

## SPECIAL REPORT

# WHO INFLUENCES UKRAINIAN YOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



## INTRODUCTION

At a time that in-person activities are limited for the foreseeable future, online engagement is more critical than ever for supporting youth who are leading the positive, transformational change of Ukraine's democratic trajectory. That's why we wanted to know: Who is influencing Ukraine's youth today online? Who is engaging them in discussions of national identity, socio-economic opportunities, and youth civic issues online?

To answer these questions, IREX turned to the global digital media intelligence company, SemanticForce, to conduct a study of key youth influencers on social media in Ukraine. We were particularly interested in identifying key influencers of national identity, socio-economic opportunity, and youth civic issues.

We hope these research findings will provide useful insights to organizations and individuals eager to support youth leadership and development in Ukraine. By identifying who is most influential online, these findings suggest who to engage to affect important conversations and activities among Ukraine's youth. If you are interested in viewing the full analysis, [please fill in this form](#).

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Top influencers are Ulana Suprun, Yanina Sokolova, and Serhiy Prytula
- Most influential nonprofit organizations are the educational platforms Osvita.ua and Promotheus
- Individual personalities are more influential than organizations
- National platforms are more influential than regional platforms
- Central and Western Ukraine are most engaged in discussions of national identity, socio-economic opportunity, youth civic issues, while Southern and Eastern Ukraine are less active.

## ABOUT IREX

IREX is a global development and education organization dedicated to building a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world by empowering youth, cultivating leaders, strengthening institutions, and extending access to quality education and information. In the mid-1990s, on behalf of the US Information Agency, IREX implemented the Internet Access and Training Program (IATP), which connected millions of people in Ukraine and other parts of Eurasia to the internet for the first time through libraries and other civic institutions. We knew then that the internet held great potential to support the free exchange of information and freedom of speech. Today, with more than 40% of Ukraine's 26 million internet users between the ages of 15-34, the internet is critical for cultivating Ukraine's next generation of leaders.<sup>1</sup>

Whether helping youth strengthen critical information consumption skills through Learn to Discern<sup>2</sup> or supporting decentralization by connecting local communities through online platforms, IREX's work in Ukraine invests heavily in online engagement and education. We believe that online tools play a vital role in supporting youth to drive change in their own lives and communities. Emerging research shows that online youth engagement, or "participatory politics," translates into increased in-person civic engagement.<sup>3</sup>



## METHODOLOGY

Using publicly available social media content, SemanticForce conducted a social media analysis in Ukraine to identify the key influencers of youth (ages 14-35) on social media that are engaged in issues related to national identity, access to social and economic opportunities, and youth civic participation. SemanticForce's mapping process started with a search for the most influential social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and VKontakte by searching key anchor words associated with these topics.

Because it is impossible to compare across social media platforms, the degree to which these individuals were "influential" is based on calculations using Facebook data only. Facebook was the platform chosen for analysis because almost all individuals in the Top 20 were most active on Facebook.<sup>4</sup>

SemanticForce started with a long list of influencers based solely on the number of subscribers. They manually audited the initial list to ensure relevance and geography, and with the remaining influencers, gathered additional social metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares of relevant posts.

The influencers' rank was then determined by a SemanticForce's Influence Rate Formula, based on a calculation of comments, likes, followers, and shares of relevant posts.

SemanticForce then gathered information about the top influencers, such as reach by location; the influencer's mission, values and sentiment; and sources promoted by the influencer. Additionally, SemanticForce gathered demographic data on these influencers' youth followers, such as region, gender, level of education and work status.

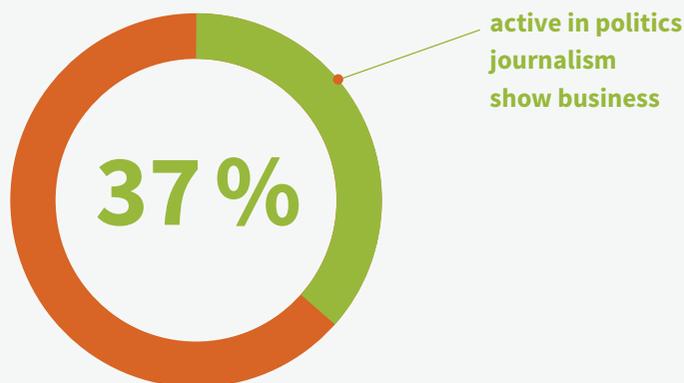
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1. <https://ain.ua/en/2019/10/15/almost-the-entire-population-of-ukraine-under-35-surfs-the-internet/> and <https://ain.ua/en/2019/02/20/number-of-internet-users-in-ukraine/>  
2. IREX's Learn to Discern program develops healthy information engagement habits. In an evaluation of students in 50 schools, students were twice as likely to detect hate speech and 18% better at identifying fake news stories after Learn to Discern.  
3. <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/media/706/file/UNICEF-Global-Insight-digital-civic-engagement-2020.pdf>  
4. Ukraine's youth audiences are also active on Facebook. Among the age group of 18 to 24 years, 2.1 million Ukrainians, or 68.28% of all citizens of that age, use Facebook. In the age group of 25 to 35 years, there are 4.6 million Facebook users, or 62.43% of all citizens of that age. [http://plusone.com.ua/fb/en/facebook\\_in\\_ukraine.pdf](http://plusone.com.ua/fb/en/facebook_in_ukraine.pdf)

## KEY FINDINGS

### THE MOST INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUALS AMONG YOUTH

We found that Ukraine's top influencers of young people are usually active in politics, journalism or show business. On average, the top influencers relevance rate is 37%, meaning that in general, influencers do not focus solely on the three areas studied. Furthermore, while some influencers mentioned volunteering, discussion of youth organizations was almost non-existent.



#### Top individuals by influence rate\*

Ulana Suprun	35.19
Yanina Sokolova	32.56
Serhiy Prytula	31.81
Borislav Bereza	30.29
Valeriy Ananiev	30.06
Oleg Sentsov	29.81
Oksana Zabuzhko	29.54
Sergii Ivanov	29.41
Sviatoslav Vakarchuk	28.91
Anotoly Shariy	28.53
Semyon Semenchenko	28.28
Larysa Nitsoy	28.13
Michael Shchur	26.84
Yuri Biriukov	26.67
Alina Mykhailova	25.87
Andrey Kukhta	25.26
Serhiy Zhadan	25.14
Vitaliy Shabunin	24.71
Vitaliy Portnikov	24.64
Denys Bihus	24.22

### Semantic's profile of the top 3:



**ULANA SUPRUN** 35 INFLUENCERS RATE

**Key Audience Region:** National  
**Key Social Network:** Facebook  
**Field of Activity:** Physician, activist, philanthropist, acting Minister of Healthcare (from 2016 to 2019)  
**Used Sources:** Almost every post is supported by official information from related sources. Like: ede.gov, theguardian.com.

LINKS: 307K followers, 39K comments, 2M likes, 320K shares, 58% relevant posts

social metrics



**YANINA SOKOLOVA** 33 INFLUENCERS RATE

**Key Audience Region:** Central UA  
**Key Social Network:** YouTube  
**Field of Activity:** Journalist, TV presenter  
**Used Sources:** facebook.com/5skanal, pravda.com.ua

LINKS: 135K followers, 16K comments, 444K likes, 69K shares, 32% relevant posts

social metrics



**SERHIY PRYTULA** 32 INFLUENCERS RATE

**Key Audience Region:** Central & Western UA  
**Key Social Network:** Facebook  
**Field of Activity:** TV presenter, actor  
**Used Sources:** No links

LINKS: 794K followers, 23K comments, 896K likes, 79K shares, 18% relevant posts

social metrics

TOP 3 INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCERS:		INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCERS WHOSE POSTS ARE MOST RELEVANT TO KEY ACTIVITIES <sup>5</sup> :	
Ulana Suprun	35	Vitaliy Shabunin	71.43%
Yanina Sokolova	33	Vitaliy Portnikov	64.29%
Serhiy Prytula	32	Denys Bihus	60.32%

\*Influencer rate was determined based on a calculation of comments, likes, followers, and shares of relevant posts.

5. Access to social and economic opportunities, national identity, and participation in youth organizations.

## THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS

In Ukraine, we found that organizations have much less influence than individual personalities. Consider the top personality, Ulana Suprun<sup>6</sup>, with 307K followers, versus the top organization, [Osvita.ua](#)<sup>7</sup>, with almost half the number of followers at 183K. This suggests that youth in Ukraine would rather follow real people than organizations. The Top 10 most influential organizations are related to either education or politics. Youth appear most interested in seeking out educational and professional development opportunities – the top two most influential organizations are educational platforms, Osvita.ua and Prometheus.

### Top organizations by influence rate



### Field of Activity:



#### CULTURE

Watch Ukraine 14



#### DISABILITY INCLUSION

Dostupno.ua 17



#### POLITICS

Youth Solidarity 24



#### YOUTH ORGANIZATION

Plast – Ukrainian scouting 24

Youth Nationalist Congress 16



#### EDUCATION

Osvita.ua 31

Prometheus 25

IREX Ukraine 14

### Top influencer organizations filtered by key activity:



#### ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Osvita.ua 31

Prometheus 25

Plast – Ukrainian 24



#### NATIONAL IDENTITY

Plast – Ukrainian Scouting 24

Youth Solidarity 24

Building Ukraine Together 16



#### PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Plast – Ukrainian Scouting 24

Youth Solidarity 24

Building Ukraine Together 16

6. The top influencer individual, Ulana Suprun, has 307K followers, 39K comments, 2M likes, 320K shares, and 58% relevant posts for an influencer rating of "35."

7. The top influencer organization, Osvita.ua, has 183K followers; 5,453 comments; 32K likes; and 49K shares for an influencer rating of "31."

## LOCATION

The most influential organizations are national organizations or organizations that target all of Ukraine, rather than regional organizations. Furthermore, organizations based in the South and the East are significantly less influential; the ratings for organizations based there was so low that none of them were included in the list of influencers.

From the side of audience engagement, audiences in central and western Ukraine are the most active in discussions of national identity, access to social and economic opportunities, and participation in youth organizations.



### Top influencer by region:



### Top organization by region:

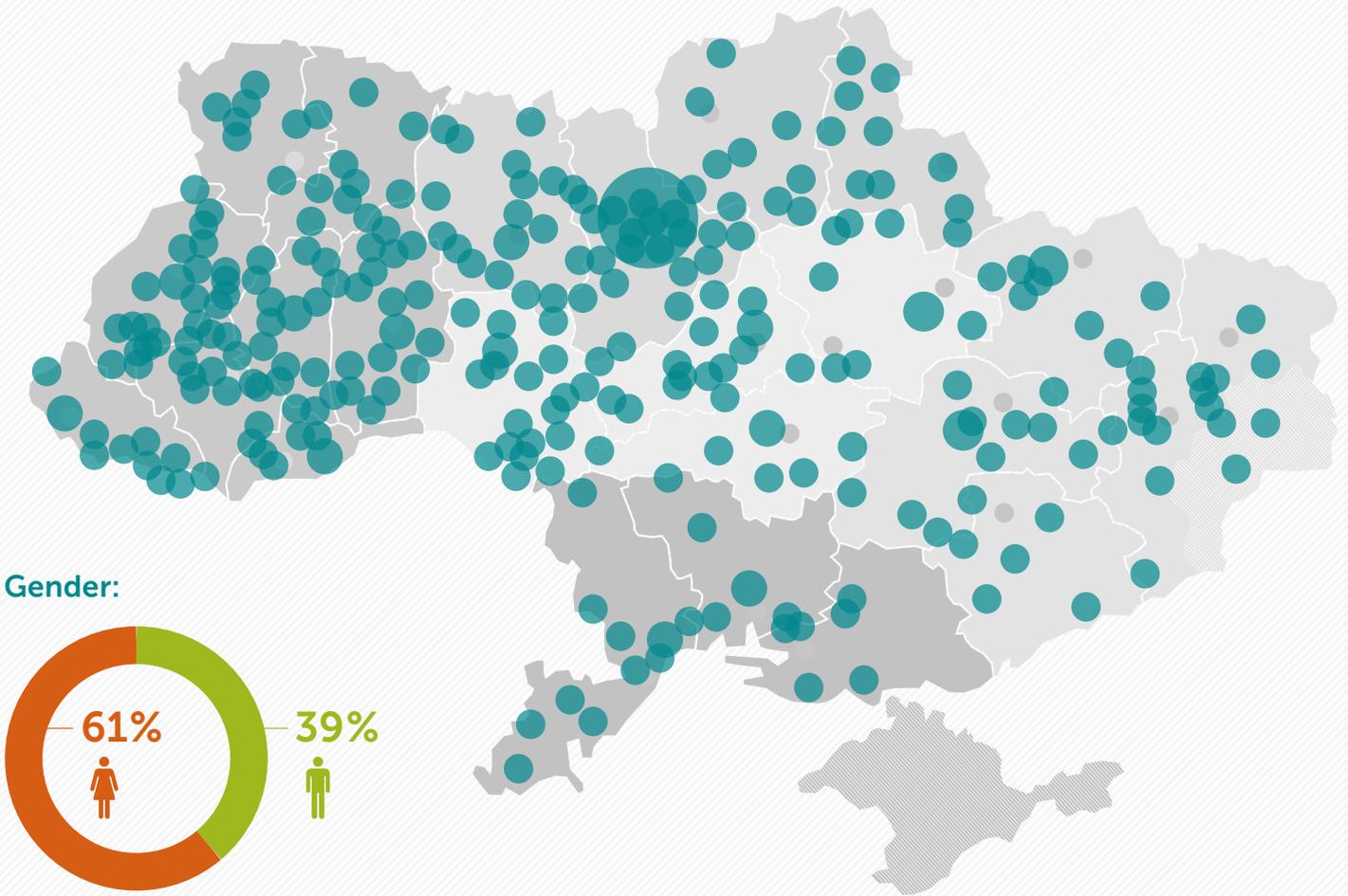
National  
Central  
Eastern  
Southern  
Western

	Ulana Suprun		Osvita.ua
	Yanina Sokolova		Plast – Ukrainian scouting
	Anatoly Shariy		None with high influence rank
	Anatoly Shariy		None with high influence rank
	Serhiy Prytula		Plast – Ukrainian scouting



## INFLUENCER FOLLOWERS

Map of followers by region:



### KEY FIELDS OF ACTIVITY



Education level:

**75% of followers**  
are attending or have  
attended university