



香港大學民意研究計劃

The University of Hong Kong  
Public Opinion Programme

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**Hong Kong Journalists Association**

**Press Freedom Index Survey 2015**

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March 22, 2016

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# **Press Freedom Index Survey**

## **Research Design**

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**Prof. Clement So**

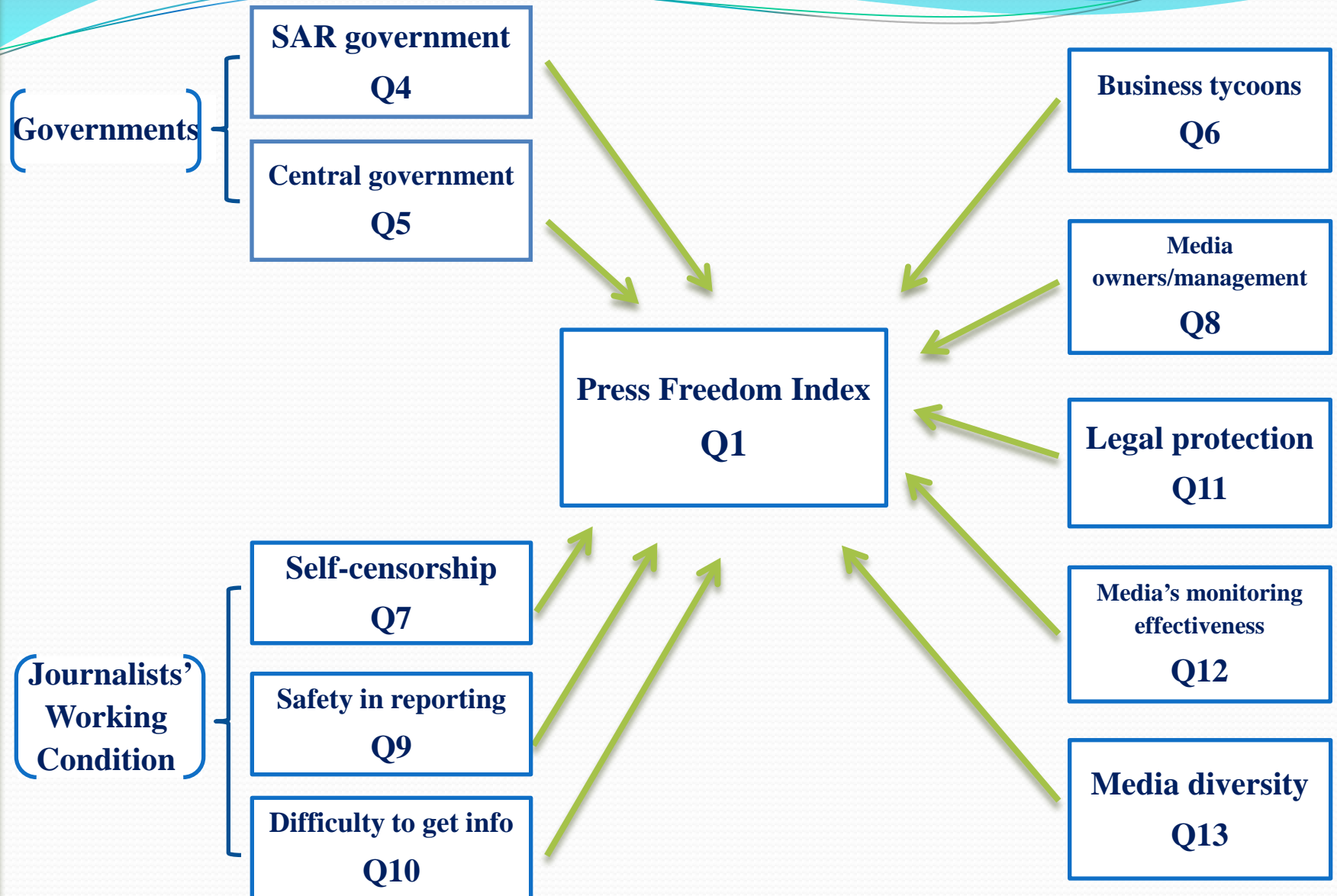
**Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, CUHK**


**Prof. Lisa Leung**

**Associate Professor, Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University**

- **Preparation before constructing the “Press Freedom Index”:**
  - **Literature review on press freedom**
  - **How international organizations measure the level of press freedom**
  - **Questions to be included in the survey**
- **Seven aspects or factors related to press freedom have been identified.**
- **Ten question items have been designed to construct the Press Freedom Index with reference to the local situation.**

- **Related organizations, indexes and literature:**
  - **Reporters Without Borders**
  - **Freedom House**
  - **Media Sustainability Index (MSI) by International Research and Exchange (IREX)**
  - **Konrad Adenauer Foundation: Media and Democracy Report**
  - **Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Media Institute of Southern Africa: African Media Barometer**
  - **Eun Suk: “Factors Influencing Freedom of the Press in South Korea”**



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- **These 10 questions represent the various aspects/factors, but they do not necessarily share the same degree of relevance with press freedom.**
  - **The survey asks both the public and the journalists to evaluate the relative importance of these factors.**
  - **The results are used for weighting purpose in the construction of the Press Freedom Index.**

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# **Press Freedom Index Survey 2015**

## **Survey Findings**

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**Dr. Robert Chung**

**Director, Public Opinion Programme, HKU**



# Research Background

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- In 2013 and 2014, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) commissioned HKUPOP to conduct the “Press Freedom Index Survey”. In 2015, HKJA commissioned HKUPOP again to conduct this “Press Freedom Index Survey 2015”. The objectives of the survey were to gauge the public and the journalists’ views on press freedom in Hong Kong, track changes over time and calculate the “Press Freedom Index”.
- An advisory panel which includes academics was formed by HKJA to perfect the research design.
- Questionnaires of both surveys were designed by the advisory panel. Fieldwork operations and data analysis of the public survey were conducted independently by HKUPOP. For the journalist survey, HKJA was in charge of data collection while HKUPOP was responsible for conducting data analysis.



# Contact Information (Public)

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- Survey date:** January 14-19, 2016
- Survey method:** Random telephone survey conducted by real interviewers
- Target population:** Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong citizens aged 18 or above
- Sampling method:** Telephone numbers were randomly generated using known prefixes assigned to telecommunication services providers under the Numbering Plan provided by the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA). Invalid numbers were then eliminated to produce the final sample. If more than one eligible subject had been available, the one who had his/her birthday next was selected.
- Sample size:** 1,021 successful cases
- Response rate:** 66.5% (based on eligible respondents)
- Sampling error:** Less than 1.6% (i.e. at 95% confidence level, the maximum sampling error of all percentages should be no more than +/- 3.1 percentage points)

# Contact Information (Journalists)

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- Survey date:** January 6 – February 16, 2016
- Survey method:** Self-administered questionnaires distributed to different news organizations and collected by HKJA
- Target population:** Journalists from different news organizations, including reporters/translators/photojournalists, assignment editors, chief editors/editorial directors, etc.
- Sampling method:** HKJA was fully in charge of distributing questionnaires to journalists from different digital and print media. In total, 745 questionnaires were distributed. Upon completion, the respondents returned the questionnaires to HKJA. HKUPOP was not involved in the process.
- Sample size:** 446 successful cases
- Response rate:** 59.9% (based on eligible respondents)
- Sampling error:** Less than 2.3% (i.e. at 95% confidence level, the maximum sampling error of all percentages should be no more than +/- 4.5 percentage points)

# Summary of Findings (1) – Press Freedom Index: Public

Press Freedom Index Components (by question order) (Q4-Q10: Higher score means more uncommon)^	2013	2014	2015			Change
	Mean (0-10)	Mean (0-10)	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	
Q4 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>HKSAR Government</b> ?	4.6^	4.7^	<b>4.5^</b>	0.09	993	-0.2
Q5 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>Central Government</b> ?	4.2^	4.4^	<b>4.1^</b>	0.08	1,001	-0.3*
Q6 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>business tycoons</b> ?	4.5^	4.7^	<b>4.7^</b>	0.07	976	--
Q7 How common do you think it is for news media in Hong Kong to practice self-censorship?	4.6^	4.4^	<b>4.2^</b>	0.07	966	-0.2
Q8 How common do you think it is for media owners or the management to exert pressure and try to influence the editorial freedom of the frontline journalists?	3.8^	3.9^	<b>3.8^</b>	0.07	934	-0.1
Q9 How common do you think it is for local journalists to become the targets of extralegal intimidation or physical violence when reporting?	5.0^	4.8^	<b>4.6^</b>	0.08	1,000	-0.2
Q10 How common do you think it is for news media to face difficulties in obtaining information they need for reporting?	4.5^	4.6^	<b>4.3^</b>	0.07	962	-0.3**
Q11 How adequate do you think the existing laws in Hong Kong are in safeguarding the local journalists so that they can obtain the information they want freely? (Higher score means more adequate)	5.8	5.8	<b>5.7</b>	0.08	963	-0.1
Q12 How effective do you think the watchdog role played by the local news media is? (Higher score means more effective)	6.6	6.3	<b>6.3</b>	0.07	976	--
Q13 Overall speaking, do you think there is a diversity of viewpoints within the local media? (Higher score means more diversified)	6.0	5.9	<b>5.8</b>	0.07	970	--
<b>Hong Kong Press Freedom Index (Public, 0-100)</b>	49.4	48.8	<b>47.4</b>			-1.4

^ Scores have been transformed from negative scale to positive scale by calculating 10 minus the mean score. In other words, a higher score indicates a more positive view of the respondents.

\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.05 level.

\*\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.01 level.

## Summary of Findings (2) – Press Freedom Index: Journalists

Press Freedom Index Components (by question order) (Q4-Q10: Higher score means more uncommon)^	2013	2014	2015			Change
	Mean (0-10)	Mean (0-10)	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	
Q4 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>HKSAR Government</b> ?	4.8^	4.2^	<b>4.5^</b>	0.12	436	+0.3*
Q5 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>Central Government</b> ?	3.8^	3.5^	<b>3.6^</b>	0.11	437	+0.1
Q6 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>business tycoons</b> ?	3.8^	3.8^	<b>3.9^</b>	0.10	435	+0.1
Q7 How common do you think it is for news media in Hong Kong to practice self-censorship?	3.1^	3.0^	<b>2.9^</b>	0.09	436	-0.2
Q8 How common do you think it is for media owners or the management to exert pressure and try to influence the editorial freedom of the frontline journalists?	3.5^	3.1^	<b>3.1^</b>	0.10	430	--
Q9 How common do you think it is for local journalists to become the targets of extralegal intimidation or physical violence when reporting?	5.2^	4.5^	<b>4.9^</b>	0.10	436	+0.4**
Q10 How common do you think it is for news media to face difficulties in obtaining information they need for reporting?	4.1^	4.0^	<b>4.0^</b>	0.10	436	--
Q11 How adequate do you think the existing laws in Hong Kong are in safeguarding the local journalists so that they can obtain the information they want freely? (Higher score means more adequate)	4.6	4.6	<b>4.4</b>	0.11	409	-0.2
Q12 How effective do you think the watchdog role played by the local news media is? (Higher score means more effective)	6.6	6.3	<b>6.3</b>	0.08	441	-0.1
Q13 Overall speaking, do you think there is a diversity of viewpoints within the local media? (Higher score means more diversified)	5.3	4.6	<b>4.7</b>	0.10	440	+0.1
<b>Hong Kong Press Freedom Index (Journalists, 0-100)</b>	42.0	38.9	<b>38.2</b>			-0.7

^ Scores have been transformed from negative scale to positive scale by calculating 10 minus the mean score. In other words, a higher score indicates a more positive view of the respondents.

\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.05 level.

\*\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.01 level.

## Summary of Findings (3) – Press Freedom Index: Public vs Journalists

Press Freedom Index Components (by question order) (Q4-Q10: Higher score means more uncommon)^	Public			Journalists		
	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base
Q4 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>HKSAR Government</b> ?	4.5^	0.09	993	4.5^	0.12	436
Q5 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>Central Government</b> ?	4.1^	0.08	1,001	3.6^	0.11	437
Q6 How common do you think it is for the local news media to have scruples when criticizing the <b>business tycoons</b> ?	4.7^	0.07	976	3.9^	0.10	435
Q7 How common do you think it is for news media in Hong Kong to practice self-censorship?	4.2^	0.07	966	2.9^	0.09	436
Q8 How common do you think it is for media owners or the management to exert pressure and try to influence the editorial freedom of the frontline journalists?	3.8^	0.07	934	3.1^	0.10	430
Q9 How common do you think it is for local journalists to become the targets of extralegal intimidation or physical violence when reporting?	4.6^	0.08	1,000	4.9^	0.10	436
Q10 How common do you think it is for news media to face difficulties in obtaining information they need for reporting?	4.3^	0.07	962	4.0^	0.10	436
Q11 How adequate do you think the existing laws in Hong Kong are in safeguarding the local journalists so that they can obtain the information they want freely? (Higher score means more adequate)	5.7	0.08	963	4.4	0.11	409
Q12 How effective do you think the watchdog role played by the local news media is? (Higher score means more effective)	6.3	0.07	976	6.3	0.08	441
Q13 Overall speaking, do you think there is a diversity of viewpoints within the local media? (Higher score means more diversified)	5.8	0.07	970	4.7	0.10	440
<b>Hong Kong Press Freedom Index (0-100)</b>	<b>47.4</b>			<b>38.2</b>		

^ Scores have been transformed from negative scale to positive scale by calculating 10 minus the mean score. In other words, a higher score indicates a more positive view of the respondents.

## Summary of Findings (4) – Press Freedom Index: Public vs Journalists

**Q2 The major factors that affect assessment of press freedom in Hong Kong**  
(a maximum of three answers are allowed; ordered by percentages in public survey):

	Public		Journalists	
	Frequency	% of valid sample (Base=1,017)	Frequency	% of valid sample (Base=443)
<b>Personal safety of the journalists at work</b>	374	<b>37%</b>	100	23%
<b>Self-censorship by the media</b>	323	<b>32%</b>	300	<b>68%</b>
<b>Central Government</b>	302	<b>30%</b>	205	<b>46%</b>
Legal protection	290	29%	43	10%
HKSAR Government	287	28%	182	41%
Level of convenience for the news media to obtain information	264	26%	81	18%
Monitoring effectiveness of news media	236	23%	60	14%
<b>Media owners</b>	147	14%	199	<b>45%</b>
Structure of the media industry	82	8%	49	11%
Business tycoons	64	6%	72	16%
None of the above	14	1%	--	--
Other factors	10	1%	--	--
Don't know	6	6%	8	2%
Total	2,460		1,299	
<i>Missing</i>	4		3	



## Summary of Findings (5) – Press Freedom Index: Public vs Journalists

### “Press Freedom Index” Results:

	Public			Journalist		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
<b>Index (Mean)</b>	49.4	48.8	47.4	42.0	38.9	38.2
<b>Standard error</b>	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.6
<b>Median</b>	48.5	46.9	46.3	41.9	38.0	37.3
<b>Min</b>	6.9	0.0	0.0	5.5	3.1	1.5
<b>Max</b>	94.6	99.0	100.0	95.9	80.9	81.3

### Analyses by respondents’ gender and age (2015):

		Index (Public)	Index (Journalist)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	48.1	37.9
	Female	46.9	38.5
<b>Age</b>	29 or below	45.0**	39.0**
	30-49	46.2**	35.7**
	50 or above	49.4**	44.3**

\*\* Differences among sub-groups have been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.01 level.



# Summary of Findings (6) – Other Questions

Other Questions	Public				Journalists			
	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	Latest change	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	Latest change
<b>Q1 Degree of press freedom in Hong Kong (Higher score means more free)</b>	<b>6.1</b>	0.07	1,014	<b>-0.4**</b>	<b>5.1</b>	0.08	433	<b>-0.1</b>
<b>Q3 Satisfaction with press freedom in Hong Kong (Higher score means more satisfied)</b>	<b>5.8</b>	0.07	1,017	<b>-0.2*</b>	<b>4.4</b>	0.09	437	<b>--</b>
<b>Q14 Compared to a year ago, do you think the overall press freedom in Hong Kong has become better, worse or remain unchanged?</b>	<b>Public</b>				<b>Journalists</b>			
		2014	2015	Latest change	2014	2015	Latest change	
Better		11%	8%	-3%*	1%	1%	--	
<b>Worse</b>		51%	<b>54%</b>	+3%	90%	<b>85%</b>	-5%*	
No change		35%	34%	-1%	7%	13%	+6%	
Don't know		2%	3%	+1%	2%	2%	--	
Base		1,035	1,019		535	443		
<b>Q15/Q22 China's e-commerce giant Alibaba Group acquired the control of South China Morning Post and all related assets. Do you think this had damaged the press freedom in Hong Kong?</b>	<b>Public</b>				<b>Journalists</b>			
	Yes (Big damage/half-half/small damage)		<b>57%</b>			<b>88%</b>		
No			28%			2%		
Don't know			15%			10%		
Base			1,018			444		

\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.05 level.

\*\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.01 level.

# Summary of Findings (7) – Other Questions for Journalists

Q15 There is a saying that the HKSAR Government is one of the sources of suppressing press freedom. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this saying?	2014	2015	Latest change	
Agree	71%	<b>64%</b>	-7%**	
Half-half	23%	27%	+4%	
Disagree	6%	8%	+2%	
Don't know	1%	1%	--	
Base	537	445		
Q16-Q21 (ordered by mean scores)	Mean (0-10)	Standard error	Base	Latest change
Q18 I practiced self-censorship when I came under pressure. (Higher score means more uncommon)^	<b>6.6^</b>	0.13	427	<b>+0.2</b>
Q20 My supervisors or the management edited or deleted my article/ news report or rejected my story ideas for fear of offending the <b>HKSAR Government</b> . (Higher score means more uncommon)^	<b>6.6^</b>	0.16	413	--
Q21 My supervisors or the management edited or deleted my article/ news report or rejected my story ideas for fear of offending the <b>Central Government</b> . (Higher score means more uncommon)^	<b>6.3^</b>	0.17	403	<b>-0.2</b>
Q19 My supervisors or the management edited or deleted my article/ news report or rejected my story ideas for fear of offending <b>business tycoons/consortia</b> . (Higher score means more uncommon)^	<b>6.2^</b>	0.16	407	--
Q17 The degree of government's manipulation of the media in reporting the news and information (Higher score means less manipulation)^	<b>3.9^</b>	0.10	431	<b>+0.1</b>
Q16 The attitude of Hong Kong Government officials, including the Chief Executive, when they reply to media inquiries (Higher score means more truthful)	<b>2.6</b>	0.09	433	--

\*\* Variation since the last survey has been tested to be statistically significant at p=0.01 level.

^ Scores have been transformed from negative scale to positive scale by calculating 10 minus the mean score. In other words, a higher score indicates a more positive view of the respondents.

# Summary of Findings (8) – Other Questions for Journalists

**Q22 Do you think the following incidents in the past year had damaged the press freedom in Hong Kong?** (ordered by percentages of “damaging”)

<b>Incidents</b>	<b>Damaging</b>	<b>Half-half</b>	<b>Not quite damaging/ No damage</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Base</b>
<b>Many cases of attack on journalists during the Occupy Movement remained hanging for over a year with the assaultants not being charged.</b>	<b>86%</b>	8%	4%	1%	441
<b>The Government releases information with improper timing or channel. Example are the late night news releases of the delay of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge and the salary of the Chief Executive and politically appointed officials being restored to 2009 levels; and the Development Bureau's using Facebook only to respond to the media.</b>	<b>82%</b>	10%	7%	1%	444
<b>Ming Pao Editor-In-Chief Chong Tien Siong made a late-night replacement of the headline story “Canadian confidential records reveal a student witnessed shooting on June 4”with “Alibaba Group establishes a HK\$1 billion Alibaba Hong Kong Young Entrepreneurs Foundation to support start-up businesses of young people in Hong Kong”.</b>	<b>79%</b>	13%	7%	2%	444
<b>The University of Hong Kong applied for a court injunction on the publication of its Council meeting materials.</b>	<b>77%</b>	12%	9%	2%	445
<b>The media industry faced a year of austerity with the closures of Hong Kong Daily News and Sudden Weekly. Digital Broadcasting Corporation cut most of its newsroom manpower and financially beleaguered broadcaster Asia Television reduced the air time for news.</b>	<b>61%</b>	24%	13%	2%	443
<b>Online media are barred from attending government press conferences and events.</b>	<b>58%</b>	25%	15%	1%	445
<b>China's e-commerce giant Alibaba Group acquired the control of South China Morning Post and all other media assets from the SCMP Group.</b>	<b>49%</b>	27%	14%	10%	444

**End of Presentation**