

# MEDIA AND METHODS OF OBTAINING INFORMATION BY NINTH GRADES

A Research in support of  
the career information process

Implemented by:

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The way young people use the media is changing very frequently. In fact, traditional media is no longer a source of information for young people, as opposed to social media. Even with the different social media, there are changes in the way of use.

Young people between the ages of 13 and 15 are in a position to enroll in high school, that is, they are to make big decisions that will later affect their further development and their career. Making such decisions and the influence of the external environment in this process is a central aspect that is of interest to this research.

From the obtained results, a general conclusion can be made that young people ages 13–15 use very little traditional media, such as newspapers, radio or television for information. They use social media much more, such as: Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

Young people want to be informed before making the decision to enroll in secondary school, and they usually obtain information or get informed during the last year of the primary education, i.e., in the 9th grade. Parents have the greatest influence while making a decision where young people will enroll in high school.

More detailed information regarding the full survey and the data obtained can be seen below in the full report of the results. However, certain key results can be singled out, namely:

- ▶ respondents mostly use Instagram, TikTok and YouTube,
- ▶ respondents, in the largest percentage (71%), do not use Twitter as a social network where they get information,
- ▶ respondents aged 13–15 years do not listen to the radio (76.7%) and do not watch television (56.2%) as media where they can get information,
- ▶ 78.6% of respondents do not follow online websites,
- ▶ The most used smart device (94.9%) is the smart phone,
- ▶ Young people on average (66.6%) use the smart device for 2–6 hours during the day,
- ▶ 39.3% of the respondents use the smart device all the time while at home,
- ▶ When they are online, young people mostly follow or watch fun and interesting content,
- ▶ when reading news and information, the respondents (65%) have answered that they want to have text, image and video so that they can understand the content more easily,
- ▶ more than half, i.e. 57% of respondents do not follow civil society organizations and do not obtain information through them,
- ▶ when receiving/obtaining information, respondents trust their family the most, i.e. their parents and siblings,
- ▶ the respondents know how to make a distinction between what is a true information i.e. news and what is fake news, because they check the information under several sources,
- ▶ 71% of the respondents consult their parents and trust them about choosing a secondary school,
- ▶ 74.4% of the respondents answered that before making a choice for enrollment in secondary education, they would like to have information about the possibilities for college and future employment,
- ▶ Young people from the 9th grade are getting informed or being informed about enrolling in secondary education during the last, 9th year of primary education (82.7%).
- ▶ Significantly larger percentage of the respondents, i.e., more than half of the respondents (52.4 %) choose a secondary school where the acquired education can help them find a job within the labor market more easily in the future.

# METHODOLOGY

A total of 2,097 students from the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia participated in this research. Questionnaires and focus groups were used to obtain data. The questionnaires were conducted online and face-to-face, i.e., through traditional filling out of the questionnaires, in cooperation with primary schools. A total of 2,036 students answered the questionnaires. For successful cooperation with the primary schools, an opinion/approval was previously obtained from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Bureau for the Development of Education (BDO) for the implementation of this research, commissioned by the Education for Employment in North Macedonia project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. 61 students from 9th grade participated in the focus groups. The focus groups were conducted face to face with all respondents.

This research aimed to cover all the factors that influence the transition of the young people from primary to secondary education. The topics and areas on which this research gathered more information include:

- 1 the manner young people use social media compared to traditional media,
- 2 whether young people are exposed to traditional media and in what percentage,
- 3 do social media influence the decision-making among young people about the future of their education,
- 4 from which media (social versus traditional media) do young people most often receive information,
- 5 what factors influence young people to make decisions about continuing their education,
- 6 with whom the young people communicate most often in order to choose secondary school..

The Questionnaires represented the basic method of identifying the opinion of young people on the topics presented above. The questionnaires were administered on two occasions, as an online questionnaires and questionnaires administered directly in primary schools. A total of 2,036 respondents participated in this research through questionnaires, which actually represents 10.7% of the total number of students in primary schools in the 9th grade within the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The online questionnaires were conducted from April 7th to April 27th, 2023. They questionnaires were available in Macedonian language, Albanian language, Turkish language and Serbian language. 766 respondents provided their answers through the online survey.

In the period from May 8th to May 22nd, a field survey with questionnaires was conducted in urban and rural areas in all 8 planning regions of the country. More specifically, 1,270 questionnaires were administered in 11 municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia. The questionnaires were administered to students in the 9th grade through cooperation with primary schools. These questionnaires were only available in Macedonian language and Albanian language.

The second method used to obtain data for this research was focus groups.

The main goal of the focus groups is to collect in-depth data on the manners in which the ninth-grade students access information, which media they use for information and how they make or form decisions.

In order to understand the process and to obtain a clear overview, eight focus groups were established, made up of 14- and 15-year-olds from different municipalities, from urban and rural areas (Prilep, Vinica, Cheprigovo village, Klepach village, Moroishta village, Struga, Veles, Bitola, Nerasht village, Sveti Nikole and Tetovo). Six of the focus groups were carried out in Macedonian language and two in the Albanian language.

The focus groups were based on a specially developed questionnaire and included three sets of questions that were in advance detected as crucial.

The question sets were on: Using media, obtaining information, decision making.

The focus groups included students from the ninth grade, a total of 61, out of which 36 were female and 25 were male.

The focus groups were conducted in April, May and June of 2023.



# INTRODUCTION

The use of social media is becoming an omnipresent among young people, especially those at in the 14 and 15 age group. This generation has grown up in the digital age, surrounded by various social media platforms that have transformed the way they interact with each other and the way they interact with others. It is important to understand how these young individuals perceive social media compared to more traditional forms of communication. It is especially important to be able to see how they receive information from the media and what information they consider relevant.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, offer young people the opportunity to connect with friends, share experiences, and express themselves in new ways (Livingstone & Helsper, 2019). The social media enables young people instant messaging, video calling, and photo and video sharing, which facilitates real-time communication and enhances their sense of connectivity (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). Young people perceive social media as an integral part of their social lives, providing a platform for self-expression, identity exploration and maintaining social connections (Madden et al., 2013). That is why it was necessary to see how young people use and receive information from social media. The research was also focused regarding the question of influence of social and traditional media in the way young people make decisions about enrolling in high school.

While social media offers convenience and instant communication, traditional forms of communication, such as face-to-face interactions and phone calls, still hold value for young people. Some studies suggest that face-to-face communication is considered more personal, more meaningful and conducive to building deeper relationships (Uhls et al., 2017). Traditional methods of communication allow for non-verbal cues, emotional expressions and a greater sense of intimacy, which may be lacking in online interactions (Subrahmanyam et al., 2006).

The perception of 14 and 15-year-olds of social media is shaped by its influence on the communication practices. While they embrace social media as a tool for self-expression and social connection, traditional forms of communication still have meaning. The impact of social media on young people's communication habits and the interplay between virtual and face-to-face interactions continue to be areas of interest for researchers and educators.

The period of adolescence, especially between the age of 14 and 15, is a critical time for young people as they begin to think about their future education and career. At this stage, individuals are faced with decisions that can have a significant impact on their academic and professional trajectories. Understanding how 14- and 15-year-olds make decisions about their future education is essential for educators, parents and policy makers, as they need to provide appropriate guidance and support.

The decision-making process about future education involves a complex interaction of various factors, including personal interests, aspirations, academic abilities, parental expectations, and social influences (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Young people at this age begin to explore various educational and career opportunities, collecting information and evaluating potential carrier paths (Schoon et al., 2011). They consider and take into account their own abilities, values, and long-term goals when making decisions about future education (Porfeli & Lee, 2012).

Peers, parents, teachers, and mentors contribute significantly to youth's decision-making about future education (Schoon et al., 2011). Social support and guidance from parents and educators can influence youth's clarity of educational goals and their confidence in following certain paths (Eccles

et al., 1993). Peers can also provide inspiration, information and social comparison, influencing young people's choices and aspirations (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

The access to information about various educational and career options, including apprenticeships and post-secondary programs, is critical to informed decision-making (Hansen and Metzger, 2016). Career counseling, educational guidance programs, and exposure to a variety of educational opportunities can improve young people's decision-making processes (Malanchini et al., 2018).

## YOUNG PEOPLE AT AGES OF 13, 14 AND 15 IN REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The category of young people from the age 13 to 15 was the target group when conducting this research. Actually, the manner or the way young people make decisions about enrolling in secondary school was of primary interest in the creation of the methodological tools. For this purpose, an analysis of the available data was made for this age category in order to be able to set appropriate goals in the research.

According to the data available from the State Statistics Office, in the 2022/2023 school year, 19,102 students were enrolled in the 9th grade, out of which 9,280 are female students, and 9,822 are male students. According to the age categorization, 629 students in the 9th grade are 13 years old, 18 037 students are 14 years old, 390 students are 15 years old, 40 students are 16 years old, while 6 students exceed these age categories and are more than 17 years old.

T-02: Students in regular primary and lower secondary schools, according to age and sex, by grades															
		Totali	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+ years
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>185.099</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>20.231</b>	<b>20.992</b>	<b>21.211</b>	<b>20.690</b>	<b>20.786</b>	<b>20.121</b>	<b>20.978</b>	<b>20.139</b>	<b>18.717</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Female students</b>	<b>89.676</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>9.962</b>	<b>10.150</b>	<b>10.255</b>	<b>10.033</b>	<b>10.019</b>	<b>9.749</b>	<b>10.207</b>	<b>9.623</b>	<b>9.064</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I</b>	All	20.932	573	19.690	522	79	22	9	12	10	6	7	2	-	-
	Female students	10.213	291	9.650	211	37	12	2	3	4	3	-	-	-	-
<b>II</b>	All	21.094	-	541	19.942	450	61	27	9	12	12	19	20	1	-
	Female students	10.234	-	312	9.673	179	27	8	4	7	7	5	11	1	-
<b>III</b>	All	21.301	-	-	528	20.135	480	81	29	13	9	15	10	1	-
	Female students	10.314	-	-	266	9.776	204	36	12	7	2	6	4	1	-
<b>IV</b>	All	20.815	-	-	-	547	19.551	530	107	29	21	13	14	3	-
	Female students	10.091	-	-	-	263	9.498	256	43	13	10	2	5	1	-
<b>V</b>	All	20.914	-	-	-	-	576	19.633	520	116	40	21	8	-	-
	Female students	10.052	-	-	-	-	292	9.428	237	67	16	8	4	-	-
<b>VI</b>	All	20.164	-	-	-	-	-	506	18.802	675	130	35	12	3	1



T-02: Students in regular primary and lower secondary schools, according to age and sex, by grades															
		Total	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+ years
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>185.099</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>20.231</b>	<b>20.992</b>	<b>21.211</b>	<b>20.690</b>	<b>20.786</b>	<b>20.121</b>	<b>20.978</b>	<b>20.139</b>	<b>18.717</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Female students</b>	<b>89.676</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>9.962</b>	<b>10.150</b>	<b>10.255</b>	<b>10.033</b>	<b>10.019</b>	<b>9.749</b>	<b>10.207</b>	<b>9.623</b>	<b>9.064</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>6</b>
	Female students	9.775	-	-	-	-	-	289	9.127	271	58	22	7	1	-
<b>VII</b>	All	20.856	-	-	-	-	-	-	642	19.565	507	102	33	6	1
	Female students	10.155	-	-	-	-	-	-	323	9.546	216	48	18	3	1
<b>VIII</b>	All	19.921	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	558	18.785	468	87	21	2
	Female students	9.562	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	292	9.004	211	41	12	2
<b>IX</b>	All	19.102	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	629	18.037	390	40	6
	Female students	9.280	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	307	8.762	188	20	3

Regarding the number of schools, according to the data from the State Statistics Office, in the academic year 2022/2023 there were 966 primary public schools, including 7 regular primary private schools on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

	Schools	Class sections	Students			Teachers				
			total	of which		Total		full-time		
				females	repeaters	all	women	total		of which for definite time
								all	women	
<b>Regular primary and lower secondary schools</b>										
<b>Total</b>										
<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>11.146</b>	186.649	90.608	261	19.138	13.374	16.213	11.642	2.740
<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>11.116</b>	185.099	89.676	250	19.050	13.591	16.338	11.922	3.072
<b>Of which private schools</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>109</b>	1.568	688	-	229	178	200	157	115
<b>2022/2023</b> <b>2021/2022</b>	<b>99,4</b>	<b>99,7</b>	99,2	99,0	95,8	99,5	101,6	100,8	102,4	112,1

**DEMOGRAPHIC**

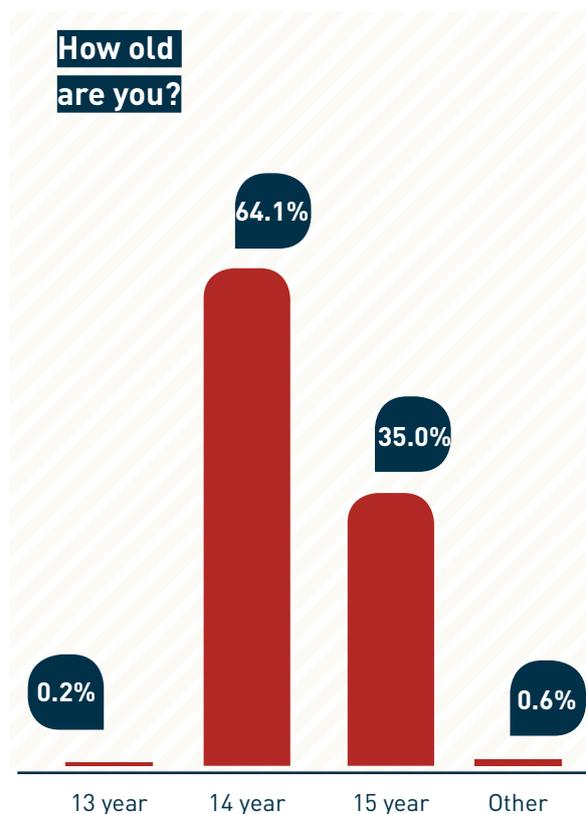
**DATA FOR THE**

**RESPONDENTS**

Since the questionnaire was carried out only with students from the 9th grade in the Republic of North Macedonia, they were given several options for the demographic data "age", i.e. the option 13, 14 or 15 years. If some of the students exceeded this age, they could choose the "Other" option.

How old are you?		
	Frequency	Percent
13	5	0,2
14	1306	64,1
15	712	35,0
Tjera	13	0,6

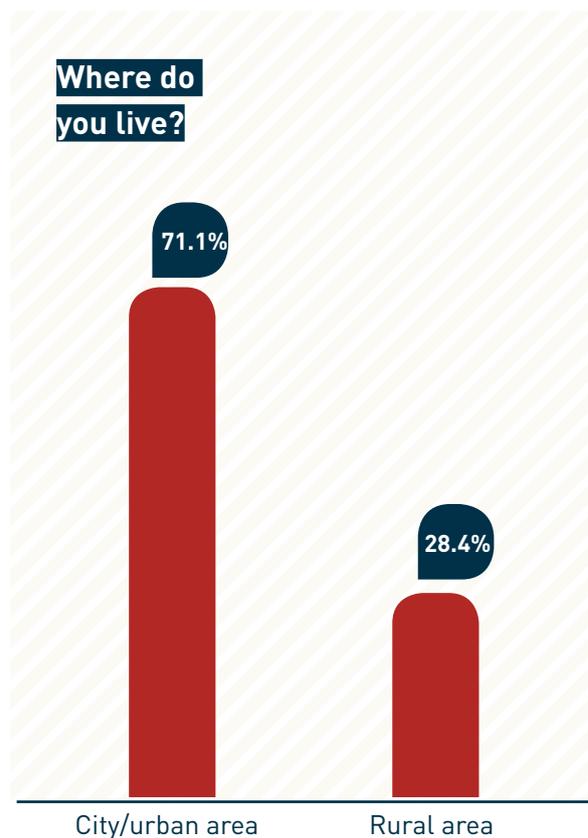
Regarding the age segregation of the respondents, this is the following image: 0.2% of the respondents are 13 years old, which is a small part of the participants. Most of the respondents, i.e., 64.1% of the participants, are 14 years old. Additionally, 35% of respondents are 15 years old. It is important to note that the given age options do not include all respondents, since 0.6% of participants exceed these given age categories.



As previously stated in the methodology section, this survey includes respondents from all 8 planning regions. For a better understanding of the demographic distribution, respondents were asked about their place of residence, that is, whether they live in an urban or rural environment. In this regard, 71.1% of respondents live in urban areas, while 28.4% or exactly 579 respondents live in rural areas.

Respondents were given the opportunity to choose their gender, that is, to choose between male and female or to choose the option "I do not want to answer".

The distribution and the coverage between male and female respondents in this research is considered excellent, considering the numbers (in the methodology section) of the distribution of students in the 9th grade. Thus, 45.7% of respondents are male, while 52.1% of respondents are female. 2% of respondents did not want to answer this question.



Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	930	45,7
Female	1061	52,1
I do not want to answer	45	2,0

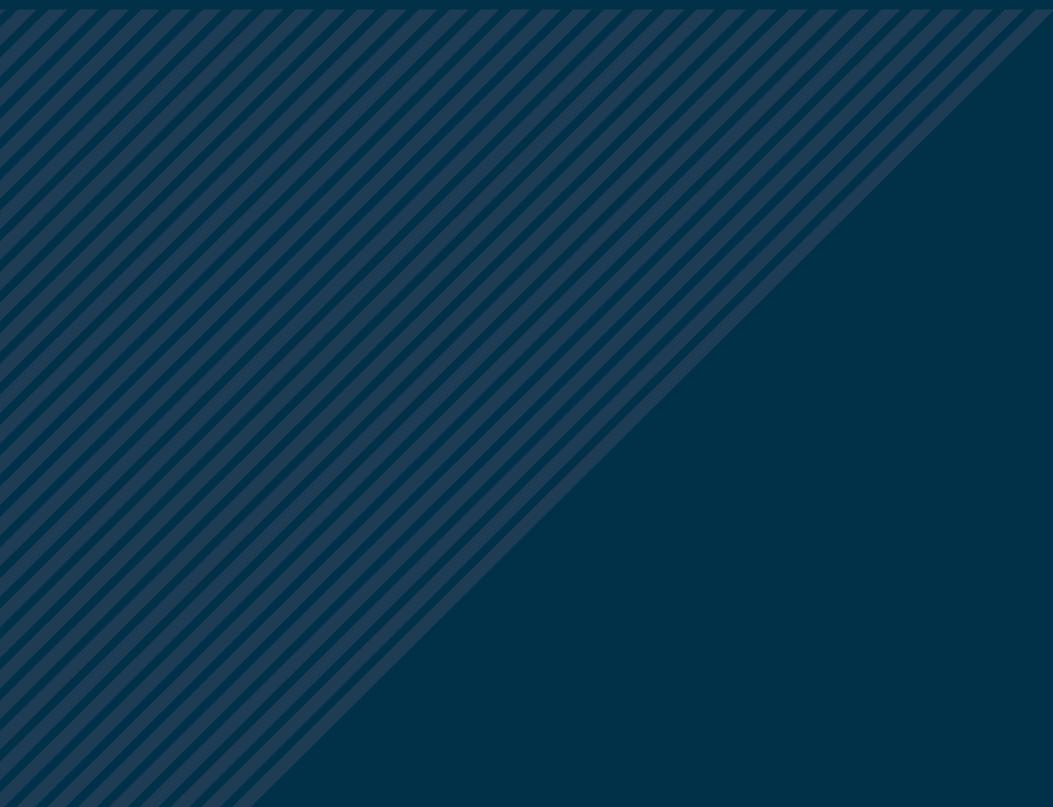
Having analyzed the total number of students enrolled in the 9th grade, classified by gender, 11.4% of the female students from the 9th grade participated in this research, against 9.5% of the male students enrolled in the 9th grade.

In order to make a distinction between the respondents regarding the language being taught in their classes, the Questionnaire has provided this opportunity. So, the Macedonian language, the Albanian language, the Turkish language, the Serbian language, the Bosnian language and the Roma language were the options on which the teaching could take place.

Most of the respondents, i.e., 69.9%, attend classes in Macedonian language; 26.8% of the respondents attend classes in Albanian language, while 3.1% attend classes in Turkish language. Only one respondent attends classes in Serbian language. Respondents attending Roma or Bosnian language classes did not participate in this research.

<b>What is your teaching language?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Macedonian	1424	69,9
Albanian	545	26,8
Turkish	63	3,1
Serbian	1	,0

**ANALYSIS AND  
INTERPRETATION OF  
THE RESULTS FROM  
THE QUESTIONNAIRES**



The first part of the questionnaire focused on the research of social networks and social media. In this phase, respondents were tasked with answering questions related to owning profile accounts on different social networks, as well as the manner and intensity with which they use these networks. In addition, respondents were also asked about the objective or purpose for which they use social media.

This phase of the research investigated their habits and approach to social networks, highlighting different aspects of their use. With these questions, we tried to get a more detailed and complex overview of their experience and participation in social networks and media.

This information will help us understand the influence and use of social networks and social media among respondents, in order to get a detailed picture of their habits, interests and goals in the context of digital communication and social platform.

According to the data from the respondents, 93,2% have social media profile accounts as opposed to 6,7 % of respondents which at the time of answering this Questionnaire do not have any social media profile accounts.

#### Do you have a profile account at any social media platform?

		Frequency	Percent
Do you have a profile account at any social media platform?	Yes	1898	93,2
	No	136	6,7

Regarding this issue, there are no significant differences in other parameters and variables (gender, place of residence and age category, that is, the numbers are similar (in the attachment)). The only visible difference is among respondents who live in urban and rural areas, namely 4.5% of the respondents in urban areas do not have any profile account on any of the social networks, as opposed to 14.4% of respondents who live in rural areas.

#### Do you have a profile account at any social media platform? \*HOW OLD ARE YOU?

		How old are you?				Total
		13	14	15	Other	
Do you have a profile account at any social media platform?	Yes	5	1215	671	7	1898
	No	0	90	40	6	136

### Do you have a profile account at any social media platform? \*WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

		Where do you live?		
		City/urban area	Rural area	Did not answer
Do you have a profile account at any social media platform?	Yes	1384	506	1
	No	62	73	0

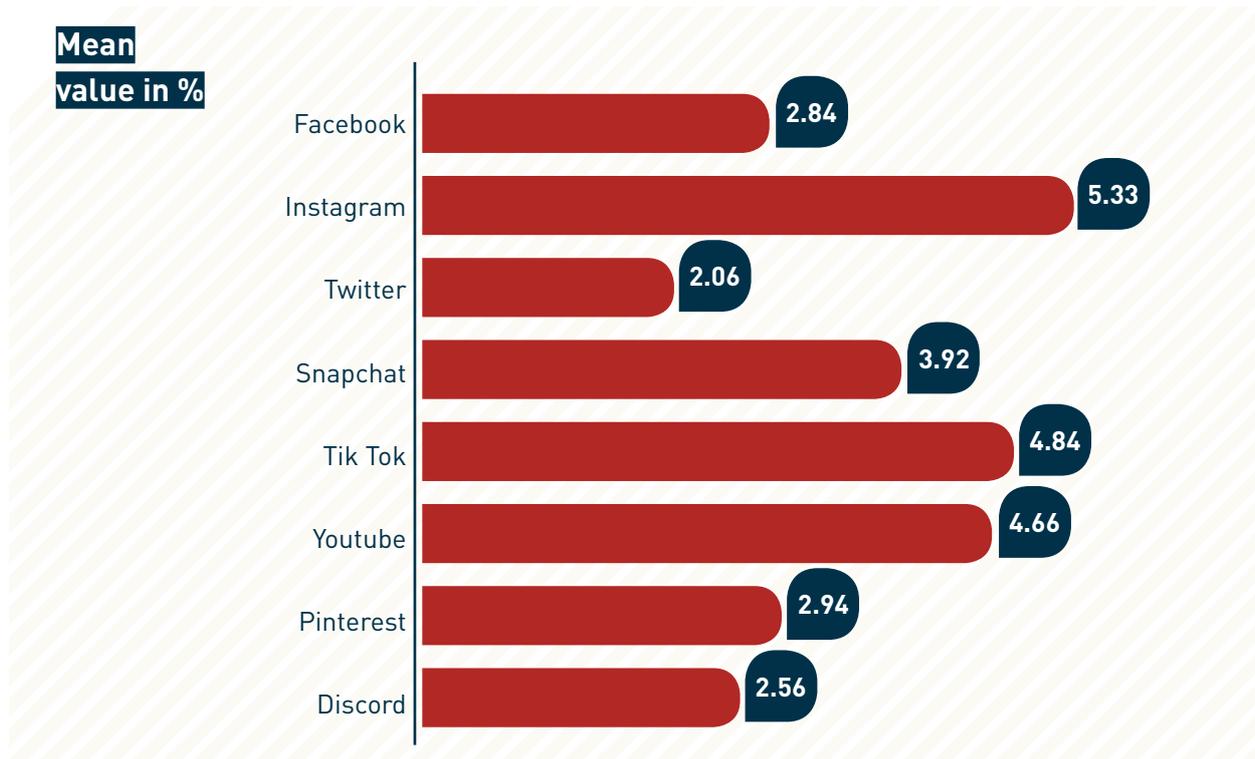
### Do you have a profile account at any social media platform? \*GENDER

		Sex		
		Male	Female	I do not want to answer
Do you have a profile account at any social media platform?	Yes	874	984	37
	No	55	76	3

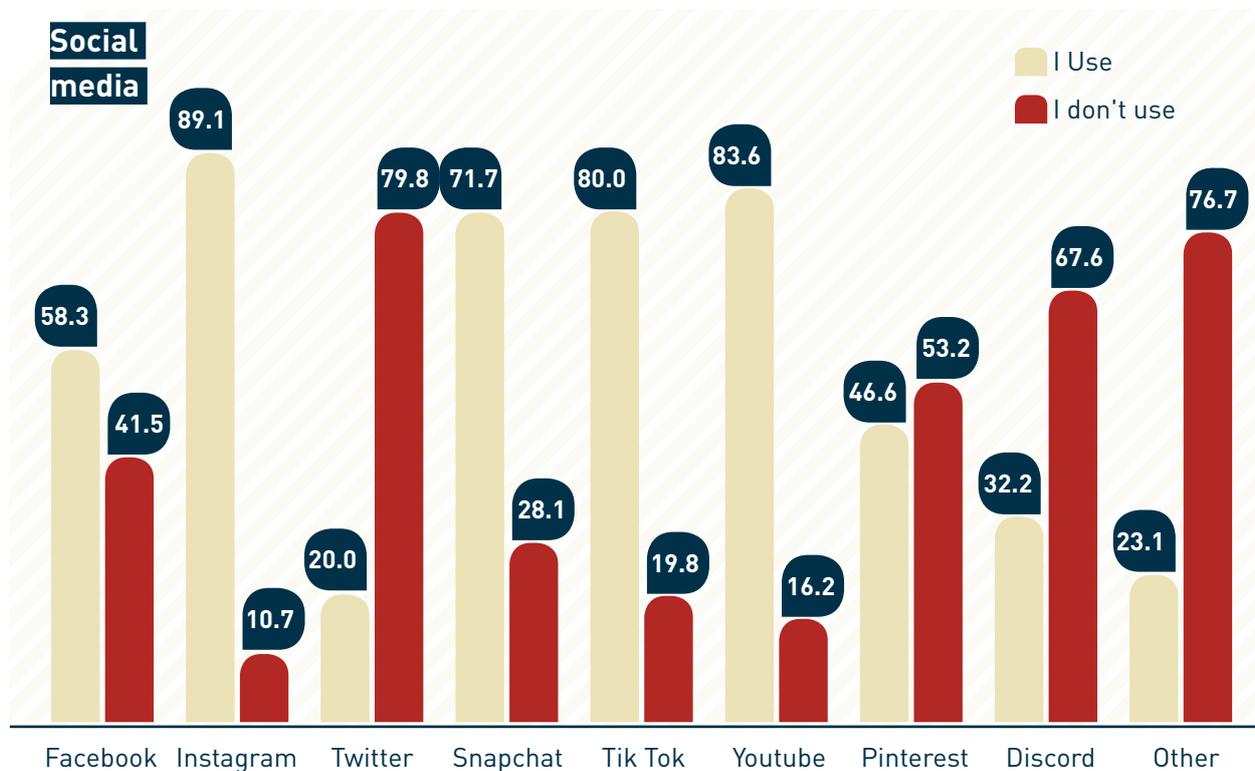
The following questions regarding social networks are aimed at exploring the types of social networks that the respondents use and the ranking of different social networks depending on the frequency of their use.

At this phase of the research, we aimed to identify the types of social networks used by the respondents and to study their preferred networks and their ranking, depending on the frequency of use. Through this research, we try to perceive the dynamics of social networks and the preferred platforms of the respondents, which allows us to understand their preferred ways of digital communication and interaction.

The respondents have answered that they most often use Instagram, and following Instagram, with an average score of 4.84% is the TikTok social network. Respondents in the 9th grade indicated to least use social networks such as Twitter (2.06 %) and Facebook (2.84 %). For obtaining data on this question, respondents ranked social networks depending on the frequency of their use.

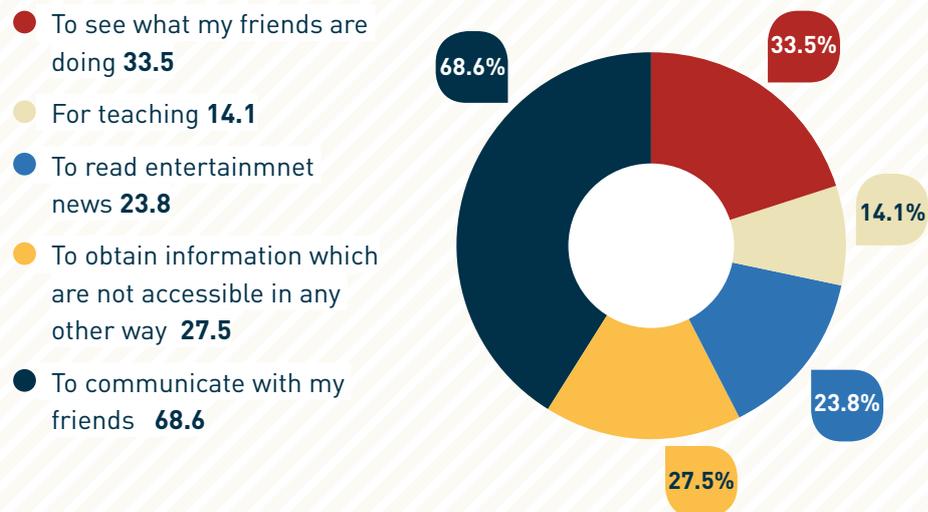


As a result of this question, from the obtained data, the differences between the answers of the respondents about the use of the proposed networks can be extracted, as part of a deeper analysis. 89.1% of respondents answered that they use Instagram, while 83.6% use YouTube, 80% use Tik Tok and 71.7% use Snapchat. The least used network is Twitter (20%) and Discord (32.2%).



The next question was aimed at examining the purpose for which the respondents have their profile accounts, that is, what are they using social networks and online media for. From the elaborated data, it can be concluded that social media is mostly used to maintain communication with their peers. Thus, 68.6% answered that they use social media to communicate with their friends, i.e., 33.5% use them to see what their friends are doing. Social media is least used for the needs of teaching and the teaching process in schools (14.1%), that is, for reading entertainment news 23.8%.

### Use of Social Media



In the next part of the research, the questionnaire was focused on traditional media and the exposure of young people to the traditional ways of obtaining information. In this section, young people were asked about receiving information through radio and television, as well as obtaining information through books and magazines.

In regard to the question “Do you read books and magazines that contain useful information for you?”, more than a third of the respondents have answered that they do not read books and magazines. From the respondents who answered affirmatively, 26.9% have answered that they read books and magazines, that is, 26.6% read only literature that is mandatory for them for school. 11.4% of respondents prefer online, i.e., audiobooks.

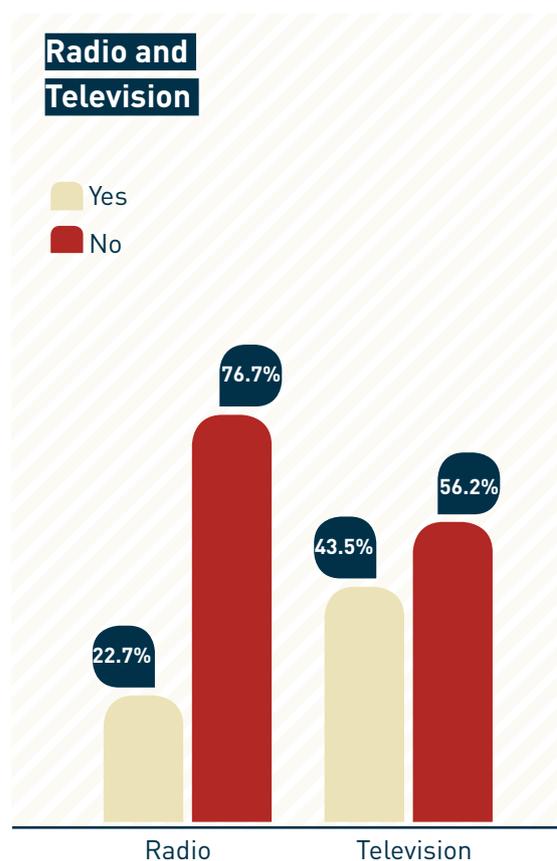
### Do you read books and magazines that contain useful information for you?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	547	26,9
I read only literature which is obligatory for school	542	26,6
I prefer online i.e., audiobooks	233	11,4
I don't read magazines and books	666	32,7
Did not answer	48	2,41

The respondents had the chance to indicate which books or magazines they read. From the books they read, they mentioned: Harry Potter, Begalka, The Little Prince, The Diary of Anne Frank, books with an adventurous or romantic content. In terms of authors, among the most mentioned are Colin Furrell and Naim Frasheri, as well as writers of domestic origin: Gorjan Petreski, Kocho Racin, Vasil Iljoski and others.

In terms of these data, as well as other parameters, gender, place of residence and age, there are no significant differences among the respondents, except for the gender. So, male respondents in a larger percentage read books and magazines much less compared to the female respondents. In fact, 44.4% of the male respondents have answered that they do not read books and magazines, compared to 22.3% of female respondents.

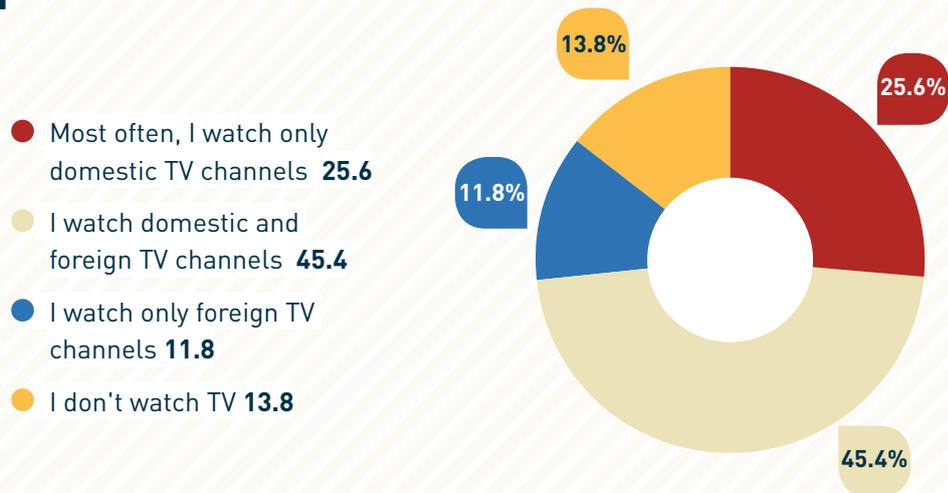
Regarding the radio and television, there are significant differences among the respondents, through which it can be concluded that the respondents are more exposed to television as opposed to radio, as a medium for obtaining information. So, more than two thirds of the respondents do not listen to the radio, compared to 22.7% who answered affirmatively to this question. Regarding television, the answers of the respondents do not vary greatly, i.e., more than half (56.2%) of the respondents do not watch television regularly, as opposed to 43.5% of the respondents who answered that they watch television regularly.



Furthermore, respondents were required to answer which television channels they are exposed to when watching television. The respondents could answer from the multiple choice offered such as the foreign, national, or local channels they are exposed to and give their answer.

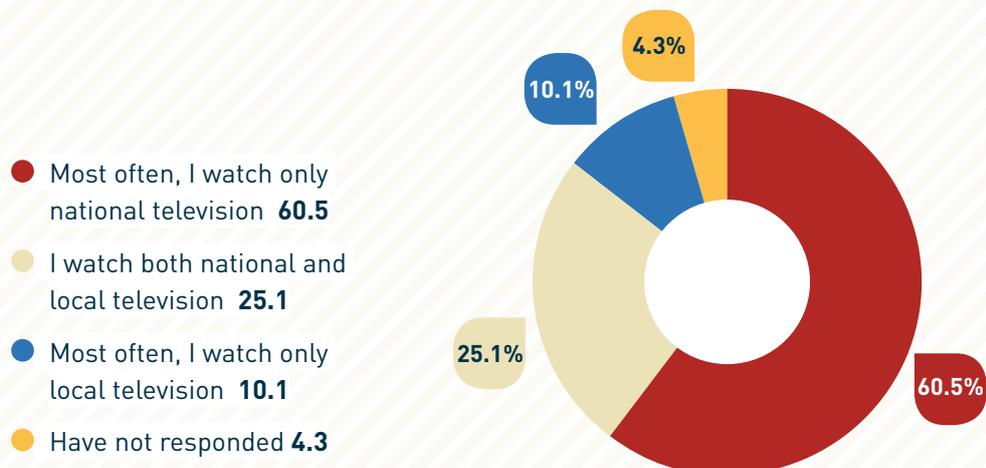
From the obtained data, it can be concluded that almost half of the respondents when they watch television, watch both foreign and local channels (47%). 27% watch only local channels, while 12% watch only foreign channels. 14% of respondents answered that they do not watch TV at all.

### Foreign and domestic TV channels



Furthermore, the distinction in television viewing was made between watching national public television service or domestic local media. Regarding this question, the difference in the exposure of young people is visible, that is, it can be concluded that the respondents watch national television more than local television. Thus, 60.5% of the respondents watch only national public televisions, while 10% of respondents watch only local televisions.

### National and local television

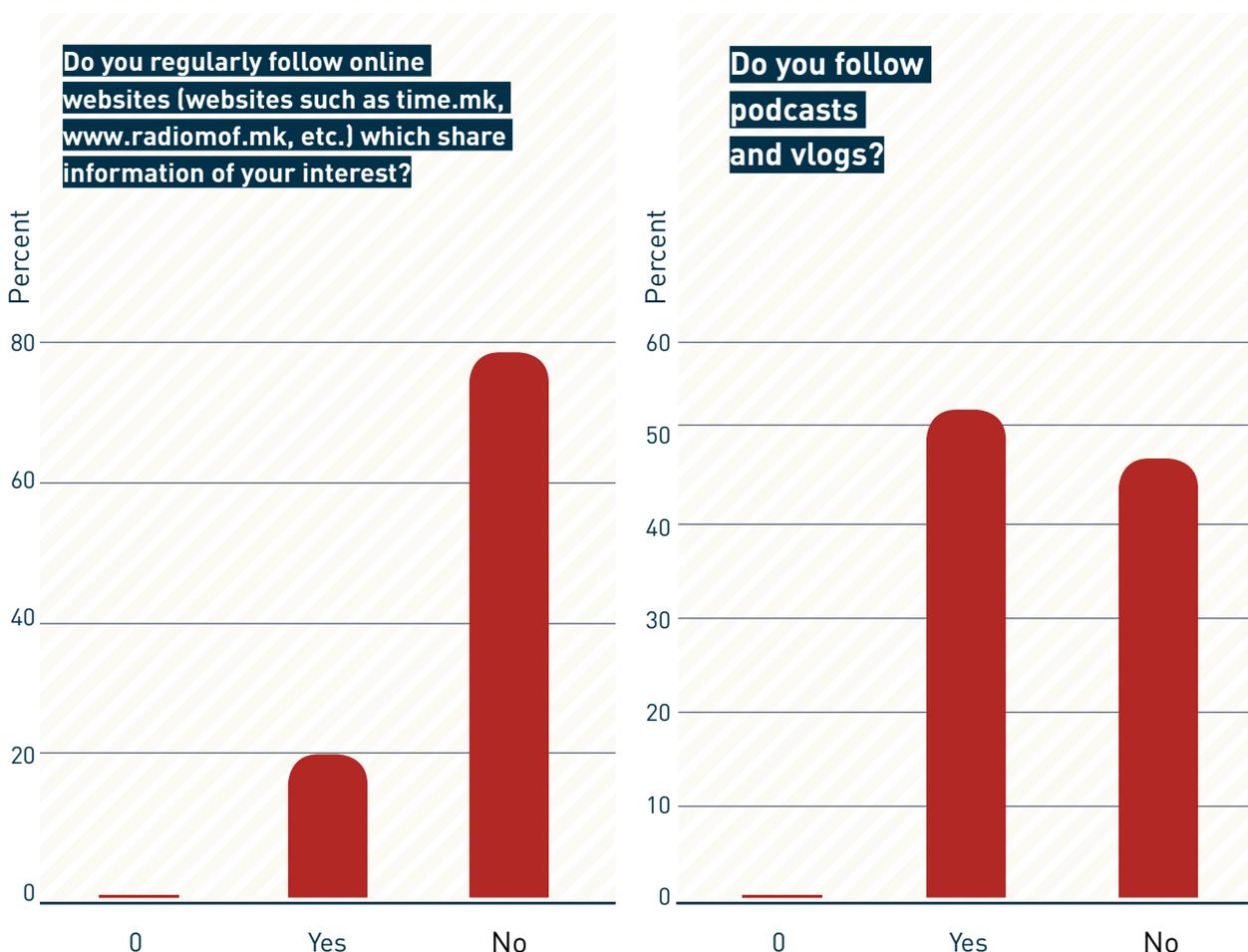


Furthermore, in the research, the questionnaire again focuses on online media and the way of informing young people. In this section, the questions were aimed at online websites that inform respondents about youth and social events, but also about podcasts and vlogs as a new way of communicating, informing and educating young people.

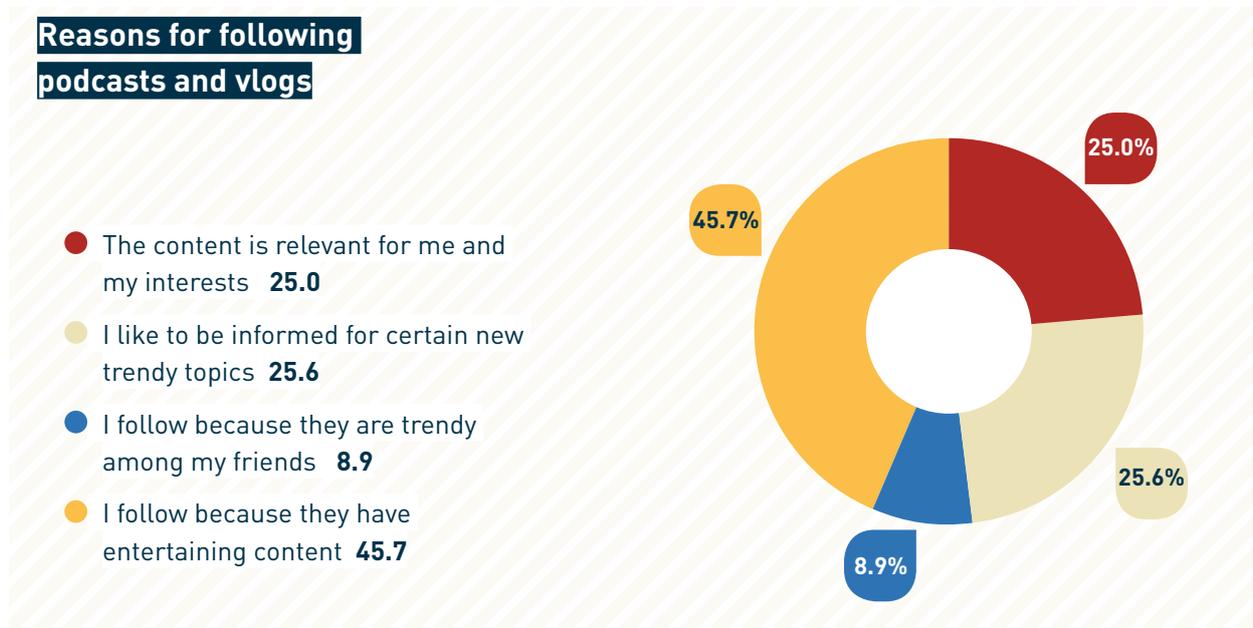
When analyzing the data, the respondents use websites that are intended for their information much less, as opposed to podcasts and vlogs. Thus, as many as 78.6% of respondents have answered that they do not follow online websites, contrary to 20.4% who follow websites and read information that is useful for them.

The respondents who said they follow online websites could further write down which sites they follow and visit. According to the answers received, these are mostly sports sites (rezultati.com, fifa.com, maxbet.com, admiral.com). Furthermore, the respondents use sites that convey information about fashion, i.e., web sites that present an opportunity for online shopping, such as: zara.com and fashiongroup.com. In addition, the respondents visit the following sites from the field of fashion and entertainment: fashionel.com.mk, femina.com.mk and similar. However, from the answers provided by the respondents, it can be concluded that also in relation to this question, the most numerous answers are about following social networks, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

Contrary to this, the podcasts and vlogs are more prevalent way of communication and obtaining information among the respondents. More than half of the respondents (52.8%) answered that they follow podcasts and vlogs that have information that interests them. However, 46.2% of respondents have answered that they do not follow podcasts and vlogs.



In order to provide in-depth research regarding the use of podcasts and vlogs as a way of informing the young people, the next question asks of the reasons for which the respondents follow podcasts and vlogs. According to the received answers, the respondents (45.7 %) follow podcasts and vlogs because they have entertaining content, while the smallest percentage of respondents (8.9 %) follow podcasts and vlogs because it is a trend among their peers.

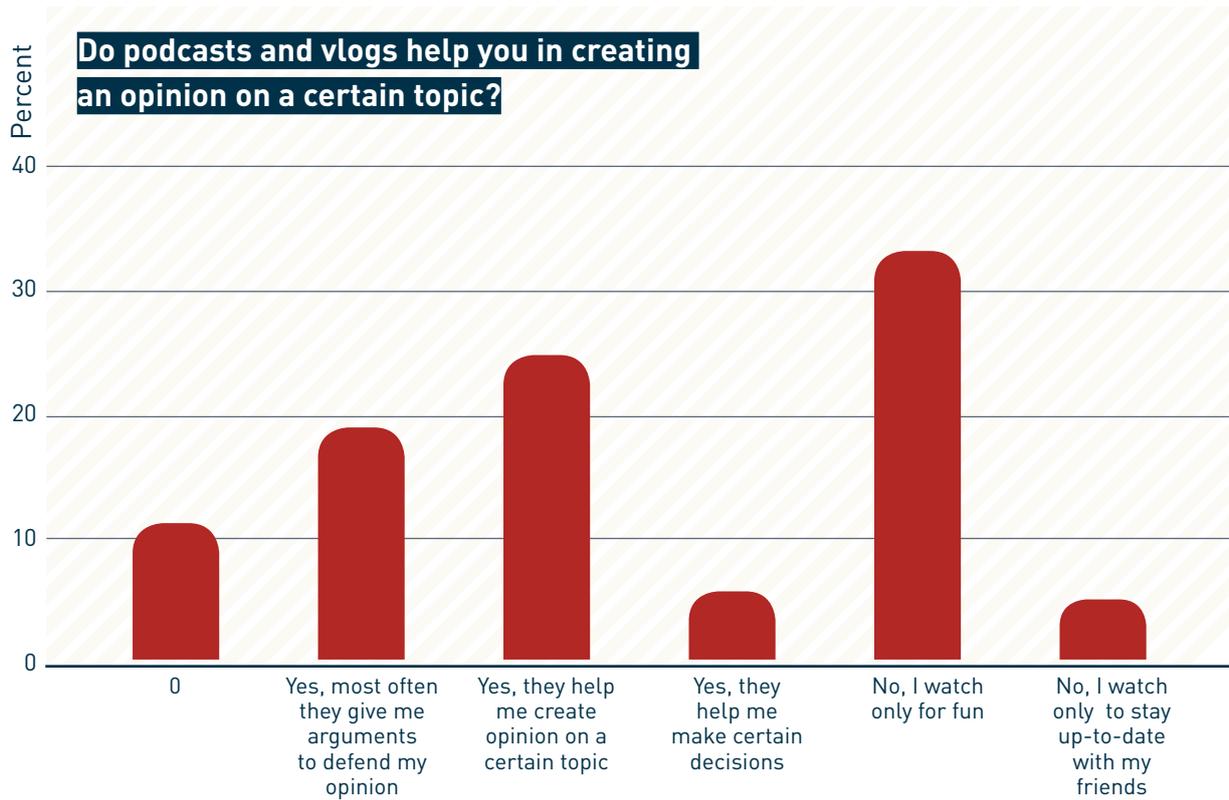


Since more than half of the respondents gave an affirmative answer that they follow podcasts and vlogs, it was necessary to follow up on this question. In this context, the next question in the Questionnaire for respondents was: “Do podcasts and vlogs help you form an opinion on a certain topic?” This question provides relevant information, as it allows us to understand the motives for using podcasts and vlogs and whether these media influence the opinion of our respondents.

This information allowed us to explore the relationship between podcasts, vlogs, and the process of opinion formation. Therefore, we have the opportunity to understand the influence of these media on the attitude of our respondents to a certain topic and whether it helps them in understanding, analyzing and creating their own opinion.

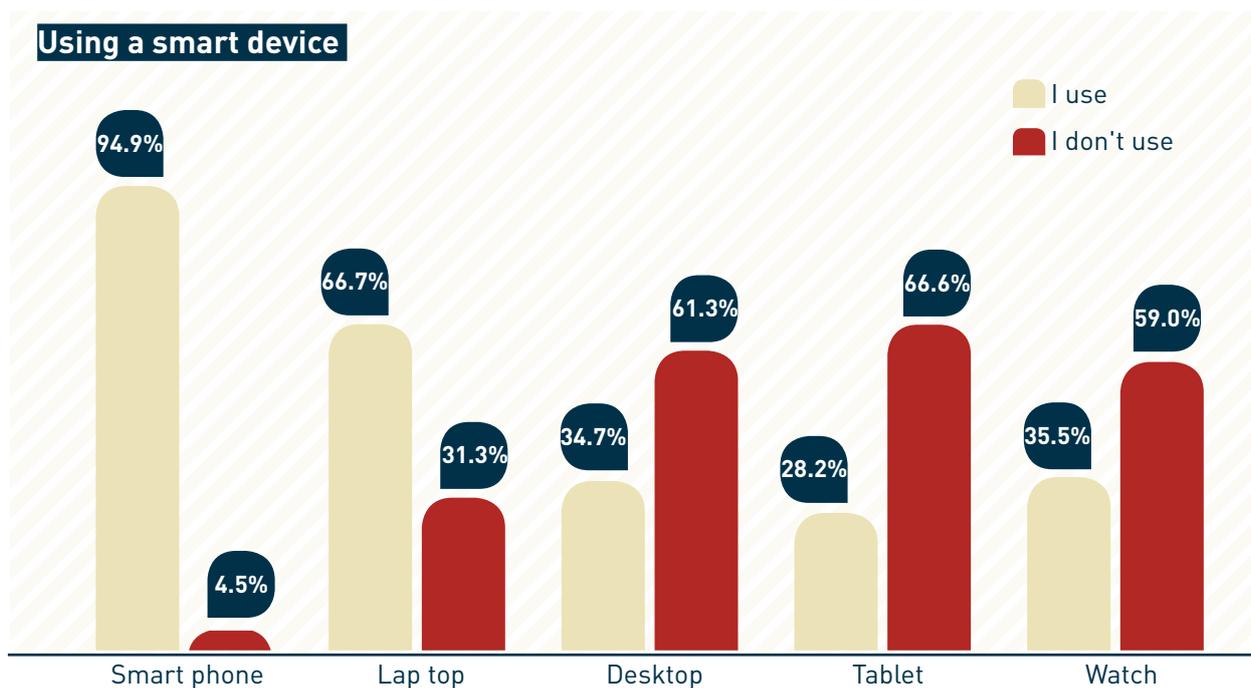
The largest percentage of respondents (33%) answered this question that they watch podcasts and vlogs only for fun. In contrast to this, 24.8% of the respondents who have answered that the information they receive from podcasts and blogs helps them form their opinion. This claim is supported by 19.2% of respondents, who have answered that the information they receive from podcasts and vlogs helps them create arguments when defending their position or opinion.

Following up to the creation of opinions among the respondents based on the information obtained from podcasts and vlogs, the difference based on gender is noticeable. Thus, 21.4% of the male respondents answered that podcasts and vlogs help them form their opinion on a certain topic, compared to 27.3% of female respondents.



The next set of questions referred to the use and ownership of a smart device among the respondents. The questions related to different smart devices, time duration of using the smart device during the day, but also the period of the day in which the respondents use a smart device.

At the first question of this set, the respondents had the opportunity to mark all types of smart devices (from those offered) that they use. The options that were offered were: smart phone, laptop, desktop, tablet and watch.



From the obtained results it can be concluded that the most frequently used smart device among the respondents is the smart phone (94.9%), while the least used is the tablet (28.2%).

Significant differences occur in the use of desktop computers, especially when segregating the the respondents according to the place of residence. Thus, 71.5% of respondents who live in rural areas do not use a desktop computer, compared to 57% of respondents who live in urban areas.

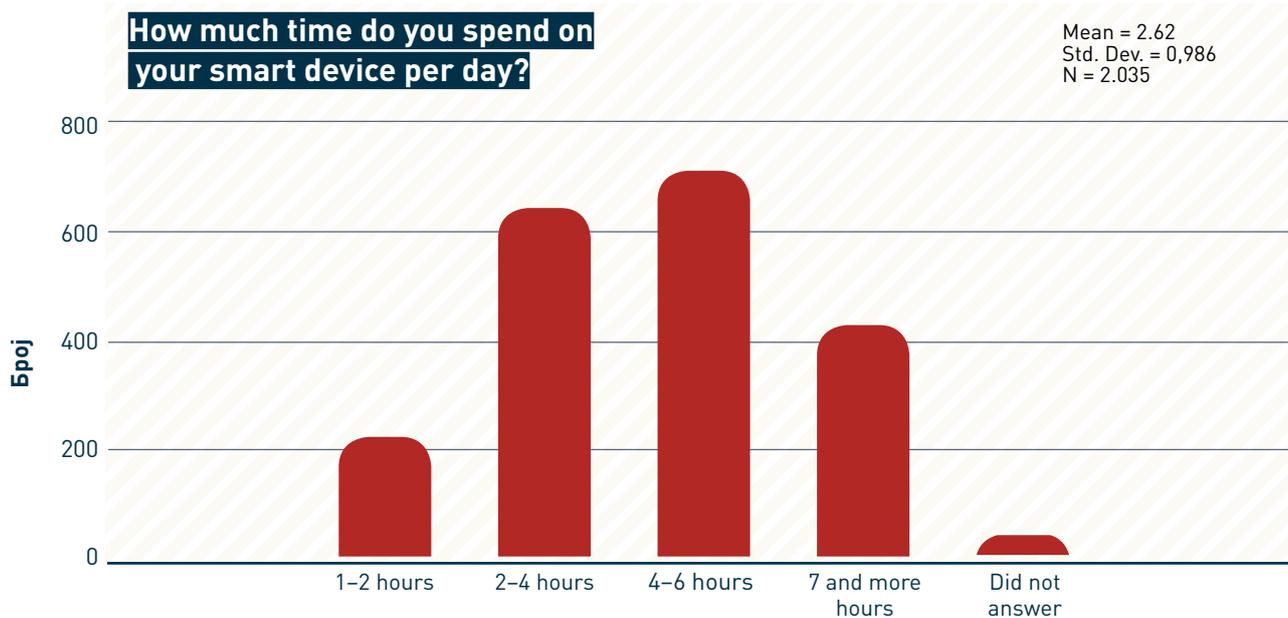
On the other hand, the results from using of a laptop show that there is a significant difference between the male and female respondents. Thus, 73% of female respondents use a laptop computer, while this percentage among male respondents is 60%.

Respondents had the chance to indicate the use of another smart device. The most frequent answers are smart TV, PlayStation and Xbox.

Regarding the time duration they spend in front of their smart device, the respondents could choose different hourly options for the time spent in front of the device. The largest percentage of respondents (34.8%) answered that they spend 4-6 hours in front of their smart device. Consequently, 31.8% of respondents answered that they spend 2-4 hours using their smart device. The lowest percentage of respondents, i.e., 10.8% answered that they use their smart device for 1-2 hours during a day.

### How much time do you use the smart device during the day?

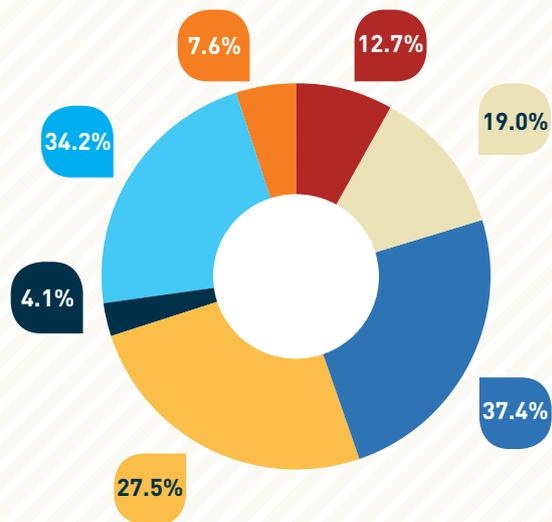
	Frequency	Percent
1-2 hours	219	10,8
2-4 hours	648	31,8
4-6 hours	709	34,8
7 and more hours	423	20,8
Did not answer	37	1,9



Considering the time spent in front of their smart device, the respondents also answered a question about the period of the day when they use the smart device most often. In regard to this question, respondents were given the opportunity to choose all the answers for the period of the day when they spend time in front of their smart device. According to the answers received, more than a third of the respondents (39.3%) use the smart device all the time while they are at home; 37.4% of the respondent use the smart device after the end of the school day while going home. The smart device is used the least by the respondents while studying and writing homework (4.1%) and while they are out with their friends, i.e., 7.6%.

### Time period in a day when using the smart device

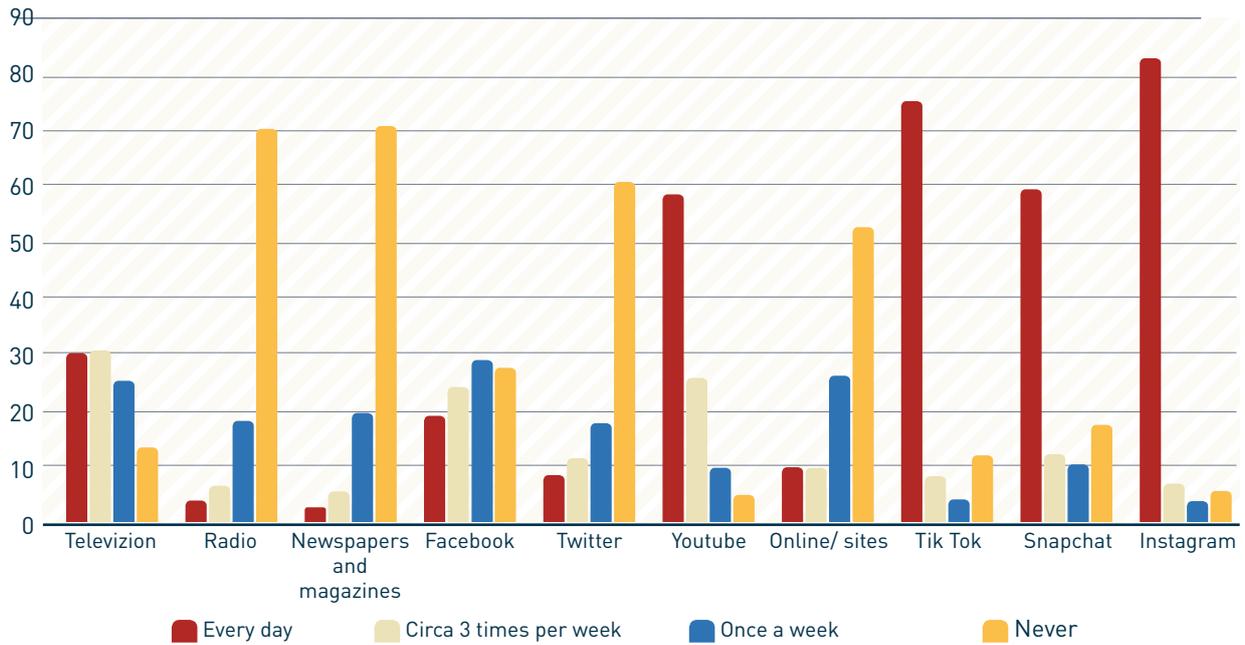
- In the morning, while going to school **12.7%**
- During the school breaks **19.0%**
- After finishing school, while going home **37.4%**
- All the time at home **39.3%**
- Only when I am studying and writing homework **4.1%**
- At night before bed **34.2%**
- Always when I am out with my friends **7.6%**



The next part of the questions was intended for the manner of informing the young people through various channels of communication, which were also offered to them in the above questions. The goal is to make a direct comparison between traditional channels of information and new channels, i.e., social media. However, the general conclusion from the results obtained from the respondents continues to be that the young people from ninth grade almost don't use the traditional media, as opposed to the new social channels.

Thus, the most used channel for obtaining information, which young people use every day, is Instagram with high 82.1% of respondents. The next channels that young people use daily for information are TikTok (74.5%) and Snapchat (58.9%). More than half of the respondents (58%) also use YouTube daily for their information.

Young people at age from 13-15 years do not use information channels such as newspapers and magazines (70.1%), radio (69.6%) and the social network Twitter (60.2%). In addition to this, 52.2% of respondents have answered that they do not visit online channels at all, that is, portals for obtaining information.



Significant differences between the respondents by gender or place of residence can be observed for several channels of information. The respondents from rural areas answered in a higher percentage (37.1%) that they watch television daily for the purpose of information, as opposed to respondents from urban areas (27.1%).

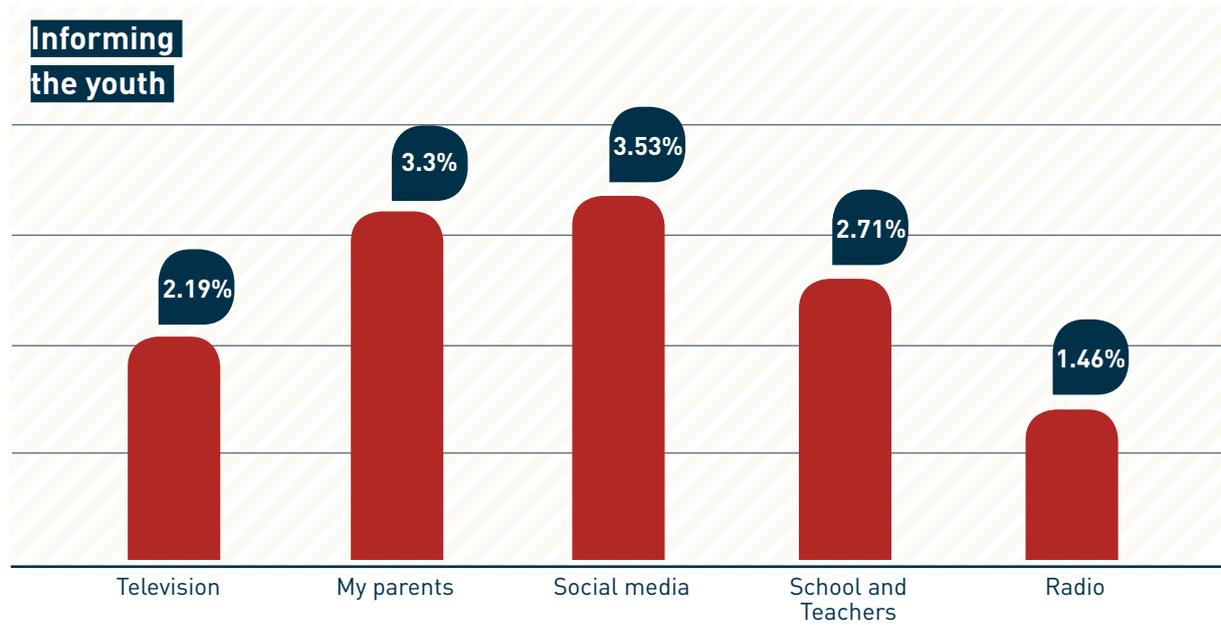
Furthermore, the results showed a difference regarding the daily use of YouTube between male and female respondents. Thus, the male respondents (67%) use YouTube daily for information purposes, compared to half (50.1%) of female respondents.

The differences regarding the use of Snapchat are made both in terms of gender and in terms of place of residence. Thus, 75% of the respondents who live in a rural environment answered that they use Snapchat daily, compared to 52% of the respondents who live in an urban environment. In terms of male and female respondents, 67% of female respondents use Snapchat daily for information, compared to 51% of male respondents.

Regarding Instagram as an information tool, female respondents (86 %) use it more than male respondents (78 %).

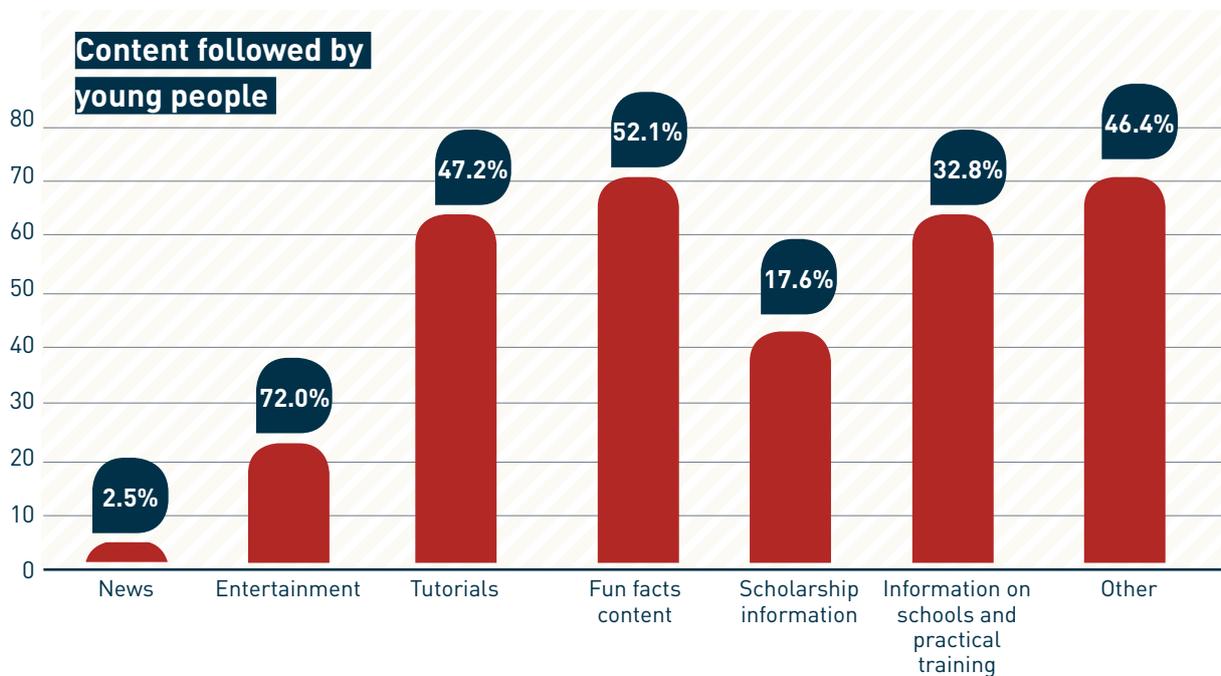
The next question also referred to the way of informing young people from the ninth grade, with the difference that in this question were included the both parents and the school as options, in order to see who has the greatest influence in providing information to the respondents.

According to the obtained data, it can be noted that social media is still the most common source for obtaining information among young people. Next to social media, the respondents' parents are a source of information. The young people aged 13–15 rarely use the radio, television and newspapers as source for information.



The use of social media (TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat) by itself does not constitute sufficient data for the use of these networks. That is why the questionnaire allowed the respondents to give us their opinion on the type of content they follow on social media as well as on traditional media.

From the obtained data it can be concluded that the respondents least follow information about scholarships (17.6%) and news (25%). Most often, respondents follow entertaining content (72%), fun facts content (52.1%) and tutorials (47.2%).

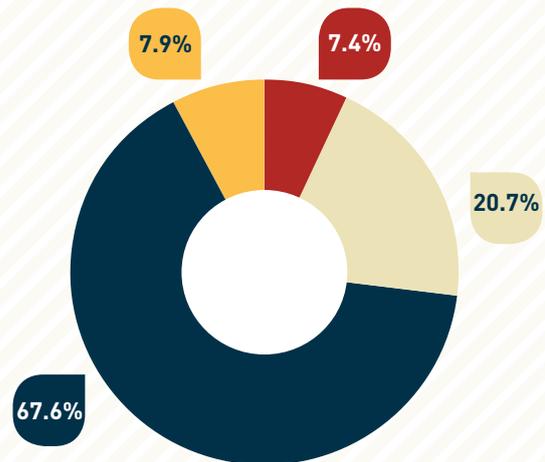


Respondents also had the chance to indicate the content they follow in an open-ended question, but their answers are similar to those above. Thus, the respondents mostly follow entertainment content, music, sports and fashion related content.

When reading information/articles from the Internet, young people may encounter news written only with text or a mixture of news with text and images. Visualization helps young people to understand the news and information they read. We received exactly such data from the respondents, where the use of photo and video in the news is better for 88.3% of the respondents. Of these 88.3%, 20.7% like when the news, that is, the information only has a photo or video (tutorial), while for 67.6% it is important to have text in every news, but they need a photo and a video so that they can understand the information more easily.

### Including image or video in the creation of information for young people

- I am best informed only from the text i **7.4**
- I want the article to have only video or image (tutorial) **20.7**
- I want the article to have text and image and video so I can understand the information better **67.6**
- I am not sure **7.9**

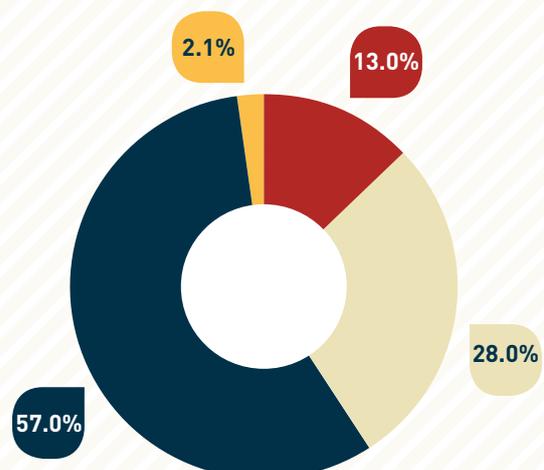


Civic organizations can represent another way of informing the young people from ninth grade, especially in the direction of skills, activities and informal education. That is why this aspect was included in the questionnaire, where the respondents could communicate their own experience regarding the manner of information provided by civil society organizations.

From the obtained data, it can be concluded that half of the young people are not informed by the organizations. However, the young people who do receive information from civil society organizations tend to follow those organizations that have visited their school for a certain promotion, presentation, etc., as opposed to those civil society organizations that were recommended by their friends.

### Do you follow some civil society organizations that share information about your education, rights, practical training and internship?

- Yes, I follow only those that are followed by my friends **13.0**
- Yes, I follow those organizations that were in schools for presentation **27.8**
- No, I don't follow civil society organizations **57.0**
- Have not responded **2.1**

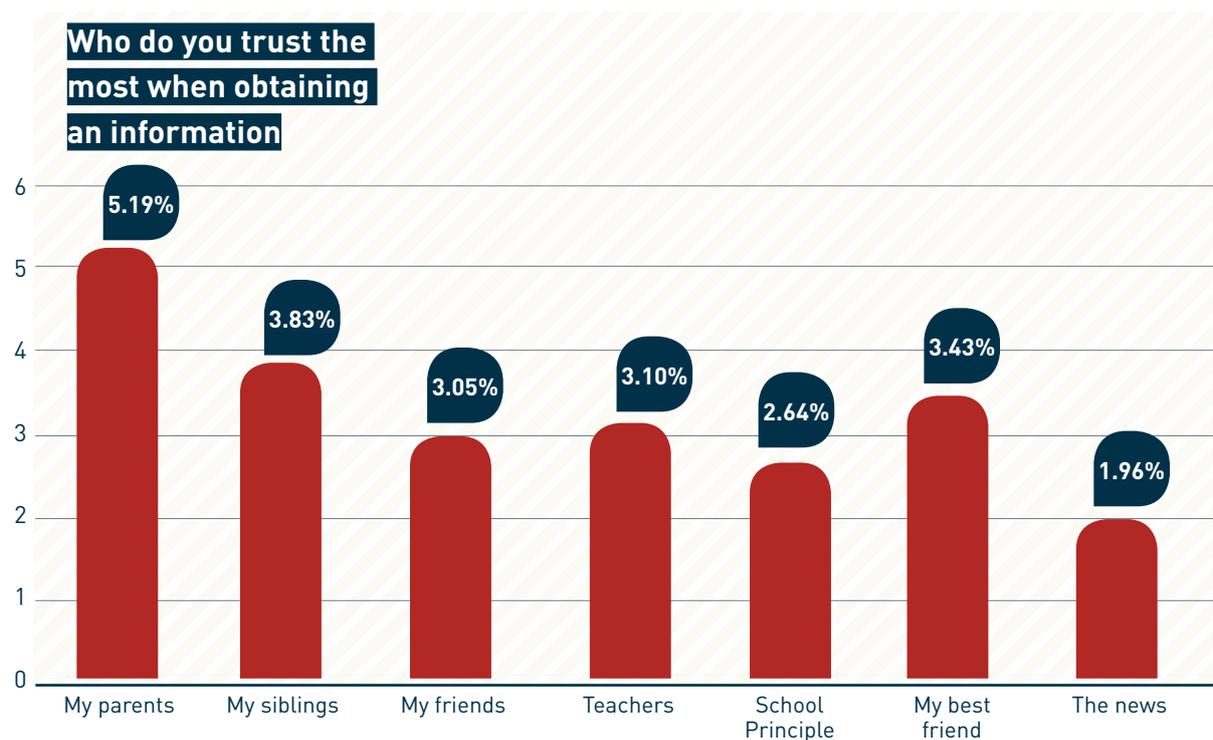


Regarding the following of influencers, the respondents presented an opposite attitude to that of following and obtaining information by the civil society organizations. So, 66.5% of respondents shared that they follow influencers, compared to 32.5% of the total number of respondents.

Significant differences regarding influencers appear when classifying the results by place of residence. A higher percentage of respondents from urban areas (71 %) answered that they follow influencers, compared to young people living in rural areas (55.7 %). Regarding the difference made by gender, female respondents answered with 70.2% that they follow influencers, against 62% of male respondents.

Respondents who answered affirmatively (that they follow influencers) also had an open question to which they could answer which influencers they follow. Well, world famous people like: Kylie Jenner, Kim Kardashian, Ariana Grande, Ronaldo, Baka Prase, Andrew Tate, Angela and Nadja and so on. Among the influencers of the domestic scene, respondents mostly follow: Stefan Lazarov, Aleksandra Shijakovska, Jelena Spendjarska, Janko, Lila Filipovska, etc.

In order to be able to round-up the attitude of the respondents towards the information process, it is significantly important to find out the trust in the information they receive from different sources. Hence, the questionnaire included questions regarding the news for scholarships or the strengths of a certain school and the respondents' belief in different sources of information.

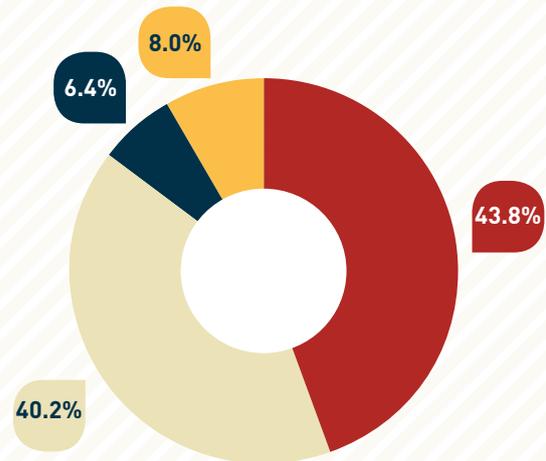


In this questionnaire, the attitude of the young people from the ninth grade was examined in regard to the billboards and posters posted in their school.

The respondents in the largest percentage (43.8%) have answered that they are not interested in the advertisements displayed on the billboards, even though they are located on their way to school, which they pass every day. However, in contrast to this answer, 40.2% of the respondents answered that they notice billboard ads only when something is striking enough. 6.4% of young people have answered that the advertisements on the billboards placed on the way to school do not have sufficiently interesting information. Only 8% of the respondents have answered that they always follow and see the advertisements placed on the billboards.

## Billboard advertising

- No, I am not interested **43.8%**
- Sometimes I might notice something if it is sufficiently impressionable **40.2%**
- I don't notice them if they don't have sufficiently interesting information **6.4%**
- Yes, I always see them **8.0%**

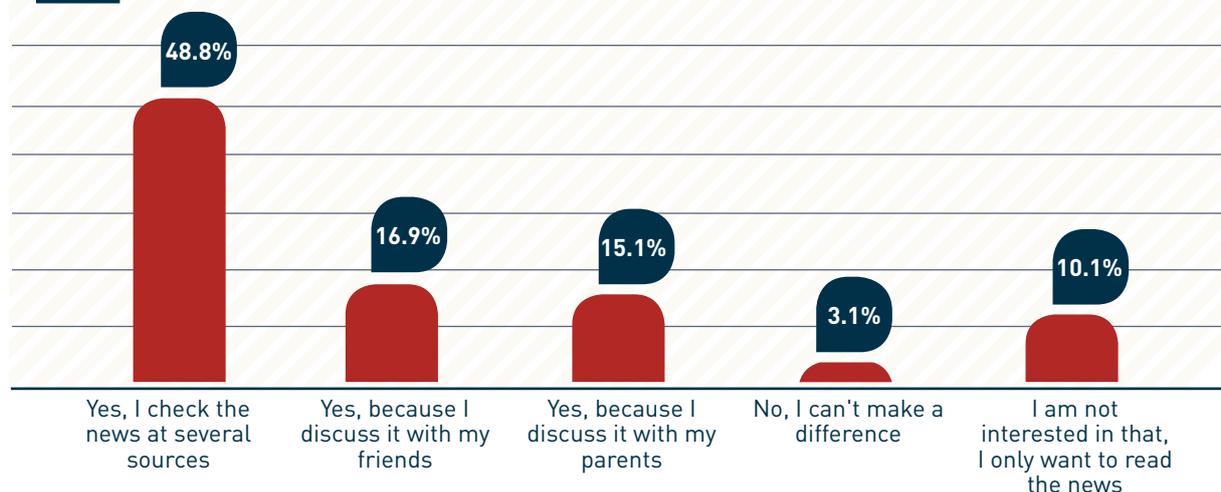


More than half of the respondents (59.5%) have answered that they follow the posters located in and around the school and read the information on them, while 39.3% of the respondents do not see the posters and are not informed from them.

When informing the young people, a particularly important fact is whether they can and know how to recognize which information is true and which is fake news. Regarding this issue, the respondents have shared their views and how they check which news is fake and which news is true.

From the answers received from the respondents, it can be concluded that more than two-thirds (80.8%) of the respondents believe that they can recognize which news is fake and which is true. Of those who know how to make a difference, they make the difference because they will check the same information in several places (48.8%). Respondents check and discuss the news and information they read with their friends (16.9%), as well as with their parents (15.1%). 3.1% of the respondents have specified that they do not know how to distinguish which information is true and which is false, while for 10.1% of the respondents have stated that it is not important to check the news and only important for them is to read the news.

## Accurate and fake news

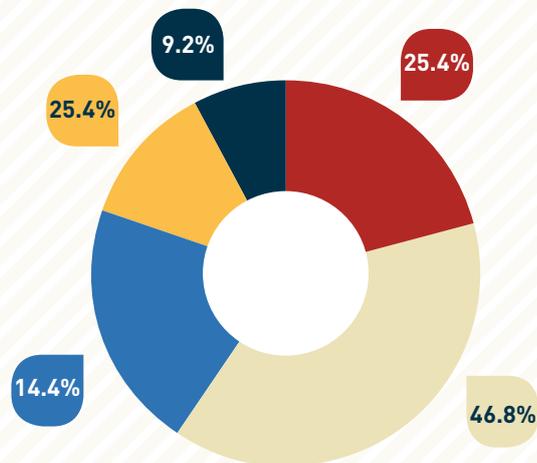


In the last part of the questionnaire, the examiners have asked questions which refer to the way the ninth graders make decision in choosing the secondary school in which they will enroll. These decisions are influenced by many factors; hence the examiners have generated certain results, reached through the questions asked to the respondents.

Students in the ninth grade need to have accurate information about the secondary schools in order to make a decision where to continue their education. Almost half of the respondents (46.8%) usually receive the information regarding the possibilities for enrolling in the secondary schools from their parents. 50.8% of respondents receive information about the enrollment into secondary school at the school or through teachers (25.4%), i.e., through presentations from secondary schools (25.4%).

### Information for secondary education

- The teachers and the school inform us and direct us toward the possible options **25.4%**
- The parent inform me of the possibilities **46.8%**
- We have presentations by the secondary schools **14.4%**
- I obtain information for the secondary school from my friends **25.4%**
- Other **9.2%**

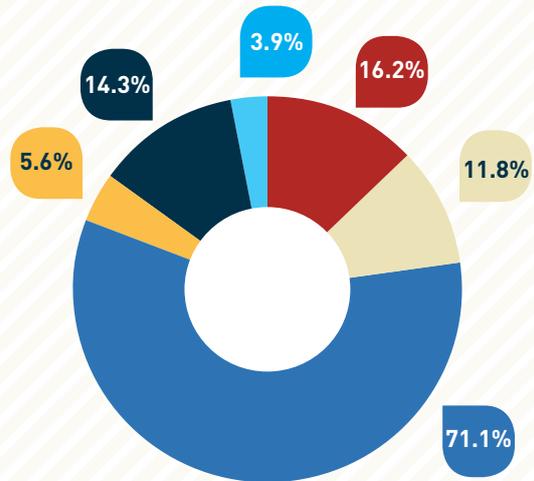


This question was followed by an open-ended question, at which the respondents mostly wrote the answers that have already been presented above. Hence, the students are mostly informed by parents and schools. However, a certain number of respondents are informed independently, by searching for necessary information on the Internet and reading blogs regarding secondary schools.

When choosing a High School, the students from the ninth-grade consult with their parents, peers, teachers, etc. The next question examined the confidence of the respondents, i.e., who they consult in order to make the decision for enrolling into secondary school. From the answers received, it can be concluded that the students mostly consult with their parents regarding the choice for secondary school. Actually, most of the respondents (71.1%) choose to consult their parents in contrast to the other possibilities. Contrary to this, the respondents least consult with the teachers in the school regarding the decision where to continue the education in secondary school.

### Who do you consult regarding the choice of secondary school?

- Friends 16.2%
- Siblings 11.8%
- Parents 71.1%
- Teachers 5.6%
- Friends that have already enrolled 14.3%
- Other 3.9%

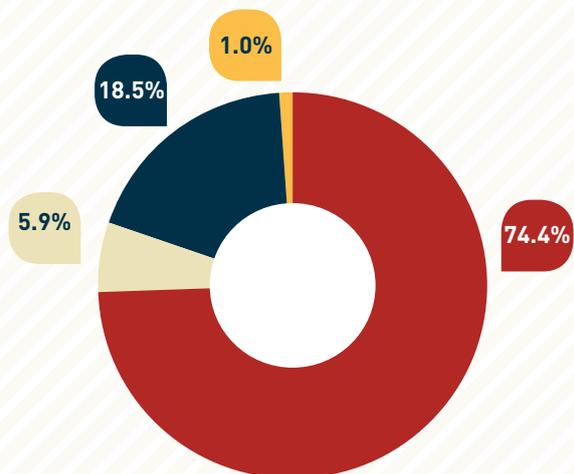


Those 3% of respondents who chose the option "Other" had the opportunity to specify who they consult most regarding the choice of secondary school. Greater number, however, have mentioned options that have already been provided previously, such as consultation with parents and friends.

One of the factors influencing the decision to choose a secondary school is the future opportunities (faculty, practical training, employment) that the student will have available. 74.4% of the respondents answered that before choosing the secondary school, they would like to have information about the possibilities for university and future employment. Contrary to this, 5.9% of respondents have answered that they do not need such information.

### Information about possibilities for university education and future employment

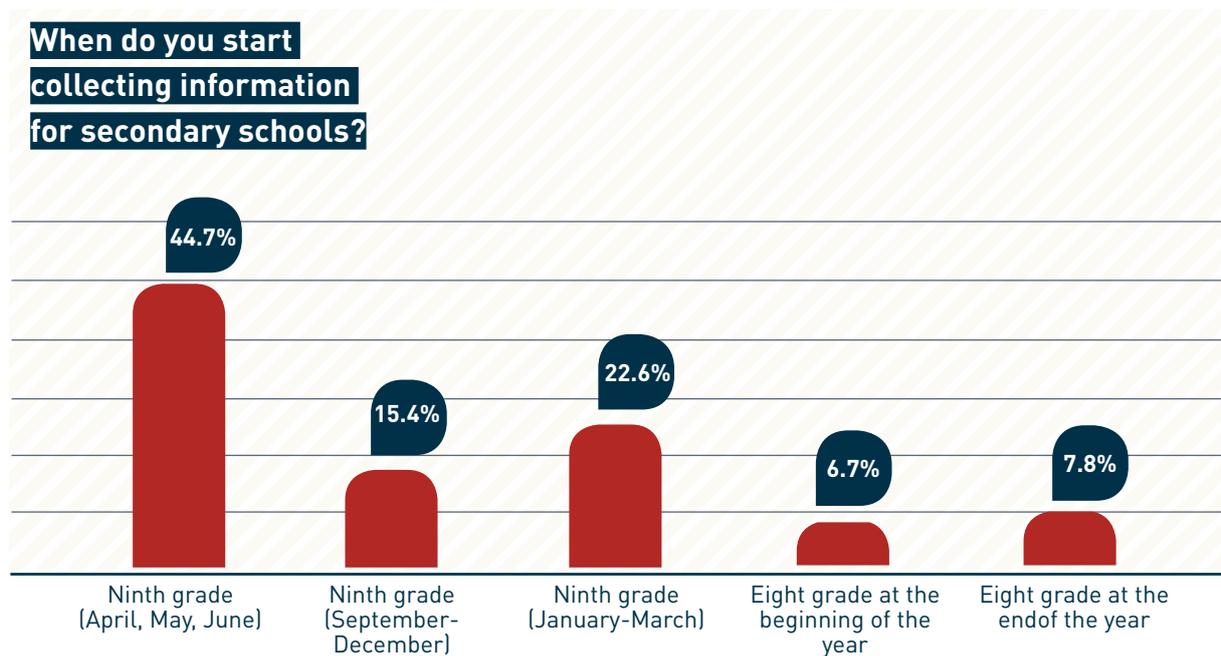
- Yes 74.4%
- No 5.9%
- I don't know 18.5%
- Have not answered 1.0%



The next question was focused on whether respondents could find sufficient information on the internet about secondary schools. From the answers received by the respondents, we can conclude that almost half of them (42.9%) think that they can find on the Internet a sufficient amount of information related to future studies at a university level, i.e., employment. However, almost third of the respondents (32.4%) believe that this information is not available online, although it would be of great benefit to them. 23.3% of respondents believe that social media should not focus on such topics and share such information.

Regarding the period when young people from the ninth grade begin collecting information about enrolling into secondary school, it can be concluded without a doubt that this process is happening during the last, ninth year of primary education (82.7%). Only 14.5% of the respondents start collecting information about enrolling into secondary school as early as in eighth grade.

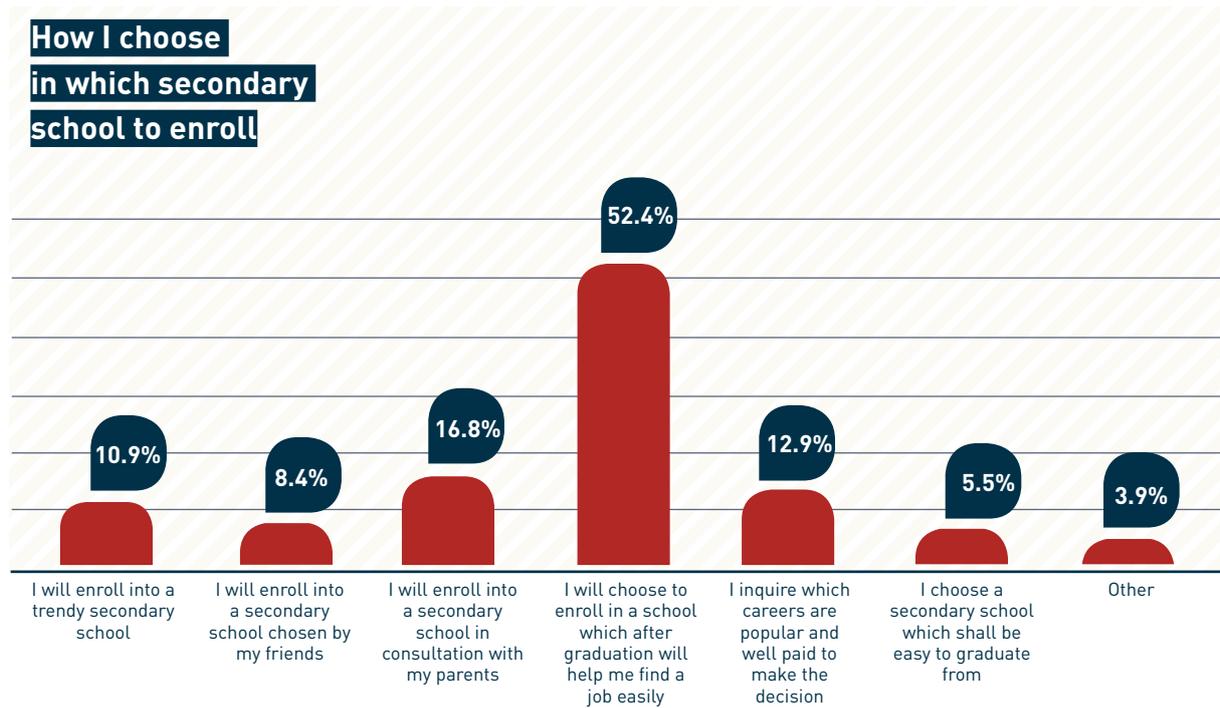
Of those respondents who are informed in the last year of primary education, 44.7% stated that they have started collecting information at the end of the school year, that is, in the period from April to June. 22.6% of the respondents begin to collect information about secondary schools already at the beginning of the second semester in the period from January to March. 15.4% of respondents have informed that they have started collecting information for enrolling into secondary education at the beginning of the school year in the period from September to December.



The last question of the questionnaire was intended for the motives for choosing a secondary school. A significantly higher percentage of the respondents, that is, more than half of the respondents (52.4%) choose the secondary school, which can help them find a job in the labor market more easily in the future through the acquired education.

As the next factor that affects the decision to choose the high school of the respondents are their parents, that is, 16.8% of the respondents enroll in the secondary school in consultation with their parents.

The least significant factor for the respondents when choosing a secondary school is “easy completion of school”. Only 5.5% of respondents decided on this claim.



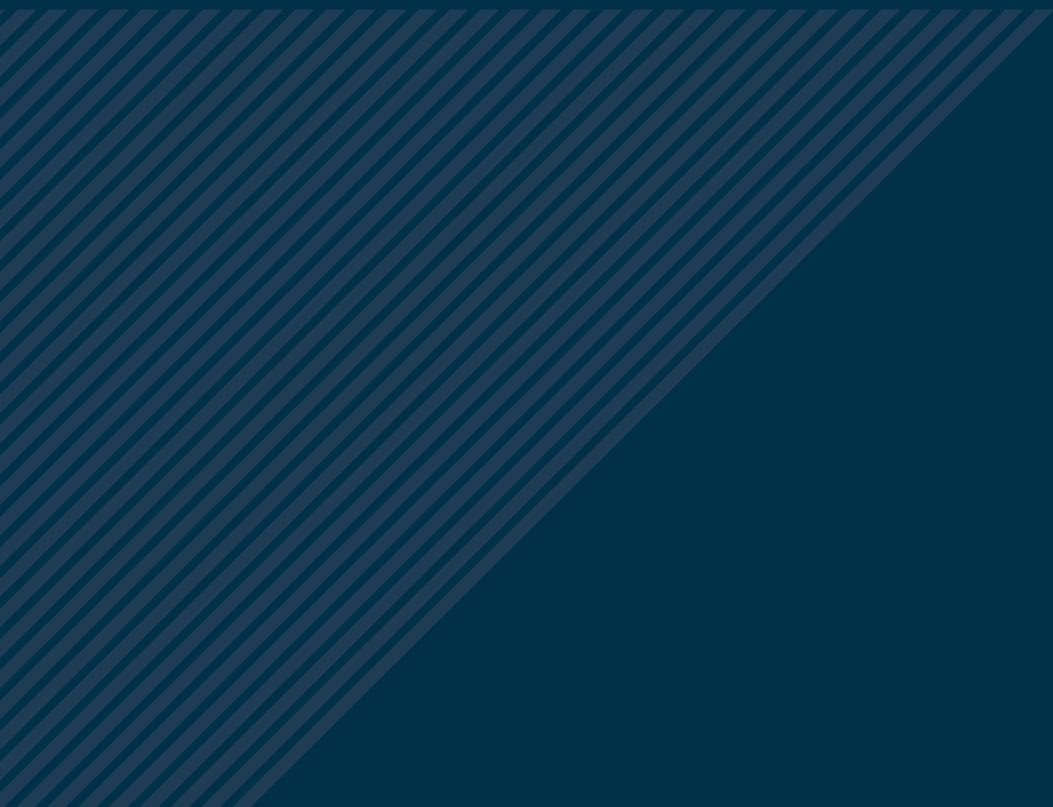
Those 3% of the respondents who chose the “Other” option in the largest number stated that they will choose the secondary school according to the profession they want, that is, the profession that interests them and in which they would like to continue their education.



**ANALYSIS OF THE**

**RESULTS FROM THE**

**FOCUS GROUPS**



## USE OF MEDIA

### The first set of questions was devoted to media and students' use of media.

The first question asked the participants to define the media and what they represent to them. The participants in the focus groups mostly defined the media as a **source of information, news, novelties**. Some of the participants defined the media by type of media: social networks, television and radio.

“**Place from where the information is transmitted.** (Male respondent, 14 years old, Sveti Nikole)

“**So, I think that the media is something that can be a social network from which we get information and we can get acquainted with many new things.** (Female Respondent, 14 years old, Vinica)

“**To me, medium/media refers to various means of communication and sources of information, such as television, radio, newspapers and the Internet.** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Nerasht village)

“**There are different platforms that we use to access news, entertainment and other forms of content.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village)

When the respondents were asked: “**Which media do you use most often?**”, the students mostly mentioned social networks, such as: Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Discord, Facebook. A small number of students mentioned traditional media, television and less often radio.

“**Of the traditional ones, I mostly use TV, sometimes radio, and of these, let's say the electronic ones, mostly Tiktok or Instagram.** (Male respondent, 15 years old, Prilep)

“**I spend a lot of time on social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. They are my main source of entertainment and communication with friends.** (Male respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village)

At the specific question about the use of traditional media, the majority of students have declared that they do not use them. Those who stated that they watch television, emphasized that it is mostly in the evening when they are together with one of the older family members and watch television together. Radio is the least used medium by young people and they stated that they listen only in cars or when they are out (in a cafe, etc.).

When they watch television, it is mostly music shows, quizzes, as well as scientific shows about animals and nature, they watch for example the **National Geographic** channel.

“**I listen to the Radio only when grandma turn's it on.** (Male respondent, 15 years old, Struga)

“**I listen to podcasts if it can be considered a form of radio during my commute to and from school. It keeps me entertained and up to date with the latest news and music.** (Male respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village).

“**I watch TV shows and news on national and international channels several times a week. It's a way for me to relax and enjoy quality programs.** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Nerasht village).

**“Usually in the evening hours, because during the day, we are at school in the morning, and after school we rest, and mostly in the evening hours** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Tetovo).

**“I watch television and I learn many new things from there. Also my environment, which are friends or parents, teachers, and they guide me with a lot of new information and it can be said that I use Instagram the most from social media and learn a lot of new information from there.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Vinica).

**“I don’t listen to the radio very often, and from the television programs I also follow some foreign ones, like National Geographic.** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Klepach village).

Those respondents who answered that they follow traditional media, pointed out that the television lacks entertainment, but also that the content is often outdated and limited. More content and information can be obtained online on websites and social media.

The content they watch on television is mostly sports matches and music shows, as well as news they watch with their parents.

**“If I need some news, I have to watch the news half an hour before what I want to hear - and it’s much faster on the Internet.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Moroishta village).

**“I don’t follow traditional media that much because I find it easier to access digital platforms. With online resources I can follow what I want in news and entertainment.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village).

**“Traditional media can sometimes feel outdated, and the content can’t always be as diverse as what I find online.** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Nerasht village).

**“I think traditional media is often limited, especially when it comes to global news. Online platforms offer different perspectives on things and alternative information.** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Nerasht village).

## INFORMING

The second set of questions referred to informing the students and the channels through which they receive information.

A part of the respondents is informed through their close relatives and friends who have more information and knowledge. Also, depending on the topic, they sometimes discuss with people in their environment, such as parents, teachers and friends. But without exception, everyone is informed by social networks and various websites.

Taking into account that the participants in the focus groups are young people, it is clear that information mostly comes to them from the Internet and social networks. Without exception, all students answered that they have more than one social network that they check very often during a day. They usually open social networks through their personal phones, less often through a computer or tablet.

Although all participants in the focus groups have social media, only half pointed out that they regularly follow some influencers who have their own channels on some of the networks. Most of the time, they pointed out that they follow foreign influencers, such as Mr. Beast, Joe Rogan and Logan Paul, and they mentioned Darko Vlogs, Ivan Einstein, Alexandra Shijakovska, Roberto Navali and GP (GP) from Macedonia.

The content they follow on social media is related to music, sports, gaming, adventure and travel, and makeup and fashion channels.

Regarding websites, they mostly use them to get entertainment information, such as sports news, fashion sites or for information about music, movies and technology. The sites mentioned by the participants are: Sport M, YouTube, Pinterest, Reddit, Results.mk, Crno belo.mk, Wikipedia, Makedonika for books and readings, Advertisement 5, Buy Sell, TechCrunch.

**“I watch vlogs on YouTube, and I watch either motovlog or something with cars.** (Male respondent, 14 years old, Prilep).

**“I watch channels with cars, motorbikes, something with training, let’s say someone who practices or football.** (Male respondent, 15 years old, Prilep).

**“I am active on Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. I use them multiple times a day to connect with friends and discover new content.** (Male respondent, 15 years old, Veles).

**“I follow people that dance to music, I do it for school plays, I follow people who do makeup and clothes, fun people who say interesting things. Lately, I’ve started watching videos of people that clean things, that’s very interesting to me. For example, they record a video of how they clean the stove.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Sveti Nikole)

Regarding advertisements and advertising space, the participants pointed out that they notice advertisements everywhere, on social networks (ads), banners on websites, on television, but also in the offline environment on billboards, on school boards, posters hung around the objects where they commute. Respondents from smaller communities pointed out that although there aren’t billboards in their places, they notice them when they go to bigger cities.

As the most appropriate place for advertisements that are in the interest of young people of their age, they pointed out that it is still the online space and social networks, where they spend most of their time.

## DECISION-MAKING

The final set of questions addressed decision-making and the ways in which respondents make decisions that are important in their lives.

Respondents make important decisions in consultation with someone they trust. Depending on the decision they have to make, they consult their parents, older brothers and sisters or teachers from their school.

**“It depends on the topic and on which subject matter. We consult with the family, sometimes a teacher that we have good connection with and we can trust him or her more.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Cheprigovo village)

**“I first think on my own, and if in doubt, I consult my mother, my brother, then my friend with whom we talk about everything. In the end, I somehow decide, but if I’m determined about something, such as secondary education, no matter what anyone tells me, if I’ve made up my mind, I don’t change my decision.** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Sveti Nikole)

**“When it comes to important decisions, I like to gather as much information as possible. I research the topic extensively, look at the pros and cons, and look at the possible outcomes before coming to a conclusion.** (Male respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village)

Taking into account that the participants in the focus groups were students from the ninth grade, they were asked how they would make the important decision of choosing a school where they would continue their education and with whom they would consult.

They will make the decision according to their interests, that is, what “attracts” them the most. However, before making the final decision, they talk and consult with their parents, first of all, but also with their close friends who are already in secondary education and share their personal experience from school.

Their decision is also influenced by whether the profession is prosperous and in demand in the labor market, they do not choose schools influenced by influencers or a school that is in trend. Some of the respondents have stated that the distance of the school to their place of residence influenced their decision and that they decided to study secondary education in a nearby city, and to go to college in Skopje or another city where there are colleges i.e., universities.

A very small part of the participants is informed about the possibility of receiving various scholarships. Those who have information got it from the school website or from a teacher who shared information.

**“I usually consult my parents when I see a school that interests me and their opinion was important, and I also consult my friends** (Female respondent, 15 years old, Tetovo).

**“I find it helpful to seek information from a variety of sources. I consult with my parents and teachers, as well as gather knowledge from online platforms and social media profiles of different schools** (Female respondent, 14 years old, Nerasht village).

**“Rather than just considering what is known, I prioritize factors such as the school’s academic reputation, extracurricular opportunities, and supportive learning environment. These aspects are more important to me than trends. Because in the future, I want to study abroad and for this reason it seems reasonable to consider these classifications as well.** (Male respondent, 15 years old, Nerasht village).

## CONCLUSION

The research findings provide very relevant insights into the information habits and decision-making processes of young people (the 13–15-year-old generation), especially in terms of social media use, preferred sources of information, and the factors that influence their decision-making choices, such as high school enrollment.

First of all, it is evident from the provided results above that Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are the primary social media platforms used by respondents for information, while Twitter is not a significant source of information for the majority of participants. This highlights the importance of these platforms as channels to market information and engaging with young audience.

In addition, the study reveals that young people rely heavily on their smartphones, with 94.9% citing it as the most used smart device. This highlights the need for information providers and organizations to optimize content for mobile devices and provide a seamless user experience on these platforms. In fact, informing young people should be through different tools that allow obtaining complete information through the screen of their smart phones.

Interestingly, the research highlights a preference for multimedia content among young people, with respondents expressing a desire for a combination of text, images and videos when consuming news and information. This highlights the importance of presenting information in a visually appealing and easy-to-understand manner to satisfy their preferences. Connecting this information to the one from before about the use of smart phones, it would mean that every information should be adapted, that is, it should be multimedia that will fully inform young people through their smart phones.

The family, especially the parents and siblings, according to the obtained results, are the most reliable sources of information for the respondents. This highlights the continuing influence and guidance that parents have in the decision-making processes of young people (13–15 years), particularly in areas such as school choice.

Furthermore, the findings show that young individuals demonstrate critical thinking skills by cross-referencing information from multiple sources to distinguish between credible and fake news. This highlights their growing awareness of the importance of information verification and the need for media literacy education to further enhance their ability to navigate digital information.

Research also suggests that young people prioritize the potential for future opportunities when choosing a high school and employment prospects when making high school enrollment decisions. This highlights the importance of providing comprehensive information about educational pathways and career opportunities to support informed decision-making.

Overall, these findings highlight the significant role that social media, smartphones, and trusted family networks play in shaping young people's information preferences and decision-making processes. The research provides insights for information providers, policy makers and educators to effectively engage and meet the information needs of young people while promoting critical thinking skills and media literacy. By understanding and adapting to the preferences and behaviors identified in this study, organizations can better tailor their strategies to reach and empower young individuals in an increasingly digital world.

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