

# The Slap Heard Around The World:

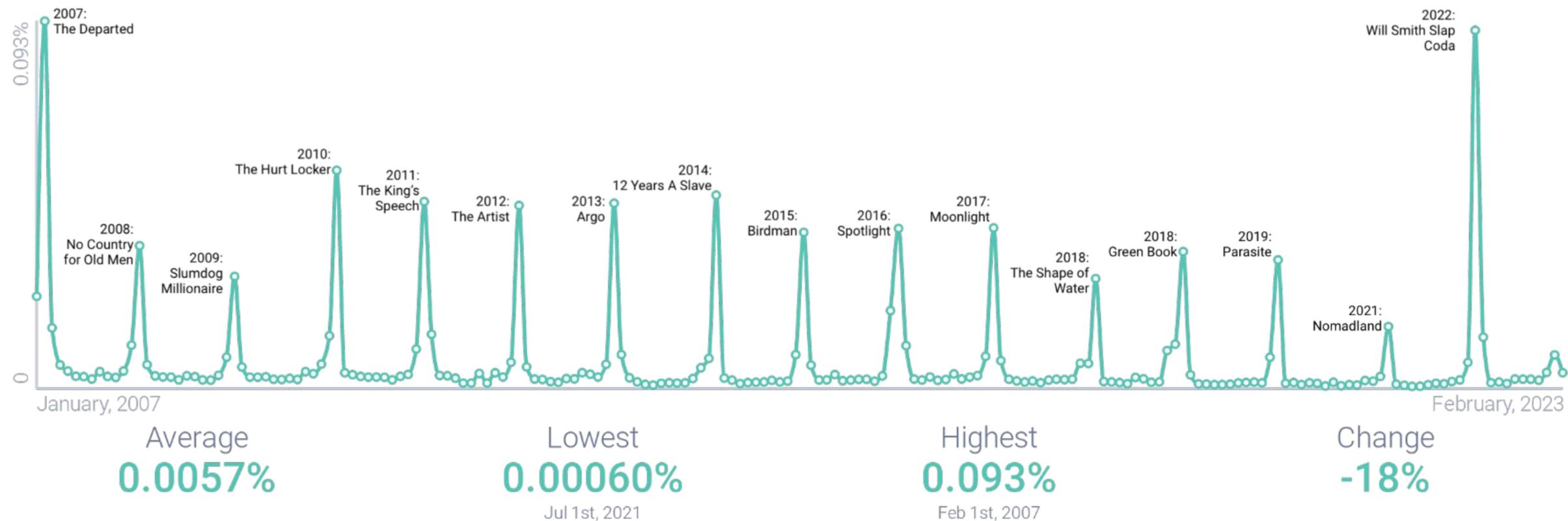
A Retrospective on the 2022 Academy Awards

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# The 95<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards and reflections on last year's ceremony

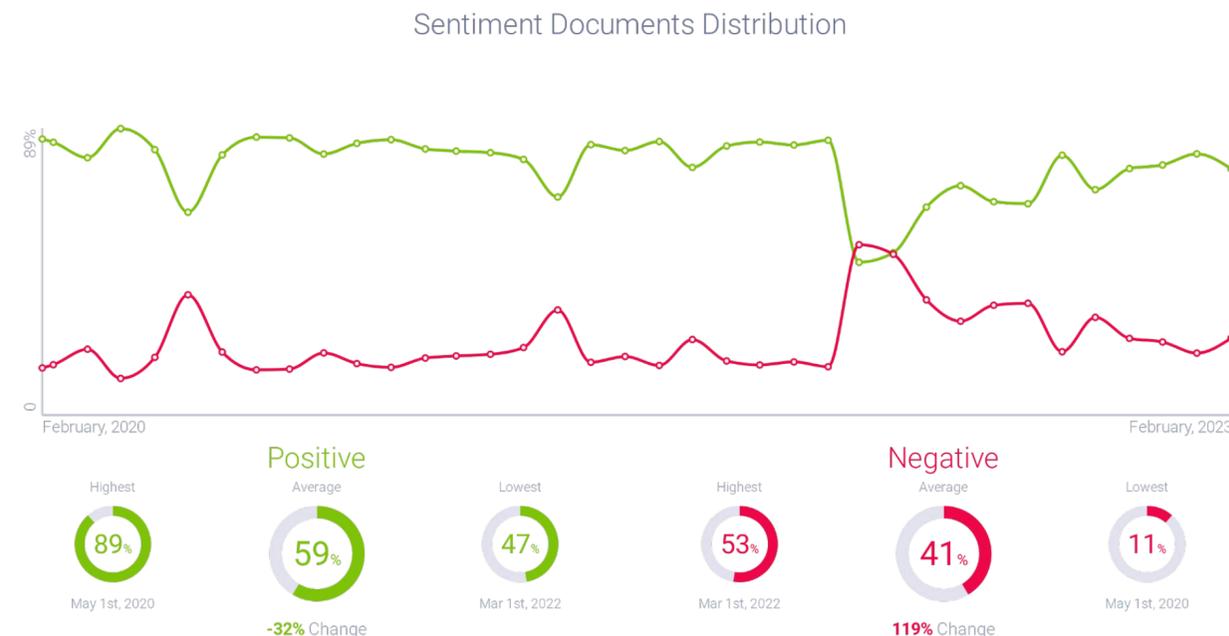
With the 95th Academy Awards just around the corner (Mar. 12), we took a moment to reflect on last year's ceremony. Hindsight being on our side, we explored how celebrity events can shape conversations and direct attention towards an upcoming awards show. Consumer intelligence data sourced from Infegy explains that one event in particular, Will Smith slapping Chris Rock during last year's ceremony, had an extremely significant impact on the Oscars' conversation volume and sentiment. Here, we show how "The Slap" has become a flashbulb memory for Oscar viewers. Using social media analytics from Infegy Atlas, we show how this awards show and the actors involved will have a hard time moving past the impact of The Slap.



# An introduction to the event for those who don't know

At the 94th Academy Awards on Mar. 27, 2022, Will Smith slapped Chris Rock across the face during Rock's presentation for Best Documentary Feature. The act was a response to Rock's joke about Smith's wife Jada Pinkett Smith's shaved head due to alopecia areata. Smith yelled at Rock to keep his wife's name out of his mouth before returning to his seat. Rock completed his presentation without further interruption. The incident has been dubbed "Slapgate" or "The Slap."

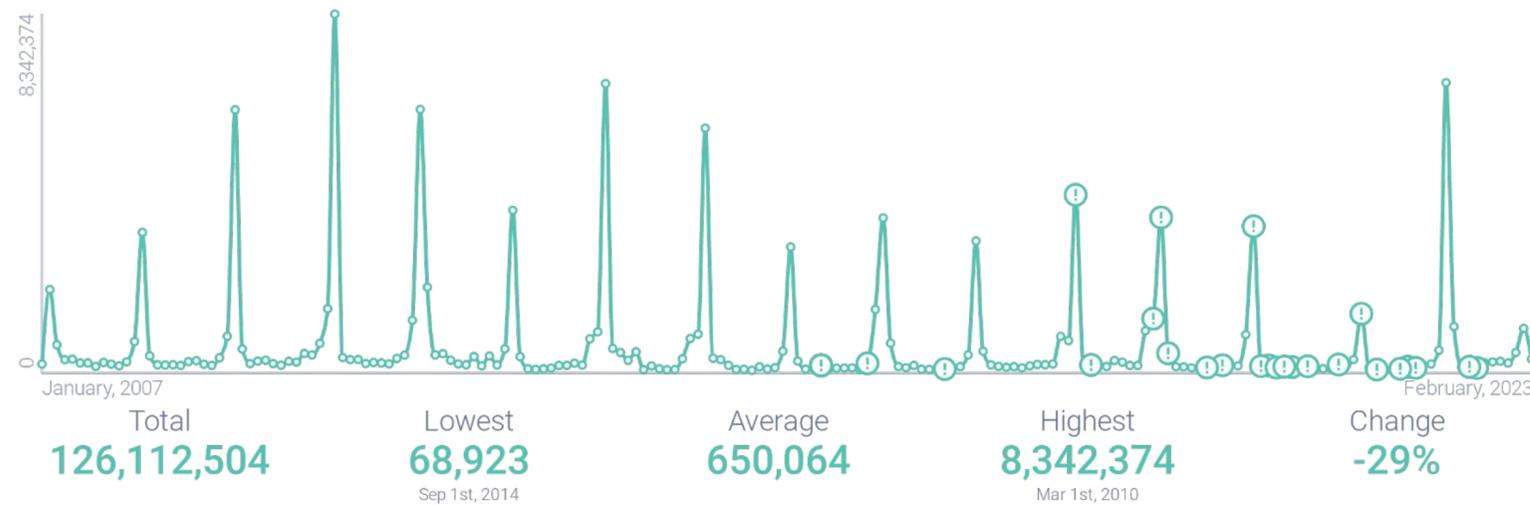
The aftermath of the Will Smith-Chris Rock slapping incident affected Smith's popularity, causing a dramatic decline in his positive popularity. A survey conducted by Q Scores indicated that Smith's score fell from 39 to 24, indicating a significant decline in popularity. Infegy sentiment data around Smith's sentiment corroborates this drop, showing a 119% increase in negative sentiment over the last 3 years. While Smith's overall sentiment has recovered somewhat since The Slap, it has not regained the sustained positivity Smith was accustomed to before the incident.



# The impact of The Slap: defining the conversation surrounding the Oscars

Infegy recorded over 6,400,000 mentions of The Slap. This has become a defining moment in Oscars history, accounting for **5.34% of all Oscars post volume** over the **last 16 years**. Typically, sentiment around the Oscars is quite high, bouncing between 90% through 95% positivity. The Slap, however, caused negative sentiment towards the Oscars to skyrocket, from just 8.4% to a remarkable 42% (a 16-year high), which is unusual for an event that is typically associated with glamour and celebration.

Posts Universe



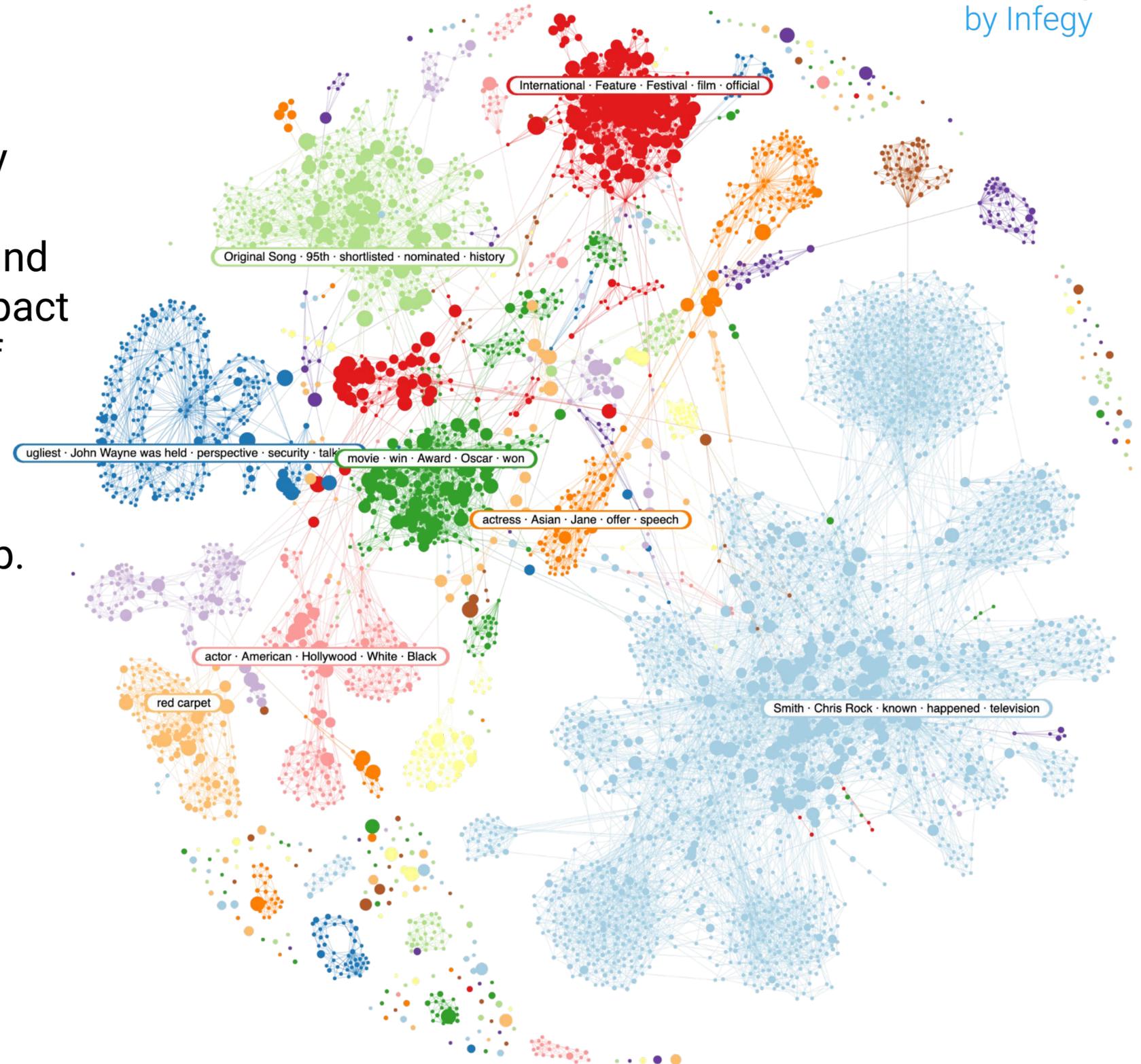
Sentiment Documents Distribution



# The Slap's impact on the 2023 Oscars: post volume

We wanted to examine whether the controversy surrounding Will Smith's slap at the previous Oscars was still influencing conversations around the future 2023 Oscars. To our surprise, the impact of the slap remained significant: the majority of conversation clusters were related to it.

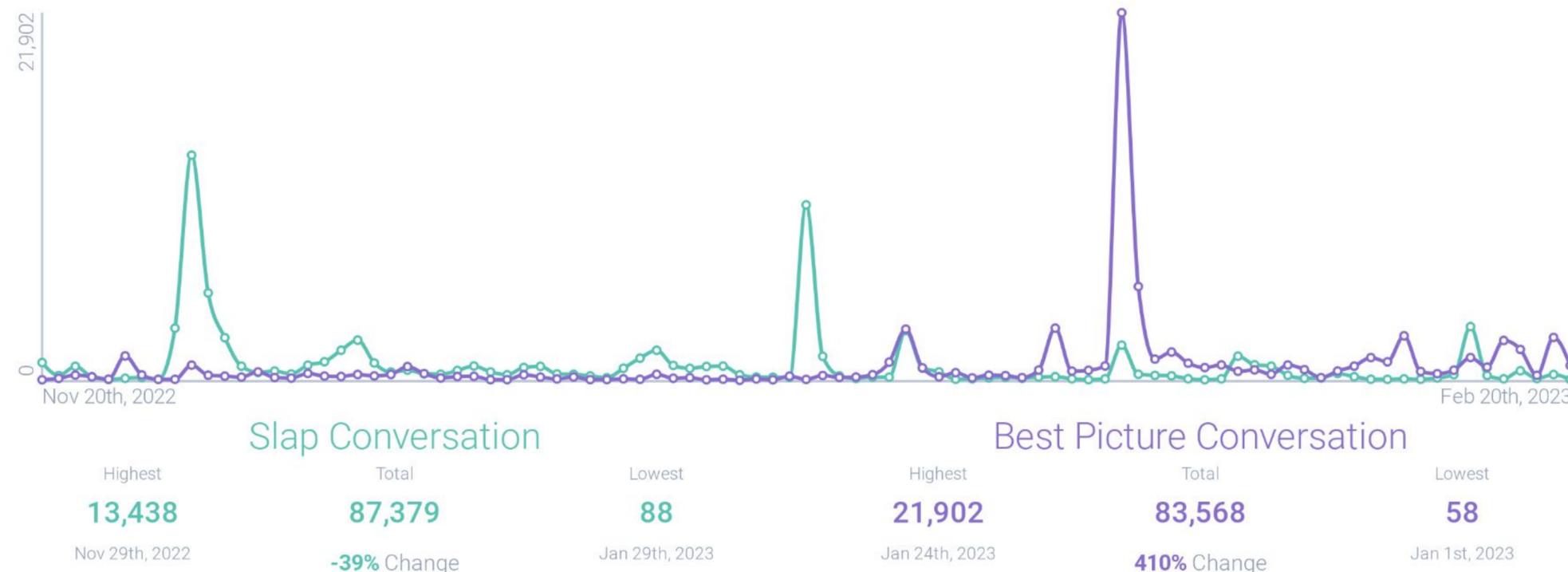
Interestingly, other subclusters, such as the John Wayne cluster, also alluded to Smith's slap. This cluster compared Smith's slap to the time when John Wayne got so angry, he had to be restrained by six security officers after Marlon Brando invited Sacheen Littlefeather, a Native American icon, up to the stage to discuss Native rights.



# The Slap's impact on the 2023 Oscars: slap discussion overwhelms future Best Picture nominees

The conversations about the Will Smith slap even dominated discussions about the movies nominated for the 2023 Oscar. In terms of post volume, slap-related conversations outnumbered discussions related to the 2023 Best Picture nominees over the last 3 months. With the Academy attempting to generate buzz for this year's award show, this retrospective attention towards the Oscars' largest controversy (to date) could dampen much-needed brand attention for the event.

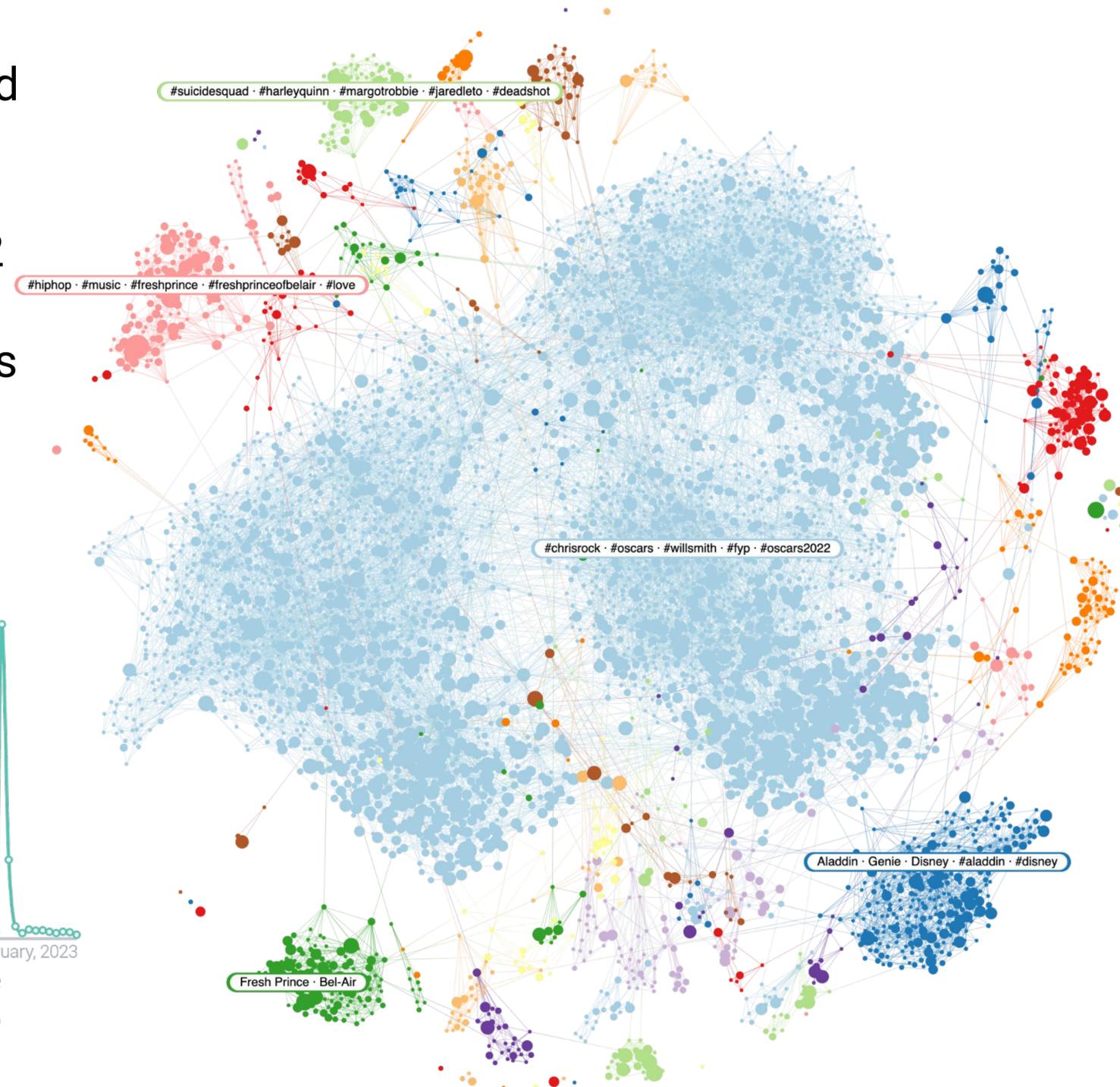
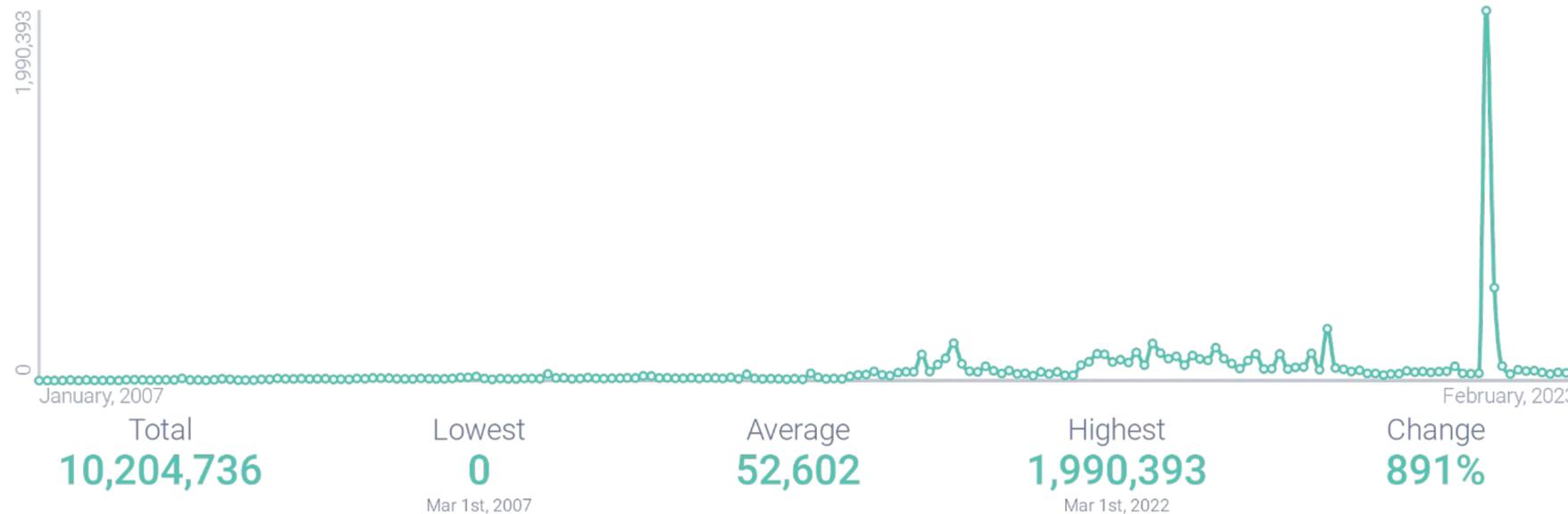
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# The Slap's effect on Will Smith's brand health

The impact of what's been referred to as “the slap heard around the world” has left its mark not only on the Academy Awards, but also on Will Smith's personal brand. An analysis of 16 years of post volume on the actor shows that the #oscars2022 cluster dominates every other aspect of his movies and career. Based on social media analysis, it appears that the incident has overshadowed Smith's other achievements.

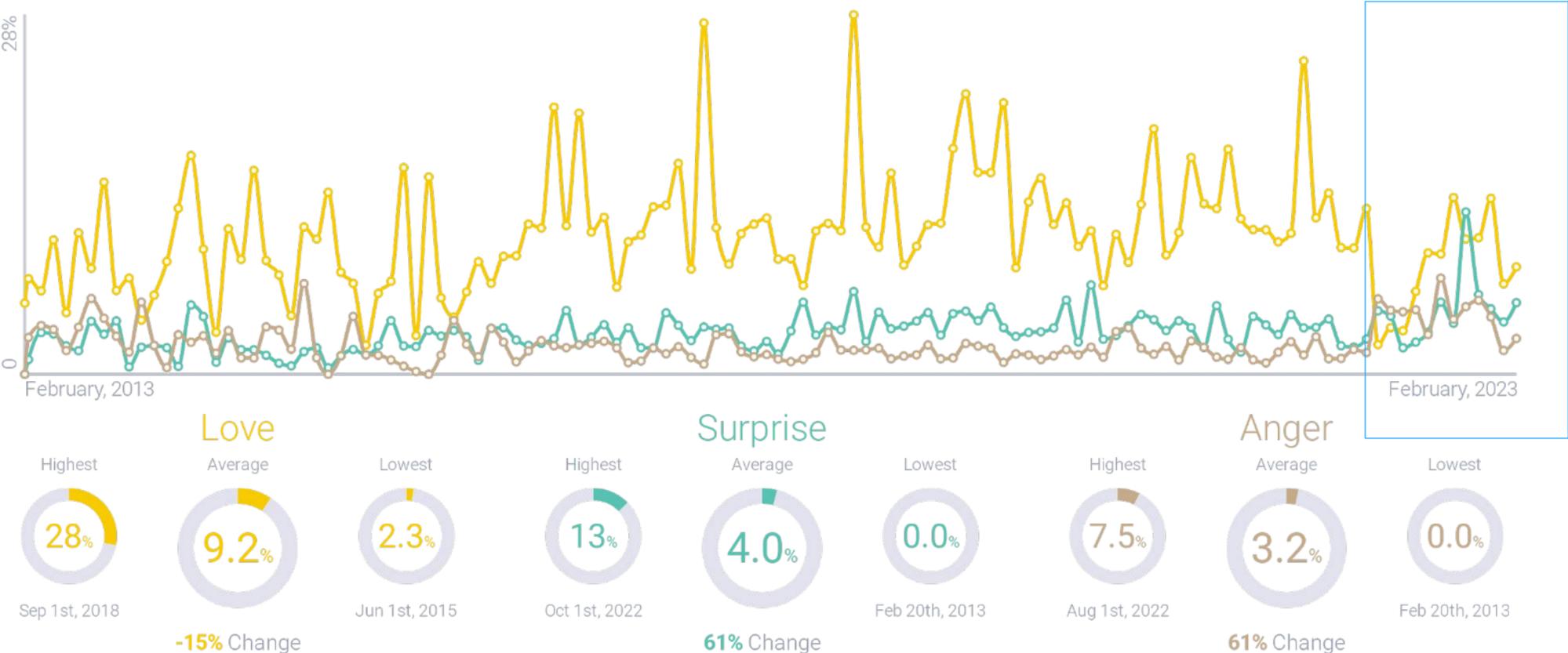
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# Analyzing Will Smith's fans' emotions

Emotions of surprise and anger peaked after the incident and have remained elevated ever since. This highlights the lasting effect that a celebrity event can have on a person's brand identity, regardless of their previous accomplishments or reputation. As a public figure, Will Smith himself has been impacted by The Slap; it will be interesting to see how he manages this in the future and what strategies he may use to mitigate the negative effects.

Emotions Documents Distribution



## **Takeaway:** **celebrity events influence brand identity**

The impact of Will Smith's slap at the 2022 Oscars highlights the lasting effect that celebrity events can have on public perception and sentiment. Even almost a year later, the incident continues to dominate conversations related to both the Oscars and Will Smith's career. This serves as an example that celebrities have a significant influence on shaping cultural conversations, and the actions they take within sight of the public eye can have a lasting impact, positive or negative, on their personal and professional reputation as well as the organizations around them.

# About Infegy

We're changing the way companies listen to consumers, and what they do about it.

- Robust social listening data and analysis
- Quickest view of consumers' thoughts and sentiments
- Unmatched client experience and support
- Agile approach to products and services



ENDEAVOR



MINTEL



# Our dataset

- Social dataset spanning hundreds of billions of posts and growing fast.
- Data collection that best mirrors varied real-world populations.
- Unlimited data access provides flexibility to obtain the context that matters.
- In-house data storage allows for unmatched speed to insight.

