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16 Global Index of Bribery for News Coverage

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At a time when the accuracy and reliability of the media have come under intense scrutiny around the world, the International Public Relations Association and the Institute for Public Relations in the United States has developed a comprehensive index that ranks 66 nations according to the likelihood that print journalists will seek or accept cash for news coverage from government officials, businesses or other news sources.

While bribery is also known to occur with broadcast and other types of media, the researchers confined their focus to print media to ensure a common frame of reference. The researchers suspect that each country's numerical score and ranking for daily consumer newspapers is very similar for other news media, but this was not measured because of the range of possible media programming formats, for example, print magazines, free-circulation 'shopper' newspapers, websites, radio and television.

The index provides a numeric-value score and ranking of 66 countries. The countries were selected primarily for their global economic and political importance and – to some extent – the availability of reliable data for variables in the index.

Because of the virtual impossibility of measuring the phenomenon of cash being paid for news coverage through direct observation, the researchers employed a composite index methodology. They sought a surrogate set of measures that would be predictive and correlated, but not necessarily causative. A critical challenge was how to select these factors.

To solve this problem, an email survey instrument was used to seek the collective expertise of two worldwide groups affected by bribery for news coverage. These were the International Public Relations Association's board and council; and the International Press Institute's board, national committee members and fellows. Representing public relations practitioners and journalists respectively, the worldwide leadership of these two institutions were asked for their expert views on the relevance of potential index factors. They were asked what are the leading factors that they – through their observation and years of experience – believe correlate with the phenomenon of 'cash for news coverage'. This approach is somewhat analogous to a physician who is unable to examine a patient directly, and who instead asks questions about factors that point to the probability of a specific disease by isolating and identifying those variables that are believed to be correlated with the presence of the illness.

The researchers thereby selected eight variables for which objective data was available. The data on each factor was numerically scored on a scale from 0 (low likelihood of bribery) to 5 (high likelihood of bribery), and the eight scores were

averaged in order to generate a rank order of the 66 countries. The variables, and the data source for each, were:

- length of tradition of self-determination by citizens (derived from the *CIA World Factbook 2001*, with scoring according to the number of years)
- perception of comprehensive corruption laws with effective enforcement (as measured by TI's 2001 Corruption Perceptions Index)
- accountability of government to citizens at all levels (involving evaluation of government type, legal system, suffrage and elections, as reported by the *CIA World Factbook 2001*)
- adult literacy (as reported by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics database)
- liberal and professional education of practising journalists (scored according to the reports in the *World Press Encyclopedia: A Survey of Press Systems Worldwide*, 2003)
- the existence of well-established, publicised and enforceable codes of professional ethics for journalists (derived from the International Journalism Network)
- free press, free speech and free flow of information (taken from Freedom House's 'Press Freedom Survey 2002')
- media competition (gathered from *World of Information Business Intelligence Reports 2001* or Walden country reports, and from *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook: The Encyclopedia of the Newspaper Industry 2002*).

The study did not attempt to justify or explain the specific impact of any single variable. It is possible, for instance, that a low score on 'free press, free speech and free flow of information' might in some instances indicate the extent to which journalists are intimidated by governments, rather than the extent to which journalists are bribed. The study simply measured those variables that experts believe to be positively correlated with 'cash for news coverage'.

As shown in Table 16.1, of the 66 countries in the study, bribery of the media is most likely to occur in China, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Pakistan. By contrast, the countries with the best ratings for avoiding such practices are Finland (first place); Denmark, New Zealand and Switzerland (tied for second place).

A complete study and a detailed description of the methodology is available at www.instituteforpr.com/international.phtml?article_id=bribery_index

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Table 16.1: Global Index of Bribery for News Coverage^a

	Self-determination	Perception laws	Accountability	Literacy	Professional education	Ethics codes	Free press	Competition	Mean score
Finland	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.88
Denmark	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4.75
New Zealand	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.75
Switzerland	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.75
Germany	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.63
Iceland	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	4.63
UK	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4.63
Norway	5	4	5	Miss. data	4	4	5	5	4.57
Austria	5	3	5	5	5	4	4	5	4.5
Canada	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	4.5
Netherlands	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	2	4.5
Sweden	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	4	4.5
Belgium	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.5
USA	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	4.5
Australia	5	4	5	5	3	5	5	3	4.38
Ireland	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	2	4
Israel	5	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4
Italy	5	1	5	5	5	5	4	2	4
Spain	4	2	4	5	4	5	4	3	3.88
Cyprus	4	Miss. data	3	5	3	3	4	5	3.86
France	5	2	5	5	4	4	4	1	3.75
Portugal	4	2	4	5	3	4	3	5	3.75
Chile	3	3	3	5	3	4	4	4	3.63
Greece	4	0	4	5	4	3	4	5	3.63
Estonia	3	1	3	5	3	4	4	5	3.5
Japan	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	1	3.5
Bosnia & Herz	3	Miss. data	3	5	2	5	2	Miss. data	3.33
Brazil	4	0	4	4	4	5	3	2	3.25
Hungary	3	1	3	5	3	4	4	3	3.25
Puerto Rico	4	Miss. data	4	4	3	Miss. data	3	1	3.17
Korea, S.	4	0	4	5	4	3	4	1	3.13
	3	0	3	5	3	4	4	3	3.13
Bulgaria	3	0	3	5	3	4	2	5	3.13
Czech Rep	3	0	3	5	3	4	4	3	3.13
Hong Kong	1	0	3	5	4	4	4	1	3
Lithuania	3	3	1	5	4	3	4	2	3
Singapore	4	0	3	5	3	3	Miss. data	5	3
Mauritius	3	5	2	5	3	4	5	1	3
Slovenia	3	0	3	4	3	2	1	2	3
Poland	3	1	3	5	3	Miss. data	4	4	3
Argentina	4	0	3	5	3	3	4	2	3
Mexico	5	0	3	5	3	3	4	2	3
Taiwan	4	0	4	4	4	0	3	2	2.88
Ukraine	4	1	4	4	1	5	3	3	2.75
Croatia	3	0	3	5	3	0	4	0	2.75
Turkey	4	0	3	5	3	3	2	2	2.75
Venezuela	4	0	4	4	3	4	Miss. data	3	2.75
South Africa	4	0	2	5	3	3	2	1	2.71
Thailand	4	0	3	2	4	0	3	3	2.63
UAE	2	0	3	2	3	4	4	0	2.63
Malaysia	3	Miss. data	1	5	4	2	4	0	2.5
India	4	0	2	3	2	3	1	0	2.5
Kenya	4	0	3	4	3	3	1	4	2.43
Kuwait	3	0	3	1	2	5	3	2	2.38
Indonesia	2	Miss. data	1	3	3	5	1	0	2.25
Nigeria	4	0	2	4	2	Miss. data	2	3	2.25
Bahrain	3	0	3	1	2	3	2	0	2.17
Jordan	1	Miss. data	1	4	3	5	2	0	2.13
Egypt	2	0	2	4	1	Miss. data	1	4	2.13
Pakistan	4	0	3	1	2	3	2	1	2
Bangladesh	2	0	2	0	1	4	0	0	2
Vietnam	3	0	2	1	2	3	2	0	1.63
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	5	1	3	1	0	1.5
China	2	Miss. data	1	3	1	1	0	2	1.38
	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	1.38
						0	0	0	0.75

a. Some data are missing ('Miss. data') because they were not available from the standardised sources. The researchers eliminated the categories for these variables in determining the mean scores for those countries for which such data were not available.

