Method Overview

How N²LAB Analyzes Narrative Behavior Across the Media Ecosystem

N²LAB is an open research initiative focused on narrative forensics — the study of how stories originate, propagate, diverge, or go unreported across the media landscape. Through a combination of contributor-driven research and analytical modeling, N²LAB works to make editorial patterns visible — not to judge what is true or false, but to surface how coverage behaves around a given story.

This overview explains what N²LAB measures, what its outputs mean, and how they should be interpreted.

DATA INPUTS

What N²LAB Analyzes

N²LAB works with publicly available journalistic outputs from a defined set of editorial sources. Inputs include:

- Article URLs, headlines, and subheads
- Publication timestamps
- Outlet identification and tier classification
- Cross-outlet coverage volume
- Timing and sequence of reporting across sources

N²LAB does not ingest or rely on non-public data, leaked materials, internal communications, or private datasets.

CLASSIFICATION

The Tier Framework

N²LAB organizes editorial sources into four tiers based on observable structural characteristics:

- Investigative depth — How frequently a source conducts original, resource-intensive reporting
- Editorial independence — Degree of institutional separation from government, corporate, or political interests

- Transparency practices — Engagement with FOIA, public records, and source disclosure norms
- Historical scrutiny patterns — Track record of sustained institutional accountability coverage
- Longitudinal behavior — How coverage patterns evolve over time, not just individual articles

Tier assignments describe editorial structure, not political orientation or factual reliability. They are reviewed periodically as outlets evolve.

ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

What N^{2}LAB Measures

N^{2}LAB evaluates measurable editorial dynamics across several analytical dimensions. These include:

- Coverage divergence — Whether different tiers of outlets cover a story differently, or whether certain tiers abstain entirely
- Timing and uptake — How quickly a story moves between sources, and whether delays are structurally significant
- Compression and containment — Whether coverage narrows, simplifies, or loses complexity as it propagates
- Propagation velocity — The speed and pattern of spread across the media ecosystem
- Origin lineage — Where a story first appeared and how it was handed off between sources
- Suppression footprint — Observable patterns consistent with a story being underreported relative to its structural significance

N^{2}LAB scores reflect the presence and intensity of these dynamics.

They do not infer motive, intent, or truthfulness.

OUTPUTS

Evidence Artifacts

Each N^{2}LAB analysis produces auditable evidence outputs that allow independent review. These include:

- Coverage sample counts organized by editorial tier
- First-appearance timestamps and source identification (origin lineage)
- Cross-tier divergence ratios
- Timing curves and velocity indicators
- Suppression or compression footprint data
- Tier-to-tier handoff sequences

These artifacts are designed so that anyone reviewing an N^{2}LAB output can trace the reasoning back to observable data.

REPRODUCIBILITY

Consistent and Auditable

Given identical inputs and the same model version, N^{2}LAB produces identical outputs. Each analysis includes:

- The model version used
- The ingestion timestamp
- The source list analyzed
- A summary of which analytical dimensions were activated
- The full evidence artifact set

This means N^{2}LAB assessments can be reviewed, challenged, or audited under consistent conditions by editors, researchers, legal teams, or institutional reviewers.

LIMITATIONS

What N^{2}LAB Does Not Do

- N^{2}LAB does not assert that any reported information is true or false
- N^{2}LAB does not determine the motives of institutions, editors, or journalists
- N^{2}LAB does not replace editorial judgment or independent reporting
- N^{2}LAB does not make claims about political ideology or bias

N^{2}LAB identifies editorial behavior. It is an analytical tool, not a verdict.

APPLICATION

Appropriate Use

N^{2}LAB outputs are designed to support:

- Investigative journalism
- Academic media analysis
- NGO and human rights reporting
- Legal proceedings involving media behavior
- Research on disinformation or narrative manipulation
- Internal editorial audits and newsroom accountability

When referencing N^{2}LAB in published work, users should cite the accompanying evidence artifacts to provide full context.