

Crimes against Women in the News, 2019-2026: Attention, Geography and Tone of Global Coverage, and How It Compares with Research

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

A note on this topic. This paper measures news coverage of rape, sexual assault, femicide and related crimes. It names no victim, accused person or individual case, and gives no detail of how or where any crime took place. If you or someone you know is struggling, contact local emergency services or a crisis line.

Abstract

We measure how crimes against women were covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 403,021 de-duplicated articles, and set that coverage beside 31,739 research papers published between 2015 and 2025. All results describe attention in the news, not the incidence of crime. Six results stand out:

1. **Falling share.** The topic took 42.9 of every 10,000 news articles in 2019 and 22.17 in 2025, a 48.32% smaller share. Raw counts rose because the index grew.
2. **Peaks.** The share fell 43.45% from 2019 to 2020. The highest monthly share was December 2019, at 72.2 per 10,000. The largest monthly count was August 2024, at 10,402 articles.
3. **Geography.** India is the largest source of located coverage (33.87%), 2.57 times its share of all news. The United States (32.67%) is under-represented at 0.68. Romania (11.13), India, Bangladesh (2.14) and France (2.0) are the most over-represented countries. Within India, West Bengal (6.8) leads by far; within the United States, New York (2.09).
4. **Shifting attention.** From 2023 to 2025 the topic's share of national news rose 2.83 times in Bangladesh and 9.08 times in Norway, and fell to 0.37 times its earlier level in Ireland.
5. **Tone and urgency.** 93.8% of articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and 92.5% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
6. **Research.** Papers on the topic rose from 3.49 to 4.97 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025, a 1.42-fold rise in share, while news share fell.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** The topic's share of news fell from 42.9 per 10,000 articles in 2019 to 22.17 in 2025 (48.32% lower).
- **F2.** December 2019 was the peak month by share (72.2 per 10,000); August 2024 by count (10,402 articles).
- **F3.** India, the largest source of located coverage (33.87%), had 2.57 times its share of all news. The United States' share (32.67%) was 0.68 times.

- **F4.** Romania (11.13), India (2.57), Bangladesh (2.14) and France (2.0) were the most over-represented countries.
- **F5.** 93.8% of articles were negative in tone, 2.79 times the all-news share.
- **F6.** 92.5% of articles were rated critical priority, 2.17 times the all-news share.
- **F7.** Gender-based violence and femicide appeared in 4.4% of themed articles, 70.09 times its frequency in all news.
- **F8.** Research papers on the topic rose 1.42-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F9.** Within India, West Bengal (6.8), Madhya Pradesh (1.56) and Manipur (1.56) had the most over-represented coverage.
- **F10.** Within the United States, New York (2.09) and California (1.34), the two largest sources, were over-represented.
- **F11.** Coverage as a share of Bangladesh's news rose 2.83 times from 2023 to 2025.
- **F12.** Asia's continent lift was 1.58, against 0.73 for North America.

1. Introduction

Violence against women is a global public-health and human-rights problem. Surveys and police records measure how often it happens. News coverage measures something different: which crimes become public, when, where and in what tone. Coverage shapes public debate, policy responses and the willingness of survivors to report. Yet it is rarely measured as data in its own right.

This paper and its dataset do that for one topic. They combine a global news index with research papers. 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 (50,314 rows) and full coverage tables, so every figure here can be re-derived. The [Prism News API](#) serves the full history.

The paper follows safe-reporting practice. It reports counts, shares and ratios. It does not name or describe individual cases, even where a peak in coverage coincides with one.

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 in scope when its opening text contains one of 20 terms as whole words: *rape*, *raped*, *rapes*, *gang rape* and its spellings, *sexual assault*, *sexually assaulted*, *femicide(s)*, *feminicide*, *dowry death(s)*, *molestation*, *eve-teasing*, *crime(s) against women* and *violence against women*. Four families of matches are excluded:

- agricultural uses ("oilseed rape", rapeseed);
- figurative uses ("rape of the planet", "rape and pillage");
- openings about child abuse, or about offences against "minors" or "children", that do not state the victim's sex;
- listing and navigation pages.

Together these removed 20,048 of 423,069 raw matches (4.74%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings, and a second reviewer re-judged them with one rule applied to all 40. 34 reported a sexual or gender-based crime against a woman or girl, a rape or sexual-assault case against an adult whose sex the opening did not state, or crimes against women as a public issue (precision 85.0%). In 32 (80.0%) such a crime was the main subject. The false positives were offences against a child or teenager whose sex the opening did not state, a war-crimes trial where rape was one charge among many, and a complaint against an institution.

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. Geography, tone, priority and themes use January 2023 – July 2026. In that window 103,128 articles carried a primary country (47.34%). Place tags derived from ordinary words (such as "Congress", "Earth", "Winter" or "Cloud"; 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 place's share of matched articles divided by its share of all located articles. State lift is measured against the state's share of its own country's located news.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *rape*, *sexual assault*, *sexual violence*, *intimate partner violence*, *femicide*, *violence against women* or *crime(s) against women* in the title. Repository deposits and agricultural senses (oilseed rape and other crops) are excluded. Patent families were searched with the same method, but only 13 families from 2015 to 2024 name sexual assault, harassment or anti-rape devices in the title, so patents are not analysed further.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 403,021 matched articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 50,658 in 2019 to 70,477 in 2024, but the share of all news fell (Table 1). It was highest in 2019, at 42.9 per 10,000. It dropped to 24.26 in 2020, 43.45% below 2019, and reached its lowest complete-year level in 2025, at 22.17. Within that decline there are sharp monthly peaks (Figure 1). The highest share was in December 2019, at 72.2 per 10,000. The largest count was in August 2024, at 10,402 articles, or 54.82 per 10,000. Both peaks coincide with widely reported individual cases, which are not named here.

Year	Matched articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	50,658	11,807,177	42.9
2020	39,379	16,230,014	24.26
2021	42,609	17,281,220	24.66
2022	52,498	19,115,515	27.46
2023	55,786	20,484,506	27.23
2024	70,477	23,311,896	30.23
2025	59,848	26,990,006	22.17

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

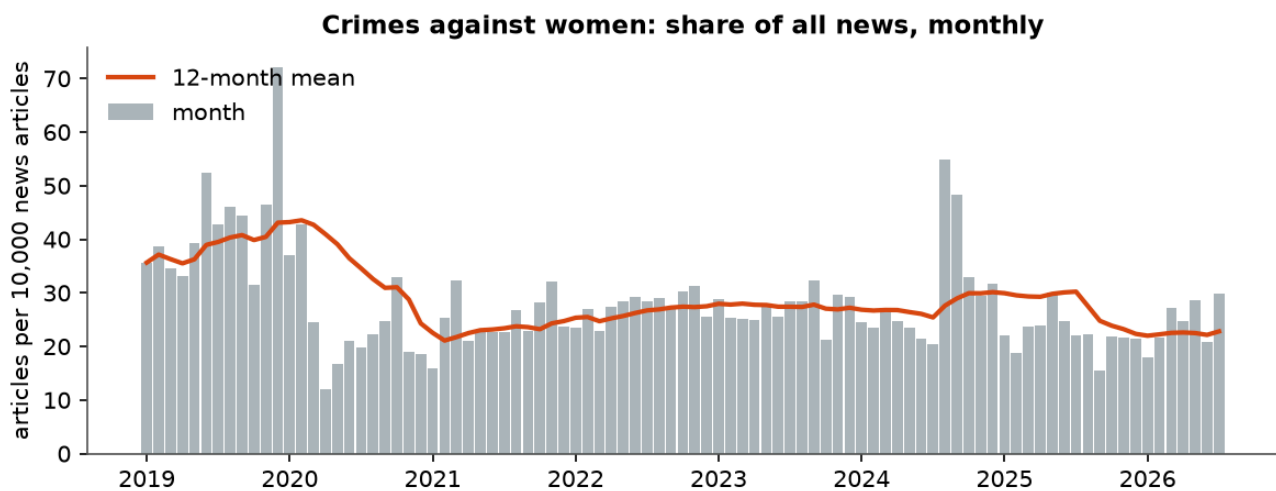


Figure 1. Coverage of crimes against women as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Unlike weather-driven topics, coverage has little seasonal pattern (Figure 2). August (9.67%) and September (9.29%) are the busiest months of a typical year, together 18.96%, and April (6.89%) is the quietest. These differences are small and are driven by single events in particular years.

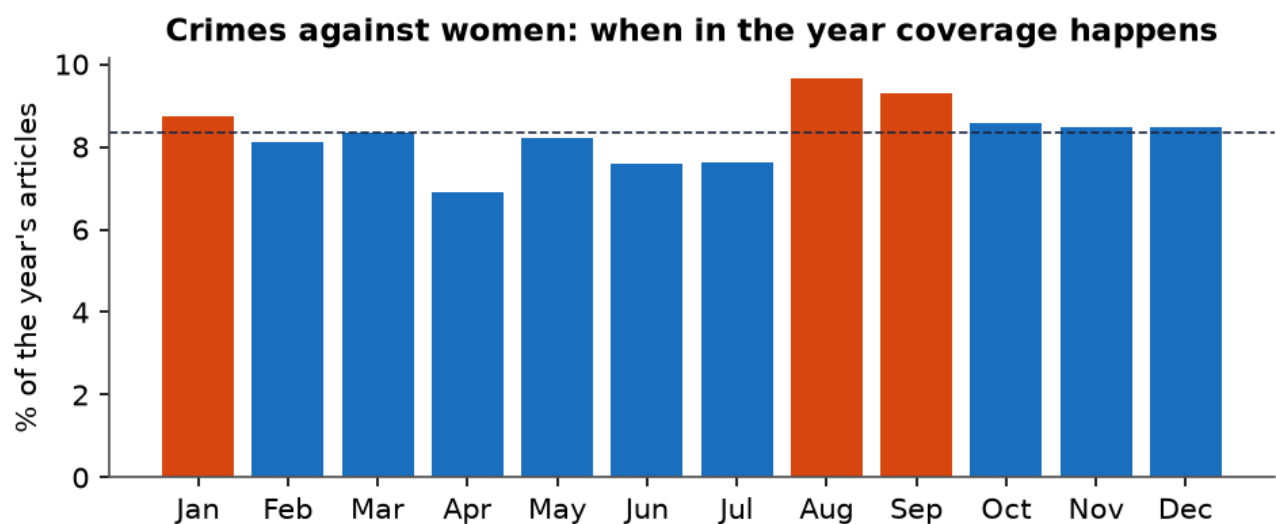


Figure 2. Share of each year's matched articles published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. Dashed line = an even spread.

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 103,128 matched articles carried a primary location. India holds the largest raw share (33.87%), with a lift of 2.57. The United States is a close second (32.67%), but its lift is 0.68: the topic takes a smaller share of American news than of news overall. Romania has the highest lift among the leading countries (11.13), from a small base of 531 articles concentrated in 2023. Bangladesh (2.14) and France (2.0) are also strongly over-represented (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
India	34,933	33.87	2.57
United States	33,691	32.67	0.68
United Kingdom	7,624	7.39	1.27
France	4,070	3.95	2.0
Australia	2,156	2.09	0.98
Canada	2,150	2.08	0.97
Spain	1,505	1.46	1.49
Brazil	1,126	1.09	1.26
Ireland	920	0.89	1.24
Nigeria	843	0.82	0.6
Italy	678	0.66	0.68
Germany	661	0.64	0.55
Bangladesh	571	0.55	2.14
Romania	531	0.51	11.13
Japan	515	0.5	0.47

Table 2. Leading countries in located coverage of crimes against women, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news.

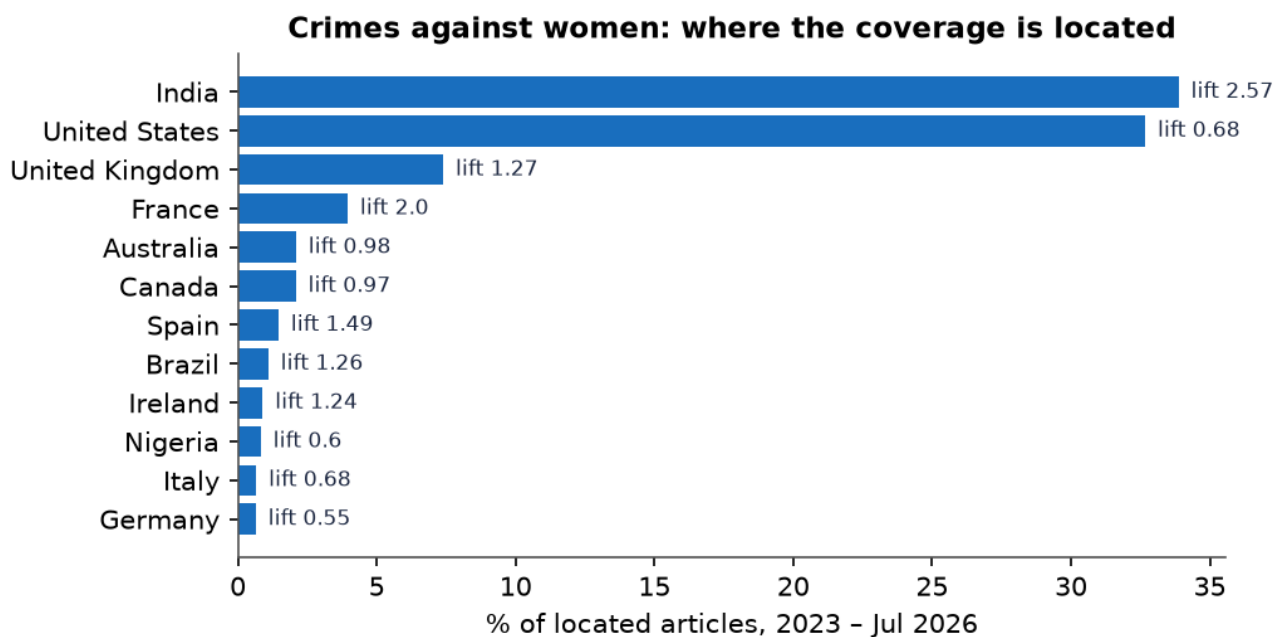


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located matched articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Coverage is over-represented in South Asia, in parts of Europe, and in Sudan (5.92) and Senegal (2.67). It is under-represented in China (0.09), Russia (0.23), the United States, Japan, Singapore and Nigeria. By continent, Asia is over-represented (1.58), South America (1.03), Europe (1.0) and Oceania (0.99) are close to parity, and Africa (0.78) and North America (0.73) are below it (Figure 7, left). India supplies most Asian articles, so the Asian lift largely reflects one country.

Crimes against women: which countries over- and under-cover the topic

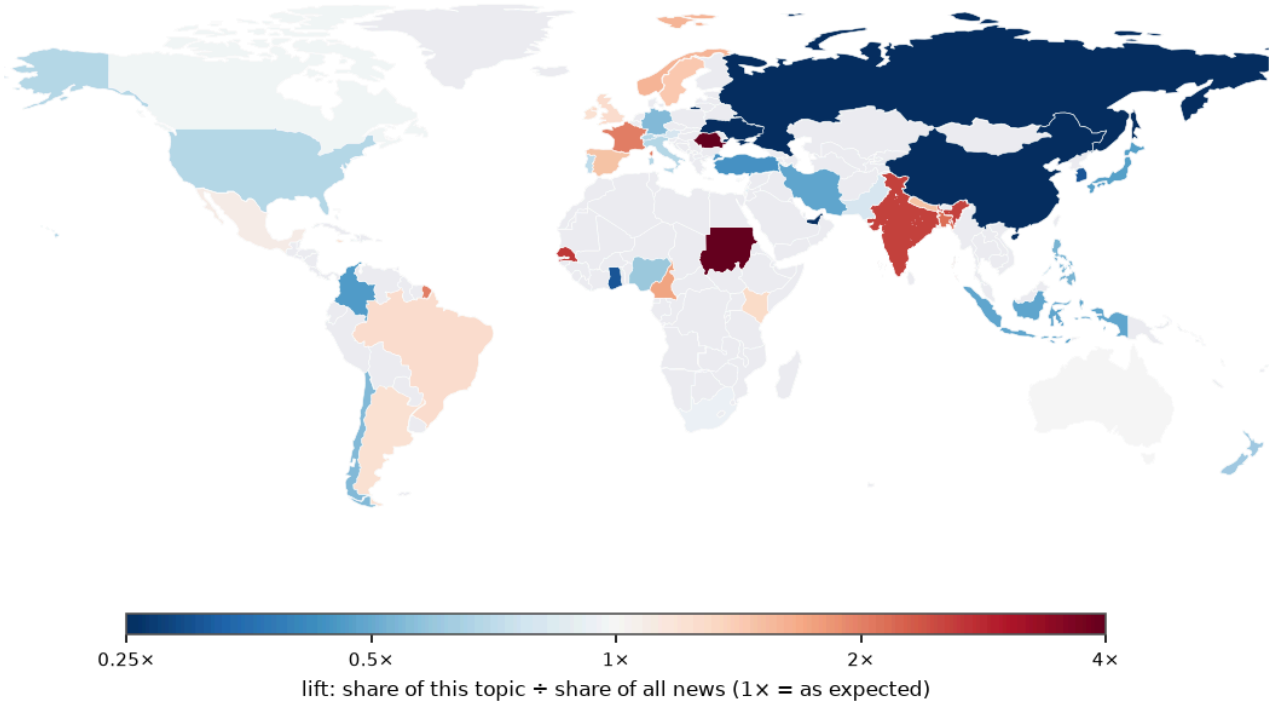


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located articles on crimes against women, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = too few articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries the picture is sharper (Table 3). In India, coverage is concentrated in one state. West Bengal holds 23.73% of 34,225 located Indian articles on the topic, with a lift of 6.8 against its share of Indian news. Madhya Pradesh (1.56), Manipur (1.56), Kerala (1.47) and Odisha (1.31) follow. The most under-represented states with at least 50 articles are Himachal Pradesh (0.28), Jammu and Kashmir (0.29), Uttarakhand (0.38) and Meghalaya (0.4) (Figure 5). Uttar Pradesh holds the second-largest count (4,688) but sits close to parity (1.08). In the United States, New York leads by both count (7,494 of 30,728 located US articles) and lift (2.09), and California, the second-largest source, is also over-represented (1.34). Texas (0.89) is close to parity, and Pennsylvania (0.56) and New Jersey (0.1) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6). Lift rankings among smaller US states are not reported. Their sampled rows are dominated by surnames of people in a few widely reported court cases that are also the names of small towns, which places Iowa (2.02), West Virginia (1.81) and Louisiana (1.68) at the top of the table for reasons unrelated to those states.

India: state	Articles	Lift	United States: state	Articles	Lift
India: highest lift / US: largest sources					
West Bengal	8,123	6.8	New York	7,494	2.09
Madhya Pradesh	1,575	1.56	California	4,114	1.34
Manipur	301	1.56	Florida	2,109	1.27
Kerala	1,229	1.47	Texas	1,617	0.89
Odisha	928	1.31	Pennsylvania	1,027	0.56
India: lowest lift / US: lowest lift					
Andhra Pradesh	366	0.47	Delaware	94	0.72
Meghalaya	64	0.4	Washington	553	0.69
Uttarakhand	294	0.38	Minnesota	326	0.67
Jammu and Kashmir	232	0.29	Pennsylvania	1,027	0.56
Himachal Pradesh	131	0.28	New Jersey	568	0.1

Table 3. States of India with the highest and lowest lift, and US states with the most located articles and the lowest lift, in coverage of crimes against women, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 articles). Lift = the state's share of the country's located matched articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country. US highest-lift rankings are omitted because surnames tagged as small towns distort them; Florida's lift is partly raised by film-industry stories tagged to a Florida city of the same name.

Crimes against women: states of India by lift

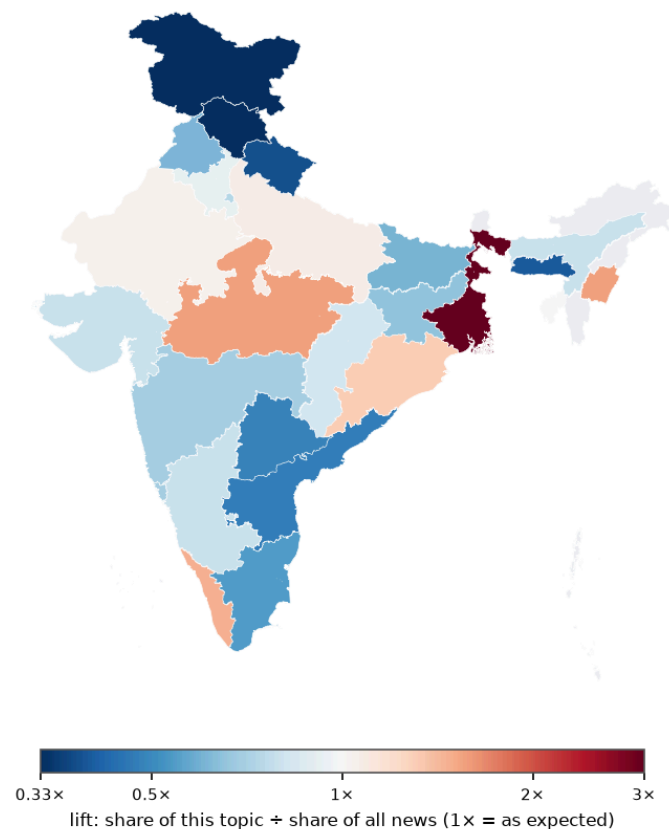


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located matched articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Crimes against women: states of United States by lift

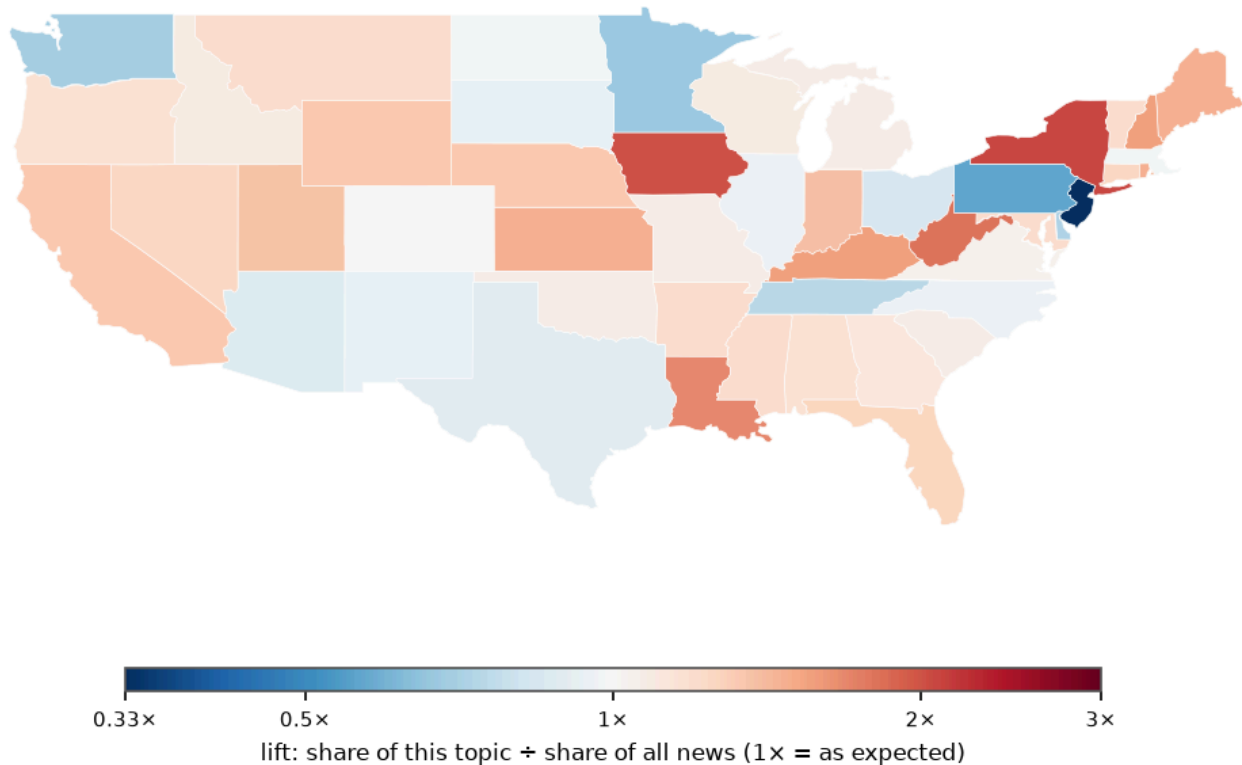


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located matched articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right). Measured as matched articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, among countries with at least 100 matched articles in 2025, Norway rose from 6.27 in 2023 to 56.94 in 2025 (9.08 times), Bangladesh from 35.95 to 101.84 (2.83 times), New Zealand from 12.04 to 18.76 (1.56 times) and South Africa from 22.73 to 35.22 (1.55 times). India's share stayed high and rose slightly, from 57.65 to 62.89 (1.09 times). Ireland (0.37), Australia (0.56), Japan (0.56) and Spain (0.62) fell most over the same years. Romania, below that threshold in 2025, is the exception: its share was 820.93 per 10,000 in 2023 and 121.88 in 2025, which shows how a few heavily covered stories can dominate a small national baseline.

Coverage is negative in tone everywhere, so tone is best read against each country's own news. The gap is widest in Singapore (96.7% negative against 24.5% for Singaporean news overall), Japan (94.7% against 23.3%) and Sweden (96.9% against 26.2%). It is narrowest in Sudan (99.1% against 80.6%) and Israel (97.5% against 73.2%), where news in general was already strongly negative, and in Pakistan (97.0% against 59.5%).

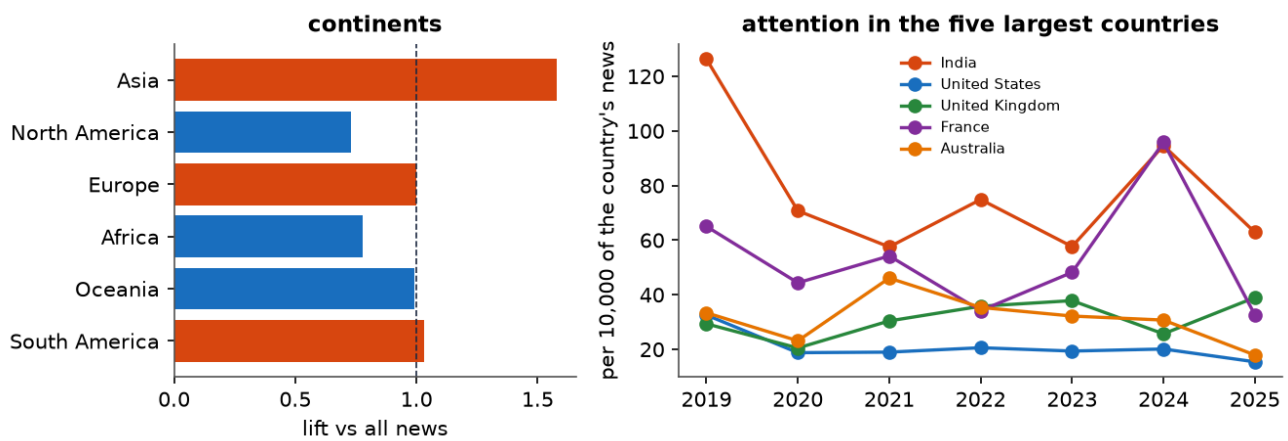


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: matched articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Coverage of crimes against women is far more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 93.8% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (2.79 times). Editorial priority puts 92.5% of articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (2.17 times).

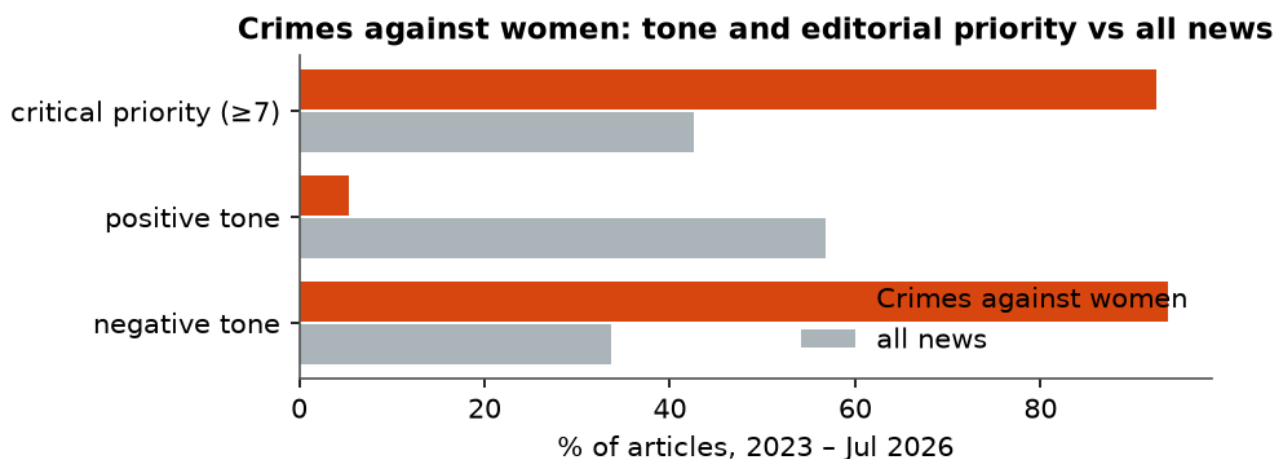


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, articles on crimes against women vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what the stories are about (Table 4). Sexual violence and assault is the leading theme (50.39% of themed articles). Legal rights of crime victims (19.09%) and victim advocacy and support services (16.11%) come next, which suggests that much of the coverage concerns courts and support services as well as the crimes themselves. Gender-based violence and femicide (4.4%, lift 70.09) and workplace harassment (4.64%, lift 55.14) are smaller but highly specific to the topic. Child abuse and neglect still appears in 19.52% of themed articles, partly because openings that name a girl as the victim are kept.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
sexual violence and assault	70,588	50.39	105.21
victim advocacy and support services	22,566	16.11	74.31
legal rights of crime victims	26,746	19.09	70.62
gender-based violence and femicide	6,159	4.4	70.09
abuse in sports or military environments	2,380	1.7	59.85
sex offender registration and community notification	12,682	9.05	58.01
domestic violence intervention programs	9,286	6.63	57.01
workplace harassment and abuse	6,498	4.64	55.14

Table 4. Themes most specific to coverage of crimes against women (lift against all themed news), January 2023 – July 2026, among themes with at least 2,000 articles.

The organisations named most often are wire services, broadcasters and social platforms, together with a legal code. The list reflects how the news is sourced and is not analysed as a finding.

3.5 Research attention

Research on the topic grew faster than the scientific literature. Papers with one of the topic terms in the title rose from 3.49 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to 4.97 in 2025, a 1.42-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, 31,739 such papers were published. The most-cited work since 2010 concerns global prevalence estimates of intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence, risk factors for intimate partner violence, and the evidence on prevention [1-6].

News attention does not track research attention (Figure 9). Research share rose in most years from 2015 to 2022 and then held steady near 5 per 10,000. News share fell sharply in 2020, recovered partly by 2024 and fell again in 2025.

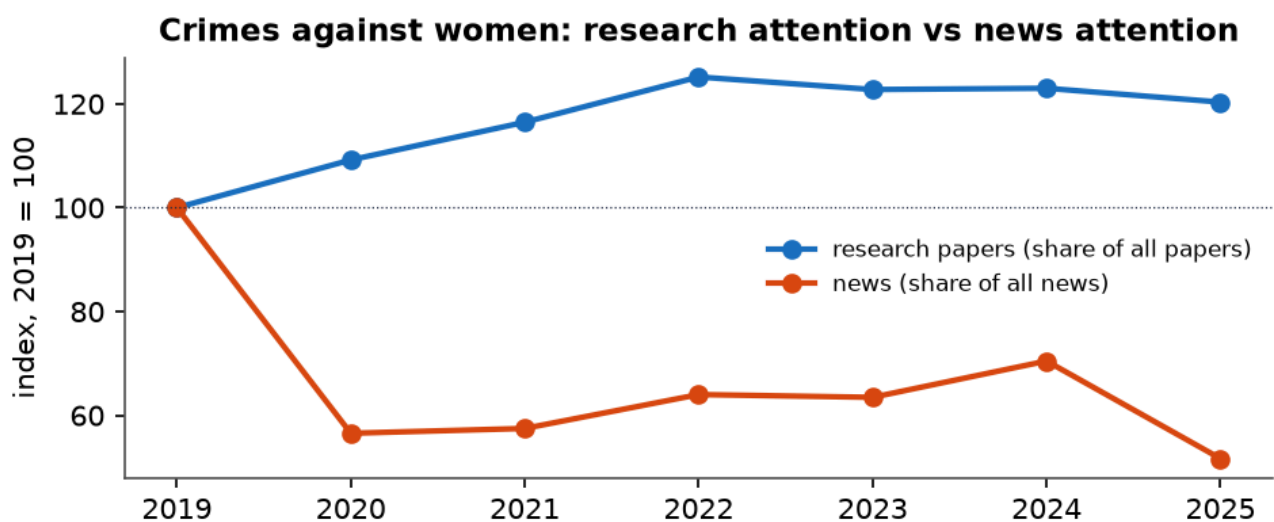


Figure 9. Research papers on the topic (share of all papers) and news on crimes against women (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of crimes against women. First, coverage measures attention, not incidence. The topic's share of news halved between 2019 and 2025, and monthly peaks follow a handful of cases that the press reported intensively.

None of this says whether these crimes became more or less common. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States supplies almost as many located articles as India but is under-represented relative to its weight in the index, while India, Bangladesh and, within India, West Bengal are strongly over-represented. Location tags also need care: ordinary words and surnames can be tagged as places, and once ordinary words are set aside several apparent US state peaks turn out to be surnames. Third, the vocabulary needs care. The word "rape" also means a crop, and some coverage of sexual offences concerns children of unstated sex. These matches must be removed or measured separately.

Research and news run on different clocks. Research share has grown steadily for a decade, while news share depends on which cases reach the headlines. The dataset lets researchers link the two, for example to test whether countries with sustained coverage show later growth in research or in policy debate.

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 these crimes only later are missed, and 15% of checked matches were not about crimes against women. The exclusion of openings about "minors" also removes some articles about girls. Terms in other languages (for example local words for dowry harassment) are captured only through translation.
- **Scope.** Domestic violence, acid attacks and honour killings are matched only when the opening also uses one of the release's terms.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority and themes are machine-labelled. The city field is noisy and is not analysed.
- **Place tags from ordinary words.** Place tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated in every location field, which removed 15.3% of city-tagged articles; some genuine places that share a name with such a word are lost, and surnames tagged as towns still distort smaller US states.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets and, within India and the United States, outlets in some states. This shapes both the national and the state figures.
- **Research counts.** These match titles only.

Data availability

The dataset (article sample, monthly, country and state tables, research tables, all metrics) is released under CC BY-NC 4.0 with this paper. The sample holds 50,314 of 402,919 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 "sexual assault" --since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

If you or someone you know is struggling, contact local emergency services or a crisis line.

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