

Obesity in the News, 2019-2026: Attention, Geography and Tone of Global Obesity 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 obesity was covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 51,207 de-duplicated obesity news articles, and set that coverage beside 136,334 research papers (2015-2025) and 4,615 patent families (2015-2024) on obesity. Six results stand out:

1. **Rising attention.** Obesity's share of news rose 1.61-fold between 2019 and 2025, from 2.74 to 4.42 articles per 10,000. The largest annual step came from 2022 to 2023 (34.7%). The peak month was November 2025, at 5.95 per 10,000.
2. **A drug story.** Between January 2023 and July 2026, drug pricing and reimbursement was the most common theme (12.97% of themed articles), and Novo Nordisk was named in 10.53% of all obesity articles.
3. **Geography.** Denmark (11.6) and Sweden (4.04) are the most over-represented countries. The United States holds 54.61% of located articles at a lift of 1.13. India is under-represented (0.77) but its attention rose 2.25-fold from 2023 to 2025. Within the United States, Massachusetts (3.64) leads; within India, Telangana (2.12).
4. **Tone and urgency.** 63.3% of obesity articles are positive in tone (all news: 56.8%), and 74.1% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%). In the United Kingdom, obesity news is 16.8 points more negative than UK news overall.
5. **Measurement.** 56.1% of raw matches for obesity vocabulary were removed by exclusion patterns for research-journal abstracts, market-research notices and other non-news items. Counting them would more than double "coverage".
6. **Research and invention.** Obesity papers grew from 16.88 to 21.28 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025. Patent families with obesity in the title were flat (487 in 2015, 495 in 2024), and the offices of China and South Korea held 50.2% of office filings.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Obesity's share of news rose 1.61-fold between 2019 and 2025 (2.74 to 4.42 per 10,000 articles).
- **F2.** The largest annual rise in share came from 2022 to 2023 (34.7%).
- **F3.** November 2025 was the peak month for obesity news, at 5.95 articles per 10,000.
- **F4.** Drug pricing and reimbursement was the most common theme (12.97%); prescription weight-loss drugs appeared 672.72 times more often than in all themed news.
- **F5.** Novo Nordisk was named in 3,555 obesity articles (10.53%), Lilly in 1,579.

- **F6.** Denmark (11.6) and Sweden (4.04) were the most over-represented countries, followed by Spain (1.8).
- **F7.** The United States held 54.61% of located obesity news at a lift of 1.13; India's lift was 0.77.
- **F8.** 63.3% of obesity articles were positive in tone, 1.11 times the all-news share.
- **F9.** 74.1% of obesity articles were rated critical priority, 1.74 times the all-news share.
- **F10.** 56.1% of raw obesity-vocabulary matches were removed as abstracts, market notices or other non-news items.
- **F11.** Obesity papers rose 1.26-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F12.** Patent families with obesity in the title were flat from 2015 to 2024; the offices of China and South Korea held 50.2%.
- **F13.** Within India, Telangana (2.12), Karnataka (1.56) and Maharashtra (1.44) had the most over-represented coverage.
- **F14.** Within the United States, Massachusetts (3.64), Washington (2.6) and Indiana (2.18) led; Florida (0.64) and Texas (0.72) were under-represented.
- **F15.** Obesity coverage as a share of India's news rose 2.25-fold from 2023 to 2025.
- **F16.** UK obesity news was 53.7% negative against 36.9% for all UK news, a gap of 16.8 points.

1. Introduction

Obesity is one of the largest causes of preventable illness worldwide, and its prevalence has risen for decades in rich and poor countries alike [1, 2, 6, 7]. News coverage shapes how the public and policy-makers see the condition: as a matter of personal choice, of food environments, or of medicine. The arrival of a new class of weight-loss drugs in the early 2020s added a commercial story to the health story [4, 5]. Yet coverage is rarely measured as data in its own right. Surveys record prevalence. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record attention, meaning how much of the news obesity takes 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 (12,849 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, a machine-assigned 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 obesity when its opening text contains *obesity* or *obese* as whole words. Broader words such as *overweight* were not used, because they also carry a

stock-rating sense. The index also ingests research-journal abstracts, which use these words heavily. Three families of matches are excluded:

- abstracts: openings with structured headings ("background:", "objective:"), a paper title run into the abstract text, or the stock phrases of scientific writing ("we report", "this review");
- market-research notices ("market size", "CAGR", sample-request pages);
- adult-content listings that use the word as a tag.

Together these removed 65,455 of 116,662 raw matches (56.1%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 37 were news items using obesity in its medical sense (precision 92.5%), and in 24 (60%) obesity, its treatment or its drugs was the main subject. The three misses were an abstract that escaped the patterns, a scraped page of unrelated headlines and a promotional webinar listing. A second reviewer re-judged 15 of the 40 openings.

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. Geography is expressed as lift: a country's share of obesity articles divided by its share of all located articles. States are measured the same way against that country's located news. Place tags derived from ordinary words ("Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile", "Hurricane" and others, 714 words in all) were treated as unlocated in every location field, which removed 15.3% of city-tagged articles.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *obesity*, *obese* or *anti-obesity* in the title; repository deposits 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 51,207 obesity articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 3,233 in 2019 to 11,925 in 2025, and so did the share of all news, though by less: from 2.74 per 10,000 in 2019 to 4.42 in 2025, a 1.61-fold rise (Table 1). The share was flat from 2019 to 2022, between 2.55 and 2.85. It then rose by 34.7% in 2023, to 3.84, and kept rising. The highest monthly share was November 2025, at 5.95 per 10,000, and the month with the most articles was February 2025 (1,480) (Figure 1).

Year	Obesity articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	3,233	11,807,177	2.74
2020	4,343	16,230,014	2.68
2021	4,413	17,281,220	2.55
2022	5,449	19,115,515	2.85
2023	7,856	20,484,506	3.84
2024	9,100	23,311,896	3.9
2025	11,925	26,990,006	4.42

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

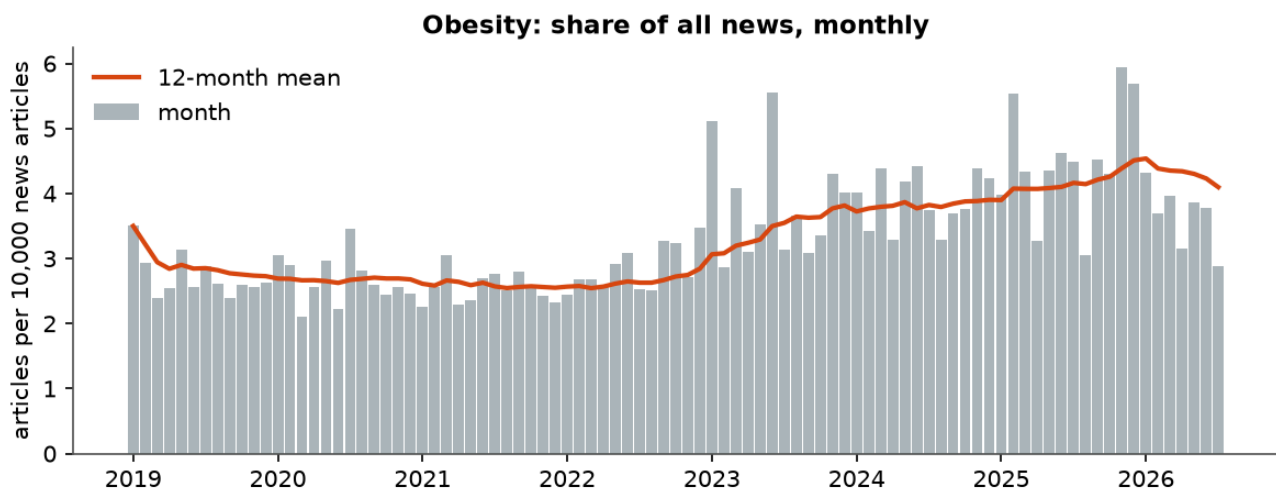


Figure 1. Obesity coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Unlike weather or disaster topics, obesity coverage has little seasonality (Figure 2). Every month from February to December holds between 7.02% (April) and 8.73% (May) of a typical year's articles. January holds the most (9.69%), but part of that excess is items that carry only a publication year, which the index dates to 1 January, so we do not read it as a New Year effect.

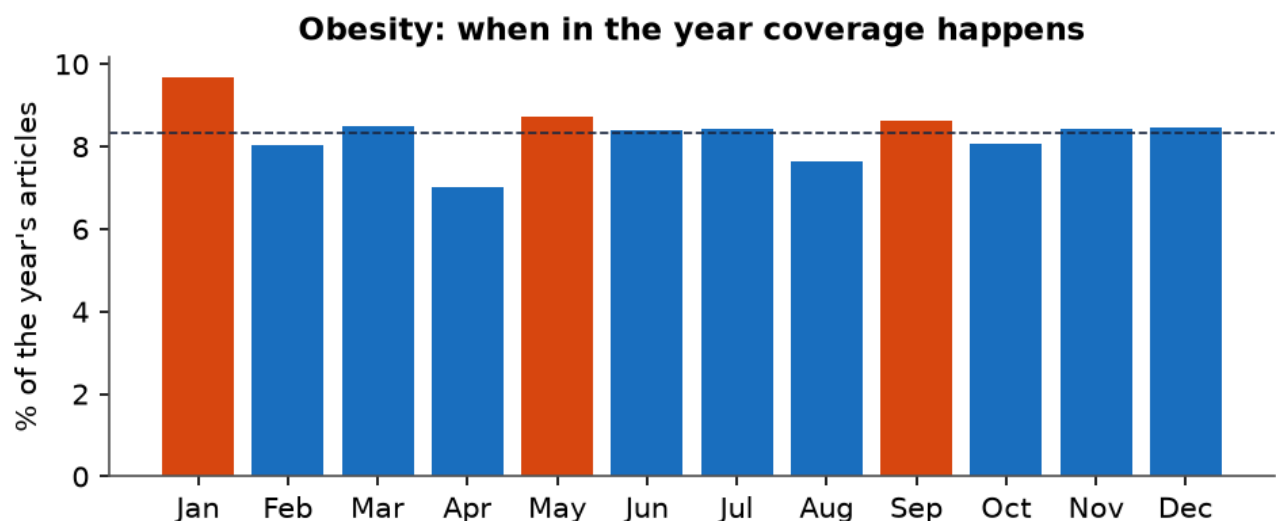


Figure 2. Share of each year's obesity articles published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. The dashed line is an even spread.

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 15,047 obesity articles carried a primary location. The United States holds the largest raw share (54.61%) and is slightly over-represented, at a lift of 1.13. The United Kingdom (8.81%, lift 1.51) and China (3.3%, lift 1.25) are also over-represented. India holds 10.13% of located articles but is under-represented, at 0.77. The most over-represented countries are Denmark (11.6) and Sweden (4.04), followed by Spain (1.8) (Table 2, Figure 3). Norway's lift (3.5) is not ranked: most of its sampled rows are located through "Al" (as in "et al.") read as the Norwegian village of Ål.

Country	Located obesity articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
United States	8,217	54.61	1.13
India	1,524	10.13	0.77
United Kingdom	1,326	8.81	1.51
China	496	3.3	1.25
Australia	285	1.89	0.88
Spain	264	1.75	1.8
Canada	220	1.46	0.68
Denmark	203	1.35	11.56
Brazil	167	1.11	1.28
Germany	159	1.06	0.9
France	141	0.94	0.47
Japan	135	0.9	0.84
Sweden	133	0.88	4.04
Italy	124	0.82	0.85
Norway	107	0.71	3.5
South Korea	102	0.68	1.13

Table 2. Leading countries in located obesity news, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news. Norway's row is inflated by the place tag "AI" (see text).

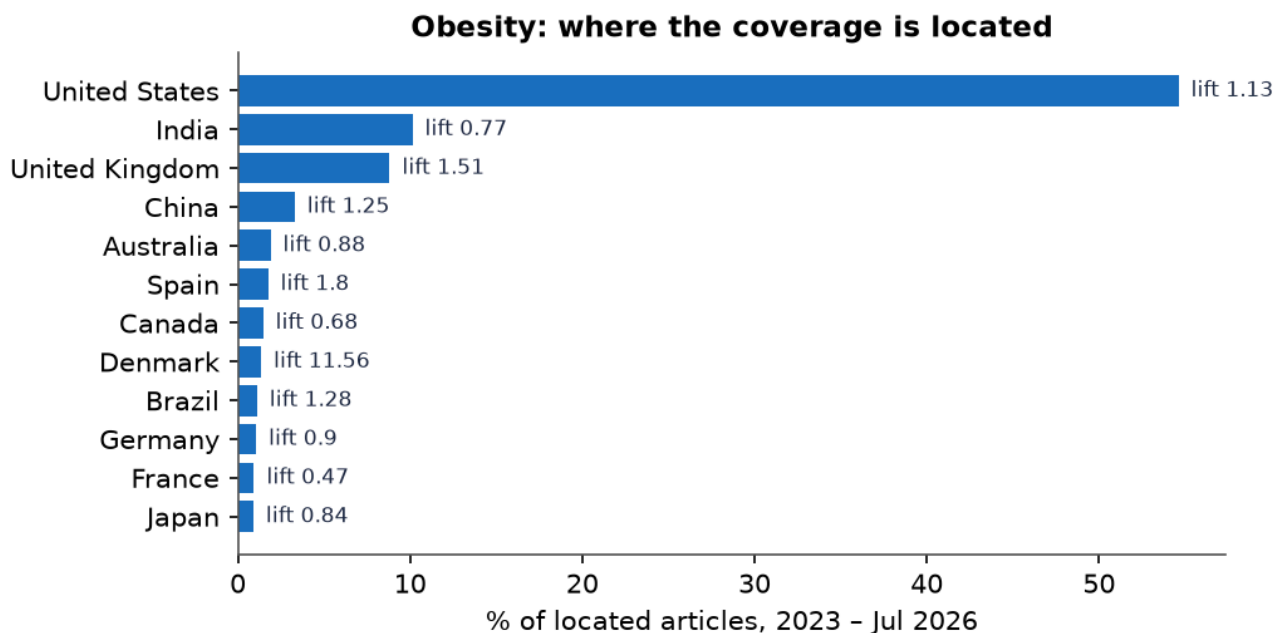


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located obesity articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Obesity is over-represented in the news of Denmark, Sweden, Spain, the United Kingdom, Brazil, China and the United States, and under-represented in France, India, Canada and most of Africa. By continent, Europe (1.25) and North America (1.09) are over-represented, while Oceania (0.86), South America (0.78), Asia (0.75) and Africa (0.4) are not (Figure 7, left). Only 44.6% of obesity articles in the window carry a primary country, so the map rests on the located part of the coverage.

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

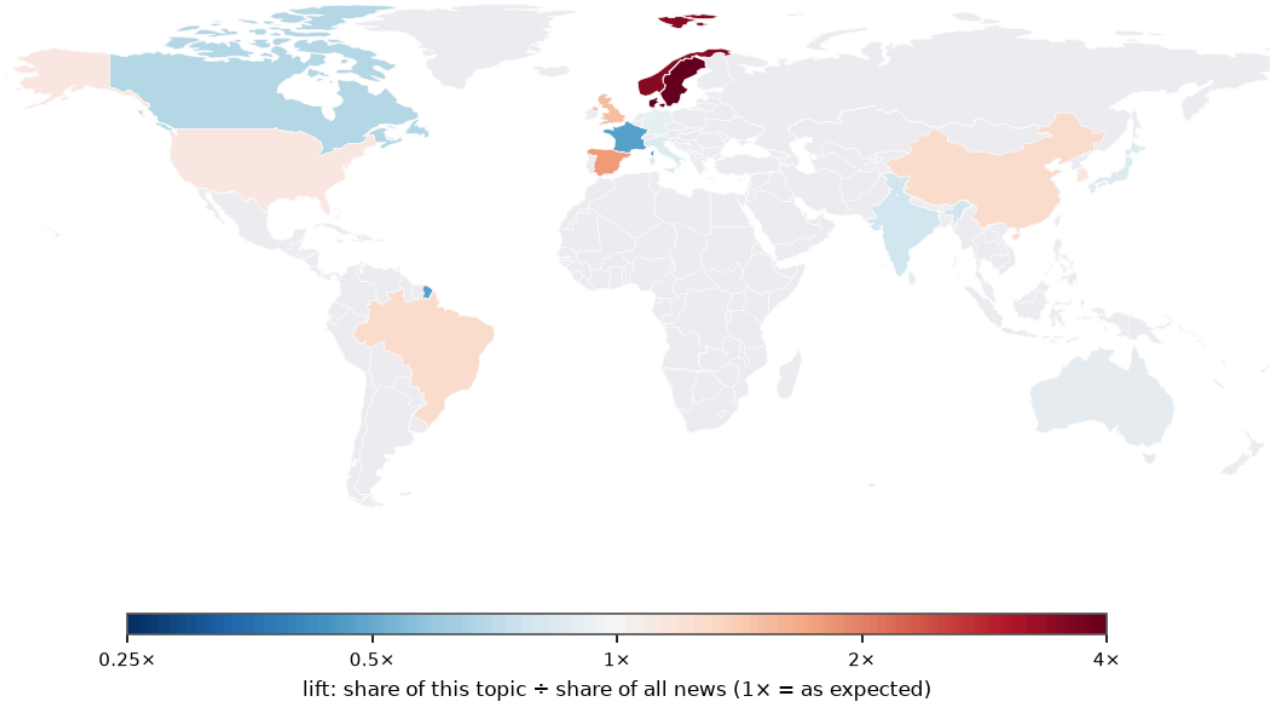


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located obesity articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = too few articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is more specific (Table 3). In India, 773 obesity articles carried a state. Measured against each state's share of Indian news, Telangana (2.12), Karnataka (1.56) and Maharashtra (1.44) are the most over-represented, followed by Delhi (1.29). Their located rows come mainly from Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Uttar Pradesh is under-represented (0.58) despite a large article count (Figure 5). Indian state counts are small, so only states with at least 50 articles are discussed.

In the United States, 5,377 articles carried a state. Massachusetts (3.64), Washington (2.6), Indiana (2.18) and Illinois (1.68) lead by lift; their rows are located mainly through Boston and Cambridge, Seattle, Indianapolis and Chicago. About two in five sampled Washington rows carry no city and are Washington, D.C. datelines, so its lift is inflated. Florida (0.64) and Texas (0.72) are below their weight in American news (Figure 6); Minnesota (0.62) and Michigan (0.66) sit lower but their few sampled rows rest largely on surnames such as Hopkins, Taylor and Fraser. The US state field needs care even after the place-word rule. Some states rank high or low because a surname or an organisation name matches a town: "Gallup" (the polling firm) places most sampled rows in New Mexico (3.23), "Davis" many in West Virginia (2.69), "ADA" many in Oklahoma (2.01), "White House" many in Tennessee (0.56), and "Clark" and other surnames many in New Jersey (0.14). These states are not ranked here.

Country	State	Articles	Lift	Position
India	Telangana	57	2.12	highest
India	Karnataka	67	1.56	high
India	Maharashtra	177	1.44	high
India	Delhi	129	1.29	high
India	Uttar Pradesh	57	0.58	lowest
United States	Massachusetts	464	3.64	highest
United States	Washington	366	2.6	high
United States	Indiana	161	2.18	high
United States	Illinois	238	1.68	high
United States	California	803	1.5	high
United States	Texas	227	0.72	low
United States	Florida	184	0.64	lowest

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in obesity coverage, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 obesity articles). Lift = the state's share of the country's located obesity articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country. US states located mainly through surnames or organisation names that match towns are omitted (see text).

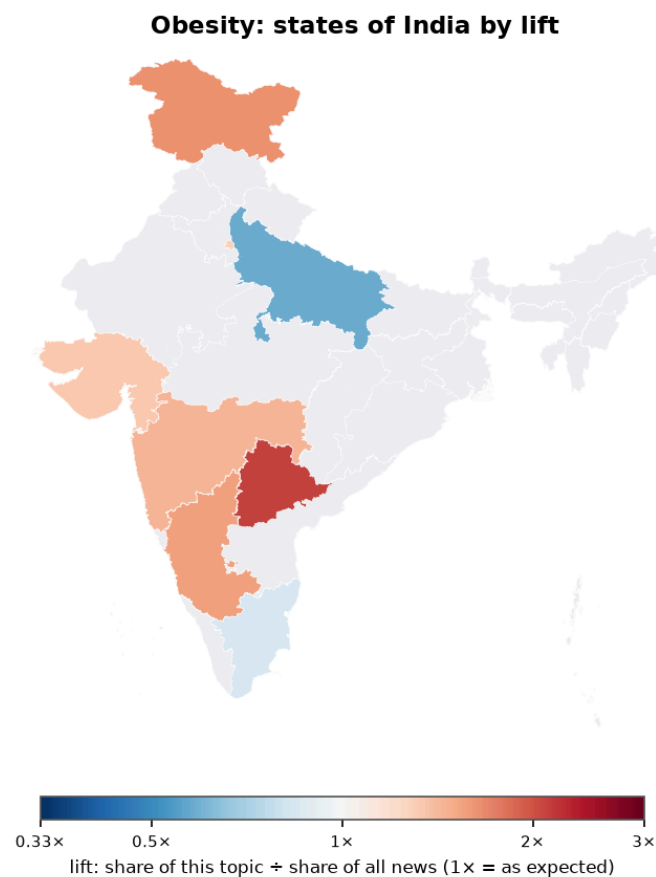


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located obesity articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline.

Obesity: states of United States by lift

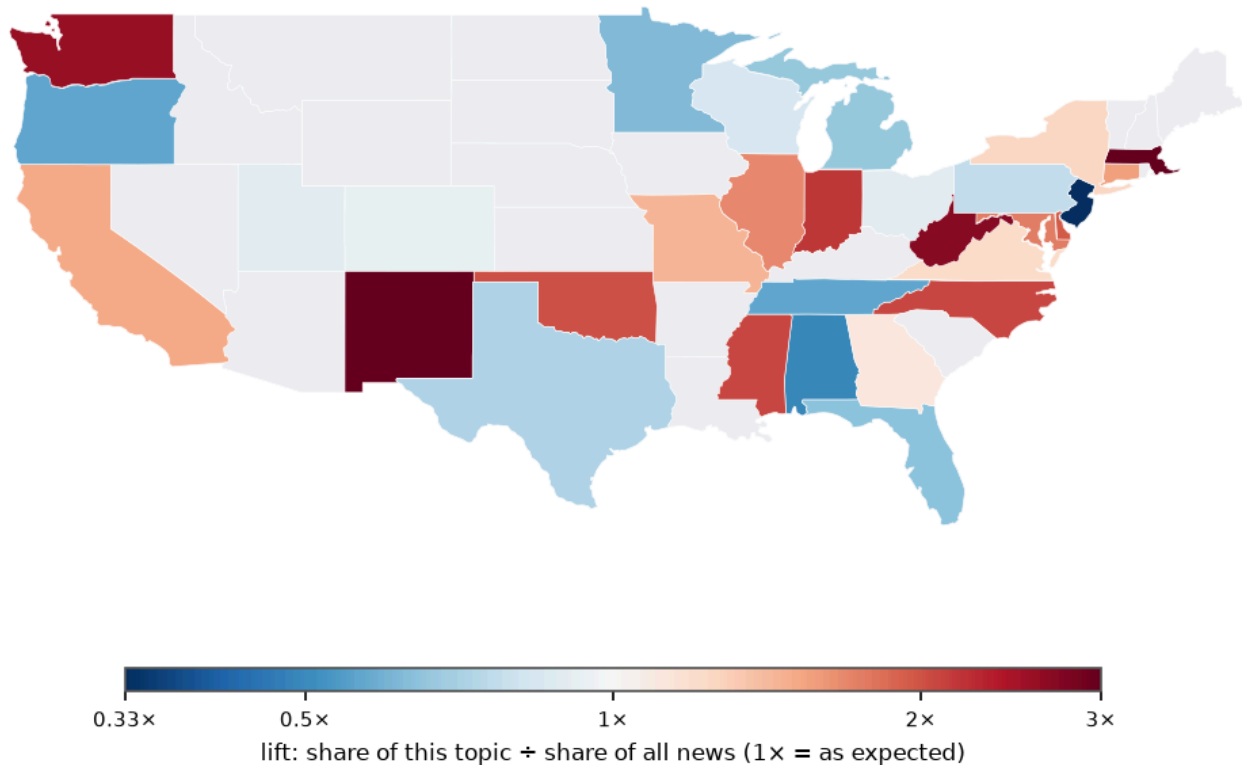


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located obesity articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right). Measured as obesity articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, every one of the five countries with at least 100 located obesity articles in 2025 rose from 2023 to 2025. India rose most, from 2.08 to 4.68 (2.25 times), followed by Spain (1.88 times), the United States (1.35 times), China (1.32 times) and the United Kingdom (1.1 times). Denmark, which is outside the five compared, rose from 35.86 in 2023 to 59.63 in 2025, the highest level of any country.

Tone differs by country once each country's own baseline is taken into account. In the United Kingdom, 53.7% of obesity articles were negative against 36.9% of all UK news, a gap of 16.8 points. The gap was 6.9 points in India (48.1% against 41.2%) and 4.5 points in the United States (37.6% against 33.1%). In Denmark, obesity news was less negative than Danish news overall (26.6% against 28.1%).

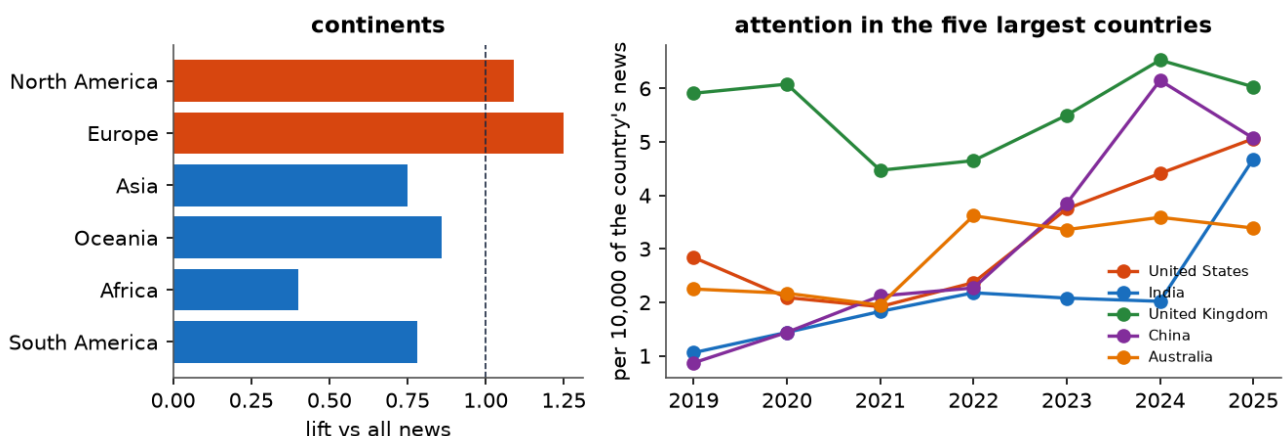


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: obesity articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Obesity coverage is more positive and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 63.3% are positive, against 56.8% across the index (1.11 times), and 35.4% are negative, close to the 33.6% for all news. Positive articles outnumbered negative ones in every year from 2021 onward, and by 2025 the count was 7,691 positive against 4,250 negative. The machine-assigned priority rating puts 74.1% of obesity articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (1.74 times).

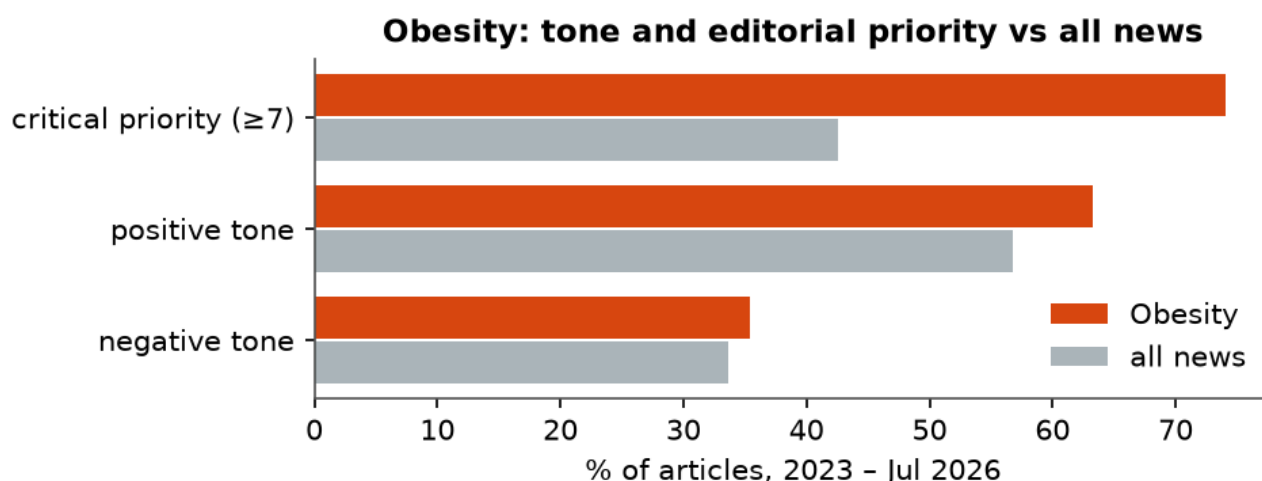


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, obesity articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what obesity stories are about (Table 4). The most frequent themes are about medicines and money: drug pricing and reimbursement (12.97% of themed articles), diabetes medication management (10.42%) and prescription weight-loss drugs (8.1%, 672.72 times their rate in all news). Public-health themes are smaller but the most specific to the topic, with lifts above 1,600.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
drug pricing and reimbursement strategies	2,243	12.97	142.31
diabetes medication management	1,803	10.42	164.92
prescription weight loss drugs	1,401	8.1	672.72
pharmacological interventions for obesity	959	5.54	1518.47
childhood obesity prevention strategies	648	3.75	1613.69
obesity epidemic in developed nations	348	2.01	1910.04
obesity trends in developing countries	367	2.12	1863.88
economic burden of obesity on healthcare systems	251	1.45	1817.84
public health policies for obesity control	354	2.05	1764.9

Table 4. The most frequent themes in obesity coverage and the themes most specific to it (lift against all themed news), January 2023 – July 2026.

The organisations named most often are the two leading makers of weight-loss drugs: Novo Nordisk (3,555 articles, 10.53% of the topic) and Lilly (1,579, with a further 587 under its full company name). Health agencies follow, among them the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (608) and the National Institutes of Health (431). Automatic tagging also produces artefacts here: a label attached to the word "research" ranks second (3,239), and some mentions of Novo are tagged as a Brazilian political party.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on obesity grew faster than the scientific literature. Papers with an obesity term in the title rose from 16.88 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to 21.28 in 2025, a 1.26-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, 136,334 such papers were published (223,081 since 2000). Highly cited work includes global estimates of overweight and obesity prevalence [1, 2], US prevalence series [3] and the trials of once-weekly semaglutide and tirzepatide [4, 5].

News attention and research attention moved differently (Figure 9). Research share rose through the period, with a dip in 2023, while news share was flat until 2022 and then rose in steps.

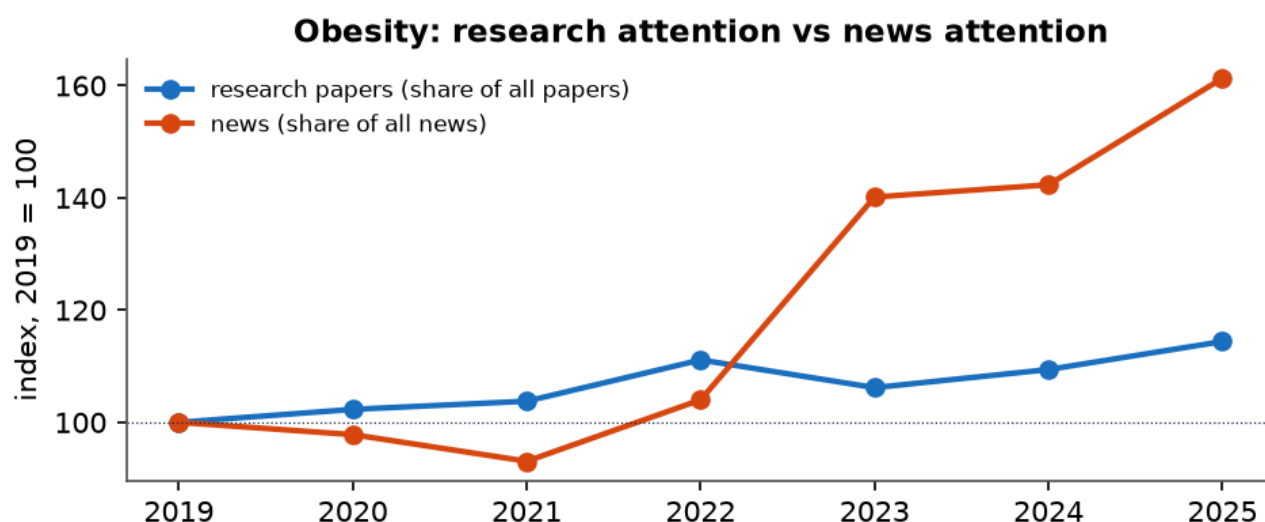


Figure 9. Research papers with obesity in the title (share of all papers) and obesity news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019.

Patent families with obesity in the title did not grow. 487 obesity-related patent families were published in 2015 and 495 in 2024, with 4,615 families from 2015 to 2024. China's office (25.4%) and South Korea's (24.8%) together hold 50.2% of office-family pairs, followed by the United States (13.1%) (Figure 10). The leading technology classes are medicinal preparations (A61K, 1,441 families) and foods and food treatment (A23L, 367).

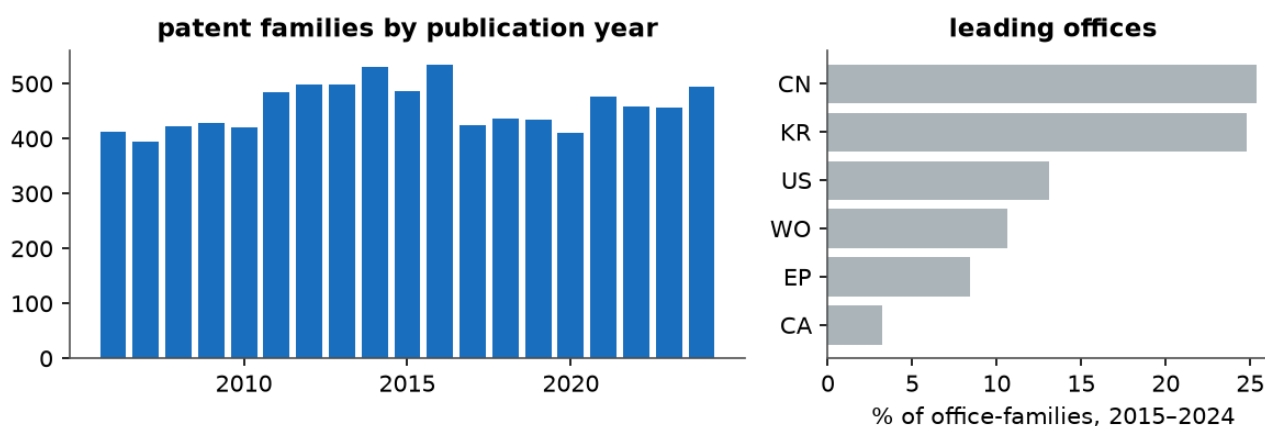


Figure 10. Obesity-related patent families by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015–2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of obesity. First, coverage measures attention, not prevalence. Obesity's share of the news was flat for four years and then rose in steps from 2023, and its most frequent themes since then concern drug prices and prescriptions. The geography is consistent with that thread, though the data do not test it: the most over-represented countries are Denmark, where a leading maker of weight-loss drugs is based, and Sweden. The dataset does not measure prevalence, so the map describes attention only. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States leads obesity news in raw terms but is only slightly over-represented relative to its weight in the index, and India's large article count hides an under-representation that is closing fast. Third, much of what keyword searches return as "obesity news" is not journalism: research abstracts and market notices made up more than half of raw matches.

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share grows. Patent families titled by the condition are flat, possibly because many drug patents are titled by compound or mechanism rather than by the condition. News follows the medicines and their prices. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether drug approvals are followed by changes in tone or in the geography of coverage.

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 obesity only later are missed, and 7.5% of matches in the hand check were not obesity news. The abstract exclusions also remove a small number of genuine news items whose headline runs into the text.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority, themes and organisations are machine-labelled. The city field is noisy and is not analysed. Fewer than half of articles carry a country.
- **Place words.** Place tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated, which removed 15.3% of city-tagged articles. Surnames and organisation names that match towns ("Gallup", "Davis", "White House") still place some articles in the wrong US state, so state lifts are reported only for states located mainly through their real cities.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets, which shapes the geography.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. Office shares reflect filing practice.

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 12,849 of 51,203 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 "obesity" -since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

References

1. Marie Ng et al. (2014). Global, regional, and national prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adults during 1980–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013. *The Lancet*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(14\)60460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(14)60460-8)
2. Leandra Abarca-Gómez et al. (2017). Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016: a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128·9 million children, adolescents, and adults. *The Lancet*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(17\)32129-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(17)32129-3)
3. Cynthia L. Ogden et al. (2014). Prevalence of Childhood and Adult Obesity in the United States, 2011–2012. *JAMA*. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.732>
4. John Wilding et al. (2021). Once-Weekly Semaglutide in Adults with Overweight or Obesity. *New England Journal of Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa2032183>
5. Ania M. Jastreboff et al. (2022). Tirzepatide Once Weekly for the Treatment of Obesity. *New England Journal of Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa2206038>
6. Matthias Blüher (2019). Obesity: global epidemiology and pathogenesis. *Nature Reviews Endocrinology*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41574-019-0176-8>
7. Barry M. Popkin et al. (2012). Global nutrition transition and the pandemic of obesity in developing countries. *Nutrition Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-4887.2011.00456.x>
8. Fliar BI (2026). *Obesity in the News 2019–2026: article-level dataset and coverage tables*. Prism News API. <https://github.com/fliarbi/prism-news-api>