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Evolutionary Paths and Confining Cages: The Genealogy of American State Constitutions

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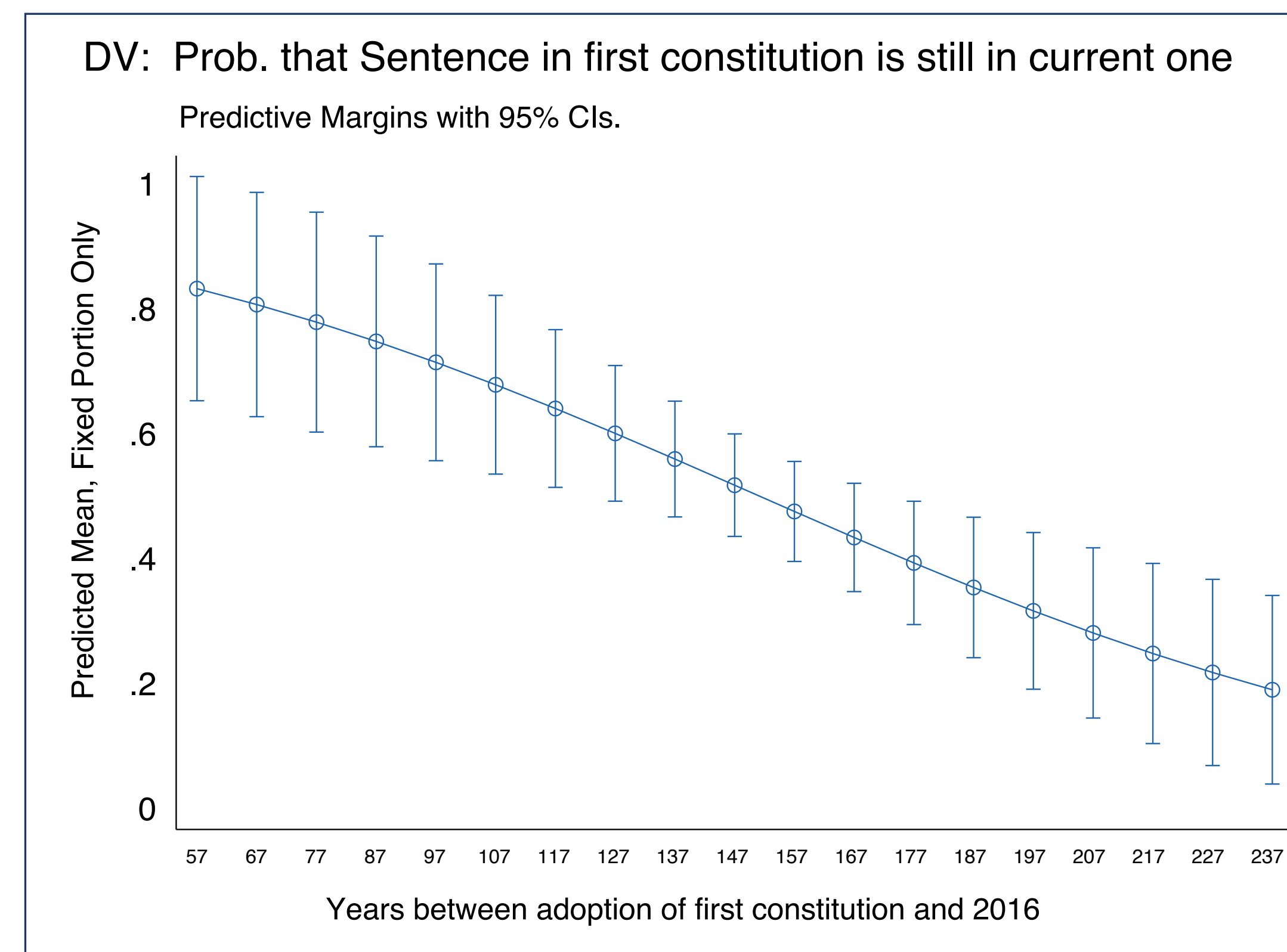
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Evolutionary Paths and Confining Cages: The Genealogy of American State Constitutions*

Nancy Martorano Miller, Ph.D., Department of Political Science

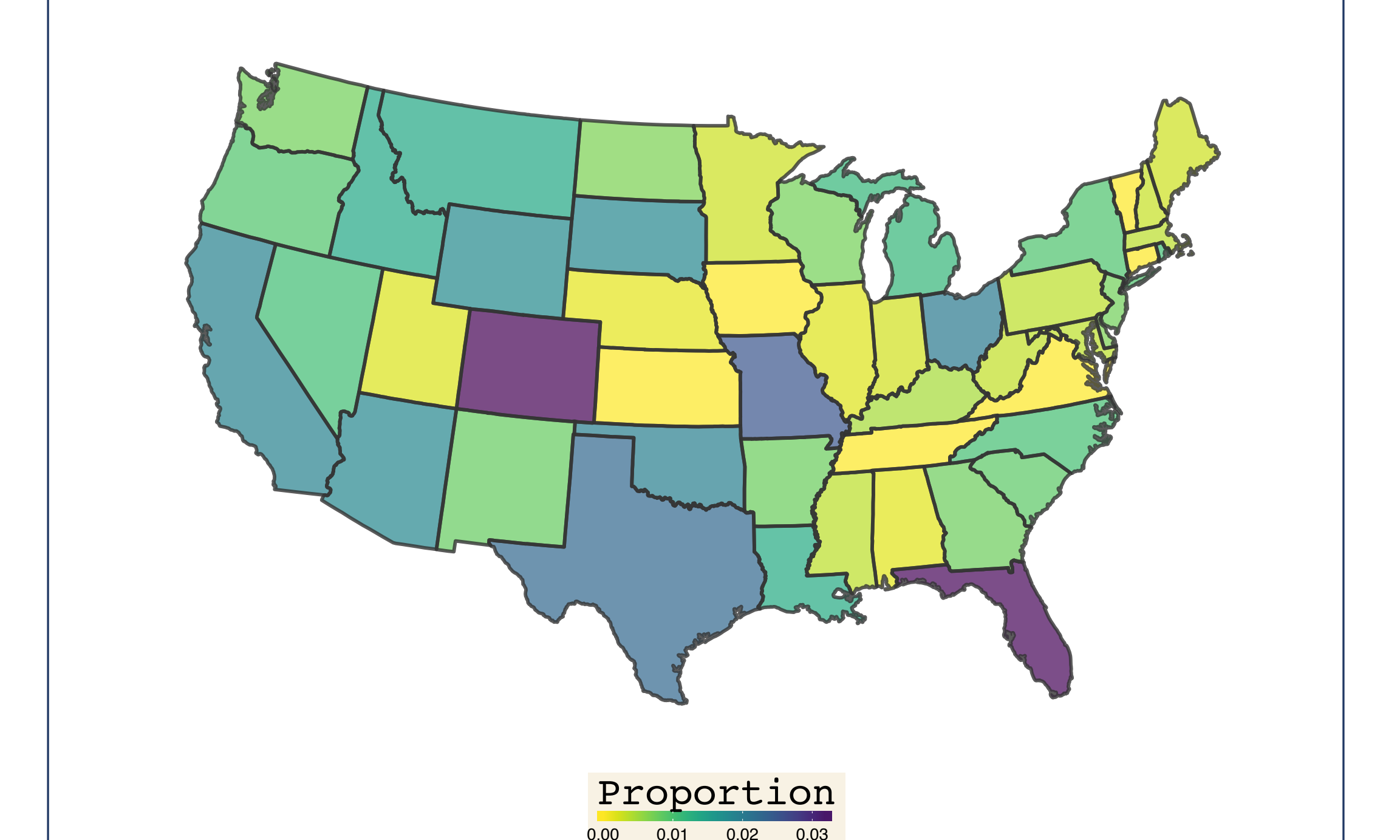
Purpose:

- 1) Identify how provisions and concepts in state constitutions are related to one another and evolved over time
- 2) Understand how the provisions in these documents impact the work of state officials in the policymaking process

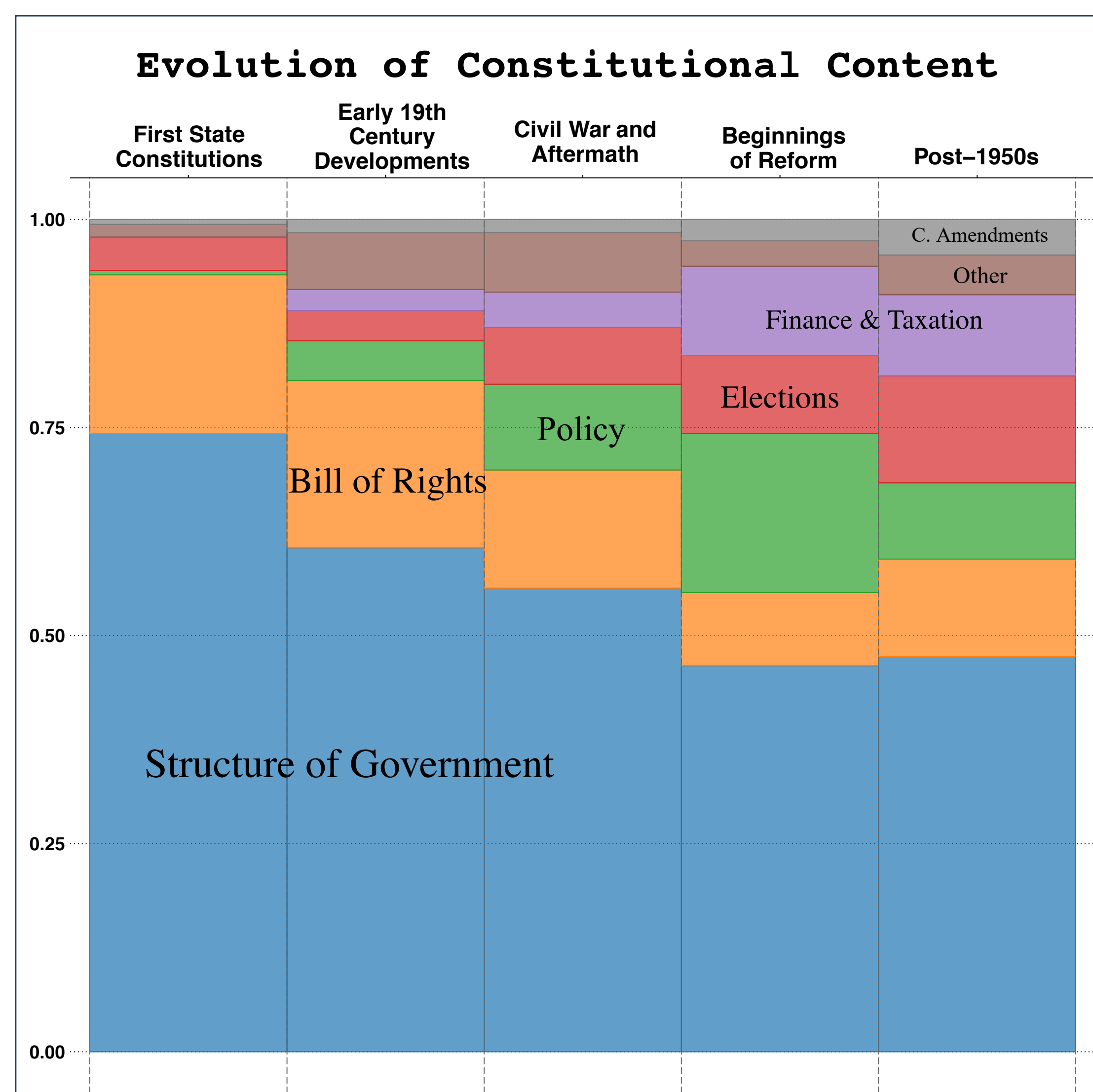


Once a sentence appears in a state's constitution it is likely to remain even as the document ages.

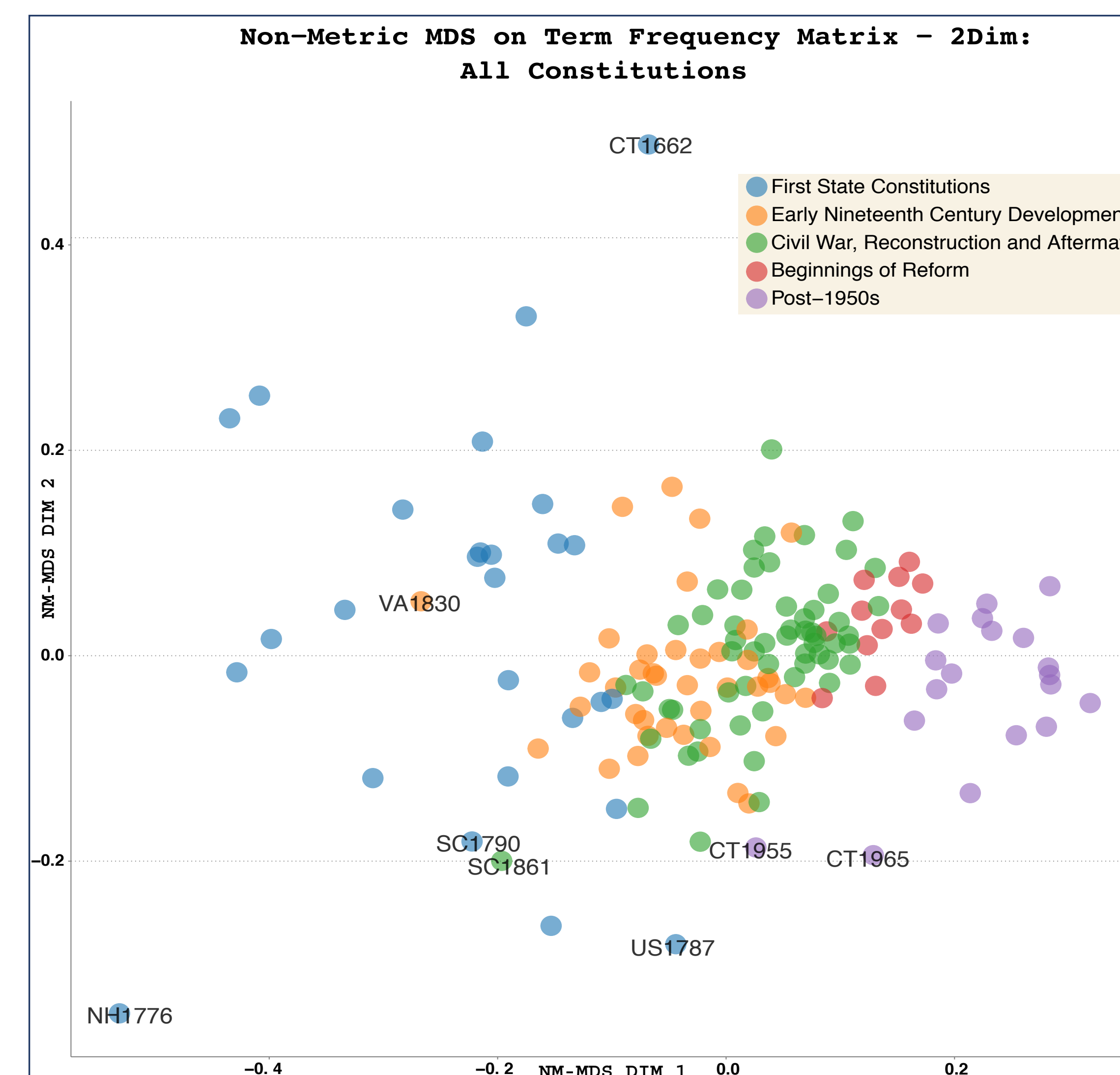
Proportion of Health Related sentences in Constitutions as of 2016



There is quite a bit of variation in the extent to which policy is outlined in each state's document.



While the length of state constitutions continued to grow, larger proportions of each document on average became devoted to policy content.



Constitutions adopted during the same era, exhibit a good it of similarity with respect to content.

End Goals:

- 1) Provide a "genealogical" mapping of state constitutional evolution that will allow the testing of path dependency and other theories of institutional development.
- 2) Create a series of scores that can be used to assess the extent to which a state government's capacity to act in a specific policy area (e.g., Health, Education, Taxation, Gaming, etc.) is constrained by policy directives embedded in the state constitution.

*Collaborators: Keith E. Hamm and Maria Aroca (Rice Univ.) and Ronald D. Hedlund (Northeastern Univ.)