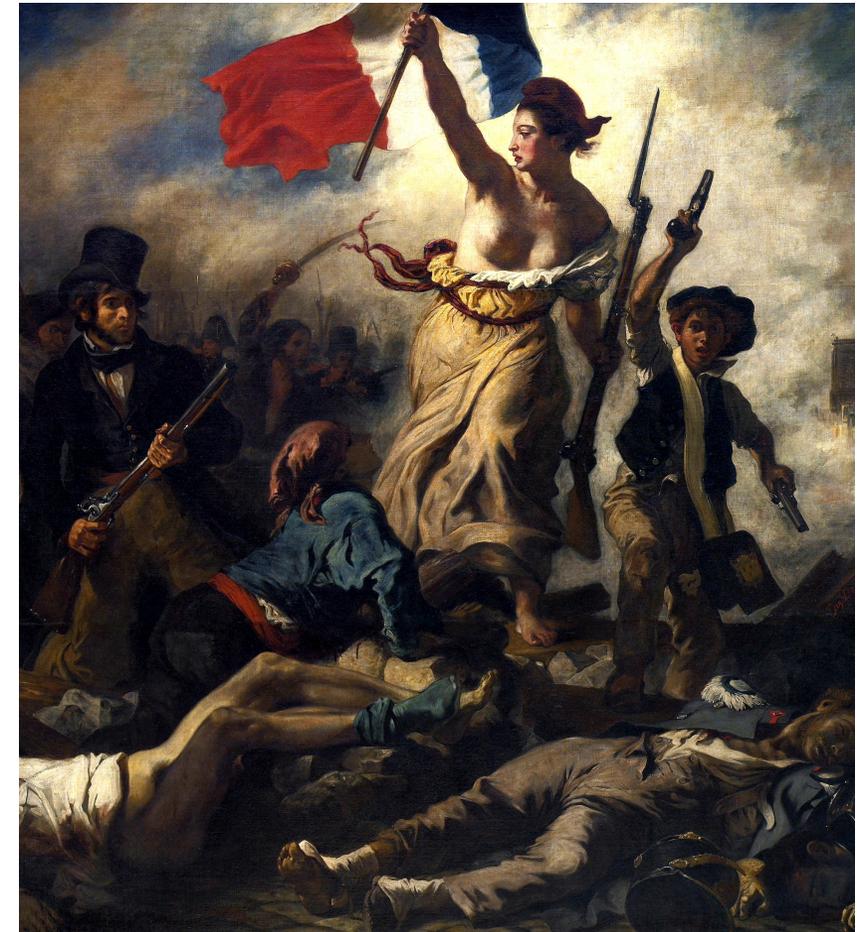


Feminist Mobilization: A Force for Change

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Part of a virtual event
*Feminist Movements and Lasting Change:
What We Know and Where Next*



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What is feminist mobilization and why do we need to measure it?

The **Feminist Mobilization Index (FMI)** measures the existence, strength, and autonomy of feminist movements, allowing us to track change over time and across the globe.



Feminist mobilization is linked to advances in women's rights.

Feminist movements have been critical for advances in equality

- Violence against women
- Family Law
- Reproductive Rights
- Women's Legal Status at Work
- Marriage equality
- Land tenure
- Childcare
- Movements articulate women's perspectives, transform public opinion, insert issues into public and policy agendas, resist rollbacks
- Indirect effects: Institutions, Norms; May be recursive!



Women's Cooperatives and Groups focused on economic autonomy, well-being

Picture from *field work by Summer Forester* (Tanzania)





Jordanian women advocating for equity at work



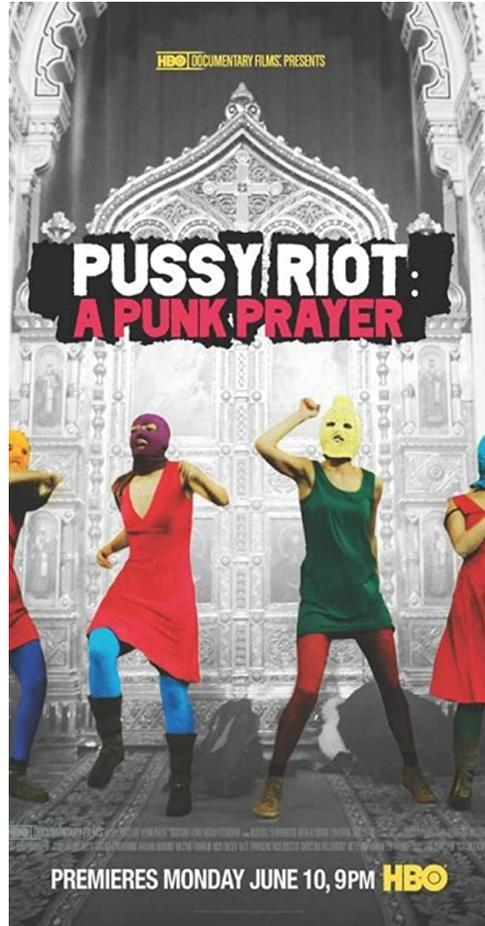
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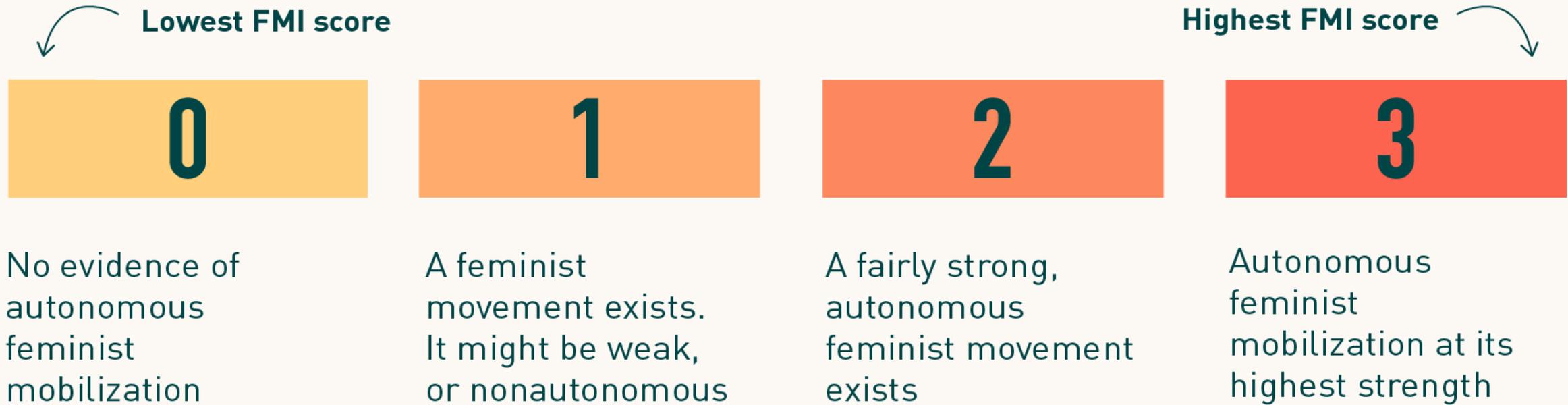


Radical Cheerleaders

Political Theatre or Music



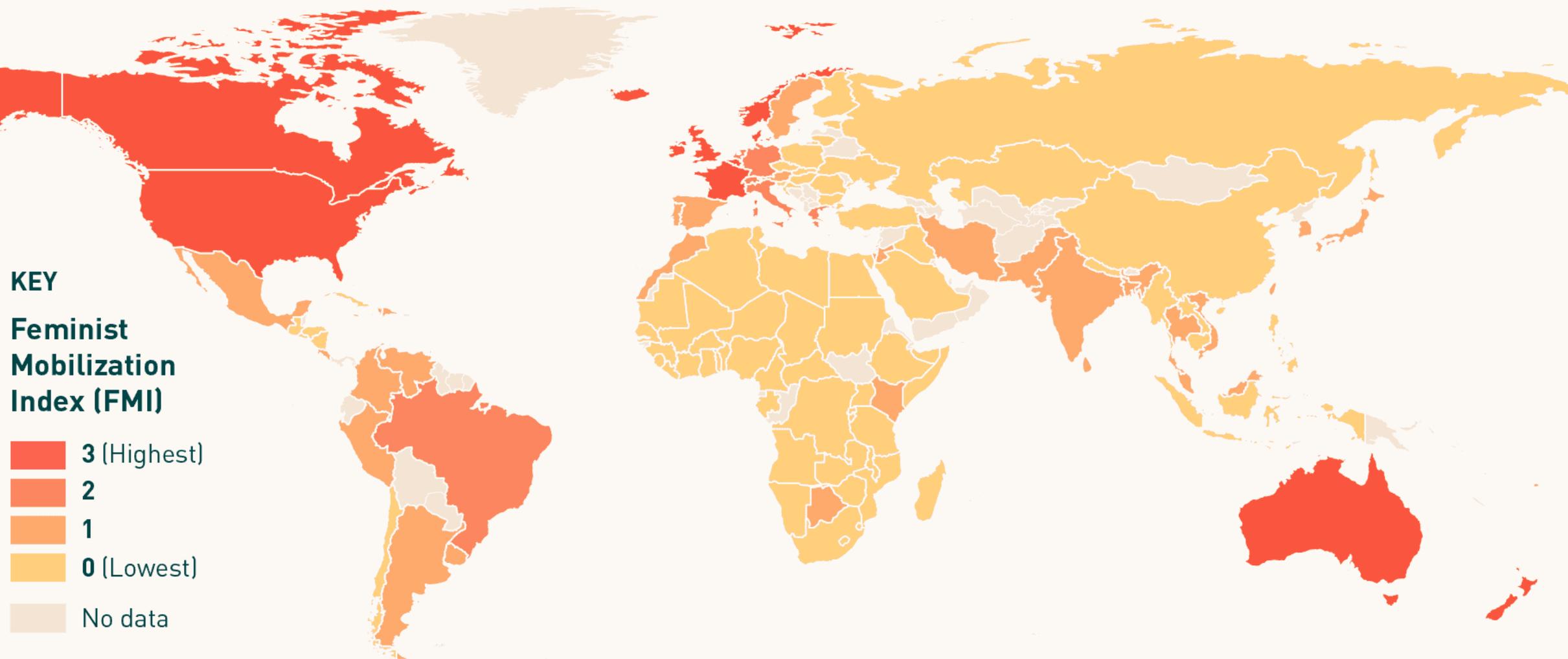
Feminist Mobilization Index (FMI)



Source: A global, comparative map of feminist movements, 1975-2015 (Weldon, Forester, Lusvardi, Kelly-Thompson, 2020)

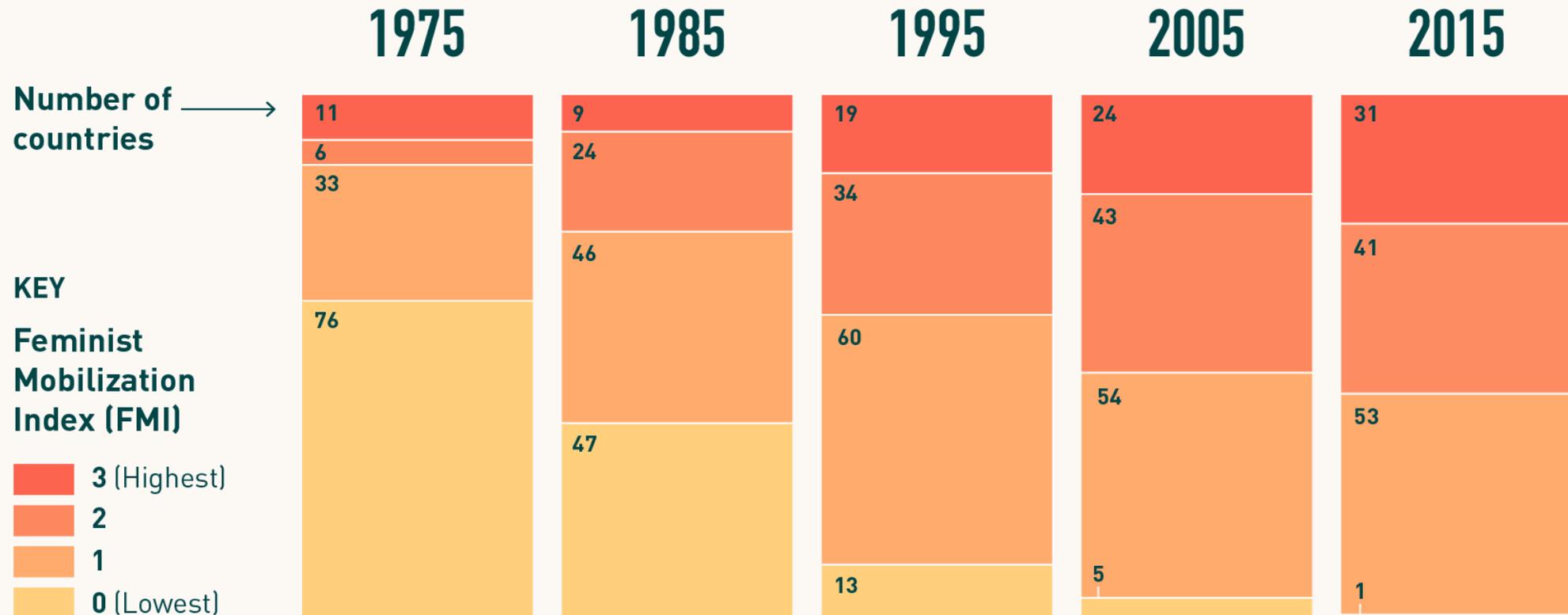
The global growth of feminist mobilization

1975



Source: A global, comparative map of feminist movements, 1975-2015 (Weldon, Forester, Lusvardi, Kelly-Thompson, 2020)

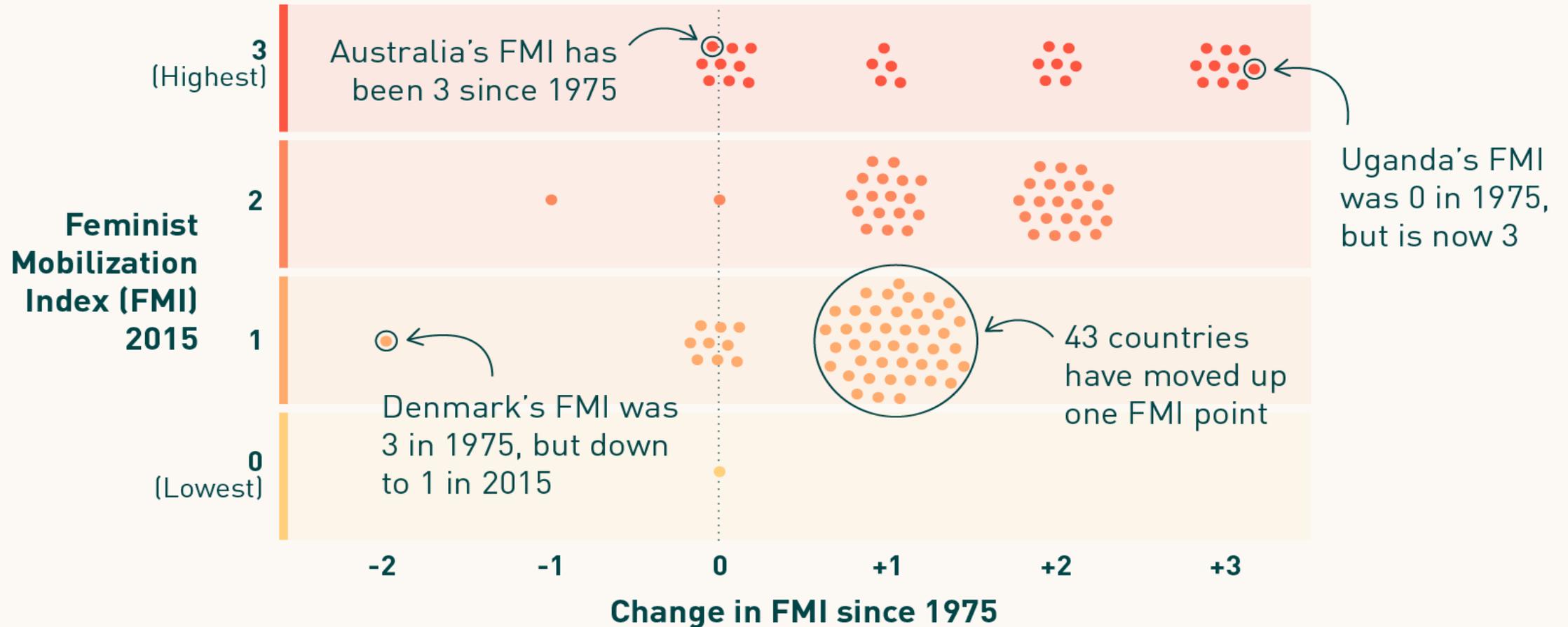
How has feminist mobilization changed over time?



Source: A global, comparative map of feminist movements, 1975-2015 (Weldon, Forester, Lusvardi, Kelly-Thompson, 2020). Note: Number of countries is 126.

The global growth of feminist mobilization

• = 1 country



Women's Organizations and Empowerment

- “My business exposed me to more, it changed my life. I have tasted the other side of the story and learned how to be independent....”
- “I never thought I would know happiness in this life, but now, because of...the group, I do. “
- “We need to encourage [women] to have women's group of their own just to have conversations and build trust and share ideas...women are beaten a lot for everything. For going three hours each direction to gather bananas and then to sell them and are then beaten when they arrive home for being late....”



Feminist Activism and Gender Inequality

- The IMF's measure of gender inequality index (GII) accounts for: maternal mortality ratio, adolescent fertility rate, percentage of female seats in national parliaments, levels of education, and labor force participation rates
- **Finding: Feminist Mobilization Associated with Reduced Gender Inequality**
 - *Difference in strongest to weakest movements associated with 12% less inequality (GII)*
 - *One SD of the FMI associated with a 5% decrease in GII (Table 1)*
 - *(also holds for SIGI)*



Economic Rights Indicator (0-6)(WBL)

- Married women can legally get a job or pursue a profession in the same way as a man
- Married women can open a bank account
- Married women can sign a contract
- Married women can initiate legal proceedings without their husband's permission
- Women are guaranteed equality in domestic laws and/or regulations
- Domestic laws and/or regulations include a non-discrimination in employment clause covering gender/sex



Finding: Feminist Mobilization Associated with More Expansive Economic Rights

Difference in strongest to weakest movements associated with one additional area of equality; associated increase of 7 to 16% of total range

Government action on sexual harassment

- Government legislation on and penalties for sexual harassment (WBL)
- a lagged version of FMI is a positive and statistically significant predictor that sexual harassment legislation and criminal penalties will have been developed
- Holds controlling for a wide range of factors
- **Finding:** any movement at all improves the chances of sexual harassment legislation being adopted or strengthened, while stronger movements increase these odds substantially.



Expansions of Domestic Workers' Rights

- Extent of legal protections for domestic workers: whether domestic workers are covered to the same extent- or at least to some degree- by labor laws covering other workers, are they covered by a separate, subordinate regime, or not at all (ILO 2010)
- Finding: **Feminist Mobilization Associated with More Expansive Rights extended to Domestic Workers**



Agricultural landholding

- *Proportion of land holding in female hands (World Bank)*
- *Positive but not statistically significant*
- *Positive and statistically significant role for inheritance and property rights (not surprisingly)*
- *Since these are at least partially driven by feminist mobilization, there is an indirect effect*
- ***Finding:*** *Feminist Mobilization is likely indirectly associated with, increased agricultural landholding*



Access to Financial Institutions

- Women and girls 15+ who report having a bank account or using mobile money service (last 12 months) (%) (Findex)
 - *Positive and significant bivariate relationship*
 - *But its really the laws that drive change*
 - *Positive and significant, robust relationship with laws on financial institutions*
 - *Laws strongly and robustly associated with more access to bank accounts)*
 - *Since these are significantly driven by feminist mobilization, there is an indirect effect*
- **Finding:** Positive, significant relationship, especially robust wrt changing laws (and probably making legal rights matter)



Social Rights

- Public spending on social protection as a percent of GDP (ILO 2020)
- a positive, significant association between feminist mobilization and social spending in a simple, bivariate regression analysis (using cross-sectional time series with fixed effects) (model 1, Table 2)
- relationship holds up controlling for a wide range of other possible factors.
- **Finding:** Feminist mobilization associated with expanded social rights



Summary of Findings

- *Feminist Mobilization associated with reduced gender inequality*
- *Feminist Mobilization associated with more expansive economic rights*
 - *Feminist Mobilization associated with expanded government action on sexual harassment*
 - *Feminist Mobilization associated with expanded rights for domestic workers*
- *Feminist Mobilization positively associated with financial inclusion (more bank accounts), with strongest relationships likely indirect, through legal change and implementation*
- *Feminist Mobilization is indirectly associated with increased agricultural landholding*
- *Feminist Mobilization associated with expanded social rights*

Conclusions and Implications

- Feminist mobilizing advances women's rights in a wide variety of areas
- On-line activism is expanding, and feminism is resurgent in the Global North
- Reasons for concern about the future of feminist activism?
 - # WINGOs appears to be levelling off or declining; V-Dem data on women's participation also suggestive of leveling off or declining
 - Close relationship to democracy: but 2019 was the 14th year of consistent decline of freedom in the world (Freedom House)
 - Inadequate and declining funding: direct funding of women's organizations accounting for less than 1% of ODA funding (Hessini 2020; OECD 2020).
 - Continued Northern domination of transnational networks unlikely to change unless more support for Southern movements and participation emerges
 - Fraught question of a 5th world conference on women, lack of UN Process

Questions?

