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GCMJ launches Multilateral Journalism Index to measure global governance reporting

Geneva pilot finds stronger substantive and explanatory reporting than source diversity across 247 coverage records from 71 media outlets.



Media and participants at the UN Secretary-General candidates' debate in Geneva on 9 June 2026, the opening day of the MJJ pilot study. Photo: John Heilprin/GCMJ.

GENEVA, Sept. 21, 2026 - Journalism covering international organizations in Geneva was strongest at providing substantive information and explaining why events mattered, while drawing on a narrower range of sources and perspectives, according to a new index released Monday.

The Geneva Center for Multilateral Journalism, or GCMJ, developed the **Multilateral Journalism Index** to examine how news coverage helps people understand the institutions and decisions behind global affairs.

The six-week pilot analyzed **247 coverage records from 71 media outlets** and tracked **27 multilateral events** involving artificial intelligence, human rights, climate policy, global health, international security and other subjects. Of those records, 230 received full MJJ scores.

Each piece of journalism was evaluated for four things: the amount of substantive reporting it contained; how clearly it explained why the story mattered; how well it explained the institutions and decision-making processes involved; and the range of sources and perspectives it included.

Those measures produced separate scores for **Substance, Public Understanding, Governance Literacy and Source Diversity**, with each contributing equally to the overall MJJ score.

The pilot's overall score was **67.4 out of 100**, establishing the first baseline for the Index. Substance scored 75.3, followed by Public Understanding at 72.7, Governance Literacy at 69.5 and Source Diversity at 52.0.

The pattern shows reporting that was strongest at providing substantive information and helping audiences understand the significance of events. The lower Governance Literacy and Source Diversity scores point to greater room for explaining how multilateral institutions work and incorporating a wider range of sources and perspectives.

International institutions make decisions that affect billions of people, while the specialist journalism needed to explain those decisions is under growing pressure. The MJJ is designed to show where multilateral reporting is strong, where important gaps persist and how coverage changes over time. By building that evidence, GCMJ aims to strengthen independent journalism, improve public understanding and ultimately support a more accountable and resilient multilateral system.

“The MJJ gives us a way to see where global governance is being explained well and where stronger journalism is needed,” said Ronald Powers, a GCMJ co-founder and veteran Associated Press journalist and editor based in Washington. “This pilot gives us a baseline. The real value will come from following it over time.”

The study found that much of International Geneva's reporting capacity rests with a relatively small community of specialist correspondents and international wire service journalists. Institutional significance also did not always correspond with media attention, with political events and crises tending to generate more coverage than some technically important negotiations and governance processes.

Artificial intelligence and technology formed the largest subject category, accounting for **72 coverage records**. Climate governance, global health, nuclear verification and other scientific and technical subjects also featured prominently.

The study also examined the growing amount of news and information published directly by international organizations. Journalism and direct institutional reporting produced similar scores for Substance and Public Understanding. Direct institutional reporting scored higher for Governance Literacy, **76.6 to 67.7**, while journalism had a much higher Source Diversity score, **54.6 to 32.4**.

The pilot combined analysis of published coverage with direct observation, case studies and mapping of the International Geneva reporting environment.

Sydney Wiser, a Mount Holyoke College student participating in the University of Geneva-Smith College Junior Year Abroad Program, conducted research, database development, coding and data collection while also reporting from Geneva for GCMJ. Powers also served as a journalism mentor during Wiser's internship.



Sydney Wiser at the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the MJI pilot study. Photo: John Heilprin/GCMJ.

“Through this internship I realized, more so than I ever had before, the value of journalism as a bridge between the public and the officials who make decisions through informal sessions, days-long meetings, and closed-door negotiations,” Wiser wrote in her reflection on the project.

Future editions of the MJI are expected to extend the observation period, refine the methodology, strengthen reliability testing and examine additional institutions and centers of multilateral governance.

GCMJ was founded by **John Heilprin, Powers and Dr. Christoph B. Egger**. The center focuses on strengthening independent journalism and research on global governance to improve public understanding of international organizations.

The **MJI Pilot Index 2026**, **MJI Pilot Report 2026** and **Executive Summary** are being published together. They are based on the finalized **MJI Master Database v4.3**.

MJI 2026
Executive Summary | Pilot Index | Full Report

Geneva Center for Multilateral Journalism
gcmj.ch



GCMJ.CH

MEDIA & INQUIRIES

gcmj@protonmail.ch

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