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MAT. 2080422

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NETWORK SCIENCE

# AFTER THE VOTE: MAPPING ONLINE TRANS DISCOURSE

# BACK GROUND

Transgender people face stigma and discrimination, leading to **minority stress**: a chronic strain linked to negative mental and physical health outcomes (Hunter et al., 2021). It is realistic to think this stress can be intensified by **political attacks on trans rights**, especially efforts to restrict access to gender-affirming care and fuel the **demonization of trans people**. Donald Trump's 2024 **Agenda 47 campaign** included several such proposals, framing them as protection from so-called "gender insanity" ([President Trump's Plan to Protect Children From Left-Wing Gender Insanity | Donald J. Trump for President 2024](#)).

## President Trump's Plan to Protect Children from Left-Wing Gender Insanity

February 01, 2023



Today, President Donald J. Trump announced his plan to stop the chemical, physical, and emotional mutilation of our youth because no serious country should be telling its children that they were born with the wrong gender.

1. **Revoke Joe Biden's cruel policies on so-called "gender affirming care"**—a process that includes giving kids puberty blockers, mutating their physical appearance, and ultimately performing surgery on minor children.
  2. Sign a new executive order instructing every federal agency to **cease all programs that promote the concept of sex and gender transition** at any age.
  3. Ask Congress to **permanently stop** federal taxpayer dollars from being used to promote or pay for these procedures.
  4. **Pass a law prohibiting child sexual mutilation** in all 50 states.
  5. Declare that any hospital or healthcare provider participating in the chemical or physical mutilation of minor youth **will no longer meet federal health and safety standards for Medicaid and Medicare**—and **will be terminated** from the program.
  6. Support the creation of a **private right of action for victims to sue doctors** who have unforgivably performed these procedures on minor children.
  7. Direct the Department of Justice to **investigate Big Pharma and the big hospital networks** to determine whether they have:  
**Deliberately covered up horrific long-term side-effects** of "sex transitions" to get rich at the expense of vulnerable patients.  
**Illegally marketed hormones and puberty blockers**, which are in no way licensed or approved for this use.
  8. Direct the **Department of Education** to inform states and school districts that if any teacher or school official suggests to a child that they could be **trapped in the wrong body**, they will be faced with **severe consequences**, including, **potential Civil Rights violations** for sex discrimination, and the **elimination of federal funding**.
  9. As part of our new credentialing body for teachers, we will **promote positive education** about the nuclear family, the roles of mothers and fathers, and celebrating rather than erasing the things that make men and women different and unique.
- Ask Congress to pass a bill** establishing that:
- The only genders recognized by the U.S. government are **male and female**—and **they are assigned at birth**.
- Title IX prohibits men from participating in women's sports.
- Protects the rights of parents from being forced to allow their minor child to assume a new gender identity without the parents' consent.

# GOAL

Capture a snapshot of online discourse within trans-oriented communities in the months following Trump's re-election.

# OBJECTIVES

1

Cluster online posts into topics in order to understand what people are discussing within the broader transgender discourse.

2

Perform sentiment analysis on each topic to get an overview of the emotional tone and affect expressed across discussions.

# PROCESS

## PHASE 1

Collected top posts and comments from trans subreddits (Dec 6, 2024 – May 17, 2025) via **Reddit's API**. Deep cleaned and POS-tagged the documents (allowed POS: ADJ, ADV, PRON, NOUN, PROPN, VERB).

Constructed an **undirected weighted graph** from the giant component of the thresholded **document-projected** network.

Applied the Network Community Profile (**NCP**) to determine the pruning percentile for thresholding the larger network (99%).

## PHASE 2

Ran **four topic modeling methods** (BERTopic, BERTopic w/ outlier reduction, Louvain, Leiden).

Evaluated performance using **Modularity, Ncut, and NMI**. Selected the best model and performed GPT-aided **topic interpretation**.

## PHASE 3

Applied **LIWC-22** (categories: tone\_pos, tone\_neg, emo\_pos, emo\_neg, politic, health, mental) and **BERTAgent** (BATot). Created composite scores:

Tone = tone\_pos – tone\_neg;

Emotion = emo\_pos – emo\_neg.

Added the six resulting attributes to topic nodes, and built a **topic-level graph** from the output.

## PHASE 4

**Visualized** the network in Gephi + Python (node size = PageRank score).

## PHASE 1

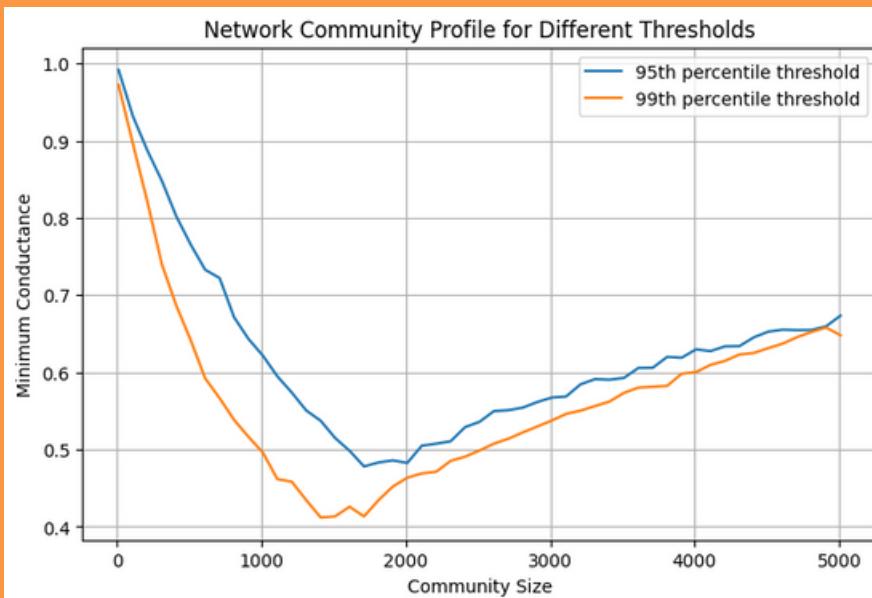
## AFTER THE VOTE: MAPPING ONLINE TRANS DISCOURSE

### START

r/trans  
r/transgender  
r/asktransgender

256 posts  
18085 comments  
=  
18341 documents  
6247 words

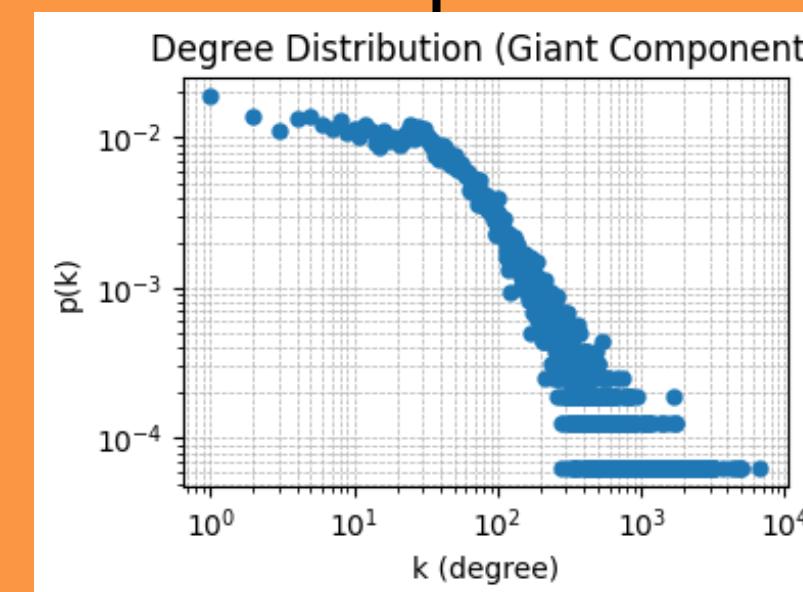
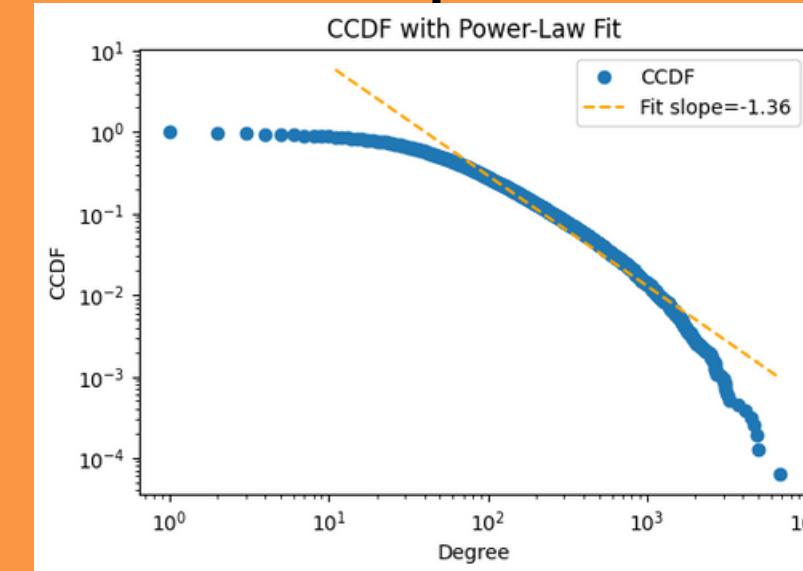
### BUILD DOCUMENT-PROJECTED NETWORK



### EXTRACT GIANT COMPONENT

15819 nodes  
924976 edges  
 $\gamma = 2.36$

--- Giant Component of Document-Projected Network ---  
Size of the giant component: 15819  
Average degree: 116.94  
Median degree: 50.00  
Density: 0.00739  
Diameter: 6.00  
Average path length: 2.51146



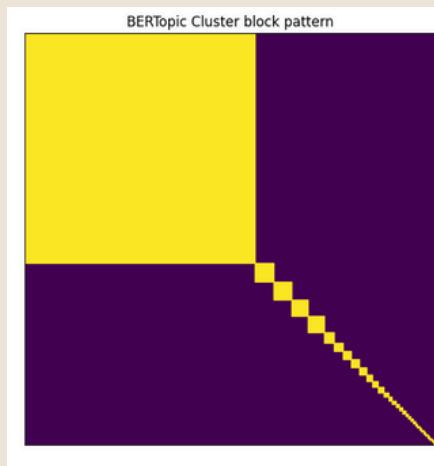
### DOCUMENT-LEVEL GRAPH

## PHASE 2

## AFTER THE VOTE: MAPPING ONLINE TRANS DISCOURSE

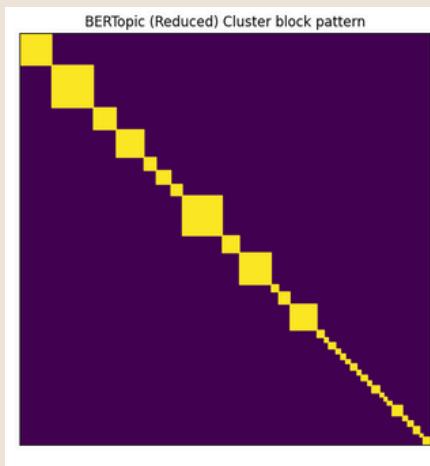
### BERTOPIC

33 topics  
8835 outlier docs



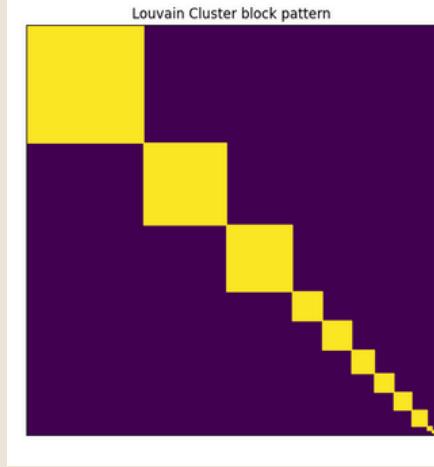
### BERTOPIC -REDUCED

33 topics  
12 outlier docs



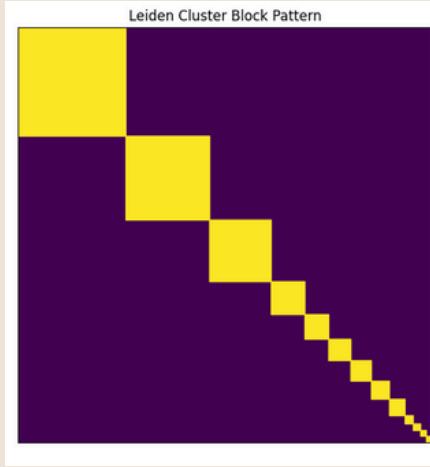
### LOUVAIN

11 topics  
2 outlier groups

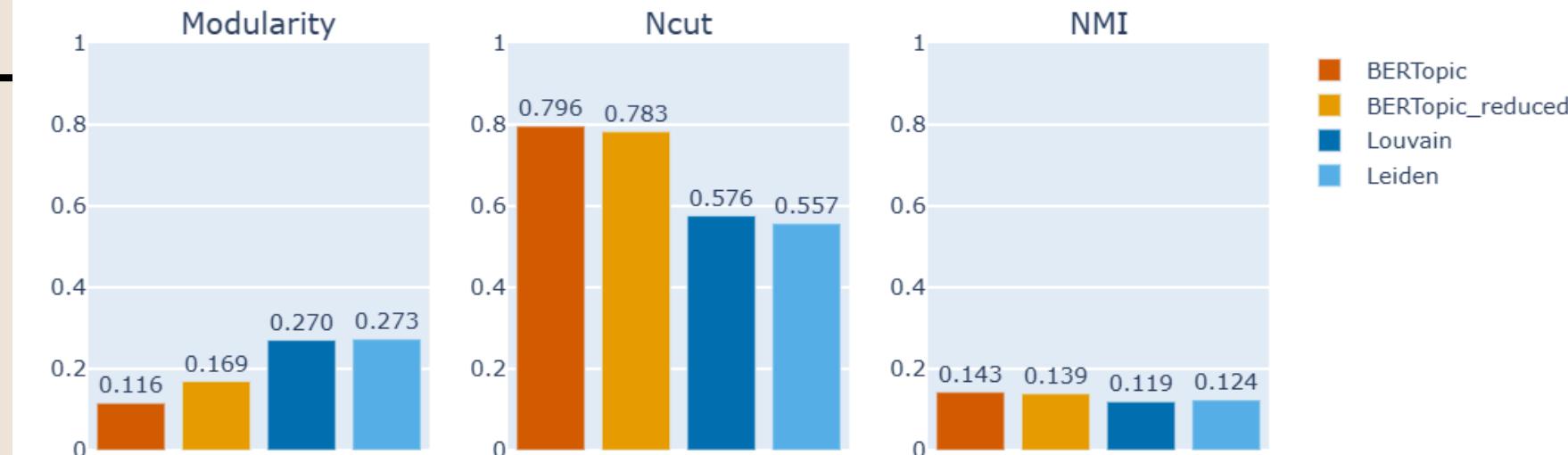


### LEIDEN

13 topics  
3 outlier groups



### Model Scores per Metric



Topic 0: Erosion of Trans Rights in the U.S.  
Topic 1: Daily Challenges for Trans People  
Topic 2: Comprehensive Care for Trans Youth  
Topic 3: Christianity and Trans Identity Conflict  
Topic 4: HRT Physiological and Anatomical Changes  
Topic 5: Cultural Sensitivity in Name Choice  
Topic 6: Hypersexualization of Trans People  
Topic 7: Legal Document Changes  
Topic 8: LGBTQ+ Representation and Controversies in Media  
Topic 9: Gender-Neutrality of Language  
Topic 10: Trans Resources and Legal Context  
Topic 11: Sex and Gender in Nature vs. Norms  
Topic 12: Misrepresentation of School Shooter Narratives  
Topic 13: Outliers 1  
Topic 14: Outliers 2  
Topic 15: Outliers 3

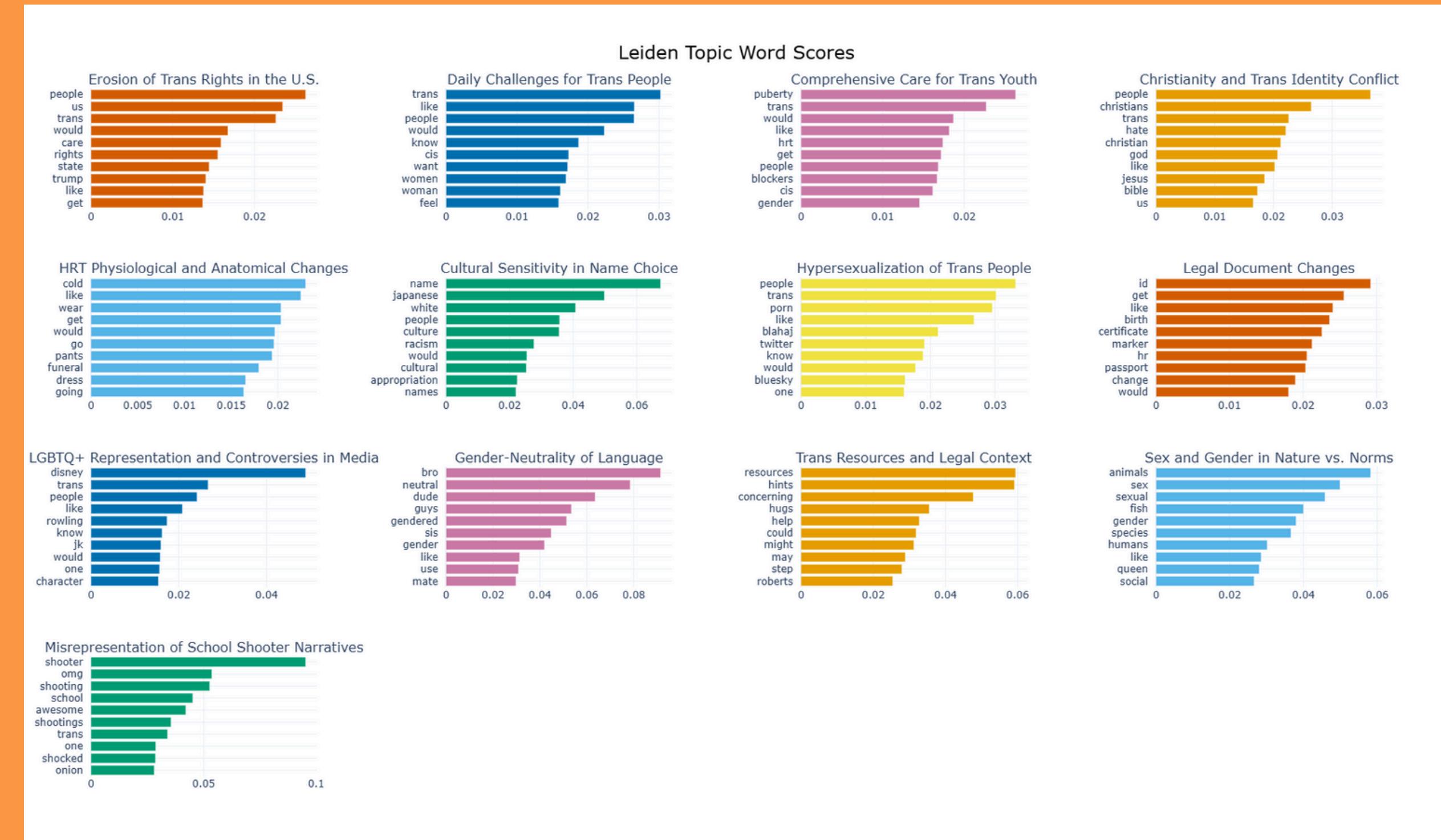
4120 documents  
3194 documents  
2358 documents  
1263 documents  
928 documents  
840 documents  
784 documents  
676 documents  
615 documents  
315 documents  
264 documents  
230 documents  
201 documents  
22 documents  
5 documents  
4 documents

## TOPIC DETECTION

## PHASE 2

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# BAR CHART

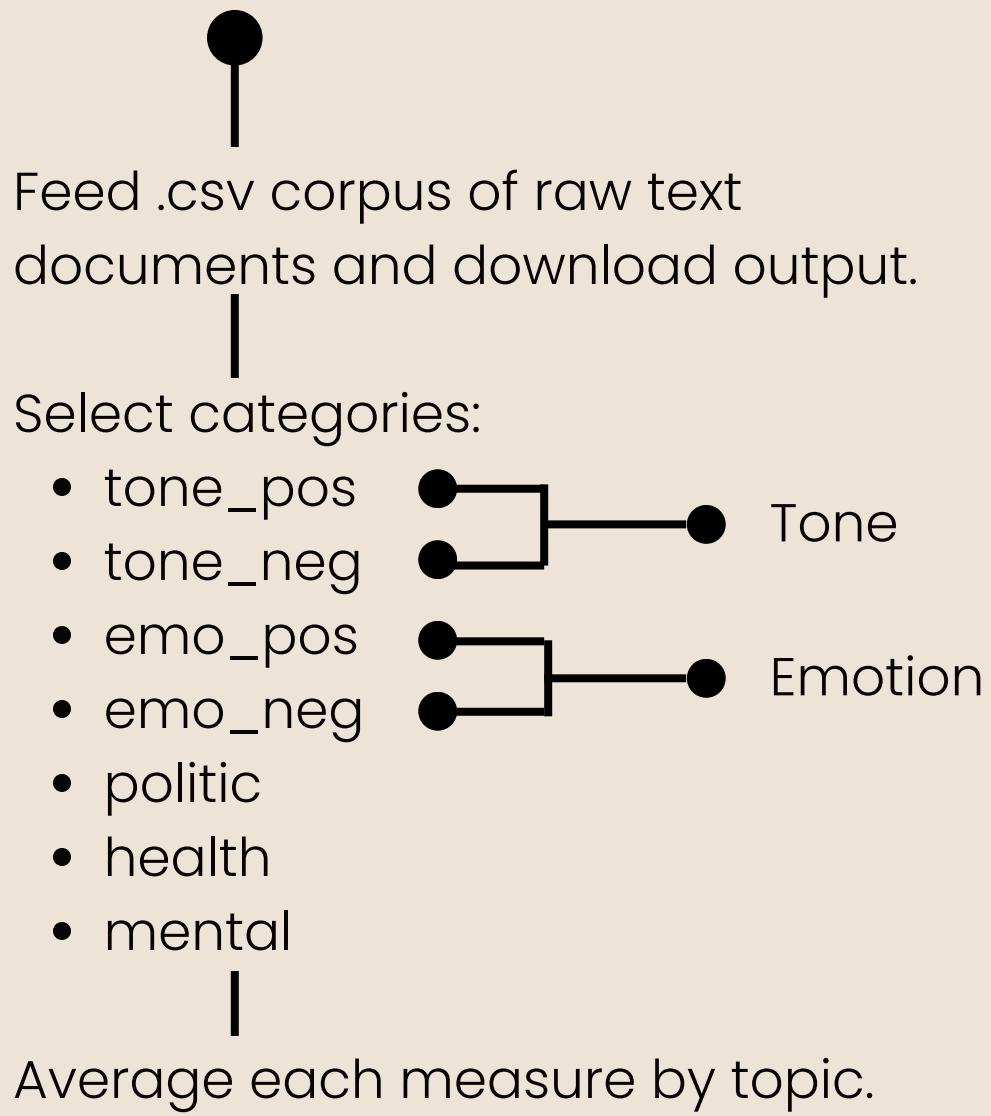


ID	TOPIC	DESCRIPTION		
0	Erosion of Trans Rights in the U.S.	Examines the escalating threats to transgender rights and healthcare in the U.S., driven by conservative policy agendas, judicial shifts, and inconsistent political support. Underscores the growing disillusionment with the political system and call for urgent advocacy to counter bipartisan failures and safeguard LGBTQ+ protections.	7	Legal Document Changes
1	Daily Challenges for Trans People	Examines the personal, social, and systemic challenges faced by trans and intersex individuals, including identity formation, medical transition, discrimination, and the quest for acceptance and support amid cultural and institutional resistance.	8	LGBTQ+ Representation and Controversies in Media
2	Comprehensive Care for Trans Youth	Addresses the medical, psychological, ethical, and social dimensions of gender-affirming care for transgender minors, highlighting the need for informed, individualized treatment supported by parents and professionals while confronting misinformation and societal challenges.	9	Gender-Neutrality of Language
3	Christianity and Trans Identity Conflict	Examines the complex intersection of Christian beliefs and transgender identities, revealing internal religious conflicts, varying interpretations of scripture, and the political and social tensions that shape acceptance, prejudice, and activism.	10	Trans Resources and Legal Context
4	HRT Physiological and Anatomical Changes	Discussion of individuals' varying changes associated with hormone replacement therapy (HRT), esp. regarding temperature sensitivity, hunger, and the possible consequences of anatomical changes (e.g., at TSA security screenings).	11	Sex and Gender in Nature vs. Norms
5	Cultural Sensitivity in Name Choice	Explores perspectives on name choice, esp. on the adoption of a non-culturally-coherent name, focusing on cultural appropriation, racial identity, and intent.	12	Misrepresentation of School Shooter Narratives
6	Hypersexualization of Trans People	Discussion around the social perception of fetishes within and outside trans communities. The documents emphasize rejecting harmful generalizations and stereotypes that see trans people as driven by sexuality, while advocating for nuanced understanding of individual expression and sexuality.		

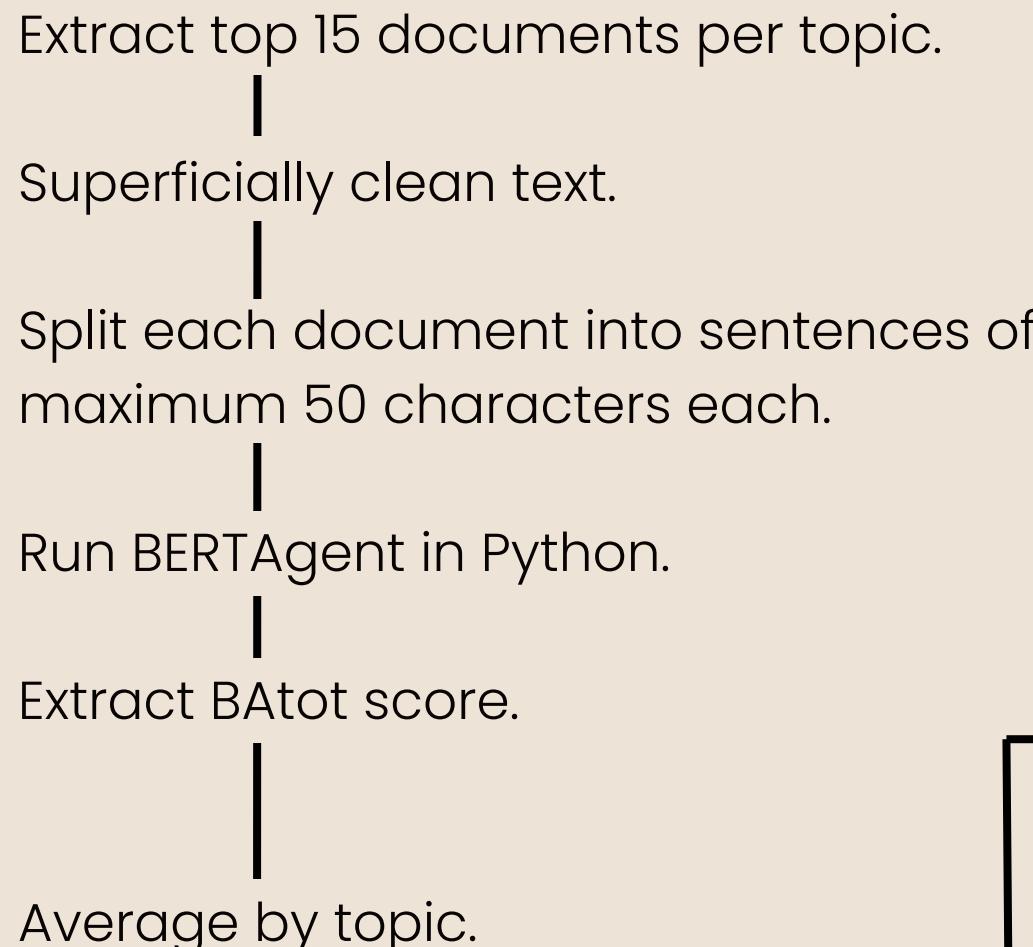
## PHASE 3

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### LIWC-22



### BERTAGENT



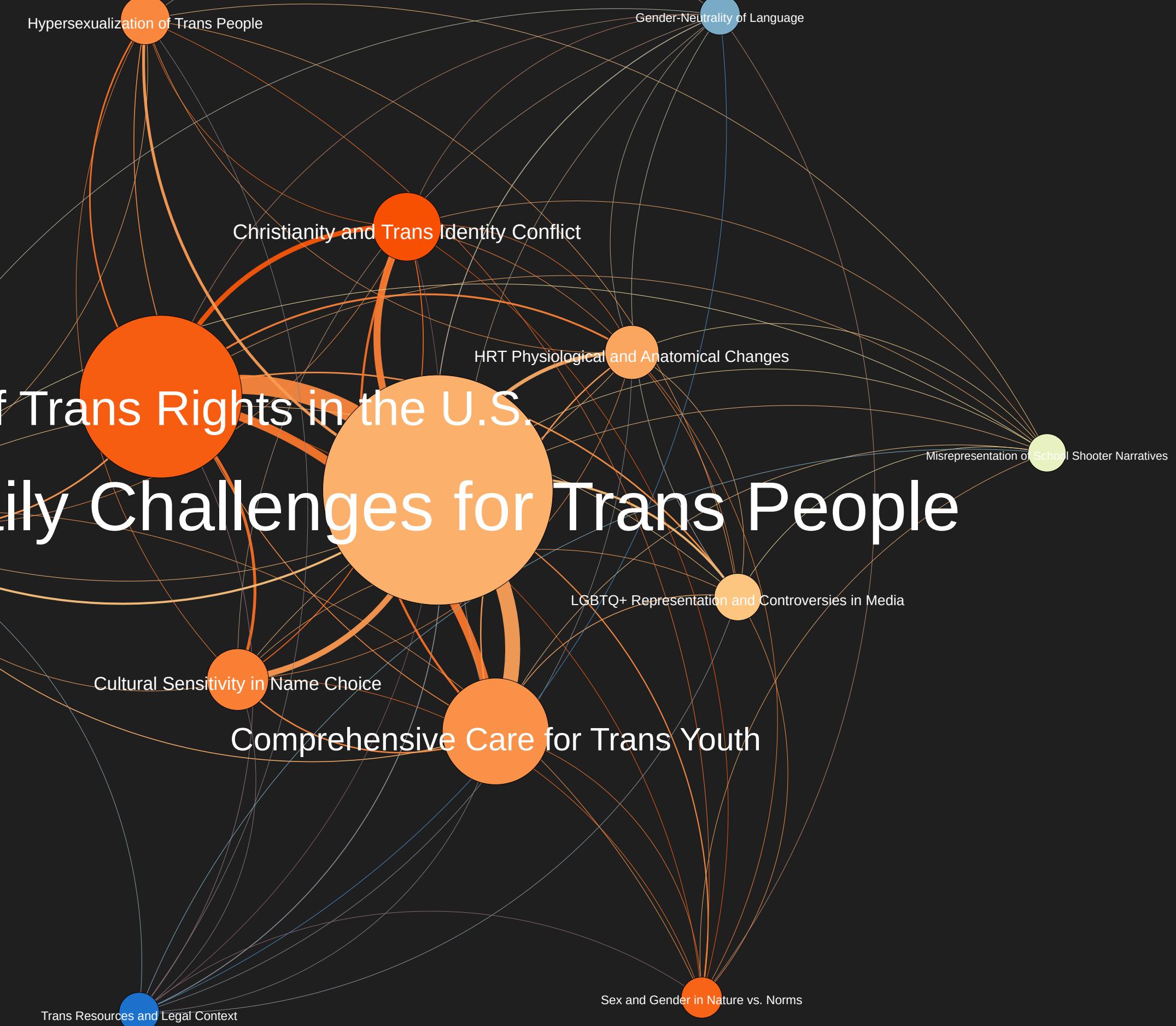
**SENTIMENT ANALYSIS**

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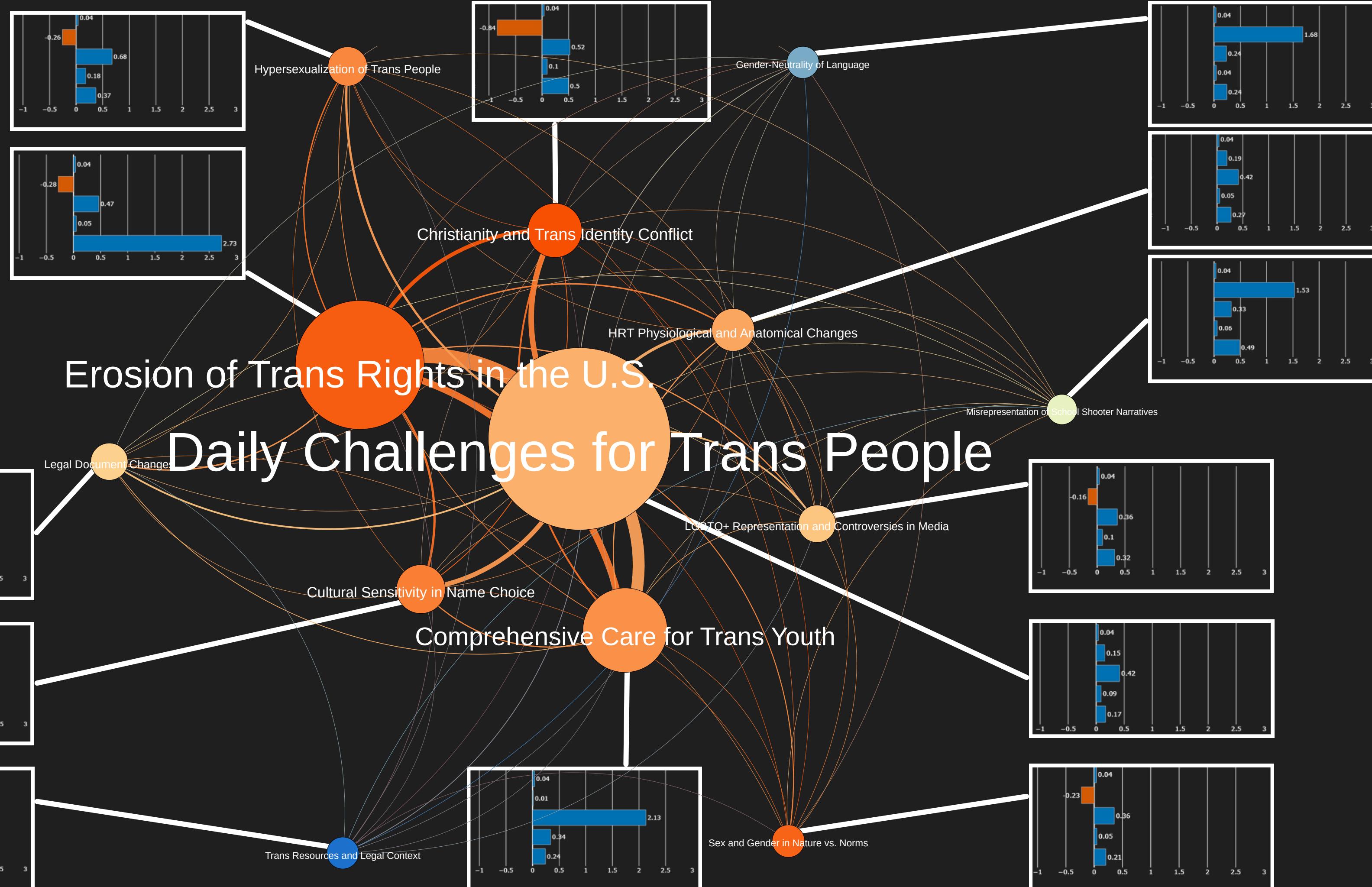
# PHASE 4

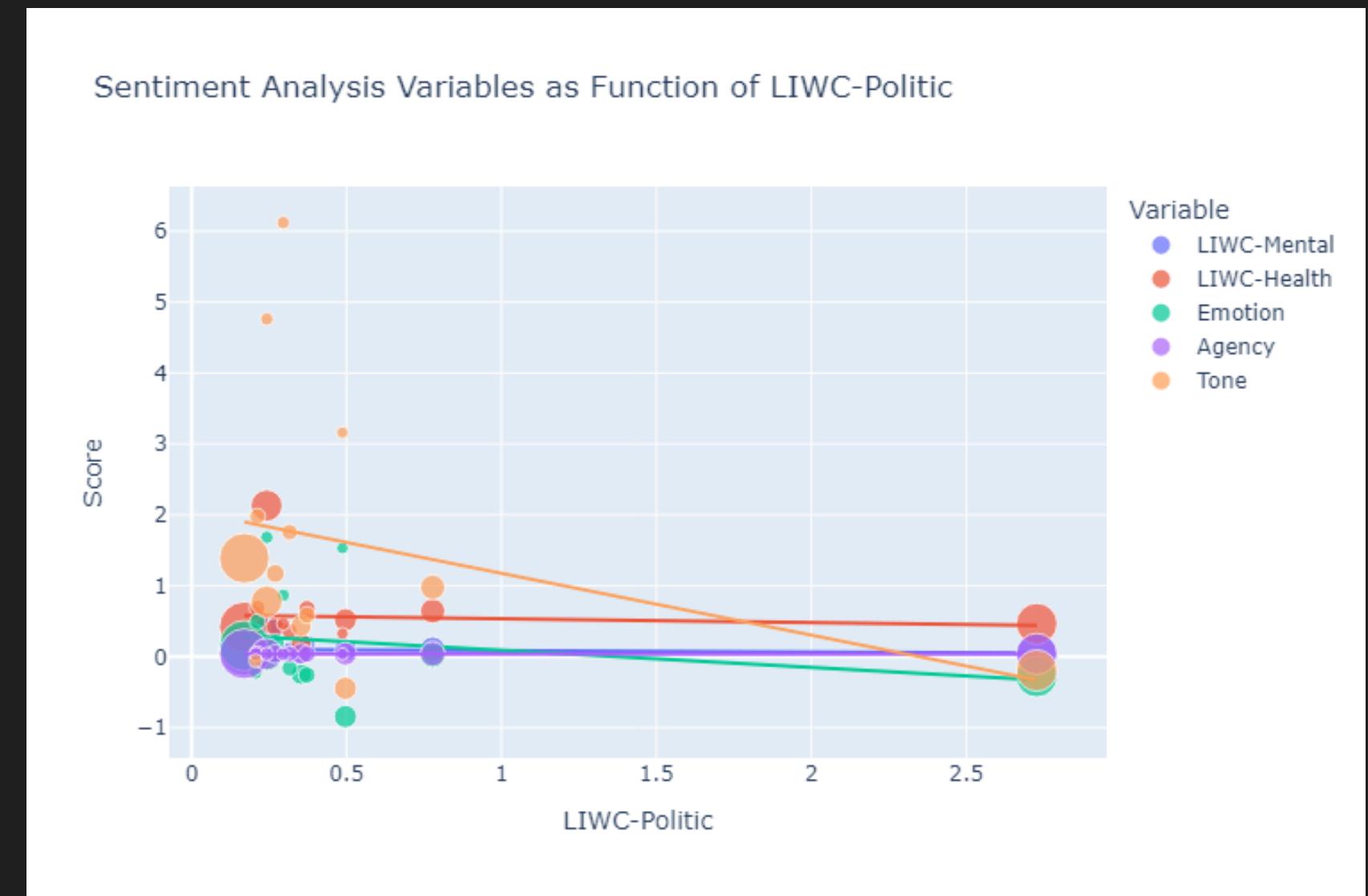
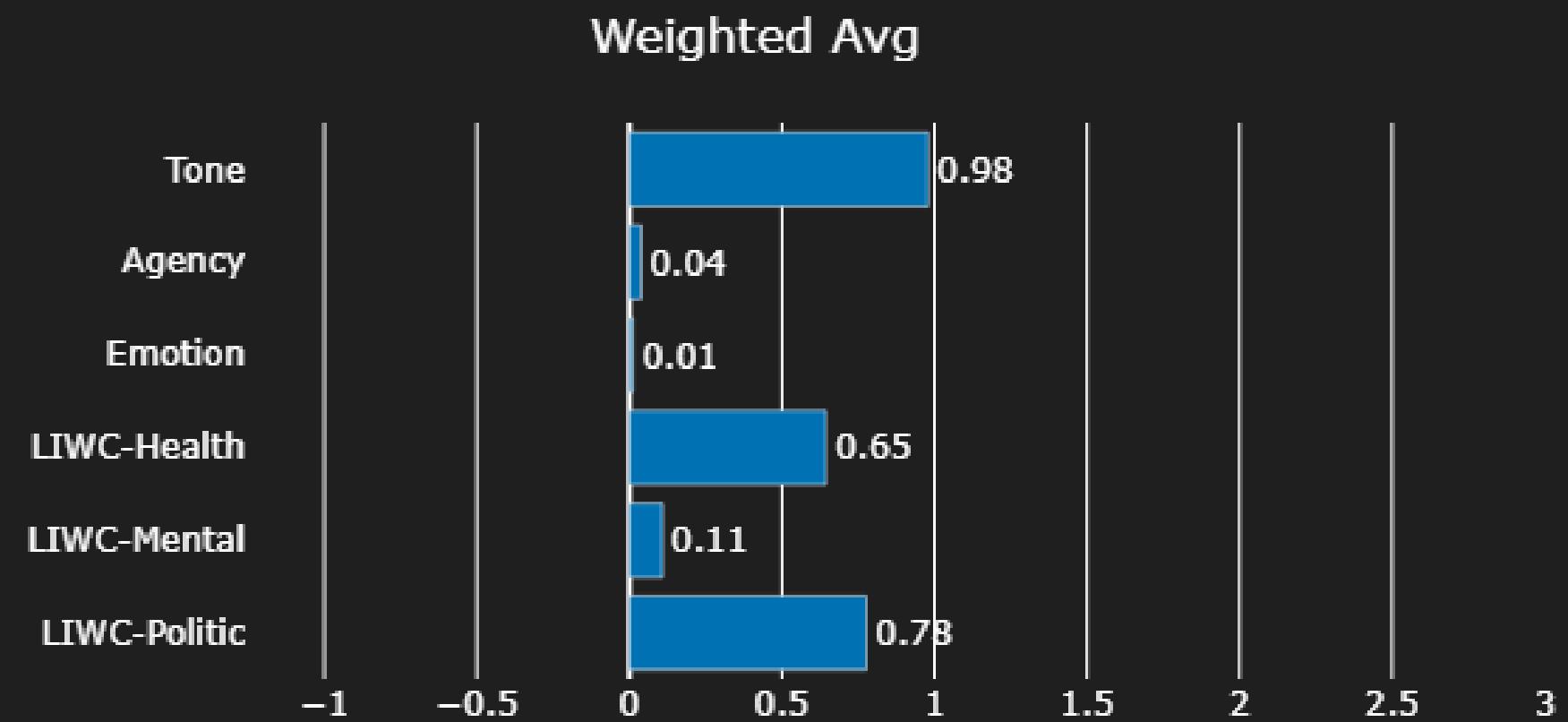
# Erosion of Trans Rights in the U.S. Daily Challenges for Trans People



Top to bottom  
of each barplot:

- Agency
- Emotion
- LIWC-Health
- LIWC-Mental
- LIWC-Politic

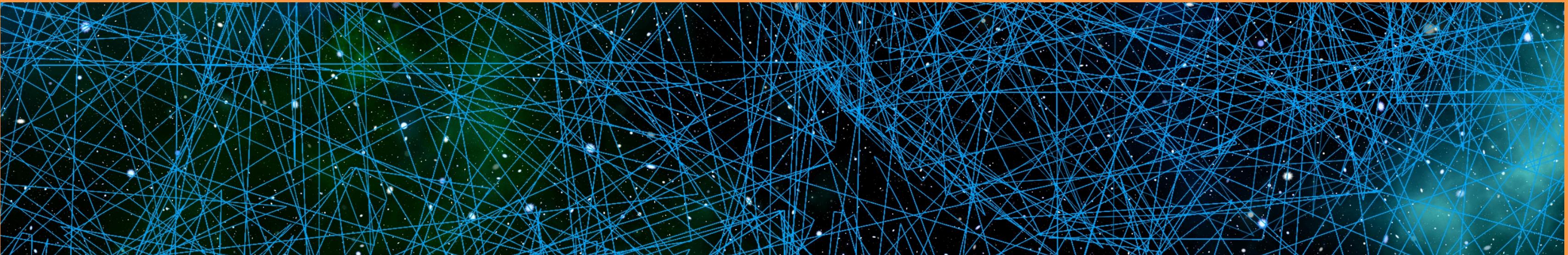






# MAIN RESULTS

- **Most central theme:** *Daily Challenges for Trans People*
- **Key concerns** echo Agenda 47 priorities:
  - *Erosion of Trans Rights in the U.S.*
  - *Comprehensive Care for Trans Youth* (notably included more discussion of physical and mental health)
- **Supportive** discourse found in:
  - *Trans Resources and Legal Context*
  - *Gender-Neutrality of Language*
- **Tone analysis:**
  - Overall tone leaned slightly positive, with negativity increased in politically charged discussions
  - Affect and perceived agency stayed mostly neutral



# MAIN LIMITATIONS

- **Top posts filtering:** Reddit's API doesn't allow custom date-based filtering. Post-hoc filtering may bias results.
- **Overlapping communities:** These could be more effectively analyzed using detection methods specifically designed for overlapping structures.
- **LIWC-22:** The tool can have difficulty picking up on sarcasm or other subtle language cues, which might lead to skewed interpretations.
- **BERTAgent:** It can be challenging to preprocess longer documents for this model, which may affect the reliability of the results.

THANK  
YOU

Q/A

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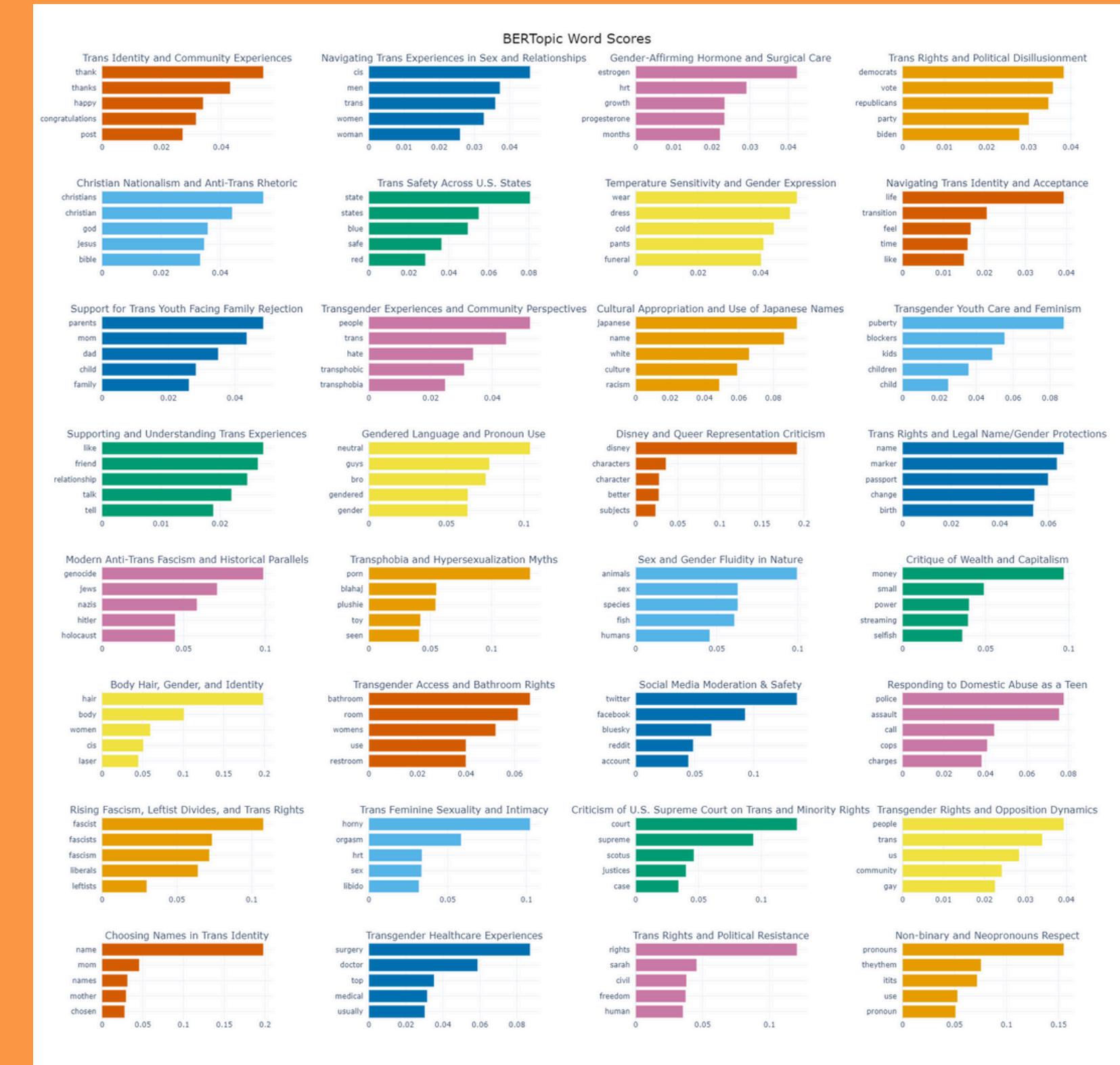
# SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

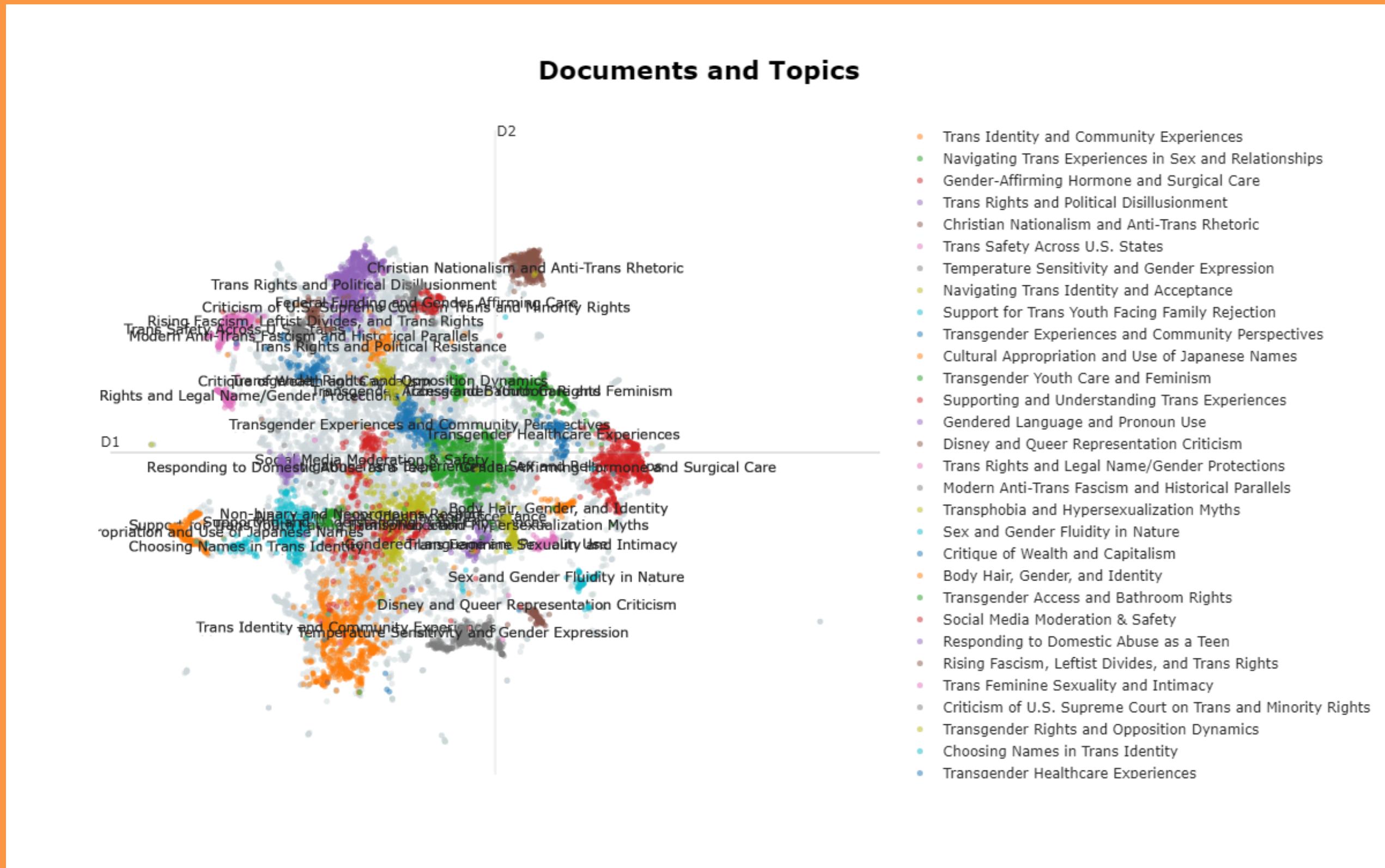
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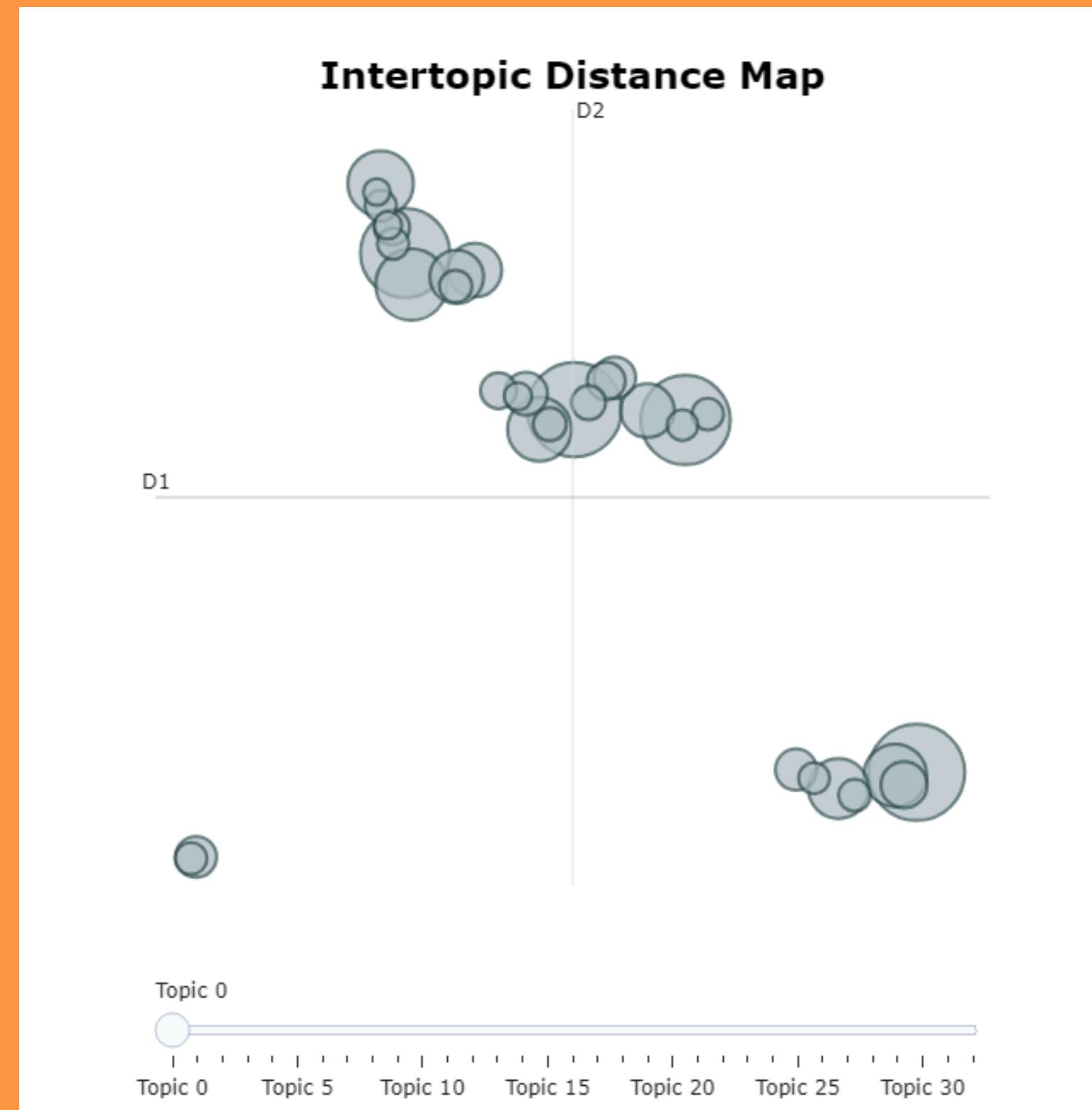
# BERTOPIC

# BAR CHART





# TOPIC DISTANCE MAP



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# BERTOPIC -REDUCED

# BERTOPIC -REDUCED

# BAR CHART

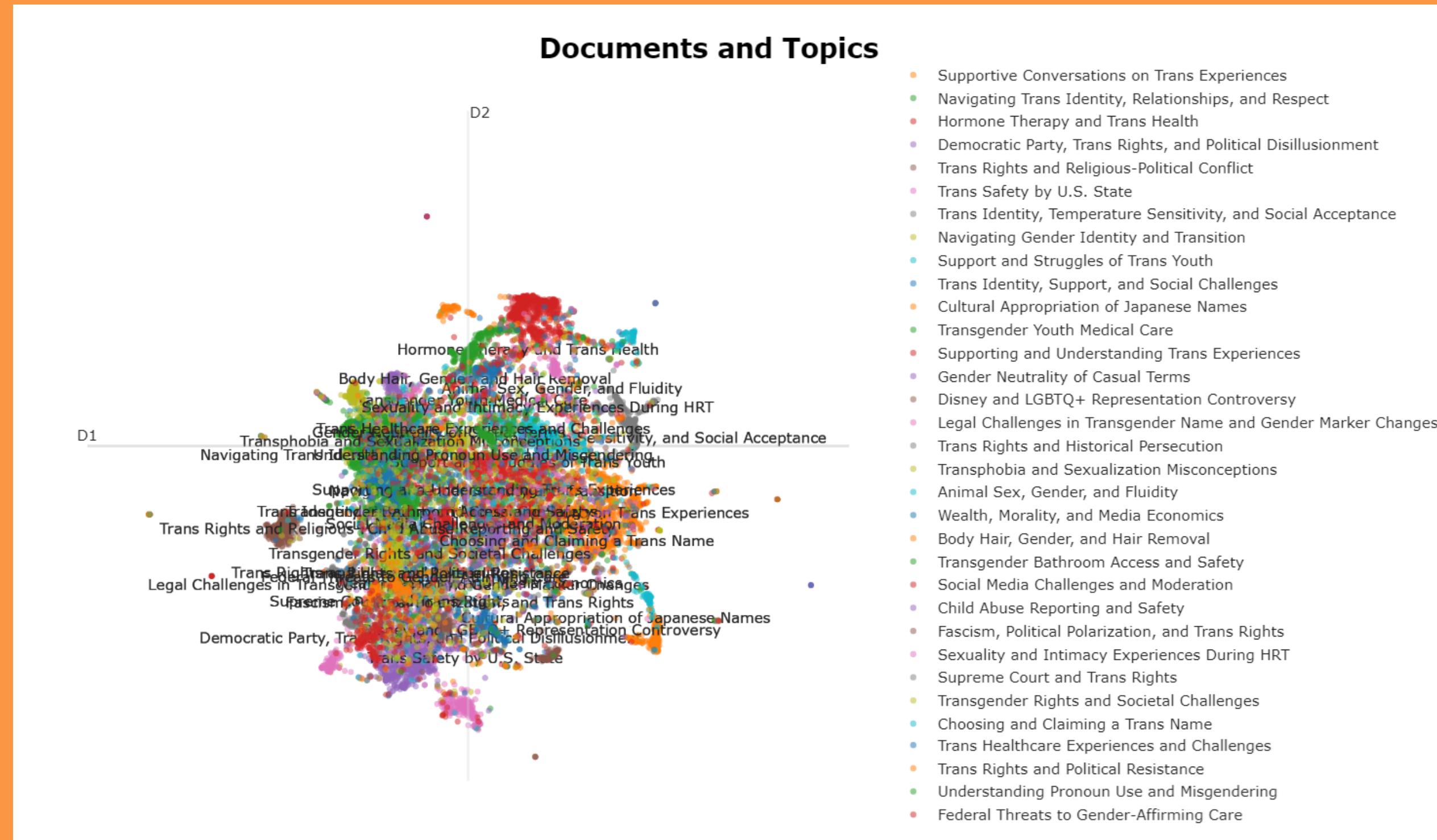
## AFTER THE VOTE: MAPPING ONLINE TRANS DISCOURSE



# TOPIC NETWO RK

BERTOPIC  
-REDUCED

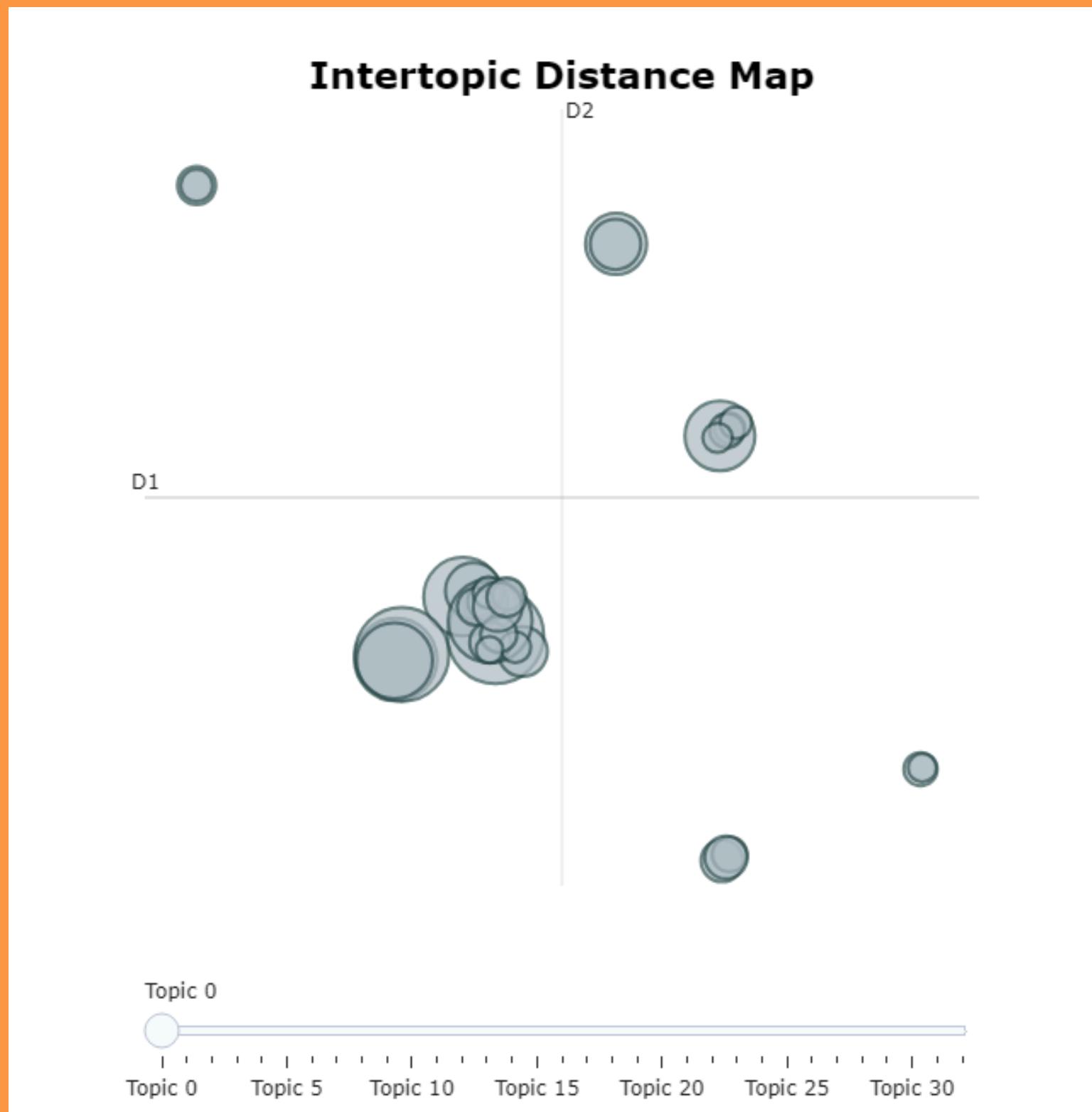
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# TOPIC DISTANCE MAP

BERTOPIC  
-REDUCED

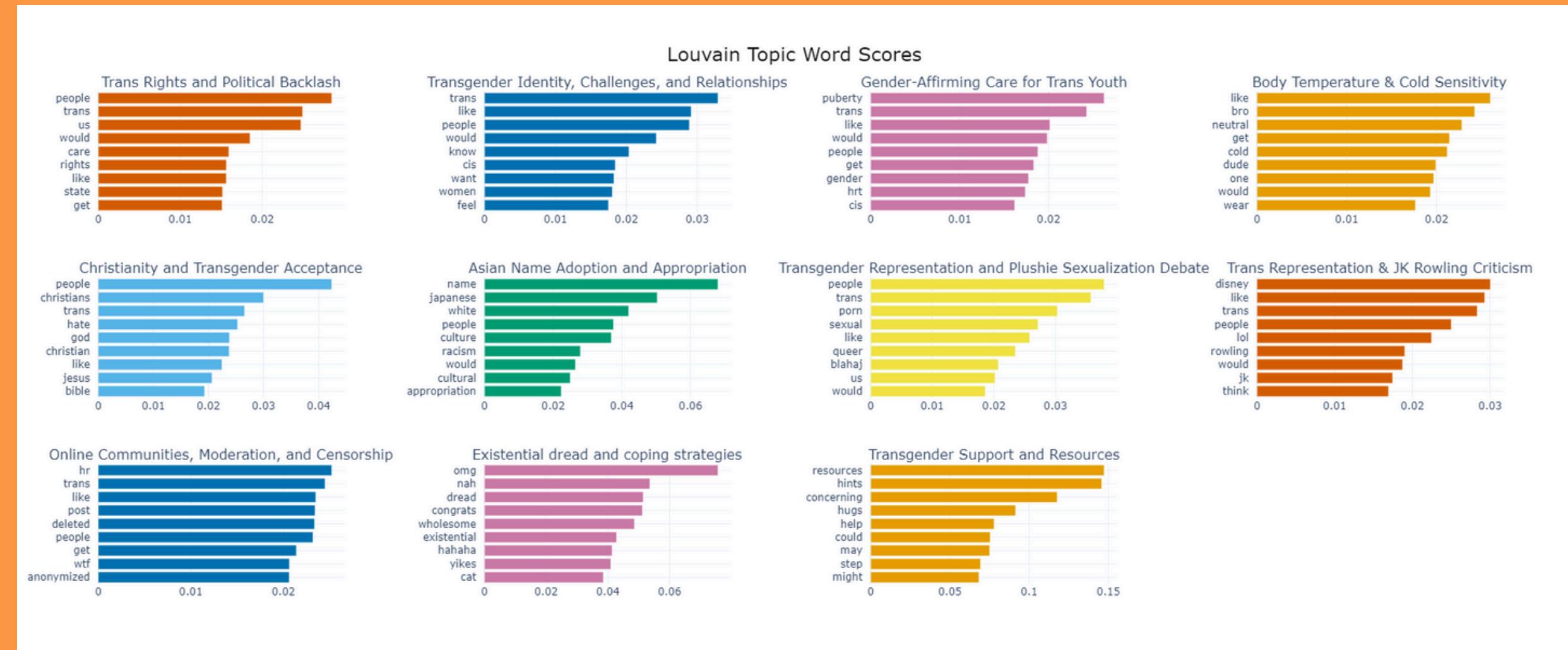
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**LOUVAIN**



# BAR CHART