

# Mental Health in the News, 2019-2026: Timing, Geography and Tone of Global Mental Health 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](https://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. It describes no individual case.

## Abstract

We measure how mental health was covered in a global news index from January 2019 to July 2026, using 273,783 de-duplicated articles about mental health, mental illness or a named mental disorder, and set that coverage beside 304,271 research papers (2015–2025) and 7,959 patent families (2015–2024) on the same subject. Six results stand out:

1. **Awareness months.** On average 20.54% of each year's coverage appears in May and October, the months of Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States and of World Mental Health Day.
2. **A pandemic-era rise that faded.** Mental health took a 34.27% larger share of news in 2021 than in 2019. By 2025 its share (16.41 per 10,000 articles) was close to the 2019 level. The peak month was May 2021, at 29.05 per 10,000.
3. **Geography.** The United States holds 55.31% of located coverage (lift 1.14). Among the 20 countries with the most located articles, New Zealand (2.77), Australia (2.02) and the United Kingdom (1.87) are the most over-represented, and China (0.38) and India (0.51) among the least. Within India, Karnataka (2.15), Kerala (1.49) and Odisha (1.35) lead; among US states with at least 100 articles, once two tagging artefacts are set aside, New Hampshire (2.12), Maine (1.96) and Colorado (1.79) lead.
4. **Tone and urgency.** In January 2023 – July 2026, 45.3% of articles are negative in tone (all news: 33.6%), and a machine rating puts 66.3% at critical priority (all news: 42.6%).
5. **Measurement.** 21.49% of raw matches for mental health vocabulary were removed as journal abstracts, page furniture, catalogue listings, spam or other senses of the words.
6. **Research and invention.** Papers on the topic grew from 28.54 to 60.09 per 10,000 papers between 2015 and 2025 (2.11 times). Patent families grew from 1.71 to 1.99 per 10,000 patent families between 2015 and 2024 (1.17 times), and China's office holds 58.2% of office filings.

## Findings stated for citation

- **F1.** Between 2019 and 2025, an average of 20.54% of each year's mental health news appeared in May and October, against 16.67% for an even spread.
- **F2.** Mental health took a 34.27% larger share of news in 2021 than in 2019 (21.39 vs 15.93 per 10,000 articles), then fell 23.28% by 2025.

- **F3.** May 2021 was the peak month for mental health news, at 29.05 articles per 10,000.
- **F4.** The United States' share of located coverage (55.31%) was 1.14 times its share of all news. India's (6.78%) was 0.51 times.
- **F5.** By continent, Oceania (2.24) and North America (1.22) were over-represented, and Africa (0.71), South America (0.63) and Asia (0.51) under-represented.
- **F6.** 45.3% of articles were negative in tone, 1.35 times the all-news share.
- **F7.** A machine rating put 66.3% of articles at critical priority, 1.56 times the all-news share.
- **F8.** Psychiatric hospitals and facilities appeared in 2.39% of themed articles, 159.08 times their rate in all themed news.
- **F9.** 21.49% of raw vocabulary matches were abstracts, page furniture, listings, spam or other senses.
- **F10.** Papers on the topic rose 2.11-fold as a share of all papers between 2015 and 2025.
- **F11.** China's office held 58.2% of office filings of patent families (2015–2024).
- **F12.** The topic's share of published patent families grew 1.17 times between 2015 and 2024 (1.71 to 1.99 per 10,000).
- **F13.** Within India, Karnataka (2.15), Kerala (1.49) and Odisha (1.35) had the most over-represented coverage.
- **F14.** Among US states with at least 100 articles, New Hampshire (2.12), Maine (1.96) and Colorado (1.79) had the most over-represented coverage, after two tagging artefacts were set aside.
- **F15.** Coverage as a share of Ireland's news fell to 0.21 times its 2023 level by 2025; New Zealand's rose 1.4 times.
- **F16.** In New Zealand, 68.8% of the topic's articles were negative, against 45.7% of all its news (2023 – July 2026).

## 1. Introduction

Mental health is one of the largest causes of illness and disability worldwide, and it has become a regular subject of news. News coverage shapes how the public understands mental illness, how much stigma surrounds it, and which services policy-makers treat as urgent. Studies of media portrayal usually read a few hundred articles from a few newspapers. Few sources measure attention at scale: how much of the news mental health takes, and when, where and in what tone.

This paper and its dataset do that for one topic across 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 (68,430 rows) and full coverage tables, so every figure here can be re-derived. The [Prism News API](#) serves the full history.

The subject is sensitive. Following safe-reporting practice, we report coverage measures only. We give no detail of individual cases, places or methods, and name no individuals.

## 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 mental health when its opening text contains, as whole words, *mental health*, *mental illness(es)*, *mental disorder(s)*, *mental health crisis*, *psychiatric disorder(s)*, *anxiety disorder(s)*, *depressive disorder*, *major depressive disorder*, *clinical depression*, *postpartum depression*, *depression and anxiety* or *anxiety and depression*. The bare word "depression" is not used, because it also names tropical weather systems and economic slumps. Four families of matches are excluded:

- journal abstracts carried by the index, recognised by a title followed directly by a structured label ("background:", "objectives:") or by a subtitle such as ": a systematic review";
- page furniture repeated across many pages, such as sidebars of headlines and a publisher's book catalogue;
- pharmacy spam, market-research reports and stock-rating notes;
- reporter biographies that mention the beat, horoscopes, and other senses of "depression" (economic, great or tropical depression).

Together these removed 74,958 of 348,741 raw matches (21.49%). One reviewer read 40 randomly drawn matched openings. 37 were about mental health (precision 92.5%), and in 32 (80%) mental health was the main subject. Six of the 40 were journal abstracts on mental-health subjects that escaped the exclusion; they are on topic but are not news reporting. The three false positives were a business profile, a lifestyle article and a charity promotion in which mental health was not the subject of the opening.

**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 the topic's located articles divided by its share of all located articles. For states, the baseline is all located news from the same 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.

**Research and patents.** Research papers are de-duplicated articles and reviews (2000–2025) with *mental health*, *mental illness*, *mental disorder*, *psychiatric disorder*, *anxiety disorder*, *depressive disorder* or *depression* in the title. Repository deposits and non-psychiatric senses of "depression" (tropical, inbreeding, freezing-point, synaptic and respiratory depression, among others) are excluded. Patent families (2005–2024) use the same title rule, are counted once per filing office, and exclude mechanical senses of the word ("a recess or depression").

## 3. Results

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### 3.1 How much and when

The index holds 273,783 mental health articles from January 2019 to July 2026. Raw counts rose from 18,810 in 2019 to 44,298 in 2025, but the share of all news rose and then fell back

(Table 1). It climbed from 15.93 per 10,000 in 2019 to 21.39 in 2021, a 34.27% rise over the years in which the COVID-19 pandemic began; the rise is not attributed to it here. It then declined each year to 16.41 in 2025, 23.28% below the 2021 level. The highest monthly share was May 2021, at 29.05 per 10,000 (Figure 1).

| Year | Articles | All articles in index | Per 10,000 |
|------|----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 2019 | 18,810   | 11,807,177            | 15.93      |
| 2020 | 29,994   | 16,230,014            | 18.48      |
| 2021 | 36,961   | 17,281,220            | 21.39      |
| 2022 | 39,165   | 19,115,515            | 20.49      |
| 2023 | 41,057   | 20,484,506            | 20.04      |
| 2024 | 41,403   | 23,311,896            | 17.76      |
| 2025 | 44,298   | 26,990,006            | 16.41      |

**Table 1.** Mental health articles per year and as a share of the index. 2026 (January-July) is partial and omitted.

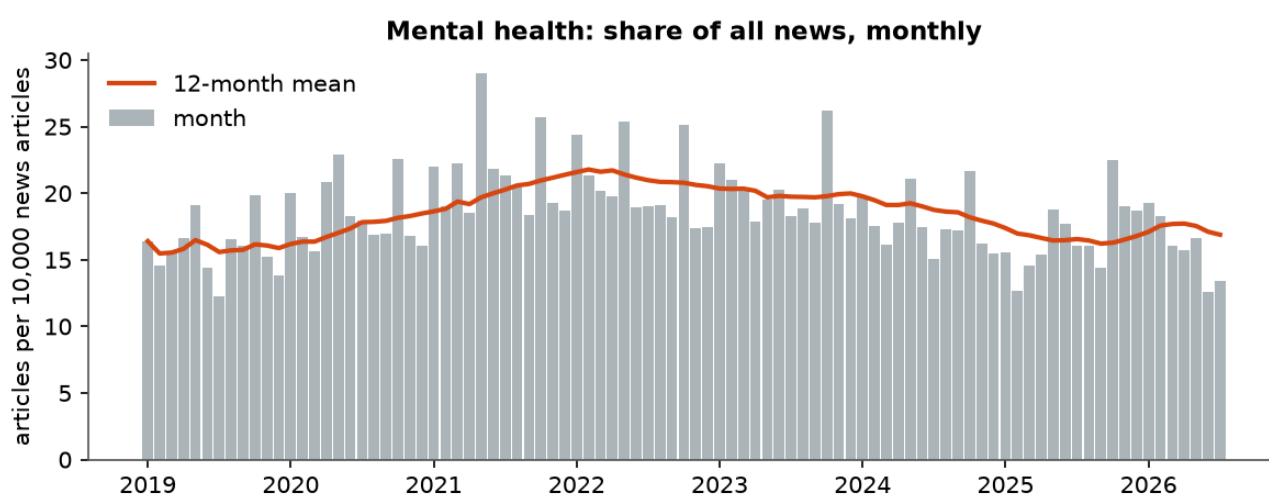


**Figure 1.** Mental health coverage as articles per 10,000 news articles, monthly, January 2019 – July 2026. Bars are months; the line is the 12-month mean.

Coverage has two clear peaks in the year (Figure 2). May (10.11%) and October (10.43%) together hold 20.54% of a typical year's articles, against 16.67% for an even spread. May is Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States, and October holds World Mental Health Day; the timing matches, though the link is not tested. January (9.75%) is also high, but part of that comes from undated items that the index places on 1 January. December is the quietest month (7.21%).

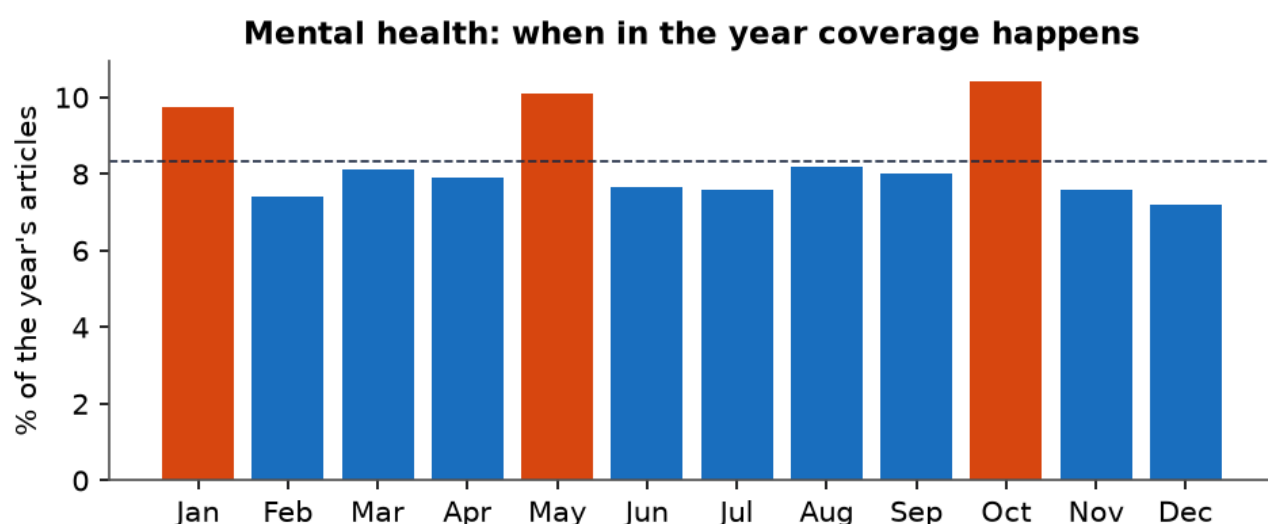


**Figure 2.** Share of each year's mental health articles published in each month, averaged over 2019–2025. Dashed line = an even spread (8.3% per month).

### 3.2 Where

Between January 2023 and July 2026, 67,120 articles (45.09%) carried a primary location. The United States holds the largest share (55.31%) with a lift of 1.14. The English-speaking countries of Oceania, Europe and North America are the most over-represented, while China (0.38), France (0.48), Italy (0.49) and India (0.51) take a far smaller share of attention than their weight in the index (Table 2, Figure 3). Among the 20 countries with the most located articles, New Zealand (2.77), Australia (2.02) and the United Kingdom (1.87) have the highest lift, followed by Canada and Norway (both 1.71).

| Country        | Located articles | Share % | Lift vs all news |
|----------------|------------------|---------|------------------|
| United States  | 37,125           | 55.31   | 1.14             |
| United Kingdom | 7,319            | 10.9    | 1.87             |
| India          | 4,554            | 6.78    | 0.51             |
| Australia      | 2,903            | 4.33    | 2.02             |
| Canada         | 2,463            | 3.67    | 1.71             |
| New Zealand    | 1,203            | 1.79    | 2.77             |
| Ireland        | 699              | 1.04    | 1.44             |
| China          | 677              | 1.01    | 0.38             |
| Singapore      | 644              | 0.96    | 1.08             |
| France         | 640              | 0.95    | 0.48             |
| Nigeria        | 536              | 0.8     | 0.58             |
| Spain          | 448              | 0.67    | 0.68             |
| Germany        | 410              | 0.61    | 0.52             |
| Japan          | 404              | 0.6     | 0.57             |

**Table 2.** Leading countries in located mental health news, January 2023 – July 2026, with lift against all located news.

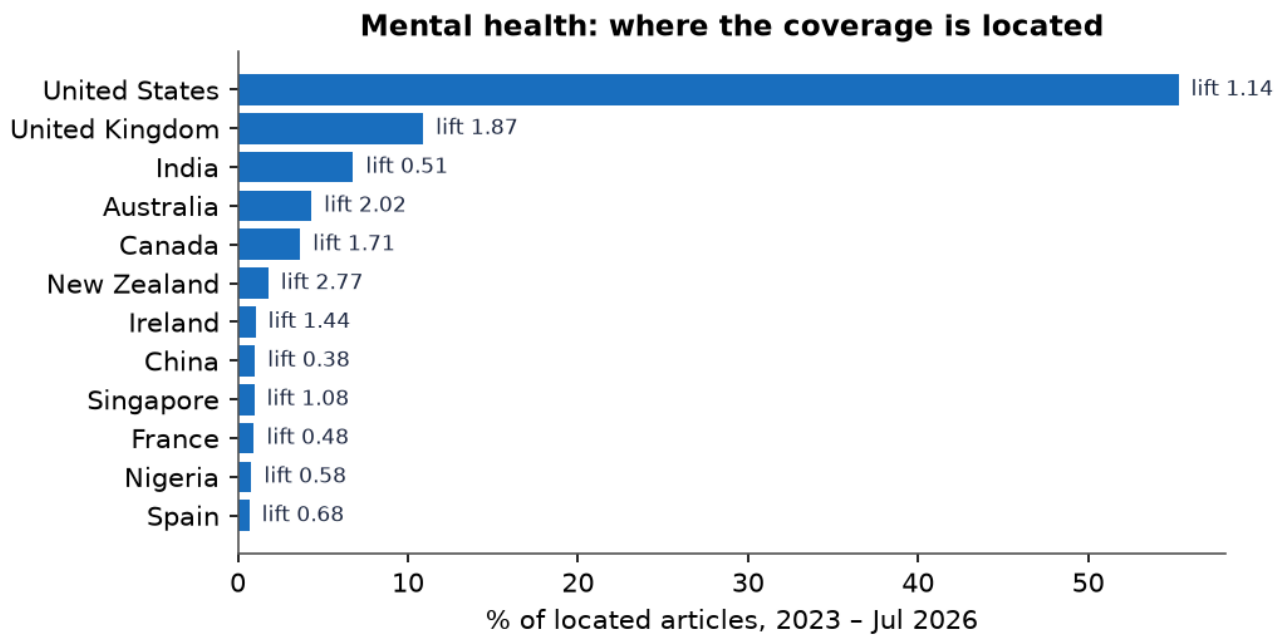


**Figure 3.** Leading countries by share of located mental health articles, 2023 – Jul 2026, labelled with lift against all located news.

### 3.3 Geo intelligence: continents, states and shifting attention

The world map (Figure 4) shows the pattern at a glance. Mental health is over-represented in the news of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, and under-represented in much of Asia, Africa, South America and continental Europe. By continent, Oceania (2.24) and North America (1.22) are over-represented, Europe sits at parity (1.01), and Africa (0.71), South America (0.63) and Asia (0.51) are under-represented (Figure 7, left).

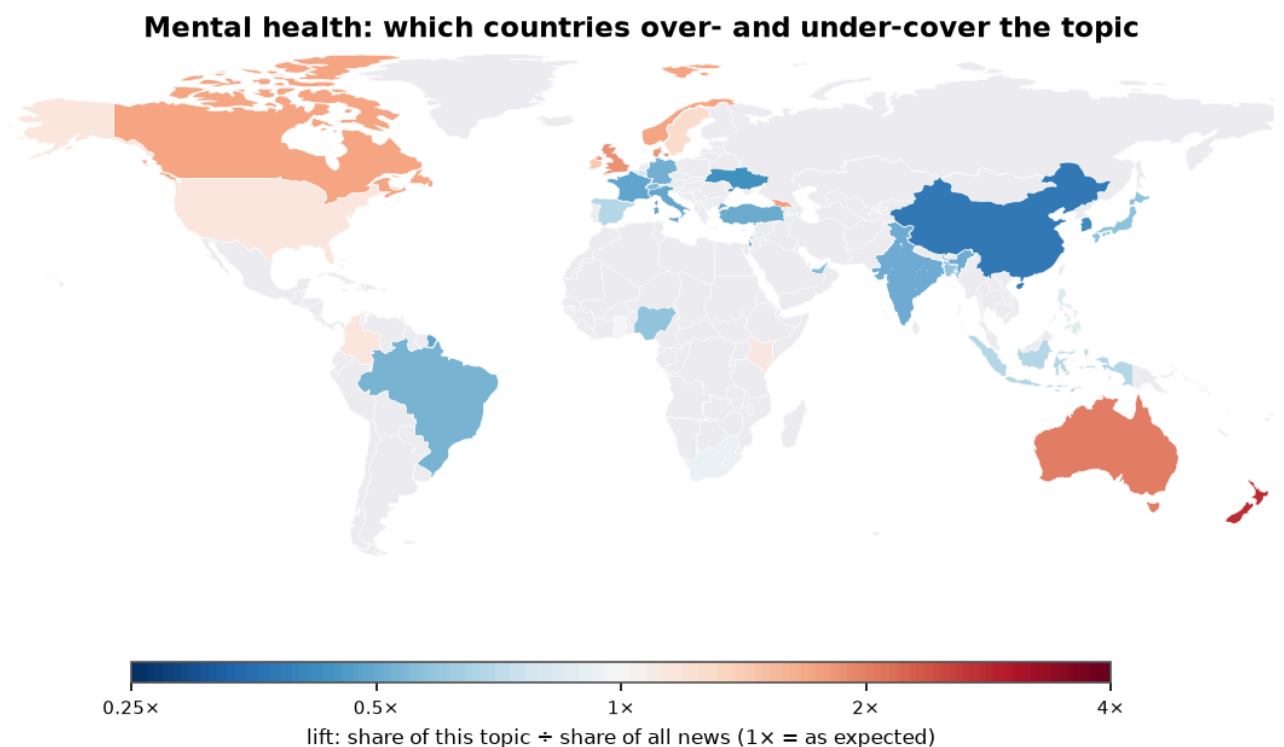


**Figure 4.** Lift of each country's share of located mental health articles, January 2023 – July 2026 (red = over-represented, blue = under-represented, grey = fewer than 100 articles). India is drawn with its official outline.

Table 3 lists the states with the highest and lowest lift. In India, 3,218 articles carried a state. Measured against each state's share of Indian news, Karnataka (2.15), Kerala (1.49), Odisha (1.35) and Maharashtra (1.33) are the most over-represented. Bihar (0.47), Uttar Pradesh (0.58) and West Bengal (0.67) are under-represented (Figure 5). In the United States, 31,203 articles carried a state. New Mexico (2.89) and Nebraska (2.1) have the highest lifts, but both are tagging artefacts. In the article sample, more than half of New Mexico's rows are tagged to the town of Gallup, which is also the name of a polling firm, so survey reports are placed there; about a quarter of Nebraska's rows are one repeated templated item tagged to Beatrice. Setting them aside, New Hampshire (2.12), Maine (1.96), Vermont (1.91, from only 63 articles) and Colorado (1.79) lead by lift. New Jersey (0.13) and Pennsylvania (0.56) are far below their weight in American news (Figure 6). States with fewer than 50 articles are left out of the text.

| India: state    | Articles | Lift | United States: state | Articles | Lift |
|-----------------|----------|------|----------------------|----------|------|
| Karnataka       | 384      | 2.15 | New Mexico†          | 316      | 2.89 |
| Kerala          | 117      | 1.49 | New Hampshire        | 189      | 2.12 |
| Odisha          | 90       | 1.35 | Nebraska†            | 276      | 2.1  |
| Maharashtra     | 679      | 1.33 | Maine                | 263      | 1.96 |
| Delhi           | 484      | 1.16 | Vermont              | 63       | 1.91 |
| Assam           | 58       | 1.1  | Colorado             | 1,083    | 1.79 |
| Lowest: Gujarat | 74       | 0.7  | Lowest: Delaware     | 109      | 0.82 |
| West Bengal     | 75       | 0.67 | Nevada               | 261      | 0.82 |
| Uttar Pradesh   | 239      | 0.58 | South Dakota         | 86       | 0.76 |
| Bihar           | 72       | 0.47 | Pennsylvania         | 1,043    | 0.56 |
|                 |          |      | New Jersey           | 764      | 0.13 |

**Table 3.** States with the highest and lowest lift in mental health coverage, January 2023 – July 2026 (states with at least 50 articles). † Tagging artefact (see text). Lift = the state's share of the country's located articles ÷ its share of all located news from that country.

### Mental health: states of India by lift

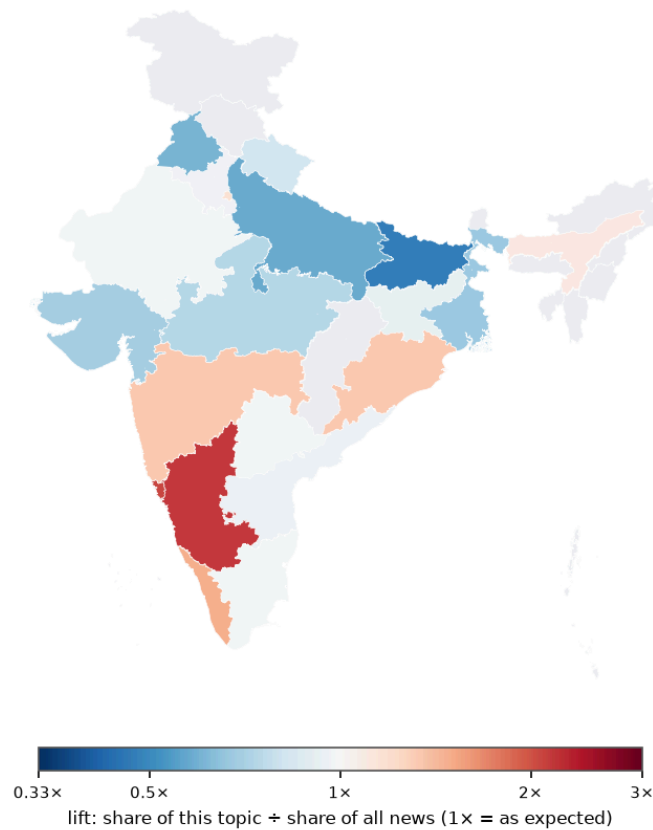


**Figure 5.** Lift of each Indian state's share of located mental health articles against its share of all located Indian news, January 2023 – July 2026. Official outline; Ladakh is drawn within Jammu and Kashmir in the boundary file used.

### Mental health: states of United States by lift

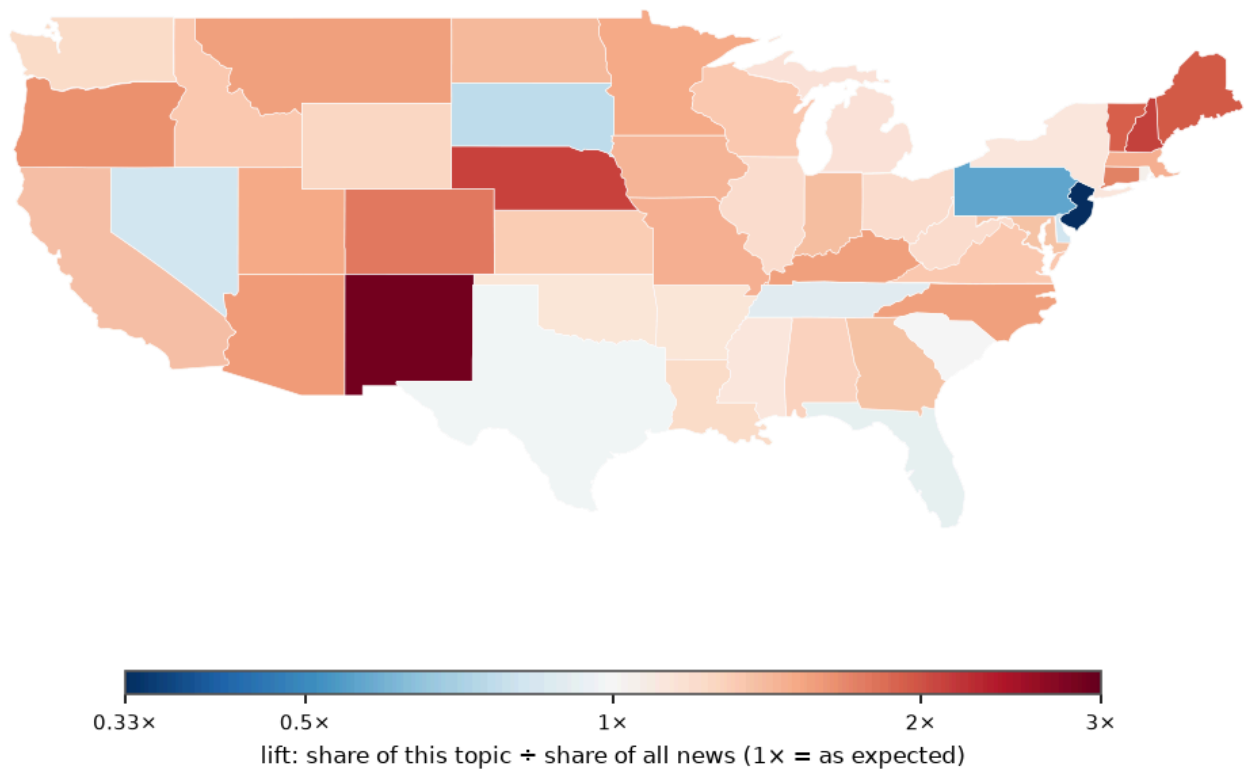


**Figure 6.** Lift of each US state's share of located mental health articles against its share of all located US news, January 2023 – July 2026.

Attention also moves between countries from year to year (Figure 7, right; Table 4). Measured as articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, New Zealand rose from 39.05 in 2023 to 54.62 in 2025 (1.4 times), Brazil from 7.73 to 10.01 (1.29 times), Colombia from 14.83 to 18.31 (1.23 times) and Spain from 9.14 to 11.11 (1.22 times). Ireland fell from 50.48 to 10.69 (0.21 times), France from 14.8 to 4.89 (0.33 times), China from 8.08 to 4.89 (0.61 times) and Canada from 33.95 to 22.01 (0.65 times). The United Kingdom (37.9 to 28.83, 0.76 times) and the United States (22.33 to 17.24, 0.77 times) both fell by about a quarter.

| Country        | 2023  | 2025  | 2025 ÷ 2023 |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------------|
| New Zealand    | 39.05 | 54.62 | 1.4         |
| Brazil         | 7.73  | 10.01 | 1.29        |
| Colombia       | 14.83 | 18.31 | 1.23        |
| Spain          | 9.14  | 11.11 | 1.22        |
| Nigeria        | 9.42  | 10.46 | 1.11        |
| India          | 9.41  | 9.77  | 1.04        |
| United States  | 22.33 | 17.24 | 0.77        |
| United Kingdom | 37.9  | 28.83 | 0.76        |
| Canada         | 33.95 | 22.01 | 0.65        |
| China          | 8.08  | 4.89  | 0.61        |
| France         | 14.8  | 4.89  | 0.33        |
| Ireland        | 50.48 | 10.69 | 0.21        |

**Table 4.** Mental health articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2023 and 2025: the largest rises and falls among the 25 countries with the most coverage.

Tone differs by country even after allowing for each country's news overall. Among the 15 countries with the most tone-labelled articles, mental health coverage is more negative than the national baseline in most, most of all in Ireland (63.3% negative against 34%, a gap of 29.3 percentage points), China (53.4% against 27.2%, 26.2 points) and New Zealand (68.8% against 45.7%, 23.1 points). In the United States the gap is 18.2 points (51.3% against 33.1%). In India (43.9% against 41.2%) and Ghana (43.3% against 43.3%) the topic is about as negative as news in general, and in Nigeria it is slightly less negative (42% against 44.4%).

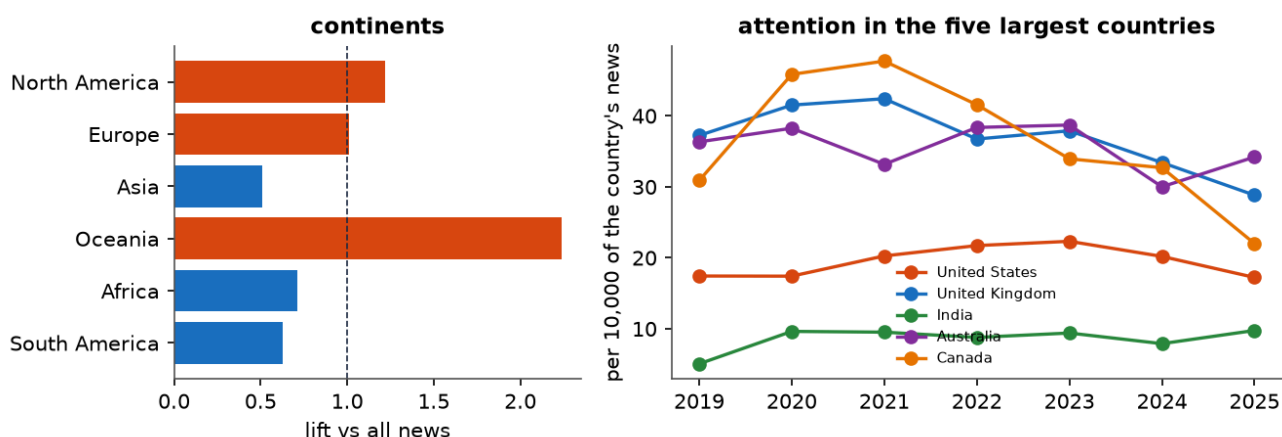


**Figure 7.** Left: lift by continent, January 2023 – July 2026. Right: mental health articles per 10,000 of each country's located news, 2019–2025, for the five countries with the most articles.

### 3.4 Tone, urgency and themes

Mental health coverage is more negative and more urgent than news in general (Figure 8). Among articles with a tone label, 45.3% are negative, against 33.6% across the index (1.35 times). A majority (53.6%) are still positive. A machine-assigned editorial priority rating puts 66.3% of articles at critical level (7 or higher), against 42.6% of all news (1.56 times).

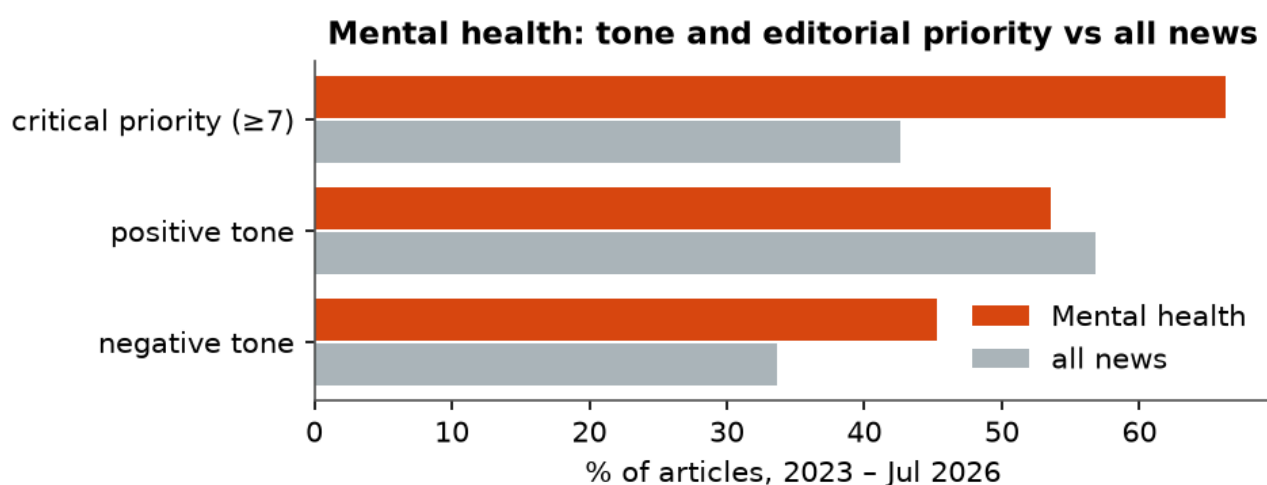


**Figure 8.** Tone and the share rated critical priority, mental health articles vs all news, 2023 – Jul 2026.

Themes show what the stories are about (Table 5). The pandemic's effect on mental health is the single most common theme (3.43% of themed articles). Care settings are highly specific to the topic: psychiatric hospitals and facilities appear in 2.39% of themed articles (159.08 times their rate in all news) and crisis intervention centres in 2.16% (153.26 times). Workplace and school programmes, teletherapy and mental health in prisons are smaller but even more specific.

| Theme                                                     | Articles | Share % | Lift   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| COVID-19 mental health impact and pandemic-related stress | 2,646    | 3.43    | 36.69  |
| antidepressant efficacy studies                           | 2,549    | 3.3     | 64.37  |
| psychiatric hospitals & mental health facilities          | 1,849    | 2.39    | 159.08 |
| mental health crisis intervention centers                 | 1,671    | 2.16    | 153.26 |
| school-based mental health education                      | 1,428    | 1.85    | 411.44 |
| workplace mental health initiatives                       | 767      | 0.99    | 456.13 |
| mental health in prison systems                           | 720      | 0.93    | 321.48 |
| teletherapy and virtual counseling access                 | 599      | 0.78    | 378.82 |

**Table 5.** Selected themes in mental health coverage, January 2023 – July 2026: the most common, and those most specific to the topic (lift against all themed news).

The organisations named most often are dominated by social platforms and by tagging artefacts, so we do not rank them. Among health bodies, the World Health Organization (2,132 articles), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1,396), the National Alliance on Mental Illness (1,244), the National Institute of Mental Health (939) and the American Psychiatric Association (926) appear most often.

### 3.5 Research attention and invention

Research on mental health grew much faster than the scientific literature. Papers with the topic in the title rose from 28.54 per 10,000 papers in 2015 to 60.09 in 2025, a 2.11-fold increase in share, while the total number of papers in the corpus was about the same in both

years (a factor of 1.0). Between 2015 and 2025, 304,271 such papers were published. The sharpest rise came in 2020 and 2021 (40.45 and 48.24 per 10,000), and the most-cited papers in the set include work on the pandemic's effect on mental health [1-4] and on the prevalence and age at onset of mental disorders in young people [5-7].

News attention and research attention diverged after 2021 (Figure 9). Both rose in 2020 and 2021. Research share kept rising, while news share fell back towards its 2019 level.

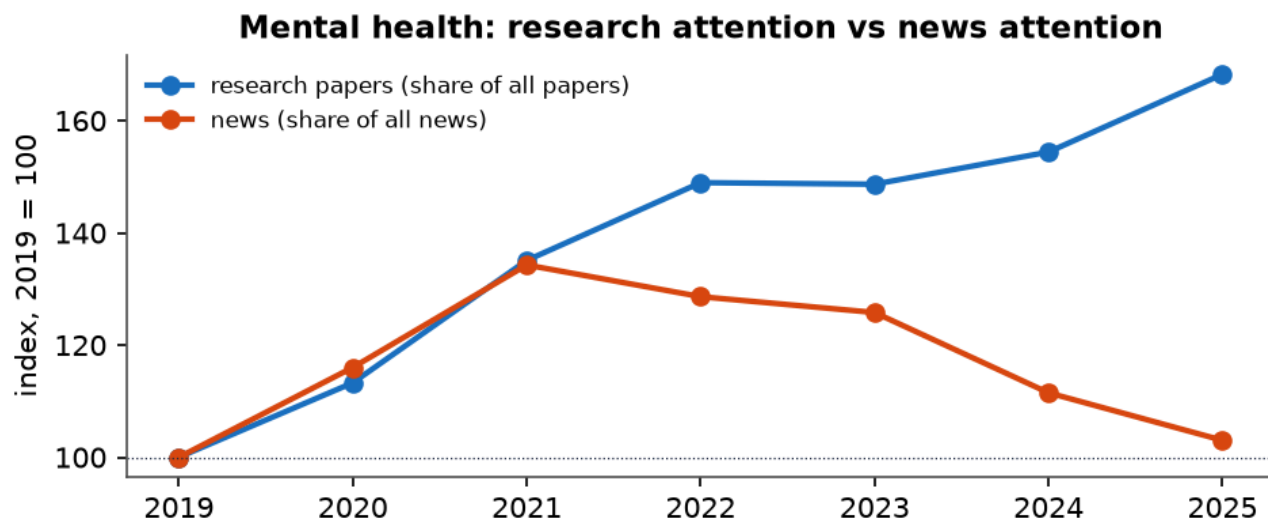


**Figure 9.** Research papers with the topic in the title (share of all papers) and mental health news (share of all news), each indexed to 2019 = 100.

Patenting rose less as a share: 564 patent families on depression and other mental disorders were published in 2015 and 1,107 in 2024, but all published patent families grew 1.68-fold over the same years, so the topic's share rose only from 1.71 to 1.99 per 10,000 (1.17 times). Counting each family once per filing office, China's office holds 58.2% of filings from 2015 to 2024, followed by the United States (10.2%), the international (PCT) route (8%) and South Korea (6.1%) (Figure 10). The leading technology classes are medical preparations (A61K, 1,427 families), health informatics (G16H, 571) and diagnosis (A61B, 453).

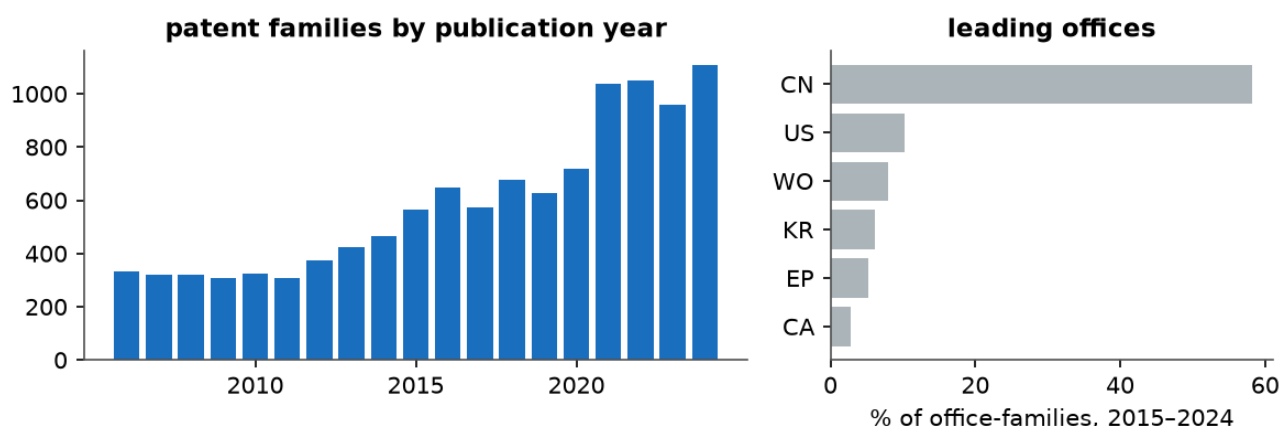


**Figure 10.** Patent families on depression and other mental disorders by publication year (left) and the leading filing offices, 2015-2024 (right).

## 4. Discussion

Three points matter for anyone who uses news as a record of mental health. First, coverage measures attention, and attention follows the calendar. The clearest peaks of the year fall in the months of two awareness observances, and the topic's share of news was higher in the

pandemic years. By 2025 that share had returned close to its 2019 level, while research output kept growing. Second, raw shares mislead. Mental health news in this index is heavily English-language and American, and countries with large populations in Asia and Africa take a small share of it relative to their weight in the index. This is a gap in coverage, not evidence that mental illness is less common there. Location tags also need checking before they are read as geography: the two US states with the highest lifts owe them to a polling firm's name and a templated item, not to local reporting. Third, a large share of what keyword searches return as "mental health news" is not journalism: journal abstracts, page furniture and spam made up a fifth of raw matches.

Research, invention and news run on different clocks. Research share doubled in a decade. The topic's share of patent families grew far less (1.17 times) and filings are concentrated in one office. News follows observances and crises. The dataset lets researchers link the three, for example to test whether national awareness campaigns or policy changes are followed by shifts in coverage tone in the affected country.

## 5. Limitations

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- **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 mental health only later are missed, 3 of 40 sampled matches were not about mental health, and some journal abstracts remain.
- **Dates.** Some undated items are placed on 1 January, which inflates January's share.
- **Machine labels.** Location, tone, priority, themes and organisations 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 located counts are smaller than the raw tags suggest; names of organisations and people can still be tagged as places, as New Mexico and Nebraska show.
- **Outlet mix.** The index over-represents English-language outlets. This shapes geography above all.
- **Research and patent counts.** These match titles only. Office shares reflect filing practice.
- **Sensitive subject.** The measures describe coverage. They say nothing about the prevalence of mental illness or the quality of care in any place.

## Data availability

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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 68,430 of 273,721 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 "mental health" --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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