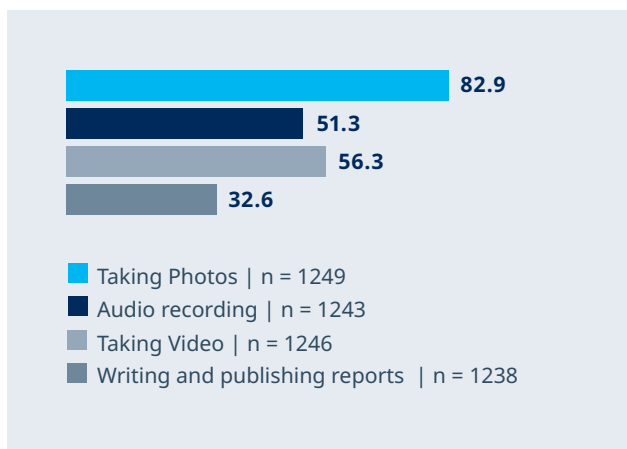


Image 8 Use of production skills (photo, video, audio, editorial) at least “sometimes”. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

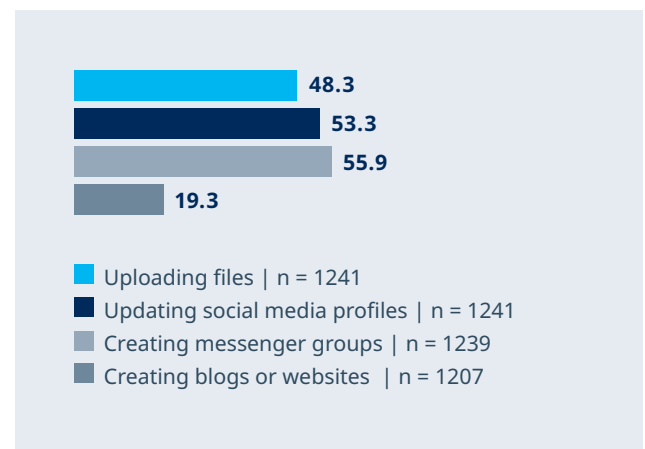


Image 9 Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

## 6. Action

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

### Scoring

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

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

- 1. Media activism | 5.8 out of 10
- 2. Putting MIL skills into practice | 7.1 out of 10

### Action Sum Index Score

12.9 out of 20



The action competency builds upon all previously mentioned skills. It refers to the ability to make one’s voice heard, to use media to express oneself. Action can mean sharing knowledge, addressing others, participating in public debates and drawing attention to relevant issues in society. It entails both using one’s skills for the public good and for one’s own benefit.

Both Purity Jebor (Youth Alive) and Chris Mukasa (Fatuma’s Story) agreed that youths mainly voice their concerns on social media. Caren Namalenya (Well told Story) also saw this trend but argued that the smartphone can lead away from problem solutions if the information does not lead to activity based on it. Her advice to young people was to have “quality time away from the phone.” Prof. Omanga of Moi University recounted an example of youths using the media to help convince regulatory bodies to let them pass their exams even though they had not paid their school fees. “It’s not the norm,” he added.

For the MIL INDEX, action was measured in terms of (1) whether the respondents shared information they obtained from media with others at least “sometimes, whether they commented on social issues in public or online,” and whether they had ever taken part in a campaign for freedom of speech or access to information, and (2) based on their self-appraisal of how well they could put the abovementioned skills (access, reflection, analysis, creation) into practice.

### Media activism

More than two thirds of the respondents shared information with others and over 60% commented social issues online or in public at least sometimes, while almost half reported having taken part in campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information. It is likely that the latter question was interpreted in the sense that they had put their rights to access of information and freedom of expression into practice for a

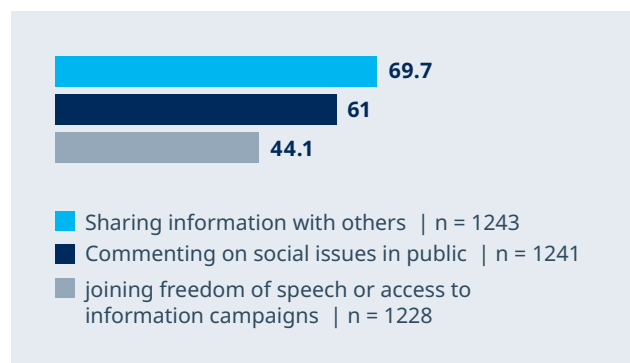


Image 10 Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others, commenting on social issues) or at least “rarely” (joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Male 19-25, urban

“ We can make our noise there on the social platforms. But after we have made all that noise what happens? They only come up with a scapegoat and Kenyans forget. Then life goes on.



Female, 19-25, urban

“ In the case of Al-Shabaab, the media created awareness, like for instance: ‘this place is vulnerable’.



specific cause. This interpretation would still be in line with the action dimension. The MIL INDEX score drawn from the data for sharing, commenting, and campaigning was 5.8 out of 10.

Some focus group participants recounted examples of how social media were used to draw attention to issues of public interest. A boy spoke of a friend posting an ironic GIF to comment on rising bus fares and another reported having once posted a rap song in which he criticized corruption. Such examples, however, were rather rare. One older participant from a rural district recalled wanting a befriended journalist to report on a case of corruption, which the reporter declined for fear of intimidation.

There is a general disenchantment with “official” politics, as also documented by the low interest in politics as a media topic mentioned above. Especially amongst the younger focus group participants, politics is described as a “dirty game” (male, 15-18, urban) or regarded as something “for the old people” (female, 15-18, urban). The topic of corruption is raised in almost every focus group, with media seen as a means for making such cases public. This disenchantment sometimes went along with a skepticism towards trying to use media to change things for the better.

However, social and traditional media were regarded as having a potential for mitigating and preventing conflict and terrorism. Some participants mentioned social networks as a means of bringing people together to create a peaceful country. Documentaries about the Rwanda genocide were referenced as a means of sensitizing citizens and the media were seen as an early warning system in the case of terrorism.

The media were also attributed an important role in promoting health care and reducing poverty. Participants mentioned media as a vehicle for lobbying for the rights of refugees and street children, and creating awareness if food was contaminated or there was danger of diseases spreading: “The media can help in the fight of diseases like HIV. They can come up with a health show and invite doctors.” (male, 15-18, rural)

### Putting MIL skills into practice

Moving from the grand scheme of things to using MIL skills for one’s own individual benefit, the self-evaluation is quite positive. Roughly three quarters of the respondents think they are good at using media responsibly, analyzing media critically and reflecting their own use of the media. Less than two thirds are at least somewhat sure that they can create and publish their

own media content. The MIL INDEX score for putting MIL skills into practice is quite high at 7.1 out of 10.

The biggest issues at the individual level discussed in the focus groups were education and employment. This is in line with a remark by Chris Mukasa (Fatuma’s Voice): “They don’t want the radio, they want jobs, they want a school, [...] and they want representation. That’s what they’re talking about.” And yet the young focus group participants showed that they put their MIL skills into practice in trying to attain success in life. Using the media to make their hopes come true and overcome obstacles is part and parcel of the mediatized world young people increasingly live in.

Media are, for instance, perceived as a good access point for the job market. This includes using one’s own MIL skills to earn money, either by working in the media as “an editor, media photographer, radiographer, presenter” (female, 15-18, rural), marketing one’s own products via social media or using them for self-promotion to get a job. In most cases mentioned during the focus groups, the media were used as a vocational inspiration and as a platform for finding job

offers: “If someone has a job somewhere, the fastest way he can reach the youth is by posting it or going to a radio station.” (Male, 15-18, rural)

The media are also viewed as a partial substitute for educational institutions, seeing as parts of the population cannot mobilize the fees required for books and more advanced education.

Focus group participants reported using social media and messengers to “help us pass exams” (female, 15-18, rural) by exchanging notes and solutions to difficult questions in WhatsApp groups prior to the examinations. But traditional media were also mentioned several times as providing “access to information about education” (male, 15-18, urban) and for listening to and watching educational programs.

These findings highlight the role that MIL can play in the everyday lives of young people. Media issues cannot be separated from their hopes and worries and information needs. Instead, these issues are intricately connected. Finding, using, and processing information in order to benefit from it at the personal level is what MIL is about.

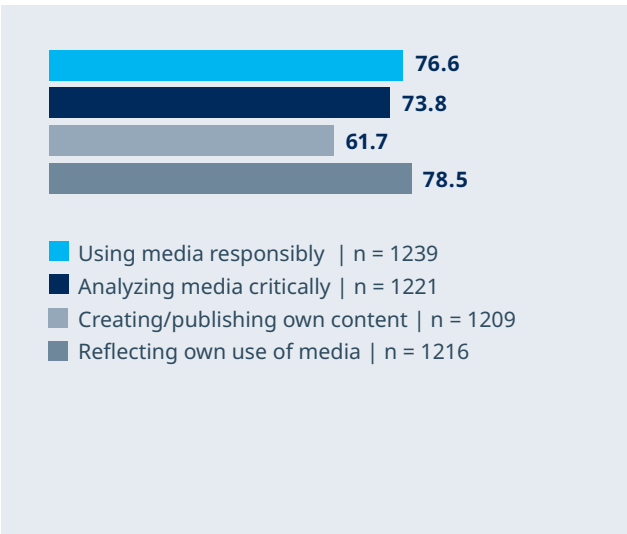
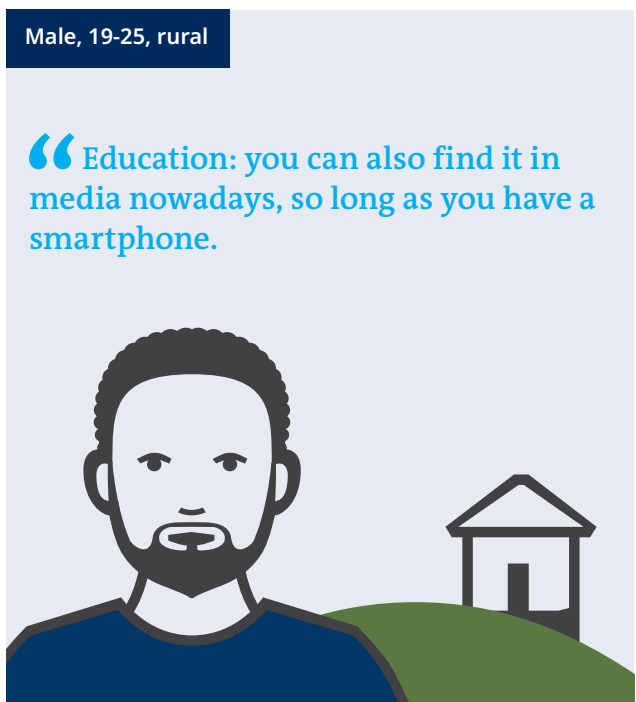


Image 11 Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills (using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, creating and publishing own content, reflecting own use of media) into practice (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.



## 7. Conclusions

The MIL INDEX study focused on the Media and Information Literacy skills of 15-25-year-old Kenyans. Based on the quantitative results, on average this age group has good skills when it comes to analysis and moderate to good scores in terms of action, access, and reflection. Deficits were found mainly in the creation department. The MIL INDEX score was 59.2 out of a possible 100, meaning young Kenyans achieved upper mid-range results for Media and Information Literacy.

### Access

Taking a closer look at the different dimensions, young Kenyans access radio and television, and to a lesser extent go online, regularly. An important prerequisite for online access, the smartphone, is owned by almost three quarters of survey respondents. WhatsApp and Facebook are used by roughly half on a daily basis. Both Internet access and smartphone ownership are lower for rural, female, and adolescent segments of the population, highlighting the fact that access is more than just a matter of skills. It also depends on infrastructural, cultural, and economic factors. Kenya's youth do not use printed press items very extensively. Considering the diversity of media used on a weekly basis and the diversity of media used for news and information, the MIL INDEX score is moderate to good (11.9 out of 20).

According to DW Akademie's Speak Up Barometer (2019), Kenya is "one of the most wired nations in Africa," based on Internet subscriptions. As shown in this study, the young generation reaps the benefits. Data from the Afrobarometer Study conducted in 2018 reveal that 18-25-year-olds are 50% more likely to have mobile Internet access than the general population which alerts to the fact that the findings here are specific to a certain generation of Kenyans, but not to the population as a whole.

### Analysis

The young Kenyan respondents are quite knowledgeable when it comes to background details concerning the Internet, journalism, and their right to freedom of expression. Over 80% knew that their right to freedom of expression is part of the constitution, and more than 60% could tell the difference between the Internet and Facebook, and define journalism. These results add up to a good MIL INDEX score for analytical skills (13.8 out of 20).

On the negative side, when asked to judge the Kenyan media landscape, respondents were found to be relatively uncritical, considering the levels of partisanship and corruption in the Kenyan media documented by independent studies and organizations (see African Media Barometer 2012, Election Observation Group 2017). The high level of trust in media is in line

with Afrobarometer data (2018) that show that 18-25-year-olds trust the media more than almost any other institution. But the Afrobarometer data also show considerable differences in that consumption of television news is quite low, while more MIL INDEX respondents said they watched TV news than listen to radio news. This might be explained by the fact that MIL INDEX respondents were not recruited from every province, but according to an urban-rural quota plan, which leaves remote villages with limited television access out of the frame.

### Reflection

There is a keen awareness amongst Kenya's youth that adverse forms of communication like disinformation, cyberbullying, and hate speech are not to be tolerated. The survey respondents are also quite adept at spotting news bias and censorship. Over 60% condemned disinformation and cyberbullying and were able to identify news bias and censorship. Merely hate speech was dealt with more leniently, with only a relative majority of the respondents rejecting it. The MIL INDEX score for reflective skills is moderate to good (11.4 out of 20).

But the MIL INDEX survey also revealed that respondents were willing to tolerate news bias and censorship in certain situations. The focus groups documented frequent cases of young Kenyans becoming victims of online scams and showed that they only have a limited repertoire in coping with cyberbullying.

The findings concerning disinformation are in line with an exploratory study conducted by Herman Wasserman and Dani Madrid-Morales (2019), showing that Kenyans report coming across disinformative content more often than Nigerians and South Africans. Though this might be because disinformation indeed is disseminated more often than in both other countries, the more likely conclusion is that there is a greater awareness of "fake news" on the part of the Kenyan respondents. On the other hand, the lower sensitivity when it comes to hate speech is surprising when taking into account the violence inducing behavior in the aftermath of the 2008 elections (see Comninos 2013).

### Creation

The lines between content producers and media users have become blurred in the digital age. More than 80% of respondents reported using the basic skill of taking photos at least sometimes, around half made audio and video recordings, uploaded files, and updated their social media profiles at least sometimes, and almost a third wrote and published reports. More than half of the respondents had also created a WhatsApp group before, while every fifth respondent claimed having created a blog or website. This resulted in a moderate MIL Index score (9.9 out of 20).

## Action

Action entails putting one's MIL skills into practice for the good of society or for one's own benefit. When it comes to contributing to better levels of information in society, the young respondents are fairly good. More than two thirds share information with others and every sixth respondent comments on issues in public at least sometimes, and almost half report having taken part in a campaign for freedom of expression or access

to information. The respondents' MIL self-assessment is also quite positive. Around three quarters feel they can use media responsibly, analyze them critically, and reflect their own use of media. The proportion of respondents believing they are good at creating and publishing their own content is somewhat lower, at a bit more than 60%. The MIL INDEX score for the sub-dimension of action is moderate to good (12.3 out of 20).

### Positive results

### Critical results

#### Access

- + Widespread regular access to radio and television
- + Fairly widespread regular access to the Internet
- + High levels of smartphone ownership

- Internet access less frequent amongst rural, female, and adolescent respondents
- Smartphone ownership less frequent amongst rural, female, and adolescent respondents
- Rare access to printed media

#### Analysis

- + Widespread knowledge of constitutional right to freedom of expression
- + Fairly widespread knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet
- + Fairly widespread knowledge of the definition of journalism

- Media landscape judged more favorably than independent studies would suggest

#### Reflection

- + Strong rejection of disinformation and cyberbullying
- + High awareness of news bias and censorship

- Limited repertoire in dealing with cyberbullying

#### Creation

- + Photo taking widespread and quite frequent
- + Audio and video recordings fairly widespread
- + Uploading files, updating social media profiles, and creating messenger groups fairly widespread

- Writing/publishing reports not very frequent
- Rare creation of blogs/websites

#### Action

- + Sharing of information with others and commenting on social issues is considerably widespread
- + Self-assessment of skills in using media responsibly, analyzing them critically, and reflecting one's own media use is positive

- Limited participation in campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information
- Self-assessment of skills in creating / publishing one's own content is comparatively low

## 8. Recommendations

Drawing on the above findings for Kenya, recommendations are as follows:

### Access



**Improve technical access and usage skills of rural, female, and adolescent youths:** These segments of the young generation are at a disadvantage and should be targeted especially in terms of online access and skills.

#### **Foster a culture of reading and comprehension of long texts:**

The young generation is less and less inclined to read the printed media or long reads online. They should develop an awareness for the importance of being able to dig deeper into a subject matter to gain a more fundamental understanding than possible by skimming or reading short texts.

### Analysis



**Encourage critical trust in media:** 15-25-year-old Kenyans trust the media, but they should maintain a critical distance to realistically be able to judge which outlets, brands, and information sources are indeed to be trusted and which are not.

**Explain the role of media in democracy:** Tolerance of forms of news bias and censorship alert to the fact that young Kenyans also need to learn the value of independent media for democracy, though this is a tough sell in a polarized setting with mainly partisan media.

### Reflection



**Promote critical reflection of hate speech:** In a country characterized by strong polarization in recent years, hate speech takes place at the covert level. Nevertheless, the young generation needs to be sensitized and to take responsibility not just for their public statements but also for how they communicate on social media and messengers on a day-to-day basis.

**Equip with digital safety tactics:** Young people in Kenya often fall prey to online scamming in the digital realm. They are in need of the necessary armor in the form of digital safety skills that will enable them to identify attacks before they fall victim to them.

**Equip with strategies to deal with cyberbullying:** While they are able to identify and condemn cyberbullying, 15-25-year-

olds lack strategies in dealing with cyberbullying and cyber-mobbing. These should be conveyed.

### Creation



#### **Foster a culture of writing or creating audio/visual content:**

In order to voice their concerns succinctly and convincingly, productive skills need to be conveyed to young Kenyans. Kenyan bloggers have undergone harsh criticism in recent years for being corruptible. The new generation should be encouraged to raise their voice for the common good of all Kenyans.

### Action



**Integrate MIL into the national curriculum:** It is important to sensitize the young generation for the importance of Media and Information Literacy at an early age. Kenya's schools have focused on digital literacy in the past – it is now time to take the next step and introduce MIL into curriculums at all levels of education (see the accompanying article on the MIL landscape in Kenya).

**Raise public awareness for MIL:** Seeing as curriculum development can take a while, a first step might be to raise awareness for MIL issues, getting young people engaged with the subject and sensitizing them for the aspects mentioned above.

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