



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Digital political literacy: DIGIEFFECT methodology

Borz, Gabriela, Cristina Mitrea, Thomas Montgomerie, Remi Almodt

a. University of Strathclyde and Babes-Bolyai University

b. Babes-Bolyai University

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In order to develop an index of digital political literacy, we draw on data from the DIGIEFFECT citizen survey conducted in 27 EU countries in 2025¹. We perform an exploratory factor analysis to assess whether the DIGIEFFECT survey items capture a single dimensional concept or multiple related dimensions. Since the questions were measured on different scales, they were standardized before analysis.

The results show three distinct dimensions, rather than a single scale. Together, these dimensions explain a substantial share of the differences in respondents' answers. Only those questions that clearly belong to one dimension were retained, while those that did not fit well or overlapped across dimensions were excluded.

The *functional* dimension measures respondents' exposure to digital platforms through which political information is disseminated. It reflects both familiarity with major social media and messaging platforms and the extent to which individuals rely on online sources for political information, such as news websites or apps, social media platforms, video-sharing services, online forums and blogs, and private messaging applications.

The *attitudinal* dimension captures respondents' affective and normative views regarding digital political communication and the risks associated with digital campaigning. It combines attitudes toward transparency in online political advertising (such as disclosure of funding sources, content producers, targeting practices, and the use of AI) as well as concerns about the broader consequences of digital campaigns, including misinformation and disinformation, AI-driven manipulation, data misuse, foreign interference, and online harms such as hate speech, cyberbullying, and social polarization.

The *analytical* dimension captures respondents' skills in critically assessing political information and managing digital risks. It includes behaviors related to political information seeking and engagement, such as searching for additional information about candidates or parties, commenting on political content, and sharing political material on social media, as well as strategies aimed at safeguarding online privacy, including clearing browsing data, blocking website tracking, using VPNs, or deleting online accounts. The factor also reflects awareness of fact-checking organizations.

List of DIGIEFFECT survey questions per dimension	
Functional dimension	
<i>What are your main sources of information for political events and current affairs?</i> • Online news websites / online newspapers / online apps • Social media (Facebook, X, TikTok, Instagram) • Video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube) • Online blogs / forums (e.g., Reddit) • Family, friends or colleagues online via private messaging (e.g., WhatsApp)	0=Unchecked 1=Checked
<i>To what extent are you familiar with the following platforms and search engines?</i> • Facebook • X (Twitter) • Instagram • TikTok • Snapchat • YouTube	1=Very familiar 2=Somewhat 3=A little 4=Very little 5=Not at all familiar 6=Don't know/not sure 7=Not applicable

¹ More details about the digital political literacy index development and the DIGIEFFECT citizen survey see Borz et al. forthcoming *Digital political literacy and democratic resilience*

• LinkedIn • Telegram	
Attitudinal dimension	
<i>To what extent do you consider the following information important:</i> • Who paid for the on-line political advert • Who created and produced the content or advert • Targeting techniques used in electoral communication strategies • The use of AI for preparing political adverts	1=Not at all important 2=Slightly important 3=Moderately important 4=Very important 5=Extremely important 6=Not sure/don't know
<i>To what extent do you agree or disagree with following statements regarding microtargeted (personalised) political adverts?</i> • Personalised political adverts make me feel angry • I am worried about what organisations do with my personal data	1=Strongly disagree 2=Slightly disagree 3=Neutral 4=Slightly agree 5=Strongly agree 6=Not sure/don't know
<i>During digital campaigns, to what extent are you concerned with the following:</i> • Dissemination of false information • Dissemination of manipulative information • Dissemination of malicious/harmful information • Manipulative AI-generated content (e.g., deepfakes) • AI personality-tailored adverts • Use of personal data without consent • Recommended biased information • Foreign interference in elections	1=Not at all concerned 2=Slightly concerned 3=Moderately concerned 4=Very concerned 5=Extremely concerned 6=Not sure/don't know
<i>To what extent are you concerned with the following effects of digital campaigns:</i> • Distorted perception of parties' policy position • Distorted perception of political candidates • Lack of public debates • Reputational/personal harms, hate speech, cyberbullying • Societal division • Lack of accountability of malicious political actors	
Analytical dimension	
<i>How often do you do any of the following on-line?</i> • Search for more information on candidates' or parties' websites • Comment on political content on the internet (e.g. social media) • Post or share political content on social media	1=Never or hardly ever 2=At least once a month 3=At least once a week 4=Several times a week 5=Daily or almost daily
<i>How often do you engage in the following activities to protect your privacy online:</i> • Delete search history • Clear online cookies • Use software to stop website tracking • Activate a VPN to hide IP address • De-register/delete apps or online profile to protect data	1=Never or hardly ever 2=At least once a month 3=At least once a week 4=A few times a week 5=Daily or almost daily 6=Don't know/not sure
<i>Are you aware of any fact-checking organisations that investigate political or non-political claims made online?</i>	Yes/no