

Airports in the News, 2019-2026: Attention, Geography and Tone of Global Airport Coverage, and How It Compares with Research and Invention

Fliar BI · Prism Research Layer · Working paper, October 2026 · Dataset and code: github.com/fliarbi/prism-news-api · Licence CC BY-NC 4.0

Abstract

We measure how airports were covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 724,354 de-duplicated airport articles, and set that coverage beside 15,897 research papers and 7,829 patent families on airports. Six results stand out:

1. **Attention, not traffic.** Airports took a 22.3% smaller share of news in 2020 than in 2019. By 2025 their share (49.75 per 10,000 articles) was still 12.75% below 2019 (57.02), although raw counts almost doubled.
2. **Events.** The highest monthly share was August 2021, the month of the Kabul airport evacuations, at 100.02 articles per 10,000. January 2020, the month of the first airport health screenings for the novel coronavirus, ranks third (82.7).
3. **Geography.** India's share of located airport news is 1.61 times its share of all news. The United States, the largest source of located airport articles (32.24%), is under-represented at 0.67. The United Arab Emirates (4.04), Nepal (3.56), Qatar (3.33), Thailand (3.09) and Saudi Arabia (2.96) are the most over-represented countries with at least 595 located articles (as many as Qatar). Within India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (6.25, on 98 articles), Delhi (2.01) and Goa (1.74) lead; within the United States, Hawaii (3.38), Alaska (2.22) and Arizona (2.15).
4. **Shifting attention.** From 2023 to 2025, airport coverage rose fastest as a share of South Korea's news (1.5 times) and fell most in Ireland (0.35) and France (0.4).
5. **Tone and themes.** 51% of airport articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and 57.9% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%). Terminal facilities (21.63% of themed articles) and security measures (12.68%) are the leading themes.
6. **Research and invention.** Airport papers grew from 2.06 to 2.5 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025. Airport patent families grew 4.3-fold from 2015 to 2024, and China's office held 88.1% of their office filings.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** August 2021 was the peak month for airport news, at 100.02 articles per 10,000, 2.28 times the 2021 average.
- **F2.** Airports took a 22.3% smaller share of news in 2020 than in 2019 (44.29 vs 57.02 per 10,000).
- **F3.** In 2025 the share (49.75 per 10,000) was still 12.75% below 2019.
- **F4.** January 2020 was the third-highest month for airport news, at 82.7 per 10,000.
- **F5.** India's share of located airport news (21.29%) was 1.61 times its share of all news. The United States' (32.24%) was 0.67 times.

- **F6.** Among countries with at least 595 located articles (as many as Qatar), the United Arab Emirates (4.04), Qatar (3.33) and Saudi Arabia (2.96) were three of the five most over-represented.
- **F7.** 51% of airport articles were negative in tone, 1.52 times the all-news share; 57.9% were rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
- **F8.** Security measures appeared in 12.68% of themed airport articles, 125.24 times their rate in all themed news.
- **F9.** Terminal facilities were the leading theme, in 21.63% of themed airport articles.
- **F10.** Flight delay compensation appeared in 6.96% of themed airport articles, 72.12 times its rate in all news.
- **F11.** Airport papers rose 1.22-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F12.** Airport patent families grew 4.3-fold from 2015 to 2024; China's office held 88.1% of office filings.
- **F13.** Within India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (6.25, on 98 articles), Delhi (2.01) and Goa (1.74) had the most over-represented airport coverage; Uttarakhand (0.34) and Haryana (0.38) the least.
- **F14.** Within the United States, Hawaii (3.38), Alaska (2.22) and Arizona (2.15) had the most over-represented airport coverage; New Jersey (0.2) and Pennsylvania (0.46) the least.
- **F15.** Airport coverage as a share of South Korea's news rose 1.5-fold from 2023 to 2025.

1. Introduction

Airports are where air transport meets the public. They appear in the news for many reasons: new terminals and routes, strikes and delays, security incidents, crashes, evacuations, and the arrival of a disease. Coverage of airports is therefore a record of attention to air travel as a whole. Yet it is rarely measured as data. Traffic statistics record passengers. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record how much of the news airports take, and when, where and in what tone.

This paper and its dataset do that. They combine three records for one topic: a global news index, research papers and patents. Each comparison uses a denominator, so that growth in the index or in publishing is not mistaken for growth in interest. The companion dataset publishes an article-level sample (91,076 rows) and full coverage tables, so every figure here can be re-derived. The [Prism News API](#) serves the full history.

2. Data and methods

News. The Prism news index holds articles from outlets worldwide; non-English articles are indexed in English translation. Each article carries its opening text (the first few sentences), a primary location, a graded tone label, an editorial priority rating (1–9), themes, keywords and named organisations. We count unique article identifiers; repeated rows for the same article are removed. When this release was built, 92.88% of the index was readable, so all counts are lower bounds.

Matching. An article is about airports when its opening text contains *airport*, *airports*, *aerodrome* or *aerodromes* as whole words. Several families of matches are excluded:

- a cryptocurrency exchange named Aerodrome and its token listings;
- job notices and classified listings that name an airport employer;
- automated airport weather warnings;
- headline sidebars ("most read", "latest news") and a few boilerplate paragraphs that the index repeats across many unrelated articles.

Together these removed 7,056 of 731,410 raw matches (0.96%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 38 used the word for an aviation facility (precision 95%), and in 25 (62.5%) an airport, its operations or its passengers were the main subject. The rest mention an airport in passing, for example as the place of an arrest or a dateline.

Measures. Coverage over time is expressed per 10,000 articles in the index that month or year, because the index grew from 11,807,177 articles in 2019 to 26,990,006 in 2025. Year comparisons use 2019–2025; 2026 covers January–July only. Geography, tone, priority and themes use January 2023 – July 2026. Of the 423,809 airport articles in that window, 242,434 (57.2%) carry a primary country. Place tags derived from ordinary words ("Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile", "Hurricane"; 714 words in all) were treated as unlocated in every location field, which removed 15.3% of city-tagged articles. Geography is expressed as lift: a country's share of airport articles divided by its share of all located articles. For states, the baseline is all located news from the same country.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *airport*, *airports* or *aerodrome* in the title. Repository deposits and the cryptocurrency sense of "aerodrome" are excluded. Patent families (2005–2024) use the same title rule and are counted once per filing office.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 724,354 airport articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 67,325 in 2019 to 134,271 in 2025, 1.99 times. The share of all news did not rise (Table 1). It was 57.02 per 10,000 in 2019, fell to 44.29 in 2020, a 22.3% drop, and recovered only slowly, to 49.75 in 2025. That is 12.75% below 2019. The lowest month was April 2020, at 29.89 per 10,000, when air travel had largely stopped.

Year	Airport articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	67,325	11,807,177	57.02
2020	71,876	16,230,014	44.29
2021	75,834	17,281,220	43.88
2022	85,476	19,115,515	44.72
2023	98,125	20,484,506	47.9
2024	113,457	23,311,896	48.67
2025	134,271	26,990,006	49.75

Table 1. Airport articles per year and as a share of the index. 2026 (January–July) is partial and omitted.

Coverage is driven by events, not seasons (Figure 1). The highest monthly share was August 2021, the month of the Kabul airport evacuations, at 100.02 per 10,000, 2.28 times the average for 2021. March 2026 was second (90.9) and January 2020, the month of the first airport health screenings for the novel coronavirus, third (82.7). March 2026 also holds the largest raw count of any month (24,309 articles).

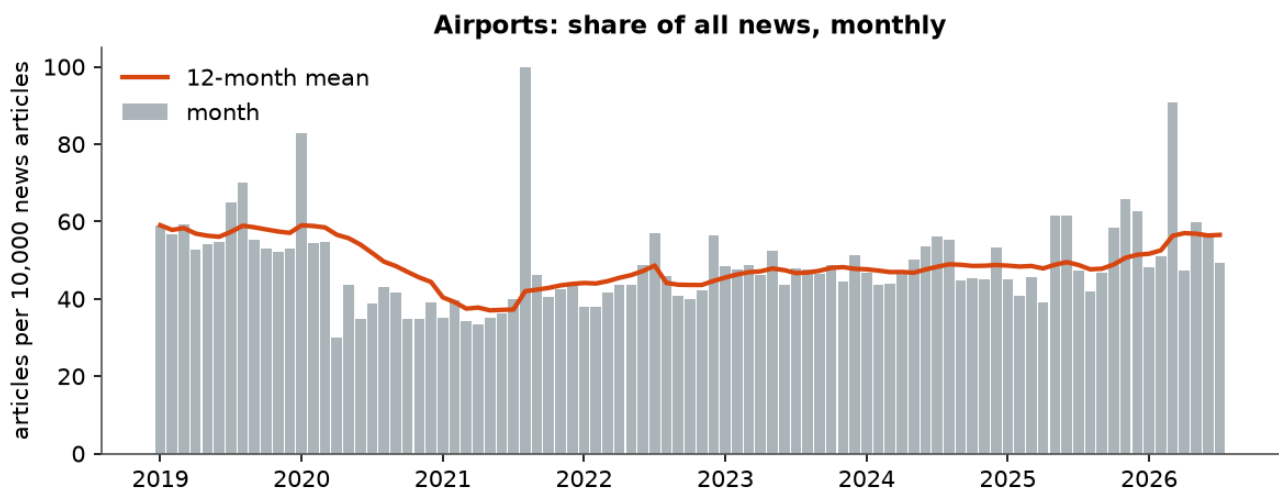


Figure 1. Airport coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

The seasonal pattern is weak (Figure 2). August (10.2%) and January (9.6%) hold the largest shares of a typical year's airport articles, and April the smallest (6.98%). An even spread would give 8.3% per month.

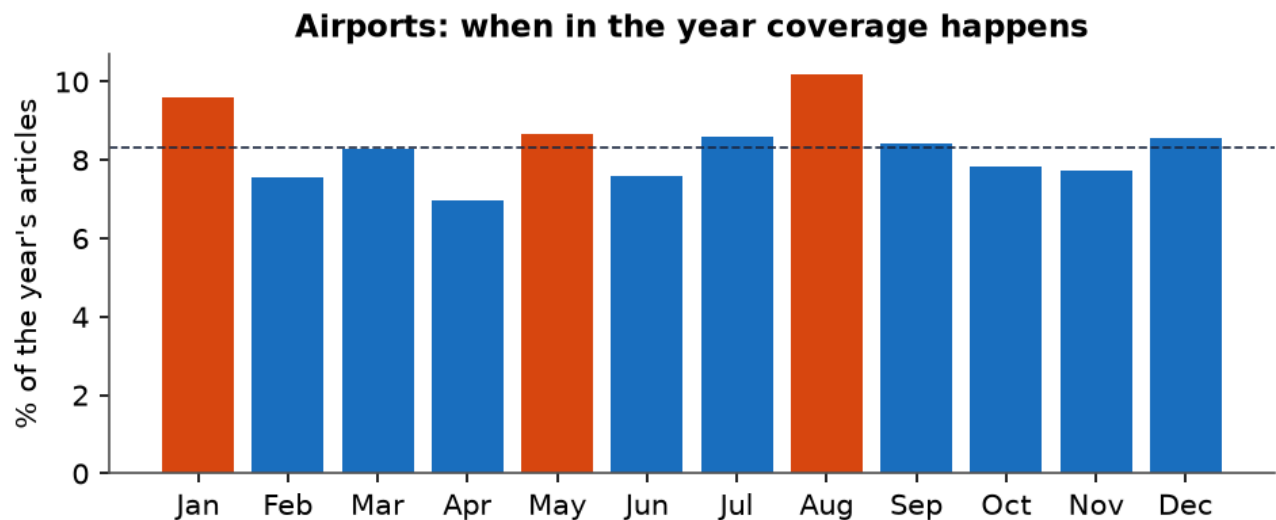


Figure 2. Share of each year's airport articles published in each month, averaged over 2019-2025. Dashed line = an even spread (8.3% per month).

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 242,434 airport articles carried a primary location. The United States holds the largest raw share (32.24%), but its lift is 0.67: airports take a smaller share of American news than of news overall. India's share (21.29%) comes with a lift of 1.61. The most over-represented countries with at least 595 located articles (as many as Qatar) are the United Arab Emirates, Nepal, Qatar, Thailand and Saudi Arabia, followed by Malaysia (2.2), Indonesia and Turkey (both 2.1) and Singapore (2.04) (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located airport articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
United States	78,169	32.24	0.67
India	51,625	21.29	1.61
United Kingdom	16,395	6.76	1.16
United Arab Emirates	6,380	2.63	4.04
China	4,978	2.05	0.78
Australia	4,932	2.03	0.95
Nigeria	4,884	2.01	1.47
France	4,439	1.83	0.93
Singapore	4,407	1.82	2.04
Germany	3,809	1.57	1.34
Canada	3,661	1.51	0.7
Turkey	1,615	0.67	2.1
Indonesia	1,415	0.58	2.1
Malaysia	958	0.4	2.2
Nepal	1,555	0.64	3.56
Saudi Arabia	1,540	0.64	2.96
Thailand	1,421	0.59	3.09
Qatar	595	0.25	3.33

Table 2. The eleven countries with the most located airport news, followed by every other country with at least 595 located articles and a lift above 2, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news.

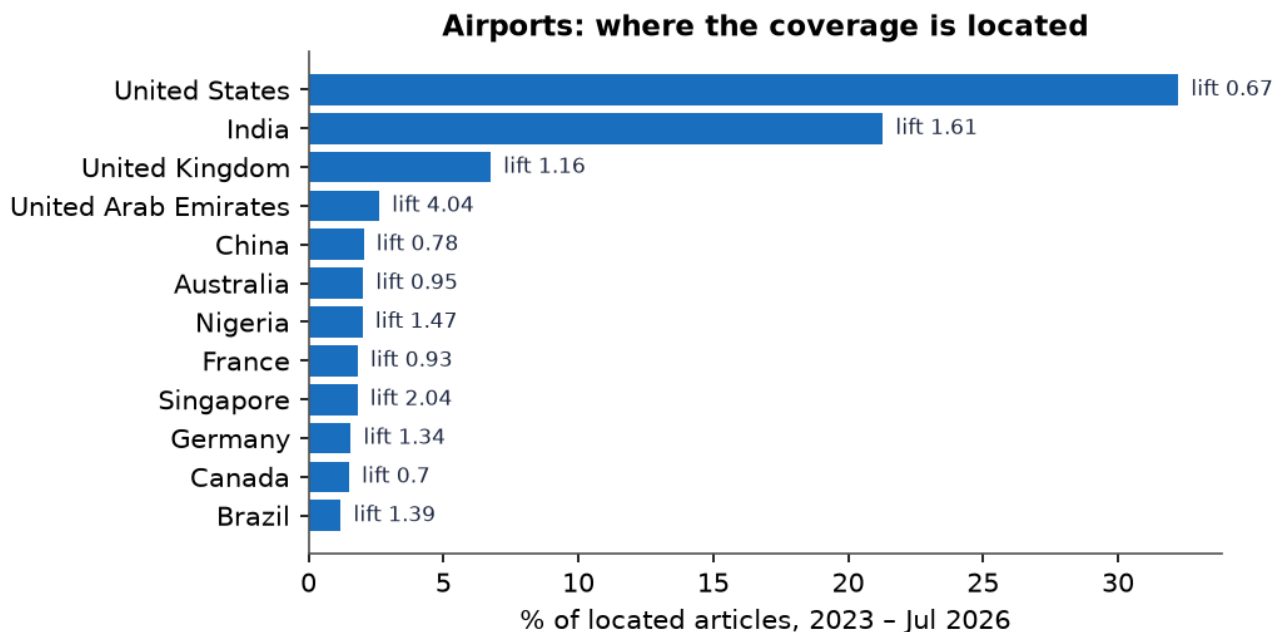


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located airport articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Airports are over-represented in the news of the Gulf, South and Southeast Asia and parts of Africa, and under-represented in Ukraine, Sweden, the United States, Canada, Ireland, South Africa, China and Austria. By continent, Asia (1.59) and Africa (1.27) are over-represented, Oceania (1.05), South America

(1.04) and Europe (1.02) sit close to their weight in the index, and North America (0.67) is well below it (Figure 7, left).

Airports: which countries over- and under-cover the topic

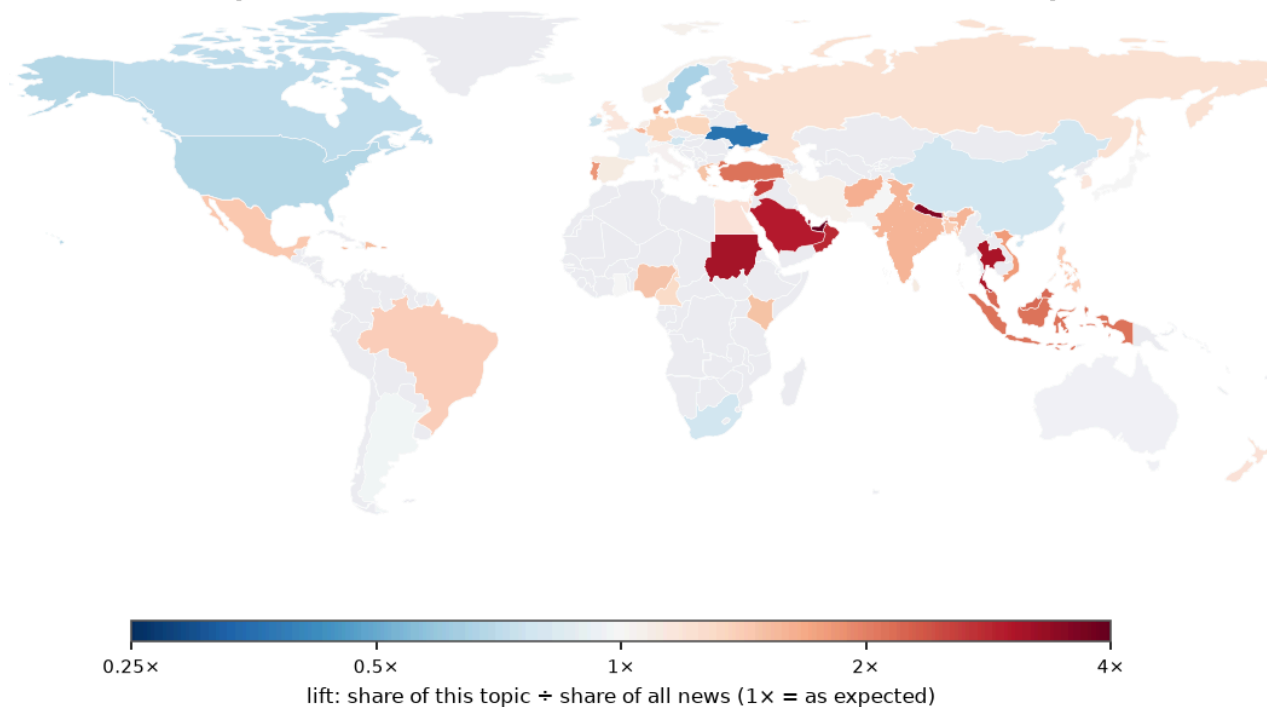


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located airport articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = fewer than 100 articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is sharper (Table 3). In India, the highest lift is in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (6.25), on only 98 articles, most of them tagged Port Blair. Among the larger states, airport coverage is concentrated in Delhi, which holds 26.13% of located Indian airport articles and has a lift of 2.01, and in Goa (1.74). Karnataka (1.26), Gujarat (1.21) and Tripura (1.15) are slightly over-represented. Several northern and central states are under-represented: Uttarakhand (0.34), Haryana (0.38), Chhattisgarh (0.49), Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh (both 0.5) and Madhya Pradesh (0.51) (Figure 5). In the United States, Hawaii (3.38), Alaska (2.22) and Arizona (2.15) lead by lift, followed by Kansas (2.03) and Virginia (1.97). Part of the Kansas figure comes from place tags attached to coverage of a single mid-air collision near Washington, D.C., so its rank is not stated as a finding. New Jersey (0.2) and Pennsylvania (0.46) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6).

India: state	Articles	Lift	United States: state	Articles	Lift
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	98	6.25	Hawaii	653	3.38
Delhi	12,174	2.01	Alaska	289	2.22
Goa	447	1.74	Arizona	827	2.15
Karnataka	3,257	1.26	Kansas	762	2.03
Gujarat	1,857	1.21	Virginia	1,236	1.97
<i>Lowest</i>			<i>Lowest</i>		
Himachal Pradesh	317	0.5	Oklahoma	430	0.55
Jharkhand	567	0.5	Wyoming	83	0.54
Chhattisgarh	308	0.49	South Dakota	114	0.49
Haryana	457	0.38	Pennsylvania	1,763	0.46
Uttarakhand	359	0.34	New Jersey	2,461	0.2

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in airport coverage, January 2023 – July 2026. Lift = the state's share of the country's located airport articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country. States and territories with fewer than 50 articles (in India Ladakh, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Puducherry, Daman and Diu; in the US Vermont, 41) are left out.

Airports: states of India by lift

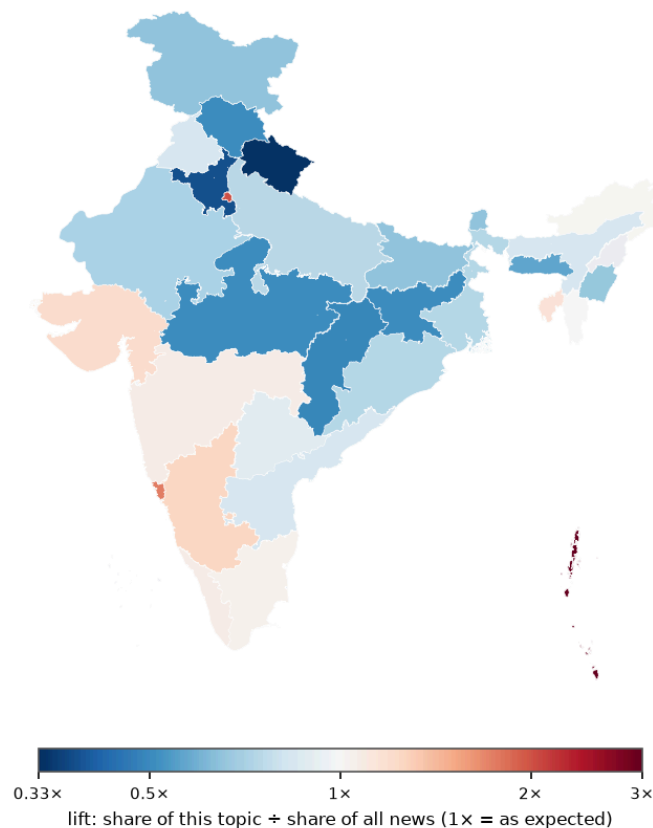


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located airport articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Airports: states of United States by lift

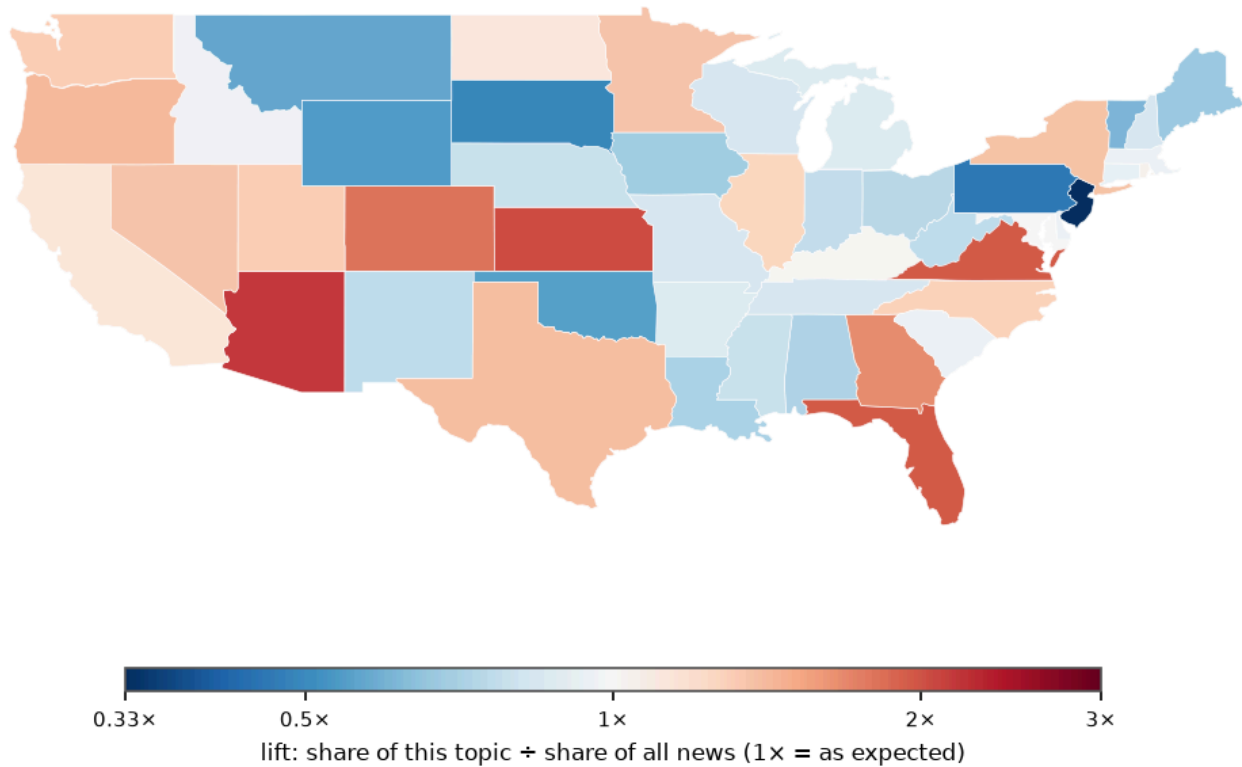


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located airport articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Table 4, Figure 7, right). Measured as airport articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, South Korea rose from 50.64 in 2023 to 75.75 in 2025 (1.5 times), the largest rise among the 25 countries with the most airport coverage. Spain (1.34), Israel (1.28) and the United States (1.27) followed. Ireland fell from 64.33 to 22.61 (0.35 times), France from 79.94 to 32.04 (0.4) and Nepal from 335.16 to 179.95 (0.54).

Rising	2023	2025	Ratio	Falling	2023	2025	Ratio
South Korea	50.64	75.75	1.5	Ireland	64.33	22.61	0.35
Spain	60.39	81.16	1.34	France	79.94	32.04	0.4
Israel	82.14	105.25	1.28	Nepal	335.16	179.95	0.54
United States	34.31	43.51	1.27	Brazil	116.42	70.14	0.6

Table 4. Airport articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2023 and 2025, for the countries with the largest rises and falls among the 25 with the most airport coverage.

Airport coverage is more negative than each country's news overall in all but four of the countries with a tone baseline, but the gap varies. Relative to the national baseline it is widest in the Netherlands (45.6% negative against 16.8% of Dutch news), South Korea (63.8% against 25.0%), Denmark (64.2% against 28.1%) and Japan (51% against 23.3%). In four countries airport news is less negative than the national baseline: Ghana (39.7% against 43.3%), Qatar (31.3% against 38.6%), Ukraine (70.7% against 72.4%) and Argentina (38.6% against 40%).

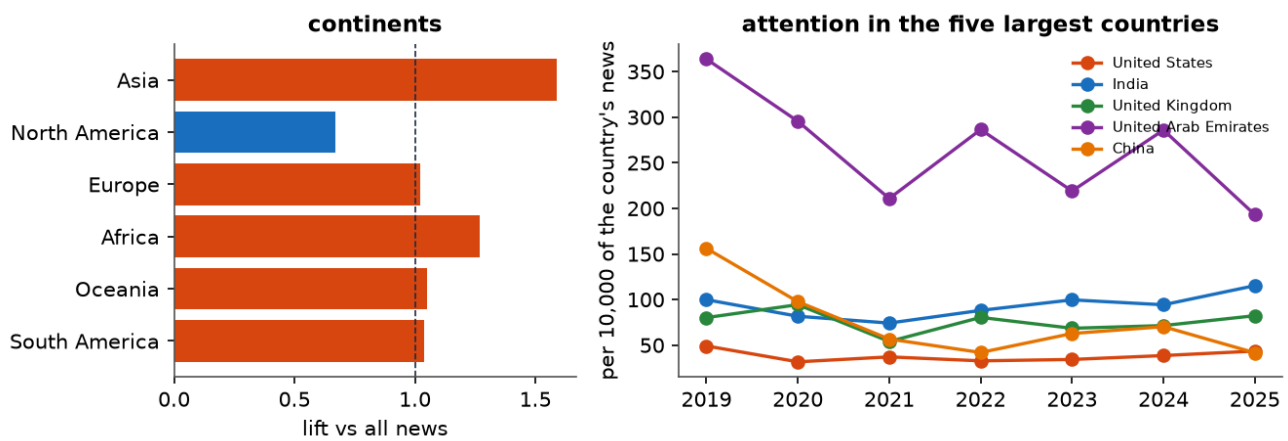


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: airport articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Airport coverage is more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 51% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (1.52 times). Editorial priority puts 57.9% of airport articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (1.36 times).

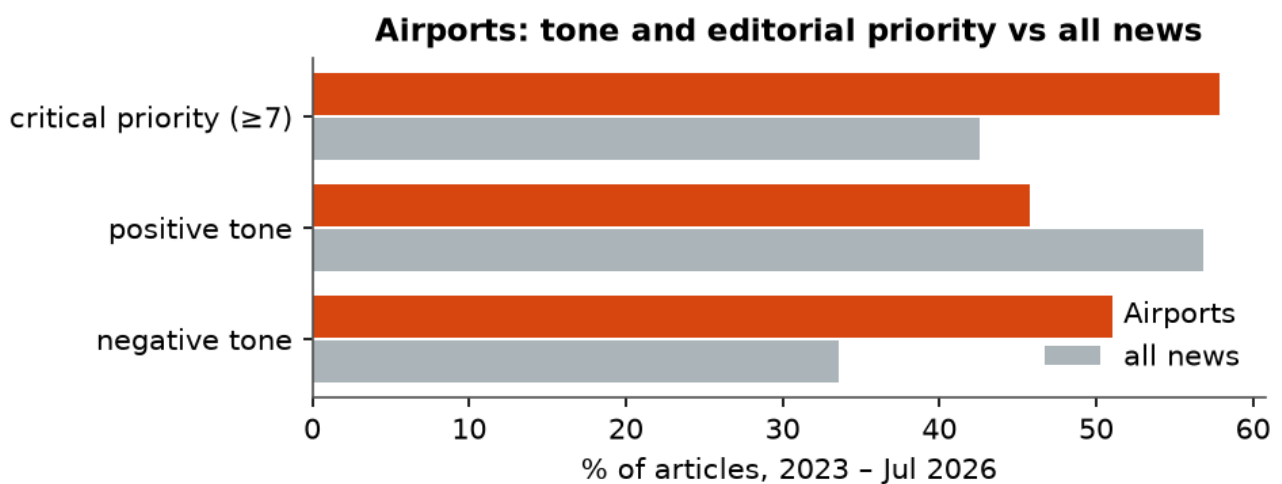


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, airport articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what airport stories are about (Table 5). Terminal facilities are the most common theme (21.63% of themed articles). Security measures appear in 12.68%, aviation safety in 10.24%, immigration and customs in 8.67% and crash investigations in 8.37%. Delay compensation (6.96%) and ground handling (5.27%) are smaller but highly specific to the topic.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
airport terminal facilities	53,266	21.63	148.17
aviation industry airport infrastructure development	15,451	6.27	139.85
airport ground handling services	12,987	5.27	137.07
airport immigration and customs procedures	21,348	8.67	134.56
airport security measures	31,236	12.68	125.24
air traffic control systems	13,534	5.5	106.7
aircraft de-icing procedures	4,213	1.71	97.84
flight delay compensation policies	17,151	6.96	72.12

Table 5. Themes most specific to airport coverage (lift against all themed news), January 2023 – July 2026.

The organisations named most often are aviation regulators, manufacturers and airlines: the Federal Aviation Administration (17,139 articles), the Transportation Security Administration (13,564), Boeing (13,484), American Airlines (11,308) and Air India (8,136). Wire services also rank high, which reflects how airport news is sourced.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on airports grew slightly faster than the scientific literature. Papers with an airport term in the title rose from 1,445 in 2015 (2.06 per 10,000 papers) to 1,761 in 2025 (2.5 per 10,000), a 1.22-fold increase in share, while the total literature in the corpus grew by a factor of 1.0 over the same years. Between 2015 and 2025, 15,897 such papers were published; the leading venue is the Journal of Air Transport Management (322 papers). The most-cited include work on airport air pollution and health, on aircraft noise and heart disease, on delay propagation, and on airport screening for the novel coronavirus [1–6].

News attention does not track research attention (Figure 9). Research share rose gently over the period, while news share fell sharply in 2020 and has recovered only in part.

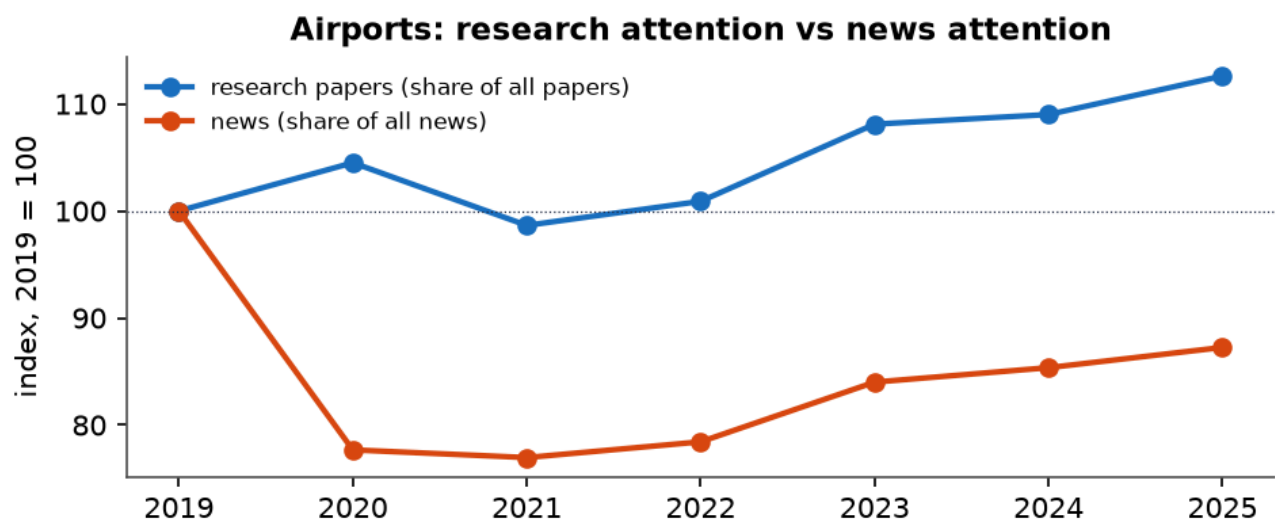


Figure 9. Research papers with airport in the title (share of all papers) and airport news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

Patenting rose faster still: 299 airport-related patent families were published in 2015 and 1,285 in 2024 (4.3 times). China's office holds 88.1% of office filings from 2015 to 2024, followed by the United States (3.6%) and the European Patent Office (1.9%) (Figure 10). These shares are of office-family pairs. The leading technology classes are business data processing (G06Q, 591 families), traffic control for aircraft (G08G, 312) and electric digital data processing (G06F, 279), ahead of aircraft ground installations (B64F, 214).

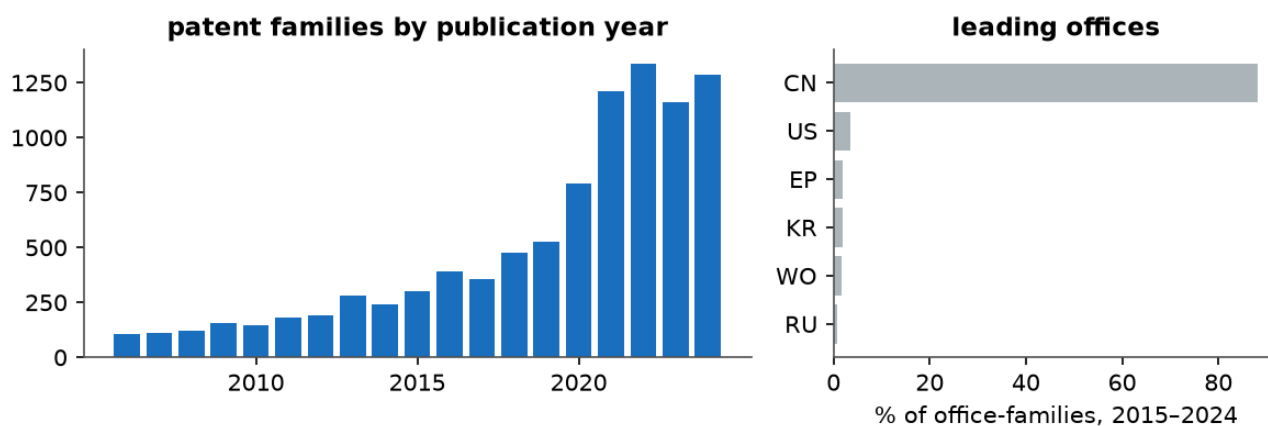


Figure 10. Airport-related patent families by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015–2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of airports. First, coverage measures attention. The 2020 fall and the slow recovery reflect what else was in the news as well as what happened at airports; the peaks fall in months of single large events, such as the Kabul evacuations. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States leads airport news in raw terms but is under-represented relative to its weight in the index. Airports take the largest share of attention in the Gulf states, Nepal and Thailand. Within India, airport coverage concentrates on Delhi; within the United States, on Hawaii and Alaska, two states that depend on air links. The data describe where coverage concentrates; they do not test why. Third, a keyword count of "airport news" mixes stories about airports with stories that only happen at one. About a third of matched articles mention an airport in passing.

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share grows slowly. Patent filings grow fastest and are concentrated in one office, much of it in data processing rather than in physical infrastructure. News follows events. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether disruptions with heavy coverage are followed by research or patent activity in the affected country.

5. Limitations

- **Index availability.** 92.88% of the index was readable at build time, so counts are lower bounds. Shares and lifts are less affected, because the missing part is spread across topics.
- **Coverage after May 2026.** The index thins after May 2026, so 2026 is partial and is excluded from year comparisons.
- **Matching.** Matching uses the article opening. Articles that mention airports only later are missed, 5% of matches are not about airports, and about a third mention an airport only in passing.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority and themes are machine-labelled. The city field is noisy and is not analysed.
- **Place tags.** Place tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated (15.3% of city-tagged articles). This lowers the located share to 57.2% and changes some country and state lifts; a few remaining tags still follow one story to a state, as with Kansas.

- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets. This shapes geography; Indian and American outlets are numerous.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. Some papers use an airport only as the name of a weather station. Office shares reflect filing practice; utility models are numerous in China.

Data availability

The dataset (article sample, monthly and country tables, research and patent tables, all metrics) is released under CC BY-NC 4.0 with this paper. The sample holds 91,076 of 724,209 matched articles to 31 July 2026. Full article text, headlines, publishers, later articles and other topics are served by the Prism News API: <https://github.com/fliarbi/prism-news-api> (base URL <https://radar-api.fliarbi.com/news>). A worked query: `prism-news trends "airport" --since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

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