

World divided on need for free press

by UPI

LONDON -- Trust of the news media is low across the world, and opinion is split on the necessity of press freedom, a new poll says. The 14-nation poll showed 56 percent of people surveyed believed press freedom was crucial to ensuring free society, but another 40 percent said they felt social harmony and peace were more important even if it meant restricting media freedoms. "While people generally support a free media, the Western view of the necessity of a free press to ensure a fair society is not universally shared across all regions of the world," said Doug Miller, president of GlobeScan, which conducted the poll for BBC World Service. North American and Western Europe placed the highest value on press freedom, with 70 percent placing it above social stability, followed by Venezuela, Kenya and South Africa. Nearly half of the people surveyed in India, Singapore and Russia, however, valued stability over a free press. Only about 29 percent of U.S., British and German residents surveyed gave the media high marks for accurately reporting news. And more than 70 percent in Brazil, Britain, Mexico and the United States said media owners' political views tainted news coverage, the survey said. GlobeScan surveyed 11,344 people for the poll in October and November.

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