

# MEDIA LITERACY LEVEL ASSESSMENT STUDY

## Summary of key insights and policies

Third wave of the survey | Dynamics 2017–2021–2025 | Lithuanian population and national minorities

### I. GENERAL VIEW

The ability to use media of the Lithuanian population has been growing over the past eight years (2017–2025), but not evenly and not in all areas. The technical ability to use digital tools is strengthening, but the critical evaluation of information and the basis for civic expression remain the weaker links. One of the most important conclusions of this study is that a large gap is observed between what the population knows and how it actually behaves in the information environment.

The survey data should be analyzed in context: the “jump” in some indicators recorded in 2021 likely reflected the increased activity of the population in the digital space during the COVID-19 pandemic and the mixed-mode survey methodology used at that time (some respondents were surveyed online). The 2025 data is more reflective of the actual level of daily practices - therefore it should be considered a more reliable reference point.

Indicator (maximum value)	2017	2021	2025	Trend
Ability to use media (100)	49.2	67.6	<b>61.4</b>	▲ vs. 2017
Critical assessment (86)	32.6	39.6	<b>36.5</b>	▲ vs. 2017
Communication skills (100)	2.9	11.3	<b>4.7</b>	▲ vs. 2017
Media evaluation (50)	33.5	29.8	<b>30.3</b>	≈ stable

*An important note about the 2021 peak.* The “jump” was likely situational: restrictions during the pandemic intensified the digital activity of the population, and the mixed-mode survey methodology increased indicators related to Internet use.

### II. THREE CONCEPTUAL TENSIONS

#### 1. Universality of access versus lack of critical competence

Almost all Lithuanian residents (92%) have daily access to information via mobile phones. This means that the accessibility of the information environment is no longer an obstacle. The relevant question arises – are people able to navigate critically in that environment?

The study shows that a critical approach is often lacking. Every second citizen has encountered fake video or audio content (deepfake). Every third citizen has encountered misinformation (so-called “fake news”), and two out of three believed it at the time. More than

half of residents who have noticed information presented differently in different sources simply ignore it.

**This gap is a key area requiring policy action.** The media literacy problem in Lithuania is not an infrastructure problem, it is a problem of skills and habits.

## 2. Information pluralism versus closed information bubbles

The Internet is rated as the most important source of information (4.20 points out of 5). However, social networks, which are in second place in terms of importance, operate through personalized content: the statement that social networks select content for the user based on previous views and interests is rated at 3.47 points out of 5. Such an assessment shows that the population is aware of this algorithm, but this awareness is not reflected in their information search and use behavior.

The consumption of foreign media has decreased significantly: from 38% in 2017 to 26% in 2025. This is closely linked to the restriction of access to Russian media following the outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine. This change is a sign of improved security and a challenge: residents rely more on local media, but this does not mean that it is always sufficiently diversified.

## 3. Digital activism versus civic passivity

Social networks are used by the majority of the population (79%). Unfortunately, this activity often does not translate into civic actions. The civic participation component of the communication skills indicator is negative (-8.7 points), and the content creation component is -24.8 points. This means: residents are in the digital space, but not as active residents or content creators.

In 2021, civic activity increased (38% of the population participated in some civic initiative), and in 2025, it dropped significantly (to 22.9%). This fluctuation reflects not only the limited effect of the pandemic, but also a long-term structural trend: being in the digital space does not equal civic activity.

<p><b>1. Technological acceleration has reached critical mass</b></p> <p>The penetration of mobile phones and mobile internet is approaching universal coverage. The infrastructure for accessing information in Lithuania is already strong – the question is not whether people can access information, but whether they are able to critically navigate it.</p>	<p><b>2. Knowledge-behavior gap</b></p> <p>This is the most important paradox recorded by the study: residents understand what disinformation, propaganda, and paid content are, but actual behavior indicators remain low. As many as 56 percent of those who notice information discrepancies simply ignore them.</p>
<p><b>3. Inertia of civic expression</b></p> <p>The components of civic participation and content creation remain negative. Social media activity does not equate to civic expression: being in the digital space does not equal civic engagement.</p>	<p><b>4. Awareness of national minorities: a structural gap</b></p> <p>The lack of reliable media in Russian and Polish encourages the search for alternative sources. This is a long-term risk to information resilience that requires a systemic response.</p>

### III. DYNAMICS OF INDICATORS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

**Ability to use media: 49.2 (2017) → 67.6 (2021) → 61.4 (2025).** The growth since 2017 is clear and significant (+12.2 points over 8 years). The decrease in 2025 compared to 2021 mainly reflects a methodological difference. The growth of this indicator is consistent and predictable - by 2030, growth to 67.6 points is expected, primarily due to generational change and digital activation of older age groups.

**Critical assessment: 32.6 (2017) → 39.6 (2021) → 36.5 (2025).** The peak in 2021 was most likely situational: the pandemic context intensified information-checking habits. The 2025 indicator is higher than in 2017 (+3.9 points), which is a consistent but slow growth. Critical weak point: the consumer behavior component reaches only 14.6 points - this indicates that residents know how to behave, but do not always do it.

**Communication skills: 2.9 (2017) → 11.3 (2021) → 4.7 (2025).** The most dramatic fluctuation: the 2021 “jump” (almost 4 times) and then the return to near 2017 levels clearly demonstrates the catalytic effect of COVID-19. The long-term growth potential is high, but it requires not only infrastructure, but also targeted policies: promoting civic expression, supporting content creation, reducing psychological barriers.

**Media evaluation: 33.5 (2017) → 29.8 (2021) → 30.3 (2025).** The indicator has remained stable for the past four years, but is lower than in 2017. The most important observation is that trust in media independence is decreasing (2.68 points out of 5). This reflects a general culture of skepticism and the pressure of algorithms and the "attention economy" on the media to choose emotional, conflictual formats.

### IV. OUTLOOK TO 2030

The projections were based on demographic adjustments (changes in the composition of age groups), expert assessments of behavioral changes, and the dynamics of real historical change:

Indicator	2025	Forecast for 2027	2030 forecast
Ability to use media	61.4	64.2	67.6
Critical assessment	36.5	37.5	38.5
Communication skills	4.7	5.2	5.8
Media evaluation	30.3	30.4	30.4

By 2030, the key question will no longer be “*do I know how to use it?*” but “*do I know how to recognize, verify, and act responsibly in the information environment?*” The development of artificial intelligence will create both new risks (the proliferation of deepfakes, synthetic content)

and new opportunities (source verification tools, context search). This duality requires constant monitoring, not one-off interventions.

## V. PRIORITY POLICY AREAS

### 1. Changing behavior is not just about raising awareness

Lithuanians are well aware of the importance of critical thinking. The goal should be to change behavior: simple, repetitive habits of checking information must be formed, which would become automatic. It is important to create environments that facilitate the correct decision, and not just teach what it is. This means not only training, but also the design of the information environment: references to sources, clear authorship, simple verification tools.

### 2. Information security of national minorities – a systemic priority

The lack of local, high-quality and attractive media in Russian and Polish is a structural gap with a direct security dimension. This is not just a question of cultural policy – it is a question of information resilience. Targeted measures for national minorities must be integrated into all media literacy programs, and not treated as a separate addition.

### 3. Promoting civic expression and content creation

Social media does not replace civic engagement, it only briefly illustrates it. Targeted measures are needed to reduce the psychological barrier to participation in public discourse, support the creation of local creative content, and create conditions for meaningful civic expression in the digital space. Special attention is paid to the youngest and oldest age groups.

### 4. Continuous monitoring and updating

Artificial intelligence, deepfake technologies and the ever-changing information environment are advancing faster than traditional research cycles. It is recommended to: repeat the study every 2-3 years; integrate new AI literacy indicators; develop early warning mechanisms for waves of disinformation. Separately – monitor changes in the information environment of national minorities.

*The study was conducted by UAB “Baltijos tyrimai” in January 2026 at the request of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania according to the methodology approved in 2016. Main sample: representative survey of the Lithuanian population (n = 1,011, age 18–75); additional sample: national minorities (Russians, Poles). Data were collected by direct interview from 2026-01-08 to 2026-01-31. The results of the study are compared with the data of the 2017 and 2021 waves.*