

“Jamaica sits in the middle of the countries where we had asked this question, with Canada (11 per cent) at the top and Venezuela at the bottom on 67 per cent of those polled.”

Representing a sample size of 1,515 persons, the survey further revealed that on average, trust in the media in Latin America and the Caribbean has been declining since 2004.

The data showed that more than half the Jamaican population trusted the media in 2006. However, the trust factor steadily declined to a low of 37.9 per cent in 2017, after reaching a high of 58.3 per cent in 2010.

Jamaica sits only above Colombia (35.8 per cent) and even more surprisingly above the United States, where a mere 29.8 per cent of that country’s population said that they trust the media, as reported by LAPOP.

Veteran newspaper columnist and radio talk show host, Ronald Thwaites, said that he was surprised by the findings.

“I have been involved in media for more than 40 years and there has been great press freedom. There is no impediment like in other countries. The press is easily accessed, so I am surprised that at this time we are saying that press freedom is limited,” Thwaites said.

“By and large, there is no structural impediment to accessing the media in Jamaica. I really doubt the validity of this research.”

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF

He said the findings were contrary to popular belief and previous assessments, which painted a more favourable picture of the Jamaican media landscape.

Ironically, Jamaica had moved up two places to eight on the 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

The LAPOP study showed that geographic location, social status, and education affect the views on press freedom in Jamaica.

Jamaicans living in rural areas (48.7 per cent), compared to those in urban areas (37.9 per cent), were more likely to trust the media.