

Smartphones in the News, 2019-2026: Attention, Geography and Tone of Global Smartphone 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 smartphones were covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 423,717 de-duplicated smartphone articles, and set that coverage beside 44,813 research papers (2015-2025) and 8,248 patent families (2015-2024) with smartphone in the title. Six results stand out:

1. **A shrinking share.** Smartphones took 40.47 of every 10,000 news articles in 2019 and 25.35 in 2025, a 37.4% fall in share, although the number of smartphone articles rose 1.43-fold.
2. **No season, one peak.** Coverage is spread almost evenly across the year. The highest monthly share was February 2019, the month of that year's Mobile World Congress, at 50.33 articles per 10,000.
3. **Geography.** India holds 30.28% of located smartphone news, 2.29 times its share of all located news. The United States holds 19.2% but is under-represented, at a lift of 0.4. Asia as a whole is over-represented 2.66 times. Within India, Karnataka (1.96), Delhi (1.55) and Maharashtra (1.52) lead; within the United States, leaving aside brand-name tags, Nevada (2.69), California (2.32) and Washington (1.58).
4. **Tone and urgency.** 84.7% of smartphone articles are positive in tone (all news: 56.8%), and only 21.3% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
5. **Shifting attention.** Between 2023 and 2025 smartphones gained share in the news of Nigeria (1.55 times) and Brazil (1.47 times) and lost it in France, Taiwan and China.
6. **Research and invention.** Smartphone papers rose from 4.65 to 6.65 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025. Smartphone-titled patent families fell 47.4% over the same decade, and South Korea's office held 33.5% of their office filings, ahead of China's (29.2%).

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Smartphones' share of news fell 37.4% between 2019 (40.47 per 10,000) and 2025 (25.35).
- **F2.** February 2019 was the peak month for smartphone news, at 50.33 articles per 10,000.
- **F3.** India's share of located smartphone news (30.28%) was 2.29 times its share of all news. The United States' (19.2%) was 0.4 times.
- **F4.** Smartphone attention fell from 2023 to 2025 in Taiwan (157.42 to 74.89 per 10,000) and China (131.63 to 77.06).
- **F5.** 84.7% of smartphone articles were positive in tone, 1.49 times the all-news share.

- **F6.** 21.3% of smartphone articles were rated critical priority, half the all-news share.
- **F7.** Mobile operating systems appeared in 19.13% of themed smartphone articles, 87.1 times their rate in all news.
- **F8.** Smartphone papers rose 1.43-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F9.** Smartphone patent families published per year fell from 1,037 in 2015 to 545 in 2024.
- **F10.** South Korea's office held 33.5% of office filings of smartphone patent families (2015–2024), China's 29.2%.
- **F11.** Within India, Karnataka (1.96), Delhi (1.55) and Maharashtra (1.52) had the most over-represented smartphone coverage.
- **F12.** Within the United States, leaving aside brand-name tags in Florida and Oklahoma, Nevada (2.69), California (2.32) and Washington (1.58) had the most over-represented smartphone coverage.
- **F13.** Asia held 65.53% of located smartphone news, a lift of 2.66.
- **F14.** Smartphone coverage as a share of Nigeria's news rose 1.55-fold from 2023 to 2025.
- **F15.** 6.9% of Indian smartphone articles were negative in tone, against 41.2% of Indian news.

1. Introduction

The smartphone is the most widely owned computing device in the world. News about it covers new models, prices, software, makers and their supply chains, and the effects of phone use on health and schooling. This coverage is a record of public attention to a technology. It is rarely measured as data in its own right. Sales trackers record shipments. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record how much of the news smartphones 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 (52,553 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 smartphones when its opening text contains *smartphone*, *smartphones*, *smart phone* or *smart phones* as whole words. The word has no common figurative sense, so exclusions target templated items rather than other meanings:

- market-research press releases ("market size and share", "CAGR", "forecast period", "request a sample");
- app-install and service-availability boilerplate attached to local news pages.

Together these removed 13,037 of 436,754 raw matches (2.98%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. In 34 the smartphone was a substantive part of the story (precision 85%), and in 27 (67.5%) smartphones or a named smartphone were the main subject. The six misses were an author biography, a holiday-greetings piece, articles on folding televisions, a foldable tablet and smartwatches that mention phones in passing, and a school social-media rule.

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. Seasonality uses each year's within-year month shares, averaged over the complete years 2019–2025. Geography, tone, priority and themes use January 2023 – July 2026. Geography is expressed as lift: a place's share of smartphone articles divided by its share of all located articles. For states, the baseline is all located news from that country, and states with fewer than 50 smartphone articles are not discussed. Place tags derived from ordinary words (714 words such as "Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile" and "Hurricane") 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 a smartphone term in the title; repository deposits are excluded. Patent families (2006–2024) use the same title rule and are counted once per filing office.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 423,717 smartphone articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 47,783 in 2019 to 68,415 in 2025, but the share of all news fell almost every year: 40.47 per 10,000 in 2019, 31.15 in 2020 (23% lower), 27.51 in 2023 and 25.35 in 2025 (Table 1). The highest monthly share was February 2019, at 50.33 per 10,000 (Figure 1). The largest monthly count came later, in August 2025 (8,110 articles), when the index was much larger.

Year	Smartphone articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	47,783	11,807,177	40.47
2020	50,549	16,230,014	31.15
2021	51,169	17,281,220	29.61
2022	53,112	19,115,515	27.78
2023	56,354	20,484,506	27.51
2024	64,954	23,311,896	27.86
2025	68,415	26,990,006	25.35

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

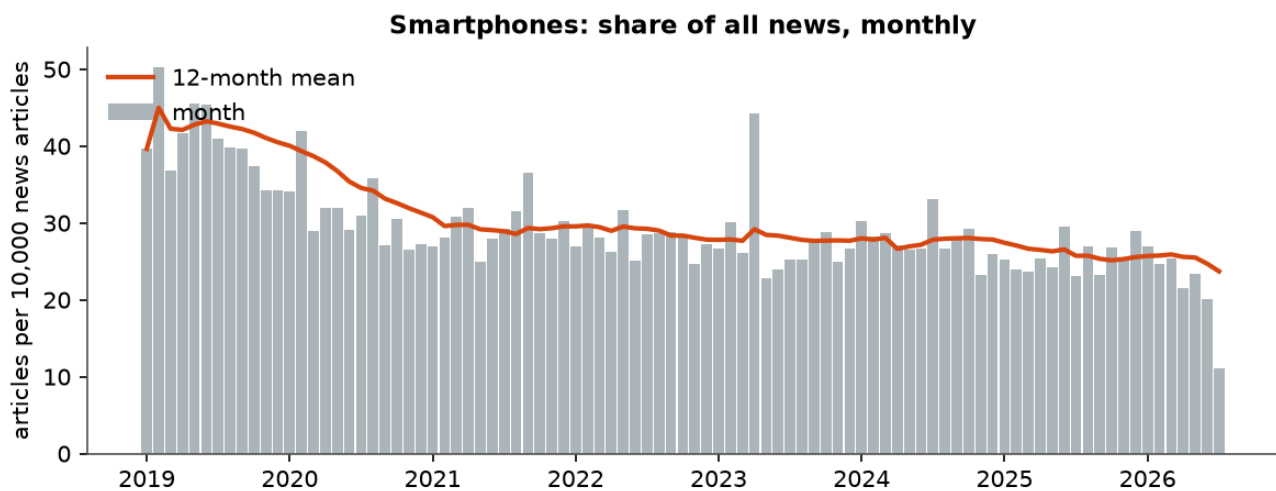


Figure 1. Smartphone coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Unlike event topics, smartphone coverage has almost no season (Figure 2). The busiest month, January, holds 9.13% of a typical year's articles. The quietest, November, holds 7.19%. The ratio between them is only 1.27. This is consistent with launch events and trade fairs being spread across the calendar.

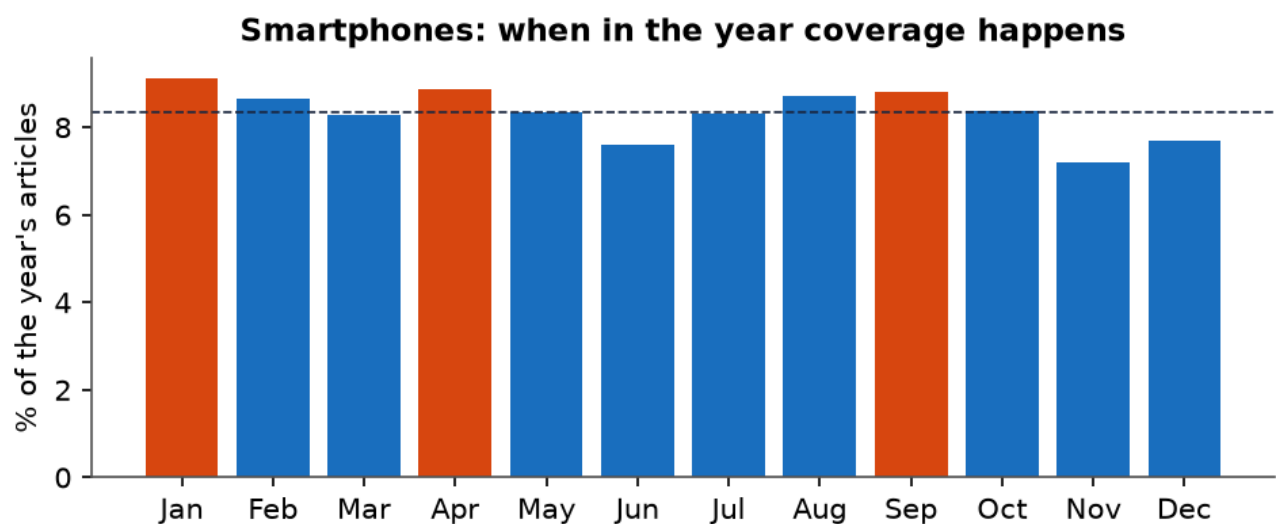


Figure 2. Share of each year's smartphone articles published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. The dashed line marks an even spread.

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 99,815 smartphone articles carried a primary location. India holds the largest raw share (30.28%) with a lift of 2.29. The United States holds 19.2% but its lift is 0.4: smartphones take a smaller share of American news than of news overall. Taiwan and China, centres of handset manufacture, have lifts of 4.18 and 3.92 (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located smartphone articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
India	30,223	30.28	2.29
United States	19,165	19.2	0.4
China	10,308	10.33	3.92
United Kingdom	3,614	3.62	0.62
Japan	1,513	1.52	1.43
Spain	1,212	1.21	1.24
France	1,045	1.05	0.53
Singapore	956	0.96	1.08
Australia	948	0.95	0.44
Germany	936	0.94	0.8
Indonesia	789	0.79	2.84
Pakistan	739	0.74	1.63
Philippines	720	0.72	2.29
Taiwan	554	0.56	4.18

Table 2. Leading countries in located smartphone news, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news. South Korea (16,548 articles), Finland (1,023) and Mali (498) are omitted: their tags are artefacts of location matching.

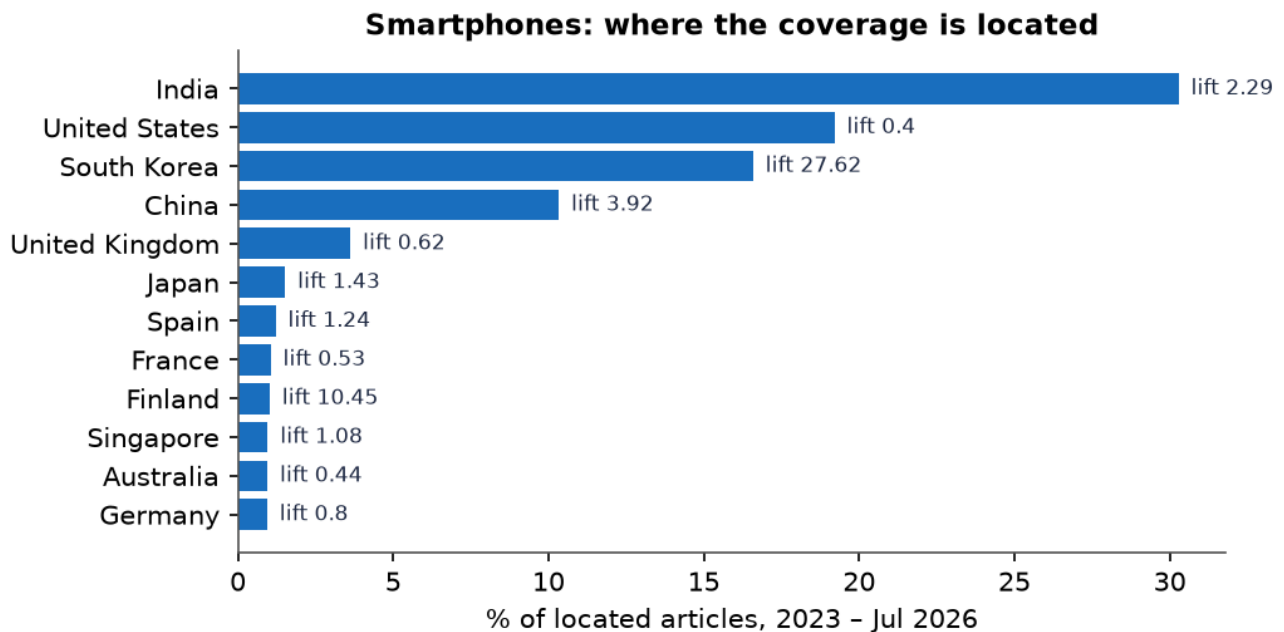


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located smartphone articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

Two cautions apply. First, the index tags 16,548 smartphone articles to South Korea (lift 27.62), but nearly all sampled South Korean rows carry the city tag "samsung": the manufacturer's name read as a place. Finland's lift (10.45) rests on the same artefact, with "nokia" read as the town of Nokia. Both lifts measure a brand, not a country, so South Korea and Finland are left out of the news findings. Second, the index tags 498 smartphone articles to Mali (lift 11.25), but sampled openings are launch, review and processor stories; "Mali" is also the name of a line of phone graphics processors. Mali is therefore left out of every finding.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Smartphones are over-represented in the news of South, East and Southeast Asia, and under-represented in North America, most of Europe, Oceania and South America. By continent, only Asia is over-represented, at 2.66 times its share of all located news and 65.53% of located smartphone articles. Africa (0.68), Europe (0.66), South America (0.58), Oceania (0.45) and North America (0.36) are all below parity (Figure 7, left).

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

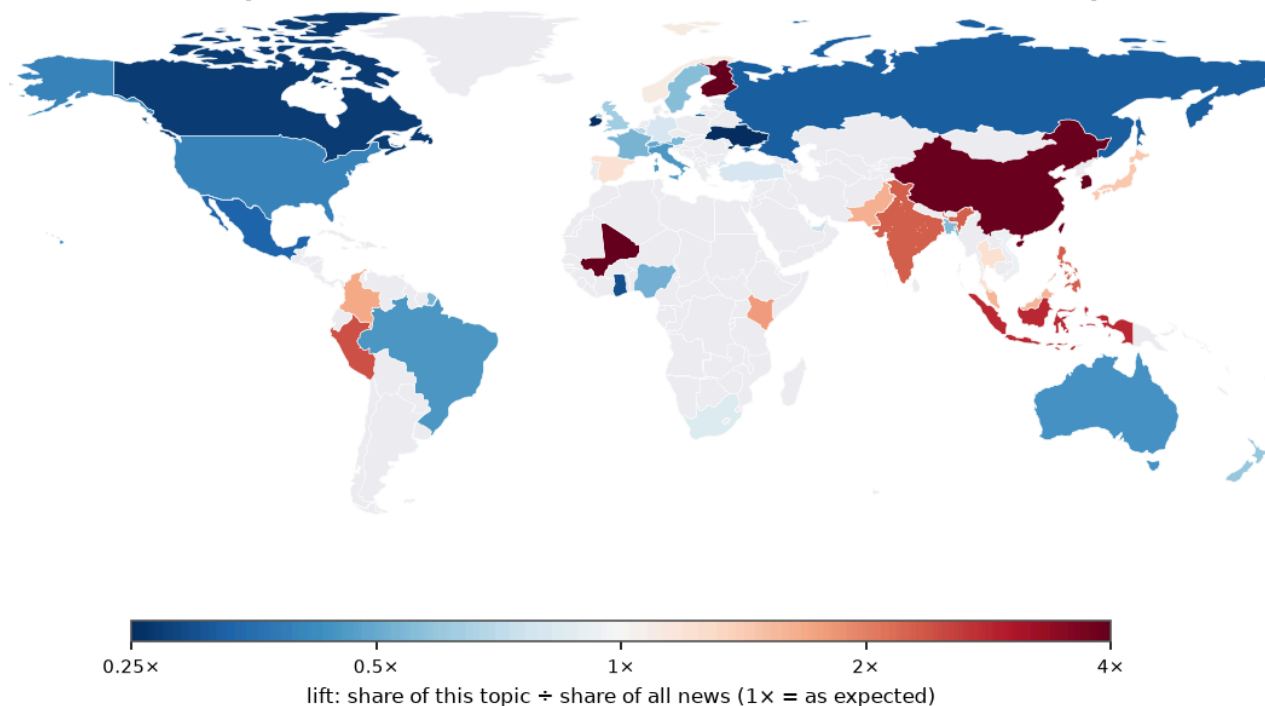


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located smartphone articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = fewer than 100 articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is more even than for event topics (Table 3). In India, 4,040 located articles are spread across states, but not evenly. Measured against each state's share of Indian news, Karnataka (1.96), Delhi (1.55), Maharashtra (1.52) and Tamil Nadu (1.31) are over-represented. Karnataka's capital, Bengaluru, is the centre of the Indian technology industry. Bihar (0.27), West Bengal (0.4) and Kerala (0.51) are under-represented (Figure 5). In the United States, 10,577 located articles give Nevada (2.69), California (2.32) and Washington (1.58) the highest lifts among states with at least 100 articles. Nevada's lift rests largely on trade-show coverage from Las Vegas. New Jersey (0.12) and Pennsylvania (0.41) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6). Florida (2.23) and Oklahoma (1.57) are not ranked: sampled openings show Xiaomi phone stories tagged to Miami and stories on Samsung's Bixby assistant tagged to the town of Bixby, Oklahoma. An earlier build of this release ranked Alabama and Kansas high; that came from place tags read from ordinary words (for Alabama, "mobile" read as the city of Mobile), and with those tags removed Alabama's lift is 0.87.

India: state	Articles	Lift	United States: state	Articles	Lift
Karnataka	440	1.96	Nevada	292	2.69
Delhi	811	1.55	California	2,448	2.32
Maharashtra	977	1.52	Washington	438	1.58
Tamil Nadu	266	1.31	New York	1,502	1.22
Telangana	168	1.2	Illinois	296	1.06
<i>lowest</i>			<i>lowest</i>		
Gujarat	93	0.7	Wisconsin	102	0.72
Andhra Pradesh	52	0.56	North Carolina	117	0.69
Kerala	50	0.51	Michigan	164	0.67
West Bengal	57	0.4	Pennsylvania	257	0.41
Bihar	53	0.27	New Jersey	235	0.12

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in smartphone coverage, January 2023 – July 2026. Lift = the state's share of the country's located smartphone articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country. Indian states with at least 50 articles and US states with at least 100 are shown; Florida and Oklahoma are omitted because their tags come from brand names.

Smartphones: states of India by lift

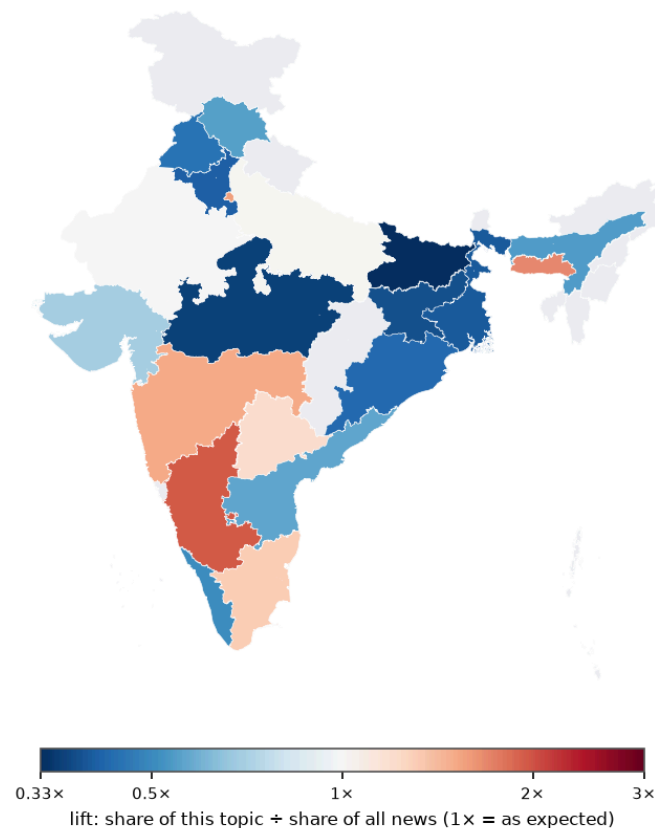


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located smartphone articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Smartphones: states of United States by lift

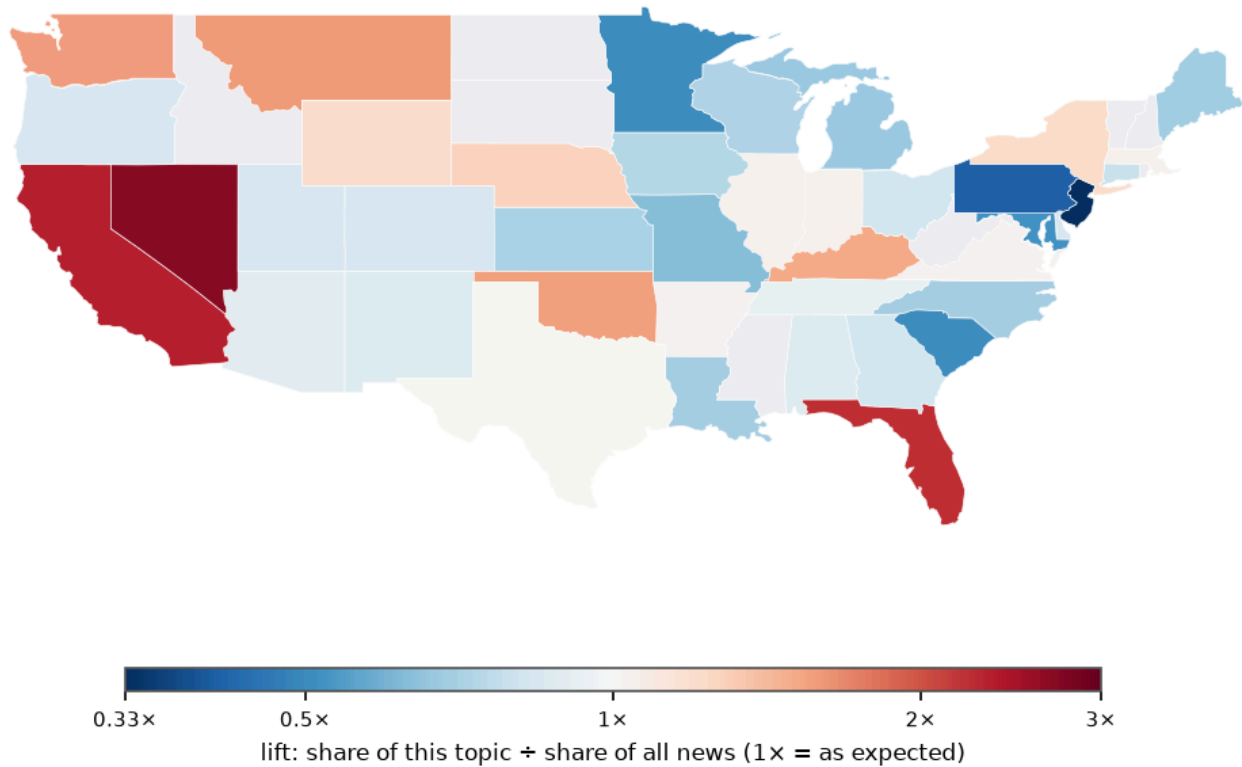


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located smartphone articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Table 4, Figure 7, right). Measured as smartphone articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, Nigeria rose from 10.27 in 2023 to 15.89 in 2025 (1.55 times), Brazil 1.47 times, the United Arab Emirates 1.24 times, Singapore 1.19 times, the United Kingdom 1.17 times and India 1.16 times. France (0.45), Taiwan (0.48) and China (0.59) fell most over the same years.

Rising	2023	2025	Ratio	Falling	2023	2025	Ratio
Nigeria	10.27	15.89	1.55	France	17.74	8.04	0.45
Brazil	8.64	12.72	1.47	Taiwan	157.42	74.89	0.48
United Arab Emirates	18.23	22.52	1.24	China	131.63	77.06	0.59
Singapore	29.29	35.0	1.19	Germany	29.17	19.15	0.66
United Kingdom	14.49	16.99	1.17	Japan	49.21	32.55	0.66
India	54.03	62.72	1.16	Indonesia	87.61	58.71	0.67

Table 4. Countries whose smartphone attention rose or fell most between 2023 and 2025, in articles per 10,000 of that country's located news (among the 25 leading countries, those with at least 100 located smartphone articles in 2025; Mali, South Korea and Finland omitted as location artefacts).

Tone differs by country, and each country should be read against its own baseline. Smartphone coverage is less negative than news overall almost everywhere. The gap is widest in Pakistan (8.4% negative against 59.5% of Pakistani news), New Zealand (9.2% against 45.7%), Nigeria (8.0% against 44.4%), India (6.9% against 41.2%) and the Philippines (5.1% against 39.4%). It is narrowest in Canada (22.8% against 27.1%), the United States (27.4% against 33.1%), Japan (16.5% against 23.3%) and Colombia (23.0% against 31.9%), leaving aside Finland, whose tag is a brand artefact. In every country of the table, smartphone coverage is less negative than that country's news overall. Russia is the

exception in level rather than direction: 56.0% of its smartphone articles are negative, against 72.1% of Russian news.

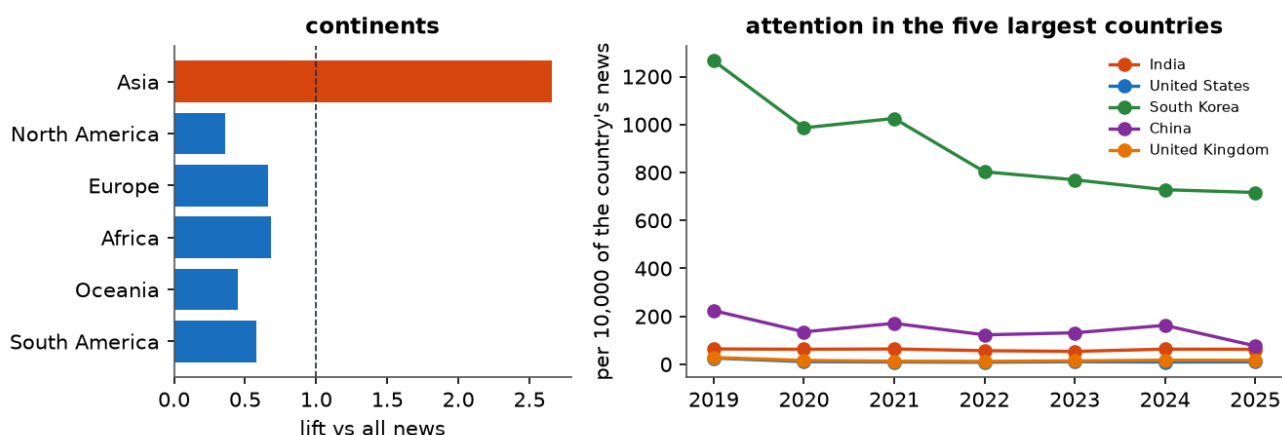


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: smartphone articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Smartphone coverage is far more positive and less urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 84.7% are positive, against 56.8% across the index (1.49 times), and 13.7% are negative, against 33.6% (0.41 times). A machine rating of editorial priority puts 21.3% of smartphone articles at critical level (7 or higher), half the 42.6% share of all news.

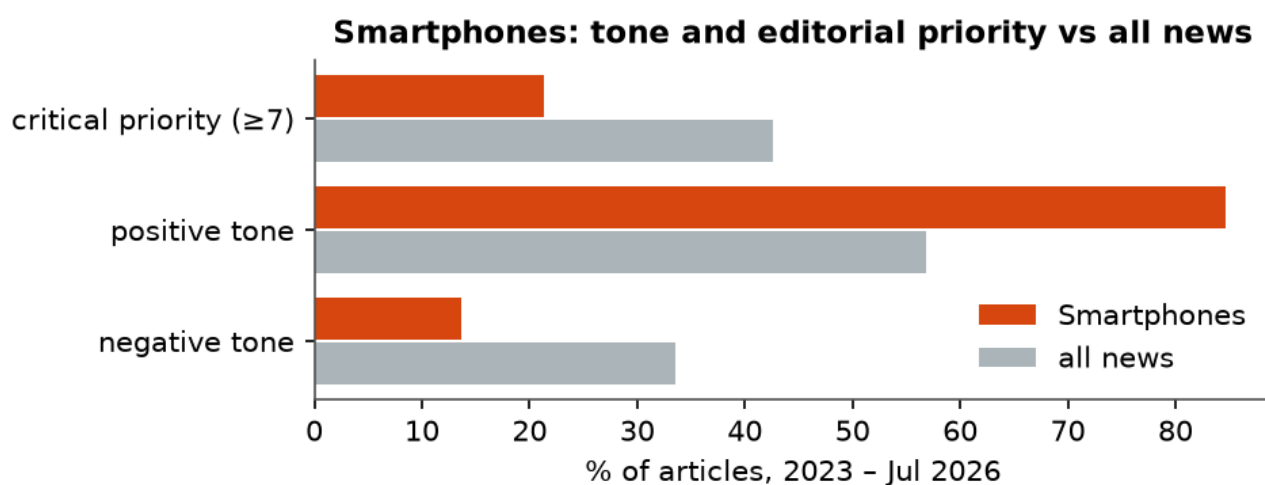


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, smartphone articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what smartphone stories are about (Table 5). Mobile operating systems are the most common theme (19.13% of themed articles, 87.1 times their rate in all news), followed by consumer gadgets, hardware, battery, camera, pricing and displays. The most specific themes are gaming capability, connectivity standards and market segmentation.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
mobile phone gaming capabilities	6,800	5.42	176.57
mobile phone connectivity standards (5G, LTE)	7,860	6.27	165.31
mobile phone market segmentation	6,655	5.31	150.92
mobile phone water and dust resistance	5,612	4.48	149.08
mobile phone retail distribution channels	6,158	4.91	129.43
mobile phone audio technology	2,815	2.25	127.43
mobile phone battery performance	14,237	11.36	121.67
mobile phone hardware components	14,869	11.86	114.29

Table 5. Themes most specific to smartphone coverage (lift against all themed news), January 2023 – July 2026. The organisations named most often are makers, platforms and retailers: Samsung (36,880 articles), Google (22,878), Xiaomi (12,917), OnePlus (9,837) and the Indian online retailer Flipkart (9,017). The list reflects which brands launch most often, so it is not used as a finding.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on smartphones grew faster than the scientific literature until 2022 and then levelled off. Papers with a smartphone term in the title rose from 4.65 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to a peak of 7.13 in 2022, and stood at 6.65 in 2025, a 1.43-fold increase in share over the decade. The number of such papers rose 1.44-fold while the total literature in the corpus was almost flat (a factor of 1.0). Between 2015 and 2025, 44,813 such papers were published. Five of the ten most-cited since 2010 concern smartphone addiction or problematic use [1–5]. Other highly cited papers describe activity recognition from phone sensors and health applications [6–8].

News attention does not track research attention (Figure 9). Research share held near its peak from 2019 to 2025, while news share fell by more than a third.

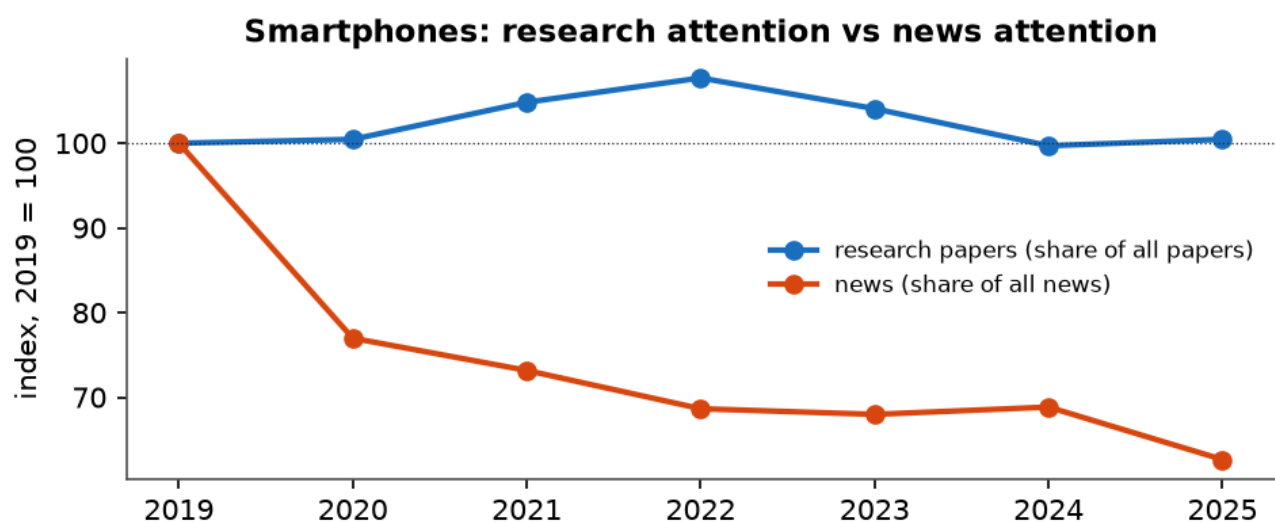


Figure 9. Research papers with smartphone in the title (share of all papers) and smartphone news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

Patenting moved the other way. Patent families with smartphone in the title peaked at 1,044 in 2014. The 2015 figure was 1,037 and the 2024 figure 545 (0.53 times). Of office filings of these families from 2015 to 2024, South Korea's office holds 33.5%, China's 29.2% and the United States' 14.7% (Figure 10). Together the Korean and Chinese offices hold 62.7%. The leading technology classes are telephonic communication (H04M, 957 families), business

methods (G06Q, 542) and cases and holders (A45C, 421). The fall in titles may partly reflect a shift in wording ("mobile terminal", "electronic device"), so it should not be read as a fall in smartphone innovation.

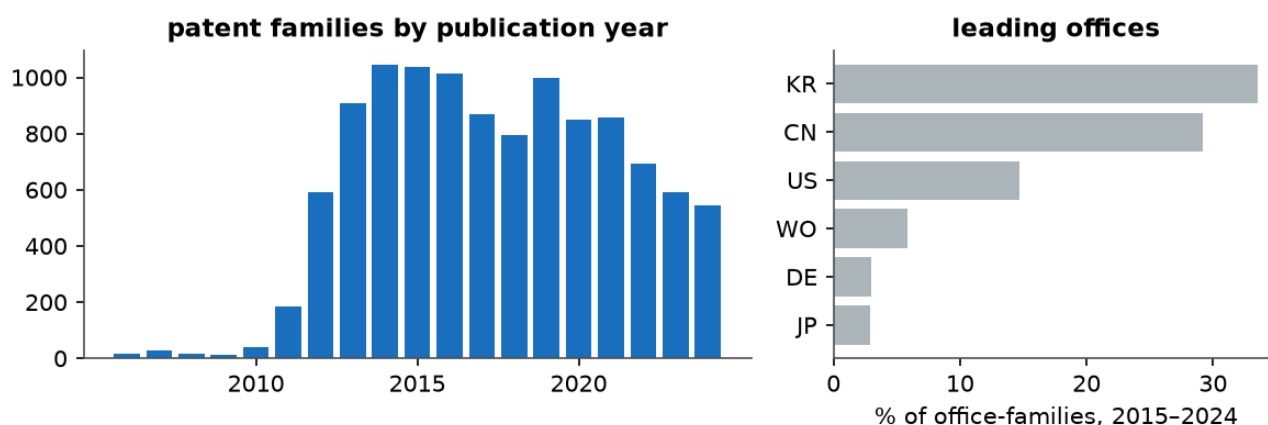


Figure 10. Smartphone patent families by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015–2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of smartphones. First, coverage measures attention, and attention to smartphones has fallen as a share of the news since 2019, even as the number of articles grew. The data do not show why; possible reasons include the device becoming ordinary and the index adding outlets that cover other subjects. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States is the second largest source of located smartphone articles but is under-represented relative to its weight in the index. India, China and Taiwan, where phones are sold in great numbers or made, are where smartphones take the largest share of attention. Third, smartphone news is mostly product news. It is positive in tone, low in urgency and organised around specifications, prices and launches.

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share grew to 2022 and has held since, led by work on problematic use and mental health. Patent titles that name the smartphone have halved since their 2014 peak. News share has fallen steadily. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether waves of coverage on phone use and health are followed by research in the same countries.

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 smartphones only later, or say only "phone" or a model name, are missed, and 15% of matches are not substantively about smartphones.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority and themes are machine-labelled. Brand names read as places ("samsung", "nokia") inflate South Korea and Finland, articles naming a phone graphics processor are tagged to Mali, brand names put Florida and Oklahoma high among US states, and the city field tags brand names as places and is not analysed.

- **Place tags from ordinary words.** Place tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated (15.3% of city-tagged articles). This removes false places such as Mobile, Alabama, but it also drops the few articles that really were about a place with such a name.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets and, for this topic, Indian technology sites. This shapes both geography and tone.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. Patent wording drifts towards generic terms, so title counts understate later smartphone patenting.

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 52,553 of 423,674 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 "smartphone" --since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

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