

Going forward:

The development of a new phraseological expression

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Overview

- Background
- *Going forward* as a phraseological expression
- Methodological questions
- Touchstones of development
- Conclusions

Background

Recent and ongoing language change

- Sociolinguistics ('variation and change')
- corpus linguistics (e.g. Whitt 2018)
 - culture – society – language (e.g. Buerki 2020)
 - hist. linguistics & theories of language change
 - Etymology and development of phras. expr.
(e.g. Villers 2018)

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'

... while profits plummeted a staggering 71 percent, resulting in Elon Musk on an earning call to confirm that **going forward** he will prioritise Tesla over his White House role at Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (Doge).

... to ensure that they continue to be taxed on the correct share of profits **going forward**.

The solicitor added: "His partner is very unhappy about what he has done. Their priorities **going forward** are the new baby."

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future' *not* 'from now on' (break, aspect)

We look forward to continuing to work with them **going forward**.

However, Julian Bray revealed there are some gaps in the aviation industry which authorities need to fix **going forward** .

... we believe Rebel IPA does just that. "Honestly, we think it's set to become the King of Session IPAs **going forward** .

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future' *not* compositional

'(spacially) advancing' (verbal)

- Glenn is a very experienced player from the south. "He is consistently good **going forward** and gains us metres.
- With the clocks **going forward** and sunny spring days in sight, Chris Bonnet, founder of GardeningExpress.co.uk has shared his top tips

'go ahead' / 'proceed' (verbal)

- As we see it, if this councillor's vote was void then the plan would not be **going forward** for consultation.
- [Trump] fired off another casual tariff threat Monday even as he told reporters 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico were **going forward** tomorrow.

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'
- Non-finite VP or (sentence) adverbial, clause-initial or final

...this is not what we will tolerate **going forward**.

Going forward, it seems that the focus of Etc. will now shift to tackling connectivity problems that many drivers face at EV charging

If successful, the household will not only be due a lower bill **going forward**, but ...

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'
- Non-finite VP or (sentence) adverbial, clause-initial or final
(very occasionally adjectival in NP / adverbial in AdjP)

'We regret to inform all of those who have booked with us that, [...] **all trips going forward** are cancelled ...

I didn't need to worry because "the UK has reached an agreement with the EU which provides certainty about their **rights going forward**".

Zelensky proposed a new plan to achieve safety for Ukraine **going forward**.

... the club wished Davids **well going forward**.

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'
- Non-finite VP or (sentence) adverbial, clause-initial or final
- occurring with tense-marked forms going to / will

we **will** be looking at making a small reduction in core BMW headcount at Plant Swindon **going forward**

We are **going to be more like Dubai going forward**, not less like it.

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'
- Non-finite VP or (sentence) adverbial, clause-initial or final
- occurring with tense-marked forms going to / will
but also with present & past tense, modals

Going forward, regulation **is** really needed.

Having access to that **was** really, really important to me **going forward**."

there is still an amount of respect from the clubs and players, but **going forward** it **might be** something that needs to be looked at

Going forward... semantics

- semantics of 'in the future'
- Non-finite VP or (sentence) adverbial, clause-initial or final
- occurring with future tense-marked forms (going to / will),
not replacing them

Going forward... stability

going forward	going forwards	moving forward	moving forwards
7791	112	1448	81

2025 - English Trends corpus, .uk domains (Sketch Engine)

*going/moving ahead

Going forward... spread

- Genres/text types
- Varieties of English

.uk domains (2025)	All domains (2025) (including .uk)
9.6 per million	10.5 per million

Going forward... type

- No full compositionality, fixedness, polylexicality, **conventionality**
- Usual sequence?
MWT, periphrasis, phrasal verb?
- clichéd

Words around 10/m in the BNC:

polish (v)
polite (adj)
suffering (n)
ashamed (adj)
bacon (n)

Methodological challenges

- Diachronic corpus materials
 - diachronic balance
 - quality & documentation of corpora
(e.g. Koplenig 2015)
 - English: well served, but messy in terms of varieties

Methodological challenges

- Diachronic corpora:

- **Google Books** (books) only up to 2022, no concordances, only n-grams
- **enTenTen** (very large web-corpora), 2012, 13, 15, 18, 21 (61 billion for 2021)
- **English Trends** (news, Wikipedia, newsfeeds) 2014 - present (84+ billion)
- **Wikipedia**
- **BNC, BNC2014** (spoken, 11 million) 1990s & 2014
- **Brown family** (Brown, LOB, Frown, FLOB), 1960s & 1990, UK and USA, 1m
- **COCA** (AmE, 1990-2019)

Methodological challenges

- Diachronic corpora:

- **Google Books** (books) up to 2022; allows BrE spec
- **enTenTen** (very large web-corpora) 2012, 13, 15, 18, 21; allow .uk spec
- **English Trends** (news, Wikipedia, newsfeeds) 2014 - ; allows .uk spec
- Wikipedia (no clear time-depth, no variety spec)
- BNC, BNC2014 (too small)
- Brown family (Brown, LOB, Frown, FLOB), too small
- COCA (AmE)

Methodological challenges

analyses:

- frequencies across time, varieties
- randomly sampled concordance lines

Touchstones

- how new?
- S-curve?
- Formal predecessors: shifts from literal/other uses?
- Predecessor/alternative expressions: functional equivalents?
- Grammaticalisation?
- Functional need?
 - Linguistic relativity, forced conceptualisation?

Touchstones

- how new?
- S-curve?

1980 - 2022 ▾

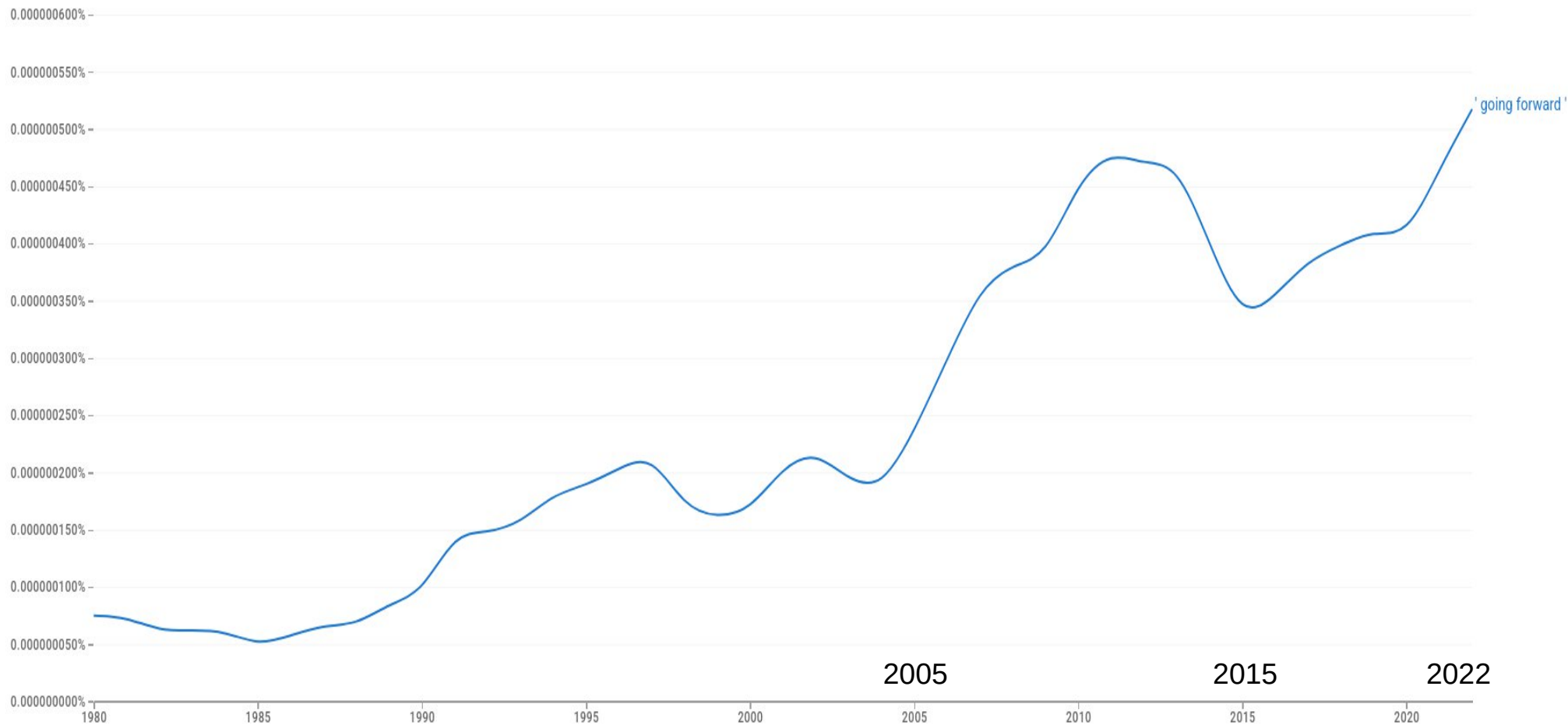
British English ▾

Case-Insensitive

Smoothing ▾



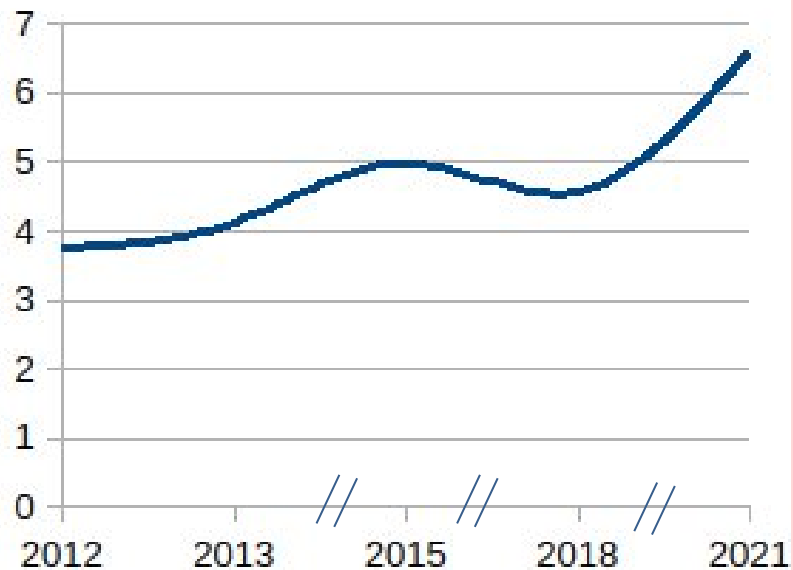
Replaced 'going forward' with 'going forward' to match how we processed the books.



Touchstones

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enTenTen corpora British English
(.uk top-level domain) per million



English Trends corpus British English
(.uk top-level domain) per million



Touchstones

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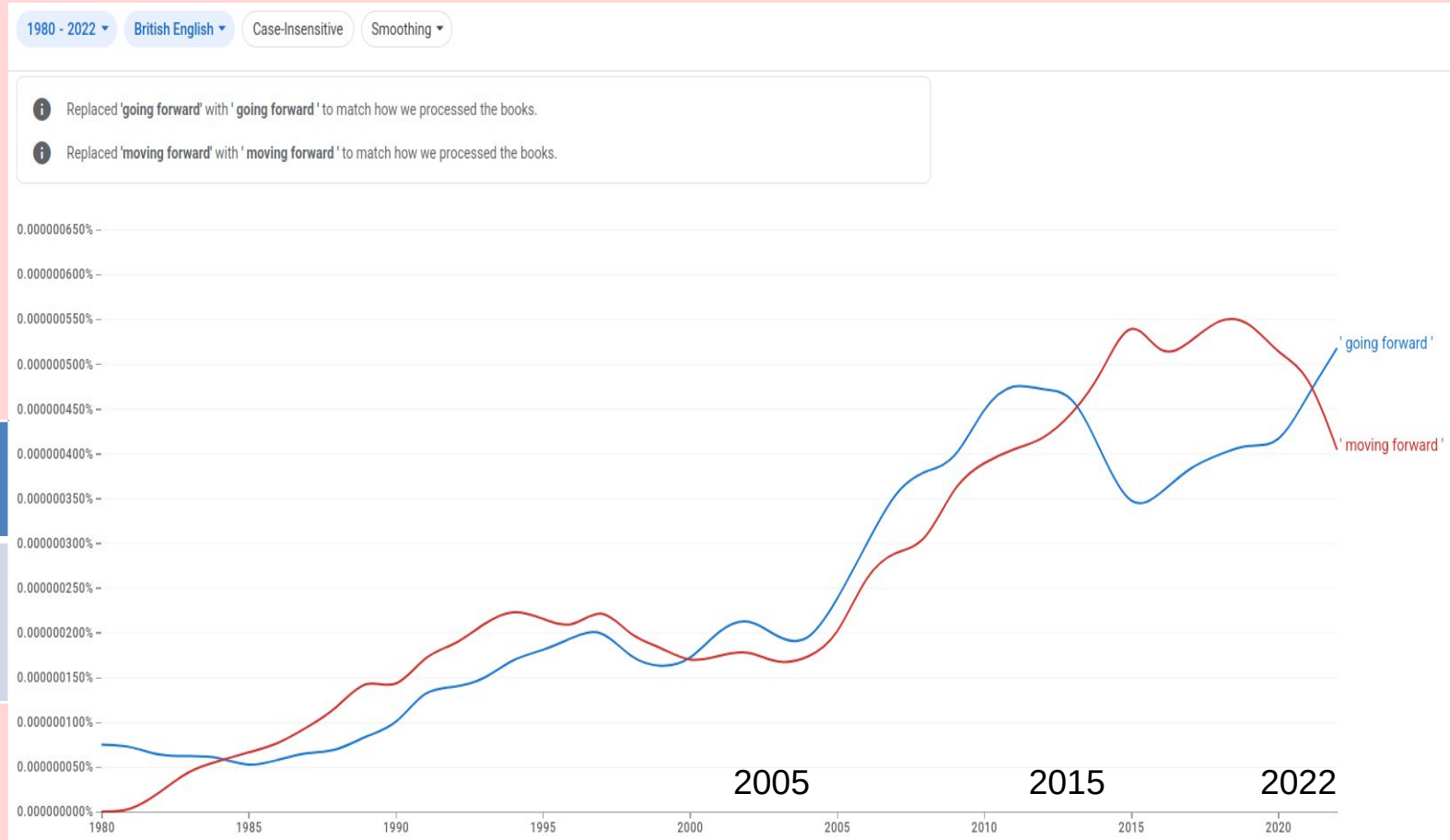
English Trends
(.uk) 2014-2025:

Going
forward

12.4/m

Moving
forward

6/m



Google Books 1980-2022 British English

Touchstones

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he is looking for a bit more cover defensively, maybe at centre-half, but from midfield **going forward** they are absolutely superb.

More chances came for Bengner, Tinsley and Tinsley as Heanor looked unstoppable **going forward**. On 73 minutes, Gerry Moran replaced ...

Wenger prepares for Saturday's clash with last season's beaten FA Cup finalists Hill. He added: 'I believe that maybe **going forward**, City are a bit more complete. '

English Trends (Sketch Engine) 2014 - 2017 .

Touchstones

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"He is a really key asset to us **going forward** - selfishly for me from a one-day and T20 bowlers (perspective) but also the Test team as well," Giles said.

English Trends (Sketch Engine) 2014 - 2017

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As the country's leaked diplomatic cables suggest, the impact of the case **going forward** could be severe.

We look forward to working with Oxfordshire County Council on important initiatives **going forward** to encourage people to travel by bus. '

Unfortunately, the damage done by the current model cannot be reversed, but we can make a change **going forward** and stop more planned mega-projects

Touchstones

- how new?
 - S-curve?
 - **Formal predecessors: shifts from literal/other uses?**
 - Geographical origins?
 - Predecessor expressions: functional equivalents?
-
- Literal uses frequently in sports reporting
 - Blurring evident in going forward to next stage, next season (only secondary temporal aspect)
 - More clearly temporal uses also occur in sports
 - Outside sports, fewer examples of literal and 'progression' uses
 - Frequency increase comes outside sports, and usually unambiguously temp.

Touchstones

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- Predecessor expressions: functional equivalents?

1980 - 2022 ▾

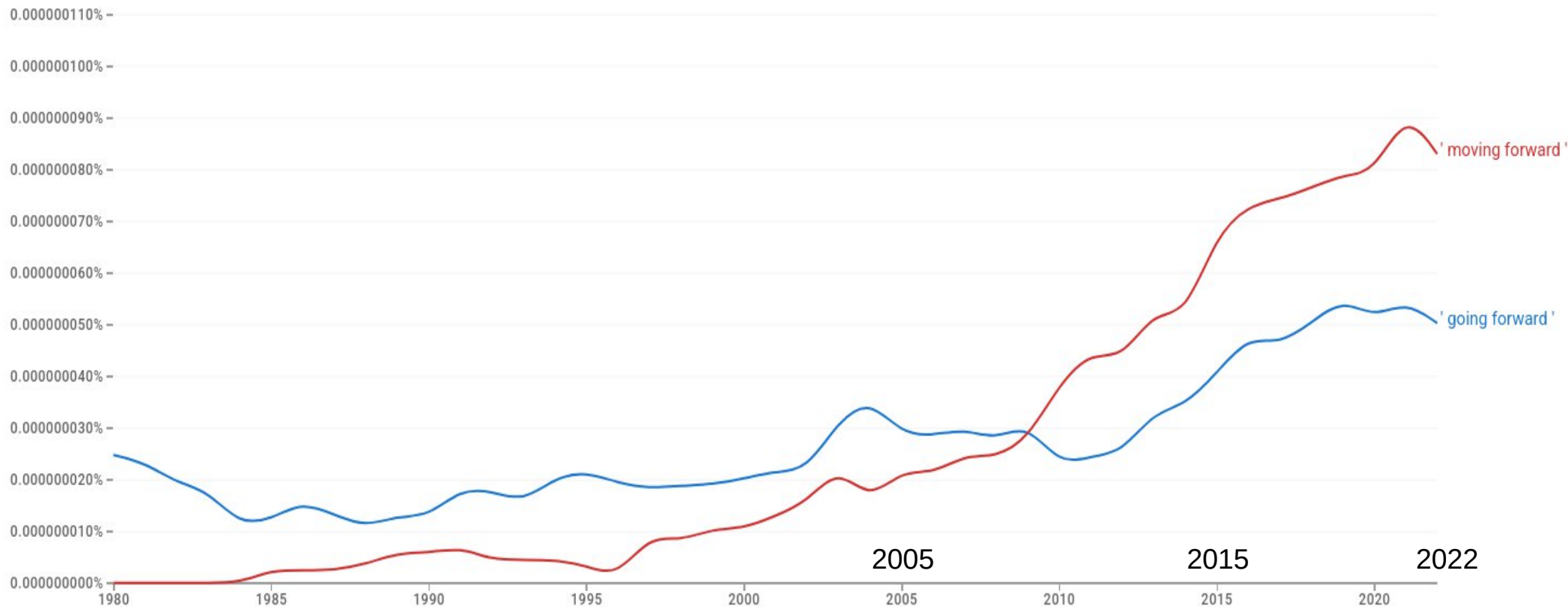
American English ▾

Case-Insensitive

Smoothing ▾

i Replaced 'going forward' with 'going forward' to match how we processed the books.

i Replaced 'moving forward' with 'moving forward' to match how we processed the books.



Google Books 1980-2022 American English

Touchstones

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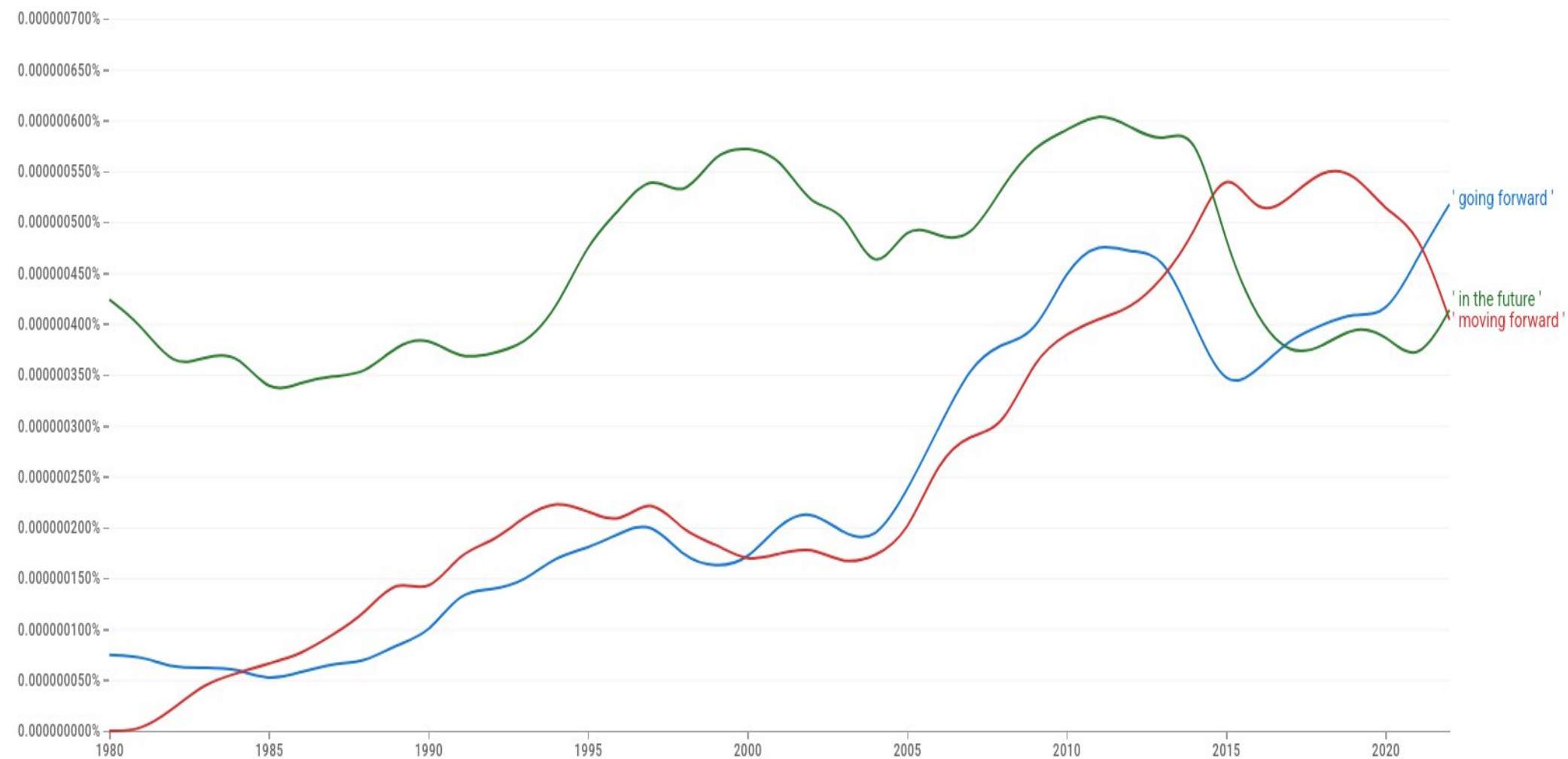
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British English ▾

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Google Books 1980-2022 British English



Touchstones

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- Formal predecessors: shifts from literal/other uses?
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- **Grammaticalisation?** No, periphrastic future still mostly obligatory, outside sports
- Functional need or (fad) replacement/shift, filler or emphatic?
- Linguistic relativity, forced conceptualisation

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"We expect there to be lower profitability **going forward**," Ofgem Chief Executive Dermot Nolan told a conference call.

... the uncertainty is making some landlords question their viability **going forward**.

English Trends (Sketch Engine) 2014 - 2017 .

Conclusions

- *Going forward* seems
 - a more dynamic and more parsimonious replacement for *in the future*
 - recent, but here to stay
 - an extension from spacial and procedural forwards to future, something that may have overlapped particularly in sports reporting (where fillers are also functionally useful)
 - remains pleonastic, but can serve filler as well as emphatic purposes
- General insights for diachronic phraseology might include
 - Fast change does occur and can lead to permanent change
 - Bleeding of genre-specific expressions into general language use
 - Aided by filler/emphasis functions less present in alternatives
 - Aided by use of pervasive metaphor (LIFE IS A JOURNEY)

Thank you

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