

Plane Crashes in the News, 2019-2026: Attention, Geography and Tone of Global Crash 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 plane crashes were covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 44,836 de-duplicated plane-crash articles, and set that coverage beside 1,375 research papers on aviation accidents and safety and 134 patent families on flight recorders and crash equipment. Six results stand out:

1. **Attention moves with single events.** Plane crashes took 4.69 of every 10,000 news articles in 2025, the highest annual share of 2019-2025 and 1.84 times the 2024 share. The share fell 53.2% from 2019 to 2020 and stayed low through 2022.
2. **Peaks.** The largest monthly share was June 2025, the month of the Air India crash in Gujarat, at 20.92 articles per 10,000, 4.46 times the 2025 annual share.
3. **Geography.** The United States holds 42.14% of located plane-crash news but is under-represented (lift 0.87). India is over-represented (1.36). Among the 15 countries with the most coverage, Malawi (22.2), Nepal (19.51), Russia (8.1), South Korea (5.29) and Colombia (5.0) have the highest lift. Within India, Gujarat (12.26) and Maharashtra (2.4) lead; within the United States, Kansas (8.71), Alaska (6.98) and Hawaii (5.45).
4. **Shifting attention.** Measured per 10,000 of each country's own news, and among countries with at least 100 plane-crash articles in 2025, attention in South Korea rose 35.11-fold and in India 14.12-fold from 2023 to 2025, while Nepal and Russia fell back after crash years.
5. **Tone and urgency.** 91.2% of plane-crash articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and a machine rating puts 92.2% at critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
6. **Research and invention.** Papers on aviation accidents and safety grew from 0.16 to 0.27 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025 (1.67-fold). Patent families on flight recorders and crash equipment are few; annual publications peaked at 19 in 2017 and were 9 in 2024.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Plane crashes took 4.69 per 10,000 news articles in 2025, 1.84 times the 2024 share.
- **F2.** The share fell 53.2% from 2019 to 2020 (4.04 to 1.89 per 10,000).
- **F3.** June 2025 was the peak month, at 20.92 articles per 10,000.
- **F4.** In Russia, plane crashes took 79.74 per 10,000 located articles in 2023 and 9.59 in 2025.
- **F5.** The United States held 42.14% of located plane-crash news (lift 0.87); India 18.0% (lift 1.36).

- **F6.** Among the 15 countries with the most located coverage, Malawi (22.2), Nepal (19.51), Russia (8.1), South Korea (5.29) and Colombia (5.0) were the most over-represented.
- **F7.** 91.2% of plane-crash articles were negative in tone, 2.71 times the all-news share.
- **F8.** A machine rating put 92.2% at critical priority, 2.16 times the all-news share.
- **F9.** Crash investigations and flight-recorder data were a theme of 71.14% of themed articles.
- **F10.** The National Transportation Safety Board was the organisation named most often (4,420 articles).
- **F11.** Papers on aviation accidents and safety rose 1.67-fold as a share of all papers, 2015–2025.
- **F12.** China's office held 40.9% of office filings of 134 patent families on crash equipment, 2015–2024.
- **F13.** Within India, Gujarat (12.26) and Maharashtra (2.4) held 78.68% of located coverage.
- **F14.** Within the United States, Kansas (8.71), Alaska (6.98), Hawaii (5.45) and Kentucky (4.98) had the highest lift.
- **F15.** In South Korea, plane crashes took 45.44 per 10,000 located articles in 2024 (0.89 in 2023); 95.3% of that coverage was negative in tone.

1. Introduction

Air travel is one of the safest forms of transport, yet a single crash can dominate the news for weeks. News is often the first public record of a crash: where it happened, who was on board and what investigators found. Coverage may also affect how safe the public thinks flying is, although that is not tested here. Yet coverage is rarely measured as data. Accident databases record crashes. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record attention, meaning how much of the news crashes take and when, where and in what tone.

This paper and its dataset do that for plane crashes. They combine three records: 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 (11,138 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 a plane crash when its opening text contains *plane crash*, *plane crashes*, *plane crashed*, *air crash*, *aircraft crash*, *airplane crash*, *airliner crash*, *air disaster* or *aviation disaster* as whole words. *Plane crashed* carries 11,849 articles and *plane crash* 25,356, the two largest terms. Broader phrases such as *aviation accident* were tested

and left out, because they also return near-misses and incidents without a crash. Three families of matches are excluded:

- video games and flight simulators;
- films, novels and trailers that retell a crash;
- figurative uses ("a political plane crash") and law-firm advertising.

Together these removed 181 of 45,017 raw matches (0.4%). The vocabulary is precise to begin with. One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 37 referred to an actual aircraft crash, aeroplane or helicopter (precision 92.5%), and in 31 (77.5%) a crash, its victims or its investigation was the main subject. The three false positives were an unrelated story carrying a crash headline from a sidebar, a navigation menu and a film review.

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; 61.64% of articles in that window carry a primary country. Place tags derived from ordinary words (such as "Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile" and "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 plane-crash articles divided by its share of all located articles. States are measured the same way within India and the United States.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *plane crash*, *aircraft crash*, *air crash*, *aviation accident*, *aircraft accident*, *air disaster*, *airplane crash* or *aviation safety* in the title. Repository deposits and the road, software and market senses of "crash" are excluded. Patent families (2005–2024) use titles naming aircraft crashes, flight or cockpit voice recorders, emergency locator transmitters or crash position indicators, are counted once per filing office, and exclude vehicle, rail, ship and computing senses.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 44,836 plane-crash articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 4,775 in 2019 to 12,661 in 2025, but most of that rise reflects the growth of the index. As a share of all news, plane crashes took 4.04 per 10,000 in 2019, fell to 1.89 in 2020 (53.2% lower) and stayed below 2 until 2022 (Table 1). The share rose to 2.99 in 2023 and reached 4.69 in 2025, 1.16 times the 2019 level.

Year	Plane-crash articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	4,775	11,807,177	4.04
2020	3,064	16,230,014	1.89
2021	3,198	17,281,220	1.85
2022	3,324	19,115,515	1.74
2023	6,127	20,484,506	2.99
2024	5,938	23,311,896	2.55
2025	12,661	26,990,006	4.69

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

Coverage is spiky (Figure 1). The highest monthly share was June 2025, at 20.92 per 10,000, the month of the Air India crash in Gujarat. Other high months were March 2019 (10.2), the month of an Ethiopian Airlines crash; January 2026 (9.37), the month of a crash in Maharashtra that killed the state's deputy chief minister; August 2023 (9.18), the month of the Wagner Group plane crash; and December 2024 (7.6), the month of the Jeju Air crash in South Korea. These attributions rest on timing alone; other crashes occurred in the same months.

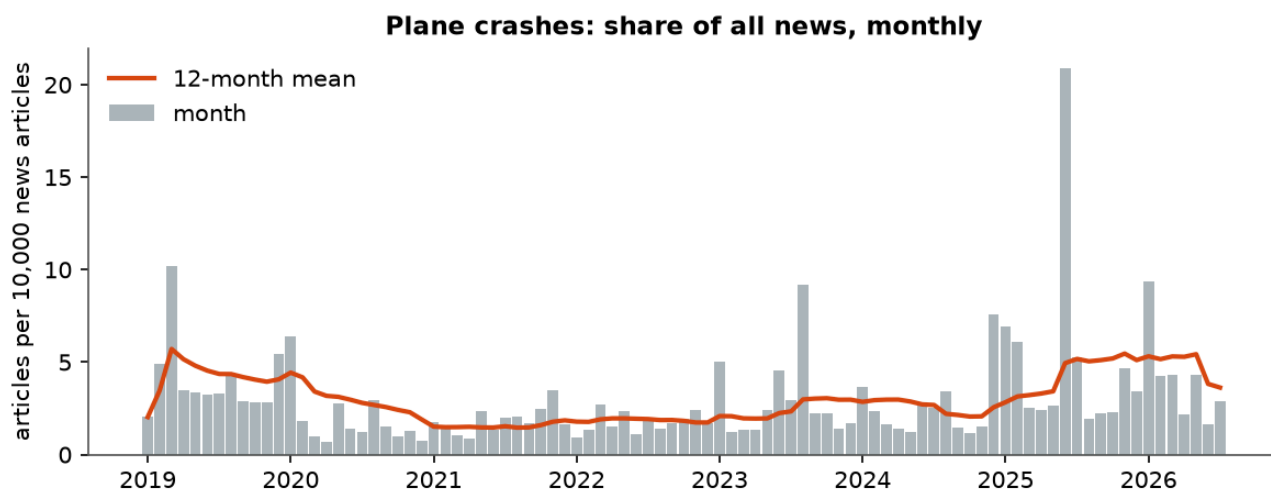


Figure 1. Plane-crash coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

The calendar pattern is weak (Figure 2). January holds 12.82% of a typical year's coverage and April 4.74%, but these shares come from a few large crashes in single years. Plane crashes show no clear season in the news.

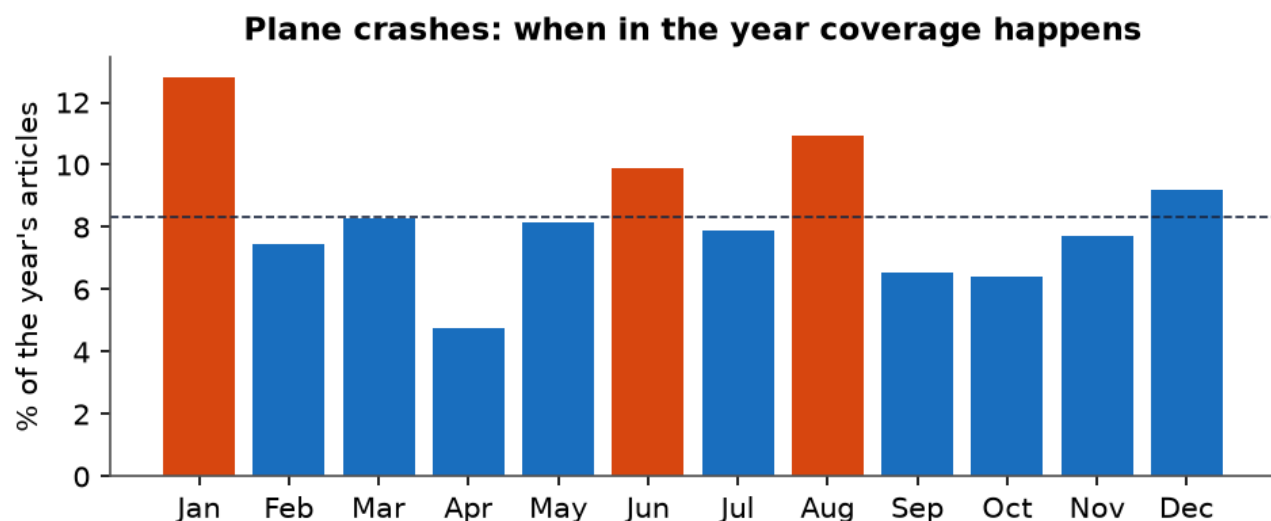


Figure 2. Share of each year's plane-crash articles published in each month, averaged over 2019-2025. Dashed line = an even spread (8.3% per month).

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 18,784 plane-crash articles carried a primary location. The United States holds the largest raw share (42.14%), but its lift is 0.87: crashes take a slightly smaller share of American news than of news overall. India's share (18.0%) comes with a lift of 1.36. The most over-represented countries are those where one crash dominated a small or mid-sized news market (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located plane-crash articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
United States	7,916	42.14	0.87
India	3,382	18.0	1.36
Russia	1,146	6.1	8.1
United Kingdom	929	4.95	0.85
Nepal	661	3.52	19.51
South Korea	596	3.17	5.29
Brazil	458	2.44	2.82
Australia	334	1.78	0.83
Canada	280	1.49	0.69
Colombia	244	1.3	5.0
Ukraine	146	0.78	1.45
Thailand	135	0.72	3.79
Germany	132	0.7	0.6
France	131	0.7	0.35
Malawi	128	0.68	22.2

Table 2. Leading countries in located plane-crash news, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news.

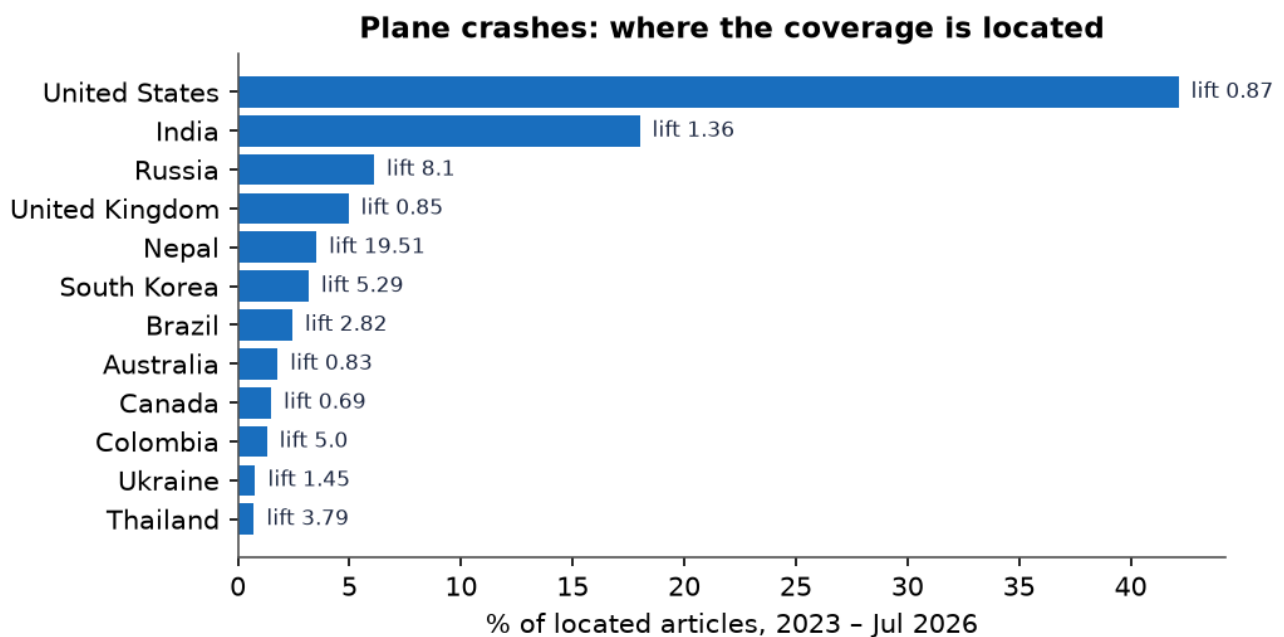


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located plane-crash articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Only 15 countries have at least 100 located articles, so most of the map is grey. Among those, plane crashes are most over-represented in Malawi, Nepal, Russia, South Korea, Colombia, Thailand and Brazil, and under-represented in France, Germany, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. By continent, South America (2.32) and Asia (1.26) are over-represented, while North America (0.9), Europe (0.88), Oceania (0.8) and Africa (0.67) are not (Figure 7, left). Africa's low continental lift sits beside Malawi's high country lift, which rests on 128 articles, too few to move the continental value.

Plane crashes: which countries over- and under-cover the topic

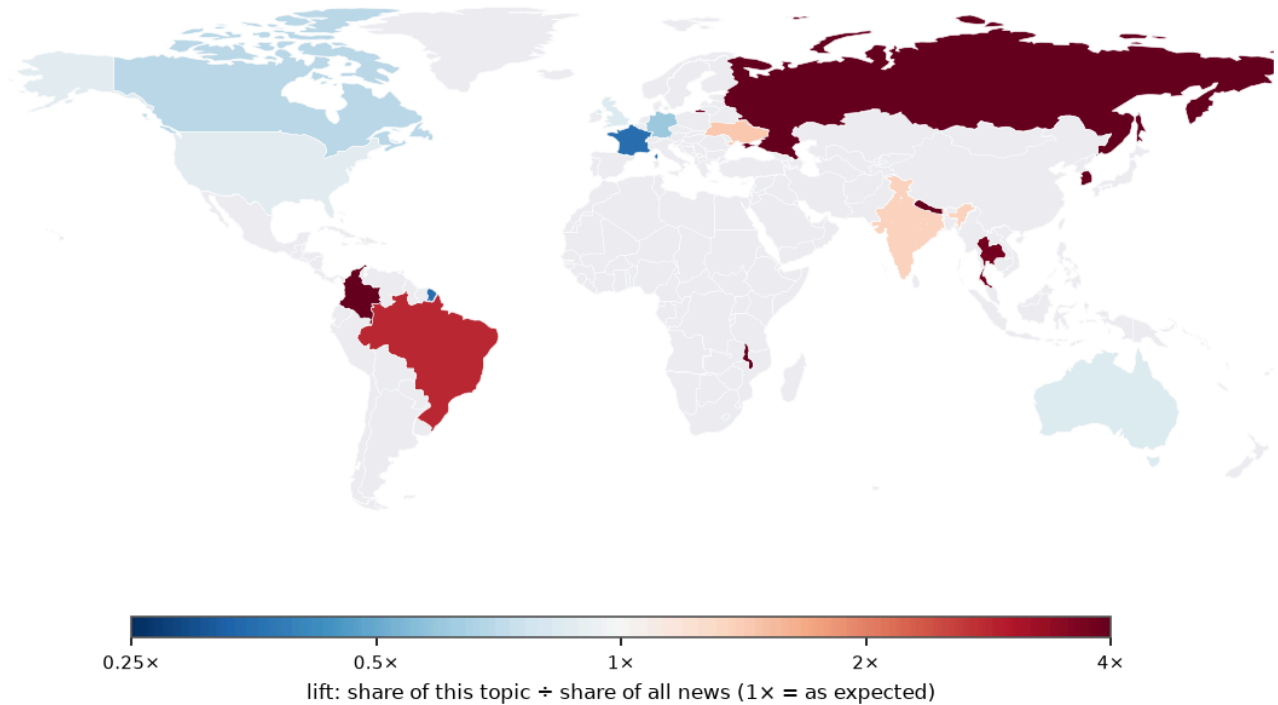


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located plane-crash articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = fewer than 100 articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is sharper (Table 3). In India, located coverage is concentrated in two states. Gujarat (12.26) and Maharashtra (2.4) together hold 78.68% of located Indian plane-crash articles, while Uttar Pradesh (0.17), Delhi (0.45), Madhya Pradesh (0.59) and Rajasthan (0.61) are under-represented (Figure 5). Most other Indian states have fewer than 50 located articles and are not discussed. In the United States, Kansas (8.71), Alaska (6.98), Hawaii (5.45) and Kentucky (4.98) lead by lift, followed by North Carolina (3.13). New Jersey (0.08), Illinois (0.58) and Michigan (0.69) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6).

Highest lift: state	Articles	Lift	Lowest lift: state	Articles	Lift
Gujarat (India)	1,250	12.26	New Jersey (US)	103	0.08
Kansas (US)	360	8.71	Uttar Pradesh (India)	68	0.17
Alaska (US)	100	6.98	Delhi (India)	182	0.45
Hawaii (US)	116	5.45	Illinois (US)	108	0.58
Kentucky (US)	122	4.98	Madhya Pradesh (India)	54	0.59
North Carolina (US)	352	3.13	Rajasthan (India)	65	0.61
New Hampshire (US)	60	2.97	Michigan (US)	113	0.69
Virginia (US)	185	2.68	Alabama (US)	58	0.72
Maharashtra (India)	1,176	2.4	Texas (US)	336	0.81

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in plane-crash coverage, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 articles). Lift = the state's share of the country's located plane-crash articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country.

Plane crashes: states of India by lift

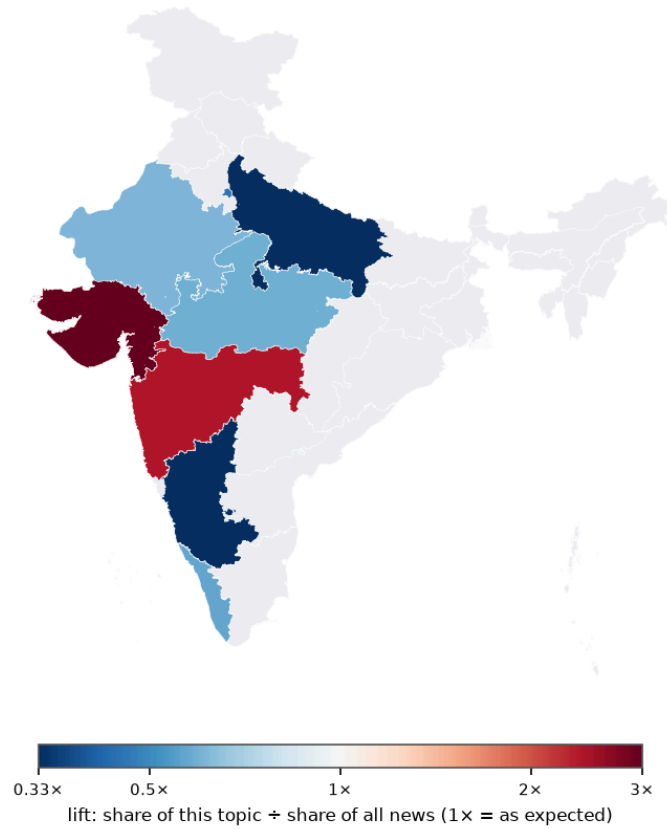


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located plane-crash articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Plane crashes: states of United States by lift

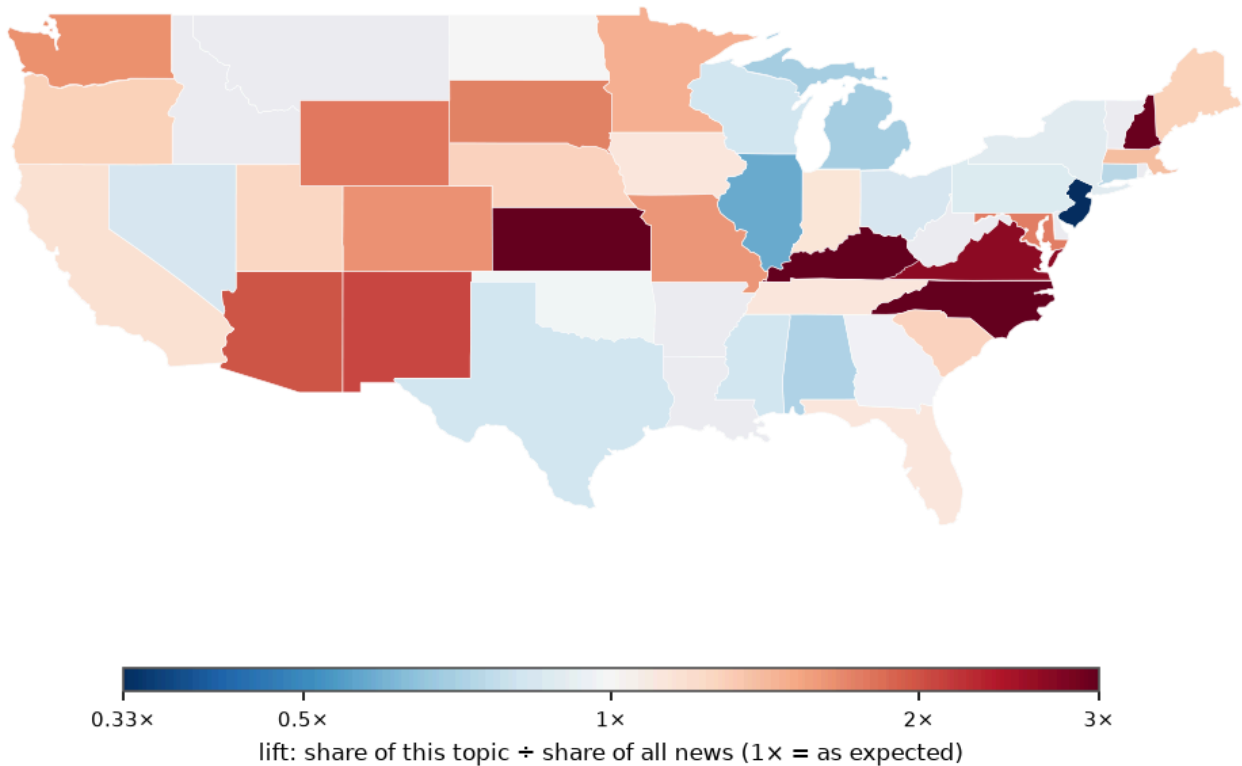


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located plane-crash articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right). Measured as plane-crash articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, and among countries with at least 100 plane-crash articles in 2025, South Korea rose from 0.89 in 2023 to 31.25 in 2025 (35.11 times, after 45.44 in 2024), India from 0.89 to 12.57 (14.12 times) and the United Kingdom from 1.56 to 9.65 (6.19 times). Canada rose 2.53 times, the United States 2.27 times, and Australia hardly changed (1.02). Among the smaller markets, attention fell most where 2023 was a crash year: Nepal from 266.64 to 4.31, Russia from 79.74 to 9.59 and Colombia from 63.35 to 3.39.

Plane-crash coverage is negative in tone everywhere, but the gap with each country's own news differs. Relative to that baseline, the gap is widest in South Korea (95.3% negative against 25.0%, 3.81 times), Canada (84.9% against 27.1%) and the United States (91.5% against 33.1%). It is narrowest in Russia (99.0% against 72.1%), whose news is negative in tone more often than most.

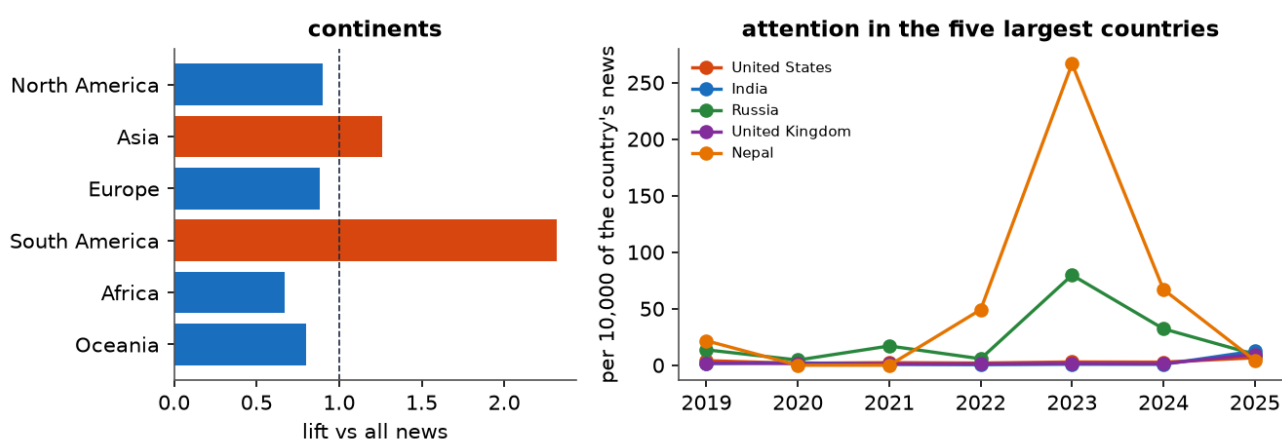


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: plane-crash articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Plane-crash coverage is far more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 91.2% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (2.71 times). The machine-assigned priority rating puts 92.2% of plane-crash articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (2.16 times).

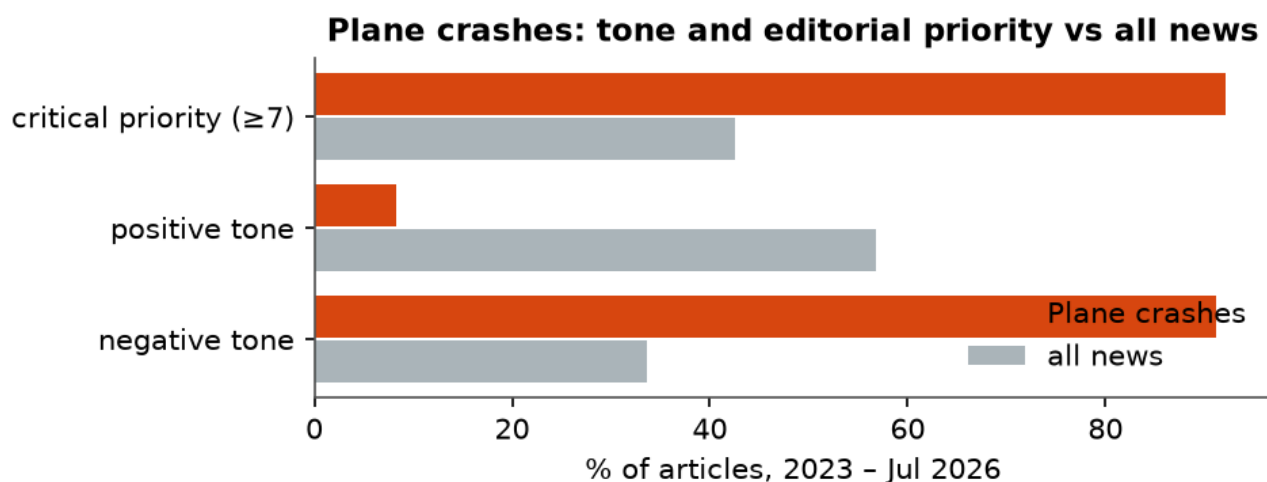


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, plane-crash articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what crash stories are about (Table 4). Crash investigations and flight-recorder data appear in 71.14% of themed articles, 351.64 times their rate in all news.

Safety protocols, maintenance and evacuation follow. Memorials and obituaries are common but less specific to the topic.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
aviation crash investigations and black box data	15,208	71.14	351.64
aircraft maintenance procedures	1,897	8.87	119.79
aviation safety protocols	3,116	14.58	94.59
aircraft evacuation drills	839	3.92	89.97
aircraft de-icing procedures	313	1.46	83.73
aviation industry aviation safety regulations	597	2.79	65.21
pilot training and certification programs	349	1.63	59.81
accidental deaths and fatalities	2,145	10.03	44.67

Table 4. Themes most specific to plane-crash coverage (lift against all themed news), January 2023 – July 2026.

The organisations named most often are investigators, regulators and manufacturers: the National Transportation Safety Board (4,420 articles), the Federal Aviation Administration (3,812), Boeing (2,810) and Air India (2,563). Wire services also rank high, which reflects how crash news is sourced.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on aviation accidents and safety grew faster than the scientific literature. Papers with these terms in the title rose from 0.16 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to 0.27 in 2025, a 1.67-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, 1,375 such papers were published, 189 of them in 2025. The most-cited studies address aircraft icing, human factors in controlled flight into terrain, and the modelling of accident investigation reports [1–4].

News attention does not track research attention (Figure 9). Research share rose steadily after 2022, while news share jumps with single crashes.

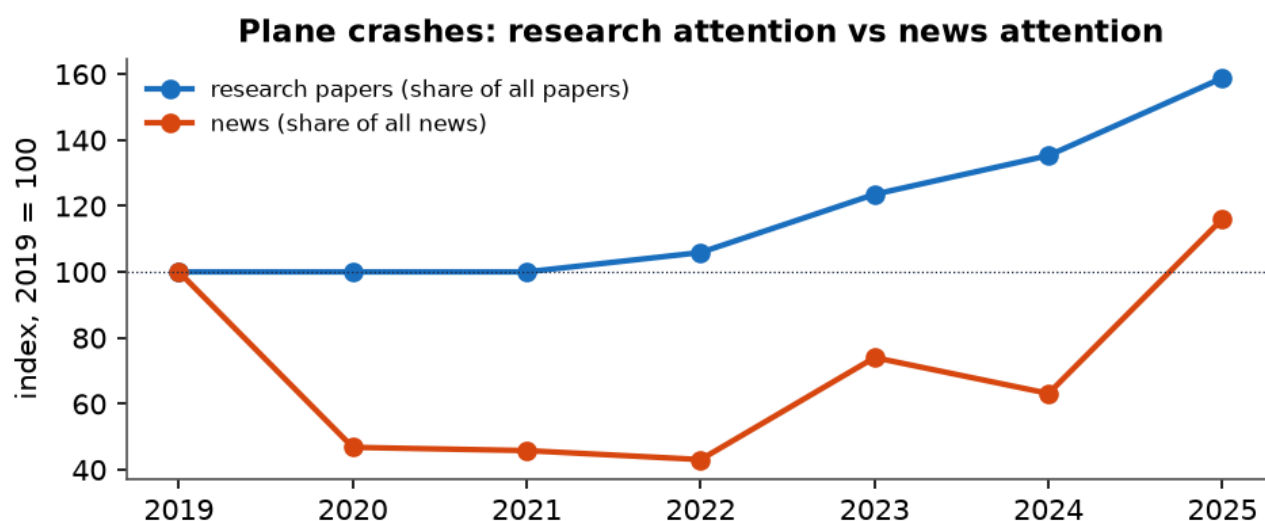


Figure 9. Research papers on aviation accidents and safety (share of all papers) and plane-crash news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

The patent side is small. Between 2015 and 2024, 134 patent families named flight recorders, crash locator transmitters or aircraft accidents in their titles. Annual publications peaked at 19 in 2017 and fell to 9 in 2024. China's office holds 40.9% of office filings,

followed by the United States (17.5%) and the European office (10.2%) (Figure 10). The leading technology class is aircraft equipment (B64D, 27 families).

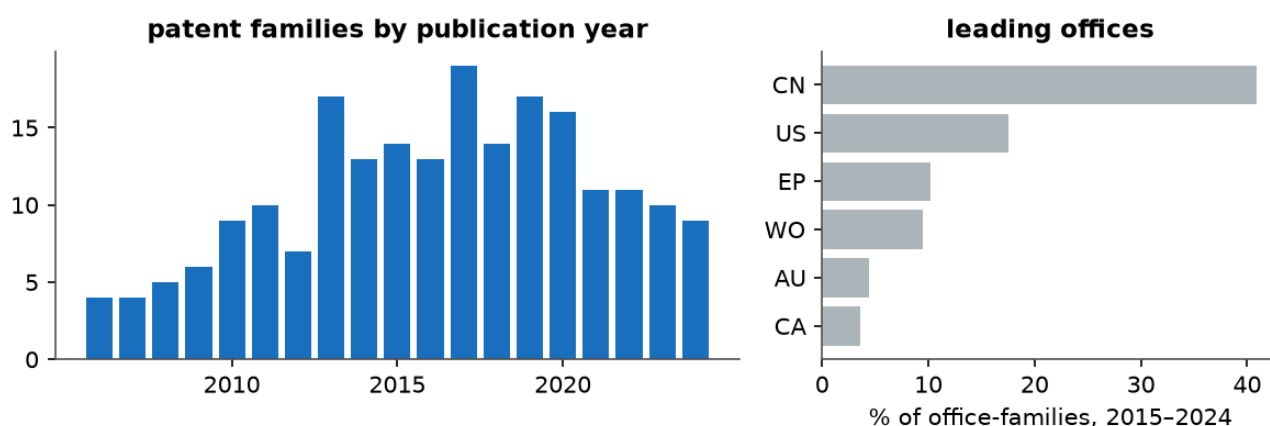


Figure 10. Patent families on flight recorders and crash equipment by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015-2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of plane crashes. First, coverage measures attention, and attention is set by a few large crashes. The 2020 trough and the June 2025 peak are not a count of crashes; they may reflect what else was in the news and where crashes struck as much as how many occurred. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States leads plane-crash news in raw terms but is slightly under-represented relative to its weight in the index. Countries where a single crash dominated the national news (Malawi, Nepal, Russia, South Korea and Colombia) have the highest lift. Third, the tone and urgency of crash coverage are extreme: almost every article is negative and rated critical. Whether this shapes how the public judges the risk of flying is not tested here. The research literature on aviation safety addresses that risk directly [5-7].

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share grows slowly and steadily. Patents on crash equipment are few and falling. News follows the big crashes. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether heavily covered crashes are followed by research on their causes.

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 a crash only later are missed, and 7.5% of matches are not about an actual crash. Helicopter crashes described as "air crashes" are included.
- **Event-driven values.** Annual, country and state values move with single crashes. Lifts for small news markets can be set by one event.
- **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 ("Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile", "Hurricane") were treated as

unlocated (15.3% of city-tagged articles). This lowers located counts, and a few real places that share a name with an ordinary word may be lost.

- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets. This shapes geography.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. The research count includes general aviation safety papers; the patent count is small.

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 11,138 of 44,827 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 "plane crash" --since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

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