

# GLOBAL

MEDIA INDEX FOR AFRICA

20  
24



**THE  
AFRICA  
CENTER**



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# Context

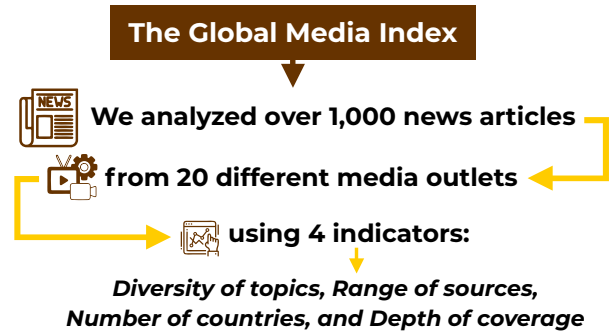
The Global Media Index for Africa is the only index that tracks how the world's most influential news providers cover the continent. It was created in response to the fact that global news coverage about Africa continues to shape perceptions about the continent. The impact of these persistent stories about conflict, corruption, poverty, poor leadership, bad politics, and disease continues to have an outsized influence on investment, tourism, global policy on Africa and the cost of money for the continent.

*The Global Media Index for Africa*, the largest manual study of media analysis ever conducted for an African media index, assesses and ranks \*online news stories of the 20 leading news providers that offer primary coverage of Africa for the world. It is also a tool that aims to provide much needed regular 'health checks' on how Africa is framed in the media.

## Media outlets



The overall score for each outlet is based on an average of each individual media's performance across the four broad indicators.



The general performance across the online news content from all 20 media outlets falls within the category of 'medium', suggesting that coverage of Africa in terms of new, more progressive narratives leaves room for improvement.

*The Global Media Index for Africa* is more than just a ranking; it is a much-needed monitoring tool that aims to hold a mirror up to global media, allowing them to critically examine their storytelling about Africa and understand its impact.

It is our hope that the *Global Media Index for Africa* will contribute to a larger discussion about the role of global media in perpetuating and sustaining stereotypical narratives about Africa. The tool is not intended to be a punitive mechanism for media who find themselves at the bottom of the rankings, rather, its launch should be viewed as a reflective learning moment for media.



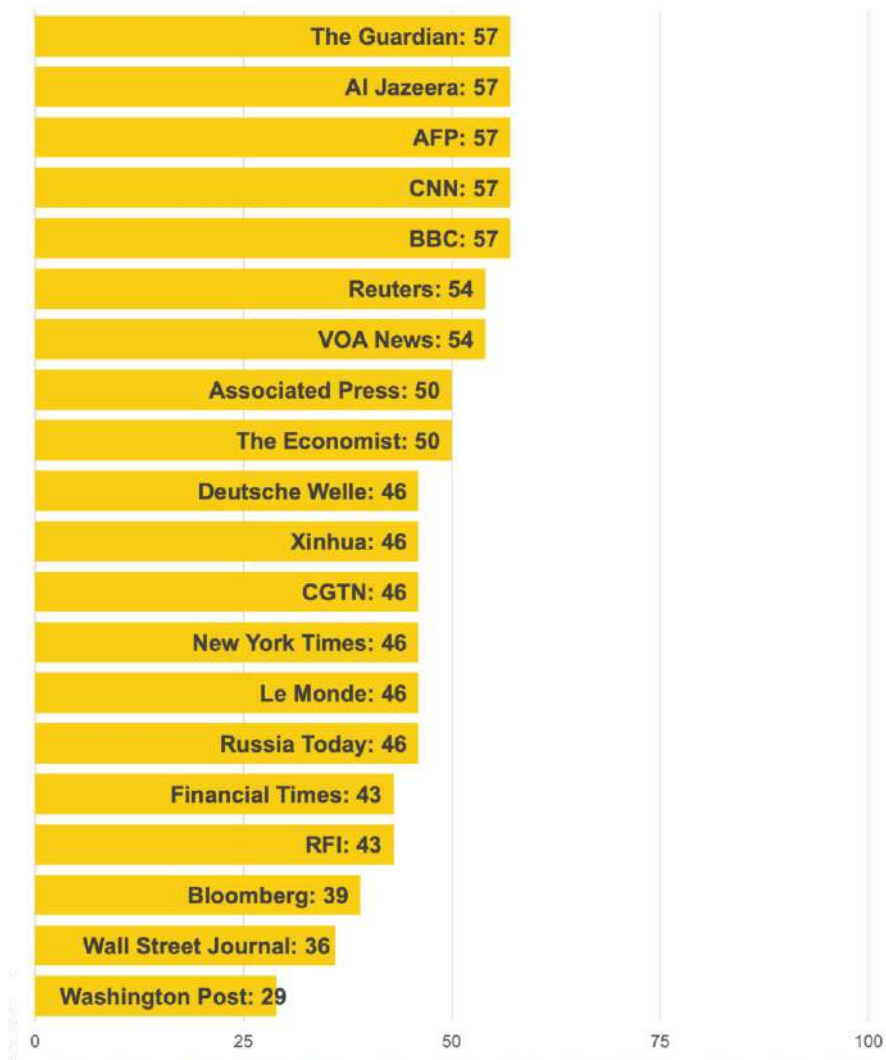
# The Index indicators

In developing the index, we identified particular indicators which, in our view, constitute the key pillars of any rigorous media coverage. We present the media outlets' results per indicator here:

## Indicator 1: Diversity of topics

This indicator assessed media outlets' coverage of news stories against a curated list of 28 possible topics. Observing the global media's tendency to narrowly focus on Africa, particularly highlighting issues such as corruption, poverty, disease, and politics, we aimed to determine whether the media outlets followed or diverted from this trend.

Figure: Diversity of Topics by Media Outlets



### Results:

This indicator revealed a persistent challenge in global media's coverage of Africa, with even the highest-scoring outlet, *The Guardian*, only achieving 57. *The Washington Post* ranks lowest at 29. While news outlets specialize in certain beats, they typically cover a range of topics for the regions they focus on. However, coverage of Africa is narrow across the board.



Figure: Heat map: Topics by Media Outlets

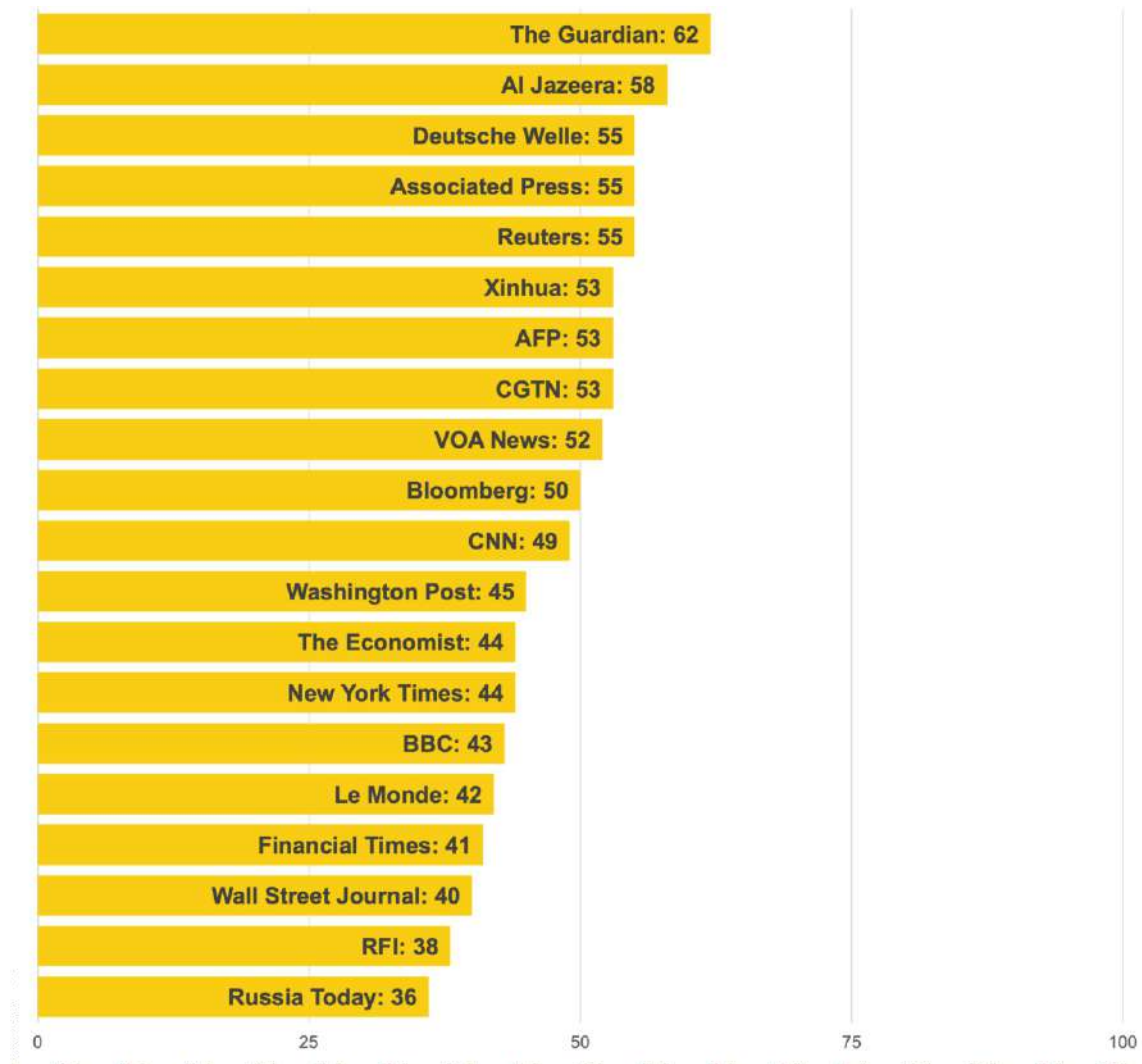




## Indicator 2: Diversity of sources

This indicator assessed the representation of voices in mainstream global media by examining direct citations in single stories. Our literature review showed the tendency to prioritize male, pale voices such as experts, politicians, and government leaders, while overlooking ordinary people, even on topics directly affecting them, hence our aim to assess the extent of diverse voices represented.

Figure: Diversity of Sources by Media Outlets

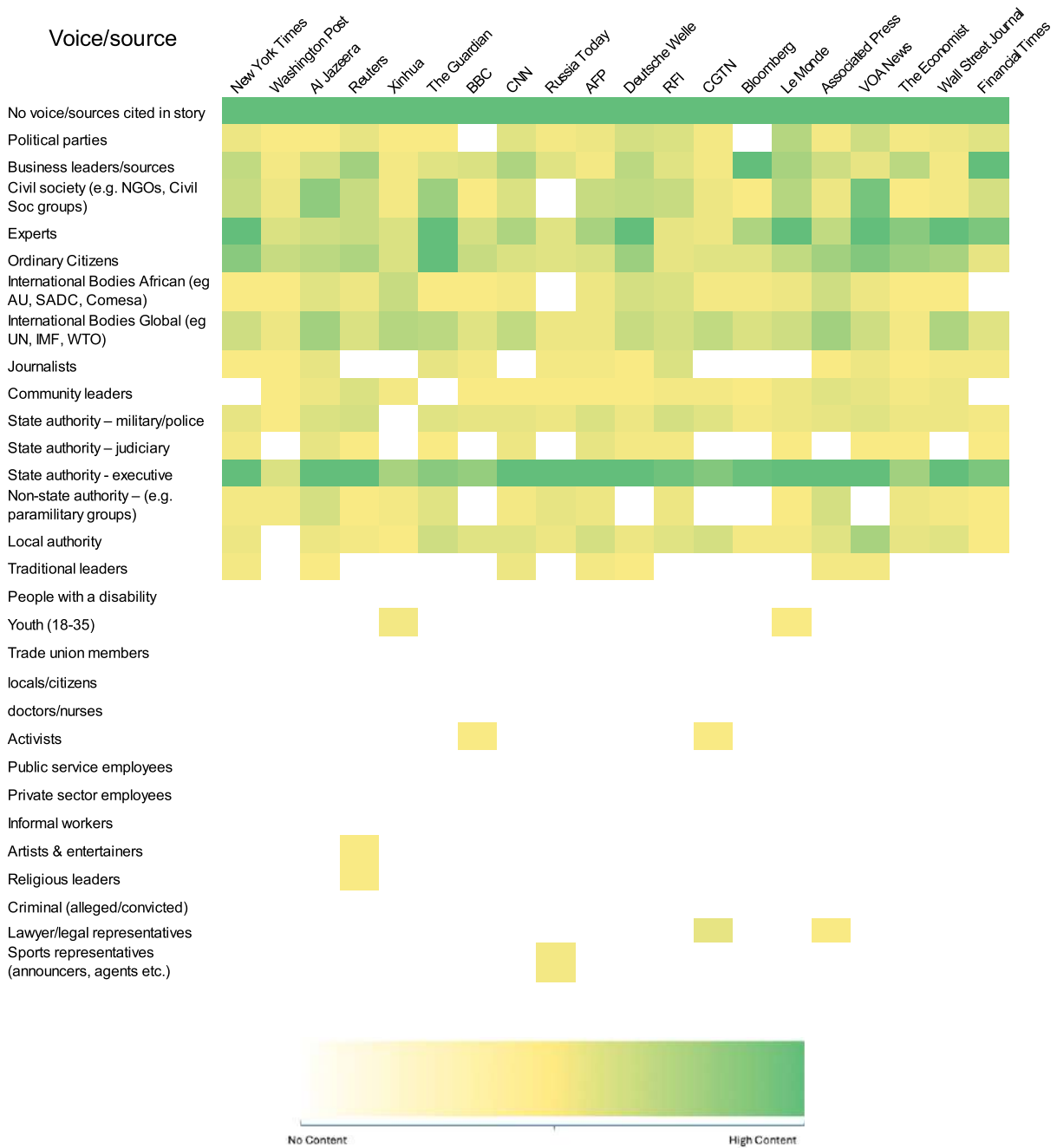


### Results:

This indicator revealed limited diversity of voices overall, with the highest-scoring outlet *The Guardian* achieving only 62. *Russia Today*, *RFI* and *Wall Street Journal* scored the lowest at 36, 38 and 40 respectively.



Figure: Heat map: Voices/Sources by Media Outlets

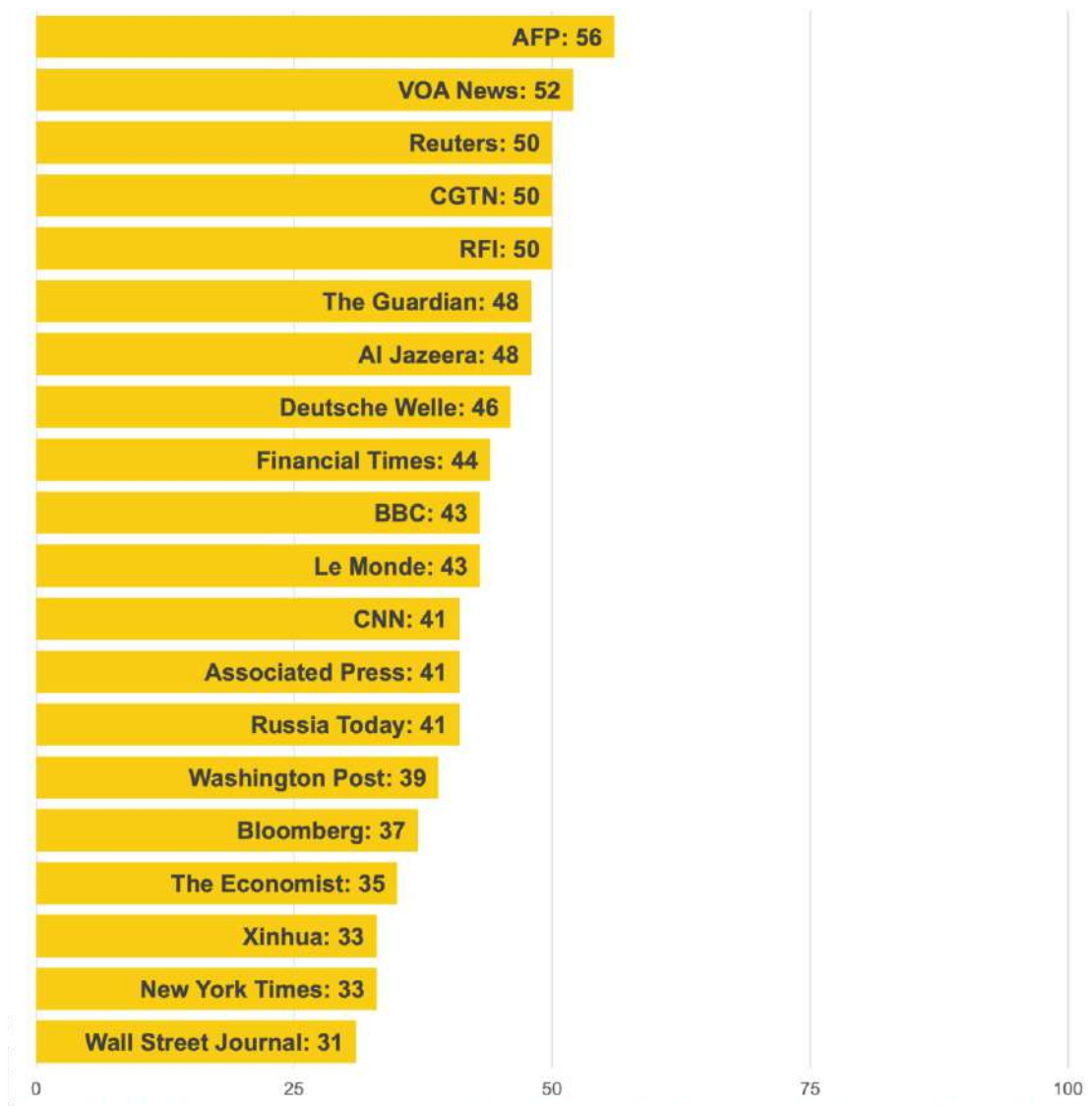




## Indicator 3: Diversity of countries

Literature indicates that global media tend to focus on economically and politically powerful African countries or those aligned with Western interests, neglecting others. This contributes to a perception of a generalized "Africa" rather than individual nations. We examined how many African countries each media outlet covered during the period, calculating the percentage out of the total 55 countries on the continent.

Figure: Diversity of Countries by Media Outlets



### Results:

The African Union recognizes 55 states in Africa. Healthy coverage would entail news representation of most countries, ideally scoring 80. However, this indicator revealed that fewer than half of these countries receive coverage across all media outlets (average score 40), except for *AFP*, which slightly surpasses 50. This clearly shows that news coverage of African countries lacks representation of the continent's diversity, potentially influencing global perceptions.



Figure: Heat Map: Countries by Media Outlets



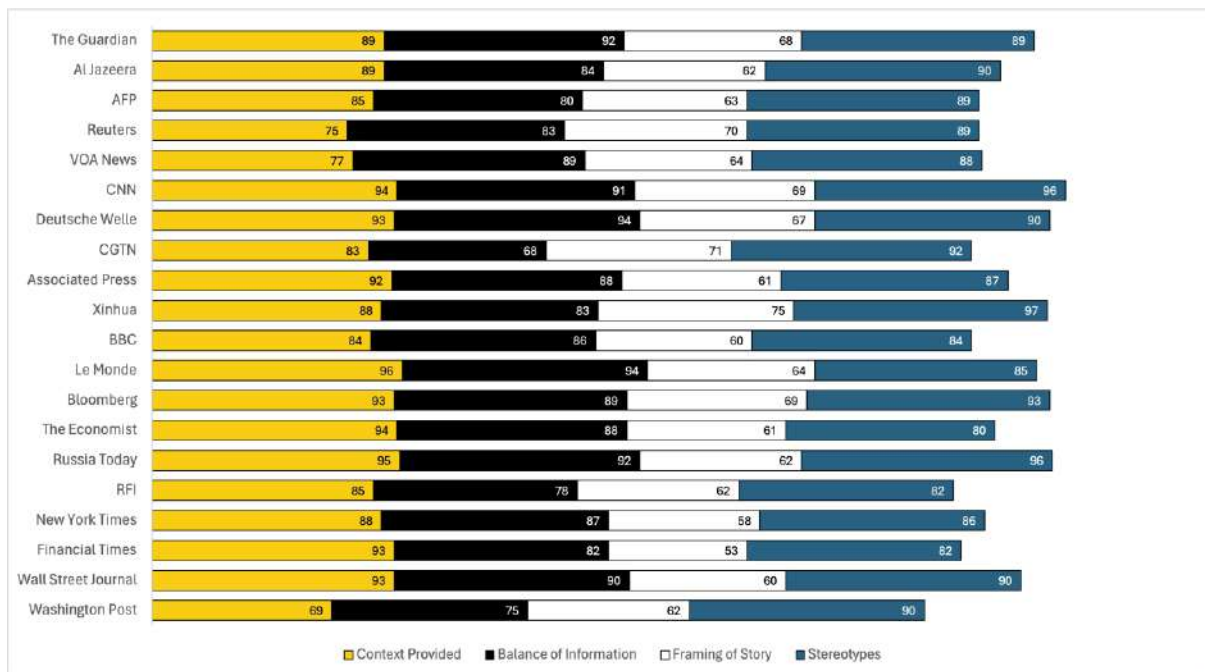




# Indicator 4: Depth of coverage (context, balance, framing and stereotypes)

The depth of coverage of African stories is a key factor in the index. Simply reporting on a subject, even breaking news, isn't enough. The quality of coverage is measured by factors such as thorough research, provision of information, balance, and context. This indicator assessed a combination of sub-variables including context, stereotypes, framing, and balance to evaluate coverage quality.

Figure: Stacked bar chart (horizontal): Depth of Coverage Comparison Across Outlets



### Results:

All outlets performed relatively well in the ‘balance’, ‘context’, ‘frame’, and ‘stereotype’ sub-indicators. In terms of balance, the majority of outlets showed a balanced approach by providing different sources a right of reply, with only one outlet scoring below 75. Contextualization was also strong, with outlets offering detailed information to aid reader comprehension, including hyperlinks and context sections within news stories. Stereotype avoidance in reporting on African countries was generally high across outlets, although *RFI*, *Financial Times*, *BBC*, and *The Economist* scored slightly lower. Despite some variance, the overall scores did not indicate significant disparities, with the highest being 97 and the lowest 80 out of 100.

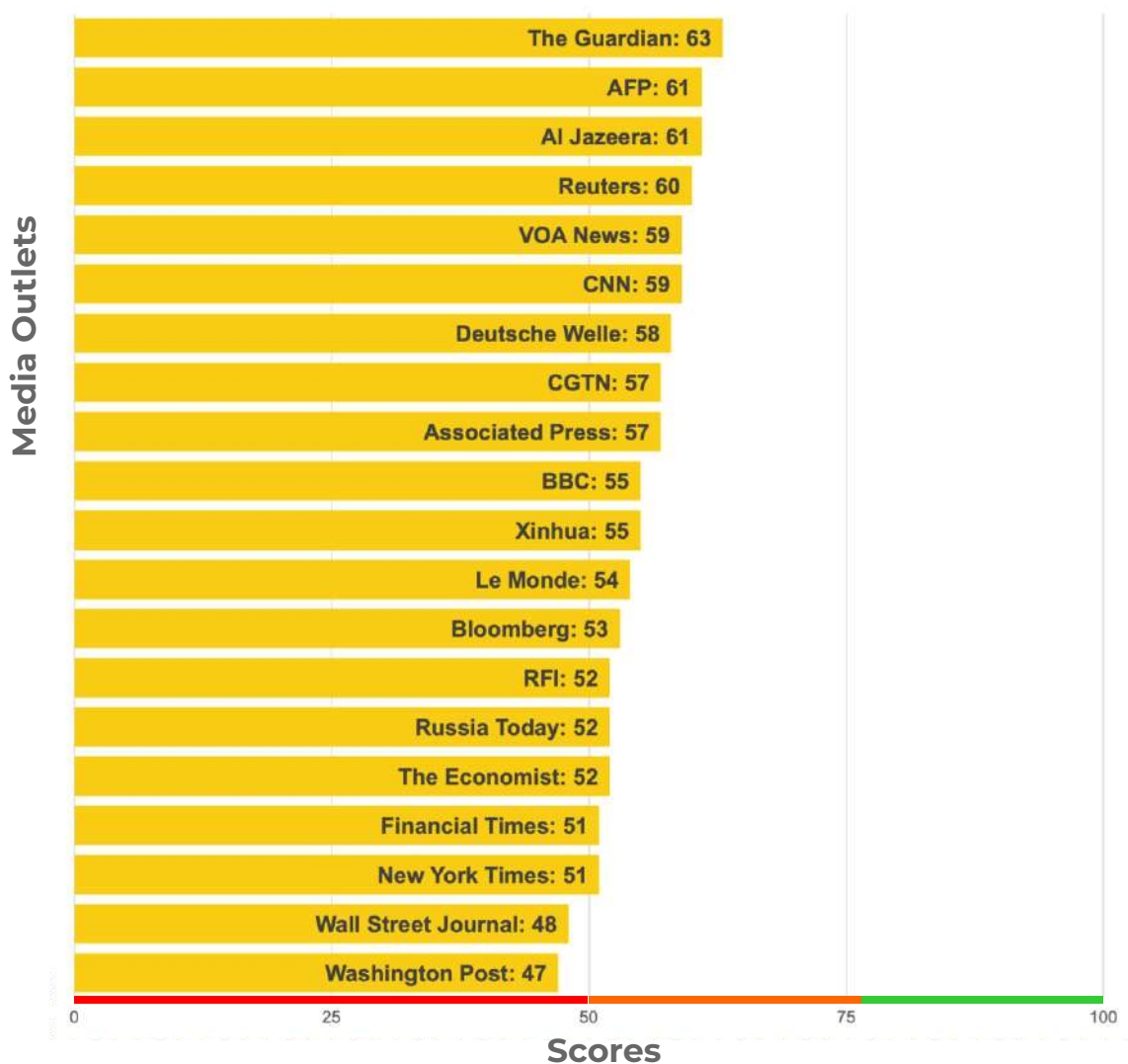
However, this is based on manifest reading of the content, whereas a qualitative approach that includes latent meanings of stories is likely to identify elements of stereotype and balance as just a veneer.



# The Global Media Index

Here, we present the results from the Global Media Index for Africa, showcasing the average score and overall rankings of all 20 media outlets based on their performance across all four indicators.

Figure: Global Media Index for Africa: Media Outlets Ranked



**Key:** ■ 0 - 49/100 = Low-performing ■ 50 - 79/100 = Medium-performing ■ 80 - 100 = High-performing

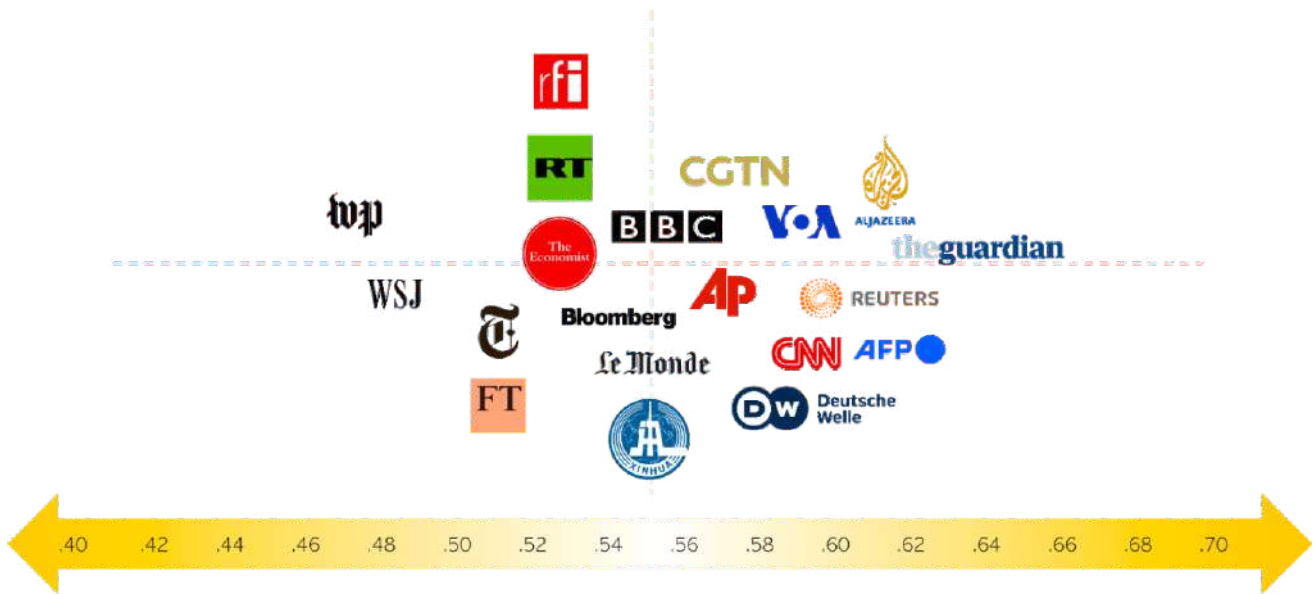
## Results:

The overall score averages individual media performance across all four indicators.

*The Guardian* ranks highest with a total score of 63, while *The Washington Post* has the lowest score at 47. While there are highlights in depth of coverage, reflecting awareness of criticisms against superficial reporting, there's still a lack of diversity in voices and topics. This perpetuates old stereotypes of Africa as a troubled continent dominated by political, economic, and social issues, with powerful figures defining newsworthiness.

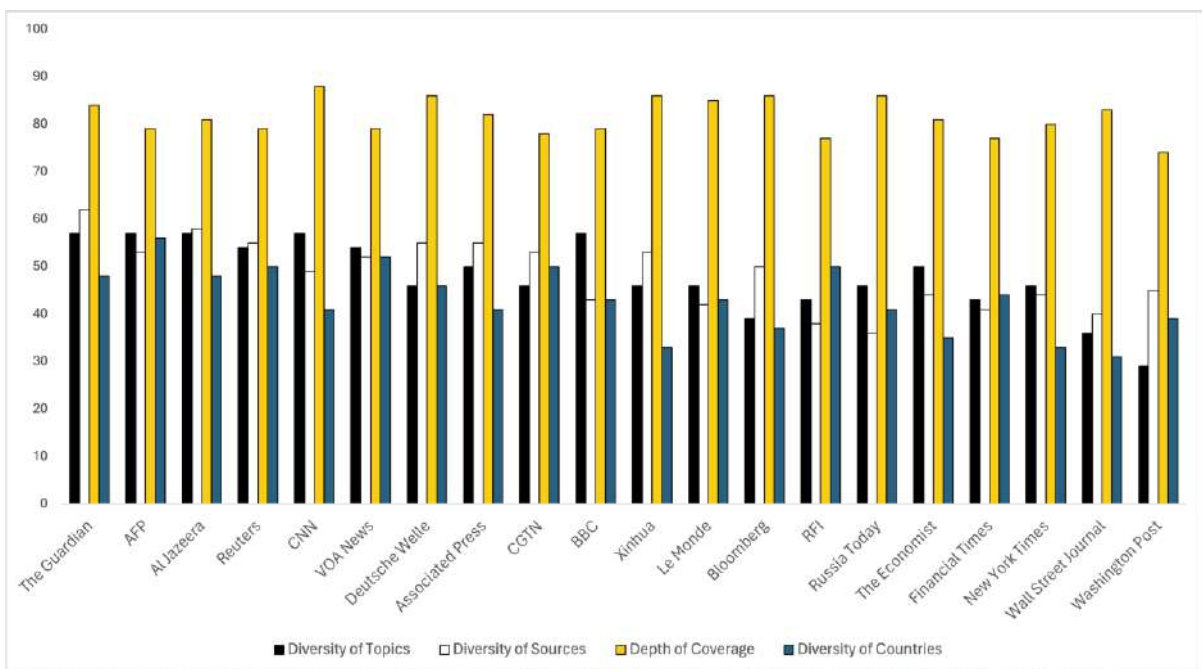


Figure: Single Axis Logo “Scatter” Plot: Overall Index of Media Outlets



The average score for the Global Media Index for Africa is 52.55 out of 100 which puts the collective performance of all 20 media outlets just above low-performing.

Figure: Grouped bar chart: Index Comparison Across Media Outlets



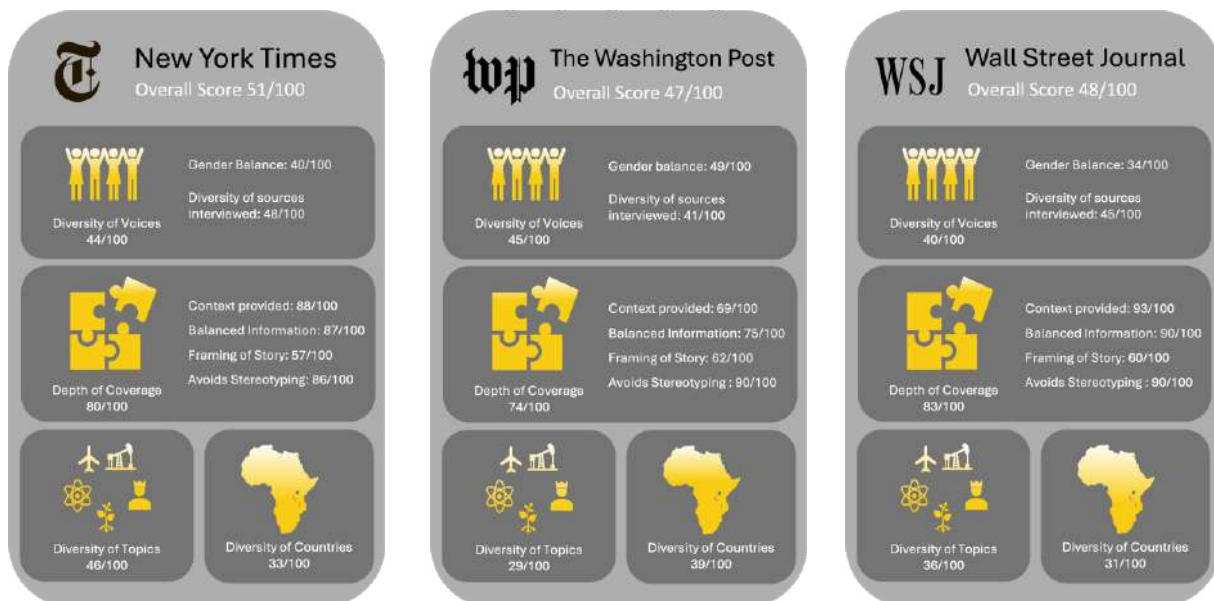


# Rankings

## The Top Three High-performing Media Outlets



## The Bottom Three Low-performing Media Outlets





# Key Highlights

Below is a summary of key highlights from the *Global Media Index for Africa*.

- *The Guardian* is in first place on the index for its overall coverage of the continent, with a score of 63%. It was also number one for the diversity of topics covered, with a score of 57%.
- At second and third places overall on the index are *AFP* and *Reuters* agencies, with scores of 61% and 60%, respectively. *AFP* also came in first place for covering the most African countries of the outlets assessed, with a score of 56%.
- Three leading American powerhouse media organisations came in at the bottom of the index at 18th, 19th and 20th positions. They were the *New York Times* (51%), *Wall Street Journal* (48%), and *Washington Post* (47%).
- Without exception, the global media organisations in this study devoted disproportionate space to powerful men — from politicians and businesspeople to experts — as primary news sources in their stories about Africa; showing that men still dominate news in and about Africa.
- Most of the global media in the index only covered a handful of African countries in depth in their reports, showing that global media still largely treats Africa as a country. *Wall Street Journal* came in at the bottom of the index in the 20th position for the limited number of countries it reported on, with a score of 31%.
- There were no high performers in the 'diversity of topics' reported on, with the lion's share of news about Africa being about politics, poverty, corruption and related negative subjects. There was scant attention to topics such as culture, the arts, innovation, technology, and other positive developments in the continent found in the online stories.
- The *Washington Post*, with a score of 29%, ranked lowest for the 'diversity of topics' covered, representing a continuity of previous patterns found in many media of framing Africa through the lens of its stereotypes.
- The voices of ordinary Africans were missing in the stories because global reporting still privileges the voices of powerful elites, both local and international. These include experts, politicians, national leaders, international organisations and others. Very little attention is given to ordinary citizens and other traditionally marginalised voices like young people, women, traditional leaders etc. Once again, *The Guardian* is in first place with a score of 62% for the range of diverse voices in its articles. *Russia Today* ranked at number 20 with a score of 36%.
- For the 'depth of coverage' on their stories, overall, all 20 outlets generally performed well across the four sub-indicators of balance, context, framing, and avoidance of stereotypes.
- Balance — the only outlet that scored below 75% is *CGNT*, which is in the 20th place with a score of 68%. *Deutsche Welle* and *Le Monde* share the first place with a score of 94%.
- Context — most outlets offered detailed information to aid reader



comprehension, including hyperlinks and context sections within news stories. *Le Monde's* score of 95% put it ahead of the rest in first position. Once again *Washington Post's* score of 69% puts it in 20th place.

- Stereotype avoidance was generally good across outlets despite some variance. Coming in at number one is *Xinhua* with a score of 97%. *The Economist* is in the 20th position with a score of 80%.



Picture credit: DC Studio on Freepik



# Recommendations

Based on the results of this index, we propose the following policy recommendations for media organisations, funders, regulatory bodies amongst other stakeholders to consider:

## 1: Invest in Media Diversity and Gender Equity

We urge media organisations to prioritise and invest themselves in creating diversity in the newsroom - with a focus on gender equity. We also ask media funders to consider funding initiatives and training programs that increase diversity in newsrooms.

## 2: Ensure Depth, Context, and Collaboration

We call upon media organizations to adopt ethical storytelling principles to enhance balanced reporting, depth, and context in African coverage. We also ask for media regulatory bodies to establish guidelines that ensure that coverage of Africa adheres to ethical storytelling principles. Furthermore, we advocate for more collaboration between media outlets, regulatory bodies, researchers,

and civil society organizations to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of African narratives.

## 3: Improve Media Literacy and Cross-Cultural Understanding

We appeal to education ministries, cultural exchange organizations, and international media associations to prioritize media literacy initiatives and cross-cultural exchange programs. By integrating media literacy into school curricula and launching public awareness campaigns, we can empower audiences to critically evaluate media coverage of Africa. Additionally, supporting cross-cultural exchange programs, festivals, and partnerships will contribute to fostering mutual understanding and respect between African and international communities.

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