

Suicide in the News, 2019-2026: Seasonality, Geography and Tone of Global Suicide 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

If you or someone you know is struggling, contact local emergency services or a crisis line. This paper measures news coverage. Following safe-reporting practice, it names no individual case and gives no method or location detail of any death.

Abstract

We measure how suicide was covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 213,127 de-duplicated articles about suicide, and set that coverage beside 51,312 research papers (2015–2025) and 295 patent families (2015–2024). Six results stand out:

1. **Seasonality.** On average 20.31% of each year's coverage appears in August and September, against 16.67% for an even spread. September holds the largest share (10.43%).
2. **Attention, not occurrence.** Suicide took a 34.8% smaller share of news in 2021 than in 2019. Its share peaked in August 2019, at 34.24 articles per 10,000, and has stayed between 13.74 and 14.53 per 10,000 each year since 2022.
3. **Geography.** India's share of located coverage (43.89%) is 3.32 times its share of all news. The United States (34.37%) is under-represented at 0.71. Asia is the only continent with clear over-representation (2.0). Within India, Rajasthan (2.12), Telangana (1.94) and Madhya Pradesh (1.74) lead; within the United States, New Mexico (1.96), Alaska (1.84) and Wyoming (1.8), once Utah and Montana, whose lift comes from place-name tagging errors, are set aside.
4. **Tone and urgency.** 88.7% of articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and 93.1% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
5. **Measurement.** 12.9% of raw matches for suicide vocabulary referred to suicide bombings, attack drones or figurative uses. Counting them would inflate coverage and mix in conflict reporting.
6. **Research and invention.** Suicide papers grew from 5.34 to 9.01 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025, a 1.69-fold rise in share. Patenting is small: 295 families in ten years, with China's office holding 37.8% of office filings.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Between 2019 and 2025, an average of 20.31% of each year's suicide coverage appeared in August and September, against 16.67% for an even spread.
- **F2.** Suicide took a 34.8% smaller share of news in 2021 than in 2019 (12.98 vs 19.9 per 10,000 articles).

- **F3.** August 2019 was the peak month, at 34.24 articles per 10,000; June 2020 was second (22.3).
- **F4.** India's share of located coverage (43.89%) was 3.32 times its share of all news. The United States' (34.37%) was 0.71 times.
- **F5.** 88.7% of articles were negative in tone, 2.64 times the all-news share.
- **F6.** 93.1% of articles were rated critical priority, 2.19 times the all-news share.
- **F7.** Cyberbullying-related suicide appeared in 15.5% of themed articles, 448.22 times its frequency in all news.
- **F8.** Veteran suicide and post-traumatic stress appeared in 3.75% of themed articles, 284.47 times its frequency in all news.
- **F9.** 12.9% of raw suicide-vocabulary matches were attack senses or figurative uses.
- **F10.** Suicide papers rose 1.69-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F11.** China's office held 37.8% of office filings for suicide-related patent families (2015–2024).
- **F12.** Within India, Rajasthan (2.12), Telangana (1.94) and Madhya Pradesh (1.74) had the most over-represented coverage; Jammu and Kashmir (0.31), Himachal Pradesh (0.32) and Delhi, Uttarakhand and West Bengal (0.56 each) the least.
- **F13.** Within the United States, leaving aside Utah and Montana (tagging artefacts), New Mexico (1.96), Alaska (1.84) and Wyoming (1.8) had the most over-represented coverage; New Jersey (0.14) and Pennsylvania (0.55) the least.
- **F14.** Coverage as a share of Nepal's news rose 3.64-fold from 2023 to 2025; it fell most in Ireland (13.5 to 3.56) and China (4.65 to 1.66).
- **F15.** Coverage was most disproportionately negative against the national baseline in South Korea (3.62 times) and Japan (3.56 times).

1. Introduction

Suicide is a leading cause of death worldwide, and news coverage of it is a public-health matter in its own right. Studies of the "Werther effect" suggest that some kinds of coverage, especially prominent, repeated or detailed reports, can be followed by imitation, while coverage that points to help may be protective. Media guidelines therefore ask journalists to avoid sensational headlines and method detail. Yet the volume, timing and geography of coverage are rarely measured as data. Mortality statistics record deaths. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record attention, meaning how much of the news suicide 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. All findings are coverage measures. A high share of news about suicide in a country or state says that its press reports suicide often. It does not say that suicide is more common there. The companion dataset publishes an article-level sample (52,959 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 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 suicide when its opening text contains *suicide*, *suicides*, *suicidal*, *died by suicide*, *suicide prevention* or *took his/her/their own life* as whole words. Three families of matches are excluded:

- attack senses: suicide bombings, suicide attacks, suicide vests, suicide drones and "kamikaze";
- other fixed phrases: "suicide squad", "suicide doors", "suicide squeeze";
- figurative uses: "political suicide", "commercial suicide", "career suicide" and similar.

Together these removed 31,523 of 244,650 raw matches (12.9%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 38 referred to suicide in the self-harm sense (precision 95%), and in 28 (70%) suicide was the main subject. The two misses were a forensic case report and a garbled machine translation. The match keeps articles in which suicide is part of a wider story, such as a murder followed by a suicide, a court case or a research abstract on suicidal ideation.

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 country's share of articles about suicide divided by its share of all located articles. The same rule is applied to states within India and the United States, against each country's own located news. Place tags derived from ordinary words ("Congress", "Earth", "Winter", "Cloud", "Mobile", "Hurricane" and 714 such words in all) are treated as unlocated in every location field, which removes 15.3% of city-tagged articles.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *suicide*, *suicidal* or *suicidality* in the title. Repository deposits and the cell-biology sense ("suicide gene", "suicide substrate", "suicide plasmid") are excluded, as are titles about suicide attacks. Patent families (2005–2024) use the same title rule and are counted once per filing office.

Safe reporting. We read and report aggregates only. No case is named. Article texts, which may contain detail about individual deaths, are not published in the dataset and are reached only through the API.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 213,127 articles about suicide from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 23,493 in 2019 to 37,122 in 2025, but the share of all news did not (Table 1). It was 19.9 per 10,000 in 2019, fell to 12.98 in 2021 (34.8% lower), and has stayed between 13.74 and 14.53 since 2022. The highest monthly share was August 2019, at 34.24 per

10,000, 2.49 times the 2025 annual share. June 2020 was second, at 22.3 (Figure 1). The dataset records when coverage peaked, not why. We do not identify the stories behind either month and make no claim about the effect of the coverage.

Year	Articles about suicide	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	23,493	11,807,177	19.9
2020	23,647	16,230,014	14.57
2021	22,423	17,281,220	12.98
2022	26,274	19,115,515	13.74
2023	29,755	20,484,506	14.53
2024	32,662	23,311,896	14.01
2025	37,122	26,990,006	13.75

Table 1. Articles about suicide per year and as a share of the index. 2026 (January-July) is partial and omitted.

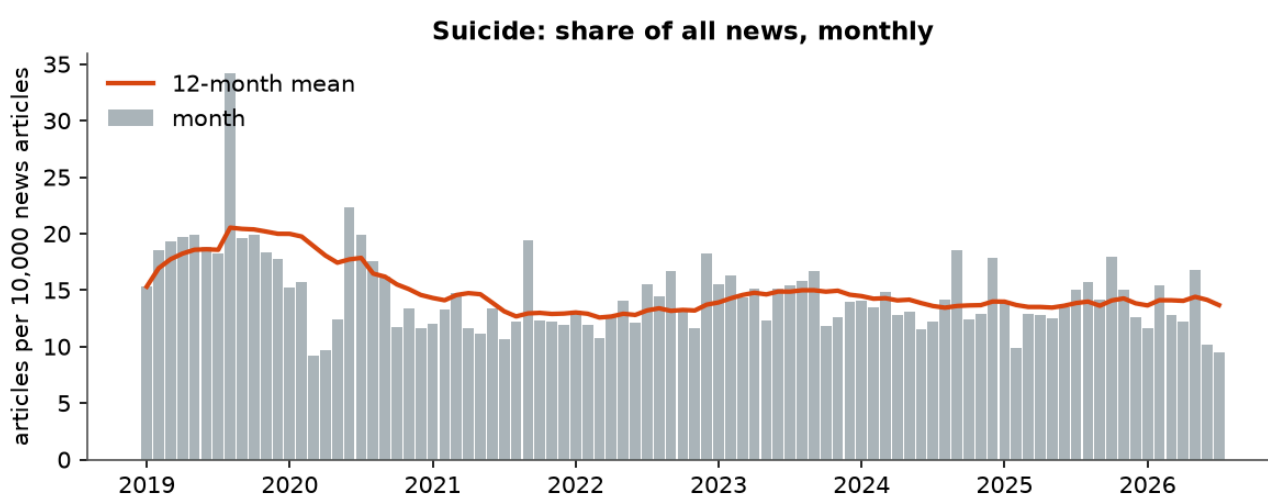


Figure 1. Coverage of suicide as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Coverage is mildly seasonal (Figure 2). September (10.43%) and August (9.88%) together hold 20.31% of a typical year's articles, against 16.67% for an even spread. April (7.37%) and November (7.44%) are the quietest months. The seasonal swing is far smaller than for weather-driven topics. September includes annual awareness campaigns, but the month shares measure attention, not the timing of deaths.

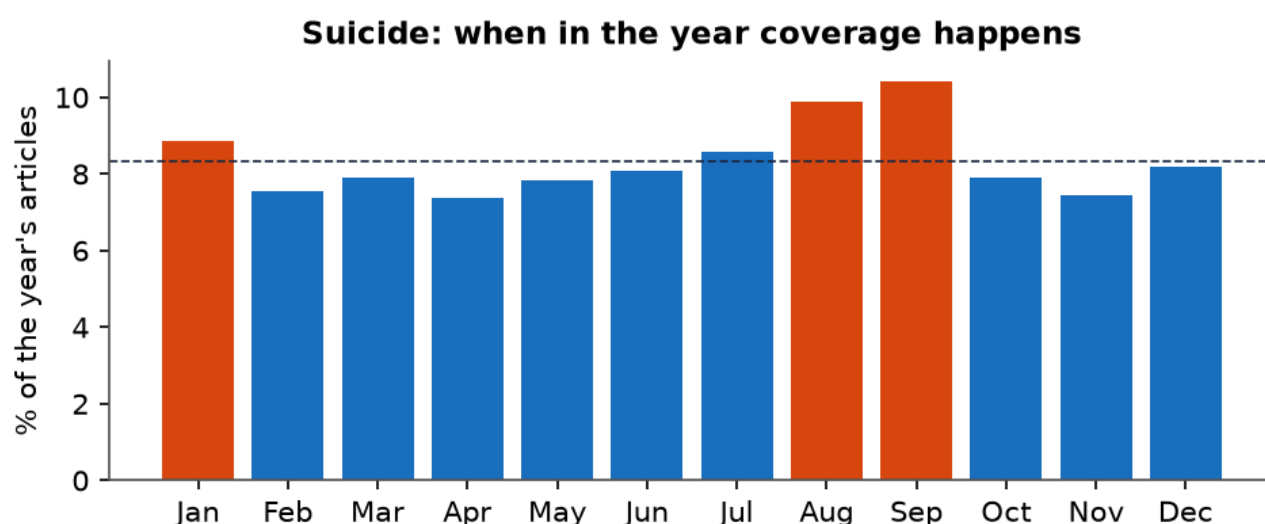


Figure 2. Share of each year's articles about suicide published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. Dashed line = an even spread.

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 58,422 articles about suicide carried a primary location (49.8% of the 117,281 in that window). Two countries dominate. India holds 43.89% of located articles with a lift of 3.32: suicide takes more than three times as large a share of Indian news as of news overall. The United States holds 34.37%, but its lift is 0.71. Among other countries, Afghanistan (2.28), Nepal (1.78), Kenya (1.29) and Switzerland (1.22) are over-represented, and New Zealand (1.1), Australia (1.05) and South Korea (1.05) are close to parity, while China (0.21), the United Arab Emirates (0.27), Singapore and Ukraine (0.33 each), Italy (0.35), Germany (0.37) and Spain (0.38) are well below their weight in the index (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
India	25,639	43.89	3.32
United States	20,081	34.37	0.71
United Kingdom	2,528	4.33	0.74
Australia	1,314	2.25	1.05
Canada	690	1.18	0.55
France	625	1.07	0.54
New Zealand	417	0.71	1.1
Japan	396	0.68	0.64
South Korea	369	0.63	1.05
Nigeria	367	0.63	0.46
China	316	0.54	0.21
Switzerland	309	0.53	1.22
Germany	257	0.44	0.37
Nepal	188	0.32	1.78

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

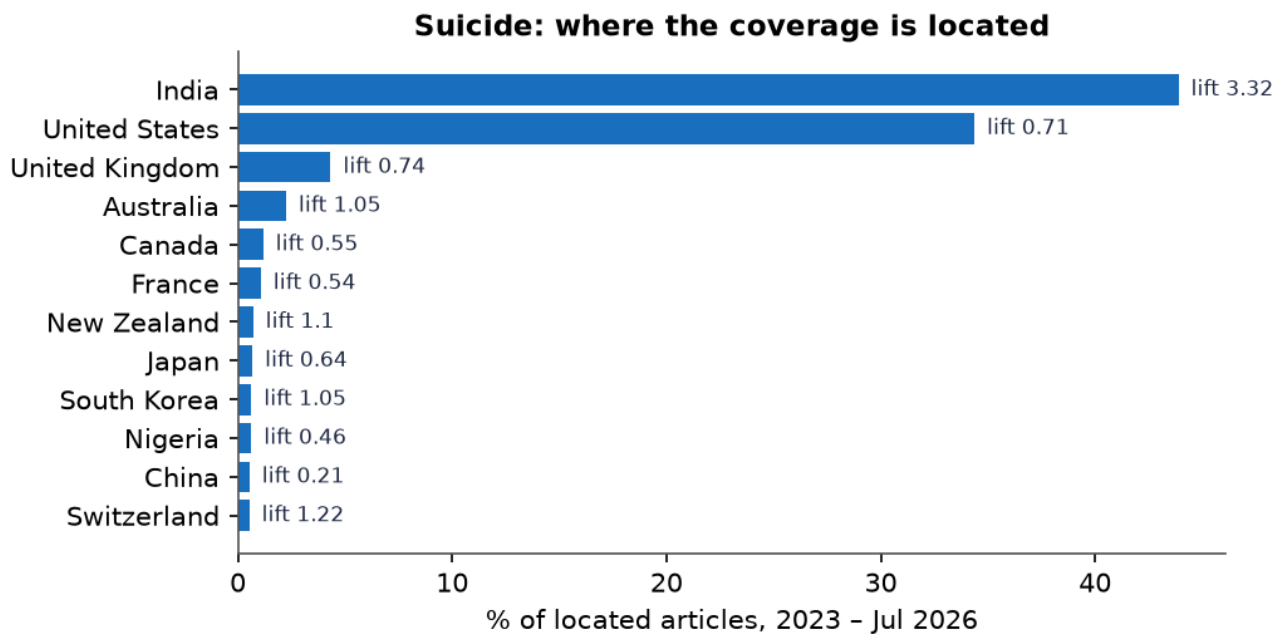


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located articles about suicide, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Suicide is over-represented in the news of India, Afghanistan, Nepal and Kenya, close to parity in Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, and under-represented in most of Europe, China, Latin America and the rest of Africa. By continent, Asia (2.0) is the only clearly over-represented region, and Oceania (1.06) is close to parity. North America (0.73), Europe (0.53), South America (0.48) and Africa (0.46) are under-represented (Figure 7, left). Asia's figure is driven by India.

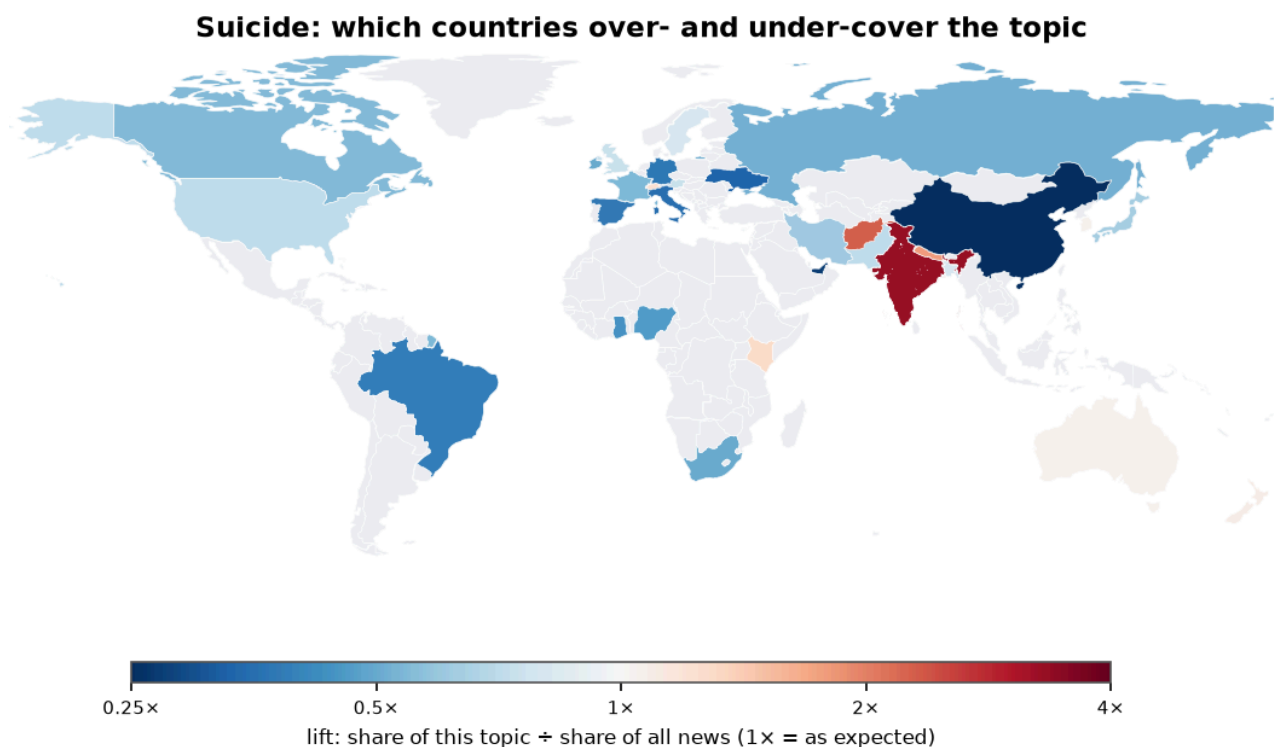


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located articles about suicide, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = fewer than 100 articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is sharper (Table 3). India has 25,172 articles located to a state. Measured against each state's share of Indian news, coverage concentrates in Rajasthan (2.12), Telangana (1.94), Madhya Pradesh (1.74), Uttar Pradesh (1.48) and Kerala (1.46). Uttar Pradesh has the most articles (4,745). Jammu and Kashmir (0.31), Himachal Pradesh (0.32), Delhi, Uttarakhand and West Bengal (0.56 each) are the most under-represented (Figure 5). In the United States, 17,407 articles are located to a state. Utah (2.1) and Montana (2.08) head the lift table, but about half of the sampled rows tagged to each never name the state: the tag comes from a personal name read as a town (Morgan, Murray, Logan; Kevin, Phillips, Conrad). We set both aside. Among the rest, New Mexico (1.96), Alaska (1.84), Wyoming (1.8), Virginia and Idaho (1.67 each) lead by lift, while New Jersey (0.14) and Pennsylvania (0.55) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6). Lift reflects how often each state's press reports suicide; it is not a ranking by suicide rate.

India: state	Articles	Lift	United States: state	Articles	Lift
Rajasthan	1,847	2.12	New Mexico	120	1.96
Telangana	1,696	1.94	Alaska	65	1.84
Madhya Pradesh	1,295	1.74	Wyoming	75	1.8
Uttar Pradesh	4,745	1.48	Virginia	284	1.67
Kerala	894	1.46	Idaho	54	1.67
Haryana	916	1.42	Louisiana	128	1.65
<i>Lowest: Delhi</i>	1,826	0.56	<i>Lowest: Delaware</i>	65	0.88
Uttarakhand	315	0.56	Tennessee	322	0.81
West Bengal	489	0.56	Arkansas	51	0.74
Himachal Pradesh	110	0.32	Pennsylvania	574	0.55
Jammu and Kashmir	186	0.31	New Jersey	455	0.14

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in coverage of suicide, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 articles; Utah, 2.1, and Montana, 2.08, are omitted as place-name tagging artefacts). Lift = the state's share of the country's located articles about suicide ÷ its share of all located news from that country.

Suicide: states of India by lift

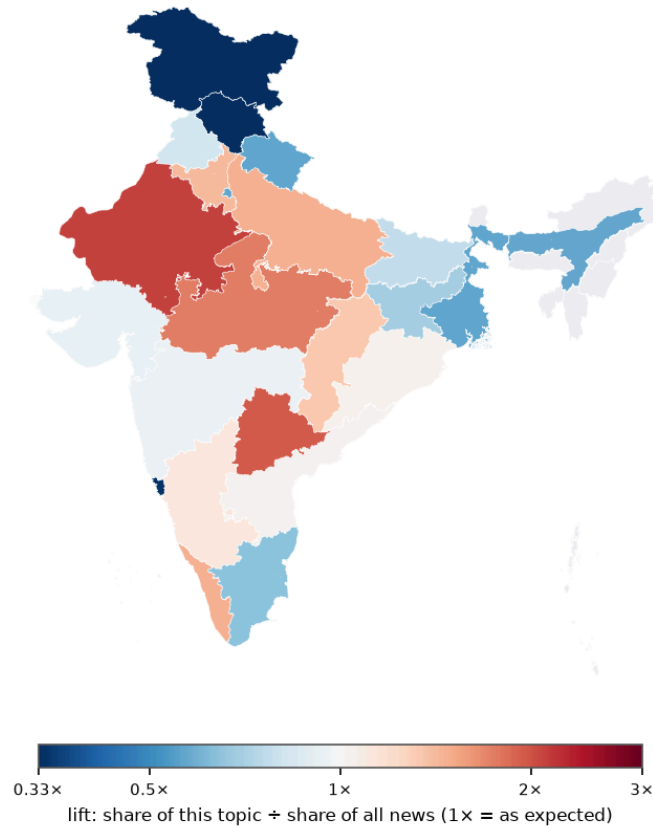


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located articles about suicide against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Suicide: states of United States by lift

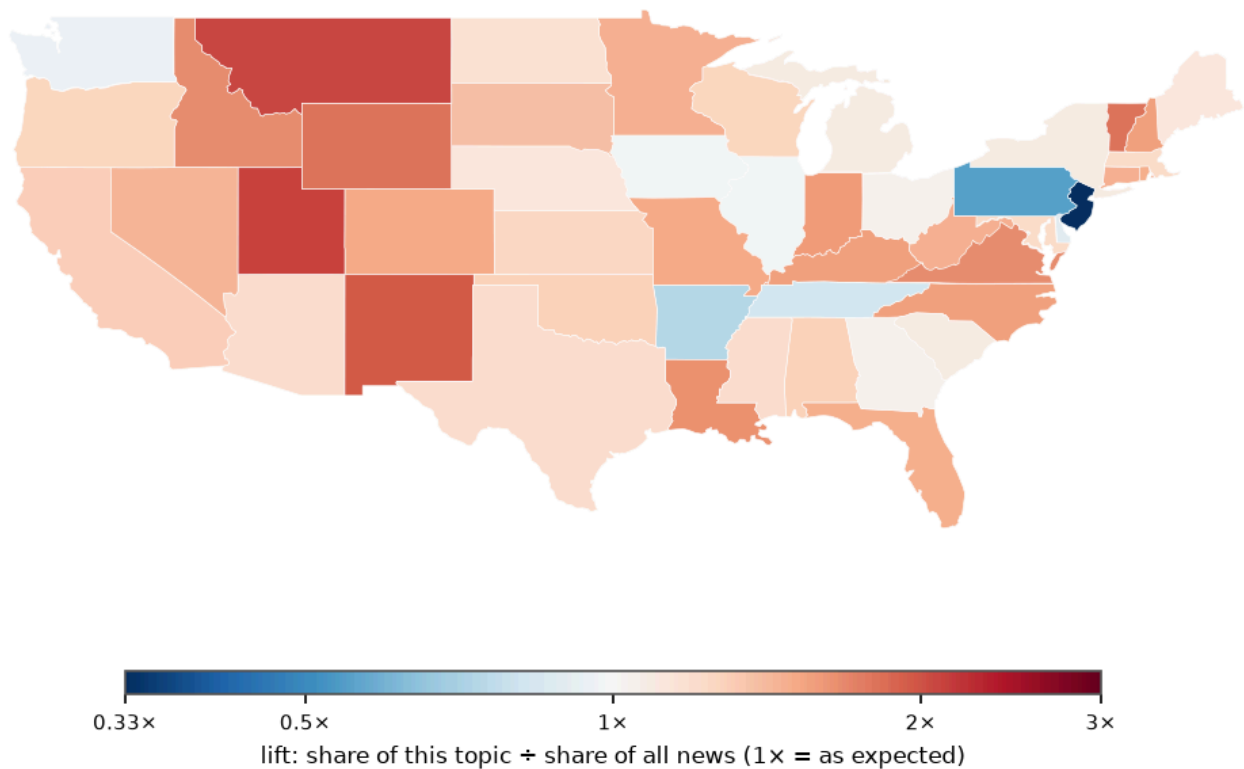


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located articles about suicide against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right). Measured as articles about suicide per 10,000 of each country's located news, Nepal rose from 14.34 in 2023 to 52.17 in 2025 (3.64 times) and New Zealand 2.27 times. India (56.44 to 54.35) and the United States (10.83 to 10.68) were almost flat. Among the 25 countries with the most located coverage, the steepest falls were in Ireland (13.5 to 3.56), China (4.65 to 1.66) and South Korea (24.61 to 11.9), and Canada, Singapore and Ghana roughly halved. Coverage of suicide is negative in tone everywhere, but most of all relative to each country's news overall in South Korea (90.5% negative against 25.0%) and Japan (83.0% against 23.3%), 3.62 and 3.56 times the national baseline. In India the ratio is smaller (97.5% against 41.2%, 2.37 times), in part because Indian news is more negative overall.

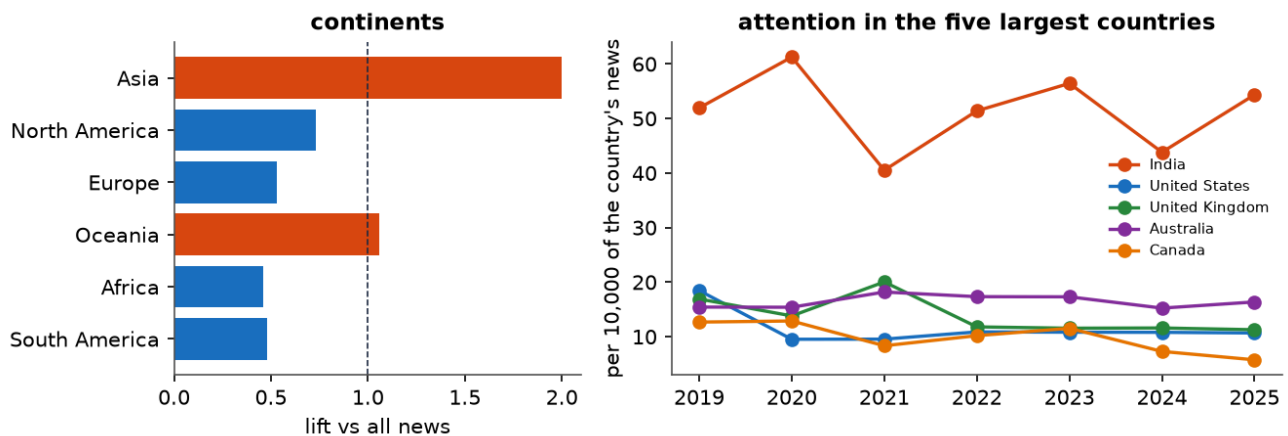


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: articles about suicide per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Coverage of suicide is far more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 88.7% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (2.64 times). The machine-assigned priority rating puts 93.1% of articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (2.19 times).

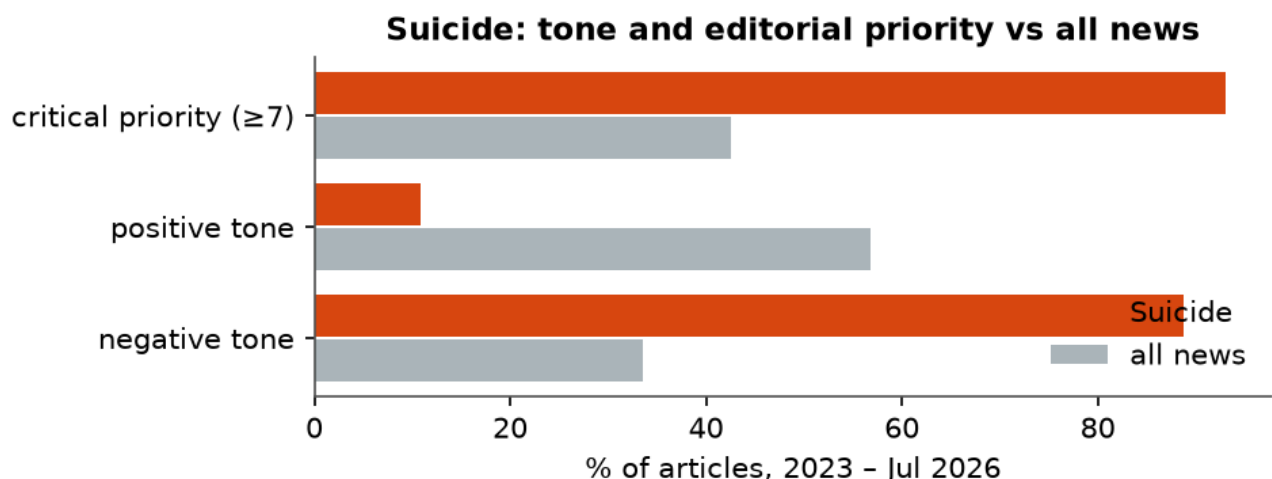


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, articles about suicide vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what the stories are about (Table 4). Suicide prevention and mental-health crises is the most common theme (30.23% of themed articles). Cyberbullying-related suicide appears in 15.5%, 448.22 times its rate in all news, and veteran suicide in 3.75%, 284.47 times. Research has long examined the link between bullying, cyberbullying and suicide [6] and self-harm in adolescents [4]. Domestic violence appears in 10.07% of themed articles, so

suicide is often reported as part of a wider story of abuse. Help lines and prevention programmes are small themes, under 1% each, though highly specific to the topic.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
suicide prevention and mental health crises	18,581	30.23	312.83
mental health and survivor guilt narratives	12,307	20.02	383.04
cyberbullying-related suicide incidents	9,525	15.5	448.22
domestic violence and intimate partner abuse	6,191	10.07	27.84
grief counseling and bereavement support	3,716	6.05	83.24
veteran suicide and post-traumatic stress	2,307	3.75	284.47
self-harm prevention hotlines	443	0.72	580.21
suicide prevention programs	446	0.73	366.22

Table 4. Leading themes in coverage of suicide, with lift against all themed news, January 2023 – July 2026.

The organisations named most often are social platforms (Instagram, 3,323 articles), wire services and broadcasters, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1,118) the leading public-health body. Several entries are tagging artefacts, so the list is not analysed further.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on suicide grew faster than the scientific literature. Papers with a suicide term in the title rose from 5.34 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to 9.01 in 2025, a 1.69-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, 51,312 such papers were published. The most-cited include the interpersonal theory of suicide, a validated suicide-risk rating scale and a meta-analysis of fifty years of research on risk factors [1-3], and work on suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic [5].

News attention does not track research attention (Figure 9). Research share rose almost every year, while news share fell from 2019 to 2021 and has been flat since.

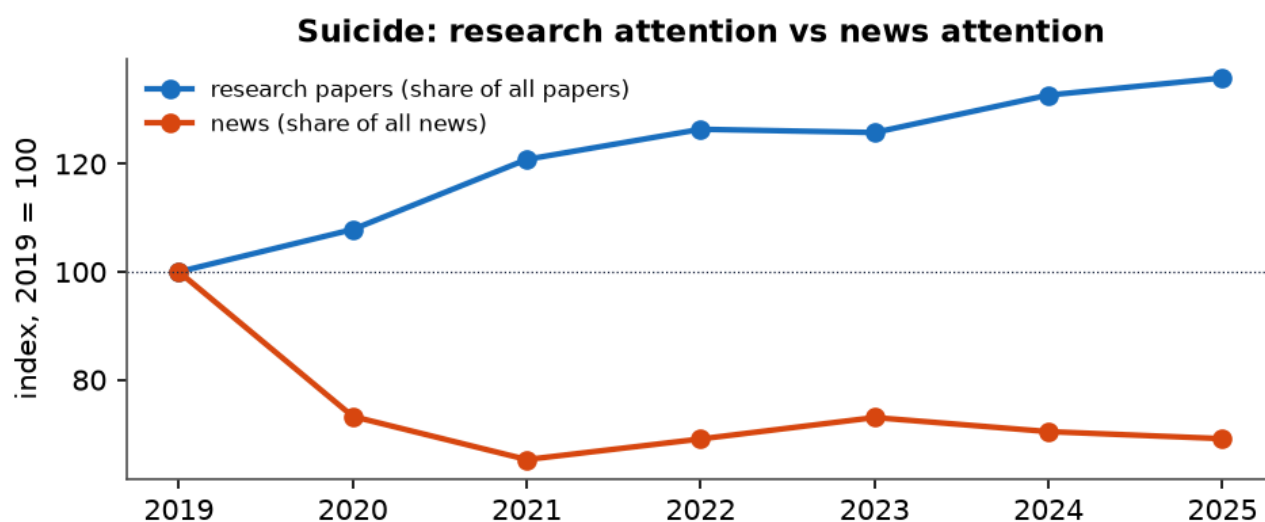


Figure 9. Research papers with suicide in the title (share of all papers) and news coverage of suicide (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

Patenting on suicide is small. 295 patent families were published from 2015 to 2024, from 22 in 2015 to a high of 46 in 2023. China's office holds 37.8%, and the United States and

South Korea 16.3% each (Figure 10). The leading technology classes are drug preparations (A61K, 18 families), health informatics (G16H, 18) and bridge structures (E01D, 17).

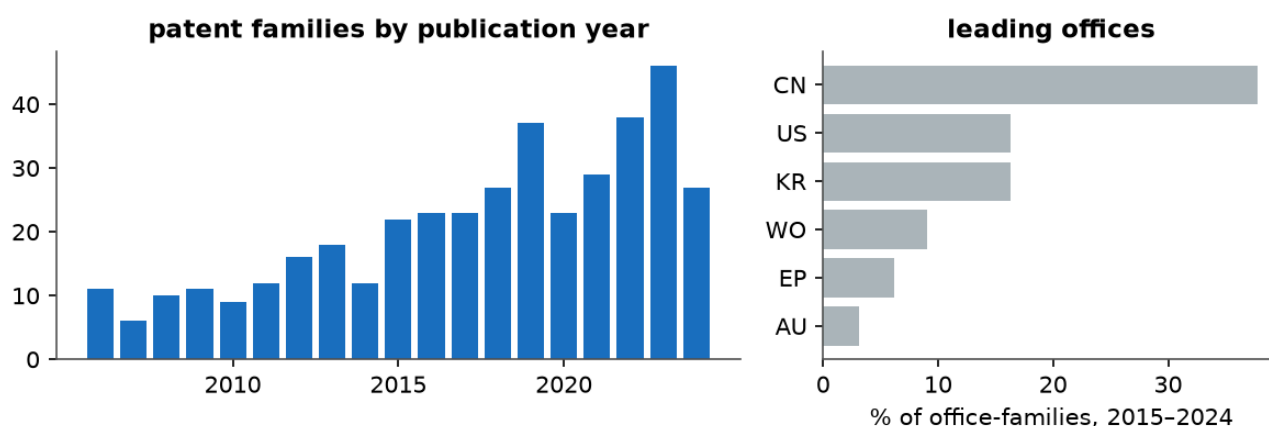


Figure 10. Suicide-related patent families by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015-2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of suicide. First, coverage measures attention. The August 2019 and June 2020 peaks are peaks of attention and say nothing about suicide rates. Media guidelines warn against prominent, repeated coverage of single deaths, and monthly shares are one way to see when coverage was concentrated. Second, raw shares mislead. India and the United States hold comparable raw shares of located coverage, but suicide takes more than three times its usual share of Indian news and less than its usual share of American news. Within India, state lift reflects each state's press and the outlets the index collects, not only events. State rankings are also sensitive to place tagging: before tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated, Rhode Island and Kentucky led the US ranking, and neither does now; Utah and Montana still head it, but on tags from personal names read as towns, so we set them aside. Third, a keyword search for "suicide" returns conflict news as well: attack senses and figurative uses made up 12.9% of raw matches.

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share grows steadily. Patenting is small; its leading classes are drug preparations, health informatics and bridge structures. News follows single events. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether coverage that follows reporting guidelines differs in tone or theme from coverage that does not.

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 suicide only later are missed, and 5% of matches are not about suicide. Articles that mention both an attack and a suicide are excluded.
- **Coverage is not incidence.** No figure here is a suicide rate. Lift describes reporting practice.

- **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 (15.3% of city-tagged articles), so located counts are lower and some genuine places that share a name with a common word are lost.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets and Indian and American outlets. This shapes geography.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. The patent count is small, so office shares move with a few filings.

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 52,959 of 213,079 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 "suicide" --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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