

# World Public Opinion on Freedom of the Media

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**

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# WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG

## International Public Opinion Says Government Should Not Limit Internet Access

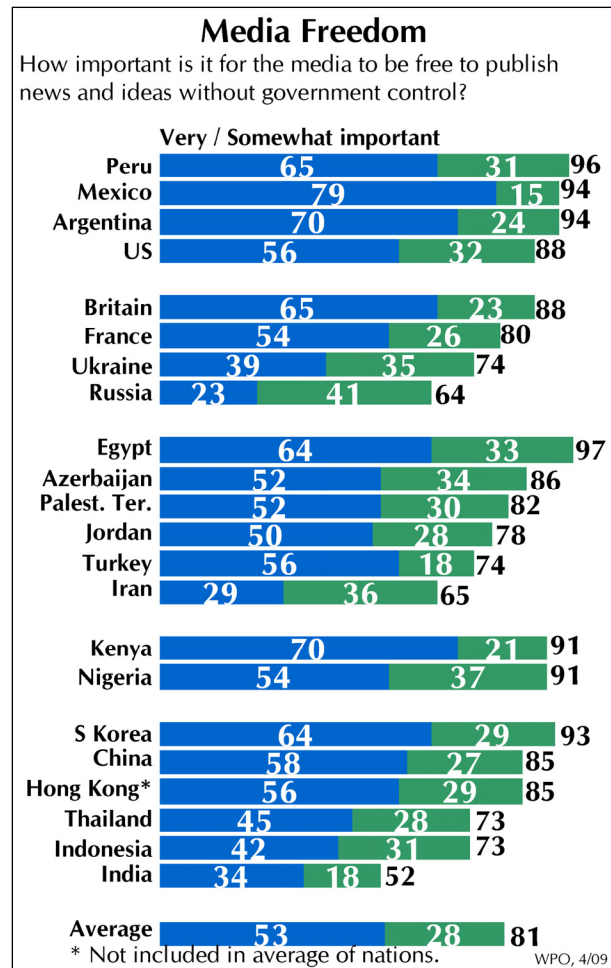
### All Nations Polled Support Principle of Press Freedom, and Half Want More Freedom

### But Many Muslims and Russians Accept Press Restrictions to Preserve Political Stability

*This report presents an updated analysis of a poll of 20 nations originally released in advance of International Press Freedom Day in 2008, a year that marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

In all nations polled there is robust support for the principle that the media should be free of government control and that citizens should even have access to material from hostile countries. With just a few exceptions majorities say that the government should not have the right to limit access to the internet. But while most publics say the government should not have the right to prohibit publishing material it thinks will be politically destabilizing, a majority in several predominantly Muslim countries and nearly half of Russians say that governments should have such a right. In many countries, majorities want more media freedom.

The poll of 20,512 respondents was conducted by [WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://WorldPublicOpinion.org), a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. Polling was conducted between January 10 and October 24, 2008.



Interviews were conducted in 22 nations, though in three of them not all questions were asked. Those nations interviewed include most of the world's largest nations --China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia--as well as Argentina, Azerbaijan, Britain, Egypt, France, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, Poland, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, and the Palestinian territories. The public in Hong Kong was also polled. These nations represent 61 percent of the world population.

## Worldwide Support for Principle of Media Freedom

The broad principle of media freedom gets very robust support. Majorities in all nations asked say that it is important “for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control.”

On average, 81 percent said it is “important,” with 53 percent saying it is “very important.” In no country did more than 29 percent say that media freedom is “not very important” or “not important at all.”

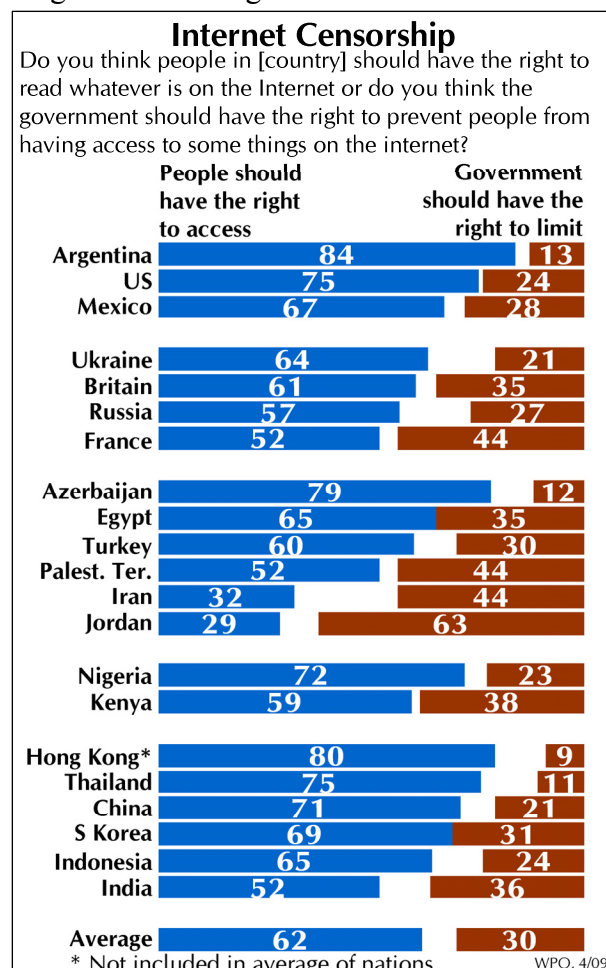
Citizens are also seen as having the right to read publications from hostile countries. Respondents were asked whether people in their country should “have the right to read publications from all other countries including those that might be considered enemies.” Once again, majorities in all countries affirmed this right; on average 80 percent.

The only country with fewer than seven in 10 agreeing was India, where 56 percent agreed. India also had the highest percentage (33%) saying that access to such publications should be limited.

## Internet Censorship

The Internet is a significant new medium for news, information, and ideas. As some governments have sought to regulate access to the Internet, it has also become a new arena for conflict about media freedom.

Presented the issue of Internet censorship, a majority in all but two of the countries that were asked this question said that “people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.” On average 62 percent



endorsed full access, while 30 percent said that the government should have the right to “prevent people from having access to some things on the Internet.”

In China, a country whose Internet censorship policies have received a great deal of international attention, 71 percent of the public said that “people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet;” only 21 percent of Chinese endorsed their government’s right to limit access.

The only two publics to not endorse full access were Jordan and Iran. In Jordan 63 percent supported government regulation of the Internet, as did 44 percent in Iran (32% favor unlimited access).

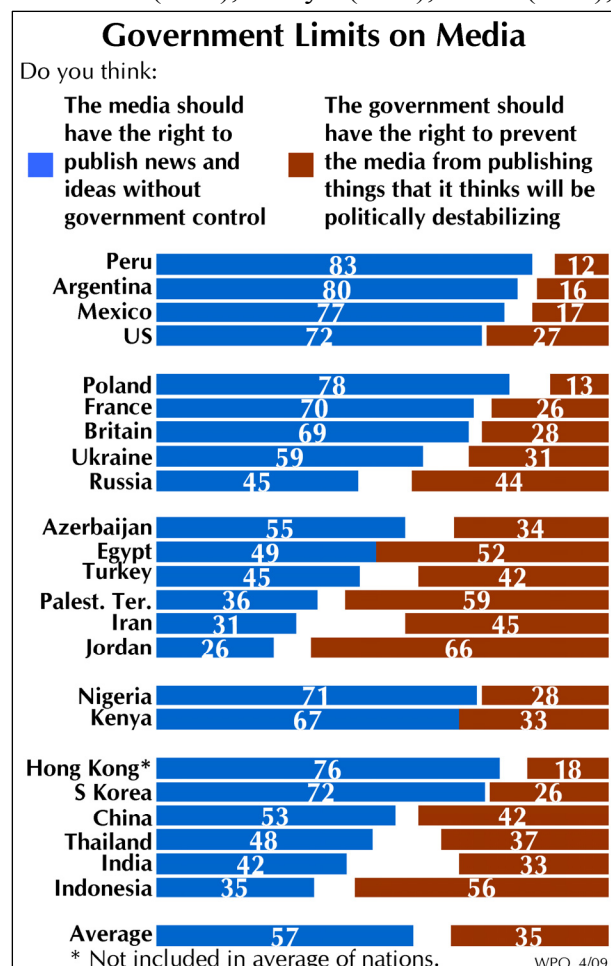
However majorities in other Middle Eastern nations favored the right to full Internet access, including Egypt (65%), Turkey (60%), and the Palestinian territories (52%). Two other majority-Muslim countries polled also endorsed this right: Indonesia (65%) and Azerbaijan (79%).

Though majorities in all countries except Jordan and Iran favored the right, there is also significant minority support for some government control of access to information on the Internet in France (44%), the Palestinian territories (44%), Kenya (38%), India (36%), and Great Britain (35%).

### Controlling Potentially Destabilizing Information

Presented with a choice between an argument in favor of media freedom without government control and the argument that “government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things it thinks will be politically destabilizing,” majorities or pluralities in 15 publics polled felt that that the risk of political instability does not justify government control.

However, in six predominantly Muslim nations and in Russia this scenario prompted considerable support for government control. Majorities in Jordan (66%), the Palestinian territories (59%), and Indonesia (56%) supported government control of the media when the government thinks that publishing some things might be politically destabilizing. In Iran, a plurality (45%)



supported government control under such circumstances (31% felt the media should be able to publish freely). Views were divided in Russia (45% to 44%), Egypt (49% to 52%), and Turkey (45% to 42%).

This does not, however, mean that any of these publics favor greater government regulation in general. Rather, in four of these cases majorities favored greater media freedom—Egypt (64%), the Palestinian territories (62%), Jordan (56%), and Indonesia (53%). Only small minorities favored less freedom in Iran (9%), Turkey (30%), and Russia (17%).

Those countries with strong majorities continuing to favor media freedom even when it may be destabilizing include Peru (83%), Argentina (80%), Poland (78%), Mexico (77%), the US (72%), South Korea (72%), Nigeria (71%), France (70%), Great Britain (69%), and Kenya (67%). Smaller majorities or pluralities in three other countries also preferred media freedom over government control: Ukraine (59%), Azerbaijan (55%), China (53%), Thailand (48%), and India (42%).

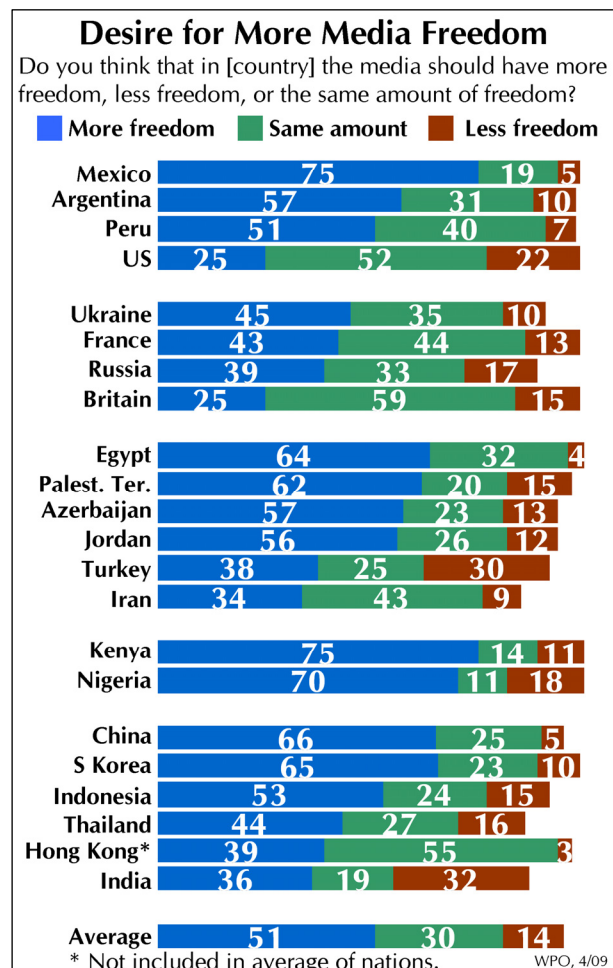
## Widespread Desire for More Freedom

In 12 nations a majority favored more media freedom and in another six their publics leaned in that direction. Just three countries are largely content and in no country did more than one in three favor less freedom.

The 12 nations with a majority calling for more freedom included Mexico (75%), Kenya (75%), Nigeria (70%), Ukraine (75%), France (70%), Russia (66%), China (66%), South Korea (65%), Egypt (64%), the Palestinian territories (62%), Jordan (56%), and Azerbaijan (57%).

An additional five countries had substantial numbers favoring greater freedom. These included Ukraine (45%), Thailand (44%), France (43%), Russia (39%), Turkey (38%), and India (36%). It should be noted, though, that in Turkey and India there was an unusually large number calling for less freedom (30 and 32%, respectively).

Three countries expressed relative



contentment. Only small minorities called for more freedom in the United States (25%), Great Britain (25%) and Iran (34%). Majorities in Britain (59%) and the United States (52%) said that they have the right amount of freedom, as did 43 percent in Iran. In the United States an unusually large 22 percent called for less freedom—approximately the same number of those calling for more (25%). This is in contrast to Britain and Iran where those calling for more freedom were significantly more numerous than those calling for less (Britain: 25 to 15%; Iran: 34 to 9%).

On average, across all nations polled, 51 percent said that they would like their media to have more freedom, 14 percent favored less freedom, and 30 percent favored the same amount of freedom.

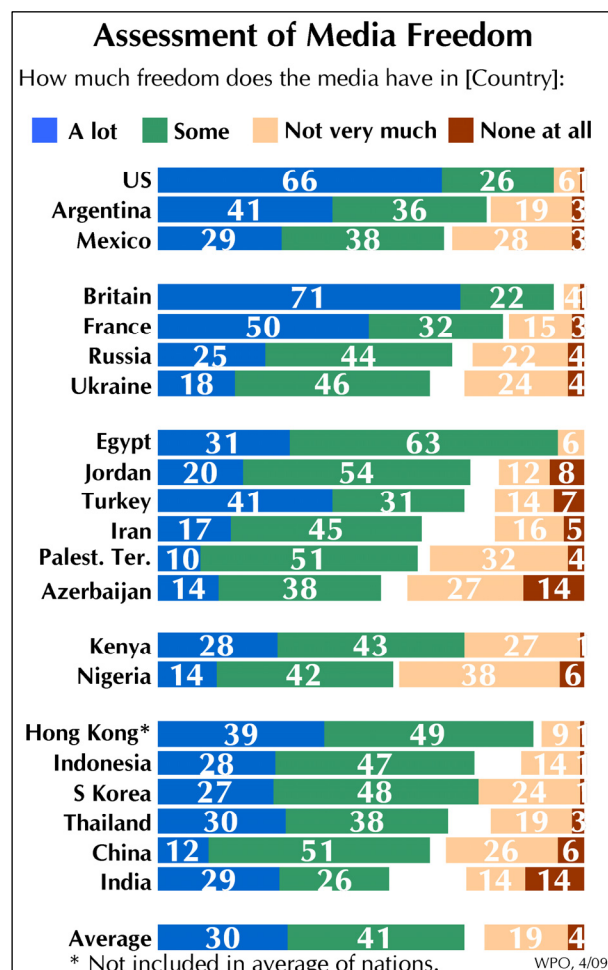
### Perceived Status of Media Freedom in Country

This poll also assessed public views of how free the media are in their own country. In all nations polled, a majority said that media in their country have either “a lot” of freedom (30% across countries) or “some” freedom (41%). In no country polled did a majority say “not very much” or “none at all.”

This may not be surprising. Even when governments, or other forces, do exercise control over the media, they usually create an environment where control is not complete, where “some freedom” is present.

In only three countries polled did 50 percent or more say that the media in their country have a “lot of” freedom: Great Britain (71%), the United States (66%), and France (50%).

The largest percentages saying the media have either not very much or no freedom were found in Nigeria (44%), Azerbaijan (41%), the Palestinian territories (36%), and China (32%).



There is a clear correspondence between how people perceive media freedom in their country and outside evaluations. For example, the organization *Reporters Sans Frontieres* (RSF, or Reporters without Borders) ranked 169 countries in terms of their media freedom (see [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org) for details of their measures). There is a correlation of



0.64 between the 2007 RSF rankings of countries in terms of media freedom and the proportion of the public in those countries saying in the poll that there was a lot of freedom.

In the poll, the three countries rated by at least half of their citizens as having “a lot” of media freedom also had three of the four highest ranks in the RSF 2007 Index: Great Britain (24<sup>th</sup>), France (31<sup>st</sup>), and the United States (48<sup>th</sup>). South Korea had a ranking of 39 among the 169 RSF-ranked countries, but only 27 percent of Koreans said there was a lot of media freedom in their country.

Those nations where very few citizens polled said that there was “a lot” of media freedom also got low rankings among the 169 countries in the RSF index: the Palestinian territories 158<sup>th</sup>, China 163<sup>rd</sup>, Azerbaijan 139<sup>th</sup>, Nigeria 131<sup>st</sup>, Iran 166<sup>th</sup>, and Ukraine 92<sup>nd</sup>.

There also appears to be a relationship between the actual level of freedom—perceived by respondents or outside evaluators—and expressed dissatisfaction. In the three countries where half or more of the public said that there is “a lot” of media freedom, and who scored relatively high on the RSF Index, the public tended to indicate that they want the media to have the “same amount of freedom.” This was the case in Britain (59%), the United States (52%), and France (44%), though in France another 43 percent said they want more freedom.

In the 14 nations where the publics characterized their country as having “some” rather than “a lot” of media freedom, majorities in nine said that there should be *more* media freedom: Mexico (75%), Nigeria (70%), China (66%), South Korea (65%), Egypt (64%), the Palestinian territories (62%), Azerbaijan (57%), Jordan (56%), and Indonesia (53%).

Argentina displayed a similar pattern: a slim plurality (41%) said their country had “a lot” of media freedom and 36 percent said it had “some” freedom. A majority of Argentines (57%) did think the country should have more freedom than it currently has.

In six other countries that said they had “some” media freedom, the view was more mixed: Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Thailand, India, and Iran. In none of the six did a majority say there was a lot of media freedom, and each of the six countries received low RSF Index rankings on media freedom. However, in none of the six did majorities say that there should be more media freedom.

In five of the countries, support for more media freedom is the most common response, but not a majority: Russia (39%), Ukraine (45%), Turkey (38%), Thailand (44%), and India (36%). Here, the publics seem to recognize that media freedom is at least somewhat limited; they also said that media freedom was important, but a majority of the people were not demanding more.

Among Iranians, only 17 percent of the public said there is a lot of media freedom, but only 34 percent said there should be more freedom in their country, and the most



common response (43%) was that there should be the same amount of freedom as there is currently.

People with greater education tend to support media freedom more than those with less education. This pattern is evident in response to questions on the importance of media freedom, whether the media should be free to publish without government control, whether people should be able to read publications from other countries even those considered enemies, and whether people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet. Those with a college degree supported media freedom across each of these issues more so than those with less than high school educations by magnitudes ranging between 7-14 points. However, even those with the lowest level of education supported media freedom on all these questions.

Education has no effect, however, on people's view of how much media freedom their country has or how much it should have.

The effect of age showed a different pattern. Older and younger people showed little difference in the importance of media freedom, whether the media should be free of government control, or on whether people should have the right to read publications from other countries. But people 60 years and older (though still a majority of 52%) were less likely than younger respondents (66%) to feel that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.

The oldest respondents (40%) also were more likely to say that their country has "a lot" of media freedom than the youngest (26%); and the oldest (42%) were less likely to feel that their country should have "more" media freedom than the youngest (53%).

## **COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY RESULTS:**

### **AMERICAS:**

#### **MEXICO**

##### [Reforma](#)

Mexicans have the largest majorities saying freedom of the media is “very important” and that the media in their country should have greater freedom. Mexico has one of the largest majorities in support of media being free to publish news and ideas as opposed to allowing the government to impose restrictions to maintain stability.

- 94% of Mexicans say is important for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control, including the largest majority (79%) that says it is very important.
- Two-thirds (67%) agree that people should have the right to read whatever they want on the Internet, rather than believing the government should have the right to prevent access to some things (28%).
- Presented two arguments, very few (17%) agree that the government should have the right to prevent media from publishing things it thinks will be destabilizing, while a majority (77%) feels that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, the third-largest majority out of all nations asked.
- An overwhelming 95% feel that they should have the right to read publications from other countries, even those considered enemies, the largest majority out of any nation asked.
- Only 29% in Mexico say that the media have a lot of freedom, while 38 percent says it has some freedom. Three in four (75%) in Mexico think that the media should have more freedom, the most out of any nation asked.

#### **UNITED STATES**

##### [Program on International Policy Attitudes](#) / [Knowledge Networks](#)

Americans have the second-largest majority in support of having the right to read whatever they want on the Internet and one of the largest majorities in favor of the right to read publications from all other countries. Americans are one of only three publics where the most common view is that the media already have a lot of freedom as opposed to just some. Americans also show some of the most widespread support for the media having the freedom to publish news and ideas without government control.

- Nearly nine in 10 (88%) Americans say it is very important for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control, including 56% that say it is very important. Three-quarters (75%) believe they should have the right to read whatever they want on the Internet without government restrictions.

- Very few (27%) favor the argument that the government should have the right to restrict this freedom in order to preserve stability, as opposed to 72% who say that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A very large majority (92%) feels that they should be free to read publications from other countries, even those considered enemies.
- Two-thirds (66%) in the US feel that the media have “a lot” of freedom, while a majority (52%) says it should have the same amount of freedom it does and significantly fewer say it should have either more (25%) or less (22%).

## **ARGENTINA**

### [Graciela Romer y Asociados](#)

Argentina has the largest majority that believes people should be free to read whatever is on the Internet out of all publics polled, and an overwhelming majority believes it is important for the media to be free to publish without government control, even if given the argument that this might create instability. Like other publics in the region, Argentina believes that the media should have more freedom, even though a substantial majority says the media already has a great deal of freedom.

- An overwhelming majority (94%) say it is important for the media to be free to publish news and idea without government control, and 84% believe that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Presented two statements, 80% agree that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, while just 16% take the view that this could be too destabilizing and the government should have the right to prevent some things from being published.
- 92% believe that Argentines should have the right to read publications from all other countries, even those considered enemies.
- More than three in four (77%) say that the media have “a lot” or “some” freedom in Argentina, and a majority (57%) says that it should have more than it does while just 10% believe it should have less and 31% believe it should have the same amount it currently does.

## **PERU**

### [Grupo de Opinión Publica, Universidad de Lima](#)

Peruvians are among the largest majorities that say freedom of the press is important and are the largest majority that rejects the argument for government restrictions on the press in order to preserve political stability. A slight majority favors more freedom for the media.

- An overwhelming majority (96%) says that it important for the media to have the right to publish news and articles without government control, including 65% that say it is “very important.”
- Presented two arguments, only 12% say that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that could be politically destabilizing,

- while a very large majority (83%) favors the position that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A slight majority (51%) says that media in Peru should have more freedom, while 40% feel it should have the same amount and 7% say it should have less.

## **EUROPE:**

### **FRANCE**

[Efficiency 3](#)

The French are among the three nations where the most common view is that the media have a lot of freedom in their country, although a significant number says it should also have more freedom. However, they are among the smallest majorities that favor people having the right to read whatever is on the Internet, rather than allowing the government to restrict access to some things.

- 80% in France feel it is very important for the media to have the right to publish news and ideas without government control and a smaller majority (52%) feels that people should have the unrestricted right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Seven in 10 (70%) favor the argument that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, over the position that the government should have the right to prevent the publication of things it feels could be politically destabilizing (26%).
- A very large majority (82%) feels that they should have the right to read publications from all other countries.
- Half (50%) of the French says that the media already have “a lot” of freedom. The French are largely divided between 43% who believe the media should have more and 44% feel that it should have the amount it does now.

### **GREAT BRITAIN**

[Chatham House \(Royal Institute of International Affairs\)](#) / [GlobeScan](#)

Britain has the largest majority saying the media have a lot of freedom in their country. Correspondingly, it has the largest majority expressing satisfaction with the amount of freedom it currently has. Britons are also among the largest majorities that say they should be free to read publications from all countries.

- Nearly nine in 10 (88%) in Britain say it is important for the media to have freedom, including 65% that say it is “very important.” A majority (61%) feels that they should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- 69% of Britons say that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, as opposed to just 28% that feel the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things it thinks could be politically destabilizing.

- A very large majority says that Britons should have the right to read publications from all countries, even those considered enemies (89%).
- A large majority (71%) says that the media have a lot of freedom in Britain, the largest majority out of all nations asked. Fifty-nine percent feel the media should have the same amount of freedom it has now, as opposed to smaller numbers that say it should have more (25%) or less freedom (15%).

## **RUSSIA**

[Levada Center](#)

Although a substantial majority of Russians agree it is important for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control, it is the second smallest majority. More significantly, Russians are one of the few publics (and the only non-Muslim one) divided on whether the government should have the right to control the media in the effort to preserve stability. They are among the publics with the lowest levels of support for the media gaining more freedom than it already has.

- 64% of Russians feel it is either somewhat (41%) or very important (23%) for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control, while 57% believe they should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Given two positions, Russians are one of the few publics divided on whether the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control (45%) or whether the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things in order to preserve stability (44%).
- 71% in Russia believe that they should have the right to read publications from all other countries, even those considered enemies.
- Asked how much freedom the media currently have in Russia, the most common view is it has “some” (44%), followed by “a lot” (25%). Only 39% believe the media should have more freedom, while 33% believe it should have the same amount and 17% believe it should have less.

## **UKRAINE**

[Kiev International Institute of Sociology](#)

Ukrainians agree with most other publics that it is important for the media to have freedom. Approximately half believe the media in their country should be more free than it is now.

- 74% of Ukrainians agree it is important for the media to have the freedom to publish news and ideas without government control and a majority (64%) believes people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet rather than having the government impose restrictions.
- Ukrainians tend to reject the argument that the government should have the right to restrict the media’s freedom in order to preserve stability (31%), while nearly three in five (59%) agree more that the media should be free to publish news and ideas without control.

- A large majority of Ukrainians (82%) believes people should have the right to read publications from any country, even those that could be considered enemies.
- 46% in the Ukraine say the media only have “some” freedom, while just 18% feel it has “a lot.” 45% believe it should have more freedom than it does now, 35% feel it should have about the same, and 10% say it should have less.

## **POLAND**

### **CBOS**

- A very large majority of Poles (78%) believes that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, while very few (13%) believe government should have the right to restrict this freedom.
- An overwhelming majority (84%) agree that people in Poland should have the right to read publications from all other countries, even those that might be considered enemies.

## **MIDDLE EAST/EURASIA:**

### **AZERBAIJAN**

International Center for Social Research

Azerbaijanis have the largest majority supporting the right to have unrestricted access to material on the Internet. While most say the media in Azerbaijan have at least some freedom, they are among the smallest numbers saying the media have a lot of freedom and a majority believes the media should have even greater freedom.

- A very large majority of Azerbaijanis (86%) say that it is important for the media to have the freedom to publish news and ideas without government control and 79% say that people should have the right to read whatever they want on the Internet, the largest majority out of all nations asked.
- Few Azerbaijanis (34%) find the argument convincing that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing news and ideas that could be politically destabilizing, while 55% favor the media having the right to publish news and ideas without government control.
- Nearly three in four (73%) say that people should have the right to read publications from all other countries, including those that could be considered enemies.
- Azerbaijanis most commonly say that the media have “some” freedom (38%), while very few say it has “a lot” of freedom. Fifty-seven percent feel that the media should have more freedom than it does now, significantly more than those who say it should have the same amount (23%) or less freedom (13%).

## EGYPT

### Attitude Market Research

Egyptians are among the publics most supportive of the principle of media freedom—they have the highest number saying media freedom is important. However they are also one of three divided on whether the government should have the right to restrict freedom to prevent political instability. Egyptians are also one of the five largest majorities calling for more freedom.

- An overwhelming majority (97%) of Egyptians say it is important for the media to be free (64% very important) and 65% believe that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Presented two arguments, Egyptians are among the few publics divided on whether the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things it thinks will be destabilizing (52%) and whether the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control (49%).
- Nearly three in four (74%) say that people in Egypt should have the right to read publications from all other countries, even those that might be considered enemies.
- A majority in Egypt (63%) says that the media have “some” freedom, although 31% also say it has “a lot” of freedom. A large majority (64%) also feels it should have more freedom, while just one-third (32%) says it should have the same amount and 4% say it should have less freedom.

## IRAN

[WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://WorldPublicOpinion.org)

While two thirds of Iranians favor press freedom, overall their support is among the weakest. Iranians are one of two publics asked that lean in favor of the government having the right to restrict access to information on the Internet and among the few nations that feel the government should have the right to prevent the press from publishing news and ideas that could be destabilizing. However, a large majority believes Iranians should have the right to read publications from all other countries.

- A majority of Iranians (65%) agrees that it is important for the press to have the freedom to publish news and ideas without government control.
- 44% support the government having the right to prevent people from having access to some things on the Internet, while 32% believe people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- A plurality (45%) favors the argument that the government should have the right to restrict the press’ freedom to publish things it thinks could be destabilizing, while 31% prefer the argument that the press should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A very large majority (79%) believes people in Iran should have the right to read publications from all other countries.



- Iranians most commonly say that the press has “some” freedom in their country (45%), while just very few (17%) say that it has “a lot” of freedom. Most say that the press should have the same amount of freedom as it does now (43%), while fewer say it should have more (34%) or less freedom (9%).

## **JORDAN**

[Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan](#)

Despite a robust eight in 10 supporting media freedom in principle, among the nations asked, Jordanians are the only case in which a majority favors the government restricting access to things on the Internet. Jordanians also favor the argument that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things in order to maintain stability.

- Nearly four in five (78%) Jordanians agree on the importance of the media having freedom to publish news and ideas.
- A majority (63%) says that the government should have the right to prevent people from having access to some things on the Internet (one of two nations where this is the most common view), while just 29% say people should be able to read whatever is on the Internet.
- A majority of Jordanians (66%) favors the argument that the government should have the right to restrict the media from publishing things that could be destabilizing, while just 26% feel that the media should be free to publish news and ideas without government control.
- 54% in Jordan say the media have at least “some” freedom, while 24% feel it has “a lot” of freedom. A majority (56%) also believes the media should have more freedom, while only 26% say it should have the same amount and 12% feel it should have less.

## **PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

[Palestinian Center for Public Opinion](#)

Palestinians are among the publics more willing to tolerate government restrictions on media freedom in order to maintain stability. However Palestinians have the smallest number agreeing that the media have “a lot” of freedom now, and has one of the largest majorities feeling that it should have greater freedom.

- 82% of Palestinians agree that it is important for the media to have the freedom to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A slight majority (52%) favors people having the right to read whatever is on the Internet, although 44% take the opposite view that the government should have the right to prevent people from having access to some things on the Internet.
- A majority of Palestinians (59%) subscribes to the argument that the government should have the right to restrict media freedom to prevent instability, while 36% find the argument that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control more convincing.

- 72% believe that Palestinians should have the right to read publications from all countries, even those that could be considered enemies.
- Palestinians most commonly say that the media have “some” freedom (51%), and very few (10%) feel it has “a lot” of freedom. A large majority (62%) believes the media should have more freedom than it does now, while 20% feel it should have the same amount, and 15% say it should have less.

## **TURKEY**

[ARI Foundation](#) / [Infakto Research Workshop](#)

Among Muslim publics, Turks have the largest number saying the media already have a great deal of freedom. Though supporting freedom of the media in principle, Turks are one of the few publics divided on whether the government should have the right to restrict media freedom in order to maintain political stability.

- Nearly three in four (74%) Turks say that freedom of the media is important, and 60% believe that people should have the right to read whatever they want on the Internet.
- Presented two arguments, Turks are among the few publics that are divided between the media having the right to publish news and ideas without government control (45%) and the government having the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it thinks will be politically destabilizing (42%).
- 74% say that the people in Turkey should be able to read publications from other countries, even those considered enemies.
- Many Turks believe the media have “a lot” (41%) of freedom, the largest number among the Muslim publics asked, while an additional 31% say it has “some” freedom. Thirty-eight percent say it should more freedom than it does now, while 30% feel it should have less and 25% feel it should have about the same amount.

## **AFRICA:**

### **KENYA**

[Research Path Associates Limited](#)

Kenyans are the largest majority (along with Mexico) among the nations polled that believes the media should have more freedom. Although an overwhelming majority says it is very important for the media to have the right to publish news and idea without government control, support is more modest for people having the right to read whatever is on the Internet.

- 91% in Kenya say that is important for the media should be free to publish news and ideas without government control, including 70% who say it is “very important.”

- 59% believe that people should be free to read whatever is on the Internet, although a substantial 38% agree the government should have the right to prevent access to some things on the Internet.
- Presented two arguments, 67% take the view that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, while only 33% agree with the position that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things it thinks would be politically destabilizing.
- 84% in Kenya agree that people should have the right to read publications from all other countries, even those considered enemies.
- More than seven in 10 (71%) say that the media has a good deal of freedom in Kenya, while three in four (75%) say that it should have more, rather than less (11%) or the same amount of freedom (14%).

## **NIGERIA**

Market Trends Research International

Nigerians have the largest number saying the media lacks freedom in their country and have the second-most widespread support for greater media freedom among all nations asked. Nigerians are also among the largest majorities favoring the right to read publications from all countries and rejecting the argument that government should restrict media freedom to preserve stability.

- An overwhelming 91% say it is important to have freedom of the media and 72% say they should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Nigerians have one of the largest majorities rejecting the argument that the government should have the right to restrict media freedom to ensure stability (28%) in favor of the media having the right to publish news and ideas without government control (71%).
- A large majority (91%) says Nigerians should have the right to read publications from other countries, even those that could be considered enemies, one of the largest majorities among all nations asked.
- Nigerians have the largest number saying the media have “not very much freedom” (38%) or “none at all” (6%), though 42% say it has “some” freedom. 70% feel that Nigeria should have more freedom for the media, while just 18% say they should have less and 11% say it should remain about the same.

## **ASIA/PACIFIC:**

### **CHINA**

[WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://WorldPublicOpinion.org)

The Chinese public expresses robust support for freedom of the media in principle and has the most widespread support among Asian publics asked for the right to read

publications from other countries and for unrestricted access to the Internet. China also has the third-largest majority calling for greater freedom.

- 85% say it is important to have freedom of the media and 71% agree that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- While a significant number of the Chinese (42%) favor the argument that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing news and ideas that it thinks will be politically destabilizing, a majority (53%) says the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A large majority (78%) says that people in China should have the right to read publications from other countries, even those that could be considered enemies.
- A slight majority (51%) in China says the media have a least “some” freedom, though very few (12%) say it has “a lot.” Two-thirds (66%) feel that the media should have more freedom in China, while 25% are satisfied with the freedom they have.

## **HONG KONG**

### [Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme](#)

People in Hong Kong widely agree that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet, although support is somewhat more widespread than in mainland China. Attitudes in Hong Kong and mainland China are similarly supportive of the importance of the media being free to publish news and ideas without government control. The public in Hong Kong also overwhelmingly perceives the media as having a significant amount of freedom, relatively more than mainland China or other publics in the region, and tends to believe the media should have the same amount of freedom rather than more than it currently does.

- 85% of people in Hong Kong agree that is important for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control, while a similar number (80%) say that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Three in four (76%) favor the statement that the media should be free to publish without government restrictions, as compared to just 18% that would agree the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it thinks would be politically destabilizing.
- 86% agree that people should be free to read publications from any country, even those considered enemies.
- A very large 88% say that the media has a lot (39%) or some (49%) freedom in Hong Kong, with 55% saying it should have the same as it does now, compared to those that say the media should have more (39%) or less freedom (3%).

## **INDIA**

### [Team CVoter](#)

Indians have the most modest majorities expressing support for the importance of media freedom and for the right to read publications from unfriendly countries. They have the largest percentage calling for less freedom.

- Modest majorities of Indians (52%) say it is important to have freedom of the media and that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet (52%).
- Given two arguments, a plurality (42%) maintains that the media should be free to publish news and ideas without government control, while just one-third (33%) prefer that the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that could be politically destabilizing.
- 56% say that people in India should have the right to read publications from other countries, including those that could be considered enemies, though one-third (33%) say people should not have this right, the most of any public asked.
- Only 29% believe the media have “a lot” of freedom in India, while 26% say it has “some.” Indians are somewhat divided on whether they favor greater freedom for the media (36%), less freedom (32%) or whether it should remain about the same (19%).

## **INDONESIA**

### [Synovate](#)

Though a large majority of Indonesians think it is important to have freedom of the media, Indonesia is one of a handful of nations to have a majority saying that restricting the media is appropriate so as to preserve political stability. At the same time a majority favors greater freedom.

- 73% say it is important to have freedom of the media and 65% feel people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Presented two positions, Indonesians are one of the few majorities that endorse the government having the right to restrict media freedom in order to ensure political stability, while 35% say that the media should be free to publish news and ideas without government control.
- A very large majority (84%) agrees that Indonesians should have the right to read publications from other countries, even those considered enemies.
- A significant number in Indonesia believes the media have at least “some” (47%) or “a lot” (28%) of freedom. A majority (53%) feels that the media should have greater freedom, while just 24% believe it should be about the same and 15% say it should have less.

## **SOUTH KOREA**

[East Asia Institute](#)

Among Asian countries, South Korea has the highest support for freedom of the media in principle. South Koreans are also among the largest majorities favoring greater freedom for the media in their country, and the least supportive among Asian publics for the argument that government should be able to restrict the freedom of the media in order to preserve stability.

- An overwhelming majority (93%) say it is important to have freedom of the media and nearly seven in 10 (69%) say that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet.
- Presented two arguments, very few South Koreans (26%) favor the government having the right to prevent the media from publishing things it could consider politically destabilizing and are among the publics that most widely support the media having the right to publish news and ideas without government control (72%).
- 73% say that people in South Korea should have the right to read publications from other countries, including those that may be considered enemies.
- South Koreans most commonly say the media have at least “some” freedom in their country (48%), although an additional 27% say it has “a lot” of freedom. A large majority (65%) feels that the media should have greater freedom, while 23% are satisfied with the freedom they already have.

## **THAILAND**

[ABAC Poll Research Center, Assumption University](#)

Along with the United States, Thais have the third-largest number of respondents saying that people should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet. However an unusually large minority says that government has the right to restrict the media to preserve political stability.

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) say it is important for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control and similar numbers (75%) believe they should have the right to read whatever they want on the Internet without government restrictions.
- A plurality (48%) says that the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control, but 37% favor the argument that the government should have the right to restrict this freedom in order to preserve stability.
- A large majority (79%) feels that Thais should be free to read publications from other countries, even those considered enemies.
- More than two-thirds (68%) feel that the media have “a lot” or “some” freedom. However more a large number (44%) says it should have more freedom than it does; fewer say it should have either the same amount (27%) or less freedom (16%).

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## Freedom of the Media

Originally released May 1, 2008

Updated with data from December 2008

\* Data listed as Hong Kong are not included in the averages displayed.

Q1. How important is it for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all	Depends (vol)	DK / NS
<b>Argentina</b>	70	24	4	1	0	0
<b>Mexico</b>	79	15	4	0	1	1
<b>Peru</b>	65	31	3	0	0	1
<b>US</b>	56	32	10	1	0	1
<b>France</b>	54	26	11	5	3	1
<b>Britain</b>	65	23	7	4	1	1
<b>Russia</b>	23	41	21	5	5	6
<b>Ukraine</b>	39	35	13	5	3	6
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	52	34	5	5	3	1
<b>Egypt</b>	64	33	2	0	0	0
<b>Iran</b>	29	36	9	8	3	16
<b>Jordan</b>	50	28	12	7	0	4
<b>Palest. Ter.</b>	52	30	12	5	0	1
<b>Turkey</b>	56	18	9	9	3	5
<b>Kenya</b>	70	21	7	2	0	0
<b>Nigeria</b>	54	37	6	1	1	1
<b>China</b>	58	27	10	1	2	2
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	56	29	4	0	8	3
<b>India</b>	34	18	8	6	33	2
<b>Indonesia</b>	42	31	13	3	2	8
<b>S Korea</b>	64	29	6	1	0	0
<b>Thailand</b>	45	28	6	1	16	5
<b>Average</b>	53	28	8	3	4	3



Q2. Which view is closer to yours? Do you think:

	<b>The media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.</b>	<b>The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it thinks will be politically destabilizing.</b>	<b>DK / NS</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	80	16	4
<b>Mexico</b>	77	17	6
<b>Peru</b>	83	12	5
<b>US</b>	72	27	1
<b>France</b>	70	26	4
<b>Britain</b>	69	28	3
<b>Poland</b>	78	13	9
<b>Russia</b>	45	44	12
<b>Ukraine</b>	59	31	10
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	55	34	11
<b>Egypt</b>	49	52	
<b>Iran</b>	31	45	24
<b>Jordan</b>	26	66	8
<b>Palest. Ter.</b>	36	59	6
<b>Turkey</b>	45	42	13
<b>Kenya</b>	67	33	
<b>Nigeria</b>	71	28	1
<b>China</b>	53	42	5
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	76	18	6
<b>India</b>	42	33	25
<b>Indonesia</b>	35	56	9
<b>S Korea</b>	72	26	1
<b>Thailand</b>	48	37	15
<b>Average</b>	57	35	8

Q3. How much freedom does the media have in [country]: a lot, some, not very much, none at all?

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Not very much</b>	<b>None at all</b>	<b>DK / NS</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	41	36	19	3	1
<b>Mexico</b>	29	38	28	3	2
<b>US</b>	66	26	6	1	0
<b>France</b>	50	32	15	3	1

<b>Britain</b>	71	22	4	1	2
<b>Russia</b>	25	44	22	4	5
<b>Ukraine</b>	18	46	24	4	8
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	14	38	27	14	6
<b>Egypt</b>	31	63	6	0	
<b>Iran</b>	17	45	16	5	17
<b>Jordan</b>	20	54	12	8	7
<b>Palest. Ter.</b>	10	51	32	4	3
<b>Turkey</b>	41	31	14	7	7
<b>Kenya</b>	28	43	27	1	0
<b>Nigeria</b>	14	42	38	6	1
<b>China</b>	12	51	26	6	4
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	39	49	9	1	2
<b>India</b>	29	26	14	14	18
<b>Indonesia</b>	28	47	14	1	11
<b>S Korea</b>	27	48	24	1	0
<b>Thailand</b>	30	38	19	3	10
<b>Average</b>	30	41	19	4	5

Q4. Do you think that in [country] the media should have more freedom, less freedom, or the same amount of freedom?

	<b>More freedom</b>	<b>Less freedom</b>	<b>The same amount of freedom</b>	<b>DK / NS</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	57	10	31	2
<b>Mexico</b>	75	5	19	1
<b>Peru</b>	51	7	40	2
<b>US</b>	25	22	52	1
<b>France</b>	43	13	44	1
<b>Britain</b>	25	15	59	1
<b>Russia</b>	39	17	33	11
<b>Ukraine</b>	45	10	35	9
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	57	13	23	6
<b>Egypt</b>	64	4	32	
<b>Iran</b>	34	9	43	15
<b>Jordan</b>	56	12	26	6
<b>Palest. Ter.</b>	62	15	20	3
<b>Turkey</b>	38	30	25	8

<b>Kenya</b>	75	11	14	0
<b>Nigeria</b>	70	18	11	0
<b>China</b>	66	5	25	5
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	39	3	55	3
<b>India</b>	36	32	19	13
<b>Indonesia</b>	53	15	24	8
<b>S Korea</b>	65	10	23	1
<b>Thailand</b>	44	16	27	14
<b>Average</b>	51	14	30	5

Q5. Do you think people in [country] should or should not have the right to read publications from all other countries, including those that might be considered enemies?

	<b>Should</b>	<b>Should not</b>	<b>DK / NS</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	92	7	1
<b>Mexico</b>	95	3	2
<b>US</b>	92	7	1
<b>France</b>	82	15	4
<b>Britain</b>	89	7	4
<b>Poland</b>	84	7	9
<b>Russia</b>	71	15	14
<b>Ukraine</b>	82	8	10
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	73	14	13
<b>Egypt</b>	74	26	
<b>Iran</b>	79	6	16
<b>Palestine</b>	72	23	5
<b>Turkey</b>	74	18	9
<b>Kenya</b>	84	15	0
<b>Nigeria</b>	91	8	1
<b>China</b>	78	17	5
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	86	8	6
<b>India</b>	56	33	11
<b>Indonesia</b>	84	7	9
<b>S Korea</b>	73	26	1
<b>Thailand</b>	79	7	13

Average	80	13	6
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Q6. Do you think people in [country] should have the right to read whatever is on the Internet or do you think the government should have the right to prevent people from having access to some things on the internet?

	People should have the right to read whatever is on the internet	Government should have the right to prevent people from having access to some things on the Internet	DK / NS
<b>Argentina</b>	84	13	3
<b>Mexico</b>	67	28	5
<b>US</b>	75	24	1
<b>France</b>	52	44	4
<b>Britain</b>	61	35	5
<b>Russia</b>	57	27	17
<b>Ukraine</b>	64	21	16
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	79	12	10
<b>Egypt</b>	65	35	
<b>Iran</b>	32	44	24
<b>Jordan</b>	29	63	9
<b>Palest. Ter.</b>	52	44	4
<b>Turkey</b>	60	30	10
<b>Kenya</b>	59	38	2
<b>Nigeria</b>	72	23	5
<b>China</b>	71	21	8
<b>Hong Kong*</b>	80	9	12
<b>India</b>	52	36	12
<b>Indonesia</b>	65	24	12
<b>S Korea</b>	69	31	0
<b>Thailand</b>	75	11	13
<b>Average</b>	62	30	8

\* Data listed as Hong Kong are not included in the averages displayed.

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## METHODOLOGY

Country	Sample Size (unweighted)	MoE (%)	Field dates	Survey methodology	Type of sample
Argentina	800 675	3.5	March 14-20, 2008 September 3-10, 2008	Face-to-face	Urban <sup>1</sup>
Azerbaijan	602	4.1	Jan 13 – Feb 5, 2008	Face-to-face	National
China	1000	3.2	Jan 10-25, 2008	Telephone	Urban <sup>2</sup>
<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>October 22-24, 2008</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Representative of Hong Kong</i>
Egypt	600	4.1	Jan 17-27, 2008	Face-to-face	Urban <sup>3</sup>
France	600	4.1	Feb 5-11, 2008	Telephone	National
Great Britain	800	3.5	Jan 29 – Feb 19, 2008	Telephone	National
India	1023	3.2	February 25-29, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>4</sup>
Indonesia	811	3.5	Jan 19-29, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>5</sup>
Iran	710	3.8	Jan 13 – Feb 9, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Jordan	959	3.2	March 4-10, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Kenya	1000	3.2	July 17-30, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Mexico	850	3.4	Jan 25-27, 2008	Telephone	National <sup>6</sup>
Nigeria	1000	3.2	February 7-18, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>7</sup>
Palestinian territories	626	4.0	February 10-23, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>8</sup>
Peru	597	4.1	March 2008	Face-to-face	Urban <sup>9</sup>
Poland	870	3.4	Nov 29 – Dec 4, 2007	Face-to-face	National
Russia	792	3.5	Jan 18-22, 2008	Face-to-Face	National <sup>10</sup>



South Korea	600	4.1	Feb 11-12, 2008	Telephone	National
Thailand	2699	1.9	Apr 21 – May 6, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>11</sup>
Turkey	719	3.7	Jan 12-24, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Ukraine	1021	3.1	Feb 8-18, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>12</sup>
United States	940	3.3	Jan 18-27, 2008	Internet	National <sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In March 2008, the survey was executed in the urban areas of Capital Federal, Gran Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Mendoza, and Rosario, representing 39 percent of Argentina's population. In September 2008, the survey was executed in the urban areas of Capital Federal and Gran Buenos Aires, representing 35 percent of Argentina's population.

<sup>2</sup> In China, the survey was a national probability sample of urban telephone households across China. A stratified PPS sample design was developed to sample 20 cities; urban households represent approximately 45 percent of the Chinese population.

<sup>3</sup> In Egypt, the survey was executed in the urban areas of Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, and Subra. These four urbanized areas represent 75 percent of Egypt's urban population, which is 42 percent of the national population.

<sup>4</sup> In India, a face-to-face survey was conducted in urban and rural areas in 14 of the largest Indian states; these states comprise 77 percent of India's population. The sample is 60 percent urban, India's population is approximately 30 percent urban.

<sup>5</sup> In Indonesia, a national probability sample was conducted in both urban and rural areas and covering approximately 87 percent of Indonesia's population.

<sup>6</sup> In Mexico, a random telephone sample of adults who had landline telephones was conducted in all 31 states and the Federal District. Telephone penetration in Mexico is 55 percent.

<sup>7</sup> In Nigeria, the sample was developed by selecting six states, one per geographic region, based upon their size and representativeness. Within each state, sampling points were selected by means of a multi-stage random sample which disproportionately sampled urban areas. The final sample is 75 percent urban; Nigeria is approximately 50 percent urban.

<sup>8</sup> In the Palestinian Territories, a face-to-face national probability survey was conducted among the population of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

<sup>9</sup> In Peru, the survey was executed in the metropolitan areas of Lima and Callao, representing 31 percent of the population.

<sup>10</sup> In Russia, all items were half sampled; each item was answered by 800 respondents.

<sup>11</sup> In Thailand, the survey was conducted in 10 provinces of the country including Bangkok, Samutprakarn, Chantaburi, Ratchaburi, Chiang Mai, Kampanget, Kornkan, Sakonnakorn, Chumporn, and Songkla.

<sup>12</sup> In the Ukraine, all items were half-sampled; each item was answered by at least 1,020 respondents.

<sup>13</sup> In the United States, the poll was an online survey drawn from a nationally representative sample of the Knowledge Networks online panel. This panel is probabilistically-based, selected from the population of US telephone households and subsequently provided with an Internet connection if needed. Items in the US survey were split sampled so that each item was answered by at least 940 respondents.