

# Digital Media Literacy Report

**SOUTH AFRICA**

# ***Digital Media Literacy Report***

***Republic of South Africa***

**2020**

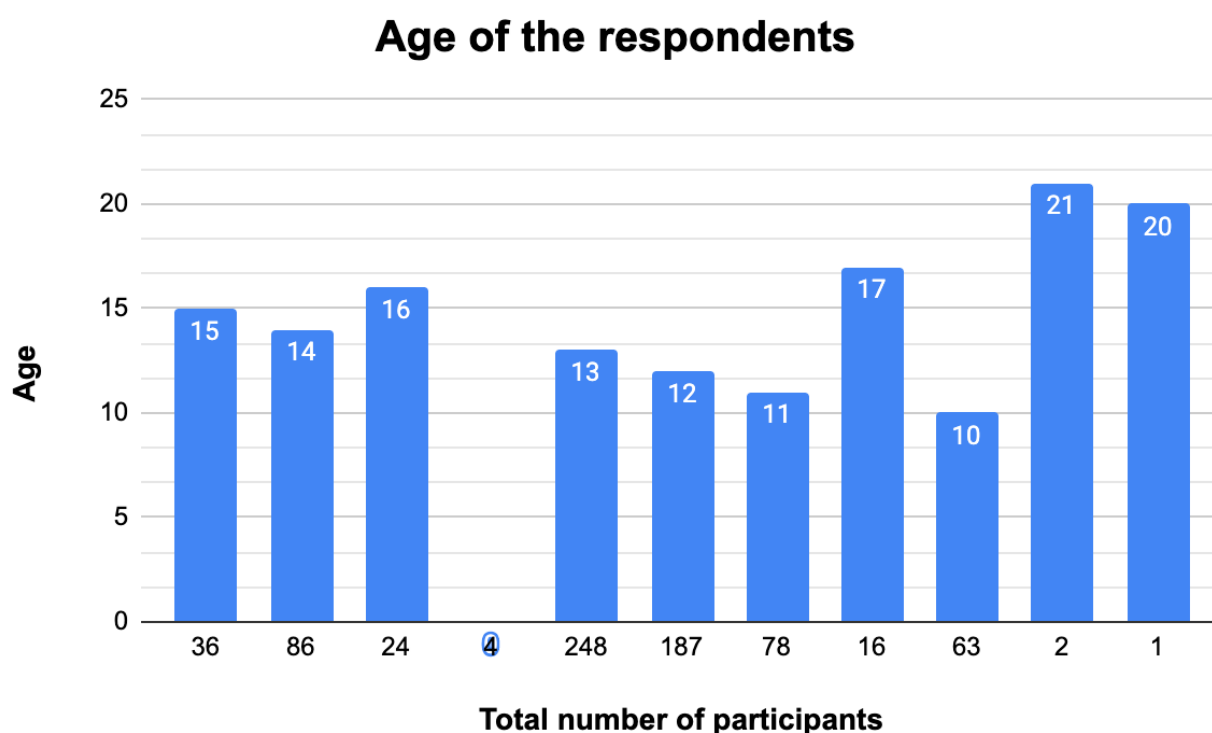
## Overview

The Digital Media Literacy inquiry made provision for a questionnaire to be sent to students born between 1990 and 2010 in South Africa. The questionnaire was sent in digital format to developed and underdeveloped schools in the following provinces: Western Cape, Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal. These provinces were purposively selected and, the results produced by the questionnaire was segmented as follow:

- I. English 745 respondents;
- II. Zulu 7 respondents and;
- III. Afrikaans 3 respondents

Generating 755 responses in total.

The graph below is a visual representation of the sample's age.



## Country context

The South African schooling system is guided by the National Curriculum Statement which gives “*expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African*

*schools*” (DoE, 2011). It is against this backdrop that a fundamental subject, Life Orientation is compulsory for every learner in grade 10 to grade 12. Life Orientation takes a holistic approach to what is deemed important for learners to learn. Three of the key domains which contribute to learner development is the enhancement of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-development (DoE, 2011). These areas have a strong focus on factors which influence a learners’ holistic development. One such factor is the media. How it builds and contributes to a learners self-confidence. In addition, Life Orientation looks at the role media plays in a democratic society, may it be electronic media or printed media. Since Life Orientation is only looking at one specific area of media, one can, therefore, argue that there is a need to strengthen the existing curriculum and expound on it to not only focus on one dimension of media but a variety of media to develop learners into better digital citizens.

## **Presentation of the results**

### ***Behavioural patterns (Use of digital technology)***

Behavioural patterns of digital technology are salient in the 21st century. The questionnaire yielded that 74% of the participants possess a smartphone, 34% a tablet, and 33% a laptop. A small percentage make use of a desktop or a Chromebook. Even though the usage of a digital device is significantly high only 27% is completely confident using these devices as an alarming 72% use it for WhatsApp, 60% for YouTube, and 45% for TikTok. The rest use it for communication on social media. This can be due to the fact that the participant’s usage of their devices is one dimensional. This corroborates the results the questionnaire yielded that only 27% are completely confident with their overall experience with the latest technological trends. In addition, it can be deduced that by only using your device for one of its features, will limit your technological behaviour.

## Digital population in South Africa as of January 2020 (in millions)

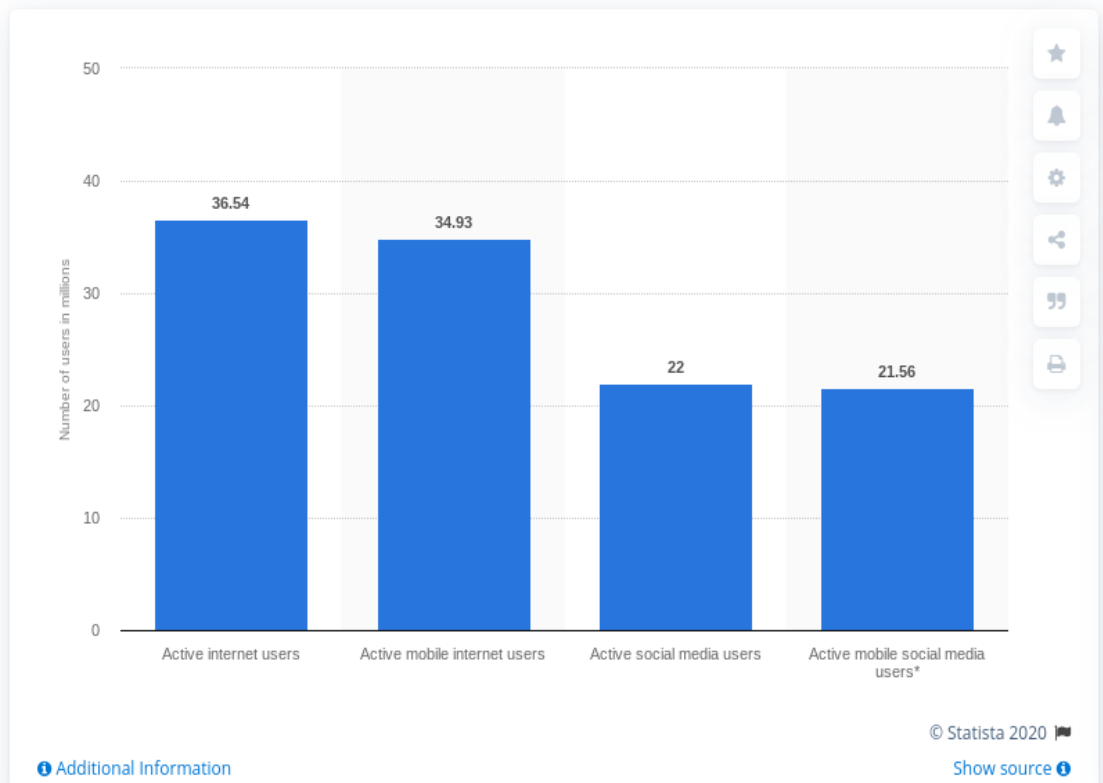


Table 1: Respondents dominant smartphone usage

In the paragraph above it was stated that 72% of the respondents use their device for WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a Short Messaging Service application which allows you to communicate with family, friends and everyone else whom you might have in your phone directory. The word cloud below indicates the most predominant reasons why people use their smartphones again corroborating the one dimensional usage of the smartphone.



### **Communication (Netiquette, etc.)**

The analysis yielded that 77% of the participants who answered the questionnaire indicated that they are knowledgeable when it comes to choosing the most suitable type of media to achieve desired results. In addition to this, 79% of the respondents stipulated that they have a good understanding of the effects of communication through different types of media. Furthermore, 71% stipulated that they evaluate the recipients and carefully tailor their communication accordingly. Also, 75% of the respondents acknowledged that they have an in-depth understanding of how social media influences different forms of communities and democracy. However, though they have an in-depth understanding of the influence of social media, only 62% of the respondents indicated that they evaluate their information which is obtained from the internet. What is interesting regarding this sample is that there was a balance between those who enjoy expressing thoughts and opinions through relevant social media and those who do not. This indicated that not everyone is knowledgeable consumers and not everyone is vocal on social media platforms. This can be related to the fact that 72% of the respondents indicated that they strategise their information search and subsequently opinions too.

### **Responsible use of technologies & Health**

The results depicted in the chart below, provide a scope that most respondents are quite aware of how online activities can impact not only their lives but the reputations of others and we see this very common within the radius of their age groups. According to the Staff Writer report released on 1 Feb 2019 (Businesstech, 2019), South Africans (approximately 20% of the countries population) spend up to 8 hours a day online, of which a third of that is on social media.

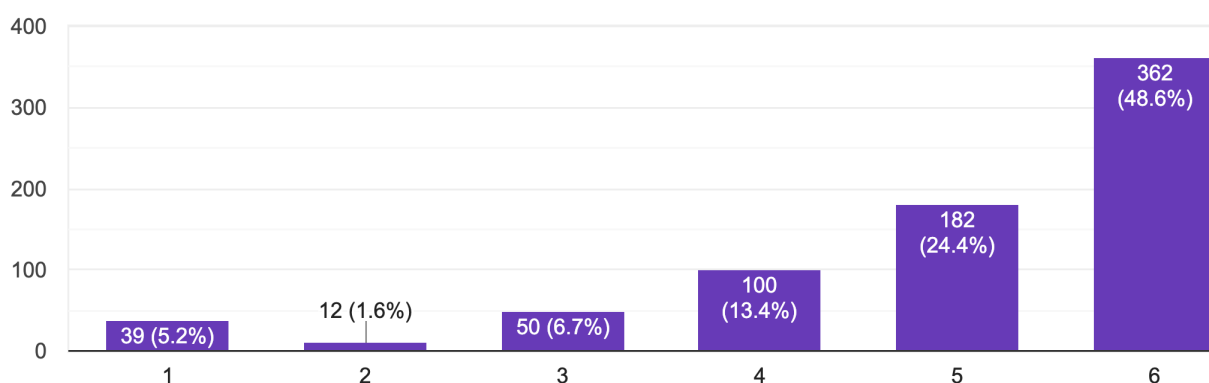
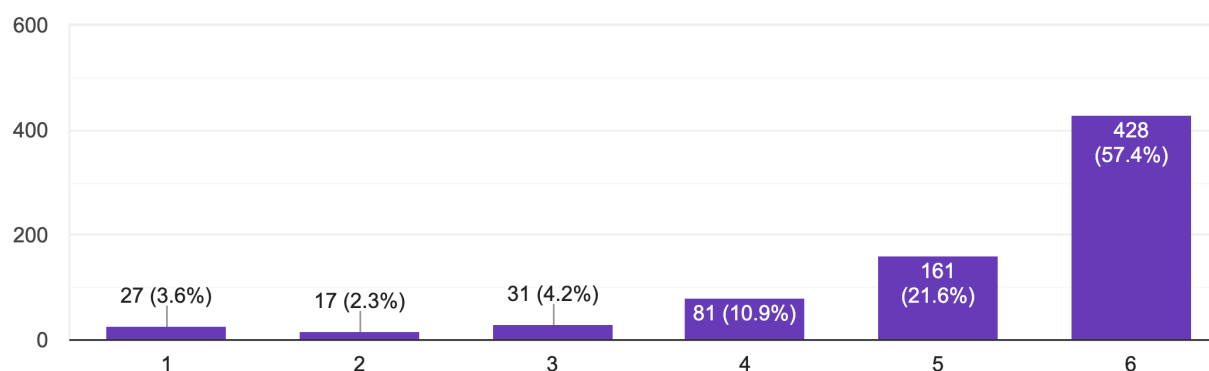
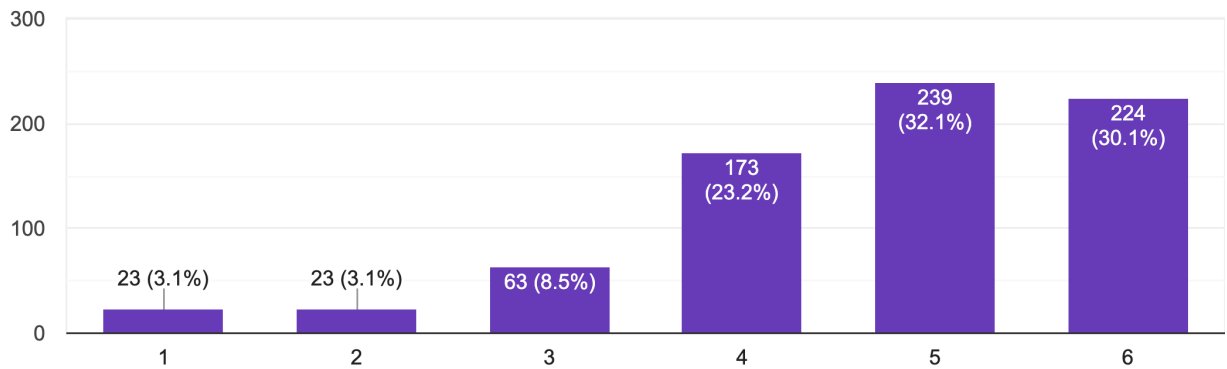


Table 2 : knowledge on the effects of online activities

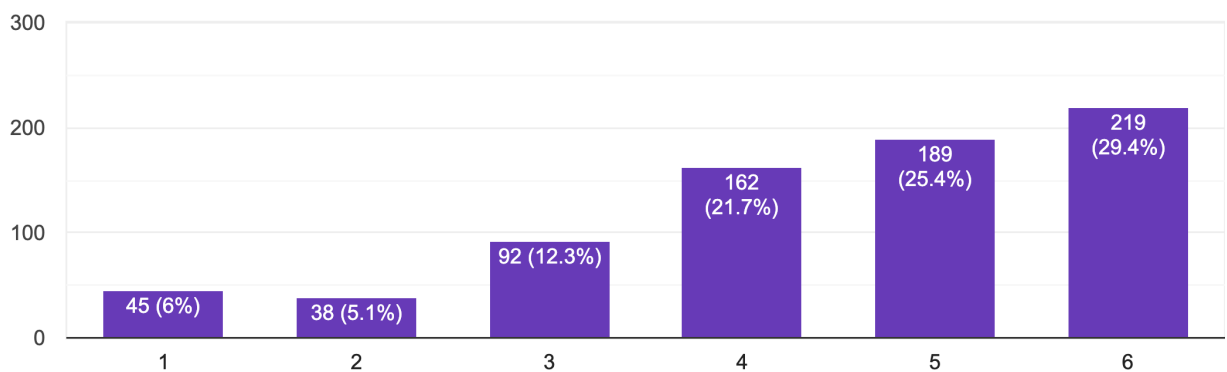


As we can assess from the graph indicated above, up to 89.9% of the respondents are very much attentive to differentiate and assess their online behaviour as to what they regard as inappropriate & illegal. The remainder 10.1% of the individuals *may not* understand the effects of illegal & inappropriate behaviour in regards to the expectation of online behaviour within their own understanding. Here we can see that the majority of the respondents' digital citizenship is quite apparent.

## Digital media literacy for youth employment and social realisation



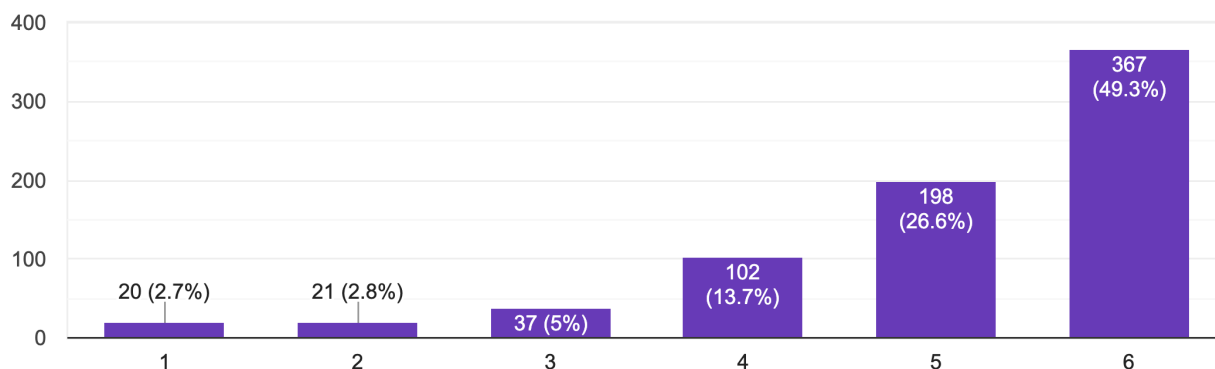
In this observation it is clear that a majority of the respondents carry the necessary knowledge in knowing how to handle improper behaviour of others. For the individuals to fathom and understand improper behaviour not only in the online industry such as *social media and online exploring sites* but as well as being able to apply the same understanding in their *schooling period*. We can agree that it is the majority of cases where there are individuals who would know how to behave appropriately on the respective online platforms.



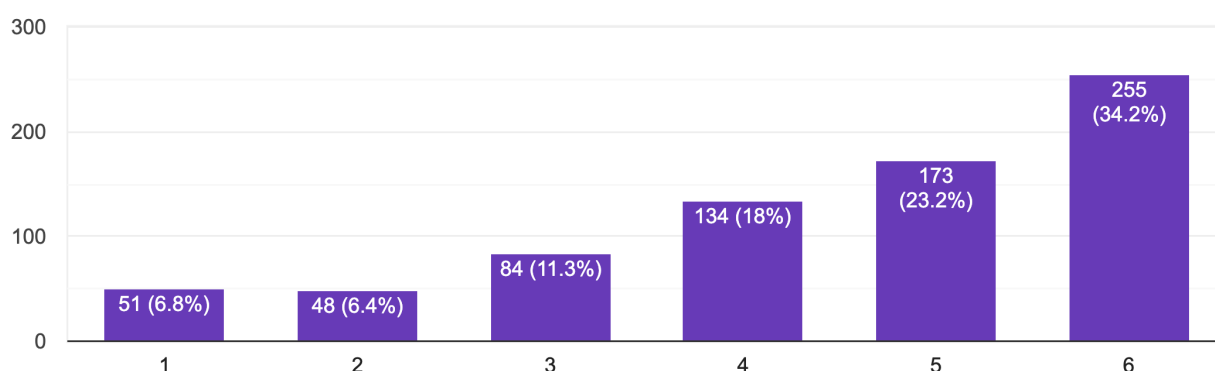
These 21st Century students are reflecting characteristics of realists that are not bystanders but are willing to partake in society and create communities that will have a positive impact on those around them.



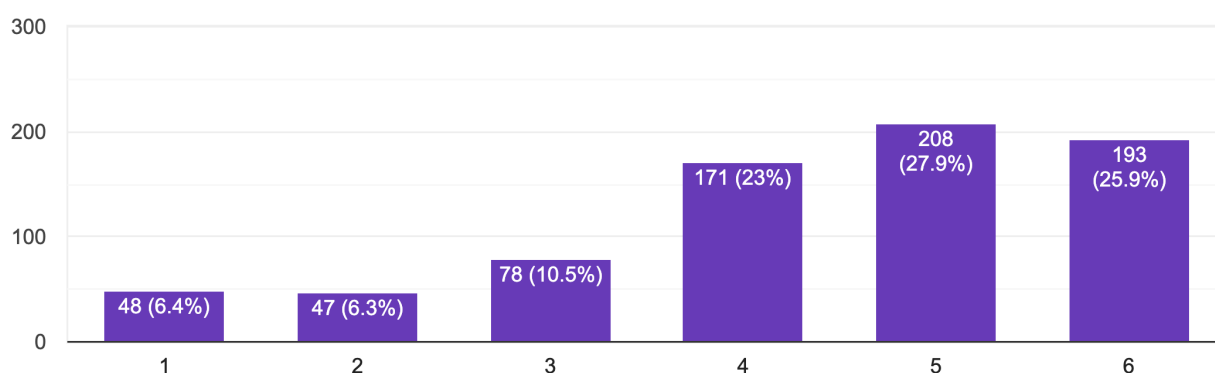
## Digital media literacy for youth employment and social realisation



The observation of the students' above responses indicates that they have an understanding of how certain; not all; online behavior may impact their identity negatively, thus allowing the youth of today to understand how the future in technology is already in effect from this point.



In this survey we can see that an estimate of 51 students does not understand that overuse of technology may affect them in the future, whereas 255 students understand it completely which is our aim to help the youth to impact their future regarding their future understandings in regards to technology usage.



### ***Attitude toward sources (Critical thinking)***

The questionnaire indicated that 72% of the respondents have a proactive attitude towards finding and collecting information from the internet and 62% indicated they have a habit of evaluating sources on the internet, with a further 57% indicating that they have a good understanding of how a search engine operates. However, it is evident from the graph below that a small percentage of the respondents evaluate the information which they obtain from the internet. This is worrying with the increase of fake news on social media platforms including the internet. The positive side to this is the 72% who have indicated that they have strategies on how to deal with fake news.

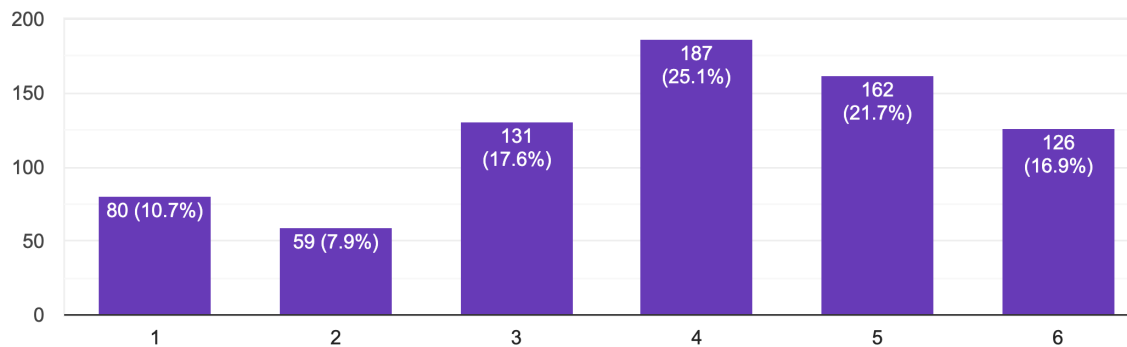
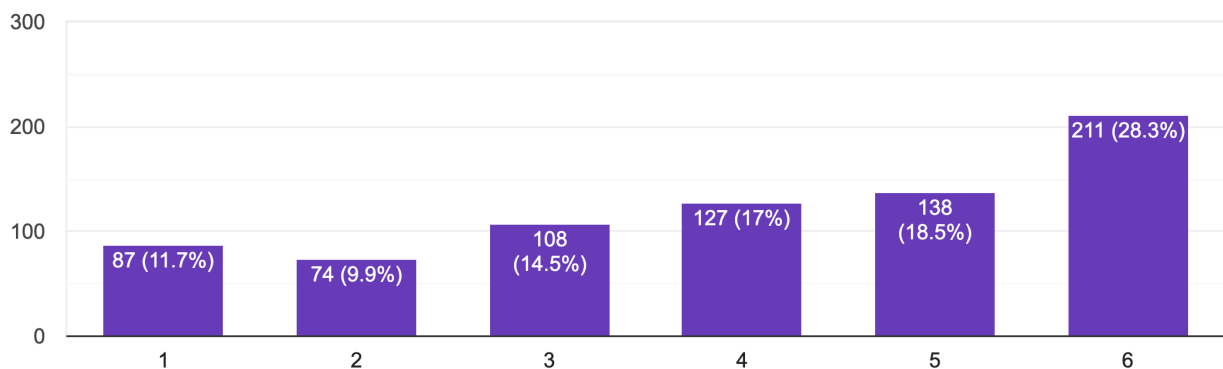


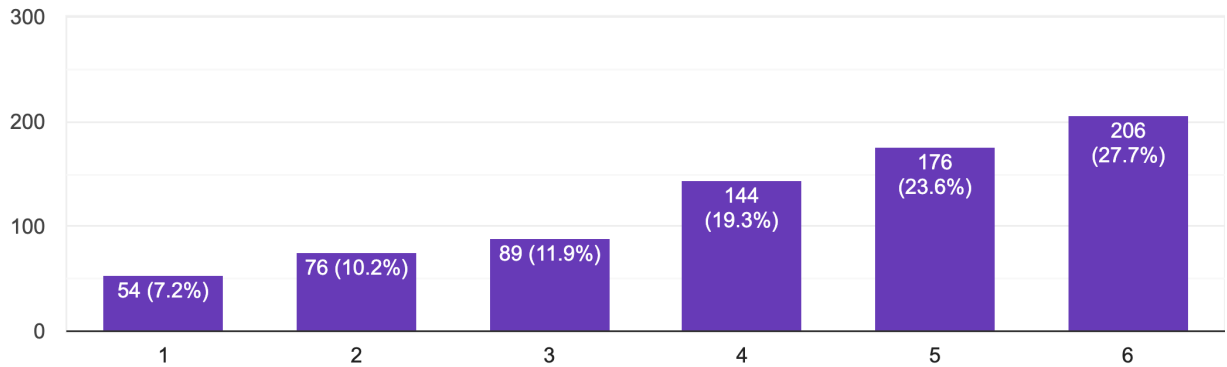
Table: respondents habit of critically evaluating information

### **Creation of content**



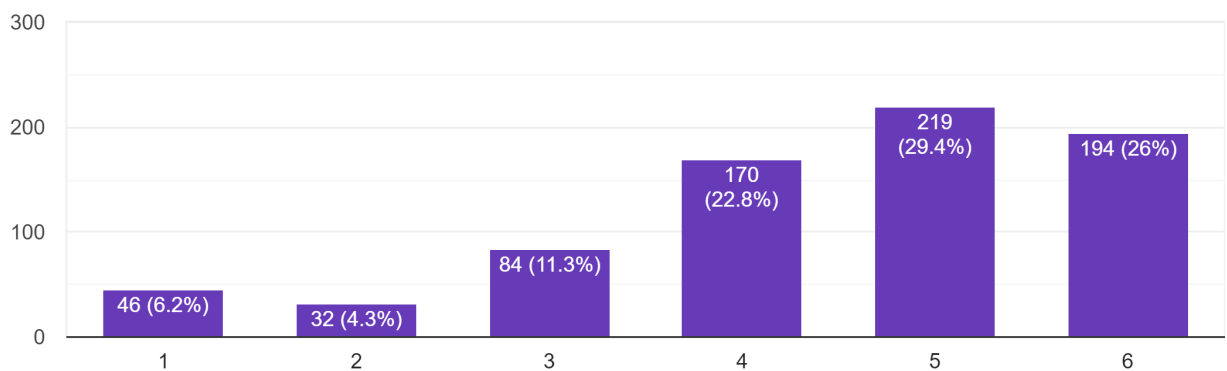
This can be seen as multiple online platforms such as social media; online creative arts as well as part-taking in assessments provided by teachers online such as classroom activities, however, the feedback provides a further understanding as to where the youth

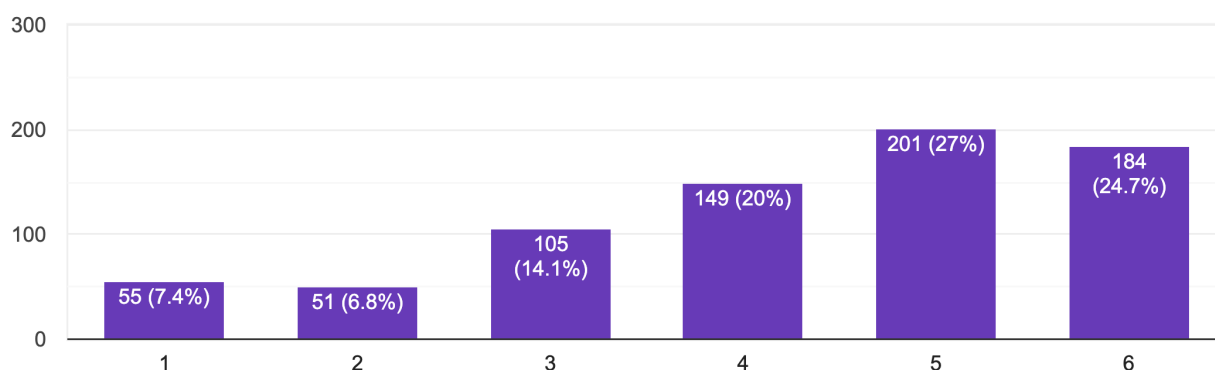
can be impacted with truthful and encouraging activities to further their knowledge on digital content creation.



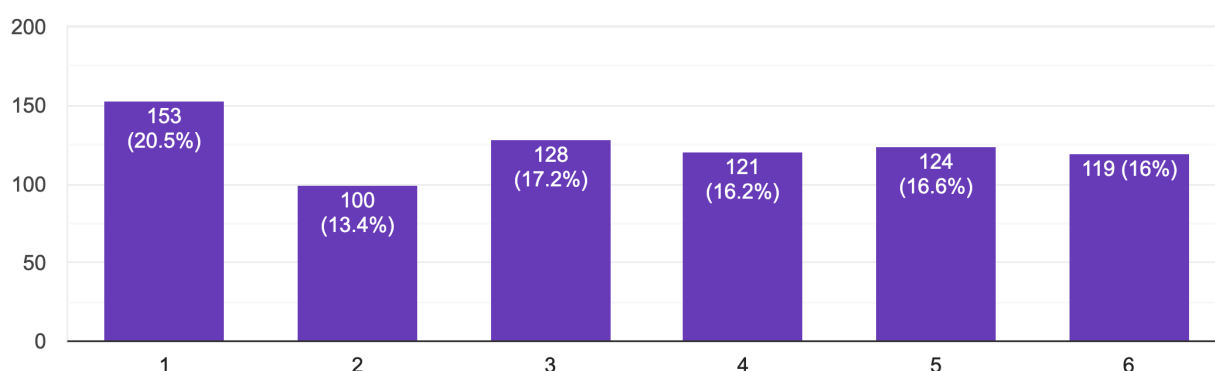
As we can see, an estimate of 60% of the respondents are quite knowledgeable about how to use applications to create multimedia platforms, and thus it is appropriate to say that the youth are quite tech-knowledge-savvy. As the known fact that they are born in the technological era, these types of skills can be expected to come as second nature to them.

The results from this question are typical of a 21st century learner's general ability of utilising the media in their possession for specified purposes. This graphical representation shows more than 50% with advanced knowledge of this.





Majority of the respondents are able to evaluate sources and recipients, and adapt the communication received accordingly. This can be linked to the types of media that they use; fit for their communicational needs and therefore used accordingly.



This is a fair spread of results based on respondents' different contexts. The responses most likely inspired by the effects of issues such as cyberbullying; which prompt respondent use and expression of opinions as such thoughtfully.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this project is to provide meaningful support to youth workers who engage in developing youngsters' skills and competences in the field of Digital Media Literacy. The DML questionnaire serves the purpose of providing the youth workers with relevant information relating to the varied competencies of the youth and therefore; base training scenarios accordingly and in relation to respondents contexts. The results yielded by the inquiry, in the context of South African schools, it is evident that there is a need for learning scenarios that will educate the youth how to use their devices effectively. Many indicated

that they use their devices for social purposes and few indicated that they actually use their devices for educational purposes.

## References

[1] Department of Basic Education. (2011). *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement*.

[2] South Africans spend over 8 hours a day online – and a third of that time is spent on social media.

(2020). Retrieved 15 April 2020, from

<https://businesstech.co.za/news/internet/296716/south-africans-spend-over-8-hours-a-day-online-and-a-third-of-that-time-is-spent-on-social-media/>



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