

## **WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH (WAPOR)**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Freedom to Publish Public Opinion Polls Study Released**

Lincoln (Nebraska, USA), December 20, 2012. The World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP) have released the results of the fifth worldwide study on the Freedom to Publish Opinion Poll Results. WAPOR has carried out cross-national studies of the freedom to publish poll results in 1984, 1992, 1996, 2002, and now in 2012. A record number of 85 different countries or regions participated in this year's study, up from 49 in 1984, 57 in 1992, 78 in 1996 and 66 in 2002. This is WAPOR's first collaboration with HKUPOP on the study.

While more and more countries are conducting surveys in general and pre-election and exit polls in particular, major governmental impediments to the free flow of public opinion surveys remain common. For example in 2012, 46% of countries had blackout periods during which pre-election poll results could not be published, and there has been no overall improvement in the freedom to publish pre-election polls in the last decade. Additionally the study found that among the 38 countries/regions that impose an embargo on publishing poll results before an election, a large majority enforce those restrictions through government agencies or election administration offices (87%) followed by independent agencies (5%) and broadcast/press regulatory agencies (3%).

As in previous studies, the main goals of the 2012 update were to assess:

- Poll embargos prior to elections,
- Restrictions for conducting and publishing exit polls,
- Awareness and conformity to industry codes or guidelines,
- Evaluation of overall poll quality and problems conducting polls.

As stated in the constitution of WAPOR, "Public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming society. Properly conducted and disseminated survey research provides the public with a tool to measure opinions and attitudes in order to allow its voices to be heard." In light of this, WAPOR promotes the right to conduct and publish polls in each country around the world. The worldwide study is an important effort by WAPOR to keep the research industry and the public aware of restrictions that may impact access to this critical tool. As the world evolves, the task of safeguarding the freedom to publish opinion polls will remain as important as the development of codes of ethics and professional standards. With the knowledge gained through the study, WAPOR will continue working to expand the rights of researchers around the world to conduct surveys and to freely publicize their results.

Information on the findings can be found in the full report on our website:  
<http://wapor.unl.edu/freedom/>

WAPOR would like to express our gratitude to Robert Chung and the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong for undertaking the study.

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