Public Sentiment about Women's Rights Movements

An analysis of the evolution of public sentiment about women's rights movements, starting from the right to vote.

Initial Inspection of the Dataset

The dataset contains a wide range of text records about Suffragettes.

Our initial research question is to compare the suffragette movements in the early 1900s and the feminist resurgence of the 1960s and 1970s. But looking at the time frame, we saw the initial dataset only contains documents up to 1914. Therefore, we might build on the current dataset to include documents from the 1960s and 1970s so that a comparison can be made across time.

Building Datasets (1)

We set out to search for results about the Feminist movement in 1960s and 1970s, and we intend to use them to build a comparison set to the original content set.

We also started searching for results in the pre-Suffragettes years. We intend to use them as a comparison set as well to the original content set.

Building Datasets (2)

We have built the Pre-History Suffragettes dataset and the Feminism Resurgence dataset with approx. 200-300 documents in each set. This is to match with the number of documents in the initial Suffragettes dataset.

Some keywords used for the Feminism Resurgence dataset include "Feminism" "Women's Rights Movement" "Equality for Women" "Workplace" "Sexism", etc.

Besides the filters on publication years and OCR confidence level, we selected editorial and newspaper publications out of the variety of document types because we believe that these documents are more politically charged, more readable, and can represent to a certain extent the public opinions of the time.
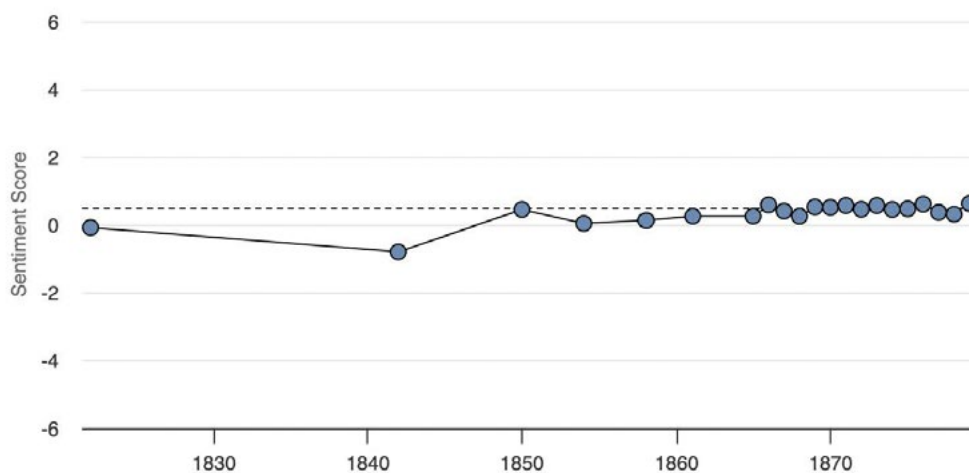
Pre-History Period

The nineteenth-century

The debate about women's right to vote goes back into the nineteenth century, and the archives in Gale DSL reflect that presence. In order to establish a background for the suffragette movement "proper" in the twentieth century, we built a dataset of documents from transatlantic archives that mention all of the following: suffrag*, voting, and wom?n. We then further subsetted the results by the document types of "editorials" and "letters to the editor," which gave a manageable corpus of 266 documents.

Misleading sentiments in the early period

A sentiment analysis of our nineteenth-century editorials show a slight but definite negative leaning in the time period. However, a closer analysis of the documents indicates that negatively emotive words are often marshaled against the opponents of broader suffrage. Thus, the negative slant appears to be more indicative of the genre of the archive rather than the content --editorialists and authors of letters to the editor are looking to inveigh against something, no matter the position of the writer.

Cluster analysis of the pre-history editorials

To get a better sense beyond sentiment of how the documents frame women's suffrage, I did an analysis of the pre-history editorial documents, breaking them down into 5 clusters of documents. I then took two clusters which looked to be furthest apart, "Cluster 2," and "Cluster 5," and subjected them to quick analysis for the common shared and common unique terms between them, to see what "the extremes" might be. Unsurprisingly, the top shared terms were: women, woman, suffrage, vote, and men. The first four terms were what I originally searched for

to build the dataset, so again, no surprise. The distinct terms, however, were curious.

The most common unique terms for each cluster are included in the attached visualization. The two document clusters seem to be:

Cluster 2: Western locale, people groups, and finance terminology
Cluster 5: Northeastern(ish) locale and governmental terminology

There were also curious unique words in both: e.g., "polygamy" for Cluster 2, and "temperance" for Cluster 5. Although generalization is dangerous at this point, the initial analysis of these clusters suggests that location specificity impacts what kinds of larger societal concerns are tied up in the question of women's suffrage.

Note that the cluster sizes are different. Cluster 2 contains 105 documents, and Cluster 5 only 32.

	A	B	C	D	E	
1	**Cluster 2**	**Count:**		**Cluster 5**	**Count:**	
2	tax	33		petition	30	
3	franchise	29		hall	27	
4	wyoming	28		michigan	22	
5	utah	26		rev	20	
6	wives	24		maine	19	
7	negroes	22		president	19	
8	mormon	19		temperance	18	
9	view	19		audience	17	
10	republic	18		vermont	17	
11	state county	17		dr	15	
12	taxation	17		member	15	
13	girls	16		met	15	
14	polygamy	16		platform	15	
15	trade	16		signed	14	
16	whites	16		die	13	
17	sit	15		month	13	
18						
19	Western/people groups/finance?			Northeastern / governmental?		

Similar Words | **Unique Words** | ⊕

Five Topics in the early period

When we run an analysis for 5 topics in the nineteenth-century editorials, place still seems to
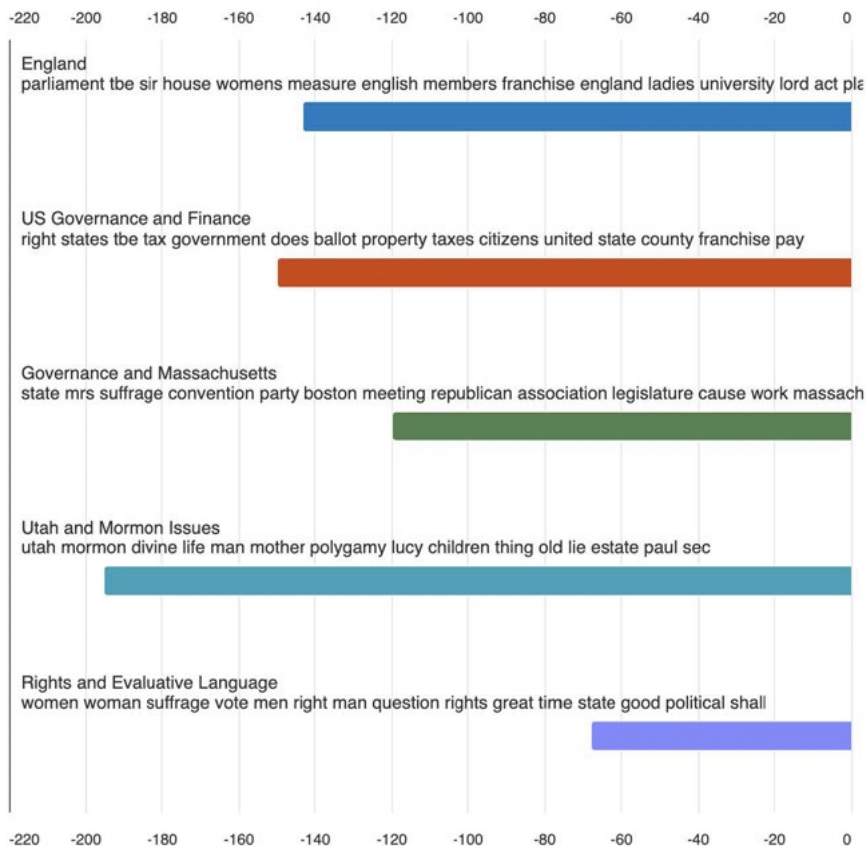
hold a strong sway, with England, Massachusetts, and Utah showing up as strong signals. This leads me to suspect that this could be a dataset bias, but I don't know why.

What is most "coherent," in this set, however, are a cluster of words that deal with gender, rights, and evaluative language ("good," "great," even "shall" and "time" seem to fit).

What a person might glean from this, in combination with the cluster analysis, is that there is geographic specificity to the issues surrounding the question of women's right to vote, and people see it as a major phenomenon, whether they are for or against the extension of the franchise. Perhaps. These are opening guesses, which further close and distant reading would need to test and develop.

Coherence

A score indicating how likely it is that a topic's words will appear together in a document. Values closer to 0 indicate that the topic's words are more likely to appear together. Large negative values indicate words that don't co-occur often.
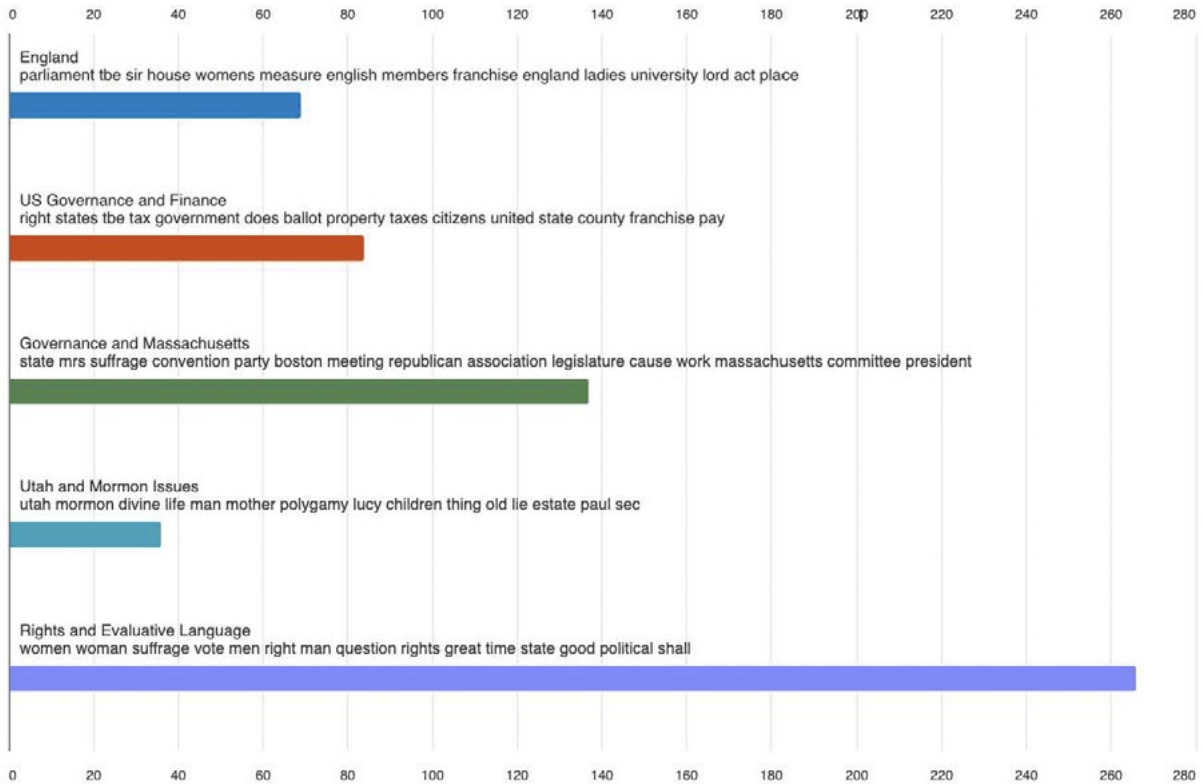

Evaluative language is widespread in the early period

Confirming my suspicion on the earlier topic models visualization, this representation of document count for the different topics shows that "Rights and Evaluative Language" is a

widespread phenomenon throughout his early-period archive.

Document Count

The count of documents that make up a given topic. Smaller counts compared to the total number of documents may indicate an outlying topic whereas larger counts may be more representative of the Content Set as a whole.

England
parliament tbe sir house womens measure english members franchise england ladies university lord act place

US Governance and Finance
right states tbe tax government does ballot property taxes citizens united state county franchise pay

Governance and Massachusetts
state mrs suffrage convention party boston meeting republican association legislature cause work massachusetts committee president

Utah and Mormon Issues
utah mormon divine life man mother polygamy lucy children thing old lie estate paul sec

Rights and Evaluative Language
women woman suffrage vote men right man question rights great time state good political shall

Suffragette Period

Suffragette Ngram Result

Words with the highest frequency in the dataset include suffragette, women, MAUD, house, London, police, government, prison, pankhurst.
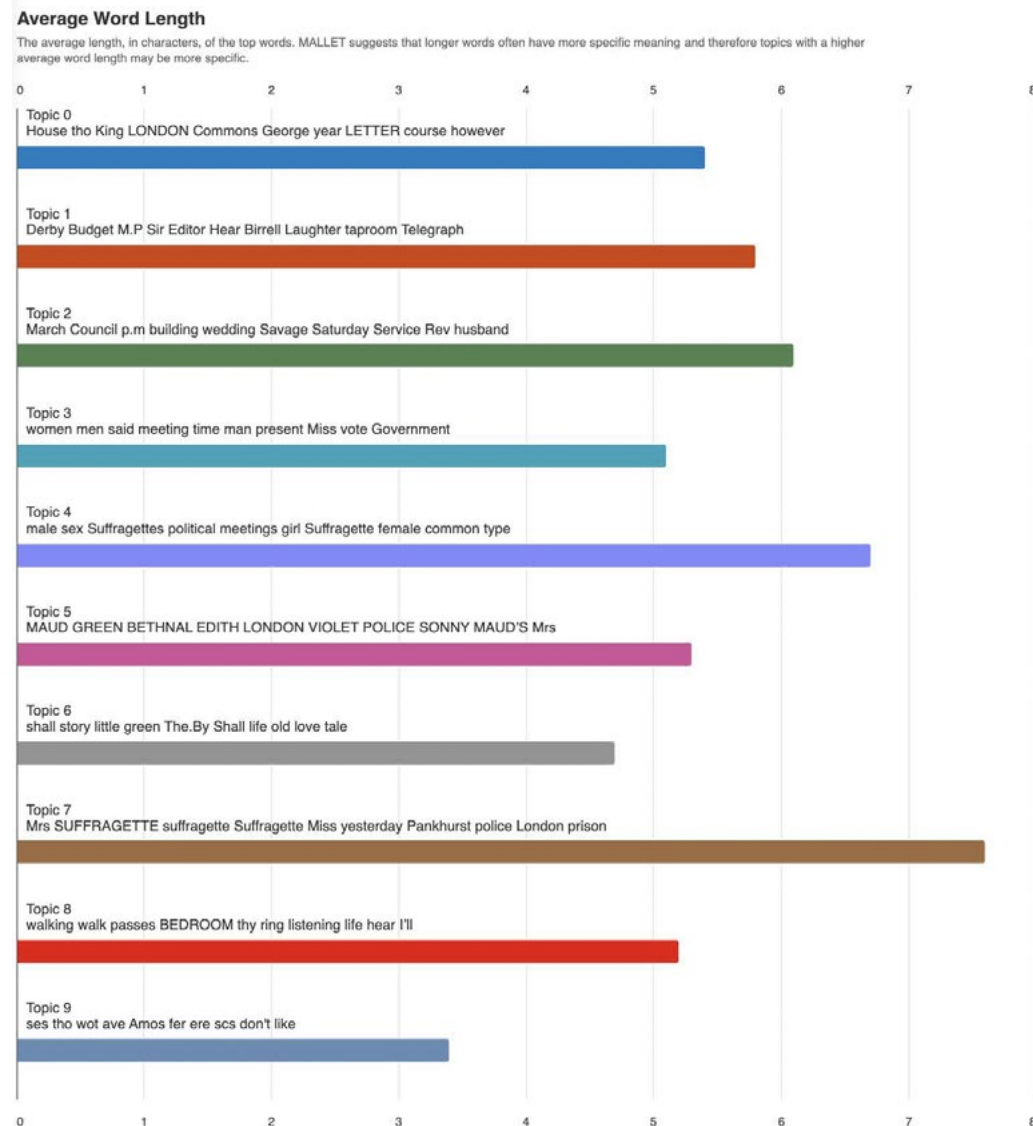
These words suggest the political and activist nature of the movement, involving a lot of police activities, arrests, and civil unrest. It also highlights the location and the main people in the Movement.

The appearance of the word "house" is very interesting and worth more in-depth inspection.

Suffragette Topic Modeling Result (Final)

The topic modeling result suggests that Topic 3 and Topic 7 are the two most prominent topics for the Suffragette dataset.

Topic Proportion

Content Set

Suffragette Trial

Suffragette Havoc

Notes and News

The Extraordinary Apologia of the Picture-Destroying Suffragette

"Suffragette" Week Poster

Suffragette Fire at Hurst Park

Suffragette Dress

THE WORLD OF WOMEN

Suffragette Army

The Arrest of Mrs. Pankhurst

The Suffragette

Parisian Suffragette Fined

Suffragette Caravan

Suffragette Raid Echo

Suffragette with Paraffin

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Proportion

Gale Research Showcase
gale.com/showcase

Suffragette Topic 3 Analysis

Gender Dynamics: words like women, men, and man suggest a focus on discussions about gender roles,status, or actions of specific individuals. The prominence of women and men indicates these are central to the corpus,possibly reflecting debates on suffrage or societal Roles.

Political and Activism Context: words like vote, government, and meeting point to political discussions or organizations, maybe centered around suffrage advocacy or legislative debates. Government and vote suggest the involvement of political institutions, and meeting might be referring to activist gatherings or parliamentary debates.

Average Word Length

The average length, in characters, of the top words. MALLET suggests that longer words often have more specific meaning and therefore topics with a higher average word length may be more specific.

Topic 0
House tho King LONDON Commons George year LETTER course however

Topic 1
Derby Budget M.P Sir Editor Hear Birrell Laughter taproom Telegraph

Topic 2
March Council p.m building wedding Savage Saturday Service Rev husband

Topic 3
women men said meeting time man present Miss vote Government

Topic 4
male sex Suffragettes political meetings girl Suffragette female common type

Topic 5
MAUD GREEN BETHNAL EDITH LONDON VIOLET POLICE SONNY MAUD'S Mrs

Topic 6
shall story little green The.By Shall life old love tale

Topic 7
Mrs SUFFRAGETTE suffragette Suffragette Miss yesterday Pankhurst police London prison

Topic 8
walking walk passes BEDROOM thy ring listening life hear I'll

Topic 9
ses tho wot ave Amos fer ere scs don't like

Suffragette Topic 7 Analysis

Individual Figures and Leaders: words like Mrs, Miss, Pankhurst point to specific individuals or
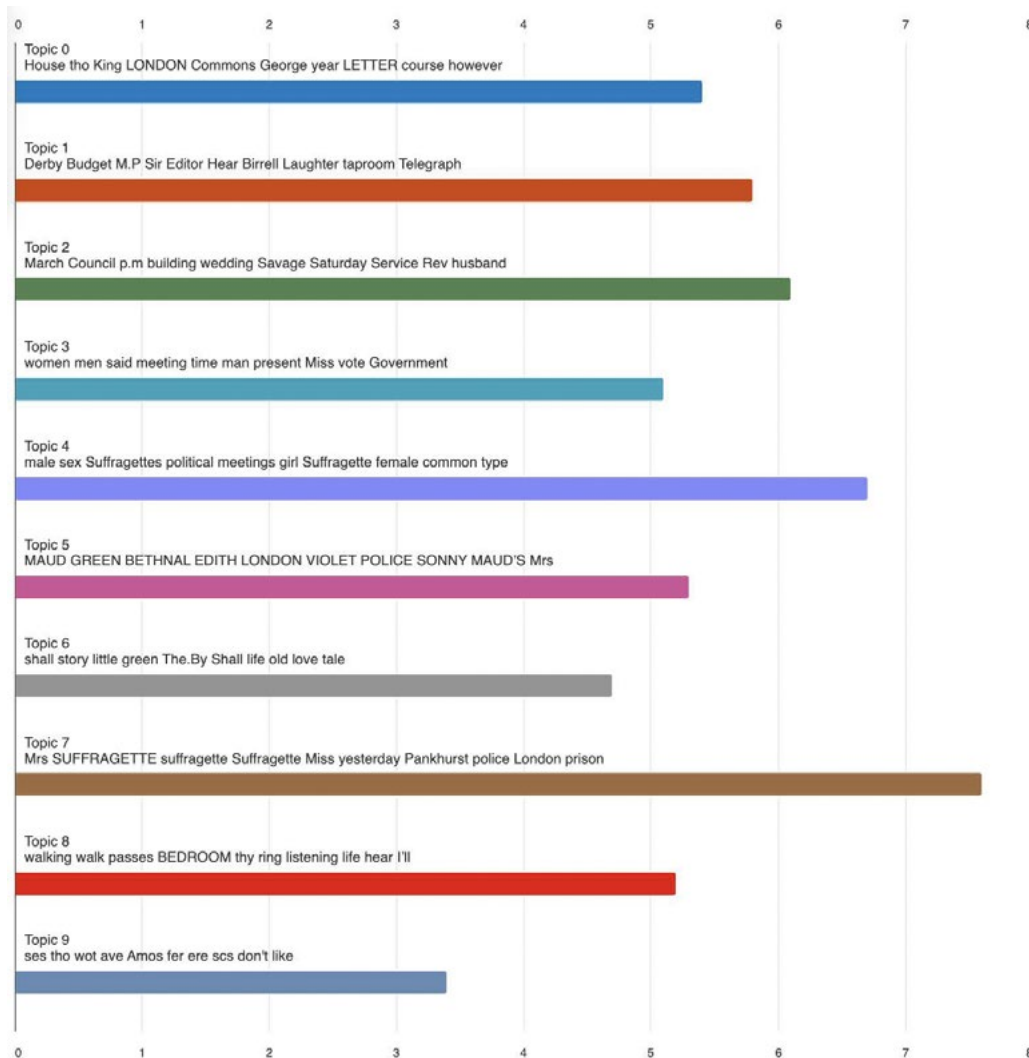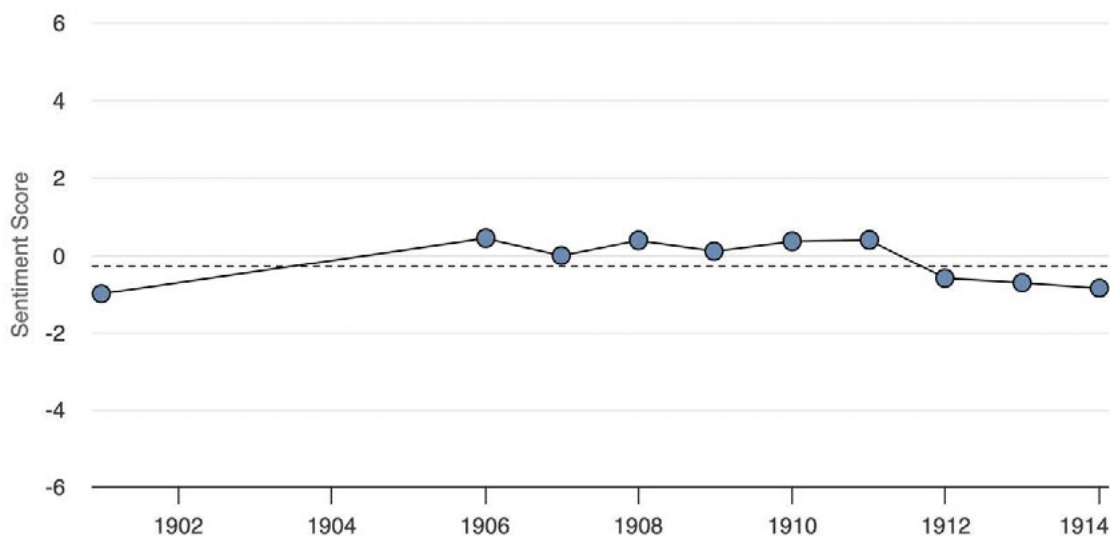
roles in the movement. Pankhurst likely refers to Emmeline, prominent the leader of the suffragette movement.

Arrests and Unrests: words like police and prison likely relate to arrests and incarcerations of suffragettes, a recurring theme in the movement's history. Many arrests and trials took place during the movement, suggesting again the militant nature of the movement.

Locations and Hub: London is significant, as it was a central hub for suffragette activism, protests, and government engagement.

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Suffragette Dataset Sentiment Analysis

After multiple cleaning iterations, we ran a sentiment analysis on the suffragette dataset. The visualization indicates an increasing sentiment for the Suffragette movement between 1906 to 1912 and then a downturn after 1912.

The initial negative response towards the Suffragette movement might be due to the militant activism method the Suffragettes decided to adopt. They disrupted public meetings, protested publicly, and demonstrated their demand through minor criminal acts.

The sentiment then shifted towards a more positive outlook in the early 1900s. We presume that it was due to the public's increased sympathy towards the women Suffragettes. People started empathizing with their cause, and they even attended their rally (one of the biggest rally took place in 1908, arousing public interest in the movement). During imprisonment, some Suffragette members refused to eat, resulting in the much hated force-feeding measure of the Government.

Entering the 1910s, the analysis indicates a downturn in the sentiment. Our hypothesis is that the Suffragettes caused too much havoc and damage to the public living, and the public and the press were feeling a little exhausted about the Suffragettes' doings. By clicking into each sentiment data point, we can see keywords like "A violent Suffragette" "Suffragette Madness" "Suffragette Rage" that reflect the militant nature of the movement.
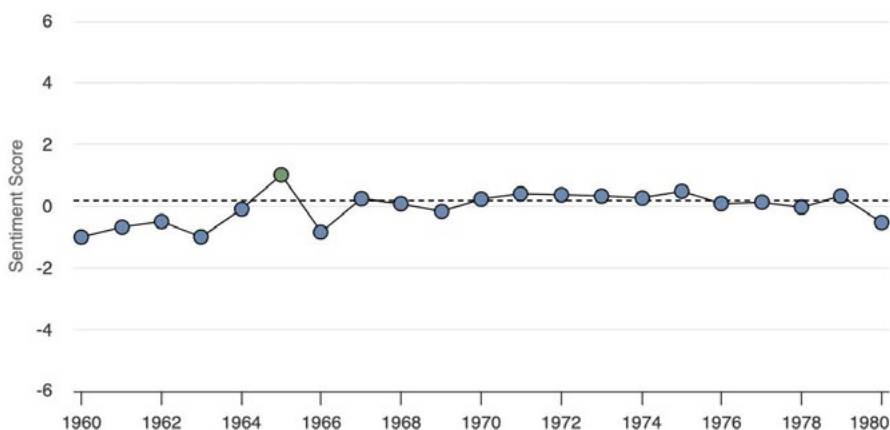
Sentiment Analysis Insights for Year 1913

Data point result for 1913

☐	-1.100	The Unpopularity of the Suffragettes
☐	-1.111	Suffragette Leader's Arrest
☐	-1.214	The Arrests
☐	-1.222	Suffragette in Trousers?
☐	-1.286	Suffragette Outrage
☐	-1.333	Suffragette Sandwich-Women Mobbed in London
☐	-1.333	Suffragette Committed
☐	-1.400	A Trial of Patience
☐	-1.444	Suffragette Crimes
☐	-1.667	The " Suffragette."
☐	-1.667	Doorstep Suffragette
☐	-1.833	"The Home Breakers."

Resurgence Period

Resurgence Period Sentiment Analysis Result

By 1965, the suffragette movement had largely achieved its primary goals in many countries. The sentiment analysis of documents this year shows that the sentiment is positive and then became pretty neutral, slightly positive. Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark legislation that outlawed discriminatory practices like literacy tests and poll taxes and ensured women of color the right to vote. Sentiment became consistently neutral and slightly positive in the 1970s. It reflects that public discussions have become less contentious.
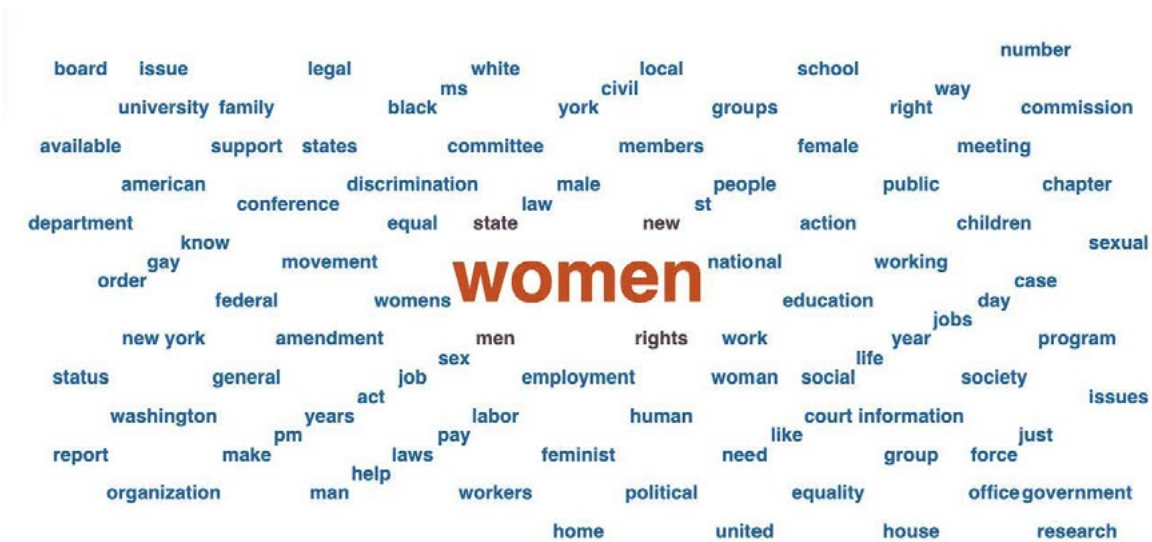
Entity Analysis

Unsurprisingly, named entity recognition indicates a strong emphasis on feminism/suffragette rights in terms of geo-political entities and cultural groups. Continuing to query and explore how attention paid to these entities and cultural groups changed/expanded over time.
We see a lot of focus on American places/groups (washington, new york, american, chicago) but I found a fair amount of discussion around the Caribbean in my topic model, so curious about reconciling these/putting them in convo with each other.

Entity	Category	Documents	Count
washington	Geo-Political Entity	46	598
new york	Geo-Political Entity	51	575
years	Date	68	485
american	Cultural Group	54	432
congress	Organization	37	319
july	Date	33	308
chicago	Geo-Political Entity	29	304
year	Date	55	302
second	Position	62	296
today	Date	48	294
irish	Cultural Group	3	273
cuba	Geo-Political Entity	15	273
august	Date	36	258
june	Date	34	245
senate	Organization	30	243
california	Geo-Political Entity	31	229
supreme court	Organization	18	217
lesbian	Cultural Group	9	193
october	Date	33	171
days	Date	31	162

Word Cloud

The word cloud suggests that "equal," "rights," "employment," and "jobs" are high-frequent words, which marks an era when broader issues of gender equality and civil rights gained momentum.

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