

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

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

Abstract

We measure how unemployment was covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 160,942 de-duplicated unemployment articles, and set that coverage beside 12,020 research papers published between 2015 and 2025 with unemployment in the title. Six results stand out:

1. **The pandemic shock.** Unemployment took 24.55 of every 10,000 news articles in 2020, 2.52 times its 2019 share. The monthly peak was April 2020, at 49.67 per 10,000.
2. **Return to baseline.** By 2025 the share had fallen to 8.01 per 10,000, 17.8% below 2019. Raw counts rose over the same years only because the index grew.
3. **Geography.** Africa (2.39) and South America (1.85) are over-represented in unemployment news and Europe (0.67) is under-represented. South Africa (3.98), Ghana (3.58) and Nigeria (2.61) lead among the ten countries with the most located articles. Within India, Haryana (2.44), Jammu and Kashmir (2.27) and Bihar (2.19) lead; within the United States, Kentucky (2.66), Arkansas (2.18) and Oregon (2.05).
4. **Shifting attention.** Between 2023 and 2025, attention per 10,000 of each country's news rose 2.32 times in Chile and 1.71 times in South Africa, and fell to 0.33 times its 2023 level in China and 0.74 times in India.
5. **Tone and urgency.** Between January 2023 and July 2026, 63.9% of unemployment articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and 73.4% are rated critical priority (all news: 42.6%). The Federal Reserve is the organisation named most often, in 10.0% of articles.
6. **Research.** Papers with unemployment in the title held a steady share of the literature, 1.79 per 10,000 papers in 2015 and 1.74 in 2025, with a peak of 1.94 in 2020.

Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Unemployment took 2.52 times as large a share of news in 2020 as in 2019 (24.55 vs 9.75 per 10,000 articles); by 2025 the share (8.01) was 17.8% below 2019.
- **F2.** April 2020 was the peak month for unemployment news, at 49.67 articles per 10,000.
- **F3.** In US-located news, the share went from 9.45 (2019) to 35.67 (2020) and back to 10.14 (2025).
- **F4.** 13.75% of themed unemployment articles concerned unemployment insurance benefits and claims.

- **F5.** 63.9% of unemployment articles were negative in tone, 1.9 times the all-news share.
- **F6.** 73.4% of unemployment articles were rated critical priority, 1.72 times the all-news share.
- **F7.** The Federal Reserve was named in 10.0% of unemployment articles.
- **F8.** Africa (2.39) and South America (1.85) were the most over-represented continents; Europe was under-represented (0.67). Among the ten countries with the most located articles, South Africa (3.98) led.
- **F9.** Unemployment took 37.7 of every 10,000 located South African articles in 2025.
- **F10.** Within India, Haryana (2.44), Jammu and Kashmir (2.27) and Bihar (2.19) had the most over-represented coverage.
- **F11.** India's attention to unemployment fell from 7.3 to 5.43 per 10,000 between 2023 and 2025.
- **F12.** Within the United States, Kentucky (2.66), Arkansas (2.18) and Oregon (2.05) had the most over-represented coverage.
- **F13.** China's attention fell from 20.68 to 6.73 per 10,000 between 2023 and 2025.
- **F14.** Unemployment coverage in Nigeria and Ghana was less negative than those countries' news overall.
- **F15.** Research papers on unemployment held a share of 1.79 (2015) and 1.74 (2025) per 10,000 papers.

1. Introduction

Unemployment is one of the most closely watched economic measures. Statistical offices publish it monthly or quarterly, central banks set policy with it in view, and elections are fought over it. News is how most people meet those figures. Coverage decides which job reports, layoffs and benefit changes become public talking points, and in which places. Yet news attention to unemployment is rarely measured as data in its own right. Labour-force surveys record the rate. Bibliometric studies record research. Few sources record attention: how much of the news unemployment takes, when, where and in what tone.

This paper and its dataset do that. They combine a global news index with research papers and patent families on one topic. 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 (40,209 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 unemployment when its opening text contains *unemployment*, *jobless* or *joblessness* as whole words. The word *unemployment* matches 92.8% of articles and *jobless* 12.2%; an article can match both. Four families of matches are excluded:

- market-commentary templates, such as stock-index futures notes and currency-pair notes;
- audio and video stubs ("Watch:", "Listen:");
- horoscopes;
- fantasy-sports items.

These removed 478 of 161,420 raw matches (0.3%). The words are rarely used in other senses, so the exclusions matter less here than for most topics. One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 36 used the words in the labour-market sense (precision 90%), and in 21 (52.5%) unemployment, jobless claims or unemployment benefits were the main subject. The four false matches were figurative uses (a released football player sent to "the unemployment line", a presenter's "sudden unemployment") and machine translations in which a strike was rendered as "unemployment".

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; 47.9% of articles in that window carry a primary country. Place tags derived from ordinary words ("Congress", "Earth", "Winter" and 714 such words in all) were treated as unlocated in every location field, which removed 15.3% of city-tagged articles. Geography is expressed as lift: a place's share of unemployment articles divided by its share of all located articles. For states, the baseline is all located news from the same country. States and countries with fewer than 50 articles are not discussed.

Research and patents. Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *unemployment*, *jobless* or *joblessness* in the title; repository deposits are excluded. Patent families (2005–2024) use a title rule (*unemployment*, *jobless*, *job seeker*) and are counted once per filing office.

3. Results

3.1 How much and when

The index holds 160,942 unemployment articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 11,510 in 2019 to 21,609 in 2025, but the share of all news fell: 9.75 per 10,000 in 2019 and 8.01 in 2025 (Table 1). The high point was 2020, at 24.55 per 10,000, 2.52 times the 2019 share. The share then declined each year to a low of 7.59 in 2024. The highest monthly share was April 2020, at 49.67 per 10,000, 5.09 times the 2019 average (Figure 1). The following month, May 2020, held 42.33.

Year	Unemployment articles	All articles in index	Per 10,000
2019	11,510	11,807,177	9.75
2020	39,838	16,230,014	24.55
2021	25,387	17,281,220	14.69
2022	18,750	19,115,515	9.81
2023	16,868	20,484,506	8.23
2024	17,701	23,311,896	7.59
2025	21,609	26,990,006	8.01

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

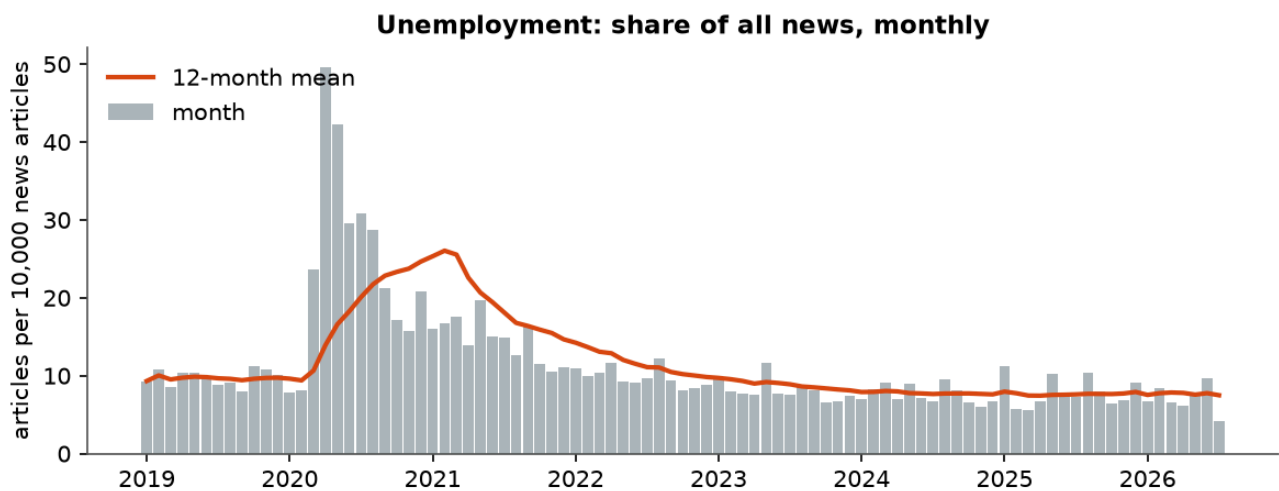


Figure 1. Unemployment coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Unlike weather or disaster topics, unemployment coverage has little seasonality (Figure 2). Averaged over 2019–2025, the busiest month (May, 10.93% of a year's articles) and the quietest (November, 6.65%) differ by less than half. Coverage does not follow a seasonal cycle.

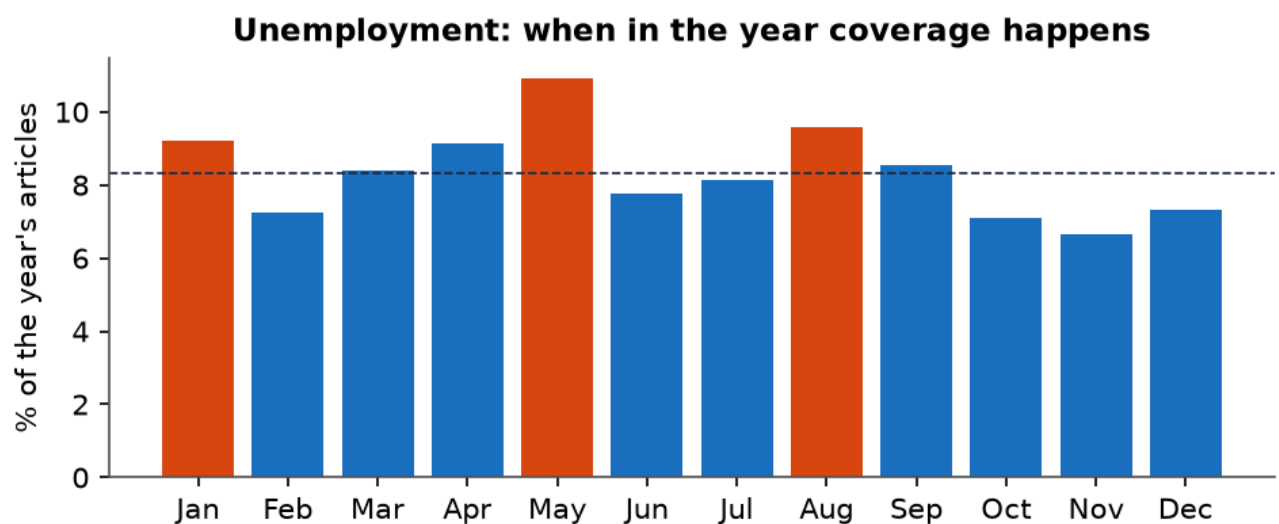


Figure 2. Share of each year's unemployment articles published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. The dashed line is an even spread.

3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 31,319 unemployment articles carried a primary location. The United States holds the largest raw share (51.11%), with a lift of 1.06: unemployment takes about the same share of American news as of news overall. India's share (10.2%) comes with a lift of 0.77, and the United Kingdom's (3.64%) with 0.62. Among the ten countries with the most located articles, the most over-represented are South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Brazil (Table 2, Figure 3).

Country	Located unemployment articles	Share %	Lift vs all news
United States	16,008	51.11	1.06
India	3,194	10.2	0.77
United Kingdom	1,139	3.64	0.62
Nigeria	1,118	3.57	2.61
China	1,072	3.42	1.3
Australia	854	2.73	1.27
Canada	588	1.88	0.87
South Africa	566	1.81	3.98
Ghana	540	1.72	3.58
Brazil	491	1.57	1.81
France	389	1.24	0.63
Germany	371	1.18	1.01
New Zealand	351	1.12	1.73
<i>Other countries with lift ≥ 2: Chile</i>	168	0.54	2.86
Austria	167	0.53	2.27
Iran	200	0.64	2.14
Kenya	141	0.45	2.05

Table 2. The 13 countries with the most located unemployment articles, then every other country with at least 100 articles and a lift of 2 or more, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news.

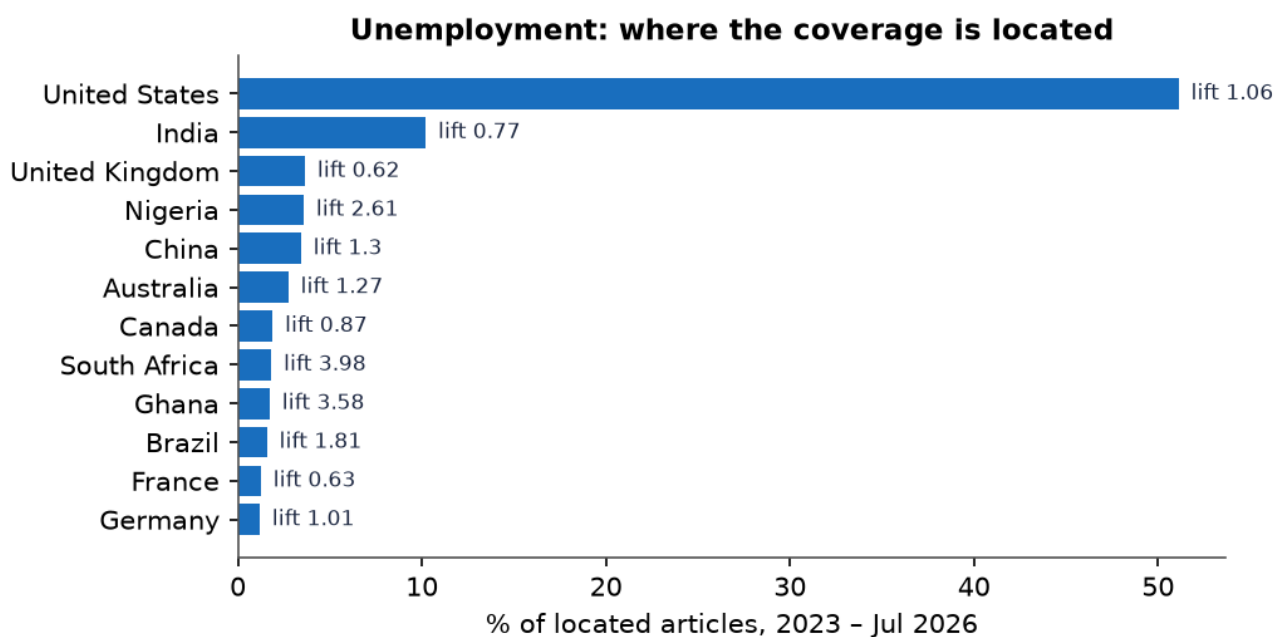


Figure 3. Leading countries by share of located unemployment articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Unemployment is over-represented in the news of South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, of Chile, Brazil and Colombia, and of Iran, Austria and New Zealand. It is under-represented in Italy (0.46), the United Arab Emirates (0.49), Russia (0.53), the United Kingdom, France and Japan. By continent, Africa (2.39), South America (1.85), Oceania (1.43) and North America (1.05) are over-represented,

while Asia (0.83) and Europe (0.67) are not (Figure 7, left). Europe's low lift is a coverage measure. It does not mean that unemployment is low in Europe.

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

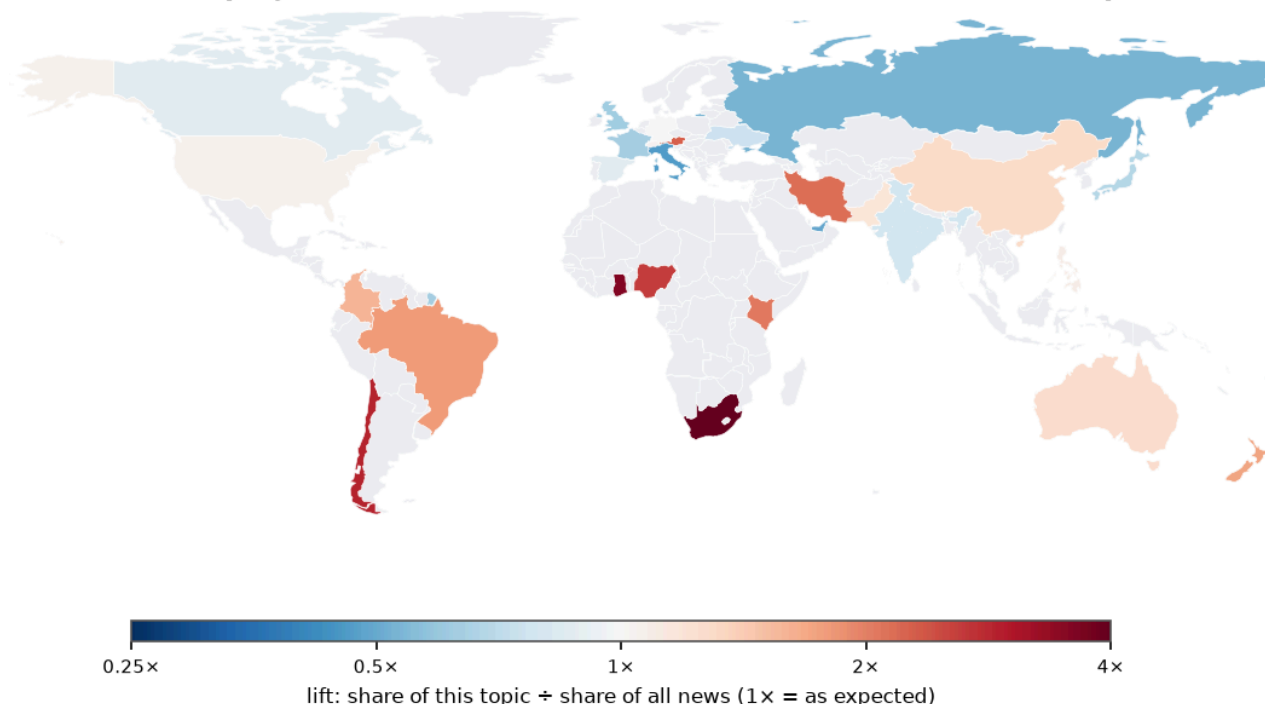


Figure 4. Lift of each country's share of located unemployment articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = too few articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Within countries, the picture is sharper (Table 3). In India, unemployment coverage concentrates in a group of northern and eastern states. Measured against each state's share of Indian news, Haryana (2.44), Jammu and Kashmir (2.27), Bihar (2.19) and Chhattisgarh (1.79) are the most over-represented. Maharashtra (0.67) and Tamil Nadu (0.68) are under-represented, and Delhi and Karnataka (both 0.81) sit below their weight. Uttar Pradesh has the largest article count (283) and a lift close to one (0.98) (Figure 5). In the United States, Kentucky (2.66), Arkansas (2.18) and Oregon (2.05) lead by lift among states whose tags hold up. Three states rank higher but are not interpreted: Ohio (3.67), where 115 of 196 tagged rows in the sample carry the city "powell" (Jerome Powell read as Powell, Ohio); New Mexico (2.72), where 22 of 29 carry "gallup" (the Gallup poll read as Gallup, New Mexico); and Washington state (3.05), to which the tagger assigns some Washington, D.C. stories. Arizona, which ranked second before place tags from ordinary words were removed, now has a lift of 0.89. New Jersey (0.16), Pennsylvania (0.64), Oklahoma (0.67), Missouri (0.72), and Texas and Georgia (both 0.76) are below their weight in American news (Figure 6).

India: state	Articles	Lift	United States: state	Articles	Lift
Haryana	142	2.44	Ohio*	823	3.67
Jammu and Kashmir	121	2.27	Washington*	837	3.05
Bihar	238	2.19	New Mexico*	100	2.72
Chhattisgarh	55	1.79	Kentucky	97	2.66
Jharkhand	80	1.45	Arkansas	91	2.18
Uttarakhand	65	1.28	Oregon	215	2.05
<i>lowest</i> : Karnataka	102	0.81	<i>lowest</i> : Missouri	75	0.72
Delhi	239	0.81	Oklahoma	86	0.67
Tamil Nadu	77	0.68	Pennsylvania	404	0.64
Maharashtra	242	0.67	New Jersey	326	0.16

Table 3. States with the highest and lowest lift in unemployment coverage, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 articles). Lift = the state's share of the country's located unemployment articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country. *Not interpreted: Ohio's tags come mostly from "Powell" (Jerome Powell), New Mexico's from "Gallup" (the polling firm), and Washington state includes some stories from Washington, D.C. that the tagger assigns to it.

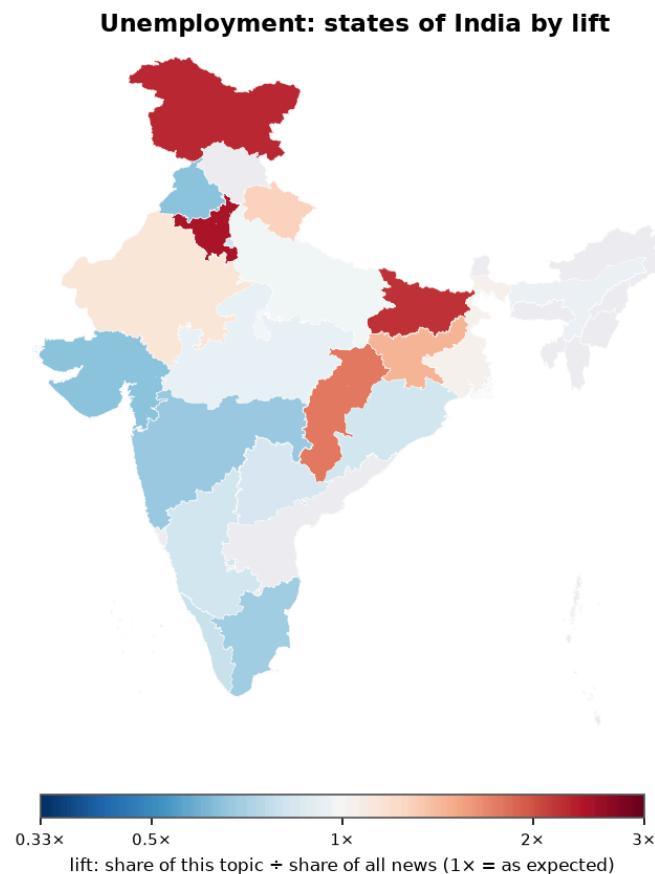


Figure 5. Lift of each Indian state's share of located unemployment articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

Unemployment: states of United States by lift

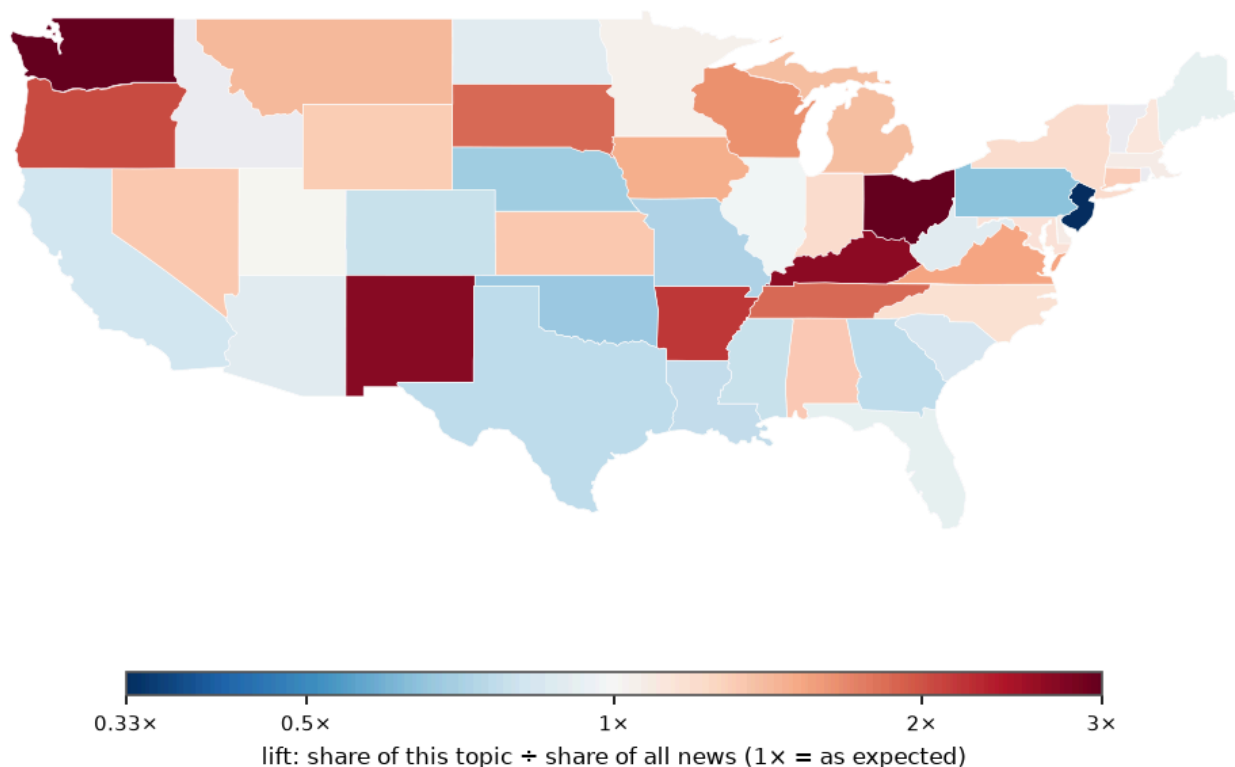


Figure 6. Lift of each US state's share of located unemployment articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right). Measured as unemployment articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, Chile rose from 15.57 in 2023 to 36.07 in 2025 (2.32 times), New Zealand 2.03 times, South Africa 1.71 times (from 22.09 to 37.7) and Canada 1.51 times. China fell from 20.68 to 6.73 (0.33 times), Ukraine from 9.15 to 3.08 (0.34 times), France to 0.43 times, Pakistan to 0.49 times, Australia to 0.55 times and India from 7.3 to 5.43 (0.74 times). Nigeria remained among the countries where unemployment takes the largest share of the news, although its share fell from 25.78 to 18.26.

Tone by country, measured against each country's own news, splits in two. In most countries unemployment coverage is far more negative than the country's news overall. The widest gaps are in China (74.1% negative against 27.2%), Spain (67.3% against 30.3%), Germany (70.8% against 35.6%) and the United Kingdom (71.1% against 36.9%); in the United States the figures are 66.4% against 33.1%. In Nigeria (39.3% against 44.4%) and Ghana (36.9% against 43.3%) it is less negative than the national baseline. Tone is machine-labelled, and coverage of job programmes and policy pledges can read as positive; the reason for the difference is not tested here.

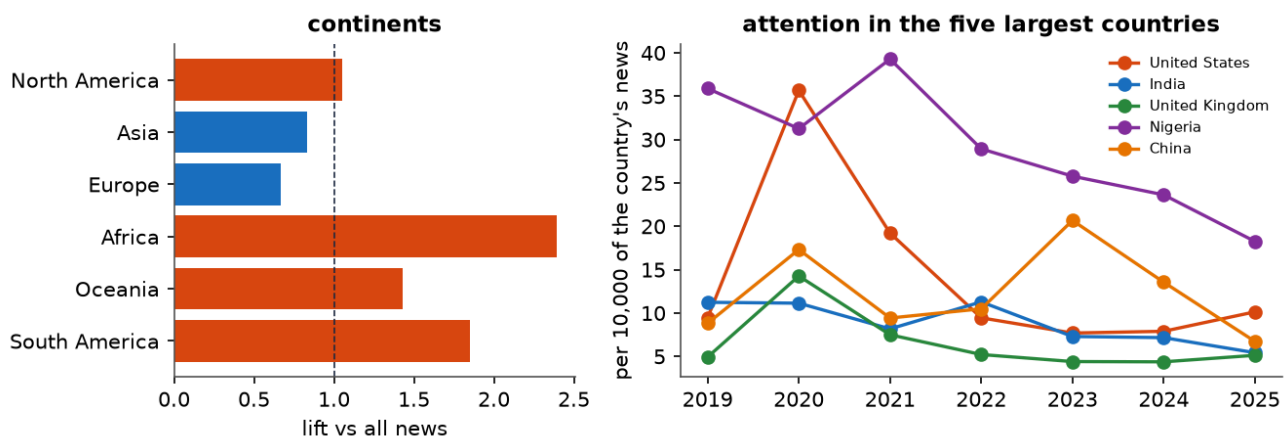


Figure 7. Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: unemployment articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Unemployment coverage is more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 63.9% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (1.9 times), and 33.1% are positive, against 56.8%. Reports of falling unemployment or new hiring can read as positive. The machine-assigned priority rating puts 73.4% of unemployment articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (1.72 times).

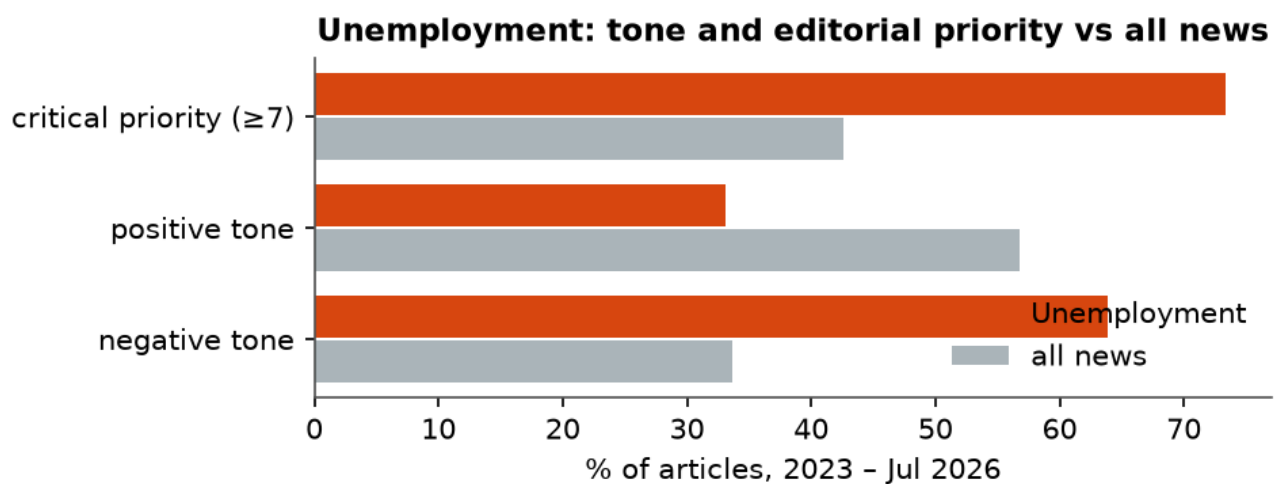


Figure 8. Tone and the share rated critical priority, unemployment articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what unemployment stories are about (Table 4). Unemployment-rate trends (51.93% of themed articles) and labour-market dynamics (50.77%) dominate. Unemployment insurance benefits and claims appear in 13.75%, 908.92 times their rate in all news. Smaller themes cover benefit extensions, compensation law, job search services and benefit fraud.

Theme	Articles	Share %	Lift
wage protection & unemployment compensation laws	504	1.29	941.49
unemployment benefit extensions & emergency measures	384	0.98	933.33
unemployment insurance benefits & claims	5,385	13.75	908.92
job search & placement services for unemployed	1,067	2.73	748.9
unemployment fraud prevention & legal compliance	498	1.27	715.31
economy news: unemployment rate trends	20,332	51.93	387.43
economy news: labor market dynamics	19,877	50.77	362.14
labor economics and workforce studies	1,532	3.91	264.99

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

The organisations named most often are monetary and statistical authorities: the Federal Reserve (6,572 articles, 10.0% of the topic), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2,160), the United States Department of the Treasury (530) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (475). India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha (644), appears through debates on jobs. Wire services and large technology employers also rank high.

3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on unemployment kept pace with the scientific literature but did not outgrow it. Papers with unemployment or jobless in the title made up 1.79 of every 10,000 papers in 2015 and 1.74 in 2025, a ratio of 0.98, while the total literature in the corpus grew by a factor of 1.0. The share rose to 1.94 in 2020, 1.22 times the 2019 level. Between 2015 and 2025, 12,020 such papers were published. The most-cited include work on unemployment and inequality in a global economy [1], on unemployment and mortality [2], on the wider impact of job loss [3] and on unemployment and suicide during the pandemic [4].

News attention and research attention moved together only in 2020 (Figure 9). News share rose 2.52-fold in 2020 and then fell below its 2019 level. Research share rose less and stayed close to its long-run level.

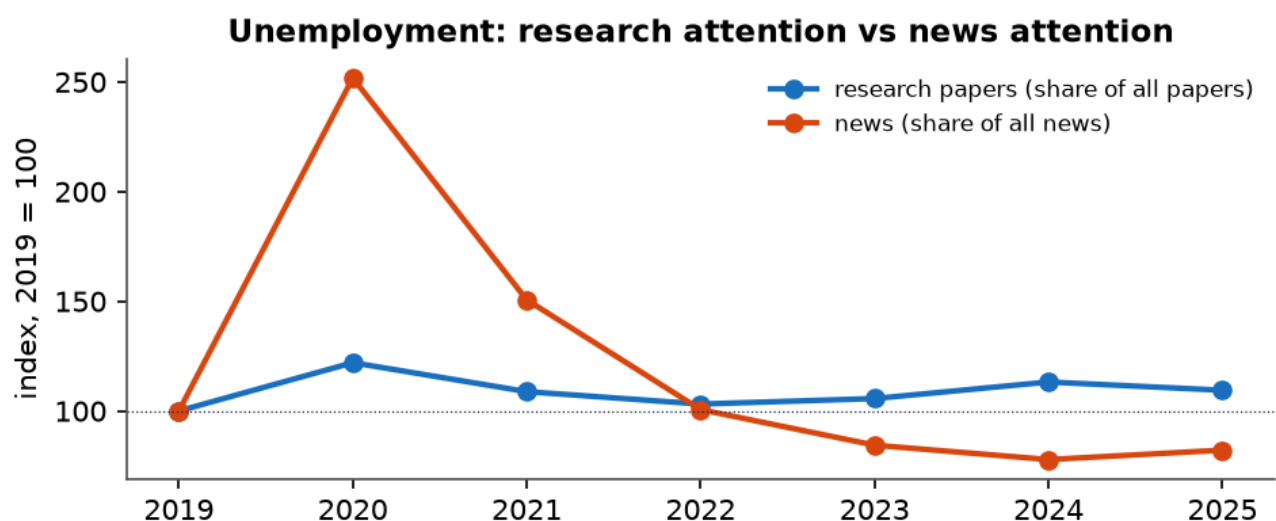


Figure 9. Research papers with unemployment in the title (share of all papers) and unemployment news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

The patent side is small. 120 patent families published between 2015 and 2024 match the title rule, most of them job-matching and recruitment software: 63.3% fall in the business-methods class G06Q. South Korea's office holds 34.5% of office-family pairs, followed by the

United States (19.1%) and China (17.3%) (Figure 10). Annual counts are too small for a trend.

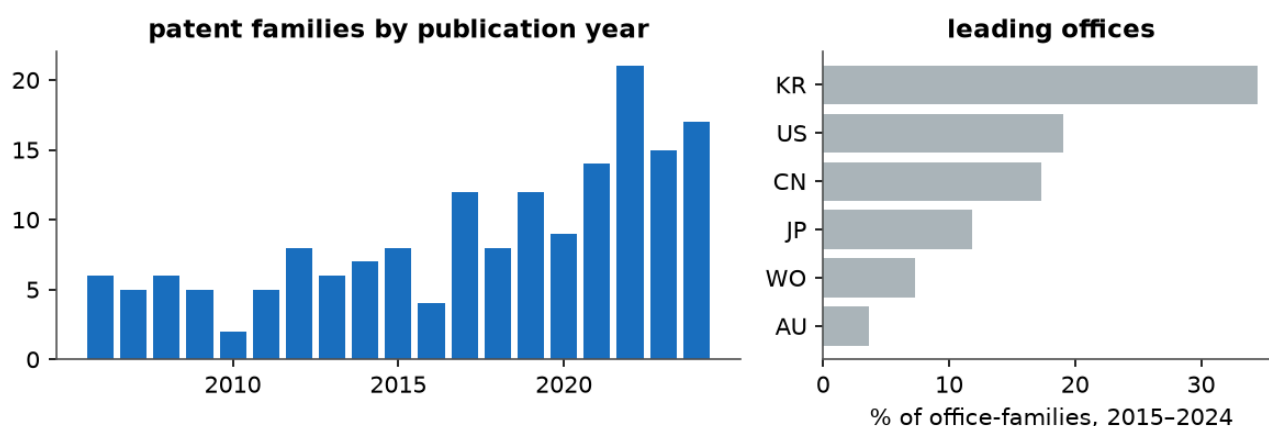


Figure 10. Patent families matching the title rule by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015–2024 (right).

4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of unemployment. First, coverage measures attention, not the rate. The 2020 spike shows how quickly unemployment can come to dominate the news, and its return to the 2019 level by 2022 shows how quickly attention moves on. Second, raw shares mislead. The United States leads unemployment news in raw terms only because it leads the index; its lift is close to one. The places most over-represented relative to their share of all news (highest lift) are South Africa, Ghana, Chile and Nigeria, and within India, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar. Third, unemployment news is closely tied to monetary policy. The Federal Reserve is named in one article in ten, which suggests that much coverage treats unemployment as an input to interest-rate decisions rather than as a social condition.

Research and news run on different clocks. Research share is steady over a decade. News follows shocks and statistical releases. The dataset lets researchers link the two, for example to test whether countries with rising coverage see more research on their labour markets, or whether coverage tracks official unemployment rates by state.

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 unemployment only later, or that use other words (layoffs, job losses), are missed, and 10% of matches are not about unemployment.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority and themes are machine-labelled. The city field is noisy and is not analysed. Place tags derived from ordinary words were treated as unlocated (15.3% of city-tagged articles), so some articles that do concern a place count as unlocated.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets. This shapes geography: Indian regional-language coverage and much of European coverage are

thinly represented.

- **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 40,209 of 160,858 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 "unemployment" --since 2019-01-01 --until 2026-07-31 --granularity monthly`.

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